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## **The Mechanical Presentations of Marian Statues in the Late Gothic Period**

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The following parts of my contribution make no claim to completeness since the materials I propose to present are chance findings made in the course of many years. I have threaded these findings together in no order other than chronological sequence.

I will give you a condensed insight and, having you all together here, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss still-open questions.

We begin with a unique statue, the Madonna of Cheyres in Switzerland, which holds a removable Child in her left arm. This is the only one example of which I know, and it is highly probable, that statues like this stood in the center of the procession held on the day of the *purificatio Mariae*. In his mystical writings Heinrich Suso provides a description of the *Purificatio* procession in Constance, southern Germany, where a statue like this stood in the center of the event. The procession was divided into two groups. One group carried the statue of the Virgin from outside of the town to the city gate. The second group, after the benediction of the candles, went to the city gate, to welcome Our Lady. Then, united, the two groups brought the statue to the cathedral and stopped in front of the cathedral's west façade. There, the Virgin handed her Child over to Heinrich Suso, before she brought the Child into the temple, i.e., into the Cathedral of Constance:

[...] and [Heinrich Suso] knelt before her, raised his eyes and hands in supplication and prayed that she show him the Child and allow him to kiss him. And as she kindly offered him (the Child), he spread his arms and embraced [...] the Beloved [Geminnten] [...] He contemplated his beautiful eyes, gazed upon his small hands, greeted his tender little mouth [...] and then gave him [...] again to his mother and went in with her until the end (of the Purificatio).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Seuse, *Des Mystikers Heinrich Seuse O. Pr. Deutsche Schriften*, ed. by N. Heller, Regensburg 1926, p. 31. Johannes Tripps, *Das handelnde Bildwerk in der Gotik. Forschungen zu den Bedeutungsschichten und der Funktion des Kirchengebäudes und seiner Ausstattung in der Hoch- und Spätgotik*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised and enlarged edition, Berlin 2000, pp. 62-63.

[“ [...] und [Heinrich Suso] kniete vor sie hin und hob seine Augen und Hände auf und bat sie, dass sie ihm das Kindlein zeige und ihm das auch zu küssen erlaube. Und da sie ihm das gütlich bot, so breitete er seine Arme aus [...] und empfing [...] den Geminnten [...] Er beschaute seine hübschen Äuglein, er besah seine kleinen

The division of the procession into two groups clearly indicates that the ceremony was inspired by the order of Palm Sunday processions.<sup>2</sup>

A completely unresolved question is the naissance of *Pietàs* with movable Christ figures in their arms. These crucifixes have hinged arms, allowing the body to be taken down from a cross and laid in the lap of the statue of the Virgin. The oldest examples date back to the first half of the fourteenth century, i.e., the same period when we first find the preserved crucifixes with hinged arms as independent statues. These crucifixes were used during the mystery plays of Good Friday, taken down from the cross, laid on a bier, and then interred in the Easter sepulchre to re-enact the biblical event. The many *libri ordinarii* from all over Europe give us a clear insight into the rites of Good Friday, but they do not mention the scene in which one of these crucifixes has been laid in the lap of the statue of a mourning Virgin.<sup>3</sup>

By this point the question may be posed whether the research into the origin of the Pietà was, until recently, glossed over. In 1974, Gesine Taubert already pointed out that ca.1300 and the first half of the fourteenth century that not only did a dramatization of the Good Friday Liturgy aided by crucifixes with hinged arms take place, but that at the same time, the *Planctus Mariae* was inserted in between *Adoratio* and *Depositio Crucis* during the liturgy.<sup>4</sup> This point is illustrated by the three *Pietàs* from Radolfzell (now Freiburg, Augustinermuseum), Rottweil and Watterdingen (near Engen, district of Constance). They all belong in the time frame ca. 1320/1330 or shortly thereafter and lie, as such, contemporaneous with the first preserved immovable *Pietàs* in the traditional sense, which allow the observer through daily commemoration of the Descent from the Cross and Lamentation, the meditative witnessing of the Passion.<sup>5</sup>

