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Adorno’s conception of “serious art” posits that art rejects mimesis, has autonomy from the world as well as from itself, and yet can simultaneously be about the world. Autonomy, from my position, has always signaled will, volition, positive and negative freedom. Positive freedom is defined as freedom from internal restraints—the art being autonomous from itself—while negative freedom is freedom from external restraints—the art being autonomous from the world. In this paper, I interrogate what exactly qualifies as serious art and, moreover, how serious art can be autonomous. My interest here is directly implicated in Adorno’s totality. This totality, I posit, is the culture industry. However, through the course of this essay I argue that those films that prompt abject sorrow—or perhaps anxiety—can rupture or go un-subsumed by this totality. This rejection of subsumption, I suggest, is implicated in what Sara Ahmed calls “willful objects”, which I discuss later in the article.

In “The Schema of Mass Culture,” Adorno discusses the ways in which art is subsumed by the totality. Firstly, we must elaborate on what exactly this totality is, namely the culture industry, and how it operates as a totality. My interest and possible rupturing of Adorno’s idea here will come by way of the incredibly sad, devastating film. I argue that perhaps the sorrowful, abject, devastating film—the film wherein your recovery period lasts more than mere hours and extends into days and perhaps weeks—can potentially be un-subsumed by the totality. In service of this, I will perform a close reading of Adorno’s “The Schema of Mass Culture.”

Drawing on Hegel’s “concept,” Adorno discusses the totality. In “The Concept of Enlightenment,” Adorno and Horkheimer posit, “The concept, usually defined as the unity of the feature of what it subsumes, was rather, from the first, a product of dialectical thinking, in which each thing is what it is only by becoming what it is not.” Hegel’s concept was the product of dialectical relationships. Being was not Nothing. Nothing was not Being. The subsumption of the two became Becoming. Parts of the totality are only known in distinction to what they are not. However, when they are subsumed, all that it is to be an individual part of the totality, or the concept, is to be the totality. In this way, to know one part is to know the whole. I imagine the totality to be analogous to a tornado. Suspend belief for a moment and consider inside the tornado: once you are inside of its force, there is no getting outside. Suspend belief once again to imagine that there never was an outside to the tornado. Within the tornado, objects move in circular motions; perhaps they lose their original shape, or they

become intertwined with other objects, yet crucially they remain inside the tornado. The tornado is the totality. The objects within the tornado become the parts. However, as nothing exists outside the tornado, these objects cannot exist discretely, and therefore exist only in the tornado. To look at each object is still to look at the whole. For Hegel, the totality was thought thinking thought. Contrarily, for Adorno, the totality is the culture industry.

Adorno and Horkheimer propose that popular culture operates like industry, in so far as popular culture is like a factory, producing standardized goods through a division of labour wherein workers are alienated from their labour. The goods, whether they be songs, television shows or films, are “self-similar,” that is they are repetitions with just enough difference to make them appear ‘new’ to consumers. Cultural products are churned out at rapid rates and promptly subsumed into the totality, defined as the culture industry. Each of these products is just different enough to adhere to spectator expectations—and thus be successful products within the industry—while still seeming ‘new’.

I am of the belief that nothing lies outside of a totality. I reject the idea of an outside. Although I understand that this belief begs the question of how it may be possible to conceive of a totality you cannot see, I maintain that like a house it is possible to discern its walls from the inside. Simultaneously, I am an optimist. I argue that there is always potential for rupture. Within the discipline of cinema studies, we are aware of the ways that intentions for films—be they intentions of directors, actors, or cinematographers—are never guaranteed to be conveyed. This is to say that sometimes intentions do not matter. Rather, what matters is their effect—or affect. This brings us to Adorno’s conception of ‘serious art’; the distinction that needs to be made here is that perhaps ‘serious art’ is not always autonomous art. Adorno posits, “the difference between ‘serious’ and ‘light’ culture is either eroded or expressly organized and thus incorporated into the almighty totality.” Within the processes of the totality, and in this case industry, everything is collapsed. Again, to reiterate, all it is to be anything within the totality is to be the totality, and to look at a part is to look at the whole. Autonomous art, on the other hand, appears to be quite different. Adorno wants to posit that autonomous art is autonomous both from itself and from the world, and moreover that it rejects any mimesis. This is not to say that it is art that cannot be about the world, but that rather it cannot look like the world. Moreover, ‘serious art’ seems to be attributed to its maker: “a great poet is almost as good as a great inventor or talent scout, just as long as the standing of the work protects us from having to read any of it.” The implication here is that what is more important than the greatness of the work is our knowledge of the greatness of the maker. With knowledge of the greatness of the maker we can gain social capital, that is we can gain status within the culture industry as being of good taste, instead of intrinsic value; reversely, autonomous art could not be indebted to its maker because it would not be autonomous, and instead it would be dependent. Makers cannot protect us from engaging with autonomous art. Consequently, I argue that autonomous art is innately experiential in nature, an argument I will return to later.

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5 Ibid, 65.
Not looking like the world is a consequence of time and ends. Speaking to the ‘variety act’, Adorno discusses the ways that spectators are taught what to expect through reiteration and repetition, a process that Adorno calls reification. Adorno believes that “the trick is played on time itself and not merely upon the viewer; thus variety already represented the magical repetition of the industrial procedure in which the selfsame is reproduced through time—the very allegory of high capitalism which demonstrates its dominating character as it appropriates its necessity as the freedom of play.” As was previously elaborated, Adorno believes that repetition with a hint of variation allows for the selfsame to be reproduced as novel. This false novelty in turn passes itself off as ‘play’, that is something spontaneous, fun, and not predetermined to any end.

In regards to film, Adorno believes that images simply pass by passive spectators, and then become temporally interchangeable with one another; saying, “all moments which succeed one another in time are more or less directly interchangeable with one another; that is there is no real development and what comes later is not one whit richer in experience than what proceeded it.” What I would like to expand upon here is this conception of development. Adorno appears to argue that autonomous art cannot have a predetermined end because if it did it would not be autonomous. Calling on Benjamin, to have a predetermined end is only to replicate a pre-existing sociality or at least run this risk. If art has a predetermined end it might end up looking like the world, which in turn means it would not be autonomous from the world. Therefore, development must be distinct from end. Development must exist independently of temporality. I propose that perhaps films that defy spectator expectations have development but not a predetermined end.

Adorno believes that “in so far as the individual images are played past in an uninterrupted photographic series on the screen they have already become an object.” As temporality becomes inconsequential, and thus interchangeable and unimportant, films become objects retrospectively. However, I consider here sequences in films that are radically different in form and content to their whole.

Sean Baker’s 2017 *The Florida Project* contends with moments in the lives of a child and her mother who are part of Florida’s motel class. At the film’s end, it appears as though the daughter is going to be taken away from her mother by child protective services as her mother has been accused of sex-work. However, in a *Last Laugh* (1924) style ending, the child runs away with a friend through Disney World—radically different from the content and

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6 Ibid, 70.
7 Ibid, 71.
style of the rest of the film, this sequence is singularly striking. This excess, as Kristin Thompson refers to it, cannot be recuperated into the plot. Consequently, it disrupts both spectatorial expectations and predetermined ends. Perhaps it could be argued that the spectator is still met with a sorrowful understanding that this ending is meant as a rhetorical device and in ‘reality’ the daughter would be taken from her mother, and not running through Disney World with a friend. Nevertheless, it needs to be considered. What happens when the “uninterrupted images” are interrupted? Does excess in film stand to rupture the totality? What if we were to think through films that produce only moments in the lives of characters as opposed to plot driven narratives? Considering these kinds of films, and the kinds of films I will posit subsequently, demands a distinction between art and mass culture, which Adorno attempts to elaborate (in writing this essay, I finally understand the impulse). Adorno notes, “mass culture…simply identifies with the curse of predetermination and joyfully fulfills it,” “the empty passage of time, the meaningless transience of life was to be seized upon through form and brought into participation with the ‘idea’ by virtue of the totality of this form.” The difference between art and mass culture, for Adorno, is that mass culture signals an unimportant temporality whereas art necessarily involves a sense of eternity.

The eternal seems to be that which overtly defies mimetic relations including to itself. Adorno allows that, “Art can be understood only by its laws of movement, not according to any set of invariants. It is defined by its relation to what it is not.” The eternal seems to be how art makes time significant. Thinking of eternity, I argue, does suggest a kind of movement. Movement could signal either a finality of movement—in the sense of movement through life—or in the way of Spinoza’s God—with no beginning, no end, existing completely autonomously through time and space but not in a finite way. The eternal, which for Adorno seems to be more akin to Spinoza, appears to be how art makes time significant.

I argue that Adorno’s issue with time is the way it is made insignificant. He says, “the temporal moments into which the narrative disintegrated now even begin to escape from the relationship of temporal succession through the power of memory draw all temporal events back into themselves like a whirlpool.” When parts of films, be that frames, shots or sequences, can be moved without consequence, they did not matter to begin with. I argue that the will is tied up with memory and thought, just as films are. It has been a discourse in cinema studies that films operate like thought, or, more materially, that films are thought. Sara Ahmed argues that willing implies an experience of a subject.

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13 Ibid., 3.
Willis thus an object of thought. However, the will straddles the gap between subject and object essentially collapsing the two. If you, a subject, are an object of a will, and you are therefore simultaneously both subject and object. This is the link that is absent in Adorno: in order to be an object—as Adorno names film—you must be the subject of a will. Therefore, Adorno is not considering the ways that films are simultaneously object and subject. That is, films have will—the ability to prompt feelings in spectators, to act upon them as well as the ability to be willed upon by spectators. Additionally, a link that needs to be explicit is that willing is only known in and through time. Perhaps will is what makes time matter again.

Will becomes akin to memory. Ahmed asserts, “willing over and in time creates the very impression of the will.” 17 If willing through and in time creates the impression—that is effect—of the will, then the will is related to memory; “the body moves as if it is contributing to making something possible because it recalls prior acts of willing.” 18 Willing becomes experiential, phenomenological, a sensation or reflex that you experience in your body. I argue that willing becomes a way of world building, which is something that film also does. Consequently, I would like to conflate film as an experience of willing. With the will, “the subject experiences itself as actively involved in…bringing.” 19 Similarly, Christian Metz once noted, “by watching the film, I help it to be born, I help it to live, since only in me will it live, and since it is made for that purpose: to be watched, in other words to be brought into being by nothing other than the look.” 20 In this way, spectators will films into being. By way of this exchange, it is clear that spectators and films are implicated in a reciprocal relationship.

So, what about films that resist spectatorial expectations? What about films that resist the will of the spectator? Sara Ahmed posits that willing might be an experience of being on the way to actualization. In the case of the spectator of the film, this actualization would be the film in its totality, and perhaps the cohesion of the film. When a film resists the will of a spectator—of the expectation for that film—it becomes a “willful object: what is not moveable by the will is contrary to the will” which is to say that it resists the will. 21 I suggest that films that produce abject sorrow, sorrow that feels prolonged, hopeless, unthinkable, and heavy in your body, resists the will of the spectator and thus, resists subsumption into the totality, or the culture industry. I propose that there is a dialectical relationship that happens between the spectator and abject sorrow films. Films prompt abject sorrow in the body of the viewer; therein the will of the film acts on the spectator, who simultaneously brings the film into being. The film, in turn,

18 Ibid, 35.
19 Ibid, 37.
21 Ahmed, Willful Subject, 40.
resists the will of the viewer, as it does not adhere to expectation, does not let the viewer sit passively as its images pass by. Instead, the feelings prompted in the body of the spectator by the film force the spectator to engage with the film. Consequently, time matters. Temporality in the film cannot be haphazardly interchangeable.

Perhaps we may then ask what occurs when we go into a film expecting sorrow? When we watch a film and our expectations of that sorrow are fulfilled? What is the difference between a film that makes us sad and a film that makes us sorrowful? The distinction needs to be made. Firstly, I argue that sadness is a performative emotion. It is one that can be momentary, un-lasting. Sadness is when you watch the news and you know you should feel badly about the events in the world, but it is only a surface level effect, it does not affect your body. Sadness, I posit, is a normative emotion. A sad film could passively pass you by without leaving a mark. Alternatively, I suggest that sorrow always exceeds expectation. Consider for example, a dying relative or friend. Even if you are aware of their impending death months in advance, that does not prepare you for the blow. Regardless of how long you had to prepare, the feelings will exist in your body. Your grief, your abject sorrow, will be a burden you carry. Sorrow is heavy, it sinks like a rock while sadness is buoyant, or superficial—it floats. This is ultimately to say that sadness never makes an impression. For this reason, even if you go into a film expecting sorrow, that sorrow will always exceed expectation. If it is truly sorrow, it will affect your body in a lasting way.

The first film in my recollection that caused me to feel entirely abject sorrow was Darren Arnofsky’s *Requiem for a Dream* (2000). Prompted by a fascination with, and perhaps a romanticism of, drug addiction, I can remember the sheer, abject, and hopeless sorrow that I felt at the film’s end. This was a consequence of both its form and its content. The fates of the three primary characters are respectively sealed as follows: Harry (Jared Leto) loses his arm because of infection from intervenes drug use; Marion (Jennifer Connelly) takes up survival sex-work to perpetuate her addiction; lastly, Tyrone (Marlon Wayans) ends up incarcerated on drug charges. Yet, it is not only the content that prompts abject sorrow, although just considering these fates I still feel shivers, but rather the content in tandem with the form. These formal elements include the editing and the soundtrack. Crosscutting occurs to align each character’s fate as happening contemporaneously. All three are shot from above to make them look small, weak, pathetic and beyond reprieve. Moreover, these shots are accompanied by the crushing music of Clint Mansell’s “Lux Aeterna.” The form and content of the film, especially in regards to this final scene, prompt a feeling of sorrow so intense, I name it as abject.

Ahmed posits, “if becoming an object is to receive the will of a subject, then an object that does not allow a subject to carry out a will would be described ‘willful’. Willful objects would be objects that do not allow subjects to carry out their will.” I propose

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that film’s that produce abject sorrow in spectators, which I refer to as abject sorrow films, are willful objects because they do not allow the spectators or the culture industry to carry out their will. I argue that this has to do with expectation and duration.

