

**Matter of Faith:
An Interdisciplinary
Study of Relics and
Relic Veneration
in the Medieval Period**

Edited by James
Robinson and
Lloyd de Beer
with Anna Harnden

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Chapter 13

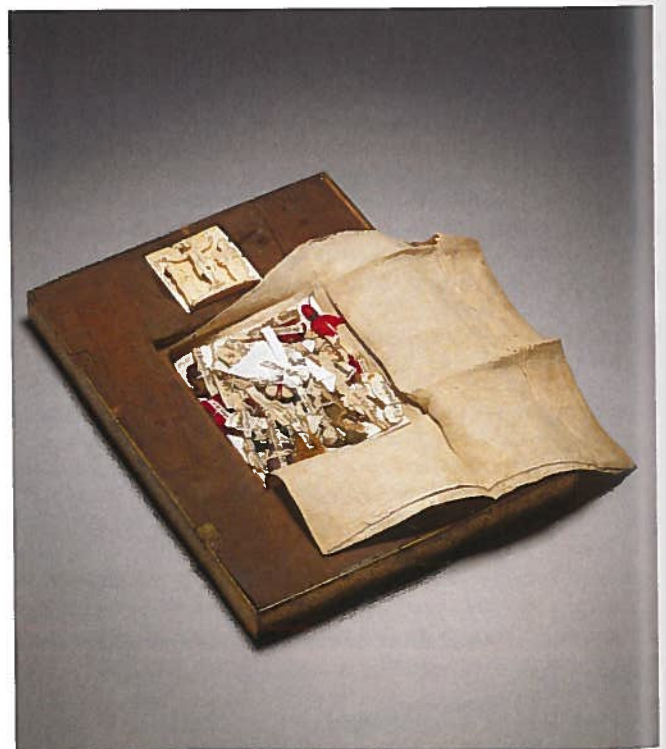
Dressing the Relics

Some Thoughts on the Custom of Relic Wrapping in Medieval Christianity

Martina Bagnoli

For quite some time now, scholars have drawn attention to the shift that occurred in the later Middle Ages from materiality to visuality. There is an ever increasing body of work dedicated to this subject, in particular to the way in which the sense of sight contributed to the devotional experience. Indeed, much has been said about the relationship between seeing and believing. In my essay for the catalogue that accompanied the *Treasures of Heaven* exhibition, I too expounded on this subject and discussed the impact that an increasing reliance on physical sight had on the design of reliquaries.¹ Indeed, this concept was one of the main narratives of the exhibition. Those who visited the show in Baltimore will recall that strolling through the galleries one moved from impenetrable marble sarcophagi to luminous rock-crystal containers and finally to two-dimensional pictures. Reliquaries such as the magnificent Man of Sorrows from Santa Croce were instrumental in mediating the passage from materials to image.² The micromosaic image of the Man of Sorrows was gifted to the Roman church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme by an aristocrat who had acquired it in Constantinople. Sometime after its arrival, the icon (perhaps because of its wondrous technique) began to be venerated as a relic. It was believed that it was the testimony of Pope Gregory I's vision, when an image (thought to be this very image) of the suffering Christ appeared on the altar of Santa Croce as the pope was celebrating the Eucharist. A later local legend maintained that the icon was made with the bones of the saints. Presumably, such an association was triggered by the multitude of relics visible around the picture, itself a relic: the bones underscoring the sacred nature of the image. Caroline Walker Bynum has argued that visual presentation

Plate 1 Portable altar, 1190–1200, copper gilt over a wood core, limestone, painted vellum, rock crystal and ivory, 35.4 x 25.1cm. British Museum, London (1902,0625.1)



of relics was crucial to anchor the devotional powers of images in the later Middle Ages.⁴ Bynum argues that the display of body parts in reliquaries was a way to refute the corruption of the flesh.⁵ But were the relics really visible? In a large number of medieval 'transparent' reliquaries, the relics are not displayed in a naked form but are instead wrapped up in precious little pouches, the same way in which they would be when concealed inside reliquaries (Pls 1–2).⁶ The perceived visibility of relics in the face of their apparent invisibility is the subject of this article. I shall start my discussion with a brief survey of the Christian tradition of relic wrapping and will pay special attention to silk as the material of choice to protect and conserve relics.

