Dying Well: The *Ars moriendi* and the Dormition of the Virgin[1]

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The late Middle Ages offer two models for dying well: the *ars moriendi* and the Virgin's death or dormition. The former outlines the crises that the dying face and describes a ritual that will lead ordinary Christians to a "good death," while the latter presents a privileged instance of such a death. This essay will present the *ars moriendi* in some detail and then consider the dormition in relation to it. As we shall see, the dormition of the Virgin and *ars moriendi* suggest a common image of the good death. Indeed, in the dormition we shall find the ideal toward which the art of dying aims.

The *Ars Moriendi*

Rites for the sick and dying had long been present in the Christian tradition and had been developed with special care in monastic communities. By the late Carolingian era, we find well established liturgical practices to assist the dying.[2] Yet only in the fifteenth century did specific treatises on the *ars moriendi* or art of dying emerge. Several factors may have prompted the introduction of these practical manuals for instructing and comforting the dying. First, plagues and diseases often rendered death premature, unpredictable and 'unnatural,' so that *The Book of the Craft of Dying*—a fifteenth-century translation of the *Ars moriendi*—remarks how "accidental" illnesses make death "by nature and course of age" a rare event.[3] Secondly, Ariès discerns a shift in the late Middle Ages from collective judgement at time's end to individual judgement at the hour of death. This shift intensified the concern for one's own death and the preparation for it

that the *ars moriendi* provided.[4] Finally, Church decrees and councils emphasized the education of clergy for parish work that inevitably involved pastoral care for the dying. Here we find the immediate occasion for the *Ars moriendi*'s composition. For Jean Gerson composed a brief *De arte moriendi* (c.1408), which he brought to the Council of Constance. Because Gerson's work provided the structure for the *Ars moriendi* treatise, and because the latter appears in many south German manuscripts, O'Connor suggests that the treatise was written near Constance, perhaps during the Council itself. And since the treatise cites Dominican sources, she adds that the unknown author may have been a Dominican.[5] The council's program for Church-wide reform and the mendicants' extensive network would explain the treatise's rapid distribution throughout Europe. In addition, diffusion of the Latin *Ars moriendi* was accompanied by translations into German, French, English, Dutch, Italian, Spanish and Catalan and the appearance of illustrated editions[6]—all of which indicate that the treatise soon found a wide audience beyond the clergy. As Rudolf suggests, although the work was originally composed as a "pastoral handbook for young priests," it was quickly adapted for use by lay Christians attending their dying family members and friends.[7]

Latin and vernacular texts of the *Ars moriendi* survive in manuscripts, and in block book and printed editions. There are two principal versions of the work. The first is longer and contains six chapters that present death as a public ceremony with prescribed rites and prayers. The second is a brief, illustrated version dramatizing the moral conflict described in the longer version's second chapter. In the illustrations, demons and angels surround the bed of the dying man, who struggles against a series of temptations before coming to a good death. O'Connor persuasively argues for the priority of the longer version and sees the shorter text as an abridgement designed to accompany the illustrations of the block book editions.[8] Since the longer text also clarifies the purpose and setting for the illustrated editions, I shall examine the tradition's iconography within the context of the long version. For convenience, I shall cite two early English translations of this text: the manuscript *Book of the Craft of Dying* and Caxton's *The Art and Craft to Know Well to Die*.[9]

The *Ars moriendi*'s preface announces two related aims: 1) to prepare for one's own death, and 2) to guide those attending the dying. Caxton's preface announces the first aim, namely, "to teach every man whilst he hath understanding, health and reason, to the end that

it is needful to him to be the better warned, informed and taught" (*Caxton* 55). The good death is one that we encounter with preparation, knowledge, and skill in the art of dying. The preface to *The Craft of Dying* emphasizes the second aim, "teaching and comforting them that be in point of death" (*Craft* 3). Even if the dying have prepared themselves well, their hour of death confronts them with an intense spiritual crisis. For as the *Craft* shrewdly notes, "When death or great sickness falleth upon thee, devotion passeth out of thee; and the more near they take thee and grip thee, the further fleeth devotion from thee" (*Craft* 37–38). The very difficulty of sustaining devotion amid pain and anguish requires those present to guide the dying through the *ars moriendi*. By providing a shared language and ritual, the treatise's prayers and protocols instruct and console both the dying and those attending them.

The brief first chapter praises the good death of those who have lived a Christian life and of the sinful who have repented. Only "death of the soul" should be feared, since "the death of just and true people is precious to God; for dead men be well happy who die in the Lord" (*Caxton* 56–57). Commonplace biblical and philosophical citations assure us that death is a release from the burdens and dangers of earthly life. The chapter concludes by integrating the art of dying into the life of the Christian who "must live in such wise and so have himself alway that he may safely die, every hour, when God will."[10] This Christian will then face death not only well, but "gladly and wilfully" (*Craft* 7).

The second chapter is the longest and most psychologically nuanced of the work. As the only chapter with no precedent in Gerson's work, it also marks the author's most original contribution. It confronts the dying with five temptations and their corresponding inspirations or remedies[11]:

Temptations	*Inspirations*
1. Against faith	Confirming faith
2. Despair over sins	Hope for mercy through contrition
3. Impatience	Charity and patience in suffering
4. Vainglory or complacence	Humility and recollection of sins
5. Avarice	Detachment

This scheme accounts for ten of the eleven illustrations in the block book *Artes moriendi*, where demons and angels present Moriens with

the temptations and inspirations. The illustrations add vivid detail to the text, as when impatience leads the dying man to overturn his bedside table and kick his physician [Fig. 1].

The first three temptations and inspirations concern the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. The devil challenges the faithful with calls to doubt and heresy, which are countered by reciting the Creed to establish the sick "in stableness of faith" (*Craft* 10). The conflict of despair and hope, which revolves around one's sinful past and divine mercy, will be discussed in detail below. The opposition between impatience and charity hinges on love of God tempering one's grief and anger; to die well, one must not complain but suffer patiently. Vainglory or pride then summon the dying to complacence about their salvation. Reversing despair's tactics, the devil here shrewdly tempts the "most religious, and devout and perfect men" who—having overcome the temptations against faith, hope, and love—may attempt to stand on their own virtues and deeds. The remedy challenges this misplaced confidence and requires the dying to recall their sins and turn humbly to God (*Craft* 18–19). The final pair, avarice and the need to break worldly ties, will be discussed shortly.

Let us look more closely at the images for the temptations to despair and avarice and their corresponding remedies. The temptation to despair marks the hour of death as a moral reckoning or settling of accounts, as the demons lead Moriens—the person dying—into an overwhelming recollection of his sins [Fig. 2]. A demon says, "Behold your sins" and holds up a page listing them.[12] Other demons point to specific sins: he has fornicated with the woman standing near the head of the bed; stolen a man's money bag and the clothes off his back; fatally stabbed another man, whose wound some editions (e.g., X and XII) graphically display and rubricate with a splash of red; and lived avariciously by ignoring those in need. Emphasizing the last point, the facing text comments that "Judgment without mercy shall be theirs who have been without mercy on earth" (James 2:13). These examples are indeed depressing, and the text remarks how these reminders add new grief to the dying's physical torment. By counseling despair over one's sins, the devil works "against the hope and confidence that a man ought to have in God."

The corresponding inspiration restores this hope. The text cites the penitential Psalm, "God, you will not reject a contrite and humble heart" (Ps. 50:19, Vulgate; 51:17), and calls the dying—whatever their sins—to "interior contrition" rather than despair. In the illustration

[Fig. 3], an angel says, "Do not despair" and summons prominent examples of repentant sinners: Peter whose denials of Christ are signalled by the cock on the headboard; Mary Magdalene with her urn; Paul who was stricken along the road to Damascus and here lies upon his fallen horse; and the good thief bound to his cross as the heavens open behind him. Zerner has noted how differently the various editions portray the good thief. Master E.S.'s engraving does not articulate his arms and binds his legs stiffly to the cross [Fig. 4], while Edition I of the block books places him lower on the cross, clearly delineates the arms, and leaves the legs untied so that he "seems ready to free himself in a movement of utterly extraordinary lyricism" [Fig 3].[13] To Zerner's observations we may add Edition X's good thief, who seems balanced and relaxed high upon his cross as he calmly looks off to the side [Fig. 5].[14] Confronted with the angel's consoling message and these potent *exempla*, the demons admit defeat and lament that victory will not be theirs.

The temptation to avarice especially assaults "carnal and secular men" with their deep worldly loves and attachments; such a person must "put away out of his mind all temporal and outward things, and plenerly [fully] commit himself all to God" (*Craft* 19–20). In Master E.S.'s engraving of this temptation, the demons point to the dying man's family and friends above, and to his even more prominent house, stable, and wine cellar [Fig. 6]. This cluttered illustration aptly portrays avarice as an "over great occupation of outward things and temporal" (*Caxton* 64). Emphasizing this temptation's power, Ariès describes avarice as "the passionate and eager love of life, of persons as well as things."[15] To keep this passion within bounds may require a severe *contemptus mundi* and reminders of death. Hence, the corresponding "inspiration" sets a radical detachment against this love. In the illustration [Fig. 7] Moriens's property has disappeared as angels shield his family from view and seek to refocus his attention on the crucifixion. The accompanying text says, "Remember the poverty of Christ on the cross," so that Moriens will recall Christ's detachment as well as the saving power of his death.

