The Art Bulletin

ISSN: 0004-3079 (Print) 1559-6478 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcab20

# The Exuding Wood of the Cross at Isenheim

Gregory C. Bryda

**To cite this article:** Gregory C. Bryda (2018) The Exuding Wood of the Cross at Isenheim, The Art Bulletin, 100:2, 6-36, DOI: 10.1080/00043079.2018.1393323

**To link to this article:** https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2018.1393323

Published online: 16 Jul 2018.

# The Exuding Wood of the Cross at Isenheim

GREGORY C. BRYDA

Ice thaws on the river, ice melts on the streams,
They are freed again as the spring sun gleams.
The valley is green with new life, new hopes;
Old winter is beaten—see how it withdrew
To skulk up there on rough mountain-slopes!…
They have something today to celebrate,
For the Lord's resurrection is theirs as well:
Today they have risen and been set free
From the mean damp houses where they dwell,
From their trades and crafts and drudgery.…

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Easter Stroll," from *Faust* (1808)[1]

**1** *Christ on the Tau Cross*, ca. 1500, colored woodcut, 14½ × 10 in. (36.8 × 25.6 cm). Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, 90–1 (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Jörg P. Anders, provided by bpk Bildagentur/Art Resource, NY)

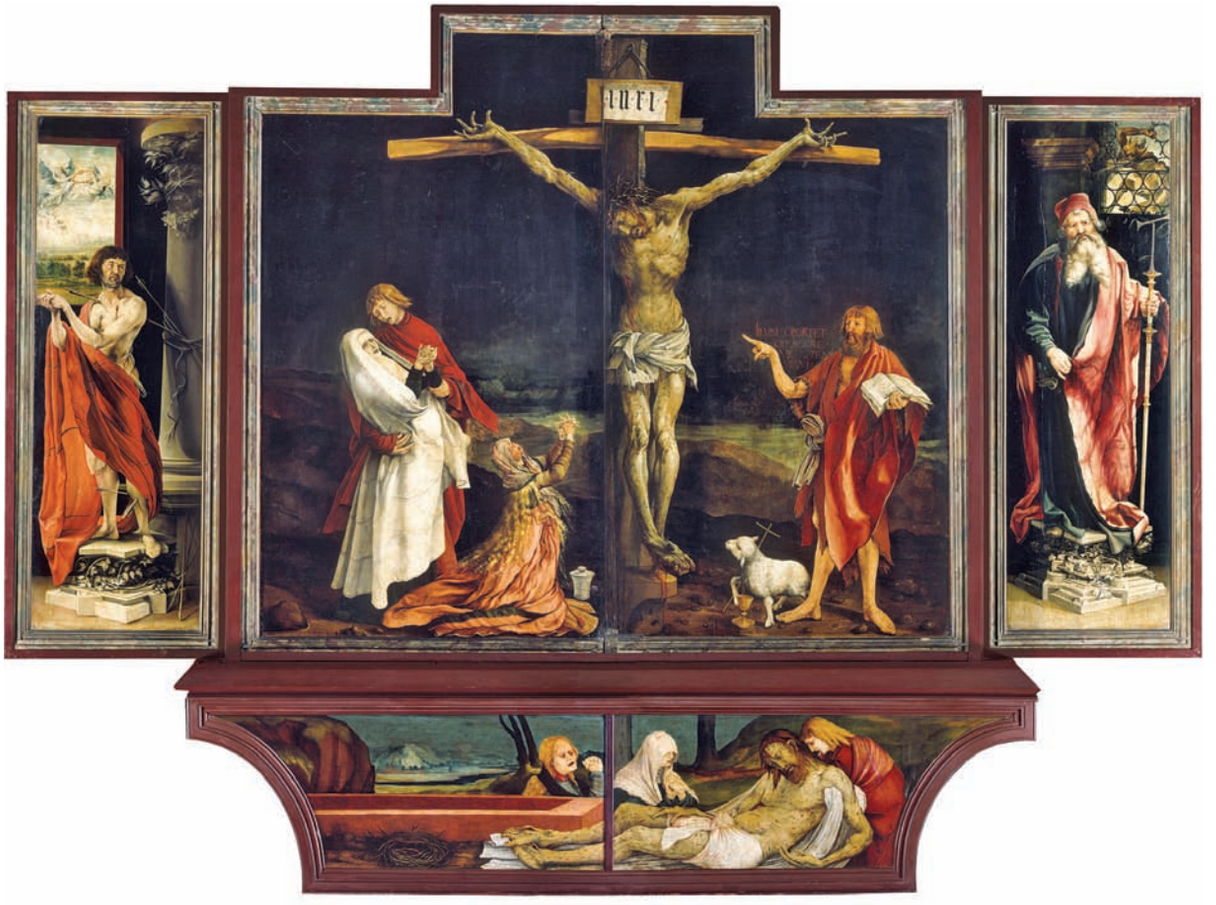
**2** Matthias Grünewald, Isenheim Altarpiece, closed position, 1512–15, tempera and oil on wood, 15 ft. × 11 ft. 6 in. (4.6 × 3.5 m). Musée Unterlinden, Colmar (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Musée Unterlinden, Dist. RMN–Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY)

**3** Matthias Grünewald, Isenheim Altarpiece, first opening, reconstructed, 1512–15, tempera and oil on wood. Musée Unterlinden, Colmar (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Musée Unterlinden, Dist. RMN–Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY)

A miraculously vegetating cross figures prominently in the story of the founding of the Hospital Brothers of Saint Anthony. According to tradition, the eleventh-century Lord Gaston of the Dauphiné received a vision after his son Guérin was cured of the debilitating affliction known as Saint Anthony's fire.[2] A long-deceased Egyptian hermit saint, Anthony appeared to Gaston and instructed him to plant a tau cross, which subsequently bore fruit that contained healing powers. The saint's principal attribute, the Greek letter tau (τ), was thought to possess magical properties, and the Antonines, who specialized in nursing the physical and mental symptoms of Saint Anthony's fire, ascribed it with "power" (*potentia*) in a bull of 1297 and emblazoned their black habits with large tau crosses.[3] Its obscure origins, tied both to the Hebrew "sign" (*tav*) that marked those spared the plague in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 9:6) and its resemblance to the miraculous crutch that supported Saint Anthony in the Egyptian desert, the magic tau derived its effectiveness from the holiest of all crosses, the one on which Christ was crucified.[4]

Like Gaston's fructuating tau, which compelled his son and him to establish the order's first hospice in 1095, the *potentia* of Christ's Cross revealed itself throughout the Middle Ages as the bounty of nature's seasonal transformations. Centuries after the order's founding, inscribed prints beseeched their readers to meditate on an image of Christ crucified on a tau cross sprouting golden leaflets to help ward off pestilence (Fig. 1).[5] At the same time that these apotropaic pictures circulated around southern Germany in the fifteenth century, writers and artists began to conceive of the cross as living flora whose essential tissues and saps could be exploited for medicinal and other salutary purposes. As evidenced by a series of late medieval garden allegories, not previously examined in art history, the devotional trope of the cross's exuding wood served as the theological basis for the well-known Antonine altarpiece at Isenheim sculpted by Nikolaus Hagenauer between 1490 and 1493 and painted by Matthias Grünewald in 1512–15 (Figs. 2–4). From the holiest spot of their church on the high altar, the Antonine monks at Isenheim expressed in their multimedia retable a trenchant awareness of the symbolic and material relevance of trees and vegetation, whose viscous essences they prescribed for patients at their adjacent infirmary.[6]

Vegetation was always fertile ground for Christological symbolism.[7] Theologians such as Saint Bonaventure (1221–1274) popularized Christ's Cross as a diagrammatic "tree of life" (*Lignum vitae*), whose branches charted the events of his life and sacrifices. Mystical writers



**4** Matthias Grünewald and Nikolaus Hagenauer, Isenheim Altarpiece, final opening, reconstructed, 1512–15 and 1490–93, tempera and oil on wood, polychrome limewood. Musée Unterlinden, Colmar (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Musée Unterlinden, Dist. RMN–Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY)

like Henry Suso (1295–1366) saw in blooming roses the beauty of Christ's wounds, pain, and torment. In fifteenth-century German-speaking lands, though, artistic and verbal accounts of the Passion truly reveled in extended vegetal metaphors. Writing under a mystical genre known as the Spiritual Woods (*Geistliche Maien*), figures like the Dominican Johannes Kreutzer from Alsace (d. 1468) and the Franciscan Stephan Fridolin of Nuremberg (d. 1498), among numerous unknown authors, began to expound on the biology of the metaphors' living subjects, rather than using them solely as allegories or mnemonic devices.[8] Emanating from the Living Wood (*das lebendige Holz*), the archteypal plant on which Christ suffered and bled, a spiritual ecosystem of medicinal herbs, plants, and flowers assumed sacred relevance for their essential properties as mutable organisms (Fig. 5).[9] Working from this rich medieval literary tradition, Goethe immortalized in his "Easter Stroll" (*Osterspaziergang*) of 1808 the manner in which dormant plants blossoming in the spring gave visual, tactile, and olfactory credence to the concept of the Resurrection.[10]

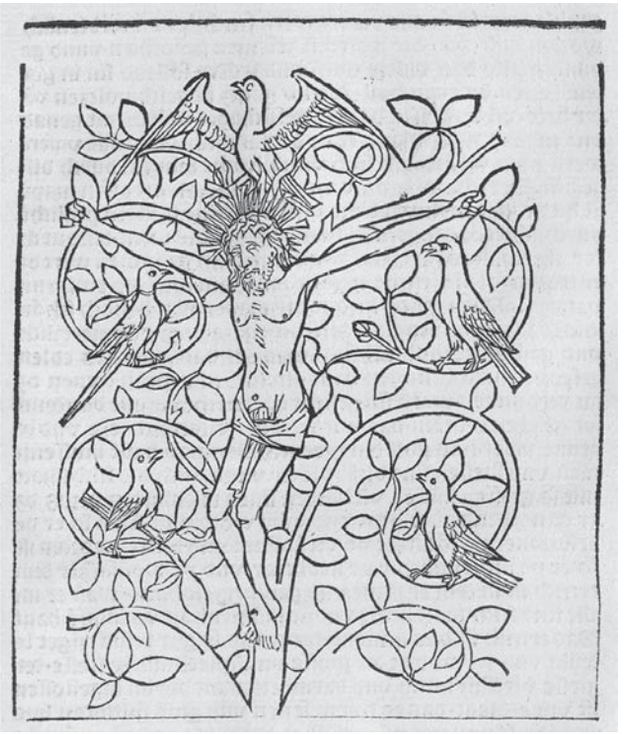
First identified with the cosmic Tree of Life from Genesis,[11] then the Tree of Love from mystical-bride commentaries on the Song of Songs (*Arbor amoris*, or *der Minnebaum*),[12] and the heavenly sprig blossoming into a tree over Adam's grave, as recited from the Golden Legend,[13] the Spiritual Woods became an entrenched metaphor that extended from the wood of the cross to Christ's body as the life-giving fruit hanging from it (Fig. 6). In eliding the redemptive power of Christ and the divine tree, the wood of the cross topos opened itself to the possibility for additional degrees of anatomical similitude between the God-man bleeding from his veins and the scarred wood exuding resins onto its bark. "Overflowing" and fertilizing the earth's crust with this admixture of sacro-biological

effluvia, the redemptive materiality of the tree-cross planted at the center of Paradise streams to earth and all of God's verdant creative bounty.[14] Greening the conventional Neoplatonic syntax of mystical emanation, the spiritual writers suffused their Passion narratives with an earthiness whereby plants and herbs portray the supporting details, and the wood figures prominently at the center.

The greenery of vegetation is in fact historical language. Recognizing the humor that courses through plants and naming it their *viriditas*, or greenness, Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179) understood that it was their essential effluvia that kept plants fresh, leafy, and vibrant.[15] I thus employ the words "vegetation" and "greenery" deliberately, for they are the best approximations in English of the now antiquated word *Maien/Meyen*, which in medieval German stood more generally for all of the earth's flora. Spiritual Woods, or Greenery, a concept that originated with the mendicant orders in the domain of female piety but was popular among lay audiences long after 1500, came to represent trees, vines, and herbs as both subject and medium.[16] It accounted for the sacred potential of nature's outer appearance as well as the humors, secretions, and other salutary qualities of its organisms in perpetual flux, from growth to human intervention: vines cultivated for the Eucharistic wine, plants' saps drained for salves dedicated to saints, and the exuding Edenic Tree lumbered to fashion the True Cross. In its various botanical representations, the Spiritual Woods thus also offered an extended horticultural vocabulary in which to frame the violence perpetrated against Christ on the Cross.

Graphic accounts of Christ's ultimate sacrifice had indeed inspired artists and writers for centuries, though none quite like the south German Mathis Gothart Nithart, better known as Matthias Grünewald.[17] A prolific master painter working in the first three decades of the sixteenth century on mainly religious subjects, Grünewald was unmatched in his preoccupation with the Crucifixion, which appears more than any other iconography in his surviving corpus.[18] For one, his eclectic depictions of Christ's chief torture device exemplify his knowledge, as a hydraulics engineer and trained carpenter, of numerous methods of joining pieces of timber (Fig. 7).[19] In addition to his artistic commissions, Grünewald was solicited throughout Germany and Alsace for his expertise in plumbing. His familiarity with carpentry and horticulture creeps into all of his artwork, from his display of construction methods to his fastidious representation of plant species. In formally cross listing his paintings with illustrations in medieval building treatises and pharmacopoeia, though, Lottlisa Behling and others have privileged optical art historical approaches and overlooked how Grünewald, like the spiritual writers of his time, embraced the multiple semantic registers afforded by the living conditions of wood and vegetation.[20]

For example, he haphazardly built the crossbars in his Crucifixion for the Holy Cross Church of Tauberbischofsheim, crudely chopping their ends and only partially planing their surfaces flat to set off the wood's bark; he also captured the pulpy, pliable texture of lumber in the roughly hacked foot block, or *suppedaneum* (Fig. 8).[21] But his display of expertise with natural materials is not limited to the timber of the Cross; it extends to his heightened attention to the living wood of other botanical *arma Christi*, such as the crown of thorns and the birches, which can be found on the reverse side of the bilateral panel (Fig. 9). The same is true for his now-lost Crucifixion that Christoph Krafft copied in about 1648 (Fig. 10). Grünewald painted it as a tree trunk shorn of its branches but still firmly rooted in the ground. The crossbar and wooden ladder appear as unrefined logs. As Christ is portrayed from the back to highlight the lamentation of Mary Magdalene, his face is not seen. Barely suspended from the ground, his body in its streaky coloration parallels the surface of the adjoining tree-cross. However, in the winged altarpiece Grünewald painted for the Antonine monks at Isenheim (Figs. 2, 12), the largest painted Crucifixion in northern Europe to survive from this period,



**5** *Spiritual May Pole*, title page of the *Geistlicher Maibaum*, Ulm, ca. 1482, woodcut, 5⅝ × 4⅝ in. (14.2 × 11.8 cm). Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, 2 Inc.s.a. 139, 147a (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, published under fair use)

**6** *Christ on the Tree-Cross*, from Geiler von Kaysersberg, *De xii excellentiis arboris Crucifixi*, Strasbourg, 1514, woodcut, 6¼ × 5¼ in. (15.8 × 13.2 cm). Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Res/2 Plat. 884, fol. 35a (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, published under fair use)

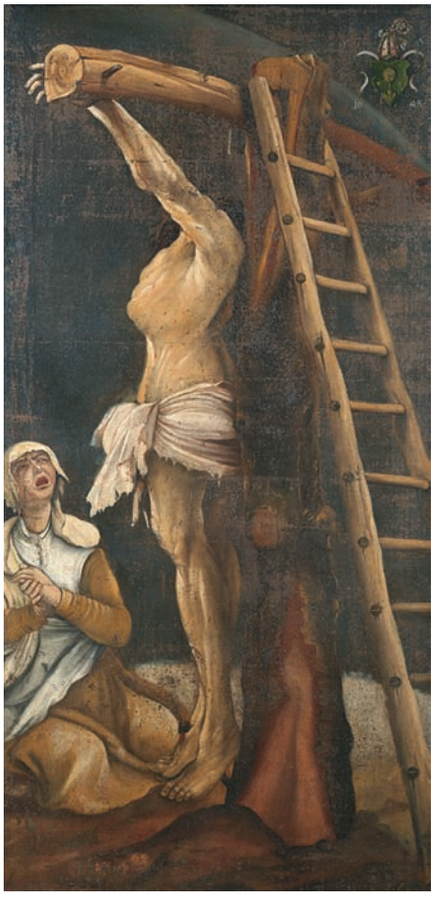
**7** Matthias Grünewald, *Christ on the Cross*, ca. 1520, charcoal, white heightening, and ink on paper, 21 × 12¾ in. (53.9 × 32.5 cm). Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Wolfgang Pankoke and Elvira Beick, provided by bpk Bildagentur/Art Resource, NY)



**8** Matthias Grünewald, *Crucifixion*, from the Tauberbischofsheim Altarpiece (obverse), 1523–25, tempera and oil on panel, 77⅛ × 56¼ in. (196 × 143 cm). Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Wolfgang Pankoke, provided by bpk Bildagentur/Art Resource, NY)

**9** Matthias Grünewald, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, from the Tauberbischofsheim Altarpiece (reverse), 1523–25, tempera and oil on panel, 77⅛ × 56¼ in. (196 × 143 cm). Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Wolfgang Pankoke and Ellen Frank, provided by bpk Bildagentur/Art Resource, NY)

**10** Christoph Krafft, after Matthias Grünewald, *The Lamentation of the Magdalene*, ca. 1648, oil on canvas, 61 × 30 in. (156 × 76 cm). Sammlung Wurth, Kunzelsau (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Horst Ziegenfusz, published under fair use)