Since the beginning of the veneration of relics, material remains were wrapped in reverence. We are told that notable figures such as St Anthony the Great (d. 356) abhorred the Egyptian habit 'to wrap in linen cloths at death the bodies of good men, and especially of the holy martyrs; and not to bury them underground, but to place them on couches, and to keep them in their houses, thinking in this to honor the departed'.⁷ The 4th-century priest Vigilantius also complained that 'heaps of tapers are lighted, and everywhere a paltry bit of powder, wrapped up in a costly cloth, is kissed and worshipped'.⁸ In response to this, Jerome sharply replied: 'It is nothing less than the relics of the martyrs which he [Vigilantius] is vexed to see covered with a costly veil, and not bound up with rags or hair-cloth, or thrown on the midden'.⁹ In the late 7th-century *vita* of St Eligius written by Dado of Rouen, Eligius who had been tasked to find the remains of St Quentin, found first 'the wrapping of the holy body'.¹⁰ When the tomb of the saint was opened, some of the bones were withheld for distribution and then 'he brought the body to the altar wrapped in the most precious silk and decently laid out'. In the early

13th-century account of the translation of Gilbert of Sempringham we read how 'the revered relics were wrapped in spotless linen within a precious silk cloth', both items given by Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, for this purpose, and only then were they placed within the consecrated vessel.¹¹ The evidence from the textual sources is substantiated by archaeological findings. Indeed, most of the surviving textiles from the medieval period were used as wrapping material for relics. The dating and provenance of these pieces of cloth is becoming clearer thanks to the studies of Regula Schorta, Annemarie Stauffer, Marielle Martiniani-Reber and others.¹² Some may be as old as the relics, such as the 5th-century Near Eastern silk with Dionysian images from the cathedral of Sens, while others are later but still medieval, such as the 11th-century Byzantine silk wrapped around the remains of St Germain of Auxerre (d. 448), recently identified with one of the precious clothes given at the time of Bishop Hugh of Chalon around 1030.¹³ Another example is the Amandus shroud from the Cleveland Museum of Art (Pl. 3), an 11th- or 12th-century Near Eastern silk that became integrated into the shrine of St Amandus in Salzburg.¹⁴ The material evidence confirms what the sources tell us: bodies were wrapped at burial and then rewrapped every time the tomb was opened to translate the relics, to obtain a relic, to insert a new relic into a shrine or even to verify its contents. This practice continued well into the modern era. For example, of the relics contained in the Grande Chasse of Sion, Switzerland, 18 were laid out in a sealed box, wrapped and tied in a large piece of taffeta silk cloth. An enclosed document dated 1832 established the nature of the contents and another dated 1923 certified a new opening and closing of the reliquary.¹⁵ This brief analysis shows that whereas it was common for early modern reliquaries to revel in the



Plate 2a–b Front and reverse of *ostensorium* with 'Paten of St Bernard', paten c. 1180–90, silver, silver gilt and niello, diam. 13.4cm, monstrance c. 1350–1400, silver, silver gilt and rock crystal, 34.5 x 15.9 x 14cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, purchase from the J.H. Wade Fund with additional gift from Mrs R. Henry Norweb (1930.505)



Plate 3 Amandus shroud, 11th or 12th century, silk and gold, 46.4 x 54.6cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, purchase from the J.H. Wade Fund

exhibition of gnarled bones, such as the 1682 St Titus reliquary in the Treasury of San Marco, Venice, medieval reliquaries are much more reticent and, more often than not, the chambers of relics present but a handful of fabric pouches.¹⁶ There are notable exceptions of course, the most famous being the hand of St Attala in Strasbourg which is not wrapped and the reliquary consists of a rock-crystal vase containing one bony hand. The custom of wrapping relics in precious fabrics is certainly not to be taken as a rule, but the

Plate 5 Book of Hours, c. 1430s, French, Burial Service, Office of the Dead. Walters Museum of Art, Baltimore, MS. W. 262 fol. 90



Plate 4 Book of Hours, 1470, French, Burial Service, Office of the Dead. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MS. W. 249, fol. 119r

number of examples is significant enough that we can talk of it being a common practice.¹⁷

While the bones of saints were wrapped up and concealed, those of normal human beings were often left exposed.¹⁸ Illustrations of the office of the dead (cycle of prayers recited throughout the nine canonical hours for the soul of the deceased) in late medieval Book of Hours offer visual evidence of medieval funerary practices.¹⁹ The bodies of the deceased were washed and then sewn into a shroud (Pl. 4). They were then placed in a coffin for transportation to the church and the cemetery. Coffins became common from the 13th century onwards mostly for transport as the dead were laid directly into the earth (Pl. 5). As is evident from these images, and many others like them, the deceased left the world as he or she had entered it: naked. After the body had been consumed by decay, the burial spot of an individual could be used for another, while the remaining bones would be kept in a charnel house (Pl. 6).

