



Saint Lucy, the Silent Woman, and Subversive Female Speech in the Middle Ages

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A Catalonian panel painting, originally from the parish church of Santa Llúcia de Mur (Guàrdia de Noguera, Pallars Jussà) and dated ca. 1300, graphically depicts four of the tortures suffered by the virgin martyr Saint Lucy (Figure 1).[1] In the bottom right panel, it appears that Lucy is being decapitated, the ultimate fate of most martyrs. However, the scene actually represents the moment that Lucy is stabbed in the throat in order to keep her quiet, after she had continuously goaded the Roman consul Paschasius during the other tortures that he had ordered for her. Miraculously, Lucy continued to be able to speak, even after her throat was cut. Intelligent, articulate speech was a crucial feature of the legends of many of the virgin martyrs;[2] Lucy, Agnes, Agatha, and Catherine, among others, all used their powers of speech against their tormentors. Catherine was so persuasive and logical

in her arguments against paganism and in favor of Christianity that she converted the fifty philosophers who had been assembled in order to sway her from her position. The medieval audience for these legends was probably meant to admire their powers of rhetoric and reason, but in the end, these eloquent women were punished and then killed, with their persistent speech an important motivation for those who tortured and executed them. This ambivalence about women's speech was evident in the Middle Ages not only in hagiography, but also in literature, in fabliaux, in conduct manuals, and in real life, where talkative women were often mocked, suspected, feared, and prosecuted. In the following I analyze some of the medieval texts and images that depict the silencing of women, often through violent means, because of speech that is portrayed as insipid at best, and unruly at worst. I will also touch on how some of these attitudes remain visible in the modern world, employing as a particular example the motif of the Silent Woman, an image of a beheaded woman used on pub signs, and most memorably, as the name of a restaurant my family frequented when I was young. And yet the prevalence of the trope of the silenced woman in the Middle Ages suggests that the words of women could and did in fact wield real power, both in these sources, and in lived experience. I am also interested in exploring how the perception of women in these medieval sources could vary depending on the audience, and the ways that medieval (and modern) audiences might embrace the speech of outspoken women as authoritative and even inspirational.

Silence, Sight, and Saint Lucy

The slicing of Saint Lucy's throat in order to render her unable to speak was only one of the tortures associated with the martyr, whose legend was included in the fifth-century *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* (*Martyrology of Jerome*), and whose cult spread widely when her name was included in the daily canon of the mass by Pope Gregory the Great.[3] The version of Lucy's legend that had the greatest reach was Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea* (*Golden Legend*), his thirteenth-century compilation of saints' lives and other liturgical material that would become one of the most widely-reproduced texts of the later Middle Ages.[4] According to Jacobus's account, Lucy was of noble birth, but after the miraculous healing of her mother at a shrine dedicated to Saint Agatha, Lucy convinced her mother that the money that had been set aside for her dowry, as well as all their other possessions, should be given away to the poor. Lucy's beleaguered fiancé then accused her of being a Christian and handed her over to Paschasius, who in turn tried to make her offer sacrifices to pagan idols. When this failed, he threatened to take her to a brothel so that she could be raped by a crowd until she was dead, but the Holy Spirit affixed her to the spot so that she could not be moved, despite the efforts of teams of oxen and

the spells of magicians. She then suffered the successive torments of being soaked with urine, placed in a roaring fire, and covered with boiling oil.



Figure 1. Panels with Scenes of the Martyrdom of Saint Lucy. c. 1300, Spain. From the parish church of Santa Llúcia de Mur (Guàrdia de Noguera Pallar Jussà Barcelona, Museu d'Art de Catalunya, inv. no. 035703-CJT).

