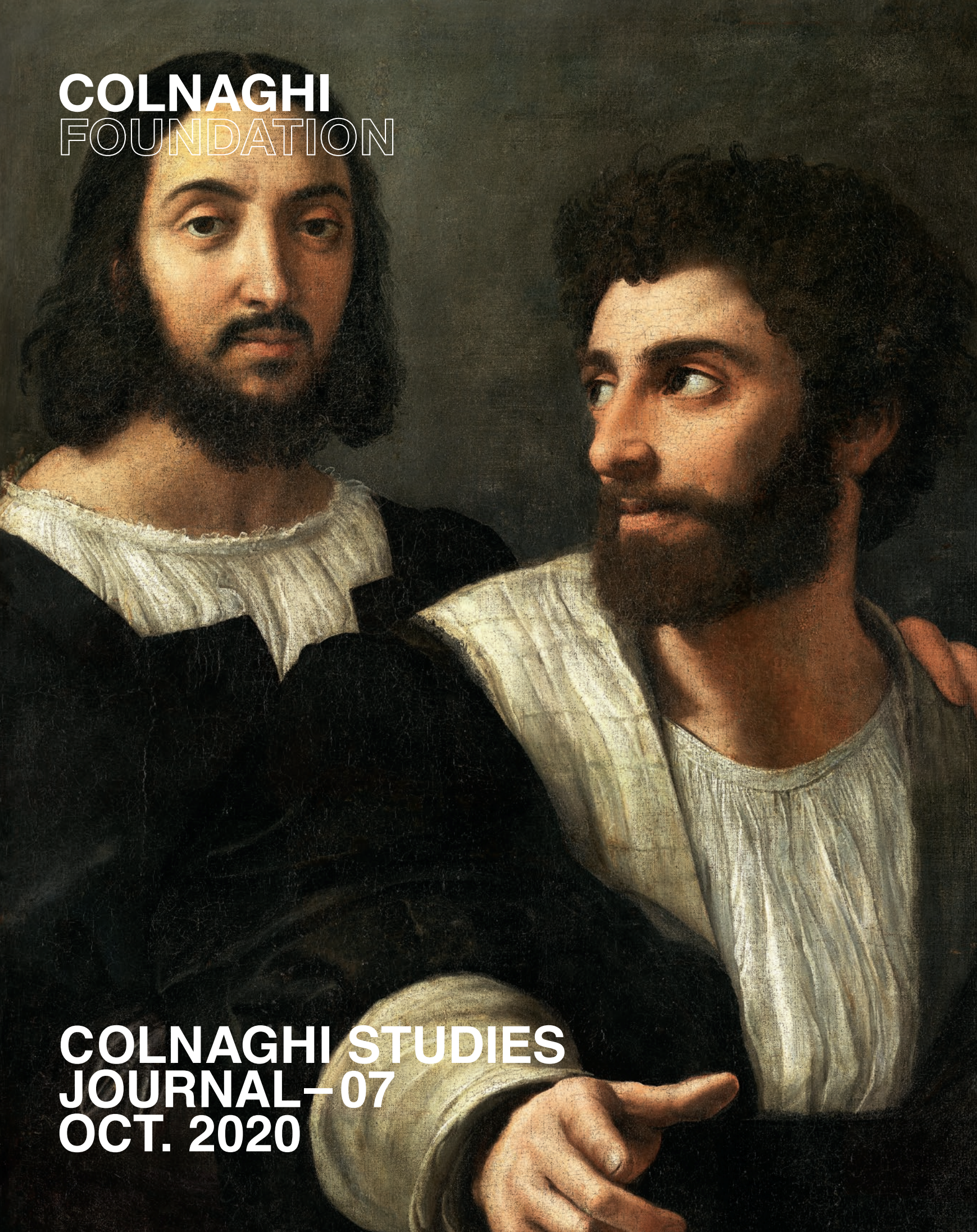




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Jan van Eyck's Holy Face, the Holy Shroud, and Spain

MANUEL PARADA LÓPEZ DE CORSELAS AND JESÚS FOLGADO GARCÍA



Fig. 1 / Petrus Christus, *Portrait of a Young Man*, ca. 1450-1460, oil on panel, 35.4 x 26 cm, London, National Gallery.

In 1580, after conquering Portugal and its global empire, Philip II of Spain coined the motto *non sufficit orbis*, “the world is not enough”. The longed-for *Universitas Christiana* dreamt of by his father, Charles V, and seeded by his great-great-grandfather, Philip the Good of Burgundy, was about to be fulfilled.¹ For both Philips, the acquisition and study of holy relics was a key means of articulating this hegemonic programme. According to Ambrosio de Morales and Benito Arias Montano, humanists in the service of Philip II, relics were testimonies and mediators of the truth.² By the end of his life, Philip had gathered in the monastery of El Escorial one of the largest collections of relics in the world.³ This article looks at one category of relic to which Spaniards were particularly devoted and which originated at the court of Philip the Good: paintings of the Holy Face, derived from a model by the Burgundian duke’s court painter, Jan van Eyck.

Although Van Eyck’s painting of the Holy Face is no longer extant, it is known to us today through copies, many of which are or were in Spanish collections. We look here at the influence the Eyckian work had in Spain and propose that it was inspired by the Shroud currently preserved in Turin, as opposed to inspired by the Mandylion at the Vatican, as traditionally held. We also highlight an unpublished late fifteenth-century Castilian version preserved in Segovia and a miniature in Ávila, as well as proposing a new attribution to Petrus Christus or a follower of Jan van Eyck for a Vera Icon in Calahorra, Spain.

SACRED TREASURE, MONARCHY, AND THE DEVOTIO MODERNA

One of the characteristic features of European monarchies in the Medieval and Early Modern periods was their passion for gathering dynastic treasure, with relics playing a primary role as legitimizers of the ruling house.⁴ Relics from the Holy Land, and mainly those associated with Christ, had the greatest value. The paradigmatic example is at the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris where the Capetian kings of France had in the thirteenth century gathered a great collection of Christological relics, amongst which the Crown of Thorns was the most important.⁵ The phenomenon is understandable if we take into account the characteristics of popular devotion between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the encounter with God was largely based on seeing and touching mediators such as saints and relics. This was the reason for the proliferation of “golden legends”, which described those who had been closest to God, as well as pilgrimages and relics that, in turn, were used by the ruling groups as instruments of power and control over the population.

As well as owning relics, control over the visual derivatives of these holy objects was also fundamental. The religious movement known as *Devotio Moderna*, which originated mainly in the Netherlands, emphasized the importance of images inspired by relics and taught that they performed a similar devotional function.