Despite the claims of theologians, especially Thiodfrid of Echternach, that beautiful reliquaries were a necessity in order to mask the disgusting nature of sacred matter, medieval men and women seemed to be quite unaffected by the exhibition of human bones.²⁰ So why were relics wrapped? There are a number of reasons why this was done. The most obvious is the veneration that relics were due. As with all sacred things, relics were not to be touched by human hands. In the 12th-century Limoges Chasse of St Valerie, Valerie holds her own severed head with covered hands (Pl. 7), while in Rogier van der Weyden's *Exhumation*



Plate 6 Book of Hours, c. 1460, Bruges, Burial Service, Office of the Dead. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MS. W. 197, fol. 175v

of St Hubert, the body of the saint is lifted out of the tomb by a cleric whose hands are reverently covered with a precious blue cloth (Pl. 8). Reliquaries themselves, as *vasa sacra* and containers of the holy were not to be touched with bare hands. The 1396 inventory of the church of Il Santo in Padua mentions 19 silk clothes to handle relics, while the 1382 inventory of the relics at the shrine of St Cuthbert in Durham Cathedral included 'five napkins for carrying the relics'.²¹

This type of reverence expressed the desire to shield sacred matter from human touch and its association with carnality. Although pilgrimage was dictated by the desire to gain physical knowledge of sacred sites, as a rule pilgrims could not touch the actual relics with their bare hands. In his extensive travel accounts, Egeria describes how before a relic of the True Cross, pilgrims would 'stoop down, touch the Holy Wood, first with their forehead and then with their eyes, and then kiss it but no one puts out his hands to touch it'.²² In Augustine's narration of Ambrose's procession of the bodies of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius through the streets of Milan, a blind man who had approached the coffins of the saints and touched them with his handkerchief is cured when the same handkerchief is put on his eyes. Ambrose himself is quick to sanction the sacred nature of *brandea*, equal to relics acting as miracle workers. In Ambrose's narrative there is plenty of touching, but the saints are always shielded from human hands by pieces of



Plate 7 Reliquary chasse with St Valerie, c. 1170-2, copper, gold and enamel, 16.5 x 29.2cm. British Museum, London (WB.19)

cloth, a sign of their intangible nature. Ambrose implicitly acknowledges this notion when he says: 'you see that the miracles of old time are renewed, when through the coming of the Lord Jesus grace was more largely shed forth upon the earth, and that many bodies are healed as it were by the shadow of the holy bodies'. It is the shadow of the holy bodies that the *brandea* seem to absorb. The proscription or at least the difficulty of touching relics directly continued into the later Middle Ages. In the *Anonymous Book of St Gilbert*, we read that during the canonization of St Gilbert his relics were paraded inside his reliquary and when some people approached the 'consecrated chest' and touched it, they were delivered from their illnesses.²³

For the most part, if touching occurred then the act was described almost as an illegitimate pleasure, even if the person did not touch the body directly. During the transfer of St Edmund's body from his sepulchre to a more ornate

Plate 8 Rogier van der Weyden, *The Exhumation of St Hubert*, late 1430s, oil with egg tempera on oak, 88.2 x 81.2cm. National Gallery, London (NG783)





Plate 9 Apocalypse. Opening of the Fifth Seal (bottom) and souls of the martyrs under the altar (top). Morgan Library and Museum, New York, MS PM 524, fol. 3

shrine, the enthralled Jocelin of Brakelond standing before the spectacle of the saint's coffin, confesses of putting his 'sinful hand' on it (the coffin), although the abbot had forbidden anyone to 'come forward unless summoned'.²⁴ In the same text, we read that upon opening the sepulchre, Abbot Samson undid all of the wrapping that protected the body of the saint with the exception of the last layer of fine linen.²⁵ This puzzling passage reads as follows:

