

“DO YOU HAVE EYES BUT FAIL TO SEE?”: THE UNFOCUSSED GAZE AND THE
DEVOTIO MODERNA IN HANS MEMLING’S DEVOTIONAL DIPTYCH FOR ISABEL LA
CATOLICA

by

HANNAH GRACE WILLIAMS

(Under the Direction of Shelley E. Zuraw)

ABSTRACT

Toward the end of his career, Hans Memling painted a devotional diptych of Christ’s Deposition for Isabel “la Católica” of Castile. This image is unusual among Early Netherlandish devotional art and also among Memling’s larger oeuvre. Despite clearly occupying the same space and taking part in the same narrative, the figures possess gazes that are unfocused and imprecise; if the illustrated scene were happening in real life, these figures would not be able to effectively see each other or anything else. In combination with the simplified costuming and other unusual characteristics, the unfocused gazes of the painting support and illustrate the particular imaginative meditation that was prized by the highly popular *devotio moderna*. This essay connects the painting to the *devotio moderna*, the *devotio moderna* to Isabel, and attempts to recreate the commissioning of this painting, which has not yet been fully appreciated by the scholarly community.

INDEX WORDS: Hans Memling, Isabel la Católica, *Devotio Moderna*, Early Netherlandish Painting, Northern Renaissance, Devotional Art, Bruges, Castile

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On her deathbed, Queen Isabel “la Católica” of Castile bequeathed a collection of her most prized religious items to the Capilla Real of Granada, the newly built chapel in which she would be buried.¹ This group included books, tapestries, jewels, paintings, liturgical objects, a large altarpiece, and, most likely, a devotional diptych of Christ’s deposition by the Flemish master Hans Memling (fig. 1).² The diptych is remarkably finely executed, but despite this and the fact that both its creator and owner are enormously famous, it has received little attention by scholars. In part, this essay hopes to remedy that but more importantly this essay will demonstrate the inventive way that Memling used extant types of devotional imagery and combined and developed them in order to create a distinctive image that appealed not only to the contemporary aesthetic tastes of Castile and Flanders but also to Isabel’s and a more general Netherlandish interest in the immensely popular *devotio moderna*. At the root of this devotional appeal is the painting’s manipulation of gaze; despite clearly occupying the same physical space, each figure depicted possesses a gaze that is somehow imprecise, unfocused, and in no way interactive with the scene unfolding before them. This is clearly a conscious choice of Memling, and in combination with particular types of costuming, he was able to create an image that both illustrates and inspires the sort of spiritual activity that was sought after by adherents of the

¹ Jessica Sue Weiss, “Isabel of Castile, Flemish Aesthetics, and Identity Construction in the Works of Juan de Flandes,” (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2014), 37. Isabel bequeathed her collection to her funerary chapel, which would, several years later, be the Capilla Real de Granada. Isabel died in 1504, but the chapel was not complete until 1517. The last will and testament can be found transcribed in Antonio de la Torre y del Cerro, *Testamentaria de Isabel la Católica* (Barcelona: Vda. Fidel Rodríguez Ferrán, 1974).

² The painting cannot be distinguished with certainty within Isabel’s inventories made during her lifetime, but it is accepted by authors like Dirk De Vos to have been probably transferred to the Capilla Real in 1520 along with the other paintings she bequeathed. Dirk De Vos, *Hans Memling: The Complete Works*, trans. Ted Aikens (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 335. Patrick M. De Winter has noted that the inventories were incomplete in “A Book of Hours of Queen Isabel la Católica,” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 68, no. 10 (1981): 346.

devotio moderna. This was devotion that was spurred by an image but then transcends it, reaching an aniconic, wholly internal meditation on holy narratives and figures in which the devotee can imagine himself present in the narrative that the picture describes.

Hans Memling was born in Germany around 1430, but at some time in his youth, he immigrated to Brussels where he most likely studied in the workshop of Rogier van der Weyden, whose style Memling emulated throughout his career.³ After Rogier's death in 1464, Memling moved to Bruges where he eventually bought citizenship and established his own workshop.⁴ He became the most prominent and sought-after painter in Bruges, and he had patrons spread out across Europe, from Italy to Spain and England.⁵ A particularly enthusiastic contemporary of his in Bruges noted at Memling's death that he was "the most accomplished and excellent painter of the whole Christian world," and this is reflected in the powerful sorts of patrons he attracted.⁶ While it is impossible to connect Memling directly with the *devotio moderna*, Vida Hull has argued that Memling created an oeuvre that reflects the *devotio*'s support for meditation on the humanity of Christ, specifically his Passion and the Eucharist. Like Memling's paintings, the particular piety of the *devotio* can be described as "rational" rather than "enthusiastic" with its emphasis on moderated and restrained expression of emotion.⁷ Memling worked in a number of genres, including large and small altarpieces, but he is most famous for his portraits and

³ For a discussion of questions surrounding Memling's training, see Barbara G. Lane, "The Question of Memling's Training," in *Memling Studies: Proceedings of the International Colloquium (Bruges, 10-12 November 1994)*, eds. H  l  ne Verougstraete, Roger Van Schouete and Maurits Smeyers (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1997), 53-70.

⁴ The earliest archival reference to Hans Memling is this document, from January 30, 1465, in which he paid the equivalent to one month of a craftsman's wages to buy citizenship to Bruges. Stadsarchief, Brugge (Municipal Archives), Poorterboek 1454-1478, fol. 72v.; published by De Vos, *Hans Memling*, 407.

⁵ See Maximiliaan P.J. Martens, "Hans Memling and his Patrons: A Cliometrical Approach," in *Memling Studies: Proceedings of the International Colloquium (Bruges, 10-12 November 1994)*, eds. H  l  ne Verougstraete, Roger Van Schouete and Maurits Smeyers (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1997), 35-42.

⁶ Rombout de Doppere, Notary at St. Donatian's in Bruges, quoted in Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*, vol 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 347.

⁷ Vida Hull, "Devotional Aspects of Hans Memling's Paintings," *Southeast College Art Conference Review* 11, no. 3 (1988): 207-208.

devotional images, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Portinari portraits and the *Diptych of Maarten van Nieuwenhove* (fig. 2). Like the Nieuwenhove diptych, the diptych preserved in Isabel's Capilla Real is also a small, half-length devotional image, itself a common sort of painting for fifteenth-century Flanders. In vivid, finely executed color and detail, the left panel shows the deposition of Christ from the cross, and the right panel shows John the Evangelist, the Virgin, and four other female mourners.⁸ The diptych is roughly table-top sized, and the backs of the two panels are painted in a taupe faux marble, demonstrating that when not in use, it was likely closed and put away—an object prized for its functionality in addition to its aesthetic value.⁹ The closeness of the figures to the edge of the picture plane and to the viewer, along with the half-length cropping and small size, make the painting fit well within the standard definition of the *andachtsbild* (a close-focused devotional image), though the painting is not simply a context-less image of holy individuals but is a narrative frozen at the particular moment of its strongest emotional appeal.¹⁰ Behind the figures, a lush landscape spreads across both panels, culminating in a tiny evocation of a Northern European city in the right corner of the mourners' panel.¹¹ This detail may be a suggestion of the Holy Land, though its accuracy is limited by the

⁸ It should also be noted that there have been some authors who argue that the diptych is not autograph but rather a workshop copy, notably Barbara Lane in her *Hans Memling: Master Painter in Fifteenth-Century Bruges* (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2009). However, many other authors, including Panofsky, De Vos, and Friedländer accept the Granada diptych as autograph from a late point in his career. See Max J. Friedländer, *Hans Memling and Gerard David*, trans. Heinz Norden (Leyden: A.W. Stijthoff, 1971), 47. Juan Luis Gonzalez Garcia also discusses it as autograph in "Empathetic Images and Painted Dialogues: The Visual and Verbal Rhetoric of Royal Private Piety in Renaissance Spain," in *Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative and Emotional Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, vol. 1, eds. Sarah Blick and Laura D. Gelfand (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 502-504. There are many more references to the painting as autograph than not, and the painting will be treated as autograph in this essay.

⁹ De Vos, *Hans Memling*, 334 noted the faux-marble of the panels' backs in his description of the paintings' condition.

¹⁰ Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting*, 2nd rev. ed. (Doornspijk, Netherlands: Davaco, 1984), 52. On page 55, Ringbom writes, "The *Andachtsbild* is 'an incentive or object of a devotional attitude and prayer', and a comprehensive narrative can just as well as an isolated figure in that narrative become an *Andachtsbild*."

¹¹ For a discussion of the landscapes in Memling's backgrounds, see Catherine Reynolds, "Memling Landscapes and the Influence of Hugo van der Goes," in *Memling Studies: Proceedings of the International Colloquium (Bruges, 10-12 November 1994)*, eds. Hélène Verougstraete, Roger van Schoute, and Maurits Smeyers (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1997), 163-170.

sorts of buildings Memling would have known.¹² With its fine execution of careful details supporting devotion to Christ's passion and his journey to Golgotha, the Granada diptych would have been an expensive, treasured tool for prayer and meditation.

The actual composition of the diptych, particularly of the mourners' panel, did not originate with Memling, though he made enough changes to it that make it worthy of study on its own. Ten to fifteen years prior to the Granada diptych's creation, Hugo van der Goes, a painter who intermittently spent time in Bruges, made a diptych of the same subject, and it is from this diptych that most scholars believe Memling's composition of both panels originated (fig. 3).¹³ The Deposition panel from Memling's diptych is likely a combination of Hugo's composition and a lost Robert Campin Deposition, known only through copies.¹⁴ Sometime between the creation of Hugo's diptych around 1480 and the Granada diptych's creation shortly before Memling's death in 1494, Memling made a first version of this same subject, and it more closely resembles Hugo's original (fig. 4).¹⁵ In his first version, now divided between a private collection and the Sao Paulo Museum of Art, Brazil, Memling painted five mourners: John the Evangelist, the Virgin, and Three Holy Women (three more Maries), including Mary Magdalene.

¹² The most distinct building in the painting is a tall, centrally-planned building crowned with a cupola. It perhaps reflects the Jeruzalemkerk in Bruges, which was erected in the middle of the fifteenth century and was intended to echo pilgrims' accounts of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Elsewhere in Memling's oeuvre where the architecture in the background clearly references the Holy Land, Memling painted a myriad of buildings that are variations of those in the back of the Granada diptych: centrally planned towers with cupolas. See Memling's Turin *Passion of the Christ* (c. 1470) and his so-called *Seven Joys of Mary* (c. 1480). For a discussion of these paintings and their relationship to the Jeruzalemkerk in Bruges, see Mitzi Kirkland-Ives, *In the Footsteps of Christ: Hans Memling's Passion Narratives and the Devotional Imagination in the Early Modern Netherlands* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), xi-xxiv and 121-128. The Adornes family, responsible for the building of the Jeruzalemkerk, were connected to Memling and his patrons.

¹³ Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 138; De Vos, *Hans Memling*, 332-335; Max Friedländer, "Van der Goes und Memling," *Oud Holland* 65 (1950): 167-171.

