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The Master of the Female Half-Lengths Group, Eclecticism, and Novelty

In the past, historians of early Netherlandish art attached little importance to workshops that specialized in producing panels in multiple versions. The lack of scholarly interest in pictorial repetition – a lack already evident in Max J. Friedländer's foundational volumes on the period, and seen in many subsequent studies – has less to do with this artistic practice's significance during the Northern Renaissance than with twentieth-century biases which value originality and individuality over quotation and copy, and innovation and novelty over tradition and conservatism.[1] Connoisseurs such as Friedländer, whose work dealt largely with establishing clear parameters for a painter's oeuvre, tended to interpret replicas as little more than insubstantial shadows of a single, dominant 'master's' design. Recent writers, however, have explored how the authority of familiar formulae had a compelling allure for Northern European audiences, especially in the case of devotional imagery, and new studies have recognized that many ambitious artists were eager to exploit the appeal of replicas and copies.[2] To dismiss these artists as unimaginative or uncreative, as much of modern art history has done, distorts our understanding of the range of late medieval images and obscures the significance of a whole category of work that sheds light on the nature of the market, on contemporary taste, and on artistic strategies devised to compete for clientele.

The so-called Master of the Female Half-Lengths is one of the most engaging of the early Flemish artistic personalities whose works do not fit comfortably into the ranks of established twentieth-century categories of importance. The many panels associated with this hand demonstrate that they satisfied a significant niche among contemporary buyers of art. More accurately described as an atelier or group of artists working in a similar style than as a single individual, the Half-Length Master painters produced more than one hundred surviving works; the majority of these represent either devotional subjects such as the Madonna and Child and the Holy Family, or half-length images of courtly young women reading, writing, or playing music in interior settings, all repeating similar compositional formulae with minor variations.[3] These paintings's charm and the technical skill they often display account for the approval they evidently enjoyed at the time.

Despite their contemporary success, we know very little about the Master of the Female Half-Length painters. Writers have speculated about both the place and period of their activity; their origins are also unclear. While the Group is best known for the series of half-length panels of elegant young ladies from which it takes its name (fig. 1, *The Concert*, Harrach collection, Rohrau, Austria), it is the religious scenes and landscapes that are most closely related to other sixteenth-century images. Robert Koch established the landscapes's similarities to Joachim Patinir's works produced in Antwerp, but the figural paintings remain less carefully examined.[4]



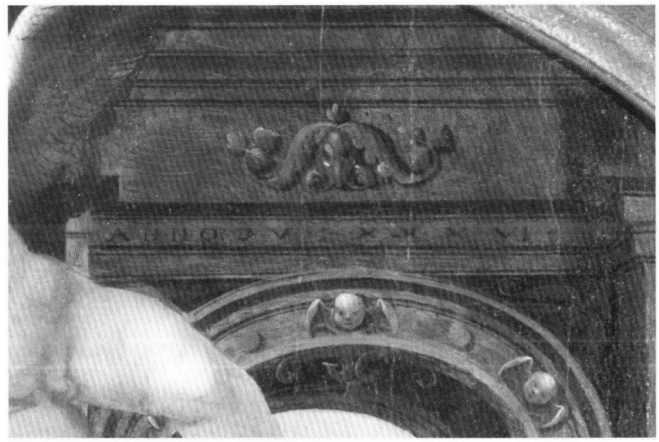
1
The Master of the Female Half-Lengths Group, *The Concert*, panel, 60 × 53 cm. Harrach collection, Rohrau, Austria.

This paper identifies several previously unstudied panels of the Virgin and Child which reveal clues about two questions surrounding this intriguing and enigmatic group of painters: the date of their period of activity, and the artistic milieu in which they worked. Moreover, this paper highlights some of the complexities of early sixteenth-century image production in the Netherlands by showing how one of the many – now anonymous – personalities that flourished at the time positioned itself in the market by adapting models and motifs from many diverse traditions and shops.

Date

Although dated works in the Half-Length Master style are extremely rare, most scholars have convincingly placed the Group's activity to the second and third decades of the sixteenth century.[5] A *Holy Family in an Interior* that was formerly in the Rush collection, New York, now adds a precise date (fig. 2).[6] The year *ANNO: DV: XXXVI.* inscribed on the entablature above the window to the right confirms that the Half-Length Master style was mature by 1536 (fig. 3). This is the only devotional panel of the group known to me to bear a date.





