

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:           THE PHENOMENAL LIVES OF MOVABLE CHRIST  
SCULPTURES

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This dissertation deals with a fascinating and understudied group of free-standing Christ sculptures that were moved in imitation of Christ during the dramatic observances of late medieval Holy Week. They adhere to general iconographic formulas, but stand apart from other depictions of Christ in one important respect—they were elaborately kinetic. Congregations animated these images in a variety of ways, from basic manual operation in processions and elevations to the manipulation of fitted joints, wheels, hand cranks, and elevation apparatuses. Scholars who study movable Christ sculptures use them as evidence for liturgical and para-liturgical observances recorded in written texts, they approach them as aesthetic objects or as objects of folk tradition, and they discuss their place in the development of medieval sculpture and architectural space. I argue, however, that these images have more meanings to offer. Accordingly, these meanings are available when we consider not only their material and symbolic forms and their performative functions, but also their shifting cultural locations in medieval and modern Europe. Movable Christ sculptures were edifying and sacred images, disconcerting

idols, homely folk objects, and works of art. My aim in this dissertation is to write a cultural biography of the lives of these images—in other words, a history that can account for the varied connotations of movable Christ sculptures in different instances of practice, reception, and response.

It is my contention that these images, because of their performative function, experiential qualities, mimetic form, relatively anonymity, and “thingness,” present an ideal opportunity to exercise cultural biography from an art historical perspective. Such an exercise elucidates the history of movable Christ sculptures after the moment of production and artistic intent has passed. It describes how these images have remained fixed in human imagination and in life regardless of changing cultural, social and political circumstances, yet it also accounts for the ways in which their meanings have changed over time. In short, it provides a more complete account of the lives of these unique and understudied objects and reveals the ways in which movable Christ sculptures create transcendental moments and social realities.

THE PHENOMENAL LIVES OF MOVABLE CHRIST SCULPTURES

by

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## PREFACE

I first became aware of movable sculptures of Christ in a graduate seminar at the University of Missouri-Columbia.<sup>1</sup> Students were asked to choose an object from the University museum and apply a particular art historical methodology. I selected a fifteenth-century Austrian sculpture of Christ (fig. 1) and attempted to write a social history of the figure. I was interested in the image as a material object, its place in the cultural fabric of late medieval Europe, and what it meant in its original context. When I encountered the wooden figure it was in a gallery sitting atop a white podium in front of a white wall. Surrounded by the colorful canvases of Dutch and Italian masters, its grace, beauty, and sweeping fragility were accentuated, but all indications of its original purpose were lost. Aside from its stylistic and iconographic designations, I had no idea what the image was. My first thought was that it must have come from a large wooden altarpiece. Perhaps it stood in the spindly heights of one of the massive fifteenth-century German retables (fig. 2). Or perhaps it was an *Andachtsbild*, one of the free-standing wooden sculptures placed in homes or on side chapel altars in churches, providing focus for private devotion (fig. 3).<sup>2</sup>

When the conservator and curator agreed to take it down from the podium, a new possibility presented itself. An assessment from this perspective revealed a large filled

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1. These images have been called by different names. Johannes Tripps uses the term “handelnde Bildwerke” while Ulla Hastrup refers to them as liturgical props. I use the somewhat cumbersome term “movable sculptures of Christ” to accommodate their general characteristics. Johannes Tripps, *Das handelnde Bildwerk Forschungen zu den Bedeutungsschichten und der Funktion des Kirchengebäudes und seiner Ausstattung in der Hoch- und Spätgotik* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1996); Ulla Hastrup, “Medieval Props in the Liturgical Drama.” In *Hafnia: Copenhagen Papers in the History of Art* 11 (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 1987), 133-170.

2. The issue of the *Andachtsbilder*, its definitions, and its functions are nicely summarized from Panofsky to Marrow by Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting* (Abo, Finland: Abo Akademi, 1965), 55-58.

hole and an axe or hatchet mark on the top of the figure's head (fig. 4). These aspects of condition and further investigations into fifteenth-century image practice suggested a surprising and unique history for the figure which I pursued in my Master's thesis.<sup>3</sup> A chemical analysis and x-ray determined that the filled hole was at one time occupied by an iron object. From my research into Ascension Day observances of the late middle ages, I concluded that it was most likely occupied by an iron ring. The ring would have been used to elevate the figure on either Easter Sunday, Ascension Day, or both. In this capacity the figure acted as an instrument of religious instruction, a sacred image that made the narrative of Christian redemption understandable and the divine visible.

The axe mark and the removal of the ring, however, implied that at one time the image's privileged place in Catholic worship was negated. While this damage could have occurred in the most banal way at any point in the object's history, I again linked these aspects of the object's condition to the figure's function as a sacred image in late medieval Ascension Day. As a mimetic and kinetic representation of Christ, the Missouri figure carried dangerous idolatrous connotations for some sixteenth-century viewers. Images central to Church observances, particularly three-dimensional sculptures, were prime targets for iconoclastic actions during the Protestant Reformation. Images that were deemed inappropriate or idolatrous were systematically removed and quietly

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3. Tanya Jung, *A Late Gothic Ascending Christ in Context*. Master's Thesis, University of Missouri, 1995. Here image practice refers not only to the particulars of the movable Christ sculptures' function in dramatic para-liturgical and liturgical performance i.e. how they were made, used, moved, dressed, addressed, and performed; but also to the more general roles of religious images in late medieval Europe. David Morgan discusses the multiple purposes of religious images in visual practice which include the ordering of time and space, the imagining of communal identity, communication with the divine, collaboration with other forms of representation, persuasive magic which influences thought and behavior, and the displacement of rival images and ideologies. David Morgan, *Visual Piety, A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), and *The Sacred Gaze, Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (University of California Press: Berkeley, CA: 2005).

eliminated or violently “executed” in public spectacles. They were stored away in attics, burned in household hearths or bonfires of the vanities, drawn and quartered, disfigured, and decapitated. In this context, the extraction of the ring and the axe mark became the possible remnants of an aniconic and Protestant past.

In constructing a history for the Missouri Ascending Christ, I was afforded interpretations and insights that I did not expect when I first encountered the image in its museum setting.<sup>4</sup> Through this process I came to understand that original intent and original meaning though compelling and credible pursuits were circumspect goals. The reclamation of history and more specifically the history of an object were dependent on my own situation and reading. I could never “purify” my conclusions of my own past or “insistent present.”<sup>5</sup> But while my own interpretations would always remain subjective, they need not be naïve or solipsistic. They were themselves a part of the history of the image. More important, I came to realize that the image’s meaning was not something that remained fixed to original intention but, rather, it changed along with its cultural and temporal locations. In varied circumstances and at different times, the Missouri Ascending Christ had the potential to be a didactic image, a sacred icon, a sterile idol, and an art object. The effort to describe, define, and reduce this image to an original context revealed instead the richness and complexity of late medieval visual culture and demonstrated just how fluid an image’s meaning can be. In the following pages, I will extend my study of the Missouri Ascending Christ and consider all movable images of Christ used in Holy Week, Easter, and Ascension Day observances in this way.

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4. For a similar point see Freedberg, *The Power of Images, Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 273.

5. Michael Baxandall, “The Language of Art History,” *New Literary Criticism* 10 (Spring, 1979): 453.



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## INTRODUCTION

In 1529 an angry mob stormed the Great Minster at Basel and removed the crucifix. Accompanied by adolescent boys singing “O Poor Judas,” the mob tied a rope around the crucifix and pulled it through the streets to the *Kornmarkt* where they threw it onto a bonfire in front of the church (fig. 5).<sup>6</sup> As it burned, one man addressed the image demanding, “If you are God, save yourself, if you are man then bleed.” By addressing the crucifix, even in the same way Christ himself was addressed at the Crucifixion, the iconoclast not only challenged the legitimacy of the image, he questioned its potential to act within terrestrial time and space. His interrogation of the image, not uncommon in sixteenth-century iconoclastic episodes, speaks to the skepticism and anxiety that religious images can invoke—a skepticism and anxiety predicated on the power of images to manifest presence in the human experience. This episode also illustrates how mutable an image’s meaning can be. The social and spiritual interchange between visual representation and spectator shapes and negotiates the image’s functions, connotations, and powers which are, in turn, relative to each reception. For some, the crucifix was the essential Christian image, a central component in Catholic worship. For the man at Basel, it was a powerfully deceptive and ultimately impotent idol.

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6. The riot occurred on *Fasnacht*, February 9, 1529. The night before, Protestant citizens broke into the armory, seized weapons and set up cannons in the streets. In the morning they forced their way into the town hall on the Kornmarkt and demanded an audience with the town council. As the council and citizens debated, some members of the mob stormed the cathedral and removed other religious images including paintings, sculptures, and liturgical objects. The mob threw the images on a bonfire and proceeded through the rest of the city, similarly destroying images in other churches and chapels. These events are recorded in various contemporary chronicles including *Die Chronik Konrad Schnitts 1518-1533*, *op. cit.* Robert W. Scribner, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London: The Hambeldon Press, 1987), 76; hereafter referred to as *PCPM*.



This dissertation deals with a fascinating and understudied group of free-standing Christ sculptures that were moved in imitation of Christ during the dramatic observances of late medieval Holy Week. Like the crucifix at Basel, they offer a resonant example of the power of the image in the experience of the sacred on the eve of the Protestant Reformation and the changing identities which images carry over time. They adhere to general iconographic formulas, but stand apart from other depictions of Christ in one important respect—they were elaborately kinetic. Congregations animated these images in a variety of ways, from basic manual operation in processions and elevations to the manipulation of fitted joints, wheels, hand cranks, and elevation apparatuses. On Palm Sunday a procession pulled life-sized sculptures of Christ on the ass or *Palmeseln* through the community on wheeled-biers as they sang Hosannas and threw palm fronds at the images' feet (fig. 6). Celebrants and deacons removed figures of Christ with jointed arms from the cross and buried them in sepulchers during Good Friday services (fig. 7). And hidden hands elevated Christ Ascendant images with iron rings, ropes, and pulleys in imitation of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday and the Ascension forty days later (fig. 8).

Scholars who study movable Christ sculptures use them as evidence for liturgical and para-liturgical observances recorded in written texts, they approach them as aesthetic objects or as objects of folk tradition, and they discuss their place in the development of medieval sculpture and architectural space. I argue, however, that these images have more meanings to offer. Accordingly, these meanings are available when we consider not only their material and symbolic forms and their performative functions, but also their shifting cultural locations in medieval and modern Europe. Movable Christ sculptures

led numerous lives. They were edifying and sacred images, disconcerting idols, homely folk objects, and works of art. My aim in this dissertation is to write a cultural biography of the lives of these images— in other words, a history that can account for the varied connotations of movable Christ sculptures in different instances of practice, reception, and response.

Furthermore, it is my contention that these images, because of their performative function, experiential qualities, mimetic form, relatively anonymity, and “thingness,” present an ideal opportunity to exercise this approach from an art historical perspective. Such an exercise elucidates the history of movable Christ sculptures after the moment of production and artistic intent has passed. It describes how these images have remained fixed in human imagination and in life regardless of changing cultural, social and political circumstances, yet it also accounts for the ways in which their meanings have changed over time. It affords entry into these meanings both apparent and discursive, it emphasizes perceptions of the images as it relates to their function, and it acknowledges the response of viewers as well as the role of artists and patrons. In short, it provides a more complete account of the lives of these unique and understudied objects and reveals the ways in which movable Christ sculptures create transcendental moments and social realities.

### *Method and Theory*

. Images are phenomenological things which consist of matter and form that synthesize together in appearance. Like all things, they are situated or “thrown” into our world and inextricably linked to us through our consciousness, our corporeality, and our

social location.<sup>7</sup> Images have their own horizons of meaning that merge with the viewer's.<sup>8</sup> They resist being interpretively exhausted even as they offer themselves up to interpretation, and anyone person will never understand an image in the same way as another. And by accepting that meaning is inexhaustible, we also recognize that perception is never stable; it changes among cultures and individuals over time. This phenomenological hermeneutic is the foundation of cultural biography.<sup>9</sup>

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7. The idea of “thing” and “thingness” is a complex concept that is central to my study. In phenomenological and social thought, Edmund Husserl first announced that we must look to “the things in themselves” (*Den Sachen selbst*) without prejudice in order to understanding anything. Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer qualified this view. Accordingly, it is impossible to remove prejudices from our contemplation of the thing. Rather, they are a part of the *Dasein* (used to mean both being human and human beings) and thus a part of the lived experience or *Erlebnis*. For Heidegger’s explication of “thing” and “thingness” see *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); and especially “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, eds. Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 650-703. For Gadamer’s discussion of “thing” and *Dasein* see *Truth and Method*, trans. and revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 5-146. In social thought, Arjun Appadurai also recognizes that things “have no meanings apart from those that human transactions, attributions, and motivations endow them with.” As a neo-Marxist, however, he does privilege the way in which things move “in and out of commodity” states or *transvaluation*. Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: commodities and the politics of value,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5 & 13 especially.

8. Both the interpreter and the text have a ‘horizon’ or range of meaning that potentially includes everything perceived or understood from a particular vantage point. Hans-Georg Gadamer notes that “The projecting of the historical horizon... is only a phase in the process of understanding, and does not become solidified into the self-alienation of a past consciousness, but is overtaken by our own present horizon of understanding. In the process of understanding there takes place a real fusing of horizons, which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously removed.” He calls this the “hermeneutic circle” in which we can only know what we are prepared to know at any given point in time. While this circle is limited to the fore-knowledge of the interpreter and the substance of the text, it is not closed off. Because of the symbolic and reflective nature of human perception, it remains open in a continual process that creates new meanings. *Truth and Method*, 273

9. Phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method is taken to be interpretive rather than purely descriptive. Hermeneutics as applied by both Martin Heidegger and his student Hans-Georg Gadamer is not concerned with a method of understanding that amasses “knowledge which satisfies the methodological ideal of science.” Rather, it is the application of the theory that “understanding is not just one of the various possible behaviours of the subject, but the mode of being... which includes the whole of [our] experience of the world.” Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xi-xxi.. Thus, phenomenological hermeneutics is descriptive interpretation of being in the world—the being of both the interpreter and the interpreted. For Heidegger’s hermeneutics see *Being and Time*. The cultural biography of things was formulated by the social anthropologist Igor Kopytoff. Drawing from Appadurai’s theory of the *transvaluation* of things, Kopytoff addressed the way that this process lends itself to a life-history of biography of things. His idea that things have different meanings for different interpretive viewers is directly based in phenomenological hermeneutics. Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64-91.

At any given point various viewers are delineated for the reception of an image including the artist's conception of the viewer both imagined and intended; the explicit, implicit, and ideal viewer suggested in the image itself; and the actual viewers who have come in contact with the work over time.<sup>10</sup> Each viewer's response is a symptom "of the relationship between image and beholder" and includes "the active, outwardly markable responses of beholders, as well as the beliefs (insofar as they are capable of being recorded) that motivate them to specific actions and behavior."<sup>11</sup> An image's history can be established only by considering these varied kinds of receptions and responses including our own.

By both reflecting and directing meaning for various viewers, the "work of art" maintains an "essential tension" between what Clifford Geertz echoing Martin Heidegger calls a "model of" reality and a "model for" reality over the course of its lifespan.<sup>12</sup> An

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10. This formulation comes directly from the reception aesthetics of Wolfgang Iser in *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). Reception aesthetics and reader/response theory are, like the cultural biography of things, based in phenomenological hermeneutics. For more on reader/response theory and reception aesthetics see Peter U. Hohendahl. "Beyond Reception Aesthetics," *New German Critique* 28 (Winter 1983): 108-146; and for a summary discussion of reader/response theory as it applies to the visual. Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History," *Art Bulletin* 82 (1991): 174-208

11. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, xxii.

12. Geertz goes on to say that "[t]he capacity, variable among peoples as it is among individuals, to perceive meaning in pictures (or poems, melodies, buildings, pots, dramas, statues) is, like all other fully human capacities, a product of collective experience which far transcends it... It is out of participation in the general system of symbolic forms we call culture that participation in the particular we call art, which is in fact but a sector of it, is possible. A theory of art is thus at the same time a theory of culture, not an autonomous enterprise." Clifford Geertz, "Art as a Cultural System," in *Local Knowledge*, 94-120. Heidegger defined the tension between "model of" and "model for" as the tension between "earth" and "world" in three lectures on "The Origin of the Work of Art" in 1936. He argued that the essence of the artwork does not lie in its 'representational' function or in the "anestheticizing" effect of its aesthetics, but in its ability to disclose the world. The possibility of truth arises on the basis of this process of disclosure or 'unconcealment' in which the coherence between individual statements about the object and the larger body of statements about the world forms the "truth of the matter." Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 674-678. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological reduction, the work of art accentuates this tension and "defamiliarizes" our perception. The "vision" of the artist shows us a "profane vision," revealing a world that is "strange and paradoxical." "Selections from *The Visible and the Invisible*," in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings*, ed. Thomas Baldwin (New York: Routledge, 2004), 253. The "works of art" that these thinkers engage vary in medium from poetry to literature to dance. Most, however, rely on the visual arts to make their points.

image's meaning does not reside in simple representation that is faithfully disseminated through time and space. Instead, it is a social and symbolic form that always contains something more than is apparent to us in the work. Even after it is made, after the artist has conceived of it and created it, it goes on being. It is used, charged, discharged, and restored, all the while changing, communicating, and living with us. Art historians Oleg Grabar, Sally Promey, and Michael Ann Holly have framed this idea in terms of the "post-history" and "after-lives" of an object which "begins with the first reaction of the first person to see something or to use it."<sup>13</sup> Thus the image's moment of conception and its life after that moment are equally meaningful.

When we open up the possibility of an image life and after-life, we privilege it and recognize that it has autonomy and an agency of its own. It is the object of our eye and of our argument. It determines our judgments as much as preconceptions about it determine its meaning. Images are cultural products that carry "associations, orders, and representations," and have the power to influence the making and maintenance of reality—what we tell ourselves about our past and about ourselves.<sup>14</sup> They are "often appropriated to work for one group and, all too often, against another" as ideological instruments of power, repression, and persecution.<sup>15</sup> They slip from commodity to cultic

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13. Oleg Grabar, "Different but Compatible Ends," in the "Object of Art History," David Freedberg, et al., *Art Bulletin* 76 (Sep., 1994): 397; Sally Promey, "The Afterlives of Sargent's Paintings," *Art Journal* 57 (Spring, 1998): 31-44; and Michael Ann Holly, *Past Looking: Historical Imagination and the Rhetoric of the Image* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 14-15. Promey qualifies Holly's use of "after-life," which Holly uses synonymously with her concept of "post-text." Promey makes it plural to account for the multiple audiences, contexts, and interpretations of an object and to indicate both the "disjunction from as well as the connection to the 'prior' life," 31.

14. For a discussion of the phenomenology of the everyday "life-world" and the social construction of reality see Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966). For an art historical application of these theories see David Morgan, *Visual Piety*.

15. For this quote see Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), xxviii. Appadurai refers to this phenomenon as the "politics of tournaments of value, in which the actors manipulate the cultural definitions...so that the

state and back again, and are thus subject to changing meanings as they move between economic object to sacred singularity.<sup>16</sup> Movable Christ sculptures are particularly good examples of this process of transvaluation. They are part of the everyday world yet reside beyond it. They are social commodities with transformative purposes and as such secure “the world or sense of reality in which the self finds its existence.”<sup>17</sup>

The power of movable Christ sculptures to structure social reality and engage the transcendent is “predicated on the efficacy and effectiveness (imputed or otherwise) of images” to engage the individual and collective consciousness symbolically and materially. “Since we see both metaphorically and metonymically our perception [often] elides representation with reality.”<sup>18</sup> In the experience of the sacred image (at least in European cultures) this elision charges the figured object with a power of presence. From the individual and collective written responses and reactionary behaviors toward movable Christ sculptures, it is clear that these images had an effective vitality which integrated feeling and cognition for the beholder and allowed the images to stand on their own in the midst of changing perceptions. In their ritual and aesthetic functions, movable

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movement of things enhances their own standing.” Appadurai, 22. For a discussion of the cultic state of art see Walter Benjamin, “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Illuminations, Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 217-252.

16. Appadurai and Kopytoff discuss the method by which things move between commodity states to states of singularity and how this relates to the social life and cultural biography of things. In doing so, they explode limited understandings of material culture. First, they deconstruct the idea that a commodity is reducible only to something made for the exchange of money and consider “much broader, more cross-culturally and historically useful approaches to commodities.” Appadurai, 8. There are various kinds of commodities that are either intended or placed in a relationship of economic exchange. And the flow of these “commodities in any given situation is a shifting compromise between socially regulated paths and competitively inspired diversions.” Appadurai, 17. Second, they point out that things move in and out of commodity phases. They are bought for others and thus given as gifts in an exchange that involves forms of social currency other than money; they are commissioned for special purposes and subsequently commoditized as enclaved *sacra are* or special singularities; and sometimes culture “resingularizes what has been commoditized” and vice versa. Kopytoff, 73. This formulation of material culture allows for a broader understanding of movable Christ sculptures and images in general. One thing can contiguously, contingently, and sometimes simultaneously be a market item, a sacred object, and an aesthetic artifact.

17. Morgan, *Visual Piety*, 12.

18. Freedberg, *Power of Images*, 237.

Christ sculptures direct communal concordance and disruption, structure time and space, serve as instruments of salvation, present avenues to the divine, provide a means of cultural identification and edification, and remain things of beauty. Their history, the history I offer here, is one story of the persistent fluidity and potency of images in the human consciousness.

### *Art History and Cultural Biography*

In his foundational treatise, Igor Kopytoff outlines the questions that one asks when writing the cultural biography of a thing which are “similar to those one asks about people:”

What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its 'status' and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized 'ages' or periods in the thing's 'life', and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?<sup>19</sup>

These are also the questions that art historians ask about images. Like all things, images are ontologically situated in the past and in the present. Their meanings are both available and removed from us in time and place. The historical record hesitates to show us how images were perceived. This distance is one of our greatest difficulties and leaves us pondering how to answer these questions and gain some understanding into the “relationships between the character of works of art and their historical circumstances.”<sup>20</sup>

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19. Kopytoff, 66-67.

20. This question is posed by Michael Baxandall who supplies us with the method of inferential criticism to solve this problem, which is strikingly similar to the method offered by Erwin Panofsky in 1940: “Not only does re-creative synthesis serve as a basis for the archaeological investigation, the

The answer lies in our own ontological grounding. When we interpret the world and the things within it we make meanings which are immediately apparent and fulfilled by the subsequent perceptions of ourselves and others.<sup>21</sup> To understand any “thing” in the world we need to consider how these things might appear in the human consciousness relative to the situation of the perceiver. Interpretive insight into the experience of the “other” does not afford objective or absolute access however. Neither the art critic, reader, actor, ethnographer, or therapist can or would want to become their subject, and this is not the goal of the historian either.<sup>22</sup> We do not declare a truth about the

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archaeological investigation in turn serves as a basis for the re-creative process; both mutually qualify and rectify one another.” Erwin Panofsky, “The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline,” in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), 17-18. For Michael Baxandall’s definition of inferential criticism see “The Language of Art History:” 455. David Freedberg qualifies Baxandall’s solution.

21. Martin Heidegger argued that, in fact, all we do as human beings is interpret. It is the human condition and the way we engage the world. We “read” our experience of phenomena in the world—things, behaviors, beliefs, practices, and institutions—as “text.” Gadamer calls the process of interpretive condition the “hermeneutic circle” in which we can only know what we are prepared to know at any given point in time. While this circle is limited to the fore-knowledge of the interpreter and the substance of the text, it is not closed off. Because of the symbolic and reflective nature of human perception, it remains open in a continual process that creates new meanings. *Truth and Method*, 273. Paul Ricoeur and Maurice Merleau-Ponty underscore that our interpretations are reflective, narrative, corporeal, and social. Texts “speak of possible worlds and of possible ways of orientating oneself in those worlds.” *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 1962), 144. See also Gary Brent Madison, *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty: A Search for the Limits* (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 1981). Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. I, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990). Rather than allowing for a singular interpretation, a text (as opposed to a work which is a fixed, reducible, consumable object) “typically leads to an explosion of meaning due to the fact that it is composed of a web of signification and intertextuality without origin or destination.” Martin Stevens, “The Intertextuality of Late Medieval Art and Drama,” *New Literary History* 22 (Spring, 1991): 333. Also see Christopher Tilley who considers Gadamer’s hermeneutics in “generalized anthropological principles and/or direct ethnohistorical evidence” and uses it in order to gain “an entry point into meaning.” *Material Culture and Text. The Art of Ambiguity* (London: Routledge, 1991), 179-183.

22. This is an emic principal and Max Westphal and Ninian Smart use the examples of aesthetic appreciation of the visual arts, reading a novel, the actor’s re-enactment on stage, the ethnographer’s field observations, and the psychiatrist’s practice of “good listening” as valid and accepted methods of empathetic interpretation. Max Westphal, *God, Guilt, and Death* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 10-12; Ninian Smart, *Phenomenon of Religion* (New York: Oneworld Publishers, 1973), 69-76. . Victor Turner takes the emic to another level in his performed ethnographies; bringing American university students in anthropology and dramaturgy together to reenact the performance of ritual from a Ndembu community in Central Africa. The convergence of the social drama of life and its recreation through aesthetic drama allows us to “learn something about ourselves from taking the role of others.” Victor Turner, “Dramatic Ritual/Ritual Drama,” 82. Clifford Geertz similarly constructs an “actor-oriented” ethnographic method of “thick description” that encourages imaginative immersion in the stuff of everyday life, giving rise to history and anthropology that have more the feel of literature than cold science,



experiences of others, especially those long dead and gone, but entertain their possibilities—their horizons—in an empathetic way. Since these past horizons can only be what we know about them we are obliged to announce our role in the creation of history.<sup>23</sup> We remain critical not only when we announce our own agency in constructing the history of any one thing, but when we embrace the possibility of other interpretations outside of our own.<sup>24</sup> Every interpretation is activated by the image and is therefore an inherent part of the object's meaning. Furthermore, what is left out of an interpretation is as relevant and meaningful as what is emphasized. A definitive conclusion is neither possible nor necessarily desirable, but this process is not hyper-relative or solipsistic. It does not permit every interpreted conclusion because we practice eidetically. When we engage the phenomenon in question, we compare it with other related but different phenomena and look for recurring moments of agreement and discord—for patterns and invariants.<sup>25</sup> Thus my task in writing an art historical account of the cultural biography of movable Christ sculptures is not to discover an unmediated

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becoming an interpretive or even creative activity. "Ritual as a Cultural Symbol," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 3-32. See also James Clifford, "Ethnographic Allegory," in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds. James Clifford and George Marcus (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 98-121.

23. Paul Ricoeur echoing Hans Gadamer on this point notes that "in hermeneutical reflection -- or in reflective hermeneutics -- the constitution of the *self* is contemporaneous with the constitution of *meaning*." Paul Ricoeur, "On Interpretation," in *From Text to Action*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 15.

24. Clifford, "Ethnographic Allegory," 98.

25. For the formulation of eidetic reduction, see Edmund Husserl, "Eidetic Variation and the Acquisition of Pure Phenomenology," in *Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*, ed. Donn Welton (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 292-299. Erwin Panofsky articulated the eidetic approach for art historians. We collect and verify "all the available information as to medium, condition, age, authorship, destination." We compare the work with other images "of its class," and examine texts that "reflect the aesthetic standards of its country and age." But he emphasizes that when we do this, our "perception" should change accordingly so that we do not "erect a rational superstructure on an irrational foundation." We should always adapt our "re-creative experiences" to the results of our research, "while continually checking the results...against the evidence of [our] re-creative experience." Erwin Panofsky, "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), 17-18.

history about these images, but to continue to mediate their past and current meanings through new comparative and creative interpretations.

### *The Scholarship*

For the most part movable Christ sculptures remain outside the traditional canon of art history, residing in the shadow of Tilman Riemenschneider's massive golden-colored retables. Few scholars have taken notice of them and those that have relegate movable Christ sculptures to the categories of liturgical furnishings or folk art. Historians of medieval drama such as Karl Young briefly mention the role of movable Christ images in their discussions of the dramatic liturgies of the Church.<sup>26</sup> Social historians like Robert Scribner, briefly use them in their explication of popular religious practice on the eve of the Reformation.<sup>27</sup> Art historians give them more attention and approach the images from different directions. Hans Reudi Weber, Orville Larsen, Goetz Pochat, and Hans Joachim Kraus examine Resurrection figures that were elevated on Easter Sunday and Ascension Day and their relationship to the iconography of medieval art and the structure of medieval architecture.<sup>28</sup> E. Wiepen, M. Peinkofe, and Josef Adelman write about the *Palmesel* as folk art and its function on Palm Sunday.<sup>29</sup>

Elizabeth Lipsmeyer also looks at the function of the *Palmesel* on Palm Sunday and at its

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26. Karl Young, *Drama of the Medieval Church*. 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933); hereafter referred to as *DMC* i or ii.

27. Scribner, *PCPM*; Sergiusz Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

28. Hans Reudi Weber, "Tanzende Engel—Fallende Hosten: die Repräsentatio Ascensio Domini." In *Unserdenkmaler Spätgotische Skulptur* 42 (1991); Orville K. Larson, "Ascension Image in Art and Theatre." *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 29 (1959): 161-176; Goetz Pochat, "Brunelleschi and the 'Ascension' of 1422." *Art Bulletin* 60 (June, 1978): 232-234; Hans Joachim Krause, "Imago ascensionis und Himmelloch." In *Skulptur des Mittelalters: Funktion und Gestalt*, eds. F. Mobius and E. Schubert (Weimar: H. Blöhau, 1987), 1-352.

29. Eduard Wiepen, *Palmsonntagsprozession und Palmesel* (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1909); M. Peinkofe, "Von niederbayerischen Palmeseln." *Bayerisches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* (1955), 79-85; Josef Anselm Adelman, "Christus auf dem Palmesel." *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 63 (1967): 11-18.

role as an aesthetic object during the medieval period.<sup>30</sup> P. Kolumban Gschwend charts movable crucifixes and Ascending Christ sculptures and their correspondence to the liturgy of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.<sup>31</sup> Johannes and Gesine Taubert catalog movable and removable sculptures of Christ crucified that were taken down from the cross and buried on Good Friday.<sup>32</sup> Rhinehard Rampold describes five examples of the movable crucifix from the Austrian Tyrol.<sup>33</sup> Pamela Sheingorn and Neil Brooks examine the relationship between movable crucifixes and images of the dead Christ in their broader discussions of Easter sepulchers.<sup>34</sup> Ulla Haastrup discusses all of the movable image types from *Palmesln* to Ascendant Christ figures as liturgical props.<sup>35</sup> Michael Baxandall and Jeffrey Chipps Smith mention them as a group in their books on German Renaissance sculpture.<sup>36</sup> Johannes Tripps also examines these images as a group in his study of space, art, and ritual in the high and late Gothic.<sup>37</sup> And David Freedberg, Michael Camille, and David Morgan briefly address movable Christ sculptures in their general discussions of the history of image practice and response.<sup>38</sup>

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30. Elizabeth Lipsmeyer, "Jahreslaufbrauchtum: Palmsonntag-Christus und Palmesel." *Volkskunst: Zeitschrift für volkstümliche Sachkultur* 2 (1982): 50-58, and "Devotion and Decorum: Intention and Quality in Medieval German Sculpture." *Gesta*, 34 (1995): 20-27.

31. P. Kolumban Gschwend, *Die Deposition und Elevatio Crucis im Raum der altern Diözese Brixen* (Sarnen: 1965).

32. Johannes and Gesine Taubert, "Mittelalterliche Kruzifixe mit schwenkbaren Armen: die Beitrag zur Verwendung von Bildwerken in der Liturgie." *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft*. 23 (1969), 79-121.

33. Rhinehard Rampold, "Gotische Kruzifixe mit schwenkbaren Armen: Neuentdeckung in Tirol," *Schler* 73 (1999): 425-436.

34. Pamela Sheingorn, *The Easter Sepulchre in England* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1987); Neil C. Brooks, "The Sepulchre of Christ in Art and Liturgy." *University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature*. 7 (May 1921): 7-110.

35. See n. 1.

36. Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980) and Jeffrey Chipps Smith, *German Sculpture of the Later Renaissance c. 1520-1580: Art in an Age of Uncertainty* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

37. See n. 1.

38. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*; Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol*; and David Morgan, *Visual Piety*.

This is the extent of the scholarship on movable sculptures of Christ from Germany. These works, the majority of which are documentary and explanatory, are extremely useful as records of these anonymous objects and their function in Christian ritual. But aside from Tripp's interesting study of the images and their relationship to the space of the medieval church and the brief treatments by Freedberg, Camille, and Morgan, historians' discussion of these images are limited. They consider them as either simple utilitarian objects that aid in the reconstruction of liturgical performance or as referential representations that help decode the iconography of two-dimensional panel paintings, manuscript illustrations, architectural sculpture, and frescoes.

The comparative approach to Christian image and ritual text informs the majority of scholarship on movable Christ sculptures.<sup>39</sup> Liturgical and theological texts are used to explain the aesthetic and symbolic forms of these images and the images are used to enlighten the written documents.<sup>40</sup> But these comparisons confine the meaning of movable Christ sculptures to their role as evidence for the analysis of medieval drama or more canonically recognized images. These comparative studies are further restricted by the rarity of anecdotal and polemic material used. I advocate, instead, for the mutually

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39. Erwin Panofsky and Emile Mâle's established this paradigm as a method of interpretation. It is largely based on the recognition of normative patterns of represented subjects and their sources. Their discussions depend on formal analysis and the discovery of the appropriate doctrinal or theological text to support an iconographic identification. Their analyses of an image's relation to hagiography, theology, and liturgy laid the foundations for art historians like Barbara Lane who examines the relationship between the fifteenth century painted altar pieces from the Low Countries and their liturgical function in *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); and Pamela Sheingorn, *The Easter Sepulchre in England* and "Using Medieval Art in the Study of Medieval Drama," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 22 (1979): 101-109. Erwin Panofsky's *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*. 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), particularly the discussion of Van Eyck's paintings; Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image; Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Dora Nussey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).