And so the abbot looking near, found after this a silken cloth which covered the whole body, and then a linen cloth of wonderful whiteness; and over the head a little linen cloth and another small and skillfully made silken cloth, as it were the veil of some holy woman. And then they found the body wrapped in a linen cloth, and so at last all the lines of the holy body were clearly *traceable*. Here the abbot stopped, saying that he *dared not go further, and behold the naked body of the saint*. Therefore, he held his head between his hands, and said with a groan, 'Glorious martyr, holy Edmund, blessed be the hour in which you were born. Glorious martyr, turn not my daring to my hurt, in that I, who am a sinner and wretched, *touch you*. You know my devotion and my intention.' And then he touched the eyes and nose, the latter being thick and very large, and afterwards touched the breast and arms, and raising the left hand touched the fingers and placed his own fingers between those of the saint. And going further, he found the feet standing upright as though they had been the feet of a man but lately dead, and he touched the toes, and counted them as he touched them.²⁶

The evocative description of the abbot's exploration of Edmund's face and torso is one of rapture and akin to a lover's caress. Reading it, one is made aware of the

languorous longing for physical contact, a desire bound to remain frustrated. Note that Abbot Samson is only touching the body of the saint through the protective layer of the linen shroud. He is not stroking his actual skin. Samson does not see the saint's body (his naked flesh), and while he feels it with his hands, his touch is also a non-touch because the body is shielded by a thin veil. By protecting the relics from human contact, the wrappings of relics proclaimed the intangible nature of the divine.

In addition, relic wrappings conferred a certain degree of security. Theft of relics was certainly a concern, especially when relics were exhibited to the public. It was harder to steal relics from a tightly wound body or parcel. In the late 9th-century *vita* of St Theodora of Thessaloniki, we read that when her relics were moved from a communal tomb to an individual tomb, her body was 'securely wrapped in a shroud so that no one could steal any part of the relics'.²⁷ In western Europe, the protective function of funerary shrouds is highlighted by the story of Hugh, bishop of Lincoln. According to his *vita*, Hugh went to the abbey of Fécamp and asked to see the relics of Mary Magdalene. The body of the saint was sewn in three different cloths and nobody had ever seen it. Since the clerics guarding the relics did not accede to Hugh's request to see the bones, he took a knife and cut through the wrappings, after which he admired the relics so much that he bit off one of the saint's fingers.²⁸ In this case, the tight shroud could do nothing against Hugh's ferocious devotion; however the abbot of Fécamp clearly thought that it would provide adequate protection.

Wrapping conferred protection not just from thieves, but also and, more importantly, from uninitiated people. The act of wrapping, tying and sealing relics in small precious pouches was part of a series of rituals restricted to the clergy. These rituals were tightly controlled and included the translations, examinations and the bestowing of relics as gifts, when relics could be handled by the chosen few and then withdrawn from view. The recourse to wrapping rituals in order to create some distance between a thing and ordinary life is encountered in cultures across time.²⁹ Consequently, observations drawn from other contexts can enhance the discussion of the wrappings of relics in Christianity. Among the ancient people of Hawaii, for example, objects considered to be the manifestation of gods were wrapped in bark cloths at the time of consecration. Valerio Valeri discusses this procedure as a way of manifesting the god's presence in these objects. Valeri argues that 'the act of removing the object from sight favors the implantation of the belief in the god's invisible presence because it creates the experience of a passage from a concrete reality to an invisible one, from a thing of perception to a thing of the mind, and therefore from an individual object to a general concept. In other words, wrapping has become a sign of consecration because it reproduces the concept by which the mind reaches the idea of the god'.³⁰ The Christian custom of wrapping relics manifests similar ideas. In their pouches, relics were kept at a distance even when exhibited to the faithful. It was precisely by removing the relics from sight that they became visible to one's mind alone and thus a symbol of God's invisible presence. Contrary to the image gods of Hawaii,

relics did not need to become activated through ceremonial wrapping: they did not need to be consecrated as, according to Christian doctrine, they already held the immanence of God. Yet, it is clear that the action of enclosing them in carefully constructed pouches confirmed and enhanced their special status as objects of divine power.

As a result of the relationships that they engendered (of power, control and the invisibility of God's presence), the wrappings of relics established an interesting parallel between the earthly remains of saints and their heavenly lives. According to scripture, on the day of Judgement, the martyrs would be given white robes to wear: 'And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, Holy and True, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them' (Rev. 6). The passage was frequently illustrated in medieval art, for example in a 13th-century English apocalypse (Pl. 9).

