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Ragnhild M. Bø

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Introduction

Visual representations of the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother appear in Italian manuscripts around 1300, linked to an episode in the Meditationes Vitae Christi. The visual dissemination, however, never matched its textual dissemination and it was still a rare motif when Rogier van der Weyden included it in what has become its epitome, the right panel of the Miraflores Triptych painted in the early 1440s. The textual sources and the pictorial development of the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother were both thoroughly outlined by James D. Breckenridge in 1957, but the motif has since received little attention. In this article, I aim to revisit it by also including a group of objects not observed by Breckenridge, namely Netherlandish carved altarpieces.

Admired for their technical virtuosity, rich ornamentation and dense narratives, Netherlandish altarpieces spread all over Europe between c.1480–1560, attracting a diverse group of customers. As posited by Lynn F. Jacobs, however, Netherlandish altarpieces expressed “not only distinct tastes, but also particular religious values.” From the fourteenth century onwards, a number of religious reforms occurred in the Netherlands, occasioning new communities of interpretation and devotional innovations in both textual and visual culture, and targeting clerics and lay people alike. Without dismissing the effects of patronage, commissions and the circulation of models, this article argues for more weight to be given to the agency of the often anonymous individual artist within workshops in the selection of religious scenes in larger altarpieces.

Commencing with some introductory notes on the encounter between mother and son in devotional texts and images, the first parts of this article thus proceed by cross-referencing the inclusion and employment of the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother in late medieval altarpieces with the contemporary flourishing of Vita Christi-literature and artisans’ and artists’ possible increased partaking in religious reading.

Whereas pictorial tradition, artistic imagination and religious reading would integrate at the place of production, the potential for discrepancies in perceptions of the altarpieces would increase correspondingly with the distance traveled. The Netherlandish altarpieces exported to Scandinavia are interesting cases.
in point: On the one hand, in this area the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother is only known from these imported altarpieces; on the other hand, however, the motif appears proportionally more frequent in the altarpieces imported to Scandinavia than elsewhere. The last part of the article discusses to which extent altarpieces made for export were more prone to receive unsanctioned motifs such as the Resurrected Christ Appearing to his Mother; if the many examples found in Scandinavia are merely an accident; or if the appreciation of the scene in the north is to be traced not to Vita Christi-literature in general, but to the encounter between mother and son referenced in the visions of St Birgitta.

Text, image and religious reading

Whereas the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother was disseminated in textual form in the Meditationes Vitae Christi from the mid-thirteenth century, illuminations of the encounter seems to have emerged only around 1300, either in copies of the Meditationes itself or in derivative devotional texts. In the Netherlands, the earliest depiction is an illuminated scene in the devotional treatise Ci nous dist from c.1390 (Fig. 1). Its more famous – and probably the more copied – depiction, however, is the one incorporated in Rogier van der Weyden’s Miraflores Triptych (Fig. 2), painted in the early 1440s. Although documentary evidence is inconclusive when it comes to the commission of the altarpiece, it is known that Juan II of Castile gave a triptych by Master Rogier to the Carthusian monastery at Miraflores (Burgos) in 1445; if the king was indeed the commissioner, he was probably aided by his Brussels envoy Juan de Murillo.

Framed by imitative sculpture with episodes from the Life of the Virgin, Rogier’s triptych displays the Holy Family, the Lamentation and the Resurrected Christ Appearing to his Mother, noted by Alfred Acres to be “three non-biblical tableaux of distilled devotional content.” Visualizing scenes corresponding to Gospel accounts only in the imitative sculpture, the altarpiece is also uncommon in being divided into three equally sized compartments instead of the traditional triptych form. Furthermore, the altarpiece differs from other altarpieces painted by Rogier because the texts on the banderoles held by angels at the crest of each arch do not quote Biblical passages verbatim. Rather, they paraphrase three episodes from Scripture referring to a crown and elaborate these into Marian praise, communicating that the first crown is awarded for her purity, the second for her faith and the third for her perseverance.
Nicola Sinclair has convincingly argued the three-themed division and the emphasis on the Virgin makes the triptych an important precursor to the rosary for which the Carthusians at Mirafloros were an ideal audience.

In the depiction of the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother, Christ steps into the Virgin’s dwelling as she looks at him with her hands raised in surprise. The actual Resurrection takes place in the landscape visible through the open porch in the background. Next to the Resurrection, the three Maries are seen approaching the tomb, emphasizing the message of the motif in the front: that Christ appeared first to His mother. When analyzing the Miraflores Triptych, Erwin Panofsky took this message in earnest and found the motif to be based “in some way or other, on Pseudo-Bonaventure’s Meditationes.”

The encounter between the Resurrected Christ and His mother unfolds as:

Then, while she was praying this way and gently weeping, look there, the Lord Jesus suddenly did come: dressed in whitest white garments, serene countenance, beautiful glorious and rejoicing. At her side, he addressed her: “Greeting, holy parent.” She, turning at once asked, “Is it you, Jesus, my son?” Then she knelt to adore him. And he knelt in similar fashion, saying, “My dearest mother, I am he (John, 6, 20); I have risen, and here I am with you.”

Following up on Panofsky’s research, however, James D. Breckenridge, demonstrated that narratives placing the Virgin “on stage,” often as present at the grave, emerged early on, both among Coptic and Byzantine writers and in the Latin West. According to Breckenridge, all authors seemingly shared the belief that “a meeting at which Christ announced his Resurrection to His mother was no less than a logical necessity in the completion of his ministry.”

The urge to have the Virgin written into narratives on Christ’s postmortal life infused texts already in the twelfth century probably due to a number of cultural transfers and codifications and amplifications of a body of legends present in the written tradition of the Church as well as in wider oral traditions.

The Meditationes may have been the first text where the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother is defined as an actual event, yet Jacobus Voragine also delineated the possibility of such an encounter in his Legenda Aurea in the 1260s. Similar encounters take place in texts adapted from the Meditationes.
in the fourteenth century; in Cistercian circles by Guillaume de Degueville’s *Pelerinage de Jesu* and – important for my subsequent discussion of artists participating in religious reading – in Dominican and Carthusian circles by Ludolph of Saxony’s *Vita Christi*.\(^19\)

The encounter between the resurrected Christ and the Virgin was also included in texts provided by visionary women, such as St Birgitta of Sweden (d. 1373).\(^20\) In St Birgitta’s recalling of the encounter, the Virgin herself puts the scene into words:

> After my son’s death, I the Mother of God, was saddened with a sorrow beyond understanding, but palpable to my touch, he appeared to me before appearing to anyone else, and he comforted me and reminded me that he would be seen ascending into heaven. Although this is not in Scripture because of my humility, it is nonetheless the truth of the matter that when my son arose he appeared to me first before anyone else.\(^21\)

Although confirming the need among writers from earlier centuries to have the Virgin written into the earliest moments of the Resurrection, St Birgitta did not elaborate on the conversation between mother and son, nor did she voice anything about an imaginative onlooker or a reader’s emotional response.\(^22\)