40. Pamela Sheingorn, for example, offers "guidelines as to how iconography can be used to enrich drama studies, with some examples drawn from recent scholarship. Conversely, [she] offers some examples of how drama has been used in the study of art." She directs these guidelines specifically to literary scholars "who usually have not been trained in drawing interpretative information from visual sources." Sheingorn, "Using Medieval Art in the Study of Medieval Drama," 101.

causal relationship of image, text, and performance in which one medium was not simply the model for another. Rather, liturgists, artists, patrons, performers, audiences, and images were involved in a mutual exchange of ideas and forms in a complex interplay of allusion that, for movable Christ sculptures, has not been adequately addressed.<sup>41</sup> My study expands the discussion of movable Christ sculptures beyond their designations as simple stage properties or visual verifications of texts to examine how their meanings are made in this interplay of culture and consciousness over time by taking into account all of the material remnants—textual and visual, sacred and profane, anecdotal and official—that relate to movable Christ sculptures.

#### *Sources, Form, and Provenance*

There are few documents directly addressing or even mentioning these figures. There are a small number of laconic liturgical directives, some prose and poetry from Protestant polemicists, one or two treasury records, and the scholarship I have noted above. Since these texts are limited, we must rely on supporting sources to tell the story of movable Christ sculptures including other images, theological and ideological directives and discourses, and the anecdotal accounts of image practice and response that “historians of art and culture” have generally “felt to be an embarrassment, too childish or trivial to merit serious attention.”<sup>42</sup> A consideration of popular beliefs about the power of the Eucharist in sixteenth century Germany, for instance, expands the

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41. This formulation comes from Martin Stevens theory of medieval image/text reciprocity and intertextuality in which the visual, textual, and performative forms of ritual drama are in essence the images of each other and the interpretation of each work is enriched by reference to the other. Stevens draws from Roland Barthes’ idea of “intertextuality,” in which meaning is disseminated and irreducibly plural. Martin Stevens, “The Intertextuality of Late Medieval Art and Drama;” and Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text” in *Modern Literary Theory*. eds. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh (New York: Arnold, 1996).

42. *Ibid.*, 284.

understanding of movable Christ sculptures as corporeal images and subsequently idolatrous objects. By considering other “texts” not previously utilized in the study of these images and by collapsing the distinction between “magic,” “superstitious,” or “primitive” responses and the more official or “purely ‘aesthetic’ functions,” I am afforded deeper insight into the lives of movable Christ sculptures.<sup>43</sup>

The sculptures themselves serve as the major source for this study. Of the ninety-three movable Christ sculptures included, only five are attributed to a known artist. Three *Palmesel*n are assigned to the circle of Hans Multscher who worked alongside other sculptors, masons, and artisans in the cathedral city of Ulm between 1420 and 1467. He is often credited with bringing Claus Sluter’s style of realistic sculpture from the Low Countries to southern Germany (figs. 9, 10, & 11). The intricately mimetic movable crucifix from Bad Wimpfen am Berg is assigned to Oswald Bockstorfer from Memmingen and also dates to late fifteenth century (fig. 12). And the *Palmesel* from the village of Obertsdorf is documented in the town records as the first master work of Franz Xaver Schmädl who was born in Obertsdorf in 1705 and went on to become one of the most prolific sculptors of the Catholic Reformation in southern Germany. These are the only movable Christ sculptures with ascribed makers. The work of these three artists anchors the production of these images in central Europe and provides a starting context for their interpretation.

The style of movable Christ sculptures varies drastically between these chronological bookends. While most resemble the wooden sculptures of fifteenth-century southern German workshops like Multscher’s, some are rigidly abstract and recall the sculpted tympani of eleventh and twelfth-century France while others echo the undulating

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43. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, xxii.

seventeenth-century Baroque altarpieces including Schmädler's. And since direct textual or visual documentation describing or even mentioning movable Christ sculptures during any period is scarce, it is difficult to corroborate the wide-ranging stylistic evidence with specific records in order to substantiate a chronological and geographic place of origin for these images. To add to the confusion, many movable Christ sculptures have been refurbished and reconstructed over the centuries. Assigning attributions or analyzing the stylistic development of these images is thus an elusive enterprise that has already been attempted by previous scholars and is not my concern here. Rather, in the following pages I emphasize the functional and material aspects of movable Christ sculptures over their formal qualities in order to group these figures as a type. My intent is not to reduce and limit these images by grouping them as a type, but to narrow my focus "by calling attention to a particular set of features" in order to make it manageable and the meaning of movable Christ sculptures available.<sup>44</sup>

The criteria for my grouping of these images include the forms, media, and functions that they share as a group. While there were movable images of Christ used at different points in the liturgical year, all of my images correspond to the iconography of Christ at various moments in the Holy Week narrative. Most are free-standing figures and range in size from one to two meters. They were carved in the round from lindenwood (also known as limewood) by anonymous sculptors and were painted by those same sculptors, their apprentices, or artisans who specialized in polychromy. Communities and individuals commissioned and used these images throughout Western and Central Europe from at least the thirteenth century and they continue to be made and used today—mainly in Spanish-speaking countries, New Mexico, and the Philippines

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44. Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze*, 36.

(fig. 13).<sup>45</sup> The highest concentration of extant movable Christ sculptures comes from southern German-speaking regions and this concentration is the scope of my study.<sup>46</sup> Most are from Swabia, Bavaria, and the Tyrol and date to c. 1490-1530 (fig. 14). There is no evidence that these images were made or used in Eastern Christendom. Rather they are a Catholic phenomenon and as Protestantism spread across Europe over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we have fewer occurrences of these images in the arti-factual and textual record. Their most important common factor, however, is that they all simulated Christ in form and action during different ritual points in the annual narrative performance his last days, death, and Resurrection.

### *Structure of the Dissertation*

In the following chapters I construct the history of movable Christ sculptures using the methods and sources outlined above. I proceed towards a biography of movable Christ sculptures and present the story of their lives in the culture and consciousness of past and present viewers as I relate to them. Chapters One and Two situate movable images of Christ in their first cultural, historical, and functional surroundings. This grounding offers insights into how their material form and performative function generated connotations beyond those immediately apparent or

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45. Movable sculptures of Christ are still used in parts of Central and South America, the Philippines, and New Mexico. See, for instance Rosamond B. Spicer and N. Ross Crumrine, *Performing the Renewal of Community, Indigenous Easter Rituals in North Mexico and Southwest United States* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997); Fenella Cannell, "The Imitation of Christ in Bicol, Philippines," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 1.2 (June 1995): 377-394; William Wroth, *Images of Penance, Images of Mercy, Southwestern Santos in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

46. I use the phrase "German-speaking areas" to describe those regions where German was the primary vernacular language. These areas include modern-day Germany, Austria, and Switzerland and are roughly bordered by Rhine and Mosel rivers in the west, the Bohemian uplands to the east, the North Sea and Jutland to the north, and parts of northern Italy in the south. My reference to German and Germany hereafter will be a cultural rather than a national identification.



previously suggested in the scholarship. In Chapter One I provide a generalized picture of religious images in the late medieval period—the time when most movable Christ sculptures were made and used. I describe the wide-ranging place of religious images in the larger arena of medieval market economies, doctrines and theology, and popular piety. These ideas and practices informed a visually rich atmosphere in which sacred and profane resided in “holy familiar” images of Christ and the Saints. In Chapter Two, I present another more specific factor in determining the meaning of these images over time—their first action at the center of the liturgical and para-liturgical observances of Holy Week, Easter, and Ascension Day. In this section, I describe the development and various forms of these medieval observances; the different types of movable Christ sculptures used in them; and the liturgical, para-liturgical, and polemic texts that suggest, confirm, and describe the dramatic role of movable Christ sculptures in these rituals. The contextualization of movable Christ sculptures in their first moments as commoditized workshop sculptures and singularized performative religious images as presented in the first two chapters has a residual and determining effect on the moments that follow.

In the remainder of the study, I pursue an in-depth interpretation of movable Christ sculptures based on their formal qualities, their identification as valued objects, their role as religious images, and their function in Church ritual. In Chapter Three, I explore different ways in which these images would have been received in light of the associations and allusions that informed Catholic visual culture of the time. The mimetic, kinetic, and ritualized qualities of movable Christ Sculptures centered belief and structured time. Their association with the Eucharistic Host, their ability to remake the sacred past in a contemporary narrative action; and the magical properties of their

lindenwood bodies lent these images a power of presence that went beyond simple representation and had a potent effective on the lives of the faithful. In Chapter Four, I build on this potency and examine the place of movable Christ sculptures in the atmosphere of reforming polemics and practice of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Because of their very central location in Church ritual and their mimetic and kinetic qualities, these images were highly problematic for iconophobic Protestants and often fell victim the kind of ridicule and destruction reserved for blasphemous idols. Through acts of figurative and literal nullification by Protestant reformers and iconoclasts and reappropriation by iconophiles under the Catholic Reformation; these images formed new communities, undermined existing power structures, and assumed new identities. The Epilogue provides the last but not final episode in the history of movable Christ sculptures. During the early nineteenth century, they reappear in German folk studies and are collected as both artifacts and art. In this moment, they represented the modern and romanticized notions of a medieval German past and the will of the people. And because of this new found interest, movable Christ sculptures begin to be accessioned and displayed in museums and galleries, discussed in scholarly publications, and reused in revitalized performances of traditional Holy Week, Easter, and Ascension Day observances. In this modern ethnographic and art historical context, movable Christ sculptures move through new phases of commoditization and singularization becoming folk objects and works of art.

To describe what movable Christ sculptures meant for past and present viewers in this biography, I accept that all viewers are subjectively and socially situated meaning-makers just as I am subjectively and socially grounded in my own making of their

history. And while I am temporally and culturally separated from late medieval and early modern Europe, basic assumptions about how meanings are made in the human experience grounds my interpretation. My ideal readers will appreciate these images as “things” that carry specific reference to what they have been and what they can be. They will understand that my approach is primarily an art historical exercise—that images are central to my study and that I engage comparative materials in the recreation of their meanings over time. Furthermore, my ideal readers will see this history as an experiment in art historical writing and an expedition into the idea of the image in human perception.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Religious Images in Medieval Market, Thought, and Practice

#### *Making and Market*

The majority of movable Christ sculptures were made during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. This period marked a creative explosion in the sculpture market of southern Germany. It was the “Age of Riemenschneider,” when sacred imagery and ecclesiastical ornament were prevalent and sculptors were in demand.<sup>47</sup> Most sculptors were secular craftsman who specialized in the religious image. Some were celebrated masters such as Master Nikolaus Gerhaert of Leyden, whose work brought “praise and renown” to the city of Strasbourg.<sup>48</sup> But they all worked in the collaborative and commercial system of guilds and workshops.<sup>49</sup> Their preferred medium was wood, primarily lindenwood, which they transformed into large, intricate retables and free-standing devotional figures.

Most extant movable Christ sculptures were carved of lindenwood (also called limewood) despite the abundance of oak, walnut, poplar, pine, and elder forests in southern areas of Europe. It was the most popular material for sculpture in late medieval Germany, and though its use was not mandatory, it was preferred for religious sculpture. The physical qualities of lindenwood provided a material that was both strong and lightweight when compared to oak or walnut. The lightweight quality permitted patrons

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47. The canonization of German late medieval sculpture was established by Justus Bier and subsequently followed by Baxandall and others. Justus Bier, *Tilman Riemenschneider: his Life and Work* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1982); See Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors and South German Sculpture 1480-1530*. (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1974).

48. Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 110.

49. A contract from Strasbourg dated 1514-1516, for example, describes a “practice of old” that enabled the master to employ journeymen as both sculptors and painters in a way that was “everywhere the custom of” their craft. *Ibid.*, 113.

to request and sculptors to create elaborate and enormous retables that could be placed safely atop main and side altars. It also allowed for the type of image manipulation that characterized the processions and elevations of liturgical and popular performances such as the *Elevatio* and the Ascension Day ceremony.

There are two species of lindenwood native to Germanic areas of Europe: the *Winterlinde*, or wild lime, and the *Sommerlinde*, or tame lime (fig. 15). The *Sommerlinde* does not grow north of the Main River and became the preferred choice of sculptors in southern Germany and the Tyrol.<sup>50</sup> The wood of the linden tree is exceptionally uniform for a hardwood. Fibers serve as the supporting elements of the tree and run along the axis of the trunk. The orientation and proximity of the fibers form the grain and, subsequently, the rings. In a linden tree, these fibers are more evenly aligned than in other hardwoods. There is little differentiation between the rings of a linden tree, and this uniformity makes the linden tree unusually soft, durable, lightweight, and easy to carve. Its natural availability, pliancy, and light weight made it a perfect choice for liturgical and devotional sculpture.

Lindenwood was also quite costly. From the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries extensive areas of central Europe were clear-cut, and the predominance of forests in these regions gave way to open farm land and rolling hills. Demands on the vanishing timber supply increased as urban centers grew, and by the fifteenth century all of the forests in central Europe were the property of the emperor, princes, nobility, free cities, or the Church, and the privilege of harvesting timber was either bought or bequeathed. This contributed to the increased value of wood and strict regulations on the use and harvesting of trees. Fees were determined by sliding scales measuring the type of tree, its

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50. Ibid., 27-29.

size, and the quality of the wood.<sup>51</sup> Over-cutting combined with a long growing cycle made lindenwood a particularly expensive and rare commodity. Fines for cutting without permission were determined by the type of tree; beech was three *pfund*, oak was five *pfund*, and the linden tree was an exorbitant ten *pfund*. In order to avoid such fines, special consent from the land holder was required, and there are a number of sixteenth century documents granting sculptors permission to cut down linden trees. In 1506 the town council of Nuremberg gave the sculptor Veit Stoss a linden tree from the surrounding forest:

Veit Stoss is granted a lime tree from the forest, according to Forest regulations, for two figures to go under the Cross in The church of Our Lady at the Market.<sup>52</sup>

Community collectives like the cathedral chapter in Constance, influential laity including the powerful banker Antonius Fugger of Nurnberg, and equally influential princes of the Church such as the Archbishop of Mainz commissioned movable images of Christ from artisans like Stoss.<sup>53</sup> Movable Christ sculptures were exchange commodities in the market of early modern Europe prized as aesthetic objects both producers and users. When the *Palmesel* from Constance was commissioned from a local craftsman in 1523, for example, it was found formally wanting: “. . . in view of his many children and great poverty, the chapter concluded that in addition to the eighteen florins he’d already been given, [the craftsman] be paid an additional two florins, but that he should take the donkey home again and make it better and more decorous.”<sup>54</sup> Clearly, the quality of the

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51. *Ibid.*, 38-31.

52. *Ibid.*, 28.

53. For an account of the *Palmesel* commissioned in Constance, see pg. 26 below; for the Fugger commission see pg. 123; and for the Albrecht von Brandenburg’s Ascending Christ, see pg. 72.

54. This translation from the Latin is in Lipsmeyer, 24.

image was measured against a standard of proper decorum. While the specific standards of the Constance chapter are unknown, a fourteenth century English document gives an idea of some patrons' formal considerations when it came to commissioned images. In 1306 the bishop of London reprimanded a German sculptor named Thydemann for carving a "terrifying crucifix" (*crux horribilis*). The image was problematic not only because "many people adored" its abject appearance but because it took the novel and very German form of a Y-shaped cross, which deviated from the "true form of the cross" (fig. 16).<sup>55</sup>

An image's stylistic or aesthetic value was directly related to its monetary value. When the Great Ravensburg Company commissioned an altarpiece from the sculptor Hans van Wangen, they stipulated that "if Hans makes it better, and so well that we recognize that he has earned more, it shall be up to us whether or not we shall give him more than 150 Florins. If he does not make it as well as we should like and as he promised, it shall be up to us how much less we shall give him."<sup>56</sup> Hans' artistic skill determined the price of the image and 150 florins for a large altarpiece was a considerable sum. The *Palmesel* from Constance cost a total of twenty florins, equivalent to two months' pay for most sixteenth century craftsmen.<sup>57</sup> The continual conservation of this particular image over three centuries gives further indication that its worth was long-lived for members of the community. The *Palmesel* from Weilheim presents a similarly striking and, in this case, material example of an image's enduring value (figs.

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55 . Camille, 212. Michael Baxandall describes two unfinished sculpted Crucifixes from the Upper Rhine as instructional models for the proper carving of Crucifixes by apprentices in the workshop setting. Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 102; fig. 64.

55. *Op. cit.*, Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 106.

56. See page for the Constance *Palmesel* and Baxandall, 100-101 for a discussion of the wages of sixteenth-century sculptors.

11 & 17). Painted in black on the green base is a list of dates documenting its continuous refurbishment from 1616 to 1870. The inclusion of this chronicle is evocative. It provides provisional cause to conclude that the figure was used in Palm Sunday services well into the late nineteenth century, and it most assuredly indicates this *Palmesel* was carefully cared for and cherished for over two hundred years. From this perspective, movable sculptures of Christ were market objects—part of a circuit of production and consumption.<sup>58</sup> And their makers, both sculptors and patrons, had their own agendas making and using these images as manifestations of personal and communal pride, emblems of political will and influence, and demonstrations of wealth and artistic virtuosity.<sup>59</sup> Alongside these more worldly uses, movable Christ sculptures also functioned at the center of the highly visual and dramatic liturgical and para-liturgical observances of late medieval Holy Week, Easter, and Ascension Day as a means for controlling and experiencing the sacred.

### *Sacred Icons and Image Theology*

As representations of divine personages, movable Christ sculptures met the “institutional needs of the Church” and aided the “intellectual and spiritual activities” of the faithful.<sup>60</sup> Their manipulation in the liturgical and para-liturgical ceremonies from Holy Week to Ascension Day relayed the narrative of Christ’s sacrifice and made redemption immediate and comprehensible. In late medieval piety, religious images

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58. This understanding of the cultural circuit comes from Richard Johnson, “What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?” *Social Text* 16 (1986/1987): 47.

59. The two books on German sculpture by Michael Baxandall and Jeffery Chipps Smith provide an expanded and comprehensive study of German sculpture as an aesthetic and market product, see n. 36 & 47.

60. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the History of Pictorial Style*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 41.



were “officially” understood as tools for edification, recollection, and inspiration.<sup>61</sup> This triplex principle provided justification and clarification for the role of images in worship.<sup>62</sup> In 1248 Bonaventure described the three-part rationale in simple and effective terms:

It must be said that images [likenesses] introduced in the Church are not separate from rational causes. Indeed, they are introduced for three reasons; most clearly to instruct the simple, because of the slowness of emotion, and because memory slips.<sup>63</sup>

The first function of religious imagery is to teach; images are meant to instruct the unlearned. The second function is devotional; images induce the emotions which are naturally delayed or impeded and they provoke passion through the senses enabling a closer relationship with the divine. The third function also serves an experiential and didactic purpose; because memory is unreliable and subject to slippage, the image acts as a mnemonic device that preserves and recalls the lessons and mystery of Christ for the faithful. All three image functions enable the internalization of the sacred in the mind, memory, and soul.

The didactic rationale was an early and perennial justification for image use in the Roman Church. Gregory I, writing to the iconoclastic bishop Serenus in the late sixth century, made the pontifical position on images very clear:

What books are to those who can read, that is a picture to the ignorant who look at it; in a picture even the unlearned may see what example they should follow; in a

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61. Ringbom discusses the Western medieval approach to images as theological, didactic, and empathetic in *Icon to Narrative*, 12-13.

62. Belting uses the term *triplex ratio. Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997)144-50. Freedberg calls this system a “triad.” *The Power of Images*, 162-165.

63. “*Dicendum quod imaginum introductio in Ecclesia non fuit absque rationabili causa. Introductae enim fuerunt propter triplicem causam, videlicet propter simplicium ruditatem, propter affectuum tarditatem, et propter memoriae labilitatem.*” This is my translation from Bonaventure, *Commentaria in tertium librum sententiarum M. Petri Lombardi* 9.1.2, in *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae, Vol. 11 (Rome, 1882-1902), 203.

picture they who know no letters may yet read. Hence for barbarians especially, a picture takes the place of a book.<sup>64</sup>

Gregory's analogy of images as "books of the unlearned" was repeated time and again in defense of visual piety by theologians and liturgists including Bonaventure, Durandus, Aquinas, and Luther. All referred to the Gregorian dictum in order to justify images as tools in rudimentary instruction.<sup>65</sup> Gilbert Crispin, abbot of Westminster in the eleventh century noted that "just as letters are the shapes and signs of spoken words, pictures exist as the representations and signs of writing."<sup>66</sup> This sentiment is materially marked in the sculptural programs of the great Gothic cathedrals and in printed block books like the *Biblia pauperum* and *Speculum humanae salvationis* where images serve as typological

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64. The following quote comes from Gregory's letter to Serenus of Marseilles in which he admonished the bishop for having taken down images from the churches in his diocese. St. Gregory, *Ep. IX* (Letter to Serenus), 52; *op. cit.*, Ringbom, 12 and Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 163. Gregory's treatment of the matter in the letters to Bishop Serenus is not a systematic or doctrinal declaration but rather an ad hoc response to some immediate matters of Church discipline including the actions of Serenus and the Second Iconoclastic controversy in Constantinople. See Celia M. Chazelle, "Pictures, Books and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I's Letters to Serenus of Marseilles," *Word & Image* 6 (1990): 138-153 and Lawrence G. Duggan, "Was Art Really the 'Book of the Illiterate'?" *Word & Image* 5 (1989): 227-251.

65. Durandus wrote in his *Rationale divinatorum officiorum* that images "move the mind more than descriptions; for deeds are placed before the eyes in paintings and thus appear to be actually carrying on. But in description, the deed is done as it were by hearsay, which affects the mind less when recalled to memory. Hence, also, it is that in churches we pay less reverence to books than to images," *op. cit.*, Margaret Miles, Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 66. Aquinas echoing Bonaventure wrote in one of his Commentaries, "A threefold reason for the institution of images in the Church: first, for the instruction of the unlettered, who might learn from them as if from books; second, so that the mystery of the Incarnation and the examples of the Saints might remain more firmly in our memory by being daily represented to our eyes; and third, to excite the emotions which are more effectively aroused by things seen than by things heard." This is Freedberg's translation of a "rarely correctly cited and hardly ever actually quoted" passage from *Commentarium super libros sententiarum: Commentum in librum III*, dist. 9, art. 2, qu. 2. *The Power of Images*, 162, 470. In his *Against the Heavenly Prophets* of 1525, Luther wrote "Pictures contained in these books we would paint on walls for the sake of remembrance and better understanding, since they do no more harm on walls than in books. . . . Yes, would to God that I could persuade the rich and the mighty that they would permit the whole Bible to be painted on houses, on the inside and outside, so that all can see it. That would be a Christian work." *Luther's Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehman, vol. 40, *Church and Ministry II* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 99. For an extensive discussion of Luther's view on images see Carl C. Christensen, *Art and the Reformation in Germany* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), 55-59 and Michalski, 1-42.

66. *Op. cit.*, Michael Camille, "The Book of Signs: Writing and Visual Difference in Gothic Manuscript Illumination," *Word and Image* I (1985): 135.

and symbolic equivalents to an absent text (fig. 19).<sup>67</sup> Together word and image constituted a conventional language of signs used to communicate sacred history and moral understanding.

Memory was an active vehicle in this process of visual edification. Images used as mnemonic devices were more than a matter of simple recall for the illiterate. Extensive memory training was part of the medieval university, where books were plentiful and accessible, and the population was literate.<sup>68</sup> Memory was an elusive but necessary function of learning and educators instructed their students in memorization techniques. Aquinas's educational theory involved various types of sense knowledge. Sense-memory allows the individual to reproduce in one's memory an image already seen. It is dependent on sense-consciousness, which allows awareness of an object through various perceptions—hearing, smell, touch, and especially sight. Imagination takes materials supplied through the sense-memory and sense-consciousness and translates them into an image composed of characters derived from other images.<sup>69</sup> In this system, memory provides an experiential vehicle by which recorded knowledge becomes personal

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67. Emile Mâle read the Gothic cathedral as literature. He argued that it was “essentially a Bible in stone and glass.” Mâle, 390-396. For more on the *Biblia pauperum*, see James Marrow, “The Shape of Meaning: Word and Image in a 15th Century Book,” *Art & Design* 11 (May-June, 1996): 40-45; Susan Smith, “The Bride Stripped Bare: A Rare Type of the Disrobing of Christ,” *Gesta* 34 (1995): 126-146; and *Biblia Pauperum: a Facsimile and Edition of the British Library Blockbook*, translated and commentary by Albert C. Labriola and John W. Smeltz (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1990). For the *Speculum humanae salvationis* see Bert Cardon, *Manuscripts of the Speculum humanae salvationis in the southern Netherlands, c. 1410-c. 1470: A Contribution to the Study of 15th Century Book Illumination and of the Function and Meaning of Historical Symbolism* (Leuven, The Netherlands: Peeters, 1996). For wall paintings as text in secular and sacred contexts see Hans Belting, “Das Bild als Text: Wandmalerei und Literatur im Zeitalter Dantes,” in *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Kantezeit*, ed. H. Belting and D. Blume (Munich: Hirmer, 1989): 57-68.

68. For an excellent discussion of medieval memory see Mary Caruthers, *Book of Memory, a Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Peter Parshall also discusses memory and image, specifically the *Rhetorica ad Herenium* and the iconography of the Passion in “The Art of Memory and the Passion,” *Art Bulletin* 81 (Sept. 1999): 456-472. See also Lina Bolzoni, *La Chambre de la Mémoire modèles littéraires et iconographiques a l'âge de limprimerie*, trans. Marie-France Merger. (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2005).

69. M. Dewulf, *The System of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Dover Publishing Co., 1959), 12.

knowledge for the reader/viewer. The didactic and mnemonic justification of images assisted their devotional or empathetic function. By the ninth century the doctrinal understanding of images presented at the Second Council of Nicea (782) was accepted in the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>70</sup>

For as often as they [images of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, of our immaculate Lady the holy Mother of God, of the honorable angels and all saints and holy men] are seen in their pictorial representations, people who look at them are ardently lifted up to the memory and love of the originals and induced to give them respect and worshipful honor but not real adoration which according to our faith is due only to the Divine Nature. So that offerings of incense and lights are to be given to these as to the figure of the sacred and life-giving Cross, to the holy Gospel-books and other sacred objects in order to do them honor, as was the pious custom of ancient times. For honor paid to an image passes on to its prototype; he who worships an image worships the reality of him who is painted in it.<sup>71</sup>

The council drawing from the theology of John of Damascus and the “Three Cappodocians” presented an image doctrine that posited a subtle but important augmentation of Gregorian didactics.<sup>72</sup> “Pictorial representations” not only aided education through memory, they enabled access to the divine. Six hundred years later Thomas Aquinas restated the “Hierarchy of Ascent” between representation and represented in his *Summa Theologiae*:

Religion does not offer worship to images considered as mere things in themselves, but as images drawing us to God incarnate. Motion to an image does not stop there at the image, but goes on to the thing it represents.<sup>73</sup>

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70. At the Second Council of Nicea the Roman pontiff, Adrian I, answered the iconoclastic stance of Emperor Leo and the previous council of 754. In the *Libri Carolini*, the Frankish court initially took issue with the doctrines of both councils. But by the late ninth century the position of the Second Council of Nicea was generally accepted as doctrine throughout the Holy Roman Empire and continues to be the foundation of image use in the Roman Catholic Church today. John Murphy, *The General Councils of the Church* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1960), 86-92.

71. Transcribed in Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 505-507. Full text available from Fordham University, *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Fordham University Center for Medieval Studies, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/nicea2.html> (accessed Dec. 2004).

72. The “Three Cappodocians”—Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianus, and St. Basil—wrote in the fourth century alongside one another as well as Augustine.

73. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Latin text and English translation, 60 vols., XXV, Q. 9, Art. 50. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

Intimate veneration of the image in this way was officially understood to be adoration of its prototype. The experience of the image endowed the viewer with knowledge different from that communicated by words. Through the senses, it gave direct and enthusiastic contact with the divine beings incorporated in the material object. The mystic Jean Gerson wrote in the fifteenth century that “we ought thus to learn to transcend with our minds from these visible things to the invisible, from the corporeal to the spiritual. For this is the purpose of the image.”<sup>74</sup>

Though the West never adopted a standardized image theology or practice in the same way that the Eastern Orthodox Church did, the didactic, mnemonic, and devotional rationales remained at the center of a long, virulent, and sanctioned dialogue on the image. For Christian theologians and mystics, most of whom adhered to some form of neo-Platonism, the justification of image use in worship rested on the understanding that images were not merely “surface skins” of the external world; rather they provided an active way of approaching invisible truth and divine beauty through the visible. But this presented a dilemma as well. Images however helpful in the contemplation of God were only matter and matter is deceptive. Nicholas of Cusa noted in his commentary on the “Lentulus Letter” that, when encountering an image of Christ’s face, he did not perceive with his “fleshy” eyes, “but with the eyes of [his] mind.” And that.

...understanding, the invisible truth of [Christ’s] face, which therein is signified, under a shadow and limitation. [Christ’s] true face is freed from any limitation, it hath neither quantity nor quality, nor is it of time and place, for it is the Absolute Form, the Face of faces.<sup>75</sup>

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74. J. Gerson, *Opera omnia* (Strasbourg, 1514), leaf 71M, *op. cit.*, Ringbom, 20.

75. *Op. cit.*, Parshall, “The Art and Memory of the Passion,” 465. For more on the “Lentulus Letter,” see n. 250.

Bonaventure reminds us that “all created things of the sensible world lead the mind of the contemplator . . . to eternal God.” Images are only “shades, resonances, tracks, simulacra, and spectacles . . . set before our still unrefined and sense-oriented minds.” Through these “sensible things” that are seen, the “intelligible” unseen is “transferred . . . as if by signs to the signified.”<sup>76</sup> The admonitions contained in the rationales of Gregory, Aquinas, Bonaventure, and others repeated the warning that “an image, apart from its representational function, has no claim to veneration.”<sup>77</sup> The ideal image was an intangible image, one made in the mind or in the heart and painted with the “spiritual imagination.”<sup>78</sup> Thus the problem of body and soul dualism presented a theological and practical paradox for image practice. Although useful as representations of and conduits to the divine, images—whether in stone, paint, or the mind—presented not truths but opinions. They were imitations of a universal reality and, as such, were manipulated and misrepresented by the deceptive nature of a material world.

The material and the mental were connected through vision, which in the medieval period was as much about psychology as it was about science. The ancient metaphor of the soul as image-maker privileged sight as the most mind-like sense.<sup>79</sup> Aristotle taught that matter consists of accidents of form, which can be perceived by the senses, and substance, which the mind grasps and which constitutes essential reality.

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76. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, 2.11; cf. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 165.

77. Aquinas, *S. T.*, XXI, Q. 4, Art. 39.

78. Aelred of Rievaulx in the early twelfth century counseled his young student that he too felt a desire to know and feel Christ. In order to achieve this, he instructed, when in prayer “this sweet image of the sweet boy appears before the eyes of your heart, when you *paint* this most lovely face with, as it were, a spiritual imagination, when you feel so keenly how his most lovely and at the same time more gentle eyes radiate charmingly at you.” *Tractus de Jesu puero duodenni*, *op. cit.*, Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 167 and Ringbom, 16.

79. Plato describes the soul as a book in which events are inscribed in two media: words and pictures. In the first instance, memory and perception collaborate to “write words in the soul.” At the same time, Socrates says, there is “another member of the soul’s work-force . . . an artist, who turns the secretary’s words into images in the soul.” Plato, *Philebus* 38c-38e.

Sight was the most powerful catalyst of perception and imagination, and together the three informed memory and aided understanding. Augustine named three categories of sight: corporeal, intellectual, and spiritual. The three worked in concert, with spiritual sight being the most desirable and closest to God.<sup>80</sup> But sight was also duplicitous and subjective. Sin, evil, misunderstanding, and idolatry were attributed to the myopic materialism of individual perspective.<sup>81</sup> In the classical structuring of optical theory, the eye emitted a ray that bounced off of an object, returned to the eye, and imprinted an image of that object in the mind.<sup>82</sup> In the thirteenth century the Aristotelian scholastics, namely Roger Bacon, reevaluated this theory of extramission. They proposed that the visual ray originated with the object, which “sends its visible qualities through the intervening air to the observer’s eye.”<sup>83</sup> Accordingly, the eye remains passive while the image becomes active. The ingrained image could then replicate itself at the will of the divine subject it represented. These basic theories of extramission and intramission were a continual topic of debate. They provided one more way for the authors of image theology to balance the benefits and dangers of material representations and the potentially deceptive vehicle of sight.

The written directives and apologies for image use in medieval worship, however, are comprised of only the word of the clergy, lettered laymen and a few lettered women. Most of these authors were members of the intellectual elite, and were reporting on and reacting to the theological discourse of their predecessors and colleagues, the protests of

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80. *De Genesi ad litteram*, lib. XII, cap. 1-30; *Ep.*, I:7; cf. Ringbom, 15.

81. Augustine, *Confessions* VII, and *De Civitate Dei* XI.22.

82. Miles, 96 and Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 110. For a complete discussion of medieval vision, see *Visuality before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

83. Quoted by Miles, 97.

designated “heretics,” and to the practices, behaviors, and beliefs of their congregants whom they describe in patronizing tones as women, children, the elderly and “foolish men.”<sup>84</sup> When approaching these texts to describe the world of visual piety in which movable Christ sculptures moved, we should understand these theological and pastoral attempts to control sacred images as attempts to manage, facilitate, and control the experience of the sacred. And while we should be discerning in our use of these texts, they do indicate that the complex correlation between image and prototype was constantly redefined as the line between evocation and embodiment was continually obscured.

#### *Visual Piety and the Holy Familiar*

Theological writings and pastoral directives along with anecdotal and polemic responses document an ongoing dialogue between the Church as an institution and the religious practices of the community of believers. Despite the efforts of those few souls who advocated an imageless devotion, representations of the sacred were central to medieval religious life.<sup>85</sup> By the thirteenth century, embellishments in liturgical and para-liturgical observances and the advent of new dramatic forms including Morality and Passion plays followed an expanding calendar of feast days and their visual

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84. Gregory, Aquinas, Bernard, and others consistently identify these groups and remark on their need for and abuse of religious imagery. Miles, 56, 96-97. See also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast; The Religious Significance of Food To Medieval Women* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986); and Jeffery Hamburger, “The Use of Images in the Pastoral Care of Nuns,” *Art Bulletin* 71 (1989): 20-46.

85. I am thinking here of the Bernardino tradition named after the twelfth century Benedictine, Bernard of Clairvaux; the ideal imageless devotion of the thirteenth and fourteenth century mystics including Hugh of St. Victor and Thomas à Kempis; and the aniconism of the Cathars, Lollards, Hussites, Anabaptists, and Calvinists. Ringbom, 15-17, 20-21 and Miles, 70-71, 121.



components.<sup>86</sup> Increased emphasis on the performative and visual in Church ceremony during the later medieval period is usually associated with a change in the liturgy. Around the beginning of the eleventh century it became customary for the celebrant to turn his back to the congregation and recite the liturgy in a whisper (fig. 20).<sup>87</sup> This verbal and auditory alienation effectively barred the laity from the Word and privileged the ocular elements of the Mass. More and more images were incorporated in ceremony to serve as devotional foci and educational elucidations of the ritual. Public worship was visually saturated from the architectural decoration of the church, to liturgical vestments and vessels, to large-scale retables on high altars, smaller devotional objects on side altars and in chapels, and, of course, movable Christ sculptures.