Throughout all of these tortures, Lucy talked. She contradicted and provoked Paschasius until he was near despair, whereupon his friends stabbed her in the throat to shut her up. Instead, she continued to speak, taunting him about the fall of other anti-Christian imperial leaders: “I make known to you that peace has been restored to the Church! This very day Maximian has died, and Diocletian has been driven from the throne. And just as God has given my sister Agatha to the city of Catania as protectress, so I am given to the city of Syracuse as mediatrix.”[5]

The Catalonian panel painting is somewhat unusual in that it represents multiple scenes from Lucy’s legend.[6] In addition to the throat-slicing incident depicted in the bottom right section, three other incidents from Lucy’s story are illustrated, although only one other appears in the *Legenda aurea*. In the bottom left, two men pull at ropes that surround the saint, most likely illustrating the moment when the Holy Spirit fixed Lucy to the ground so she could not be hauled off to the brothel. In the top right, Lucy is tied to a pole as her breasts are cut off by the two men who flank her. This is a torture that is particularly associated with Saint Agatha, and one that is sometimes depicted for other virgin martyrs, including Margaret and Catherine, even if it is not the most typical way they are represented. It is unusual to depict Lucy this way, although this may be a reference to the way her legend intersects with that of Agatha.[7]

In the top left, Lucy points to a bleeding eye socket and holds her missing eye (and what appears to be a section of her face). By the later Middle Ages and beyond, a variety of hagiographic sources described the mutilation of Lucy’s eyes.[8] In some accounts her eyes were torn out by torturers; in others she gouged them out herself in order to deter the wanton glances of men. Thus she became associated with the miraculous healing of the afflictions of the eye, and many late medieval and Renaissance presentational (as opposed to narrative) depictions of Lucy portrayed her with her disembodied eyes, often on a plate. Perhaps because these images are so striking (and, for a modern audience, unnerving), the story of the blinding of Lucy tends to be the one most associated with the saint. But the loss of Lucy’s sight has complicated associations; Madeline H. Caviness has explored the ways that the gaze of women could be considered unnatural, transgressive, and dangerous.[9] She used as an example Lot’s wife, who against all admonitions turned back to look at the destruction of Sodom and was punished for her disobedience by being turned into a pillar of salt. Good girls were not supposed to look—and often they were not supposed to speak, either.



Figure 2. Martyrdom of Saint Lucy. Morgan-Mâcon Golden Legend. 1445-65. Bruges, Belgium. New York: The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.672, fol. 28v. Photographic credit: The Morgan Library and Museum, New York.

Despite the rich array of tortures suffered by Lucy, medieval images of her martyrdom tend to focus on the one where she is stabbed in the neck, even after the fifteenth century, when the mutilation of Lucy's eyes became a more settled part of her story in both text and image. For example, a fifteenth-century miniature in the *Morgan-Mâcon Golden Legend* depicts an elaborate scene of a kneeling Lucy reeling back as one of the two torturers impales her neck with a long pike (Figure 2).[10] The other grabs her wrist, in a gesture that can be associated with sexual assault.[11] It may very well be that the two women standing on the left are denizens of the brothel to which Lucy had been condemned, particularly since signs of Lucy's other tortures are depicted in the background. A tree trunk and bales of hay probably reference the fire, and the flaming cauldron, the boiling oil. On the right stands Paschasius, with an elaborate hat, pointing at the scene in a gesture of judgment and authority, and behind him, perhaps the hapless and betraying fiancé. The miniature is done in grisaille but for a few details, including Lucy's blonde hair, a typical color for medieval virgin martyrs (and the love interests of literary romances).[12]

A contemporary witness to Lucy's torture is represented in the *Savoy Hours*, which consists of a fragment of the Book of Hours of Blanche of Burgundy (d. 1348), who was the Countess of Savoy and granddaughter of Louis IX.^[13] The manuscript was probably created around 1334-40 in the atelier of Jean Pucelle, and it is estimated that it originally contained over 280 leaves and 187 miniatures, with even more texts and miniatures added later in the century when it was owned by Charles V. It had several later owners and ultimately ended up at the University Library in Turin, where it was nearly destroyed in a fire in 1904.^[14] The surviving fragment contains the Suffrages, and Blanche is depicted in more than half of the fifty remaining miniatures, kneeling with clasped hands before the figures of various saints. Such scenes underscore the way that these books could be used as sites for personal devotion; in this case the owner is quite literally part of the scene.^[15] While Blanche prayed with her book of hours in hand, she witnessed herself performing those prayers inside the book itself.^[16]