Fig. 2 / Copy after Jan van Eyck, *Holy Face*, late fifteenth century, oil on panel, 53 x 41 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie.

It is in the context of the new religiosity influenced by the Devotio Moderna and particularly by the Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence (1431-1445), that we must place the Holy Faces deriving from the work of Jan van Eyck.⁶ A key factor was the dissemination at this time of *De Imitatione Christi* (ca. 1418-1427) written

by Thomas à Kempis (ca. 1380-1471), a devotional manual linked to Devotio Moderna that called every Christian to conform him/herself to the life of Christ. Individual meditation on the mysteries of the life of Christ was an essential part of this process. Indeed, it was the intimate nature of this new type of devotion which marked out the movement from previous popular traditions of piety which were of a more communal and public nature. Devotio Moderna proposed the old *homo interior* become *homo devotus* through the *via moderna* towards God and beyond the *via antiqua*.⁷ The shift in the theological paradigm brought about by the Black Death and by the passage from Platonism to Aristotelianism also contributed to this religious renewal, which meant a return to contemplation of the suffering Christ who shared our pain.⁸ Even so, popular forms of piety continued to proliferate, and the new and old coexisted.

Contemplation of Christocentric images constituted an essential element of the meditation prescribed by Devotio Moderna, often involving details from the Passion such as the wounds, the Cross and the thorns. These images contrasted with those associated with popular piety which focused instead on the worship of saints, sometimes verging on idolatry. Nevertheless, the same type of image could work in both popular and intimate contexts. This was true of devotion to the Holy Face, which was both a mass phenomenon typical of popular devotion and pilgrimages, and associated with the new, more intimate devotional practices. Devotio Moderna encouraged Christians to have a copy of the Holy Face at home to pray to in solitude, such as in a private oratory. This is reflected in the *Portrait of a Young Man* by Petrus Christus (ca. 1450-1460), in which the piece of parchment on the wall behind the man shows the prayer *Salve sancta facies* (fig. 1).⁹ The invention of the printing press and engraving would further promote these individual objects of devotion since they made devotional images accessible to all.



Fig. 3 / Copy after Jan van Eyck, *Holy Face*, early seventeenth century, oil on panel, 33.4 x 26.8 cm, Bruges, Groeningemuseum.

JAN VAN EYCK'S HOLY FACE

No original Holy Face by Jan van Eyck has been preserved. It is known, instead, from four copies, based on two distinct prototypes, which reproduced not only the image itself but also what must have been the original frames. One prototype is now in Berlin (fig. 2), and Munich; the other is in Bruges (fig. 3) and was until the late twentieth century in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.¹⁰ Traditionally, these panels have been linked to the relic of the Mandylion now in the Vatican in Rome (fig. 4).¹¹ Larry Silver, who recently surveyed the literature on this subject, states: "Of course, the Holy Face [by Jan van Eyck] derives from one of the most treasured relics of the Vatican."¹² We suggest, however, that it is worth looking again at other works which clearly derive from the Roman relic. We refer to the thirteenth/fourteenth-century Mandylion preserved in San Bartolomeo degli Armeni in Genoa, the *Holy Face* or *Veronica* from the Jaén Cathedral (fourteenth century) (fig. 5) and the *Veronica between Peter and Paul* (ca. 1525) (fig. 6) by Ugo da Carpi in the Vatican.¹³ This last painting was placed in the Sancta Sanctorum of the basilica before its reform during the Renaissance.¹⁴ In our opinion, these works are part of what we could call the "Roman model" of the Holy Face, which is characterized by a strong Byzantine influence. The paintings in question depict elongated, schematic and flat faces, cut out against the background without representing the neckline of Christ's tunic. If we look in detail at the Eyckian Holy Faces, which include many details that do not appear in the Roman relic, it appears that the model must have been a different one. The Eyckian faces are more voluminous, with several locks of hair that can be distinguished, gradual transitions between the hair and background, and details such as the neckline of the tunic and inscriptions. Jan van Eyck appears to have consciously moved away from the Roman relic, avoiding any relation to the traditional and highly recognizable representation of it. In other words, rather than creating something which a fifteenth-century viewer would recognize as the famous relic preserved in



Fig. 4 / Anonymous, *Mandylion or Veronica*, ca. 1208, cloth on panel, Vatican.

Fig. 5 / Anonymous, *Holy Face*, ca. 1300, cloth on panel, 30 x 22 cm, Jaén, Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin.

Rome, Van Eyck started a new visual tradition, possibly referring to a different relic. The only time – as far as we know – that Jan van Eyck depicted Christ according to the Roman model was on the stole of one of the singing angels on the Ghent Altarpiece (1432) (fig. 7).

Several relics related to the face of Christ were known in the Middle Ages, such as the shroud of the Holy Chamber of the Oviedo Cathedral, but few of them acquired international renown.¹⁵ In addition to the above-mentioned Mandylion, the other relic showing the face of Christ which had achieved international prominence by the fifteenth century was the Holy Shroud currently preserved in Turin (fig. 8). The first link between Philip the Good's ancestors and the Holy Shroud is in a letter written by the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Commeno (1080-1118) to Robert le Frison, Count of Flanders. The letter, which included an account of relics, describes the Shroud as “*linteamina, post resurrectionem ejus [Domini] inventa in*



sepulcro (linen cloth found after the [Lord's] resurrection in [his] sepulchre).”¹⁶ This same relic was venerated by the French King Louis VII in 1147 on his visit to Constantinople where it was exhibited every Friday in the church of Saint Mary of Blachernae.

The Shroud disappeared in the Sack of Constantinople on 13 April 1204, probably looted by the French nobleman Otto de la Roche. Indeed, a petition was made by the emperor Theodore Komnenos to Pope Innocent III to return the Shroud in which the corpse of Christ was wrapped.¹⁷ The next mention of it is in Besançon, in 1206, in the hands of Pontius de la Roche, father of Otto de la Roche, who, in turn, lent it to the Archbishop of Besançon. After a member of the de la Roche family married a Charny, who were lords of Lirey, the relic passed in 1353 to this town, 150 km from Dijon, and in 1389 the religious authorities allowed it to be displayed to believers.¹⁸ The relic remained in Lirey until 22 March 1453, when Margaret de Charny, Countess de



Fig. 6 / Ugo da Carpi, *Saint Veronica between Peter and Paul*, ca. 1525, tempera and charcoal on canvas, 158 x 145 cm, Vatican.

Fig. 7 / Jan and Hubert van Eyck, *Ghent Altarpiece* (detail), 1432, Ghent, Cathedral of Saint Bavo.