The mystery plays give us even more detailed information:

And so it happened in Perugia on Good Friday in 1448 that Christ, played by the barber Eliseo de Cristofano, carried the cross from the Church San Lorenzo in a wide circle through the city, returning once again to the church. There, a crucifix with hinged arms was then used in the mystery play in front of the façade of San Lorenzo. While the roman soldiers nailed the hinged

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Händlein, er begrüßte sein zartes Mündlein [...] und gab ihn dann [...] seiner Mutter wieder und ging mit ihr hinein, bis dass alles vollbracht war.“]

<sup>2</sup> Tripps 2000, cit. (note 1), pp. 62-63.

<sup>3</sup> Tripps 2000, cit. (note 1), pp. 122-123, 180-181.

<sup>4</sup> Gesine Taubert, Spätmittelalterliche Kreuzabnahmespiele in Wels, Wien und Tirol, in *Jahrbuch des Oberösterreichischen Musealvereins*, 119 (1974), pp. 54 and 59.

<sup>5</sup> For this example and others, with regard to Christ statues which were also removable, lost or overhauled, see Jürgen Michler, Neue Funde und Beiträge zur Entstehung der Pietà am Bodensee, in *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Baden-Württemberg*, 29 (1992), pp. 29-49. Michaela Burek, Jürgen Michler, Peter G. Vogel, Eine neuentdeckte frühe Bodensee-Pietà in Meersburg, in *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung*, 6 (1992), pp. 315-330.

crucifix on the cross the “Three Marys” and “John” lamented loudly; after which the crucifix was taken down from the cross and laid in the lap of the Virgin Mary who, just as in a living *Pietà*, passionately mourned her son. At the end, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea interred the crucifix in the Easter sepulchre. It all happened, as the chronicler pointed out in several places, under a multitude of lamentations and weeping among the Perugian people.<sup>6</sup> We know of a similar instance in Florence when, in 1491, Luca della Robbia was commissioned by the Florentine *Opera del Duomo* to carve a crucifix, which was to be exhibited to the public. It was festively removed from the cross and laid on a bier, and was the highlight of the Good Friday Procession, which included a dramatic enactment of the *Planctus Mariae*.<sup>7</sup>

Another notice comes from the convent of San Vincenzo in Prato where, at the end of the sixteenth century, the nuns put on a mystery play in which they took down the figure of Our Lord from the cross and laid it in the lap of their sister, Catarina de’Ricci, who played the Mourning Virgin.<sup>8</sup>

In light of the development of the *Compassio Mariae* thus far described in texts and represented by sculptures, a liturgical thread leads to the origin of the *Pietà* that is rooted in the three-part Good Friday Liturgy - the *Adoratio*, *Planctus Mariae*, and *Depositio* of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. First one took the crucifix with the hinged arms from the cross and venerated it, laid it then in the lap of the Virgin Mary for the *Planctus Mariae* and ultimately interred it in the Easter sepulchre.

Other *Pietàs* at Saint Martin’s in Bamberg as well as in the Schnütgen Museum in Cologne appear in this context where the statues of Christ are also removable.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the left hand of the Mary in the *Pietà* in Bamberg can be moved and even removed.<sup>10</sup> In Martin Luther’s

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<sup>6</sup> For text, see Peter Meredith-John Tailby, *The Staging of Religious Drama in Europe in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Documents in English Translation*, translated by Raffaella Ferrari, Peter Meredith, Lynette R. Muir, Margaret Sleemann and John E. Tailby, Kalamazoo (Michigan) 1983 (Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series, 4), pp. 248-249.

<sup>7</sup> Tripps 2000, cit. (note 1), pp. 157-158.

<sup>8</sup> Tripps 2000, cit. (note 1), p. 180.

<sup>9</sup> Tripps 2000, cit. (note 1), pp. 178-179, 181.