The illustrations highlight central features of the longer *Ars moriendi*'s second chapter. They effectively portray the public drama of dying as Moriens finds himself surrounded not only by his family, friends, physician and clergy, but also by demons, angels, saints, the Virgin, Christ and the Trinity. All these attend Moriens in his last hour, which is an extraordinarily perilous time because "men that die,

in their last sickness and end, have greatest and most grievous temptations, and such as they never before had in all their life" (*Craft* 9–10).

Considered in isolation, however, the iconography can be misleading. The dense population of Moriens's chamber may suggest that he is a spectator, if not a victim, of the drama that unfolds all around him.[16] But the iconography can be clarified by the longer text, which unequivocally identifies Moriens as the principal actor in this drama. Concluding the chapter on temptations, Caxton writes that the devil "may not surmount the man in none of the said temptations, nor in none other whatsomever they be, but if the man, having usage of reason, will by his own agreement consent to them."[17] While the hour of death is perilous, Moriens's destiny depends on his own response to his temptations and inspirations. As Ariès comments, "Here human freedom is respected, and . . . man has become his own judge . . . It is up to him to triumph with the help of his guardian angel and his intercessors, or to yield to the temptations of the devil and be lost."[18] Dying is a preeminently personal act, which completes one's biography and decides one's destiny. Hence, the temptations and their remedies are described not to render Moriens passive, but to outline the moral and religious crises which the dying may expect and to prescribe appropriate responses. As we shall see, Moriens's death in the eleventh illustration thus becomes a personal triumph that has been sustained through the art of dying.

Chapters 3–6 of the *Ars moriendi* treatise comprise the rituals and prayers that support Moriens in his last hour. In chapter three, two series of "interrogations" are addressed to the dying while "they have the usage of reason and speech" (*Caxton* 65). These are the short "Anselm questions"[19] and a longer set derived from Gerson's *De arte moriendi*. A similar pattern rules both sets of questions, as Moriens affirms his faith, acknowledges and repents his sins, and proclaims his belief in the saving efficacy of Christ's passion. The interrogations reflect liturgical practice for the sick and dying; John Mirk, for example, lists the Anselm questions in the order for extreme unction.[20] Here in the *Ars moriendi*, the questions and Moriens's simple affirmations are especially appropriate since they counter the previous chapter's temptations and confirm its inspirations, especially those to faith and hope. In this chapter Christ's passion becomes central, as Moriens is urged to "put all thy trust in His passion and in His death only, having trust in none other thing. To this death commit thee fully. In His death wrap all thyself fully" (*Craft* 23).

The repeated appeals to Christ's passion lead smoothly into the fourth chapter, which summons Moriens to imitate Christ's five actions on the cross. Christ prayed, wept, cried, "commended his soul to God," and "yielded to Him His spirit." Similarly, Moriens should pray "in his heart," weep in repentance, cry in the desire for forgiveness and everlasting life, "commend his soul to God," and "yield his spirit to God voluntarily."[21] The remainder of this chapter specifies prayers to Christ, Mary and the angels, and invites Moriens to pray to "the apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins—and specially to those saints which he loved and worshiped . . . in his heal."[22] Amid this cloud of witnesses and holding Christ's death before him, Moriens prays for "a clear end" and the "everlasting bliss" that is the reward for holy dying (*Craft* 31).

The fifth chapter shifts focus to those attending the dying. As Beaty notes, it reminds Moriens's companions of their obligation to assist the dying through the protocols previously outlined, and also of their own mortality.[23] As Gerson and Innocent III command, they must offer Moriens no false hope for recovery, and even the physician should defer to the "spiritual medicines" of the sacraments (*Craft* 32–33). The attendants should lead Moriens to make a will, "disposing lawfully his house and other goods and needs" (*Caxton* 75). They must counsel the dying to repentance and reconciliation with the Church, assist them with the interrogations and prayers, and present them with a crucifix, image of the Virgin or a revered saint, and holy water so "that fiends may be voided" from them (*Craft* 36). The chapter concludes by urging the companions to master the art of dying while in good health, and confirming the importance of their help to Moriens because he is "in such peril and so great need at that time, that, and it were possible, all a city should come together with all haste to a man that is nigh to death or dying" (*Craft* 38). Ideally death should not be a private affair, but a town meeting. Religious communities, who flock to the bedside of their dying, provide a model in this regard. Here the treatise most explicitly affirms the public drama which surrounds death and demands specific actions and attitudes from the dying and their companions.

The sixth chapter contains ten prayers that may be said for the dying by one attending them. While these prayers continue the pleas for forgiveness and mercy found in chapter four, here the emphasis finally falls on the commendation of the dying person's spirit to God. The ninth prayer addresses Moriens as "Dear brother" and commends him to God, the angels and the communion of saints; it asks that he

may never know hell, but be saved by Christ and enjoy "the contemplation of God without end" (*Craft* 45–46). The chapter and the entire work then conclude with the majestic liturgical prayer, "*Profiscere anima Christiana* / Go, Christian soul, out of this world."[24] This prayer brings the *Ars moriendi* treatise to a triumphant, consoling conclusion.

The illustrated *Ars moriendi* vividly portrays this outcome in its eleventh and final image: the good death. Here the earlier temptations and inspirations give way as Moriens succeeds in "dying well." In Master E.S.'s engraving of this scene [Fig. 8], the deathbed becomes the focus for a crowded—indeed cosmic—scene. The same scene appears, but reversed, in the block-book editions [Fig. 9].[25] The last rites are represented by a priest giving the dying man a candle, which he here correctly holds in the right hand. An angel gently receives his soul in the form of a child, while the demons below vent their frustration at losing this battle. A crucifixion scene appears to the side, with John, Mary and other saints. The text on the facing page summarizes key points from the longer version's later chapters, as it advises the dying to embrace Christ's redeeming passion and to commend their souls to God, and suggests that their devotion be sustained by prayers and images of the crucifixion and the Virgin.

This image occurs within a long tradition of deathbed scenes. As Ariès comments, the *Ars moriendi*'s iconography reflects the late-medieval fusion of death and judgement where "All that used to take place at the end of time now happens at the hour of death, in conjunction with the traditional rites—no longer in the explosive world of the Apocalypse but instead in an existing and private place, the bedchamber, at the bedside."[26] With its sequence of temptations and inspirations leading to a good death, the *Ars moriendi* does this with exceptional clarity. But it is scarcely alone in fusing judgement and the moment of death. Books of hours, for example, occasionally include similar deathbed scenes. One such scene appears in a Latin and French book of hours printed in Paris by Thieleman Kerver. In the Office of the Dead, Kerver's editions of 1522 and 1525 place a deathbed scene within a richly decorated, nearly organic architectural frame, where the French text informs us: "When the man has lived to a full age / In this valley of misery / While hoping without distress / To gain everlasting life"[Fig. 10].[27] We are thus presented with a natural death accepted as release and with hope. Although this scene differs from the *Ars moriendi*'s iconography, it retains some of its central elements. The dying man lies in a four-poster bed, while outside the

window to the left a workman energetically digs his grave. A priest touches the dying man's right arm and offers him the *viaticum* or last Eucharist. This image thus presents a more overtly sacramental approach to dying well than do the *Ars moriendi* illustrations. Yet the hour of death remains a religious crisis, as familiar figures are in attendance: an angel and three demons, two of whom draw back from the foot of the bed. The angel does not receive the dying man's soul but guides his words to Christ in a window above. Unlike the *Ars moriendi* scenes, where the demons and angels often speak in banderoles, here the dying man himself speaks. He prays, "Deliver me, Lord, and place me beside you. *Libera me, Domine, et pone me iuxta te.*" This verse (Job 17:3, Vulgate) is from the seventh reading for Matins in the Office of the Dead. Since the complete reading is printed on the reverse of this leaf, the image visually enacts the precise prayer that the text prescribes for a good death.

The Virgin's Death or Dormition

The medieval concern for dying well also found rich, detailed expression in the Virgin Mary's death or dormition—her "falling asleep"[28]—which became the most popular deathbed scene throughout medieval Europe. As Philippe Ariès notes, "For centuries it remained the prototype of the good death."[29] Taking up Ariès's suggestion, let us first survey the dormition and its sources. We shall then discuss the Virgin's death in late-medieval art and compare it to the illustrated *Ars moriendi* treatises and their similar deathbed scene.

The death or dormition of the Virgin derives from apocryphal sources and has been linked with her assumption into heaven since the legend's beginnings. Indeed, the Byzantine church, where the feast emerged, referred to it as both the Dormition and the Assumption. The feast of the Assumption entered the Roman church calendar in the seventh century, and artistic representations of the dormition began to appear in the West in the tenth century.[30] It became a common theme in the sculptural programs of Gothic churches dedicated to Mary, such as Chartres and Strasbourg, and appeared frequently in stained glass, painting and manuscript illumination.