¹⁴ De Vos, *Hans Memling*, 332. De Vos notes the English copy now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

¹⁵ Dirk De Vos determined the timeline of these paintings' creation, treating both Memling's first and second version of the diptych as autograph. De Vos, *Hans Memling*, 332-335. At much earlier date, Friedländer, *Hans Memling and Gerard David*, 47, considered the first version to be a workshop copy, though it is unclear if he meant that the extant "first version" is a workshop copy of a lost original first version or a free copy of the so-called "second version" in Granada. Dirk De Vos rejects this theory based on a number of criteria, as outlined on pages 332-335 of his monograph.

The Magdalene is most easily identifiable by her loose hair and fine clothing. Another Mary behind her looks directly at the viewer, a third Mary looks up at the sky in grief, while the Virgin and John look across the panel to the deposition of Christ's body from the cross. None of these details about gaze and identification remained true for Memling's second version, the Granada diptych. All of the figures, most notably the Magdalene, have been given less ornate fabrics than in the Sao Paulo version, and in the case of the Magdalene, this makes recognizing her less straightforward. The Magdalene's hair has been tied up beneath her veil which also covers much of her chest, and she wears a plain green dress with a scarlet mantle. Her identification is based solely on her position in the scene and the fact that in the first version, the figure that occupied her place is clearly the Magdalene. Memling has so simplified all of the costumes that the viewer's attention is drawn solely to the faces of the holy figures, not to their clothing. That is not to say that their clothing is not fine; upon a very close look, the fabrics are all richly dyed, and a sleeve of purple-dyed fur can be found peeking out from underneath the Virgin's blue gown. This seeming contradiction may be an attempt to appeal to a patron who is wealthy but who also hopes to appear humble and pious. Memling also added a sixth figure in the mourners' panel, and her praying figure is squeezed between the inner frame of the diptych and the rest of the mourners. John covers most of her body. The fact that she is praying with hands clasped together, not expressing abject shock and sorrow as in the case of the other mourners, makes her unique in the painting and distinguishes her from the other women, those thought to be present at the Deposition. She is an interesting figure who may even be a reference to the painting's illustrious female patron, and this theory will be dealt with later in this essay.

The most striking change that Memling made between his first and second versions of the diptych is the omission of clear sight for the figures; though open, their eyes are unfocused and

behold nothing. For example, the Virgin's irises are splayed such that her right eye is directed too far to the right, and her left eye too far to the left, and if a real person had such eyes, she would not be able to effectively see anything. Each of her eyes, when observed on its own, could be read to look at different things. No figures look clearly across the panel to the Deposition, no figures in the Deposition look clearly across to the mourners, and no figures look out to meet the viewer's gaze. Even if we were to imagine the diptych opened at an angle, not flat against a wall as it is presented today, figures still would not be seen to have direct, clear sight. Memling's blurring of the gazes in the Granada diptych is not a symptom of some deficit in his capability of a painter. As in the Hugo original, Memling's first version included directed gazes that make logical sense for a real, unfolding narrative. He was perfectly capable of painting direct, distinguishable sightlines, for he painted powerfully piercing gazes in other paintings, such as his *Christ Blessing* that is now in Boston, in which Christ's brown eyes are the focal point of the painting and precisely meet the viewer's gaze (fig. 5). A close look at his illustration of the eyes and the surrounding detail in the Granada diptych and in his larger oeuvre reveal the great care that went toward their creation. Lorne Campbell has argued that the incredible refinement of detail in Memling's depictions of eyes demonstrate their great importance to the paintings.¹⁶ Maryan Ainsworth has similarly espoused this belief that Memling must have seen the illustration of eyes as vital to the success of the image, based on the care he took in their creation.¹⁷ Still, despite the regular and important use of gazes in Memling's own work and the obvious attempts to create a strong sense of naturalism throughout the painting, the Granada eyes

¹⁶ Lorne Campbell, "Memling and the Netherlandish Portrait Tradition," in *Memling's Portraits*, ed. Till-Holger Borchet, exh. cat. (New York: Thames & Hudson and the Frick Collection, 2005), 57-58.

¹⁷ Maryan Ainsworth, "Minimal Means, Remarkable Results: Memling's Portrait Painting Technique," in *Memling's Portraits*, ed. Till-Holger Borchet, exh. cat. (New York: Thames & Hudson and the Frick Collection, 2005), 100-101.

do not adhere to the rules of natural sight. They must have been purposefully blurred, leaving open the question of why such a naturalistic artist would avoid a naturalistic portrayal of the very faculty that allows for an individual to appreciate such a painting: vision.

In Flemish devotional imagery, there was already a tradition of painting blurred gazes, but this was only implemented in very specific circumstances, none of which apply to the Granada diptych.¹⁸ When donor figures, sometimes simply called “devotional portraits,” are included within a holy narrative or alongside saints, their gazes were frequently painted to be indeterminate in an attempt to separate them spatially from the holy figures and also to illustrate their devotional attitudes.¹⁹ Suggested by this indeterminate gaze is the idea that a person so involved in his own prayers would not be focused on the world around him, and thus his unfocused eyes might reflect ardent meditation. On a social level, such a portrait of a devotee could demonstrate to viewers the powerful piety of the devotee in question, and so these portraits could be seen as attempts to raise one’s own status in a time when outward displays of piety often correlated with a better standing in society.²⁰ On a related note, these donor images also could have provided examples to viewers of how to situate the body in order to meditate well, such as kneeling a certain way or holding one’s hands in a particular pose or, perhaps in the case of donor portraits with blurred gazes, even to let one’s eyes unfocus.²¹ Additionally, sometimes

¹⁸ See Jan Koenderink, “The Eyes in Jan van Eyck: Enquiry on an Academic Question,” in *Vision & Material: Interaction Between Art and Science in Jan van Eyck’s Time*, eds. Marc de Mey, Maximiliaan P.J. Martens, and Cyriel Stroo (Brussels: KVAB Press, 2012), 298-313 for a discussion of the way in which a different Bruges artist—Jan van Eyck—purposefully distorted eyes’ natural form, but in Jan van Eyck’s case, this does not result in the appearance of blurred vision.

¹⁹ Gonzalez Garcia, “Empathetic Images and Painted Dialogues,” 500. See also Ingrid Falque, *Devotional Portrait and Spiritual Experience in Early Netherlandish Painting* (Leiden: Brill, 2019) for a thorough discussion of the phenomenon.

²⁰ Reindert L. Falkenburg, “Prayer Nuts: Feasting the ‘Eyes of the Heart,’” in *Prayer Nuts, Private Devotion, and Early Modern Art Collecting*, eds. Evelin Wetter and Fritts Scholten (Riggisberg, Switzerland: Abegg Stiftung, 2017), 18.

²¹ Laura Katrine Skinnebach, “Practices of Perception: Devotion and the Senses in Late Medieval Northern Europe,” (PhD diss., University of Bergen, Norway, 2013), 117-118 notes the didactic nature of a donor’s body, especially in regard to Jan Polack’s *Madonna of Mercy*, 1510, in the Munich Frauenkirche.

artists would include a self-portrait hidden within multi-figural works with a similar trance-like gaze, undirected at the drama of a scene with an analogous effect of establishing a thematic separation between his own figure and the scene in which he appears.²² Memling might have added such a self-portrait to his *Shrine of Saint Ursula*.²³ In *sacra conversazione* paintings, one can also find unfocused gazes that are intended to demonstrate the temporal separation between figures, in this case the holy figures themselves, as in Gerard David's 1509 *Virgo inter Virgines*. Each character has been plucked from different narratives in different times and placed in one scene that would only exist in a painting, creating a general sense of timelessness in the painting (fig. 6).²⁴ But the Granada diptych does not fit within any of these situations. Its holy figures are all extant in the same time and place and taking part in the same narrative, so the reason why Memling would illustrate their gazes as unfocussed must be found elsewhere.

In late medieval culture, vision was held to be chief among the five senses, and this makes the purposeful blurring of illustrated sight curious. Thought was understood to originate from vision, and medieval theologians and philosophers noted that even in aniconic devotion that endeavors to transcend the physical world, the mind attempts to create images to “see.”²⁵ Reading, too, was commonly considered to be an activity one only did in order to generate images for the mind.²⁶ However, the visible world, while vital for fostering intelligent thought,

²² Jai Imbrey, “Faith Up-Close and Personal in Mantegna’s *Presentation: Fictive Frames and the Devotio Moderna* in Northern Italy,” in *New Studies on Old Masters: Essays in Renaissance Art in Honour of Colin Eisler*, eds John Garton and Diane Wolfthal (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2011), 235 and 247.

²³ Hilde Lobelle-Caluwé, “Hans Memling: A Self-Portrait?” in *Memling Studies: Proceedings of the International Colloquium (Bruges, 10-12 November 1994)*, eds. Héléne Verougstraete, Roger Van Schouete and Maurits Smeyers (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1997), 50.

²⁴ Stanley Edward Weed, “The ‘Virgo inter Virgines’: Art and the Devotion to Virgin Saints in the Low Countries and Germany, 1400-1530,” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2002), 52 notes that *Virgo inter Virgines* figures in general are shown present together but do not actually interact with each other.

²⁵ Bret Rothstein, “Vision and Devotion in Jan van Eyck’s *Virgin and Child with Canon Joris van der Paele*,” *Word & Image* 15, no. 3 (1999): 265.

²⁶ William A. Dryness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture: The Protestant Imagination from Calvin to Edwards* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 28.

was also associated with the imperfect and ephemeral that was, in turn, profoundly separate from the eternal spiritual world, the world with which one sought to connect in one's prayers and devotions.²⁷ Saint Augustine of Hippo attempted to compensate for the necessity of vision for thought with the spiritual need to avoid dwelling on the visible world. He wrote extensively on the use of vision for the improvement of one's spiritual life, and he delineated three grades of what we now call "Augustinian" vision: *visio corporalis*, *visio spiritualis*, and *visio intellectualis*. These three stages would be very influential on later medieval authors. Ocular vision, or *visio corporalis*, can facilitate spiritual vision, or *visio spiritualis*, which encompasses imaginative thought about things that could exist in the visible world. Once a person achieves strong spiritual vision, his corporal vision is left behind on the quest to ultimately use his spiritual vision to transcend to intellectual vision, or *visio intellectualis*, which involves thought about abstract concepts like the Trinity or goodness.²⁸ Physically, either one closes his eyes in his devotions or lets his eyes unfocus so that he can turn the mind inward. Jean Gerson (1363-1429), influenced by Augustine and applying some of his theology to the use of images in meditation, wrote, "we ought thus to learn to transcend with our minds from these visible things to the invisible, from the corporeal to the spiritual. For this is the purpose of the image."²⁹ To Gerson, the devotional image is a tool that will encourage aniconic meditation out of the narrative or idea presented in the image. There have been some investigations of Augustinian modes of vision as an interpretative device in early Netherlandish painting, specifically in an attempt to understand the odd gaze of Canon Joris van der Paele in Jan van Eyck's famous

²⁷ Dryness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture*, 22-23. For a more detailed discussion of the importance of sight for late medieval spirituality, see Bret Rothstein, *Sight and Spirituality in Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. 10.

