



GOTHIC IVORY SCULPTURE

CONTENT AND CONTEXT

EDITED BY
CATHERINE YVARD



Gothic Ivory Sculpture: Content and Context

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Designed by Matthew Cheale

Cover Image:
Detail of Fig. 10.1,
London, The British Museum, Inv. 1888,1217.1.
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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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KATHERINE BAKER is Professor of art history at Arkansas State University. Her research examines Parisian art between the late medieval and early Renaissance periods with an emphasis on methodological approaches that explore the complex dynamics that exist around collaboratively made objects. Key to this work has been the use of archival material, which she began to utilise in her dissertation *Painting and the Luxury Arts in Paris, 1490-1515: Objects and Their Urban Contexts* (University of Virginia, 2013). Her current project is focused on one document: the 1533 estate inventory of Chicart Bailly. An ivory carver in Paris at the turn of the sixteenth century, Bailly and his documentary trail should help to deepen our present notions about the ivory trade during the Renaissance.

CAMILLE BROUCKE is Head Curator in charge of medieval art at the Musée Dobrée in Nantes. After studying Art History at the Sorbonne (MA), Management at Sciences Po Paris (MA) and Curatorship at the Institut National du Patrimoine, she began her career as curator at the Centre National du Costume de Scène in Moulins. In recent years, she has worked on a number of exhibitions and co-directed and contributed to two exhibition catalogues: *Le Cœur d'Anne de Bretagne* (Grand Patrimoine de Loire-Atlantique/Silvana Editoriale, 2014) and *Trésors de la fin du Moyen Âge* (Locus Solus, 2017). After researching Arthurian iconography, she is now turning to historiographical questions and investigating the history of collecting, focusing in particular on the figure of collector Paul Thoby.

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FRANZ KIRCHWEGER has been Curator of the Kunstkammer and Secular and Ecclesiastical Treasuries at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien since 1998, where he has contributed to numerous research projects, exhibitions and publications. From 2010 to 2013 he was in charge of the new installation of the Kunstkammer galleries encompassing sculpture and decorative arts from the tenth to the nineteenth century. From 2007 to 2011, and again from 2015 to 2016, he was Acting Director of the Kunstkammer and Treasuries. His research focuses on medieval insignia and treasures, the decorative arts (800-1800 CE), the Habsburg collections, and collectors in the Early Modern period. He regularly lectures on these topics at Vienna University, the University of Applied Arts Vienna and Graz University.

JULIETTE LEVY-HINSTIN is a sculpture conservator with a long-standing interest in ivory sculptures and their polychromy. She has worked on collections of archaeological ivories for the departments of Egyptian, Oriental, and Greek and Roman Antiquities at the Musée du Louvre. She has conducted missions abroad, in particular in Syria, where she studied the Arslan Tash ivories, dated to the fourth century BCE. She has acquired a profound knowledge of medieval ivories, collaborating since 1986 with the Département des Objets d'Art at the Louvre, at first under the direction of Danielle Gaborit-Chopin and, since 2005, of Elisabeth Antoine-König, Jannic Durand and Florian Meunier. She has also been working on the rich ivory collection of the Musée de Cluny in Paris and teaches at the Institut National du Patrimoine, where she is in charge of the Sculpture Conservation Specialisation.

CHRISTIAN NIKOLAUS OPITZ is an independent scholar based between Vienna and Glasgow. He studied Art History and Romance Philology in Vienna and Basel; he has published widely on late medieval art, especially on winged altarpieces in the Alpine region, and on wall paintings in secular as well as in religious contexts. Further research interests include word-and-image studies and the modern reception of medieval art and culture. He is currently working on a book entitled *Wall Painting as a Medium of Representation of Courtly, Civic and Monastic Communities in Central Europe, c.1250-1350*.

STEPHEN PERKINSON is the Peter M. Small Associate Professor of Art History at Bowdoin College (Brunswick, ME, USA). He is author of *The Likeness of the King: A Prehistory of Portraiture in Late Medieval France* (Chicago, 2009), curator of *The Ivory Mirror: The Art of Mortality in Renaissance Europe* (an exhibition at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, with accompanying volume published by Yale University Press, 2017), and co-editor, with Jessica Brantley and Elizabeth Teviotdale, of *Reassessing Alabaster Sculpture in Medieval England* (Medieval Institute Publications/Index of Christian Art, forthcoming) and, with Noa Turel, of *Picturing Death, 1200-1600* (Brill, forthcoming). His work has also appeared in several journals, including *The Art Bulletin* and *Gesta*, and he has contributed to the following exhibition catalogues: *Set in Stone: The Face in Medieval Art* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006) and *Object of Devotion: Medieval English Alabaster Sculpture from the Victoria and Albert Museum* (ASI, 2011).

NAOMI SPEAKMAN is Curator for Late Medieval European collections in the Department for Britain, Europe and Prehistory at the British Museum. Her research interests include Gothic ivory carvings, late medieval metalwork, collecting histories and museology. She is currently curating the British Museum international touring exhibition *Medieval Power: Symbols and Splendour*. Prior to joining the British Museum, Naomi worked at Bonhams and the Victoria and Albert Museum. She is currently undertaking a collaborative PhD at the Courtauld Institute of Art and the British Museum exploring the nineteenth-century collecting history of the museum's medieval ivory carvings.

MICHELE TOMASI is Senior Lecturer in Medieval Art History at Lausanne University in Switzerland. He specialises in art made in Italy and France c.1250-1450, with a focus on materials, production methods, patronage and marketing. His publications include *Monumenti d'avorio. I dossali degli Embriachi e i loro committenti* (Paris/Pisa, 2010), *Le arche dei santi. Scultura, religione e politica nel Trecento veneto* (Rome, 2012) and *L'arte del Trecento in Europa* (Turin, 2012). He recently co-edited *Collezioni del Museo Civico d'Arte Antica di Torino. Avori medievali* (Savigliano, 2016), with Simonetta Castronovo and Fabrizio Crivello, and *Orfèvrerie gothique en Europe: production et réception* (Rome, 2016), with Élisabeth Antoine-König. He is currently exploring how reading late medieval French chronicles can help us understand the ways in which works of art were viewed, used and talked about at the French courts c.1360-1420.

CATHERINE YVARD is Special Collections Curator at the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. She previously worked on digitisation projects at the Chester Beatty Library, the Bodleian Library and the British Library. Specialised in late medieval manuscripts, in particular books of hours, she is interested in the transition from manuscript to print, and the transmission of patterns across time, space and media. From 2008 to 2015, she managed the [Gothic Ivories Project](#) at The Courtauld and acquired an in-depth knowledge of Gothic ivory carving. Recent publications include 'Un Napolitain à Tours: un incunable enluminé par le Maître de Jean Charpentier', in Claudia Rabel (ed.), *L'Enluminure. Etudes réunies en hommage à Patricia Stirnemann* (Paris, 2014) and 'Gothic Ivories and their Owners: an Overview', in Glyn Davies and Eleanor Townsend (eds.), *A Reservoir of Ideas. Studies in Honour of Paul Williamson* (London, 2017).

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PREFACE

CATHERINE YVARD



0.1
Pax with Crucifixion
(Germany, Cologne?,
third quarter of the
fourteenth century?).
Ivory, 10.7 x 7.6 cm.
London, Sam Fogg Ltd.,
2016.

Gothic ivory carvings, long considered to be the expression of a minor art, have increasingly been brought into the art historical discourse. Since the seminal publication by Raymond Koechlin, *Les Ivoires gothiques français* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1924), a few pioneers in the field, from the late 1970s onwards, have stressed the importance of these artefacts through collection catalogues, exhibitions and articles. These publications were largely the fruit of research conducted by the members of an informal international study group formed at the initiative of Richard Randall (Walters Art Museum) and comprising

Danielle Gaborit-Chopin (Musée du Louvre), Peter Barnet (Detroit Institute of Art), Paul Williamson (Victoria and Albert Museum), Charles T. Little (Metropolitan Museum of Art), and Neil Stratford (British Museum). The constant reference to their work in the present volume is testimony to their continuing impact in the field.¹ The online launch in 2010 of the [Gothic Ivories Project at the Courtauld Institute of Art](#), a catalogue of Gothic ivory carvings preserved in public and private collections around the world,² which coincided with the publication of the first of a lavish three-volume catalogue dedicated to medieval ivories in the Victoria and Albert Museum collection,³ constituted another milestone in the study of these intricate sculptures. Never before had these artworks been so visible and readily accessible to a wide audience. The vision of Prof. John Lowden for ‘a Koechlin for the twenty-first century’ grew from an initial 700 objects accessible online in 2010 to over 5,000 in 2015, illustrated with more than 14,200 images. The Gothic Ivories Project, however, differed from Koechlin’s approach in one important aspect: it did not attempt to give a judgement on the place and date of execution of each piece, but compiled the published opinions of experts, thus providing a history of the dating and localisation of each one.⁴

Although my twenty-first-century experience as project manager of the Gothic Ivories Project was very different from that of Koechlin, facilitated by the work of my predecessors and contemporaries, modern means of travel and communication as well as advances of digital photography, the words of his preface still strongly resonated: ‘... I set out on my journey and from Madrid to Saint Petersburg, from Palermo to Copenhagen, from Budapest to Liverpool, I sought out ivories ... so that, after a few years of travels, an ample crop had been reaped: about 2,000 photographs of ivories from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century had found a place in my boxes’.⁵ Focusing on pieces that he considered to be French, his catalogue amounted to 1328 entries and, as he was well aware, could not be comprehensive, as hitherto unknown ivories kept coming on the market or were brought to his attention through, for instance, the 1923 Burlington Club exhibition, too late for inclusion in his catalogue volume.⁶ Although many pieces have made their way into public collections since 1924, a staggering number is still today on the art market and in private hands: 967 pieces, nearly one fifth of the total number of objects currently on the Gothic Ivories Project website, are registered as ‘unknown location’.⁷ Hitherto unknown pieces continue to appear at auctions, such as the [fourteenth-century pax with a Crucifixion](#) (presumably a repurposed diptych wing) recently offered for sale by Sam Fogg, London (fig. 0.1), while others surface as a result of ongoing provenance research. Most recently, Peter Kidd brought to light a photograph showing some ivory carvings from the collection of Jack Ball (b. 1883, d. 1938).⁸ A few searches reveal that, out of the seven Gothic ivories featuring on the photograph, five can be found in the Gothic Ivories database, though without the Ball provenance, and two are as yet uncatalogued pieces. In 1940, most of his collection was acquired by his friend Sydney Edward Lucas who was to sell the ivories in 1956. The sale catalogue contains about fifteen ivory carvings dating from

the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century.⁹ Similarly, the exciting discoveries presented by Franz Kirchweyer in this volume concerning the collection of the Count of Renesse-Breidbach could fruitfully feed into the Gothic Ivories database. I also would like to signal here a number of objects in public collections that, for a variety of reasons, did not make it into the online catalogue. These comprise eleven ivories in the collection of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon,¹⁰ three fragments of a diptych carved in the so-called Kremsmünster style, dispersed between the [cathedral treasury of Győr](#) and the Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz ([Inv. 913 and 914](#)),¹¹ a knife handle showing a crowned king feeding a hawk, kept in a museum in Rostov in Russia, a ‘handful’ of fourteenth-century knife handles and hair parters in the Musée Carnavalet in Paris,¹² and a broken blank writing tablet recessed on both sides excavated at Rievaulx abbey and now the property of English Heritage.¹³ An online database, by nature, is easier to update than a printed book, and it is hoped that the Gothic Ivories Project website, last updated in June 2015, will expand and see its entries amended and added to in coming years.

Glyn Davies and Sarah Guérin, in 2014, surveyed the flurry of new museum catalogues, and other publications that came out in the early 2010s.¹⁴ The trend has shown no sign of abating, with the publication of the catalogue of ivories in the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg in 2014, that of the Palazzo Madama in Turin and of the Fondazione Cini in Venice, both in 2016.¹⁵ The two former institutions collaborated on the exhibition *Il collezionista di meraviglie: L’Ermitage di Basilewsky* held in Turin in 2013, which resulted in a special issue of *Palazzo Madama: Studi e notizie* containing, as one would expect, a few articles on ivory carvings, including one on an outstanding knife with ivory handle now at the Hermitage.¹⁶ The 2015 exhibition at the Louvre-Lens *D’Or et d’ivoire: Paris, Pise, Florence, Sienne 1250-1320* also gave pride of place to ivory carvings, while the forthcoming exhibition entitled *The Ivory Mirror: The Art of Mortality in Renaissance Europe* at Bowdoin College Museum of Art will examine the use of ivory in the making of *memento mori* in Northern Europe in the sixteenth century.¹⁷ The many contributions devoted to ivories in the volume recently published in honour of Paul Williamson not only pay tribute to a lifelong passion but also show that much remains to be said.¹⁸

To showcase new research in the field, the Gothic Ivories Project co-organised two conferences in London: one in 2012 with the Victoria and Albert Museum and another in 2014 with the British Museum.¹⁹ While selected papers from the former were published as a special issue of *The Sculpture Journal* (Spring 2014), it is particularly pertinent that the second publication to come out of this conference series should be in a digital format. While the papers have been devised so that they are self-contained when downloaded and read in a printed form, the content is considerably enhanced by an online reading as it engages in a dialogue with the Gothic Ivories website and a number of other online resources.

The present volume is thematically and chronologically divided into three sections. The first one focuses on the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and places the artefacts in

their original context of production. Elizabeth Antoine-König and Juliette Levy, through close material examination and analysis, ascertain that the Martin Le Roy Christ, acquired by the Louvre in 2011, originally formed a pair with an executioner figure that had been in the museum since 1961. They further argue that this Flagellation scene was not one of many passion scenes in a large altarpiece, but was designed to stand alone, framed and protected by a micro-architectural structure. Michele Tomasi provides a survey of the so-called Kremsmünster group, and produces a web of compelling evidence in favour of Cologne as the centre where this distinctive style originated. Christian Nikolaus Opitz approaches ivory carvings through the prism of documentary evidence: his analysis of hitherto unknown archival sources in central Europe sheds new light on the acquisition, significance and functions of ivory statuettes of the Virgin and Child, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century.

The second section turns to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century when the production of ivory carvings, while still adhering to some older models, undergoes changes, venturing into new functional and iconographical territories. My contribution examines the impact of Parisian prints as a source of inspiration for ivory carvers, as evidenced in a number of pieces, especially paxes. Katherine Baker gives a tantalising first peek at the 1533 post-mortem inventory of a house belonging to Chicart Bailly, ‘maistre tabletier’ in Paris. Stephen Perkinson focuses on two early sixteenth-century ivory *memento mori* whose outstanding anatomical accuracy invites us to reassess their meaning and function.

The third section offers a rich panorama of the particular taste for ivory developed by collectors all over Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thanks to the serendipitous appearance of an album of drawings and watercolours at a 1995 auction, Franz Kirchweyer brings to light the collection of Clemens Wenceslaus Count of Renesse-Breidbach (b. 1776, d. 1833). Naomi Speakman delves into the British Museum archives to understand the nature of the institution’s relationship with William Maskell (b. 1814, d. 1890), and the story behind the acquisition of his vast collection of ivories in 1856. The world in which Paul Thoby (b. 1886, d. 1969) assembled his modest collection was radically different: medieval ivories were by then scarcer and more expensive and his wealth did not compare with that of most of his nineteenth-century predecessors. Through a case study of Thoby, Camille Broucke retraces his path from medical doctor to amateur collector, to eventually become director of the Musée Dobrée in Nantes where his ivories, archives and library are still kept today.

Finally a thought-provoking epilogue by Jack Hartnell brings us into the twenty-first century and addresses the question of reproductions and Gothic ivory sculpture in the age of digitisation and 3D printing.

Reading this book will, I hope, enable the reader to metaphorically step into the ‘chambre aux dentz d’ivoire’ described in Chicart Bailly’s inventory and discover some of its riches.

All references in *Courtauld Books Online* are hyperlinked. To navigate to a footnote, click on the reference number in the body of the text. To return back to the main text, click on the number at the beginning of the footnote.

All hyperlinks directing to online resources were checked and valid at the date of 14 March 2017.

1. For a bibliographical survey of the subject 1970s–2014, see Glyn Davies and Sarah Guérin, 'Introduction', in *Sculpture Journal* 23:1 (2014): pp. 7–12. Two important catalogues then announced as forthcoming have since appeared in print: Jeremy Warren, *Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture in the Ashmolean Museum*, II: *Sculptures in Stone, Clay, Ivory, Bone and Wood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), and Sarah Guérin, *Gothic Ivories. Calouste Gulbenkian Collection* (London: Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers Ltd., 2015).
2. For more details on the genesis and nature of the project initiated by Prof. John Lowden and funded by Thomson Works of Art and the Paul Ruddock Foundation for the Arts, see: Davies and Guérin, 'Introduction'; Catherine Yvard, 'The Gothic Ivories Project at the Courtauld Institute of Art', in *Sculpture Journal* 23:1 (2014): pp. 98–100; and the 'Background and Mission Statement' section on the Gothic Ivories website.
3. Paul Williamson, *Medieval Ivory Carvings. Early Christian to Romanesque* (London: V&A Publishing, 2010), and Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings 1200–1550* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014).
4. When unpublished, no date or place of origin was included in the entry.
5. '... je me mis en route et, de Madrid à Saint-Petersbourg, de Palerme à Copenhague, de Budapest à Liverpool, je fis ma quête d'ivoires ... de sorte qu'après quelques années de voyages une ample récolte était amassée: environ 2,000 photographies d'ivoires du XIII^e siècle au XV^e avaient trouvé leur place dans mes cartons', in Koechlin, *Les Ivoires gothiques*, pp. i–ii. One should also note that Koechlin's work was interrupted by the advent of World War I and thus came out much later than he would have wished (p. v).
6. Koechlin, *Les Ivoires gothiques*, p. v, note 1.
7. Search carried out on 4 December 2016.
8. Peter Kidd, 'Leaves and Cuttings from the Collection of Jack Ball, Arms Dealer and Fraudster' (paper delivered at the *Beyond Words* symposium, Boston, 5 November 2016). I would like to thank Peter Kidd for sharing this Ball display photograph with me.
9. *Works of Art Mainly of the Mediaeval Period the Property of S. E. Lucas, Esq., Christie, Mansion and Woods, London, 7–9 May 1956*, lots 333–46 and 357. A copy annotated with the buyers' names exists at the National Art Library, London, so that the later fate of these objects could be traced further.
10. See Guérin, *Gothic Ivories. Calouste Gulbenkian Collection*.
11. I would like to thank Christian Opitz for bringing the latter to my attention. See Michele Tomasi's paper in the present volume for more on this group and on this object, which can be completed by a fourth piece in the Chicago Art Institute (Inv. 1943.60).
12. See for instance Jean-François Dureuil, Jean-Claude Béal, *La Tabletterie gallo-romaine et médiévale. Une histoire d'os* (Paris: Paris musées, [c.1996]), nos. 287 (Inv. AY 37) and 288 (Inv. AY 38).
13. English Heritage (Lord Feversham), acc. No. 85000391. Glyn Coppack (comp.), *Abbeys: Yorkshire's Monastic Heritage* (London: English Heritage, 1988), no. 78. Léon Pressouyre and Terry N. Kinder (dir.), *Saint Bernard et le monde cistercien* (Paris: Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, 1990), no. 88.
14. See note 1.
15. Marta Kryzhanovskaya, *Western European Medieval Ivories. Catalogue of the Collection* (Западноевропейская резная кость Средних веков. Каталог коллекции), (St Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers, 2014), Simonetta Castronovo, Fabrizio Crivello, Michele Tomasi (eds.), *Avori Medievali IX–XV secolo. Collezioni del Museo Civico d'Arte Antica di Torino* (Savigliano: L'Artistica Savigliano, 2016). Entries on ivory carvings and Embriachi work by Benedetta Chiesi and Michele Tomasi, in Andrea Bacchi and Andrea De Marchi (dir.), *La Galleria di Palazzo Cini. Dipinti, sculture, oggetti d'arte* (Venice: Marsilio, 2016), no. 61–77.
16. Marta Kryzhanovskaya, 'Il coltello-présentoir gotico nella raccolta del Museo Statale dell'Ermitage: questioni di iconografia', in *Palazzo Madama. Studi e notizie*, fourth year, no. 3 (2014–15): pp. 82–6.
17. Xavier Dectot and Marie-Lys Marguerite (dir.), *D'Or et d'ivoire. Paris, Pise, Florence, Sienne 1250–1320* (Gand Lens: Snoeck, 2015). Stephen Perkinson (ed.), *The Ivory Mirror: The Art of Mortality in Renaissance Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press with the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, forthcoming [2017]).
18. Glyn Davies and Eleanor Townsend (eds.), *A Reservoir of Ideas: Essays in Honour of Paul Williamson* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2017).
19. *Gothic Ivory Sculpture: Old Questions, New Directions*, 23–24 March 2012; *Gothic Ivories: Content and Context*, 5–6 July 2014.

PART ONE

PRODUCTION AND USES: THIRTEENTH TO FOURTEENTH CENTURY



A FLAGELLATION SCENE REUNITED: A REASSESSMENT OF EARLY FOURTEENTH- CENTURY IVORY ALTARPIECES AND TABERNACULA

ELISABETH ANTOINE-KÖNIG AND JULIETTE LEVY-HINSTIN



1.1
Flagellation Christ
(Paris, c.1300-20).
Ivory, height: 21.8 cm.
Paris, Musée du Louvre,
Département des Objets
d'Art, Inv. OA 12380.

In October 2011, the Musée du Louvre acquired an outstanding ivory figure of Christ tied to the Flagellation column formerly in the collection of Victor Martin Le Roy (b. 1842, d. 1918) (fig. 1.1; [Inv. OA 12380](#)).¹ This piece was made famous by the publication of the catalogue of this collection in 1906, but was, for more than a century, only known through the 1906 pictures.² It was not studied closely since, as it remained in the possession of the Martin Le Roy heirs.³



The style of this slim and most elegant figure is characteristic of the best Parisian ivory carvers of the beginning of the fourteenth century. Christ is featured with his bust facing the viewer, his wrists tied to the column; he is wearing a long *perizonium* covering his knees. His head, in three-quarter view, is tilted, expressing with nobility the sorrow suffered during this humiliating torment (fig. 1.2). If the head of Christ expresses sorrow, the rest of his body is a model of grace and idealised beauty, with long and elegant legs, feet and hands (fig. 1.3).

In 1906, Raymond Koechlin did not publish this piece once, but twice: in the Martin Le Roy catalogue and in a fundamental contribution entitled *Retables français en ivoire du commencement du XIV^e siècle*.⁴ In the latter, he assembled around the Flagellation Christ four more carvings, arguing that they were all fragments from an altarpiece adorned with scenes of the Passion, and were carved in the same Parisian workshop: a scene of the Arrest of Christ in the Louvre (Inv. OA 9961),⁵ a Mocking of Christ in Antwerp (Inv. MMB.0436),⁶ an executioner also in Paris (Inv. OA 9958; fig. 1.4),⁷ and a Deposition in the Metropolitan Museum (Inv. 17.190.199). In 1924, in his magnum opus, *Les Ivoires gothiques français*,⁸ he made two additions to this group: a Deposition in Oslo (Inv. OK-09927) and three Holy Women at the Victoria and Albert Museum (Inv. A.99-1927).⁹

Danielle Gaborit-Chopin reassessed and nuanced his conclusions in her catalogue entries for the exhibition *Les Fastes du gothique* in 1981, and in her 2003 catalogue of the medieval ivories in the Louvre.¹⁰ While she accepted that all these works were made in Paris in the early fourteenth century, she pointed out stylistic differences and offered to divide them into groups, according to a tentative chronology. She dated to c.1300-10 the earliest group, consisting of the statuette of the executioner in the Louvre (fig. 1.4) and, probably, the Martin Le Roy Christ; then around 1320-30, came the two reliefs of the Betrayal in the Louvre and the Mayer Van den Bergh Mocking of Christ, certainly part of one and the same altarpiece; the Oslo Deposition was, she argued, from about the same date, but by a different hand.¹¹ Finally, she considered the Deposition in the Metropolitan Museum and the Holy Women in the Victoria and Albert Museum to have been executed around the same time, but by a different workshop. This hypothesis implied that the pieces came

1.2
Detail of Flagellation
Christ (Paris, c.1300-
20).

1.3
Detail of Fig. 1.1.



from four or five different retables, made in three or four Parisian workshops.

Two main questions presented themselves to us when we studied the Christ figure in view of its acquisition: did it indeed belong to the same group as the executioner, as Koechlin had suspected in 1906?¹² What was the relationship between the Martin Le Roy piece and the other reliefs with scenes from Christ's Passion?

The material study of the Christ and the executioner gave us solid grounds to answer in the affirmative the first of these questions. The figure of Christ is entirely carved out of a small piece of ivory, the curve of his back follows that of the tusk and makes maximum use of its width. Indeed, traces of *cementum* (the outer layer of the tusk) are visible in places on the reverse of the statuette. On the front, the flatness of the forearms and hands (fig. 1.3) and the shallowness of the relief suggest that the artist had little material at his disposal: the ivory block was very slender and its dimensions limiting. This probably implies that it did not come from the upper part of the tusk but from lower down between the external layer, corresponding to the curve of Christ's back, and the pulp cavity (fig. 1.5). The reverse presents some visible tool marks: halfway up, vertical gouge traces were probably incurred when removing the outer layer and, in the back, a rasp was used to roughly even out the surface. The volume of the head was worked on with a chisel, making its main facets emerge. On the front, where the surface is perfectly polished, one can only make out in places the thin striations of a scraper with a serrated edge. The face, body and *perizonium*, probably polished with an abrasive substance, are remarkably smooth.

1.4
Flagellation Christ and executioner (Paris, c.1300-20). Ivory, height: 21.8 and 18.6 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Objets d'Art, Inv. OA 12380 and OA 9958.

1.5
Hypothesis regarding the placement of the blocks out of which the statuettes were carved in the tusk. Drawing by J. Levy-Hinstin.



At the back of the right hip a small cavity into which some lead was melted to hold two thin metallic threads was probably intended to attach the statuette to a backdrop or a structural element (fig. 1.6).¹³ Two old cavities on the underside indicate that dowels enabled the statuette to stand upright: this arrangement is probably original. The lead inclusion and threads are placed slightly to the side, which suggests that Christ was not fully applied to the background. The rounded back edge of the terrace where he stands and the curvature of his back also confirm that his position in space was not that of an applied relief.

The ivory is in general good condition: it seems to have been treated with care. All cracks follow the growth lines of the ivory and are old and stable. Worn areas on the hands and rope could be linked to handling or, more likely, to devotional practices. A restoration, probably carried out in the nineteenth century, resulted in several alterations. This operation was to remedy the breakage on the base, which occurred when the statuette was probably intentionally wrenched from its support. This violent removal caused the terrace to break under the right foot and at the front, as well as the lower and upper part of the column to snap, including the capital. Following this accident, the restorer first worked on the broken surfaces and then complemented the relief with portions which he sculpted himself, also out of ivory (fig. 1.7).¹⁴ He thus levelled the break on the terrace (where one can still make out a trace where the original column rose) and pierced the column to attach it to its base, which he then glued on. He proceeded in the same way above the hands, to add the upper part of the shaft and the capital, made of two separate portions of ivory. It is difficult to know whether the brutal nailing of the upper section to Christ's chest occurred then or was done at a later stage to consolidate the piece.

The executioner is sculpted in high relief (fig. 1.4). Like for the flagellated Christ, several elements indicate that it was carved out of a block of ivory that was just large enough for the sculpture. Indeed the back of the figure was used optimally: only the section corresponding to the side of the pulp cavity, brown in colour, was not carved. Legs and arms are perfectly modelled. On the front, *cementum* on the left kneecap (signalled by

1.6
Reverse of Flagellation
Christ and executioner
(Paris, c.1300–20).



1.7
Later repairs to the two
statuettes (shown in
brown). Drawing by
J. Levy-Hinstin.

a whiter area) indicates the proximity of the outer limit of the tusk: here again, the carver was constrained by the small dimensions and limited thickness of the ivory piece. He nevertheless made the most out of it and succeeded in executing the figure in this small block coming, like that of Christ, from the wide and hollow lower part of the tusk. One could thus very well imagine that the two figures were carved out of the same tusk (fig. 1.5). Remarkably, in spite of the small and awkward dimensions of the ivory, the positioning of the figure in space is very dynamic, a quality which is also found, though more subtly expressed, in the Christ statuette.

The executioner was initially carved out of a single piece of ivory. Following a restoration probably dating to the nineteenth century, it now comprises several modern ivory elements: the nose, the front of both feet, both forearms, the hands and the whip, as well as a plug in the base to hide a modern screw (fig. 1.7). The repair made to the nose significantly modifies his face. All modern parts have been covered with a translucent ochre-red product, which can be identified as wax. This substance, mixed with a black pigment to mimic dust generously overflows onto the original ivory parts. Furthermore, fake cracks are engraved to prolong the original ones, in order to make the modern additions less obvious.

Numerous original tool marks are nevertheless discernible. In addition to the sawing under the base, one notes marks caused by the same tools as those used on the Christ figure: facets carved with a small flat chisel (at the top of the head), curved cuts made with a



1.8
Reconstruction of the
original polychromy.
Drawing by J. Levy-
Hinstin.

gouge (lower part of the hair) and traces of scrapers with variously spaced teeth. Cavities on the underside, as in the case of the Christ, originally maintained the statuette onto a support thanks to dowels. The modern screw in the centre of the base is contemporary with the ivory additions.¹⁵

Abundant traces of fourteenth-century polychromy have survived on both statuettes, presenting numerous analogies (fig. 1.8). It however differs when it comes to later restorations: two layers of overpainting are visible on the executioner and only one on Christ.

The remaining medieval polychromy corresponds to the way colour was applied onto ivory in the Gothic period. The flesh is left unpainted and only the eyes and mouth are highlighted with touches of colour, while the eyebrows, notably those of Christ, are outlined with a gold line (fig. 1.2). Four colours are employed: gold, blue, red (particularly predominant) and green on the base.

Gold leaf was applied first onto a thin oil size called mordant. Under binocular magnifier, the mordant has a similar appearance on both sculptures, i.e. pale ochre and rather matt, dotted with small red specks/grains (minium?). The gold, in relatively good condition, may have been enriched in places with an orangey glaze, traces of which are found in the hair of both figures. This glaze also features on the outer edge of the executioner's cloak, which was decorated with a frieze made of a continuous line and a row of gold dots.

A single gold line ran along the edge of the tunic and along the neckline. On the figure of Christ, the outer edge of the *perizonium* was adorned with a gilt frieze whose motif has now become illegible. The trace of a thin white line 'in negative' may have run along the inner edge of the *perizonium*.

Blue (probably azurite) was used inside the executioner's cloak and Christ's *perizonium*. This copper blue caused the ivory to discolour and turn brown where copper salts penetrated it. The brownish green appearance of the lining of the executioner's cloak thus indicates that it once was blue. A similar phenomenon can be observed on the irises of Christ's eyes (and possibly also of the executioner).

The red touches are applied with great refinement, in two superimposed layers (bright red, possibly vermillion covered with a red glazing) on the mouths of both figures and on the rope tying Christ's wrists. A red translucent glazing colours the inside of the executioner's tunic and his hat is enhanced with a red line. Finally, the terrace where Christ stands is painted with a green glazing while that of the executioner, probably abraded during restorations, is devoid of polychromy.

The two figures therefore share numerous characteristics, both from the point of view of the carving of the ivory and of the execution of the polychromy. In both cases, the sculptor only had at his disposal small shallow ivory blocks, extracted from the wide end of the tusk. His remarkable skill enabled him to carve out the figures inscribing them freely into space, giving the executioner a dynamic pose, more subdued in the case of Christ. One should note the similarities in the mode of fixation of the two statuettes and in the distinctive treatment of the terraces where they stand, very different from the other reliefs of the group assembled by Koechlin. Finally the parallels in the polychromy go beyond a general conformity with the Parisian fourteenth-century workshop tradition and appear at a macroscopic level, revealing the same aspect and same composition for the mordant onto which the gold leaf rests, enhanced with the threads of a fine orangey glazing. The material examination of the two statuettes thus seems to corroborate Koechlin's hypothesis according to which they could have belonged to the same ensemble. It may even be that the two figures were carved from the same tusk, each on one side of the pulp chamber, as shown above (fig. 1.5).

Stylistic examination confirms that the figures were originally part of the same Flagellation scene. They are carved with the same plasticity and keen sense of movement inscribed in space: these qualities are exacerbated in the twisted posture of the executioner, to convey violence, but also perceptible in the figure of Christ. The rhythm of the drapery is also comparable, with long expanses of smooth fabric clinging around one thigh contrasting with deep beak folds cascading against the other leg; the hair is, in both cases, carved with broad deeply chiselled locks. The rocky ground at their feet has also been sculpted in the same way.

Feet and hands cannot unfortunately be compared, due to later restorations. As for the faces, the nose of the executioner is modern, but his face, with its thick lips and the

physiognomy of a villain, is on purpose quintessentially different from the noble and idealised face of Christ. The executioner is slightly smaller than Christ,¹⁶ but this discrepancy is iconographically correct: the proportions of Christ were meant to enhance his nobility and majesty, while dwarfing the villain. They were usually represented thus in the fourteenth century, as for example on the embroidered *Marnhull Orphrey* (c.1315-35 and 1400-30)¹⁷ or in the *Holkham Bible* (c.1327-35).¹⁸

We have thus far reached the conclusion that the two Louvre statuettes were originally part of the same scene, but what was its context? We may here nuance Koechlin's remarks, or at least employ a more precise terminology. It would appear that this Flagellation, which would certainly have included a second symmetrically placed executioner,¹⁹ was an isolated piece rather than a fragment from an altarpiece adorned with episodes of the Passion. Indeed several material and compositional clues argue for this interpretation. Firstly, the two carvings are not flat on the reverse, which implies that they were not made to be glued onto a background (fig. 1.6). Neither were they fully carved in the round to be seen from the back, they seem instead to have been designed to allow viewing from three sides. Furthermore, the isolated grassy islets where Christ and the executioner stand do not form a continuous ground for the two statuettes. Finally, the most important argument is the visual strength and realism they gain when the executioner is placed at a slight angle in front of Christ, adding to the theatricality of the scene (fig. 1.4). When the figures are laid flat against a background the scene loses its power and the executioner seems to be running after Christ.

We therefore argue here that the two figures were not part of a sequence in a large Passion altarpiece such as the marble one of the Sainte-Chapelle (*Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. R.F. 475*),²⁰ but stood on their own (together with a second executioner), like the Louvre Coronation of the Virgin (*Inv. OA 58 and OA 3921-3922*) and Deposition groups (*Inv. OA 3935, OA 9443, OA 12516-12517*). Consequently, they should be envisaged enclosed in a small structure of goldsmith's work or gilded wood of the same type as that proposed by Danielle Gaborit-Chopin for the Deposition,²¹ but with a closed background, and probably wings. Such an object was called a tabernacle in the Middle Ages, a term that designated not only the place where reserved Hosts were kept (as it still does today), but also all kinds of micro-architectures that would now be called canopies. These structures were certainly far more numerous than their scarce survival suggests: many were destroyed, while the statuettes and sculptures they enclosed have survived in greater numbers. A few pictorial representations still offer visual testimonies of their existence: they occur especially in miniatures of the *Bible moralisée* as in the Toledo copy, probably illuminated for Saint Louis in the 1230s.²² Such tabernacles appear in scenes denouncing idolatry, and therefore do not contain statuettes of the Virgin or saints, they nevertheless demonstrate that these structures (complete with wings, pinnacles, locks and iron fittings) already existed about a century before our statuettes. Even more interesting are idols suddenly coming to life, as on the verso of the first folio of the third volume in



the same Bible (fig. 1.9): the one on the left places its hand on the priest's mouth to keep him silent, while another blinds the two priests by spreading a veil over their eyes.²³ The meaning is clear: those who worship idols are unable to see or praise the glory of the true God. This scene depicts quite literally the incredible power that such images of devotion could have, if they were the right ones (Virgin or saints) and if dutifully used in prayer.

The wooden retable-tabernacle in Grandrif (Auvergne) is one of the rare surviving examples of such structures.²⁴ Executed in the late thirteenth century, it contains a statuette of the Virgin and Child against a wooden background and under a canopy with pinnacles; the wings are now lost, but the hinges indicate their former existence. Interestingly, most mentions of tabernacles found in inventories refer to structures enclosing an 'ymage' of the Virgin and Child, as for instance in two documents nearly contemporary with our statuettes. In 1325, Mahaut d'Artois made a payment to Jean le Scelleur for 'une ymaige Notre-Dame d'ivoire à tabernacle', and an inventory dated to 1319-22 mentions an 'ymage de Nostre-Dame de yvor en un tabernacle cluse' among the possessions of Alienor of Bohun.²⁵ The famous and slightly earlier *Madonnina* of Giovanni Pisano (1299) also comes to mind: according to a fifteenth-century inventory, it stood under a *tabernaculum* of gilt wood, between a pair of ivory angels and two scenes of the Passion made of the same material.²⁶

On the occasion of a landmark exhibition on the first altarpieces in 2009, Pierre-Yves Le Pogam made an interesting point concerning terminology and methodology, clearly dividing medieval altarpieces into two 'families' or 'branches': on the one hand, the *tabernaculum*-altarpiece or 'retable-tabernacle' and, on the other hand, the altarpiece with a long rectangular shape.²⁷ He went on to show that these two formats had a different effect on the devout. The elongated rectangular shape emphasises the sense of narration, and

1.9
Detail of idols and their worshippers, from the *Saint Louis Bible* (Paris, 1226-34). Toledo, Cathedral Treasury, vol. III, f. 1v; reproduction from the facsimile edition *Biblia de San Luis. Catedral primada de Toledo* (Barcelona: Moleiro editor, 2002), vol. I, p. 162.

the values of linearity and continuity, while the *tabernaculum*-altarpiece, with its centralised arrangement, insists upon the iconic value of the figure or scenes depicted in the centre.

Koechlin concluded his chapter on ivory *tabernacula* by saying that most of them were devoted to the Virgin and that no such structure was used to enshrine an isolated scene from the Passion, apart from the Crucifixion.²⁸ The close examination of the Flagellation however leads us to disagree and argue that this group was originally a single scene enclosed in a *tabernaculum* made of a material other than ivory. In the thirteenth century, this type of altarpiece commonly revolved around the Virgin and Child, but from the second half of the thirteenth century, the range of subjects depicted seems to have expanded, reflecting the growing devotion to Christ's Passion and his Infancy. This is evidenced, for instance, by the aforementioned Deposition and by the Louvre statuettes from two different Annunciation groups, the beautiful Chalandon angel (Inv. OA 7507) and the Garnier Virgin (Inv. OA 7007).²⁹ The same trend can be observed in some early fourteenth-century metalwork reliquaries, very close in composition and size to ivory statuettes enclosed in *tabernacula*, such as the Pamplona reliquary centred on the Holy Women at the Sepulchre, the Flight into Egypt in Savona³⁰ and the Saint Simeon reliquary in Aachen.

Such miniature tabernacles seem to have been designed for private devotion, although they may also have on particular occasions been placed on a chapel altar. The closest parallel for the refined treatment of our Flagellation is to be found in the *Hours of Jeanne d'Évreux*, a minute masterpiece of Parisian manuscript illumination painted in demi-gri-saille in the 1320s by Jean Pucelle. In this book of hours, a full-page Flagellation scene faces the Nativity at the beginning of Prime in the Office of the Virgin.³¹ The slightly later *Hours of Jeanne de Navarre* also made in Paris (c.1336–40) provide an interesting pictorial account of private devotion to the Flagellation, as the queen is represented kneeling before this scene (fig. 1.10), as one may have prayed in front of the Louvre group, framed by an open *tabernaculum*.³² An in-depth analysis of the development of the cult to the Flagellation and its iconography, across different media, including altarpieces and illuminated manuscripts, in the second half of the thirteenth century and the fourteenth century would be useful to understand better the context of creation of our group, but would exceed by far the limits of this paper.³³

To conclude, we offer that Koechlin's group of ivory altarpieces should be divided into two different categories, according to their structure and independently from their style. The first type consists of the rectangular altarpieces, linearly presenting several scenes, like the Louvre Betrayal, the Mayer van den Bergh Mocking of Christ and the Oslo Deposition on the one hand, and the New York Deposition and the Holy Women at the Tomb in the Victoria and Albert Museum on the other hand.³⁴ The second type corresponds to *tabernacula* altarpieces containing a single scene: this type is represented by our Flagellation, to which should be added the earlier pieces of the Louvre, i.e. the Coronation of the Virgin,³⁵ the Deposition and the two Annunciation statuettes (the Chalandon angel



1.10
 Jean Le Noir,
 Flagellation scene in the
Hours of Jeanne de Nav-
arre (c.1336–40). Paris,
 Bibliothèque nationale
 de France, NAL 3145,
 f. 125v.

and the Garnier Virgin). This list ought to be augmented with other carvings, which may have also formed part of *tabernacula* altarpieces and should therefore now be reconsidered in this new light. These include a Flight into Egypt in Saint-Omer ([Musée de l'Hôtel Sandelin, Inv. 1920](#)), two saint Simeon statuettes (one in the Walters Art Museum [[Inv. 71.174](#)] and one stylistically very close to our Flagellation [[Sotheby's, London, 7 July 1994, lot 12](#)]), and the Virgin and Child from a Presentation in the Temple scene now in London ([Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. A. 16-1949](#)).³⁶ Mostly illustrating Passion or Infancy scenes, they allowed the devout to meditate on Christ's incarnation in its most extraordinary aspects: a god living the earthly life of a child and suffering a humiliating death to redeem mankind.

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1. Height: 22 cm; width: 6 cm. Acquired directly from the Marquet de Vasselot family, before the sale at Christie's *Œuvres médiévales provenant de la collection Marquet de Vasselot*, Paris, 16 November 2011 (cf. pp. 86-7). On this topic, see also Elisabeth Antoine, 'Trois chefs-d'œuvre de l'art médiéval', in *La Revue des musées de France. Revue du Louvre* (2012/1): pp. 6, 8-9, and, more recently, ead., 'Christ à la colonne', in *La Recherche au Musée du Louvre 2011* (2012), pp. 170-1.

2. Raymond Koechlin, *Catalogue raisonné de la collection Martin Le Roy. Fascicule II. Ivoires et sculptures* (Chartres: imprimerie de Durand, 1906), pp. 57-8, no. 24, pl. XIV.

3. See introduction on Martin Le Roy and his son-in-law Jean-Joseph Marquet de Vasselot in Christie's *Œuvres médiévales*, pp. 4-11.

4. Raymond Koechlin, 'Les retables français en ivoire du commencement du XIV^e siècle', in *Monuments et Mémoires publiés par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Fondation Eugène Piot* 13:1 (1906): pp. 67-76. Fully accessible online through the *Persée* portal: http://www.persée.fr/doc/piot_1148-6023_1906_num_13_1_1278.

5. Pierre-Yves Le Pogam (dir.), *Les Premiers retables, XII^e-début du XV^e siècle. Une mise en scène du sacré* (Paris: Musée du Louvre éditions, 2009), pp. 128-9, no. 29 (Élisabeth Antoine).

6. See *Les Premiers retables*, pp. 130-1, no. 30 (Élisabeth Antoine).

7. See Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux V-XI^e siècle* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2003), pp. 366-7, and more recently *Les Premiers retables*, pp. 132-3, no. 31 (Élisabeth Antoine), where the hypothesis of this Flagellation scene being envisaged as a separate *tabernaculum* appears for the first time.

8. Raymond Koechlin, *Les Ivoires gothiques français* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1924), I, pp. 142-6 and II, no. 224 and pl. LVII (Martin Le Roy Christ).

9. See Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings 1200-1550* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014), pp. 115-17, no. 34.

10. *Les Fastes du gothique. Le siècle de Charles V* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1981), pp. 178-81, nos. 133-8. Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, pp. 366-8.

11. It may have come from a third altarpiece (Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, p. 365), or from the same ensemble as the Betrayal and the Mocking of Christ, if we consider different ivory carvers worked together (Antoine, in *Les Premiers retables*, p. 134).

12. Koechlin, *Catalogue raisonné*, pp. 57-8: 'Cette statuette a dû être jadis la figure principale d'une Flagellation, et peut-être le "tyran" de la collection de M. Mège était-il, avec son fouet levé au-dessus de sa tête, le personnage de droite de ce groupe'.

13. The use of this kind of fastening is rather surprising for ivory, and was more common for stony materials: English alabaster reliefs for instance were applied onto the background and secured to the oak retables using this same technique. While the two thin metal wires are here still visible, it is difficult to establish whether this was the original system or, less likely, a later mode of attachment.

14. It would be interesting to compare this intervention with other restorations executed for Martin Le Roy to try and establish whether they indicate the same hand and techniques.

15. This can be established by the fact that the head of the screw has been hidden by an ivory piece also covered with wax.

16. Height: 18.6 cm; width: 5.5 cm; depth: 2.6 cm.

17. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. T.31&A-1936.

18. London, The British Library, Add. MS 47682, f. 29v.

19. Until now, this third ivory figure has never been seen, but one can only hope that it will surface one day.

20. Some of the scenes are now unfortunately missing; see *Les Premiers retables*, pp. 122-5, no. 27 (Pierre-Yves Le Pogam).

21. Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, 'Nicodème travesti. La Descente de croix d'ivoire du Louvre', in *Revue de l'art* 81 (1988): p. 43.

22. So-called *Saint Louis Bible*, in three volumes. Toledo, Cathedral Treasury.

23. Toledo, Cathedral Treasury, III, f. 1v; see also I, ff. 71v and 76r, II, ff. 171v and 214r. A facsimile of the Toledo Bible has been published under the direction of Ramon Gonzalez Ruiz: *Biblia de San Luis. Catedral primada de Toledo* (Barcelona: Moleiro editor, 2002).

24. Grandrif (Puy-de Dôme, Auvergne), Saint Blaise church; see *Les Premiers retables*, pp. 68-9, no. 11 (Christine Vivet-Peclet).

25. See Koechlin, *Ivoires gothiques français*, I, pp. 117 and 133, for more examples. On the question of tabernacles and representations of the Virgin, see the recent article by Sarah Guérin, 'Meaningful Spectacles: Gothic Ivories Staging the Divine', *The Art Bulletin* 95 (2013): pp. 53-77, esp. pp. 55-66.

26. The 1433 inventory is quoted in Max Seidel, 'The Ivory Madonna in the Treasury of Pisa Cathedral', *Italian Art of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Venice: Marsilio, 1972 [reprinted 2003]), II, pp. 345 and 382, note 14.

27. Pierre-Yves Le Pogam in *Les Premiers retables*, pp. 18-19.

28. Koechlin, 'Les retables français', pp. 5-6: 'à l'exception de la Crucifixion, nous n'avons pas d'exemple, dans l'ivoirerie française, de scènes de la Passion représentées isolément; jamais on ne rencontre le Baiser de Judas, le Christ bafoué, la Flagellation ou la Déposition de Croix seules'.

29. Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévales*, pp. 283-6, no. 97, for the Virgin, and pp. 338-40, no. 120, for the angel.

30. *L'Art au temps des Rois Maudits. Philippe le Bel et ses fils* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1998), nos. 121 and 128.

31. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters, Acc. 54.1.2, f. 53v and 54r; height: 9.2 cm; width: 6.2 cm (each folio). See François Avril, *Manuscript Painting at the Court of France. The Fourteenth Century* (New York: G. Braziller, 1978), pp. 44-59; Barbara Drake Boehm, Abigail Quandt and William D. Wixom, *Das Stundenbuch der Jeanne d'Évreux* (Luzerne: Faksimile Luzern, 2000).

32. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 3145, f. 125v. See *Les Fastes du gothique*, pp. 312-14; Charles Sterling, *La Peinture médiévale à Paris. 1300-1500* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1987), pp. 104-07.

33. One should also point out that a Flagellation scene adorned one side of the Sainte-Chapelle *Grande Châsse*.

34. See Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévales*, pp. 288-92, no. 99 (OA58, 3921 and 3922).

35. Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévales*, pp. 288-92, no. 99 (OA58, 3921 and 3922).

36. Williamson and Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings*, pp. 122-3, no. 37 (Paul Williamson).

MADE IN COLOGNE: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE KREMSMÜNSTER WORKSHOP

MICHELE TOMASI



Studies on Gothic ivories have expanded spectacularly over the past thirty years, in quantity, scope and method. A broad range of innovative approaches has been employed to better understand this long-neglected class of artefacts.¹ Nonetheless, given the vast number of surviving Gothic ivory carvings, their scattering in museums, church treasuries and private collections, and the rarity of securely dated and/or localised works, establishing their chronology and origin will remain a major task for scholars for years to come. Stylistic analysis will be an essential tool to this end, provided that style is correctly understood as the result of the conditions of production of a particular piece, be they material, cultural, social or intellectual.² This paper re-examines the group of ivory carvings first gathered by Raymond Koechlin under the name of 'Kremsmünster Workshop', after a diptych first documented in 1740 in the Treasury of Kremsmünster Abbey in Austria (fig. 2.1).³ Stylistic and iconographical observations will lead me to argue that these works were made in Cologne during the second half of the fourteenth century, a context that explains their formal, thematic and material peculiarities.

2.1
Diptych of the
Adoration of the Magi
and Crucifixion. Ivory,
15.5 x 10.6 cm.
Kremsmünster, Stift
Kremsmünster.

The case of the Kremsmünster Workshop is representative of the historiography of Gothic ivories. Since Koechlin attributed twenty-five objects or fragments to this workshop in his 1924 *magnum opus*,⁴ no systematic study has been conducted, and investigations have been advancing piecemeal, mostly through catalogue entries or articles on single objects.⁵ Koechlin thought the *atelier* was active in Paris during the last quarter of the fourteenth century and he credited it for having first translated into ivory the realism that prevailed in other media in France since the mid fourteenth century. However, in her unsurpassed synthesis on medieval ivories, Danielle Gaborit-Chopin advanced a radically different hypothesis. Observing the expressive quality of the carvings in this group, she suggested that the workshop could be German, drawing comparisons with Middle-Rhenish sculptures, especially with the *Memorienpforte* in Mainz Cathedral, dating to c.1420–25.⁶ She expanded her argument in a later article, adding more comparisons with Middle-Rhenish works.⁷ This position has been accepted by most scholars, including Charles T. Little,⁸ but there is still much disagreement about the dating and localisation of carvings in the group. Géza Jászai, in 1979, dated the Ochtrup-Langenhorst Virgin and Child statuette to c.1300–25 placing it in Mainz, while Andrea von Hülsen-Esch recently assigned it to Cologne and dated it to c.1340.⁹ Theo Jülich proposed a date of about 1330 and a localisation in the Rhineland for another Virgin and Child in Darmstadt, whereas Hartmut Krohm and Jürgen Fitschen favoured again a Parisian origin for other crucial works.¹⁰ Nor is there consensus on which pieces should be attributed to the workshop: Paul Williamson recently argued that the statuettes, usually considered as part of the group, should be dated earlier than the rest.¹¹

Moreover, the corpus is still expanding and new carvings have recently appeared that contribute to a better understanding of the whole group: a scene with the Death of the Virgin in the Chicago Art Institute has been recognised as a fragment of the left leaf of a diptych whose right wing is in Győr Cathedral Treasury.¹² During the editing process of this paper, Christian Opitz brought two more carvings, now in the Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz, to the attention of Catherine Yvard, who recognised them as the probable missing fragments of the same diptych.¹³ Her attribution, based on style and iconography, was confirmed by the measuring of the Graz fragments.¹⁴ So a Marian diptych of the group is now complete, though scattered in three different places.

This paper cannot provide definitive answers, primarily due to the absence of documentary evidence, but also because I was only able to examine at first hand twenty out of a total of about fifty ivories that have, at one point or another, been related to the group. It is nevertheless worth casting a fresh eye on these artworks and on the questions they raise.

