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Matter and Meaning of Mother-of-Pearl:
The Origins of Allegory in the Spheres of Things*

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Abstract

The first, theoretical part of this study pursues the question of how meaning was generated and how an ambivalent—or polyvalent—object, for example, an allegory, was or can be understood. The interweaving of acts of interpretations involving things, ideas, nature, and—in the specific case of a work of art—the artist, that is to say, the material history of matter and artistic traditions, can be described as allegoresis. *As this study demonstrates, the scholar who most vigorously shed light on the medieval exegesis of nature through allegoresis was Friedrich Ohly. The second part of the essay is a case study of an object executed in* émail en ronde bosse, *combined with an extremely fine relief carved in mother-of-pearl, that unfolds the various layers of the object's meaning through an analysis of the ambivalence of its iconographic motifs, its cultural origin (the courtly practices of gift-giving in French families), and its artistic origin in Paris about 1400, in the workshop of a goldsmith with an extraordinary expertise in only recently developed artistic techniques (*rouge cler, émail blanc, *painted enamel, and* pointillé*). The aim of this article is not to provide* one *interpretation of this object but, rather, to elucidate its ability to oscillate between multiple possible meanings and to reveal how insisting on just one of them would deprive the object of its ability to function in different contexts—secular and sacred.*

Things are made of matter. Their form, their material, their functions, and their history provide a multitude of different references, all of which can be charged with allusive significance. The question at stake here is the role of matter in the production of meaning. Essential for the production of meaning are the spheres of things (*Dingsphaere*). Ernst Cassirer, introducing this term, differentiated between various spheres of things. According to him, spheres of life and semiosis were coextensive: "The relation of body and soul represents the prototype and model for a purely symbolic relation, which cannot be converted into either a relationship between things or into a causal relation."[1] For the German medievalist Friedrich Ohly, considering the modes of generation of meaning was crucial to revealing the array of notions a certain "matter" could have. He was particularly interested in the conditions of production for those meanings produced by a matter, substance, or subject that he dealt with. This "matter" can be either a story—for example, that one needs the blood from male goats to cut a diamond[2]—or a concrete, material thing like a pearl. The posthumously published collection *Die Perle des Wortes* (*The Pearl of the Word* or *The Word as Pearl*) reveals how profound and world-spanning was one particular substance that attracted Ohly's attention over his lifetime—the pearl.[3]

The contribution of the spheres of a thing for the generation of meaning is particularly revealing if the object in question is ambivalent or polyvalent. The analysis of such a polyvalent "thing" is at the core of this essay: an object with multiple functions—reliquary, precious gift, pax, and portable altar—made from mother-of-pearl, probably in Paris about 1400 (Figs. 1 and 2). The most striking aspect of this object, besides the beauty of Christ's body, is the ambivalence of its central scene, which oscillates between an angel Pietà and the Man of Sorrows, and, importantly, cannot be defined according to the iconographic conventions created and modified over the course of time by the artistic practice of invention and reinvention. However, the artist not only brought even more ambivalent motifs (e.g., Man of Sorrows/angel Pietà, siren/harpy, dead/alive) to the object but also put into play various ideas related to the material of mother-of-pearl itself.

To consider both aspects equally (the generation and the reception of meaning), I have chosen a twofold structure for my analysis. Taking the introduction of the term *Dingbedeutung* by Ohly as a point of departure, the first part of the essay reflects on the entanglement of matter and meaning in the generation of meaning—generally regarding its perception and cognition, a process that was described in medieval sources as *allegoresis*, as well as in the particular case of creating an ambivalent work of art or an allegory.[4] To investigate the origin of, or at least some of the premises of, Ohly's conception of *Dingbedeutung*, it is necessary to recall some insights of Ernst Cassirer and Erich Auerbach. The premises that undergird the new term *Dingbedeutung* are significant. First, the term is rooted in Cassirer's distinction of spheres involved in the production of meaning. Second, Auerbach's famous article on *figura*, a key text in the historiography of medieval allegory, is critical to understanding Ohly's new term.[5] Whereas Auerbach was interested in pursuing the changes in "meaning systems" in relation to notions of the term *figura* from Antiquity to the age of Dante, Ohly focused on the threefold meaning system itself.

Furthermore, I ask *how* an object was created that was invested with different levels of meaning, some of which even contradict each other, or at least create an ambiguous effect. Answers to these questions point in two directions from the

FIGURE 1. *Reliquary, gold, mother-of-pearl, and enamel, 10.5 × 8 × 7 cm, Paris, ca. 1400, front view, stolen from Museu d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (photo: © Ramon Manent).*

FIGURE 2. *Reliquary, gold, mother-of-pearl, and enamel, 10.5 × 8 × 7 cm, Paris, ca. 1400, back view, stolen from Museu d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (photo: © Ramon Manent).*

chronology initiated from the moment the object was created: on the one hand, how the object's meaning was created; and, on the other hand, how it has been and can yet be interpreted.

To understand the full meaning of an ambivalent material like a pearl in works of art, it is necessary to take into account not only the ambivalence of things in terms of their multiple meanings but also the full array of meanings (*volle Dingbedeutung*) that was already established at the time of the work's creation. This array of meanings circulated through and is (partially) documented within the kind of texts Ohly and other modern scholars have studied. Ohly analyzed this textual heritage for the substance pearl with regard to how an artist with a scholarly background might bring an innovative perspective or ambition to his (or her) work. He combined the literary heritage with traditions that were preserved in works of art themselves, such as iconographic conventions, the traditional meaning of the material pearl, its cult value, as well as aesthetic traditions.[6] Finally, in examining an ambivalent substance, the desire for innovation, that is, for a break with tradition, must also be taken into account.

In the second part of the essay, a thorough analysis of an object made of mother-of-pearl and enamel demonstrates how different spheres involved in the production of meaning were masterfully deployed by an artist working in Paris about 1400. Considering a little-studied object, I explore how the work's polyvalence might have been received, and, finally, what it means for art historians today to deal with such an *objet ambigu*, as Paul Valéry has put it.[7] After its historical context as a gift between members of a noble family is introduced, its novel artistic techniques (*émail en ronde bosse*, *pointillé*) are described, techniques that identify the artistic context of its production with the workshops of Paris at the turn of the fifteenth century. At this time in Paris, fragments of the relic of the holy tunic were offered to various potential buyers by the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (1350–1425, r. 1391–1425), an event that may be implicated in the inclusion in the base of the reliquary of the relic wrapped in red cloth. Furthermore, the artful play of making the blood a painted smear on Christ's body in conjunction with the red cloth in the hand of the angel and the one covering the relic of Christ's tunic visible behind the window in the object's towerlike base will be contextualized within the growing interest on the part of artists in the representation of drying blood, an interest evident, for example, in the use of different shades of red in painting and the development of a new enamel technique to improve the representation of blood (*rouge cler*). A further artistic innovation to be consid-

ered is the use of mother-of-pearl for the body of Christ. This specific material had not been used in a work of such high artistic quality before, nor had the play with the meanings attributed to the pearl been cultivated previously in such a sophisticated manner as it is in this object's represented scene, where it figures the oscillation between life and death and simultaneously alludes to rebirth and/or virginal conception.

As Ohly's works have demonstrated, to gain access to the meaning of things in the Middle Ages, it was essential to explore the world of meaning (*Bedeutungswelt*). In the medieval context, a thing (*res*) referred to the sum of possible spiritual insights and senses (*Summe geistiger Sinnmöglichkeiten*) established at its creation. Ohly distinguished between this polyvalent potential of things to signify and the importance of attending to precisely those properties of things, both external and internal to the thing itself, that were selected for emphasis in medieval exegesis or creative allegoresis in the work of modern interpreters of medieval sources.[8] Thus, the potential sum of all meanings (*significationes*) of a thing (*res*), in both medieval and modern practice, is delimited by or predicated on terms of finite perceived or apperceived properties.[9]

Discriminating between *Dingsphaere* and *Bedeutungssphaere*, Cassirer's discussion of the role of matter for the production of *significatio* was, I suggest, crucial for Ohly. When Ohly was appointed professor at Kiel in 1958, he began his inaugural lecture not only with Hegel but also with reference to Cassirer.[10] Cassirer differentiated between the spheres of things (*Dingsphäre*),[11] the sphere of expression (*Ausdruckssphäre*), the sphere of representation (*Darstellungssphäre*), and the sphere of meaning (*Bedeutungssphäre*).[12] In the act of cognition (*Erkenntnis*), the various spheres are interdependent, and the interlacing of the different spheres is constitutive for the production of meaning(s). According to Cassirer, the premise for this conclusion is that

> the origins of art reach, as it seems, back to a sphere in which the activity of picture/image making [*Bildens*] is rooted in the circle of magical imagination [*im magischen Vorstellungskreis*] and focused on magical purposes in which the image itself does not yet have an individual, truly aesthetic meaning. Although already in the first steps of artistic practice [*im Stufengang der geistigen Ausdrucksform*] a new origin, a new principle is achieved. . . . From the sphere of the effect (in which the mythical consciousness resides) and from the sphere of the meaning, we are transferred to an area in which only the pure being, the inherent essence/being of the image is captured/meant/referred to.[13]

This opposition of art and myth, image and thing, of matter (*res*) and meaning (*significatio*), inspired Ohly's term *Dingbedeutung*.[14] Ohly concluded that the "fundamental concern of medieval philology" is to discover and identify the nature of both, of the *voces* (the sounds of a word alluding to some-

thing) and the *res* (the array of meaning of things).[15] It was important to Ohly that something is lost in acts of translation between thought and language, between different languages, as well as between word and image: "The meaning of a word is pinched out in the reference to a single thing."[16] Contrary to the literal sense (*Wortbedeutung*, *Buchstabensinn*), the thing inhabits a world full of different meanings, which reaches from God to the devil and is potentially inherent in everything, with one word covering a plentitude of meanings. Ohly suggested a model wherein the literal sense refers extratextually to a world of signifying things, but where other senses might remain "in" the text (e.g., a tropological sense, possibly even an allegorical sense). To give an example, in the concrete case of a given text, the lion "cannot signify God or devil, but only one of them, and in another context the other."[17] The potential array of external meanings, going beyond the literal sense, is of particular relevance for works of art, which not only can allude to the external meanings but are also capable of establishing more than one allusion, creating a polyvalence of sometimes even contradictory meanings.

