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Fountains of Blood: Sanguine Devotion at Chateau de Boumois

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An abstract of
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Abstract

Fountains of Blood: Sanguine Devotion at Chateau de Boumois By Iain MacKay

In a sixteenth-century French stained-glass window originally from a private chapel, the crucified body of Christ hangs limply from the cross, his blood pouring from five wounds into an enormous golden fountain at his feet. A crowd of saints and laypeople reverently observe the scene, some even bathing in the crimson pools of blood. Crucifixion is not a bloody form of death, so the fantastical scene prompts the question: why is the *Fountain of Life* so vividly sanguine? Rooted in the experiences of women mystics and other marginalized religious adherents, the window exemplifies the devotional practice of blood ideology as a way of contact with the divine. Inextricable from this alternative form of devotional engagement is an examination of image theory and materiality. How did the *Fountain of Life* bridge religious orthodoxy and personal mysticism in animating and embodying the divine through light and color? Even beyond the magical and, at times, forbidden nature of Christ's blood, the window qua materia also contributes to shaping the devotional experience of the spectator. The glass itself becomes miraculous via its animate agency, paradoxical existence, and heavenly connotations. An iterative web of material and meaning thus simultaneously elucidates and mystifies the experience of contact with the divine through blood, light, and glass.

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Table of Contents

Fountains of Blood: Sanguine Devotion at Chateau de Boumois.....	pg. 1
Appendix A.....	pg. 33
Figures.....	pg. 34
Bibliography.....	pg. 48

“Salve plaga lateris nostri redemptoris / ex te enim profluit fons rosei coloris” [Hail wound in our savior’s side / a fountain of rosy color flows forth from you].¹ So begins the *Salva plaga lateris* hymn to the wounds of Christ crucified.² The evocative imagery and word choice of this prayer draw our attention to a particular presentation of Christ on the cross, one in which his blood flows freely from his five bodily wounds into a chalice or basin below him, offering eternal salvation to the faithful. Alternatively called a fountain of blood, fountain of life, or even fountain of youth, this imagery sprang to prominence in the fifteenth century.³ Executed in a variety of mediums, including prints, paintings, and metalwork, perhaps the most potent delivery of the fountain of blood theme can be found in stained glass. As Emile Mâle paradigmatically noted, “participation in the Passion became the principal act of Christian piety” in the fifteenth century onwards; what made glass particularly well-suited to this participation and the deliverance of sanguine salvation?⁴ In attempting to answer this question, I offer forth a striking sixteenth century stained-glass triptych from a small private chapel in France, the Chateau de Boumois *Fountain of Life* (figure 1).

In the central panel of the *Fountain of Life* triptych, the crucified body of Christ slumps from the cross while rivers of blood stream from his wounds into an enormous golden fountain at his feet. Though clothed only in a loincloth, Christ retains a strong sense of dignity and divinity, which is evident in the closed eyes and still expression of the recently deceased. A brilliant ruby

¹ *Northern English Books, Owners, and Makers in the Late Middle Ages*, trans. John B. Friedman (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 161.

² For more on the *Salva plaga lateris* hymn, see Sara Ritchey, “The Wound’s Presence and Bodily Absence: Activating the Spiritual Senses in a Fourteenth-Century Manuscript,” in *Sensory Reflections: Traces of Experience in Medieval Artifacts*, ed. Fiona Griffiths and Kathryn Starkey (De Gruyter, 2019), especially 172–173.

³ When referring to the general image or idea of Christ as a fountain source, I will use the term “fountain of blood,” as it can be understood as a purely descriptive phrase. When referring to particular works of art, I will use the historically traditional names given by collectors, curators, and scholars.

⁴ Emile Mâle, *L’art Religieux de La Fin Du Moyen Age: Étude Sur l’iconographie Du Moyen Age et Sur Ses Sources d’inspiration*, trans. Marthiel Matthews (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1922), 86.

halo around Christ's head is mirrored in the free-flowing streams of blood that drain smoothly from his body to pool in the fountain below. A different fluid—likely water—falls from Christ's feet and lightly froths as it splashes into the pool. In the uppermost basin, Adam and Eve gaze reverently up at Christ, Adam's hands brought together in prayer and Eve's folded across her breast. At the lowest point of this tub, four heads distribute the blood from the upper pool into a larger lower one. From left to right, the heads are an Eagle, Ox, Lion, and Angel (or man) representing the Evangelists John, Luke, Mark, and Matthew, respectively.

In the left panel of the *Fountain of Life*, the Virgin Mary stands on an arm of the structure reminiscent of a baptismal font or candelabra. Dressed in her traditional deep blue robe, she emerges from the quatrefoil spout as if she herself is the liquid of the fountain. Mary gazes towards Christ in the central panel and crosses her arms devoutly across her chest, mirroring Eve's pose in the central panel. Standing near the basin at her feet are two clergymen, identifiable by the staves they hold and the mitre on the front figure's head. On the left of the panel, below the Virgin, a group of three male figures observe patiently. The figure at the back appears older and is dressed more sumptuously than the younger boys in front of him. Perhaps the collection of three figures represents different social classes. The next boy, almost directly under the Virgin, mirrors her pose, also copying Eve's pose by proxy. The boy closest to the foreground holds an article of clothing draped over his arm and is dressed only in undergarments, suggesting he is about to enter the pool of blood, as another naked boy has already done. There is no daintiness or reserve to the naked boy in an impossible sea of blood. His hand on the edge of the basin creates a sense of expansive space, like a swimmer in a pool.

The right panel of the triptych is dominated by Saint John the Evangelist, who rises from a fountain arm in the same manner as the Virgin Mary. At his feet are clerical figures like those

found in the left panel; the clerics are accompanied by Mary Magdalene at the far left. On the right of the panel is a man dressed in red and carrying a staff, but it is unclear if this golden rod is a walking stick, liturgical scepter, or some other object. Near this man is a nude male who has hoisted one leg over the edge of the fountain and prepares to step into the liquid. A similar figure on the other side of the basin also appears to be unrobed in anticipation of bathing in Christ's blood. The final figure in the panel kneels in the bottom right. Dressed in a rich purple robe, the figure appears to be religiously affiliated. He holds an unidentified object, possibly a censer or scourge, the former used for the distribution of liturgical scents and the latter associated with self-flagellation.

At the top of all three panels in the triptych are illusionistic arches with flanking grotesques and crowning medallions containing youthful angelic faces. Each panel is also surmounted by a spade- or teardrop-shaped arrangement of glass. In the left panel, an angel with green wings holds a naker or toph.⁵ These small drum instruments were intended to be portable and were often associated with Jewish travelers. As a counterpoint on the right, another angel, this one with blue wings, plays a flute. The two instruments contribute an aural component to the work, suggesting an experience that moves beyond the visual alone. The teardrop aperture above Christ is figureless, instead depicting two portals forming a hallway in vivid red.

Originally, the *Fountain of Life* was surmounted by additional tracery. A black and white photo from 1895 is the only remaining evidence of this portion of the tracery components (figure 2). Due to the poor quality and light exposure of the photo, only a few vignettes from the tracery can be concretely identified. On the left, Saint Veronica is depicted in a traditional manner, as

⁵ Bob Jones University Museum, "Set of Five Stained Glass Windows."

she is holding a veil imprinted with Christ's face. According to later Christian tradition, Veronica offered Christ the cloth to wipe his face as he carried the cross to Calvary. Christ accepted the offer and when he returned the veil, his face was miraculously imprinted upon it.⁶ In the space opposite Veronica, a column is visible and could be the column to which Christ was tied and flagellated. At the top of the tracery are two angels who hold instruments of the Passion. Smaller panels on the sides are indiscernible, but an account of the windows in situ from 1858 suggests that they depicted angels singing.⁷ Taken as a whole, the tracery seems to enhance the message of the triptych by depicting the instruments of the Passion and scenes from Christ's final days.

Other small details serve to unite the three physically distinct lancets into a cohesive narrative and message. Painted stippled foliage decorates much of the green glass that serves as a landscape or ground plane. From a distance, the paint serves as an effective floral conceit, though the illusion dissolves into imprecise brush impressions upon closer inspection. Architectural features are almost invariably decorated with a repeated motif of two vertical lines. These lines serve the dual purpose of adding depth to the two-dimensional surface of the glass and unifying the disparate structural elements.

With each panel measuring approximately ninety-four inches tall and twenty-one inches wide, the *Fountain of Life* is a moderately sized stained-glass work. The glass was commissioned in the middle of the sixteenth century and was originally installed in the private chapel of the

⁶ Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art: The Passion of Jesus Christ*, trans. Janet Seligman, vol. 2 (Greenwich, C.T.: New York Graphic Society, Ltd., 1972) 78–79. There is no story of a holy veil relic in the Bible though the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus identifies a woman healed by touching Christ's robe (Luke 8:43–8:48, Matthew 9:20–9:22, and Mark 5:25–5:34, Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition) as Veronica. Roger d'Argenteuil's thirteenth century *Bible in French* is the first source that ties a figure named Veronica to the miraculous transformation of the veil. The legend gained popularity during the early fourteenth century before becoming a station of the cross.

⁷ X. Barbier de Montault, "Le Chateau: La Terre, Le Prieuré et Les Chapellenies de Boumois," *Répertoire Archéologique de l'Anjou*, (1858): 94.

Chateau de Boumois in France's Loire Valley (figure 3). The size of the *Fountain of Life* window thus matches the scale of the relatively small devotional space. The workshop or creator of the work is unknown, though inconclusive attempts have been made to identify the artist.⁸ The stained-glass panels—many of which are painted with silver stain—are joined with lead.

In addition to the now lost tracery from the apex of the lancets, many components of the *Fountain of Life* have been restored or replaced. Some of these restorations appear to have occurred after the triptych's removal from Boumois, as the image from 1895 shows missing panels throughout the piece. Significantly, the entire lower portion of the central lancet is shown as clear glass in the historical image. Now, three unidentified coats of arms decorate the central base of the fountain. The coats of arms are described in provenance documentation as follows, "(left) a per fess azure and gules in base a star of six points argent, (center) a quarterly 1 argent a bend gules 2 and 3 cheque sable and argent 4 gules, (right) vair a bend azure."⁹ The 1895 picture also shows many damaged panels in the lower left and a missing angelic face above Saint John. Correspondence between Bob Jones University and a representative for French and Company, Inc. imply that the window was restored to how it was believed to have originally looked before being shipped to the university.¹⁰

However, further damage occurred after the *Fountain of Life* arrived in South Carolina. Shortly after receiving the work at the Bob Jones Museum in 1956, a heavy windstorm blew into a storage area and knocked the window over, causing damage.¹¹ Though not specified in

⁸ Provenance documentation suggests that the work was made near its in situ installation in the Loire, though does not identify specific workshops. For more information, see Bob Jones University Museum, "Set of Five Lancets."

⁹ Bob Jones University, "Fountain of Life Description" includes an inconclusive attempt to identify these heraldic shields.

¹⁰ Bob Jones University, "May 7, 1956 French Company" and Bob Jones University, "May 12, 1956 BJJR."

¹¹ Bob Jones University, "July 4, 1956 BJJR" and Bob Jones University, "July 6, 1956 Mitchell Samuels."

museum paperwork, the damaged areas may be identified in the mantle of the front clerical figure by the Virgin. The long red stripe is clearly a later addition and does not successfully replicate the texture of the glass, as other restorations do. I mention these restorations and damages as a caution against reading certain individual components of the work—particularly in the lower registers—as vested with exclusively powerful iconographical or symbolic power. While the precise details of the *Fountain of Life* may be lost to time and wear, the overall impression conveyed by the main lancets has changed little despite alterations. The more influential component is the missing Passion imagery formerly provided by the tracery.

Understanding the function, reception, and use of the *Fountain of Life* window relies heavily upon Medieval conceptions of sight and vision. As the authority on sight and vision for over a millennium, Saint Augustine's frameworks were evoked throughout the Middle Ages.¹² His theory encompasses both ordinary and supernatural seeing over three categories: corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual.¹³ As the lowest category, corporeal vision encompasses things that are “perceived through the body and presented to the senses of the body.”¹⁴ The next category, spiritual, involves a sort of imagination; “vision by which we represent in thought the images of bodies even in their absence.”¹⁵ The highest form of vision, intellectual, is characterized by “transparent truth . . . seen without any bodily likeness.”¹⁶ Patterns of Augustinian viewing were rarely overtly present in the creation and reception of art, but should be understood as

¹² St. Bonaventure, for example, reiterates an Augustinian conception of vision with only minor word substitutions in his thirteenth century work *De Oculo Morali*. Susannah Biernoff, “Flesh,” in *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 17–39, 25.