In the thirteenth century, Jacobus de Voragine assembled the legendary materials concerning the Dormition in *The Golden Legend*, and his account influenced later piety, art and literature. He presents two narratives of Mary's death and assumption. For the first and more

detailed narrative, he cites "a small apocryphal book attributed to John the Evangelist"[31] which describes the following events: living near Mount Sion, Mary often visited the sites of Jesus' baptism, passion, resurrection and ascension. One day as her "heart was aflame with desire to be with her Son," she wept and an angel appeared saying, "Hail, blessed Mary!" He gave her "a palm branch from paradise" and announced that she would die in three days. She asked for two things: that she may die in the apostles' presence, and that in dying her soul "may see no foul spirit, and that no power of Satan may confront" her. The angel agreed to both requests and departed. The apostles, who had been preaching around the world, found themselves "snatched up into the clouds" and transported to her doorstep to attend her death and burial. Jesus himself then appeared, accompanied by the heavenly court. He led a brief liturgical dialogue, where Mary joyfully accepted his call to be crowned and share his throne. As she died peacefully, her soul "went forth from her body and flew to the arms of her Son." She was then "seated upon a throne of glory to the right of her Son." In the funeral procession Peter and Paul carried the bier, and John held the palm branch. Peter began the chant "*Exiit Israel de Aegypto*" (Ps. 114:1; Vulgate Ps. 113:1), which was joined by the other apostles and angels as well. Hearing the song, the Jews became enraged and the chief priest attacked the bier "to overturn it and throw the corpse to the ground," but his hands "withered and stuck to the bier" and the others were blinded. At Peter's urging the priest converted, kissed the bier and was healed, and the Jews who affirmed a faith in Christ and his mother regained their sight. The apostles proceeded to bury Mary's body and to keep watch at the tomb. On the third day Christ came to the tomb and as Mary's soul re-entered her body, "she came forth glorious from the monument, and was assumed into the heavenly bridal chamber." Reprising his role as skeptic, Thomas missed Mary's assumption and refused to believe until the belt or "girdle that had encircled her body fell intact into his hands."

Jacobus retains some critical perspective on this story, as he cites pseudo-Jerome's judgement that it is "apocryphal, except regarding some things in it that are credible because they seem to be approved by the saints." While affirming most details of the story, he and Jerome consider some incidents to be "pure invention,"such as Thomas's absence and doubt.[32] With this caveat in place, Jacobus mentions Elizabeth of Schönau's claim that Mary's bodily Assumption occurred forty days after her death, not three days as in the first narrative. As proofs that Mary "was assumed integrally soul and body" into heaven, he

cites Bernard of Clairvaux and texts attributed to Jerome and Augustine.[33] He then describes in detail several miracles of the Virgin. Finally, in a long concluding section on "how Mary was assumed into heaven," Jacobus adds a second narrative of Mary's death and assumption from "a sermon that was compiled from various sayings of the saints and is solemnly read in many churches."[34] This version of the story repeats much of John's apocryphal account but adds a detail that is important for the Dormition's iconography: it clearly states that Mary died in bed. When all the apostles—along with one hundred-twenty virgins—were gathered together, "Mary put on her funeral clothes, and, bidding all farewell, composed herself on the bed, ready to die."[35]

This story responds to the medieval desire for a fuller account of the Virgin's life than is available in Scripture, which describes only Mary's role in Christ's birth and infancy and her place at his passion and death. Wanting to know more, medieval Christians eagerly appropriated legendary accounts of the Virgin's birth and early life, as well as of her death and assumption. *The Golden Legend*, moreover, presents the latter events with biblical echoes that lend them familiarity and authority. The angel's announcement to Mary repeats the Annunciation. The conflicting accounts of when Mary's body was assumed into heaven suggest different comparisons with Christ: the third day after her death recalls Christ's resurrection, while forty days parallel the post-resurrection life prior to his ascension. And in the one event that Jacobus recognizes as "invented," Thomas requires proof of Mary's bodily assumption into heaven as he had demanded evidence of Jesus' resurrection.

In *The Golden Legend*, the narrative of the Virgin's death and assumption thus found its place within one of the Middle Ages' most popular handbooks. From this common source and the legendary tradition that it synthesizes, programs of painting and sculpture across medieval Europe presented the dormition and assumption in the same sequence of events and images. Illustrated cycles of individual scenes can be seen in illuminated manuscripts such as the York Psalter (c.1170) and de Braille Hours (c.1240), in sculpture at Bourges and Notre Dame in Paris, in glass at Chartres and St. Quentin, in frescos at Assisi, Siena and Padua, as well as in English wall paintings at Chalgrove and Croughton.[36]

Other works combine several episodes from the legend into a single image. For example, a fragment from a large, late fourteenth-century altar panel in Avignon mingles the deathbed and funeral scenes [Fig.

11]. It portrays Mary three times: on her deathbed or bier at the lower right, as a delicate young girl carried by a smiling angel in full flight at the upper left, and held by Christ within a mandala surrounded by seraphim at the upper right. The two images at the top reflect the flight of Mary's soul to Christ at her death. In contrast to *The Golden Legend*, Christ here does not receive Mary's soul directly, but from the hands of an angel. Below, a host of saints fades into a sea of halos toward the left. John holds the palm of paradise and stands beside an angel at the Virgin's head, and Peter sprinkles the body with blessed water. Because the Virgin's body and Christ's mandala would usually occupy the center of an altar panel, Meiss suggests that we have three-fifths of the original painting and that a parallel company of saints had appeared to the right of Peter.[37] The surviving fragment, however, preserves its most remarkable scene in the lower right-hand corner, where an angel with an oversized sword strikes the hands of a falling figure. Although this figure has been so heavily repainted as to render its gender uncertain, he or she clearly portrays a Jew attacking the Virgin's funeral bier and suffering the consequences. While images of the Jew touching or reaching for the bier are fairly common, representations of the avenging angel are extremely rare in Western medieval art.[38] Hence, the Avignon painting expresses with unusual clarity two facets of the Dormition legend: a vengeful contempt for Jews and a loving, nearly sentimental piety toward the Virgin.

Another large, central altar panel combines three episodes common in medieval Italian art: the Virgin's burial, her Assumption into heaven, and the gift of her girdle or belt to Thomas. Painted for a church near Lucca prior to 1408, this panel was attributed to the Master of the Bambino Vispo, who has since been identified as the Florentine artist Starnina.[39] At some point in the last century, however, this panel was cut in half and sold as two separate works. The top portion with the Assumption and Thomas scene now belongs to Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum [Fig. 12], and the lower portion with the burial belongs to the Philadelphia Museum of Art [Fig. 13].[40] The panels have been reunited, and the complete work was on display in Philadelphia from 1994–96 and is currently at the Fogg. In the lower portion, Mary's body is lowered into a shallow tomb by three apostles, one of whom leans forward across the tomb as he supports her. In the foreground another apostle reads, perhaps leading prayers for the burial rite. Peter again sprinkles the body with blessed water. Reversing the Madonna and child image, Christ gently

cradles Mary's soul in the form of a young girl—a gesture that, following *The Golden Legend*, often accompanies the deathbed scene where Christ receives her soul. Here, however, his gesture may represent the later moment in the legend when Christ returns Mary's soul to her body at her resurrection.[41] On this view, Christ's holding Mary would link the burial scene to the Assumption above. The top portion portrays the Assumption as Mary's triumph over death and burial. She sits enthroned within her own mandala that angels carry into the heavens above the central palm tree and clouds. Looking down toward Thomas, she lowers her belt to him as he gazes toward her from the mountain below. This episode, which leaves no doubt about Mary's assumption into heaven, remained extremely popular in Italy, where Prato claimed the Virgin's belt as its premier relic.

In a pradella panel, Fra Angelico also presents the Virgin's burial [Fig. 14],[42] but with fewer legendary features. This burial proceeds without Christ holding the Virgin's soul, and instead of attending angels, Florentines in contemporary dress stand at the far right and against the rockscape toward the left. A simple burial rite is in progress. Five apostles carefully lower the Virgin's body, which rests in a tightly held cloth, into the tomb. John holds the golden palm of paradise, and four apostles carry torches. Peter stands near the center with his right hand raised in blessing, as one apostle prepares a thurible with incense and another holds an aspergillum. In the delicate scene above, six angels surround Mary and Christ, who holds a book displaying the Greek letters Alpha and Omega (beginning and end). The iconography of this visionary scene remains ambiguous; it may represent either the reception of Mary's soul at her death or her bodily assumption into heaven.[43] Because Mary stands beside Christ, the Assumption may be the more likely interpretation, yet on either reading the key point is Mary's presence with her divine son. In this panel Fra Angelico, unlike Starnina, downplays the miraculous events surrounding the Virgin's burial and obscures those associated with her assumption, completely ignoring the episode of Thomas and Mary's belt. As Strehlke suggests, the absence of miraculous details in this panel reflects the influence of St. Antonio Pierozzi, prior of Fra Angelico's Dominican community in Fiesole. Since Antonio "questioned apocryphal tales about Mary's funeral . . . [and] preferred to emphasize the humbleness of her obsequies," Strehlke says that Angelico's painting seems "to respond to Antonio's doubts and his wish for a straightforward iconography."[44] The paintings of Starnina and Angelico thus

illustrate two approaches to handling the Virgin's death in Italian art: one lush with miraculous details and the other restrained with a shimmering vision of the Virgin's triumph.