The scriptural trope appears early on in hagiographical narratives and continues throughout the medieval period. In the 3rd-century account of Saurus' vision of his and Perpetua's martyrdom, we read that after death, the saints arrived at a palace made with shining walls and upon entering it they were given white raiment to wear by four angels.³¹ In the 13th-century *Lives of the Brethren of the Order of the Preacher*, we read that before dying, one of them, John of Serlin, 'told a companion how he dreamt he was dwelling in a grand palace and in the company of a goodly throng of exalted personages, and there he heard this melody sung by voices of ravishing sweetness: "This is the man who, having trodden under foot all earthly life and gains, has attained onto heavenly kingdoms: he has been clothed with the stole of glory by the tight hand of the most High, and his place is numbered among the saints."³² The stole of glory mentioned in this passage is to be understood as the white robes of chapter six of the Book of Revelation. It is true that in medieval exegesis the white robes distributed to the martyrs were commonly associated with the blissful state that the souls of the elect will achieve after death. A second reward, or stole, would, according to common exegetical thought, await them at the Second Coming when the bodies would be resurrected.³³ A beautiful illustration of this idea appears on one of the long sides of the 12th-century St Servais shrine in Maastricht (Pl. 10) where we see the robing of the elect at the Last Judgement.³⁴

The association of white robes with spiritual beauty was also applied to church symbolism and in particular to the nature of liturgical vestments. Durandus of Mendes, author of important and popular treatises on ecclesiastical symbolism, distinguished the dress for common use from that for the service of the Lord.³⁵ The distinction is made in order that 'the Priest, doth off the old man with his doing, and putteth on the new man, made in the image of God'.³⁶ In this context, priestly robes are compared to those which God commanded Aaron and his sons to wear: 'holy garments for Glory and for Beauty' (Ex. 28:2) that were 'taken to signify virtues and express the mystery of the incarnation'.³⁷ This concept also appears in the 12th-century *Mytrale* by Sicardus



Plate 10 Shrine of St Servais, Church of St Servais, Maastricht

of Cremona, a classic manual of Church symbolism.³⁸ Liturgical vestments were thus like a new skin, one not tainted by the original sin.

Saints straddled both the realm of the dead and the living in as much as their remains were imbued with the power of God. Their bodies were signs of their heavenly souls as they were able to discard the robe of the flesh and wear instead that of the spirit. They were made in the image of God, hence the incorruptibility of their remains. The Catalan painter Jaume Serra painted a vivid rendition of this idea in his 1385 retablo of St Peter. The discovery of the saint's body is illustrated in the bottom right corner, where Peter is found beautifully dressed and preserved next to two decomposing skeletons (Pl. 11). Since the body of a saint was a sign of his soul, it stands to reason that presenting his remains wrapped in precious textiles reinforced the identity of the relics by evoking visions of the saint's soul as it would have appeared in paradise: dressed with the reward of divine bliss. The fact that relic packaging was often made out of priestly garments strengthens the notion that these textile shells alluded to the prelapsarian state of grace enjoyed by the saints in paradise.

In this context, the nature of the materials chosen to wrap relics is interesting. The medium of choice seems to have been silk, even though parchment was also used. Scripture is quite precise about the polluting nature of animal byproducts. In the Bible, Adam and Eve are clothed with tunics made with animal skins when they are chased from paradise as a sign of their fall from grace (Gen. 3:21). In contrast, Moses took off his leather sandals before encountering God as the burning bush (Ex. 3:4). From a theological point of view, materials made from animals were impure as they had been polluted by carnality. Indeed, in scripture and exegetical literature purity of soul is always identified with robes made of fine white linen. The Book of Revelation does not mention what type of fabric the stoles given by God to the martyrs were made of, but we can assume that they would be of the finest linen. Why then are the overwhelming majority of relics wrapped in silk? As with



Plate 11 Jaume Serra, *St Peter*, 1385, tempera on wood. Museo Nacional de Arte de Catalunya, Barcelona (003947-CJT)

gold and silver, materials often used in crafting medieval reliquaries, silk had notions of preciousness and monetary value and was thus used as a metaphor for the spiritual value of the relics and hence their authenticity. Silk was a very precious commodity whose price and output was tightly controlled.³⁹ Until the later Middle Ages most silk came from the Byzantine Empire or the Near East whence many relics also originated, thus silk manufacture itself was a sign of good provenance. Still, the value of silk alone is not enough to justify the possible contamination of sacred matter with an animal material.