¹³ See, Biernoff, “Flesh,” 25–26 and Sixten Ringbom, “Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions: Notes on the Place of Art in Late Medieval Private Pity,” *Gazette Des Beaux-Arts / Fond Par Charles Blanc* (1969): 159–70, 162.

¹⁴ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. J.H. Taylor (New York: Newman Press, 1982) 186 (12.7.16).

¹⁵ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 214 (12.24.51)

¹⁶ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 190 (12.10.21). The illuminating quote, “If we read the sentence ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’ we see the letters corporeally, think of our neighbor spiritually, and perceive Love intellectually,” is offered as illustration of the three forms of vision.

inextricably bound in a cultural framework of seeing. In the case of the Boumois windows, the figures might be seen corporeally, imagined spiritually, and cognized intellectually.

The standard scholarly understanding of attitudes towards vision during the Medieval period was that one should strive to ascend from corporeal seeing to intellectual seeing, using spiritual seeing as a way to bridge the otherwise insurmountable divide between corporeal and intellectual. Jeffrey Hamburger, Reindert Falkenburg, Susannah Biernoff, and other scholars have suggested, however, that attitudes towards vision were more complex than has been assumed.¹⁷ As Hamburger suggests, adhering religiously in both the literal and metaphorical sense to later Medieval theoretical texts strips devotional art from its earned legitimacy.¹⁸ Rather than viewing devotional images as vulgar perversions of religious theory, art occupied a highly influential role as valuable guide to devotion, so long as the image was “seen through” rather than seen directly. It is necessary to further recognize that neither clerical nor lay attitudes and beliefs were monolithic; the Medieval period was teeming with divergent, contradictory, and even paradoxical devotional microcosms.

Within the *Fountain of Life* window, the forms of vision are indirectly represented in the gathered figures. Some figures, especially the laity, are primarily focused on the pool of blood, the corporeal manifestation of Christ. Some of the more enlightened laity and clerical figures gaze up at the saints or Adam and Eve, suggesting spiritual vision. The saints and Adam and Eve themselves all look upon Christ directly, though it is not true looking upon, but looking through.

¹⁷ See Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Jeffrey Hamburger, “The Visual and the Visionary: The Image in Late Medieval Monastic Devotions,” *Viator* 20 (1989): 161–82; Reindert L. Falkenburg, “Hieronymus Bosch’s Mass of St. Gregory and ‘Sacramental Vision’,” in *Das Bild Der Erscheinung. Die Gregorsmesse Im Mittelalter*, ed. A Gormans and T. Lentjes (Berlin, 2007), 179–206; Ringbom, “Devotional Images”; and David S. Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe*, Visual Culture in Early Modernity (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2010).

¹⁸ Hamburger, “The Visual and the Visionary,” 166.

Their gaze is indicative of intellectual vision in its aspirations beyond the physical. Despite Christ's visual depiction, his presence is only an imperfect reminder of a divine ideal of salvation that is ultimately imageless. The vision of the figures in the *Fountain of Life* seems to present a form of contingent vision, which emphasizes the fictive image as connected and drawn close to the consciousness of the viewer.¹⁹ By depicting figures engaged in the various forms of seeing, the triptych prompts the viewer to reflect on their own seeing and how it might mirror or diverge from that of the fictive figures. In contrast to many of the figures in the glass, the viewer is afforded a level of holistic understanding that could have prompted recognition of the shortsightedness of the figures engaged in lower forms of seeing, encouraging the viewer to self-reflect in turn. Contingent vision in the window thus provides the viewer with models of seeing and encourages them to look up, through, and finally beyond the glass. In this way, the window becomes the threshold of a meditative or contemplative journey of vision.

The rise of mysticism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries seems to have contributed to a proliferation of private devotional images and their key role in worship.²⁰ Women mystics—already beset by systemic challenges from religious institutions—were especially aware that doubt was often cast on their spiritual visions. To Gertrude, a thirteenth-century nun at the Saxon convent of Helfta, her visions combined both intense visual, audial, and tactile sensations with an overwhelming impression of contact with the imageless divine.²¹ Similarly, the fourteenth century nun Adelheid von Frauenberg wrote of her desire to be martyred for Christ. She asked that her kerchief be used for his diaper, her veins woven into a dress for him, her flesh used up

¹⁹ For more information on contingent vision and the role it plays in late Medieval art, especially the Passion and Infancy, see Alfred Acres, *Renaissance Invention and the Haunted Infancy* (London: Harvey Miller Publ, 2013) 120-121.

²⁰ Ringbom, "Devotional Images," 165–166.

²¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011) 102–103.

for all sinners, and most thought-provoking in the context of this paper, her blood poured out for his bath.²² Accounts such as Adelheid's clearly complicate historiographies of imageless devotion. Veins become thread, and blood becomes bathwater, mixing physical and metaphysical in a paradoxical mire. Corporeal sight seems to thus contribute beyond being a simple gateway or intermediary step on the way to intellectual vision.²³

Although overlooked in scholarship due to the separation and likely destruction of the tracery, Passion symbolism is key to understanding the performative devotional function of the *Fountain of Life*. The contemporary viewer could see Christ on the cross and empathize with his plight: he suffered an excruciating death at the hands of imperfect sinners. The image also encourages personal insertion. After all, the viewer is an imperfect sinner like those who crucified Christ. The narrative is further personalized by the collapse of space and time. Christ is not depicted martyred on Golgotha many centuries ago. He appears directly before the viewer in their own time and their own space.²⁴ The Passion imagery of the tracery is critical in reminding the viewer that Christ suffered greatly in sacrificing himself for humanity. The cleansing and purifying blood that is visually received is spilled through the violence alluded to in the tracery. Christ's death alone is not what offers salvation to the sinner. A deeper empathy with the suffering of Christ—made possible through sight—is necessary.

Even the form of Christ represented in the triptych alludes to vision and visionary. Christ is depicted as the Man of Sorrows, who has already passed into death, yet whose suffering has only recently subsided. This is confirmed by the fact that Christ is still depicted on the cross

²² Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 103.

²³ For more on the corporeal component of women mystic experience see Maile S. Hutterer, "Illuminating the Sunbeam through Glass Motif," *Word & Image* 38, no. 4 (October 2, 2022): 407–34, especially 422–429.

²⁴ For more information on the presentation of holy images removed from space and time, see John L. Ward, "Hidden Symbolism in Jan van Eyck's Annunciations," *The Art Bulletin* 57, no. 2 (1975): 208–220.

before his Deposition, but with the wound in his side opened, which only occurred postmortem. The Man of Sorrows iconography was understood as a vision that was presented to Pope Gregory the Great at Santa Croce in Gerusalemme as he was celebrating mass.²⁵ Although the legend of the Man of Sorrows appears apocryphal—Gregory’s hagiographies do not include it and even Jacobus de Voraigne fails to mention it at the end of the thirteenth century—it attracted immediate and intense devotional attention when pilgrims brought it to France in the early fourteenth century.²⁶ The Boumois *Fountain of Life* should thus be understood not as a historical depiction of events at Golgotha, but as a literal visualization of Gregory’s vision.

It is significant to recognize the interplay of vision and materiality in glass as mutually amplifying. If images are meant to guide the viewer to higher levels of vision—that is, they are to be seen through, to something beyond, rather than seen as—then a translucent substance is the perfect medium. It adds depth to an otherwise two-dimensional object through the light that pierces it, animating the scene in the process. This single property of translucency is alone enough to set glass apart from other mediums of religious art. Paintings, prints, sculptures, and all other forms of religious art actively resist penetration by light. The nearly translucent layers of oil paint in Jan van Eyck’s *Ghent Altarpiece*, for example, permit some layering of light, but this is ultimately a concession by the oil paint, brilliantly wrested from the medium by van Eyck’s masterful hand. In contrast, the *Fountain of Life* welcomes the interpenetration of light. The light does not transform the medium, like it might in oil painting, but the medium of glass transforms the light itself.

²⁵ Mâle, *L’art Religieux*, 95. For more on the Man of Sorrows motif, see Falkenburg, “Sacramental Vision.”

²⁶ Mâle, *L’art Religieux*, 96.

Crucially, stained glass is only translucent, not transparent. Corporeal vision alone cannot pierce the window to access something beyond; the translucent nature of the glass visually detaches the world beyond the chapel from the space within. Paradoxically, light itself enhances vision, but without corporeal vision of the world beyond the chapel to turn to, the viewer is instead prompted by the glass to consider higher forms of vision. Therefore, spiritual and intellectual vision must be employed in addition to corporeal seeing to comprehend the full devotional power of stained glass. In obstructing physical vision outside the space of devotion, the *Fountain of Life* also encourages the viewer to look inwards. Knowledge of the divine is intimated via the window by way of light and the viewer cannot help but be reminded that the image is a path to something greater.

Another theoretical space in which to expand our understanding of the visionary and material interplay of the window pertains to time. Like another similar sanguine altarpiece of the time, the 1499-1505 *Altarpiece of the Holy Blood* from Riemenschneider, the *Fountain of Life* harnesses light as a medium (figure 4).

To see Riemenschneider making a virtue of the circumstances... one needs a full day, not to examine detail but to let the sun run its course. During the day the altarpiece goes through a cycle of transformation and Riemenschneider's mastery emerges as a manipulation of light, which is as much a medium as wood.²⁷

Unlike the unpainted *Altarpiece of the Holy Blood*, however, the *Fountain of Life* insists upon color as conveyor of exegetical meaning. The Boumois window would appear to evolve over the course of the day in response to the Purkinje shift, a perceptual phenomenon in which different colors of glass are most brightly illuminated at different times of the day.²⁸ Blue, as the color most compatible with low light, would glow in the earliest rays of dawn, well before other

²⁷ Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980) 189.

²⁸ Madeline Caviness, "Stained Glass Windows in Gothic Chapels, and the Feasts of the Saints," in *Kunst Und Liturgie Im Mittelalter*, ed. Nicholas Bock et al. (Rome, 2000), 141.

colors— especially red, which requires high light—became similarly resplendent.²⁹ The only significant expanse of blue in the triptych is reserved for the robes of the Virgin, thus drawing attention to the physical source of Christ. Like the window of Saint Etienne at Chartres, Boumois' *Fountain of Life* faces roughly north (figure 5).³⁰ Claudine Lautier discusses how the Purkinje shift would apply particularly vividly to reds in windows with this orientation during morning and evening.³¹ Therefore, we can imagine the chapel as bathed in an ethereal crimson wash during common times of devotion. The temporal narrative created by moving from the Virgin in the earliest light to Christ's blood during the day evokes the Haunted Infancy, in which we are reminded of Christ's sacrifice through its juxtaposition with the Virgin and Christ child.³² There is even a further iconological link between the times of brightest illumination, the color of the glass, and the crucifixion imagery. Given the window's most resplendent vermilion display at the beginning and end of the day, the viewer would be prompted to reflect on the imagery as Christ's personal sunset, but his sacrifice as a sunrise heralding a new age of forgiveness for sin. The metaphorical blood of Christ could be seen painted on the altar and walls in divine light.

The making of glass is an inherently transformative process that creates a resplendent medium from simple sand. Giles of Rome recognized this explicitly when considering whether alchemical creation of gold is possible; he likened the transmutation of simple metals to the

²⁹ Caviness, "Stained Glass Windows in Gothic Chapels," 141.

³⁰ The north-west orientation of the window in situ at Boumois is relatively unorthodox. Considering the small size of the chapel, I believe that the most likely explanation for the strange facing is simple pragmatism. The estate of Boumois was not organized around the chapel. In fact, the chapel is appended to the end of the main building, almost as if by afterthought. For these reasons, I believe that the demands of the topography and architectural siting likely subsumed the traditional orientation of religious space.