Throughout the first portion of this essay, I have been attempting to tease out the links between will and time. Both Adorno and Ahmed grapple with time. For Adorno, repetition, reiteration, and reification of viewer’s expectations are created through time, which is why he posits that the “trick” is not only played on the spectator but on time itself. For Ahmed, time is the way we come to know the will. The will becomes knowable to us in and through time. We remember what we have willed in the past and so it seems to operate a little like muscle memory. For Ahmed, the will becomes experiential, as we remember past wills and our bodies literally moving or moving towards what we want to will. She describes a scenario wherein you are watching your favourite sport and you lean your body towards the opposing teams’ goal as if to will the puck to move in that direction. I argue that the body moves in similar ways while watching a film.

Steve McQueen’s 2009 Hunger—another abject sorrow film—made me physically sick to my stomach for days. The film details IRA activist Bobby Sands’ last days in prison on hunger strike. Mistreated and abused by the prison wardens and Thatcher’s government, Sands persists. However, it was not the violence or the heartache that made this film prompt abject sorrow in the spectator. What causes abject sorrow in the spectator is watching the deterioration of the body of Bobby Sands (Michael Fassbender). During my own viewing of the film, I physically turned my body away as to will the decaying of Sands’ body to stop. However, the film did not accept my will—Bobby Sands dies a slow and painful death—and the film was therefore willful. Ahmed says, “when something resists will, an impression becomes more distinct.” I suggest that it is this distinctness that causes duration. Imagine a wound: You experience its initial hurt, you might bleed, you might clean and cover it in an effort to heal it. When you uncover the wound to let it breathe, it persists, dried red, sore; you can see and feel it. After weeks, it might start to fade. Perhaps the wound is closed, however; the mark remains. Maybe the wound leaves a scar, an impression on your skin to remain forever. Similarly, when a film rejects your will, it leaves a mark. Hunger’s mark was my upset stomach, my inability to speak, my heavy body, and my heavy eyelids.

The last abject sorrow film I would like to discuss is The Silence of the Lambs (1991). The film follows Clarice Starling (Jody Foster), a student at the FBI, as she tries to solve the murders of missing young women. She enlists the help of former psychiatrist and cannibal, Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins). According to Ahmed, “willfulness might strike in a moment of suspension: what gets in the way of what is on the way.”

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24 I personally find it difficult to see any kind of violence or body-gore on screen. Even now, when I think about Hunger my stomach turns. Hunger, dir. Steve McQueen, 2009.
25 Ahmed, Willful Subject, 43.
27 Ahmed, Willful Subject, 47.
because of my position as a queer woman, I felt abject sorrow when Hannibal suggests that Buffalo Bill is not really trans, he just seems to think he is. Having Hannibal be the gatekeeper of gender and knowledge struck something within me that endured for months afterwards—how is anyone to know whom or what they are if others tell them otherwise—however, I digress. The Silence of the Lambs is a film that famously rejects viewers’ expectations. The infamous graphic match/match on action comes three quarters into the film. Clarice Starling knocks on the killer’s door; and simultaneously the SWAT team prepares for apprehension. Spectators are led to believe that Clarice and the SWAT team are in the same location. However, this is not the case. Clarice is at the home of the killer; the SWAT team is somewhere else entirely. Shock, terror and abject sorrow wash over the bodies of spectators. What gets in the way of happiness is the film itself and so the film becomes willful. By destroying spectator’s expectation, the film asserts its will on the spectator; which in turn leaves a mark: abject sorrow that remains with them. This sorrow, I argue, makes these films un-subsumable—or at least difficult to subsume—by the culture industry, the totality.

There is something about a feeling that stays with you, a feeling that endures through time that creates its imprint on you. The typical experience of films wherein viewer expectations are fulfilled, I suggest, is as such: you enter a theatre, you watch a film, what you think will happen does happen, you tell your company the film was good, you go home and you do not think much of that film ever again. You may remember it in fleeting moments, however; it does not stay with you, and it does not persist through time. Adorno describes films like this, saying: “wrenched from all context, detached from thought, they are made instantly accessible to an infantile grasp.”28 The notion of “infantile” is of interest here. Infantile signals a lack of maturity. Maturity is a feature we cultivate in and through time. Immaturity is then something that can desist through time, the distinction being something that lasts as opposed to something that does not. The films Adorno describes here are the latter.

Alternatively, films that affect you, that resist your will, that direct their will at your body are willful. Ahmed postulates, “then to be judged willful is to become a killjoy of the future: the one who steals the possibility of happiness, the one who stops happiness from becoming actual, the one who gets in the way of happiness assumed as on its way, when judgment of willfulness converts to a potential into a threat, willfulness comes up as a theft of potential.”29 This willfulness is related to the notion of the ugly. In his essay, “Transparencies on Film,” Adorno suggests that films with the potential to liberate are those that communicate subjective instances of time as well as those that do not seem to have mastery over their medium, the ugly. Mastery over the medium seems to be those films that articulate their ideas through conventional formal techniques (ie. the continuity editing system). Adorno is weary of film because of its collective address, and says, “It would not be incorrect to describe the constitutive subject of film as ‘we’ in

29 Ahmed, Willful Subject, 47.
which the aesthetic and sociological aspects of the medium converge.”30 The collective address of film, along with its conventionalized style, allows—and perhaps even precipitates—film’s potential for nefarious ideological work. Why this is especially important for Adorno goes without saying. Consequently, for Adorno, aesthetics that are “uncinematic”, those that are ugly (by which I argue Adorno means stylistically dissimilar to the continuity editing system), can use film’s collective address for liberatory means. Filmic techniques that explicitly create juxtaposition (like those that I have described in Requiem for a Dream and The Silence of the Lambs) create subjective experiences in the spectator, wherein the images cannot passively wash over the spectator; or be considered interchangeable without consequence, Juxtaposition, of form and content, create a dialectical structure, wherein form and content work to affect the body of the spectator.

Adorno suggests, “Irrespective of the technological origins of the cinema, the aesthetics of film will do better to base itself on a subjective mode of experience which film resembles and which constitutes its artistic character.”31 As the subjective is what allows for film’s radical potential, I argue that it relates to Sara Ahmed’s concept of the feminist killjoy, that is those who resist and those who are willful. The subjective film is doubly willful as they both resist the will of the spectator as well as the will of conventional film form. Women are always told to be smile and be happy. This happiness, Ahmed posits, is in direct tension with women’s possibility, agency and autonomy. Happiness becomes that which serves to erase the horizon; feminism is that which opens the horizon. The horizon is that which is future, that which is potential, and that which is possible. Happiness becomes similar to the beautiful. I argue that abject sorrow films are those that let breathe the ugly typically covered over by the beautiful. The ugly is that which is recuperated by the work of art. Adorno posits that beauty is always necessarily predicated on the ugly. The ugly is the foundation on which the beauty sits. The beauty in this context is the conventional strategies of film, while the ugly is the formal strategies that resist, those that become willful, those that open the horizon, and those that necessitates film’s liberatory potential. Beauty has a mystifying effect through film’s collective address and is an attempt to erase and persuade the viewer that what they are seeing is not predicated or created in virtue of a violence. Beauty is an attempt to pull the wool over our eyes. Ugliness, that which is uncinematic and subjective, becomes the fragment, in other words, that which can be tugged at until the totality unravels. This is where we get at the fact that art can be political or about the world; it just cannot have a mimetic quality, that is, it cannot resemble the world; it cannot look like the world. Consider beauty in film as narrative expectation and happiness and the ugly as the abject sorrow that causes rupture. Additionally, consider the ugly to be the culture industry itself. As I maintain that there is no outside to a totality, there is no outside to the culture industry. Therefore, everything is created within its bounds.

31 Ibid, 181.
Following from that, all films, including the abject sorrow film, are created and birthed from its womb. The culture industry is the specter beneath the floorboards.

This violence, through abject sorrow film, affects and directs its will at the spectator. Consequently, it creates an impression through duration. This duration is what allows the abject sorrow film to resist subsumption into the culture industry. Unlike the experience of the film that fulfills your expectation, the abject sorrow film remains with you. As it remains with you it cannot be neatly organized into the culture industry. Because you remember it and because you still feel its lasting impression, it cannot be replaced by another. It cannot be subsumed and reiterated by another film that is just different enough as to feel novel. Moreover, it points to the operation of the culture industry, making it self-reflexive in nature as all it is to be a film is to be a product of the industry, just as all it is to be a part of the totality is to be a part of the totality. When you see a part, you see the whole. When a part comes loose, when it fractures, you can tug. Through its lasting effect, its tug, it points to its maker. This self-reflexivity is also a consequence of duration. If an abject sorrow film cannot be replaced by the next film, because of its lasting effect, then it points to the very process trying to replace it. Thus, its operations are revealed, and it cannot be subsumed and subsequently replaced, creating a rupture in the culture industry and resisting subsumption. Adorno posits, “the spirit demands that these goods...are not genuinely experienced...all genuine experience of art is devalued into a matter of evaluation.”

As I have exhaustively expressed, films that will the spectator to feel abject sorrow are innately phenomenological and therefore innately experiential. Feeling depends upon having a body. In this way, abject sorrow films are genuinely experienced. Conversely, the forgettable films that fulfill expectations come down to a matter of value judgment, that is evaluation, that does not will any reaction in your body. As I have stated, you go to the theatre, you sit through the movie, you tell your company the movie was ‘good’, you go home and only ever think of that movie in disparate moments. Another movie promptly replaces that movie, which is subsequently replaced by another, and so on and so forth.

All of this is to say that films that will abject sorrow in the bodies of spectators can cause ruptures in the culture industry. The film’s will is in direct opposition to the will of the spectators. Through the culture industry, the spectators come to have expectations dictated through repetition and reiteration: each reiteration being just slightly different from the last as to appear novel while still adhering to expectations. When spectators see films they will the film to follow those expectations. They move their bodies as a way to direct their will towards those expectations. When films resist, they become what Sara Ahmed names ‘willful’, that which resists the will of a subject. This is how the film exerts its will on its spectators. In the case of the abject sorrow film, it wills the spectator to feel a lasting feeling which can in turn rupture the totality. This is a consequence of duration. Abject sorrow stays with you as it causes an impression. Like a

wound, it persists through time. In virtue of its persisting, it cannot be quickly replaced in the way the culture industry demands. It therefore interrupts that culture industry, that is the totality’s, operations. This interruption causes these films to be un-subsumable, or at least very difficult to subsume, by the totality. Consequently, they become fragments begging to be tugged at. What lies beyond this essay is the following question: what happens when we tug?

— Emily Barton
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**WHOSE NEIGHBOURHOOD?**  
*Immigrant Inhabitation in The Ward*

**JOSHUA PHILIP HUMPHREY***

**Introduction**

The Ward, The Noble Ward, Saint John’s Ward, Old Chinatown, and most recently, the Bay Street Corridor all describe a particular area of Toronto bordered by College Street, Yonge Street, Queen Street, and University Avenue. Historically this area was the landing point for immigrants to Canada and over time became what was considered by the local government to be a slum. Today this area is home to a variety of commercial amenities, and important institutions, most notably: the Cadillac Fairview Toronto Eaton Centre, the New and Old City Hall, Osgoode Hall, Toronto General Hospital, and the Hospital for Sick Children. Based off of recent census information, the area is still home to recent newcomers, with 62 percent of the residents being first generation status.1 Through case studies of the various time periods, the people of the neighbourhood can be compared to their historic counterparts, both socio-economically and ethnographically, while also showing the residents’ transitory nature over time.

There is not one particular demographic that has kept The Ward as their permanent enclave. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century the neighbourhood began to house various newcomers, becoming an important transitional space and constantly evolving with the diverse ethnicities inhabiting this enclave.2 By exploring the timeline of the neighbourhood’s inhabitation with a focus on demographics and householders from the 1840s to the 2010s, I will evaluate the accuracy of calling this area Toronto’s first Chinatown. The first ethnic enclave, ‘The Noble Ward,’ was formed by African American refugees escaping slavery. The ethnic succession continued as Eastern European, and most notably, Jewish immigrants began settling in ‘Saint John’s Ward’ starting in the 1880s and continuing until the 1920s. Chinese immigrants began to land in ‘Old Chinatown’ from the 1910s until the 1950s, which is when the city’s

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government began to expropriate more land culminating in the construction of New City Hall. Throughout these changes there has been a consistency in tenancy and constant transformation, both in the urban fabric and in the ethnocultural groups that inhabit The Ward; all of which can be connected back to the near-constant flow of residents in and out of this neighbourhood.

The Noble Ward

Starting in the early nineteenth century, the area was the landing point for black American refugees as they fled the United States. Slavery was practiced in Canada, with the slaves of French and English settlers arriving since the late 17th century, until its abolition in 1833 by the British Empire.³ It then proceeded to become “a country that professed to be a land of freedom and welcomed fugitive slaves who gained their freedom the moment they crossed the Canadian border.”⁴ At this point the neighbourhood, then referred to as The Noble Ward, housed around half of the thousand residents of Toronto with African ancestry.⁵ They often arrived with next to nothing and were forced to live in what was then considered the outskirts of the old City of Toronto. It is because of this that many of them lived in what were once cottages, which they repurposed into their own permanent housing. These houses would also often include a commercial or workshop space at the street level, as a means of creating a source of income. A few churches, predominantly attended by the black Canadians, were erected in the mid-late nineteenth century and were in use until the mid-late twentieth century when they were demolished, for parking lots, or new buildings.⁶

One example of these churches was the British Methodist Episcopal (BME) Church which was founded in 1856, rebuilt in 1871, and stood until 1988 near Centre Avenue and Armoury Street (figure 1). Originally a wooden structure, the BME Church was rebuilt with brick. It endured for 117 years, first as the BME church, and then changing hands in the fifties to the Chinese United Church (figure 2). Recently, as construction for a new courthouse began, they uncovered the foundations of this church, discovering the rich history of the African-American refugees settling in Canada. This is one of many structures that symbolizes the evolving nature of the neighbourhood, reminding us of its rich diversity and history.

⁴ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid.
Figure 1. British Methodist Episcopal Church, circa 1950s. Image courtesy of the City of Toronto Archives.