I would like, first of all, to stress the relative coherence of the group. A common pool of models was clearly available, freely used and adapted: two Crucifixions on diptychs in Berlin and New York thus show obvious affinities, mitigated by skilful variations.¹⁵ Two *Vierge glorieuse* diptych leaves now in Dublin and Palermo follow a similar pattern.¹⁶ The two Virgin statuettes in Cracow share the same handling of drapery on the front, but the



back of the Virgin on loan to the Wawel Royal Castle is closer to that of the statuette in the Bargello Museum, although a mirror version of it.¹⁷ Models were sometimes reused from one type of object to another: the small free-standing Virgin in the Louvre (fig. 2.2) is extremely close to the *Vierge glorieuse* on the aforementioned left leaf of the Metropolitan diptych (fig. 2.3), and the treatment of the drapery on a leaf fragment in the Musée Unterlinden in Colmar is very similar to that found on statuettes at the British Museum and the Toledo Museum of Art.¹⁸ Family resemblances also exist in the rendering of the Virgin's face on the statuettes in Darmstadt and Florence, and on two diptych leaves in the Louvre and the Musée de Cluny.¹⁹

Technique also should be taken into account when trying to understand the relationships between pieces within the group. The best works, such as the large diptych leaves in Berlin and in Lyon, are carved with deep undercutting, while some other works, such as a smaller diptych leaf in Florence, are much flatter.²⁰ The means of the buyers probably

2.2
Statuette of the Virgin
and Child. Ivory, 24
x 7.3 x 3.9 cm. Paris,
Musée du Louvre,
Département des Objets
d'Art, Inv. 12101.



played a role in this, since deeper relief implied more work on the part of the craftsman. Yet the Virgin statuettes are always shallow, being carved out of sections at the base of the tusk (around the pulp cavity), rather than from its fuller upper part. Most statuettes share the same weaknesses: the figure of Christ lost its head or broke away altogether in at least eleven out of seventeen cases.²¹ It is also worth noting that many Virgins hold a drilled cylinder where a metal flower would have once been inserted (probably made of silver).²²

These formal and material affinities are strong enough evidence to argue that most of the statuettes and diptych leaves should be considered together. This does not mean however that all objects were carved by the same hand. The face of the standing Virgin in the Louvre is so close to that of her enthroned sister in Compiègne that one might well assign them to a single carver²³ but, if we compare the Darmstadt and Compiègne Virgins, the latter shows a much more complex handling of drapery and a subtler use of the drill to pick out facial details.²⁴ Further research will be necessary to clearly establish the relationships between the different pieces of the group, but it is certain that more than one artist was involved in the production of these artefacts, probably over a few decades.

If we accept that panels and statuettes form a relatively close-knit ensemble, the approximate chronology of the group becomes easier to establish. As Gaborit-Chopin pointed out, the composition of certain Passion scenes, for instance on the Baltimore and Lyon leaves, is derived from the large Passion diptychs group, which can reasonably be placed in Paris at the end of the reign of Charles V.²⁵ This would imply that the Kremsmünster ivories date from slightly later.

Concerning the geographical origin, Paris seems out of question: the very distinctive and vehement style of the group does not fit into the development of Parisian Gothic ivory

2.3
Diptych of the Virgin
and Child and Crucifix-
ion. Ivory, 15.6 x 19.7
cm. New York,
The Metropolitan
Museum of Art, Inv.
1971.49.3a-b.



carving. The Rhenish solution suggested by many writers is however a more promising alternative. Provenance information is usually of little help, as it tends to be too recent, yet it is interesting to note that, out of the eight oldest known provenances for carvings of the group (pre-1840), seven point to locations east of the Rhine. The crozier in Amsterdam was in Liesborn Abbey (Westphalia) before 1811; the triptych in Copenhagen appeared in inventories of the Gottorf Kunstkammer from 1710 onwards; the Darmstadt statuette was acquired in 1805 from the Hüpsch collection that comprised ivories mostly with a provenance from the Lower Rhine or the Meuse region;²⁶ the Graz fragments entered the Joanneum in 1817 coming from the Maria Saal pilgrimage church in Carinthia; the diptych in the Klosterneuburg Treasury has probably been there since the seventeenth century and the one in Kremsmünster, at least since 1740; finally, the fragment of a diptych leaf in Munich was in the Ambras collection before 1811.²⁷ The diptych leaf in the Bargello Museum is the odd one out, coming from the collection of Canon Apollonio Bassetti (d. 1699), but we know that Bassetti travelled to Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany in 1667-8.²⁸

Some formal details also point towards the Rhineland. The tiled roofs that appear in some diptychs of the group, such as those in Kremsmünster (fig. 2.1) and in the Musée de Cluny, have been considered as probable evidence of a German origin.²⁹ Furthermore, on the left leaf of the former, the Virgin and Child sit on a throne whose base is decorated with pierced quatrefoils, a highly unusual detail in ivory carving. Similar ornaments however frequently appear on fourteenth-century sculptures from Cologne, such as the beautiful Annunciation from the main altar of Cologne Cathedral (c.1322, Cologne, Museum Schnütgen, Inv. K 210) or the Adoration of the Magi from Sankt Maria im Capitol (c.1310, on loan to the Museum Schnütgen).³⁰ The motif is also recurrent on Cologne wooden statuettes of this period.³¹

2.4
Statuette of the Virgin and Child. Ivory, 11.7 x 6 x 5.4 cm. Saint Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, Inv. F-3225.

2.5
Statuette of the Virgin and Child. Boxwood, height: 28.5 cm. Cologne, Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Inv. A 1172.



Although stylistic comparisons are difficult, partly because narrative cycles are very rare in Rhenish sculpture during the fourteenth century, the line of inquiry opened by Jászai, Jülich and von Hülsen-Esch, who first drew comparisons with Cologne pieces, is worth pursuing. Focusing on figures of the standing Virgin and Child is particularly fruitful, since Rhenish elements of comparison in other media are more readily available for this type of object. The face of the Virgin in the Kremsmünster group is framed by curly hair and characterised by a small nose and mouth, and by a pointed chin over a double chin (fig. 2.4). Similar features are recurrent in Cologne statuettes of the second half of the fourteenth century, such as the boxwood Virgin and Child in the Cologne Museum für Angewandte Kunst (fig. 2.5; Inv. A1172 Cl.), or the celebrated walnut Virgin and Child of the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection (on loan to the Universalmuseum Joanneum, Alte Galerie, Graz), both dated to c.1360-70.³² The treatment of the reverse of the statuettes is even more noteworthy. When viewed from the back, all Kremsmünster statuettes show a similar organisation of the drapery, with two small beak folds right under the arms and a few larger curvilinear folds stretching lower down (fig. 2.6). Although this system of folds occasionally appears on French Virgins, French ivory statuettes more often adopt a central tubular fold going down the whole length of the cloak, an arrangement closer to that typical of thirteenth-century examples.³³ On the contrary, a number of Cologne Virgins share the Kremsmünster drapery treatment: not only the Thyssen statuette already mentioned, but also other works of the same period, such as the Friesentor Madonna in the Museum Schnütgen (Inv. A 40) or the Zollturm Madonna in the Zons Museum, respectively dated to c.1360-70 and c.1380 (fig. 2.7).³⁴ These comparisons confirm a dating in the last third of the fourteenth century for the Kremsmünster group.

The attribution to Cologne might be further supported by an iconographical argument. The group comprises two diptychs with scenes from the life of the Virgin, which is quite

2.6
Statuette of the Virgin and Child. Ivory, height: 20 cm. The British Museum, London, Inv. 1856,0623.148.

2.7
Statue of the Virgin and Child. Sandstone, height: 71.5 cm. Zons, Kreismuseum.



rare in Gothic ivories. One survives in an incomplete state, split between Berlin and London (fig. 2.8),³⁵ while the other is the one divided between the Győr Cathedral Treasury, the Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz and the Art Institute in Chicago.³⁶ Their atypical iconography and compositions are also found on two other nearly identical works:³⁷ an ivory diptych formerly in the Kofler-Truniger collection and a boxwood diptych in the Kolumba Museum in Cologne (fig. 2.9).³⁸ The latter probably came from Sankt Maria im Kapitol and had long been considered a mid-fourteenth-century Cologne work when Peter Bloch declared it to be an 1860s neo-Gothic creation by the sculptor Nikolaus Elscheidt.³⁹ But the works attributed by Bloch to Elscheidt are too disparate in style and quality to all be accepted as the products of a single hand, and even if some of his attributions are convincing, some pieces have been too quickly dismissed by the scholar as nineteenth-century artefacts.⁴⁰ The boxwood diptych was declared a copy only because it was identical to the Kofler-Truniger diptych, and Elscheidt was identified as the author simply because he was working for Sankt Maria im Kapitol from 1868. The ivory diptych was first described by

2.8
Diptych leaf with
scenes from the life
of the Virgin. Ivory,
22.2 x 12.1 cm. Berlin,
Skulpturensammlung
und Museum für
Byzantinische Kunst,
Inv. 2722.



Westwood in 1876, two years after Elscheidt's death, when it was in the Possenti collection in Fabriano,⁴¹ no photograph of it was published until 1880,⁴² and no cast of it was, as far as we know, ever available. The Cologne sculptor is therefore quite unlikely to have copied it at the end of his life and, unless new and compelling evidence comes to light, it seems reasonable to accept the Kolumba diptych as a genuine fourteenth-century Cologne work. The question of its relationship to the Kofler ivory, although opening interesting perspectives, is beyond the scope of the present article. If we accept the boxwood diptych as an authentic mid-fourteenth-century work, the fact that its peculiar iconography is also found in products of the Kremsmünster Workshop becomes yet another argument in favour of a Cologne origin for the ivory carvings.

Although Marian scenes also appear on Parisian fourteenth-century ivories, notably in a beautiful group of triptychs dating to the 1320s-30s,⁴³ the iconography used by the Kremsmünster Workshop is still quite remarkable. Its focus on the death and glorification of Mary, its scope and some of its details are rare, especially north of the Alps.⁴⁴ Many other works from the corpus also present unusual iconographical features. The Virgin trampling the dragon, carved on leaves in Colmar, Dublin, formerly Langres, New York and Palermo, seldom appears on French ivories, and then mostly on objects of the early fourteenth century.⁴⁵ Angels mourning over Christ's sacrifice in the Crucifixion are also a notable detail, as is the diminutive figure of Adam collecting the blood of Christ at the foot of the cross.⁴⁶ On French ivories, in the Crucifixion, Longinus is most often represented kneeling in prayer beside the cross. In the Kremsmünster group, another composition is systematically adopted, where he touches his eyes, miraculously healed of his blindness by the jet of Christ's blood, as in carvings in Baltimore, Berlin, Klosterneuburg and Paris.⁴⁷ The Virgin always helps Christ carry the cross, as in the Berlin, Klosterneuburg and Lyon examples, a detail that also appears on French ivories, but less frequently.⁴⁸

2.9
Diptych with scenes
from the life of the Vir-
gin (Cologne, c.1350).
Boxwood, 19.4 x 10.2
cm (each leaf). Cologne,
Kolumba, Inv. A 80-60.

The Kremsmünster ivories are far from being standardised products. Carved in a meticulous and labour-intensive way, many objects were certainly conceived and created for specific patrons, rather than for anonymous buyers. Although we know little about the ways ivory objects were actually produced and sold, it seems improbable that elaborate and impressive works, made out of a rare material and showing specific iconographies, were carved on speculation. While many diptych leaves are using thick panels, the statuettes are carved making the most out of thin plaques of ivory, in a way that seems to imply that the raw material was not readily available, even for relatively ambitious creations. This would indicate a different system of production from that which we find in Paris where, in the second half of the fourteenth century, even high-quality works often followed well established and widely reproduced patterns, and where the supply of elephant tusks was not an issue. The singular features of the Kremsmünster group would rather point in the direction of a market less developed than that of Paris, a market such as we could expect to find in Cologne. Yet it is apparent that French models were available to our carvers, a situation that would also correspond to what we know of the artistic milieu in the great Rhenish city during the Gothic period.⁴⁹ In the fourteenth century, ivory carving tended to emancipate itself from monumental sculpture, developing an inner formal and iconographical coherence. Meanwhile, Paris remained the point of reference in Europe for ivory carving. Such a model, if we accept it, might explain why it is so difficult to find definitive stylistic comparisons for ivories of the Kremsmünster group in other media. French scholars believe that the Kremsmünster ivories cannot be Parisian, German scholars that they cannot be German. Their controversial and elusive character, their particular mixture of French and German features, their idiosyncrasies may be the result of a different system of production determined by specific commissions in the most Francophile city of the Empire.

Appendix

A. Carvings belonging to the Kremsmünster group⁵⁰

1. [Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Inv. BK-16991](#), crozier with *Vierge glorieuse* and Crucifixion. Frits Scholten and Guido de Werd (eds.), *Eine höhere Wirklichkeit* (Kleve: Museum Kurhaus, 2004), pp. 158-61, no. 54.
2. [Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum, Inv. 71.246](#), statuette of standing Virgin and Child. Richard H. Randall, Jr., *Masterpieces of Ivory from the Walters Art Gallery* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1985), pp. 208-09, no. 284.
3. [Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum, Inv. 71.156](#), left leaf of a diptych with three Passion scenes. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-1, no. 313. Formed a diptych with A30.
4. [Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Inv. 645, 646](#), diptych with four Passion scenes. Regine Marth (ed.), *Glanz der Ewigkeit. Meisterwerke aus*

Elfenbein der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1999), pp. 120-1, no. 46.

5. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Inv. 654, right leaf of a diptych with Crucifixion. Ibid., p. 122, no. 47.

6. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Inv. 656, fragment of leaf with Crucifixion. Ibid., p. 123, no. 48.

7. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Inv. 663, relief with enthroned Virgin and Child. Ibid., p. 126, no. 50.

8. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Inv. 2722, left leaf of a diptych with three scenes of the Death and Glorification of the Virgin. Ibid., pp. 124-5, no. 49. The bottom fragment of the right leaf is A28.

9. Chicago, The Chicago Art Institute, Inv. 1943.60, fragment of left leaf of a diptych with Death of the Virgin. Richard H. Randall, Jr., *The Golden Age of Ivory. Gothic Carvings from American Collections* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1993), p. 107, no. 149. The two missing fragments of the same leaf are A20; the right leaf of the diptych is A21.

10. Colmar, Musée Unterlinden, Inv. 91.5.1, fragment of diptych leaf with *Vierge glorieuse*. Pantxika Béguerie, 'La Vierge à l'Enfant de l'atelier du diptyque de Kremsmünster', *Bulletin de la Société Schongauer* 1987-92 (1993), pp. 91-7, 186.

11. Compiègne, Musée Antoine Vivenel, Inv. L.330, statuette of enthroned Virgin and Child. Raymond Koechlin, *Les Ivoires gothiques français* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1924), I, p. 301, II, p. 312, n. 841, III, pl. CLI.

12. Copenhagen, Nationalmuseet, Inv. 10359, triptych with the Virgin, Saint Clare and Saint Francis. Niels K. Liebgott, *Elfenben - fra Danmarks Middelalder* (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, 1985), pp. 54-5, no. 50.

13. Cracow, Wawel Royal Castle, Inv. dep. 681, statuette of standing Virgin and Child. Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, 'Réapparition d'une Vierge en ivoire gothique', in *Objets d'art: mélanges en l'honneur de Daniel Alcouffe* (Dijon: Faton, 2004), pp. 47-55, esp. p. 49, 52-3.

14. Cracow, Czartoryski Museum, Inv. XIII-928, statuette of standing Virgin and Child. Ibid., pp. 49, 53.

15. Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Inv. Pl 36:87, statuette of enthroned Virgin and Child. Theo Jülich, *Die mittelalterlichen Elfenbeinarbeiten des Hessischen Landesmuseum Darmstadt* (Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner, 2011), pp. 192-3, no. 42.

16. Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Inv. CA T 328, statuette of enthroned Virgin and Child. Emmanuel Starcky, Hélène Meyer and Catherine Gras, *Le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon* (Ghent: Ludion, 1992), pp. 20-1.

17. [Dublin, National Museum of Ireland, Inv. 1906:156](#), left leaf of a diptych with *Vierge glorieuse*. Charles T. Little, 'Gothic Ivory Carving in Germany', in Peter Barnet (ed.), *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 80-93, esp. p. 93, note 36.

18. [Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Inv. 9 A](#), left leaf of a diptych with Nativity and Crucifixion. Benedetta Chiesi, *Catalogo degli avori gotici del Museo Nazionale del Bargello* (PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Firenze, 2011), pp. 468-75, no. 37

19. [Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Inv. 91 C](#), statuette of standing Virgin and Child. *Ibid.*, pp. 476-83, no. 38.

20. [Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum, Museum im Palais, Inv. 913 and 914](#), two fragments of the left leaf of a diptych with scenes of the Death of the Virgin. See [Ulrich Becker, Nina Bachler, 'Aus der Frühzeit des Joanneums: Zwei gotische Elfenbeinreliefs', *Museumsblog*, 22 April 2015](#). The lower fragment of the same leaf is A9, the right leaf is A21.

21. [Győr, Cathedral Treasury, Inv. Gy 77. 49](#), right leaf of a diptych with three scenes of the Death and Glorification of the Virgin. Peter Bokody (ed.), *Image and Christianity: visual media in the Middle Ages* (Pannonhalma: Pannonhalmi Főapátság, 2014), pp. 266-7, no. 33. The bottom fragment of the left leaf is A9, its two upper fragments are A20.

22. [Klosterneuburg, Stift Klosterneuburg, Inv. KG 155](#), diptych with six Passion scenes. Wolfgang Christian Huber (ed.), *Die Schatzkammer im Stift Klosterneuburg* (Wettin: Stekovics, 2011), pp. 60-1, no. 12.

23. [Kremsmünster, Stift Kremsmünster](#), diptych with Adoration of the Magi and Crucifixion. Koechlin, *Ivoires gothiques français*, II, pp. 304-05, no. 824, III, pl. CXLVII.

24. [Langres, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Guy-Baillet](#) (stolen in 1977), left leaf of a diptych with *Vierge glorieuse*. *Ibid.*, II, p. 305, no. 825, III, pl. CXLVIII. The right leaf of the diptych is A38.

25. [Lisbon, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Inv. 2287](#), diptych with *Vierge glorieuse* and Crucifixion. Sarah M. Guérin, *Gothic Ivories. Calouste Gulbenkian Collection* (London: Scala, 2015), pp. 110-13, no. 10.

26. [London, The British Museum, Inv. 1856,0623.71](#), right leaf of a diptych with Adoration of the Magi and Coronation of the Virgin. Henk van Os, *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Merrel Holberton, 1994), p. 74, fig. 29. The left leaf is A34.

27. [London, The British Museum, Inv. 1856,0623.148](#), statuette of standing Virgin and Child. Ormonde M. Dalton, *Catalogue of the Ivory Carvings of the Christian Era in the British Museum* (London: Printed by order of the Trustees, 1909), p. 115, no. 332, pl. LXXV.

28. London, The British Museum, Inv. 1978,0502.5, fragment of the right leaf of a diptych with funeral procession of the Virgin. James Robinson, *Masterpieces. Medieval Art* (London: The British Museum, 2008), p. 125. The left leaf is A8.

29. London, The British Museum, Inv. 1980,0102.1, statuette of enthroned Virgin and Child. Little, 'Gothic Ivory Carving', p. 93, note 36.

30. Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Inv. L 404, left leaf of a diptych with three Passion scenes. Christian Briend, *Les Objets d'Art: guide des collections. Musée de Beaux-Arts de Lyon* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1993), p. 23, fig. 8. Formed a diptych with A3.

31. Maastricht, Bonnenfantenmuseum, on loan from the Neutelings Foundation, Inv. 10-5423, central panel of a triptych with the Death and Coronation of the Virgin. Scholten and de Werd, *Eine höhere Wirklichkeit*, pp. 176-8, no. 61.

32. Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Inv. MA 2009, statuette of enthroned Virgin and Child. Rudolf Berliner, *Die Bildwerke des Bayerischen Nationalmuseums, IV: Die Bildwerke in Elfenbein, Knochen, Hirsch- und Steinbockhorn* (Augsburg: Filser, 1926), p. 16, no. 31.

33. Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Inv. MA 2037, fragment of the left leaf of a diptych with Arrest of Christ. Ibid., p. 19, no. 45.

34. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Inv. 32.100.203, left leaf of a diptych with Nativity and Crucifixion. Koechlin, *Ivoires gothiques français*, II, p. 309, no. 834. The right leaf is A26.

35. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Inv. 1971.49.3a-b, diptych with *Vierge glorieuse* and Crucifixion. Hermann Schnitzler, Fritz Volbach and Peter Bloch, *Sammlung E. und M. Kofler-Truniger, I: Skulpturen: Elfenbein, Perlmutter, Stein, Holz. Europäisches Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Räber, 1964), pp. 28-9, no. S 93.

36. Ochtrup-Langenhorst, Catholic Parish Church St John the Baptist, Stiftskammer, statuette of standing Virgin and Child. Dagmar Täube and Miriam Verena Fleck (eds.), *Glanz und Grösse des Mittelalters. Kölner Meisterwerke aus den grossen Sammlungen der Welt* (Munich: Hirmer, 2011), pp. 269-70, no. 25.

37. Palermo, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia di Palazzo Abatellis, Inv. 11430, left leaf of a diptych with *Vierge glorieuse*. Vincenzo Abbate (ed.), *Wunderkammer siciliana: alle origini del museo perduto* (Naples: Electa, 2001), pp. 232-3, no. II.51.

38. Paris, Musée de Cluny – Musée national du Moyen Âge, Inv. Cl. 10904, right leaf of a diptych with Crucifixion. Élisabeth Taburet-Delahaye, *Les Ivoires du Musée de Cluny* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1988), p. 17. The left leaf is A24, formerly in Langres.

39. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. OA 7276, right leaf of a diptych with Crucifixion. Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux V^e-XV^e siècle* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2003), pp. 485-6, no. 220.

40. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. OA 11042, statuette of enthroned Virgin and Child. Ibid., pp. 480-1, no. 216.

41. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. OA 12101, statuette of standing Virgin and Child. Gaborit-Chopin, 'Réapparition'.

42. Sacramento, Crocker Art Museum, Inv. 1960.3.77, fragment of the left leaf of a diptych with Entombment. Randall, *The Golden Age*, p. 107, no. 150.

43. Saint Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, Inv. F-3225, statuette of enthroned Virgin and Child. *Christliche westeuropäische Elfenbeinkunst 13.-18. Jahrhundert aus der Ermitage Sankt Petersburg* (Erbach: Deutsches Elfenbeinmuseum, 1993), no. 11.

44. Toledo, The Toledo Museum of Art, Inv. 50.305, statuette of standing Virgin and Child. Randall, *The Golden Age*, pp. 43-4, no. 23.

45. Unknown location, diptych with *Vierge glorieuse* and Crucifixion. Sale, Auktionshaus Geble, Radolfzell, 9 November 2013.

B. Carvings related to the group

1. Amiens, Musée de Picardie, Inv. M.P. 3063.550, diptych with Adoration of the Magi and Crucifixion. Koechlin, *Ivoires gothiques français*, II, p. 306, no. 827.

2. Cracow, Wawel Royal Castle, Inv. 4149/1-2, diptych with Passion scenes. Stanisława Link-Lenczowska and Joanna Winiewicz-Wolska (eds.), *Sapiehowie. Kolekcjonerzy i mecenas, Zamek Królewski na Wawelu* (Cracow: Zamek Królewski na Wawelu, 2011), p. 292, no. 137.

3. Paris, Musée de Cluny – Musée national du Moyen Âge, Inv. Cl. 441, right leaf of a diptych with Crucifixion. Koechlin, *Ivoires gothiques français*, II, p. 307, no. 830.

4. Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Inv. GR 29, statuette of seated Virgin and Child. Ibid., II, p. 250, no. 689.

5. Saint Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, Inv. F 3196, right leaf of a diptych with Crucifixion. Ibid., II, p. 306, no. 826.

6. Turin, Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Inv. 144/AV, writing tablet with Crucifixion. Simonetta Castronovo, Fabrizio Crivello and Michele Tomasi (eds.), *Avori Medievali. Collezioni del Museo Civico d'Arte Antica di Torino* (Savigliano: L'Artistica Savigliano, 2016), pp. 130-1, no. 20.

7. Unknown location, statuette of enthroned Virgin and Child. [Sale, Hôtel des ventes de Neuilly, 7 December 1997, lot 87.](#)

8. [Utrecht, Catharijneconvent, Inv. BMH bi1871](#), diptych with scenes of the Infancy and Passion of Christ. Roland Koekkoek, *Gotische Ivoren in het Catharijneconvent* (Zuphen: De Walburg Pers, 1987), pp. 70-5, no. 12.

C. Doubtful attributions

1. [Frankfurt am Main Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Inv. 6471](#), diptych with Adoration of the Magi and Crucifixion. See *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk des Mittelalters* (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Kunsthandwerk, 1966), no. 232, fig. 27.

2. [Toronto, The Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Inv. 29111](#), diptych with Nativity and Crucifixion.

All references in *Courtauld Books Online* are hyperlinked. To navigate to a footnote, click on the reference number in the body of the text. To return back to the main text, click on the number at the beginning of the footnote.

All hyperlinks directing to online resources were checked and valid at the date of 14 March 2017.

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1. Glyn Davies and Sarah M. Guérin, 'Introduction', *Sculpture Journal* 23:1 (2014): pp. 7-12.

2. Bruno Klein and Bruno Boerner (eds.), *Stilfragen zur Kunst des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Reimer, 2006).

3. Raymond Koechlin, 'Un atelier d'ivoiriers de la fin du XIV^e siècle', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'art français* (1910): pp. 16-19.

4. Raymond Koechlin, *Les Ivoires gothiques français* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1924), I, pp. 299-306, II, nos. 824-46.

5. See the bibliography listed in notes 9 and 10. For a list of works related to the Kremsmünster group, see the Appendix at the end of the present article: carvings will hereafter be designated by their number in the appendix.

6. Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires du Moyen Âge* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1978), pp. 169-70.

7. Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, 'Réapparition d'une Vierge en ivoire gothique', in *Objets d'art: mélanges en l'honneur de Daniel Alcouffe* (Dijon: Faton, 2004), pp. 47-55.

8. Charles T. Little, 'Gothic Ivory Carving in Germany', in Peter Barnet (ed.), *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 80-93, esp. pp. 91-3.

9. Appendix A36. Géza Jászai, 'Nordfranzösisch oder mittelhochdeutsch? Zur Elfenbein-Madonna der Kirche des ehemaligen Augustinerinnenklosters in Langenhorst', *Westfalen* 47 (1979): pp. 16-23; Andrea von Hülsen-Esch, 'Paris-Köln und zurück. Gedanken zur Madonna von Ochtrup-Langenhorst und der Elfenbeinproduktion im Rheinland', in Andrea von Hülsen-Esch and Dagmar Täube (eds.), *Luft unter die Flügel... Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Kunst: Festschrift für Hiltrud Westermann-Angerhausen* (Hildesheim, Munich and New York: Olms, 2010), pp. 173-85.

10. Appendix A 15. Theo Jülich, *Die mittelalterlichen*

Elfenbeinarbeiten des Hessischen Landesmuseum Darmstadt (Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner, 2011), pp. 192-3, no. 42; Jürgen Fitschen, in Regine Marth (ed.), *Glanz der Ewigkeit. Meisterwerke aus Elfenbein der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1999), pp. 120-6, nos. 46-50; Hartmut Krohm, 'Die mittelalterlichen Elfenbeine', in *Stadtmuseum Münster. Elfenbein, Alabaster und Porzellan aus der Sammlung des fürstbischöflichen Ministers Ferdinand von Plattenberg und der Freiherren von Ketteler* (Berlin: Kultur-Stiftung der Länder, 2001), pp. 6-35, esp. pp. 26-9.

11. Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings 1200-1550* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014), p. 53.

12. Appendix A9 and A21. I suggested the pairing of these carvings in my London presentation of 2012. The same conclusion was independently reached by Zsombor Jekely: see Zsombor Jekely, 'Gothic Ivories in Hungary', *Medieval Hungary Blog*, 6 October 2013, <http://jekely.blogspot.co.uk/search?q=ivories>.

13. Appendix A20. The museum recognised the link with the Kremsmünster group, but not the association with the Chicago fragment and the Győr wing.

14. I am grateful to Ulrich Becker, curator at the Museum im Palais, for sending me the measurements of the fragments.

15. Appendix A5 and A35.

16. Appendix A17 and A37.

17. Appendix A13, A14 and A19.

18. Appendix A41, A35, A10, A27 and A44.

19. Appendix A15, A19, A39 and A38.

20. Appendix A8, A30 and A18.

21. Head missing: appendix A13, A19, A27, A29 and A32. Whole figure missing or remains recarved: appendix A2, A41. Head glued back into place: appendix A11. Head replaced: appendix A14, A40, B4. The head of Christ Child is intact on the statuettes in Dijon (appendix A16) and in Berlin (appendix A7), which I was able to examine myself. No damages have been mentioned in the scholarly literature for the other four statuettes.

22. Appendix A13, A15, A16, A32, A36. In almost all other statuettes or panels of the group, the Virgin holds either a bird or a branch of roses carved in ivory, so the missing silver element was probably a stem of roses, rather than lilies or a sceptre. On the iconography of the Virgin holding a rose, see Gertrud Schiller, *Ikongraphie der christlichen Kunst*, IV-2: *Maria* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1980), p. 205.

23. Appendix A41 and A11.

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24. Appendix A15 and A11.
25. Gaborit-Chopin, 'Réapparition', p. 50.
26. Jülich, *Die mittelalterlichen Elfenbeinarbeiten*, p. 15.
27. Appendix A1, A12, A15, A20, A22, A23, A33.
28. Appendix A18. Roberto Cantagalli, 'Bassetti, Apollonio', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Treccani, 1965), VII, pp. 117-18.
29. Charles T. Little, 'Kölner Elfenbeinschnitzereien der Gotik: Viele offene Fragen', in Dagmar Täube and Miriam Verena Fleck (eds.), *Glanz und Grösse des Mittelalters. Kölner Meisterwerke aus den grossen Sammlungen der Welt* (Munich: Hirmer, 2011), pp. 82-9, esp. p. 88. See Appendix A23, A38.
30. For the Annunciation, see: Täube and Fleck (eds.), *Glanz und Grösse*, pp. 353-5, no. 100-3; for the Adoration, see: Manuela Beer, Iris Metje and Karen Straub (eds.), *Die Heiligen Drei Könige: Mythos, Kunst und Kult* (Munich: Hirmer, 2014), pp. 159-61, no. 58.
31. For example, the wooden enthroned Virgin of c.1340 in the Museum Schnütgen, Inv. A 773: Ulrike Bergmann, *Schnütgen-Museum: die Holzskulpturen des Mittelalters (1110-1400)* (Cologne: Locher 1989), pp. 292-5, no. 78.
32. Robert Suckale (ed.), *Schöne Madonnen am Rhein* (Leipzig: Seemann, 2009), p. 205, no. 36 and pp. 208-09, no. 44.
33. See for instance two statuettes in the Louvre, [Inv. OA 6076](#) and [OA 9957](#): Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux I^{re}-XV^e siècle* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2003), p. 372, no. 138 and pp. 427-8, no. 180; or one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, [Inv. 30.95.114a](#).
34. Suckale (ed.), *Schöne Madonnen*, pp. 205-06, no. 38 and p. 218, no. 62.
35. Appendix A8 (left leaf) and A28 (lower register of the right leaf).
36. Appendix A20 (upper registers of the left leaf), A9 (lower register of the left leaf) and A21 (right leaf).
37. This was first recognised by Katalín David, in 'Rekonstruktion des Elfenbeindiptychons von Győr/Raab', *Ars Decorativa* 7 (1982), pp. 5-17.
38. Hermann Schnitzler, Fritz Vollbach and Peter Bloch, *Sammlung E. und M. Kofler-Truniger, I: Skulpturen: Elfenbein, Perlmutter, Stein, Holz. Europäisches Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Räber, 1964), p. 23, no. S. 64; Walter Schulten, *Kunstwerke in Köln. Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum. Katalog* (Cologne: Greven, 1978), p. 74, no. 179.
39. Antje Middeldorf Kosegarten, 'Inkunabeln der gotischen Kleinplastik in Hartholz', *Pantheon* 22 (1964): pp. 302-21; Peter Bloch, 'Neugotische Statuetten des Nikolaus Elscheidt', in Lucius Griesbach and Konrad Renger (eds.), *Festschrift für Otto von Simson zum 65. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt: Propyläen, 1977), pp. 504-15, esp. p. 513.
40. Robert Suckale, *Das mittelalterliche Bild als Zeitzeuge* (Berlin: Lukas, 2002), p. 152, note 46, already cast doubts on some attributions by Bloch criticising the 'methodological off-handedness of his approach'.
41. John Obadiah Westwood, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Fictile Ivories in the South Kensington Museum* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1876), pp. 373-4.
42. *Catalogue d'objets d'art et de curiosité formant la collection de feu M. le Comte Girolamo Possenti de Fabriano* (Rome, 1880), p. 7, no. 40 with plate.
43. Koechlin, *Ivoires gothiques français*, I, pp. 138-41, II, pp. 89-94, nos. 210-19bis, III, pl. LII-V; Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, pp. 386-9, nos. 152-3; Sarah M. Guérin, *Gothic Ivories. Calouste Gulbenkian Collection* (London: Scala, 2015), pp. 94-103, no. 7.
44. See Schiller, *Iconography*, pp. 121-31. The author, who was unaware of the existence of the Kofler diptych, commented on the Cologne boxwood diptych, and her remarks naturally also apply to the Kremsmünster ivories.
45. For an early fourteenth-century example, see a diptych leaf in the Louvre, [Inv. OA 11097](#): Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, pp. 342-4, no. 122. See Appendix A10, A17, A24, A35, A37.
46. Appendix A5, A35.
47. Appendix A3, A4, A6, A22, A39.
48. Appendix A4, A22, A30. See for instance a celebrated diptych in the Louvre, [Inv. OA 4089](#): Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, pp. 461-3, no. 201, or another one in the Victoria and Albert Museum, [Inv. 290-1867](#): Williamson and Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings*, pp. 306-07, no. 102.
49. For a broad panorama of artistic production in Cologne, see Täube and Fleck (eds.), *Glanz und Grösse*.
50. I established a first corpus of 45 carvings in winter 2011-12, building on the lists published by Koechlin, Gaborit-Chopin and Little; I was later able to verify and expand it using the database of the Courtauld Gothic Ivories Project.

CHAPTER 3

BUYING, GIFTING, STORING: IVORY VIRGINS IN DOCUMENTARY SOURCES FROM LATE MEDIEVAL CENTRAL EUROPE

CHRISTIAN NIKOLAUS OPITZ



3.1
Zwettl Virgin and Child
(French, first half of
the thirteenth century,
before 1258). Ivory,
height: 23.5 cm (Virgin),
10 cm (intermediate
figures), 5.5 cm (angels).
Zwettl Abbey.

Central Europe is not the first region that comes to mind when discussing Gothic ivories. And yet, a written source from precisely this region has long served as a key witness to the original use and context of late medieval ivory Virgins. The early fourteenth-century *Liber Fundatorum* of Zwettl Abbey in Lower Austria recounts that, half a century earlier, Abbot Bohuslaus brought back an ivory sculpture of the Virgin from a visit to France. Once in Zwettl, the figure was placed on the high altar of the monastery church

on feast days.¹ As a rare record of how Gothic ivory statuettes were acquired and used at the time of their production, this passage in the *Liber Fundatorum* has received a lot of attention from specialist scholars.² Zwettl is, however, not an isolated case. Indeed, a number of other medieval sources from Central Europe include references to the acquisition, donation, and storage of ivory Virgins. The present article will focus on material written between roughly 1250 and 1400 in the Duchy of Austria and in the Kingdom of Bohemia, mostly inventories, obituaries and wills. While most of the artworks mentioned in these sources are no longer extant, the documents themselves provide important contextual information for ivory sculptures in late medieval Central Europe.

Before moving on to new—or rather, overlooked—material, a closer examination of the Zwettl *Liber Fundatorum* is needed. The passage regarding Abbot Bohuslaus and the statuette he acquired in France is cited fairly often in scholarly literature, but it is rarely quoted in full, let alone discussed in any depth. Consequently some authors have given a slightly misleading representation of what the source actually says.³

Founded in 1138 by local nobleman Hadmar I of Kuenring, the Cistercian monastery of Zwettl was one of the most important religious institutions in northern Austria in the later Middle Ages. Its early history is related in some detail in an elaborate manuscript entitled *Liber Fundatorum et Benefactorum Zwetlensis Monasterii*, still preserved in the abbey library today.⁴ Mostly written in 1310–11 though incorporating earlier material, it begins with the monastery's foundation narrative in German verse, emphasising the role of its founders, the powerful Kuenring family. Next is a short Latin prologue, followed by the retelling of the foundation story, this time in Latin verse, and then a prose paraphrase of the same, again in Latin. The manuscript's main section consists of the monastery's cartulary, interspersed with some more narrative pieces relating to the history of Zwettl, and a series of large genealogical diagrams detailing the various branches of the Kuenring dynasty and of some other major benefactors of the abbey. The compilation then closes with a rent-roll and some more transcriptions of charters added between 1311 and 1314.

One of the narrative insertions in the cartulary is dedicated to the 'venerable' Abbot Bohuslaus, who governed the monastery from 1248 to 1258. This abbot, we are informed, 'had the habit of bringing back relics of the saints every time he went to the [Cistercian order's] general chapter [in Cîteaux]'.⁵ The chronicler then adds a long list of these relics and their reliquaries, which takes up nearly five pages in the 1851 printed edition.⁶ The passage about the ivory Virgin comes at the very end of this enumeration:

Of the ivory image of the glorious Virgin Mary which is diligently preserved in the monastery of Zwettl and placed on the altar of the Blessed Virgin on feast days, it is to be known that the aforementioned Abbot Bohuslaus brought back the said image from the upper regions of France together with the other relics, and in that image are enclosed the following relics...⁷

This entry is all the more notable since it has traditionally been related to a surviving object: [an ivory Virgin and Child still in the treasury of Zwettl Abbey](#), which is said to be the one acquired by Bohuslaus in the thirteenth century (fig. 3.1).⁸ Thus it appears that both the Virgin and its connection to Abbot Bohuslaus have indeed been ‘diligently preserved’ across the centuries to the present day. An inventory of 1451 still lists it as ‘an ivory image of the Blessed Virgin which Bohuslaus brought from France’ (*‘unam imaginem B. Virginis eburneam, quam Boveslaus portavit de Francia’*), and adds that the statue was adorned with a silver crown and a silver sceptre.⁹ According to an early nineteenth-century description, the statuette was later installed on one of the abbey church’s side altars, dedicated to Saint Leopold (erected in 1736):

On the side altar of Saint Leopold on the left wall of the church one can see, above the tabernacle, an old Virgin and Child, carved of ivory, with the Virgin gazing tenderly at the Child; the figure is approximately one foot high and adorned in places with gilding, like the figures in the Portable Altarpiece of Saint Leopold in Klosterneuburg,¹⁰ at her sides, slightly to the fore, [are] two smaller figures, possibly angels, and in the centre a kneeling bearded [?] man, allegedly king Louis IX of France; right below are four smaller figures with crowns in their hands who are said to represent princes of the Royal Household. This artwork, which is very remarkable for its antiquity, is a gift which king Saint Louis gave to Abbot Boguslav [sic] of Zwettl when he was in Cîteaux in France around 1259, together with a processional cross containing many relics, and an ivory Pastorale, or crozier, both of which are also still preserved in the monastery.¹¹

By this time, the Virgin was already accompanied by seven other ivory fourteenth-century figures, namely an Annunciation group (i.e. another smaller Virgin and archangel Gabriel), a bearded king (presumably one of the Magi), and four figures holding crowns (presumably angels). This ensemble is still extant today and was apparently created by combining the image of the Virgin with the remains of at least one small-scale polyptych. The source cited above, however, saw the whole assemblage as one coherent piece and interpreted the figure of the bearded king as Saint Louis, and the four youths as French princes. It is interesting to note how, over the course of the centuries, the monks of Zwettl ‘upgraded’ their ivory Virgin by considering it to be a gift from Saint Louis, while preserving the memory of Abbot Bohuslaus who had brought the sculpture to Zwettl.¹² Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that the group of medieval ivories was placed on the altar of Saint Leopold. Indeed, during his lifetime, Leopold (b.1073, d. 1136) was Margrave of Austria, and in 1136 he founded Zwettl’s motherhouse, the Cistercian abbey of Heiligenkreuz near Vienna. In addition, Leopold’s son and successor, Margrave Leopold IV (b. c.1108, d. 1141), played a part in the foundation of Zwettl Abbey itself. Not only did he

formally confirm the establishment of the monastery, but he also supported it through generous grants of land.¹³ Thus the eighteenth-century altar of Saint Leopold was a focal point of the community's institutional memory, bringing together relics and figures believed to be related to a saintly margrave, a holy king, and an extraordinary abbot, who all had played a part, real or imagined, in the history of the abbey in the Middle Ages.

As part of the display on the altar of Saint Leopold, the ivory Virgin continued to be of great importance in the fashioning of Zwettl's monastic identity beyond the Middle Ages. In spite of this, it has to be emphasised however that there is no actual 'hard' evidence for the identification of the figure kept in Zwettl today with the Madonna of Abbot Bohuslaus. Indeed, already in 1940 Paul Buberl strongly doubted this identification on stylistic grounds and insisted that the Zwettl Virgin was only created in the mid fourteenth century and therefore could not be the one mentioned in the *Liber Fundatorum*.¹⁴ While this was in turn refuted by Max Seidel and by Robert Suckale,¹⁵ more recently Charles T. Little expressed similar doubts regarding the origin of the Zwettl Madonna. As he convincingly demonstrated, many of the statuette's features are unlike those of other mid-thirteenth-century French ivories.¹⁶ Moreover, there are no traces on the figure's head indicating that it was ever adorned with a crown as suggested by the inventory of 1451.¹⁷ Abbot Bohuslaus's ivory Virgin may therefore have been lost after all and his name and memory later attached to a different figure preserved in the monastery.

A close parallel to the case of Zwettl Abbey can be found in the Benedictine monastery of Břevnov, located on the outskirts of Prague. There, in 1306, Abbot Bavarus (r. 1290–1332) compiled an impressive list of all the things he had donated to his monastery over the past ten years.¹⁸ It contains a wide variety of items from paintings, books, and chalices, to entire buildings sponsored by the abbot, and mentions an ivory figure bought at the papal curia in Rome: 'imaginem eburneam in curia Romanam emptam pro III mar. arg'.¹⁹ We know from other sources that Abbot Bavarus visited Rome in the Jubilee Year 1300, so he could have acquired the sculpture on that occasion.²⁰

This entry from Břevnov is a lot shorter than the passage in the *Liber Fundatorum* from Zwettl, but it is more precise in one important respect. In Zwettl, the chronicler only tells us that the abbot brought back ('attulerit') the statuette from France, but no information is given on how he actually acquired it. The most plausible explanation is that he bought it, either from a carver or a merchant, but it could also have been a gift from one of the other abbots at the General Chapter. In the case of Břevnov, on the other hand, it is clearly stated that the image was *bought*, and we are even given its price: three marks silver. Establishing the relative value of medieval currency is notoriously difficult,²¹ but we can still compare the price of the ivory figure with that of other objects in the same list. Among other items, a crozier, a canopy made of damask cloth, four banners, and three chasubles of cendal (a silk fabric) were each bought by the abbot for the same price of three marks silver. As regards the price of other carvings and luxury objects, we find a large wooden sculpture for nine marks, a chalice for twelve marks, and a crystal cup for thirty marks. On the whole, this

comparison shows that, while the ivory statuette was certainly not cheap, it was also far from the top of the price range for luxury goods.

However, one must emphasise that, as a basis for comparison, the objects in the list are of only limited merit. Since none of them survive, it is impossible to assess how large and how elaborate each of them was, and what their value depended on. This also applies to the ivory figure itself: while we know how much it cost and what it was made of, there is no indication of its size or its artistic quality, nor even of what or who it represented. That said, circumstantial evidence suggests that, like in Zwettl, it was an image of the Virgin Mary. Indeed, a late fourteenth-century inventory of Břevnov Abbey lists two ivory Virgins. The entries read ‘Item, a small ivory image of the Blessed Virgin’, followed by ‘Item another, simpler and very old one’ (‘Item ymago eburnea parva beate Virginis. — Item secunda simplicior antiqua valde’).²² Although we cannot be certain, it seems likely that one of these carvings was the one bought by Abbot Bavarus in Rome. If so, the abbot’s ivory figure was either a small or a relatively simple older one, which would explain its comparatively low price.

In the inventory, the ivory carvings are included in a long list of most varied objects, ranging from liturgical vestments to an ostrich egg or a painted *mapa mundi*. What these objects have in common is that they are all classified under the rubric ‘vestments of the upper sacristy’ (‘Notantur vestes sacristie superioris’). Yet it is not entirely clear where and how exactly they were stored: the term ‘upper sacristy’ could simply refer to the domain of responsibility of a sacristan, and does not necessarily mean that all these objects were kept in the same physical space.²³

More detailed information on the storage of ivory figures can be found in another roughly contemporary inventory. It comes from the monastery of Police, a daughter-house of Břevnov in Northeastern Bohemia. Dated 25 May 1390, and entitled ‘Regestum sacristie Pollicensis’, it organises the different types of objects in coherent groups and records them under useful headings.²⁴ Here, an ivory Virgin features under the rubric ‘Panels and boxes that are [kept] in the chest’ (‘Tabule et pixides, que sunt in archa’). The entry reads: ‘Item, 2 small images of the Blessed Virgin, one of ivory, and the other of alabaster’ (‘Item 2 imagines beate Virginis parve, eburnea una et alia de albastro’).²⁵ In a way, this document complements what the Zwettl source told us. In the Zwettl *Liber Fundatorum*, we learnt how an ivory statue was treated on special feast days, when it was placed on the altar. In Police, on the other hand, we get a glimpse of what happened on ordinary days, for the rest of the year: together with other valuable objects, the ivory sculpture was safely stored away in a chest.

Storing precious ivory figures in chests and boxes throughout the year seems to have been common practice in the later Middle Ages. For instance, Charles T. Little recently mentioned a treasury inventory of Arras Cathedral dated 1328, which lists several ivory Virgins kept in boxes.²⁶ ‘Such objects’, he concludes, ‘were thus not displayed continuously, but probably only on the four great Marian feast days (the Purification, Annunciation,

Assumption and Nativity), and during the thirteenth century perhaps also on Saturdays, which was considered a Marian feast day'.²⁷ Returning to Central Europe, a close parallel to the Police arrangement can be found in the Cathedral of Bressanone/Brixen in South Tyrol. Here, an inventory of 12 December 1379 includes 'a certain small ivory image of the blessed Virgin Mary' ('Item quedam imago parva eburnea beate virginis Marie').²⁸ It was stored in a wooden box or chest ('in cassa lignea'), together with other precious objects ranging from golden chalices and silver crosses to reliquaries and indulgence letters. Unlike the inventory from Police, the one from Bressanone/Brixen actually states that the storage chest was itself kept *in* the sacristy, as the relevant rubric reads: 'Reliquie in sacristia in cassa lignea reperte'.

From the examples discussed so far, it may appear that the donors of ivory carvings were for the most part members of the high clergy, like abbots Bavarus and Bohuslaus, who gave such objects to their own respective monasteries. Other sources, however, attest that not only clergymen but also members of the secular elite played a significant role as donors of such pieces.

A case in point is that of Ella von Potenstein (d. 1339), an Austrian noblewoman who was an important patron of the Franciscan convent in Vienna. The convent's late fourteenth-century necrology identifies her as 'a great lover and benefactor of the friars' ('maxima amatrix et benefactrix fratrum'),²⁹ and records several donations including two 'ivory images, a large one and a small one' ('iste ymagines de ebore maior et minor').³⁰ As in the case of Břevnov, no further specifications about the figures are made, but we have to bear in mind that most of the sources discussed here were intended for internal use. The compilers acted on the assumption that their audience was familiar with the objects and needed no further clarifications.

If we know very little about the ivory carvings of the Vienna Franciscans, we do know more about the woman who donated them. Ella von Potenstein belonged to a milieu that was highly aristocratic, international, predominantly female, and with a predilection for the Franciscans. She was closely associated with the Habsburg court in Vienna, where she first served as governess to princess Gutta, daughter of Emperor Albert I, and later as part of the entourage of Isabella of Aragon, wife of Frederick the Fair, Duke of Austria.³¹ In her 1328 testament, Isabella refers to Ella as her 'faithful servant' ('unser treuen Diennerinn'), and leaves her the considerable sum of twenty marks. This indicates a relatively close relationship between the two women, since no other member of Isabella's entourage is mentioned by name in her will, and only her confessor, who remains anonymous, is given the same amount of money.³² Ella's connection to Isabella of Aragon is of particular interest here, since Isabella was perhaps the most significant patron of the Vienna Franciscans in the first half of the fourteenth century. Most importantly, she sponsored there the building of a chapel dedicated to Saint Louis of Toulouse, which also served as her burial place.³³

The Vienna friars were not the only monastic community to commemorate the donation of an ivory carving in their necrology. A similar mention is found in the necrology of

Heiligenkreuz Abbey, a Cistercian foundation which has already been mentioned above as the motherhouse of Zwettl. Here, we are informed that a nobleman named Heinrich von Seefeld (d. 1268) gave, not only land and money to the monastery, but also an ‘ivory statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary with relics of saints in a silver case’ (*statuam eburneam Beate Virginis Marie cum reliquiis sanctorum in thecis argenteis*).³⁴ This entry ties in well with some of the previous mentions. Like in Zwettl, the ivory carving appears to have served as a reliquary. Like in Vienna, the donor was part of the local secular elite: Heinrich von Seefeld belonged to a small group of noblemen known as the *ministeriales Austriae*, who occupied most of the political and administrative key positions in the country.

In Heiligenkreuz, the gift of the ivory Virgin is even better documented than in the previous examples as, not only is it mentioned in the necrology, but the original charter recording its donation also survives. Issued from Heinrich’s residence in Seefeld on 28 August 1268, the charter confirms his choice of Heiligenkreuz as his burial place, and lists several donations made to the monastery: money for the upkeep of a sanctuary lamp, a liturgical book, and the aforementioned statuette, described as a ‘large ivory image of the glorious Virgin Mary’ (*maiolem ymaginem gloriose virginis Marie eboream*).³⁵ The most interesting part, however, is what comes next: it proceeds to stress that, once retrieved from the church at Seefeld (*ab ecclesia Seveldensi recepta*), the statuette would always remain in the custody of Heiligenkreuz. This implies that during Heinrich’s lifetime, the ivory was kept at his local parish church in Seefeld, and only after his death was it to be given to the monastery that would serve as his final resting place and the focal point of his liturgical *memoria*. Thanks to these arrangements, Heinrich von Seefeld ensured that he would remain physically close to the statuette, both in life and in death. In this case, the ivory figure appears to be inextricably linked to the person of the donor.

A similar attitude is noticeable in some of the previously discussed sources. As the entries in monastic chronicles and necrologies show, ivory carvings were often still associated with their donors several decades, or even centuries after their demise. In Zwettl, for instance, the inventory of 1451, written almost two centuries after the death of Abbot Bohuslaus, still names him as the donor of the monastery’s ivory Virgin. Gifting such an object was therefore an enduring way of endearing oneself to a religious institution and of ensuring the preservation of one’s memory. While the documents discussed in this article offer revealing insights into the buying, gifting, and storing of ivory figures in late medieval Central Europe, they are perhaps first and foremost evidence of the appreciation of such objects. The relatively frequent mention of ivory sculptures in sources related to individual and institutional *memoria* shows the importance of these artefacts, both to their donors and to the monastic communities who received, venerated, stored, and occasionally displayed them.

It remains to be asked whether this appreciation was based solely on the ivories’ precious material and ‘exotic’ foreign origin or also on their specific artistic qualities. After all, the import of ivory carvings by both ecclesiastics and lay people was certainly in

line with the prevalent artistic taste among the local upper classes: in the period under discussion, Central European patrons showed a discernible predilection for artworks in the French, or more generally Western European style, but acquiring paintings or sculptures actually produced in those regions tended to be beyond their financial and logistic means.³⁶ Small-scale artworks such as ivory carvings must therefore have played an important role in the transmission of artistic ideas to Central Europe, but since almost none of the objects discussed above survive, they have so far received little attention. The frequency with which imported ivories appear in Austrian and Bohemian inventories and other written sources however bears testimony to their former popularity and establishes them as a group of objects one ought to take into account when discussing the artistic landscape of late medieval Central Europe.

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1. Johann von Frast (ed.), *Das Stiftungen-Buch des Cistercienser-Klosters Zwettl* [sic] (*Fontes rerum Austriacarum – Österreichische Geschichts-Quellen* II, 3) (Vienna: Kaiserliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1851), pp. 137-42.

2. Raymond Koechlin, *Les Ivoires gothiques français* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1924), I, no. 62; Paul Buberl, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Zisterzienserklosters Zwettl* (Baden bei Wien: M. Rohrer, 1940), pp. 219-21; Robert Suckale, *Studien zu Stilbildung und Stikwandel der Madonnenstatuen der Ile-de-France zwischen 1230 und 1300* (Bamberg: Rodenbusch, 1971), p. 105; Herwig Wolfram (ed.), *Die Kuenringer: Das Werden des Landes Niederösterreich* (Zwettl: Österreichisches Museum für Volkskunde, 1981), nos. 174 and 216;

Charles T. Little, 'Gothic Ivory Carving in Germany', in Peter Barnet (ed.), *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 80-93, esp. p. 82; Sarah M. Guérin, 'Tears of Compunction': *French Gothic Ivories in Devotional Practice* (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2009), pp. 149-50.