3
Detail of Fig. 2.

2
The Master of the Female Half-Lengths Group, *The Holy Family in an Interior*, dated 1536, panel, 71 × 54,5 cm. Formerly Richard H. Rush collection, New York.

The *Holy Family in an Interior* displays the Group's salient characteristics as found in works such as the Harrach *Concert* (fig. 1), the ambitious *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* in the National Gallery, London (fig. 4), and the half-length *Madonna and Child* formerly in the W. A. Howgate collection (fig. 5).[7] The Virgin exemplifies the female type: her head a refined oval shape with lowered eyes, a long straight nose, and thin delicate eyebrows; her hair is parted in the center, wound in braids around her head, and partly covered by a transparent veil. Joseph is portrayed with the typical longish face, downturned eyes, bald head, and flowing, forked gray beard. The Child's nude body is slender and slightly elongated, and the Virgin offers him a piece of fruit, as she frequently does in the Half-Length Master panels (fig. 5). The painting's sensitive execution and idealized grace represent the Group's products at their most appealing.

However, while the Half-Length Master paintings tend to repeat the same general elements, this panel exhibits features that are unusual in the oeuvre. The Holy Family appears in a classically-inspired hall instead of in a landscape or against a neutral background, as is more usual for the devotional scenes (figs. 4, 5). Joseph's left hand projects outward, palm partly open to the viewer, to create a more energetic, three-dimensional effect than is typical of the Group, which favored stable planarity and restrained movement. Moreover, the details of the Virgin's clothing – particularly the shawl wrapped around her shoulders, her thick knotted belt, and her bulky sleeves – differ from the dress that Mary wears in almost all the Group's paintings, which features a fitted bodice with smooth tight sleeves and white cuffs, a rounded or square neckline embellished with fur, and white fabric inserts at the shoulder seams, with the neckline, hair or waist adorned with the metallic buttons that are the Group's personal trademarks (figs. 4, 5). Moreover, the Half-Length Master panels are rarely dated. These atypical qualities point to the fact – as demon-

strated below – that the panel adapts another artist's design, a borrowing that raises questions about the milieu in which the Half-Length Master oeuvre drew its sources.

Artistic Milieu

The Rush *Holy Family in an Interior* adds to our understanding of the Half-Length Master style not only by providing a precise date, but also by establishing a clear link to contemporary painting in Antwerp. Its composition derives from a formula designed by Pieter Coecke van Aelst, a dominant Antwerp artist by the 1520s, although the figure types and the smooth, enamel-like execution are completely characteristic of the Group.[8] Antwerp artists replicated this Coecke formula in great numbers during the second half of the sixteenth century; many of these versions bear dates on the entablature above the window, as does the Rush painting.[9] Indeed, the design enjoyed such popularity among Antwerp workshops that one might be tempted to interpret the Rush panel as evidence of the Group's activity there.

Because writers disagree about where this anonymous atelier worked, it is useful here to summarize briefly some of the various opinions. While earlier students of Flemish art have speculated unpersuasively that the Group was active in Ghent, Mechelen, or at the French court, most recent writers now situate it either in Antwerp or Bruges. Otto Benesch identified the artist with the Bruges painter Hans Vereyck whom Karel van Mander described as a landscape specialist.[10] However, Benesch's theory – based on a landscape drawing in the Louvre which is inscribed with Vereyck's name in a later hand – has not found general acceptance.[11] Alternatively, Friedländer and Koch suggested that in the 1520s and 1530s, the 'Master' worked in Antwerp and Mechelen, noting that some of the panels adapt Joachim Patinir's late landscape formulas and that the female types are reminiscent of Bernard van Orley's Madonnas.[12] Koch proposed that the 'Half-Length Master' trained in Antwerp during the beginning of the 1520s, perhaps in Patinir's shop.[13] But, just to confuse matters still further, Schubert returned to Benesch's theory that the Master is the draughtsman of the Louvre landscape album.[14]

The problem with all this, however, is that these writers focus primarily on the landscapes, taking little account of the Group's distinctive figures. In 1985, Genaille examined some of the figural paintings, noting general stylistic similarities with numerous artists, including Coecke and van Orley, but also with the Bruges painters Adriaen Ysenbrant and Ambrosius Benson.[15] Genaille ultimately concluded that the Master worked in Antwerp, but he too relied on an analysis of the landscapes, in which he saw Joos van Cleve's influence instead of Patinir's.

