

MODERN *ACHEIROPOIETA*: THE VEIL OF VERONICA IN THE AGE OF THE
JACQUARD LOOM

by

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Abstract

The removal of the human hand from the creation of images was a concomitant feature of industrial modernity. In the first years of the nineteenth century, textile production entered this new phase with the invention of the Jacquard loom. The proliferation of the Jacquard technique was virtually synonymous with technological innovation and the acceleration of industrial capitalism; and yet, this quintessentially modern development was echoed—somewhat paradoxically—by the multiplication of a consummately *premodern* textile image, also generated without a craftsman's labor. The Veil of Veronica, a Christian relic bearing a miraculous image of Christ's face, became a focus of popular devotion in France through the revival of the medieval cult of the Holy Face. The Veronica relic is one of the Christian *acheiropoieta*, meaning "not made by human hand." Engravings depicting the relic were printed on cloth and circulated throughout France, where they were believed to strengthen the Catholic Church, particularly in its confrontations with communism.

The disavowal of human mediation therefore took two very different, though similarly mobilizing, forms in the 1800s. The foundational premise of this thesis is that there are registers of similarity, interaction, and negation between the premodern miraculous and modern mechanical paradigms. These operative and tectonic connections are the ground against which the actual historical interactions between the religious and industrial spheres in nineteenth-century France must be understood. My objective is to examine how the reemergence of the cult of the Veil of Veronica and its material culture operated within this particular historical moment to mediate the relations with communism and capitalism, and ultimately to reinforce the power of the Catholic Church. While the Church and industrial capitalism similarly negated human

handiwork to engender and normalize their power, communism challenged the strategies of abstraction and mystification inherent in both systems. What is ultimately at stake in this analysis is a more nuanced understanding of the critical issues of the nineteenth century: the interplay between materiality and abstraction, mediation and immediacy, and copies and models—problems that vexed the economic, social, political, and artistic spheres of industrial modernity.

Preface

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The removal of the human hand from the creation of images was a concomitant feature of industrial modernity. In the first years of the nineteenth century, before the advent of the daguerreotype and lithography, textile production entered this new phase with the invention of the Jacquard loom. Obviating the weaver's skilled manipulations of the threads, the Jacquard device enabled the mechanical production of fabrics with intricate designs. The proliferation of these commodities was virtually synonymous with technological innovation and the acceleration of industrial capitalism. And yet, beginning in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, this quintessentially modern development was echoed—somewhat paradoxically—by the multiplication of a consummately *premodern* textile image, also generated without a craftsperson's labor. The Veil of Veronica, a Christian relic bearing a miraculous image of Christ's face, became a focus of popular devotion in France through the revival of the medieval cult of the Holy Face.¹ The Veronica relic is one of the Christian *acheiropoieta*, a Greek word

¹ Thomas A. Kselman briefly discusses the cult in *Miracles and Prophecies in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 102-103. Several texts, all produced in the 1880's by, or in collaboration, with abbé Pierre Janvier, the Dean of the Metropolitan Chapter of Tours, Priest of the Holy Face, are my main sources for nineteenth-century Holy Face devotion. Pierre Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter Carmelite of Tours, Written by Herself. Arranged and Completed with the Aid of Her Letters and the Annals of Her Monastery by M. l'Abbé Janvier, Director of the Priests of the Holy Face*, Revised Edition. (1884). Pierre Janvier, *The Holy Man of Tours: Or, the Life of Léon Papin-Dupont, Who Died at Tours in the Odor of Sanctity*, March 18, 1876, (Baltimore: John Murphy and Co., 1882). Pierre Janvier, *M. Dupont and the Devotion to the Holy Face*, trans. Anne R. Bennett (Tours: Oratory of the Holy Face, 1885). Pierre Janvier, *Manual of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face*, trans. Anne R. Bennett (Tours: Oratory of the Holy Face, 1887). All quotations are transcribed directly from the English translations listed above. Where the original language attributed to Sister Mary is of interest, I included the text from the French edition of Sister Mary's biography in the footnotes. Pierre Janvier and Sister Mary Saint Peter, *Vie de la Soeur*

used within Christian doctrine to designate those icons that are “not made by human hand.” These are often images derived directly from Christ and produced without, or with minimal, human intervention. According to the medieval legend, the divine likeness was impressed on the linen cloth when a woman named Veronica used it to wipe the sweat from the Christ’s suffering face during the Passion. Engravings depicting the relic were printed on cloth and circulated throughout France, where they were believed to shore up the strength and integrity of personal faith and the Catholic Church (fig. 1).

The disavowal of human mediation therefore took two very different, though similarly mobilizing, forms in the 1800s. An understanding of the complex texture of industrial modernity requires not just an awareness of their differentiation, but also an analysis of the ways in which these models overlap and intersect. The foundational premise of this thesis is that there are registers of similarity, interaction, and negation between the premodern miraculous and modern mechanical paradigms. To see these similarities as more than trivial or metaphorical is, admittedly, counterintuitive. Entrenched in myth, the Christian *acheiropoieton* seems to exist in a fundamentally different reality from that of the Jacquard textile. An intricate cultural framework of tradition, ritual and theology renders the Veronica relic both “not made” and divine. The Jacquard device seems to be the inverse: while it physically distances the hand from production, no cultural support gives this condition a metaphysical significance. Indeed, the magical cloth, revered as a divine memento and token of eternity, is all but incommensurable with the conventional, mass-produced commodity. However, my intention is to turn the focus

Saint-Pierre carmélite de Tours, écrite par elle-même, mise en ordre et complétée, à l'aide de ses lettres et des annales de son monastère, par M. l'abbé Janvier, doyen du chapitre de l'église métropolitaine de Tours, Directeur des Prières de la Sainte-Face, 2nd ed. (Tours: Oratoire de la Sainte Face, 1884).

from the objects themselves to the process involved in creating and sustaining the “not made by human hand” effect. A more thorough examination reveals that both models emerged through analogous technical operations, which in both cases actuate an abstract register. In unraveling the operations that support and reinforce the disavowal of human labor, the apparently rigid distinctions between the miraculous and the mechanical begin to thaw.

These operative and tectonic connections, I argue, are the ground against which the actual historical interactions between the religious and industrial spheres in nineteenth-century France must be examined. The Veronica devotion was revived, in part, to intervene in a conflict in which the questions of human labor and machine production were central. Popular devotion to the relic, which had waned in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, was rekindled in the 1840’s when a French Carmelite nun received a series of divine revelations in which Christ explained that his face on the Veronica cloth was the ideal figure of the “Work of Reparation.”² At first this devotional labor involved making amends for the secularization of France’s people and institutions more generally, but in 1847 it achieved a more explicitly political tenor when, as the nun reported, Christ had directed her to “cross swords with the Communists who [...] were the sworn enemies of the Church, and of his Christ.”³ Henceforth, the Veronica cloth became an instrument in the Catholic Church’s fight against communists and others who challenged the economic and social systems most amenable to the perpetuation of the Church’s authority.

My objective is to examine how the reemergence of the cult of the Veil of Veronica and its material culture operated within this particular historical moment to mediate the relations with

² Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 238.

³ Ibid., 319. The same passage in the French text reads: “Il m’a commandé de faire la guerre aux *communists*, qu’il m’a dit être les ennemis de l’Église et de son Christ.” Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Vie de la Soeur Saint-Pierre*, 298.

communism and capitalism, and ultimately to reinforce the power of the Catholic Church. To address this, I consider how the “not made by human hand” model served the hegemonic religious and economic systems of modern France. To reiterate, the obviation of the creative gesture in the fabrication of textile images also abetted industrial capitalism. The Jacquard technique was quickly adopted in factories throughout France and England, significantly deskilling the textile industry.⁴ Thus we find an analogous process in the two spheres. As the Church opted to stem its loss of stature through the age-old obfuscations embedded in the Veronica veil and its many reproductions, industrial capitalism, in its ascendance, relied on similar strategies of abstraction, which at once diminished the value of labor while shoring up the wealth and power of the capitalists. And indeed, while the Catholic Church and industrial capitalism similarly negated human handiwork to engender and normalize their power, communism challenged the strategies of abstraction and mystification inherent in both systems.

By directing this unlikely comparison between the paranormal cloth and the industrial fabric to the level of mediation, I aim to demonstrate how homologous operations gave rise to these idealizations. It is this mode of mediation that many communists and other critics of both capitalism and religion, whether explicitly or not, resisted. My argument centers on a comparison between two constellations of objects: on one hand the Veronica relic and its reproductions, and on the other the punch cards of the Jacquard loom and the textiles it produces. In both sets, it is the interplay between model and copy from which the abstractions and obfuscations arise.

To elucidate my approach, the question of the mechanical, as opposed to mythic, character of the Veronica relic needs to be addressed more specifically. To be clear, my objective

⁴ See George Caffentzis, *In Letters of Blood and Fire: Work, Machines, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland and Brooklyn: PM Press/Common Notions/Autonomedia, 2013), 195-198.

is not to prove that the image of Christ on the ancient linen cloth was made by an artist. My analysis does not set out to contradict the Church's narrative, but rather to pursue the religious framework of the relic and its devotion deeply into its mechanics. *Acheiropoieta*, as a designation, involve two levels, which must be established and bridged: the object is not made by humans, and, therefore, it has a divine origin. In this way, the object legitimates the Christian God and the Church. But the gap between negation of human labor and divine authority is not simply bridged by religious imagination; rather, the space is interwoven with technical operations and actual materials.

The complexity of the situation is suggested by the fact that Catholics hold the image on the Veronica to be both miraculous and the result of physical contact with the historical person of Christ. What in the end is venerated is the physical object, the cloth with the image or its reproduction. Scholars of medieval and Byzantine art have studied the theological structures, image theory, and material culture that could accommodate the metaphysical-mechanical duality of the *acheiropoieta*, which to contemporary minds often seems a contradiction.⁵ Because an essential characteristic of these holy objects is their ability to engender sacred reproductions, the

⁵ Whereas the veil of Veronica only appears in archival sources in the twelfth century, similar miraculous images on cloth were revered by Byzantine Christians since the sixth century. The Image of Edessa, later known as the Mandylion, became the source of innumerable representations and replicas, one of which was likely the Veronica. Gerhard Wolf traces the disjointed genealogy from the various incarnations of the Byzantine Mandylion to the medieval appearance of the Veronica *sudarium* (sweat cloth) at Saint Peter's basilica. See Wolf, "From Mandylion to Veronica: Picturing the 'Disembodied' Face and Disseminating the True Image of Christ in the Latin West," in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: Papers from a Colloquium Held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1996*, ed. Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998), 53-179, especially 166-168. Throughout this article, Wolf deals extensively with the ambiguity of the relic as a miraculous image and impression. This problem is taken up in many of the essays in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*.

interpretation necessarily involves an understanding of image reproduction within these contexts.⁶ Most relevant to my analysis is Herbert L. Kessler's study of the complex discursive and physical gestures that render the act of deriving a copy from a prototype not just analogous to but even explanatory of the *acheiropoieta* in Byzantine image theology. This is to say that reproductions of the divine—both *acheiropoieta* and their copies—had a purpose in relation to Christian cosmology. According to Kessler, “copies allowed the prototypal image to remain at the threshold of the world of matter and sense perception [...] they entered the divine archetype into the physical order, leaving the true image uncircumscribed in matter, time, and place.”⁷ A heavenly archetype impressed both Christ and icons in the temporal realm, and the more these models then behaved like stamps, the more they reinforced this schema. In the nineteenth-century texts promoting the Holy Face devotion, the notion of the divine stamp continued to organize and bolster the modern Veronica cult and the production of Holy Face prints.

The aspects of Kessler's analysis that address the technicity of the miraculous image as it operates across image theory, legend, and artistic production are therefore particularly useful in assessing the modern cult. In conjunction with this study of the religious operations, moreover, this thesis also examines the extent to which these techniques are at play outside the strictly Christian context. The anthropologist Mattijs van de Port has studied the role of the “not made

⁶ James Trilling goes so far as to suggest that the miraculous reproducibility of images can be attributed to the tendency of indigo to transfer, without the intervention of the human hand, from one textile surface to another. For Trilling, credulity links the mechanical to the miraculous, categories already fluid since the “Byzantine way of seeing” did not firmly differentiate between nature, art, and miracle. While Trilling does link the miraculous to the mechanical, he ultimately leaves the gap between to be crossed by a leap of faith. Trilling, “The Image Not Made by Hand and the Byzantine Way of Seeing,” in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, 109-128.

⁷ Herbert L. Kessler, “Configuring the Invisible by Copying the Holy Face,” in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, 150-151.

by human hand” model in the production of “the sensation that one’s imaginations are not human fabrications at all, but immanent to the world”: a ruse van de Port elsewhere calls the “cultural production of the real.”⁸ From the name of Allah found in the marbling of cut meat, to involuntary bodily convulsions experienced in Bahia spirit possession cults, and even in the advertising campaigns that promote high-definition television sets as providing more immediate experiences of reality, van de Port demonstrates that human mediation is often regarded as a impediment to the experience of reality and is consequently disavowed through a variety of techniques.

While van de Port does elucidate the ways in which these techniques operate, his analysis ultimately addresses the problem of subjects using objects to create and maintain cultural constructions. Moving away from the parameters of human intentionality, my analysis does not prioritize the existence of objects of the cultural imagination above the techniques that validate them. I want to inverse this formula, approaching the *acheiropoieton* less as fiction generated by Catholicism than as a technique that engenders the religion and its secular analogues. German media theorist Bernhard Siegert’s formulation of a cultural technique is particularly useful in conceiving the possibility of the agency of technical operations in creating meaning. “When we speak of cultural techniques,” writes Siegert, “we envisage a more or less complex actor network that comprises technological objects as well as the operative chains they are part of and that

⁸ Mattijs van de Port, “(Not) Made by the Human Hand: Media Consciousness and Immediacy in the Cultural Production of the Real,” in “What is a medium? Theologies, technologies and aspirations,” special issue, *Social Anthropology* 19, no. 1, (February 2011), 75-76.
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configure and constitute them.”⁹ The operational sequence mediated by technologies process, encode and articulate simultaneous distinctions in the real and the symbolic, distinctions that delimit culture.¹⁰ A door, for instance, involves the acts of opening and closing, which render the distinctions between inside and outside, nature and cultural, and even sacred and profane. The door enables the ontic operations, and yet the crucial acts of opening and closing also precede the specific medial instantiation of the device.¹¹ According to Siegert,

[T]his changing of the humanities frame of reference aimed to replace the hegemony of understanding, which inevitably tied meaning to a variant of subjectivity or self-presence, with ‘the materialities of communication’—the nonhermeneutic non-sense—as the base and abyss of meaning. As a result, the focus was less *what* was represented in the media, or how and why it was represented in one way rather than another. In contrast to content analysis or the semantics of representation, German media theory shifted the focus from the representation of meaning to the conditions of representation, from semantics itself to the exterior and material conditions of what constitutes semantics.¹²

Applying this approach to the Christian *acheiropoieton* thus involves concentrating less on the magical object than on the set of processes that continually produce the notion of “not made by human hands” alongside its metaphysical valence. A closer look at the incremental construction of the Veronica devotion and myth, accreted and developed over the course of history, indicates that *acheiropoieta* entail a complex network of operations—concealing,

⁹ Bernhard Siegert, *Cultural Techniques: Grids, Filters, Doors, and Other Articulations of the Real*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6-17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11, 192-205.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2.

revealing, abstracting, substituting, stamping, multiplying—that obfuscate human production and create a distinction between the human and the non-human and, by extension, the worldly and the sacred. A consideration of an *acheiropoieton* as a cultural technique does, however, require an adjustment of Siegert’s model, since the focus is not how the object is acted upon or the operations it enables, but rather the cluster of processes that comprise and generate the miraculous. Nonetheless, these insights alert us to the fact that ontic operations such as veiling or duplicating, prior to being invested with any meaning, are in fact the processes by which the distinction between the sacred and profane is articulated and the symbolic register is generated.

It needs to be emphasized that while these operations developed from the physical properties of the relic, they actually exceeded the object itself as they reverberated throughout the devotional apparatus. In fact, the iteration of these processes comprised many of the fundamental structures of the Veronica legends and devotions. They became discursive and representational techniques as they generated meaning in a variety of media, such as images, ritual, prayer, engraving, and even the behaviors and desires of believers. Indeed, a crucial insight of the cultural techniques approach is that particular operations can produce similar effects through diverse supports. I want to extend these implications by suggesting that analogous operations were enabled by the Jacquard device. In both the religious and industrial contexts, these medial processes yielded the “not made by human hand” effect. This is an important aspect of the historically specific problem under investigation here: the processes of veiling and replication that gave rise to the miraculousness of the Christian object also played an important role in industrial production. The punch cards of the Jacquard loom, as will be seen, veiled the textile-image’s prototype and enabled mechanical reproduction. While these processes were anything but metaphysical, they did distance the hand of the worker from the production of

the textile and in doing so articulated distinctions between the human and a non-human register, which from the perspective of the worker and the consumer was both occulted and authoritative. The seeming autonomy of the machine, the economic system, and the commodity gave rise to what both enthusiasts and detractors of industry sometimes perceived as an absolute or even mystical emanation. This abstract field, apparently beyond the realm of human agency, became both contentious and powerful in the encounters between Catholicism, capitalism, and communism. Examining these operations in both the Veronica devotion and the Jacquard device, therefore, offers a glimpse into the force of the not-made-by-hand model in shaping modern France.