3. To give but one example, William H. Monroe claims the source 'implies that the monastic setting of the Zwettl Virgin was on an altar retable', when the *Liber Fundatorum* actually states that the figure was placed on the altar *only on feast days*. See William H. Monroe, 'A French Gothic ivory of the Virgin and Child', *Museum Studies* 8 (1978): pp. 6-29, esp. p. 29.

4. See Frast, *Stiftungen-Buch* as well as the facsimile edition of the manuscript: Joachim Rössl (ed.), *Liber fundatorum Zwettlensis monasterii 'Bärenhaut'* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1981).

5. 'talem consuetudinem habuit ut quotiens ad capitulum generale iret tociens secum reliquias sanctorum deferret', in Frast, *Stiftungen-Buch*, p. 137.

6. Frast, *Stiftungen-Buch*, pp. 137–42.
7. Ibid., p. 142: 'De ymagine autem eburnea beate Marie uirginis gloriose que in zwetlensi monasterio diligencius conseruatur et summo altari beate uirginis in festiuitatibus supponitur sciendum quod eandem ymaginem predictus Bovzlaus abbas de superioribus partibus Francie cum alijs reliquijs attulerit in qua ymagine subscripte reliquie sunt incluse...'
8. For details and illustrations, see the entry in [The Courtauld's Gothic Ivories Database](#).
9. Buberl, *Kunstdenkmäler*, p. 221; Robert Suckale, *Das mittelalterliche Bild als Zeitzeuge: Sechs Studien* (Berlin: Lukas-Verlag, 2002), p. 229.
10. The so-called *Portable altarpiece of Saint Leopold*, preserved in the Treasury of Klosterneuburg Abbey near Vienna, is another eighteenth-century assemblage, comprising several alabaster fragments dating from the fourteenth century. Its supposed connection to Saint Leopold is entirely fictitious. See Floridus Röhrig and Gottfried Stangler (eds.), *Der heilige Leopold: Landesfürst und Staatssymbol* (Vienna: Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung Kulturabteilung, 1985), p. 211.
11. 'Auf dem Leopoldsseitenaltare, an der linken Hauptwand der Kirche sieht man über dem Tabernakel eine alte aus Elfenbein geschnitzte Madonna mit dem Kinde, welches sie mit Innigkeit anblickt; die Figur ist etwa einen Fuß hoch und mit Vergoldung an einigen Stellen geziert, ähnlich den Figuren an dem Reisealtar des heiligen Leopold zu Klosterneuburg, ihr zur Seite etwas vorwärts zwey kleinere Figuren, vielleicht Engel, und in der Mitte ein kniender bärtiger [?] Mann, der Angabe nach König Ludwig IX. von Frankreich; ganz unten aber vier kleinere Figuren mit Kronen in den Händen, welche Prinzen des königlichen Hauses vorstellen sollen. Dieses durch sein Alter sehr merkwürdige Kunstwerk ist ein Geschenk, welches König Ludwig der Heilige dem Abte Boguslav von Zwettl bey seiner Anwesenheit zu Cîteaux in Frankreich um 1259 schenkte, nebst einem gleichfalls noch im Stifte befindlichen Kapitelkreuz mit vielen Reliquien und einem elfenbeinernen Pastorale oder Krummstabe', from Aloys Primisser, 'Reise-Nachrichten über Denkmahle der Kunst und des Alterthums in den österreichischen Abteyen, und in einigen andern Kirchen Österreichs und Kärnthens', *Archiv für Geographie, Historie, Staats- und Kriegskunst* 12 (1821): p. 556.
12. Since no mention is made of Saint Louis in the *Liber Fundatorum*, it is safe to presume that his alleged connection to the ivory Virgin has no historical basis and is entirely fictitious.
13. On the foundation of Heiligenkreuz and Zwettl, see Christina Lutter, 'Locus horroris et vastae solitudinis? Zisterzienser und Zisterzienserinnen in und um Wien', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 132 (2012): pp. 141–76.
14. Buberl, *Kunstdenkmäler*, pp. 220–1.
15. Max Seidel, 'Die Elfenbeinmadonna im Domschatz zu Pisa: Studien zur Herkunft und Umbildung französischer Formen im Werk Giovanni Pisanos in der Epoche der Pisoienser Kanzel', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 16 (1972): pp. 1–50, esp. p. 8; Suckale, *Das mittelalterliche Bild*, p. 130. Buberl's opinion was, however, accepted by Annegret Laabs in her exhaustive study of painting and sculpture in the Cistercian Order: Annegret Laabs, *Malerei und Plastik im Zisterzienserorden: Zum Bildgebrauch zwischen sakralem Zeremoniell und Stiftermemoria 1250–1430* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2000), pp. 86, 201, 238.
16. Little, *Gothic Ivory Carving*, p. 82.
17. It is also unclear whether the statuette preserved in Zwettl could actually have been used for storing the relics mentioned in the *Liber Fundatorum*. On the one hand, it has been claimed that the Zwettl Virgin's head was detachable and could be removed to access a relic depository: cf. Hermann Fillitz, 'Das Kunstgewerbe', in Fritz Dworschak and Harry Kühnel (eds.), *Die Gotik in Niederösterreich. Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Staatsdruckerei, 1963), pp. 194–213, esp. p. 200. On the other hand, the more sober assessment of the object's condition in the Gothic Ivories Database simply indicates that the head of the Virgin was cut and glued back into place (as was the head of Christ) at an unknown point in the object's history, suggesting that it was not intended to be detached after all. In any case, though, there remains the possibility that the relics could have been stored in the statuette's original base rather than in the figure itself. However, since neither the written nor the material evidence allows any conclusions regarding the object's original setting, nothing can be said for certain in this respect.
18. Joseph Emler (ed.), *Regesta diplomatica nec non epistolaria Bohemiae et Moraviae*, pt. II: 1253–1310 (Prague: Typis Gregerianis, 1882), pp. 1202–04. The list is entitled 'Annotantur res, quas fr. Bavarus, abbas ecclesiae Brzewnouensis, tempore sui regiminis sub annis diversis comparavit', referring to Bavarus in the third person, but later switches to the first person, in phrases such as 'nos supradictus abbas fundavimus' or 'nos frater Bauarus convenimus'. This suggests that Bavarus himself was the author of the compilation.
19. Emler, *Regesta*, p. 1202.
20. Emler, *Regesta*, pp. 1207–08.
21. For an overview of the subject, see Peter Spufford, *Handbook of Medieval Exchange* (London: The Royal Historical Society, 1986).
22. Joseph Emler (ed.), 'Zlomek inventáře kláštera Břevnoského z let 1390–1394', *Věstník Královské České Společnosti Náuk. Třída Filos.-Histor.-Jazykozpytná* (1888), pp. 280–305, esp. p. 286.

23. I am indebted to Lesley Milner (London) for pointing out to me the complexities of the term 'sacristy' in the Middle Ages.

24. Emler, 'Zlomek inventáře', pp. 293-7.

25. Emler, 'Zlomek inventáře', p. 296. In accordance with its heading, the rubric in question begins with 'tabule' and continues with a rather longer list of 'pixides'; the two 'images' of the Virgin are only added at the very end, forming the penultimate entry and, it seems, a separate category. The last entry under the rubric names 'two small gilded silver crowns' ('due corone parve argentee deaurate'): it seems likely that these belonged together with the aforementioned images of the Virgin.

26. Charles T. Little, 'The Art of Gothic Ivories: Studies at the Crossroads', *The Sculpture Journal* 23 (2014): pp. 13-29, esp. pp. 18-19.

27. Little, 'Gothic Ivories', p. 19.

28. Michael Mayr-Adlwang (ed.), 'Urkunden und Regesten aus dem k. k. Statthaltereii-Archiv in Innsbruck (1364-1490)', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 20 (1899): pp. CXXIV-CLXXXIX, esp. p. CXXVI.

29. Adalbert F. Fuchs (ed.), *Necrologia Germaniae*, V: *Diocesis Pataviensis*, pt. 2: *Austria inferior* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1913), p. 181.

30. Fuchs, *Necrologia*, p. 170. Strictly speaking, this entry refers not to Ella, but to her daughter Chunigunde. The phrasing, however, is slightly confusing and also mentions Ella; considering that Chunigunde is referred to as a 'girl' ('puella'), I find it more likely for Ella to have been the donor rather than her daughter. There remains nonetheless a certain amount of uncertainty.

31. Heinrich Ritter von Zeissberg, 'Elisabeth von Aragonien, Gemahlin Friedrich's des Schönen von Oesterreich', *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen Classe der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 137, pt. VII (1898): pp. 97-8.

32. Zeissberg, 'Elisabeth von Aragonien', pp. 98, 106.

33. Zeissberg, 'Elisabeth von Aragonien', pp. 99-108.

34. Malachias Koll, *Chronicon breve Monasteriorum Ord. Cisterc. ad Sanctam Crucem in Austria et ad St. Gotthardum in Ungaria adjecta Serie omnium nobilium Benefactorum ibidem sepultorum etc.* (Vienna: Typis Viduae Antonii de Haykul, 1834), p. 34.

35. Johann Nepomuk Weis (ed.), *Urkunden des Cistercienser-Stiftes Heiligenkreuz im Wiener Walde, I. Theil (Fontes rerum Austriacarum – Österreichische Geschichts-Quellen II, 11)* (Vienna: Kaiserliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1856), p. 168.

36. See, for instance: Gerhard Schmidt, 'Bildende Kunst: Malerei und Plastik', *Die Zeit der frühen Habsburger. Dome und Klöster 1279-1379* (Vienna: Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung, 1979), pp. 82-98, esp. p. 85.

PART TWO

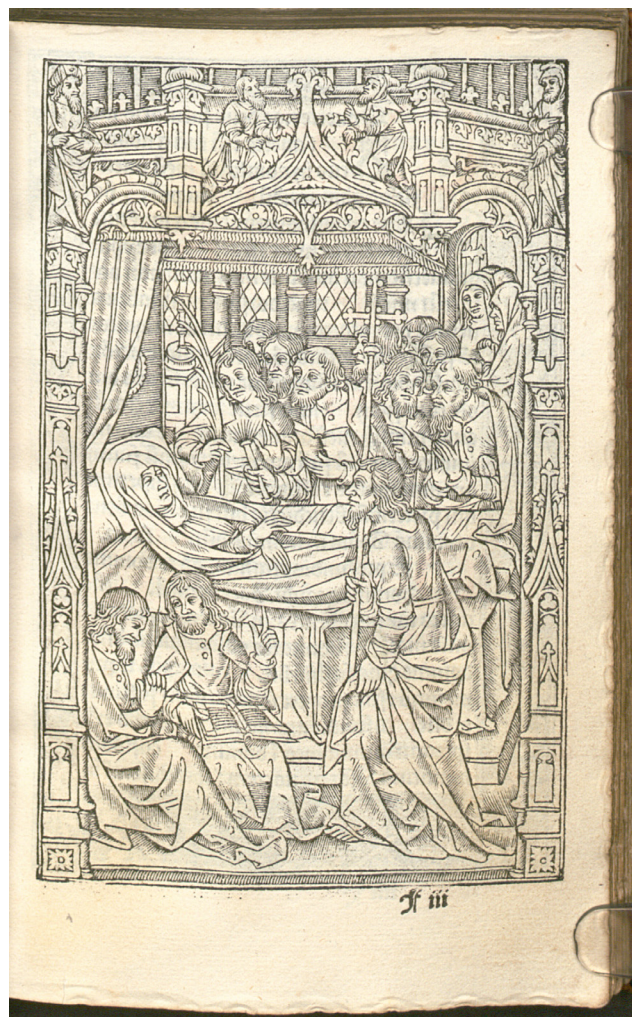
IVORY CARVING IN TRANSITION: LATE FIFTEENTH TO EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY



CHAPTER 4

TRANSLATED IMAGES: FROM PRINT TO IVORY IN THE LATE FIFTEENTH AND EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY

CATHERINE YVARD



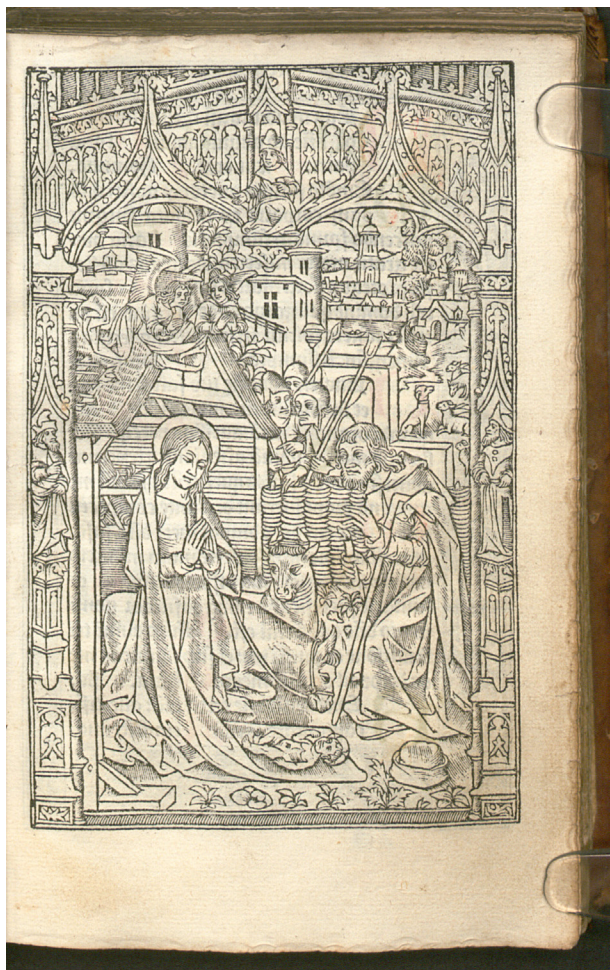
Although scholars have recognised a kinship and occasionally drawn attention to similarities in iconography and composition between manuscript illumination and ivory carving, compelling instances of influence in one direction or the other are few and far between. One notable exception is a group of polychrome openwork carvings which are stylistically related to early fifteenth-century Parisian manuscript illumination, in particular to the work of the so-called Rohan Master,¹ a case strengthened by recent research on the *Portovenere Pax* commissioned by Jean le Meingre, Lord of Boucicaut.² Practitioners in both media worked closely together, as painters were called upon to enhance most ivory carvings with parsimoniously applied polychromy and gilding—the openwork carvings group being an exception in that the colours and gilding cover most of the surface. But we also know that manuscript illuminators sometimes painted figurative scenes on ivory, as in the case of a well-known booklet now at the Victoria and Albert Museum probably carved and painted c.1330–40 in Cologne (*Inv.* 11-1872),³ a set of writing tablets in New York

4.1
Pax with Dormition.
Ivory, 21.3 x 12.7 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, Inv. BK-
2003-6.

4.2
Dormition (Compline),
from *Hours for the use of*
Rome (Paris: Philippe
Pigouchet for Simon
Vostre, 22 May 1496).
Metalcut on paper,
c.16 x 11 cm (page).
Munich, Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek, Inc.c.a.
247 g, f. f3r.

featuring two paintings usually considered to be later than the carvings (Inv. 1982.60.399),⁴ or a late thirteenth-century Northern French or Mosan triptych now in Lyon whose wings are painted with Infancy scenes (Inv. L 422).⁵

When it comes to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, evidence abounds of the impact of prints on ivory carving, as indeed on many other media. Emile Mâle noted in 1908 that scenes from the *Biblia Pauperum* and the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*⁶ were used as models for a bone and wood casket in the Musée de Cluny in Paris (Inv. Cl. 1565),⁷ and Richard Randall recognised episodes from the *Biblia Pauperum* on a casket in Baltimore (Inv. 71.251) whose iconographical programme is simpler.⁸ In 2007, Christine Vivet-Péclet showed that the composition on the large *Noirétable pax* (24 x 22 cm)⁹ was based on the *Madonna of the Rosary* engraving by Israhel van Meckenem dating from c.1480 (see Chicago, Art Institute Chicago, Inv. 1956.836; 27.1 x 18.5 cm), an image whose popularity was increased by the fact that it was associated with an indulgence promised in the few lines at the bottom of the print.¹⁰ An unusual and hitherto overlooked panel in Florence mixing ivory and gilt wood considered to be German follows even more closely the same model (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Inv. 156 C; 12.9 x 8.3 cm).¹¹ This is however just the tip of the iceberg, as many more pieces can be found to be transpositions of prints.¹² The impact of the compositions and style of the Parisian artist known as the Master of the *Very Small Hours of Anne of Brittany*, known under many different names, depending on which medium is examined, has been observed in a range of artworks in different media—tapestry, enamel, stained glass, metalwork.¹³ In some cases, he himself provided the models for these artworks, in other instances, prints designed by him served as inspiration for other artists. It is therefore not surprising to see his influence extend to ivory carving. Active in Paris from c.1489 to 1508, this painter, whom Nicole Reynaud offered to identify with Jean d'Ypres,¹⁴ designed several series of metalcuts to illustrate printed books of hours,¹⁵ and it is some of these compositions that one finds translated into ivory. The Dormition scene depicted on a pax now in Amsterdam (fig. 4.1; Rijksmuseum, Inv. BK-2003-6) is part of a set of metalcuts designed by Jean d'Ypres for the Parisian printer Simon Vostre: according to Ina Nettekoven, the earliest occurrence of this print is in an edition dated to 22 May 1496 (fig. 4.2).¹⁶ A couple of important variations were introduced in the ivory, namely the addition of the Assumption in the upper section, and of a seated apostle in the foreground to the right. Another pax formerly in the Spitzer collection and acquired in 2013 by the Gandur Foundation (Inv. FGA-AD-BA-116) follows more closely the Ypres composition, with the shape of the pillars and arches precisely translated into ivory.¹⁷ The Crucifixion from this same 1496 series (see Washington, Library of Congress, Rosenwald 451, f. h1r)¹⁸ was equally successful, and is found on three other paxes now in Langres (Saint-Mammès Cathedral Treasury), Turin (Palazzo Madama-Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Inv. 131/AV)¹⁹ and Liverpool (Walker Art Gallery, Inv. M8031),²⁰ to which therefore the same *terminus post quem* of 1496 applies. The Nativity scene from this series

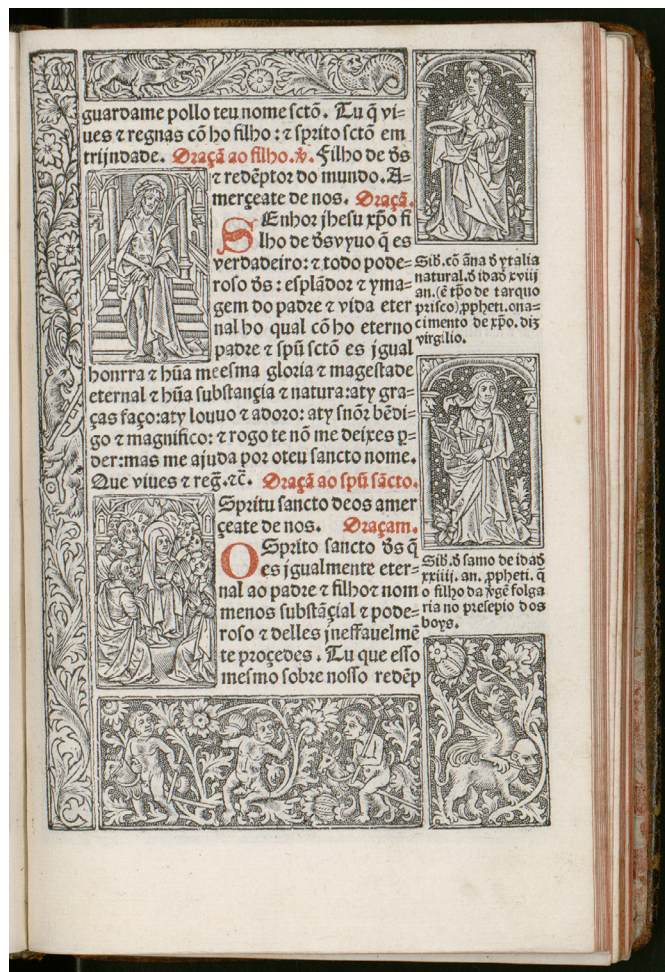


(fig. 4.3; [Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Inc.c.a 247 g, f. d8r](#)) features on another pax in Turin (fig. 4.4; [Palazzo Madama-Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Inv. 130/AV](#)),²¹ but also on a metalwork diptych with niello design now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York ([Inv. 2000.152](#)) whose technique allows for greater fidelity to the original. In the latter example, it is facing the Adoration of the Magi based on a print from the same cycle ([Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Inc.c.a 247 g, f. e4r](#)). Incidentally, we also see evidence of the impact of several of these compositions in a fascinating enamelled booklet now in Vienna.²²

Ivory carvers did not only use the large prints as a source of inspiration, but also the smaller border illustrations. We find evidence of this on a pyxis that came from the Abbaye du Voeu in Cherbourg (fig. 4.5; [Cherbourg-Octeville, Musée Thomas Henry, Inv. MTH 2009.0.33](#)). The six female figures represented all around it are sybils based on the small series of metalcuts designed by Jean d'Ypres for *in-octavo* books of hours printed by Parisian printer Simon Vostre from 1500 (fig. 4.6).²³ The prophetesses are each given an attribute, which alludes to their particular prophecy: the Libyan Sybil has a lit candle, symbolising the light brought into the world by Christ, the Erythraean Sybil a flower (usually a lily though here more akin to a rose) evoking the Annunciation, the Cumaean Sybil a mysterious attribute which brings to mind representations of the side wound of Christ (see fig. 4.6), the Samian Sybil a cot announcing the birth of Christ (figs. 4.5–4.6), the Cimmerian Sybil a horn somewhat strangely believed to refer to the nursing of Christ by the Virgin, and the European Sybil a sword pointing upwards, symbol of the Massacre of the Innocents.²⁴ The same model was used on an ivory strip ([Sotheby's, New York, 10 December 1992, lot 38](#)) where the Samian, Cimmerian, Persian (with a lantern announcing the coming of Christ), European, Agrippine (with a whip prefiguring the Flagellation) and Tiburtine Sybils (with a hand referring to the sacrilegious hand that slapped the face

4.3
Nativity (Terce), from
Hours for the use of Rome
(Paris: Philippe Pigou-
chet for Simon Vostre,
22 May 1496). Metalcut
on paper, c.16 x 11 cm
(page). Munich, Bayer-
ische Staatsbibliothek,
Inc.c.a 247 g, f. d8r.

4.4
Pax with Nativity.
Ivory, 14 x 10 cm.
Turin, Palazzo
Madama-Museo Civico
d'Arte Antica, Inv. 130/
AV.



of Christ during his Passion) stand against a crosshatched background, each holding a phylactery with her name.²⁵ The back and edges are not described, but the format (12.1 x 3.7 cm) and proportions indicate that it originally was the central part of a comb. The six missing sybils would have featured on the other side of the panel but, as they are not mentioned in the 1992 catalogue entry, the piece was certainly cut longitudinally, to obtain two very thin plaques, as is the case for two fragments of a same comb used to decorate a nineteenth-century binding now at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (NAF 10039). The two sybils with no attributes but holding scrolls on an enameled triptych in New York obey the Ypres canons and seem to merge the border vignettes series we have just mentioned which features full-length figures, and smaller vignettes where the sybils are shown bust-length with a scroll inscribed with their name (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Inv. 14.40.669).²⁶ The piece is highly composite and various elements, such as the dolphins and green and pink marble foot are clearly post-medieval, the inaccuracy of the inscriptions on the phylacteries ('*SIBILLA EPICHEA*', for instance, does not exist) may indicate that they were altered or added in the modern period.²⁷ The Nativity on the outside of these half-ovoid wings is clearly derived from an Ypres model and closer to compositions found on loose prints.²⁸

A puzzling assemblage of ivory, bone and wood in Florence looks like the three-dimensional rendition of a page from a book of hours, mixing manuscript and printed influences (*Museo Nazionale del Bargello*, Inv. 154 C).²⁹ The archaic treatment of the landscape steeply ascending and nestling diminutive scenes chronologically preceding the main episode of the Meeting at the Golden Gate in the foreground is reminiscent of the work of manuscript illuminators in the early fifteenth century. In contrast, the elaborate architectural framework with columns topped with figures and pinnacles is close to what was used in the second half of the fifteenth century in printed hours such as those designed by Jean

4.5
Pyxis with Sybils, here the Samian Sybil. Ivory, 10 x 7.1 cm (diameter). Cherbourg-Octeville, Musée Thomas Henry, MTH 2009.0.33.

4.6
Border with Cumaean Sybil and Samian Sybil, from *Hours for the use of Rome* (Paris: Wolfgang Hopyl for Narcisse Bruno, 13 February 1500). Printed page, Sybil metalcuts: 3.5 x 2.1 cm. Washington, Library of Congress, Rosenwald 451, f. M5r.



d'Ypres.³⁰ The Tree of Jesse winding its branches in the border echoes the marginal decoration at the beginning of Matins in the *Very Small Hours of Anne of Brittany* (Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 3120, f. 28r).

A printed book of hours kept in the atelier would certainly have been a practical and inexpensive pool of models, providing a wide range of compositions, especially of a religious nature. The compositions by Jean d'Ypres were incredibly successful and widely copied; his distinctive style is encountered in countless books of hours, but also in a group of single-sheet woodcuts.³¹ About fifty exist today, but tens of thousands of them must have been produced. These prints, fragile by nature, have mostly reached us in objects now known as 'coffrets à estampe' or print caskets (fig. 4.7).³² It is believed that these caskets were designed to accommodate the prints in their lids, but that the latter were not specifically conceived to fit in the former, and existed independently of this support.³³ The proportions of the caskets suggest that they were intended for books, and more specifically prayer books, given the devotional nature of the prints.³⁴ The recent discovery of a unique representation of a coffer in a 1530s Antwerp painting of the rest on the flight into Egypt (private collection) has recently shed more light on their use and content, as the partially-lifted lid reveals 'a small leather-bound book with clasps, a rosary composed of precious gems, a brush, scissors, and two finger-rings'.³⁵ The presence of a horsehair cushion on the underside of one of the surviving examples confirms that they were designed to be carried as rucksacks.³⁶ The image inside the lid was in this context meant to encourage meditation and prayer, and the box may in some cases have changed into a portable altar. From this series, an image of saint Roch (fig. 4.7)³⁷ was used as a model for two paxes now in Nantes (Musée Thomas Dobrée, Inv. 969.7.27) and Venice (fig. 4.8; Museo Correr, Inv. Cl. XVII n.7).³⁸ The devotion to this saint was relatively recent:³⁹ he cared for the victims of the plague epidemics in Italy in the fourteenth century and, when he was eventually stricken

4.7
Saint Roch (Paris, 1490-1500). Woodcut on paper pasted in the lid of a casket, c.25.5 x 17 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Réserve EA-5 (O)-OBJET.

4.8
Pax with Saint Roch. Ivory, 15 x 9.5 cm. Venice, Museo Correr, Inv. Cl. XVII n.7.

by the disease, retired to the forest where he survived thanks to a dog who brought him a loaf of bread every day, a story which elucidates the iconography. A [fourth pax formerly in the collection of Charles-Léon Cardon](#),⁴⁰ very roughly carved, may also be based on the Ypres design, although the saint does not exactly adopt the same posture;⁴¹ the group he forms with the archangel and the dog is compressed to accommodate Saint Sebastian on one side and Saint Maurice on the other.⁴² These pieces, while obviously drawing on the same model, are stylistically very different from each other. All obliterate the landscape to focus on the foreground and small variations are introduced in the composition, such as the posture of the dog or the position of the staff. A unique diptych now in Rouen featuring the Carrying of the Cross and the Crucifixion ([Musée Départemental des Antiquités de la Seine-Maritime, Inv. 2001.0.7](#)) is also based on Ypres style woodcuts: the left wing repeats the composition found on a loose print (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Estampes et Photographie, Ea 5 [11]),⁴³ but the model for the Crucifixion remains elusive. Indeed, the arrangement of the figures to the left of the cross is close to that found in the 1496 series⁴⁴ and in a single-leaf woodcut,⁴⁵ but the centurion on horseback is not present in the surviving prints. It nevertheless appears in the miniature of the *Very Small Hours of Anne of Brittany* (f. 48r),⁴⁶ so it is possible that a print existed mixing these features. In 2010, Frits Scholten drew attention to the fact that an ivory panel depicting the Virgin surrounded by the symbols of the Immaculate Conception, also called Virgin of the Litanies ([Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Inv. BK-2008-69](#)), was based on a Parisian composition found in a printed book of hours published by Antoine Vérard in 1503.⁴⁶ This print actually belongs to a series of metalcuts that the Parisian printer Thielman Kerver ordered from the Ypres workshop between 1497 and 1506, and it would seem that it first appeared in a book of hours he printed for Gillet Remacle on 1 December 1502.⁴⁷ This design was to mark the beginning of the Office of the Conception of the Virgin, a newcomer to the book of hours, following the promotion of this cult by Sixtus IV who introduced the Office in 1476. A slightly different version of this composition, functioning outside the context of a book and on the same sheet as three other devotional images, was recently discovered inside the lid of a box acquired by the Bibliothèque nationale in 2010.⁴⁸

These prints, cheap and easy to circulate, had a great impact on artistic production, well beyond Paris and the borders of the kingdom of France, and so did the books of hours, printed in large numbers and widely disseminated. An edition dated 13 February 1500 exemplifies this international dimension. This book of hours, as stated in the colophon, was:

fully translated from Latin into the Portuguese language; seen and amended by reverend brother Johan Claro Portuguese doctor in holy theology and Luis Fernandez also Portuguese student in the arts servant of the queen of Portugal dona Leonor. It was fully printed in Paris by master Narcissus Brun German... (f. p8r).⁴⁹



4.9
Detail of Fig. 4.8.

4.10
Detail of Fig. 4.1.

It was thus expertly translated and printed in Paris in Portuguese and intended for export (it also features the coat of arms of Portugal on its title-page, f. a1r). The Little Office of the Virgin in this edition contains the popular Ypres series of prints recurrent in ivory, and I was initially tempted to see in an *azulejo* Annunciation made in the early sixteenth century for a small chapel in the cloister of the monastery of São Bento de Cástris in Évora a possible reflection of the impact on Portuguese art of an Ypres model (now Évora, Museu de Évora, Inv. ME 231). Indeed both figures betray the Ypres influence (see for comparison Washington, Library of Congress, Rosenwald 451, f. c5r), although the artist took liberties with the treatment of the background and turned the Virgin so she would face the archangel. This work is however attributed to the workshop of Francisco Niculoso (d. 1529), a Pisan artist who after training in the majolica arts in Faenza settled in Seville and enjoyed popularity in Spain and Portugal, often drawing inspiration from prints.⁵⁰ His repertory of models in Seville thus contained at least one in the Ypres style.

Although the date of the first occurrence of the prints that served as models allows us to establish a precious *terminus post quem* for the ivories, one should bear in mind that some of these compositions enjoyed a lasting popularity and were reused by other Parisian printers, in particular Thielman Kerver, well into the sixteenth century. The question of the place of production of these carvings also remains to be investigated further, as one cannot infer from the Parisian origin of the models that the ivories were made in the French capital. In his 2004 article, Frits Scholten discussed a number of pieces including the two Dormition paxes and the comb fragment with the sybils, arguing for an origin in the Northern Netherlands.⁵¹ If we are to accept this hypothesis, the stylistic diversity of the ivory carvings he assembled would point to a great number of hands as opposed to a more uniform production. Michele Tomasi, writing about the two Turin paxes based on Ypres compositions in a recent publication remains uncertain, tentatively offering a Flemish origin for the former and a 'Paris or Flanders' origin for the latter (Palazzo Madama-Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Inv. 130/AV [fig. 4.4] and Inv. 131/AV).⁵² Indeed the origin of these objects is difficult to ascertain: although all the examples I focused on in the present article are drawn from Ypres models, they greatly differ stylistically and display varying degrees of skill on the part of the carvers. At the lower end, one finds rough interpretations such as the Turin Nativity (fig. 4.4), while high-end works comprise the Amsterdam Dormition and the Venice Saint Roch (figs. 4.1 and 4.8). The Ypres compositions, in these two paxes, have been translated into a different medium while remaining remarkably faithful to the original details and style. As one examines them side-by-side (figs. 4.9 and 4.10), one is struck by the similarities in the crispness of the carving, the treatment of the figures with their staring eyes and stern faces, the meticulously crosshatched background, etc. There is no doubt in my view that these two objects were made in the same

milieu, and possibly even by the same craftsman. Where this was is yet to be determined, although the style would argue for a Northern European origin, probably Netherlandish,⁵³ rather than the Italian hypothesis put forward for the Venice pax in 1988.⁵⁴ The recent publication of high-resolution images through the Gothic Ivories Project facilitates the comparison at close range of objects kept in distant collections, and more works by this hand, as well as further groupings, will undoubtedly emerge. These, in turn, will need to continue being confronted with other media, in particular with geographically anchored monumental sculpture, in order to reach a better understanding of the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century production of ivory carvings in Western Europe.

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1. For instance [London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. 605-1902](#); Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings 1200-1550* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014), no. 157, with further bibliography. See also Élisabeth Taburet-Delahaye (dir.), *Paris 1400. Les arts sous Charles VI* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004), no. 123 (Charles T. Little).

2. Mauro Natale and Serena Romano (eds.), *Arte Lombarda dai Visconti agli Sforza. Milano al centro dell'Europa* (Milan: Skira, 2015), p. 165, no. II.24 (Clario Di Fabio). See [entry on the Gothic Ivories Project](#) for further bibliography.

3. See for recent discussion: Williamson and Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings*, no. 121.

4. See Peter Barnet (ed.), *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 90-2. The carving is considered to be Northern French, c.1300 and the painting upper Rhenish c.1310-20, with compelling comparisons with manuscripts such as the *Manesse Codex* ([Heidelberg, Universität Heidelberg](#),

[Cod. Pal. germ. 848](#)) and the *Weingarten Liederhandschrift* (Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, HB XIII 1).

5. See Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, 'The Polychrome Decoration of Gothic Ivories', in Barnet (ed.), *Images in Ivory*, pp. 47-61, esp. pp. 59-60.

6. For a printed German or Netherlandish copy of the *Biblia Pauperum* dating to c.1470, see [Washington, Library of Congress, Incun. X. B562](#), fully available online. For extensive reproduction of the woodcut cycles illustrating the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, see Adrian Wilson and Joyce Lancaster Wilson, *A Medieval Mirror. Speculum Humanae Salvationis 1324-1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, c.1984); <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft7v19p1w6/>.

7. Émile Mâle, *Art religieux de la fin du Moyen Âge: étude sur l'iconographie du Moyen Âge et sur ses sources d'inspiration* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1908; 1995, 7th edn), p. 242. See also Raymond Koechlin, *Les Ivoires gothiques français* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1924), I, pp. 27, 344; II, no. 959; III, pl. CLXVIII.

8. Richard H. Randall, *Masterpieces of Ivory from the Walters Art Gallery* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1985), no. 359.
9. In the thirteenth century, the kiss of peace hitherto given through an embrace, just before communion, was replaced by a kiss 'by proxy', using a pax, whose function was to avoid physical contact. First documented in the mid thirteenth century in England, its use spread from the early fourteenth century onwards to the rest of Europe. On this topic, see Thomas Richter, *Paxtafeln und Pacificalia, Studien zu Form, Ikonographie und liturgischem Gebrauch* (Weimar: VDG Weimar, 2003).
10. See Christiane Vivet-Péclet, 'Le Baiser de paix de Noirétable', *Bulletin de la Diana* 61:1 (2007): pp. 67-92. On this iconography, see Sixten Ringbom, 'Maria in Sole and the Virgin of the Rosary', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 25 (1962): pp. 326-30.
11. Igino Benvenuto Supino, *Catalogo del Regio Museo Nazionale di Firenze* (Rome: Tipografia dell'Unione Cooperativa Editrice, 1898), p. 247, no. 156.
12. Katherine Baker and Ingmar Reesing simultaneously also came across various instances of this: see Katherine Baker, 'La Chambre aux dentz d'ivoire: an Introduction to the Inventory of Chicart Bailly' in the present volume, pp. 68-75 and unpublished communication by Ingmar Reesing delivered at the *Gothic Ivories: Content and Context* conference in 2014 organised by the British Museum and Courtauld Institute of Art.
13. He is named after a diminutive book of hours now in the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, NAL 3120. For a useful recent summary of research on the topic, see Isabelle Delaunay, 'Quelques dates importantes dans la carrière du Maître des Très Petites Heures d'Anne de Bretagne', in Claudia Rabel (ed.), *Le Manuscrit enluminé. Études réunies en hommage à Patricia Stirnemann* (Paris: Le Léopard d'or, 2014), pp. 147-66, esp. pp. 147-51. Earlier key publications on the topic include: Nicole Reynaud and François Avril, *Les Manuscrits à peintures en France 1440-1520* (Paris: Flammarion-Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1993), p. 265, no. 143-7; Dominique Thiébaut, Philippe Lorentz, François-René Martin, *Les Primitifs français: découvertes et redécouvertes* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004), pp. 92-107; Ina Nettekoven, *Der Meister der Apokalypsenrose der Sainte-Chapelle und die Pariser Buchkunst um 1500* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004); Geneviève Bresc-Bautier et al. (dir.), *France 1500. Entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2010), pp. 220-2 and no. 113-23, 136-7, 143; Geneviève Souchal, 'Un grand peintre français de la fin du XV^e siècle: le Maître de la Chasse à la Licorne', *Revue de l'art* 22 (1973): pp. 22-49.
14. Reynaud and Avril, *Manuscrits à peintures*, pp. 265-70.
15. Nettekoven, *Meister der Apokalypsenrose*, pp. 119-24.
16. Nettekoven, *Meister der Apokalypsenrose*, p. 120 and fig. 169. It introduces Compline in the Hours of the Virgin section. This edition corresponds to ISTC no. ih00378500, a copy of which exists in Munich and has been fully digitised: [Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Inc.c.a 247 g](#), for f. f3r (Dormition), see [here](#). Frits Scholten sensed that the model behind this composition was a print, but his comparison with a 1499 Zwolle engraving was not compelling. Frits Scholten, 'Een Nederlandse ivoren pax uit de Late Middeleeuwen', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 52:1 (2004): pp. 3-23, fig. 23 (Zwolle print). By 2010, however, he had come across a version of the Parisian Dormition print in a book of hours published by Antoine Vérard in 1500. Frits Scholten, 'A Late Medieval Ivory of the Immaculate Conception from the Low Countries', in Andrea von Hülsen-Esch and Dagmar Täube (eds.), *'Luft unter die Flügel...' Beiträge zur mitterlalterlichen Kunst: Festschrift für Hiltrud Westermann-Angerhausen* (Hildesheim, Munich and New York: Olms, 2010), pp. 186-92, esp. p. 192.
17. A third Dormition pax kept in Venice features an Assumption scene similar to the Amsterdam example, but is otherwise too different in composition to be based on the Ypres model ([Museo Correr, Inv. CIXVII n.8](#)).
18. I am using here for convenience a later occurrence of this same metalcut in a book of hours in Portuguese printed in Paris by Wolfgang Hopyl for Narcisse Bruno, 13 February 1500 ([Washington, Library of Congress, Rosenwald 451, f. h1r; ISTC ih00404000](#)), as it is missing from the Munich copy.
19. Simonetta Castronovo, Fabrizio Crivello, Michele Tomasi (eds.), *Avori Medievali. Collezioni del Museo Civico d'Arte Antica di Torino* (Savigliano: L'Artistica Savigliano, 2016), no. 55 (Michele Tomasi).
20. The authenticity of the latter, from the Fejérváry collection, has been questioned by Margaret Gibson in 1994. Margaret Gibson, *The Liverpool Ivories: Late Antique and Medieval Ivory and Bone Carving in Liverpool Museum and the Walker Art Gallery* (London: HMSO, 1994), p. 114.
21. Castronovo, Crivello, Tomasi, *Avori Medievali*, no. 54 (Michele Tomasi).
22. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, KK 9023; *Katalog der Sammlung für Plastik und Kunstgewerbe, II: Renaissance* (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1966), no. 292 (as French, end of the fifteenth century). I would like to thank Michele Tomasi for bringing this object to my attention, and Franz Kirchweiger for kindly sharing images and information.
23. Nettekoven, *Meister der Apokalypsenrose*, p. 124, no. 15 and fig. 233.
24. On this iconography, see Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1957), II pt. 1, pp. 420-30; Mâle, *Art religieux de la fin du Moyen Âge*, pp. 253-79.

25. Frits Scholten argues that this piece belongs to the same group as the Dormition paxes and places its production in the Northern Netherlands c.1480–1500; Scholten, ‘Een Nederlandse ivoren pax’, pp. 15–16.

26. See for instance the bust-length sybil vignette of the Delphic Sybil from *Hours for the use of Rome*, printed by Philippe Pigouchet for Simon Vostre, Paris, 20 August 1496, f. d4v (ISTC no. ih00379000). All are reproduced in Nettekoven, *Meister den Apokalypsenrose*, figs. 164, 233 and 233a.

27. The current arrangement of these late fifteenth-century elements dates from the nineteenth century, according to Wolfram Koeppe. I thank Elizabeth Cleland, of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for kindly checking museum files for this piece.

28. See for comparison Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Estampes et Photographie, Réserve Ea-5 (13). See *infra* for more on this format.

29. Supino, *Catalogo del Regio Museo*, pp. 245–6, no. 154.

30. See for instance f. b1v of the 16 September 1498 edition printed by Philippe Pigouchet for Simon Vostre (ISTC no. ih00395000); reproduced in Nettekoven, *Meister der Apokalypsenrose*, fig. 159.

31. On this topic, see Michel Huyhn and Séverine Lepape, ‘De la rencontre d’une image et d’une boîte: les coffrets à estampe’, *La Revue des Musées de France. Revue du Louvre* 4 (October 2011): pp. 37–50; Séverine Lepape, ‘When Assemblage Makes Sense’, *Art in Print* 2:4 (November–December 2012); <https://artinprint.org/article/when-assemblage-makes-sense-an-example-of-a/>.

32. Huyhn and Lepape, ‘De la rencontre d’une image et d’une boîte’, p. 45. Fifteen of these ‘coffrets à estampe’ have now been added to Gallica; <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>.

33. All woodcuts measure c.22 to 24 cm high by 15 to 17 cm wide.

34. A small compartment in the lid of certain caskets was unfortunately systematically forced open and its contents stolen, but it may have originally enclosed a secondary relic, i.e. a small medal, pilgrim’s badge, piece of fabric or mirror, sanctified by contact or reflection of a major relic. See Huyhn and Lepape, ‘De la rencontre d’une image et d’une boîte’, pp. 47–8.

35. Sandra Hindman, ‘Gothic Traveling Coffers Revisited’, in Sandra Hindman, Isabelle Jammes, Bruno Jammes et al. (eds.), *Le Livre, La Photographie, L’Image & La Lettre. Essays in Honor of André Jammes* (Paris: Aux Éditions des Cendres, 2015), pp. 312–27.

36. Les Enluminures, *Gothic Traveling Coffers revisited*, New York, 3–25 November 2015, no. 3; <http://www.lesenluminures.com/enlu-assets/exhibitions/real/2015-10-coffret/gothic-traveling-coffers-revisited.pdf>.

37. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Estampes et Photographie, Réserve Ea-5 (O)-OB-JET.

38. A third pax now in Clermont-Ferrand features the same scene, but differences in the position of the saint’s arms and of the dog suggest another model was used, possibly another print (Musée d’Art Roger-Quiliot, Inv. 61.23.1). For further discussion on paxes, see Katherine Baker’s article in the present volume, pp. 68–75.

39. He was born c.1348 (trad. 1295) and died c.1376–9.

40. Koechlin, *Ivoires gothiques français*, no. 941.

41. He is very similar to the Saint Roch on the pax now in Clermont-Ferrand; see note 38.

42. This martyrdom of Saint Sebastian is not based on the surviving Ypres print of the same subject which is encountered in a casket in the Musée de Cluny in Paris (Inv. Cl. 23837); *France 1500*, no. 123.

43. See *France 1500*, no. 118, p. 248 with reproduction.

44. Washington, Library of Congress, Rosenwald 451, f. h1r (see note 18). This composition includes Mary Magdalene embracing the foot of the cross.

45. Les Enluminures, *Gothic Traveling Coffers revisited*, no. 3.

46. Frits Scholten, ‘A Late Medieval Ivory of the Immaculate Conception’, pp. 186–92. Two other panels show similar compositions (Christie’s, London, 8 December 1981, lot 60 and Christie’s, New York, 29 January 1997, lot 1) and the cast of a third one was made in the nineteenth century (John Obadiah Westwood, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Fictile Ivories in the South Kensington Museum* [London: George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1876], no. 906).

47. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Réserve des livres rares, Vélins 1504, f. K6 verso. Séverine Lepape however signals two earlier occurrences of this composition which may have been the original sources for the Kerver design: one in the Chapelle Notre-Dame in Cahors Cathedral, consecrated in 1484, said to have contained the emblems of the litanies of the Virgin, according to an 1875 account, and the other on a painted panel of the altarpiece of San Saturnino in Artajona in Navarra, very similar to the print and dated to 1497 to 1501. In Geneviève Bresc-Bautier et al., *France 1500*, no. 137 (Séverine Lepape). On this iconography, see Mâle, *Art religieux de la fin du Moyen Âge*, pp. 211–15; Heribert Tenschert and Ina Nettekoven (dir.), *Horae B. M. V.: 158 Stundenbuchdrucke der Sammlung Bibernmühle: 1490–1550*, 3 vols. (Ramsen: Schweiz Antiquariat Bibernmühle Rothalmünster Antiquariat Heribert Tenschert, 2003), pp. 229–31, and no. 35.

48. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Estampes et Photographie, Réserve Ea-5q. Huyhn

and Lepape, 'De la rencontre d'une image et d'une boîte', p. 48, fig. 18, and Lepape, 'When Assemblage Makes Sense'.

49. 'tresladado todo d[o] latin e[m] lingoajem purtuges; visto et e[m]me[n]dado p[or] o reuere[n]do frei joa[n] claro purtuges doctor e[m] as[an]cta theologia et luis fernandez outrosi purtuges studa[n]te e[m] artes criado da rainha de portugal dona lyanor. Foy todo e[m] Paris e[m] premido por mestre narciscus brun elema[n]o...'. Only one copy of this edition survives: [Washington, Library of Congress, Rosenwald 451 \(ISTC ih00404000\)](#).

50. See *No Tempo das Feitorias: a arte portuguesa na época dos descobrimentos* (Lisbon: Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 1992), I, no. 95.

51. Scholten, 'Een Nederlandse ivoren pax'.

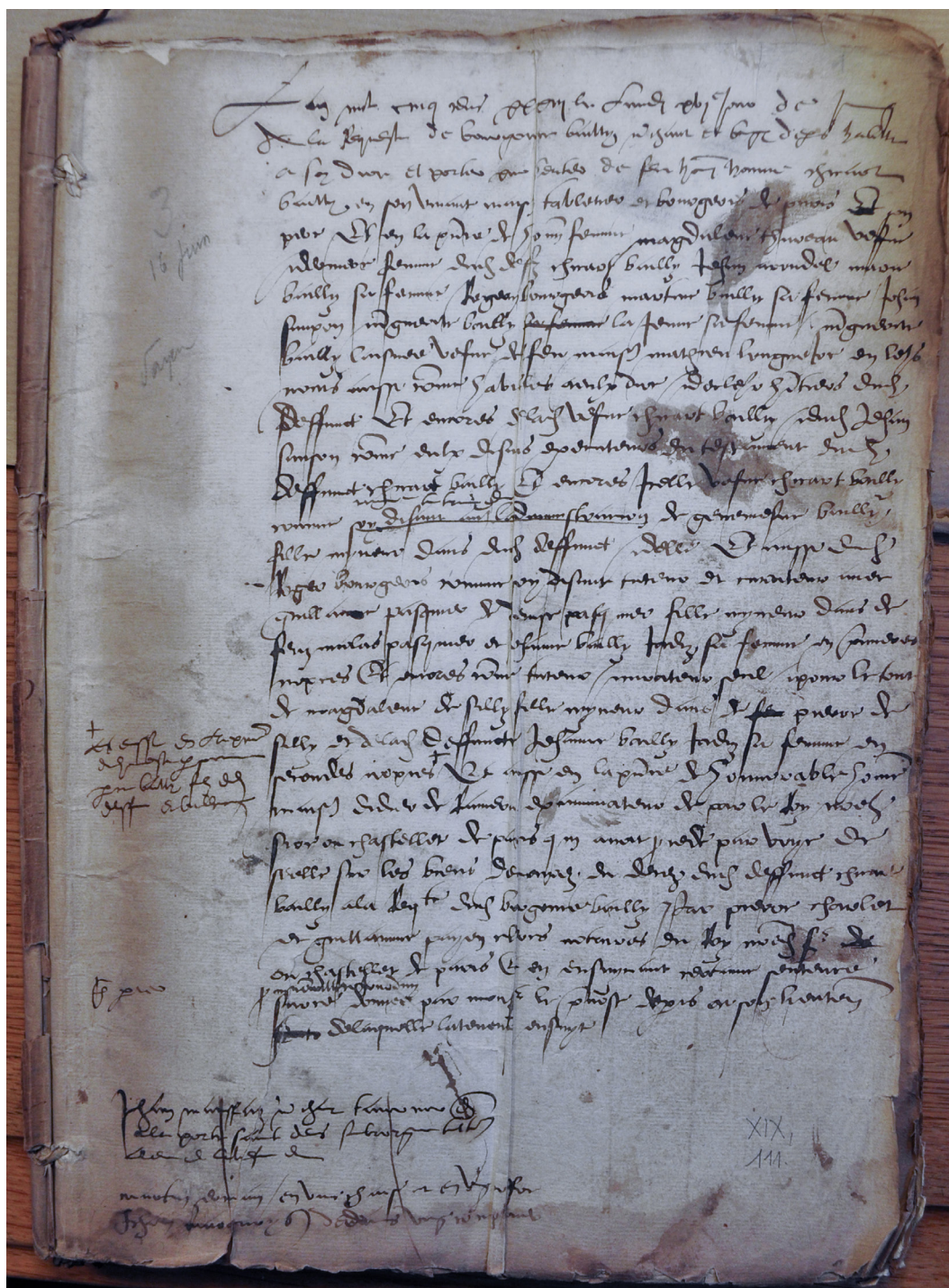
52. See Castronovo, Crivello, Tomasi, *Avori Medievali*, nos. 54-5 (Michele Tomasi).

53. Frits Scholten, in his 2010 article, argued for a Netherlandish origin for the Immaculate Conception panel and the Dormition pax (thus broadening his earlier attribution of the pax to the Northern Netherlands in his 2004 article). For full references of these two publications, see note 16.

54. Madile Gambier (dir.), *Una Città e il suo museo. Un secolo e mezzo di collezioni civiche veneziane* (Venice: Civici Musei Veneziani d'Arte e di Storia, 1988), p. 81, no. I.129.

'LA CHAMBRE AUX DENTZ D'YVOIRE': AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INVENTORY OF CHICART BAILLY

KATHERINE EVE BAKER



5.1
Inventory of Chicart
Bailly. Pierrefitte-sur-
Seine, Archives nation-
ales, Minutier central
des notaires de Paris,
ET/XIX/111, 16 June
1533, f. 1r.

On 16 June 1533, the members of Chicart Bailly's family gathered together in a house on the rue Saint Denis.¹ This large group was not reuniting to mourn the recent loss of their patriarch, but instead to begin the process of making an inventory of Chicart's estate.² While not mandatory in the Parisian civil code of the period, these catalogues of the

possessions, debts, and financial interests of the deceased were typically generated when inheritances were complicated by multiple marriages and numerous offspring. Such was the case with Chicart, who not only left behind several adult children from a previous marriage, but also a widow whose daughter Genevieve had not yet reached majority.³ After a kind of legal reckoning, where all interested parties were listed along with their relationship to the deceased, the nearly two-week long process of making the inventory began, as a team of notaries and numerous appraisers moved from room to room recording all the goods found within.

Although estate inventories are always valuable documents for those engaged in the task of material history, the inventory of Chicart Bailly is particularly precious for the light it sheds on ivory carving in the capital at the turn of the sixteenth century. As stated at the beginning of the document, ‘feu honorable homme Chicart Bailly’ was a ‘maistre tabletier et bourgeois de Paris’, meaning a member of a guild that was responsible for working with ivory, bone, and precious woods.⁴ In its most etymologically strict definition, the professional term *tabletier* would seem to refer to the making of writing tablets (*tablettes*) or game boards (*tablier*).⁵ While the stockroom, boutique, and other storage areas in Chicart’s house did contain objects that match these categories in large quantities, the variety of goods in the possession of the Bailly family—from ivory birdcages to crosses made of bone—makes clear that the designation was not strictly descriptive of practice.