The saints themselves are standing and holding various attributes; martyrs are typically represented holding palms, and only on occasion the instruments of their passion (Catherine holds a small wheel on fol. 8v). Only a few of the martyrs are depicted in any way that suggests a torture in process. Saint Anthony Abbot holds a crozier and makes a sign of blessing toward Blanche as he stands in a fire that seems relatively benign (fol. 15v). In contrast, Saint Lucy's book and martyr's palm are overshadowed by the sight of the large sword thrust horizontally through her neck, leaving visible bleeding wounds on either side (fol. 19r; Figure 3). To know exactly how the sword came to be there, Blanche need only have looked two folios prior at the image of Saint Agnes, who kneels on the ground in the position ordinarily occupied by Blanche, while a determined-looking torturer drives a spear into the base of her throat (fol 17v; Figure 4). Blanche herself is absent from this scene, perhaps because typically she does not appear in the images that are narrative rather than purely devotional. There are several parallels in the stories of Agnes and Lucy – both are condemned to brothels (Agnes is actually stripped nude but then miraculously grows hair in order to retain her modesty); both stun their male listeners with their powerful arguments; and both are stabbed in the throat.^[17]



Figure 3. Blanche of Burgundy, Countess of Savoy, kneeling before Saint Lucy. Savoy Hours. ca. 1334-40. Paris. New Haven: General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, MS 390, fol. 19r.



Figure 4. Martyrdom of Agnes. Savoy Hours. ca. 1334-40. Paris. New Haven: General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, MS 390, fol. 17v.

The *Savoy Hours* also contains an image of Agatha on a cross-like structure and flanked by two torturers who cut off her breasts, similar to the image of Lucy on the Catalonian panel painting—although the image is damaged, enough of it remains to be able to identify this relatively standard iconography (fol. 18r; Figure 5). It is not clear when the miniature was defaced, but almost certainly it was a deliberate act.[18] While it is not unusual to see rubbed images in medieval manuscripts, when saintly figures are damaged it tends to be because they have been repeatedly touched or kissed. In other cases, evil figures, often the torturers of the saints, are deliberately mutilated. Particularly in the later Middle Ages, people who saw images of tortured saints probably connected them with the brutalized bodies they had personally witnessed in a time of plague, warfare, and public punishment and execution. Blanche herself was indirectly connected to a particularly gruesome incident of public violence. Her sister Marguerite, married to Philip IV's son Louis, was imprisoned during the notorious Tour de Nesle affair along with the wives of Philip's two other sons, after all three women were accused of adultery. Marguerite's lover, Philippe d'Aunay, was brutally tortured and then hanged, with Marguerite in attendance, and she herself died (or was perhaps murdered) in prison.[19] Given this personal experience, it may have been that the image of Agatha's graphic torture was particularly upsetting to Blanche. We know from inventory lists and other documentation that many women owned books of hours;[20] what is more difficult to determine is how much control they had over their contents and cycles of illumination. It is possible that Blanche had some hand in the selection of saints and the way they were presented, particularly as she was included in so many of the scenes, but it is just as likely that she did not; either way she may have reacted to the image of Agatha by defacing it. It is also possible the miniature was erased by someone who inherited the manuscript—it probably went from Blanche to her niece, and then to Charles V. The king's heir, Charles VI, gave it to Jean, duke of Berry in 1409, and it seems the latter gave it away shortly after he received it since it is not listed in his 1413 inventory.[21]



Figure 5. Martyrdom of Agatha (defaced). Savoy Hours. ca. 1334-40. Paris. New Haven: General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, MS 390, fol. 18.



Figure 6. Lucy. *Legenda aurea*. San Marino, Huntington Library, HM 3027, fol. 4. Paris. ca. 1280-90. www.digital-scriptorium.org.