²⁸ Gonzalez Garcia, "Empathetic Images and Painted Dialogues," 500.

²⁹ Jean Gerson, as quoted and translated in Sixten Ringbom, "Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions: Notes on the Place of Art in Late Medieval Private Piety," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 73, no. 6 (1969): 165.

painting of him with the Virgin and Child (fig. 7). Bret Rothstein has argued that the Canon's glazed expression, looking away from his book and beyond the saints who surround him, is intended to suggest that he has achieved spiritual sight out of corporal sight.³⁰ He no longer needs to read the text in order to experience the presence of the saints; he has transcended *visio corporalis* in favor of *visio spiritualis*.³¹ This painting and others that are arguably depicting some aspect of late medieval devotional aspirations prompted Craig Harbison to say that the contemporary Lowlands culture had an "obsession" with visions and meditations, which resulted in the breadth of images that show recognizable people engaged in devotions and experiencing visions.³²

From its beginnings, practitioners of the *devotio moderna* took particular interest in the *visio corporalis*, especially its necessity in order to achieve *visio spiritualis* and ultimately *visio intellectualis*. The *devotio moderna* was founded in the Netherlands in the fourteenth century by Geert Grote (1340-1384) and his circle of clergymen.³³ Grote hoped to improve the spiritual lives of laypeople and clergymen alike with vernacular publications, like his Dutch translation of a Book of Hours. The monastic branch of the movement, the Windesheim Congregation, operated under the rule of St. Augustine, demonstrating the accessibility and importance of his theology to the Windesheim monks.³⁴ Among other important contributions to late medieval

³⁰ Rothstein, "Vision and Devotion in Jan van Eyck's *Virgin and Child with Canon Joris van der Paele*," 262-276, esp. 264.

³¹ See also Gonzalez Garcia, "Empathetic Images and Painted Dialogues," 498, note 30.

³² Craig Harbison, *Jan van Eyck: The Play of Realism*, 2nd updated and expanded ed. (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2012), 123. On page 68, the author explains that "the most popular lay religious device—and image—of the fifteenth century in the Netherlands [is that] through private prayer the donor is granted a vision."

³³ The early history of the *devotio moderna* movement is outlined in John Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 11-44. On its spread, see Charles Caspers, Daniela Müller, and Judith Keßler, "In the Eyes of Others. The Modern Devotion in Germany and the Netherlands: Influencing and Appropriating," *Church History and Religious Culture* 93 (2013): 489-503. On the role of Grote's letters on its spread, see Rudolf Th.M. van Dijk, "Die Überlieferung der Briefschaften von Geert Grote," *Quaerendo* 41 (2011): 172-182.

³⁴ Harbison, *Jan van Eyck: The Play of Realism*, 70.

piety, Grote popularized the notion that imagining oneself in the physical company of Christ and other holy figures was crucial in developing empathy for Christ's sacrifice, the emotions of saints and martyrs, and important Christian narratives. Although aniconic devotion was the preferred mode of achieving such meditation, Grote conceded that images, when used appropriately, could help the "childlike" mind picture Christ and his holy retinue and enter into closer union with them.³⁵ The devotee could then focus on the image in his mind rather than the image before his eyes. Perhaps more than anything else, Grote and others who would write within the *devotio moderna* school of thought emphasized the importance of the inner life over the outer. They believed that the inner life was especially facilitated by sensory experience.³⁶ The *devotio moderna* spread rapidly across Europe. The largest number of followers were in the Northern Netherlands as opposed to the Southern Netherlands, but there was certainly still a significant presence of those interested in the *devotio moderna* in and around Bruges in the Southern Netherlands.³⁷ For example, Abbot Jan Crabbe, a patron of Memling and other prominent artists such as Hugo van der Goes, occupied a large house in Bruges owned by his order and was known to commission and collect copies of many types of religious texts, including those that were very important within the *devotio moderna*, such as works by Jean Gerson and Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi*.³⁸ Jean Gerson's writings, discussed earlier, were

³⁵ Geert Grote, "Treatise on Four Classes of Subjects Suitable for Meditation," in *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. John Van Engen (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 101.

³⁶ Christopher Herbert, *Foreshadowing the Reformation: Art and Religion in the Fifteenth-century Burgundian Netherlands* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 69.

³⁷ Elsewhere in the Low Lands, dedicated adherents of the *devotio moderna*—lay and clergy alike—consolidated themselves into semi-monastic communities known as the Brothers (or Sisters) of the Common Life. There were such houses within short distances of Bruges, such as Ghent, but no records survive of a Bruges Common Life house. On nearby houses, see Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life*, 50-51. On Bruges interest in the *devotio moderna*, see Andrew Brown, *Civic Ceremony and Religion in Medieval Bruges, c. 1300-1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 209 and 287.

³⁸ Noël Geirnaert, "Johannes Crabbe, Abbot of Ten Duinen, 1457-88," in *Hans Memling: Portraiture, Piety and a Reunited Altarpiece*, ed. John Marciari, exh. cat. (New York: The Morgan Library & Museum, 2016), 67-68. Some of Crabbe's collection survives in the Ten Duinen Abbey archive: Archief van het Grootseminarie, Brugge.

thoroughly absorbed by *devotio moderna* theology by the end of the fifteenth century and were central to understanding the *devotio moderna* outlook on meditation and vision.³⁹ These and other texts, particularly the Gerson texts, all highlighted the importance of perfecting one's physical sight, or in Augustinian terms, one's *visio corporalis*, specifically when to use it and when to move beyond it.

Another influential author for the *devotio*, Jan van Ruysbroeck (1293-1381), a contemporary of Grote, also regularly wrote about the importance of separating physical sight from spiritual sight and using physical sight to inspire the latter, following the model of Saint Augustine.⁴⁰ Although he was staunchly in favor of aniconic devotion, his writings were vividly illusionistic and reveal that a sensory input on which the mind might elaborate was still central to his ideals for meditation.⁴¹ And Thomas á Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* (ca. 1418-1427), which was written as a result of Thomas á Kempis's membership within the *devotio moderna*, espouses the importance of inward-turned vision as well; for example, he wrote, "Blessed are the eyes that are shut to outward things but intent on inward things."⁴² It is clear that the *devotio moderna* authors had a keen interest in directing and controlling vision in order to better connect with the spiritual world. Viewing religious images was important so that meditation can be based on the sensory imagination with the goal of eventually transcending such physical images in favor of aniconic meditation. Nicholas of Cusa, a fifteenth-century German philosopher, jurist, and theologian wrote texts that became very important within the *devotio moderna*. Inigo Bocken has argued that the cardinal was, in fact, a "theologian of visual experience," as discussions of

³⁹ Yelena Mazour-Matusevich, "Gerson's Legacy," in *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 371-375.

⁴⁰ Herbert, *Foreshadowing the Reformation*, 8-9.

⁴¹ See Rothstein, *Sight and Spirituality in Early Netherlandish Painting*, 71-75 for a discussion of the importance of Ruysbroeck's illusionistic writing style.

⁴² Thomas á Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, quoted in Dryness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture*, 33.

sight operated at the core of his written works.⁴³ He addressed the power of the physical gaze in improving spiritual life, using a discussion of the gaze of images to help explicate it.⁴⁴

Interestingly, one of the images he specifies is a lost painting by Memling's own teacher, Rogier van der Weyden.⁴⁵ Indeed, Nicholas of Cusa and Rogier van der Weyden probably knew each other personally.⁴⁶ Furthermore, we know Nicholas of Cusa and Jan van Eyck, one of Memling's predecessors in Bruges, operated in the same circles.⁴⁷ Jan van Eyck might have also known Cusa personally, and due to their patrons and parallel traveling, van Eyck was likely familiar—even if not consciously—with the ideals of the *devotio moderna* that Cusa (and others) were propagating.⁴⁸ These connections between Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, and Nicholas of Cusa demonstrate the knowledge that artists may have had of the *devotio moderna* and that practitioners of it might have had of them.

But here is the paradox an artist encounters when attempting to illustrate or encourage inward-turned meditation for a patron interested in *devotio moderna*. Grote wrote, “the more a person is able to withdraw himself from such images and to persist in this abstraction...the more

⁴³ Inigo Bocken, “The Viewers in the Ghent Altarpiece,” in *Vision & Material: Interaction Between Art and Science in Jan van Eyck's Time*, eds. Marc de Mey, Maximiliaan P. J. Martens and Cyriel Stroo (Brussels: KVAB Press, 2012), 147, 156.

⁴⁴ Nicholas of Cusa, *The Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa*, trans. Jasper Hopkins (Minneapolis: A. J. Banning Press, 2001), 680-683.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 739, note 1. According to editor and translator Hopkins in note 1, the image in question is the supposed self portrait of Rogier van der Weyden within his lost *Examples of Justice*. The painting is known through a tapestry copy in the Historical Museum of Bern. Before its destruction in a 1695 fire, the painting was highly praised. For a description of the painting made before its destruction, see François-Nicolas Baudot Dubuisson-Aubenay (1590-1652), “Itinerarium Belgicum,” published in translation in *Northern Renaissance Art, 1400-1600: Sources and Documents*, ed. Wolfgang Stechow (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 9-10.

⁴⁶ Harald Schwaetzer and Alanus Hochschule, “Rogier's Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin and Cusanus' Epistemology,” in *Vision & Material: Interaction between Art and Science in Jan van Eyck's Time*, eds. Marc de Mey, Maximiliaan P.J. Martens and Cyriel Stroo (Brussels: KVAB Press, 2012), 159.

⁴⁷ Inigo Bocken, “Jan van Eyck and the Active Mysticism of the *Devotio Moderna*,” in *Art and Mysticism: Interfaces in the Medieval and Modern Periods*, eds. Helen Appleton and Louise Nelstrop (New York: Routledge, 2018), 89-103, esp. 93.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* See also Inigo Bocken, “Performative Vision: Jan van Eyck, Nicholas of Cusa, and the *devotio moderna*,” in *Ritual, Images, and Daily Life: The Medieval Perspective*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz (London: Global Book Marketing, 2012), 95-106.

truly and purely he meditates upon the birth, life and death of Christ and upon the Holy Scripture... the more nearly he approaches the eternal.”⁴⁹ What would a useful image look like—what would be its properties—that could encourage a devotee’s “childlike” mind toward imageless devotion? Writing about north Italian art, Jai Imbrey argues that fictive frames and *trompe-l’oeil* were one way to create such an image by transforming the picture plane into a permeable membrane through which viewers can reach during devotion, all while the frame emphasizes the actual presence of holy figure as they cross from divine space into earthly space (fig. 8).⁵⁰ The fictive frame was both a window and a barrier, showing the separation between us (the viewers) and them (the holy individuals), and it directs the viewer’s gaze upward into a higher, holier reality.⁵¹ Unfocused gazes—gazes that would, if extant in real life, behold nothing—in an otherwise thoroughly illusionistic picture plane could achieve a similar effect. It would be preferred over simply closing the eyes of the figures, which is what actual practitioners might have more often done, because closed eyes in art was often associated with blindness or even Judaism, both of which had strongly negative connotations to the late medieval devout.⁵² To avoid such associations, unfocused eyes would be better than closed eyes.