How can this paradox be solved? With typical medieval ingenuity, a means was found to justify the taste and desire for luxurious textiles. Durandus explained that silk was acceptable for episcopal vestments instead of linen because it was made from worms, which are born from flesh without intercourse. This was a commonly held idea in the medieval period and is mentioned in medieval bestiaries.⁴⁰ It is possibly for this reason that in his *Decretum*, Gratian is careful to articulate how after the fall Adam and Eve were dressed with tunics made of animal skins and not of silk.⁴¹ Silk here is a symbol of being in a state of grace.

What of the wrappings made of parchment? Was animal skin not the epitome of uncleanness? This clearly seemed to have been the case for furs and leather. Parchment, on the other hand, being the material of sacred books had been long associated with the flesh of Christ. Scripture on parchment became a metaphor of the mystery of the incarnation: the word made flesh.⁴²

This notion is of interest when considering the role of *cedulae* in relics wrapping. *Cedulae* or *authentiques* were small strips of parchment attached to the pouches to identify the relics. They provided a sort of 'proof' of the authenticity of relics. In his treatise against relic veneration, Guibert of Nogent mentioned this practice as a symptom of foolish credulity. Guibert's exasperated tone alone is evidence that the custom was thought to be credible.⁴³ To be sure, the significance of these labels was beyond that of confounding the simple minded. Judging from the collections of *cedulae*



Plate 12 Silk of Dioscurides, Byzantine, 7th or 8th century. Church of St Servais, Maastricht

preserved without their relics, it is clear that they were (or later became) meaningful in and of themselves. Among the collection of *authentiques* from the Sancta Sanctorum (the Pope's private chapel in the Lateran Palace, Rome), one with a large reddish brown stain at the centre could have itself been a relic perhaps of the blood of a certain Luplireni.⁴⁴ These inscriptions were significant not only because they had been in contact with sacred matter, but also and mostly because they incarnated the presence of the saints, and their names, so to speak, were inscribed on the flesh of Christ (parchment). *Cedulae* also evoked the saints through speech. The invocation of saints' names was an important part of liturgical performances and exegetical sources testify to the power of saints' names as equal to that of the relics themselves.⁴⁵ Since the relics were hidden in their pouches, the strips of parchments with the saints' names served to make their presence tangible: they substituted the saints for the relics. In this way a pinch of sacred dust or the splinter of a bone hidden from view conjured through the labels the image of the saint, not as a man but as a dweller of paradise. In the same way, we know that words uttered by holy people could be kept as verbal relics, for example those of St Francis. His biographer St Bonaventure, tells us that a piece of paper containing prayers written by St Francis was kept as a keepsake and performed miracles.⁴⁶

Given the reliance on materials in the art of the Middle Ages to evoke and, indeed, invoke the sacred, one would be tempted to argue that reliquaries with transparent chambers still relied on materials to reconstruct the visible, as much as those that hid the relics completely. Yet, some distinctions must be made. Relics and their casings worked in parallel to create a visual metaphor pointing to the lives of the blessed in their heavenly dwelling. In fact, relics and their shells

were interchangeable. The importance of textiles as relics is a good case in point. The shroud in which the body of a saint was wrapped or the dress in which he or she was buried often became a relic in its own right. The examples are legion; a famous instance is that of the 7th- or 8th-century Byzantine silk in Maastricht, known as the silk of the Dioscurides (Pl. 12).⁴⁷ The fabric was identified as the dress of St Servatius when in fact its date and provenance indicate that it could be the precious silk cloth that the archbishop of Worms donated to the saint's shrine in 826.⁴⁸ With time, the princely donation used to cover the shrine became identified as a piece of the saint's clothing. Hugh of Lincoln managed to obtain a relic of the tooth of St Benedict, this time without resorting to violence to acquire it. Hugh got the relic from the abbot of Fleury together with another coveted possession: a piece of the cloth in which Benedict's remains had been buried. Later Hugh distributed fragments of this cloth to the monks and abbots of his house 'out of his unbound generosity'.⁴⁹ The relics of the Three Magi in the church of St Gregory in Ribeauvillé (Alsace) are but fragments of a 1st- or 2nd-century Syrian textile that arrived in Cologne with the so-called relics of the Three Magi.⁵⁰ The blurring of boundaries between relic textiles and wrappings is exemplified at best by the custom of sewing new cloth onto the original shrouds in order to protect them.⁵¹