**11** *Crucifixus dolorosus*, Rhineland, late 13th or early 14th century, walnut with original polychromy, height 59½ in. (151 cm). Santa Maria im Kapitol, Cologne (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Michael Thuns, provided by LVR-Amt für Denkmalpflege im Rheinland, published under fair use)

Grünewald called even greater attention to the arboreal Corpus Christi. Beyond Christ's tawny-green complexion, the perforations of his excoriated flesh, as Andrée Hayum has noted, intimate the patterns of tree bark.[22]

What the Spiritual Woods texts and Grünewald's painting make clear, moreover, is that the corollary to Christ's formal semblance to the metaphoric tree is his containment of its salvific resins and turpentines, which, like the blood of a human body, are extracted through injury to a tree's bark. Exploited figuratively as a parallel for the sacramental blood Christ shed on the Cross, tree exudates like resin and turpentine formed the basis of medieval medicine and, most important, were prescribed by the Isenheim monks to treat skin pustules and boils and soothe the burning sensations associated with Saint Anthony's fire.[23] Stretching across two panels, then, Christ's body suffering on the Ur-tree at Isenheim opens up and emanates in the botanical reimaginings of Christ and the Cross in the subsequent unfurlings of the altarpiece's wings, which culminate in the gilded wooden sculpture of the enthroned Anthony sitting beneath a leafy canopy (Fig. 4).[24]

These and other features of Grünewald's compositions tend to be overshadowed by the disturbing degree to which the artist portrayed Christ's mangled body on the Cross. His Tauberbischofsheim Crucifixion was considered so unsightly in the nineteenth century that the clergy had it removed in 1875 and replaced with a wooden crucifix.[25] Previous art historical explanations of Grünewald's gruesome innovations have relied on much of the same exegetical literature cited to explain the appearance of violent sculpted crucifixes emerging out of the Rhineland about 1300 (Fig. 11). Some even suggest that the wooden sculptures themselves, which were more than two centuries old at the time, were points of influence for Grünewald.[26] In his volume on German sculpture, Wilhelm Pinder placed the painter at the culmination of a continuum initiated by the famous depiction of Christ on the branchy cross (*Astkreuz*) from Cologne's Santa Maria im Kapitol. Its "novel realization of an interior process . . . is horrible, like from a first Grünewald, pulled apart, hunched, tattered, torn, bent, and contorted."[27] Writing in a nationalistic manner in the years leading up to World War I, Pinder prized Grünewald's expressionistic style as emblematic of an "irrational" Gothic temperament endemic to the German nation.[28] Not long after Pinder's publication, the altarpiece became a cause célèbre for Germans, who, a year before the war's end, transferred it from the politically fraught border region of Alsace to Munich for cleaning and display.[29] In the short interim from November 1918 to September 1919 at the Alte Pinakothek, the reexhibited Isenheim Altarpiece enthralled the public and made an indelible impact on Otto Dix, Max Ernst, George Grosz, and Thomas Mann, to name a few.[30]

Stipulated by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 to return to its Alsatian home, which itself passed back into French hands, the altarpiece continued to be absorbed into disparate ideologies, from the Expressionist movement in art to existentialist philosophy and even Reformed theology.[31] In fact, some have argued that because a copy of Martin Luther's sermons is listed among Grünewald's personal effects after his death in 1528, the artist himself may have sympathized with the Reform movement.[32] Surely, Grünewald must have had to nimbly negotiate the fragmented political terrain of German-speaking territories in the aftermath of Luther's activism. The works he painted for the Antonines at Isenheim and the church of Tauberbischofsheim, however, were never designed to contend with encroaching Protestantism but rather represent the tail end of a long continuum of unabated medieval traditions—a period that Germans call *das ausgehende Mittelalter* (the waning Middle Ages). Notwithstanding the paintings' modern receptions, Grünewald's particular meditation on the torment inflicted on Christ fits squarely with popular, late medieval, markedly horticultural variations of Holy Cross mysticism.[33]

## THE GREENNESS OF HOLY CROSS MYSTICISM

The mystic Saint Bridget of Sweden (d. 1373) is generally credited with influencing Grünewald's graphic Crucifixions. The similarities are indeed unmistakable:

> The crown of thorns was impressed on his head; it was pushed down firmly covering half of his forehead, and the blood, gushing forth from the prickling of thorns, ran down in many rills over his face, hair, and beard so that it seemed like a river of blood. . . . The color of death spread through his flesh, and after he breathed his last human breath, his mouth gaped open so that one could see his tongue, his teeth, and the blood in his mouth. The dead body sagged. His knees then contracted bending to the side. His feet were cramped and twisted about the nails of the cross as if they were on hinges. . . . The cramped fingers and arms were stretched out painfully.[34]

Bridget was herself indebted to older imaginings of Christ's martyrdom and very much operated in the same mystical milieu as such contemporaries as Suso. These immersive extrapolations of Christ's torment on the Cross are consistent with Grünewald's Crucifixions, but they account for only part of the picture.

Running parallel to the texts inspired by Saint Bridget's visions was a fifteenth-century wave of "May devotion" (*Maiandacht*) that viewed natural greenery as a mirror of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.[35] Spiritual writers working in this mode literalized conventional religious figures into familiar accounts of real-life practice in botany, agriculture, and medicine.[36] Synchronized with the liturgical feasts of the Holy Cross's Invention (May 3) and Elevation (September 14), a pair of devotional topoi called the *Geistliche Maien* and *Geistliche Herbst* allegorized mankind's seasonal celebration and exploitation of nature at the moment of its sprouting on the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, when the beauty of Christ's wounds, pain, and torment was revealed in blooming flowers and fructuating tree branches. The illustrated text *The Spiritual May Pole* (*Geistlicher Maibaum*) from Ulm, printed about 1482, which at once allegorizes the Cross as the prized tree local townspeople celebrated on May Day, also emphasizes the biological properties of Christ's instrument of death (Fig. 5).[37] Christ is "harshly stretched over the rawness of the untrimmed wood of the cross . . . the joyful and beautiful wood, the wood of life with its sublime branches and pluckable, tender blossoms bearing perfect fruit and eternal nourishment."[38] But the anonymous author of the *Geistlicher Maibaum* also incorporates Christ's body into the arboreal metaphor. His arms wrenched widely apart, his two holy legs woven together, and his two hands compared to green leaves, Christ takes the physical shape of a nest, in which the reader's soul is planted and in which many weak, yearning birds seek refuge, flying up the wood to feed from its—and thus Christ's—rose-colored, redemptive fruit.[39]

Better known for his *Schatzbehalter* of 1491, which was printed by Anton Koberger and illustrated with ninety-six woodcuts by Michael Wolgemut, the preacher Stephan Fridolin wrote his own springtime devotional treatise, which is called *Der geistliche Mai*. Unlike the anonymous Swabian author, Fridolin tailored his Passion allegory for a female audience—namely, the Franciscan nuns of Saint Clare in Nuremberg, to whom he served as confessor from the 1480s until his death in 1498.[40] Furthermore, throughout *Der geistliche Mai* he imbued the metaphoric language with the kind of well-informed and empirically tested pharmacological knowledge that was compiled and printed out of Mainz at the very same moment in the late fifteenth century.[41] Weaving science and religion together, Fridolin sanctified countless plant species, like the medicinal sage, as mirrors for the various episodes of the Passion:

> The sage leaf is bristly and long and has many tiny stems. In it, contemplate the nature of the garden virginal body [of Christ] on the column. . . . In the plurality of the sage

> leaf's tiny veins, contemplate how in the brutal flagellation the saintly veins of Christ were so brutally ruptured, that his rose-colored blood streamed abundantly, without obstruction, out of all his veins and and all his limbs.[42]

For these authors, who liken the fluids and even the circulatory system of Christ and his vegetal stand-ins, the resemblance between Christ and the earthly symbols is indeed physical and material. Collapsing the gap between sacred history and metaphor, they attribute the fecundity of nature to the generative force of Christ's and the Spiritual Woods' vital liquids and inner saps, which soak into and fertilize the earth.[43] Grünewald's Tauberbischofsheim Crucifixion, first mentioned by the French novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans in 1904, plainly illustrates this principle (Fig. 8). The blood dribbling down the wood of the Cross amasses in a large red pool in the painting's foreground.[44] Emanating from the red primordial sludge, a mossy green layer of grass coats the hills receding into the dark horizon.

With the written word, Fridolin and his contemporaries also strove to capture the Christological materiality of vegetation. Fridolin's biological approach to Holy Cross mysticism in fifteenth-century Germany, though every bit as graphic as Saint Bridget's exegesis, delights in the physical harmonies between the wood of the Cross and Christ's own body. Where Fridolin, in particular, differs from Saint Bridget and her direct adherents is the grounds for his deployment of violent imagery—namely, that Christ's torment on the Cross yielded material medicines to battle common spiritual and physical ailments.[45] Throughout his treatise, Fridolin assigned plants metaphoric roles in Christ's Passion based on their formal resemblance to narrative figures and the parts of the body they were known to treat. The crown of thorns thus suited Fridolin's chapter on migraines, which he interpreted as the physical manifestation of the sin of pride or bullheadedness (*Hoffart* and *Eigensinnigkeit*).[46] With his crowning, Fridolin commented, "Christ shows with his works the medicinal herbs that you need when your sickness of leprous pride is so great and incurable."[47] He then launched into extended comparisons between the thorns used to draw the blood from Christ's head and the specific plant species, like the "prickly" thistle and prunella, whose saps herbal books like the *Gart der Gesundheit* had prescribed to alleviate headache.[48]

The blurring of symbolic and effectual vegetation is a hallmark of Fridolin's treatise and also proves a useful framework for analyzing the originality of Grünewald's rendering of corporeal mutilation in his Crucifixions for Isenheim and Tauberbischofsheim. For all their graphic attention to detail, the writings of Bridget and those following in her wake do not account for the unique gangrened coloration Grünewald gave Christ's skin, whose entire surface, from wrist to ankle, is punctured by stray twigs. The reverse side of the Tauberbischofsheim altar, which Grünewald painted with a large-scale representation of Christ carrying the Cross to Golgotha, adumbrates some of the Crucifixions' formal eccentricities (Fig. 9). A torturer at the top right, whose face is hidden by the Cross's lateral beam, brandishes the birches (*Birkenrute*) with a tightly clenched fist. The sprigs splintered off into Christ's corpse on the obverse side of the Tauberbischofsheim retable and in the Isenheim Crucifixion are therefore lingering indications of his flagellation (Fig. 12); they are also visual reminders of the earthly stock of the instruments wielded to inflict pain and make him bleed.

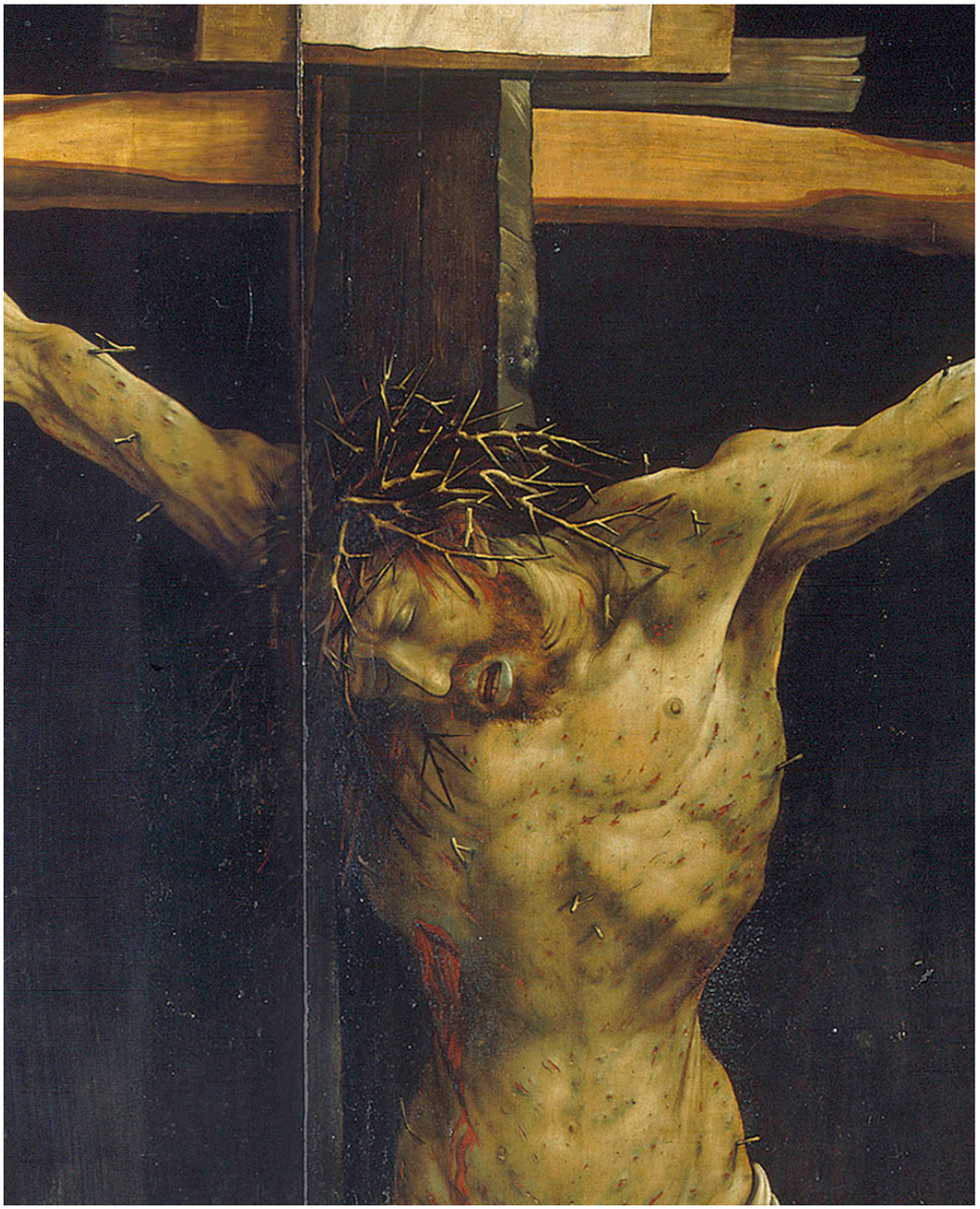
Grünewald adorned the architrave on the upper register of his Christ struck by the birches with a verse from Isaiah 53 on the so-called Man of Sorrows ("Er ist umb unser sund willen gesclagen" (he was bruised for our sins).[49] In it, the prophet compared the forsaken Lord to an unassuming "rod [*virga/die Rute*]" sprouting from the dry ground. Seizing the horticultural potential of the same passage in Isaiah, Fridolin drew on the symbolic, medicinal, and linguistic resonance of the quince (in medieval German, *die Kute*). He also invoked

the eroticism of fruit trees in the Song of Solomon to convey the mystical marriage between nuns and Christ, their bridegroom. "As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow, whom I desired: and his fruit was sweet to my palate" (Song of Songs 2:3). In the surrogate of a crestfallen Mary, who witnessed and shared in her son's death as he uttered his last words on the Cross, Fridolin beseeched his female readers to enter the spiritual tree garden and admire the burgeoning quince.[50] Unlike a tall, vigorous tree, the quince stands inconspicuously low to the ground.[51] A humble variety, the quince figures in Fridolin's Passion allegory as the array of *arma Christi*, from the Cross to the crown of thorns, whip, and scourge.[52] Its rough skin concealed by a wooliness that should be rinsed off, the quince fruit hangs unrecognizably from the branch just as the maimed body of the Man of Sorrows, as foretold by Isaiah, hangs from the Cross.[53]

Participating formally in Christ's sacrifice, the quince is not merely an object to behold but also a thing to bring about change. In the spirit of the battered Christ crying out to his Father, Fridolin's readers should pulverize, juice, and mix the quince with honey to form an electuary (*latwergen*), or a drug in slurry form applied specifically to the teeth, tongue, or gums.[54] Here, again, we see vegetal symbols rooted in the tree of the cross and the Song of Solomon materialize in real plants, whose healing effects are structurally related to features of the Passion story. In this episode, the mouth is the site of the physical and spiritual congruence between Christ gasping for air, howling from the tree-cross, and the restorative quince paste, which contemporary herbals prescribed for asthmatics short of breath.[55] Adding to the symbolic beauty in the Passion's savagery, Fridolin brought out the performative pharmacology found in it. In the case of Grünewald's Isenheim Crucifixion, the violation of Christ's body in turn made possible the soothing of bodies ailing in Isenheim's infirmary.

Grünewald's use of color also reflects the elaborate arboreal metaphors for Christ that were circulating at this time. Propped up over the composition's center, the Isenheim Christ, saliently painted in earth tones, stands apart from the brightly draped figures flanking him (Fig. 2). A sign of his premature decay on the Cross, his tawny-green complexion also harmonizes with the mossy escarpment and the muddy riverbed of the landscape behind him. Perhaps an allusion to his baptism in the Jordan, the river also parallels the spring that gave rise to the Spiritual Woods, in whose biospiritual essence the Corpus Christi is here formally enmeshed. As has already been mentioned, Grünewald captioned his fallen Christ from Tauberbischofsheim with the same Isaiah chapter that Fridolin cited to liken the body of the Man of Sorrows to the uncomely quince tree. On the reverse side of that altarpiece and in the Isenheim Crucifixion, the prophesied tree shows the trauma from blows to it, in a way that closely resembles Fridolin's allegory of Christ as the bruised hanging fruit. "The quince's color is pale and yellow; in that recognize the abject form of your most beloved Lord, how he has been tapered and has yellowed, how his lucid eyes are so deeply planted in his head . . . his rosy red mouth whitened, his delightful face paled and his ever holy and virginal flesh yellowed and blued as the color of death."[56] From a distance, yellows dominate, but on closer scrutiny at Isenheim, blues appear as the bruising around the numerous raw abrasions to his skin, as well as in his eye sockets and especially the famously livid mouth, whose white highlights also correspond to Fridolin's botanical exegesis (Fig. 12).