The Half-Length Group's figure paintings deserve closer attention, however, as they present further specific links to Netherlandish art. These links repeatedly point to designs popular not only in Antwerp, but also in Brussels and Bruges, demonstrating that these panels are more complex in nature than was previously thought.

Friedländer and Koch, plausibly suggesting that the Half-Length Master female type derives from Bernard van Orley's Madonnas of the early 1520s, cited only general stylistic similarities to van Orley's works. An unpublished *Madonna and Child* from the Group which was on the New York art market in 1984 (fig. 6) now presents a specific compositional link with a design ascribed to van Orley, a 1520-23 *Holy Family* known in studio versions (fig. 7).[16] In addition to the figures's poses, most of the details closely correspond in the two works, including the parted fingers of the Virgin's right hand, the Child's fingertips at his mother's neck, and even the Child's spread toe. While this *Madonna and Child* has only recently come to light,



4
The Master of the Female Half-Lengths Group, *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, panel, 81 × 62 cm. National Gallery, London.



5
The Master of the Female Half-Lengths Group, *Madonna and Child*, panel, 55,5 × 42 cm. Formerly W. A. Howgate collection.



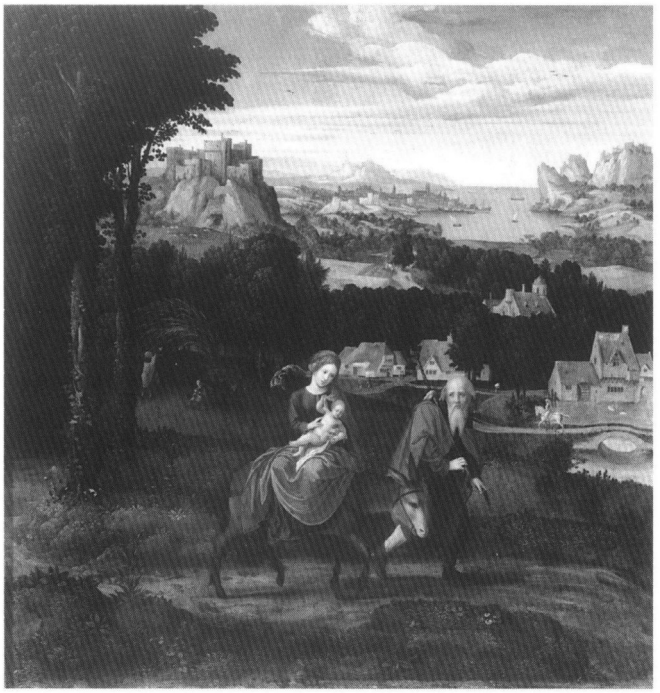
6
Master of the Female Half-Lengths Group, *Madonna and Child*, panel, 35 × 26,5 cm. Art market, New York, 1984.



7
Circle of Bernard van Orley, *Holy Family*, panel. Private collection, Stuttgart.



8
Master of the Female Half-Lengths Group, *Madonna and Child with a book*, panel. Present whereabouts unknown.



9
Master of the Female Half-Lengths Group, *The Flight into Egypt*, panel, 65,4 × 63,3 cm. North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina.

we can find that Friedländer and others have already published other Half-Length Master Group panels which employ van Orley's designs. The corpus includes, for instance, several versions of van Orley's popular *Madonna and Child with a Book* of circa 1520 (fig. 8).[17]

The Half-Length Master Madonna panels reveal a distinctively eclectic artistic personality. Sources include Jan Gossaert: for instance, in the *Flight into Egypt* set in a Patinir-like landscape (North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, fig. 9), the Child holds his mother's veil above his head and crosses his legs exactly as in a popular Gossaert design known in several replicas.[18] In fact, the Group's Child types seem very close to Gossaert's in their complicated poses and chubby proportions, although their smooth, slender forms differ from the broad muscularity typical of Gossaert.[19]

