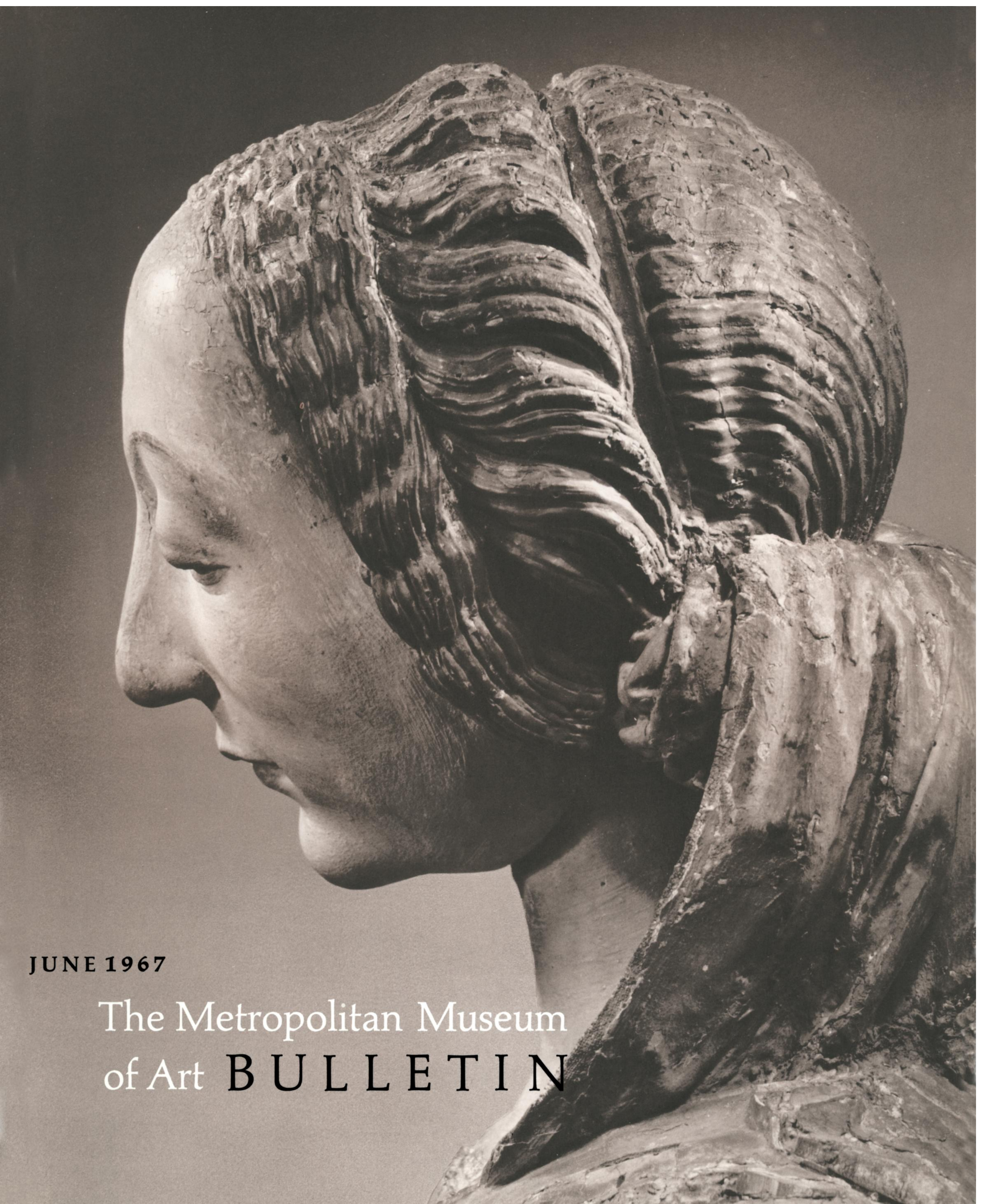
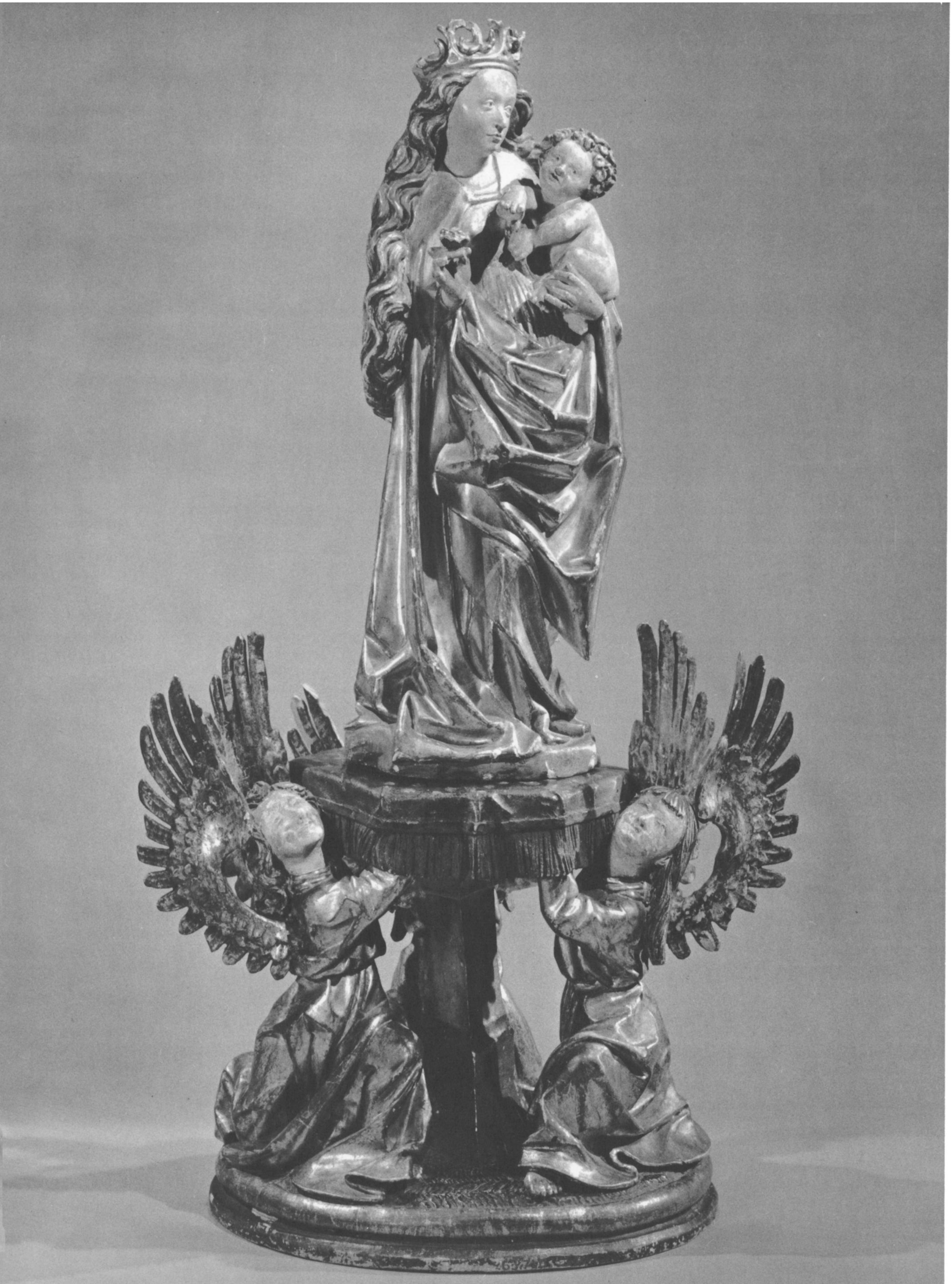


JUNE 1967

The Metropolitan Museum of Art BULLETIN



The Virgin and Child with Angels

VERA K. OSTOIA *Associate Research Curator of Medieval Art*

It has been stated often enough that the fifteenth century was a period of great popularity for images of the Virgin. Innumerable statues of the Virgin and Child of this period have survived, despite the vicissitudes of time and the ravages of the Reformation years.

Sculptures are usually sorted by certain similarities into types, or groups, of related representations. Even if no two sculptures are ever identical within each group, they are closely related to each other iconographically. It is surmised that in many cases these types go back to some common prototype.

To list only a few variations in the types of standing Virgin and Child, there are: the Virgin holding the Child on her right arm, or on her left, or in both hands in an almost horizontal position; the Virgin holding in her free hand a flower (usually a rose, one of the Virgin's symbols), some fruit (apple, pear, grapes, or pomegranate – all symbolic of Christ's Passion and the Redemption of original sin), or a scepter (as the Queen of Heaven). The Christ child may be holding in his hands a bird (symbol of the salvation of souls), a fruit, or an orb (as the Ruler of the World). He may be raising his right hand in blessing, or he may be just clinging to his mother, often placing his arm around her neck in a gesture deriving from the Byzantine Eleusa (Tenderness) type of Mother of God.

In the fifteenth century some new representations of the Virgin were introduced, inspired by theological teachings. The Virgin with the Child in her arms standing on a crescent moon was inspired by interpretation of the vision of St. John the Evangelist on Patmos: "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet . . ." (Rev. 12:1). A more mystical representation, of the Virgin of the Rosary, referred to the series of devotional prayers recited in her honor. The prayers followed one another like roses in a chaplet, or like the prayer beads, carved in the shape of small roses, used to count off the fifteen decades of Ave Marias. A garland of flowers framing the statue, or a string of prayer beads, would allude to the meaning.

Angels, when included in the various compositions, were represented no longer in the earlier, hieratic, attitudes of the Heavenly Host, but swarming around the Virgin in a most lively manner, crowning her, or carrying musical instruments, holding onto the crescent on which she was standing, supporting the folds of her mantle, or just kneeling or crouching at her feet, as young children would at the feet of the grownups.

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FRONTISPIECE:
The Virgin and Child with Angels. German (Lower Bavaria), about 1510-1520. Polychromed and gilt linden, height 18¾ inches. The Cloisters Collection, 63.71

ON THE COVER:
The head of a fifteenth-century Italian Madonna. See the article beginning on page 384

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With so many known iconographic representations, one is surprised to come upon still another variant for which there seems to be no parallel, and which presents problems in interpretation. Such is the case of a South German statuette of the Virgin and Child standing on a pedestal supported by angels (Frontispiece), acquired by The Cloisters in 1963.

The little sculpture is quite unusual in its charm and grace, present in every detail as well as in the whole. There is nothing solemn, majestic, or sad about it; there is no grandeur, but rather elegance and virtuosity. The youthful Virgin is clad in a long and voluminous mantle covering her almost completely, with only a small part of her dress showing, the gathers of its skirt caught into a tight bodice at a high waistline. The left side of the mantle is brought over the front and is held up by the Virgin's right elbow pressed to her body. It thus creates a series of angular folds, crumpled and restless, as if the mantle were raised by a current of air from below. The mantle's corner ends in a sharp downward angle; the hem spreads on the ground, concealing the Virgin's feet, and hangs over the edge of the small base.

The figure of the Virgin is really quite slim, and only the heavy folds of the mantle give the impression of bulkiness. The weight of her body rests on her left leg, and the right leg is brought forward, its slightly flexed knee faintly outlined under the folds of the mantle. Her left shoulder is pushed up and forward, while the right is pulled back and down. This "Gothic stance" creates a feeling of weightlessness in spite of the voluminous outline of the mantle.

From under a crown with intricate fleurons, the Virgin's hair falls in rich waves, enveloping her back down to below the waistline. She carries the naked Child on her left arm, while in the gracefully bent fingers of her right hand she holds a rose, the attribute of the Rose without Thorns, as the Virgin was sometimes called by medieval writers, or possibly in reference to the Rosary. The Child's pose is playful and full of animation. His plump little body is comfortably cradled in the hollow of his mother's arm, his crossed legs held in her hand. His right hand is extended toward the flower held by the Virgin, while his left grasps the loose end of the strap holding together the mantle at the Virgin's neck. This movement of the Child emphasizes the "late Gothic twist," especially since the Child turns his face outward and not to the Virgin. The Virgin does not face the Child either, but looks into the distance over his head. The Child's face is illuminated by an impish smile, while the mother's expression is alert and thoughtful, even aloof, but not disturbed by any forebodings; on the contrary, it also shows a shadow of a smile.

The table-like platform of the pedestal on which the statuette is placed is covered with a fringed cloth and rests on a triangular pillar, which in turn stands on a round base. Here, arranged in a triangle, kneel three very youthful angels. Their raised arms, with hands hidden behind the fringe of the coverlet, seem to carry or support the platform of the pedestal.

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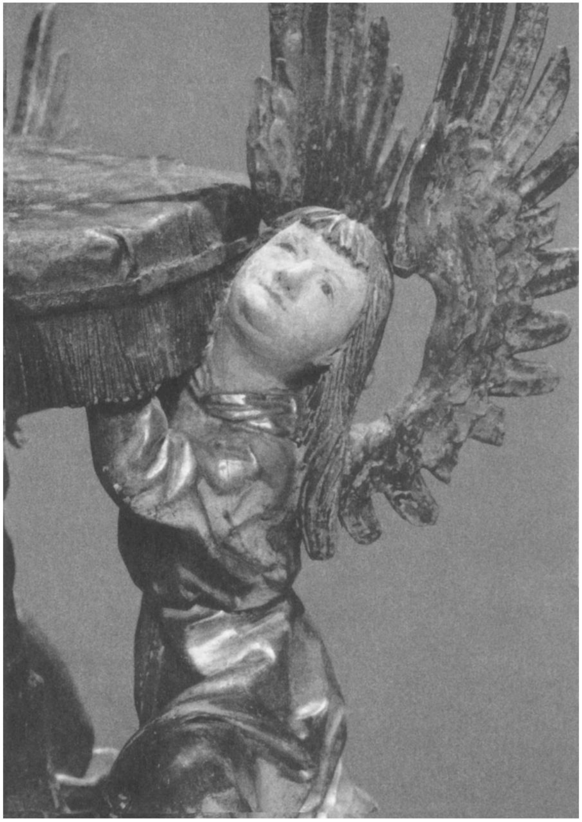
Their faces, thrown back or sideways to clear the fringe, are turned upward, but none of them is looking at the Virgin. They are like mischievous children proudly performing a pleasant task, and they appear to invite the spectator to participate in their joyful activity. The angels are wearing albs and amices; their wings are deployed and raised.

The sculptured group consists of two parts: the Virgin and Child on a small base, and the pedestal with the angels. The parts are carved separately, but of the same linden wood.

The carving of the sculpture is excellent. The quality of the decorative drapery is outstanding; the faces, the hands, and the body of the Child are all carved with the greatest of care. The roundish face of the Virgin, with well-formed chin, small straight pointed nose, small pursed mouth, and eyes under arched eyebrows on a rounded forehead, the face of the Child with its puggy nose of a baby, the smiling mouth above the same small chin, and the same rounded forehead as those of his mother, show acute observation. So do the three individually very different and strikingly expressive faces of the angels.

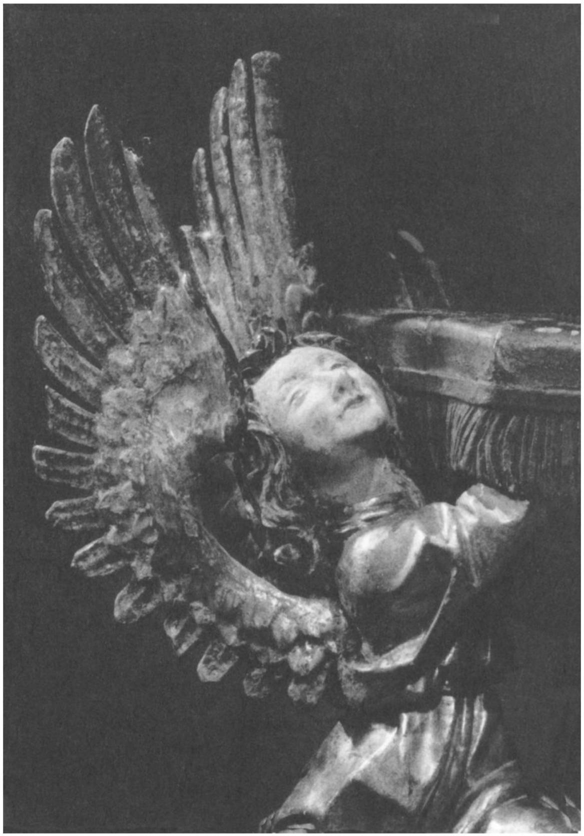
The carving is almost intact, with only a few tips broken off here and there. It may be that not all of the angels' wings are original: in a photograph published in 1907, only one, the far wing of the angel at the right, is present, and a small fragment of another. But in a photograph of the 1920s, all six wings are in place. Also, there is a faint design of peacock's feathers, in green glaze, only on the wing visible in the 1907 illustration.

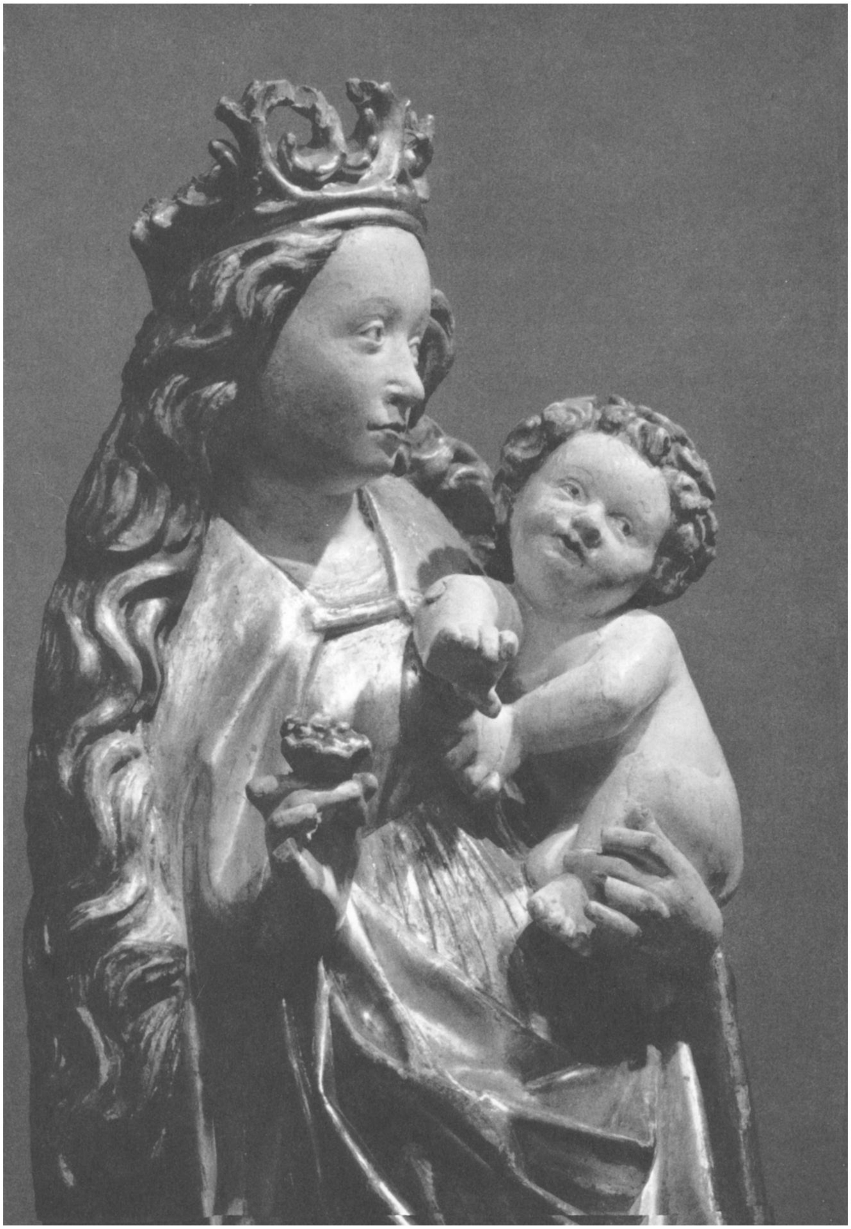
The polychromy is in very good condition. Extremely attractive is the ivory-smooth surface of the white flesh tones, marred by only a few tipped-in repairs, particularly noticeable on the faces of the angels. These flesh tones, the dark eye irises, and the deep red of the cheeks are almost the only colors found on the figures. The dress, the mantle, and the crown of the Virgin, the albs and amices of the angels, all are gilt. So is the hair, but one cannot be sure whether it was meant to be gilt originally. Red glaze is used on the Virgin's rose, on the strap of her mantle, and for the cloth covering the platform of the pedestal. Small circles of



1. The angel at the right

2. The angel at the left





3. The Virgin and Child

gilt paper are glued onto this cloth, and the fringe is painted a dull blue with what appears to be azurite blue in an oil medium. One wonders whether this might be a repainting, even if of long ago. The ground on which the angels kneel is carved and painted green to represent grass. But the gilding definitely predominates.

While on all solid surfaces there is water gilding over reddish bole, the hair and the wings show traces of oil mordant gilding, and this could indicate a later regilding. On the other hand, oil mordant gilding is a simpler procedure, and could have been used where no burnishing was envisaged.

Since the composition is perfectly balanced when viewed from every side, it is evident that it was made to be seen not only from the front. But, on the back (Figure 10), some of the carving of the hair has been cut or scraped off, and a fragment of an old handmade screw is embedded in the wood, as if something had been attached there. It is possible that it was an oval sunburst of rays, known as a glory, made of gilt wood or metal. Indeed, when a tentative glory, made of plain white paper, was tried out against the outline (Figure 5), the composition seemed rather to gain than to suffer. With such golden rays behind her, the Virgin would have been a "Virgin in Glory." But, it being against the policy of the Museum to add missing parts to an object, the glory, if there ever was one, will never be replaced.

Virgins in Glory were often represented standing on a crescent moon or with a serpent under their feet, in accordance with the text of Psalm 91:13: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder." (This text, referring to Christ, was transferred to the Virgin as well.) The interpretation given to such representations was related to the theological argument, of mystical meaning, of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception. Therefore, in certain cases, during the early years of the Reformation, such crescents, as well as rosary frames and other attributes of the Virgin with mystical connotations, were removed, as not fitting for the age of reason. Although small pieces of the statuette's base might be missing, and the whole plinth has evidently been repainted at some time – and thus could also have been recarved – no trace of such an attribute at the base could be established.

The subject represented by the sculpture cannot be identified as one of the well-known ones in which the Virgin might be carried by angels. The Assumption of the Virgin and the Immaculate Conception must be ruled out, because in both cases the Virgin should be represented without the Child. In the miraculous translation of the Holy House of Loreto, the iconography usually involves some indication of a building. In the Vision of the Apocalypse, or in the somewhat similar image of the Virgin and Child shown in the skies by the

Tiburtine Sibyl to Caesar Augustus, the angels do not carry the Virgin. The famous statue of the *Virgen del Pilar* of Saragossa, commemorating the appearance of the Virgin to St. James, stands on a column, but is not carried by angels. One must search elsewhere for the event depicted here.