Fig. 8 / X-Ray of the Holy Shroud (detail), Turin, Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist.

la Roche, gave it to Duchess Anne of Lusignan, wife of Ludovico of Savoy.¹⁹ This change of ownership explains why the Shroud went to Chambéry and finally to Turin, former capitals of the Duchy of Savoy.

In this way, the Shroud was in Burgundian territory from 1353 to 1453. The jurisdiction of the Duke of Burgundy over this relic is revealed in the bull granted in Avignon on 5 June 1357, where the “*nobilissimi principis ducis Burgundie* (most noble prince the Duke of Burgundy)” is cited as protector of the Shroud.²⁰ This protection continued to be reflected in documents until the time of Philip the Good, patron of Jan van Eyck. In 1443, when Margaret de Charny wanted to take the Holy Shroud, other relics and jewels from the church of Lirey to her castle, the court in Dole intervened on behalf of Philip the Good to settle this case.²¹ This is demonstrated by the arbitration given in the name of Philip the Good, dated 9 May 1443, which regulated the custody of the Holy Shroud.²²



This data, and formal coincidences such as the volumetry of the hair and the horizontal line in the lower part of Christ's neck, allow us to suggest that Jan van Eyck's Holy Face referred to the Holy Shroud and not to the Mandylion preserved in Rome. This would have accorded with the political interests of Philip the Good, since the Shroud, which is now in Turin, was in Lirey, under Burgundian jurisdiction, for much of the fifteenth century. Although it was famous, the Holy Shroud lacked representations, and we suggest that Jan van Eyck took advantage of this opportunity to create a new image linked to the most important Christological relic related to his lord, Philip the Good. As we know from dates inscribed on the frames of the copies in Berlin and Bruges, two of Van Eyck's Holy Faces were made in 1438 and 1440 (the Berlin version, on 31 January 1438; the Bruges version, on 30 January 1440).²³ It is unknown in what year Jan van Eyck's original was painted, but this could perhaps relate to one of his secret missions. In this regard it is significant that his journey documented in 1426 is cited as a "*certain pèlerinage* (certain pilgrimage)" on behalf of Duke Philip the Good.²⁴ Given the importance of the Shroud of Lirey for the Burgundian duke, it may be that this pilgrimage was to visit Lirey. Philip's control over this relic was a way of not only competing with France in religious and propagandistic terms, but also of obtaining economic benefits from the pilgrims who visited the sanctuary of Lirey.

These circumstances would also explain why Jan van Eyck's workshop made its two versions of the Holy Face in 1438 and 1440, that is, at key moments of the Council of Basel.²⁵ At this council, the emissaries of Philip the Good succeeded in having him declared "the most important of all the Dukes of Christendom", a title that was disputed with the Duke of Brittany.²⁶ Likewise, the Council of Basel was fundamental for the renewal of Christological images and their dissemination throughout Europe.²⁷

THE SPANISH CONNECTION

The new Netherlandish iconography of the Holy Face had an early impact in Spain. In the kingdom of Castile, two cases are known through documentation, although the corresponding paintings have not been found. The first of these early examples is "*una Verónica de Flandes*" (a Vera Icon from Flanders) that appears amongst the goods that made up the chapel that normally accompanied Alonso de Cartagena, bishop of Burgos, on his travels. This bishop donated these goods to his funerary chapel in Burgos Cathedral shortly before his death in 1456.²⁸ Although this painting has not been preserved, Alonso de Cartagena may have acquired it directly from Jan van Eyck's workshop on his way through Flanders when he returned from the Council of Basel to Castile in 1439-1440.²⁹ The second example of a Holy Face from the Netherlands arriving in Castile is recorded as "*una Verónica de Flandes muy devota pintada en una tabla para las procesiones*" (a very devout Flemish Vera Icon painted on a panel for processions) in the chartulary of the Monastery of Santa María del Parral in Segovia.³⁰ This panel and the *Fountain of Grace* attributed to Van Eyck's workshop were donated to El Parral by Henry IV of Castile (r. 1454-1474), perhaps around 1463. In this year Henry IV also donated to El Parral an important relic of Saint Thomas Aquinas which was acquired in Toulouse in 1438 when Henry was the Prince of Castile. The relic was kept in the treasury of the Alcazar of Segovia and donated to El Parral after the monastery was finished.³¹ This royal donation to El Parral was as important as the donation of the *Holy Face* and the *Fountain of Grace*, and all three may have been donated at the same time. Furthermore, like the Saint Thomas Aquinas relic, the *Fountain of Grace* remained in the royal collection from the time of its arrival in Castile around the 1440s until its donation to El Parral.



Fig. 9 / Castilian painter after an Eyckian model, *Holy Face*, ca. 1500, oil on panel, 33.7 x 20.5 cm, Segovia, Church of San Millán.



Fig. 10 / Castilian painter after an Eyckian model, *Holy Face* (reverse of panel and detail of reverse of the frame), ca. 1500, oil on panel, 33.7 x 20.5 cm, Segovia, Church of San Millán.

Alonso de Cartagena can be linked to this context too, as he is thought to have been the originator of the *Fountain of Grace*'s iconographic program.³² Weale in 1908 mentioned that another Eyckian work, the *Vera Icon* now in Berlin (see fig. 2), had also been in Segovia, although he provided no evidence for this.³³ It is possible, then, that the Berlin *Holy Face* is the one from El Parral. However, the Berlin version is different from two panels which, as we argue below, are likely to be copies of the lost *Holy Face* from El Parral which instead followed the model now in Bruges and formerly in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Felipe Pereda also believes that the *Vera Icon* or *Holy Face* of El Parral could be related to Jan van Eyck's workshop because there is a possible copy of it from

around 1500 in Segovia, in the church of San Millán.³⁴ A black and white photograph of this copy was provided to Pereda by Fernando Collar de Cáceres, although Pereda did not publish the photograph and could not find the painting.³⁵ We are deeply grateful to Professor Pereda for putting us on the trail of this painting in 2019, providing us with the black and white photograph and encouraging us to continue researching it. Happily, we were able to find the painting, which has now been cleaned (fig. 9). It is on a pine panel – a common support in Castile – and measures 33.7 x 20.5 cm without its frame and 41 x 28.2 cm with it. The outer edges of the frame and the back face of the panel are stuccoed and painted in a reddish ochre colour, imitating stone (fig. 10) as in other Eyckian paintings such as his *Portrait of Margaret van Eyck*.

