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Introduction to Mary Magdalene: Iconographic Studies from the Middle Ages to the Baroque

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INTRODUCTION

Scope and Focus of the Volume

From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, Mary Magdalene was second only to the Virgin Mary as a female subject in devotional art and narrative cycles. Vast resources—artistic, material, literary, and monetary—were devoted to creating images of the Magdalene. Although the Magdalene's popularity and prominence in the visual arts spanned three major eras in art history, there is a surprising dearth of scholarship focused on Magdalene iconography of this period. This volume aims to address this gap and demonstrate the enduring versatility of Mary Magdalene's iconography across different regions, audiences, religions, and politics.

Part of the great appeal of the Magdalene during the time period under consideration was her ability to relate to people. In contrast to the Virgin, who was born without original sin, the Magdalene led the life of a sinner, and yet still found great favor in Jesus' eyes. In this timeframe she represented the woman in Luke's Gospel who turned away from a life of sin (prostitution) and gained Jesus' forgiveness. Through her conversion and subsequent life as a penitent, Mary Magdalene served as a role model for the laity and ecclesiastics alike. Although it was in her role as the embodiment of repentance that she first became popular, her persona grew in complexity through exegesis, legend, sermons, and mystery plays. Informed by the richness and intricacy of her story in textual sources she assumed many guises in visual art, including that of witness to the Resurrection, reformed prostitute, preacher, miracle worker, and hermetic penitent. As new layers were added to her character, her appeal to a wider spectrum of the population grew, as did her presence in religious art. It is acknowledged that in the arena of religious art and iconography, Mary Magdalene's great versatility made her one of the most frequently illustrated saints. In essence, Mary Magdalene became many things to many people, and patrons of religious art were eager to commission images of her that simultaneously communicated their own ideals and strivings.

While the past decade witnessed a resurgence of interest in Mary Magdalene, the discussion specifically of the saint's iconography has been surprisingly limited. Typically, explorations of Magdalene imagery have largely been limited to brief mentions as mere artifacts within larger historical and religious studies of the saint. The most notable contributions to the

advancement of Magdalene iconographic studies date back over fifty years. Victor Saxer's career dedicated to studying the cult of Mary Magdalene ushered in the first serious scholarship on the Magdalene, culminating in his 1959 publication, *Le Culte de Marie Madeleine en Occident: des Origines à la Fin du Moyen Age*.¹ More than thirty years later, Susan Haskins's *Mary Magdalen, Myth and Metaphor* (1993) was the first examination of the saint to discuss her various roles, or guises, and the symbolism that was implied. Haskins's publication was groundbreaking in its nuanced interpretation of the saint and spurred an entire generation of scholars from varied disciplines, including art history, dedicated to exploring the importance of Mary Magdalene. Of this generation, one of the most noteworthy publications is Katherine L. Jansen's *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (2000), which explores the symbiotic development of Mary Magdalene and the mendicant orders in Italy in the fourteenth century. Embraced by the mendicants, the use of Mary Magdalene in their art established much of the visual tradition for the saint. Within the last decade fictional publications on Mary Magdalene, such as Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* (2003), caused a resurgence of interest in the saint, including the proliferation of numerous publications, many of which were limited to historical invention. To this date, no comprehensive study of the saint in visual art has been published. In fact, the most exhaustive studies of Magdalene iconography remain unpublished. Most notably is the 1961 dissertation by Marga Anstett-Janßen entitled, "Maria Magdalena in der Abendländischen Kunst. Ikonographie der Heiligen von den Anfängen bis ins 16 Jahrhundert," which is concerned with the time period covered by this volume.²

This anthology seeks to fill the void in art historical literature through an exclusive focus on the iconography of pivotal cycles and images of Mary Magdalene produced from the fourteenth through the seventeenth century. Additionally, the authors in this volume examine novel scenes or unique iconographic features with a contextual lens. By considering iconography in tandem with an image's context, the authors shed light on the relationship between Mary Magdalene and her patrons, both corporate and private, as well as the religious institutions and regions where her imagery is found. Ultimately, this volume is significant because it represents the only dedicated iconographic and contextual study of Mary Magdalene imagery available.

What this anthology reveals is the flexibility of the Magdalene's character in visual art and,

in essence, the reinvention of her iconography from one generation to the next. Unique to many other saints in the medieval lexicon, the figure of Mary Magdalene was altered over time to satisfy the changing needs of her patrons as well as her audience. This publication seeks to show how her fluidity in art aided her continued popularity and devotion for over four hundred years.

Mary Magdalene in the Gospels

Textual sources served as the point of departure for much of the Magdalene imagery created in the time period under consideration and as such provide necessary background information for understanding the Magdalene images discussed in this volume. Since Mary Magdalene was one of the few saints who could claim a direct relationship with Christ, references to her in the New Testament fostered numerous representations, particularly at her debut in religious art. The Gospels positioned Mary Magdalene as one of Christ's closest disciples and indirectly as a reformed prostitute who repented for her sins.