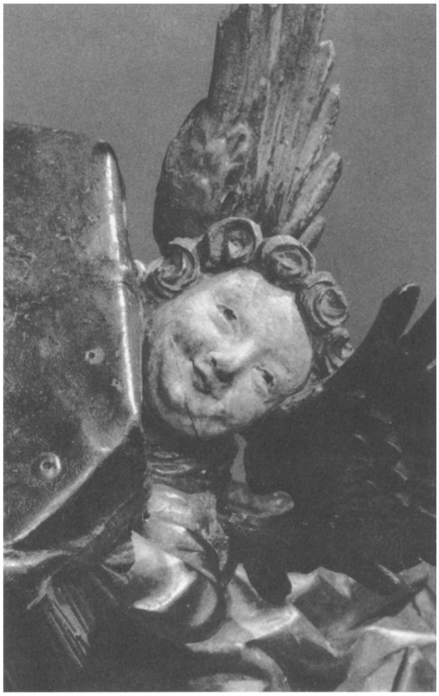
This might be some miracle, and there is a miracle the sculpture could represent, said to have occurred in a place that is still a destination for pilgrimages: the church at Tongre-Notre-Dame, near Ath, in Hainaut, not far from Tournai. The account of the miracle relates that in the year 1081, in the night from the first to the second of February, an image of the Virgin was brought by angels and deposited in the garden of a certain Hector, sire of Tongre. On the following day, the Feast of the Purification, Hector, accompanied by a crowd of people, solemnly carried the image into the parish church of St. Martin. But as night fell, the angels came and transported the image back to Hector's garden. Hector, convinced that the church was a more suitable place for the image, took it there again. But, during the night, the angels appeared once more and returned the image to the garden. Hector, unable to doubt any longer that the Virgin wished to stay in his garden, notified the Bishop of Cambrai of the events, and the Bishop sent his representatives to investigate. In their presence, the image was carried to the church for the third time. And again, when night came, the Virgin appeared "for everybody to see, crowned with light and glory" (Figure 6) and was carried by angels through the air, to the accompaniment of angelic music, and placed in Hector's garden. After this, the Bishop blessed the site, and a chapel was built in a very short time, because when building material was lacking angels supplied what was needed. The story of the image brought by angels spread quickly, multitudes of pilgrims came from everywhere, and many further miracles were recorded. Thus when Hector of Tongre became blind, he recovered his sight miraculously. In 1093, a confraternity of Our Lady was founded at Tongre, in Hainaut, with branch houses in other towns, and privileges and indulgences were granted to them. In 1524, a bull conceded further privileges to Tongre-Notre-Dame. Today, pilgrims still come to pray in the church, and great celebrations in honor of the Virgin take place twice a year: on the feasts of the Nativity of the Virgin and of the Purification. One could hardly find a more suitable explanation than the miracle of the Virgin's image brought by angels for the subject of the Cloisters sculpture.

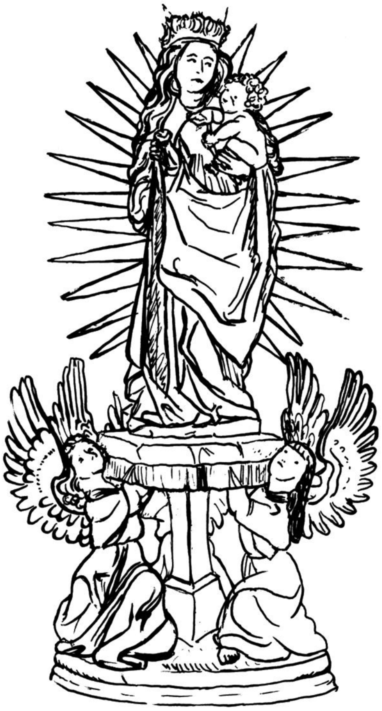
Although Hainaut is quite distant from southern Germany, where the statuette no doubt was carved, historical connections existed between the two regions. Around 1400, William, duke of Bavaria, was also Count of Holland and of Hainaut. His daughter Jacoba struggled all her life, with variable success, for her inheritance. Hainaut was included in the Burgundian domain only after Jacoba died childless in 1436.

The small sculpture at The Cloisters does not copy the actual statue at Tongre-Notre-Dame, which is a seated Romanesque Virgin. But this fact does not necessarily speak against the possible reference to it, and to the miracle. It has been established that, in the fifteenth century, when devotional images were copied for worship elsewhere, sometimes it meant more to illustrate the idea than to execute replicas, although of course actual replicas could be made. A miracle pictorially recorded earlier could be interpreted by an artist in a different form.

For example, the highly venerated, miraculous Madonna of Einsiedeln, in Switzerland, is shown in an engraving of 1466 by Master E.S. (L.81) seated, with the Child standing on her left knee. If the Einsiedeln statue was actually a seated Virgin earlier, in the second half of the fifteenth century it was replaced by a standing Virgin and Child, of South German workmanship (Figure 7). The veneration of the image did not diminish because of that, and the standing Virgin is the present devotional image at Einsiedeln. It may be noted that this standing Virgin of Einsiedeln shows a remarkable similarity in posture to the Virgin at The Cloisters, made half a century later. This similarity would be more evident if the mantle enveloping the Cloisters Virgin could be removed.

4. The angel at the back



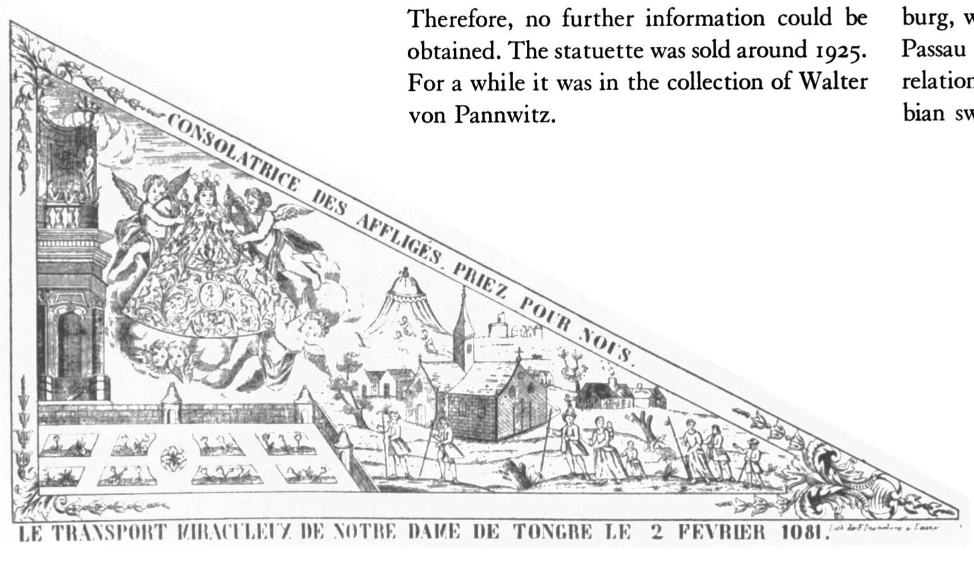


5. *Drawing of the Cloisters Virgin and Child with suggested glory*

The provenance of the Cloisters sculpture is unknown, and its history cannot be traced further back than 1907, when it was shown in the Exhibition of the Bavarian Museum Association, in Munich, as one of the objects owned by Count Arco-Zinneberg. The family archives of the count have been destroyed. Therefore, no further information could be obtained. The statuette was sold around 1925. For a while it was in the collection of Walter von Pannwitz.

The Cloisters sculpture should be dated between 1510 and 1520. It is late Gothic in style, but already presages and includes some Renaissance changes. Thus, while the hair of two of the angels is curly, the hair of the third (Figure 1) is straight and cut with bangs over the forehead, in the manner that came into fashion around 1500 and continued for almost half a century. The curls of the angel in the back (Figure 4) are windswept, as are those on some of the figures by Hans Leinberger, a Bavarian master whose activity began about 1515. They can also be compared to those of the Angel of the Annunciation in St. Lorenz Church in Nuremberg, by Veit Stoss, dated about 1517 to 1519.

The workmanship of the Cloisters sculpture is anonymous, as is that of so many other sculptures of the late Gothic period. By style it is South German, and shows Bavarian traits, and more specifically those of Lower Bavaria in southeast Germany, in the general region between Passau, Regensburg, and eastern Swabia. It is here that one encounters the pleasant round faces of Virgins, the rounded foreheads, the precious attitudes, and the restless folds. The sculpture shows the inheritance of grace and exquisiteness of the so-called Schöne Madonna style. This style, the outgrowth of the International style, swept in the first half of the fifteenth century from Bohemia west, south, and northwest, passing through Salzburg, where it was accepted enthusiastically; Passau and Salzburg had close ecclesiastical relations at that time. There are also the Swabian sweetness and mildness, and details – to


CONSOLATRICE DES AFFLIGÉS. PRIEZ POUR NOUS.
LE TRANSPORT MIRACULEUX DE NOTRE DAME DE TONGRE LE 2 FEVRIER 1081.

6. *Pennant used by pilgrims to Tongre-Notre-Dame: angels carrying the image of the Virgin and Child. Mid-XIX century. Lithograph. From E. H. van Heurck, Les Drapelets de Pèlerinage en Belgique et dans les pays voisins (Antwerp, 1922)*

be discussed later – found in Strasbourg, as well as others, coming from the direction of Nuremberg.

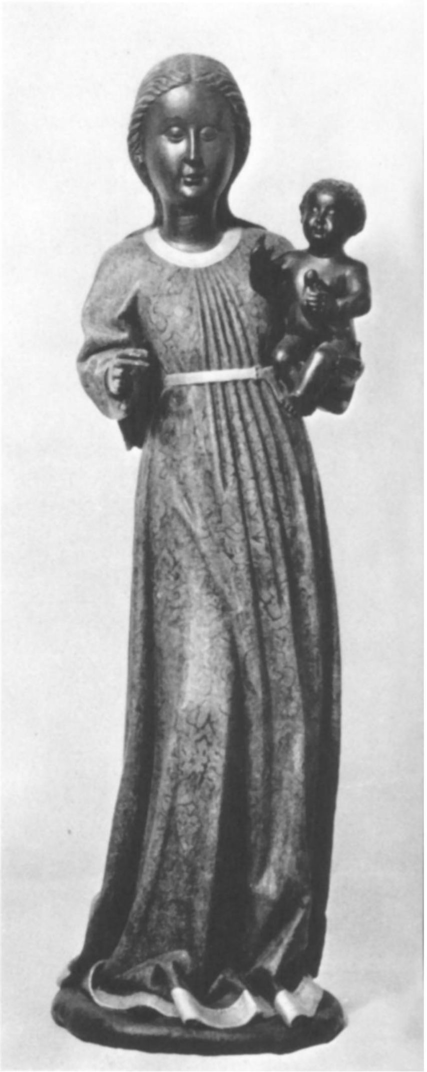
Besides regional traits in the sculpture, there are others that leave little doubt that the master who carved it was aware of the achievements of great contemporary and somewhat earlier sculptors. He could have known their work directly or through intermediaries.

When one looks for the first time at the Cloisters Virgin, one is reminded of the so-called Dangolsheim Madonna (Figures 8 and 9). At present it is attributed to the Strasbourg region and dated about 1470 to 1480, but formerly it was dated earlier and attributed to various masters, among them Nicholas Gerhaert of Leyden. It is possible that the Master of the Dangolsheim Madonna was a pupil of the latter. The very slim Dangolsheim Madonna is wearing a wide mantle. She supports with both hands the playful Child and, at the same time, holds in her right hand the pulled-up hem of the mantle. A great number of statues in the Upper Rhine region and in South Germany were influenced by this Madonna. They are recognizable by the similarity in the arrangement and treatment of the drapery, and in the manner the Virgin holds the Child. Although the position of the Child in the Cloisters sculpture is entirely different, the sculpture shows a comparable liveliness of the Child and the same accent on movement within space, as well as a certain unconventionality. The allover pattern of the drapery arrangement appears different, but actually has a similar underlying system. The way in which the mantle falls over the front of the base and the manner in which a strong accent of a single vertical fold counterbalances the broken folds of the pulled-up mantle are common to all figures of the Virgin and Child influenced by the Dangolsheim Madonna; so is the long hair spread over the back and shoulders of the Virgin. Viewed from the back, the arrangement of the folds in both sculptures is almost identical (Figures 9 and 10): the vertical folds of the mantle radiate out from the shoulders with their lower ends lying flat on the ground. These folds, and the deep pockets formed by the drapery at the left side of the Cloisters Virgin (Figure 14) and on the right side of the Dangolsheim Madonna, are characteristics going back to the "Schöne Madonnas."

Nothing can be said with certainty about the activity of the Master of the Dangolsheim Madonna, but Nicholas Gerhaert of Leyden traveled widely. After appearing in Trier in the 1460s, and working in Strasbourg and Constance, he stayed in Passau from 1468 to 1472, and from there proceeded to Vienna and Wiener Neustadt, where he died in 1473. He left traces of his influence in all these regions: realism in the setting of figures within space, and the breaking of drapery into lively folds, among other details. Practically all German late Gothic sculptures show the imprint of his personality. Some of his traits are to be found in the engravings by Master E.S., active in the period between 1440 and 1470, and these prints doubtless disseminated Nicholas Gerhaert of Leyden's style.

All this does not mean that the Cloisters sculpture is directly connected to the Master of the Dangolsheim Madonna, or to Nicholas Gerhaert of Leyden. Several other outstanding masters of the second half of the fifteenth century also left their stamp on the artistic production of that period. Neither does the admission of their influences detract from the attribution of the sculpture to Lower Bavaria.

There are indications that the artist who carved the statuette was acquainted with the prints of Master E.S. Besides the "large" Einsiedeln Madonna print, mentioned earlier, Master E.S. made another engraving in the same year, known as the "smallest" Einsiedeln Madonna (Figure 12). In this engraving, the Child is seated on the Virgin's left knee. Also in the same year, Master E.S. engraved a small picture of a Virgin and Child (Figure 11), in which the Child is in exactly the same position as in the smallest Einsiedeln Madonna print, but the Virgin is standing, and there is a serpent at her feet. In both prints the Child's posture is very much like that of the Child of the Cloisters sculpture. The arrangement of the Virgin's hair, spread widely over her shoulders, is the same as in several other prints of Master E.S., as well as in the Dangolsheim

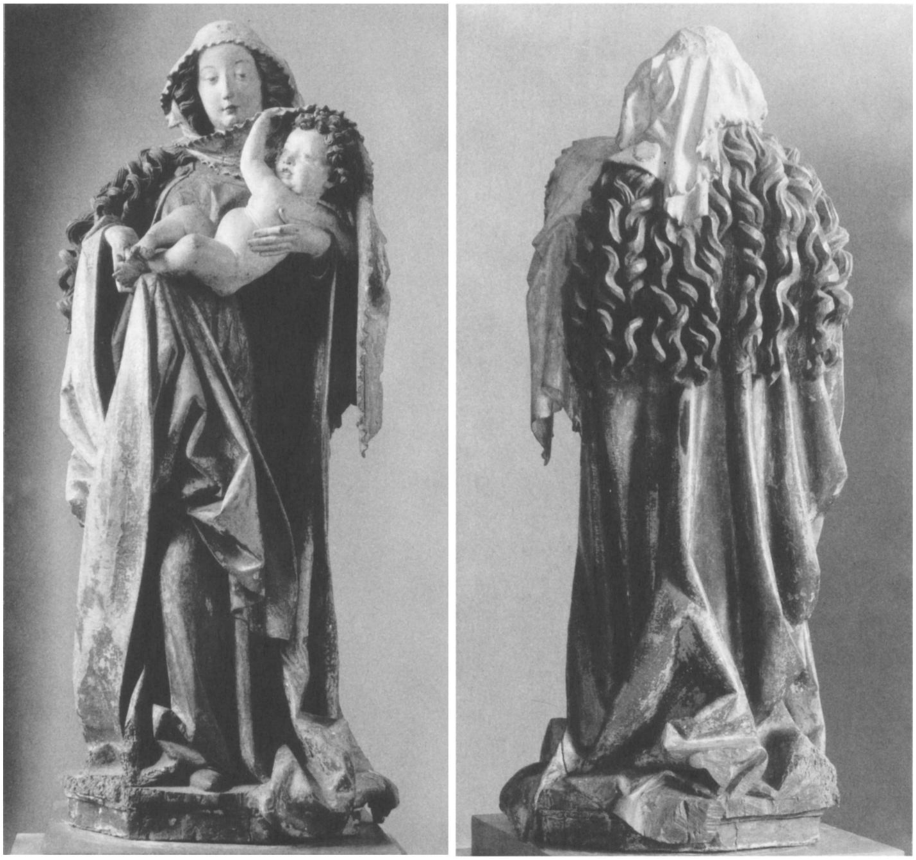


7. *The Virgin and Child, devotional image of Einsiedeln. South German, second half of the* XV *century. Polychromed and gilt wood. Maria-Einsiedeln Monastery, Switzerland*

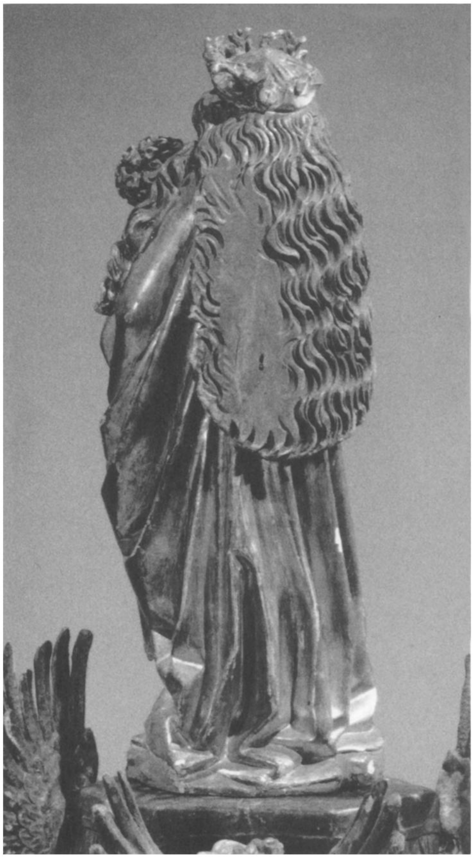
Madonna and the sculpture at The Cloisters.

Another master who had felt the influence of Nicholas Gerhaert of Leyden, and whose own personality left lasting impressions on other artists, was Veit Stoss. Born about 1440, probably in Nuremberg, he went in 1477 to Cracow, where he achieved great success. In 1496 he returned to Nuremberg, established a workshop, and died there in 1533. His influence is also found in the Cloisters Virgin, for example in the drapery that seems to flutter in the air, and in the pointed corner of the pulled-up mantle.

Veit Stoss left an engraving (the best of the very few he made), datable after 1496, of a Virgin and Child, with a pomegranate, in which one can see some recollections of Master E.S. (Figure 13). It is believed to have been made as a model for a sculpture. The Virgin holds the pomegranate as if it were a flower, and the fruit itself looks so much like a rose that sometimes it was mistaken for one. In connection with this print one can, because of certain similarities, mention another, earlier print. It is the Madonna on the crescent moon (Figure 16), by the Master of the Death of the Virgin, an Upper Rhenish follower of Robert Campin, active about 1440 to 1450. Both these engravings have several details in common with the Cloisters sculpture. In all three the Child holds on to something belonging to his mother in a comparable way: a fold of her mantle in the earlier print, a strand of hair in the print by Veit Stoss, and finally, in the sculpture, the strap of her mantle. The manner in which the Virgin holds the rose (or pomegranate in Stoss's print) is almost identical in all three. The gesture of the Child as he reaches out for it is also very similar, only in the Cloisters sculpture there is created the

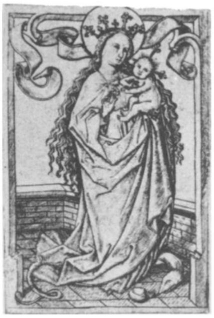


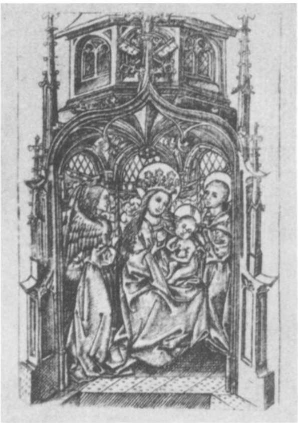
8, 9. The Dangolsheim Madonna. German (Strasbourg), about 1470. Polychromed walnut, height about 41 inches. Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin-Dahlem. Photograph: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg

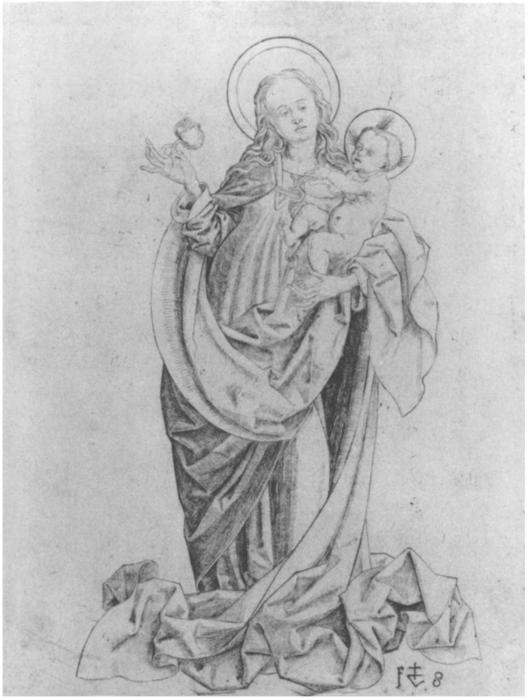


10. The Cloisters Virgin and Child, seen from the back additional torsion of the body of the Child, because he grasps the strap with his left, outer, hand. In this, one is strongly reminded of the movement of the Child in the print of the standing Virgin and Child (Figure 11) of Master E.S. There are other interrelations as well as differences between the three prints and the sculpture. The principal difference lies in the drapery pattern, which in the prints is closer to the Dangolsheim Madonna. But this can probably be explained by the existence of some local preferences.

It is clear that all the details discussed above were firmly rooted in the South German and Upper Rhenish traditions. But several German scholars, among them the late Friedrich Winkler, have tried to establish a prototype for the prints. Winkler believed he had found the source for the print by the Master of the Death of the Virgin via still another print, a







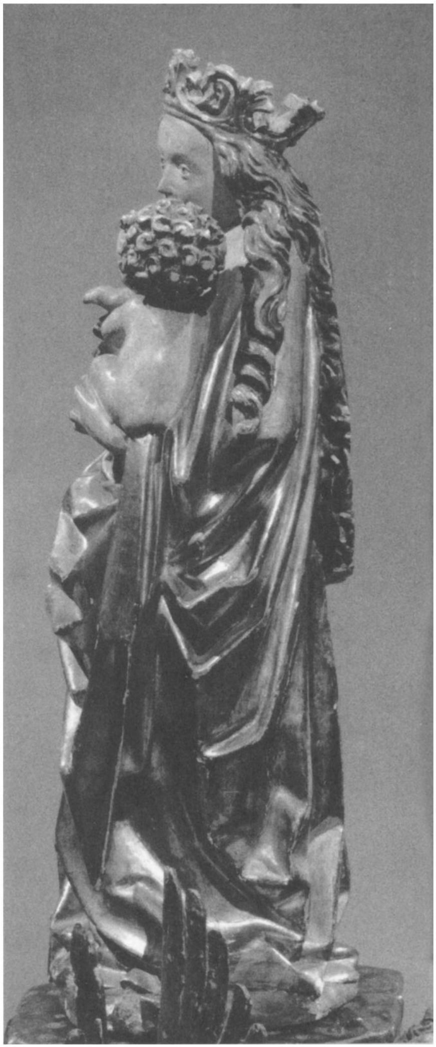
LEFT:

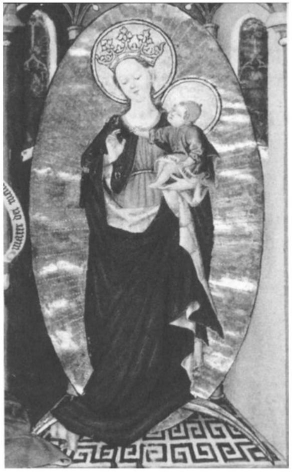
11. The Virgin and Child, with a serpent at her feet (Lehrs 64), by the Master E.S., German. 1466. Engraving, about 2½ x 1¾ inches. From Max Geisberg, Die Kupferstiche des Meisters E.S. (Berlin, 1924)

12. The "smallest" Madonna of Einsiedeln (Lehrs 68-II), by the Master E.S., German. 1466. Engraving. From Max Geisberg, Die Kupferstiche des Meisters E.S.

