RITUAL AND THE VIRGIN ON THE COLUMN: THE CULT OF THE SCHÖNE MARIA IN REGENSBURG

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Abstract
The pilgrimage to the Schöne Maria of Regensburg (1519-21) is often called the last great pilgrimage of the Middle Ages. From all over southern Germany people streamed toward the site of a miraculous healing, usually in hope of further wonders. The focus of their devotions was at first a painted icon in a chapel. But to accommodate the crowds, the city soon erected a stone statue of the Virgin on an outdoor column. This highly unusual format incited pilgrims to ever wilder and more indecorous devotions. The pilgrimage drew the censure of church and civil officials and was eventually discontinued. This account of the episode examines the power of the sculpture on the column, especially its ability to disrupt traditional models of ritualized public worship.

The pilgrimage to the Schöne Maria of Regensburg is one of the most dramatic and notorious manifestations of late medieval piety. It is familiar to most students of the period and has figured even in the broadest synoptic treatments of the Western image, most recently David Freedberg's The Power of Images (Freedberg 1989:100-4, 109, 141-2) and Hans Belting's Bild und Kult (Belting 1990:505-9). The cult was ignited in 1519 by the miraculous healing of a stonemason injured during the demolition of a synagogue. Within months thousands of pilgrims were converging on Regensburg, a free imperial city of middling size in southeast Germany. A sixteenth-century woodcut designed by Michael Ostendorfer, a pupil of the leading local painter, Albrecht Altdorfer, depicts the behavior of pilgrims in unusual detail (fig. 1). This woodcut is a cultural document in itself. Hardly any image of the period reports on a contemporary event so comprehensively and suggestively. Like all good reportage, the print assures beholders of its own reliability with its technical accomplishment and sobriety of tone. And yet its purpose is not entirely clear. Ostendorfer's woodcut was sold to the pilgrims themselves as a souvenir, and it doubtless helped to advertise the pilgrimage abroad. On the other hand, this was a fairly expensive print and not published in numbers nearly sufficient to satisfy all the demand. The text was in Latin (a German version was printed only in the seventeenth century). The woodcut may have addressed a select, even somewhat detached, audience. Indeed, it calls attention to exactly those aspects of the pilgrimage that were most likely to attract criticism. The woodcut reveals that the original focus of the cult, an old
Figure 1. Michael Ostendorfer, *The Pilgrimage to the Schöne Maria at Regensburg*, P. 13, woodcut, c. 1519-20, 54.8 x 37.7 cm., Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz.
copy of a Byzantine icon of the Virgin, still visible through the door of
the chapel, had to compete for the attention of the pilgrims with a
more spectacular stone statue mounted on a column before the chapel.
The woodcut shows pilgrims collapsing about the statue in various
attitudes of supplication and ecstatic self-abasement. Some are
embracing the column it stands on. One man raises his hat on a pole in
order to make physical contact with the Virgin. A woman has slid so
far into indecency as to bare her head in public.

To many contemporary observers, conservatives and reformers alike,
the whole affair did indeed look like the Devil's work. The theologian
and historian Sebastian Franck described the pilgrims as prostrating
themselves before the Schön Maria, howling and convulsing, circling
the chapel on their knees, barefoot, or even naked. They came, Franck
wrote, "as if enchanted...as if possessed or mad." Even the primary
instigator of the cult, the demagogue preacher Balthasar Hubmaier,
despaired when he witnessed pilgrims dancing in a frenzy around the
image of the Virgin or throwing themselves on the ground in the forms
of crosses. They spoke of themselves as victims of "a sudden overheating
of the blood" (Stahl 1968:67-70). Ostendorfer's woodcut would have fed
such disapproval. Many contemporary critics must have known the
pilgrimage only from the woodcut.

At the center of the cult was a statue on a column. A preacher at a
rival church in town, the Niedermünster, was already in 1520 urging
citizens to ignore the pilgrimage: "There is nothing there but stones;
seek St. Erhard here at home: he lies here in the flesh." The Bishop of
Chiemsee complained in 1524 that the Schön Maria had been trans-
formed into an "idol." Luther explained to his agents in Regensburg in
1523 that the Devil had installed himself in the city after the
expulsion of the Jews and "through the most blessed name of Mary made
a false sign" (Stahl 1968:71, 77-8). Albrecht Dürer, the preeminent
German artist of the day, owned a copy of Ostendorfer's woodcut. In 1523
he wrote in a careful hand, at the bottom of the sheet, these austere
words of disapproval: "This illusion [gespenst] rose up against Holy
Scripture in Regensburg and was tolerated, for the purposes of worldly
gain, by the bishop. God help us, that we do not so dishonor His worthy
mother..." (Rupprich 1956:210).