These emergent religious ceremonies that grew alongside popular saints' cults and their relics and together they made up the ingredients of a rich culture of visual piety in the late medieval period which was "one of the most churchly-minded and devout periods."<sup>88</sup> With the exception of the Moors in Spain and Jews throughout Europe, virtually every person in medieval Europe was a Catholic. Though medieval European culture was a Christian one, it was also quite heterogeneous. Within a culture of both commonality and real distinctions, differences in beliefs and practices existed between East and West, the clergy and the lay people, elite and poor, literate and illiterate, men and women. Furthermore, the idea that there was one continuous tradition from the eleventh century to the sixteenth century over simplifies a complex period in European

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86. The role of the Passion play has not yet been satisfactorily discussed in relation to images and iconographic formulae. The relationship between the plays, *Ludi*, and movable images has been briefly addressed only to suggest that the structure of the play might give us an idea of how the images were used in liturgical drama. But the Passion play as an aspect of visual culture is an area that needs closer attention. Tripps, 127-128 and Taubert and Taubert, 115.

87. Miles, 97 and Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 217-219, among many others.

88. Bernd Moeller, "Piety in Germany Around 1500," trans. Joyce Irwin in *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective*, 50-75. Originally published in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 56 (1965): 5-30;

history. The Church was not a single state consistently administered through effective and uniform satellites in the parishes, monasteries, and convents throughout Western Europe.<sup>89</sup> Christianity was as localized and regional as it was orthodox or ecumenical and piety was both intensely individual and communal.

Adherence to or even knowledge of orthodox Catholicism was spotty and sporadic. The authority of the scripture, the ideas of theologians, and the influence of the elite were only part of the story. The vast majority of the faithful were illiterate but one did not need to be literate to be religiously sophisticated.<sup>90</sup> Congregants were aware of precise doctrinal definitions through Church ritual and sermons which they in turn made into their own understanding of doctrine; particulars of religious practice varied from community to community.<sup>91</sup> There is evidence, for instance, that late medieval religious practices in rural areas were less controlled than in urban centers. Lionel Rothkrug makes an argument especially relevant to this study; he asserts that piety in southern Germany was more fervent and visual than in the north. This conclusion provides one

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89. John Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," *The American Historical Review* 91 (June, 1986): especially 526, 532-533, and 546-547.

90. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 17. This is a point that Freedberg, Morgan, and Miles make again and again.

91. Carlo Ginzburg and Gerald Strauss among others make the argument that the majority of the populace during the medieval period was only "superficially Christianized," and that it was not until the Protestant and Catholic Reformations during the sixteenth century that Christianity took hold among the folk. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms* (New York, 1982); Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978): 268-308. Jacques Le Goff promulgated this folkloric view of medieval culture *Medieval Civilization, 400-1500*, trans. Julia Barrow (New York: Blackwell Publishers, 1988); and C.S. Lewis, "Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages," in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 41. Van Engen accuses these historians of "setting up a 'medieval straw man'," pointing out, however, that the reality of medieval Christian Europe was much more complex. He notes the influence of sacerdotal-lay divisions like the Beguines and the Brethren of Common Life in the non-institutionalized popularity of Christian practice. For a recent discussion see Natalie Z. Davis, "From 'popular religion' to religious cultures," in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, 321-41

explanation for the delimitation of extant movable Christ sculptures to southern German-speaking areas.<sup>92</sup>

Piety involves the “set of practices, attitudes, and ideas” that structure and recognize the elements and experience of the sacred in all human relationships both “high and low.”<sup>93</sup> The nineteenth-century social historian Jakob Burckhardt wrote that medieval piety...

was intertwined most tightly with popular culture, such that it is impossible to say which depends upon the other. It embraced the entire outer and inner life of men, with all their mental and spiritual faculties...For all the abuses, extortions, indulgences, and so forth, religion at that time had the great advantage that it richly engaged all the higher human faculties, above all imagination...Religion was truly popular; and it was not merely accessible to the masses: they lived in it, it *was* their culture.<sup>94</sup>

Religious practices including para-liturgical performances, processions, pilgrimages and the cult of the saints were the collective religious expressions of the “people.”<sup>95</sup> And medieval visual piety constituted the “pervasive and pragmatic materialism” that lay “at

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92. Lionel Rothkrug, “Religious Practices and Collective Perceptions: Hidden Homologies in the Reformation and the Renaissance,” *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historique* 1 (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Historical Reflections, 1980). There are, however, important factors that need to be considered before Rothkrug’s conclusions can be accepted with confidence. Kasper von Greyerz notes that Rothkrug has not adequately considered the importance of the Beguines or the Rhine river for connecting northern and southern communities or the equally prevalent regional deviations from one northern community to another, and that “much more research needs to be done at the grassroots level” before making these claims safely. Kasper von Greyerz, “Review: Sanctity, Deviance, and the People of Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe. A Review Article,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27 (April, 1985): 280-90. Caroline Walker Bynum makes the further point that northern Germany had a number of very important “popular” religious sites that claimed to possess the blood of Christ, including Wilsnack which “rivalled Rome” as a pilgrimage site. Caroline Walker Bynum, “Bleeding Hosts and their Contact Relics in Late Medieval Northern Germany,” *The Medieval History Journal* 7 (2004): 227-241.

93. This configuration is a combination of John Bossey’s ideas of piety and David Morgan’s. Morgan, *Visual Piety*, 2; and for Bossey see Scribner, *PCPM*, 1.

94. Jacob Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 115-116.

95. Etienne Delaruelle, *La piété populaire au moyen age*, eds. R. Manselli and A. Vauchez (Turin, 1975), 165-167, 275.

the heart” of these popular expressions.<sup>96</sup> Piety could take various forms including “practical religion embodying the religious views of the ordinary churchgoer and the religion of the intellectual elite whose understanding of religion is shaped by theory or scholarship.” But the religious practices of the “broad mass of the population” were and are often distinguished from those who participated in “learned culture.” They are described as a deviation from the “institutional norms,” “inferior and distorted version of a ‘higher’ or ‘superior’ form of religion” and labeled as “superstition” or “magic.”<sup>97</sup>

While both Catholic and Protestant clergy condemned some popular religious beliefs and practices as magical and superstitious, the idea that popular piety was a “distorted” or “deviant” version of official religion is problematic. In the super-fluid visual piety of the late medieval period the lines “between magic and religion” and popular and official are “impossible to draw.”<sup>98</sup> The Church itself was “a vast reservoir of magical power” and encouraged popular piety.<sup>99</sup> From the fourteenth century to the sixteenth century, for instance, lay movements including the *Devotio Moderna*, the Brethren of Common Life, and the Beguines were extremely influential and intertwined with the traditional monastic orders and the Church in Rome. These movements not only

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96. R. Po-Chia Hsia, "The Structure of Belief: Confessionalism and Society, 1500-1600," in Germany, A New Social and Economic History, Vol. 1 1450—1630, ed. Robert Scribner (New York: Hodder Arnold, 1995), 369.

97. All of the above quotations come from Scribner’s definition of piety in *PCPM*, 18.

98. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971), 50.

99. *Ibid.*, 49. Scribner makes a similar point. Magic is “the exercise of a preternatural control over nature by human beings, with the assistance of forces more powerful than they. Religion, by contrast, is the recognition by human beings of a supernatural power on whom they are dependant, to whom they show deference and are obligated. But the contrast is not so simple when it is considered as an historical phenomenon. Sacraments involved ritual actions which effected in the supernatural sphere that which they symbolized by their signifying performances in the natural: thus, the cleansing and purifying symbolic action of water in baptism brought about the purification of the soul from sin. But sacraments also offered consolation, succor, and nourishment for the body as well as the soul. Sacramental action thus had innerworldly as well as transcendental efficacy and firm lines between magic and religion were blurred.” Robert W. Scribner, “The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the ‘Disenchantment of the World’,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (Winter, 1993): 480.

encouraged familiarity with theological and canonical texts, they also emphasized the collaboration of the individual, the congregation, the Church, and the image in worship.<sup>100</sup> Pilgrimages were also directly invested in and by the Church and papal bulls granted indulgences that validated the saints' shrines and their miracles. And Devotion to the Virgin and the saints was a sanctioned part of public and private worship. By the tenth century the "Cult of Saints" was in full motion in shrines, pilgrimages and devotional images—most specifically three-dimensional images.<sup>101</sup>

The intervention of saints on behalf of the faithful was an accepted part of religious life. Johannes Herolt, a pre-Reformation Dominican preacher from Nuremberg, defined three requirements for the faithful in their contemplation of the saints: veneration, imitation, and invocation. Relics were central components in this devotion. These material and corporeal fragments served as reminders of the saint's martyrdom and sacrifice as well as links to divine dead. They also had a powerful effect on the material world. They could heal, bleed, sweat, and secrete oil.<sup>102</sup> Reliquaries housing the saints' corporeal fragments ranged from anamorphic chests to life-sized sculpted containers taking the form of the body parts they contained (fig. 21).

The efficacy of sacred relics could transmit to the image that housed them. A pre-Reformation reliquary at St. Elian's shrine in Llanellian, Wales continued to be effective well into the nineteenth century even after its original contents had been removed. The

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100. This is apparent in the slogan of the Conciliar movement: *reformatio ecclesiae in capite et in membris* or "reformation of the church in head and members." This movement, epitomized by the writings of thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth-century mystics, greatly influenced the lay devotions of the fifteenth century. See, for example, Jean Gerson's *Tract on the Unity of the Church* (1408) and Nicholas of Cusa's *On Peace in Faith* (1453). Lindberg, 9.

101. For excellent discussions see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

102. Caroline Walker Bynum and Paula Gerson, "Body-Part Reliquaries and Body Parts in the Middle Ages," *Gesta* 36 (1997): 3-7.

relic's residue within the reliquary could prognosticate one's future, ensuring prosperity or portending death and disaster.<sup>103</sup> The "most famous" reliquary of St. Foy from Conques is an often cited example of the fusion of image and relic (fig. 22). The "beautiful" gold and jewel-encrusted image of the saint, a conglomerate of Roman and Carolingian gems, cut stones, and sculptural components, sits enthroned in "majesty" holding the burned bones of the girl martyr in its body.<sup>104</sup> The image and the relics supported a thriving pilgrimage economy in the town of Conques and were known to heal, as in the case of a sick boy who "sat at the foot of the raised throne" of the saint and was miraculously cured of his ailment.<sup>105</sup> In documents that describe the reliquary and responses to it, the distinction between image and relic is never made and the absence of this distinction suggests that the two were seen as one. Reliquaries were thus functional images that symbolically, materially and visually became the representation, restoration, and apotheosis of what they carried—namely sacred presence.<sup>106</sup>

Relic-less images of the saints were equally effective. The clergy provided instructions for the correct use of Saints' images. Around 1505 John Geiler von Kaiserberg urged his congregation to voice a petition or at least genuflect when passing a picture of the Virgin so that she might intercede with God on their behalf. And the sixteenth century author Albrecht von Eybe recommended that the pious place an image

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103. Richard Suggett, "Festivals and Social Structure in Early Modern Wales," *Past and Present* 152 (August, 1996): 79-112.

104. In the eleventh century, Bernard of Angers described the Cult of St. Foy in Conques adding that this reliquary as a "beautiful," "most famous" image "enthroned in majesty". For a transcript of his text see Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 536-537.

105. *Ibid.*

106. These three are named by Caroline Walker Bynum and Paula Gerson, 3-6. This is an introduction to a series of four papers on the topic which follow and provide an excellent summary of and resources for the discussion of image and relic. See also Andre Grabar who postulated that the cult of relics was directly responsible for the rise of the cult of images in the sixth century; Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence*; and John Dillenberger, *Images and Relics: Theological Perceptions and Visual Images in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). For the early history of the Cult of Saints see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*.

of Christ, the Virgin, or some other saint near the deathbed so that the dying person could invoke the help of the saint.<sup>107</sup> The Shrine of the Beautiful Virgin at Regensburg is a compelling example of the telescopic and teleological transference of holy to image (fig. 23). In 1519, the city expelled its Jewish community, razed the synagogue, and destroyed the cemetery. After one of the workmen dismantling the synagogue survived an injury, a chapel was built on the site to commemorate his miraculous healing, to honor the Virgin, and to erase any memory of its Jewish history. Regensburg's most prized possession, an image of the Virgin attributed to St. Luke, was brought from the "old chapel" and placed in the new. The icon, because it was understood as an "original" portrait of the Mother of God made by the hand of a saint, was particularly powerful.<sup>108</sup> Albrecht Altdorfer was hired to paint a copy of the original for the altar, and Erhard Heydenreich's statue of the Virgin was placed on a column outside the shrine. These three images effectively tripled the Virgin's sacred presence, and each one was credited with miracles and the ecstatic reaction of pilgrims.<sup>109</sup> The faithful experienced "visions and wonders" before the images and any clothing that touched statue, painting, and icon became an effective talisman for curing sick cattle.<sup>110</sup> As embodiments, images had the same power as the personages they represented and the bodily fragments with which they were associated. Even without the power of a corporeal relic, images of saints could make miracles, save souls, and end physical suffering. As this episode demonstrates, in essence images were

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107. These instances are referred to in Ringbom, 23-30; Chipps Smith, 10-17; Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 52-57; and Christensen, 18-19 respectively.

108. On the power of the images considered original depictions of Christ and the Saints including the *Mandylion*, the *Vera Icon*, and St. Luke's portrait of the Virgin see Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 59, 203-208, 313-320.

109. Many of the scholars cited here refer to the Regensburg Madonnas including Scribner, Belting, and Chipps Smith. For a general introduction see Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 83-84.

110. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 100-104 and Chipps Smith, 11-13.

consecrated by their proximity to relics, by their function in the religious observance, and in their simulation of the divine.<sup>111</sup>

### *Sacred and Profane*

Movable Christ sculptures were sacred objects and thus similarly associated with the divine. They allowed access to the transcendent through the senses and provided a way of transgressing the limits of the sensible realm and reaching the spiritual world in the manner of Gregory's devotional instruction. Yet while they were distinct from the profane world, they were also a part of it.<sup>112</sup> They were, in fact, social things with a special transformative purpose. Special times and spaces were carved out of ordinary time to accommodate the images' performance. They resided at in sacred places, in side altars, chapels, and churchyards and moved through common places, streets, markets, and fields. They were revealed in all their performative glory during the culmination of the Church calendar, but were often visible and approachable throughout the year. The community adored, touched, clothed, bought, sold, prized, processed, and beseeched them. And re-consecrated and re-activated the images' power every spring in the public worship and dramatic performance of sacred history.

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111. For more on the idea of image consecration, see Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 31-34.

112. For the sociologist Emilé Durkheim sacredness refers to those things in society that are forbidden or set apart; and since these sacred things are set apart by society, he concludes that the sacred force is society itself. The dichotomy between sacred and profane is a central part of his discussion. He concludes that "religious and profane life cannot coexist in the same place and time." Emilé Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J.W. Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965), 312-13. The phenomenologist Mircea Eliade qualifies this view. He formulates the relationship between the sacred and the profane as a dialectic. Religious man is located within this dialectic, within the opposition between sacred and profane space. It is this "break effected in space that allows the world to be constituted" and forms the "fixed-point" or "center" of the lived experience. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1961). For a critical discussion of Eliade see Tim Murphy, "Eliade, Subjectivity, and Hermeneutics," in *Changing Religious Worlds: The Meaning and End of Mircea Eliade*, ed. Bryan Rennie (Albany, NY: Suny Press, 2001), 67-87.



As such they were concretely social and material, while at the same time assuming the possibility of a transcendent divine—something “quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar.”<sup>113</sup> These two states were not antithetical however. The sacred does not simply “imply belief in God or gods or spirits . . . it is the experience of a reality and the source of an awareness of existing in the world.”<sup>114</sup> The transcendent mystery is present in the substance of the “profane” world—in the symbols, behaviors, and things of our social and cultural locations. And the things of this world are sacralized through belief and ritual transforming them into openings “toward the transcendent” while simultaneously orienting the believer within terrestrial space.<sup>115</sup> For religious person, “the very fact of *living in the world has a religious value.*”<sup>116</sup> Thus in late medieval Europe at least, sacred and profane life was not necessarily separate or always distinguishable. As Kitagawa points out in his study of pilgrimage and the idea of “mixed motives:”

Usually pilgrims are motivated by religious objectives...but these religious motives are often mixed with the desire to acquire healing, good fortune, easy child-birth, prosperity and other this-worldly benefits. Furthermore, seen from a broader perspective, the pilgrimage, which cements the solidarity of religious groups, also stimulates trade and commerce, dissemination of ideas, and intercultural exchange.<sup>117</sup>

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113. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Nonrational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 5-41, especially 25, and 12-13.

114. Mircea Eliade, *Ordeal by Labyrinth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 154.

115. Eliade uses the example of the Achilpas, an Australian Aranda tribe who fashion a pole from the trunk of a gum tree. This pole represents “the cosmic axis” where their maker, Numbakula, ascended into the sky. Through belief and ritual, pole becomes a transportable sacred compass that directs the Achilpas’ nomadic lives and transforms or “cosmicizes” the land into a habitable world. Mircea Eliade, “The World, the City, and the House,” in *The Experience of the Sacred: Readings in the Phenomenology of Religion*, eds. Sumner B. Twiss and Walter H. Conser, Jr. (Hanover, NH: Brown University Press, 1992), 188-199.

116. *Ibid.*, 91.

117. Joseph Kitagawa, “Three Types of Pilgrimage in Japan,” in *The Experience of the Sacred, Readings in the Phenomenology of Religion*, 178-179.

The same way in which the spiritual and the mundane are mixed in pilgrimage, they are mixed in the dramatic rituals of Holy Week and Easter. These ceremonies and their images were referents to heaven in the midst of earth and the sacred in the center of the profane.

One may have experienced a wooden image as something “other-worldly” in situations where theological elucidation, cultural tradition, and staged performance were activating agents, but it was always “holy familiar.”<sup>118</sup> Movable Christ sculptures were constant companions that lived amongst the people, manifested communal identity, and structured social order. They were valued commodities that were made for special purposes and kept in special places. They were inanimate and material objects that came to life in their role as the recipients of prayers; the agents of divine intercessions, and the vehicles of miraculous power. Their mechanizations were known but veiled in the moment of spectacle, and they moved at the center of events which transformed the ordinary into the extraordinary. In this liminal realm between the sacred and profane, movable Christ sculptures in their first form and function provided equally diverse ways of revealing the “invisible by means of the visible” through the images’ ability to construct social realities.<sup>119</sup>

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118. Here I reconfigure Rudolf Otto framing of the sacred or “the holy” as “wholly other.” Otto recognizes the mystery of religion that both terrifies and fascinates us with what he calls the “numinous.” He describes the numinous as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* or “mystery, terror, and fascination.” The religious experience is “located in strong, sudden ebullitions of personal piety...in the fixed and ordered solemnities of rites and liturgies, and again in the atmosphere that clings to old religious monuments and buildings, to temples and to churches.” It may come peacefully “sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship” or it may erupt “from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions” in a “thrillingly vibrant and resonant form, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its ‘profane,’ non-religious mood of everyday experience. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 12-13.

119. St. Gregory, *Ep. IX* (Letter to Serenus), 52, *op. cit.*, Ringbom, 12.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Form and Function of Movable Christ Sculptures in Ritual Drama

Images of Christ and the saints were almost always at the center of liturgical and para-liturgical observances throughout the Church year and movable Christ sculptures were not unusual in this respect.<sup>120</sup> Neither were they unusual in their kinetic usage.

On the Feast of the Annunciation in December an image of the Angel Gabriel descended from an oculus in the church roof bringing with it the news of Mary's conception.

During the Christmas season an image of the Christ child, made either from wood or

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120. Though scholars define liturgical and para-liturgical according to their own needs and specific concerns, in general "the neutral and more embracing term 'ritual'" is used to describe both. Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 218. The distinction between liturgical and extra- or para-liturgical is an important one since extra-liturgical and para-liturgical are used interchangeably in the scholarship. The two types are generally accepted though the particulars of each category are rarely uniform. Liturgy is defined by some according to the mandates and definitions of the Catholic and Protestant churches and the ordered rites of sacramentaries and service books. In this incarnation liturgical means any form of official, communal worship that has a sacrament at its center. Para-liturgical, however, is reserved for all other forms of public and private worship. This seemingly obvious and relatively simple explanation becomes more complicated when one considers that many of the public ceremonies of the medieval Church were preludes to and extensions of the Mass. In the case of the Holy Week and Easter observances; Karl Young, E.K. Chambers, and Neil Brooks assert that most ceremonies were extra-liturgical with the exception of the Mass itself. Young, *DMC*, i, 114 and 262; Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, I (London: Oxford University Press, 1903), 181-182; Brooks, 24. The Tauberts and Gschwend conclude that the Good Friday services are liturgical because of their proximity to and origin in the Mass. Taubert and Taubert, 104; Gschwend, 60-69. Indeed, the Good Friday *Depositio* service had a lengthy series of antiphons, responses, prayers, and a procession before the Mass and a dramatic enactment of the burial of Christ after the Mass. Thus the question of where and when the liturgical portion of the Good Friday observance began and ended is difficult to determine. This was generally the case in medieval worship especially during Holy Week which consisted of numerous Masses, vigils, and processions each emphasizing a particular point in the continuous narrative and performative structure of one week long observance. Robert Scribner places *functiones sacrae* (or sacred performances) between the prescribed liturgy of the Church and the para-liturgical ceremonies of popular or "folklorised ritual." Scribner, *PCPM*, 26-30. This distinction between "official" and "popular" has become the understood, if not always announced, difference between liturgical and para-liturgical observances. I will follow this distinction using the term para-liturgical to describe ceremonies that were not sanctioned in the Roman Rite but practiced none the less. Furthermore, I will use para-liturgical rather than extra-liturgical since the latter indicates something outside of the liturgy while the former conveys the idea of parallelism that I argue is a more accurate way of understanding these unofficial observances. For a foundational study of the liturgy see Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, (London: Dacre Press, 1945). For a general introduction and survey of the Christian liturgy see *The Study of Liturgy*, eds. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold S. J., and Paul Bradshaw (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

wax, acted in Nativity (fig. 24).<sup>121</sup> And in all seasons, on different feast days, images of the saints worked in the fields, villages, and cities; blessing the crops, warding off evil, death, and disease; and ensuring salvation. By the late medieval period the forty-seven-day span between Palm Sunday and Ascension Sunday had become the most intricate series of image-centered observances in the Church calendar, and movable Christ sculptures were at their center. Together clergy, laity, and image performed these rituals in urban centers and rural cloisters across central Europe. Accompanied by the sights and sounds of dramatic ritual and surrounded by the mass of faithful, movable Christ sculptures took the lead in a sequence of events that could be “thrillingly vibrant and resonant” or “hushed, trembling, and speechless.”<sup>122</sup>

#### *MEDIEVAL HOLY WEEK*

Together, Holy Week and Ascension Day consists of a series of public spectacles and vigils following in a performed narrative recalling Christ’s last days and reasserting his sacrifice and resurrection. The seven days from Palm Sunday (*Dominica Palmarum*) to Easter Sunday (*Pascha* or *Dominica Resurrectionis*), known collectively as Holy Week (*Hebdomada Major*), still mark the culmination of the Church year and the realization of the Christian doctrine of redemption. Although core observances of Holy Week were practiced throughout Western Europe, before the sixteenth century Catholic liturgies were heterogeneous and ecumenical.<sup>123</sup> The structure of the Mass and of the

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121. See Tripps for a discussion of the Annunciation and Christ child figures and their liturgical function. Also see Eugen Roth, *Ein Kind ist uns geboren* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1962) for an introduction and catalog of *Christkind* figures from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century.

122. Otto, 12.

123. The earliest record of a complete Holy Week cycle comes from the fourth century Gallican nun, Etheria or Egeria who went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 385 A.D. When she reached Constantinople she wrote a series of letters detailing the trip for her fellow sisters, giving a full account of

Church year generally followed the Roman Rite but liturgical forms and additions varied from region to region.<sup>124</sup> Localized services had their own ordering of hymns, prayers,

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the Holy Week ceremonies in Jerusalem. Egeria referred to the Holy Week as the “Paschal Week,” although she did mention that in Jerusalem they called it the “Great Week.” According to Egeria the “Great Week” celebration in Jerusalem began with Palm Sunday service which followed the usual Lord’s Day pattern including a vigil of hymns, antiphons, and prayers, all of which took place in the atrium of the *Anastasis*, or Church of the Resurrection. At dawn the bishop arrived and the congregation entered the *Anastasis*. The bishop read a Gospel account of Christ’s resurrection and the singing of Psalms followed. He then proceeded to the cross for further prayers. The Eucharist followed, accompanied by a sermon after which the bishop blessed the congregation and dismissed them around 11 a.m. At 1 p.m. the congregation met at the *Eleona*, the church dedicated by Empress Helena on the Mount of Olives, where they heard more chants and lessons. At 3 p.m. they moved to the *Imbomon*, or Church of the Ascension, for a similar service. At 5 p.m. the congregation and the bishop walked down the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem chanting Psalm 118. Finally the congregation, carrying palm and olive branches, surrounded the bishop as he re-entered Jerusalem on foot. When they arrived at the *Anastasis* the bishop led a prayer at the cross and the service ended. Monday through Wednesday included Gospel lessons that commemorated the last days of Christ. From Thursday afternoon until Friday morning a series of vigils or stations took place throughout Jerusalem. The first occurred around 7 p.m. at the *Eleona*, the second at the *Imbomon* at midnight, and the third and fourth at Gethsemane. The fifth consisted of a procession through the city, and the sixth occurred at Zion. At 8 a.m. on Good Friday the congregation venerated the cross in a ceremony called the *Adoratio Crucis*, or Adoration of the Cross. It began when the bishop took his place on a throne in front of a cross erected on Golgotha. The bishop stood before a table covered with linen cloth, and a silver-gilt casket containing the wood of the “True Cross” rested on top of the table. The casket was opened and both the wood and the superscription INRI were placed on the table. The bishop held up the wood of the cross as the congregation approached one by one and kissed the sacred object; the bishop then administered the Eucharist. The rest of the day consisted of vigils recounting Christ’s last hours. Saturday also included a number of vigils and the Baptism of the Catechumens. The “Great Week” culminated on Easter Sunday with the Eucharist, the reading of Gospel accounts of the Resurrection. Egeria also mentions a special feast forty days after the *Pascha*. Although she never refers to this celebration as the Ascension, we can assume, based on Christian tradition, that it was observed on this special feast day. When discussing Egeria’s account, three things are important: first, it is at this point that the Passion and the Resurrection become separate observances, one of mourning and grief, and the other of celebration and joy; second, the Ascension becomes a separate feast day; and finally, the historicization of Christ’s life, inclusion of visual symbols, and the practice of processing from site to site become central parts of commemoration. For an introduction to the diary and a translation by chapter, see George E. Gringas, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage* (New York: Newman Press, 1970).

124. The “Great Week” of fourth century Jerusalem was the model for the Ambrosian, Gallican, and Roman Rite, which in turn were the basis for Holy Week liturgy in most of western and central Europe throughout the medieval period. Late fourth century *Pascha* observances in Spain and Rome adhered to ante-Nicene traditions and suggest that the elaborate *Pascha* observances recorded by Egeria had not yet made their way to Western Europe. But by the eighth century the Paschal week in Rome included a series of liturgical processions and ceremonies that followed the model of the fourth century Holy Week in Jerusalem the week-long *Pascha* cycle quickly followed in most areas of Europe. Davies, 30-34. It is important to bear in mind that the *Ordines Romani* was not contained in one consistent body of text until the late sixteenth century. The earliest written Roman liturgy dates to the sixth century. These rites began to circulate north of the Alps at the end of the eighth century. They were adapted and greatly enlarged in local Orders including Romano-Germanic Pontifical of the tenth century. Elements of non-Roman rites also influenced and were incorporated into the Roman Order. There are, for instance, elements of the Gallican Rite of the eighth century in the Gregorian Sacramentary of the early ninth century. And there continued to be divergent liturgies well into the late medieval period including the Avignon Rite of the fourteenth century. The *Ordines Romani* was not collected as such until the seventeenth century by the Benedictine Jean Mabillon from St. Maur. Mabillon identified fifteen orders that represent a collective history of the

antiphons, structural embellishments, and specific prescriptions that were relevant to the congregation. Community resources and needs determined the material and spatial aspects of worship. The site of the *Adoratio Crucis* in Rome, for example, was the Church of the Holy Cross while in Augsburg an altar dedicated to the Holy Cross in the church of St. Ulrich, the city's patron saint, fulfilled the requirement for sacred topography. Movable Christ sculptures are a part of this heterogeneity. Not every community used movable Christ sculptures in their services, but almost every community practiced dramatic reenactments of Christ's life in their Holy Week and Ascension Day rituals.

### *Palm Sunday*

Medieval Holy Week consisted of four major events: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.<sup>125</sup> Palm Sunday recalled Christ's entry into Jerusalem and marked the advent of the Passion cycle. By the seventh century, the fourth-century processional custom in the East was adopted in the West, and was generally set aside as a public, ambulatory introit to the Mass of the day.<sup>126</sup> The preferred form called for a procession of celebrants which began on a hill or an elevated place outside of town. As they approached the town gates, members of the procession sang the hymn *Gloria*,

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most common rites in the Western Church from the sixth to the fifteenth century. When I refer to the Roman Rite, I am referring to Mabillon's configuration. For a discussion of the development of the Western liturgy see Louis Duchense, *Church Worship—Its Origin and Evolution: A Study of the Latin Liturgy up to the Time of Charlemagne* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1919); Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources*, rev. and trans. William Storey and Niels Rasmussen (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1981).

125. For a complete history of Palm Sunday observances, see H.J. von Gräf, *Palmenweihe und Palmprozession in der lateinischen Liturgie* (Siegburg: Veröffentlichungen des Missionspriesterseminars St. Augustin, 1959).

126. Mary C. Erler, "Palm Sunday Prophets and Processions and Eucharistic Controversy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 67 (Spring 1995): 75.

*laus et honor* (Glory, Lauds, and Honor). The celebrant then sang the response, *Ingrediēte Domino in sanctum civitatem* (Enter Lord into the Sacred City) while congregants cast palm branches and garments before the procession as it passed through the gate. The procession then made its way toward the church, and Mass followed.

Both the celebrant and specialized objects like the Gospel book could serve as the representative of Christ in Palm Sunday observances. The tenth century *Regularis Concordia* and *Romano-Germanic Pontifical* both detail the use of the cross, relics, and gospels.<sup>127</sup> In the eleventh century Lanfranc of Bec instituted a Palm Sunday procession at Canterbury. Its focus was the consecrated Host carried in a shrine with candles, banners, and incense.<sup>128</sup> The veneration of a painted panel, or *tabula*, is described in the Palm Sunday services of Arras and Cologne around 1050, Magdeburg soon after 1250, Cluny from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, and Cambrai in the fourteenth century.<sup>129</sup> The *Life of St. Ulrich*, written between 982 and 992 is one of the earliest recorded instances of a Palm Sunday image of Christ. It recounts a Palm Sunday procession from Augsburg. The procession, led by St. Ulrich, followed the account of Christ's entry into Jerusalem according to the Gospel of John.<sup>130</sup> It began in the Church of St. Afram, where the "image of our lord on an ass" was housed throughout the year. Ulrich led a "great decorated" procession with clerics, congregants holding palm fronds, and an image of Christ on an ass toward the city's cathedral. At the same time a "multitude of people" carrying palms branches left the Cathedral and met Ulrich, entourage, and image on top

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127. Young, *DMC*, i, 92-93.

128. For more on Lanfranc of Bec see Erler, 75; and Young, *DMC*, i, 92.

129. Tripps, 97-99.

130. John 12:12-19.

of a hill called the *Perlach*. Hosannas were sung and a recounting of Christ's Passion followed.<sup>131</sup>

A fourteenth century service from the royal church and convent of Essen resembles the Augsburg service in its dramatic and liturgical structure. In this instance the celebrant and canonesses waited in the collegiate church, or *Stiftskirche*, while a procession of laity, canons, and congregants processed from the *Stiftskirche* to the Church of St. John singing the antiphon *Cum appropinquaret Jherusalem* (As they drew near Jerusalem) then on to the Church of St. Gertrude, which like the Church of St. Afram in Augsburg, housed the "image on an ass" throughout the year. The image was taken out to meet a procession of congregants singing antiphons. They surrounded the image and accompanied it through the marketplace and streets of Essen, back to the *Stiftskirche*. When the procession reached the church, it was met at the door by a priest with a silver cross and by a bell ringer both facing east. The main celebrant and his entourage waited at midpoint in the nave as the image was taken in front of the Altar of St. Peter. Six canonesses sang the verses of the hymn *Gloria, laus et honor* (Glory, Lauds and Honor) while the congregation added the refrain. The canon then sang the antiphon *Pueri Hebraeorum vestimenta* (Hebrew children spread their garments) as eight scholars approached the image and laid three carpets before it. Genuflecting in front of the image the celebrant, canonesses, and congregation sang hymns and antiphons describing

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131. "*Cum effigie sedentis Domini super asinum*" (with an effigy of the wise Lord on the ass). For the full text see *Acta Sanctorum*, Julii, 2 vols., Rome, 1721, p.103; transcribed in Tripps, 95.



Christ's triumphal entry and eternal glory. The image was then placed before the tomb of St. Alfred, the procession officially ended, and High Mass began.<sup>132</sup>

Scholars have consistently identified the *effigies* and *Ymagini cum Asino* mentioned in these and other prescribed Palm Sunday rites as *Palmeseln*. Though the Augsburg and Essen Palm Sunday images no longer survive, approximately twenty other *Palmeseln* do exist. The late fifteenth century sculpture from Alheim exemplifies the type. The life-size, free-standing figure is fixed in the visual and textual accounts of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem (fig. 25). The figure of Christ, covered in a purple robe, is joined to a separate donkey figure by a series of dowels hidden from sight. Christ's right hand forms the sign of benediction, he carries the Holy Word in the crook of his left arm, and nails fasten a tall crown to his head. The donkey is similarly joined by dowels to a wheeled wooden bier. The entire assemblage is carved from linden wood and covered in layers of paint and over-paint. Four wooden wheels, two on either side of a base support, facilitate the movement of the assemblage. The incorporation of a crown announces the figure's role as the material re-presentation of Christ the King whose triumphal entry marked the beginning of Holy Week. The crown is a unique attribute, and while some *Palmeseln* also have halos, most are bare-headed. This does not, however, negate the addition of other attributes and accessories including Gospel books, royal robes, and palm fronds that are now lost to us.