<sup>10</sup> The sculpture (height without pedestal: 1,175 m) dated by Tilmann Breuer in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century was taken from the parish church before demolition in 1803 and transferred to St. Martin’s Church; the setting is of that modern era; See Tilmann Breuer-Reinhard Gutbier, *Die Kunstdenkmäler von Bayern, Regierungsbezirk Oberfranken, Vol. VII: Stadt Bamberg 5 - Innere Inselstadt, 1. Halbband*, ed. Michael Petzet, München 1990, pp. 105-108. The last restoration occurred in 1927 by the Bamberg Company Johann Mayer & Co. Many thanks to Renate Baumgärtel-Fleischmann (+), Bamberg, for all of these biographical references as well as her research on the history of restoration and conservation.

*Colloquia Mensalia*, a statue of the Virgin Mary in Rötha, Saxony is mentioned, which was said to have had movable hands.<sup>11</sup>

The crucifixes at Döbeln in Saxony (ca. 1510), at the former Augustinian convent at Rattenberg in Tyrol (ca. 1520), and at the Sculpture Gallery in Berlin (ca. 1360/70) appear to be similar in their mobility to jointed mannequins<sup>12</sup> which in their verism give us the impression of real corpses. After the *Adoratio* and prior to the *Depositio* they were laid in the laps of the Madonnas during the *Planctus Mariae*. Mary could have been represented by a real person for whom the aforementioned examples from Perugia and Prato spoke.

Certainly the most fascinating sculptures are statues of Our Lady carrying a Christ Child with a movable head. Gyöngyi Török found four examples in the districts of Lesser Poland and of the Zips in North Slovakia: the Virgin from Ruszkin (Rießdorf, Ruskinoce; ca.1320-30 at the Bratislava Slovenská Národná Galéria), the Virgin of Toporc (Toppertz, Toporec; ca. 1320-30 at the Budapest National Gallery of Hungary), the Virgin of Újszandec (Neusandetz, Nowy Sącz; ca.1330-40 at the parish church of St. Margaret in Újszandec), and the Virgin of Podolin (Pudlein, Podolinec; ca. 1350-60 at the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin in Podolin). The heads of the Christ Child figures in these sculptures rest on long pivots inserted into the upper torsos of the children. Strings are wound around the pivots, their ends dangling from a hole in the back of the Christ Child statues. Depending on which string is pulled, the Child turns its head toward the beholder or away from the beholder toward the mother.<sup>13</sup>

I am using the opportunity of this lecture to expand these three aforementioned examples to include others no longer existent but mentioned in written sources.

Let's start with Martin Luther's *Table Talks* as it is called in TR 6848 from „The Papists' Deceit“:

The Prince Elector of Saxony, Duke Johann Friedrich [...] was given a figure during the Farmers' Riot in 1525, which he still owns. I have seen it, namely Mary with her Child. When a rich person came and prayed, the Christ Child turned toward his mother not wanting to behold the sinner, and so he should seek intercession and help from the Virgin Mary. But if he promised a great deal to the monastery, the Christ Child turned

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<sup>11</sup> Birgit Franke, Mittelalterliche Wallfahrten in Sachsen, ein Arbeitsbericht, in *Arbeits- und Forschungsberichte zur Sächsischen Bodendenkmalpflege*, 44 (2002), p. 113.

<sup>12</sup> For the crucifix in Döbeln, see Tripps 2000, cit. (note 1), pp. 161, 176, 182, 237; Franke 2002, cit. (note 11), p. 114. For the crucifix in Berlin, see Tripps 2000, cit. (note 1), pp. 157-158. Manfred Koller, Gliederpuppe und Mirakelmann – Der spätgotische Schmerzensmann von Rattenberg in Tirol, in *Restauratorenblätter*, 26 (2007), pp. 133-143; many thanks to Michael Rief, Aachen, who mentioned this publication to me. Kamil Kopania, *Animated Sculptures of the Crucified Christ in the Religious Culture of the Latin Middle Ages*, Warszawa 2010, p. 254.