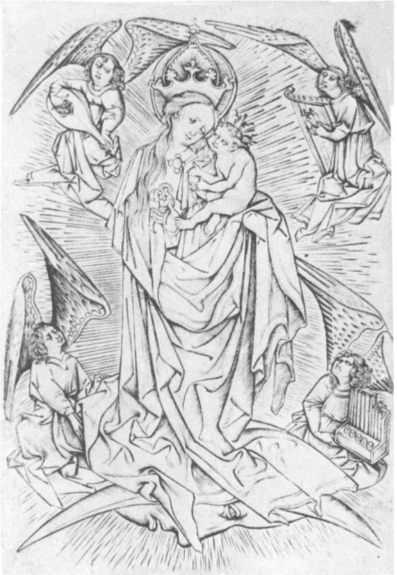
13. The Virgin and Child, with a pomegranate, by Veit Stoss, German (Nuremberg). After 1496. Engraving, 7⅞ x 6½ inches. Richard H. Zinser Collection, New York

14. The Cloisters Virgin and Child, seen from the right





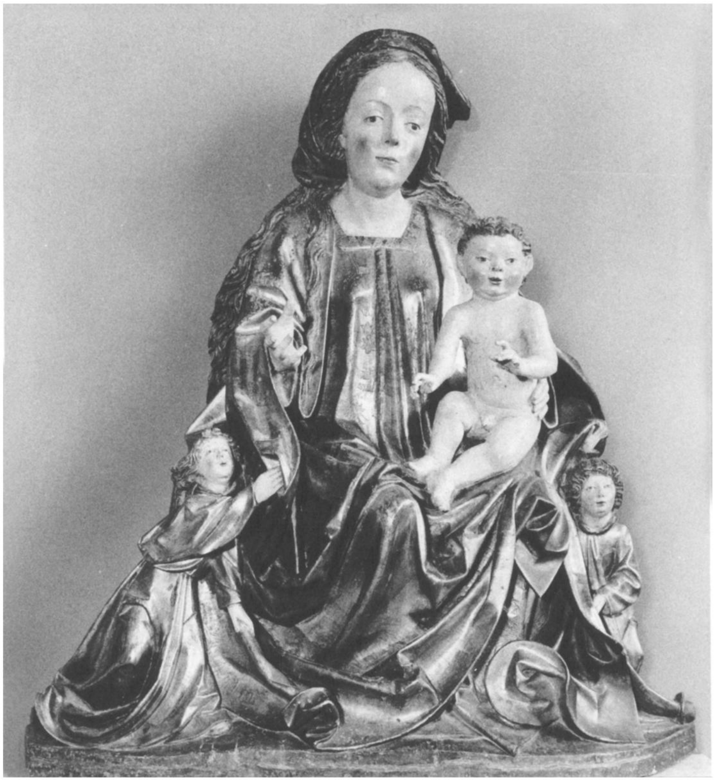
15. Virgin and Child. From the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves. Netherlandish (probably Utrecht), about 1435. Guennol Collection, New York. Photograph: The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York



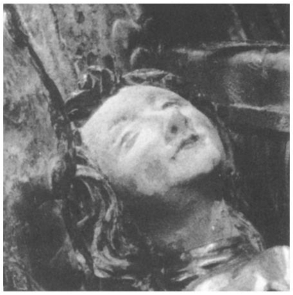
16. The Virgin and Child with a rose, surrounded by angels, attributed to the Master of the Death of the Virgin, German (Upper Rhenish). About 1440. Engraving, 7¾ x 5 inches. The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Swabian copy of a Netherlandish print. He said that all these prints derived ultimately from illuminations in three Netherlandish manuscripts, one of these being the Virgin and Child on the dedication page of the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves (Figure 15). Winkler believed that "there must have been a still earlier prototype, probably some devotional image."

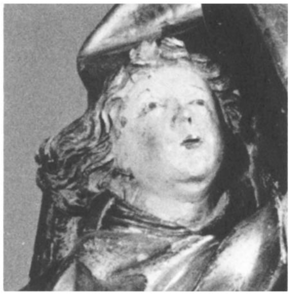
Karl Zürcher, in 1920, tried to connect the Cloisters sculpture with the circle of Simon Lainberger, who, he thought, was a Nuremberg artist active between 1478 and 1503, and identical with the Master of the Dangolsheim Madonna. Georg Lill, in 1925, attributed it to Veit Stoss himself. But, although the sculptor remains anonymous, there is a master whose work shows sufficient relationship to it to be mentioned in this article. There is, in the collection of Emil G. Bührle in Zurich, a seated Madonna with two angels kneeling at her feet (Figure 17). This sculpture, said to come from Passau, is connected by style to Nuremberg and to the school of Veit Stoss. The angels are closely related to the angels supporting the



17. Seated Virgin and Child with Angels, attributed to the Master of the Frame of Angels, German. About 1480. Polychromed linden, height about 47 inches. E. G. Bührle Collection, Zurich

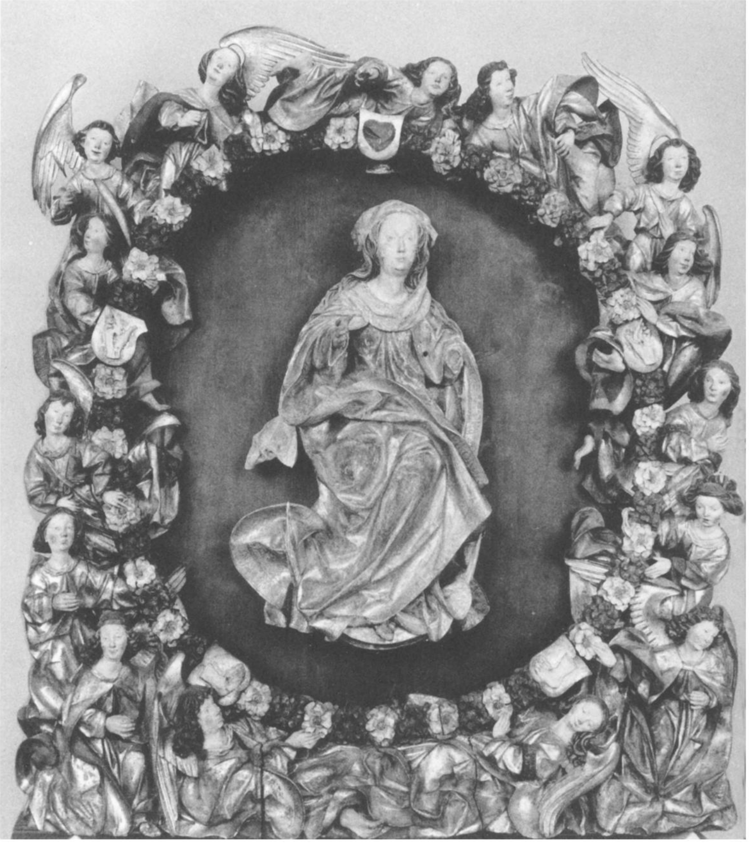


18. The angel at the left, the Cloisters Virgin

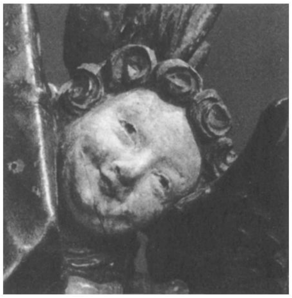


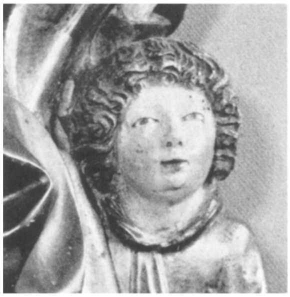
19. The angel at the left, the Virgin in the Bührle Collection

20. Frame of Angels, enclosing a seated Virgin of the Rosary, by the Master of the Frame of Angels, German. About 1490-1500. Polychromed and gilt linden, height about 65½ inches. Germanisches Museum (the frame) and St. Jakob Church (the Virgin), Nuremberg. Photograph: Germanisches Museum. The Child and the glory originally surrounding the Virgin are missing

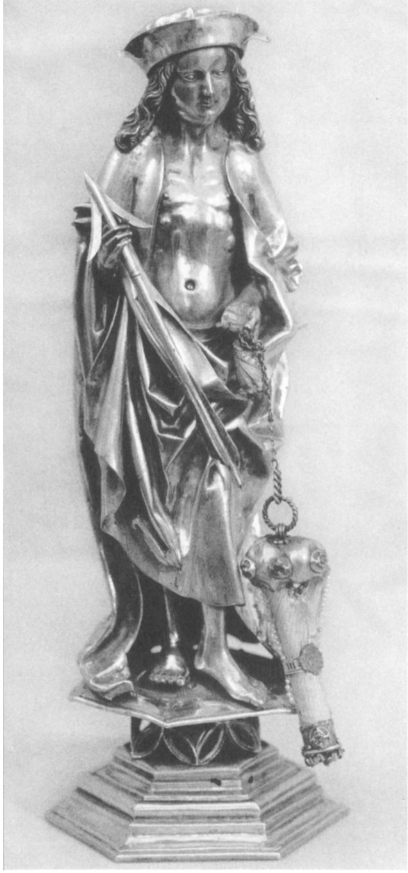


21. The angel at the back, the Cloisters Virgin





22. The angel at the right, the Virgin in the Bührle Collection



23. *St. Sebastian, reliquary statuette. German (Regensburg), about 1505. Silver-gilt, height about 17 inches. Cathedral of St. Peter, Regensburg. Photograph: J. Zacharias, Regensburg*

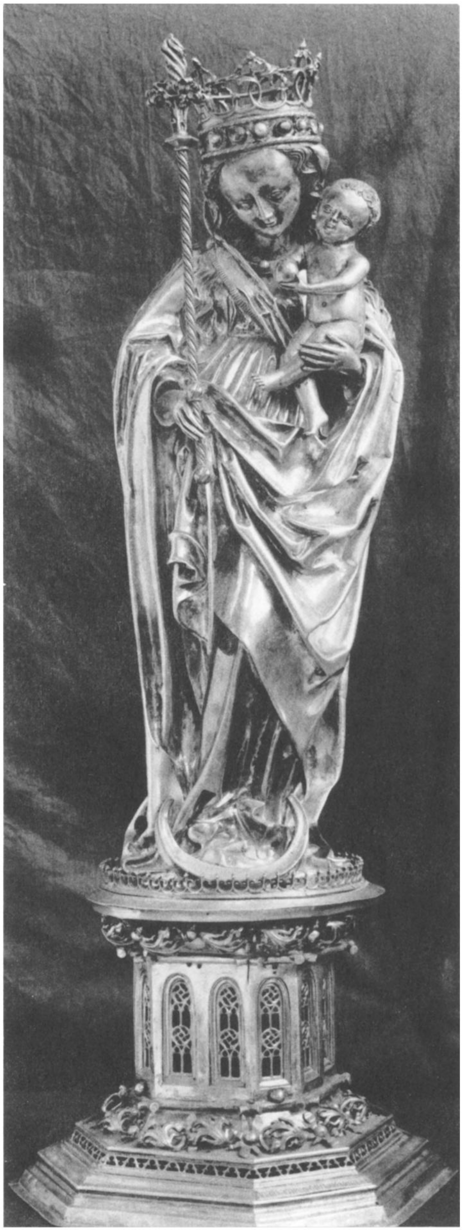
pedestal of the Cloisters Virgin. They have the same softly rounded chins, with creases under them, the same elongated eyes with straight lower lids, and the same eager expressions. The angels at the left in both cases look very much alike when seen at a certain angle, while the angel at the right in Zurich is closer to the Cloisters angel at the back (Figures 18 and 19, 21 and 22). The curves of the drapery of the angels' albs are also similar. The sculpture in Zurich is attributed to a follower of Veit Stoss, known under the very poetical name of "Master of the Frame of Angels," because his principal work is a Virgin and Child of the Rosary seated within a wreath of roses held by fifteen angels (Figure 20).

The similarities possibly do not suffice for an attribution of the Cloisters sculpture to this master, about whom so little is known. But one may at least suppose that our master's work and that of the Master of the Frame of Angels has some, as yet unexplainable, relationship. The slight difference in style between the drapery of the Virgin's mantle and the albs of the three kneeling angels might then be explained in one of two ways: either the master wished to be more conservative in the carving of the Virgin and Child, or he had seen the work of another master when the Virgin's statuette had already been completed, but the kneeling angels not yet carved.

It now remains to conjecture for what purpose such a small-scale sculpture could have been made with such care for detail. The easiest answer would be that it was meant to be a devotional figure for a private chapel, or for private worship. It could also have been destined to be placed at the top of a tall staff, to be carried in processions, as a patron saint of a guild or confraternity. Or it could have been made as a model for a silver figure, with the polychromy added later. Even such outstanding sculptors as Tilman Riemenschneider, Gregor Erhart, and Veit Stoss carved such models, and, in certain cases, both the model and the metal figure have been found.

No silver statuette is known for which the Virgin and Child with Angels could have served as a model, but very few of the great number of silver figures recorded in various inventories have been preserved. Several of the surviving ones can give a good idea of how such a statuette might have looked (Figures 23 and 24). In some, even the hexagonal shape of the pedestal resembles that of the Cloisters sculpture. Finally, the sculpture could have been made to be used in place of a silver statuette, if sufficient money was not available for the precious metal, and for the additional expense of a silversmith's work.

Whatever the answer may be, the delicate beauty of the carving, the polychromy, and the gilding can be admired as much as, and possibly even more than, silver and silver-gilt.

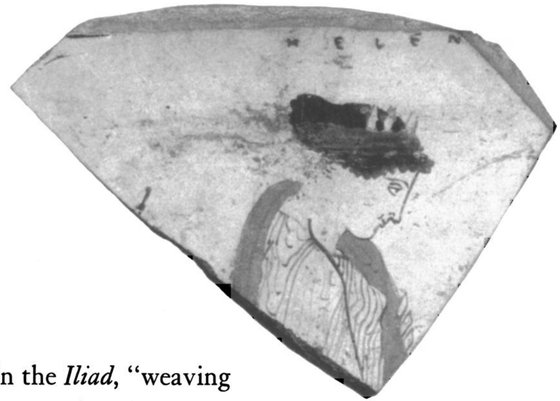


24. *The Virgin and Child, by Balthasar Waltenperger, German (Passau). 1485-1488. Silver, parcel-gilt, height about 35 inches. Parish church, Kösslarn. Photograph: B. Schwarz, Munich*

Helen of Troy

MARGARET R. SCHERER

Research Fellow, Retired



1. Helen of Troy. Fragment of a white-ground krater, Attic, 460-440 B.C. Cincinnati Art Museum

Helen of Troy appears for the first time in recorded literature in the *Iliad*, "weaving a great web, a red folding robe, and working into it the numerous struggles of Trojans, breakers of horses, and bronze-armoured Achaians, struggles that they endured for her sake at the hands of the war god."

Homer's *Iliad* tells little of Helen's story. It covers only a few weeks in the war's tenth year and is concerned chiefly with the conflicting passions and struggles of a few of the heroes fighting on either side. In this epic of masculine motives and the clash of battle, Helen plays a comparatively passive part, although her name is a continuing battle cry. Homer often alludes to earlier incidents evidently so familiar to his audience of the ninth century B.C. that there was no need for retelling them.

Within the next few centuries this background of legend took form in a group of poems known as the epic cycle, telling of events both before and after the *Iliad*. These epics were lost long ago, but brief summaries of them were made in the second century A.D. by the Greek grammarian Proclus. These were preserved in the ninth-century *Biblioteca* of the Byzantine scholar Photius. Quotations from other ancient writers have also given some details from the lost poems.

The *Cypria* covered the years before the *Iliad*'s opening, including the abduction of Helen, wife of the Greek Menelaus. Its summary ends with the landing of the Greeks near Troy, and their dispatch of envoys to Priam, the Trojan king, to demand her return. After the failure of this embassy, the ten-year siege of Troy began. The *Aethiopus*, named for Troy's Ethiopian allies, takes up the story where the *Iliad* ends. It is followed by the *Little Iliad* and the *Sack of Ilium*, which describe Troy's last days, its capture through the stratagem of the wooden horse, the slaughter of many Trojans, and the recovery of Helen.

From this wealth of legend Greek and Latin authors drew for centuries a variety of themes for epic, lyric, drama, and satire, following, on the whole, the established outline of events. As late as the fifth century A.D. two Greek epics, Colluthus's *Rape of Helen* and Tryphiodorus's *Taking of Ilion*, carried the story into the Christian era with few changes in pagan background or human motives.

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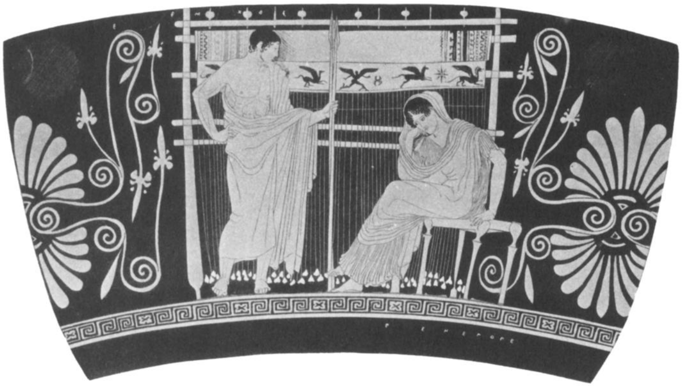
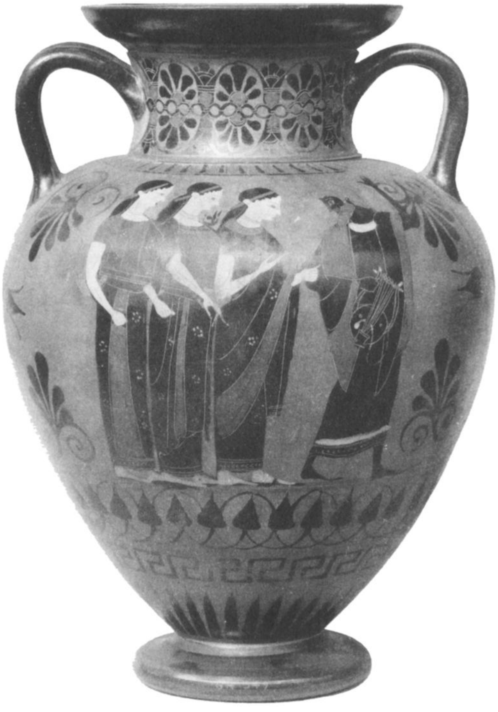


2. *A vertical warp-weighted loom such as Helen may have used: Penelope at her loom as described in the Odyssey. Drawing after an Attic red-figured skyphos, second half of the* V *century* B.C. *Chiusi Museum*



3. *The Judgment of Paris: Hermes Leading the Three Goddesses. Black-figured neck amphora, attributed to the Swing Painter. Attic, about 540* B.C. *Gift of F. W. Rhinelander, 98.8.11*

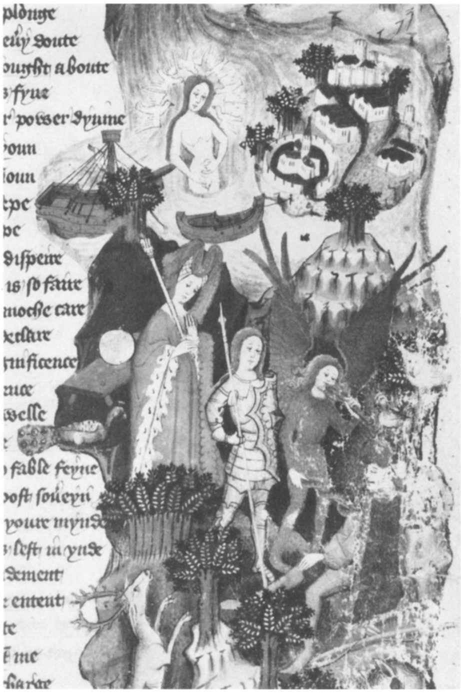
As Christianity gradually superseded paganism and the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome entered their long transition to the Middle Ages, the shape of the Trojan story changed. Two books, especially, were agents of this change: the *Diary of the Trojan War* by Dictys of Crete, probably written in the fourth century A.D., and *The History of the Destruction of Troy* by Dares of Phrygia, composed about the sixth century. Both these works, known only in Latin, were probably drawn from Greek originals, and both purported to be eyewitness accounts by men who had fought in the war, Dictys with the Greeks and Dares with the Trojans. Their authenticity was little questioned, and they became the main sources of the medieval romances of Troy. Not only were these books in Latin – the ability to read Greek was fading in western Europe – but they were short by comparison with older Latin works, and they told a continuous story. Dares was the more popular, as the sympathies of much of Europe were shifting to the Trojan side. Many noble Roman families had long traced their descent from the Trojans who founded Latium after Aeneas fled from Troy. In the seventh century A.D. a Frankish chronicle said that the French were descended from a Trojan prince, Francus. In the ninth century the Latin chronicler Nennius told of the founding of Britain by Brutus, grandson of Aeneas. The final victory of the Greeks was too well known to be changed, but gradually the Trojans rather than the Greeks became the heroes of the tale.

The first of the great Troy romances, Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*, written in French verse about 1160, transformed the epic heroes of Greece into medieval knights. Costumes, armor, and backgrounds are those of contemporary life. The influence of the Crusades appears in Benoît's emphasis on Eastern magic and wonders and exotic ornaments. Between 1272 and 1289 Guido delle Colonne's Latin prose *History*, based largely on Benoît but without credit, reached an even larger audience and was translated into many languages. Among many delightful English versions are a fourteenth-century minstrels' romance, *The Seege or Batayle of Troye*, and Lydgate's *Troy Book* in verse, based on Guido's *History*. About 1474 William Caxton published his translation of the French prose romance by Raoul Lefèvre, *Recueil des Histoires de Troye.* Caxton's translation, the *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,* the first book printed in English, became the standard English version of the Troy romance.

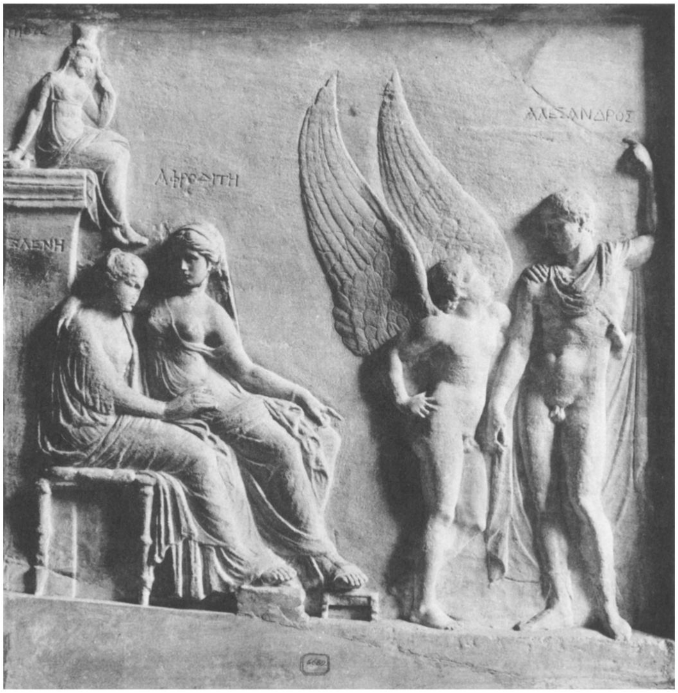
Although the romance versions went out of fashion with the revival of learning in the Renaissance, remnants of the medieval tradition, as well as that of Greece, have survived both in literature and in art. Sometimes, as in the high Renaissance and the eighteenth century, classic forms have prevailed; sometimes, as in the work of Romantic poets and artists, the Middle Ages have been the strongest influence. And, in Part II of *Faust,* early in the nineteenth century, Goethe combined the two. His Helen, represented as the ideal of classic beauty, is shown in the setting of a medieval legend of necromancy.

Helen, daughter of Zeus and wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta, was carried away to Troy by Paris (often called by the Greeks Alexandrus or Alexander), son of Priam. Menelaus summoned other Greek chieftains to his aid and set out to recover his wife. Thus she became the immediate and most famous cause of the Trojan War. But the *Cypria* gave an underlying cause, which emphasizes the Greek concept of fate: ". . . the countless tribes of men, though wide-dispersed, oppressed the surface of the deep-bosomed earth, and Zeus saw it and had pity and in his wise heart resolved to relieve the all-nurturing earth of men by causing the great struggle of the Ilian war, that the load of death might empty the world. And so the heroes were slain at Troy." Helen is here but an instrument of the gods; Priam expressed the Greek attitude toward her when he reassured her, early in the *Iliad*: "I am not blaming you: to me the gods are blameworthy."