In the third and final volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Cassirer draws an important conclusion: the symbolic forms he had compared in his monumental work cannot "stand on its own, but rely on their context and their mutual interdependencies. Intertwined, they contribute to the objective *Sein* and the sphere of the objective-theoretical meaning. To none of them can be attributed an isolated truth and validity; only in their whole, in the proceeding of steps and the system of cognition do they provide meaning."[18]

In his 1958 inaugural lecture, Ohly attempted to elaborate further the historical dimension of three- or fourfold meaning,[19] explicitly mentioning several medievalists working on German literature: Julius Schwietering, Hans Glunz, and Erich Auerbach. The changes in the signification of *figura* and figurative meaning (*Figuraldeutung*) in the Late Antique and medieval periods and related possibilities of producing and deriving meanings beyond the literal reading had been laid out most clearly in Auerbach's famous "Figura" article first published in 1938 (in which he also quotes Cassirer).[20] While Auerbach traces the differences in various "meaning systems" in relation to changes in the notions of the term *figura* from Antiquity to the age of Dante, Ohly focused on the threefold meaning system itself. In particular, he considered the widespread exegetical tradition derived from the school of St. Victor, which Auerbach did not treat at all. Ohly took as his point of departure the Victorine's key phrase "non solum voces, sed et res significativae sunt" (not only voices [verbal expressions], but things also are meaningful).[21]

At the end of the "Figura" article, Auerbach deals briefly with one of the most fundamental changes in Western image culture. Shortly before and during Dante's composition of *La divina commedia* (Auerbach's final example), monumental pictorial programs were developed in the Upper Italian cities, promoted by the rise of a protodemocratic political system
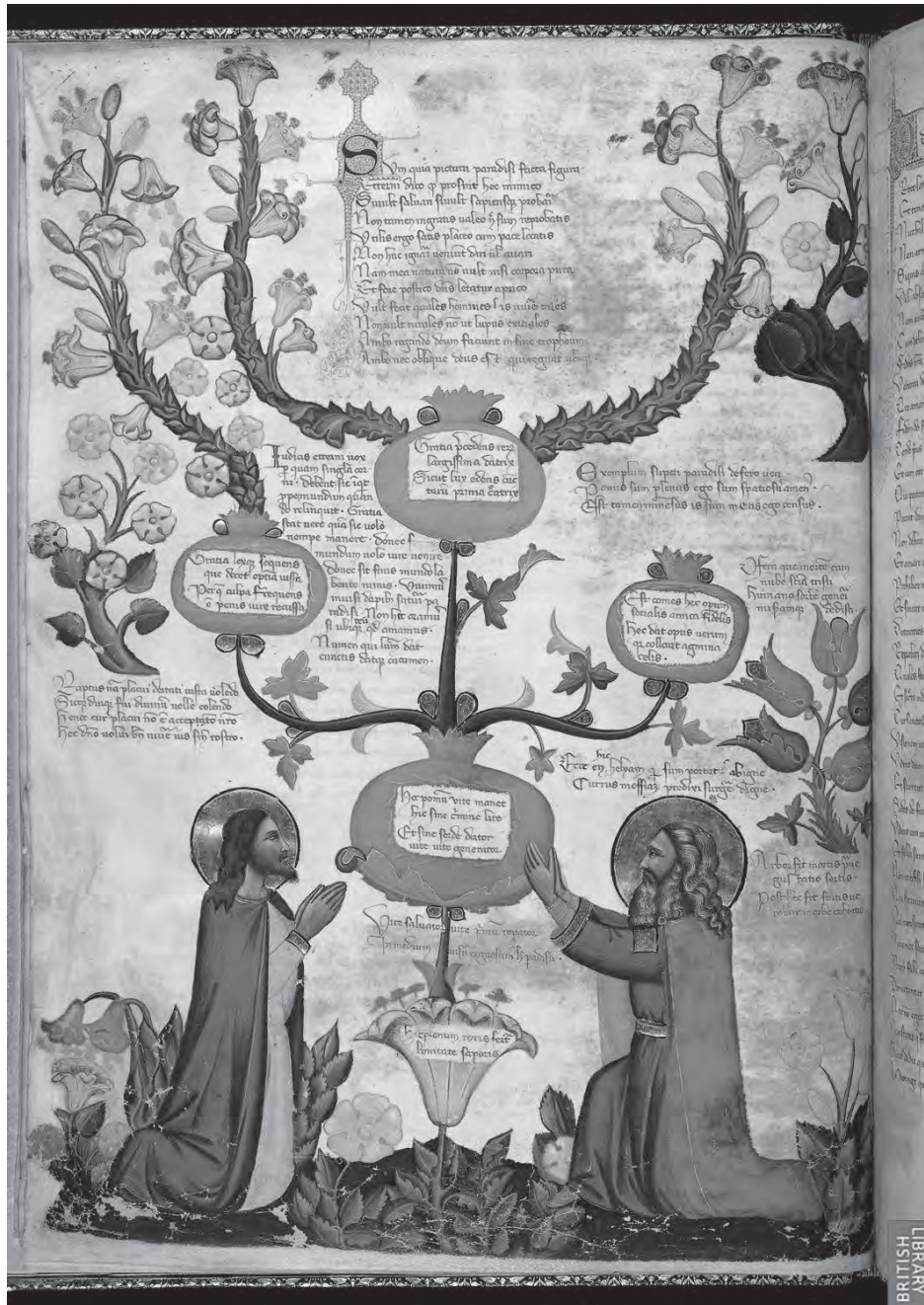
FIGURE 3. *Pacino di Bonaguida,* Regia Carmina, *written by Convenevole da Prato, 1335–40, London, BL, MS Royal 6 E IX, fol. 2v (photo: © British Library, London).*

based on civic power.[22] Art historians use the term *allegory* to describe these images.[23] However, *allegoria* remained a foreign word in medieval ekphrases, in aesthetic writings, or other writings about art, long into the Renaissance. Giorgio Vasari does not use the word, and only toward the end of the sixteenth century did the term become a common expression for enigmatic pictures or emblems, those pictures whose meaning was intentionally obscured by the artist.[24] By contrast, *figura* or

figura sacra were expressions used in the trecento and the terms most likely used for these pictorial inventions. For example, an inscription in the miniature in praise of Robert of Anjou by Convenevole da Prato (Fig. 3) reads, "Sum quia pictura paradisi facta figura" (I am the painted image of the eternal paradise).[25] What we actually see is not paradise but a tree, a so-called *arbor armoris*. Enoch and Elijah, prophets considered to be eyewitnesses of paradise, kneel next to the tree.[26] The third of

three full-page illustrations, a kind of multilayered frontispiece, the image plays on several layers of meaning in the text, with its use of pictorial terms (*pictura*, *figura*, *exemplum*, *tropheum* [sign], and *imago*), as well as the many layers of meaning in the image itself and the folio's blank spaces.

In his article, Auerbach argues that the European figurative method dates back to the origins of Christianity, whereas the allegorical method derives from pagan-antique influences. According to Auerbach, the figurative approach is applied mostly to Christian motifs, while the allegorical mode is used for antique themes.[27] Pictures like the illustration by Convenevole da Prato, however, exemplify how his distinction between figurative and allegorical structures is of limited use for understanding images. Auerbach's rigid differentiation has been relativized more than once.[28] The more fruitful interesting question regarding images is the question Auerbach poses but leaves unanswered: "Not fully clear to me is how far aesthetical ideas are defined figuratively."[29] The period around 1300—a moment when allegorical modes of representation in art undergo experience a decisive and major change (i.e., when they begin to speak of themselves as *figura*)—provided especially fertile ground for innovations on the part of artists and poets. Their creations reveal how artists understood visible things, both their concrete, established metaphoric meanings and how they refer to more general ideas (both visible and invisible), and, simultaneously, how artists attempted to find new speaking (visible) artistic forms equal to the challenge of alluding polyvalently to invisible content, the meaning, or else to revoke older, inherited forms.

This is where my object, the mother-of-pearl reliquary, comes in. As obsessive as Ohly was in attempting to track down the origin of meaning in various and variant layers of medieval legend, it is astonishing that he never turned his attention to the actual use of pearls, and specifically of mother-of-pearl, in the Middle Ages.[30]

To unfold the complex web of such intertwined interdependencies between container and content, matter and meaning, conventional iconography and artistic invention, and to demonstrate what might be gained by reflecting on the underlying mechanisms of meaning production, I want to cast new light on a tiny reliquary, now lost, that has received little scholarly attention (Fig. 1). At its center, the object displayed a shimmering body of Christ made of mother-of-pearl. From the vast body of sources Ohly compiled for the various conceptions of the pearl, he was especially interested in how the pearl's meaning twisted and shifted over the arc of centuries across several, very different cultures. Stringing his findings together like so many pearls found in the depths of the ocean of written sources, Ohly identified several threads of tradition. However, he never included actual objects made of pearls or pictures in his analyses, nor did he examine artists' exploitation of the material's metaphoric and mythical dimensions.

This tiny reliquary (10.5 × 8 × 7 cm) was bought by the Museu d'Art de Catalunya in Barcelona in 1972 and was preserved there for only two decades before it was stolen in May 1991.[31] Originally, it was a gift of Duke Pere d'Urgell (d. 1408) to his daughter Isabel of Urgell, duchess of Coimbra (d. 1443).[32] The gift is mentioned in an inventory of the monastery of Sigena,[33] where Isabel lived.[34] The reliquary was made about 1400—certainly before the duke's death in 1408—and not on the Iberian Peninsula, as Joan-Francesc Ainaud i Escudero suggested, but in Paris.[35] It is equipped with a handle at its back (Fig. 2). Although Ainaud i Escudero identifies the object as a pax, the object's original function (or functions) remains unclear. The object—a precious present at first—could have been easily carried in a procession; it may also have served as a private altar. Since the combination of a reliquary with a pax is highly unusual, and mother-of-pearl was frequently used for portable relic containers,[36] in the remainder of this essay I will refer to the object as a reliquary, although I would like to suggest that it served multiple purposes and therefore carries with it multiple meanings.[37]

In the later Middle Ages, at the courts of Burgundy, the Valois, and elsewhere, valuable objects were given to noble family members and hosts of New Year's Eve celebrations.[38] These gifts were often made with precious materials like pearls, gemstones, or enamel *en ronde bosse*, a combination of materials in evidence in the famous Goldene Rössl, with which the Barcelona reliquary shares a number of technical and material similarities.[39] Furthermore, such high-status New Year's gifts were often imbued with a certain ambiguity regarding not only their appearance but also their function. Not only were they precious gifts, but they could also serve a large array of purposes (e.g., reliquary, private altar, pax, ostensorium, but also as a vessel for magical or valuable objects).[40]

What is so particular about this reliquary? First of all, it is unique with regard to its combination of three artistic techniques developed shortly before the date of the object's creation and combined extremely artfully by the goldsmith. The angel's right hand and face were made with *émail en ronde bosse* with *émail blanche*; his wings were made with painted *émail* (Fig. 2); and the translucent red of the Christ's mantle, bunched in the angel's left hand, was made with *rouge cler* (Fig. 1). In addition, the mythical creatures punched with tiny dots (*pointillé*) in the towerlike basement (Fig. 4) on which Christ and the angel are placed are as polyvalent as the main subject of the object itself: typically an angel Pietà shows either the dead body of Christ or the Man of Sorrows presented by one or more angels. Finally, the body of Christ is made of mother-of-pearl, a material that had never been used before in such a refined, artistic manner.

An angel holds, protects, and presents Christ at the same time. Contrasting with the splendor of the beauty of its surface, the dour expression on Christ's face appears almost disconcerting. His crude face does not correlate with the accepted conventions for depictions of Christ, but it does emphasize his humanness. He bears the wounds of the Crucifixion—made clearly visible through the use of the color red—but he is shown with his eyes half open. With his chin, the angel steadies the

FIGURE 4. *Reliquary, gold, mother-of-pearl, and enamel, Paris, ca. 1400, 10.5 × 8 × 7 cm, winged creatures, stolen from Museu d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (photo: © Ramon Manent).*

left shoulder of Christ, whose red mantle has slid down and no longer veils his naked body, covering only the angel's left hand. Two blue sapphires sit above the pinnacles, and a longitudinal spinel connects the heads of the angel and Christ.

A hexagonal crenellated golden tower serves as the base for the reliquary. Two winged creatures with claws—sirens or harpies[41]—are chiseled into its golden wall with little dots.[42] The fortress's clear-cut golden edges and the subtlety of its shimmering skin of mother-of-pearl form a stark contrast to the lifeless fingertips of Christ. No other example of this iconographic type is known in which the contrasting moments of protection, support, and presentation are emphasized so strongly in the mise-en-scène. The deep subtlety of Christ's shiny skin is carefully, even softly, held by the white fingers of the angel's right hand and the veiled left hand, hidden in Christ's red mantle. Christ's head leans toward the raised right wing of the angel, as if the angel has just lifted its wing to softly envelop or support the head's sinking weight. The interior of the wings reveal dainty layers of feathers, indicated by brushstrokes of white painted enamel against the dark blue background (Fig. 2).