<sup>13</sup> Gyöngyi Török, Die Madonna von Toppertz, um 1320-30, in the Hungarian National Gallery and the phenomena of the movable Christ Child, in *Annales de la Galerie Nationale Hongroise – A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Évkönyve*, 2005-2007 (2008), pp. 76-87. Many thanks to Zoltán Gyalóky, Kraków, who mentioned this publication to me.

toward him once again; if he promised even more, the Child became friendly, and with his arm outstretched, made a sign of the cross over him. The Child is hollow inside, filled with locks and strings. There was always a trickster behind it who pulled the strings and vexed and cheated the people, so that they would have to sing him a song of praise [Liedlin]. If the priests wanted the Child to demonstrate ingratitude toward him, he would turn his back on him. The King of England also found such a statue and showed it to the people and then broke it. But it would be good if they saved such a thing, so that our descendants could see what kind of people the papists have been. Because they do not want to muddy the waters just to prove it to them. Prince Wolf von Anhalt obtained it during the Farmers' Riot and gave it to the Prince Elector of Saxony.<sup>14</sup>

In the edition of the Table Talks published by Johannes Aurifaber in 1567, we find the indication that this statue originally belonged to the Convent of St. Paul's in Eisenach.<sup>15</sup>

Some 50 years later we have a similar report to hand; Bernhard Latomus reported of a Marian statue on the high Altar of the Cistercian abbey in Dargun (Schwerin diocese) at the beginning of the seventeenth century, which is supposed to have been prepared by attaching screws in such a way that it was able to turn toward or away from the devotee, depending on the size of the donor's proffered sacrifice.<sup>16</sup> In his „*Eilenburgische Chronika / Oder Beschreibung Der sehr alten Burg / Schlosses und Stadt Eilenburg...*“, published in Leipzig 1696, Jeremias Simon describes a similar figure:

But the Marian statue currently under consideration was prepared in such a way / that, because it is hollow inside / one approached it from behind / and could see everything

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<sup>14</sup> Franke 2002, cit. (note 11), p. 113. Susanne Zeunert, Luther und die Bilder. Martin Luthers Stellung zu Kult- und Wallfahrtsbildern unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Tischreden. Arbeit zur Erlangung des Grades eines Magister Artium an der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Philosophische Fakultät, Institut für Europäische Kunstgeschichte. Submitted by Prof. Dr. Johannes Tripps, Heidelberg 2006, p. 40. The source is published in Martin Luther, *Tischreden*, Bd. VI, Weimar 1921, p. 232, Nr. 6848

[“Der Kurfürst zu Sachsen, Herzog Johann Friedrich ... hat ein Bilde im Bauern Aufruhr 1525 bekommen, welch[e]s er noch hat. Das hab ich gesehen, nämlich Maria mit ihrem Kinde. Wenn ein Reicher ist kommen, und dafür gebetet, so hat sich das Kind zur Mutter gewandt, als wollt er den Sünder nicht ansehen, drüm sollt er Fürbitte und Hülfe bei der Mutter Maria suchen. Hat er aber viel ins Kloster gegeben, so hat sichs zu ihm wieder gewandt; hat er aber noch mehr verheißen, so hat sich das Kind freundlich erzeigt und mit ausgestrecktem Arm ein Creuz über ihn gemacht Es ist aber hohl gewest innwendig, und mit Schlossen und Schnüren also zugericht. Dahinter ist allzeit ein Schalk gewest, der die Schüre gezogen hat, und die Leute vexirt und betrogen, so daß sie ihm sein Liedlin haben müssen singen. Wollten aber die Pfaffen, daß sich das Kindlin gegen einem ungnädig erzeigen, so kehrets einem gar den Rücken zu. Ein solch Bild hat der König von Engeland auch gefunden und dem Volke geweiht, und danach zerbrochen. Es wäre aber gut, dass man solch Ding aufhübe, damit unser Nachkommen könnnten sehen, was die Papisten für Leute sind gewest, denn sie wollen kein Wasser getrübt haben, sie damit zu überweisen. Dies Bilde hat Fürst Wolf von Anhalt in der Bauern Aufruhr bekommen und dem Kurfürsten zu Sachsen geschant.“]

<sup>15</sup> Zeunert 2006, cit. (note 14), p. 42.