In the Eyckian versions of the Vera Icon or Holy Face, there are two ways of representing the neckline of Jesus's tunic. One typology has a jewelled neckline (such as in the Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Bruges versions) (see fig. 3); the other has an inscription in the neckline (such as in the Munich and Berlin versions) (fig. 11 and see fig. 2). The copy in San Millán in Segovia is based on the first typology. The jewels are enriched with plant elements taken from Castilian metalwork of the late fifteenth century. As in all the Eyckian versions, the imprint of the alpha and omega at the top is still visible in the Vera Icon of San Millán. This links the panel with Van Eyck's model rather than with similar versions devised by Dieric Bouts and disseminated by Albrecht Bouts and their followers.³⁶ The Dieric Bouts *Holy Face* preserved in Rotterdam does not have alpha and omega, nor wrinkles near the nose, and has a shorter moustache than the Eyckian versions and the Segovia painting (fig. 12). In addition, Van Eyck's Vera Icon model is distinguished by the elongated shadow under the lower lip, which is much more marked than in the Bouts version. In the Segovia painting, several locks of hair can, furthermore, be distinguished, falling down from Christ's shoulders, whereas the tips of the locks are turned sideways in the model by Bouts.



Fig. 11 / Copy after Jan van Eyck, *Head of Christ*, ca. 1500, oil on panel, 50.6 x 37.3 cm, Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek.

Fig. 12 / Dieric Bouts, *Holy Face*, ca. 1456-1464, oil on panel, 36 x 27 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.

Fig. 13 / Workshop of Juan de Carrión after an Eyckian model, *Holy Face* (III Book of the Dominicas, fol. 1r), 1470-1472, Ávila, Museum of Ávila Cathedral.

We have also identified a Holy Face related to Jan van Eyck's model in a Castilian illuminated manuscript. This is a miniature by Juan de Carrión or his workshop in a choirbook in the Ávila Cathedral,³⁷ made between 1470 and 1472 for Alonso de Fonseca, Bishop of Ávila (1469-1485) and chaplain of John II of Castile (fig. 13).³⁸ Juan de Carrión and his brother Pedro had established one of the main illumination workshops in fifteenth-century Castile. The miniature in question (III Book of the *Dominicas*, fol. 1r) is in the lower section of a folio opening with a capital letter illuminated with the Ascension of Christ, attributed to Pedro.³⁹ The miniature depicts the Holy Face on a veil held by a couple of angels. This Holy Face is positioned

close to the Ascension to underline the belief that the Vera Icon was the true holy image of Christ which remained on earth after he had ascended into Heaven. The expression, his eye bags, nose, lips, hair, parting and beard are all based on the Eyckian model, but here Christ's face and tunic – including the neckline – are once again similar to the Eyckian versions from Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Bruges. As with the Holy Face in the church of San Millán, it seems possible that the miniature from Ávila could be inspired by the lost Eyckian Holy Face of the Parral Monastery in Segovia. Juan de Carrión and his workshop had worked for Henry IV of Castile and his courtiers in both Segovia and Ávila since 1454.⁴⁰



Fig. 14 / Petrus Christus, *Head of Christ*, ca. 1445, oil on parchment, laid down on wood, 14.6 x 10.5 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 15 / Petrus Christus or follower of Jan van Eyck, *Head of Christ*, late fifteenth century, oil on panel, 43 x 32 cm, Calahorra, Museum of Calahorra Cathedral.



The Vera Icon in Segovia and the miniature from Ávila are also exceptional because, although the iconography had many Spanish devotees, the main source of inspiration for Castilian painters was not the Eyckian works but those by followers such as Bouts, his son Albrecht, and Petrus Christus. For example, we know that the *Vera Icon* (ca. 1445) by Petrus Christus preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art comes from Spain (fig. 14).⁴¹ A work considered until now to be a copy of this, made in the late fifteenth century, is kept in the Museum of the Cathedral of Calahorra in La Rioja, Spain (fig. 15).⁴² In our opinion, this painting is of extraordinarily high quality and could be an original by Petrus Christus or by someone close to Jan van Eyck. Its iconography is different from that of the Vera Icon in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: in Calahorra, Christ is crying and bare-chested, and we can see the folds of his armpits. This last detail, as well as the figure type and the quality of the details – particularly the modelling of the nose and hairs of the moustache – are reminiscent of the Adam in the Ghent Altarpiece. The lips, the eyelashes, the tear ducts and tears are very finely painted, and the suffering but serene expression appeals directly to the feelings of the viewer. The frame and inscription on it are reminiscent of those on a work signed by Petrus Christus, the *Madonna in Half-length* (1449), formerly kept at the Bontinck-Thyssen Collection.⁴³





Fig. 16 / Follower of Albrecht Bouts, *Head of Christ*, 1500-1525, oil on panel, 30 x 30 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.

In Castile there are many portraits of the suffering Christ by Albrecht Bouts and his circle, housed today in institutions such as the Museo del Prado (fig. 16), the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, and the Cathedral of Toledo.⁴⁴ The prototype for this model of the suffering Christ crowned with thorns was created by Dieric Bouts around 1462, and today it is considered by most scholars to be lost.⁴⁵ As we have seen, the work in Calahorra attributed here to Petrus Christus, has a crown of thorns, blood and tears, but does not feature the Boutsian reddened eyes, dark circles, or open mouth. In our opinion the Calahorra painting is the nexus, on an iconographic level, between Jan van Eyck's *Holy Face* and the Man of Sorrows often painted by Albrecht Bouts and his workshop.

Intense trade between Castile and the Netherlands, and the great Spanish demand for themes related to the Passion of Jesus, explain the arrival of these types of works in the peninsula as early as the mid-fifteenth century.⁴⁶ A paradigmatic collector of these Netherlandish paintings was Queen Isabella I of Castile (1451-1504). Her inventories contain more than 180 entries dedicated to devotional paintings. Among them there are two diptychs which, according to their descriptions, may have been produced by Albrecht Bouts or his workshop.⁴⁷ The first one was a diptych "*con Nuestro Señor e Nuestra Señora, que dio el obispo de Málaga a su Alteza*" (with Our Lord and Our Lady, which the Bishop of Malaga gave to Her Highness).⁴⁸



The second one was described as "*dos tablas, la una de un Christo y la otra de nuestra Señora, medios cuerpos, de rroble de Flandes, 8 ducados de oro*" (two panels, one of a Christ and the other of Our Lady, half length, of oak of Flanders, 8 gold ducats).⁴⁹ Several "*Eccehomos*"⁵⁰ and "*Cristo coronado de espinas*" (Christ crowned with thorns)⁵¹ were also recorded in these inventories. The queen donated some of these works to the Royal Chapel of Granada, for example, "*otro retablo de dos tablas que en una está nuestro Señor coronado e en la otra nuestra señora, puestas las manos*" (another altarpiece of two panels that in one is Our Lord crowned and in the other Our Lady, laying her hands).⁵² Today, a *Holy Face* by a follower of Dieric Bouts, is kept in the Royal Chapel in Granada (fig. 17). There is also a *Holy Face* by Bartolomé Bermejo (ca. 1477-1483) which follows the Boutsian model (fig. 18).⁵³ Around 1500 Leonor de Chacón, one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting, also acquired a diptych of Jesus and the Mater Dolorosa by a follower of Dieric Bouts, now in the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo.⁵⁴



Fig. 17 / Follower of Dieric Bouts, *Holy Face*, ca. 1500, oil on panel, 39.6 x 30.1 cm, Granada, Capilla Real.