One author who is absent from Panofsky and Breckenridge’s discussions of the motif is Thomas à Kempis (d.1471), an Augustinian actively involved in the religious reform movement known as the *devotio moderna*, founded in Deventer by Geert Groote in 1374.\(^23\) Calling for apostolic renewal through the rediscovery of pious practices such as humility, obedience and simplicity of life for community members, the movement’s ideas would also reach larger audiences through writings, such as Groote’s *De quattuor generibus meditabilium* (late 1370s) and *De Imitatione Christi*, written by – or ascribed to – Thomas (c.1418).\(^24\) Existing in numerous manuscripts and printed editions, *De Imitatione Christi* enjoyed great popularity and profoundly influenced religious practices in late-medieval societies all over Western Europe. Thomas also wrote other spiritual treatises and sermons, such as *Orationes et meditationes de vita Christi*.\(^25\)

In this latter text, Thomas identifies the post-resurrection events in ways similar to the original Italian text allowing for encounters between Christ and the Magdalene, the Virgin, St Peter, the disciples on their way to Emmaus and St Thomas, but he expands significantly on each appearance. Although the Virgin is second to the Magdalene in the order of appearances in Thomas’ text, the text itself assures the reader she was the first:

> This then is to be piously believed by all the faithful, that before any one [sic] else Thou didst first of all visit Thy most holy Mother, who was sorrowing deeply at Thy Passion; and by Thy presence didst dispel all her grief and sorrow, and didst fill her heart with joy.\(^26\)

Unlike copies of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, as well as copies of various translations of the text and copies of the *Legenda Aurea*, the few extracts from Thomas à Kempis’ *Orationes* included in late fifteenth books of hours and devotional miscellanies seem not to have been accompanied by illuminations apart from decorated initials.\(^27\) When the *Orationes* was printed in Utrecht in 1474 it was also without illustrations. The Utrecht printing, however, is verbatim with Thomas’ autograph text and includes punctuation marks (flexa) to indicate the rhythm and intonation required when reading aloud. Clearly designed for public reading, the text may indeed have
been known to far more persons than the small number of manuscripts and editions of printed books indicate.²⁸

Analyzing Rogier’s *Miraflores Triptych*, Panofsky found the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother to be “characteristic of Roger’s psychology,” but also acknowledged the possibility “that the rare subject was code-determined by the wishes of the patron (...).”²⁹ More poignantly yet less discussed is Panofsky’s assumption that “he [Rogier] knew of course the Meditationes.”³⁰ Admittedly, assessing artisans’ and artists’ actual involvement in religious reading is a challenging task and there is little documentary evidence to prove if artists read books themselves or if they would acquire knowledge of devotional texts merely as attendants. Even for Antwerp, where preserved documentation allow for prosopographical analyses of artists’ whereabouts and careers, intellectual interests and religious views often remain obscured.³¹ Various circumstantial evidence, however, indicate artisans read vernacular religious literature and were involved in the circulation, dissemination, appropriation and even creation of religious texts as religious books were common features in the houses and workshops of late medieval artisans.³² Examples of book-owning artisans are the goldsmith Jean Turquam from Tournai, who according to his post mortem inventory from 1519 possessed among other books a Life of Christ in French and a French translation of Thomas à Kempis’s *Imitatio Christi*; the merchant Jean Piece from Amiens was recorded in 1518 as owning a French translation of the *Legenda Aurea*; and Pierre de Coyn from the same town, was known in the previous year to possess a copy of Ludolph of Saxony’s *Vita Christi*.³³ It is very likely artists would possess similar literature.

Rarely mentioning book titles, *boedels* (inventories of movable estates) from Antwerp c.1530–50 does not match the detailed information in the post mortem inventories from the north of France. They do disclose, however, that the amount of books in households of burghers differed both in numbers and content and that some of these books were intended for religious or devotional purposes.³⁴ If the dissemination of religious and devotional texts is somewhat obscured, the visual material culture listed in these *boedels* offer a more solid evidence for household possessions of religious items: There are a great many crucifixes and paintings of the Virgin, as well as items more specifically designed for domestic devotion, such as a rosary painted on cloth and on display in a frame, a painting of the Fourteenth Holy Helpers, a *Johannesschüssel*, and what is described as a Transfiguration with two doors (a triptych?).³⁵ Although not immediately recognizable from any of the items listed in these sixteenth-century *boedels*, a household triptych with the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother painted on the inside of the right wing from c.1500 (Fig. 3) and a contemporary household

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Fig. 3. House altar, Brussels (?), 1490–1510, polychrome wood. Brussels, Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire, Inv. No. V.354.
etable with the scene included as one of four scenes surrounding the Crucifixion indicate two visual contexts in which the motif could be experienced outside the church.  

As the *Miraflores Triptych* was shipped to Castile soon after its creation, the novel iconography may not have had much immediate impact on the iconography of Netherlandish altarpieces. A drawing executed with brown pen on preparatory drawings of black chalk from Rogier’s workshop, however, demonstrates that the motif was subject to experiments. Dated to 1435–50, it has a similar exposition of mother and son as the scene in the *Miraflores Triptych*, yet the architectural background is diminished and there is an angel on the grave in the background instead of the risen Christ (Fig. 4). Its rather coarse nature suggests it was intended as a model for painters to refine in oil, embodying, in the words of Stefan Hautekeete, “a pictorial solution for the appearance that was entirely new and very quickly became the guideline others would follow.” Others did indeed follow, but apparently only around 1475–80 when depictions similar to Rogier’s employment of the motif appeared in altarpieces painted by the Master of the Ehningen Retable and by an anonymous follower of Rogier, as well as in the *Paganotti Triptych* by the Master of the Ursula Legend.

At the same time as the motif (re)emerged in these painted altarpieces, it found its way into printed books, an imperative medium for the dissemination for both texts and images at the end of the fifteenth century. Gerhard Leeu’s work on the religious vernacular text the *Devote ghetiden* in 1483 and in 1485/86, for example, is believed not only to have accelerated iconographic developments in a variety of media, but also to have informed the minds of readers and viewers and to have influenced their perception and appreciation of art. In 1487, Leeu printed the first edition of *Taboeck vanden leven Ihesu Christi*, a dialogue in Dutch between Man and Scripture adapted from Ludolph of Saxony’s *Vita Christi*. This is the first Netherlandish incunable to contain an image of the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother, and it does so in the form of a half-page wood cut (Fig. 5). Just like most artisans and artists in Antwerp, Leeu carried out his commercial endeavors at the *Pand* and enjoyed a membership of the guild of St Luke, perchance interacting with the sculptural artists employing the motif in contemporary altarpieces.

Having had a rather longstanding pictorial tradition in copies of the *Meditationes* and derivative devotional texts, the inclusion of
the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother in an illuminated book of hours made in Poitiers(?) between 1450–75 (Fig. 9) points to a new artistic engagement with the motif. Replacing the commonly found Annunciation at the opening of Matins, it lacks the narrative context offered in the Vita Christi-literature. It is also applied as a moment in the Life of the Virgin rather than as a moment in Christ’s Passion. From its inclusion in preserved religious material culture from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it seems the motif eventually parted ways into two different visual situations: It could be included as a scene from the Life of the Virgin and in particular as one of the Seven Joys of the Virgin; or it could be included as one of the final scenes of the Passion. The inclusion in Passion narratives in carved altarpieces is the more common, and it is to these I now turn.

The Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother as a motif in Netherlandish altarpieces

In Netherlandish altarpieces, the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother materialized both in sculpture and painting and it persisted through all stages of their formal developments, occurring in altarpieces with square-endings, ogees and rounded tops alike. The small sculpted version in Strängnäs I is probably the earliest occurrence (Fig. 7(a,b)). The altarpiece is attributed to a collaborator or follower of Jan I or Jan II Borman in Brussels and...
commissioned by or on behalf of Cordt Rogge, bishop in Strängnäs, in the 1480s. The encounter between mother and son is included together with minor sculptures of the Resurrection and the Supper in Emmaus in the tracery above Christ Reveals himself to the Disciples. As it is, the three smaller scenes likely allude to the illusionary sculpted arches found in Rogier’s Miraflores Triptych. The Rogerian influence on the artists carving the Strängnäs I is also present in stylistic choices, for example in the bending pose of one of the women witnessing the Crucifixion which is similar to the Magdalene in Rogier’s Descent from the Cross.

Altarpieces with an exposition of the motif similar to Strangnäs I include Strängnäs II, the altarpieces made for the Beguine convent at Tongeren and for the parish church in Münstermaifeld, as well as the ones if not made for, now in or known to have been in the parish churches of Elmpt, Häverö, Jonsberg and Västerfärnebo. In Strängnäs II, an altarpiece more loosely associated with Cordt Rogge, four post-resurrection appearances – the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother, the Noli me tangere, Christ Appearing to St Peter and the Supper in Emmaus – all surround the larger Resurrection. In Häverö, the motif is included together with the women at the tomb also in the margins of the Resurrection, whereas as the Incredulity of Thomas is included in painting on the small wing above. In Elmpt, the motif is included above the Lamentation, together with a small sculpted scene of the Last Rites, whereas the Noli me tangere is painted on the outside of the small shutters; in the altarpieces from Tongeren, Västerfärnebo and Jonsberg, the Resurrected Christ Appearing to his Mother is included together with the Noli me tangere in the margins of the Resurrection in the two former and the Lamentation in the latter.

When included in the form of a painted scene, the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother is most commonly situated on the inside of the small movable upper wing to the viewer’s right. Such is the position in the Passion altarpieces in Botkyrka, By, Château de Pagny, Frustuna, d’Herbais-sous-Piétrain, Heimbach, Hökhovud, Münstermaifeld,
Nordingrå, Opitter, Pont-à-Mousson, Schwerte, Västerlövsta, Vårtnäs, Wattignies and Zoutleeuw. In the altarpieces in Waase, the scene is included in the upper wing to the viewer’s left. Except for the Leuven provenance of the altarpiece in Zoutleeuw and the Brussels provenance of By and Nordingrå, all are Antwerp products and all are Passion altarpieces, mostly dated to the earlier decades of the sixteenth century.

Although the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother is painted on a smaller surface, entrusted with fewer details and relegated to a marginal part of the altarpiece, the motif is otherwise employed as by Rogier: as a visual rendering of the encounter between mother and son only in an interior setting. In the altarpiece from d’Herbais-sous-Piétrain (Fig. 8), for example, a carved prie-dieu is placed at the left front. The Virgin kneels behind it, dressed in a blue robe and Christ appears by her side, covered in a red cloak, holding a cross with a banner in his left hand, blessing the Virgin with his right. In the background, there is a bed covered with green draperies and a window. These features are present in all the other altarpieces mentioned above, at times with smaller variations such as the red draperies and omission of the prie-dieu in Pont-à-Mousson (Fig. 9). In Botkyrka and Hökhuvud, Christ appears descending rather than standing next to the Virgin whereas the Brussels altarpieces Nordingrå (Fig. 10) and By are more indebted to the pictorial tradition of Rogier as Christ shows his stigmata instead of holding the cross with a banner.

The only preserved altarpiece which has the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother included both as a minor sculpture and a painted wing is the Passion retable in Münstermaifeld, securely dated to 1518 (Fig. 11(a, b)). As it is, this could be the altarpiece in

**Fig. 8. The Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother, altarpiece from d’Herbais-sous-Piétrain, Antwerp, ca. 1530, gilded and polychrome oak. Brussels, Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire, Inv. No. 4009.**
which the motif was transferred from sculpture to painting, re-installing it to the format employed by Rogier and other Netherlandish painters. The sculptures of the Münstermaifeld are attributed to Jan Genoots, but the identity of the painter remains unknown.\textsuperscript{53} Genoots is also associated with the carving in Botkyrka and Västerlövsta.\textsuperscript{54} For these two altarpieces, however, the paintings have been attributed to the Master of the Groote Adoration who may also have been responsible for the paintings in Frustuna and Hökhuvud.\textsuperscript{55} It seems, however, this master was not responsible for the small wings, at least not the small wings in Botkyrka and Västerlövsta, said to have been painted by “weaker hands.”\textsuperscript{56} The possible inferior in quality of the paintings in these two sets of wings, however, does not mean the artist responsible would not be capable of including a more experimental motif.

As very few documents report the commissions of Netherlandish carved altarpieces, I allow a contract relating to the \textit{Seven Sorrows Altarpiece} commissioned for the Cistercian nunnery at ’s Hertogendal in 1432 to address the content of what Jacobs considered to be “the least important painted sections of an altarpiece.”\textsuperscript{57} In the ’s Hertogendal contract, the painter Jan van Molenbeke is asked to add donor portraits “to each of the doors of the four big doors of the panel” as well as “in the two small wings above at the top [there] shall be our Lord sitting in one [wing] and in the

\hspace{1cm}

Fig. 9. The Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother, altarpiece (detail), Antwerp, ca. 1520, gilded and polychrome oak. Botkyrka parish church.
other Our Lady in manner of a coronation.

Merely requesting a theme and not a detailed iconographical representation, it seems the iconography of the wings was of lesser importance to the commissioners; these wings may thus have been a part of the altarpiece where artists could paint a motif of their own liking, or experiment and invent. The involvement of Jan Genoots in three altarpieces containing the motif may prove instructive, too, even if the records concerning him were written due to violations of guild regulations. If not meticulously concerned with regulations, he may also have been inclined to accept untried motifs on the smaller wings, thus allowing one of his fellow workers to include the Resurrected Christ Appearing to his Mother to be included in painting in Münstermaifeld, Botkyrka and Västerlövsta.

Employment, context, vision and devotion

In pictorial design, the staging of Christ and the Virgin in the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother is very similar to the Annunciation. Also in meaning, the two motifs are closely related: the Virgin is being announced to and it is the presence of the living Christ (the Word Incarnate) that is announced. In none of the preserved altarpieces, however, does the Annunciation complement the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother in the same way as does the juxtaposition of the Word Incarnate and the Resurrected Flesh in the Advent and Triumph of Christ altarpiece painted by Hans Memling in 1480. Yet, in the altarpieces from Château de Pagny and d’Herbais sous Piétrain, the Annunciation and the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother are placed diagonally, the Annunciation in the lower left and the encounter in the upper right. In these two altarpieces, the employment of the two motifs thus elusively allows the viewer to ponder the Life of Christ from its very beginning to its very end while also encircling the entire altarpiece.