I have discussed elsewhere, as have others, the sado-erotic potential of the visualized tortures of martyrs such as Agatha, and Lucy's story in the *Legenda aurea* is similar to that of so many of the virgin martyrs, which typically include rejected suitors and sexualized punishments.[22] The tortured bodies of men, including Christ, could also be depicted in eroticized ways; in fact, Assaf Pinkus's nuanced discussion of images of tortured martyrs distinguishes the erotic body from the sexual body, and sees a clear difference, for example, in the representation of partially naked martyrs compared to the bestial and often aroused bodies of their torturers.[23] Nevertheless, certain images of Lucy work against the textual account of her torture and in doing so completely undo the miracle of her continued speech. The depiction of Lucy in the earliest surviving illuminated manuscript of the *Legenda aurea* is striking; all of her tortures take place at once as she kneels in a fire and boiling oil is poured over her head (Figure 6).[24] Yet, instead of being stabbed in the throat, Lucy is impaled through the stomach, in a pseudo-rape. There is an image of Lucy with a penetrated belly in an earlier libellus made for the monastery of St. Vincent of Metz (which claimed to have some of Lucy's relics).[25] Some Latin narratives describe two stabbings of Lucy, one in the stomach and one in the neck,[26] but visualizing her legend with the former scene in effect neutralizes the significance of her miraculous

ability to be able to talk even after the sword pierced her throat. Similar to some of the martyrdom accounts, acts of sexual and physical violence that lead to the silencing of a woman are interwoven in Chrétien le Troyes's twelfth-century text *Philomela*, a retelling of the story of Tereus and Philomela from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.^[27] Tereus falls in love with Philomela, who happens to be his wife's sister. Overcome by his lust for her, he carries her off into the forest and rapes her. When Philomela threatens to tell everyone what happened, Tereus cuts out her tongue. This shocking mutilation was also the fate of Saint Christine, among the many other tortures quite graphically described in a Middle English legend of her life written by William Paris.^[28] However, like Lucy, Christine remains able to speak, while Philomela cannot. Ultimately, she is able to tell her tale, but only by weaving the story into a beautiful tapestry and sending it to her sister.

Loose Lips

One wonders what Blanche of Burgundy might have made of the images of women in her book of hours who are depicted impaled in the neck in order to silence them.^[29] There is no question that virgin martyrs were figures of devotion for both men and women. Jean de Berry was known for his particular interest in Saint Catherine; one of his luxurious books of hours, the *Belles Heures*, had a cycle of twelve images depicting the life of Saint Catherine, and he owned several relics associated with the saint, including a piece of her stone tomb from Mount Sinai.^[30] The legends of the martyrs oscillate between casting them as both victims and heroes, and the virgin martyrs in particular often act in defiance of traditional gender roles, with their aggressive behavior toward their tormentors.^[31] The faith and fortitude of the virgin martyrs was no doubt inspirational, and their ability to get under the skin of their adversaries must have been satisfying, as when Agatha's nemesis, the Sicilian consular official Quintianus, complains in the *Legenda aurea* that she is "making him look foolish in the public eye."^[32] But he also describes her "loose tongue" and "idle talk," which is in line with the way that women's speech was sometimes described in secular sources. A few decades after the creation of Blanche's prayerbook, the so-called *Le Ménagier de Paris* dispensed advice about the proper running of a household and behavior of a good wife (notably, Blanche is depicted as a wife in her book of hours as she wears a wimple in her every appearance in the manuscript). The Eighth Article of *Le Ménagier de Paris* in particular focuses on women's speech: "I urge and advise you, whether in society or at table, to restrain yourself from too much conversation...in so doing you will conquer your woman's nature that, so it is said, can hide nothing."^[33] The fictional narrator is suggesting that a good wife keeps her husband's secrets and guards his

reputation (the loss of which will also affect her), but his examples illustrate that in his view, women seldom keep silent and in doing so, are prone to embellish their tales as they engage in gossip.