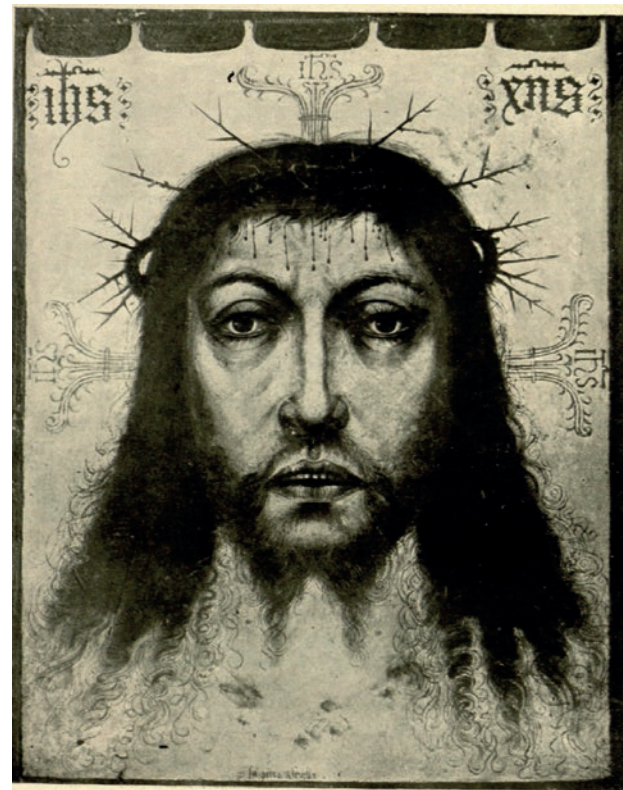
Fig. 18 / Bartolomé Bermejo, *Holy Face*, ca. 1484, oil on panel, 44.6 x 46 x 1.2 cm, Granada, Capilla Real.



Fig. 19 / Juan Sánchez de San Román, *Man of Sorrows*, ca. 1500, mixed method on panel, 40.3 x 30.3 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.

Fig. 20 / Pedro Sánchez, *Veil of Veronica*, ca. 1500, formerly in an Italian private collection.

Castilian artists also produced versions of the face of Christ inspired by Netherlandish models, such as the *Holy Face* by Bermejo in Granada, the *Man of Sorrows* by Juan Sánchez de San Román now at the Museo del Prado (ca. 1500) (fig. 19),⁵⁵ the *Veil of Veronica* by Pedro Sánchez (ca. 1500) (fig. 20) formerly in an Italian private collection,⁵⁶ and the *Vera Icon* (ca. 1500) from the chapel of Christ at the Column in Toledo Cathedral (fig. 21).⁵⁷ This chapel provides a possibly unique opportunity to compare the “Netherlandish model” of the Holy Face developed by Jan van Eyck and the Bouts family, with the earlier “Roman model” of Byzantine inspiration: the stone relief on the chapel’s



altarpiece, carved by Copín de Holanda around 1510-1515,⁵⁸ includes the Roman model (fig. 22), whereas the *Vera Icon* panel is an interpretation of the Netherlandish model.⁵⁹ This panel does not derive directly from Jan van Eyck, but is inspired by the Man of Sorrows created by Dieric Bouts and diffused by his son Albrecht, and based on versions such as the tondo now in the collection of the Museo del Prado (inv. P002698) (see fig. 16). In both the Toledo panel and Prado tondo, Christ has a crown of thorns, a halo with rays emanating from it, reddened eyes, an open mouth with visible lower teeth, abundant drops of blood, and tears deployed in a similar way.

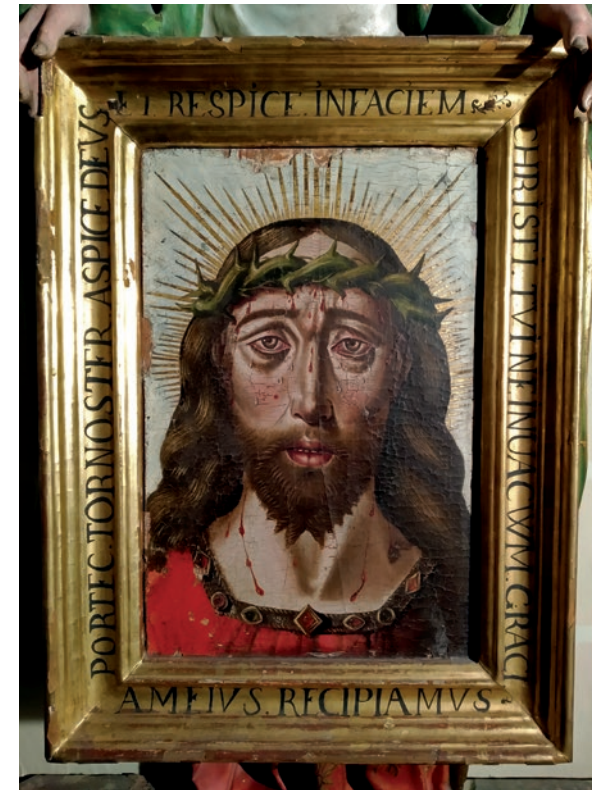


Fig. 21 / Castilian painter after a model by Albrecht Bouts, *Vera Icon*, ca. 1500, oil on panel, 41 x 27 cm, Chapel of the Christ of the Column, Toledo, Primate Cathedral of Saint Mary.

Fig. 22 / View of the Chapel of the Christ of the Column, Toledo, Primate Cathedral of Saint Mary.