With the exception of Vårdnäs, the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother only comes to the attention of the viewers when the altarpiece is open. Addressing this mise-en-scene with the narration of the encounter in Thomas’s Orationes in the form of a visual exegesis may allow for a better understanding of its inclusion in carved altarpieces.
Said to have taken place when the Virgin and Christ were alone together, Thomas’s text allows the reader to utter: “Oh, that I had been there, and had heard Thy sweet words (...), could I, for my comfort in my earthly pilgrimage, so full of danger as it is, have remembered even one or two words of that sacred converse!" It is also embedded in Thomas’ text that the encounter was too holy for any humans to assist: "Perchance too that conference was so exalted and so heavenly, (...), that neither were the Apostles allowed at that time to enter, nor could they have taken in the wondrous mysteries (...)," stressing, as it were, “no mortal men were present.”

Sense-perception and emotional experience of the holy were of much importance for late medieval religious selves also from outside the ordained or cloistered spheres and practiced in rather sophisticated terms. The wish to be absorbed into the scene has its perhaps most profound expression not in an altarpiece, but in the frontispiece of *Le dyalogue de la duchesse de Bourgogne à Jesus Christ*. A treatise on contemplation, the text was composed for Margaret of York, duchess of Burgundy (d.1503) by her almoner Nicolas Finet sometimes around 1468, and the miniature was painted by a follower of Dreux Jean (Fig. 12). Christ stands on the left side, holding the cross and the banner. He is dressed in a red cloak, wrapped around his body in a way that exposes the side wound. The duchess is seated as if in prayer, but reaching out for Christ. A white dog lies on the floor. Whereas the inclusion of small (white) dogs is a common feature in portraits of (female) book owners from the late fourteenth century onwards, no such domestic interruptions is found in the subsequent depictions of the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother in the preserved altarpieces. Adapting the frontispiece to the duchess’ visual situation when reading the treatise, the follower of Dreux Jean thus allowed Margaret of York the potential of visualizing Christ’s presence as did the Virgin and as prescribed in the text.

The possibility to allow a lay person to witness the resurrected Christ in lieu of the

Fig. 11. Jan Genoots (sculpture, attributed) and unknown painter, The Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother, altarpiece (details), Antwerp, 1518, gilded and polychrome oak. Münstermaifeld parish church.
Virgin in the same way as could Margaret seems, however, not to have been repeated. Moreover, the Resurrected Christ appearing to His Mother is very rarely included in the many painted altarpieces with devotional portraits. The devout person more close to the encounter in the sense that his portrait is painted next to the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother, is Paolo Paganotti. In the altarpiece painted by the Master of the Ursula Legend, Paganotti is kneeling in front of a prie-dieu while presented by his patron saint St Paul on the left shutter, looking directly at the encounter between mother and son on the right. One could argue, in accordance with the textual narrative of Thomas, that if “no mortal were present,” that neither Margaret nor Paolo nor any of their peers would actually achieve a vision of the encounter as did St Birgitta and Margery Kempe.

Nonetheless, Thomas’s text also posits “(…), full of affection I keep on knocking at
the door of Thy loving Mother (...).” This knocking, I believe, is to be understood as an “ocular knocking,” a glance pleading to take part in the encounter when a priest or some other ecclesiasts open the wing and reveal the scene. Such knocking is also featured in earlier Franciscan treatises of prayer such as the *Septem gradus orationis* by David of Augsburg (d.1272) in which the devout was encouraged not to pray but to knock, as “through knocking we experience the sweetness [of God].” Moreover, this employment also stresses an aspect of the late medieval viewing designed as “looking but not quite seeing,” a strategy found in late medieval altar-pieces as well as in contemporary tomb monuments of the nobility.

It follows from such propositions that the devotional culture of the time, manifest in book possessions and images in private households, meant artisans and artists in the Netherlands shared what Michael Clanchy called a “literate mentality.” They may even have formed textual communities, in as far as this coining of terms may be taken to designate people of the same profession forming a community similar to people belonging to a monastic order. It thus seems beneficial to include what artisans and artists read and potentially discussed to more fully understand what they themselves could bring to the creation of religious works of art. More in particular, cross-referencing the employment of the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother in carved altarpieces with its narrative counterparts in devotional literature suggest the motif was well understood in Netherlandsish workshops beyond instructions from patrons and commissioners – and, as it were, possibly understood in a way that favored the common parishioner outside the altarpiece proper, more than named commissioner/devotee within it.

### The Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother as a motif in Scandinavia

We are left mostly with circumstantial evidence for the commissions of the altarpieces transported to Scandinavia. In the few cases where it is possible to establish a relation between an artist or a workshop and a commissioner, such as the Strängnäs I, there is no information about who would decide the iconography. Because one painter may have been responsible for at least four versions (Botkyrka, Frustuna, Västerlövsta and Hökhuvud), the motif may have been copied routinely by the master or by an associate or apprentice in his workshop based on model patterns, and thus imported unintentionally. As Kim Woods has noted, however, it was possible for clients at the Antwerp Pand to view “display models probably at far closer range than they would ever be allowed to venture once the altarpiece was installed in a church (...).” The motif may thus have been specifically requested also for the altar-pieces ending up in Swedish parish churches, at times finding a rather strong resonance among parishioners, in particular in Vårdnäs where the encounter is painted on the outer side of the wings. This placement meant the motif would be on display throughout most of the liturgical year.

If widespread in the Netherlands, the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* has left fewer traces in Scandinavia, and Thomas’s *Orationes* would primarily have been known among those who had access to the University in Copenhagen (established in 1479) and the libraries from the (then) Danish Franciscan convents in Flensburg and Cismar. St Birgitta’s *Revelationes*, on the other hand, were widely disseminated in manuscripts as well as in print, and the text was printed in Sweden as early as
In addition to the textual circulation, the nuns at Vadstena would recite from the text daily, interacting with pilgrims and the lay congregation from a tribune on the northern wall of the abbey church. They were not visible to the ones circulating in the nave, but their singing and reading would be heard (in the same way as would the Orationes elsewhere, as indeed indicated by the *flexa*). Although there were more Birgettine houses in the Netherlands and Rhineland, they also settled in Maribo (1416) and Mariager (1446) in Denmark as well as in the former Benedictine convent of Munkeliv (1426) in Norway.

The manuscripts produced by the Birgettine nuns themselves, however, do not demonstrate much iconographical invention in regard to narrative scenes as they mostly contain non-narrative devotional imagery such as portraits of individual saints, hearts and anagrams. This holds true both for the books of hours produced in Vadstena and for the so-called Psalter-Breviaries produced by Birgettine houses in the Netherlands. The omission of narrative pictorial contents in these manuscripts, however, does not impede the meeting between the resurrected Christ and his mother witnessed by Birgitta in her *Revelationes* as being one of the contributing sources for the employment of the motif in Netherlandish altarpieces in the first place as artists may have been among those listening to the recitations of the texts.