To contemporaries, donor images—which, as discussed, often included unfocused gazes—might have modeled examples of how to position oneself in order to meditate well. This might be exemplified by the myriad of devotional portraits in Jan Polack’s *Madonna of Mercy*, produced for the Sänftl family in 1510 (fig. 9).⁵³ With the variety of devotional tools that the vast

⁴⁹ Grote, *A Treatise on Four Classes*, in Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, 113.

⁵⁰ Imbrey, “Fictive Frames and the *Devotio Moderna* in Northern Italy,” 342.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* For further discussion of the effect of fictive frames on devotional experience, see Rothstein, *Sight and Spirituality*, 53-54.

⁵² Andrea Pearson, “Sensory Piety and Social Intervention in a Mechelen *Besloten Hoffe*,” *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 9, no. 2 (2017): 9-13. See also Felipe Pereda, “Literal Sense and Spiritual Vision in the ‘Fountain of Life,’” in *Fiction Sacrée Spiritualité et Esthétique Durant le Premier Âge Moderne*, eds. Ralph Dekoninck, Agnès Guiderdoni, and Emilie Granjon (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 126.

⁵³ Skinnebach, “Practices of Perception,” 117-118.

array of devotees hold in the painting, the many different ways that they direct their gazes toward or away from the Madonna, and the different gestures that the figures make with their hands, any sort of viewer might find his or her representation in the painting.⁵⁴ If this interpretation is correct, then the curious wide-eyed, unfocused gaze so often found in such donor figures—like those in Robert Campin’s *Merode Triptych*—might exemplify what to do with the sense organs in order to pray adequately where the illustration of closed eyes would not be appropriate (fig. 10).⁵⁵ The male donor in the left panel of the *Merode*, who kneels outside the enclosed domestic space where the Virgin appears, has removed his hat, and with raised eyebrows, and perhaps even somewhat flared nostrils emphasizing a fuller sensory experience, peers inside, humbly, full of awe and adoration. Every hair on his head and every crease in his skin is painted with exacting attention to texture and color, but his eyes splay somewhat such that his left eye looks too far to the side, making it impossible for him to clearly see the miraculous Annunciation taking place inside the room in front of him. His wife, behind him, averts her eyes and holds close her rosary; she does not see, either, and perhaps, like the Canon van der Paele in Jan van Eyck’s painting, both have moved from *visio corporalis* to *visio spiritualis*. In the *Merode Triptych*, viewers could be presented with a didactic image of a devout lay couple who, through devotion, are blessed with spiritual vision of the Annunciation to the Virgin. Reindert Falkenburg connected the *Merode* with Hendrik Mande’s vernacular meditation manual *Here Begins a Devout Book on the Preparation and Decoration of the Dwelling of Our Heart* written for practitioners of the *devotio moderna*.⁵⁶ Mande’s text, intended to support “spiritual housekeeping,” vividly details some of

⁵⁴ Skinnebach pointed out that some figures reach out to touch the Madonna, some modestly avert their gazes, some pray with books, some pray with arms crossed across their chests, and more display other positions and attitudes associated with devotion.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of the donor figures in the *Merode Triptych*, see Falkenburg, “Prayer Nuts,” 13-26.

⁵⁶ Reindert Falkenburg, “The Household of the Soul: Conformity in the *Merode Triptych*,” in *Early Netherlandish Painting at the Crossroads: A Critical Look at Current methodologies*, ed. Maryan Ainsworth (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2001), 6. Falkenburg is careful not to claim the Mande text

the same sorts of objects in a home and adjoining garden that Robert Campin painted in the *Merode Triptych*. Mande encouraged the spirit to be cleaned and furnished so that Christ can inhabit the bridal suite of the heart, and he detailed objects like a white cloth, decorations of flowers, a table with a lit candle, and other stuffs that are described with metaphorical significance.⁵⁷ With his illusionistic and vibrantly written text, Mande created for his reader a similar experience of imagination and inner perception spurred through devotion that the donors model in the *Merode*.⁵⁸

Sometime in the 1480s, the anonymous master I. A. M. of Zwolle, made a large engraving (almost a foot in length) of St. Bernard kneeling before the Virgin in a church, who sprays milk at his face (fig. 11). The church interior itself seems to reference the church of St. Agnietenberg outside Zwolle, a church with which the Zwolle master would have been familiar.⁵⁹ This monastery was part of the Windesheim Congregation, the monastic branch of the *devotio moderna*, and it was the location of Thomas á Kempis's education, which led to his enormously influential *Imitatio Christi*.⁶⁰ The church was an important hub for the spread of *devotio moderna* rhetoric, as not only was the *Imitatio Christi* written there, but numerous other missals, Bibles, and other texts were copied in the church and disseminated throughout Northern Europe.⁶¹ Among these publications seems to be this engraving, and if the engraving illustrates St. Bernard's miracle in that particular church, we can assume a correlation between the image,

is a concrete "source" for the painting in the fashion of Panofsky; see page 7. The Mande text was originally titled *Hier Beghint een Devoet Boeckskijn van der Bereydinghe ende Vercieringhe onser Inwendiger Woeninghen* and was written sometime in the beginning of the fifteenth century.

⁵⁷ For a transcription of Mande's text, Falkenburg cites Willem Moll, *Johannes Brugman en het godsdienstig leven onzer vaders in de vijftiende eeuw*, vol 1 (Amsterdam, 1854), 293-309.

⁵⁸ "Spiritual housekeeping" is Falkenburg's phrase. Falkenburg, "The Household of the Soul," 7.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Finkenstaedt, "Two Netherlandish Engravings and the Windesheim Congregation in the Fifteenth Century," *Gesta* 8, no. 1 (1969): 42.

⁶⁰ Max Von Habsburg, "The Devotional Life: Catholic and Protestant Translations of Thomas á Kempis' *Imitatio Christi*, c. 1420-c1620," (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 2001), 66.

⁶¹ Finkenstaedt, "Two Netherlandish Engravings and the Windesheim," 42.

its commissioning, and *devotio moderna* thought, as the miracle was said to occur in a different, but real, church and has been transplanted to St. Agnietenberg.

Despite the traditional telling of the miracle that makes it clear that the Bernard's engagement with the divine was a physical one, the engraving seems to exhibit a visionary experience. The Madonna has come to life through the devotion of St. Bernard, and she takes the place of an altarpiece in a church interior.⁶² In the image, Bernard only seems aware of a mystical or internal presence of the Virgin rather than a physical presence.⁶³ Not only are his eyes unfocused, but the position of his face makes his would-be field of vision completely perpendicular to the Virgin and her place on the altar of the church. Before him on the ground, he has abandoned a small devotional book, demonstrating that, like Canon van der Paele in Jan van Eyck's masterpiece, St. Bernard could be understood to have used meditation to produce a vision, and now he has transcended any need of the text. The Virgin herself seems to be the altarpiece come to life, for based on Bernard's position, he could have been supplementing his devotional book with the image of the Virgin and Child on the altar.⁶⁴ All around him in the church interior, there are men and women walking around, praying, going about church business seemingly without notice of the visionary miracle occurring in the space that they share. The engraving suggests an experience that crosses lines between an apparition that takes physical, tangible form—as made clear by the milk that strikes Bernard—and a vision that is only apparent to Bernard, as demonstrated by his glazed expression and those in the church who do not seem to notice the Virgin's presence. Inscriptions record the conversation between the Virgin and Bernard, which further shows interest in the distinction between physical sight and spiritual

⁶² Finkenstaedt, "Two Netherlandish Engravings and the Windesheim," 42.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Finkenstaedt, "Two Netherlandish Engravings and the Windesheim," 42. "She is the visionary incarnation of the altarpiece."

sight: Bernard asks the Virgin, “Show [‘monstra’] yourself to be a mother,” to which the Virgin replies “Behold, Bernard.”⁶⁵

The related miracle of the Mass of St. Gregory, in which Gregory sees an apparition of the Man of Sorrows on the altar during mass, is often illustrated with a similar composition of a kneeling man in a church interior before an altar-come-to-life, but these illustrations show Gregory directly gazing upon the apparition, demonstrating the straight-forward interest in the physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist of mass rather than a mental experience of him. The Master I.A.M. of Zwolle also made a print of the *Mass of St. Gregory*, and in this image of a miracle that at its heart is about the physical manifestation of Christ in the consecrated Eucharist, the master depicted the protagonist directly gazing at the apparition before him (fig. 12). As a further testament to the physicality of the miracle, souls in purgatory have arisen at the foot of the altar on which Christ stands, and a dog who has wandered in the church barks at their startling presence. There is also a small dog in the left margin of the Bernard print, but he seems to be unaware of any strange activity around him. The Gregory print shows the contrast between the illustration of a physical, real sight that can be shared by many with the sight of Bernard in the Zwolle *devotio moderna* church that toes the line between physical experience and mental vision that is replayed again and again for viewers as they gaze upon the image.⁶⁶ In this *devotio moderna* engraving of Bernard, physical reality is not as substantive or important to the spirit as one’s internal life, which may be “shown” to the inner eye through devotions, to quote the engraved Bernard’s words to the Virgin. Bernard in the Zwolle engraving may be a holy figure himself, but he has taken on the gaze of donor figures experiencing a devotion-induced vision, as

⁶⁵ “Monstra te e[sse] matrem [si].” “Ecce Berde.”

⁶⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the Zwolle master’s *Mass of St. Gregory*, see Christine Göttler, “Is Seeing Believing? The Use of Evidence in Representations of the Miraculous Mass of Saint Gregory,” *The Germanic Review* 76, no. 2 (2001): esp. 133-136.

in the *Merode Triptych*. The idea of the mental and imaginative connection to the divine through images or prayers may have been an idea common in the late medieval period, but it was certainly popularized by the *devotio moderna*.⁶⁷

Memling's Granada diptych, full of holy figures, inspires and illustrates intense meditation that transcends the senses, as donor figures had done previously. Canon Joris van der Paele in Jan van Eyck's *Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele* transcended *visio corporalis* so effectively that he is shown experiencing the presence of the saints around him in his mind's eye.⁶⁸ However, holy individuals, such as the witnesses to the Deposition in the Granada diptych, do not actually need a vision in order to experience their own presence and the event that they, according to tradition, witnessed in life, so why give them the gaze associated with a vision? Perhaps it offers an example for devotion from the highest source imaginable: the Virgin and others present at the Crucifixion and Deposition. If the Virgin herself is telling the devotee to do more than simply see her image, to instead transcend the image and one's senses, it would represent advice that no devotee could ignore. The gazes that indicate a sort of non-seeing provide for the viewer a sort of coding for "do more than look," which was of utmost importance to the *devotio moderna*—a school much more interested in the metaphorical eye than the physical eye. Both *trompe l'oeil*, like that of Mantegna's *Presentation*, and the unfocused gazes of the Granada diptych can underscore to the viewer that what they behold is a mere image and something that the viewer must transcend in order to fully connect with the divine. The details defy natural reality by creating an image that bridges the illustrated sacred realm and the physical

⁶⁷ Emma Capron, "Paintings, Prayers, and Salvation: The Jan Vos Virgins in Context," in *The Charterhouse of Bruges: Jan van Eyck, Petrus Christus, and Jan Vos*, exh. cat. (New York: D. Giles Limited and The Frick Collection, 2018), 37. Capron notes that the Carthusians' images at the Charterhouse of Bruges were meant to provide a prompt for ultimately imageless contemplation, which was common practice of the period.

