RECONSTRUCTING THE OFFICE FURNITURE: 
THE ART OF THE EARLY MODERN CHOIR STALL

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy 
Graduate Department of Art 
University of Toronto

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Abstract

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2016

This dissertation examines a range of choir stalls made in northern Europe and Spain between 1450 and 1550 with the aim of reinstating choir stalls as significant objects in our understanding of the arts of the early modern period. This century of prosperity and renewal supported widespread church commissions and resulted in the construction of some of the most complex and inventive sets of stalls ever built. As objects that were central to the ritual life of religious communities and helped define the sacred space of the choir, their form and iconography tell us about the values, beliefs and aspirations of the patrons who commissioned them and the communities who used them. As large, complex microarchitectural structures, they allowed varying and potentially interacting visual programs to be displayed in diverse and innovative ways. Using a variety of approaches, four broad art historical issues are investigated, showing some of the ways that choir stalls contribute to the larger discourse. Historiography elucidates the longstanding emphasis on misericords and the lack of integration of this work with broader art historical research, as well as suggesting ways to move forward. Analysis of a variety of historical documents along with current research on acoustics and design, and engagement with modern theorists of space highlight how the spatial configuration of choir stalls contributed to key aspects of their use and meaning. The examination of a range of documentary sources provides a picture of how a set of stalls might be realized.
in the early modern period, and the ways in which these practices compare with the
construction of other complex objects. Finally, “thick description” of early modern choir
stalls based on historical data, contemporaneous documents and the stalls themselves
combined with assumptions from material culture studies, show how they were used to
construct both individual and group identity, which affirms the significance attached to
choir stalls in early modern society. Overall, this dissertation demonstrates that choir
stalls were an important part of the artistic production of the early modern period and
their study is therefore necessary for a fuller appreciation of the arts of this time.
Acknowledgements

While early on in my work, someone warned me that writing a dissertation is a lonely business, my research brought me into contact with many people who have been so helpful in its realization. Thank you very much! Merci beaucoup! Danke schön! Merci vielmals! ¡Muchas gracias! Moltes gràcies! Dank u wel! to the many tourist information people, ticket sellers, tour guides and caretakers who provided me with contacts, unlocked doors (both literally and figuratively), and showed me around. In particular, I am grateful to:

in Albi: P. Vinceneau, Recteur.

in Amiens: M. Gauthier Gillmann, Responsable de la documentation photographique des musées d’Amiens et assistant régie des oeuvres. A special thank you to Abbé Dominique-Marie Dupré, Recteur, for his kind assistance.

in Astorga: D. Miguel Sánchez Ruiz, Deán.

in Auch: M. l’Abbé David Cenzon, Recteur. A very special thank you to M. Jacques for his thoughtfulness and to Mme. Martine Lepoittevin-Obama, whose tour of the cathedral was one of the highlights of my travels.

in Ávila: A very special thank you to Fr. Pelegrín Blázquez Fernández for his warm welcome and for the wonderful tour of the monastery.

in Barcelona: Sra. Mariona Sancho.

in Bern: Hr. Felix Gerber, Betriebsleiter/Sigrist.

in Blaubeuren: Fr. Bärbel Wottke.

in Bourg-en-Bresse: Mme Marie-Anne Sarda, Conservatrice en chef du musée de Brou, Mme Yvonne Mandon, secrétaire, and Mme Anaïs Dorey, Chargée de la communication.

in Ciudad Rodrigo: D. Nicolás Martín Matías, Deán. A special thank you to Sra. Estefanía Mangas Santos, Técnico de Turismo for her assistance.

in Dordrecht: Mevr. Marianne Rietveld, Kerkrentmeester. Dhr. A. Boogerman, Secretaris, Vereniging van Vrienden van de Grote Kerk te Dordrecht, kindly put me
in touch with Dhr. van Duinen. A very special thank you to Dhr. Herman A. van Duinen for a tour of the church, stimulating discussion and a copy of his very interesting book.

in Freising: Dr. Norbert Jocher, Leiter des Kunstreferats and Dr. Thomas Ino Hermann, Wissenschaftlicher Volontär.

in Fribourg: P. André Schenker, Curé and M. Bruno Fischer, Sacristain.

in Gatton, Surrey: the Rev. John Smith. A very special thank you to Mr. Stephen Robinson, Churchwarden, and his wife, Jan, who went out of their way to welcome me and share their knowledge of the choir stalls.

in Hauterive: A special thank you to Fr. Michel for a tour of the monastery.

in Kalkar: Hr. Heinz Heyl. Thank you also to Fr. Gerda-Maria Kühnen for her friendly interest.

in León: D. Jacinto Gutiérrez Campillo, Administrador del Cabildo. A very special thank you to Sr. José Manuel Rodríguez Montañés for all his assistance and his warm welcome.

in Leuven: Dhr. Jan Bruels, Koorleider.

in Manchester: Ms. Susan Duce, Cathedral Secretary, Ms. Joanne Hooper, and the Very Revd Rogers Govender, Dean.

in Miraflores: A special thank you to Sr. Juan Ramón Diaz G. for his interest and assistance.

in Plasencia: D. Francisco Rico Bayo, Deán.

in Toledo: D. Juan Sánchez Rodríguez, Deán. A special thank you to Sra. Mercedes for her kind intervention.

in Ulm: Fr. Christine Schreck, Tourist-Information Ulm/Neu-Ulm. A special thank you to Fr. Katrin A. Schulthess for her friendly interest and offer of assistance.

in Windsor: A special thank you to Mrs. Enid Davies, Assistant Archivist, St George’s Chapel Archives & Chapter Library for sharing her knowledge and showing me St. George.

in Zamora: Sr. José Ángel Rivera de las Heras, Director del Museo Catedralicio.
I am extremely grateful for the funding I received that allowed me to complete this work: Ontario Graduate Scholarship, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Doctoral Scholarship, Leonore V. Kinghorn Scholarship and a Doctoral Completion Award.

As a year in Berlin showed me, the libraries and library services at the University of Toronto are outstanding. I would like to thank the excellent staff at Interlibrary Loan / Resource Sharing in particular. Margaret English and staff at the Art Library were also unfailingly helpful. The staff at Robarts Reference and Research Services and at the John Kelly Library consistently provided high-quality service.

The collegiality I encountered and the support I received from my fellow graduate students in the Art Department – during classes, working on the GUStA executive, grappling with writing, performing practice talks, chatting over coffee – was extraordinary. I so appreciate all the feedback given and ideas shared. In particular, thanks to: Sarah Guérin for showing me the ropes early on; Christine Kralik for tips on living and studying in Berlin; Flora Ward and her colleague, Prof. Therese Martin, for putting me in contact with people in León. Many thanks, big and little, to: Jackie Ford, Katie Jakobiec, Hannah Moland, Liz Parke and Karine Tsoumis. Spain would not have been possible without Daniella Coderre Porras: Muchas, muchas gracias for Spanish lessons, translations, phone calls, everything. A very special thank you to my “doctor sisters,” Tara Bissett, Olenka Horbatsch and Tianna Uchacz, for their generous advice and solidarity (and to the last two for keeping me in Hagelslag).

Special thanks to my cousin, Dale, for all his advice on photography.

Thank you also to Laurent and Charlotte who unwittingly started it all by suggesting a visit to Amiens.

I am also extremely grateful for the hospitality of friends (and friends of friends) who made my travels so much more enjoyable:

in Barcelona: Thank you to Raquel for a great night out.
in Belp: Many thanks to Marg, a wonderful host and the most amazing cook.

in London: Many thanks to Cindy and Sergi, who were always the consummate hosts no matter how hectic their schedules.

in Wuppertal: Many, many thanks to Judith and her family for all their interest and support.

A huge thank you to my supervisor, Professor Ethan Matt Kavaler, for his consistent support, extensive feedback, and for providing me with so many learning opportunities.

Thank you to my committee members, Professor Christy Anderson and Professor Jill Caskey, for their enthusiastic encouragement, insightful comments, and for always sending pertinent references my way.

Thank you to my external evaluators, Professor Evonne Levy and Professor Achim Timmermann, for their probing questions and generous comments.

A huge thank you for the unfailing support of my parents: to Ron, who took an interest despite the fact that it wasn’t economics and to Lydia, who adventured with me in France, Switzerland and Spain – we’ll always remember Toledo.

And most of all thank you to Chris for taking me to Paris, for bringing me back, and for making me knock on doors. I couldn’t have done any of this without you.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The magnificent choir stalls in Amiens Cathedral (Figure A.1) were famous in their time and were celebrated in Pierre Grosnet’s\(^1\) sixty-six-line ode to the city of Amiens, which was published in 1533, about a decade after the completion of the set:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{En outre sont chaires de boys unis ,} \\
\text{De grant estat et les plus magnifiques} \\
\text{Qu’on pourrait voir et sans aultre replicques.}\(^2\)
\end{align*}
\]

Diaries from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries show that travellers ranging from the medical doctor, geographer and astronomer Hieronymus Münzer to the artist Albrecht Dürer to the nobleman Antoine de la Laing recorded outstanding choir stalls they had visited, describing them variously as “pulcerimma” (most beautiful), “egregiis” (excellent), “preclarissimis” (most noble),\(^3\) “köstlich” (exquisite), “überköstlich schön” (most exquisitely beautiful)\(^4\) and “biens entretailliées et gorgiasement paintes” (well carved

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\(^1\)His name is also spelled “Grognet”.

\(^2\)“Moreover, there are harmonious wooden choir stalls / of great distinction and the most magnificent / that one could see and without equal.” (translation mine) Pierre Grosnet, “Blason de la ville et cité d’Amiens,” in *Blasons, poésies anciennes des XV et XVIèmes siècles*, ed. Dominique Martin Méon (Paris: Guillelnot, 1809), 355.


and gorgeously painted). Prominent artists, such as Jan Gossaert, Daniel Hopfer and Niklaus Manuel Deutsch, designed choir stalls. Powerful patrons, such as Cardinal Pedro González de Mendoza and Bishop Louis Ier d’Amboise, commissioned magnificent sets for their cathedrals as part of campaigns to display power and enhance prestige.

Framing the choir of the church, choir stalls supported events ranging from the everyday ritual of the divine offices to momentous secular ceremonies: French kings were traditionally crowned in the choir of Reims Cathedral, for instance; and Charles V and his entourage occupied the choir stalls of Barcelona Cathedral during the funeral rites for Emperor Maximilian. While the pre-Reformation choir has traditionally been perceived as both physically and visually closed off to those who were not part of the religious community of the church, recent research on jubes has shown that many choirs were permeable, at least at certain times. They might be places to see and places to be seen, particularly for members of the nobility. Honorific seats for the most powerful secular rulers were included in some cathedral choirs from at least the eleventh century; lesser lay elites were given the right to be in the choir during the divine offices from as early as the thirteenth century. The presence of prized relics might allow an even wider range of people to gain access to the choir: at the dual purpose church of the Benedictine Abbey in Conques, an open door to the monks’ choir signalled to pilgrims and parishioners that they might enter the choir to view the famous reliquary of Sainte-Foy. And as the poem

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10 Camille Belmon, Le bienheureux François d’Estaing l’évêque de Rodez, 1460–1529 (Albi, France: Imprimerie des Orphelins-Apprentis, 1924), 296–297. The reliquary of Sainte-Foy had been placed in the choir of the church in 1065 while it was still under construction. Conques also became a major stop
and the diaries mentioned above inform us, the stalls themselves might become objects of viewing.

Despite the centrality of choir stalls to ritual life in the early modern period and despite the lavish sums of money spent on the finest sets, choir stalls have been marginalized in the art historical discourse. Choir stalls are rarely included in art history survey courses or textbooks. Because of their scale, they are not frequently displayed in museums, and when they are, they appear most often as sculptural fragments (e.g., Figure A.2). There are a variety of factors that have contributed to this neglect. Some are historical, some are material, and others are art historical.

**Historical factors**

History has not been kind to medieval and early modern choir stalls. Although hundreds of sets survive, they do not accurately reflect the ubiquity of choir stalls in Western Europe between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries, nor the splendour of many sets. In some regions, the number of choir stalls has been considerably diminished: only about five percent of the choir stalls extant around 1500 survive in churches in the Netherlands today.\(^{11}\) One of the greatest blows struck against choir stalls as an oeuvre was the Reformation. Following centuries of increasing numbers of religious, secular and lay communities who required a set of choir stalls to perform the divine offices, the elimination of monks, nuns, canons, canonesses and friars, as well as confraternities and chantries, in the newly established Protestant church made great numbers of these sets superfluous. When churches were converted into Protestant houses of worship, some sets of choir stalls were obliterated. In the systematic clearing of churches in Zurich by Ulrich Zwingli and his followers during the summer of 1524, among the many objects that

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\(^{11}\)Regnerus Steensma, *De koorbanken in de Martinkerk te Bolsward en hun Europese context* (Gorredijk, Netherlands: Bornmeer, 2012), 205-207.
were removed and destroyed were the choir stalls. In Geneva, the stalls at the convent of Sainte-Claire were hacked to pieces (chapeler) in August of 1535, presumably to reinforce the ban on the performance of the divine offices that had been proclaimed several weeks earlier. Since one of the main aims of the Reformation was to stamp out idolatry, sometimes only the religious imagery was attacked. In 1561, Huguenots snapped off and shattered the statuettes of saints and monks that adorned the tops of the stall ends at the collegiate church in Villefranche-de-Rouergue. In other cases, choir stalls were transformed and re-purposed. In Coventry, the stalls from the Whitefriars church of the Carmelites and those from the church in St. John’s Hospital were combined to form desks for a grammar school that was established in the friary church following the dissolution of the monasteries in England. Under a policy of dechristianization, choir stalls were also targeted during the French Revolution. The stalls at Mirepoix cathedral, the collegiate church in Le Vigan, and Tongerlo abbey are among the sets

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13 www.cnrtl.fr/definition/dmf/chapeler1?idf=dmfXgXrmXcjh;str=0 (accessed May 6, 2015)

14 “Et la veille de saincte Claire [August 11] fut mandé par grande defence de ne plus sonner ne dire Messe, ny aucun office... Le jour de Monsieur Sainct Bartholomy Apostre [August 24] vindrent grades campagnies tous en armes... ils... chapelerent les formes et chaires des Soeurs, qui estoient belles, et de bon noyer...” Jeanne de Jussy, Le levain du calvinisme ou commencement de l’hérésie de Genève (Geneva: Jules-Guillaume Fick, 1853 (1611)), 142–145.


16 Victor Lafon, Historique du choeur et iconologie des stalles de l’église Notre-Dame de Villefranche-de-Rouergue (Rodez, France: Ratery-Virenque, 1889), 18. In 1575, the canons had the bases of these statuettes sawn down to eliminate traces of the vandalism, 10.

17 The school was moved to the hospital in 1557 or 1558 where parts of the two sets of stalls remain. Charles Tracy, “Choir-Stalls from the 14th-Century Whitefriars Church in Coventry,” Journal of the British Archaeological Association CL (1997): 76–77.

18 Sylvie Augé et al., Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, le choeur Renaissance, Saint-Just de Valcabrère, l’église romane (Graulhet, France: Editions Odyssee, 2000), 49.


that perished under this regime. Many other sets were dispersed, sometimes to more than one place. Throughout the revolutionary period, the artist Alexandre Lenoir arranged to move threatened church furnishings to safe places,\textsuperscript{21} including the early sixteenth-century choir stalls from the chapel at the Château de Gaillon, which are now set up in a modified form in the nave of Saint-Denis Cathedral in Paris (Figures A.3 and A.4).\textsuperscript{22} Secularization in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland around the turn of the nineteenth century resulted in the selling off of a large amount of redundant church furniture, including choir stalls.\textsuperscript{23} Economic factors frequently motivated such sales.\textsuperscript{24} A considerable amount of this furniture ended up in England where it was often substantially reworked for installation in homes, private chapels, and churches to satisfy prevailing taste and collecting interests during the Gothic revival period.\textsuperscript{25} The sale of the dorsals (stall backs) and canopy from the Church of Our Lady in Aarschot in 1833 is part of this story: they were purchased by Lord Frederick John Monson, who installed them, along with other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century church furnishings, in his private church, St. Andrew’s, in Gatton, Surrey (Figure A.5).\textsuperscript{26}

Wars over the centuries have also taken a heavy toll on choir stalls. The set at Saint-Riquier abbey burned after Philip II of Spain’s attack in 1554,\textsuperscript{27} while Napoleon’s troops set fire to the stalls at the Franciscan monastery of San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo during

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{21}For more details and other examples of French stalls that were destroyed, damaged or dispersed over the centuries, see Dorothy Kraus and Henry Kraus, \textit{Le Monde caché des miséricordes} (Paris: Les Editions de l’amateur, 1986), 38–46.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{22}Other surviving parts of this set are housed at the Musée de la Renaissance in Ecouen. \textit{France 1500 : entre Moyen Age et Renaissance}, ed. Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, Thierry Crépin-Leblond, and Elisabeth Taburet-Delahaye (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2010), 305.}


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{24}J. A. Cumps, \textit{De Koorbanken van de Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk te Aarschot} (Tielt, Belgium: Veys, 1978), 50.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{25}Tracy, \textit{Continental Church Furniture in England}, 38–44.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{26}Cumps, \textit{De Koorbanken te Aarschot}, 26. The stained glass window behind the altar was also originally at Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk in Aarschot.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{27}Kristiane Lemé-Hébuterne, \textit{Les stalles de la cathédrale Notre-Dame d’Amiens : histoire, iconographie} (Paris: Picard, 2007), 42.}
the Peninsular War. Among the many sets that were destroyed during World War II were those at St. Stephan’s Cathedral in Vienna, Coventry Cathedral in England, and Sint-Pieters collegiate church in Oirschot, the Netherlands. Other sets have been heavily damaged by warfare. Half of the stalls at Oviedo Cathedral were burned during an uprising by Asturian miners in the turbulent years leading up to the Spanish Civil War. Those at St. Gertrude Abbey in Leuven (Figure A.6), the collegiate church in Hoogstraten, Belgium, and St. Nicolai parish church in Kalkar, Germany are examples of sets that suffered serious bomb damage during the Second World War.

However, it was not only hostile forces that damaged choir stalls. Although they were constructed as fixed furnishings, many sets of choir stall were repositioned by the communities who used them. Such displacements brought the risk of damage, not only during dislodgement and transportation, but also because modifications were often needed to adapt the stalls to the new location. In 1547, the reconstruction of Astorga Cathedral necessitated the transfer of the stalls made in the 1520s to a rebuilt part of the church, which resulted in numerous additions: up to six upper and lower stalls, the bishop’s

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32For more details, see Kraus and Kraus, *Gothic Choirstalls of Spain*, 33–40.
33After the war, with the help of photographic documentation, the surviving remains were restored, which accounts for the wood colour differences that clearly distinguishes the original, as well as surviving parts of the nineteenth-century canopy, from the replacement material. For more details about the restoration, see Maurits Smeyers and Marjan Buyle, “De koorbanken van de Sint-Geertruikerk te Leuven,” *Monumenten en Landschappen* 10.3 (May–June 1991): 51–53. For images of the damaged stalls, see the A69 series at www.kikirpa.be/www2/cgi-bin/wwwopac.exe?DATABASE=fotos2&LANGUAGE=0&COPYTEXT=&COPYRIGHT=&OPAC_URL=&47601=on.
34Roeland De Ceulaer, *De Sint-Catharinakerk te Hoogstraten* (Ghent, Belgium: Snoeck-Ducaju, 1988), 75.
35Johannes Kistenich, *Geschichte der Bruderschaften und Gilden in der Stadt Kalkar* (Bielefeld, Germany: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2005), 159.
36Kraus and Kraus, *Gothic Choirstalls of Spain*, 180.
throne, doors, stairs, corners and stall ends were all made at this time.\textsuperscript{37} The fifteenth-century stalls in León Cathedral were initially located in the choir, but were transferred to the central nave in 1746.\textsuperscript{38} Eight upper stalls were removed and several panels had to be replaced following this relocation.\textsuperscript{39} While the contract for the Astorga additions stipulated that the new work had to match the earlier work in form and manner,\textsuperscript{40} the replacement panels made for the León stalls are starkly different than the original ones (compare Figure A.7 with Figure A.8). In the case of the set made at the beginning of the sixteenth century for Plasencia Cathedral, it was ready more than fifty years before the completion of the new cathedral for which it had been intended. The limited space in the new choir resulted in the loss of two seats and an unusual reconfiguration of the set: the north and south sides are much shorter than the west side, rather than much longer (Figure A.9).\textsuperscript{41}

Even changing mores affected certain sets. The misericords for which choir stalls have become famous are the ones that display secular imagery, which subsequently came to be considered inappropriate for a church. This change is first documented in 1563 when, as part of its defence of sacred images, the Council of Trent forbade anything “profane” or “unseemly” in the church.\textsuperscript{42} Presumably some of the now missing medieval

\textsuperscript{38}Two entries from the chapter’s records regarding the move are transcribed from Archivo de la Catedral de León, Actas Capitulares (Doc.10.036 and Doc.10.037) in María Dolores Teijeira Pablos, \textit{La influencia del modelo gótico flamenco en León: La sillería de coro catedralicia} (Salamanca, Spain: Universidad de León, 1993), 104.
\textsuperscript{39}María Dolores Teijeira Pablos, “The Choir Stalls of Leon Cathedral,” \textit{The Profane Arts of the Middle Ages/Les arts profanes du moyen âge} VI.2 (Autumn 1997): 175.
\textsuperscript{40}“aveys de labrar todas las sillas altas e baxas que fueran menester para el dicho coro de la forma e manera y conforme a las sillas que estan hechas en todo y por todo…” Cited from Archivo Diocesano de Astorga, protocols of Diego López, fol. 199, in Manuel Arias Martínez, “Aportaciones al estudio de la sillería catedralica de Astorga,” \textit{Astorica} 9.10 (1991): 129.
\textsuperscript{41}Pilar Mogollón Cano-Cortés and Francisco Javier Pizarro Gómez, \textit{La sillería de coro de la Catedral de Plasencia} (Cáceres, Spain: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Extremadura, 1992), 12–14. I do not know of any other sets that are configured in this way.
\textsuperscript{42}“Omnis superstitio in imagimum sacro usu tollatur, omnis turpis denique lascivia vitetur, ita ut procaci venustate imagines nec pingantur nec ornentur…Postremo tanta circa haec diligentia et cura ab episcopis adhibeatur, ut nihil inordinatum, aut praepostere et tumultuarie accommodatum, nihil profanum nihilque inhonestum appareat, cum domum Dei deceat sanctitudo.” (“All superstition must
and early modern misericords were destroyed because they displayed secular imagery. Others were hacked, much as Reformers hacked certain types of religious imagery. On the Aarschot stalls, details on nudes and impertinently-posed monks were hacked, sliced off or recarved to desexualize them (e.g., Figure A.10). In at least two documented cases, church officials tried to have such images removed from choir stalls in churches under their jurisdiction. In a letter written in 1783, the archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur du Juigné, ordered the canons at the collegiate church of Saint-Martin in Champeaux to change the “bizarre and strange” figures on the stalls as soon as possible (e.g., Figure A.11). Similarly, in 1820, the newly-appointed bishop of Aosta, Jean-Baptiste-Marie Aubriot de la Palme, demanded the removal of all “indecent” choir stall figures from the cathedral in Aosta (e.g., Figure A.12). While these two campaigns were unsuccessful, it is not known how much undocumented damage and losses to choir stalls may have been motivated by similar goals.

Finally, many choir stall sets were significantly altered due to the vogue for opening up the choir that began in the seventeenth century. Choir stalls were normally attached to a jube or choir screen at both edges of the return stalls, the seats on the west side facing the altar. The stalls and the screen were often constructed as part of a single building

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44“Exhortons les Srs Chanoines, et néanmoins les enjoignons de faire changer le plutôt qu’il sera possible les figures bizarrés et singulières que se trouvent dans les stalles.” The letter is partially transcribed and fully reproduced from *Inventaire-Sommaire des Archives de Seine-et-Marne*, II, 1864, G.187 in *Kraus and Kraus, Le Monde caché des miséricordes*, 120–121.

45The letter of defence that the canons sent to the king and the king’s subsequent letter to the bishop are reproduced in Robert Berton, *Les chapiteaux et les stalles médiévaux d’Aoste : un bijou d’art roman au Val d’Aoste* (Aosta, Italy: Imprimerie Valdôtaine, 1996), 117–120.

campaign, sometimes by the same workshop, sometimes out of the same material (e.g., Figure A.13). It is therefore usually difficult to detach the screen without damaging the stalls. Furthermore, the opening up of the choir typically entailed the removal and/or repositioning of the return stalls, too. At Amiens Cathedral, eight return stalls were taken out to widen the entryway when the jube was replaced by a metal screen in the eighteenth century. More frequently, the return stalls were rotated ninety degrees to align with the north and south stalls, thus opening the choir fully on the nave side. To gain the necessary space to straighten the sides, the whole set might be pushed east towards the altar, as happened to the stalls in the Augustinian abbey church in Leuven when the jube was removed in 1848 (Figure A.14). Once again, such reconfigurations would be difficult to carry out without loss and damage. The set at Freising cathedral lost an unknown number of stalls when it was rearranged, probably when the jube was removed in 1624. When the return stalls at the collegiate church in Hoogstraten were aligned with the north and south stalls around 1880, the parts that broke off during the reconfiguration were re-worked into the new formation, but two seats ended up being removed nevertheless. Even when return stalls were not moved or removed, they were sometimes modified to give the choir a more open appearance. At the church of St. Mary, St. Denys and St. George in Manchester, the wooden panels of the return stall dorsals were replaced with glass panes, presumably in the nineteenth century (Figure A.15).

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47 See chapter Choir Practice, section Choosing a Choir Stall Master for a brief discussion of some of the contracts that included the construction of both choir stalls and a screen. 
48 Georges Durand, *Description abrégée de la Cathédrale d’Amiens* (Amiens, France: Yvert et Tellier, 1904), 115. 
49 Van Even, *Louvain*, 408. 
50 At least one stall on each side was lost. Berndt Oesterhelt, “Das Chorgestühl von 1488,” in *Der Freisinger Dom: Beiträge zu seiner Geschichte*, ed. Joseph A. Fischer (Freising, Germany: Verlag des Historischen Vereins Freising E. V., 1967), 106. See Chapter Preaching to the Choir, section Proclaiming Identity for more discussion about the most likely number of original stalls. 
52 De Ceulaer, *De Sint-Catharinakerk te Hoogstraten*, 75. 
Material factors

The vast majority of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century choir stalls were made of wood.\footnote{The stone stall dorsals and canopy at the cathedral in Albi are an exception, but the seating is made of wood.} While wood has many fine qualities that make it ideal for constructing choir stalls,\footnote{See chapter The Construction of Space, sections Performative Space and Corporeal Space for a discussion of these qualities.} it is not as durable as stone or metal. Contemporaneous objects, such as stone carvings and metal work, retain their original appearance much better than wooden choir stalls. And while other wooden objects, such as panel painting and wood sculpture, are subject to the same physical hazards (e.g., insect damage), they are rarely subject to the same kind of daily physical contact that causes wear and breakage. Furthermore, as large, non-portable objects, choir stalls are more difficult to protect from suboptimal environmental conditions, which are common in medieval and early modern churches, or from natural disasters. Therefore, the overall survival and condition of wooden choir stalls have been affected more than many other types of objects from the same period.

Fire is particularly destructive to wood and has ravaged many choir stall sets over the centuries. The stalls at Saint-Etienne in Toulouse were destroyed by fire in 1609,\footnote{Augé et al., \textit{Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges}, 49.} as was the fifteenth-century set at the Benedictine abbey in Niederaltaich in 1671.\footnote{Oesterhelt, “Das Chorgestühl von 1488”, 116.} In the nineteenth century, all of the woodwork in the Austin friary church in London, including the choir stalls, went up in flames.\footnote{Tracy, “Choir-Stalls from Whitefriars Church,” 86.} Despite better preventative measures today, fire remains a danger: half of the impressive fifteenth-century choir stall set at the cathedral in Saint-Claude, France burned in 1983.\footnote{André Vauchez, “Conclusion historique,” in \textit{Pensée, image et communication en Europe médiévale : A propos des stalles de Saint-Claude}, ed. Pierre Lacroix et al. (Besançon, France: Asprodic, 1993), 265.}

While much slower acting, dampness can also be destructive. Humidity and lack of ventilation can lead to rotting of the wood if they are not addressed at the first sign...
of deterioration. The choir stalls at the church of Saint-Jacques in Villefranche-de-Conflent, France is one example of a set that has been seriously affected by humidity (Figure A.16). Furthermore, damp conditions encourage furniture beetles. Close examination of certain choir stalls reveals the telltale holes of woodworm, the larval stage of a variety of wood-boring beetles (e.g., Figure A.17). During a recent restoration, the choir stalls at the abbey church in Leuven had to be treated for an infestation of two kinds of woodworm: the common furniture beetle and the death watch beetle. Left unchecked, infested wood would eventually be reduced to dust.

An important aspect of many sets of choir stalls was the use of partial polychromy including gilding. Unfortunately, polychromy is subject to fading and flaking, so the visual effect that was originally sought is often no longer in evidence. At the collegiate church in Romont, Switzerland, the cinnabar that was applied to the bottom arcade of the canopy has faded so much that it no longer registers as red (Figure A.18). Furthermore, misconstructions of the original polychromy have led to inaccurate repainting. Compare the unhistorically painted dorsal at the Musée d’art et d’histoire in Geneva, which is probably from the city’s cathedral, Saint-Pierre, with the very different reconstruction of the original fifteenth-century polychromy based on a stratigraphic analysis of paint samples (Figures A.19 and A.20).

And over time, everyday use is damaging to wooden choir stalls. People constantly brush past stalls, and textiles snag, detaching small pieces of sculpture or marquetry (e.g., Figure A.21). People brace themselves with hand rests day after day, and pieces snap off (e.g., Figure A.22). People sit on stalls again and again, and hinges come loose (e.g.,

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60 Tracy, *Continental Church Furniture in England*, 88–89.
Figure A.23). The recurrent pressure of bodies causes joins to separate (e.g., Figure A.24). Accidental bumps gouge or crack wood (e.g., Figure A.25). And even measured footsteps (e.g., Figure A.26) and gentle hand contact (e.g., Figure A.27) eventually wear wood down.

Normal wear and tear, changes to the choir, and in some cases, more serious damage, have affected fifteenth- and sixteenth-century choir stalls over the centuries, and they have therefore all been subject to considerable restoration. The cost for such upkeep can be prohibitive, which may contribute to delayed, incomplete or incompetent restoration. Also, restoration practices have changed over time, so many older restorations are now considered inaccurate or undesirable. The choir stalls at Saint-Nicolas in Fribourg, Switzerland, which were constructed from 1462–1465, are a good example of the types of renovations and restorations that have been done to a set that has had no serious damage. The return stalls were modified even before the second range of stalls was put into place due to a decision to have two doors rather than one in the choir screen, which was being built concurrently (Figure A.28). A statue was added at each of the four corners of the stall canopy in the 1520s to represent the Adoration of the Magi (e.g., Figure A.29). In the second half of the sixteenth century, a Tree of Life and reliefs showing the Temptation were made to fill in the space after the entry to the sacristy on the south side of the choir was walled up (Figure A.30). In 1654, the stalls were coated with a dark varnish and the text on the banderoles was gilded. At some time in the eighteenth century, the set was covered with dark brown oil paint. In 1788, the sculptor Dominique Martinetti made unspecified repairs to the stalls. No repairs are recorded in the nineteenth century, which

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65 Cumps, De Koorbanken te Aarschot, 50.
67 See chapter Choir Practice, subsection Unexpected expenses for more details.
is rather surprising since many stalls were restored and renovated during this time, but six lecterns, which were originally attached to the backs of the lower stalls, were most likely removed then. From 1984 to 1993 extensive restoration work was carried out, including the repair of broken carving, and the removal of the brown paint, in order to provide the contemporary viewer with a more faithful impression of the original set and its later additions (Figure A.31).

Art historical factors

For a variety of reasons, art history has to a large extent excluded choir stalls from the art historical discussion. Choir stalls as a whole have generally not been considered subjects of art history primarily because they are classified as furniture. As practical objects that fulfill a functional role in religious rites, they do not fit in to the Vasarian triad of painting, sculpture and architecture that has, until relatively recently, greatly influenced which objects we study. Rather than recognizing the range of art objects that were considered important to diverse European patrons at the time of their making, for a long time art historians narrowed their focus to objects that were deemed to be important in the modern era.

Our contemporary notion of the artist, which equally has its roots in Giorgio Vasari’s grand narrative, has also limited art historical research on choir stalls. As objects that

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70 Strub, Stalles fribourgeoises, 83.


were obviously built by a workshop, rather than an individual, choir stalls have been considered second-rate objects, despite the fact that the workshop was central to the Italian Renaissance artistic practice that Vasari idealized. While choir stalls were designed by artists of the stature of Jan Gossaert and Niklaus Manuel Deutsch, the majority of sets were designed by local joiners who remain nameless or are of limited renown. Many studies on choir stalls have emphasized the identification of the various hands of these unknown carvers, perhaps in the hopes of ascribing them to well-known names. Research on some of the finest sets has even been slightly skewed in the absence of a single name to ascribe them to. In the nineteenth century, it was believed that the name of the carver Jean Turpin/Trupin that is inscribed on one upper and one lower elbow rest at Amiens Cathedral named the architect of these stalls (Figure A.32), but documentary evidence reveals that Trupin was one of a number of woodworkers who was paid an ordinary daily wage, and he is only recorded on the registers for one month out of more than a decade of construction. Furthermore, in cases where the main designer included his signature, it was normally displayed in a prominent place, such as Jörg Syrlin the Elder’s signatures on the second dorsal at each end of the Ulm stalls (e.g., Figure A.33) or that of his son, whose name appears in an inscription on a return dorsal of the Blaubeuren stalls along with the name of the abbot who commissioned them (Figure A.34). Nevertheless, the

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75 Georges Durand, Monographie de l’église de Notre-Dame cathédrale d’Amiens (Paris: A. Picard, 1903), 150. It must be kept in mind, however, that the sources for the Amiens stalls are secondhand, incomplete and sometimes contradictory. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, local scholars copied excerpts from primary documents, but these originals were deliberately destroyed as unnecessary around 1777. Lemé-Hébuterne, Les stalles d’Amiens, 13.

76 David Gropp, Das Ulmer Chorgestühl und Jörg Syrlin der Ältere: Untersuchung zu Architektur und Bildwerk (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1999), 169.

77 Anna Morahit-Fromm, “Erneuerung braucht Erinnerung: Raumprogramm und liturgische Dispositionen,” in Kloster Blaubeuren: Der Chor und sein Hochaltar, ed. Anna Morahit-Fromm and Wolfgang Schirle (Stuttgart, Germany: Konrad Theiss Verlag, 2002), 52. See chapter Choir Practice for a transcription of this inscription.
concern with finding the artist who designed a work of the stature of the Amiens stalls and the weight afforded artists’ signatures has kept Trupin’s name alive.\textsuperscript{78}

Periodization has also affected research on choir stalls. The finest sets in northern Europe were made during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Although some of the sixteenth-century sets use the Italianate or antiek vocabulary that art historians have most closely associated with this period (e.g., Figure A.35), the majority are made in the modern or very late Gothic style (e.g., Figure A.36). Long considered retardataire in the wake of the Italian Renaissance, recent research has begun to redress our misunderstanding of this period. Rather than reflecting the ignorance or lack of sophistication of woodworkers and patrons, the use of the modern style was a conscious choice made by cultivated patrons and innovative artists in northern Europe and the Iberian peninsula at this time.\textsuperscript{79} The choir stalls at Saint-Nicolas of Tolentino in Brou form part of a Gesamtkunstwerk that was carefully chosen by Margaret of Austria, who commissioned the church. Surviving correspondence reveals that she had initially engaged a team of leading French artists who were known for their work in an Italianate style (Jean Lemaire de Belges and Jean Perreal),\textsuperscript{80} but she fired them in 1512 and chose instead Jan van Roome and Loys van Boghem, prominent Netherlandish artists, who designed the church in a modern style.\textsuperscript{81} Some of these late Gothic sets also show an awareness of the Italianate current, incorporating both styles, but associating each with different connotations. In the Augustinian abbey church in Leuven, scenes from the Infancy and the Passion that take place in historical time are carved in an Italianate style, while the surrounding late Gothic tracery frames them within God’s larger celestial time (e.g.,

\textsuperscript{78}Although Georges Durand set the record straight over a century ago, the myth of Jean Turpin as architect is still referred to and dispelled in recent books. For example, Lemé-Hébuterne, Les stalles d’Amiens, 42–43; Charles Tracy and Hugh Harrison, The Choir-Stalls of Amiens Cathedral (Reading, UK: Spire Books, 2004), 23.


\textsuperscript{80}Jens Ludwig Burk, “Conrat Meit, Margaret of Austria’s Court Sculptor in Malines and Brou,” in Brou, un monument européen à l’aube de la Renaissance, (Paris: Editions du patrimoine, 2009), 133.

Figure A.37). Periodization has also influenced where choir stall fragments are displayed, and therefore how they are perceived. Both The Cloisters, The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s medieval collection, and the Musée de Cluny, France’s national museum of medieval art, house late Gothic choir stall fragments from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, although this period is not normally considered medieval.\textsuperscript{82}

Collecting practices have also had repercussions on the survival and condition of choir stalls. While the Gothic Revival in England saw the acquisition of sets or partial sets, most collectors over the centuries have been more interested in the busts and statuettes on the stalls since they fit into the traditional art history paradigm, and they are easy to handle and display. This acquisitiveness has left many choir stall niches empty, often through theft. More than forty statuettes were stolen from the Amiens Cathedral choir stalls one night in March 1839 when the choir was left unlocked as preparations were made for the funeral of a former bishop (Note the empty niches in Figure A.38).\textsuperscript{83} In other cases, pieces survive only because collectors salvaged them from otherwise condemned furnishings. When the choir stalls from the Fugger Chapel in Augsburg were scheduled for destruction in 1832, the sixteen dorsal busts were first detached and sold off.\textsuperscript{84} The busts eventually ended up in museums, where they are now displayed (Figure A.2).\textsuperscript{85} Stolen works sometimes end up in museums rather than being returned to their original setting. After statuettes that had been taken from the St. Gertrude abbey stalls in Leuven were recovered, they were put on display in the city museum, leaving their niches empty (e.g., Figure A.39).\textsuperscript{86} Due to these dislocations, the presence of choir stall statues


\textsuperscript{83}Although the theft was reported the next day, no trace was ever found of these carvings. Durand, Monographie de la Cathédrale d’Amiens, 156.

\textsuperscript{84}Michael Baxandall, The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 296.

\textsuperscript{85}These three busts are at the Bode-Museum in Berlin. The fourth surviving bust is at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, US. The other twelve busts were destroyed during World War II.

\textsuperscript{86}Smeyers and Buyle, “De koorbanken te Leuven,” 54.
in museums is not necessarily recognized. While fragments of known provenance and fragments that obviously come from choir stalls (e.g., misericords) are identified as such, there are probably a sizable number of choir stall carvings in museums and private collections that have not been linked to their original setting.

The fact that most surviving choir stalls are in churches has also affected research on choir stalls. Late medieval and early modern art works that are in churches remain on the edge of research compared to those now housed in museums. There are a variety of factors that contribute to this situation. First, it is not always known where these objects are. There are no catalogues to direct the researcher. Second, some churches are in out-of-the-way places that are not easily accessible, in particular, former monasteries, since they were often built far from urban settlements. Third, opening hours are frequently more restricted than museum opening hours. The abbey church in Leuven is only open for three hours in the afternoon every weekend from April until September. Active churches also have many time restrictions due to both regular rites and special events, such as funerals. Fourth, accessibility may be difficult. Many choirs are locked, so special arrangements often need to be made in advance to properly view choir stalls (e.g., Figure A.1). Finally, unlike museums, which have established policies regarding photographing and examining objects, individuals, such as the deans of the cathedral chapters in Spain, may have the power to decide who has access to objects in a church according to their own opinions and inclinations. Even finding out who has the authority to grant permission to examine and photograph choirs stalls is frequently complicated. These factors, all of which I encountered in my own project, may discourage research and even make certain aspects impossible.


The focus on misericords has played a major role in marginalizing choir stall research. Misericords are the small, hinged, tip-up seats that allow choir stall users to take some of the pressure off of their legs when standing or can be used as support for the arms when kneeling to pray (Figure A.40). While the majority have geometric or vegetal designs (e.g., Figure A.41), and many show religious scenes or symbols (e.g., Figure A.42), the misericords that have drawn the most interest and research attention are secular scenes and figures, especially the ones that are irreverent (e.g., Figure A.25) vulgar (e.g., Figure A.43) or enigmatic (e.g., Figure A.44). Attempts to identify images and to account for the puzzling appearance of non-religious scenes have dominated the research to such an extent that they have presented a skewed understanding of what is usually shown on misericords. Furthermore, misericords are frequently studied and illustrated in isolation from the rest of the choir stall, whether or not they are still attached to a set. Finally, much like Dutch genre painting, many images that appear to show unmediated “everyday life” have remained unrecognized as largely conventional, and have instead been over-interpreted and misinterpreted. All together, this narrow focus has led to superficial research that propagates certain misconceptions and rarely goes beyond the identification of scenes and symbols.

Finally, the marginal status of the choir stall in art historical research has resulted in largely localized scholarship on single sets of choir stalls or a small number of sets in a region. Given the low profile of choir stalls, it is not surprising that most work is done by scholars who know about a set of choir stalls because of their proximity. Local scholars can often gain access to surviving documentation more easily since it is

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89 This topic is discussed in more depth in chapter Singing from the Same Choir Book: The Construction of the Margins.
90 Many are now displayed as independent sculpture in museums.
frequently stored in local archives. They are also more connected with local knowledge than a visiting researcher, which may facilitate their work. They have better access to choir stalls because they are not restricted to a limited study trip. Furthermore, local contacts may allow them entry after hours when they can examine choir stalls unimpeded by church ceremonies or visiting tourists. They may also gain special privileges, such as being allowed to erect scaffolding to photograph the choir stall canopy or being allowed in areas of the church that are not normally accessible. However, there are several problems that arise under these circumstances. First, there is not necessarily a local scholar who is interested in choir stalls; therefore much of this research remains undone. Second, while many of these studies are the result of serious research, some are less scholarly with few or no references. Third, publications may be difficult for other researchers to obtain since they are often produced in small print runs by local publishers and are not widely distributed. Finally, most of the research is published in the local language. When this language is Catalan, for instance, spoken by a relatively small population and not widely studied, the audience for the research is even more limited.