³¹ Claudine Lautier, "La Polychromie de La Cathédral de Chartres et Le Vitrail," in *Licht(t)Räume: Festschrift Für Brigitte Kurmann-Schwarz Zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Katharina Georgi and Brigitte Kurmann-Schwarz, Studien Zur Internationalen Architektur- Und Kunstgeschichte (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2016), 128.

³² See Acres, *Haunted Infancy*, for more information on the Haunted Infancy motif in art.

creation of glass.³³ In fact, a parallel between gold and glass is well-established in the Bible; Job 28:17 equates the two materials in value saying “Gold or crystal cannot equal [heaven].”³⁴ The kindred value of glass and gold in relation to the divine is further established in Revelations 21:21: “And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”³⁵ Bynum interprets Giles—and by way of his influence, most early Medieval thinkers—as saying that all production, be it organic or mechanical, is ultimately a form of generation.³⁶ Expanding the ideological tradition, Aristotle’s *On Generation and Corruption* held considerable sway later in the Medieval period.³⁷ One of the most sustained ideas Aristotle espoused concerns the nature of matter and claims that matter must not be a real thing in itself, or it would be incapable of change. Because matter is capable of fundamental change, such as from sand into glass, matter must be seen as dynamic and metaphysical. Its metaphysical properties were increasingly interpreted in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as animacy.³⁸ With animacy came a belief in the autonomy of some materials; it was believed that the materials actively participated in creation. The *Fountain of Life* glass would thus be seen as a viewer not as a static lifeless material, but as an active participant in creation and devotion.

The wondrous agency of glass was further underscored by what was seen as a volatile combination of the four elements.³⁹ Glass was understood by Plato as composed of water and

³³ Giles of Rome, *B. Aegidii Columnae Romani... Quodlibeta revisa, correctata, ete varie illustrata, studio M. F. Petri de Coninck*, (Louvain, 1646) 147-149, cited in Bynum, *Christian Materiality*.

³⁴ DRA, Job 28:17.

³⁵ DRA, Revelations 21:21.

³⁶ Bynum, *Christian Materiality* 232–233.

³⁷ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 234–237.

³⁸ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 237.

³⁹ For a full consideration of the historical views on the elemental properties of glass see Francesca dell’Acqua, “Between Nature and Artifice: ‘Transparent Streams of New Liquid,’” *RES* 53/54 (2014): 93–103.

earth, formed by fire.⁴⁰ Although Plato makes no mention of air, Pliny rectifies this in incorporating the process of glassblowing—which was unknown at the time of Plato’s writing—to the process of glass creation.⁴¹ In extrapolating the inclusion of air further, we might understand it as the medium through which light, undeniably crucial in the performance of stained glass, is carried. Stained glass as a combination of all four elements marks itself as mirroring the construction of the human body according to the four Medieval humors, with each humor corresponding to an element. Thus, glass was situated as a tantalizingly paradoxical living material ripe to transmit complex exegetical content.

In a similar vein, the evangelists who distribute blood from the upper basin of the fountain to the lower one may also underscore the significance of glass as a material and indicate why Boumois possessed a luminous altarpiece. Each evangelist is biblically associated with one of the four rivers of paradise, and each river is associated with a precious stone; Jan van Eyck carried this paradisiacal exegesis to its literal extreme by embedding the surface of the Ghent Altarpiece with physical stones.⁴² Van Eyck also painted a Fountain of Life scene in which redemption is facilitated by divinely bestowed lustrous stones (figure 6).⁴³ Since antiquity, glass has been associated with precious stones, crystals, or jewels.⁴⁴ Revelations 4:6 directly alludes to this in saying “And in the sight of the throne was, as it were, a sea of glass like to crystal.”⁴⁵ Later in Revelations, crystal and glass appear again: “And he shewed me a river of water of life,

⁴⁰ Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. H.D.P Lee (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), 61b.

⁴¹ Dell’Acqua, “Between Nature and Artifice,” 93.

⁴² Wolfgang Christian Schneider, “The Sparkling Stones in the Ghent Altarpiece and the Fountain of Life of Jan van Eyck, Reflecting Cusanus and Jan van Ruusbroecc,” *Studies in Spirituality* 24 (2014): 155.

⁴³ Wolfgang Christian Schneider, “Sparkling Stones,” 163.

⁴⁴ Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “Crystalline Bodies: Fragments of a Cultural History of Glass,” *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 20, no. 2 (2013): 173–194, 176.

⁴⁵ DRA

clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.”⁴⁶ Thus, an iterative web of material and meaning is generated by the depiction of the evangelists in glass, a material associated with precious gems, which are in turn associated with the rivers of paradise, which returns us to the evangelists themselves. Furthermore, beyond Christ’s blood, the red glass is overwhelmingly associated in the *Fountain of Life* with clergy members. In this way, the church can be seen as an extension of the salvation offered by Christ’s blood, which is delivered via the evangelists and distributed even more broadly by the religious order.

Jeffrey Schnapp offers the term “metaglass” to describe the volatile contradictions glass contains.⁴⁷ “Its physics is paradoxical, combining fullness with emptiness, solidity with permeability, fluidity with strength.”⁴⁸ As the wound in Christ’s side is often considered a liminal space between the realm of the beholder and the sacred promise of salvation, blood can be seen as the direct material composition of salvation.⁴⁹ Normally kept at bay by skin, the rupture of skin allows blood to burst forth. With this conception in mind, the choice of stained glass to depict Christ’s pools of blood seems particularly apropos. Much like skin, glass serves as a membrane.⁵⁰ Both materials allow the incorporeal to pass through unimpeded while preventing the intrusion or extrusion of physical matter. Likewise, while the material of stained glass might impede physical and visual passage, it maintains the possibility of higher spiritual and divine levels of movement. This parallels Christ’s dual nature as corporeal and divine. The *salva plaga lateris* hymn, for example, stresses Christ’s side wound as a portal between his physical

⁴⁶ DRA. Though translated as crystal in the Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition, many other translations use glass instead of crystal.

⁴⁷ Schnapp, “Crystalline Bodies,” 178.

⁴⁸ Schnapp, “Crystalline Bodies,” 178.

⁴⁹ Vibeke Olson, “Penetrating the Void: Picturing the Wound in Christ’s Side as a Performative Space,” in *Wounds and Wound Repair in Medieval Culture*, ed. Larissa Tracy and Kelly DeVries (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 333.

⁵⁰ Herbert L. Kessler, “‘They Preach Not by Speaking out Loud but by Signifying’: Vitreous Arts as Typology,” *Gesta* 51, no. 1 (2012): 55–70, 58–59.

manifestation and the divinity within.⁵¹ Glass is thus the ideal material to capture the divine mysteries of the Trinity and Christ's dual nature as the word of God incarnate.

Despite the burgeoning sanguinity of religious experiences in the later Medieval period, Caroline Walker Bynum has drawn particular attention to the fact that crucifixion is not a bloody form of death, an observation many other scholars have echoed.⁵² A vast majority of victims of crucifixion died from asphyxiation rather than external bodily mutilation. The biblical account of Christ is no exception. Only a single mention of Christ's blood is made while Christ was on the cross, in John 19:34: "But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water."⁵³ Even in this instance, however, Christ is already dead. Despite the clear lack of biblical precedent for a bloody Christ, the middle to late Medieval period is steeped in sanguine imagery, often violently so, as a fifteenth century folio from Raymund of Capua's *Life of St. Catherine of Siena* demonstrates (figure 7). From where, then, does the explosion and proliferation of bloodied images of the crucified Christ arise?

The general prominence of blood ideology in the late Medieval period is linked to a number of factors. With the gradual splintering of religious ideologies and Christian denominations came a variety of conflicting beliefs over the nature and properties of the blood of Christ. Blood cults became a common phenomenon, especially in northern Europe, and venerated relics such as vials containing Christ's blood supposedly spilled during the Passion. In general, debates over Christ's blood and blood relics can be condensed to the question: is the blood of Christ separate from Christ as the word of God made flesh? If the blood is separate from

⁵¹ Ritchey, "The Wound's Presence and Bodily Absence," 172–173.

⁵² Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 1.

⁵³ DRA, John 19:34.

the word of God, then it does not possess the necessary sanctity to be worshipped as a relic. However, if the blood is synonymous with the word of God made flesh, then that would imply that it is obligatory to venerate blood relics. The debate was complicated by issues over the ascension of Christ into heaven. When Christ ascended, did his blood, even the blood which was spilled, accompany him? Finally, many theologians acknowledged a difference between blood of the Passion, which was directly spilled by Christ, and miraculous blood objects. The latter category of blood includes blood which inexplicably pours forth from inanimate yet deeply holy statues, images, or spaces.⁵⁴

Blood cults frequently competed directly with traditional communion ceremonies for the eucharistic attention of the laity. Sight remained an important component for personal devotion, but a general craving for more direct interaction with Christ was widespread.⁵⁵ Discomforted by the clamoring for greater agency, the early fifteenth century (1414–1418) Council of Constance denied the laity the right to drink from the communion cup, an experience previously available to laymen. Predictably, this only further increased demand for alternative means of experiencing Christ's salvific blood. In the Medieval treatise *A Talkyng of the Loue of God*, the author writes,

I see You so piteously hanging on the cross, Your body all covered with blood... I leap at [Christ] as swiftly as a greyhound at a hart, quite beside myself, in loving manner... I suck the blood from his feet... I embrace and I kiss, as if I was mad... And when I am sated, I want yet more. Then I feel that blood in my

⁵⁴ The nature of Christ's blood is important primarily as a contextual and framing device for the scholarship undertaken in this paper. See M.D. Chenu, "Sang Du Christ," *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique* 14 (1939): 1094–97 for a concise but thorough summary of debates over holy blood. Bynum's *Wonderful Blood* stands as the preeminent textual authority on this topic.

⁵⁵ For more information on Augenkommunion – the reception of the eucharist via sight – see Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages," *Church History* 71, no. 4. (December 2002). For more information about the role of sight in devotional practices more broadly, see Ingrid Falque, *Devotional Portraiture and Spiritual Experience in Early Netherlandish Painting* (Boston: Brill, 2019); Georgia Frank, "'Taste and See': The Eucharist and the Eyes of Faith in the Fourth Century," *Church History* 70, no. 4 (December 2001): 619–43; Sixten Ringbom, "Devotional Images," 159–70 in play; and Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

imagination as it were bodily warm on my lips and the flesh on his feet in front and behind so soft and so sweet to kiss.⁵⁶

Passages such as this one with its vividly sanguine and borderline erotic content indicate the importance of the personal devotional experience with Christ on the cross and the power and role of his blood.

A precedent for the turn towards blood as a eucharistic alternative seems to have been set by women mystics, who had always been denied the opportunity to drink from the communion cup. If the wine in the cup is miraculously transformed into Christ's blood during the sacrament, then what better way for the devout to legitimately experience this than by going straight to the blood's source? In *The Life of Beatrice of Nazareth*, the saint is recorded as being inundated in Christ's blood after consuming the communion wafer. "It seemed to her that all the blood that flowed from his wounds was poured into her soul, and that all the drops of that precious liquid were so sprinkled on it that it was wholly washed by these drops and most perfectly cleansed from all the dust of sin."⁵⁷ This desire for intimate contact underscores the performative function of blood. Therefore, forms of engagement with Christ's blood beyond the communion cup were critical to personal devotional practices in the late Medieval period.

Christ's blood as a space of divine contact offered a distinct advantage; it was readily available. The Proto-Indo-European etymology of the word blood even suggests its ubiquity and prominence: blood is derived from *bhel* meaning "to swell or burst forth."⁵⁸ Church orthodoxy itself inherently provisioned the seemingly infinite multiplication of Christ's blood through Eucharistic Sacrament. More controversial was the replication of blood relics—in some cases

⁵⁶ *A Talkyng of the Loue of God*, trans. M. Salvina Westra (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950) 61.

⁵⁷ *The Life of Beatrice of Nazareth*, trans. Roger de Ganck (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 276-279.

⁵⁸ Online Etymology Dictionary, "bhel," accessed January 29, 2023.

literally duplicating themselves.⁵⁹ Blood also frequently appeared through a sort of miraculous spontaneous generation, splashing from spilled Eucharistic chalices or flowing from holy images. Significantly, both clerical and laity frequently made no differentiation between the source of the blood, whether original, duplicated, or miraculously generated; the Wienhausen Cloister did not even bother recording the source or type of their blood relic, despite the convent's evident pride in its power.⁶⁰ The lack of hierarchy concerning Christ's blood seems uncharacteristic in an age dominated by ideologic ordering and competition.⁶¹ The perceived identity and disinterest in differentiation is precisely, however, what made Christ's blood such an appealing devotional target for broader publics.