To conclude, wrappings and inscriptions complicate the idea of transparency in medieval reliquaries by creating a self-referential enshrinement. Following Seeta Chaganti, I use enshrinement not to refer 'to acts of enclosure but instead to the more complex effect whereby contained and container are interchangeable'.⁵² At play is the paradox between the relic and its packaging. The latter conceals the former to highlight the absence of the sacred (the soul of the saint in heaven), but at the same time reveals itself as the saint (his or her material presence). The invisibility of relics in transparent chambers means that their objecthood is absolved first by the wrappings and then by the reliquary. The latter therefore did not merely act as a framing device, but rather as the embodiment of the relics: it personified them. Fifteenth-century *Heiltumbücher* (relic books) are a perfect expression of this notion,⁵³ whereby relics were illustrated by images of their reliquaries. Consequently, it is not surprising to find bits of old reliquaries often reused in newer ones: the material scraps calling back the memory of the previous container and maintaining the presence of the old and sacred in the new.⁵⁴ Here, one needs to consider what constitutes a relic. Patrica Cox Miller and Julia Smith have recently invited us to reconsider the long-held distinction between primary relics and contact relics, a differentiation that, albeit normative, was not followed in popular devotion.⁵⁵ There was little perceived difference between the value and efficacy of a so-called contact relic and a 'real' piece of bone. In the same way, ampullae filled with the oils collected at pilgrim sites were themselves relics and not just containers of the holy. One appears as such encased in the frame of the icon of St Demetrios, now in Sassoferrato.⁵⁶ The shift of identity between relics and their wrappings follows similar ideas, indicating that the visibility of bones was not a prerequisite for experiencing sacred matter.

Notes

- 1 Bagnoli 2010.
- 2 H. L. Kessler in Bagnoli *et al.* 2010, cat. no. 116 (202). With further bibliography.
- 3 The legend is reported by Carlo Bertelli in his magisterial study of the icon, Bertelli 1967.
- 4 Bynum 2011.
- 5 Ibid., 70.
- 6 N.C. Speakman in Bagnoli *et al.* 2010, cat. no. 66 (127). H.A. Klein in Bagnoli *et al.* 2010, cat. no. 44 (87).
- 7 The quote is taken from Athanasius of Alexandria's *vita* of St Antony, see Athanasius of Alexandria 1892, 220 (also available online in the University of Fordham Medieval sourcebook: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/vita-antony.asp>).
- 8 Jerome, 'Against Vigilantium', *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 6, 417–23 (also available online at <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/jerome-againstvigilantius.asp>).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Dado of Rouen 1902, 699: 25 (now available online on the site of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: http://www.mgh.de/dmgh/resolving/MGH_SS_rer._Merov._4._S._699). I here use the translation by Jo Ann McNamara, available on the Internet Medieval Sourcebook, Fordham University at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/eligius.html>.
- 11 Anonymous, *The Canonization*, in *The Book of St Gilbert* 1987, 185–95.
- 12 Schmedding 1978; Stauffer 1991; Marielle Martiniani-Reber in *Byzance* 1992, 148–55, 192–9, 370–81; Schorta 1998; Schorta 2000; Desrosiers 2004.
- 13 For the silks of Sens and Auxerre see Marielle Martiniani-Reber in *Byzance* 1992, cat nos 104, 285 (154, 377).
- 14 H.A. Klein in Bagnoli *et al.* 2010, cat. no. 67 (128).
- 15 Schorta 2005.
- 16 Hahnloser 1971, cat. no. 252 (217), Tav. CCVII. The relic was given back to the Archdioceses of Zara.
- 17 For the early 13th-century reliquary of the hand of Attala, see Anton Legner in *Ornamenta Ecclesiae, Kunst und Künstler der Romanik* 1985, cat. no. H 53 (147).
- 18 About medieval funerary rituals see: Boase 1972; Binski 1996; DuBruck and Gusick 1999.
- 19 On the representation of death in Books of Hours see Wieck 1999.
- 20 Thiofridus Epternacensis (Thiofrid of Echternach) 1996, 2.3. 84–92.
- 21 The Padua inventory is quoted in Bock 1970, vol. 2, 157. The Durham napkins are mentioned in the 1389 inventory of St Cuthbert's shrine redacted by Richard of Segbruk, the *feretrarius* of the cathedral, which was published in Raine 1828, 122. On St Cuthbert's shrine see Battiscombe 1956.
- 22 *Egeria's Travels* 2002, 155–6.
- 23 Anonymous, *The Canonization*, in *The Book of St Gilbert* 1987, 185–95.
- 24 Jocelin of Brakelond 2008, 98–102.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Jocelin of Brakelond 1907 (also available online: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/jocelin.asp>). Italics used by current author for emphasis and not in original text.
- 27 'Life of St Theodora of Thessalonike', trans. by A.-M. Talbot in Talbot 1996), 223–4. I wish to thank the author for this reference.
- 28 Adam of Eynsham. *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis*. From 'Bishop Hugh of Lincoln's Devotion to Relics (1186–1200)' in Shinnars 2007, 181–3.
- 29 Karsten Wantik has demonstrated the ceremonial use of Neolithic axes and the importance of wrapping in Neolithic culture see Wantik 2006, 91. James L. Fitzsimmons has investigated the wrapping of the bodies of deceased Mayan kings as an attempt to localize their ritual power in a finite space (Fitzsimmons 2009, 81). The importance of wrapping in contemporary culture has been discussed by Hedry 1993.
- 30 Valerio Valeri has described this in regards to the ancient culture of Hawaii (Valeri 1985, 301).
- 31 Published online at: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/perpetua.asp>.
- 32 *Lives of the Brethren of the Order of the Preachers 1206–1259* 1955 (also available online at: <http://www.domcentral.org/trad/brethren/bretho6.htm>).