The historical Mary Magdalene, specified by her first and last name, appears in twelve different passages in the Gospels most of which relate to the events surrounding Christ's Passion and Resurrection.³ Luke introduces her, describing her as the woman who was healed of seven demons (8:2).⁴ After identifying her as such, he adds in the following verse (3) that she was one of the women "who ministered unto him [Christ] of their substance." Matthew's Gospel (27:55) also insinuates that Mary Magdalene was a disciple, describing her as one of the women who had followed Christ from Galilee "ministering unto him."

Particularly significant to Mary Magdalene's depiction in religious art are the Gospel passages that elaborate on her presence at the crucial events of Christ's Passion. Both Matthew (27:56) and Mark (15:40) identify Mary Magdalene as one of those present at Christ's Crucifixion.⁵ John's Gospel also names Mary Magdalene as a witness at the Crucifixion, but provides greater detail placing her directly near the cross along with the Virgin Mary and Mary of Cleophas (19:25). According to the Gospel accounts, not only was Mary Magdalene at the Crucifixion, she was also present at Christ's burial. Both Matthew 27:61 and Mark 15:47 indicate that she was at the tomb after Christ was buried. Artistically, in scenes of the Crucifixion she often stands at, or near, the cross alongside the Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist, and other female mourners.

Representations of the Entombment display her accompanying Christ's body from Mount Golgotha to the tomb or weeping at his feet in the tomb. In Resurrection scenes, Mary Magdalene appears as one of the three Marys to whom Christ appeared.

Yet, the events of Easter morning account for Mary Magdalene's seminal role in narrative representations of Christ's Resurrection. Three of the four Gospels (Mark, Luke and John) identify the Magdalene (alone or in a group) as the first person to witness Christ's Resurrection and as the first to inform the disciples of it. Mark emphasized Mary Magdalene's premier role in the events surrounding the Resurrection, identifying her as the first person to whom Christ appeared. He also stated that she delivered the news of the Resurrection to the disciples (Mark 16:9–11).⁶ Mary Magdalene's involvement in Christ's Resurrection is even more extensive in John's account (20:1–18). According to his Gospel, after seeing that the tomb was empty Mary Magdalene informed Peter and another disciple of the news. Later she saw two angels at the site where Christ's body had been and after turning around saw Christ himself. Thinking that he was a gardener she asked him where he had taken the body of Christ. Once he spoke her name, she recognized him and referred to him as master (*rabboni*). When she tried to touch him he said to her, "Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren, and say to them: I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God." Mary then relayed to the disciples what Jesus had said to her. John's description of Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene was the source for one of the most popular episodes in both Christological and Magdalene cycles: the *Noli me tangere*. Emphasizing her role as the first witness to the Resurrection and the one sent to announce his Resurrection to the other disciples, Mary Magdalene became known in religious art as the *apostolorum apostola*, or the "Apostle to the Apostles."

Gregory the Great's "Composite Magdalene"

The medieval figure of Mary Magdalene did not appear exclusively in scenes derived from scriptural passages in which she was identified by her full name. In art she also features prominently in other frequently represented scenes from Christ's life, such as the Raising of Lazarus, the Feast in the House of Simon, and in images of Christ's visit to the home of Mary and Martha, where the Magdalene sits attentively at Christ's feet. While not

directly referred to by name in the New Testament passages from which these scenes were derived, Mary Magdalene's incorporation into them came about through one of the most well known examples of mistaken identity in religious history. In 591, Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540–604) asserted that Mary Magdalene, along with the anonymous sinner in Luke who washed Christ's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, and Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, were all the same person.⁷

The identification of Mary Magdalene as Luke's anonymous sinner led to the conception of her as a reformed prostitute. According to Luke (7:36–38) when Christ was eating dinner at the house of Simon the Pharisee, a woman who was known as a sinner came to see him at the Pharisee's house. She brought with her an alabaster box full of ointment "and standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet, with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and then kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment." In representations of the Anointing or Feast in the House of Simon, Mary Magdalene appears weeping at Christ's feet, usually before a banquet table, wiping them with her hair. Her association with the woman in Luke's Gospel emphasized her role as one of Christ's anointers on Easter morning. In images of the Anointing the Magdalene is frequently shown with an ointment jar (pyxis) or vase.