A sign of his loss of circulation, the dark blue lips and eyes recall those afflicted with Saint Anthony's fire, whose ravaged, gangrenous limbs "blackened like charcoal."[57] The lips and eyes also hark back to what spiritual writers described as the black conglutination of blood, sweat, and tears concentrated on the face of Christ at his Passion. Fridolin, in his *Spiritual Woods*, argued for the medicinal value of pitch, which is a term used interchangeably for resinous substances like turpentine seeping from coniferous trees (*Baumpech/Pechtanne*) or crevices



**12** Matthias Grünewald, *Crucifixion*, from the Isenheim Altarpiece, detail showing Christ's face, splintered twigs, and the tree-cross. Musée Unterlinden, Colmar (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Musée Unterlinden, Dist. RMN–Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY)

in the ground (*Erdpech/Erdharz/Bergpech*), as in bitumen. As part of a section dedicated to the Christological May Bath, Fridolin wove arboreal pitch into his horticultural portrayal of the Crucifixion.[58] Pitch heals the most incurable of diseases because of its comparability to Christ's precious blood, but it is also by its very nature an earthly material that derives from trees.

Likewise, the anonymously written *Geistlicher Maibaum* revels in the dark color and textural properties of pitch. Its semiliquidity mirrors the sweat, tears, bone marrow, and coagulated blood "pitchified" (*gepachen*) with the Jewish spittle and dust flowing around Christ's mouth.[59] Associated with Jews (*Judenpech/Iudenleym*) because the best variety was thought to have come from the Dead Sea, mineral pitch—which in the Middle Ages was thought to have ultimately derived from tree resin—was also collected locally throughout northern Europe.[60] In fact, it served as a strong symbol of Alsatian identity in the Middle Ages. The Abbey of Lampertsloch, located in the same region as Isenheim's monastery, bestowed on its pilgrims samples of this liquid earth.[61] In addition to its common application to skin blisters and boils, pitch was prescribed in the *Gart der Gesundheit* to alleviate dental discomfort, which calls to mind Christ's blackened

mouth and the paste that Fridolin mixed from the quince tree he envisioned as his Christ and his *arma*.[62] But Christ's saliently dark lips at Isenheim speak to the altarpiece's local premise of the medicinal redemption from Saint Anthony's fire that was assured in Christ's death on the wood of the cross. While the oldest surviving recipe for the Isenheim chapter's *Anthoniensalbe* dates from May 1662, its primary ingredients are consistent with numerous topical balsams predating Grünewald's painted panels: "2 pounds of pitch resin and a quarter of turpentine."[63]

## RESIN IN MEDICINAL AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE

Beyond the significance of the injuries to his face, the punctuated abrasions on the rest of Christ's excoriated flesh intimate the pattern of the bark that runs vertically in line with Christ's lips and along the right edge of his tree-cross (Fig. 12). A striated, twisting, earth-toned trunk, Christ's body culminates in a head woven in thorns and fingers at the ends of his limbs branching toward God above. Indeed, Grünewald's exceptional choice to relentlessly accentuate Christ's suffering under the scourge by littering his entire crucified corpus with its branchy remnants had the distinct visual effect of conflating him with it, for the sharp twigs pierce into but also protrude out of him.[64]


**13** *Tapping Turpentine*, from *Livre des simples médecines*, French, 15th century, painted parchment, 6¾ × 4¾ in. (17.2 × 12.2 cm). Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, MS fr. 12319, fol. 312r (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the BNF, published under fair use)

Sapwood, as opposed to the dead inner heartwood, is quite literally the living wood of the tree, channeling the nutrient-filled sap from the tree's roots to its branches; as the tree's vascular exoskeleton, it provides the flexible rigidity necessary to hoist and guide foliage toward the best conditions for capturing light and air.[65] When trees are injured, deposits of fats and resins in its veins rupture, and their extracellular contents exude onto the bark.[66] Hardening into a vitreous mass on evaporation, resin in its tawny liquid state is often referred to as turpentine. In the Middle Ages, the term "turpentine" was synonymous with the resin of the proper Mediterranean terebinth tree and European deciduous conifers.

Art historians have pointed out how medieval wood-carvers tended to the organic properties of trees in their artistic production process. We can build on Michael Baxandall's study of limewood as an inert carving medium to consider wood's own material fluxes, which were harvested for numerous purposes, chief among them for surgery and for painting.[67] But artists also exploited the living, transforming tree for its metaphoric potential.[68] And the resin, which coursed through its veins and erupted on its surface when the bark was scarred, posed interesting possibilities for wood as subject and medium in religious images of this period.

The extraction of crude turpentine from trees was commonplace in Europe; the procedure is particularly well illustrated throughout the Middle Ages within a rich tradition of northern European medical treatises that date back to the twelfth century and were inspired by the ancient *Materia medica* of Dioscorides.[69] A standard reference book, the *Book of Simple Medicines* (*Livre des simples médecines*) survives in a great number of extant copies.[70] Under the entry for turpentine, they all include a miniature of entire trees, from root to leaf, accompanied by standing farmers who ladle the tree's exuding resins into barrels that they either carry or rest on the ground (Fig. 13).[71]

Just as these herbal books illustrate extrusion and the Spiritual Woods texts describe it in words, Grünewald depicted Christ's body on the Cross as drained and wrung out of its resinous blood (Fig. 12). Like the resin of an exuding tree, the blood never spurts into the air but rather trickles down Christ's skin. Red secretions dribble from the cuts in his forehead across his chin, while a wide cinnabar stream percolates out of his side wound and over the folds of his contorted torso. The focal point of Christ's oozing blood, however, is the foot of the Cross, where Grünewald concentrated more of his creative energies (Fig. 14). Walther Karlz Zülch underscored the shocking effect of the gigantic iron nail pounded through Christ's feet: "the Isenheim cross is like a drawn crossbow on which Christ's body was stretched: should the nail be released, he would be catapulted to heaven."[72] The anonymous author of the *Geistlicher Maibaum* meditated at length over the nail boring through Christ's feet; likewise, the inscription above the giant nail formed on the devotional woodcut of the vegetating tau cross pointedly mentions the "length and shape" of the *Nagel Christi* (Fig. 1).[73] By placing Christ's feet at a remove from the *suppedaneum* meant to support them, Grünewald cleverly illustrates the nail's injury to Christ and the tree of the cross. Gathered into droplets under his soles and at the ends of his toes, the blood also collects around the body of the nail and appears to flow independently from the puncture in the wood. Separating into two streams, the blood that hangs in suspended animation becomes an index of temporality. Pooled from streams down his entire body, it now exists in two tones: fresh vermilion and congealed lake.

**14** Matthias Grünewald, *Crucifixion*, from the Isenheim Altarpiece, detail showing Christ's feet and fresh versus resinous blood. Musée Unterlinden, Colmar (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Asa Mittman)

In addition to two tones of color, Grünewald differentiated the coagulated blood with an impasto application of the darker pigment, which appears as bas-relief globules on the otherwise smooth panel. To build up such a thick glaze, he increased the ratio of medium to pigment—likely with unusually high proportions of tree resin in his paint mixture—which would have rendered the original texture and appearance of the congealed blood as more vitreous and translucent than is visible today.[74] We know artists purchased many of their supplies from apothecaries, where resins were readily available for craftsmen and physicians alike.[75] While Leonardo da Vinci was the first artist to mention it by name, historians have long assumed that Early Netherlandish masters like Jan van Eyck made use of distilled volatile solvents like oil of turpentine to thin paint to a more manageable consistency; because oil of turpentine required distillation, it may be inferred from Giorgio Vasari's accusation that Jan van Eyck engaged in alchemy that he employed the paint thinner as part of his illusory technique.[76] With his paintbrush, then, Grünewald blended metaphor and practice, for the blood and resin fuse substantially and representationally at the point of contact between the body of Christ and the wood of the cross.[77]

Moreover, in this lower register, in the beholder's direct view, Grünewald most audaciously asserted the sacrality of the tree-Christ's exudations in his compositional equation of three holy humors: blood, wine, and balsam (Fig. 2). Parallel to the blood dripping from the

Cross's chunky *suppedaneum*, the blood that pours into the wine chalice originates curiously from the throat of John the Baptist's lamb as well as the long stem of the stick-cross it carries. Closing the formal triangle on the other side of Christ's feet, Mary Magdalene's balsam jar, which she brought to anoint Christ's dead body (Mark 16:1), would have been assumed to contain the same kind of aromatic tree resins that were allegorized as his divine blood. Derived from the story of the nameless prostitute who came to Jesus with an alabaster jar of perfume in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:37), the Magdalene's painted ceramic pot in the Isenheim Crucifixion resembles the medical flasks found in contemporary depictions of working pharmacists (Fig. 15). Indeed, her association with curative balms persisted beyond the Gospel accounts of Christ's death. Legend maintains that after her flight to France and missionary work in Marseille, she retired to the massif of Provence and lived in a hilltop grotto, which, by the twelfth century, came to be known as Sainte-Baume (Holy Balm).[78] Widely circulated medical recipes like the "Balsam of Marseille" were printed in southern Germany at the time and dedicated to Mary Magdalene; it lists the essential volatile oil of a lavender bush as its active ingredient.[79] True balsam, like Mecca myrrh or balm of Gilead, which are mentioned throughout Scripture, came from the *Commiphora opobalsamum* shrubs of the Middle East and would have been rare in medieval Europe.[80] Instead, the words "balm" or "balsam" would have been used to describe the viscous secretions from a variety of local plants, most notably turpentine from conifer trees.[81]

The unusual placement of the balsam, usually carried by the Magdalene or Nicodemus, at the foot of the Crucifixion at Isenheim, endows it with Christological significance. Besides the commonplace Eucharistic symbol of wine or juice from grapes, notably in images of Christ in the Wine Press, Grünewald's composition asserts tree exudations as an additional effluvial mirror for Christ's redemptive body and blood.[82] Like the wine the priest would consecrate at the altar, the salve participated in church ritual not merely as a symbol but also as a tangible conductor of the salvific power of Christ and his saints. For the Antonine monks at Isenheim, who were tasked with nursing those afflicted with Saint Anthony's fire and other ailments, the order's eponymous balsam of pitch resin and turpentine manifested spiritual treatment in physical form.


**15** *On the Manufacturing of Plasters*, title page of chap. 3, Hieronymus Brunschwig, *Dis ist das Buch der Cirurgia.…*, Augsburg, 1498, vol. 7, woodcut, 5¼ × 5⅛ in. (13.5 × 13 cm). Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, 2 Inc.c.a. 3452, 122b (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, published under fair use)

Since all Antonine monks took an oath to treat patients exhibiting the markers of Saint Anthony's fire, they would have known how to handle resin. Since antiquity, turpentine had been used as an analgesic and adhesive plaster for skin abrasions.[83] Surgical texts from the spectrum of Latin-based medical centers across Europe, including those from the Italian- and French-trained Henri de Mondeville and Guy de Chauliac of the fourteenth century, are in total agreement about the role of tree exudates in the treatment of wounds.[84]

Produced nearby and at the time of the Isenheim Altarpiece's commission, the German vernacular writings of Hieronymus Brunschwig (ca. 1450–ca. 1512) are representative of the handwritten texts of preceding generations. Known mostly for his research on the art of distillation, Brunschwig published his *Book on Surgery* in Augsburg in 1497 with the subtitle *Handiwork of Wound Pharmacopoeia* (*Handwirckung der wundarzney*), which encapsulates his interventional approach to repairing injuries to the human body.[85] In his seventh volume on medicinal simples, Brunschwig instructed his readers on the making of topical emollients and salves. As the chapter's woodcut frontispiece illustrates, pharmacists simmered and stirred their ingredients (Fig. 15); a shelf carries flasks for their elixirs, which are reminiscent of the Magdalene's jar at Isenheim. Known also by the Latin term *diachylon* (or "through extraction"), Brunschwig's

wound plasters comprised several different plant juices and, in the vast majority of cases, exudates of local trees, like the fir and spruce (*Terbentim, Weiß viechten dannenharz*).[86]

As arcane as Brunschwig's excursus may seem, resin's value in the field of medicine was commonplace knowledge across Europe throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period.[87] The expert physician Hans von Gersdorff, who conducted hundreds of amputations at the Antonine hospital in Strasbourg, also prescribed a mixture of wax and turpentine in his *Fieldbook of Wound Medicine*, published in 1517.[88] At Isenheim, a surviving employment contract for a wound surgeon hired in 1708 stipulates that he manufacture the Saint Anthony salve by collecting and preparing local herbs.[89] A large Crucifixion scene that formally balances balm, wine, and blood suggests that the monks of Isenheim, who were well versed in botanical remedies for dermatological illnesses, were fully aware of the spiritual-allegorical value ascribed to essential tree resins.

The symbolic and practical pertinence of resins in their hardened state is also the subtext for Grünewald's *Lamentation* in the predella of the altarpiece, in which Christ's loyal retinue mourns over his lifeless body after it has been deposed from the Cross (Fig. 2).[90] Befitting a section of the altarpiece that Germans call its coffin (*Sarg*), Grünewald's painting of the recumbent Christ continues the Passion narrative and, situated below the gummy blood of the Crucifixion trickling downward, exemplifies another principal use of tree exudates: to retard and mask the odor of putrefaction.[91] Purged of any foreign bodies that had ravaged his skin, which has greened further since the Crucifixion, Christ displays in his open gashes the dark-cerise blood in sculpted paint, whose coagulation the various versions of the Spiritual Woods compared to the specific thickening tendency of resin and pitch (Fig. 16). The brittling tendency that Brunschwig describes as resin's ideal property to generate a second skin, or incarnative, is here manifested in the scabbing of the dark red paint on Christ's lesions.[92] In Fridolin's prayer for the twenty-second day of May, the curative analog to one's hardened heart at the sight of Christ's suffering was the hardened resin ("harzt / verharzt"), which was used to embalm the wounds of Christ, the King ("des gesalbten kunigs").[93] The coagulation of Christ's blood in the *Lamentation* can thus be understood as a kind of self-embalmment, for Christ's incorruptible body, unsusceptible to decay, was prepared for burial—rushed, in fact, before the Sabbath began at sunset—as a matter of Jewish tradition (John 19:38–42).

**16** Matthias Grünewald, *Lamentation*, from the Isenheim Altarpiece, detail showing Christ's feet and coagulated blood. Musée Unterlinden, Colmar (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Asa Mittman)

Indeed, embalming was reserved for the special few in the Middle Ages. In addition to the evisceration of body organs, "to embalm" involved smearing balms and waxes saturated with aromatic spices and oils inside the internal cavity.[94] To take the handling of the antipope Alexander V's corpse (d. 1410) as an example of what had become standard embalming practice, the anatomist Pietro d'Argellata first removed Alexander's entrails, washed out the hollow interior with ethanol, and filled it with cotton and a powder, which comprised numerous spices, among them tree resins like dragon tree blood (*Drachenblut Harz*).[95] In fact, turpentine had been recommended for generations by surgeons like de Mondeville as an important

means of hampering decomposition.[96] For the vast majority of patients who never walked out of Isenheim's hospital church, then, Christ's cadaver served as an exemplar for the postmortem redemptive power of the Crucifixion's liquid output. The smearing of plant saps was the ultimate assurance that one's mortal remains were properly tended to before burial, at once a practical solution to bodily decay and anointment with the botanical blood symbolically flowing from Christ's wounds.

According to custom, wax, turpentine, and pitch would also infuse the cerecloth linens, which were sutured together and wrapped around the corpse as the last step of embalmment before burial.[97] The burial cloth with which Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea bound Christ's cadaver was also mixed with myrrh and aloes (John 19:40). The Isenheim *Lamentation* is consistent with all of these practices. Crowded around Christ on the right, Nicodemus and the two Marys have prepared him for the empty stone tomb pictured before a dreary landscape on the predella's left side (Fig. 2). He is held up for display on a long, unsoiled burial shroud that spans the length of his entire oversize body; his mangled, desiccated remains, now rid of splintered branches, would have been preserved and repaired with the very balsams whose potency his death on the Cross promised. While this *Lamentation* serves as a veiled symbol of the Eucharistic bread atop the altar cloth, Christ in his lifelessness also provides a model of the ideal burial as it was conducted at the time: with bodies rubbed and blanketed in tree juices.[98]

**17** Matthias Grünewald, *Resurrection of Christ*, from the Isenheim Altarpiece, detail showing the radiant body of Christ in shroud. Musée Unterlinden, Colmar (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Musée Unterlinden, Dist. RMN–Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY)

## MARY'S WOMB AS FERTILE GROUND

The cerecloth reappears when the altarpiece's shutters open to episodes in the life of Christ that rejoice in the wholeness of his body. Following his Incarnation at the Annunciation and birth in the Nativity, Christ's Resurrection vividly reestablishes the integrity of his form subsequent to its fragmentation and mutilation at the Crucifixion (Fig. 17). Although his figure is physically circumscribed, the ethereal Christ has transcended his battered skin, which, as the predella's still-visible Lamentation reminds us, had been smeared with resins and wrapped in a fragrant cerecloth. His ravaged body having been properly embalmed, the risen, levitating Christ basks in the starry heavens. A brilliance radiating from within blinds any surface contours of his flesh, leaving prominent marks, like his facial features and wounds, to merge with the flat golden ground. Swaddled in the now prismatically lambent shroud, so enlarged that it coils around itself, draping over the tomb and billowing freely in the air, Christ's unblemished skin in the afterlife offered a poignant postmortem inspiration to those at Isenheim treating and afflicted with dermatological disorders. A severed tree trunk pointing toward the resurrected Christ from the bottom of the composition also reminds the viewer of the symbolic and physical source enabling his extraterrestrial transformation.