The Castilian theological tradition played an important role in the success of the iconography of the Holy Face in Spain. One of the most popular expressions of this new devotion was the creation of the *Via Crucis* by the Dominican monk Álvaro de Córdoba around 1420 to underline the suffering humanity of Christ. Due to the influence of this priest as confessor to both Queen Consort Catherine of Lancaster and her son, the future John II of Castile, the *Via Crucis* became popular throughout Castile.⁶⁰ This could be one of the reasons for the iconographic popularization of the sixth station of the cross, called “*la Verónica enjuga el rostro de Jesús*” (Veronica wipes the face of Jesus). We have seen

that Alonso de Cartagena (1384-1456) had the first documented Netherlandish Holy Face in Castile, and its presence in his private oratory indicates his particular devotion to this iconography. Similar interest is reflected in the *Coplas a la Verónica* (Verses to the Vera Icon) by Friar Íñigo de Mendoza (ca. 1430-ca. 1490), first printed in the *Cancionero* of 1483.⁶¹ These *Coplas* end with the poem entitled *Adoración de la Verónica* (Adoration of the Vera Icon), which includes a reflection on the face of the suffering Christ represented in a holy painting, the Veil of Saint Veronica, and speaks of God as the supreme painter. The following verses begin as if it were the prayer *Salve sancta facies*:



Salve, santa faz preciosa / [...] ¡o rostro
iluminativo! / yo te adoro así pasivo [pasional,
sufriente] / como estás en este lienzo / [...] ¡O
cara que representas / la vista de mis amores!/
[...] Las manos que te pintaron / la Luna y el
Sol fizieron, / todas las cosas formaron, / a los
ángeles criaron, / las estrellas compusieron, /
[...] adoro yo tus proporciones; / tu boca de
la verdad, / tus ojos de piedad, / adoro con
tus pasiones. / ¡O tú que pintaste el cielo /
de sutil astronomía! / dime, rey de justo zelo,
/ en pintar aqueste velo / ¿faltóte sabiduría?
/ Sin pinzel la luz del día / pintaste en el
firmamento, / ¡o Jhesus, vera sofía!, / pero [en]
tu filosofía / ¿dó estaba tu entendimiento?
/ Aquel color rubicundo / que el cielo en la
tarde tiene; / aquel azul tan jocundo / que
el luzero espira el mundo / de tu sola mano
viene: / pues si a ti solo conviene / fazer
colores tan vivos, / no ay corazón que no pene
/ en ver tu faz, que contiene / estos colores
esquivos. / [...] Esto digo con dolor / de tanta
desventura: / que potencia ni color / no faltó
a mi Redemptor / quando fizo esta pintura;
/ ¡o ciega humanal natura! / Contempla en tu
rey de gloria / que te dexa su figura / con tal
visión y presura / porque hayas dél memoria.

Hail, holy precious face / [...] Oh illuminating
face! / I adore thy so passionate [suffering] / as
thou are on this veil / [...] Oh face that thou
represent / the sight of my loves! / [...] The
hands that painted thee / the Moon and the
Sun created, / all things they formed, / angels
they created, / the stars they composed, / [...] I
adore thy proportions; / thy mouth of truth,
/ thy eyes of pity, / I adore with thy passions
/ Oh! thou who painted the sky / of subtle
astronomy! / tell me, king of righteous sky, /
in painting this veil / did thou lack wisdom?

/ Without paint brush the light of day / thou
painted in the sky, / oh! Jhesus, true wisdom!,
/ but [in] thy physiognomy / where was thy
understanding? / That ruddy color / that the
sky in the afternoon has; / that so joyful blue
/ that the bright star breathes out the world
/ from thy single hand it comes: / well, if it
is only convenient for thou / to make colours
so vivid, / there is no heart which does not
agonize / in seeing thy face, which contains /
these elusive colors./ [...] This I say with pain
/ of so much misadventure: / that power or
colour / my Redemptor did not miss / when He
made this painting; / oh! blind human nature!
/ Contemplate in thy king of glory / who leaves
thou his figure / with such vision and haste / for
thou to have a memory of Him.

Íñigo de Mendoza was the great-nephew of Alonso
de Cartagena and a preacher for the Catholic
Monarchs. The suffering face of Christ that Mendoza
describes in this poem composed for the royal court
may well have been inspired by the paintings by
Bouts that Isabella I of Castile owned. Likewise, in
several cloisters of cathedrals and monasteries in
Castile we find representations of the Holy Face,
as in the Segovia Cathedral and in San Juan de
los Reyes in Toledo, both images from the time of
Isabella I of Castile. These works can be related to
the processions dedicated to the Holy Face such as
the ones to which the chartulary of El Parral testifies
when, as cited above, it records the collection of “a
very devout Flemish Vera Icon painted on a panel
for processions”. This kind of procession in which
Christological paintings are carried and publicly
displayed, still survives in Spain. For example,
during Holy Week in Alcalá la Real near Jaén, a
seventeenth-century *Ecce Homo* on canvas (fig. 23) is
one of the highlights of the *Ecce Homo* procession.
We also have a valuable testimony of particular



Fig. 23 / *Ecce Homo*
procession during the Holy
Week, Alcalá la Real (Jaén).

devotion towards the Shroud and the face of Christ:
according to the Burgundian courtier Antoine de
Lalaing, Joanna the Mad and Philip the Handsome
on 14 April 1503 passed through Bourg-en-Bresse
and worshipped the Holy Shroud shown to them
by their relatives the Dukes of Savoy.⁶² Joanna I of
Castile must have had a special devotion to the face
of Christ, since her Book of Hours – the London
Rothschild Hours – begins with the infrequent prayer
dedicated to the Holy Face, *Salve sancta facies*.⁶³

In conclusion, we have seen that the Holy Face of
Jan van Eyck was put at the service of the hegemonic
policies of Van Eyck's patron, Philip the Good,
although the passage of the Shroud from Burgundy
to Savoy has meant that the origin of this model
has not previously been correctly identified. This
Eyckian model enjoyed particular success in Castile.
One of its early adopters was Alonso de Cartagena,
who acquired a “Vera Icon from Flanders” around
the same time that the earliest surviving versions
of Jan van Eyck's model of the Holy Face are
dated. Given Castile's position as the main foreign
consumer of early Netherlandish painting in Europe
and its favourable reception of, and novel additions
to Devotio Moderna practices, its patrons soon
assimilated Van Eyck's innovation.⁶⁴ Among these new
Castilian practices was Álvaro de Córdoba's *Via Crucis*,
formulated around 1420, and Íñigo de Mendoza's
poem on the Vera Icon, published in 1483. Likewise,
the Castilian demand for highly emotive subjects
about the Passion of Jesus may have influenced
Netherlandish production, with Petrus Christus and
the Bouts reformulating Jan van Eyck's Vera Icon to
introduce dramatic elements such as the haggard face,
the crown of thorns, blood, and tears. In this way we
witness a dialogue between the Iberian Peninsula and
the Netherlands that can only be understood as an
early example of globalization in which the Kingdom
of Castile played an important role.