The earliest *Palmeseln* come from German-speaking areas and date to the late twelfth and early thirteenth century (figs. 26 & 27). Their schematic drapery and rigid

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132. "ymaginem Chrisit heri illuc cum Asino adducta" (image of Christ attached to an ass drawn thither the day before). For the full text see *Der Liber Ordinarius der Essener Stiftskirche*, ed. F Arens (1908), 42-47 as transcribed in Young, *DMC*, i, 94-97.

forms contrast with the more realistic and “Florid” manner of the later fifteenth century and sixteenth century figures, and it is this later type that account for the majority of *Palmesel* figures (figs. 28 & 29). Tripps contends that the “genesis” of the *Palmesel* relates to the growth of free-standing sculpture during eleventh century, particularly reliquaries and sculpted crucifixes.<sup>133</sup> He concludes that the *Palmesel* type radiated out from German-speaking regions and, over two or three centuries, found its way to Slavic areas and parts of northern Italy. Tripps’ conclusion is generally convincing, but when constructing a stylistic genealogy for the *Palmesel*, the anonymity of their makers, the ambiguity of their original provenances, and their rarity should be kept in mind.

Similarly, the liturgical function of the *Palmesel* needs to be qualified. While it might seem intuitive to assign these images to the Palm Sunday processions of medieval Europe, there is no definitive textual support for this identification in the prescribed rites of the Catholic Church. Orders like the ones at Augsburg and Essen simply describe the Palm Sunday Christ as an “image of our lord on an ass.”<sup>134</sup> To solve this evidentiary dilemma Tripps maintains that in the liturgical and theological writings of the day, a distinction is clearly made between *effigy* and *Ymagine* on the one hand and *tabula* on the other. *Effigy* and *Ymagine* are identified with sculpted figures while *tabula* is understood

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133. In his analysis Tripps recalls the developmental model of medieval sculpture used by Hans Belting and Ilene Forsyth, 99-111; Belting, 297-303; Ilene Forsyth, “Magi and Majesty: A Study of Romanesque Sculpture and Liturgical Drama,” *Art Bulletin* 50 (1968): 215-222.

134. Scribner reads this lack of description in the official texts as an intentional omission and an indication that “many churchmen saw” the use of a *Palmesel* as an “unliturgical addition.” *PCPM*, 26. But in general, documents that prescribe the rites of service do not offer full descriptions of images, at least not the kind of descriptions that can satisfy our modern interpretive needs. It is possible that the authors of these “official” texts left their directions intentionally ambiguous to suit the needs of their local community over time. In this formulation, the authorities of the Church were very consciously accommodating “folklorised ritual” rather than dismissing and omitting them as unliturgical or unorthodox.

to be a two-dimensional image, most often a painted panel.<sup>135</sup> These idiomatic distinctions support the conclusion that the *effigies* and *Ymagines* mentioned in Palm Sunday services were in fact three-dimensional sculptures and thus correspondent with the *Palmesel* type. Para-liturgical documents also support this identification. The records of the church treasury in the diocese of Constance detail the commission, repair, redecoration, and eventual replacement of one Palm Sunday image from 1523 to 1753.<sup>136</sup> As with the Augsburg and Essen figures the Constance image did not survive, but we can certainly conclude from its description as a large wheeled sculpture of Christ on an ass that it was, in fact, a *Palmesel*. Similarly all of the sixteenth century, polemic accounts of Catholic ceremony definitively describe a *Palmesel* as the visual and performative center of Palm Sunday processions.<sup>137</sup> In 1570 Thomas Naogeorgus wrote:

Here comes that worthie day wherein, our sauior Christ is thought,  
 To come vnto Jerusalem, on asses shoulders brought:  
 A woodenASSE they haue, and Image great that on him rides,  
 Being borne on wheels, which ready rest, and all things meete therefore  
 TheASSE is brought abroad and set before the Churches doore:  
 The people all do come and bowes of trees and palmes they bere,  
 Which things against the tempest great, the Parson coniures there,  
 And straytwayes downe before theASSE, vpon his face he lies,  
 Whome there on other Priest doth strike with rodde of largest sise:  
 He rising vp, two lubbors great vpon their faces fall,  
 In straunge attire and loathsomely, with filthie tune they ball:  
 Who when againe they risen are, with stretching out their hande,  
 They poynt vnto the wooden knight, and singing as they stande  
 Declare that that is he that came, into the worlde to saue,  
 And to redeeme such as in him their hope assured haue:  
 And euen the same that long agone while in the striate he roade,  
 The people mette, and Oliue bowes so thicke before hym stroade

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135. Although all three words are used in texts as early as the eleventh century, *tabula* is by far the rarest term. Tripps, 96.

136. The *Palmesel* is mentioned in 1523, 1557, 1561-1562, 1589, 1606-1608, 1635, 1693-1694, and 1735. Scribner, *PCPM*, 26. These documents are also discussed in P. Zinsmeier, "Eine Unbekannte zur Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Liturgie im Konstanzer Münster," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des OberRhines* (1956): 52-104 and F.X. Kraus, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Kreises Konstanz* (Freiburg im Breissau, 1887).

137. See also Sebastian Franck descriptions of Palm Sunday services, n. 361.

This being soung, the people cast the braunches as they passe,  
Some part vpon the Image, and some part vpon the Asse.  
Before whose feete a wondrous heape, of bowes and braunches ly,  
This done into the Church he strayght, is drawne full solely:  
The shauen Priestes before them marche, the people follow fast,  
Still striuing who shall gather first the bowes that down are cast:<sup>138</sup>

The Palm Sunday procession that Naogeorgus recorded follows the general structure of the liturgy as it was practiced from the fourth century in Jerusalem to the fourteenth century in Essen. Though the official liturgical prescriptions give us little insight into what the Palm Sunday image actually looked like, the image described in Naogeorgus's account is unquestionably a *Palmesel*. And his detailed albeit critical record provides an excellent account of how these images moved in the context of Church ritual.

### *Maundy Thursday*

The next major observance of Holy Week occurred four days after Palm Sunday on Maundy Thursday.<sup>139</sup> Three Masses were held during the course of the day. Services began in the morning with the Mass of Remission in which penitents were reconciled to the Church. The second service, the Mass of the Oils, occurred in the afternoon. It began with an adoration of the Cross and proceeded through the blessing of the oil of the sick,

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138. Naogeorgus (also known as Naogeorgus) was German theologian, classicist, and reformer. This passage comes from Barnabe Googe's translation of the German original. Googe was an English poet and humanist who translated two of Thomas Naogeorgus's works including the *Regnum papisticum* (1553), quoted above, and the *Libri V agriculturae sacraei* (1550), which was based on Virgil's *Georgics* and lent Naogeorgus his pseudonym. Although Naogeorgus wrote and published the *Regnum papisticum* in Basel, he traveled widely through German-speaking areas and never identified a specific place as inspiration for his polemic. This an excerpt from fol. 50<sup>r</sup>-53<sup>v</sup> of Barnabe Googe's (1540-94) translation of Thomas Naogeorgus's *Regnum Papisticum*. Googe's translation is entitled *The Popish Kingdome, or reigne of Antichrist, written in Latine verse by Thomas Naogeorgus, and englyshed by Barnabe Googe*, London, 1570; transcribed in Young, *DMC*, ii, 525-537.

139. The liturgy for the three days between Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday was relatively simple. Daily Mass included readings from the synoptic Gospels that recounted Christ's visit to the temple and his confrontations with the Pharisees and the money changers. Davies, 27-28.

the oil of the catechumens, and the chrism (a mixture of oil and balsam that was used in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation). The third Mass took place in the evening and commemorated the institution of the Eucharist during the Last Supper. At the moment of consecration, the celebrant set aside a portion of the Host in the tabernacle for the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified on Easter Sunday and then administered the Eucharist to the congregation. A reenactment of Christ's washing of the Apostles' feet called the *Mandatum* followed the reservation of the Host. Once the Gospel accounts of this event were read, the congregation sang a series of antiphons. The celebrant, kneeling by the altar, wrapped a towel around his waist and proceeded to wash and anoint the feet of a select number of poor persons recalling Christ's humility and compassion. The service ended with a *Tenebrae* (shadow service) during which the church interior was stripped of all adornment and the altars were washed. The altars and all the images in the church, with the exception of a crucifix, were covered in cloths and all the lights were extinguished. The church interior remained shrouded in dark austerity until the Mass on Easter morning.<sup>140</sup> The *Tenebrae* service ended the preparatory tenor of the previous two Masses, marked the eve of the *Triduum*, and inaugurated an intensified period of mourning.

Vigils followed the *Tenebrae* and lasted until dawn on Friday morning extending the narrative of Christ's last hours late into the night. They often centered around a sculptural group of Christ and the Apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane called an *Ölberg* (Mount of Olives). In the early sixteenth century, the citizens of Ulm engaged in candlelight vigils before an *Ölberg* which was described as elaborate, expensive, and was

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140. For a general discussion of Maundy Thursday observances, see Young, *DMC*, i, 98-99; Chambers, 116-122.

the location of the tabernacle that housed the pre-sanctified Host (fig. 30).<sup>141</sup> The drawing by Matthias Böblinger depicts this massive architectural structure housing the figure of Christ praying before an angel. Christ is surrounded by the apostles who succumb to sleep while he is left to agonize in the simulated landscape of Gesthemane.

Most *Ölberg* groups were made in Germany during the late fifteenth century. They are located in churchyards, on exterior west walls (figs. 31), or inside the church proper close to the high altar. Their forms are as varied as their placement and these *Ölberg* groups could include anywhere from four to twenty figures. Sometimes the groupings are simple and contain only an image of Christ, the sleeping apostles John and Peter, and an angel. In other cases, eleven of the apostles are present while Judas and Roman soldiers occupy the background. *Ölberge* are fashioned from stone, wood, or a combination of both. Generally the figure of Christ is sculpted in the round while subsidiary figures like the sleeping apostles and approaching Roman soldiers are carved in relief. Their settings, including the garden and the walls of Jerusalem, are represented either by sculpted reliefs and painted plaster or by the churchyard itself. They are often visually and functionally conflated with the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Many served as the Holy Sepulcher accommodating the Host on Maundy Thursday and again serving as the center of ritual action on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. In addition, some *Ölberg* groups include a cross or crucifix. One grouping from the north transept of Strasbourg Cathedral is particularly complex (figs. 32 & 33). The figures and their environs are carved in stone. A life-sized, three-dimensional figure of Christ kneels in prayer while sleeping apostles and approaching guards populate the undulating landscape

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141. H. Rott, *Quellen und Forschungen zur süd westdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte im XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols, *Al-Schwaben und die Reichstädte* (Stuttgart, 1935), 75; Robert Scribner, *PCPM*, 110-113.

in various degrees of relief. Sprouting from the top of this stone edifice is an enormous wooden crucifix located directly above the head of the praying Christ. This visual juxtaposition of the *Ölberg* with the Crucifix effectively conflates the Garden of Gethemane with Calvary.<sup>142</sup>

Free-standing *Ölberg* Christ figures from the late medieval period are static. They were placed in permanent positions in and around churches and the clergy and congregation moved toward them rather than with them during ritual observances. There are no jointed or wheeled examples and no documents that record mobile Maundy Thursday images in any capacity— processional or otherwise. There are, however, two unique, kinetic, southern German figures from the late eighteenth century that correspond nicely with examples of movable Christ sculptures from other Holy Week observances (figs. 34, 35, & 36).<sup>143</sup> Both are free-standing wooden sculptures, and unlike most *Ölberg* figures they are not carved as clothed figures but were later dressed with cloth garments that covered their jointed bodies. They bend at the elbows and knees, and were moved in imitation of Christ's vigil in the Garden during Maundy Thursday devotions. The machination of the figure from Reischach is particularly elaborate. A base complete with a hidden hand crank system supports the figure. As an individual beneath a canvas cover turned the hand crank, the image of Christ appeared to genuflect— bending and rising in prayer, longing to pass the cup even as he resigns himself to drink. Although these two *Ölberg* figures are dated two hundred years after most movable Christ

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142. There is similar mention of an *Ölberg* with a crucifix from Augsburg in 1524. Scribner, *PCPM*, 111; Chipps Smith, 29.

143. *Christus im Leiden, Kruzifix Passiondarstellung aus 800 Jahre* [exhib. cat. Württembergisches Landesmuseum, Stuttgart] (Ulm, 1986), 158; Edgar Harvolk, "Szenische Ölbergandachten in Altbayern," *Bayerisches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* (1976/77): 69-87.

sculptures were made, they do suggest the possibility of earlier non-extant prototypes, and at best they indicate that a mechanically movable image of Christ was part of the dramatic enactment of Maundy Thursday worship in at least two German communities.

### *The Triduum*

Holy Week culminated with a series of dramatic, liturgical observances that included the *Adoratio* and *Depositio* on Good Friday and the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* on Easter Sunday. The *Adoratio Crucis* in the West originated in the ceremony that Egeria witnessed in fourth century Jerusalem. By the seventh and eighth centuries it was a prescribed part of the *Ordines Romani* and came into general use throughout Western Europe only a century later.<sup>144</sup> The *Adoratio Crucis* involved a procession of the congregants and clerics carrying a cross aloft through the community. The procession ended at the main altar of the church, where the clerics elevated the cross as the faithful adored it. The *Depositio* was an extension of the *Adoratio Crucis* service. It enabled the reservation of the consecrated Host for Easter Sunday during the mourning period of Holy Saturday. By the tenth century the *Adoratio Crucis* (also referred to, in some cases, as the *Adoratio*) was directly followed by the *Depositio*. Most of the documents recording the *Depositio* observance from the eleventh to the sixteenth century come from Germany, and a large number of them are from Benedictine monasteries.<sup>145</sup> The *Depositio* occurred in the evening between Mass and Vespers, and centered around a

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144. For general discussion of both the *Elevatio* and the *Depositio*, see Young, *DMC*, i, 111-148; Chambers, 130-138.

145. Two of the earliest German examples date to the twelfth century and come from the Benedictine cloisters of Rhineau and Hirsau. Taubert and Taubert, 93; Brooks, 20-26.



receptacle in the nave which also served as the sepulcher.<sup>146</sup> A twelfth century example from the Benedictine cloister at Rhineau follows:

The priest moreover, as it was foretold, goes to the minimally furnished altar, immediately after Office of the Mass of the Cross, brothers are bestowed in order upon the Grave to this place: Two of the ordained brothers carry the cross, another three with censers and candles precede, offerings from the seven days accompany those to sepulcher, and at once the suppressed voices sing

Response. *This is how He Died*

Response. *Withdraw Shepherd*

Antiphon. *Joseph of Arimathia*

Antiphon. *Sepulcher of Our Lord*

The cross is put away upon a covered bed in the floor, censed, concealed with linens and a candle is placed which perpetual burns through the night when all others have been extinguished.<sup>147</sup>

The *Depositio* service was never written down in the Roman Rite, and the number of documents that record service are relatively rare and idiosyncratic. Local *Depositio* customs are either completely absent in the official service texts or are indicated by cursory glosses. Brooks and Young offer an unsatisfying explanation for this documentary deficit. They explain that the irregularity of textual description and evidence is due to the “extra-liturgical” nature of the observances.<sup>148</sup> P. Kolumban Gschwend, the first to fully chart the liturgical character of these rites, conversely argues that the *Depositio* observances are close enough in form to the “full sense of church

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146. While this was the case in Germany, in England the sepulcher was almost always placed in the north side of the chancel, and in France it was usually located in the choir. Brooks, 53-58. For a thorough discussion of the Easter sepulchers, see also Pamela Sheingorn, *The Easter Sepulchre in England*.

147. *Sacerdotes autem, qui, ut predictum est, ad altare minicum ministrabant, Statim post missale officium crucem, quam fraters desoculati sunt, in Sepulchro hoc ordine collocant: Duo ex ipsis ordine priores portant crucem, quos alii tres cum turibulo et candelabras precedent, sacredone ebdomadario Et armario illos comitantibus, simulque cum eis suppressa voce cantantibus*

R. *Ecce quomodo moritur*

R. *Recessit pastor*

Ant. *Joseph ab Arimathia*

Ant. *Sepulto domino.*

*Interim ponunt crucem super tapete stratum in pavimento, quam Operientes linteo incensat et apponunt cereum, qui iugiter ardebit usque Dum in nocte cum aliis extinguitur.* My translation from the transcription in Taubert and Taubert, 94.

148. Young, *DMC*, i, 114; Brooks, 24.

service” that they can be considered liturgical. He concludes that the *Depositio* developed from the basic structure of the Roman Rite and that the needs and inclinations of individual dioceses and parishes. Since the hymns of the *Depositio* were taken from the prescribed hourly prayers of the day, copyists did not find it necessary to delineate the service a second time. He posits that “. . . our special rite was probably recorded only in rare cases. These ceremonies were so easy to remember they did not have to be specially written.”<sup>149</sup> Gschwend’s conclusions present a convincing explanation for the rarity of *Depositio* services in the textual record and the rarity of textual sources that document the use of movable crucifixes.

We do know that representations of Christ used in the *Depositio* varied from place to place. In some areas the *Depositio Crucis*, or burial of the cross or crucifix, occurred; in others only the *Depositio Hostiae*, or burial of the Eucharistic Host was practiced; and in some locations both image and sacrament were used. Although scholars differ on the originating primacy of one form or another, for our purposes it is important only to note that the Deposition of the Cross formed a logical conclusion to the *Adoratio Crucis*, that the *Depositio Hostiae* was a means of reserving the Host for Easter Sunday, and that the combination of both presented compelling associations between the image of Christ’s corporeal sacrifice and his sacramental body.<sup>150</sup> Gschwend, Tripps, and the Tauberts name the 1160 *Depositio* service from the diocese of Salzburg as central to the development of the Deposition rite for all southern German regions including Swabia, Bavaria, and Austria. From here “the custom probably radiated to the neighboring

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149. Gschwend, 60-69.

150. For a list of specifics of image use in the German *Depositio*, see Appendix A.

eastern countries of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland.”<sup>151</sup> It occurred during Matins and was preceded by the *Adoratio Crucis* procession. An *Ymago crucifixi* was carried before an altar in the choir and elevated. Then the celebrant placed the image along with a particle of the Eucharist in the altar reenacting the burial of Christ in the tomb. The Salzburg rite remained relatively unchanged for nearly five centuries, and in a number of manuscripts and early printings throughout Western Europe, the *Depositio* is literally identical to the Salzburg service.

One such example is a fifteenth century service from the Benedictine cloister of Prüfening. It is a typical, though unusually comprehensive, example of *Depositio* service describing the burial of the Host and a detachable crucifix.<sup>152</sup> As in Salzburg, the *Depositio* service began at the end of the *Adoratio* and included the *Depositio Crucis* followed by the *Depositio Hostiae*. The abbot carried a *Crucem* to the altar of the Holy Cross in a procession accompanied by ministers, deacons, and subdeacons carrying candles. This altar was situated in the middle of the nave before the choir screen, and was visible to the congregation and approachable from all sides. Earlier in the day a box surrounded by curtains and covered with linens was placed either on or in front of the altar. Together altar and curtained-box became the Holy Sepulcher. After the adoration of the cross and the antiphon *Super omnia ligna cedrorum* (Above all the Cedar Trees),

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151. For a transcription of the rite, see Taubert and Taubert, 104-111. Young and the Tauberts have traced the use of the Cross and the Host in the Good Friday liturgical observances from England, Germany, and France. They assert that the rite followed a developmental pattern—the earliest forms employing only the cross, as in the *Adoratio Crucis*, and later forms employing both the Cross and the Host. Young concludes that developmentally, the *Deposito Hostiae* preceded the *Depositio Crucis* since the presence of the Host made the service liturgical and therefore valid. Young, *DMC*, i, 97 and Taubert and Taubert, 93. See Solange Corbin, *La deposition liturgique du Christ au vendredi saint, Sa place dans l'histoire des rites et du théâtre religieux* (Paris: 1960) for examples from Italy, 120, 176, 225, 311; Southern France, 176; Spain, 124-126; Portugal, 271, 275; and Mexico, 128.

152. The Tauberts conclude that the *Depositio Hostiae* was added to the Prüfening rite sometime around the thirteenth century and that Prüfening, being typical of German rites, demonstrates the chronological development of Good Friday liturgy in German-speaking regions during the medieval period. Taubert and Taubert, 96. For the full service at Prüfening see Young's transcription *DMC*, i, 157-160.

the abbot, in view of the congregation, removed an *Ymago Crucifixi* from the cross, wrapped it with linens, and laid it in the sepulcher. The cross was then put aside, the Mass of the Pre-sanctified was said, and the *Depositio Hostiae* followed. The abbot placed a particle of the pre-sanctified Host inside the sepulcher alongside the previously placed image of Christ's corpus, wrapping both in another layer of linen. After more antiphons and prayers, including the Lord's Prayer, the ceremony ended as the abbot censed the sepulcher and anointed it with holy water.<sup>153</sup>

A 1517 *Depositio* service from the university town of Wittenberg also documents the use of a detachable crucifix. It is not the regulated instruction of a Benedictine monastery rather it describes in both German and Latin the *Depositio* service of the collegiate church, or *Stiftskirche*, of the Prince of Saxony.<sup>154</sup> As at Prüfening the service occurred in front of the altar of the Holy Cross in the middle of the church. The altar was materially transformed into the Holy Sepulcher by the addition of a screen decorated with implements of the Passion and burning candles. The service occurred at Vespers during Mass, "in the great choir" behind the altar of the Holy Cross. The "benefactor" (most likely the Prince of Saxony himself) took "down the image of dear Lord and Savior from the cross," carried the corpus to the altar on a stretcher, and deposited it in the altar. The Wittenberg text is an excellent example of the localized, para-liturgical devotional activities that occurred throughout Germany in the interim between the *Depositio* on

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153. MS lat. 12018, Ordin. Pruveningense sæc., xv-xvi, fol. 64<sup>v</sup>-67<sup>v</sup>, 73<sup>v</sup>-74<sup>v</sup>, 88v-89r, Munich Staatsbibliothek; transcribed in Young, *DMC*, i, 157-160. It is immediately preceded by the *Improperia* of the Adoration of the Cross and followed by Matins. The Ascension ceremony is transcribed in Hans-Joachim Krause, "Imago ascensionis und Himmelloch," 351.

154. The Tauberts describe the Wittenberg document: it "describes a liturgical action, it is not a liturgical source." Taubert and Taubert, 98-99.

Good Friday and the *Elevatio* on Easter Sunday and confirmation that detachable crucifixes were in use.

The *Elevatio* celebrated Christ's resurrection, culminated Holy Week, and the inaugurated the Easter season. Like other Holy Week observances the *Elevatio*'s general form was regularized while certain particulars varied from place to place. A 1587 service book from Bamberg records how the congregation joined the clergy at the altar sepulcher. After reciting two psalms, clerics and deacons opened the sepulcher and sprinkled the Host and cross that had been "buried" there on Good Friday with holy water and censed them. They then elevated the cross and the Host in full view of the congregation. The Bamberg ceremony continued with an enactment of the Harrowing of Hell. After the cross and the Host were elevated, both objects were carried in a procession through the town. When the procession returned to the church, two clergymen holding a large crucifix knocked on the first portal shouting *Tollite portas* (Open the door). A participant representing Satan shouted from inside the church. *Quis est iste rex gloriae?* (Who is that Glorious King?) The chorus outside the door replied *Dominus fortis* (Our Mighty God). The door remained closed and the procession moved on to the next door, where the same events occurred. At the third portal the door was opened, and the procession advanced to the choir. There the officiating priest elevated the Host and blessed the congregation, who sang *O vere digna Hostiae* (O true Host). The Eucharist was put away in the tabernacle as the chorus sang *Victimae paschali* (Sacrificial victim), and the congregation responded with several vernacular songs such as *Christ ist erstanden* (Christ is risen).<sup>155</sup>

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155. For the full service see Young, *DMC*, i, 173-176.

The *Visitatio* followed the *Elevatio*.<sup>156</sup> A dramatic introit trope called the *Quem Queritis* commemorated the visit of the Three Marys to the tomb after Christ's resurrection. Three clergymen dressed as the women proceeded to the sepulcher, and a dialogue with another clergyman dressed as the Angel of the Lord followed:

Whom seek you in the tomb, O followers of Christ?  
Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, O Heaven-Dwellers.  
He is not here, he has arisen as he said; go and announce  
That He is risen.<sup>157</sup>

This ceremony records the moment in the narrative when Christ's divine transcendence is revealed to humanity, represented in the figures of the Three Marys.

In both the *Depositio* and the *Elevatio*; the cross, the Host, and the *Ymagine* were meant to represent Christ. These symbols provided visual affirmation that Christ had suffered, died, and risen again for the sins of mankind. In reconstructing what the images named in official Church documents looked like, scholars have drawn different conclusions. The terms used for the images in the primary documents vary from place to place. In twelfth century Rhineau and Salzburg, like in fifteenth century Prüfening, the term *Imago Crucifixi* was used; in fourteenth century Saint Lambrecht, *crucis caput*; in fifteenth century Mainz, *stigmata crucis*; and in Augsburg in 1491, *crucis pectore*.<sup>158</sup>

The term *Ymago Crucifixi* is especially common in south German sources from the

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156. The question of whether the *Visitatio* is liturgical, extra- or para- is discussed by Young and Chambers, who declare them para-liturgical, and the Tauberts, who conclude that these are liturgical. Young, *DMC*, i, 262; Chambers, 181-182; Taubert and Taubert, 104.

157. This is the earliest *Quem Queritis* trope, dating to the tenth century. While this version is from Limoges, this form remained the standard core of *Quem Queritis* play throughout Europe, including Germany. Transcribed in Young, *DMC*, i, 211-212.

*Quem Queritis in sepulchro, o Christicole?*  
*Ihesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o celicole.*  
*Non est hic, surrexit sicut ipse dixit; it enunciate*  
*quia surrexit.*

158. Taubert and Taubert, 99-101.

fifteenth century, and Gschwend explains that this is directly tied to the pervasive influence of the 1160 Salzburg rite.<sup>159</sup>

Young concludes that the term *Ymago Crucifixi* from Prüfening is “far from clear” but that it can be interpreted as a “corpus alone” and, together with the *Crucem*, or cross, formed “some sort of special representation of the Crucifixion—a painting or carving.”<sup>160</sup> Neil Brooks concludes the *Ymago Crucifixi* is “an image of Christ, not attached to the cross” and refers to an extant sculpted figure from Scandinavia and its accompanying wooden sepulcher (fig. 37).<sup>161</sup> The Tauberts and Johannes Tripps go even further claiming that the *Depositio* required the use of a detachable crucifix with movable arms.<sup>162</sup> By their estimate, the number of individuals involved in the deposition indicates that the *Ymago Crucifix* must have been large measuring between 0.90 and 1.20 meters high with an arm span of 1 meter and therefore necessitating folding arms for entombment in the sepulcher. In the case of Wittenberg, the Tauberts similarly conclude that the “Image of our Lord” used in the service must have been large because of the presence of the four custodians who helped with the *Depositio*, and that its size dictated the necessity of movable arms for the entombment of the image. In fact only one primary document definitively records the use of a detachable crucifix. A late fourteenth century Order from Barking in London records a *Depositio* service in which the celebrants in the

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159. Gschwend, 67.

160. Karl Young, *The Dramatic Associations of the Easter Sepulchre*, University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature 10 (Madison, WI: 1920), 81.

161. Brooks, 39. He seems unaware of or unimpressed with German examples.

162. The Tauberts and Tripps again engage the syntactic argument of *effigy/Ymagine* vs. *tabula* to make the semantic conclusion that these figures were three-dimensional sculptures. The Tauberts conclude from the Prüfening text, especially the passage “*ymaginem crucifixi coram populo de cruce deponent*,” that the cross must have been large because it “took many men to lift it,” and Tripps accepts this interpretation. But I am unconvinced by their translation and their argument. It is unclear to me whether the number of participants was part of the ceremonial structure of the service or whether they were necessary because heavy lifting was required. Taubert and Taubert, 96; Tripps, 129-130.

guise of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus “remove the image from the wood of the cross, and wash the wounds of the figure with oil and water.”<sup>163</sup> There are also no paraliturgical documents that precisely describe a detachable crucifix and absolutely no texts that describe a crucifix with movable arms. While the textual record is vague, the artifactual evidence indicates that sculptures of Christ used in the *Elevatio* and *Depositio* services took a variety of kinetic and mimetic forms.

As in Bamberg, fixed or solid crucifixes were used during the *Depositio* and were then replaced either during or after the service with images of the resurrected Christ.

The anonymous English translation of the Rites of Durham, dated 1593, also describes a trifold exchange of *Triduum* images:

After the Passion was sung, two of the eldest monkes did take a goodly large Crucifix, all of gold, of the picture of our Sauour Christ nailed upon the cross, lying upon a velvet cushion, hauinge St. Cuthbert's armes upon it all imbroydered with gold, bringinge that betwixt them upon the said cushion to the lowest greeces in the quire, and there betwixt them did hold the said picture of our Sauour, sittinge of every side, on ther knees, of that, and then one of the said monkes did rise and went prettye way from it, sittinge downe upon his knees, with his shooes put of, uerye reuerently did creepe away upon his knees unto the said Crosse, and most reuerently did kisse it. And after him the other monke did so likewise, and then they did sitt them downe on euery side of the said Crosse, and holdinge it betwixt them, and after that the prior came forth of his stall, and did sitt him downe of his knees, with his shooes of, and in like sort did creepe also unto the said Crosse, and all the monkes after him, one after an other in the same order.... The seruice beinge ended, the two monkes did carrye it to the Sepulchre with great reuerence, which Sepulchre was sett upp in the morninge, on the north side of the quiry, nigh to the high altar, before the seruice time; and there did lay it within the said Sepulchre with great deuotion, with another picture of our Sauour Christ, in whose breast they did enclose, with great reuerence, the most holy and blessed Sacrament of the altar, senceinge and prayinge vnto it upon their knees a great space, settinge two tapers lighted before it, which tapers did burne unto Easter day in the morninge, that it was taken forth.

The *Elevatio* is then described:

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163. “...ibique in specie Ioseph et Nichodemi, de linga deponents Ymaginem, vulnera Crucifixi vino abuluant et aqua.” Young, *DMC*, i, 164. Also Tripps, 154-155.



...uppon Easter Day, betweene 3 and 4 of the clocke in the morninge, in honour of the Resurrection, where 2 of the oldest monkes of the quire came to the Sepulchre, out of the which, with great reverence, they tooke a maruelous Beautiful Image of our Sauour, representing the Resurrection, with a crosse in his hand, in the breast of wherof was enclosed in bright christall the Holy Sacrament of the altar, throughe the which christall the Blessed Host was conspicuous to the beholders.<sup>164</sup>

Thus at Durham three images were involved in the *Depositio* and *Elevatio*: the golden, “goodly, large Crucifix”; the “picture of our Sauour Christ” that carried the sacrament in its breast; and the “beautiful Image of our Sauour, representing the Resurrection,” with cross in hand and the Host in its breast.

The effigy of the dead Christ from Førup, Norway provides an extant example of the second type of image used at Durham (fig. 38). Sculpted from walnut the image represents the dead Christ—naked except for a carved loincloth and a crown of thorns. The face of the figure is drawn and the eyes are sunken and closed in death. Below the chin of the figure is a drilled hole which once held the Host on Good Friday.<sup>165</sup> Some extant effigies of the dead Christ, like the figure from the Cistercian cloister at Magerau, are still housed in their original wooden sepulchers (figs. 39 & 40). Wooden sepulchers are usually painted outside and inside with other scenes from the Gospel narrative—the sleeping soldiers and the angels are typical. Some sepulchers are made of stone and formed a permanent part of the church interior (figs. 41 & 42). Some, as we have seen, served multiple functions as tabernacles for the pre-Sanctified Host and as *Ölberge*.<sup>166</sup>

The edifices referred to in documents recording Good Friday and Easter Sunday services

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164. This section of the *Rites of Durham* transcribed in Young, *DMC*, i, 138.

165. Haastrup, 145.

166. For a complete discussion of the Easter Sepulcher see Neil C. Brooks; and Pamela Sheingorn, *The Easter Sepulchre in England*. Karl Young gives a short but informative survey of the sepulcher types from large stone structures that imitated the round form of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher Jerusalem to temporary coffers that were enclosed by curtains. My catalog includes only the wooden sepulchers that still contain recumbent effigies of the Dead Christ. Young, *DMC*, ii, 507-513.

are not described in detail. The only extant sepulchers that still retain their effigies are made of wood and the Christ images inside are solid, static figures carved from single blocks of wood.

Some *Depositio* figures served as both the crucified and the buried Christ. These are the images that the Tauberts and Johannes Tripps associate with the *Depositio* services at Prüfening and Wittenberg. They are literally nailed to the cross—their sculpted bodies are attached to a separate wooden cross by metal or wooden nails placed in the hands and feet of the figures (figs. 43 & 44). Their transference from cross to tomb is further facilitated by the figures' movable arms, which can be folded, enabling the images' burial in the sepulcher. Their arms are connected to the body either by a ball-and-joint or tongue-and-groove mechanism, or by wooden dowels and leather strips that act as hinges (figs. 45, 46 & 47). In the case of a crucified Christ figure from Florence and now at St. Germain des Prés in Paris, a rope was attached to the figure and hidden from view. When pulled, the rope opened the image's mouth and crossed the arms over its torso and allowed for the deposition and burial of the image (fig. 48).<sup>167</sup> There are at least thirty-seven extant crucified Christ images that have movable arms. Without exception these figures come from Swabia, Bavaria, the Tyrol and Northern Italy. The earliest extant examples date to the early fourteenth century, and there are none that date later than the sixteenth century. They are, for the most part, extremely abject (fig. 49). Their mouths hang open and painted blood drips from bruised wounds over emaciated bodies. The incorporation of life-like features including real hair and hollowed chest cavities facilitating the flow of red liquid from the side-wound amplified the realism of

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167. Taubert and Taubert, 86.

these figures (figs. 7 & 12). In the ceremonies of the *Depositio*, these figures and their very real movement from cross to tomb visually affirmed Christ's sacrifice.