In the art of medieval France and Germany, two scenes are represented most frequently: the deathbed scene and the coronation in heaven. They sometimes appear together, as in the tympanum of the Liebfrauenkirche in Worms [Fig. 15]. In the lower register Mary reclines on the bed while Christ stands at the center holding her soul in his left arm; above, he places a crown upon her head. An altar panel from Cologne (c. 1415–1440) [Fig. 16] suggests these images' Christological connections, as Christ's resurrection and ascension appear in the lower panels, and the Virgin's death and coronation are depicted above. The overall effect here is an eschatology of hope, where the Virgin's triumph echoes Christ's, and the two together offer salvation and new life to the believing viewer. In the deathbed scene [Fig. 17], Mary lies under an elaborate coverlet with her hands crossed before her. The apostles' grief is clear in the hooded figure who holds his hands to his face near the headboard, and in the foreground where one apostle reaches out to support the arm of another. Behind the bed other apostles perform the rites for the dying, with Peter holding the prayer book and sprinkling holy water. Within a circle above, Christ receives Mary's soul in the form of a child seated on his left arm. This familiar deathbed scene recurs with subtle variations.[45] In another panel from Cologne (second half of fifteenth century) [Fig. 18], the sacramental trappings are depicted more fully. John gives Mary a candle, while another apostle holds the holy water bucket and aspergillum, and Peter and two others hold books for the rite. Toward the left an apostle blows on the coals in the thurible to get the incense going. Amid the gilded swirls above, Christ again cradles the Virgin's soul.

A carved dormition from Freiburg (c. 1500) [Fig. 19 and 20] places Mary in a canopy bed and emphasizes the textured folds of her pillow and coverlet. She holds a candle in her right hand, as her left hand rests on the draped headcloth that unfurls down her arm. A beardless John again assists her with the candle, and Peter reaches around him with an aspergillum. The apostles appear without halos, and in a delightful anachronism, one of them rests a pair of eyeglasses on his book. By accenting contemporary physical details and excluding Christ's reception of the Virgin's soul, this work "secularizes" the dormition—that is, presents it as the death of an ordinary woman in a contemporary setting. Viewers of this work must envision the missing details to complete the scene's iconography.

The Antwerp artist Joos van Cleve's paintings of the dormition highlight contemporary reality with extraordinary intensity. In one that he painted for the private chapel of a wealthy Cologne family in 1515,[46] the familiar scene unfolds in a richly drawn room filled with household objects and activity [Fig. 21]. Light streams in from the leaded window on the left, and in the back a figure enters through a door that opens to the space beyond. In the center an elaborate four-poster bed dwarfs the figure of the Virgin, while the apostles move freely—perhaps even frantically—in the open space around her. Peter's golden cope heightens the liturgical solemnity of the occasion, while the absence of halos suggests its contemporary or everyday quality. In this painting, Mary dies within an active, wealthy household of the early sixteenth century.

The dormition and related images also appear in books of hours, which are interesting on several counts. As books for private use, they open onto a more intimate devotional sphere, and they have the advantage of texts to clarify their images. As Roger Wieck has noted, they also illustrate late-medieval beliefs and practices concerning death, especially in the Office of the Dead.[47] Similarly revealing are their portrayals of the dormition. Wieck notes that in the Hours of the Virgin, the coronation in heaven usually illustrates Compline (the last hour of the day), but that the dormition occasionally takes its place.[48] An apparently rarer pattern can be seen in two books of hours from the Free Library of Philadelphia's Rare Book Department.[49] These manuscripts place the dormition at Vespers and the coronation at Compline.

Widener Ms 6 is a lavishly illustrated book from the Paris atelier of the Duke of Berry (c. 1420). Its dormition [Fig. 22] contains the familiar elements: the Virgin reclining on a bed, here lined in gold; the ministering apostles; and above, Christ holding her childlike and crowned soul. Below an elaborate initial "D" begin the prayers for Vespers, and a scrolling leaf motif frames the entire page. At Compline a long-bearded Christ raises his hand in blessing, while an angel places the crown upon Mary's head as she kneels before him [Fig. 23].[50] Angelic musicians perform on psaltery and vielle on either side.

Lewis Ms 97 is a late fifteenth-century French manuscript. In its richly drawn dormition [Fig. 24], Mary lies in a blue canopy bed and receives a palm branch from John, as the apostles crowd around her in prayer. Two dogs and a coat of arms appear at the bottom of the page, which is framed in a fruit and floral border. In the coronation scene for Compline [Fig. 25], an angel crowns Mary not before Christ

alone, but before the entire Trinity—a variation that became common in the fifteenth century.

Two other illustrations will round out this brief survey of dormitions in books of hours. The first is a leaf from a Flemish manuscript c. 1440 [Fig. 26]. Mary lies in an outsized, reddish bed so large that her head rests on her halo instead of the pillow. She holds a candle, while Christ looks down with two angels from a blue arc above. The massive bed seems to float above the checked floor and also dwarfs the seated apostle in the foreground. In the second, a French manuscript c.1470 [Fig. 27], the Virgin reclines on a red bed, while Peter again presides over the rites for the dying. Above, Christ and a youthful Mary are supported in a cloth borne by angels. A point of special interest occurs in the right margin: kneeling on a patch of turf that breaks into the dormition scene's frame, the book's owner prays, "Mother of God, remember me (*Mater Dei memento mei*)."

This last illumination suggests an intriguing question. How does the owner wish to be remembered? At least in part, we may assume that she invokes Mary's help at the time of death, when late-medieval piety considered her intercession especially helpful in securing salvation. The Virgin's miracles, such as the Theophilus legend,[51] often portray her intervening with demons and her more judgemental Son to save those who would otherwise be damned. In one instance she literally tilts the scales of justice: a sinful man had a vision of himself "before God's judgement seat"; when no one could counter the demon's charge that his evil deeds outweighed the good, the sinner called upon Mary who promptly "put her hand on the side of the scale where the few good deeds were, while the devil tried to pull the other side down; but the mother prevailed and the sinner was freed" and reformed his life.[52] In her mercy Mary would even save seducers, thieves, and murderers who called upon her. These stories were tied to changes in prayer and practice, so that during the fifteenth century a second verse was added to the *Ave Maria*, asking the Virgin to "pray for us sinners . . . at the hour of our death." Similarly, the *Ars moriendi* advises the dying Christian to ask Mary "to reconcile me to thy sweet Son, my Lord Jesu, . . . that for love of thee, sweet Lady, He will forgive me my sins."[53]

This association of the Virgin with our dying has important implications for understanding the representation of her own death as well. In books of hours, placing the dormition illuminations at the last hours of the day may itself be significant, since the coming of night and

sleep readily suggests "dormition" and death. Two texts in books of hours reinforce this point. The readings for Compline include the penitential Psalm 129, "*De profundis*," which also occurs in the Office of the Dead, another regular feature in books of hours. Similarly, these books often include the prayer "*Obsecro te*," which addresses Mary and asks, "At the end of my life show me your face, and reveal to me the day and hour of my death. Please hear and receive this humble prayer and grant me eternal life."[54] Like the dormition itself, this prayer suggests the ideal death as one foreseen, consecrated, and leading to salvation. That the Virgin's intercession may confer such a death is a medieval commonplace; but that her dormition provides a model for dying well may be less obvious. Comparison with the *ars moriendi* literature will clarify this point.