Fountain of blood imagery is closely linked with the mystic winepress, a depiction of Christ largely exclusive to northern Europe. In these imaginative images, Christ is shown being crushed in a large winepress; sometimes the figure is freestanding and other times he grasps the press itself as if it were the cross (figure 8). Christ is often shown surrounded by saints, as the screws of the press are turned by the gathered figures, or, occasionally, by God himself. As Christ is viscerally macerated between the boards, his blood spills out into a waiting receptacle or chalice, sometimes held directly by the work's donor or another iconologically significant figure. A clear reference to communion wine permeates mystic winepress imagery. Christ himself becomes the grapes to create the communion wine which are transformed back into the blood of Christ. Simultaneously, the relationship is inverted. Christ's blood directly flows into the chalice, serving unmediated as the wine. That the Man of Sorrows appeared to Pope Gregory

⁵⁹ Chenu, "Sang du Christ," 1095.

⁶⁰ Bynum, "The Blood of Christ," 694.

⁶¹ A lack of hierarchy did not stop blood relics from being used as symbols and weapons of political power. For an emblematically famous case study on the topic, see Nicholas Vincent, *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

the Great as he prepared to celebrate mass further underscores a eucharistic connection at Boumois. It is important to note, however, that the *Fountain of Life* does not depict the faithful imbibing Christ's blood, only bathing in it. While a clear eucharistic link exists through the history of the mystic winepress, the placement of the triptych behind the altar, and the connection to the legend of the Man of Sorrows, the window should not be understood as an exclusively sacramental image.

The link between fountain of blood and mystic winepress imagery is revealing of the devotional function of the Boumois triptych. The window was placed behind the altar where the eucharist would have been consecrated in the private chapel, though photographs suggest that the limitations of the space would have meant the basin in the window was roughly visually level with the physical altar. In this way, the *Fountain of Life* can be seen as a luminous extension of the altar.⁶² During the sacrament, the physical wine of the chalice could be understood as transforming into the blood of Christ represented in the window. Furthermore, the qualities of light through glass are especially well suited to elucidating the exegetic mystery of host multiplication. Translucent glass possesses prismatic properties, which causes light to be gathered and focused into small bundles before emanating forth.⁶³ Although the overall amount of light remains fixed, stained glass creates the impression of intensification and multiplication; Charles Connick describes light through glass as “spreading, radiating, and consuming blackness.” At Boumois, light seen as divine would penetrate the *Fountain of Life* and appear to

⁶² Paul Crossley convincingly argues for the programmatic unity of devotional association in “The Man from Inner Space: Architecture and Meditation in the Choir of St Laurence in Nuremberg,” in *Medieval Art: Recent Perspectives*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Timothy Graham (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998), 165–82. Especially considering a small private chapel, with a contemporaneous date of construction and decoration, it seems particularly apropos to consider the *Fountain of Life* in conversation with its space.

⁶³ Charles Connick, *Adventures in Light and Color* (New York: Random House, 1937), 22.

replicate, paralleling the miraculous replication of the body and blood of Christ that was understood to have occurred during the Sacrament.

An early iconographic study of fountain of blood imagery notes that typically the fountain contains two basins: an upper basin of life and a lower basin of mercy.⁶⁴ This matches the visual and symbolic presentation at Boumois. Many Byzantine and early Medieval images of Christ on the cross placed Adam's skull or tombstone at the base of the cross on Golgotha.⁶⁵ In the Boumois *Fountain of Life*, Adam appears in the basin of life directly below Christ, recalling the biblical passage "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."⁶⁶ The ultimate power of Christ's blood is thus alluded to in the resurrection of Adam and the replacement of Adam's skull or tomb with the embodied, worshipping, and living man.

The lower pool of the fountain of blood is typically identified as the basin of mercy.⁶⁷ In the Boumois window, it is the four evangelists who directly disperse blood from the upper basin into the lower one. This representation dispels the idea that the imagery is a simple allegory for the eucharist, as Evelyn Underhill points out that "any doctrine which represented the saints as contributing to the efficacy of these mysteries would clearly be heresy as well as nonsense."⁶⁸ The saints instead can be seen as distributors of Christ's divine providence; Adam and Eve are ministered directly by Christ in the upper basin, while the son of God's wisdom is channeled through the evangelists who serve as fountainheads for the common man. Adam and Eve as the first benefactors of Christ's sacrifice is apropos in recalling the Harrowing of Hell, wherein

⁶⁴ Evelyn Underhill, "The Fountain of Life: An Iconographical Study," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 17, no. 86 (1910): 99–109.

⁶⁵ Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art: The Passion of Jesus Christ*, trans. Janet Seligman, vol. 2 (Greenwich, C.T.: New York Graphic Society, Ltd., 1972), 131.

⁶⁶ DRA, 1 Corinthians 15:22.

⁶⁷ Underhill, "Fountain of Life," 102.

⁶⁸ Underhill, "Fountain of Life," 104.

Christ spiritually descended to hell to free the souls of Adam and Eve (along with other sinners) during his three days of death in the tomb.

At Boumois, the *Fountain of Life* stood in an aperture behind the altar, facing to the northeast. Four other lancets also accompanied the *Fountain of Life*. The northwest wall was adorned with a donor panel depicting René de Thory's on the left and a Deposition scene on the right (figure 9). The southeast wall contained a donor panel of Françoise du Plessis—René's first wife—on the right and an image of the Virgin and Child on the left (figure 10). The southwest wall of the chapel connected the space to the main body of the chateau. The modest size of the chapel meant that the collection of seven lancets provided all the light necessary for the space; there are no other openings besides a small square portal well above the triptych on the northeast side—this opening was likely added during renovations in the mid-seventeenth century.⁶⁹ A photo of Stanford White's New York studio from c. 1906 shows the Deposition on the left of the triptych and the donor lancet on the right (figure 11). At Bob Jones University Museum, the two lancets were also displayed on either side of the central triptych, though this time with the donor image on the left and the Deposition on the right (figure 12). Both presentations occlude the devotional intent of the original seven lancets.

René de Thory's panel depicts him kneeling at a prie dieu with an open book in front of him and his hands clasped in prayer. Despite ample space to add letters, the book contains suggestions but not actualization of text through uniform straight lines. The donor has removed his silver and gold gauntlets and helmet; they lie discarded at his feet. René's red and white decorated shirt matches a heraldic shield attached to the side of the pulpit, as well as the coat of

⁶⁹ Christian Demouveau, "Le Château Du Boumois," *Congrès Archéologique de France* (1964): 601.

arms that decorates the keystone of the chapel (figure 13). A historic seal confirms this as the Thory coat of arms; the seal depicts the coat of arms with a caption reading “this is René from Thory” (figure 14). Behind René, adorned in ecclesiastical garments and holding a conventional large ornate shepherd’s staff, Saint René of Anjou is labeled and accompanies his devout namesake. Saint René’s open palm near René de Thory’s shoulder suggests an act of offering—the saint is literally presenting the donor to the Virgin. A curling speech scroll emanates from René de Thory, proclaiming, “o mater dei memento mei”—oh mother of God, remember me.

Considering the focus on sensual interaction with Christ’s blood in the *Fountain of Life*, it also seems necessary to examine entire program at Boumois from a baptismal perspective. Visually, the spouts upon which the Virgin and Saint John stand might be read as baptismal fonts. However, the basin itself is on a scale many times larger than a traditional baptismal basin, and baptisms were typically performed on the very young or very old, while the figures in and around the basin of blood appear to be adults in the prime of their lives. Despite these considerations, the inclusion of Saint René in the overall composition heavily complicates matters. Saint René’s hagiography is bound inextricably with Saint Maurille, a fifth century bishop of Angers.⁷⁰ As bishop, Maurille inadvertently neglected to baptize the baby René, who died as a result. Upon realizing his error, Maurille left Angers in shame and fled to England for seven years. After his whereabouts were discovered by his congregation and the saint was beseeched to return, Maurille did so and performed a miracle in Angers by resurrecting René:

⁷⁰ Saint René’s hagiography is a mire of confusion, misinterpretation, and outright fabrication. Ultimately, no historical evidence suggests that an Anjou figure named René ever existed. Historical lists of Anger bishops make no mention of him, moving from Saint Maurille (died 453) to Bishop Thaladius (appointed 453). Furthermore, despite a long list of obscure confessor churches in Anjou, no parish was ever dedicated to Saint René; his first altar does not even appear until 1297. For further arguments against the historical existence of Saint René, see Célestin Port, *Dictionnaire Historique, Géographique et Biographique de Maine & Loire et de l’ancienne Province d’Anjou* (Angers, France: H. Siraudeau, 1965) 405.

As soon as the prayer is finished,
 Then the child rises from death
 Visibly and before all.⁷¹

Saint Maurille then bestowed Saint René with his liturgical name, which derives from the Latin *renatus* for “rebirth.” Saint René later succeeded Maurille as bishop of Angers.

Given the complicated historiography of Saint René, it has been suggested that the late Medieval interpretation of Saint Maurille’s miracle added a literal dimension to what was intended as a metaphorical story.⁷² Baptism was a form of rebirth into the church, literally referred to as *nativitas secunda*, or “second birth.” Thus, Saint René’s resurrection and naming are not literal, but instead refer to his being lifted from his languish for seven years in the sin of the unconfirmed. While there certainly exists an ideologic parallel between both Christ crucified and baptism as agents of cleansing sin, an explicit conjoining of the two is rare.⁷³ The viewer of the *Fountain of Life* might have been expected to draw parallels between the literal resurrective power of belief in Christ and the metaphorical resurrective power of baptism, though the triptych ultimately appears focused on redemption directly through contemplating Christ’s sacrifice, rather than through baptism. Attention to this theme is further directed by Mary Magdalene at John’s feet; her existence embodies the claim that no sin is so great it cannot be washed clean.⁷⁴

⁷¹ “Sitôt l’oraison faite / Lors enfant se lève de mort / Visiblement et devant tous. Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l’art Chrétien*, vol. 3 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958) 939. Translation by author.

⁷² Réau, *Iconographie*, 939–941.

⁷³ Paul A. Underwood, “The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950): 41–138, 105–107. Underwood considers a manuscript frontispiece which associates Christ’s body with a life-giving fountain in Eden, suggesting a theological link between Christ’s body and baptism. He notes, however, that it is an irregular type of illumination.

⁷⁴ Thomistic thought holds that baptism and eucharistic sacrament are also heavily linked. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 73, a. 3.

The two Renés originally faced a combined Deposition and Pietà scene that separated them from the central *Fountain of Life* triptych.⁷⁵ In it, Christ has been lowered from the cross into the arms of the Virgin, who is accompanied by three holy women and Saint John the Evangelist. Above the two lancets in teardrop arrangements of glass are two putti. At Boumois, the putti faced each other; the glass sections that surmount the two lancets were switched in Stanford White's studio, possibly to account for White's reorganization of the pieces around the central triptych. Bob Jones University Museum also copied this erroneous presentation, though in swapping the René lancet with the Deposition, caused the putti to face outward. The loss of a sense of inwardness and introspection provided by the putti is one example of the disruption of devotional intent created by the removal and reinstallation of the Boumois windows. Two tracery pendants once formed a joint tympanum for the donor and Deposition lancets but have since been lost. The lower image showed soldiers sleeping outside Christ's tomb, while the upper image depicted Christ's ascension into heaven.