### *ASCENSION DAY*

*Elevatio* figures of the Resurrected Christ could also move from one part of ritual practice to another. A 1525 print from Albrecht von Brandenburg's reliquary catalog, the *Heiltums Halleschen*, depicts a figure that resembles the third type mentioned at Durham (fig. 50). This image had a tripartite function: it was a reliquary that contained the blood of Christ, it served as the *Imago Resurreccionis* on Easter Sunday, and it acted as the Ascending Christ image forty days after Easter.<sup>168</sup> By the late fourth century the Ascension was commemorated in a feast forty days after Easter. By the twelfth century this ceremony would develop dramatic aspects similar to the *Depositio*, *Elevatio*, and *Visitatio*. In some communities the Ascension Day drama included an introit trope modeled on the *Quem Queritis* of the *Visitatio*, and occasionally these dramatic elements were incorporated into a procession.<sup>169</sup> At Münster, for instance, during the procession on Ascension Day the words "*Ascendo ad Patrem*" were sung while two priests raised a cross aloft, similar to the *Adoratio Crucis* observation on Good Friday. At Essen certain clerics climbed stairs to a raised platform in imitation of Christ ascending.<sup>170</sup>

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168. *Breviary*, Halle, 1532, 108r-110r:151; transcribed in Krause, 351 and is discussed in Krause, 165 and Chipps Smith, 150-153.

169. Young only postulates that the form of this antiphon could have developed into an paraliturgical play like the *Quem Queritis*. He does not provide any evidence that it ever attained this form. Young, *DMC*, i, 197-198.

170. *Ibid.*, 483.

Documents from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries record the use of a figured image of Christ in Ascension Day celebrations.<sup>171</sup> The 1587 ordinary from Bamberg describes the liturgical drama occurring in its “traditional place” in the afternoon. The image was placed upon a mensa, or platform, in front of the choir. After a blessing with holy water and incense, the celebrant and his deacons lifted the image aloft by hand, singing *Ascendo ad Patrem*. They then lowered the image as two choirs boys, situated above them, sang *Viri Galilaei*. This process took place three times, and then the image was slowly and finally drawn up through an opening in the roof as bits of unconsecrated wafer and drops of water showered down upon the congregation.<sup>172</sup>

The *Ordo* from Moosburg presents a highly detailed record of an Ascension Day ceremony:

After None it is an ancient custom of ours to perform the Ascension of the Lord. A tent or little hut of boards covered by fine cloths shall be constructed exactly in the middle of the church, on the floor beneath the opening in the high vault. This represents Mount Sinai. Within the little shelter is placed an image of the Savior, suitably clothed in a humerale, a tucked up alb, with a stole and mantle, or some similar items of costume found suitable. He shall hold a banner in one hand. A thin rope shall pass through the hole in the vault down to the image of the Savior, so that with its help the image can be raised. Two wreaths of flowers must also hang from two other cords. One wreath shall enclose the likeness of a dove, and in the other shall be the likeness of an angel. There must also be a third ring twined in pieces of silk. This shall hang tranquilly in the opening in the vault, and through it pass the cords. The image of the Savior shall be raised through it as if into Heaven.<sup>173</sup>

The *Ordo* goes on to describe a complex dramatic observance in which clergy dressed as the Virgin and the Apostles address and engage the image in antiphons and responses.

The image is slowly hoisted first out of the “tent” that represents Mount Sinai and finally

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171. According to Hans-Joachim Krause, most sources date to the fifteenth and first-third of the sixteenth centuries. There is nothing before the twelfth century. Krause, 284.

172. For the full text see Krause, 350.

173. For the full text see Transcribed in Young, *DMC*, i, 484-485.

through a hole in the nave roof.<sup>174</sup> An anonymous copper engraving from 1784 shows what this ceremony would have looked like (fig. 51). The congregants crowd the nave and watch as the Ascension figure is raised along with two angels through the hole in the roof or *Himmelloch* as Holy Water and paper blessings rain down upon them.

Sculptures of the Resurrected Christ and the Ascendant Christ conform to the same iconographic type—Christ dressed in a loin cloth and cloak, right arm raised in benediction, and a banner in the left hand (fig. 52, 53, & 54). Some are surrounded by mandorlas and supported by undulating clouds or grassy hillocks (figs. 55 & 56). It is, in fact, impossible to determine whether an extant Christ figure was used in one service or the other.<sup>175</sup> But it is clear from certain documents that some *Elevatio* Christ figures, like the one from Halle, also served at the center of Ascension Day observances. In Prüfening, the *Imago Resurrectionis* remained on the altar from Easter Sunday to Ascension Day.<sup>176</sup> In 1497, another figure from the parish church of St. John in Torun is described as being raised into the vault during the Ascension Day service, but it was also identified as a Resurrection image in the inscription on its garments which read *alleluia resurrexit*, the first words of the antiphon sung by the Three Marys during the *Visitatio* on

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174. Similar ceremonies can be found in documents from Augsburg, Berlin, and Meissen. The Berlin ceremony can be found in Young, 484. The Meissen (1520) is in Krause, 284-288.

175. Hans Ruedi Weber divides these images into four iconographic types. The first he identifies as a Resurrection type. It is characterized by an attachment to a base which resembles a hill or “slice of earth.” Weber calls the second type Ascension figures. These include three-dimensional images that are attached to “cloud” bases. Type three includes two-dimensional or images carved in low relief. Weber defines the type four as Ascension figures characterized by the addition of mandorlas or rainbows, clouds, and wreaths of angels. While Weber’s system is helpful for organizing the images, associating one type with the Ascension and another with the *Elevatio* on Easter Sunday is an impractical and unnecessary reduction of these figures to one function. Weber, 50-51.

176. “Deinde ante altare trium regum in monasterio locetur mensa parua pallio quasi altaris cooperta super qua locetur mensa parua pallio quasi altaris cooperta super qua rite disponatur arcus pro leuacione ymaginis resurreccionis fune desuper tabulato demisso suspensoque.” For full transcription see Krause, 351.

Easter Sunday.<sup>177</sup> And again we turn to Thomas Naogeorgus (via Barnabe Googe) describes an Ascension Day ceremony where “The blocke that on the aultar still, still then was seene to stande, Is drawne vp hie aboue the rooffe, by ropes, and force of hande.”<sup>178</sup>

The elevation process was an elaborate technical undertaking. It was first necessary to construct a hole in the church roof so that the figure could ascend and disappear from the congregation’s view. These holes, or *Himmellochen*, were usually located in the yoke of the nave preceding the choir. They were commonly decorated with appropriate images including prophets and angels who held scrolls inscribed with prophesy of the Ascension and the animal symbols of the four evangelists (fig. 57). In this way, the function of the *Himmelloch* is visually framed by biblical precedent and prophesy.<sup>179</sup> The actual elevation of the Christ figure was accomplished by a complex system of ropes and pulleys which were similar to the mechanical devices constructed by Filippo Brunelleschi in 1420 for the Feast of the Annunciation in the Florence Duomo. The drawings of Bonaccorso Ghiberti provide a good idea of how Brunelleschi’s apparatus functioned (figs. 58 & 59). The English translation of the inscription reads:

This iron handle-bar (is used) so that (the wheels) move faster, since the cross-(device alone) would lose much (speed and time).

This tube is (made) of leaded iron fixed on the “throne”; inside it Has a copper lantern and an iron wire is below. When a cord, as is Shown on the drawing, is pulled, it sends lights out of the tube. One cord sends out six or eight of them, so that when it is time (to do so) they all come out simultaneously.<sup>180</sup>

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177. Krause, 333.

178. See n. 138.

179. Haastrup, 161-162.

180. This translation is provided by Goetz Pochat, 232-234. The text of the folio (MS. BR 228, cart. 115r) reads: “questo manicho di fero perche vadia piu forte che cho la-per [de] rebe ttropo/questo chanone e di fero istangniatto apichatto I sul ttrono che ve denttro una luccernuza de rame che a una filo di fero disotto che ttirato uno spagho chome vedi disehniatto fa isthizare fuori...del chanone e’ uno spagho ne

This Italian device is particularly sophisticated, but we can assume that German elevation apparatus consisted of similar sets of ropes and pulleys. Bonaccorso's drawing also provides us with the third aspect of the elevation technique: attachment to the figure. In his drawing we see a mandorla which allowed the elevation of the boy who played the Angel Gabriel in the Annunciation observance into the roof above. An iron ring was attached to the top of this mandorla and a rope passed through the ring. Although we cannot definitively determine whether extant Christ sculptures functioned in the *Elevatio* on Easter Sunday, their identification as Ascension Day figures is often confirmed by the presence of a mandorla and/or the incorporation of an iron ring that facilitated their elevation on Ascension Day (figs. 60, 61, & 62).

The account of movable Christ sculptures and the structure and characteristics of Holy Week and Ascension Day practices in the preceding pages provides a description of the images' first function. In a series of dramatic rituals that collectively recalled and re-enacted Christ's redemptive sacrifice, Resurrection, and Ascension these images served as the visual and performative heart of the observances. By my count, there are approximately one hundred extant movable sculptures of Christ.<sup>181</sup> While this may seem like a large number, I should emphasize that there are only twenty to thirty of each type including *Palmeseln*, *Ölberge*, movable crucifixes, effigies of the dead Christ and their

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pingnie 6 o 8 in modo che quando e ttenpo ttute a un otta venghono fuori. The English translation is Pochat's.

181. I readily admit that a more comprehensive (and expensive) assessment of all museums—especially local Diözesen, Städten, and Landesmuseen in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland—of private collections and of auction catalogs is required in order to arrive at a definitive count of these image types. I am confident that all of the examples available in various publications have been accounted for in this study. But my own “fieldwork,” which I undertook in 1995, 1996, and 1997, was necessarily limited. I did find, however, a number of images that had not been previously considered in the scholarship and a few instances where sculptures that had been included in published studies were no longer available, having either been removed, sold to private parties, or lost altogether.

accompanying sepulchers, and Resurrection and Ascension figures. The vast majority come from southern Germany, eastern Switzerland, and Austria and date to the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Their small number and narrow provenance is surprising when you consider that Holy Week practices were observed in literally tens of thousands of communities over many centuries.

Why are these image types so limited in number and scope? One easy answer is that they simply were not common, and infrequent reference to such images in written sources appears to support this conclusion. A more interesting reply, however, considers movable Christ figures within the complex artistic, spiritual, social, and visual environment of late medieval and early modern Europe. Their seemingly sudden occurrence around the fourteenth century coincides with the increasingly image-centered nature of public and private worship, while the general departure of these images from the arti-factual and textual record during the sixteenth century corresponds with the spread of Protestantism and outbreaks of iconoclasm. Though the documents that prescribe their use in the Church ritual provide little indication of how these images were meant to be understood, situating movable images of Christ in their cultural and historical surroundings offers insights into how their material form and performative function generated connotations beyond those immediately apparent from the described services above.

What follows in the next chapter is a discussion of the specific implications that the cultural and historical context of medieval piety, the documents of function, and the variants of form had for movable Christ sculptures. The first lives of movable Christ sculptures are situated in the super-fluid, liminal environment between the late medieval



and the early modern. They were Catholic objects used in medieval rituals that transformed earthly space into sacred space and solidified social relationships and institutions. They were also abused by critics of the Church and reused in ways that fostered a sense of community and belief by challenging existing institutions and creating new ones on the eve of the modern period.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Sacred Bodies in Ritualized Spaces

#### *MOVEMENT AND NARRATIVITY*

##### *Sacred History*

In late medieval Europe religious observance was expected of, practiced by, and common to all. From baptism at birth to last rites, life was grounded in the “basic cultural structure” of the sacraments and the annual cycle of the Church.<sup>182</sup> As the central archetype of Christian ritual, the Mass formed the center of all other liturgical and para-liturgical observances. The scriptural directive given by Christ to “do this in remembrance of me” fostered a ritual representation that followed the story of Christ’s “most glorious passion and resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven.”<sup>183</sup> The anamnesis of the original sacrifice was conceived as a dramatic reenactment of the paschal mystery.<sup>184</sup> Rather than a simple commemoration of a past event, it carried with it the sense of being there, participating, joining with, and making present. Both ritual and drama shared this mimetic re-presentation, each blurring the boundaries between a remembered past and the present moment in a performed enactment. The dramatic rituals of Holy Week and the Easter season constituted the most elaborate re-presentation of this sacred narrative and movable Christ sculptures were at their center.

Christian concepts of time include the earthly and heavenly. God’s time is eternal, while human time is defined by change. According to Augustine there is a

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182. Van Engen, 546. For the same point made by a different author see Scribner, *PCPM*, 18.

183. Dix, 214.

184. Robert Taft, “The Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34 (1980); 70.

“present of past things, a present of present things, and a present of future things. Some such different times do exist in the mind, but nowhere else that I can see. The present of past things is the memory; the present of present things is direct perception; and the present of future things is expectation.”<sup>185</sup> Augustine’s formulation describes time as fluid and locates it in the mental action of the perceiver where it is at once historical, “actual,” and “potential.”<sup>186</sup> The Augustinian concept of time, the Judeo-Christian exegetical practice, the Church calendar, and visual traditions like block books stressed a continual sacred history whereby one past personage or event prefigured or signified a subsequent one.<sup>187</sup> The latter fulfills the former, and even though the two are historically distinct, their full realization and significance reside in the mimetic and metaphoric relationship between them.

Saint Anselm, in his *Cur Deus Homo*, also identified sacred history as relative time that allows access for all “since not all men who were to be saved were able to be present when Christ made that redemption, there was so much efficacy in His death the effect of His death extends even to those who are absent in space and time.”<sup>188</sup>

Religious observance made that absence present. In devotional tracts and liturgical

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185. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.

186. H. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, (New York: Blackwell, 1991), 191. For a summary of Christian time as it relates to worship see Jean Danielou, “The Concept of History in the Christian Tradition,” *Journal of Religion* 30 (1950): 171-179.

187. James Marrow notes how Kurt Ruh and F.P. Pickering in the 1940s argued that the increased interest in the narrative of Christ’s life and the devotion to his human suffering was related to the exegetical tradition and that Old Testament prefigurations provided much of the detail and expanded symbolism of images, both textual and visual, of the Gospels. *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance* (Kortrijk, Netherlands: Van Ghemmert, 1979) and “‘Circumdede runt me canes multi:’ Christ’s Tormentors in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance,” *Art Bulletin* 59 (June 1977), 66-68. F. P. Pickering, *Literature and Art in the Middle Ages* (London: Macmillan, 1970). Erich Auerbach discusses the place and function of Augustinian hermeneutics in literary imitation. *Mimesis: The Representations of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), especially 66-74.

188. Quoted by Alfred Acres, “The Columba Altarpiece and the Time of the World,” *Art Bulletin* 80 (Sept. 1998): 422-451.

directions, for instance, the viewer is almost always addressed in the present tense. In the *Meditationes*, the faithful are asked to “reflect thus and see Him,” to “behold” Christ in the moment.<sup>189</sup> The ardent iconoclast Savonrola remarked that “one should watch and meditate on one’s Crucifix, always thinking “God is dead, crucified by me.”<sup>190</sup> And in Wolf Traut’s devotional woodcut of 1512 the words and gestures of the Man of Sorrows and the Mater Dolorosa stop the viewer in their tracks, demanding “Behold [you] who pass by because you [are] the cause of my sorrow” (fig. 63).<sup>191</sup> In these forms of private devotion, human and personal responsibility for sin and sacrifice is eternally replayed with a temporal immediacy. The participants’ interaction lends the narrative its full meaning because here and only here is “the time of action and suffering fully restored.”<sup>192</sup>

In the liturgy, the congregation and clergy similarly moved between present time and sacred history. Amalarius of Metz, Hugh of St. Victor, Rupert of Deutz, and

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189. Miles, 70.

190. *Op. cit.*, Ringbom, 20 from G. Gruyer, *Les illustrations des écrits de Jérôme Savonarole et les paroles de Savonarole sur l’art* (Paris, 1879). The seemingly ironic directive of image use from an acclaimed iconoclast is less so when one considers that Savonrola’s iconoclasm was as much about the sensual excesses of misdirected wealth as it was about the blasphemy of misdirected worship. As with Bernard of Clairvaux and Andreas Karlstadt, in this case we see the paradigm of the image loving and image using iconodule.

191. Chipps Smith, 10.

192. Paul Ricoeur echoes Augustine and Anselm in his discussion of the narrative self and “human time.” He divides the temporal into “cosmic time” that is the time of the world unfolding as a sequence of uniform, qualitatively undifferentiated moments in which all change occurs, and “lived time” or the time of our lives. The intersection of these two times is “historical time” which in turn becomes human time “to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode.” Human time is narrative by virtue of the fact that it is offered in episodes that are plotted by the self and by others. Significant moments for the individual derive their “meaning from its connection with the whole, from the relation between future and past.” Ricoeur’s concept of narrative identity is an eschatological moment framed by the agent’s space of experience and horizons of expectation. *Time and Narrative*, 45 & 118, see also his chapter on “The Narrative Function” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 294. For a helpful discussion of Ricoeur’s conception of narrative identity, see David Rasmussen, “Rethinking Subjectivity: Narrative Identity and the Self,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 2 (Winter, 1986): 159-72.

Honorius of Autun explained liturgical action as the unfolding of different temporal planes which occurred simultaneously.<sup>193</sup> Each Mass is a reenactment of Christ's original sacrifice and is related to every other Mass in an annual cycle that repeats itself. The Mass denotes the original sacrifice that remains constant in "absolute time."<sup>194</sup> But its connotation changes giving the same central observance either joyous or somber tones depending on whether it is performed at Christmas or on Maundy Thursday.<sup>195</sup> During the ceremonies of Holy Week and the Easter season, absolute time and the annual cycle of the Church calendar are aligned with linear and sequential chronology in a detailed "rememoration" Christ's Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension.<sup>196</sup> Through this alignment the eschatological and Christological unity of creation, time, and the Old and New Covenants are made manifest in dramatic action.<sup>197</sup> In medieval liturgy and para-liturgical observances, special settings, ritual gesture, and religious imagery had deep symbolic and social value. Together they actualized, in the present time of the ceremony, a past or future event that was mysteriously and dramatically recreated or anticipated amongst the community of believers. During a *Palmesel* procession or the deposition of a crucifix on Good Friday, the edifying, experiential, and devotional function of images and worship as stressed in Gregorian image theology and visually diagrammed in *Biblia Pauperi* became accessible across time in live action.

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193. G. R. Evans, "Hugh of St. Victor on History and Meaning of Things," *Studia monastica* 25 (1983): 223-234; Valerie J. Flint, "World History in the Early Twelfth Century: The 'Imago mundi' of Honorius Augustodunensis," in *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages. Essays Presented to Richard William Southern*, ed. R.H.C. Davis and J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981): 212-238; and O.B. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 39-40.

194. Hardison, 82. This is also described as a sense of "all time" by Margot Fassler, "Liturgy and Sacred History in the Twelfth-Century Tympana at Chartres," *Art Bulletin* 75 (Sep., 1993): 499-520.

195. Hardison, 83.

196. Hardison's usage, e.g. 44 & 67.

197. Chambers, 86-87.

## *Ritual and Social Space*

Together, the “whole exterior apparatus” of the religious experience including ritual and sacred objects forms “a body of collective beliefs and practices endowed with a certain authority” that reflects underlying social structures and allows for the reshaping of those structures.<sup>198</sup> As such rituals are a set of conventions by which people sacralize their place in the world. This sacralization offers a means of social unity, order, and change and allows individuals to experience their community and themselves as part of a larger reality that “calls the community into being with such power...it affects our presence at that event.”<sup>199</sup> Ritual carries cultural meaning as a symbolic system and that system shapes the ways that social actors see, feel, and think about the world through representation and remodeling. As symbolic performance, ritual is a “model” that describes society as it is and inventively suggests ways in which that society is formed or can be reformed.<sup>200</sup> Like all things sacred, religious ritual emphasizes the transcendent

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198. Emile Durkheim describes ritual as only a superficial part. I take issue with this. My argument is that the visual is far from superficial it is an active agent in the social structuring or reflection of social order that Durkheim seeks to discover. But I do agree with his contention that “collective representations which express collective realities; rites are a manner of acting which takes rise in the midst of assembled groups and which are destined to excite, maintain, or recreate certain mental states in these groups.” This excerpt and the quote above are from “Individualism and the Intellectuals” quoted in Robert N. Bellah, *Emile Durkheim: On Morality and Society, Selected Writings* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), 51. The sociological and anthropological Durkheimian model unlike the philosophy or phenomenology of religion approach considers all elements of religion and the religious experience as a natural or cultural happening rather than a transcendental experience. Even though individuals and communities might experience it as something “wholly other” it is not. Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade fall on the other side of the issue. They stress the transcendental and experiential nature of religious ritual. See ns. 111 & 112. More recently in the works of Ricoeur and Merleau-Ponty, the social, symbolic, physical, and transcendental approach to religion and particularly religious ritual has been reframed and discussed in a more generous and less limiting manner. See n. 21.

199. Margaret Mead, *Twentieth Century Faith: Hope and Survival* (New York: Harper, 1972), 127, *op. cit.*, Richard F. Hardin, “‘Ritual’ in Recent Criticism: the Elusive Sense of Community” *PMLA* 98 (Oct., 1983): 851; and Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 19.

200. As the anthropologist Clifford Gertz notes: “In ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world.” *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 112.

stressing the events' extraordinary character. It is a liminal occasion which results in a "betwixt and between" state of *communitas*.<sup>201</sup> Liminality provides a way of understanding why "numinous" feelings or expectations of timelessness and dislocation that characterize the experience of the sacred are attributable to ritual activities and performances and to certain literary or visual objects associated with ritual including movable Christ sculptures.

Images are central to most rituals. Both image and ritual take "us out of ordinary time while at the same time opening us up to the true possibility of community."<sup>202</sup> Images "communicate between human and divine realms...in ritualized exchange." They "establish the social basis of communion...create and organize memory," and they "fuel constructive synthetic acts of imagination in the kind of meaning-making practices that form a basic aspect of religious experiences."<sup>203</sup> This activation in human life is what lends the image its power of presence. The ritualized spectacle and the public display of religion is not a collection of images, rather, it is a social relationship between people mediated by images and movable sculptures of Christ are no exception.<sup>204</sup> "Released at special moments of ritual festivity," these images acted at the center of the dramatic

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201. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 52-53. Also see Van Gennep's classic *Rites of Passage* (1909) and a discussion of Turner and Van Gennep in Bell, 35-43.

202. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 122-124, 290-5.

203. David Morgan's discussion of the operations by which images participate in religious practice captures this expanded view of the image in the ritualized experience of the sacred. David Morgan, "Introduction," in *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, eds. David Morgan and Sally Promey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 2-3.

204. Sally Promey, "The Public Display of Religion," in *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, 27-48.

narration of the sacred history in the observances of Holy Week, Easter, and Ascension Day fusing the earthly participants and the divine and sainted personalities portrayed.<sup>205</sup>

As dramatic action, religious ritual involves “impersonation” which “consists in physical imitation”.<sup>206</sup> And impersonation is more than mere representation of a character; it is the ability to “resemble” the character. Performance elides both the line between thought and action in the body and the line between participant and viewer in the sensory, emotional, and spatial ritual experience. Participants in liturgical events become

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205. John Bossy, “The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe,” *Past and Present* (May, 1970): 61.

206. Young, *DMC*, i, 80. To equate ritual with theater is to say that theater recreates in the present that which it represents in the past. The Catholic Mass reconstitutes systematically the mystery of the Redemption—the death and Resurrection of Christ. In the twelfth century Honorius of Autun echoing Amalarius of Metz made a comparison between ancient drama and the Mass very clear: “It is known that those who recited tragedies in theaters presented the actions of opponents by gestures before the people. In the same way our tragic author represents by his gestures in the theater of the Church before the Christian people the struggle of Christ.” From the *Gemma animae* as quoted by O.B. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 39-40. By the early twentieth century, literary scholars namely Karl Young and E.K Chambers recognized these parallelisms and sought to find the source of early modern drama in medieval Church ritual. They traced the development of early modern drama from its roots in the prescribed rite to the popular performances that played out in the nave and on the market stage. O.B. Hardison takes issue with the way that Young and Chambers define drama and assemble its history. Hardison astutely points out that the developmental model in which dramatic forms evolve over the centuries from simple to more elaborate is itself the product of Social Darwinism and Hegelian idealism. Hardison contends that Chambers and Young overlook or ignore evidence that does not agree with their evolutionary model. When highly complex ceremonies from the eleventh and twelfth century do not fit nicely into their constructed teleology, Chambers and Young dismiss them as anomalies and neither adequately addresses the issue of regional diversity. Both assume, for instance, that fifteenth century English morality and mystery plays not only represent the culmination of dramatic development in the liturgy but that these plays also set the standard for vernacular drama throughout Europe-- regardless of continental examples which suggest otherwise. A more careful analysis of the primary texts indicates that various institutions, orders, and parishes had less need for elaborate dramatic action than others. The degree of dramatic complexity and realism depended as much on the place of performance as on whether the performance occurred in the eleventh or in the sixteenth century. In particular see Hardison’s chapter on “Darwin, Mutations, and Medieval Drama” in *Christian Rite and Christian Drama*, 1-34. Martin Stevens maintains that medieval rite and drama were mutually exclusive since rite is composed of prescribed gesture as well as theological significance which go far beyond the staging of performance. For a complete list of sources on medieval drama up until the mid-twentieth century see *Bibliography of Medieval Drama*, ed. Carl J. Stratman (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954). In more general terms, Ronald Grimes points out that ritual is “theater’s next of kin,” and the two intersect in the “fundamental impulse toward stylization, mimesis, and transformation.” *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 164. And Victor Turner models his concept of religious ritual as social drama in five stages that move from breach to crisis to redress, and can result in either reintegration or schism. Following Arnold Van Gennep, Turner calls this dramatic state of being outside the categories of routine social life and social order. See *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* and “Dramatic Ritual/Ritual Drama.”



*dramatis personae* able to penetrate the wall between the “ordinary” and the “dramatic” worlds.<sup>207</sup> With definite roles assigned to participants and a plot with rising action culminating in the dramatic reversal Christ’s Resurrection; the observances of Holy Week and Ascension Day thus provided opportunities for Christians to enter into redemptive history and the drama of the liturgical calendar. When the nuns at the convent of St. Katherine in Wil, for instance, processed their little *Palmesel* along a path designated for the Stations of the Cross, they not only performatively prefigured Christ’s jubilant entry with the torment of his last hours, they transformed their community into the holy city itself (fig. 64). In this visual and performative action; the sculpture became Christ the King, and the community became Jerusalem, and reenactment became realization.

Since religious ritual resides between accepted social behavior and the “assumed structure of reality,” it brings the two together.<sup>208</sup> As an event outside of the norm, ritual is the way in which communities deal with conflict, tension, and ambiguity assert their identity in a dynamic and creative catharsis. As such, dramatic ritual affords insight into how public rituals articulated and maintained norms for Christian self-understanding, created sacred space and time, and determined social relationships during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Dialogues between Christ and various biblical personages framed idealized relationships between Christians and Christ and inserted the community and the

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207. Hans-Jürgen Diller, “Theatrical Pragmatics: The Actor-Audience Relationship from the Myster Cycle to the Early Tudor Comedies,” in *Drama in the Middle Ages, Comparative and Critical Essays*, 321-22. This is what Paul Ricoeur calls “creative imitation.” Creative imitation is not a mere “copy of some preexisting reality... if we translate mimesis by ‘representation’..., we must not understand by this word some redoubling of presence, as we could still do for Platonic mimesis, but rather the break that opens the space for fiction. *Time and Narrative*, 45.

208. Clifford Geertz goes on to say that “between ethos and world view, between the approved style of life and the assumed structure of reality” wherein “there is conceived to be a simple and fundamental congruence such that they complete one another and lend one another meaning.” “Ethos, World-view and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols,” *The Antioch Review* 17 (1957): 426.

individual into the biblical narrative. These mythic ritualizations structured modes of being, cuing appropriate emotions and habits in response to the dramatization and rehearsal of the Christian story and community life. And again, movable Christ sculptures were at the center of this phenomenon.

In the 1517 *Depositio* service from the *Stiftskirche* (collegiate church) in the university town of Wittenberg a movable Christ sculpture moved at the center of a ceremony which not only remade sacred time and space, it also confirmed the social order.<sup>209</sup> Like Prüfening, the service occurred in front of the altar of the Holy Cross in the middle of the church. The altar was materially transformed into the Holy Sepulcher by the addition of a screen decorated with implements of the Passion and burning candles. The service occurred at Vespers during Mass, “in the great choir” behind the altar of the Holy Cross. “The benefactor took down the image of dear Lord and Savior from the cross,” and the image is carried to the altar on a stretcher. It is assumed that the “benefactor” in the service was none other than the patron of the *Stiftskirche*, Fredrick the Wise himself. Thus the ceremony was characterized by ecclesiastical and royal grandeur appropriate to the Prince of Saxony.<sup>210</sup> The benefactor was accompanied by four custodians dressed in “*Juden Klyder*,” (Jewish clothing) who took the roles of Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and their two servants.

At the sepulcher, fourteen men of Wittenberg dressed in mourning clothes and symbolizing the fourteen holy saints met the benefactor and his entourage. The clerk of the Elector, the rector of the University, the provost and deacon of the church, and the mayor of Wittenberg enlisted the fourteen men from the local population of poor citizens

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209. This service is recorded in both German and Latin, and the Tauberts describe the Wittenberg document as “a liturgical action...not a liturgical source.” Taubert and Taubert, 98-99.

210. Ibid.

and students. Before the service the fourteen citizens were bathed and endowed with “victim’s money” so that they could participate in the Good Friday service and a series of visitations to the sepulcher which occurred that evening and throughout the day on Holy Saturday. The text instructed the fourteen citizens to approach the service and the vigils with reverence and sorrow for “our Lord and Savior” and with the health and well-being of the “humble servant of the Church and the whole of Christendom, our Lord, the Prince of Saxony.” After the meeting of the fourteen and the civic leaders at the sepulcher, the Deposition ended when the celebrant covered the image of Christ’s corpus in silk cloths, leaving its face open to view. A period of mourning followed the service. From Matins on Good Friday to Matins on Holy Saturday, a series of somber vigils took place in the dimly lit, imageless church. At different times during Easter eve the fourteen citizens visited the sepulcher. The men removed their “Juden” clothes before the last vigil and donned “rich” new garments. Then, in the dark of early morning they led a candlelight procession to the altar sepulcher, and the entire congregation prayed in front of the Host and the image of Christ entombed in the altar.<sup>211</sup>

The Wittenberg text is an excellent example of the use of a movable crucifix in the localized liturgical and para-liturgical activities that occurred throughout Germany in the interim between the *Depositio* on Good Friday and the *Elevatio* on Easter Sunday. The selection of the fourteen and their participation in *Triduum* observances was a common practice and was as much a civic affair as it was a religious observance. The dramatic rituals in which movable Christ sculptures performed were transformative,

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211. Reg. O 158, pp. 25-32, Ernestinisches Gesamtarchive, Weimar; transcribed in Taubert and Taubert, 98-101.

public and shared.<sup>212</sup> The celebrant and the congregation were immediately involved in dramatic experience when they took on the role of Christ and the community of saints respectively. The past and the future pass “into the actuality of the present happening” as real utterances and real actions refigure historical utterances and historical actions.<sup>213</sup> During medieval Holy Week and Ascension Day services congregants, clerics, and images assumed the role of Christ’s friends and enemies, becoming Judas, Pilate, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, the Virgin, the Apostles, and the “poor Hebrew children” in their appearance and actions. And in these roles they ordered and reaffirmed social structure and relationships.

The enactment of Christ’s life in the Holy Week and Ascension Day dramas made discordant events concordant through the catharsis of the spectator.<sup>214</sup> Fulfillment of the sacred narrative was dependant on its reception. The image as the central symbolic element in the story was not simply as an object that represented or “re-doubled” Christ; it was brought into being through the practical activity of those whose lives brought it into being originally either as makers, patrons, or participants with it. It was constructed and continued to be modified by the community through communal action, and the topography of the community became its narrative frame. Christ made repeated appearances in the guise of *Palmesel*, *Ölberg* figure, Christ Crucified and Christ Ascendant in a series of scenic moments that transposed the past into the temporal and

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212. Mary Suydam, “Begune Textuality: Sacred Performances,” in *Performance and Transformation, New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, eds. Mary A. Suydam and Joanna E. Ziegler (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 174.

213. J.A. Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, trans. Francis Brunner, vols. 1 & 2 (New York: Benzinger Bros., 1950), ii, 203.

214. Dirk Van den Berg, “Spectators in Jerusalem: Urban Narrative in the Scenic Tradition,” *Image & Word* 3 (K.U. Leuven, *Image & Word, an online magazine of Visual Narrative*), <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/illustrations/dirkvandenberg.htm> (accessed February 2004).

spatial reality of the particular community that “re-presented” it (fig. 65).<sup>215</sup> These moments played out in processions, vigils, depositions, and elevations converting the “place of the story (Jerusalem) into the story’s places (the sequence of scenic settings) and, finally, into the story of a place (the community as Jerusalem).”<sup>216</sup> Walking side by side with the *Palmesel* or praying with Christ at the *Ölberg*, the faithful became “choric spectators” and active participants in Christ’s life and redemptive history.<sup>217</sup> When Christ sculptures were put into mimetic motion during dramatic ritual, immanent action became actual movement intensifying the image’s power of presence and allowing for the recovery of sacred space and time.

#### *MIMESIS AND CORPOREALITY*

The elision of time in the mimetic actions of the liturgical narrative is related to the elision of the line between image and reality. As mimetic representations of Christ’s body, movable images of Christ merged the symbolic, the spiritual, and the corporeal. Justification of images as conduits to the divine depended on Christ’s somatic incarnation and his Real Presence in the Eucharist. Looking to Genesis and the Synoptic Gospels, the Chalcedonian Ecumenical Council in the fifth century agreed that “at no point was the difference between the natures [human and divine] taken away through the union, but

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215. This idea is still current and comes directly from Pope Benedict X’s usage. Cardinal John Ratzenberger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (Ft. Collins, CO: Ignatius Press, 2000), 153.

216. Dirk Van den Berg, “Spectators in Jerusalem: Urban Narrative in the Scenic Tradition.” *Image & Word, an online magazine of Visual Narrative*, 3. K.U. Leuven, <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/illustrations/dirkvandenberg.htm> (accessed February 2004).