What did Dürer mean by an "illusion," and Luther by a "false
sign"? The pilgrims saw any number of physical images of the Schön
Maria, the Beautiful or Immaculate Virgin: sculptures, paintings,
banners, woodcuts, and metal badges. Dürer was surely not disputing the
capacity of any of these images to represent accurately the Virgin and
her attributes. He himself made plenty of Marian images in various
media. He must have disapproved of the installation and exhibition of
the image of the Schön Maria and of the form that its worship had
taken. The statue on the column was powerfully associated with pagan
deities and in general with alien cultic practices. Centripetal worship, it was feared, would degenerate into a dance or a bacchanal. The archetypal image on a column was that original idol of the tribe of Israel, the target of Moses' wrath in Exodus 32, the Golden Calf. The scene was constantly represented in fifteenth-century prints and illustrated books, for example in this woodcut from the Nuremberg Chronicle of 1493 (fig. 2). Contemporary beholders must have associated Ostendorfer's report on the Regensburg pilgrimage with such images.

For the sober-minded critic of the pilgrimage, the contortions before the statue were outside the ordinary and proper framework of worship. Dürrer and the clerics condemned the behavior of the pilgrims at the precise moment that it passed beyond ritual into a kind of Dionysian intoxication. To be sure this is a restricted understanding of ritual. If ritual is defined more generally as a shaping or symbolizing process (Scribner 1987:120-2) or as formal behavior associated with a social transition (Turner 1978:243-4), then the entire pilgrimage could be interpreted as a species of ritual.

Crowd behavior has its own structures and dramatic unities, as Natalie Davis demonstrated in her study of the "rites of violence" in sixteenth-century France (Davis 1975). Even the wildest paroxysms of the pilgrim copied the behavior of previous pilgrims. The Regensburg devotees were certainly aware that they were competing with other recent mass manifestations of piety, perhaps above all the pilgrimage to Altötting in Upper Bavaria, which began around 1490. Here, however, we will focus not on the structures and rhythms of the pilgrimage as a whole but on the encounter between individual and image at the pilgrimage site. This encounter was ritualistic insofar as the individual was subordinated to a rule, to a publicly prescribed and repeatable formula of behavior. We know little about what images meant to people before the Reformation and how they were used. Often the best evidence about normal practices of image worship emerges out of the disruption of those practices (Wood 1988). Some exchanges with Christian images proceeded within the framework of a liturgy, or at least a para-liturgical structure such as the procession or the miracle play (Trexler 1972; Scribner 1984). Others were adapted to private regimens of prayer and meditation, for example, the devotions associated with Books of Hours or images of the Pietà (Belting 1981). The use of Christian images was governed by conventions and prescriptions, and ordinarily the participants in such ritualized exchanges had little or no say in the process. Procedures of image worship were ritualized insofar as their component actions or gestures stood in no direct or instrumental relationship to its ends. Rather, the actions were symbolic, and efficacious only when performed as a complete sequence.
Figure 2. The Worship of the Golden Calf, woodcut, from Hartmann Schedel, Liber chronicarum, Nuremberg, 1493, fol. 31, by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
The Regensburg pilgrims, in the eyes of their critics, were skipping too many steps in this sequence. In their impatience the pilgrims began to instrumentalize the elements of ritual, expecting direct benefit from physical contact with the cult object. They were in effect improvising their own modes of worship, hoping to attain more immediate access to the sacred. To some observers it looked as if the indecorous and unmanageable pilgrims had succumbed to a magic spell (Stahl 1968:71). The city doctor of Ulm detected a pathology; he attributed their behavior to a "nervous irritation" (Hubel 1977:204). To the reformer Johann Agricola, the phenomenon was merely another instance of the inevitable slide from idolatry into sensual abandon: "Wherever there are pilgrimages," he wrote, "it turns to feasting and carousing, tankards and taverns" (Stahl 1968:78). A Protestant pamphlet of 1523-24 compared the pilgrims (rather obscurely) to pigs rooting for a buried human heart (Clemens 1907:146-7). Luther himself dismissed the cult with these words: "It is a sure sign of the Devil that the people rush giddily like madmen, for the holy spirit is a spirit of deliberation, which does not move so impetuously, nor does it teach the people to run after the Lord, but rather to behave dutifully."