A relic is preserved below the pinnacles and behind a crystal window. It is a piece of Christ's tunic, wrapped in red cloth. A piece of parchment is attached to it, inscribed in black ink with the clearly visible words "De tunica domini." It might have been part of the set of relics, including the bluish tunic of Christ, which the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Komnenos sent to Paris in 1399 after his failed attempt to use the tunic, together with other relics, as securities for a loan he had hoped to receive

from the republic of Venice in 1395 after a year of siege by the Turks.[43] Since the reliquary was made in Paris about 1400 and bought there by Pere d'Urgell, just as several fragments of the tunic of Christ were offered to potential buyers, the relic's origin in the Byzantine emperor's treasury is plausible.

Holger Klein has pursued the dispersal of the bluish tunic of Christ during Manuel's desperate attempts to gain support from European emperors against the Turks: soon after his arrival in Paris, Manuel's envoy, Alexios Branas, presented fragments of a bluish tunic of Christ that were believed to have healed the woman with the issue of blood, together with the sponge of Christ's Passion, not only to the court of Aragon (in October 1400) but also to Charles III of Navarre (in early 1401) and to King John I of Portugal (on 15 June 1401). Shortly before Branas returned to Constantinople, the last piece of the tunic was sent to Queen Margaret of Denmark, in November 1402. Furthermore, a fragment of the tunic accompanied a letter by Branas to the anti-pope Benedict XIII and in July to Pope Boniface IX.[44] The use of relics for fund-raising was a widespread practice, in part a financial transaction and also a politically motivated or diplomatic act. It was not only Byzantine emperors in urgent need of military assistance who opened their treasuries and divided famous collections of relics as part of their diplomatic gift-exchange; Charles V gave a set of Passion relics from the Sainte-Chapelle to both Louis of Anjou and his older brother.[45]

Most relics were kept wrapped inside another piece of cloth for protection; in many cases, even such enveloped relics

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FIGURE 5. *Medaillon with Christ, Mary and St. John, opaque and translucent enamel on gold, 6.2 × 5.8 × 1 cm, Paris, ca. 1390–1405, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.913 (photo: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art).*

FIGURE 6. *Portable Altar from Chocques(?), gold and enamel, overall 12.5 × 12.7 × 2.6 cm, ca. 1390–1400, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, BK-17045 (photo: © Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum).*

were presented ostentatiously, still "visible" behind rock crystal coverings. Since the Barcelona object was stolen in 1991, however, it remains an open question if a bluish fragment of the relic that belonged to Manuel's collection was hidden inside the red cloth. Nevertheless, the red-tinted mantle of Christ is made of *rouge cler* and, except for the piece in the angel's left hand, seems to have sunk fully into the towerlike base, to reappear again only behind the rock crystal covering. The two levels—the enclosed concrete piece of cloth and its imitation above in *rouge cler*—relate to one another in the imagination. The mantle made of *rouge cler* is a mise-en-scène of the relic of the holy cloth: the gesture of the winged creature formally recalls the gesture of the angels holding up the veil of the Veronica. The transluscent red of the *rouge cler* emphasizes the relic—the mantle of Christ—as it simulates it in another medium.

Precious objects employing *rouge cler* were first produced in the last quarter of the fourteenth century.[46] One of the oldest preserved objects using *rouge cler* for red vestments, flames, and shed blood is the so-called Royal Cup, made before 1380 and described in the Bedford inventories (compiled 1447–49).[47] When the Barcelona reliquary was made, *rouge cler* had only recently been developed as a way to emphasize "fresh" blood in enamel.[48] Its use was particularly widespread on three-dimensional objects made of *émail en ronde bosse* in Paris after 1400 (Figs. 5–7).[49] These three tiny pendants from New York, Amsterdam, and Munich demonstrate a close relationship to the reliquary from Barcelona. All three present Christ on the verge of a transition between his two natures.[50] The dead Christ

FIGURE 7. *Pendant with Man of Sorrows, gold, enamel,* rouge cler, *8.4 × 5.6 cm, Paris, ca. 1400, Munich, Treasure of the Residenz (photo: © Munich, Schatzkammer der Residenz).*

FIGURE 8. *Ugolino di Vieri, reliquary for the corporale, gold, translucent enamel, 1337–39, Orvieto, Duomo (photo: © Scala).*

FIGURE 9. *Ugolino di Vieri, reliquary for the corporale, detail with the Miracle of Bolsena, Orvieto, Duomo (photo: © Scala).*

is surrounded by John, Mary, and two angels in the enamel from New York (Fig. 5), while John and Mary are shown on the wings of the Amsterdam example (Fig. 6). In the Munich enamel, Christ is shown as the *imago pietatis*, presented by two angels; however, he seems rather alive, and the clouds indicate a glimpse of heaven (Fig. 7).

Previously, during the fourteenth century, translucent *basse taille* enamel was the dominant enameling technique. Flat silver plates or flat silver reliefs were chased and overlaid with translucent layers of violet, green, or blue enamel. They were often used for particularly precious reliquaries, such as the relic of the corporale, the altar cloth stained with blood after a host miraculously started to bleed in 1263 at Bolsena, a miracle provoked by a doubt-filled priest who begged God for a sign to strengthen his belief as he celebrated Mass (Fig. 8).[51] The reliquary was made of translucent enamel with deep-cut reliefs by Ugolino di Vieri in 1337–39 (Fig. 9).[52] It shows in thirty-two scenes the Passion of Christ and the story of the corporale.[53] The enamels on this reliquary, housed in Orvieto, reveal the challenge artists faced in finding a tone of red adequate to represent fresh blood: due to differences in the melting points of the materials used for the different colors, red could only be used in an opaque form confined within single cells.

The technical restrictions of deep-cut enamel offered artists few choices for the representation of fresh blood: the result in Ugolino di Vieri's example is a scene in which the most important aspect—the fact that the host is bleeding—can hardly be seen. The solution for this problem marked a turning point in the history of enamel techniques. As of about 1400, *rouge cler* was most frequently used on *émails en ronde bosse* for the blood of Christ. The depth of the red contrasted effectively with the pale whiteness of the corpse (Figs. 5–7). Producing the effect of fresh blood, still liquid and dripping out of the body, it was often used for the Man of Sorrows, as in the medaillon today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art at New York (Fig. 5) and the pendant housed in the treasury of the Munich Residenz (Fig. 7).[54]

In the same period painters evinced a particular interest in how blood changes color after it exits the body and congeals. They painted traces of coagulating blood not only to highlight references to established Christological topoi (the Passion, pain, sacrament) but also to generate a sophisticated play on

FIGURE 10. *Jean Malouel,* Grande Pietà ronde, *ca. 1400, oil on wood, diam. 64.5 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre (photo: © The Louvre).*

FIGURE 11. *Jean Malouel,* Grande Pietà ronde, *detail, Paris, Musée du Louvre (photo: © The Louvre).*

the pictorial (re)animation of a dying or already dead body. If painters around 1300 were particularly interested in depicting the flow of blood and tracing its runlets,[55] by about 1400 they had come to focus on apparent changes in blood after it leaves a dying body. Different shades of red highlighted the processes of congealing and coagulating. In this way, artists introduced a temporal aspect to their works and pointed to blood's role in sustaining life (Figs. 10 and 11). To replicate their observation of these changes in the color of drying blood, painters like Jean Malouel chose different shades of red, a visual tactic also mentioned by Cenino Cennini.[56] Lorenzo Monaco went a step further and combined paint and lacquer, two completely different techniques, to produce certain shades of red and to secure his pigments on the panel. In his Crucifixion at Berlin, the two tones of red emphasize the pulsing blood, distinguishing between older and fresher blood. Particularly interested in the moments around the moment of death—the transition from life to death—painters highlighted a paradox: their painted bodies seem most alive when they are almost dead or have just crossed the border dividing life from the afterlife.

The artist of the Barcelona reliquary with Christ, however, used *rouge cler* for the representation of the relic's origin, the mantle of Christ, and not for Christ's blood. When he turned his attention to rendering that blood, however, he achieved another effect that deserves further attention: simulated blood is depicted by the blood smear on the silky shine of Christ's body, bringing to life the soft, inner shine characteristic of objects made of mother-of-pearl. The body of Christ is not made of enamel but of mother-of-pearl; therefore, the smear of blood, framed by the crenellations of the tower, is made of paint, not enamel.

In no preserved object had mother-of-pearl been used for such a precious object and worked with such a high degree of artistic skill. This innovative use of the material suggests that the vibrant Parisian market for New Year's Eve gifts demanded ever fresh novelties; in this case, trade from the East, which brought pearls and probably mother-of-pearl to Western Europe, encouraged the use of new materials.[57] Until the beginning of the fifteenth century, mother-of-pearl was rarely used in Europe. Since the European freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) produces only rather thin layers of mother-of-pearl, the thickness and the color of the material incorporated in the Barcelona reliquary indicates that its mother-of-pearl most likely originated in south Asia.[58] The piece used in the reliquary is both thicker and more precisely carved than any other pieces of mother-of-pearl preserved in older precious objects, like the reliquary of Břevnov dating from 1406, which includes several reliefs narrating the story

FIGURE 12. *Reliquary from St. Margaret, 1406, Prague-Břevnov (photo: © Ondřej Koupil–Benedictine Arch-Abbey Prague-Břevnov, the Czech Republic).*

of Christ's Passion on a smaller scale. They are less distinct in their details and are carved in flatter relief than the Barcelona object (Figs. 12 and 13).[59] In the case of the Barcelona reliquary, however, the rarely used material does not stage a mise-en-scène for an exotic foreign body but was instead sagaciously inserted into a web of established iconographic conventions. In an inspired fashion, the artist incorporated and modulated the material's unusual effects—chief among them, its pearlescent shimmer—according to his Christological subject matter.[60]

The hardness and thinness of mother-of-pearl requires special tools and extensive technical experience to carve.[61] Dur-

ing this period, Parisian goldsmiths and cutters of gemstones had the necessary tools, knowledge, and repertoire of motifs. Moreover, the latter group was actively involved in modifying the conventional iconography of the angel Pietà, as a comparison with a contemporary onyx cameo carved in Paris demonstrates (Fig. 14). There is, however, no older angel Pietà extant that shows Christ as he is displayed in the Barcelona reliquary, with one angel and open eyes, that is, as the living Christ.

What might have motivated an artist to modify the existing iconographic traditions for the *imago pietatis* and the angel Pietà to produce a result as truly ambivalent (regarding Christ's

FIGURE 13. *Reliquary from St. Margaret, 1406, detail, Prague-Břevnov (photo: © Ondřej Koupil–Benedictine Arch-Abbey Prague-Břevnov, the Czech Republic).*

FIGURE 14. *Pietà with One Angel, Paris, enamel, onyx, gold, 10.4 × 9.8 cm, 1400, Florence, Museo degli Argenti (photo: © Scala-Bildarchiv).*

position between life and death) as the reliquary with Christ made of mother-of-pearl? And why did the artist use mother-of-pearl in the realization of this deeply polyvalent work?