The '*Ars Moriendi*' and Dormition

Without displacing Christ's passion, the Virgin's dormition provides an idealized picture of "holy dying" that fits well with the *ars moriendi*, for the dying Christian struggles toward the "good end" that Mary attains with ease. Marian devotion precludes her suffering intense moral conflict. Having lived fully in faith, hope, etc., the Virgin is beyond the deathbed temptations that beset ordinary Christians. It would, for instance, be odd for her to cling avariciously to life and property. And what past sins could tempt her to despair? This absence of temptations and demons thus marks the dormition as an ideal death. *The Golden Legend* and dormition iconography also make clear that Mary fulfills the *ars moriendi*'s injunction to embrace death "gladly and wilfully."[56] Following John Damascene, *The Golden Legend* has Mary recite Jesus' last words on the cross that were prescribed for the dying, "Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."[57]

Her death exemplifies other features of the art of dying as well. Thanks to the angel's announcement, this is no sudden, unforeseen death; rather, it is prepared in accord with her wishes, as the apostles are present to comfort and minister to her. Their ministry highlights the liturgical response to death in both the dormition and the art of dying. As we have seen, the *ars moriendi* treatises specify prayers and rites for the dying—including the sprinkling of holy water so "that fiends may be voided."[58] Similarly, in dormition scenes the apostles recite from prayer books and use holy water, candles and incense. In both cases, prayer and the rites of the church bless the act of dying

and transform it into a rite of passage. Hence, the angel receiving the dying man's soul and Christ holding Mary in his arm are comforting images of salvation at the time of death. These images, along with Mary's later resurrection, assumption, and coronation, powerfully represent the hopes that medieval Christians entertained for themselves, since on the last day all would be called to rise and face judgement. Not only does the Virgin's death suggest a model for human dying, but her triumph provides a powerful intercessor both at the hour of our individual deaths and at the end of time.[59]

In conclusion, the *ars moriendi* and the Virgin's death provide powerful, consoling images of the good death. Returning to Ariès, we may say that the *ars moriendi* is a guide for "taming" death, while Mary's dormition represents death fully "tamed" and under control. Hence, if Mary's protection was often invoked for the hour of death, her own dormition offered a clear, idealized picture of the holy dying sought in the *ars moriendi* tradition. While the art of the dormition increasingly brought this ideal into contemporary settings, the art of dying carried it still further into practical, everyday life by instructing the dying and those attending them about what to expect and how to practice the rites that produce a "good death." In this movement between ideal and practice, the Virgin's dormition and the art of dying lead beyond anxiety, temptation, and terror, and transform dying into an event at once serene and holy. As we in the later twentieth century know only too well, that is no mean achievement.[60]

Notes

1 This essay adapts and expands portions of my earlier articles: "*Everyman* and the *Ars moriendi*: Fifteenth-Century Ceremonies of Dying," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 6 (1983): 93–113; and "The Virgin's 'Good Death': The Dormition in Fifteenth-Century Drama and Art," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 21 (1994): 55–86.

2 Concerning this development, see Frederick S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

3 "*The Book of the Craft of Dying*," in *The Book of the Craft of Dying and Other Early English Tracts concerning Death*, ed. M. M. Comper (New York: Arno Press, 1977; 1st ed., 1917): 15. Rainer Rudolf counts seventy-five years of plague between 1326 and 1500; see his valuable survey article, "*Ars moriendi*, I. Mittelalter," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 4 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1980): 144–149.

4 Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982): 97–107; see also Ariès, *Images of Man and Death* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985): 151.

5 Sister Mary Catherine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars moriendi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941): 48–60. See Gerson's *La Médicine de l'âme*, the French version of his *De arte moriendi*, in Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, 10 vols. (Paris: Desclée and Cie, 1966), VII: 404–407; and Giuseppe A. Brunelli, "Le traité *La science de bien mourir ou médicine de l'âme* de J. Gerson," *Le Moyen Age* 70 (1964): 265–284.

6 Concerning the diffusion of texts, translations, and editions, see O'Connor, *Art of Dying Well*, passim; and Roger Chartier, "Les Arts de mourir, 1450–1600," *Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisations* 31 (1976): 51–75.

7 Rudolf, "*Ars moriendi*," 144. See also Francis Rapp, "La Réforme religieuse et la méditation de la mort à la fin du moyen âge," in *La Mort au moyen âge* (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, 1975): 53–66; and Nigel Palmer, "Ars moriendi und Totentanz: Zur Verbildlichung des Todes im Spätmittelalter," in *Tod im Mittelalter*, ed. Arno Borst et al. (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1993): 313–334, with an extensive bibliography on the *Ars moriendi* (330–334). O'Connor notes that Gerson's *De arte moriendi* suggests "a sort of layman's ritual" (*Art of Dying Well*, 23); the treatise opens with an appeal to "les vrays amys d'ung malade" (Gerson, *Médicine de l'âme*, 404).

8 O'Connor, *Art of Dying Well*, 11–17 and 44–48. Henri Zerner confirms this view in "L'art au morier," *Revue de l'art* 11 (1971): 14, n. 29.

9 These shall be cited, generally between parentheses in the text, as "*Craft*" and "*Caxton*" from Comper's modernized edition, *Book of the Craft of Dying and Other Early English Tracts*, 3–47 & 55–101. Caxton's *Art and Craft* (1490) is the longer of his two abridgements of the *Ars moriendi*; Pynson reprinted it in 1495. David W. Atkinson also edits *Craft* and *Caxton* in *The English Ars Moriendi* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992): 2–20 and 21–35. Comper and Atkinson edit *Craft* from different manuscripts with minor variants.

10 *Craft*, 9. This theme later developed into an "art of living" which often accompanied the *Ars moriendi*, as in Vérard's published French editions (Paris, 1493/94, 1496 and 1498), and the tradition's late flowering in Robert Bellarmine's *De arte bene moriendi* (1619) and Jeremy Taylor's treatises on *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* (1651). See Bellarmine, *Spiritual Writings*, ed. and trans. John P. Donnelly and Roland J. Teske (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 321–386; Taylor, *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, 2 vols., ed. P. G. Stanwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Alberto Tenenti, *La vie et la mort à travers l'art du XVe siècle* (Paris: A. Colin, 1952): 60–68; and Nancy L. Beaty, *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the Ars Moriendi in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), especially 197–270 on Taylor's *Holy Dying*.

11 O'Connor finds "no evidence of psychological plan" in this order of temptations and inspirations (*Art of Dying Well*, 44). Beaty replies in *Craft of Dying*, 16–18. Some illustrated editions change the temptations' sequence. Vérard (Paris, 1493/94, 1496, 1498) places avarice third, between despair and impatience; see O'Connor, *Art of Dying Well*, 153–156; Emile Mâle bases his discussion of the *Ars moriendi* on Vérard in *L'Art religieux de la fin du moyen âge en France* (Paris: A. Colin, 1922): 382–388.

12 This temptation highlights the "accountancy of the hereafter," which commentators have linked to the discovery of Purgatory. See Jacques Chiffoleau, *La Comptabilité de l'au-delà* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1980); and Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984): 227–229. Le Goff writes, "Purgatory was one of the main reasons for the dramatization of the moment of death" (292) that we witness in the *Ars moriendi* tradition.

13 Zerner, "L'art au morier," 16. On Master E.S., see the catalogue by Alan Shestack, *Master E.S.: Five Hundredth Anniversary Exhibition* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1967); for the *Ars moriendi*, see plates 8, 10, 12, 14 and 15, and commentary. Of all the *Ars moriendi* illustrations, only Master E.S.'s engravings survive with no accompanying text; Shestack suggests that they "may have been intended to be pasted into a manuscript *Ars moriendi*."

14 The Pierpont Morgan Library has the only copy of Edition X (PML 274). It combines hand-colored woodcut prints (except for a pen-and-ink drawing of the Temptation to Vainglory) and a manuscript German text that O'Connor describes as "a systematically unintelligent abbreviation" of the long *Ars moriendi* text (*Art of Dying Well*, 130–131).

15 Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 130. Because O'Connor considers avarice a "petty attachment to material things," she finds its position as Moriens's final temptation "somewhat anticlimactic" (*Art of Dying Well*, 44). When Ariès redefines it and claims—perhaps too strongly—that "probably at no time has man so loved life as he did at the end of the Middle Ages" (132), he makes avarice's placement psychologically and morally appropriate.

16 Tenenti judges the dying man to be "bien plus le témoin que l'acteur" in the combat of demons and angels (*La Vie et la mort*, 52–54).

17 *Caxton*, 65; see the parallel passage at *Craft*, 20–21, which cites I Cor. 10:13.

18 Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 109.

19 Attributed to Anselm of Canterbury; see O'Connor, *Art of Dying Well*, 31–35; and Balthasar Fischer, "*Ars moriendi*: Der Anselm von Canterbury zugeschriebene Dialog mit einem Sterbenden," in *Im Angesicht des Todes*, ed. Hansjakob Becker et al. (Erzabtei St. Ottilien, 1987): 1363–1370.

20 John Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. Edward Peacock (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969 reprint; E.E.T.S., o.s. 31): 53–54; see also Mirk, "Seven Questions to a Dying Man," 69–71.

21 *Caxton*, 70–71; see *Craft*, 27–28.

22 *Craft*, 30–31. Concerning the importance of the saints in late antiquity as "patrons," especially of the dying, see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981): 67–68.

23 Beaty, *Craft of Dying*, 26.

24 *Caxton*, 86–87; *Craft*, 47. On this prayer in the Gellone *Sacramentary* (c. 800), see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 117–118. The Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer* (1977) includes the prayer in the "Ministration at the Time of Death" (464).

25 *The Ars Moriendi (Editio Princeps, circa 1450)*, ed. W. Harry Rylands (London: Holbein Society, 1881). The relation between this edition, Master E.S.'s, and others has been the subject of considerable debate. See Zerner, "L'Art au morier," 7–30.