Dürer, Luther, and the other critics of the pilgrimage did not really believe that the devotees had lost their faith or were bowing to a false god. Ecstatic devotion to the Virgin was in itself nothing new. Rather, they saw the conventional structures of image worship threatened by the fervent enthusiasm for the column statue. Both the painter and the churchman would agree that the proper use of images involved drawing careful discriminations between one image and another. The impatience of the pilgrims with ritual and mediation ill-prepared them to attend to finer modulations of function, iconography, or even style. Their idolatry, paradoxically, entailed a measure of iconophobia, or at least blindness to imagery. The pilgrims were in this sense the precursors and colleagues of those Protestant iconoclasts who in Switzerland and southern Germany over the next decades systematically destroyed the conventional focuses of image worship, in particular the painted and carved altarpieces. Both iconoclasm and iconophilia were enemies of those images that were safely imbedded in ritual. It is no wonder that the painter and the cleric could agree on the need for a reinstatement of that ritual.

A community of perhaps 500 Jews, about five percent of the population of the city, enjoyed moneymaking privileges and the political protection of the Emperor Maximilian (Volkert 1981). Already they had endured a rancorous public trial on charges of ritual infan-icide in 1476-80, and a papal prohibition on usury obtained by the Bishop-Administrator of Regensburg in 1517. But on January 13, 1519, the emperor died. Only five weeks later, on February 21, the City Council, under pressure from the guilds, moved to expel the Jews. The painter
Altdorfer was a member of that council. The Jews were given two hours to clear their synagogue and five days to leave town. A depiction of the early 13th-century synagogue is preserved in an extraordinary pair of documentary etchings by Altdorfer, based on drawings made evidently on the very day of the evacuation (Winzinger 1963:nos.173-4) (fig. 3). It should be pointed out that the protest of the Jews at the Imperial Diet did not fall on entirely deaf ears, and the city of Regensburg was accordingly placed under closer imperial supervision and compelled to assume the tax burden of the Jews.

The citizens, inflamed by the preacher Hubmaier, began demolishing the synagogue immediately with the intention of building a new church to the Virgin, as was customary in the wake of pogroms and expulsions. A stonemason, Jakob Kern, fell from a beam and was crushed by rubble, but rose from his deathbed and returned to the site the very next day. A miracle was declared. News spread rapidly, and the cult was inaugurated. The wooden chapel which dominates Ostendorfer's woodcut was raised in great haste and dedicated to the Immaculate Virgin on March 25. Immediately, further miracles followed. In June the Pope issued an indulgence for the pilgrimage. During the rest of that year and the following one the stream of pilgrims hardly abated. They came from as far as Breslau and Innsbruck, Colmar and Budapest. Virtually every profession and trade was represented (the sources for the social history of the pilgrimage are the printed Miracle Books, which list the miracles reported by the pilgrims). On feast days they came in huge numbers: a reported 50,000 on St. George's Day in 1520, another 27,000 on Pentecost. Priests pressed forward to perform masses in the chapel; more than 25,000 were read in the first three years of the pilgrimage (Stahl 1968:66).

What attracted the pilgrims? In part they wished to imitate those wealthier or harder pilgrims who had seen Jerusalem, Rome, or Compostela, or even their elders and neighbors who in the previous generation had walked to Wilsnack or Grimmenthal. But above all these were people who had come to expect much from religion—not merely salvation but direct relief of suffering from illnesses and accidents. They were discontented with the medicine their local clergy was offering. When they sought contact with a miraculous Virgin, they believed they were returning to essences, to the unmediated sources of power. The pilgrims were, paradoxically, the very sort of people who would soon prove most susceptible to Luther's radical message of anticlericalism and simplification.