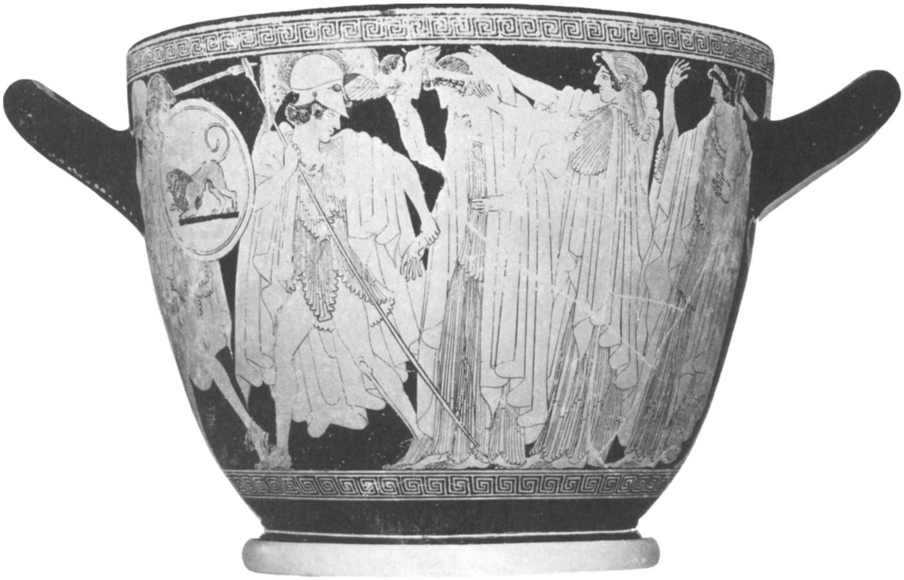
The summary of the *Cypria* tells how the plan was put into action: "Zeus plans with Themis [goddess of order] to bring about the Trojan War. Strife arrives while the gods are feasting at the marriage of Peleus and Thetis and starts a dispute between Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite as to which of them is fairest. The three are led by Hermes [Figure 3] at the command of Zeus to Alexandrus on Mount Ida for his decision, and Alexandrus, lured by his promised marriage with Helen, decides in

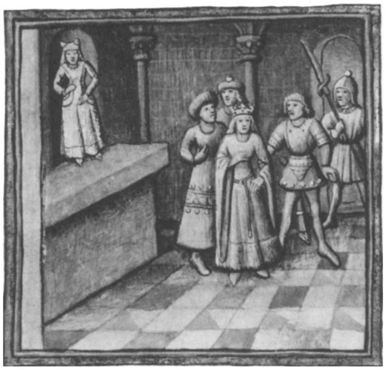


4. *The Judgment of Paris: Paris Sees the Goddesses in a Dream. From Lydgate's Troy Book, English, third quarter of the* XV *century. John Rylands Library, Manchester, Ryl. Eng.* MS I, *fol. 42*



5. *The Persuasion of Helen.* I *century* B.C. – I *century* A.D. *Marble. National Museum, Naples. Photograph: Brogi-Art Reference Bureau*





6. *Helen Led Away by Paris. Red-figured skyphos, signed by Hieron as potter and by Makron as painter. Attic, about 480* B.C. *Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Francis Bartlett Fund, 13.186*

7. *The Abduction of Helen from the Temple of Venus on Cythera. From Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César, French, mid-*XV *century. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York,* M *212, fol. 69*

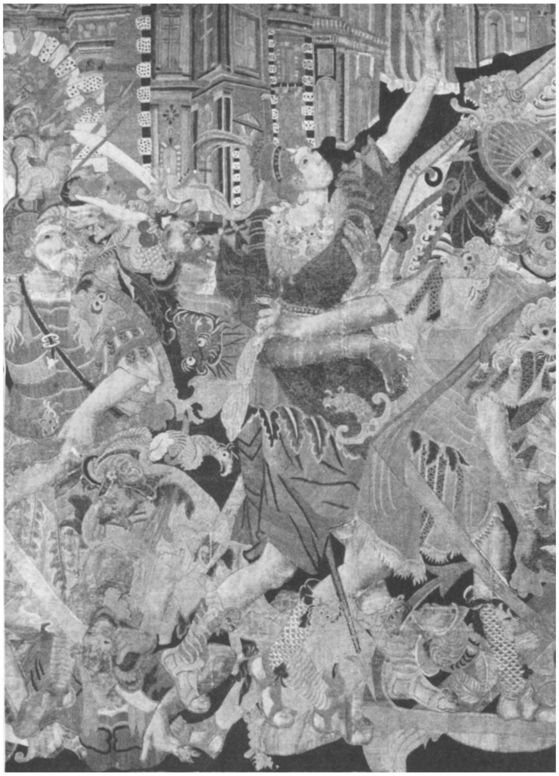
favor of Aphrodite." The summary does not tell how Strife brought about the dispute between the goddesses. Later writers say that she tossed on the table an apple inscribed "for the fairest," and that it was this apple which Paris awarded to Aphrodite.

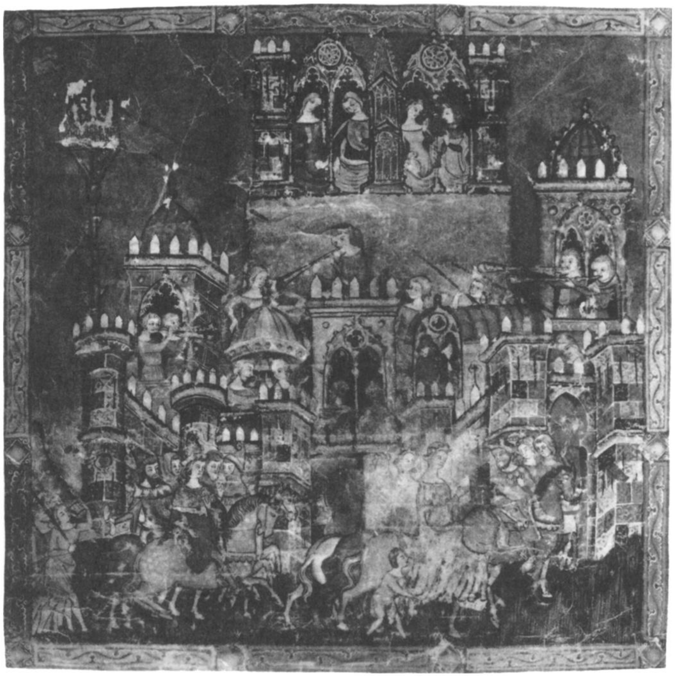
The Judgment of Paris has remained a favorite subject both in literature and in art for well over two thousand years. One of the most entertaining descriptions of it was written late in the second century A.D. by the Greek satirist Lucian in his *Dialogues of the Gods*. Last of the three goddesses to be judged, Aphrodite approaches Paris with flattery and urges him to marry some Greek girl: "Helen, now, is a Spartan, and such a pretty girl – quite as pretty as I am – and so susceptible!" Aphrodite then tells Paris to set out for Greece: ". . . and when you get to Sparta Helen will see you; and for the rest, her falling in love, and going back with you – that will be my affair. . . . Love, beauty, wedlock; all these you may purchase at the price of yonder apple."

Paris: "Take the apple: it is yours."

Dares describes the Judgment as a dream. Paris, he says, tells his father that once in the forest of Ida, "Mercury [Hermes] had led before him in a dream Venus and Minerva and Juno [Aphrodite, Athena, and Hera], for him to judge amongst them as to their beauty. At that time Venus had promised him, if he would adjudge her beauty greater than theirs, that she would give him that dame who appeared most beautiful in all Greece. When he heard this he judged Venus fairest of all." The Troy romances usually followed Dares's account, their illustrations showing Paris asleep while the goddesses appear (Figure 4).

After he had awarded the prize to Aphrodite, Paris set out for Greece. According to the summary of the *Cypria* he was entertained "by Menelaus in Sparta, where in the course of a feast he gives gifts to Helen. After this, Menelaus set sail for Crete, ordering Helen to furnish the guests with all that they require until they depart. Meanwhile, Aphrodite brings Helen and Alexandrus together, and they, after their union, put very great treasures on board and sail away by night." The Persuasion of Helen, in which the goddess of love sits





protectively beside the pensive Helen while Paris and Eros stand before them, is represented in a late Greek relief (Figure 5).

Medieval romances changed radically the story of Helen's abduction. To the Middle Ages the Trojans were so emphatically the heroes that it was unthinkable for a Trojan to steal his host's wife from a home where he had been entertained. According to Dares and most of the romancers, Paris, with his fleet, came to the island of Cythera, off the Greek coast south of Sparta. There he saw Helen, who had come "to do divine service" at a famous temple of Venus. "And when the two had caught sight of each other" their mutual passion flamed, and that night Paris set sail, carrying off Helen from the temple.

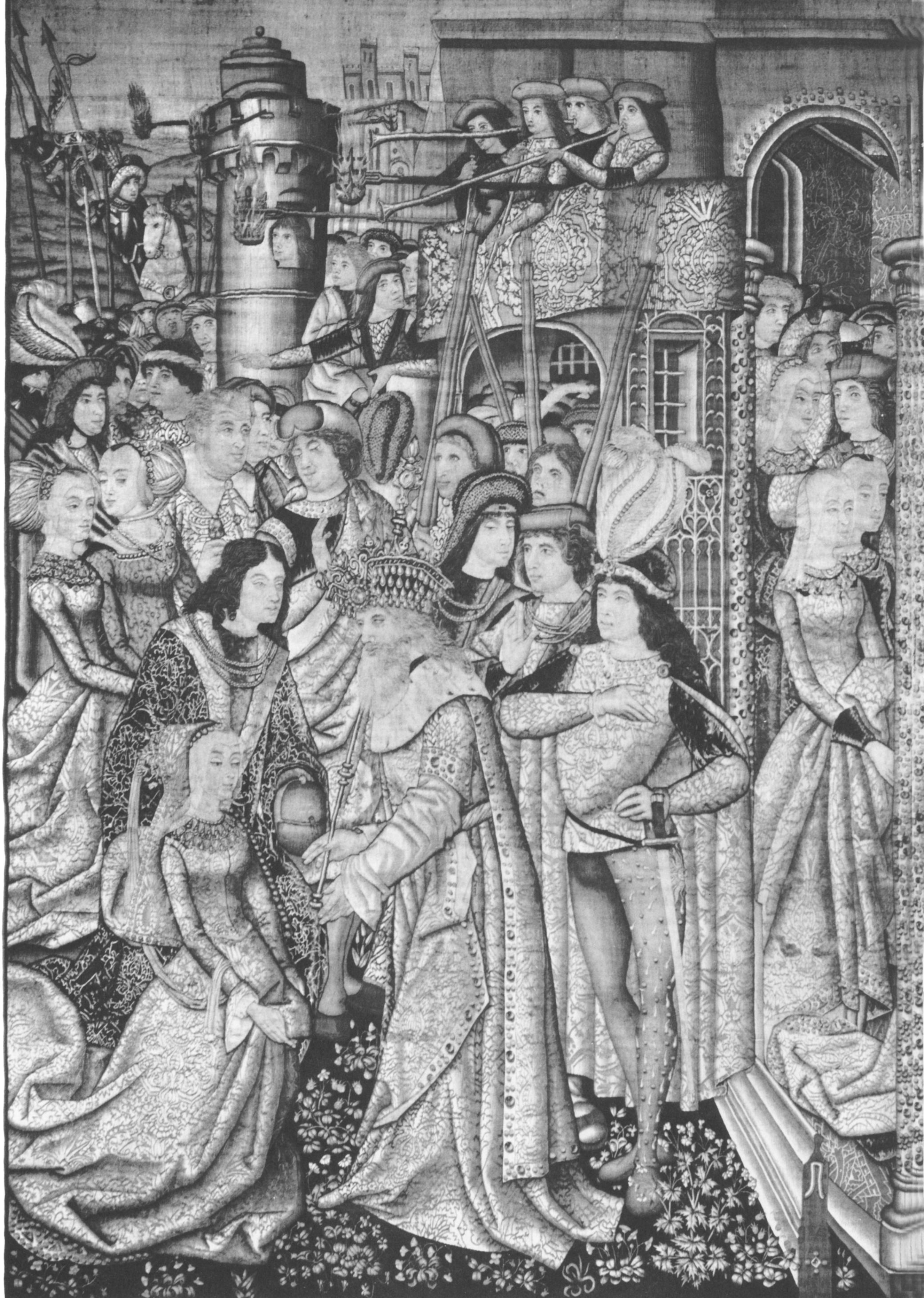
In Lefèvre's romance Helen takes more of the initiative. Having heard of the "beauty and fine apparel" of the visiting Trojans, "after the custom of women, she had great desire to know by experience if it were the truth." So, "under cover of devotion," she put on her royal robes and set out with her company for the temple. Paris, hearing of her arrival, "arrayed himself in the most gentlemanly wise that he could" and came to the shrine. There he was overcome with her beauty, for "nature had made her to be beheld and to be seen." The two withdrew from the others and talked together of their love. And when Paris left, Helen followed him with her eyes as far as she might. That night "Paris with his own hand took Helen and those of her company" to his ships.

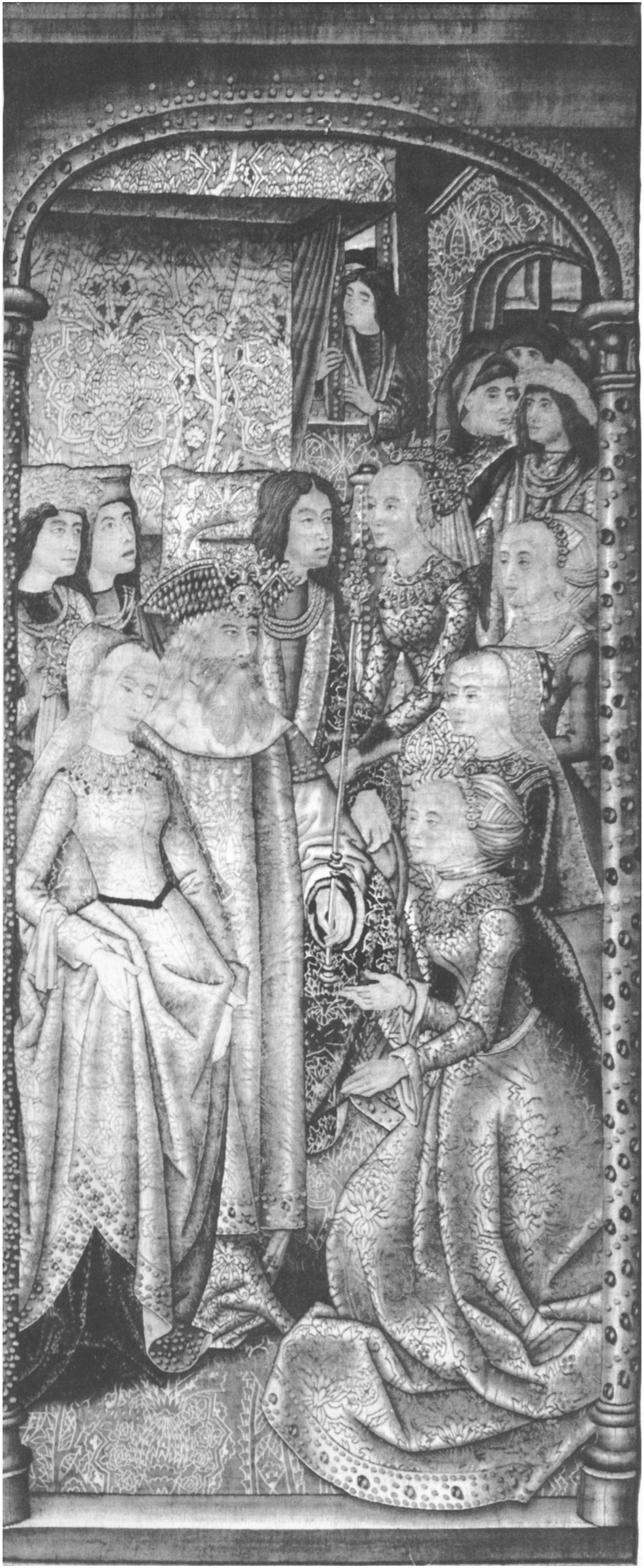
A Greek vase (Figure 6) and an illustration from a fifteenth-century manuscript (Figure 7) show the abduction of Helen as represented by ancient and medieval artists. The manuscript shows Paris and his companions approaching Helen in a thoroughly Christian temple of Venus, an early Gothic chapel, on whose altar stands a statue of the goddess like a large doll in fashionable dress.

A seventeenth-century hanging in which Helen is forcibly carried off adds an exotic touch (Figure 8). It was probably embroidered, following a European print or other design, in the Portuguese settlement of Macao, founded in the sixteenth century just off

8. *The Abduction of Helen. From a series of embroideries showing the events of the Trojan War. Sino-Portuguese, first half of the XVII century. Silk and gilt threads. Lent by Louis E. Seley, L. 66.51*

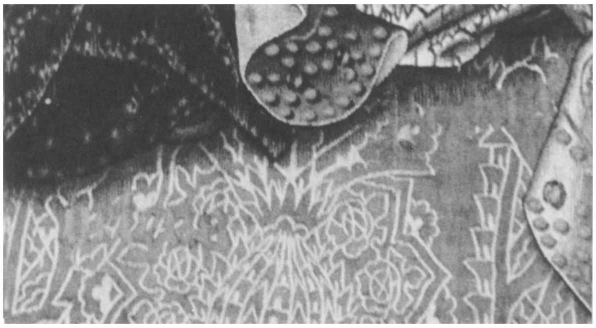
9. *The Arrival of Helen at Troy. From the Cronica Troyana, a Castilian version of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's romance. Spanish, 1350. Escorial Library, Madrid, MS 81.1.6, fol. 23 verso*

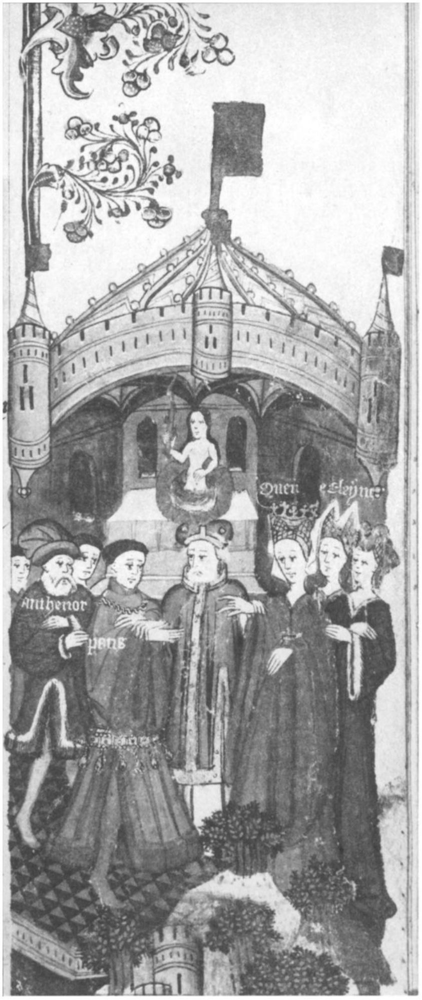




10. The Presentation of Helen to King Priam and His Family. Flemish (Tournai or Brussels), about 1500. Wool and silk tapestry, 12 feet 8 inches x 13 feet 8 inches. Lent by the Norton Simon Foundation, L.66.24.1

11. Detail of Figure 10: inscription of the names of Helen and Priam





12. The Marriage of Paris and Helen. From Lydgate's Troy Book, English, third quarter of the XV century. John Rylands Library, Manchester, Ryl. Eng. MS 1, fol. 52

the southeastern coast of China. Costume and armor in general are in the current style of classical taste, but details show a strong Chinese influence.

With Helen and her treasure aboard, Paris set sail for Troy. Early accounts of the voyage and the arrival at Troy vary, but all are brief. The summary of the *Cypria* says merely that, after being carried off course to Sidon by a storm sent by Hera, Paris "sailed to Troy and celebrated his marriage with Helen." But Colluthus's fifth-century *Rape of Helen* closes with an ominous note: "Troy unbarred the bolts of her high-built gates and received on his return her citizen that was the source of her woe."

The Middle Ages found in the welcome of a beautiful queen an opportunity for showing the pageantry of royal entries. Such is Lefèvre's description of the lovers' arrival at Troy: "And there came toward them outside the town King Priam with a great company of noble men, and received his children and his friends with great joy. And then he came to Helen and bowed right sweetly to her and gave her great joy and honour. And when they came near the city they found a great multitude of people who made great feast of their coming, with many kinds of instruments of music."

This welcome outside the city gates appears in manuscript illustrations as a delightful scene of merrymaking (Figure 9). As described in *The Seege or Batayle of Troye* it is filled with

> joy and melody
> And all manner of minstrelsy
> Of trumpets, tabors, harps, and fiddles.

Music and rejoicing greet the lovers inside the city, too, in the first of four tapestries recently lent to the Museum by the Norton Simon Foundation (Figure 10). These hangings, based on the Troy romances, were woven in Flanders about 1500. They present in rich detail the pageantry of a medieval court, its ladies and nobles resplendent in gold-toned robes with jeweled borders, lit up by touches of rose and blue.

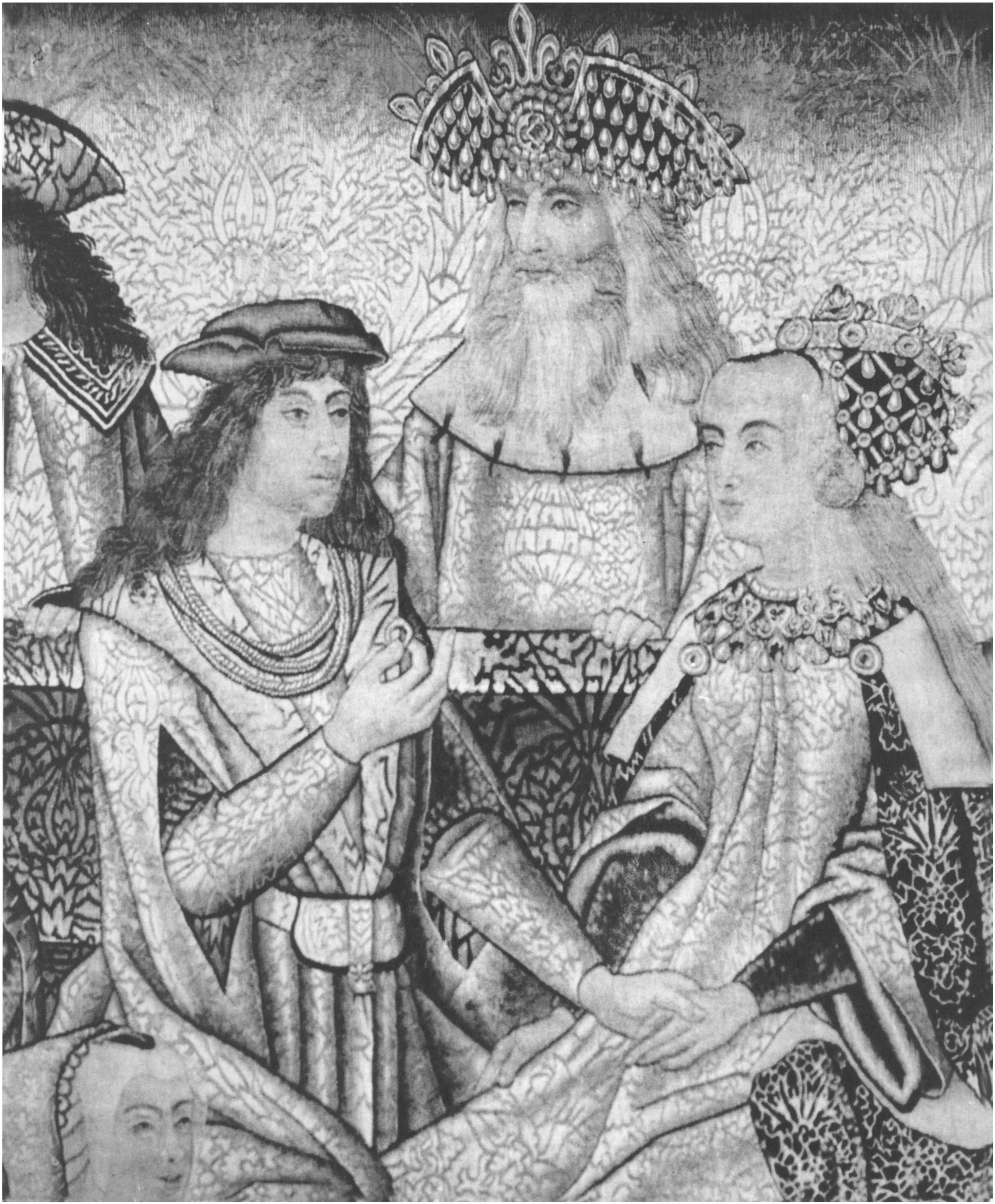
The fifteenth century saw the greatest production of tapestries with scenes from the Trojan War: the flowering of an art foreshadowed more than two thousand years earlier in the *Iliad*'s description of Helen weaving the "numerous struggles of Trojans." Several sets of medieval tapestries devoted to the Trojan War are preserved in public or private collections; many more, lost now or unknown, are listed in old inventories of kings and nobles. No others, however, seem to have been so exclusively devoted to the story of Helen as are these four.