Inheriting the identity of Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, had further consequences for the medieval understanding of Mary Magdalene and her characterization in art. According to Luke's Gospel, while Christ was at Martha's house, Mary listened to his words and Martha occupied herself with serving. When Martha requested that Christ encourage Mary to help her, he responded to her that, "Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38–42). In addition to appearing in scenes of Lazarus' resurrection and other scenes related to the life of Martha and Lazarus, through Luke's Gospel account of Christ in the house of Mary and Martha, she became a representative of the contemplative life.⁸

Mary Magdalene and Medieval Legend

Similar to other saints, legends surrounding her life before and after Christ's death and Resurrection surfaced in the medieval period and formed the source for much of her artistic imagery. By the mid-thirteenth century, Jacobus de Voragine preserved the Magdalene's life

story in the *Golden Legend*, which combined the identities she inherited from various Gospel passages with apocryphal details that had circulated in disparate legends.⁹ According to the *Golden Legend*, fourteen years after Christ's Resurrection, Mary Magdalene, along with her siblings, Lazarus and Martha, and two other followers of Christ, Maximin and Cedonius, were exiled from Judea and cast off to sea in a rudderless boat to die. Instead of perishing, the boat landed in Marseilles where the Magdalene and her companions spent the rest of their lives preaching and converting the pagan residents of Gaul to Christianity.¹⁰ There, Mary Magdalene preached the Gospels, performed many miracles, and even converted the ruler of Marseilles and his wife to the teachings of Christ. For the last thirty years of her life she retreated to the desert of Provence where she lived as an ascetic in prayer, devoting her remaining days to penance for the sins of her youth. At every canonical hour she was lifted by angels to hear the celestial chants of heaven. On her last day, Maximin, who had been made Bishop of Aix, came to her so that she could receive Communion, at which time she shed tears of joy and then laid down and gave up her spirit to heaven.¹¹

The story of Mary Magdalene's life as presented in the Gospels and the popular *Golden Legend* consists of different segments or parts. In cyclical images of the Magdalene's life episodes from any one or all of these different parts were illustrated. While the source for her life as a companion to and follower of Christ was obviously derived from the Gospels, the *Golden Legend*, which combined earlier legends, supplied the material for all other segments of her life. According to Voragine's account of her pre-conversion life, she was a member of a noble family in Magdala, a fishing village in Galilee. While medieval writers disagreed somewhat on the factors that led to her prostitution, most argued that it was her great wealth and beauty that were her downfall.¹² The story of her pre-conversion life as a beautiful noble woman encouraged creative images of the secular or worldly Magdalene in which she might be hunting or participating in a court dance.¹³ References to her privileged upbringing also appear in scenes originating from other parts of her legend, particularly in her luxurious and sometimes revealing clothing.

Along with scenes from her life before her conversion to Christianity and as a disciple to Christ, images derived from what is described as her apostolic life frequently portrayed Mary Magdalene as a powerful preacher and witness to Christianity.¹⁴ Not only did she convert pagan Gaul but she performed miracles for the rulers of Marseilles, helping them

to bear a child and reviving their dead queen. While this segment of her life was popularized in the *Golden Legend*, it had existed long before its publication in the *vita apostolica*. Circulating in the eleventh century the *vita apostolica* was intimately tied to her cult in France and explained how the Magdalene's body came to rest at Vézelay. This section of her story often begins with scenes of her and her companions in a rudderless boat. Mary Magdalene's attempts to convert the people of Gaul to Christianity were captured in images of her either appearing to the pagan rulers of Marseilles in their bed chamber or preaching to the entire population. Particular cycles also represented the Magdalene's miracles performed on behalf of the rulers of Marseilles.

Whereas the apostolic life of the Magdalene ultimately arose from the need to account for her relics in Vézelay, an earlier legend, known as the *vita eremetica* was the source for her time spent as a penitent in the wilderness.¹⁵ According to the *vita eremetica*, which was written in the ninth century in southern Italy, the Magdalene retired to the desert after Christ's Ascension and lived there for thirty years without food or clothing. The legendary account of Mary Magdalene's life as a penitent in the desert was derived from the legend of Saint Mary of Egypt.¹⁶ According to legend, Mary of Egypt, who lived in the fifth century, became a prostitute at the age of twelve and remained in the profession for seventeen years. Having no money to journey to Jerusalem, she paid her way by performing her trade. When she arrived in Jerusalem, she was not permitted in the temple and became aware of the magnitude of her sins. She immediately repented and then lived alone in the desert in repentance for her sins. After forty-seven years in the desert, Zosimus, a holy monk administered her last Communion. She died the next day and Zosimus, along with a friendly lion, buried her.¹⁷ Representations of Mary of Egypt influenced those of Mary Magdalene. Both saints are often shown with long hair enveloping their body in a cavernous retreat or outdoors. Additionally, they both appear receiving their last communion.