<sup>16</sup> Franke 2002, cit. (note 11), p. 113.

through a secret hole./ The people/ knelt before the statue, venerated and prayed to it / brought their offerings and worshipped it, and also brought it their sacrifices and contributions / deeds or intentions. If the priest or monk / standing behind it / found the offering worthy / he used the hidden strings, wire pulls and other instruments to direct and regulate the statue so that soon the eyes / when animated / turned toward him /or turned away / with a back-and-forth movement / nodding / or shaking its head / whether it wanted to be understood as either a *yes* or a *no*. Now if /someone / who had done terrible deeds / such as murder / adultery / promiscuity / theft or similar vices / fell prone before the statue/ and begged for mercy or prayed [*ora pro me*] / or some such scene / the figure pretended to be asleep / or shook his head anyway and gave a negative reply. Therefore some of those who had additional possessions /a substantial amount of money / or other items / would try to make up for their deeds / and at the same time to procure mercy with their additional sacrifices [...]<sup>17</sup>

But it would be good if they saved such a thing, so that our descendants could see what kind of people the papists have been. Because they do not want to muddy the waters just to prove it to them.

With these words of Luther's in mind, it would explain why, in Protestant Lübeck, such a movable Marian statue survived the Reformation up until 1696, and had even been repaired time and again: Shortly before September 1478, a new altarpiece was built in the choir of the Cathedral of Lübeck. This altarpiece was dismantled in April 1696.<sup>18</sup> In the center of the shrine stood the mechanical statue of Our Lady with Child, mentioned by descriptions and in bills of the cathedral's *fabrica*.

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<sup>17</sup> Franke 2002, cit. (note 11), p. 113.

[“Es war aber das ietzgedachte MarienBild also zubereitet / daß weil es inwendig hohl / man dahinter treten / und durch ein heimliches Loch alles sehen kunte / was die Leute / so vor demselben niederknieten und es venerierten und anbeteten / auch ihre Opfer und Einlage demselben brachtzen / thaten oder vornahmen: Wie es nun Pfaff oder Münch / so dahinter stund / for gut befand / so konnte er durch die verborgenen Schüre, Draht-Züge und anderen Instrumenta das Bild so regieren und regulieren / daß es bald die Augen / wenn es lebete / gegen einen wandte / oder von ihm abkehrte / solcher auff- oder zuthat / ingleichen den Kopf bißweilen neigete / bißweilen schüttelte / wodurch es also ja oder nein zu verstehen geben wollte. Wenn nun / einer / so böse Thaten / als Mord / Ehebruch / Hurerey / Diebstahl un dergleichen Laster an sich gehabt / vor ihm niedergefallen / und umb Vorbitte oder ora pro me selbiges abgeflehet / hat sich solch Bild gestellt / als wenn es schliefe / oder doch mit Schüttelung des Hauptes abschlägigen Antwort von sich gegeben: Dahero mancher / der es im Vermögen gehabt / ein stattliches am Geld / oder anderen Sachen / umb solches wiederum zu versöhnen / und bey demselben Gnade zu erwerben / ihm aufgeopffert [...].“]

<sup>18</sup> Tripps in Zeunert 2006, cit. (note 14), pp. 71-72. The source is published by Johannes Baltzer - Friedrich Bruns, *Die Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler der Freien und Hansestadt Lübeck, Bd. III: Kirche zu Alt-Lübeck, Dom, Jakobikirche, Ägidienkirche*, Lübeck 1920, pp. 117-119.