Parameters of this study

This study focuses on choir stalls made in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when many sets were built. In general, this was a period of European economic prosperity and money was available to build new churches, many of which required choir stalls, and to fund major church commissions in established churches. In France, there was much rebuilding following the political and economic crises of the Hundred Years War.93 With its elevation to the status of duchy in 1416, Savoy was enjoying a period of economic and artistic development, which is reflected in both ducal and ecclesias-

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tical church commissions. On the Iberian peninsula, the aspirations of the Catholic Monarchs were closely tied to the church, and both they and the powerful clergy whom they nominated commissioned important churches and church furnishings. There were also socio-political factors that stimulated the construction of choir stalls in particular. In the Low Countries, there was a rise in the observance of the Hours that began at the end of the fourteenth century, necessitating choir stalls in churches where the Divine Office had not previously been performed. In England, the increasing popularity of chantry foundations in the late Middle Ages included the establishment of chantry colleges, which required choir stalls for the performance of communal prayers. Therefore, some of the most costly and resplendent examples of choir stalls were made during this period (e.g., Figure A.45). Overall, sculptural ornament of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century sets is profuse, varied, and in general, quite sophisticated, distinguishing these sets from earlier ones. Furthermore, among these sets were some of the most innovative: technically (e.g., Figure A.1), iconographically (e.g., Figure A.46), and formally (e.g., Figure A.47). Rather than examining only exemplary stalls, however, I cast my net more widely to highlight the range of choir stall sets, as well as to better illustrate the issues that I have chosen to investigate. I also aimed for a broad geographic reach to bring together the primarily monographic and regional studies that have been done to this date. I studied stalls in Belgium, England, France, Germany, the Netherlands and

99See chapter The Construction of Identity section Claiming Identity for more discussion of the unique iconographic program that displays decisive events of the Reconquista.
100The novel use of busts that rotate out of the plane of the stall end to engage with the viewer was subsequently imitated many times, but never so successfully replicated.
Switzerland, as well as sets made in Spain by woodworkers trained in the north. Limits were necessary due to time and resources. Since Italy has traditionally been treated separately from the “Northern Renaissance” landscape, choir stalls from the Italian peninsula are largely excluded.\footnote{A few relevant documents about choir stalls made in Venice as well as a study on sound and space in Venetian Renaissance churches are adduced to flesh out some of my analyses.} Choir stalls east of the German-speaking lands are excluded for geographic, historical and linguistic reasons. The distances are vast, the research was so isolated during the Cold War period, and, as mentioned above, much of the literature on choir stalls is written in the local languages, which in this case are beyond my competence.

I visited and photographed twenty-eight sets of choir stalls from a range of church types. Cathedrals make up the greatest number of my sample, in part because I was looking at high-quality sets of stalls, and during this period many cathedrals were outfitted with magnificent choir stalls. Furthermore, monastic churches suffered the greatest losses, first, during the Reformation, in particular in England due to the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and again during the secularization that occurred in Northern Continental Europe around the turn of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, there are no sets from female communities in this sample. Given the large number of monuments that are part of my study, I did not carry out archival work. Rather, I examined published primary documents related to these choir stalls, as well as published documents related to other choir stall sets from this period to broaden the sample. This information is summarized on a map (Figure A.48): the stalls that I photographed are represented by stars; stalls that are still extant, at least in part, but that I did not visit, are represented by rhombuses; those that have been completely destroyed are represented by circles; sets that were never built are represented by squares. The different types of churches are colour-coded: cathedrals are red, collegiates are orange, monastic orders are blue, mendicant orders are green, military orders are yellow, parish churches are purple and chapels are
black. The paler colours represent stalls that have been moved from their original church in part or in whole.  

The main goal of this dissertation is to show how much the study of choir stalls has to offer to larger art historical discussions. The production of a choir stall set was a considerable undertaking in terms of time, money and expertise. As both socially and spiritually significant objects, choir stalls document the goals, cultural environment, and social position not only of their patrons and users, but also of their makers, some of whose careers rested largely on the construction of stalls. Historiographically, the study of choir stalls helps complicate several conventional binaries that have limited our understanding of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century art: medieval/Renaissance; art/furniture; religious/secular. While there are many broad art historical themes that are relevant to the study of choir stall, some must await future research. In this study, I examine four main topics: marginalia, art and space, artistic practice, and patronage. My overarching methodological approach is that of the social history of art, but, where relevant, I employ other methods that better enable me to explore certain questions.

In Chapter 1, *Singing from the Same Choir Book: The Construction of the Margins*, I provide an overview of the literature on choir stalls, and discuss how and why the study of misericords has been primarily conducted without reference to the larger context of the choir stall set. I argue that a better understanding of both the local and broader social contexts within which these stalls were built, as well as a wider range of interpretative strategies, would provide a more nuanced, if less definitive, understanding of this imagery. I also explore why this research has not been well integrated with the larger art historical literature on marginalia and make suggestions for ways to improve the interchange.

In Chapter 2, *Made to Order: The Construction of Space*, I trace the development of the form of the choir stall set and its component parts, examining why the definitive

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103 Note that due to the size of the map, shapes that represent churches in the same or a nearby town are partially superimposed. Basic information about each set of choir stalls discussed in this dissertation can be found in Appendix B.
thirteenth-century design continued to be used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries despite significant social, ecclesiastical and artistic changes during this period. I argue that the flexibility of the form allowed it to be easily adapted to different physical spaces, different Christian communities, and different institutional goals. At the same time, certain fixed aspects of the form provided ideal support for the important performative, institutional, corporeal and symbolic requirements of religious communities in the early modern period.

In Chapter 3, *Choir Practice: The Construction of Stalls*, I follow the steps in the construction of a set of choir stalls from the decision to make a new set to the first time that one is used, drawing on a broad range of extant published primary documents from all over western Europe. These documents provide insight into the working lives of woodworkers who made choir stalls in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, revealing modes of practice, career trajectories and working conditions. The documents also reveal some of the desires and aspirations of the individual and communal patrons who commissioned choir stalls. Advance planning, the large sums spent, and the carefully-weighed decisions made throughout the multi-year process show how valuable the choir stalls were to those who commissioned and used them.

In Chapter 4, *Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity*, I analyze a number of choir stall commissions that reflect larger issues of personal, communal and corporate identity for those who commissioned them. In some cases, the stalls were used as platforms to promote the patron or the community, using devices such as heraldry, portraits, or highly customized iconography. In other cases, imagery was self-consciously selected to deliver a political message, whether of reform or resistance, at a time when traditional codes of behaviour were being enforced and traditional privileges were being challenged. In yet other cases, a patron’s choir stall commission was an attempt to accrue status or prestige for a church or community, some of which had no official requirement for choir stalls. The association of choir stalls with these multifarious carefully designed
messages about identity reflects the significance of this platform to a broad range of patrons and audiences in the early modern period.
Chapter 2

Singing from the Same Choir Book:
The Construction of the Margins

Alongside their main iconographic programs, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century choir stalls are replete with marginal imagery – on the canopies (e.g., Figure A.49), the stall ends (e.g., Figure A.50), the partitions (e.g., Figure A.51), the hand rests (e.g., Figure A.52), and even the dorsals (e.g., Figure A.53), the most common site for the main program. But the only marginal images on choir stalls that have been studied to any extent are the worldly scenes and figures on the misericords (e.g., Figure A.54). In fact, the main focus of research on choir stalls in general has been on the misericord and why secular imagery was depicted there. How did the misericord become a synecdoche for choir stalls? How has this focus affected the study of choir stalls? How might the discourse be broadened? In this chapter, I will first examine some of the historical factors that led to the emphasis on the misericord. Subsequently, I will look at the historiography to understand why the study of misericords has remained rather separate from the larger art historical discourse on marginal imagery. I will then discuss how the interest in non-religious scenes and figures in most of the literature has misrepresented both the location and thematic scope of marginal imagery on choir stalls, as well as circumscribed the selection of sets that have
been studied. Next, I will examine some of the factors that make marginal imagery more difficult to interpret than main iconographic programs, and how that has also influenced research. I will then examine a variety of approaches to marginal imagery that go beyond the symbolic interpretation that is most commonly seen in the literature on misericords, arguing that while context is the most important consideration when approaching the interpretation of the myriad themes, ultimately, it must be recognized that many of these images are so laden with history and tradition that no single meaning can be ascribed to them, despite the fact that they may have been created and viewed without a fully conscious recognition of their multivalency. I will conclude with brief case studies on the marginalia of two sets of choir stalls.

But I will begin with two definitions. First, a misericord is a small ledge on the underside of the choir stall flip-up seats that allows the user to relieve pressure on the legs by leaning his or her buttocks against it during the intervals of the Divine Offices when the user must remain standing (Figure A.55 shows a seat with the misericord up beside one with the seat flipped down). This association with the buttocks is frequently alluded to in the interpretation of the sexual and scatological imagery that is sometimes seen on misericords (e.g., Figure A.43), most famously by Michael Camille in his book on marginal imagery, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*. The misericord was also used as a place to rest one’s arms during prayer and prostration; however, this use is rarely referred to in the literature on misericords, despite the fact that it remained

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1 “De consuetudinibus in ecclesia...Ingressi vero stamus in sedibus nostris versa facie ad altare: donec ad misericordias, vel super formas prout tempus postulat ad orationem inclinemur”. Statuta Antiqua, ch. 37 *The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes, from the Consuetudines Guigonis to the Tertia compilatio*, ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1989), I, 124. “On customs in church...Having entered, truly, we stand at our seats turned towards the altar, until upon the misericords or on the *forma* we incline for prayer according as the time demands”. Transcribed and translated in Joanne Allen, “Carthusian Choir Stalls and the Misericord in Italy,” *The Antiquaries Journal* 92 (Sept. 2012): 322n69. See also chapter Made to Order section Corporeal space for a similar description from a thirteenth-century instructional book for Benedictine novices.
current in some places until at least the eighteenth century, as the ordinaries of several churches in France attest.\(^2\)

Second, I will use the term *marginalia* to refer to the marginal imagery that is not part of the main iconographic program. The word marginalia was first used in the nineteenth century to designate material that was written or printed in the margins of books or manuscripts.\(^3\) When used to refer to images, the term is principally associated with thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts from northern Europe whose illuminators filled the edges in specific ways.\(^4\) First, I want to draw attention to the shared characteristics of traditional book marginalia and choir stall marginal art. Many of the properties noted by scholars on marginalia, such as Lucy Freeman Sandler and Lilian Randall, are helpful in articulating and defining marginalia as a useful concept when applied to choir stalls. In a review of the study of marginal imagery in manuscripts, Sandler summarizes the main characteristics of manuscript marginalia of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Both the frequently fantastic formal features and the diverse subject matter, which she identifies as dissimilar to other manuscript illumination,\(^5\) are typical of much choir stall marginalia of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Examples of the first are a scene representing Saint Jerome on a misericord at the cathedral in Zamora, Spain (Figure A.56) where the proportional relationship between the saint and the architecture is distorted, and the contorted poses of figures who transform themselves into hand rests (e.g., Figure A.57) or fit themselves into irregularly shaped frames (e.g., Figure A.58), both recalling similar contortions in historiated capitals. As for the second characteristic, there is such an astounding variety of marginalia found on early modern choir stalls that


\(^5\)Ibid., 1.
it is difficult to summarize. Vegetal imagery, whether stylized or realistic, is ubiquitous (e.g., Figure A.59). Animal depictions are prevalent, including real, mythological and unique hybrid creatures (e.g., Figure A.60). Heraldic and other symbolic devices are also common (e.g., Figure A.61). Events drawn from both written and oral traditions, such as sacred texts, secular works, saints’ lives, and proverbs, are frequently represented (e.g., Figure A.62). Scenes also show incidents from daily life, such as employment, pastimes, combat and interpersonal relationships (e.g., Figure A.51). Even historical events are occasionally shown, such as the beheading of Don Alvaro de Luna on a partition of the stalls in León Cathedral in Spain (Figure A.63). Another important attribute of marginalia that is noted by Randall is the frequent lack of any program or systematic organization: much like choir stall marginalia, unrelated themes, both secular and sacred, are frequently juxtaposed in an apparently random way (e.g., Figure A.64). Furthermore, the majority of manuscripts with such marginalia are religious tomes: primarily psalters and books of hours. Thus, most of these marginal images appear in a devotional context that is as surprising and puzzling to modern viewers as the appearance of such images on choir stalls. Second, it is important to use a comprehensive term that is not linked with a specific part of the choir stall to refer to peripheral imagery in order to challenge the tradition in the choir stall literature of subsuming all marginal carving under the term misericord. This lack of precision has contributed to a bias in the literature that has limited the investigation of other sites of such imagery. Furthermore, this usage implies that only the hidden misericord was an acceptable site of worldly imagery in the choir, despite the fact that a wide range of marginal imagery can be found on all parts of choir stalls (e.g., Figure A.65).

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Historical factors

When the contemporary visitor happens upon a sexual or a scatological scene during a tour of church choir stalls (e.g., Figure A.66), the discovery generally evokes one of two responses: immediate laughter or an averted gaze. Both responses are clearly rooted in surprise. Why would such an image appear on the church furniture that was built to support the performance of sacred Christian rites? The modern viewer might also be taken aback by parodies of religious rites and practitioners, such as a scene on a misericord that shows three monks dressed in wine skins enthusiastically singing “vino puro” rather than a liturgical text (Figure A.25). Moreover, many people, familiar with the officially regulated imagery of post-Reformation and post-Tridentine churches, wonder why any non-religious figures appear in the consecrated space of the church. Like Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, writing in 1125, they may ask: “...what profit is there in those ridiculous monsters, in that marvelous and deformed beauty, in that beautiful deformity? To what purpose are those unclean apes, those fierce lions, those monstrous centaurs, those half-men, those striped tigers, those fighting knights, those hunters winding their horns?” While echoes of this early tract can be found in later writing, such as the criticism of painters in the mid-fifteenth-century Summa Theologica by the influential Italian archbishop, San Antonino, protests such as these were irregular, with the largest cluster

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9 It is important to note that this parody of monks occurs in a cathedral setting.


11 It seems superfluous and vain in the stories of saints or in churches to paint oddities, which do not serve to excite devotion, but laughter and vanity, such as monkeys and dogs chasing hares, and the like...” In historiis etiam sanctorum seu in ecclesiis pingere curiosa, quae non valent ad devotionem excitandum, sed risum et vaniatem, ut simias et canes insequentes lepores, et hujusmodi...” Cited and
occurring in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The continued use of secular motifs in sacred spaces and on sacred objects, combined with the sparse documentation of criticism, suggests an attitude of overall acceptance of such imagery.\(^\text{12}\) In fact, most of the rare guidelines for iconography in extant choir stall contracts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are brief suggestions for non-religious marginalia with no reference to the main iconographical program. According to preserved copies of original documents,\(^\text{13}\) the artisans working on the stalls at Amiens Cathedral in France were initially instructed that the seats, “...should be a good width and the underneath decorated with leaf work or small figurines and little creatures and anything else as you wish.”\(^\text{14}\) In the Basel contract of 1494 for a new set of stalls at St. Peter’s Collegiate Church, a picture or flowers are suggested for the misericord carvings.\(^\text{15}\) The contract of 1508 concerning the stalls for the cathedral of Saint-Tugdual in Tréguier, France, first specifies, “and the aforementioned new seats will be equipped with misericords carved with funny faces and leaves.”\(^\text{16}\) and later, “And with this there will be round pendants completely covered with carvings of leaves and funny faces where they belong and are required on the work.”\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{12}\) Randall, Images in the Margins, 3–4.

\(^{13}\) Unfortunately, an archivist of the seventeenth century destroyed all of the sources after having classified and inventoried the cathedral chapter archives. Lemé-Hébuterne, Les stalles d’Amiens, 13.

\(^{14}\) Translation mine. “...seraient de bonne largeur et le dessous garni de feuillage ou mannequins et petits bestiaux et autre chose à plaisir.” This quotation comes from Ms. de Riencourt et Masclef, ms. 2131 D, Bibl. mun. Amiens. It is presumably from an early plan that was subsequently modified since the Amiens stalls actually have Old Testament scenes on them, but when and why the change occurred is not known. Transcribed in ibid., 43.

\(^{15}\) “...darzu unter veglichtem blatt eins veglichten stuls, so man uff und nider laßt, ouch ein bildung oder blumen...” The full contract is transcribed from Bauakten, I. I. 35 (1390–1833) of June 2, 1494 in Hans Rott, Quellen und Forschungen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte im XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert (Stuttgart, Germany: Strecker und Schröder Verlag, 1936), 119–120.

\(^{16}\) This and the following translation are mine. “...et seront les dites neuffves chaires garnies de salleres tailléees de grimasses et feillaiges.” Both excerpts are transcribed from a fabric notebook in the Archives des Côtes-d’Armor in Anatole de Barthélemy, Mélanges historiques et archéologiques sur la Bretagne (Paris: Librarie Archéologique de V. Didron, 1856), 112.

\(^{17}\) “Et avec ce y aura des bouillons pendantz taillées à feillage et grimasses jacques à remplesissement de l’eupre l’a où il appartienendra, et sera requis;...” ibid., 114.
Similarly, “...round figures of lovers or animals or round foliage.”\textsuperscript{18} were suggested for the elbow rests in the contract of 1519 for the stalls at the Abbey of Sint-Niklaas in Veurne, Flanders.\textsuperscript{19} One of the few documents that puts forward a single theme for marginalia is the contract of 1506 between the carver/joiner Gilles van Dickele, and the abbess and directors of the abbey of Sint-Klara in Gentbrugge in Flanders,\textsuperscript{20} proposing images for the misericords, “...corresponding to some proverb or the like.”\textsuperscript{21} Suggestions are also given for the partitions between the seats: “...on each of the aforementioned partitions carved from the same wood a rounded (?) column and a figure, whether man, woman, animal or something else,...”\textsuperscript{22} It is interesting to note that these guidelines include multiple suggestions and/or indicate that these suggestions are not exhaustive, thus reflecting the diversity of most choir stall marginalia.

By the time scholarly examination of choir stalls began in the nineteenth century, this type of figural imagery had been excluded from the Western church for over two hundred years, and some of the earlier imagery had been destroyed or damaged, whether deliberately, accidentally, through wear or renovation. Surprise at the presence of the copious and diverse images carved on medieval and early modern church furniture has therefore influenced the investigation of choir stalls since its inception. Our contemporary

\textsuperscript{18}\textsuperscript{18} “...ronde personaijen van liefden oft van ghediertem oft ronde loovers.” Cited and translated in Malcolm Jones, “Review of Christa Grössinger’s The World Upside-Down: English Misericords,” The Profane Arts of the Middle Ages/Les arts profanes du moyen âge VI.2 (Autumn 1997): 334. Thank you to Professor Emeritus Malcolm Jones for kindly sending me references for this and the following excerpt, as well as for sharing his work on the theme of the World Upside-Down.

\textsuperscript{19}\textsuperscript{19} J. K. Steppe, M. Smeyers, and J. Lauwerys, Wereld van vroomheid en satire. Laat-gotische koorbanken in Vlaanderen (Kasterlee, Belgium: Uitgeverij De Vroente, 1973), 46. Veurne is known as Furnes in French.

\textsuperscript{20}\textsuperscript{20} For more excerpts from this contract, see chapter Choir Practice; for a complete transcription, see Edmond de Busscher, Recherches sur les peintres et sculpteurs à Gand aux XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles (Ghent, Belgium: Kessinger, 1866), 228–233n1.

\textsuperscript{21}\textsuperscript{21} Translated in Jones, “Review of World Upside-Down,” 334. “...onder elc vers. berdt een figuere corresponderende eenigh e bysprake of dies ghelycke.” Transcribed in Busscher, Peintres et sculpteurs à Gand, 229n. The stalls were destroyed by Calvinist iconoclasts, 232–233. It is therefore impossible to know how closely this suggestion was followed, but certainly proverbs were depicted on many sets of choir stalls.

\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{22} Translation mine. “...an elc middelscof voers. ghesneden van den selven houte eenen propren pylaer, ende een figuere, tsy man, vrouwe, beeste oft yet anders,” Transcribed in ibid., 229n.
dichotomy between the secular and the religious, which is generally assumed in most of the literature on choir stalls, is a product of nineteenth-century ideas, such as those of Emile Durkheim, and does not accurately reflect medieval and early modern thinking. Rather, in the Christian West, the sacred and the secular were seldom kept apart, nor was the secular perceived as something independent of the religious. It is therefore problematic to even distinguish the secular in this context. A more appropriate distinction would be the traditional division in medieval art between imagery that is central to the main program and that which is or appears to be peripheral, regardless of its actual physical placement, a differentiation that is used in the literature on book marginalia. Thus, secular imagery that forms part of the main program, such as events from the Reconquista on the stalls at the cathedral in Toledo, Spain (e.g., Figure A.46) would not be included in the study of marginalia, while religious imagery that is not part of the central iconography, such as the misericord depicting the Old Testament hero, Samson, at the cathedral in Zamora (Figure A.67), would be. Analogously, while “misericord” is and was more or less synonymous with marginal imagery, the misericords at Amiens Cathedral cannot be classified as marginal. In the original contract, they were commissioned to display traditional marginal themes, but at some point, not only the themes, but also their

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25 For more about the difficulties involved in defining sculpture from this period as secular, see Phillip Lindley, “Introduction,” in *Secular Sculpture 1300-1550*, ed. Phillip Lindley and Thomas Frangenberg (Stamford, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2000), 1–9.


27 Elaine Block believes that this misericord shows a lion tamer, rather than Samson. Given the man’s grasp on the lion’s jaws, the long history of this iconography associated with Samson, the popularity of depictions of Samson on choir stalls, and the formally similar misericord on the bishop’s stall at Ciudad Rodrigo in Spain (Figure A.68) that Block herself identifies as Samson, this claim is not convincing. Elaine C. Block, *Corpus of Medieval Misericords Iberia: Portugal-Spain, XIII-XVI* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 42, 55.

28 Cited above.
relationship to the main program was rethought. The characters and episodes from the Old Testament that are displayed on the Amiens misericords form part of the main religious program, prefiguring the life of Christ, which is narrated more prominently on the stall ends (e.g., Figure A.69, one of eleven misericords recounting the life of Moses).\footnote{Mireille Mentré, “Figures vétéro-testamentaires dans les stalles d’Amiens et de Saint-Bertrand-des-Comminges,” in Bible de bois du Moyen Age : Bible et liturgie dans les stalles médiévales, ed. Frédéric Billiet (Paris: Harmattan, 2003), 148–149.}

Without the textual point of reference enjoyed by manuscript illumination, the distinction between centre and periphery may be ambiguous at times, particularly in cases where a significant amount of imagery has been lost. However, our conventional distinction between secular and sacred is not always clear either. There are many carvings on choir stalls that portray men fighting animals; however, when the man is fighting a dragon, as he is on a misericord at the cathedral in Zamora (Figure A.70),\footnote{Block, Medieval Misericords Iberia, 53.} should he be identified as Saint George even though there are no other details in the scene (e.g., a princess, his flag or armour) or in the larger context (e.g., related scenes or the presence of his relics in the church)? More importantly, the obvious programmatic nature of most prominent choir stall imagery, such as the full-length figures on many dorsals that display the Double Credo, compared to the disparate themes commonly shown in less conspicuous places (at Zamora Cathedral, for example, subjects on misericords, hand rests and stall ends include animals, monsters, proverbs and scenes from textual sources)\footnote{Ibid., 52–56.} indicate that at least some choir stall designers intended to make such a distinction. I will nevertheless continue to use our modern distinction between secular and sacred in this chapter because it reflects the usage in the literature, as well as being one of the motivations for much of the research. But by focusing on what is central versus peripheral, some of the distinctions can be discussed in a way that is closer to how the imagery was originally perceived.
Chapter 2. The Construction of the Margins

The Reformation had an enormous impact on the presence and use of images in both Protestant and Catholic churches: iconoclasm resulted in the removal and vandalism of vast quantities of church imagery; Protestant sects, such as Lutheranism, that accepted images in the church restricted them to specific themes; and the church of Rome responded to internal and external criticism of church art at the Council of Trent by limiting the subjects that were deemed permissible in Catholic churches. At the Council of Trent’s twenty-fifth session, held on December 3–4, 1563, in its defence of sacred images in the church, the council concluded: “And lastly, bishops should give very great care and attention to ensure that in this matter nothing occurs that is disorderly or arranged in an exaggerated or riotous manner, nothing profane, nothing unseemly, since holiness befits the house of God.” This injunction led to the discontinuation of certain kinds of imagery deemed non-religious that had been common in medieval and early modern churches. Most religious imagery, on the other hand, remains accessible to contemporary eyes because of its close ties with Christian texts and because of the continuity of much of this imagery, particularly in the Catholic church. Moreover, the prohibition against disorder and confused arrangements seems to apply directly to much of the apparently haphazardly chosen choir stall marginalia. This injunction helps explain the observation that misericord carvings made after the Council of Trent show much less diversity than earlier ones.

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33 While the use of the word *profane* in English translations is ambiguous, the term has been interpreted in the literature as *secular*. For example, Christa Grössinger, *The World Upside-Down: English Misericords* (London: H. Miller, 1997), 9. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, our modern distinction between secular and sacred was not so clear-cut in the sixteenth century.

34 “Postremo tanta circa haec diligentia et cura ab episcopis adhibeatur, ut nihil inordinatum, aut praepostere et tumultuarie accommodatum, nihil profanum nihilique inhonestum appareat, cum domum Dei debeat sanctitudo.” Transcribed and translated from *De invocatione, veneratione et reliquis sanctorum, et de sacris imaginibus*, Session 25, 3–4 December, 1563) in Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 776.

The contrast between the decorum imposed by the Council of Trent and the inclusiveness of the earlier church is not only reflected in its images. During the medieval and early modern periods, the church was much more a part of an average Christian’s everyday life than it is today. People did not leave their traditional culture outside, but rather were encouraged to connect their stories and concepts to the Christian worldview. Even members of cloistered communities brought with them tales and experiences from their earlier lives. This close integration of the secular and the sacred in people’s daily lives can been seen in the range of activities that took place within the church, some of which combined church doctrine with the type of secular symbols and anecdotal material seen in the imagery of marginalia. However, some of these traditions have since been modified or discontinued, which has further limited contemporary understanding of secular material within the church. Three particular traditions that may have influenced the secular imagery seen on choir stall marginalia are: the use of exempla in sermons; liturgical and para-liturgical drama; and various celebrations known collectively as the Feast of Fools.

The rise of the Mendicant orders in the thirteenth century brought important changes to the sermon. To reach as large an audience as possible, the friars frequently preached in the vernacular, rather than in Latin. They also made use of a wide range of exempla drawn from a variety of oral and literary traditions, as well as from contemporary events, to help the laity better understand Christian doctrine. Visual manifestations of the same themes are found in the margins of both religious and secular texts of the period.

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37 J. G. Davies, The Secular Use of Church Buildings (London: SCM Press, 1968), 95. See chapter Preaching to the Choir, section The cultural poaching of choir stalls for a discussion of some of the non-religious activities that might take place in early modern churches.


40 Randall, Images in the Margins, 7–8.
as well as on misericords. Given the rise of these themes in book marginalia not long after this broad dissemination of previously little known stories began, Lilian Randall concludes that exempla played an important role in the development of Gothic book marginalia. Simultaneously, the themes carved on misericords also saw an increase in diversity, and were therefore probably also influenced by the spread of exempla. One popular legend used as an exemplum was the story of Phyllis and Aristotle, a motif found on early modern choir stalls all over Europe (e.g., Figure A.71). Included at the end of the sermon, exempla were designed to entertain as well as to reinforce the central message, and were therefore directly related to the theme of the sermon. The same direct relationship between marginalia and central imagery is doubtful, however, since, unlike preachers, those choosing the marginal imagery were not necessarily expected to comment on the main theme. Certainly by the fifteenth century, many of the images derived from exempla would have been part of a carver’s traditional repertory and were therefore unlikely to have been specifically chosen as a gloss on the main program, particularly by the carvers themselves. However, familiarity with exempla might be helpful in identifying unusual marginal imagery. More importantly, awareness of this tradition provides some of the background context for the presence of some of the images on choir stalls that are surprising to post-Tridentine eyes.

Liturgical and para-liturgical dramas also frequently employed non-Christian representations and ideas, some of which are seen on choir stall marginalia. For example, three aspects of liturgical drama that Thomas of Chobham severely criticizes in his thirteenth-

\[\text{\footnotesize 42 Randall, “Exempla,” 107.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 44 Randall, “Exempla,” 106.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 45 Ibid., 101–102.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 46 Ibid., 103.}\]
century *Summa Confessorum* are the satirizing of clerics, the use of obscene gestures and the wearing of masks, all of which are themes carved on choir stalls (e.g., Figure A.25). While such dramas were regularly denounced, and many of them were gradually separated from the liturgy and ultimately the church in the form of Mystery Plays, in fact much of the criticism had the aim of reforming, rather than banning, liturgical drama because it was seen as an important medium in the teaching of theological concepts to both clerics and the laity. In fact, in her analysis of the thirteenth-century cathedral play, *Danielis ludus*, Margot Fassler argues that by aptly incorporating certain undesirable traditions into church dramas, these traditions could be censured and suppressed: in the Daniel play, for example, the very abuses that many twelfth- and thirteenth-century reformers condemned are performed by the Babylonians who later pay for their sins, while Daniel is shown as a model who is able to withstand the earthly temptations that surround him. Similarly, monks, nuns, canons, canonesses and friars would be considered models for the laity who should be able to resist their own human weaknesses. Thus, the appearance of inappropriate behaviours on the choir stalls may have also originally served an analogous function before eventually becoming part of the standard repertory.

A third example of a medieval church tradition that shares themes with much secular marginalia is a group of celebrations known collectively as the *Feast of Fools*. Although there were at least three other feasts that took place during the week of Christmas, ecclesiastical prohibitions of the period tended to use this term generally to refer to all of them. For more details and distinctions, see Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, 336–337.
One of these feasts, that of the Holy Innocents, or *Childermas*, held on December 28, was the feast day for the choir boys. It is commemorated in an eight-panel frieze on the canopy of the north stalls in Dordrecht in the Low Countries (e.g., Figure A.72). While these feasts were mainly celebrated in collegiate churches and cathedrals, that of the Holy Innocents was also popular in monasteries, including some female houses. Such festivities were celebrated from about the end of the eleventh century until the sixteenth century, when the Feast of Fools began to be celebrated outside the church in its entirety. These festivals were primarily observed in France, but also in the German-speaking lands, Bohemia, England, the Low Countries, and Spain. References are found to these celebrations in a variety of texts ranging from choir books and chapter accounts to statutes and papal decretals. There were four parts to the Feast of Fools: a procession, a mass, revelry in the church, and revelry along with theatrical performances outside the church, although the celebration varied in different places and over time. One common practice was the temporary elevation of the particular lower order whose feast day it was: they sat in the upper choir stalls and conducted the services. There was also always a non-religious aspect and in some cases the celebration became quite boisterous, hence the attempts by some authorities over the centuries to reform or stop the festivities. A recent revisionist history of this feast reminds us, however, that much

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56 Ibid., 359–362.


60 Duinen, *De koorbanken te Dordrecht*, 77.


65 For a censorious description of such feasts, see a transcription and English translation of the letter written by the dean of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris in 1445 urging the bishops and chapters of France to put a stop to this practice in ibid., 293–295.
like the focus on the secular scenes on choir stalls, our modern characterization of these feasts has been lopsided due to our focus on the most egregious examples.\textsuperscript{66} The main characteristic of these feasts was reversal: of hierarchy, gender (through cross-dressing), appropriate behaviour – even books were held upside-down.\textsuperscript{67} Not surprisingly, since the choir itself was the site of much of this frivolity, imagery associated with these festivals is commonly seen on choir stall marginalia: masks, game-playing, obscene gestures, dancing, etc. The frequent presence of the fool on choir stalls may also be a reference to such festivities (e.g., Figures A.52 and A.73), which would have been familiar to the artisans given the public display involved in such feasts. At Amiens Cathedral, for example, where the feast is known to have been celebrated between 1291 and 1548,\textsuperscript{68} there are seven representations of fools on the armrests, pendants and corbels of the early sixteenth-century choir stalls.\textsuperscript{69} Whether such traditions were intended to keep the clergy in touch with each other and the people they served,\textsuperscript{70} or whether they were simply for pleasure,\textsuperscript{71} the ejection of such festivals from the choir has left behind only visual traces that are no longer intelligible to modern eyes.

All of these traditions were already hundreds of years old by the period that I examine; therefore, the specific meaning of some of the symbols that derived from them may have been vague or unknown at the time that they were carved on the choir stalls, and some may never have been clearly defined. Nevertheless, sermon exempla, liturgical dramas and the Feast of Fools provide a context for understanding some of the non-religious imagery seen on early modern choir stalls, showing that such imagery was not an isolated phenomenon, but formed part of the larger church culture and history.


\textsuperscript{68}Chambers, \textit{The Medieval Stage}, 301–302.


\textsuperscript{70}Fassler, “Feast of Fools and Danielis Ludus”, 99.

\textsuperscript{71}Gilhus, “Feast of Fools in France,” 46.
Chapter 2. The Construction of the Margins

Historiography

Choir stall marginalia shares motifs with many other liminal church spaces as well as with book marginalia. Although this fact is acknowledged in some of the research on choir stalls, when other types of marginalia are referred to in this literature, the emphasis is usually on a secular theme that they have in common, for example, mermaids,\(^72\) or the use of one as a model, such as the thirteenth-century Rouen Cathedral portal quatrefoils that were replicated on nineteen of the extant fifteenth-century misericords.\(^73\) Similarly, in the literature on other types of marginalia, particularly illuminations, misericords may be evoked as illustrations of objects with comparable imagery.\(^74\) However, despite the inclusion of misericords in Camille’s broad examination of medieval marginal art, which was published in 1992, most of the recent literature on choir stall imagery is not part of a more comprehensive art historical discussion. And while *Image on the Edge* is frequently referenced in the choir stall literature, it is usually cited for its general inclusion of this material,\(^75\) or for a particular assertion regarding misericords,\(^76\) rather than for Camille’s larger arguments about the margins of medieval art. The earliest research on marginalia, however, encompassed a wide range of genres and media. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholarship on caricature and satire, such as Champfleury’s *Histoire de la caricature au moyen âge et sous la renaissance* and Louis Maeterlinck’s work focussing on satiric genre scenes, examined marginalia on architecture and church furniture, in manuscripts and paintings. In his book, Champfleury stressed the value


\(^{74}\)For example, see Sandler, “Study of Marginal Imagery,” 27.


\(^{76}\)For example, see Paul Hardwick, “A Problematic Representation of the Eucharist in Beverley St Mary,” in *Bible de bois du Moyen Age : Bible et liturgie dans les stalles médiévales*, ed. Frédéric Billiet (Paris: Harmattan, 2003), 170.
of looking at objects from different periods, as well as comparing different media,
but most subsequent work has a narrower focus, generally examining a single genre within a restricted time period.

There are two main historiographical reasons for the development of this tradition: periodization and genre distinctions. First, there has been an emphasis on defining and describing artistic periods in art historical research, in university education and in museum organization that only began to be seriously questioned in the 1960s, and which remains influential today. Already in the nineteenth century, Champfleury’s book and Thomas Wright’s slightly earlier *A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art* were both criticized by Emile Mâle precisely because they did not adhere to defined art historical eras in their discussion. Hence, while many marginal motifs remained popular over centuries, there have been few studies that examine particular motifs over time, two exceptions being H. W. Janson’s *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, and more recently, Ruth Mellinkoff’s book *Averting Demons: The Protective Power of Medieval Visual Motifs and Themes*. Rather, most work on marginalia, as well as most review articles of this research, adhere to a relatively restricted time period. Meyer Schapiro’s important essay on the marginal in monumental sculpture, “On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art”, centres on the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Laura Kendrick’s recent article “Making Sense of Marginalized Images in Manuscripts and Religious Architecture” reviews research on Romanesque and Gothic marginalia that was created prior to 1300. While the first wooden stalls were con-

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structed in the tenth century, the earliest extant wooden choir stalls in Europe, from the former Premonstratensian abbey in Ratzeburg, date from the twelfth century. Relatively few surviving sets, however, were made before the fourteenth century. Furthermore, early sets usually have little or no figural sculpture. Therefore, it is not surprising that Kendrick’s review does not mention current research on choir stalls. Most manuscript marginalia research examines imagery from its most inventive period, between 1250 and 1350, as both Randall’s seminal book and Jean Wirth’s recent review article, “Les marges à drôleries des manuscrits gothiques : problèmes de méthode” demonstrate. While Christa Grössinger’s article on misericords and manuscript marginalia shows the overlap of these two genres in England during this period, the greatest number of surviving choir stalls with significant marginal sculpture date from the fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Thus, strict periodization limits the types of comparisons that researchers make.

Second, beginning with Giorgio Vasari’s influential Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects, artistic genres were divided into major and minor arts, a focus that is still seen in art historical research despite the fact that this distinction does not always accurately reflect how early modern works were perceived at the time of their creation. With the appearance of marginalia on new genres, such as choir stalls, and in new places, such as book margins, the diversity of the media that had such imagery also influenced its investigation. While innovative marginalia was often found on capitals and other architectural components from the tenth through the twelfth century, manuscripts became the medium for such developments in the two centuries that followed; from the fourteenth through the sixteenth century, the favoured site became church furnishing. Since architecture and sculpture are part of Vasari’s triad of privileged genres, and he considered wood

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83 Randall, Images in the Margins, 9–10.
84 Grössinger, “English Misericords and Manuscript Illuminations,”
85 Belozerskaya, Rethinking the Renaissance, 1–4.
a less desirable material, particularly when carving figures, it is not surprising that the first important genre-specific art historical works were on stone architectural sculpture, such as Schapiro’s analysis of figural capitals. And while manuscript illuminations do not form part of Vasari’s triad, the miniature paintings in Italian Renaissance manuscripts were highly esteemed by nineteenth-century art historians, and the importance of books to our literate society have further contributed to the stature of manuscripts generally in art history. Randall’s Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts, published in 1966, provided a solid base for subsequent investigation of book marginalia in particular. Wooden liturgical furnishings, on the other hand, have been much less valued by art historians, who have consequently paid little attention to them. The study of choir stalls, therefore, has been largely separate from the broader art historical literature despite overlapping concerns.

The Scope of Marginalia

Ironically, while choir stalls owe their popularity to the secular scenes and figures on misericords, this interest has resulted in a reductive understanding of choir stalls and the imagery displayed on them. This narrowness manifests itself in several ways in the literature on choir stalls, and even influences which sets are chosen for study.

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86 “But in truth, one never gives that flesh-like appearance and softness to wood that can be given to metal and to marble and to the sculptured objects that we see in stucco, wax, or clay.” Giorgio Vasari, Vasari on Technique: Being the Introduction to the Three Arts of Design, Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, Prefixed to the Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects (London: J. M. Dent & Company, 1907), 173.


Location

Although non-religious imagery pervades all parts of the choir stalls, the focus of much of the research has been specifically on the misericords, as can be seen from a quick perusal of many titles, from Emma Phipson’s book of 1896, *Choir Stalls and Their Carvings: Examples of Misericords from English Cathedrals and Churches*, to Paul Hardwick’s *English Medieval Misericords: The Margins of Meaning*, published in 2011. Even some works that ostensibly examine choir stalls as a whole often concentrate on misericords when analysing the iconography, such as Dorothy and Henry Kraus’s book from 1986, *The Gothic Choirstalls of Spain*. In studies that focus on marginalia more broadly, when choir stalls are included, often only the misericords are referred to despite the presence of other relevant images, thus portraying an incomplete picture. For instance, while Camille discusses many different sites of marginal images in his book *Image on the Edge*, misericords are the only component of the choir stalls that he mentions, which suggests to the reader that the type of marginal imagery that the book explores does not appear on other choir stall parts. Furthermore, the conclusion Camille then draws, that this imagery was permitted in the choir because misericords were sat upon,\(^90\) overlooks similar imagery on parts of choir stalls, such as hand rests (e.g., Figure A.65), which would not have been in contact with the users’ buttocks. In other cases, researchers do include imagery from various parts of the stalls, but this fact is obscured by the title of the publication: in *Misericords in the Rhineland*, for instance, Elaine C. Block also looks at imagery on armrests, partitions, end panels and canopies.\(^91\) Such narrow titles confirm the preeminence of misericords in the study of choir stalls, and for the casual browser, they perpetuate the impression that only the choir stall misericords are worthwhile subjects of investigation.


Why have misericords been singled out for examination among the profuse carvings seen on every component of many choir stall sets (e.g., Figure A.74)? There are a variety of factors that have contributed to this focus that are related to the structure of the choir stall as well as to that of the misericord. First, since the main iconographic program is usually presented very prominently, misericords are less suitable for displaying such a program because they are regularly hidden from view. When the stalls are in use, all of the misericords are obscured whether the participants are upright, seated or leaning against the misericords. When not in use, misericords cannot be seen if the seats are left folded down (e.g., Figure A.75). Misericords in the upper rows are often obscured by the lower row (Figure A.76), and in single-row sets, they are usually screened by a built-in desk (Figure A.77). Misericords are therefore more likely to include the non-programmatic themes that have piqued researchers’ interest than the more visible parts of the stalls are. Second, some of the other standard choir stall parts that are correspondingly less conspicuous, such as hand rests or pendants, are mainly limited to the carving of single figures due to their shape and small size, (e.g., Figure A.78). The thick, trapezoidal form of the misericord, on the other hand, is more conducive to the carving of scenes, which allows a wider array of themes. Scenes also tend to elicit more scholarly interest due to their greater complexity and narrative potential (e.g., Figure A.79). Finally, misericords are generally more accessible than many other choir stall parts. If they are still in their original place, they can easily be examined and photographed since they are only about one metre from the ground. Imagery at the tops of dorsals or in the canopy, on the contrary, is less accessible as it is shown far above the viewer. In the cathedral of Amiens, for example, the height of the canopy ranges from 6.54 metres to a soaring thirteen metres above the stalls of honour.\footnote{Lemé-Hébuterne, \textit{Les stalles d’Amiens}, 61.} Also, misericords are relatively small, and since they were normally carved separately, are easily detachable, making them ideal collectibles; many have therefore outlasted the ensembles that they were
originally part of due to their preservation in private collections and museums,\textsuperscript{93} such as *The Burrell Collection* in Glasgow. Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, copies of many misericords were made and these plaster casts also form part of some museum collections, for example at the *Victoria and Albert Museum* in London. In general, church artifacts that are housed in museums are better studied than those still in situ because they are more readily available to researchers.\textsuperscript{94} Tellingly, out of the four misericords that Camille illustrates in his book about marginal imagery, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, three are housed in a museum.\textsuperscript{95}

### Themes

As already mentioned, there is an astounding variety of marginalia found on early modern choir stalls. Nevertheless, it has been the non-religious scenes that have primarily captivated researchers’ interest, for two main reasons. First, there are fewer surviving secular images from the medieval and early modern periods compared to surviving religious images. Second, as already mentioned, their appearance in the sacred space of the choir is surprising to modern eyes. This focus on secular misericord imagery has given rise to the widespread idea that misericords display only secular iconography,\textsuperscript{96} and scabrous images in particular. Some research has so closely linked secular subjects with misericords that claims have been made that contemporaries did not consider these seats appropriate sites for religious scenes, despite many examples to the contrary. While there are some sets that show exclusively secular imagery (e.g., St. Nicolai in Kalkar),\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{93}While some museums exhibit larger pieces, such as dorsals, (e.g., *Victoria and Albert Museum*) or even a series of choir stalls (e.g., *Musée de Cluny*), these pieces are rarer as their bulkiness makes them less convenient for collecting and display.