As mentioned before, Ohly's obsession with revealing the varieties of meaning attributed to pearls led him to sources not only by Late Antique Christian and medieval and postmedieval authors like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe but also by authors from India and China, with attention to a range of religious traditions, including Judaism. Belief in the pearl's origin in a marriage of heaven and earth is old and was widely disseminated from the second century, thanks to the *Physiologus*.[62] A true theology of the pearl's origin in heaven was developed in the early days of Christianity by Clement of Alexandria,[63] Origen,[64] and Ephraim the Syrian.[65] The vast scope of pearl lore surveyed by Ohly allowed him to describe the major semantic shifts that a single material—pearl—underwent over the course of time. For example, that the pearl was born from lightning, an idea widespread among Greek authors, became known to some Western scholars after the twelfth century. By contrast, the Islamic world's ascription of the pearl's creation to the tears that Adam and Eve wept over the death of Abel or to angelic tears remained unknown in the West.[66] Until the early modern period, the genesis of pearls was considered a kind of virginal conception, while during the modern period, the dominant account understood pearls to result from injuries suffered by mussels.

Ohly was fascinated by how Christian exegesis of nature (i.e., Christian readings of the pearl's origin) took the form of an allegoresis (i.e., a glossing of that process in terms of virginal conception): what is given by nature or is a product of a natural process becomes, as it were, a transparent nexus of different spheres of meaning. These meanings can be perceived either through methodological analysis or through a creative act of the mind.[67] For Ohly, this exegesis of nature through allegoresis culminates in a mode of active contemplation in which a thing, like the pearl, reveals its hidden meaning and, by doing so, offers a productive point of view on a certain set of meanings.[68] In short, this means that by looking at a substance from nature with a bit of imagination, one can project (*Hineinsehen*) a spiritual world into the natural world. Appropriated by this hermeneutic process, the thing itself becomes the core of interrelated spheres of meaning.

With this process of allegoresis in mind, the merging of two iconographic traditions—one showing Christ alive, the other dead—in the Barcelona reliquary acquires even more striking significance: the result is the effect of ambiguity. The beholder is facing a thing filled not with one meaning (*Dingbedeutung*) but with a whole array of (varying) meanings. To read such an object in the later Middle Ages would require the practice of allegoresis.[69]

The object's powerful ambiguity is also evident in the details of the artist's staging of Christ (Fig. 1). The iconographic type of the Man of Sorrows is a fictive scene, an *Andachtsbild*. Although a "timeless" image (not referring to a

specific moment during the Passion), in the Barcelona reliquary Christ's shimmering body seems almost weightless, indicated by the feathery wing holding him softly. In contrast to Christ, the angel, clearly rendered as a heavenly creature, nonetheless appears more present, real, and concrete than Christ owing to his opaque whiteness. Playing shimmering body against angelic opacity, the artist points to the moment when Christ's earthly body was glorified and on its way to heaven. Are his limbs already filled with eternal life and therefore full of shimmering luminescence? As the angel's finger draws the eye to the traces of fresh blood slightly smeared under its tight grip, it points to the paradox of animation: to the paradox of being dead, yet alive.

This productive ambiguity is realized in material terms, both by means of mother-of-pearl's aesthetic appearance and through its allusive invocation of the array of meanings to which it refers. In short, by joining its sphere as a thing with the sphere of meanings, the specific appearance of the matter used for the body of Christ—mother-of-pearl—renders the Man of Sorrows an already transfigured semblance. Furthermore, the material's color implies an allusion to the host, which, through its transformation from dry wafer into the body of Christ, incorporates a double reference to Christ's two natures, even if the scarcity of reliable sources about private devotion leaves it an open question as to how or if looking at such a reliquary would have been considered an act of a spiritual, or ocular, communion.[70] What can be said with certainty is that the specific appearance of the material used, mother-of-pearl, invited artistic play on the ambivalence that the body of Christ evoked in late medieval beholders. A medallion made of mother-of-pearl a few decades later that depicts Christ either just rising from death with his feet still within the tomb or as the Man of Sorrows presenting his wounds merits close comparison (Fig. 15).[71]

Preserved at Basel, the medallion presents the figure of Christ with his upper body turned almost 180 degrees to the right. His grieving mother has fully sunk down and is holding his lower right arm with a subtle grip. John's face, with deep rings under the eyes, likewise bears signs of strong grief. His left hand cradles his left cheek, alluding to deep melancholy, while his right hand reaches out to hold Christ's left elbow. Christ, however, is full of life with his eyes wide open. The twisted body, the gesture of his right hand that displays his side wound, the open mouth, and, last but not least, the shimmer of the material—mother-of-pearl—present him as alive. It remains unclear if this carved episode depicts Christ in the final moments of his earthly life or as having already assumed his heavenly body. Nor is this ambiguity peculiar to this particular object: it is shared by many artworks depicting the Man of Sorrows or the Pietà, works showing Christ at the threshold between earthly and heavenly presence.

The choice of mother-of-pearl for Christ's body in a range of objects (such as the Basel medallion and the Barcelona reliquary) is a little surprising if one considers the broad array of notions attributed to pearls in Late Antique and medieval

FIGURE 15. *Pendant, Lamentation of Christ, mother-of-pearl, 4.5 cm, Basel, Historisches Museum, inv. 1882.112 (photo: © Basel, Historisches Museum).*

writings. In Ohly's extensive study of pearls and their meanings, as known to ancient and medieval authors, one important aspect of pearl lore comes into play, an association that might have inspired the goldsmith's choice of materials. As Ohly pointed out, already for Clement of Alexandria pearls stood as an image for the Incarnation and, as a kind of corollary, for the Immaculate Conception. Pearls alluded to the topos of "the luminous logos-pearl in the flesh of a clam," as the early Christian author put it.[72] Conceived and growing within clams, pearls were the perfect fruit of the conjunction of the high and the low, of heaven and earth. As a metaphor and a symbol for the virginal conception of Christ, pearls were often used in treasure objects.[73] On the one hand, as figured by pearls, Mary could be allegoricallly assimilated both to Venus and to the circumstances of her birth from foam at the Cypriot seashore. On the other hand, the shimmering materiality of mother-of-pearl could be glossed in explicitly Christological terms. In the words of Clement of Alexandria,

A pearl is also the luminous and most pure Jesus who was born by the Virgin from divine thunderbolt. For, like the pearl, born in flesh and shell and dampness, a body is moist and extremely shiny and full of *pneuma*, so also

the God-Logos is spiritual light incarnate, sending His rays through a luminous and moist body.[74]

Both levels of the Barcelona reliquary (Christ's body above and the base in the shape of a tower with winged creatures punched into its side walls) are drawing on such references to the sea- and froth-born creatures. Mary—being conceived virginally and as giving birth to God's son—has therefore often been compared with the froth-born Venus. Furthermore, the sirens were considered daughters of the sea.[75] Equally, whether the creatures punched into the side walls of the reliquary's base are sirens or harpies,[76] a beholder closely examining them would have simultaneously encountered his or her reflection in the reflective surfaces of the reliquary juxtaposed with these monstrous inhabitants of the golden tower (Fig. 4). In this mirrored conjoining of the beholder and the miniature forms of metal-work, harpies might have called to mind the medieval legend that tells how the harpy eats men in the desert and then cries about them when she sees her mirror image. As a result of her divine likeness—manifest in her remorse—God takes pity on the harpy.[77] If one considers the reliquary's potential reference to this mythological conjunction of savagery and contrition seriously, the visual pun effected by the object's optical effects and iconographic configuration would seem to offer an allegorical lesson in the self-awareness of the sinful man. Or, with more immediacy and less allusive charge, one could read the two winged creatures as apotropaic forces watching over the tower. Indeed, if, as seems probable, genuine ambiguity was the goldsmith's goal, it is a mark of his success that the reliquary lends itself equally to both interpretations.

To ensure that none of these "meanings"—each relating to a different sphere rooted in the various materials used for making this object—was lost, the goldsmith created a stark inter-play between angels/Veronica, sirens/froth-born Venus, the mother-of-pearl material of Christ's body, and the blood of the earthly body of Christ. If one takes the metaphorical associations of mother-of-pearl seriously, the following reading of the gemstones seem obvious.[78] Together with the blue sapphires, the origin of the mother-of-pearl from a seashell suggestively evokes water, and the traces of blood on Christ's body, the red mantle, and the red spinel (between the heads) point to blood. Blood and water flowed from the wound in Christ's side when he died an earthly death, but he received his heavenly body during his Resurrection. This body is immortal, transcendent. Therefore, it is principally invisible and cannot be represented. The reliquary represents the skin of Christ and the blood of the Passion with the finest artistic media of its time, in a kind of

heavenly matter. The crenellation with pinnacles is often read as allusion to the Heavenly Jerusalem that will hover over earth on the last day, precisely at the point when humans will finally be able to see Christ again, in his new body.

In the Barcelona reliquary, the specific appearance of the mother-of-pearl used for the body of Christ, suggestively renders the Man of Sorrows as an already, if mysteriously, trans-figured semblance. The Man of Sorrows is a fictive scene, an *Andachtsbild*. Artists had started in this period to play around with iconographic conventions, although they do not go so far as to merge the Man of Sorrows with the Pietà, and present a living Christ showing his wounds as Mantegna does.[79] As the angel presents the wounded body of Christ at a certain point between the death and its resurrection, are his limbs already filled with eternal life and therefore full of glow?

In his case study of the constellation of diamond, male goat, and blood (*Diamant und Bocksblut*), Ohly privileged insights derived from a history of an allegorization toward the development of an analysis of *Einzeldingallegorese* (allego-rization of one thing), a mode of allegorical discourse distin-guished, for Ohly, by virtue of its manifold disclosures of secret knowledge about nature, culture, and thought. The intrinsic relationship between nature and art that Ohly discerned in such allegoresis encompasses the step from matter to meaning, from things to signification. The increasing interest evinced by art-ists in mother-of-pearl and blood during the later Middle Ages demonstrates that these shifts had tangible, productive results. This article also argues for the importance for the history of allegorical representation of objects whose representational strategies cultivate and deploy ambiguity in sophisticated and often irresolvable ways. Thus far, this history has been writ-ten almost exclusively on the basis of either literal or pictorial forms of representation. However, the Barcelona reliquary's play with the ambiguity of its represented figures (Christ and the winged creatures) is not only intrinsically related to con-temporary solutions in painting and the *Pietà with One Angel* (Fig. 14) but also to the metaphoric and mythical dimensions of the material used—mother-of-pearl—which adds a new level of playfully interlaced spheres to the production of meaning.

A close reading of an object that had previously evaded the art historical search for hidden meanings has shown how fertile the intertwining of two spheres of meaning, rooted in the matter of blood and of the pearl, were for medieval artists. And, last but not least, it shows how fruitful it can be for modern art historians to attempt to untangle these spheres of material and meaning, of *res* and *significatio*, and to analyze their impact on the generation of meaning from ambivalence.

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1. E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, trans. R. Manheim (New Haven, 1957), 3, 100.

2. F. Ohly, *Diamant und Bocksblut: Zur Traditions- und Auslegungsgeschichte eines Naturvorgangs von der Antike bis in die Moderne* (Berlin, 1976).

3. F. Ohly, *Die Perle des Wortes: Zur Geschichte eines Bildes für Dichtung* (Frankfurt, 2002). Only two articles dealing with the mythical heritage inspired by pearls had been published earlier, both as contributions to Festschrifts dedicated to female scholars: idem, "Tau und Perle: Ein Vortrag," in *Festschrift für Ingeborg Schröbler zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. D. Schmidtke and H. Schüppert (Tübingen, 1973), 406–23; and idem, "Die Geburt der Perle aus dem Blitz: Strukturen und Interpretationen," in *Strukturen und Interpretationen: Studien zur deutschen Philologie, gewidmet Blanka Horacek zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. A. Ebenbauer, F. P. Knapp, and P. Krämer in collaboration with K. Zatloukal (Vienna, 1974), 406–23. Both texts were reprinted in idem, *Schriften zur mittelalterlichen Bedeutungsforschung* (Darmstadt, 1977), 274–92 and 293–311.