Images play an unusually complex part in this story. It should be stressed that the pilgrimage was not provoked by an image. The initial miracle was worked by the Virgin herself. The image installed on the altar of the New Chapel on March 24, 1519, the day before consecration of the altar, was explicitly a representation of that beneficent Virgin,
Figure 3. Albrecht Altdorfer, Porch of the Synagogue in Regensburg, B. 64, etching, 1519, 16.4 x 11.7 cm., Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz.
in Hubmaier's words "a panel of the Schöne Maria after the portrait which St. Luke painted of her" (Stahl 1968:85). Most likely this panel was the thirteenth-century icon then and now preserved in the Alte Kapelle in Regensburg. This icon was allegedly a gift from Pope Benedict VIII to Emperor Henry II. In fact it was probably a local copy of that original gift. The old panel conforms to the iconographic formula established by the Byzantine Hodegetria icon, a portrait of the Virgin attributed to St. Luke himself, lost in the Turkish conquest of Constantinople, but preserved in innumerable medieval copies (Belting 1990:87-91). It was certainly this local icon which Altdorfer reproduced in his colored woodcut of the Schöne Maria (Winzinger 1963:no.89) (fig. 4). The woodcut was printed from as many as six separate blocks, an elaborate technical achievement. Less splendid woodcuts were sold to the crowds. Altdorfer generally assumed control of Schöne Maria imagery. He illuminated a copy of the papal indulgence for display in the chapel. He painted the huge banner seen flying over the chapel in Ostendorfer's woodcut. He painted the wings of the new organ, and probably he designed the small pilgrimage badges which were minted in enormous quantities, as many as 120,000 in 1520, in silver and lead versions. On St. George's Day in 1520, 27,000 badges were sold; nevertheless two-thirds of the crowd were left empty-handed and reportedly wept with disappointment (Stahl 1968:75).

Altdorfer also left a painted Schöne Maria (until recently preserved in St. Johann in Regensburg, now in the Diocesan Museum St. Ulrich), an ingenious and historically conscious interpretation of the Hodegetria type into a modern idiom (Winzinger 1975:no.41) (fig. 5). Here the gold ground became a flaming aureole; the tassels of the Virgin's Maphorion or mantle swung into motion; the frontal stare was deflected into a contemplative downward gaze, archaically still and empty. There is no proof that this panel ever stood on the altar of the New Chapel, as some have argued, either as the original image of the Schöne Maria or as a replacement for the icon. Indeed, there is no proof that it was a public commission at all. Most probably it was one of many copies produced by Altdorfer or his shop for more affluent enthusiasts of the cult (Hubel 1977:218). Copies of Byzantine icons had been produced in the north for more than a century. The famous Madonna brought from Rome to Cambrai in 1440, for example, was copied three times by the Flemish painter Petrus Christus, and twelve times by Hayne de Bruxelles (Dölling 1957; Aurenhammer 1955).

It is not entirely clear what purpose such replicas served. Were the woodcut, the lead badge, and the painted icon fragments of divine substance, laden with power in the manner of an amulet or talisman, or were they mere souvenirs? There was after all a tradition of prints which described or documented pilgrimages, although none was so informative as Ostendorfer's (see, for example, the engraving of the
Figure 4. Albrecht Altdorfer, *The Beautiful Virgin of Regensburg*, color woodcut, c. 1519-20, 33.9 x 24.6 cm., Rosenwald Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington.
pilgrimage to Einsiedeln by the Master E.S., dated 1466, [Lehrs 1910: no.81]). Such images were clearly not themselves objects of worship. Badges were also commonly sold at pilgrimage sites and way-stations along pilgrimage routes. Long-range pilgrims pinned them to hats and cloaks and returned from Rome or Compostela with an entire collection. But the Regensburg badge was more than an emblem, for it actually reproduced the Schöne Maria. It did not merely attest to the existence of the cult object, but replicated its essential form and its esoteric iconography, and thus may have been understood to share in the aura of that object. Perhaps pilgrims expected such images as an exchange for their own tangible offerings. Many pilgrims arrived in Regensburg carrying bizarre tokens and objects: farm implements, live animals, clothing, jewelry, and wax models of limbs, organs, tumors, and plague sores. Even after scrutiny of the textual sources—primarily the Miracle Books—it is not fully understood what the pilgrims had in mind. Many of these objects were brought as votive tokens, presented to the Virgin in
fulfilment of a vow. Others, apparently, were quasi-sacrificial offerings, presented in hope of salvation or a miraculous cure (Stahl 1968:158-74).

In any case, there is no evidence that the replication of the icon in woodcuts and badges ever met with criticism. No one expressed fears that the icon would be drained of its aura. Consistency of iconography, after all, was guaranteed by Altdorfer's supervision of the reproduction process. Contemporary criticism was instead directed, as we have seen, to the stone statue in front of the chapel. This monumental Virgin and Child had been carved by the cathedral architect Erhard Heydenreich in 1516, and had most likely stood inside the cathedral on a pedestal or console against a wall. It was moved and mounted on a column before the New Chapel on March 27.5 Another, simpler woodcut by Ostendorfer, the title page of a pamphlet also distributed as a broadsheet, attests that the statue competed successfully with the indoor icon for the attention of the pilgrims.6 But this Madonna, with her crown and scepter, was not a Hodegetria Madonna but belonged instead to an entirely different iconographical tradition and was never replicated in badges or prints.