Figure 2. Chinese United Church, circa 1980s. Image courtesy of the City of Toronto Archives.
Saint John’s Ward

Since the 1880s Eastern Europeans, particularly Jewish Eastern Europeans, began to arrive in the city, populating what had then become known as Saint John’s Ward. At this point, it was becoming increasingly common for owners to rent out their homes to tenants. Householders of Jewish heritage within the neighbourhood increased from 1.2 percent in 1889 to 74.3 percent in 1909.7 In the latter year, 17 percent of these householders were occupied by owners, while 57 percent rented from Jewish landlords, and 26 percent rented from non-Jewish landlords.8 It is interesting to note that Jewish landlords were more likely to live in close proximity, as opposed to their non-Jewish counterparts who mostly lived outside of the neighbourhood.9 The development of the Jewish community may have attracted more Jewish newcomers to this enclave. It seems likely that this helped the landlords and tenants foster better relationships than tenants with distant landlords.

Saint John’s Ward began facing a critical issue as the “demand for housing increased, rents soared, while the maintenance of buildings fell off considerably.”10 The high value sites, with low value buildings made this area potentially viable for commercial and industrial use.11 The neighbourhood began to see its perimeter closing in as major developments emerged, most notably are City Hall from 1889-1899, Toronto General Hospital in 1913 (where 232 dwellings were cleared for the project), and Timothy Eaton Company’s department store, warehouses, and factories.12 Landlords also began to disinvest, often selling the property for reasonable prices to their tenants.13 This would have ultimately been bad for the new Jewish owners, as the value would continue to drop lower. As the periphery developed, the interior began to deteriorate, raising issues of its sanitation and safety, and quickly becoming the closest thing Toronto had to label as a slum (figure 3).14

The Ward/Old Chinatown

Although this area has been considered Toronto’s Old Chinatown, Chinese newcomers only began to settle here in the 1900s, living amongst the Eastern Europeans and Jewish

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8 Ibid, 381.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid, 22-23.
12 Ibid, 23.
14 Dennis, “Property and Propriety,” 382.
Figure 3. Fire Insurance maps of The Ward showing densification over time. Red denotes masonry construction, and yellow denotes wood construction. From left to right: 1858, 1889, 1903, 1912, 1924.
residents of The Ward.\textsuperscript{15} These newcomers were mostly men, coming alone to work on the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, without their wives and families due to Canada’s racist immigration laws.\textsuperscript{16} In 1919, a report was distributed by the Toronto Bureau of Municipal Research titled “What is ‘the Ward’ going to do with Toronto” targeted this area, and was made to inform people of the unpleasant, and infectious “Ward Conditions.”\textsuperscript{17} This report also discusses the contemporaneous real estate values, which increased as the city began to grow north, making property in The Ward very desirable for redevelopment.\textsuperscript{18} In “Urban Restructuring, Homelessness, and Collective Action in Toronto, 1980-2003,” Johnathan Greene discusses the later redevelopments in the city, arguing that the post-Fordist society led to an economic and occupational shift.\textsuperscript{19} Ultimately this led to the loss of low-income housing due to gentrification. Manufacturing was pushed out of downtown Toronto, while professional jobs moved in, leading to a shift in the housing market, notably the removal of 13,000 rental units within the city of Toronto.\textsuperscript{20} This is significant considering that tenants and subtenants made up a majority of the occupiers in The Ward from the 1880s to the 1910s, rather than the more prosperous home owners.\textsuperscript{21}

The mixing of ethnic groups went beyond the co-inhabitation of the neighbourhood. It created an environment where Chinese men began having interracial relationships with Jewish women, which would have been a controversial occurrence at this time.\textsuperscript{22} This deconstructs the myth of the celibate and loveless lives of Chinese immigrant men. One example of this can be seen through the life of Rose Rosenfeld, the “daughter of Jewish Russian-Polish parents who refused to conform to the social dictates that constrained young women’s lives” and was married twice, to Chinese men each time (figure 4).\textsuperscript{23} This shows that The Ward was an ethnically diverse area, and that the communities were interacting though tenancy and business, as well as intimate relationships.

The interactions between ethnically diverse immigrants can further be seen in figure 5, around the Elizabeth-Agnes intersection—the intersection on which Chinatown was centered on—where there were a variety of Chinese and Jewish businesses,
Figure 4. Rose Rosenfeld, her children, and second husband Lew Doe, circa 1940s. Image courtesy of the personal collection of Rose Rosenfeld.
operating in close proximity to one another. These are the roots of Toronto’s identity as an ethnically diverse city where there is more interconnectedness, akin to the Toronto we have today.

**Bay Street Corridor**

The modern-day iteration of this area, now considered part of the Bay Street Corridor, is surprisingly similar to its former versions, as it still appears to be a landing point for Toronto’s newcomers. Based off of the 2016 neighbourhood profile, published by the City of Toronto, non-permanent residents made up 20 percent of the inhabitants, and first generation residents made up 62 percent—17 percent and 11 percent higher than the city’s averages, respectively.24 Another interesting commonality is that the traditions of tenancy have endured as 67.9 percent are renter households, compared to the city’s average of 47 percent.25 This neighbourhood is also continuously growing, with a population change from 19,348 in 2011 to 25,797 in 2016, which is a 33.3 percent growth in those five years.26, 27 The housing typology has seen a drastic change from the historic, ground oriented housing to almost completely high-rise buildings (over five floors). Looking to the ethnographic diversity of the area in 2011, the top four ethnic backgrounds were Chinese (4,185), English (2,255), Irish (1,615), and Canadian (1,555).28 Five years later, the top four ethnic backgrounds were Chinese (7,585), English (2,805), Canadian (2,180), and Scottish (2,085), revealing a disproportionate increase.29 What this indicates is that this area is still seeing many new populations arriving from abroad, most prominently from China, proving that this has remained a transitory place, and continues to be a home for Chinese immigrants over a century later. The businesses around the centre of what used to be considered Chinatown, are far different from those that existed in the 1920s-1950s. What was once the home to a mix of Chinese and Jewish business has now been replaced by several Japanese and Korean stores, as well as several Chinese stores that continue to have a strong presence here (figure 6).

**Evaluation**

The common conception of this area as Toronto’s Old Chinatown may be misleading, as it was home to a variety of ethnic groups. It is clear that the initial black Canadian presence was both strong and long-lasting, along with the later introduction of

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25 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
Figure 5. Business storefronts around the Elizabeth-Agnes (Dundas) intersection from 1920s-1940s, showing Jewish, and Chinese stores. Images courtesy of the City of Toronto Archives (edited to adjust contrast, and collaged by the author).

Figure 6. Business storefronts around the Elizabeth-Dundas intersection in 2018, showing Japanese, Korean, and Chinese stores. Images taken from Google Street View (edited to black and white, and collaged by the author).
the Jewish and Eastern European immigrants in the 1880s. It appears that the consideration of this area as the Old Chinatown is because it was the final and largest ethnic enclave before the construction for New City Hall. Such a moniker is not inclusive to the other prominent ethnic groups who sought this enclave before them. We should take into account the other histories of the prior ethnic groups, to have a more accurate consideration of the The Ward’s history.

What once was the meeting place for indigenous people became known as Toronto to French and English colonists. Black Canadians occupied the cottages of the Anglo’s before them. A transition came as the prominent Jewish and Eastern European communities began to settle in place of the black community that was slowly dissipating. After them, another ethnic succession came as the Chinese began to inhabit these spaces. These changes in communities were never abrupt, rather they were gradual transitions from one group to the next, in what has retrospectively become a transitory space for emigrating ethnocultural groups. Nevertheless, the urban renewal projects and construction of City Hall was still a catalyst in forcing Chinese businesses to move to Chinatown West, where they took over vacancies created by the previous Jewish population (figure 7). Even today, this continues to be landing point non-permanent residents, and first generation Canadians. The succession of an ethnic enclave requires one ethnic group to replace another. In a growing and diverse city, the histories of its inhabitants should be recognized in its entirety, rather than in fragmented and selective narratives.

The major difference between historic newcomers and their modern-day counterparts is their socio-economic statuses and the conditions in which they are living in. Previously, this area was for low-income immigrants, whereas now it has become an expensive place to live in. The median and mean shelter costs for rental householders sit over 500 dollars above the city’s average of around 1200 dollars per month. What is puzzling, is that an area with housing that is considered unaffordable, both for the renter households and the owner households, accounts for 68 percent and 32 percent of all households, respectively. How is it possible for people with low incomes to live in such unaffordable housing?

The fact is that a majority of this demographic is composed of international students supported by their parents/guarantors, which explains why low-income

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37 Chenier; “Sex, Intimacy, and Desire,” 31.
34 Almost two thirds of the rental property in the area is considered unaffordable. See “2016 Neighbourhood Census,” 19.
Figure 7. Comparative aerial photographs showing the site before 1960 and in 1965, during the New City Hall construction. Edward Street (north/top), Bay Street (east/right), Osgoode Hall (south/bottom), and University Avenue (west/left). Images courtesy of the City of Toronto Archives, cropped and arranged by the author.
Figure 8. Map of The Ward in 2018, mapping the commercial, residential, and institutional zones based off of building function. Image created by the author.
residents are able to afford expensive housing. It can also be extrapolated from the abnormally high number of non-permanent residents in the neighbourhood as well, which can account for people who are on study permits.\(^{37}\) This particular area is perfectly nestled between the three universities in downtown Toronto: OCAD University, Ryerson University, and the University of Toronto. This makes it the perfect distance for students of any of the three schools to live and walk to their campus. In some ways this transitory group is similar to their counterparts from the early twentieth century, who came to make money through the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway and send it back home. However, it is important to distinguish between wealthier privileged students who are able to afford exorbitant international fees, and the Chinese migrant workers who were forced to move here in order to earn money for their families.

The heavy flow of immigrants into this small portion of the city once created a condition that greatly affected the quality of the living conditions of the residents, as well as the infrastructure. Now the area is rapidly developing, with the construction of several high-rise condominiums over the last decade.\(^{38}\) The Ward has a rich history that includes so many ethnocultural groups, a trait that remains today in the neighbourhood’s residents. As John Lorinc writes, “the Ward’s deeply compelling stories, and its wider legacy, remain woven into the fabric of a global city now defined by the diversity it first encountered well over a century ago, within a few cramped blocks of the downtown.”\(^{39}\)

— Joshua P. Humphrey

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\(^{37}\) Ibid, 16.

\(^{38}\) See “2016 Neighbourhood Census,” 3.


Freeman, Victoria. “‘Toronto Has No History!’ Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, and Historical Memory in Canada’s Largest City.” Urban History Review 38, no. 2 (2010): 21-35.


Art throughout time has been contained within frames and often housed by the constraints of physical borders. The art of Francesco Maria Mazzola, better known as Parmigianino (1503-1540), is no exception to this principle. Despite potential physical constraints, Parmigianino’s works excel in their innovation, particularly in their frames. This paper will examine two works by Parmigianino in different media, in particular the Bardi Altarpiece (Fig. 1), and Design for an Altarpiece in its Frame (Fig. 2), which were completed at the beginning of his career. Through the reconsideration of Parmigianino’s use of parergon and ergon as discussed by Jacques Derrida, and of specific artistic elements, I will assert that these two works were meant to be displayed together. These works, I argue, shed light onto the artist’s creative process, his understanding of the nature of frames, and his thinking about centre and border of the images. I will demonstrate why the similarities and connections that these two works share are too intertwined to not inherently go together; as they can be seen as the harmonious amalgamation of ergon and parergon.

Parmigianino’s Design for an Altarpiece in its Frame should be examined first and from the bottom upwards. The artist conceived a large basamento and below the columns are plinth-like bases of different widths, which are extended outwards at both the top and bottom. The baluster-columns are of equal form but differ in decoration. They are squat for their bottom third, and then taper sharply. The left one is fluted at the bottom and then rises with a decorative spiral detail. The right-hand column has a similarly fluted bottom third, differentiated from the left by a band of basket weave decoration that sits atop the fluting. Above the basket weave decoration, there appears to be a detail, though it is difficult to assert of what. David Ekserdjian suggests that what appears to be fluting behind the columns may instead indicate that the columns are free standing. The capitals of both columns are indistinct, potentially either Corinthian or Composite order. Based on the perspective with which Parmigianino drew this decorative frame, the proposed altarpiece appears to be set back into the frame, with some type of ceiling on which the pediment sits. The pediment contains a plain cornice, topped by a tall, thin vase in the centre (placed directly under the pediment’s vertex), flanked by faint indications of volutes. Behind the vase is a large shaded tondo. In the frame is an image of the Virgin and Child surrounded by various figures, and what appears to be a half kneeling bishop, based on his headdress.

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Figure 1. Parmigianino, Bardi Altarpiece, ca. 1521-1522, Bardi (Parma) Francesco Bini (Sailko), 2011. From Wikimedia Commons.
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The altarpiece that I suggest would have been displayed within this ornamental frame is the Bardi Altarpiece. This painting depicts an enthroned Virgin and Child with St. Catherine and Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist set in an apse topped by a baluster-colonnettes. The Virgin and Child sit atop a gold and white cylindrical base adorned with a winged and garlanded cherub-head, with foliage at the Virgin’s feet. The Virgin is rendered frontally with a crimson dress and what appears to be a blue-green-grey mantle. The child Christ leans across her lap, placing the ring on St. Catherine’s extended hand as she turns her head to gaze at the viewer. St. Catherine wears a golden, red-damask patterned dress that trails on the floor. Her attributes, a broken wheel and a martyrdom palm, are placed in the foreground of the image. St. John the Evangelist is positioned behind St. Catherine holding a chalice filled with fire-spitting serpents in his right hand with his haloed eagle at his feet. He wears a combination of cardinal red and dark green. The crowded nature of the left side of the image stands in stark contrast to the right, in which St. John the Baptist stands in isolation. He is portrayed bare-chested, wrapped in a green-yellow mantle. Both saints are represented in profile. Parmigianino groups the figures in a rounded apse; on its entryway step rest Saint Catherine and Saint John the Baptist’s attributes.