To the left of the Resurrection, a different fragmentary tree peeks from behind a curtain hanging in the middle of the primary composition from this view of the altarpiece, which brings the Spiritual Woods topos into still greater expression (Fig. 19). Its trunk bulged toward the infant Christ and his mother, the fig fittingly occupies the privileged position of the now obscured tree-cross that it typologically prefigures.[99] The healthy, leafy tree extends its branches across a cruciform gate, further accentuating the charged nature of the altarpiece's central axis but also reverberating beyond and outward to the enclosed garden (*Hortus conclusus*) that stands for Mary's virginity.[100] Just as they had for Christ's death on the

Cross, spiritual writers at the time indulged in horticultural metaphors for his Incarnation. According to Fridolin, the "noble wood of Christ" could come to fruition only insofar as he was planted in the fertile field of Mary's womb.[101] Mary was the garden, "the flower of the field," to the Christological tree. She was considered a healing mediatrix (*Heilsvermittlerin*) owing to her associations with the healing powers of herbs.[102] During the so-called Virgin Thirty (*die Frauendreißiger*), or the approximately thirty days between Mary's Assumption and Birth (August 15 to September 8), it was believed that wild and planted herbs matured into their most potent medicinal form—and were therefore ripe for plucking.[103]

**18** *Arbor virginis*, Germany, late 15th century, colored woodcut, 6⅛ × 4¼ in. (15.7 × 10.9 cm). Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, 129-1 (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Dietmar Katz, provided by bpk Bildagentur/Art Resource, NY)

But Mary's relation to medicinal plants is structural. As the allegory's terra firma (*Erdreich*), the Virgin's fertile body participates in and facilitates the sprouting of the divine tree from which all created greenery radiates.[104] As Fridolin exploited the ambiguity between Christ as the quince (*Kute*) and the rod (*Rute*) in vernacular German, small devotional woodcuts of the Virgin as a trunk (*virga* in Latin) transpose the arboreal metaphors associated with her immaculate stock and her scion (Fig. 18). Christ is nailed to the very offshoots of the spiritualized flower stemming from the hearts of his forebears, who are seated on the turf benches of the enclosed garden in the foreground.[105] Witnessed by his angels, God's cosmogonic plan comes into full bloom with Christ's Crucifixion on the living wood implanted with sacred roots. Although writing decades before Grünewald's commission, Fridolin's horticultural adaptation of the Incarnation almost doubles as an ekphrastic description of the artist's Virgin and Child and Annunciation panels:

> On the fourth day [of May], behold the noble Incarnation and Birth of Jesus. Bid the angelic company of knights . . . in the holy heavenly army to lead you to the beautiful green meadows into Bethlehem, where therein after the long, cold and gloomy winter . . . the highest creator plowed the Holy Ghost into the arable earth of the virginal body of Mary through the Annunciation of the angel Saint Gabriel, dunged with a multitude of graces, and moistened with the sweet May dew and long rain, and fertilized with noble seed of the eternally godly, eternally paternal Word, and made pregnant of the son of God. There, over all arose and sprang forth so many blessed little green grasses and fragrant little herbs. . . .[106]

In Grünewald's panel of the Virgin and Child (Fig. 19), above a tiny ecclesiastical cityscape perched before green hills and soaring mountains, a flurry of golden angels cascades through the parting rain clouds to herald the holy pair in the grassy rose garden bathed in springtime light.

Grünewald, however, does not depict a Nativity. Marked by the golden crown being carried down to earth from God the Father in heaven, the coronation of the Virgin instead represents the mystical marriage between Christ and his mother, the *Sponsa Christi*.[107] Following a long tradition of expressing love of God with the erotic language of the Song of Songs, Grünewald engaged with the same horticultural variety of Solomonic bridal mysticism that functioned as the subtext for all of the Spiritual Woods exegeses.[108] In line with the curving fig tree and the cruciform garden gate, the wooden hospital bed on which the Virgin sits doubles as the flowering nuptial bed from Song of Songs 1:15.[109] The Dominican preacher Johannes Kreutzer, known for his ambitious but unfinished exposition on the Song of Songs,

**19** Matthias Grünewald, *Virgin and Child with Concert of Angels*, from the Isenheim Altarpiece. Musée Unterlinden, Colmar (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Musée Unterlinden, Dist. RMN–Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY)

cites the same verse in his edition of the *Geistlicher Mai* from the mid-fifteenth century.[110] In it, he bids his Observant nuns to sleep on the soft and tender bed bedecked in flowers to achieve mystical union with their bridegroom.[111] Fridolin, in contrast, more explicitly compares the hospital bed to Christ's Cross.[112]

That Grünewald painted a close replica of his Isenheim Virgin and Child for the canon Heinrich Reitzmann of the collegiate church of Saints Peter and Alexander in Aschaffenburg in 1516, both of which center on the infant clutching the rosary, speaks to the popular reception of the garden allegories that were originally targeted for cloistered nuns.[113] Unlike the Aschaffenburg Madonna, though, the Isenheim panel is joined together with a concert of angels performing under an ornate baldachin (Fig. 19). Because it resists conventional iconographic classification, Ruth Mellinkoff has characterized the picture as "one of the great interpretive puzzles for critics and historians of art."[114] However, the image as a whole is perfectly consistent with the Spiritual Woods metaphors, which identify the healing powers of the wood of the cross throughout Solomon's Old Testament verses.

It has been well established that the left half of the composition visually prefigures what transpires on the right.[115] The red-curtained baldachin with its sculpted prophets alludes to the Temple of the Old Law that gives way to the personified Ecclesia witnessing the Infant Christ with Mary in the New.[116] But here the typologies between the Old and New Testament that pertain to the healing properties of the Spiritual Woods are what would have resonated with the Antonine monks and their patients. Although embellished with the kinds of organic

motifs that were becoming fashionable in southern German church architecture about 1500, the structure rather harks back to the built environment laid out in Kreutzer's version of the *Geistlicher Mai*.[117] Carved not in inert stone but bright and lively earthen matter, it resembles the "beautiful and resplendent palace" of cedar and cypress—an allusion to Song of Songs 1:16 and two of the four arboreal species comprising Christ's Cross—built for Kreutzer's nuns in their spiritual garden.[118] Extrapolated from the Solomonic bedchamber, wine cellar, banquet house, and storeroom, Kreutzer's mystical wooden edifice shelters the soul and functions quite like a medieval monastery.[119] It housed "a pantry, herb garden, and pharmacy," which contained more than fifty specific "spices, potions, ointments, aromatics, oils, and confections" for the use of nuns in their medical practices.[120]

In a subsequent chapter, Kreutzer's nuns are aurally nourished by the sweet, reverberating sounds of string music (*Saitenspiel*), whose therapeutic effects he attributes to the instrument's functional likeness to Christ's body strung about the wooden Cross.

> The harp signifies Jesus the *sponsus*, who was nailed and stretched on the wood of the cross. The wood [of the harp] represents the cross, the pins [*Nagel*] the weapons, with which he was crucified. The strings are his holy appendages and veins pulled apart and made taut over the cross. The music and the harp player [are] the devout soul.[121]

Drawing their golden bows in the open air and beneath the leafy Solomonic canopy, the Isenheim angels thus serenade the holy pair with the sweet melodies of the wood of the cross. In a pen-and-ink drawing from a manuscript copy of Fridolin's *Der geistliche Mai*, which belonged to a nun of the Franciscan convent in Pütrich, we are reminded that the healing capacity of string instrumentation is rooted in spiritualized nature (Fig. 20). Resounding from the earth, the music generated by the Infant Christ fingering a harp from a depression in the ground stimulates the sprouting of nature and its attendant medicinal fruits. The image's caption reads, "I, Jesus, want to play the harp well and sweetly for you, that you might fend off fever."[122]

Moreover, the large wooden bathtub in the foreground of Isenheim's Marian picture also belongs to the standard repertoire of springtime rituals that Fridolin and Kreutzer allegorized (Fig. 19). Stretching across the two central panels, the tub formally and programmatically participates in the same horticultural matrix of Holy Cross mysticism foretold by the monumental exuding Crucifixion from the altarpiece's closed state. With the herbs grown in the fecund ground of the Virgin's womb and fortified by the fluids from Christ's body drained on the tree-cross, Fridolin and Kreutzer beseech their readers to draw a hot medicinal bath to "entirely sweat out from themselves their wicked desires, corporeal lusts, and evil yearnings."[123] Introducing Fridolin's chapter on the subject in the Pütrich manuscript, a drawing shows Christ in the mystical wooden tub, which, with its two protruding handles, appears strikingly similar to that found in the Isenheim composition (Fig. 21).[124] Accompanied by an angel, the Infant Christ eats from a lateral plank, carries a ladle, and is about to drink from a *Krautstrunk* beaker with its distinctive decorative prunts—all conforming to contemporary accounts of bathing. Though neglected by historians, the spiritualized May Bath proved so provocative at the time that it spawned an entire subgenre of devotional allegories by the same name, whose audience expanded to include male monastics and the literate public.[125] During the years Grünewald painted his panels for Isenheim, Thomas Murner published his illustrated text *A Devout, Spiritual Bathing Tour* (1514) in the nearby Alsatian city of Strasbourg. While he reversed the roles of the actors from those in the Spiritual Woods texts, Murner nevertheless staged bathing therapy—this time with Christ as the bathing master and Murner as patient—as an allegory for repentance.[126]

**20** *Christ Playing the Cross-Harp*, pen and ink on parchment glued into the manuscript of Stephan Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, Bavarian, 1529, 2½ × 2 in. (6.3 × 5 cm). Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Cgm 4473, fol. 217r (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, published under fair use)

**21** *The Infant Christ Bathing*, pen and ink on paper glued into the manuscript of Stephan Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, Bavarian, 1529, 3 × 2⅛ in. (7.6 × 5.5 cm). Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Cgm 4473, fol. 206r (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, published under fair use)

Apart from figuring as subjects of the devotional prayers, though, daily activities like tending the herb garden, stocking the apothecary, composing music, and even bathing constituted typical monastic obligations. While the pastiche of healing imagery from the Spiritual Woods would have appealed to sick patients receiving variations of these treatments, its privileged placement on the Isenheim Chapter's high altar—and its visibility restricted to special feast days when the first set of wings was opened—indicates that the Antonine monks considered these medical duties an integral part of the spiritual exercises that elevated them closer to God.

## SAINT ANTHONY'S ABUNDANCE

The critical earthly element that supports the spiritual growth outlined in the horticultural allegories is water. In the mystical garden picture he produced for canon Heinrich Reitzmann of Aschaffenburg, Grünewald painted Mary not on a hospital bed but perched on the edge of an empty cistern.[127] Their source of moisture dried up, the plants are nourished instead from Mary and Christ's dominating presence as personified fountains; a double rainbow appears in the illuminated mist above their bodies. Intimately familiar with the mechanics of irrigation, Grünewald reserved the aspects of the Spiritual Woods allegories relating to hydration and watering for the Isenheim Altarpiece's final opening, which was revealed on the most momentous of holy days. In its most sublime view, the altarpiece dedicates itself to the Antonine Order's patron saint as well as two of the chapter's preceptors, Jean d'Orliac and Guido Guersi, who commissioned the sculpted shrine by 1490 and its painted shutters by 1512 (Fig. 4).[128]

In the left panel of Anthony meeting Paul the Hermit, Grünewald portrays the two saints seated amid teeming flora and fauna in a Theban oasis. A date palm fans its fronds above Paul and a gnarly tree covered in stringy moss and lichen is rooted behind Anthony. Scholars interested in the altarpiece's service to the adjacent infirmary have focused their attention on the three species of plants sprouting below Anthony as those recommended in contemporary herbals for the treatment of Saint Anthony's fire.[129] But those and the other herbs in the painting's foreground sustain life only by means of the wellspring beneath Paul that inundates the soil with water (Fig. 22). A crudely chopped tree branch with decayed heartwood directs the flow into a makeshift basin made up of haphazardly raised stone slabs. Its humble construction

**22** Matthias Grünewald, Saint Anthony's Meeting with Saint Paul, from the Isenheim Altarpiece, detail showing the wellspring. Musée Unterlinden, Colmar (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Musée Unterlinden, Dist. RMN–Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY)

mirroring that of Grünewald's reflections on the wood of the cross, the wooden plumbing, in fact, constitutes yet another representation of the exuding wood of the cross—this time channeling its creative potential to the mystical herb garden. In his passage on the five lovely flowing fountains, Kreutzer calls the fourth "the little Jesus fountain, named after our savior and redeemer, the holiest of mankind. And the fountain . . . springs forth from the trunk [*Stock*] of the cross; and it possesses five large pipes, which carry out the red juice" mixed with the water and sweat of Christ.[130] The two saints, Paul and Anthony, positioned above the fertile, soaked earth thus figure as spiritual surrogates for the healing powers emanating from Christ on the Cross. Such is the conceit for a drawing from Fridolin's *Spiritual Woods*, in which a haloed saint pours medicine (*Arznei*) from a vessel into a nun's sack (Fig. 23).[131] Perhaps a portrait of the manuscript's owner, Eufrosina, the picture illustrates an encounter between heaven and earth—the saint symbolized by the gold ground and the nun by the green grass and blue sky—that dignifies Eufrosina's worldly duties as "gardener" and healer for her convent.[132]

**23** *A Saint Pouring Medicine into a Nun's Sack*, pen and ink on parchment glued into the manuscript of Stephan Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, Bavarian, 1529, 2½ × 2 in. (6.5 × 5 cm). Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Cgm 4473, fol. 230r (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, published under fair use)

**24** Nikolaus Hagenauer, carved shrine, from the Isenheim Altarpiece, detail showing buds, acorns, and grape bunches. Musée Unterlinden, Colmar (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Musée Unterlinden, Dist. RMN–Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY)

**25** *Infant Christ as the True Vine*, pen and ink on paper glued into the manuscript of Stephan Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, Bavarian, 1529, 3⅛ × 2⅛ in. (8 × 5.5 cm). Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Cgm 4473, fol. 261r (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, published under fair use)

If Anthony and Paul represent the vitality of greenery, then the opposite panel of Anthony's Temptation shows its destruction. Demons incinerate a timber structure in the background while hybrid monsters beat Anthony with branchlike clubs. The anthropomorphic demon in the foreground of Anthony's Temptation, with its gangrened skin covered in boils and its limbs partially deformed, exhibits symptoms of Saint Anthony's fire. Fastened to a cracked and fungus-covered tree trunk (which corresponds to the sawed-down version in the Resurrection panel), a piece of paper recounts Anthony's struggle according to the Golden Legend. "Where were you good Jesus, where were you? Why were you not there to heal my wounds?"[133]

Anthony's ability to cure, though, is offset by his control over who falls ill in the first place—hence, his ubiquitous representation as an enthroned judge.[134] Following a juridical iconography commonly found on seals, the Isenheim variation seems to underscore the order's heritage in herbal healing. Just as Grünewald paints Anthony's modest throne as branches tethered together over a stone seat, beneath which the holy plants grow, the carved throne of the frontal Anthony in the altarpiece's shrine appears arboreal in constitution, springing off foliated spirals on its four corners (Fig. 4).

Attributed to the Strasbourg artist Nikolaus Hagenauer between 1490 and 1493, the shrine is one of the earliest instances of the kind of sculpted wooden cabinets that were beginning to furnish countless altar mensas across southern Germany.[135] Hagenauer's work stands literally and historiographically in the shadow of Grünewald's, receiving only a tiny fraction of the popular and scholarly attention paid to the altarpiece, but the arboreal Christological metaphors extend to it as well. Wilhelm Vöge in 1917 was among the first to appreciate the shrine's uniquely flat and enormous wall of leaves, which covers more than one-third of the middle compartment and hangs over the figure of Saint Anthony.[136] Others have since noted the mixture of arboreal and viticultural attributes therein—tiny buds and acorns alongside pronounced grape bunches (Fig. 24).[137] Not only signifying the Eucharistic wine, fructuating vines also stood for Christ on the Cross (Fig. 25).[138] For example, the Christ child drawn in the Fridolin manuscript from Munich steadies himself on a fork-shaped staff that resembles the alder poles carrying the weight of the vines framing him; his body becomes the vine, as his tufts of hair intimate the juicy grape clusters.[139] Viticultural mirrors for the wood of the cross on Isenheim's carved shrine would have underscored the healing potential of its *Saint-Vinage*,

a wine-vinegar medicament that the Isenheim monks infused with herbs and in which they immersed the relics of Saint Anthony.[140]

Moreover, the finely wrought branches and tendrils of Hagenauer's canopy, swarming with sopping, writhing leaves, call attention to the very wooden medium in which they were carved. They therefore possess more than an iconic kinship with their referent. They were and are trees—the *materiae medicae* that were integral to therapeutic practice at Isenheim precisely for their tangible and elemental composition: their sap, balsam, and other exudates, which Antonine monks emulsified and fermented for various therapies. Conspicuously crowning Anthony and his peers, the ornamental screen of foliage, among the first of its kind and which inspired many imitators, thus operates on a polyvalent register to signify and participate in the physio-spiritual healing that was manifested in the miraculous works of the order's founder. As such, the shrine's earthly flora is stylized to suit its sacred setting. Sheathed in a burnished gold, the branches and leaves conform to the constraints of the cabinet's architecture and envelop the four symbols of the Evangelists in the central screen.

Indeed, Hagenauer's sculpted vegetation in wood attests to the broader ethos of herbal books: that the salutary *quality* of plants is inherent in their organic essence, their pulp and lifeblood. The wooden substrate thus shares material properties with the mélange of natural designs into which it is hewn: branches, vines, and grape bunches—all of which were central to the physical healing of the sick at Isenheim's infirmary.