In any event, the motif was not included in the Brussels altarpiece commissioned by the Vadstena community upon the consecration of the altar of the Virgin of the Rosary in 1521. The Antwerp altarpiece in Årsunda (*Fig. 13*), however, contains a very singular event, namely Christ appearing to St Birgitta. Painted on the exterior of the upper smaller wings very similar to the exposé of the Resurrected Christ Appearing to his Mother, Christ displays the stigmata and appears on the right to St Birgitta who, book in her hand, hears the words: “(...) it is now time to fulfil my promise: you shall be clothed and consecrated as a nun before my altar.” The encounter is included in an altarpiece with scenes from the Life of the Virgin encircling the Virgin of the Rosary in the corpus. The altarpiece thus indicates devotional practices and prayers related both to the Virgin of the Rosary and to St Birgitta as well as yet not fully explored affinities to Vadstena.

Apart from the textual and auditory disseminations of the *Revelationes* – and the cult of St Birgitta more in general – the *Legenda Aurea*, Ludolph’s *Vita Christi* and derivations of the other devotional texts mentioned above seem to have had a more constrained circulation in Scandinavia than on the continent, and probably even less in the more remote parishes. This could indicate that the parishioners attending celebrations in parish churches with Netherlandish altarpieces containing the motif, in as far as they were given access to the altarpiece at all, may not ever have been able to truly decipher the scene. As my discussion above suggested, the motif may have been included in altarpieces destined for export. After all, the altarpieces in question were all produced in a time when the religious climate in the Netherlands was not only diverse and pragmatic, but also conflictual. The many
debates concerning images as doctrines disguised in aesthetic allure did not go unnoticed in the production of religious material culture.80

Regardless if the motif was being included in large scale altarpieces as a result of artists participating and engaging in religious reading or if it was included because the altarpiece was destined to a church outside the Netherlands, the relation between the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother and Netherlandish altarpieces seems to culminate in an altarpiece from a significantly later date, namely the one now in Roskilde cathedral (c.1560). In this altarpiece, the motif is included on the small upper wing to the left and the painted representation is replaced by a representation in bas-relief and entirely gilded (Fig. 14).81

Informed by Italianate aesthetics and the many debates on religious artifacts caused by the Reformation, this altarpiece is one of a small group of six preserved altarpieces described as “late Gothic retables disguised in a Renaissance mantle.”82 Although materials with more overt all’antica connotations such as alabaster and marble would become the preferred material for altarpieces in the next centuries – and painted altarpieces would outnumber the sculpted ones – the material appearance of the Roskilde altarpiece may be said to be in accordance with its own time: the material matter (bas-relief, gilded surface) and motif

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Fig. 13. The Resurrected Christ Appearing to St Birgitta, altarpiece (detail), Antwerp, 1500–20, gilded and polychrome oak. Årsunda parish church.
(Passion iconography) work in tandem to promote a unity, possibly manifesting a Lutheran view on flesh and spirit as not separate, but curved in upon themselves.\(^8\)

**Concluding remarks**

Appearing towards the end of the fourteenth century in the *C’est nous dist*, the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother is found in artifacts as different as books of hours, portable altars and triptychs from the subsequent century. All Netherlandish altarpieces responded to contemporary local tastes for what Lynn F. Jacobs identified as dense narratives, multiple small scenes and polychromy. The ones with guild hallmarks also possessed “intrinsic values,” that is the sum of the political (urban), ideological (guild, mastership, cooperative) and religious (devotional, imitational) climate in which they were produced.\(^8\)

In order to fulfil these aspects of consumers’ preferences, not at least because of the period’s emphasis on an imitational and intensified devotion, the makers of the altarpieces at times moved beyond the formulaic and conventional, introducing new religious concepts. One such new concept was the one explaining that after his Resurrection the first person Christ went to see was the Virgin Mary. Never among the most common motifs, it did enjoy a certain popularity in altarpieces made between c.1480–1560, and in particular in altarpieces exported to Scandinavia.
Outlined in the Mediationes vita Christi, in the Legenda Aurea, in Ludolph of Saxony’s Vita Christi, in St Birgitta’s Revelationes and in the writings of Thomas à Kempis, the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother as a pictorial motif may, not at least in relation to the latter source have been thought of as appropriate for a peripheral, movable part of altarpieces, and perhaps especially in altarpieces produced by artists participating or otherwise engaged in religious reading. The placement of the motif on the inside of a small wing allowed for quite a few of the ‘secrecies’ of the encounter emphasized in devotional literature to come to the fore: the Virgin and Christ are alone together; the non-Biblical scene is almost exclusively included in the altarpiece’s ‘periphery’ and the motif is hidden from sight most of the liturgical year.

It cannot be excluded that more nobles had themselves replacing the Virgin, allowing them to communicate with the resurrected Christ in the same way as did Margaret of York in the manuscript made for her around 1468 or Paolo Paganotti in the triptych he commissioned around 1480. Lay presences in religious scenes were a commonplace in late medieval visual culture and would certainly propel the employment of motifs fit for such personalization. Even if St Birgitta had been canonized well before the making of the Årsunda altarpiece, the adaptation of the motif into Christ Appearing to St Birgitta is – at least in visual terms – a similar personalization.

Due to changes in market dynamics as well as external factors like flood and famine, the commercial endeavors at the Antwerp Pand began to cease at the end of the 1530s and one of many consequences was that the production of the successful object that had been the carved altarpieces came to an almost complete standstill around 1560. As carved altarpieces were the material object in which the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother had thrived the most, the motif also declined and it seems not to have been included in any of the paintings listed in the city’s boedels from 1565–85. Rather, in the wake of the iconoclasm that swept through the city in 1566, the most popular motifs among the religious scenes in private homes were the Last Supper and the Deposition, and if of a singular saint, St Hieronymus and St Mary Magdalene. In fact, the motif seems to have but little continuations in the reformed regions of Holland, England, Germany and Scandinavia, with the inclusion in the Roskilde altarpiece as a lone exception. It may, however, be repeatedly observed in the oeuvre of Spanish and Italian Baroque painters. It is also found in paintings and on liturgical objects and vestments produced in the southern part of the Netherlands, such as in a chasuble embroidered in Brussels by Bartholomeus van de Kerckhoven in 1562 (Fig. 15). No churches in Scandinavia witnessed iconoclastic riots similar to the ones in England and various parts of the Netherlands following the Reformation (installed in Denmark-Norway in 1536/37 and in Sweden in 1527), thus most (medieval) altarpieces would continue to be on display. Yet unlike other post-resurrection narratives such as the Noli me tangere and the Incredulity of Thomas, the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother never made it into the locally produced religious art in the area. Whereas the motif was considered a scene from the Life of Christ when employed in the Netherlands altarpieces at the time of production, it seems that in Lutheran Scandinavia, its former Christological
connotation was eclipsed by the fact that the encounter between the resurrected Christ and his mother is a non-Biblical event.