At the time of the completion of the Bardi Altarpiece Parmigianino was a young artist. Records report that he was born in Parma on January 11, 1503 to the local painter Filippo Mazzola and his third wife, Donella Abbati. Several years prior to Parmigianino’s birth, his father had traveled to Venice to learn from Giovanni Bellini’s works. He later implemented the Bellinesque formal features in the family workshop that he shared with his brothers Michele and Pier Ilario and his first son Zaccaria. Filippo

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3 Ibid, 49.
Mazzola passed away due to the plague when Parmigianino was two years old leaving his brother, Pier Ilario, the guardian of his children and the owner of his workshop. In addition to his father and uncles, his eldest brother, Zaccaria, was a painter active in Umbria, while an uncle by marriage, Andrea Guidorossi, worked as a goldsmith in Rome. In addition, records inform us that another cousin by marriage, Girolamo Mazzola Bedoli, was also a painter. The latter executed an altarpiece in the Zangrandi chapel in the church of San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma, which Mary Vaccaro has suggested as the location of Parmigianino’s missing altarpiece as represented in his Design for an Altarpiece in its Frame. Parmigianino was active in many cities throughout the Italian peninsula, travelling to different localities due to both commissions and to political upheavals. By the early 1520s Parmigianino began working in San Giovanni Evangelista. Within the latter half of 1521 he fled Parma with Girolamo Bedoli for the safety of Viadana, in the territory belonging to the Duke of Mantua, to evade the French siege of the city. He returned to his native town on November 22, 1522 where he agreed to paint part of the cross vault with four figures above the niche in the Parma Cathedral. He remained in situ until 1524, when he left for Rome, presumably at the end of the summer after the plague in Rome had subsided. There are various accounts of his departure from Parma and his arrival in Rome. Some scholars have said that he moved with one of his uncles due to an invitation from the newly elected Pope Clement VII, while others have stated that he went to Rome on his own and was then subsequently introduced to the pope by the datary. In May 1527 Parmigianino fled to Bologna due to the Sack of Rome where he worked and had time to travel to other Italian cities such as Venice. He returned to Parma on May 10, 1531 to paint the apse and high altar of Santa Maria della Steccata. He remained in Parma until his imprisonment on December 19, 1539, where after he fled across the state border to Casalmaggiore. His time in Parma after his return was documented as being turbulent due to his reluctance and inability to complete the commission in Santa Maria della Steccata. The only part which Parmigianino completed over this long period of time was the vault. Parmigianino became ill on August 21, 1540 while in Casalmaggiore and passed away.

4 Ibid, 49.
5 Ekserdjian, Parmigianino, 2.
6 Ekserdjian, Parmigianino, 44.
8 Fadda, “Parmigianino in Rome,” 50.
9 Ibid, 50.
11 Fadda, “Parmigianino in Rome,” 52.
12 Ibid, 56.
Figure 2. Parmigianino, Design for an Altarpiece in its Frame, ca. 1520, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Bequest of Charles A. Loeser.
three days later.\textsuperscript{13} As an artist, Parmigianino was extraordinarily well-rounded. He was a remarkable painter of altarpieces, frescoes and portraits, as well as a marvelous creator of drawings, in addition to his exploration into the techniques of printmaking.

Parmigianino worked in Parma at San Giovanni Evangelista at the same time Correggio did. In his 1550 edition of his \textit{Lives}, Vasari states that Parmigianino was a student of Correggio, while in his 1568 edition of his biography of the artist, he omitted this assertion.\textsuperscript{14} Though the two prolific artists worked in the same city and for the same patron, it seems more plausible that Parmigianino was trained in his family’s workshop. When Parmigianino began his work on the first two chapels on the left side of the church of San Giovanni Evangelista, Correggio was working on the dome. A putto has been attributed to Parmigianino among those painted by Correggio, potentially indicating that Parmigianino worked in direct contact with Correggio as one of his many assistants.\textsuperscript{15} Although it is evident that Parmigianino was influenced by Correggio’s works, the \textit{Bardi Altarpiece} appears completely independent of Correggio’s style.\textsuperscript{16} Notwithstanding the fact that this altarpiece was completed in Viadana, Ekserdjian asserts that if Parmigianino was attempting to achieve the type of psychological engagement with the viewer that Correggio was known to be a master of, “he cannot be said to have succeeded.”\textsuperscript{17} I would argue instead that Sydney J. Freedberg is correct in stating that Parmigianino developed a “very evident individuality” despite his exposure to Correggio’s works.\textsuperscript{18} It is more plausible that Parmigianino intentionally took to a different painting approach, creating his own style, so as to distinguish himself from the already more locally renowned Correggio. Despite Correggio’s influence on Parmigianino at the beginning of his career, Parmigianino was able to develop his own painterly style, distinct from Correggio’s.

Parmigianino’s \textit{Bardi Altarpiece} should be considered in the context of Renaissance altarpiece conventions. Though the term ‘altarpiece’ is broad and can be interpreted in many ways, I will discuss it as “a structure containing a figurative image complex (painted or sculpted) which is directly associated with an altar.”\textsuperscript{19} An altarpiece is placed above the sacramental table of the altar. An intentional vertical axis and the aid of its architectural setting are crucial to the bond forged between the viewer and the image. The vertical axiality of the image commands the viewer to consider notions of heaven

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{12} Ibid, 57.
\bibitem{14} Mary Vaccaro, "Correggio and Parmigianino: On the Place of Rome in the Historiography of Sixteenth Century Parmese Drawing" in \textit{Artibus et Historiae} 30/59 (2009): 114.
\bibitem{15} Fadda, “Parmigianino in Rome,” 49.
\bibitem{16} Ekserdjian, \textit{Parmigianino}, 4.
\bibitem{17} Ibid, 44.
\bibitem{18} S. J. Freedberg, \textit{Parmigianino: His Works in Painting} (Cambridge 1950), 42.
\end{thebibliography}
and earth.20 Furthermore, the “functional core of the image”, the deity or his surrogate, is aided by the visual cues from the additional characters in the image as they observe the central figure(s).21 Inviting the viewer into the image and acting as a guide for an appropriate response, Leon Battista Alberti in his De Pictura (1435) recommends an individual to be painted into the image to directly address the viewer:22 Parmigianino does this in a twofold manner. He ensures that St. Catherine peeks out at the viewer; while St. John the Baptist’s typical attribute of the long slim cross extends from the interior realm of the image field to the beholder; and his left pointer finger, though not pointing at the viewer, acts as a signal to draw the eye in. The Renaissance scheme of perspective emphasizes the necessity for mediation between realms on each of the two sides of the picture plane: it follows that structurally the frame becomes the mediator.23 The frame becomes an integral component of the Renaissance altarpiece due to its ability to aid in meditation for the viewer.

Frames, though seldom given the attention they deserve, are essential to art. To examine frames and framing goes against the conventional art historical discussion as scholars’ general tendency is to focus on the painted subject within the frame, either completely neglecting the frame or rendering it insignificant or separate from the art it contains. A frame is a “marker of limits,” an essential parergon.24 A frame acts as an edge, a border, a boundary, and a limit to the artwork that it houses aiding in the appearance of completeness. In other words, once an image is framed, it is complete. The discussion of the notion of centres and margins of a work can be problematic, particularly when holding the belief that the central subject is more significant than the imagery of the border. In the case of frames, the relationship between boundaries are integral as the frame distinguishes the image as being separated from its surroundings. There is a clear demarcation of what is at the centre, i.e. ergon, and what is in the periphery, i.e. parergon. A frame and a work of art are not only physically connected, they are “mutually dependent;” a frame without an image and an image without a frame are both incomplete.25 The absence of a frame will “cause the artwork to exhibit incompleteness of purpose,” stripping the image of stability.26 A frame protects and stabilizes the image, not only physically, but also conceptually: it “makes a focus and invites reflection.”27 In this

21 Ibid, 144-48.
22 Ibid, 148.
23 Ibid, 148.
26 Ibid, 4.
27 Ibid, 7.
context, Louis Marin has discussed frames as “an indispensable parergon, a constitutive supplement. The frame renders the work autonomous in visible space; it puts representation into a state of exclusive presence; it faithfully defines the conditions of visual reception and of the contemplation of representation as such.” In addition to the physical aspects provided by frames to works of art, frames further serve an organizational purpose, as the logic of “(en)closure corresponds to the logistics of administration,” emphasizing the artworks’ strategic placement within a space and aids the viewer in demarcating where art ends and everyday life begins.

In his Parergon contribution, Derrida is particularly interested in the “framing” of philosophy as well as the concept of pleasure, which is applied to art and its viewing through the use of frames. As he stated:

The parergon is distinguished from both the ergon (the work) and the milieu; it is distinguished as a figure against a ground. But it is not distinguished in the same way as the work, which is also distinguished from the ground. The parergonal frame is distinguished from two grounds, but in relation to each of these, it disappears into the other. In relation to the work, which may function as its ground, it disappears into the wall and then, by degrees, into the general context.

Derrida speaks to the liminality of artwork and the necessity of the frame for completion of the piece. He argues that a work without a frame is difficult to interpret and view, and that “the strength of [the viewer’s] reading may depend, as with architecture, on point of view and a certain relation to the ideal limit – which constitutes the frame.” For Derrida, there is a prescribed order which should be followed to ensure that the intentionality of the artist becomes clear. Parergon and ergon work in tandem with one another. His concept of the frame revealing the truth of an object (or a philosophy) is applicable to all framed art. Parmigianino’s intended frame for the Bardi Altarpiece would have worked in tandem with the painting to reveal Parmigianino’s personal perception of how it should have been executed and contained: it reveals his truth of the image.

Jean-Pierre Warnier discusses containment as both physical and theoretical. Though his consideration is grounded mostly on the containment of physical things, he also confronts the topic of containing as a whole.33 He focuses on the idea of containing in which “various domains of material culture in which containers, inside and outside,  

*28* Ibid, 82.  
*29* Ibid, 134.  
*31* Ibid, 16.  
openings and surfaces, are all relevant.” I would argue that a frame is just that: an inside and an outside, an opening and a surface. The frame houses and contains the image that is inside: it separates the work of art from the surface on which it is displayed. Through the frame we are invited into the image, to engage with another realm delivered to us by an artist. The frame is not only present for its tectonic stability (since the painting is on panel and not canvas, a frame was needed for the wooden panels to tie together), but also for visual stability and continuity. Without a frame, the eye wanders: with a frame the gaze is contained to one particular field. As if the frame is the entrance to another world, we can accept the frame as its barrier, and enter immediately into the image.

Returning to Parmigianino’s works, we must acknowledge that there are various scholarly positions as to whether or not the drawn frame was intended for the *Bardi Altarpiece*. A number of Parmigianino’s drawings have been suggested for the scene of the Mystic Marriage, though as mentioned by Ekserdjian, the association between these two was first made by Arthur E. Popham. It is within this context that Ekserdjian posits that it is rather Mary Vaccaro’s suggestion that should be taken for the frame. She has argued that rather than being the drawn frame for the *Bardi Altarpiece*, it was a drawing of a frame for a work in the Zangrandi chapel in San Giovanni Evangelista due to a recently discovered document that connects the chapel’s decoration with one of Parmigianino’s uncles. Additionally, the altarpiece was later executed by Girolamo Mazzola Bedoli, Parmigianino’s cousin. Furthermore, according to Ekserdjian, the tondo in the drawing should be interpreted as a window, which he considers a perfect fit as there were windows, which have subsequently been boarded up. Though these suggestions seem plausible I would advance an alternative hypothesis. As Popham has stated, “though the differences between the composition of painting and drawings are considerable, the similarity between the standing figures on the right of each is so striking, that the connection can hardly be doubted.” Moreover, even Ekserdjian has written that it would be surprising to put such a “squarish format of the altarpiece” in San Giovanni Evangelista as it would “have been distinctly out of the ordinary” in that location. Further still, Parmigianino’s decorative frame was preliminary and completed in a hasty shorthand, demonstrating that it should be interpreted as a work in progress.

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34 Ibid, 187.
36 Ibid, 244.
37 Ibid, 44. As I was not able to read Vaccaro’s book myself (Béguin, Sylvie, Mario Di Giampaolo, and Mary Vaccaro. 2001. *Parmigianino: i disegni*. Torino: University of Allemandi), I relied on the accuracy of material presented by Ekserdjian.
38 Ibid, 4.
41 Ibid.
It should be expected to find a difference between Parmigianino’s initial drawings and final works since “throughout his career he seems to have been in the habit of trying out every variation of attitude in each figure, every combination of that figure, before reaching his final solution of a composition.” Vaccaro indicates that since the drawing includes additional figures, such as the bishop, it would not be for the Bardi Altarpiece, but rather for Niccolò Zangrandi’s chapel. Keeping in mind that we are dealing with a preparatory drawing, and due to Parmigianino’s focus on composition and order, it could be very likely that he simply removed the individual from the image, creating a more simplified version of the sketch in his painting. Among other reasons aside from composition, I want to focus on two formal details that have remained overlooked in the scholarship, which justify why I propose that the Bardi Altarpiece and the Design for an Altarpiece in its Frame were intended to be seen together.

As mentioned, a frame is not only a physical container: it is also the parergon that mediates the ergon. This mediation can include the rendering of similar imagery on the frame as we can see in the artwork, both literally and metaphorically. First, I want to draw attention to the vase in the pediment rendered in the drawing. The vase is a container: Containers are inherently feminine in their meaning. By this, it is meant that “the technological forms associated both with traditional labors of women, and with metaphors for female organs of storage, transformation, and supply,” render the vessel depicted in the image as a feminine container. It is not simple coincidence that the Bardi Altarpiece is of a Virgin and Child, but rather, the frame’s use of the feminine vessel acts as a metaphor for the Virgin Mary’s womb as the “container” for Christ, who, via her immaculate conception, gave her body for him to exist. The frame’s use of the vase metaphorically relates to the painted protagonists through the use of a container. This is not the only depiction on the frame that demonstrates the relationship to the painted altarpiece.

The second formal aspect I want to draw attention to is the columns depicted in the frame. Their squat shape that narrow at the top is an extraordinary and unusual rendering of a column. They seem somewhat out of shape for the rigid nature of the squarish frame. When one looks at the Bardi Altarpiece, however, we are immediately drawn into seeing a repetition of this exact shape in the balustrade colonnade at the top of the plain apse in which the figures are situated. The mimetic nature of this architectural feature used by Parmigianino leads me to insist that the frame depicted in his Design for an Altarpiece in its Frame fits exceptionally well with the altarpiece. Moreover, the use of the columns in this frame appears to visually represent the entrance of the image: through the repetition of similar columns on the frame and the painting, creating a fluid transition, as if we are (with our eyes) entering into the physical space of the image.