In some medieval sources, women who talked too much were portrayed as either silly, or subversive, or overly sexual. Just as many of the legends of the talkative virgin martyrs are threaded through with sexual themes (they are leered at, stripped, and sent to brothels, and there are thwarted attempts to sexually assault them), in other contexts women who were loose with their words were understood to be loose with their morals as well. As liminal zones providing entrances and exits to the body, and as body parts with similar shapes, the physical and semiotic association of mouth and vulva was a given (and of course the linguistic correlation of both sets of lips was readily apparent in the Latin word *labia*).^[34] These connections could be employed in ways that were chastisingly moralistic—Tertullian wrote in *Ad Uxorem (To His Wife)* of women who talked too much, stating that “their god...is their belly, and so too what is neighbor to their belly”^[35] (and of course this emphasis on the belly complicates the images of Lucy stabbed in the stomach rather than the throat). The association of mouth and genitalia was also played for comedic effect, particularly in the fabliaux, the ribald stories which drew a wide audience from across the social classes.^[36] Some of these stories feature talking female genitalia. For example, *Du Chevalier qui fist les cons parler (The Knight Who Made Cunts Speak)* is extant in seven manuscripts, the earliest an Anglo-Norman version from the early thirteenth century.^[37] It relates the story of a knight who had been granted the ability to make vaginas speak to him; if for some reason a vagina was silenced, the woman’s cul (“arse”) would speak instead. He demonstrates his party trick in front of the entire court, and gets the better of a countess who had attempted to thwart him by filling her vagina with cotton and is stunned to hear that her anus answers instead. The underlying message of this particular fabliau is that even if deceitful women told lies with their mouths, their garrulous lower halves would betray them and “speak” the truth, from one orifice or another.

The Silent Woman

The cliché of the overly talkative woman who needs to be silenced, often by resorting to violent means, has persisted far beyond the Middle Ages, even if it is now sometimes played for laughs. A particular example of this has had a lasting impact on me. My mother’s side of the family has lived for generations on Messalonskee Lake, one of the Belgrade Lakes in rural central Maine. Although my mother herself moved away after she married, our family spent (and continues to spend) a portion

of the summer there every year. The largest nearby town is Waterville (home of Colby College), where we shop for groceries and get ice cream. For many years, on special occasions we enjoyed “fine dining” at a restaurant called The Silent Woman.

The large sign advertising the restaurant, tall enough to be visible from the elevated highway passing overhead, featured a standing woman holding a tray of dishes (Figure 7). The disturbing part was that she was completely headless – thus the “Silent Woman.” This never seemed to bother anyone else during the many meals I ate there over the years with my extended family of aunts, uncles, and cousins, but even in my youth I was annoyed not only by the sexism, but also by the downright ridiculousness of a decapitated restaurant server who couldn’t see or talk, let alone enjoy the delicious “Silent Woman rolls” that were the specialty of the house.



Figure 7. Vintage ashtray from The Silent Woman, Waterville, Maine. Photo: Author.

Since the restaurant closed in the 1980s and was by and large a local establishment, imagine my surprise when I searched for images of the headless restaurant mascot for this project, and discovered that it has been mentioned in a variety of contexts. A

Berkeley-based writer made a trip to Waterville with her boyfriend, who had been hired to teach at Colby; upon seeing the Silent Woman sign she announced that she would never live in a town that had such a restaurant (in the end, she did). In a short piece for *Colby Magazine*, she mused how the town grew on her, although she does not say that the Silent Woman did!^[38] The author of a blog post for *Psychology Today* had a similar summer experience to me, enjoying bucolic lakeside days during a summer vacation, but being (silently) horrified by the decapitated woman decorating the sign of the local restaurant.^[39] Madeline H. Caviness discussed an eighteenth-century version of the image, a wooden cabaret sign from Grivegnée near Liège, Liège reading “À la Bonne Femme, 1762,” and mentioned the similarity to the Waterville Silent Woman sign. As Caviness noted, she is “a good woman because she cannot speak—she is the silent body structured by the absent voice.”^[40] In fact, a Google image search reveals that there are numerous examples of bars, restaurants, and inns called The Silent Woman (or sometimes The Quiet Woman),^[41] usually advertised by an image of a female server with no head.

This is, of course, the misogynist joke. What is better than to be served by a woman who cannot talk (or, really, talk back)? Any means of being able to speak is eradicated for the Silent Woman; she doesn't have a brain in her head, quite literally. She is nothing but a body, fully on display with bared shoulders and curvaceous bosom and hips, her visible feet and ankles solidly akimbo in a way that suggests both workaday servitude and sexual invitation.