217. Norman Bryson, *Word and image: French painting of the ancien régime*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

rather the property of both natures is preserved.”<sup>218</sup> God made man in his image and assumed the corporeality of man in Christ. When the Second Council of Nicea established the doctrine of Incarnation in the late eight century, it was determined that “the real and not imaginary” humanity of the incarnate *Logos* can, and should, be depicted in “representational art.”<sup>219</sup> Depictions of the sacred were acceptable objects of veneration precisely because God himself had assumed the image of man in Christ. Transubstantiation defined as doctrine in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council and again between 1545 and 1563 at the Council of Trent contributed to the conflation of the image of Christ and his Real Presence. In Christ’s declaration “this is my body” and “this is my blood” the Church insisted that the “is” be understood literally.<sup>220</sup> And if Christ is substantially present in the Host, it is only natural that the elements of his earthly image in the Host should be adored as well. Incarnation and Transubstantiation thus endowed medieval image theology with a fascinating semiotic dynamic. The relationship between representation and referent became a self-reflecting, cyclical series of sign and signified. The image of Christ is an image of God in the corporeal visage of man who was, in turn, created in God’s image and is forever present in the material world through His body and blood in the bread and wine.<sup>221</sup>

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218. *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Fordham University Center for Medieval Studies, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/chalcedon.html> (accessed Dec. 2004).

219. See n. 70.

220. Matthias Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, trans. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1946), 469-539. See also Douglas Burnham, “The Riddle of Transubstantiation,” and Alison Yarrington, “Sculptural Transubstantiations: Reflections upon Wax, Flesh and Stone, Blood, Bread and Bone,” and in the *Poetics of Transubstantiation: From Theology to Metaphor*, ed. Douglas Burnham and Enrico Giaccherini (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 1-10, 162-171.

221. “If Christ is the ‘image of God’ Christ is from God.” That is, an image is an image of what is “manifested; but God is manifested; Christ therefore is the image.” Marius Victorinus, *Against Arius*, 1A 18.34-19.21 in *Fathers of the Church: Theological Treatises on the Trinity*, C. Marius Victorinus, trans. Mary T. Clark (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1980), 114.

## *The Body of Christ*

The ultimate Christological mimesis is rooted in the Eucharistic recreation of Christ's body and blood done in *remembrance* of him.<sup>222</sup> Though the bread and wine seem material unchanged after consecration, the imperceptibility of miraculous transformation is explained by the doctrine of Transubstantiation as the difference between the substance or true reality of the consecrated bread and wine and their accidents or visible and tangible characteristics. When the Sanctus bell rings and the words of consecration are said, the sensible accidents of form remain but the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ. This was visually substantiated by the legendary Mass of St. Gregory in which the challenge to Christ's "real presence" was answered by his corporeal appearance on the altar in place of the Eucharist (fig. 66). Throughout the medieval period, devotion to the Host as corporeal sacrament was a part of doctrine and worship. Berthold of Regensburg delivered a sermon in the late thirteenth century suggesting that when the Host is elevated at the moment of consecration, the faithful should "See the Son of God who, for your sakes, shows his wounds to the heavenly Father; see the Son of God who, for your sakes, was thus lifted on the cross; see the Son of God who will come to judge the living and the dead."<sup>223</sup> By the fifteenth century the Host stood alongside the relics of the saints as the center of liturgical and popular religious practices, becoming the most effective sacred object. During daily Mass Christ's bodily presence within the sacrament was deemed so powerful that one could receive spiritual communion simply by gazing upon the Host at

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222. Luke 22:19b.

223. *Op. cit.*, Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, i, 121.

the moment of consecration.<sup>224</sup> The Sacrament's power continued to be effective outside of sanctioned liturgical boundaries as the consecrated Host performed numerous miracles within the community. It affected weather, insured a bountiful harvest, healed the sick, and was known to bleed when attacked or on its own accord.<sup>225</sup> In an interesting example of art imitating legend, the English Croxton Sacrament Play retells the story of the conversion of a Spanish Jew in 1461. The man and his three friends kidnapped the Host and boiled it in oil. When that did not destroy the Sacrament, they tried to bake it but the oven burst and a figure of the wounded Christ appeared from the undamaged bread. The Jew, seeing the error of his ways, begged forgiveness and converted to Christianity.<sup>226</sup> In this scene, as in the Mass of St. Gregory, the Eucharistic Host miraculously transforms from the symbolic and literal body of Christ to a figurative image.

Amalarius, in his directions for the Ascension Day liturgy of the ninth century made the association between the Host and other manifestations of Christ's image:

Sacraments should have likeness of the things for which they are sacraments. Therefore the celebrant should be like Christ, just as the bread, wine and water are similar to the body of Christ.<sup>227</sup>

He went on to say that when the *Gloria in Excelsis* is sung during the Mass, the bishop moves to the right of the altar, thus becoming an image of Christ after the Resurrection. He then directed the celebrant to bless the congregation, give his salutation, and turn to

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224. Ibid., 80-92; Huizinga, 159-160; Charles Zika, "Host, Processions and Pilgrimages: Controlling the Sacred in Fifteenth-Century Germany," *Past and Present* 118 (February, 1988): 31-33

225. See Zika et al., "Bleeding Hosts and their Contact Relics in Late Medieval Northern Germany," *Medieval History Journal* 7 (2004): 227-241. All scholars who discuss the Host in medieval piety reference Peter Browe's work, especially *Die Verehrung der Eucharistie im Mittelalter* (Munich: 1933).

226. Lynette R. Muir, "The Mass on the Medieval Stage," in *Drama in the Middle Ages, Comparative and Critical Essays*, eds. Clifford Davidson and John H. Stroupe (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1991): 227.

227. From the *Liber officialis* as translated by Hardison, 48.



the East, raising his hands in prayer. He noted this as the moment when the celebrant becomes Christ, who led the apostles “as far as Bethany” lifting up his hands and blessing them before the Ascension.<sup>228</sup> This transposition of Christ’s presence also extended to inanimate material images of Christ especially the image of Christ’s crucified body.

### *Host and Crucifix*

The cross easily aligned with the Eucharist. Aquinas claimed the cross was particularly worthy of *adoratio*, “firstly insofar as it represents to us the figure of the One crucified on it, and secondly from contact with Christ’s limbs and because it was soaked with His blood.”<sup>229</sup> Aquinas believed that adoration was due images of the cross because they were simulations of the original Cross of Calvary, and thus could be associated with Christ’s corporeal remnants. In the later medieval period, aniconic crosses and figural crucifixes were equally privileged. In the winter of 1524-35, Luther deemed the Crucifix was appropriate for use in worship and in private contemplation, declaring that “whether I want to or not, when I hear the name of Christ, there appears in my heart the image of a man nailed to a cross, just as my face appears in a mirror when I look at it.”<sup>230</sup>

Crucifixes often had the same miraculous abilities as the consecrated Host. Some believed that archers or marksmen could achieve infallible aim or invulnerability by firing an arrow into the Host or a holy image.<sup>231</sup> The Cistercian monk Caesarius of

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228. *Ibid.*, 76.

229. Aquinas, *S. T.*, III. Q25. Art. 4

230. From *Against the Heavenly Prophets, Concerning Images and the Sacraments*, Wittenberg, 1524-25, *op. cit.*, Michalski, 25-28. Ulrich Zwingli similarly approved of the crucifix: “Since the crucifix of Our Lord does not signify divinity, but alone the humanity and suffering of Christ [they] should everywhere, in the churches and on the streets, in a wayside shrine and wherever one might find them should remain; and no one is riotously to break them, tear them, or bring any wantonness against them, under threat of severe punishment.” Wandel, 95.

231. Scribner, *PCPM*, 11.

Heisterbach described this conflation of Crucifixion and Sacrament in his dialogues on “popular” practices, written sometime between 1220 and 1235.<sup>232</sup> In one episode Caesarius recalls a “lecherous” priest who could not consume the Host because of his transgression and thus buried it. When the priest returned, accompanied by his lover, to burial place in the corner of the church, they “threw back the dust, where they found not the appearance of bread, but the shape, though small, of a man hanging on the cross, fleshy and blood-stained.”<sup>233</sup> The Host had transformed into the image of the abject Christ crucified, and with that transformation came intimations of corporeal power and sacred presence. In a similar but somewhat reversed example, the mystic Juliana of Norwich held a Crucifix before her eyes and watched as it became “a semblance of the living Christ whom she saw by a bodily, spiritual, and intellectual sight.”<sup>234</sup>

When movable sculptures of Christ accompanied the Host in both official and popular ritualized settings, the theological distinction between image and sacrament was further elided and representation and sacred presence were automatically conflated. Movable sculptures of Christ, like the anecdotal and theological instances above, were similarly aligned with the Sacrament and Christ’s corporeality. Their association with the Eucharistic Host was a constant in the services described. The Host was central in

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232. Caesarius of Heisterbach’s *Dialogus Miraculorum* was reprinted five times between 1475 and 1605. There were a number of collections that recounted the miracles and movements of images in the medieval period including Gregory of Tours in the sixth century; the eleventh and twelfth century works of William of Malmesbury and Peter the Venerable; and the thirteenth century collections of Caesarius of Heisterbach, Gautier de Coinci, and Jacques de Vitry. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 299-316.

233. Similarly, “In Himmerode an aged priest, Henry by name, died a few years ago. He was a holy and just man, and had been for very many years sacristan in that monastery. When he was reading the mass one day at the altar of St. John the Baptist, in the choir of the lay-brethren, a certain one of the lay-brethren standing near, saw, in the hands of the priest, the Saviour in the form of a man. Nevertheless the priest himself did not see it. This was told to me by one of the elders in that convent.” These passages are from Joseph Strange, *Caesarii Heisterbacensis monachi Ordinis Cisterciensis Dialogus Miraculorum*, vol. 2 (Cologne: 1851): 234, as transcribed on the *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/heisterbach-sacra-charm.html> (accessed December 2004).

234. Ringbom, 18.

Palm Sunday observances, and the *Palmesel* was often processed with the Eucharist. The elevation of Ascending Christ figures was followed by a rain of unconsecrated Eucharistic bread, and in numerous places including Prüfening, Bamberg, Meissen, and Freising; the Host, the crucified image of Christ, and sometimes the resurrection image were buried together in the sepulcher.<sup>235</sup> And in some instances the sculpted corpus of the crucifix and the Resurrection figures served as a receptacle for the Host—in effect becoming tabernacles or reliquaries for Christ’s body (figs. 7, 12, 38 & 67). The image was thus consecrated by its association with the Host and subject to the transmittal of his Sacred Presence. When combined during the Holy Week and Easter ceremonies, the sculptures of Christ with movable body parts and the consecrated Host not only visually and sacramentally restored Christ’s sacred body, together they made his divine presence physically and spiritually effective.

*Abject Suffering: Devotion to Christ’s Body*

Late medieval devotion also emphasized the body of Christ through the narrative of his human life, most especially his last days of pain and torment. Devotion to Christ through his physical suffering encouraged “intimate knowledge and empathetic experience” of his humanity and Passion.<sup>236</sup> The writings of the mystics including the

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235. For Prüfening see n. 152; for Bamberg n. 155. There seems to have been a similar use of an *Imago resurrectionis* in Meissen around 1520. Krause, 284-288. In Freising the use of a similar image was recorded in 1637. Separate images of Christ resurrected were also used in Augsburg and Halle. Brooks, 39-43. Also see Appendix A.

236. Marrow, “Circumdede runt me canes multi,” 167. Marrow’s work, including the article above and the book above (see n. 187), traces the relationship between the devotional literature and practices of the later Middle Ages and the iconography of the Passion. In this article he nicely summarizes and cites the genealogy of the devotional literature. He restates that the most important devotional authors were the Pseudo-Bernard, the Pseudo-Anselm, and the Pseudo-Bede. He examines how these thirteenth century tracts were expanded a generation later by the Pseudo-Bonaventure and Ludolphus of Saxony; and how these in turn influenced the German devotional writings of the fourteenth century including those of

thirteenth century *Meditationes Vitae Christi* of Pseudo-Bonaventure and the fourteenth century *Vita Christi* of Ludolphus of Saxony were the first comprehensive biographies of Christ and were, in turn, excerpted and elaborated upon in German Passion tracts of the late fourteenth century.<sup>237</sup> The detailed imitation of Christ's human appearance in imagery coincided with the detailed description of his appearance and suffering in scholastic and devotional tracts. Ludolphus of Saxony, in the introduction to his *Meditationes*, used the often cited "Lentulus Letter," to give his reader an image of Christ.

He is a man of average size and pleasing appearance, having a countenance that commands respect, which those who behold may love or fear. He has hair the color of an unripe hazelnut, smooth almost to his ears, but below his ears curling and rather darker and more shining, hanging over his shoulders, and having a parting in the middle of his head according to the fashion of the Nazarenes. His brow is smooth and quite serene: his face is without wrinkle or blemish, and a slight ruddiness makes it handsome. No fault can be found with his nose and mouth; he has a full beard of the color of his hair, not long but divided in two at the chin. His facial expression is guileless and mature; his eyes are grayish and clear. . . . At times he has wept, but has never laughed. In stature he is tall and erect and his hands are fine to behold.<sup>238</sup>

Descriptive accounts of Christ's physical torment during the Passion demonstrated how this divine beauty became grotesque through human nature and human cruelty. Two fifteenth century devotional tracts expand upon Isaiah 53, which prophecies a Messiah who will be "like a leper"; "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows...acquainted

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Henrich of Gall and the *Devotio Moderna* movement in the Netherlands during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

237. See Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern Europe Art*; Parshall; and Ringbom. For the two primary texts, see Sister M. Jordan Stallings, *Meditationes de Passione Christi Olim Sancto Bonaventurae Attributae. The Catholic University of America, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Latin Language and Literature*, XXV (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1965). Sister Mary Immaculate Bodenstedt, *The Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian, The Catholic University of America, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Latin Language and Literature*, XVI (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1944).

238. The "Lentulus Letter" was considered an eyewitness account of Christ's appearance despite that fact that Lorenzo Valla declared it a forgery in 1440. This excerpt is from Parshall, 465.

with grief” and “bruised for our iniquities . . . with whose stripes we are healed.”<sup>239</sup> They describe the moment when Christ is beheld by the crowd:

Thus Pilate took him . . . and exhibited him horribly. He had not the form of a man, because our beloved Lord’s holy face was as miserably transformed and disfigured as if he had been leprous; because the foul snot and filthy yellow spittle of the unclean malefactors lay baked and dried upon his holy face, hanging from it in a large congealed pieces, in such a manner that the Lord appeared as if his face were covered with boils and sores.<sup>240</sup>

This realism, often abject, of Christ’s physical appearance aided the mnemonic in empathetic devotion. As the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* teaches, “Real” images adhered “longest to memory” and thus those that “established likeness as striking as possible . . . not vague, but active” were most advantageous to devotion. Images of “exceptional beauty or singular ugliness” ornamented with “crowns or purple cloaks” or disfigured with “blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint” were better because they were more “distinct” and “striking” and ensured “remembering them more readily.”<sup>241</sup>

#### *Movable Christ Sculptures, the Abject, and the Decoruous*

It is difficult not to recall the “decorous” and dignified manner of the *Palmesel* from Altheim (fig. 25) or the abject form of the Weilheim Crucified Christ (fig. 68) when reading or hearing these tracts. Christ’s triumphal entry or jubilant Resurrection and Ascension realized His redemptive sacrifice. Standing in front of a crucifix or kneeling before a sculpted figure of Christ in a sepulcher summoned instructions similar to ones

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239. Isaiah 53: 3-5. Raphael Patai discuss how interpretations of Isaiah 53 by Jewish and Christian scholars described the “Suffering Servant” portrayed in Isaiah 54 as a “Leper Messiah.” Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 39.

240. *Op. cit.*, Marrow, *Passion Iconography*, 20-27.

241. The *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* which dates to the first century B.C. was widely used during the Middle Ages and Renaissance as a rhetorical and mnemonic training text. Parshall, 456-457.

set down in the manual attributed to Bonaventure, the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* which urged one to:

Behold the Lord hanging dead on the cross, the whole multitude has departed. . . . But you, if you will contemplate your Lord well, consider that from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there is no health in Him. There is not one member or bodily sense that has not left total affliction or passion. . . . Study devoutly and faithfully to meditate on this.”<sup>242</sup>

The realistic (or even hyper-realistic) simulation of Christ’s body, especially his wasted and wounded body, fostered an intense emotional and empathetic response from the viewer. And the physicality and three-dimensionality of these figures grounded those mimetic and corporeal qualities. By meditating on Christ’s story and suffering, the faithful, aided by movable images of Christ, realized the weight of his glory and his suffering, which then became emotionally available and corporeally immediate. Thus the movable crucifix, in semblance and motion, could become a visible path to the divine invisible and an embodied agent of intimacy and sacred understanding.

As representations of Christ’s divine body, movable sculptures were treated as such in the dramatic rituals of Holy Week. They were clothed, cleaned, anointed, kissed, and caressed. Handling an image as if it were a living presence was a common occurrence in medieval visual piety. Both official and anecdotal accounts of the day describe the treatment of images as physical beings which transpired within and outside of the regulated environment of communal worship. In the twelfth century Rupert of Deutz recounts going to the altar of his local church, embracing the crucifix, and feeling Christ’s tongue in his mouth. Some nuns and lay women were known to swaddle,

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242. For a facsimile of this text see *Meditations on the life of Christ; An illustrated manuscript of the fourteenth century (Princeton monographs in art and archaeology)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).

comfort, and suckle the sculpted image of the Christ Child which used in the Christmas Crib. And in the case of a thirteenth century German nun, Margarethe Ebner, viewer response assumed a similar quality of sexual fetishism. In her diary she tells us that she would take a life-sized wooden model of the crucified Christ into her bed at night and lay it on top of her. While these behaviors might be extreme examples, they were likely not unusual and demonstrate the length to which treatment of an image as corporeal presence could extend.<sup>243</sup>

### *MATERIALITY AND MAGIC*

Connotations of corporeal presence surrounding images of Christ implied a miraculous power of action. Not only were they animated by the clergy and the congregation in procession, ceremony, and in private, they could also move on their own. Numerous documents describe instances when crucifixes would bleed, bow their heads, point to the stigmata, or come down from the cross to greet the faithful (fig. 69); while St. Francis, St. Bridget, and many others, saw Christ speak from the “wood of the cross.”<sup>244</sup> Caesarius of Heisterbach recounts that as he was meditating on the Passion in front of the altar, the image of Christ Crucified “withdrew his most merciful arms from the cross, embraced his servant, drawing him to his breast ...he clasped him close; and by that

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243. For a full discussion of women and Christ images and particularly Beguines and the mystic Margarethe von Ebner see Mary Suydam, “Beguine Textuality: Sacred Performances,” and Rosemary Drage Hale, “Rocking the Cradle: Margaretha Ebner (Be)holds the Divine,” in *Performance and Transformation, New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, 169-213. Bynum makes the point that these incidents should not necessarily be seen simply as erotic or sexual but rather as a means of corporeal interaction and transmission. Caroline Walker Bynum, “The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages, A Reply to Leo Steinberg,” 399-439. For a discussion that focuses on image practice in monasteries and convents in general see Jeffery Hamburger, “The Use of Images in the Pastoral Care of Nuns,” and “The Visual and the Visionary: The Images in Late Medieval Monastic Devotion,” *Viator* 20 (1989): 161-182.

244. The most notable case was that of St. Bernard. Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, 97.

embrace destroyed his strongest temptations.”<sup>245</sup> He goes on to discuss how images of Christ crucified not only comforted the faithful, they deterred the wicked. He tells the story of a nun who, driven by her desire for a cleric, tried to leave her convent to meet him. Her passion was hindered, however, by a Crucifix that blocked each exit door and eventually slapped the nun unconscious preventing the impious liaison.<sup>246</sup>

Images were also known to miraculously and sometimes deceptively secrete bodily fluids. Paintings and sculptures of Christ bled to confirm divine presence for the faithful or when attacked by an unbeliever, whether Jew, Muslim, or Christian heretic.<sup>247</sup> Throughout the Christian world, the story of the Jew or Saracen doubting or striking an image only to find it bleed or secrete oil became a standard moralizing tale that marginalized and vilified the other. An image of the Virgin suckled Bernard of Clairvaux as he prayed before it. The mystical trope of lactating Madonna images (both actual and imaginary) was a common one during the medieval period as was the Mother of Sorrows who cried real tears. In February of 1508 an image of the Virgin from the infamous altar Pieta of Bern was seen to cry and heard to speak (fig. 70). A few months later, however, the crying image was exposed as a fraud. It was determined that four Dominican brothers had conspired to make the Virgin’s image weep with “varnish drops beneath their eyes in place of tears” and speak through a pipe “from behind” the image.<sup>248</sup> Though this is a particularly duplicitous example, it would be a mistake to assume that every anecdote of

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245. Caesarius, dist. 8, cap. 16, *op. cit.*, Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 306.

246. Gautier de Coinci (1177-1238) tells a similar tale. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 309.

247. For the most complete summary of the secreting image phenomenon, see Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 288, 301, 306, 311-12, 332, 368; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 60, 194-197, 305, 313, 323, 486.

248. This quote is from Thomas Murner’s pamphlet of the same year, *op. cit.*, Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 59-60. Murner was a Franciscan polemicist reacting to the fraudulent miracle of the Dominicans whom Baxandall asserts plotted to lure pilgrims away from the Franciscans and discredit the Franciscan doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.



a crying or bleeding image was the result of deception and fraud. Rather there were certainly cases, as there are today, in which psychology, the natural elements, and the actions of ritual drama played a role. What is important in all of these anecdotal instances is the fact that images in late medieval piety demonstrated corporeal abilities. More to the point, movable images of Christ displayed seemingly miraculous physicality in man-made ways.

The movable crucifix from Memmingen dating to 1481, for instance, is an extremely realistic example complete with a wig of real hair (fig. 12).<sup>249</sup> When pulled, a rope behind the figure opened and closed the mouth and folded the arms. During the *Depositio* service, red liquid resembling blood and held in a hollow cavity in the back of the figure could be pumped or pushed out of the side wound. The early sixteenth-century crucifix from Saxony is similarly mimetic and mechanized (fig. 7).<sup>250</sup> Pieces of painted canvas conceal the ball-in-joints that facilitated the movement of the figure's head and arms; a cavity in the back connects to an open side wound; and a crown of thorns, now lost, once held a wig in place. Some *Palmesel*n also had cavities in the trunk of the donkey figure which were opened furtively emitting figs and other tasty treats from its belly during the Palm Sunday procession. As we have seen, the mechanical trappings of the *Ölberg* figures from Reischach and Stuttgart were hidden from view causing the image in motion to appear to genuflect on its own. And Ascending Christ images in all instances rose through the church and disappeared into the heavens assisted by the hidden

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249. Tripps, 334.

250. Taubert and Taubert, 80 and Tripps, 369

hands of clerics and deacons.<sup>251</sup> Some movable Christ sculptures even had the power to move on their own in order to protect the community who moved them during high holy days. According to one local legend, on a dark night at the end of the sixteenth century, the *Palmesel* from Kalbensteinberg thwarted thieves by physically attacking them as they attempted to rob the church (fig. 71).<sup>252</sup>

These corporeal connotations and physical abilities were, in turn, amplified by the material of sculptures' making—lindenwood. Lindenwood was not only prized as a rare and valuable commodity during the medieval period, it was also a powerful substance that had a long and virulent place in local tradition. The potency of the linden tree is evident in the landscape of German consciousness. One need only think of Walther von der Vogelweide, Goethe, Schiller, or the main thoroughfare of the capital city Berlin. “Unter den Linden” is a Germanic trope that recalls romantic, nationalistic, and ancient histories. Wood and trees in general, have a primary place in Teutonic lore and customs. Forests and trees are the homes of gods, demi-gods, dwarfs, and elves.<sup>253</sup> Linden trees in particular were the places where mythic heroes like Siegfried surrendered to magical sleep, and they served as the center of sacrifice and worship in pre-Christian religious traditions of central Europe. These associations continued into the Christian period and were adopted and transformed to meet Christian purposes and practices.

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251. I have only come across these descriptions in uncited German and Austrian websites. While these cases should be considered carefully and skeptically, their repetition in the online sources indicates that these authors at least are aware of a source that I am not. The most legitimate site is the University of Innsbruck, Institut für Europäische Ethnologie Volkskunde, University of Innsbruck, <http://www2.uibk.ac.at/volkskunde/infoservice/palmeselprozession.html> (accessed Oct. 2004).

252. V.G. Guzenhausen, “Die ‘Reiter Kirche’ in Kalbensteinberg,” Markt Absberg, <http://www.absberg.de/rieter.htm> (accessed June 2005).

253. See for instance Jakob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, vol. 1, trans. James Steven Stallybrass (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1976).

Linden trees were at the center of community life, and both tree and wood were considered a magical, totemic, fecund, and restorative material. In sixteenth century New High German, the word *linde* was used for the “linden tree” as well as for groves that served social and sacred rituals. Summoning the community involved symbols central to its identity including the church, the market place, and the linden tree.<sup>254</sup> Planting a linden tree in the center of villages was customary and magistrates often sat under their shade to pass judgment and hand down sentences. The citizens of Fribourg, for instance, commemorated the victory of the battle of Morat in 1476 by planting a linden tree that still stands today at the center of town.<sup>255</sup> Linden groves protected the community and assured prosperity and success. A linden tree in Süderheistede known as the “Wonderful Tree” withered after the town lost its liberty in a princely takeover. A local prophecy ensured, however, that when a magpie builds its nest in the tree, it will be restored along with the town’s independence.<sup>256</sup> The community, in turn, ensured and protected the lindens. During the sixteenth-century siege of Neustadt in Baden-Wurtemberg, the town linden was severely damaged. Afterwards, local princes and various members of the nobility salvaged the landmark by propping its branches with stone monuments inscribed with family arms and thus acted as benefactors performing their civic duty in the reclamation of the tree.<sup>257</sup>

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254. John Thiebault, “Community and *Herrschaft* in the Seventeenth-Century German Village,” *Journal of Modern History* 64 (March 1992): 1-21.

255. Alexander Porteous, *Forest Folklore, Mythology, and Romance* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1928), 232.

256. *Ibid.*, 233.

257. *Ibid.*, 232.

Popular celebrations, especially kermis and mayday festivals and religious holidays took place around the community tree.<sup>258</sup> Local secular and Church officials often constructed niches in or on the trunks of these village trees, and holy images—usually sculptures of the Virgin—were placed inside sacralizing the social space (fig. 72).<sup>259</sup> In texts and images that depict traditional activities—peasant-brawl poems for instance—peasants dance around the linden tree.<sup>260</sup> Hieronymous Bock, a south German botanist writing in the sixteenth century, included a reference to this popular practice in a description of the linden tree in his *Kreuterbuch*. “Let us once dance under the green lime trees and look at how they grow” (fig. 73).<sup>261</sup> Linden also had phenomenal and curative abilities. Linden trees could miraculously remember communal history. Every spring a “very aged tree, a venerable Lime” in Goldenkron in Bohemia sprouted folded leaves that resemble monk’s cowls commemorating the destruction of the monastery, and the execution of the brothers on the very same tree in 1420.<sup>262</sup> The linden could also endow the powers of fertility, virility, and health. In Upper Bavaria it was customary to apply the leaves, blossoms, and bark of the tree to the body in order to promote strength and beauty.<sup>263</sup> Women who wanted to conceive would ingest linden seeds, and pregnant women ate linden seeds to ensure a safe pregnancy. *Palmesln*, the majority of which are made from lindenwood, had similar powers of fecundity. During the Palm Sunday procession, it was customary for mothers to place their young sons on the *Palmesel*,

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258. Jürgen Kuczynski, *Geschichte des Alltags des deutschen Volkes, 1600-1945: Studien*. 5 vols. (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1982). See especially the chapter on leisure, the tavern, and the linden tree.

259. *Beneath the Cherry Sapling, Legends from Franconia*, compiled and trans. Norbert Krapf (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988), 103

260. George Fenwick Jones, “Christis Kirk, ‘Peblis to Play,’ and the German Peasant-Brawl,” *PMLA* 68 (December 1953): 1101-1125; *Beneath the Cherry Sapling*, 123.

261. Hieronymous Bock, *Kreütterbuch*, 1577, reprint. (Munich: Konrad Kölbl, 1964), 391-392.

262. Porteous, 232.

263. Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 31.

thereby ensuring their virility and the promise of numerous grandchildren.<sup>264</sup> In this case, the potency of the linden tree continued to reside in and remain effective through the image made from its matter. Combined with the physical qualities of movable Christ sculptures, this material in three-dimensions afforded them a dynamism which manifested in the “uncanny feeling” that these images could “come to life” and carry presence.<sup>265</sup>

Movable Christ sculptures were vivid representations of Christ’s historical body, subject to the confusion between evocation and embodiment that colored all images of the sacred. But these particular images were also closely associated with the Real Presences of Christ in the Host. They processed with it, held it, were buried with it, and rose with it. They were also moved in anthropomorphic ways, imitating the actions of Christ and recalling the physicality of his earthly body. Their material furthered these amazing properties lending additional powers of presence. When animated in real time and space, and combined with the Eucharistic Host in dramatic ritual, the images’ corporeal implications and effective power intensified, social relationships between members of the community were structured, and heaven was brought down to earth. For some these results provided a means of controlling the supernatural world through tangible material; for others it meant sacrilegious and duplicitous abuse of worship.

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264. Michalski, 92.

265. For a discussion of three-dimensional forms and the life-like or aliveness of images, see Freedberg, *The Power of Images*; Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, especially 244-245; and Kenneth Gross, *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Reformations and Continuations

Europe from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century as a continent of unrest—a deeply religious world that fluctuated between sacred and profane, religion and magic, high and low, public and private. It was a visually dynamic atmosphere in which ideas, texts, image, customs, and beliefs were in flux. This was a period when commerce and humanist ideas were changing the politics of Europe, the place and perspective of the common man, the nature of religion, and the understandings of God and the world.<sup>266</sup> In their construction, the reforming religious movements of the fifteenth and sixteenth century were responsible for the development of free cities, modern nation states, and the indoctrination of an informed citizenry.<sup>267</sup> Wood-block print pamphlets circulated calling for a religious reform that emphasized the secularization of Church property, the abolition of nobility, the fixing of fair prices, the availability of vernacular texts,

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266. Robert Scribner has noted that “the basic form of association in both town and country was the commune (*Gemeinde*), which possessed, or sought to possess, autochthonous rights to regulate its own affairs. This included the administration of justice, maintenance of peace within the community, economic functions such as distribution of common land for grazing, administration of church finances and church fabric, in some places communal appointment of pastors. “Communalism: Universal Category or Ideological Construct? A Debate in the Historiography of Early Modern Germany and Switzerland,” *The Historical Journal* 37 (1994): 199. See also Peter Bickle, “Reformation and Communal Spirit: The Reply of Theologians to Constitutional Change in the Late Middle Ages,” in *The German Reformation, The Essential Readings*, 133-168.

267. “It is difficult” says C. Scott Dixon “to speak of the essence of the Reformation in Germany without appeals to the modern age.” “Introduction: Narratives of the German Reformation,” in *The German Reformation, The Essential Readings*, ed. C. Scott Dixon (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 21. For more on the Reformation and the idea of the modern age, see H.A. Oberman, “Reformation: Epoche oder Episode,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 68 (1977): 56-109; Richard van Dülmen, “The Reformation and the Modern Age,” in *The German Reformation*, 196-219. For a medieval perspective on the Protestant Reformation see *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective*, ed. Steven E. Ozment (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971) and H. A. Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought Illustrated by Key Documents* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1966). Bernd Moeller’s work in *Imperial Cities and the Reformation: Three Essays*, trans. H. C. Erik Midelfort and Mark U. Edwards (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1982) inspired similar studies of the Protestant Reformation as a modern, urban phenomenon including Steven E. Ozment’s *Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975).

educational opportunities for all, and a married clergy.<sup>268</sup> The propagators of these reforming ideas intended a religious change that would be both theologically, socially, and politically revolutionary. New confessions and doctrines of the reformers, the *Bundesschuh* peasant rebellion, Thomas Muntzer's messianic millennialism, and the apocalyptic Anabaptist commune at Münster fundamentally changed medieval Europe.<sup>269</sup> But as the historian Richard Van Dülmen points out, "in studying the connection between the Reformation and the advent of the modern era, the Reformation is not seen as the 'essential' dividing line between the Middle Ages and modernity, nor is it hailed as

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268. Michael Hughes, *Early Modern German 1477-1806*. (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1992), 11. "The word reformation was as popular in the Middle Ages as democracy is today -- and it meant as many things to as many people . . . Then reformation meant return to original ideals. The Church was to emulate the model of the early Christian community, to be united again in love; or a monastic community was to regain sight of the original, authentic principles of the founder of their order. With regard to the individual reformation stood for the renewal of man and woman." H. A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New York: Image Books, 1992), 50-51.

269. A singular term was not commonly used to describe the Reformation as one era of ecclesiastical history until the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when scholars linked the idea of the Reformation to the life and career of Martin Luther and described the period between the posting of his *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517 and the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. The problem with this approach is that other reformers like Zwingli and Calvin and reformations like the Bohemian, English, Swiss, French, and Catholic reformations tend to be ignored or downplayed. *The Reformation in Historical Thought*, eds. A.G. Dickens and John M. Tonkin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 9; and Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 10. More recently, social historians have modified the traditional emphasis on intellectual Reformation history or the history of ideas as the cause for social and political change in favor of a history in which religious ideas were merely one reaction among many to political and social movements. Social historians also make the distinction between "magisterial" and "radical" reformations; the magisterial Reformation denoting those reform movements that were supported by the magistrates such as royalty and town councils including Luther's reform in Wittenberg and Zwingli's reform in Zurich and radical reforms referring to movements like Thomas Muntzer's reform in Mühlhausen. Wolfgang Reinhard suggests that confessionalization is best thought of as "an early phase of modern state formation" that affected all of Europe and not just those states like Saxony which adhered to a certain confession. Furthermore, confessionalism was not particular to Catholicism or Protestantism and not just a German phenomenon but a French and English one as well. "Pressures towards Confessionalization? Prolegomena to a Theory of the Confessional Age," in *The German Reformation, The Essential Readings*, 169-192. For more on the Peasant's War see Peter Bickle, *The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants Revolution from a New Perspective*, trans. H.C. Erik Midelfort and Thomas A. Brady (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); and Robert W. Scribner, "German Peasant's War" in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*. For the Anabaptists and the "Radical Reformation," and for Thomas Müntzer see R. H. Bainton, "Left Wing of the Reformation," *Journal of Religion* 21 (April, 1941): 124-134.; Werner O. Packull, "In Search of the 'Common Man' in Early German Anabaptist Ideology," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 17 (Spring, 1986): 51-67; George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992); R. H. Bainton, "Thomas Muntzer Revolutionary Firebrand of the Reformation," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 13 (Summer, 1982): 3-16.

already embodying modern freedom, rationality and morality. New areas of freedom certainly emerged during the Reformation, but so did new strategies of suppression.”<sup>270</sup> Moreover, the “religious practices and the social relationships imbedded” in medieval Catholic practices continued to play a role in early modern reactions to them.<sup>271</sup> The eradication of an artificial and stringent division between late medieval and early modern identities for movable Christ sculptures is important for they are only considered as a phenomenon of the former in current scholarship. This limited consideration, limits their meaning and leaves their place in early modern Europe either as targets of Protestant iconoclasm or as continuations of Catholic tradition in Counter Reformation image practice unaddressed.