An analysis of the processes by which the metaphysical is mediated reveals not simply resemblances between premodern religion and modern technology, but points to structures they actually share. Thus, the history presented here does not see the premodern and modern as discrete and incommensurable. To study the registers of similarity between these disparate objects and techniques is to challenge the qualitative separation between religion and technology, matter and spirit, premodern and modern—binaries forged in Enlightenment thought. Yet many of the scholars who have detected the recuperation of the *acheiropoietic* mode in modern technologies have left these divisions largely intact. Those who mobilize the religious concept to theorize photography, for instance, tend to use the former metaphorically, assuming a purely mythical basis for the miraculous production of the image.¹³ In these metaphoric uses, there

¹³ Roland Barthes, David Harvey, and George Didi-Huberman, among others, have mobilized the religious concept in their theorizations of photography. Harvey, calling the miraculous relics “proto-photography” and “pseudophotographic,” draws on the comparison to elucidate the mystique of early photography and its easy assimilation into spiritual frameworks. David Harvey, *Photography and Spirit* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 41. For Barthes, the absence

ultimately remains a difference between the miraculous object and the modern technology. The present study, in contrast, posits the inability to fully delineate the religious mode from the technological, the premodern from the modern, and the irrational from the rational.¹⁴

In other words, those of Bruno Latour, we have never been modern. For Latour, being modern means dogmatically believing in and interpreting the world according to the ontological distinction between human and non-human, culture and nature, subject and object, environment and politics, rational and irrational, and spiritual and technological.¹⁵ Latour argues that not only are the categorical divisions a construct, but in the period that coincides with modernity the impossibility of their separation becomes all the more profound through the development of

of the human hand in the image's production gives rise to a "resurrection," rather than a reproduction. Neither the Veronica relic nor the photograph attest to absence, but rather some sliver of the real: "not a memory, an imagination, a reconstitution, a piece of Maya, such as art lavishes upon us, but reality in a past state: at once the past and the real." Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 82. Didi-Huberman similarly homes in on the *acheiropoietic* image's relationship to its original source, exploring the ambiguous status between the semiotic categories of icon and index. George Didi-Huberman writes on Secundo Pia's 1894 photograph of the Shroud of Turin in "The Index of an Absent Wound (Monograph on a Stain)," trans. Thomas Repensek, *October*, vol. 29 (Summer 1984), 63-81. This interplay of second-order image and first-order presence embodied in *acheiropoieta*—an issue that will become important in the present essay—Didi-Huberman also identifies with painting. "But this denial of the pictorial in favor of the incarnational demand had but one end, which was to offer itself as the absolute paradigm of all iconicity, and thus of all painting activity. A way of positing *in painting itself*, or in the history of art if one prefers, an absolute object of desire for all religious iconography: *an impossible object* of the pictorial desire for incarnation." Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, trans. John Goodman (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 189.

¹⁴ This is not simply to say that certain modes of existence persisted into and coexisted with modernity, nor that one mode prefigures or informs the other, although both approaches to temporality could be applied to gain some purchase on the nineteenth-century revival of the Veronica cult. Rather, I propose that there is a possibility of crisscrossing between the seemingly separate spheres at an operative or dynamic level.

¹⁵ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 10-11.

science and technology. A familiar narrative of European modernity, although one now met with much skepticism, traces the waning of religious mentalities and authority against the waxing of industry and secularization. This thesis studies the ways in which Catholicism persisted, adapted, and transformed in modern France. My further aim, however, is to redress this conception of modernity at a more foundational level. Latour calls for analytic models that do not perpetuate the divisions described above.¹⁶ My intention is to focus on a modality that exists prior to its instantiation in particular objects in order to move beyond the subject and object parameter and uncover a profound reciprocity and interrelation in the 1800s.

A recent methodological shift in art history aims to intervene in the temporality of art and art history by studying homologies in premodern and modern artistic practice.¹⁷ The discipline of art history has been historically engaged with periodization and consigning the work of art and its ability to generate meaning to a particular time and place. Amy Knight Powell and Alexander Nagel have notably challenged the discipline's particular bracketing of modernity by studying the artistic forms, concerns, practices that undergird both premodern art and twentieth-century art. Rather than ignore the parallels between the two modes of art production, Powell suggests,

¹⁶ Alternatives are explored in Bruno Latour, "Reflections on Etienne Souriau's *Les différents modes d'existence*," trans. Stephen Muecke, in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, Graham Harman (Melbourne: Re.press, 2011), 304-333.

¹⁷ While I am studying a modality, I should note that it is instantiated in and only perceptible through particular material objects. Much of this analysis takes place deep within the apparatuses, out of sight. But these operations are equally at play on the aesthetic level, in particular in the engravings depicting the Veil of Veronica that were produced in the nineteenth century, and also in a special Jacquard textile containing a portrait of the inventor. Though these items, and even less so the actual relic and the Jacquard device itself, would not traditionally be treated by the discipline of art history, this thesis is nonetheless concerned with questions that pertain specifically to the aesthetic object. The print medium, the relation of copy to original, the even the iconographic and stylistic aspects play a role here, but they are elements in the processing, perpetuation, and articulation of the *acheiropoietic* modality.

the art historian must acknowledge the tendency of works of art to “enter into liaisons with other works from distant times or places.”¹⁸ Nagel specifically highlights the contingency of the fine art paradigm furnished by the Enlightenment and German Romanticism by focusing on how twentieth-century artists recuperated medieval modalities to defamiliarize the modernist framework. He examines the “deeper structural analogies, sometimes acknowledged, sometimes not, that come into view when considering issues that are fundamental to art in both periods: questions regarding the generation and dissemination of images; site-specificity and mobility; fetishism and iconoclasm; memory and anachronism; and authorship and authority.”¹⁹

Like Powell and Nagel, I am interested in the way that the reappearance of a mode can force us to rethink our treatment of history and, more specifically, the monolithic concept of modernity. Extending their inquiries, however, I study the way an operative mode did not just shape disparate artistic practices, but was also enacted across a broader network of techniques and objects. Furthermore, while Powell and Nagel both suggest the possibility that the nineteenth century is also “shot through,” to use Nagel’s term, with premodern forms of production, both seem to imply that the reemergence of these techniques initiated a rupture with a period, even an illusory one, in which the modern paradigm adhered. My analysis, in contrast, detects the premodern in the most objectively modern of implements, if, barring all else, we could reduce modernity to the transformation of the technological landscape. In fact, the contradictions

¹⁸ Powell goes on to state: “In its promiscuity, form has a way of detaching works of art from the people who worked them and from the time and place in which they were made, not by transcending history—that would be the metaphysical understanding of form as ‘idea or essence’—but rather by transgressing history, at least, our linear conception of it.” Amy Knight Powell, *Depositions: Scenes from the Late Medieval Church and the Modern Museum* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), 11.

¹⁹ Nagel, *Medieval Modern: Art Out of Time* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2012), 10.

identified here have not arisen from a rupture, nor from a continuity; rather, I want to suggest that the interpenetration of the mechanical and the miraculous points to an operational symmetry rather than a chain (broken or stretched) between the premodern and modern.

In fact, in leapfrogging over the nineteenth century, Nagel leaves one of the more profound reifications of the modern and premodern division largely unexamined. In Nagel's discussion of the *acheiropoietic* mode, he focuses on the reproduction of the relic and its copies, both of which are valued as original and authentic in relation to a divine prototype. Nagel suggests that in the early-twentieth century, Walter Benjamin, László Moholy-Nagy, and Marcel Duchamp "recuperated the notion of the multiple under the sign of the machine," releasing art from the "unnecessary bourgeois obsession with originals."²⁰ While I follow Nagel in his suggestion that what seems most modern—the machine—is actually the barer of medieval modalities, the congruity he suggests between the *acheiropoieta*, the machine, and Benjamin's thesis in "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility" only brings up more profound difficulties.²¹ Whereas in this instance Nagel is not primarily concerned with the way the *acheiropoietic* mode operated within the theological sphere to generate the sense of absolute divine authority, this is precisely what I am arguing reappeared in the machine. In Benjamin's essay, the technological is antithetical to the mystical character he calls the aura. Therefore this deep, modal relationship between the religious and the mechanic is precisely what is overlooked by Benjamin and other Frankfurt School theorists. This scotoma is not incidental. When these

²⁰ Ibid., 233-234.

²¹ This is not to say that Nagel is unaware of the uneasiness with which Benjamin's technology-aura opposition relates to the *acheiropoietic* paradigm. Nagel does acknowledge the inappropriateness of this connection by citing Horst Bredekamp's objection to Benjamin, namely that copies of sacred images retain the aura of the original.

thinkers drew on religious language such as aura, phantasmagoria, fetish, and mystification, they often used them metaphorically, forcing a space between the religious and industrial rather than acknowledging the essential connection. Ultimately, Nagel evades the crucial point that Benjamin's oversight in fact generates and perpetuates (into the present) the very modernist framework Nagel seeks to eviscerate.

Thus, the bizarre correlation between the Veronica veil and the Jacquard textile enables a profound insight. The confluence of the two "not made by hand" models in the 1800s brings into focus the shared qualities and mechanisms between the religious and the industrial, enabling a reassessment of the religious terminology and metaphors used by the likes of Benjamin. That the intersections between Catholicism and capitalism on the question of mediation were apprehended by certain nineteenth-century critics is likely related to the enduring power of the Catholic Church throughout the century. Its alliances with the government and capitalists were strong while its aversions to socialism and communism were made equally vocal. Some of the most influential, radical thinkers of the century, such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Auguste Blanqui, and Karl Marx, recognized the same operations across religious, economic and governmental arenas, modalities that posited a transcendent, abstract sphere and diminished any sense of human agency.²² It is outside the scope of the thesis to analyze to what extent

²² Robert Graham cites many examples of this in *We Don't Fear Anarchy We Invoke It: The First International and the Origins of the Anarchist Movement* (Oakland: AK Press, 2015), 45, 50, 76, 109. Also see Clive Castaldo, "Socialism and Catholicism in France: Jaures, Guesde and the Dreyfus Affair," in *Religion, Society, and Politics in France Since 1789*, ed. Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin (London: The Hambledon Press, 1991), 136-147. Castaldo argues that French Socialism differs from Orthodox Marxism in that the former actively opposed Catholicism whereas the latter considered the bourgeoisie rather than religion the enemy. Indeed, already in 1855 Marx refers to the Anglican Church as one of the "obsolete social forces, nominally still in possession of all the attributes of power and continuing to vegetate long after

contemporaries conceived of the miraculous as coextensive with the mechanical in the nineteenth century, or the degree to which such an understanding has been lost in twentieth-century scholarship. A few examples throughout this paper will suffice to show that the link between the miraculous and the mechanical was very much alive in the 1800s. Still, ultimately this essay is not trying to recover what individuals thought about religion and technology. It is an investigation into a mode of mediation: the way a crucial power struggle of the nineteenth century, almost synonymous with modernity itself, was enacted at a technical, medial level, through the negation or disavowal of the human hand.

For all the Veil of Veronica's pretensions of being an ahistorical object, the conditions of its appearance and reproduction in nineteenth-century France were profoundly enmeshed in the specificity of the moment. In the first part of this thesis, "The Modern Revival: The Marvelous Economy and the Work of Reparation," I explore the ways in which the nineteenth-century Veil of Veronica devotion and its visual culture revived the relic's reciprocity with the Church's power, but with a new set of associations. Weakened by conflicting ideologies, the Church did not direct the Holy Face against capitalism, against which it only slightly chaffed, but instead mobilized the devotional labor to attack the communists—those who directly critiqued the mechanisms of abstraction and obfuscation fundamental to the religious and economic apparatuses. This lays the groundwork for the second part and the core of the thesis, "Abstracting the Figure, Figuring the Abstract." Here I embark on the comparative analysis of the Veronica

the basis of their existence has rotted away." Quoted in Denis R. Janz *World Christianity and Marxism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9. However, in my analysis the extent to which religion was implicated in the political *programs* of these thinkers is of less interest than the constitutional similarities they identify between Catholicism and modern systems of power. Janz outlines the significance of religion in Marx's thought in *World Christianity and Marxism*, 6-15.

and the Jacquard apparatuses to examine the material-symbolic operations that process the *acheiropoietic* quality.

What is ultimately at stake in this analysis is a more nuanced understanding of the critical issues of the nineteenth century: the interplay between materiality and abstraction, mediation and immediacy, and copies and models—problems that vexed the economic, social, political, and artistic spheres of industrial modernity. A perennial problem of Christianity—the negotiation of the metaphysical and universal through the material and temporal—was echoed in industrial society as new technologies dematerialized mechanisms and abstracted labor, manufacturing techniques and the image. In particular, the model and copy relationship, rendered numinous in Catholicism, reappeared in the industrial sphere where it generated its own absolutes. In the context of industrialization, textiles acquired new capacities of signification, or, rather, recuperated its premodern modes.

Chapter 2: The Modern Revival: The Marvelous Economy and the Work of Reparation

Reparation—devotion aimed at repairing sin—was the rallying cry of the Holy Face cult in the nineteenth century. Sister Mary of St. Peter, the Carmelite nun with whom the modern Veronica devotion originated, dedicated her life to a pious and strenuous quest for the ideal symbol for the “Work of Reparation,” a labor which sought to mediate between a frustrated God and the increasingly secular world.²³ Unlike acts of reparation cultivated in earlier times, the modern variety was not aimed at personal salvation, but was intended to make amends for the sins of all of France and particularly for those individuals who had slipped outside the fold of the religion.²⁴ In Sister Mary’s biography, in which her communications with Christ are recorded, she conceives the “reparatory work” as “a mine of gold. Our Lord told me that it required much patience and care to work this mine, for it was only by dint of hard labor that we could obtain the gold. He also said: Oh! if the world could only behold the immense treasure to be reaped by those who work my mine, I would not be without laborers.”²⁵ In 1845, Christ offered his Holy Face on the Veronica cloth as the “exterior symbol of the reparation.”²⁶ The Veronica cloth

²³ Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 141-166, 283-299.

²⁴ Kselman categorizes the Holy Face devotion within the larger association between suffering and reparation in nineteenth-century French religion. Other examples include the emphasis on Mary’s suffering during the La Salette visions, instances of stigmata, and the cult of Saint Philomena. According to Kselman, the change from personal to national salvation arose in response to the “new awareness of a distinction between Church and society” and the visibility of irreligious attitudes. Kselman, *Miracles and Prophecies*, 106.

²⁵ Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 328.

²⁶ The Holy Face on the Veronica object is also referred to as the “sensible object offered for the adoration of the associates [of the Work of Reparation], to repair the outrages of Blasphemers

imprinted with the divine face is described as a coin impressed with the face of a ruler. Christ tells Sister Mary that this token enables her to “transact the business of my house. By this Holy Face you will obtain the salvation of a multitude of sinners.”²⁷ Likewise, the Holy Face devotion is a “vast treasure [...] with which we can buy millions of souls by presenting the infinite merits of Jesus at the bank of the Divine Majesty!”²⁸

The devotional labor and sacred currency were crucial elements in a “marvelous economy”—the term used by Abbé Pierre Janvier, Sister Mary’s biographer and the priest of the Holy Face, to commend the efficacy of the Holy Face devotion in managing the fraught situation within which Catholics found themselves in modern France.²⁹ The economic organization was envisioned as such: France’s modern sins revived the suffering that Christ had endured during the Passion, but by emulating Saint Veronica, Christians could aid and appease him once again. As Veronica had ameliorated Christ’s discomfort by wiping his begrimed face with her veil, Sister Mary and other devotees may similarly sooth the troubled God by directing their prayers and devotion to the Holy Face on behalf of the blasphemers and sinners of France. In describing this as a “marvelous economy,” Janvier evoked the age-old Christian use of “economy” to refer to the management of human history by God. The Greek term *oikonomia*, which in its original context referred to the praxis of household management, came to be used by early Christians to

who attack the Divinity, of which it is the figure, the mirror and the image.” Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 299, 244.

²⁷ Ibid., 291.

²⁸ Ibid., 297.