42 Popham, Drawings of Parmigianino, 21.
43 Ekserdjian, Parmigianino, 44.
only this, but the columns, due to their squat lower portion, also relate to the Virgin in a different way. Considering the physical construct of a woman in the Renaissance, what would have been sought after in a partner were wide, child-bearing hips. The columns are plump below the midsection, just as a woman should have been. Additionally, the curvature alluding to consummation and the advent of childbearing, we see a metaphor linking to the features in the painting. These two formal similarities are aspects that have been previously overlooked, although they undoubtedly point to a connection between these two works by Parmigianino.

For the purpose of our discussion and as a way of a closure, we will look at another altarpiece made by Parmigianino, in particular his San Rocco Altarpiece, which is the only remaining altarpiece in its original frame. In the case of Parmigianino’s other altarpieces, the frames are not preserved. The San Rocco Altarpiece has been linked with a drawing in which a very similar composition appears. In this drawing the altarpiece has a tall base, which demonstrates the function of raising the painting above the crucifix, candles, and other items on the altar table, and of providing a solid foundation for the wooden panels of the altarpiece. Above the base, the remainder of the frame comes to fruition, although unfortunately only the left-hand column is drawn. The drawn column is a fluted Ionic column, whereas the frame that is in situ is of the Composite order. In the drawing, there appears to be a plain cornice topped by a low triangular pediment. In contrast, the cornice of the San Rocco frame is rather elaborately decorated with circular shields above the capitals, and an intricately carved winged putto head in the centre flanked by swags on either side. There is not a proper pediment, and Ekserdjian has suggested, the upper section is a later addition. If this drawing is correctly attributed to the altarpiece, we can once again observe changes made from the drawing to the final execution of the work. As mentioned above, the drawn frame itself differs in several ways from the physical frame. Similarly, the image within the frame is also different. The drawn image demonstrates that the figures will be small and in the lower corners of the San Rocco painting, with either a figure in the centre of the top of the piece, or a dramatic rendering of landscape. In the finished altarpiece, Saint Roch is monumental and takes up over fifty percent of the painted field, with the donor depicted in the bottom right corner.

Another altarpiece frame that we need to examine is Parmigianino’s Design for an Altarpiece Frame in Modena, Galleria Estense. This drawing is meticulously finished

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45 Ekserdjian, Parmigianino, 243-44.
46 Ibid, 244.
47 Ibid.
48 Ekserdjian, “Correggio and Parmigianino: Art of the Sixteenth Century in Parma,” 220. The dating of this object has been debated by scholars as some, such as Fabrizio Tonelli, believe it was completed prior to Parmigianino’s departure to Rome in 1524 due to architectural vocabulary, while other scholars, such as Ekserdjian suggest the dating to be after 1530 when the artist had returned to working in Parma.
and exceedingly ambitious, especially in comparison to other altarpiece frame drawings. Similar to Parmigianino’s other frames, the basamento is tall, and only partially finished. The left plinth is blank, whereas the right one has a circular detail and what appears to be some foliage below it. Only the upper third of the left-hand pilaster is decorated: it contains what seems to be a basket weave decoration (similar to that which we have seen in his Design for an Altarpiece in its Frame, only this time vertically depicted as opposed to horizontally), which turns into an overlapping style of foliage. In contrast, the right pilaster is decorated in full, consisting of a candelabrum type decoration held up by a female figure. In the top half of the pilaster, curving vegetal forms are rendered. The pediments are topped by Ionic capitals, above which rests a uniform dentil frieze. The pediment is a fantastical depiction of a snake-filled chalice at the centre with snakes pouring out of the container and working their way down the centre of the frame, with an eagle perched on either side of the chalice. The eagle and a chalice with serpents are, as we have discussed with reference to the Bardi Altarpiece, attributes of St. John the Evangelist. On the interior plane of the drawing, between the pilasters and underneath the frieze, there is an inner frame which would have worked as an additional transition from the frame to the painting as if the outer frame was both ergon and parergon, that is, the inner frame, the parergon and the painting, the ergon. The elaborate detailing of St. John the Evangelist’s attributes leaves little doubt on the subject of the image that this frame would have housed, whether or not the frame was earnestly meant to have been carved. This is yet another example of an altarpiece frame whose decoration would have mirrored the art piece that it housed, demonstrating the likelihood of the imitative nature of Design for an Altarpiece Frame to have been intended for the Bardi Altarpiece.

Throughout this essay I have sought to assert that Parmigianino’s two works, the Bardi Altarpiece and the Design for an Altarpiece in its Frame, were made to be one. The drawn frame has mimetic qualities that are echoed in the altarpiece. Additionally, there are metaphorical and formal connections between the two images, which should not be ignored. The inherent connection of Jacques Derrida’s parergon and ergon works in harmony with Jean-Pierre Warnier’s theory of containment to provide a theoretical context for rethinking framing and containing. In addition to the analysis of these two works, their symbolic and physical relations to one another, and the ways in which they, as a pair, would have interacted with the viewer/worshipper, I strove to provide an alternative trajectory than that given by other scholars arguing that the drawn frame was deliberately made for the painting created in Viadana between 1521 and 1522, and now kept in Bardi. These two works by Parmigianino inherently contain pieces of one another in their own parts and come together to form a holistic unity of centre and border, or ergon and parergon.

— Tatiana Thoennes

49 Ekserdjian, Parmigianino, 244.
50 Ibid, 244.
Bibliography


Nicola Infantino, *Living*, 2019, Oil on Canvas, 30’ x 40’.
Olivia Di Gregorio, *Untitled*, 2017, Oil on panel, 12’x16’.
The wind holds a key place in the history of artistic and literary representation as both an atmospheric force and a complex metaphor. Landscapes have been shaped by the power of wind, and historic naval battles fought in the name of empire have been won or lost due to its whims. We feel, rather than see, wind — it connects us to our environment through touch, smell, and shared invisible space. In some cultures, wind has even come to represent divine beings. A connection between Godly wind and sea travel was established in the English cultural narrative as early as 1066, when William the Conqueror prayed for a favorable wind to cross the English Channel and attack the natives at Hastings. Needless to say, God answered his prayers and he came to rule England. The Protestant Wind was similarly said to have been sent by God to protect the English from the Catholic Spanish Armada during the summer of 1588. The National Maritime Museum’s Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I is one of the better-known representations of the Protestant Wind; the painting commemorates the English victory through the portrayal of three distinct climates and temporal periods.

In the Armada Portrait, a curious atmospheric divide between the calm space of the Queen and the chaotic space of the Armada events reveals the artist’s desire to represent her as a strong, formidable, and almost king-like, queen. Crashing waters and sailing ships are present in the open windows depicted in the painting’s background, yet the Queen appears unaffected by these same weather conditions. The effects of the invisible force of the wind are discernable in the dramatic seascape to the right of the Queen. The wind became of central concern in an age of exploration; Elizabethan sailors were especially aware of the effects and dangers of wind at sea, and even the most experienced seafarers could be thrown off-course due to the unruly elements. The power of wind is most visible on the sea because of the way it controls water, forcing the liquid to move into ripples and waves, much like the way air moves invisibly around us. Both air and water are fluid forces of nature that obey the same laws of

2 Wind has been represented by pagan gods, the Greek Aeolian specifically, and the Christian God.
physics, but air, in the form of wind, is stronger and faster. 6 Those who ventured north in search of the Northwest passage were especially affected and reports of the environment from these voyages verge on mystical, the topography described as a blurred void where ice, sea, and air mingle together. 7 Though sea travel to the Arctic was more extreme than the voyages taken around the British Isles, sailors’ descriptions of the blurred nature of seascapes helps paint a view of how dangerous yet monotonous sea travel was in the 16th century.

In the Elizabethan age, the invisible nature and quality of wind also resulted in its descriptive use as a religious metaphor. Although air is an invisible force, its existence is demonstrated, as it is in the Armada Portrait, by its perceived impact on the physical world: ripples move across an otherwise still lake, trees sway in the wind, and various atmospheric effects allow us to ‘see’ air in the form of wind. Similarly, God can be ‘seen’ indirectly through miraculous acts and is sometimes, fittingly, represented as wind. Jan DeBlieu, author of Wind: How the Flow of Air Has Shaped Life, Myth, and the Land, writes: “God is not merely seated in a remote heaven, but [is] whirling all around us,”8 encouraging readers to “[t]hink of the wind as God and God the wind. Think of the fluid element in which we live, on which we depend, as a divine current that envelops us, swirls through us, and joins us to a great, organic, barely fathomable whole.”9 Air is required for life, for breathing, just as God is necessary if one intends to lead a respectable Christian life. In the Elizabethan era, wind was understood as both a physical force and as a metaphor for God, and the idea of the Protestant Wind demonstrates just how intertwined the two concepts were at the time.

There is ample evidence of the connection between God, wind, and the sea in the Bible. The Hebrew word ruwach, which is found in both the Old and New Testament, can mean breath, spirit, or wind, and was used frequently.10 In Genesis, God breathed life and intelligence into Adam and allowed Moses to harness wind to part the Red Sea. DeBlieu reminds us of the variable weather in the biblical Holy Land and how to the authors of the Old Testament used it to determine the times of feasting or starvation, fluctuations that are compared to the moods of a “nurturing yet jealous and vengeful God.”11 The many narratives that involve boats and seafaring in the Bible are further evidence of this; Jonah learns that God is present even on the empty sea, while Jesus amazes his disciples by calming storms and helping them catch fish.12 Thus, it seems

6 Ibid, 147.
8 DeBlieu, 20.
9 Ibid, 13.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
almost natural for a naval battle such as the Armada to be associated with God's presence.

The 1588 events of the Spanish Armada consisted of multiple small-scale raids rather than large battles between the Spanish Catholics and English Protestants. King Phillip II of Spain desperately wanted to restore Catholicism in England and return the country to the state it was in during the reign of Queen Mary I. The attack ended when Spanish ships were wrecked in a “greate tempest” on the coast of Ireland, an event that the English believed was sanctioned by a God who supported the Protestant, rather than the Catholic, agenda. In 16th century England, God's will could seemingly be discerned from how the country faired in battle. Passages written by John Hawkins, an English naval commander, and Howard of Effingham, the Lord High Admiral, associate victory and protection from the elements with God's will and the 'correctness' of one's faith. John Hawkins wrote of the Spanish moving northward in a letter to Francis Walsingham, principal secretary to the Queen, stating: “The spaniards take their course for Schotland, my Lo[rd] [High Admiral Charles Howard of Effingham] dothe follow them. I doubt not w[ith] gods favour, but we shall impeach ther landing…” Luckily, or perhaps by the will of God, the Lord High Admiral was hit by a wind that impeded him from following the Spanish to their demise. The Lord High Admiral certainly equated the ‘Southerly wynde’ with God's blessing of the English fleet, writing: “The Southerly wynde That brought us bak fro[m] The[rm] out God blessed us w[ith] Torny[n]g us bak…”. For the English, their escape from the storm and ultimate victory was seen as a sign of God's support for Protestantism.

Despite the failed attempt in 1588 to return England to Catholicism, King Philip II sent more ships in 1596 and 1597, and once again encountered hostile weather. During the war, England's sea power grew considerably, though not enough to pose a real threat to Spain. Historians agree that “in terms of population, economy and military power, England was dwarfed by the might” of Spain. However, this fact did not stop the English from celebrating the earlier victory profusely or from touting their imperial desires through carefully constructed artworks, which sought to present Queen

13 "A Spanish Captian's Account of the Armada," Don Lewes De Cordua to Francis Walsingham, 1588, The National Archives of the United Kingdom.
15 The letters in [ ] are from The National Archives of the United Kingdom. The { } and italics are mine. "Lord Howard of Effingham, Admiral of the English Fleet, Sent This Report to Francis Walsingham 21 July, 1588," Charles Howard to Francis Walsingham, 1588, The National Archives of the United Kingdom.
Elizabeth and her rule as favorably as possible. The iconography of the royal portraits, and in particular those from the last years of Elizabeth’s reign, make clear her plan to expand the British empire and her country’s strength for expelling the Spanish.

There are, in fact, three Armada portraits: one at Woburn Abbey, one at the National Portrait Gallery, and the version at the National Maritime Museum, which is the subject of this paper. In the National Maritime Museum’s version, the seascapes of the Armada events in the windows were repainted by a Dutch-trained artist working in England in 1707 and are the most noticeable difference between the National Maritime Museum’s version of the scene and the others. X-rays of the portrait reveal that it once included the original seascapes found in the Woburn Abbey version, in which the ships are larger and more bulbous and the color scheme is brighter.18 The Armada portraits were produced during the latter part of Elizabeth’s reign, when it was obvious that the ageing Queen would never marry or have children. Consequently, the images from this period proclaim her virginity and timeless image. In them, and in many portraits from the latter part of her reign, she wears a brilliant red wig and heavy make-up to conceal her age. She also wears a huge pear-shaped pearl that hangs at her waist, reminding the viewer of her chastity. This large pearl, along with the pearls strung around her neck and placed in her hair, allude to the sea and England’s new naval and colonial power.19 The portrait shows Elizabeth at the high point of her reign: victorious over the Spanish she is the “miraculous savior of the country”20 and “aspiring empress of the world.”21 Through her Protestant faith, and consequently the will of God, England had been saved.

The National Maritime Museum’s Armada Portrait (Figure 1) is thought to have been commissioned by Sir Francis Drake in 1588, as it was held in his family’s collection until 1777. Drake, an experienced seaman, was vice admiral during the Armada battles and was instrumental in sending fireships into the Spanish Armada and disrupting their formation. The resulting confusion was pivotal for the English and is memorialized in the left window of the Armada Portrait. The painting shows a triumphant Queen seated in her splendor while two separate moments from the Armada play out behind her. She wears a sumptuous dress of silver and black silk that reflects light, much like her perfectly pale complexion, and her dress and hair are decorated with bows and pearls. Her right hand rests on a globe, covering North America, as she gazes serenely out of the scene, her eyes meeting the viewer.