Covering both sides of over fifty paper leaves bound with simple twine (fig. 5.1), the document from 1533 primarily records the professional materials of Chicart Bailly, although the domestic spaces of the home were also inventoried, including beds, clothes, jewelry, and even tapestries. While not every finished ivory object included in the text was necessarily carved by the deceased and his associates, it is important to note that we are not simply seeing the material reserves of a merchant, of someone who exclusively sold products made by other artisans. Significant quantities of partially completed ivory objects, with their intended function often listed alongside their value, appear in the inventory.⁶ For example, in a small gallery on the first floor with a view on the courtyard, we find:

Item, twenty-four *livres* [i.e. 11.75 kg] of ivory rods, ready to make rosaries. Appraised at nine *solz tournois* for each *livre*, worth together at this price 10 *livres* 16 *solz tournois*.

Item, three *livres* and a half [i.e. 1.47 kg] of small pieces of ivory used to make combs. Appraised at eight *solz tournois* for each *livre*, worth together at this price 28 *solz tournois*.⁷

Like other unfinished items in the inventory, these pieces could have been worked with some of the tools scattered throughout the house. For example, in a room described as ‘l’arrière boutique dudit hostel’, we find numerous saws, a three-sided file, two billhooks,

and ‘many other kinds of tools used in the profession of *peignier* and *tabletier*’.⁸ The presence of tools would indicate that carving took place in this space, although this ‘back shop’ seems to have primarily functioned as a kind of stockroom, with large quantities of finished goods being kept alongside half-completed objects in ‘layettes’ or drawers. Other tools with more specialised uses could also be found in the home, such as a lathe to turn ivory rosary beads.⁹ Whether this tool was still functional, however, remains unclear. Located in an attic with a view on the rue Saint Denis, the lathe sat alongside ‘a certain quantity’ of old cow bones, and was itself described as ‘tel quel’, a term used to indicate age or wear.¹⁰ A second lathe was also found on the top floor of Chicart’s house, in this case a separate attic that faced the courtyard.¹¹ One hypothesis for the placement of both lathes in attic spaces could be the need for excellent lighting, as they were often used as workrooms by artisans such as painters.¹²

The old bones that neighboured the rosary lathe were not the only raw materials found in Chicart’s house. For example, a room on the third floor below the attic, evocatively named ‘la chambre aux dentz d’yvoire’ in the inventory, was seemingly full to the brim.¹³ Its content included 1.100 *livres* (538.45 kg) of ‘boys rouge’, a type of precious wood that frequently appears in combination with ivory and bone in the finished objects, and over 300 bones, described as ‘oz vert’.¹⁴ For the ivory, when a calculation is made based on entries that include ‘dentz d’yvoire’ priced in large batches, one comes to the staggering total of 4.431 *livres* of ivory, which translates to a weight of approximately 2.169 kg. Although these batches are differently valued, possibly reflecting quality or type, overall there is a significant lack of detail about the exact nature of the ivory teeth. One entry in this room, however, provides more taxonomic information. Located near the end of Bailly’s list of raw materials, it reads:

Item, one ivory tooth, weighing one hundred and 24 *livres*. Appraised at fifty *livres tournois* per hundred [*livres*], worth together at this price 62 *livres tournois*.¹⁵

Weighing 60.7 kg, there can be little doubt that this single ‘dent’ was a substantial elephant tusk, as the average historical weight of an African savannah elephant tusk was between 45 and 60 kilograms.¹⁶ The inventory also lists two other single ‘dents’ with significant—though slightly lower—weights, and it is likely that much of the stock was made up of variously sized elephant tusks.

Due to the large quantity of raw ivory in his home, one could rightfully ask whether Chicart was himself a middleman, having enough capital to acquire a significant stockpile that could then be sold to other members of the trade.¹⁷ Unfortunately, corroborating documentary evidence has yet to be found. Certainly, it seems impossible that such an enormous quantity of ‘dentz d’yvoire’ could be processed by a single atelier, although the tools and the surprising quantities of finished objects in the house would seem to indicate that at least a portion of this material was being carved by Chicart and his assistants.



5.2
Plaque with Tree of
Jesse (Netherlandish?,
early sixteenth
century). Ivory, 17.4
x 12 cm. London,
The British Museum,
Inv.1875,0617.1.

Turning to these finished objects, it is clear from descriptions in the inventory that there existed a range in quality and decorative elaboration amongst the pieces sold in Chicart's boutique. Among the more elaborate items, one encounters an ivory statuette of the Virgin Mary with a tabernacle and a menagerie with shepherds, sheep, a bull, and cows:

Item, one large Notre Dame with tabernacle, entirely of ivory, the outside made with ornaments. Appraised for XVII livres X solz tournois.¹⁸

Found inside of another small box made of *boys rouge*, two shepherds, one shepherdess, and eleven sheep, one bull and six cows, all of ivory. Appraised together for XLV solz tournois.¹⁹

Not all objects were this intricate, however, and one finds scores of plain combs and simply decorated ivory boxes. The latter in fact make up a large percentage of the finished material in the inventory, and can be found in various shapes, sizes, and types: square or round; small, medium, or large; intended for powders, perfumes, or even for use by barbers.²⁰ One aspect of the inventory that may be interesting for the art historian is when objects described in the text can be in some way associated with surviving material. Take for example an entry that records four ivory ‘tableaux’ located in the aforementioned ‘arrière boutique’:

Item, four panels, each one of approximately one square foot, two of which feature the Conception, another with a Tree of Jesse, and another with a Nativity, all of ivory attached to wood. Appraised together for X *livres tournois*.²¹

A plaque depicting the Tree of Jesse has survived in the collection of the British Museum, although it is smaller than the panel mentioned in the inventory and may not have been made using the same technique (fig. 5.2; Inv. 1875,0617).²² Both Dalton and Koechlin date this piece to the early sixteenth century, noting that it was modeled after a print published in the capital around 1500.²³ Despite the visual connection to the capital, the association cannot be taken as concrete evidence for origin, as Parisian single-leaf prints and books of hours travelled widely and were used as models for ivories, even as far as the African coast.²⁴ The crosshatched background of the Tree of Jesse panel would seem to recommend a Netherlandish origin, making this object demonstrative of the importance of Parisian designs abroad. Given the problematic nature of printed models and attributions, it is therefore rather interesting to note that Chicart Bailly had numerous printed books of hours in his possession at the time of his death. In the aforementioned ‘chambre aux dentz d’ivoire’, there existed a substantial ‘librairie’ with over 70 printed hours, two of which were luxury editions, printed on parchment and illuminated.²⁵ Although these books were undoubtedly for sale, one or two cheap editions could have been taken from this stock to serve as models for craftsmen.

One category of objects where we can see Parisian illustrations from books of hours being used widely is amongst surviving ivory paxes.²⁶ At the time of his death, Chicart had over twenty paxes in his stock. Six of these were valued together at 50 *solz tournois* and featured ‘plusieurs personnages’, a term that was typically applied to narrative scenes. Another thirteen, appraised together for only 22 *solz* and 6 *deniers tournois*, lacked any mention of subject matter and were simply called ‘telles quelles’.²⁷ The remaining two paxes were part of a group of objects the Bailly family had brought to the famous Lendit Fair in Saint Denis, although they were unsold at the time of Chicart’s death. This entry reads: ‘Item, two large ivory paxes, one of which has a Pietà and the other Our Lady holding her child. Appraised together, XV *solz tournois*’.²⁸

While cognates for these subjects exist, none have been connected to Paris. In fact, very few pieces have been directly associated with the capital, although attributions to France abound. Paul Williamson has recently assigned a Northern French or Parisian origin to a pax featuring the Annunciation at the Victoria and Albert Museum ([Inv. Circ.500-1923](#)), noting the lack of crosshatched background and its compositional ties to printed compositions that appeared in Parisian books of hours in the 1490s.²⁹ In fact, other extant paxes with Parisian print affiliations and smooth backgrounds can be found, including a Crucifixion in Turin, which Michele Tomasi tentatively associates with the French capital in his recent catalogue of this collection ([Palazzo Madama-Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Inv. 131/AV](#)).³⁰ While these objects might be the beginning of a group that can be used for comparison, we are at the start of the process of localisation, and continue to lack any definitive 'anchoring objects', those prized items that have an undeniable origin because of documentary evidence, continuous provenance, etc.

While determining the origin of extant ivory carvings from this period remains a difficult task, partly owing to the mobility of prints, this fascinating document clearly demonstrates that Paris was home to ivory carvers who were producing a vast array of objects. A project in its initial stages, the analysis of the inventory of 1533 promises to provide us with a more complex vision of the production and trade of ivory objects in the capital at the turn of the sixteenth century.

All references in *Courtauld Books Online* are hyperlinked. To navigate to a footnote, click on the reference number in the body of the text. To return back to the main text, click on the number at the beginning of the footnote.

All hyperlinks directing to online resources were checked and valid at the date of 14 March 2017.

1. This house, with its entrance on the rue Saint Denis, was three-stories tall, plus a cellar below and multiple attic spaces. It was one of at least two houses in the area owned by the family. As outlined in a document kept in the Archives nationales in Paris, Chicart owned a second house on rue de la Tableterie, which the text states was previously in the possession of Martin Bailly, 'père dudit Chicart' (Archives nationales, Minutier central des notaires de Paris, S 99A, no. 18 [1524]). These two buildings may have been connected to one another, although the exact layout of the properties remains unclear at the present time.
2. Archives nationales, Minutier central des notaires de Paris, ET/XIX/111, 16 June 1533. This document will be referred to as [Inventaire] in the ensuing article.
3. [Inventaire], f. 1r. Minority did not necessarily mean Genevieve (spelt 'Geneviefve' in the inventory) was a child. In Paris at this time, the status of minor applied to unmarried individuals under the age of twenty-five.
4. The guild itself encompassed many titles and had no unified name: in the amendment to the rule in 1485, for example, the list included 'peigniers', 'tabletiers', 'tourneurs', and 'tailleurs d'ymages'. In the rule of 1507, a similar set of professional designations appeared, although the title 'tailleurs d'ymages' was further elaborated with the qualifier of *d'yvoire*. For transcriptions of these documents, see René de Lespinaisse, *Les Métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris: XIV^e-XVIII^e siècles. Orfèvrerie, sculpture, mercerie, ouvriers en métaux, bâtiment et ameublement* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1892), II, pp. 673-5 (for 1485) and pp. 676-7 (for 1507). See Elizabeth Sears, 'Ivory and Ivory Workers in Medieval Paris', in Peter Barnet (ed.), *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 19-37, for a discussion of the guild's early period. In the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the term *tailleurs d'ymages* is never applied to ivory carvers in the Parisian archival record outside of the guild rules. A singular counterpoint may be Jean Petit, who is mentioned in Etienne Hamon's *Une Capitale flamboyante. La création monumentale à Paris autour de 1500* (Paris: Picard, 2011), p. 285, as being a 'tailleur d'images d'ivoire' between 1473 and 1485. This individual—along with Martin Bailly, Chicart's father—is listed with the other masters of the guild in 1485, although none of these individuals are given specific professional titles. As part of my dissertation entitled *Painting and the Luxury Arts in Paris, 1490-1515: Objects and their Urban Contexts* (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2013), I completed a survey of the published sources, databases, and documents of the Minutier central des Notaires de Paris, looking for any records that included the professional titles listed in the guild rules before 1515. Of the 22 individuals found, none are addressed as 'tailleur d'images d'ivoire'. The reference by Hamon is the only example of this terminology I have seen.
5. See Victor Gay for definitions of these terms, *Glossaire archéologique du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance* (Paris: Société Bibliographique, 1887), II, pp. 370-1.
6. Catherine Yvard has made the suggestion that a portion of these half-completed objects could have been sold as-is to ivory carvers unaffiliated with the Bailly. Given the enormity of the stockpile for this material, it is a definite possibility.
7. [Inventaire], f. 15r: 'Item, vingt quatre livres de broch-es d'yvoire, prestes a faire patenostres. Prisé la livre neuf solz tournois, vallant ensemble audict pris, 10 livres 16 solz tournois; Item, troys livres et demye de petitz coup-peaulx d'yvoire servans a faire peignes. Prisé la livre huit solz tournois, vallant ensemble audict pris, 28 solz tournois'. The primary units of weight were the *livre de poids de marc* or the *livre de Paris*. Both of these tallies equaled 489.506 grams during the period. See Ronald Edward Zupko, *French Weights and Measures before the Revolution: A Dictionary of Provincial and Local Units* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 97-8, for information about *livres*, their weight in grams, and their divisions into smaller units.
8. [Inventaire], f. 4r.
9. [Inventaire], f. 28v. The lathe is specifically described as 'ung tour a tourner patenostres d'yvoire'.
10. See *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin, vulgairement appelé Dictionnaire de Trévoux. Nouvelle édition* (Paris: La Compagnie des Libraires Associés, 1771), VII, p. 1006.
11. [Inventaire], f. 29r.
12. Guy-Michel Leproux, *La peinture à Paris sous le règne de François I^{er}* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2001), p. 16.
13. [Inventaire], ff. 27v-28r.
14. 'Boys rouge' is very hard to define, given that it covers a number of species from the Caesalpinia family. The terms 'boys rouge' and 'boys de bresil', moreover, both appear in the inventory, often interchangeably. 'Oz vert' is also problematic, although there is a possibility that the 'green' of this bone was meant to indicate freshness, i.e. that it needed to 'rest' before it was dry enough to be used. It may also indicate coloration, as it is clear that green-tinted bone was used in marquetry.
15. [Inventaire], f. 28r: 'Item, une dent d'yvoire pesant cent 24 livres. Prisee au pris de cinquante livres tournois le cent, vallant ensemble audict pris, 62 livres tournois'.
16. See Sarah Guérin, 'Avorio d'ogni Ragione: The Supply of Elephant Ivory to Northern Europe in the Gothic Era', *Journal of Medieval History* 36:2 (June 2010): pp. 156-74, esp. p. 158. Danielle Gaborit-Chopin gives a slightly higher average of 50 to 70 kilograms: Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, 'L'ivoire au Moyen Âge: matériaux et voies de circulation', in *Ivoires médiévaux: V^e-XV^e siècle* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2003), p. 22.

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17. An earlier example of this type of practice by a *tabletier* dates to the fourteenth century. See Sears, 'Ivory and Ivory Workers in Medieval Paris', p. 25. Certainly, the quantities described here were not the result of accumulation over one generation, and one can imagine that Chicart inherited some of this material from his father Martin, who was also a *tabletier*.
18. [Inventaire], f. 15r: 'Item, une grande Nostre Dame a tabernacle, le tout d'yvoire, faicte par dehors a paremens. Prisé: XVII livres, X solz tournois'.
19. [Inventaire], f. 12v: 'Dedans ung autre petit coffre de boys rouge fut trouve deux bergiers, une bergiere, et unze moutons, ung vachier, et six vaches, le tout d'yvoire. Preisez ensemble: XLV solz tournois'.
20. The following entries can be seen as representative of this variety: 'Item, six boxes, both round and square, of various sizes, all of ivory, as is. Appraised together for XXII solz VI deniers tournois'. ('Item, dix sept boistes rondes et carrees et de plusieurs grandeurs, le tout d'yvoire, telles quelles. Preisez ensemble: XXII solz, VI deniers tournois') and 'Item, five boxes for powders and two boxes for use by barbers, all of ivory. Appraised together for XXXV solz tournois'. ('Item, cinq boistes a pouldres et deux boistiers servans a barbier, le tout d'yvoire. Preisez ensemble: XXXV solz tournois'), in [Inventaire], ff. 8r and 10r.
21. [Inventaire], f. 4v: 'Item, quatre tableaux d'un pied en carre chacun ou environ, les deux chacun a une Conception, l'autre a ung Abre [sic] Jessé et l'autre a une Nativité, le tout d'yvoire assis sur boys. Preisez ensemble: X livres tournois'.
22. The inventory describes the panels as being around 'un pied en carré', i.e. where the added height and width of the piece equals approximately 60 cm. Adding the height and width of the British Museum plaque only equals 29.4 cm, making it about half the size of the one described in the inventory.
23. See Ormonde M. Dalton, *Catalogue of the Ivory Carvings of the Christian Era in the British Museum* (London: Printed by the order of the Trustees, 1909), no. 327; and Raymond Koechlin, *Les Ivoires gothiques français* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1924), II, no. 973. The earliest known appearance of this composition is recorded by Ina Nettekoven as being in a 1498 *Horae*: Ina Nettekoven, *Der Meister der Apokalypsenrose der Sainte Chapelle und die Pariser Buchkunst um 1500* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), p. 120 and fig. 162.
24. See Catherine Yvard, 'Translated Images: from Print to Ivory in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Century' in the present volume, pp. 57–67; and Ezio Bassani and William B. Fagg, *Africa and the Renaissance: Art in Ivory* (New York City: Center for African Art, 1988), pp. 101–05 and 111–17.
25. [Inventaire], f. 29r–v.
26. See Yvard, 'Translated Images' for a number of examples, pp. 57–67.
27. [Inventaire], f. 12r.
28. [Inventaire], f. 33r: 'Item, deux grandes paix d'yvoire en l'une desquelles y a une nostre Dame de pitié, et en l'autre une nostre Dame qui tient son enfant. Preisez ensemble, XV solz tournois'.
29. Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings 1200–1550* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014), no. 142 (Paul Williamson).
30. Simonetta Castronovo, Fabrizio Crivello, Michele Tomasi (eds.), *Avori Medievali. Collezioni del Museo Civico d'Arte Antica di Torino* (Savigliano: L'Artistica Savigliano, 2016), no. 55.

CHAPTER 6

ANATOMICAL IMPULSES IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY *MEMENTO MORI* IVORIES

STEPHEN PERKINSON



Visitors to the Schnütgen Museum in Cologne are confronted by an arresting—even alarming—artwork: an ivory corpse measuring over a foot in length, lying rigidly within an open-sided casket consisting of a dazzling combination of ebony and ivory panels (fig. 6.1; [Inv. B 160](#)).¹ At once riveting and stomach-churning, the piece proudly occupies the centre of a gallery dedicated to the *memento mori* theme in Early Modern art. Viewers who work up the nerve to examine the piece closely quickly discover that it incorporates an astonishing level of detail. A varied menagerie of verminous pests—worms, toads, lizards, and flies—consume what remains of the shredded flesh of the cadaver. Six small figures of living humans inhabit niches on the pedestals that support the sarcophagus’s

6.1
Memento mori (France,
Paris, c. 1520–30). Ivory
and ebony, 12 x 42 x 15
cm. Cologne, Museum
Schnütgen, Inv. B 160.

lid, two of whom bear scrolls bearing French phrases which combine to form a cautionary pronouncement ('We must die / when God pleases'). The attentive viewer also discovers that the cadaver's bone structure is meticulously rendered: individual vertebrae are carefully depicted, minute bones are distinguished within the feet and hands, and the cranium is covered with a network of lines marking the boundaries of the bony plates that make up the skull.

The most recent scholarship on this piece sees it as having originated around the year 1520 in Western Switzerland.² The object's provenance is the primary basis for this localisation.³ We can trace that provenance back to at least 1891, when it appeared in the auction of the collection of Johann Nikolaus Vincent who lived in the city of Konstanz in southwestern Germany near the Swiss border. An inscription of uncertain, but likely nineteenth-century date, on the bottom of the object references St. Victor of Geneva, a monastery in that region that was dissolved in 1534. Scholars have also noted that the piece resembles a *transi* tomb, in which the figure of a gruesome cadaver—often in an advanced state of decay and in the process of being consumed by worms—serves to commemorate the deceased. The earliest known instance of such a tomb is that of Francis de la Serra, which is located in La Sarraz in Western Switzerland; this could be seen as offering further evidence that the piece originated in that region.⁴

However, Katherine Baker has recently uncovered a previously unpublished archival source in which an object very much like the present piece—if not this object itself—appears.⁵ The source in question is the postmortem inventory of Chicart Bailly, evidently a major purveyor of luxury ivory goods in Paris in the early sixteenth century.⁶ As Baker notes, the 1533 inventory of objects in his salesroom includes a reference to a piece that is particularly interesting for our purposes: 'a Death of ivory, garnished with its bier, also of ivory and black wood'. Baker moreover notes stylistic features of the Cologne object—particularly the figures on the pillars—that link it with prints found in Parisian Books of Hours from the early sixteenth century (a frequent source of models for ivory carvers in that period).⁷ Stylistic elements offer additional suggestive evidence placing its origin in France rather than Western Switzerland.

While differences in scale make it hard to compare those pillar figures with other ivories, there are strong parallels in both carving style and costume between them and the figures we find on pieces that are commonly ascribed to France or the Southern Netherlands in the early years of the sixteenth century.⁸ In certain respects, this astonishing object stands alone among works of its era; nothing else quite like it has survived to the present. However, it presents similarities to a small group of other carvings in ivory. Its macabre iconography relates it to a number of pieces; these are generally ascribed to France, the Netherlands, and Germany, and dated between the last years of the fifteenth century and the first quarter or so of the sixteenth century.⁹ Stylistic features of the figures on the supports allow us to narrow the chronological and geographic circle further: the carving of facial features, the depiction of bodies, elements of costume, and the letter



6.2
Pedestal (Paris, France,
c.1520-30). Ivory, 9.2
x 12.1 x 11.6 cm. New
York, Metropolitan Mu-
seum of Art, Cloisters
Collection, Inv. 55.168.

6.3
Reverse of pedestal
(Paris, France, c.1520-
30).



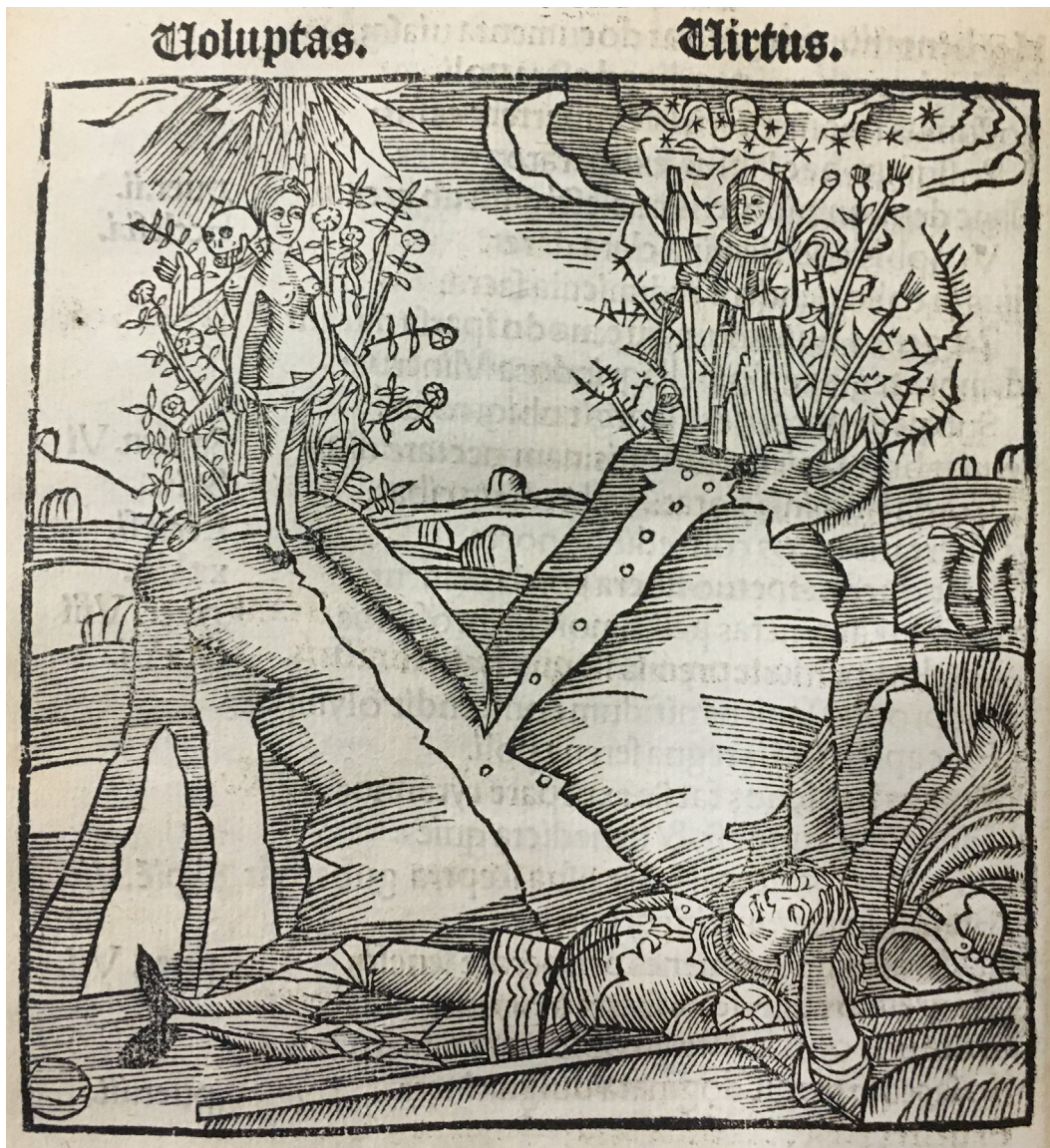
forms of the inscriptions all are paralleled in a small group of ivories housed today in New York (figs. 6.2 and 6.3),¹⁰ Detroit,¹¹ Toronto,¹² Braunschweig,¹³ and Berlin (figs. 6.4 and 6.5).¹⁴ When we combine that evidence with the French language of the inscriptions on the banderoles carried by figures on two of the columns, the Parisian provenance suggested by the Chicart Bailly inventory begins to appear far more likely.

Most of the objects we have been comparing the Cologne sculpture with take the form of pendants, and are thus commonly understood as prayer beads. However, two of these pieces are, like the object in Cologne, larger statuettes that we might think of as table pieces, *objets d'art*, or 'curiosities' made for collectors. These two most closely related works are a statuette on a base in Berlin and an object in New York that clearly once served as a base for a similar statuette.¹⁵ In the 1980s, the eminent ivory expert Christian Theuerkauff cast doubt on the authenticity of the Berlin piece, suggesting that it was created in the nineteenth century.¹⁶ There are strong reasons, however, to suspect that Theuerkauff's doubts may have been misplaced. As Katherine Baker has noted, the same inventory containing a reference to an object similar, if not identical, to the Cologne sculpture also contained ivory pedestals, some with statuettes, others that had not yet been paired with a figurine.¹⁷ The pedestal at the Cloisters is quite clearly from the same workshop—the carving of details of the figures and the setting are identical in style to that witnessed on the pedestal of the piece in Berlin, and the two pieces share ancillary details (the forms of the fruit-eating monkey and sorrowful lion, for instance) without duplicating their primary figures. In 2001, staff at the Metropolitan Museum of Art tested their pedestal to obtain a radiocarbon date profile for it. The testing came back with dates for the ivory securely in the pre-modern range: 2 Sigma calibrated results provided a pair of possible date ranges with 95% probability of 1430–1530 and 1550–1630.¹⁸

It is, of course, possible that both objects are fakes, and that the New York piece was carved in the nineteenth century from an antique piece of ivory with a radiocarbon date profile that coincidentally matches the stylistic date for the piece quite well. It is also

6.4
Vanitas (Paris, France, c.1520–30). Ivory, 27.6 x 8.2 cm. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Inv. No. 8554.

6.5
Reverse of *Vanitas* (Paris, France, c.1520–30).



6.6
The Dream of Hercules
 (Hercules at the Cross-
 roads), from Sebastian
 Brant, *The Ship of Fools*
 (Paris: Geoffroy de Mar-
 nef, 1498), f. 129v.

possible that the Cloisters pedestal is authentic and that a master forger carved the Berlin piece in the nineteenth century using it as a model, perfectly emulating its style without copying it in its entirety. This forger would also, as we will see, have needed an acute sense of the vocabulary of costume and iconography available to artists at precisely the time of the style he was mimicking—a vocabulary that was not nearly as well understood in the nineteenth century as it is today. These possibilities, however, seem remote; the simplest explanation is that we are looking at a pair of authentic objects.

Nearly twenty-eight centimeters in height, the Berlin figurine is a substantial object. One side presents the viewer with an explicitly detailed female nude, while the other displays a standing skeleton (figs. 6.4 and 6.5). The base, which is carved separately, depicts an uproariously laughing jester and a young man drawing a sword, along with a menagerie—a lion, a monkey, a dog, and a yowling, spotted monster.¹⁹ In 1907, Camille Enlart convincingly identified the ensemble as a depiction of the classical tale of *Hercules at the Crossroads*, or *The Dream of Hercules*, a story recounted in Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools*.²⁰ The reference to this incident in Hercules's life lies embedded in a chapter on the 'Reward for Wisdom' in the original 1494 edition of the text, but it did not receive an illustration at that time.²¹ When he translated the book into Latin in 1497, Brant's associate Jacob Locher enlarged this section; it was that version of the text that served as the basis for a French translation in the same year. As Enlart noted, these versions contain an illustration that is strikingly similar to the ivory in Berlin (fig. 6.6).²² In the print, Hercules lies asleep at the bottom of the scene. Above him, two personifications appear in a dream

XXIII

Is fatuus, miseris casus, & fata subibit.
 Quas Venus insignes luxu prostrauerit urbes:
 Quos homines pharetris olim transfixerit atris:
 Cōmemorare liber: ceciderunt pergamā Troiæ;



Et cecidit Priami ledes: sceptrumq; iuperbum:
 Ob paridis cecum: quo cum flagrabat: amorem.
 Marcus romane princeps Antonius arcis:
 Non iugulo sua colla truci: lethoq; tremendo

Ouidius de re
 med. amo.
 Troia.
 priamus.

Calamitas
amatorū.

Ne intenderis
 fallacię mulie
 ris. Fauus enī
 distillās labia
 meretricis. &
 nitidius oleo
 guttur ei⁹: No
 uissimā autem
 illi⁹ amara q̄si
 absinthiū. &
 lingua eius acu
 ta quāsi gladi
 us biceps.

Littore quot
 cōche: tot sūt
 in amore do
 lores.

M. anthoniū

6.7
 'De amore venereo',
 from Sebastian Brandt,
The Ship of Fools (Paris:
 Geoffroy de Marnef,
 1498), f. 24r.

vision. At right, at the end of a rocky path and in the midst of a bush of brambles, is an elderly woman clad in a modest gown and clutching a distaff, symbol of earthly toil. This is, as the caption reminds us, a personification of abstemious virtue. To the left, standing in the midst of roses atop a hill at the end of a much smoother path, is a young woman, nude but for her slippers, hairnet, and a thin veil with which she half-heartedly covers

herself. She holds up a rose, as if to invite Hercules—and the viewer—forward. This, as the caption tells us, is ‘Voluptas’ (in Latin) or ‘Volupte’ (in French)—sensual pleasure. Behind her seductive figure lurks a much darker creature: a leering, prancing cadaver who reminds the savvy viewer that lust is a mortal sin. Hercules chooses the path of virtue, and the text exhorts the reader to do the same.

According to Cicero, this tale was drawn from the work of the ancient author Xenophon; it was transmitted to the late medieval West via Petrarch’s *De vita solitaria*.²³ As scholars from Erwin Panofsky to Joseph Leo Koerner have demonstrated, the story exercised considerable appeal among Humanist audiences in Europe.²⁴ Koerner notes that the chapter of Brant’s *Ship of Fools* in which the story appears served as the basis of three full sermons by the popular Strasbourg preacher Johann Geiler von Kayserberg in 1498–9.²⁵ It provided the inspiration for Dürer’s celebrated print of c.1498, at least two paintings of c.1537 by Lucas Cranach, and (somewhat less directly) Raphael’s painting in London known as the *Vision of a Knight* of c.1504.²⁶ The tale certainly provided the basis for the illustration in the Latin and French editions of *The Ship of Fools*, which in turn seems to have inspired the object in Berlin. In the print, the figure representing vice echoes what we see in the ivory: she holds up a small veil, clutches a rose, and a skeletal figure emerges from behind her. The young man drawing a sword on the base, then, is likely Hercules.

Brant’s *Ship of Fools* generally contained another image in which a figure of death emerged from behind a woman. This image appears at the start of the chapter thirteen, ‘De amore venereo’ (‘On Sexual Love’), and it represents the mythological character, Venus, whose name formed the basis of the word for this type of love (fig. 6.7). Venus holds several cords in her hand, binding the necks and wrist of two fools and a monk. At her feet stands an ass, a collared monkey sprawls on the ground, and a blindfolded Cupid indiscriminately aims his bow in front of the ragged procession. The text that follows recounts the tales of many famous historical and mythological characters known for having been undone by love.

One wonders if this chapter was the basis for another product of this workshop: the pedestal in New York (figs. 6.2 and 6.3). Its subject matter is somewhat mysterious.²⁷ Its sides display a pair of related scenes, which are bracketed by a pair of schematically rendered trees. Both scenes involve three figures: an elegantly dressed young man and woman, and a jester in his fool’s garb. In one scene, clearly the first stage of the brief narrative, we see the young man at left, proffering a ring in his right hand. At right, the young woman seems to respond to his offering with a gift of her own: a heart-shaped pomegranate. Between them, leaning from behind a fountain, the fool looks longingly, his mouth agape, at the fruit in the young woman’s hands. Rotating the base reveals the next scene: the young man now menacingly brandishes a sword, his other hand raised in a gesture of admonishment and a look of anger or dismay on his face. Opposite him, the young woman turns away, her right hand clasped to her chest and her left hand raised to her

forehead in a gesture of grief or shame. The fool stands between them, seeming to follow her while blocking the advance of the man with his *marotte*, an unpleasant snarl on his lips and a dull cast to his eyes. To the sides of each scene are animals—precisely the same menagerie as seen in the base of the Berlin statuette. Scholars have reasonably suggested that the pair of scenes on the New York piece illustrate the concept of the folly of love, depicting the descent of a young couple's once-loving relationship into acrimony and sorrow.²⁸ As such, it would fit well within the theme of chapter thirteen of *The Ship of Fools*; one wonders, therefore, if it might once have been surmounted by a figure similar to that atop the statuette in Berlin, this time one representing Venus with Death behind her, as in the image in Brant's text.

With their gruesome imagery, pieces like those in Cologne and Berlin seem to confirm Johann Huizinga's account of a late medieval culture that was labouring under the weight of a morbid obsession with death and decay. Huizinga published his description of what he called 'the Autumn of the Middle Ages' in 1919. Recent scholars have moved far beyond his beautifully written but often highly tendentious claims about the culture of the period; however, as Paul Binski has noted, the influence of his thought has haunted much of the work of cultural historians who have studied beliefs about death in the years since.²⁹ Huizinga famously pointed to images of cadavers like those in Cologne and Berlin as proof that in the later Middle Ages, European culture had adopted an impoverished conception of death:

In the drive to create an unmitigated depiction of death, in which everything intangible had to be abandoned, only the coarser aspects of death made it into consciousness. The macabre vision of death lacked everything elegiac as well as everything tender. And at root, it is a very earthly, self-preoccupied attitude towards death. It does not deal with sadness over the loss of those beloved, but rather with regret about one's own approaching death, which can be seen only as misfortune and terror.³⁰

The roots of this vision of death, according to Huizinga, lay in the hectoring words of popular preachers, who berated their lay audiences to fear death and to dwell on misery and decay. In Huizinga's telling, pictures (particularly woodcuts, but a wider array of imagery as well) served as straightforward means of confirming and spreading the lessons of the sermons.³¹ This in turn allowed such images to function for Huizinga as further confirmation of his claim that the years around 1500 witnessed a medieval culture that was itself in its death throes, with the intellectual vitality and complexity of previous generations reduced to simple and rigid formulations over which new Humanist ideas would inevitably triumph.

One might be tempted to describe the ivories in Berlin and Cologne as examples of the tastes and trends described by Huizinga. Such an account of these pieces would conclude



6.8
Detail of *Memento mori*
(France, Paris,
c. 1520–30).

that these are simply designed to admonish their viewers to shun the material pleasures of life on earth and to turn instead to pious thoughts of prayer and the afterlife. But on reflection, such a reading seems odd, and even forced. These are, after all, luxury goods—the very sort of worldly possessions that *memento mori* imagery exhorts us to renounce. They are carved of a material—ivory—that was precious and exotic throughout the Middle Ages, and that by the period around 1500 had become quite rare indeed in Northern Europe.³² Their carving is exquisitely intricate, inviting the kind of sustained examination that seems more like worldly absorption than spiritual contemplation. That examination might be said to be of a prurient nature—despite its moralising theme, the

female figure on the Berlin statuette reveals her genitals in startlingly explicit detail. The Cologne piece, on the other hand, is marked by a dark humour: close inspection of the gruesome abdominal cavity of the piece reveals a fly, astonishingly carved within the corpse's chest where you might expect to find a heart (fig. 6.8).

Both of those details—the misogynous eroticism and the gallows humour—connect these pieces to a particular cultural context. The motif of a barely clad woman who ostentatiously uses a veil to both conceal and reveal herself is widespread in early sixteenth-century art, most notably perhaps in the work of Lucas Cranach, who found a ready audience for such imagery among wealthy clients at court and in urban centers.³³ Likewise, the fly secreted in the chest cavity of the corpse in Cologne winks (if flies can be said to wink) at the conversations taking place among sophisticated art viewers of the period. In fact, the fly in the chest is one of three such insects depicted on the Cologne ivory. Two other flies stand on the body's surface—one on the figure's left breast, the other just below its right hip. In all three cases, the size of these flies is jarring. Whereas all of the other vermin crawling across and into the corpse seem appropriately scaled, the flies are, in relative terms, enormous. This disjunctive scale seems to detach them from the fictive world of the ivory representation, bringing them closer in line with the real world of the viewer.

The flies, in other words, ostentatiously call attention to the boundary between reality and artifice, and in doing so, signal the virtuosity of their creator. In this, they are strongly reminiscent of the *trompe-l'œil* flies that appear to skitter across the surfaces of several fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century artworks: Petrus Christus's New York *Portrait of a Carthusian* of 1446, the Master of Frankfurt's *Portrait of the Artist and his Wife* in Antwerp of 1496, and a folio in Simon Bening's *Imhof Prayerbook* of 1511, to cite but three.³⁴ The inclusion of flies in such works seems almost certainly connected with stories told about Giotto, who, according to the fifteenth-century Italian author Filarete (Antonio Averlino, b. 1400, d. c.1479) painted flies so convincingly that his master, Cimabue, attempted to chase them from the surface of his painting. This story in turn echoes tales from Antiquity—Zeuxis fooling birds with his painted grapes, for instance.³⁵

Nods to the international art scene and classical Antiquity such as these instantly suggest that we are looking at works designed for a sophisticated audience that was engaged with Humanist texts and debates. That is precisely the audience for Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools*, and it is moreover an audience that was, as Koerner has noted, deeply interested in the story of *Hercules at the Crossroads*. As Koerner points out, the Humanists who owned images of this story saw it not simply as a moralising lesson, but rather as a prompt to reflection on human choice and free will.³⁶

There are further ways in which the visual interest of these pieces cannot simply be reduced to a moralising message, and further ways in which they were designed to appeal to a learned, worldly, and curious audience. For the remainder of this essay, I want to focus in particular on the ways in which they convey what was, for their time, absolutely state of the art knowledge concerning human anatomy. Evidence of anatomical interest



is most immediately visible in the Cologne piece, in which elements like the vertebrae of the neck are depicted with remarkable care and precision. Comparing it to a modern diagram allows us to appreciate just how closely its details correspond to actual human anatomy. The piece also goes to considerable lengths to convey the complexity of the bones of the hands and of the feet, without truly capturing the complexity and variety of bones in those regions. The skull, however, displays significant instances of anatomical accuracy.³⁷ A gentle protrusion at the back of the skull indicates the presence of a feature known as the ‘occipital protuberance’ (fig. 6.9). Another structure, known today as the ‘mastoid process’, is shown descending from the skull below and behind the ear canal. The network of jagged lines that traverse the surface of the skull are another instance of remarkable accuracy. These are, in fact, what are called ‘sutures’—the joints where the different bones of the skull are bonded with connective tissue. As anatomical texts of our own era note, there are quite a few of these sutures in the human skull, and their precise forms vary somewhat among individuals. But the Cologne piece has, with great precision, charted the essential location and track of the five principal sutures—the Sagittal suture, the Lambdoid suture, the left and right Squamosal sutures, and the Coronal suture.

These sutures also appear on the skull of the skeletal figure on the statuette in Berlin (fig. 6.5). That figure features a sixth suture arranged vertically at the center of the forehead. This again is an accurate anatomical detail: the foreheads of infants consist of two separate bones which are initially joined in a suture. In most cases, those two bones progressively fuse, such that all traces of them are effaced by the time children reach the age of eight or so. In some individuals, however, the suture persists throughout life.

Both of these ivories also display pairs of tiny pinprick holes on the faces of the skulls. These are in fact actual features of the human skull, known to today’s anatomists as ‘foramina’, which serve as conduits for the passage of nerves and veins between the interior of the skull and the face.³⁸ The Cologne object displays a pair of infraorbital foramina

6.9
Detail of *Memento mori*
(France, Paris,
c. 1520–30).



on the cheeks below the eye sockets, while a supraorbital foramen appears above each eye socket of the Berlin piece.

In short, both ivories depict anatomical features in remarkably accurate detail. In this, they closely track the key medical texts of their period. In the years around 1500, the most widely available medical text in northern Europe was one written by the fourteenth-century physician Guy de Chauliac.³⁹ Drawing on the ancient treatises of Galen, Guy de Chauliac noted that the skull consists of multiple bones that are held together by five principale sutures—precisely the five sutures that are indicated so carefully in the piece in Cologne.⁴⁰ Guy de Chauliac also reports that a sixth suture sometimes appears on the foreheads of women. He explains that it serves as a vent for the excess fumes and vapors generated by women's chaotic minds and bodies.⁴¹ This would suggest that the skeleton we see on the Berlin statuette is specifically gendered as female, making her the cadaverous *doppelgänger* of the seductress on the other side.

These anatomical details distinguish these pieces from even slightly earlier depictions of skulls. Take, for instance, Hans Memling's mysterious set of panel paintings known today as the *Triptych of Earthly Vanity and Divine Salvation* of c.1490.⁴² Two of its panels are particularly appropriate comparisons for our purposes, as they feature a female nude personification of Vanity and a standing corpse reminiscent of the Berlin statuette. In all, the panels include four depictions of skulls: the cadaver's head, the head of the *transi* figure inscribed on his tomb slab, the skull at his feet, and a large skull in a stone niche. Memling's skulls are not wildly inaccurate, but they do not include the level of detail we witness in the group of ivories—their smooth surfaces are unblemished by the sutures and foramina catalogued in the ivories.

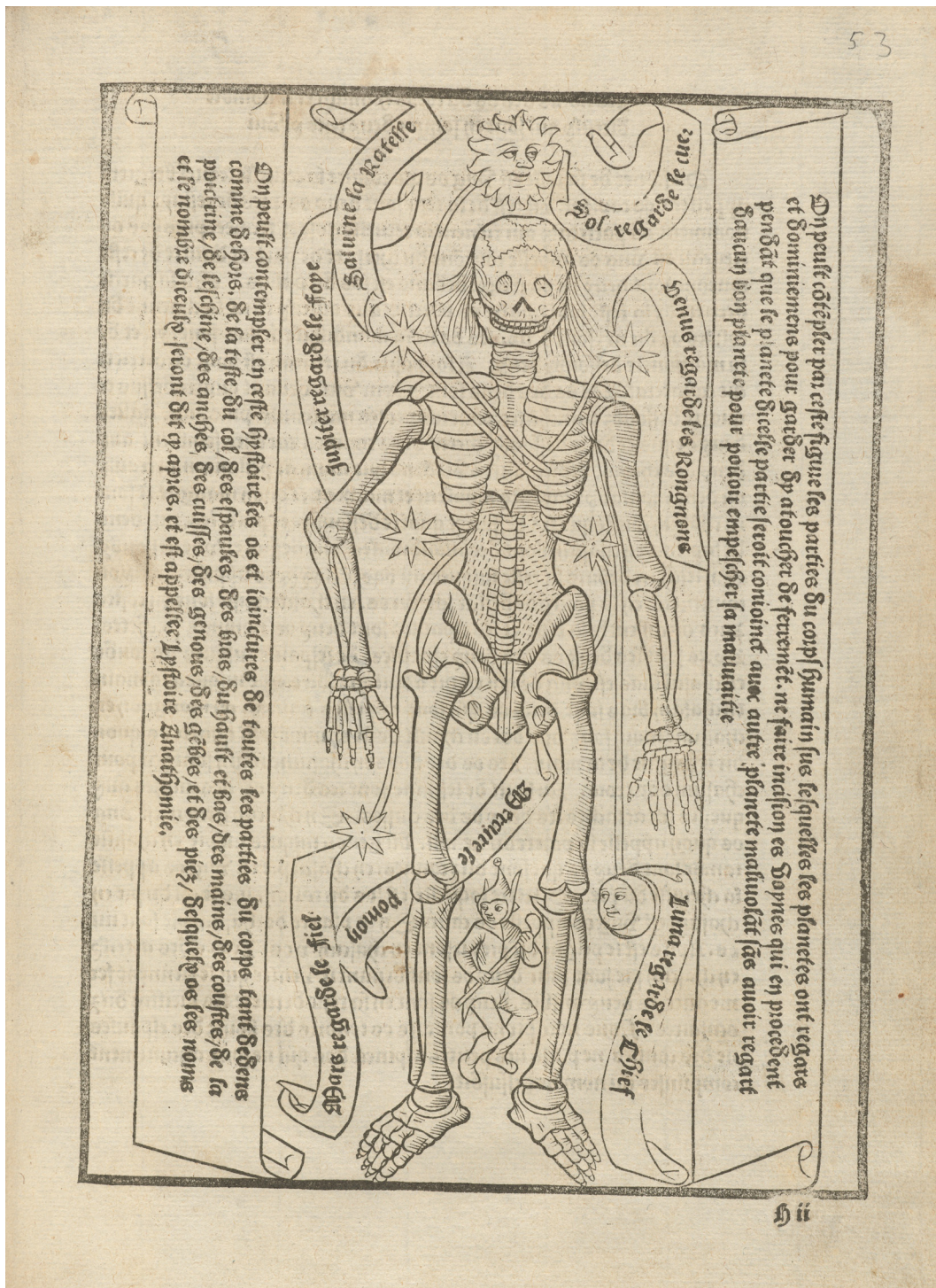
There are exceedingly few instances in which artists of this period depicted skulls with the level of accuracy and detail found in these ivory pieces. One of those rare

6.10
Jan Gossart, *Diptych of Jean Carondelet* (reverse), 1517. Oil on panel, 42 x 27 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. 1442 and 1443.

instances comes from the hand of Jan Gossart, an artist active at the aristocratic courts of the Southern Netherlands in the second and third decades of the sixteenth century.⁴³ Gossart's *Diptych of Jean Carondelet* features a skull conceived in ways quite similar to Memling's painting of roughly three decades earlier, but with carefully rendered sutures and foramina (fig. 6.10). Also, unlike earlier treatments of the 'skull in a niche' theme, Gossart's skull is tipped up, allowing its viewers to examine its underside. Much like the ivories, this painted skull thus offers viewers access to the mysterious structures that lie hidden beneath the surface of the skin, and that are not reflected in the body's external appearances.

Gossart's painting and the ivories therefore might be said to function as conveyers of anatomical information. But that function seems out of sync with what scholars have generally taken to be the function of these ivories as *memento mori* objects, which would presumably serve primarily to exhort their viewers to turn away from the concerns of the corporeal world and to focus solely on matters of the soul. The inclusion of these details is, however, in line with the ways that prosperous laypeople encountered anatomical knowledge in the years around 1500. A brief anatomical section appears, for instance, in the *Kalendrier des bergiers* or *Shepherds' Calendar*, which, despite its name, was aimed at a fairly elite audience.⁴⁴ Published in multiple editions in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, this book contained an array of texts dealing with both practical and moral matters. An image of a skeleton prefaces this section of the *Kalendrier*, its inscription informing the viewer that 'in this picture one can contemplate the bones and the joints and all the parts of the body, both within and outside' (fig. 6.11).⁴⁵ The subsequent text, announced as 'l'hystoire Anathomie', rapidly enumerates the bones of the body, beginning with the head, and then moves on to briefly describe the body's veins for the purposes of therapeutic blood-letting. The picture tries to match the information provided in the text. For instance, using techniques similar to the cartographic projection of a globe onto a flat map, the print distorts the spatial relationship between the skull's sutures in order to allow the image to depict the number and position of the individual bones that the text identifies as comprising the skull. This level of detail makes this image stand out from other skeletal imagery of the time, but brings it in line with the level of detail found in the ivories.

Strictly speaking, in the context of religious contemplation, the *memento mori* genre did not require anatomical accuracy—indeed, one might argue that cruder images like those in the *Shepherds' Calendar* would be more conducive to shifting one's attention from worldly concerns and towards more spiritual matters. But within the context of a Renaissance *Kunstammer*, the ability to convey cutting-edge anatomical knowledge would have been considered to be desirable.⁴⁶ There, the appeal of these ivories was likely complex. Their exotic material, intricate detail, dark humour, humanist iconography, and (in the case of the Berlin piece) literally naked misogyny made them appealing baubles for wealthy collectors. Their attention to cutting-edge anatomical information, too, may have



6.11
Anatomical diagram,
from *Le Calendrier des
Bergers* (Paris: Guy
Marchant, 18 April
1493). Cambridge
(Massachusetts),
Harvard University,
Houghton Library,
Inc. 7985.5 (31.2) (n.p).

served as opportunities for artists, owners, and viewers to display their impressive knowledge. But their extravagant affirmations of mortality and terrestrial decay could have insulated their owners from potential criticism that they had fallen prey to the ephemeral attractions of worldly curiosity. In this respect, death once again has the last laugh.

All references in *Courtauld Books Online* are hyperlinked. To navigate to a footnote, click on the reference number in the body of the text. To return back to the main text, click on the number at the beginning of the footnote.

All hyperlinks directing to online resources were checked and valid at the date of 14 March 2017.

I am grateful to Catherine Yvard and the anonymous peer reviewer of this essay for their invaluable assistance in transforming this piece, to Katherine Baker for her willingness to share her groundbreaking archival research with me, and to the organisers of the Gothic Ivories Project conference at the Courtauld and the British Museum for the opportunity to present this paper in its original iteration.

1. Andrea von Hülsen-Esch, Hiltrud Westermann-Angerhausen, and Stefanie Knöll (eds.), *Zum Sterben schön: Alter, Totentanz und Sterbekunst von 1500 bis heute* (Cologne: Museum Schnütgen/Schnell-Steiner, 2006), II, pp. 42–4, no. 15; Christiane Vogt (ed.), *Vanitas vanitatum: Das Tödlein aus der Sammlung Ludwig: Todesdarstellungen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin/Schloss Oberhausen: Ludwiggalerie/Kerber, 2012), passim. After delivery of this paper, I became aware of a recent consideration of this piece within the context of *memento mori* prints designed for manipulation by their beholders: Suzanne Karr Schmidt, 'Memento Mori: The Deadly Art of Interaction', in Sarah Blick and Laura D. Gelfand (eds.), *Push Me, Pull You: Physical and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), pp. 261–94, esp. pp. 278–9.

2. Von Hülsen-Esch, et al., *Zum Sterben schön*, II, p. 42, no. 15; Vogt, *Vanitas vanitatum*, p. 27.

3. For this summary of the piece's provenance, I rely on Vogt, *Vanitas vanitatum*, p. 25.

4. It is thus tentatively invoked as a precedent, e.g. in Vogt, *Vanitas vanitatum*, p. 17.

5. Katherine Baker, 'Chicart Bailly and the Specter of Death: *Memento Mori* in a Sixteenth-Century Estate Inventory', in Stephen Perkinson (ed.), *The Ivory Mirror: The Art of Mortality in Renaissance Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press with the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, forthcoming 2017), pp. 107–19.

6. For more on this topic, see the contribution by Katherine Baker to the present volume, pp. 68–75.

7. On this subject, see Catherine Yvard, 'Translated Images' in the present volume, pp. 57–67.

8. See Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings, 1200–1550* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014), II, pp. 628–9, no. 218; John Lowden and John Cherry, *Medieval Ivories and Works of Art: The Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario* (Toronto: Skylet Publishing/The Art Gallery of Ontario, 2008), pp. 132–6, no. 47; Peter Barnett (ed.), *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 277–8, nos. 78 and 79.

9. For an overview of the interest in this theme, see most recently Hülsen-Esch et al., *Zum Sterben schön*, passim.

10. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cloisters Collection, Inv. 55.168; William R. Levin (ed.), *Images of Love and Death in Renaissance and Late Medieval Art* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1976), no. 76 and pl. XIX. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Inv. 17.190.305; Barnett, *Images in Ivory*, p. 278, and Timothy Husband and Jane Hayward (eds.), *The Secular Spirit: Life and Art at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: The Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975), no. 254.

11. Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts, Inv. 1990.315; Barnett, *Images in Ivory*, no. 78.

12. Toronto, The Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Inv. 29272; Lowden and Cherry, *Medieval Ivories and Works of Art*, no. 45.

13. Braunschweig, Kunstmuseum des Landes Niedersachsen, Herzog Anton-Ulrich Museum, Inv. Elf 18; Hülsen-Esch et al., *Zum Sterben schön*, II, no. 107.

14. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Inv. 8554.

15. For two works which, based on their style and certain inconsistencies of subject matter, do seem likely to be nineteenth-century fakes, and in fact may well have been based on the piece now in Berlin, see Hülsen-Esch et al., *Zum Sterben schön*, II, pp. 205–08, nos. 115 and 116.

16. Christian Theuerkauff, *Die Bildwerke der Skulpturengalerie Berlin, II: Die Bildwerke in Elfenbein des 16.–19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Mann, 1986), no. 116.

17. Baker, 'Chicart Bailly and the Specter of Death'.

18. Pete Dandridge (Conservator and Administrator, Objects Conservation, Metropolitan Museum of Art), personal communication, 27 July 2016.

19. For an overview of the association of images of fools with the iconography of death, see Sophie Oosterwijk, 'Alas, Poor Yorick': Death, the Fool, the Mirror and the *Danse Macabre*, in Stefanie Knöll (ed.), *Narren – Masken – Karneval: Meisterwerke von Dürer bis Kubin der Düsseldorfer Graphiksammlung 'Mensch und Tod'* (Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner, 2009), pp. 20–32.

20. Camille Enlart, 'La Volupté et la Mort: à propos d'une figurine d'ivoire du Musée de Cluny', *Mémoires et Bulletins de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* 67 (1907): pp. 115–36, esp. pp. 128–9.

21. In the English translation of the text, this is chapter 57; see Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, trans. by Edwin H. Zeydel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), pp. 346–7. I have consulted a copy of this text online via e-rara: Sebastian Brant, *Das Narrenschiff* (Basel: Johann Bergmann von Olpe, 1494), pp. 296–7; <http://dx.doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-4620>.

22. Copies of several editions of this translation printed at Basel by Johann Bergmann von Olpe can be found on [Gallica](#). These include the editions of 1 March 1497 ([Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, DA III 2](#), and [Falk 2093](#)), and 1 August 1497 ([Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, DA III 1](#)), as well as the French version printed in Paris in 1497 by Geoffroy de Marnef (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Réserve-YH-1, Vélins 607, Vélins 608 and [département Arsenal, 4-BL-2142](#)).
23. Erwin Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neueren Kunst* (Leipzig/Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1930), pp. 9–18; <http://dx.doi.org/10.11588/diglit.29796>.
24. Panfsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege*, passim; Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 318–19, 385–94.
25. Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, p. 319.
26. The Cranach paintings are: Munich, Julius Bohler Gallery (see Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, fig. 179); and Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrichs-Museum (see *ibid.*, fig. 180). The Raphael is [London, National Gallery, NG213](#). On all of these, see: Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege*, passim; and Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, pp. 385–96.
27. The fullest treatment of the subjects appears in Levin, *Images of Love and Death*, pp. 113–14, no. 76.
28. Levin, *Images of Love and Death*, pp. 113–14, no. 76.
29. Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 130–1.
30. Johann Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, (trans.) Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 170–1.
31. Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, esp. p. 156.
32. For the rarity of ivory in this period, see Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, 'Les Ivoires au XV^e siècle', in Christiane Prigent (ed.), *Art et société en France au XV^e siècle* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1999), pp. 251–7. The history of this period of ivory carving largely remains to be written; the material tends to fall in the cracks in expertise between curators and scholars of Gothic and Baroque ivories. However, recent work has tied the increased availability of ivory in northern Europe in the first half of the sixteenth century to the rising tide of global trade, and in particular to the activities of the mercantile empire run by the Fugger family. Their office in Antwerp, for instance, evidently was the European point of entry for vast quantities of African elephant ivory coming from new colonial outposts along the west coast of Africa and even, on occasion, from sources such as the recently-established colonies and trading ports in India. On this trade, see Michael Gorgas, 'Animal Trade Between India and Western Eurasia in the Sixteenth Century: The Role of the Fuggers in Animal Trading', in Matthew Kuzhippalli Skaria (ed.), *Indo-European Trade and the Fuggers of Germany: Sixteenth Century* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997), pp. 195–225, esp. pp. 219–20.
33. Yvonne Bleyerveld, 'The Power of Women', in Anna Coliva and Bernard Aikema (eds.), *Cranach: l'altro rinascimento / A Different Renaissance* (Rome: Galleria Borghese, 2010), pp. 74–85, esp. pp. 82–4; Elke Anna Werner, 'The Veil of Venus: A Metaphor of Seeing in Lucas Cranach the Elder', in Bodo Brinkmann (ed.), *Cranach* (London: The Royal Academy of Arts, 2007), pp. 98–109.
34. For the works by Christus and Bening, see Sybille Ebert-Schifferer (ed.), *Deceptions and Illusions: Five Centuries of Trompe-l'Œil Painting* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2002), p. 164, no. 24 and p. 173, no. 28 respectively; for the Master of Frankfurt, see Stephen H. Goddard, *The Master of Frankfurt and His Shop* (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten, 1984).
35. Ebert-Schifferer, *Deceptions and Illusions*, p. 163.
36. Koerner, *The Moment of Self Portraiture*, p. 319.
37. For purposes of comparison, I made use of George D. Zuidema (ed.), *The Johns Hopkins Atlas of Human Functional Anatomy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
38. Frank H. Netter, *Atlas of Human Anatomy* (Summit, N.J.: CIBA-GEIGY Corp., 2nd edn, 1989).
39. For studies of Guy de Chauliac's importance for medical knowledge in France in the fifteenth century, see Sylvie Bazin-Tacchella, 'L'exposition du savoir chirurgical en français à la fin du Moyen Âge: les traductions françaises (XV^e siècle) de la *Chirurgia Magna* de Guy Chauliac', in Jacqueline Jenkins and Olivier Bertrand (eds.), *The Medieval Translator (10)/Traduire au Moyen Âge (10)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 27–43; and Sabine Tittel, 'Die *Anathomie* in der *Grande Chirurgie* des Gui de Chauliac: wort- und sachgeschichtliche Untersuchungen und Edition' (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004). Print editions of his work appeared in 1498, 1503 (with reprints in 1515 and 1520), 1537, 1538, and later in the sixteenth century. On these, see Howard Stone, 'The French Language in Renaissance Medicine', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 15:3 (1953): pp. 315–46, esp. pp. 323–4. For an English translation of his text, see Margaret S. Ogden (ed.), *The Chirurgie of Guy de Chauliac* (London: The Early English Text Society and Oxford University Press, 1971). I have consulted an early sixteenth-century edition of Guy de Chauliac's work: Guy de Chauliac, *Le Guidon en françois nouvellement imprime. Avec les gloses de tres excellent docteur en medecine maistre Jehan Falcon...* (Paris: Jehan Masse, 1537).
40. De Chauliac, *Le Guidon en françois*, f. XLIIr.

41. De Chauliac, *Le Guidon en françoys*, f. XLIIv.

42. Dirk de Vos, *Hans Memling: The Complete Works* (Ghent/New York: Ludion Press/Harry N. Abrams, 1994), pp. 245–7, no. 64.

43. Maryan Ainsworth (ed.), *Man, Myth, and Sensual Pleasures: Jan Gossart's Renaissance: The Complete Works* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010), pp. 245–9, no. 40.

44. On the *Kalendrier des bergiers*, see Sandra Hindman, 'The Career of Guy Marchant (1483–1504): High Culture and Low Culture in Paris', in Sandra Hindman (ed.), *Printing the Written Word: The Social History of Books, circa 1450–1520* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 68–100.

45. 'On peut contempler en ceste hystoire les os et jointures de toutes les parties du corps tant dedans comme dehors...', from *Le Kalendrier des Bergers* (Paris: Guy Marchant, 18 April 1493), Cambridge (Massachusetts), Harvard University, Houghton Library, Inc. 7985.5 (31.2) (n.p.).

46. On the development of the *Kunstammer*, see Thomas DaCosta Kauffman, 'Remarks on the Collections of Rudolf II: The *Kunstammer* as a Form of *Representatio*', *Art Journal* 38:1 (1978): pp. 22–8; Joy Kenseth, 'A World of Wonders in One Closet Shut', in Joy Kenseth (ed.), *The Age of the Marvelous* (Hanover: Hood Museum of Art, 1991), pp. 81–101; Thomas DaCosta Kauffman, *Court, Cloister, and City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe, 1450–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 166–83, and id., 'From Treasury to Museum: The Collections of the Austrian Habsburgs', in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (eds.), *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), pp. 137–54. On the place of *memento mori* objects in the early modern *Kunstammer*, see Andrea von Hülsen-Elsch, 'Elfenbein in der Kunstammer. Zu Funktion und Materialität von *Memento mori*-Objekten', in Von Hülsen-Esch et al., *Zum Sterben schön*, I, pp. 301–09. In revising this essay for publication, I learned of the existence of an MA dissertation on this topic: Silvia Mülleger, 'Der Tod in der Kunstammer der frühen Neuzeit' (MA diss., University of Vienna, 2011).

PART THREE

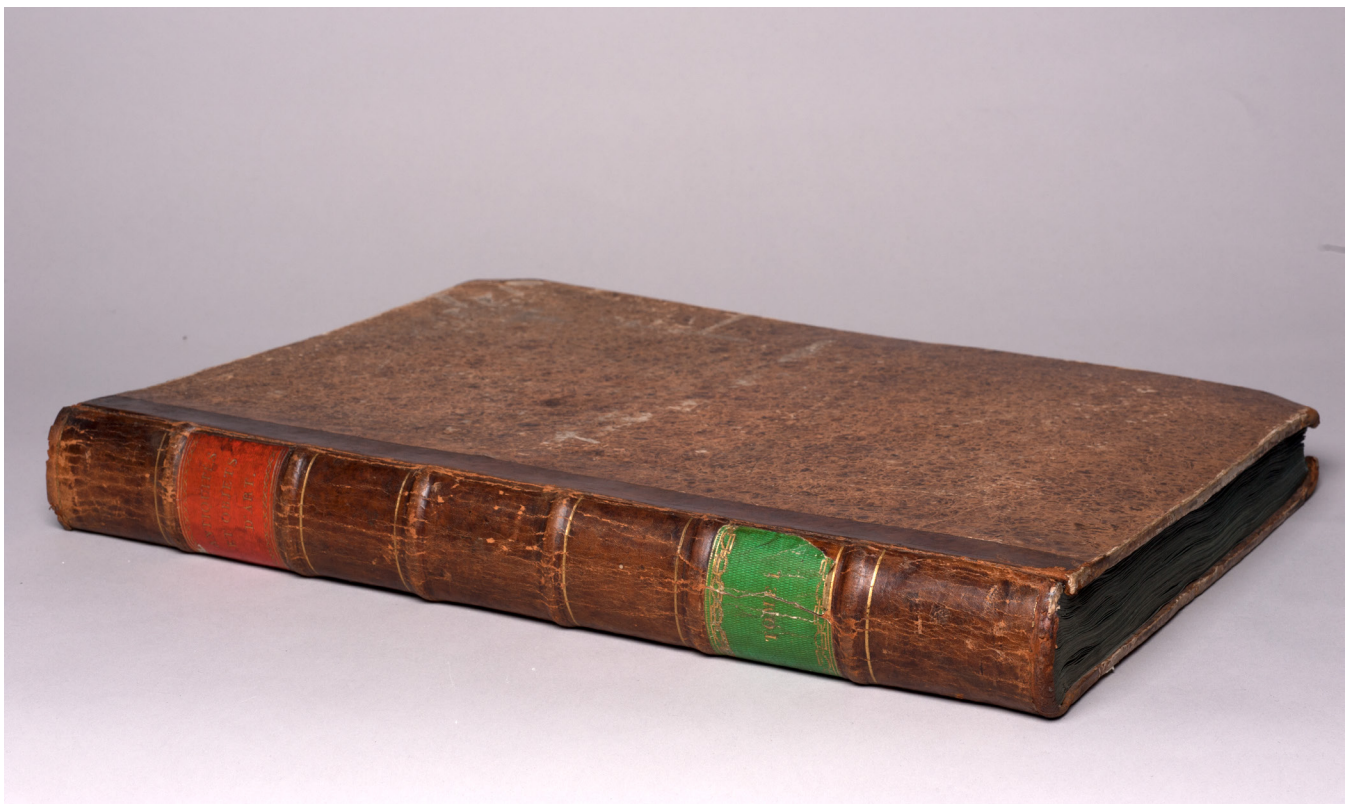
IVORY AND THE COLLECTOR: NINETEENTH TO TWENTIETH CENTURY



CHAPTER 7

GOTHIC AND LATE MEDIEVAL IVORIES FROM THE COLLECTION OF CLEMENS WENCESLAUS COUNT OF RENESSE-BREIDBACH

FRANZ KIRCHWEGER

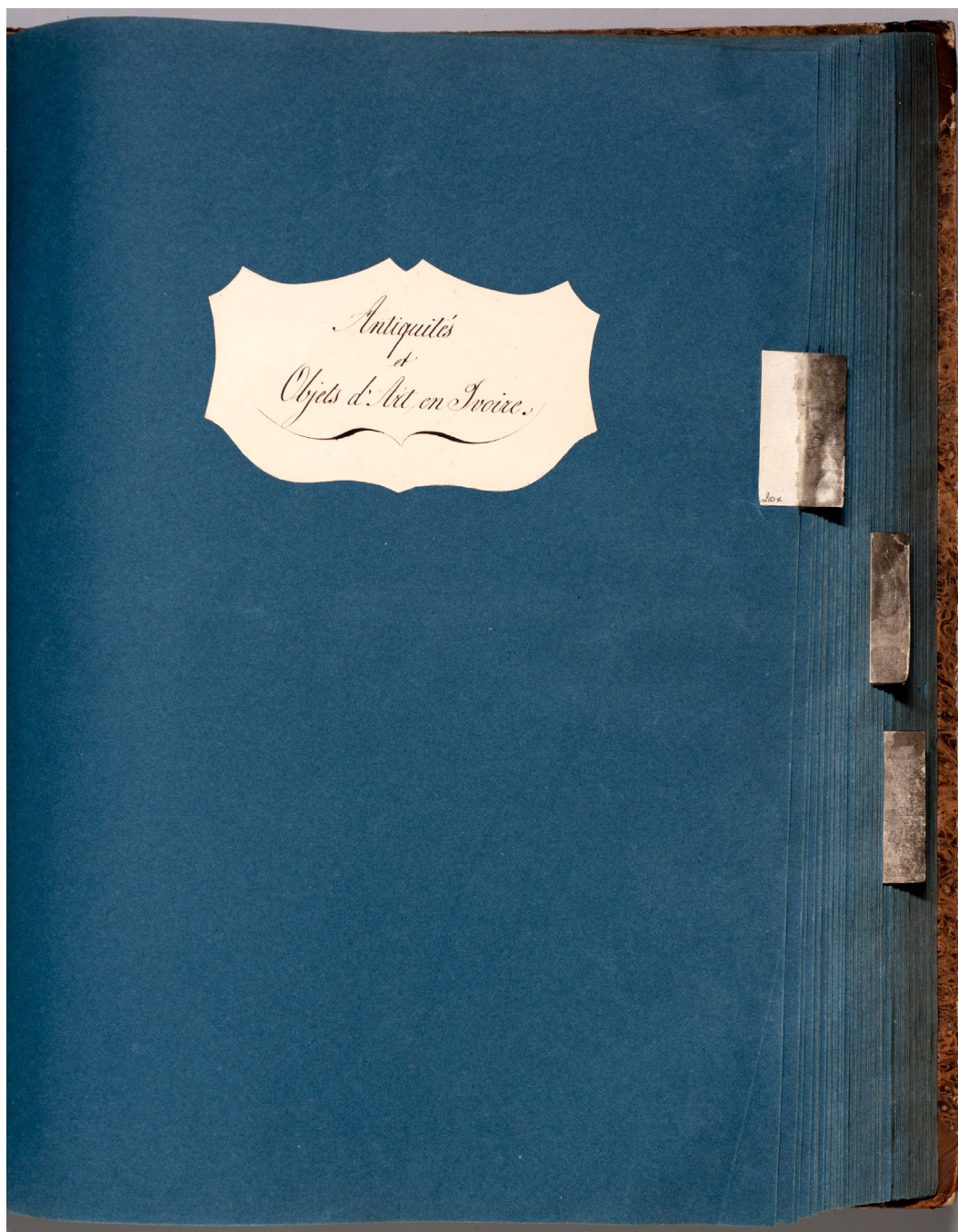


In 1995 the German antiquarian dealer Reiss and Sohn (Königstein im Taunus), auctioned an album that was described in the sale catalogue as follows:

Antiquités et objets d'art (title on binding). Catalogue of a private collection. France, c.1810–20. Large in-folio. 55 leaves with wash drawings and water-colours, some spreading over a full opening; pasted on blue card leaves ... Finely-executed pen drawings of medieval religious objects and of a few Asian objects. Probably the catalogue of an important French or Belgian art collection; designated as volume 1 on the binding. Drawings of c.80 objects made of metal, ivory and wood, for the most part shown from different angles, including reliquary caskets, crucifixes, chalices, monstrances, Asian deities, polyptychs, etc.¹ (fig. 7.1)

7.1
Binding of *Antiquités et Objets d'Art*, vol. I, from the collection of Clemens Wenceslaus Count of Renesse-Breibach (before 1831). Album of drawings, Vienna, Private Collection.

The album, which does not contain the name of any former owner, was acquired at this sale by a private collector in Vienna who brought it to my attention, and gave his kind



permission to publish the first results of my research, with a special focus on the Gothic ivory and bone carvings present in the album.

The large album (54.4 x 41.4 x 6.5 cm) does not contain any text, apart from a short caption giving each image a number and indicating the view depicted. The sequence of drawings pasted in the album is ordered by material, and comprises four sections entitled as follows:

Antiquités et Objets d'Art en Or, Argent, Bronze, Fer, Cuivre, Etain et Plomb

Antiquités et Objets d'Art en Ivoire (fig. 7.2)

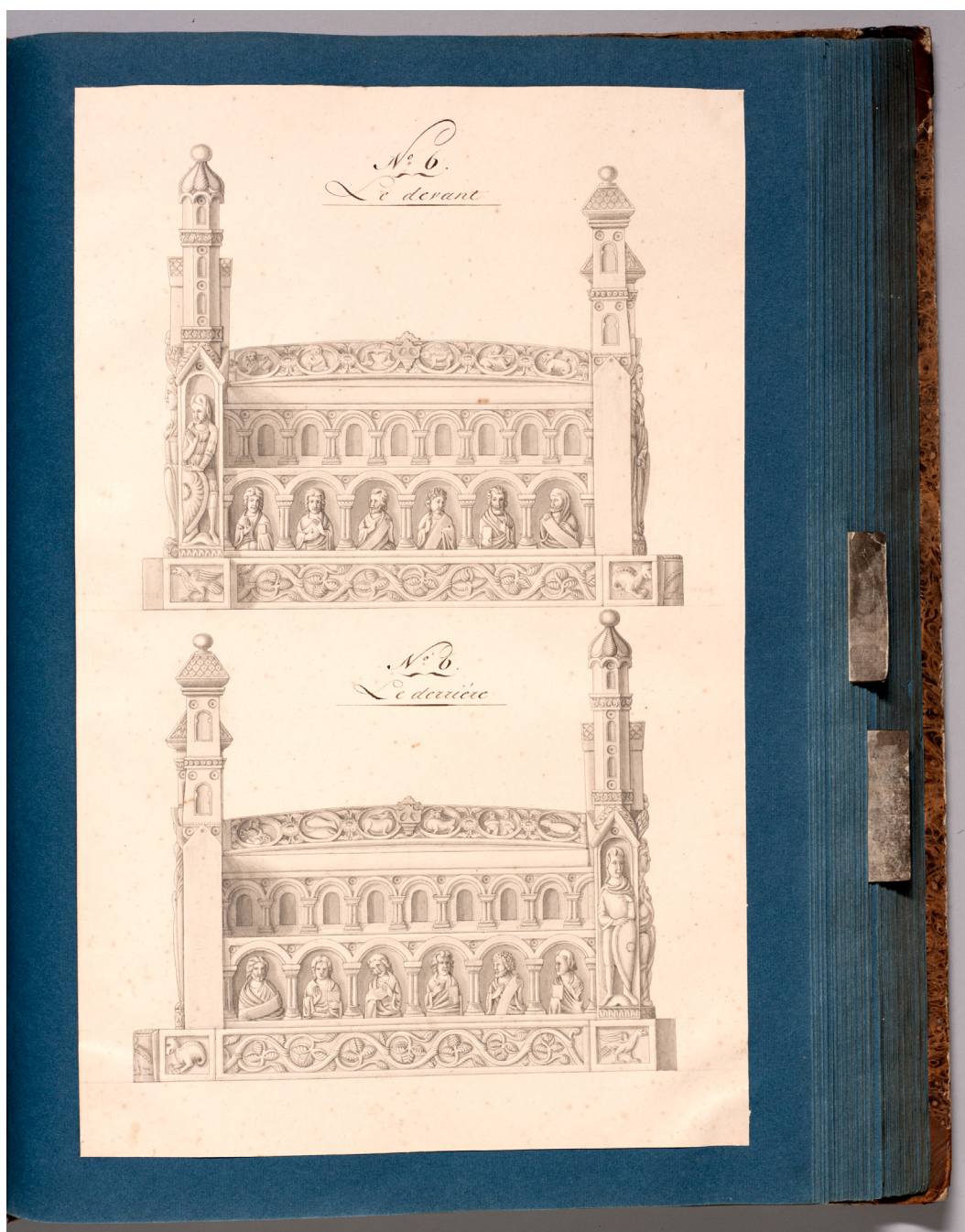
Antiquités et Objets d'Art en Corne

Antiquités et Objets d'Art en bois

The ivory section illustrates twenty-eight objects in total. Two of them were particularly helpful in identifying the nineteenth-century commissioner of the album and owner

7.2

Title-page of the 'Antiquités et Objets d'Art en Ivoire' section. *Antiquités et Objets d'Art*, vol. I, from the collection of Clemens Wenceslaus Count of Renesse-Breibach (before 1831). Vienna, Private Collection.



of the works of art recorded therein. Object no. 6 is a casket in the shape of a church now kept at the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels (fig. 7.3),² and no. 11 the famous late antique or Byzantine relief with a relics procession now in the Treasury of Trier Cathedral (fig. 7.4).³ Both ivories are known to have once belonged to Clemens Wenceslas Comte de Renesse-Breidbach (b. 1776, d. 1833), whose vast collection was auctioned in Antwerp in 1835 and 1836.⁴ Several catalogues accompanied the sales,⁵ among them the *Catalogue d'une superbe collection d'antiquités du moyen âge, objets d'art et curiosités, faisant partie du magnifique cabinet délaissé par feu M. le Comte Clemens Wenceslas de Renesse-Breidbach*.⁶ The first twenty-eight entries in the 'Objets en Ivoire' section of the 1836 sale catalogue correspond exactly to the objects illustrated in the album and are given the same numbers. This provides clear evidence that the album once belonged to Count Renesse-Breidbach, and therefore constitutes a hitherto-unknown source documenting over eighty art works in his collection.

The count was born in 1776 in Liège to an old aristocratic family.⁷ As a young man he embraced a military career in the service of the Archbishop-Elector of Trier,

7.3
No. 6 (Ivories section),
from the album *Antiquités et Objets d'Art*, vol. I
(before 1831). Drawing,
Vienna, Private
Collection.



7.4
Nos. 11-13 and 21 (Ivories section), from the album *Antiquités et Objets d'Art*, vol. I (before 1831). Drawing, Vienna, Private Collection.

Clemens Wenceslaus of Saxony (b. 1739, d. 1812), who was also his godfather. In 1794, he got wounded in the French Revolutionary wars, decided to quit the army and retired to his s'Heeren-Elderen castle near Tongeren in present-day Belgium. A few years later he inherited the estate of his great-uncle Franz Ludwig of Breidbach-Bürresheim (b. 1718, d. 1796). This provided him with additional means.⁸ In 1831, the count himself wrote and published a description of the collection that he had assembled over the past thirty-two years, giving the year 1799 as the starting point for his collecting activities.⁹ According to this summary, the collection comprised books and paintings, prints and drawings, Roman, German and other antiquities, medieval objects, documents and seals, Asian artefacts and natural history specimens. It then amounted to over 35,000 objects, excluding coins and *naturalia*.¹⁰ The content of his 'Cabinet d'antiquités du moyen âge et d'objets d'art' was summed up in a brief note stating that this collection included approximately one hundred objects in ivory, and only mentioned more specifically the relief with the relics procession now in Trier, clearly considered to be the most important artefact, owing to its greater antiquity.¹¹ He however also referred to the existence of a large format album with drawings of the most interesting objects in this group: 'De tous ces objets d'antiquités et du moyen

âge et d'objets d'art, il a été fait un catalogue, ainsi que les dessins des objets les plus curieux, contenus dans un volume grand atlas, dans lequel se trouvent décrits les objets les plus marquans [sic].¹² This description perfectly corresponds to the volume that came up for sale in 1995.

In his preface to the 1831 publication, Count Renesse-Breidbach made clear that he hoped to be able to gather his collection in the near future in Koblenz, bringing together the holdings that were divided between his s'Heeren-Elderen castle near Tongeren and a townhouse in Koblenz.¹³ As a matter of fact, he intended to sell his collection to the government, for them to establish a museum in which he was to be the curator.¹⁴ Although negotiations between the family and the authorities continued after the collector's sudden death in 1833, the plans were eventually abandoned and the different parts of the collection sold in 1835 and 1836.

The objects went on the art market and were dispersed, but the once famous collection¹⁵ was still remembered,¹⁶ and even became the subject of scholarly interest in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1873 Henri Schuermans published an article in which he gave valuable information on both the collector and his collection.¹⁷ Especially interested in antiquities, he was given access to two albums by Count Ludolphe of Renesse-Breidbach, a grandson of Clemens Wenceslaus.¹⁸ According to the author, these albums contained drawings of Roman, Celtic, Greek and other antiquities that had been made by Gottfried Welcker from Koblenz in the years 1820 to 1825. Schuermans also mentioned the existence of another volume similar to the other two, but with drawings of medieval objects in a large format: this was obviously our album that seems to have stayed with the Renesse-Breidbach family at least until the early 1870s.

Welcker may have also contributed to the 'objets d'art' album. Yet the majority of the illustrations—including all representations of medieval ivories—is so different in style and technique from the drawings published in 1873, that other artists must have also been working for Clemens Wenceslaus.¹⁹ The question of who was actually responsible for these watercolours therefore remains open. It is nevertheless certain that the album, complete with most of the drawings, existed by 1831, thus providing a precious *terminus ante quem* also for the acquisition of the actual works of art.²⁰

Unfortunately, little is known so far as to where and when the count acquired the objects. According to his own account, he inherited a collection of coins, and another of prints and drawings from relatives.²¹ Apart from that, he only mentions in a generic way the many acquisitions that he made himself. Leopold von Eltester discussed the radical political changes going on in Belgium, France and Germany in the time around and after 1800, which brought many antiquities and art works on the market and must have provided Renesse-Breidbach with plenty of opportunities to develop his collection.²² For several pieces, Schuermans and Eltester were able to draw information from the count's personal notes recording the places where some of the antiquities had been found.²³ In his thorough and detailed study on the provenance of the Trier Cathedral ivory relief, Hans

Wolfgang Kuhn however showed how misleading such references could be.²⁴ Although he gathered an impressive amount of historical information and archival material that shed light on the many ways and contacts Renesse-Breidbach could have used to expand his collection, he was unable to give a definite answer to the question of where the relief was actually acquired.

Such painstaking archival research remains to be carried out for the rest of the objects in the album, including the ivory and bone carvings. It seems nonetheless opportune to present this find in the context of the present publication, as the database of the [Courtauld Gothic Ivories Project](#) has constituted an essential tool to find the current location of several of the objects. For all the ivory and bone pieces listed below, the Renesse-Breidbach connection was unknown and now constitutes the earliest provenance information. But it was also possible to uncover further information on the fate of the objects following the Antwerp auction in 1836, thanks to annotated copies of the sale catalogues in Brussels and The Hague which record prices paid and names of buyers,²⁵ and were used as sources for the new information given in the entries below.²⁶

The following section collates the information available for the fifteen illustrated Gothic and late medieval ivory and bone carvings, in the order they appear in the album. A short description of the drawing and the measurements of the object as it is depicted is followed by the relevant entry from the 1836 sale catalogue and a transcription of the buyer's name and the price paid for it at this auction. Information on the present whereabouts of each object, on dating, localisation and the later known provenance information have been compiled from the Gothic Ivories Project database, except for Embriachi-style carvings, which are not within its remit.²⁷

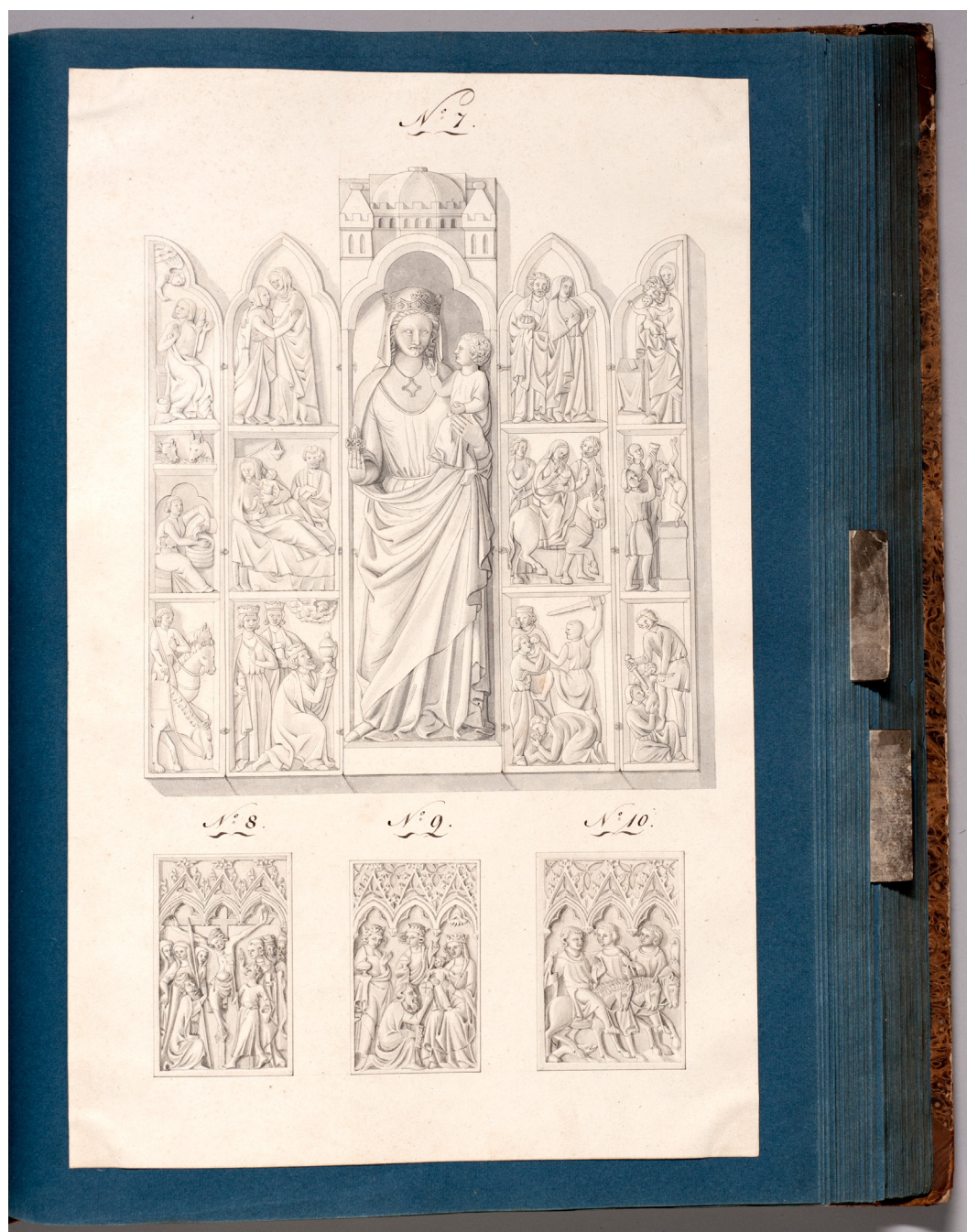
Two pages within the album's ivory chapter illustrate a range of objects from different periods (figs. 7.4, 7.9; nos. 11, 13, 20, 21, 23, 26). For the following section's focus to remain on Gothic and late medieval ivories, some essential information on these earlier and later objects has been provided in an endnote.²⁸

Antiquités et objets d'art, vol. I: Antiquités et Objets d'Art en Ivoire

No. 7 (fig. 7.5)

Drawing: Tabernacle with two wings on either side; standing Virgin and Child in the centre; three registers on each panel with six scenes from top left to bottom right: Annunciation, Nativity, Adoring Magi, Presentation in the Temple, Flight into Egypt, Massacre of the Innocents. Height: 27.4 cm, width: 25 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 1, lot 7: 'Petit autel de forme gothique avec ses doubles portes, à charnières. Cette belle antique provient de l'ancienne abbaye de Rommersdorff près Coblenz, et dénote par son travail et l'état où se trouve l'ivoire une haute antiquité; la tradition de cette église dit qu'elle fut apportée de l'Orient par le comte de Sayn, fondateur de cette abbaye, en l'an 1180'.²⁹ Sold to 'Sommesson' for '1200,--' Francs.³⁰



Madrid, Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Inv. 2551: Polyptych (tabernacle), nineteenth century (Museum's opinion 2013). Height: 27.5 cm, width: 24.5 cm (open), depth: 5 cm (centre), 0.6 cm (wings).

Later provenance: Collection of Prince Petr Soltykoff (b. c.1801, d. 1889), acquired in January 1850; sale, Paris, Drouot, 8 April-1 May 1861, lot 233; sold to Delembaut. Acquired in 1934 by José Lázaro.

No. 8 (fig. 7.5)

Drawing: Panel with Crucifixion. Virgin supported by two Women, Longinus with spear kneeling in prayer on the left; Saint John the Evangelist, Stephaton with the sponge and two onlookers on the right; pointed trefoils and pinnacles. Height: 9.9 cm, width: 6.2 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 1, lot 8: 'Petit bas-relief d'un travail très ancien, représentant le Christ à la croix, derrière lui les trois Saintes-Femmes et autres personnages.' Sold to 'Hartog' for '20,--' Francs.³¹

Present whereabouts unknown.³²

7.5

Nos. 7-10 (Ivories section), from the album *Antiquités et Objets d'Art*, vol. I (before 1831). Drawing, Vienna, Private Collection.

No. 9 (fig. 7.5)

Drawing: Panel with Adoration of the Magi; pointed trefoils in the spandrels. Height: 9.5 cm, width: 5.8 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 2, lot 9: 'Petit bas-relief d'un même travail et ancienneté que la pièce précédente, représentant l'adoration des Trois-Rois.' Sold to 'Hartog' for '20,--' Francs.³³

Brussels, [Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire – Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis](#), [Inv. V.375](#): Panel, Adoration of the Magi, France, fourteenth century.³⁴ Height: 9.5 cm, width: 5.6 cm.

Later provenance: Vermeersch bequest in 1911.

No. 10 (fig. 7.5)

Drawing: Panel with a lady and two youths on horseback with hawks; pointed trefoils. Height: 9.8 cm, width: 6.7 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 2, lot 10: 'Autre petit bas-relief de même travail, représentant trois jeunes gens à cheval, tenant chacun un oiseau sur la main'. Sold to 'Maes' for '32,--' Francs.³⁵

[Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh](#), [Inv. MMB.0443](#): Writing tablet, Hawking party. France (Paris), first half of the fourteenth century (Museum's opinion 2012). Height: 9.4 cm, width: 6.1 cm.

Later provenance: Collection of Louis Fidel Debruge-Duménil (b. 1788, d. 1838); sale, Paris, 12-15 March 1839, lot 260. Collection of Carlo Micheli (d. 1895?), Paris; sold with the rest of his collection in 1898 by his daughter, Marie Micheli, to Fritz Mayer van den Bergh (b. 1858, d. 1901), Antwerp.

No. 12 (fig. 7.4)

Drawing: Mirror case with Crucifixion; foliated corner terminals; pointed trefoils in the spandrels. Height: 8.6 cm, width: 8.4 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 2, lot 12: 'Petit bas-relief de forme carrée, représentant le Christ à la croix; les trois Saintes-Femmes et deux soldats sont à ses côtés.' Sold to 'De Nolvos' for '29,--' Francs.³⁶

[Cracow, Czartoryski Museum](#), [Inv. XIII-1274](#): Mirror case, Crucifixion, France (?), beginning of fifteenth century (Museum's opinion 2010). Height: 8.5 cm, width: 8.3 cm.

Later provenance: Private Collection, Cologne; acquired for the Czartoryski collection after 1891.

No. 14 (fig. 7.6)

Drawing: Gabled triptych with Passion scenes. Height: 25 cm, width: 20.5 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 2, lot 14: 'Petit autel à deux battans [sic] représentant en bas-relief dans 9 compartiments, une partie de la Passion'. Sold to 'De Bruges' for '225,--' Francs.³⁷



7.6
Nos. 14–16 (Ivories section), from the album *Antiquités et Objets d'Art*, vol. I (before 1831). Drawing, Vienna, Private Collection.

Private Collection, DEC 1519 (formerly Inv. K 91C): Gabled triptych, French (Paris), c.1330.³⁸ Height: 24.6 cm, width: 20 cm (open).

Later provenance: Collection of Frédéric Spitzer, Paris: his sale, Chevallier and Mannheim, Paris, 17 April 1893, lot 122. Collection of Prof. W. Weisbach, Berlin (at least 1898 until after 1924). Collection of Ernst and Martha Kofler-Truniger, Lucerne (by 1964). Collection of Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza (b. 1921, d. 2002), Castagnola-Lugano (bought on 26 April 1971); thence by descent to the present owner.

No. 15 (fig. 7.6)

Drawing: Diptych with Adoration of the Magi (left) and Crucifixion (right). Height: 7.9 cm, width: 11.8 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 2, lot 15: 'Petit bas-relief en deux parties, se fermant au moyen de deux charnières et d'un petit crochet, représentant l'adoration des mages et le Christ à la croix.' Sold to 'Maes' for '48,--' Francs.³⁹

London, *The British Museum*, Inv. 1856,0623.86 (Dalton 298): Diptych with Adoration of the Magi and Crucifixion, French, fourteenth century (Museum's opinion 2011).



7.7
No. 17 (Ivories section),
from the album *Antiquités et Objets d'Art*, vol. I
(before 1831). Drawing,
Vienna, Private
Collection

Height: 7.3 cm, width: 11.6 cm (open).

Later provenance: Collection of William Maskell (b. 1814, d. 1890) (no. 3); bought from him by the British Museum in 1856.

No. 16 (fig. 7.6)

Drawing: Diptych with Coronation of the Virgin with Child and two angels on the left, Crucifixion with the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist on the right panel. Height: 7.3 cm, width: 7.8 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 2, lot 16: 'Petit bas-relief aussi en deux parties comme le précédent, représentant la Vierge et Jésus à la croix, entre la sainte Vierge et saint Jean'. Sold to 'Maes' for '16,--' Francs.⁴⁰

Present whereabouts unknown.

No. 17 (fig. 7.7)

Drawing: Gabled triptych (in the style of the Embriachi workshop); centre panel with two groups from a Crucifixion scene (mourning women to the left, mourners including Saint



7.8
Nos. 18–19 (Ivories section), from the album *Antiquités et Objets d'Art*, vol. I (before 1831). Drawing, Vienna, Private Collection.

John and onlookers to the right); its central section which would have featured the crucified Christ⁴¹ was lost and replaced by an unrelated piece with Saint Bartholomew (knife) and Saint Peter; right wing with Saint Anthony and Saint Catherine of Alexandria; left wing with Saint Francis and Saint James the Greater (?). Height: 23.6 cm, width: 32 cm.

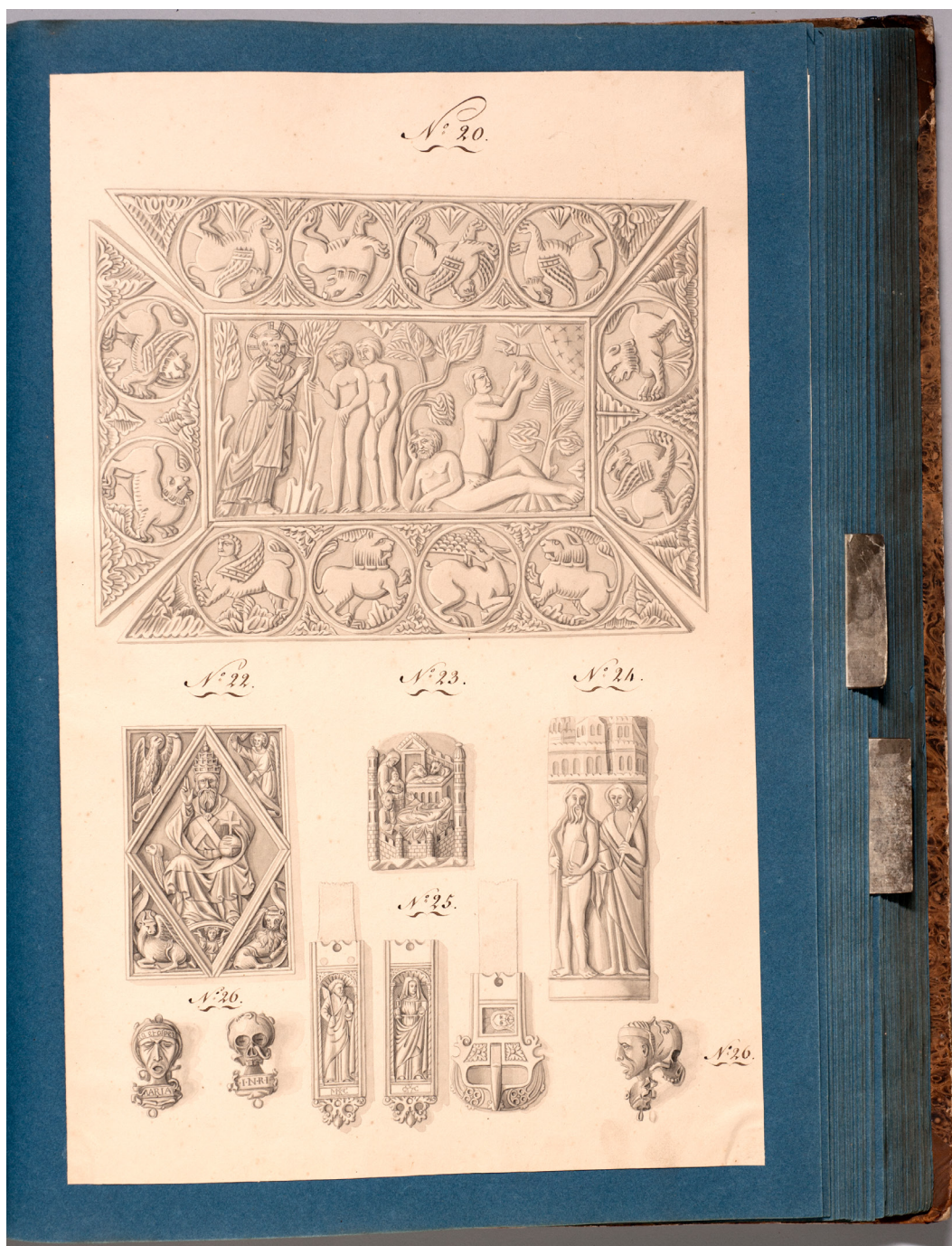
Sale catalogue (1836), p. 2, lot 17: 'Petit autel dont le haut se termine en pointe et se fermant à deux battans [sic] en bois de chêne, incrusté sur le devant avec de l'ivoire et des bois de couleur.' Sold to 'Seghers' according to the Brussels annotated catalogue, spelt 'Segers' in the The Hague copy,⁴² for '42,--' Francs.

Present whereabouts unknown.

No. 18 (fig. 7.8)

Drawing: Statuette of Saint James the Greater as a pilgrim, shown from the front and from the back. Height: 24.2 cm, width: 7 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 2, lot 18: 'Statuette de saint Jacques en ivoire massif'. Sold to 'Hanicq' according to the Brussels copy or 'Hanikq Malines' in the catalogue in The



7.9
Nos. 20, 22–26 (Ivories section), from the album *Antiquités et Objets d'Art*, vol. I (before 1831). Drawing, Vienna, Private Collection.

Hague⁴³ for '32,--' Francs.

Present whereabouts unknown.⁴⁴

No. 19 (fig. 7.8)

Drawing: Panel with Crucifixion, three Holy women to the left, Saint John the Evangelist and two onlookers to the right. Height: 8 cm, width: 6.2 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 2, lot 19: 'Petit bas-relief, représentant le Christ à la croix.' Sold to 'De Bruges' for '27,--' Francs.⁴⁵

Beaune, Hospices civils de Beaune, Inv. 87 GHD 869: Right wing of a diptych, France, mid fourteenth century (Museum's opinion 2012). Height: 8.1 cm, width: 6.3 cm, depth: 0.7 cm.

Later provenance: Collection of Albert Humbert, Dijon architect, his bequest in 1892.

No. 22 (fig. 7.9)

Drawing: Openwork panel with God the Father in a rhombus in the center, four Symbols of the Evangelists with scrolls in the spandrels. Height: 11 cm, width: 7.4 cm.



7.10
No. 27 (Ivories section),
from the album *Antiquités et Objets d'Art*, vol. I
(before 1831). Drawing,
Vienna, Private
Collection.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 2, lot 22: 'Bas-relief dont le fond est à jour, placé sur du velours noir, représentant le Père éternel.' Sold to 'Maes' for '40,--' Francs.⁴⁶

London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. 262-1867: Openwork panel, probably used as part of the binding of a book, France (Paris), early fifteenth century.⁴⁷ Height: 11 cm, width: 7 cm.

Later provenance: In the possession of John Webb (b. 1799, d. 1880), London, by 1862; purchased from him by the Museum in 1867.

No. 24 (fig. 7.9)

Drawing: Two standing saints under canopy: a hermit and a female holding a small container and a palm leaf (fragment from a work in the style of the Embriachi workshop). Height: 12.5 cm, width: 4.5 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836): The sale catalogue is missing an entry for no. 24. A handwritten note was however added in the copy kept at The Hague reading: '24 Bas relief'. It is followed by the name 'Doncker'⁴⁸ to whom this lot was sold for '6,--' Francs.

Present whereabouts unknown.

No. 25 (fig. 7.9)

Drawing: Belt pendant and buckle with fragments of the belt's material. Pendant with Saint Jude Thaddeus with an axe in a niche on the one side and an unidentified female saint with a monstrance on the other side. Belt buckle with the head of Christ and foliated decoration. Height: 8.1 cm, width: 2.4 cm (pendant). Height: 6 cm, width: 4.2 cm (buckle).

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 2, lot 25: 'Trois pièces ayant fait partie d'une ceinture de religieuse'. Sold to 'De Nolivos' for '38,--' Francs.⁴⁹

London, Private Collection: Belt pendant and buckle (pendant 1 and buckle 3 on Gothic Ivories website). Height: 8.3 cm, width: 2.3 cm (pendant). Height: 6 cm, width: 4.1 cm (buckle).

Later provenance: Les Enluminures, Paris, at least from 1999: Le Louvre des Antiquaires exhibition, 21 September–30 October 1999, no. 38; private collection, London (bought 13 February 2007).

No. 27 (fig. 7.10)

Drawing: Statuette, standing Virgin and Child, shown from the front and from the back. Height: 18.5 cm, width: 6 cm.

Sale catalogue (1836), p. 3, lot 27: 'Petite statue d'ivoire massif de la sainte Vierge, voilée et couronnée. Ouvrage ancien'. Sold to 'De Nolivos' for '38,--' Francs.⁵⁰

London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. 7-1872: Statuette, standing Virgin and Child, French (Champagne or Burgundy), c.1300–20.⁵¹ Height: 18.5 cm, width: 4.5 cm (at base).

Later provenance: In the possession of John Webb (b. 1799, d. 1880), London on loan to the Museum from 1867; purchased from him by the Museum in 1872.

All references in *Courtauld Books Online* are hyperlinked. To navigate to a footnote, click on the reference number in the body of the text. To return back to the main text, click on the number at the beginning of the footnote.

All hyperlinks directing to online resources were checked and valid at the date of 14 March 2017.

I wish to thank Catherine Yvard for her help with translations and her useful suggestions.

1. Sale catalogue, Reiss & Sohn, Buch- und Kunstantiquariat, D-6154 Königstein im Taunus, Auktion 60, 17-20 October 1995, lot 4460: 'Antiquités et objets d'art. (Einbandtitel). Privater Sammlungskatalog. Frankreich, c.1810-20. Gr.-fol. 55 Bll. mit lavierten und aquarellierten Federzeichnungen, teils doppelblattgroß, aufgelegt auf blaue Kartonbl. Hldr. d. Zt mit Griffregister, bestoßen (38). Fein ausgeführte Federzeichnungen von mittelalterlichen sakralen und einigen asiatischen Objekten, vermutlich als Bestandskatalog einer bedeutenden französischen oder belgischen Kunstsammlung angelegt, im Einband als Bd. 1 bezeichnet. Dargestellt sind ca. 80 Objekte, meist von mehreren Seiten, aus Metall, Elfenbein und Holz, darunter Reliquienkästchen, Kruzifixe, Kelche, Monstranzen, asiatische Gottheiten, Klappaltärchen u.a. Teils auf Whatman-Papier ausgeführt, mehrere leere blaue Kartonblätter beigegeben. – Nur wenige Bll. gering stockfl. bzw. leicht gebräunt, insgesamt von guter Erhaltung'. The album is now kept in a private collection in Vienna. Access was arranged through Natter Fine Arts, Vienna (<http://www.natterfinearts.com>).

2. Anton Legner (ed.), *Ornamenta Ecclesiae. Kunst und Künstler der Romanik in Köln* (Cologne: Greven & Berthold, 1985), II, p. 426, no. F 63; Francis Van Noten, *La Salle aux Trésors. Chefs d'œuvre de l'art roman et mosan* (Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Bruxelles, Catalogues des Collections I) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), p. 90, no. 33.

3. Hans Wolfgang Kuhn, 'Untersuchungen zur Provenienz des byzantinischen Elfenbeinreliefs im Trierer Domschatz. Ein Problemfall aus den ehemaligen Sammlungen Boos-Waldeck und Renesse-Breidbach', *Jahrbuch für westdeutsche Landesgeschichte* 14 (1988): pp. 1-25. Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff (eds.), 799. *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1999), II, pp. 519-21, no. VIII.9.

4. Henri Schuermans, 'Collections belges d'Antiquités. Collections de Renesse', *Bulletin des Commissions Royales d'Art et d'Archéologie* 12 (1873): pp. 428-73. Leopold von Eltester and Henri Schuermans, 'Die ehemalige Renesse'sche Sammlung', *Bonner Jahrbücher* 58 (1876): pp. 90-119. Kuhn, 'Untersuchungen', pp. 1-25; Sophie Balace, *Historiographie de l'art mosan* (PhD diss., Université de Liège, 2009), pp. 38-40; accessible online: <http://bictel.ulg.ac.be/ETD-db/collection/available/ULgetd-01112009-143217/>.

5. Frits Lugt, *Répertoire des catalogues de ventes publiques intéressantes l'art ou la curiosité* (La Haye: Nijhoff, 1953), II: 1826-60, nos. 14108, 14110, 14377, 14380, 14454.

6. Full reference: *Catalogue d'une superbe collection d'antiquités du moyen âge, objets d'art et curiosités, faisant partie du magnifique cabinet délaissé par feu M. le Comte Clemens Wenceslas de Renesse-Breidbach dont la vente aura lieu à Anvers, au Salon d'Expositions, rue de Vénus, par le Greffier Ter Bruggen,*

le 3 Juin 1836 et jour suivant (Antwerp: J.-E. Rysheuevels, 1836).

7. Léon Naveau, 'Renesse-Breidbach (Clément-Wenceslas-François-Charles-Cunégonde-Constant-Jean-Népomucène, comte de)', in *Biographie Nationale de Belgique*, publiée par l'Académie Royale de sciences des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique 19 (Brussels: É. Bruylant, 1907), pp. 96-101. *Genealogisches Handbuch des Adels, Gräfliche Häuser A* (Limburg an der Lahn: C. A. Starke, 1970), VI, pp. 317-8.