The efficacy of material medicine, however, is predicated theologically, and at Isenheim foreshadowed programmatically, by Christ's suffering on the Spiritual Wood, the Ur-plant grown from the Virgin's womb, from whose images all creative greenery emanated. It is therefore difficult to believe that one of the largest and most expressive of such images painted in northern Europe would not have participated in the same dialogue of spiritual and physical healing as the tiny plants sprouting in the corner of one of the altarpiece's numerous panels. Tree resins and plant juices were of paramount importance for treating the sick at Isenheim and throughout Europe. Consistent with devotional tracts that reveled in the figurative elisions of a bleeding Lord on the exuding tree of the cross, Grünewald's painted branchy Corpus Christi is drained of its essential effluvia by gigantic wooden beams, which are shown to secrete fluids when struck. Grünewald's sensitivity to the sacred materiality of wood in all of its forms reached a crescendo in his portrayal of its acoustic blessings. Produced from the agitation of the strands wound tightly around the instruments' wooden frames, the dulcet tones of the angels' choir shower the Virgin and Child in the garden with a vibratory energy that proleptically calls to mind the redemptive howling of Christ on the Cross.

Still, Grünewald and Hagenauer's grandiose representational strategies were no match for the tiny traces of the wood of Christ's Cross ("de ligno sanctae crucis") and Saint Anthony's head, which were housed in a silver T-shaped reliquary that likely crowned the altarpiece's superstructure.[141] Pushing the limit of metaphor to enliven its professed power for their viewers, the two artists ultimately could only approximate the divinity of the singular exuding heavenly *Maien*.

*Maien*, the medieval German word introduced here, also took on an intransitive verbal form to evoke the ceremonial basking in the seasonal reawakening of nature. Fridolin invoked the rhetorical device in the final sentences of the prayer concluding the third week of spiritual exercises for his Clarissant nuns.[142] "Thus delight yourself [*Allso ermay dych*] in the sweet-smelling flowers in this third week of prayer. . . . Take a stroll to the wood of the saintly Cross."[143] Like the occasions that outdoor rituals were marked to honor, then, the texts and images related to the Spiritual Woods speak to humanity's broader entanglement with God's creation.[144] In fact, the manuscript copy of Fridolin's *Der geistliche Mai* discussed above was

handwritten and illustrated for the gardener of the Pütrich convent, Sister Eufrosina, whose use of the text must have blurred the lines between horticultural, ritual, and religious praxis. For the Antonine monks at Isenheim, then, the act of tending their garden and mixing the herbs, resins, and juices for their salve and wine would have constituted both spiritual and medicinal practice.[145]

Having incorporated them into art historical inquiry for the first time, I wish to conclude by restating how the Spiritual Woods allegories pose fascinating new avenues for late medieval and Reformation studies more broadly. In their blurring of the processes of plant domestication and Christ's manner of sacrifice, they reach their semantic climax and reflect new terms for the expression of corporeal violence in word and image. A late medieval coda to physical degradation and suffering as catalysts for spectator compassion and empathy, horticultural devotional tropes of Christ writhing on the tree-cross or the Virgin as an arable field elicited from their audiences a more literal image of spiritual cultivation: the draining and squeezing out of Christ's (and the saints') vital liquids for sacramental but also medicinal and other extraliturgical gain. That is, to fixate on the piety of guilt, compassion, and self-abnegation in the spirit of Saint Bridget is to overlook alternative explanations for the graphic expressions of physical torment in the final chapter of medieval Holy Cross mysticism. Whereas the *imitatio Christi* empowered the use of one's own body as an instrument for transcendental experience, the Spiritual Woods allegories saw no antagonism between matter and spirit in the visible world. On the contrary, the violation of Christ as a plant suffering on the tree of the cross, for example, which never ceased to arouse empathy and imitation, became a spiritual license for the embrace of greenery and its refinement for material benefit.

But it also became a target of early Reformers, who were vehemently opposed to rituals, artistic representations, prayers, and other religious gestures that displaced veneration of the Word toward nature. Printed in Strasbourg in the same year that Grünewald was painting his panels, a woodcut from Geiler von Kaysersberg's *On the 12 Merits of the Tree of the Crucifix* parodies popular conceptions of Christ crucified on the *Geistliche Maien* (Fig. 6). Here, peasants yank at the two branchlike crossbars of Christ's tree-cross, which yield a fantastic mishmash of fruits. An aristocratic woman baring her shoulders plucks a grape as she flirtatiously exchanges gazes with the viewer. Distracted by the urge to reap his bounty, the people fail to even notice the crestfallen Christ hanging at the center, who stares downward and elicits sympathy only from the angels below him. Unlike the depicted laity, the reader of Geiler's early Reformational text can draw enlightenment from nature, having meditated on the abstracted form that Christ's branches approximate and the timeless symbol of God's love for his created world despite its insatiable inhabitants: a heart.

GREGORY C. BRYDA is assistant professor in the Department of Art History at Barnard College, Columbia University [Art History Department, 3009 Broadway, 500 Diana Center, New York, NY 10027, gbryda@barnard.edu].

## NOTES

I wish to acknowledge Natalie Adamson, Shawon Kinew, Alan Phenix, and Bert Winther-Tamaki, who helped me see the forest for the trees as I developed this study during the Getty Research Institute's "Art and Materiality" fellowship in the 2015–16 academic year. I am indebted to Valérie Kobi and Lauren Cannady for the opportunity to share a distilled version of this work in their session at the College Art Association annual meeting (New York, 2017). Research at various stages was funded by Yale University, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, and Universität Hamburg (Naturbilder). I am deeply grateful for the mentors who adopted me while I worked on this project abroad. Among them I would especially like to thank Julien Chapuis, Frank Fehrenbach, Hanns Hubach, and Margit Kern. I have also incurred debt to Christina Neilson, Richard Koss, Lory Frankel, Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, and Stephanie Luther, who refined the text for publication. Finally, for showing me the ropes in the United States and Europe, I dedicate this article to my *Doktoreltern*, Jacqueline Jung and Christopher Wood.

1. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, vol. 1, trans. David Luke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), lines 903–7, 920–24. The passage from which the epigraph is excerpted comes from part 1 of *Faust* and is commonly referred to as Goethe's "Osterspaziergang" (Easter Stroll).

2. Andrée Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 38; Timothy B. Husband, "The Winteringham Tau Cross and Ignis Sacer," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 27 (1992): 23; and Ernest Wickersheimer, "Le Signe Tau, faits et hypothèses," *Strasbourg Médical* 88 (1928): 241–48. The relics of Saint Anthony had been translated from Constantinople to Saint-Didier-La-Mothe in the south of France about 1070, where Gaston was a lord.

3. Laura Fenelli, *Il tau, il fuoco, il maiale: I canonici regolari di sant'Antonio Abate tra assistenza e devozione* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2006), 65, in Christopher Wood, "The Votive Scenario," *RES* 59–60 (2011): 207–27, at 212: "habitu cum signo T quod potentia vocant. . . ." For more on the order's heritage in caring for the poor and sick, see Adalbert Mischlewski, *Grundzüge der Geschichte des Antoniterordens bis zum Ausgang des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1976), 27ff.

4. As recorded by the Greek bishop Athanasius, Anthony regularly attributed his miraculous acts to the image and suffering of his lord, Christ. Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980).

5. The inscription beneath Christ crucified on the tau indicates that "whoever looks on this sign with devotion . . . he should expect that he and the persons of his household will be protected that day from the plague [*Wer dise figure andechtiglich ansycht . . . der solyn fester hofnūg syn / dz er un die mensche des selbē huß dē tag vor pestilenz behūt syn*]." For more on Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, inv. no. 90-1, see Wilhelm Ludwig Schreiber, *Handbuch der Holz- und Metallschnitte des XV. Jahrhunderts*, 8 vols. (Leipzig: K. W. Hiersemann, 1926–30), vol. 2, 73, no. 931; Paul Heitz, *Pestblätter des XV. Jahrhunderts* (Strasbourg: J. H. Ed. Heitz, 1901), 6; and Nina Miedema, "Die 'Oratio ad sanctam crucem' des Johannes Mercurius Corrigeiensis: Ein Einblattdruck als Apotropäum?," in *Einblattdrucke des 15. und frühen 16. Jahrhunderts: Probleme, Perspektiven, Fallstudien*, ed. Volker Honemann et al. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000), 325–47.

6. This study builds on Andrée Hayum's seminal book on the altarpiece, which elucidated its paraliturgical service to lay viewers—namely, those in the care of the monastery's adjacent infirmary. For Hayum, a critical piece of evidence tying the altarpiece to the infirmary's patients comes from the Antonine Reforms of 1478, which stipulate, "The next day they [the patients] must be led before the chapel of said hospital and they must be examined to find out if their disease is the *infernal fire*." She cites this document from Henri Fleurent, *L'art et la médecine au musée de Colmar* (Colmar: Société Schongauer, 1928), 101. See also Ernest Wickersheimer, "Mathias Grünewald et le feu Saint-Antoine," in *1r. Congrès de l'Histoire de l'Art de Guerir* (Antwerp: De Vlijt, 1921), 3–11; Johannes W. Rohen, *Isenheimer Altar als Psychotherapeutikum* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 2008); and Veit Harold Bauer, *Das Antonius-Feuer in Kunst und Medizin* (Berlin: Springer, 1973).

7. Two key resources on scriptural vegetation are Michael Zohary's *Plants of the Bible: A Complete Handbook* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982); and idem, *Geobotanical Foundations of the Middle East* (Stuttgart: Fischer, 1973).

8. Three texts in this genre will be cited throughout this study. The first is the anonymously written *Geistlicher Maibaum*, which was composed at the end of the fifteenth century in southern Germany. Six handwritten copies survive in libraries in Berlin, Beuron, Freiburg, and Munich. It also survives in print in *Geistlicher Auslegung des Lebens Jesu Christi* (Ulm: Johann Zainer der Ältere, ca. 1482); and Anton Birlinger transcribed the passage from Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (hereafter SBB), mgq 1112 (ca. 1500, written in Bavarian) in "Asketische Traktate aus Augsburg IV," *Alemannia* 8 (1880): 103–17. The second major text of this study is Johannes Kreutzer's *Geistlicher Mai*, which was written in Alsace in the mid-fifteenth century and survives in three manuscripts in Stuttgart, Berlin, and Moscow; I cite Moscow State Library, Fonds 68, inv. no. 446 (1477; Alemannic language), as transcribed in Natalija Ganina, *"Bräute Christi": Legenden und Traktate aus dem Straßburger Magdalenenkloster* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 217–74. The third is Stephan Fridolin's *Der geistliche Mai*, written in the mid-1480s or mid-1490s and found in three extant manuscripts in Augsburg, Berlin, and Munich; I cite Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich (hereafter BSB), Cgm 4473 (1529), which is written in Middle Bavarian (*mittelbairisch*) and has never been transcribed. I am greatly indebted to the ever-generous Hanns Hubach for editing my transcriptions of Fridolin's *Der geistliche Mai* that appear here. On the Munich manuscript, see Karin Schneider, *Die deutschen Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München: Die mittelalterlichen Handschriften aus Cgm 4001–5247* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 130–32.

9. *Geistlicher Maibaum*, in Birlinger, "Asketische Traktate aus Augsburg IV," 110: "paum vnd holcz des lebens"; Kreutzer, *Geistlicher Mai*, fol. 89v: "daz lebendige Holtz"; and Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fol. 5r: "lebentig holz jesus."

10. See above. Beyond Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's botanical study *Metamorphosis of Plants* (1790), in which he inquired into the mechanics of how the "innerness" (*Innerlichkeit*) of nature reveals itself over time, Goethe in his literary and poetic works exhibited an interest in how people relate to nature, culturally. Goethe, *The Metamorphosis of Plants*, trans. Douglas Miller (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

11. Origen, Gregory the Great, and Hippolytus of Rome, among others, identified the tree of the cross (*Arbor crucis*) with the *Arbor vitae* from Genesis, which was conceived as a link between heaven and earth and a foil to the perilous tree of knowledge. For more on Origen, Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* (parable of the mustard seed), Quodvultdeus's sermon "De cataclysmo ad catechumenos," Hippolytus of Rome, and Gregory of Nyssa, see Romuald Bauerreiss, *Arbor Vitae: Der Lebensbaum und seine Verwendung in Liturgie, Kunst, und Brauchtum des Abendlandes* (Munich: Neuer Filser-Verlag, 1938), 4; Stephen Reno, *The Sacred Tree as an Early Christian Literary Symbol* (Saarbrücken: Home et Religio, 1978), 79–123; Jerrold Cooper, "Assyrian Prophecies, the Assyrian Tree, and the Mesopotamian Origins of Jewish Monotheism, Greek Philosophy, Christian Theology, Gnosticism, and Much More," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120, no. 3 (2000): 430–44; and R. E. Neil Dodge, "The Well of Life and the Tree of Life," *Modern Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Medieval and Modern Literature* 6, no. 2 (October 1908): 191–96.

12. The locus classicus on the subject is Urs Kamber, *Arbor amoris, der Minnebaum: Ein Pseudo-Bonaventura-Traktat* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1964). See also Mary Forman, "Gertrud of Helfta: Arbor Amoris in Her Heart's Garden," *Mystics Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (2000): 163–78; Rab Hatfield, "The Tree of Life and the Holy Cross: Franciscan Spirituality in the Trecento and the Quattrocento," in *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, ed. Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 132–60; and Johann Wilhelm Preger, "Allegorie: Der Minnebaum; Der Baumgarten; Der Palmbaum," in *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter: Ältere und neuere Mystik in der ersten Hälfte des XIV. Jahrhunderts Heinrich Suso* (Leipzig: Dörffling und Franke, 1881), 48–52. For texts on the *Minnebaum* in lyric form, see the marvelous volume from Judith Theben, *Die mystische Lyrik des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts: Untersuchungen-Texte-Repertorium* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 250–60.

13. Jacobus de Voragine, "The Finding of the Holy Cross" and "The Exaltation of the Holy Cross," in *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1:277–84, 2:168–72. See also Barbara Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image*, trans. Lee Preedy (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

14. Variants of "flowing forth" or "flowing over," which appear throughout all three texts examined here, constitute part of the standard Neoplatonic mystical grammar of emanation (*exitus/usfluz*) exhibited in the works of Meister Eckhart, Suso, and other German Dominicans. Bernard McGinn offers an overview of Eckhart's and Suso's concept of "divine outflow" in *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany (1300–1500)* (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 94–239.

15. Victoria Sweet, *Rooted in the Earth, Rooted in the Sky: Hildegard of Bingen and Premodern Medicine* (New York: Routledge, 2006). Sweet criticizes the conventional, exclusively symbolic interpretation of *viriditas*, the bibliography for which is too long to list here. See Miriam Schmitt, "Hildegard of Bingen: Viriditas, Web of Greening Life Energy," *American Benedictine Review* 50, no. 3 (1999): 253–76; and Barbara Newman, *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 56–61, 64–67.

16. Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, "Maie," in *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1984), 12: col. 1473–76. The popularity of Fridolin's *Der geistliche Mai* persisted during the Counter-Reformation; it was printed in Landshut in 1533, Munich in 1549 and 1550, and Dillingen in 1581.

17. For the authoritative biography of Grünewald, see Hanns Hubach, "Grünewald," in *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon* 63 (Munich: Saur, 2009), 386–96.

18. *Crucifixion* in the Kunstmuseum, Basel (1501); *Small Crucifixion* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (1502); *Standing Man of Sorrows* from the Lindenhardt Altarpiece (1503; attributed to Grünewald); *Crucifixion* from the Isenheim Altarpiece (1512–15); *Lamentation of the Magdalene* (date unknown; survives from a copy by Christoph Krafft, ca. 1648); *Study of the Crucifixion* in the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe (ca. 1520); Tauberbischofsheim Crucifixion in the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe (1523–25); *Saint John under the Cross* (reported by Joachim von Sandrart); "I[tem] crucifix, Maria und Sant Johannes" (1528, reported in Grünewald's estate inventory).

19. Hanns Hubach, "'. . . adder wasserkunstmacher': Annäherung an den 'anderen' Grünewald," in *Grünewald und seine Zeit*, by Jessica Mack-Andrick et al., exh. cat. (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2007), 30–38.

20. Lottlisa Behling writes that no painter—except perhaps Albrecht Dürer—until Grünewald had reached such a "euphony of vegetal form of such compelling empathy as to the essence [*Wesen*] of plant phenomena, of such a profound connection between plant and man according to form and symbol." Behling, *Die Pflanze in der mittelalterlichen Tafelmalerei* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1967), 140–49. For a similar symbolic analysis of Grünewald's depiction of plants, see Wolfgang Kühn, "Grünewalds Isenheimer Altar als Darstellung mittelalterlicher Heilkräuter," *Kosmos: Handweiser für Naturfreunde* 12 (1948): 327–33.

21. A chapter of the Holy Cross was endowed in the church of Tauberbischofsheim, just south of Würzburg, in 1498. A priest named Virenkorn supplemented the endowment in 1504 and 1515. Because Virenkorn had a benefice in Aschaffenburg, where Grünewald had his workshop, it is assumed that he was in charge of commissioning the artist and that the altarpiece decorated a cross altar. That it was bilateral also contributes to this last point, as it would have been visible to spectators on either side of the cross aisle. Walther Karl Zülch, *Der Historische Grünewald: Mathis Gothardt-Neithardt* (Munich: Bruckman, 1938), 261; and Jessica Mack-Andrick, "Von beiden Seiten betrachtet: Überlegungen zum Tauberbischofsheimer Altar," in Mack-Andrick et al., *Grünewald und seine Zeit*, 68–77, 71, 75.

22. Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece*, 80.