²⁹ Ibid., 239. The Holy Face is effective for additional reasons that are elaborated throughout the biography. For instance, the suffering face of Christ will evoke God’s mercy and thus soften his anger towards the blasphemous France. See 326-327.

theorize the divine administration of the contingencies of the earthly realm, in particular by way of the incarnation of Christ.³⁰

That the Holy Face devotion was envisaged in the language of labor, exchange, currency, value—terms and frameworks reminiscent of industrial capitalism—suggests an arcane connection between this Christian economy and modern hegemonic apparatuses. Giorgio Agamben, in his study of the “theological genealogy of the economy,” finds the essence of Michel Foucault’s use of “apparatus,” or *dispositif* in French, in Christian *oikonomia*, translated by the early Church Fathers in Latin as *dispositio*. While the theologians implemented *oikonomia* to reconcile the simultaneous trinity and the unity of God, it ultimately created a “fracture that divides and, at the same time, articulates in God being and practice, the nature or essence, on the one hand, and the operation through which He administers and governs the created world, on the other.”³¹ This separation persisted into modernity as the “pure activity of governance devoid of any foundation in being.”³² In other words, the governmental apparatus exists as an abstract register against which living beings must struggle and conform. The peculiar character of the divine governance therefore reappears in modern power structures as apparatuses that, according to Foucault, take the form of “a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient—in a way that purports to be useful—the behaviors, gestures, and thoughts of human beings,” engendering “docile yet free bodies that assume their identity and their ‘freedom’ as subjects in the very process of their

³⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stephen Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 8-12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³² *Ibid.*

subjectification.”³³ Of particular interest here is the way that the industrial capitalist economy, like the Christian *oikonomia*, came embedded with the divisions between being and action, as Agamben points out, and between abstract systems and living beings. It engendered ideological structures that affirmed capitalism as a necessary and essential being, while subjecting the variable workers to this system. Capitalists implementing machines such as the Jacquard loom, which automated the processes of production, made the method of production yet more autonomous of the workers and invulnerable to their resistance. Therefore, Agamben’s analysis of *oikonomia* provides a useful backdrop for an examination of the historical context of the Holy Face revival in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. This medieval cult prefigured industrial capitalism and then reemerged as a reaction to modern power struggles. In this section I examine the political circumstances surrounding the modern restoration of this Veronica devotion. The Church found itself defending the modality of its *oikonomia* at a time when the kind of divisions and abstractions it imposed through Catholic doctrine were being re-appropriated by other power structures—such as those of industrial capital—and also challenged by radical detractors—namely, communists and other critics of religion. The marvelous economy of the Veronica devotion functioned as an apparatus that, in managing the “behaviors, gestures, and thoughts” of the Church’s followers, aimed to weaken the communist struggle against Catholic and capitalist systems alike.

The “Work of Reparation” sought to make amends for France’s sins, which, in short, involved the secularization of its citizens and institutions. The deterioration of the sovereignty

³³ Ibid., 12, 19.

and authority of the Catholic Church and the papacy, the laicization of public institutions, decreased attendance at church, and other irreligious trends that came to be associated with modernity motivated this spiritual innovation. Ironically, this reparation cult was part of an inventive and invigorated flourishing of religiosity.³⁴ Despite the Church's steady diminishment of authority over the course of the eighteenth century, culminating in the temporary evisceration of the Church's property, power, and stock of clergy during the French Revolution, the nineteenth century was, by many accounts, an "age of revival."³⁵ Catholicism proved adaptable and resilient in the face of crisis. Over the terrain of education, religious freedom and property,

³⁴ These two faces of the Veronica movement, as with other large-scale modern religious phenomena such as the mass-pilgrimages to the Lourdes shrine, present a challenge to the idea that religion underwent ineluctable decline in the nineteenth century. The notion that the immutable, anti-modern and anachronistic Church would inevitably be overshadowed by a liberal, progressive, and egalitarian modernity was fortified in the nineteenth century. Vocal parties on both sides of this conflict had stakes in creating and concretizing these binaries. While liberal, democratic movements depended on a rhetoric of progress, the Catholic Church represented itself as eternal and "outside of history." For a concise catalogue of the many facets of the religious/secular binary, their nineteenth-century origins, and their many inaccuracies and weaknesses, see Austen Ivereigh, "Introduction: The Politics of Religion in an Age of Revival," in *The Politics of Religion in an Age of Revival*, ed. Austen Ivereigh (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2000), 1-21. Of course, many twentieth- and twenty-first-century intellectual movements have undermined such a reductive and teleological understanding of history, but still case studies of nineteenth-century religiosity do much to probe the persistent and profound role of religion in the development of modernity. For historian Ruth Harris, the scale and scope of the Lourdes phenomenon demonstrates that spirituality and mysticism were woven into the fabric of modern culture. See Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (London: Penguin Press, 1999). Suzanne K. Kaufman highlights the particular modernity of the Lourdes movement as well as the shrine's role "as a crucial site for the emergence of a modern culture of consumption" in *Consuming Visions: Mass Culture and the Lourdes Shrine* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 9. An earlier study that examines the interplay of religion and politics in nineteenth-century France, as well as the scope and variety of modern spirituality is Kselman, *Miracles and Prophecies*.

³⁵ See the essays in Austen Ivereigh, ed., *The Politics of Religion in an Age of Revival*, in particular Austen Ivereigh, "Introduction: The Politics of Religion in an Age of Revival," 1-21, and Margaret Lavinia Anderson, "The Divisions of the Pope: The Catholic Revival and Europe's Transition to Democracy," 22-42.

the Church fought valiantly for its sovereignty.³⁶ But to a large measure the thriving religiosity was achieved through the official Church's support and cultivation of new and recuperated forms of popular piety. Religious feeling germinated through cults devoted to relics, miracles and saints, and often these forms of devotion were embedded with pro-monarchy and nationalistic sentiments and a profound loathing of revolutionary thought in its many forms.³⁷ Republicanism, socialism, and communism were anathema to the Church and its adherents. Not surprisingly, many of the miracle cults and other new or recovered forms of devotion were established to curtail these developments.

Though the devotion began as an antidote to the blasphemies against the name of the Lord and the "profanation of the Lord's Day by manual labor," in 1847, according to Sister Mary, Christ alerted her to the "anti-Christian machinations" of the communists.³⁸ Thereafter, the Holy Face devotion was intended to both stymie and atone for the advancement of what Janvier referred to as the communist "sect."³⁹ Comparing herself to Bernard of Clairvaux, Sister Mary garnered enthusiasm for a modern crusade against the so-called communist infidels within France's borders. Saint Veronica served as a model, not just for Sister Mary but for all modern crusaders against communism.⁴⁰

While this conviction was finely honed throughout Sister Mary's *vita*, the nature of the communist threat remained considerably less precise. The question of who these communists were and why they were the object of paranoia and loathing were only addressed in the vaguest

³⁶ Ivereigh, "Introduction," 15-21.

³⁷ Kselman provides many examples throughout *Miracles and Prophecies*, particularly in the subchapter "Suffering and Reparation," pp. 102-106.

³⁸ Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 315.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 319.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

of terms. “It is the Communists who have dragged me from my tabernacles, profaned and despoiled my sanctuaries, and have ever dared to raise their hands against the anointed of the Lord, but their designs shall be frustrated.” Christ warns.⁴¹ This “anti-social spirit has spread all over Europe, assuming different names at different epochs to suit the caprice of the moment; at one time styling themselves Socialists, then Liberals, and again Nihilists,” Janvier explained: “Towards the end of the reign of Louis Philip, at the period to which the life and communications of Sr. Mary St. Peter now lead us, they bore the appellation of Communists.”⁴² Thus, the communists were the avatar à la mode of a perennial malady afflicting religious law, order, and the redemption. Janvier glossed the insidious spread of the communist mentality among the intellectual elite of France, commending Sister Mary’s perspicacity in recognizing the threat of these “dangerous chimeras” while they still flew beneath the July Monarchy’s radar.

Sister Mary’s divine communications impressed Léon Dupont, a lay thaumaturge residing in Tours, who further popularized the cult of the Holy Face and stimulated the distribution of its imagery. Dupont closely followed Sister Mary’s divinations, and after her death he devoted himself to propagating the piety. During Lent of 1851, the Carmelite prioress gave Dupont “two engravings representing the Holy Face, copied from that impressed upon the Veil of Veronica which is preserved in the Vatican.”⁴³ The prioress acquired the images from the

⁴¹ Ibid. 321. “Eh bien! ma fille, c'est cette société de communistes qui m'ont arraché de mes tabernacles et qui profanent mes sanctuaires; ils ont porté la main sur l'oint du Seigneur; ils ne réussiront point en leurs desseins.” Janvier, *Vie de la Soeur Saint-Pierre*, 300.

⁴² Ibid., 318-319. “Il a pris des noms divers, selon les pays et selon les temps, tels que ceux de socialisme, de libéralisme, de nihilisme. Vers la fin du règne de Louis-Philippe, à l'époque où nous en sommes de la vie et des communications de la soeur Saint-Pierre, on le nommait le communisme.” Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Vie de la Soeur Saint-Pierre*, 297-298.

⁴³ Janvier suggests that these may have been touched to the Vatican relic during the miracle performed by the Veronica veil that took place in 1849, as discussed below. According to

Benedictines of Arras, France, who, inspired by the writing of the thirteenth-century mystic Gertrude of Helfta, also revered the divine face. The Benedictines obtained reproductions of the relic from Rome, where they received a certificate confirming that they were authentic copies of the sacred relic.⁴⁴

Such prints were to become the essential medium of Holy Face devotion. Dupont displayed one of the effigies in a shrine in his home, and the image soon became an object of worship and worker of miracles. After Dupont's death, his residence became a public chapel to the Holy Face and, in 1885, the epicenter of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face.⁴⁵ The fruits of Sister Mary and Dupont's efforts, this international association propagated the devotion and disseminated the authentic prints of the relic (fig. 1). The *Manual of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face* specified that the likenesses are engravings printed on paper, linen, or silk and produced in Rome "under the guarantee of proper authority." Furthermore, the prints were touched to the original Veronica cloth, as well as the wood of the True Cross and the spear that pierced Christ's side, before receiving a papal seal to authenticate and contain the numinous contact.⁴⁶

While the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face was largely responsible for the broader distribution of the prints in France and beyond in the latter half for the nineteenth-century, the

Janvier, these effigies that made contact with the miraculously glowing relic were printed on white silk. However, he does not confirm the material on which the engravings possessed by Dupont were printed. Janvier, *The Holy Man of Tours*, 217-219.

⁴⁴ Janvier indicates that the Benedictines distributed these on a small scale, to individuals with a particular interest in the Holy Face devotion. *Ibid.*, 217.

⁴⁵ Janvier, *M. Dupont and the Devotion to the Holy Face*, 81-83.

⁴⁶ Janvier, *Manual of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face*, 92-93. Members also wear a small cross with an engraving of the suffering Face "outraged and disfigured in His passion." Janvier, *M. Dupont and the Devotion to the Holy Face*, 93.

original impetus for their production stems from the pope's own confrontation with anti-clerical and egalitarian ideals. Pius IX spent his papacy, which began in 1846 and lasted until his death in 1878, negotiating the clash between traditional Catholic universalism and modern secular liberalism. The pope began his leadership with several actions that seemed to align him with the liberal cause and Italian *Risorgimento*. However, when forced to choose between defending a unified Italian republic and its values or representing a universal Catholic kingdom, he chose the latter, impeding Italian unification and drawing hostility from revolutionaries. In order to maintain the spiritual oversight of the Christian world, he thought it incumbent to preserve his temporal power, but the nationalist revolutionaries sought a government that would represent their cause. In 1848, in the face of escalating violence, Pius fled Rome disguised as an ordinary priest and established a provisional papal *curia* in Gaeta in the Kingdom of Naples.⁴⁷ Though he soon returned to power in Rome, this time as a reactionary conservative, Pius eventually saw the near total diminishment of the Papal States and his own temporal power. His papal labor was a constant effort to redefine the spiritual agency of the Church.

Between Christmas and Epiphany of 1848-49, during Pius's exile in Gaeta, the Veronica relic, it was reported, miraculously produced light, revealing a displeased expression on the Holy Face. According to Henry Lea, the nineteenth-century author of *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences*, "the image is very faint and scarce distinguishable behind the glass which covers it, but on this occasion it suddenly for three hours shone forth in an aureole of light,

⁴⁷ Roberto de Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, trans. John Laughland (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2004), 23-31. Also, Frank J. Coppa, *Pope Pius IX: Crusader in a Secular Age*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), 84-97.

having the death-pallor of a corpse, with sunken eyes and an expression of stern severity.”⁴⁸ The relic’s irritation with the upheaval in Rome and the pope’s exile is not surprising, as it had long been associated with the spiritual authority of the Eternal City. Having originated in Jerusalem, the Veronica’s presence in Saint Peter’s Basilica symbolized the relocation of the spiritual center of Christianity from the Holy Land to the Rome.⁴⁹ On the evening of the miraculous event, reported Lea, “some veils of white silk on which the Holy Face was represented were applied to [the Veronica relic] and were immediately sent to France,” thus initiating the modern Veronica copy industry.⁵⁰

Pius IX addressed the recent Italian upheavals in his 1849 encyclical “Nostis at Nobiscum,” which unambiguously condemned the “wicked theories of this Socialism and this Communism.” According to the pope, their “pernicious fictions” deluded workers “by the

⁴⁸ Henry Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church, Volume 3* (Philadelphia: Lea Brothers and Co., 1896), 505.

⁴⁹ See Gerhard Wolf, “*Laetare filia Sion. Ecce ego venio et habitabo in medio tui*: Images of Christ Transferred to Rome from Jerusalem,” in *The Real, and Ideal, Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Art: Studies in Honor of Bezalel Narkiss on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Bianca Kühnel (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997/98), 425-429. Wolf is particularly interested in the ways miraculous images of Christ were used to transfer spiritual power between different Christian centers. Pope Innocent III in particular rallied the cloth in revitalizing his city as a spiritual center and major pilgrimage destination. During Innocent’s papacy, the legend of Veronica began to take shape, as did the idea that the veil—the *sudarium*, or sweat cloth—not only contained Christ’s blood and sweat but also was a true likeness. Thus the presence of Christ as body and image reinforced the primacy of Rome; a powerful counterpoint the Church’s modern instability. See also Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 115, 187-194.

⁵⁰ Lea goes on to write: “The devotion of the Catholic world being thus excited afresh for the Veronica a large demand quickly sprang up for copies of it, to which Pius IX benignantly responded by allowing them to be printed on silk, muslin or linen, authenticated with a seal and certificate, and sold at a price which put them within reach of all but the poorest—eight cents for the smaller size and fourteen cents for the larger.” Henry Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences*, 505-506. See also Janvier, *The Holy Man of Tours*, 219.

promise of a happier condition. They are preparing them for plundering, stealing, and usurping first the Church's and then everyone's property."⁵¹ In the *vita* of Sister Mary, Christ wages a similar allegation against the communists, insinuating Judas's betrayal with the question, "have they not sold me for silver?"⁵²

While this suggestion of avariciousness was misguided, many radical thinkers did see the liquidation of the Church's property as a necessary precondition for an egalitarian society. "The supreme work of the Revolution," wrote Proudhon, was "to do away with the reactionary Catholic Church."⁵³ For Proudhon and others, especially Karl Marx and his followers, the Church posed a particular problem insofar as it both echoed and abetted capitalism. "What capital does to labour, and the State to liberty, the Church does to the spirit... The most effective means for oppressing the people would be simultaneously to enslave its body, its will and its reason. If socialism is to reveal its truly positive aspect, free from all mysticism, all it will have to do is denounce the idea of this trinity."⁵⁴ Catholicism, in addition to deluding and subjugating believers on its own terms, more generally supplied the framework of oppression for government and capitalism, acting as a "highway for authority," to use Proudhon's phrase.⁵⁵

Pius's encyclical suggested the extent to which the Church's existence was inexorably interwoven with that of capitalism. The pope advised: "The poor would receive even greater aid if the many institutions which our pious ancestors established for their relief had not been closed down or plundered in the recent recurrent public demonstrations. Let Our poor recall the

⁵¹ Pope Pius IX, "Nostis at Nobiscum: On the Church in the Potifical States" (Encyclical of Pope Pius IX, December 8, 1849). <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9nostis.htm>.

⁵² Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 321.

⁵³ Quoted in Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*, 50.

⁵⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

teaching of Christ Himself that they should not be sad at their condition, since their very poverty makes lighter their journey to salvation.”⁵⁶ Pius thus intimated that just as the poor were dependent on charity, the Church depended on the poor. Indeed, the encyclical repeatedly affirms inequality: “It is likewise a mark of the natural, and so of the immutable condition of human affairs that even among those who are not in higher authority, some surpass others in different endowments of mind or body or in riches and such external goods; therefore it can never be lawful under any pretext of liberty or equality to usurp or injure in any way the good or rights of other men.”⁵⁷ In regard to socialism and communism, Pius conclusively stated that “man is not empowered to establish new societies and unions which are opposed to the nature of mankind.”⁵⁸

This affirmation of an immutable, abstract, and hierarchical order of things to sanctify inequality and the property form was precisely what many socialists and communists condemned.⁵⁹ According to many radical thinkers, these religious forms of mediation—

⁵⁶ Pius IX, “Nostis at Nobiscum.”