It is only natural that the statue dominated. There was no well-established tradition of two-dimensional public cult objects in Germany. Half-length icons rarely appeared on German altars (Hubel 1977:225). The Regensburg icon (or its copy) was chosen as a cult object for an exceptional reason, namely, its associations with an archaic and exotic past, with remote apostolic piety. The initiators and propagators of the cult—Altdorfer chief among them—carefully outfitted their replicas with the iconography of the Hodegetria (the gesture of reverence to the Child, the mantle, the stars on the forehead and shoulder). This iconography was then fused with the theological notion of the Immaculate Virgin. But the prestige of the Byzantine formula proved feeble among the pilgrims, and the subtleties of the iconographic synthesis were lost on them. There is reason to believe that even the panel on the altar was soon replaced by a stone retable, for which a woodcut by Altdorfer was apparently a model (Winzinger 1963:no.90). This retable may have contained a wooden Schöne Maria by the sculptor Hans Leinberger, although not necessarily the small figure now preserved in St. Kassian in Regensburg (Hubel 1977:229; Decker 1985:272-96).

The various small sculptural versions of the St. Luke Madonna evince a certain pressure to extend the icon into a full-length figure. At least one of these sculptures may actually predate the pilgrimage. In some woodcuts, moreover, the half-length Madonna is cut off by a frame, suggesting that we are seeing only part of a standing figure (see, for example, Altdorfer's colored woodcut, fig. 4; Hubel 1977:224). In his woodcut of the Holy Family at the Fountain, dated prior to 1515, Altdorfer had expanded the half-length Virgin, complete with mantle
and stars, into a living character (Winzinger 1963:no.83). The Holy Family and the attendant angels properly avert their eyes from the petulant idol crouching above them on the fountain.

Altdorfer's drawing of the St. Luke Madonna on a Crescent Moon, in pen and white body color on a grey-green ground, is dated 1518, a year before the inauguration of the cult (Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. no. 11601; Winzinger 1952:no.65). In three small engravings, Altdorfer depicted the Schöné Maria seated within a throne-like shrine, seated in a landscape, and in the act of seeking her twelve-year-old son in the temple (Winzinger 1963:nos.137, 139-40). The imagination of the period demanded more movement, more narrative interest, and more corporeality than a static icon could provide.

The icon inside the chapel was thus too weak, and the statue outside too strong. The attention of the public was divided. Moreover, neither icon nor statue was ever agreed upon and unequivocally enshrined as the focus, as happened in the great Baroque image-focused pilgrimages. Ritualized image worship normally involves a single focus and a thoroughly structured space. Instead, pilgrims here moved at will around the large open square, at liberty to hurl themselves at the outdoor statue or to join the shuffling processions or queues to see the altar within. What pilgrim had the time and the composure to linger over the refinements of Marian iconography, or the retrospective gestures of a historically conscious stylist?

It is difficult to overstate the audacity of the city's decision to transfer the cathedral statue to the public place. Christianity, by and large, had successfully suppressed the various Greco-Roman practices of mounting statues on votive or triumphal columns (Haftmann 1939). Some ancient statues of gods or men were replaced by crosses, especially in Byzantium. They celebrated no longer individuals but the triumph of Christianity itself. Most columns were simply destroyed. One modest Christian analogue to the column statue was the Bildstock, or wayside shrine. These stone or wooden posts topped with small sculpted or painted Crucifixes, usually housed in gabled niches, were ubiquitous in northern Europe. They were erected at crossroads and the sites of important local events, including murders. Many still survive, especially in Catholic territories. But for the most part the sculpted figure in the Middle Ages was closely associated with architectural elements. The statue was either physically attached to a column or it stood in a niche or a tabernacle (Paatz 1951). Occasionally, an antique statue was reinterpreted as a holy personage. A Madonna on a column recorded in fourteenth-century Verona, for example, was actually a rechristened goddess (Haftmann 1939:120). A fourteenth-century English manuscript depicts a Virgin and Child in an aedicule on a column (Camille 1989:fig.125). But no new statue of the Virgin, as far as we know, had ever before been mounted on a column in an open public place, and
certainly not as the focus of a cult. No comparable statue would be erected until 1614, when a bronze Madonna was mounted on a Corinthian column before S. Maria Maggiore in Rome. The earliest of many German Baroque examples is the Mariensäule in Munich of 1635-8 (Baruchsen 1931:28, 49-52).