26 Ariès, *Images of Man and Death*, 151; see his survey of deathbed scenes on 94–112.

27 My translation. The Pierpont Morgan Library has a complete copy of Kerver's 1525 *Book of Hours* (PML 125446) with this plate at gathering M, leaf 3r. Chartier ("Arts de mourir," 57–58) discusses and reproduces the same scene, but differently framed, from a 1542 *Book of Hours* published by "la Veuve Kerver." Concerning the Office of the Dead in Books of Hours, see Roger S. Wieck, *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York: G. Braziller, 1988): 124–136; and Gabriele Bartz & Eberhard König,

"Die Illustration des Totenoffiziums in Stundenbüchern," in *Im Angesicht des Todes*, 487–528, especially 508–510 on deathbed scenes.

28 The term "dormition" echoes classical descriptions of death as sleep and rest (*requies*); see Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 22–24. On the Virgin's "dormition," see Constantin Andronikof, "La Dormition comme type de mort chrétienne," in *La Maladie et la mort du chrétien dans la liturgie* (Rome: Edizione Liturgiche, 1975), 27.

29 Ariès, *Images of Man and Death*, 96. Yet in his monumental *The Hour of Our Death*, Ariès mentions the dormition only in passing; see 141, 250, and 311.

30 On the Dormition/Assumption in Byzantine and early medieval theology and art, see Christa Schaffer, *Koimesis: Der Heimgang Mariens* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1985). Michael O'Carroll conveniently summarizes the Assumption's passage from legend to Roman Catholic doctrine in *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Virgin Mary* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1982), 55–61; see also Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Cult and Myth of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 81–102. For Western theologians' handling of the doctrine from the thirteenth to fifteenth century, see Martin Jugie, *La Mort et l'assomption de la Sainte Vierge* (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944), 389–406. Pope Pius XII's 1950 declaration of the Assumption as dogma sidesteps the issue of whether Mary died or was taken into heaven while still alive (O'Carroll, *Theotikos*, 55 and 117–118). There was rarely any doubt on this question in Byzantine or medieval theology; an exception was Francis of Mayron (Jugie, *Mort et assomption*, 402).

31 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), II: 77; this narrative occurs at 78–82. For the source texts, see *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. Montague R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953); for the John narrative, Jacobus relies mainly on the Latin version of Pseudo-Melito (209–216).

32 *Golden Legend*, 82; in the ninth century Paschasius Radbertus wrote the *Epistola ad Paulam et Eustochium* (*PL* [*Patrologia Latina*] 30, 122–142) attributed to Jerome. The Thomas episode derives not from Pseudo-Meleto's Latin text, but from one attributed to Joseph of Arimathaea; see James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 217–218.

33 *Golden Legend*, 83. The pseudo-Augustine tract *De Assumptione Beatae Virginis* (*PL* 40, 1141–1148) is an early twelfth-century work.

34 *Golden Legend*, 89–92. Jacobus's entire concluding section (89–97) is a compendium of Byzantine narrative and theological texts.

35 *Golden Legend*, 90.

36 See the invaluable survey by Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst*, 5 vols. (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1980), Bd. 4,2: *Maria*, 83–154, espe-

cially 118–131; Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 246–258; Claire Donovan, *The de Brailes Hours* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 95–104; and Ernest W. Tristram, *English Wall Paintings of the Fourteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), 154–155 and 163.

37 Millard Meiss, "Un fragment rare d'un art honorable," *Revue du Louvre* 12 (1962): 105–114. Because St. Lawrence with his emblematic grill stands behind John, Meiss suggests that "the painting was executed for an altar of the Virgin in a church dedicated to St. Lawrence, or vice versa" (106). Meiss compares the painting with frescos in the papal palace in Avignon and attributes it to the circle of Matteo da Viterbo.

38 For a nearly identical scene from a wall painting in Vithkûq, Albania, see Klaus Schreiner, "Der Tod Marias als Inbegriff christlichen Sterbens," in *Tod im Mittelalter*, 276 (see n. 7 above).

39 Jeanne Van Waadenoijen, "A Proposal for Starnina. Exit the Maestro del Bambino Vispo?" *Burlington Magazine* 116 (1974): 82–91.

40 This iconography parallels the central panels of Orcagna's carved tabernacle in Orsan Michele, Florence (1352–1360); see Schiller, *Ikonographie*, pl. 672; and Marilyn A. Lavin, *The Place of Narrative: Mural Decoration in Italian Churches, 431–1600* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 82–83.

41 On this theme in Italian iconography, see Pamela Askew, *Caravaggio's Death of the Virgin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 20.

42 On this panel's history and other panels from the same altar, see Everett Fahy, "The Kimball Fra Angelico," *Apollo* 125 (March, 1987): 178–183.

43 Carl Brandon Strehlke labels it the Assumption in his "Fra Angelico and Early Florentine Renaissance Painting in the John G. Johnson Collection," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, v. 88, n. 376 (Spring, 1993): 5. Elsewhere he writes that while the scene "may represent the bodily assumption of the Virgin into heaven, . . . it more likely shows the immediate reception of her soul in heaven" (Laurence B. Kanter et al., *Painting and Illumination in Early Renaissance Florence, 1300–1450* [New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994], 330).

44 Strehlke, "Fra Angelico," 8.

45 A variation that occurs in fifteenth-century Bohemian and Austrian painting portrays Mary dying on her knees or seated on a chair. See Schiller, *Ikonographie*, 137–139. In this essay, however, I shall focus on the dominant image of her dying in bed.

46 Frank Günter Zehnder and Ingelore Ebeling, *Vom Sinnbild zum Abbild: Malerei im Umbruch vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* (Köln: Vista Point, 1986), booklet with slides, text for Dia 10. A similar painting of the dormition by van Cleve is in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

47 Wieck, *Time Sanctified*, 124–136 (see note 27).

48 Wieck, *Time Sanctified*, 60 and 66.

49 Edwin Wolf, II, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the John Frederick Lewis Collection of European Manuscripts in the Free Library of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Free Library of Philadelphia, 1937); and Meta Harrsen, "Corrections and Additions to the Catalogue of the Lewis Collection" (Philadelphia, 1959; unpublished, available in the Rare Book Department).

50 Atypically, this manuscript represents the coronation a second time at Compline in the hours of the Spirit (Widener MS 6, fol. 156v). On the coronation's iconography, see Schiller, *Ikonographie*, 147–154.

51 See *Golden Legend*, vol. 2, 157.

52 *Golden Legend*, 86–87.

53 *Craft*, 30; see *Caxton*, 72–73.

54 Wieck, *Time Sanctified*, 164.

55 See Schreiner, "Tod Marias," 261–302 (see n. 38 above). For a later phase of this correlation, see Askew, *Caravaggio's Death of the Virgin*, 102–104 (see n. 41 above).

56 *Craft*, 7. On Mary's dying as "activité volontaire," see Andronikof, "Dormition," 24–25 (see n. 28 above).

57 *Golden Legend*, 94; Luke 23:46, citing Ps. 31:5 (Vulgate Ps. 30:6). See also Jean Damascene, *Homélies sur la nativité et la dormition*, ed. and French trans. by Pierre Voulet (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1961), 148–149; Schreiner, "Tod Marias," 291–292; *Craft*, 27–28; and *Caxton*, 71.

58 *Craft*, 36.

59 See Schiller, *Ikonographie*, 133 and 139.

60 See Donald F. Duclow, "Dying on Broadway: Contemporary Drama and Mortality," *Soundings* 44 (1981): 197–216; and Harald Wagner, "'*Ars moriendi*': Impulse für heute aus christlicher Tradition," in *Erfüllt leben—in Gelassenheit sterben: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Arthur E. Imhof and Rita Weinknecht (Berlin: Dunker and Humblot, 1994), 262–268.



Fig. 1 Temptation to Impatience. Woodcut, *The Ars Moriendi (Editio Princeps, c. 1450), A Reproduction of the Copy in the British Museum*, ed. W. H. Rylands (London: Holbein Society, 1881), 6v. By permission of the British Library.