Directly opposite the Renés stood Françoise du Plessis's donor lancet and a lancet with an image of the Virgin and Child. Perhaps due to its condition—the glass was already heavily neglected by 1895—the window was not purchased by Stanford White and is now presumed destroyed. In the right lancet, Françoise kneels in the same pose as her husband across the room, her hands brought together in prayer. Again, like her husband, Françoise is presented by her namesake saint, this time Francis of Assisi. Françoise's devotional book—likely a book of hours—is open but turned away so that the viewer is not afforded an angle of the pages. In the

⁷⁵ Many mentions of this lancet in the literature identify the scene as a Pietà. The inclusion of the cross and other mourners suggests that the image combines a Deposition with a Pietà, as a Pietà typically does not include the cross or presence of figures other than the Virgin. With an awareness of these complications, I refer to the scene as a Deposition.

lancet accompanying Françoise's, the top portion is filled with an image of Virgin being crowned by angels as she holds the Christ child. The bottom of this lancet was replaced with clear glass by the time of the 1895 photo. Two inward facing putti again crown the lancets. The tympanum tracery depicts the Annunciation, with the angel Gabriel descending from the upper pendant to inform the Virgin in the lower one that she will give birth to the son of God.

I turn now from the verifiable realm of contemporary experience and historic photographs to Xavier Barbier de Montault's description of the Boumois chapel, composed in 1858 for the *Répertoire archéologique de l'Anjou* periodical.⁷⁶ According to Barbier, Françoise's speech scroll reads "I beg you very sweet lady have mercy on my soul" but tragically the photograph of Françoise's window does not contain sufficient clarity to decipher the text.⁷⁷ Barbier identifies a scene below the Virgin and Child as Saint Elizabeth distributing food to the poor. Presumably this Saint Elizabeth is not the biblical Saint who mothered John but the thirteenth century Elizabeth of Hungary, as Barbier describes the scene as "sainte Elisabeth, un pot et une cuillère en main, distribue des aliments à des pauvres couverts de haillons ou qui se trainent péniblement à l'aide de béquilles" (Saint Elizabeth, a pot and spoon in hand, distributes food to poor people covered in rags, or who drag themselves painfully on crutches).⁷⁸ Further credence is given to this identification as Elizabeth of Hungary was both of royal descent and a follower of Francis; Barbier continues in saying, "Mais le mari de la sainte arrive à son palais; sa colère s'apaise et fait place à une pieuse admiration quand il voit le bonheur goûté par les

⁷⁶ Barbier de Montault, "Le Chateau," 85–117. See especially 91–99 for his description of the windows in the chapel. As a celebrated French Catholic writer on Medieval art, I have no reason to doubt Monsieur Barbier—nevertheless, to my knowledge, no corroborating accounts exist, so his description and identifications must, out of necessity, be treated with some degree of caution.

⁷⁷ Despite reproducing René's speech scroll in Latin and offering a translation, Barbier does not reproduce Françoise's in Latin, only offering a French translation.

⁷⁸ Barbier de Montault, "Le Chateau," 92. Translation by author.

pauvres, qui louent en Elisabeth leur soutien et leur bienfaitrice” (But the husband of the saint arrives at his palace; his anger subsides and is replaced with pious admiration when he sees the happiness tasted by the poor, who praise Elizabeth for the support and benefaction they receive).⁷⁹ Finally, Barbier identifies the Virgin as giving the Christ child a daisy, with Christ wearing a pearl necklace.

I propose that the high degree of specificity shown in the donor windows makes their ideological target René and Françoise themselves. Although I believe the coats of arms in the *Fountain of Life* to be later additions, the small coat of arms below René de Thory in his donor lancet visually mirrors the pattern of his overshirt, insisting on specific identity. The quality of the 1895 photograph and damage to Françoise’s window precludes knowing if she once also possessed a coat of arms and matching garment, although I find it highly likely given the other parallels between the donor windows that she did.

Further credence is given to the idea that the donor windows target their donors themselves via the private nature of the chapel at Boumois. The estate is small, and the chateau is relatively modest, with the chapel itself measuring only nine and a half meters by eight meters.⁸⁰ Given both the size and personal nature of the space, worshippers would have been limited to the proprietors of the chateau, their guests, and perhaps servants. Additional evidence for the private nature of Boumois’s chapel is suggested by means of access. René and Françoise could enter the chapel through the main door that connected directly to their chambers, while all other visitors would have to enter through a smaller side door.⁸¹ This suggests a highly limited political and

⁷⁹ Barbier de Montault, “Le Chateau,” 93. Translation by author.

⁸⁰ Christian Cussonneau, “Boumois: le dernier château gothique en Anjou,” *Bulletin Monumental*,” 158, no. 2 (2000): 126.

⁸¹ Cussonneau, “Le dernier château gothique,” 134.

social dimension to the glass depictions of René and Françoise. In a larger church building, it would have been important for aristocratic donors to claim and adorn private chapels within the space; despite limited physical access, the visual access afforded to visiting laypersons would have allowed the donors to reify their wealth, power, and status through visualizations of a devout self. Some aspects of concretizing power were likely influential on the chapel windows at Boumois – after all, chateaus were sites of frequent political and personal gatherings—but it seems that other more impactful factors are at play in the donor lancets.

It is significant that both donors are introduced by their namesakes. While it was common for children to be given saintly names in the hope of enticing the perceived literal protection and mentorship of the saint as well as invoking more amorphous cultural associations, René de Thory's presentation by Saint René is of special note. Saint René was a local Anjou figure with little to no devotional traction outside the region. That René de Thory is presented by a local saint and namesake together suggest personal significance, rather than broad devotional appeal. Returning to an argument of representation for political or social reasons, while it might make sense for René to select a popular saint in the context of currying local favor, a more broadly recognizable national or internationally acclaimed saint would have greater utility in the sphere of multivalent aristocratic jockeying in which René undoubtedly engaged, furthering the argument against his representation as a primarily politically or socially motivated decision.

If the significance of Saint René is reflected in and reflects upon René de Thory, then should Françoise being presented by Saint Francis be read in kind? Francis of Assisi (and the Franciscan Order) had a high degree and geographical range of influence but appears out of place when juxtaposed with the insistently personal Saint René. I believe that the resolution to this perceived discrepancy is answered not in Saint Francis, who was likely included solely to

match the pictorial motif of namesake saints presenting the donors, but beside Françoise in the story of Saint Elizabeth. Elizabeth (1207–1231) was the daughter of Andrew II of Hungary and Gertrude of Merania. A young bride to Louis IV, Landgrave of Thuringia, Elizabeth joined the Franciscan Order as a teenager in 1223. Even after Louis' death in 1227, Elizabeth continued her charitable mission. Despite her death at just twenty-four, her devotion to the faith was recognized and she was canonized in 1235. The parallels between Saint Elizabeth and Françoise are evident, including, unfortunately, Françoise's death at a young age. Both women were young aristocratic Franciscan tertiaries married to titled men. Elizabeth thus provided a model for Françoise in how she should behave; further subtext might be read into Louis's inclusion in the narrative as an entreatment to René to support his wife in charitable matters.

Françoise was René's first wife; the two most likely married when they were both in their mid-to-late teens.⁸² It would therefore be seen as important for her to birth heirs for her husband. An allusion to this—perhaps even hopeful manifestation—can be seen in the Annunciation scene that crowns her donor window. Furthermore, Saint René was associated with ailments of the kidneys through an etymological misinterpretation—the Latin word for kidney is “*renes*,” in French, it is “*reins*.”⁸³ As kidneys were seen as crucial to fertility in the late Medieval period, Saint René thus became a patron saint for those suffering from impotence. The youth of René and Françoise, coupled with the doubtless strong external and internal pressure to produce an heir, supports an argument for personally significant specificity in the donor windows. Even beyond the allusions to successful conception in the Annunciation and involvement of Saint

⁸² Their dates of birth and marriage are unknown for both René and Françoise. Cussonneau suggests a date of birth around 1590 for René and a marriage date between 1515 and 1517 because in 1518 René required ratification from his wife on a real-estate transaction. For more information, see Cussonneau, “Le dernier château gothique,” 121.

⁸³ Réau, *Iconographie*, 1148.

René, motherhood itself is invoked via the ultimate maternal emblem; the Virgin and Child who share space with Françoise.

It is, in fact, precisely to the Virgin Mary that René and Françoise are being introduced by their patron saints; this is indicated by the speech scrolls that emanate from them. René's reads, "o mater dei memento mei"—oh mother of God, remember me—while Françoise's similarly beseeches the Virgin: "I beg you very sweet lady, have mercy on my soul." Significantly, the scrolls do not flow from the figure's mouths, but from their hands clasped in prayer. Via the unintuitive placement of text, the real René and Françoise could be expected to recognize that the scrolls do not suggest a literal act of speech. The supplication of the fictive René and Françoise to the Virgin is manifested instead in their devotional piety, which is directly modeled for the corporeal couple. René and Françoise are not invited merely to view their forms in glass, but to imitate and embody them.

In a final significant departure from the *Fountain of Life*, the donor lancets have small crème-colored architectural platforms at the base of the compositions. In conjunction with the light tufa that composed the entirety of the Boumois Chateau, this indicates a seamless visual transition between the real space of the viewer and the imagined space of the glass.⁸⁴ By way of the donor lancets, René and Françoise could gain access to the Crucifixion, Baptism, and Eucharistic Sacrament depicted in the central triptych. The couple might have thus seen their fictive counterparts less as demonstrations of their status or as votive figures, but as examples of proper devotional piety to be imitated. The highly specific depictions of René and Françoise literally modeled proper devotional behavior.

⁸⁴ For discussion of Boumois's construction and materials see, Cussonneau, "Le dernier château gothique," and Demouveau, "Le Château Du Boumois," 599–602.

An additional allusion to sight in the Boumois windows may be found in the hagiography of Saint Elizabeth, as one of the most oft repeated stories from her life concerns vision. Despite appearing in the Boumois narrative with Elizabeth, to my knowledge, no hagiography of the saint includes Louis in stories about feeding the poor. In fact, Louis plays a key role in only a single story in Elizabeth's hagiography, though the miracle is consistently treated as her most significant. "She had laid a leper in the marital bed. The disgusted [Louis] abruptly lifts the blanket. 'But at the same time the almighty opened to him the eyes of the soul (*interiores oculos*) and instead of the leper he saw lying in his bed Jesus crucified.'"⁸⁵ By inserting Louis into a scene of Elizabeth's charity, where he is not elsewhere found, multiple narrative understandings are overlaid. At Boumois, Saint Elizabeth was thus not only a model for Françoise, but also a facilitator of non-corporeal visual contact with the divine.

In conjunction with the *Fountain of Life*, the scenes in the side panels created a temporal narrative in the chapel. Beginning in the right tympanum with the Annunciation, one then moved to the Virgin and Child in majesty before confronting the Passion and crucifixion of Christ in the central triptych. The narrative concludes with Christ's deposition from the cross, followed by his ascension to heaven. In just a few scenes, the entire trajectory of Christ's life is laid out for the faithful, with special emphasis on his sacrifice for all humanity. The viewer's salvation is modeled by Christ's divine ascension, but movement from the earthly to the heavenly realm is accessible to the viewer only via the sacrifice of Christ in the central triptych.

Beyond a metaphysical understanding of glass as a membrane, visionary guide, and physical diffuser of Christ's blood, the Boumois *Fountain of Life* also appears to contain an

⁸⁵ Réau, *Iconographie*, 418.

explicit visual representation of liminality. At the top of the center lancet is a hallway of deep red, the same color as the blood in the basin. It recalls John 10:9, which states, “I am the door. By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved: and he shall go in, and go out, and shall find pastures.”⁸⁶ Taken alone, physically engaging with Christ’s blood—as the figures in the window do—is not enough. The faithful must devotionally invest themselves in Christ, embodying the spiritual incorporeality of light to penetrate the hallway and pass through the window. The viewer must look through and beyond the physical plane of the image to access the paragon of devotion. This devotional fantasy is permitted, controlled, and facilitated via the blood of Christ, through which eternal salvation is made real.

⁸⁶ DRA, John 10:9.

Appendix A: Provenance

The René de Thory donor panels, Annunciation, *Fountain of Life*, Virgin and Child, and Françoise du Plessis donor panels were all removed from Boumois by 1895. The *Fountain of Life* and René de Thory donor panels were purchased by New York architect Stanford White—the Françoise du Plessis panels have sadly been lost. William Randolph Hearst acquired the five extant windows following White's death in 1907. The Bob Jones University Museum was gifted all five remaining lancets in 1956 and they have been installed there since.