The first notice of this mechanical statue dates from May 26, 1652 and we find among the bills of the *fabrica*: “to a stone mason, who repaired the statue of Our Lady standing high above the main altar in the choir for 3 pounds”.

The next payment dates from April 4, 1653: „to the clockmaker, who repaired the statue of Our Lady standing high above on the altar for 7 pounds, 8 shillings”.<sup>19</sup> Calling a clockmaker means, that the statue must have been mechanical.

Much more precise are the indications given by Kunrat von Hövelen in his descriptions of the sights of Lübeck, published in 1666: “In the choir, above the main altar, behind which is a staircase, stands the fraudulent statue of Our Lady with a mechanical Child in combination with the three little bells ringing in C, E, and G. With this the papists made a lot of wisecracks and they called it ‘*piam fraudem*’”.<sup>20</sup>

That movable Marian statues have found public acceptance is based, on the one hand, on a tradition that reaches far down into the Middle Ages. Thus does Book VII of the *Speculum Historiale* from Vincent of Beauvais (d. 1264) report a lot of acting in Marian statues; one example is, during the war between Philip of France and Henry of England when a Brabançon throws a stone at the statue of Our Lady and hits the Christ Child on the arm, whereupon it bleeds. The transgressor and his companion die on the spot and the next day a huge crowd of people watch as Mary tears her clothes in agony over the shame inflicted upon her son.<sup>21</sup>

Wonderful testimonies are also included in the *Liber depictus* (Vienna, National Library, cod. 370) written prior to 1350 for the Franciscan monastery at Český Krumlov (Krumau). Among the many stories, one in particular is singled out regarding the healing of a woman who has a devil breathing down her neck (is possessed), against which even a crucifix is powerless. The woman therefore pleads with the figure of an enthroned Madonna and Child. Mary stretches out her hand and beats the devil, which immediately drops away.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Baltzer/Bruns 1920, cit. (note 18), pp. 117-119, with note 1:

1651 May 26 “einem Steinhawer, der daz Marienbildt oben dem Altar, welches sehr zerbrochen, wieder gemacht, zahlt 3 £”.

1653 April 4 “ dem Uhrmacher zahlt, welcher oben aufn Altar daz Marienbildt wieder zurecht gemacht 7 £ 8 β“ (2 ½ Reichstaler).

<sup>20</sup> Quoted here from Baltzer/Bruns 1920, cit. (note 18), pp. 118-119: „ oben im Kore über dem Altar, da man hinten bis oben hinauf steigen kann, das betrigliche bewägliche Christbildchen mit der Marien samt den nach c, e, g tönenden Glöcklein, womit die Pöbstler vile Possen gemacht, welches sie *piam fraudem* nännen“; cf. Kunrat von Hövelen, *Der [...] Stadt Lübek [...] Herrligkeit* (1666), p. 67.

<sup>21</sup> Adolfo Mussafia, "Studien zu den mittelalterlichen Marienlegenden", *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie in Wien, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse*, CXIII (1886), pp. 917-994; XCV (1888), pp. 5-92; CXIX (1889), Abh. IX; CXXIII (1890), Abh. VIII; CXXXIX (1898), Abh. VIII.; the example mentioned in the text taken from XCV (1888), p. 55. Many thanks to Miklós Boskovits (+), Florence, for the bibliographic references.

<sup>22</sup> Karel Stejskal, *Die wundertätigen Bilder und Grabmäler in Böhmen zur Zeit der Luxemburger*, in: *King John of Luxembourg (1296-1346) and the Art of His Era. Proceedings of the International Conference, Prague, 16-20 September 1996*, ed. Klara Benešová, Prague 1998, pp. 270-277, esp. p. 276 and figs. 155-156.