The first tapestry shows the presentation of Helen to King Priam and his family. The scene is divided into two parts. At the left, on a balcony draped with richly woven fabrics, trumpets welcome Paris and his bride, while in the foreground the bearded Priam holds out his hand to raise the kneeling Helen. Behind her Paris, beret in hand, bends forward to present her to his father. In the center background a watchtower guards the approach to Troy, a sentinel's head visible at a window. The lords and ladies who crowd about are dressed in patterned silks suggesting Italian and Oriental design. Lighted torches add to the air of festivity.

Behind Priam stands a young man of commanding appearance, whose plumed headdress towers above his companions. The left leg of his hose bears a pattern of dripping jewels, and on the thigh is a sun centered in a blue gem. This sun may indicate that he is Hector, Priam's eldest son. The device of an azure sun, also called the sun's shadow, was widely recognized in medieval heraldry as that of Sir Ector de Maris of Arthur's court, bearer of the Trojan hero's name. The arms devised for the heroes of romance were widely known through illustrations in books of heraldry.

The right side of the tapestry shows the interior of the palace hall, with the flattened arches developed in late Gothic times resting on jeweled piers. Here Priam presents Helen to his family. The crowned woman to the right may be Queen Hecuba, to whom Paris seems to be speaking a few words in private. Just below the heavy folds of the robes of

13. Detail of Figure 15: Paris, Priam, and Helen. Inscriptions of the names of Paris and Priam are faintly visible



Helen and Priam appear their names in Gothic letters, so dimmed by time and wear as to be almost undecipherable (Figure 11).

After the royal welcome, says Lefèvre: "... when it came unto the morn, Paris, with the agreement and consent of his father, took Helen as his wife, and wedded her in the temple of Pallas. And therefore the feast was extended throughout the whole city, and was continued for eight whole days." Lydgate gave the marriage the same setting (Figure 12). Only the wailing of Priam's daughter Cassandra, to whom Apollo had given the fatal gift of prophecy never to be believed, broke the air of merriment, as she foretold Troy's doom: "O unhappy Trojans, wherefore rejoice you at the wedding of Paris, whereof so many evils shall come and follow?"

The marriage is shown in the second of the tapestries (Figure 15), taking place, probably, in Priam's palace. A canopied dais fills much of the picture. Helen sits on a high-backed bench, hung with rich silks; Paris is about to place a ring on her finger. Behind the bench Priam sits under the canopy, with a young noble and his lady. Lords and ladies gather around Paris and Helen, their jeweled robes sweeping the pineapple-patterned carpet. One of the ladies holds up a basket, which may have contained the ring.

14. Detail of Figure 15: inscription of Helen's name

In a small scene at the upper left, Priam stands before a kneeling woman, who may be Cassandra protesting against the marriage. A corresponding scene at the upper right shows the newly wedded couple withdrawn to the nuptial chamber.

The names of the chief personages are woven near them in light-toned Gothic letters. The name "Helena" appears on the patterned fabric just below her robe (Figure 14), that of Paris is above his head on the hanging behind the dais, and that of Priam is on the covering of the high-backed bench, just beside his hand (see Figure 13). Little can now be deciphered of the name woven above the head of the man beside Priam, but the letter "t" suggests that this may be Hector, with his wife Andromache.

Menelaus, when he discovered Helen's flight, called other rulers throughout Greece to help him recover her, and the Greek fleet of more than a thousand ships set out for Troy. In the romances, as in the cyclic epics, the Greeks sent ambassadors to Priam to ask for Helen's return. Early accounts, including the *Iliad*, had called the ambassadors Menelaus and Odysseus (Ulysses). With the Middle Ages, however, one of the ambassadors changed. Ulysses remained, but Diomedes, lord of Argos, replaced Menelaus. The embassy was a failure, but the scene gave rise to entertaining descriptions and to fifteenth-century tapestries in which Eastern and Western motifs blend.

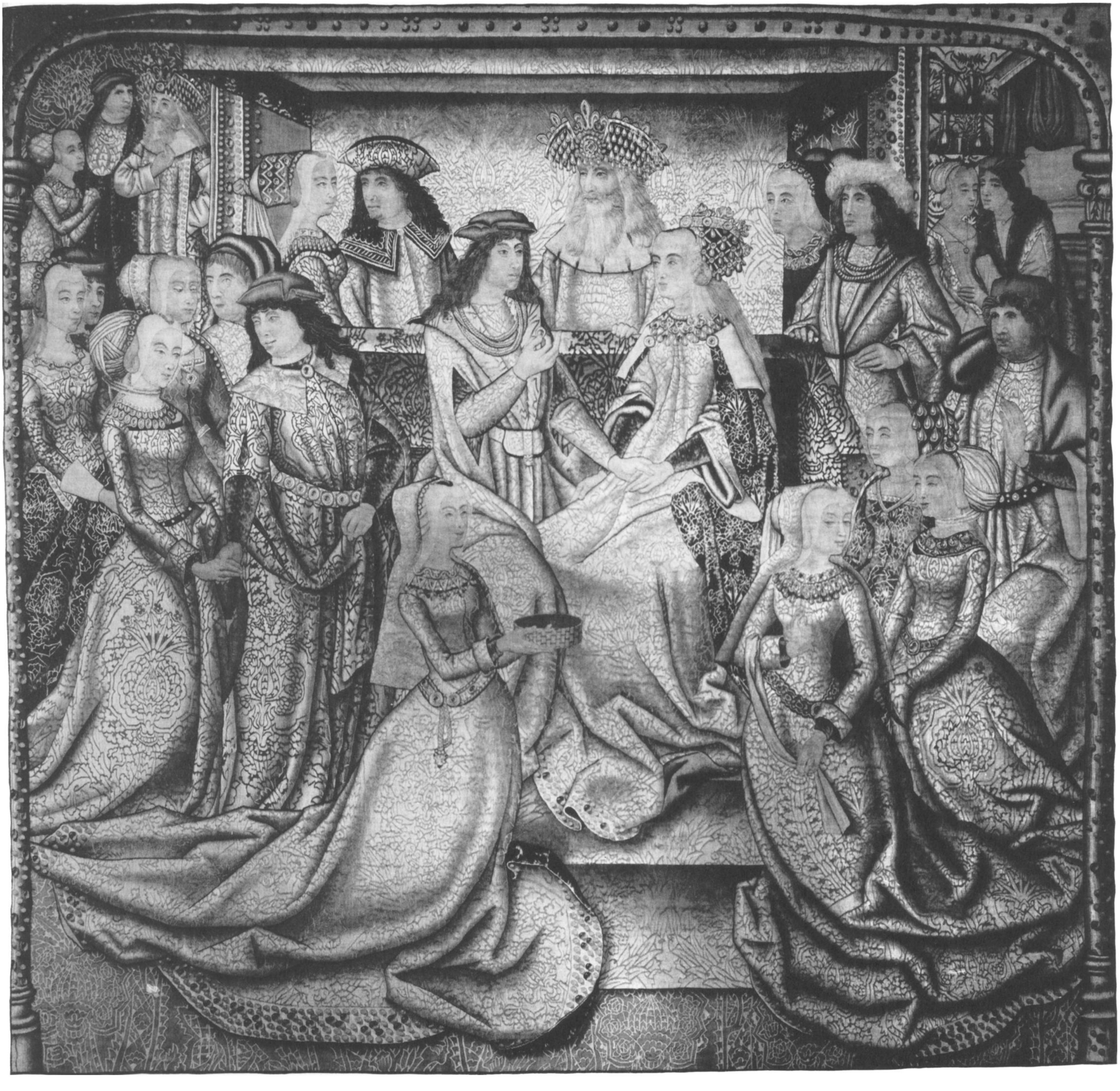
The embassy of Ulysses and Diomedes to Priam's court is shown in the third of the tapestries (Figure 16). Like the first, this is divided into two parts by jeweled piers supporting flattened arches. In the right side, within his hall, Priam sits on a canopied throne, his name woven into the middle section of his robe just below the knees. (This inscription is too faint to be reproduced.) Ulysses and Diomedes stand before him. Below, in the right foreground, is a turbaned man with a scimitar who seems to be exchanging quiet words with the man behind him. The scimitar suggests that he may be one of the Trojans' Eastern allies, among whom was the king of the Persians. The one woman shown may be Helen.

In the left side of this tapestry, just outside Priam's hall, is one of those marvels of the East that delighted the romancers, the golden tree (Figure 17). Benoît de Sainte-Maure says of it:

> Before the hall there was a pine,
> Its branches made of purest gold,
> Wrought by some form of magic art,
> By necromancy or by gramarye.

Lydgate's *Troy Book* describes its

> rich branches and the leaves so fair
> Twined with each other to make a pair,
> One leaf of gold with one of silver sheen,
> And scattered through with stones both white and green.



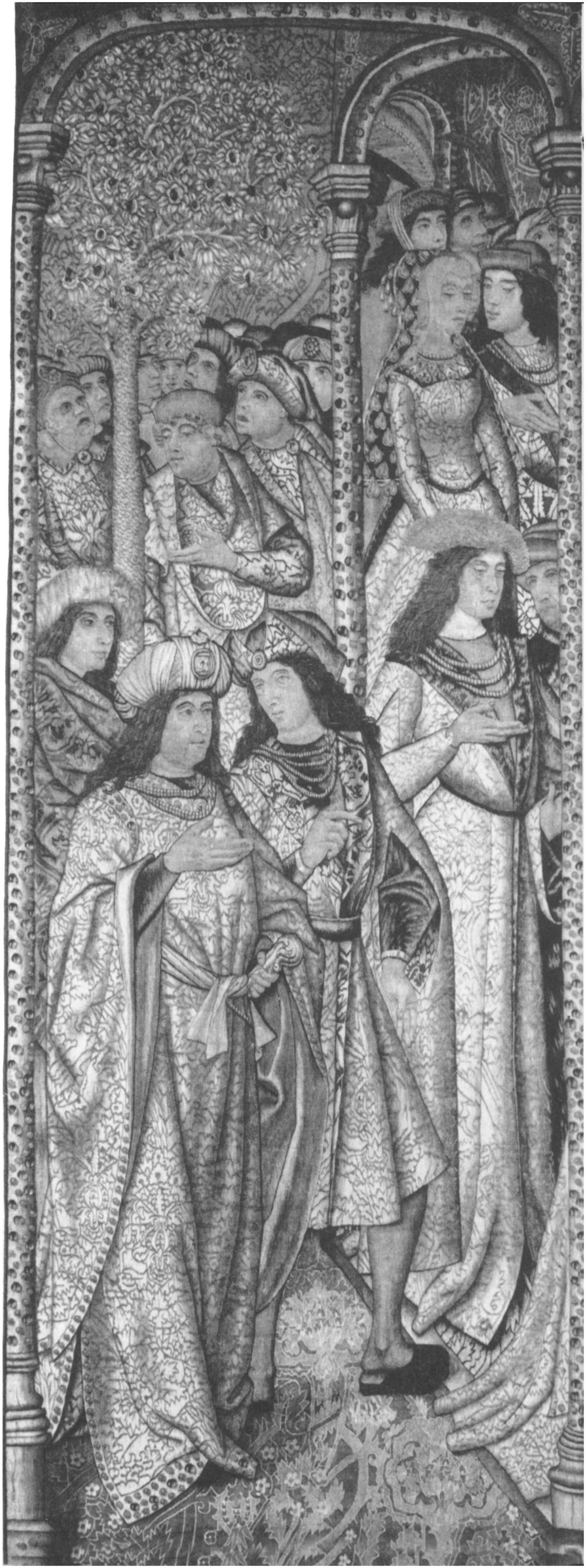
15. The Marriage of Paris and Helen. Flemish (Tournai or Brussels), about 1500. Wool and silk tapestry, 11 feet 2 inches x 11 feet 1 inch. Lent by the Norton Simon Foundation, L.66.24.2

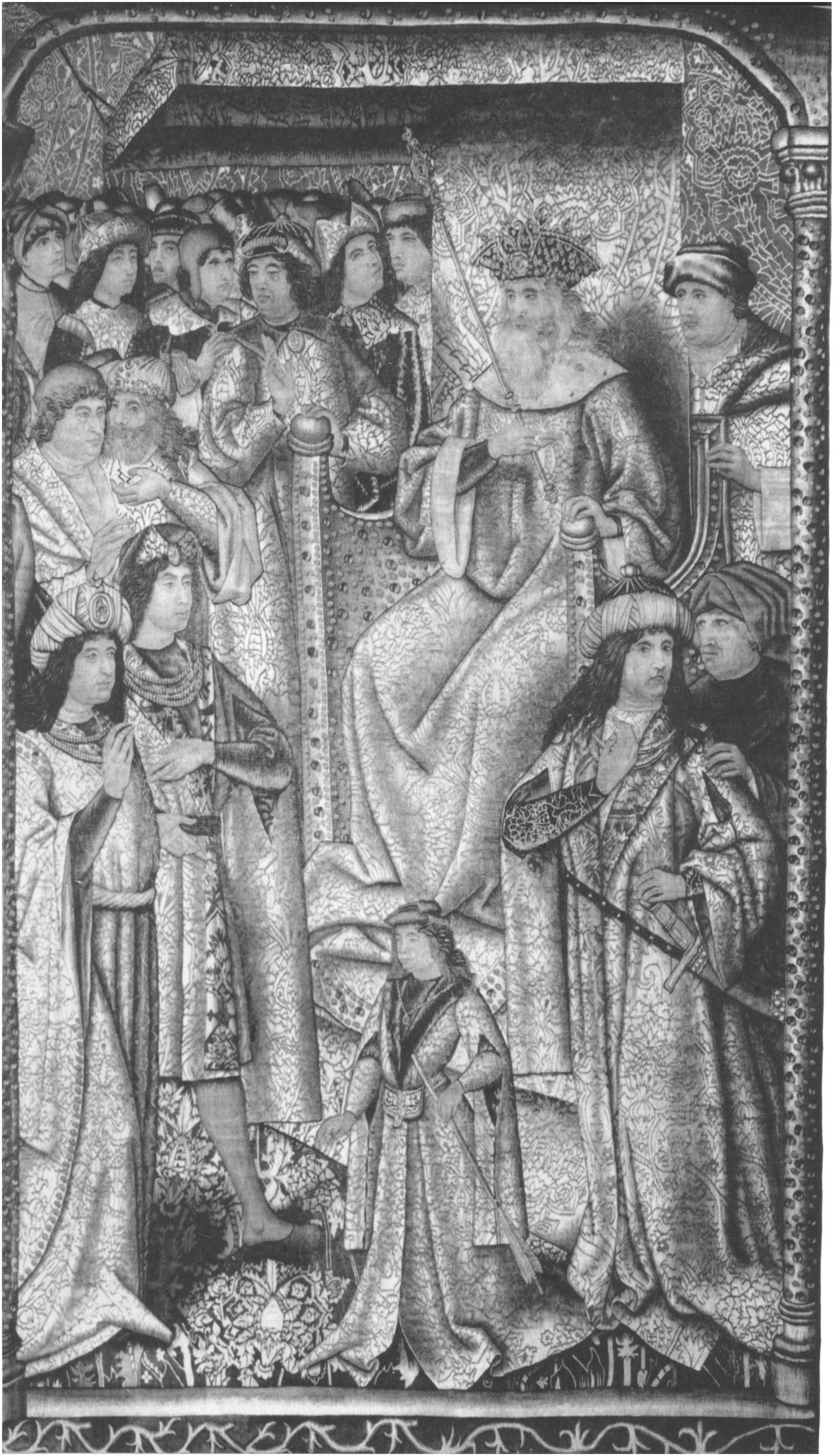
This tree, as well as the turbans and the scimitar, shows Eastern influence on the Trojan story. The tree resembles closely a "marvel" described in the tenth-century *Antapodosis* of Liudprand of Cremona, ambassador from Tuscany to the Byzantine court: "Before the emperor's seat stood a tree, made of bronze gilded over, whose branches were filled with birds, all made of gilded bronze, which uttered different cries, each according to its varying species."

The summaries of the epics and their few remaining fragments tell little of the recovery of Helen. That of the *Sack of Ilium* says merely: "Menelaus finds Helen and takes her to the ships." According to the *Little Iliad* Menelaus threatens Helen with his sword, but, catching sight of her breasts unveiled, he cast the sword away. Quintus of Smyrna, in his epic, *The Fall of Troy*, tells that Menelaus, finding his wife,

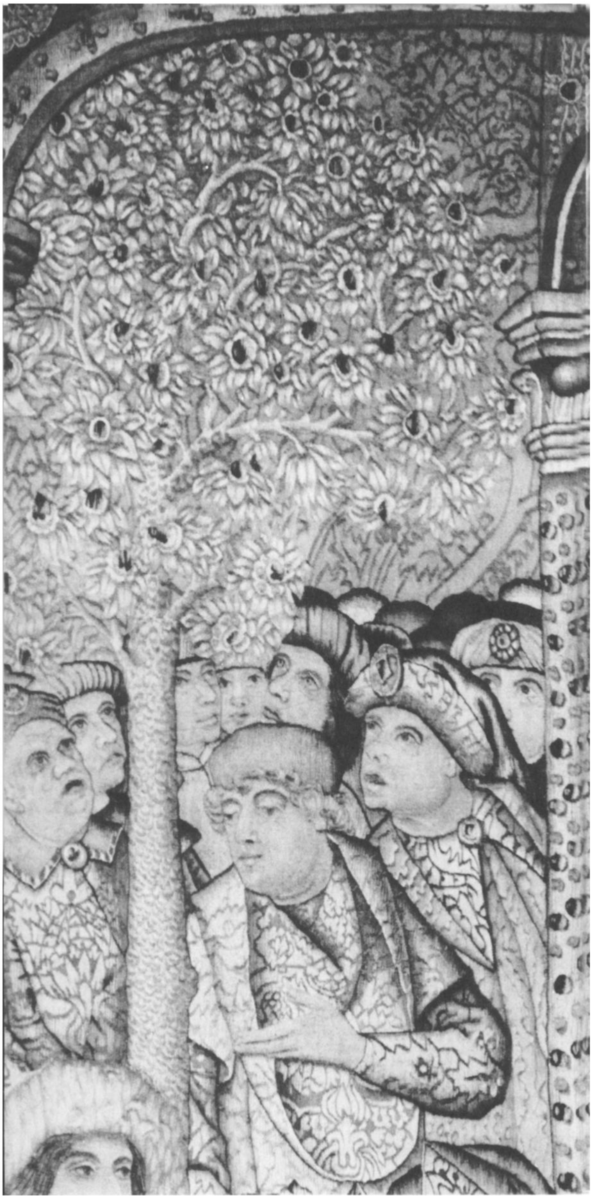
> glared on her
> Hungering to slay her in his jealous rage,
> But winsome Aphrodite curbed him,
> struck
> Out of his hand the sword.

Medieval romances, on the whole, with their Trojan slant, tell that the Greeks felt considerable enmity against Helen after the





16. The Embassy of Ulysses and Diomedes to King Priam. Flemish (Tournai or Brussels), about 1500. Wool and silk tapestry, 13 feet 2 inches x 12 feet 1 inch. Lent by the Norton Simon Foundation, L.66.24.3



17. Detail of Figure 16: the golden tree

fall of Troy. According to Lefèvre, some of the Greek leaders urged "that they should burn Helen, for whom so much hurt and evil was come, that so many worthy kings and princes had died for . . . but Ulysses with his fair language said so much to them of divers things that they were content that Helen should have no harm."

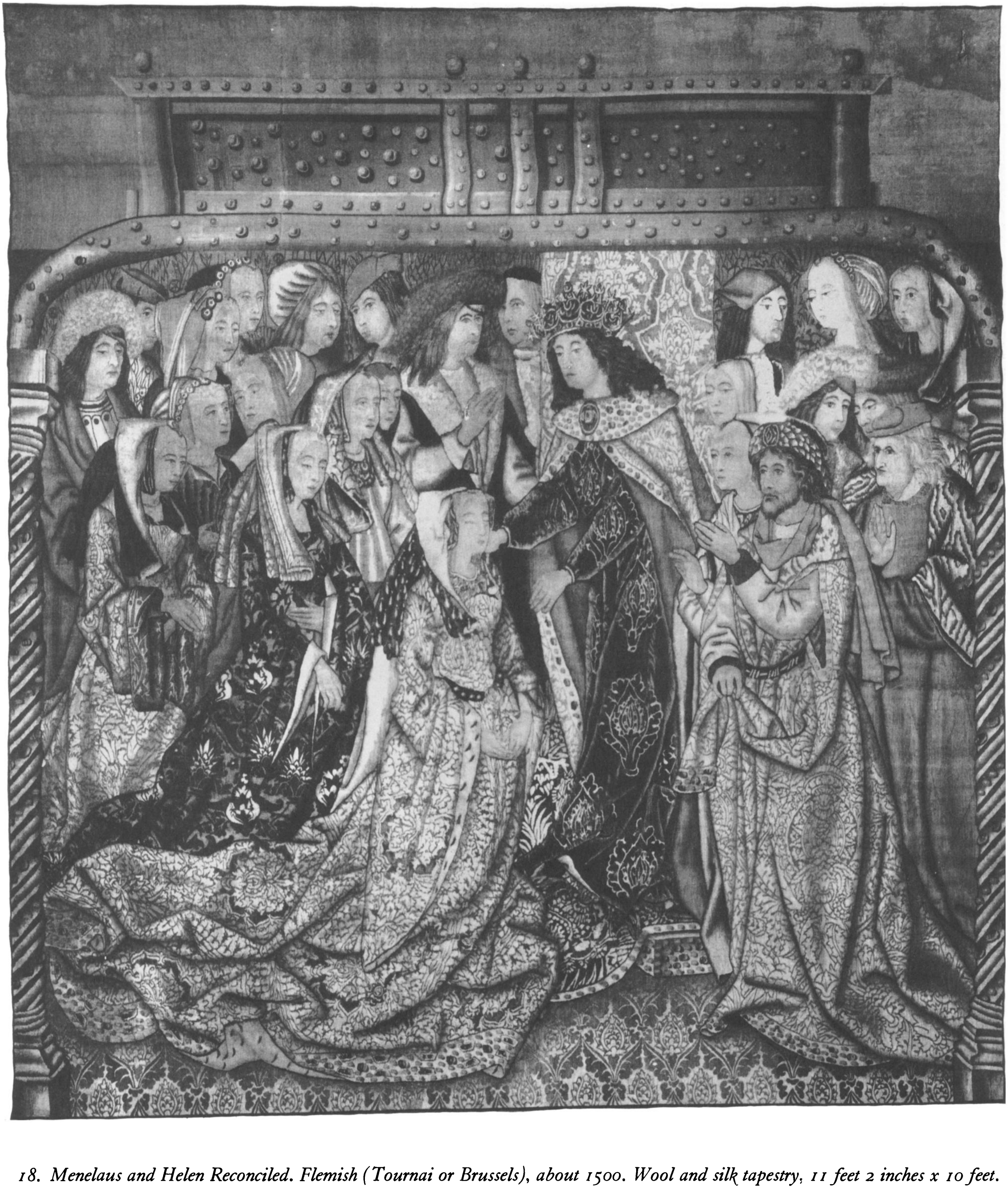
A woodcut from an early French edition of Lefèvre's book (Figure 19) shows Ulysses leading Helen to the Greek ships while Greek warriors descend from the wooden horse. Troy is in flames, and slaughter is everywhere. In the temple of Apollo, Priam lies dead.