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Endnotes

2. 'Netherlandish altarpieces' designate altarpieces made in the geographical area of Brabant, that is in workshops in Brussels, Antwerp, Mechelen or Leuven. French literature on the topic seems to prefer 'Brabantine.'
3. Comprehensive studies of Netherlandish altarpieces include Antwerpse retabels, 15de-16de eeuw, ed. Hans M. J. Nieuwdorp, vol. 2. Antwerp, 1993; Lynn F. Jacobs,


5. On religious reading and lay participation, see for example Sabrina Corbellini, Cultures of Religious Reading in the Late Middle Ages. Instructing the Soul, Feeding the Spirit, and Awakening the Passion, Turnhout, 2013; Sabrina Corbellini, Mart van Duijn, Suzan Folkerts and Margriet Hoogvliet, “Challenging the Paradigms: Holy Writ and Lay Readers in Late Medieval Europe”, Church History and Religious Culture, 93, 2013, 171–188; and Journal of Early Modern Christianity. Special Issue: Late Medieval and Early Modern Bibles and their Readers 6, No 2, 2019.


7. There are about 50 Netherlandish carved altarpieces in the Nordic region today, 38 of these are in Sweden. See Gunnar Lindqvist, Semnedelida altarskáp från Bryssel och Antwerpen i Sverige. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Stockholm, 1958; Aron Andersson, Medieval Sculpture in Sweden III: Late Medieval Sculpture, Stockholm, 1980, pp. 185–216; Hannah de Moor, “Les retables brabançons en Suède: dispersion, adaption et reception”, Perspective 1, 2019, pp. 165–174 and Hannah de Moor, “Moving Altarpieces: Tracing the Provenance of Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces in Sweden”, Konsthistorisk tidskrift/ Journal of Art History 88, No 4, 2019, pp. 188–204. The Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother is included in more than 33% of the Netherlandish altarpieces in Sweden (12 of 38), whereas the motif is present in less than 6% of the ones made for churches in modern Belgium, Nethelands and Germany (13 of 224 listed in De Boodt and Schäfer, Vlaamse Retabels). These numbers, of course, rely on preserved altarpieces only.

8. The Meditationes vitae Christi, for long ascribed to Pseudo-Bonaventure, is now believed to have been written for an anonymous Poor Clare by an anonymous author in an Italian convent in the mid-thirteenth century, see Sarah McNamer, Meditations on the Life of Christ: The Short Italian Text, Notre Dame, 2018 and Peter Töth and David Falvay, “New Light on the Date and Authorship of the Meditationes vitae Christi”, in Devotional Culture in Late Medieval England and Europe: Diverse Imaginations of Christ’s Life, ed. Stephen Kelly and Ryan Perry, Turnhout, 2014, pp. 7–105.

9. Brussels, KBR, MS II 7831, fol.44: Breckenridge, “Et Prima Vidi”, p. 22. The motif is, however, also present in the Sacramentarium Gregorianum executed in Liège in the eleventh century (Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, MS Lit 3, fol. 62). This manuscript may have had less impact on the re-emergence of the motif in the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries.

10. Rogier van der Weyden’s oeuvre is extensively studied and it is beyond the limits of this article to address this literature. For a recent and context-oriented chapter on the Miraflores triptych, see Francisco de Paula Canas Gávez, “Juan II de Castilla y el Triptico de Miraflores: marco estiralpín, proyección política y propaganda regia en torno a un donación real (1445)”, in Rogier van der Weyden y España, ed. Lorne Campbell and José Juan Peréz Preciado, Madrid, 2016, pp. 20–29. Also see Katrin Dyballa and Stephan Kemperdick, “A Look Back – Johannes Taubert and the Investigation of the Miraflores Altarpiece”, Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art 11, No 1, 2019.


20. St Birgitta's version of the encounter is mentioned only in passing by Breckenridge. Furthermore, yet unnoticed by Breckenridge, the encounter between mother and son is also vividly witnessed by Margery Kempe (d. after 1438), see *The Book of Margery Kempe*, translated and with an introduction and notes by Anthony Bale, Oxford, 2015, pp. 258–259.


22. St Birgitta dictated her visions to her confessor and they were written down in the 1360's. The Revelations exists in a number of Latin copies as well as copies in various vernaculars, see Jonathan Adams, *The Revelations of St Birgitta. A Study and Edition of the Birgittine-Norwegian Texts*, Swedish National Archives, E 8902, Leiden, 2015, pp. 16–30.


25. Thomas à Kempis [Thomae Hemerkens a Kempis], *Opera omnia. V: Orationes et meditationes de vita Christi*, ed. Mich. Josephus Pohl, Freiburg, 1904; Thomas à Kempis, *Prayers and Meditations on the Life of Christ*, transl. William Duthoit, London, 1908. All subsequent references to this oeuvre in the article itself will keep the Latin title (*Orationes*), while references in the footnotes will be given according to the edition applied for this study (*Prayers and Meditations*).


27. There are, for example, no illuminations accompanying the extract from Thomas' *Orationes* in a book of hours executed in the Northern Netherlands around 1475 (Brussels, KBR, MS 11171, ff. 34v–37v). A book of hours from Zeeland dated 1523 with excerpts from Thomas' *Orationes* which were to be read in front of a crucifix is also missing out on miniatures (KBR, MS II 5573), see Kathryn M. Rudy, *Rubrics*, *Images, Indulgences in Late Medieval Netherlandish Manuscripts*, Leiden, 2017, pp. 241 and 262. A late fifteenth century copy of Thomas' *Orationes* made for the Carthusians in Basel executed by Netherlandish artists also lacks illuminations apart from a decorated initial B at the opening folio (Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, B X 12, ff.1–39v), see https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/ubb/B-X-0012 with further bibliography.

28. See ISTC s.v. "Opera, sermons, epistolae et alia opuscula." Although not printed in many editions, the book printed by Nicolaus Keteelaert and Gerhardus de Leempt in Utrecht in 1474 have been preserved in more than 30 copies. I am most grateful to Wim François for notifying me of the existence of the flexa marks and for giving me access to the copy in Leuven (Maurits Sabbe Library, P inc 83B13) and to an as yet unpublished catalogue entry written by Rob Faesens.


31. For an example of the use of Antwerp protocols and documents for research into individuals, see David van der Linden, "Coping with Crisis. Career Strategies of Antwerp Painters after 1585", *De Zeventiende Eeuw*, 31, No 1, 2015, pp. 18–54.

32. Sabrina Corbellini and Margriet Hoogvliet, "Artisans and Religious Reading in Late Medieval Italy and Northern France (ca.1400–ca.1520)", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 3, 2013, pp. 521–544. Also see Margriet Hoogvliet, "Metaphorical Images of the Sacred Workshop. Die conférie de Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens"


35. The iconography of the images is deciphered from the abbreviated entries in the CD-ROM attached to Vandenbossche’s thesis, inventories B37 and B109. For the subsequent decades, inventories from 1560–1585 show that almost half of the paintings in private households had a religious character and that devotional motifs were the most numerous within this group, cf. Carolien De Staelen, Spulletjes en hun betekenis in een commerciële metropool. Antwerpenaren en hun materiële cultuur in de zestiende eeuw. Doctoral thesis, Antwerp, 2007, p. 211. Also see Bert de Munck, “Artisans, Products and Gifts: Rethinking the History of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe”, Past and Present, 224, 2014, pp. 39–74.