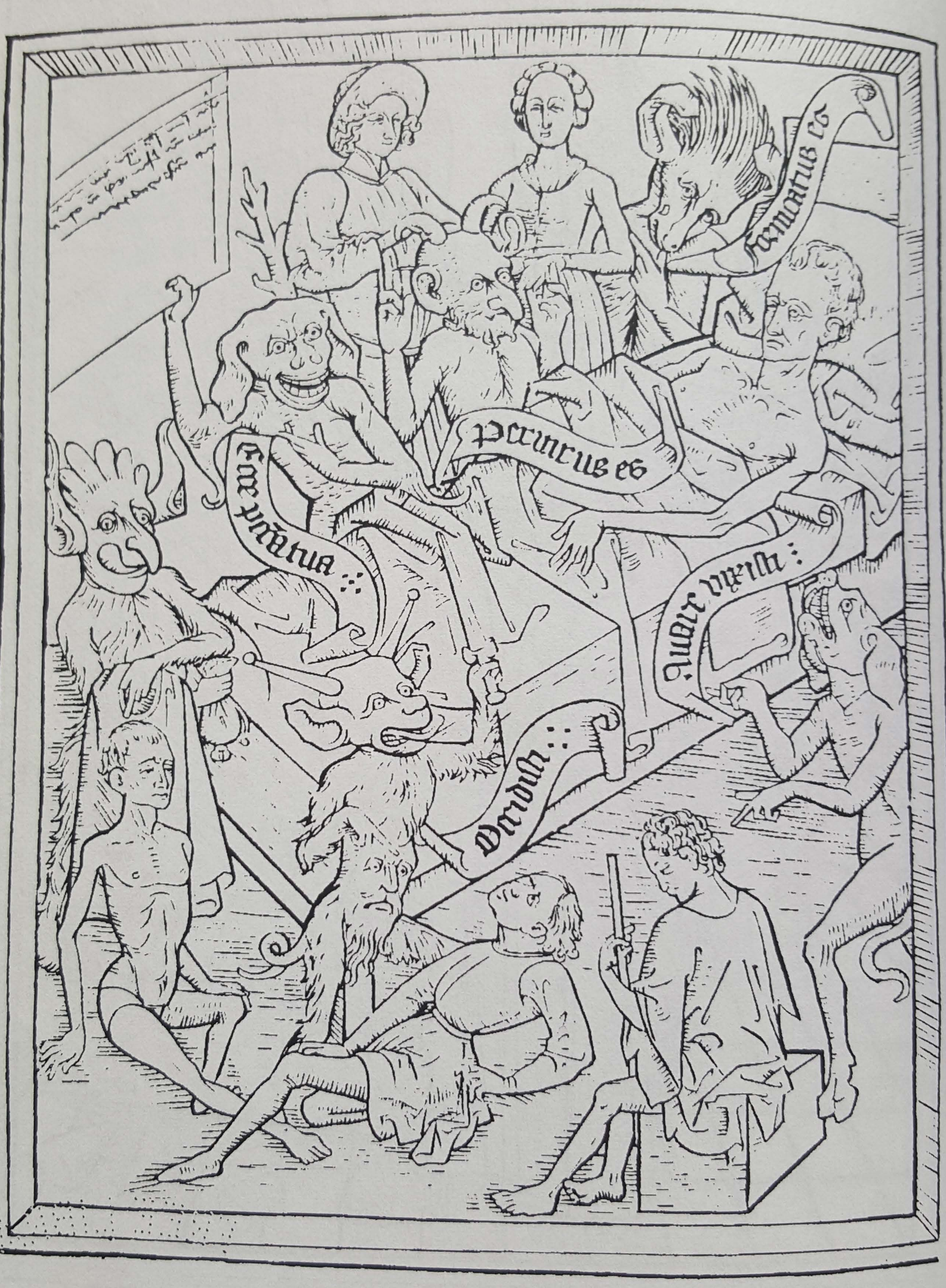


Fig. 2 Temptation to Despair. Woodcut, *The Ars Moriendi (Editio Princeps)*, 4v. By permission of the British Library.



Fig. 3 Inspiration against Despair. Woodcut, *The Ars Moriendi (Editio Princeps)*, 5v. By permission of the British Library.



Fig. 4 Inspiration against Despair. Engraving, Master E.S., *Ars Moriendi*. From Lionel Cust, *The Master E.S. and the 'Ars Moriendi'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898); plate 2b. Courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Fig. 5 Remedy against Despair. Hand colored woodcut, *Ars Moriendi, Edition 10* (Augsburg, c. 1480); The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, PML 274, 4v. Courtesy of the Pierpont Morgan Library.



Fig. 6 Temptation to Avarice. Engraving, Master E.S., *Ars Moriendi*. From Cust, *The Master E.S.*, plate 5a. Courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Fig. 7 Inspiration against Avarice. Engraving, Master E.S., *Ars Moriendi*. From Cust, *The Master E.S.*, plate 5b. Courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Fig. 8 Moriens's Death (Triumph over all temptations at the hour of death). Engraving, Master E.S., *Ars Moriendi*. From Cust, *The Master E.S.*, plate 6. Courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Fig. 9 Moriens's Death. Woodcut, *The Ars Moriendi (Editio Princeps)*, 12v. By permission of the British Library.



Fig. 10 Deathbed. Engraving, book of hours, printed by Thielman Kerver (Paris, 1522). Leaf from collection of D. and G. Duclow.



Fig. 11 Dormition of the Virgin. Avignon School, late 14th century. Avignon, Musée du Petit Palais (R.F.2258). Photograph by A. Guerrand, courtesy of Musée du Petit Palais.



Fig. 12 Assumption of the Virgin. Starnina, c.1408. Courtesy of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Gift of Friends of the Fogg Art Museum Fund.



Fig. 13 Burial of the Virgin. Starnina, c.1408. Courtesy of the John G. Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Fig. 14 Funeral of the Virgin and the Virgin being received in heaven by Christ. Pradella panel, Fra Angelico, *c.1427. Courtesy of the John G. Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.*

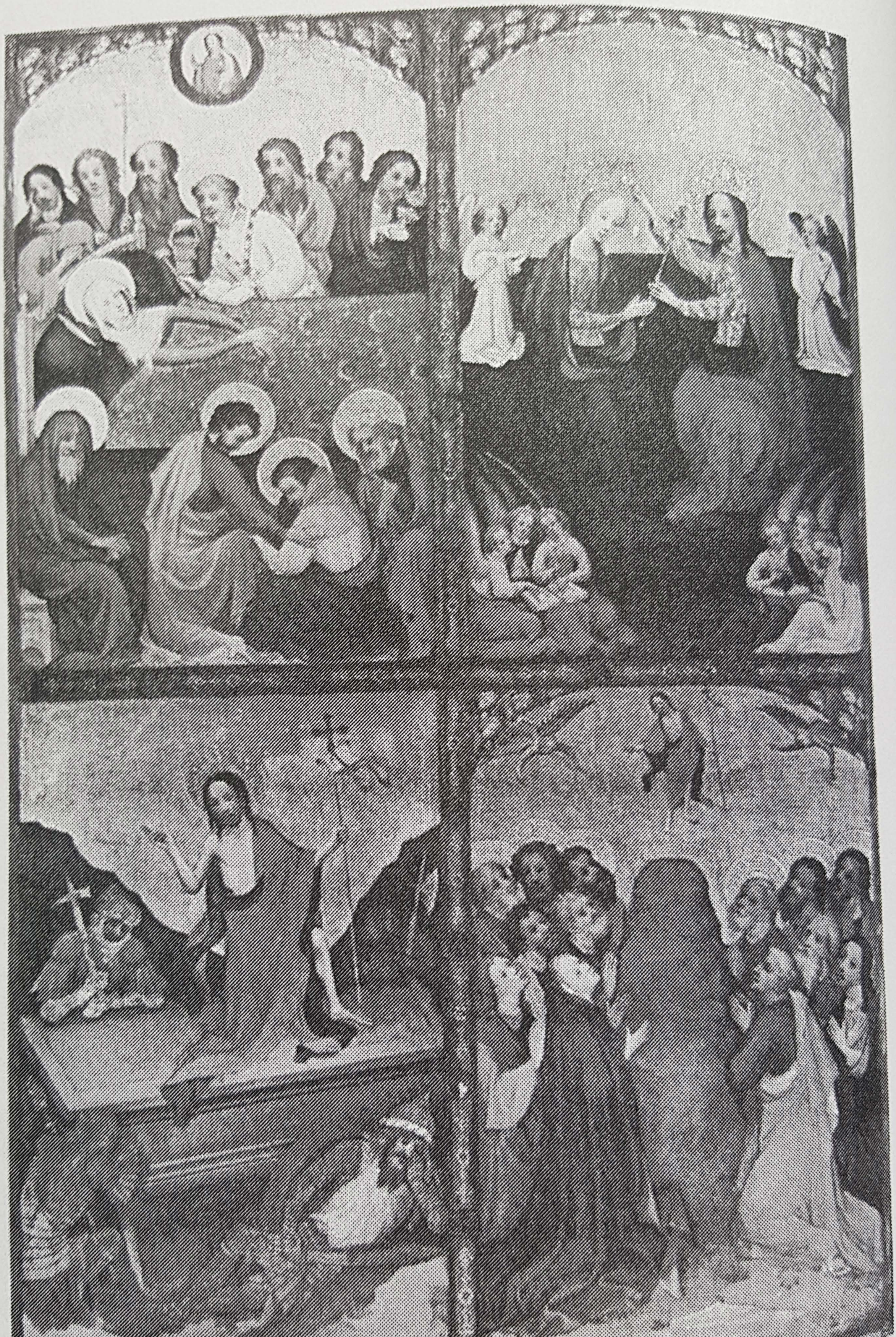


Fig. 16 Dormition and coronation of the Virgin; Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. Altar panel. Master of St. Lawrence, Köln, 1415–40. Köln, Wallraf-Richartz Museum (WRM 737). Photograph courtesy of the Rheinisches Bildarchiv.



Fig. 17 Dormition. Detail of # 16. Photograph courtesy of the Rheinisches Bildarchiv.



Fig. 18 Dormition. Altar panel, second half of 15th century. Köln, Wallraf-Richartz Museum (WRM 400). Photograph courtesy of the Rheinisches Bildarchiv.