⁶⁸ Rothstein, "Vision and Devotion in Jan van Eyck's *Virgin and Child with Canon Joris van der Paele*," 262-276.

realm of the viewer. The unfocused gazes of the painting also indicate that the depicted holy figures do not rely on the physical world—or their corporeal sight—for their holiness allows them to instead see with a higher faculty: their spiritual sight, or *visio spiritualis*. Their unnatural, unearthly gazes can indicate that they are in a superior world that does not operate by laws of physical sense and ocular vision. The medieval Christian saw the visible world as specifically “corruptible,” so it is actually perfectly sensible that Memling used the glossed-over gaze to indicate the holy figures as existing in a world that was not “corruptible” but wholly spiritual and intellectual.⁶⁹ This might lead the viewer to a meditation of not only being surrounded by the holy figures but also a meditation on the simple fact that the holy figures are not of this world and thus see not with their eyes but with their spirit. Around the holy figures is the corruptible world in which the Deposition took place, but by not focusing on seeing it, they help to transform this narrative of the corruptible world into a miraculous inner vision of a holier world not dependent on sense for thought like the corruptible physical world is. The Deposition marks the moment that the dead Christ was lowered from the Cross but anticipates the moment that he will rise again, and to Christians, his resurrection and conquering of death is what allows any devotee to ultimately transcend the physical world in favor of the heavenly world. This is exactly the sort of devotion that the *devotio moderna*, perhaps more than any other school of thought, sought.

Isabel “la Católica” of Castile, in all her piety and desire for a court more devoted to Christian teaching, has been shown to have had at least some interest in the *devotio* herself, as demonstrated by her commissions of art and music that reflect *devotio moderna* teaching (fig.

⁶⁹ “For medieval Christian thought, the visible equaled the evanescent, the insubstantial, and corruptible.” Gonzalez Garcia, “Empathetic Images and Painted Dialogues,” 498.

13).⁷⁰ Isabel surrounded herself with people from Flanders, where the influence of the *devotio* among the laity was strong, and through these channels and others, she seems to have been introduced to the sort of mystical piety that the *devotio* encouraged.⁷¹ As Mario Muñoz Carrasco has pointed out, an increase in commissions of art and text emblematic of the *devotio* in Castile at the end of the fifteenth century is not simply a result of Flemings being in Castile, but it must be because the particular piety of the *devotio* was encouraged by Isabel herself.⁷² Lay devotion was particularly central to Isabel's rule, as both she and her confessor Hernando de Talavera found the conversion of Moors to Christianity to be of the utmost importance.⁷³ It makes sense that a school of thought that likewise stressed vernacular lay devotion would appeal to her. At a fundamental level, the *devotio* overwhelmingly encouraged the writing of devotional texts in vernacular and the translation of texts into vernacular so as to benefit lay populations. Neither devotional guides nor vernacular texts on the life of Christ and the Virgin were popular in the first half of the fifteenth century in Spain, but under Isabel and perhaps due to the emphasis placed on such texts by the *devotio*, these texts would flourish.⁷⁴ Thomas á Kempis's *Imitatio*

⁷⁰ See Mario Muñoz Carrasco, "Influencia de la Devotio moderna en la corte de los Reyes Católicos: El mecenazgo piadoso ejemplificado en Francisco de Peñalosa," in *Musicología Global, Musicología Local*, eds. Javier Marín López, Germán Gan Quesada, Elena Torres Clemente and Pilar Ramos López (Madrid: Sociedad Española de Musicología, 2013), 2073-2088.

⁷¹ For a discussion of the Flemish individuals who were frequently around Isabel in Castile and in her husband's domain of Aragon, see Tess Knighton, "Northern Influence on Cultural Developments in the Iberian Peninsula During the Fifteenth Century," *Renaissance Studies* 1, no. 2 (1987): 221-237.

⁷² Muñoz Carrasco, "Influencia de la Devotio moderna," 2074.

⁷³ Weiss, "Isabel of Castile and Flemish Aesthetics," 143, note 312.

⁷⁴ Muñoz Carrasco, "Influencia de la Devotio moderna," 2076; Weiss, "Isabel of Castile and Flemish Aesthetics," 140-141. Northern Europe was full of such texts, but in the Iberian Peninsula for most of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, publications of treatises on the life of Christ were widely ignored, with the notable exception of Francesco Eiximenis's *Vita Christi* written around 1397 in Valencia. Chiyo Ishikawa, *The Retablo de Isabel la Católica by Juan de Flandes and Michel Sittow* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 41, note 49. Within the last fifteen years of Isabel's reign, five major original treatises regarding the life of Christ were published in the Castilian language, by El Comendador Román (1490), Diego de San Pedro (1492), Pedro Ximenes de Prexano (1493), Andrés de Lí (1494), and Juan de Padilla (1505): Ishikawa, *The Retablo*, 29.

Cristi, essential to the *devotio*, was translated into Catalan in 1482 and Spanish in 1490.⁷⁵

Additionally, Isabel commissioned Castilian translations of other “classic” texts from the *devotio moderna*, surely demonstrating what had to have been at least an intellectual interest in the movement if not actual dedicated practice.⁷⁶ For example, in 1493, Isabel commissioned Ambrosio Montesino to translate Ludolph of Saxony’s *Vita Christi*, a text fundamental to the *devotio moderna*, into Castilian.⁷⁷ And in her chapels, musical compositions directly reflective of the *devotio* and its texts became increasingly favored.⁷⁸ Within Isabel’s art collection, her famous *Retablo* (known as the *Retablo de Isabel la Católica*) by Flemish artists Juan de Flandes and Michel Sittow exemplifies the personal, mystical union with Christ’s Passion specifically encouraged by the *devotio* in dozens of small panels depicting scenes from the life of Christ. The monumental altarpiece merges these private devotion themes with a more public form of religiosity that a large *retablo* would be expected to facilitate (fig. 14).⁷⁹ That the *devotio moderna* themes are implicit, not explicit, is probably a reflection of the patron’s status. The queen could not be a fully practicing member of such a movement as the *devotio moderna* for she needed to balance her personal piety with public commitments to Roman rites that would lead her domain to greater religiosity overall. But at least on a private level, she seems to have had an interest in the *devotio*, and through her commissions across media, she encouraged its practices among her court, as demonstrated by the translations of *devotio moderna* texts, music from the composer Francisco de Peñalosa whose compositions reflect the mysticism and

⁷⁵ Muñoz Carroasco, “Influencia de la Devotio moderna,” 2075. On Thomas á Kempis’s lifelong involvement with the *devotio moderna*, see note 60 of this essay and John Van Engen, Introduction to *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 7-12.

⁷⁶ Weiss, “Isabel of Castile and Flemish Aesthetics,” 4.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁷⁸ Muñoz Carroasco, “Influencia de la Devotio moderna,” 2078.

⁷⁹ Weiss, “Isabel of Castile and Flemish Aesthetics,” 5. For an in-depth description and analysis of the many small individual panels of the *Retablo*, see Chiyo Ishikawa’s 2004 publication *The Retablo de Isabel la Católica by Juan de Flandes and Michel Sittow*.

intimacy of the *devotio*, and through paintings like Memling's Granada diptych that seem to likewise demonstrate the values of the *devotio*.⁸⁰

The way in which the Granada diptych might have made its way to Isabel is unclear, as no documents survive about its commission or its transport to Spain. Although one can probably never know with certainty how Isabel came to own it, such an unusual painting, made by an illustrious (expensive) artist, and painted to such a fine degree of finish must have been a commission and not something made for the open market.⁸¹ Memling's first version of the diptych was copied regularly by other artists while his second version was not, so this might support the idea that his first version went to the open market or otherwise remained in Bruges in a highly visible place while his second version went straight to Isabel in Castile and was commissioned directly for or by her.⁸² There are many ways one might tie Isabel to Memling and Memling to the ideas of the *devotio moderna*, and two possible avenues are laid out here. If the painting is indeed indicative of *devotio moderna* meditation, Memling must have been asked to paint it so, and he had the means around him in Bruges to determine how best to do that. As mentioned, the *devotio moderna* had a wide reach beyond the Northern Netherlands, and while Bruges did not have dedicated cloisters for *devotio moderna* practice like Northern Netherlands cities did, its influence was still to be found.⁸³ Abbot Jan Crabbe, the noted collector of *devotio moderna* texts, commissioned a large triptych from Memling in the late 1460s (fig. 15). This

⁸⁰ Muñoz Carrasco sees in Peñalosa's compositions reflections of *devotio* texts in their tone and in lyrics that draw attention the Christ's Passion and to the life of the Virgin. Muñoz Carrasco, "Influencia de la Devotio moderna," 2073-2088.

⁸¹ For a discussion of the art markets of Bruges, see Maximiliaan P. J. Martens, "Some Aspects of the Origins of the Art Market in Fifteenth-Century Bruges," in *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800*, eds. Michael North and David Ormrod (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), 19-28. For a discussion of the art markets of Castile under Isabel, particular the art fairs that she sponsored and frequented, see Mari-Tere Alvarez, "Artistic Enterprise and Spanish Patronage: The Art Market during the Reign of Isabel of Castile (1474-1504)," in *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800*, eds. Michael North and David Ormrod (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), 45-60.

⁸² De Vos, *Hans Memling*, 332-335.