British artists during Elizabeth’s reign often ordered their paintings like heraldic shields instead of attempting to display naturalism. Thus, Elizabeth appears flat, her body

18 David Starkey and Susan Doran, Elizabeth: The Exhibition at the National Maritime Museum (London: Chatto & Windus in association with the National Maritime Museum, 2003), 120.
19 Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn, Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture, c. 1540-1660 (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), 44.
21 Gent and Llewellyn, 14.
Figure 1. Unknown/British School, *Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I*, 1588, oil on oak panel, 44” × 50”, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Figure 2. Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger or Isaac Oliver, *Rainbow Portrait*, 1600-1602, oil on canvas, 50” × 39”, in the collection of the Marquess of Salisbury, on display at Hatfield House.
stiff, while the items around her are represented from several angles. The furniture in the National Maritime Museum’s Armada Portrait — two tables and an ornate chair — are represented without strict illusionism in mind and are painted on multiple visual planes.\textsuperscript{22} The chair features a naked mermaid, seen in profile, while the royal crown sits on a table to the left of Elizabeth. It is the windows that add depth to the scene, framed by dark green curtains that part to reveal the events leading to the English defeat of the Armada. The repainted windows in the Armada Portrait depict the English sending fireships into the Spanish formation on the left and the defeat of the Spanish fleet off the coast of Ireland on the right.

Though the windows represented are fully open to the elements, the Queen is unaware of the wind and atmospheric effects present in the seascapes within them; she sits oblivious to the destruction behind her. It appears the space in the windows and the space inhabited by the Queen are separate from each other, although they are not visually distinguished from each other within the painting itself. Similarly, there are no signs of wind swirling around Elizabeth, as not a hair or pearl is out of place. It is possible that the Queen is unaffected by the elements due to the fantastical and indiscriminate setting of the painting, where non-linear events occur at once, but her steadfastness against the wind could also support the idea of her as a strong, victorious monarch that is comparable to any king.

Negative commentary about the Queen because of her gender, as well as the patriarchal belief that women are weaker and less intelligent than men, are subdued in the National Maritime Museum Armada Portrait. Not only can the wind not touch her, Elizabeth also exudes masculine strength. The bare-chested mermaid in the right corner acts as a foil to this by reminding the viewer that the Queen is not a typical woman according to the standards of the time. She covers her body in heavy clothing and jewels that help to convey her virginal, untouched, status. She is the opposite of a flighty, changeable wind, one that could be associated with the 16th century perceptions of female nature. By demonstrating her mastery over the weather, Elizabeth has taken the place of God — she was, after all, head of the Anglican church — as she is unaffected by the elements, further demonstrating her godly power over the world by resting her hand on the globe.

The Armada Portrait was not the only instance where Elizabeth’s theoretical authority over the weather is made apparent. In the Rainbow Portrait (Figure 2), she holds a rainbow in her hand, and in the Ditchley Portrait (Figure 3) she faces away from a dark storm and turns to the light.\textsuperscript{23} Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses by Hans Eworth (Figure 4), however, comes closest to the Armada Portrait in the way that it depicts the Queen in control of the wind. In the painting, Elizabeth takes the place of Paris at the moment when he chose the most beautiful goddess between Juno, Venus, and Minerva, 

\textsuperscript{22} Gent and Llewellyn, Renaissance Bodies, 17.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 15.
Figure 3. Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, The Ditchley Portrait, circa 1592, oil on canvas, 95” × 60”, National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 4. Hans Eworth, Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses, 1569, oil on panel, 25 × 33”, Queen’s Drawing Room, Windsor Castle.
resulting in the Trojan War. In Eworth’s version, the Queen stands on a platform that places her higher than the goddesses who, in turn, flee from her, suggesting Elizabeth’s beauty, intellect, and might is greater than theirs.24 Elizabeth stands against a brick archway wearing a heavy and stiff dress and holding a golden globe, a symbol of her imperial goals, in place of the iconic apple. By comparison, the goddesses are backed by a vast, lush landscape, their divinity emphasized by their complete nudity or by dresses made of thin, diaphanous fabric. Like the half-naked mermaid in the Armada Portrait, they serve as a contrast to the Queen’s virginal nature and fixed strength.

Elizabeth’s space within Eworth’s painting is separate from that of the goddesses, though not formally so. There is no clear barrier between them, yet the air around the two types of women is completely different. It is as if the Queen is capable of commanding the wind around her, giving Elizabeth a God-like status that overshadows the goddesses. In Eworth’s painting it is clear that Christianity, and thus Elizabeth’s divine right as the English monarch, reigns victorious over the pagan goddesses of the past. The Queen’s ability to command the atmosphere around her is carried over into the later Armada Portrait, in which she sits in front of the windows but does not feel the moving vapors, airs, and waters from the legendary Protestant Wind behind her.25 She is separated from the events transpiring behind her by a sort of shoreline, not one that connects land and sea, but one that marks a boundary between two realms: her space and the naval events of the Armada.

A more direct connection between God and the Protestant Wind can be found in a Netherlandish commemorative medal from 1588, the year of the Armada. The medal was likely made in the Dutch Republic, which converted to Protestantism about a decade before Spain sailed to England and which aided England during the Armada events. The obverse (Figure 5) of the medal shows the engagement of the fleets on rippling water. The Latin inscription on the medal’s edge reads “He blew and they were scattered,” alluding to the powerful wind sent by God that destroyed the Spanish. On the reverse (Figure 6), a lone church is situated on a rock amongst rough waters.26 Wind from the heavens — the Protestant Wind made visible — blows down to the church, which withstands the violent waves. The inscription on this side reads “I [England] am assailed not injured,” which refers to the country’s, and to a lesser extent Elizabeth’s, strength. Outside of England, the idea that Queen Elizabeth’s divine nature brought on the storm is played down and agency is given to the Protestant God Himself. The Protestant Wind, however, remained a key feature in the events of the Armada.

The idea of the Protestant Wind was revived a century after the Armada,

24 On the original frame of the Eworth painting is written “Pallas was keen of brain, Juno was queen of might, / The rosy face of Venus was in beauty shining bright, / Elizabeth then came, And, overwhelmed, Queen Juno took flight: / Pallas was silenced: Venus blushed for shame.”
26 Beneath the main scene is the coat of arms of Maurice of Orange.
Figure 5. Obverse, Medal commemorating the Defeat of the Spanish Armada, 1588, Netherlands, copper silvered alloy, 51 mm, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Figure 6. Reverse, Medal Commemorating the Defeat of the Spanish Armada, 1588, Netherlands, copper silvered alloy, 51 mm, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.
when once again Catholicism threatened England. In 1688, King James II was removed from the throne by William of Orange for his desire to reinstate Catholicism throughout the kingdom. Wind patterns were observed carefully for weeks as William prepared to sail from the Netherlands to England, reminding the British of the tense and windy summer of 1588. The easterly wind, the one that would aid William, was deemed the Protestant Wind and the westerly, the Popish Wind. Ballads announcing the return of the Protestant Wind were sung until the threat was diminished.

The Armada victory itself also became a part of a British Protestant mythology. It was celebrated by the country in November of 1588 with a national thanksgiving. The Queen herself was to go to “Westminster to gyve publyck thankes to god for his miraculous goodnes in overthrowing” the Spanish, the “mortall ennemyes” of the English. This event was celebrated with fervor; despite the uncertainty that the Spanish had truly been defeated, and became a recurring celebration of England’s military history. The victory was also immortalized in luxurious tapestries of the event. Commissioned by Lord High Admiral Howard and sold to the Crown during James I’s rule, they hung in the House of Lords until the building burned down in the 19th century. Interestingly, the tapestries were recreated in paint in 2007 from prints, making clear the importance of Elizabeth’s victory even in the present era.

Queen Elizabeth takes on the role of God in the National Maritime Museum’s Armada Portrait, and it is through her Protestant faith and otherworldly ability that she harnesses the wind and England is saved. Much has been written on the material objects within the painting — the globe, crown, and mermaid in particular — but the presence of wind and three different climates and temporalities has been largely overlooked. Studying the Armada Portrait’s atmospheric effects, or lack thereof, reveals how the sea was regarded during the Elizabethan era, as well as the measures taken to emphasize Queen Elizabeth’s nature as strong and formidable. It also reveals the belief the English had in the invisible forces of the world, specifically wind. These forces were thought to be controlled by God, who ultimately favored England for the country’s Protestant alliances. Unseen in the painting, but undeniably present, the Protestant Wind enhances both the image of Queen Elizabeth and her country.

— Erin Riddiford

29 Marotti and May, “Two Lost Ballads of the Armada Thanksgiving Celebration [with Texts and Illustration],” 38.
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Within the treasury of the Basilica di San Giovanni Battista, in Monza, Northern Italy, one object stands out: a golden statue of a hen, surrounded by her seven chicks, all placidly pecking grain from a large disk (figure 1). According to local tradition, the hen and her brood were discovered in the thirteenth century within the sarcophagus of Queen Theodelinda (c. 570-628 C.E.), when her remains were transferred from their original resting place in the chapel of her sixth-century palace to Monza’s newly-built basilica.

Among the remnants of medieval treasuries that have managed to survive to the present day, the hen is undoubtedly an unusual piece. Yet it is often described as unique, “un unicum assoluto” without any point of comparison—an assertion that is patently untrue. The image of a hen and chicks can be traced through diverse media, from art objects to theological tracts, dating from the late Antique to the early Modern era. These repeated applications of analogous figurative formulae also provide conclusions as to the most likely intended significance of Monza’s sculpture. Furthermore, because there are no indications beyond local legend that the hen came into contact with the living Theodelinda, we are left with the question of how this belief emerged. An exploration of the object’s afterlife exposes potential sources for the sculpture’s centuries-old associations with the queen and her tomb.

In terms of physical composition, the hen appears to have a great deal in common with some of the medieval era’s most famous treasures. Unfortunately, discrepancies in available reports make decisive conclusions on its material nature difficult. The size of a small modern chicken, the golden hen is made of gilded silver foil supported on a wooden core. Most of the body was shaped using repoussé out of a single sheet of silver. Delicate chasing created the surface texture of the feathers, while circular punches are used to suggest the finer feathers of the head. The legs were made

2 Augusto Merati, Il Tesoro del duomo di Monza (Monza: Comune di Monza, 1963), 36.
3 Vergani, Museum and Treasury, 15.
Figure 1. Statue of a Hen and Chicks, gilded silver and gems. Hen is 40 cm long, 27 cm high; chicks are roughly 7 cm high, Museo del Duomo, Monza. Image from The Iron Crown and Imperial Europe II: In Search of the Original Artifact Part I, 186.
separately and welded to the body, as was the double crest. The hen’s eyes are red gemstones, reported in different sources as either rubies or garnets. The stone of the left eye is a somewhat crude intaglio of an armoured warrior, the execution of which bears close resemblance to Alexandria-based glass carving from the third and fourth centuries. A cache of stones cut using the same technique was uncovered at Aquileia, increasing the likelihood of late Antique eastern-Mediterranean provenance for the intaglio.

The chicks have sapphires for eyes, and the texture of their feathers is suggested using half-moon punches. Their bodies are formed using a thicker layer of silver than that of the hen, and it has been argued that the increased thickness is because the bodies were created via casting. Others have claimed that the chicks were made with the same repoussé technique as the hen, but that their smaller size prevented the artisan from achieving consistent finesse. Supporting the later conclusion are unconfirmed reports of incisions of varying lengths found in backs of each chick, allowing access to the inside. Another unverified source describes the chicks as having different head positions, which would preclude the use of a single mould. Most often, whether the chicks are described as made in repoussé or out of casts appears to depend on whether an author

7 Conti, Il Tesoro, 48.
9 Conti, Il Tesoro, 48.
wishes to assign the hen and her chicks the same or separate dates.

Each bird appears to have undergone repairs at least once since its creation. The tails of the chicks have been especially prone to cracking and have been reinforced with silver foil.\(^\text{12}\) The supporting disk is of relatively recent origin, and differences in their representation point to rearrangements of the chicks over the centuries. Most of the documented restoration has been done to the hen: the feathers of the tail, the right wing, and the tips of the feet all having suffered breakages and repeated repair.\(^\text{13}\) The greater damage could be the result of the hen being earlier in date than her offspring, but could equally be explained by her larger size and greater delicacy of construction. The original design of the hen’s legs was structurally insufficient to support the body’s weight over time, and the legs have thus suffered considerable damage. At some point, a grey adhesive was used to strengthen the left leg around the first joint. A later restoration effort re-enforced the abdomen with a smooth sheet of silver extending from the same leg. The original silver underside of the hen’s tail has been replaced by a wooden cylinder.\(^\text{14}\)

Theories concerning the original significance of the sculpture range from the Seven Churches of Asia of the Book of Revelation to purely decorative intentions with no meaning beyond visual whimsy.\(^\text{15}\) Among the many proposed possibilities, there are three strains of thought most commonly discussed. The first is a reiteration of the local tradition that the hen represents either Theodelinda or the Lombard kingdom, and the chicks are subsequently the seven dukes or the provinces that they ruled.\(^\text{16}\) The second connects the sculpture to unverified pre-Christian practices that coexisted with early Lombard Christianity. In this vein, the hen is presented as either a fertility object related to Theodelinda’s second wedding or as a lavish, enduring variation on the Germanic practice of placing chickens in graves.\(^\text{17}\)

14 Ibid.
Before examining the third variety of hypothesis, let us establish some facts about the hen and chicks as an image. First of all, the form has significance. One of the few things about the hen of which we can be sure is that at some point, someone desired a golden chicken and chicks enough to warrant its creation. There is no question that they had a reason, only whether said reason is still discernable to us today.

Secondly, the significance of the hen is deeper than a flight of visual whimsy. The statue must have had value greater than that of the raw materials to survive, at least until it became a part of the narrative of Theodelinda. Although said value could have been limited to a token of royal patronage, once it entered the context of a church, the hen could not have escaped sacred associations.

Thus thirdly, the original significance of the sculpture is religious, at least in part. Even if it were created in a purely secular setting in which the shape of a chicken held no religious significance, gold and silver had other worldly as well as material meaning in the Middle Ages. Once an image was wrought in gold, the meaning of the fabric was inexorably intertwined with the form. And as soon as the hen entered the environment of the church treasury, the golden sculpture would have immediately gained spiritual significance of its own.

Fourth and finally, a hen is not a rooster. In Christian contexts the rooster is commonly used as a reference to Saint Peter, and it is tempting to interpret a hen in a church as a female incarnation of the same. However, unless depicted together, the iconographic significance of hen and rooster should not be considered related within Western medieval art. Chickens, even more than other animals, were defined by their gender to a level that surpasses other species. For example, hens and roosters were so quintessentially male and female that any violation of their sexual roles has often been viewed with horror. In traditions found from Germany to Persia, a hen that crows like a rooster is a terrible omen and must be killed immediately. Likewise, a number of roosters were tried in medieval European courts of law and condemned to death for laying eggs.