Figure 1⁸⁷

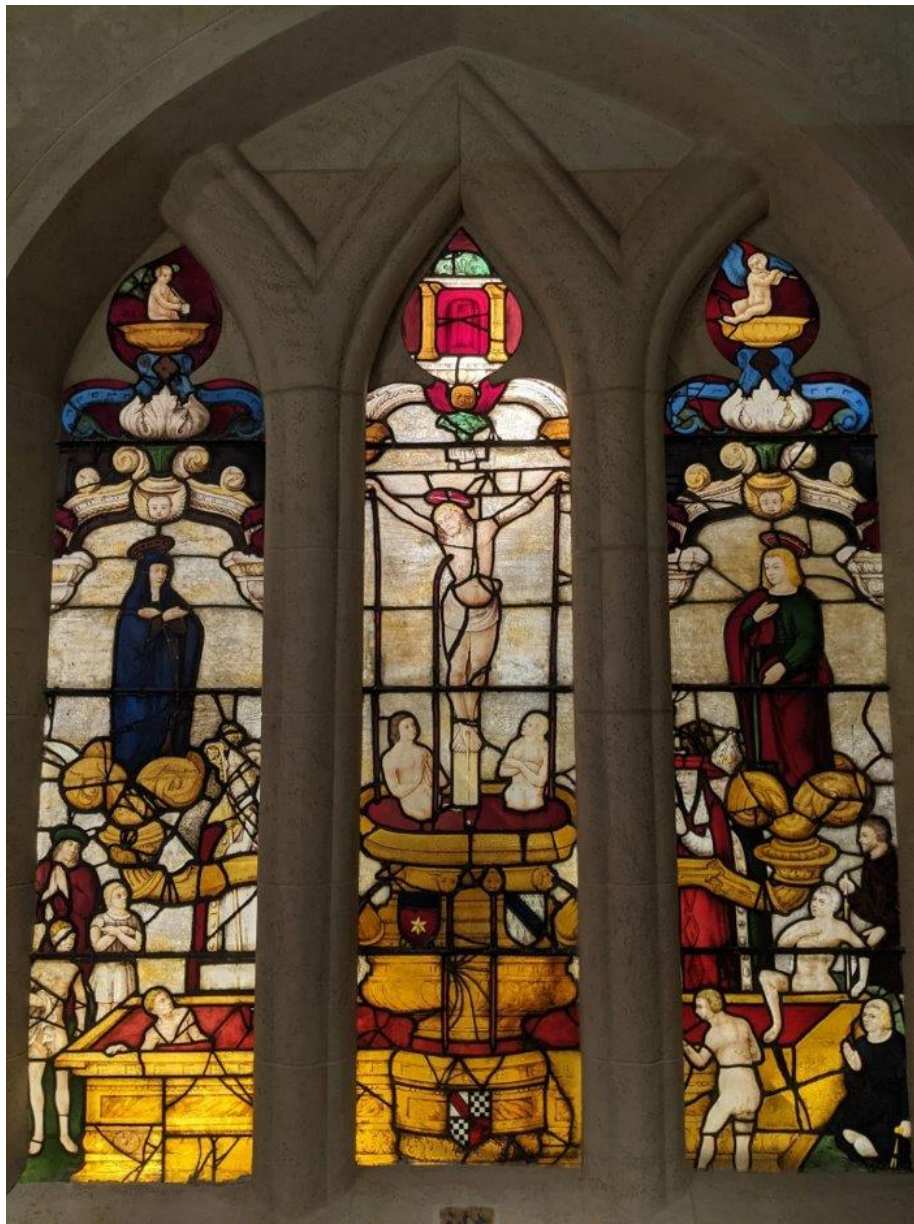
Fountain of Life

C. 1525

Stained glass

Each lancet, 239 x 53 cm

Bob Jones University Museum

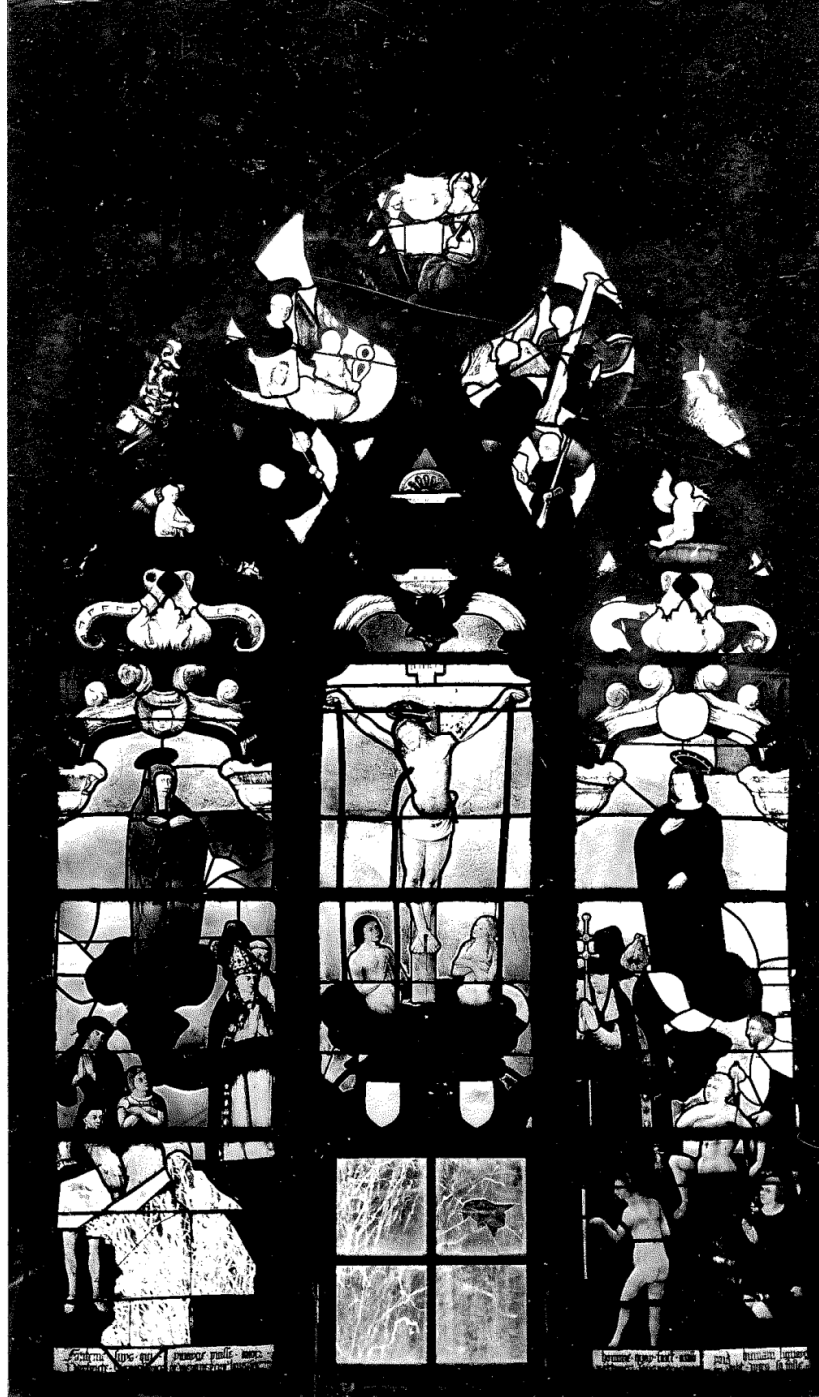


⁸⁷ Photo by author.

Figure 2⁸⁸

Installation of original tracery and lower registers for *Fountain of Life* at Boumois

Photo from 1895



⁸⁸ Photo courtesy of Bob Jones University Museum, "1895Image1."

Figure 3⁸⁹

Tilman Riemenschneider of Würzburg

Altarpiece of the Holy Blood

1499-1505

Limewood

About 900cm tall

St Jakobskirche, Rothenburg-on-the-Tauber

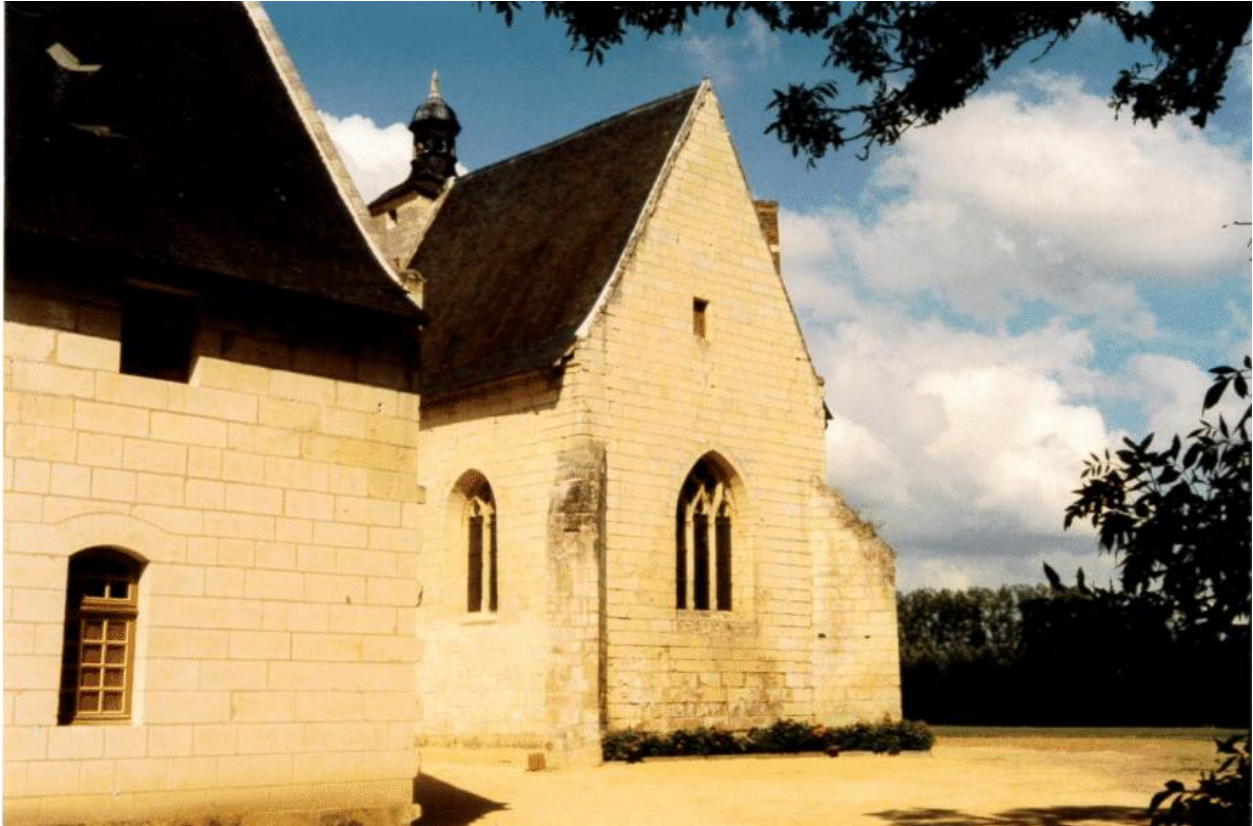


⁸⁹ "Tilman Riemenschneider," <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/tilman-riemenschneider-altarpiece-of-the-holy-blood-wings-open>.