In medieval manuscripts and paintings, the representation of a statue on a column was shorthand for idolatry. Everyone had seen pictures of idols—usually naked, ugly, and gilded—on columns in martyrdom scenes, above all in representations of the Flight to Egypt. The story of the spontaneous self-annihilation of the pagan idols when the Virgin and Child entered a temple in Egypt was told in the Apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew and disseminated in the encyclopedias, the Biblia pauperum, the Meditations on the Life of Christ, and the Golden Legend (Camille 1989:1-2). Many late medieval and Renaissance panel paintings depict a single idol toppling from its perch as the Holy Family passes by. Hans Baldung Grien represented the worship of an idol on a column in his woodcut illustrations to the Ten Commandments, published in 1516 (Hollstein 1954:no.221). Most of these columns appeared outdoors, far from any legitimizing architectural context. The column was thought to encourage dancing and sensual abandon. This is clear in Lucas van Leyden's altarpiece of the Worship of the Golden Calf of about 1530, now in Amsterdam. The roundness of the column—as opposed to some other form of pedestal—seemed to invite worship from any direction. Christian worship, with its rectangular churches, its kneeling prayer, and its crucifixes, was based on frontality; the outdoor column abolished it. The Christian God did not wish to be viewed from behind. Indeed, medieval painted representations of idols or the Devil often revealed their hindquarters. Furthermore, circular worship was suspect because it left no place for a priest or mediator.

Despite all these negative associations, the organizers of the Regensburg cult mounted an over-lifesize statue of the Virgin on a 2 1/2 meter column in an open space. How did they overcome the powerful taboos against such an installation? It is true that the Virgin herself was often compared to a column; for that matter, so were the apostles (Bandmann 1970). But none of this had ever before justified placing a cult statue on top of a column. Nor did the tradition of erecting columns to commemorate momentous events, such as military victories, martyrdoms, or miracles. These local monuments were topped with crosses, not statues. Dürrer himself designed three commemorative columns, including the morbid and ambiguous Monument to the Defeated Peasant (Mittig 1984). But they were never built.

The organizers of the cult were, on the contrary, responding to and exploiting a tremendous accumulation of popular pressure to bring worship out into the open. The two centuries before the Reformation saw an efflorescence of extra-ecclesiastical and para-liturgical processions,
ceremonies, exhibitions of relics, dramatic performances. Congregations wanted to see everything with their own eyes: relics, cult images, treasures, even the host itself. For most believers optical participation in the cult sufficed (Wood 1988:34). One response to this so-called Schaubedürfnis was the increased willingness of the clergy to remove sculptures from altars and chapels and display them in processions and miracle plays. The art historical category of the Andachtsbild—a modern coinage, roughly equivalent to "devotional image"—has reinforced a misconception that late medieval piety was primarily a private and indoor affair. In many documents of the period, for example, in popular ballads (Liliencron 1867:325) or in the diaries of Peter Krafft, a Regensburg cleric (Schottenloher 1920:44), the word Andacht referred to public worship.

There is even some evidence that statues in the church were, under special circumstances, detached from walls and columns and moved into the open. In Frankfurt in 1393 an indulgence was promised to anyone who said five Our Fathers "to the image of the most glorious Virgin on the stone column in the middle of the church" (Beeth 1965:15). Perhaps some such installation stands behind Altdorfer's curious and little-remarked woodcut of the Schöne Maria standing on a platform inside a church (Winzinger 1963:no.88). The platform is cut off by the lower edge of the picture, and it cannot be assumed that it rests on a column. But the Virgin is clearly detached from any architectural element. The representation is doubtless symbolic (like Jan van Eyck's painting of the Virgin in the Church in Berlin) and not documentary. Nevertheless, it may rest on the assumption that such an installation was possible within a contemporary church.

The motivation for the city's installation of the Schöne Maria on an outdoor column, then, is unambiguous. The justification for that move, however, has not yet been established. I argue that the pretext was furnished by the medieval tradition of the civic emblem. The earliest statues of saints raised on free-standing columns in the Middle Ages were the patron saints of cities. The Romans, at home and abroad, had commonly erected statues of the local genius or city-god in public squares and market-places. Some of these were mentioned in medieval chronicles. The Kaiserchronik and the Sächsische Weltchronik, for example, both recorded that the Romans had erected statues of Mercury in their market-places (Haftmann 1939:79). Some antique column statues, like the Mars on the Ponte Vecchio in Florence and the "Regisole" in Pavia, were adopted as civic emblems (Haftmann 1939:120-5). In 1329 the Venetians mounted a statue of St. Theodore (actually a composite of antique spolia) on a column on the Piazzetta; the lion of St. Mark had been in place on the other column from the early thirteenth century (Haftmann 1939:135). By the late fifteenth century such city saints were mounted on columns like deities all over Europe. There are several
representations of such emblems in woodcuts of city views in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* of 1493. Some even look like Madonnas.\(^8\) The Virgin herself stood with three saints in an aedicule on a column in Verona by the early fifteenth century. A Madonna stood on a column in the market of Udine by 1487 (Haftmann 1939:140). By the late fifteenth century many German cities were crowded with outdoor statues of the Virgin, mounted, for instance, on the outside walls of houses and on fountains (Baruchsen 1931:38-42).