4. While extensive scholarship has been dedicated to individual types of medieval allegory, few theoretical approaches treat the functions and nature of medieval allegory and *allegoresis*. Most literature on allegory is based on concepts for allegory developed in seventeenth-century literature—itself rooted in and inspired by the changes in allegories in paintings around 1600. The most influential theoretical approaches to the subject are by scholars working on allegory in literature, which had experienced strong influences by the allegorical paintings made around 1600, in other words, by Walter Benjamin, Paul de Man, Samuel Fletcher, and Anselm Haverkamp. For the recent attempt to investigate Auerbach's concept of *figura*, see C. Kiening and K. Mertens-Fleury, *Figura: Dynamiken von Zeichen und Zeiten* (Würzburg, forthcoming).

5. E. Auerbach, "Figura," *Archivum Romanicum*, 22 (1938), 436–89.

6. Ohly's analysis of legends and theological thought is based on the idea that *allegoresis* culminates in a mode of active contemplation, in which a thing like the pearl reveals its hidden meaning to both the artist or poet creating an allegory and the interpreter.

7. P. Valéry, "Eupalinos ou l'architecte précédé de L'ame de la danse" (Paris, 1923), first published in *Nouvelle revue française*, 90/1 (March 1921), 237–85; H. Blumenberg, "Sokrates und das 'objet ambigu': Paul Valérys Auseinandersetzung mit der Tradition der Ontologie des ästhetischen Gegenstandes," in *Epimeleia: Die Sorge der Philosophie um den Menschen; Helmut Kuhn zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. F. Wiedmann (Munich, 1964), 285–323; idem, "Die essentielle Vieldeutigkeit des ästhetischen Gegenstandes," in *Kritik und Metaphysik: Heinz Heimsoeth zum achtzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. F. Kaulbach and J. Ritter (Berlin, 1966), 174–79. More recent approaches are gathered in the special issue of *Critical Inquiry* about things, e.g., B. Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (2001), 1–22.

8. As mentioned before, there is still a gap in art historical research defining the nature of the medieval allegories from a theoretical point of view and how it differs from the medieval traditions of *figura*, *allegoria*, and exegetical practices.

9. F. Ohly, "Vom geistigen Sinn des Wortes," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 89 (1958), 1–13, at 4: "Jedes mit dem Wort gemeinte eine Ding hat selbst eine Menge von Bedeutungen, deren Zahl mit der Summe der Eigenschaften eines Dinges identisch ist. Denn dies ist der zweite Grundsatz, der wiederum nicht historisch verfolgt werden soll: Das Ding hat so viele Bedeutungen wieviel Eigenschaften es hat. . . .

Die bedeutungshaitigen Eigenschaften des Dinges sind gegeben in seiner äußeren Erscheinungsform (*visibilis forma*) und in seinem inneren Wesen (*invisibilis natura*)."

10. E. Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1923–31). This study in cultural philosophy was his most important work. It was widely read again after the end of World War II and was explicitly quoted by Ohly and Auerbach. For Cassirer, Kant, and Hegel, see G. Kreis, *Cassirer und die Formen des Geistes* (Berlin, 2010); T. Trummer, "Humanismus, Befreundung und Freiheit: Zu Panofsky, Cassirer und Heidegger," in *Festschrift für Götz Pochat: Zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. J. K. Eberlein (Vienna, 2007) 391–400; and P. Müller, *Ernst Cassirers "Philosophie der symbolischen Formen"* (Darmstadt, 2010).

11. Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, 1:207: "Aber es ist begreiflich, daß dieser neue Gesichtspunkt sich weit langsamer innerhalb der persönlichen Sphäre als innerhalb der bloßen Dingsphäre durchsetzt: Denn die erstere ist ihrem Ursprung und ihrem Wesen nach auf die Form der Heterogenität gestellt. Das 'Du' ist dem 'Ich' nicht gleichartig, sondern es tritt ihm als sein Gegensatz, als Nicht-Ich, gegenüber: Der 'Zweite' entsteht hier also nicht aus der einfachen Wiederholung."

12. Ibid., 3:326: "Schon jene Sphäre, die wir als die des Ausdrucks, und mehr noch die Sphäre, die wir als die der Darstellung bezeichneten, griff über diese Unmittelbarkeit hinaus—sofern beide nicht im Kreise der bloßen 'Präsenz' verharrten, sondern aus der Grundfunktion der 'Repräsentation' entsprangen. Aber erst innerhalb der reinen Bedeutungssphäre gewinnt diese Funktion nicht nur an Ausbreitung, sondern hier tritt erst das Spezifische ihres Sinnes in voller Klarheit und Schärfe hervor. Jetzt kommt es zu einer Art der Ablösung, der 'Abstraktion', die die Wahrnehmung und die Anschauung noch nicht kannten. Die Erkenntnis löst die reinen Beziehungen aus der Verflechtung mit der konkreten und individuell bestimmten Wirklichkeit der Dinge heraus, um sie sich rein als solche in der Allgemeinheit ihrer 'Form', in der Weise ihres Beziehungscharakters zu vergegenwärtigen."

13. Ibid., 2:32: "Die Anfänge der bildenden Kunst reichen vielmehr, wie es scheint, in eine Sphäre zurück, in der die Tätigkeit des Bildens selbst noch unmittelbar im magischen Vorstellungskreis wurzelt und auf bestimmte magische Zwecke gerichtet ist, in der somit das Bild selbst noch keineswegs selbständige, rein 'ästhetische' Bedeutung hat. Dennoch wird schon in der ersten Regung eigentlich künstlerischer Gestaltung im Stufengang der geistigen Ausdrucksform ein ganz neuer Anfang, ein neues 'Prinzip' erreicht. . . . Aus der Sphäre der Wirklichkeit, in der das mythische Bewußtsein, und aus der Sphäre der Bedeutung, in der das sprachliche Zeichen verharrt, sind wir nun in ein Gebiet versetzt, in dem gleichsam nur das reine 'Sein', nur die ihm eigene innewohnende Wesenheit des Bildes als | solche ergriffen wird."

14. Ibid., 2:51: "Wo wir ein Verhältnis der bloßen 'Repräsentation' sehen, da besteht für den Mythos, . . . vielmehr ein Verhältnis realer Identität. Das 'Bild' stellt die 'Sache' nicht dar—es ist die Sache; es vertritt sie nicht nur, sondern es wirkt gleich in ihr, so daß es sie in ihrer unmittelbaren Gegenwart ersetzt."

15. F. Ohly, "The Spiritual Sense of Words in the Middle Ages," trans. D. A. Wells, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 41/1 (2005), 18–37 at 21.

16. Ohly, "Vom geistigen Sinn des Wortes," 7: "Die Wortbedeutung erschöpft sich im Bezug auf das eine Ding. Das Ding aber hat eine Bedeutungswelt, die von Gott bis zum Teufel reicht und potentiell in jedem mit einem Wort bezeichneten Dinge vorliegt. Sie aktualisiert sich jeweils nur in einer durch den Kontext und die am Dinge herangezogene Eigenschaft bestimmten Richtung."

17. Ohly, "The Spiritual Sense of Words," 23.

18. Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, 3:443: "keine dieser Formen (mathematische, logische und physikalische Erkenntnisformen) für sich allein, sondern daß sie nur in ihrem Zusammenhang und ihrem

wechselseitigen Ineinandergreifen das objektive 'Sein' und die Sphäre der objektiv-theoretischen Geltung aufbauen—daß also keiner von ihnen eine schlechthin isolierte Wahrheit und Gültigkeit zukommt, sondern daß sie diese immer nur im Ganzen, im Stufengang und System der Erkenntnis besitzen."

19. Ohly, "The Spiritual Sense of Words," 25: "The Middle Ages as a general rule understands three stages of the spiritual sense of the word and generally denotes the first of these three steps as allegory. Above the foundation of the historical or literal sense of the word rises a superstructure—so called by the Middle Ages themselves—of the three levels of spiritual sense of Scripture: the allegorical, the tropological and the anagogical senses." Cassirer's somewhat condensed summary of the same point, reads differently; *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, 2:50: "Die mittelalterliche Philosophie hat in dieser Deutung einen dreifachen Stufengang, einen sensus allegoricus, einen sensus anagogicus und einen sensus mysticus unterschieden."

20. Auerbach, "Figura," 459: "Damit erhält zugeich die Lehre vom vierfachen Schriftsinn einen weit stärker realistischen und geschichtlich konkreten Charakter, indem drei von den vier Bedeutungen konkret ereignishaften, miteinander verknüpften Sinn gewinnen, und nur eine rein(!) moralisch-allegorisch bleibt, wie Augustin dies in der Schrift de gen. ad litt. I, 1, auseinandersetzt: *In libris autem omnibus sanctis intueri oportet, quae ibi aeterna intimentur* (Weltende und ewiges Leben, anagogischer Sinn), *quae facta narrentur* (wörtlich-geschichtlicher Sinn), *quae futura praenuntientur* (Figuralsinn im eneren Verstande, im AT die Realprophezei(!)ungen des Erscheinens Christi). *Quae agenda praecipiantur vel moneantur* (moralischer Sinn)."

21. Richard of St. Victor, *Excerptiones* 2.3: "*De scripturae divinae triplici modo tractandi*," Migne, *PL* 177, 205B; see also appendix to Hugo von St. Viktor, *Speculum ecclesiae*, Migne, *PL* 177, 375B; and Ohly, "Vom geistigen Sinn des Wortes," 3–4.

22. Auerbach, "Figura," 484–89; and D. Blume, "Die Argumentation der Bilder: Zur Entstehung einer städtischen Malerei," in *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit*, ed. H. Belting and Blume (Munich, 1989), 13–21.

23. The history of the development of allegory in medieval art is still unwritten; important single aspects of this development are dealt with in A. Dunlop, "Allegory, Painting and Petrarch," *W&I*, 24 (2008), 77–91; W. Freytag, "Allegorie, Allegorese," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, ed. G. Ueding et al., 10 vols. (Tübingen, 1992–), 1:330–92; *Studien zur Geschichte von Exegese und Hermeneutik*, vol. 2, *Significatio*, ed. R. Forster and P. Michel (Zurich, 2007); N. D. Guynn, *Allegory and Sexual Ethics in the High Middle Ages* (New York, 2007); W. Haug, ed., *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie, Symposion Wolfenbüttel 1978* (Stuttgart, 1979); L. Hodne, "Faces of Time: Allegories of Change and Fortune in Petrarch's 'Trionfi' and Their Illustrations," in *Rhetoric, Theatre and the Arts of Design: Essays Presented to Roy Eriksen*, ed. C. Lapraik Guest (Oslo, 2008) 69–89; D. Innes, "Metaphor, Simile, and Allegory as Ornaments of Style," in *Metaphor, Allegory and the Classical Tradition: Ancient Thought and Modern Revisions*, ed. G. Boys-Stones (Oxford, 2003), 7–27; H. R. Jauß, "Form und Auffassung der Allegorie in der Tradition der 'Psychomachia,'" in *Medium Aevum Vivum: Festschrift für Walther Bulst*, ed. I. Schaller and D. Schaller (Heidelberg, 1960), 179–206; C. Meier, "Überlegungen zum gegenwärtigen Stand der Allegorie-Forschung: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Mischformen," *FS*, 10 (1976), 1–69; G. W. Most, "Cornutus and Stoic Allegoresis: A Preliminary Report," in vol. 2/1, *Sprache und Literatur (Allgemeines zur Literatur des 2. Jahrhunderts und einzelne Autoren der trajanischen und frühhadrianischen Zeit)*, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, ed. W. Haase, 6 vols. (Berlin, 1989–92), 2014–65; É. Myara Kelif, "De l'Éden païen au paradis terrestre: L'allégorie et le mythe des âges de l'humanité," in *Le noyau et l'écorce: Les arts de l'allegorie, XVe–XVIIe siècles*, ed. C. Nativel et al. (Paris, 2009), 165–87; Ohly, *Schriften zur mittelalterlichen Bedeutungsforschung*; N. Staubach, "Signa utilia—signa

inutilia: Zur Theorie gesellschaftlicher und religiöser Symbolik bei Augustinus und im Mittelalter," *FS*, 36 (2002), 19–49; and C.-P. Warncke, *Symbol, Emblem, Allegorie: Die zweite Sprache der Bilder* (Cologne, 2005).