However, before we are tempted to place the Group within Gossaert's immediate orbit, we should note that some of the paintings also follow formulas popular among the Bruges artists, particularly Ambrosius Benson and Adriaen Ysenbrant; one example is a *Virgin and Child* in a private collection in Burgos (fig. 10).[20] How should we explain the Group's use of motifs current in both Bruges and Antwerp, while at the same time incorporating stylistic features of van Orley and Gossaert of Brussels and Mechelen? Clearly there was much exchange between the painters of Bruges, Antwerp, and other cities; moreover, attracted by employment possibilities in the prosperous port on the Scheldt, many artists relocated to Antwerp from Bruges and elsewhere.[21] The Half-Lengths Master painters may have been attracted to the Bruges formulae since these artists made a particular specialty of in-



10
Master of the Female Half-Lengths Group, *Madonna and Child*, panel. Private collection, Burgos.



11
Master of the Female Half-Lengths Group, *Madonna and Child*, panel, 35,6 x 30,5 cm. Present whereabouts unknown.

timate devotional panels of the Madonna and Child. Furthermore, the Group not only mined their colleagues's repertory of successful compositions, but also used fifteenth-century formulas by Roger van der Weyden to create conservative devotional images linked with the authority of the past (fig. 11), and even appropriated – although very rarely – classical subjects from Italian prints in a bid for buyers with relatively learned, humanistic tastes.[22] Ultimately, this extensive borrowing from diverse artistic models makes it all the more difficult – if not impossible – to pinpoint the exact location of the Half-Length Master Group, and moreover makes the issue of a single location itself seem less significant. Eclecticism typifies the oeuvres of many of the Bruges and Antwerp artists, and can be considered a characteristic of much early sixteenth-century Netherlandish art.

Novel Imagery in a Painting from the Group

Because the Half-Length Master Group is known primarily for its panels of courtly women in contemporary settings, its paintings of other subjects sometimes go unrecognized and are even mistaken for the works of other artists. Such is the case with the indecisive attribution of the characteristic *Madonna and Child in*

an Interior to an anonymous follower of Jan Gossaert, made when the painting was on the New York art market in 1981 (Dr. and Mrs. Gordon Gilbert collection, U.S.A., fig. 12).[23]

The Gilbert panel exemplifies the Half-Length Master style. The Virgin repeats the familiar female type: the graceful oval head turned in three-quarter view, the lowered eyes, slight smile, straight thin nose, and high narrow eyebrows. She wears the distinctive dress of the Group's Madonnas, with its close-fitting dark bodice and long sleeves ending in white cuffs, rounded neckline edged with fur, and white fabric trim inserted at the shoulders (figs. 4, 5, 11). Her hair is parted in the center, braided around the crown of her head, and adorned with a transparent veil. The Child is also typical: muscular, slender, and slightly elongated in proportion, he assumes an impossible but effortlessly acrobatic pose, leaning backward on one foot as he reaches up to hold a cluster of grapes to his mother's mouth. The Group's trademark motifs appear: the golden pear that the Child often holds, the still life arrangement of fruit and an open book laid out on the table, and especially the round metallic buttons that trim the Virgin's neckline and her headband.

Most of the Group's half-length Madonnas appear against a flat ambiguous background instead of in an identifiable setting, a format Friedländer described pejoratively as taking "the easy, economical way, placing the flesh parts of the mother and child against a neutral dark ground."[24] Friedländer dismissed these paintings as uninspired, produced, to his mind, with the monotony of assembly line production.[25] The Gilbert panel elaborates the basic formula, suggesting that it may have been a more deluxe version or even an individually designed, customized commission. The figures occupy a meticulously rendered throne room adorned with massive marble columns and a landscape viewed through a window. Embellishing the room are several motifs drawn from the familiar vocabulary of fifteenth-century Netherlandish painting; these include the eucharistic reference of the windmill in the distant landscape and the lion finals on the Virgin's throne which allude to her role as the *sedes sapientiae*.[26]