Not all romances show the Greeks in such a bitter mood. *The Seege or Batayle of Troye* makes Helen's recovery a cause for general rejoicing, when

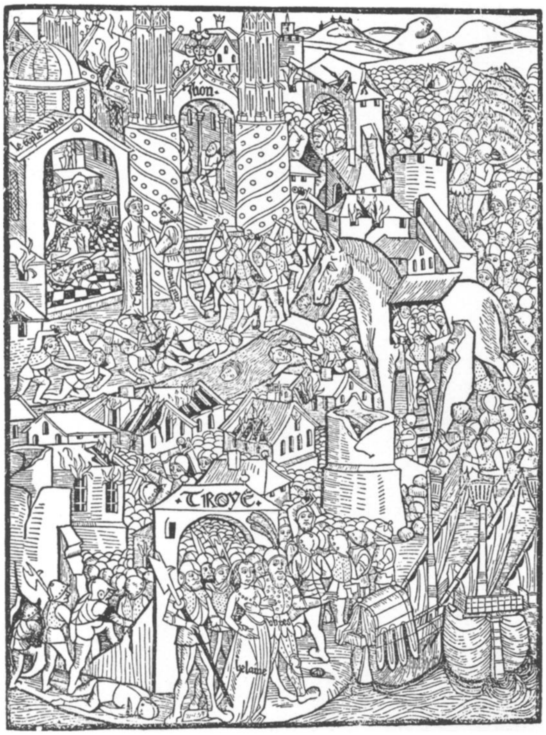
> Earls and barons with great honour
> Fetched Helen the queen out of the
> tower,
> And brought her to the king her lord,
> Either kissed other and were accord.

An attitude of reconciliation and tranquility marks the fourth tapestry (Figure 18). The setting of this scene, in which Helen kneels before Menelaus, is difficult to determine. In Greek and Latin literature Menelaus finds his wife in the house of Deïphobus, Paris's brother; in the romances she is in the royal palace. But here there is no suggestion of Troy burning, no feeling of tension. Menelaus and Helen, stately in their rich robes, are attended by noble lords and ladies as for a royal welcome. Lydgate's *Troy Book* suggests such an atmosphere of reconciliation and resignation to fate as Menelaus sets out for Sparta:

> With his queen, the goodly fair Helen,
> And because she was so famous and so fair,
> Great was the press and marvellous the
> repair,
> From every part her beauty to behold,
> For whose sake Troy, with walls still far
> from old,
> Had been destroyed, that noble, royal
> town,
> And many a man full worthy of renown,



18. Menelaus and Helen Reconciled. Flemish (Tournai or Brussels), about 1500. Wool and silk tapestry, 11 feet 2 inches x 10 feet. Lent by the Norton Simon Foundation, L.66.24.4



Had lost his life – that no man can
    gainsay,
And all for Helen, the wife of Menelay:
When a thing's done, it may then be no
    other.

What, then, was the ending of Helen's story? In the *Odyssey* Homer shows Menelaus and Helen living in harmony and comfort in the palace at Sparta. Telemachus, Odysseus's son, has visited them to ask for news of his father, who has not yet returned from the war, though it had been ended for ten years or more. As the two men talk, "forth then, from her fragrant high-roofed chamber came Helen, like Artemis of the golden arrows." Helen and Menelaus have been at home but a few years, for evil fortune had swept them off course to Phoenicia, Cyprus, Egypt, and other Eastern lands until the eighth year after Troy's fall.

But although all seems happily secure in Sparta, there is a prediction of other things to come. On the homeward journey a sea god had told Menelaus: ". . . it is not ordained that thou shouldst die and meet thy fate in horse-pasturing Argos, but to the Elysian plain and the bounds of the earth will the immortals convey thee, where dwells fair-haired Rhadamanthus, and where life is easiest for men. No snow is there, nor heavy storm, nor ever rain . . . for thou hast Helen to wife, and art in their eyes the husband of a daughter of Zeus." The *Odyssey* does not say whether Helen accompanied him, but a later compiler of legends, Apollodorus, states that Menelaus "went to the Elysian fields with Helen."

According to the Greek poet Stesichorus in the seventh century B.C., Helen had never gone to Troy, but had been borne by a god to Egypt, while Paris stole a phantom Helen in her place. Euripides made this the theme of his drama *Helen*, in which Menelaus, landing in Egypt, finds the real Helen, the phantom vanishes, and he learns that all through the weary war

        Helen, by Simoïs' crimsoned water
Was a breath, was a battle-cry – nought
    besides.

In his *Description of Greece* in the second century A.D., Pausanius tells several versions of Helen's end, two of which deny her immortality. In the island of Therapne he saw the grave of Menelaus and Helen; another story told by the men of Rhodes was that, after Menelaus's death, Helen was hanged there by the island's jealous queen.

According to a third story, told in the same chapter of Pausanius: "In the Euxine Sea there is an island over against the mouths of the Danube; it is sacred to Achilles, and is called the White Isle. To this island a sorely wounded man was sent by an oracle for healing. When he returned well he told that he had seen Achilles there, with other outstanding warriors of the Greeks, and Helen was wedded to Achilles."

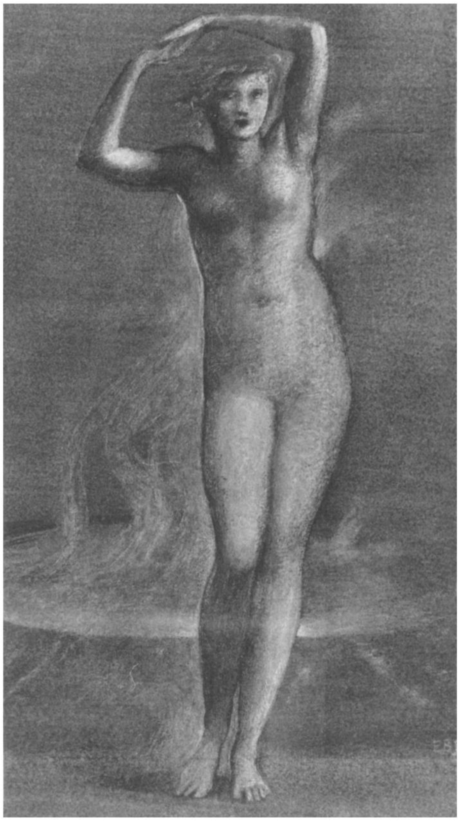
A little later Philostratus amplified this legend in his *Heroicus*, a collection of Trojan histories. In this island, he says, there is a sanctuary with images of Helen and of Achilles, who had seen her in a dream and had persuaded her to show herself upon the walls of Troy. All must leave the island by sunset: at night Achilles and Helen revel there, singing and chanting verses of Homer in ringing voices, which fill with awe the sailors who hear them. And mariners anchored close to shore declare that they hear by night the clash of arms, the trampling of horses, and the shouts of warriors.

The story of Helen has, indeed, no true ending. As the daughter of Zeus she was immortal, and her story shared her immortality: the legend of

> the face that launched a thousand ships
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium.

LEFT:

19. The Fall of Troy: Helen Led to the Greek Ships. Woodcut from Raoul Lefèvre, Recueil des Histoires de Troye (Lyons, 1490). The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York



20. Helen at Burning Troy, by Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), British. Red and gold watercolor on brown paper. Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Grenville L. Winthrop Bequest, 1943.673

LEFT:

21. Menelaus Recovers Helen. Black-figured neck amphora. Attic, about 550 B.C. Fletcher Fund, 56.171.18

NOTES:

The Norton Simon Foundation has also generously lent the Museum two other medieval tapestries, and Renaissance furniture and sculpture.

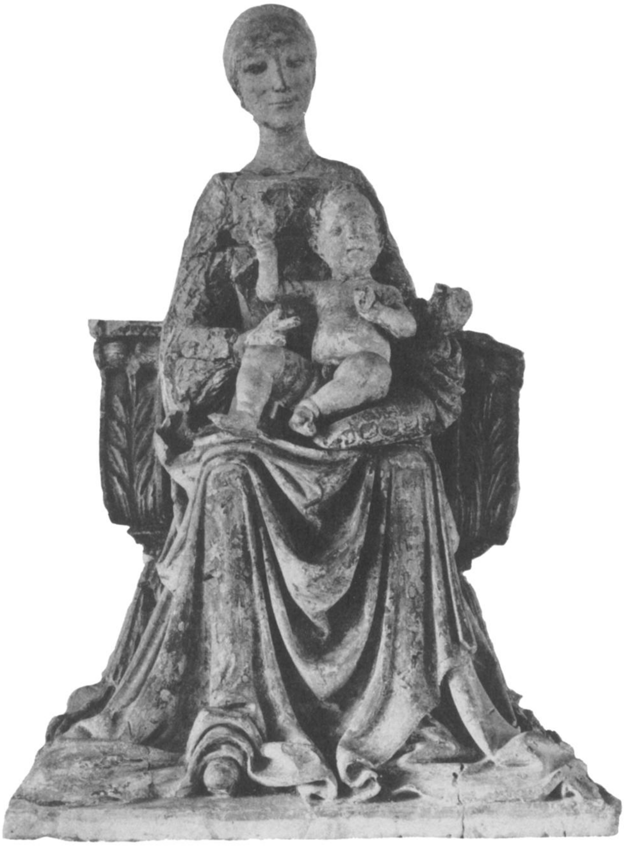
For information concerning the heraldic emblem of the azure sun, I am indebted to Helmut Nickel.

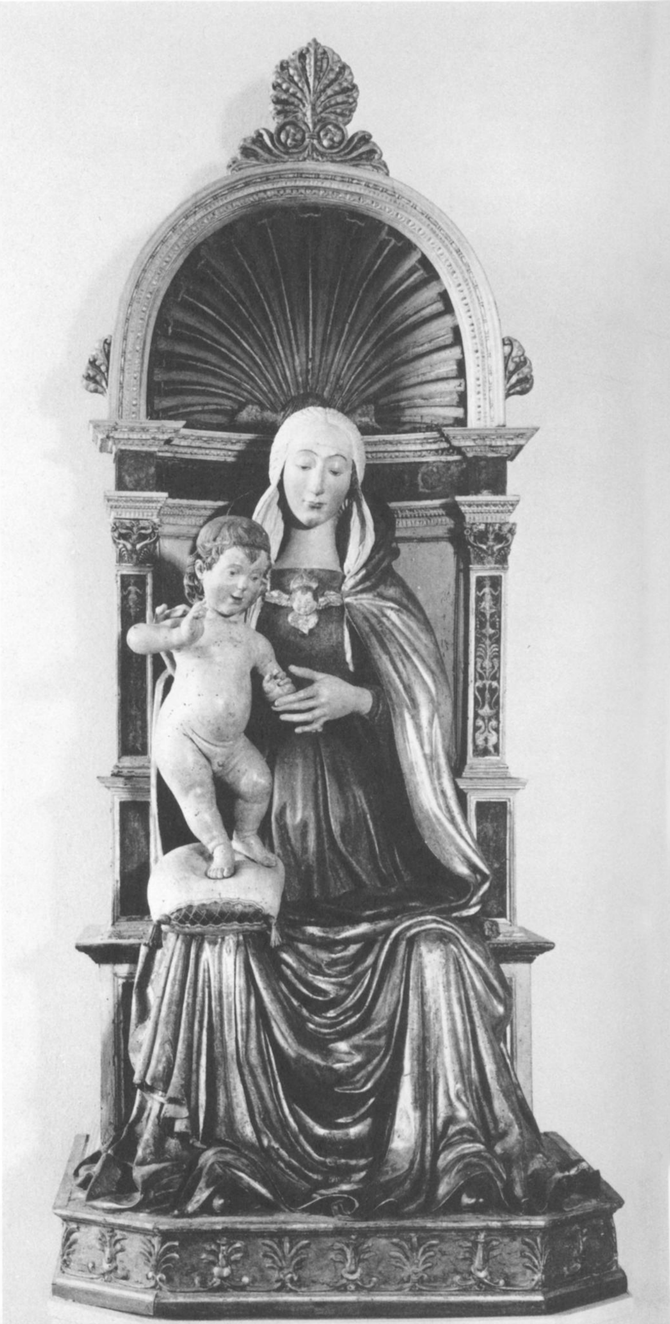
In texts in medieval English I have modernized the spelling and the more archaic phrases.

Three Madonnas in Search of an Author

CARMEN GÓMEZ-MORENO

Assistant Curator of Medieval Art





ABOVE:

1. *Madonna and Child from S. Maria delle Grazie, Civitaquana, by Paolo Aquilano, Italian. 1475. Polychromed wood, height 45¼ inches. Museo Nazionale Abruzzese, Aquila*

RIGHT:

2. *Madonna and Child, probably by Paolo Aquilano About 1475. Polychromed wood, height, including throne, 78¾ inches. Staatliche Museen, Berlin*

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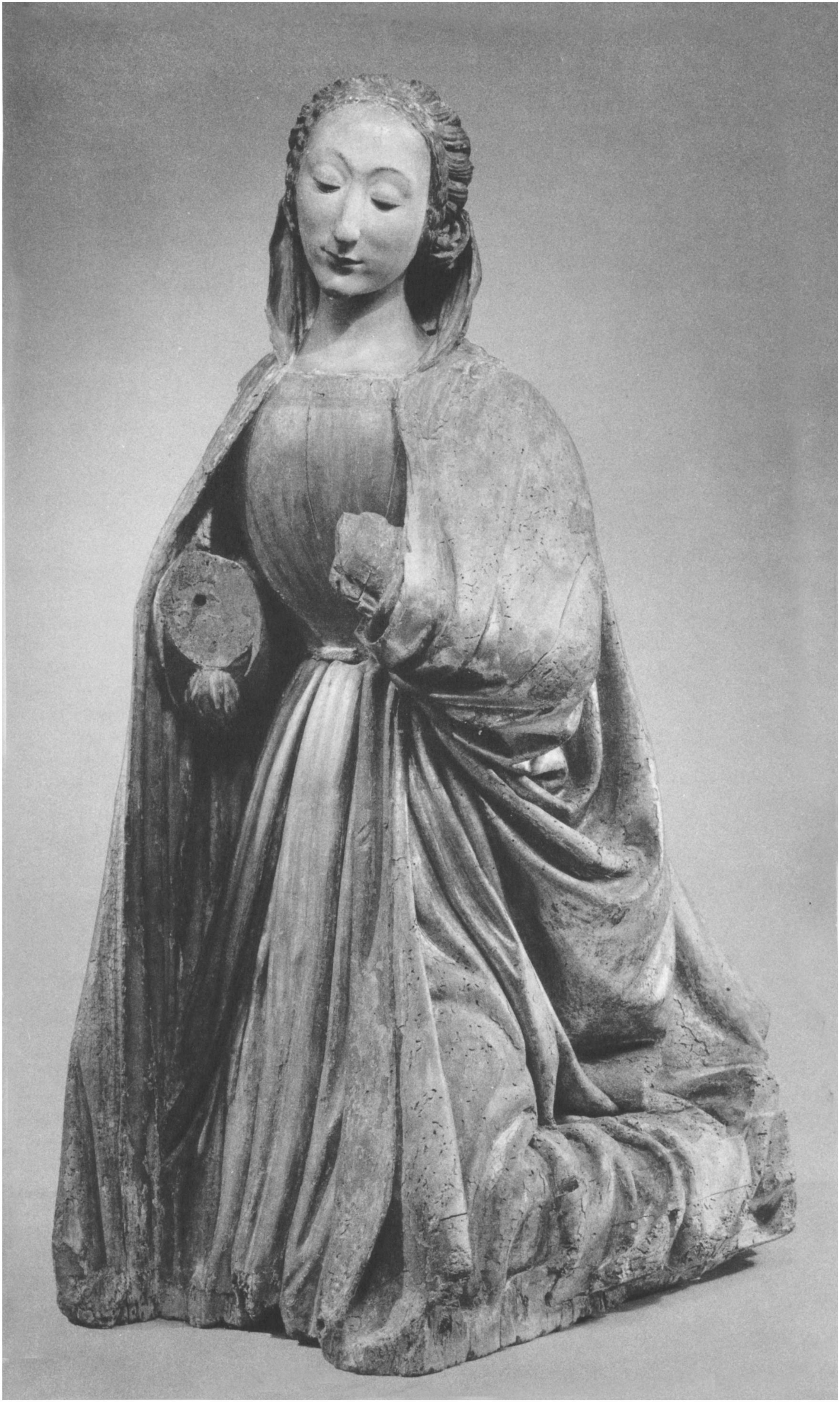


3. Kneeling Virgin, probably by Paolo Aquilano. About 1475. Polychromed willow, height 46 inches. The Cloisters Collection, 25.120.217

The first Italian sculptures, four in number, entered the collection of The Cloisters in 1925. One of them, carved in wood and with traces of polychromy, represents a young woman kneeling on the ground (Figure 3). She carries no distinguishing attribute to indicate her identity, and her costume and hairstyle might be those of any lady of the late fifteenth century. But for someone familiar with Italian iconography of that period, her attitude of humility and adoration clearly shows that she is the Virgin Mary adoring her newborn son, who once must have been lying on the ground in front of her.

The statue, forty-six inches high, is carved in willow, a rather soft wood of not very good quality. This deficiency, however, is not serious, because the wood was never meant to be exposed, but was covered with a coat of gesso (under which pieces of canvas were placed in some areas to make the surface more even) and painted with lifelike colors and gold. With the exception of the forearms, the hands, and an addition at the bottom, the whole figure was carved from a single piece of wood, probably the lower part of a tree trunk, and is hollow all the way to the neck. Part of the back and right side were left unfinished, indicating that the sculpture was meant to be seen only from the front and the onlooker's right. At some time it must have been placed in a narrower space, maybe a niche, and the figure's foot, together with the part of the mantle that covered it, was sawn off.

Its preservation is rather good, considering the softness of the wood and the hazardous life this statue must have led from the time it was made till it landed at The Cloisters. It has a great number of wormholes, though almost none, fortunately, on the face. The only missing parts are the hands (which must have been joined in prayer), a little of the right arm, and the sawn foot. The uncarved area in back has been repaired with pieces of fir. Very little is preserved of the original polychromy. Though a great deal of the modern paint that covered the sculpture when it came to our collection was removed, it was not taken off completely, to avoid a patchy effect that would have been very disturbing. The gold leaf that once covered all the mantle remains in some areas and gives an idea of the glowing richness this sculpture had in the past. The color scheme is now the same as it was originally: red tunic, and gold mantle with blue lining.

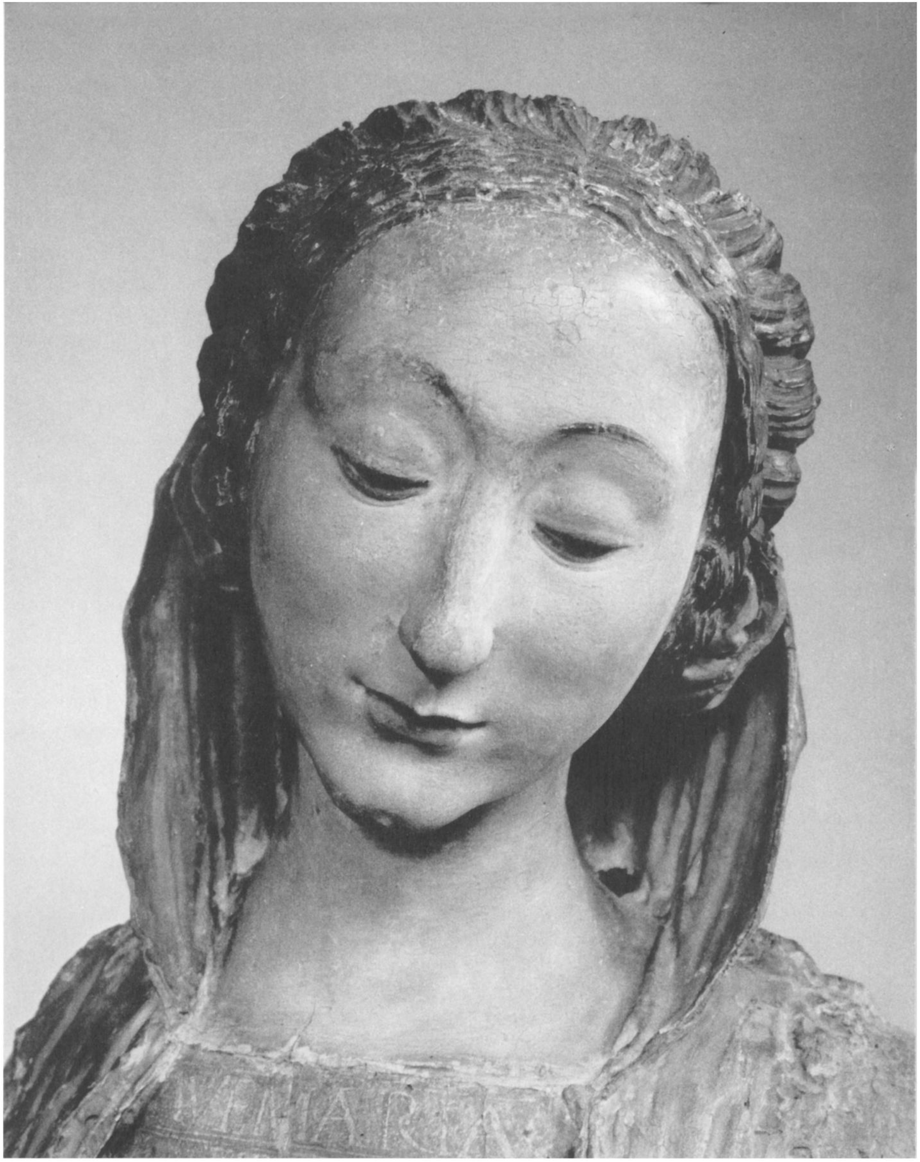
The lovely face of this Madonna, almond shaped and with a small, pointed chin, has very high and strongly curved eyebrows, downcast eyes with lids that cover exceedingly protruding eyeballs, a long, straight nose, and a small mouth, deeply dimpled at the corners, with a thin upper lip and fleshy lower one in the shape of a bow. The hairdo is quite sophisticated: a band of wavy hair frames the rounded forehead and temples; the rest is combed loosely back, kept fluffy by means of a narrow ribbon, and is gathered at the nape of the neck and rolled up in a veil. A large, rounded collar, almost like a cowl, frames the lower part of the face and hangs down the back in a sharp point. Both collar and veil are now painted yellow, but it is impossible to tell what the original color was.

The heavy mantle gives the Virgin's figure a pyramidal volume that must have been less emphatic when it was broken by the triangle formed by the hands joined in adoration. The upper part of her body is strongly rounded, but with a roundness that is much closer to the geometric curvature of an amphora than to a woman's chest; this unrealistic rigidity would also have been less striking when arms and hands half covered it. Her long, vaselike neck is softly curved, but becomes too slender at the point where it supports the tilted head, making the fullness of the cheeks and the pointed chin more conspicuous. Along the neckline of the tunic is inscribed in gold the angelic salutation: AVE MARIA. The sleeves end in wide upturned cuffs and have a slit through which shows a white undersleeve of thinner material.

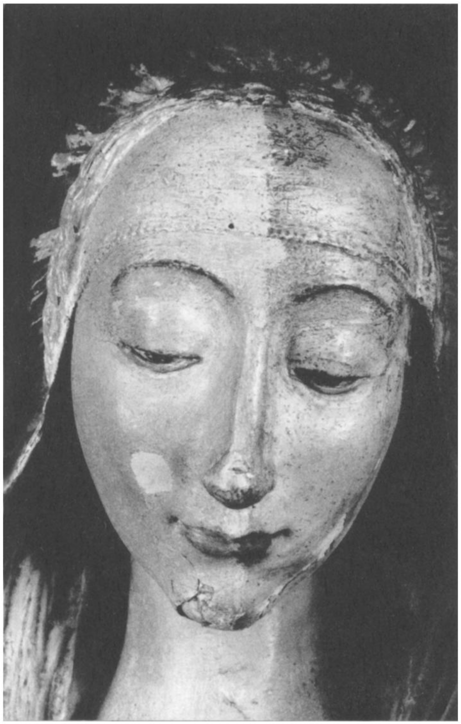
Through this almost scientific analysis of the Cloisters kneeling Virgin I arrived at the conclusion that several of her features are so personal and distinctive that it should not be impossible to find the artist who created them. The statue was once attributed to Silvestro dell'Aquila, considered the leading sculptor of the Abruzzi region of central Italy during the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Later it was attributed to Giovan Francesco Gagliardelli, a follower of Silvestro, and dated as early sixteenth century. As we shall see, both attributions are geographically correct, but the connection with either of those artists is not convincing.