39. The altarpiece painted by the Master of the Ehningen Retable is now in Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart; the one by the anonymous follower (possibly the Master of the Prado Redemption) is in the National Gallery of Art, Washington; the triptych painted by the Master of the Ursula Legend is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. For the latter two, see Léonard de Rogier van der Weyden. La peinture à Bruxelles 1450–1520, ed. Véronique Bücklen and Gert Steyaert, Tielt, 2011, pp. 157–159. On Queen Isabella’s demand, an exact copy of the entire Miraflores Triptych was executed in c.1496 by Juan de Flandes (the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the Capilla Real, Granada). In service of the queen, Juan painted two more versions (now in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin and National Gallery, London) of the scene intended for inclusion in a large retable, see Chiyo Ishikawa, The Retablo de Isabel la Católica by Juan de Flandes and Michel Sittow, Turnhout, 2004, pp. 35–39 and Matthias Weniger, Sittow, Morros, Juan de Flandes. Drei Maler aus dem Norden am Hof Isabellas von Kastilien, Kiel, 2011, pp. 210–228. As it were, the motif also re-emerged in Valencian painting at the turn of the sixteenth century, overlapping with the introduction of devotional practices encouraged by the devotio moderna and translations and disseminations of Vita Christi-literature in the area, see Maxime Deubergue, The Visual Liturgy. Altarpiece Painting and Valencian Culture (1442–1519), Turnhout, 2013, pp. 143–149.


41. Ina Kok, Woodcuts in Incunabula Printed in the Low Countries, 4 Vols., Houten, 2013, p. 105 (Kok Reference Number 46.63). An almost identical edition was printed by Jacob Jacobszoon van der Meer or Christian Snelaert in Delft the 22 May 1488, re-using Leuvi’s version of the motif. The motif is also included in the post-incunabular version by Hendrik Eckert van Homberch, such as the 1512 edition of Leven ons liefs heeren Ihesu Christi, Uden, Museum voor Religieuse Kunst, Inv. 8280.


43. Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, MS W 289, fol. 34. The artist is not identified, but the miniatures are all in the style of the Bedford Master. The original female owner is unknown, too; the replacement at Matins in the Hours of the Virgin makes it likely she had an attachment to the Franciscans, for example by having a Franciscan almoner or confessor. In this book of hours, however, Christ appears carrying the cross itself instead of the more commonly found crozier and/or banner.

44. The occurrence of the motif in German altarpieces is always linked to the Virgin such as in the altarpiece executed in the workshop of Veit Stoss in 1498, now in the Nonnberg abbey, Austria. Two Netherlandish examples of the motif being applied as one of the Seven Joys of the Virgin are the alabaster altarpieces in Brou and in Sint-Salvador, Bruges, see Ragnhild M. Bø, “The Seven Joys of the Virgin in Sculpture: Borman and Beyond”, forthcoming. For a similar employment of the motif in painting, see the triptych by Pieter Aertsen in Sint-Leonardus, Zoutleeuw (1554).


46. No known documents attest to the making of the Strängnäs I, in large parts due to two almost
RESURRECTED CHRIST APPEARING TO HIS MOTHER IN LATE MEDIEVAL NETHERLANDISH ALTARPieces

contemporary unfortunate events, the bombardments of the Grand Place in Brussels in 1695 and the fire in the Royal Palace in Stockholm in 1697. In addition to guild marks attesting to its Brussels origin, there is an inscription on the painted wing with the Circumsicion: istud faciebatur in Bruxella. There is also an entry in the Martyrologia ecclesiae Strengnense, Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Cod. Holm. A 28, pointing to Rogge as the commissioner, see Erik Bohn, Sigurd Curman and Armin Tuulse, Strängnäs domkyrka I: Medeltidsens byggnadshistorie, Sveriges kyrkor 100: Text, Stockholm, 1964, p. 339 and Aron Andersson and R. Axel Unnerbäck, Strängnäs domkyrka II: Inredning, Sveriges kyrkor 176, Uppsala, 1978, pp. 10–12. For the latest attribution to the many Bormans and up-date bibliography, see Borman, A Family of Northern Renaissance Sculpture, ed. Marjane Debaene, London and Turnhout, 2019, pp. 268–269. The painted wings of Strängnäs I are attributed to Colin de Coter, see Catheline Périer-D’teteren, Les volets peints des retables bruxellois conservés en Suède et le rayonnement de Colyn de Coter, Stockholm, 1984.


48. The Antwerp altarpiece now in Elmpert was originally made for the Graafenthal monastery close to Cleves. Two are in museums, Tongeren (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne) and Jonsberg (Swedish History Museum, Stockholm).

49. In Strängnäs I, the coat of arms is placed on one of the columns behind Pontius Pilate in the Ecce Homo scene. In Strängnäs II, however, the coat of arms is placed in the architectural tracery of the predella. Its prominent position does indeed promote bishop Rogge, but its “clinging” nature means it may have been added upon arrival or even at a later date.

50. In the Antwerp altarpiece from Tongeren, the pendant small sculpted scene to the left is lost, but compared to the other Antwerp altarpieces with the scene present as a minor sculpture, it is likely to assume it was a Noli me tangere. For all these altarpieces, see the respective paragraphs in the literature listed in notes 3 and 7 above.

51. In the same way as the altarpieces with the motif in sculpture Some of the altarpieces with the motif included are now in museums: d’Herbais-sous-Pétrain (Musée Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire, Brussels), Château de Pagny (Philadelphia Museum of Art), Frustuna and Vårnås (Swedish History Museum, Stockholm). The ones in parish churches were not all made for these churches originally; the altarpiece now in Heimbach was originally commissioned for the Mariawald convent, established in 1486. The altarpiece now in Waase was commissioned for a church in Stralsund and moved to Waase in 1708. For the ones in Swedish parish/museums, see de Moor, “Moving Altarpieces”.

52. As it is, the small wings in Botkyrka and Hökhuvud share their mise-en-scene with an Antwerp painting from C.1520 now in Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, cf. https://www.vmfa.museum/piction/6027262-8012129/.


54. See Dumortier, “Jan Genoots”, and Schäfer, “Is It Possible”. Whereas documents allow for Münstermaifeld to be dated to 1518, Botkyrka is generally dated to between 1520 and 1530. Schäfer has, however, argued for Botkyrka as Genoots’ signature work, finding the quality of the sculptural parts of this altarpiece comparatively superior to Münstermaifeld. From this he deduces Botkyrka could have been made around 1512, the year Genoots is inscribed in the Liggeren as a free master. If Botkyrka is indeed made this early, the co-existence of one carved and one painted representation of the Resurrected Christ Appearing to his Mother in Münstermaifeld may thus not have been decisive for the motif being included as a painted image in Netherlandish altarpieces.


57. Jacobs, Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, p. 175.


59. In 1520, there was a dispute between the Antwerp guild masters and Genoots because the latter had unjustifiably marked his sculptures, in 1527. Genoots was accused of selling an unmarked altarpiece to Helmond abbey and the following year, he was found displaying an unmarked altarpiece at Antwerp, marked his sculptures, in Antwerp, praktijk van het merktekenen . See Jan van der Stock, Merken opmerken. Merk- en meestertekens op kunstwerken in de zuidelijke practijk van het merktekenen .