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ The art historian James Rubin, in his study on the relationship between Proudhon’s philosophy and Gustave Courbet’s painting, discusses religious ideals in relation to work: Proudhon sought “the demystification of the myth that man was condemned to work because of the Fall... Any alienation of [labor’s] value from the producer [...] was a profound injustice. Such injustices were perpetrated especially through religious and utopian myths which degraded the physical nature of man and preferred to see him yearning towards a perfect spiritual archetype, and which thus diminished the value of his physical product by linking it to what they defined as a transitory stage in his existence. No externally imposed ideal [...] could respect the right of each human being to dispose of his product...” James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 31-32. Though Marx wholeheartedly dismissed Proudhon’s socialist anarchy, which took the Church as a primary adversary, Marx shared many of the latter’s sentiments on religion. In 1847, Marx made a strong statement on the congruity of Christian and capitalist ideology, anticipating Pius IX’s encyclical: “The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages and equally know, when necessary, how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, although they make a pitiful face over it. The social principles of Christianity preach

mystification, creation of abstract ideals, the avowal of metaphysical and abstract registers of institutions and objects—both prefigured and sustained capitalist mentalities and institutions. Certainly the texts that promoted the Holy Face devotion are striated throughout with metaphors of currency, labor, and commerce that suggest Catholicism’s structural similarities with industrial capitalism, affirming and reinforcing a notion of work that was opposed by the communists.

In fact, labor under industrial capitalism parallels Saint Veronica’s role in the production of the *acheiropoietic* image and Sister Mary’s devotional labor insofar as an external entity determines what is produced and how it is produced. As in the capitalist system, a hierarchy is built into the devotional schema, in which Christ, the absolute taskmaster, gives orders to Sister Mary, the pliant and subordinate laborer. “‘He made me understand,’ said she, ‘that I was in his hands, as a feeble instrument which he used at pleasure. This is very true, for I cannot labor at this work but by a special grace, when he pleases and as he pleases. I feel convinced that I have received this grace in my soul, therefore, with the assistance of the Lord who directs me, I will do nothing from my own inclination.’”⁶⁰ Elsewhere Christ tells the nun: “My daughter, the

the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and all they have for the latter is the pious wish the former will be charitable.” Quoted in Janz, *World Christianity and Marxism*, 13. Even more pertinent here is Marx’s use of religious frameworks, such as that of the fetish, to explain the illusions and obfuscations embedded in capitalist systems of production and consumption. The illusion that a commodity has intrinsic value apart from its use-value results from the fact that labor has been abstracted into the wage form, which creates a unit of commensurability between two otherwise incommensurable materials. Since industrial capitalism also inserts many layers of mediation between the creation and the consumption of the commodity, the production is obfuscated—as with the Veronica relic—and the exchange value is perceived as intrinsic to the object, rather than a manifestation of labor and social relations. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (New York and Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), 163-177.

⁶⁰ Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 312.

virtue of obedience is very dear to me. Be submissive, that all may recognize the spirit which guides you.”⁶¹ Built into this order is a division of intellectual and manual labor, Christ supplying the mental plan and direction while Sister Mary provides the physical energy. The act of enabling the production of the commodity or the miraculous image, or of cultivating the reparative gesture, is automatic and reflexive, rather than creative.

We therefore find throughout the Holy Face devotion and the Christian framework more generally a tendency towards divisions in which an abstract and ideal register is generated against the human, lived realm. Agamben argues that this division that “separates the living being from itself and from its immediate relationship with its environment” is the legacy of the Christian economy.⁶² To further conceive this problem, Agamben suggests that the religious notion of consecration, which he defines as the removal of an object from human use, also has a secular analogue. “From this perspective, one can define religion as that which removes things, places, animals, or people from common use and transports them to a separate sphere. Not only is there no religion without separation, but every separation contains or conserves in itself a genuinely religious nucleus,” states Agamben: “capitalism and other modern forms of power seem to generalize and push to the extreme the processes of separation that define religion.”⁶³ This is to say that religion and capitalism intersect at the point where a nonhuman, absolute register is ordained. This separation is epitomized in the *acheiropoieton*—that which is, apparently, not made by human hands and is therefore evidence of divine intervention. I want to propose that this division between being and action is enabled, even generated, by specific

⁶¹ Ibid., 316.

⁶² Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 16.

⁶³ Ibid., 18-19.

medial operations embedded in the materiality of the Veronica relic and Jacquard technique. In the following sections I examine the operations involved in producing the *acheiropoietic* objects and the conception of “not made by human hands” in both the religious and industrial sphere.

Chapter 3: Abstracting the Figure, Figuring the Abstract

3.1 Interface

A silk portrait of Joseph-Marie Jacquard woven on the Jacquard loom in 1839 recuperated the Veil of Veronica's most singular feature (fig. 2). Like the miraculous image of the Creator, the cloth portrait of the inventor was not made by human hands. Its fabrication was largely mechanical, as the creation of the design was preprogrammed and automated using a system of punch cards.

Though not miraculous, many of the processes involved in the production of the mechanically produced textile resemble those that created and sustained the Christian *acheiropoietic* model. I am not suggesting a direct correlation between the Jacquard technique and the *fabrication* of the Veronica relic. Rather I detect elements of the Jacquard device's manner of functioning in the manifold operations that stemmed from the materiality of the actual Veronica relic and reappeared throughout the entire apparatus of Veronica devotion, from the appearance and display of the relic, to devotional acts, rhetoric, rituals, legend, representations and methods of reproduction, and image theology. This multifaceted framework involved certain mechanics, comprising ontic operations that configured the *acheiropoietic* modality.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ As discussed in the "Introduction," these processes, materialized in various technologies (some linguistic and representational), constitute a set of cultural techniques. It is important to recall that a cultural technique, according to Siegert, "is both a material object and a symbolic thing, a first order as well as a second order technique [...] a machine by which humans are subjected to the law of the signifier."⁶⁴ Therefore, these operations, though they have a technical basis, shape the contours and character of Catholicism as well as industrial modernity. They enact, articulate and figure boundaries of these particular cultures. A further point, from Siegert: "Essentially, cultural techniques are conceived of as operative chains that precede the media concepts they generate."⁶⁴ These homologous processes occur throughout the multitude of micro-components

Just as the Veronica has a mechanical side, the Jacquard technique has a mythical or imaginary dimension. Its obviation of the human hand is itself a dissimulation. Though this device automated the weaving process, human labor was still integral to the production of the Jacquard textile. And indeed, insofar as the new production techniques tended to obfuscate the human intervention, a quality sometimes perceived as mystical came to surround the machine and its products. The punch cards played a crucial role in this process. As they transfigured the image and multiplied, separated, and dispersed the human producers, they occulted both the origins of the image and the process of its reproduction.⁶⁵

In this chapter, I will study the procedures that form the heart of both models—how they negate the role of human labor in rendering these images, and the cultural implications of these methods of obfuscation and abstraction. The first two sections explore the main operations by which the distinction between the human and the nonhuman were processed. The first part, “Occulting Vision,” examines the operation of concealing and revealing. In suppressing vision, veiling creates a distinction between the seen and the not seen, and also between the material and the image. The second section, “Hidden Prototypes and Numinous Copies,” probes the relationship between models and copies. In both these sections, I aim to decipher the operations that render a distinction between two zones: the human, worldly realm on the one hand, and an occulted, abstract, and autonomous register on the other. Following this, I examine the broader

that comprise the larger Veronica and Jacquard apparatuses. Through these manifold recursive operations, the distinctions between made and not made, human and non-human are generated. Siegart, *Cultural Techniques*, 11-13.

⁶⁵ Occulting mean concealing or hiding, of course, but within this context of miraculous images I also intend it to evoke the occult. The origins of the image take on a supernatural hue, beyond the realm of human temporality and agency.

effects. “Mechanical Metaphysics” is an investigation of the ways in which the nonhuman becomes the realm of magic and mystification, even when it is coextensive with the mechanical. Finally, “*Acheiropoietic Apparatuses*” considers how the *acheiropoietic* mode enabled the reproduction of the systems in which the objects were employed.

Unfolding the *acheiropoietic* modality leads to counterintuitive movements, in which vision gives way to blindness, images become abstract, originals become copies (and copies become originals), and technical modes are replaced by spiritual ones. The thematic title of this chapter, “Abstracting the Figure, Figuring the Abstract,” thus undergirds each of the processes discussed in the four sections: not only the technical operations of abstracting the image and creating a plethora of copies, but also the simultaneous engendering of the numinous, absolute, and immutable register. It should be noted that my use of the term abstraction operates in multiple ways. In the most general sense, it refers to the transformation of something concrete into an idealized or quantifiable form, as discussed by Karl Marx in his analysis of capital and labor. But a moment of formal abstraction, or non-figuration, clears the way for these idealizations. Both the Veronica relic and the punch cards of the Jacquard loom provide the support for an image and enable its perpetuation and reproduction; and yet, they simultaneously dissolve and destabilize the image into a form unrecognizable to most observers. This transitory annulment of the image is a necessary step in the obfuscation of production and thus in the generation of abstraction.

3.2 Occulting Vision

The Veronica relic presents an amalgamation of materiality and image, figuration and non-figuration, real and ideal, and vision and invisibility. One way to approach the excessiveness

and elusiveness of the relic is to consider the Veil of Veronica's multiple claims to authenticity. It is once a "genuine image" of Christ, unmediated by artistic imitation, a contact relic, and a container for sacred blood and sweat.⁶⁶ On the one hand, the object and its image are emphatically physical. It is a linen cloth bearing a stain—ostensibly, a trace of a historical body. Since the twelfth century, the relic has been cherished by the Catholic Church as a witness to Christ's incarnation, rendering visible and perpetuating his human form. However, its evidentiary and empirical value does little to stabilize the object. Neither the legend nor the relic can be traced to Christ's lifetime, and the origins of both are evasive and convoluted, intersecting at many points with other myths and objects.⁶⁷ Early textual descriptions of the object are particularly contradictory. The first account of the Veronica relic dating from 1143 described a *sudarium*, or sweat cloth, but did not mention an image. Petrus Mallus's 1160 history of Saint Peter's Basilica similarly confirmed "the indubitably genuine *sudarium* of Christ, the cloth unto which he pressed his most holy face before the Passion, when his sweat ran in drops of blood to the earth."⁶⁸ A late twelfth-century chronicle first alluded to the image, and in 1210 Gervase of Tilbury writes of "a likeness of the Lord's face painted on a panel."⁶⁹ Five years later Gerald of Wales described for the first time the image as an impression on fabric. Yet even this affirmation of figuration produced its own form of invisibility: "This image is likewise held in honor, and no one can see it, except through the veils hanging in front of it," as the sight of the bare relic would

⁶⁶ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 221.

⁶⁷ See Wolf, "From Mandylyon to Veronica," 53-179, especially 166-168.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 541. Wolf supplies both the earliest mention of the *sudarium* and the first account of its imagery in "From Mandylyon to Veronica," 167.

⁶⁹ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 541.

cause blindness and even death.⁷⁰ Though the Veronica legend solidified in the fourteenth-century with the institution of a corresponding Station of the Cross, invisibility continued to be the necessary obverse of the relic's emphatic visuality.⁷¹

The lacunae of visibility, invocations of hiddenness, and ambivalence in regard to the type of image (iconic or evidentiary, painted or impressed) indicate that the *acheiropoieta* involve not simply the concealing of production, but also a complex and paradoxical formulation: a concealing revelation, blinding sight, invisible vision.⁷² Very early in the Veronica's history, the Church supplanted the actual sight of the relic with a disembodied and virtual vision. Innocent III composed a prayer dedicated to the Veronica cloth and issued an indulgence for its recital. Official and advantageous worship of the relic, therefore, did not have to take place in the presence of the actual object. The hymn calls for the adoration of the image

⁷⁰ Ibid., 542. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages*, 115. Herbert L. Kessler and Johanna Zacharias also discusses the ciborium, bronze grid and door, and columns that "protect the relic itself," but it is unclear if these were in place during ostentations. Kessler and Zacharias, *Rome 1300: On the Path of the Pilgrim* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 211. Saint Luke's icon, the *Acheropita*, also opposes vision. In the Middle Ages it was often kept covered because the "fearsome effect it had on the viewer." According to legend one pope was struck blind by looking too closely at it. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages*, 114.

⁷¹ Regarding the Stations of the Cross, see Ewa Kuryluk, *Veronica and Her Cloth: History, Symbolism, and Structure of a "True Image"* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 123. The Veronica's Station of the Cross further stabilized the purported origins of the object and devotion. However, the appearance of the relic continued to be somewhat evasive. The many replicas produced from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century do confirm the appearance of a face on Veronica's cloth, but they vary considerably in appearance. In 1907 an eye witness attested that the cloth had only an amorphous stain. Frank K. Lord IV, "Image Vision and Faith: Viewers' Responses to the Mandylion, Veronica's Veil, and the Shroud of Turin" (PhD diss. University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2003), 144-149. Today no sharp photographs exist, and modern ostentations only show it mostly hidden in its reliquary.

⁷² As it hovers between image and relic, it at once guarantees a presence of the divine while circumventing iconoclastic transgressions. Herbert L. Kessler discusses the dangerous coincidence of image and presence in the miraculous image relic and the consequent immuring of the Cloth of Edessa in the Pharos Chapel "to avoid transgressing Orthodox image theory." Kessler, "Configuring the Invisible," 142.

“as through a glass darkly” in order to see Christ “face to face” at the Last Judgment.⁷³ This Pauline simile (originating in 1 Corinthians 13:12), which was often used in both the medieval and modern cult to characterize perception of the Holy Face, expresses the theological foundation for the relic’s inverted opticality. In the Christian worldview, earthly vision of the divine is necessarily dim. This mere shadow is an anticipation of vision at the end of time, when the Christian will see Christ directly. This is both thematized in the “nascent character” of the relic’s image and enacted in its display.⁷⁴ The occultation of relic with its embedded promise was managed by the mediating popes who closely controlled the sight of the relic, administering it to believers only several times a year during ostentations, specific days of displays at the Vatican.⁷⁵ Lay believers typically saw the relic at a distance, encased in a reliquary of precious materials.

The Veronica relic was not only hidden; it also hides. It should be underscored that the cloth, and in particular the veil—a device for concealing—was both a physical and conceptual support for the Holy Face *acheiropoieton*. Renewing the medieval accounts in which the display of the relic invoked blindness and invisibility, nineteenth-century devotees specifically mobilized

⁷³ The prayer purportedly composed by Innocent III is included in Matthew Paris’s *Chronica majora* (after 1245). According to Belting, “The sight of the cloth image seemed to anticipate the vision of god, though subject to the conditions of an earthly view of the human face.” Belting translated the prayer: “Grant, for the sake of your Passion and the cross, that we, as we now adore and venerate this on earth in a mirror and parable, shall one day see you face to face as judge on the good side.” Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 543. The translation I provide about is drawn from David S. Areford, “Multiplying the Sacred: The Fifteenth-Century Woodcut as Reproduction, Surrogate, Simulation,” in *The Woodcut in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Peter Parshall (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 146.

⁷⁴ Kessler uses this phrase to describe the Byzantine Holy Face images. “Configuring the Invisible,” 141. “And the tenth-century Acts of Andrew draws the obvious theological conclusion, referring to ‘the form of the God-like appearance of Christ, a form not made by man’s hand [but] formed immaterially in matter.’ Like the imagined face in veined marble or Renaissance sfumato painting, the shaded image fixed the evanescence of Christ’s visibility.” Kessler, “Configuring the Invisible,” in 139.

⁷⁵ Janvier, *Manual of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face*, 89.

the paradox of the veil. Insofar as a veil obscures sight while also being latent with the possibility of revealing, it already embodies the contradictory visuality embedded in the relic.⁷⁶ The 1887 edition of the *Manual of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face* indicates the layers of veiling involved in Veronica's gracious gesture and the production of the relic: "Detaching the soft white veil made of fine Egyptian linen, which covers her face, she applies it to, and spreads it gently over the Face of Christ."⁷⁷ In the simple act described here, there is a sequence of veiling and unveiling, revealing and concealing, vision and blindness, visibility and invisibility—a set of inversions that continue to reproduce themselves from the dialectical object. Sister Mary further expanded the metaphorical use of the veil as a garment that covers the face. Doubting the validity of the remarkable revelations she received, Sister Mary asked Jesus to confirm his will by veiling the Carmelites from the eyes of the secular world. "If God desire that we should soothe his Divine Face [...] the favor which I desire to ask is, that he would have the goodness to veil the faces of his spouses, who will be exposed to the eyes of seculars, if the ground adjoining our garden be sold to strangers."⁷⁸ Whereas the owner of the land had previously refused to sell the property, once Sister Mary came to understand that she was "to purchase it by offering this

⁷⁶ Though early accounts often referred to the Veronica as a *sudarium*, the Holy Face relics had long been associated with the veiling function. Gerhard Wolf, drawing on Herbert Kessler's argument, writes that the fabric of the Byzantine Mandylion "refers to the veil of the temple"—the curtain surrounding the Holy of Holies. See Wolf, "From Mandylion to Veronica," 161-162.