Figure 4⁹⁰

Chapel at Chateau de Boumois

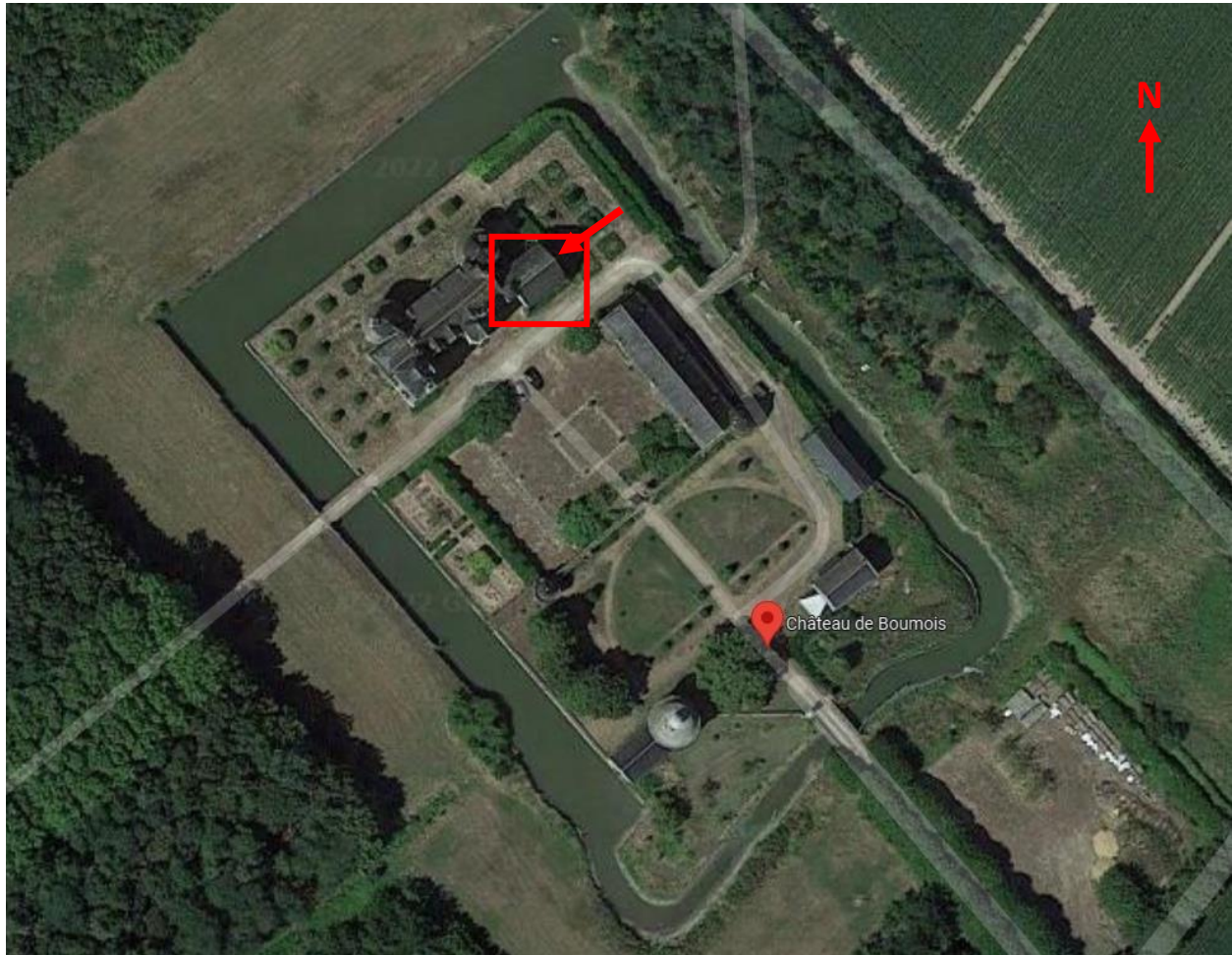
Built c. 1525, photo 2007



⁹⁰ Photo courtesy of Bob Jones University Museum, "Madame Boofzheim."

Figure 5⁹¹

Aerial view of the Chateau de Boumois with chapel and original location of the *Fountain of Life* window indicated



⁹¹ Google Maps.

Figure 6⁹²

Jan van Eyck

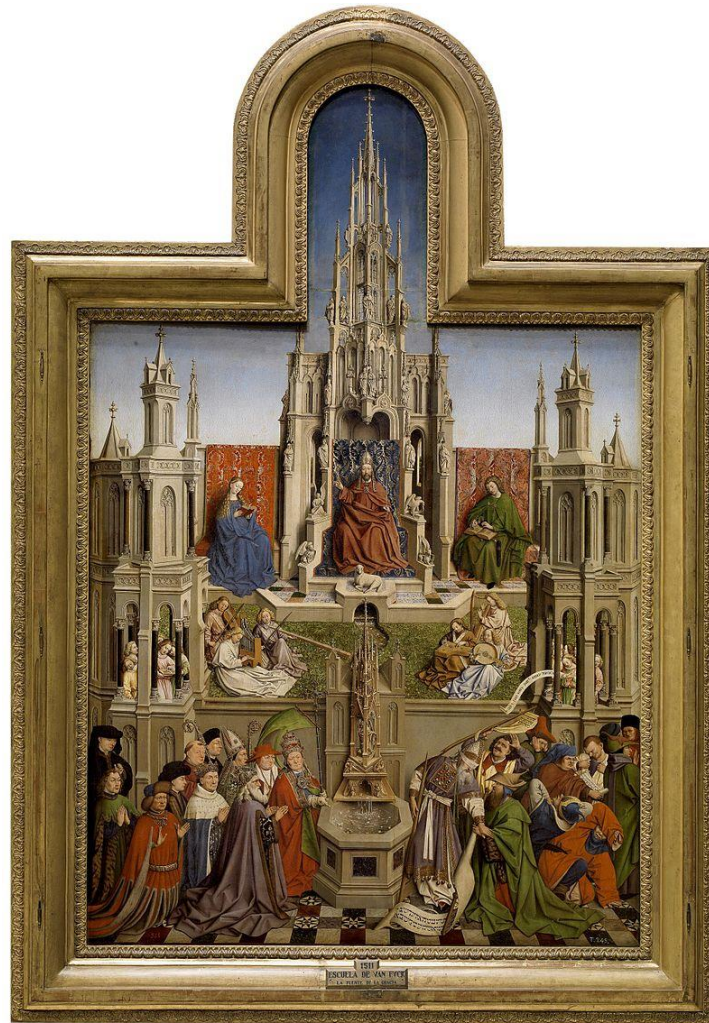
The Fountain of Life

C. 1432

Oil on panel

181 x 119 cm

Museo del Prado



⁹² Wikimedia Commons,
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fountain_of_Life_\(painting\)#/media/File:The_Fountain_of_Life_after_van_Eyck_2.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fountain_of_Life_(painting)#/media/File:The_Fountain_of_Life_after_van_Eyck_2.jpg).

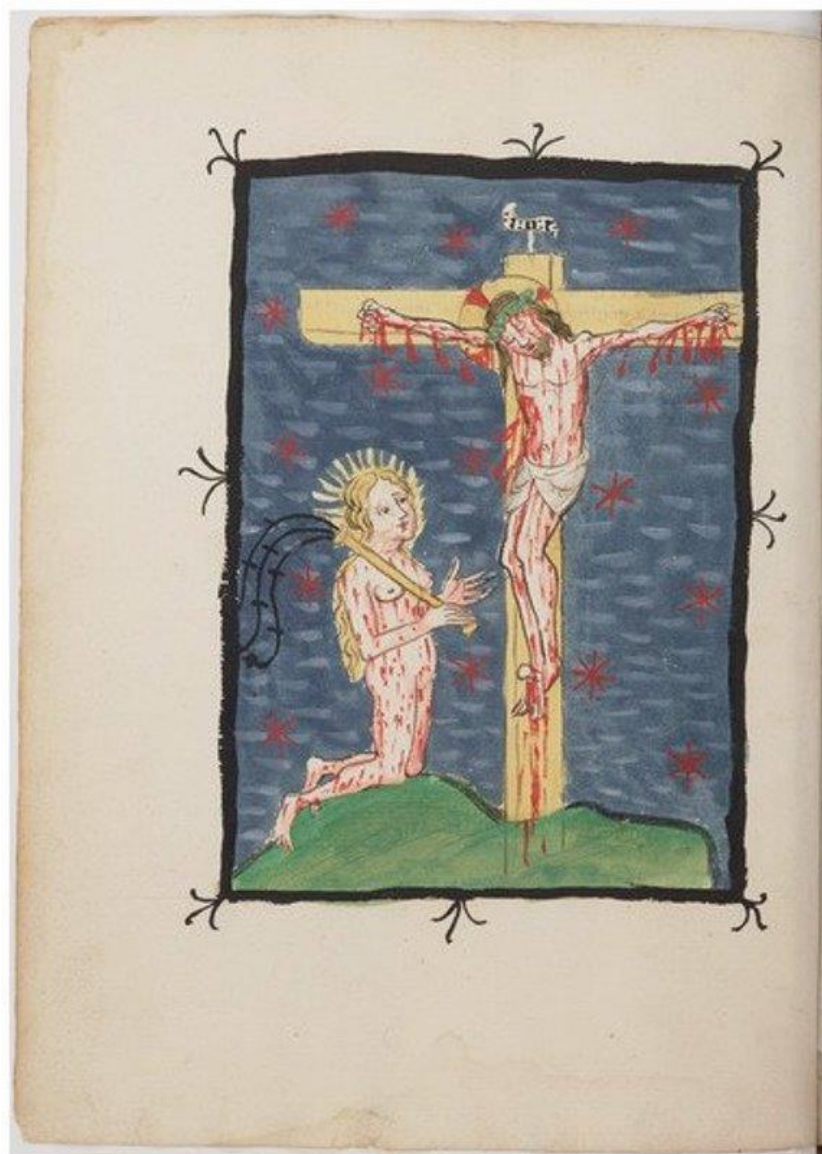
Figure 7⁹³

St. Catherine of Siena flagellating herself before the crucified Christ, from an illustrated copy of Raymund of Capua's *Life of St. Catherine of Siena*

C. 1430

Illuminated manuscript

Bibliothèque Nationale de France



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Allemand 34

⁹³ Bnf.fr/allemande/34.

Figure 8⁹⁴

Bible Moralisee de Philippe le Hardi (Mystic Winepress)

C. 1485-1493

Illuminated manuscript

Bibliothèque Nationale de France

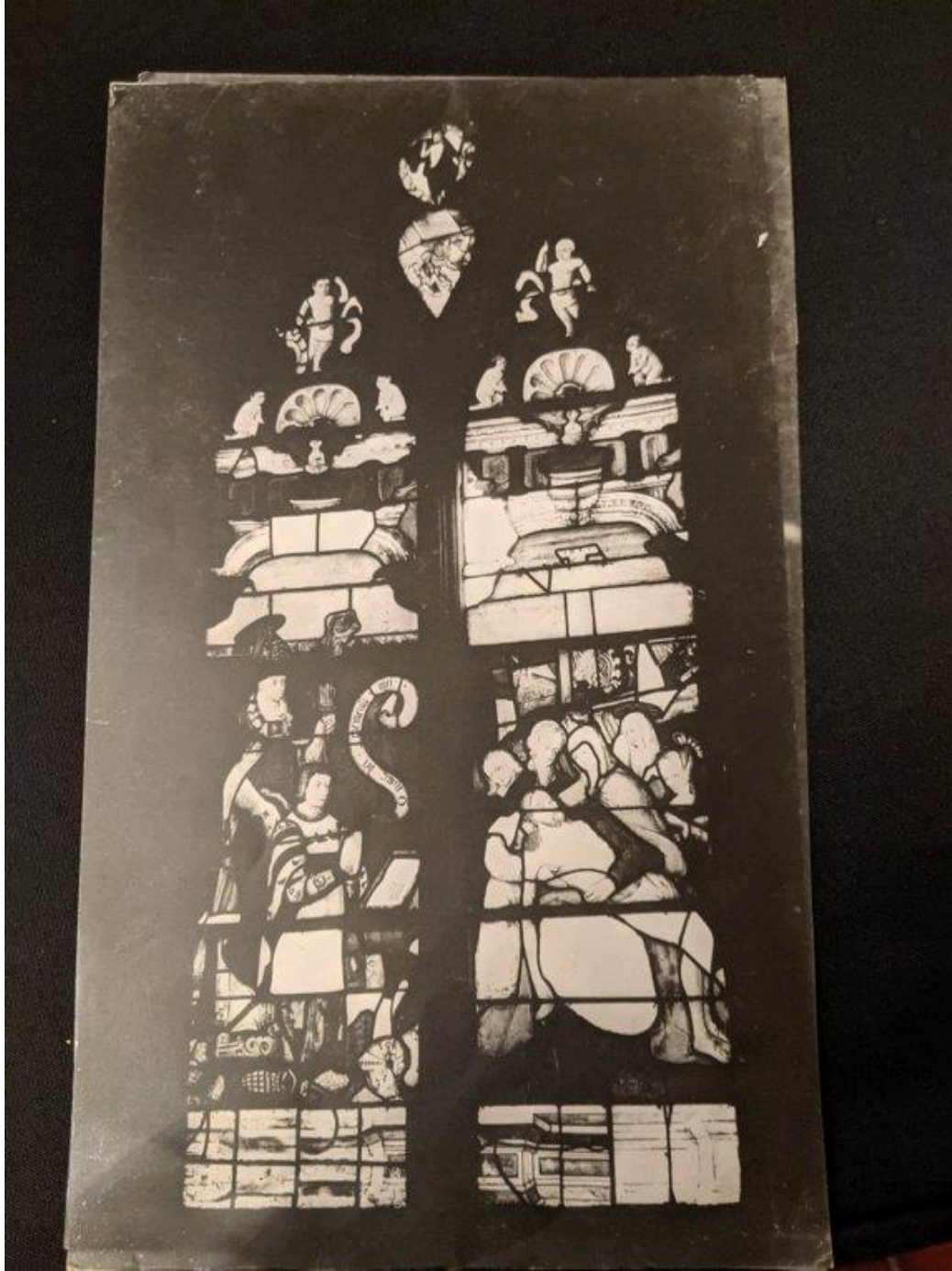


⁹⁴ "Christ in the Mystic Winepress," http://www.drabruzzi.com/christ_in_the_mystic_winepress.htm.