24. C. S. Wood, "Allegory and Prophecy," in *Die Oberfläche der Zeichen: Bildallegorien der frühen Neuzeit in Italien und die Hermeneutik visueller Strukturen*, ed. K. Krüger et al. (Munich, 2009). An example is Jakob Masen, *Speculum Imaginum Veritatis Occultae* (Cologne, 1681) 9: "Aenigmatum figurae, vel cohaerere inter se, ut Emblematum, possunt; et tunc nullo inscribendae, aut subscribendae erunt Lemmate, ut discrimen appareat: vel dissolutae esse poterunt; et tunc ab Emblemate quidem per figuras ipsas, ab hieroglyphicis vero nonnumquam soli Expositione, non metaphorice, sed per signa adhibita, discernendae erunt. Figurae aenigmatis se solis clarae, compositione vero rara obscuritatem involvente gratiores sunt, nullam tamen a remota, aut audaci allegoria laudem merentur."

25. London, British Library, MS Royal 6 E IX, text (*Regia Carmina*) by Convenevole da Prato (1270/75–1338). Address in verse to Robert of Anjou, king of Naples, from the town of Prato in Tuscany (the *Regia Carmina*). The manuscript was illustrated in central Italy (Tuscany), ca. 1335–ca. 1340, attributed to Pacino di Bonaguida by A. Labriola, "Pacino di Bonaguida," in *Dizionario biografico dei miniatori italiani: Secoli IX–XVI*, ed. M. Bollati (Milan, 2004), 841. According to Pfändtner, "Als Autor des Textes gilt Convenevole da Prato, Professor für Grammatik und Rhetorik, der als erster Lateinlehrer Francesco Petrarcas bekannt ist." Two other illuminated copies are preserved: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Ser. n. 2639 der; and Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Magliabecchiana, MS ci vii cod. 17, both made earlier at Naples or Bologna. See K.-G. Pfändtner, *Das Lobgedicht auf König Robert von Anjou: Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe des Codex Series nove 2639 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek Wien; Kommentar* (Graz, 2008). For the opening miniatures, see ibid., 30–32. The second paragraph includes quotations by Augustine regarding the virtues and vices and the seven liberal arts.

26. The apocryphal text tells that Enoch was carried into the Garden of Eden; see Enoch, Jubilees 4:23, *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text*, ed. J. C. Van der Kam, 2 vols. (Louvain, 1989) (= Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 510–11).

27. Auerbach, "Figura," 480.

28. In his critique of Auerbach's dichotomy (figural/allegorical), G. B. Ladner emphasizes the importance of other areas of knowledge and refers to other precedessors, e.g., scientific illustrations; see Ladner, "Medieval and Modern Understanding of Symbolism: A Comparison," *Speculum*, 54 (1979), 223–56, here 237.

29. Auerbach, "Figura," 477: "Nicht ganz deutlich ist es mir, wie weit die ästhetischen Vorstellungen figural bestimmt sind."

30. Despite the fact that a significant number of religious objects made of mother-of-pearl have survived, some from the fourteenth century and a multitude of objects since the mid-fifteenth century, the body of scholarship on these objects is relatively small. The production of objects made from mother-of-pearl is documented at Žirovnice since the middle of the thirteenth century. An early mention is found in an inventory at Hildesheim, describing the treasure received by Conrad Schade on 15 March 1409: "matrem perlarum cum reliquiis." See R. Döbner, "Schatzverzeichnis des Doms zu Hildesheim aus dem Jahre 1409," *Anzeiger für Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit*, N.F., 25 (1878), 207–13, at 207–8. In late medieval German, mother-of-pearl is described with the terms *perlînmuoter*, *perilmuoter*, or *berlinmuter*, while the expression in the Romanic languages goes back to the Persian *nakar*, from which comes, e.g., the French *nacre*. The following studies have contributed to a corpus of the extant works: A. Büttner, *Perlmutt: Von der Faszination eines göttlichen Materials* (Petersberg, 2000); idem, "Spätgotische Perlmuttreliefs in den Museen Kölns," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, 61 (2000),

69–98; S. Husemann, *Pretiosen persönlicher Andacht: Bild- und Materialsprache spätmittelalterlicher Reliquienkapseln (Agnus Dei) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Materials Perlmutter* (Weimar, 1999); and G. E. Pazaurek, *Perlmutter* (Berlin, 1937). Of the cited studies, Husemann considers only objects made in the 1440s and later, whereas Büttner includes some older objects. The PhD thesis by Samantha Darell at the Courtauld Institute, London, is not yet published. The largest number of objects is covered in the catalogue of M. Slatner-Prückl, "Spätgotische Perlmutterschnitzarbeiten," 6 vols. (Dissertation, Universität Salzburg, 1990). Two exhibitions have focused on mother-of-pearl: Amsterdam, Gemeentemuseum Arnhem, *Pearl Perlmuter: Beeldhouwster* (Arnhem, 1988), ed. M. Westen; and Stuttgart, Württembergisches Landesgewerbemuseum, *Perlmutter-Ausstellung* (Stuttgart, 1929). For the Antique, Late Antique, and early medieval use and distribution of pearls, see *Perlen: Archäologie, Techniken, Analysen; Akten des Internationalen Perlensymposiums in Mannheim vom 11. bis 14. November 1994*, ed. U. von Freeden and A. Wieczorek (Bonn, 1997). Ohly is following in the footsteps of Hermann Usener and his focus on the pearl as motif in written sources: Usener, "Die Perle: Aus der Geschichte eines Bildes," in *Theologische Abhandlungen, Karl Weizsäcker zum siebzigsten Geburtstage (1892) gewidmet*, ed. A. Harnack (Freiburg, 1892), 201–13. Earlier works on the history of the meaning of pearls are O. Casel, "Die Perle als religiöses Symbol," *Benediktinische Monatschrift*, 6 (1924), 321–27; W. W. Frerichs, "Perle," in *Biblisch-Historisches Handwörterbuch*, ed. B. Reicke and L. Rost, 4 vols. (Göttingen, 1962–79), 1422 ff.; H. Leclercq, "Perle," in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. F. Cabrol, 30 vols. (Paris, 1907–53), 14/I (1939), 379; A. Lipinsky, "Perle," in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, 8 vols. (Rome, 1970–76), 3:393–94; and J. Schildenberger, "Perlen," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Freiburg, 1963), 8:279. See also M. Eliade, *Image et symboles: Essais sur le symbolisme magico-religieux* (Paris, 1952), 190–98.

31. The theft of the object was made public a year later; Josep Massot, "Robada una valiosa joya gótica de la caja fuerte del MNAC," *La Vanguardia* (Barcelona), 28 March 1992, 41. The existing photographs provide a sufficient visual record of the object.

32. See F. Español, *El gòtic català* (Manresa, 2002), 316–17.

33. The inventory has partially survived in a 1590 transcript written by a superior of the monastery, D. Jaime Juan Moreno, published in 1890 with other documents regarding the Santuario de Santa Maria de Sijena; D. J. J. Moreno, "Jerusalem Religiosa," Sigena, archive of the monastery, fol. 59: "Un pedazo de la tunica de N.S.J. Regalo de D. Pedro de Aragón, Conde de Urgell, padre de la religiosa D. Isabel de Aragón."

34. The monastery of Santa María de Sigena is located at Villanueva de Sigena, Aragon (Spain). It was erected between 1183 and 1208, by order of Queen Sancha of Castile, the wife of Alfonso II, and served as a monastery for nuns from the richest families of Aragon. It was a basilica with one nave over a Latin cross, with three apses. It flourished in the fourteenth century thanks to the royal support. State confiscations deprived it of most of its revenues in 1835, and it was abandoned in 1837. During the Spanish civil war it suffered severely in a fire of 1936 and was restored only in the 1950s.

35. J.-F. Ainaud i Escudero, "Dos portapaus de cap al 1400: El de Pere d'Urgell I el de Violant de Bar," *Butleti del Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya*, 2 (1994), 127–43.

36. See Husemann, *Pretiosen*, 1999.

37. To date, the object has been described as *pax* or *pacificale*, a container for the *pax* kissed in the Mass. An entry in the inventory of possessions of Jean, duc de Berry describes a comparable object made of enamel, given by Madame de Bourbon as a present to her husband, as *petit portepaix/pourtepaix*. J. Guiffrey, *Inventaires de Jean, duc de Berry (1401–1416)*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1894–96), 1:47, no. 103: "Item, un petit portepaix d'or ouquel a une Veronique d'esmail et par dessus une croix garnie de trois balaiz, un saphir et une perle, et par dessoubz un lieu pour mectre reliques; lequel pourtepaix madame de Bourbon donna à Monseigneur aux estrinnes le premier jour de janvier mil CCCC et douze." Therefore, "pax" would be an adequate, contemporary term; however, the combination of a pax and a relic and/or a reliquary would have been unusual. For the use of the term *portepaix/pourtepaix* or *portapau* (Catalan), see F. Godefroy, "Portepaix," in *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue français et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècle*, 10 vols. (Paris, 1880–95), 6:316. Ainaud i Escudero, "Dos portapaus," describes the object as *portapau* (Catalan). For her help in this matter I would like to thank Aden Kumler.

38. B. Büttner, "New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, ca. 1400," *AB*, 83 (2001), 598–615.

39. Points of comparison include the use of *pointillé*, same type of gemstones, the *émail en ronde bosse*, the use of *rouge cler*, and the ambivalence of its function.

40. Similar objects were used as table dishes and decoration. As Christina Normore's contribution to this issue demonstrates, these objects could initially have had a more profane use as a saltceller and only later were transformed into a reliquary.