8. See note 4.

9. *Description abrégée du Cabinet de Médailles antiques et modernes, tableaux, gravures etc., appartenant à M. le comte Renesse-Breidbach, divisée par classes* (Brussels: C.-J. De Mat, 1831).

10. Le Cte De Becdelièvre, *Biographie liégeoise ou précis historique et chronologique de toutes les personnes qui se sont rendues célèbres par leurs talents, leurs vertus ou leurs actions dans l'ancien diocèse et pays de Liège, les Duchés de Limbourg et de Bouillon, le pays de Stavelot, et la ville de Maastricht* (Liège: Jeunehomme Frères, 1837), II, p. 720, adds: '800 médailles anciennes et 45.000 modernes' and 'plus de 17.000 pièces' that we would today designate as a natural history collection.

11. *Description abrégée*, p. 18: '1° D'une collection d'environ 100 objets, travaillés en ivoire, dont plusieurs d'une haute antiquité, principalement un bas-relief du 6e ou 7e siècle, représentant Ste Hélène recevant la tunique de Notre-Seigneur'.

12. *Description abrégée*, p. 21.

13. *Description abrégée*, pp. 6-7.

14. Schuermans, 'Collections belges', pp. 452-73; Kuhn, 'Untersuchungen', pp. 3-5.

15. See for example: Willibald Rheineck, *Rheinreise von Mainz bis Düsseldorf. Nebst ausführlichen Gemälden von Frankfurt, Mainz, Koblenz, Bonn, Köln und Düsseldorf mit ihren Umgebungen* (Mainz: Kupferberg, 1822), pp. 265-6. Johann August Klein, *Rheinreise von Mainz bis Köln. Historisch, topographisch, malerisch* (Koblenz: Röhling, 1828), pp. 181-2.

16. See for example: *Biographie liégeoise*, pp. 719-20; *Denkwürdiger und nützlicher Rheinischer Antiquarius, welcher die wichtigsten und angenehmsten geographischen, historischen und politischen Merkwürdigkeiten des ganzen Rheinstroms, von seinem Ausflusse in das Meer bis zu seinem Ursprunge darstellt. Von einem Nachforscher in historischen Dingen, Mittelrhein. Der III. Abteilung 2. Band* (Koblenz: R. F. Hergt, 1854), pp. 776-8.

17. Schuermans, 'Collections belges', pp. 428-73.

18. Schuermans, 'Collections belges', pp. 433-4.

19. Schuermans, 'Collections belges', pls. I-III.

20. A few illustrations may have been added to the album in the years before the count's death in 1833.
21. *Description abrégée*, pp. 5–6.
22. Eltester and Schuermans, 'Renesse'sche Sammlung', p. 90.
23. Eltester and Schuermans, 'Renesse'sche Sammlung', pp. 94–5.
24. Kuhn, 'Untersuchungen', pp. 12–25.
25. Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, R.10 439/42 and The Hague, Rijksbureau voor kunsthistorische en iconografische Documentatie, no. 201309497. Many thanks to Marie-Cécile Bardo (Paris, Musée du Louvre) for bringing the latter to my attention.
26. Lugt, *Répertoire*, II, no. 14377, lists other annotated copies, such as one at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, which may yield further information.
27. See the scope of the Gothic Ivories Project outlined [here](#) and in the preface to the present volume.
28. **No. 13** (fig. 7.4): five rectangular panels now in London, The British Museum, Inv. 1903,0514.3–7, see Ormonde Maddock Dalton, *Catalogue of the Ivory Carvings of the Christian Era in the British Museum* (London: Printed by Order of the Trustees, 1909), pp. 58–9, nos. 63, 65–68; Adolph Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser VIII–XI. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1918), II, p. 42, nos. 129–132, 135, pl. XXXIX. **No. 20** (fig. 7.9), two pieces now in Crakow, Czartoryski Museum, nos. 402, 403 (central panel and a fragment of one of the framing panels); see Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X. bis XIII. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1930), I, p. 61, nos. 115–6, pl. LXVII. **No. 21** (fig. 7.4), present whereabouts unknown. **No. 23** (fig. 7.9), now in Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh; see Goldschmidt, *Elfenbeinskulptur*, II, p. 38, no. 95, pl. XXX; Jozef de Co, *Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Catalogus*, 2 (Antwerp, 1969), pp. 71–2, no. 2075. **No. 26** (fig. 7.9), now London, [The British Museum](#), Inv. 1856,0623.135; see Dalton, *Catalogue*, p. 149, no. 444 (acquired in 1856 from the Maskell collection).
29. The polyptych was already mentioned, in the course of the negotiations between the Renesse-Breidbach family and the Prussian government over the purchase of the late count's collection in 1833, as a great fourteenth-century work of art from Rommersdorf ('eine schöne und artistische Arbeit des 14. Jahrhunderts aus Rommersdorf'), cited after Kuhn, 'Untersuchungen', p. 5. Despite the dating given in that context, the 1836 sale catalogue entry referred to a local tradition, according to which the polyptych would have been donated by the founder of the abbaye of Sayn, and dated to the twelfth century. Concerning the ongoing misunderstandings over Sayn as a provenance, see in detail Kuhn, 'Untersuchungen', pp. 12–20.
30. The tabernacle was later part of the Sommeson sale in 1848 (Lugt, *Répertoire*, II, no. 18868): *Catalogue de la précieuse collection d'objets et de curiosité ... composant le cabinet de M. S. (Sommesson)*, 24–26 January 1848, pp. 25–6, lot 125. The copy at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Estampes et Photographie (YD-1, 1848-01-24-8) has several notes added, the first one referring to a price of '1300 chez De Renesse'.
31. According to Eltester and Schuermans, 'Renesse'sche Sammlung', p. 98, note 1, Hartog was a dealer of antiquities whose collection was auctioned in Antwerp on 9 May 1859, by Ter Bruggen (Lugt, *Répertoire*, II, no. 24892).
32. A nearly identical ivory is kept in [Stuttgart, Landesmuseum Württemberg](#) (Inv. WLM 1968-74), that came from the collection of Edwin Oppler, sold in 1913. Apart from the fact that the writing tablet in Stuttgart is slightly larger and extensively gilded there are some details concerning the pinnacles that are different from the illustration in the album. Given the accuracy of the drawings in general, it seems unlikely that the Stuttgart ivory is in fact the one from the Renesse-Breidbach collection. In spite of the accuracy of the reproductions, however, the artist(s) seem to have considered traces of missing hinges as imperfections, preferring to leave the borders smooth, as can be seen in the Beaune example (no. 19). This means that, in the case of no. 8, we cannot be sure of the original function of the panel: it could have been a writing tablet or a diptych wing whose hinge mitres were obliterated (kindly pointed out to the author by Catherine Yvard).
33. See note 31.
34. A. Jansen, *Christelijke Kunst tot het einde der Middeleeuwen – Art chrétien jusqu'à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Brussels: Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis-Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, 1964), no. 282, pl. CXXVI, fig. 268.
35. According to Eltester and Schuermans, the collection of antiquities of Mademoiselle Maes was auctioned in Antwerp, on 22 March 1845, by Ter Bruggen: Eltester and Schuermans, 'Renesse'sche Sammlung', p. 98, note 2. Lugt lists several sales linked to the name of 'Mlle Marie Maes, antiquaire': Lugt, *Répertoire*, II, nos. 14831, 15922, 18509.
36. The catalogue of the 1866 sale of the collection of M. De Nolvos (Frits Lugt, *Répertoire des catalogues de ventes publiques intéressant l'art ou la curiosité* [La Haye: Nijhoff, 1964], III [1861–1900], no. 28802) lists some ivories: *Catalogue d'objets d'art et de haute curiosité, antiques, du Moyen Âge...*, *provenant en grande partie de la précieuse collection de M. De Nolvos*, 19–20 January 1866, pp. 23–4, lots 76–9—but not this mirror case with the Crucifixion.
37. Jules Labarte, *Description des objets d'art qui composent la collection Debruge Dumenil* (Paris: Eugène Duverger, 1847), p. 452, no. 144: 'Triptyque terminé par un fronton aigu. La partie centrale et les deux volets, divisés en trois registres, renferment dix scènes tirées de la vie et de la passion du Christ sculptées en bas-reliefs. Ces sujets sont

placés sous des arcades ogivales. Travail français des dernières années du XIII^e siècle ou du commencement du XIV^e. - H. 25 cent., L. 20.'

38. Paul Williamson, *Medieval Sculpture and Works of Art. The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 1987), no. 23.

39. See note 35.

40. See note 35.

41. See for comparison the scene in the upper register of a triptych, now kept in Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer, Inv. 8024; Angelo Tartuferi and Gianluca Tormen (eds.), *La Fortuna dei Primitivi. Tesori d'arte dalle collezioni italiane fra sette e ottocento* (Florence: Giunti Editore, 2014), pp. 336–8, no. 54.

42. See note 25 for the full reference to the annotated catalogues. This is probably J. Segers whose collection was sold in 1862 in Antwerp. Lugt, *Répertoire*, III, nos. 26911, 26913.

43. Maybe P. L. Hanick whose collection was sold on 20 December 1876 in Brussels. Lugt, *Répertoire*, III, no. 36959.

44. There is only one known statuette of Saint James the Greater, now in a [private collection in London](#), but James is seated rather than standing.

45. The panel is not mentioned in: Labarte, *Description des objets*.

46. See note 35.

47. Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings 1200–1550* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014), no. 180.

48. This probably refers to Jos de Doncker whose collection was sold on 31 August 1846, in Antwerp. Lugt, *Répertoire*, II, no. 18284.

49. The name is much more legible in the catalogue in The Hague. For De Nolvos, see note 36.

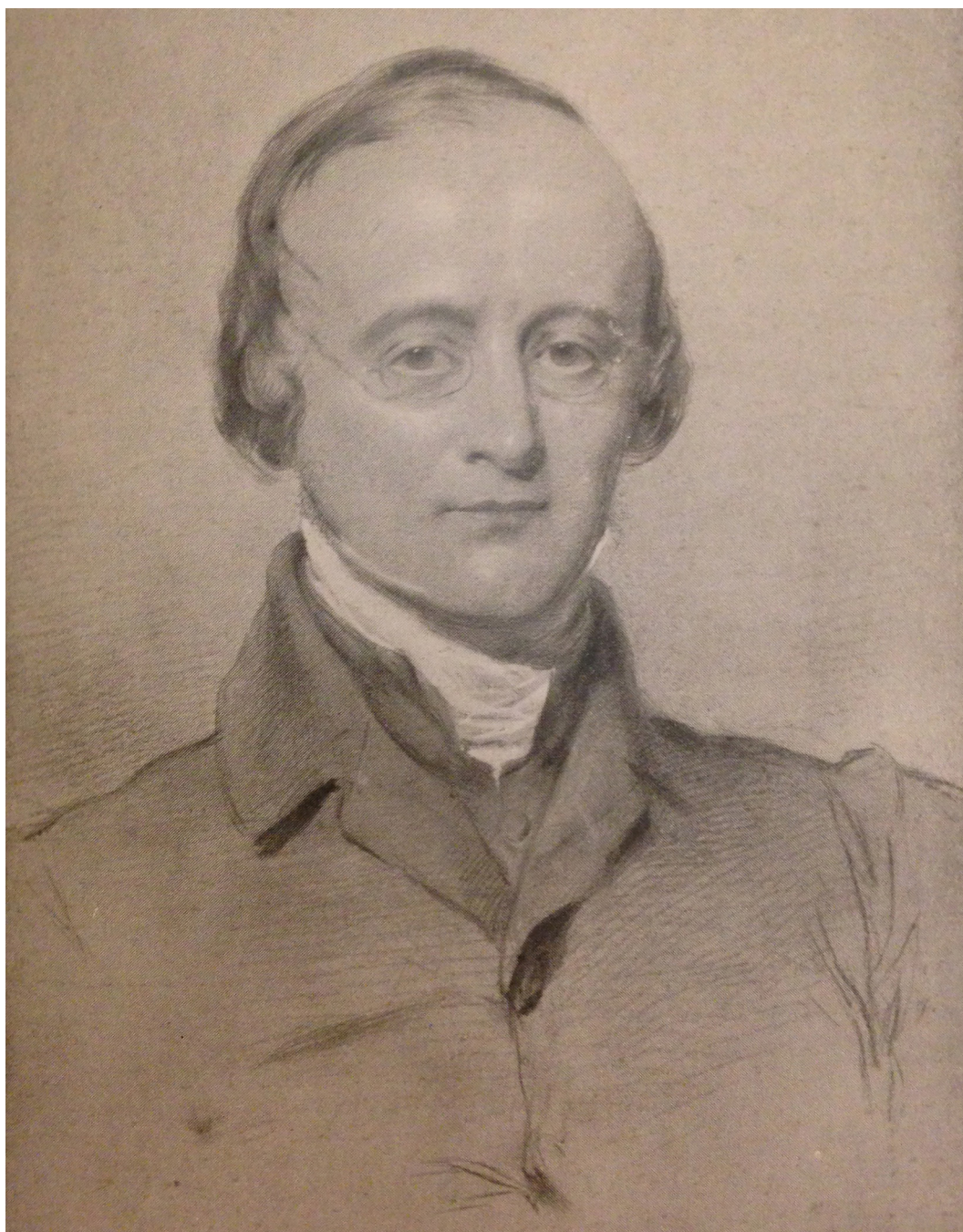
50. Ibid.

51. Williamson and Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings*, no. 7.

CHAPTER 8

'A GREAT HARVEST': THE ACQUISITION OF WILLIAM MASKELL'S IVORY COLLECTION BY THE BRITISH MUSEUM

NAOMI SPEAKMAN



8.1
William Maskell, from
a portrait by Richmond
in the possession of
Alfred Maskell, from C.
E. Byles, *The Life and
Letters of R. S. Hawker*
(London, New York:
John Lane, 1905), p. 594.

Since its acquisition in 1856 the collection of English clergyman and antiquarian William Maskell (b. 1814, d. 1890; fig. 8.1) has formed the core of the British Museum's holdings of Gothic ivory carvings. As this contribution has barely been studied,¹ the present article presents recent research into Maskell and explores the provenance of his

collection of ivories, which was recognised in the 1850s as one of the largest and finest in the world.² An influential supporter of the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum, he is one of the important mid-nineteenth-century benefactors who helped form large-scale public holdings of medieval antiquities in Britain.

Having taken holy orders in 1839, William Maskell served as an Anglican priest in Devon and Dorset. It was not until after 1850, when he converted to Roman Catholicism and resigned from his post of vicar of Saint Mary's Church, Torquay, that he emerged as a prolific collector of objects.³ Prior to 1850 Maskell was known for his extensive library and for his publications on ecclesiastical liturgy and history but this new collecting activity fostered his growing expertise in medieval material culture.⁴ Despite his conversion, Maskell did not take holy orders in the Roman Catholic church and spent most of his subsequent life as a country gentleman in his house at Bude and later Penzance. Over the course of the 1850s and 1860s his knowledge developed rapidly and he was by the time of his death recognised as one of the leading scholars in the field, with *The Tablet* noting:

In his late years he cultivated art, and was the author of, at all events, one work—that on Ivories ... He was previously known as the author ... of several controversial pamphlets and treatises on the Anglo-Roman controversy and the history of the Prayer Book and the English Reformation.⁵

One of Maskell's most active collecting phases was between 1850 and 1856, and was followed by the sale of 170 ivory carvings to the British Museum on 23 June 1856, for £2,444.⁶ This was the culmination of a relationship which had prospered over a number of years between Maskell and the museum, which stemmed from his activity as a book collector. His route to antiquities was not unlike that of other English collectors of the early nineteenth century, such as Francis Douce who gathered one of the largest early holdings of ivory carvings in Britain and like Maskell bought a number of them from book dealers.⁷ Both collectors were initially interested in acquiring books and prints before turning their attention to ivories. A notebook compiled by Maskell in 1844 lists about 375 liturgical volumes within his library,⁸ a portion of which was purchased by the British Museum for £2,240 in 1847. Other acquisitions were made in 1852 and 1864.⁹

In a letter dated 12 March 1856, the collector invited Augustus Wollaston Franks, of the British Museum, to view ivories at his house in Bude and select objects for the museum, specifying: 'As before with the books:—I shall not send them to you: you must come and determine about them here'.¹⁰ In a letter, written to the museum trustees the previous month, he was more specific: 'some years ago, the museum bought a collection of books which I had made: and I am glad to believe that Mr. Panizzi has never seen any reason to repent it'.¹¹ By the mid 1850s Maskell had also started to sell, loan and donate objects to Marlborough House, the precursor to the South Kensington Museum: the earliest record of an object with this provenance is a pair of sixteenth-century brass snuffers, which he presented to the museum in April 1855.¹²

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No. 19

CERTIFICATE OF CANDIDATE FOR ELECTION.

Name Rev. William Maskell M.A.

Addition, Profession or Occupation _____

Residence Clifton

Qualification Author of *Ritualia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* and other works of high reputation. Well acquainted and much attached to the study of medieval Antiquities

being desirous of admission into the SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON, We, the Undersigned, recommend him as likely to become a useful and valuable Member.

Dated this third day of May 1855

Personal knowledge.	General knowledge.
<u>Edw. Hawkins</u>	<u>William Walford</u>
<u>Thos. Hugo.</u>	
<u>Henry Ellis</u>	
<u>Augustus W. Franks.</u>	
<u>J. P. Wilson</u>	

Proposed 3rd May 1855.

Balloted for 24. May 1855.

Louvre	Musee de Clugny	Antiquarium	Kunstham. Berlin	Musee de Clugny	Antiquarium	Musee de Clugny	Antiquarium
1	1	5	3	6	4		
2				1	1		
3					1	1	
4						1	
5							1
6							1
7							1
8							1
9							1
10							1
11							1
12							1
13							1
14							1
15							1
16							1
17							1
18							1
19							1
20							1
21							1
22							1
23							1
24							1

Handwritten notes in margins:
 - Top right: *Maskell's collection of 111 objects in the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries, London, 1855.*
 - Bottom right: *Maskell's collection of 111 objects in the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries, London, 1855.*

In 1855 when Maskell joined the Society of Antiquaries, his signatories for election were drawn largely from the British Museum, and included Augustus Wollaston Franks, Edward Hawkins (both members of the Department of Antiquities) and principal librarian Henry Ellis (fig. 8.2).¹³ The record of his election praised his publication record and noted that he was 'well acquainted and much attached to the study of medieval antiquities'.¹⁴ His membership strengthened ties with authorities at the British Museum and Marlborough House. The first known record of Maskell's association with Franks dates from 1 June 1855, when the former lent the latter a document to show the Antiquaries at one of their meetings. Evidently aware of his shifting social position as a new Roman Catholic, Maskell also wrote to the Society on 16 June 1855, to point out that he was no longer known as 'Reverend', as mistakenly stated in his election announcement.¹⁵ His involvement with the Society, as with the British Museum, lessened significantly from the end of 1856. There is little other reference to Maskell amongst the papers of the Society after this year, although he is mentioned as the owner of 'a small little book of *horae*' in 1861.¹⁶ His obituary by the Society in 1890 noted '[he] occasionally exhibited seals, pictures and other antiquities at our meetings'.¹⁷

The first of Maskell's objects acquired by the British Museum Department of Antiquities were seven seal matrices and one seal impression in 1856.¹⁸ These items, in addition to two impressions presented two years previously to the Department of Manuscripts probably reflect Maskell's early interest in book collecting, as they were intimately related to written documents, and may have been among the first antiquities he obtained.¹⁹ Six of the matrices came from 'Gardner's collection',²⁰ i.e. Thomas Gardner, a London-based printer who published a history of Dunwich in 1754.²¹ Between 1856 and 1890 the British Museum acquired 198 objects from Maskell, mostly made of ivory or bone (170) and of these, ninety-two pieces date between c.1200 and 1530.²² These medieval ivories are

8.2
William Maskell's
Certificate of Candidate
for Election (3 May
1855). London, Society
of Antiquaries.

8.3
Alexander Nesbitt's
*Survey of Major Ivory
Collections* (dated 3 April
1856). London, The
British Museum.

predominantly religious and only thirteen have secular iconography (eleven mirror cases, one casket and one writing tablet). Prior to the acquisition the collection was already acknowledged as one of the finest in the country. Alexander Nesbitt, one of the three chief producers of moulds for the Arundel Society's manufacture of fictile ivories,²³ had an intimate knowledge of Maskell's pieces and had presented casts of some of them at the Society of Antiquaries in 1855 and 1856.²⁴ When surveying the sculptures for the British Museum on 23 April 1856, he compared the group with other such collections, both public (i.e. Hôtel de Cluny, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Antiquités in Paris, Berlin Kunstkammer) and private (Douce, Fejérváry) and found it to be the largest. It consisted of fifty-four fourteenth-century carvings as opposed to Douce's twenty-three, twenty at the Hôtel de Cluny and thirteen at the Louvre (fig. 8.3).²⁵ As the internal advocate for the acquisition, Franks also provided a report for the trustees, where he described 'a very remarkable collection' noting the diversity of the carvings, their quality and the speed with which Maskell had acquired them; '[he] has during the last few years turned his attention to Carvings in Ivory'.²⁶

As part of his report, Franks valued the collection and was surprised to find that, in his estimation, it was worth £426 more than Maskell's asking price of £2,444.²⁷ Such a significant difference indicates that the sale was not prompted by financial concerns; Franks noted that 'Mr. Maskell is quite willing to wait for the part or whole of the sum asked till next year'.²⁸ As an only child, Maskell had inherited his wealth from his father, a solicitor from Somerset of the same name.²⁹ He also seems to have had no desire for public acknowledgment; the sale was anonymous and Maskell did not publically identify himself as the previous owner even years later, when he noted in 1872: 'more than two-thirds of the ivories in the British Museum and certainly a large number of the most valuable, have been previously collected by a private person'.³⁰ From Maskell's actions and the surviving documentation, the main reasons for the sale are apparent: namely his eagerness to see his pieces in national collections, where they would contribute to educate the public, and the guarantee that his collection would remain intact. The sale was made possible by Maskell's willingness to offer such a collection at a lower price when it would have been out of reach to any public institution on the art market. He explicitly outlined some of these motivations in his formal offer letter to the trustees on 29 March 1856:

It would be a great satisfaction to me, if you should think my ivory carvings sufficiently important as a collection to be purchased for the museum ... I would rather see them in the British Museum, than contain them in my own possession, or allow them to be broken up and dispersed ... There is one value about early ivories which I venture to remind you of ... that they, with buildings, mosaics, and the illuminations in mss [sic] constitute almost the only records of which remains of that period ... Buildings and mosaics cannot be moved about, hence ... the immense importance of early illuminations and carvings in ivory for national collections.³¹

His desire to maintain the integrity of his collection may have arisen from witnessing the sale of English collector Ralph Bernal by Messrs. Christie & Manson from 5 March to 30 April 1855. The Bernal collection contained hundreds of medieval artifacts which were dispersed between museums, dealers and collectors; Maskell himself attended the sale and acquired objects from it.³²

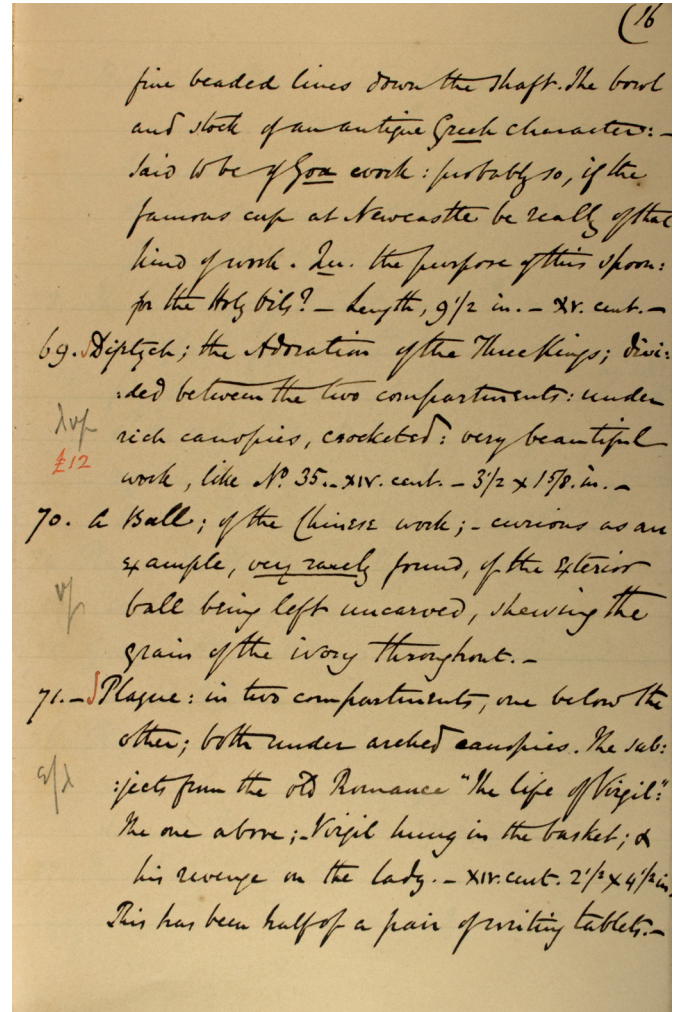
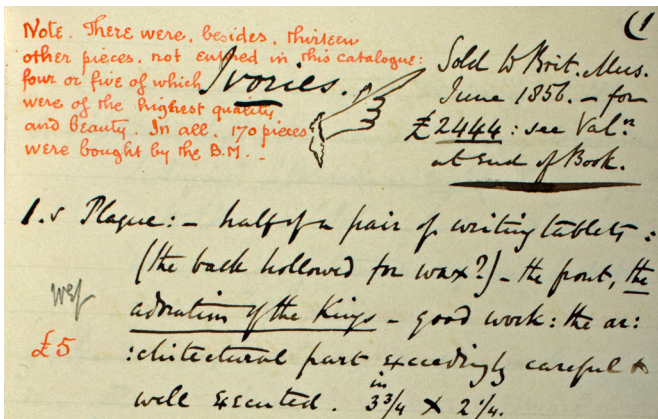
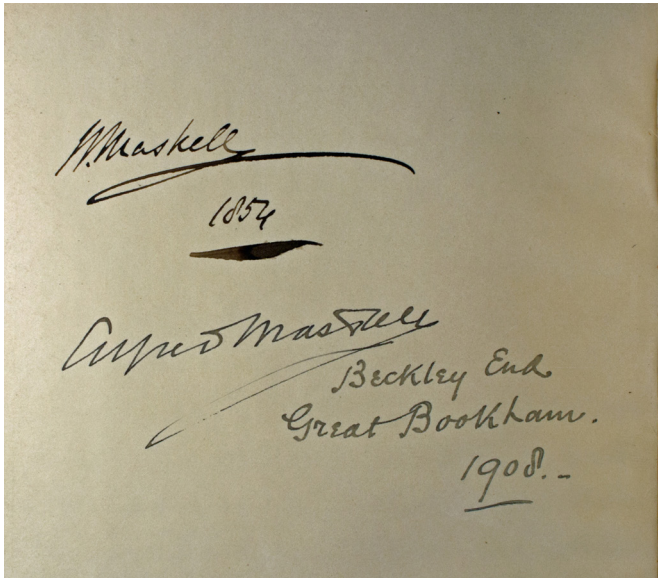
The increasing popularity and cost of ivories helped garner internal support for the purchase at the British Museum. Franks, particularly, argued in favour of the sale, explaining that rising market prices were due to 'greater demand for them [and] also from the gradual absorption of fine specimens into public collections'.³³ Maskell too echoed this concern over the continued pressures for museums in Britain, writing: 'works of art ... [are] increasing in money value as time goes on and the number of private collectors increases ... opportunities of securing works ... occur more and more rarely every year. To all this must be added the fact that public museums abroad are eager buyers'.³⁴ In making his case for acquisition Franks stressed the difficulty of sourcing new pieces: 'the void cannot be filled as in Greek and Roman antiquities by excavations on ancient sites'.³⁵ William Maskell's awareness of these challenges evidently played a part in deciding to sell his collection at no profit and is something he continued to do throughout his life. On 26 July 1875, for instance, he offered to the South Kensington Museum a silver saltcellar and six crystal buttons for £10 less than their valuation with the rationale that 'these objects should be added to the museum's collection'.³⁶ Maskell was very active at the South Kensington Museum, which acquired and borrowed some of his pieces; the earliest loan being dated 28 October 1861. From 1871, he produced acquisition reports and collection handbooks as an art referee,³⁷ and the museum acquired twenty-six objects from the sale of his remaining collection at his death in 1890.³⁸

A. W. Franks was the lynchpin in Maskell's relationship with the British Museum: he advocated for the purchase of the collection and advised the collector. Franks also put Maskell into contact with other amateurs, for example advising him in 1855 to visit Amiens to see Amédée Bouvier's antiquities.³⁹ Three known letters from Maskell, one undated and two from 12 March and 28 August 1856, show that Franks was his main point of contact at the museum. All three mention ivories, in addition to other items. The informal offer of sale, on 12 March, details: 'I would like to see my ivories either in Brit. Mus. or Marlborough House. If the Museum will like to buy them, I am glad to make them the offer ... please to let me know, when yes or No?' The undated letter, possibly written after the offer was made, asks humorously: 'What has been yet done or heard about the tusks?' On 28 August, as the acquisition is under way, he enquires whether Franks has 'ticketed and arranged the ivories yet?'.⁴⁰ In these three letters Maskell's affection for Franks is clear, he teases the younger man (twelve years his junior), asking him: 'Was that your embalmed body which Mr. Pettigrew unveiled and expounded about, the other day, if I were quite sure you are really dead I would have no doubt about it'.⁴¹ Maskell's respect for Franks' opinion is also evident; the letter dated 28th August 1856 contains a detailed



8.4
Drawing of a coconut
cup by William Maskell
in a letter to Franks
(dated 28 August 1856).
London, The British
Museum.

drawing of a sixteenth-century coconut cup beside which can be read: ‘What do you think of that young man? Shall I bring it up with me?’ (fig. 8.4). Whilst Franks’s responses are not known, Maskell’s questions indicate a dialogue between the two revolving around antiquities and the art market, as demonstrated by these other questions: ‘have you seen Chaffer’s ivories? And have you bought them?’ and ‘Let me know what [the] diptych at Rogers fetches tomorrow’.⁴² In the mid 1850s, such large-scale collections of ivory carvings were not unusual. In 1855 Joseph Mayer of Liverpool purchased the Fejérváry collection of ivory carvings, which he displayed in his museum at No. VIII Colquitt Street, Liverpool.⁴³ A year later Alexandre-Charles Sauvageot donated his numerous ivories to the Musée du Louvre.⁴⁴ Franks would have been aware of the opportunity that Maskell presented for the British Museum to also obtain a large collection of this kind.



The British Museum archives also hold a notebook Maskell kept through the years 1854 to 1856, which comprises a basic catalogue of 157 ivory carvings of various dates, and forty later enamels (fig. 8.5). The entries contain some provenance information and Maskell's opinions on the carvings including iconography and date, but it is not clear exactly when he began and whether the carvings are listed in order of acquisition. The notebook also has a number of later annotations in two different hands relating to a debate that took place nearly fifty years after the acquisition of the ivories. One hand, in red ink, is that of Alfred Maskell, William's son, who, in 1908, inserted comments throughout the notebook (figs. 8.5b and c).⁴⁵ Feeling cheated by what he saw as a low sum paid to his father, he wrote in the volume, which by this point was in the possession of the museum:

I have always understood that my father ceded this collection to the British Museum for what it cost him, because he thought the nation ought to have it. But, in view of the value of ivories, not only at the present day, but say as far back as 1870, it is difficult to understand the ridiculously small amount at which the nation acquired these superb examples.⁴⁶

This comment, complemented by added prices Alfred believed should have been paid, echoes an unsuccessful campaign he launched against the British Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum (as it was known from 1899), seeking compensation. Cecil Smith, then Director and Secretary of the latter institution, explained Alfred's motivations in an internal memo after the two had corresponded:

8.5 (a-c)
Extracts from William Maskell's *Ivory Notebook* (1854-6). a. Detail of Alfred Maskell's signature from his annotations in 1908. b. Detail of f. 1r of William Maskell's title page and Alfred Maskell's notes in red ink. c. F. 16r listing ivories 68-71. London, The British Museum.

he explained that one of his objects in making this enquiry is to establish some claim on his father's behalf on the government. As far as I could gather he thinks the smallness of the prices paid for the objects sold by him to the British Museum and South Kensington Museum constitutes a (moral) claim.⁴⁷

Alfred's assertions, starkly in opposition to his father's motivations, almost certainly had a financial dimension alongside the 'moral claim'. A photographer, Alfred lived in a cottage in Great Bookham (Surrey), a more modest abode than Bude Castle (Devon) where William resided from 1850 to 1890. He did not have the wealth of his father whose fortune at death was valued at £2,986 19s 15d.⁴⁸ Letters from Alfred to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1908 concerning the sale of some of his objects, and requests for payment, suggest that he was increasingly in need of money.⁴⁹

Other annotations made by Alfred at the same date appear beside objects that had not received comment by his father. A large Virgin and Child statuette ([The British Museum, Inv. 1856,0623.144](#)) is noted as one of William's last and most expensive ivory purchases, valued at £140 by his son.⁵⁰ William saw this as one of his finest carvings, writing in 1872 that no statuette 'is equal ... [to this] large sitting figure'.⁵¹ A third layer of text is provided in pencil sometime after 1908 by Charles Hercules Read, Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography at the British Museum. In the opening pages of the book he objects to Alfred's valuations and justifies the actions of his father and of the museum:

The red ink entries ... are founded on ignorance of the prices of works of art at the time when the Collection was sold (1856). When the individual sums are compared with the prices paid at the Bernal sale in 1855, for instance, it will be found that Mr. Maskell obtained a fair market price of the time, and received it moreover without paying auctioneers commission. If any further proof be required for this—*vide* the purchases of ivories and other similar things made for the S. K. Museum at the same time.⁵²

Both of these later additions, from son and keeper, address the reader and any future readers of the notebook, competing to convince us of their positions. At the time of writing, Alfred's claim to the government was a distinct possibility and this graffitied notebook may have been intended as evidence in the case he hoped to raise. It appears that Alfred did not pursue the case and his death in 1912 brought the matter to a close.

The unpublished notebook and an accompanying letter by Franks shed light on the source of some of the ivories and form a partial picture of Maskell's collecting practices. This evidence shows that he acquired primarily from London dealers and auction houses. Nine sources can be identified: 'Mr. Hertz' is Abraham 'Bram' Hertz, a London-based dealer and collector active from the 1830s to the 1850s; 'Mr Webb' is John Webb



8.6
Diptych purchased
by Maskell from John
Webb (Flemish,
fifteenth century). Ivory,
5.8 x 8.5 cm, London,
The British Museum,
Inv. 1856,0623.50.

(b. 1805, d. 1880), a dealer who worked as an agent for both the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum; and 'Chaffers' refers to successful curiosity dealer William Chaffers (b. 1811, d. 1892), active from the 1850s. 'Mr. Farrer' is likely to be Henry Farrer (b. 1798, d. 1866), picture dealer and restorer based in Soho and then Old Bond Street, London, and 'Bryant' could be either John Bryant, a curiosity dealer based in Wardour Street, or William Lamboll Bryant, a London-based dealer in curiosities, pictures and foreign china. Finally, 'Mr Bernal' refers to Ralph Bernal (b. 1783/4, d. 1854), British politician and former president of the British Archaeological Association, whose collection was sold in 1855.⁵³ However three other sources do not belong to this milieu. Two indicate a link with the Continent: 'Chev. Bunsen', i.e. Christian Carl Josias von Bunsen (b. 1791, d. 1860), was the Prussian ambassador to Britain from 1841 to 1854;⁵⁴ and 'Bouvier', i.e. Amédée Bouvier, was the antiquarian Maskell visited in 1855 and whose collection was sold at his death in 1873.⁵⁵ This undoubtedly brought the collector into contact with objects displaced as a consequence of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. One catalogue entry describes a crozier head ([The British Museum, Inv. 1856,0623.32](#)) that 'was preserved at Dijon, until the great French Revolution, with a relic of Saint Bernard, and a piece of his coffin, also in my possession'.⁵⁶ Maskell's new Roman Catholic connections are manifested by an object described as 'Hansom's present', i.e. from English architect Charles Francis Hansom (b. 1817, d. 1888), a prominent Catholic in the 1850s.⁵⁷ Surprisingly, eighteen ivories were purchased in 1855, only one year before the sale to the British Museum, six from the Bernal sale, and twelve from Bouvier, with the likely aim of making his collection as representative as possible.

Throughout his public and private writings Maskell emerges as an energetic scholar, who was as keen to challenge his contemporaries as he was to learn from them. He recorded in his notebook a lively difference of opinion between 'Mr Robinson (Marlborough House)', who argued for one of his ivories to be Italian from about 1600 and 'W. Franks' who believed it to be Spanish. Maskell disagreed with both, asserting: 'nonetheless it most certainly has a very Oriental character'.⁵⁸ Interestingly, the carving in question is indeed now believed to be a seventeenth-century piece from Macau.⁵⁹ Two pieces, markedly different in their style and composition, are accompanied with the following comment (figs. 8.6 and 8.7): 'Mr Webb told me both objects are of the same work and character as a very



8.7
Diptych purchased
by Maskell from John
Webb (French,
fourteenth century).
Ivory, 9 x 8 cm, London,
The British Museum,
Inv. 1856,0623.52.

superb round casket, preserved at Dijon, in which Charles of Burgundy is said to have kept his jewels'.⁶⁰ This remark refers to both [Inv. 1856,0623.50](#), attributed by Dalton in 1909 to fifteenth-century Flanders, and [Inv. 1856,0623.52](#), dated by Dalton in 1909 and by Koechlin in 1924 to fourteenth-century France. The object with which they were compared by Webb is a pyxis at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon ([Inv. CA 1462](#)), which was ascribed to Paris or Eastern France c.1300-30 by the museum in 2011. About a plaque in his possession (The British Museum, [Inv. 1856,0623.16](#) and [Inv. 1856,0623.73](#)), Maskell writes: 'this piece is said to be a fragment from the famous chair at Ravenna, of the time of Justinian:—and from which some portions have certainly been lost:—in which case it would be a portion of the history of Joseph'.⁶¹ The panel actually depicts two of the three magi and is believed to be tenth-century Ottonian.⁶² His own confident, although sometimes inaccurate, observations can be found in the margins, such as his description of two diptych wings as 'similar in design and manner of treatment', when the style of these carvings is markedly different (The British Museum, [Inv. 1856,0623.74](#) and [Inv. 1856,0623.73](#)).⁶³ Nevertheless the early foundations of Maskell's scholarship are laid out within the notebook, a process that would lead to his position as one of the foremost experts of ivory carvings by the 1870s.

Maskell does not appear to have maintained his relationship with Franks and the British Museum after 1856, even though he continued to work with ivory carvings in later years at the South Kensington Museum. Certainly the British Museum later came under criticism for its inability to acquire large collections of such objects (including ivories),⁶⁴ even though the museum had acquired these in the 1850s. Within a sheaf of papers concerning the 1878 donation of the Meyrick collection, Franks listed major government grants received to assist the purchases of the Bernal collection for £4,000 (1855), the Roach Smith collection for £2,000 and the Maskell collection for £2,444 (both 1856).⁶⁵

Tellingly, perhaps, these were the only recorded major grants to the Department of Antiquities between 1855 and 1878. The year 1856 marked a highpoint for ivory collecting at the British Museum, which was thereafter thwarted by internal opposition to the expenses of such purchases and increasing competition from private individuals and institutions alike. No documents have survived to explain why Maskell's relationship with Franks and the British Museum cooled after 1856. His increasing involvement with the South Kensington Museum, in contrast, may have been a reaction to the British Museum's decreasing support for medieval acquisitions, although there is no doubt that his role as an art referee at the South Kensington Museum was a major factor. The loan and subsequent acquisition of John Webb's ivories in the 1860s may also have drawn Maskell to the South Kensington Museum.⁶⁶ As two major ivory collectors and connoisseurs, they were closely linked; the dealer acted on Maskell's behalf at the Bernal sale and is referred to on five occasions in the ivory notebook. Later reports written for the South Kensington Museum in the 1870s and 1880s reveal Maskell's admiration: 'the collection of ivories in the Sth. K. Museum is of the highest character: no collection in England (nor do I know any on the Continent) can compare with it, except that in the British Museum: and even that collection must be ranked below it'.⁶⁷ Maskell was fully committed to the development of public collections and, once his ivories found a suitable home at the British Museum, his support of the South Kensington Museum was the logical next step. The words of ex-curator John Charles Robinson, writing to Alfred Maskell in 1909, fittingly summarise the great contribution the collector made to both institutions:

W. Maskell was a constant and ever willing helper and adviser, and his service was invaluable... Both museums owe to W. Maskell the first reception of the magnificent collections of ancient ivories which have since accrued to both institutions. This, moreover, at a time when such objects now of great pecuniary value, were literally obtainable for shillings ... the nation has reaped a great harvest of which he was the disinterested sower.⁶⁸

All references in *Courtauld Books Online* are hyperlinked. To navigate to a footnote, click on the reference number in the body of the text. To return back to the main text, click on the number at the beginning of the footnote.

All hyperlinks directing to online resources were checked and valid at the date of 14 March 2017.

1. Ormonde M. Dalton, *Catalogue of the Ivory Carvings of the Christian Era in the British Museum* (London: Printed by Order of the Trustees, 1909), pp. xvii–xviii; Marjorie Caygill and John Cherry, *A. W. Franks: Nineteenth-Century Collecting and the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 1997), pp. 82, 190–1; Paul Williamson, *Medieval Ivory Carvings Early Christian to Romanesque* (London: V&A Publishing, 2010), pp. 15, 20–2.
2. 'Letter from W. Maskell to British Museum trustees 29 March 1856' and 'Letter from A. Nesbitt to E. Hawkins, 23 April 1856', London, British Museum Archives, Officer's Reports, vol. 56, pp. 361–2 and 459–60.
3. On Maskell, see: James M. Rigg and Reverend David Maskell, 'William Maskell (1814–1890), Roman Catholic Convert and Liturgical Scholar', *Online Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18265>; and Angela Williams, 'William Maskell (1814–1890)', 2012, *Robert Stephen Hawker: His Life and Writings Blog*, http://www.robertstephenhawker.co.uk/?page_id=2135. On the dispute which led to his conversion, see: John Charles Somerset Nias, *Gorham and the Bishop of Exeter* (London: S.P.C.K for the Church Historical Society, 1951); and Walter Ralls, 'The Papal Aggression of 1850: A Study in Victorian Anti-Catholicism', in Gerald Parsons (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain, IV: Interpretations* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 115–34, esp. p. 126. For a number of original sources concerning the case, see: 'The Gorham Controversy', *Project Canterbury*, <http://anglicanhistory.org/england/gorham.html>.
4. His pre-1850 publications include: *Ancient Liturgy of the Church of England, According to the Uses of Sarum, Bangor, York and Hereford and the Modern Roman Liturgy, Arranged in Parallel Columns* (London: William Pickering, 1844); and *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiae Anglicanae, or, Occasional Offices of the Church of England* (London: William Pickering, 1846).
5. 'Obituaries', *The Tablet*, 19 April 1890, p. 25.
6. London, The British Museum, Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory, Antiquities Register, February 1856–August 1857, p. 28.
7. Francis Douce documented his acquisitions from 1803 to 1834. See *Collecta*, vols. I–III (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce e.66–68). My thanks to Glyn Davies of the Victoria and Albert Museum for sharing with me his notes on Francis Douce's collection. For more on this topic, see Glyn Davies, 'Francis Douce FSA (1757–1834): Scholar and Collector of Gothic Ivory Carvings', in Glyn Davies and Eleanor Townsend (eds.), *A Reservoir of Ideas: Essays in Honour of Paul Williamson* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2017), pp. 245–54.
8. *Notebook of the Reverend William Maskell*, London, British Library, Add. MS 38721.
9. Philip R. Harris, 'The Development of the Collections of the Department of Printed Books, 1846–1875', *The British Library Electronic Journal* (1984): pp. 114–46. For a list of books from Maskell which were in the British Museum by 1850, see: 'List of Printed Service Books of English Uses', *The Ecclesiologist* 76 (February 1850): pp. 257–83.
10. William Maskell, 'Letter from Maskell to Franks, 12 March 1856', London, The British Museum, Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory. Franks himself also recorded this relationship noting 'Mr Maskell of Clifton, whose collections of Printed books and Manuscripts are already in the Museum' in his *Report on the Collection of William Maskell*, 9 April 1856, London, The British Museum, Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory.
11. William Maskell, 'Letter from Maskell to British Museum trustees, 29 March 1856', London, British Museum Archives, Officer's Reports, vol. 56, pp. 361–2 and 459–60. Sir Anthony Panizzi was Principal Librarian at the British Museum from 1856 to 1866.
12. Alfred Maskell Nominal File, London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, MA/1/M/1093.
13. Thursday 24 May 1855, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*, III, issue 43 (1856): p. 199. The other signatories were John Charles Robinson from the South Kensington Museum and antiquarians Weston Walford and Thomas Hugo.
14. 'Certificate of Candidate for Election, 3 May 1855', Archives of the Society of Antiquaries. My thanks to Adrian James at the Society of Antiquaries for this reference.
15. William Maskell, 'Letter to the Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, 16 June 1855', Archives of the Society of Antiquaries: 'I am not now accepted as "Revd." And I shall be much obliged if you will alter it from lists of the members of the Society'.
16. William Tite, *An Address Delivered Before the Society of Antiquaries of London ... December 12th 1861 at an Exhibition of Early Printing Books. To Which is Subjoined an Address Delivered on Thursday 6th June 1861 at an Exhibition of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: Privately printed, 1862), p. 28.
17. 23 April 1890, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London* 13 (1891): p. 140. Maskell was also a member of the Burlington Fine Arts Club and was involved in the expulsion of the painter James McNeil Whistler from the club in 1867 as a result of a complaint by Francis Seymour Haden. See London, Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library, MSL/1952/1317, MSL/1952/1353/2/6/11 and MSL/1952/1353/3/3, also available online in 'The Correspondence of James McNeil Whistler', <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/>.
18. Inv. 1856,0602.1–8.

19. London, British Library, Inv. Seal XLIII.1 and 2.
20. London, The British Museum, Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory, Antiquities Register February 1856–August 1857, p. 25.
21. Thomas Gardner, *A Historical Account of Dunwich, Antiently a City now a Borough: Blithburgh, Formerly a Town of Note, Now a Village; Southwold, Once a Village, Now a Town-corporate; with Remarks on Some Places Contiguous Thereto* (London: Printed by the author, 1754).
22. A search in the Provenance field on the [Gothic Ivories Project at the Courtauld Institute of Art](#) will retrieve all Gothic ivory carvings owned by Maskell (c.1200–c.1530 and neo-Gothic pieces, excluding Embriachi works).
23. Edmund Oldfield, *Catalogue of Select Examples of Ivory Carvings from the Second to the Sixteenth-Century, Preserved in Various Public and Private Collections in England and Other Countries... Casts of which, in a Material Prepared in Imitation of the Originals, are sold by the Arundel Society* (London: Arundel Society, 1855).
24. On 7 December 1855, Alexander Nesbitt displayed casts including, ‘some admirable productions ... from Mr Maskell’s collection’ and on 7 November 1856, Mr Westwood exhibited, ‘casts from sculptures in ivory ... also the Raising of the Widow’s Son ... from the Maskell Collection’; *Archaeological Journal* 13 (1856): pp. 96, 416.
25. Letter from Alexander Nesbitt to Edward Hawkins, 23 April 1856, London, British Museum Archives, Officers’ Reports, vol. 56, pp. 459–60.
26. Franks, *Report*, ff. 1–2.
27. Franks, *Report*, f. 1.
28. Franks, *Report*, f. 1.
29. Rigg and Maskell, ‘William Maskell’.
30. William Maskell, *A Description of the Ivories Ancient and Medieval in the South Kensington Museum* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872), p. 121.
31. William Maskell, ‘Letter from Maskell, 29 March 1856’, London, British Museum Archives, Officers’ Reports, vol. 56, f. 361.
32. These are contained within an annotated copy of the catalogue for the Bernal sale, with additions throughout by A. W. Franks. See copy of the Christie and Manson *Catalogue of the Celebrated Collection or Works of Art ... of that Distinguished Collector Ralph Bernal Esq., ... Commencing on Monday, March the 5th 1855* kept in London, The British Museum, Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory.
33. Franks, *Report*, f. 2.
34. 16 July 1880, Art Referees Reports, London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, MA/3/50 27B.
35. Ibid.
36. Art Referees Reports, p. 161. London, Victoria and Albert Museum archives, MA/3/47 26A.
37. See Maskell’s Nominal File (London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, MA/1/M1094), and Art Referees files (London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, MA/3/50 27B, MA/3/48 26B, MA/3/47 26A, MA/3/51 28 and MA/3/49 27A). This work led him to correspond with Charles Drury Edward Fortnum at the Ashmolean Museum during the 1870s, I am grateful to Dr. Jeremy Warren for supplying me with this information and photocopies of the letters (Oxford, The Bodleian Library, U.L. 930. 01 Lon. V).
38. Sold by Christie, Manson and Woods on 25 July 1890.
39. Caygill and Cherry, *A. W. Franks: Nineteenth-Century Collecting*, p. 82.
40. William Maskell, ‘Letters from Maskell to Franks, 28 August 1856, and undated’, London, The British Museum Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory.
41. Ibid. This refers to Thomas Pettigrew who authored *History of Egyptian Mummies* in 1834 and held public un-wrapping displays of ‘mummies’, see Gabriel Moshenska, ‘Unrolling Mummies in Nineteenth Century Britain’, *The British Journal for the History of Science* (November 2013): pp. 1–27.
42. Maskell, ‘Letters from Maskell to Franks, 28 August 1856, and undated’. For information on Chaffers see p. 8 further and endnote 54. ‘Rogers’ may refer to William Gibbs Rogers (b. 1792, d. 1875), a carver who was noted also for dealing in curiosities and ancient carvings, see Mark Westgarth, ‘A Biographical Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Antique and Curiosity Dealers’, *The Journal of the Regional Furniture Society* 203 (2009): p. 158, <http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/42902/6/WestgarthM1>.
43. He would donate this collection to the town of Liverpool in 1867. See Margaret Gibson, ‘Joseph Mayer 1803–1886’, in Margaret Gibson and Susan M. Wright (eds.), *Joseph Mayer of Liverpool 1803–1886* (London: The Society of Antiquaries of London in Association with the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, 1988), pp. 1–27, esp. p. 11.
44. Alexandre Sauzay, *Musée impérial du Louvre. Catalogue du Musée Sauvageot* (Paris: Charles De Mourgues Frères, 1861).
45. Alfred Maskell (b. 1859, d. 1936) was a photographer, but also wrote a few art historical works: *Russian Art and Art Objects in Russia. A Handbook to the Reproductions of*

Goldsmiths' Work and Other Art Treasures from that Country in the South Kensington Museum (London: Chapman and Hall, 1884); *Ivories* (London: Methuen and Co., 1905); *Wood Sculpture* (London and New York: Methuen and Co. Ltd, and G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911).

46. William Maskell, *Ivories Notebook*, f. 1r-v. London, The British Museum, Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory. This unpublished notebook is divided by William Maskell into two sections, 'Ivories' and 'Enamels' which are foliated independently.

47. Report by Cecil Smith, 19 May 1909 (London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, MA/1/M1093).

48. Rigg and Maskell, 'William Maskell'.

49. Alfred Maskell Nominal File, London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, MA/1/M/1093.

50. Maskell, *Ivories Notebook*, f. 3r. Described by Alfred as 'The "Great Statuette" of B.V.M [Blessed Virgin Mary] [£] 140'.

51. Maskell, *Ivories Ancient and Medieval in the South Kensington Museum*, p. lxxxvii.

52. Maskell, *Ivories Notebook*, see pencil note from C. H. Read at the back of last flyleaf facing the beginning of the 'Ivories' section.

53. For profiles of Farrer, Hertz, Bryant, Chaffers and Webb, see Westgarth, 'Biographical Dictionary', pp. 75, 78-80, 99-101, 116, 181-3. For further details of Bernal and his collection see Henry Bohn, *A Guide to the Knowledge of Pottery, Porcelain and Other Objects of Vertu Comprising an Illustrated Catalogue of the Bernal Collection of Works of Art, with the Prices at which they were sold by Auction* (London: H. Bohn, 1857). For a discussion of John Webb, see Williamson, *Medieval Ivory Carvings: Early Christian to Romanesque*, p. 16.