#### *CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT*

In Germany during the first part of the sixteenth century all iconoclasts and Protestants were dissenting or former Catholic. As R. Po-Chia Hsia points out, Protestantism “grew over a sub stratum of existing cultural beliefs and practices...[which] transcended both confessional and social boundaries, at least in the sixteenth century.”<sup>272</sup> And Protestantism was as diverse as Catholicism. The Reformation period consisted of not one but many reformations. There were the reforming movements of John Wycliffe and the Lollards in England and John Huss and the Hussites in Bohemia during the fifteenth century; the ideas of Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich and John Calvin in Geneva and France, John Knox in Scotland, Martin Bucer in Strasbourg, and Martin Luther in Saxony during the sixteenth century; and there was the

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270. Richard Van Dülmen, “The Reformation and the Modern Age.” In *The German Reformation: The Essential Readings*, ed. Scott Dixon (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 198.

271. Holt, 133.

272. R. Po-Chia Hsia, “The Structure of Belief: Confessionalism and Society, 1500-1600,” 369.



Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation that began in answer to the movements above with the Council of Trent.<sup>273</sup> Movable Christ sculptures also lived here, in this complex moment of change and continuation. They were layered with meaning and colored by their function in Church ritual. Individuals adopting the new Protestant confessions were drawn to them and at the same time threatened by them. And those who remained within the Catholic Church saw them as a continuation of their traditional practices and powerful centers of devotion and belief.

### *Idolatry and Iconophobes*

The “magical” power of linden and lindenwood images was decried by the polemicist Sebastian Franck, who noted another custom in which participants in the Palm Sunday procession prompted by two “Bacchinates” throw their palms at the *Palmesel*, and “whoever catches the first makes big magic with it.”<sup>274</sup> Franck viewed these practices as outlandish idolatry, sacrilegious paganism, and superstitious magic. The zealous Wittenberg reformer Andreas Karlstadt similarly condemned practices that involved the linden and lindenwood images. In his pamphlet *Von Abtuhung der Bylder*

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273. For summaries see John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) and Steven E. Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980). For reformations outside of modern day Germany, see Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975); Thomas A. Brady, *Ruling Class, Regime and Reformation at Strasbourg, 1520-1555* (Leiden: Brill, 1978) and *Turning Swiss: Cities and Empire, 1450-1550* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991) to name just a few.

274. “Palm Sunday comes . . . a wooden ass on a trolley is pulled around the town with the image of their God on it; they sing, throw palms before it, and do much Idolatry with this wooden God of theirs. The Parish priest prostrates himself before this image, and a second priest also creeps up. The children sing and point with their fingers. Two Bacchinates prostrate themselves before it with outlandish ceremony and song, and then everyone throws palms at it: whoever catches the first makes big magic with it.” *Weltbuch* (Augsburg, 1534), 134b, cf. Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 58.

*Vnd das keyn Betdler vnther den Christen seyn sole* from 1522, Karlstadt quoted and translated Deuteronomy 7:5:

Ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves and burn their graven images with fire.

[Ire *linden* solt ir abhauwen, und ire geschnitzte blider solt yr verbronnen.]<sup>275</sup>

The reference to dancing in groves and graven images makes allusions to the behaviors associated with linden groves and lindenwood images. But Karlstadt went even further than allusion and made an outright statement on the dubious nature of this material. He translated the Latin word for altar (*locus*) to *linde*. In his word choice Karlstadt was responding to the use of the linden tree, lindenwood, and linden groves in popular practice and the material's association with blasphemous images.

Karlstadt's use of the word *geschnitze* is also telling. He, like other interpreters and translators of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—read *idols* as *sculpture*.<sup>276</sup> In Karlstadt's translation of Isaiah 44:16-18, he drew a parallel between the idol maker and the sculptor. He purposefully translated the general pronoun *he* as the word *sculptor*. This sculptor cuts down trees, and “with part of their wood he warms himself, or makes a fire for baking bread: but with another part he makes a god [and an idol] which he adores.”<sup>277</sup> Martin Bucer, in his *Basis and Reason for Innovation* of 1524, denounced the material and monetary implications of not just *bilder* (pictures), but specifically with

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275. Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 31. For the primary text, see Andreas Bodenstein Karlstadt, *Von Abtuhung der Bylder Vnd das keyn Betdler vnther den Christen seyn sollen 1522 und die Wittenberger Beutelordnung*, ed. Hans Lietzmann. *Kleine Texte für theologische und philologische Vorlesungen und Übungen*, no. 74 (Bonn: A. Marcus & E. Weber, 1911), 12-13.

276. For example, Stephan von Landskron described idols as carved images, or “geschnitzte” in his *Road to Heaven*, written and published in Augsburg during the second half of the fifteenth century. Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 53.

277. *Op. cit.*, Michalski, 187-188.

*holtz, stein, and wachs* (wood, stone, and wax) objects.<sup>278</sup> In Ulrich Eckstein's "Dialogue between Christ and Adam," written in 1525, he explained Zwinglian image theology, commenting that when "one addresses wood as God, one makes God a thing and thus one gives wood the same privilege as man."<sup>279</sup>

Sculpture, and in these cases wooden sculpture, was problematic. Its three-dimensional form easily called up associations with the golden calf of the Old Testament and Saints' cults and their accompanying relics and images. The Eastern Orthodox Church avoided sculpture almost altogether because of these idolatrous connotations.<sup>280</sup> Images that invaded all three dimensions of physical space carried the potential for embodiment, and sometimes the inhabitants of the inanimate object were more profane than sacred. In medieval Verona, for instance, there was a legend that the donkey which Christ rode into Jerusalem on the original Palm Sunday eventually made its way to the Italian city, died, and was buried in a wooden effigy that was then used in Palm Sunday processions and worshipped as a sacred entity (fig. 74).<sup>281</sup>

Apologists for and polemicists of the Roman Church found these image practices and perceptions highly suspect. As we have seen, a person or thing is designated as sacred when it is unique or extraordinary, but this connotation of otherness was not always positive. On the eve of the Protestant Reformation Erasmus of Rotterdam,

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278. Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols, The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 91.

279. "Wenn denn schon kein geschriff wär, so ist doch das ein uneer. Das man zu holtz sagt: Herr Gott, nun macht man ye uss gott ein spott. Also gibt man dem holtz die eer, die selb sol than got der Herr. Bilder sind wider all gschrift veer." *Dialogus: Ein Hüpsche Disputation die Christus Hat mit Adam Thon/arinn ein Mensch Erlernen May nach Welchem Wercken Gott Frag von Liebe/Glauben/Güten Wercken und Bätten/Bildern/was Gott uns Erfordre*, op. cit., Eire, 98.

280. For a complete discussion of the absence of sculpture in the East and its development in the West, see Belting, *Likeness and Presence* and *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages*.

281. This legend is discussed in Chambers, 333. While there is no hard evidence that the current *Palmesel* in Verona is the same one referred to in the legend, the early date of this sculpture supports this conclusion.

complained that many people made no distinction in their prayers between images of the saints and the saints themselves. He went on to say that “. . . images are treated as if they are alive, people bow their head, fall on the ground or crawl on their knees before them and worshippers kiss or fondle the carvings.”<sup>282</sup> Andreas Karlstadt echoed this critique, describing the practices of those who pay “homage before images placed on the altars where the sacrament of Christ’s body has been celebrated.” He noted that “they light candles before the images, and bow or genuflect before them. The congregation brings objects of gold, silver, or precious stones to adorn the images, and figures of limbs they wish to be healed.”<sup>283</sup> He then quoted Romans 1:22-23:

They boast of their wisdom, but they have made fools of themselves, exchanging the splendor of immortal God for an image shaped like mortal man, even for images like birds, beasts, and creeping things.<sup>284</sup>

Karlstadt again referenced scripture and sculpture lamenting the man “who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a dumb stone, Arise! Can this give revelation? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it.”<sup>285</sup> Karlstadt’s theological argument against religious imagery paralleled those of the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli. Zwingli called the practices “idolatry of the maddest kind, diminishing the glory of God and depraving the senses.”<sup>286</sup> In addition to being contradictory to biblical admonitions, and theologically flawed, the use of religious imagery was in direct conflict with the monetary policies of reformers. Both Karlstadt and Zwingli questioned the vanity, pride,

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282. *Op. cit.*, Miles, 99.

283. *Ibid.*, 5-6.

284. Karlstadt further defines his position with a set of three theses: [1] That we have images in churches and houses of God is wrong and contrary to the first commandment: “Thou shalt not have strange gods.” [2] That carved and painted idols are standing on the altars is even more pernicious and devilish. [3] Therefore, it is good, necessary, praiseworthy, and godly that we abolish them, and give to the Scripture its proper right and judgment. Karlstadt, 22-23; Christensen, 30-31.

285. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

286. Michalski, 54

and motives of a person who attained salvation through the purchase of an inanimate object rather than by giving their money to the poor. Zwingli addressed this issue in his sermon to the people of Bern:

Now there is no more debating whether we should have these idols or not. Let us clear out this filth, and rubbish! Henceforth, let us devote to other men, the living images of God, all the unimaginable wealth which was once spent on these foolish idols.<sup>287</sup>

In these passages Karlstadt and Zwingli criticize the issues of money, magic, and the treatment of “images as if they were alive” which they find fundamentally idolatrous.

But even Karlstadt acknowledges the power of the image on his own psyche:

My heart since childhood has been brought up in the veneration of images, And a harmful fear has entered me which I gladly would rid myself of, and cannot. . . . When one pulls someone by the hair, then one notices how firmly his hair is rooted. If I had not heard the spirit of God crying out against the idols, And not read His Word, I would have thought thus: “I do not love images. I do not fear images.” But now I know how I stand in this matter in relation to God and images, and how firmly and deeply images are seated in my heart.<sup>288</sup>

While Karlstadt’s statement reflects the basic Protestant theology of *Sola Scriptura* and the primacy of the Word, it simultaneously demonstrates the importance of the visual in late medieval piety. Protestant polemicists were likely to distort or even invent information about visual piety. But keeping their polemic and satirical tenor in mind, these anecdotes and recollections should be taken seriously. Not only do they lend information about the responses and reactions that they critique, they are themselves a form of image response.<sup>289</sup>

Erasmus, Karlstadt, Zwingli, and others describe these practices as duplicitous because, in them, the images assume life all their own. The narrative of liturgical drama

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287. *Op. cit.*, Chipps Smith, 37.

288. *Ibid.*, 19.

289. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 28.

added to these accusations of idolatry.<sup>290</sup> Thomas Naogeorgus noted that the *Depositio* ritual was a particularly dubious manipulation of image and worship. He derided the ceremony in verse:

Two Priestes the next day following, vpon the altar neare:  
The Image of the Crucifix, about the altar neare:  
Being clad in caope of crimozen die, and dolefully they sing:  
At length before the steps his coate pluckt of they straight him bring,  
And vpon Turkey Carpettes lay him downe full tenderly,  
With cushions vnderneath his heade, and pillowes heaped hie:  
Then flat vpon the ground they fall, and kisse both hande and feete,  
And worship so this wooden God, with honour farre vnmeete.  
Then all the shauen sort falles downe, and foloweth them herein,  
As workemen chiefe of wickednesse, they first of all begin:  
And after them the simple soules, the common people come,  
And worship him with diuers giftes, as Golde, and siluer some:  
And others corne or eggs againe, to poulshorne persons sweete,  
And eke a long desired price, for wicked worship meete.  
How are the Idoles worshipped, it this religioin here  
Be Catholike, and like the spowes of Christ accounted dere?  
Besides with Images the more, their pleasure here to take.  
And Christ that euerywhere doth raigne, a laughing stocke to make,  
An other Image doe they get, like one but newly dead,  
With legges strecht out at length and handes, vpon his body spreade:  
And him with pompe and sacred song, they beare vnto heis graue,  
His bodie all being wrapt in lawne, and silkes and sarcent braue,  
The boyes before with clappers go, and filthie noyses make,  
The Sexten beares the light, the people hereof knowledge take:  
And downe they kneele, or kisse the grounde, their handes held vp abrod  
And knocking on their breastes they make, this wooden blocke a God.  
And least in graue he should remaine, without some companie,  
The singing bread is layde with him, for more idolatrie.<sup>291</sup>

For Naogeorgus (and Googe) the *Depositio* was a counterfeit play that misdirected worship. Naogeorgus specifically addressed the ways in which the image was handled in the ceremony: its entombment with the Host, its treatment as a corporeal entity, and its

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290. Bernd Moeller and Steve Ozment have made the argument that the ecclesiastical practices meant to shape the identity and life of the people from naming, marriage, burial, the daily passage of the hours, and seasonal changes had become so “burdensome” that it made Luther’s message of “liberty” for the Christian man appealing. *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, 7-8, 63-64.

291. See n. 138.

movement in the ritual. These modes of practice are problematic because they actively transform representation into simulacrum.

### *IDOLS AND ICONOCLASMS*

For many, iconoclasm not only ended idolatrous blasphemy and satisfied the theological rhetoric of reformers; it also presented a means of liberation from the power of these images. The earliest incidents of Reformation iconoclasm remained limited to the cities of Switzerland, the Tyrol, and southern Germany—areas consistent with the provenance of movable Christ sculptures (fig 75).<sup>292</sup> The first outbreak occurred in Germany while Luther was hiding in Wartburg Castle. In December 1521 the students and townspeople of Wittenberg, under the leadership of Andreas Karlstadt, stormed the city's parish church and pelted the celebrating priests with stones. Later in the day the mob burst into the same church, seized the missals, and drove the officiating celebrant from the altar. In January 1522 a mob, fueled by Karlstadt's sermons, overturned and removed all the altars except one from the cloister chapel and smashed and burned the statues and paintings. By 1524 Zurich was immersed in its own iconoclastic reform. The city council ruled that religious statues, paintings, and liturgical objects should be removed from the churches. Between June 20 and July 2 of that year a group of officials, including Zwingli, went from church to church and orderly stripped them of their decoration. Metal objects were melted down; frescoes were chipped away and the walls whitewashed; and the wooden figures of Christ and the saints were burned.<sup>293</sup>

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292. When Luther finally returned to Wittenberg in early March, he condemned the violence that had taken place while he was gone, and Wittenberg's iconoclastic period ended. Christensen, 35-41.

293. Chipps Smith, 37.

Sometimes iconoclasm was a mob phenomenon that spiraled out of control. In Wittenberg the actions of the crowd resulted in the destruction of images and the injury of clergy and Catholic faithful. On January 27 and 28, 1528, a rowdy crowd plundered the cathedral at Bern. This riot was partly fueled by the preaching of Zwingli, who spoke in the church on January 28:

There are still many weak and quarrelsome people who complain about the removal of the idols, even though it is clearly evident there is nothing holy about them, and that they break and crack like any other piece of wood or stone. Here lies one without its head! Here another without its arms! If this abuse had done any harm to the saints who are near God, and if they had the power which is ascribed them, do you think you would have been able to behead or cripple them as you did?<sup>294</sup>

It was this mentality that inspired both orderly officials and rioting crowds to remove and destroy images throughout southern German areas of Europe during the early sixteenth century, and continued as an instigating factor in the French and Netherlandish iconoclasms of 1566.<sup>295</sup>

Zwingli's sermon gives a glimpse into the types of destruction employed. Iconoclasm could be orderly and simple, as in Zurich, or mass vandalism, as in Bern. Often, though, images were damaged and destroyed in rituals of degradation and punishment. In 1524 an image of St. Francis in Zwickau was dressed up with ass' ears and set on top of the town fountain, and in Memmingen in 1527 a statue of the Virgin was "sold" to the highest bidder in a manner resembling prostitution. Images of Christ and the Saints were smeared with excrement or cow's blood and thrown into latrines.<sup>296</sup>

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294. *Op. cit.*, Lee Palmer Wandel, *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands, Iconoclasm in Reformation Zurich, Strasbourg, and Basel*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 97.

295. Iconoclasm in the Netherlands began in Amsterdam and spread throughout the country within two weeks. Michalski, 83-84. See also David Freedberg, "The Structure of Byzantine and European Iconoclasm," in *Iconoclasm*, ed. Anthony Bryer and Judith Herrin (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1977).

296. Scribner, *PCPM*, 112-115 and Michalski, 77.



Some acts of protest and iconoclasm were loosely framed by ritual occasions, moments inspired by a particular Church ceremony or moments that actually occurred within a Church ceremony. In 1524 in Saxony and Ulm and in Augsburg in 1527 and 1529, there were mock processions. This idea was carried a step further by a peasant from the priory of Oberried who, in 1525, celebrated a parody of the Mass, in which he “sang Mass,” elevated the Host, and forced his colleagues to ring the Sanctus bells.<sup>297</sup>

These acts often took the form of public, judicial processes. Interrogation, torture, and execution were common modes of trial and punishment in sixteenth century Germany. Punishment was commonly inflicted upon the sensory organs. Torture included gouging out the eyes; cutting off the hands, fingers or tongue; slitting the ears, nose, or cheeks. Some images were put into the stocks in a public display of degradation.<sup>298</sup> These procedures were inflicted on “guilty” images and in many cases the town executioner was present as at Basel in 1529.<sup>299</sup> During these trials and executions images were addressed as though they were alive. In Basel, as we have seen, the image was asked to announce itself as either “God or man.” When it did not respond, it was burned. An incident in Straslund in 1525 combined the trial of an image with its degradation. The miraculous statue of Mary of the Seven Sorrows was taken from the Johanneskirche, stripped of its adornment, and hacked to pieces. The rump was then brought to an inn and asked to perform a miracle in its defense. When it did not comply it was also burned.<sup>300</sup> Execution took the form of dismemberment with the wheel,

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297. Michalski, 105, 115.

298. An image of St. Francis was hung on the gallows in 1524 in Nebra; an image of St. John was hung upside down on the gallows in Wolkenstein in 1524, and in Xanten in 1566. Michalski, 96 and Scribner, *PCPM*, 115.

299. Michalski, 91.

300. *Ibid.*, 131.

hanging, decapitation, and burning (fig. 76).<sup>301</sup> In 1525 peasants attacked the abbey of Anhausen. They chopped off the arms, feet, and heads of images of Christ and the Virgin with axes and hatchets. Decapitation of an image also occurred in Augsburg in 1529; in Kempten in 1525, where the head of a statue of the Virgin was sawn off; and in Rothenberg in March 1525, where a crucifix was decapitated and its arms torn off.<sup>302</sup> In Riddagshausen in 1551, a crucifix was first decapitated and then hanged from a tree.<sup>303</sup>

The intention of iconoclasts was not always to destroy the entire image but rather “to render the images powerless, to deprive them of those parts which may be considered to embody their effectiveness.”<sup>304</sup> Many images were left unburned, but mutilated and returned to their original places as a symbol of its new ineffectiveness.<sup>305</sup> This was the case with the *Ölberg* Christ figure in Ulm (fig. 30). In January 1530 the figure was taken from its place in the churchyard *Ölberg* and carried by a group of women to a neighbor’s house where it was interrogated under torture by three men. It was challenged to speak twice and asked in a way similar to the incident at Basel: “If you are Paul, then help yourself [sic].” When the image remained mute, its hand was cut off and it was thrown out of a window. Later in the evening, the iconoclasts retrieved the figure and returned it to its original place.<sup>306</sup> By 1534 the newly reformed town council attempted to put a stop to Maundy Thursday vigils by removing the *Ölberg* from the church permanently, leaving only the tabernacle. The Ascending Christ from Missouri carries evidence of such destruction (fig. 1). Its iron ring was removed at one point when an axe blow

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301. Scribner, *PCPM*, 127.

302. *Ibid.*, 112.

303. Michalski, 94.

304. Freedberg, “The Structure of Byzantine and European Iconoclasm,” 169.

305. Scribner, *PCPM*, 11 and 114.

306. From the *Stadtarchiv*, Ulm A5327, *op. cit.*, Scribner, *PCPM*, 110.

rendered it useless for the Ascension Day elevation. Similarly, the donkey and the limbs and head of Christ from the Preetz *Palmesel* were hacked away at some point leaving only the remnants of Christ's torso (fig. 77).<sup>307</sup>

Once an image had failed the tests set by its inquisitors; it was not always damaged or destroyed in symbolic action. Some images were used for practical purposes. In Esslingen and Thuringia sculptures were used for cooking fires and in Cologne in 1536 the arms of crucifixes were used as children's toys. It should also be noted that sometimes adherents of the Roman Church rescued religious images by purchasing them or through daring acts of intervention. During the iconoclastic riots in Basel, Theobald Hylweck the abbot of Lutzel risked life and limb to remove a statue of the Virgin from a street-side chapel. He carried it to safety, protecting it and giving it a place in his own home.<sup>308</sup>

Just as there were favored types of defamation and destruction, there were also particular images associated with Catholic worship that were targeted more often than others. Retables were favored objects of iconoclastic destruction. They were the backdrop for the Catholic Mass which Protestants saw as an empty and overly excessive distancing between man and God.<sup>309</sup> Protestants replaced these altarpieces with simple tables which not only permitted the clergy to face the congregation, but corresponded to the scriptural "table of the Lord."<sup>310</sup> Processional crosses and figures with a liturgical or para-liturgical function were also preferred targets. For example, in Magdeburg in 1524 a number of journeymen destroyed a reliquary containing the remains of St. Florentinus,

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307. Haastrup, 138.

308. Christensen, 108.

309. Michalski, 57 and Wandel, 28-35.

310. 1 Cor. 10:21. Christensen, 87.

which had been set out in the cathedral for the processional display of the relics.<sup>311</sup>

Movable Christ sculptures were common targets.<sup>312</sup> *Palmesln* and crucifixes were burned, derided, thrown into the water, and brought to “dishonorable places,” such as taverns. In Waldshut in 1524 the influential Anabaptist Balthasar Hubmaier pulled the crucifix by a rope out of the church in a moment similar to the event at Basel (fig. 78).

Ascending Christ figures were considered particularly idolatrous. George Gilpin, as Dutch polemicist, found these Ascension images problematic:

Likewise, upon Ascension day, they pull Christ vp on hie with ropes about the clouds, by a vice deuised in the rooffe of the church, and they hale him vp, as if they would pull him vp to the gallowes: and there stande the poore Priests, and looke so pitfully after their God, as a dogge for his dinner. . . . All what soeuer Christ hath done, must bee set abroch to counterfeite.<sup>313</sup>

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311. Scribner, *PCPM*, 103.

312. Michalski, 92; and Christian von Burg, “Das bildt vnsers Herren ab dem esel geschlagen: Der Palmesel in den Riten der Zerstörung,” in *Macht und Ohnmacht der Bilder. Reformatorischer Bildersturm im Kontext der europäischen Geschichte*, eds. Peter Bickle, et. al. (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2002).

313. The following passage is from fol. 200<sup>v</sup>-201<sup>v</sup> of George Gilpin’s (1514?-1602) translation of *Den Byencorff der Hl. Roomsche Kercke* (1569) by the Dutch poet, statesman and Calvinist Philipp van Marnix (1538-98) published under the pseudonym Issace Rabbotenu. Gilpin’s translation was entitled *The Bee hiue of the Romische Churche...Translated out of Dutch into Englishe by George Gilpin the Elder* and was published in London in 1570; transcribed in Young, *DMC*, ii, 531-537. The full text is as follows: “In summe, Christ hath not done anie thing in his death and passion, but they do plaie and counterfeite the same after him, so trimlie and liuelie that no plaier nor iuggler is able to do it better. Yea, do we not see likewise, that vpon good Friday they haue a Crucifixe, either of wood, or of stone, stone, which they laie downe softlie vpon the ground, that euerie bodie may comme creeping to it, vpon handes and knees, and so kisse the feete of it, as men are accustomed to doe to the Pope of Rome: And then they put him in a graue, till Easter: at which time they take him vppe againe, and sing, Resurrexit, non est hic, Alleluia: He is risen, he is not here: God be thanked. Yea and in some places, they make the graue in a hie place in the church where men must goe vp manie steppes, which are decked with blacke cloth from about t beneath, and vpon euerie steppe standeth a siluer candlesticke with a waxe candle burning in it, and there doe walke souldiours in harnessse, as bright as Saint George, which keepe the graue, till the Priests come and take him vp: and then cometh sodenlie a flash of fire, wherewith they are all afraid and fall downe: and then up-startes the man, and they begin to sing Alleluia, on all handes, and then the clocke striketh eleuen. Then againe vpon Whitsunday they begin to play a new Enterlude, for then they send downe a Dove out of an Owles nest, deuised in the rooffe of the church: but first they cast out rosin and gunpowder, with wilde fire, to make the children afraide, and that must needes be the holie ghost, which commeth with thunder and lightening. Likewise, upon Ascension day, they pull Christ vp on hie with ropes about the clouds, by a vice deuised in the rooffe of the church, and they hale him vp, as if they would pull him vp to the gallowes: and there stande the poore Priests, and looke so pitfully after their God, as a dogge for his dinner. In summe, a man doeth often spende a pennie or two, to see a play of Robin hood, or a Morisse daunse, which were a great deale better bestowed vpon these apische toies of these good Priests, which counterfeite all these matters so hansomlie, that it will do a man as much good to see them, as in frostie weather to goe naked. I speake not of their perambulations, processions, and going about the towne, caring their crucifixes alongst the streetes, and there play and counterfeite the whole passion, so trimlie

In 1533 the “counterfeite” quality of the Holy Sepulcher and the Ascending Christ, and their function in Holy Week and the Easter season, prompted the church warden of St. Moritz in Augsburg, Max Ehem, to lock the sacristy, making liturgical vestments and vessels inaccessible. In response, Antonius Fugger, the patriarch of the leading Catholic family of bankers, had new vestments, a chalice, an altar cloth, candles, and candlesticks made. A confirmed Protestant, Ehem then tried to prevent the *Depositio* on Good Friday by having the Holy Sepulcher sealed. He also tried to prevent the celebration of the Ascension by stealing the flags, incense, vessels, monstrance, and image of the Ascending Christ and its accompanying angels and Holy Spirit image from the church. Once again, Fugger, at his own expense, commissioned new, more elaborate items to replace the stolen ones. When Ehem heard of this, he had the *Himmelloch* in St. Moritz sealed up. On May 23, the morning of the Feast of Ascension, the Fuggers broke into St. Moritz and reopened the hole. The ceremony took place as usual. Halfway through the ceremony, Ehem learned of the Fuggers’ actions. He gathered a group of followers and stormed the church. They stood in the middle of the nave with hands on the hilt of their knives and swords. Ehem’s supporters scattered clerics from the choir, and the congregation fled from the nave. Ehem then began to let down the figure of the Ascending Christ until it was twenty feet off the ground and then let it slip to ground where it broke into pieces.<sup>314</sup>

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with all the seuen sorrowes of our Lady, as though it had ben nothing else, but a simple and plaine Enterlude, to make boyes laugh at, and a litle to recreat heauie or sorrowfull hearts: for these matters fal out onlie vpon Church holy dayes or solmniteis, when the Catholikes are determined to be merrie, and drink themselves so droncke, that they tumble from their seat: as you shall see our Maisters of Louen doo every yere in their solemnitie, and especially at the seuenth yeres procession, which is, of the seuen sorrowes of our Ladie. All what soeuer Christ hath done, must bee set abroch to counterfeite.”

314. Scribner, *PCPM*, 109.

The need to dismember and destroy images fulfilled the desire to desacralize and discharge them. And the reaction and response of congregations, clergy, reformers, and iconoclasts alike demonstrate that, for the late medieval viewer, these images did indeed have an affecting and effective power. This power manifested itself to each of them in various ways. When animated in church ritual, images were even more dangerous. Rites are not only guarantors of the status quo they also provide a means for changing social status. The liminality of ritual causes participants to momentarily exchange their established place in the social order and fosters an “undifferentiated, equalitarian, and direct” relationship among members of the community.<sup>315</sup> The preparation and repetition of ritual need not anchor it as an unchanging form but can instead encourage a “dynamic flow and process.”<sup>316</sup> This is practically illustrated in the case of Carnival or ritualized iconoclastic actions that mimicked, mocked, and discharged Church practice and provided opportunities to challenge and redefine old modes in new ways.<sup>317</sup> In the practices of visual piety and visual protest, movable sculptures of Christ became image, icon, and idol and carried all of the complex and subtle connotations that those categories imply.

By the 1530's, the period of the “Florid” sculptors was waning in Germany.<sup>318</sup> The demand for religious imagery was in decline, workshops were getting smaller, and artisans were losing their patrons and moving into new professions. In 1537, the Strasbourg artist Heinrich Vogtherr the Elder commented that

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315. Turner, *Dramas*, 46-47.

316. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 74-78.

317. See Scribner, *PCPM*, especially 17-48 and 71-102; and Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

318. This is Baxandall's term for the style of fifteenth and sixteenth century limewood sculpture. *Limewood Sculptors*, viii & 151.

[God has] by special dispensation of his Holy Word, now in these our days brought about a noticeable decline and arrest of all the subtle and liberal arts, whereby numbers of people had been obliged to withdraw from these arts and to turn to other kinds of handicrafts. It might, therefore, be expected that in a few years there would scarcely be found any persons in German lands working as painters and carvers.<sup>319</sup>

This decline was a direct result of the Protestant Reformation. The polemics against and destruction of religious images by Catholic irenicists, Protestant reformers, and peasants stifled a sculpture market that was thriving only decades before. A 1525 broadsheet entitled *The Complaint of the Godless against Luther* by Hans Sachs and Sebald Beham makes this very clear. Image and text describe the “Godless” priests, priests’ concubines, canons, painters, goldsmiths, manuscript illuminators, bell-makers, glaziers, and sculptors who blame Luther for “wielding a sword that threatens their livelihood.”<sup>320</sup> In his broadsheet five years later, Erhard Schoen had the images themselves speak the connection between their decline and accusations of idolatry (fig. 79). Above the text is a scene of iconoclasts “cleansing” a church interior and assaulting statues of the Virgin, the Saints, and a Crucifix with picks and axes. The men move past a cutaway wall to an outside scene where the statues are thrown into a bonfire as a man with a “beam in his eye” points to a speck in the Catholic’s.<sup>321</sup> In part of the text below this scene the images lament:

As we are in such distress,  
The whole world takes a tilt at us,  
And we must stand in such daner,

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319. *Op. cit.*, Chipps Smith, 47. Chipps Smith gives an excellent analysis of the decline of religious sculpture in Germany during the sixteenth century, its relationship to the spread of Protestantism, and the new forms of religious and secular sculpture that resulted.

320. Chipps Smith, 47-48.

321. “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.” Matthew 7:3-5.

We publicly confess hereby:  
We poor mean church images  
And corner idols big and small  
Admit our misdeeds  
Which have enraged God and the world  
That we have stood in church  
As if we were God himself.  
To us every man has cried  
Of what was close to his heart.  
For flood and fire,  
For every dread and prodigy,  
For every illness, everywhere  
They called on us without measure. . . .  
[But] you yourselves started this with us,  
Who are lifeless  
And yet now must bear  
The blame and punishment for others.  
That is surely an unjust reward.  
You yourselves made us into idols  
And now you deride us for it . . .<sup>322</sup>

Movable sculptures of Christ were victims of this plight. Aside from a few seventeenth and eighteenth century exceptions from steadfastly Catholic areas, they stop being made after the middle part of the sixteenth century. Their constrained life-span indicates that they were subject to the changing circumstances of their time and place. While movable sculptures of Christ were particularly useful for the liturgical, spiritual, and visual requirements of late medieval piety, it seems that they stopped being made and used in Protestant areas precisely because they were so effective.

Some movable Christ sculptures were destroyed or damaged while some were simply put away and forgotten. The Cloisters *Palmesel*, for instance, was hidden away in the wall of the church at Mellrichstadt in Bavaria only to be rediscovered in the late nineteenth century (fig. 6).<sup>323</sup> Similar to the Döblen and Bad Wimpfen crucifixes, the

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322. Translated in Baxandall, *Limewood Sculptors*, 78-81.

323. The hooves of the donkey and Christ's fingers have been restored. The base and wheels are modern. The figure was acquired by the Cloisters in 1955. Adelman, 196 and Wiepen, 41



movable crucifix from Stift Göttweig had a working side wound that appeared to bleed (fig. 80).<sup>324</sup> Like the Missouri Ascending Christ and an Ascending Christ at Princeton (fig. 81), the attributes that were most kinetic and corporeal were nullified after the Protestant Reformation.<sup>325</sup> At some point during the seventeenth century, the chest cavity of the Stift Göttweig figure was sealed—an indication that the “bleeding” of the figure was no longer a part of the local liturgy. And a few Protestant communities continued to use their movable Christ image, though in a less ritualized but equally powerful capacity. The thief-thwarting *Palmesel* from Kalbensteinberg, for instance, has remained in its traditional place of honor (in front of the tabernacle of the church) to this day, even though the town converted to Lutheranism in 1540 (fig. 71).

#### *COUNTER REFORMATIONS AND ICONODULES*

Some movable Christ sculptures continued to be used in the Holy Week, Easter, and Ascension Day observances, especially in the Catholic communities of Bavaria and the Tyrol as a sustained and popular form of religious image. The emphasis on drama, accessibility, immediacy, and experientiality that characterized Tridentine image theology, mysticism, and devotional practices suggest a renewed use for movable Christ sculptures in liturgical and popular piety.<sup>326</sup> In 1563, the Council of Trent provided an official understanding for both literal and figurative image use:

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324. Taubert and Taubert, 82

325. Robert A. Koch, “A Gothic Sculpture of the Ascending Christ,” *Record of the Art Museum of Princeton University* 19 (1960): 37-43.

326. For a discussion of the Counter Reformation image theology and visual piety see Walter Friedländer, *Caravaggio Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 117-135; Joseph F. Chorpenning, “Another Look at Caravaggio and Religion,” *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 8 (1987): 149-158. As it relates to German sculpture see Jeffery Chipps Smith, *Sensuous Worship: Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation in Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); and *German Sculpture of the Later Renaissance*.