Figure 9⁹⁵

Installation of René de Thory's donor panel and Deposition scene at Boumois

Photo from 1895

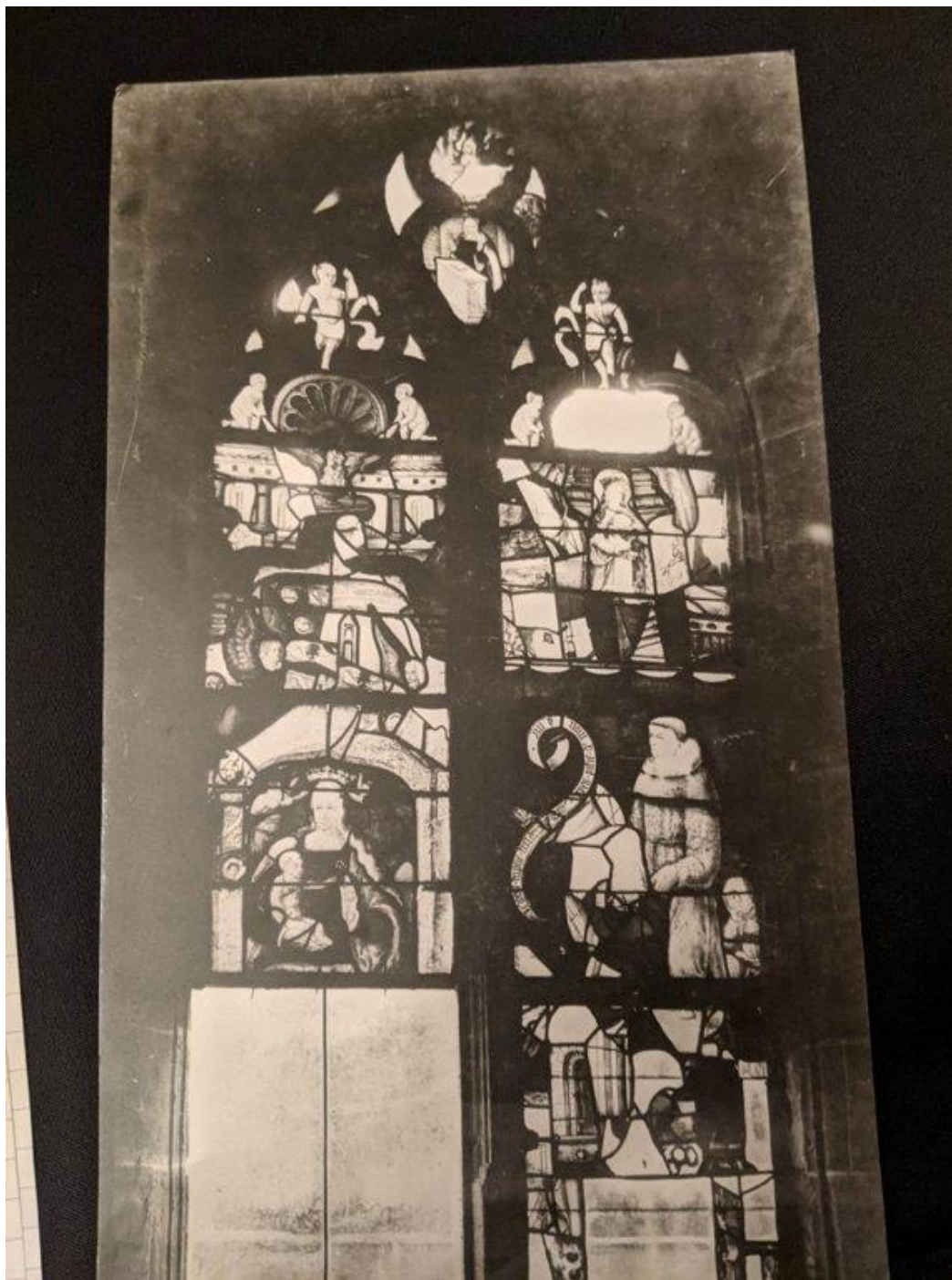


⁹⁵ Photo courtesy of Bob Jones University Museum, "1895Image2."

Figure 10⁹⁶

Installation of Françoise du Plessis' donor panel and Virgin and Child at Boumois

Photo from 1895

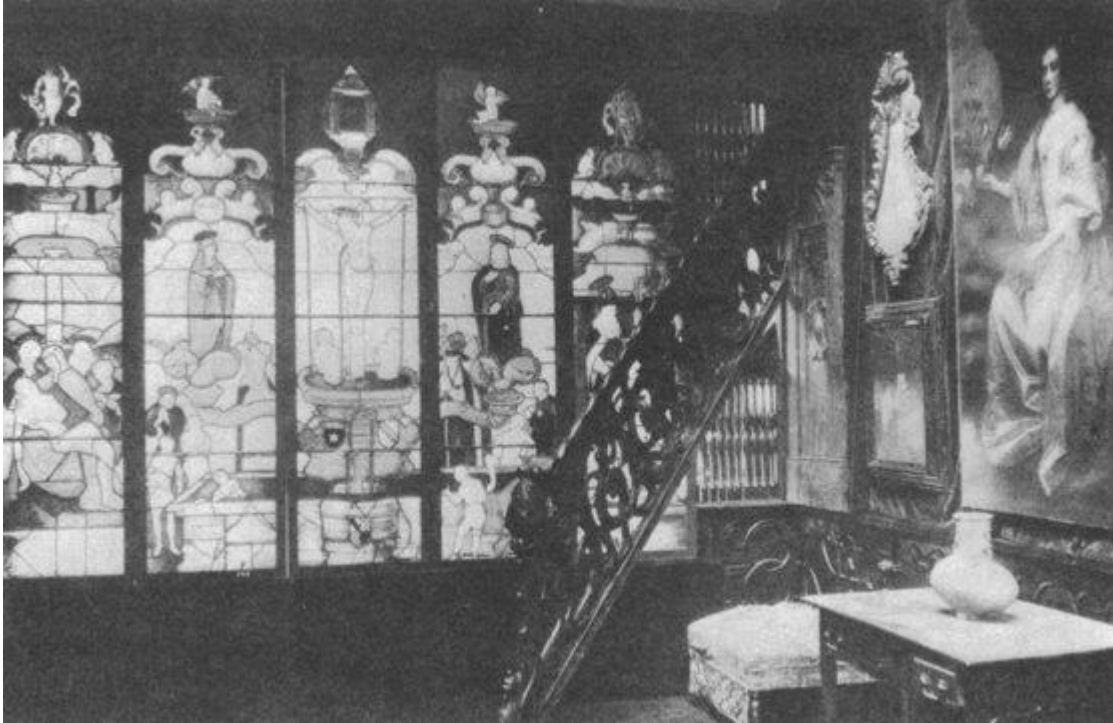


⁹⁶ Photo courtesy of Bob Jones University Museum, "1895Image3."

Figure 11⁹⁷

Stanford White's NYC studio

Photo ca. 1906



⁹⁷ Caviness, Madeline H. "Learning from Forest Lawn." *Speculum* 69, no. 4 (1994): 980.

Figure 12⁹⁸

Installation of the lancets at Bob Jones University Museum

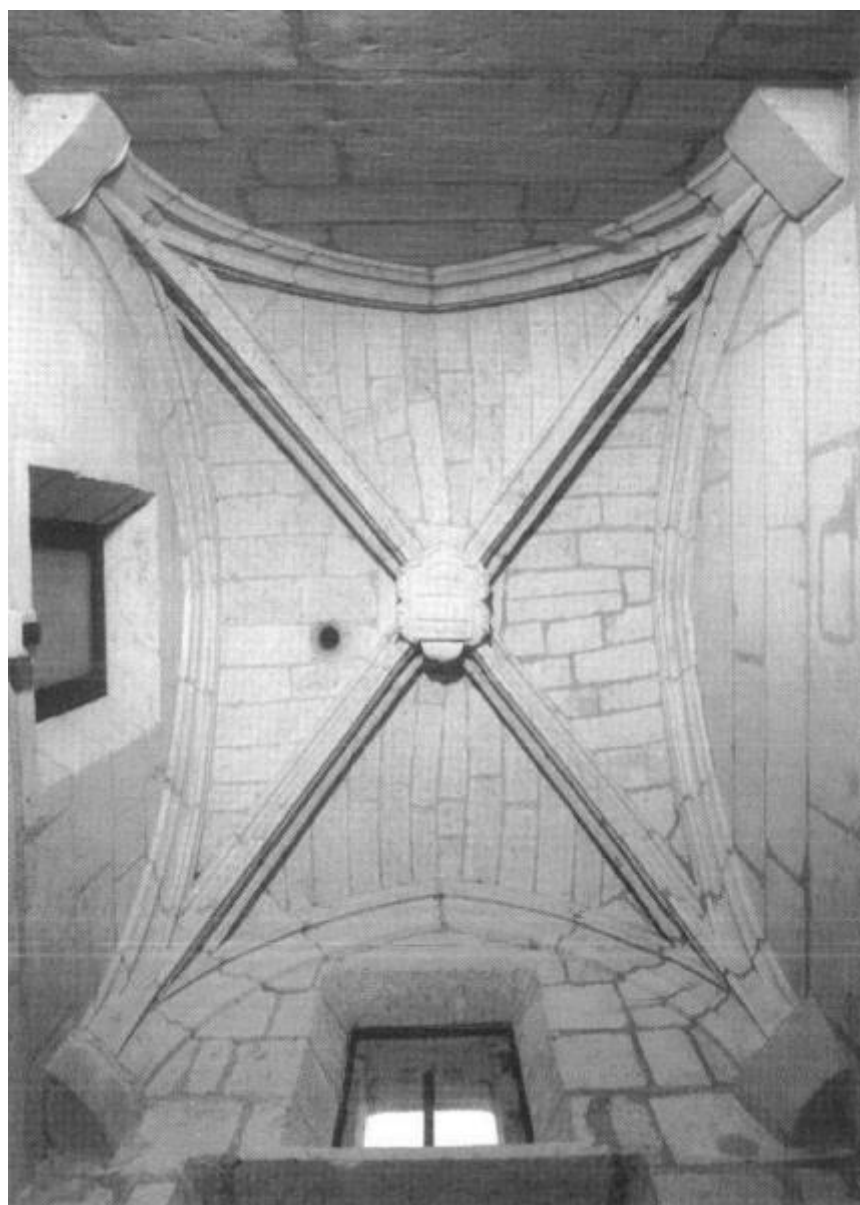
Photo ca. 2018



⁹⁸ Bob Jones University Museum, "Object of the Month: October 2018," <https://museumandgallery.org/object-of-the-month-october-2018/>.

Figure 13⁹⁹

Vault key of the chapel at Boumois



⁹⁹ Cussonneau, Christian. "Boumois: le dernier château gothique en Anjou." *Bulletin Monumental* 158, no. 2 (2000): 128.

Figure 14¹⁰⁰*Bourgogne 494*

¹⁰⁰ Sigilla, "Bourgogne 494," <http://www.sigilla.org/moulage/bourgogne-494-9700>.

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