NOTES

1. We would like to thank Dr Nicola Jennings for her suggestions in relation to the text of this article. The text has been translated by Alberto Vela Rodrigo. See: Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Bold: The Formation of the Burgundian State* (New York: Longman, 1979); Wim Blockmans and Walter Prevenier, *The Promised Lands: the Low Countries under Burgundian Rule, 1369-1530* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 16-178; Monique Sommé, *Isabelle de Portugal, duchesse de Bourgogne, une femme au pouvoir au XV^e siècle* (Villeneuve d'Asc: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1998); Oskar Jacek Rojewski, “Arte, ceremonial y esplendor festivo en la corte de los duques de Borgoña (1419-1477). Los Valets de chambre y sus tareas artísticas” (PhD diss., Universitat Jaume I, 2018), pp. 60-79.

2. Alfredo Alvar Ezquerra, *Dos humanistas cara a cara: Ambrosio de Morales y Benito Arias Montano* (Madrid: CSIC, 2001), pp. 8-12.

3. Fernando Checa Cremades, *Felipe II mecenas de las artes* (Madrid: Nerea, 1992), pp. 284-290; Juan Manuel del Estal Gutiérrez, “Inventario de las reliquias veneradas en el Real Monasterio de El Escorial,” *Ciudad de Dios: Revista agustiniana* 212.3 (1999): pp. 713-794; Juan Manuel del Estal Gutiérrez, “Inventario del archivo hagiográfico de El Escorial,” *Ciudad de Dios: Revista agustiniana* 211.3 (1998): pp. 1145-1220.

4. See: *Supra* Devotionem. Reliquias, cultos y comportamientos colectivos a lo largo de la Historia, eds. Francisco José Alfaro Pérez and Carolina Naya Franco (Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, 2019); Edina Bozóky, *La politique des reliques de Constantin à Saint Louis* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 2007).

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7. Jesús Folgado García, “Nacimiento y expansión de los Jerónimos y su relación con la Dinastía Trastámara,” *Iacobus* 31-32 (2012): pp. 141-162, esp. pp. 141-142.

8. Joseph Ratzinger, *Obras Completas de Joseph Ratzinger XI. Teología de la liturgia. La fundamentación sacramental de la existencia cristiana* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2014), pp. 72-73.

9. John Oliver Hand, “Salve sancta facies: Some Thoughts on the Iconography of the ‘Head of Christ’ by Petrus Christus,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 27 (1992): pp. 7-18, esp. p. 10.

10. The whereabouts of the Newcastle copy are now unknown. For the most recent discussion of the four copies, see: Guido Cornini, “From Rome to Florence and Bruges, and Back Again. Van Eyck’s

Sancta Facies,” in *Van Eyck. An Optical Revolution*, eds. Maximiliaan Martens, Till-Holger Borchert, Jan Dumolyn, Johan De Smet, and Frederica Van Dam (Veurne: Hannibal, 2020), pp. 284-295; Miyako Sugiyama, “Replicating the Sanctity of the Holy Face: Jan van Eyck’s Head of Christ,” *Simiolus* 39.1/2 (2017): pp. 5-14; Susan Frances Jones, “The Workshop and Followers of Jan van Eyck” (PhD diss., The Courtauld Institute of Art, 1998), pp. 96-100; Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: a History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 430; Hans Belting and Dagmar Eichberger, *Jan van Eyck als Erzähler: frühe Tafelbilder im Umkreis der New Yorker Doppeltafel* (Worms: Werner’sche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1983), pp. 95-96; Martin Conway, “A Head of Christ by John van Eyck,” *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 39.225 (1921): pp. 253-255.

11. About the depictions of Christ’s face see: *The European Fortune of the Roman Veronica in the Middle Ages*, eds. Amanda Murphy, Herbert L. Kessler, Marco Petoletti, Eamon Duffy, and Guido Milanese (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017); Emanuela Fogliadini, *Il volto di Cristo: gli acheropiti del Salvatore nella tradizione dell’Oriente cristiano* (Milano: Jaca Book, 2011), pp. 171-175; *L’immagine di Cristo: dall’Acheropita alla mano d’artista, dal tardo medioevo all’età barocca*, eds. Christoph Luitpold Frommel and Gerhard Wolf (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica vaticana, 2006); Gerhard Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel. Traditionen des Christusbildes und die Bildkonzepte der Renaissance* (München: Fink, 2002), pp. 193-200; Tiziana Maria Di Blasio, *Veronica il mistero del volto. Itinerari iconografici, memoria e rappresentazione* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2000); Gerhard Wolf, “Or fu si fatta la sembianza vostra?: sguardi alla vera icona” e alle sue copié artistiche,” in *Il volto di Cristo*, eds. Giovanni Morello and Gerhard Wolf (Milano: Electa, 2000), pp. 103-114; Heinrich Pfeiffer, “L’immagine simbolica del pellegrinaggio a Roma: La Veronica e il volto di Cristo,” in *Roma 1300-1875: l’arte degli anni santi*, eds. Marcello Fagiolo and Maria Luisa Madonna (Milano: Mondadori, 1984), pp. 106-112.

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13. See note 11 and also: “Veronica Route. Il progetto,” accessed 15 August 2020, <https://veronicaroute.com/>. About the Holy Face of Jaén see: Manuel López Pérez, *El Santo Rostro de Jaén* (Jaén: Agrupación de Cofradías y Hermandades de la Ciudad de Jaén, 2020).

14. See: Nicole Blackwood, “Printmaker as Painter: Looking Closely at Ugo da Carpi’s Saint Veronica Altarpiece,” *Oxford Art Journal* 36.2 (2013): pp. 167-184.

15. Andres Nicolotti, “El Sudario de Oviedo: historia

antigua y moderna,” *Territorio, sociedad y poder: revista de estudios medievales* 11 (2016): pp. 89-111.

16. Ulysse Chevalier, *Étude critique sur l’origine du st. suarie de Lirey-Chambéry-Turin* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1900), p. 10, n. 3.

17. Manuel Solé, *La Sábana de Turín: su autenticidad y trascendencia* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 1986), p. 74.

18. Ulysse Chevalier, *Autour des origines du Suaire de Lirey, avec documents inédits* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1903), pp. 10-24.