23. The dermatological signs of Anthony's fire, or ergotism, as it is now known, are only the outward manifestations of a disease that attacks the nervous and vascular systems, in turn leading to seizures, hallucinations, and gangrene. Behling, *Die Pflanze*, 145; and Kühn, "Grünewalds Isenheimer Altar," 20–27.

24. Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece*, 31ff., has proposed that Christ's body in both the *Crucifixion* and *Lamentation*, which split apart from its limbs with the opening of the altarpiece's wings and predella, served as a model for amputee victims of Saint Anthony's fire.

25. Ewald Vetter, "Der verkaufte Grünewald," *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg* 24 (1987): 69–117; and Mack-Andrick, "Von beiden Seiten betrachtet," 68.

26. James Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350 to 1575* (New York: Abrams, 1985), 349: "A similar emaciated and deformed image of Christ on the cross is found in the so-called Plague Crucifixions, a type of *Andachtsbild* in sculpture such as the expressionistic Crucifix in the convent of Santa Maria im Kapitol Cologne that served as a mystical devotional piece." See also Astrid Reuter, "Zur expressiven Bildsprache Grünewalds am Beispiel des Gekreuzigten," in Mack-Andrick et al., *Grünewald und seine Zeit*, 78–86.

27. Wilhelm Pinder, *Die Deutsche Plastik vom ausgehenden Mittelalter bis zum Ende der Renaissance*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1914), 96. An indispensable resource on late medieval branchy crucifixes is Godehard Hoffmann et al., *Das Gabelkreuz in Saint Maria im Kapitol zu Köln und das Phänomen der Crucifixi dolorosi in Europa*, Arbeitsheft der rheinischen Denkmalpflege 69 (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsanstalt, 2006).

28. Ann Stieglitz, "The Reproduction of Agony: Toward a Reception-History of Grünewald's Isenheim Altar after the First World War," *Oxford Art Journal* 12, no. 2 (1989): 87–103. Stieglitz chronicles the post–World War I misuse of the term "Gothic" as one associated with the pain and injustice of war reparations and its specific application during the repatriation of the Isenheim Altarpiece from Munich to Alsace, which was returned to French hands.

29. The Isenheim Altarpiece remained at the monastery until the monastery was dissolved during the French Revolution, at which point it was transferred to the local branch of the French national library in 1792 for safekeeping. In 1852, it was moved to the chapel of the former Dominican convent known as the Unterlinden in Colmar, which has since been converted into a museum. Visitors can now view the altarpiece in the newly renovated church of Colmar's Musée Unterlinden, which the architecture firm Herzog and de Meuron completed in 2016.

30. M. Kay Flavell, *George Grosz: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 228; Keith Moxey, "Impossible Distance: Past and Present in the Study of Dürer and Grünewald," *Art Bulletin* 86, no. 4 (2004): 750–63; Brigitte Schad and Thomas Ratzka, eds., *Grünewald in der Moderne: Die Rezeption Matthias Grünewalds im 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Wienand, 2003); and Ingrid Schulze, *Die Erschütterung der Moderne: Grünewald im 20. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1991).

31. Grünewald's Isenheim *Crucifixion* was the ultimate expression of the Incarnation for two of the great Protestant theologians of the twentieth century, Paul Tillich and Karl Barth. Starting in 1919, Barth for many years wrote at a desk beneath a reproduction of the Isenheim *Crucifixion*. See Reiner Marquard, *Karl Barth und der Isenheimer Altar* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1995); Karl Barth, "Biblische Frage, Einsichten und Ausblicke," in *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1924), 70–98; and Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, *1930–1935*, ed. Caren Algner (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2000), 802. On Tillich, see his *Systematische Theologie*, vol. 3 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987), 229; and Roy A. Harrisville, "Encounter with Grunewald," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 31, no. 1 (2004): 5–14.

32. The inventory of Grünewald's personal effects after his death in Halle in 1528 lists copies of Luther's sermons, a New Testament, and other "Lutheran hogwash" ("45. Item 27 predig Lutters ingebunden . . . 58. Item das nu testament, ingebunden und sunst viel scharteken luterich"). Reiner Marquard, *Mathias Grünewald und die Reformation* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2009), 157–70. For a summary and persuasive criticism of Marquard's argument, see Mack-Andrick, "Von beiden Seiten betrachtet," 72–75; and Hubach, "Grünewald," 392. In his final years, Grünewald separated from Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg just as the cardinal expelled Protestants from his court. Grünewald's roommate in Halle was Hans Plock, a stalwart of Luther. Still, we cannot ascertain the extent of the Reformation's influence on his work, much less his personal beliefs.

33. Early Reformers also exhibited a continued interest in the Passion; Luther himself updated the *Speculum passionis* and was involved in the conception of its illustrations. See Martin Luther, *Ein Betbüchlein mit Kalender und Passional, Wittenberg, 1529*, ed. Frieder Schulz (Kassel: J. Stauda, 1982).

34. Saint Bridget, *Revelations*, 4, quoted in Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 349; see also Zülch, *Der Historische Grünewald*, 146.

35. Kurt Küppers, *Marienfrömmigkeit zwischen Barock und Industriezeitalter: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Feier der Maiandacht in Deutschland und im deutschen Sprachgebiet* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987); Luzian Pfleger, "Zur Geschichte der Marien-Maiandacht im Elsaß," *Straßburger Diözesanblatt* 31 (1912): 163–76; and Dietrich Schmidtke, *Studien zur dingallegorischen Erbauungsliteratur des Spätmittelalters: Am Beispiel der Gartenallegorie* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1982), esp. 1–3, 74–76.

36. That late medieval devotional art and literature reveled in extended vegetal metaphors is in large part due to the mystical precedent established by Suso, who espoused the "speculation" of the created visible world—its flora and fauna—as a bridge to the transcendent. In a riveting essay, Jeffrey F. Hamburger roots Suso's speculation in a rich history of Pauline and Neoplatonic cosmology. Hamburger, "Speculations on Speculation: Vision and Perception in the Theory and Practice of Mystical Devotion," in *Deutsche Mystik im abendländischen Zusammenhang: Neu erschlossene Texte, neue methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische Konzepte; Kolloquium, Kloster Fischingen 1998*, ed. Walter Haug and Wolfram Schneider-Lastin (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000), 353–408.

37. From Henry Suso's *Life of the Servant* (1362), in which he describes several exercises (*Übunge*) that he follows over the course of the liturgical year, we have an early source—if not the first—for the use of the term "Spiritual Woods." In the twelfth chapter, the Servant of Eternal Wisdom, which is a pseudonym for Suso, explains to his spiritual daughter, Elsbeth Stagel, how he erects his spiritual May Pole ("saste einen geistlichen meyen") on the first of May. Suso, "Vita," in *Deutsche Schriften*, ed. Karl Bihlmeyer (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1907), chap. 12, 32–33; and Pfleger, "Zur Geschichte der Marien-Maiandacht," 166. So provocative was Suso's mystical exercise of the Spiritual Woods that it spawned an entire subgenre of devotional allegories with the same title. For more on such texts in lyric form, see Theben, *Die mystische Lyrik*, 246–50, 460–61, 485, 500–501, 511. The late medieval spiritualization of the secular May Pole custom in word and image is discussed at great length in Gregory C. Bryda, "Tree, Vine, and Herb: Vegetal Themes and Media in Late Gothic Germany" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2016).

38. *Geistlicher Maibaum*, in Birlinger, "Asketische Traktate aus Augsburg IV," 113: "das herte werffen auf das creucz, das er so hert gestrecht ward uber das rauche des ungehawen holcz des creuczes"; and ibid., 109: "den wunsamen [angenehm] schönen maien, das holcz des lebens mit seinen edelen esten und abreisender, zarter plust, die lustig volkomen frucht ewige speiß." Additional background information about the anonymous tract can be found in Karin Schneider, "Geistlicher Maibaum," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, ed. Kurt Ruh et al., vol. 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1980), 1168–69; and Kamber, *Arbor amoris*, 137–40.

39. *Geistlicher Maibaum*, in Birlinger, 109–10: "Dye mynigclich sel sicht yetz an den wunsamen schönen maien, das holcz des lebens mit seinen edelen esten vnd abreissender zarter plust . . . hat seine nest, das ist sein zerspanen arm und die grünen pletter seiner gebenedeitten hend vnd auch die zwen est susamen geflochten siner hailigen pain, dardurch unser lieb und vmbfachung des gemuttes gevestiget und geplanczet ist. . . . Hier innen send nisten die besundern adelichen vogel, die da von dem edelen geschmack der vbertreffenlichen susse gezogen werdend, hoch fliegend vnd komend in die wunsamen waid der verporgen hülle in der sie habend ire nest. . . ."

40. By comparing the calendar with the days of the week Fridolin mentions in his text, Petra Seegets and Carmen Stange have inferred 1485 or 1495 as potential dates of authorship. Seegets, *Passionstheologie und Passionsfrömmigkeit im ausgehenden Mittelalter: Der Nürnberger Franziskaner Stephan Fridolin (gest. 1498) zwischen Kloster und Stadt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 91–122, esp. 103; Stange, "Stephan Fridolin: Geistlicher Mai, Geistlicher Herbst," in *Aderlass und Seelentrost: Die Überlieferung deutscher Texte im Spiegel Berliner Handschriften und Inkunabeln,* ed. Peter Jörg Becker and Eef Ouvergauuw (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2003), 258–60; Dietrich Schmidtke, "Stephan Fridolin," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, ed. Wolfgang Stammler and Karl Langosch, 14 vols. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978–2008), 2 (1980):918–22. See also Tilo Brandis, "Mittelalterliche deutsche Handschriften: 25 Jahre Neuerwerbungen der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz," in *Die Präsenz des Mittelalters in seinen Handschriften: Ergebnisse der Berliner Tagung in der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 6.–8. April 2000*, ed. Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002), 303–35, at 316; Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 152–53; Florenz Landmann, "Zum Predigtwesen der Straßburger Franziskanerprovinz in der letzten Zeit des Mittelalters," *Franziskanische Studien* 15 (1928): 322–29; and Nikolaus Paulus, "Der Franziskaner Stephan Fridolin, ein Nürnberger Prediger des ausgehenden Mittelalters," *Historisch-politische Blätter* 113 (1894): 465–83.

41. The medicinal aspect of Fridolin's text is woefully understudied and lacking in Johannes Kreutzer's version of the *Spiritual Woods*. An invaluable source on the herbal incunabula published out of Mainz is Brigitte Baumann's *Die Mainzer Kräuterbuch-Inkunabeln Herbarius Moguntinus (1484), Gart der Gesundheit (1485), Hortus sanitatis (1491): Wissenschaftshistorische Untersuchung der drei Prototypen botanisch-medizinischer Literatur des Spätmittelalters* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2010).

42. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fols. 223r–v: "Das salve [salvia; *Salbei*] plat ist lang und rauch und hat vyl rüngelein. Pey dem petracht dye geschyklykayt des garten junckfreulychen leybs an der seul. . . . Pey den manigfalltigen ederlein, dye in dem salve plat sindt petracht wie in der scharpfen gayslung dye heylligen ader Christi so gewalltigklych sind gerrysen worden, das mylltigtlych sein rosenfarbs pluot an [*ohne*] alle verstopfung geflosen ist aus allen adern aller seiner gelyder." Fridolin transposes the gushing body of Christ on the column over the episode of Moses striking the rock in Meribah with his rod to produce water for the Israelites (Exod. 17 and Num. 20). Moreover, he uses the same adjectives to describe the sage leaf as does the herbal *Gart der Gesundheit* (Augsburg: Schönsperger, 1487), "Selbe," chap. cccxlvii (emphasis mine): "Die bleter sind geleÿch den kütten blettern allein daz sÿ *lenger* sind und *rauhe* als thůch." All subseqent citations of the *Gart der Gesundheit* come from this 1487 edition.

43. *Geistlicher Maibaum*, in Birlinger, 109: "der gaisselung hat disen maien vill pitterlich durchweet die pletter und plust so peinlichen durchachtet, das sy gerissen send pis auf die erden, dardurch der acker unsers herzen so volkomenlich gepawen wirt, das er tragen sol der frucht zugehörend dem tisch des ewigen vaters."

44. Joris-Karl Huysmans, "Les Grünewald du Musée Colmar," *Le Mois Littéraire et Pittoresque* (1904): "je l'ai vue, détrempée par la pluie, pareille à des boues d'abbattoir, à des mares de sang." Huysmans's writings on Grünewald in *Là-bas* (1891) and *Trois primitifs* (1905) contributed significantly to the rediscovery and appreciation of Grünewald around the turn of the twentieth century. Anthony Zielonka, "Huysmans and Grünewald: The Discovery of 'Spiritual Naturalism,'" *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 18 (1989–90): 212–30; and Katharina Heinemann, "Entdeckung und Vereinnahmung: Zur Grünewald-Rezeption in Deutschland bis 1945," in Schad and Ratzka, *Grünewald in der Moderne*, 8–17.

45. Immersive extrapolations of Christ's torment on the Cross did not cease in the fourteenth century; indeed, sermons, prayer books, and plays continued in the same vein for generations thereafter. In his essay, which compiles Passion literature that is "reflected" in Grünewald's Crucifixions, Dietmar Lüdke traces the reincarnation of many of the specific motifs promulgated by Bridget's *Revelations*. Lüdke, "Die 'Kreuzigungen' Grünewalds im Spiegel mittelalterliche Passionsliteratur," in Mack-Andrick et al., *Grünewald und seine Zeit*, 87–95.

46. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fol. 232v: "Item in dyssem siechkobel lygt auch dein arme ellente sell kranck an ainem grosen haubt wee der aygen synigkayt, dye entspringt aus der hochfart [*Hoffart*]. . . ."

47. Ibid., fol. 235r: "So zaigt er dyr, wy mit den wercken was erzeney du prauchen sollt, wan dye kranckhayt deiner aussezigen hochfart [*aussätzigen Hoffart*] ist so gros und unhaylper, das sy mit nichte pas mag gerainigt werden, den mit kospar teurem pluet des hoch wyrdigen may[e]stetlychen haubts des sun gottes, welches durch scharpfe eindruckung der angstlychen dörnen kron . . . auß getruckt ist worden. . . ."

48. Ibid., fols. 236v–237v: "corda benedycta [*Cardo benedictus*], das gesunt ist fur alle weetagen des haubts und störckt vast das hyrn. . . . Pey disem kraut, das ein grob kraut ist und vyl spiziger stechenter dorn hat in seinen pluemen und pletern, würt inigklych erinert der dornenkron Christi. . . . Item pesteck das pad auch mit Pronelen (Prunella) kraut, das auch vast gesundt ist fur das haubtwee und hat in seiner plume schöne praune kölblein. . . ." The *Gart der Gesundheit*, chap. lxxii, prescribes Prunella to treat headache: "Brunella latine et grece. Die meÿster sprechen dz diß kraut sey heyß und trucken ann dem dritten grade. Der meister Isaac spricht das der safft von disem krautte gemüschet mit rosen wasser und auf dz haubt gelegt vertreibt das wee darinne."

49. Mack-Andrick ("Von beiden Seiten betrachtet," 72–74) has refuted the hypothesis that Grünewald's unusual spelling of Isaiah (*ESAIAS*) in his Tauberbischofsheim panel suggests his sympathies with Luther's writings.

50. The subject of the twenty-third day, the quince is one of several fruit trees that are featured in Fridolin's third week of prayer. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fol. 182r: "der xxiii tag im Mayen. / Am Samstag pyt die werden [*würdige*] muotter gotes und all lyeb heylligen frauen, dye dem herrn untter dem heylligen creuz sind peygestanden, das sy umb desselben ellenden stands wyllen dych wollen füren in den paumgarten deines gespanssen, das du mugst schauen die küten [*Quitte*] plume, wölliche plume untter andern plumen fast dye allerlezt ist. . . ."

51. Ibid., fol. 182v: "du sychst wol das dye küten stend nit auf hochen paumen sunder demuettig un[d] achtpar nider standen. . . ."

52. Fridolin compares the *arma Christi* to the fittings of a state bed, in turn linking the symbols of the Passion with the bedchamber or Solomon's palanquin in the Song of Songs, ibid., fol. 183r: "Die kůten stauden sindt hert rauch und nit schön. Dapey petracht, das nichts hupsch gartes lindes noch tröstliches der sinlykayt dein gespansen von ausen in sterbenter not hat gehabt sunder fur am pet das hört plocker, krenz, für das flaum fon deren küs [*Kissen*] die dornen kron, fur die seyden döck die gärten [*Gerten*] und gaysel und eysen nagel."

53. Ibid., fol. 183v: "Darpey petracht das der profet Ysayas sprycht: Wir haben i[h]n gesechen alls ainen aussezigen, von got geschlagen und geduemůetiget. Darumb haben wyr sein nit kont noch geacht."

54. Ibid., fols. 184v–185r: "Da hat man erst schmöckt den saft und kraft dysser gesunden kröftigen kuten, aus der dye heylligen apostel, ewangelisten und lerrer guet, kōstlich unnd krāftig latwergen gemacht." Fridolin's readers should emulate the holy apostles, evangelists, and church fathers in their spreading of the honey-infused word of God.

55. The *Gart der Gesundheit*, chapter c, indicates that pharmacists prescribe the quince fruit (*küdten baum*) for a variety of oral and respiratory health problems; it also specifically calls for quince electuaries (*latwergen*): "Dises kraut nüczet man in der erczneÿ / Der safft von kütten ist fast gůt asmaticis / das sind die einen kurczen atem haben. . . . Item in allen kranckeÿten mage man nüczen dyse frucht und jre latwergen wann sÿ bringend dem herczen grosse krafft. . . ." According to Konrad von Megenberg, the quince cures cough; see an Alsatian manuscript copy of his *Buch der Natur* now in Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 300 (produced in Haguenau, 1444–48), bk. 4, chap. 13, 243v–244v.