⁷⁷ Janvier, *Manual of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face*, 75.

⁷⁸ Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 240. "Si Notre-Seigneur désire que nous essayions sa Face, et s'il est disposé à nous accorder une grâce par le service que lui a rendu la pieuse Véronique, la grâce que je vous ordonne de lui demander, c'est qu'il ait la bonté de vouloir bien voiler notre face, à nous qui serons exposées aux yeux des séculiers, si la portion de terre qui avoisine notre jardin est vendue à des étrangers; ainsi priez-le de vouloir bien la donner à ses épouses; s'il vous accorde cette grâce, vos supérieurs auront une prevue sensible de l'esprit qui vous conduit." Janvier, *Vie de la Soeur Saint-Pierre*, 224.

Holy Face,” the landlord unexpectedly offered the property to the Carmelites “on the most favorable conditions” and died several days after.⁷⁹

This test underpins the notion that the figure of the veil, which separates and conceals, also served to demarcate the sacred from the profane. Veiling articulates the limits of the faith. And indeed, the Veronica veil was activated on the threshold of the religious framework, at the moments and places where Catholicism came up against its dissolution into the secular domain.

Léon Dupont also contrasted the sacred face of Jesus with the seductively optical world. According to his biographer, Dupont feared that his daughter would stray towards “worldly amusements” and vowed to God that “I consent that Thou shouldest take her from me rather than that I should see her giving herself up to worldly vanities.”⁸⁰ When his daughter died of typhoid fever shortly after, Dupont, “with a heavenly expression on his face,” declared that his child now saw God.⁸¹ Dupont soon turned his devotion towards the image of Christ on the veil, as the corrective to profane vision.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Thérèse of Lisieux, another Carmelite nun, received mystical visions of Veronica and Jesus and further popularized devotion to the Holy Face. Thérèse wrote on her Veronica reproduction, “Make me resemble you, Jesus!”⁸² Paradoxically, she desired to resemble Jesus in his invisibility. Her meditations on the image

⁷⁹ Ibid., 252-253.

⁸⁰ Janvier, *M. Dupont and the Devotion to the Holy Face*, 15-16.

⁸¹ Ibid., 18.

⁸² Quoted in Mary-Elizabeth Peters, “Christological Symbolism in the Writings of Thérèse of Lisieux: Synthesis and Mimesis” (PhD diss. Florida State University, 1986), 179. For an analysis of the Veronica veil as a site of imitation in medieval female devotion, see Jeffrey F. Hamburger, “‘*Frequentant Memoriam Visionis Faciei Meae*’: Image and Imitation in the Devotions to the Veronica Attributed to Gertrude of Helfta,” in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, 230-246.

focused on the theme of hiddenness, a pious resistance to visibility that she strove for in her cloistered life.⁸³ Meditating on her Veronica print, Thérèse saw “nothing but a half-veiled light, the light which was diffused by the lowered eyes of my Fiancé’s face!”⁸⁴ Though revelation came to Thérèse through the image, Jesus’s visibility concealed him. His “glory is hidden by his humanity and by the marks of his Passion,” Thérèse asserts, “Jesus is a hidden treasure that few souls know how to find because he is hidden and the world loves that which shines.”⁸⁵ In contrasting the luster of the profane world with the indiscernibility of Christ, Thérèse of Lisieux evokes Hebrew 10:20 which proclaims “a new and living way which he hath dedicated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.”⁸⁶ Thus, the figure of the veil has the special ability to evoke the flesh of Jesus, which makes God perceptible and tangible in the earthly realm while also obscuring his divine essence. The flesh, and the veil, both articulates and cloaks the sacred.

Considering the relic’s tendency towards concealment, it is not surprising that in contrast to its evanescent and sporadic image, the fabric support was far more stable. The symbolism of cloth in the Christian tradition provided the backdrop for the Veronica cult and the devotion to

⁸³ Although her writings represent a turn to a privatized, subjective spirituality, Thérèse’s piety also responded to an increasingly lay society. See Mary Frohlich HM, “Desolation and Doctrine in Thérèse of Lisieux,” *Theological Studies*, v. 61, n. 2 (2000): 262. Also see Caroline Ford, *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 111-115.

⁸⁴ Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 176.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁸⁶ On the relationship between Hebrews 10:20 and the cloth *acheiropoieta*, see Wolf, “From Mandylyon to Veronica,” 162. Furthering the metaphorical links between the flesh of Christ and the veil, Wolf suggests that the Veronica relic had Eucharistic connotations, as the relic likely played a role in promoting the 1215 Forth Lateran Council, which makes transubstantiation dogma. The reproduction of the divine image on the Veronica cloth, and especially the replication of the innumerable copies of the relic, echoes the Eucharist ritual and supports the idea that Christ is “hidden but truly present in the veil of the host.” Wolf, “From Mandylyon to Veronica,” 168. For more on the association between the miraculous cloths and the flesh of Jesus, see Powell, *Depositions*, 223

holy textiles more generally. The mingling of the heavenly and earthly realms was figured in the essential material qualities of cloth. In the Bible and medieval Christian texts and iconography, the textile is the metaphoric medium of the Incarnation. A constellation of textile images elaborate the Virgin Mary's clothing of Jesus in her flesh, prefigured by her role in the production of the temple curtains and imaged in her spinning of yarn in Annunciation scenes. The substitution of cloth for body is repeatedly reinforced at the end of Christ's life. The transmission of face to veil by Veronica is one instance, as are the removal of the garment with no seams, the doubling of the body on the burial shroud, and, in a fulfillment of Mary's labor, the ripping of the curtain of the Holy of Holies at Christ's death.⁸⁷ This last example speaks to and reinforces the role of cloth as a mediator of the invisible and eternal divine.

⁸⁷ In discussing the twelfth-century Annunciation icon at Saint Catherine's monastery at Mount Sinai, Wolf suggests that the icon blends Mandylicon imagery with the nexus of textile symbolism surrounding Mary's production of both the Temple curtain and Christ's body. "In fact, she herself is the house and the veil which Christ enters to take on the color of flesh, so that he becomes himself the veil of the temple." Wolf, "From Mandylicon to Veronica," Amy Powell also describes the figuring of Christ as cloth, and, following this, the clothing metaphors that express the divine grace that enfolded believers. Representations of Christ's burial shroud associate cloth with Mary's body "as the medium through which we can know an otherwise invisible God." And yet, a contradiction arises from Christ's flesh as temple veil: "Christ's flesh hides the Godhead and yet, also and at once, reveals it." Powell, *Depositions*, 222-223. For a broad range of the ways textiles and their production have been used to conceptualize, image, and practice Christian belief in the late Middle Ages, see the essays in *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing: Textiles and Their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Kathryn M. Rudy and Barbara Baert (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2007). Within the nineteenth-century industrial context, textile production and religiosity merged in the "Christian factory" in France. These mills promoted Christian ideals and practices for the workers. While all were for-profit, they ranged from philanthropic and rather socialist models to highly exploitative "convent-workshops." Colin Heywood, "The Catholic Church and the Business Community in Nineteenth-Century France," in *The Politics of Religion in an Age of Revival: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Europe and Latin America*, ed. Austen Ivereigh (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1999), 78-81.

Those transpositions effected by the veil, of image for cloth and cloth for body, are facets in the broader tendency towards substitutions and reversals of image and aniconic material, sight and invisibility, form and flesh, and ideal and real presence. These confounding inversions suggest that the object does not behave like a mundane image created by the humans. In effect, in making the image exceedingly evasive, they participate in the occultation of the object and its production. But even more crucially, I want to suggest that these exchanges, which arise from the act of veiling, rehearse the divisions fundamental to the *acheirpoietic* mode. The figurative and actual applications of Veronica's veil ultimately process the distinctions between an abstract, ideal, hidden, and sacred zone and a material, temporal, human and profane zone. This is not to say that every transposition neatly situates the divine on one side and the human on the other. It is rather that the structure of separation is trained through these acts, priming the creation of an abstract and authoritative realm. As Bernhard Siegert suggests, the generation of the sacred derives from the ontic operations themselves. The affirmation and mystification of the absolute is of course a fundamental and age-old aspect of religion, but the concealment of production and the concomitant divisions between the human and the non-human also became problems of industrial modernity as machines and methods of production became more complex. As discussed in the previous chapter, nineteenth-century radicals, and later Agamben, noted the affinity between Christianity and modern power systems insofar as they both generate abstractions and idealizations.

Turning now to an analysis of the Jacquard device, I will examine how the crucial operations of the religious apparatus recur in the weaving technology, creating the conditions for the development of a nonhuman register. The punch cards, in particular, obscured the origins of the image and enabled its reproduction (fig. 3). Earlier power looms had automated the

movement of the weft, or horizontal threads, but to create designs a person known as a drawboy was still required to manipulate the positions of the warp, or the vertical threads. Building on earlier experiments with input devices, Jacquard developed a technique to obviate the time-consuming, meticulous labor of the weaver's helper who had to pick up each warp string individually with his hands. With the Jacquard system, the designs were translated into a binary language and recorded by punching holes into many pasteboard cards, which were then set into the machine. The Jacquard Head, which would be attached to a dobby loom or similar power loom, feeds hooks through the holes in the cards, which then lift the warp (fig. 4). In the absence of a hole, the hook does not pass through and the thread remains in place. The position of the warp above or below the weft then creates the pattern.⁸⁸ Once these punch cards are set and the loom is threaded, the machine could efficiently and repeatedly generate designs with fine details and subtle tonal gradations. Though skilled draftsmen created the original drawing and translated it to the punch cards, the set and threaded apparatus fabricated the textile image with minimal human intervention. The drawboy's hands were effectively replaced. Moreover, the visual data was abstracted into an unrecognizable language, dematerialized and displaced from both the original prototype and human action.

And yet, the cardboard mediator also gave the image a density in the presence and absence of space. Transubstantiating the image, the punch cards paradoxically materialize and preserve it. As the Veronica relic is a semi-aniconic bearer of the idea of an image, the punch cards are not an image even as they contain a pictorial form. The intervention of a material thing—a bit of cardboard or cloth—adds another layer of mediation while engendering the

⁸⁸ Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Technology: Invention, Innovation, and the Rise of the Machine* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 23.

proliferation of images. Not only do the cards expedite the weaving process, they could also be reset into any Jacquard device to generate the identical image potentially infinite times.⁸⁹

Therefore, by inserting a formally abstract material as a necessary phase in the fabrication of the textile image, the punch card system liberated the image from its physical specificity and unique position in space and time, dematerializing it into an ideal, numerical and quantifiable entity. Though with less precision, a similar operation occurs in the religious arena where the materiality of the Veronica relic intervenes in the perception of the image. As with the punch cards, this enables the apotheosis of the Holy Face form from its material specificity. Because the stain-like, darkened mark on the Veronica relic is all but consumed by the warp and weft, the precious cloth is encased in a reliquary frame that imposes a face-shaped template over the textile, forming the image through a physical imposition.⁹⁰ The abstracted form was later manifested in other media such as metal or painted badges, paintings, and later prints, while the cloth itself remained evasive and indiscernible. For all its optical uncertainty, the relic, from its earliest days, was copiously reproduced as a stylized icon of Christ.⁹¹

Further underscoring the idealization of the figure, the vast majority of the Holy Face reproductions depict the face as distinct from the material support.⁹² One is tempted to say that

⁸⁹ The machine could alternately be threaded with different colored threads to vary the end product.

⁹⁰ Though not all Holy Face relics possess this frame, it has been a common feature since the earliest Byzantine *acheiropoieta*. See Kessler, “Configuring the Invisible,” 138.

⁹¹ In fact, the thirteenth-century images were already part of a genealogy of Holy Face icons. Long before the Veronica appeared in the West, the Eastern Church possessed its own *sudarium* known as the Mandyllion or image of Edessa, which, like the Veronica, generated many authentic copies. The idea of the Veronica relic, if not the object itself, surely descended from these prototypes. See Wolf, “From Mandyllion to Veronica,” 153-180.

⁹² This is especially the case in serially produced images, as opposed to singular paintings. For instance, the famous Veronica paintings by Francisco de Zurbarán and Mattia Preti notably

the face hovers above the cloth, but the material and the image rather exist in different ontological registers. The Holy Face on the nineteenth-century print is more naturalistic than many earlier mass-produced images, with crisp outlines and careful shading giving volume to the disembodied head (fig. 1). Nonetheless, the portrait is undisturbed by the creases and undulations of the cloth, as if two paradigms of reality coexist within the frame. This separation of figure from ground thematizes the abstraction of the image from the materiality of the world.

Thus detached from its physical support, the Veronica image was free to germinate in any time and place, sending the spores of Holy Face devotion around the globe. In the preface to the Sister Mary's biography, Janvier rejoices in the dispersion of the reparation cult "from the ice-bound shores of the Canadas, to the zephyr-fanned plains of Mexico." Bound on the zephyr of reparation, the Holy Face print itself made its way in abundance throughout Europe and North America.⁹³ "It would be impossible to calculate the number of these sacred effigies, exposed for pious veneration in thousands of places, and nearly always having a lamp burning before them."⁹⁴ At once material and abstract, dematerialized and rematerialized, the original Holy Face spawned numerous, numinous copies.

depart from this representational formula. Many copies and replicas of the relic show the face as a darkened patch, seen as through a glass darkly. Here again, the mediation of the veil unfolded its operations of vision and non-vision, generating the fundamental distinction between the earthly and the heavenly. See Kessler, "Configuring the Invisible," 137.

⁹³ Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 8.

⁹⁴ Janvier goes on to describe the proliferation of the images as self-perpetuating and *necessary*: "The Priests of the Holy Face undertake to have them expedited from Rome, in order to facilitate their propagation, or rather the propagation goes on of itself, so natural, so necessary does this idea of Reparation seem to the faithful." *Ibid.*, 451.

3.3 Hidden Prototypes and Numinous Copies

The nineteenth-century effigies of the Holy Face depict beads of perspiration and blood emerging from Christ's forehead, eyes, temples, and mouth. The droplets visualize Christ's renewed suffering, but they also speak to the production of the image, or stain, on the *sudarium*. The miraculous image was, according to the legend, created by contact with the soiled face. In a process akin to printmaking, bodily fluids pigmented with grime were transferred from the divine prototype to the receptive surface of Veronica's cloth. Likewise, the nineteenth-century prints were derived from a matrix—an engraved piece of metal—echoing the production of the original. This copy industry was not a specifically modern condition. The mass production of Holy Face images derived from impressions was only the latest chapter in the relic's long history of generating copies and participating in a theology of immediate, or, one could even say, mechanical reproduction.⁹⁵ Both model and copy actualize a slippage between banal, mechanical processes and marvelous ones.

Premodern as well as modern Christians employed the seal and impression, both figuratively and literally, to express the relationship between the divine and the earthly. The intaglio seal and the authoritative images it generated had particular metaphoric power. Like the image concealed within the punch cards, the model image incised in the seal's stone matrix would be nearly imperceptible and yet endlessly generative. Moreover, it epitomized a form of image making that distances the hand of the artist. The seal was thus a convenient and potent

⁹⁵ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 221. For a discussion of Holy Face icons and mechanical reproduction in Byzantine image theory, see Kessler, "Configuring the Invisible," 132-135. Also, see Trilling, "The Image Not Made by Hand and the Byzantine Way of Seeing," 113-116.

figure for theorizing the Veronica relic. The operation of impressing a surface that contains but also conceals an image was material and metaphysical, technical and poetic.

“Rendering the invisible model in material form,” writes Herbert L. Kessler in regard to Holy Face reproductions, “copies thus serve to bring the originary icon into the world. That is why they often mark and make the transition between mundane and sacred spaces.”⁹⁶ In this section I address this intermediary quality of the Veronica relic—not simply its position on the threshold of the two realms, but its role in rendering the very distinction between them. The production of copies from a fixed prototype, whether enacted physically or rhetorically, actually processed this relation between the temporal and extra-temporal, and the mundane and the sacred.