However, the Gilbert panel's conservative style and imagery make it easy to overlook its innovation in showing the Child offering his mother a bunch of grapes. In his book *The Fruit of Devotion* (1994), Reindert Falkenburg demonstrated that the great variety of fruit and flowers shown with the Virgin and Child in hundreds of early Flemish paintings bear extraordinary rich meanings: alluding to the 'undepictable' tastes and fragrances of the heavenly Paradise, the fruits and flowers are intended to be consumed by the Christ Child or, occasionally, by the faithful patron.[27] Falkenburg found no images in which the fruit or flowers are meant for the Virgin, leading him to suggest that in these scenes "Christ is the principal – and perhaps the exclusive – consumer. I know of no paintings in which the Virgin either tastes fruit or savors the fragrance of flowers. However, the number of pictures which clearly show the Virgin merely passing on the gifts of angels and saints to her Son are innumerable. Even in cases where he is being nursed by the Virgin, or being fed porridge, the flowers and the fruit, and even hard nuts, bread and wine, are apparently intended for the Christ Child and not for his Mother. Finally, in the few paintings which show Christ sharing these gifts with others, it is not his Mother but a bird, or a pious donor whom he wishes to honor."[28]

The painter of the Gilbert panel departed from the usual approach by showing the Virgin herself thus honored by her son. Since the shared fruits are grapes, a familiar allusion to the Eucharist, the consumption motif here invokes Mary's and Christ's roles as the central figures in the Redemption cycle, their lives united in the love, suffering, and virtue that they offer for the salvation of the world.[29] Moreover, Christ's gesture of proffering fruit bears the same meaning here that Falkenburg found in the more usual scenes: that Mary will receive Christ's gift in her

12
Master of the Female Half-Lengths Group, *Madonna and Child in an Interior*, panel, 59,5 × 48 cm. Gordon and Adele Gilbert collection, Florida.



heart, meditating on its symbolic essence in the context of the Passion. As a devotional image, the panel exhorts the viewer to emulate Mary by contemplating the fruit's symbolic meanings in his or her soul; the Gilbert panel may well be the first known representation of the Virgin as the 'intended consumer'.[30]

The Gilbert *Madonna and Child in an Interior*, therefore, demonstrates a previously unexamined inventive aspect of the Half-Length Master personality, altering the older scholarly view of the Group as jaded and rigid. On the contrary, eclecticism seems not to indicate a lack of imagination on the artist's part, but rather to have played a special role in these paintings's success. By drawing upon the authority of the Flemish 'founding fathers' such as Roger van der Weyden and by re-interpreting contemporary formulas in an easily identifiable, appealing pictorial style utilizing smooth brushstrokes, rich surface textures, and slender, serenely elegant figures, the Master of the Half-Lengths Group panels provided a 'brand-name' product of guaranteed quality and recognizable value for the sixteenth-century buyers of small-scale panel paintings.[31] Their repetition of specific themes – mainly intimate religious images of the Madonna and Child and secular scenes of beautiful

courtly women – and their synthesis of eclectic models current among their contemporaries may well represent not the artists's limitations, but rather their entrepreneurial accommodation of a significant aspect of societal taste.

It is hoped that a consideration of these paintings of the Half-Length Master Group will enable us to form a clearer picture of a significant phenomenon in the Netherlandish art market in the 1520s and 30s: that of painters whose skills and popularity depended significantly on the work of a wide range of other artists. While some modern art historians have dismissed these works they nevertheless have a real charm that accounts not only for their appeal in the sixteenth century but also for the favor they still deservedly enjoy. For we find these anonymous artists's paintings employed as illustrations in recent books, and a current novel mentions these distinctive depictions of ladies, all indications that these lovely pictures – while admittedly providing less than others in terms of the dramatically new and the cult of the artistic individual – still maintain in the late twentieth century the power to delight and to engage the imagination of the viewer.[32]

NOTES

* I thank Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, David Freedberg, and Matt Kavaler for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

[1] Max J. Friedländer's series of volumes *Die Altniederländische Malerei* was published between 1924 and 1937 (vols. I-XI, Berlin, and vols. XII-XIV, Leyden). An expanded edition translated into English contains extensive illustrations (*Early Netherlandish Painting*, vols. I-XIV, Leyden-Brussels, 1967-1976). The following notes will refer to the English edition. Friedländer discussed the Master of the Female Half-Lengths in vol. XII, *Jan van Scorel and Pieter Coecke van Aelst*, Leyden-Brussels, 1975.