54. On Bunsen, see: Susanne Stark, 'Bunsen, Christian Karl Josias von, Baron von Bunsen in the Prussian nobility (1791-1860)', *Online Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/53760>. It is possible that Maskell purchased objects from Bunsen in 1854 when the Baron sold the majority of his art collection and library from his London residence in advance of his move back to Germany in June of that year. See: Frances Baroness Bunsen, *A Memoir of Baron Bunsen, Late Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of his Majesty Frederic William IV, at the Court of St. James* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1868), II, p. 334.

55. *Catalogue des objets d'art et de curiosité ... tableaux anciens, composant la collection de M. Bouvier d'Amiens ... vente Hôtel Drouot*, 8-13 and 15-16 December 1873.

56. Maskell, *Ivories Notebook*, ff. 28v-29v, no. 121.

57. Maskell, *Ivories Notebook*, see unnumbered end flyleaf of the diary, which lists in pencil the price of a number of Maskell's objects. On Hansom, see: Denis Evinson, 'Hansom, Charles Francis (1817-1888)', *Online Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/48460>.

58. Maskell, *Ivories Notebook*, f. 19v, no. 83.

59. Inv. 1856,0623.118. See Dalton, *Ivory Carvings*, no. 583 and Tardy, *Les Ivoires: Évolution décorative du 1er siècle à nos jours* (Paris: Tardy, 1972), I, p. 46.

60. Maskell, *Ivories Notebook*, f. 9r-v, no. 35.

61. Maskell, *Ivories Notebook*, f. 7r-v, no. 30.

62. Inv. 1856,0623.16. See: Dalton, *Ivory Carvings*, no. 49; John Obadiah Westwood, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Fictile Ivories in the South Kensington Museum* (London: George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1876), p. 132, no. 300; and Peter Lasko, *Ars Sacra: 800-1200* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), pl. 101.

63. Maskell, *Ivories Notebook*, f. 19v, no. 83.

64. For a fuller discussion see Williamson, *Medieval Ivory Carvings: Early Christian to Romanesque*, pp. 14-15.

65. London, The British Museum, Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory.

66. Williamson, *Medieval Ivory Carvings: Early Christian to Romanesque*, pp. 16-21.

67. 16 July 1880, Art Referees Reports (London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, MA/3/50 27B).

68. Alfred Maskell, 'Letter from Alfred Maskell to Cecil H. Smith, 7 June 1909', London, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, MA/1/M/1093. Alfred quotes Robinson in this letter to Smith, Director and Secretary of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

CHAPTER 9

ON PAUL THOBY, THE MUSÉE DOBRÉE AND MEDIEVAL IVORIES

CAMILLE BROUCKE



9.1
Paul Thoby in his
library (c. 1934). Glass
positive, 13 x 18 cm.
Nantes, Musée Dobrée,
Inv. F 382.

Paul Thoby (b. 1886, d. 1969) is famous for his research on Limoges crosses and for his extensive study on crucifixes.¹ The fact that he was a curator at the Musée Dobrée in Nantes and a collector of medieval art in general, and Gothic ivories in particular, is however less well known. In 1969, Thoby bequeathed a large part of his collection to the Musée Dobrée (287 works of art), as well as his library, personal archives and



photographs.² His bequest included nineteen medieval ivories, which form over half the total of twenty-seven medieval ivories now in the museum's collection. This essay, as a case study of a twentieth-century collector of antiquities, aims to present the first findings of an ongoing study of Thoby's character and collection and will focus on his particular interest in Gothic ivories and on their provenance.

Thoby was born in Nantes in 1886 into a lower-middle-class family (fig. 9.1).³ A talented student, he entered the Catholic *lycée* Saint-Joseph in Ancenis in 1899 and passed his baccalauréat in 1905. At that time, only about 4,000 students obtained the baccalauréat every year out of a total of 7,000;⁴ at the age of nineteen, Thoby was thus already part of an intellectual elite. He became a surgeon in 1913 after studying in Paris and Nantes. In 1911, he married Louise Léauté, also of modest origins, but they had no children.⁵ As neither of their families seems to have had artistic preoccupations, Paul's interest in art history must have sprung from his academic education. It is clear that he shared this interest with his brother Henri. Paul had three older brothers, Théophile (b. 1881), Henri Jean (b. 1882) and Henri (b. 1884); after him, his mother gave birth to a stillborn brother and sister in 1890 and 1893 respectively. Théophile, serving as a gunner in the colonial army, died aged twenty-one in a military accident; Henri Jean passed away at the age of one. As the two younger and soon only remaining children, Henri and Paul most probably became the focus of their parents' ambitions. They both attended the same *lycée* from 1899. They shared a common interest in religious art, which was probably acquired during their studies. Henri, two years older than Paul, entered the priesthood at the end of his studies, and it was he who, around 1904, had the idea of writing a history of the crucifix that would eventually be brought to completion by Paul in 1959. His death in 1908 must have strongly affected the young medical student who, fifty-one years later, dedicated his book to him.

9.2
One of Thoby's albums from World War I: Laon Cathedral towers and Bishop's Palace (October 1914–September 1918). Album of photographs, 18 x 26.5 cm (closed). Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée, Archives Thoby 50.

Finishing his studies in Paris between 1911 and 1913, Thoby frequented museums and came into contact with fellow bourgeois students whose interest in art was part of their social upbringing.⁶ His curiosity, awakened in Nantes, probably found in the French capital city new ways to exert itself and to test his budding knowledge and connoisseurship. In a 1959 newspaper article he recalled his visit to a sculptor's workshop as a defining moment in his career. The artist could not find the words to explain how one would recognise a sculpture of Christ, such as the one he was restoring, as the product of the fourteenth century rather than of any other period. This prompted Thoby to try and answer the question himself, and he thus became in effect an amateur art historian from very early on.⁷

Turning twenty-eight in 1914, Thoby was sent to the front as a military surgeon. From August 1914 to January 1915, he kept a diary, along with dozens of photographs and glass plates that cover the whole duration of the war. These documents, though dealing mostly with the day-to-day military life, also show Thoby's already deeply rooted interest in heritage. Photographs of historical monuments and their sculpted ornamentation, such as Sens and Laon cathedrals are found alongside pictures of soldiers and military manoeuvres (fig. 9.2). In his diary, he cannot help noticing that the church where he is operating is of the thirteenth century,⁸ or, in another village, even as the sound of cannons is drawing closer, that the construction of one of the houses is 'remarkable'.⁹

Thoby opened his first practice in Nantes in 1914, just before the war. But it was when he returned in the 1920s that he really started collecting. An established doctor and surgeon, he was by then *de facto* part of the city's social elite. Since the nineteenth century, many members of the Nantes high society had been collecting and exhibiting artworks. Whereas some of these figures have been studied individually,¹⁰ a comprehensive analysis of these collectors, their relationships and the way they were considered by their contemporaries inside and outside the city, from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first, remains to be made. In Nantes, as in many other French cities, influential learned societies were founded at the end of the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century.¹¹ Formed and led by members of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, their membership operated through recommendation and cooptation. These societies and their boards were important meeting places for the male elite in Nantes, circles where they could share their interest for history, archaeology and the arts, and very often also for collecting. They regularly organised exhibitions revolving around artworks owned by their members. It was therefore natural for Thoby to join one of these organisations, and he did so in October 1920, being admitted in the Société archéologique et historique de Nantes et de Loire-Inférieure. The Société archéologique, founded in 1845, had created an archaeological museum in 1849, which had been given to the Département in 1860. In July 1921, the Société archéologique counted 215 members: at least a quarter of them were from the aristocracy, and another half from the bourgeoisie.¹² Although its members included a few well-known collectors,¹³ this was not a prerequisite to join the Société; its goals were, and still are, the study and preservation of antiquities and monuments. It did not

organise exhibitions, but published an annual *Bulletin* in which Thoby wrote three articles on subjects that were particularly dear to him: Gothic ivories in 1929,¹⁴ late-medieval crucifixes in 1931,¹⁵ and two early printed books from his collection in 1938.¹⁶ The two latter subjects led to the publication of books.¹⁷ These publications show that, as he found his place among the cultural elite of the city, he deepened his knowledge of medieval art to such an extent that, by the 1930s, he was regarded as an expert in Nantes and beyond. His two substantial studies on crucifixes, published in 1953 and 1959, brought him international fame and are still celebrated to this day.¹⁸

It was also in the 1930s that Thoby started getting involved in the administration of the Musée Dobrée. The Museum had opened in 1899 following the 1894 bequest by Thomas II Dobrée (b. 1810, d. 1895). Dobrée was from a Protestant family, the very wealthy heir of a ship-owner and merchant. He was also an avid collector with a passion for the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: prior to Thoby's bequest, almost all the museum's medieval artefacts came from Dobrée's collection.¹⁹ In 1862, he had acquired the site of the episcopal Manoir de la Touche in western Nantes: on this plot, between 1862 and 1898, Dobrée had a 'Romanesque-style residence' erected to house and showcase his art collection. This private residence was left to the Département de Loire-Inférieure, on the condition that it be used as a museum placed under the supervision of an Administrative Committee. The collections of the archaeological museum were from that date also kept and displayed at the Musée Dobrée, and in 1935 the two museums were merged.

In 1931, Thoby entered the museum's prestigious Committee, a recognition rewarding ten years of scholarly research and social networking. Indeed, most members of the museum's Administrative Committee were also prominent members of the Société archéologique. The chairman of the museum's Committee was then the marquis de la Ferronnays, whom Thoby probably met and befriended at the Société archéologique.²⁰ When de la Ferronnays decided to create a society for friends of the Musée Dobrée, he entrusted this task to Thoby, who became its first President. Moreover, when in 1934 de la Ferronnays became too busy with his political career, he suggested Thoby should act as Deputy President of the museum's Committee in his absence. In 1947, following the death of de la Ferronnays in March 1946, his widow gave Thoby an impressive late twelfth-century enameled processional cross, 'in memory of her husband';²¹ Thoby may have admired it when the marquis was alive. He also showed interest in an ivory Virgin and Child in de la Ferronnays's collection, which was said to have been commissioned by Blanche of Castile.²² It was probably thanks to him that this artwork was bequeathed to the Musée Dobrée by the widow of the marquis in 1955 (Inv. 958.3.1), at a time when Thoby was its curator.²³ The fact that Henri de la Ferronnays and Paul Thoby were both members of the Société archéologique points to a shared interest in antiquities, though nothing indicates that de la Ferronnays was active as a collector: no such preoccupation is mentioned by his biographers,²⁴ and the two hitherto identified medieval works of art from his collection, the cross and the Virgin statuette, had been bequeathed to his mother by the widow of Auguste de

Bastard d'Estang.²⁵ Thoby and de la Ferronnays had also, and perhaps more importantly, the same political and religious convictions since they were both right wing and fervent defenders of Catholicism.²⁶

With such influential support, Thoby quickly became more and more involved in the management of the museum: he was appointed deputy curator in 1938, assisting the curator on a voluntary basis.²⁷ He kept this position until 1951 when curator Bernard Roy died. He was then asked to step in as temporary curator for five years; after the arrival of a new curator, Dominique Costa, in 1955, Thoby, aged sixty-nine, remained as Director of the museum until 1960.

It is difficult to say if Thoby started collecting in order to consciously emulate his peers, or if collecting was an older wish that he was able to fulfil only from the 1920s, when he began to have the financial and social ability to do so. It was probably a mixture of both. We know that a few pieces were given or bequeathed to him by family and friends before World War I, so he may have expressed an interest in collecting artworks at an early stage.²⁸ Alternatively, these gifts might have been an appropriate way to please a young man with an interest in art, and the possession of these first modest pieces could have triggered a wish to collect. Nevertheless, it was only from the 1920s that he started buying artworks for himself.

Thoby's collecting practices can be studied thanks mainly to three notebooks now kept in the archives of the Musée Dobrée. As is recorded on the first page of each, he specifically requested that they be given to the museum with the collection. They are neatly organised—a habit he got from school²⁹—and full of information on the objects, although not all are mentioned.³⁰ One notebook is entitled *Antiquités* and comprises ivories, wood and stone sculptures, textiles, goldsmith work, earthenware, enamels, stained glass and paintings. Another focuses on secular eighteenth-century silverwork. The third one stands out: it is an extract from the first notebook, devoted exclusively and exhaustively to what Thoby considered to be Gothic ivories.³¹ All notebooks contain precious details: like in a museum register, for example, the items are listed in chronological order of acquisition. For each entry, Thoby wrote down the date and place of origin of the piece, its description and sometimes an iconographic analysis, a brief condition report, its measurements, a bibliography, the provenance of the piece and, when purchased, its price. Sometimes a conservation intervention on the piece was mentioned (the removal of a label, for example), and similar works of art were also occasionally referred to. Thoby possessed a huge photographic collection, with hundreds of pictures either taken by him or ordered from museums, as well as a large library where he kept, among many other things, catalogues from past auctions. Undoubtedly aware of the crucial importance of such documentation, he bequeathed all these photos and books to the museum along with the works of art. We can see from these three notebooks that Thoby was a rigorous and scholarly collector, akin to a modern museum curator in his method: he aspired to comprehensiveness, relentlessly deepening his knowledge of the pieces he owned, regularly adding to and correcting

his notes. Keeping books or records to monitor and comment on one's artworks is not an uncommon practice among collectors, whatever the time, the place and the scale of the collection.³² The content of the books may vary depending on the collector, his character and his skills, and what he thinks is important to record. For example, William Burrell's expertise in the commercial aspects of ship management certainly transpired in the detailed purchase books he kept for his large collection. Thoby seems at a crossroad between connoisseurship and curatorship, at a time when, in French museums, amateur curators tended to disappear in favour of professional ones. Thoby was indeed the last curator of the Musée Dobrée not having had a proper schooling in art history.

Thoby collected different kinds of objects, mainly decorative arts: goldsmith works, wood and stone sculptures, a few textiles, and ivories, but also a few paintings along with prints and drawings mainly related to local history. His chief interests were medieval art and the Vendée civil war during the French Revolution.³³ It is difficult to know to what extent Thoby's fervent Catholic faith played a part in his interest in medieval religious art. He always kept a rigorous scientific neutrality when speaking or writing on the topic, even in his works on crucifixes. Nevertheless, given his background, there is little doubt that religion was a dominant factor in his taste for medieval art, helping him understand it and precociously shaping his sensibility. The fact that he and his brother decided as young men to write a history of the crucifix is significant, even if the resulting publication half a century later made no reference to Thoby's faith. One should note, however, that even in his early writings what particularly appealed to him in a work of art was its physicality and the way in which the features of a figure were rendered, rather than the Christian iconography.³⁴ He for instance referred in his war diary to the sensuous pleasure derived from touching sixteenth-century wooden sculptures.³⁵

Yet the economic context was not in Thoby's favor: he was trying to assemble a collection at a time when the art market was not as vibrant as in the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁶ Genuine and interesting works of art had become scarce and expensive. Thoby, being a doctor, had adequate financial resources, but with no inherited fortune, these resources were nevertheless limited and had to be carefully spent, especially at the beginning of his career. This may explain why, in the 1920s, he almost always bought from other collectors whom he got to know and trust through his professional and personal networks. It was a usual practice among these circles and, for an inexperienced collector, a reassuring way to start. As we saw, the 1930s were a productive decade for Thoby, when his expertise as an art historian became widely acknowledged.³⁷ During that period, he organised two major exhibitions, and played an active part in the management and development of the city's most important museum. Taking advantage of increasing personal wealth, he became more confident in his purchases, buying from antique dealers in Paris and Nantes,³⁸ and, less often, at public auctions (see Appendix for full provenance and price details).³⁹



According to his notebooks, Thoby bought his first artwork in 1920 and his last in 1962. His collecting activity was most intensive during the 1920s and the 1930s, and drastically diminished from the 1950s. The latter may be explained by Thoby's new position as curator of the Musée Dobrée: contrary to some previous curators, he chose not to confuse his own collection with that of the museum, and to focus on the latter in his role as acting curator.⁴⁰ In very different ways, the work involved in the preparation for his books on Limoges crosses (1953), and on crucifixes (1959) on the one hand, and the death of his beloved wife in July 1956 on the other, might also explain the slowing down in his collecting activity.

At the end of his life, Thoby owned hundreds of works of art of varying quality. He carefully selected the ones he wished to give the museum: having been its deputy and acting curator for almost twenty years, he knew the strengths and weaknesses of its collection. Thus he bequeathed all his Gothic ivories, well aware that the Musée Dobrée had only two at the time, both of them acquired in the 1950s thanks to him.⁴¹ These two pieces were the aforementioned de la Ferronnays Virgin and a fourteenth-century diptych (*Inv. 953.7.3*) bought in 1953 during Thoby's curatorship of the museum from Brimo de Larroussilhe in Paris.

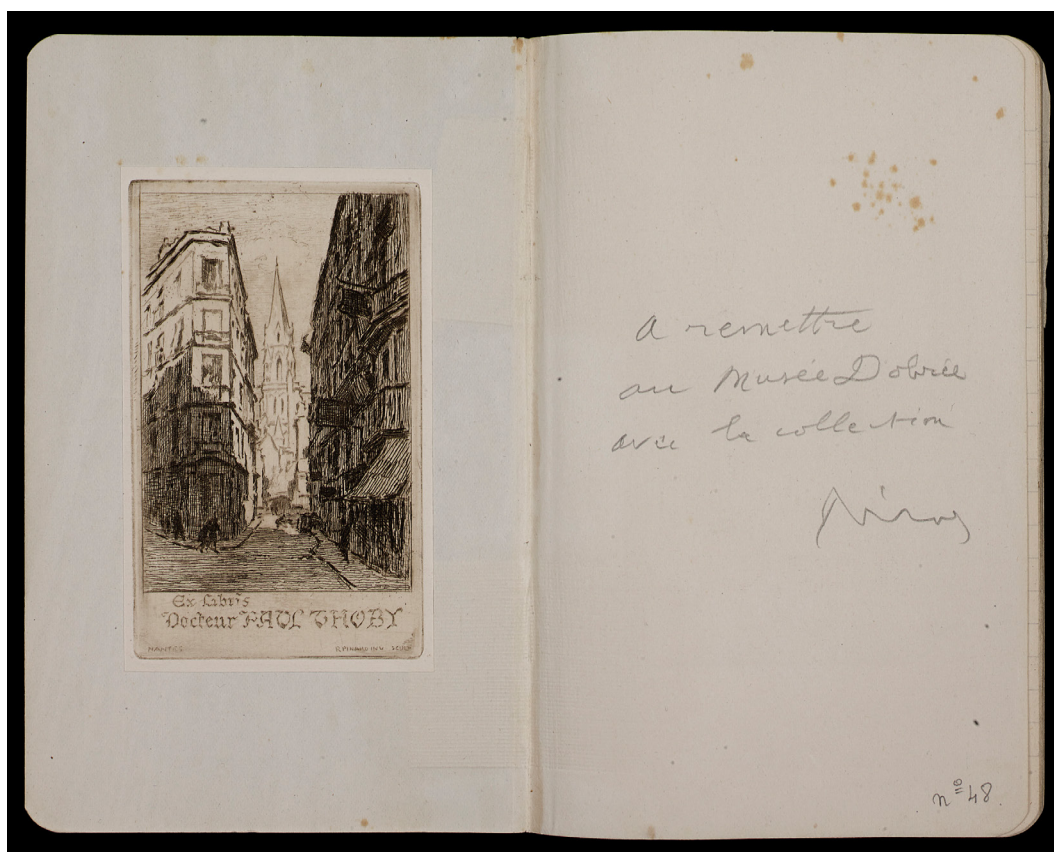
Often in the evening, to forget the troubles of the day, I get close to my ivories, certain to always find in them a new joy; and when I feel under my delighted fingers the precious caress of the worn and polished ivory, I dream of the many hands that held it before me ... [M]y dreams may make you smile, but they are the dreams of a collector, and that will be my excuse.⁴²

From the very beginning, Gothic ivories had a special place in Thoby's collection: he set them apart in various ways, dedicating a notebook to them, to the exclusion of ivories from other periods.⁴³ Thoby started it in 1930 and referred to it as his 'special catalogue of Gothic ivories' (figs. 9.5-9.9).⁴⁴ It is illustrated with black and white photographs; the few pieces sculpted in the round are photographed twice, front and back, a practice that was very much ahead of its time as, until recently, reverse views of ivory carvings were few and far between. All the Gothic ivories are numbered with Roman numerals. His particular passion for this type of object was well known: in a newspaper article published in September 1949, Thoby was introduced as a 'collector of ivories'.⁴⁵ From the partial description of his study, we are given to understand that Gothic ivories could be seen in different parts of his library: two Virgins were on the desk, panels were in a display case, and others pieces on the shelves of the bookcase. By that time, the collection was complete and it still exists intact in the Musée Dobrée today, as Thoby bought his last Gothic ivory in 1945 and never parted with any of them. Pictures of his library taken in June 1928 were found in his archives (figs. 9.3 and 9.4),⁴⁶ where one can see all the ivories he had acquired by that time.⁴⁷ Even then, Gothic ivories were the only pieces of his collection to be exhibited in a special

Previous page:

9.3
Anonymous, Thoby's library (1928). Photograph, 17.9 x 12.9 cm. Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée, Dossier Thoby.

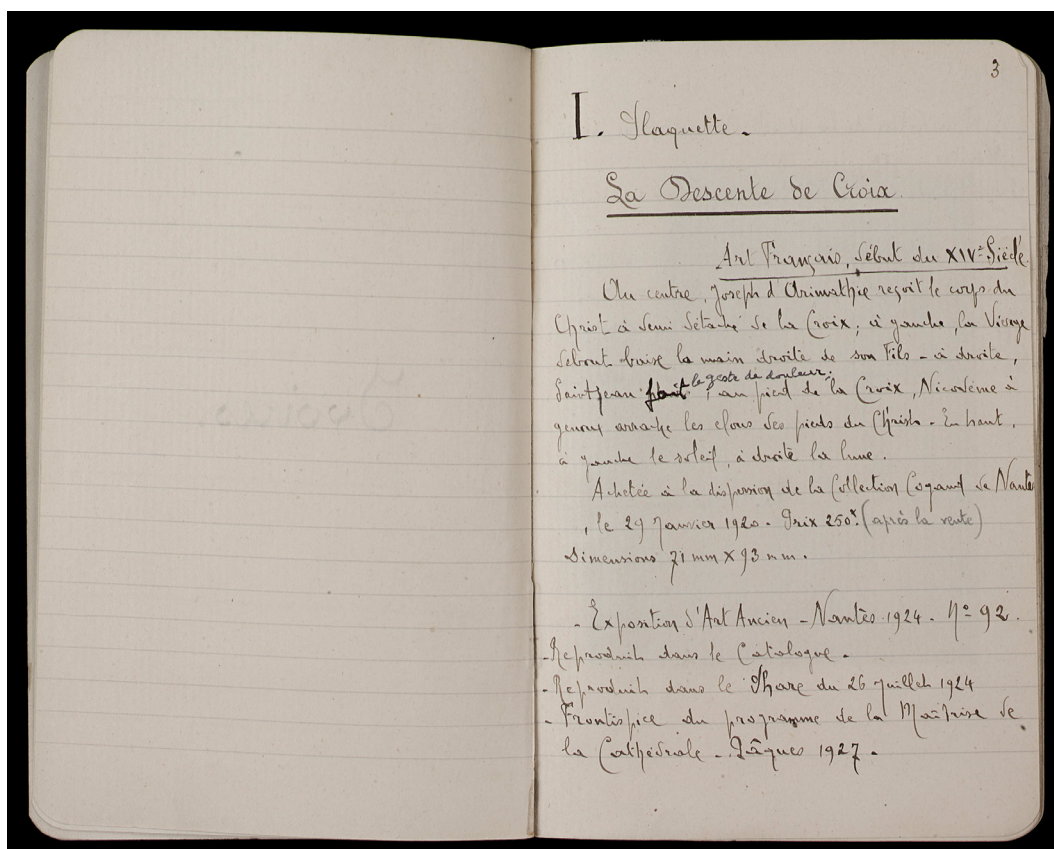
9.4
Anonymous, Display case for ivories in Thoby's library (1928). Photograph, 17.9 x 12.8 cm. Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée, Dossier Thoby.



9.5
Paul Thoby, *Ivoires*
(1930–69?). Handwritten notebook with photographs, 11 x 17 cm (closed), Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée, Dossier Thoby, Carnet no. 48, inside of the upper cover with bookplate and f. 1r.

display case. It is also worth noting that in the 1930s he chose to be photographed in front of this very case which by then also contained a carving of the Trinity (Inv. 969.7.26), a pax (Inv. 969.7.27) and a diptych (Inv. 969.7.33), all new additions, as they were bought in 1930 (fig. 9.1).

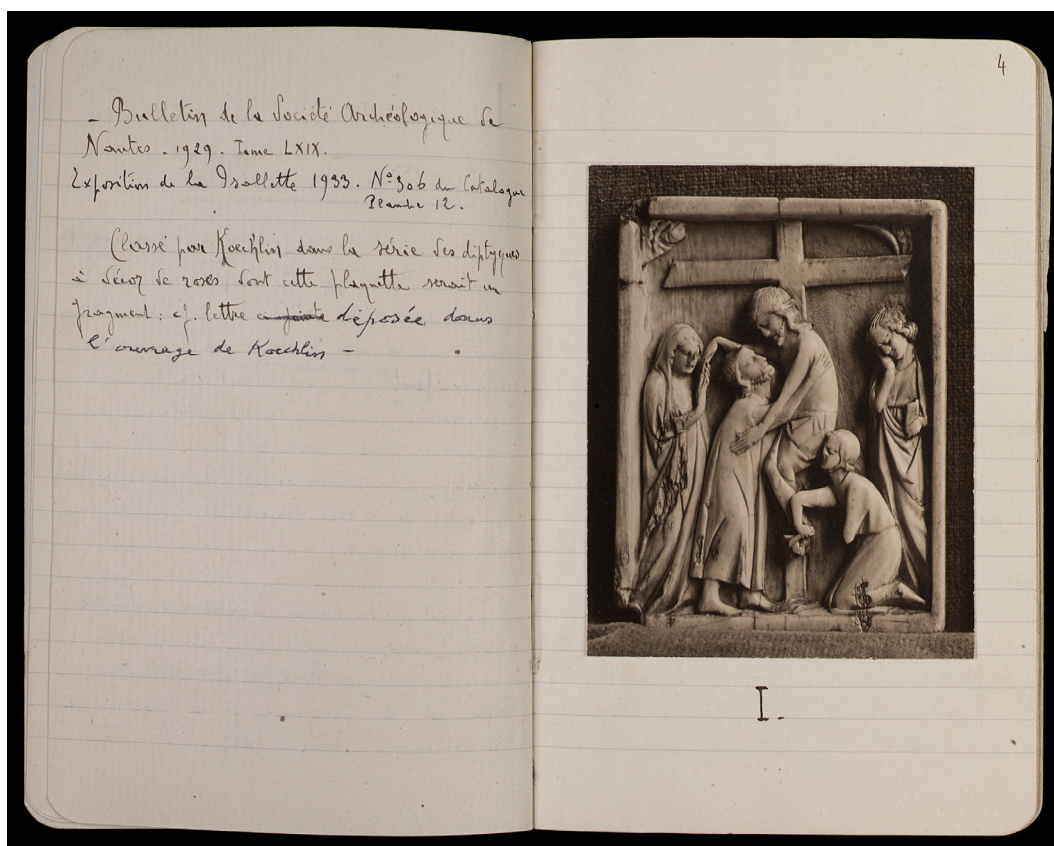
Thoby's passion for Gothic ivories was nevertheless restrained by the economic context. Metalwork and Gothic ivory statuary, which had already caught the eye of nineteenth-century collectors, had become scarce and expensive on the twentieth-century art market, but one could still find smaller, less impressive pieces, such as ivory panels. It is no wonder that Thoby first turned his attention to this kind of artwork before looking for bigger and more expensive pieces as his wealth and confidence were growing. His first six ivory carvings came from the collection of Paul Marie Coyaude, also a medical doctor. Thoby knew his son, Paul Joseph Coyaude, who was two years his junior. They met either before the war, while training to be doctors, or during the conflict, as they both served in the same army corps. Coyaude's father owned a collection of antiquities, which was partly auctioned after his death in 1920. It was at this sale that Thoby bought for 250 francs his first Gothic ivory: a panel with a Descent from the Cross, now considered to be from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century (figs. 9.6 and 9.7; Inv. 969.7.34).⁴⁸ His notebook explains that he purchased it 'after the auction'.⁴⁹ As the first artwork he ever purchased, it must have held particular value to him and he often later referred to it in interviews and conversations. It constituted a good way to start collecting: a safe purchase, of good quality, not too expensive.⁵⁰ His friendship with Paul Joseph Coyaude brought more ivories: in 1922, Paul gave him a diptych leaf as a present (Inv. 969.7.36), and sold a small statuette to him in 1924 (Inv. 969.7.5) and three panels in 1925 (Inv. 969.7.2; Inv. 969.7.37; Inv. 969.7.35). The Coyaude collection is quite obscure and I could find no documentation relating to it or to the 1920 auction. The modalities of the sale thus remain mysterious: only part of the collection would appear to have been sold, as Paul Joseph Coyaude kept at least a few Gothic ivories and two painted enamels.⁵¹ He later passed them on to Thoby, some as gifts, some as sales. Incidentally it is interesting to note that the Coyaudes, both senior and



9.6

Paul Thoby, *Ivoires* (1930-69?), no. I (entry for [Inv. 969.7.34](#)).

Handwritten notebook with photographs, 11 x 17 cm (closed), Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée, Dossier Thoby, Carnet no. 48, ff. 2v-3r.



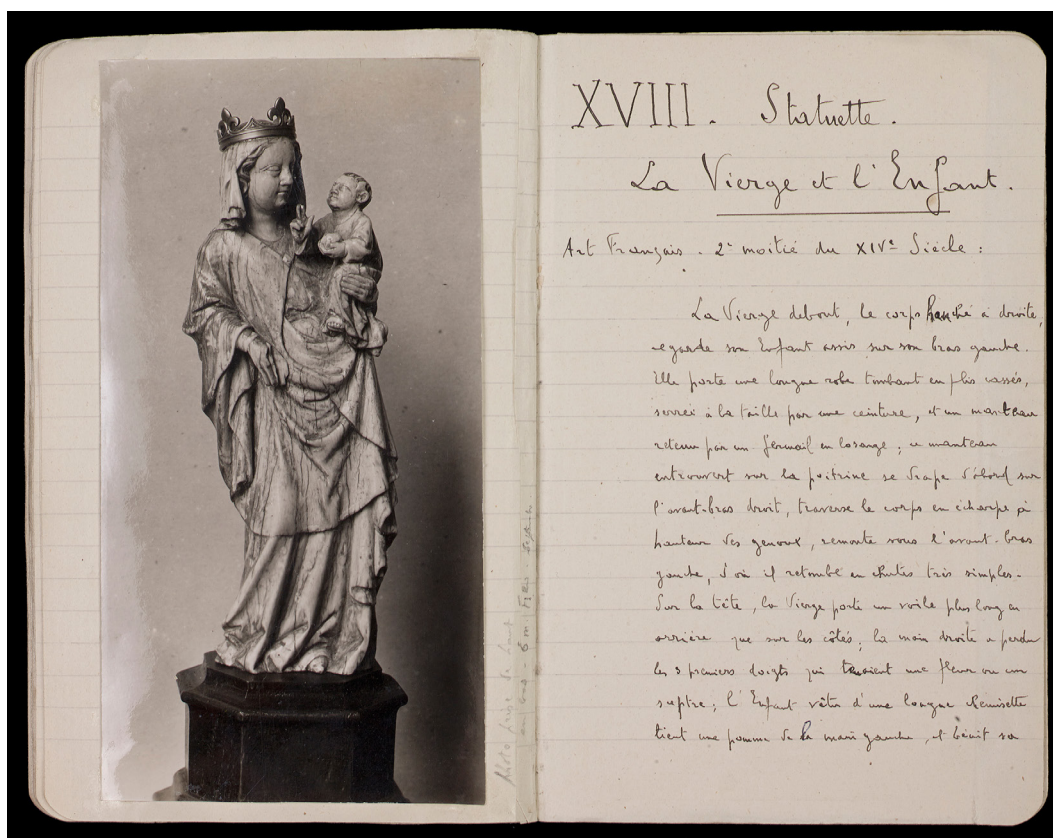
9.7

Paul Thoby, *Ivoires* (1930-69?), no. I (entry for [Inv. 969.7.34](#)).

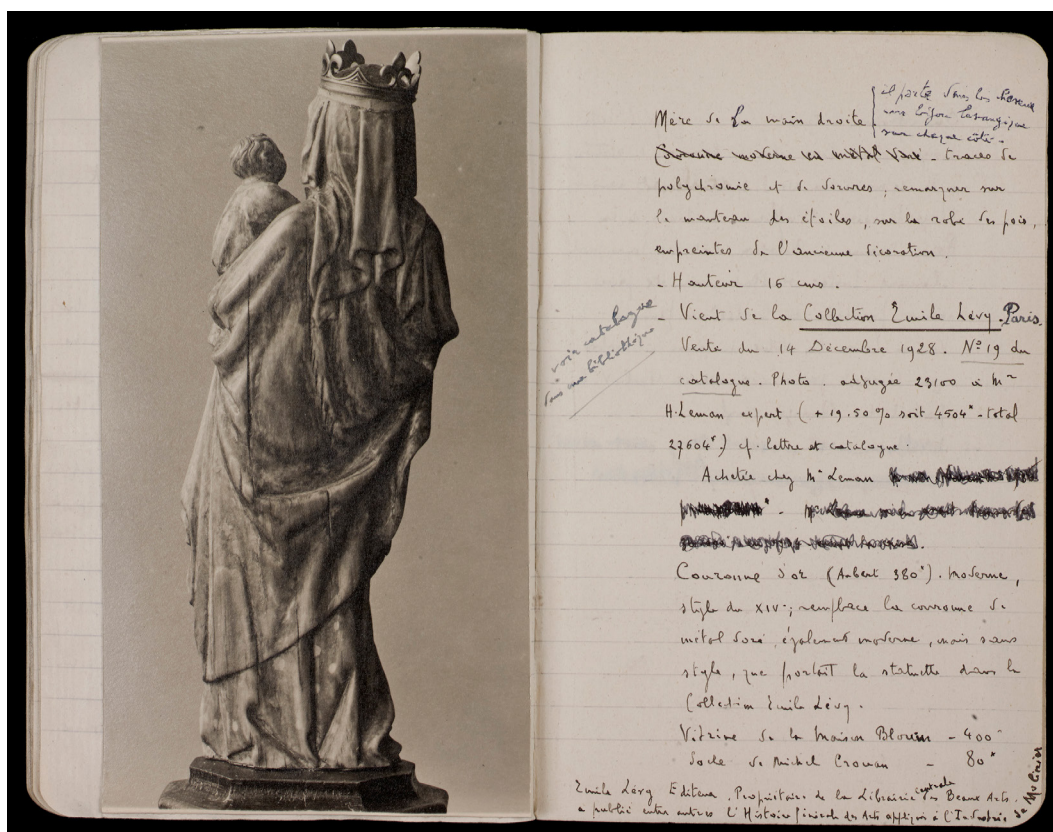
Handwritten notebook with photographs, 11 x 17 cm (closed), Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée, Dossier Thoby, Carnet no. 48, ff. 3v-4r.

junior, and Thoby were all doctors, members of a professional network that shared common values, tastes and knowledge, and had the means to buy and collect art.

No study of the market for medieval art in France during the first half of the twentieth century exists to date. However Thoby's notebook shows that the prices he paid for panels in the 1920s and 1930s were much lower than what he spent on the few more three-dimensional ivories he purchased. Between 1920 and 1940, Thoby spent between 250 and 5,000



9.8
Paul Thoby, *Ivoires* (1930-69?), no. XVIII (entry for [Inv. 969.7.8](#)). Handwritten notebook with photographs, 11 x 17 cm (closed). Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée, Dossier Thoby, Carnet no. 48, ff. 36v-37r.



9.9
Paul Thoby, *Ivoires* (1930-69?), no. XVIII (entry for [Inv. 969.7.8](#)). Handwritten notebook with photographs, 11 x 17 cm (closed). Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée, Dossier Thoby, Carnet no. 48, ff. 37v-38r.

old Francs on plaques and rosary beads, the highest sum being for the diptych bought in 1930; but he spent 1,100, 5,000 and 18,000 Francs on three-dimensional artworks: a late-medieval Virgin and Child ([Inv. 969.7.21](#)); the previously mentioned Trinity; and another Virgin and Child (figs. 9.8 and 9.9; [Inv. 969.7.8](#)).⁵² It is likely that the first museum catalogues,⁵³ the first important exhibitions⁵⁴ and Koechlin's work on Gothic ivories, published in 1924,⁵⁵ unwillingly played a significant part in driving the prices up. Thoby paid 6,000 Francs for his last purchase in 1945, a fine relief representing the Deposition ([Inv.](#)

969.7.17), which he attributed to the ‘atelier des grands retables de la Passion’ as defined by Koechlin. These economic circumstances may explain why Thoby owned only nineteen ivories out of hundreds of artworks: seven panels, one relief, one complete diptych, one writing tablet, four statuettes, one reliquary medallion, one rosary bead, a pax and a belt buckle. If this small number pales in comparison with large nineteenth-century collections such as that of William Maskell,⁵⁶ it compares with other French twentieth-century collections such as those assembled by Henri Marcus or Edouard and Marie-Joseph Richard.⁵⁷ Next to these last two collections, the number of ivories in Thoby's even seem high, showing his particular interest for this kind of artwork, when Marcus's main focus was on art from Lorraine and militaria,⁵⁸ and the Richard's on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century secular goldsmith work.⁵⁹

Throughout his career, Thoby acquired ivories ranging in quality: though he had more means from the end of the 1920s onwards, he kept buying unremarkable pieces (Inv. 969.7.31; Inv. 969.7.33; Inv. 969.7.27) alongside more interesting ones like the rare reliquary medallion, the Trinity, or the Virgin and Child statuettes bought in 1930 and 1936 (Inv. 969.7.30; Inv. 969.7.26; Inv. 969.7.8). One major acquisition was the statuette of the Virgin and Child bought in 1936 for 18,000 Francs. This was by far the most expensive ivory Thoby ever bought, though not the most expensive piece in his whole collection,⁶⁰ and undoubtedly one of the most important, quality-wise. Curiously, if the price of this ivory statuette was carefully noted, as for the other ivories, all the information about the purchase was crossed out at an unknown date (see fig. 9.9). It is still possible however to decipher part of the cancelled annotations. It appears that Thoby bargained a lot for this piece: it was offered to him in 1934 for 32,000 Francs by the Parisian art dealer Henri Leman who had purchased it for 23,100 Francs,⁶¹ at the Émile Lévy sale on 14 December 1928 (lot 19). Thoby had probably already noticed this piece in 1928, as he had the auction catalogue in his library. The price he eventually paid for it is uncertain: the museum archives contain a bill for 18,000 Francs, but the notebook seems to record the sum of 24,000, which would be closer to what Leman had spent some years before. It was a time of severe economic crisis and this might explain why the merchant had difficulty selling the piece and the substantial fall in its value. This was still a significant investment, special enough for Thoby to order a display case and a base for the piece, as well as a new golden crown ‘in the fourteenth-century style’ to replace the previous one, also post-medieval, but ‘without style’.⁶²

In 1924 Thoby wrote to Raymond Koechlin to congratulate him on the publication of *Les Ivoires gothiques français* and ask for his expertise on the two first ivories he had acquired. In his answer, the renowned scholar linked this piece to the ‘atelier des diptyques à décor de roses’, and expressed his regret at not being able to publish it in his study, stressing that there were many ivories in private hands of which he had no knowledge.⁶³ In the early 1920s, Thoby was still learning about medieval ivories, which were in any case a relatively new field of research at the time. The content of his library and two lectures he

gave in 1933 and 1934 on the topic show that Thoby endeavoured to acquire a more extensive knowledge of this material.⁶⁴ When he contacted Margaret Longhurst, of the Victoria and Albert Museum,⁶⁵ about the Trinity carving he had bought in 1930, she agreed with him in thinking that it was an English work of the fourteenth century.⁶⁶

But this expertise is to be put in perspective. As previously mentioned, at the same time as he made this valid assessment of the Trinity, Thoby bought a nineteenth-century netsuke thinking it was a sixteenth-century rosary bead—a mistake he probably never became aware of, since it was never corrected in his notebook. Also in 1930, he purchased a diptych combining the Virgin and Child and the Crucifixion about which Danièle Gaborit-Chopin expressed doubts during a visit at the Musée Dobrée in 1989. Two other ivories are very puzzling, namely the Crucifixion panel and panel featuring the Virgin and Child with saints that were bought from Coyaud in 1925 (along with a genuine writing tablet). The upper part of the Crucifixion plaque, with its strange ogee shape, has no equivalent in Gothic ivory carving (*Inv.* 969.7.2). Furthermore, the inconsistencies and anachronisms in the soldiers' equipment and armour are problematic: on the right the horse trappings, especially the stirrups, evoke the thirteenth century, while on the left two soldiers wear an armour *alla romana* of a kind that appeared in Italy in the fourteenth century and was in use until the beginning of the sixteenth century.⁶⁷ The second panel presents an unusual iconography and, if authentic, may have answered a specific commission: the Virgin and Child are accompanied by Saint Catherine and Saint John the Baptist to the left and an unidentified male saint and Saint Helena holding a cross to the right (*Inv.* 969.7.35). It mixes figures that are clearly related to Italian Trecento painting, and framing devices inspired by French Gothic architecture, alluding perhaps to the sculpted frames of some Italian Primitives paintings. One can understand how such a piece would have appealed to Thoby, but its characteristics make it either extremely rare or dubious.⁶⁸

While the history of collecting has been a rising field of research for the past twenty-five years, the focus has decidedly been on the nineteenth century, with the early twentieth century attracting much less attention. In the latter period, medieval art collectors were far less numerous and prominent than their predecessors, partly owing to the fact that this category of artworks was not as readily available on the market as before. Research has nevertheless recently developed, mostly at the initiative of museums wanting to gather information about the history of their collections.⁶⁹

As an exceptionally well-documented case, Thoby's interest in Gothic ivories helps us understand the opportunities and difficulties encountered by a collector of medieval ivories in the first half of the twentieth century. It is indeed extremely rare to come across a collection kept intact, together with the detailed notebooks, correspondence, original photographs and full library of the person who assembled it. Thoby's study is not only of great importance to the history of the Musée Dobrée and of Nantes society in the early twentieth century, but also constitutes a precious testimony towards a better understanding of collecting practices in that period.

Appendix: Provenance and prices

Ivoires (1930-69?)	Accession number	Description	Price of purchase	Date of purchase	Place of purchase	Dealer	Former owner
I	969.7.34	Panel: Descent from the Cross	250 Francs	29 January 1920	Nantes		Coyaud
II	969.7.36	Panel: Nativity and Adoration of the Magi	Gift	12 October 1922	Nantes		Coyaud
III	969.7.5	Statuette: Virgin and Child	500 Francs	29 October 1924	Nantes		Coyaud
IV	969.7.2	Panel: Crucifixion	1,500 Francs	5 June 1925	Nantes		Coyaud
V	969.7.37	Writing tablet: Virgin between saint John the Baptist and saint Christopher	500 Francs	5 June 1925	Nantes		Coyaud
VI	969.7.35	Panel: Virgin and Child among saints	1,000 Francs	5 June 1925	Nantes		Coyaud
VII	969.7.38	Left leaf of a diptych: Virgin in glory	3,200 Francs	26 October 1925	Paris	Garnier, 79 rue des Saints Pères, Paris	Kélékian
VIII	969.7.32	Right leaf of a diptych: Crucifixion	1,800 Francs	7 June 1928	Paris	Garnier	
IX	969.7.30	Reliquary medallion	1,300 Francs	20 June 1929	Nantes	Mayet, Nantes	
X	969.7.26	Statuette (?): Trinity	5,000 Francs	24 February 1930	Paris	Lambert, 5 rue Bonaparte, Paris	Planquart
XI	969.7.31	Panel: Saint Michael between Saint James and Saint Christopher	1,000 Francs	24 February 1930	Paris	Lambert	
XIII	969.7.21	Statuette: Virgin and Child	1,100 Francs	18 December 1930	Nantes	Roberteau, Nantes	
XII	969.7.33	Diptych: Virgin and Crucifixion	5,000 Francs	1930	Paris	Lamert	
XV	969.7.3	Rosary bead: head of young man, lady and Death	700 Francs + fees	7 June 1932	Paris (auction)		Lowenfeld
XVI	969.7.27	Pax: Saint Roch	500 Francs	15 May 1934	Nantes	Rochard, Nantes	
XVII	969.7.19	Belt buckle: Crucifixion	350 Francs	27 July 1935	Paris		
XVIII	969.7.8	Statuette: Virgin and Child	18,000 or 24,000 Francs	12 November 1936	Paris	Leman, 37 rue Laffitte, Paris	Levy
XIX	969.7.17	Relief: Descent from the Cross	6,000 Francs	28 April 1945	Nantes		Polo

All references in *Courtauld Books Online* are hyperlinked. To navigate to a footnote, click on the reference number in the body of the text. To return back to the main text, click on the number at the beginning of the footnote.

All hyperlinks directing to online resources were checked and valid at the date of 14 March 2017.

1. Paul Thoby, *Les Croix limousines de la fin du XII^e siècle au début du XIV^e siècle* (Paris: A. and J. Picard, 1953); Paul Thoby, *Le Crucifix des origines au Concile de Trente: étude iconographique* (Nantes: Bellanger, 1959).

2. Thoby's books are now part of the library at the Musée Dobrée; an inventory was drawn in 1969 and can be consulted on site, like his archives. The photographs are currently being catalogued.

3. Public records show that his grandparents were farmers on both sides; his father, Pierre Marie Théophile Thoby, was a salesman and his mother, Louise, born Rortais, a seamstress.

4. Michel Leymarie, *La France contemporaine. De la Belle Époque à la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1999), p. 81.

5. Her father was a baker, her mother a housewife.

6. At the beginning of the twentieth century in France, being a bourgeois meant not only owning property and having money, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, sharing common values and a way of life. This shared culture particularly included knowledge, appreciation and possession of art. On this topic, see Leymarie, *La France contemporaine*, pp. 79–81. Through his education, Thoby was able to raise himself from middle-class to bourgeoisie, his interest in art being an asset for his integration in this new milieu.

7. *La Résistance de l'Ouest* (2 December 1959): '[C]e jour où, étudiant en médecine, je visitai l'atelier d'un sculpteur. Il réparait un Christ du XIV^e siècle. Il m'expliqua les beautés et les caractéristiques de l'effigie. Je lui demandai donc comment on reconnaît un Christ du XIV^e siècle d'avec un Christ d'une autre époque. Et de me répondre: "Ce sont des choses qui se sentent mais qui ne s'expliquent pas..." Cette réponse ne m'a pas satisfait. Il y avait une lacune qui me laissa perplexe et me décida à la combler un jour'.

8. Paul Thoby, *War Diary* (August 1914–January 1915), p. 11. Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée.

9. Thoby, *War Diary*, p. 3.

10. See for instance: Gérard Aubin, 'Fortuné Parenteau (1814–1882) et la constitution d'un médaillier gaulois à Nantes (Loire-Atlantique)', *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* 118–3 (2011): pp. 243–89; Laure Barthet, 'Retouches, truccages et remontages: la singulière fortune des épées de la collection Rochebrune', *Bulletin de la Société archéologique et historique de Nantes et de Loire-Atlantique* 147 (2012): pp. 15–31; Claire Aptel et al., *Thomas Dobrée 1810–1895. Un homme, un musée* (Paris: Somogy, 1997); Philippe Mainterot, *Aux Origines de l'égyptologie: voyages et collections de Frédéric Caillaud, 1787–1869* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011); Gildas Salaün, 'Paul Soullard (1839–1930), numismate et sigillographe nantais', *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* 118:3 (2011): pp. 335–45;

Marie-Hélène Santrot, 'Fortuné Parenteau (1814–1882) et Pitre de Lisle du Dreneuc (1846–1924), collectionneurs et conservateurs passionnés', *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* 118:3 (2011): pp. 151–242.

11. On this topic, see Jean-Pierre Chaline, *Sociabilité et érudition. Les sociétés savantes en France* (Paris: CTHS, 1995). In Nantes, the oldest society was the Société académique de Nantes et de Loire-Atlantique, founded in 1798. It endeavoured to 'perfect science and art through ongoing research, the publication of discoveries and free correspondence with other learned societies', and to 'report on scientific, mechanical and literary works'. See *Institut départemental des sciences et des arts, séant à Nantes (Loire-Inférieure)* (Nantes: Berjou, 1798), pp. 19–20).

12. These proportions are drawn from the list of members in the *Bulletin de la Société historique et archéologique de Nantes et de Loire-Inférieure* 61 (1921): pp. IX–XIX. As the occupation of the members is not systematically mentioned, the data are incomplete, but it is likely that these two categories (aristocracy and bourgeoisie) made up a larger proportion of the total.

13. Such as Louis Chevalier La Barthe, Paul Soullard, Gaëtan de Wismes, or Thoby himself.

14. Paul Thoby, 'Les ivoires gothiques', *Bulletin de la société archéologique de Nantes* 69 (1929): pp. 129–42.

15. Paul Thoby, 'Les grands crucifix du XV^e siècle en France', *Bulletin de la société archéologique de Nantes* 71 (1931): pp. 185–201.

16. Paul Thoby, 'Les Heures à l'usage de Nantes', *Bulletin de la société archéologique de Nantes* 78 (1938): pp. 192–225; these two printed books are now in the collection of the Musée Dobrée: Inv. 690.2775 and Inv. 690.2780.

17. Thoby, *Le Crucifix*; Paul Thoby, *Les Heures à l'usage de Nantes* (Fontenay-le-Comte: Imprimerie Moderne, 1939).

18. See note 1.

19. With the notable exception of sculptures and archaeological items found in Nantes and its surrounding area, which had been collected by the Société archéologique.

20. The marquis de la Ferronnays was also, from 1931 until his death in 1946, President of the Conseil général de Loire-Inférieure, the Département where Nantes is located.

21. Paul Thoby, *Antiquités* (1920–69?). Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée, Dossier Thoby, Carnet no. 50, f. 38r. It is now part of the collection of the Musée Dobrée (Inv. 969.7.110).

22. He mentioned it in a lecture on Gothic ivories given in April 1934 (the full text of it is kept among Thoby's archives), and other written notes in his archive suggest that he examined it at length.

23. This donation was subject to usufruct. The Virgin was therefore only effectively given to the museum in 1958, after the death of the marchioness, by the Cossé-Brissac family, heirs to de la Ferronnays.

24. Jean Le Cour Grandmaison, *Le Marquis de La Ferronnays 1876-1946* (Paris: Siloë, 1952); David Bensoussan, 'Le marquis Henri de la Ferronnays, parlementaire catholique et royaliste (1876-1946)', *Parlement(s). Revue d'histoire politique*, hors-série 10 (2014/2): pp. 37-50.

25. Henri de la Ferronnays's mother, Marie-Thérèse de Pérusse des Cars, was the great-niece of Auguste de Bastard d'Estang. Blandine Nouvellement, *Collectionneurs et amateurs d'art médiéval au XIX^e siècle: l'exemple du comte Auguste de Bastard d'Estang (1792-1883)* (fourth-year diss., École du Louvre, 2005), p. 32.

26. Thoby's political ideas can be understood through some notes for a few political speeches he left in his archive. He was even involved in local politics, since in 1929 he was part of a list for the municipal elections (his party, the Union Nationale Républicaine, did not win); some other notes testify that in 1932 he gave a speech in favour of the re-election of the marquess of Juigné, whose conservative ideas he supported.

27. This was a consequence of the merging of the Musée Dobrée with the archaeology museum in 1935. The curator was henceforth managing two museums, and needed two deputies, picked from each of the former museums' committees: one for the Dobrée collection (Paul Thoby), and one for the archaeological items.

28. Two ivories: a seventeenth-century Indo-Portuguese Virgin and Child (Inv. 969.7.24), offered by his wife's godmother in 1912, and a seventeenth-century Christ given to him in 1914 by a friend who was a priest (Inv. 969.7.54); a fifteenth-century wood sculpture of a saint, bequeathed by a military chaplain in 1916 (Inv. 969.7.244); an undated earthenware Virgin and Child given to him by a doctor from Quimper in 1908 (Thoby gave it to a friend at an unknown date).

29. His archive contains notebooks dating from his and his brother Henri's school years, where, as in the three notebooks of the collection, all the pages are carefully numbered and the writing is small, tidy and precise.

30. Prints and drawings are not listed, and many minor works of art are missing.

31. Paul Thoby, *Ivoires* (1930-69?). Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée, Dossier Thoby, Carnet no. 48. One of them actually turned out to be a nineteenth-century Japanese netsuke (Inv. 969.7.4).