Mary Magdalene's Cult

Indicated in the close association between her legend as the apostle of Gaul and the promotion of her relics at Vézelay, legend and cult were closely associated. Moreover, one of the byproducts of the growth in her cult was an increase in Magdalene imagery. While signs

of Magdalene devotion began to accumulate in the ninth and the tenth centuries throughout Europe,¹⁸ Mary Magdalene's rise in popularity paralleled the establishment of her cult in southern France in the twelfth century. In the thirteenth century another significant event occurred that was to have a profound effect on her cult and, more importantly, the character of her imagery. In 1279, Charles II, Prince of Salerno and member of the House of Anjou, dramatically changed the course of the saint's history when he claimed to discover the Magdalene's true relics at Saint-Maximin in southern France.¹⁹ In a vision Mary Magdalene told him that her relics were not in Vézelay, as previously thought, but in actuality remained near the city of Aix-en-Provence where they had been since her death. Acting upon this vision, on December 9th of that year, Charles presided over the official exhumation ceremonies of a tomb in the crypt of Saint Maximin, where the saint had led him. Upon opening the tomb, the saint's remains were miraculously rediscovered.²⁰ Ten days later prelates convened to authenticate the saint's body. After confirming the authenticity of the Magdalene's relics, they were exhumed and translated to an opulent reliquary. In 1283 the Magdalene's skull was removed and placed in a golden reliquary, crowned with an Angevin diadem sent especially for the occasion by the prince's father, Charles I, King of Naples.²¹ In 1295 Boniface VIII gave papal approval of the site and instituted the Dominicans as custodians of the Magdalene's shrine.²² These events led to the establishment of a new cult center for the saint, which quickly spread first to Italy thanks to the Angevin control over the city of Naples and the Dominican adoption of the saint as a paradigm of penance. In the century that followed the events at Saint-Maximin, the appearance of Mary Magdalene in visual art exploded and spread to other parts of Europe. The revival of fresco decoration within mendicant churches and the growing adoption of altar-pieces helped to establish Mary Magdalene as one of the most versatile and alluring subjects in visual art of the era.

Contents of the Magdalene Volume

Beginning in this nascent period in the fourteenth century, the essays in this anthology chronicle an overview of the development of Magdalene iconography through the seventeenth century. By examining the historical, socio-cultural, and contextual factors that promoted changes in her imagery, the authors weave together a complex tapestry that narrates the

evolution of Magdalene iconography in visual art. Together the five parts of this anthology address the major manifestations of the Magdalene's character—her role as saint, sinner, penitent, witness, and advocate. While the details of Mary Magdalene's life, replete with drama and a savory narrative, made her an attractive subject in art, the flexibility of her iconography and the allure of her story conveyed a powerful message of the ability of faith to transform sin into salvation.

Iconographic Invention in Late Medieval Magdalene Cycles

This first section focuses on narrative cycles in the late medieval period both south and north of the Alps. Starting in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, episodes from the Magdalene's *vita* appeared in a wide variety of media, including stained glass, fresco, manuscript illumination, and panel painting. While certain episodes of her life became standard, including the scenes of her Anointing, the *Noli me tangere*, and her Last Communion, new episodes were frequently added and overall characterized by a great variety of scenes. Few, if any cycles were identical and increasingly, the differences among scenes as well as the details of common portrayals often varied. In some instances the patron influenced her depiction, while other scenes may reflect broader trends in devotional literature or mystery plays. Scholars in this section explore what motivated specific scenes and the details of their representation as well as how Magdalene cycles could be customized according to their patrons, audience, or textual sources. Michelle Erhardt's essay discusses how the figure of Mary Magdalene became a symbol of repentance and salvation for the Franciscan order seeking to reach a mostly illiterate public. Whether portrayed as the sinner who washed Christ's feet with her tears, or the first witness to the Resurrection, Mary Magdalene emerged as a tangible model of deliverance from the sinful life. Erhardt argues that images of the saint presented an even more immediate and powerful message to the Franciscan friars themselves. Like their founder, Francis of Assisi, the Magdalene rejected a life of luxury and devoted herself to preaching and penance. By examining the Magdalene cycle from the Guidalotti-Rinuccini Chapel, Florence as a reflection of Franciscan ideals, the author reinterprets the cycle as a visual treatise on three of the most important aims of the order—dedication to penance, observation of the *vita mixta*, or the perfect union of the active and the contemplative lives, and the commitment to public preaching. Joanne

Anderson examines the iconographical innovation that took place in the rarely discussed Alpine parish churches dedicated to the cult of Mary Magdalene. The late fourteenth-century fresco cycle in the church of Santa Maddalena in Rencio near Bolzano is the primary focus of her study. Set in its artistic context, Anderson's essay reconsiders the fundamental role Martha, Mary's sister according to legend, played in her conversion away from worldly vices in both Italian and German traditions. Her investigation of a unique scene and the factors that influenced its innovations and appeal broaden our understanding of regional variants in the evolution of Magdalene imagery. Furthering the Germanic connection to Magdalene iconographic innovations, Amy Morris revisits Lucas Moser's *Saint Magdalene Altarpiece*, one of the most significant Magdalene cycles created in fifteenth-century Germany. She unearths sources for the cycle's unique iconographic program and reveals Moser's dependence on earlier German Magdalene cycles in terms of the selection of scenes and their composition, and, through a comparison with French and Italian cycles identifies the aspects of Magdalene iconography that are uniquely German proposing the abbot of the nearby Hirsau monastery as the likely iconographic advisor for the altarpiece. Together these articles illustrate the unique character that different sources brought to the early visual definitions of the Magdalene's *vita* and how they deviated from traditional and literary sources, shedding light on the influence of regional customs and religious orders, who sought her out in visual imagery as a didactic as well as tangible role model.