Fig. 19 Dormition. Linden wood relief, Alsace (Hans Bongards?), c.1500. Freiburg im Breisgau, Augustiner Museum (S 59/2). Courtesy of the Augustiner Museum. Photograph by Geraldine Duclow.



Fig. 20 Detail of #19. Courtesy of the Augustiner Museum. Photograph by Geraldine Duclow.

Fig. 21 Dormition. Central panel of triptych, Joos van Cleve, 1515. Köln, Wallraf-Richartz Museum (WRM 430). Photograph courtesy of the Rheinisches Bildarchiv.

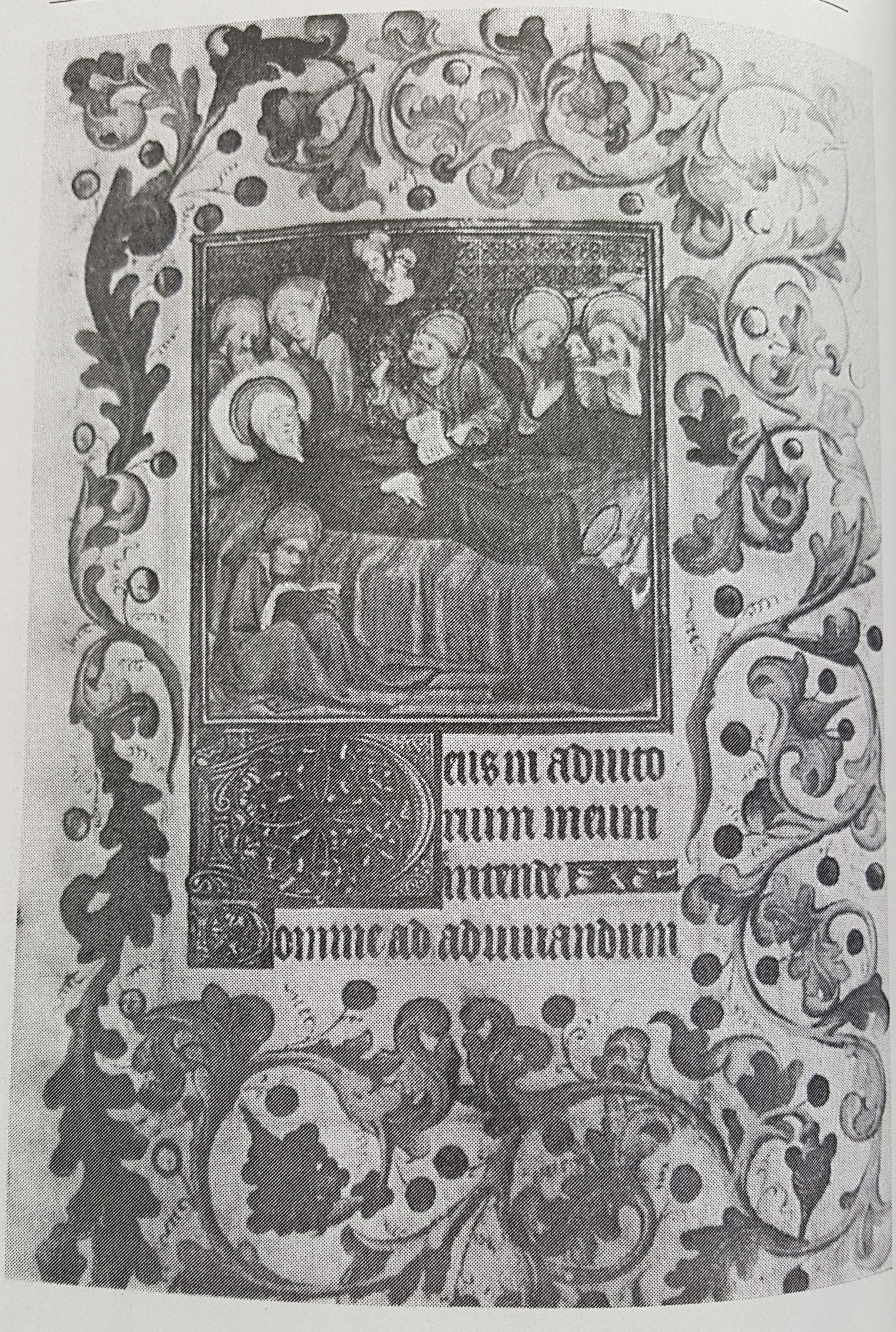


Fig. 22 Dormition. Widener MS 6, fol. 96r. Courtesy of the Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia. Photograph by A. Richard Hunter.



Fig. 23 Coronation. Widener MS 6, fol. 105v. Courtesy of the Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia. Photograph by A. Richard Hunter.



Fig. 24 Dormition. Lewis MS 97, fol. 52v. Courtesy of the Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia. Photograph by A. Richard Hunter.



Fig. 25 Coronation. Lewis 97, fol. 56v. Courtesy of the Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia. Photograph by A. Richard Hunter.

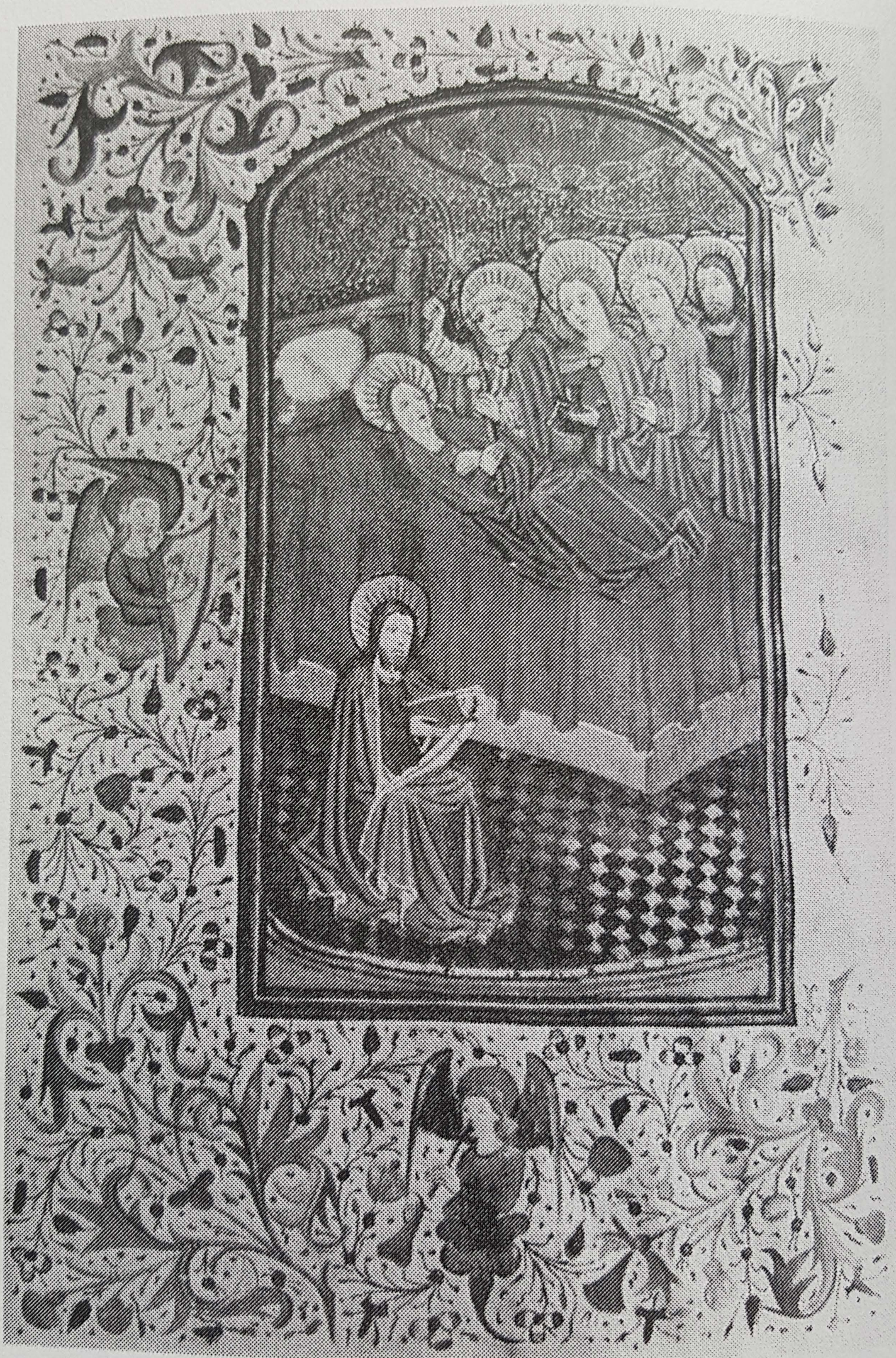


Fig. 26 Dormition. MS leaf, M5 26. Courtesy of the Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia. Photograph by A. Richard Hunter.



Fig. 27 Dormition, with book's owner in margin. Lewis MS 90, fol. 48r. Courtesy of Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia. Photograph by A. Richard Hunter.