60. The altarpiece is now in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

61. In fact, there is not an established match to the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother. From the preserved altarpieces, it is most commonly paired with the Agony in the Garden (Pagny, Pont-à-Mousson, d’Herbais-sous-Pétrain, Waatignies, Zoutleeuw) and the Mocking of Christ/ Ecce Homo (Münstermaifeld,
Schwert, Botkyrka, Frustuna, Hönkhuvud, Västerlövsta). The encounter is also found paired with Christ in Limbo (Nordingrå), the Temptation of Christ (Opitter), the Supper at Emmaus (Waase) and the Washing of the Feet (Roskilde). When not found on the inside of the upper wing, the encounter is paired with the Noli me tangere (Vårnäs) and Christ Taking leave on Mary (By). Whichever scene is chosen to accompany the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother, it is a scene from the Gospels; making the resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother the only non-Biblical event included, except for the Christ taking leave on his Mother which also derives from the Meditationes.

63. Thomas à Kempis, Prayers and Meditations, p. 236.

64. On the practice of prayer in medieval treatises, see Largier, “Inner Senses – Outsers Senses”. The scholarly literature on the relationship between text and image and on the relation between texts, images and religious selves is extensive and burgeoning. For further explorations of religious selves, see the chapters included in Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ed. Reindert L. Falkenburg, Walter S. Melion and Todd M. Richardson, Turnhout, 2007.

65. London, BL, MS Add. 7970, f.1v. See the digitized manuscript and full bibliography at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_7970

66. Andrea G. Pearson, “Gendered Subject, Gendered Spectator: Mary Magdalene in the Gaze of Margaret of York”, Gesta, 44, No 1, 2005, pp. 47–66, at 49. In this article, Pearson posited the miniature is a noli me tangere, that Margaret of York is the Magdalene. Pearson holds this conflation to be true even if the meeting between the Resurrected Christ and the duchess takes place indoor and in front of a bed – the conventional mise-en-scene for the meeting between the resurrected Christ and his mother. Pearson’s explorations of how the painter of the miniature opted for an interior setting via the text and how Margaret’s viewing of it fashioned “a deeply layered subtext for the frontispiece” are thought-provoking. In pure pictorial terms, however, the bed and the interior rather present an image of the duchess in lieu of the Virgin, and no less so if the bed is thought to allude to the wish for a fecund marital union. Nevertheless, if Margaret were as well versed in devotional literature as Pearson’s article suggests, she would probably also have been able to picture herself both as the Virgin and the Magdalene, by intervisually attending to the motif. Craig Harbison elaborates on Brekenridge brief mention of the frontispiece, seeing the duchess as having taken the Virgin’s place, see Brekenridge, “Et prima vivid”, p. 31, note 145 and Craig Harbison, “Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting”, Simiolus: Netherlandish Quarterly for the History of Art, 15, No 2, 1985, pp. 87–118, at 93–94.

67. Apart from the Paganotti Triptych, there are – to the best of my knowledge – only two more examples of painted altarpieces with the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother that also contain devotional portraits, cf. Falque, Devotional Portraits: Catalogue, No. 618 (Welshpool) and No. 641 (Rouen). In Rouen, the motif is but a detail in the background of the Christ Taking Leave of His Mother. I do not here include the many witnesses to the encounter in versions of the motif in Late Medieval and Early Modern painting from the Iberian peninsula.


77. On this Brussels altarpiece with sculpture attributed to the workshop of Jan Borman and with paintings to Jan van Coninxlo and two followers of Colyn de Coter, see Aron Andersson, Västgöta klosterkyrka II Inredning. Sveriges kyrkor. Stockholm, 1983, pp. 72–89. The omission may be due to the fact that the iconography of the altarpiece is devoted to the Life of the Virgin – and indeed to the Rosary, thus linking the conceptual content to Rogier’s Miraflores Triptych and rosary indulgences – and not to the Passion.

78. The Revelations of St Birgitta Book VII, 266 (Chapter 31, verse 3).

79. See Lindqvist, Semnedeltida altaskåp, p. 214.


81. The circumstances concerning the commission of the Roskilde altarpiece are unclear and anecdotal. It was probably transferred to Roskilde when the then royal chapel in Copenhagen was refurbished in the 1570s, although it is first mentioned as present in the cathedral in 1623 and as on display on the main altar only in 1694. The most detailed analysis of the altarpiece to date is Axel Bolvig, Altertavlen i Roskilde Domkirke, et ualmindeligt kunstværk, Copenhagen, 1997.

82. Aleksandra Lipinska, “Between Contestation and Re-invention. The Netherlandish Altarpieces in Turbulent Times (c.1530–1600)”, in Netherlandish Sculpture of the 16th Century, pp. 78–117, at 83. Because Roskilde is the only one of these six altarpieces with intact wings, we may not know if the motif was included in the other five – or indeed in similar altarpieces now lost.


84. De Munck, “Artisans, Products and Gifts”, p. 43.


87. In England, subsequent translations of the Prayers and Meditations even erased the parts concerning the Virgin, see the introduction by William Duthoit in Thomas à Kempis, Prayers and Meditations, pp. xxiii–xxviii.

88. The chasuble is kept in Sint-Kwintens in Sint-Kwintens-Lennik, Belgium.

89. Whereas the establishment of the Reformation in Denmark-Norway was a political – or princely – decision by Christian III, the Reformation in Sweden was a slow process. Starting with the election of Gustav Vasa in 1527, it only ended with the Uppsala synod in 1593.

Summary

Linked to the thirteenth century devotional text Meditationes Vitae Christi, visual representations of the Resurrected Christ Appearing to His Mother appear in Italian manuscripts, either of the Meditationes itself or in other devotional treatises around 1300. The epitome of the motif, however, is probably the depiction in the right panel of the Miraflores Triptych, painted by Rogier van der Weyden in Bruges in the 1440s. Previously virtually unnoticed in art historical scholarship, the motif re-appears in Netherlandish carved altarpieces made c.1480–1530. The earliest occurrence seems to be in the form of a minor sculpted scene in the Brussels altarpieces now known as Strängnäs I, yet its more common inclusion is as a painted scene on the inside of the small upper wing to the viewer’s right. Without dismissing the effects of patronage, commissions and the circulation of models, I will argue for the inclusion as partly resulting from artists’ increased partaking in religious reading due to the dissemination of Vita Christi literature in the Netherlands. As it were, however, the motif appears proportionally more frequent in the altarpieces imported to Scandinavia than
elsewhere, allowing for discussions about the
iconographical program in altarpieces made
for export and the possibility of the
appreciation of the scene in the north is to be
traced not to *Vita Christi*-literature in general,
but to the encounter between mother and son
as referenced in the visions of St Birgitta.

Ragnhild M. Bø
Dep. of Archaeology, University of Oslo,
Conservation and History,
P.O. Box 1008, Blindern,
0315 Oslo
Norway
E-mail: r.m.bo@iahk.uio.no