With these facts in mind, let us turn to the third set of theories as to the original significance of Monza’s hen. The only interpretations that are based in theological or art historical precedent, this group sets aside legendary ties to Theodelinda and identifies the hen and chicks as a representation of Christ and/or the Church protecting the faithful.

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20 Ibid., 67
The analogy has biblical precedents. Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34 present an identical passage in which Christ refers to himself as a mother hen sent to gather the chicks of Jerusalem: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.”

Furthermore, throughout early and medieval Christian theology, there are frequent analogical applications of a hen sheltering her young. During a period in which animals often played large roles in Christian symbolism, hens and chicks were often used as an illustration of Christ and/or the Church, providing refuge to any and all who would accept it, in exactly the way proposed for Monza’s sculpture. Examples appear most often in the context of typology: exegesis done concerning the relationship between the Old Testament to the New. The Old Testament frequently equates birds with divine protection. Although chickens are never specified, this did not prevent Christian theologians from finding links with Matthew 23:37/Luke 13:34.

The earliest example appears in the work of third-century theologian Saint Hippolytus, who drew parallels between the protective wings of a mother hen, the crucified Christ, and Malachi 4:2. Saint Jerome similarly compared Christ’s specific reference to himself as a hen, the arms of the cross, and wings from Deuteronomy. The fourth-century bishop Saint Hilary of Poitiers created an analogy between a hen nurturing her young and the divine mercy offered by Christ, offering through his body both “the warmth of immortal life and leading them to fly in a manner of rebirth.”

Hilary of Poitiers also argued in favour of comparing an ordinary hen to Christ, citing how it was out of love for his children that God humbled himself by becoming human. Saint Augustine (354 to 430 C.E.), who repeatedly refers to God gathering the nations as a hen gathers her chicks, makes a similar same argument: “She [the hen] changes altogether from love for her chickens: she weakens herself because they are weak. Thus since we were weak, the Wisdom of God made Itself weak, when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us, that we might hope under His wings.”


22 New International Version.
23 Lipinski, “Der Theodelinden-Schatz im Dom zu Monza,” 162.
27 Ibid.
defensive tone continues as he reminds his audience that the origins of the metaphor come from the very highest authority: “For the comparison of the hen to the very Wisdom of God is not without ground; for Christ Himself, our Lord and Saviour, speaks of Himself as likened to a hen; ‘how often would I have gathered your children,’ etc. Matthew 23:37.” It thus appears that though the mother hen was an established analogy for God’s love in theological discourse, the comparison of God with a creature so intrinsically ordinary and female was not without controversy.

The mother hen also appears in early texts as akin to the Church in her role of nurturing and protecting the faithful. In the Incomplete Commentary on Matthew, a text once believed to have been written by John Chrysostom (349-407 C.E.), but now dated to the fifth century, the unknown author extends the metaphor beyond God/Christ to make a lengthy comparison with the institution of the Church:

For just as the chicks of a hen seek their food and wander through various places and are gathered back to her by her motherly voice, and again they are likewise scattered as the feed and again are gathered by her motherly voice, so also the people of God pursue their carnal pleasure and worldly conscience and wander through various errors. Their mother, the church, hastens through the priests to gather them back and allure them, now with rebukes, now with encouragements, as with some voices. And just as a hen that has chicks does not cease to call them, so that with her diligent voice she upbraidsthe way the chicks wander off, so also the priests ought not to cease teaching so that by the zeal and diligence of their teachings they can correct the negligence of their wandering people. And just as a hen that has chicks not only warms her own but also loves the offspring of each bird that has been shut out from her as if they were her own, so also the church is eager to call not only her own Christians, but whether Gentiles or Jews, if they have been placed under her care, she makes all alive with the heat of her faith and begets them in baptism and nurtures them in the world and loves them with a mother’s love.

The examples cited here are far from exhaustive. The analogical hen, whether compared to God, the Church, or both simultaneously, is repeated sporadically throughout the writings of other major late Antique and early Medieval authors, including the Roman governor and Milanese Bishop Saint Ambrose, Spanish bishops Gregory of Elvira and Justus of Urgell, the Roman statesman Cassiodorus, Pope Gregory the Great (540-604), Archbishop Isidore of Seville, the English Benedictine Saint Bede, and Rabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Mainz.

30 Ibid.
32 Mezoughi, “Gallina significant sanctam ecclesiam,” 62.
The theological precedent is thus without question, yet literary evidence alone is insufficient. Though moral objections to visual images passed in and out of style over the centuries, the selection of religious imagery remained highly conservative. Monza’s hen cannot be understood as the result of a medieval patron or artist sifting through biblical verses or other religious text in search of an original concept—something so contrary to our understanding of medieval sensibilities must be rejected out of hand.

The visual evidence is admittedly limited, to the point that some have claimed that a hen protecting chicks never appears in early Christian art at all. However, there is a history of hens in Christian art that gives a mother hen as the Church the necessary historical pedigree.

For example, there are cursory reports of hens with chicks appearing among other motifs in floor mosaics from early Christian churches, including those from Shellal in Palestine, Qabr Hiram in Lebanon, Sabratha in Libya, Mopsuestia in Cilicia, and Teurnia in Carinthia. These have been interpreted as representations of the Church as a protective mother figure offering shelter to its members—visual parallels to the literary analogies discussed above.

Two pavements including hens that have received more attention come from Jewish sites contemporaneous with the early churches. In the synagogue of Ma’on at Nirim, Israel, a caged bird is juxtaposed with a hen and single egg in a basket. The latter’s presence has been argued as emphasizing the caged bird’s role as an allegory of the Earth as blessed by God. At another synagogue at Beth Alpha, Israel, a sixth-century floor mosaic includes a panel depicting a hen and four chicks. Both versions, a hen with chicks and a hen with eggs, appear to have been adapted from the standard “rural landscape” repertory of Roman floor mosaics. There is also evidence that the hen may have held spiritual significance in non-Abrahamic faiths: the late fourth or early fifth century Carthaginian dominus Julius mosaic includes what is believed to an anthropomorphic Heath figure with a hen and chicks and a bird in a cage at her feet.

There are also at least two surviving pieces of late Antique terracotta with the image of a hen and her chicks. The first is a fourth-century lamp found at Carthage, decorated with six chicks surrounding a central hen. It is believed to be from a Christian context due to parallels with contemporary lamps depicting the heads of apostles.

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33 Talbot Rice, “Opere d’arte paleocristiane ed altomedieval,” 33
37 Metzger, “Note sur le motif de ‘la poule et des poussins’,” 245.
around the Chi Rho.\textsuperscript{40} The second, a medallion uncovered at Orange, has a hen with three chicks and the inscription MIHI ET M(eis)/FELICI/TER bisected by a palm.\textsuperscript{41} It too is thought to be Christian, as \textit{feliciter} is found at the end of two epitaphs from a Christian cemetery at Mayence and the palm frond is often included with early Christian inscriptions.\textsuperscript{42}

A more elaborate version of the iconographical formula of hen and chicks has a protective mother hen shielding her chicks from a predator; usually a fox or a bird of prey.\textsuperscript{43} In literary sources, the fox is an often-used analogy for the heretic or some other diabolical influence—for example, in Gregory the Great’s commentary on the Song of Songs 2:15.\textsuperscript{44} As for cases where it is a hawk menacing the chicks, we find an exact description in Augustine’s \textit{Enarrationes in Psalmodia}, where he writes: “if you do not protect me, I who am a chick, the kite will carry me off,”\textsuperscript{45} as well as in Rabanus Maurus.\textsuperscript{46}

One of the early Christian floor mosaics, found at Qabr Hiram, Lebanon, belongs to this expanded type. A protective hen is depicted with her chicks feeding on grain in one roundel, while in another roundel across from a third featuring a peasant woman, a fox escapes with a rooster in his jaws.\textsuperscript{47}

However, examples appear most often in manuscript miniatures from somewhat later dates than the pavements and terracotta shards. The earliest rendition appears in the first bible of Charles the Bald (c. 846-51). At the top left of the ninth page of canon tables, a dog prowls menacingly towards a hen as she gathers her chicks into a basket. In the opposite corner, a wolf is depicted in the act of leaping on a goat that has strayed too far from the flock.\textsuperscript{48}

Another miniature is from an eleventh-century manuscript of Oppian of Apamea’s \textit{Cynegetica}, now at the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice. Two hens and their chicks appear at the top of a page describing maternal love among animals, one shielding her young beneath her wings from the bird of prey swooping down on the second, who remains oblivious.\textsuperscript{49} Later Christian manuscripts feature the formula in reduced forms. For example, in an illustration from a twelfth-century rendition of the legend of Saint Boniface a fox snatches away one of a trio of chickens, while above cannon tables in a

\begin{itemize}
  \item Hubert, “La poule aux poussins d’or,” 290.
  \item Mezoughi, “Gallina significant sanctam ecclesiam,” 53.
  \item Augustine, “Enarrationes in Psalmodia I-LXXIX,” 757.
  \item Rabanus Maurus, “Commentariorum In Matthaeeum libri octo,” in \textit{Beati Rabani Mauri I}, 1075.
  \item Grabar, “Recherches sur les sources juives,” 124.
  \item Mezoughi, “Gallina significant sanctam ecclesiam,” 55.
  \item Hubert, “La poule aux poussins d’or,” 292.
\end{itemize}
Romanesque bible another fox is seen sneaking up on a rooster.\textsuperscript{50}

What appear to be the most recent examples are found in two late fifteenth-century copies of the Tanakh from the Iberian Peninsula: the Kennicott and the Lisbon Bibles. In both cases, the images appear in the frame of a page from the grammatical treatise included to aid in oration.\textsuperscript{51} At the top of the page in the Kennicott Bible, one hen stands guard over a small battalion of chicks, while a second feeds a chick from her beak. In the margins below, a pair of foxes each escape with a chick.\textsuperscript{52} In the Lisbon Bible, a dog pursues a hawk as it flies away with a chick in its talons as, to the right, a hen is once again seen passing a morsel directly into the mouth one of her chick.\textsuperscript{53}

Some have interpreted the various medieval miniatures as copies of now-lost Antique models, relying heavily on the eleventh-century Cynegetica, as the miniatures in the Macedonian-made manuscript are believed to have been executed by a number of artists based on archetypes originating in earlier eras.\textsuperscript{54} Whether or not this was the case, as a group they demonstrate the persistence of the hen and chicks motif from late Antiquity into the early Modern period, albeit in a different medium from Monza’s sculpture.

Intriguingly, there also are a number of folktales from rural France that include mentions of long-vanished golden statues of hens and chicks, which have been taken as indications that Monza’s treasure was not the only one of its kind.\textsuperscript{55} Stories from Levroux, Indre, speak of a gold hen and twelve gold chicks buried somewhere under what was then the remains of a fortress, today a bare motte. Similarly, within the department of Haute-Marne, two villages 90 kilometers apart, Morancourt and Farincourt, each have legends of a lost golden hen and chicks buried somewhere in the environs. And according to the residents of Le Puy-Notre-Dame in Anjou, the finest item in the treasury of the local canons was a gold chicken surrounded by chicks that disappeared during the French Wars of Religion.\textsuperscript{56} It is believed to have belonged to Louis XI, who gave it to the canons when he founded the chapter in 1482.\textsuperscript{57}

The most elaborate example comes from the legend of Saint Begge (615-693 C.E.), a noble Frankish woman and an antecedent of the Carolingian dynasty. According to the \textit{Vita Beggae}, during a pilgrimage to Rome she vowed to build a monastery and

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[50]{Mezoughi, “Gallina significant sanctam ecclesiam,” 55.}
\footnotetext[51]{Metzger, “Note sur le motif de ‘la poule et des poussins,’” 245.}
\footnotetext[52]{Mezoughi, “Gallina significant sanctam ecclesiam,” 55}
\footnotetext[53]{Metzger, “Note sur le motif de ‘la poule et des poussins,’” 246.}
\footnotetext[54]{Campanati, “La cultura artistica nelle regioni bizantine d’Italia,” 412.}
\footnotetext[56]{Hubert, “La poule aux poussins d’or,” 294.}
\footnotetext[57]{Frazer, “Oreficerie altomedievali,” 22.}
\end{footnotes}
seven churches in honour of the city’s seven hills. Sometime later, Begge’s son Pepin of
Landen was hunting near Ardennes when a hen followed by seven chicks suddenly
crossed his path. To great surprise, none of the dogs would go near the birds. Begge
understood the event as a sign from God and she erected the promised monastery and
churches in Ardennes.\textsuperscript{58} A hen and chicks may have also been considered one of Begge’s
attributes, although this remains unclear.\textsuperscript{59} Begge is also rumoured to have commissioned
a gold statue of a hen with six chicks.\textsuperscript{60} There has been speculation that her sculpture
and the one in the treasury at Monza are the very same, with the seventh chick as a
later addition.\textsuperscript{61}

Though other than Monza’s hen there are no extant examples of medieval
hens in metal, three-dimensional or otherwise, late Antique and Medieval records
repeatedly mention now-vanished monumental sculptures in precious metals. Perhaps
the most famous of examples are the opulent gold and silver sculptures which, according
to the \textit{Liber Pontificalis}, once adorned the Lateran Baptistery.\textsuperscript{62} As well as statues of Christ
and saints, golden lamps, and an enormous silver ciborium, the \textit{Liber Pontificalis} records
fifty golden dolphins, each weighing fifty pounds, a thirty-pound golden lamb, and seven
eighty-pound silver stags pouring water into the font.\textsuperscript{63}

When compared only to extant pieces of medieval metalwork, dominated by
reliquaries and votive crowns, a golden hen seems very strange to modern eyes. It is
only when placed in the context of long-lost treasures, theological tracts and other
artistic media that we realize how familiar the sculpture would have seemed. However,
as with ancient bronzes, the value and mutability of the materials involved in such works
makes their survival an exception rather than the rule.