Mary Magdalene as the Reformed Sinner

The essays in the second section explore the Magdalene in one of her most popular guises, her transformation from a sinner to saint as a converted prostitute. To contemporary audiences of the renaissance and baroque periods, the Magdalene became a tangible model of redemption from the sinful life. While the scene of Mary Magdalene's conversion had been featured routinely in late Gothic cycles, they acquired new meaning in the sixteenth century. Beginning in this century individual episodes of Mary Magdalene's life appeared as isolated images. The message of her conversion served as a particularly poignant message to prostitutes as well as to the sexually promiscuous as some of the essays in this section emphasize. Rachel Geschwind's essay proposes that the Magdalene's image was a religious

and social model for the reform of prostitution in Venice and Rome between 1500 and 1700. Coinciding with the introduction of syphilis (the disease associated with prostitution) in the early sixteenth century and the incarceration of prostitutes at the end of the seventeenth century, Geschwind argues that Magdalene imagery in the form of religious chapbooks depicting the Conversion of the Magdalene and their secular counterparts, prints and moralizing broadsheets dedicated to the Lives and Miserable Ends of Prostitutes, can be inextricably linked to prostitution reform, and that the images presented were created in order to persuade, reinforce, and assist the intended viewer to participate in the popular campaign to decrease prostitution in early modern Italy. In a similar vein, Elizabeth Carroll Consavari's essay explores a flourishing reinvention of Mary Magdalene in Venice in the late sixteenth century. By reexamining Jacopo Tintoretto's so-called "Marian cycle" of canvases for the *sala terrena*, or ground floor, of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Consavari confirms the much-debated identification of these figures as pendant images of Mary of Egypt and Mary Magdalene. These two figures were especially significant to the confraternity's mission, aiding the growing numbers of those afflicted with the plague and syphilis, who sought emotional and physical comfort in the Scuola. Patrick Hunt in his essay on Caravaggio's *Penitent Magdalene* (1596–97) offers a new interpretation of the painting within the context of Counter-Reformation Rome, where Mary Magdalene was epitomized as the fallen sinner who became a great saint, a fitting subject for a Baroque melodrama. Hunt interprets Caravaggio's iconography as a possible twist against archbishop Gabriele Paleotti's 1682 injunction against the actual use of prostitutes and courtesans as models for saints. Hunt argues that in Caravaggio's mind what better sitter for a portrait of a prostitute than the well-known Roman courtesan Anna Bianchini, furthering a new meaning to the polarity between the sacred and profane. The irony of Caravaggio is that despite his reputation for shunning tradition, he actually followed sources much closer than his contemporaries, while simultaneously introducing new iconographic details in a very subtle manner. The articles of this section highlight the Magdalene's role as the reformed sinner or penitent, in visual imagery. In her most powerful manifestation, the Magdalene became an instrument for powerful campaigns for social reform, moral instruction, and political commentary by artists and patrons alike.

Noli me tangere: Mary Magdalene, the Witness

Similar to her role as penitent, part three consists entirely of essays that explore the iconography of the *Noli me tangere*, or Mary Magdalene's unique role as the first witness to the Resurrection. The scene's privileged status emphasized the Magdalene's special relationship to Christ. Like scenes of her conversion, the popularity of isolated images of her role in the Resurrection surged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A visual manifestation of the Gospel narrative taken from John 20:17, images of the *Noli me tangere*, meaning "touch me not," explore themes of physical and spiritual contact between Christ and his favourite female companion. In her essay, Barbara Baert discusses the anthropological field of tension of the body and embodiment in late medieval visual culture where the *Noli me tangere* theme occupies a special place. Both in exegesis and in artistic expression, Christ's prohibition on touching has been a starting point for broaching the relationship between spirituality, gender, and the corporeality of Christ and Mary Magdalene in the late Middle Ages and early modernity. Baert attempts to bring this field of tension expressed in the *Noli me tangere* into sharp focus with an emphasis on the fifteenth-century Low Countries. Lisa Rafanelli examines Michelangelo's lost *Noli me tangere* cartoon designed for Vittoria Colonna, known to us today only through the painted copies of Pontormo (1531), Bronzino (1531–32), and Battista Franco (1537). These copies bear witness to the originality of Michelangelo's composition, which defies iconographical expectations established for scenes of the *Noli me tangere*. His innovation focuses on the Magdalene's privilege and the worth and redemptive power of her words and deeds, rather than her sinful past and penitence, as was typical of other renditions of the *Noli me tangere*. By celebrating the more empowered aspects of the Magdalene's identity, this painting participates visually in the debate raging in humanist and theological circles over the status of women in religion and society, and not only reflects Colonna's personal devotion to the Magdalene but also her active participation in the contemporary pro-feminist dialogue. Bobbi Dykema analyzes Rembrandt's unusual composition of the *Risen Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalene* (1638) and places the Resurrection encounter within the visual typology and context of the seventeenth-century Calvinist Netherlands. Her consideration of the scene moves beyond specific patronage to explore the meaning of the scene in a post-Reformation context. Typological exegesis, or the interpretation of figures and events in the Old Testament as pre-figurations and events in the gospels, paired the Magdalene with such