⁸³ Brown, *Civic Ceremony and Religion in Medieval Bruges*, 287.

painting, now aptly called the *Triptych of Jan Crabbe*, shows very detailed portraits of Jan, his mother, and his brother in prayer before the crucifixion, accompanied by saints and the swooning Virgin.⁸⁴ The pointed realism of Crabbe's face would lead one to believe that he surely would have sat for the portrait, and during these sittings, he and Memling may have talked. Later, perhaps shortly before his death in the late 1480s, Crabbe seems to have commissioned another triptych from Memling that also included a devotional portrait of himself, though this portrait can now only be seen through scans of the triptych now in the Vienna Kunsthistorisches (fig. 16). Perhaps Crabbe died while the painting while still being completed, leaving the project unpaid for, so Memling sought out another patron whose features could be painted over Crabbe's and whose face remains on the triptych today.⁸⁵

Crabbe was a Cistercian abbot, and around the time his first Memling painting was finished, he was collecting important *devotio moderna* texts.⁸⁶ He also was known to be an avid art collector, and sometime around 1480, he commissioned Hugo van der Goes's *Death of the Virgin*, one of Hugo's late works that has been arguably influenced by the *devotio moderna* cloister to which Hugo retired.⁸⁷ Additionally, Crabbe's abbey, Ten Duinen, would be instrumental in introducing the *devotio moderna* to the Cistercian world, in part because of how supremely connected Crabbe was with important courts across Western Europe.⁸⁸ In the late

⁸⁴ John Marciari, "Memling at the Morgan: The Crabbe Triptych in Context," in *Hans Memling: Portraiture, Piety, and a Reunited Altarpiece*, ed. John Marciari, exh. cat. (New York: The Morgan Library & Museum, 2016), 26.

⁸⁵ Till-Holger Borchert, "Memling: Life and Work," in *Memling's Portraits*, ed. Till-Holger Borchert, exh. cat. (New York: Thames & Hudson and the Frick Collection, 2005), 34. See also Ingrid Falque, *Devotional Portraiture and Spiritual Experience in Early Netherlandish Painting | Catalog* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), cat. 584.

⁸⁶ Geirnaert, Johannes Crabbe," 67-68.

⁸⁷ Bernard Ridderbos, "Hugo van der Goes's *Death of the Virgin* and the Modern Devotion: an analysis of a creative process," *Oud Holland Jaargang* 120, no. 1 (2007): 7. It should be noted that Jessica Buskirk attempted to complicate the association of the Hugo's late works and his retirement to the *devotio moderna* Red Cloister ("Roodklooster") outside Brussels. Jessica Buskirk, "Hugo van der Goes's Adoration of the Shepherds: Between Ascetic Idealism and Urban Networks in Late Medieval Flanders," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 6, no. 1 (2014): 1-39.

⁸⁸ Gerinaert, "Johannes Crabbe," 71.

1470s, Crabbe became involved in Burgundian government as advisor to Mary of Burgundy, who seems to have frequently relied upon him.⁸⁹ As advisor to Mary of Burgundy, Crabbe was known to have a relatively amicable relationship with her grandmother, Isabella of Portugal, who was great aunt to Isabel of Castile, making Mary a second cousin to Isabel of Castile.⁹⁰ Crabbe also took daily mass at his abbey's Bruges house from a monk of a local Carmelite monastery, and that monastery was often a meeting point for merchants and bankers from England, Scotland, the Iberian Peninsula, and other places.⁹¹ As noted earlier, Crabbe (and perhaps his book collection with numerous *devotio moderna* texts) were known to Memling, allowing him to be acquainted enough with the *devotio* to be able to paint a suitable picture when called upon, but Crabbe might not be the one to directly connect Isabel of Castile to Memling at the time of the diptych's creation, since Crabbe died in 1488. A different individual must have connected Isabel to Memling while Memling might have been acquainted to the *devotio* through Crabbe, and Crabbe was known to have ordered multiple projects from Memling.

Another theory about the connection between Isabel and Memling rests on the figure of Francisco de Rojas, Castile's ambassador to Flanders.⁹² In 1492, Archduke Maximilian I of the

⁸⁹ Geirnaert, "Johannes Crabbe," 70. In 1480, Pierre Coustain (or one of his followers) was commissioned by Pierre Vailant, manager of Ten Duinen, to paint a cycle of seventeen panels that illustrate the genealogy of the Counts of Flanders as well as the abbots of Ten Duinen, and one such panel shows Mary of Burgundy together with Jan Crabbe (fig. 17). The inscription notes that the cycle was commissioned at the request of Mary herself and with the consent of Jan Crabbe, and this demonstrates the close connection between the two. See Falque, *Devotional Portraiture and Spiritual Experience | Catalog*, cat. 19.

⁹⁰ Initially, Crabbe's relationship with Isabella was difficult, as Isabella wanted a member of her own family to be abbot of Ten Duinen and not Crabbe. However, this is known to have changed in 1464 when Crabbe helped reconcile her husband, the Duke of Burgundy, and her son, Charles the Bold, Count of Charolais. Geirnaert, "Johannes Crabbe," 67 and 70. Also, Isabella of Portugal, Duchess of Burgundy (1397-1471), was daughter of John I of Portugal (1357-1433) and Phillipa of Lancaster (1360-1415). Isabel of Castile (1451-1504) was their great-granddaughter through their son, John, Constable of Portugal (1400-1442). Isabella of Portugal, Duchess of Burgundy was great aunt to Isabel of Castile, and Mary of Burgundy was Isabel of Castile's second cousin. In a double wedding in 1496, Isabel of Castile married her son and daughter to Mary of Burgundy's son and daughter. Joana of Castile married Philip the Handsome, and Juan married Margaret.

⁹¹ Geirnaert, "Johannes Crabbe," 67.

⁹² Winter, "A Book of Hours of Isabel la Católica," 346.

Holy Roman Empire, husband to the deceased Mary of Burgundy, entered into negotiations with Isabel of Castile to marry his children to Isabel's children, who would be third cousins through Isabel and Mary's great grandparents John I of Portugal and Phillipa of Lancaster. The double wedding would ultimately take place in 1496, a time when Spanish diplomacy was clearly led by Francisco de Rojas.⁹³ Not only did Francisco de Rojas begin making long stays in Bruges in 1492—near the approximate date of the Granada diptych's creation—but he also was an art patron keenly interested in art trends, and he seems to have commissioned a large work from Memling himself sometime in the middle of the century, perhaps around 1467, demonstrating that he knew the artist (fig. 18).⁹⁴ On the occasion of the double wedding, Francisco gave Isabel of Castile a sumptuous gift, a breviary now known as the *Breviary of Queen Isabel la Católica*; the fact of the gift is documented by a page that combines the arms of Isabel, her children, and Francisco with an inscription that records the book as a gift from him to Isabel (fig. 19). Another manuscript owned by Isabel, the so-called *Book of Hours of Queen Isabel la Católica*, was also potentially a gift from Francisco, who was a “polished and multifarious” individual and used gifts to curry favor, and through these texts he seems to have hoped to win favor by appealing to Isabel's piety.⁹⁵ As part of his aim to elevate his position with this powerful queen leading up to the marriage of her children to Mary of Burgundy's children, Francisco easily could have commissioned Memling in 1492, when he began spending lengthy periods in Bruges and when marriage negotiations began, to paint a diptych for her that played to both her piety and her noted

⁹³ Winter, “A Book of Hours of Isabel la Católica,” 346. “Spanish diplomacy in the reign of the Catholic monarchs plainly was led by Don Francisco. Besides the double marriage of 1496, he also played a major role in equally arduous negotiations such as extracting financial concessions from the papacy or the return of the Kingdom of Naples to Aragon.”

⁹⁴ See Winter, “A Book of Hours of Isabel la Católica,” 346-347 for his time in Bruges. Francisco's painting survives in part. It was probably once a triptych, but now only the panel with Francisco's devotional portrait survives. The panel is in a private collection.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 347. “The *Book of Hours of Isabel la Católica* might well have been, as in the case of the *Breviary*, a calculated gift from this polished and multifarious individual.”

interest in the *devotio moderna*. Still, however, it is impossible to say with much certainty how the diptych came to Isabel, and Francisco de Rojas represents only one of many possibilities.

Despite the lack of certainty, it can be said that the diptych itself seems to subtly refer to Isabel. Other than the addition of the blurred gaze, Memling made two other important changes to the Granada diptych from his first version: an added sixth mourner and simplified clothes. As for the simplified clothes for each figure, they not only appeal to *devotio moderna* ideals of simplicity, modesty, and austerity in one's life, they also appeal to the ideals that Isabel's very close advisor and confessor Hernando de Talavera had with regard to the costuming of Christ and the Virgin in imagery.⁹⁶ Hernando de Talavera argued for simple illustrations that did not dress the figures in expensive, elaborate costumes whose only purpose was to adorn the painting.⁹⁷ And to him as in the *devotio moderna*, the lives of Christ and the Virgin were absolutely central for any meditation, so a diptych with the Deposition on one side and the mourning Virgin on the other would be a perfect fit for Isabel.⁹⁸ If Francisco de Rojas indeed ordered the painting from Memling for Isabel, he might have also told Memling to simplify the dress so as to make the painting more appropriate for Isabel's particular piety. She closely relied upon Hernando de Talavera's spiritual advice, with whom she had the closest relationship of all her religious leaders.⁹⁹ Furthermore, austerity seems to be such an important aspect of *devotio moderna* practitioners' outward life that some authors have thought that the *devotio* cannot be directly associated with Early Netherlandish painting which frequently, as in the case of Jan van

⁹⁶ For an example of the austerity and simplicity encouraged for the *devotio* adherents of the Windesheim, see Finkenstaedt, "Two Netherlandish Engravings and the Windesheim," 42 and 44. On Hernando de Talvera's opinions on costuming in art, see Chiyo Ishikawa, "Hernando de Talvera and Isabelline Imagery," in *Queen Isabel I of Castile: Power, Patronage, Persona*, ed. Barbara F. Weissberger (Rochester: Tamesis, 2008), 74.

⁹⁷ Hernando de Talvera seems to have also cared for the Flemish aesthetic, as he owned work by Michel Sittow, a Fleming working in Isabel's court. Ishikawa, "Hernando de Talvera," 74.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁹⁹ Ishikawa, "Hernando de Talvera," 71.

Eyck, is elaborately embellished with finely detailed painted fabrics and gems.¹⁰⁰ The intentionally simplified costumes on the Granada panels are a far cry from the fine brocade and inlaid jewels that are found both in Memling's oeuvre at large and in the general tastes of Early Netherlandish painting, and the change seems appropriate to a shift in focus towards an inner spiritual vision and away from earthly glory. Such changes might have found approval in the *devotio moderna* and with the queen.

The added sixth mourner might be a reference to Isabel herself, if not an outright devotional portrait.¹⁰¹ The figure is quite unlike the others. Her prayerful attitude indicates her spiritual or metaphorical separation between the other figures, who act more as a group. Instead of expressing shock and grief, her hands are clasped in prayer as tears roll down her face, and even her veil seems more modern than the veils of the other figures.¹⁰² The veil closely resembles the veils given to Jan Crabbe's mother, Anna Willemzoon, and her patron saint, St. Anne, in Memling's *Triptych of Jan Crabbe*, both of whom are dressed in fifteenth-century attire (fig. 15). The particular shape of her veil also links her to the Virgin, though her veil is not covered by a mantle like the Virgin's is. The addition of a mantle would signify a cloistered nun to a fifteenth-century audience, while the veil alone signifies piety and modesty, as in the figure of the matriarch in Memling's *Altarpiece of Jacob Floreins* in the Louvre (fig. 20). Francisco de Rojas seems to have elsewhere attempted to compare Isabel "the Catholic" to the Virgin; in the breviary that he gave the queen, he placed her arms on the page with an illumination of the

¹⁰⁰ Finkenstaedt, "Two Netherlandish Engravings and the Windesheim," 42 and 44-45.