Part of the reason why the Waterville sign might have seemed acceptable to its mid-twentieth-century audience is because the Silent Woman was obviously not of their time. What time period she was supposed to be from is not entirely clear – the wooden signboards on the interior of the restaurant and the overall décor could probably best be described as early Americana, but for a modern viewer, the woman's costume could connote anything from Colonial Barmaid to Medieval Wench. And yet, the joke and the misogyny still work in the present day. Even if some of us were offended by the image, we got the message—the only way to make a woman stop talking is to remove her head entirely, with the additional implication that whatever she would have had to say wasn't much worth listening to in the first place.

Losing One's Head

Of course the difference between the medieval images discussed thus far and the Silent Woman of Waterville, Maine is that the latter is unable to speak not because

she has been stabbed in the throat, or because her tongue has been cut out, but rather because she has no head at all. In hagiographic legends martyrs endured and survived any number of tortures, and many times, the only way to dispatch them once and for all was to behead them (although in some cases, cephalophoric saints still functioned after their decapitations).[42] For the loquacious virgin martyrs like Catherine, removing the head was often the only way to shut them up—and of course, this is the implication of the Silent Woman motif, too. But the only thing that is important about the head of the Silent Woman is that it is missing, because that is the thing that makes her silent. In contrast, beheaded bodies in the Middle Ages, be they saintly or secular, were often less important than the heads from which they had been severed. The significance of the head was such that it was believed to be the repository of the soul, and a relic of a saint's head was nearly as precious as the entire body.[43] Images of decapitation almost always included the head, either in the process of falling or already on the ground. Decapitation became the preferred method of execution after a revival of Roman law in the central Middle Ages and served as a warning to political rivals or potential criminals, particularly when the heads remained visible; Sonja Drimmer has demonstrated how severed heads on display in late medieval England could be understood as a type of public monument.[44]

And unlike both the Silent Woman and the silenced virgin martyrs, in some medieval sources, severed heads continued to be able to speak.[45] In a particularly well-known hagiographic example, the decapitated head of Saint Edmund, thrown into the brush, called out to those searching for him, until they found it in the protective grasp of a she-wolf.[46] Several miniatures in the *Miscellany on the Life of St. Edmund* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 736) contain dramatic images of Edmund's severed head, still bleeding from the stump (fols. 14v; 16r; and 16v; on fol. 17r the head is reattached to the body). Even more familiar is perhaps the incident in the fourteenth-century Arthurian romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where Gawain accepts the challenge of the Green Knight and beheads him, when to his astonishment the Knight picks up his severed head. The head speaks, challenging Gawain to a rematch in one year's time, and then the Knight rides away holding his head.[47] Before the rematch, Gawain stays with the lord Bertilak de Hautdesert at his castle, and is visited by Bertilak's wife, who attempts to seduce him with increasingly aggressive language. The poem famously includes a passage where Gawain bemoans the way he has been tricked by the wiles of women, both by Bertilak's wife, and by the sorceress Morgan le Fay, who had transformed Bertilak into the Green Knight. Some scholars see this passage as deeply misogynist and anti-feminist, as Gawain excoriates women who use their powers of speech for evil ends. On the other hand, some scholars have a more positive interpretation of the

portrayal of women in the poem, as characters who can think and speak for themselves, and who have the ability to change minds and influence the actions of others.[48]