diverse figures as Miriam, Eve, Susanna, Hagar, and the unnamed Shunnamite woman in the Song of Songs. Dykema argues Rembrandt's panel serves to exemplify the shift in conception away from the Roman Catholic cult of the saints toward a more bibliocentric Calvinist understanding of this female New Testament figure and her vital importance to Christian salvation history. The articles in this section highlight the Magdalene's unique role as the first witness to the Resurrection and speak to broader themes such as sensuality, the meaning of touch, and the manner in which saints such as Mary Magdalene were redefined to appeal to Protestant audiences. By approaching the *Noli me tangere* from different perspectives, the authors help to broaden our understanding of how the Magdalene's role in this scene was adapted to divergent audiences.

The Magdalene and the Patron: Manifestations of a Personal Agenda

Some of the essays already described reveal the powerful affects that a patron could have on Magdalene imagery. The essays of the fourth section further reveal the degree to which this could occur, elucidating the intermingling of personal agendas and Magdalene imagery. Patrons commissioned images of Mary Magdalene to fit their political, religious, and cultural agendas. Because of her accessibility and transformative character, she was easily manipulated to become an icon for campaigns of the wealthy or for prominent religious orders and their ideals. The proliferation of these altered images of the Magdalene were influential, helping to mold the appreciation of the saint in visual culture. In her essay, Barbara Johnston closely examines the 1516 manuscript depicting the *Vie de la Magdalene* designed for Louise of Savoy, mother of French king Francis I. Johnston contends that the creators of the *Vie de la Magdalene* incorporated the personal and spiritual agendas of both Louise and her confidant, Franciscan priest François du Moulin, with the life and legend of Mary Magdalene to create a remarkably complex manuscript that functioned as quasi-biography, historical document, theological forum, and book of devotion. Margaret Morse, in her essay on Correggio's *Noli me tangere* (1520s) explores the influence of patronage and politics upon the iconic scene by situating Correggio's painting within the domestic context and public life of the Ercolani family of Bologna, Italy. Morse argues that image bears a curious relationship to Raphael's *Saint Cecilia in Ecstasy* (1514), an altarpiece commissioned by a local noblewoman, Elena Duglioli dall'Olio, and

located in the church of San Giovanni in Monte, across the street from the Ercolani palace. To demonstrate how the Ercolani family transformed a civic cult into one that fulfilled more personal spiritual needs, Morse explores not only the political climate in Bologna, but discovers the ties between Correggio's sensual naturalism, contemporary devotional literature, and what Mary Magdalene's union with Christ may have meant for the beholder when used during household prayer and meditation. Jane Eade explores the iconography of conversion in a late seventeenth-century image associated with the French court, now in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Etched and painted on the reverse of a piece of glass using a technique known as *verre églomisé*, this brilliant jewel-like object depicts the Magdalene in a sumptuous interior in the midst of the revelation that is to lead to her conversion. Eade proposes that the painting was likely intended as an allegorical portrait of Louise de La Vallière (1644–1710), first mistress of Louis XIV, who left court in order to enter a Carmelite convent. The essay discusses the revelatory power of divine light, symbolized by the sun and how the artist conflates this image with references to Apollo and to Louis XIV as the 'Roi Soleil.' The essays of this section highlight the significance of patrons in shaping, and even to an extent altering, the Magdalene's image to fit personal agendas. Whether by promoting a political or social campaign, or by using the Magdalene as a foil for disguised portraits, patrons took advantage of the unique malleability of the saint's image in art.