19. Chevalier, *Autour des origines*, p. 31.

20. Troyes, Archives départementales del’Aube: Fonds de Lirey, 96. See a complete transcription of this document in: Chevalier, *Autour des origines*, pp. 29-30.

21. Chevalier, *Étude critique*, p. 33.

22. Troyes, Archives départementales del’Aube: 9 G. 4, fols. 8-9r; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France: Coll. de Champagne, v. 154, fol. 154 and Coll. De Camps, v. 124, fol. 223(129)v. See a complete transcription of this document in: Chevalier, *Étude critique*, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

23. Jones, “Workshop and Followers,” p. 96.

24. William Henry James Weale, *Hubert and John van Eyck. Their Life and Work* (London: John Lane, 1908), doc. 7, pp. xxxi-xxxii; William Henry James Weale and Maurice Walter Brockwell, *The Van Eycks and Their Art* (London: John Lane, 1912), doc. 7, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

25. See notes 6 and 26.

26. Luis Suárez Fernández, *Castilla, el Cisma y la crisis conciliar (1378-1440)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1960), pp. 52-67. See also: Joseph Toussaint, *Les relations diplomatiques de Philippe le Bon avec le Concile de Bale* (Louvain: Bibliothèque de l’Université de Louvain, 1942); Joseph Toussaint, “Philippe le Bon et le concile de Bâle (1431-1449),” *Bulletin de la Commission royale d’Histoire* 107 (1942): pp. 1-126.

27. See: Jana Lucas, *Europa in Basel. Das Konzil von Basel (1431-1449) als Laboratorium der Kunst* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2017).

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30. Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España: Libro de la fundación del Monasterio de Nuestra Señora del Parral, Ms. 19412, fol. 54v.

31. Parada and Folgado, “Jan van Eyck, Alonso de Cartagena,” p. 26.

32. Parada and Folgado, “Jan van Eyck, Alonso de Cartagena,” Manuel Parada López de Corselas and Jesús Folgado García, “«Síguese la contemplación y oración»: Alonso de Cartagena y el programa iconográfico de la Fuente de la Gracia,” in *La Fuente de la Gracia. Taller de Jan van Eyck*, ed. José Juan Pérez Preciado (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2018),

pp. 39-55; Jose Juan Pérez Preciado, “La Fuente de la Gracia. Nuevas luces sobre viejas sombras,” in *La Fuente de la Gracia. Taller de Jan van Eyck*, ed. José Juan Pérez Preciado (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2018), pp. 7-37, esp. pp. 28, 37.

33. Weale, *Hubert and John van Eyck*, p. 167.

34. Felipe Pereda Espeso, “Eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear: Literal Sense and Spiritual Vision in the Fountain of Life,” in *Fiction sacrée: spiritualité et esthétique durant le premier âge moderne*, eds. Ralph Dekoninck, Agnès Guiderdoni, and Émilie Granjon (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), pp. 113-155, esp. p. 151.

35. Pereda, “Eyes that they should not see,” p. 154, note 126.

36. Concerning the Holy Faces by Bouts and his entourage see: Valentine Henderiks, *Albrecht Bouts (1451/55-1549)* (Bruxelles: Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique, Centre d’Étude des Primitifs Flamands, 2011), pp. 227-231.

37. Manuel Gómez-Moreno Martínez, *Catálogo monumental de la provincia de Ávila* (Ávila: Institución Gran Duque de Alba, 1983/1901), pp. 119-120 and fig. 178.

38. About Juan de Carrión and the Ávila Cathedral’s books, see: Fernando Villaseñor Sebastián, *El libro iluminado en Castilla durante la segunda mitad del siglo XV* (Segovia: Instituto Castellano y Leonés de la Lengua, 2009), pp. 143-155; Lynette M.F. Bosch, “Los manuscritos abulenses de Juan de Carrión,” *Archivo Español de Arte* 253 (1991): pp. 55-64; María del Pilar Silva Maroto, “La miniatura hispano-flamenca en Ávila: nuevos datos documentales,” *Miscelánea de Arte* 1 (1982): pp. 54-56.

39. Villaseñor, *Libro iluminado en Castilla*, pp. 151-152.

40. See: Villaseñor, *Libro iluminado en Castilla*, pp. 99-138.

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42. Elisa Bermejo, “Anónimo flamenco (seguidor de Petrus Christus [?]). Busto de Cristo coronado de espinas (ca. 1500). Óleo sobre tabla, 43 x 32 cm,” in *La Luz de las Imágenes. La faz de la eternidad*, exh. cat. (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 2006), no. 29, p. 277.

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50. José Manuel Pita Andrade, “Pinturas y pintores de Isabel la Católica,” in *Isabel la Católica y el arte*, eds. Gonzalo Anes and Carmen Manso (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2006), pp. 13-72, esp. p. 40.

51. Sánchez, *Libros, tapices y cuadros*, p. 178; Pita, “Pinturas y pintores,” p. 53.

52. Sánchez, *Libros, tapices y cuadros*, p. 179.

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55. Felipe Pereda Espeso, *Las imágenes de la discordia. Política artística en el tiempo de los Reyes Católicos* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007), pp. 33-35; Juan Miguel Serrera Contreras, “Un ‘Cristo Varón Dolores’ de Juan Sánchez de San Román, Juan Sánchez II, en el Prado,” *Boletín del Museo del Prado* 8.23 (1987): pp. 75-84.

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57. Ángela Franco, “Verónica,” in *Ysabel, la reina católica. Una mirada desde la Catedral Primada*, ed. Pilar Gordillo Isaza (Toledo: Instituto Teológico San Ildefonso, 2005), no. 223, pp. 495-496.

58. Teresa Pérez Higuera, “Altar de Cristo a la columna,” in *Ysabel, la reina católica. Una mirada desde la Catedral Primada*, ed. Pilar Gordillo Isaza (Toledo: Instituto Teológico San Ildefonso, 2005), no. 221, pp. 493-494.

59. This panel measures 54 x 40.5 x 6.5 cm including the frame; 41 x 27 cm without frame.

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62. Chevalier, *Étude critique*, pp. 45 and xlvii.

63. London, British Library: Add MS 35313, fol. 8r. About the prayer *Salve sancta facies* see: Hand, “Salve sancta facies.”

64. See: Jonathan Brown, “Spain in the Age of Exploration: Crossroads of Artistic Cultures,” in *Circa 1492. Art in the Age of Exploration*, ed. Jay A. Levenson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 41-49; Iban Redondo Parés, “El mercado de arte entre Flandes y Castilla durante el reinado de Isabel la Católica (1474-1504): rutas, mercaderes, clientes y obras” (PhD diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2019).