Looking for new possibilities, I came upon a wooden Enthroned Madonna and Child from the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, now in the Staatliche Museen of East Berlin (Figure 2). The striking similarity of the two sculptures is obvious at first glance, despite the difference in posture and the elaborate throne of the Berlin Madonna, which is a modern addition built over the few worm-eaten remains of an original one. The costume – heavy mantle, cowl-like collar, skirt falling in wide box pleats from a narrow belt – and the round bosom are extremely similar, but the resemblance can be most clearly seen by comparing their heads (Figures 4 and 5), tilted in exactly the same way and supported by the same kind of long, curved neck. The hairdo with the wavy band framing the forehead is the same in both, but in the Berlin Madonna it is covered by a sheer veil that also covers part of the forehead and hangs down on either side. The color scheme in both sculptures is also identical: red tunic, and gold mantle lined with blue.

We are here in the presence of two works by the same artist, who is neither Silvestro nor Gagliardelli. The Berlin Madonna has never been studied properly, though it was published in the catalogue of the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum in 1933 as being from the



4. *The face of the Cloisters Virgin*



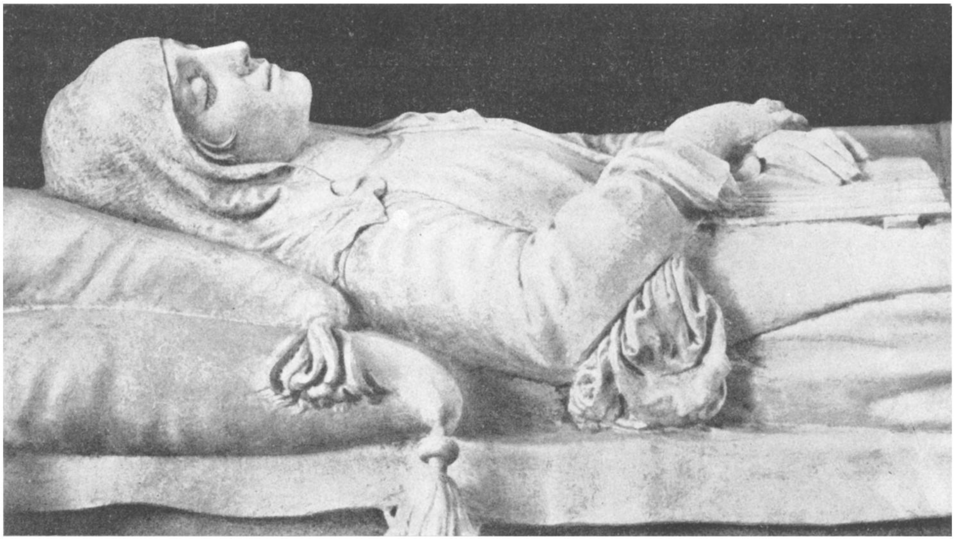
LEFT:
5. *The face of the Berlin Madonna. Photograph taken during the process of cleaning, and before repainting*

Marches (a region close to the Abruzzi) and dated about 1500, and was attributed to Silvestro dell'Aquila by W. R. Valentiner in 1925. In an attempt to pin down its authorship – and that of our Cloisters Madonna – I went to the Abruzzi, hoping for the remote possibility of finding other work by the same sculptor.

Most of the many Madonnas in churches and museums of that region proved to have local characteristics in common with the two sculptures under study, but none was similar enough to be by the same artist. Then, in the Museo Nazionale Abruzzese in Aquila, I found a terracotta Enthroned Madonna and Child (Figure 1) that had been there only a few days. It had come from the parish church of Civitaquana, a small town east of the Abruzzi Mountains about eighteen miles from the city of Pescara. Though considerably damaged, the Civitaquana Madonna has enough of the original polychromy left to show that the color scheme was exactly that of the Cloisters and Berlin Madonnas. The size is about the same as the latter (without the high throne). The hairdo is also identical, and is covered by a veil like the one on the Berlin piece. The face, neck, tunic, mantle, and slit sleeves with upturned cuffs are very close in all three. The cowl-like collar and hanging veil are broken off in the Civitaquana Virgin, but the place where they were attached is still visible. The Child is seated instead of standing, but his body has the same protruding stomach and fat, bent legs as the Child in Berlin. The tasseled pillows beneath them are also similar. It is possible that the tall modern throne of the Berlin Madonna originally looked like the much more convincing one of the Civitaquana Madonna. The Civitaquana Madonna is less hieratic than the Berlin one, and her mantle falls over her legs and down to the ground more simply and freely, but the overall arrangement is extremely close in both, and the slight variations could be explained by the different media and, perhaps, by a difference in date. The pensive expression of the Cloisters and Berlin Madonnas becomes more optimistic in the Civitaquana one. Instead of looking down, she looks more to the front; her tilted head is slightly lifted; and her lips show the beginnings of a smile. The Child also looks more lively. (Though the condition of this sculpture is far from good, it is not as bad as it looks in Figure 1, and to a certain extent the reader will have to rely on my judgment to accept these conclusions.)

Finding the Civitaquana Madonna was a great help in definitely establishing the Abruzzi as the region of origin for the three pieces under study, but nothing was known about the authorship of this sculpture and apparently it never had been published.

To understand the difficulties that confront art historians interested in the sculpture of the Abruzzi, one has to be acquainted with the history and physical structure of that region. In most of Italy the landscape is friendly, distances seem nonexistent, and one seldom has the feeling of being in a foreign country. In the Abruzzi, on the other hand, one has the impression of being an intruder in an alien



6. *Maria Pereyra, by Silvestro dell' Aquila (working 1471-1504), Italian. 1496. Detail of the Pereyra-Camponeschi funerary monument. Marble. S. Bernardino, Aquila. From L. Serra, Aquila (Bergamo, 1929), p. 79*

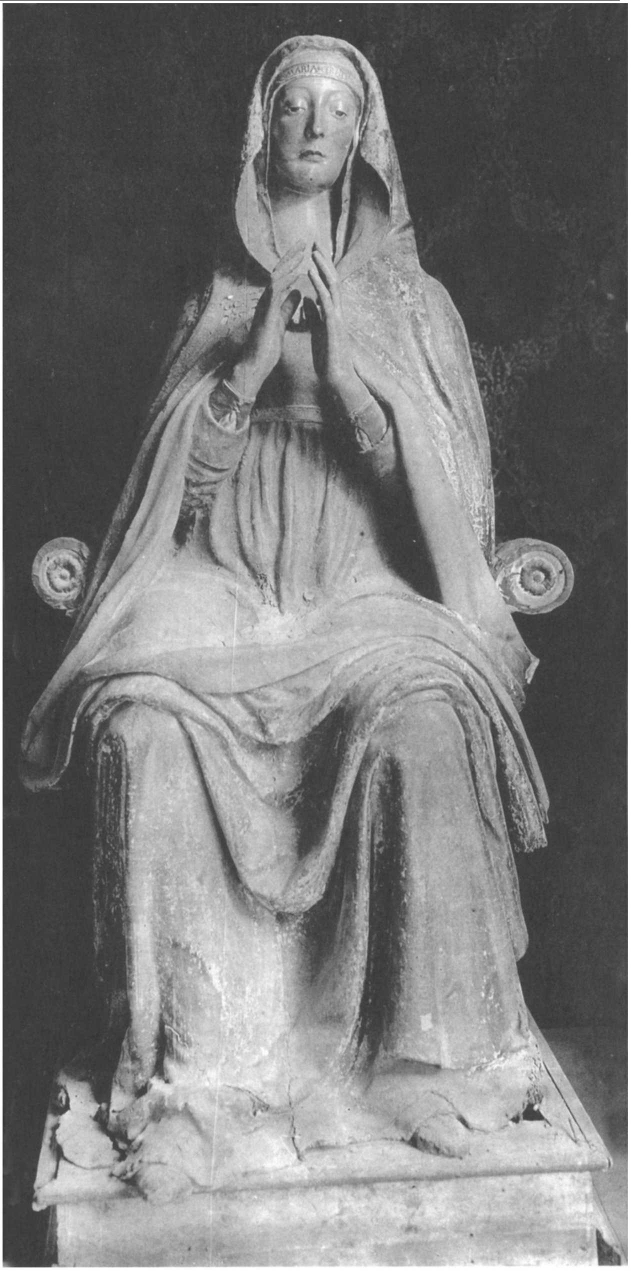
land. This does not imply any hostility on the part of its inhabitants. While in other parts of Italy life, culture, and art seem to dominate nature, in the Abruzzi nature dominates everything. The overpowering mass of the Abruzzi Mountains, crowned by the awe-inspiring and snow-covered peak of the Gran Sasso, makes human beings small, towns only protective shelters, and art itself a passing fancy. Though life in the Abruzzi now seems to stand still, it has been shaken since the beginning of history by wars and violent earthquakes that periodically destroyed its towns. If communication between other regions of Italy and this one has been, and is, difficult and slow, these conditions are not much better within the Abruzzi itself, because of the isolation of some provinces from others by the barrier of the high mountains. Those mountains, beautiful as they are, have always been the main reason for all the trouble this region has had. They dominate both Rome and the Adriatic, and thus have always been of great strategic importance in wars – with disastrous repercussions on art. What was not annihilated by the struggles and ambition of men was finished up by the horrifying wrath of Mother Earth. Documents disappeared. Many works of art were destroyed or very damaged, and others were uprooted and scattered.

One of the most devastating earthquakes in the history of the Abruzzi took place between 1461 and 1462, and destroyed, among other places, the capital of the region, Aquila. As a consequence, much construction took place during the next fifteen years, providing a great opportunity for artists.

The principal documented figure of that period is Silvestro dell'Aquila (also known as Silvestro di Giacomo, Silvestro Aquilano, Silvestro da Sulmona, and, erroneously, "l'Ariscola"), the sculptor to whom both the Berlin and Cloisters Madonnas were at one time attributed. He settled in Aquila in 1471, but nothing is known of his whereabouts before that date. It is probable that he had some training outside the Abruzzi, because some of his works show a knowledge of the quattrocento sculpture of Tuscany and Rome. His first important and documented work is the funerary monument of Cardinal Amico Agnifili for the baptistery of the Cathedral of Aquila, started in 1476 but signed and dated 1480. This monument, carved in marble, was much restored after an earthquake in 1703. In 1478 he made a St. Sebastian in polychromed wood for the church of El Soccorso of Aquila, now in the Museo Nazionale Abruzzese. This is the only freestanding sculpture that can be called, without doubt, Silvestro's. His most significant work, however, is the impressive funerary monument for the Pereyra-Camponeschi family, executed in marble for the church of S. Bernardino of Aquila in 1496. Though he probably worked with assistants, this piece shows Silvestro's acquaintance with other funerary monuments outside the Abruzzi, probably more Roman ones than Florentine. The architectural part is fully Renaissance, and the figures of Maria Pereyra (Figure 6) and her little daughter Beatrice show excellent craftsmanship and a style in which the realism of portraiture has been softened with an idealism that is almost classic.

It is known that Silvestro made Madonnas. In 1490 he was commissioned to carve one, following a model by the contemporary sculptor Giovanni Biasucci, for the church of Ancarano. This wooden statue is now badly broken and poorly restored, and gives no idea of the master's style. In 1494, 1499, and 1500 he received payments for another Madonna and Child, in terracotta, for the church of S. Bernardino, but we do not know if he ever carried out this commission; the Madonna now there is an inferior sculpture, dreadfully repainted, and it is believed that Silvestro's was probably destroyed during the earthquake of 1703, a particularly bad one for Aquila. The number of other seated Madonnas, mostly in terracotta, attributed sometimes to Silvestro himself or to his followers and imitators, is practically endless. Most of them seem to date no earlier than 1500, and others seem considerably later than 1504, the year of Silvestro's death.

Judging by the high quality of the Pereyra-Camponeschi monument, we must suppose that Silvestro's sculptures of the Virgin and Child were better than those that have been

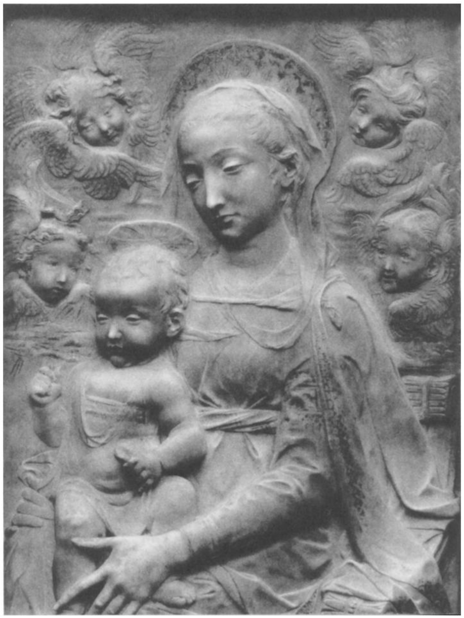


thought to follow his prototypes closely. It may very well be that the confusion in art-historical discussions of sculpture of the Abruzzi during the last quarter of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth has been created by the myth of Silvestro's influence.

Another problematic artist is Giovan Francesco Gagliardelli da Città Sant' Angelo, who in 1524 made a terracotta Madonna for the convent of S. Maria Maggiore of Ripatransone. We cannot judge Gagliardelli's style from what is left of this sculpture. Though there is no documentary proof, most scholars now seem to agree in attributing to him the wooden Madonna of S. Maria Materdomini of Chieti (Figure 7). This beautiful sculpture, full of spiritual dignity, shows an elegance that seems inspired by some of the works by Tuscan masters of the quattrocento, mainly Antonio Rossellino (Figure 8). Other Madonnas have been attributed to Gagliardelli – including the kneeling one at The Cloisters – but if the Chieti Madonna is really by him none of the others could be, because stylistically they have few elements in common.

There are several other artists from the Abruzzi, most of them better known as painters than as sculptors, whose names have been used more or less arbitrarily to fit the theories of the "*studiosi.*" To analyze here all those attributions when there is no documentary evidence to support them would be to add confusion to our problem.

7. Madonna, probably by Giovan Francesco Gagliardelli (active 1524), Italian. Polychromed wood. S. Maria Materdomini, Chieti. Photograph: Istituto Nazionale

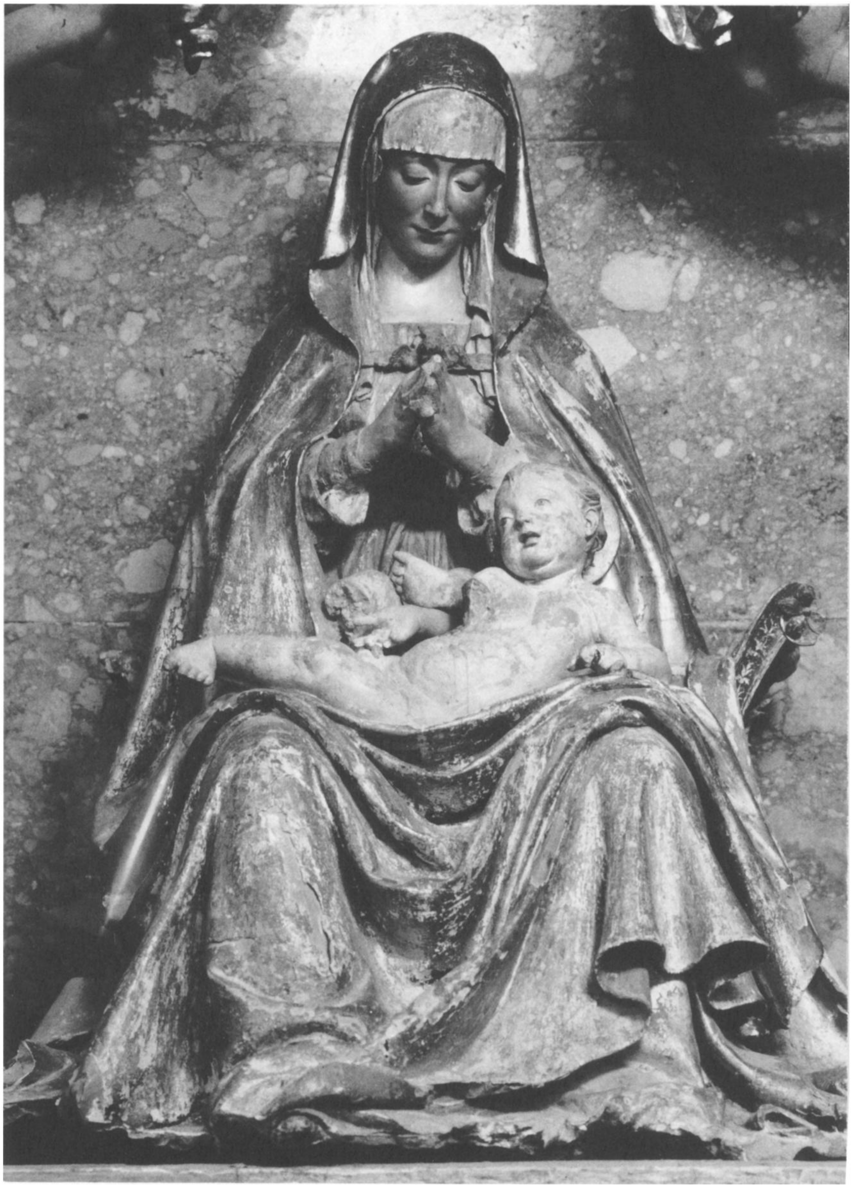


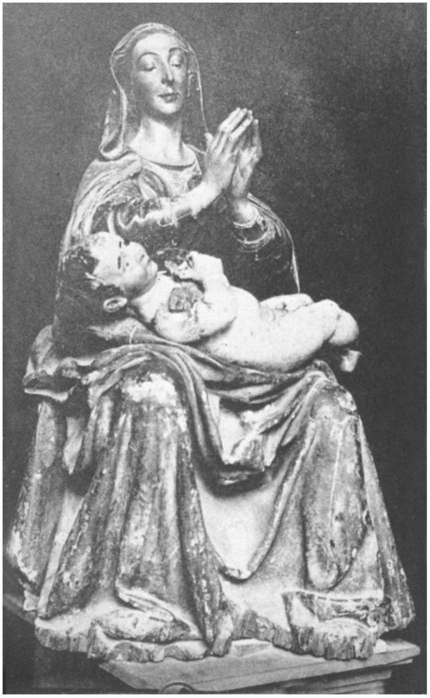
8. Madonna and Child, by Antonio Rossellino (1427-1479), Italian. About 1460-1465. Marble, 28¾ x 20¼ inches. Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 14.40.676

Leaving aside names and referring only to style, we find in the Abruzzi a very specific type of seated Madonna with the Child sitting or reclining on her lap, which must come from an undetermined prototype. The material used is wood or, more frequently, terracotta, both originally with polychromy and now usually extremely repainted. Marble, so popular in northern Italy and in Tuscany, was seldom used in the Abruzzi, probably because it had to be imported from the north and was, naturally, expensive. It could also be that the Abruzzese were more attracted by the realism of lifelike polychromy than by the sophisticated coolness of marble. None of the Madonnas in this group can be dated earlier than 1490, but there are, so far, no similar representations of earlier date that could be taken as prototypes. (Although there are a few examples of fourteenth-century seated Madonnas, also made in the Abruzzi, which must have formed part of a group as solidly characteristic of that region as the later group, there is no possible link between the two groups, apart from having both vigor and a strong personality – as well as a marked provincialism.)

Most of the Abruzzi Madonnas of the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth are seated on a fairly low, backless throne and form a rather solid pyramid; they have nothing in common with the slender elegance of the Tuscan sculptures mentioned above in reference to the Chieti Madonna. A representative example of the most usual type of Abruzzi Madonna is in S. Maria di Collemaggio in Aquila (Figure 9), attributed sometimes to Silvestro himself, to one of his followers, or even to Gagliardelli (the latter attribution cannot be accepted if we accept the Chieti Madonna as his work). All of them wear a heavy, gold mantle that covers the head and envelops the figure, falling in ample folds to the ground. A red tunic shows underneath. A veil under the mantle covers the forehead down to the eyebrows. In very few instances there is no veil and a little of the hair appears under the mantle; one example of these exceptions is the Madonna and Child from the church of S. Margherita of Aquila, now in the Museo Na-

9. *Madonna and Child. Italian (Abruzzi), late XV-early XVI century. Polychromed terracotta. S. Maria di Collemaggio, Aquila. Photograph: Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale*

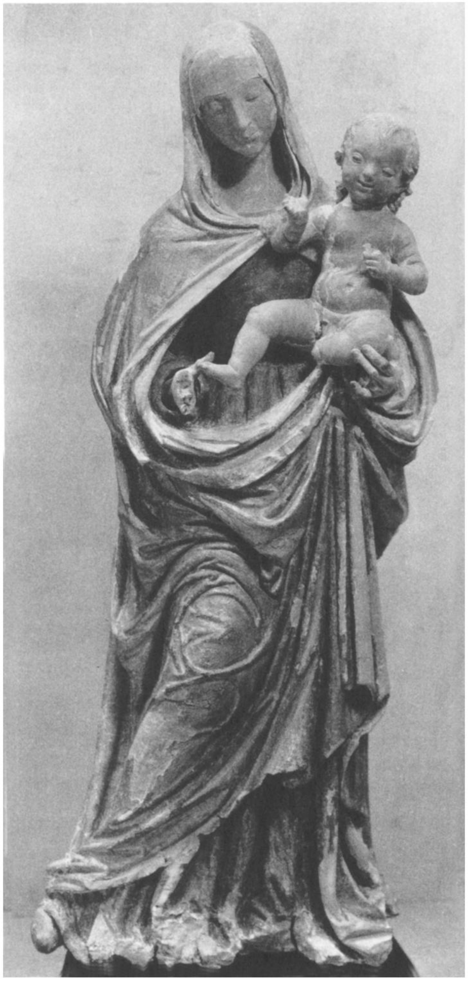




10. *Madonna and Child from S. Margherita, Aquila. Italian (Abruzzi), late* XV*-early* XVI *century. Polychromed wood. Museo Nazionale Abruzzese, Aquila*

zionale Abruzzese (Figure 10), that, as usual, has been attributed to Silvestro. All have hands with fingers joined together in prayer; they are not simply the Virgin and Child, but the Virgin adoring the Child as the Son of God and Redeemer of Mankind. (The Child lying passively across his mother's knees is almost an intimation of the Pietà, in which the Virgin mourns the crucified body of her son.) The Child is always nude, a difference from the Tuscan school, where he is usually covered by a transparent veil.

If we compare the Berlin and Civitaquana Madonnas with those of the Abruzzi group, we find that the general mood is different. Both Madonnas sit upright and seem to be presenting the Child to the onlooker instead of raptly adoring him. The Child himself is more lively and more important in the composition: attention is focussed on him. These two statues are closer in feeling to some of the Florentine Madonnas of the quattrocento, exemplified by Fra Angelico in painting and by Luca della Robbia in sculpture. Though the costume is very close in all of them, the Berlin and Civitaquana Virgins are the only ones without the mantle covering the head; they are also the only ones with that sophisticated hairdo. The Berlin Madonna has a very elongated body and short legs, proportions characteristic of Abruzzi sculpture of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. We find them, for instance, in the figures on the silver processional crosses by Nicola da Guardiagrele, greatest of the Abruzzi silversmiths, who worked in Aquila during the first half of the fifteenth century. In the Civitaquana Madonna the proportions are less exaggerated. In both, the drapery falls in very symmetrical folds, more meticulously described in the Berlin example, but both more Gothic in feeling than the draperies of the Madonnas of the Abruzzi group, which tend to be simpler and more naturalistic. The shape of their faces is more geometric than in the other Madonnas: they are a perfect almond shape, with unmarked cheekbones.