Fusion and Flexibility: The Magdalene's Role Transformed

The fifth and final part of the collection, *Fusion and Versatility: The Magdalene's Role Transformed*, highlights the unique versatility in Magdalene iconography throughout the period under consideration. Not only was Mary Magdalene constantly emerging in new roles, but even the manner in which standard scenes were represented were constantly evolving. Magdalene imagery responded to a range of artistic, social, and historical factors. Andrea Begel in her essay on Giovanni da Milano's *Anointing* from the Guidalotti-Rinuocini Chapel, Florence chronicles how the Magdalene was transformed from a hermit into a demonically possessed sinner by the inclusion of a rare detail, seven demons fleeing the room. Begel argues that the fresco makes reference to a rarely depicted episode from Luke 8:1–3, the exorcism of Mary Magdalene by Christ as a result of Christ's forgiveness. Further, her essay

also explores exorcism in the context of Franciscan practices and other images of exorcism. Addressing a very different role, Vibeke Olson follows the changing tide of devotional practice toward an affective piety in the later Middle Ages which called for emotionally charged images that invited the beholder to participate directly in their Passion drama through the agency of tears. The tears of mourners, chief among them Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary, who weep and wail over the body of Christ, acted as a paradigm for the beholder who was encouraged not only to imitate, but also to participate. These instances of painted tears had the power to transport the beholder, in his or her imagination and via the agency of their own real tears, to the actual event being depicted. Annette LeZotte discusses how the theological significance of Mary Magdalene changed dramatically in this period as new understandings of her character and virtues or vices evolved. In particular, Mary Magdalene came to be understood or promoted as a “new Mary” alluded to in Olson’s article and theatrical and metaphorical references to the Magdalene promoted this idea. Artists responded by representing Mary Magdalene in guises and settings that previously had been reserved for depictions of the Virgin Mary. This essay explores the iconography of depictions of Mary Magdalene in domestic settings and investigates how references to the home, or domestic environment, were used to reframe the character of the Magdalene during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Lastly, Michelle Moseley-Christian turns our attention to images in Northern Europe produced from 1450–1550, where an unusually large number of paintings and prints depicting Mary Magdalene as a reformed penitent appear in two guises: the saint elevated in ecstasy and as an outcast in the wilderness. Moseley-Christian brings to light a curious aspect of these penitent images in the fact that they were produced during the inception and explosive growth of the open art market. The choice of iconography for the Northern penitent combines sensual nudes with a landscape setting, all while demonstrating ostensibly devotional overtones in images that seem intended to advance the commercial potential of these pictures to the broadest possible range of buyers. Her study proposes how and why the iconography in Northern penitent imagery changed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the implications suggested by those changes within the context of commercial competition. The authors of this section explore the complex development of the Magdalene’s character as she began to appear in new settings, including the domestic sphere and expanded landscape backgrounds and gained attributes often associated with the Virgin Mary. Together these authors demonstrate the

transformative power unique to Mary Magdalene, one that distinguished her in the lexicon of Christian art. In art of the medieval through Baroque periods, the images of Mary Magdalene became many things to many people—saint, sinner, penitent, witness, advocate—proving that she was one of the most influential female figures in the medieval, Renaissance, and baroque periods.

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1. For the most exhaustive work on the evolution of the cult of Mary Magdalene, see Victor Saxer, *Le Culte de Marie-Madeleine en occident des origines à la fin du moyenâge* (Auxerre: Publications de la Société des fouilles archéologiques et des monuments historiques de l'Yonne, 1959).
 2. Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1993); Katherine L. Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code: a Novel* (New York: Doubleday, 2003); Marga Anstett-Janßen, "Maria Magdalene in der abendländischen Kunst. Ikonographie der Heiligen von den Anfängen bis ins 16. Jahrhundert" (PhD diss., Freiburg i. Br., 1962). Additional key sources on Mary Magdalene and her relationship to art include: Marjorie Malvern, *Venus in Sackcloth: The Magdalen's Origins and Meamorphoses* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975); Marilena Mosco, et al., *La Maddalena tra Sacro e Profano: Da Giotto a De Chirico* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1986); and more recently, Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, *In Search of Mary Magdalene: Images and Traditions* (New York: American Bible Society, 2002).
 3. Mary Magdalene should also be considered among the women in (Acts 1:12–13) who received the gift of tongues at the Pentecost. Katherine Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalene: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 23.
 4. Unless otherwise noted all scriptural passages are from *The Holy Bible: Douay Rheims Version* (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 2000). It was assumed that the healing of seven demons referred to an exorcism.
 5. In both Matthew and Mark, Mary Magdalene was in the company of Mary the mother of James and Joseph.
 6. In the Gospel of Matthew Mary Magdalene went with the other Mary to the sepulcher where they were told by the angel to deliver the news of Christ's Resurrection to the other disciples. In both Mark and Luke Mary Magdalene was accompanied by Mary, the mother of James. In Luke, Joanna was also named in the group of women. These women, in this account, collectively

told the disciples of Jesus' Resurrection.