¹⁰¹ Gonzalez Garcia noticeably avoids identifying this figure despite identifying the other female figures as the Virgin and Three Holy Women. Gonzalez Garcia, "Empathetic Images and Painted Dialogues," 502-504.

¹⁰² Her clasped hands, with fingers interlocking, is unlike the more common prayerful position of pressing one's hands together with palms and fingers flat, but it is still found in some donor portraits, such as in the female donor in Rogier van der Weyden's *Crucifixion Triptych*, 1443-1445, in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

Crowning of the Virgin.¹⁰³ And excluding images of the Virgin and Child, Memling seems to have almost always painted the Virgin with this particular veil, either on its own or covered by a mantle, so there is a clear association here with the sixth figure and the Virgin, and a distinction between the sixth figure and the other mourners. Additionally, her place on the dexter side of the panel, despite being mostly hidden by the figures on the first row, would be an honorific position appropriate for a queen so famously pious.¹⁰⁴ The principle of dexterity and the honor associated with one's physical placement among others was enormously important, particularly to Burgundy. In the mid 1480s, Aliénor de Poitiers, lady-in-waiting to none other than Isabelle de Bourbon, Mary of Burgundy, and Joana of Castile at different points in her life, wrote *Les honneurs de la cour*, which documented the seemingly obsessive degree that the Burgundian court treated following the rules of dexterity.¹⁰⁵ If Memling, or his patron, sought to honor Isabel of Castile, the dexter side of the second row of figures would be the correct place for her in the panel. Interestingly, Thomas á Kempis, in a text written for cloistered *devotio moderna* practitioners, wrote, "If you love our Lady and desire her protection in every affliction, then stand by her by the side of the cross of Jesus," and this position, between the cross and the Virgin, is the sixth mourner's exact position.¹⁰⁶

The inclusion of a donor figure, particularly one seemingly so modestly hidden deep in the picture who expresses prayerful tears, or *gratia lacrymarum*, fits well within the ideals of the

¹⁰³ *Coronation of the Virgin* by Gerard Horenbout, in *Breviary of Queen Isabel la Católica*, British Library, Add. Ms. 18851, fol. 437r. See Winter, "Book of Hours of Isabel the Catholic," 344.

¹⁰⁴ Hugo van der Velden, "Diptych Altarpieces and the Principle of Dextrality," in *Essays in Context: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych*, eds. John Oliver Hand and Ron Spronk, published in conjunction with the exhibition *Prayers and Portraits: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych* (Cambridge and New Haven: Harvard University Art Museums in association with Yale University Press, 2006), 124-155.

¹⁰⁵ Van der Velden, "Principle of Dextrality," 130-131. Van der Velden cites Aliénor de Poitiers, *Les honneurs de la cour*, in *Mémoires sur l'ancienne chevalerie*, ed. J. B. de la Curne de Sainte-Palaye, 2 vols. (Paris, 1826), 2:143-216.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas á Kempis, *In Praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, trans. Robert E. Patterson (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1956), 12, cited by Hull, "Devotional Aspects of Hans Memline's Paintings," 208.

devotio moderna, for the ultimate goal of any *devotio* practitioner is to experience mystical union with Christ by imagining oneself present within holy narratives.¹⁰⁷ The Brussels prioress Janne Colijns and Tongeren canon Renier van Hulsberg, both members of the Congregation of Windesheim, the monastic branch of the *devotio moderna*, had devotional portraits of themselves painted within holy scenes (figs. 21 and 22).¹⁰⁸ And the married couple Lieven van Pottelsberghe and Livina van Steeland, founders of a bursary for ten schoolchildren at the school of the Brethren of the Common Life, another name for the *devotio moderna*, had a triptych painted by Gerard Horenbout with donor portraits of themselves and their children in prayer with devotional texts on the left and right panels (fig. 23).¹⁰⁹ Like these other *devotio moderna* donor images, the sixth mourner the Granada panel has an unfocused gaze, one directed loosely at the narrative before her. This semi-directional gaze also distinguishes her from the other figures in the panel; she alone perhaps still needs some guidance from the physical world as she seeks spiritual unity with the divine.

The Granada diptych is a curious little painting with many questions imbedded within it concerning its patronage and its devotional function. Although this essay has focused more on the right panel, showing the mourners at the Deposition, the left panel, showing the Deposition itself, is supportive of the same principles of *devotio moderna* meditation. The figures carrying Christ's body from the cross in the left panel present Christ's body and his blood—foreshadowing the presentation of the Eucharist—to the Virgin and her retinue of mourners on the opposite panel. On this Deposition panel, while we see finer, brocaded costuming, no nearby

¹⁰⁷ Ludolph of Saxony encouraged devotees to meditate on each step of Christ's suffering until one has "a plenteous stream of tears." *The Hours of the Passion taken from The Life of Christ by Ludolph the Saxon* (London: Burns and Oates, 1887), 10, cited by Hull, "Devotional Aspects of Hans Memlinc's Paintings," 208.

¹⁰⁸ Falque, *Devotional Portraiture and Spiritual Experience | Catalog*, cats. 490 and 47.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, cat. 365. The central panel of their supposed triptych is lost.

city is depicted in the background. Perhaps these figures refer more directly to the universal priestly role at mass, the Church-sanctioned expression of devotion and hope for salvation. Like priests, these men present the body and blood of Christ to the rest of us, lay and cloistered alike, who might find in the figures of the mourners and the pseudo-devotional portrait of Isabel a reference point. The women are dressed more simply, more austere than women at the queen's court, and behind them—and likewise behind us—is the evocation of the city that they have left behind but to which they must ultimately return after beholding the body and blood of Christ. The *devotio moderna* was an “urban” religious movement, not encouraging the strict monasticism that entirely leaves behind the urban masses. One would live among the people, but in one's devotions, one would solitarily leave behind the earthly world and enter into mystical union with the divine.

The diptych is ultimately an image about spiritual vision, articulated in an inventive way, and demonstrative of the acuity of both Isabel and Memling in matters of contemporary devotional practice. The most common application of the unfocused gaze in this period was found in donor portraits—whose splayed, non-seeing eyes indicate a mental or spiritual engagement with the narrative around them rather than a physical one—and *sacra conversazione* paintings that include holy individuals from many diverse narratives and who thus are not engaged with each other because they share no narrative. The Granada diptych's holy figures all share a narrative but still do not see each other or the event unfolding before them, which to a viewer informed of the values of the *devotio* like Isabel was, would indicate an existence in a holier world transcendent of the senses, as well as an experience understood not with the eyes but with the spirit. The Virgin and her retinue in the painting model the ideal way to engage with scripture and the holy individuals and narratives described by the painter for this purpose.

Among the scholarly community, the *devotio moderna* was previously thought to be an anti-intellectual movement with no major impact on art production and style in the late medieval period.¹¹⁰ It is easy to misunderstand its influence on art based on the numerous contemporaneous writings that show that *devotio* leaders preferred aniconic meditation, but they valued sight—ocular and spiritual—and still approved of and desired images, specifically as tools for the imagination. Furthermore, it seems almost impossible that a movement so widespread and so popular would not have some input on arts, especially as its practice was not limited to monasteries but was also found in the very social groups creating and buying art. In recent decades, interest in the influence of the *devotio moderna* on the arts of the later Middle Ages has increased, though the specific evidences of that influence are not always clear, and subsequent art historical scholarship is needed to further codify that. However, in the case of the Granada diptych, the unfocused gaze of its figures seems to be one way that the *devotio moderna* and its imaginative devotional practices influenced art production, encouraging viewers to appreciate the described narrative with more than just their eyes but also with their spirit.

¹¹⁰ J.G.R. Acquoy, *Het Klooster te Windesheim en zijn invloed*, vol. 1 (Utrecht, 1876), 244-245, cited by Finkenstaedt, "Two Netherlandish Engravings and the Windesheim," 42, note 1.

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Figures



Figure 1: Hans Memling, *Deposition Diptych*, oil on panel, c. 1492-1494, Capilla Real, Granada Spain

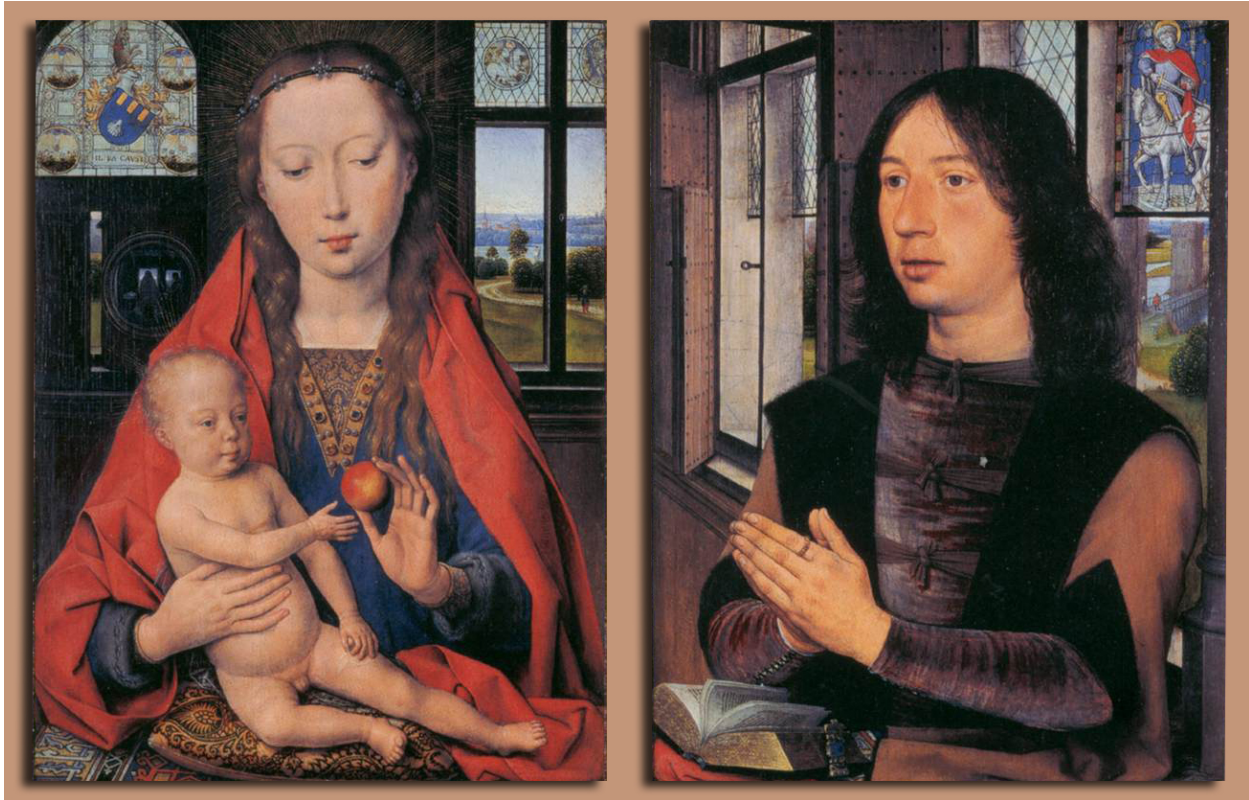


Figure 2: Hans Memling, *Diptych of Maarten van Nieuwenhove*, oil on panel, 1487, Old St. John's Hospital, Bruges.