\textsuperscript{94}Welzel, “Das “Goldene Wunder””, 19.

\textsuperscript{95}Camille, *Image on the Edge*, 94–96.


\textsuperscript{97}Nevertheless, the pelican piercing its breast on one of the Kalkar misericords is an indisputable Christological symbol (Figure A.64). For a list of all of the misericord themes, see Guido de Werd, *St. Nicolai – Kalkar* (Berlin: Deutschen Kunstverlag, 1986), 27.
there are others that display exclusively religious scenes (e.g., Sint-Geertrui in Leuven), and the majority show both. In an early study of misericords, *Le genre satirique, fantastique et licencieux dans la sculpture flamande et wallonne; les miséricordes de stalles (art et folklore)*, Maeterlinck contends that secular rather than religious scenes were carved there because of their close contact with the lower part of the body.98 This idea continues to be repeated in the literature,99 even in discussions of choir stalls that are known to have originally had Old and New Testament scenes, such as Rouen Cathedral.100 Gérard Pfulg even asserts that the depiction of sacred people was forbidden on misericords.101 However, there are no known contemporary documents that ban any kind of imagery on misericords, and given the range of subjects carved on them throughout Europe, it is unlikely that such prohibitions ever existed.102 Taking this line of reasoning one step further, André Courtens,103 and later Michael Camille, argue that clerics deliberately erased the secular scenes, symbolically, by sitting on them. Camille maintains, therefore, that while religious scenes sometimes appear, central Christological subjects are never seen on misericords.104 This assertion is untrue. While rare, there are examples, including several misericords on the late fourteenth-century choir stalls at Lincoln Cathedral in England showing scenes from the Infancy and the Passion,105 including the Resurrection (Figures A.80 and A.81).106 Moreover, both religious images and secular, even vulgar,

99For example, see Dorothy Kraus and Henry Kraus, *The Hidden World of Misericords* (New York: G. Braziller, 1975), ix.
100There is no scene from the New Testament, which is logical considering that these carvings are placed below the rumps of the canons. However, the cathedral accounts mention carvings of Old and New Testament scenes now destroyed.” Elaine C. Block and Frédéric Billiet, “Iconography of the Misericords at Rouen Cathedral,” in *Les stalles de la cathédrale de Rouen : histoire et iconographie*, ed. Elaine C. Block and Frédéric Billiet (Rouen: Publications de l’université de Rouen, 2003), 258.
102Lemé, “La religion à travers les stalles”, 32.
106Note that the Resurrection scene is flanked by the figures of Christ and Mary Magdalen in the supporters representing *Noli me tangere*. Grössinger, *World Upside-Down*, 126–128.
scenes frequently coexist on the same set of misericords. On the stalls at the collegiate church of Saint-Pierre in Saumur, France, which were begun in 1474, there are a pair of misericords that illustrate the Annunciation (Figures A.82 and A.83), as well as the misericord with the bottom-sniffing man that Camille uses to illustrate his point that misericords were associated with low subject matter (Figure A.84). It seems more likely that central Christological scenes are less common on misericords because such scenes are more typically part of the main iconographic program and therefore displayed in prominent and visible places, such as dorsals (e.g., Figure A.85) or stall ends (e.g., Figure A.86). Furthermore, comprehensive catalogues of misericords show that all of these types of claims are at odds with the actual frequency of both vulgar and religious images. While such interpretations suggest that scatological scenes are common and religious scenes are rare, Block’s catalogue of the misericords in Belgium and the Netherlands lists a total of twelve scatological misericords and a total of eighty-six biblical scenes, seventy-four from the Old and twelve from the New Testament. Similarly, in her catalogue of French misericords, there are twenty-nine sexual and scatological scenes compared to 198 Old Testament scenes; on the Iberian peninsula, she recorded fourteen Old Testament scenes and only nine depicting urination or defecation.

Moreover, these catalogues tell us that vegetal imagery was most frequently depicted, not narrative subjects, and that it is seen on all choir stall marginalia. Some of the vegetal imagery is emblematic, and may be secular, like the ubiquitous pomegranates that refer-

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109Camille, Image on the Edge, 94.
111Elaine C. Block, Corpus of Medieval Misericords in France, XIII-XVI Century (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2003), 221–228.
112Block, Medieval Misericords Iberia, 70–80. Note that the categories vary from catalogue to catalogue, in part due to differences in the imagery, in part due to the difficulty in categorizing such a range of material.
ence the Reconquista on the stalls in Ávila, Spain (Figure A.87), but much is religious, such as the thistles that allude to Christ’s suffering (Figure A.88);\(^{113}\) in other cases, the lush vegetation all over the stalls evokes the Garden of Eden or the \textit{hortus conclusus}.\(^{114}\) But like most of the other marginal carvings, much of it cannot be categorized; unlike most of the other marginal carvings, however, it is not the subject of much discussion in the literature. Nor is vegetal imagery reproduced in publications in the same way or to the same extent that carvings with figures are. Publications showing a complete set of misericords may have smaller plates of the vegetal examples.\(^{115}\) In ostensibly comprehensive catalogues, photographs of figural carvings far outnumber vegetal images, despite the opposite distribution. George Remnant’s \textit{A Catalogue of Misericords in Great Britain} shows photos of 196 misericords, but only fifteen display vegetal imagery; in Block’s more recent series of catalogues, only six out of 500 images show foliage in the Low Countries volume,\(^{116}\) and no vegetal images are shown in the French or Iberian volumes, each of which have over 800 photographs of misericords.\(^{117}\) Furthermore, choir stalls sets without figural misericords are more likely to remain unstudied and inaccurately characterized in the choir stall literature, despite the fact that some important sets have misericords with exclusively vegetal and/or architectural motifs. The stalls at Santo Tomás in Ávila (Figure A.89), and those at the Cartuja de Miraflores in Spain (Figure A.90), which were probably supervised by the same workshop head, Martín Sánchez, have not been subject to much study, despite the fact that both sets are of high quality and were commissioned by important patrons: Tomás Torquemada and Queen Isabel of Spain, respectively. A contributing factor to this neglect is that both sets are consistently described as having

\(^{113}\)Moraht-Fromm, “Raumprogramm und liturgische Dispositionen”, 51.
\(^{114}\)See Chapter Made to Order: The Construction of Space, section Heavenly Space for more details.
\(^{115}\)For example, J. A. J. M. Verspaandonk, \textit{Venlo: de koorbanken van de St. Martinuskerk} (Venlo, Netherlands: Uitgeverij van Spijk, 1993), in which the vegetal misericords are shown two or four to a page, whereas most with people or animals have a dedicated page, except for two similar pairs pictured together.
\(^{116}\)Block, \textit{Medieval Misericords: Belgium – The Netherlands}.
\(^{117}\) Block, \textit{Medieval Misericords in France} ; Block, \textit{Medieval Misericords Iberia}.
little or no figural imagery: Jesús MaCaamaño Martínez states that both sets belong to a group that has “...only or almost only geometric decoration...”, while Dorothy and Henry Kraus include these two sets in a list of stalls that they label as not figurative. Since no comprehensive work has been done on these stalls, subsequent researchers are restricted to quoting such cursory comments, thus perpetuating these conclusions. In her Iberian catalogue, Block includes the Miraflores set in a list entitled Gothic Choir Stalls with No Set of Historiated Misericords, and shows only a handful of photographs. However, a closer inspection of these two sets reveals symbolic (e.g., Figure A.87) and animal imagery (e.g., Figure A.91) on the armrests, and an even wider range of images that are “hidden in plain sight” in the tracery of the dorsals: a few religious (Figure A.92), some political (e.g., Queen Isabel’s yokes and King Ferdinand’s arrows are insistently repeated throughout the stalls in Ávila, see Figure A.93), and many that are more mysterious (e.g., Figure A.94). As well as excluding certain sets, this bias towards the figurative promotes others. Some choir stalls with no significant extant figural work apart from their misericords are nevertheless well-studied. For example, despite the mutilation of the armrests and the destruction of the canopy, dorsals and stall ends, the surviving misericords from the mid-fifteenth-century set at the cathedral in Rouen have been examined as a group, most recently in the book Les stalles de la cathédrale de Rouen, and individual misericords from the set are frequently included in articles about iconography.

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118...una serie de sillerías con sólo o casi sólo, decoración geométrica... (translation mine). Citaremos entre ellas... la de Santo Tomás de Ávila (ca. 1482); y la de la cartuja de Miraflores (1486–1489)... Jesús Mª Caamaño Martínez, “Sillerías Castellanas,” in Los coros de catedrales y monasterios: arte y liturgia, ed. Ramón Yzquierdo Perrín (A Coruña, Spain: Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza, 2001), 208.

119Kraus and Kraus, Gothic Choir Stalls of Spain, 98.

120For example, Dorothee Heim, referencing Kraus and Kraus, describes both sets as having “...exclusively architectonic and vegetal ornament...” (“...ausschließlich architektonische und vegetable Ornamentsformen...”), translation mine. Dorothee Heim, Rodrigo Alemán und die Toledaner Skulptur um 1500: Studien zum künstlerischen Dialog in Europa (Kiel, Germany: Ludwig, 2006), 91.

121Block, Medieval Misericords Iberia, 89–90. Furthermore, one of the photographs is mislabelled: the canopy in the first picture belongs to the Coro de los Padres, not the Coro de los Hermanos, 256.


123For example, Lemé-Hébuterne, “Sources de l'iconographie des miséricordes”, 171.
The puzzle of choir stall marginalia

Although complex religious programs on choir stalls may take time to decipher, particularly if the set was built over a long period or if it was moved or rearranged, generally speaking, the main choir stall iconography is relatively straightforward to interpret, despite the fact that there are not many extant contemporary documents that record choir stall programs. Those that do, such as the contract of 1414 to build a set for Saint-Pierre Cathedral in Geneva, tend to be brief: the sculptor, Jan Prindal, was simply instructed to use scenes from the life of Saint Peter rather than those of Saint Francis, which were depicted on the stalls that he was to use as a model. However, many sets display conventional programs that are easily recognizable and may contain further information in the form of quotations, as is commonly seen on figures representing the Double Credo (e.g., Figure A.95). Programs may also include text to clarify meaning, as at St. Mary and St. Corbinian Cathedral in Freising, Bavaria where each bust of a bishop is identified by name and date of incumbency (e.g., Figure A.96). Some sets do not even have an elaborate program but only a small number of traditional images that are generally easy to identify. At the cathedral in Ciudad Rodrigo, there is only one large-scale figure in the choir, which is on the dorsal of the bishop’s throne (Figure A.97). Saint Peter is instantly recognizable because he is holding a key, which is his attribute. Peter symbolizes the Christian church (Matthew 16:18) and his position on the bishop’s throne reinforces this interpretation. One of the few misericords in this set with a religious theme also appears on the throne: Samson rending the jaws of the lion. Together these two biblical

125 It is not certain whether these stalls were ever built. For a transcription of the Latin contract along with a French translation, see pages 236–238. Corinne Charles, Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle : Genève et le duché de Savoie (Paris: Picard, 1999), 77.
126 For more about the Double Credo, see chapter Made to Order: The Construction of Space, section Institutional space.
127 For a transcription of the epigraphs, see Berndt Oesterhelt, Der Chorraum des Freisinger Domes im Mittelalter (Munich: Fotodruck-Frank, 1966), 120–121.
figures represent the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, the former as the promise of Redemption made manifest in the latter. The circumstances surrounding a commission, such as whether the church was monastic, its titular saint or who commissioned the stalls, also facilitates comprehension of the iconography. At Saint-Nicolas parish church in Fribourg in the former Savoy, for example, the main program and subprograms all allude to the patrons’ suitability to form a collegiate chapter, which was their goal in constructing these stalls. Thus, documents and inscriptions, awareness of the broader religious context, and information about local circumstances generally allow the main choir stall program to be reconstructed, even when some of this imagery has been moved, damaged or lost.

Unlike the themes of the main religious program, however, the identification of subjects in the marginalia on choir stalls may be difficult or uncertain, as can be seen in the literature. Actions and objects that are depicted may not be clear: two entwined figures could either be hugging or wrestling; perhaps a monk is holding a stick, or perhaps he is holding a book; and it may be particularly hard to tell whether an image is meant to be interpreted ironically or at face value. In fact, there is a lack of agreement about the subject of many scenes: see, for instance, Jennifer Fellows’s article that re-identifies a number of English misericord carvings as subjects from medieval romances, Wendy Armstead’s reinterpretation of several misericords from a Bakhtian perspective, and Malcolm Jones’s book review of The World Upside-Down: English Misericords. Images that are enigmatic are often singled out for individual investiga-

\[\text{References:}\]


129 See chapter Construction of Identity, section Claiming Identity: The Appropriation of Sacred Space for further information about this commission.


131 Block, Medieval Misericords Iberia, 48.

132 Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 102. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find an image of this hand rest.

133 Martínez, “Sillerías Castellanas”, 212.


135 Jones, “Review of World Upside-Down,” In particular, see pages 337–339.
tion, such as the unusual misericord of ca. 1445 at Beverley, Saint Mary in Yorkshire, England, that Paul Hardwick analyzes (Figure A.98). And some themes, such as Figure A.79, remain unidentified. A fundamental reason that the interpretation of marginal sculpture can be so problematic is that there was often little context provided when the marginalia was created.

One type of information that is seldom seen on marginalia is text. While it is possible that painted letters have been worn away or banderoles have fallen off marginalia, particularly parts that were frequently handled such as misericords and hand rests, the dimensions of most liminal spaces and the rarity of examples suggest that text was uncommon to begin with. Most of an inscription survives, however, on a thirteenth-century misericord that is probably from Durham Cathedral, England. It shows an eagle holding a banner carved with the letters, “IOHANNIS . . . EWÁGELIS” (Figure A.99). At Magdeburg Cathedral, four of the extant mid-fourteenth-century misericords have figures with scrolls: three depict evangelist symbols and one shows a bearded man, who is possibly an Old Testament prophet. While there is currently nothing written on the scrolls, it is possible that they originally had painted text. The symbols of Saint Luke (Figure A.100) and Saint John (Figure A.101) are clearly recognizable as evangelists even without text because of their conventional poses and attributes; however, the exact identity of the bearded man remains unknown and in the absence of its companions, the Saint Matthew symbol might be interpreted as an angel of the Annunciation.

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136 Hardwick, “Problematic Representation of the Eucharist”.
138 For some additional examples, see Elaine C. Block, “Obscuring Iconography: Mysterious Misericords,” *The Profane Arts of the Middle Ages/Les arts profanes du moyen âge* VIII.2 (Fall 1999): 264–266.
139 The damaged letters between these two words is perhaps an abbreviation for apostoli. The dating of this misericord is based on the design of the seat and the style of the carving. For more information, see Charles Tracy, “Two Thirteenth-Century Choir-Stalls from Durham Cathedral,” *The Burlington Magazine* 135.1083 (June 1993): 401.
Chapter 2. The Construction of the Margins

(Figure A.102).\textsuperscript{141} As for the rather dumpy bird on the Durham stall, one would be hard-pressed to convincingly argue that it was an evangelist symbol without the presence of the banderole with text. Given the ubiquity of ambiguous figures such as birds, bearded men and winged people in liminal spaces, these examples suggest that the absence of text on most marginalia has made the interpretation of many images less certain.

Marginalia is also frequently unrelated to any larger iconographic choir stall theme. Furthermore, marginal images are often independent of one another. Those that were extracted from a series of illustrations can be particularly hard to interpret, especially if they depict a lesser known incident. Others may have been inexpertly or inaccurately copied, and have lost some of their identifying attributes.\textsuperscript{142} While there are attempts to discern a program among generally disparate themes, one cannot usually speak of a program when discussing marginal iconography.\textsuperscript{143} The few surviving references to choir stall marginalia suggest that at least sometimes its exclusion from the main, or any other, program was intended. In these cases, a broad theme was suggested and the particular imagery was largely left up to the carvers (see section Historical factors, above). Since it is a principle of iconography to use the surrounding context to understand the subjects depicted, it is therefore not surprising that the identification of many marginal scenes remain disputed or inscrutable.

In some cases, it seems as if the themes of marginalia were chosen for formal rather than iconographic reasons. On the pendants at Amiens Cathedral, foliate sculpture alternates with carvings of groups of figures (e.g., Figure A.103); the vegetal pendants are also paired with figural corbels and the figural ones are paired with vegetal corbels.\textsuperscript{144} A formal arrangement may also have been planned for the misericords of the stalls built between 1478 and 1486 at the cathedral in Rodez, France, although the destruction of

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\textsuperscript{141} Porges-Watson, “Misericords of Magdeburg Cathedral,” 92.
\textsuperscript{143} Charles, Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle, 49.
\textsuperscript{144} Durand, Description abrégée de la Cathédrale d’Amiens, 121.
some stalls and the reorganization of the remaining ones makes it impossible to be sure that the alternation of foliate designs and narrative subjects on the surviving misericords is original; but a similar alternation is seen on other sets of misericords, such as those at the dual purpose collegiate/parish church in Villefranche-de-Rouergue in France, which were overseen by André Sulpice, the same master who made those in Rodez, and on those at St. Nicolai in Kalkar (e.g., Figure A.104). At the abbey of Hauterive in the former Savoy, there is a pattern of arms, foliage and moulding on the corbels of the canopy, and in Ulm, the arches on the dorsal panels are alternately carved with tracery and vegetal work such that the tracery appears beneath the groin vaults and the plant motifs under the net vaults of the canopy. Furthermore, rosettes on the panels under the seats alternate, so that a plant motif in the rosette is paired with tracery on the dorsal and vice versa. Such formal plans on marginalia may be more common than has been realized thus far since many stalls have been damaged and reorganized. Also, the focus on figural sculpture often excludes any mention of other types of ornament. Finally, the fact that such attention to patterns occurs on choir stall marginalia further supports the probability that when diverse, unrelated images were juxtaposed on choir stalls, it was done intentionally.

Whether or not a formal plan was laid out, and even in the absence of specific instructions regarding subjects, motifs or a comprehensive theme, designs for marginalia still had to be selected. It is therefore likely that the carvers often made their own decisions about what to depict. In Nigel Morgan’s examination of illuminations in the Rutland Psalter, he shows that it is possible to distinguish the personal preferences for the subjects

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145 Ariela Erez also surmises, based on four pairs of misericords, that each narrative scene may have had a related ‘partner’ on the other side of the stalls. For example, there is a single swan on one side and a pair of swans on the other. Erez, “Misericords Carved by André Sulpice,” 301.
147 See the plan with themes in Werd, *St. Nicolai – Kalkar*, 27.
148 For an ordered list, see Strub, *Stalles fribourgeoises*, 90.
149 Gropp, *Das Ulmer Chorgestühl*, 44–49. There are a few exceptions, due to the interruptions of the aisles, and special vaulting above the central and end seats.
of marginal figures among the various artists who worked together on the manuscript, which suggests a certain independence in the choice of marginal motifs. Whether such distinctions could be made in choir stall carving awaits further research, but it is conceivable and certainly consistent with the often random-seeming collection of marginal themes that generally would have been carved by more than one member of the workshop. However, as Jeffrey Hamburger points out in his review of *Image on the Edge*, medieval artists did not freely invent marginal subjects; rather, marginalia was part of a relatively stable repertory of images, which they might interpret in different ways. This stability can be seen through space and across media, as well as over time. For example, there is a misericord at Manchester Cathedral that shows a hare cooking a hunter on a spit while boiling his hounds in nearby cauldrons (Figure A.105). This scene probably derives from a closely contemporary engraving by Israhel van Meckenem (Figure A.106), but this world upside-down tale had already had a long history, having been depicted in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century English manuscripts, as well as on twelfth-century German capitals. Geographically, María Dolores Pablos Teijeira observes that the secular marginal iconography on a group of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century stalls in Spain resembles that seen all over Europe in this period. Similarly, Christa Grössinger’s study of English misericords reveals that although a few unique English images can be distinguished, the most common themes are the same as those employed on the European continent. Moreover, Grössinger’s earlier article on English thirteenth- and fourteenth-century misericords found that diverse media of that period, such as manuscripts, embroidery, stone and wood carvings, share not only similar themes, but also similar formal characteristics,

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suggesting that artisans working in different media had shared sources of imagery. The earliest dissemination of this repertory of imagery was probably primarily through workshop pattern books, then manuscripts, and later prints. Sometimes, however, artisans used images closer to home: the fourteenth-century misericords at Worcester Cathedral in England were probably derived from the twelfth-century wall paintings at the nearby chapter house; nineteen of the extant fifteenth-century misericords at Rouen Cathedral were copied from stone quatrefoils on the north transept portal (portail des Libraires), which were carved between 1280 and 1320; and Jörg Sürlin the Younger’s workshop presumably used traced models to produce the same misericord figures for the stalls of the Benedictine monastery church in Blaubeuren, Württemberg that his father’s workshop had employed at the Ulm parish church about twenty years earlier, despite the fact that both the main choir stall programs, and the affiliations of the patrons and users were very different. As Lemé-Hébuterne points out in her comparison of three of the Rouen misericords with their respective stone quatrefoil models, even when there is an apparently clear relationship between a model and its copy, questions arise about how it is copied, why, and, particularly with the passage of time, whether the image was understood in the same way by the different artists, and the different viewers. Similar issues arise when images deriving from other languages or cultures are copied: for example, did local patrons understand all of the proverbs that Flemish artisans carved on choir

155 Grössinger, “English Misericords and Manuscript Illuminations,”
156 Grössinger, World Upside-Down, 21.
159 Following the convention in recent literature on Sürlin and his more famous father, I will spell the son’s surname with a ü and his father’s name with a y. Contemporary documents show a variety of spellings for both of their names. See Hans Rott, Quellen und Forschungen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte im XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert (Stuttgart, Germany: Strecker und Schröder Verlag, 1934), 50–55.
stalls in other places, such as England, France or Spain? André Courtens postulates that the meaning of marginal scenes must not have been of great importance to these patrons since they allowed Flemish workers to depict uniquely Flemish themes.\textsuperscript{162} Thus, the repetitive imagery reproduced from a variety of sources, times and places did not necessarily have a specific or a shared connotation among viewers, particularly if it was not related to the images around it. The lack of documentation, and the imprecise and perfunctory references when marginalia is referred to in contracts adds to the difficulty of interpretation.

Despite the relative dearth of context available to identify much choir stall marginalia, careful attention to details of the carving as well as familiarity with the standard repertory of marginal imagery of the period allows most images to be at least tentatively identified. An understanding of the larger local context also helps in this process since images might have been chosen in response to local sources, customs or events.

Methodological approaches to marginalia

The literature on marginalia

Given the wide variety of marginal imagery and its usual lack of any obvious program, the focus of much of the research is on trying to decode its enigmatic meaning, particularly in cases in which the secular imagery seems at odds with the religious context in which it is found. While the literature on choir stalls remains largely rooted in this nineteenth-century approach, with its emphasis on a moralizing interpretation of the imagery, a wider array of interpretative strategies has been used in recent literature. Nevertheless, even this work remains in general less sophisticated than the literature on book and architectural marginalia. For example, marginal religious imagery is less frequently in-

\textsuperscript{162} Courtens, “Les stalles sculptées,” 322.
cluded in interpretive discussions, in contrast to research such as Sandler’s article on the Luttrell Psalter,\textsuperscript{163} or Linda Seidel’s chapter on the historiated capitals at the cathedral of Saint-Lazare in Autun, France.\textsuperscript{164} Additionally, more theoretical underpinnings that generally frame discussions on book and architectural marginalia are often missing, and even references to important proponents or theoreticians, such as Meyer Schapiro or Mikhail Bakhtin, are frequently absent. Finally, the work on choir stalls tends to be more narrow, generally applying only a single strategy to arrive at a single interpretation. However, both Thomas E. A. Dale, in his review of the interpretation of the monstrous in medieval imagery,\textsuperscript{165} and Sandler, in her review of manuscript marginalia research,\textsuperscript{166} come to the conclusion that it is best to apply a broad range of strategies when interpreting marginalia for two main reasons: first, a single method tends to result in a rigid interpretation, which may not reveal the potential multivalence of images; second, one specific method cannot be equally valid in all cases as it would be unable to account for the various social, historical and functional contexts in which the imagery was created.

I will briefly summarize the main approaches to marginalia in a loosely chronological order according to when the method was first applied, including specific examples from both the choir stall and the broader literature on marginalia. I will conclude with strategies for future work on choir stall marginalia.

**Symbolic versus Decorative** During the first art historical discussion of marginalia in the nineteenth century, art historians were divided between those who were convinced of the Christian symbolism of each and every image that appeared in liminal spaces and those who characterized most of this imagery as purely decorative. While scholars like Félicie d’Ayzac and Count Bastard d’Estang used theological texts and medieval

\textsuperscript{165}Dale, “The Monstrous”, 269.
\textsuperscript{166}Sandler, “Study of Marginal Imagery,” 43.
bestiaries to elucidate mysterious hybrid creatures and puzzling scenes in sculpture and illumination, some of their conclusions were so implausible that it was easy for those who did not accept such interpretations to challenge their findings. Champfleury mocks Bastard d’Estang’s claim that a snail being aimed at by an archer is a symbol of Christ by juxtaposing the marginal image with a woodcut showing people attacking a snail due to its destructiveness to the wine crops, as explained in a rhyming couplet that is part of the print.\textsuperscript{167} Similarly, in the first of his three influential books on French religious art, Mâle scoffs at the “\textit{manie symbolique}” that he considers had misled many of his contemporaries into over-interpretation and that he believes had discredited their work. Drawing on Saint Bernard’s famous letter to lend weight to his point of view, he sarcastically asks how any nineteenth-century scholar could possibly be able to interpret imagery from the middle ages that the esteemed twelfth-century mystic claimed he could not.\textsuperscript{168} Today, researchers who search for symbolic meanings may appeal to theological texts, but they are generally more careful to take the specific context into consideration. Rather than using esoteric sources to try to explain non-programmatic images chosen by lay artisans, they are more likely to examine how particular kinds of secular imagery operate in the larger culture, or to relate the symbolism specifically within the context in which such imagery was produced and viewed. An example of the former is Karl P. Wentersdorf’s article about the religious meaning of \textit{figurae scatologicae} in Gothic manuscripts. He begins with the Christian understanding of excrement, as first evidenced in biblical texts, as a means of defiling the sacred. He then traces the idea into the early modern period when excrement was linked with Satan. He also takes note of the belief that the power of excrement could be turned against the devil as a method of exorcism. He gives examples of these


\textsuperscript{168} Mâle, \textit{L’art religieux du XIIIe siècle}, 63–82. Mâle’s views changed over time, however, and while he never advocated the exhaustive interpretation of every non-religious image, in later work he regarded carvings that were associated with fables and the bestiary primarily as negative moral signs. Emile Mâle, \textit{Religious Art in France, the Twelfth Century: A Study of the Origins of Medieval Iconography} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978, 1922), 316–363.
beliefs from contemporaneous morality plays, books on demonology, writings by Martin Luther, and even witch trial accounts, to substantiate his claim that figurae scatologicae continued to be interpreted as moralistic symbols into the early modern period.\(^{169}\)

An example of the latter type is Thomas E. A. Dale’s case study of the Romanesque capitals at St-Michel-de-Cuxa in France, which were commissioned and viewed by the monks themselves. He discerns a connection between eleventh- and twelfth-century monastic writing about the physical body as a reflection of one’s moral state, and the bodily movements and deformities seen on the capitals. He posits that these types of images, which also appeared in the margins of the texts that the monks read, were visualizations of the temptations of the soul that were similarly evoked during the monks’ recitation of the psalms at Compline, and that such imagery encouraged the monks to reflect on past sins and purge their souls, as recommended by monastic writers such as Saint Anselm and Saint Bernard.\(^{170}\)

In the choir stall literature, the most common approach to making sense of secular marginalia continues to be the attempt to discern a moral meaning related to Christian thought. In the introduction to his recent book, *English Medieval Misericords*, Paul Hardwick declares, “...my central thesis is that symbolism is in fact the guiding principle of misericord decoration.”\(^{171}\) Similarly, Danièle Alexandre-Bidon argues that there is a religious interpretation for every image that appears on choir stalls. She uses William Durandus’s thirteenth-century description of the misericord from his *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* as evidence, because the misericord signifies, “the contemplatives who remain at rest in God without offense, who, on account of their great holiness and

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the clarity of the eternal life they contemplate, are compared to gold;”¹⁷² Alexandre-Bidon contends that post-conciliar theologians have impeded our current ability to understand secular choir stall imagery.¹⁷³ Other researchers may not be as explicit about their assumptions, but a focus on deciphering a Christian or moral meaning makes their position clear. Articles that examine a particular image or set of imagery, such as Sylvie Bethmont-Gallerand’s analysis of children’s games depicted on choir stalls,¹⁷⁴ are more likely to posit a symbolic meaning, whereas writers of monographs on a group or set of stalls who are forced to account for a wide range of images, such as Corinne Charles’s study of choir stalls in Savoy, are more likely to consider that such imagery was part of a general decorative repertory and avoid rigorously classifying these images.¹⁷⁵ As André Courtens points out in his criticism of M. D. Anderson’s iconographic analysis of misericords, although medieval and early modern artisans would have been familiar with the Bible, liturgical dramas and other similar sources that may have served as an inspiration for misericord images, it seems unlikely that most lay artisans would have had enough education for the esoteric speculations that are sometimes ascribed to them.¹⁷⁶ While the subjects that artisans carved for marginal spaces may not all have been consciously selected for their iconographical meaning, there may have been some subconscious reasons for some choices that were related to the program, the church, current events, etc. Many marginal images therefore fall somewhere on a continuum between fully developed iconography and imagery that was chosen for its visual appeal.


¹⁷⁴ Bethmont-Gallerand, “La joute à cheval-bâton”.

¹⁷⁵ Charles, *Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle*, 47.

The representation of everyday life While not current in the literature on book and architectural marginalia, much like Dutch genre painting, secular choir stall imagery has long been interpreted as providing a window onto earlier cultural practices. Maeterlinck was one of the first to approach the interpretation of imagery on misericords in this way in Le genre satirique, published in 1910. Like much of the work on manuscript marginalia before the appearance of Randall’s book in 1966, Maeterlinck’s study is concerned with folkloristic aspects of the imagery. He therefore concentrates on the secular scenes, considering them to be archaeological documents of a bygone culture. Throughout the book, he links archival information, such as lawsuits, with the images on the stalls. While the restricted range and conventionality of such images signal that they do not actually provide unmediated access to the past, the folkloric interest in such imagery continues to the present. Titles such as Anderson’s Misericords: Medieval Life in English Woodcarving of 1954 and Block’s Misericords in the Rhineland: Images of Medieval Life of 1996 make clear this interpretative lens.

“Artistic Freedom” The early debate between symbolic and decorative interpretations continues; however, the discussion has widened considerably since the 1940s when Meyer Schapiro raised the question, “Are the religious and the ornamental the only alternatives of artistic purpose?” In his examination of Romanesque sculpture, he breaks away from these two traditional explanations, positing instead that liminal spaces that lay beyond the imposed religious program gave the medieval artist the freedom to be creative, and that both artists and viewers were primarily interested in the aesthetic appeal of such imagery. Like Mâle and many other art historians before him, he uses Saint Bernard’s comments to bolster his claim that such images are not obscure Christian sym-

177Randall, Images in the Margins, 12.
bols that need to be interpreted. Rather, other accounts from this time show that just as
Saint Bernard had feared, and as his own use of “beautiful” to describe the “deformity”
of this imagery reveals, monks and others admired the attractiveness of the material and
the skill of the artisan.\footnote{Schapiro, “Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art”, 10–15.}
Similarly, H. W. Janson’s study of the ape figure in the medieval and early modern period concludes that while artisans at this time may not have been entirely responsible for the specifications of an artistic oeuvre, they were not simply carrying out patrons’ orders, but actually had some freedom of expression.\footnote{Horst Woldemar Janson, Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1952), 42.} In the first serious examination of book marginalia by Lilian Randall, she acknowledges the effect that workshop tradition and the patron’s preferences could have on marginalia, but after examining manuscripts in which the main and the marginal images were painted by the same hand, she recognizes this third important factor: the role of the individual illuminator whose personal expression could be perceived in the more spontaneous marginalia compared to the formal, programmatic images.\footnote{Randall, Images in the Margins, 19–20.} In the choir stall literature, the depiction of marginalia is also sometimes ascribed to artistic freedom. Since misericords are rarely mentioned in contracts, seldom form part of the main program and display diverse imagery, many researchers, including Gérard Pfulg, assume that subjects were not imposed and that therefore the workers were allowed freedom of expression;\footnote{Pfulg, Les stalles de Fribourg, 17.} certainly, the broad suggestions for marginal imagery from the contracts mentioned, above, support this view. In contrast to Schapiro, however, some of these researchers conjecture that the carvers were taking advantage of this freedom, and have interpreted indecorous and satiric themes as a joke on or even retaliation against the patrons.\footnote{Kraus and Kraus, Hidden World of Misericords, xii.} While it is true that artists in the fifteenth century might be blamed for choosing themes that were deemed inappropriate, as can be seen in San Antonino’s criticism of painters, cited ear-

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{181} Schapiro, “Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art”, 10–15.
\bibitem{182} Horst Woldemar Janson, Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1952), 42.
\bibitem{183} Randall, Images in the Margins, 19–20.
\bibitem{184} Pfulg, Les stalles de Fribourg, 17.
\bibitem{185} Kraus and Kraus, Hidden World of Misericords, xii.
\end{thebibliography}
lier, as Dorothy and Henry Kraus point out, it seems inconceivable that patrons would have paid for work that they found inappropriate.\(^{186}\) Furthermore, while it may have been possible for carvers to have hidden such imagery in the tracery of dorsals (e.g., Figure A.107) or up high on the canopy (e.g., Figure A.108),\(^ {187}\) a misericord was not only more easily seen, but since the seats were attached with hinges, any undesirable ones could be easily removed and replaced. Other choir stall researchers have a more pragmatic view of the artistic freedom that carvers seemed to enjoy, and do not associate it with either artistic concerns for aesthetics, nor with political or personal goals due to disgruntlement. Charles, for example, points out that while in most cases the carvers were probably allowed by the patrons to choose the imagery for marginal spaces, the motifs they depicted formed part of a general repertory that would have been found in atelier models.\(^ {188}\)

**Apotropaic** Another theory that continues to influence current scholarship on marginalia is Ernst Gombrich’s idea that much of the imagery in the margins, or ‘zone of licence’ as he calls it, served an apotropaic function.\(^ {189}\) While monsters and fierce animals may be the first categories that come to mind when considering such a function, there are many other categories that are frequently found in liminal spaces that have also traditionally been associated with averting evil, such as entertainers, masks, body parts, battle, sexual and scatological imagery, and deformities.\(^ {190}\) Gombrich argues that both the human sense of order and our psychological predisposition to search for meaning influence our visual perception. When confronted with hybrid figures, we find them hard to understand and to remember since they do not fit into our knowledge of the world. Thus, given the ambiguous nature of many marginal motifs, as well as the ambiguous zone that

\(^{186}\)Ibid., xii.

\(^{187}\)For more photographs, see Biget, *Sainte-Cécile d’Albi : sculptures*, 18–29.

\(^{188}\)Charles, *Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle*, 47.

\(^{189}\)Dale, “The Monstrous”, 262.

they inhabit, we tend to alternate between our two perceptual tendencies, viewing them either as decorative or symbolic. He asserts, however, that most fantastic images should be seen as artistic inventions and that rather than attempting to discover a meaning, we should instead examine their function. Given the strength of metaphorical thought, it makes sense that people would depict powerful, confusing or watchful images around sacred sites to protect them. More recently, Ruth Mellinkoff’s book, *Averting Demons*, examines a variety of marginalia, including misericords. She proposes five strategies that people have traditionally used to protect themselves from evil and shows how the wide variety of marginal motifs, including Christian ones, fulfill these strategies. This work extends the possible apotropaic function of marginal imagery over a greater iconographic and chronological range than had been done in previous scholarship. And while it may be difficult to determine whether the original patrons and viewers interpreted marginal images as humorous or horrifying, perhaps it does not matter: both fear and laughter were considered to serve a protective function. The apotropaic function is not frequently evoked in studies on choir stall marginalia, except in passing, but Wingolf Lehnemann explores this function further in his examination of demons on the early-sixteenth-century choir stalls in Cappenberg in the County of Mark. He rejects the popular conception in the literature that images of demons on late Gothic misericords are amusing “drolleries”. Instead, Lehnemann considers the demons as representatives of evil and at the same time apotropaic, much like the earlier type of apotropaic imagery that was commonly carved on church portals. Viewed as a whole, he believes that the

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Cappenberg stalls embody the earthly world where demons are confined to a supporting function on hand rests and misericords in order to remind the canons who used these stalls what the disciples proclaimed after returning from their mission: even demons were submissive before Christ’s name (Luke 10:17). Thus, Lehnemann sees this imagery as protection against the despair the Christian may be in danger of succumbing to when contemplating the power of evil.\textsuperscript{198}

\textbf{Memory} Mary Carruthers’s work on the importance of memory in medieval culture demonstrates that images were customarily used as cues and memorial hooks.\textsuperscript{199} Her translation of a fourteenth-century treatise on memory by the English theologian, Thomas Bradwardine, for example, shows that such manuals gave instructions on how to use images to build ideas, quotations, words and even syllables. While these mnemonics were primarily intended to be images in the thinker’s mind, the variety of marginalia seen in contemporaneous manuscripts reflects the types of suggestions Bradwardine makes. Moreover, he refers specifically to illuminations as examples of the kinds of images to construct,\textsuperscript{200} which suggests that book marginalia was designed as a memory aid, at least in some cases. In Sylvia Huot’s study of a late thirteenth-century manuscript containing troubadour lyrics, she contends that while the illuminations do not reflect a fully developed plan, they are not random, and seem to operate on both a literal and an allegorical level to help the reader remember important points and learn the song lyrics, as well as to enhance the act of reading.\textsuperscript{201} Similarly, church capitals have also been construed as sites of recall.\textsuperscript{202} In her book on Saint-Lazare cathedral, Linda Seidel interprets the historiated capitals as alternative documentation that evokes memories.

\textsuperscript{198}Ibid., 213–216.
\textsuperscript{199}Mary Carruthers, \textit{The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 221.
\textsuperscript{200}Ibid., 281–288.
\textsuperscript{202}Seidel, \textit{Legends in Limestone}, 114.
of both Christian and pre-Christian associations and history, including conflicts between Christian and popular culture. For example, she places a capital showing fighting cocks in the larger context of ancient imagery within the cathedral where it would have brought to mind the god Mercury, who was often shown with a rooster; the pre-Christian association of the cock with magical powers; the Christian connection with the clerical profession; and, due to its Latin name, *gallus*, the Roman designation for France.\textsuperscript{203} One of the few studies that posits a mnemonic function for choir stall marginalia is Sylvie Bethmont-Gallerand’s examination of two misericords, one on the fifteenth-century choir stalls at the cathedral in Bruges and the other on the late fifteenth- to early sixteenth-century set at Sainte-Anne in Gassicourt, France, which represent the same game: Colin-Maillard (Blind Man’s Buff). In depictions of the ages of man, this game symbolizes youth just prior to marriage. Since both of these sets have additional imagery that is connected with this visual tradition, she believes it was chosen to represent the canonical hours that were performed daily in the choir stalls. She traces the association between the ages and the hours, first in liturgical treatises by writers such as William Durandus, then in a variety of art genres made in various parts of Europe. She proposes that since the traditions of memorizing sacred texts and meditation after communal prayers were both supported by the construction of mental images, that by the end of the fourteenth century, images related to these texts and prayers were carved on choir stalls as mnemonic devices.\textsuperscript{204}

**Popular Culture** Some recent work on marginalia has placed it within the broader popular culture through the influence of Mikhail Bakhtin’s book, *Rabelais and His World*, which was first translated into English in 1968.\textsuperscript{205} In this examination of forms of folk (or popular) culture in François Rabelais’s writing, Bakhtin posits that the comic, which

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{203}Ibid., 132–135.
\item \textsuperscript{205}Dale, “The Monstrous”, 263.
\end{itemize}
he believes is most fully expressed in carnival where traditional hierarchies are upset, creates its own world in defiance of official culture.\textsuperscript{206} Although Bakhtin’s focus is on language and literature, many of the popular sources he examines, such as mystery plays and the Feast of Fools,\textsuperscript{207} have also been associated with the imagery seen on choir stall marginalia, as discussed earlier. In Nurith Kenaan-Kedar’s study of a series of sculpted corbels in twelfth-century Romanesque churches in France, she identifies compositional features that distinguish the corbels as marginal art, separate from the “official” art of the main program. The compositional model of the latter is hierarchical and symmetrically oppositional, whereas the marginal art is neither hierarchical nor symmetrical and has no contrasting parallels. Moreover, these distinctions are seen despite the fact that the same visual sources were used to design both the corbel series and the official program, and the same patrons and artists were most likely involved in their creation. Similar to certain literary genres of the period that parodied ecclesiastical high culture, the artists transgressed visual codes to parody official art.\textsuperscript{208} Michael Camille has been the most important proponent of examining popular culture’s influence on medieval art.\textsuperscript{209} In \textit{Image on the Edge}, he focuses on the types of liminal cultural spaces that have been identified by anthropologists as ambiguous: book and needlework margins, church exteriors, capitals and misericords. While he takes a Bakhtinian approach in his investigation of these margins of medieval sites of power, in contrast to Bakhtin and Kenaan-Kedar, he views these spaces as integrative, rather than subversive: he argues that although marginal art may parody and problematize authority, it does not undermine it. Rather, the inversion of marginalia is illusory: by looking carefully at both cultural practices and marginal spaces it becomes evident that oppressed groups remain marginalized.\textsuperscript{210} Given their

\textsuperscript{206} Mikhail M. Bakhtin, \textit{Rabelais and His World} (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 58, 88.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{209} Dale, “The Monstrous”, 263.
\textsuperscript{210} Camille, \textit{Image on the Edge}, 10, 127.
form and some of their themes, it is not surprising that the notion of the upside-down world is frequently evoked in research on misericords as can be seen in book and article titles, such as *The World Upside-Down: English Misericords* and “Physical and Social Inversions in the Topsy-Turvy World”. Although the theme is related to Bakhtin’s understanding of carnival, it is only in the wake of Camille’s approach to marginal imagery in *Image on the Edge* that research on choir stall marginalia has begun to use Bakhtin’s theory of popular culture. An example of a study that uses an explicitly Bakhtinian interpretation is Wendy Armstead’s examination of depictions of women with books on English misericords. She construes the imagery on misericords as carnivalesque: rank is suspended, norms of decorum are ignored and unconventional rules apply. While she acknowledges that the interpretation of this imagery is complex and can be uncertain, she asserts that many of these images were probably intended to be ironic, such as those that show women reading, since they display the opposite of what was considered to be true, a strategy that was used to ensure that contemporary viewers would understand the irony. Therefore, rather than viewing these images as records of the social history of the people, she believes that such motifs were deliberately appropriated from the popular culture by those who commissioned and used these stalls, an elite that freely moved between official and unofficial culture. By displaying such images on the seats of an educated ecclesiastical community, the power and status of this group was emphasized, which in turn reinforced the social bond among its members.\(^{211}\) Thus, much like Camille, Armstead concludes that carnivalesque imagery on choir stalls preserves the status quo, rather than being subversive.