7. Prior to Gregory the Great, there had been no fixed tradition regarding the conflation of Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany and Luke's anonymous sinner in the western or eastern churches. Thomas Zeller, *Die Salbung bei Simon dem Pharisäer und in Bethanien. Studien zur Bildtradition der beiden Themen in der italienischen Kunst von den Anfängen im 9. Jahrhundert bis zum Ende des Cinquecento* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1997), 29. The conflation of Mary Magdalene with Luke's Anonymous Sinner has been attributed to the introduction of Mary Magdalene by name immediately after the scene in the Pharisee's house. The sequential placement of these two incidents gave rise to the assumption that they involved the same person. The fact that Mary Magdalene was healed of evil spirits may also have suggested that she was a sinner. Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*; also see Jansen for additional information on the foundations for this assumption in the time of Gregory the Great, *The Making of the Magdalen*, 33. For information on the extensive use of the name Mary, see Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, *In Search of Mary Magdalene*, 10–11.
8. For more information on the representation of this scene in art and its iconography, see Jane Couchman, "Action and Passio. The Iconography of the Scene of Christ at the Home of Mary and Martha," *Studi Medievali* 26/3 (1995), 711–719.
9. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William G. Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 374–383. Jacobus de Voragine was a Dominican monk who is thought to have written the text between 1263 and 1267, possibly near Lombardy where he had entered the Dominican Order twenty years prior in 1244. He died in Genoa in 1298. See Marilena Mosco, et al., *La Maddalena tra Sacro e Profano: Da Giotto a De Chirico* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1986), 42.
10. Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 376. According to the legend Mary Magdalene and Maximin focused their preaching on Marseilles, and then moved to Aix-en-Provence. Lazarus reportedly stayed in Marseilles while Martha focused her missionary work on Tarascon.
11. Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 380–81.
12. Ruth Mazo Karras, "Holy Harlots: Prostitute Saints in Medieval Legend," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 (1990): 18–28.
13. According to Karras, the sinful life of the Magdalene reached its zenith in the sixteenth-century Netherlands, "Holy Harlots," 26. On the interpretation of the *Dance of the Magdalene* by Lucas van Leyden, see Craig Harbison, "Lucas van Leyden the Magdalen and the Problem of Secularization in Early Sixteenth-Century Northern Art," *Oud Holland* 98 (1984): 117–129.
14. While women were forbidden to preach, the Magdalene was upheld as a model for female preaching by certain heretical sects and other reform-minded women. Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen*, 270–277.
15. The *vita eremetica* was written in the ninth century in southern Italy. Jansen, *Making of the*

Magdalen, 37.

16. Marga Anstett-Janßen, "Maria Magdalene in der abendländischen Kunst. Ikonographie der Heiligen von den Anfängen bis ins 16. Jahrhundert" (PhD diss., Freiburg i. Br., 1962), 56. The story that Mary Magdalene retired to the desert after Christ's ascension may have first been reported in an old English Martyrology, but became well known in the *vita eremetica*. The Anglo-Saxon martyrology is dated to the mid-to late nineteenth century. The text describes how Mary Magdalene lived in the desert for thirty years after Christ's Ascension. During that period she fasted but was lifted up to heaven at meal times by angels for sustenance. When she died a priest gave her the last sacrament and buried her. The eventual assimilation to Mary of Egypt in the creation of her *vita* may have resulted from the old English martyrology, which gave the Magdalene a hermetic life. In addition to their isolation in the desert the similarity of their names and their lives of sin contributed to the conflation of their identities Haskins, *Myth and Metaphor*, 110–111.
17. Haskins, *Myth and Metaphor*, 111.
18. Prayers to her appeared in sacramentaries and were related to the mass on her feast day already in the ninth century. Haskins, *Myth and Metaphor*, 111.
19. Charles of Salerno would later become King Charles II of Provence. For earlier information on the Magdalene's cult in Vézelay, see Victor Saxer, "L'Origine des Reliques de Sainte Marie Madeleine a Vézelay," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 29 (1955): 1–18. See also Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen*, 308–09.
20. In 1355 Philippe Cabasole, chancellor of the Kingdom of Naples, described the discovery of the Magdalene's relics at Saint-Maximin in his Historical Book of the Blessed Magdalen. In the saint's mouth was found a small frond which the witnesses took to signify that she was an *apostolorum apostola*, or apostle to the apostles, because she was the first witness to the Resurrection. See Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen*, 18–19. For more on Cabasole's text Jansen cites Victor Saxer, "Philippe Cabasole et son Libellus hystoria- lis Marie beatissime Magdalene. Préliminaires à une édition du Libellus," *L'État Angevin: Pouvoir, culture et société entre XIII et XIV siècle* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1998): 193–204.
21. Katherine L. Jansen, "Mary Magdalen and the Mendicants: The Preaching of Penance in the late Middle Ages," *Journal of Medieval History* 21 (1995): 1–25.
22. Jansen, "Mary Magdalen and the Mendicants," 2. The House of Anjou claimed the Magdalene as their protectress and became instrumental in promoting her cult throughout France and their protectorates in Italy and beyond. By 1297 the cult of the Magdalene was firmly established in Italy when Gerardo Bianchi of Parma, Cardinal-Bishop of Sabina, interestingly also closely associated with the Angevins, raised an altar to her in the nave of the Lateran. See Eve Borsook, *Mural Painters of Tuscany: from Cimabue to Andrea del Sarto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 15.