56. Ibid., fols. 183v–184r: "Item die farb der küten an ir selb ist plaich und gelb. Darpey petracht die ellent gestallt deines aller lyebsten herrn, wye sych der angespitzt und ergilbt hat, wye seine luechte [*lichten*] augen so tief in seinem heylligen haubt gestanden sind, . . . , sein rosen roter mund erweyst, sein mynigklychs angesicht erplaycht und aller sain heylliger junckfraulycher fron leyb ergylbt unnd erplabt ist mit todes farb."

57. The monk Sigebert of Gembloux writing in Lotharingia in 1089 described the sickness in his *Chronicle*: "The intestines eaten up by the force of Saint Anthony's Fire, with ravaged limbs, blackened like charcoal; either they die miserably, or they live more miserably seeing their feet and hands develop gangrene and separate from the rest of the body; and they suffer muscular spasms that deform them," trans. from the Latin in Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece*, 21. See also Mischlewski, *Grundzüge der Geschichte des Antoniterordens*, 22.

58. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai* fol. 235v: "wunden seines kunigklychen haubts, die pech des haysen pluets sindt geflosen uber sein heyllige styrn, uber sein heyllige wang, uber sein heyllige oren und augen, das sein ganz mynigklich angesycht, sein heylliger nack[en] und part [*Bart*], ja auch sein heyllig schulter ganz pluetig sindt worden."

59. *Geistlicher Maibaum*, in Birlinger, 115: "sein erwirdiges haupt was durchstochen mit tausent wunden der scharpfen doren, die inn seyn hiren getruckt warden, dardurch der inwendig keren und marck seins hirns versert ward, das ain sel seines zarten hirens gewundet, die haut was von seinem haupt gelassen, sein zartes geäder stund an manigen enden ploß, sein antlücz was schwarz geleich der erden von der vermischung der juden spaicheln und des staubs und des gerunnen gestanden plutes, das alles zesamen gepachen was, do floß das plůt, die zeher und der todlich schwais dem heren in seinen mund." "To pitchify" as an infinitive appears variously as *pichen*, *verpichen*, or *pechen*, according to the Grimms' dictionary. It can be used transitively to designate the smearing of something with mineral or pine resin or intransitively to describe something that hardens with time, as pitch does. The author of the *Geistlicher Maibaum* employs the word intransitively—hence the irregular past participle form "gepachen." Grimm and Grimm, "Pichen," in *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 13:col. 1837.

60. Lothar Suhling, "Erdöl und Erdölprodukte," in *Europäische Technik im Mittelalter: 800 bis 1400 Tradition und Innovation* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1996), 257–62; and Georg Hansen, *Steinöl und Brunnenfeuer* (Kassel: Wintershall, 1975), 103–30. See chap. lxxx, "Iudenleym," in the *Gart der Gesundheit*.

61. Suhling, "Erdöl und Erdölprodukte," 261.

62. "Petroleum," in *Gart der Gesundheit*, chap. cccxxxii. For an image of a man collecting the liquid earth in a jug, see *Hortus sanitatis* (Mainz: Jakob Meydenbach, 1491), bk. 5, chap. ci.

63. "Sankt Antoniussalbe—für 2 Pfund Pechharz 2 Batzen—für ein Viertel Terpentin 1 Batzen. . . ," as given in Elisabeth Clémentz, "Vom Balsam der Antoniner," *Antoniter-Forum* 2 (1994): 15. Clémentz quoted it from the original source in the Archives Départementales du Haut-Rhin, Colmar, Isenheim 21 and 22. As it does for the quince, the *Gart der Gesundheit* recommends turpentine electuaries, mixed with sugar and honey, and applied to the chest, to relieve coughing and pain from blisters, chapter cccv: "Dises genüczet gůt den die do haben einen kalten hůsten und dienet sunderlichen wol ptisicis [*phthisic*] das ist die dz abnemen haben und terpentin also genüczet sol vorhin bereitet werden mit hônig unnd zucker geleich als ein latwerg und aussen auf die brust geleget geleich einen pflaster. Terpentin gemischet mit hônig und auf die bôsen schwarczen blatern gelegt benÿmmt das wee davon und weichet sÿ behend."

64. Signs of the branchy scourge also punctuate the Corpus Christi in his Tauberbischofsheim Altarpiece and in his small Crucifixion now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

65. William E. Hillis, *Heartwood and Tree Exudates* (Berlin: Springer, 1987), 4–6.

66. Ibid., 14.

67. Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980). In his fascinating exploration of the limewood's cellular structure Baxandall demonstrates how foresters, tradesmen, and artists profited from the material's idiosyncratic makeup to use its dual qualities of pliancy and stability.

68. Tim Ingold, "Materials against Materiality," *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (2007): 1–16; Christy Anderson, Anne Dunlop, and Pamela H. Smith, introduction to *The Matter of Art: Materials, Practices, Cultural Logics, c. 1250–1750* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 1–20; and Christina Neilson, "Carving Life: The Meaning of Wood in Early Modern European Sculpture," in Anderson et al., *The Matter of Art*, 223–40.

69. I am greatly indebted to Alan Phenix of the Getty Conservation Institute, whose expertise on turpentine has been pivotal to my research. I have benefited from his published research as well as our conversations, which took place during my fellowship at the Getty Research Institute during the 2015–16 academic year. See Phenix, *Some Instances in the History of Distilled Oil of Turpentine, the Disappearing Painters' Material* (Los Angeles: printed by author, 2015).

70. There are ten copies of the *Livre des simples médecines* in Paris alone: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (hereafter BNF), fr. 623 (fol. 180v), fr. 1307 (fols. 234r–v), fr. 1309–12 (fol. 43r), fr. 9136 (fols. 288r–v), fr. 12317 (fol. 241v), fr. 12319 (fols. 312r–v), fr. 12320 (fols. 206r–v), fr. 12321 (fol. 220r), fr. 19081 (fols. 199r–v). Others are in Bibliothèque Municipale, Dijon, MS 0391 (fol. 202v), Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, 227 20 (fols. 207v–208r), and Wellcome Library, London, MS 626 (fols. 249r–v). A thirteenth-century Latin copy (*Circa instans*) made in southern Germany (Alsace or Pfalz) from Heidelberg's Bibliotheca Palatina is now in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City (Cod. Pal. lat. 1227). For more on the complicated attribution of the *Livre*, see Jean A. Givens, "Reading and Writing the Illustrated *Tractatus de herbis*, 1280–1526," in *Visualizing Medieval Medicine and Natural History, 1200–1550*, ed. Givens, Karen M. Reeds, and Alain Touwaide (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2016), 115–46; and Phenix, *Some Instances in the History of Distilled Oil of Turpentine*, 19–26.

71. For the most part, though, the depicted trees of the *Livre des simples médecines* are European conifers rather than deciduous terebinths because, as has been mentioned, Europeans used the eastern Mediterranean term "turpentine resin" to refer to the exuding species that were indigenous to their continent.

72. Zülch, *Der Historische Grünewald*, 146.

73. *Geistlicher Maibaum*, in Birlinger, "Asketische Traktate aus Augsburg IV," 113–14; the inscription on the woodcut reads, "Dis yst die lengt vnd gestalt des wairhaptigen Nagels Cristi."

74. For the effect of an increased proportion of medium to red pigment (lake or madder), see Rachel Billinge et al., "Methods and Materials of Northern European Painting in the National Gallery, 1400–1550," *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 18 (1997): 6–55, esp. 41–42. See also Mark David Gottsegen, *The Painter's Handbook: A Complete Reference* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 2006), 111–25; and Victoria Finlay, *The Brilliant History of Color in Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2014), 30–33. I must credit Alan Phenix of the Getty Conservation Institute for these sources and his analysis of Grünewald's *pastiglia* technique from photographs.

75. Rutherford Gettens and George Stout, *Painting Materials: A Short Encyclopedia* (New York: Dover, 1942), 17–24.

76. Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, trans. Louisa MacLehose, *Being an Introduction to the Three Arts of Design, Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, Prefixed to the Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (London: Dent, 1907), 226. Leonardo described a preparatory sealant for wood panels that comprised "mastic and turpentine twice distilled and white." See Leonardo's notebooks in *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 319.

77. Michel Menu et al., "Analyse de la palette des couleurs du Retable d'Issenheim par Matthias Grünewald," in *La technique picturale de Grünewald et de ses contemporains: Colloque international des 24, 25, et 26 janvier 2006*, ed. Pantxika Béguerie-De Paepe (Colmar: Musée d'Unterlinden, 2006), 49–60. While a targeted "destructive" study of Grünewald's painting medium and lacquer has not been conducted, technical analysis attests to the widespread employment of turpentine in the mixing of pigments in

the early modern period. The fugitive volatile oil of turpentine (paint thinner), however, leaves no trace evidence in the paint film; its presence is undetectable to scientists. Billinge et al., "Methods and Materials," 41–42. That said, the circumstantial evidence points to its use as early as the fourteenth century. For the best summary on this topic, see Phenix, *Some Instances in the History of Distilled Oil of Turpentine*.

78. At this time, a rivalry over the true site of the Magdalene's remains broke out between the town of Saint-Maximin, near the Sainte-Baume grotto, and the Benedictine monks of Vézelay, further to the north, whose Romanesque basilica is dedicated to the biblical saint. Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalene: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

79. All quotations from the "Balsam of Marseille" are my translation from an extant copy printed by Anton Koberg in Augsburg in 1478 and now housed in BSB, 2. Exemplar: B-22,2.

80. Elly Truitt, "The Virtues of Balm in Late Medieval Literature," *Early Science and Medicine* 14, no. 6 (2009): 711–36; and Ernest Wickersheimer, "Exégèse et matière: Le baume et ses vertus (Moyen-Âge)," *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire de la Pharmacie* 10, no. 34 (1952): 385–89.

81. In its record for the balsam tree, the *Book of Simple Medicines* instructs its readers on how to identify synthetic versions, which include turpentine. "It can be distinguished from the false because if one places some real *opobalsamin* on the end of an iron spike into fire, it burns, but turpentine does this too. . . . Others advise dipping a piece of cloth in the preparation, then washing it well afterwards. If the cloth is not at all stained, the *opobalsamin* is good." Carmélia Opsomer-Halleux and William T. Stearn, eds., *Livre des simples médecines: Codex Bruxellensis IV. 1024; A 15th-Century French Herbal*, trans. Enid Roberts and William T. Stearn (Antwerp: De Schutter, 1984), 86–88. See also Phenix, *Some Instances in the History of Distilled Oil of Turpentine*, 14.

82. The sources on depictions of Christ in the Wine Press are numerous. The locus classicus is Alois Thomas, *Die Darstellung Christi in der Kelter: Eine theologische und kulturhistorische Studie* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1936); see also Elina Gertsman, "Multiple Impressions: Christ in the Wine Press and the Semiotics of the Printed Image," *Art History* 36, no. 2 (2013): 310–37.

83. Historians have noted that tree and shrub exudations like turpentine and conifer resins but also cassia, frankincense, and myrrh were valued by ancient Greeks and Akkadians as analgesics and adhesive plasters for skin excoriations. Guido Majno, *The Healing Hand: Man and Wound in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 63–65, 208.

84. Trained in Paris, Montpellier, and then in Italy, Henri de Mondeville (ca. 1260–1316) compiled his Latin treatise on surgery at a time of internecine conflict among physicians, who were skeptical of absorbing what they deemed the vocational field of surgery into academic medicine. His pioneering text made an indelible impact on the field, paving the way for works like Guy de Chauliac's *Inventarium chirurgia magnum* of 1363. For the original Latin text of de Mondeville's *Surgery*, see *Die Chirurgie des Heinrich von Mondeville (Hermondaville) nach Berliner, Erfurter und Pariser Codices zum ersten Male*, ed. Julius Leopold Page (Berlin: Hirschwald, 1892). There is an English version based on a French translation: de Mondeville, *The Surgery of Master Henry de Mondeville: Written from 1306 to 1320,* trans. Leonard D. Rosenman (Philadelphia: XLibris, 2003). For an edited volume of de Chauliac's treatise, see *Inventarium sive chirurgica magna*, ed. Michael R. McVaugh and Margaret Ogden (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1:354.

85. Hieronymus Brunschwig's surgical text was translated into English within thirty years of its original publication. Brunschwig, *The Noble Experyence of the Vertuous Handy Warke of Surgeri* (London: Peter Treveris, 1525).

86. Hieronymus Brunschwig, *Dis ist das Buch der Cirurgia Hantwirckung der Wund Artz* (Augsburg: Schönsberger, 1497), 118a–b: "Ein dyaquilon pflaster das nach de Anthidotario Mesue gemachet wirt. Nym Silberglet (xxiii.lot.). . . . Terbentim. vi.lot Weiß viechten dannenharz."

87. Inventories for hospital pharmacies and apothecaries as well as the guild statutes that stipulated their minimum requirements all name crude coniferous or pure turpentine resins. A single apothecary in Marseille, for example, was in possession of 4½ pounds of turpentine in 1404; see BNF, nouvelles acquisitions latines MS 1351, which is transcribed in Jean-Pierre Bénézet, *Pharmacie et médicament en Méditerranée occidentale (XIIIe–XVIe siècles)* (Paris: Champion, 1999). Surviving transcriptions of mandatorily stockpiled pharmaceuticals in Toulouse from the years 1471, 1501, and 1513 all mention conifer resins; see Marcel Pistre, *Histoire toulousaine du métier d'apothicaire* (Toulouse: Paillés et Chataigner, 1943).

88. Hans von Gersdorff, *Feldtbuch der Wundartzney* (Strasbourg, 1517), v, on the amputations he carried out in the Antonine hospital in Strasbourg, xxvi, for his recipe on skin plasters, "ein güt wund pflaster zü dé wunden unfür die stich . . . vn ale dan thůn dorin das wachs vn dé terpentin."

89. Clémentz, "Vom Balsam der Antoniner," 14 (cited from Archives Départementales du Haut-Rhin, Colmar, Isenheim 23): "Der Wundarzt soll die Sankt Antoniussalbe, wenn man sie benötigt, nach dem Hausrezept herstellen; die Kräuter dazu hat er zu sammeln und zu bereiten, die anderen Ingredienzen sollten ihm geliefert werden."

90. Phenix, *Some Instances in the History of Distilled Oil of Turpentine*, 10–11.

91. For more on medieval mortuary and funerary practices (especially embalming), see Colette Beaune, "Mourir noblement à la fin du Moyen Âge," *Actes des Congrès de la Société des Historiens Médiévistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur Public* 6, no. 1 (1975): 125–44; Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 63–65; Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); and Roberta Gilchrist and Barney Sloane, *Requiem: The Medieval Monastic Cemetery in Britain* (London: Museum of London Archaeology Service, 2005).

92. When both wax and tree resin are used in equal measure, the resulting salve, which Brunschwig calls an incarnative (*incarnatiuum*), stimulates the regrowth of muscle tissue; Brunschwig, *Dis ist das Buch der Cirurgia*, 199a–b. The mixable resins, which absorb the active ingredients of the other herbs in the plaster simples, harden after they are smeared. They thus protect and medicate wounds as a second, plant-based skin; ibid., 199b.

93. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fols. 179v–181r.

94. Patrice Georges, "Les aromates de l'embaumement médécines entre efficacité et symbolisme," in *Le monde végétal: Médecine, botanique, symbolique*, ed. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (Florence: Sismel, 2009), 257–68.

95. Magdalena Hawlik-van de Water, "Die Methoden des Einbalsamierens vom Altertum bis zur Neuzeit," in *Der Schöne Tod: Zeremonialstrukturen des Wiener Hofes bei Tod und Begräbnis zwischen 1640 und 1740* (Vienna: Herder, 1989), 203–11, at 207; and idem, "Das Einbalsamieren und die Herzbestattung," in *Triumph des Todes?*, ed. Gerda Mraz (Eisenstadt: Das Museum, 1992), 133–39. Turpentine is also listed as one of the aromatics employed for Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy (1396–1467) and Jean, Duke of Berry (1340–1416). Baron de la Fons-Mélicocq, "Liste des aromates employés pour l'embaumement des souverains au XVe siècle," *Bulletin de la Societé Botanique de France* 4 (1857): 792–95; and J. L. Souberain, "Aromates employés pour l'embaumement des souverains au XVe siècle," *Journal de Pharmacie et de Chimie* 32 (1857): 216–20.

96. Mondeville, *The Surgery of Master Henry de Mondeville*, 736–40.

97. Hawlik-van de Water, "Die Methoden des Einbalsamierens," 207.

98. Barbara G. Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 1. See Beth Williamson for a response to scholarships' insistence on altarpieces' strict conversation with the Eucharist and/or the church's titular saint. Williamson, "Altarpieces, Liturgy, and Devotion," *Speculum* 79 (2004): 341–406, esp. 386–87.

99. Joseph Bernhart, *Die Symbolik im Menschwerdungsbild des Isenheimer Altars* (Munich: Callwey, 1975), 11; Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Devil at Isenheim: Reflections of Popular Belief in Grünewald's Altarpiece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 45; Behling, *Die Pflanze*, 147; and Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece*, 92.

100. Bridget of Sweden compares the Virgin to the Tree of Life in her "Angel's Discourse" (Sermo angelicus), a collection of Matins readings for nuns of the Birgittine Order. See Saint Bridget, "Sermo Angelicus," chap. xxi, lesson 3, trans. Dennis Searby, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, vol. 4, *The Heavenly Emperor's Book to Kings, The Rule, and Minor Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 190–96.

101. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fols. 8r–v: "so fueren sy dich zu dem hymelischen vatter; der ist der recht wa[h]r paumayster, der den edlen meyen Jesum Christi, den ainigen sun seines herzen gepflanzt hat auf das weyt feldt, das wyr i[h]n all mugen prochen, wan wyr sein pegern, da er i[h]n gesant hat, in dysses jamertal, das vol dystel und dorn ist, sych an dissen edlen mayen, wie er sych selber ruemt, so er sprycht. Ich pin ain pluem des veldes . . . an das furchtpar eya, das gewendeit ertrych, dye hoch gelobt junckfrau Marya, in das der hymelisch vatter dysse edele pluem

gepflanzt hat." To license his horticultural exegesis—and underscore Mary's virginity—he cites Song of Songs 2:1–2: "I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."

102. Hanns Hubach, *Matthias Grünewald: Der Aschaffenburger Maria-Schnee-Altar: Geschichte, Rekonstruktion, Ikonographie* (Mainz: Selbstverl. der Gesellschaft für Mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte, 1996), 152, 216–19.

103. The celebration of their annual blessing on Assumption Day—known as the Kräuterweihe or Würzmesse—is stipulated in the thirteenth-century law book known as the *Sachsenspiegel* and must have been a brilliant and fragrant spectacle in churches across Germany. The chief sources for the study of the Kräuterweihe can be found in Adolf Franz's monumental *Die Kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter*, vol. 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1909), esp. 398; Michael Haberlandt, "Der Frauen-Dreißiger," *Zeitschrift für Österreichische Volkskunde* 18 (1912): 133–61, at 157; Heinrich Marzell, "Kräuterweihe," *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* 5 (1932–33): 440–46; and Bryda, "Tree, Vine, and Herb," 164–90.

104. Fridolin often refers to Mary's virginal body as fertile ground or "guetigen ertrych." See fols. 69v–70r: "Sych dyse edele benigna rossen an die jechling uber handt wechst und grunt. Dapey pedracht, das Jesus benignus von lauter erpert [*Erdbeer*] von hymel kummen unnd aus dem guetigen ertrych des junckfraulychen leybs Marya gewachsen ist." Again, Fridolin refers to Song of Songs 2:1 in his botanical portrayal of the Incarnation.

105. Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*, 21–24. The Spiritual Woods texts are not concerned with genealogical diagrams like the Tree of Jesse, which, for example, Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fols. 8v, 62v, mentions only twice in his treatise.

106. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fols. 27v–28r: "An dem vyertan tag petracht dye edelen menschwerdung und gepurt Jesus. Pyt dye engelysch rytterschaft, . . . in dem heylligen hymelischen hör [*Heer*], das sy dych füren auf dye schönen gruenen wyssen gen Betlehem, da nach dem alls der langkweyllig, kallt, finster winter . . . der oberyst pauman, der heyllig geyst, das fruchtpar ertrych des junckfraulychen leyb Marya durch verkundung des engels sandt Gabryhelys geackert, mit manigfalltigen genaden gedungt und mit dem suessen mayen thau unnd langen regen gefeuchtiget hat und mit dem edelen samen des ewigen götlichen, ewigen vetterlychen worts pesampt und des sun gottes schwanger gemacht. Da, da [auf ganzen] sindt aufgangen und herfur gesprungen so vylenzelliger gruener greslein und wolryechenter kroutlein. . . ."

107. Rudolf Günther, *Die Bilder des Genter und des Isenheimer Altares: Ihre Geschichte und Deutung*, vol. 2, *Die Brautmystik im Mittelbild des Isenheimer Altars* (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1924).

108. Indeed, a drawing on the first flyleaf in the Munich manuscript (Cgm 4473) of Fridolin's *Der geistliche Mai* contains an inscribed banderole that evokes the Song of Songs: "Ich ste vor der tur, tue mir auf und laß mich ein du allerliebste mein" (I stand before the door. Open up and let me in, you, my most beloved), trans. Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*, 152–53; and Schneider, *Die deutschen Handschriften*, 131; foundational for scholarship on the Song of Songs and the mystical marriage in medieval art is Jeffrey F. Hamburger's *Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland circa 1300* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 70–87; and idem, *Nuns as Artists*. Michael Grandmontagne offers a Solomonic interpretation of late medieval sculpture in *Claus Sluter und die Lesbarkeit mittelalterlicher Skulptur: Das Portal der Kartause von Champmol* (Worms: Werner, 2005), 189–96. See also E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), esp. 151–77; Denys Turner, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995); and Ann Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

109. The bedposts with their curlicue ends are reminiscent of those found in cycles of Saint Elizabeth healing the infirm. For an early fifteenth-century wall painting of this subject in the hospital chapel of Blaubeuren's Heilig-Geist-Spital (founded 1424), see Wolfgang W. Schürle, "Das Spital zum Heiligen Geist in Blaubeuren: Ein Überblick," in *Blaubeuren: Die Entwicklung einer Siedlung in Südwestdeutschland*, ed. Hansmartin Decker-Hauff and Immo Eberl (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1986), 347–446.

110. Kreutzer never completed his exegesis, which was inspired by Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs. The tract ceases at chapter 2, verse 13—perhaps because of Kreutzer's death. Florent Landmann, "Johannes Kreutzer aus Gebweiler (died 1468) als Mystiker und Dichter geistlicher Lieder: Der Bestand seiner Schriften und das Hauptwerk; Auslegung von Cant. Cant. Kap. I bis II, 13," *Archives de l'Église d'Alsace* 21, no. 5 (1953–54): 21–67, at 33.

111. Kreutzer, *Geistlicher Mai*, fol. 116r; and Ganina, *"Bräute Christi,"* 261: "Der sechst lust diß geistlichen meyen so in disem garten funden wurt, do mit ouch daz huß gezieret wurt ist, ein weichs zartes pflum(ẵ)dern bettelin, dar an der gesponß byschloffen, yo bygeleit werden sol." Ganina, 141, and Schmidtke, *Die deutsche Literatur*, 232, believe that Kreutzer wrote his devotional allegories for reformed Dominican nuns, specifically those in Strasbourg. See also Florent Landmann, "Johannes Kreutzer aus Gebweiler (died 1468) als Mystiker und Dichter geistlicher Lieder: Die Unterweisung an eine Klosterfrau und Zwei Sammelwerke; Ein Geistlicher Mai und eine Geistliche Ernte," *Archives de l'Église d'Alsace* 21, no. 8 (1957): 21–52; Luzian Pfleger, "Johannes Kreutzer: Ein elsässischer Prediger und Reformator des 15. Jahrhunderts," *Historisch-politische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland* 150 (1912): 178–91, 241–47; Wieland Schmidt, "Johannes Kreutzer: Ein elsässischer Prediger des 15. Jahrhunderts," in *Festschrift Helmut de Boor zum 75. Geburtstag am 24. März 1966* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1966), 150–92; and Theben, *Die mystische Lyrik*, 71–75.

112. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fol. 263v: "auf das hört [*harte*] syechpet des heylligen fronkreuz. . . ." Bonaventure employs the term "hard bed of the cross [*durum lectum crucis*]" in the first of two Good Friday sermons. Bonaventure, *Doctoris seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, ed. Patres Collegii a S. Bonaventura (Florence: Quaracchi, 1882–1902), 9:261, col. 2.

113. For a summary of the Solomonic themes in Grünewald's Aschaffenburg Madonna, see Hubach, *Matthias Grünewald*, 211–12.

114. Mellinkoff, *The Devil at Isenheim*, 15.

115. See both Bernhart, *Die Symbolik*, and Mellinkoff, *The Devil at Isenheim*, who weave the typological themes of the so-called Incarnation Panel throughout their books.

116. Bernhart, *Die Symbolik*, 11; and Mellinkoff, *The Devil at Isenheim*, 47–48, 77–82.

117. The structure probably demonstrates Grünewald's knowledge of local Flamboyant Gothic style; he designed a chimney and sophisticated doorway for Aschaffenburg Castle. For more, see Pierre Vaisse and Piero Bianconi, *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Grünewald* (Paris: Flammarion, 1974), 92; and Hubach, "Grünewald," esp. 394.

118. Kreutzer, *Geistlicher Mai*, fols. 114v–115r; and Ganina, *"Bräute Christi,"* 258–59: "Der fúnffte wollust in disem garten vnd geistlichen meyen ist ein schȯner zierlicher palast. . . . Diß huß mit sȯlichem starcken gehȯltz gezymmerett sie. . . . Dise sparren sȯlen sin cedrynen. . . . Die bůnen sind cypressen." Probably based on the trees Isaiah lists that will "make the place of my feet glorious" (Isa. 60:13), Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, "The Finding of the Holy Cross," 1:278, reports that the Holy Cross was composed of four manner of trees: the palm, cypress, cedar, and olive. That said, in their extended vegetal mirror metaphors of the Cross, neither Kreutzer nor Fridolin limited himself to these four arboreal species.

119. Kreutzer, *Geistlicher Mai*, fol. 114v; and Ganina, *"Bräute Christi,"* 258: "Diss huß ist nůn die sel des mȯnschen, von dem durch den wisen man, von dem durch den wisen man geschriben stott. Ich wil ingon in min huß, sprichet die ewige wischeit, der do hie der gosponß ist vnd wil in im růwen. . . ." For more on the metaphorics of monastic and mystical enclosures in the area of female piety, see Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*, esp. 124ff., 137ff.

120. Kreutzer, *Geistlicher Mai*, fols. 117v–118r; and Ganina, *"Bräute Christi,"* 262–63: "ein sůsmackende spißkamer, ein appoteck, ein wurtzgaden vnd vorkeyler. . . ." See also Landmann, "Johannes Kreutzer: Die Unterweisung," 40.

121. Kreutzer, *Geistlicher Mai*, fols. 127r–v; and Ganina, *"Bräute Christi,"* 273: "Dise harpff betúttet Jhesum den gesponßen, an daz holtz des crútzes gespannen vnd genegelet. Daz holtz betúttet daz crútz, die nagel die woffen, do mit er gekrútzeget ist, die seitten sine heilgen gelider vff daz crútz vßgetenet vnd zerspannet. Der harpffer vnd spiler ist die andechtige sel." See also Landmann, "Johannes Kreutzer: Die Unterweisung," 60. For translation of "Nagel" as the pin of a string instrument, see "Nagel," in Grimm and Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 13:col. 262, sec. IV.1. Kreutzer writes that the devout soul also figures in the story of David playing his lyre to draw the evil spirit from King Saul (1 Sam. 16:23). The church fathers drew comparisons between the healing resonance of Christ's flesh and David's lyre. Hartmut Beckers, "Harfenspiel vom Leiden Christi," in Stammler and Langosch, *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters*, 3 (1981):472–74; Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece*, 44ff.; Bruce Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press,

2001), 27–60; and Holly Johnson, "God's Music-Making: The Cross-Harp Metaphor in Late-Medieval Preaching," *Medieval Perspectives* 22 (2011 for 2007): 48–49.

122. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fol. 217r: "Ich, Jesus, wyl dyr wol und sues hofyern [*harfen*], das das du dem fyeber mugst entpflyechen."

123. Kreutzer, *Geistlicher Mai*, fol. 127r; and Ganina, *"Bräute Christi,"* 272: "ach, úber disem heissen krútterkåssel bad vil und dick, daz die bo̊sen sweiße bo̊ser begirden, glúste des libes, bo̊se willen gentzlich von dir geswitzen."

124. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fol. 206r: "Ich hab vil zu hayß gepadet un bedorft dz man mich labet."

125. André Schnyder, "Die geistliche Padstube: Eine spätmittelalterliche Andachtsübung," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 113 (1984): 146–57. A copy of the "Spiritual Bath House," written in the fifteenth century (SBB 405, fols. 62r–65v) was produced for the Brotherhood of Saint Ursula, which was founded in Strasbourg in 1475. Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece*, 39–40, notes the proximity of thermal baths in the nearby region of the Vosges Mountains.

126. Thomas Murner, *Ein andechtig geistliche Badenfart* (Strasbourg: Grüninger, 1514), in *Badenfahrt*, ed. Victor Michels (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1927).

127. Hubach, "'. . . adder wasserkunstmacher,'" 30.

128. Zülch, *Der Historische Grünewald*, 131–227, esp. 132–40; Hubach, "Grünewald," 388–90; and idem, "Nikolaus Hagenauer," in *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon* 67 (2010): 441.

129. Clémentz, "Vom Balsam der Antoniner," 14; Kühn, "Grünewalds Isenheimer Altar," 327ff.; and Behling, *Die Pflanze*, 140–47. Kühn's and Behling's studies compare the painted plants with illustrations from the works of the so-called German founders of botanical studies, Hieronymus Bock, Otto Brunfels, and Leonhart Fuchs, to determine a plant's medicinal or symbolic purpose in a painting.

130. Kreuzter, *Geistlicher Mai*, fol. 111r; and Ganina, *"Bräute Christi,"* 255: "Der vyerde brunn ist genant Jhesusbrúnnelin, der do ist vnser behalter vnd erlo̊ser noch siner úberwúrdigen mo̊nscheit. Vnd der brunn ist hoch geleit vnd springet herab von dem stock des crútzes, vnd der hat fúnff grosser ro̊ren, die dis rote safft harab . . . tragen." See also Landmann, "Johannes Kreutzer: Die Unterweisung," 38.

131. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fol. 230v: "Ich pin ein guoter arzt wan ich gyb erzeney fur den aussatz. . . ."

132. "Item das piechlein ist gewessen S. Eiffersynna Gartnerin in der Piterich regelhaus," BSB, Munich, Cgm 4473 (1529), fol. 339v (colophon). Schneider, *Die deutschen Handschriften*, 131.

133. "Ubi eras ihesu boni, ubi eras? Quare non affuisti ut sanares vulnera mea?" The translation belongs to Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece*, 31.

134. Ibid., 31–32.

135. Based on stylistic and dendrochronological analysis, the consensus is that the project was initiated no later than 1490, when Jean d'Orliac, who is pictured at the foot of Saint Augustine to Anthony's right, retired from his post. Christian Heck and Roland Recht, *Les sculptures de Nicolas de Haguenau: Le retable d'Issenheim avant Grünewald* (Colmar: Musée d'Unterlinden, 1987). Heck repeats his conservational analysis later, in "De Nicolas de Haguenau à Grünewald: Origine et structure du retable d'Issenheim," in *Flügelaltäre des Späten Mittelalters*, ed. Hartmut Krohm and Eike Oellermann (Berlin: Reimer, 1992), 223–37. Regarding the sources in English, Hagenauer is mentioned only once and in passing in both Hayum's and Mellinkoff's monographs on the altarpiece. Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece*, 53; and Mellinkoff, *The Devil at Isenheim*, 2.

136. Wilhelm Vöge traces imitations of the flat wall of leaves ("das flächige Blätterwerk, das Motiv der Laubwand") in western and northern Swabian altarpieces completed much later, about 1520, in Oberndorf, Bönnigheim, and Besigheim. He also bemoaned the common impression of the sculptor's "schwache Stelle" (weak position) compared with that of the esteemed Grünewald. Vöge, *Niclas Hagnower der Meister des Isenheimer Hochaltars und seine Frühwerke* (Freiburg: Urban-Verlag, 1931), 1–12, 74; Hubach, "Nikolaus Hagenauer"; and Berenike Berentzen, *Niclaus Hagenower: Studien zum bildhauerischen Werk* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2014), 178–225, 278–83.

137. Chrisian Heck, "La partie sculptée du retable d'Issenheim: Bild d'une première analyse et problèmes de restauration," in Heck and Recht, *Les sculptures de Nicolas de Haguenau*, 48–69.

138. The celebration of the wood of the cross in the domestication of vines forms the subtext for the *Geistlicher Herbst* and *Geistliche Weinrebe* allegories, the autumnal pendants to the *Geistlicher Mai*. Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae* and *Vitis mystica* set the precedent for tandem devotional treatises that overlay religious themes on fall and spring imagery. Bryda, "Tree, Vine, and Herb," 191–261; Dietrich "Geistliche Weinrebe," in Schmidtke, *Die deutsche Literatur*, 1180–81; Seegets, *Passionstheologie*, 108–12; and Thomas, *Die Darstellung Christi*, 176–79.

139. The inscription to the drawing reads: "Ich pin Jhs daz kindlein und prin vil gutter jar in meinem körblein" (I am the Infant Jesus and bring a good year [a New Year's gift] in my little basket); Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fol. 261r. For more on the topic of New Year's greetings (*Neujahrsgrüße*), see Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*, 192ff.

140. Behling, *Die Pflanze*, 145; and Kühn, "Grünewalds Isenheimer Altar," 331. See also Pierre Bachoffner, "Bemerkungen zur Therapie des Antoniusfeuers," *Antoniner-Forum* 4 (1996): 82–89.

141. Beyond an inventory of the monastery from 1628 ("Isenheimer Visitationsprotokoll von 1628"), little is known about the reliquary. The identities of the relics installed in the T-cross were inscribed on a piece of blue silk. "De ligno sanctae crucis item sanctorum apostolorum Pauli, Bartholomei, Jacobi minoris; item de capite sancti Antonij; item de brachio et osse sancti Stephani. . . . Crux argentea semipedalis in forma figurae T. ex qua pendet cum catenula argentea minus T argenteum, in qua sunt reliquae incertae." The protocol is cited in Franz Xaver Kraus, *Kunst und Alterthum im Ober-Elsass* (Strasbourg: Schmidt, 1884), 190; and Heinrich Alfred Schmid, *Die Gemälde und Zeichnungen von Matthias Grünewald* (Strasbourg: Heinrich, 1911), 318.

142. Seegets, *Passionstheologie*, 91–92.

143. Fridolin, *Der geistliche Mai*, fols. 193v–194r: "Allso ermay dych dye drey wochen pegyrlich in den wolriecheten pluemen. . . . Erspacier dych hye wol pey dyssem holz des heylligen creuz. . . ."

144. Ian Hodder, "The Entanglements of Humans and Things: A Long-Term View," *New Literary History* 45, no. 1 (2014): 19–36.

145. Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece*, 28. Adjacent to the church, a large "*jardin*" is labeled on a plan of the Isenheim monastic complex.