**Future work on choir stall marginalia**

While the interpretative strategies seen in the literature on book and architectural marginalia have also been applied to studies of choir stall marginalia, more frequent use of strate-

gies beyond the traditional symbolic interpretation would benefit this body of research. Moreover, the use of multiple interpretative strategies is best suited to the type of images seen in marginalia.

Marginal imagery tends to be less stable iconographically than religious narratives and icons, and therefore should not be rigorously classified according to a single interpretation. Furthermore, much like imagery in the main program, although a marginal image might have a specific or dominant connotation, at times it might be deliberately multivalent, perhaps allowing the image to fulfill multiple aims, much as Seidel’s analysis of the capital depicting fighting cocks at the cathedral in Auxerre illustrates. There have been studies of choir stalls showing that some of the imagery was consciously chosen because of its multivalency, but such studies tend to focus on the main program, such as Charles’ investigation of the choir stalls for the former church of St. Francis in Geneva. With so little written documentation about how choir stall imagery was planned, it is difficult to recover specific references to multivalency, but popular cultural pursuits of the early modern period, such as impresa and, beginning in the early sixteenth century, emblem books, suggest a widespread interest in multivalency at this time. A concern with multiple interpretations is also seen in writing of the period. For example, the poetry of fifteenth-century rhéthoriqueurs, such as Jean Molinet, was characterized by a deliberate plurality of voices as well as the frequent use of puns. Finally, a reference to imagery designed by Lorenzo Lotto for intarsia covers of the panels on the choir stalls at Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo on the Italian Peninsula shows that a well-educated artist with a keen interest in the language of imprese and hieroglyphics might deliber-

\footnotesize

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{212} Camille, \textit{Image on the Edge}, 36.
  \item \textsuperscript{213} Charles, \textit{Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle}, 47.
  \item \textsuperscript{214} Seidel, \textit{Legends in Limestone}, 132–135. See previous section for more discussion of her analysis.
  \item \textsuperscript{216} For a history of the emblem, see John Manning, \textit{The Emblem} (London: Reaktion Books, 2002).
  \item \textsuperscript{217} Paul Zumthor, “From Hi(story) to Poem, or the Paths of Pun: The Grands Rhétoriqueurs of Fifteenth-Century France,” \textit{New Literary History} 10.2 (1979): 253–258.
\end{itemize}
ately create a visual program that does not allow a precise interpretation. Although each intarsia design was commissioned to be related symbolically to the Old Testament scene on the panel it covered, in a letter to the patrons of the stalls, written on February 10, 1528, Lotto is forced to explain, “As for the designs of the covers you should know that since they do not follow any written programme, they must be interpreted by imagination.”\footnote{Circha li disegni de li coperti, sapiate che son cose che non essendo scritte, bisogna che la imaginazione le porti a luce.” Quoted and transcribed in Peter Humfrey, \textit{Lorenzo Lotto} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 90, 171n10.} While most marginalia would not have been as carefully thought out as Lotto’s panel covers or a main religious program, given the less codified iconographical meaning of marginalia, multiple approaches to interpretation are necessary to reveal possible examples of deliberate or even subconscious multivalency.

Marginalia is more dependent on context in comparison to religious narratives and icons;\footnote{Camille, \textit{Image on the Edge}, 36.} therefore it is essential that any material used to interpret it is, as much as possible, coincident in time and space. It is particularly important when trying to analyze imagery based on an inherited repertory because the original rationale for such imagery may have begun to dissolve or have even disappeared by the time of its creation,\footnote{Janson, \textit{Apes and Ape Lore}, 164.} and new meanings may also have accrued.\footnote{Pearson, “Mermaid in the Church”, 120.} Therefore, contemporaneous evidence is necessary to support the validity of any ascribed symbolism. To take a simple example, the bear has traditionally been used to represent the vice of anger,\footnote{Charles, \textit{Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle}, 39.} but in the absence of any written documentation, the stance and demeanour of the bears on the sixteenth-century choir stalls at Bern Minster make it unlikely that the artisans were referring to such an interpretation when they carved four hand rests depicting bears (e.g., Figure A.109). Furthermore, the larger context, that the bear represents the city of Bern, is important in understanding its appearance in the main church. Marginal imagery should also be seen within the context of the images that surround it; however, in much
of the marginalia literature such imagery is frequently shown and analyzed discretely.\textsuperscript{223} To return to the Bern example, a close look at the other hand rests reveals that most of them represent playful putti or tradespeople at work (e.g., Figures A.110 and A.111),\textsuperscript{224} rather than other symbols of vice, which supports the interpretation that these bears do not represent anger. By examining all of the different kinds of marginal imagery on a given set, much as Sandler suggests for book marginalia studies,\textsuperscript{225} rather than a specific image or a particular type, two other problems that have been identified in the literature may also be averted. First, there is the bias that is also seen in the broader marginalia literature that focuses on secular imagery and to a large extent overlooks the body of religious marginalia.\textsuperscript{226} Second, it is more difficult for researchers to make sweeping or exclusionary statements when forced to deal with diverse imagery. Casting the research net as widely as possible will allow for many, even contradictory, interpretations.\textsuperscript{227}

**Examining marginalia: Two short case studies**

To conclude, I will briefly discuss both the central and the marginal imagery on two sets of choir stalls that contain a wide variety of non-religious imagery and suggest some of the different approaches that might be useful to understand both the diverse range of marginalia that they display, and the ways in which the centre and the margins interact. I chose to discuss the set at Ulm Minster (1469–1474) because it is one of the rare examples where much of the disparate, apparently marginal imagery actually forms part of the main iconographical program. As a contrast, many sets could have been chosen that exemplify how difficult it is to reconcile the diverse imagery on choir stalls within a single program. I chose to discuss the set at Plasencia cathedral (1497–1508) because

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{223} Smith, “Liminal Limning,” 92.
\item \textsuperscript{224} Mojon, Das Berner Münster, 377–379.
\item \textsuperscript{225} Sandler, “Study of Marginal Imagery,” 43.
\item \textsuperscript{226} Smith, “Liminal Limning,” 94.
\item \textsuperscript{227} Sandler, “Study of Marginal Imagery,” 43.
\end{itemize}
despite the presence of multiple intersecting programs, many images cannot be subsumed in any of them.

**Ulm**

At Ulm Minster, most of the apparent marginalia on the choir stalls is actually part of the overall program, although at first glance the themes depicted on the hand rests, misericords and roundels under the seats are wide-ranging and not obviously connected with the central iconography. It is only the fantastical imagery on the canopy that remains peripheral.

The main program is arranged hierarchically, both by height and by orientation, presenting a Christian worldview. Originally, the central tabernacle on the north side of the choir likely displayed a statue of Christ the Redeemer, while that on the south side probably had a statue of the Virgin (Figure A.112), thus establishing height as one aspect of the hierarchy and the north, or male side, as the other. In churches at this time, men and women sat separately, most commonly along a north/south divide. This division was also seen in painting and sculpture, such as Crucifixion groups, where John the Evangelist was placed to the north of the cross and the Virgin to the south. In the canopy, below the tabernacles, busts of male saints are shown on the north side, and busts of female saints are shown on the south side, except for two male saints who appear in the most prominent positions on the south side: St. Luke is depicted under

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228 For a discussion about how height and orientation, among other factors, reflected the hierarchy of those who used choir stalls, see chapter Construction of Space, section Institutional Space.


230 In the absence of a fixed site, left versus right was another common way that gender was oriented, but due to the ambiguity of the point of reference, this distinction is more complicated. For more discussion of spatial division by gender, see Corine Schleif, “Men on the Right–Women on the Left: (A)symmetrical Spaces and Gendered Places,” in *Women’s Space: Patronage, Place and Gender in the Medieval Church*, ed. Virginia Chieffo Raguin and Sarah Stanbury (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 2005).
the easternmost and St. Cosmas under the westernmost arch (Figure A.113).\textsuperscript{231} Old Testament figures populate the dorsals, the next level down: male heroes and prophets are ranged on the north, and female prophets, heroines and virtuous wives on the south side (e.g., Figure A.114). On the stall ends, important pagans appear with their texts that foretold the birth of Christ: philosophers, such as Terence, are on the male side (e.g., Figure A.115), while sibyls occupy the female side. All of the figures are identified through attributes and frequently through accompanying texts. In contrast, the carvings on the arm rests, misericords and the roundels below the seats display the unorganized miscellany frequently shown in these marginal spaces. Closer inspection, however, reveals that they are restricted to several categories: people, animals, hybrid animals and plants, and that as ordinary inhabitants of this earthly world, they actually form the lowest level in the overall hierarchical scheme (e.g., Figure A.116). Even as the lowest members of the earthly realm, they are nevertheless part of the Christian story.\textsuperscript{232} Thus, unlike most choir stall programs, the diversity of the marginalia has been deliberately integrated into the main program. There is also marginalia that does not fit in to this program, however. Hybrid creatures appear on some of the arches in the canopy at the same level as the saints (e.g., Figure A.117), and are therefore completely out of place within the hierarchy. The presence of such outlandish creatures on the outside of an arch framing a saint suggests instead an apotropaic function. The stance of these creatures supports this interpretation: much like guard dogs, they show their vigilance by lifting their heads and gazing outward in search of possible outside danger to the saint. Thus, even in a program that is carefully designed to integrate traditionally marginal imagery, some of the images may remain on the margins.

\textsuperscript{231}It is presumed that the four corners were reserved for the four Evangelists in the original design. The substitution of St. Damian and St. Cosmas for St. Matthew and St. John was likely made in response to the outbreak of the plague in Ulm in 1473 since these marytred brothers were the patron saints of doctors. Furthermore, the church housed relics of both saints. Vöge, \textit{Jörg Syrlin der Ältere}, 43.

Plasencia

In contrast, the Plasencia cathedral stalls not only display a greater diversity of marginal imagery, they also display many more sub-programs and a greater diversity of groupings, making them difficult even to describe in any systematic way. People, angels and animals, alone and in scenes, identifiable and enigmatic, populate the dorsal frames, misericords, hand rests, and canopies.

The main program consists of thirty-eight full-length marquetry figures of apostles and saints who are shown on the upper dorsals (Figure A.9), with a central carving of Jesus performing the miracle of walking on water, which is displayed on the bishop’s stall (Figure A.118). Dozens of scenes from the Old and New Testaments, as well as from the Apocrypha, are carved below the marquetry panels on the upper dorsals and above the seat backs on the lower dorsals (Figure A.119), although a number of them are now missing. Among the Old Testament stories that are prominent are that of Lot and his wife, Gideon and the Fleece, and Abraham sacrificing Isaac (Figure A.120). Linked to the central carving and supported by scenes from the Infancy and the Passion, as well as by the myriad saints standing between the dorsals and in the canopy, the main religious theme appears to be faith.

To protect this faith, there are many marginal images that seem to serve an apotropaic function, such as the foliage frames that surround the marquetry figures of saints and teem with cavorting putti, wildmen and animals (e.g., Figure A.21). Similarly, the figures on the stall ends, which consist primarily of aggressive animals (e.g., Figure A.121) and people fighting, serve to protect. In the upper canopy, a row of angels display the instruments of Christ’s Passion (e.g., Figure A.122), while angels playing instruments in the lower canopy create a barrier by lying down, head to head (e.g., Figure A.123), both groups also evoking heaven and the performance of the Divine Office.233 Other

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233 See chapter The Construction of Space, section Heavenly Space for more discussion.
marginalia is harder to interpret: who are the figures populating the bishop’s tabernacle (Figure A.124)? What about the small figures being engulfed by vegetation who peer out from under the lower canopy (Figure A.125)? And the hand rests and misericords on this set are so varied that they are difficult to summarize, but include hybrid creatures, tradespeople and New Testament figures, (e.g., Figure A.126) Old Testament scenes, proverbs and fables (e.g., Figure A.127).  

No matter where one looks, imagery abounds, central, marginal, sacred, secular, reassuring, frightening, multivalent, contradictory.

The bewildering diversity of the Plasencia imagery is emblematic of the challenge faced by choir stall scholars as they try to put some kind of order on the exuberant marginal images found on choir stalls that William Hope considered, “so miscellaneous, it is useless to classify them.” Such chaos helps explain why much of the work on this marginalia has focused on single images. But as Henry Hudson pointed out, it is exactly this “delightful medley of subject matter” that makes choir stall marginalia so appealing. And perhaps this appeal was one of the effects being sought by the nuns and monks and canons who provided their carvers with only broad suggestions for the marginal carvings. During the long hours spent in the choir, they would have had the leisure to visually explore the myriad imagery, perhaps to refocus wandering thoughts, perhaps to alleviate boredom. This diverse imagery warrants greater engagement with the literature on other marginalia, not only to provide a better model for research on choir stall marginalia, but also to better integrate this fascinating imagery into the larger art historical discourse.

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234 For a complete list of arm rest and misericord themes, see Block, Medieval Misericords Iberia, 11–15.
235 Hope, Windsor Castle, 443.
236 Hudson, Manchester Cathedral, 39.
237 See chapter The Construction of Space, section Immersive space for more discussion of the problem of boredom.
Chapter 3

Made to Order:

The Construction of Space

By the thirteenth century, choir stalls had acquired their definitive layout: two long, straight, parallel rows of attached seats across from each other on the north and south sides of the choir, each joined to one or more “return” seats on the west side facing the high altar. For large communities, there may have been as many as three rows of seats at different heights (e.g., Salisbury Cathedral), while only a single row was built in charterhouses (e.g., Figure A.128) or if the community was small (e.g., Figure A.129).

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2The unique arrangement of the Plasencia stalls with very short north and south rows and a longer row on the west side is due to the space where they were eventually set up. Although the stalls were built for the new cathedral in Plasencia, the set was completed long before the edifice and was not installed until 1565. Since the layout of the nave did not allow the stalls to occupy two bays, the stalls were reconfigured to fit into a single bay. An examination of the upper stall corners shows evidence of modifications: there is no room for the corner seat on the Epistle side and the seat on the Gospel side is unusable. Cano-Cortés and Gómez, La sillería de coro de la Catedral de Plasencia, 12–14.

3Except for the choir stalls at the Charterhouse of Miraflores (for which there is very little information) and the set at Ulm Münster (which has not been altered, but does appear to have been constructed for the performance of the divine office), there is evidence that the rest of the sets in my study that do not currently have return stalls (Freising, Kalkar, Aarschot, Hooogstraten, Dordrecht, Leuven) have had their original returns either removed or reconfigured. The unusual diagonal arrangement of the Fribourg returns is due to the belated decision to have two doors instead of a single central entrance through the choir screen. See chapter Choir Practice, section Financial matters, subsection Unexpected expenses for more information.

But the great majority of sets had two levels (e.g., Figure A.130). The connected backs, or dorsals, of the rear seating, which was crowned by a canopy, formed a partition that rose metres above the floor to complete the ensemble. When the choir abutted the sanctuary,\(^5\) as it did in most Western European churches at this time,\(^6\) a screen connected the two edges of the return stalls to close off the west side of the choir from the nave, while the choir remained open on the east end to allow celebrants access to the sanctuary, which was usually elevated above the choir by a step or two (e.g., Figure A.131); sometimes this border was demarcated by a low barrier, such as the balustrade that separates the Amiens choir from the sanctuary.\(^7\) Less commonly, the choir was situated further west in the nave and was separated from the sanctuary by the crossing, a disposition seen mainly in Spanish cathedrals.\(^8\) In such cases, the return stalls were usually joined in the centre by the bishop’s throne, and an openwork metal screen sealed off the east side of the choir, while still allowing direct visual and responsorial access to ceremonies taking place in the sanctuary (e.g., Figure A.132). Another less frequent configuration was to have the choir elevated in a gallery. This layout occurred most often in dual-purpose monastic churches where strict separation from the laity was required. This solution was

\(^{5}\)Presbytery and sacrarium can also be used to mean sanctuary in the sense of the part of the church around the high altar. Since all three words have multiple meanings, I have chosen to use one of them, sanctuary, to refer to this space. Choir is also an ambiguous term, but I have decided to use it over chancel to refer to the liturgical choir: the space reserved for the clergy to perform religious services. This usage draws attention to the fact that the term choir stall comes from the earlier meaning of choir rather than the later, but today more prevalent, sense of choir as an organized group of (usually lay) singers. For chancel, see: www.oed.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/Entry/30424

for choir, see: www.oed.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/Entry/32118

for presbytery, see: www.oed.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/Entry/150624

for sacrarium, see: www.oed.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/Entry/169543


\(^{6}\)Kroesen, Staging the Liturgy, 166.

\(^{7}\)This balustrade originally had a gate, which was removed in 1689. Lemé-Hébuterne, Les stalles d’Amiens, 35.

\(^{8}\)Spanish monastic choirs were often in the same position, but since laity did not have access to the space between the sanctuary and the choir, these two areas were not enclosed by discrete barriers. Kroesen, Staging the Liturgy, 166–167.
used in particular in the German-speaking lands for female monastics. The gallery was normally built at the west end of the church with the stalls ranged conventionally along the north, west and south sides, thus maintaining a visual and auditory connection with the high altar (e.g., Figure A.133). At the same time, the elevation and a balustrade at the eastern edge of the gallery acted as a visual screen to the lay congregation in the nave below.

In all three configurations, a separate microarchitectural space was created within the larger architectural space of the church. In galleries (e.g., Figure A.134) and in small churches (e.g., Figure A.135), the stalls might hug the stone walls of the building; in larger churches, particularly if there was an ambulatory, or if the choir was in the central nave, the stalls and their enclosure normally formed an independent structure, which was often delimited by the church’s piers (e.g., Figure A.1). Both responsive to a particular site, yet adaptable to any site, the space encompassed by choir stalls was constructed to fulfill a range of intersecting needs, some of which varied greatly from church type to church type, some of which changed significantly over time. In prominent churches and cathedrals, the need for impressive spaces fit for magnificent ceremonies might be pivotal: the distance between the north lower stalls and the south lower stalls at the cathedral in Amiens, France is approximately 7.3 metres and it is almost twenty metres from the eastern to the western edge of the wooden stalls.

Intimate spaces more conducive to promoting community cohesion might be preferred in monastic settings, as seen at the

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10 Kroesen, *Staging the Liturgy*, 237–238. For images with wider views of the altar from the gallery choir at Santo Tomás, see Fig. 164 and Fig. 165, PL. 118 and PL. 119.
11 See, for example, Fig. 166: a photo of the sixteenth-century choir gallery in the Hieronymite monastery church in Belém, Portugal taken from the nave in ibid., PL. 120.
12 These dimensions are based on the ground plan of the surviving set of 110 stalls illustrated in Fig. 6 (B). Note that eight of the seats (four upper, four lower) were removed from the returns, presumably when the fourteenth-century jube was removed in 1755. Fig. 6 (A) shows the original placement of these missing return seats. Abbot Edouard Jourdain and Canon Duval speculated in their 1844 publication *Les clôtures de la cathédrale d’Amiens* that the last north and south stalls at the east end originally had lower stalls, but there is no physical evidence. Whether or not these two substalls existed, the length of the choir stall set has not changed. Tracy and Harrison, *Choir-Stalls of Amiens Cathedral*, 22–26, 46.
Chapter 3. Made to Order: The Construction of Space

secluded Cistercian abbey church of Hauterive in the former Savoy (Figure A.136). This choirstall set of fifty-four seats is approximately eleven metres long, but more significantly, the distance between the lower north and south rows is only about 2.5 metres.\textsuperscript{13}

While there are frequent, but brief, references in the literature on choir stalls about how their form sustained bodily needs (focussed primarily on accounting for the invention of misericords) and performative needs (focussed mainly on explaining the set up of two facing rows of seating), a closer examination of the space created by choir stalls reveals additional important factors at play. Institutional goals were also highly influential in the organization of the space, as were Christian conceptions of sacred spaces that exist outside of time and space. However, many spaces created by choir stalls in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were greatly altered by Reformers or Counter Reformers in response to powerful criticism of the Western church in the early sixteenth century. And, over the centuries, many sets of choir stalls have been moved, damaged or destroyed under a variety of other circumstances.\textsuperscript{14} Therefore, few choirs today give us a true sense of how this space was originally configured, let alone used. As Henri Lefebvre points out, space is socially constructed and therefore closely tied to a particular society in a particular historical period.\textsuperscript{15} How are we, then, to understand the pre-Reformation space, its use and its significance? Monastic and capitular rules provide some of the motivation for the design of stalls that was established early on. Historical changes and documents from the medieval and early modern periods give insight into some of the spatial concerns seen at the time when fitted wooden choir stalls were first built, as well as in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when those I focus on were made. Modern theorists of space

\textsuperscript{13}Catherine Waeber, \textit{L’Abbaye Cistercienne d’Hauterive FR} (Bern: Société d’Histoire de l’Art en Suisse, 1990), 9. The measurements are based on the plan of the abbey, but the small scale makes it difficult to be precise. While the width is constrained by the piers of the mid-twelfth-century church, the church would have been built with plans for the original choir stalls in mind, so the narrow choir was evidently considered desirable by the community at that time.

\textsuperscript{14}See Introduction for more information on some of the historical events as well as accidents of nature that have affected many choir stall sets.

help enlarge the scope of observations about how this space was designed to support and control communal as well as individual use, how this space was actually experienced and how some people were able to subvert official usage to satisfy personal desires. Finally, certain theological matters have implications for how this space was conceived.

**Evolution of choir stalls**

In most of the earliest Christian churches in the West, the seating for clergy was located to the east of the altar in the apse. Semi-circular benches, often in several tiers, were constructed along the apse’s curved wall. In the centre of the benches was a raised throne for the bishop or abbot, depending on the type of church. This apsidal arrangement, called a *synthronon*, reflected the organization of the Roman basilica, which was used as a model for the early church. The bishop or abbot occupied the place where the presiding judge had sat in a basilica during court proceedings, while the rest of the religious community filled the wooden or stone benches that had originally been designated for the assistant judges.\(^{16}\) This type of seating continued to be used until at least the Romanesque period (e.g., Figure A.137).\(^{17}\) Today, when seating for the clergy is thus located to the east of the high altar, the space is referred to as a *retrochoir*.\(^{18}\) Around the beginning of the ninth century, however, an ultimately widespread change in church layout increased the separation between the apse and the transept in newly built churches, resulting in a larger space at this juncture.\(^{19}\) More space began to be allocated to the choir, particularly in monastic churches.\(^{20}\) The altar was moved deeper and deeper into the apse, eventually displacing the apsidal seats, and the seating for clerics

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was relocated to the front of the sanctuary.\(^{21}\) It was also in the ninth or tenth century that the celebrant began to face east during mass.\(^{22}\) There are no written ecclesiastical directives to explain these spatial shifts, but a number of social factors and liturgical changes seem to have contributed to the evolution. Heribert Reiners postulates that the architectural change came first at the beginning of the ninth century, and that because it happened during a time of expansion of the monastic population, the larger area between the transept and the apse offered monasteries the increased space they needed to accommodate their growing numbers.\(^{23}\) C. A. Ralegh Radford notes that the change in England has been linked with the development of the cult of relics and the housing of reliquaries in the sanctuary; in churches where relics remained housed the in the altar or the crypt, the synthronon survived much longer.\(^{24}\) Friedrich Möbius contends that in male monasteries the change, which was established by the tenth century, was related to the growing significance of the private mass that was overseen by an increasing number of monks who were also priests and who wanted a special place that reflected their social status.\(^{25}\) Elizabeth C. Parker associates these internal rearrangements with an increasing separation between the clergy and the laity that began in the Carolingian period with the transformation of the celebration of the eucharist from a communal rite to a representative action made by the priest on behalf of the congregation.\(^{26}\) In cathedral churches, Alain Erlande-Brandenburg links the new form and placement of the choir with the imposition of a quasi-monastic life on canons in the Carolingian empire. This change

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\(^{22}\) This orientation was ubiquitous by the twelfth century. Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic: Architecture and Identity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 202.


in capitular practice started in the mid-eighth century, based on the Rule written by Saint Chrodegang, the bishop of Metz.\footnote{Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, “Sanctuaire et chœur des religieux après la réforme de Chrodegang,” in Los coros de catedrales y monasterios: arte y liturgia, ed. Ramón Yzquierdo Perrín (A Coruña, Spain: Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza, 2001), 45.} The bishop borrowed large sections from the sixth-century monastic Rule of Saint Benedict,\footnote{The Chrodegang Rules: The Rules for the Common Life of the Secular Clergy from the Eighth and Ninth Centuries, (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 3.} and the new practice supplanted the earlier secular office, which was significantly different, in particular much shorter, than the monastic office.\footnote{Jonathan Black, “The Divine Office and Private Devotion in the Latin West,” in The Liturgy of the Medieval Church, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan and E. Ann Matter (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), 55.} Although the original layout with a retrochoir never disappeared completely in the Western church,\footnote{There were some fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century choirs that were built behind the altar, such as the one constructed in 1505/7–9 by Donato Bramante at Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome. Howard and Moretti, Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice, 104. However, the only ones that I know of were on the Italian Peninsula, which is outside my area of study.} by the thirteenth century, the location of the choir to the west of the sanctuary had become the norm.\footnote{Erlande-Brandenburg, “Chœur des religieux”; Radford, “Bishop’s Throne,” Reusens, Eléments d’archéologie Chrétienne.} Choir stalls had acquired their classic flat-bottomed U-shape by this time (e.g., Figure A.129),\footnote{Hilger, “Die Stadtpfarrkirche St. Nicolai”, 117.} in contrast to the semi-circular basilican benches. However, the development of this definitive layout remains uncertain. While it shares the function and some features with the nave enclosures that appeared in Rome in the twelfth century (e.g., Figure A.138), which were no doubt constructed in response to the renewed obligation for all Roman clergy to perform the divine office,\footnote{Elaine DeBenedictis, “The ‘Schola cantorum’ in Rome during the High Middle Ages,” (1984): 147. Despite being known as scholae cantorum today, these enclosures were not built specifically for the papal liturgy, but rather for the performance of the hours. The group of papal singers, known as the schola cantorum, was not associated with the nave enclosure until the sixteenth century and the term was first used to refer to the furnishing in the eighteenth century, 137–138.} there are also notable differences: the enclosure walls are significantly lower; moveable benches rather than fixed stalls are used for seating; there are entryways on all four sides; the ambo and pulpit are integrated into the arrangement. Further research is required to
determine whether the Roman arrangement was novel or was based on earlier northern liturgical layouts.\(^{34}\)

**Performatve space**

“Lord, you will open my lips, and my mouth will proclaim your praise.”\(^{35}\)

Beginning in the early Christian period, liturgical rituals were enhanced by careful shaping of the architectural environment.\(^{36}\) Throughout the middle ages, as ecclesiastical doctrine evolved, church architecture, furnishings and iconography were adapted to reflect new concerns, while still remaining rooted in earlier traditions.\(^{37}\) As one type of liturgical furnishing, choir stalls were specifically designed to support the communal performance of the divine office (officiis divinis),\(^{38}\) and there appear to be several important characteristics of the performance that led to the ultimate design of this furnishing. I will therefore take a functionalist approach in this section, examining the liturgical activities that choir stalls were intended to sustain and how the performance of those activities, or certain aspects of them, seems to be reflected in the definitive form of choir stalls, as well as in variations that are seen in some sets.\(^{39}\)

\(^{34}\)Ibid., 152—159.


\(^{36}\)Parker, “Architecture as Liturgical Setting”, 245.

\(^{37}\)Ibid., 293.

\(^{38}\)Today the rite is officially called Liturgy of the Hours. Black, “Divine Office and Private Devotion”, 41n1.

\(^{39}\)It must be kept in mind, however, that liturgical practice cannot completely explain the design of choir stalls. First, there is little documentation that connects liturgy and choir stalls. Liturgical sources, for example, do not often refer to church architecture or other church features. Roger E. Reynolds, “Liturgy and the Monument,” in *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings*, ed. Virginia Chieffo Raguin, Kathryn Brush, and Peter Draper (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 63. Similarly, references to liturgical practice are rare in contracts or other records related to choir stall design and construction (see chapter Choir Practice for a discussion of the types of considerations that are mentioned in documents related to choir stall construction). Thus, most of these connections can only be inferred from scanty and indirect evidence. Furthermore, any correlation between liturgical practice and architectural or microarchitectural design is necessarily complex: both changed over time, both had a variety of influences upon them, and both could be adapted to particular circumstances. Peter Draper,
about the performance of the divine office and how it developed until the early modern period, when the stalls I am focussing on were built. Next, I will discuss four specific performative aspects that the choir stalls were presumably intended to support, and how support for these activities appears to have been realized in choir stall design.

The divine office was one of the two central rites of the Western medieval church along with the mass. The series of prayers that became the divine office developed gradually among early Christians and initially not all of the eight hours were performed daily, and in non-monastic churches, not in all churches nor by all clerics. In Rome, the hours performed during the day became part of the secular office around the sixth century, but this expanded secular office only become widely practiced a few centuries later in the Carolingian Empire. By this time, the essential structure of the divine office in the Western church had been established, based on the organization of the divine office as formulated by the sixth-century Rule written by Saint Benedict, which originally had been just one of several rules being followed in Western Europe. Throughout the middle ages, the structure remained constant, although the repertory continued to be adapted to meet the needs of a variety of communities. Chapter XVI of Benedict’s Rule specified eight hours of prayer: Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline and Vigils, motivating these eight hours by quoting two verses of Psalm 118/119. The first seven hours reflect the psalm writer’s devotions in verse 164: “I praised you seven times a day,” while the nighttime performance of Vigils exemplifies the practice described in verse 62: “I rose in the middle of the night to confess your name.”

41 Chrodegang Rules, 15.
42 Rule of Saint Benedict, vii.
44 Ut ait propheta: Septies in de laudem dixi tibi. Qui setenarius sacratus numerus a nobis sic implebitur si matutino, primae, tertiae, sextae, nonae, vesperae, compleitoriique tempore nostrae servi-
which Benedict also termed *opus Dei* (the work of God) and *horas* (hours), was the recitation of all 150 psalms in the Old Testament Book of Psalms over the course of each week. The rite included many other musical items as well: antiphons, hymns, canticles, responsories and versicles. The duration and scheduling of the divine office was not the same every day, or even every week. Benedict described variations to the ceremony that were to occur on certain days of the week (e.g., chapter XI. How Vigils Should Be Done on Sundays), on festivals (e.g., chapter XIII. How Vigils Should Be Done on Saints’ Feast Days) and in different seasons (e.g., chapter X. How the Night Office Should Be Done in Summertime).

The seasonal differences were particularly acute at more northerly latitudes, since between Easter and November, Benedict specifies a very brief break after Vigils before starting Matins at first light.

While the early desert monks in Egypt performed almost continual prayer and psalmody, with the spread of the monastic movement in the fourth century, this strict regime was significantly reduced. Under Saint Benedict, only about three and a half hours of a monastic’s day was devoted to daily communal prayer. As the fundamental work of monastic life, the amount of time spent performing the opus Dei increased again over time. By the year 1000, for example, the performance of the divine office had become the principal occupation of monks at the influential Benedictine monastery of Cluny in Burgundy. In fact, after the tenth century, as many as ten to twelve hours of daily

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45Ibid., 261n27.
48A Pascha autem usque ad supradictas Nobembres, sic temperetur hora ut vigiliarum agenda parvissimo interwallo...mox matutini, qui incipiente luce agendi sunt, subsequantur.” ibid., 56.
prayer, depending on the status of the day, had become common.\textsuperscript{52} In the eleventh century, the Little Office of Our Lady was added to the performance of the divine office by many monastic orders; by the end of the century it had become part of Saturday’s communal recital for virtually all monastic and secular clergy.\textsuperscript{53} Some subsequent orders, such as the Cistercians in the twelfth century, reacted against the increased length of the divine office as part of their critique of the elaborate ceremonial life that the Benedictines had developed;\textsuperscript{54} they abbreviated some parts of the repertoire and eliminated portions that they considered unnecessary.\textsuperscript{55} Nevertheless, elaborations of and accretions to the office continued. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, many feasts were added to venerate new saints, such as Thomas Becket. Concurrently, devotion to the Virgin Mary expanded; chants in her honour were added to the end of Compline,\textsuperscript{56} and the number of Marian feasts multiplied.\textsuperscript{57} Many votive offices, such as the Office of the Dead, were also added to the hours performed by monastics and secular clergy by the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{58} Therefore, choir monks and nuns of this period had little time for anything besides saying the divine office, and criticism of its excessive length was common. The Benedictines (also known as the Black Monks) in the southern part of England officially removed certain accretions in their Statutes of 1277 despite some opposition from both inside and outside the Order.\textsuperscript{59} Canons, too, appear to have been overwhelmed based

on visitation records and synodal constitutions concerning the acceptable performance of the hours.\textsuperscript{60} Even the reform by Innocent III at the Fourth Lateran Council left many dissatisfied,\textsuperscript{61} such as the Franciscan friar Salimbene de Adam of Parma, who complained in the chronicle he wrote some seventy years after the council, “In 1215 Pope Innocent III held a solemn council in the Lateran, at which he corrected and reorganized the ecclesiastical service, making his own additions and rejecting undesirable accretions. Yet even up to the present day, some flaws remain, as many men say, and it is indeed true. For it contains much that is superfluous, which causes boredom rather than devotion...”\textsuperscript{62}

It was during this period after the Fourth Lateran Council that the classic form of choir stalls was established. As mentioned above, seating had been used for the performance of the hours from an early period, despite later claims to the contrary.\textsuperscript{63} In chapter VIII of the Rule, where Benedict sets out how the night offices should be performed, he describes a series of readings and responsories that take place while everyone is sitting on benches,\textsuperscript{64} and in chapter XI, he stipulates that each monk must take his place on the benches according to rank.\textsuperscript{65} In the previous century, John Cassian, whose writings strongly influenced monastic rules such as Benedict’s, explained the need to sit during

\textsuperscript{60}For some of the complaints, see Van Dijk and Walker, \textit{Origins of Modern Liturgy}, 21–25.
\textsuperscript{63}In Francis Bond’s book on misericords, he asserts that sitting in church was prohibited until at least the eleventh century, citing Peter Damian. Francis Bond, \textit{Wood Carvings in English Churches: Misericords} (London: H. Frowde, 1910), 208. This spurious claim is frequently repeated in the literature on misericords, presumably based on a misunderstanding of the title of Peter Damian’s text \textit{Contra sedentes tempore divini officii}; Damian was actually arguing about when the community must stand up. Gabriela Signori, “Umstrittene Stühle: Spätmittelalterliches Kirchengestühl als soziales, politisches und religiöses Kommunikationsmedium,” \textit{Zeitschrift für historische Forschung} 29 (2002): 190.
\textsuperscript{64}“...sedentibus omnis in scavmis, legantur cissim a fratibus in codices super analogium tres lectiones inter quas et tria responsoria cantentur.” \textit{Rule of Saint Benedict}, 58.
\textsuperscript{65}“...residentibus cunctis dispositae et per ordinem in subselli,” ibid., 64.
parts of the offices: “They render the aforementioned canonical number of twelve psalms easier by a kind of bodily rest: all, except he who has stood up in their midst to sing the psalms, sit upon low benches while observing these rites of assembly according to custom and follow the voice of the singer with the utmost attention. For they are so wearied by the fasts and the work of the entire day and night that, unless aided by this sort of rest, they could not get through this number while standing.”66

Since nearly all of the divine office was performed by the community from their choir stalls,67 it is not surprising, given the prolonged hours required to perform the divine office in later centuries, that better physical support, such as armrests, was added. But aspects of the design point to support for the actual performance as well. There were four main activities that monks, nuns, canons, canonesses and friars performed as part of the divine office: prayer,68 singing, reading and ritual movement. Support for these actions, or certain aspects of them, seem to have been built into the prototypical set of choir stalls. In some cases, there were several different ways to integrate such support and some of these variations appear to have been regional. It must be always kept in mind, however, that functional devotional aspects were at times overridden by other concerns, whether practical, such as the footprint of an already existing church; aspirational, such as a community’s desire to attract pilgrims; or aesthetic, such as the preference for an earlier model. Also, as mentioned before, the performance of the offices varied both within the day (each hour was different), during the week (Sunday was a special day) and over the liturgical year (ferial, festal and Lenten days), and the choir stall space had


67 Wright, Music and Ceremony, 101.

68 Since praying is primarily associated with body posture, I discuss support for prayer in the section Corporeal space: Moulding the body, below.
to be adaptable to the varying music, accoutrements, participants and processions that accompanied these fluctuations.

**Acoustic space**

Singing made up the greatest part of the monastic and secular clergy’s day, since most of the divine office was sung.\(^{69}\) Furthermore, the psalms that they sang were replete with aural images.\(^{70}\) Consequently, the acoustic features of the choir stalls where the hours were performed must have been of interest to the community performing them, particularly since, after sight, hearing was considered the most important sense during the middle ages.\(^{71}\) In early modern Europe, however, there are few documents prior to the seventeenth century that discuss the relationship between music and room acoustics.\(^{72}\) It is therefore not too surprising that no explicit concern for acoustic design appears in any known documents related to the construction of stalls. The acoustics of a set of choir stalls, let alone those of an entire church, would have been difficult to perfect before the end of the nineteenth century when the physics that was necessary to design the acoustics of even the simplest room according to sound scientific princi-

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\(^{69}\) Provisions were made for monastics and friars to perform the hours privately when travelling. In such cases, the hours would have been recited rather than sung. Andrew Hughes, *Late Medieval Liturgical Offices: Sources & Chants* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 1996), 3.


\(^{71}\) ibid., 38. The debate as to whether vision or hearing was the most important of the five senses was a popular topic for centuries. Nevertheless, hearing almost always came in second, despite being considered superior in certain respects. For more about the debate and a seemingly unique exception written by Charles de Bovelles in the sixteenth century, see Thomas Frangenberg, “Auditus visu prestantior: Comparisons of Hearing and Vision in Charles de Bovelles’s Liber de sensibus,” in *The Second Sense: Studies in Hearing and Musical Judgement from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Charles Burnett, Michael Fend, and Penelope Gouk (London: Warburg Institute, 1991).

While architects in the early modern period were familiar with ancient theories of acoustics from Vitruvius’s writings, these theories were related to the construction of outdoor theatres; once a roof is added, however, the acoustics of a structure are altogether different. Nevertheless, there were deliberate attempts by sixteenth-century architects to design churches according to acoustic theories of the day. One such example was Jacopo Sansovino’s church for the hospital of the Incurabili in Venice, which was begun in 1565, but is no longer standing. From the medieval period, there are no indications that complete buildings were designed according to ancient acoustic principles, but users did devise whatever practical solutions they could to adapt the acoustics of a given space to its purpose. Furthermore, there are some instances of architectural planning that were clearly intended to enhance aspects of church acoustics. For example, openings in the west front of some thirteenth-century English cathedrals are believed to have been designed to amplify the singing and trumpet-playing that took place during certain ceremonies that were prescribed by the English Sarum rite, such as the Palm Sunday procession.

Singers who are part of church choirs today have a concern for audience that would not have been shared by all users of choir stalls or for most performances that took place in choir stalls in the early modern period. Although the addition of outside musicians on special feast days, which had become common at this time, was no doubt intended to impress a wide audience, the performance of the hours was fundamentally intended for

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76 It was destroyed in 1831. Deborah Howard, “Introduzione,” in Architettura e musica nella Venezia del Rinascimento, ed. Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2006), 17.
77 Baumann, Music and Space, 23.
monks, nuns, canons, canonesses and friars to fulfill their Christian duty. Nevertheless, in many churches in which the offices were performed, worshippers outside the choir might have been listening as part of their own devotional observances. Even enclosed female monasteries might regularly have had an outside audience since convent churches often functioned as parish churches as well, particularly after double monasteries were discontinued in the later middle ages. In fact, as the only place to hear women sing sacred music at this time, some convents capitalized on this rarity: the Venetian convents of San Zaccaria and Santa Maria delle Vergini deliberately attracted potential patrons to listen to their singing. Under these circumstances, good acoustics that enhanced the nuns’ voices would have been considered advantageous. Even when there were no outside listeners, however, it would always have been important for members of the community to hear clearly the voices of their fellow singers during the performance of communal devotion to ensure that their singing was harmonious and in unison, and thus fitting as worship. An examination of the characteristics of churches, choir stalls and the music performed there in the early modern period provides some clues about the sonic experience and the ways in which choir stalls were constructed that would have influenced this performance, whether the resulting acoustics were deliberate or not. This last point must be taken into account when evaluating the relationship of specific aspects of design to concerns about sound since there are so few contemporary references to acoustic issues.