On the other hand, the acceptance of movable Marian figures is also due to the enthusiasm of the time for mechanical playthings, especially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when each major city or a larger church building had mechanical playthings.<sup>23</sup> Royal gardens such as Hesdin were full of machinery, and no princely entry into a city was managed without pageantry with mechanical figures.<sup>24</sup>

The late Gothic mechanical clock in the Munich Frauenkirche, which depicts the Last Judgement, to this day gives us an overwhelming sense of what has been lost. God the Father at the top pulls the sword out of its sheath, and the figure can also move its mouth and open and close its eyes. In front of God the Father, on the right and left, a Christ and Mary, kneel, praying for aberrant humanity. These two figures also have movable arms and can open and close their eyes and move their mouths.<sup>25</sup>

That the audience was really so blind to deception as Luther suggests in his *Table Talks* is, in this context, highly doubtful. The previously quoted sentence of the Reformer is at this point again called to mind: „But it would be good if they saved such a thing, so that our descendants could see, what kind of people the papists have been. Because they do not want to muddy the waters just to prove it to them.”

In my opinion, it is these movable statues used throughout Europe in the late Middle Ages that influenced the incorporation of movable figures in parts of the carved altarpieces that stood on the altars. So far, however, I know of only one surviving example of this: Tilman Riemenschneider's great altarpiece of the Assumption of the Virgin in Creglingen (ca. 1506). In 1903, Friedrich Hertlein described the mechanical figures in the crowning superstructure above the shrine as follows:

To this it should be added that in the upper representation of the Coronation [of the Virgin] the two small floating angels holding the crown were made with movable parts; until a few years ago, they were suspended on gut strings, and could thus be pulled up and down; there is no doubt that on the feast-day of the Assumption of

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<sup>23</sup> Johannes Tripps, La Sainte-Chapelle di Parigi. Sede di sacre rappresentazioni e di miracoli, in: Arturo Quintavalle (ed.), *Medioevo: la Chiesa e il Palazzo* (Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Parma, 20-24 Settembre 2005), Parma-Milano 2007, pp. 557-564. Johannes Tripps, The Priest assisted by Automaton. Medieval Altars and Altarpieces with Mechanical Figures, in: Andreas Hartmann a.o. (eds.), *Die Macht der Dinge. Symbolische Kommunikation und kulturelles Handeln*. Festschrift für Ruth E. Mohrmann, Münster – New York – München – Berlin 2011, pp. 339-347.

<sup>24</sup> Birgit Franke offers an unparalleled overview of the mechanical playthings in the secular ambience, social games with mechanical playthings – “Merveilles“ in Hesdin, in *Marburger Jahrbuch*, 24 (1997), pp. 135-158. For clocks and organs in late gothic churches, see Tripps 2000, cit. (note 1), pp. 14-15. For pageantries, see Johannes Tripps, From Singing Saints to Descending Angels. Medieval Ceremonies and Cathedral Façades as Representations of the Heavenly Jerusalem, in *Arte Cristiana*, XCIII/826 (2005), pp. 1-13.

<sup>25</sup> Tripps 2000, cit. (note 1), p. 15.



Mary, the Coronation of Mary would have been enacted before the assembled devotees.<sup>26</sup>

In other words, the floating angels would have actually placed the crown on Mary's head, which would also explain the poor state of preservation of the little angels' hands and feet in spite of their floating at a considerable height above the ground where one would have thought they would be protected from any such damage.

With this example I would like to conclude my contribution. I hope, however, that in the following discussion some of you may be able to cite some further examples of mechanical statues of the Virgin that may help me to fill out my mosaic.

Thank you.

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<sup>26</sup> "Dazu kommt, dass in der oberen Darstellung der Krönung [Mariens] die zwei kleinen, die Krone haltenden, schwebenden Engel beweglich eingerichtet waren; bis vor wenigen Jahren hingen sie an Darmsaiten, konnten also hinauf- und hinabgezogen werden; ohne Zweifel sollte am Festtag Mariä Himmelfahrt die Krönung Mariä den versammelten Andächtigen im Bilde vorgeführt werden."; cf. Friedrich Hertlein, 'Vom Marienaltar in der Creglinger Herrgottskirche,' in *Württembergisch Franken*, N.F. VIII (1903), p. 124.