The Regensburg pilgrimage was orchestrated by municipal authorities, under direct pressure from the citizenry and particularly the guilds. The cynicism of the city council cannot be gauged; too much historical detail has been lost. The economic benefits of the pilgrimage were considerable, and the bulk of the profits did go to the city (although this was disputed by the Bishop-Administrator). But the Church profited too, as Dürer implied in his comments on Ostendorfer's woodcut. To some extent the city must have cooperated with the Church, for, after all, the statue itself came from the Cathedral. The New Chapel, unlike the Cathedral and most of the other churches in town, was under the direct control of the city. This fact is made conspicuous in Ostendorfer's woodcut, in which Altdorfer's huge banner flies from the spire, emblazoned with the city emblem of the crossed keys (Zapalac 1990:96). Surely the city's sponsorship of the cult and their dispute with the Bishop-Administrator explains much of the extra-ecclesiastical character of the pilgrimage. More specifically, it could be argued that the city succeeded in erecting their Schöne Maria by presenting it to the populace in the guise of a civic emblem, as a new patron saint. There is no contradiction between the two functions of the statue, civic and sacred. Citizens of Florence used to carry as talismans miniature replicas of Donatello's *Dovizia*, a column figure erected in 1420 as an emblem of the city's prosperity (Camille 1989:343-4).

Also important was the symbolism of elevation. The Virgin on the column in Regensburg, although not the Madonna of Luke, was still an Immaculate Virgin. The woodcuts, emblems, and verses associated with the cult reminded pilgrims constantly of this fact. It was the purity and innocence of the Virgin that Jews had stained. The column served literally to elevate her above the world.\(^9\) The power of this symbol was so great that the organizers of the cult were willing to overlook the inconsistency of the iconography and risk the charge of idolatry.

A crucial move was bringing the statue out of doors. Outside an architectural structure, which would have created a natural collectivity and frontality, the pilgrims, unconstrained by frontal posture, out of earshot of liturgy, and uncontrolled by any mediating celebrant, were free to enter into individual encounters with the image. It is true that the city installed a prayer rail before the statue, visible in the woodcut. But how many worshippers could make use of it at once? In the
language of Walter Benjamin's classic essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," this was a distracted public, no longer intimidated by an "aura" or impression of distance; it was also quite incapable of concentration or contemplation (Benjamin 1963:chap.15).

Most church members, Catholic and Protestant alike, were alert to the dangers of unstructured worship. In Augsburg preachers exhorted their parishioners to stay and worship in church rather than fly to Regensburg (Stahl 1968:77). Luther railed against pilgrimages in his celebrated pamphlet "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation" of 1520. He mentioned Regensburg in particular and insisted that "if the people believed properly, they would find everything in their own churches" (Luther 1883:vol.6,447-8). Orderliness was paramount. In the years to come both Luther and Dürer would distance themselves from the violent iconoclasms and social turbulence that the Reformation brought in its wake. Iconoclasm, paradoxically, was fueled by many of the same passions that motivated the iconophilic pilgrims: impatience with mediation, that is, with images and rituals that refined and complicated the path to the divine source. Iconoclasm was no doubt perpetrated, over the course of the next decades, by some of the same people who had thronged around the column in Regensburg. Balthasar Hubmaier himself actually abandoned the cult and began preaching the new doctrine as early as 1521; seven years later he was burnt as an Anabaptist. German Protestantism for the most part succeeded in re-establishing order. Many cities, including Regensburg, managed to convert without arousing iconoclastic fury. The city fathers of Nuremberg avoided trouble by quietly removing most images from the churches before the passions could be stoked. Richard Trexler has argued, against the Weberian thesis of the merchant's rational hostility to ritual, that propertied citizens actually preferred the predictability of ritual to random cultic practices (Trexler 1972:33-4). Indeed, early Protestantism was itself highly ritualized and sacramental and relied heavily on clerical authority.