A recent review of aural architecture (e.g., concert halls) that was built at different times in a variety of cultures shows that issues unrelated to acoustics are often of equal or

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79 Asad, “Medieval Monasticism,” 172.
80 A variety of strategies were used to prevent visual contact between the nuns in their choir stalls and parishioners while still allowing both groups at least auditory access to the mass. For more details, see Hamburger, “Art, Enclosure and the Cura Monialium,” 112.
82 Kate Lowe discusses this strategy, among others, that these convents used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to maintain and augment their power and prestige. Kate Lowe, “Power and Institutional Identity in Renaissance Venice: The Female Convents of S. M. delle Vergini and S. Zaccaria,” in The Trouble with Ribs: Women, Men and Gender in Early Modern Europe, ed. Anu Korhonen and Kate Lowe (Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2007), 140–141.
greater importance even when constructing space that is primarily intended for musical performances. In great Gothic cathedrals, for example, the vast ground plan, the use of stone as a building material and the creation of soaring vaults fulfilled a variety of needs, but the resulting acoustic space with its long reverberation time was probably unintentional. The review also indicates that when a particular type of space is repeatedly used for the same purpose, the acoustics associated with that space may eventually be perceived as customary, which may in turn influence the types of sounds and music that are expected there. Since partially enclosed wooden choir stalls have been used since at least the twelfth century for the performance of the divine office, the possibility of such reciprocal effects must be recognized when discussing the acoustic space that they created.

Today, to help ensure that the various types of music and speech associated with specific traditions of religious observance can be understood and appreciated by celebrants, performers and worshippers, modern technological innovations are often recommended to fulfill the diverse and sometimes competing requirements for music and speech, large and small performances, and the potentially varying locations of both audiences and sound sources. However, acousticians who design worship space also make many suggestions that do not rely on current technology, which are therefore relevant to earlier times. The creation of ideal acoustic conditions involves a number of factors, some of which vary with the characteristics of the sound being produced: adequate sound distribution, noise control, the elimination of acoustical faults, such as echoes and points of high or low

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85Ibid., 362–363.
sound intensity (so-called hot spots and dead spots), and, most importantly, an appropriate reverberation period for the specified sound. Reverberation period is the amount of time that a sound persists in a space after the source of the sound has stopped.\textsuperscript{88} Reverberation affects fullness and clarity of sound. When there is a reverberation period of more than several seconds, as is common in large medieval and early modern churches, the tonal sound will be rich, but clarity decreases, especially at faster tempos, due to the prolongation of the notes, which overlap and merge.\textsuperscript{89}

There are many aspects of choir stall construction that affect acoustic conditions, resulting in a different, potentially better, acoustic environment for the singing of the divine office than that of the larger church. Following an overview of design issues, a discussion of some of the findings from recent studies of acoustic spaces in medieval and early modern churches helps corroborate and complicate conjectures about choir stall acoustics in the early modern period.

Probably the most influential aspect of choir stall construction on the acoustic space is the separation of the stalls from the larger building with wooden or stone partitions because enclosure affects all of the factors associated with the creation of ideal acoustic conditions. Whether the set was completely enclosed (e.g., Figure A.139), largely enclosed (e.g., Figure A.140) or solidly enclosed on three sides only (e.g., Figure A.132), the resulting smaller space facilitates sound distribution, since the sound does not have to travel as far. The smaller volume of space also lowers the probability of echoes, hot spots and dead spots, while the uneven surfaces of the carved dorsals and canopy that form the inside of the enclosure discourage the production of standing waves between the parallel sides. Reverberation period is also altered by the volume of space: a smaller space will, other things being equal, have a shorter reverberation period than a larger one;\textsuperscript{90} therefore, clarity would be better inside the stall enclosure than in a large, open

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., 8, 24.
\textsuperscript{89}Orlowski, “Acoustics and Architectural Form”, 46–48.
\textsuperscript{90}Riedel, \textit{Acoustics in the Worship Space}, 22–24.
church. Finally, disturbing sounds that are produced outside the choir are diminished by 
the high partitions: the more an enclosure breaks the line of sight between a sound and 
a hearer, the more such sound is muted.\textsuperscript{91}

Material is another important factor that modifies acoustics. While much earlier sets 
were often made of stone, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century choir stalls were normally made 
of wood, a material which is less reverberative. However, wood only tends to absorb low 
frequency sounds if it is thin or if there are air pockets between it and the masonry, 
so panelling does not always change the sound appreciably.\textsuperscript{92} Therefore, choir stalls 
constructed against walls (e.g., Figure A.141) or stone enclosures (e.g., Figure A.142) 
would likely be more reverberative than a set with an independent wooden enclosure, 
such as the Manchester choir stalls (Part of the wooden screen can be seen at the edges 
of Figure A.129). Nevertheless, stone choir stalls, such as those at the cathedral in 
Albi, France, with their limestone upper dorsal panels and canopy (Figure A.143), would 
probably be more reverberative than completely wooden sets. The upper carved parts 
of the stone would tend to absorb even less sound than the lower flat stone panels, 
particularly if the panels are thin, rough or have large joints filled with softer plaster or 
mortar, all of which increase sound absorption.\textsuperscript{93} Thus, not only the type of material 
used, but variable properties of the material, different treatments and different methods 
of construction can affect the acoustics.\textsuperscript{94}

The shape of the space also influences acoustics. U-shaped stalls are better suited 
to the traditional way that psalms were sung than the earlier curved synthronon that


\textsuperscript{93}Dorothea Baumann, “Geometrical Analysis of Acoustical Conditions in San Marco and San Giorgio Maggiore,” in \textit{Architettura e musica nella Venezia del Rinascimento}, ed. Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2006), 129–130. I have not been able to find any studies about the properties of the Albi stone panels.

\textsuperscript{94}Baumann, \textit{Music and Space}, 104.
partially encircled the altar. Although the performance of choral polyphony became increasingly important in many churches in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, particularly in aristocratic or royal chapels, such as Saint George’s Chapel in Windsor, England, and at the more prestigious colleges and collegiate churches, plainchant continued to be performed daily even on the highest-ranking feasts at the most prominent musical centres. Furthermore, polyphony might be restricted. Pope John XXII’s *Docta sanctorum patrum* of 1324–1325 warned of the dangers of polyphony and recommended it only be used on the most important occasions. The performance of elaborate music was even banned in some places: according to the statutes that Cardinal Wolsey wrote in 1519, Augustinian canons in England were forbidden from singing polyphony or allowing outside singers in their choir; considered novelties, both polyphony and instruments were prohibited at the cathedral in Lyons in the sixteenth century.

Plainchant was sung in a variety of ways. Some of the psalmody was direct: everyone sang in unison; some responsorial: a soloist sang a verse with everyone joining in for the refrain; and some antiphonal: each half of the community took turns singing a verse of the psalm. Antiphonal psalm singing was performed in churches from at least the fourth century and is still normally part of plainchant performances today. The traditional two long facing ranges of stalls especially facilitate this last type of psalmody: the direct sight line between the north and south singers means that both sides can hear

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95 Erlande-Brandenburg, “Choëur des religieux,” 45.
98 How much and for how long this decree affected actual practice varied, but is often difficult to quantify. ibid., 346–347.
the opposing voices as clearly as possible,\textsuperscript{104} even in very wide choirs, such as the one in Amiens Cathedral, in which the north and south singers sit more than seven metres apart.\textsuperscript{105} The stall rows might even be staggered, as they are at Amiens Cathedral, so that shorter members in upper stalls would still have a view across the choir when standing, unobstructed by taller members in the lower stalls.\textsuperscript{106} Indeed, in the late thirteenth-century \textit{Instruction of Novices}, novices are specifically told to stand facing each other during psalmody and hymns, while at other times, they face the altar.\textsuperscript{107} Face-to-face contact helps a community maintain consistent tempo and pitch, as well as allowing visual signals that may improve the accuracy of response time. Furthermore, the disposition of symmetrical sides contributes to a balanced performance by two equally matched groups of singers, which is crucial for successful antiphonal choral singing.\textsuperscript{108} The symmetry determines that there are the same number of participants on each side, and the central throne or opening clearly indicates which half each person is in. The importance given to antiphonal singing can be seen in some contemporary practices. The north and the south sides of the choir traditionally alternated days on duty, that is, being responsible for singing first.\textsuperscript{109} In Spain, a small sign reading \textit{Hic est chorus} was hung on one side of the choir to indicate which side was leading that day (One such sign is hanging on the fifth stall from the left in Figure A.144).\textsuperscript{110} Maintaining the musical balance for antiphonal

\textsuperscript{104}Orłowski, “Acoustics and Architectural Form”, 49.
\textsuperscript{105}Lemé-Hébuterne, \textit{Les stalles d’Amiens}, 218.
\textsuperscript{107}“Hic memorandum quod quociens dicitur \textit{Venite} stabunt fronte uersus altare uersa, et in omni neupmate et omni capitulo et uersiculis et omnibus suffragis et memoris. In omni psalmodia stabunt omnes in utroque choro frontibus uerisis quilebet et contra alium et hymnis.” \textit{The Monastic Constitutions of Lanfranc}, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 204. Although this instruction manual for the novices of Christ Church, Canterbury was written well before the fifteenth century, it provides rare details about the performance of the divine office during a period when the definitive format of choir stalls developed. Furthermore, given the conservatism associated with ritual behaviour, it seems likely that performance had not changed significantly by the sixteenth century.
\textsuperscript{108}Wright, \textit{Music and Ceremony}, 322.
\textsuperscript{109}Harrison, \textit{Music in Medieval Britain}, 105.
\textsuperscript{110}Kroesen, \textit{Staging the Liturgy}, 170. There is a hook on the stall directly opposite the stall with the sign, where it would have been hung on alternate days. I was not able to examine the sign closely, so I am not sure if it is contemporary to the stalls. Both the Zamora and the Astorga sets also have a \textit{Hic est chorus} sign hanging in the choir.
singing was considered important enough that singers might be shifted if the two groups became uneven, a change which had to have disrupted the normally strict hierarchy of the seating. At Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, the relocation of one or more singers is documented on four occasions during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The presence of an overhanging canopy also altered sound. Choir stalls were frequently built with a canopy that extended out over the upper stalls (e.g., Figure A.145). In such cases, no matter how high the vaults, the canopy reflects some of the sound back down to the singers. In Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti’s study of Venetian churches, they found that when the singers all stood and sang from the upper row of the sixteenth-century wooden stalls at San Michele in Isola, the singing was directed more uniformly downwards, resulting in thinner, less reverberant sound. At the same time, the lyrics were much clearer, which would have been more helpful to the singers than a rich, reverberant sound. Although an overhanging canopy was most likely added to shelter the higher status occupants of the back row, it nevertheless had acoustic consequences.

There is also some evidence of deliberate attempts to influence choir stall acoustics: the principle of the acoustic jar was used in some choir stall constructions. According to Vitruvius, specially designed bronze or plaster jars (*echea*) were placed in specific spots in ancient theatres to influence reverberation, thus enhancing the acoustics. Similar jars have been found in several hundred medieval and early modern European churches. Modern studies have shown that their resonance would indeed increase reverberation provided that both they and the listener were in the right place, and the sound was in the

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111 See section Institutional space, below, for more discussion of hierarchy of seating.
right frequency range; analogously, absorptive containers could be positioned to prevent the development of standing waves in particular spots.\textsuperscript{117} A recent investigation of acoustic pots in the walls and vaults of French churches found a correlation between the volume of the church and the number of pots, which indicates an understanding of the cumulative effects of acoustic pots. Furthermore, many of these pots were inserted some time after the construction of the church, implying an attempt to improve the acoustics. Finally, most pots had a resonance frequency in human voice range, which would improve speech intelligibility.\textsuperscript{118} There are also documents that reflect the contemporary understanding of these devices. In 1432, it was recorded in the Chronicle of the Célestins of Metz that after observing the use of such jars in other churches, the prior of the monastery ordered some to be placed in the choir of his church to improve the singing and resonance.\textsuperscript{119} Unlike previously discussed factors, all of which might have been chosen for reasons that are not related to sound, this feature shows a definite concern with acoustics. Acoustic jars have been found in about half a dozen extant stall foundations in England. Stalls were commonly constructed above rubble that was faced with limestone blocks.\textsuperscript{120} To protect the wood from moisture damage, the substructure of the stalls might be provided with ventilation holes and placed above an air shaft (e.g., Figure A.26).\textsuperscript{121} Occasionally, jars were inserted under the desks of the stalls instead of in the foundation. A related technique is found at the Carmelite friary church of Whitefriars in Coventry. These fourteenth-century choir stalls were built above a deliberately constructed trench that is significantly larger than the type that would have been built for ventilation. Although

\textsuperscript{118}Valière et al., “Acoustic Pots in French Churches,”
\textsuperscript{119}“...frère Ode le Roy, priour de seans,...fit et ordonnoit de mettre les pots au cuer de leglise de seans, portant qu’il avait vu altepart en aucune église et pensant qu’il y fesoit melleur chanter et que il ly resonneroit plusfort.” Quoted in Rev. G. W. W. Minns, “Acoustic Pottery,” \textit{Norfolk Archaeology} 7 (1872): 96.
\textsuperscript{120}Tracy, “Choir-Stalls from Whitefriars Church,” 85. Tracy provides a list of English stalls where acoustic jars have been found so far.
\textsuperscript{121}Meurer, “Die bewegliche Ausstattung”, 113.
there are no actual jars in the foundation, the effect would have been comparable: wooden panels placed above such an air cavity create a resonance chamber when the panels are set in motion by sound.

Finally, although the stalls formed a permanent structure, acoustic conditions in the choir varied over the liturgical year. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, speech, plainchant, polyphonic singing, bell ringing and the playing of instruments were all used to accompany sacred ritual and signal important moments to the Christian community. Various acoustic embellishments had been added to the performance of the divine office over the centuries, although the louder and more elaborate instrumental music and polyphony, which might involve the addition of outside singers, were reserved for important festivals. Concurrently, such feast days were frequently marked by the use of special textiles, which increased in number, coverage and sound absorbency over time: more textiles were hung, rugs were introduced, and wool tapestries became more popular than silk wall hangings. By the early sixteenth century, both the choir and the sanctuary of some churches, such as the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, were almost completely covered with textiles on the main feast days. While art historians generally think of such textiles as significant visual markers of special occasions, there are auditory consequences associated with them that would have signalled the distinctiveness of the celebration. Another factor that affected the acoustic conditions on feast days was increased attendance: canons were more likely to be in choir because they received

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122Tracy, “Choir-Stalls from Whitefriars Church,” 85. I have not found any reference about similar discoveries on the continent.
124Kroesen, Staging the Liturgy, 159.
125Wooden pegs for hanging tapestries can still be seen on the choir stalls in Freising Cathedral: the pegs have been placed below the busts of the bishops and the coats of arms of the canons, so the textiles would only have covered up part of the tracery fields on the dorsals and the texts identifying the bishops (Figure A.146).
126Wright, Music and Ceremony, 17.
extra revenue for participation in important celebrations;\textsuperscript{127} bishops and their entourage were also more likely to be present at cathedrals on these occasions; and many lay dignitaries obtained the privilege to sit in the choir on special days.\textsuperscript{128} Both the textiles and the extra people would have decreased reverberance in the choir,\textsuperscript{129} particularly at the middle and high frequencies.\textsuperscript{130} Thus, the sound produced in most medieval cathedrals today, with their bare stone walls, has much less clarity than the sound produced in the swathed choir of the pre-Reformation period.\textsuperscript{131}

While the opening up of many choirs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the fall into disuse of choir textiles and the replacement of many choir canopies make it difficult to accurately recover the original sonic experience of the early modern choir, some of these hypotheses about the acoustics of large stone churches are born out in recent studies. Howard and Moretti’s investigation of the acoustic properties of churches in Renaissance Venice discovered that in churches like the Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, which still has its fifteenth-century wooden stalls and stone screen,\textsuperscript{132} a distinctive acoustical space in the choir is discernible. They further observed that, in general, the best acoustics for musical performances in such large churches are in enclosed spaces in the building, such as choirs.\textsuperscript{133} Similarly, William Peter Mahrt’s preliminary study of medieval English churches found that singing in the choir can actually be heard better in the nave when the choir enclosure is intact than when the choir screen has been removed;

\textsuperscript{128}María Dolores Teijeira Pablos, \textit{Las sillerías de coro en la escultura tardogótica española: el grupo leonés} (León, Spain: Ediciones Universidad de León, 1999), 38.
\textsuperscript{129}Wright, \textit{Music and Ceremony}, 17.
\textsuperscript{130}Baumann, “Geometrical Analysis of Acoustical Conditions”, 130.
\textsuperscript{131}Wright, \textit{Music and Ceremony}, 13.
\textsuperscript{132}Howard and Moretti, \textit{Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice}, 11.
\textsuperscript{133}Ibid., 200.
he speculates that the screen directs the sound upwards to the vaults, which then reflects back down into the nave.\textsuperscript{134}

\section*{Reading space}

Much of the divine office was recited from memory. In his Rule, Saint Benedict makes several references to parts of the Bible that monks were expected to know by heart.\textsuperscript{135} In the early modern period, the memorization of the psalter, which was the basis of the divine office, continued to be a requirement for members of choirs.\textsuperscript{136} Memorizing the main parts of the office was not only a spiritual exercise, but was also a practical solution to the difficulty of performing evening and night services in choirs with little light since on ferial days and minor feasts, artificial lighting was minimal. This lack of light seems to have been the main reason that the hour of Matins was ordinarily performed without books at Notre Dame in Paris.\textsuperscript{137} Bright candlelight only illuminated choirs on important days. In fact, a popular form of patronage in the late middle ages was the donation of candles and lamps to be lit on special feast days.\textsuperscript{138} Given the expense and inconveniences associated with artificial lighting,\textsuperscript{139} a choir with as much natural


\textsuperscript{135}In chapter X of the Rule, for the summer, he substitutes the three readings that are done during the longer nights of winter with a memorized excerpt from the Old Testament: “...sed pro ipsis tribus lectionibus, una de veteri testamento memoriter dicatur,...”; in chapter XII, he includes a memorized reading from Revelation as part of Matins: “...lectionem de Apocalypse una ex corde...”; in chapter XIII, a reading from the Acts of the Apostles is to be recited from memory as part of Matins on ordinary days. “…deinde lectio una apostoli memoriter recitanda...” \textit{Rule of Saint Benedict}, 62, 68, 70.

\textsuperscript{136}Wright, \textit{Music and Ceremony}, 102; Harrison, \textit{Music in Medieval Britain}, 5.

\textsuperscript{137}Various documents inform of us this practice at the cathedral. For example, in 1516, the canons complained that the clerks of Matins did not know their Common by heart, which was scandalous because when performing night services in the dark, they did not know what to sing. “Ad mandatum dominorum comparuerunt in capitulo clerici matutinarum et macioti ecclesie quibus remonstrati fuerunt defectus quos faciunt in servitio ecclesie tam diurno quam nocturno, et quod nescient corum commune cordethenus sicut tenentur adeo quod sepe de nocte dum cantatur sine lumine nesciunt cantare, ex quo generatur scandalum...” Quoted and translated from Archives nationales, Paris, LL 133, p I (January 30, 1516) in Wright, \textit{Music and Ceremony}, 327.

\textsuperscript{138}Ibid., 327.

\textsuperscript{139}Some documents from Tournai Cathedral indicate the costliness of lighting. After funeral or requiem masses, any wax left over from candles used at the service remained the property of the canons: “residuum
light as possible was desirable for daylight hours performed on low-ranking days. At Averbode Abbey in Brabant, Abbot Gerard van der Schaeft insisted on the addition of a small window on the prelate’s side to bring in more light to the choir after the new choir stalls were put in place around 1513. At Troyes Cathedral in France, after the first three choir stalls had been erected in the choir in 1528, the chapter raised concerns that a complete set with such high dorsals and canopy would make the choir too dark. No matter how bright the choir in daylight, however, the use of lamps and candles in the choir was necessary at night and on dark winter days. An assortment of lighting solutions was used, as a description of the lighting at Tournai Cathedral by the historian and canon, Jean Cousin, in 1620 suggests: he mentions various kinds of lights arrayed in a variety of ways throughout the church. Chandeliers, such as the elaborate wrought iron one made by Quentin Massys that still hangs in the Aarschot choir, were one solution (Figure A.148). Large freestanding candlestick holders, such as the four in the choir of Saint-Nicolas Cathedral in Fribourg (Figure A.31), were also used. These 1.87 metre high copper candlestick holders were probably donated in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century by Lord Hans Falck, whose name and arms appear on the holders. While...ende op des prelaets zijde sal een vensterken staen om licht daer doer te hebben.” This excerpt from Document IV is transcribed from the Archives d’Averbode, 1, reg. 4, fol. 148–149 in Mariette Fransolet, “L’auteur des stalles executées au XVIe siècle pour l’église abbatiale d’Averbode,” Analecta Praemonstratensia 6 (1930): 159.

140 Lighting in the choir continues to be a concern. When I visited the choir stalls at Hauterive Abbey, the monk who was my guide immediately pointed out the electric lighting that had recently been installed under the canopy and told me how pleased the community was to finally have sufficient light to see their choir books. See Figure A.147

141a “Item solvet officio olei pro illuminatione lampadis capelle in atrio tres francos et pro pen illuminatoris duos francos” Quoted from Obituaire, fol. 141, June 7: Cartulaire S/18 p. 5 in Jacques Pycke, Sons, couleurs, odeurs dans la Cathédrale de Tournai au 15e siècle (Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgium: Collège Erasme, 2004), 253–255.


143 The full description is quoted in Pycke, Cathédrale de Tournai, 250–251.

144 Max de Diesbach, “Stalles de la Collégiale de Saint-Nicolas,” Fribourg artistique à travers les âges 9 (1898).
extant choir stall documents do not mention candle holders as part of the choir stall design, at least some sets had them built into the stalls. At the collegiate church in Dordrecht in the Low Countries, remnants of candle holders are still present on the stall lecterns. The electric lights attached to the desking at Manchester Cathedral and at Saint George’s Chapel, Windsor might possibly have been converted from earlier candle holders (Figure A.13 and Figure A.149). At the parish church in Kalkar, a lantern on a pole has been attached to an aisle seat on each side of the choir (Figure A.76), which is another possible lighting solution. At Tournai Cathedral, the ceremonial ordinary stipulates that candles are to be placed on the upper stalls on feast days, although it does not specify whether there were candle holders that were part of the stalls. Payments to the sacristans at Paris Cathedral to carry books on feast days provides further insight into the presence of bright light on high-ranking days. While the extra lighting added to the ceremonial nature of the rites, it also served a practical function: much more of the service had to be read since some of the chants and readings for high-ranking festivals were so rarely performed that they would not have been committed to memory.

Although much of the divine office was memorized, choir books were used for some parts of the offices from at least the time of Saint Benedict. In his discussion of the night offices, Benedict specifically mentions the choir books from which the readings were drawn, as well as the presence of a lectern to support those books: “…three readings should be recited in turn by brothers from the books on the lectern…” In the early modern period, a large lectern was often placed in the centre of the choir, and although it was not part of the choir stalls themselves, freestanding wooden lecterns would sometimes be made by the same person who made the stalls, as Rodrigo Alemán did at Plasencia.

146 “candele honeste ponuntur...superius chorum circa, supra sedes dominorum;” Excerpt quoted from Tournai Cathedral archives, Manuscript 348/A, notice 1 in Pycke, *Cathédrale de Tournai*, 147.
147 Wright, *Music and Ceremony*, 327.
Chapter 3. Made to Order: The Construction of Space

Cathedral (Figure A.150). In narrow choirs, large central lecterns might be used to display enormous choir books that could be seen by members while they remained in their stalls (e.g., Figure A.74). A different solution was to construct the lecterns as part of the choir stalls. Small lecterns were attached at intervals along the rail of the substalls, such as the four Evangelist lecterns at Hauterive Abbey (e.g., Figure A.151). Some of these lecterns rotated, allowing two different books to expediently be referred to during the office (e.g., Figure A.152). The most common solution, however, was to design the backs of the substalls of tiered choir stalls to form book rests for members in the upper stalls. This arrangement is seen throughout western Europe (e.g., Figures A.153 and A.154). Single-row sets, such as those at the Cartuja of Miraflores and Manchester Cathedral, often had book desks built in front of the stalls (e.g., Figure A.155), but in northern Europe this arrangement was rarer for multi-tiered sets. Perhaps some of them had desk fronts that have not survived, but it seems most likely that some communities considered desks unnecessary for the lower-ranking members who sat in the front row. Similarly, the design of the lectern attached to the substall rail would only have been available to the higher-ranking members in the upper stalls.

The concern that members had about being able to see the choir books is evident from another part of the critique of the new stalls at Averbode Abbey that the abbot recorded after he saw the stalls for the first time (mentioned above). He complained that the upper stalls were too high and must be lowered in order for those standing in the upper row to be able to see the books well enough to read and sing along.\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{149}¨...maestre Rodrigo entallador se obligo...de fazer un facistol par el coro de la yglesia catedral...¨ Transcribed from Archivo Capitular de Plasencia, Actas Capitulares Libro 5 (1499–1513), fol. 13v–14r as document 157 in Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 412. The upper part of the lectern is a later replacement, 76. See chapter Choir Practice: The Construction of Stall, subsection Who made choir stalls? for other examples of choir stall makers who also made a separate choir lectern.

\textsuperscript{150}This lectern is the only one remaining of the two original rotary lecterns. The other lecterns are later additions. Meurer, “Die bewegliche Ausstattung”, 113.

\textsuperscript{151}¨Item de overste stoelen staen te hoech, soe sal men die laten zyncken op dat de ghene die boven staen te bat sien moegen in de boecken om te lesen ende te singen.¨ This excerpt from Document IV is transcribed from the Archives d’Averbode, 1, reg. 4, fol. 148–149 in Fransolet, “L’auteur des stalles d’Averbode,” 158.
Processional space

Processions formed part of the everyday life of monks, nuns, canons, canonesses and friars. While the highly-regulated communal life of many monastic orders was not practiced by most non-monastics or even certain orders, such as the Carthusians,\(^{152}\) merely the routine of performing the divine office together on even the most ordinary day entailed the organized assembly and dispersion of the community on eight separate occasions. Since a set of choir stalls was frequently contiguous with the sanctuary where the high altar is located, (e.g., Figure A.128), the main daily mass was also generally celebrated by the community within the space created by the stall enclosure. On special days, the entry and exit from the choir often included a different, usually more circuitous route through the choir, the rest of the church and even outside the precincts. Extant processionals and ordinals attest that these processions were quite homogeneous throughout the Western church.\(^{153}\) A description of the regular Sunday procession in English monastic churches shows the need for space within the choir: the monks began by perambulating the choir in double file before processing through the cloister and the nave; just before they re-entered the choir, they formed two lines to enter through the side doors of the rood screen and reunited within the choir in double file.\(^{154}\) Extra participants, such as musicians, the bishop and his entourage, or other visiting dignitaries might also join in special celebrations. Therefore, choir stalls had to be built to accommodate the multiplicity of processions that took place, both the quotidian and the exceptional. As a consequence, not only the space available within the choir, but also how the space was organized were important considerations when constructing a set of stalls. A spacious choir prevented various potential problems, as the anonymous twelfth-century chronicle of the building of

\(^{152}\) The Carthusians lived a quasi-hermetical life. Except on Sundays, Carthusians performed six of the eight offices alone in their cells. Allen, “Carthusian Choir Stalls,” 322.


Cluny III recounts: “Its uncluttered spaces revive the monks as if they have been released from prison, and so adapt themselves to the monastic offices that a cramped choir no longer means that different grades of monks have to be mixed together, or that positions get confused, or that anyone is made to hover outside. Every day the monks worship as if it were Easter,. . . rejoice with joy in their new freedom, not grumbling because of want of space, but rejoicing because of the ample room in which they can wander in contemplation of God without melancholy.”

The first consideration of a set of stalls would have been that there was enough seating for all participants, both regular and special. At Blaubeuren Abbey, the community of monks that never exceeded twenty-three during the fifteenth century had sixty-eight seats in their choir because they frequently accommodated visitors from other monasteries who joined in the celebration of the divine office. Monasteries in particular were bound by the Rule to accommodate visitors, as Bernard’s chapter The Reception of Guests indicates. However, all Western churches had Processions of Reception to welcome prestigious guests, suggesting that at least a few extra seats in the choir would have normally been included in the set. In some cases, separate honorary seats were part of the choir furnishings, such as a monarch’s stall or the Dreisitz at the entrance of the Ulm stalls (Figure A.156).

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159. This seating can be distinguished from the more common sedilia or celebrants’ seat by its placement at the west end of the choir, rather than close to the altar. Unlike the bishop’s or monarch’s seat, these seats do not appear to have been associated with a particular post. Deutsch, “Der ehemalige Hochaltar und das Chorgestühl”, 243–244.
Since numerous movements took place within the choir before, during and after the offices and the mass, an open area that allowed these movements in an organized and dignified fashion was also critical.\(^{160}\) Was there enough room for the assembly of musicians on feast days? Could all the readers and singers be accommodated at a central lectern? Was the distance between the north and south stalls great enough for the most elaborate ceremonial processions? A significant event, even if it only took place annually, might necessitate a much larger choir than was needed during the rest of the year. At the church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, the feast of Saint Stephen saw members of the dogal chapel of San Marco join the monks to celebrate as one in the monastic choir. In the old church, overcrowding during the ceremony had been an inconvenience. When construction began on a new church in 1566, this concern was taken into consideration in the design of the new choir and choir stalls so that the double choir of San Marco, the doge and his entourage were easily accommodated in the new space.\(^{161}\) But new choir stalls were not always constructed in a new choir: choir stalls often had to be fitted into the available area in the church. Nevertheless, there were strategies to maximize the space within the choir as can be seen by how the wooden dorsals of the (now destroyed) choir stalls were set back beside rather than in front of the stone piers at Sint-Pieter collegiate church in Oirschot, thus allocating more space to the choir (Figure A.157). At Averbode Abbey, poor planning resulted in a choir that did not provide a large enough central area for the monks and their ceremonies. When the abbot recorded a list of stall defects upon seeing the newly-completed set sometime between 1513 and 1517, he complained both in the Latin preamble and in the Dutch itemization of faults that the choir was too narrow (\textit{nimis angusta...te enghe}). The first change he insisted on was that the stalls


be pushed back to provide the required space.\textsuperscript{162} On occasion, the larger architecture of the extant choir was modified to make room for new stalls. Prior to the installation of a set of stalls for the Saint-Jacques Chapel in the cemetery of Saint-Denis in Amiens, Nicolas de Baillon was hired to cut two of the piers in the chapel to ensure that there would be sufficient space in the choir.\textsuperscript{163} On a grander scale, James Stanley, the warden of the Manchester collegiate church, significantly enlarged the choir in the 1480s, despite the fact that it had been completely rebuilt several decades earlier following its change in status from parish to collegiate church in 1421. By taking down the old arcades and replacing them with lighter, diverging arcades, almost four feet (1.22 m) was added to the width of the choir at the west end.\textsuperscript{164} Since the distance between the stone plinths of the entrance to the choir is only six feet (1.83 m) and the stalls averaged two feet one inch (0.64 m) in width,\textsuperscript{165} the extra four feet would have been crucial to ensure enough return seating for dignitaries, as well as a wide enough entrance through the choir screen for the canons’ entries and exits (Figure A.15).

Entryways were also important. The main entrance to the choir was usually located at the centre of the choir screen (e.g., Figure A.158). Much like the central portal of the church, however, it was never the only way to gain access to the choir. Multiple entrances were necessary to allow different types of entries and exits: discreet and conspicuous, everyday and special, individual and communal. In churches with a tripartite jube, such as the late fifteenth-century jube in Aarschot (Figure A.159),\textsuperscript{166} the lateral entries to either

\textsuperscript{162}“...ut patet intuentibus stalla quippe sunt numis angusta unde particulares sequuntur defectus: In den yersten den choer is te enghe daer om moet tgestuelte achter waerts gedrongen worden nae zijnen eysch.” This excerpt from Document IV is transcribed from the Archives d’Averbode, 1, reg. 4, fol. 148–149 in Fransolet, “L’auteur des stalles d’Averbode,” 158.

\textsuperscript{163}The payment to Nicolas de Baillon on June 3, 1555 in the accounts of 1554–55, GG 604, fol. 32 is recorded but not transcribed from the Archives de la ville d’Amiens in Georges Durand, “Le cimetière Saint-Denis à Amiens,” Bulletin de la Société des antiquaires de Picardie XXXII (1927): 291.

\textsuperscript{164}Hudson, Manchester Cathedral, 9–16.

\textsuperscript{165}Ibid., 196.

side of the central opening were used for the exit and return of processions, as Tournai Cathedral documents illustrate. In churches with ambulatories, there were normally entrances to the north and the south of the choir enclosure from the ambulatory. At Albi Cathedral, the north door, which was closest to the sacristy and the cloister, was used during regular daily offices. In smaller churches without ambulatories, entries led to side chapels (e.g., Figure A.142, Figure A.160) or the sacristy (e.g., Figure A.161). In nave and gallery choirs, entryways were limited to the perimeter of the stall enclosure. To maintain the illusion of a complete enclosure behind the stalls and to allow the opportunity for less conspicuous entries and exits, these choirs often had “hidden” doors cut in to the stalls. The Zamora set has two doors on the north and south ends of the return stalls that look like part of the dorsals when they are closed. They are subtly signalled by simple basket arches that contrast with the elaborate trilobe arches seen on the other dorsals (e.g., Figure A.162). Similarly, the Astorga set has camouflaged doors behind the easternmost aisles to the upper stalls on the north and south sides of the stalls. In this case, the depiction of a bust below the arch instead of a full-length figure signals the distinction (e.g., Figure A.163). Since gallery choirs were usually built against an outer western wall, it would not be possible to construct the main entrance on the west side of the choir. Nor could the entrance be on the east side where the balustrade overlooking the nave is located. Therefore, the more elaborate main doorways had to be located along the north or south perimeter of the gallery (e.g., Figure A.164), where concealed doors were included, as well (Figure A.165).

Entry ways were considered important enough that they might affect the plan of the choir. The decision to have two lateral doors instead of a single central door in the new

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167 Pycke, Cathédrale de Tournai, 139–140.
168 Biget, Sainte-Cécile d’Albi : sculptures, 24. For photographs of the north and south entrances, see page 61.
choir screen at Saint-Nicolas in Fribourg necessitated structural changes to the choir as well as to the new choir stalls. Since this decision was made after the set was almost complete, it resulted in added expense.\textsuperscript{170} A mason had to be hired to scrape one wall and pier of the choir to allow enough space for the installation of the second part of the choir stall set that had not yet been put in place,\textsuperscript{171} while the choir stall maker, Master Antoine, had to adjust the return stalls so that they no longer formed the traditional right angle, but rather an obtuse angle, to prevent the doors from being blocked by the terminal stalls (see Figure A.31).\textsuperscript{172}

Finally, aisles to the upper stalls were essential to orchestrate a variety of assemblies in the choir. Even small sets of stalls, such as the forty-seat set at the collegiate church in Romont, had a central aisle on the north and south sides as well as terminal entries to gain access to the twelve upper stalls (Figure A.166), even though the distance from either end of the stalls to the middle was not far (Figure A.167). In larger sets, two or three aisles punctuated the north and south lower stalls to provide even more access points to the upper stalls (e.g., Figure A.168). Gallery and nave choirs needed one or two aisles to gain access to the upper return stalls since there was no terminal for an entry (e.g., Figure A.97). At Astorga Cathedral, the position of the concealed doors directly at the top of the north and south aisles of the stalls suggests that this route was deliberately set up for smooth entries to and exits from the choir (e.g., Figure A.169). The aisles in the stalls were not designed only for communal entries and exits, however.

\textsuperscript{170}See chapter Choir Practice, subsection Unexpected expenses for more details.

\textsuperscript{171}He was paid “Pour... escourchier le mur et le pilar pour assetar la secunde partie dei formes” Excerpt transcribed from Archives de l’Etat, Fribourg, Fabrique de Saint-Nicolas, Registre des comptes, No 1a, 1464–1465, fol. 100 in Charles, \textit{Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle}, 255n7.

\textsuperscript{172}“Item ensi comme maistre Anthon scelun lordonnance de messrs avoit fait et pose lovaige dez formes pour cloure le chour de lesglise seulemant a une porte, et depuix ledit ouvraige se doit faire a duez portes, scelun lordonnance de messrs,... ledit maistre Anthon a desmande pour tout le dit ouvraige XXVII florins de Rin et lesdits messrs lez ly on oultroye enclo ce que ledit maistre Anthon doit oster icelle closon et poser lez crosses a sex missions,...” Transcribed from Freiburg, Staatsarchiv, Kilchmeister Rechnung, 1463/64, fol. 80 in Rott, \textit{Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte}, 313.
They also allowed readers and musicians to move efficiently between their seats and the central area of the choir at different points in the service.  

**Immersive space**

Performing the offices was an arduous task. Substantial amounts of music and text had to be learned by heart. While much of this material would be performed regularly, both minor and major variations occurred during the annual cycle of the liturgy, requiring careful attention to the season, the day and the time of day. Since the performance was a communal activity, attention also had to focus on the other members of the choir, what they were performing, when they were performing and how they were performing (e.g., tempo). Therefore, unlike certain rote activities, members had to concentrate for long periods to ensure a faultless, harmonious performance of the hours. Once the basic material had been committed to memory, which was usually a requirement before joining a community, the two greatest difficulties that members faced during the long hours in the choir were distraction and boredom. The design of choir stalls helped alleviate the first of these hindrances, while the rich imagery they displayed provided members with an appropriate way to stave off boredom.

**Protection from distraction**

Although isolated, single-purpose monastic churches that were not on a well-travelled pilgrimage route and did not house important relics might have been able to preserve the quietude conducive to concentration during the performance of the hours, most churches in this period were bustling, noisy places that fulfilled a variety of needs for a variety of people. In addition to the performance of the divine office and the celebration of high

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175 For example, many French cathedrals had statutes that stipulated which parts of the liturgy had to be memorized before a man was allowed to serve in the choir. Wright, *Music and Ceremony*, 326.
mass, rites were carried out in side chapels, individuals made private devotions, people venerated relics, and many other activities, not all of them religious, might also have been taking place at any moment within the church.\footnote{176} Albrecht Dürer observed in his diary during his visit to Antwerp in 1520 that the Church of Our Lady was so huge that many offices could be sung at the same time without any of them being disturbed.\footnote{177} Yet, the size of the church was not always adequate to accommodate so much activity taking place simultaneously. At the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, up to 120 daily masses said at the many side chapels were carefully scheduled so that they would not disrupt the canons’ performance of the hours in the choir.\footnote{178} Despite vast churches and careful schedules, choir enclosures were also crucial to avoid the many distractions and disturbances in the rest of the church, both visual and auditory.\footnote{179} If members could not see what was happening in the ambulatory or nave, they were less likely to be distracted by it. And, as noted above, sound is muted when there is no sight line between a sound and a hearer.

Given the variety of activities conducted by diverse people that took place in most churches during the early modern period, not only protection from distractions outside the choir, but protection from interruptions inside the choir was also crucial. A decree from the Synod of Angers in 1423 indicates that the prohibition of laity from the choir was due at least in part to the disruption they might cause. After prohibiting lay people in particular from being in the choir during divine offices and from sitting at an altar while masses are being celebrated elsewhere, the final sentence alludes to the type of disruption their presence may cause, specifically that they must not be positioned between

\footnote{176}{See chapters Singing from the Same Choir Book: The Construction of the Margins and Preaching to the Choir, section The cultural poaching of choir stalls for more discussion of the range of activities that took place in churches in the early modern period.}

\footnote{177}{"Item unser Frauen Kirchen zu Antorff ist übergross, also dass man viel Amt auf einmal darinnen singt, dass keins das andrer irrt." Lange and Fuhse, \textit{Dürers Schriftlicher Nachlass}, 116.}

\footnote{178}{Cited from LL 246-249, Archives nationales, in Wright, \textit{Music and Ceremony}, 116. Unfortunately, Wright does not include the date range of these books.}

\footnote{179}{Hudson, \textit{Manchester Cathedral}, 3.}
the singers and the altar.\textsuperscript{180} In the early sixteenth-century dispute between Sir Richard Sacheverell and George Gray, the dean of Newarke College, Leicester, one particular incident that disturbed the dean while he celebrated vespers was the conspicuous presence of two of Sir Richard’s servants standing at the entry of the choir reciting evensong. The servants defended themselves, asserting, “We stand here neyther to face nor brace but to serve God as othr men have been won to doo.” Sir Richard’s wife, Lady Hungerford, further defended them by adding “I have seen men comme into the Kinge’s chapell and other greate chapells and noo matter made off yt,” but her next words show that she was aware of and perhaps complicit in the servants’ disruptiveness: “And as well may they do this as you to be from service hunting and come home at midnyght.”\textsuperscript{181} Recurrent complaints about the central processional door that was added to the León choir in 1529 show that it was not only outsiders who could be disruptive.\textsuperscript{182} The canons were dissatisfied with the doorway because it allowed low status people, such as choir boys, to repeatedly enter and exit the choir, as well as for laity to walk into the middle of the choir, both of which disturbed the canons’ performance of the divine offices.\textsuperscript{183} On

\textsuperscript{180} IX. Prohibemus insuper in & sub eisdem poenis, universis & singulis, potissimé laïcis, maribus & feminis, ne dum divina in eisdem ecclesiis celebrantur officia, intra cancellum ecclesiae residere, sedere, seu se diu tenere, ac etiam dum missae celebrantur, ad altare in quo missa celebrabitur, se jungere seu ad latus, aut in superiori ejusdem se tenere, & inter psallentes & ipsum altare se ponere praesumat.” Transcribed in \textit{Thesaurus novus anecdotorum}, ed. Edmond Martène and Ursin Durand (Paris: Bibliopolarum Parisiensium, 1717), 526.

\textsuperscript{181} The quotations are transcribed from a manuscript dated 1525 in the Registry of the Bishop of Lincoln in A. Gibbons, “Notes on an Episcopal Visitation of the Newarke, Leicester in 1525,” in \textit{Reports and Papers Read at the Meetings of the Architectural Societies of the Counties of Lincoln and Nottingham, County of York, Archdeaconries of Northampton and Oakham, County of Bedford, Diocese of Worcester, and County of Leicester}, (Lincoln, UK: James Williamson, 1887), 444.

\textsuperscript{182} Kroesen, \textit{Staging the Liturgy}, 235.

\textsuperscript{183} “...porque la puerta del coro que sale a la nave mayor, estando abierta es ocasión para que con más facilidad se salgan por ella los que están en el coro y los muchachos y acólitos y otros personas de poca autoridad toman ocasión de entrar y salir muchas veces, y los seglares se entran por ella hasta medio coro y estorban los oficios divinos,...” Transcribed from Archivo de la Catedral de León, Libro de Visitas, 1579, 1587, 1603, 1617, 1634 y 1649. Doc. 10.718 Fol. 25v. in María Dolores Teijeira Pablos, “La configuración del conjunto coral leonés: La sillería del coro,” in \textit{Arte, función y símbolo. El coro de la Catedral de León}, ed. María Dolores Campos Sánchez-Bordon, María Dolores Teijeira Pablos, and Ignacio González-Varas Ibáñez (León, Spain: Ediciones Universidad de León, 2000), 81n2–83n2. Although this document is several decades later than the period discussed in this thesis, there is no reason to believe that similar complaints did not begin at the time that the doorway was added in 1529.
November 17, 1603, the canons finally came to a consensus to close the gate in the door of the antechoir to prevent entries and exits during liturgical celebrations.\textsuperscript{184}

Latecomers were also distracting to the performers. To minimize disruption, latecomers were not allowed to take their normal place in the choir. Rather, the Rule stipulates that they either take the last position or some other place that the abbot has designated.\textsuperscript{185} By having a latecomer take the last place, or some similarly out of the way spot, the added visual and aural disruptiveness of having the person walk through the central part of the choir, and if in the upper row, mount the stairs and sidle along to his or her stall while the rest of the community was trying to perform the offices was avoided. Clearly too many monks at the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Oyend and Saint-Claude in the Franche Comté had plausible excuses for their tardiness, which they used to elude punishment. In the reform statutes of 1448, it was explicitly stated that even if lateness were due to an emergency, the latecomer would nevertheless be punished.\textsuperscript{186} As the main thrust of this reform was to ensure the correct performance of the divine office,\textsuperscript{187} this stipulation seems not only to have been intended to curb delinquent monks, but also to help ensure that the environment in the choir was conducive to performing the hours properly.

\textsuperscript{184}Reported from Archivo de la Catedral de León, Libro de Visitas, 1579, 1587, 1603, 1617, 1634 y 1649. Doc. 10.718 Fol. 25v. in María Dolores Campos Sánchez-Bordon, María Dolores Teijeira Pablos, and Ignacio González-Varas Ibáñez, Arte, función y símbolo. El coro de la Catedral de León (León, Spain: Ediciones Universidad de León, 2000), 188.

\textsuperscript{185}See section Institutional space, subsection Maintaining discipline, below, for a transcription of this sanction and more discussion of this punishment.

\textsuperscript{186}Cited from Statuta Monasterii S. Claudii autoritate Nicolai V edita, 41 in Paul Benoît, Histoire de l’abbaye et de la terre de Saint-Claude (Montreuil-sur-mer, France: Imprimerie de la Chartreuse de Notre-Dame du Prei, 1892), 153.

\textsuperscript{187}For more on this reform, see Chapter Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity, section Proclaiming Identity.
Alleviating the tedium of the Te Deum

In a series of three treatises written by the Parisian chancellor, Jean Gerson, between 1423 and 1426, he tells an anecdote about a monk being asked what a monastic’s most difficult task is: fasting, performing the night office or self-mortification. The monk responds that it is none of these, but rather the constant repetition of continuous chant. Given the long hours spent in the choir singing the psalms every week of every year, this response is hardly surprising. How did people manage this difficult endeavour over many decades? Various complaints and reforms in the medieval and early modern periods suggest some of the ways that members sought to avoid or at least alleviate the tedium of this onerous task. One of the most obvious solutions was to absent oneself from the choir, and absenteeism was certainly a problem at this time. Few documents beyond general complaints exist to indicate how high the rate of absenteeism actually was among monastics, but since canons earned a portion of their income by performing the offices, an examination of church records, such as prebend accounts and attendance lists, can reveal how common this phenomenon was at a given cathedral or collegiate church. While no comprehensive studies of this type of material have been done, a few local studies provide a sense of the scale and some of the reasons behind absenteeism, some of which changed over time. Jean-Michel Matz’s study of churches in Angers found that serious concerns surrounding income (e.g., having multiple prebends) and career (e.g., studying at a university) were the main reasons that canons were absent from their stalls for extended periods. Nevertheless, it seems likely that some absences,

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189 “...nam verissima prorsus est ratio quam monachus dedit interrogatus quid esset in sua religione difficilimum an ieiunia, an vigilie, an cilicium: “Continuatio, inquit, [continuati repetitio cantus].” Tractatus de canticis, volume 2, section 1, lines 553–556 *La doctrine du chant du coeur de Jean Gerson : édition critique, traduction et commentaire du “Tractatus de canticis” et du “Canticordum au pélerin”,* (Geneva: Droz, 2005), 399. *Cilicium* is actually a hair shirt, which was worn as an act of penitence or self-mortification. I think it is being used as synecdoche in this instance.
190 Kroesen, *Staging the Liturgy*, 171.
192 Ibid., 27–32.
particularly occasional ones, were motivated by the tedium of the job. One indication of this conclusion is that members who were present at the church were not always present in the choir, as various complaints and reformatory statutes reveal. As part of the reform of the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Oyend and Saint-Claude, one of the statutes agreed upon in 1462 stipulates that the monks are not to stand or walk in either of the monastery’s naves or in front of the doors during the divine office.\textsuperscript{193} Similarly, the bishop Francisco de Mendoza in Palencia, Spain complained that many holders of benefices were leaving the choir at the beginning of an office, not to return until the \textit{Benedicamus Domino},\textsuperscript{194} which is the versicle that concluded each of the hours. The problem evidently persisted in Palencia because a decade later the chapter decided to do more than just scold: it brought in a fine of one week’s pay for beneficed canons who were discovered outside of the church conducting personal business during the offices.\textsuperscript{195}

Another way to avoid the tedium of the offices was to occupy oneself with other activities. In his introduction to an examination of life at Palencia Cathedral in the early modern period, Antonio Cabeza reports that the canons were sometimes accused of reading books, writing letters, conversing and even sleeping during the offices.\textsuperscript{196} In Paris, rulers of the choir, whose main function was to ensure the timely and accurate start to the chants of the offices, were also charged with admonishing any of their fellow

\textsuperscript{193} "Item, quod nullus prefatorum Religiosorum dum psallitur in chori, per navim Ecclesie seu Ecclesiarum, vel etiam ante prefatarum Ecclesiarum fores stare vel incedere praesumant :” Transcribed from Statuta Monasterii S. Claudii Autoritate Nicolai V Edita in César d’Estrées, \textit{Statuts du Monastère de S. Claude} (Paris: Veuve C. Guillery, 1704), 34. For more about this fifteenth-century reform, see chapter Preaching to the Choir, section Reclaiming Identity.

\textsuperscript{194} “Muchos beneficiados contentándose con quitar el bonete desde la puerta sin pedir licencia y aun sin que ge la den, van fuera del coro al principio de la ora y no buevlen fasta el benedicamus, y esto fazen a todas las horas ganándolas con no buena conciencia” Transcribed from Archivo Histórico Provincial de Palencia, Libro de Estatutos, miércoles 4 de noviembre de 1534, Capítulos del señor obispo [Francisco de] Mendoza, fol. 419 in Cabeza, \textit{La vida en una catedral}, 35n16.

\textsuperscript{195} “que de aquí adelante ningún señor beneficiado de la dicha yglesia mientras las oras salga a la plaza con sobrepelliz en ningún tienpo que sea a pasearse, contratar, o hablar con nadie ni comprar cosa alguna so pena de perder una semana.” Transcribed from Archivo Histórico Provincial de Palencia, Actas capitulares, 27 de junio de 1544, fol. 156 in ibid., 35n18– 36n18.

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 15.
members who were not participating in the offices.\(^{197}\) The discovery of hundreds of small objects and object fragments under the floorboards of a set of choir stalls at the Cistercian Convent of Wienhausen, Lower Saxony in 1953 lends support to such accusations and presumptions.\(^{198}\) All of the objects that were found range in date from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. Although papers that might have aided the nuns in their devotion (e.g., prayer cards, devotional images) are the most common, there are a variety of other objects. Horst Appuhn and Christian von Heusinger, the researchers who first examined the trove, believe that certain objects, such as relics and pilgrim badges, must have been deliberately placed under the stalls. Other objects, such as bookmarks and the many candle stubs, would have been helpful to the nuns during the offices, and presumably fell through cracks and ventilation openings in the stalls. The more surprising presence of objects such as writing and sewing paraphernalia (e.g., letters, thimbles)\(^{199}\) suggest that not all of the nuns were always attentive participants in the choir: much like the accusations levelled at the Palencia canons, some of them seem to have endured the long hours in choir by distracting themselves with quiet, unobtrusive activities such as correspondence and needlework.

A collective solution to the long hours in the choir was to speed up performance. Despite the Bible's and the Rule's injunction to "Sing psalms sagely,"\(^{200}\) various reforms testify to a tendency for communities to race through the prayers and chants of the hours to get them over with as quickly as possible. At Notre Dame in Paris, a new statute in 1408 stipulated: "Psalmody must be sung slowly and solemnly with each word distinctly pronounced, making a pause in the middle of the verse, not starting the next before the

\(^{197}\) Wright, *Music and Ceremony*, 100.


\(^{199}\) Appuhn and Heusinger, "Der Fund in Kloster Wienhausen," 157–163.

end of the previous verse.” While the freedom that capitular communities enjoyed during the time that they were not in choir might have given canons more incentive to rush, slapdash performances also occurred in monastic settings. A comparable statute to perform the hours slowly with gravity and proper devotion, while clearly articulating all of the words was part of the reform at the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Oyend and Saint-Claude in 1462.

In contrast to the monotony of the everyday vocal work, however, the contained space of the early modern choir offered a rich visual field for members of the community. Unlike earlier sets that generally had simpler, sparser, repetitive, mainly geometric carving, such as the fourteenth-century stalls in Rothenburg ob der Tauber in Franconia (Figure A.170), most choir stalls of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries displayed abundant, complex, diverse imagery, figural and non-figural, geometric and vegetal, for members to meditate upon and refresh themselves during the long hours in the choir (e.g., Figures A.171 and A.172).

On the most important festivals, the stalls were further enriched with colourful choir tapestries that were arrayed along the stalls above the heads of the community.

The iconography displayed on choir stalls could fulfill a variety of purposes. The large, varied structure allowed multiple programs as well as many independent images. But fundamentally, the main program represented the community that was using the stalls, whether the particular community, (e.g., the cathedral of Freising and its long line of bishops: Figure A.173) or the larger Christian community (e.g., the Life of Christ:}

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201 “Item, psalmodia debent tractime et morose cantari singula verba pronunciando distincte et in medio versu fiat pausa; nec ante inchoetur sequens versus quousque prior finiatur.” Translated and transcribed from Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Latin 5185cc, fol. 328v in Wright, Music and Ceremony, 321–322, 348n132.

202 “...quod in choris Ecclesiarum praefati Monasterii dum psallitur in eisdem, Horae Canonicae tractim & cum debita gravitate & devotione, pronuntiative & sententialiter dicantur ; ” Transcribed from Statuta Monasterii S. Claudii Autoritate Nicolai V Edita in d’Estrées, Statuts du Monastère de S. Claude, 34.

203 An acquaintance who had performed the offices with a religious community for several years told me that tedium was certainly the most difficult aspect of the performance. She herself used the visual field to alleviate boredom.

Chapter 3. Made to Order: The Construction of Space

Figure A.174). Most commonly, male communities were represented by the Twelve Apostles paired with twelve Old Testament prophets, which is referred to as the Double Credo. The aptness of this representation no doubt contributed to its popularity: the community was continuing the apostolic tradition by promulgating the Christian message through their performance of the hours (Figure A.175).205 Daniel Hopfer’s sixteenth-century etching of a set of choir stalls illustrates this relationship: the dorsal figures have come to life, thus they are simultaneously role models for the community and members of the choir (Figure A.176). Such imagery presented the opportunity for members to meditate more deeply on their role models as well as on their own personal place in the larger Christian history, a reflection that might have motivated and sustained them when boredom or fatigue threatened. Indeed, the thirteenth-century liturgical scholar, William Durandus explains that such images, wherever they are shown in the church, are meant to encourage viewers to meditate constantly on the deeds and holiness of Christian fathers.206 The frequent inclusion of banderoles bearing citations from scripture and other sacred texts might also help refocus a wandering mind to the importance of the task at hand, such as the banderole that the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, holds with his prophecy that a descendant of Jesse shall be the Messiah (Figure A.177).207

While the main iconographic program was the most conspicuous part of the overall imagery, wherever one looks on most fifteenth- and sixteenth-century choirstalls, images abound, from the canopy (Figure A.178) to the substructure (Figure A.179), from the riser (Figure A.180) to the inside of the seat (Figure A.181). This diverse marginal im-

205 For more on the Double Credo, see section Institutional space, below. For a more detailed discussion of how communities used the iconography of choir stalls to shape and promote their identity, see chapter Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity.

206 “Generally the images of the holy fathers are either painted on the walls of the church or on the back panels of the altar, or on sacred vestments, and in other various places so that we might meditate continually, not indiscreetly or uselessly, on their acts and their sanctity.” Rationale divinorum officiorum (translation), 37.

agery on choir stalls has been analyzed and interpreted in so many ways, but for the weary eye, no doubt the myriad figures, scenes and symbols were ultimately diverting. Whether linked to the main program (Figure A.182), the patron (Figure A.183) or seemingly random (Figure A.184), whether amusing (Figure A.25) or serious (Figure A.185), easily interpreted (Figure A.78) or highly enigmatic (Figure A.44), prominently displayed (Figure A.50) or hidden in tangles of foliage (Figure A.186) or swirls of tracery (Figure A.187), there is much in the marginal imagery of the stalls to occupy or reinvigorate bored clergy.

The inventive ornament of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries might also provide relief from boredom. Compared to the non-figural work on earlier stalls, the carving is much more complex and diverse. In particular, the canopies (e.g., Figure A.188 and Figure A.59), and baldachins (e.g., Figure A.189) of choir stalls were stages for intricate three-dimensional constructions that captivate the eye. Perusal of the flat tracery patterns and vegetal designs carved on the dorsals and canopies of many sets reveals great diversity. The twenty Kalkar dorsals display nineteen different motifs (e.g., Figure A.76) and each of the thirty-two designs on the dorsals at Freising Cathedral is unique (e.g., Figure A.173). Dozens of patterns appear on the upper and lower canopies of the seventy-four-seat set in León Cathedral (e.g., Figure A.190 and Figure A.191). Some patterns appear relatively uniform at first glance, but are actually quite varied once the eye has had the leisure to explore them. The panels of tracery on the Ávila and Miraflores sets are primarily made up of mouchettes, but a comparison of individual panels reveals that they are configured in a kaleidoscope of ways (e.g., Figure A.192 and Figure A.193). As well as providing the viewer with visual stimulus during the long hours, these complex

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208 See chapter Singing from the Same Choir Book: The Construction of the Margins for a discussion of the literature on choir stall marginalia.

two- and three-dimensional designs might also have been used as aids in meditation.\textsuperscript{210} The intricacy of the structures might rekindle the bored member’s wonder. The lush vegetation might invoke God’s bounty. The perfect geometric forms in the tracery might cause the viewer to reflect on the perfection of God.

The carving on choir stalls fulfilled many purposes. Whether it was ever specifically intended to help relieve the tedium of long hours spent in the choir seems unlikely. Nevertheless, the abundance of imagery invited viewers on a journey of discovery, providing entertainment, encouraging meditation, and reminding members of their duty and vocation along the way.


corporeal space: Moulding the body

dots the novice brother dots knows that from that day forward, he will not even have control over his own body.”\textsuperscript{211}

For centuries, the benches of the synthronus were used for the performance of the divine office.\textsuperscript{212} And long after choir stalls had become ubiquitous, benches might still be provided for those who had not taken religious vows, such as choir boys,\textsuperscript{213} novices and tertaries, and as extra seating for occasional visitors.\textsuperscript{214} One rare integrated example from the sixteenth century is situated at the west end of the choir stall set in the collegiate church in Dordrecht (Figure A.194). It was used by choir boys as well as by officiants.\textsuperscript{215} More commonly, benches were built in front of the stalls. Both the eleventh-century

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{210}Kavaler, *Renaissance Gothic*, 100–101.
\item \textsuperscript{211}“...ille frater nobicius...quippe qui ex illo die nec proprii corporis potestatem se habiturum scit.” Chapter LVIII De Disciplina Susciendorum Fratrum. *Rule of Saint Benedict*, 188–191.
\item \textsuperscript{212}Radford, “Bishop’s Throne,”
\item \textsuperscript{213}Benches were not the only solution found for seating choir boys. At Amiens Cathedral, stools were attached to the front of the stalls. Although none of the stools survive, holes in the wood of the lower stalls show where they were attached. Lemé-Hébuterne, *Les stalles d’Amiens*, 60.
\item \textsuperscript{214}Tracy, “Choir-Stalls from Whitefriars Church,” 83.
\item \textsuperscript{215}Duinen, *De koorbanken te Dordrecht*, 27. It is surprising that officiants would be specially seated at the *west* end of the choir, but perhaps sitting on the benches made it easier for them to move to and from the altar than they could from their normal upper seats.
\end{itemize}
Cistercian customary, *Constitutiones Hirsauigienses*, and the twelfth-century Cluniac customary, *Consuetudines Cluniacenses*, refer to the lower rows of seating in the choir as *scamnae* (benches), while the upper rows are referred to as *formae* (seats) that fold up. A thirteenth-century example of such a configuration survives at the former Cistercian monastery church in Loccum, Germany (Figure A.195).\(^{216}\) A separate bench might also be placed in front of the stalls, as can be seen in the depiction of the Office of the Dead from about 1510-1520 in the Flemish manuscript known as the Spinola Hours.\(^{217}\) Few choir benches survive from this period,\(^{218}\) probably because most were freestanding, a format that was presumably preferred over attached benches because one or more could be brought out only when needed. In the miniature from the book of hours, the bench has been set up for the extra mourners at a funeral.

Since benches had served communities well for so long, why might there have been a changeover from benches to individual stalls in northern Europe beginning around the tenth century?\(^{219}\) And once fitted wooden choir stalls had become standard during the thirteenth century,\(^{220}\) why did the form of the individual stall remain remarkably similar over a long period and a large geography despite varying traditions and conditions? A comparison of the earliest and the latest of the stalls in my study exemplifies this uniformity. The Fribourg seating was created by Antoine de Peney between 1460–1464 in the former Savoy (Figure A.196), while the Leuven stalls were made by Mathys de Wayere in Brabant in the early 1540s (Figure A.197). In both cases, the stalls were created by successful joiners who came from towns close to the commissions and who had careers in relatively circumscribed regions.\(^{221}\) Thus, there are no obvious reciprocal

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\(^{216}\) Rudolf Busch, *Deutsches Chorgestühl in sechs Jahrhunderten* (Hildesheim, Germany: August Lax, 1928), 11, 50.

\(^{217}\) Fol. 185. This book of hours was illuminated by the Master of James IV of Scotland. The Getty has a copy of the manuscript online at: www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=4256 (accessed February 19, 2014).

\(^{218}\) Tracy, “Choir-Stalls from Whitefriars Church,” 83.


\(^{220}\) Ibid., 1.

\(^{221}\) See chapter Choir Practice for more details on both of these joiners and their careers.
or parallel external influences on their seat designs. The basic components of carved hand rests,\textsuperscript{222} generous elbow rests, curved back rests, partition sides, misericords with rounded edges,\textsuperscript{223} and fold-down seats remained customary despite considerable stylistic and iconographic differences across time and geography. Since communities performed almost all of the divine office from their choir stalls,\textsuperscript{224} it seems relevant that the shift from benches to stalls occurred during a time when the length of the office had increased significantly. What specific factors might have been brought into play in the creation and stability of this design? How can we best understand the design’s success?

**Habitus and Affordance**

Before examining choir stall use and design in more detail, I will briefly discuss two twentieth-century ideas that provide some insight into how the design of the individual choir stalls helped shape and support participants’ actions, thus accounting for the wide adoption and longevity of the design.

The first idea is *habitus*, a term defined by the anthropologist, Pierre Bourdieu, to describe a persistent, codified set of behaviours that can be adapted to any situation. These behaviours are so thoroughly acquired through social experience that they seem natural and are performed unconsciously.\textsuperscript{225} However, habitus is produced by social conditions; therefore, practices that seem natural to one social group do not necessarily seem natural to another.\textsuperscript{226} The set of behaviours includes bodily automatisms, which Bourdieu refers to as bodily *hexis*: “...a durable manner of standing, speaking and

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\textsuperscript{222}Although the Aarschot seats do not currently have hand rests, there were originally carved hand rests on the quarter circle edges of the seat partitions. It is not known when they were removed. Cumps, *De Koorbanken te Aarschot*, 44. The “false” hand rests carved in relief on the insides of the end stalls suggest that the missing hand rests were also figural. See Figure A.198 and compare with Figure A.199.

\textsuperscript{223}Except in the northwest, misericords were rarer on the Italian Peninsula, and seem to have been primarily associated with Carthusians, whose statutes explicitly mention the use of misericords. Allen, “Carthusian Choir Stalls.”

\textsuperscript{224}Wright, *Music and Ceremony*, 101.


thereby of *feeling* and *thinking*." I posit that the bodily hexis of the monastic or secular clergy was shaped by the choir stall, so that the individual’s postural responses became automatic through repetition, thus helping to create the ideal religious body with the ultimate goal of creating the ideal religious mind.

The second idea is *affordance*, a concept that was first applied to the design of objects in Donald A. Norman’s *The Psychology of Everyday Things*. Affordance refers to the properties of an object or material; in particular, it specifies how the object or material can be used, or the range of activities it supports. To limit this range of activities or to make evident what the intended activities are, a designer can add constraints to an object. Ideally, the constraints are immediately obvious to users, so that they do not have to ascertain what to do through trial and error.

**Constraining the body**

In order for an individual to participate in the performance of the Hours, four bodily postures are necessary: sitting, standing, kneeling and prostration. Within the highly orchestrated liturgy of the medieval and early modern periods, there were many rules about when, where and how to assume these postures, as can be seen in manuals for novices. In the thirteenth-century *Instruction of Novices*, which was intended for the Benedictine novices at the monastic cathedral of Christ Church in Canterbury, they are told when to recline over their desks, when to sit in their stalls, when to stand, when to sit on their misericords, when to kneel, depending on the part of the ceremony, the Hour, the day on which the service was being performed, and the stage of the novitiate.

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227 Ibid., 93–94. Emphasis his.
228 *Habitus* is the Latin translation for the Greek term *hexis*. Bonnie Kent, “Habits and Virtues (Ia IIae, qq. 49–70),” in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 116. I will use the term *habitus* because it is more general and is more widely used in discussions of Bourdieu’s work.
231 Ibid., 84.
232 Cumps, *De Koorbanken te Aarschot*, 12.
the weekday, the status of the day and the season. The ideal participant assumes these postures effortlessly and moves from one to another seamlessly as the ritual proceeds.

Looking carefully at the individual choir stall, one can see that it affords the basic ritual postures used in the divine office (e.g., Figure A.40). Seats eliminate certain bodily postures that are not part of the repertoire needed for the divine office. Just as arm rests are deliberately added to some public benches to prevent people from sleeping on them, the partitions between the stalls make it impossible to lie down. Furthermore, the partitions clearly demarcate each individual’s bodily space. While a person could sprawl on a bench and take up more space than was strictly necessary, individual seats preclude such conduct; at the same time, they ensure that an individual’s space is not encroached upon by neighbours. Thus everyone has the necessary space, but no more, for performing the office. This equity reflects the basic tenets of the shared communal life as set out in Benedict’s Rule. The curved backs, fold-down seats and hand rests indicate how to sit by providing an obvious resting place for the back, the buttocks and the hands. The back and partitions impose an upright posture while seated. While standing, the elbow rests and misericords show the individual where to position his or her body, and help keep the body erect and still. When kneeling in a lower row with no desk, the misericord provides a place to lean the upper body; otherwise, the desks in front of the seats can be used (e.g., Figure A.153). Although there are few contemporary descriptions of how choir stalls were supposed to be used, this last act is described in The Instruction of

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233”Sed hoc notandum quod secundum uarietatem temporum et dieum uariantur gestus et observantiae in ecclesia uel et locis.” (‘But it is to be noted that according to the difference of seasons and days postures and observances in church and other places are varied.’); “In fine quinti [psalmo] statim incumbat super formam;” (“At the end of the fifth [psalm] he shall straightaway recline over his desk”); “Qui dicta sedeat in stallo...”, (“When the above mentioned collect has been said he shall once more sit in his stall”); “In omni psalmodia stabunt omnes in utroque choro frontibus uersis quilibet et contra alium et hymnis.” (“During all psalmody and hymns all in both choirs shall stand facing each other.”); “In omni Gloria...sedeaut super paru sedilia;” (“At every Gloria...they shall sit and bow on their misericords”); “…ante Vesperas dicendum est Miserere dum fit genuflexio intra formas,” “...before...Vespers the Miserere is always to be said while a brother is kneeling at the desks,”) Transcribed and translated in Monastic Constitutions of Lanfranc, 200–205, 210–211.
Novices: “To lie upon a desk is when one kneeling bows over the desk with his breast upon it.”

The stall’s physical constraints also help prevent undesirable bodily contact. Although concerns about bodies touching during the performance of the divine office are not mentioned in the Rule, anxiety about keeping bodies apart in order to maintain the vow of chastity was clearly on Benedict’s mind when he described how monks should sleep: in separate beds; in a dormitory; with a candle burning all night; fully clothed; with junior members separated from one another. Although the shared hand rests had to be negotiated and the elbow rests were not always separated, the solid partitions between the seats in the choir partially isolate members from one another. No longer could an individual sit right up against his or her neighbour, whether for warmth, for comfort or to give the neighbour sly digs with an elbow. The particularly high partitions that rise above the elbow rests on the Miraflores stalls cut off almost any possible contact between seated monks, no doubt reflecting the more hermetic life that Carthusians led (Figure A.200). The partitions on the upper stalls at the Benedictine Monastery in Blaubeuren, while not extending out as far, clearly divide the hand rests, then continue upwards to prevent inadvertent arm contact when the monks were standing (Figure A.201). The fold-up seats also minimize bodily contact by allowing individuals to stand back to allow the passage of others during times in the ritual that one or more people leave and return to their seats before and after special duties (Figure A.167). Since the place where each person sits is more specifically determined, there is less chance of jostling, inadvertent touching or the need to readjust one’s position. The lowered likelihood of accidental contact and physical readjustment also affords more dignified movement within the choir.


235: “Singuli per singula lecta dormiant...Si potest fieri, omnes in uno loco dormiant...Candela iugiter in eadem cella ardeat usque mane. Vestiti dormiant...Adulescentiores fratres iuxta se no habeat lectos sed permixti cum senioribus.” Chapter XXII Quomodo Dormiant Monachi. Rule of Saint Benedict, 96—97.
Although Benedict talks only generally about behaviour in choir and his few references to body posture in the context of performing the divine office are brief and nonspecific,\textsuperscript{236} monastic and secular Rule books are clearly concerned with shaping their members’ physical as well as spiritual behaviour. In a lengthy chapter on humility, a virtue that Benedict insists monastics cultivate in order to fulfill their vows, Benedict asserts: “The twelfth step of humility is that a monk always show humility…not only in his heart but also with his body…” He goes on further to stipulate that no matter where a monk is or what he is engaged in, “…his head should be bowed down, his eyes fixed on the ground…”\textsuperscript{237} Thus, it is clear in this section that at the time that Benedict was writing, there was a belief that bodily habits support habits of mind. The idea that corporeal gestures reflect human traits and emotions has been part of Western culture since Antiquity.\textsuperscript{238} Codified in Benedict’s influential Rule as a mode of instruction, it was thus disseminated among religious communities for centuries. In many ways, early monastic and secular Rules were precursors to the books written by clerics in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries mainly to educate novices.\textsuperscript{239} In his manual \textit{De institutione novitiorum}, Hugh of Saint Victor included gestures in his definition of \textit{disciplina}, which he saw as the necessary intermediary step between knowledge (\textit{scientia}) and goodness (\textit{bonitas}).\textsuperscript{240} Peter the Chanter, a Parisian theologian writing at the end of the twelfth century, even produced a prayer manual, \textit{De Penitentia}, which included illustrations

\textsuperscript{236}e.g., “Ergo consideremus qualiter oporteat in conspectu divinitatis et angelorum eius esse et sic stemus ad psallendum ut mens nostro concordet voci nostrae.” “So let us consider how we ought to behave in the sight of the divinity and his angels, and stand to sing psalms in such a way that our spirits and voices are in harmony.” Chapter XVIII De Disciplina Psallendi. \textit{Rule of Saint Benedict}, 90–91.

\textsuperscript{237}Duodecimus humilitatis gradus est si non solum corde monachus sed etiam ipso corpore humiliatatem videntibus se semper indicet, id est in opere Dei, in oratorio, in monasterio, in horto, in via, in agro, vel ubicunque; sedens, ambulans, vel stans, inclinato sit semper capite, defixis in terram aspectibus…” Chapter VII De Humilate. \textit{Rule of Saint Benedict}, 52–53.


designed to show the reader the seven postures of private prayer that the author described.\footnote{Richard C. Trexler, “Legitimating Prayer Gestures in the Twelfth Century: The De Penitentia of Peter the Chanter,” History and Anthropology 1.1 (1984): 98–100. Trexler’s subsequent book on this text reproduces all of the images from the eight extant illustrated manuscripts. While some figures are surrounded by a border, none of them is shown within a spatial context, such as using a choir stall or bench. Richard C. Trexler, The Christian at Prayer: An Illustrated Prayer Manual attributed to Peter the Chanter (d. 1197) (Binghamton NY: Centre for Medieval, Early Renaissance Studies, 1987).} Rules also influenced the secular manners books of the early modern period, such as Desiderius Erasmus’s popular book of manners for children, *De civilitate morum puerilium* (1530). Bodily posture continued to be an important topic of manuals in the seventeenth century as Hermann Roodenburg shows in his examination of the emphasis on ideal physical comportment and the importance of bodily memory on both the actual and the depicted body in the Dutch Republic.\footnote{Herman Roodenburg, The Eloquence of the Body: Perspectives on Gesture in the Dutch Republic (Zwolle, Netherlands: Waanders, 2004).} Although the intended audiences were different, Rule books and manners books were primarily concerned with teaching people to so thoroughly integrate specific behaviours deemed appropriate and respectable by a certain segment of society that the behaviours became unconscious (habitus), thus marking their users as successful members of the group.

One way that bodily habits become established is by repeatedly interacting with the same objects. However, the resulting habits are not necessarily the most appropriate, nor are they necessarily performed in an efficient or elegant way.\footnote{Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 94.} Performance of the divine office was important, and it was therefore crucial to perform it properly. In *De Penitentia*, Peter the Chanter likens an imperfect gesture executed during prayer to words of a prayer that are not enunciated: ineffective.\footnote{Trexler, “De Penitentia of Peter the Chanter,” 111.} With respect to habitus in the choir, the affordance of the choir stall shaped the ideal bodily posture of its user due to the constraints that the stall imposed. Once people were assigned stalls, they had no hesitation about where to place each body part, whether standing, sitting, kneeling or prostrate. No matter which posture was necessary for the ongoing ritual, they could...
appropriately, and (eventually) automatically, position their body in space. This bodily automaticity frees up the mind for the more important mental and spiritual aspects of the performance of the divine office.

Supporting the body

It is also worthy of note that choir stalls are appreciably more comfortable than benches. The hand and elbow rests sustain the muscles of the arms and shoulders during the long hours in the choir. The rests can also be grasped or leaned on as an aid to standing up or sitting down. The curved backrest supports the back much better than a straight wall or bench back does. When standing, the misericord can be braced against to take pressure off the legs during less active parts of the service. When kneeling, the misericord is at a more comfortable height to fold ones hands and arms for prayer than a bench or the flipped down seat would be. If the stall has a desk, its width and slant provide even more support for the upper body than a misericord. And unlike benches, stalls were normally built on a wooden platform, which protects the feet and knees of participants from direct contact with the cold stone or tile church floor (e.g., Figure A.202). When the wooden platform is hollow, as is commonly seen in colder, damper climates, the layer of air provides even more insulation from the chilly floor (e.g., Figure A.203).

Why might an increase in comfort in the choir have been considered desirable at this time? While seating is only mentioned in passing in the Rule, William Durandus explains the meaning of the stall in his treatise on the origin and interpretation of Christian ritual and the objects used to execute it, *Rationale divinorum officiorum*. This compilation of an allegorical tradition that originated in the ninth century had a vast circulation in western Europe by the end of the fifteenth century and came to be seen as the authori-

\[^{245}\text{Gropp, } \text{Das Ulmer Chorgestühl, 39.}\]
Durandus identifies the most important aspect of the choir stall as providing the body with rest. He declares, “The stall, on which one is seated in the choir, signifies that the body of anyone needs to be refreshed, because a body that lacks intervals of rest will not be a durable one.” Since the widespread adoption of choir stalls took place at a time when the performance of the divine office had become significantly longer than it had been earlier, the increased support for the body in the choir was very likely connected to the change. Comfortable seating helps ensure that individuals can focus on their work and are not distracted by the bodily discomforts that may result from long hours of the limited, prescribed movement that is required during the offices. Such discomforts could potentially discourage or even impede members from appropriate participation. Documented complaints show that bodily discomfort could exacerbate the perception of boredom, which seems to have been the most significant source of frustration for those performing the offices. Writing in the late thirteenth century, the friar, Salimbene de Adam, grumbled about accretions to some of the Hours: “The same is true with the recitation of eighteen psalms in the Office of Nocturnes on Sunday before the Te Deum Laudamus, both in winter and in the summer time, with its short nights, intense heat, and pestiferous fleas: only weariness can come forth from such an ordeal.”

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246 Rationale divinorum officiorum (translation), xx–xxii. Indeed, we know that this book was copied at the Blaubeuren scriptorium in 1468, twenty-five years before their new stalls were built. Moraht-Fromm, “Raumprogramm und liturgische Dispositionen”, 248n6.

247 Rationale divinorum officiorum (translation), 20. “Stallus ad sedendum in choro designat quod aliquando corpus recreandum est, quia quod caret alterna requie durabile non est.” Guillelmus Duranti, Rationale diuinorum officiorum (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), book 1, chapter 1, paragraph 32, line 334.

248 Today’s designers even take advantage of how much bodily discomfort discourages people from remaining seated for very long: places such as fast food restaurants may deliberately install uncomfortable seating to ensure that customers do not linger so that as many people as possible can be served. Norman, Design of Everyday Things, 154.

Choir stalls could not eliminate fleas or mitigate intense heat, but as well as providing physical support for the body, they did help alleviate other discomforts associated with long hours in the stalls. The material change from stone to wood is particularly significant. While some of the early choir stalls built on the Italian and Iberian peninsulas were fashioned from stone, wooden stalls quickly became the norm. Wood and stone share many properties that are important for making choir stalls, such as solidity and an affordance for being carved. Wood, however, is a better insulator from the cold than is stone, a property that is particularly important in northern climates. The canopies and the dorsals of the stalls also help protect the body from the cold by warding off the icy drafts that circulate in churches with the continual opening and closing of doors in all weather and all seasons.

Textiles were also crucial for improving comfort in the choir. As discussed in the next section, sumptuous choir textiles, such as elaborate choir tapestry series, served primarily as visual markers to highlight important days and single out important people. However, textiles had long been part of the everyday outfitting of the stalls, as William Durandus indicates: “…the decoration of the choir consists of coverings, tapestries, floor coverings, and cushions; the coverings are specifically cloths that hang in the choir, behind the clergy; the floor coverings are things that are spread out under their feet; the tapestries are cloths that are spread out under foot, specifically for walking on, and especially for the feet of the bishops who must walk over worldly things with their feet; the cushions are cloths that are placed on the seats or benches in the choir.” Parallel to the production of stalls, rugs and seat cushions were often made for the new seating,

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252 “Ornatus chori in dorsalibus, tapetis, substratoriis et bancalibus; dorsalia sunt panni in choro pendentes a dorso clericorum; substratoria que pedibus substernuntur; tapeta etiam sunt panni qui pedibus substernuntur, quasi stratio pedum, et precipue pedibus episcoporum qui mundana pedibus calcare debent; bancalia sunt panni qui super sedes uel bancas in choro ponuntur.” *Rationale divinorum officiorum* (translation), 39.
as is documented in the Toledo chapter accounts. Church inventories, such as the fourteen that were drawn up between 1297 and 1643 for the cathedral of Angers, include both seat cushions and rugs among the various textiles. Rugs and cushions could be used to display imagery related to their users’ identities and aspirations, most commonly coats of arms. Some, however, were quite plain: six of the twenty-two cushions for the chapel that are listed in the *Inventaire de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune* display coats of arms, six show unicorns and four show pelicans, but the final six are simply described as ordinary (*communs*). In general, these types of textiles were primarily utilitarian as their rare survival indicates. They were added to make the stalls even more comfortable: the cushioning and insulating properties of textiles provide softer, warmer seating and kneeling space.

Finally, precise measurements and modifications of choir stalls that are recorded in contemporary documents indicate a desire for comfortable seating. The year before the monks of Tongerlo abbey commissioned a new set of choir stalls from Matthys de Wayere and Kersten Sweluwen, they paid for the joiners Master Johannes of Eindhoven and Thielen of Beringen and three Tongerlo monks to visit and measure a total of nine sets of choir stalls in the region. The accounts do not specify what aspects of the stalls were measured, but given the significant differences in the areas and heights of choirs among the nine different churches, measurements of aspects that could be transferred to a choir of different dimensions and to a set of stalls with a different number of seats must

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253 Heim, *Rodrigo Alemán*, 95. See Documents 28, 29, 38 and 42 for details on the commission and installation of mats, cushions and printed leather for the Toledo choir stalls.


255 Bangs, *Church Art and Architecture*, 150.

256 "Item six beaulx quarreaux armoyés des armes des fondateurs et auttres six à la licorne et quatre au pellicant et auttres six communs." This inventory is probably from 1452 when the hospital was founded. The excerpt is cited in Corinne Charles, “Tentures de chœur et stalles médiévales,” *Kunst und Architektur in der Schweiz* 53.1 (2002): 42.

257 For example, “Item via Octobris magister Johannes de Eijndovia, Thielmannus scrinifex et ego profecti sumus navigo ex Meclinia Antwerpiam ad visitandum et mensurandum sedilia chori apud Sanctum Michaelem et in ecclesia Nostre Domine, etc....” All the payments date from October 1528 and are transcribed from Archief abdij Tongerlo, A, VI, 21, fol. 106r–108r as Document VIII in Steppe and Molle, “De koorbanken te Aarschot,” 250.
have been the priority. The most likely measurements taken relate to the dimensions of individual stalls, such as seat height, width and depth. The interest in gathering so much data for the new set of choir stalls also indicates that the monks were not satisfied with the dimensions of their current stalls.

In Gentbrugge just outside of Ghent, the Rich Clares decided on their choir stall dimensions before commissioning a new set in 1506. The detailed measurements in their contract with Gillis van Dickele indicate that they had used some sort of model beyond the broad dimensions of their abbey’s choir. Perhaps they were satisfied with their existing stalls and based the measurements on them, or perhaps, like the Tongerlo monks, they had gathered more desirable measurements from elsewhere. Some of the specified measurements were clearly related to the size of their choir, such as the height of eleven feet from the ground to the top of the upper seating. Others were possibly related to the choir dimensions if space was tight: the specified width of the seats might have been necessary to ensure that all the required seats fit, although the measurement of two feet four inches, which gives a width of sixty-four to seventy-six centimetres, falls within the normal range for choir stalls. The widths of lower seats varied from sixty centimetres at Albi Cathedral to 73.5 centimetres at St. George’s, Windsor. The Rich Clares, however, also gave very precise measurements for aspects that would not have been constrained by the size of the choir, such as the depth of the seats, and the height and width of the misericords. All of these dimensions were important in terms

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258.“Item de hoogde van den eerden tot boven van den upperzittius moet zyn allevene voeten....” Contract transcribed from the Archives provinciaies of Ghent in Busscher, *Peintres et sculpteurs à Gand*, 230n1.
259.“De wydde van den stoelen twee voeten ende vier dummen....” ibid., 230n1.
of comfort: Were the misericords wide enough and at the most comfortable height for standing and kneeling? Were the seats deep enough to support the upper legs, but not too deep for the nuns to sit back against the back rest? It seems unlikely that the nuns would have provided such specific measurements unless they had reflected on such issues.

Rather than stipulating measurements ahead of time, the nuns of Santa Chiara in Venice recorded modifications that they wanted made to their choir stalls after examining two sample stalls that they had commissioned in 1478. Whereas some of the changes that they requested were aesthetic, their concern with the height and length of the arm rests indicates that comfort was also a factor. They did not give exact measurements for the modified arm rests, but simply requested that they be made lower and longer.²⁶⁴ Having presumably sat in the sample stalls, they must have found that the forearm and hand were not adequately supported, the rests being too short and too high. In fact, significant height differences between the seat capping (where the elbow rests are located) in male compared to female Italian monasteries have been found. A recent survey of fourteenth- to sixteenth-century choir stalls in northern Italy revealed a height range of 97 cm to 109 cm among the thirty-three sets in male houses, while the three female sets measured have heights of 91 cm, 95.5 cm and 97 cm.²⁶⁵

The canons of Tréguier Cathedral probably wished that they had used one of these strategies when they realized that the dignitaries’ seats were too narrow and too small after the installation of their new set on August 9, 1511.²⁶⁶ To rectify the problem, the canons paid for significant reconstruction. One of the eight stalls was removed to allow the remaining stalls, beginning with those of the bishop and the cantor, to be cut up

²⁶⁴ “...e le suo brazieri over pozj piuj bassj e piuj longj de queste...” An excerpt of the contract is transcribed from S. Zaccaria, B. 6 cart. as Document 31, Miscellanea Documenti in Pietro Paoletti di Osvaldo, L’architettura e la scultura del Rinascimento in Venezia (Venice: Ongania-Naya Editori, 1893), 93.


and remade with the desired proportions. While the seat widths would inevitably end up wider once seven seats filled the space previously taken up by eight, the canons also made sure that the arm rests would be well-proportioned and sufficiently wide by including this stipulation in their description of the remodelling.\textsuperscript{267} While the concern over the proportions of the honorary stalls could also have been due to a desire to distinguish these stalls as more important than the regular stalls,\textsuperscript{268} the insistence on increasing the size of the arm rests indicates that comfort was at least part of the canons’ concern.

Even more extensive choir stall defects were itemized by Gerard vander Schaeft, abbot of Averbode, when he returned to the abbey several years after having delegated oversight of the stall construction to the prior.\textsuperscript{269} Among the problems that the abbot identified were the extreme narrowness of the seats, the size of the hand rests and the proper placement of the misericords; it was not possible to stand and rest upon them.\textsuperscript{270} He concluded his report by stating that given the amount of work that would be needed to fix all the defects, the set would be left as it was.\textsuperscript{271} Not long afterward, however, the abbot entered into a new contract with the original joiner, Jan Borchmans, to rectify the myriad problems. No doubt after having performed the offices in the defective choir stalls, the community decided that the problems were too serious to ignore. Narrow seats, unusable misericords and hand rests that are too small would have made for long hours


\textsuperscript{268}See section Institutional space subsection Reinforcing hierarchy, below, for more discussion of this issue.

\textsuperscript{269}“Nota toto fere tempore, quo sedes hujusmodi seu stalla facta sunt, habuit dominus Gerardus abbas ob guerras Gelrenses publicas deserere monasterium et non sine cordis amaritudine fugere ad Diest et alia loca tuta, dando priori, preposito et conventui onus et commissionem in dies circumspiciendi et ordinandi quod stalla fierent utilia, honesta et commodosa circa quod fuerunt satis negligentes ut patet intuentibus stalla quippe sunt nimis angusta unde particulares sequuntur defectus:...” This excerpt and the following two are transcribed from the Archief abdij Averbode, 1, reg. 4, fol. 148–149 as document IV in Fransolet, “L’auteur des stalles d’Averbode,” 158.

\textsuperscript{270}“Item de andere gebreken van dat de stoelen te enge syn en dat de slachberders als sy op zyn niet wal en passen int staen om daer op te rusten ende dat de bollen te smael zyn...” ibid., 159.

\textsuperscript{271}“...om dat veel wercks soude hebben ende tyts nemen soe sal men dat dese tyt alsoe laten alst is.” ibid., 159.
of discomfort in the choir. The ensuing renovation project lasted almost nine months and cost over sixty florins, but was surely worth it in the end.

Institutional space: Community, hierarchy, surveillance

“...let them outdo one another in demonstrating honor.”

Space is political: who owns it, who controls it, where it is, how big it is, who has access. In this section, I will examine ways in which the space of the choir is constructed that reify certain institutional values of the church and of the communal life in particular. As David Morgan points out in his summary of current approaches to the study of religious material culture, it is important to examine the objects and spaces, as well as the practices and ideas, in which, as he puts it, belief takes shape. While this section is informed by Michel Foucault’s idea of space as an institutional tool concerned with power and discipline, I will begin by looking at how the shared space and the shared practice within the space creates a sense of community among its members. I will also examine how some people transgress institutional imperatives, whether out of respect or scorn for the institution, its practices and policies.

Creating community: Brother mine

One important institutional benefit that the enclosure of choir stalls has is in enhancing social cohesion among community members. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the larger church was open to all of the faithful and was the site of many activities, while the enclosed choir within the church was dedicated to the community and their performance.

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of the divine office. This distinction signalled not only the importance of the group and its work, but also highlighted the shared vocation of its members. Enclosure also heightens the sense of intimacy among those inside.\textsuperscript{275} The structure of the choir stalls themselves further emphasizes this cohesion. The community of monks, nuns, canons, canonesses or friars did not sit on detached seats, but rather on connected ones that could not be moved apart or reconfigured. The disposition of facing stalls, while fulfilling a performative function, also strengthens a sense of community: members on the long north and south sides could easily make eye contact with those facing them. Simultaneously, they saw themselves reflected in the actions and apparel of their colleagues.

The main iconographical programs chosen for choir stalls often reinforced this sense of community. Highly visible sequences of figures were frequently displayed on stall dorsals, encouraging members to insert themselves into a venerable, ongoing tradition. At Freising Cathedral, busts of bishops from the diocese, beginning with the cathedral’s founder, Saint Corbinian, provide the canons with a panorama of their prestigious historical lineage (Figures A.204 and A.205).\textsuperscript{276} At Albi Cathedral, the liturgical vestments worn by the carved angels that ring the choir evoke a host of angels flawlessly celebrating the divine office in heaven. They are a paragon for the canons in their daily celebration of the office on earth (e.g., Figure A.206).\textsuperscript{277} By far the most common theme depicted on choir stalls at this time was the Double Credo, which was used on sets throughout Western Europe. The twelve apostles and twelve prophets are usually shown displaying banderoles with texts from the Apostles’ Creed and the Old Testament respectively, as they parade around the edge of the choir (e.g., Figure A.207).\textsuperscript{278} Since the idea that belief and the church rest on the foundation of the apostles and prophets was promulgated by

\textsuperscript{275} Yi-Fu Tuan, \textit{Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 107.

\textsuperscript{276} For more about the Freising program, see chapter Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity, section Proclaiming Identity: Choir Stalls as Promotional Sites.

\textsuperscript{277} Biget, \textit{Sainte-Cécile d’Albi : sculptures}, 268.

\textsuperscript{278} Kurmann-Schwarz and Gasser, “Les stalles”, 198.
Saint Paul (Eph. 2:20), he sometimes replaces one of the apostles, as at Bern Münster (Figure A.208). The recital of what came to be known as the Apostles’ Creed during the liturgy began in fourth-century Rome, and by the sixth or seventh century, each apostle had been linked with a section of the creed. In the twelfth century, Rupert of Deutz created a typological parallel to the Creed by matching each portion with a text from an Old Testament prophet. By the fourteenth century, images representing the Double Credo were being displayed in myriad media. The first known depiction of this theme on a set of choir stalls was carved at the end of the thirteenth century for a monastic church in Pöhlde, Saxony. The subsequent popularity of the theme on choir stalls is no doubt due in part to its aptness for those who perform the divine office: it highlights the apostolic origins of their role in transmitting the gospel. This interpretation is personified on the mid-fifteenth-century choir stalls that were made for one of the churches at the former Benedictine monastery of Saint-Oyend and Saint-Claude in Franche-Comté by the unusual addition of monks and abbots to the traditional twenty-four figures of the Double Credo. A few small sets, such as the one at Lausanne Cathedral, have only enough dorsals to represent the Apostles’ Creed, but they are clearly related to this tradition. The collegiate church in Romont, with exactly twenty-four dorsals, is a rare

279 Scheuber, Die mittelalterlichen Chorstühle, 31–32.
280 These pairings were not standardized, however. Jean-Paul Bouhot, “L’origine apostolique du symbole au Moyen Age,” in Pensée, image et communication en Europe médiévale : A propos des stalles de Saint-Claude, ed. Pierre Lacroix et al. (Besançon, France: Asprodic, 1993), 159–162.
281 Vauchez, “Conclusion historique”, 266.
284 This church became the Cathedral of Saint-Claude in the middle of the eighteenth century. Pierre Lacroix and André Renon, “Les stalles de Saint-Claude acquis récents pour leur histoire,” in Pensée, image et communication en Europe médiévale : A propos des stalles de Saint-Claude, ed. Pierre Lacroix et al. (Besançon, France: Asprodic, 1993), 40–44. For more about this set of stalls, see Chapter Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity, section Proclaiming Identity: Choir Stalls as Promotional Sites.
285 The Lausanne set is visually similar to other Savoyard stalls that display the Double Credo. It has five “extra” dorsals that show the donor, Bishop Aymon de Montfalcon, with three martyrs: saints Candide, Victor and Innocent; Saint Catherine; the Virgin and Child (damaged during the Reformation); the donor with saints Benedict and John the Baptist. Berton, Les stalles médiévales d’Aoste, 434–437.
example which depicts only the twenty-four figures of the Double Credo (Figures A.135 and A.209). Given the large number of dorsals on many sets, the addition of identifiable figures who were important to Christian history was common. For slightly larger sets, a few significant biblical or doctrinal scenes, or figures of saints who were important to the community might be added to show the continuity between the apostles and the community. At the Cistercian abbey in Hauterive, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, who was a key figure in the expansion of the Order (Figure A.210), and Saint Benedict, whose Rule the Cistercians used, are both included on the stall dorsals. Large sets of stalls required vaster programs to populate the dorsals, thus more complex typological programs were created with the addition of evangelists, martyrs and other saints of both genders, Old and New Testament figures, sibyls, pagan philosophers, as well as allegorical figures, such as Virtues and the Church (e.g., Figure A.211). Even when not based on the Double Credo, such as the program at Auch Cathedral, which only includes four of the apostles on its dorsals, these large figural programs represent a communion of saints that all Christians are part of (communio sanctorum), a communion that is explicitly affirmed in the Apostle’s Creed, as monks, nuns, canons, canonesses and friars were reminded during their twice daily recital of the creed as they began and ended each day.

Finally, there is evidence that ritual collective behaviour, such as chanting, singing and praying together, causes participants to perceive the group as a single entity. The establishment of conventions such as seating order, vestments and communal processions further aid in uniting individuals into a corporate body. As individuals participate in

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286 Rudolph, *Bernard of Clairvaux’s Apologia*, 5.
the social performance of the ritual, the performance goes beyond representing belief, and actually becomes the belief\textsuperscript{290}. While the effects of group worship are general, the potential for monks, nuns, canons, canonesses and friars to feel part of a collective by performing such actions together was no doubt further intensified by various factors. Their communal performance was much more frequent than that of most laity. The enclosure of the choir minimized outside distractions that might break their concentration on the ritual. The aural environment within the choir may have also contributed to the intensity. While plainchant sung in the choir of a traditional Gothic cathedral sounds distant and mysterious to the people in the nave, its clarity and resonance within the choir likely reinforced the intimate, shared experience of those singing\textsuperscript{291}. At the same time, as the individual voice is absorbed into the collective voice, the greater authority of the larger institution is reinforced\textsuperscript{292}.

**Reinforcing hierarchy: Brother, go up higher**

The church as an institution had a strong hierarchical structure, as can be seen by the titles, the vestments and, most importantly, the powers of the various levels within the church that clearly distinguished everyone, from choir boy to pope. The organization of the whole church building reflected a broad social hierarchy\textsuperscript{293}. In the early church, the narthex was the site for catechumens, women, and penitents\textsuperscript{294} and it remained a liminal space; the nave was the venue where the faithful worshipped; the choir was set apart for clerics and religious to perform the offices and celebrate mass. Within the

\textsuperscript{290} Morgan, “Materiality”, 59.
\textsuperscript{291} Howard and Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, 87.
choir, the arrangement of the stalls was used both to differentiate and reinforce church hierarchy. Concern for rank is seen early on in church history. In Saint Benedict’s Rule, rank is mentioned often, and the Rule includes a chapter that is specifically dedicated to describing how rank is established: De Ordine Congegationis (Rank in the Community). Although ranking for most monks was based on the date that they began the monastic life, with neither age nor worldly status to be taken into consideration, the abbot was given the power to promote or demote a monk based on his conduct. Ranked order was preserved in choir, at table and during ceremonies such as receiving communion.  

Similarly, in the Rule of St. Chrodegang, while the ranks of the canons were based strictly on their date of ordination, the bishop had the prerogative to promote and demote as he deemed appropriate. As in the monastic setting, this order was maintained in choir and during other communal activities. Even singing order was mandated to some extent by rank, as the Use of Sarum indicates. With the elaboration of church hierarchy over the centuries, a person’s function within the order often became more important than how long he or she had been a member of the community, as can be seen in records concerning seating in the choir. At Tournai Cathedral in the fifteenth century, date of nomination was no longer the most important factor, but rather rank. Seating plans were recorded in local documents, such as ceremonial ordinaries, ordinals, capitular records, and church customaries. In the twelfth-century Sarum Consuetudinary, written for Salisbury Cathedral, there is a chapter entitled De Stallis Personarum in choro ecclesie Sarum, which dictates who sits where. This customary was eventually adopted by most English secular cathedrals, which no doubt accounts for consistent seating patterns in English

295 Rule of Saint Benedict, 202–205.
296 Chrodegang Rules, 30, 55.
297 See, for example, the table showing who begins the principal chants on double feast days. Harrison, Music in Medieval Britain, 106.
298 Pycke, Cathédrale de Tournai, 127.
299 Weigert, Weaving Sacred Stories, 44.
300 Teijeira Pablos, La sillería de coro catedralicia, 87.
301 Tracy, English Gothic Choir-Stalls, 1200–1400, xx.
cathedrals, but similar seating conventions in the choir are seen throughout the western church. Most of these stem from long-established seating traditions, some of which are still immediately recognizable to contemporary eyes: type of seating, height of the seat, width of the seat, orientation of the seat, visual markers on the seat (both permanent and temporary) and iconography displayed on the seat.

A clear change from early monastic practice was to have seating with back- and armrests rather than benches. The bench is the most democratic form of collective seating, which aligned well with monastic ideals about humility (chapter VII of the Rule) and sufficiency: “There was allotment to individuals according to their need.” While accommodations would be made when necessary, the least common denominator was the directive, no matter which aspect of monastic life was being discussed. Since benches were adequate for most people, benches were considered appropriate for monastics. The greater emphasis on comfort and display that developed in many communities over time, as is evidenced by a variety of subsequent reform movements, influenced church furnishings as well. As discussed in the previous section, stalls were much more comfortable than benches. Furthermore, the form of the stall signalled a higher status: the arm chair remained a privileged seat for people of distinction throughout the middle ages, while lower-ranked people sat on benches. Benches remained the seats for junior members, such as choir boys, into the sixteenth century, as can be seen at the collegiate church in Dordrecht (Figure A.194).

Height was also used to signal the importance of the occupant, a traditional indication of rank: feudal lords sat on seats that dominated others; Charlemagne’s throne towered

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302 See section Corporeal space: Moulding the body, above, for a discussion of other factors surrounding the change from bench to chair in the choir.
305 Ibid., See for example chapters 39 and 40 on portions of food and drink respectively, chapter 48 on manual labour, and chapter 55 on clothing and shoes.
two metres above the ground;\textsuperscript{307} in Roman basilicas, the central seat of the presiding judge’s synthronon, upon which the original choir seating was based,\textsuperscript{308} was elevated above the assistant judges’ benches located on either side. Being higher than others allows the occupant to be easily seen and therefore easily recognized. We see this, for example, in the miniature in Cotton MS Domitian A XVII, which shows a bishop seated in a raised stall at the end of set of stalls.\textsuperscript{309} A raised seat was constructed for the bishop at the cathedrals of Plasencia, Ciudad Rodrigo, Albi, Zamora, Astorga and Auch (e.g., Figure A.212); the Plasencia and Zamora choir stalls also have elevated monarch seats (e.g., Figure A.213). The level of the stall rows indicated rank, too: when there was more than one row of stalls, lower-ranked clergy or monastics normally sat in the lower stalls, while more senior members sat in the upper stalls.\textsuperscript{310} The importance of the distinction between upper and lower stalls is seen in a variety of documents and practices. Members might be referred to by their position in the choir, and thus their position in the hierarchy: in English secular cathedrals, lower-ranked choir clerks (\textit{clerici chori}) were customarily called “clerks of the second form.”\textsuperscript{311} At Tournai Cathedral, only highly-ranked members of the chapter were allowed to sit in the upper stalls, and chaplains were distinguished by where they sat, as their title indicated: “chapelain des hautes formes” or “chapelain des basses formes.”\textsuperscript{312} In the statutes of the cathedral chapter at Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges in France, it is specified that not even priests are allowed to sit in the upper stalls unless they are canons.\textsuperscript{313} During the celebrations that have come to be known collectively as the \textit{Feast of Fools}, seating was reversed: the particular lower order whose

\textsuperscript{307}Ibid., 208.
\textsuperscript{308}See section Evolution of choir stalls, above, for more details.
\textsuperscript{309}www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_domitian_a_xvii_fs001r
This miniature on 12 verso was added to the early fifteenth-century manuscript about 1430.
\textsuperscript{310}This tradition is seen in monastic, collegiate and cathedral churches throughout Western Europe. Reiners, \textit{Die Rheinischen Chorgestühle}, 15; Hope, \textit{Windsor Castle}, 50; Weigert, \textit{Weaving Sacred Stories}, 44; Kroesen, \textit{Staging the Liturgy}, 170.
\textsuperscript{311}Harrison, \textit{Music in Medieval Britain}, 6.
\textsuperscript{312}Chaplain of the upper stalls or chaplain of the lower stalls. Pycke, \textit{Cathédrale de Tournai}, 147–148.
\textsuperscript{313}See article VI in Augé et al., \textit{Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges}, 47.
feast day it was sat in the upper choir stalls, while those from the upper stalls took the lower seats. And in some churches, such as Lincoln Cathedral, a canon who had been elevated to a high rank was received with the biblical phrase, "Frater ascende superius." as he was shown to his new upper stall.

Width, too, has been traditionally associated with power. The Roman bi-sellium, the seat for senators, was the width of two normal seats, as its name indicates. Wide seats allow for elaborate ceremonial robes, a powerful seated stance with legs planted firmly apart, and a pampered, well-fed body, all signs of superiority (e.g., Figure A.214). Upper stalls are sometimes slightly wider than lower stalls, providing a subtle indication of higher status: at the collegiate church in Dordrecht, the upper stalls are two centimetres wider than the lower ones. Special stalls, such as those for the bishop, the dean (the head of a collegiate or cathedral chapter) or the abbot, are often significantly wider, and thus the difference is conspicuous (e.g., Figure A.215). A telling incident at Amiens Cathedral in the seventeenth century was the removal of the partition between the modest bishop’s stall on the north side of the choir and the one beside it at the behest of the newly-appointed bishop, François Lefevre de Caumartin, who wanted to provide himself with a seat that he considered more fitting for a bishop. Similarly, in the case of the Tréguier Cathedral honorary stalls, mentioned above, it is unlikely that the seats were

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314 Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, 340. For more on these celebrations, see chapter Singing from the Same Choir Book: The Construction of Margins, section Historical factors.

315 "Brother, go up higher." This phrase is adapted from the one in the parable of the wedding feast (Luke 14:10) *Amice (friend) ascende superius*. Henry Bradshaw and Christopher Wordsworth, *Statutes of Lincoln Cathedral* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1892), 131, 275.


317 In stall sets that are not made from regular boards, width may vary noticeably from stall to stall; however when regular, well-finished boards were used, as in the construction of the high quality stalls examined in this thesis, unintended variation is minimal. Hudson, *Manchester Cathedral*, 71.

318 Duinen, *De koorbanken te Dordrecht*, 115.


320 This act resulted in a protracted dispute that was not resolved during his tenure. Durand, *Monographie de la Cathédrale d’Amiens*, 155. See chapter Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity section Reclaiming Identity: Reform and the Struggle for Power for more about the political issues that appear to have led to the assignment of an unexceptional stall to the bishop at Amiens Cathedral.
not wide enough to sit in comfortably, since it was only the honorary stalls that the canons wanted changed. It seems more likely that these stalls did not look wide enough.

The orientation of the seat within the choir was also marked, but there was some variation as to which particular seat was the most prestigious in any given choir. Such differences as well as changes over time indicate that local customs, concerns and circumstances, rather than official rules, guided the placement of special seats. This variation is not surprising given that churches and orders had different histories, titles and prerogatives, and church floor plans varied widely. Nevertheless, there were only a few standard dispositions, all of them in the highest row in the case of multiple row stalls. The return stalls on the west side of the choir facing the altar were traditional places of honour during the performance of the hours, as was recorded as early as the eleventh century in the *Constitutiones Hirsau gienses*.\(^{321}\) The centre and corner stalls were also considered prestigious. Visually, these positions are the most salient in the conventional rectangular set up of choir stalls with a shorter west side (e.g., Figure A.129)\(^{322}\) In ordinary monastic churches, such as Hauterive Abbey, the only special seats were the two on either side of the entrance to the choir, which were reserved for the abbot and the prior,\(^{323}\) on the south (*chorus abbatis*) and the north (*chorus prioris*) sides respectively. In more important churches with many dignitaries, the easternmost seats, closest to the altar, were usually the next stalls given to those with high status. In English cathedrals, the dean and the precentor had the same westerly stalls as the abbot and the prior, while the chancellor sat on the southeast seat and the treasurer was assigned the northeast seat.\(^{324}\) However, at Albi Cathedral, the most important stall, that of the bishop, was

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\(^{321}\)“Si vero est de his, qui in ordine sunt altiores, locum habeat in aliquo sedilium ad parietes. Si est unus seniorum in ultroli bet cancello occidentali um.” Transcribed from chapter XXVI in Gisbert Porstmann, *Das Chorgestühl des Magdeburger Domes: Iconographie – Stil geschichte – Deutung* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 1997), 166n34.

\(^{322}\)Notice which seats the eye is drawn to in this single row of stalls that shows little differentiation among the seats.


positioned on the southeast edge of the choir (Figure A.216) and the head of the chapter
was seated opposite him on the north side.\textsuperscript{325} In Spanish cathedrals, the bishop’s stall
had traditionally been situated in the same position (e.g., Figure A.217), but starting
around the end of the fifteenth century, his seat was moved to the centre of the west side
opposite the altar (e.g., Figure A.97). This position became so well-established that even
in some choirs with a central doorway on the west side, such as Toledo Cathedral, the
bishop’s throne was positioned there despite being an obstacle during processions.\textsuperscript{326} In
French cathedrals, a distinction was made between clerics who sat on the bishop’s side
\textit{(ad latus episcopi)} and those who sat on the dean’s side \textit{(ad latus decani)}.\textsuperscript{327} In English
cathedrals and collegiates, the south side where the dean sat \textit{(latus decani)} ranked higher
than the north side where the precentor sat \textit{(latus cantoris)}.\textsuperscript{328} This orientation was
the same in monastic choirs in the German-speaking lands,\textsuperscript{329} where the north side was
referred to as \textit{chorus abbatis} or \textit{chorus dexter}, and the south as \textit{chorus prioris} or \textit{chorus
sinister}.\textsuperscript{330} However, the opposite ranking of sides (north over south) was generally the
rule in Spanish cathedrals.\textsuperscript{331} While precedence of the north with respect to the south
side was not standardized, the orientation of a stall within a choir was recognized as one
aspect of its importance. In some cases, it was only the position of the seat that reflected
the rank of its occupants. At the Cartuja of Miraflores, the single-level north and south
rows of uniform stalls with no returns are only differentiated by their orientation and
their proximity to the altar (Figure A.128).

Distinctive visual markers were frequently used on stalls of honour to signal the su-
perior status of important occupants to the viewer. In the contract of 1488 between the

\textsuperscript{326}Kroesen, \textit{Staging the Liturgy}, 180.
\textsuperscript{327}Pycke, \textit{Cathédrale de Tournaï}, 128.
\textsuperscript{328}Harrison, \textit{Music in Medieval Britain}, 51.
\textsuperscript{330}Möbius, “Die Chorpartie der Klosterkirche”, 34.
\textsuperscript{331}Kroesen, \textit{Staging the Liturgy}, 170.
Canons Regular of Our Lady of the Assumption in Le Vigan, France, and the joiner, Jean Moynié, the instructions to differentiate the abbot’s stall summarize the main strategy and principal objective of such markers: Jean was told to make the abbot’s stall more beautiful and more sumptuous than the other seats, so that it could be distinguished from the canons’ seats.\textsuperscript{332} There were a number of common methods used to visually differentiate prestigious from regular seats. The stalls might be crowned with elaborately carved baldachins. The dean’s and king’s stalls that flank the choir screen at Amiens Cathedral are topped with particularly impressive baldachins that soar thirteen metres in the air, about double the height of the main canopy (Figure A.1).\textsuperscript{333} At Blaubeuren Abbey, in addition to having higher baldachins, the dorsals of the four most important seats were accented with intarsia,\textsuperscript{334} a technique that was rarely seen outside of the Italian Peninsula in the fifteenth century,\textsuperscript{335} and would therefore, despite the restraint of the design, have immediately drawn the viewer’s eye (e.g., Figure A.218).\textsuperscript{336} At the cathedral in Ciudad Rodrigo, the bishop’s stall is the only one to have a full-length figural relief on the dorsal; in contrast, the other upper dorsals are covered with tracery and small figural reliefs, and the lower dorsals have blind tracery arches at the top only (Figure A.97). While coats of arms of all of the members were displayed on some sets of stalls, in other cases, only important members had this distinction. At Hauterive Abbey, two of the fifty-two misericords show carved sets of arms: the abbot’s stall to the south

\textsuperscript{332}“Item debet facere la cadiera del abat plus bela et plus sumptuosa que las autras ad fines ut sit differentia inter catradam abbatis et catedras dictorum canonicerum” The complete contract of these stalls, which were destroyed during the French Revolution, is transcribed in the appendix of Freigang, “L’Ancienne Eglise Collégiale du Vigan,” 539–541. Other interesting details from this contract are discussed in chapter Choir Practice: The Construction of Stalls.

\textsuperscript{333}Lemé-Hébuterne, \textit{Les stalles d’Amiens}, 61.

\textsuperscript{334}Meurer, “Die bewegliche Ausstattung”, 113.


\textsuperscript{336}Jörg Sürlin the Younger was presumably taught this technique by his father, who was one of the first people to use it north of the Alps. Given ties between Ulm and South Tyrol, he most likely learned the technique in South Tyrol. Gropp, \textit{Das Ulmer Chorgestühl}, 35–36.
of the entrance to the choir displays those of Jean Philibert, who was abbot during the construction of the stalls, and the prior’s stall to the north has the arms of his prior, Fruyo (Figure A.219). However, it was not just permanent markers that signalled special status: loose textiles were also used in a variety of ways to identify important people. Fabric might be draped over their seats or spread out in front of them. At Amiens Cathedral, a special yellow carpet was laid out in front of the dean on feast days when he sat in the dean’s honorary stall. Cushions might be piled on an ordinary stall to indicate the presence of a special guest: at Tournai Cathedral, an upper stall on the bishop’s side was decorated with cushions for a guest cardinal legate to use when he participated in the hours with the chapter. The longtime custom of placing individual hangings on important stalls was also still current in this period: Guigone de Salins, the widow of Nicolas Rolin, presented a hanging to Autun Cathedral in Burgundy to adorn the seat of the bishop, her stepson, Cardinal Jean Rolin.

Finally, the hierarchy of the choir could be reflected in the hierarchy of the iconography. By distributing the figures in order of increasing importance, the hierarchic structure of the church is also legitimized. And as with the people in the choir, the hierarchy might be arranged vertically, horizontally and/or by orientation. The four sets of Spanish choir stalls known as the *León group* (the set at the cathedral of León, and the sets at Oviedo (mostly reconstructed), Zamora and Astorga cathedrals, which were modelled on it) have figures on the dorsals that correspond on the whole with the relative rank

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339 On ordinary days, the dean sat in the next stall, leaving the honorary stall unoccupied. Durand, *Monographie de la Cathédrale d’Amiens*, 155.
340 “si cardinalis legatus remaneat in vesperis aut in missa, paretur sibi sedes cum pulvinaribus in latere episcopi, prope introitum chori, in sedibus superioribus, supra canonicos presbiteros” Quoted from Tournai Cathedral archives, Manuscript 348/A, notice 114 in Pycke, *Cathédrale de Tournai*, 147.
of the occupant. Unlike most other sets, this group of stalls has lower dorsals that are large enough to allow the depiction of life-size half-figures. The lower dorsals display mainly Old Testament figures who are seen as precursors to those of the New Testament (e.g., Figure A.220), while most of the upper stalls have full-length reliefs of saints (e.g., Figure A.221). Unlike most of the Savoy stalls, which display the figures associated with the Double Credo ordered according to which excerpt of the Credo they have on their banderole, and alternating with the Old Testament prophets (e.g., Figure A.222), these stalls have the figures arranged horizontally according to status within the Church.

At Zamora Cathedral, Christ the Redeemer is shown on the central dorsal of the upper returns, which is the bishop's stall (Figure A.223). Flanking him are the Four Evangelists and the Twelve Apostles on the return stalls and the westernmost ends of the north and south upper stalls. Continuing towards the east, male martyrs come next, then sainted members of the clergy by rank, followed by founders of religious orders. Female saints occupy the easternmost dorsals. At Astorga Cathedral a similar order is followed, but the female saints are placed before the founders (e.g., Figure A.169) and Saint Turibius, an important fifth-century bishop of Astorga, is shown on the bishop's stall, emphasizing the exemplary lineage of Astorga bishops. The monarch stalls at the extreme east end in Zamora Cathedral were deliberately made without saints on the dorsals although they are upper stalls: instead, by displaying the Old Testament kings, David and Solomon, they remind the viewer that, unlike the canons, the Catholic Monarchs are not part of

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344 While there is a tendency for more important apostles like Peter to appear first and lesser ones, such as Thomas and Matthias, to appear near the end, the association between an apostle and an excerpt was never completely standardized. Curt F. Bühler, “The Apostles and the Creed,” Medieval Academy of America 28.2 (Apr. 1953): 336–338.
the apostolic succession (e.g., Figure A.224). At Ulm Münster, the figures are aligned by gender, just as the laity would have been in the nave. Except for saints Luke and Cosmas on the extreme ends of the canopy, which are positions of higher status, the rest of the busts on the south side are female (Figure A.225), while all of the canopy, dorsal and stall end busts on the north side are male (Figure A.226). The south (epistle) side of the choir had traditionally been associated with Mary, while the north (gospel) side was traditionally associated with Christ. The now empty central tabernacles on either side of the Ulm choir may well have originally held figures of Mary and Christ on their respective sides. Although there is no known documentation about who sat where at Ulm Münster, the conspicuous gender distinction makes it likely that the male north side was intended for more important people.

The hierarchical arrangement of choir stalls along with the markers that identified the most prestigious stalls helped members internalize the hierarchy of the church and everyone’s assigned place within it. An incident that demonstrates just how potent a symbol one’s place in the choir could be occurred in Conques in the County of Rodez in 1516 when the Bishop of Rodez visited the Benedictine abbey of Sainte-Foy as part of an ongoing struggle to assert his authority over this monastic community. Entering the choir with his entourage when the abbot was not there, François d’Estaing immediately installed himself in the abbot’s seat. When the bishop refused to vacate the abbot’s stall after a monk informed him whose it was, a group of monks physically removed the bishop from the choir. A skirmish ensued, and the bishop subsequently took the monks to court. At the trial, the monks defended their actions, declaring, that as soon as the bishop entered the choir, he went to sit in the place where the abbot customarily

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347 For a detailed discussion of the iconography on the monarchs’ and bishop’s stalls at Zamora Cathedral, see chapter Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity section Reclaiming Identity: Reform and the Struggle for Power.
348 Vöge, Jörg Syrlin der Ältere, 45–46.
349 Gropp, Das Ulmer Chorgestühl, 76.
350 Vöge, Jörg Syrlin der Ältere, 46.
sat during the divine office.\footnote{"Item disent que incontinent que led. evesque fut dans le queur, il se alla asseoir au lieu ou led. abbé a costume sasseoir quant le divin service se faict..." Transcribed from the Archives Départementales de l’Aveyron, G 420-14, fol. 18v. in Nancy Bournot-Didier, “Un ensemble de boiseries malconnu : les stalles de Conques,” in \textit{Le miroir des miséricordes}, ed. Claude Rivals (Rodez, France: CEACM, 1996), 160n4.}

Although there was no official place for an abbot’s stall and although honorific monastic stalls were on the whole more subtly differentiated than special stalls in cathedrals, as a high-ranking cleric, François d’Estaing would have been attuned to the nuances of church hierarchy. Furthermore, although we do not know the original disposition of the stalls, one misericord displays the arms of Antoine de Marcenac, who was the abbot at the time of François d’Estaing’s visit.\footnote{The stalls were removed from the abbey church in the 1970s and were stored in various places awaiting restoration. Nancy Bournot-Didier’s examination of photographs of these stalls showed that they had been subject to numerous moves and transformations over the centuries, and that a reconstruction of the original set up would require a detailed study. ibid., 159–160.}

It is most likely that this misericord was attached to the abbot’s seat, as at Hauterive Abbey, a signal that the bishop could not have failed to notice. François d’Estaing’s highly symbolic act of taking over the abbot’s stall was clearly orchestrated as part of his attempt to re-assert diocesan authority over this famous, recalcitrant abbey.\footnote{Belmon, \textit{François d’Estaing l’évêque de Rodez}, 295–308. For more about this incident, see next section and chapter Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity, section Reclaiming Identity: Reform and the Struggle for Power.}

Maintaining discipline: A Brother is watching you

Instilling self-discipline was a critical goal of the monastic Rule. Without self-discipline, members were in constant danger of failing to live up to stringent monastic standards. Saint Benedict was very aware of the frailty of human nature and therefore capitalized on outside forces to both instill and maintain vigilance over monastic behaviour. In his Rule, he reminds his followers on more than one occasion: “...let him consider that he is always observed by God from heaven at all times and that his actions everywhere are seen by the divine gaze and reported by angels at all times.”\footnote{“aestimet se homo de caelis a Deo semper respici omni hora et facta sua omni loco ab aspectu divinitatis videri et ab angelis omni hora renuntiari.” Chapter VII De Humilitate. \textit{Rule of Saint}}
is the ideal panopticon: the Christian is perpetually observed, but the observer cannot be seen. This idea of *omniscient conspectus* was not restricted to monastic thought, and was diffused textually and visually over time to a variety of audiences. Hieronymous Bosch’s late fifteenth-century *Table of the Seven Deadly Sins* interprets the idea of God’s omnivoyance as an all-seeing eye with Christ, depicted as the Man of Sorrows, at the centre of the pupil, surrounded by scenes of the seven deadly sins in the iris. An inscription beneath Christ reminds the viewer, “Cave, cave, d[omin]us videt.” Divine oversight, however, was clearly not considered sufficient by Saint Benedict: continuous human observation was also deemed necessary. However, rather than operating like God or the panopticon as a single point of surveillance, there were a variety of situations which allowed human surveillance to take place. Standard punishments for misbehaviour were also laid down in the Rule, which were based on the transgression and its severity. Choir discipline was considered particularly critical as it reflected upon the discipline of the community as a whole. Therefore, being late for divine office warranted a particular humiliation in addition to the normal punishment: “If someone arrives at Vigils after the Gloria of Psalm 94...he should not take his place in the choir, but stand as the last of all or in a place the abbot has set aside for such careless brothers *so they may be seen by him and by all*...” Saint Benedict goes on to explain the reasoning behind this stipulation:

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*Benedict*, 46–47. See also Chapter IV Quae Sunt Instrumenta Bonorum Operum and the quotation at the beginning of this section.

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This painted table is now at the Museo del Prado in Madrid. For a high resolution image, see www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/galeria-on-line/galeria-on-line/obra/mesa-de-los-pecados-capitales.


“Quod si quis in nocturnis vigilis post Gloriam psalmi nonagesimi quarti...occurret, non stet in ordine suo in choro sed ultimus omnium stet aut in loco quem talibus neglegentitibus seorsum constituerit abbatus, ut videantur ab ipso vel ab omnibus...” (Emphasis mine.) The same punishment was meted out to those who were late during the daytime hours. *Rule of Saint Benedict*, 146–149. Chapter XLIII De His Qui Ad Opus Dei Vel Ad Mensam Tarde Occurrunt.
“We have judged that they should stand in the last place or separately so that, seen by all, they will amend because of the shame itself.”

Both the physical set-up of the choir and the assignment of seats facilitate this deterrent. Although the choir is not round like the panopticon, because the stalls are aligned along the perimeter of the U-shaped choir and all of them face inward, no matter where one stands, one cannot hide completely from the gaze of one’s fellows. At best, a large lectern might conceal a person from some eyes (e.g., Figure A.227), but since the spot where latecomers had to stand was chosen by whomever was in charge of the community, such obstacles could be taken into consideration. Furthermore, since everyone had a stall, latecomers would always be conspicuous by their absence from their assigned place. A quick glance around the choir reveals who is missing even when the size of the community exceeds a swiftly countable number. Certain characteristics associated with the stalls reserved for the head of a community not only marked the seat as belonging to someone important, but were also advantageous for overseeing the choir. The most common position at or near the centre of the short west side is the best place for viewing all of the seats in the choir. In cathedrals, particularly in Spain and southern France, the bishop’s seat was frequently raised higher than the other seats, which affords a better view of the space. And sometimes special upper stalls had no lower stall built in front of them, thus ensuring an unimpeded view even when standing (e.g., Figure A.228). A witness at the lawsuit that the bishop François d’Estaing brought against the monks of Conques refers explicitly to the need for the head of the community to be able to see everyone in the choir. Rather than adducing notions of hierarchy or ownership in defending the actions of the monks in physically removing the bishop from the abbot’s stall, the witness insists that the reason for the particular stall having been assigned to the abbot was because its position allows him to see all members of the community and how they are performing so that he can better instruct

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360“Ideo autem eos in ultimo aut seorsum iudicavimus debere stare ut, visi ab omnibus, vel pro ipsa verecundia sua emendent.” Rule of Saint Benedict, 146–147.
and correct them.\textsuperscript{361} Thus, access to his own stall was declared essential for the abbot if he was to carry out his role as head of the community. The U-shaped format of the stalls is conducive to other important functions in the choir, such as antiphonal singing, but the way it organizes people within the space of the choir shows that it is also important as a disciplinary tool. The set up of the chapter house, the dormitory and the refectory followed a similar pattern. The seating in chapter houses was traditionally arranged along the edge of a square or rectangular room so that members looked towards the centre,\textsuperscript{362} and seating order was determined by rank and function, just as in the choir.\textsuperscript{363}

In dormitories,\textsuperscript{364} members traditionally slept in one room unless their numbers were too large for a single dormitory.\textsuperscript{365} There is also evidence that the head of the community’s bed was specially placed, at least in some cases, to ensure oversight during the night: according to the thirteenth-century statutes of the Rich Clares in Ghent, the abbess’s bed should be positioned to allow her to see all the other beds in the dormitory.\textsuperscript{366} In all of these places, even if the head of the community’s attention is momentarily elsewhere,

\begin{fubref}
\textsuperscript{361} “Item et dudit lieu et siege en fores l’on veoit tous les autres sieges et estalles dud. queur afin que led. abbe ou autre pour luy que y sont assiz puissent myeulx voir les religieux et leurs seremonies pour les myeulx drecer et corriger” Transcribed from the Archives Départementales de l’Aveyron, G 420-14, fol. 18v. in Bournot-Didier, “Les stalles de Conques”, 160n4. For more about the suit, see chapter Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity, section Reclaiming Identity: Reform and the Struggle for Power.


\textsuperscript{364} In this period, only some monasteries and few chapters used dormitories. Some monastics, such as the Carthusians, led a quasi-hermetical life and each member had an individual cell for sleeping as well as other activities. Allen, “Carthusian Choir Stalls,” 322. Most cathedral chapters had abandoned the communal life by the late middle ages and canons lived independently. Matz, “Des stalles vides”, 18. Collegiate canons had never traditionally lived together as a community. Jeffrey, \textit{Collegiate Churches}, 11.

\textsuperscript{365} “Si potest fieri, omnes in uno loco dormiant; sin autem multitudo non sinit, deni aut viceni cum senioribus qui super eos solliciti sint pausent.” Chapter XXII Quomodo Dormiant Monachi. \textit{Rule of Saint Benedict}, 96. Chapter III Ut in illo claustro omnes in unum dormiant. \textit{Chrodegang Rules}, 30.

\textsuperscript{366} “Lectus tamen abbatissae in tali loco dormitoriis disponentur, quod inde ceteros dormitoriis lectos sine obstaculo, si commodo fieri poterit, valeat intueri.” Cited from Gent, RA, Fonds RC, 5; Cap. 5 in Els De Paermentier, “Experiencing Space through Women’s Convent Rules: The Rich Clares in Medieval Ghent (Thirteenth to Fourteenth Centuries),” \textit{Medieval Feminist Forum} 44.1 (2008): 61, 67n31. The copy of the rule from this convent dates from the fourteenth century, which demonstrates the continuity of these rules in religious houses, ibid., 64.
the likelihood of being observed is high, particularly since mutual surveillance on the part of all members was also promoted in the Rule. While the head of the community was the only one with the authority to mete out punishment, all members were encouraged to denounce sinners publicly to put fear into everyone.\textsuperscript{367} As Michel Foucault points out in his analysis of Jeremy Bentham’s eighteenth-century panopticon design, it is through the construction and manipulation of space and the distribution of people within that space that institutions are able to express and maintain their interests. God’s all-seeing eye was translated into the community’s all-seeing eyes: a brother is always watching you.

\textbf{Heavenly space}

“\textit{I will sing to you in the sight of the angels.}”\textsuperscript{368}

The choir of the early modern church was marked as a special place set aside for the performance of the \textit{opus Dei}. Isolated from the nave by walls and gates, the restricted access to the choir, both physical and visual, increased its mystique. Its customary proximity to the sanctuary, which housed the high altar where the titular relics of the church were interred and where the miracle of transubstantiation occurred daily, added to its aura. Upon entering an enclosed choir, a sense of being in another realm is created spatially, acoustically and visually. The walls are closer, sounds are muted, the light, the material surrounds and the imagery contrast with those of the nave (e.g., Figure A.45). During the hours, the presence of the community, the chanting of the office, and on certain occasions, the dazzle of glimmering candles and colourful tapestries mark the choir as even more distinct. This very distinction from what can be seen and what is

\textsuperscript{367}... \textit{adque constituimus ut nulli liceat quemquam fratrum suorum excommunicare aut cedere, nisi cui potestas ab abbate data fuerit. Peccantes autem coram omnibus artuantur ut ceteri metum habeant.”} ITim. 5:20 Chapter LXX Ut Non Praesumat Passim Aliquis Caedere. \textit{Rule of Saint Benedict, 222.}

\textsuperscript{368}... \textit{In conspectu angelorum psallam tibi.”} [Ps. 137/138:1] and Chapter XIX \textit{Rule of Saint Benedict, 90–91.}
taking place outside the choir suggests a space out of time. Such an allocation of place, time and behaviour that are divorced from the routines of everyday life is a universal strategy in marking the sacred.\textsuperscript{369}

Within the Christian tradition, there are several sacred places that exist outside of time and space. Although the conception of these places is not that well defined, the frequent allusions to them in liturgy, prayers and sacred texts are often realized in the actual fabric of Christian architecture, simultaneously evoking and affirming these immaterial places through their material realization.\textsuperscript{370} Properties of the enclosed choir echo certain properties of these sacred places. Iconographical programs and ornament may heighten the parallel. The choir stall set at St. Nicolai in Kalkar, with its prominent display of Marian imagery on the stall ends (e.g., Figure A.229) and abundant vegetal carving on the dorsals (e.g., Figure A.230), armrests (e.g., Figure A.231) and alternate misericords (e.g., Figure A.232), might have brought to mind the \textit{hortus conclusus}, or enclosed garden, that was associated with the Virgin Mary. The Virgin was certainly the main devotional focus of members of the \textit{Bruderschaft Unserer Lieben Frau} who commissioned and used the choirstalls:\textsuperscript{371} this Marian confraternity had these stalls built expressly to hold a weekly mass in her honour.\textsuperscript{372} The Zamora Cathedral set also presents garden imagery: there is profuse vegetal ornament, particularly on the undersides of the upper and lower canopies (e.g., Figure A.233, Figure A.234). However, in this case it is the Garden of Eden that is alluded to. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden is told through the depiction of only two key scenes that are not nearly as large as the


\textsuperscript{370}Megan Cassidy-Welch, \textit{Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth-Century English Cistercian Monasteries} (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2001), 249.