In the Jacquard technique, too, and thus in the absence of a theological framework, the expedient generation of copies from a intermediary model similarly constituted a seemingly nonhuman register, which gave rise to the sense of an absolute and immutable authority. When I speak of this authority, I intend to evoke something at once banal and prodigious. It is the momentum of the system of production that adheres as a constant, ideal scheme, headless of the individual worker. As the punch cards concealed the image’s origins and enabled its proliferation, they deskilled and disenfranchised the worker while fixing the iterative production process. The model, then, in the form of the punch cards or the intaglio seal, both represents and actualizes an abstracted schematic.

⁹⁶ Kessler, “Configuring the Invisible,” 148.

In early Christian writings, Creation is “conceived as the product of the impression of the master stamp, the Logos.”⁹⁷ The intaglio image similarly expressed the interplay of the divine prototype and earthly matter in the figure of Christ. Not only was the miracle of the Incarnation envisaged as an impression, but Christ was also figured as a seal. In a passage from Saint Theodore of Stoudios, the ninth-century theologian wrote of the Incarnation as a form of image making, in turn defending the production of icons:

A seal is one thing, and its imprint is another. Nevertheless, even before the impression is made, the imprint is in the seal. There could not be an effective seal which was not impressed in some material. Therefore, Christ also, unless He appears in an artificial image, is in this respect idle and ineffective...For the failure to go forth into a material imprint eliminates His existence in human form.⁹⁸

These theoretical uses of the seal articulate the notion that the divine is an invisible prototype that can be realized repeatedly, in innumerable original images.⁹⁹ The incarnated Christ is a copy as well as a prototype for future copies. The subsequent icons continue to point directly, like Christ, to the ineffable divine model.

The seal thus embeds a paradoxical ontology: it conjures up an immutable, invisible prototype on the one hand, and unstable, malleable matter on the other. Repeated impresses only amplify and aggrandize this internal division. Continuing the passage above, Stoudios states that “the seal shows its desire for honor when it makes itself available for impression in many

⁹⁷ Cynthia Hahn, “Loca Sancta Souvenirs: Sealing the Pilgrim’s Experience,” in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (University of Illinois Press: Urbana and Chicago, 1990), 89-90.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Kessler, “Configuring the Invisible,” 134.

⁹⁹ Hahn, “Loca Sancta Souvenirs,” 89-90.

different materials. In the same way, although we believe that Christ's own image is in Him as He has human form, nevertheless when we see his image materially depicted in different ways, we praise his greatness more magnificently."¹⁰⁰ This intermediality postulated by Stoudios reinforces the separation of the image from the ground, depreciating the material as an accidental and inconsequential support. "Earthly places themselves are only distributions within a spatial dimension," writes Alexander Nagel regarding medieval architectural replicas of Jerusalem: "a dimension, like that of time, that is no more than a fluttering veil from a metaphysical perspective."¹⁰¹ Nagel calls this effect "topographical instability," as the replicas enable a believer to be in multiple places at once, producing folds in the earthly, temporal realm. Thus, the imitations are not copies of the earthly Jerusalem (which one might be tempted to think of as the original or model), but to the heavenly and eternal archetype.

This formulation can be found in the early Christian use of the term *figura* as an interpretive and historical model, which allowed for copies to proliferate, having equal or greater value in relation to an earthly original.¹⁰² *Figura* accrued a rich body of meaning in Hellenic usage—plastic form and outward appearance, outline and body, rhetorical and physical form, model and copy, it is both static and dynamic, variable quality or permanent essence. For the early Church Fathers, most notably Saint Augustine, it carried these contradictory valences and became closely connected to the idea of prefiguration. Events and people in the Old Testament are *figurae* for those in the New, and the sacraments in the New Testament in turn are figures for the eschatological events. Figurative interpretation of the Bible allows that both *figura* and

¹⁰⁰ Kessler, "Configuring the Invisible," 134.

¹⁰¹ Nagel, *Medieval Modern*, 101.

¹⁰² Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 11-76.

fulfillment are concrete historical events.¹⁰³ Yet for Augustine figural history also “removes the concrete event, completely preserved as it is, from time and transposes it into a perspective of eternity.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, according to Eric Auerbach:

The event is enacted according to an ideal model which is a prototype situated in the future and thus far only promised. [...] For every future model, though incomplete as history, is already fulfilled in God and has existed from all eternity in His providence. The figures in which He cloaked it, and the incarnation in which He revealed its meaning, are therefore prophecies of something that has always been, but which will remain veiled for men until the day when they behold the Savior *revelata facie*, with the senses as well as the spirit.¹⁰⁵

Not only does the *figura* embody the paradoxical visibility of the veil, it functions as a form of mediation that registers the distinction between earthly temporality and heavenly infinitude.

This figural model has its technological counterpoint in the intaglio seal and other reproduction mechanisms that can realize a particular form innumerable times, even in a variety of media. According to Hans Belting, “the replicas serve to repeat the idea of the imprint.”¹⁰⁶ Like the nineteenth-century prints, many earlier copies of the Veronica relic were produced en masse, through repetitive and serialized processes. The copies shared in the holiness of the

¹⁰³ Ibid., 37-43.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 42. It should be noted that this interpretation was not universally held in Christian tradition. Auerbach notes that the “Church Fathers often justify the figural interpretation on the basis of certain passages in early Christian writings, mostly from the Pauline Epistles.” Ibid., 49.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 59.

¹⁰⁶ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 221.

original through the mechanics of their production and their multiplicity.¹⁰⁷ Beginning in the thirteenth century, pilgrims to Rome could purchase Holy Face badges, which they wore on their hat or collar as a sign of the effort and piety of their journey.¹⁰⁸ Though at first painted, these images were later obtained by impressing a carved matrix into metal or clay, replicating and reinforcing the Christian concept of the blessing as a stamp or seal.¹⁰⁹ Blessings obtained during pilgrimage were conceived as a stamp on the individual, invisible on earth but making the receiver “recognizable as one of the Elect in heaven.”¹¹⁰ According to Cynthia Hahn, the serially produced badges authenticated and sealed in the holiness of the pilgrimage experience. In the technique of their production, therefore, these mass produced icons are both a cosmological concept materialized and materiality conceptualized.

As sacramental objects, the pilgrim badges insinuated the believer and her own personal fate into this conceptual framework of the seal.¹¹¹ This reciprocity between the object and the individual’s soul by way of the stamp played a significant role in the Veronica devotion. Both medieval and nineteenth-century Veronica cults configured vision of the Holy Face as a divine

¹⁰⁷ Jeffrey F. Hamburger writes of a sheet of four painted Veronicas from a fifteenth-century Cistercian psalter, which served as devotional objects for cloistered nuns. The images evoke the repetitive production of the repeated impressing a seal, while also multiply the unique power of the relic. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 327-329.

¹⁰⁸ Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages*, 77.

¹⁰⁹ Belting writes of an early industry of Veronica copies in Rome. Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 221.

¹¹⁰ Hahn, “Loca Sancta Souvenirs,” 89-90.

¹¹¹ Early woodcuts representing the Holy Face on the Veronica cloth also connected vision of the serially produced image to the viewer’s fate. According to Peter Parshall and Rainer Schoch, the prints facilitated the indulgence prayer associated with the Veronica relic, which “asserts that the importance of gazing upon the *vera icon* on the cloth lies in the expectation that the believer will recognize Christ when he meets him face to face in the hereafter.” Peter Parshall and Rainer Schoch, *Origins of European Printmaking: Fifteenth-Century Woodcuts and Their Public* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 241.

imprint. In the thirteenth-century text of Gertrude of Helfta, Jesus informs the nun that through “the memory of the vision of my face,” he will “imprint by the grace of my humanity the vivifying splendor of my divinity.”¹¹² This casting of the believer through visual contact with the face also frames the biography of Sister Mary, which opens with a series of quotes from Jesus’s communications with the Carmelite. “I will imprint [on your soul] my own image, and I will render it as beautiful as when it came forth from the baptismal font,” reads one. Seal and impression imagery is further elaborated when Jesus states: “My adorable Face is the seal of Divinity, having the power to imprint itself on the souls of those who apply it to their persons.”¹¹³

While the relic projects Christ’s long-past humanity into the present, it simultaneously marks the believer’s soul for the eschatological future.¹¹⁴ The Veronica, therefore, conflates and incubates past, present, and future. This typological and spiritual temporality embedded in the Veronica object was enacted in the worldly realm by the intaglio seal, which harbored potentially

¹¹² Quoted in Jeffrey F. Hamburger, “‘*Frequentant Memoriam Visionis Faciei Meae*’ 235.

¹¹³ Additionally, the opening quote of Sister Mary’s biography invokes the Tribute Money. “As in the earthly kingdom, the subjects can procure all they desire by being provided with a piece of money stamped with the effigy of the monarch, so also shall you be able to obtain all that you desire in the kingdom of heaven on presenting the impress of my sacred humanity, which is my Holy Face.” Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 1. This language of stamping or minting also appears in the nineteenth-century biography of Leon Dupont. Janvier quotes Dupont: “this holy veil has been left to the Church as though it were a precious coin, marked with the effigy of the King of Kings, in order to call down upon the world, ceaselessly drawing nearer to ruin, the mercy of the Lord—The coins current in the world are marked with the effigy of their princes in order to enable the different kingdoms of the earth to exchange them for their productions. Wherefore should not the kingdom of Heaven have also a coin of its own with which every one may purchase eternal goods?” Janvier, *M. Dupont and the Devotion to the Holy Face*, 97. For an analysis of the Tribute Money in relation to Holy Face relics in the Early Christian context, see Wolf, “From Mandyllion to Veronica,” 153-155.

¹¹⁴ For a discussion of this temporality in the context of medieval Holy Face devotion, see Hamburger, “‘*Frequentant Memoriam Visionis Faciei Meae*’,” 235-236.

infinite images. The Jacquard technique only intensified this topographical and temporal instability. The factory worker operating the Jacquard loom was not situated to perceive the origins of the image that developed in the woven cloth. The image's human source was buried deep within the system of production. Instead, the worker contended with the binary tongue of the cards and the suprahuman speed, precision, and stamina of the machine. The multiplications of the woven image only reinforced the steely authority of the apparatus. Exceeding an individual's perceptions, the copies transcended the human scale to constitute a virtual infinity. Also, in many concentric spheres from the personal to the global, the worker found her gestures and rhythms replicated according to the Jacquard technique. Like an intaglio stamp or a heavenly archetype, the weaving apparatus imposed an immutable form on variable human material. The glory of multiplication expressed by both Stoudios and Janvier casts radiance on the machine while eclipsing the individual worker.

3.4 Mechanical Metaphysics

“A consumer item in which there is no longer anything that is supposed to remind us how it came into being [...] becomes a magical object, insofar as the labor stored up in it comes to seem supernatural and sacred at the very moment when it can no longer be recognized as labor.”¹¹⁵ Theodore Adorno's characterization of consumer society posits a mythic element of industrial *acheiropoieta*. As we have seen, Christianity mobilized a multitude of interlocking techniques to generate, affirm, and economize the miraculous. But outside the religious sphere, the non-human production also constituted and bolstered ideology.

¹¹⁵ Theodore Adorno quoted in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2002), 669 [X13a].

Theodore Adorno used the metaphor of the phantasmagoria—an eighteenth-century magic-lantern technology in which images are rear-projected onto a screen—to describe the dissimulating and obfuscating veneer of the capitalist superstructure.¹¹⁶ Though not an explicitly religious metaphor, it nonetheless resonates with the secreted production of the Veronica relic’s image. Closely connected to Marx’s theorization of the commodity fetish, the phantasmagoria describes the individual’s attribution of a suprahuman, magical, and absolute aura to an object or spectacle of which the production is not apparent. For Adorno, the phantasmagoria’s “outward appearance can lay claim to the status of being. Its perfection is at the same time the perfection of the illusion that the work of art is a reality *sui generis* that constitutes itself in the realm of the absolute without having to renounce its claim to image the world.”¹¹⁷ Thus, not only does the “not made by human hands” model mystify, in doing so it suspends the object in an absolute and autonomous realm, much like the divinely projected image. In the Greek bible, the word *acheiropoieta* is used to contrast those ephemeral things of the earthly realm with the infinitude, permanence, and supremacy of the heavenly.¹¹⁸ Paul compares structures made by humans to “a building from God, a house not made by hands, eternal in the heavens.”¹¹⁹ When the term *acheiropoieta* came to refer to the miraculous image relics depicting Christ in the sixth-century, this notion of the absolute was congealed in the material object.

¹¹⁶ For a discussion of the technology of the phantasmagoria and its derivatives, as well as Adorno’s theorization, see Jonathan Crary, *Suspension of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1999), 251-264.

¹¹⁷ Theodore Adorno quoted in Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1990), 132.

¹¹⁸ Belting, “In Search of Christ’s Body: Image or Imprint?,” in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, 6.

¹¹⁹ 2 Cor. 5:1.

To further pursue the mythical quality of industrial *acheiropoieta*, I leave the darkened reliquary chapel and the factory floor in order to assess the perceptual and imagined effects of the image's occulted origins. Here I examine instances in which the relationship between the mechanical and the miraculous were figured, represented, and otherwise conceived in the nineteenth century.

The woven portrait memorializing Joseph-Marie Jacquard with which I began this chapter thematizes the affinities between the religious and the industrial spheres (fig. 2). Unlike many of the mass-produced commodities generated by the Jacquard loom, this cloth is supremely self-referential, as the creator of the apparatus is preserved as an image in the very material that he is responsible for creating. This configuration echoes that of the Veronica cloth, in which God has preserved his image in a worldly material. The parallel is reinforced by the compass Jacquard holds, which is a trope in medieval representations of God as the architect of the cosmos (fig. 5).¹²⁰ Like God with his inchoate earth from a thirteenth-century *Bible Moralisée*, Jacquard towers above his own creation, a model loom. Jacquard's other hand, the one not holding the instrument, flexes around the cloth-covered knob of the armrest. The conspicuously oversized and energetic hands are notable in this object that defies, or at least redefines, human handicraft. Within his workshop cluttered with the accouterments of design and creation, and the instruments of control and manipulation of the natural world, Jacquard is figured as an absolute maker. His prominent extremities supersede the skilled hands of Lyon's weavers.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Keith L. Lilley, *City and Cosmos: The Medieval World in Modern Form* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 37-38.

¹²¹ On the impact of Jacquard's invention on the Lyon silk industry, see George Caffentzis, *In Letters of Blood and Fire*, 196-198.

Maximilien Durand, a historian of art and textiles, has noted that the juxtaposition of Jacquard's solemn grandeur with the hectic and shabby atelier conjures the iconography of the "saint laïc".¹²² While Jacquard may be figured as a *secular* saint, a reciprocity with the Christian religion proper is nonetheless established. A translucent curtain has been pulled back from the window providing a dim view of an imposing building. Although no religious iconography is visible, the tall spire seems to identify the structure as a church, perhaps the Église Saint-Martin in Oullins, near where Jacquard spent the last years of his life. The veil, window frame, and the panels of glass, then, are boundaries that figure and articulate the distinction between sacred and profane.¹²³

Similar reiterations of thresholds appear in the nineteenth-century Holy Face print, which stages within its limits a simple frame upon which the cloth is attached (fig. 1). The linen is

¹²² Here Durand is discussing Jean-Claude Bonnefond's preparatory sketch for his painting, *Portrait de Joseph-Marie Jacquard*, upon which the weaving was based. Musée des Tissus et musée des Arts décoratifs Website, "Étude pour approbation du Portrait de Joseph-Marie Jacquard," catalogue entry by Maximilien Durand.

http://www.mtmad.fr/fr/pages/topnavigation/musees_et_collections/mt_les_collections/recherche_r_une_oeuvre/mt-rechercher-oeuvre.aspx. Durand elaborates Bonnefond's aggrandizement of Jacquard: "Il faut dire que Bonnefond livre ici une effigie qui est parfaitement conforme à la glorification de l'industrie lyonnaise voulue par la Ville à travers la figure de Jacquard. L'oeuvre est une citation littérale du *Voltaire assis* de Jean-Antoine Houdon."

According to Durand, Jacquard was the first bourgeois to be figured in a woven portrait. This honor had previously only been bestowed on illustrious members of the Bourbon family, with the exception of Emperor Napoleon I and several foreign sovereigns. Musée des Tissus et musée des Arts décoratifs Website, "Portrait de Joseph-Marie Jacquard," catalogue entry by Maximilien Durand.

http://www.mtmad.fr/fr/pages/topnavigation/musees_et_collections/mt_les_collections/recherche_r_une_oeuvre/mt-rechercher-oeuvre.aspx.