41. Similar winged mythical creatures can be found in the marginal decorations of books of hours and other manuscripts. Harpies had the reputation of being invulnerable; however, for long periods of the Middle Ages they were little known, whereas sirens had been described by Isidore and were included in bestiaries. This changed when Thomas of Cantimpré wrote his encyclopedic tract, the *Liber de rerum naturis*, in which he describes harpies within his vast account of birds. See Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de naturis rerum*: "Arpia avis est, ut dicit Adelinus, in remotis mundi partibus in loco, qui Strapedes dicitur in solitudine iuxta mare Jonicum. Rabida fame fere semper insaciabilis est. Ungues habet aduncos et ad discerpendum et rapiendum semper paratos. Hec faciem tantum habet humanam, sed in se nichil virtutis humane. Nam ferocitate grassatur ultra humanum modum. Hec primum hominem quem viderit in deserto dicitur occidere. Inde cum fortuitu aquas invenerit et faciem suam in aquis fuerit contemplata, mox sui similem hominem occidisse perspiciens tristatur immodice, et hoc aliquando usque ad mortem, plangitque omni tempore vite sue. Hec avis aliquando domesticata loquitur docta humana voce, sed ratione caret." See Thomas von Cantimpré, *Liber de naturis rerum*, Redaktion III (Thomas III). Text der Handschrift M1 (München, BSB, Clm 2655), verbessert nach den Handschriften C1 (Cambridge, Mass., U.L., Riant 19), Me[1] (Melk, Stiftsbibl., 1707), Li[1] (Lilienfeld, Stiftsbibl., 206) und Kl[2] (Klosterneuburg, Stiftsbibl., 1060), erarbeitet von der Projektgruppe B2 des SFB 226 Würzburg-Eichstätt unter Leitung von Benedikt Konrad Vollmann.

42. The technique of punching with dots (*pointillé*, *Punktpunzierung)* had been used by goldsmiths at Paris since 1350. It gained particular popularity when used in combination with *émail en ronde bosse* about 1400; N. Stratford, "*De opere punctili*: Beobachtungen zur Technik der Punktpunzierung um 1400," in Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseums, *Das Goldene Rössl: Ein Meisterwerk der Pariser Hofkunst um 1400* (Munich, 1995), ed. R. Baumstark and R. Eikelmann, 131–46.

43. F. Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1958–61), 1:210, no. 892. For Manuel's travel to the West, see J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1969)*, 123–99.

44. H. Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires," *DOP*, 58 (2004), 310–11: "In early October, Manuel's envoy Alexios Branas appeared in person before the king, carrying a chrysobull and two more relics, namely, a fragment of the bluish tunic of Christ that had healed the woman with the issue of blood and the sponge of Christ's Passion. From the court of Aragon, Alexios Branas continued on to the court of King Charles III of Navarre, where he arrived probably in early 1401 with another chrysobull, a particle of the True Cross, and a piece of the same tunic of Christ that King Martin had already received."

45. B. Fricke, "Reliquien und Reproduktion: Zur Präsentation der Passionsreliquien aus der Sainte-Chapelle (Paris) im 'Reliquiario del Libretto' (Florenz) von 1501," in *Reproduktion: Techniken und Ideen von der Antike bis heute; Eine Einführung*, ed. J. Probst (Berlin, 2011), 34–55, at 41.

46. R. Eikelmann, "Franko-flämische Emailplastik des Spätmittelalters" (Dissertation, Munich, 1984), 34: "*Rouge cler* wurde, so zeigen nicht nur die erhaltenen Objekte, sondern auch die Glaskäufe im Auftrag von Philipp dem Kühnen, Herzog von Burgund, in der 2. Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts bereits eingesetzt. . . . Der Herzog beauftragte 1365 seinen Schatzmeister, an Josset de Halle, seinen in Dijon ansässigen Hofgoldschmied, '15 dernier d'or frans' zu bezahlen, damit dieser zur Ausführung eines Auftrags rotes, durchsichtiges Email kaufe: 'pour en schepter du rouge cler, pour luy en faire un ceinture qu'il luy à commendée."

47. A 9, B 158, C 110, in J. Stratford, *The Bedford Inventories: The Worldly Goods of John, Duke of Bedford, Regent of France (1389–1435)* (London, 1993), for the date, 55.

48. This argument is further developed in the third chapter of my forthcoming book, B. Fricke, *Beautiful Genesis: Creation, Procreation and Mimesis in Late Medieval Art*.

49. The studies of Eikelmann, *Flämische Emailplastik*, and of E. Steingräber and T. Müller have put together almost all of the preserved objects. See E. Steingräber, "Studien zur venezianischen Goldschmiedekunst des 15. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 10/3 (1962), 147–92; idem and T. Müller, "Die Französische Goldemailplastik um 1400," *Münchner Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, 3. Folge, 5 (1954), 29–79; H. Trnek, "Burgund oder Venedig? Zur entwicklungsgeschichtlichen Stellung des burgundischen Emails," in *Naturwissenschaften in der Kunst: Beitrag der Naturwissenschaften zur Erforschung und Erhaltung unseres Erbes*, ed. M. Schreiner (Vienna, 1995), 37–47; and idem, "'. . . ein köstlich creuz, so von dem haus Burgundi herkommt': Fragen zum Vorbesitz der Esztergomer Kalvarie, nebst einigen Vorbemerkungen zu den Anfängen des Maleremails im Dienst der Heraldik," in *Studien zur europäischen Goldschmiedekunst des 14. bis 20. Jahrhunderts (Festschrift für Helmut Seling)*, ed. R. Eikelmann and A. Schommers (Munich, 2001), 201–20.

50. This might be seen as a reference to Scholastic debates about the possibility of a separation of the dead body from the *veritas divinitatis* during the *triduum*; C. W. Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, 2007), 118–19.

51. In the second half of the fourteenth century several bleeding hosts occurred in various parts of Europe. In some cases they were related to Jewish-Christian conflicts (e.g., at Bad Wilsnack in 1383 or in 1369, when Wenzel of Luxemburg accused Jews of making bloodstained hosts in Brussels); ibid.

52. Pope Urban IV had sent the bishop of Orvieto to Bolsena to verify the miracle and to bring the corporale, its visible (bloodstained) proof, to Orvieto. The story of this translation is illustrated in the frescoes by Ugolino di Prete painted in 1357–64 in Orvieto. They show the story of the miracle, the translation of the corporale, and the miracles of holy hosts: e.g., St. Gregory elevating the host; the host transforming into a little boy to convert a unbeliever; the story of a fisherman who fed a host to a fish, was sorry for it, and received it three years later unchanged; St. Hugo who on his deathbed rejected an unconsecrated host and, after receiving a consecrated host, was carried to heaven; the story of a Jewish boy who received communion and survived being put into an oven by his own parents; and the story of the host transforming into a little boy during confrontations between Saracens and Christians.

53. P. Dal Poggetto, *Ugolino di Vieri: Gli smalti di Orvieto* (Florence, 1965).

54. Combined with rubies for the drops of fresh blood, *rouge cler* was also applied to the wound above John's eye on the plate in the treasury of the cathedral of Genoa. The artist, working about 1400, reused an antique plate. The plate uses gold and *émail en ronde bosse* to show a small head of John the Baptist. It was commissioned by a Valois prince and donated to the cathedral of Genoa by Pope Innocent VIII, from Genoa, who had inherited it from John Balue, a French cardinal. For the wound about the eyebrow, see H. Arndt and R. Kroos, "Zur Ikonographie der Johannesschüssel," *Aachener Kunstblätter*, 38 (1969), 242–328, at 301–6; and I. Combs Stuebe, "The 'Johannisschüssel': From Narrative to Reliquary to Andachtsbild," *Marsyas*, 14 (1968/69), 1–16. For the iconography of such heads and changes in the iconography, see B. Baert, "A Head on a Platter: The 'Johannesschüssel' or the Image of the Mediator and Precursor," *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten*, 2003 (2006), 8–41; idem, "'The Head of St John the Baptist on a Tazza' by Andrea Solario (1507): The Transformation and the Transition of the Johannesschüssel from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance," *Critica d'arte*, 29/31 (2007), 60–82; idem, "Le plateau de Jean-Baptiste: L'image du médiateur et du précurseur," *Graphé*, 16 (2007), 91–125. For the functions of these plates with the head of John the Baptist and their use as reliquaries, see Arndt and Kroos, 252–60; and for their use in plays, most recently G. Geml, *Frühe Johannesschüsseln* (Diplomarbeit, University of Vienna, 2009), 43–57.

55. In sculpture we can observe a similar obsession with blood. A closer look at the Roettgen Pietà reveals the artist's interest in heaping up layers of coagulated blood, carved out of matter (wood) like the petals of a flower around the side wound; see Fricke, *Beautiful Genesis*, chap. 3.

56. Cennino Cennini, *Libro dell'arte o trattato della pittura*, chaps. 148–49, CXLVIII–CXLIX [170–71], translated as Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook: The Italian "Il Libro dell' Arte,"* trans. D. V. Thompson (New York, 1933). "And likewise, when you have got them almost covered, make another still lighter flesh color from this light one, until you get the major accents of the reliefs up to straight white lead. And mark out all the outlines with dark sinoper and a little black, tempered; and this will be called 'sanguine.' And manage the hair in the same way, but not so that it looks alive, but dead, with several grades of verdaccio. . . . To do, that is, to paint, a wounded man, or rather a wound, take straight vermilion; get it laid in wherever you want to do blood. Then take a little fine lac, well tempered in the usual way, and shade all over this blood, either drops or wounds, or whatever it happens to be."

57. Mother-of-pearl is the interior or middle layer of shells. In contrast to the post-Columbian period, the early trade with south Asian regions and the trade in pearls from the Indian Ocean are much less researched; A. R. Lewis, "Les marchands dans l'Océan Indien," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, 54/4 (1976), 941–74; M. Mollat, *Sociétés et compagnies de commerce en Orient et dans l'Océan Indien: Actes du VIIIe Colloque international d'Histoire maritime (Beyrouth, 5–10 septembre 1966)* (Paris, 1970). Robert-Henri Bautier (Bautier, "Les relations économiques des occidentaux avec les pays d'orient, au moyen âge: Points de vue et documents," in ibid., 264–331) has shown how Near Eastern cities functioned as transit sites for the trade between Europe and Asia; e.g., Beirut and Alexandria were the major transit sites, from which several Catalan ships departed to Europe (according to documents from the Aragon archives). One can differentiate between two main routes: one from Kollam/Quilon in India via Basra, Baghdad, and Aleppo to Venice; and the other from Calcutta via Aden, Cairo, and Alexandria, also to Venice; K. S. Matthew, *Portugese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century* (New Delhi, 1983), 10 ff. Other locations from which ships departed for Aleppo, Cairo, or Alexandria were Genoa, Marseille, and Aigues-Mortes. Ships carried spices, color pigments, and other valuables from the Orient to European cities. Bautier, 296: "Dans les quatre années 1395, 1399, 1404, 1405, Venise envoie sur Beyrouth une muda annuelle de 3 à 5 galées qui y enlèvent de 200 à 400 tonnes d'épices fort diverses: en tout, elles chargent en quatre ans 439 tonnes de poivre, 460 de gingembre, 75 de girofle, 55 de cannelle, 15 d'indigo, 6 de noix de muscade, et une cinquantaine de tonnes d'épices variées, outre de la soie et des perles (dont on compte 50 sazi, soit 1 marc vénetien, en 1404)."

In some of Bautier's sources, in addition to pearls, rubies and emeralds were also part of the imported goods. K.-H. Spieß, "Asian Objects and Western European Court Culture in the Middle Ages," in *Artistic and Cultural Exchanges between Europe and Asia, 1400–1900: Rethinking Markets, Workshops and Collections*, ed. M. North (Aldershot, 2010), 9–28. Specifically regarding the trade in pearls, for the later period, see A. Lipinsky, "Exotische Meermuscheln in der Europäischen Goldschmiedekunst des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts," *Alte und Moderne Kunst*, 151 (1977), 1–13; K. Siebenhühner, "Precious Things in Motion: Luxury and the Circulation of Jewels in Mughal India," in *Luxury in Global Perspective: Commodities and Practices, c. 1600–2000*, ed. B.-S. Grewe and K. Hofmeester (Oxford, 2011), 327–44; and idem, "Kostbare Güter globaler Herkunft: Der Juwelenhandel zwischen Indien und Europa," in *Kultureller Austausch: Bilanz und Perspektiven der Frühneuzeitforschung*, ed. M. North (Cologne, 2009), 327–42. For the use of pearls during the earlier period, see W. Erdmann and H. Nitsch, "Spätmittelalterliche und frühneuzeitliche Perlen aus einer Kloake der Fronerei auf dem Schrangen zu Lübeck," *Lübecker Schriften zur Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte*, 12 (1986), 137–65; and K. Szilágyi, "Perlentypen aus dem X.–XII. Jahrhundert in Ungarn und ihre archäologische Bedeutung," *Památky archeologické*, 85/2 (1994), 75–110.