It has been a project of more recent feminist scholarship to find in medieval sources places where women did in fact have agency, even if they lived in a primarily patriarchal society—to focus more on women who acted rather than were acted upon, who actively looked rather than were gazed upon, who were powerful rather than powerless, who were outspoken rather than speechless. After all, in the Middle Ages there were women who wielded political influence; occupied positions of social status; managed estates; and flourished in their own occupations. Even the attempt to characterize women’s speech as vapid, or deceitful, or overly aggressive could have nuanced connotations that were not entirely negative. For example, Sandy Bardsley has discussed how the court prosecution of the speech crime of “scolding” in late medieval England, a charge brought against both men and women, in effect feminized disruptive and illicit speech. But as she explains, “...the construction of women’s voices as gossipy and argumentative was not always a thoroughly disempowering construction. Troublesome voices were not welcomed—indeed, they were sometimes feared—and this fear brought a degree of authority to the voices of some women.”[49] The words of women could have far-reaching consequences; the instigator of the Tour de Nesle incident was Isabella, wife of Edward II of England, daughter of Philip IV of France, and sister to Philip’s cuckolded sons. She noticed that purses she had given to her sisters-in-law, including Blanche of Burgundy’s sister Marguerite, ended up in the possession of their purported lovers. She exposed the adulterous couples, leading to the imprisonment of the women, the public executions of the men, and a succession crisis in the Capetian dynasty that would ultimately lead to the Hundred Years’ War.

We may never know for certain how Blanche of Burgundy, or other medieval women, reacted to stories and images of women who were punished for speaking out of turn, or if they internalized the derogatory associations of women’s speech with sexuality, deceit, and deviance. Perhaps Blanche and other women like her took to heart the message that a good wife was a mostly silent one. Or, perhaps instead, they were intrigued and inspired by the eloquent virgin martyrs who employed their speech in order to be subversive rather than subservient. Then as now, the impact of an image might vary significantly depending on the audience, and the intended message might be upended and resisted. I suspect that I was not the only little girl who upon seeing the Silent Woman restaurant sign vowed to do everything in my power to make my voice heard.

References

- **1** For more on the painting, see *Catalunya romanica*, XV (1993), 365-66; and Joan Ainaud de Lasarte, *Catalan Painting: The Fascination of the Romanesque* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), 126-27. I thank Pamela Patton for these references.

- 2** For more on this, see Maud Burnett McInerney, "Rhetoric, Power and Integrity in the Passion of the Virgin Martyr," *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Coyne Kelley and Marina Leslie (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 50-70.

- 3** For more on the early textual sources, see Barbara Wisch, "Seeing is Believing: St. Lucy in Text, Image, and Festive Culture, in *The Saint Between Manuscript and Print: Italy 1400-1600*, ed. Alison K. Frazier. *Essays and Studies*, 37 (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2015), 101-41, especially the bibliography referenced in n. 1.

- 4** For an English translation, see William Granger Ryan with an introduction by Eamon Duffy, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). Selected scholarship on the *Legenda aurea* includes Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, *Ricerche sulla composizione e sulla trasmissione della Legenda aurea*, Biblioteca di Medioevo latino 8 (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1995); Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed., *Legenda aurea: Sept siècles de diffusion* (Montreal: Éditions Bellarmin, 1986); Sherry L. Reames, *The Legenda aurea: A Reexamination of its Paradoxical History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); and Alain Boureau, *La Légende dorée: Le système narrative de Jacques de Voragine (†1298)* (Paris: Les Éditions de Cerf, 1984).

- 5** Ryan, *The Golden Legend*, 29.

- 6** Another example of multiple scenes of Lucy's tortures, although not nearly as gruesome, is one of the frescoes in a cycle of four depicting the saint's life on the west wall of the Oratory of St. George in Padua. See Mary D. Edwards, "Parallelism in the Frescoes in the Oratory of St. George in Padua (1379-84)," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 2008, 71 no. 1 (2008): 53-72.

- 7** For Agatha in general, as well as the connections between Agatha's breasts and Lucy's eyes, see Martha Easton, "Saint Agatha and the Sanctification of Sexual Violence," *Studies in Iconography* 16 (1994): 83-118.

- 8** For further information about the connection between Lucy and sight, in addition to Wisch, "Seeing is Believing," see Anthony K. Cassell, "Santa Lucia as Patroness of Sight: Hagiography, Iconography, and Dante," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, no. 109 (1991): 71-88.

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- 9 Madeline H. Caviness, *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages: Sight, Spectacle, and Scopic Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 45-89.
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23 Assaf Pinkus, *Visual Aggression: Images of Martyrdom in Late Medieval Germany* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2021), especially Chapter 4, “Eroticized and Sexualized Bodies,” 82-95.
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