Moreover, that the images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints are to be placed and retained especially in the churches, and that due honor and veneration is to be given them; not, however, that any divinity or virtue is believed to be in them by reason of which they are to be venerated, or that something is to be asked of them, or that trust is to be placed in images, as was done of old by the Gentiles who placed their hope in idols; but because the honor which is shown them is referred to the prototypes which they represent, so that by means of the images which we kiss and before which we uncover the head and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ and venerate the saints whose likeness they bear. That is what was defined by the decrees of the councils, especially of the Second Council of Nicea, against the opponents of images.

This decree was clearly embedded in medieval image theology. Furthermore, officials of the Church were instructed to “diligently teach that by means of the stories of the mysteries of our redemption portrayed in paintings and other representations the people are instructed and confirmed in the articles of faith,” and that “great profit is derived from all holy images,” because of their ability to aid memory, make the miraculous present, encourage imitation, inspire love of God, and “cultivate piety.” But the Council also echoed earlier condemnations by medieval apologists and Protestant reformers warning against the “superstitions,” “filthy” avarism, and “lasciviousness” associated with images. The “seductive charms” of images could be “perverted by the people into boisterous festivities and drunkenness,” and the bishop’s approval of image making and use in the Church was required in order to avoid the profane.<sup>327</sup>

These declarations inspired more specific textual and visual directives for image use. Ignatius of Loyola, Philip de Neri, Teresa of Avila, and Francis de Sales, among others, all encouraged the use of images in devotional practices. Inspired by the Ignatian exercises including the composition of place and the application of the senses, Francis

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327. *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. H. J. Schroeder (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1978), 215-216.

Borgia and Johannes David among others constructed devotional manuals complete with printed images (fig. 82).<sup>328</sup> These manuals made Ignatius' imaginative meditations materially available. Before meditating, one focused on an "image showing the gospel story" because it aided contemplation and confirmed sacred history.<sup>329</sup> Images with exacting verisimilitude were particularly desirable since tangible, sensory experiences in the image "as it were...give taste and flavour to the food one has to eat, in such a way that one is not satisfied until one has eaten it."<sup>330</sup>

Liturgical and para-liturgical practices were similarly regulated and experiential. The devotional manuals themselves were meant to accompany the faithful to Mass and aid their worship. Altarpieces, paintings, and sculptures were refurbished and commissioned for the proselytizing needs of the Catholic Reformation. And while there was a real concern that popular practices associated with the liturgy could become "indecent and contrary to Christian discipline," the Church retained and encouraged the performative and visual character of the Mass and high holy days, especially Holy Week, Easter, and Ascension Day (fig. 51).<sup>331</sup>

The corporeal and kinetic aspect of many movable Christ sculptures were preserved and reused during this period. *Christkind* images associated with Christmas

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328. Chorpenning summarizes: "The 'composition of place' entailed using the imagination to visualize a particular scene in the life of Christ in all its details. The 'application of the senses' goes further: the exercitant is to apply each of the five senses (or rather, their analogues in the imagination) to the scene in question." Chorpenning, n. 14, 154. See also Freedberg, 179-180.

329. These excerpts come from Francis Borgia's introduction to an unrealized meditational text that Jerome Nadal later compiled as the *Annotations and Meditations on the Gospels Read at Holy Mass throughout the Year* published in 1595 and 1607. See Miguel Nicolau, *Jerónimo Nadal, S.I. (1507-1580): Su obras y doctrinas espirituales* (Madrid: C.S.I.C., Patronato "Raimundo Lulio," 1949), 129 as cited in Freedberg, 181; See also Thomas Buser, "Jerome Nadal and Early Jesuit Art in Rome," *The Art Bulletin* (Sep. 1976): 424-433.

330. *Op. cit.*, Freedberg, 181.

331. John P. Dolan, "Liturgical Reform among the Irenicists," *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* (Jan., 1971): 72-94 and John Bossy, "The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe." This quote comes from Charles Borromeo's *Acta* as quoted in Bossy, 62.

observances continued to be made and used on a regular basis in Catholic areas of Germany. At least one *Palmesel* from Altheim was said to be in continual use since the fourteenth century, and the arm joints of a movable crucifix from Slovakia were refitted in the eighteenth century (fig. 83). The movable crucifix from Ried im Innkreis carries two restoration dates, 1624 and 1882 inscribed on the “INRI” banner above Christ’s head. Like the painted chronology on the base of the *Palmesel* from Weilheim, these dates provide a record of its continual use (figs. 11 & 84).<sup>332</sup> Many figures were apparently converted to kinetic forms in the seventeenth century. Though the crucified Christ from Zurich was made in the sixteenth century, it was not made movable until almost one hundred years later when a rope and pulley mechanism was added allowing for the figure’s deposition and burial (fig. 85).<sup>333</sup> A fifteenth crucifix from Schönbach, Austria shared a similar fate (fig. 86). According Prof. H. Kortan, movable arms were attached to the figure during the Baroque period along with a new wig of real hair.<sup>334</sup> And some images were reused in new ways. Another movable crucifix from Maria Wörth was incorporated into a carved, wooden altarpiece that dates to 1760 (fig. 87).<sup>335</sup> Similarly, the Holy Sepulchers and *Ölberge* that had previously inhabited churchyards and naves grew into elaborate *Kalvarienberge* that recreated the environs of sacred history. By the eighteenth century, many of them were part of large-scale reconstructions of the Stations of the Cross and the environs of Holy Jerusalem (fig. 88).<sup>336</sup> Life-sized,

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332. Taubert and Taubert, 86.

333. *Ibid.*, 90.

334. *Ibid.*, 88

335. *Ibid.*, 84

336. Karl Vsedni, “Die architektonische Umsetzung des Kalvarienberggedankens zu Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts im österreichischen Raum unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Kalvarienberganlagen von Lanzendorf und Eisenstadt mit Verweisen auf Hernals und Heiligenkreuz,” Ph.D. diss. (University of Vienna, 2002); Elisabeth Roth, “Der volkreiche Kalvarienberg in Literatur und Kunst des Spätmittelalters,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 79 (1960): 330-333.

three-dimensional sculptures of Christ, the Virgin, the Apostles, Romans, and Christ's tormentors form various stages in the sacred narrative inhabited these panoramas that usually culminated with full-size reproductions of Christ's tomb. The two mechanically adept *Ólberg* figures made during the eighteenth century were likely participants in these elaborate topographies.

The reuse and development of movable Christ images, though admittedly confined during the Counter Reformation, confirmed the power of the Church and continued its devotional traditions by bringing the sacred “near to the spectator, almost to the degree of physical tangibility.”<sup>337</sup> This reappropriation occurred in the context of Protestant reactions to religious imagery which often took violent and political forms. Salvaging these images and the practical piety associated with them; sustained the Catholic Church, its beliefs, its customs, and its communicants during its most difficult time. The reformations of the sixteenth century adopted movable Christ sculptures in different ways—through defamation and destruction and reconstruction and reapplication. The fact that these images were reappropriated during the Reformation period is not as significant as the ways in which that reappropriation occurred and its resultant effects in the new and renewed identities of movable Christ sculptures.<sup>338</sup>

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337. Friedländer, 120.

338. Appadurai, 67.

## EPILOGUE

### *Folk Artifact*

In written documents, with rare exception, movable Christ sculptures disappear for almost four hundred years. But during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they began to reappear in *Volkskunde* or folk culture studies, and it is here that we encounter the next known moment in the life of these objects. In this new life, movable sculptures of Christ were primarily understood not as icon or idol, but as folk art. The idea of a separate and valid culture of the folk developed in Central Europe and Britain had its strongest roots in German thought. The practices, beliefs, and artistic expressions of the “common people” were newly understood as having internal moral value and aesthetic quality.<sup>339</sup> This idea was promoted by men like Jacob Grimm and the theologian Jacob Herder who felt that everything characteristically German should be preserved in the onslaught of internationalism and Napoleon’s imperialism.<sup>340</sup> They saw the artistic and social products of the “unlettered German masses” as national treasures and prepared the way for later nineteenth-century “folklore associations” in which “educated amateur scholars such as teachers, pastors, and lawyers often aided ‘real’ scholars in their collection efforts”<sup>341</sup> Students of *Volkskunde* ethnographically captured cultural artifacts and practices. Using systematic methodologies of observation and

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339. Archer Taylor, “Characteristics of German Folklore Studies,” *Journal of American Folklore* 74 (Oct.-Dec. 1961): 293-301.

340. For general discussions of the *Volkskunde* movement, see Heinrich Schauerte, “Entwicklung und gegenwärtiger Stand der religiösen Volkskunderforschung,” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 72 (1953): 516-534. Peter Browe, Otto Höfler, and especially Georg Grass, “In Memoriam,” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung* 49 (1963): 621-626; and Wolfgang Jacobeit, “Concerning the Traditional Understanding of ‘Folk Culture’ in the German Democratic Republic. A Scholarly-Historical Retrospective,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 50 (1991): 67-94.

341. Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997): 35 & 101.

collection, professional and amateur folklorists meticulously recorded ceremonies, customs, songs, tools, textiles, and images. Every kind of object from the most mundane to the highly valued was studied as a “manifestation of an integrated national culture” while the burgeoning field of historical interpretation provided the theoretical foundation for a more aggregate classification of folk life into epochs of “historical, regional, and national layers.”<sup>342</sup>

Social customs, practices, and behaviors—both religious and secular—were of particular interest.<sup>343</sup> One of the modes of collecting was the travelogue, which began in earnest around the turn of the nineteenth century and continued into the early twentieth century. These logs were extremely detailed and included descriptions and analyses of the customs and topography that were considered inherent to the national and ethnic identity of the German people.<sup>344</sup> Fritz Bergen was an illustrator and artist who recorded his travels through the German and Austrian Alps in visual form around 1880. He described and documented in watercolor—and later in print for the *Volkskunde* journal *Mein Heimatland* (My Homeland)—the secular and sacred ceremonies of the local inhabitants he encountered. One of the customs he recorded was the Palm Sunday procession (fig. 89). Bergen depicts a colorful scene of rustic communalism. The *Palmesel*, dressed in its finery, led by a group of young boys, makes its way down the road, out of town on its way to bless the fields. The townspeople, dressed in their Sunday

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342. Tamas Hofer. “Anthropologists and Native Ethnographers in Central European Villages: Comparative Notes on the Professional Personality of Two Disciplines.” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Oct., 1968): 311-315.

343. See Paul Sartori’s *Sitte und Brauch*. 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1910-14) an encyclopedia of manners and customs containing rich references. The first volume contains descriptions of manners and customs related to human life, the second descriptions of comparable traditions connected with the seasons of the year, and the third focuses upon German calendar customs.

344. One of the earliest and most important being *Briefe eines reisenden Franzosen über die Deutschen* which appeared anonymously in 1796 but was actually written by the German theologian Wöfling. Taylor, 296.

best, hats in hand, line the road as the spectacle passes before them, while in the background the parish church framed against the Alps awaits the procession's return. Bergen's image offers two important interpretations. First, movable sculptures of Christ continued to be used in Holy Week ceremonies well into the Modern period—at least in rural Catholic communities. Second, by the late nineteenth century these ceremonies and the images at their center had once again become objects of consideration and comment for artists and scholars.

During the same period that Bergen was traveling, painting, and printing, new categories of *Jahrbücher* (yearbooks) and *Zeitschriften* (journals) devoted to folk culture, customs, and art began gaining an audience. It is in these journals exclusively, that movable sculptures of Christ reappear in text.<sup>345</sup> Similarly institutions devoted to the collection, study, and display of the material culture of the folk were established throughout Central Europe. Church and palace treasuries became ecclesiastical museums of the diocese and state museums (*Staatmuseen*), regional governments formed provincial museums (*Landesmuseen*), and town councils and folk associations turned town halls into city museums (*Stadtmuseen*). Most movable sculptures of Christ were collected by and currently reside in one of these three types of institutions. A *Palmesel* from Swabia and dated to c. 1380, was part of Wilhelm Friedrich Laur's attempts to conserve the treasures of the Hohenzollern holdings in Baden-Württemberg as well as objects from local churches during the late nineteenth century (fig. 90).<sup>346</sup> The old castle, a former chancel building opposite the royal residence, was turned into gallery space for an enormous and sometimes mundane chamber of princely diversions. Like the Berlin Hohenzollern State

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345. See pp. 14-15, ns. 29, 30, 31, & 32.

346. Adelman, 193.



Museum established in 1877, this smaller regional museum was intended to exhibit German royal treasures and cultural identity. And like all good *Kunstammern*, there was no “distinctions in genre between royal relics, natural history specimens, ethnographic artifacts, and art.”<sup>347</sup> It was an “intimate, sentimental, communal,” and nationalistic display.<sup>348</sup> Similarly, the movable crucifix in Weilheim lies in the city museum enclosed in a crypt of glass next to the *Palmesel* (figs. 11, 17, & 68). Weilheim was an important sculpture center during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Franz Xaver Schmädl who made the *Palmesel* for Obertsdorf had his workshop in Weilheim. Housed in the old city hall, the museum is dedicated to the sculptors that flourished in the town and to Bavarian folk life. Weilheim’s two movable Christ sculptures are exhibited in the “Religious Customs” room. In this setting, both ritual objects are performed as museum artifacts surrounded by other objects of local culture including peasant costumes, spinning wheels, farming tools, and children’s toys. In these modern manifestations movable Christ sculptures are newly labeled and understood as *Volkskunst*, or folk art.

The art historian, museologist, and ethnographer Alois Riegl defined *Volkskunst* in his 1894 book on folk art and domesticity. In it he analyzed the concepts of high art (*Hochkunst*) and folk art, drawing a distinction between the artist’s art and the anonymous “will to art” or *Kunstwollen*.<sup>349</sup> According to Riegl, *Volkskunst* was a manifestation of the “will to art” and thus subject to and subject of an independent,

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347. Eva Giloi Bremner, “*Ich Kaufe mir den Kaiser:*” Royal Relics and the Culture of Display in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Prussia,” Ph.D. diss, Princeton University, 2000, 5.

348. Giloi provides an excellent discussion of the culture of display in the Hohenzollern museum. She notes that the founder of the institution, Dr. Paul Seidel, was not only enamored with the royal family and the idea of Prussia, he insisted that royal Prussians “become communal property of the entire German people.” Paul Seidel, “Introduction,” *Hohenzollern-Jahrbuch Band 1-XVII, 1897-1913*; 3, *op. cit.*, Giloi, 2. The Hohenzollern was taken in part to the Soviet Union at the end of World War II, and returned to the East German Museum of German History in the 1950s.

349. Alois Riegl, *Volkskunst, Hausfleiss und Hausindustrie* (Berlin, 1893).

unpredictable, and collective determination that fixed every changing style. Since there is no objective standard of art for all eras, artistic value is relative and defined in relation to the *Kunstwollen*.<sup>350</sup> This organic unfolding of the aesthetic spirit reified folk art as a universal expression of humanity and allowed serious consideration of objects previously ignored or overlooked as less than ideal.

In his *Volkskunst in Europa* of 1926, H.T. Bossart continued this methodological distinction but labeled the categories *Volkskunst* and *Stilkunst*. Folk art, according to his definition, flourished in “primitive” or “arrested” societies, the rural communities of contemporary Europe included. Like Riegl, for Bossart the anonymity of folk art distinguished it from high art. Individual carvers or painters did not imprint their personalities upon the idiom of their art; their work is “supra-personal.” It might absorb the Gothic or Baroque, but it always “strikes us as archaic” and “timeless.”<sup>351</sup> In some designations, “Church furnishings, altars and objects or utensils employed” in religious ritual are excluded from the category of folk art because they are seen as having an institutional origin and organization.<sup>352</sup> But as we have seen, the lines separating official and popular practice are indistinct at best. A better formulation is offered when we “consider the material object in the hands of the worshipper.”<sup>353</sup> When an image is an active part of community expression it becomes the art of the people regardless of the patron or artist’s social ranking. Medieval wooden sculpture was a particularly appropriate medium for the folk art designation. With the exception of Stoss,

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350. This is Riegl’s idea of *relativer Kunstwert*. “The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin,” trans. Kurt W. Forster and Diane Ghirardo. *Oppositions* 25 (1982): 21–51.

351. Peter Fingesten, “The Theory of Evolution in the History of Art,” *College Art Journal* 13, no. 4 (Summer 1954): 305.

352. Ernst Schlee, *German folk art*, trans. Otto Ballin (New York; Harper & Row, 1980), 221-227.

353. *Ibid.*, 210.

Riemenschneider, and Multscher, the makers of most sculptures were unknown and the stylistic qualities of the work vary. This anonymity and the varying degree of technical and material qualities of movable Christ sculptures set them outside the realm of “high art.” Furthermore, wooden objects from salt boxes to children’s toys were seen as almost organically tied to folk. An anonymous almanac of German culture and customs from 1845 included an essay on *Schnitzkunst*, or the art of woodcarving. The author argued that with an “awakening national awareness” the artistic element in “the spirit of our people” should be fostered. Woodcarving and wooden sculpture were “rooted in the soil of the fatherland” and were “an instructive, holy art, in the true sense of the word, a *Volkskunst*.”<sup>354</sup>

Though some early twentieth century scholars like Karl Weinhold resisted the idealistic, nationalistic and elitist presuppositions of *Volkskunde* and *Volkskunst* scholars, this attitude remained the prevalent understanding of folk culture and folk objects.<sup>355</sup> The romantic notion of a late medieval “Everyman,” for instance, was as much the result of Reformation communalism and confessionality as it was early nineteenth century ideas about the *Volk*.<sup>356</sup> While ballads, myths, costumes, and furniture were celebrated as expressions of the will of the people, *Volkskunde* scholars were often suspicious of Catholicism and popular religious practices. Otto Laufer, one of eight scholars who compiled a foundational text on *Volkskunde* entitled *Germanische Wiedererstehung*

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354. Ibid., 219.

355. Weinhold was a student of Jakob Grimm and started one of the earliest and continually influential folk journals the *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* in 1891. Two years earlier he established the Berlin Folklore Museum along with Rudolf Virchow. His anti-nationalistic attitude was announced in his 1891 essay “Was soll die Volkskunde leisten?” in the first volume of the *Zeitschrift*: 1-10. In it, Weinhold stated that the “Lack of prejudice in all national questions is our principle.” For a discussion of Weinhold see Jacobson, 79-81.

356. Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper Collins, 1978), 3-22.

(Germanic Rebirth) in 1918, characterized medieval Christianity as a “foreign effect on German custom.”<sup>357</sup> This effect essentially ended the heroic, golden age of the Teutonic peoples in a cultural *Götterdämmerung* (End of Days), but the spirit of the people remained entrenched even in alien Christian practices and objects—the people in effect made them their own. While religious folk art and practices remained on the periphery of the early *Volkskunde* movement, they became a target of disdain, eradication, and conversion under Fascist rule.

The National Socialist Party eagerly adopted the *Volkskunde* movement and easily assumed its tenets for their own philosophical doctrines and political needs. Both the Rosenberg Bureau and Himmler’s SS-Ahnenerbe (SS-Ancestral Inheritance) utilized the “object science” of folk studies as the basis for a “racially pure religion.”<sup>358</sup> In 1934, Matthes Ziegler who became the director of the Working Community for German *Volkskunde* under the Rosenberg Bureau addressed the value of folk studies for National Socialism in his *Volkskunde on a Racial Basis*: “German *Volkskunde* is the study of the essence and the conditions essential for life of that racial and traditional world of the German *Volk* which is purest and most alive in those communities having shown most eternal contacts with the blood and soil.”<sup>359</sup> The mission of folk studies accordingly was

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357. Hannjost Lixfeld, *Folklore and Facism, The Reich Institute for German Volkskunde*, ed. and trans. James R. Dow (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 15.

358. The Rosenberg Bureau was the educational arm of the National Socialist Worker’s Party and was lead by Adolf Rosenberg who held the title of the “Fürher’s Commissioner for all Intellectual and World-View Education of the NSDAP.” Rosenberg wrote *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Wertung der seelischgeistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* in 1930. Through *Mythus* and his leadership of the Bureau, Rosenberg became “next to Hitler the leading Nazi ideologist.” Lixfeld, 66 and Appendix 1.1. For more on Himmler’s SS-Ahnenerbe see Jacobeit, 81. See also Gottfried Korff, “Volkskunst als ideologisches Konstrukt? Fragen und Beobachtungen zum politischen Einsatz der ‘Volkskunst’ im 20 Jahrhundert,” *Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 15 (1992): 23-49.

359. The Working Community was founded in 1937 by Rosenberg the to “guarantee permanent collaboration in the area of folklore,” and to ward off “ideological opponents” of National Socialism. The manifesto for the Working Community is provided in Lixfeld, Appendix 1.1.

“to expose those sources of Nordic tradition which were covered over by foreign elements and assure that it could flow freely into the future.”<sup>360</sup> Under Rosenberg, Ziegler, Himmler, and Hitler, the efforts to identify an inherent German-ness in the historical and cultural landscape of the Fatherland as defined by Herder, Laufer, and others became a tool of propaganda used to justify the ideology of Nazi eugenics.

The National Socialists’ concept of *Volkskunde* was at the same time reliant on religious metaphor and feeling, and critical of any organized religion other than the state’s—namely Judaism and Catholicism.<sup>361</sup> When the Working Community was formed, Hans Strobel was given the assignment of researching the relationship of churches to folk customs. His goal was to reconcile traditional religious practices that constituted the “calendar arrangements of life and the year” with the NSDAP’s view of Christianity as an alien and undermining force.<sup>362</sup> Through the reclamation of processions and pilgrimages, Christian communal performances became models for restructuring German life and gave new meaning in accordance with the “new religion” of the Third Reich. In 1940, Ernst Otto Thiele a folklorist reporting to the Rosenberg Bureau oversaw the reconfiguration of a Corpus Christ procession in Kitzbühel. The Church was barred from participating, the Eucharist was no where to be seen, leaders of the NSDAP replaced the clergy, swastikas and eagle standards replaced the ecclesiastical banners, political speeches replaced the sermon, and the community processed around the Maypole rather than around the church which was customary.<sup>363</sup> Though the

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360. Ziegler’s *Folklore on a Racial Basis* is reprinted in Lixfeld, Appendix 1.9.

361. The National Socialist saw the Catholic Church as a real threat and competition for the minds and hearts of the people. Particularly telling is Ziegler’s political writings including a 1933 pamphlet entitled “Church and Reich in the Struggle for the Young Generation.” Lixfeld, 87.

362. *Ibid.*, 127.

363. *Ibid.*, 129-130.

appropriation of Christian practices was generally successful, Christianity and Catholicism in particular was considered a parasitic blight on the German soul. The NSDAP and the Folk Court persecuted and often executed scholars who advocated the study of the German Christian past, religious folklore, customs, and objects for their own sake including Adolf Spamer who helped found the Reich Institute for German Folk Studies in Berlin.<sup>364</sup> The various roles and ideologies that German folklorist held under the Nazi regime are still difficult and delicate issues.<sup>365</sup> Some were persecuted, tortured, and killed while others held the swastika high and sought to find ideological justifications for death, destruction, and world domination in the material and literary culture of the German *Volk*. Movable Christ sculptures settled in the betwixt and between of this moment. Though there is no scholarship on movable Christ sculptures from the Third Reich, many images survived and were preserved. Their original religious functions certainly must have been both an inspiration for and anathema to the perverse needs of Nazi ideology.

By the 1960's and 70's, in reaction to the horrendous abuse of *Volkskunde* by the Nazis and the creation of a new Marxist "social order" in the German Democratic

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364. Spamer was labeled as a member of the *action catholica* and accused of being a part of the liberal intelligentsia. His Reich Community for German Folk Research was disbanded, his *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde* usurped, and his archives were confiscated by the SS. In 1942 Spamer was hospitalized for mental illness and never fully recovered until his death in 1953. Lixfeld, 58-59. Kurt Huber and Rudolf Kriss were two folklorist who were also targeted by the Nazis. Both were put to death by the Folk Court. James R. Dow and Hannjost Lixfeld, eds. *German Volkskunde, A Decade of Theoretical Confrontation, Debate, and Reorientation (1967-1977)* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 11.

365. Helge Gerndt charges that folklore scholars "became the instruments for the scholarly legitimization of political demands and became the handmaidens of a cynical seizure of power." Helge Gerndt, *Volkskunde und Nationalsozialismus. Referate und Diskussionen einer Tagung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde* (Munich: Münchner Beiträge zur Volkskunde, 1988), 18. Lixfeld warns that many current scholars are the students and followers of the folklorists of the Third Reich and, as such, the topic is "still a very emotional and hotly debated political issue." Lixfeld, 63. And Gerndt provides added consideration when cautions that as contemporary scholars we approach folklore studies during the Third Reich "not just to accuse but rather as a reminder to be alert, to be self-critical, and to lament." Gerndt, 18. See also Dow and Lixfeld.

Republic, scholars of folk culture in both the GDR and the FDR reevaluated the nostalgic romanticism and nationalistic idealism of their predecessors. Discarding the evolutionary paradigm of low and high culture folklorists re-shaped the concept of *Volkskunde* as the inclusive collectivity of a proletariat and pluralistic society.<sup>366</sup> Scholars began deconstructing the categorizations, canonizations, and essentialist tendencies that characterized folk studies since Herder and Grimm. They were instead interested in “social responsibility, democratization of the scholarship, and relevance [of folk studies] for contemporary society.”<sup>367</sup> During this period, comprehensive studies of movable sculptures of Christ by Josef Adelman and Gesine and Johannes Taubert re-introduced these images as cultural documents in the social history of the “people.” These studies only briefly address the aesthetics of the figures or their “Germaness.” Rather they are concerned with preserving these overlooked and understudied figures as telling indicators of the richness and vibrancy of medieval life, community, and religious practice.

At the same time communities in Austria and southern Germany began to revitalize the liturgical function of movable Christ sculptures in their own modern practices. The *Palmesel* in Hersbruck thought to be the product of a sixteenth-century Nürnberg workshop, was given to the German Museum in Nürnberg during the late nineteenth century (fig. 91). But in 2000, it was restored and returned to the town of Hersbruck where it currently resides in the church of the Virgin and the Four Church Fathers. And the *Palmesel* from Altheim is still housed alongside the town’s movable crucifix on the south side of the altar in the Church of Saint Martin (figs. 24 & 92). The current church was built in 1486 and both figures were made sometime shortly after its

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366. Georg G. Iggers, “New Directions in Historical Studies in the German Democratic Republic,” *History and Theory*, 28 (Feb. 1989): 59-77

367. Dow and Lixfeld, 1.

completion. Still every year the town hosts a Palm Sunday procession from Heldenfingen to Heuchlingen and back to Altheim. There are unquestionably some communities who never stopped using movable sculptures of Christ in this way, but since the last half of the twentieth century, these “re-enactments” of sacred and medieval history have become celebrated expressions of religious folk tradition fostering communal worship, cultural identity and tourism dollars in small alpine towns (figs. 93 & 94).<sup>368</sup>

### *Art Object*

This brings me to the last but surely not the final episode in the story of these objects. I end where I began, with my own first experience of a movable Christ sculpture in the quiet gallery of a museum. In this space there was no Church ritual, no nave, and no altar. The sights, sounds, and movements that accompanied the image of the Ascending Christ in its previous manifestations were absent from me. In this modern setting the image was an *object d’art*, a thing of beauty, an aesthetic expression.<sup>369</sup>

David Freedberg describes this experience:

[w]e go into a picture gallery, and we have been so schooled in a particular form of aesthetic criticism that we suppress acknowledgment of the basic elements of cognition and appetite, or admit them only with difficulty....It is the cultured layman or intellectual who most readily articulates this kind of response even

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368. This modern phenomenon is one that requires further examination. It seems that in the case of Thaur, Austria for instance, the Palm Sunday procession was reinvented in the 1960’s. The University of Innsbruck website for the Institut für Europäische Ethnologie Volkskunde has a page on the Thaur procession. On it, the author states that the procession was stopped in 1862 and reinstated in 1968. <http://www2.uibk.ac.at/volkskunde/infoservice/palmeselprozession.html> (accessed Oct. 2004).

369. For a discussion of the limitations of Kantian and Hegelian aesthetics, the ideal of the disinterested observer, and the modern concepts of beauty and high art see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 429-441; and “Context, Visuality, and the Objects of Art History,” in the “Object of Art History,” David Freedberg, et. al. *Art Bulletin* 76 (Sep., 1994): 394-96; and James Elkins, “Art History and Images That Are Not Art,” *Art Bulletin* 77 (Dec., 1995); 553-571.



though occasionally there may be a sneaking feeling that it has deeper psychological roots, which we prefer to keep buried or simply cannot exhume.<sup>370</sup>

“Art” is laden with modern value. It is steeped in commodity and cult in a way that is different from the commodified cultic image of the medieval period when visual production was more about materiality and function than about aesthetics and artistic expression. As Hans Belting notes, images “reveal their meaning best by their use.” Their “use,” in his construction, includes *all* the “beliefs, superstitions, hopes, and fears in handling the image.”<sup>371</sup> And without the distracting details of the image’s history; the images revealed their “use” to me in modern aesthetics. The curator’s strategy of display which placed the figure against a white wall on a white podium encouraged appreciation of form but only suggested an iconographic glimpse into other underlying meanings.<sup>372</sup> I was engrossed in the attenuated drapery, delicate sway, and fragile beauty of a figure that I could only identify as Christ after the Crucifixion. Collected and preserved for posterity in the environment of the museum, the image had become art for art’s sake.

Heidegger asks whether we encounter works as themselves when they “stand and hang in collections and exhibitions?”<sup>373</sup> His answer is yes. Works are “self-substantiating” and thus always what they are, but they are also “bygone works [that] stand over against us in the realm of tradition and conservation.” Viewing isolated images on display in museum and gallery spaces fosters an “aesthetic distancing” or

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370. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 273.

371. Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, xxii. This title comes from the original German *Kult und Bild* (literally Cult and Image). One can take issue with the translation of *Likeness* as *Kult* and *Presence* as *Bild*. The dynamic of likeness and presence, however, is central to Belting’s discussion and so these terms work well as a translated title for this book.

372. My understanding of the practice of collecting, the strategy of display, and the culture of the museum is informed by Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*. (New Haven, CT: 1989) and “Collecting/Museums,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, 281-291; Peter Jones, “Museums and the Meanings of Their Contents,” *New Literary History* 23 (Autumn, 1992): 911-921.

373. The following discussion of Heidegger’s ideas and the quoted words and phrases come from his “The Origin of the Work of Art.”

formal disinterestedness.<sup>374</sup> The work of art cultivates a *Riss* or rift in our world but, in the classic Heideggarian turn, the work is also never separate from us. The rift does not split or rip. Rather, it forms an “intimacy of opponents that belong to each other” and draw one another together. It is both a ground-plan (*Grundriss*) and an elevation (*Auf-riss*) that unifies and reveals dimensions initially concealed. As Leo Rosenstein eloquently summarizes:

“The ‘rift-design’ is the tenuous equilibrium maintained by the...art object between earth and world, medium and message, corporeality and spirituality, and between the worked and extra-artistic worlds which converge and yet oppose each other in the work.”<sup>375</sup>

And this is what we as art historians look for when we engage the cultural biography of an image—the seam between the power of the image to be on its own and the ways in which it becomes because of us. To consider all of the lives of movable Christ sculptures, their power in human history, is to “allow them their full role is, again, to acknowledge the role of sensation in knowledge.”<sup>376</sup>

Although I approached the Missouri Ascending Christ as an aesthetic object, my desire to trace the seam beyond my initial understanding inspired the narrative that you have just experienced—a multi-layered epic that traces the varied lives of a unique sculptural form through the cultural horizons of medieval and modern Europe. In late medieval piety images of Christ and the saints were representations of the divine,

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374. Camille declares that the “aesthetic anesthetizes. It annihilates function, taking the object of interest out of the realm of necessity into the disinterested contemplation of the subjective viewer’s consciousness.” Camille., 79. Here Camille is quoting the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who in turn references the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger when he says that the “aesthetic attitude...instead of questioning the credentials of everyday experience, one merely ignores that experience in favour of an eager dwelling upon appearances, an engrossment in surfaces, an absorption in things, as we say ‘in themselves.’” Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 111.

375. Leo Rosenstein, “The Ontological Integrity of the Art Object from the Ludic Viewpoint,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 34 (Spring, 1976): 14.

376. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 435.

conduits to the divine, symbols of institutional power, and commodity products, serving as the visual center in the ritualized structuring of private and public life. They were officially intended as vehicles for enlightenment, inspiration, and education; and they functioned in unsanctioned ways beyond and because of those intentions. In the phenomenological exchange between perception and matter the material image represented sacred presence. The conflation of material likeness and divine presence in religious practice and human perception was a real possibility and a real danger for the viewer—danger that reached a meridian on the eve of the Protestant Reformation. For individuals like Max Ehem and communities like movable Christ sculptures threatened the boundary between sacred and profane by fusing, reconstituting, and confusing the image and its transcendent prototype. They represented the Church—its traditions, its power, and its ability to control the sacred for both medieval Christians, reformation Protestants and Tridentine Catholics. They were discharged, destroyed, preserved, and remade. By the Age of the Enlightenment, their stylistic and provincial heterogeneity and disparateness and their location in the cultural beliefs of the people informed an alternative incarnation. Movable Christ sculptures newly manifested as residual expressions of folk and art commodity that were worthy of study as aesthetic artifacts of a romantic past, foreign invaders, and national identity. They acted as tools of ethnographic positivism, totalitarianism and social politics, and the cult of beauty. All of these episodes in the story of movable Christ sculptures are “inscribed in their forms, their uses, and their trajectories” and enliven them.<sup>377</sup> They are an accounting of the things an image can be and the way in which images not only reside in the human experience but act as viable agents—always present but ever changing.

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377. Appadurai, 5.

APPENDIX A

CROSS BURIAL

Alderbach  
Andechs  
Chiemese  
Brixen (1323)  
Diessen  
Freising  
Havelberg  
Hirsau  
Inersdorf  
Luebeck  
Magdeburg  
Moosburg  
Passau  
Prague  
Raitenbuch  
Ranshofen  
Regensburg  
Salzburg  
St. Florian  
Treves  
Zeno  
Zurich

HOST BURIAL

Bamberg  
Constance  
Brixen (1136)  
Halle  
St. Blaisen  
St. Gall  
Strassburg

CROSS AND HOST

Augsburg  
Basel  
Blaubeuren  
Brixen (1456)  
Bueckberg  
Eichstaett  
Essen  
Fritzlar  
Klosterneuberg  
Meissen  
Prüfening  
Regensburg  
Rheinau

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