32. See for instance William Maskell (b. 1814, d. 1890), William Burrell (b. 1861, d. 1958) or in France, Jules Lhomme (b. 1857, d. 1934). On these three collectors, see respectively: Naomi Speakman's paper in the present vol-

ume, pp. 111-124; Richard Marks, *Burrell: Portrait of a collector* (Glasgow: Richard Drew, 2nd revised edn, 1988), pp. 96-7; and *Musée d'Angoulême: les origines*, <http://musee-angouleme.fr/musee-collections/les-collections/arts-extra-europeens/la-collection/>.

33. In 1933, Thoby oversaw the organisation of a major exhibition of religious art in Nantes, *Exposition d'art religieux ancien et moderne à la Psalette* (Nantes, 1933), with works of art coming from local museums and churches, and private collections, including his own. In 1935, he curated an exhibition on the revolutionary wars in Vendée, organised by the Friends of the Musée Dobrée. As a member of the Administrative Committee of the museum, he then negotiated the gift of many exhibits to the museum; he gave some himself, and proposed to dedicate a room in the museum to their display. This interest for the revolutionary wars stemmed from the discovery that his mother's great grandfather, François Rortais (b. 1742, d. 1793) was sentenced to death by the Nantes revolutionary court for being a counter-revolutionary.

34. Thoby, *War Diary*, pp. 38-9: 'Superbe Vierge du XV^e, sourire et yeux adorables'.

35. Thoby, *War Diary*, p. 40: 'Délices éprouvés à caresser les sculptures des retables XVI^e dont le bois me rend ma caresse'. See also note 42.

36. Though no comparative study exists between the French nineteenth- and twentieth-century art markets, some merchants and collectors testify on this increasing difficulty in their letters. See Catherine Parpoil, *Patrimonialisation d'une collection. Le legs de la collection Raoul de Rochebrune (1849-1924) au musée Dobrée, Nantes (1930)* (PhD diss., Montpellier III - Paul Valéry University, 2007), p. 162: Jules Coudol, a merchant in Bordeaux, writes on 22 July 1915 about ancient weapons: '[They] have become extremely rare, beautiful pieces are only on sale in Paris and London, and at what prices!'

37. Between 1932 and 1943, Thoby gave many public lectures on various topics: fifteenth-century crucifixes, the Virgin and Child in medieval sculpture, religious art, medieval enamels, the history of the crucifix from its origins to the Renaissance, books of hours for the use of Nantes, medieval ivories.

38. In Paris, Thoby bought from Garnier (79 rue des Saints Pères), Lambert (5 rue Bonaparte), Stora Frères (32 bis boulevard Haussmann) and Taillemas (17 quai Voltaire), and the expert Henri Leman (37 rue Laffitte); in Nantes, from Duthil (22 rue Racine), Fournier, Mayet, Roberteau and Rochard.

39. He purchased for instance a netsuke at the Nègre auction, on 14 March 1932 (now Inv. 969.7.4), a rosary bead at the Lowenfeld auction on 7 June 1932 (now Inv. 969.7.3) and a censer at the Octave Pincot auction on 23 November 1946 (now Inv. 969.7.70). All sales took place in Paris.

40. In 1947, when the museum's first spending plan following the war was presented to the Administrative Committee, Thoby lamented the disappearance of the budget line dedicated to new acquisitions, thus showing that developing the museum's collection was vital to him.

41. In most French regional museums, collections of Gothic ivories, when they exist, come from revolutionary seizures or nineteenth-century bequests; ivory carvings joining their collections after World War II were most of the time purchased directly by the museums. However, some regional museums received in the second half of the twentieth century bequests from collectors who were contemporaries of Thoby: the Musée Lorrain in Nancy received Henry Marcus's collection (b. 1888, d. 1960) from his heirs between 1965 and 1975; the Musée Historique Saint Rémi in Rheims received in 1941 the Grangé bequest; and Édouard Richard (b. 1909, d. 1986) and his wife Marie-Joseph Richard (b. 1915, d. 1997) gave their collection to the Musée Mandet in Riom in 1983. But although these three collections comprised a few interesting medieval ivory carvings, they cannot compare in quantity to Thoby's. This quick survey was carried out using the [Gothic Ivories Project website](#), and thus is based on Gothic ivories holdings, but earlier ivories usually came from the same private collections; we therefore believe that this summary is quite representative of the acquisition trend for all medieval ivories.

42. Thoby, 'Les ivoires gothiques', p. 141: 'Souvent le soir, pour oublier les soucis de la journée, je m'approche de mes ivoires, sûr d'y trouver encore une joie toujours nouvelle; et quand je sens sous mes doigts ravis, la précieuse caresse de l'ivoire usé et poli, je rêve aux mains nombreuses qui le pressèrent avant moi ... [M]es rêves feront peut-être sourire, mais ils sont d'un collectionneur, et ce sera là mon excuse'.

43. Thoby, *Ivoires*.

44. Thoby, *Antiquités*, f. 3v.

45. *La Résistance de l'Ouest* (16 September 1949): 'M. Un Tel, collectionneur. Jaunies, patinées, les ivoires nous dévoilent leurs splendeurs'.

46. Thoby's first practice was situated on the rue du Calvaire in Nantes; around 1928, he moved to 65 rue du général Buat. The estate was sold by his beneficiaries in the 1990s; the house was destroyed and two apartment blocks built in its place. The fate of the rest of the collection is unknown for now, since the notarial archive is not yet available for consultation.

47. From the left: statuette of the Virgin and Child (Inv. 969.7.5, purchased in 1924), diptych wing with the Descent from the Cross (Inv. 969.7.34, purchased in 1920), diptych wing with the Virgin and Child between angels (Inv. 969.7.38, purchased in October 1925), diptych wing with the Nativity and Adoration of the Magi (Inv. 969.7.36, purchased in 1922), writing tablet with the Vir-

gin between Saint John the Baptist and Saint Christopher (Inv. 969.7.37, purchased in June 1925), panel with the Virgin and Child among saints (Inv. 969.7.35, purchased in June 1925), panel with the Crucifixion (Inv. 969.7.2, purchased in June 1925), Virgin with Child (Inv. 969.7.25, given to him in 1912).

48. This dating was given by Danièle Gaborit-Chopin when she visited the Musée Dobrée in 1989, invited by one of its curators, Dominique Vingtain, thus confirming the one given by Dominique Costa in *Art et liturgie au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Secrétariat d'État à la Culture-Direction des musées de France, 1977), no. 145.

49. Thoby, *Ivoires*, f. 3r.

50. It is indeed the earliest ivory in his collection.

51. Inv. 969.7.118 and Inv. 969.7.119, bought on 6 May 1926 for 2,000 Francs.

52. For a list of all pieces with prices, see the Appendix.

53. Émile Molinier, *Catalogue des Ivoires du Louvre* (Paris: Librairies-imprimeries réunies, 1896); Ormonde M. Dalton, *Catalogue of the Ivory Carvings of the Christian Era in the British Museum* (London: Printed by order of the Trustees, 1909); Margaret H. Longhurst, *Catalogue of Carvings in Ivory* (London: Published under the authority of the Board of Education, 1927 and 1929).

54. Like the one in Nantes in 1933 (*Exposition d'art religieux ancien et moderne à la Psalette*) presenting, among other objects, medieval ivories from public and private collections.

55. Raymond Koechlin, *Les Ivoires gothiques français* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1924).

56. See Naomi Speakman in the present volume, pp. 111-124.

57. See note 41.

58. Pierre Landes, 'Henri Marcus: portrait d'un collectionneur', *Le Pays lorrain* (1998/1): pp. 29-30.

59. Marie-José Linou, *Design et arts décoratifs contemporains: orfèvrerie, verrerie, céramique, XX^e-XXI^e siècles: acquisitions 1990-2010, collections du Musée Mandet de Riom* (Deauville: Illustria-Librairie des musées, 2010).

60. For example, he spent 50,000 Francs in 1948 for a fifteenth-century wood and leather casket (Inv. 969.7.113), 75,000 in 1951 for a fourteenth-century golden bronze Christ from a crucifix (Inv. 969.7.56), and 115,000 Francs in 1962 for an eighteenth-century monumental wood sculpture of Christ (Inv. 969.7.238). The latter was the most expensive and also the last artwork he ever purchased.

61. 27,604 Francs including tax.

62. Thoby, *Ivoires*, f. 37r. The old crown can be seen in the [auction catalogue image](#) and showed eight joined fleurons of a somewhat intricate design on a ribbed base. The [new one ordered by Thoby](#), as seen in his notebook, is ornamented with four simpler fleur-de-lys and four smaller tips between them on an unadorned base. It is similar to the crowns that feature for instance on the mirror case known as 'l'Assemblée' (Paris, Musée de Cluny—musée national du Moyen Âge, Inv. Cl. 404). It is very probable that Thoby gave a medieval model to the goldsmith. This new crown was made by a craftsman named Aubert; the display case was ordered from the Maison Bouin and the base from someone called Michel Cronan. The overall expense for base and crown amounted to 860 Francs.

63. Koechlin's answer dated 5 July 1924 is now in the museum archive.

64. Thoby had all the latest international publications on Gothic ivories: from Molinier to Longhurst, including Westwood, Koechlin, Dalton, etc. and the *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Carvings in Ivory* (London: Privately printed for the Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1923). The texts of the lectures he gave are kept in the museum archive.

65. Her book on English ivories was in Thoby's library; Margaret H. Longhurst, *English Ivories* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons Ltd, 1926).

66. Letter dated 17 March 1932. Nantes, Archives of the Musée Dobrée.

67. My thanks to Laure Barthet for these clarifications.

68. This judgement was also offered by Danièle Gaborit-Chopin in 1989.

69. These studies, often conducted by students, unfortunately remain unpublished. See for instance: Elsa Vernier Lopin, *La Collection du chanoine Marcadé du trésor de la cathédrale de Bordeaux: le gardien de sémiophores* (fifth-year diss., École du Louvre, 2011); Charlotte Violle, *Étude des enluminures de la collection du chanoine Barthélémy Albert Marcadé (1866 - 1951) et réflexion sur leur valorisation dans le trésor de la cathédrale de Bordeaux* (fourth-year diss., École du Louvre, 2013); Christophe Sené, *Carle Dreyfus (1875-1952): un collectionneur conservateur de musée* (fourth-year diss., École du Louvre, 1999); and Cécile Dumont, *Le Docteur Chompret (1869-1956): collectionneur, président de la Société des Amis de Sèvres* (fifth-year diss., École du Louvre, 2006). Other twentieth-century collectors of medieval art who would be worth investigating further include Julien Chappée and Germaine Hermanos-Levy. Both names appear in Thoby's auction catalogues: he had a habit of taking careful note of who was buying medieval art at auctions.

EPILOGUE

TOUCHING IVORY ONLINE

JACK HARTNELL



10.1
Writing tablet with
game of Hot Cockles
(France, probably Paris,
fourteenth century).
Ivory, 8.4 x 5.1 cm.
London, The British
Museum, Inv. 1888,
1217.1 (Dalton 363).

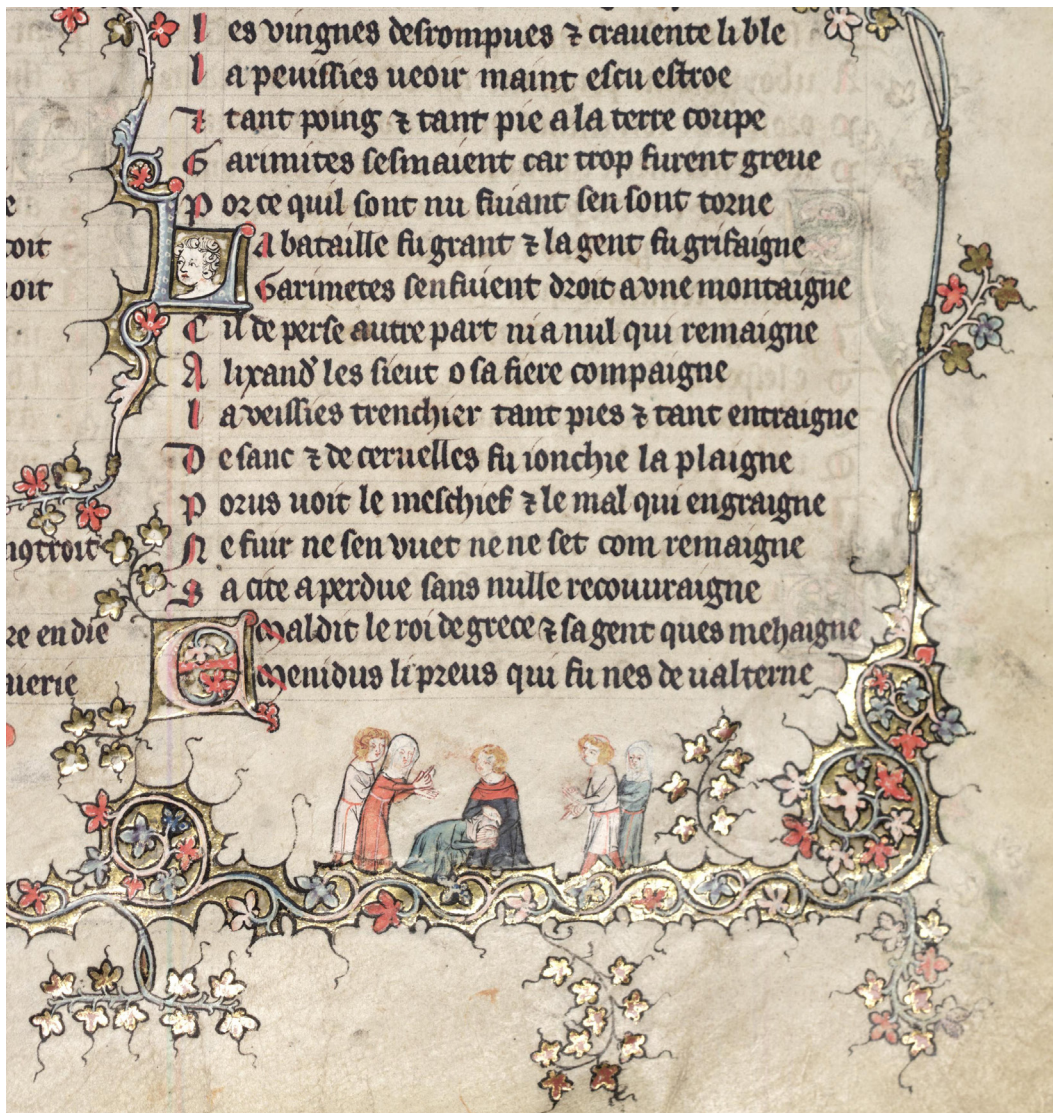
On the Mississippi you can take a six-hour trip on a paddle-steamer, obviously fake, constructed according to the latest mechanical criteria, but it still transports you along wild shores inhabited by alligators...

— Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes*

The collections of the British Museum contain a small ivory plaque ([Inv. 1888,1217.1](#) [Dalton 363]), a writing tablet from fourteenth-century France (fig. 10.1). Measuring only five by eight centimetres it is tiny, small enough to fit neatly into the palm of your hand. This is significant.

In it, a collection of men and women are tightly framed by three architectural niches to the top; some stand, one is seated, another kneels on the floor. The scene depicted is not immediately recognisable, but these courtly figures are playing a game known in the Middle Ages as *La Main Chaude* [The Hot Hand] or sometimes *Haute Coquille* [Hot Cockles].¹ Its affectionate and jaunty name masks a rather less tender pastime. We can glean the game's outline from several extant ivory depictions like the British Museum plaque—others in Lyon (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Inv. D716), Ravenna (Museo Nazionale di Ravenna, Inv. n. 1032), Paris (Musée du Louvre, Inv. OA 2762), and Princeton (Princeton University Art Museum, Inv. 1996-153)—as well as some manuscript depictions (fig. 10.2). To play, someone is first blindfolded. In the case of the British Museum plaque, a young man appears to have been chosen and he kneels on the floor at the centre of the action, his head placed inside the folds of a seated woman's skirt. Despite the piece's small size his outline is still delicately rendered, ghostly beneath the cloth, as is the silhouette of his hand creeping up the woman's left thigh. The game continues with the blindfolded victim being spanked. The act is not shown directly here, but rather premeditated in the pose of the raised right hands of two women standing to the ivory's left. The hands are striking, both literally in their flat slapping swing and figuratively in their exaggerated size and repetitious, echoing forms; repetitious just like their left hands which hitch up the folds of their gowns, mimicking each other's grabbing motion and also, perhaps, motions going on underneath the dress. Lastly, the game follows, if the blindfolded individual can successfully identify his or her slapper by touch alone they are rewarded by stealing a kiss, as depicted at the ivory's top right.²

Hands—*les mains de la 'Main Chaude'*—are everywhere in this piece: they slap, pat, hitch, point, grope, caress, spank. And the more we look, the more of them we see. The woman whose skirt the man is under rests her left hand on his head, her right at the same time pointing with a strangely elongated finger upward to the assembled crowd. The bearded figure in the lower left, who presumably is up next (or should that be under next), seems to be using his hands to part the crowd, edging his way between the women with



10.2
 Jehan de Grise and
 others, a game of Hot
 Cockles in the
 bas-de-page, from *Cycle
 of Alexander Romances*
 (Flanders and England,
 c.1350–1400). Oxford,
 Bodleian Library, MS
 Bodley 264, f. 52r.

flattened palms. Even the woman to the far left, a figure so peripheral as to not even be granted a whole body within the bounds of the plaque, is still given a large flapping hand tucked inside the ivory's centre-left frame.

Placed in the palm of the hand, as the object of a writing tablet would often have been, these tactile details resonate. With depicted hands fanning out left and right, the ivory could be said to represent the sense of touch in action amongst its figures. But as well as proudly depicting actual tactility, there are other more complex ways in which a carving like this courts and complicates manipulable sensation, not just in its historical past but in its digital present and replicant future.

Studies of medieval manuscripts have, in a sense, been here already. Take the words of Michael Camille in 1998:

The future direction of any major manuscript repository such as the British Library is not in anything so bound as the book as it is in cyberspace. Already *Portico*, the World Wide Web server, offers Internet users all over the globe the chance to see hundreds of images from the British Library collections ... Graphical user interface designs will make thousands of previously unavailable manuscript pages available in the home.³

Writing in 'Sensations of the Page: Imaging Technologies and Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts', Camille observes the inevitable fact that in the digital age to come, medieval

images and knowledge of the medieval would soon be more widely accessible than ever before in human history. This article was not his first discussion of the fate of medieval artworks in the modern age. Eight years earlier in 1990, *Critical Inquiry* had published his now well-known examination of the facsimile history of the *Très Riches Heures de Jean Duc du Berry*, a Benjaminian consideration of the various mechanical copies of the manuscript, replicated many times and in various contexts since its re-discovery in the late nineteenth century.⁴ In surveying this century-long process of repetition and abstraction, Camille charted the dramatic rise in images of the manuscript and the simultaneous, equally dramatic fall of the manuscript itself, confined to a safe room in the Musée Condé at Chantilly, then (as now) almost totally restricted from view. Sheltered from touch, the book is quite literally out of our hands.

An understanding of the problems wrought by repetition and dissemination, from parchment to Portico, runs through both of Camille's pieces, as does a concern for the sense of touch. Taken together, the two articles represent the view that touch is vital to both fact and fiction. Vital to fact, because of the sensation's fundamental importance in understanding the details of object cultures, manuscript culture in Camille's case. He voices a familiar call, even in the 1980s and 90s, for an increased consideration of the tactile experience of manuscripts that has returned to the fore recently in the so-called 'Material Turn'.⁵ But vital to fiction, too, because of touch's capacity to expose material fantasies and truth. In facsimiles, like that of the *Très Riches Heures*, we see the original in every detail—colour, line, form, even the binding or outline of the page—and sometimes quite convincingly so, but it is our fingers that give it all away. In Camille's words: 'Like Zeuxis' birds pecking at illusory grapes, we are struck by the false appearance only when we touch'.⁶ His writing is typical of any scholar considering a new-tech *zeitgeist*, coupling both anxiety and excitement. The digital leap represented by things like Portico or its successor, the British Library's 'Turning The Pages' (somewhat sinisterly marketed simultaneously as key to the nation's heritage and a hugely profitable hi-tech product), represents a clear step forward in terms of access and—when appropriately framed—the potential for understanding. But such a leap forward is also, advertently or by coincidence, a reference back to a previous medieval age. The digital humanities are an interesting futurespective echo of the corporeal and sensation-based world of medieval scholastic making, of manuscripts in particular, replaying online similar ideas of cutting, pasting, copying, and dissemination across borders and tongues. The process of viewing books on a screen, from medieval manuscripts to *Courtauld Books Online*, simultaneously rejects and courts the medieval literary field's sensory, corporeal roots.

These ideas need not only be discussed in terms of a manuscript trend. Notions of digitisation and dissemination, of touch and gloss, of realism and fiction, of gain and loss, are in many ways just as relevant to the discussion of the three-dimensional, especially since the advent of the digital corpus that is the [Gothic Ivories Project](#). As a resource, the project provides unparalleled access to objects across continents, with medieval ivories



10.3
Diagram of the internal
and external senses,
from Saint Augustine,
De spiritu et anima
(England, early
thirteenth century).
Cambridge, Trinity
College Library, MS
O.7.16, f. 47r.

available to infinitely more scholars, researchers, and members of an interested public than ever before. We might be tempted to see an uncanny continuation between historic and modern practices, ivories slung around the globe not on the trade routes of the medieval past, but on the information superhighway. But ivory is not the same as parchment, and nor is 2015 the same as the 1990s. We can now go deeper both into tactility and technology.

The medieval concept of touch is difficult to get to grips with. Recent studies of the sense by Christopher Woolgar and others have brought out many of its inherent problems and contradictions.⁷ On the one hand, we know touch was thought of as the basest of senses in the Middle Ages, as is often seen in its representation at the bottom of the sensory pile beneath other tangible senses like taste or smell, and well below the more ethereal, mystical sensations of vision and sound (fig. 10.3). Yet on the other hand, touch, through its immediacy, was also privileged. Unlike scent, sound, or sight, touch was a sturdy and hard-headed sense that gave direct and definitive contact with the world

around you. It could be at once medical and magical, asserting the authority of the itinerant physician diagnosing the sick as much as the royal ruler dispelling scrofulous misfortune through digital divine right. Moreover, in some ways touch was thought the most vital of all the senses, for despite its lower sensory ranking medieval scholars continued to acknowledge Aristotle's claim that touch was the one sense *necessary* for life: that is to say, an organism might exist without its other senses—might be deaf, dumb, blind—but without any sense of touch it is lifeless.⁸

Touch, in short, is tough. And touch in relation to ivory is perhaps even tougher, not least because its specifics are still being debated.⁹ Like the dirty corners of manuscripts, some ivory objects show clear signs of wear by touch, their details buffed and bleached by the hands of their owners at various points, something particularly present on the much-held handles of knives ([Historisches Museum Basel, Inv. 1928.837](#)) or much-kissed curved ivory paxes ([Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, Inv. KK 875](#)). Whilst it is unclear to what extent other more substantial objects were actually touched, especially religious statuettes of the Virgin and Child or ivory crucifixes, the surface of ivory was clearly an important thing for the medieval audience. This was not just in its visual materiality, its skin-like translucence commonly evoking associations with whiteness and purity, but also in its more literal sensation. Medieval scholars drew on Pliny the Elder's designation of elephants as cold-blooded and moral beasts to evolve a relationship between chastity and ivory's temperature, its literal coolness to the touch.¹⁰

Is all of this medieval tactile importance and inference lost online? Unlike 'Turning the Pages', where at least a vague acknowledgement of the tactile process of turning a manuscript page is given by the three-dimensional rendering of the page's corner being thumbled up before being flipped over, the Gothic Ivories Project does not seek to render ivory in three-dimensions. One can move it, zoom it, spin it (fig. 10.4, video), but anything approaching the actual tactile three-dimensionality of the real ivory is largely lost on a flat computer screen.

Technology has, however, come some way since the advent of 'Turning the Pages'. Digital times have shifted the senses and, in some ways, occluded them. Historians, anthropologists, and sociologists have all suggested something of a sensory loss in the existence of modernity and post-modernity, often affirming the primacy of the visual at the expense of much else, sensorially speaking.¹¹ This is nowhere clearer than in the early digital realm—up to around 2005—where we see constantly attested what Camille termed an ocular-oriented 'perceptualist fallacy': *looking* at the screen, its icons, and its image, was paramount.¹² But in the technology of the last decade or so, touch has interestingly made up some of this ground. Whilst our eyes might strain to see ever-smaller screens on our ever-smaller phones, tactility has come to the fore of contemporary digital design in the form of wearable and touchable tech. We can now sensorially engage with bio-sensitive watches, interactive body systems like clap-on lights or gesture respondent home cinema, and most obviously the jump-start of this tactile trend, Apple's 2007 first generation



10.4
Video. An image of the British Museum carving on the Gothic Ivories Project. Viewed and manipulated on an iPad.

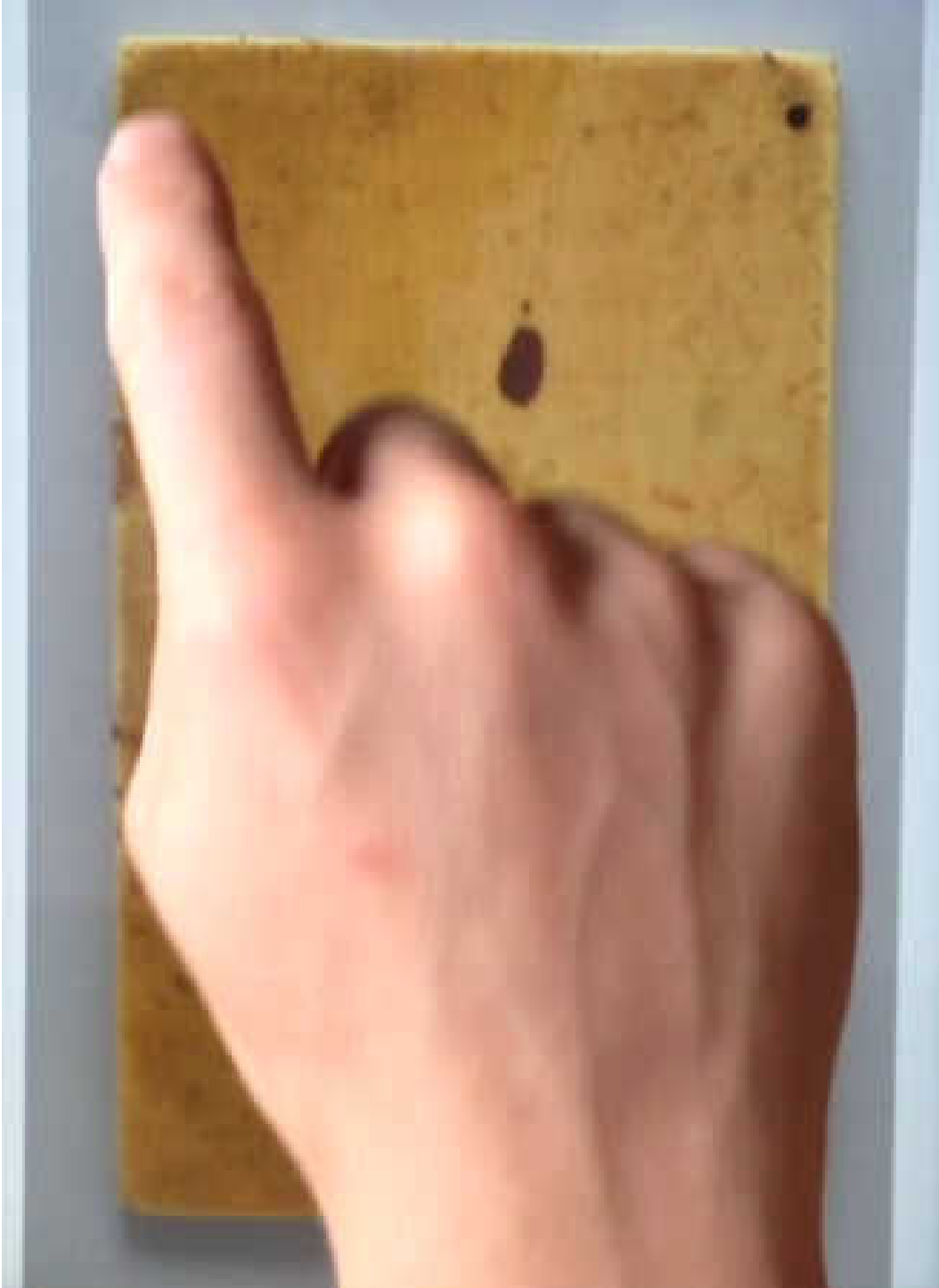
If you are experiencing problems viewing this video, please click on the figure reference number to navigate to the Courtauld Books Online channel.



10.5
Two screenshots of
historian Pam Cox,
viewing historic images
of servants on an iPad
for *Servants: The True
Story of Life Below Stairs*.
BBC2, September 2012.

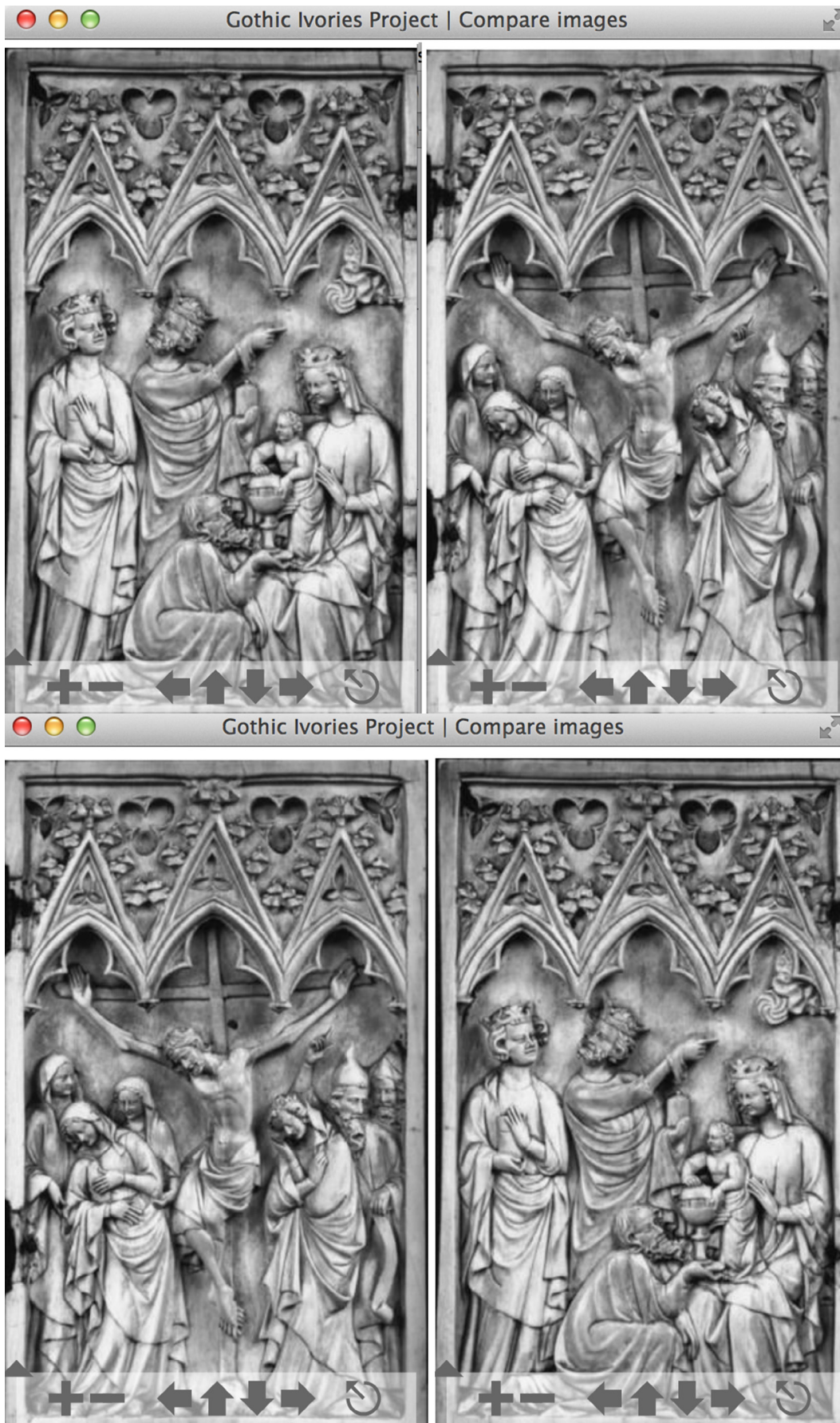
iPhone. As affirmed by the even more recent and even more meteoric rise of the tablet market, the touch-screen is a technology that many now take for granted in their bags and pockets. Even 'History' itself is not immune from this tactile immediacy, or at least history as represented in popular culture. At the time of writing, the trend for TV historians is not to be shot *à la* Simon Schama, pacing endlessly through fields whilst delivering to camera, but sitting instead on location and flicking through historical documents and images on iPads, endowing the viewer with the digital benefits newly at their fingertips (fig. 10.5).

If one loads up the Gothic Ivories Project website on iPads or iPhones, today's observer too can bring this sense of tactility to viewing objects. With a swipe or twist of the fingers we can manipulate ivory sculpture, at least in two dimensions; we can even scrawl on the back of the British Museum Hot Cockles tablet, as was originally intended, albeit not with a stylus into set wax but our fingers on the pixelated page (fig. 10.6, video). And like Camille's vaunting of Portico as a pseudo-medieval practice, viewing ivories online also engages with notions of looking inherited from the Middle Ages. Compartmental framing, for example, is a mode of presenting images that has been utilised by both medieval ivory carvers and today's designers of the multi-windowed online experience. On the Project's website, one can even combine the square-framed form of some ivory diptychs with the similarly-sized, convenient windows of the site's zoomable viewer to rearrange a fictional, digital order in the blocky squares of the original object (fig. 10.7).

**10.6**

Video. An image of the British Museum carving on the Gothic Ivories Project. Viewed and manipulated on an iPad.

If you are experiencing problems viewing this video, please click on the figure reference number to navigate to the Courtauld Books Online channel.



10.7
Gothic ivory diptych.
Screenshot as viewed
and rearranged on the
Gothic Ivories Project
online viewer. Alnwick
Castle, Collection of the
Duke of Northumber-
land, s/n.

The technology also exists for a more complex three-dimensional, tactile experience. Stemming from [research carried out at the University of Washington](#), in 2006 Microsoft launched a now-defunct online platform, Photosynth, which uses a compositing technique known as photogrammetry to layer batches of photographs drawn from large-scale



historic repositories or crowd-sourced from online sites like Flickr. Using multiple images of the same object taken from a number of angles, the tool built three-dimensional reconstructions of spaces and objects as diverse as Cologne Cathedral, Barack Obama's 2009 presidential inauguration, or an ivory tusk from Benin now in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. More complex enterprises exist in a similar vein too, like [CENOBIMUM](#)—an online project documenting the capitals of Sicily's Byzantine cathedral cloisters—which uses detailed photographs to produce online models that can be browsed in three dimensions. The capitals can even be viewed in varied lighting conditions, the computer cursor recast as a sort of lit candle wielded digitally by the viewer (fig. 10.8, video).¹³ But this, of course, brings us back again to Zeuxis and his birds. For whilst in these developments of the online world we are provided with the impression of touch, or at least manipulation of light via touch, the actual touch itself instantly belies any fiction the image on screen might muster. If anything, whilst the hi-res detail here is more convincing than ever as a representation of the ivory, the flat, un-contoured object of a computer or tablet screen is itself further away from the original ivory than even an expensive facsimile is from an illuminated manuscript, which at least preserves the size and form of the object it images.

Not, of course, that ivories are beyond more literal facsimile. In the winding, crypt-like basement of the Courtauld's Conway Library, just meters away from the former office of the Gothic Ivories Project, are two cases stuffed with ivory casts of all shapes and sizes (fig. 10.9). Created as part of that great Victorian penchant for didactic dissemination, these Plaster of Paris replicas of some of the world's greatest ivory collections represent a distinctly haptic dimension of the nineteenth-century copying ethic. Such remnants still largely languish in the basements of institutions like the Bargello or the Louvre, although historians have been turning to consider their historical relevance for some time.¹⁴ On a more quotidian level too, one only needs enter any major museum shop to find convenient copies of ivories from museum collections. In the British Museum, for example, punters can acquire a plastic copy of a casket lid duplicated from an original in the Castle Museum at Boulogne-sur-Mer ([Inv. 408](#)), the ivory conveniently counterfeited for display on your mantelpiece at a mere £90 (fig. 10.10). And of course the professional forgeries and fakes made of medieval ivories, particularly those infamously created for the nineteenth-century Parisian market, continue to affect the content and very nature of Gothic ivory scholarship. Their impact is as significant as it is troubling, enticing the discourse into a typically

10.8

Video. A double capital from the cloister of Monreale Cathedral (Palermo). Viewed in a variety of ways on the website of the *Cenobium* project.

If you are experiencing problems viewing this video, please click on the figure reference number to navigate to the Courtauld Books Online channel.



10.9
Plaster casts of various
ivory carvings (Eng-
land, mid nineteenth
century). London, The
Courtauld Institute of
Art, Conway Library.

academic obsession with authentication and the debate of ‘true’ originals at the expense of other more inventive routes of study.

All of these forms of facsimile—the educational, the intellectual, and the commercial—attest to an urge to make ivory graspable and own-able, if not necessarily in total veristic likeness then at least in three-dimensional shape and weight. Whilst vital resources like the Gothic Ivories Project clearly do not aim at a cast-court notion of spreading knowledge via literal replication, evolving technology might in fact mean that this is one way such online repositories could be used in the future.

CES, the Consumer Electronics Show, is an enormous event held annually in Las Vegas and a veritable Jerusalem for today’s global tech pilgrims. It is there that the latest in future technologies are unveiled to the world, from curved HDTVs and window-cleaning robots, to hybrid cars and digital kitchenware. 2014, critics agreed, was the year of a new kid on the block: the 3D printer. Much vaunted in the media ever since, news that we

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This plaque is based on a French original in ivory from the 14th Century, which can be seen at the Castle Museum of Boulogne-sur-Mer in France.

The piece depicts three scenes thought to be episodes from the Round Table. In one scene, two knights compete in a tournament to the sound of a trumpet. Above them ladies contemplate the scene.

On one side of the piece we can see a castle under attack by two knights who throw roses with a catapult while another climbs a ladder to reach the ladies. On the other side we see a couple thought to be Lancelot and Queen Guinevere escaping on a horse. These sculpted scenes were intended to recall famous romantic couple.

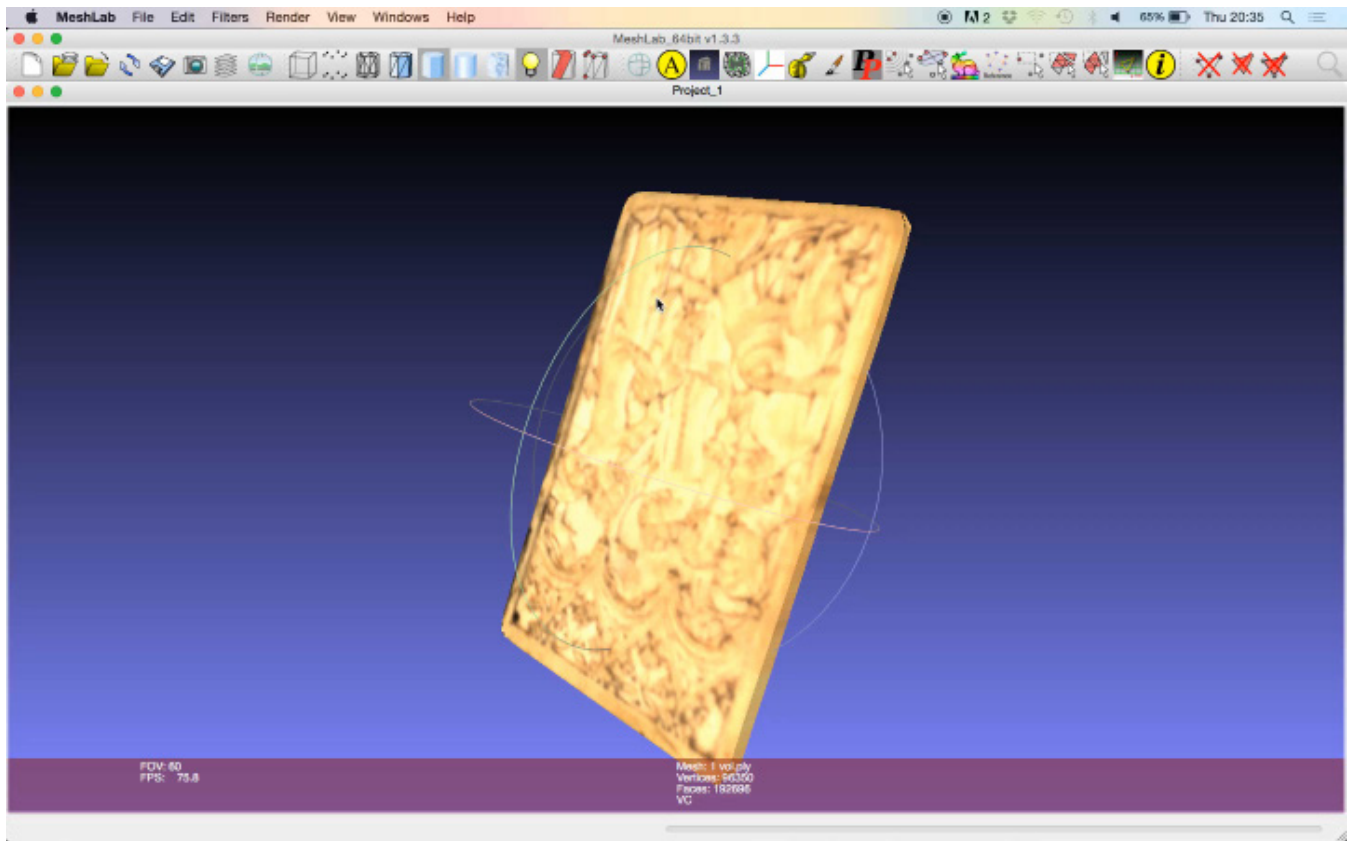
Battle of Chivalry replica £90.00 1 [Add to bag >](#)

10.10
Battle of Chivalry
replica (original:
Boulogne-sur-Mer,
Château-Musée,
Inv. 408). Screenshot of
a plastic copy of a casket
lid as sold online by the
British Museum.

might one day be able to use such technology in the home, printing out whatever we want in three-dimensions, is often met with the question, 'Why would we ever need to do that?' But whilst PR marketers are slowly convincing a broader public of 3D printing's potential benefits, its appearance has spurred museums and galleries into imaginative and inventive uses of 3D technology to promote their collections in ways never seen before. The museums of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, for example, began 3D scanning a wide variety of objects from their collection, unveiling them in 2013 as *Smithsonian X 3D*, a 'set of use cases which apply various 3D capture methods to iconic collection objects, as well as scientific missions'.¹⁵ The project places 3D scans of a variety of objects online for free, from [an ancient Greek Kylix cup \(c.800 BCE\)](#) in the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum to [a full scan of the Bell X-1](#), the first plane to fly faster than the speed of sound, now in the National Air and Space Museum. Evolving methods of capture and dissemination will eventually allow visitors—not to the museum, but to the museum's website and online resources—to browse detailed scans, and even print off their own miniature facsimiles of the objects.

Such techniques are available for the replication of ivory too, although strangely this is more complicated than scanning an ancient Greek bowl or even a historic plane. In the case of objects of historic value which cannot, or at least should not, be heavily touched during the scanning process, non-invasive scanning techniques are vastly preferable over contact-based methods. Such sympathetic technologies effectively capture the distance from various parts of the object using reflected light, either by measuring the return time of a beam to and from a scanner, or by using several points of light at once to triangulate the precise position of an object in relation to a series of sensors. The use of such focused light, small directional laser beams, can be particularly tricky for ivory: objects that are small, monochrome, and opaquely reflective tend to foil the reflective measures on which such scanners rely. It is strangely in keeping with medieval conceptions of ivory's material uniqueness—a property which saw it transported across continents at great expense—that its makeup is unusually resistant to today's contemporary processes of replication.

This has not stopped people trying, at least in the service of ivory ethics. In 2015, a San Francisco-based biotech startup named Pembient announced it had combined 3D-printing technologies with recent developments in genetic engineering to create replica rhinoceros



horn.¹⁶ Pembient's horns are printed directly from the keratin proteins that form such animal appendages naturally in the wild, making them not only visual reproductions but perfect genetic reproductions too. The company's founder, Matthew Markus, hopes the popularisation of the technique will have a tempering effect on the \$20-billion black market for endangered animal horn, and intends to expand operations to incorporate elephant ivory, tiger tooth, and pangolin skin.

Art historians and museum curators are also using techniques to scan and recreate Gothic ivory carvings, albeit on a less scientifically ambitious scale and often with mixed results. One of the more successful attempts was occasioned when the missing left half of the Llandaf Diptych ([National Museum Wales, Inv. NWM 01.335](#)), a fourteenth-century ivory carving, was identified in 2006 in the stores of the National Museums Liverpool ([Inv. 53.114.277](#)). The chance of reuniting the two at first seemed unlikely, with neither institution willing to part with their precious half. So in 2009, a detailed 3D scan of the Liverpool section was used to craft a machined-resin replica panel for its Welsh counterpart in Cardiff, a complicated process both technologically and logistically, but which eventually reunited the two panels, at least in spirit, for the first time in centuries.¹⁷ Today, technology has come so far that if you have 3D-scanned an ivory carving, relatively cheap 3D modelling and printing techniques allow for a single machine to print off a low-quality, fresh ivory copy approximately every 5 minutes, pumping out an army of ghostly Gothic palimpsests (fig. 10.11, video; fig. 10.12).¹⁸ It is easy to conceive of a not-too-distant future where the photographs of objects on the Gothic Ivories Project are pooled to create three-dimensional models that we can all print out at home, to examine, to hold, and to touch.

The idea of such ivory facsimiles presents itself as a sort of Benjaminian pinnacle. On the one hand, a to-the-millimetre-accurate, patinated copy is about as vivid a re-rendering of the ivory object as is currently possible, receptive to both eyes and fingers. Yet, this counterfeit is at the same time about as far away from the original object as can possibly be: it is not just a re-imaging of the original, it is a *whole new* identical object in its own right. The urge to perfect the copy—itself prompted by a quest for believable touch, to let one's fingers be convinced—will always be kept in an absurd limbo, a constantly

10.11
Video. Screen-capture of 3D scan taken of the British Museum Hot Cockles Ivory. Viewed and manipulated on Mesh Labs, 3D scanning software.

If you are experiencing problems viewing this video, please click on the figure reference number to navigate to the Courtauld Books Online channel.



progressing movement between two extremes, the same tension identified by authors like Camille back in 1998, between disseminating the copy of an object and knowing the object itself.

It is easy to see how the now more than 5000-object-strong resource that is the Gothic Ivories Project fulfills the initial tenor of Camille's prediction with which I began. In terms of quantity, quality, and availability, both high quality images and extensive histories of Gothic ivories are accessible anywhere in the world, giving an exceptional clarity to individual pieces and the entire genre. Soon, through coupling with ever-evolving technologies, such a resource might push back tactility as facsimile's final frontier. Perhaps, one day, we might evolve from groping blindfolded under cloth, like a figure playing Hot Cockles, and touch ivory online.

10.12
3D printed copy of scan
taken of the British
Museum Hot Cockles
ivory carving.

All references in *Courtauld Books Online* are hyperlinked. To navigate to a footnote, click on the reference number in the body of the text. To return back to the main text, click on the number at the beginning of the footnote.

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1. For more on romantic games in ivory, see the work of Richard H. Randall Jr., in particular: 'Medieval Ivories in the Romance Tradition', *Gesta* 28:1 (1989): pp. 30-40; 'Games on a Medieval Ivory', *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 56 (1997): pp. 3-9; and 'Frog in the Middle', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 16:10 (1958): pp. 269-75.

2. This game plays interestingly into the complex interpretations of medieval gender and structures of courtly and political power recently discussed by historians of medieval sexuality. Certainly if the blindfolded figure is male, as in the British Museum plaque, the rewarded kiss seems a rather hollow victory for the woman. For more generally on medieval gender roles, see: Judith M. Bennett, 'Medieval Women in Modern Perspective', in Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 139-86; Ruth Mazo Karras, *Unmarriages. Women, Men, and Sexual Unions in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages. Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and many more works cited within these volumes.

3. Michael Camille, 'Sensations of the Page: Imaging Technologies and Medieval Manuscripts', in George Bernstein and Theresa Tinkle (eds.), *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 45.

4. Michael Camille, 'The *Très Riches Heures*: An Illuminated Manuscript in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Critical Inquiry* 17:1 (1990): pp. 72-107. For a development and rejoinder to Camille's position, see Nicholas Herman, 'The Illuminated Manuscript in the Age of Digital Reproduction: Beyond Benjamin and 'contra' Camille?', in *The Challenge of the Object: 33rd congress of the International Committee of the History of Art, Nuremberg* (Nuremberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2012), pp. 599-602. Similarly interesting in this debate is Camille's visit in 1996 to the theme park 'Medieval Times', recorded for the Chicago radio show *This American Life*, <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/38/simulated-worlds>.

5. It is not entirely clear that medievalists ever truly turned away from discussions of materiality. For recent work on material and touch see, for example, the work of Katherine Rudy, especially a short summary of her work with a densitometer: 'Dirty Books. Quantifying Patterns of Use in Medieval Manuscripts using a Densitometer', *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 2:1-2 (2010), <http://www.jhna.org/index.php/past-issues/volume-2-issue-1-2/129-dirty-books>. See also Jennifer R. Borland, 'Unruly Reading: The Consuming Role of Touch in the Experience of a Medieval Manuscript', in Jonathan Wilcox (ed.), *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound. Materially Engaged Readings of Medieval Manuscripts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 97-114.

6. Camille, 'The *Très Riches Heures*', p. 104.

7. Christopher Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), esp. Chapter 3, 'Touch, Virtues and Holiness', pp. 29ff; Fernando Salmón, 'A

Medieval Territory for Touch', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 3:2 (2005): pp. 59-81. On touch in relation to sight in matters of visual culture see Barbara Baert, *To Touch with the Gaze: Noli Me Tangere and the Iconic Space* (Ghent: Oostakker, 2011).

8. For more on Aristotle, touch, and the senses, see Woolgar, *The Senses*, pp. 23, 29ff.

9. Compare, for example, Sarah M. Guérin, 'An ivory Virgin at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, in a Gothic Sculptor's Œuvre', *Burlington Magazine* 154 (2012): pp. 394-402, with Alexa Sand, 'Materia Meditandi: Haptic Perception and Some Parisian Ivories of the Virgin and Child, ca. 1300', *Different Visions* 4 (2012), <http://differentvisions.org/materia-meditandi-haptic-perception-parisian-ivories-virgin-child-ca-1300/>.

10. See William H. Monroe, 'A French Gothic Ivory of the Virgin and Child', *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 9 (1978): pp. 6-29, esp. pp. 24-25; Sarah M. Guérin, 'Meaningful Spectacles: Gothic Ivories Staging the Divine', *Art Bulletin* 95:1 (2013): pp. 53-77.

11. For an interesting overview of the haptic in the philosophy of recent technology, see Mark W. D. Paterson, 'Digital Touch', in Constance Classen (ed.), *The Book of Touch* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), pp. 431-6. For a similar view in a moment contemporary to Camille's, see Constantina Nadia Seremetakis, *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

12. Camille, 'The *Très Riches Heures*', p. 103.

13. CENOBIUM was originated by the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, the Istituto di Scienza e Tecnologie dell'Informazione in Pisa, and the Soprintendenze of both Pisa and Palermo.

14. See, for example, Benedetta Chiesi, 'Fictile Ivories: Diffusing the Taste for and Connoisseurship of Gothic Ivories', in Júlia Papp and Benedetta Chiesi (eds.), *John Brampton Philpot's Photographs of Fictile Ivory* (Budapest: Institute of Art History Research Centre for the Humanities, 2016); Rune Frederiksen and Eckard Marchand (eds.), *Plaster Casts. Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2010).

15. See G. Waibel, 'About Smithsonian X 3D', <http://3d.si.edu/about>.

16. Pembient Biotech, including the Black Rhino Genome Project, <http://pembient.com>.

17. Mark Redknap, 'The Llandaf Diptych', https://www.museumwales.ac.uk/rhagor/article/llandaf_diptych/.

18. I would like to thank Lloyd de Beer and Naomi Speakman at the British Museum for allowing me access to the ivory, as well as Su Thomas at Fuel3D for the loan of a scanner, Stephen Atkinson for his expertise in taking the scans, and Jeff Powers for his help in printing the replica.

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