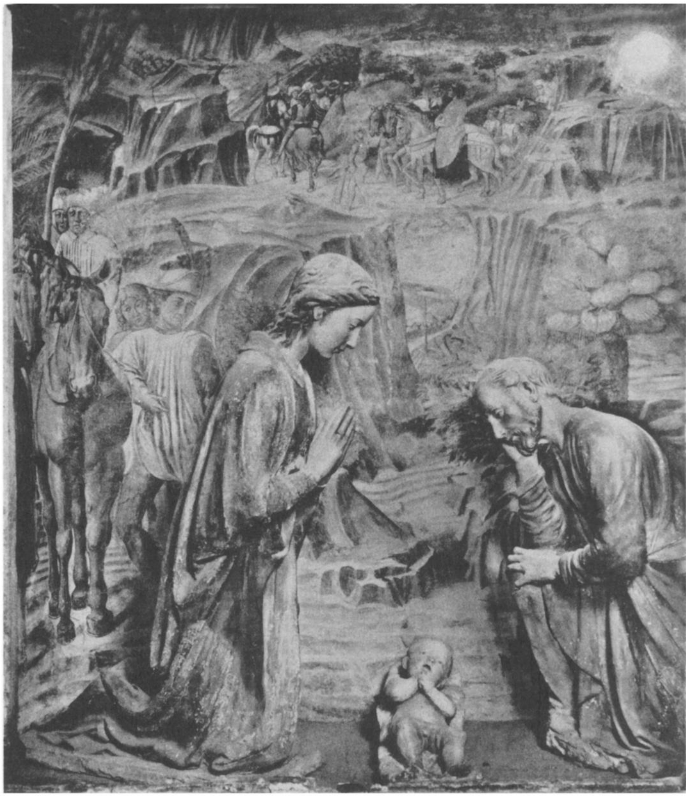


11. *Madonna and Child. Italian (Abruzzi), late* XV*-early* XVI *century. Polychromed terracotta. Museo Civico, Rieti. Photograph: Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale*

I do not think that there is any doubt that the Berlin and Civitaquana sculptures do not belong to either the "Silvestro type" of Abruzzi Madonna (Figure 9, for instance), or the "Gagliardelli type" (as exemplified by Figure 7), the latter being obviously later in date. We have to look for another artist who worked during the last quarter of the fifteenth century and, probably, in Aquila.

During my research I came upon a reference to a terracotta Madonna in the parish church of Civitaquana, done in a "progressive Renaissance style" and *signed and dated*: OPUS PAULI AQUILANI, MCCCCLXXV. This fact was published by Vincenzo Balzano in 1909 and quoted by Mario Chini in his book *Silvestro Aquilano* in 1954. Neither of these scholars seems to have seen the sculpture. As there are no records of any other Madonna from that period in the same church, it seems certain that the

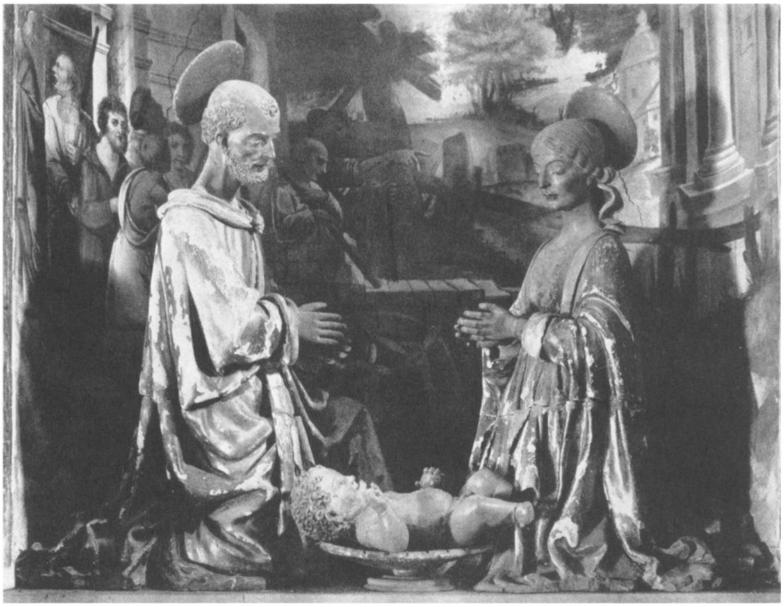
12. Presepio, with painted background by Benozzo Gozzoli (1420?-1497), Italian (Tuscany). About 1465. Cathedral of Volterra. Plate VIII.3 *from R. Berliner, Denkmäler der Krippenkunst: Italienische Krippen (Augsburg, n. d.)*



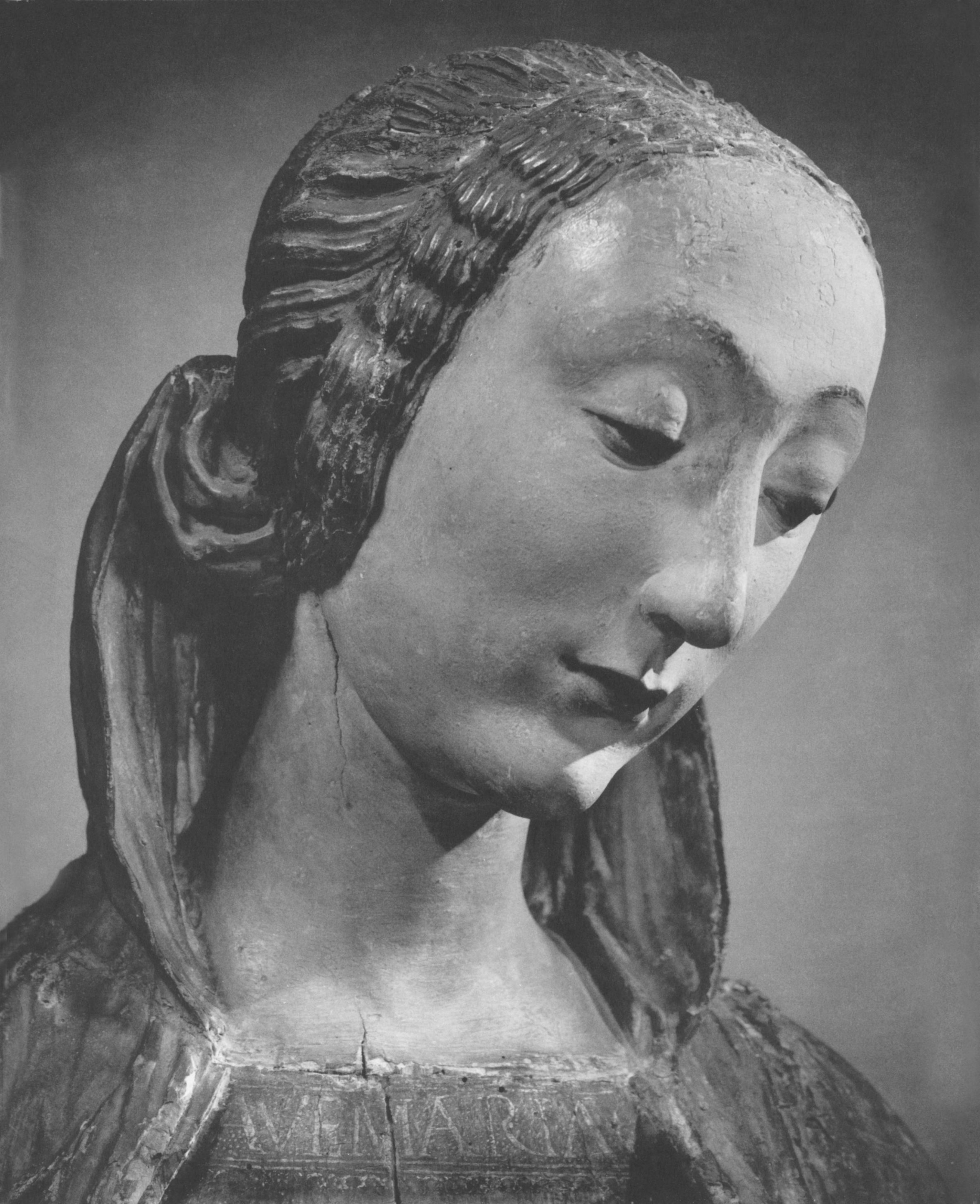
one signed by Paolo Aquilano is our Civitaquana Madonna. I had not seen any inscription on it, however, and recently I had it checked again: no inscription was found.

But then I came upon another reference to the signed and dated Madonna of Civitaquana, in a book on Aquila by Luigi Serra published in 1929. Serra is more specific: the inscription, he says, is *beneath* the sculpture. This statement clears up the problem of the vanished signature: it must have been on the pedestal or in the setting, now lost. According to the parish priest, when he came to the church, about forty years ago, the Madonna was very broken and had been stored away. Like many throughout Italy, the church has been restored: all later constructions were removed to bring it back to its original Romanesque appearance. No traces are left of where the Madonna was placed – or of the inscription.

The inscription is important because it gives us an artist for the three Madonnas and a date for one of them. The surname "Aquilano" indicates that the sculptor was from Aquila or, at least, had worked there before he made the Civitaquana Madonna. As the Berlin Madonna, with its elongated proportions and elaborate drapery, is more Gothicizing and less naturalistic, I am inclined to believe that it is earlier than the Civitaquana one. These two and the Cloisters kneeling Virgin are so much alike, however, that the dates of all three must be very close. In any case, Paolo Aquilano was



13. Presepio from S. Maria del Ponte in Fontecchio, shown in situ. Italian (Abruzzi), early XVI *century. Height of terracotta Madonna 43 5/16 inches. Now in Museo Nazionale Abruzzese, Aquila. Plate* VIII.6 *from R. Berliner, Denkmäler der Krippenkunst: Italienische Krippen*


AVE MARIA

in Aquila in the 1470s, at the same time that Silvestro was there, and they must have been familiar with each other's work.

There is a terracotta Madonna in Rieti (Figure 11) that, I believe, could be a later work by Paolo. Though she is standing and her draperies are handled even more freely than those of the Civitaquana Madonna, the face, the neck and body, and, above all, the lively Child and the general mood are extremely close to the other Madonnas in our group. This Madonna has been attributed to Silvestro dell'Aquila – but that should not come as a surprise any more. Rieti is not in the Abruzzi, but it is at its very doors when you come from Umbria.

I have not included the Cloisters Virgin in the comparisons between the Abruzzi group and the two seated Madonnas because there are no earlier or even contemporary kneeling Virgins from the Abruzzi. We find them, however, in Tuscany during the second half of the quattrocento, as part of a Nativity group consisting of Mary, Joseph, and the newborn Jesus. A good example – and one of the few preserved ones – is a presepio in the Cathedral of Volterra, dated about 1465 (Figure 12). The Nativity is recreated with terracotta sculptures by an anonymous artist for the main figures, and a painted background by Benozzo Gozzoli showing the Magi in a landscape. These presepios were made only during the second half of the fifteenth century in Tuscany, and probably originated in the miracle plays that were performed in churches during the Middle Ages; indeed, the scene is conceived here as if on a stage: the statues are the actors, and the onlooker has the feeling of participating in the event. In this example the figures of Mary and Joseph seem introspective and melancholy, as if they had a foreboding of the terrestrial fate of the babe between them. There is a similar mood of high spirituality in the Cloisters kneeling Virgin, despite her almost worldly appearance. (These Tuscan presepios have no connection with the much more elaborate ones so popular in Naples from the eighteenth century on, encouraged by the spirit of the Counter Reformation to give more popular appeal to religious scenes.)

We cannot tell for sure if our Madonna formed part of an ensemble similar to the Volterra one. Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe this possibility, because there was at least one presepio in the province of Aquila that combined sculpture with painting. This example (Figure 13), which dates from the beginning of the sixteenth century and came from the church of S. Maria del Ponte in Fontecchio, was conceived in exactly the same way as the Tuscan prototype. It consisted of terracotta figures of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, with a painted background showing the adoring shepherds, and the ox and ass warming the Child with their breath. The Fontecchio presepio is no longer *in situ*; the church is now in ruins, and the sculptures were taken to the Museo Nazionale Abruzzese after the last World War. Only the Madonna and the Child are exhibited, apparently because the St. Joseph is too damaged. These sculptures are now attributed, although tentatively, to Saturnino Gatti, a painter-sculptor active in Aquila from 1491 to his death in 1521, whose work shows a rather marked Umbrian influence. If the Cloisters Madonna was indeed part of a Nativity group, as seems probable, this group could have been the inspiration for the Fontecchio one. According to Balzano, Paolo Aquilano made a St. Francis for Fontecchio, a fact that shows there was a definite relationship between Paolo and this town.

The only reference I have found to any other representation of the Nativity in the Abruzzi concerns a commission from the Pica family for a "*cappella del Santo Presepe*" in the now demolished church of S. Francesco in Aquila. The document, however, refers only to "paintings and figures," not specifically to sculpture. It would have been fascinating to be able to prove that our sculpture was originally made for that chapel, because the author of the paintings was Paolo da Montereale, whom Balzano believed to be none other than Paolo Aquilano himself. But Balzano did not support his argument with evidence, and art historians have questioned his theory. In any case, the date of those "paintings and figures," 1501, seems too late for our sculpture: I believe that the Cloisters kneeling

14. The head of the Cloisters Virgin

Virgin was made about 1475, because it is so close in style to the dated Civitaquana Madonna. Perhaps in the course of time more evidence about the little-known sculpture of the Abruzzi will appear, and we shall be able to write a second chapter to its history.

NOTES

There is a curious coincidence that I would like to mention. As I said in the opening sentence of this article, the kneeling Virgin came to The Cloisters together with three other Italian wooden sculptures. All came from the collection of George Grey Barnard and had been purchased in Italy. Two of the others, a Virgin and St. John from a Calvary, are earlier in date and of a problematical style. The third is a standing bishop, probably St. Nicholas. The latter was included in Serra's inventory of works of art in the province of Aquila (Rome, 1934) as coming from the parish church of Monticchio (this piece had been at The Cloisters for nine years when Serra's book was published). I think the bishop is probably Umbrian, but what interests us here is that it came from the province of Aquila. Also, Enzo Carli in his book on Italian wooden sculpture finds Silvestro dell' Aquila's influence on a St. Sebastian that also was in the Barnard collection. Could it be that all these sculptures came from the Abruzzi and were brought together by an Italian dealer, who then sold them to Barnard?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Adolfo Venturi, *Le Sculture del quattrocento* ("Storia dell'arte italiano," VI) (Milan, 1908), pp. 626-634.

Note

Peter the Great pierced Muscovy's Byzantine torpor when he founded St. Petersburg – his "window on the West" – in 1703. He forced a great European capital to rise on a barren marsh, while relegating other cities such as Moscow to provincial status.

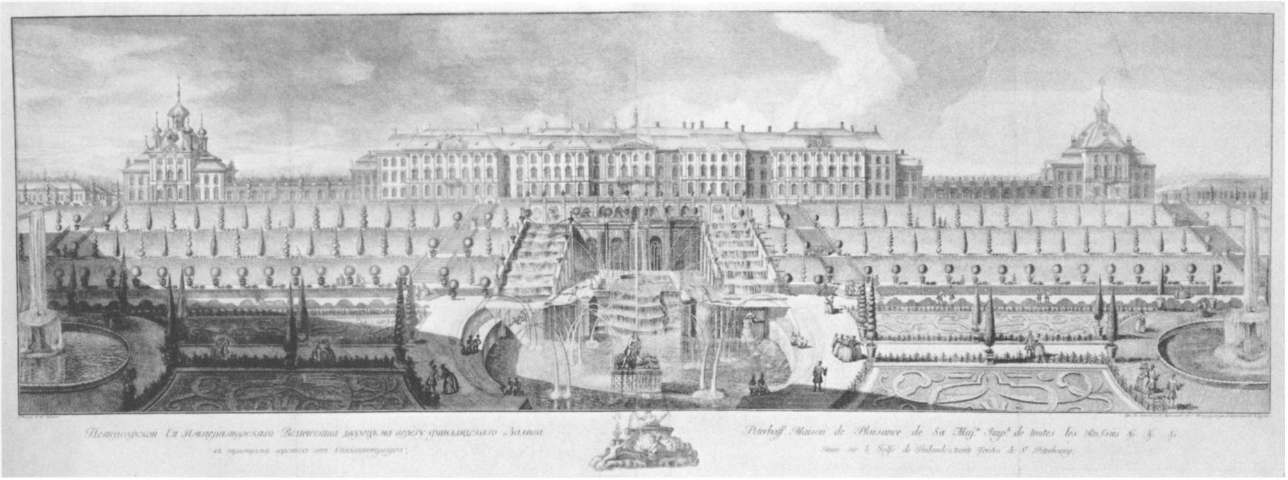
How Peter's plan was executed will be shown in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century etchings and lithographs of Russia in the Prints and Drawings Galleries from June 10 through September 4. Besides architectural subjects, the exhibition will include prints of customs and costumes, portraits and imperial fetes.

Some fifty years after St. Petersburg – the present Leningrad – was founded, twelve panoramic views of the city and its environs were made by Mikhail Makhaiev and Giuseppe Valeriani. One of their subjects was the Twelve Colleges or ministerial offices, practical structures in the style of northern European late baroque, designed by Peter's first important architect, Domenico Tressini, in 1722-1732. Two others were the grand imperial palaces – Peterhof (Figure 1), finished in 1752, and the Great Palace at Tsarskoe Selo, 1749-1756 – both given their final shape by Bartolommeo Rastrelli, favorite architect of Elizabeth I. Rastrelli's style was an exuberant and Russified rococo connected with the late baroque of Austria and northern Italy. The pavilion of Monbezh (Figure 2) in the park at Tsarskoe Selo was crowned by a bulbous cupola – Rastrelli's graceful adaptation of a Russian architectural motif. The pavilion was demolished in the 1820s. Rastrelli's third great structure, the Winter Palace, built from 1754 to 1762, was unfinished when Makhaiev and Valeriani were drawing their views. Although omitted from their set, it appears in nineteenth-century lithographs more than once in the exhibition.

Catherine the Great was the next imperial builder. She instituted a building style of strict classicism that was only slightly modified by her son Paul I (1796-1801), his son Alexander I (1801-1825), and Catherine's grandson Nicholas I (1825-1855). The work of Catherine's most eminent architect, Giacomo Quarenghi, is represented in a book of his, *Fabbriche e Disegni* (Milan, 1821). Quarenghi wrote that he acquired a foundation of simplicity and grandeur from a study of the antique, and he then examined the moderns, chiefly Palladio.

To honor Peter the Great, and incidentally herself, Catherine commissioned from Etienne Falconet a bronze equestrian statue of Peter, inscribed on the base "*Petro primo, Catharina secunda.*" Falconet was inspired to place the sculpture on an enormous granite block. The transportation of this block from Finland was written up by the superintending engineer, Count Marin Carburi de Ceffalonie, in . . . *Relation des Travaux et des Moyens Mechaniques* . . . (Paris, 1777). An illustration shows the rock floated on a barge up the Neva.

Half a century after the Makhaiev-Valeriani



1. Peterhof, after a drawing by Mikhail Makhaiev (about 1718-1770), Russian. From Plan de la ville de St. Petersbourg avec ses Principales Vues (St. Petersburg, 1753). Etching, 20½ x 53¼ inches. Louis V. Bell Fund, 66.506.1

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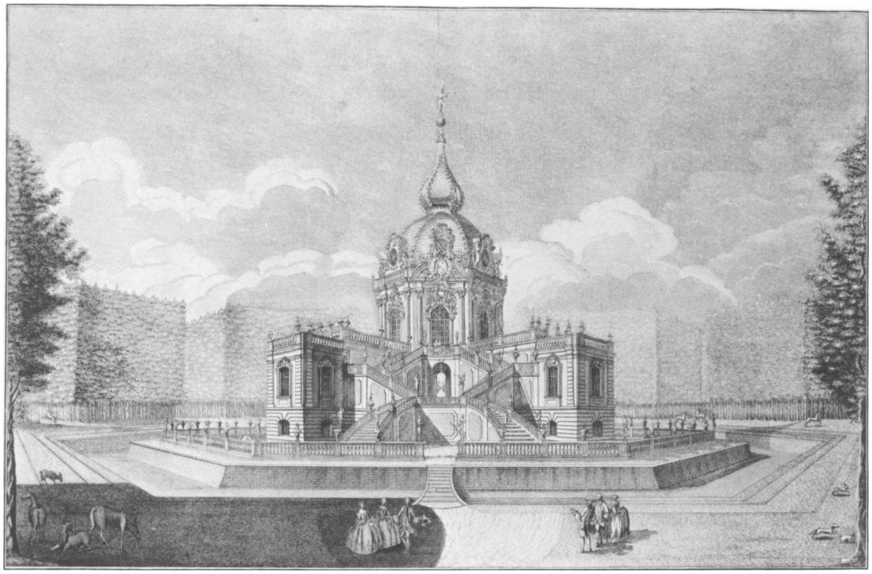
views, a Swede named Benjamin Paterssen likewise made a set of drawings for prints of Petersburg scenes. He included the tasteless and eclectic Castle St. Michel, recently built by Paul I to the designs of Vincenzo Brenna. The site of the castle had been occupied by Rastrelli's delightful Summer Palace, seen in a Makhaiev view, favorite city residence of Elizabeth I and prized by Catherine the Great. What Catherine treasured, Paul demolished or abused. He stabled horses in her Taurid Palace. A ground plan of that building with its beautiful ballroom and adjacent conservatory is seen in *Recueil des Dessins de Differens Batimens construit à Saint-Petersbourg . . .* (St. Petersburg, 1810) by Luigi Rusca, Alexander I's architect, who restored it.

Alexander commissioned Adrian Zakharov to design a new Admiralty, since Peter the Great's building had, by 1800, become obsolete. The present massive structure was built between 1806 and 1815. The earlier Admiralty is seen in a Makhaiev view; the later one appears in several nineteenth-century prints.

Another enormous building of Alexander's reign was the semicircular General Staff Building, facing the Winter Palace, constructed by Carlo Rossi in 1819-1829. Through its center, under two huge triumphal arches, runs Morskaya Street, which connects Winter Palace Square with Nevsky Prospekt. A lithograph by Karl Joachim Begerov – a view through the arches – shows the square before 1829, when Nicholas I erected there a towering columnar monument to his father. The feat of transporting the monolithic granite column from Lake Ladoga and erecting it was recorded by the architect, A. Ricard de Montferrand, in *Plan et Détails du Monument consacré à . . . Alexandre* (Paris, 1836).



2. *The pavilion of Monbezh, after a drawing by Mikhail Makhaiev. From Plan de la ville de St. Petersbourg avec ses Principales Vues (St. Petersburg, 1753). Etching, 19⅛ x 26¼ inches. Louis V. Bell Fund, 66.506.17*

Moscow, although playing a subsidiary role to St. Petersburg until the mid-nineteenth century, was nevertheless the coronation site. The earliest picture shown of the Kremlin is in a book commemorating the crowning of Elizabeth I in 1742. The latest is in a set of lithographs of 1896 representing the coronation of the last czar, Nicholas II. Two spectacular panoramas of the city were taken from the same spot on the terrace of the Kremlin: the first, after Gérard de la Barthe, is dated 1797; the second, an aquatint of 1816, was published in London.

Various exotic national dresses and customs of the Russian empire were recorded by J. G. Georgi, a German traveler who published the set of costumes on exhibition (St. Petersburg, 1776-1780). J.-B. Le Prince was the only French artist of the eighteenth century sensitive to the exotic appeal of Russia. After returning from there to France in 1762 or 1763, he supported his art for the next fifteen years on the sketches he had accumulated during his sojourn. In the Salon of 1765, Le Prince exhibited a painting called Vue d'une Partie de Saint-Petersbourg sur la Nerwa, which shows the island of St. Basil (Vasili Ostrov), the port, the customs house, the Senate, the fortress, and the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul. Diderot criticized it severely: ". . . It is somber, sad, without sky, without an effect of light, without any effect whatsoever." Twelve years later Jacques-Philippe Le Bas engraved it. Undismayed by Diderot's harsh words, we have included this print in the exhibition.

C. K.

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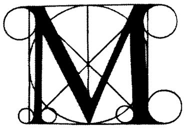www.jstor.org