The disruption of ritual in Regensburg was not suffered for long. The criticisms of the pilgrimage soon took effect. Already by 1522 the pilgrimage was beginning to decline, and by 1525 it was extinguished. The construction of the New Church was arrested. Not until the late 1530s was the temporary wooden chapel destroyed; the incomplete stone church was finally consecrated in 1540. In 1542 it was converted into the first Protestant church in Regensburg. The Virgin on the column remained outdoors until the end. In 1543 the preacher Nikolaus Gallus, quoting 2 Kings 18:4, had it destroyed: "He removed the high places, and brake the images...and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made" (Stahl 1967:178-9).10

Ostendorfer's woodcut embraces two ritual settings within one frame: the closed ecclesiastical space of the background, and the uncontained
theater-in-the-round of the foreground, where public devotion threatens to devolve into anti-authoritarian disorder. At the heart of each of these settings stands a very different type of image. The ascendance of one of these types over the other within the subsequent history of European art may well be correlated with contemporary judgments upon public ritual behavior. The woodcut itself treats the issue so even-handedly that it could serve first as an advertisement for the Regensburg pilgrimage, and later as the documentation of error. But what was Ostendorfer's own position? Was it possible to profit from the cult and at the same time distance oneself from it? No one has yet drawn attention to the prostrate figure of the young man at the lower center of the print. He faces away from the statue and straight out toward the beholder, chin resting on hand. This figure is possibly just another pilgrim, exhausted by his devotions. But his youth and his outward gaze also suggest a self-portrait. Moreover, his position within the picture suggests an Everyman figure, an outsider who refuses allegiances and judges for himself, like the pair of wanderers at the center of Pieter Bruegel's *Carnival and Lent* in Vienna, or the wanderer with the pack sitting at the lower center of Bruegel's *Bearing of Cross*, also in Vienna. This is perhaps Ostendorfer's emblem of the reasonable man, detached and collected even at the eye of the storm, inviting the beholder of the print to think twice before crossing over and joining the worshippers of the statue.

NOTES

1Ostendorfer was registered as a citizen of Regensburg in 1520. The woodcut probably dates from the summer of 1520, the high-water mark of the pilgrimage. Ostendorfer's monogram MO is legible in some impressions on the wall of the shed attached to the chapel at the far left.

2The local historian Gemeiner reported that the Council commissioned 1500 copies from the printer Paul Kohl, at the price of one Kreutzer each. Few woodblocks of this quality would yield more prints than this without deteriorating (Gemeiner 1824:475-6, n.880). The original block of this print was in fact retouched and used through the seventeenth century and is preserved in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich. See Wyten (1961:no.55).

3Gerlinde Stahl's dissertation is the most comprehensive account of the pilgrimage. Primary material quoted here is drawn from Stahl, unless otherwise noted (translations into English are my own). Another thoughtful commentary on the episode is Winkler (1981), which calls special attention to the anti-authoritarian tendencies of popular piety.

4The precise function of Altdorfer's panel within the cult has been much disputed in the literature. When it was restored and finally attributed
to Altdorfer in 1938, it was hailed as the cult image itself. Stahl, after the most thorough review of the controversy, was inclined to think that Altdorfer's panel was indeed the first image installed in the chapel (1968:205-13). Hubel, on the other hand, concludes that the original Gnadenbild was probably the icon, even after conceding the unlikelihood that the Alte Kapelle would have handed over their treasure to the city. Hubel also believes that the icon was replaced not by Altdorfer's copy, but by a sculpture (1977:210-20).

5 A painted panel of the Virgin was also mounted on a stone post or Bildstock before the chapel; nothing is known of the fate of this image (Stahl 1968:87).

6 This woodcut is dated 1522 and is also monogrammed MO. A different woodcutter accounts for the technical deficiencies of the print. Dodgson (1908) pointed out that the column in this scene is wrought rather than smooth stone and suggested that the column seen in Ostendorfer's larger and finer woodcut was merely temporary.

7 The word statua evidently means "column" in this text. A document of 1415 confusingly refers to the same image mounted "on a round wooden column (columna) before the choir of the church."

8 See, for example, the views of Nineveh, fol. 20r; Babylon, fol. 24v; and Magdeburg, fol. 179v-180r. Paris, fol. 39r, and Treviso, fol. 51v, are repetitions of Magdeburg.

9 The Baroque Virgins on columns are always Immaculate Virgins; see Baruchsen (1931:32-8).

10 With considerable ironic effect; one might recall the typological interpretation of that episode from John 3:14: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

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