¹²³ This interpretation draws on Siegert's analysis of Robert Campin's *Mérode Triptych*. "If one looks at the complex 'devotional apparatus' on display in fifteenth-century transalpine culture from the perspective of a theory of the door as a cultural technique," writes Siegert, "unfolding appears to be a highly differentiated technology designed to simultaneously articulate and operationalize the precarious threshold between appearance and vision, the profane and the sacred." Siegert, *Cultural Techniques*, 199.

bordered with a decorative cross-stitching that rearticulates and seals in this inner edge. As noted by Kessler, the holy veil and its copies functioned as thresholds between the material and the transcendental, a liminal status that is thematized in the depicted boundaries. The impossibility of an unobstructed view from the earthly realm to the divine is conveyed in the darkness of the actual relic's image, as discussed above, and also in the closed or severely downcast eyes of Christ depicted in the modern engraving. In Jacquard's portrait, in contrast, the veil has been pulled back.¹²⁴ Rather than figuring the channel between numinous and the profane as hindered by the aniconic material, the inventor's portrait discloses a transparency between the capitalist and the church. Both the gauzy drape and the window panes are thin and porous membranes between the old and new religions. A hole in the glass from which cracks radiate make the distinction yet draftier. The portrait affords a view behind the veil—or, to put it somewhat less figuratively, on the other side of the punch cards—where Catholicism and capitalism intermingle. The portrait, then, divulges the secrets of its own production. Not only does it disclose the manual production of the device that enables the mechanical fabrication of the Jacquard cloth, it also implies a liaison between the religious and industrial spheres.

Insofar as the portrait expresses elements of its own creation, it is unlike a phantasmagoric image. While this may seem to set it apart from the supremely phantasmagoric Veronica, it must be recalled that the relic's image also evokes its own fabrication insofar as it was believed to be an impression of Christ's face, stained by his sweat and blood. The nineteenth-century Holy Face print mingles the negation and disclosure of production. The

¹²⁴ This trope of pulling back the veil had much currency in nineteenth-century French and German discourse in a variety of fields. See Theodore Ziolkowski, "The Veil as Metaphor and Myth," in *Religion & Literature*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer 2008), 61-81.

trompe l'oeil depiction of the veil neatly knotted and tied to the corners of the frame alludes to the manual copying of the relic that allegedly resulted in the engraving. In this way the print asserts its status as a genuine copy of an existing and honored original, thus laying claim to its own authenticity. Mattijs van de Port argues that concealing and exposing human production are alternate strategies of generating the sense of a reality more profound than the one immediately apparent under normal circumstances. Revealing production “only serves to baffle the observer further with the incomprehensibility of the mediation process. [...] Here too, revealing the medium is not to opt for the real of mediation practices (‘mediation is all we have’), it is to enhance the mystery of the immediate, to produce a sense of its superior power and truth.”¹²⁵

Both portraits certainly apply a mixture of the two approaches discussed by van de Port. The portrait of Jacquard, while referencing its own creation, simultaneously mythologizes the bourgeois inventor. Just as noteworthy is the object’s evasion of the specificity of the medium. The archaism of the imagery contradicts the newness of the technology, and in imitating a painted portrait it belies its status as a multiple.¹²⁶ Most significantly, the woven portrait’s sheen, apparent lack of texture, and exquisite detailing and shading transcend the particular qualities of common woven textiles. In his memoir of 1864, Charles Babbage, the inventor of the proto-computer, recounted the pleasure with which he perplexed his guests with his own copy of the

¹²⁵ Van de Port, “(Not) Made by the Human Hand,” 85.

¹²⁶ Indeed, the woven portrait even thematizes its own capacity for dissimulation. It does so while also showcasing the machine’s remarkable capacities by depicting within its tableau many qualities and phases of textiles—ripped and smooth, draped and heaped, stretched and tailored, translucent and patterned—all incapable of the mimesis which makes present their particular qualities for the viewer of the portrait.

portrait. According to Babbage, visitors often mistook the weaving for an engraving or even a lithograph. The true production was evidently concealed by its sublime materiality.¹²⁷

The mechanical and the miraculous were in no way incongruous for the profoundly religious Babbage. The mystery of the divine miracle, he believed, could be found in his calculating machine, which, when it reaches the end of its input instructions, conducts an operation completely extraordinary from the perspective of one observing the machine carrying out its predictable tasks.¹²⁸ However, the “maker of the Calculating Engine” is “gifted with the power of prophesy,” as he knows that diversions from the rule are rare but predictable events. The miraculous, though not part of the normal order of things, is nonetheless an element of the framework of reality, Babbage infers. The machine provides not a metaphor for, but an actual perspective into, the working of the divine. Babbage’s Calculating Engine also received its data and instructions from punch cards—a technique he proudly appropriated from Jacquard, hence his fascination with the portrait. The sacred, therefore, is that which is concealed behind the aniconic cards, a secret belonging to the maker or owner of the means of production.

Less than two years after the Veronica performed its miracle for the exiled pope, drawing a devout audience, far greater crowds watched the formation of modern *acheiropoieta* at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London.¹²⁹ The live Jacquard loom on display wove damask fabric

¹²⁷ Charles Babbage, *Passages from the Life of a Philosopher*, (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1864), 169-170. In his memoir, Babbage describes commissioning the production of such portraits to be given as gifts, which he evidently relished. His account of the presentation of the portrait to a King is almost miraculous. Babbage, *Passages from the Life of a Philosopher*, 306-308.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 388-390.

¹²⁹ However, other non-industry people would have become acquainted with the new machine through modern techno-pilgrimage, or, for Sussman, techno-tourism: “In the early Victorian period there flourished what can be called techno-tourism, in which people traveled to the

in wool, and nearby visitors could see roller printing machines that automatically and repetitively printed patterns.¹³⁰ These “self-acting machines” that took the hand out of these processes fascinated spectators. Visitors admired the beauty and intricacy of a sample of the loom’s work, which was in the Gothic style and represented the “figures of St. George, St. Andrew, and St. Patrick in the corner niches, with St. George and the Dragon in the center.”¹³¹ Medieval handicraft, with its mystical and spiritual overtones, was the signifier of the machine’s remarkable capacity. Devices like the Jacquard loom seemed to possess intelligence and self-determination, blurring the boundaries between man and machine, the miraculous and the mechanical.¹³²

That humans took the Godlike initiative to produce this seemingly life-giving force distressed some religious critics.¹³³ However, large segments of the religious population

industrial cities in the Midlands and even to the navel armory at Portsmouth to satisfy their curiosity about the new machines.” Sussman, *Victorian Technology*, 65. The medieval pilgrimage analogy can be extended to the immense crowds that went to the Great Exhibition of 1851. Like the pilgrims that flocked to Rome for a plenary indulgence and to see the Veronica relic during Jubilee years, visitors to the Great Exhibition witnessed the mingling of classes. Ibid., 60.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 61-63.

¹³¹ Ibid., 69. Machine-produced lace also impressed visitors. Also on display, however, were many examples of manual craftsmanship including Alençon Lace. Thérèse of Lisieux was supported on the production of this extremely labor-intensive and precious product, which requires twenty-five hours of labor to produce a postage-stamp size piece of lace. Her mother was a master of the technique and the Carmelite nuns of Alençon, France kept the dying craft alive at the end of the nineteenth century. On Alençon Lace see Fanny Bury Palliser, Margaret Jourdain, and Alice Dryden, *History of Lace* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1911), 188-201.

¹³² Sussman, *Victorian Technology*, 38-41, 47-51. As the machine became more humanlike, the human body becomes more machine-like, succumbing to and fusing with the device which it operated.

¹³³ Yet it initiated a materialism resonant with that of the Middle Ages, which endowed the veil of Veronica and other material relics with *praesentia* and vitality. It is also interesting that modern machines are mimetic—in many instances such as the power loom or spinning machines,

absorbed the innovations into their Christian worldview. The Crystal Palace itself, as with its dazzling contents, invoked many comparisons to the gilt and radiant Heavenly Jerusalem. The Exhibition seemed an earthly model of the spiritual city and anticipated eschatological events.¹³⁴ While to some its contents implied the excesses of human pride, many cited the divine gift of human ingenuity and believed that the technologies on display signified God's design. In its various editions, the *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition* opened with the verse from Psalm 24, "The Earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is," situating the divine authorship of the innovations. Religious publications and sermons from 1851 often diminished the human inventors and artisans to passive expediter's of God's plan.¹³⁵ While the Roman Catholic response was somewhat dampened by suspicion of Protestant propaganda, they admired the technological displays as signs of "an acquaintance with the sublime law, and the masterly handiwork which govern and characterize the universe."¹³⁶ Even with the production in full view, the abstraction of the human role in the process denoted Saint Paul's notion of *acheiropoieta* as absolute in contrast to mutable human endeavors.

the core apparatus is the same as in earlier times and the innovation is that the machine now does the action that the human once did. In medieval Christian thought there are also transfers between the material, human, and spiritual realms through imitation. The popularity of the Veronica in the nineteenth century suggests that this persisted in parts of modern society. Geoffrey Cantor's *Religion and the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) demonstrates the extent to which religion determined reception to new technology. For *praesentia* see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Late Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 86-105.

¹³⁴ Geoffrey Cantor, *Religion and the Great Exhibition of 1851*, 6, 102-109. Religious periodicals, whether condemning or celebrating the structure, often included Crystal Palace's dimensions, replicating the biblical inclusion of the both the Temple's and Heavenly Jerusalem's specifications.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 128-137.

¹³⁶ Reporter for Irish paper, *Tablet*, quoted in Cantor, *Religion and the Great Exhibition*, 146.

Though there was not always harmony between Catholics and modern industry, the absorption of new technologies into Christian frameworks does imply a resonance between the two realms. The ease with which they interlocked suggests a structural symmetry. Central to this was the ineluctable though paradoxical movement towards abstraction and the concomitant mystification and affirmation of the institutions and ideologies in which they were activated.

3.5 *Acheiropoietic Apparatus*

Housed in the magnificent Crystal Palace, the industrial exhibitions of 1851 and 1862 “had the quality of armed parades whose intent is to forestall attack by awing the enemy with the public display of power of one’s weapons. Its success was such that the machine and its power had become the literal expression of capital in general.”¹³⁷ In describing the spectacle in this way, George Caffentzis expresses the Marxist concept that the aura of the technology is an essential element in the progression of capitalism. The impressive display was intended to humble the workers into believing that the machine impeded their ability to resist capital. Disempowered, the workers would compliantly reproduce the sanctified system.¹³⁸ The mystification of the Jacquard system discussed in the earlier sections would therefore play a role in this ideology, thus enabling the reproduction of industrial capitalism.¹³⁹ In this section I

¹³⁷ Caffentzis, *In Letters of Blood and Fire*, 153.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Machines often did inhibit the worker’s ability to resist exploitation. Jacquard was commissioned to develop the loom suppress the Lyon silk workers. The highly skilled and self-organized weavers of Lyon were a “historically intransigent sector of workers,” and had throughout the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries successfully struck and boycotted for higher piece-rates. Jacquard’s invention undermined this agency by removing the skill necessary for the actual weaver. As a consequence, the Jacquard system “halved the time needed to mount the looms, eliminated the weaver’s helper, and quadrupled productivity,” sharply reducing the

examine the additional ways in which the “not made by hand” model, encapsulated in both the Veronica relic and the Jacquard loom, helped perpetuate the systems in which they were employed. Both objects function as apparatuses that “manage, govern, control and orient [...] the behaviors, gestures, and thoughts of human beings,” as discussed by Agamben.¹⁴⁰ The Christian believer who engaged with the Veronica, or the worker employed the Jacquard loom, reproduced the essential organization of the religious or economic system. The Veronica and its reproductions, as well as Jacquard’s punch cards, therefore diagrammed and disseminated these fundamental structures.

In abstracting the image and technique of reproduction, the Jacquard device simultaneously participated in the transformation of the weaving process. Though necessary for the production of the cloth, this machine operator, as with the more temporally remote designers, card punchers, or loom setters, was displaced from the crafting of the individual product. “In the mechanized process,” writes Herbert Sussman in his study on Victorian technologies, “the worker as machine-watcher does not participate in the creation of the patterns to be woven. Yet, the activity of human creation is not lost, but relocated to the designer who sketches patterns to be woven.”¹⁴¹

The “machine watcher” plays an analogous role to Veronica, merely facilitating the creation of the cloth image through a generative, though not creative, gesture. Veronica’s image

piece-rates. “By 1846 about one-third of the silk looms in Lyons had Jacquard devices.” As a result, the “imminent danger of assassination” hindered Jacquard’s ability to peacefully enjoy his pension of 1000 crowns, awarded for his invention, in his hometown of Lyons. Though Jacquard did not succumb to the violence, his looms did as early as 1807, when an “the *official* conservators of the trade of Lyon” destroyed an early Jacquard loom. George Caffentzis, *In Letters of Blood and Fire*, 196-197.

¹⁴⁰ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 12.

¹⁴¹ Sussman, *Victorian Technology*, 149.

production is devoid of craftsmanship and agency and is simply in the service of reproducing the image of the faith. As discussed above, within the “marvelous economy” of the Holy Face devotion, the labor modeled by Veronica plays a crucial role. Sister Mary and other devotees were to “aid apostolic laborers by prayer, contemplation and by the exercises of the interior life.”¹⁴² The immediate objective of Sister Mary’s labor was to perpetuate and reproduce the Holy Face devotion. Christ instructed Sister Mary to propagate the devotion: “I seek for more Veronicas to console and adore my Divine Face.” As Veronica facilitated the reproduction of the image of Christ on cloth, devotees, by adoring the image, simply replicate the devotion. Thus, the Veronica veil was thus embedded with a code, or a plan for activity, and the prints circulated this scheme for devotional behavior throughout France.

The relic had long had the capacity to generate subjects through the mimetic apperception of believers. “The very act of viewing in its turn implied the desire of viewers to resemble the One whom they had in view,” Hans Belting writes of the image of Christ on the Veronica in the medieval context: “The image and its beholder, in ultimate terms, related to each other like archetype and copy, like Creator and creature.”¹⁴³ Sister Mary stated that the Holy Face is “the seal of the divinity, having the power to impress itself on the souls of those who apply themselves to the image of God,” and she entreated Christ “to renew us in the image of God.”¹⁴⁴

The relic and prints thus served as generative devices that established modes of behaviors, interaction, and thought. Like Augustine’s *figura*, it anticipated and called forth future manifestations. Within the social structures that support it, the Veil of Veronica functioned as a

¹⁴² Ibid., 262.

¹⁴³ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 208.

¹⁴⁴ Janvier and Mary St. Peter, *Life of Sister Mary Saint Peter*, 255.

diagram in the sense derived from Foucault's usage: "The diagram is not specific, but it is a pure abstracted function—so it can pass from one system to the next without the need to follow any similarity of form and it can intermingle with other functions, giving two incongruous systems their respective operative fields. In this way a diagram is not merely a simple model that traces similarities between things, but is also a generative device that continues working once embodied."¹⁴⁵

The diagrammatic potential of the Veronica relic extended to the broader relationships between the Divine, the Church, and the faithful that served as the ideal from the Middle Ages through the papacy of Pius IX. The Divine reveals itself directly to the Church, like a constant flow of divine light giving knowledge and spiritual power, and the Church in turn must exercise temporal power over the faithful in order to lead the people spiritually. The Church, as the earthly mediator of God, is like a screen catching Christ's image and administering it to believers who reproduce and sustain the institution. Pius IX struggled to affirm and preserve this dynamic during his papacy. The role of the Church as the only true mediator of divine truth was emphatically reasserted in Pius IX's 1849 encyclical "Nostis at Nobiscum," which aimed to "remind them explicitly with regard to divine scripture that no man, relying on his own wisdom, is able to claim the privilege of rashly twisting the scriptures to his own meaning in opposition to the meaning which holy mother Church holds and has held. It was the Church alone that Christ commissioned to guard the deposit of the faith and to decide the true meaning and interpretation

¹⁴⁵ T'ai Smith quoting Jakub Zdebik's description of Gilles Deleuze's take on Michel Foucault. See T'ai Smith, "Three Figures, Three Patterns, Three Paradigms" in *Art Practical* (February 26, 2015. <http://www.artpractical.com/feature/three-figures-three-patterns-three-paradigms/>).

of the divine pronouncements.”¹⁴⁶ As the loss of his temporal power became imminent, Pius strove to secure the primacy of the relationship between the divine and the Church. This was obtained in the First Vatican Council (1869-70), which resulted in the doctrine of papal infallibility, meaning that the pope, when speaking on doctrines of faith and morals, was empowered by the infallibility of Jesus and so his teaching would be held universally.¹⁴⁷ Though Pius IX saw the near complete loss of the papal territories, infallibility made incontestable the pope’s authority in spiritual matters.