58. The piece employed is 6.4 cm long, 4.3 cm wide, and up to 0.4 cm thick. Most likely the origin of the pieces of mother-of-pearl incorporated into the object was a sea pearl mussel (*Meleagrina margaritifera L.* or *Pinctada Margaritifera*), which can be found in the Persian Gulf as well as in the Indian Ocean in depths from 6 to 50 meters, or a green ormer (*Haliotis tuberculata*) from the Mediterrean Sea; Büttner, *Perlmutt*, 11–12. The main areas for pearl fishing were between the Indian mainland and Sri Lanka or in the Persian Gulf; O. Mugler, *Edelsteinhandel im Mittelalter und im 16. Jahrhundert mit Excursen über den Levante- und asiatischen Handel überhaupt* (Dissertation, Munich, 1928), 20 and 33. A few nautilus shells are recorded in European medieval treasuries; the oldest dates to the turn of the fourteenth century. J. Rasmussen, "Mittelalterliche Nautilusgefässe," in *Studien zum europäischen Kunsthandwerk: Festschrift Yvonne Hackenbroch*, ed. Rasmussen (Munich, 1983), 45–61. The oldest preserved artifact is a lid matching the shape of a nautilus bowl made for Philip IV, ca. 1300; ibid., 46–47; and Husemann, *Pretiosen*, 33. A drawing of a nautilus bowl in the shape of a cock is dated to 1340–60; see H.-U. Mette, *Der Nautiluspokal: Wie Kunst und Natur miteinander spielen* (Munich, 1995), 149–50.

59. For a bibliography on the Reliquary of St. Margaret (*relikviar sv. Markety*) at Prag-Breunau (Břevnov), at the treasury of the Benedictine monastery of St. Adalbert and St. Margaret, see New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia, 1310–1437* (New York, 2005), ed. B. Drake Boehm, F. Jiří, et al., cat. 129, pp. 288–90, by P. Barnet.

60. Büttner, *Perlmutt*, 11: "Der den Körper der Weichtiere umhüllende Hautmantel besitzt zahlreiche Drüsen, die Glykoproteine ausscheiden, die 'Conchyn' genant werden und als Periostracum polymerisieren. 'Durch ebenfalls ausgeschiedene Phenoloxidasen werden Ortho-Chinone aufgebaut, welche die Proteine vernetzen und dann eine Skelerotisierung des Periostracums bewirken. Im Schutz dieser unlöslichen organischen Schicht kann die Kristallisation von Calcium karbonat erfolgen.' Das hierfür benötigte 'Calcium stammt bei den Seewasserformen fvor allem aus dem Wasser." He quotes H.-U. Koecke, *Allgemeine Zoologie*, vol. 1, *Bau und Funktion tierischer Organismen* (Berlin, 1982), here 401.

61. Depending on its source, the hardness of mother-of-pearl (the Moh'sche Härte) varies from 2.5 to 4. The European pearl mussel was called *Margaritifera* by Carl v. Linné and named *Margaritana* by the Danish scientist Christian Frederik Schumacher in 1817. Linné knew this mussel ever since his travel to Lapland in 1732, upon which voyage he observed a pearl fisher and made a sketch. For his later attempts to produce pearls like the Chinese, he used the mussels living in rivers (*Unio pictorum*).

62. N. Henkel, *Studien zum Physiologus im Mittelalter* (Tübingen, 1976); and F. J. Carmody, *Physiologus Latinus: Éditions préliminaires versio B* (Paris, 1939).

63. Clement of Alexandria describes Christ as the scintillating logos-pearl in the flesh of the mussel/Mary; Ohly, "Die Geburt der Perle," 296.

64. Origen interprets the light of the pearls in the words of the prophets as being revealed in its full clarity and brightness in the Logos Christ; see Ohly, *Die Perle des Wortes*, 61–63.

65. Ohly, "Die Geburt der Perle aus Dem Blitz," in *Die Perle des Wortes*, 33–52. Ephraim the Syrian argues that the pearls should explain their origin themselves (and disprove the heretics against whom he argues). He describes the pearl as an example of the union of two natures (as in Christ), quoted in ibid., 297: "Die Perle ist ein Stein aus Fleisch geboren, denn aus dem Schalteer kommt sie hervor. Wer kann da länger der Tatsache Glauben versagen, daß auch Gott aus einem Leibe als Mensch geboren worden? Jene entstehung nicht durch Begattung der Schnecken, sondern durch eine Mischung des Blitzes und des Wassers: also ist auch Christus empfangen in der Jungfrau ohne Fleischeslust, indem der Heilige Geist aus dem gemischten Stoffe der Jungfrau für Gott die körperliche Ergänzung herstellte. Die Perle wird weder als Schnecke geboren, noch tritt sie wie ein Geist in Scheindasein hervor. . . , sie wird vielmehr in wesenhafter Existenz (Hypostasis) geboren, ohne darum selbst eienn anderen Stein zu zeugen." Ohly quotes the second part of the passage from Usener, "Die Perle," 221 and n1 (Greek original): "So ist auch der Sohn Gottes in wesenhafter Existenz und nicht in der Scheinform geboren. Dieser Edelstein hat an zwei Naturen teil, um auf Christus zu weisen, der als Wort Gottes aus Maria als Mensch geboren wurde. . . . Er hatte eine vollkommene Doppelnatur, um nicht beide zu verlieren. . . . Das Fleisch ist von der Gottheit ungeschieden, und die menschliche Natur hat nicht die göttliche Natur belastet. . . . Kein Leib wurde einem anderen Leib verbunden, sondern der Mensch mit der Gottheit vereint."

66. Ohly, "Tau und Perle," 276.

67. Ibid., 289: "In der schon im zweiten und dritten Jahrhundert bei Origines und im 'Physiologus' ausgedacht vorliegenden christlichen Naturauslegung in Form der Allegorese wird das Naturgegebene durchsichtig gemacht auf Bedeutungsdimensionen hin, die durch ebenso methodische wie schöpferische Geistesbewegungen gefunden und erschlossen werden."

68. Ibid.: "Die spirituelle Transparenz des Seienden in der Natur ergibt sich durch eine tätige Betrachtung, die dem vordergründigen Ding durch Aufdeckung seines hintergründigen Sinns die produktive Perspektive auf in ihm angelegte Bedeutungshorizonte hinzuverleiht."

69. This interpretative reading would conflate the meanings adduced from the nature of the pearl (its origin in layers) and some, but not all, of the meanings attributed to the pearl in the textual tradition.

70. Evidence about this practice in written sources is scarce and vague. It is hard to say if such a practice, repeatedly claimed in recent literature as a late medieval spiritual practice, ever existed. I would follow C. M. A. Caspers' estimation, that piety centered on the Eucharist included mental preparation for communion and an inner act to receive and "fulfill" the communion; however, that does not automatically mean that Eucharistic piety meant just looking at the conscecrated host. Furthermore, various magical effects were attributed to looking at the host, the so-called eye-communion; S. Blick and R. Tekippe, eds., *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 2005), here, 1:597; C. M. A. Caspers, "*Magister Consensus*: Wessel Gansfort (1419–1489) und die geistliche Kommunion," in *Northern Humanism in European Context, 1469–1625*, ed. F. Akkerman, A. J. Vanderjagt, and A. H. Laan (Leiden, 1999), 82–98, here, 86; and idem, *De eucharistische vroomheid en het feest van sacramentsdag* (Leuven, 1992), here, 217 and 271–72. It was also described as *manducatio per visum*; see H. Schlie, *Bilder des Corpus Christi: Sakramentaler Realismus von Jan van Eyck bis Hieronymus Bosch* (Berlin, 2002), 65 and 199–210.

71. Basel, Historisches Museum Basel, *Der Basler Münsterschatz* (Basel, 2001), ed. B. Meles, cat. 33, pp. 124–26. Several other round medaillons made of mother-of-pearl are decorated with scenes refering to the "in-between" situation of Christ between earthly and heavenly presence have survived, e.g., the the *imago pietatis* (Prague-Břevnov, Benedictine Arch-Abbey; Cologne, Museum für angewandte Kunst; Berlin, Skulpturen-sammlung; Bremen, Landesmuseum), the Not Gottes (Klosterneuburg), the angel Pietà (Klosterneuburg, Dortmund), or the Veronica (Frankfurt, Liebieghaus, Würzburg, Hamburg, Basel); for further information on the objects, see the catalogue in Husemann, *Pretiosen*.

72. Clement of Alexandria, *Niketas-Katene*, in Clemens Alexandrinus, *Protrepeticus und Paedagogus*, ed. O. Stählin and U. Treu, 3rd ed. (Berlin, 1972), 1:228. Clemens refers herein to Matthew 13:45–50.

73. By "treasure objects" I refer to objects kept in treasuries, which often served multiple purposes and could change their appearance during their use, e.g., by donations attached to them. B. Fricke, "Schatzgestalten: Diebesgut, Liebespfand und Fesselkünstler am Werk," in "Schatzkulturen im Mittelalter: Diskurs, Praxis, Vorstellung," ed. L. Burkart, P. Cordez, and P. A. Mariaux, special issue, *Micrologus*, 17 (2009), 265–82.

74. Clement of Alexandria, *Niketas-Katene*, 1, 228.

75. Depending on the author, sirens are described as the daughters of the river god Acheloos and a muse, or the offspring of the sea god Phorkys (Sophokles and Plutarch). Writers in Antiquity said sirens looked like the mythical creature on the reliquary. However, in medieval literature and art (e.g., Boccaccio, *Liber monstrorum*) typically described as mermaids (i.e., a hybrid creature, half woman and half fish) and were represented with clearly visible piscine lower bodies; J. Leclercq-Marx, *La sirène dans la pensée et dans l'art de l'antiquité et du moyen âge* (Brussels, 1997).

76. Harpies are rarely depicted in medieval art. They are the daughters of the sea titan Taumas and the oceanid Elektra. Born in the sea, they incorporate the storms and are invulnerable. However, one of them, Podarge, is described as being mortally wounded by the arrow of an Argonaut; S. Hartmann, "Harpyie," in *Dämonen, Monster, Fabelwesen*, ed. U. Müller and W. Wunderlich (St. Gallen, 1999), 287–318.

77. Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de naturis rerum*.

78. Ainaud i Escudero, "Dos portapaus," 132, explained the choice of the precious stones in terms of the symbolic meaning of the colors red and blue, drawing on a contemporary heraldic text by Jean Courtois, a French herald of Alfons V of Aragon, *Le blason des couleurs* (1414), that mentions that Aaron had attached sapphires and other stones to his vestment in accordance with God's instructions to Moses. The use of sapphires as ornament was, therefore, restricted to kings and high priests. Attaching them above the relic emphasizes this, according to Ainaud i Escudero.

79. A. Hauser, "Andrea Mantegnas 'Pietà': Ein ikonoklastisches Andachtsbild," *ZfKg*, 63 (2000), 449–93.