Besides meaning, the most common subject concerning Monza’s hen is its
origins. Conjectures include Antique, late Antique, Byzantine, Lombard, Carolingian,
Islamic, Romanesque, and Romanesque imitation of an earlier work. Mercifully, the hen’s
appearance in an inventory from 1275 prevents speculation from extending later than
the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{64}

Providing a date for the sculpture proves difficult, as no matter how many
golden hens there may once have been, it is the only one among extant art objects. The
The closest analogue within the medium is a chased-silver dove from the Attarouthi

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{58} Campanati, “La cultura artistica nelle regioni bizantine d’Italia,” 412.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Talbot Rice, “Opere d’arte paleocristiane ed altomedievali,” 33.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Frazer, “Oreficerie altomedievali,” 22.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Conti, \textit{Il Tesoro}, 47.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Lipinski, “Der Theodelinden-Schatz im Dom zu Monza,” 162.
\item \textsuperscript{63} \textit{The Book of the Popes Volume I: To the Pontificate of Gregory I}, trans. Louise Ropes Loomis (New
\item \textsuperscript{64} F. Xavier Barbier de Montault and Antonio Cavagna Sangiuliani, \textit{Inventaires de la Basilique royal de Monza} (Tours: Imprimerie Paul Bouserez, 1880), 139.
\end{itemize}
The dove was found with a number of sixth to mid-seventh century liturgical objects at the eponymous site in Syria, which under Byzantine rule had been a prosperous trading centre. The finer feathers on the dove’s head are suggested using circular punches, the same as on the head of Monza’s hen and chicks. Although the parallel is interesting, on its own it does not support further speculation.

The most complex proposition as to origins has the hen preceding her offspring by several centuries. Most often, the chicks are assigned to the seventh century, while the hen is categorized as late Roman. Combined with the eye-intaglio, this theory would liken the hen’s material nature to some famous pieces of medieval metalwork (the reliquary of Sainte Foi, for example). Unfortunately, the arguments tend to be made according to somewhat dated principles: perceived as “stocky” and “rigid,” chicks are categorized as medieval based on biased stylistic perception, while likewise the hen is described as modelled with a “liveliness” and “elegance” that could only have originated prior to the end of the Western Roman Empire.

The most salient point is that the legs of the hen are particularly naturalistic, with well-articulated joints and prominently rendered rear tendons. The legs of the chicks, by contrast, appear to be straight metal cylinders and without a bird’s characteristic backward facing ‘ankle’ between the tibiotarsus and tarsometatarsus bones. It is likely this detail that lent much of the hen’s aforementioned “liveliness”. Such different priorities in the modelling of a creature’s limbs would at very least point to different hands, if not different eras. Unfortunately, without in-person examination, it remains possible that the chicks’ apparent lack of avian joints is merely a trick of photography. In short, the published evidence does not permit any conclusions as to age.

Far more interesting than agonizing over the object’s creation is the more reliable information that exists on its afterlife. If we accept that Theodelinda may never have had any connection with the hen during her lifetime, we are left to explore how one of the most celebrated items in the basilica’s treasury became associated with the Lombard queen. We know that the story was established in Monza no later than the late fourteenth century, the date assigned to a tympanum in which the two are unquestionably bound. By the same period, Theodolinda had been transformed in popular imagination from a barbarian queen into an embodiment of Lombard history, especially significant to Monza’s place with that history.

Contemporary sources confirm little of the life of Theodelinda as found in later accounts. We know she was a schismatic Catholic who married consecutive Lombard kings Authari (c. 550-590 C.E.) and Agilulf (c. 555-616), both of whom were Arian.

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68 The *Book of the Popes Volume I*, 48-51.
Figure 2. Dove from the Attarouthi Treasure, silver foil, likely sixth to mid-seventh century Syria. 15.8 cm long, 9.5 cm high, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
was thus the first Catholic member of the Lombard royal house. She had two children, both baptised Catholics, and her son Adaloald (602-628 C.E.) was elected king. Letters addressed to Theodelinda and Agilulf by Pope Gregory the Great also indicate that she actively played the role of political intermediary between the two men.69

By the end of the seventh century, Orthodox Catholicism had been adopted as the state religion of the Lombard kingdom, and evidence begins to appear of Theodelinda’s increasing popularity. In Paul the Deacon’s Historia, likely based on a now-lost seventh-century chronicle, she is unquestionably the most prominent royal woman.70 The late eighth-century text is our earliest source for most of the widely accepted facts of Theodelinda’s life, including her Bavarii origins and her foundation of the palace and chapel at Monza. It is also in the Historia that the historically dubious account of Theodelinda’s second marriage appears for the first time: 71

But because queen Theudelinda pleased the Langobards greatly, they allowed her to remain in her royal dignity, advising her to choose for herself whomso ever she might wish from all the Langobards; such a one, namely, as could profitably manage the kingdom. And she, taking counsel with the prudent, chose Agilulf, duke of the people of Turin as her husband and king of the nation of the Langobards.72

Paul does not contradict earlier sources, which simply state that Agilulf married Theodelinda and became king. Yet the remaining details are almost certainly fanciful flattery written by a Catholic Lombard cleric for the first significant Catholic figure in Lombard history. The Historia also spends a great deal of time emphasizing Theodelinda’s great piety and services to the Church.73 It is most probable that Agilulf seized the crown by the more traditional means of violence and married his predecessor’s wife, reportedly the granddaughter of Lombard king Waccho, for the sake of additional legitimacy.74

Over the proceeding centuries adoration of Theodelinda continued to grow, and later Monzese authors greatly admired her story. In his Chronicon Modoetiense, a 14th century history of the founding of Monza, Bonincontro Morigia describes Theodolinda as beata, gloriosissima, devotissima, beatissima, sanctissima, and christianissima, likely reflecting her popular acceptance as a saint.75 He elaborates on the Historia, crediting

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71 Ibid, 196
73 Paul the Deacon, History of the Langobards, 153
74 Ibid, 150
Theodelinda’s choice of Monza to divine revelation and describing her appearance with Saint Elizabeth in the vision of a local priest.76 Her popular approval was such that, though the majority of Lombard queens found their sexual morality repeatedly slandered by chroniclers both soon and long after their deaths, Theodelinda remained largely unchallenged in this respect. Neither did the advent of the modern age diminish her status: entire books dedicated to her history survive from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.77

Theodelinda’s identity as the first significant Catholic in Lombard history was undoubtedly the root of her popularity. However, it appears that the complex web of secular and the ecclesiastical power struggles in late-medieval northern Italy played a large role in the transformation of her memory. Monza had strategic importance, especially during thirteenth- and fourteenth-century conflict between the Visconti and the della Torre families, with the Visconti positioning themselves as champions of the town, its church, and its treasure.78

Before continuing, it is worth taking a moment to highlight that much of the earliest and most valuable pieces in the basilica’s treasury have legendary links with the Lombard queen. Vatican records indicate that in 603 Pope Gregory sent a number of precious gifts to Theodelinda for the occasion of her son’s baptism, and according to Paul the Deacon she donated them to the basilica.79 Some of the objects still held in the treasury have been identified as part of the papal contributions or personal gifts from the queen, to varying degrees of reliability. Eventually, the treasury as a whole became part of a nexus of interwoven facts and legends surrounding Monza’s church both during and after the time of Theodelinda, with the hen and chicks becoming a synecdochic image of all three: treasury, basilica, and queen.80

Returning to the Visconti and della Torre: at the time that Morigia wrote his History, the contents of the treasury had been stolen and restored twice in living memory. In 1319, fifty years after a large portion of the treasure had been looted by the della Torre, it was returned to the church by Matteo Visconti (1250-1322 C.E.). Five years after that, the majority was again removed by foreign forces and brought to the Pope in Avignon. Giovanni Visconti (1290-1354 C.E.), then Archbishop of Milan, turned the full force of his diplomatic and persuasive powers towards the treasure’s return. Once successful, the archbishop paid to repair any damage, added new items to the collection, and then celebrated High Mass at Monza with, reportedly, the entirety of the

77 Balzaretti, “Theodelinda, ‘Most Glorious Queen’,” 206.
79 Ibid, 170.
80 Hahn, Strange Beauty, 172.
contents of the treasury on display.81

Strengthening centuries-old connections with Theodelinda, as well as the queen’s own reputation, increased the political value of the Visconti’s actions. Two works of art at the basilica demonstrate active promotion of queen and treasury on the part of the Visconti. The tympanum over the central west portal (figure 3) is thought to have been commissioned in 1320 to commemorate the treasure’s return by Matteo Visconti.82 It is also a testament to how intimately linked Theodelinda and the treasure were by this period. Theodolinda and her family are portrayed in a place normally reserved for saints and biblical scenes, above the image of Saint John baptizing Christ, presenting the most valuable pieces to the patron saint.83 Included is the ‘sapphire’ chalice, Berengar’s cross, what is probably the earliest image of the Iron Crown,84 and the hen and chicks, all carved with descriptive precision as one of the few examples of a sculpted inventory.85 As well as a celebration of the treasure’s return, the tympanum was also likely intended as an enduring declaration of ownership over the illustrated objects by the repeatedly bereaved basilica.86

The second example, the fresco cycle of ‘Theodelinda’s chapel’, also demonstrates her local veneration as a saint. Although dedicated to Saints Vincent and Vitus, later replaced by Anastasius, the chapel that has housed Theodelinda’s sarcophagus since its transfer is dominated by her cult. The frescos, painted circa 1444 by the brothers Zavatti, portray scenes from her life as narrated by Morigia.87 The disproportionate number of wedding scenes is believed to be a reference to the marriage of Bianca Maria Visconti and Francesco Sforza, the last of the Visconti line projecting their lives onto a semi-legendary past.88 It may also reference the Visconti’s claim of the Lombard queen as their ancestor: Validation of basilica’s custody of the treasure also remains at issue: in scene 37, the hen sculpture and other highlights of the treasury appear in the hands of the archpriest and cannons of the church.89 No matter the original significance of the sculpture, or any meaning it may have held before becoming ‘Theodelinda’s hen,’ its primary meaning for the people of Monza since the end of the Middle Ages was as a part of Theodelinda’s popular cult.

The last facet of Monza’s hen, which at first seems so outrageous it is difficult to credit as a complete invention, is the assertion that the sculpture was found within Theodelinda’s casket. Why would a golden hen and chicks be buried with the Lombard

81 Martindale, “Theodolinda,” 216.
82 Hahn, Strange Beauty, 163.
84 Ibid, 148.
85 Hahn, Strange Beauty, 172.
88 Ibid, 197
Figure 3. Tympanum, Monza Cathedral, circa 1320 C.E. Image from The Iron Crown and Imperial Europe II: In Search of the Original Artifact Part I, 148.
queen, whether in reality or imagination?

As it turns out, among ethnically Germanic groups, there is a millennia-old association of hens with death and burial. From the mists of pre-history down to the Counter-Reformation, remnants of slaughtered hens, chicken eggs, and art objects depicting hens make regular appearances in graves. Furthermore, there exists a smattering of legends featuring hens and their chicks that seem to reference a connection with the underworld.

Remains of domesticated fowl, most often a strangled hen, have been found in a number of excavated Germanic burial sites. The most prominent example is the early sixth-century ‘Goldsmith’s grave,’ from Ponsdorf in Lower Austria. Among the many objects interred with this man, including a number of metalworking tools (hence the name) is the skeleton of a hen that had between placed between his shins. Other examples include a skeletonized hen from a Longobard tomb in Vienna, chicken remains in a man’s grave at Santa Maria del Palo in Pavia, and evidence of a variety of poultry from the cemetery of Etrechy in Bern. Chicken eggs were also buried with the dead: in excavated tombs along the Elba and in Bavaria, intact shells have been uncovered.

Perhaps most surprising is evidence that similar customs appear to have persisted in northern Italy into the sixteenth century. In the archives of the Archdiocese of Milan, records reveal that shortly after the Council of Trent inquiries were made into the folk tradition of “mettere un pollo ligato in seno a li morti,” including a specific mention of a visit to Rho.

The Milanese records help to refute the idea that the aforementioned examples were intended as food offerings. Foodstuffs buried with the dead were common, although not universal, to Germanic gravesites. It is thus not impossible that the remains of hens and eggs were intended as meals rather than part of unconfirmed chicken-related spiritual beliefs. The presentation in a number of Merovingian graves in Germany of chicken bones and eggshells does suggest that these examples were food offerings. However, that the archdiocese launched an inquiry into members burying

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91 Bognetti, “Milano longobarda,” 130.
92 Conti, Il Tesoro, 46.
93 Lipinski, “Der Theodelinden-Schatz im Dom zu Monza,” 162
94 Hubert, “La poule aux poussins d’or,” 291.
95 Bognetti, “Milano longobarda,” 130.
97 Bognetti, “Milano longobarda,” 130.
99 L. Lindenschmit, Handbuch der deutschen Alterthumskunde (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 1880), 131
strangled chickens with loved ones, and not victuals in general, points to the bird having some particular significance.

There are also a few examples of art objects depicting hens found buried, or presumed buried, in graves. A gold hen with five pendants was reportedly found in a Goth tomb at Petroasa, in Wallachia, although this information remains unconfirmed. As for the terracotta medallion from Orange, the word feliciter, which is found at the end of two epitaphs from a Christian cemetery at Mayence, may indicate that it was intended for burial purposes.

Eschatological associations with hens, specifically gold hens, can also be identified in several local legends. One example from Sicily tells of a little girl who saw a golden hen with golden chicks and followed them into a cave that subsequently swallowed her up. Although the little girl’s mother can hear her calling out from underground, it is never from the same place, and she is never seen again. Such stories have been taken as implying connection with Hell and the afterlife in general, possibly the echoes of pre-Christian burial rituals that seeped into provincial folklore. Therefore, it is plausible that the idea of Monza’s sculpture buried with an early Christian queen emerged naturally from local imagination.

Although the hen may not be unique within the history of Western medieval visual culture, it still raises a great many more questions than it answers. Much of the material speculation discussed above could be resolved by a thorough examination, preferably with the full range of present-day technology. Unfortunately, without the discovery of some revelatory new object or record, original intentions and the development of later significance remain confined to the world of the ‘most likely.’ It was ‘most likely’ intended as an allegory for the maternal shelter found within the Christian fold, was ‘most likely’ absorbed into the burgeoning cult of Theodelinda, and ‘most likely’ fell naturally into eschatological patterns deeply-ingrained in local imagination. But to press these theories as indisputable would be to stray outside the limits of credibility.

—Elizabeth Rose

100 Caramel, “Dalle testimonianze paleocristiane,” 162.
101 Hubert, “La poule aux poussins d’or,” 290.
103 Ibid, 298.


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