Figure 3: Hugo van der Goes, *Deposition Diptych*, tempera on canvas, c. 1480. Deposition: Private Collection. Mourners: Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.



Figure 4: Hans Memling, *Deposition Diptych*, oil on panel, c. 1485-1490. Deposition: private collection. Mourners: Sao Paulo Museum of Art, Brazil.



Figure 5: Hans Memling, *Christ Blessing*, oil on panel, 1481, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 6: Gerard David, *Virgo inter Virgines*, oil on wood, c. 1509, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen.



Figure 7: Jan van Eyck, *The Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele*, oil on wood, 1434-1436, Groeningemuseum, Bruges.



Figure 8: Andrea Mantegna, *Presentation at the Temple*, tempera on canvas, c. 1455, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.



Figure 9: Jan Polack, Sänftl family *Schutzmantelmadonna*, 1510, Frauenkirche, Munich.



Figure 10: Robert Campin (and workshop), *Mérode Altarpiece*, oil on panel, 1428, The Cloisters, New York City.



Figure 11: Master I. A. M. of Zwolle, *The Lactation of St. Bernard*, engraving, c. 1480-1485, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

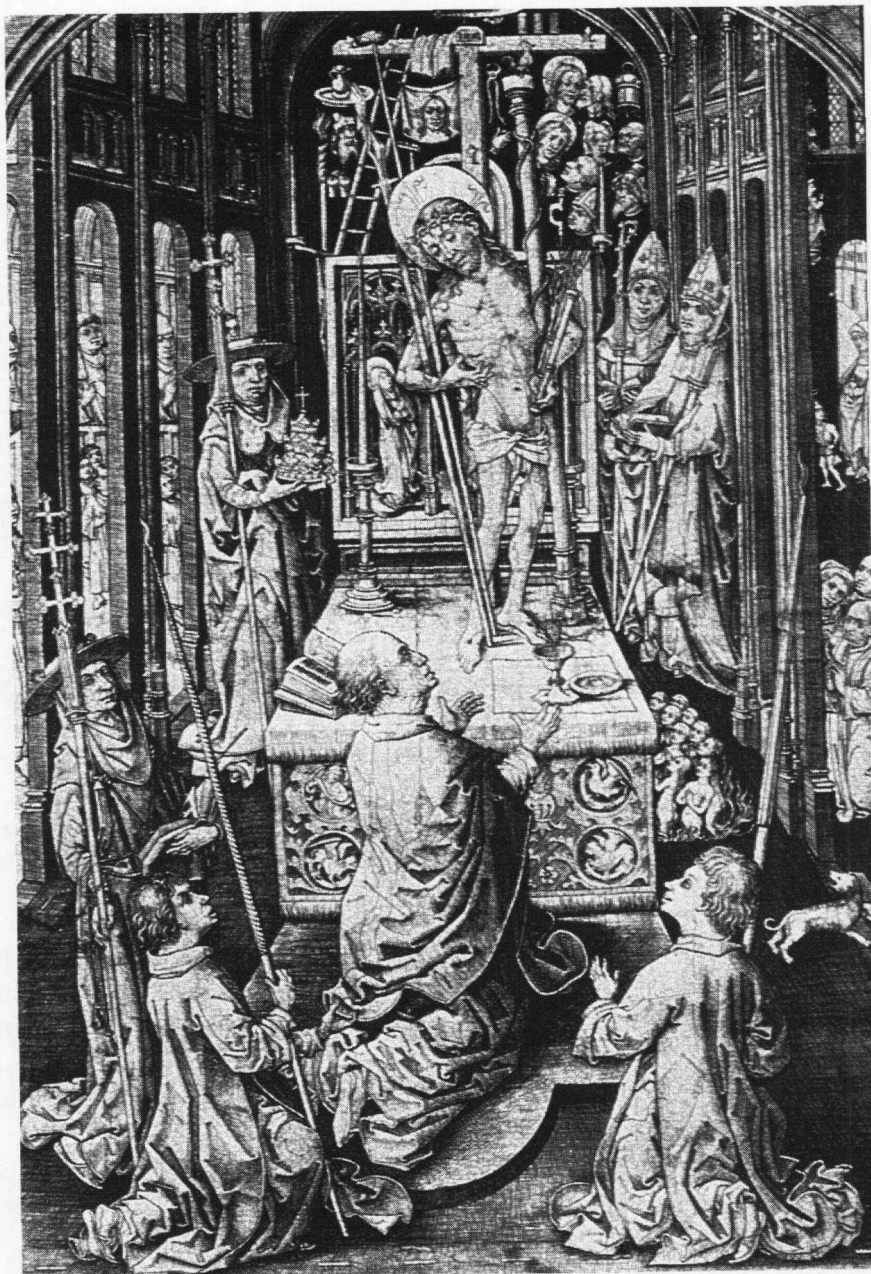


Illustration 6: Master IAM van Zwolle, *The Mass of Saint Gregory*, late fifteenth century, engraving, 323 x 224 mm, Bayrische Graphische Sammlung, München.

Figure 12: Master I.A.M. van Zwolle, *The Mass of Saint Gregory*, late fifteenth century, engraving, Bayrische Graphische Sammlung, Munich. (Image derived from Christine Göttler, "Is Seeing Believing? The Use of Evidence in Representations of the Miraculous Mass of Saint Gregory," *The Germanic Review* 76, no. 2 (2001): 134.)



Figure 13: Juan de Tordesillas, *Queen Isabel in her Chapel*, detail, tempera and gold on vellum, 1496, *Missal of Isabel la Católica*, Capilla Real, Granada.



Figure 14: Juan de Flandes and Michel Sittow, some of the extant panels of the *Retablo de Isabel la Católica*, which was never fully completed and is broken up between many collections. C. 1496-1504, oil on panel, Palacio Real de Madrid. See Chiyo Ishikawa, *The Retablo de Isabel la Católica by Juan de Flandes and Michel Sittow*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004).

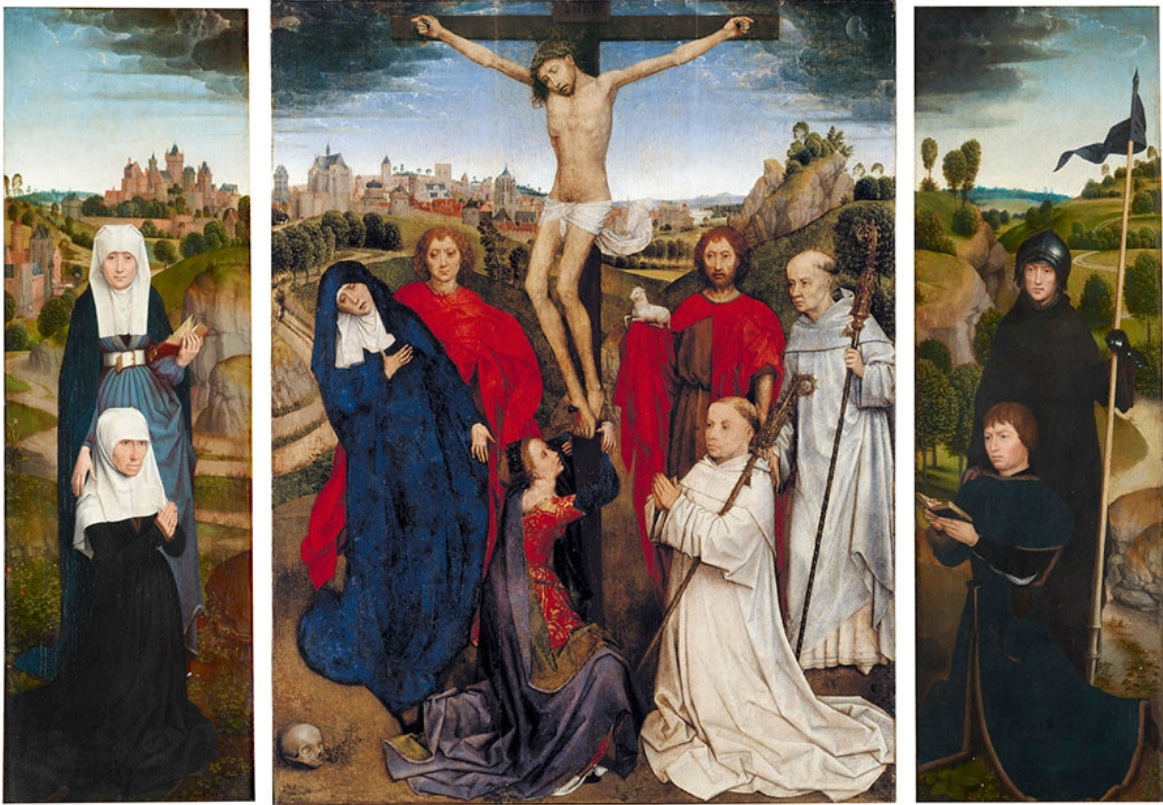


Figure 15: Hans Memling, *Triptych of Jan Crabbe*, open, c. 1467-1470, oil on panel. Side panels: Morgan Library and Museum, New York City. Central panel: Musei Civici, Vicenza.



Figure 16: Hans Memling, *Saint John Triptych*, oil on panel, c. 1485-1490, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 18: Hans Memling, *Devotional Portrait of Francisco de Rojas*, oil on panel, c. 1460s-1480s, private collection.



Figure 19: Gerard Horenbout et. al., *Arms Queen Isabel and Those of her Son Juan and Her Daughter Juana; Coronation of the Virgin with the Arms of Francisco de Rojas*, tempera and gold on vellum, c. 1496, fols. 436v-437 of *Breviary of Queen Isabel la Católica*, British Library, Add. Ms. 18851, London.



Figure 20: Hans Memling, *Altarpiece of Jacob Floriens*, c. 1485-1490, oil on panel, Louvre, Paris.



Figure 21: Master of the Legend of St. Barbara, *Epitaph of Janne Colijns*, c. 1490-1500, oil on panel, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.



Figure 22: Anonymous Liège Master, *The Martyrdom of St. Lambert with Renier van Hulsberg in Prayer*, c. 1500-1550, Musée Grand Curtius, Liège.



Figure 23: Gerard Horenbout, *Portraits of Lieven van Pottelsberghe and Livina van Steeland and their Children in Prayer*, c. 1524-1531, oil on panel, Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent