POCKET CRUCIFIXIONS: JESUS, JEWS, AND OWNERSHIP
IN FOURTEENTH-CENTURY IVORIES

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Carved devotional ivories were all the rage throughout the fourteenth century in northern Europe. Workshops in Paris, Cologne, and other urban centers created countless images with standardized iconographies made for local sale and export. These small-scale, portable images lent themselves particularly well to trade and appear to have been among the earliest serially produced commodities. As important as such ivories may have been in the histories of both popular devotion and consumption, however, the works fit uncomfortably within the academic study of medieval art history and can frustrate the goals and expectations of curators and museum visitors. In survey textbooks on the art of the Middle Ages, works such as the diptych with scenes of the life of Christ now in the Art Institute of Chicago (Fig. 1) typically are only mentioned in passing or fall out of the discussion altogether. Such pieces neither represent, for example, the great achievements of monumental figure sculptors who transformed Gothic cathedrals into visual encyclopedias of dogma, nor, with their original polychromy typically worn off, can they compare aesthetically with the illuminations in luxury manuscripts. And the fourteenth century itself is a problematic era in the narrative of medieval art history. Often considered to represent a mannered phase of the Gothic, sometimes written as a prologue to celebrated fifteenth-century experiments in naturalism, the fourteenth century is rarely examined in a sustained way, on its own terms in textbooks. For museum curators, fourteenth-century ivories present different challenges. The pieces themselves are small and thus can only be viewed by a few visitors at a time. More problematic is that many of the ivories look the same—the result of the workshops using common models. To generalize, in keeping with widespread notions of artistic individuality, museum visitors expect that they will be treated to singular works manifesting individual artistic personalities; such expectations are frustrated if a wall label reveals the actual modes of production and reception behind many fourteenth-century ivories.

The standard catalogue for fourteenth-century ivories laments these fundamental aspects of the medium. Raymond Koechlin’s three-volume Les ivoires gothiques français (1924) repeatedly bemoans the “mediocre,” “boring,” “almost industrial” nature of many of the over 1,350 pieces he examined. A passage explaining the

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consistency of iconographies in the works is typical: “Such an impoverishment of an iconography that was already mediocre to begin with makes this series [of devotional diptychs] very uninspired in our view.”5 As to style, he observes an often awkward lack of originality: “These mediocre imitations of illustrious models result from something beyond simply the lack of skill on the part of the artisans; one must recognize that the workshops copied from one another.”6 That is, ivories were carved in multiple workshops in cities throughout Europe and were produced with greater and lesser degrees of refinement. The highest-end works, those created for princely patrons (see, for example, Fig. 2), have gained scholarly attention because they are exquisite exemplars of the refined courtly styles of the fourteenth
century.\textsuperscript{7} And some scholars have addressed high-end devotional diptychs within larger discussions of late medieval piety, analyzing the small-scale images as vehicles for personal devotion.\textsuperscript{8} But to my knowledge, there has been no investigation to date of lower-end works, particularly of the two scene devotional diptychs of the kind Koechlin observes were created in an “industrial” manner.\textsuperscript{9} These pieces were made for urban, burgher audiences and could be purchased at city centers across northern Europe.

If serially produced ivories fit awkwardly within the narratives of art history, they are well-suited to a materialist analysis of production, devotion, and societal norms in the late Middle Ages. In the very years that ivory diptychs became...
widely available to new, nonelite audiences, northern Europe also witnessed the proliferation of vernacular texts intended to inspire meditation on Christ’s life and Passion. In this article, I examine textual accounts of Christ’s Passion in relation to standardized images of the Crucifixion that appeared on hundreds, or likely thousands of the devotional ivories created in the fourteenth century. Many of the texts offer brutal accounts of the torture and execution of Christ, often explicitly at the hands of the Jews. The ivories, however, eschew the kinds of violent representations one might expect from familiarity with this class of texts. Indeed, the ivories exhibit a refined, courtly character, even in works clearly created to be sold off-the-rack in mass urban markets. I suggest an explanation for this disjunction by observing that devotional ivories were created as commodities that transformed the often vituperative anti-Jewish sentiment of the fourteenth century into palatable restrained images that evoked for their middle-class owners the splendors of princely courts.10

The Refinement and Replication of the Crucifixion

A leaf localized to France in the third quarter of the fourteenth century, now in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, presents the crucified Christ at the center, flanked to his right by the swooning Virgin supported by two Holy Women, and to his left by John the Evangelist and two aged Jews (Fig. 3). Mary falls into the arms of one of her companions, the arcs of drapery on her lower body indicating that her knees have buckled. John brings one hand to his cheek and turns his head downward in a gesture of despair. Behind John two aged men, one holding a scroll, confer between themselves. The aged figures crammed into the right extreme of the plaque follow high medieval conventions for the representations of Jews. Their beards and faceted headgear mark them as exotic, alien figures, the headgear a variation on the pointed hats used to identify Jews in images from the twelfth century on.12 The scroll held by one of the Jews further marks the pair as figures associated with Hebrew scripture since such banderoles commonly functioned as signs of the Old Testament, set against images of books referring to Christian revelation. The top third of the plaque is given over to three trefoil arches adorned with leafy crockets and finials.

The diminutive ensemble, measuring 9.86 x 7.32 cm, conveys the Christian understanding of the beauty, and thus spiritual significance, of Christ’s execution in summarized visual form. Christ on the cross hangs languidly, already dead. The arc of his drooping arms is set in opposition to the rigid, perpendicular shape of the cross and offers a visual rhyme to the three pointed arches above. Jesus’s body forms a gentle inverted S, the narrow profile of his left shin extending into his delicately pointed foot. The tail end of the loin cloth around his middle flutters
off to the right and the folds of this garment find echoes in the drapery worn by the accompanying figures; passages of fabric dominate the lower third of the work. The calm disposition of the central form is underscored through opposition with the visually busy articulation of the figures crowded beneath the cross. To Christ’s right and left, trios of overlapping heads bob and turn while deeply-carved striations describing limbs, drapery, and other attributes create regions of strongly contrasting dark and light. Such handling is particularly amplified in the Jewish figures at the right extreme. Wrinkles around the eyes and mouths of these two men, along with the tresses of their beards stand in opposition to the smooth skin of Christ’s torso. Likewise, the figures of John the Evangelist, Mary, and her companions do not bear the marks of aging seen in the Jewish figures, allying these first Christians with the youthful and delicate Christ. The Gothic arcade above lends an emphatically ecclesiological armature to this image of capital punishment presented as an opposition between Jewish senescence and Christian vernal beauty.

Elements found in the Gardner ivory are repeated in countless related works of the period. One leaf, dating to the third quarter of the fourteenth century,
localized to the Rhineland or Mosan region and now in the Wadsworth Atheneum of Hartford, Connecticut, for example, offers a similar framework and deployment of figures (Fig. 4). Here again three trefoil arches shelter the action below, though the Atheneum piece, with its additional trefoils in the gables and row of pearling at the upper border, is more elaborate than its Boston counterpart. In the Hartford ivory once again a languid Christ figure hangs from the cross in an elegant inverted S curve. This time the swooning Virgin falls even more emphatically to the left, the folds of drapery ensconcing her legs carved in a dramatic diagonal running parallel to the legs of her son. On Christ's other side John the Evangelist stands in a subtle contrapposto, his head cocked to the proper right, his left shoulder down, and his left leg extending to the proper left; John strikes a serpentine pose echoing that of Christ. In distinction to the elegant Jesus and his followers, a pair of Jews again is crammed into the right extreme of the ivory. Like their counterparts in the Gardner piece, the pair is engaged in their own dialogue, faces turned in toward one another. Here though, more so than in the Boston piece, the Jews have gross features, conforming to widespread stereotypes. Not only do they have the beards, hats (one emphatically pointed), and scroll that identify them as Jewish but they also have relatively large heads, big noses, and bulging eyes, outward marks of inner decrepitude, according to the conventions of the day. Another distinction in the Hartford piece is that the Jews both point toward Christ, one hand visible between Christ and John, the other behind John's head. Muttering with one another they seem to conspire, comment, or more generally herald the significance of the ivory's main action.

Iconography and activity are expanded, though they follow the same model, in another work in the Wadsworth Atheneum, likewise localized to the Rhineland or Mosan region in the third quarter of the fourteenth century (Fig. 5). In this piece, the familiar sextet of figures surrounding the crucified Christ is joined by Longinus, who kneels in prayer on the left of Christ, and Stephaton, offering Christ the vinegar-soaked sop to the right. Weeping angels at the lateral extremes of the trefoil arch frame further augment the work. Though this ivory is enhanced by the additional figures as well as the more elaborated poses of the Virgin and the companions who seem to struggle to hold Mary up, the deployment of Christ, John, and the two Jews conforms to now-familiar standards: Christ's delicate body shows no signs of anguish but rather floats at the center of the composition; John cocks his head toward the cross and extends his left foot toward the right with courtly grace; and the two Jews, with their exotic headgear, scroll, and beards, turn in toward one another as they gesture toward the cross. Once again these latter figures have broad heads, bulbous noses, and puffy eyes, identifying them as beings outside the Christian fold. The kneeling Longinus shares physiognomic characteristics with the Jews in this ivory, an issue I return to below.
Fig. 4. Crucifixion. Ivory, right leaf of a diptych; 3 1/2 x 2 3/8 in (8.9 x 6 cm). Rhineland or Mosan region, third quarter of the fourteenth century. Wadsworth Atheneum of Art, Hartford, CT, 1949.169. Gift of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. (Photo: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY.)

Works such as those at the Gardner Museum and the Wadsworth Atheneum represent the lowest tier of a market for devotional ivories that was thriving throughout the fourteenth century in northern Europe. Plaques of this sort often originally formed the right wing of diptychs, hinged to scenes of Christ’s Infancy as in a piece now in the Smithsonian (Fig. 6). They tend to have plain, uncarved
backs, so that the modest exteriors of the closed works contrasted to the crowded ensembles revealed when the diptychs were opened. In some cases, as well, the Crucifixion plaques functioned as stand-alone works, serving as the backs of writing tablets, for example. Such pieces were simplified versions of exquisite large-scale, multi-scene diptychs, apparently custom made for the high nobility by celebrated masters, as exemplified by an ivory now in the Minneapolis Museum of Art, mentioned at the beginning of this essay (Fig. 2).16 The Minneapolis diptych, measuring 21.4 x 22.3 cm when opened, contains nine scenes from Christ’s Infancy, Passion, and post-Resurrection. Rows of delicate trefoil arches, augmented with floriate crockets and finials adorn the upper level to each tier. Beneath
these arches, elegant figures dance through the principal scenes of the Christian story. In the lower left, for example, the Virgin sways in demure acceptance of Gabriel’s Annunciation; above, a dainty figure of Judas leans in to kiss Jesus; and at the top right Pentecost scene, a refined coterie of apostles with the Virgin bow their heads and clutch their sacred books in unison as they accept their mission to proselytize. Amongst these mincing figures, in the middle row of the diptych’s right wing is a Crucifixion scene with the same elements seen in the Boston and Hartford plaques discussed previously. Christ hangs on the cross in an elegant S curve, the Virgin swoons into the arms of the Holy Women, a sinuous John bows his head in mourning and a pair of large-headed, bearded Jews with exotic hats, one holding a scroll, confer between themselves and point at Christ. And the same configuration is found in less rarified works, perhaps created for the lower nobility or particularly wealthy burghers. Such middle-tier devotional ivories are exemplified by the four-scene diptych now in the Art Institute of Chicago, also mentioned above (Fig. 1). The Crucifixion scene in the Art Institute piece adheres to all the conventions observed already as do the other episodes from Christ’s life, replicated throughout the genre.17 Of course, this standardized iconography was found
in works created in materials other than ivory as well. Manuscript illuminations, wall paintings, and other forms of sculpture could present the same configuration of characters. But what is noteworthy about the examples just discussed is the fact that, in the medium of ivory, the composition was replicated with such regularity.

The ivories reviewed here are testaments to a thriving new industry that catered to audiences ranging from modest members of the middle estates to the wealthiest nobility. What is striking is that even in instances of the lowest level of production, works that, like the Gardner ivory, for instance, have been described as “extremely coarse,” convention still holds that Christ and his supporters be shown as elegant, ennobled figures—figures whose nobility is underscored in juxtaposition to broad-faced, big-nosed, aged, and exotic Jews.

**The Market for Ivories**

Conditions of production explain the consistency in the appearance of the main players in Crucifixion episodes found in ivories from across the qualitative spectrum. While in some periods of the Middle Ages ivory was a rare material, worked primarily by elite artists at court ateliers, in the years between ca. 1275 and 1400 ivory entered the realm of urban artisans and carved pieces were produced for markets ranging from the most rarified to the relatively pedestrian. While it is estimated that two to three thousand Gothic ivories survive today, this is likely a fraction of what was originally created. This profusion was fed by an influx of ivory, most of it likely from Africa, but also some from Asia. Scholars posit that there were a variety of routes through which elephant tusks entered northern European markets. Mark Horton has analyzed archeological evidence along the east coast of Africa demonstrating a well-developed trade network, lasting from the tenth through the sixteenth centuries, between what he terms the “Swahili Corridor,” the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean. Hunting peoples in the African interior killed elephants and traded the tusks with herders who in turn traveled to the coast where they exchanged tusks for finished goods such as cloth. The seafaring Swahili then traveled north where they sold the tusks at high cost to foreigners. From there the tusks were shipped north to Europe through the ports of Venice, Genoa, Pisa, and Marseille. Horton’s model does not, however, explain the profusion of ivories carved in the fourteenth century specifically, or why production apparently dropped off dramatically in the fifteenth century—issues, it is hoped, to be addressed by future scholars.

Whatever the precise mode of the transfer of elephant tusks, it is undeniable that the European production of carved ivories at the close of the thirteenth century and throughout the fourteenth century soared. While there was a market for luxury household items such as small caskets and mirror valves with secular themes, a
great many of the works were devotional pieces. Statuettes of the Virgin and Child were a favorite in the early years of the trend. But apparently by the second quarter of the fourteenth century the greatest output was in miniature panels, carved in relief, often hinged into diptychs or triptychs, but sometimes left as single plaques. Carved ivories—works that were never signed, were produced serially, following standardized iconographies and styles, and were eminently portable—frustrate easy localization, much less identification with a specific hand or workshop. Koechlin presumed that Paris was the center for production of these plaques. But now it seems evident that Cologne as well as other sites in the Rhineland, England, the Mosan region, and perhaps other centers had substantial ivory workshops of their own, as suggested by the examples discussed previously.

Our richest evidence on the day-to-day work of ivory carvers, however, does stem from Paris. The Livre des Métiers (ca. 1250–60) of Etienne Boileau redacts the statutes of the various trades from the city. This text tells us that the ivory workers were not organized into their own guild but rather were distributed amongst a variety of groups: the makers of knife handles; comb and lantern makers; makers of writing tablets; sculptors; painters and carvers of sculpture; makers of rosaries, buckles, and buttons; and finally, dice makers. This list reminds us of the range of uses to which ivory could be put and suggests the prevalence of the material as a favored and highly functional substance for everyday use. The makers of the objects under investigation in this discussion perhaps fall under the category of “sculptors” or “painters and carvers of sculpture” (ymagier tailleurs and peintres et tailleurs d’ymages), though Boileau offers no direct reference to hinged plaques. Furthermore, the term ivoirier, identifying a specialist in ivory work, is remarkably rare in medieval documents.

Ivory carvers in Paris, Cologne, and other urban centers across northern Europe seem to have shared designs, fostering the consistency of image compositions and iconographies seen in the Crucifixion scenes discussed above. Recently, terra cotta casts, apparently designed as models for ivory workers, were found in the bed of the River Scheldt in Belgium (Fig. 7). Five such casts are now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, while a work based on these models—an ivory casket with scenes from the Life of Christ and the Virgin—resides at the Musée Paul-Dupuy in Toulouse (Fig. 8, see the top row on the casket, second image from the left). And another terra cotta relief housed in Liège seems to have served as a model for images of the Adoration of the Magi. Beyond such clay schemata, drawn designs for works must have been passed around from workshop to workshop, though no definitive example of such survives. Pictorial models standardized subject matter, figure types, poses, and gestures. The result was that an ivory carved in the southern Netherlands could vary little from a work carved in northern France or the central Rhineland.
The productions of urban artisans, in turn, were suited to the needs and pocket-books of middle-estate audiences. Lawyers, doctors, merchants, other professionals, and burgher wives could purchase, off-the-rack in city centers, the kinds of modest pieces I described earlier. In circumstances that parallel those in the trade of Books of Hours in the fifteenth century, customers likely could shop around at ivory ateliers themselves or purchased devotional diptychs through merchant middlemen at shops or outside stands on streets such as the rue de la Tableterie in Paris. Likewise, such ivories were probably sold at markets such as the grand covered stalls of Les Halles, offering customers in Paris an array of luxury fabrics, mirrors, purses, jewelry, and other personal items. With the flood of elephant tusks coming in from Africa in the fourteenth century and with new trends in spirituality—specifically an increased emphasis on private, affective piety—ivory workshops met a society-wide demand for personal devotional objects.
Published compendia and current indexing projects aimed at cataloging the wealth of surviving fourteenth-century ivories make plain the particularly broad popularity of the standardized Crucifixion composition discussed previously, many examples of which were created at the lowest tier of production. Koechlin catalogues forty-six works of a scale (12 cm in height or smaller) and iconography similar to the Gardner and Wadsworth Atheneum pieces and indicates that works with this “classic” composition, to use Koechlin’s formulation, are so common as to be tedious. The works themselves, moreover are deemed “mediocre,” “coarse,” “dry,” and even “barbarous.” The “coarse” and repetitive qualities of these ivories are what exclude them from discussions of the progress of medieval art history. But putting aside the standardized, sometimes workaday character of the pieces, we are in a position to consider the objects’ functions within the devotional lives of their original owners.
Jesus and the Jews in the Hands of the Beholder

The audiences who purchased lower-tier ivories could little ignore the opposition between the elegant, graceful Christ and the broad-featured Jews in standardized Crucifixion scenes. What they made of these antinomies is, of course, impossible to determine definitively. But we can speculate about the horizon of expectations that informed fourteenth-century ivory owners as they meditated on their precious possessions. For by the fourteenth century, there was a host of notions concerning Jews, conceived in both theological and social terms, typically negative, but sometimes relatively positive as well, that prevailed across Europe.

Indeed, though the figures at the foot of the cross in “classic” crucifixion ivories conform to stereotypes of Jews, their valence was not necessarily invariably derogatory. Some viewers may have understood the pair standing behind John the Evangelist (see Figs. 3–6) as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, those two high-ranking Jews who were said to have accepted Jesus as the messiah and prepared him for burial in the former’s own tomb. There were precedents in thirteenth-century manuscripts for representing this pair at the foot of the cross. Both men, moreover, were celebrated as saints and the cult of Joseph of Arimathea gained particular popularity in England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The gestures toward Christ that the two Jewish figures often make in the ivories might indicate a recognition of Jesus’s sacred status, and the consistent positioning of the Jews’ heads, turning in toward one another, suggests that the two are conferring over Jesus’s divinity or planning his deposition from the cross and burial. Taken to be Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the Jews depicted in “classic” Crucifixion scenes for some might also therefore have signified the fundamental Christian hope of Jewish conversion. For, in the simplest terms, Christians had a mandate to proselytize, and in principle Jews were an ideal target for such campaigns since they already accepted as sacred the scripture at the foundation of Christian belief. Jews, however, were understood as elemental components within Christian society and soteriology, their survival, yet limited power, being understood to ratify Christian authority. Moreover, it was expected that the mass conversion of Jews would announce the end of earthly time. In the thirteenth century, new drives to cleanse the earthly domain, joined with a new unease over Jewish postbiblical scripture, had spawned systematic efforts, especially on the part of mendicants, to convince Jews of the error of their belief and to draw them over to the Christian fold. By the fourteenth century, when Crucifixion ivories circulated widely, coherent programs for Jewish conversion were a thing of the past in northern Europe. A sense of the justness of the conversion of individual Jews, however, never was alien to Christian belief and so the figures of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus could serve as enduring models for a Judaism that might someday turn toward Christ. The figure
of Longinus kneeling before the cross in one of the plaques from the Wadsworth Atheneum (Fig. 5) is particularly instructive in this regard. Here Longinus—the Roman centurion who pierced Christ's side with a lance, was cured of his blindness by the blood and water that emerged from the wound, and thereafter embraced Christianity—is depicted with facial features analogous to those of the two Jews at the right of the composition. Longinus wears an exotic hat, he has long curly hair and a beard, his nose is pronounced, and he has bulging eyes. The similar depiction of the Jews and of Longinus suggests that like the centurion, the one-time enemy of Christ, so too the Jews at the foot of the cross might soon recognize the divinity of Jesus and themselves kneel before him.

In a related vein, the opposition between the aged quality of the Jews and the youthfulness of Christ and his followers may have inspired reflection on the motif of Ecclesia and Synagoga, paired female personifications of Church and Synagogue that from the early thirteenth century on were popular features of decorative programs on cathedral façades. In these monumental, public renderings Synagoga tended to be depicted as blindfolded and holding inverted tablets of the law as well as a broken staff or spear—marks of her inability to recognize the Christian message and her lack of potency within a Christian world. Set against this outworn tradition is Ecclesia, an upright queen with crown, triumphal labarum, and chalice. Standing as one element within larger sculpted decorative programs, monumental sculptures of Ecclesia and Synagoga signified in various ways depending upon iconographic context. In some cases they conveyed political ideals for an ordered Christian society; in other cases they could refer to the opposition between virtue and vice in broader terms. Regardless of such inflections of meaning, though, large-scale public renderings of a worn out and weakened Synagoga paired with a vital and regal Ecclesia conveyed to urban viewers a notion of Judaism as retrograde and obsolete. The consistent use of microarchitectural Gothic frames, complete with gables, trefoils, crocketing, and finials, in devotional ivories evokes the monumental churches at the heart of Europe's cities. Ivory owners familiar with renderings of Ecclesia and Synagoga on such structures may well have reflected on the pair's significance as they contemplated the opposition between the youthful Christ and his followers and the aged Jews presented in "classic" Crucifixion compositions. Within this framework, the Jews at the foot of the cross could stand for an antiquated tradition impelled to cede authority to the Church, an institution putatively born at the moment of Christ's execution.

More negative conceptions of the Jewish figures might have occurred to those viewers familiar with the actual Gospel texts illustrated. For in the accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, a cluster of Jews, alternately identified as "chief priests," "scribes," or "elders," mock the crucified Jesus, saying: "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross..."
and we will believe in him” (Matt. 27:41–3; compare to Mark 15:31–2 and Luke 23:35). But the nonclerical owners of these ivories would not on the whole have had access to complete Bibles. Instead, they would be exposed to biblical texts through sermons and readings from the Gospels incorporated within Books of Hours. Books of Hours did not, however, tend to include the episode of the Jews mocking Christ in either their excerpts from the Gospels or within the Hours of the Cross.49

Beyond conceptions of the place of Jews or Judaism within Christian history, popular notions of Jews as enemies of Christ and Christians likely also spurred viewer response, though varying conditions would have affected such conceptions. For while Jews had been an elemental component of urban life in northern Europe throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in the fourteenth, expulsions, readmissions, and violent attacks meant that Jewish presence in metropolitan centers often was inconsistent or diminished. Indeed, in the absence of actual Jews, the idea of the Jew could stand in for and embody perceived social and spiritual ills.50 Jews had been expelled from England in 1290 and from the French royal lands in 1306. Jews were readmitted to the kingdom of France in 1315, but in limited numbers; many left over the course of the 1320s due to hostilities and government policies, though some returned around 1359, and all the Jews of France were expelled definitively in 1394.51 So in the cities of royal France, Jews remained visible through the middle and late fourteenth century, but because of the string of deracinations, the communities lacked the vitality they had had in their heyday in previous centuries. Populations of Jews were denser in the German territories. For instance the Jews of Cologne, a city that seems to have been a center for the production of ivories, were thriving economically in the early part of the fourteenth century and were part of a broad intellectual, spiritual, and economic network among Jewish communities in the region.52 Though pogroms attendant with the Black Death drove Jews from Cologne and decimated those who remained, many returned to this city in the aftermath of the plague, reestablishing themselves, a phenomenon witnessed elsewhere in the empire.

As to societal hostilities toward Jewish populations, periodic outbreaks of violence against Jews accused of ritual murder, host desecration, poisoning wells, and thus spreading the Black Death are well known.53 More directly germane to the depiction of Jews on Crucifixion ivories, however, are fourteenth-century animosities toward Jews for their relative wealth, often gotten at the expense of Christians. Jews had been invited to settle in northern Europe originally in the eleventh century because their perceived mercantile acumen was attractive to lords seeking to establish and expand urban centers. In an economy increasingly based in coin and credit rather than trade, and with Christians putatively excluded from lending at interest, Jews immersed themselves in pawnbroking and
moneylending, thereby becoming essential cogs in the machinery of the urban market economy. Indeed, by the twelfth century the term usurer could become synonymous with Jew, as attested famously by Bernard of Clairvaux. And in the fourteenth century, it seems that animosities toward Jews for their prosperity motivated violent raids on Jewish neighborhoods as, for instance, the 1380 and 1382 riots in Paris in which Jewish loan records were a chief target of the marauders. Moreover, it was often the case that the nobility protected Jews, because Jewish wealth could be taxed and because Jewish credit was necessary for the market economy. And such circumstances easily fostered popular hostilities. If fourteenth-century popular perceptions identified Jews with affluence, a condition established in previous centuries to be sure, owners of ivories may have scorned the relatively heavy adornment of the Jews depicted therein—Jews wearing hats that may have been viewed as ostentatious, for example—over and against the simplicity of the Christian figures' garb and Jesus's nakedness. The luxurious qualities of the ivories themselves, moreover, may have offered their Christian owners an opportunity to fancy themselves to be prosperous keepers of capital, an issue I return to at the end of this essay.

So, fourteenth-century viewers had an array of conceptions to draw upon as they considered the depictions of Jews at the foot of the cross within Crucifixion ivories. Some of these pertained to Christian notions of history and salvation. Others were tethered more directly to daily life, where Jews were integral, and frequently resented, players in the economic structure of Europe. Such notions were longstanding by the period in question, sometimes rooted in the early Christian era and developed from the eleventh century on. But particular to the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in texts made explicitly for lay audiences was a new emphasis on the story of the Passion and the role of the Jews within it. While scholars long have recognized the significance of Passion devotion to late medieval pictorial trends, and some have acknowledged in passing the coincidence of the proliferation of instructional texts for meditation on the Passion and the wide-scale production of devotional ivories, until now no one has offered a sustained analysis of the two phenomena in relation to one another. A consideration of the tropes that recur in these texts combined with recognition of the iconographic conventions in Crucifixion ivories sets the stage for analysis of the status of devotional diptychs in the spiritual and social lives of their fourteenth-century owners.

**Telling the Story of the Crucifixion**

The accounts of Jesus's torture and execution in the four Gospels are remarkably terse, leaving high and late medieval commentators room to develop narrative
descriptions of the events according to the spiritual needs and social perceptions of the day. In keeping with increasing emphasis on Christ’s humanity, from the end of the eleventh century on theologians including Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), and many others composed prayers and meditations enhancing the narrative details of the Passion and stressing the suffering of both Christ and his mother. Initially written for clerics, by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries these texts served as the source for a profusion of devotional tracts, meditative treatises, and dramas depicting in often gruesome detail the horrors of Christ’s death. Many, though not all, place the blame for Christ’s execution squarely on the shoulders of the Jews and Jews are represented as Christ’s chief tormenters. Written in both Latin and several vernaculars, such texts circulated widely among clerics, the nobility, and non-elite audiences. A sampling of these works demonstrates that across northern Europe, in locales where Jews continued to reside as well as those where Jewish communities had been eradicated, fantasies of craven Jews as enemies of Christ flourished.

The early Franciscans, in their drive to minister to growing urban populations of the thirteenth century, developed and refined a spirituality marked by affective identification with the sacred that often hinged on scorn for Jews. Bonaventure’s (d. 1274) *The Tree of Life* (*Lignum vitae*), for instance, establishes the critical role of the Jews in Christ’s arrest and condemnation:

O horrible impiety of the Jews, which could not be satiated by such insults but went further and, raging with the madness of wild beasts, exposed the life of the just one to an impious judge as if to be devoured by a mad dog! For the high priests led Jesus bound before the face of Pilate, demanding death by the torture of the cross for him who knew nothing of sin.

The text goes on to say, “Pilate was not ignorant of the fact that the Jewish people were aroused against Jesus not out of zeal for justice but out of envy.” The *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (*Meditationes vitae Christi*), written for a cloistered Franciscan nun ca. 1350, but widely circulated thereafter, emphasizes the disjunction between the wretchedness of Christ’s torturers and the Lord’s benevolent forgiveness. “Jesus prayed to the Father not so much in fear of undergoing the suffering as in pity for the first people, for he sympathized with the Jews.” Christ prays, “If one could make the multitude of people believe and yet save the Jews, I refuse and reject the passion; but if the Jews are to be blinded that the others may see, then let not my will but yours be done.” Jewish blindness to Jesus’s status as messiah is presented as part of the divine plan. The Jews’ patent cruelty is a heuristic device through which others may benefit.
The Golden Legend (Legenda aurea) of Jacobus de Voragine (ca. 1230–98)—often called the “best seller” of the Middle Ages because it was translated into multiple European vernaculars and survives in roughly one thousand manuscripts—established a convention, so that vivid descriptions of Christ’s suffering at the hands of craven Jews became de rigueur in accounts of the Passion. In a painstaking analysis, the author explains that when the crown of thorns was placed on Christ’s head its spikes pierced the Lord’s skull and that the Jews were pleased about this. The Jews delighted, he asserts, not only at seeing Jesus suffer but also because ancient notions that the soul resided in the heart, blood, and the head “were known to the Jews.” Thus, “[I]n order to tear his [Jesus’s] soul from his body they sought it in his head by driving thorns all the way into the brain, looked for it in his blood by opening the veins in his hands and feet, and tried to reach it in his heart by piercing his side.” In this standard compendium of saintly exempla, Jews figure as cunning, vicious enemies of the Lord.

As these narratives were adopted within a variety of textual genres in various vernaculars, the anti-Jewish rhetoric became increasingly pitched. A late fourteenth-century narrative poem from Picardy typifies accounts of the nailing to the cross.

Then the Jews took Jesus by the arm
And hurt him greatly
It is unbelievable how they pulled him,
So much that they broke the veins in his body
And the nerves of his breast and of his heart

... And you should know, and it is true,
That the Jews were very angry
Because the feet were far away
From the hole [in the cross]...
[So] then with a rope they found there
They tied the feet of our savior.
Then they started pulling so hard,
Four people pulling together as one man,
That they of the bones, with the pulling they did,
Broke all the joints.

The formulations found in this passage had become standardized by the end of the fourteenth century, surfacing in meditational texts written and distributed across northern Europe. Indeed, the increased production and broad dissemination of such tropes for describing the events of the Passion parallels the dispersion of the ivories central to this investigation.

The writings from England exemplify such transregional replication of
tropes. In his “Shorter Meditations,” Richard Rolle (d. 1349), for instance, offers an account of the nailing to the cross strikingly similar to that in the Picard poem just discussed. His text, addressed directly to Christ, goes on to recount the raising of the cross:

Then there went over to the cross a great crowd of Jews, who picked it up and lifted it in the air, with all the strength they had and thrust it hard down into the shaft which had been prepared for it in the hill. Your wounds burst and ran out painfully, so that your body hung there utterly jarred; wretched indeed was your condition!71

“The Fifteen Oes,” a series of prayers probably written in late fourteenth-century England, links devotion to the Passion and hatred of the Jews directly to penitential reward.72 For the text repeats formulas of the type reviewed above, and legends associated with the Oes promise that regular recitation of the prayers will release the reader’s dead family members from purgatory and guarantee salvation for the reader him or herself, while they assert that Christ will reveal himself to the reader fifteen days before death.

Accounts of Jewish scorn for Christ were not limited to texts for devotion. The fourteenth century witnessed an expansion and augmentation in liturgical drama—vivid performances that brought the remote tales of the biblical past into the world of the vernacular present. Two early fourteenth-century German dramas exemplify developing trends in the genre.73 Though these dramas are relatively mild in their portrayal of Jews compared to fifteenth-century and later German Passion plays, the two pieces still cast Jews as principally responsible for Christ’s death, figures who stubbornly refuse to accept that Jesus is the messiah promised in scripture and who scorn the crucified Jesus up to his final moments.74 The Frankfurter Dirigierrolle, a work from the first half of the fourteenth century, is essentially a compilation of stage directions with key lines of dialogue written in. The episode with Christ hanging on the cross draws directly upon the accounts of the mocking Jews in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke cited above. The Dirigierrolle text, however, offers a mix of biblical Latin and vernacular Middle German, ensuring that Jewish enmity was comprehensible to all members of the audience. The directions instruct that Michilman, a Jew, is to stand before the cross and scorn Christ, exclaiming: “If he is the king of the Jews [rex Israel est], he should come down now and we will believe him. / If he is king of the Jews [der luden kunig], Christ.” Another Jew, named Speklin is to chime in: “Now see who is the son of God.”75 The Saint Gall Passion Play of western Germany (early fourteenth-century), the earliest extant example of a full-length Passion drama in the vernacular, similarly offered the people of the Rhineland a vivid dialogue to recall whenever they meditated upon Christ’s final moments on the cross. In the
play the high priest Annas protests the titulus above Christ that identifies him as "King of the Jews." The text reads:

[L]et Annas say to Pilate:
Master, as surely as I live,
the inscription is not correct.
Do not write that he was king,
for that is very loathsome to us;
write rather that he claimed publicly
to be our king, and that was not true.

Pilate then insists that the titulus remain, and Annas continues:

Since that can not be otherwise,
let it be your will,
that we might break his legs
and those of his companions.76

Frustrated in their quest to debunk Christ’s majesty, the Jews seek one last blow to Jesus’s limbs—limbs that already have endured horrible tortures.

Performed, chanted, whispered, these fourteenth-century Passion texts constituted the web of associations that made up the popular understanding of Christ’s Crucifixion and the role of the Jews within it. Returning to the devotional ivories, one, however, is struck by a disjunction between the images and the texts. Written accounts of Christ’s Passion often shriek with wrenching details of the horrors that Christ endured in his final hours. In the ivories, by contrast, Christ’s body hangs silently, even daintily intact on the cross. So too, the texts leave no doubt as to the cruelty of the Jews, delighting in Christ’s torture, concocting ingenious ways to increase his torment. The crucifixion ivories, on the other hand, present small clusters of Jews, sometimes gesturing toward Christ (see Fig. 3), sometimes merely conferring between themselves (see Fig. 4, for example) but never inflicting pain. These scenes—frozen, miniaturized tableaux that stood in for the entire narrative of the Passion—exhibit a calm that is not evident in the Passion texts.

Given the relative refinement of the ivories, it is difficult to draw a direct line between the texts’ hateful portrayals of Jews and the contained clusters of Israelites depicted in the images. Indeed, it is likely that some viewers experienced the Jews in the ivories in relatively positive terms, alien to the accounts in the Passion texts, as discussed above. And some may have limited their understanding of Jewish participation in Christ’s execution simply through reference to the biblical accounts, repeated in early Passion plays. But another body of evidence can enrich our understanding of the relationship between Passion texts and off-the-rack ivories as experienced by fourteenth-century beholders. Leaving the
question of iconography to the side for the moment, I turn now to investigate the physical qualities of carved devotional ivories themselves, considering how they offered their original owners a share in the emerging market for luxury goods in the fourteenth century. As such, the relatively refined images of Jews at the foot of the cross found in the ivories functioned as appealing, precious schema that echoed but did not illustrate the more horrifying texts. This refinement was suited to the status of the ivories as accessible luxury commodities.

**Passion Ivories as Commodities**

Serially produced devotional ivories were created to suit the tastes of growing urban populations and other nonelite owners. Our ability to fully assess these tastes, however, is stymied by the fact that some aspects of the original appearance of these works are lost to us. For it seems that in the fourteenth century most or many of the ivories made for sale in city centers were painted and gilt. A palm-sized diptych probably made in Cologne, ca. 1340–50, showing the consecration of St. Martin by two ecclesiastics and the legend of St. Martin of Tours, seems to retain its original polychromy (Fig. 9). A lapis lazuli blue enriches the ground and red adorns the roof tiles in the upper portion of the hinged plaques. On the left leaf an unidentified figure is painted in behind Martin’s head in gold, and further gilding heightens all the other figures in the work. Instances such as this, however, are rare. Many surviving ivories lost their original painted adornment when they entered the antiquities markets in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, if not before. Dealers and purchasers with a taste for the pure whiteness of neoclassical sculpture scrubbed and bleached the pieces, erasing the patina of age, as well as paint.

Written sources tell us little about the original adornment of devotional diptychs. Theophilus, the twelfth-century monk who wrote a treatise on the arts, remarks only on gilding and staining with madder root. Cennino Cennini’s fourteenth-century *Libro dell’arte* says nothing. A team of researchers at the Louvre, however, has begun scientific studies to recover traces of this lost polychromy, and there have been more limited investigations on objects at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Though the focus of the technical investigations to date has been on the most refined works, often freestanding statuettes rather than diptychs, there are trends that seem to be consistent across a variety of sculpted forms. The typical practice was to augment garments, hair, attributes and backgrounds with color, while leaving faces, hands and sometimes larger passages of bodies unadorned. Such selective polychromy enhanced the visual force of the tiny works while drawing attention to the creamy appeal of the ivory material itself.
With the addition of color to devotional diptychs, analogies to works in other media become evident. Formal similarities to contemporary manuscript illuminations are plain in the shared use of architectonic frames and the installation of figures against flat backgrounds—single toned or with diaper patterns. But painted ivories evoked other, even more luxurious media: enameled gold and metalwork. The fourteenth century was a highpoint for European metalsmithing. In this era, at noble and royal courts as well as urban workshops, artists refined the production of chamévé enamel and developed a new approach, the basse-taille technique. The latter mode uses chasing and engraving to set a design in gold or silver; this is then covered over with translucent enamels in rich colors.

An English diptych now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, made of silver, framed in gold, and enameled in translucent blue, two tones of green as well as yellow, grey, purple, red, and brown, exemplifies basse-taille work (Fig. 10). This miniature piece offers devotional scenes familiar from my previous discussion of ivories:
on the right wing are the Annunciation and a combined Nativity with the Adoration of the Magi; on the left is the Crucifixion. The exterior of this diptych also features images alluding to salvation: the Ascension and Resurrection, the Coronation of the Virgin, and Sts. Christopher and George. Parallel to the approaches taken in polychromed ivories, the heads and hands of all the figures remain unadorned and architectural frames subdivide the plaques. The diptych clearly was made to be carried around, and also could be set up in a domestic space. The will of one John Winwick of 1359 refers to a similar work, identifying it as “the piece that regularly sat on the altar of the household chapel.” Like ivory diptychs, small-scale metalwork pieces offered precious, miniaturized devotional images, perfect for carrying in a pocket or installing as a focus for devotion within the home.

Works similar to the Victoria and Albert Museum diptych were made in England, France, and the Rhineland. A handful of these survive, though written records indicate that extant pieces represent only a tiny portion of what was actually created for the fourteenth-century nobility. The richest written records of such works stem from the French royal house of Valois, princes who demonstrate a zeal for collecting enameled metalwork. Inventories of Louis of Anjou (1339–84) and Charles V (1338–80) particularly attest that these royal sons and their wives...
commissioned and received as gifts thousands of pieces in *orfèverie*—gold and silver plate, jewelry, devotional pieces, and "*joyaux,*" for the amusement of courtiers. The largest collection, at about four thousand pieces, was that of Louis of Anjou. Charles V was second at around thirty-five hundred—about 15–20% of which were in gold. And in a rare fortuitous survival, a pair of mirror valves can actually be matched to an entry in the inventories of Louis of Anjou (Fig. 11). Wrought in translucent enamel on gold, and originally hinged, one roundel presents the Virgin and Child standing on a tribune beneath a row of trefoil arches, flanked by Sts. John and Catherine. The other depicts the same setting, this time presenting God the Father with Sts. Charlemagne and John the Baptist, all bearded, with Louis's sainted royal ancestor looking remarkably like the Lord himself. The artist here explores techniques for modeling the figures' bodies and vestments and achieves a striking degree of detail in the depiction of hair and facial features.

Anecdotes revealing the noble enthusiasm for such works enhance the physical and documentary evidence. It was said, for example, that in 1352 the fourteen-year-old dauphin Charles (future Charles V), sick in bed, requested that the royal goldsmith, Pierre des Barres, fashion a toy chariot—a *joyau*—to distract the ailing youth from his suffering. Several years later, in 1356, when Charles's father was imprisoned in England, the dauphin was scolded by his uncle, Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV (1316–78), for sustaining too lavish an entourage. Christine de Pisan (1364–1431), however, gives an account of the sumptuous gifts the emperor received from his nephews on his visit to Paris in 1378. Further, as Gaborit-Chopin observes, neither war, nor royal infighting, nor the Black Death seem to have dampened the aristocratic taste for lavish metalwork. Gift exchange
of orfèverie (along with illuminated manuscripts and other treasures) was central in the diplomacy of late medieval courts, an aspect of a "surplus of visibility" nourished by the Valois and their intimates. Brigitte Buettner recently has explored such ostentation in taste and expense, the "prestigious expenditure" expected of the aristocratic estates in the fourteenth century and beyond.95

In the cities of the fourteenth century, production, consumption, and exchange of luxury metalwork was not limited to royal courts. This era saw a great expansion in the number of urban palaces established by the lesser nobility.96 In Paris there were roughly twenty hôtels from which both secular and ecclesiastical regional magnates administered their territories and, more relevant, indulged in the conspicuous displays of wealth attendant with their social estate. In England more than thirty clerical and lay lords built great "inns" in London and along the Strand, leading toward Westminster. Cologne presents a similar situation. Each of these palaces required scores if not hundreds of workers to sustain the habits of the aristocracy, creating vast urban populations with an awareness of the luxuries of court life.97 Sometimes these workers were even treated to gifts of low-level metalwork produced en masse with simple motifs like a ruler's heraldry, affording palace workers with a corporate identity while perhaps stoking acquisitive aspirations.98

Works amassed and exchanged by the nobility of Europe were created not only at court ateliers but also at city workshops. Paris was a principal center for production, with many goldsmith shops clustered on the Grand Pont.99 As Gaborit-Chopin points out, individual smiths are named by their contemporaries in striking numbers in the pages of archival sources.100 This contrasts starkly with the anonymous treatment of ivory carvers, a fact that suggests the differing statuses for workers in the two media.101 That is, goldsmiths often were celebrated for their luxury achievements created for the upper echelons of society. Most ivory carvers, on the other hand, were workaday professionals, cranking out standardized pieces for the lesser estates.

Comparison between enameled precious metals and ivories heightened with polychrome, along with documentary evidence, suggests that in the fourteenth century ivories functioned as relatively affordable stand-ins for more luxurious works created for courtiers.102 Indeed, urban burgurers apparently had a taste for the enameled luxuries that were beyond their reach financially. Statutes of 1309 make plain that there were those who concocted "false enamels" on the cheap, using lead glass on dull, impure silver.103 As a new form of commodity, the standardized ivories, sometimes polychromed and often featuring "classic" Crucifixion compositions, allowed burgurers to mimic the tastes and habits of the aristocracy.104 Now urbanités and other middle estate consumers could have their own richly-colored, precious markers of wealth and status—a fourteenth-century version of the designer "knock-off."105
This is not to deny, however, that once acquired, serially produced diptychs had very real devotional functions and, thus, spiritual meanings. Igor Kopytoff provides a useful model for analysis of objects as they move through societies, fluctuating in their commoditized status as they change ownership and are used by different individuals. Held and pocketed or set up within the domestic chapels of individual users, devotional diptychs offered their owners a powerful new means of access to the divine. Previously, burghers had had to turn to the public realm—parish or metropolitan churches, shrines erected in city centers—to view scenes replicating and inspiring meditation on the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Resurrection. But with the expansion in the market for ivory diptychs, nonnobles could establish an intimate intersubjective relationship with Christ and his suffering mother. They could touch, feel the weight of, and gaze upon these objects too small to be viewed by more than one person at a time. And in turn, the weighty object, made from tusk, the bone of a living being, could remind them of the corporality God was said to have taken on in Jesus, a corporality that bound Christ to human experience.