[2] Jean C. Wilson, *Painting in Bruges at the Close of the Middle Ages. Studies in Society and Visual Culture*, Pennsylvania University State Press, 1998, especially Part II: 'From Representation to Replication', pp. 87-131; Wilson's earlier relevant studies include 'Connoisseurship and Copies: The Case for the Rouen Grouping', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 6th ser., 117, 1991, pp. 191-206, and 'Adriaen Isenbrant and the Problem of his Oeuvre', *Oud Holland*, 109, 1995, pp. 1-17. Maryan W. Ainsworth addressed the topic of multiples in several important studies including *Gerard David: Purity of Vision in an Age of Transition*, New York, 1998, and *Facsimile in Early Netherlandish Painting: Dieric Bouts's "Virgin and Child"*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1993; see also Larry Silver's comments in 'The State of Research in Northern European Art of the Renaissance Era', *Art Bulletin*, LXVII, 1986, esp. pp. 531-534, and 'Fountain and Source: A Rediscovered Eyckian Icon', *Pantheon*, XLVI, 1983, pp. 95-104.

[3] F. Waagen first noted that the Master's two versions of the *Concert* in Rohrau (fig. 1 in the present article) and Leningrad are by the same hand (*Die vornehmsten Kunstdenkmäler in Wien*, 1866, I, p. 324). These two paintings served as the core for a reconstruction of the oeuvre by Carl Justi ('Altflandrische Bilder in Spanien und Portugal', *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, xxi, 1886, pp. 93-98, pp. 133-140) and F. Wickhoff ('Die Bilder weiblicher Halbfiguren aus der Zeit und Umgebung Franz I. von Frankreich', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, xxii, 1901, pp. 221-245). For further panels ascribed to the Master, see Friedländer XII; Jesús Hernández Perera, 'Museo Español. Del Maestro de las Medias Figuras', *Goya*, 49, 1962, pp. 2-11; Matías Díaz Padrón, 'Nuevas Pinturas del Maestro de las Medias Figuras', *Archivo Español de Arte*, 210, 1980, pp. 169-184, and idem, 'Pintores Flamencos del XVI: Tablas del Maestro de las Medias Figuras Identificados en España, Caracas y Santiago de Chile', *Archivo Español de Arte*, 219, 1982, pp. 273-284. Many of the images of courtly ladies include a small vessel, leading many scholars to suggest that the subject of these panels is the Magdalene.

[4] Robert Koch, *Joachim Patinir*, Princeton, 1968, pp. 56-65.

[5] Friedländer stated about the panels: "Nothing is in its original location or properly dated" (XII, p. 18). The only other dated panel in the Half-Length Master style is a small *Judgment of Paris* in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, dated 1532 and inscribed with the initials L.D.H. This panel is illustrated and described in Friedländer XII, no. 109, pl. 47, without a mention of the date or initials. Friedländer did note that two panels from the group (one in the Royal Museum, Antwerp, and the other in the Bechstein collection, Berlin) derive from compositions designed by Jan Gossaert in 1527. Other panels, including the two *Concerts* from which the Master's name is derived, represent musical scores that were first published in 1529. For the Gossaert compositions, see Friedländer VIII, p. 31, cat. 14.

[6] Present whereabouts unknown. Formerly New York, Richard H. Rush collection, 71 x 54,5 cm. This painting was not known to Friedländer nor to the other previous writers on the artist. It is illustrated in the exhibition catalogue *The Richard H. Rush Collection*, Finch College Museum of Art, New York, 1971, no. 1, and in the catalogues for the sales at Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, 6 December, 1973, lot 77, and Christie's, London, 9 July 1976, lot 165. Provenance: W. Altschul, New York.

[7] Sale, Sotheby's, 12 December 1973, lot 3; photograph on deposit at the Frick Art Reference Library, New York.

[8] For Coecke's design see Georges Marlier, *La Renaissance flamande: Pierre Coecke d'Alost*, Brussels, 1966, pp. 237-240.

[9] Marlier, *ibid.*, lists eleven versions from Coecke's workshop and six in the style of the Master of the Parrot, active in Antwerp. Marlier illustrates two versions of the design, which both show Joseph's hand extended palm outward as in the Rush panel (Marlier figs. 179, 180). Photographs of numerous other versions are on deposit in the Coecke files at the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD) in The Hague, and the Witt Library in London. Marlier published one panel dated 1533 (no. 5), but the design must be as early as 1530, the date placed on a version on the Munich art market in 1955 (Weinmüller, 11-13 May, no. 1619, as Pieter Coecke van Aelst, photograph on file at the RKD; listed as no. 6 by Marlier, who could not read the date). Two unpublished versions are dated 1539 and 1540, indicating that the design enjoyed the relatively long life of ten years (photographs filed at the RKD under the name 'Coecke').

[10] O. Benesch, 'The Name of the Master of the Half-Lengths', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, lxxxv, 1943, pp. 269-282.

[11] One issue is that Hulin de Loo had earlier identified Vereycke as Jan van Eeckele, who first registered in the Bruges painter's guild in 1524 (died there in 1561), and Koch argued that these dates are too late for the style of the landscapes in the Half-Length Master paintings (Koch 1968, as in note 4, pp. 57-58).

[12] Friedländer XII, p. 19; Koch (as in note 4), p. 64: "It seems clear that the Master had derived his own style of the sweet and aristocratic female figure from van Orley's style of around 1521-22 seen in such pictures as the *Job Altar* in Brussels and the *Holy Family* in the Prado, which are signed and dated in these two years. This female type reflects the courtly type that Bernard van Orley developed in Brussels and Mechelen around 1518 when he was appointed court painter of Margaret of Austria. It was adopted by the Master of the Half-Lengths, and he was apparently quite content to remain with this lovely stereotype throughout his career, just as he was perfectly satisfied with a landscape style that he had derived from Patinir."

[13] Koch's definition of the Half-Length Master landscapes has been generally accepted. For Walter Gibson, for instance, the Half-Length Master-like landscape in Gossaert's Cleveland *Madonna and Child* suggests that Gossaert may have collaborated directly with the 'Master' in Antwerp, in that case confirming that Gossaert was in the city ('Jan Gossaert de Mabuse: Madonna and

Child in a Landscape', *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 61-62, 1974-75, pp. 294-295).

[14] D. Schubert, review of Robert Koch, *Joachim Patinir*, Princeton, 1968, in *Kunstchronik*, 1971, pp. 73-74.

[15] R. Genaille, 'A propos du Maître dit des demi-figures feminines', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten*, Antwerp, 1985, pp. 137-176.

[16] New York, Sotheby Parke Bernet, 7 June 1984, lot 8 (as Master of the Female Half-Lenghts), provenance: William Parkin-Moore, in the nineteenth century, 'Whitehall', Mealsgate, Cumberland, England; Acquavella Galleries, New York. Present location unknown. A photograph of the van Orley design is on deposit at the RKD under Bernard van Orley. The composition is also similar to works by other artists such as David; see, for instance, panels of the *Virgin and Child* in Munich and Basel, circa 1490-95 (Ainsworth 1998, as in note 2, figs. 256a, 257a). For the compositions's associations with Byzantine icons, see the discussion in Ainsworth 1998, chapter six, with further bibliography.

[17] Photo on deposit at the Witt Library, London, inscribed on the back: 'Béziers'. See also Friedländer XII, pl. 36, 63 (present whereabouts unknown; from the Pallavicini collection, auctioned in London in 1927). For van Orley's design, see Friedländer VIII, pl. 116, 135a., Add. 166. As Friedländer noted, the design was popular in Bruges; see for instance a version by Ambrosius Benson (Munich, in Friedländer XI, pl. 203, Supp. 311).

[18] The motif appears in several paintings from the Master of the Half-Lengths Group; see Friedländer XII, pl. 37, no. 68. For the Gossaert design, dubbed the 'Madonna with the Entangled Child', see Friedländer VIII, pl. 36, nos. 38a-d; one rather weak version is inscribed with Gossaert's name and dated 1531.

[19] For a discussion of Gossaert's style, see J. Richard Judson, 'Jan Gossaert and the New Aesthetic', in John Oliver Hand et. al., *The Age of Bruegel: Netherlandish Drawings in the Sixteenth Century*, National Gallery of Art and Pierpont Morgan Library, 1986, pp. 13-24.

[20] This panel in Burgos, for instance, corresponds to Ambrosius Benson compositions in Madrid (Museum Lázaro Galdiano) and Detroit (private collection), ill. in Friedländer XII, pl. 170, 260-260a. Friedländer followed the design back to Gerard David and also to Ysenbrant. The Half-Length Master Madonna paintings now in Spanish collections panels that were presumably produced for export – are especially numerous in scenes that correspond to compositions used by the Bruges artists.

[21] Gerard David and Jan Provost joined the painters guild in both Bruges and Antwerp to take advantage of both markets; see Maryan Ainsworth, 1998 (as in note 2), p. 277. Artists apparently rented out and borrowed patterns; see the famous court case between David and his *compagnon*, Ambrosius Benson, over the ownership of patterns in Ainsworth, *op.cit.*, pp. 7-8.

[22] This Madonna and Child composition, similar to panels by Ysenbrant (Friedländer XI, no. 195) goes back to Roger, as do many other Madonna panels of the Bruges school (Friedländer VIb, no. 205 and II, no. 109). Panels of *Venus and Cupid* and *Neptune and Thetis* (Berlin) are after engravings by Caraglio, ill. in Friedländer XII, pl. 46, no. 108.

[23] Now in the collection of Dr. Gordon and Adele Gilbert, Florida, United States, purchased at Sotheby's, New York, 11 June 1981, lot 184 (as school of Jan Gossaert; provenance: private collection, Baltimore). The attribution to the Master of the Female Half-Lengths was made by the present writer at the time of the sale. Illustrated in Debra Miller, *Art and Life in Northern Europe, 1500-1800, The Gilbert Collection*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersberg, Florida, December 1990-February 1991, pp. 42-43, fig. 17 (in color).

[24] Friedländer XII, p. 20.

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] See, for instance, J. S. Pierce, 'Memling's Mills', *Studies in Medieval Culture*, 2, 1966, pp. 111-119, and Dirk de Vos, *Hans Memling, The Complete Works*, Antwerp and Ghent, 1994, pp. 217-219, no. 54 (Memling's *Virgin and Child enthroned*, Berlin, circa 1480-90). The Virgin's throne is embellished with lions in, for instance, Jan van Eyck's *Lucca Madonna* in Frankfurt (circa 1434-35; ill. in James E. Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art*, New York, 1985, p. 102, fig. 101).

[27] R. L. Falkenburg, *The Fruit of Devotion. Mysticism and the Imagery of Love in Flemish Paintings of the Virgin and Child, 1450-1550*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1994, esp. p. 5.

[28] *Ibid.* See Falkenburg's fig. 28 (shutter from Gerard David's *Baptism Altarpiece*, Bruges, Stedelijk Museum) for the Child extending grapes to the donor, and fig. 29 (master of the Mansi Magdalene, *Virgin and Child with St. Anne*, location unknown) for Christ holding a cherry to a bird's open beak, as parallels to his gesture in the Gilbert panel.

[29] Falkenburg convincingly linked the flowers and fruit in Madonna paintings to the medieval identification of the Virgin and Child with the bride and bridegroom of the Song of Songs, with its extensive botonical imagery (*ibid.*, p. 9). Grapes can carry various meanings; they might also refer, for instance, to the Virgin's milk (particularly in the case of white grapes, as are the ones in the Gilbert panel), and thus to the church's nourishment of the faithful. For the significance of grapes in paintings of the Virgin and Child see James Mundy, 'Gerard David's *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*: Further Additions to Grape Symbolism', *Simiolus*, 12, 1981-82, pp. 211-222.

[30] I thank Reindert Falkenburg for discussing the imagery of the Gilbert panel in a letter to this writer dated 4 April 1998.

[31] As Falkenburg (1994) notes (*op.cit.*, pp. 1-2), by the late fifteenth and especially by the sixteenth century, the market for these paintings of the Virgin and Child was very diverse. In the fourteenth and the early fifteenth centuries, these paintings were mainly owned by monks, but later there was a distinct rise in the number of paintings of this genre purchased by laymen. Patrons included not only the nobility but also members of the elite urban class, such as merchants and magistrates, and members of the middle class, such as prosperous artisans.

[32] Michael Levey employed the Harrach *Concert* to illustrate his discussion of Renaissance music (*High Renaissance*, Middlesex-Baltimore, 1975, p. 225, fig. 116)). See also Laurie Colwin's last novel, *A Big Storm Knocked It Over*, New York, 1993, p. 185. The novel describes how, while the women of the story are dressing for a wedding, two bridesmaid dresses are brought out, "stuffed with tissue paper and looking like disembodied girls. 'Master of the Female Half-Lengths', Jane-Louise said. . . There's a painter known only as the Master of the Female Half-Lengths, or something like that. . . Your dresses sort of remind me."