The circumstances that led to Pius IX’s convocation of Vatican I reflected those that beset the papacy in the thirteenth century. In its first decades, Pope Innocent III strove to extend the temporal power of the Church and centralize it in Rome. The century ended with Boniface VIII mired in violent conflict with secular rulers in struggles over power and possessions. Significantly, both popes implemented the Veronica.¹⁴⁸ In 1208 Innocent III devised a procession in which the Veronica was carried to the Hospital of Santo Spirito in Saxio and displayed for the crowds.¹⁴⁹ When Boniface VIII declared the first Jubilee in 1300, the Veronica became a major focus of the pilgrimage circuit and it was displayed in the chapel of the Holy Face in Saint Peter’s Basilica every Sunday and on major feast days.¹⁵⁰

Boniface’s proclamation of the Jubilee was strategic in that it reaffirmed the spiritual authority of Rome and alleviated the financial crisis caused by the pope’s conflicts with France, England, and the Colonna family. The Veronica contributed to his cause by soldering the

¹⁴⁶ Pope Pius IX, “Nostis at Nobiscum.”

¹⁴⁷ Coppa, *Pope Pius IX*, 154-168.

¹⁴⁸ Kessler and Zacharias, *Rome 1300*, 211.

¹⁴⁹ Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences*, 504.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 184-5, 504. During the Jubilee of 1300, or Holy Year, pilgrims to Rome were granted a plenary remission from sin.

authority of Christ to Rome.¹⁵¹ It may have been particularly effective in reproducing and disseminating this authority as a result of the hymn dedicated to the Veronica, which Innocent III had composed a century earlier, that greatly increased the relic's renown. The indulgence one gained from reciting this prayer did not require the believer to be in the presence the authentic *sudarium*.¹⁵² The hymn, then, which could activate the power of the relic anywhere, dematerialized the object—or rather its efficacy and aura—rendering it abstract, repeatable, and mobile. Moreover, the Veronica copy industry was initiated under Innocent's rule, and it was revived over the centuries at moments when the Church needed to diagram, assert, and disseminate its authority. Following the medieval popes, Pius IX released the vector of the Veronica into the world of believers where it reproduced the figure of his own infallibility. The Veil of Veronica, then, was a figure of the spiritual capital of the Church—not only its values and beliefs, but also its power and authority. In imaging this authority, the relic and its reproductions engendered and constituted it.

These popes demanded much from what is ultimately just a bit of cloth and a rather mundane process of reproduction. In industrial capitalism a parallel operation occurred as the punch cards, also on the margins of visibility, bolstered a powerful institution. They too served as a “pure abstracted function” and “generative device that continues working once embodied,” which contributed to the restructuring of the system of production and the reorientation of the

¹⁵¹ Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages*, 115.

¹⁵² The prayer purportedly composed by Innocent III included in Matthew Paris's *Chronica majora* (after 1245) indicated that viewing the Veronica anticipates a direct vision of God at the end of days: “Grant, for the sake of your Passion and the cross, that we, as we now adore and venerate this on earth in a mirror and parable, shall one day see you face to face as judge on the good side.” According to Belting, “The sight of the cloth image seemed to anticipate the vision of god, though subject to the conditions of an earthly view of the human face.” Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 543.

worker within this organization. Like the Veronica veil, Jacquard's punch cards functioned as both an interface and a method of dividing. Where they were employed in the capitalist apparatus, they distanced the worker from the product and from the value their labor generated. Further echoing the Veronica relic, a textile produced with a Jacquard loom preserved in its metadata the passivity of the facilitator of their production, the vast distance between this worker and the designer. On the other side of the punch card were both the designer and the capitalist. Whereas the workers were variable, quantifiable, excessively temporal, the registers obscured by the punch cards became comparable atemporal and uniform. As they anticipated, instantiated, and reproduced the essential organization of the economic system, the cards were a figure of industrial capital.

Marx maintained that machines do not create value; nonetheless, automation played an important role in the mystification of the capitalist system of production.¹⁵³ When the punch cards created a rift in the weaving process, both concealing the image's origins and enabling its proliferation, they fixed the production process, making it more iterative and mechanic. The punch cards, as we have seen, were involved in processing and stabilizing a distinction between the human, on the one hand, and a system seemingly autonomous of the human realm, on the other. To give this further precision, I return to Agamben's use the term "consecration," or rather his application of it outside of the strictly religious domain. To recapitulate, consecration is the removal of something from human use. In the context of the present study, this means that the systems of production became more reified, absolute, and autonomous, and less susceptible to

¹⁵³ See Caffentzis, *In Letters of Blood and Fire*, 153. Caffentzis' objective is to defend Marx's argument that machines cannot create value, and that Marx was therefore correct in trying to divert people from a fixation on techno-utopias on the one hand and Luddite technophobia on the other.

the interventions of individual workers. Therefore, the punch cards served industrial capitalism on a level at once material and imaginary, physical and metaphysical. Ideology was embedded in the cards and in the adjustments to behavior that they anticipated. If industrial capitalism gave a sense of being necessary (or, we might say, of having an inevitability like that of the divinely ordained order of things in Christian cosmology), it was rooted in the specific physicality of the cards and the removal of the human hand they enabled. The cards are indeed a *figura*: a material instantiation embedded in history, which simultaneously telescoped a broader structure that purported to stand outside history. “This eternal thing is already figured in them,” wrote Auerbach of the *figura* in the tradition inaugurated by Saint Augustine, “and thus they are both a tentative fragmentary reality, and veiled eternal reality.”¹⁵⁴ The punch cards, like the Veronica relic, were a veil that both obscured and revealed—even generated—a certain reality: a reality that was historically and culturally contingent, even while it was tendered as universal and absolute. This is to say that the hierarchies and structures of industrial capitalism were realities made by human hands, presented as modern *acheiropoieta*. As *figurae* straddling the physical and metaphysical, the Veronica cloth and the Jacquard cards embodied the synthesis of the material and spiritual, mechanical and miraculous.

¹⁵⁴ Auerbach, “Figura,” 59-60.

Chapter 4: Conclusion: “What, Then, Is the Aura?”

“What, then, is the aura? A strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be.”¹⁵⁵ Walter Benjamin’s definition of this mysterious property succinctly characterizes the mythic character of *acheiropoieta*. We might put it another way to emphasize the point: the aura is the unique apparition of infinitude, however finite it may be. This is to say that humble object of human origins is perceived as an autonomous and absolute entity, representing the authority of tradition while simultaneously purporting to stand outside history. This is a rather oppressive state of affairs as it precludes the individual worker or citizen from realizing their role as historical agents. This, at any rate, this was the general line of the critiques of mystification, be it religious or secular, leveraged by nineteenth-century communists and republicans. In the 1930’s Benjamin was keenly aware that the aura could be manipulated and instrumentalized by fascists, prompting him to write “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” which portends the liquidation of myth at the hand of technology.

It is this last detail that clashes with the argument I have been pursuing in this thesis. Benjamin famously wrote that “what withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art, is the latter’s aura.”¹⁵⁶ Modern technologies enable the realization of “the desire of the present-day masses to ‘get closer’ to things, and their equally passionate concern for

¹⁵⁵ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, Second Version,” in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, Thomas Y. Levine (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 23.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

overcoming each thing's uniqueness by assimilating it as a reproduction."¹⁵⁷ For Benjamin, the strange aural tissue is an outgrowth of the unique and original artistic object alone, and is therefore bound to wane as the effigies slough off. In opposition to this, I argue that something akin to Benjamin's aura necessarily coincides with mechanical reproduction. The mystifications are not imposed on the object from without by religious or bourgeois ideology, but are a concomitant effect of the production-obscuring techniques and temporalities of religious *and* industrial modes of reproduction.

Scholars of early devotional prints such as David Areford and Lisa Pon have reassessed Benjamin's claim from a particularly profitable vantage.¹⁵⁸ The modalities of replication, multiplicity, typology, and topographical and temporal destabilization that gird the structure of the Christian religion were only reinforced by the application of woodcut and other printing technologies. The techno-symbolic operations were in fact amplified by the newer, more prolific methods. This, as we have seen, was also the case with the Veil of Veronica, which in advance of any particular technological mediation was both a model and a copy. The Veronica devotional apparatus easily assimilated reproductive technologies—from the archaic intaglio print to the modern roller printer (and into the digital age). In its updated iterations, both the object possessed by the Vatican and the copies bare the authority and mystique of tradition. In light of this longer history, it becomes clear that Benjamin anachronistically projected the valences of the bourgeois cult of originality, authenticity, and uniqueness (insofar as these are connected to the

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹⁵⁸ See Lisa Pon, *The Printed Icon in Early Modern Italy: Fiori's Madonna of the Fire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 57-64. David S. Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 10.

“here and now” of the ritual object) onto religious categories ultimately incompatible with these values.

“You under-estimate the technicality of autonomous art and over-estimate that of dependent art,” objected Adorno, who sought to rescue art from Benjamin’s qualitative censure.¹⁵⁹ I will add that he crucially under-estimated the technicality of aura as well.

This, precisely, is my point in pitting the Veronica copy industry against Benjamin’s model of technological reproduction. In contrast to the latter’s approach, the nucleus of my project comes into focus: the “radical technicity”—Siegert’s descriptor—of religion. Whereas Benjamin treats the spheres of technology and of mystification as discrete and conflicting, my object is the concomitance of the religious and technological arenas.¹⁶⁰ As the media historian Jeremy Stolow summarized, “religious practice and imagination are inextricably bound up with the materialities of media and the labor of mediation.”¹⁶¹ My objective has been to destabilize the

¹⁵⁹ Theodore Adorno, “Letter to Walter Benjamin, 18 March 1936,” in *Aesthetics and Politics: Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, Georg Lukács* (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 124.

¹⁶⁰ It should be noted that Benjamin studied the essential relationship between capitalism and Christianity throughout his works, notably in the very short essay, “Capitalism as Religion.” “Capitalism itself developed parasitically on Christianity in the West [...] in such a way that, in the end, its history is essentially the history of its parasites, of capitalism. Compare the holy iconography of various religions on the one hand with the banknotes of various countries on the other: The spirit that speaks from the ornamentation of banknotes.” Also: “Christianity in the time of the Reformation did not encourage the emergence of capitalism, but rather changed itself into capitalism.” It is on the point of the technicality of the aura where our approaches and positions diverge. Walter Benjamin, “Capitalism as Religion,” trans. Chad Kautzer, in *Selected Writings*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 259-261.

¹⁶¹ Jeremy Stolow, “Introduction: Religion, Technology, and the Things in Between,” in *Deus in Machina: Religion, Technology, and the Things in Between* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 6.

divide between religion and technology by shifting the focus to the specific medial qualities and operations that constitute both realms.

If technological reproduction not only leaves the aura of the original intact, but is also the technique by which the numinous is generated, it begs the question: how does this impact Benjamin's main claim, that myth can be dissolved through the masses' engagement with technologically reproduced images? What, in other words, does it do to the emancipatory potential of technology, as postulated by Benjamin?

These are important questions to revisit, particularly in the face of profuse claims regarding both the apocalyptic and emancipatory potential of twenty-first-century information technologies. A consideration of the technological basis of the metaphysical is essential for avoiding the overvaluation of technology's monopoly on the real and for better understanding the mediated nature of the human and non-human distinctions. Though this study has shown that the obfuscation and negation of human handiwork is the ground in which magic grows, it would be narrow and deterministic to conclude that this entirely precludes the possibility of putting technology in the service of demythification. The questions Benjamin's essay prompts are ultimately about the possibility of engaging with technology in a useful way, an issue outside the scope of the paper.

And yet, it passes very near, even if born on a different trajectory. This is because I have dipped into the communist, socialist, and anarchist debates of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries within which the apprehension of the genealogical and structural affinities between Catholicism and capitalism opened onto questions about the role of machines in emancipatory programs. But in the framework of the present argument, my analysis has coincided with these theorizations mainly insofar as they illuminated the problem of *mediation*. The *acheiropoietic*

modality, although it did not appear in these earlier discussions as such, was quietly present where these thinkers identified the occultation of a model through abstractions and idealizations with the mechanism of oppression. In politics as in the arts, the crucial struggles of the nineteenth century were waged over and through the relationship between models and copies, and thus through forms of mediation. It is this inner substance—this fundamental level at which the right and the left clashed—that I have addressed.

In their formal and conceptual similarities the Veronica relic and Jacquard's punch cards produced analogous effects, reproducing stratified social relations and concealing them in a dazzling object. As the relic engendered its numinous copies, the punch cards generated a commodity "abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties," to use Marx's phrase.¹⁶² The antagonisms between Catholics, capitalists, and communists in the nineteenth century certainly had multiple political and ideological dimensions, but there was an intrinsic web of materiality and its negation on which the more visible confrontations played out. As communists opposed the capitalist strategies of abstraction, both the Catholic and the capitalist institutions were constituted by the very mechanisms of occultation.

¹⁶² Marx goes on to say, "to the producers, therefore, the social relations between their private labours appear as what they are, i.e. they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between things." Karl Marx, *Capital*, 165-166.

Figures



Figure 1 Holy Face print displayed in the Église Saint-Pierre de Vaucé, Couesmes-Vaucé, France, engraving on paper or linen, 19th century. Photograph © Simon de l'Ouest, 2015, via Wikimedia Commons,

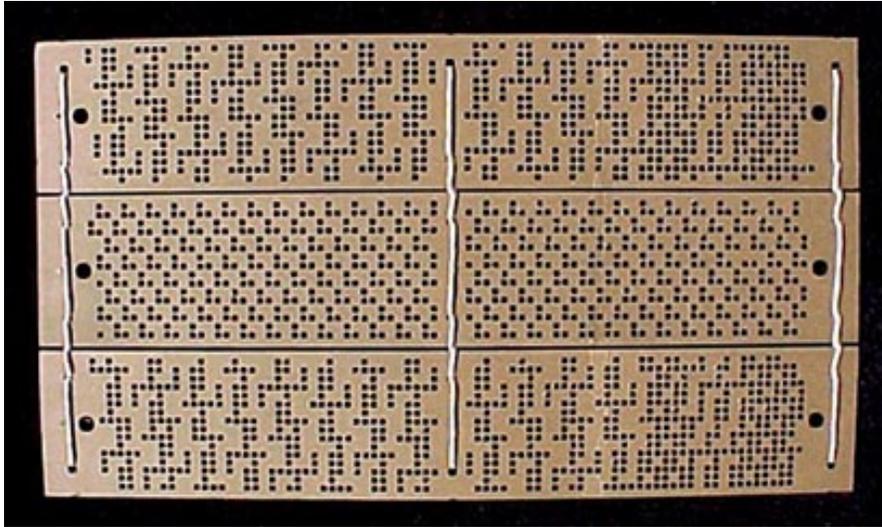


Figure 3. Punch cards for a Jacquard Loom. Gessler Collection. Photograph © Nicholas Gessler, 2002.

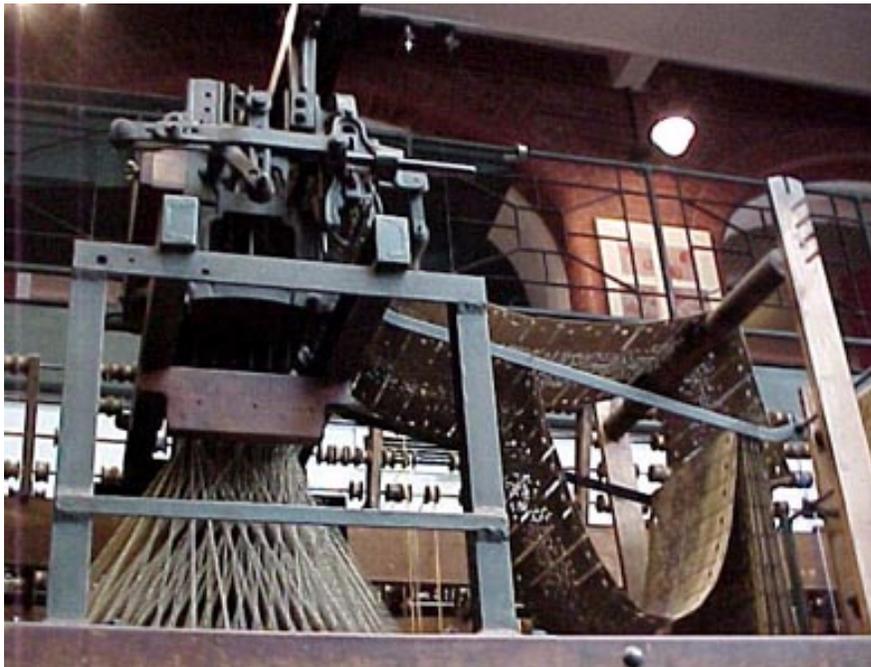


Figure 4. Jacquard Head and a set of punch cards. Berlin Technological Museum. Photograph © Nicholas Gessler, 2002.



Figure 5 Frontispiece of a *Bible Moralisée* (Codex Vindobonensis 2554), manuscript illumination, mid-thirteenth century. Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna. Photograph via Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:God-Architect.jpg>.

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