A fundamental paradox of the Christian understanding of the Crucifixion is that here an episode of execution is conceived as one of glory—an expression of the notion that in the heavenly kingdom, the last will be first (Matt. 19:30 and 20:16). In the fourteenth century artists increasingly amplified the grisly aspects of Christ’s torture and suffering on the cross in sculptures such as the Röttgen Pietà (Fig. 12) and the Cologne Pestkreuz (Fig. 13). In these works, Christ’s abjection is manifest in the revolting deformity of his body, conveying his patent humanity and his ultimate sacrifice for the sake of human salvation. Such images thus invert the standard trope in European thought from antiquity on that outward beauty is a mark of inner merit and, conversely, that ugliness manifests internal inferiority or wickedness. In an analysis of this disjunction in relation to late medieval images, Jeffrey Hamburger explores the complementary notion that the spiritually elite could recognize Christ’s beauty and glory despite his abject state on the cross. One account Hamburger considers, for instance, tells the story of a German nun who, in the words of a fourteenth-century chronicle, “was standing most piously in front of a crucifix that was painted in a particularly gruesome and sorrowful manner. . . . [And after she prayed, Christ] then showed her spiritually his noble, blissful humanity in a leprous image. . . . Our Lord once again was bright and desirable.” The religious who could throw off the material world were able to see beyond Christ’s debased state to encounter directly his transcendent beauty, an expression of his divinity as well as the truth of the Resurrection.

The serially produced Crucifixion ivories made for broad lay publics offered a shortcut to this ultimate goal. In these works, Christ is shown as anything but the wretched man of sorrows evident in many public images of the fourteenth century. Instead he is an elegant figure whose dignity is enhanced by the delicate Gothic
frame above him and the languid, sometimes courtly, Christian figures that surround him. The refined elements of these renderings were enhanced all the more so when polychromy was added, underscoring affinities to enameled pieces associated with the nobility. Owners of such works did not have to submit themselves to the rigors of ascetic devotion as exemplified by Hamburger’s fourteenth-century nun. Instead, anyone with the means to buy a modest ivory diptych or plaque could become privy to Christ’s elegance and dignity revealed on the cross.

In fourteenth-century ivories brutish Jews were the steady companions to a noble Christ. Widely circulating texts taught the owners of such works to understand Jews as the instigators and wretched perpetrators of Christ’s torture and execution. Such narratives helped constitute the popular horizon of expectations for
Christians as they contemplated the story of the Crucifixion. The ivories, however, spared their viewers exposure to scenes of Jewish brutality so prevalent in the Passion texts—and, indeed, new public image types—whitewashing the narrative into a palatable formulation that evoked, through elegant style, the glories of salvation and through material, the splendor of the earthly court. With the aid of these ivories, then, Christian burghers could imagine themselves to be affluent affiliates to the nobility, this over and against realities in which prosperous Jews in fact often were the ones protected by aristocratic rulers. Ultimately, serially produced Crucifixion ivories offered middle-estate owners visions of Christ’s beauty that otherwise could only be glimpsed by mystics and the intensely devout, and images of Jews as figures to be converted, scorned, or displaced.
Early versions of this research were presented at the University of Minnesota (2004), the 40th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI (2005), the 12th International Medieval Congress, Leeds (2005), and Fordham University (2005). I appreciate the comments and suggestions offered by audience members at these gatherings. I thank Brigitte Buettner, Sara Lipton, Elizabeth (Libby) Parker, Stephen Perkinson, and the anonymous readers for Studies in Iconography for reading drafts of this article and giving valuable guidance. Funds from Fordham University’s Faculty Research Expense Program covered the costs for photographs and permissions. I am also grateful to Susan Noakes, Griff Mann, and Dan Smail for offering encouragement at crucial moments in the formulation of this project. The study that follows is dedicated to our son, Ezra, who, during his first few weeks on this planet, slept quietly in my lap as I revised this text.

1. I resist terming fourteenth-century ivories mass-produced objects because, while the pieces share a limited range of formats, styles, and iconographies, no two are identical. Further, the term mass-produced suggests mechanized production, while the ivories in question are handcrafted.

2. In the new edition of Marilyn Stokstad’s medieval art history survey textbook, for example, thirty-one pages are devoted to “Rayonnant Gothic and its Reverberations,” but only one secular ivory and no devotional ones are discussed (Marilyn Stokstad, Medieval Art, 2nd ed. [Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004], 306–7). In the new edition of James Snyder’s medieval survey, the twenty pages given to “Saint Louis and Late Medieval France,” address an impressive four ivory works, but two of them are secular and the sacred works are a statuette of the Virgin and a bishop’s crozier—that is, no devotional plaquettes are examined (Henry Luttikhuizen, Dorothy Verkerk, et al., Snyder’s Medieval Art, 2nd ed. [Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006], 378–80). These works are both outstanding medieval survey textbooks, so I point out the deficiencies as a way to exemplify larger trends in the field, not to criticize the volumes or their authors. For trenchant comments on the place of ivories, as well as other “sumptuous arts” within the art historical canon, see Brigitte Beuttner, “Toward a Historiography of the Sumptuous Arts,” in A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 466–87.

3. It should be noted however that in the past two decades there have been important museum exhibitions showcasing top rank exemplars of Gothic ivory carving. The catalogues from these shows as well as publications on single collections make landmark contributions to the field. The principal catalogues are: Richard Randall et al., Masterpieces of Ivory from the Walters Art Gallery (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1985); Peter Barnet, ed., Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1997); Regine Marth, Meisterwerke aus Elfenbein der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin (Berlin: Staatlichen Museen zur Berlin, 1999); Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, Ivoires médiévaux, Ve–XVe siècle, Musée du Louvre, Département des objets d’art, catalogue (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2003); and Danielle Gaborit-Chopin and Annie Caubet, Ivoires: De l’Orient ancien aux Temps modernes (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004). See also Richard Randall, The Golden Age of Ivory: Gothic Carvings in North American Collections (New York: Hudson Hills Press, Inc., 1993).


6. “Ces imitations médiocres d’illustres modèles peuvent avoir encore un autre origine que la


9. Among many possible examples, see for instance Koechlin, Ivoires gothiques, 1:20.

10. In my approach I participate in a dialogue inaugurated by Richard Goldthwaite who similarly takes an anthropological approach and examines the position of art within a large consumer culture in Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

11. Randall, Golden Age, no. 141.


13. Randall, Golden Age, no. 128.


15. Randall, Golden Age, no. 119.

16. Fourteen such pieces are catalogued by Koechlin (Ivoires gothiques, 2: nos. 284–98). The earliest of these is listed in the 1380 inventory of Charles V, king of France, and others were owned by noble connoisseurs including the French king’s brother, Jean, duke of Berry. Koechlin dubs the group the work of the “Passion Master,” based on the iconographies of the diptychs. A recent assessment of this group with up-to-date bibliography is found in Barnet, Images in Ivory, 174–79 (nos. 31–33).

17. Randall, Golden Age, no. 76; and Christina Nielsen, Devotion and Splendor: Medieval Art at the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago: Art institute of Chicago, 2004), 61.

18. For instance, Randall, Golden Age, 104.

19. Ivory was rare and precious, for example, in the Carolingian and Ottonian eras. The classic study of these works is Adolph Goldschmidt, Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser, VIII.–XI. Jahrhundert, 2 vols. (Berlin: Cassirer, 1914 and 1918; repr. 1969). See also Melanie Holcomb, “The Function and Status of Carved Ivory in Carolingian Culture” (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Michigan, 1999).


26. See the catalogue Barnet, Images in Ivory, for a useful overview of the range of production.


29. See the discussions in Koechlin, Les ivoires gothiques, 1:7–20; and Elizabeth Sears, “Ivory and Ivory Workers in Medieval Paris,” in Barnet, Images in Ivory, 19–37, this list at 22.