- 33 That is how this passage was commonly explained. Schiller and Schreiner 1990, vol. 5.1, 197–9.
- 34 For the St Servais shrine see Kroos 1985.
- 35 Durandus 2007, 154.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 *Scardi Cremonensi Episcopi Mitralis de Officiis* 2008, 95–6.
- 39 Sabatino 1945; Muthesius 1997; Delogu 1998; Martiniani-Reber 1999; Jacoby 2004.
- 40 This is for example the case in the 13th-century bestiary at the Bodleian Library (MS. Bodley 764). On this see Barber 1992, 199.
- 41 'Adam de paradyso statim post culpam Deus eiecit. Non distulit; sed statim separavit a deliciis, ut ageret penitenciam; statim tunica uestiuit eum pellicea, non serica.' *Decretum Gratiani, Decreti Pars Secunda, Causa XXXIII. Quaestio III* (now available online on the site of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (<http://geschichte.digital-sammlungen.de/decretum-gratiani/online/angebot>). The online version follows Emil Friedberg's standard edition of 1879.
- 42 Richter 1968.
- 43 Guibert of Nogent 2000.
- 44 I wish to thank Julia Smith for this reference. Galland 2004, cat. no. 50 (111). The inscription on the parchment reads 'Socini Luplineni'. If the stain in the middle is indeed blood, it is possible that *socini* is a transformation of *sanguinis*.
- 45 Thiodfrid, *Flores*.
- 46 On this relic see Balfour 1944, 287; Astell 2006, 102.
- 47 On the Dioscurides fragment see Marielle Mariniani-Reber, 'Les Dioscures', in *Byzance* 1992, 155. On the subject of textile relics see: Martiniani-Reber 1992; Schorta 1998; Böse 2006.
- 48 Stauffer 1991, 19, 47–51.
- 49 Shinnars 2006, 182.
- 50 It is unclear whether the relics of the Three Magi were ever in Milan as the legend attests. On this, see Geary 1988). The textile found in the shrine of the Magi in Cologne in 1864 was the subject of a detailed study by Irmgard Timmermann (Timmermann 1982). On the fragments in Ribeauvillé, see Martiniani-Reber 1987; *Byzance* 1992, 151.
- 51 This is, for example, the case with some textiles associated with the relics of St Ambrose in Milan. See Martiniani Reber 1987, 198.
- 52 Chaganti 2008, 15.
- 53 See for example the *Bamberg Relic-Book*, printed by Hans Mair in 1493. On this, see Gabriella K. Szalay in Bagnoli *et al.* 2010, cat. no. 126 (225).
- 54 Westermann-Angerhausen 2011.
- 55 Cox Miller 2011; Smith 2011.
- 56 For the icon of St Demetrios, see Kathryn B. Gerry in Bagnoli *et al.* 2010, cat. no. 115 (201).

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