30. As observed by Sears, “Ivory and Ivory Workers,” 24.


34. See Charles Little, “Gothic Ivory Carving in Germany,” 82–83; and Musée Curtius, *La Nativité dans l’art* (Liège: Le Musée, 1959), no. 120.


36. For a discussion of Early Christian carving techniques relevant to the present analysis, see Cutler, “Prolegomena to the Craft of Ivory Carving,” 443–54.

37. Analyzing the fourteenth century it is important to make a terminological distinction: modern notions of class do not pertain in a society in which blood lines and a habitus based in lavish expenditure more than surplus wealth were markers of social status. It is more apt, thus, to consider the aristocracy and nonnoble urban dwellers to represent differing “estates,” rather than classes in the modern sense. See Stephen Henry Rigby, “Historical Materialism: Social Structure and Social Change in the Middle Ages,” in *The Marxist Premodern*, ed. Bruce Holsinger and Ethan Knapp, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34, no. 3 (2004): 473–522, at 475–77.


40. Long-term projects cataloging late medieval ivories are now underway at the Courtauld Institute of Art and the Index of Christian Art. On the former, see: http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/researchforum/projects/gothic-ivories/index.shtml


44. There are examples in the *Bibles moralisées* stemming from the French royal court: Vienna, ÖNB, MS 2554, fol. 57v; and Oxford, Bodleian, MS 270b, fol. 25v, for instance. I thank an anonymous reader for this observation and these examples.


Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).


57. See Lipton, Images of Intolerance, passim.

58. Exemplary works are: James H. Marrow, Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: A Study of the Transformation of Sacred Metaphor into Descriptive Narrative (Kortrijk: Van Ghemmert, 1979); Alasdair A. MacDonald, H. N. Bernhard Ridderbos, and R. M. Schlusemann, eds., The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late Medieval Culture (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998); and Marcia Kupfer, ed., The Passion Story: From Visual Representation to Social Drama (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2008).


60. For an excellent discussion of the Latin tradition with an overview of vernacular works as well, see Thomas Bestul, Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1996), 26–68. My discussion of Passion texts was inspired by Bestul’s work, and my analysis of the representation of Jews in vernacular Passion texts especially owes a debt to his third chapter. Bestul, along with other scholars of late medieval religious practice, demonstrates that devotional texts were driven by and, in turn, helped constitute political and social conceptions. While recognizing that late medieval Passion devotion often was driven by local contingencies, I hope that my more generalized study of the material objects that participated within these discourses will enrich the dialogue over the social meanings and uses of Passion devotion. Leading studies exemplifying new trends in the scholarship are Sarah Beckwith, Christ’s Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings (New York: Routledge, 1993); and David Aers and Lynn Staley, The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1996).


69. For German examples, see Manuela Niesner, “Wer mit juden well disputiren”: Deutschsprachige Adversus-Judaeos-Literatur des 14. Jahrhunderts (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005), 159–91 and 195–214. On such accounts as commonplace, see Bestul (*Texts of the Passion*, 44), as well as the analysis in his fifth chapter which relates such textual trends to the actual practice of torture.

70. On the multiplication of devotional texts in the period between 1350 and 1450 with further references, see Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas Bestul, eds., *Cultures of Piety: Medieval English Devotional Literature in Translation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 9–14.


73. Such dramas, of course, were performed across northern Europe. An accessible English version where the Jews are explicitly vilified is the “Northern Passion.” See Wilhelm Heuser and...


78. There are also, however, clear instances of modern repainting, for example a diptych in Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Skulptursammlung, Nr. 632–633. Reproduced in Marth, *Meisterwerke aus Elfenbein*, 115 (no. 43).


81. For the evidence, albeit limited, on the polychromy of fourteenth-century devotional diptychs, see Gaborit-Chopin, “Polychrome Decoration,” 56–57.

82. This point is emphasized by Gauthier. See discussion below.

83. For overviews, see Marie-Madeleine Gauthier, *Émaux du moyen âge occidental* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1972), 204–303; R. W. Lightbown, *Secular Goldsmiths’ Work in Medieval France:*

84. On this and other techniques, see Lightbown, Secular Goldsmiths’ Work, 62–68.


88. For discussion, see Gauthier, Émaux du moyen âge, 245–48, 254–60, and 280–94; Lightbown, Secular Goldsmiths’ Work, 10–19. For more focused overviews see the exhibition catalogues: Donzet and Siret, Les Fastes du gothique, and Musée du Louvre, Paris 1400. The other Valois brothers Jean, duke of Berry, and Philip the Bold of Burgundy reserved their enthusiasm for other media, especially manuscripts.


91. Gauthier, Émaux du moyen âge, 286–87; and Musée du Louvre, Paris 1400, 59–60 (no. 20), with further references.

92. For the following anecdotes, see Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, “Orfèvrerie et émaillerie,” in Donzet and Siret, Fastes du gothique, 220–24, at 220.


96. For a good introductory discussion, see Peter Spufford, Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 74–84. This outstanding study of late
medieval economy, however, relies on outdated information for its discussion of the ivory trade (279–80).


98. On this practice, see Buettner, “Past Presents,” 615 and 624 n. 111.

99. The ca. 1268 Livre des Mestiers of Etienne Boileau, discussed above in relation to ivory workshop practices, makes plain the perceived superiority of Parisian metalsmithing. One regulation maintains: “No goldsmith may work in gold at Paris, save it be of the touch of Paris or better: which touch surpasses all the gold of every sort worked on earth.” (“Nus Orfevre ne puet ouvrer d’or à Paris, qu’il ne soit a la touche de Paris ou mieudres: la quelle touche passe touz les ors de quoi en oeuvre en nulle terre.”) Lightbown, Secular Goldsmiths’ Work, 5.


101. Though there are a handful of celebrated ivory workers whose names do come down to us. See Koechlin, Ivoires gothiques, 1:9–13, and appendix 1.


103. Lightbown, Secular Goldsmiths’ Work, 83.

104. I use the term “commodity” here not in the sense of neoclassical economics as “goods” but rather with a Marxist understanding that the analysis of the modes of production and the circulation of commodities can lay bare dynamics of class relations. Marx and Engels, of course, considered modern capitalism centered in the exchange of commodities to begin in the sixteenth century, though scholars now recognize that the relevant trends toward urbanization and commercialization date to ca. 1300, if not earlier. See the useful analysis of the relevance of Marxism to the analysis of the Middle Ages in Rigby, “Historical Materialism,” 500–1.


107. It is worthwhile to note that, particularly in the late Middle Ages, images in public spaces often were created to inspire personal, individualized religious experience. This issue is explored in Richard Marks, Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England (Thrupp, UK: Sutton, 2004); and Kathleen Kamerick, Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England, 1350–1500 (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

108. Compelling questions pertaining to such “visual piety” are laid out in Thomas Lentes, “‘As far as the eye can see . . . ’: Rituals of Gazing in the Late Middle Ages,” in The Mind’s Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 360–73. This and the other essays in this important volume offer a road map for future inquiry.

110. Vision of the nun Elbeth in an early fourteenth-century chronicle perhaps from Württemberg, as in Hamburger, “‘To Make Women Weep,’” 23–24 and n. 56.

111. For related explorations of the negotiation between Christ’s ugliness on the cross and his spiritual beauty see Peter Parshall, “The Art of Memory and the Passion,” Art Bulletin 81, no. 3 (1999): 456–72; and Sara Lipton, “‘The Sweet Lean of his Head’: Writing about Looking at the Crucifix in the High Middle Ages,” Speculum 80, no. 4 (2005): 1172–1208.