\textsuperscript{371}The original canopy was refurbished in the seventeenth century and the jube that the confraternity also commissioned was removed in 1818. Dehio, \textit{Handbuch der Deutschen Kunstdenkmäler}, 266–267. They would have provided a better idea of how the choir stalls appeared when they were built in the sixteenth century.

\textsuperscript{372}Kistenich, \textit{Geschichte der Bruderschaften und Gilden}, 151. For more about this confraternity and the stalls it commissioned, see chapter Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity.
dorsal reliefs, but they are carved in the round and their placement is prominent: scenes of the Temptation (Figure A.235) and the Expulsion from Paradise are shown opposite one another on the stall ends that frame the entrance to the upper return stalls. But what really draws attention to this story is the repetition of the scene of the Expulsion on the pinnacles of the three major tabernacles on the canopy. The angel expelling Adam and Eve from the Garden appears on the bishop’s stall tabernacle (Figure A.236), while the figures of Adam (Figure A.237) and Eve (Figure A.238) appear on the pinnacles of the north and south monarch stall tabernacles respectively. Thus, the angel seems to be casting the sinners not only out of Eden, but also out of the choir. Displayed high above the choir enclosure, these figures could be seen from outside the choir, linking the idea of the Garden of Eden and the enclosed choir not just among members of the choir, but also among those who, much like Adam and Eve, were barred from this special place.

But given the long association between the performance of the divine office and angels, it is heaven that is the most frequent Christian model alluded to in the choir. In the Rule, St. Benedict maintains that God and his angels are always observing his flock, but most particularly during the performance of the offices. He counsels monastics: “Therefore let us always remember what the prophet says:... ‘I will sing to you in the sight of the angels.’ So let us consider how we ought to behave in the sight of the divinity and his angels, and stand to sing psalms in such a way that our spirits and voices are in harmony.”

The association with angels goes beyond simply having them as an audience, however. As the New Testament relates, the angels themselves were choral singers who sang for joy at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:13–14) and at the opening

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374 For more about the display of the Expulsion on the Zamora Cathedral stalls, see chapter Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity, section Reclaiming Identity: Reform and the Struggle for Power.
of the book with the seven seals (Rev. 5:11). Furthermore, the singing of angels was understood to have influenced Christian choral performance. In the second of his treatises in *Tractatus de Canticis*, the fifteenth-century Parisian chancellor, Jean Gerson relates that Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 35–ca. 107), one of the apostolic fathers,\(^{376}\) heard angels singing on a mountain. This angelic performance of antiphons followed immediately by hymns so impressed St. Ignatius that he introduced this new manner of performance to his church.\(^{377}\) In the fourth century, John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) explicitly paralleled human and angelic choirs. In his *Homilia I in Oziam seu de Seraphinis* I, he wrote, “Above, the hosts of angels sing praise; below, men form choirs in the churches and imitate them by singing the same doxology.”\(^{378}\) Similar associations continued during the Middle Ages. In the *Golden Legend*, a highly popular collection of hagiographies that continued to be widely read in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Genoan archbishop, Jacobus de Voragine (ca. 1230–1298), recounted how Mary Magdalene is flown up to heaven every day at each of the canonical hours to hear the angels perform the divine office.\(^{379}\) This story thus goes beyond analogy to establish that angels perform the divine office, too. In fact, part of the prestige associated with performing the divine office was due to the identification of this performance with the performance of angels in heaven.\(^{380}\)

Compared to the *hortus conclusus* or the Garden of Eden, the conception of heaven is much less definite. It is associated with a variety of biblical metaphors and imagery

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\(^{377}\) “Legitur beatus Ignatius, vir totus ignei cordis et philocaptus in Christum, voces angelicas audisse supra montem unum, qui premissis antiphonis consequenter intonabant hymnos, quemadmodum deduxit ad ecclesiam suam celebrandum.” (II, 3, 24 (col. 668)). Transcribed in *Chant du coeur de Jean Gerson*, 434.

\(^{378}\) Translation from McKinnon, “Music in Early Christian Literature,” 89.

\(^{379}\) Interea beata Maria Magdalena supernae contemplationis auida asperrimum eremum petiit et in loco angelicis manibus praeparato per XXX annos incognita mansit.... Qualibet autem die septem horis canonicos ab angelis in aethera elevabatur et coelestium agminum gloriosos concentus etiam corporalibus auribus audiebat, unde diebus singulis his suavissimis dapibus satiata et inde per eosdem angelos ad locum proprium revocata corporalibus alimentis nullatenus indigebat.” Jacobi a Voragine, *Legenda aurea vulgo historica Lombardica dicta* (Leipzig: Th. Graesse, 1850), 413.

\(^{380}\) Cooper, “Architecture, Liturgy and Identity”, 83.
including a feast (Luke 13:29–33), a house (John 14:2–4), light (Rev. 22:5–9), a city: the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1–5), and has therefore been represented in many different ways, some of which have developed over time in response to new religious currents, rituals or apparatus. Given the connection between angels and the office, one non-biblical visualization of heaven is as a choir. Once choir stalls had been established in their classic form, they were depicted in manuscripts and panel paintings as the seating for angels and saints in heaven. In the fourteenth century, the Sienese Master of the Rebel Angels painted anxious angels filling the stalls on one side of the set, while the empty stalls on the opposite side had clearly just been vacated by the transformed rebels who hurtle downwards to hell (Figure A.239). This altarpiece panel may have been a model for the Limbourg Brothers in the early fifteenth century. The composition of the *Fall of the Rebel Angels* in the *Très Riches Heures*, which they illuminated for the Duc de Berry, is similar: rebels tumble out of their seats, plunging head over heels towards hell while the loyal angels remain sitting serenely in their stalls with their hands clasped in prayer (Figure A.240). The Limbourg Brothers also used choir stalls to evoke heaven in their portrayal of St. John’s vision on Patmos. God is enthroned like a bishop between two long facing rows of stalls where the twenty-four elders sit back comfortably with their hands on the hand rests, engaged in solitary contemplation or quiet conversation (Rev. 4:1–4) (Figure A.241). Using choir stalls to symbolize heaven continued in the sixteenth century. Jean Bellegambe’s *Last Judgement* triptych shows saints seated in stalls arranged in a semi-circle rather than two straight rows behind Christ in judgement, but the fact that they are choir stalls is unmistakable: the set is mounted on a platform, the seats are separated by à jour partitions and delicate tracery crowns the dorsals (Figure A.242). The composition of heaven in Jan Provoost’s *Last Judgement* is very close. Here, hand rests, elaborate tracery on the canopy and slender compound piers topped by statuettes

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that separate the seats all signal a set of choir stalls (Figure A.243). Images such as these reinforced the association between actual choir stalls and the idea of heaven.

Just as choir stalls were depicted in paintings to suggest heaven, imagery that evokes heaven was frequently displayed on choir stalls. Given the many associations between angels and the divine office discussed above, it is not surprising that angels appear prominently on many sets of choir stalls. They may appear on any part of the stalls and they are used in a variety of ways. They may be shown as isolated images to engage the eye. They might appear as part of a narrative, such as the Annunciation, to recall Scripture. Angels sometimes carry the *arma christi*, thus fulfilling a mnemonic devotional function. But often, their depiction highlights their association with the divine office. This relationship is most clearly displayed on the Albi Cathedral choir stalls: the seventy-two stone angels that surround the choir are all clothed in liturgical vestments. Most of the angels on the north side wear the white alb, which was reserved for important clerics on the most solemn feast days (Figure A.244); on the south side, most wear the dalmatic, the colour of which varied according to the liturgical year (Figure A.245).\(^{382}\) Positioned on pedestals on the upper dorsals between the shoulders of the higher clergy in the second row, they form the third and most elite row of choir members at the cathedral. A comparable configuration occurs on other choir stalls and stall designs. On the eight-seat set that was built for the former church of Saint-François in Geneva around 1445–47,\(^ {383}\) one dorsal on each side displays a relief carving of a full-length angel clad in liturgical vestments: one wears an alb, the other a dalmatic.\(^ {384}\) The contemporary set at the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Oyend and Saint-Claude in the Franche Comté (now Saint-Claude Cathedral) originally had four dorsals on the return stalls that displayed full-length angels carved in

\(^{383}\)It is now at Saint-Gervais Temple in Geneva. Charles, *Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle*, 16.
\(^{384}\)Charles, *Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle*, 103. For colour photographs of these angels, see 106, figs. 135 and 136.
relief (Figure A.246, Figure A.247, Figure A.248).\textsuperscript{385} At Saint-Gervais, the angels stand beside saints; at Saint-Claude, the angels accompanied prophets, apostles, monks and abbots. In both cases, they formed part of an additional row behind the religious who performed the divine office in these stalls. Similarly, in Daniel Hopfer’s etching of a choir stall design, six angels take their place in the upper part of the dorsal along with the four Church Fathers behind Christ and the saints who both adorn and occupy the stalls (Figure A.176).\textsuperscript{386} Full-length angels also appear in an intermediary tier on several choir stalls of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in England and Wales. Standing on columns just below the elbow rests of the upper stalls, these angels are larger and more prominent than their placement usually warrants; therefore the eye would quickly be drawn to this extra row of participants.\textsuperscript{387}

Angels are most frequently shown on choir stall canopies, however. No matter how they are dressed or what they are doing, the presence of a multitude of angels on this highest part of the stalls also evokes a heavenly space. At Auch Cathedral, most of the canopy pendants are angels gazing heavenward (e.g., Figure A.249). At León Cathedral, fluttering angels are carved on the majority of the canopy dividers on the upper stalls (e.g., Figure A.250).\textsuperscript{388} An angel musician appears on each of the two pendants of the special canopy that distinguishes one of the end stalls of the (now incomplete) Gaillon Chapel set (Figure A.251). The set at Plasencia Cathedral has angels carved on both the upper and the lower stall canopies: upright angels holding \textit{arma christi} hover from

\textsuperscript{385}The jube was destroyed around 1700 at which time the set was moved and reconfigured in a semi-circle. These dorsals from the return stalls were not reintegrated into the set when it was restored and put back in two facing rows in the nineteenth century. Two of the dorsals are now part of the collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, while the other two are at the Musée du Louvre in Paris. Clare Graham, “Two Fifteenth-Century Stall Backs from the Jura in the Victoria & Albert Museum,” \textit{The Burlington Magazine} 131.1034 (May 1989): 343–344.
\textsuperscript{387}Tracy, \textit{English Gothic Choir-Stalls, 1400–1540}, xx, 41–42. For images of the angels at Tong, Shropshire; Halsall, Lancashire and Gresford, Clwyd see plates 140, 142. St. Mary, Beverley also displays standing angels, but Tracy does not include a plate showing them.
\textsuperscript{388}Block, \textit{Medieval Misericords Iberia}, 30.
pendants on the upper stall canopy (e.g., Figure A.122) while full-length angels playing musical instruments recline above the vaults of the lower stalls (e.g., Figure A.123). In one of the few surviving contracts that explicitly describes what kind of motifs are to be used on new stalls, the canons instructed the joiners to include up to twelve angels suspended from the canopy of the fourteen new stalls, an additional fifteen angels above the seats and another two angels suspended from the tabernacle above the bishop’s throne.\textsuperscript{389} This stipulation to include angels on the canopy indicates that their presence was not merely a default motif used by choir stall makers.

The association of heaven with height is also called to mind by some of the soaring choir stall canopies. At Ulm Münster, five tall, slender tabernacles stretch high above the stalls on either side of the choir like fingers pointing towards heaven (Figure A.168). The angel on the tip of the tallest of the three tabernacles of the Zamora Cathedral set almost seems to touch the vaults (Figure A.252). At Amiens Cathedral, the stalls of honour are twice the height of the canopy itself: they rise thirteen metres in the air (Figure A.253).\textsuperscript{390} Furthermore, the joiners used interwoven intersections, particularly on the four terminal stalls, to accentuate this verticality. This technique involves careful planning and the use of lamination to make it appear as if mouldings in one component extend through the next (Figure A.254).\textsuperscript{391} Although none of these tabernacles comes close to reaching the elevated vaults of the church buildings they furnish, the confined space of the choir makes them seem even higher than they actually are. The ability to create tall wooden structures such as these was facilitated by developments in joinery during the late fourteenth century.

\textsuperscript{389}“et entre chacune des dites croisles y aura anges suspenduz et pilier à fiolle quie monteront ainsi qu’il appartiendra. Et seront faiz jacques à doze anges…et y aura d’abondant au rang desditz doze anges quinze aultres anges…Item y aura dessus la chaire de monseigneur l’évesque ung tabernacle …et auxi aura deux anges suspenduz dudit tabernacle…” Transcribed from a fabric notebook in the Archives des Côtes-d’Armor (formerly Côtes-du-Nord) in Barthélemy, \textit{Mélanges sur la Bretagne}, 113–114.

\textsuperscript{390}Lemé-Hébuterne, \textit{Les stalles d’Amiens}, 61.

\textsuperscript{391}Tracy and Harrison, \textit{Choir-Stalls of Amiens Cathedral}, 149. Unfortunately, due to the fact that the four terminals stand at the entries to the choir where countless people have brushed past over the centuries, much of the lamination, and thus the effect, has been lost, 160.
as well as by the use of glue and nails,\textsuperscript{392} but the aesthetic of verticality, seen particularly in important Gothic churches such as the cathedral of Amiens, was also part of a broader association in Gothic architecture of constructing heavenward. The more obvious visual link between a church spire silhouetted against the sky and the heavens\textsuperscript{393} is echoed in these microarchitectural towers.

It was not only the height of canopies that might be associated with heaven, but also their materiality. In particular, the way that material could be transformed, whether through design, technical skill, understanding of the properties of the material, or the use of polychromy, might bring to mind God’s transformative powers. At Albi Cathedral, carvers took advantage of the initial softness of the local white limestone to create incredibly fragile-looking carving that resembles metalwork more than stonework. This limestone then became as solid as metal over time, thus ensuring its remarkable preservation despite the intricacy of the openwork (Figure A.255).\textsuperscript{394} When using wood, the same developments in joinery that allowed greater height meant that, unlike earlier stalls, wooden canopies no longer had to be carved from large panels of wood. Rather, these wooden structures could be made up of small component parts that could be assembled in myriad ways. At Blaubeuren Abbey, the vegetal canopy seems to burst forth from the squared-off stall dorsals (Figure A.256). While the curving vines, curling tendrils and delicate blooms might evoke the hortus conclusus or the Garden of Eden, the unexpected metamorphosis of ordinary sawn planks back to the wood’s seemingly original state highlights the opposition between the man-made and the God-made.\textsuperscript{395} This transformation in the liminal space of the choir stall canopy suggests an interface between heaven and earth.

\textsuperscript{392}Tracy, \textit{English Gothic Choir-Stalls, 1200–1400}, 67.
\textsuperscript{395}Kavaler, \textit{Renaissance Gothic}, 220. For more discussion about the use of natural forms in architecture and microarchitecture around 1500, and the variety of ways that these forms might be understood, see chapter \textit{Natural Forms}, 199–229.
More often, canopies were crowned with inventive Gothic tracery (Figure A.1). Different approaches and techniques resulted in different effects. At both Saint-Nicolas in Fribourg and Hauterive abbey, the openwork, undulating tracery of the canopy ripples across the top of the solid stalls (Figure A.257, Figure A.136). On the Windsor canopy, the openwork combined with the lowering of the outer gable springers creates an engaging interplay of light and space (Figure A.258). The delicate à jour tracery on the Miraflores and the Ávila canopies resembles metal filigree (Figure A.259, Figure A.260). At Manchester, the complex joinery again recalls sophisticated metalwork (e.g., Figure A.261). Angled, curvilinear trilobe motifs are used to create a dense crown-like motif on the canopy of the set at Saint-Nicolas de Tolentino in Brou (Figure A.262). It is not surprising that metalwork is often a model for choir stall canopies. In the description of the Heavenly Jerusalem in Revelations, the city is said to be made of pure gold (Rev. 21: 18). Furthermore, there was a long tradition in painting of using metalwork-like architecture to signal heavenly space, which seems to have arisen from the close association between metalwork and reliquaries. This tradition continued in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as can be seen in some of the paintings discussed above, such as Jan Provoost’s *Last Judgement*. In fact, the golden tracery on the choir stalls in this painting is remarkably similar in form to the tracery on the canopy of the closely contemporary stalls at the abbey in Brou (Figure A.243). Moreover, while any original partial polychromy that choir stalls from this period might have had has, for the most part, been stripped, the account book from the fabric of Saint-Nicolas in Fribourg informs us that the canopy of the stalls was partially gilded shortly after the set was completed. The painter, Master Anthon, was hired to remove, then reinstall the tabernacles of the canopy once he had applied gold

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396 Tracy, *English Gothic Choir-Stalls, 1400–1540*, 63.
leaf (*follies dort*) between the tabernacles to embellish them (*lor doner apparisence*).\(^{398}\)

Especially when seen by candlelight, this gilded, undulating canopy in all its shimmering glory must surely have evoked the transcendental architecture of heaven (Figure A.207). While there are traces of gilding on a few stall canopies, such as the fourteenth-century one at Winchester Cathedral,\(^{399}\) no traces remain on the Fribourg stalls today,\(^{400}\) which suggests that more sets of stalls from this period might also have had partially gilded canopies. Certainly, the desire to create ethereal structures that might call to mind heaven’s architecture was frequently a goal of religious architecture and microarchitecture of this period,\(^{401}\) as the above examples, gilded or not, clearly show.

Finally, allusions to heaven may be present in the choir, but excluded from the nave. Although there have been changes and losses to the choir at Blaubeuren Abbey since it was completely rebuilt in the 1490s following a destructive fire, taken as a whole, the imagery and texts on the original architecture and furnishings of this *Gesamtkunstwerk* immediately call to mind the Heavenly Jerusalem. By contrast, no such references are found in the nave’s program.\(^{402}\) One must be careful about extrapolating from a single example, particularly since most choirs and naves were constructed and modified at various times. Nevertheless, this clear distinction within the space of a fifteenth-century Benedictine church shows that in this period the distinction between the choir and the nave was at times formulated, and likely more often understood, as reflecting the distinction between heaven and earth.

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\(^{398}\) “Item a maistre Anthon pour sa poine de levar et rassetar les tabernacles des formes, pour y mettre entre deux les follies dort, pour lor doner apparisence XX $” Transcribed from Kilchmeister Rechnung, 1464/65, fol. 100 in Rott, _Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte_, 276.


\(^{400}\) Several art historians report that during the restoration of the stalls from 1984 until 1993, some of the original polychromy was retrieved, but they do not report finding any traces of gilding on the canopy. See Kurmann-Schwarz and Gasser, “Les stalles”, 194; Pfulg, _Les stalles de Fribourg_, 21.

\(^{401}\) Kavaler, _Renaissance Gothic_, 189.

\(^{402}\) Morait-Fromm, “Raumprogramm und liturgische Dispositionen”, 41–52.
The formula of the fitted wooden choir stall successfully met the many performative, institutional, corporeal and symbolic requirements of a variety of Christian communities in early modern Europe. My examination of many aspects of this design has shown how intersecting and differing needs of the pre-Reformation church were met, providing a better understanding of both the use and the significance of choir stalls at this time, how through their structuring of the space of the choir, they supported the practice of the church, from the devotion of the individual cleric to the promotion of the larger institution.
Chapter 4

Choir Practice:

The Construction of Stalls

When the medical doctor, geographer and astronomer, Hieronymus Münzer, visited Toledo in January 1495 during his five-month voyage through Spain, the canons were so eager to show off the new lower choir stalls in their cathedral that they gave him a tour of the stalls, although the work had not yet been completed. Clearly, the canons were deeply invested in this project: that same January, only one day before the dying Cardinal Pedro González de Mendoza, archbishop of Toledo and patron of the stalls, succumbed to his illness, the chapter was able to commission the final twelve stalls to complete the lower seating before a new archbishop could potentially interfere with their plans.

Although choir stalls were part of the fabric of any newly built monastery, cathedral or collegiate church, such as those still in situ at Saint-Nicolas of Tolentino in Brou, France (Figure A.158), these wooden structures, which were occupied and leaned on dur-

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1 He is also known by the latinized form, “Monetarius.”
2 Heim, *Rodrigo Alemán*, 90.
3 The document pertaining to this commission is transcribed from Archivo Capitular de Toledo, Obra y Fábrica 790 (1493), fol. 19v ff. or fol. 190r as document 23 on page 385 in ibid., 94–95. The chapter’s concern proved to be correct: Mendoza’s successor, the rather ascetic Francisco Ximénes de Cisneros, did not continue the renewal of the stalls that Mendoza had initiated, 98.
ing the performance of collective rituals for many hours every day, needed to be replaced more frequently than their more durable masonry surround. Furthermore, changes in a church’s classification or in the size of its religious community might necessitate the addition or replacement of stalls, while other concerns, such as status or reform, might also warrant the construction or refurbishment of choir stalls. Nevertheless, the resolution to commission a new set of stalls was not one that was made lightly; the production of choir stalls was a significant undertaking in terms of time, finances and expertise. From the moment its construction was proposed to the moment that the set was used for the first time, many people, decisions and procedures were involved in ensuring its realization. Tracing the steps along the way reveals not only the individuals, groups and institutions that might be involved, but also how much investment was necessary to ensure the success of the project. Although many of the same customs and practices are seen in documents regarding other church commissions, such as altarpieces, as large objects that were not intended to be portable and that took years to build, the construction of choir stalls sometimes involved issues that were not relevant for other types of commissions. In my sample, there is no set with complete records, and even if there were, some decisions were never recorded on paper and can only be inferred. While many of the same processes were involved in numerous contracts, no single standard practice in the commissioning and construction of choir stalls existed. Therefore, by examining a variety of published documents, including chapter minutes, contracts, account books, guild documents and lawsuits related to a range of choir stall projects, a fuller picture emerges of how a set of stalls might be realized in the early modern period. More generally, scrutinizing this process sheds light on early modern woodworkers, workshop practice, guild conventions

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4See chapter Construction of Identity for discussion of issues related to changes in status and reform.
5In a few cases, documents for other church commissions, documents that are earlier than my starting point of 1450 or ones from outside of my geographical boundaries (specifically, Venice) are used to help fill out the sparse extant documentation. Unless otherwise stated, there is no reason to believe that the practices described in these documents were unique to other types of church furnishings, an earlier time or a particular place.
and patronal oversight, particularly for communal patronage, which was common in the case of replacement choir stalls.⁶ Both communal patronage and the communal nature of choir stall construction are at odds with the general conception of art production in the early modern period with its focus on self-described artists working for powerful individual patrons. The process is also quite distinct from the one seen in the developing art market of this period with its speculative production of luxury goods. Choir stalls were too expensive, too large, too rare and too dependent on space to suit this model, although at least one workshop certainly capitalized on some of the practices involved, such as streamlining production.⁷ Examining the process also provides information about a category of artist who cannot be classified as painter or sculptor or architect, but who created objects that were significant in their time. Some of them proudly signed their choir stalls, some of them became renowned for this work, and a few even stood up to patrons to maintain their artistic control, to protect their working method and to ensure the remuneration they felt they deserved.

The decision to construct choir stalls

There were various reasons that a community might decide to commission a new set of choir stalls. Most obviously, stalls had to be replaced when they were damaged beyond reasonable repair. As wooden structures with moving parts that were heavily used every day, they were subject to wear and tear. To help ensure that the new choir stalls at Freising Cathedral remained in good condition, a paragraph was added to their earlier

⁶For example, in fifteenth-century France, cathedral canons were responsible for the construction of their choir stalls. Kristiane Lemé, “Le rôle joué par les chanoines des chapitres cathédraux dans la construction et la conservation de leurs stalles : A partir de l’exemple de la cathédrale de Rouen,” in Chapitres et cathédrales en Normandie, ed. Sylvette Lemagnen and Philippe Manneville (Caen, France: Musée de Normandie, 1997), 490.

statutes around the time that the stalls were commissioned stipulating that canons who damaged their stalls had to have them repaired at their own expense (Figure A.263). Examination of the minutes of cathedral chapters over time shows that repairs to the stalls had to be made regularly to maintain them, as seen in the Toledo Cathedral account books, but at a certain point, the state of the stalls would no longer be considered worth repairing. Although the fabric accounts for Rouen Cathedral are missing for 1435 through 1457, during the time that the actual decision to construct a new set was made, the extensive repairs to the stalls made in the early 1430s suggests that the condition of the stalls was quickly becoming unsustainable and a new set would soon be required. At the Collegiate Church of Saint-Etienne in Troyes, France, the stalls that the canons decided to replace were described in the chapter minutes of 1532 as rotten and falling to pieces. Similarly, when Master Bernhart and his journeymen dismantled the old choir stalls in Freising, all of the damp (and therefore in danger of rotting if not actually rotten) wood was removed. Presumably, any dry wood was kept to use in the new project.

Wooden choir stalls could also be damaged by outside forces. When a large portion of the collegiate church, Notre Dame de l’Assomption, was destroyed by a fire that

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8“Statuimus et ordinamus quod sedes / ad dei omnipotentis laudem et gloriam / ac honorem ecclesie de nouo magnis ? cum / impensis facte inaduertencia aut / petulancia canoniciorum uel uicariorum / non comburantur seu deformantur. / Quicumque uero in hiis ? / reus compertus fuerit totiens quotiens / pro superioribus duas libras cere? pro in- / feriobus vero [inserted above] unam soluet ecclesie irremissibi / liter. Et damnun in sedibus conmissum propriis/ faciet reparatini expensis et richilom / nus fructibus / prebende aut fructibus sui / beneficii careat donec de eisdem sa / tisfecet” Many thanks to Dr. Magda Hayton and Dr. Christine Kralik for their transcription of this passage.

9Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 92. Relevant excerpts from Archivo Capitular de Toledo are quoted on page 349, notes 115–116.


devastated the town of Romont, Savoy in 1434, the choir stalls burned and new ones had to be built as part of the church reconstruction.\textsuperscript{13} Similarly, extensive fire damage to the monastery in Blaubeuren, Württemberg in 1421 necessitated new choir stalls once the choir itself had been rebuilt.\textsuperscript{14} At Ripon Minster in England, the collapse of two sides of the church’s central tower in 1458 ruined the earlier choir stalls and a new set was made during the subsequent rebuilding of the tower and the choir.\textsuperscript{15}

Another reason to replace stalls was the need for more seating, as the cathedral canons of Saint-Tugdual in Tréguier, Brittany indicate in a record of 1508. At the beginning of their detailed description of the additional stalls that they were commissioning, they explain that they want to extend and expand the choir, which would give them fourteen new seats.\textsuperscript{16} Presumably, these extra seats were necessary for a community that must have grown since their existing set was built.

Finally, it seems that some sets were replaced more for outward show, than out of necessity. About six weeks before the second group of new lower stalls for Toledo Cathedral was supposed to be ready,\textsuperscript{17} the cathedral canons decided to donate the old ones to the priory of Santa Ursula,\textsuperscript{18} which indicates that the stalls were still usable, and since only the lower ones were being replaced in the constricted choir, it is unlikely that the new set would have allowed for more seating. Similarly, the cathedral in Konstanz donated its old choir stalls to the collegiate church of St. Stephan after a new set was made.

\textsuperscript{13}Strub, \textit{Stalles fribourgeoises}, 11.
\textsuperscript{14}Moraht-Fromm, “Raumprogramm und liturgische Dispositionen”, 41.
\textsuperscript{15}Tracy, \textit{English Gothic Choir-Stalls, 1400–1540}, 17–18.
\textsuperscript{17}Heim, \textit{Rodrigo Alemán}, 93.
\textsuperscript{18}“en XVI de noviembre de XCII acordaron los dichos señores que las sillas viejas que se quitaran del choro para poner las nuevas que se han de poner que se den a la priora e monjas de Santa Ursula en limosna” Transcribed from Archivo Capitular de Toledo, Actas Capitulares 2 (1490–1501), fol. 58r as Document 15 in Heim, \textit{Rodrigo Alemán}, 384.
installed in 1471.\textsuperscript{19} Also, contemporary descriptions and current examinations of stalls that were replaced often reveal that they were not as sumptuous as the subsequent stalls. In the contract for new stalls at Zamora Cathedral in Spain, the old stalls are described as having painted curtains (\textit{liencos pintados}) rather than wooden dorsals as backing.\textsuperscript{20} The mid-fifteenth-century stalls at Bern Minster, which were re-purposed as pews in 1523, are much plainer than the current set that superseded them.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, many sets were replaced at a time of community reform, which possibly necessitated increased seating, but more obviously involved a shift in the identity of the community, which was the most likely impetus for the acquisition of new choir stalls.\textsuperscript{22}

Once a resolution had been made to build a new set of stalls, there were many matters that had to be considered: the procurement of sufficient funds, the choice of a formal model, the design of an iconographic program, the acquisition of materials, and the search for a competent person to make the stalls. Depending on the patrons’ means and connections, the availability of woodworkers, as well as how easy it was to achieve consensus about the various choices that were available, it might take several years between the decision and the beginning of construction. In Bern, the choir stalls are first mentioned in the Ratsmanual in October 1517,\textsuperscript{23} five years before the contract

\textsuperscript{19} “Im jar 1461 [sic] ward gemacht das köstlich dreifach chorgestül im domstift zu Constantz. Das alt schanckt man in den chor gen Saut Stefan...” Cited from MS. 425 fol. 179 1461 and A 83 fol. 107 in Hans Rott, \textit{Quellen und Forschungen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte im XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert} (Stuttgart, Germany: Strecker und Schröder Verlag, 1933), 126. For discussion of why the date of 1461 is not possible, see Heribert Reiners, \textit{Das Münster Unser Lieben Frauen zu Konstanz} (Constance, Germany: Jan Torbecke Verlag, 1955), 347–348.

\textsuperscript{20} “...las syllas que estan agora en el dicho coro con los liencos pintados...” The full contract of 1502 is reproduced and transcribed from Archivo Catedral de Zamora, Contratos y obras as documento no. 9 in Guadalupe Ramos de Castro, \textit{La Catedral de Zamora} (Zamora, Spain: Fundación Ramos de Castro, 1982), 594–595.

\textsuperscript{21} Nineteen complete seats, including their misericords, remain distributed in several side chapels. Mojon, \textit{Das Berner Münster}, 388.

\textsuperscript{22} See chapter Construction of Identity, subsection Performing monastic reform for more discussion of this issue.

\textsuperscript{23} “Denne von des gestüls wägen im chor.” Excerpt from Staatsarchiv Bern, Ratsmanual 175, fol. 16, z. 7. Okt. 1517, transcribed in Rott, \textit{Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte}, 256.
was signed for their construction on December 5, 1522. In particular, acquiring wood often took place well in advance since seasoned timber was needed for at least some parts of the stalls. In Fribourg, then in Savoy, wood for the stalls was purchased three years before work started on the set in 1462. Even after building had begun, unforeseen circumstances, such as financial problems, an unreliable workforce, or the death of a patron or artisan, might turn a project of several years into one lasting much longer, even decades. The eighty-four seat set at León Cathedral in Spain was overseen by three successive masters from about 1460 to the early 1480s, while the set of 113 stalls at Auch Cathedral in France was constructed intermittently under three consecutive cardinals from approximately 1515 until 1554.

**Financial matters**

The construction of a set of choir stalls was a costly undertaking. Depending on how elaborate it was, a set could be the most expensive furnishing in a church. Concerns about the cost of such a project are occasionally recorded, as at Troyes Cathedral in 1528, when the new bishop, Odard Hennequin, expresses his dismay at the high cost of the stalls that had been started under his predecessor. He points to other fabric responsibilities that are more urgent, such as repairs to the bell tower, and threatens to make an appeal to the Grand Conseil, the superior court of justice, if the project is not simplified to bring costs under control. More often, financial concerns are reflected in the management of

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24 “Min herren haben Jacoben dem tischmacher und sinem gesellen, einen zwifachen stand in chor verdinget...” Transcribed from Staatsarchiv Bern, Ratsmanual 195, fol. 132, z. 5. Dez. 1522 in ibid., 256.

25 See section Wood preparation, below, for more discussion.

26 Schmid, “Stalles de Fribourg”, 149.

27 Eight of the original eighty-four stalls were lost in the eighteenth century when the set was moved to its present location in the nave. Teijeira Pablos, “Choir Stalls of Leon,” 175.


29 Cooper, “Architecture, Liturgy and Identity”, 90.

resources. Simplification, postponement, the use of less expensive materials, allocation of funding from other projects, solicitation of subscriptions, and the sale of the old stalls are all strategies that were at times employed to ensure sufficient capital for the completion of a set of stalls. The specification in the contract of 1426 to carve the stalls and jube for the Hôtel-Dieu Saint-Jean d’Angers, Anjou without figures or funny faces (sanz ymages ne grimasses) may have been a cost-saving measure.\(^{31}\) At Rouen Cathedral, the fabric’s straitened circumstances due to the ongoing hardship of the Hundred Years War and the English occupation forced the canons to delay the construction of new stalls until the 1450s despite the need for more and more frequent repairs of their old stalls from the 1430s on.\(^{32}\) The set that Jörg Sürlin the Younger\(^{33}\) built for the church of Saint Michael in Zwiefaltendorf, Württemberg in 1499 was made out of spruce, which was relatively cheap compared to the oak he used on his most elaborate set in Blaubeuren.\(^ {34}\) In the 1520s in Estavayer-le-Lac, Savoy, the town gave up its annual banquet, known as Conrey, for three years,\(^ {35}\) allocating the money thus saved towards a set of choir stalls for their collegiate church, Saint-Laurent.\(^ {36}\) A subscription offered to the most important townspeople in Amiens netted over 300 livres towards the construction of new choir stalls


\(^{32}\) Lardin, “Stalles de la cathédrale de Rouen”, 34.

\(^{33}\) Following the convention in recent literature on Sürlin and his more famous father, I will spell the son’s surname with a ü and his father’s name with a y. Contemporary documents show a variety of spellings for both of their names. See Rott, Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte, 50–55.

\(^{34}\) Rommé, “Serielle oder massenhafte Produktion?”, 279–281.

\(^{35}\) P. Apollinaire Dellion, Dictionnaire historique et statistique des paroisses catholiques du Canton de Fribourg (Fribourg, Switzerland: Imprimerie du Chroniqueur Suisse, 1886), 140. According to Dellion, this feast was frequently cancelled to help fund projects of public interest, 178. Unfortunately, this twelve volume series does not provide specific references to the documents cited. See volume one, 1884, pages 3–4 for a summary of the sources used.

for the Saint-Jacques funerary chapel. And the old stalls at Troyes Cathedral were sold to Canon Collet in 1534 once the new ones were ready to be put in place, thus recouping some of the chapter’s outlay.

It is difficult to assess the precise cost of a set of choir stalls. In many cases, the complete financial records are not extant, but even when they are, the methods of payment and the allocation of responsibility for the procurement of materials are neither standardized nor straightforward. Non-monetary contributions are impossible to estimate when insufficient information as to quantity or quality has been recorded. Furthermore, due to the variety of currencies in use and changes in currencies over time, it is complicated to translate the expense into today’s terms or even to compare the price of one set to another. The complication of currency exchange is recognized in contemporary documents, such as the contract of 1488 between Jean Moynié and the collegiate church in Le Vigan, France, in which the joiner’s cash salary is precisely converted into another currency, presumably for clarity and perhaps also to ensure that any fluctuations in value during the period that he makes the stalls does not result in a dispute over payment. With these caveats, a table comparing known total expenditure (rounded) of sets discussed in this dissertation along with the number of stalls and the dates of construction is provided on the following page.

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37Account of 1555–56, GG 606, fol. 27, reported in Durand, “Le cimetière Saint-Denis à Amiens,” 290. For a list of the subscribers, see 290n2.

38Reported from Archives de l’Aube, G 1282, fol. 398v in Piétresson de Saint-Aubin, “Deux menuisiers picards,” 402. Unfortunately, Saint-Aubin does not report the price, nor does he clarify whether this canon was from a different church that wanted to use the stalls, or whether a Troyes Cathedral canon had some other use for the stalls.


40“Et cum pro pretio centum scudorum, quodlibet scutorum computato pro XXVII solidum et VI den. monete curentis –” Transcribed from the Archives diocésaines de Cahors, D 20/15 (Documents Albe) in Freigang, “L’Ancienne Eglise Collégiale du Vigan,” 539.
Chapter 4. Choir Practice: The Construction of Stalls

Cost of Choir Stalls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th># of Stalls</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Claude Abbey</td>
<td>600 florins de petit poids</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1449–1465&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Nicolas, Fribourg</td>
<td>357 livres</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1459–1464&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rouen Cathedral</td>
<td>6961 livres</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1457–1469&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulm Minster</td>
<td>1188 gold florins</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1469–1474&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo Cathedral</td>
<td>604 851 maravedis</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1489-1496&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Peter, Basel</td>
<td>200 Basel pounds</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1494–1499&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St-Jean-de-Maurienne Cathedral</td>
<td>2086 florins de petit poids</td>
<td>81 extant</td>
<td>1498/1499&lt;sup&gt;g&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Nicolai, Kalkar</td>
<td>400 Hornsche Gulden</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1505–1508&lt;sup&gt;h&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sint-Pieterskerk, Oirschot</td>
<td>300 Rhenish guilders</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1508–1511&lt;sup&gt;i&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averbode Abbey</td>
<td>402 Rhenish florins</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1511–1513&lt;sup&gt;j&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tréguier Cathedral</td>
<td>773 livres bretons</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1508–1514&lt;sup&gt;k&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amiens Cathedral</td>
<td>9488 livres</td>
<td>118 or 120</td>
<td>ca. 1508-1522&lt;sup&gt;l&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongerlo Abbey</td>
<td>1000–50 gold Rhenish florins</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1530&lt;sup&gt;m&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapelle Saint-Jacques, Amiens</td>
<td>384 livres</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1553–1556&lt;sup&gt;n&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>b</sup>Strub, <i>Stalles fribourgeoises</i>, 10.
<sup>c</sup>Achille Deville, “Appendice,” in <i>Stalles de la cathédrale de Rouen</i>, (Rouen, France: Nicétas Periaux, 1838), 198.
<sup>d</sup>Deutsch, “Der ehemalige Hochaltar und das Chorgestühl”, 244–245n11.
<sup>e</sup>Heim, <i>Rodrigo Alemán</i>, 97.
<sup>f</sup>Rott, <i>Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte</i>, 119–120.
<sup>h</sup>Hilger, “Die Stadtpropfarrkirche St. Nicolai”, 228.
<sup>j</sup>Ibid., 248.
<sup>k</sup>Barthélemy, <i>Mélanges sur la Bretagne</i>, 116.
<sup>l</sup>Durand, <i>Monographie de la Cathédrale d’Amiens</i>, 152.
<sup>n</sup>Durand, “Le cimetière Saint-Denis à Amiens,” 288–291.

In three of the above cases, the Rouen, the Averbode and the Amiens commissions, extant accounts include daily wages for woodworkers, which can be used to provide some sense of the value of the set since the wages of skilled labourers did not tend to fluctuate.
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greatly. Nevertheless, it is difficult to estimate annual earnings because the number of days people might work in a year varied significantly. Although the church had traditionally forbidden work on Sundays, and Pope Gregory IX (1227–1241) had published an official list of thirty-seven holy days with the same work rules as Sundays, the type of work, the guild or confraternity that oversaw the work, the power of local authorities, and the economic situation all affected how many days a person might actually work in a year. Since joiners did not practice a trade that could be considered essential and were skilled enough that they were not at the lowest end of the wage spectrum, I base my calculations on a 300-day year, assuming no work on Sundays or the most holy days. The majority of the joiners working on the Rouen cathedral stalls received four sous, six deniers (half a sou) per day. The total cost of these stalls was 6961 livres. As there were twenty sous in a livre, this works out to the equivalent of about 103 years of an average joiner’s earnings for a project that lasted twelve years. At Amiens cathedral, the lowest-paid woodworkers earned three sous per day; the cost of the stalls (excluding some wood donations of unknown value) was 9488 livres. This works out to approximately 211 years of a simple woodworker’s earnings for a set that took at most fourteen years to complete. The set at Averbode abbey cost 402 Rhenish florins. In the accounts, the main joiner plus five of his workers were paid a total of fifteen stuivers a day, which averages to 2.5 stuivers each. As there were twenty-eight stuivers in a Rhenish florin, this works out to fifteen years of an average joiners’ earnings for a three-year project.

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41 Duits, “Art, Class and Wealth”, 56.
43 Deville, “Appendice”, 182.
44 $6961 \times 20 \text{ sous per livre} = 139,220 \text{ sous}, \frac{139,220 \text{ sous}}{4.5 \text{ sous per day}} = 30,937.78 \text{ days}, \frac{30,938 \text{ days}}{300 \text{ days worked per year}} = 103 \text{ years}$
45 Durand, Monographie de la Cathédrale d’Amiens, 149.
46 $9488 \times 20 \text{ sous per livre} = 189,760 \text{ sous}, \frac{189,760 \text{ sous}}{3 \text{ sous per day}} = 63,253.33 \text{ days}, \frac{63,253 \text{ days}}{300 \text{ days worked per year}} = 211 \text{ years}$
48 $402 \text{ Rhenish florins} \times 28 \text{ stuivers per florin} = 11,256 \text{ stuivers}; \frac{11,256 \text{ stuivers}}{2.5 \text{ stuivers per day}} = 4502.4; \frac{4502 \times 300 \text{ days worked per year}}{15 \text{ years}} = 15 \text{ years}$
Unfortunately, the Averbode stalls are no longer extant and we do not know how large or how complex the set was, but the length of the project indicates that it was much smaller and simpler than the Rouen and Amiens sets, which would account for a lower price. Such a large portion of the Rouen stalls have been destroyed that it is difficult to know how elaborate they originally were, but the Amiens stalls, as well as being about twenty percent larger, are certainly one of the finest extant sets of stalls from this period, so it is not surprising that they were a great deal more expensive (Figure A.1). It is difficult to draw conclusions from these tentative calculations, and the other examples in the table cannot be properly interpreted without comparanda. Nevertheless, assembling this information might be helpful to readers with access to appropriate sources.

**Patronal and non-patronal contributions**

The often complex nature of funding sources also indicates the significant outlay associated with the construction.

The church fabric was a group of members whose main role was to oversee maintenance and construction in the church, as well as administering the funding for these projects.\(^49\) Therefore, most choir stall commissions were managed by the fabric, even when they were not directly financed by it. Unfortunately, many church fabric accounts have not been completely preserved, and those that have have not all been examined, but there are accounts that have been studied, as well as other types of extant documents that shed light on a range of resources used by chapters to finance choir stall projects.

The original building accounts at Amiens Cathedral were destroyed at the end of the eighteenth century, but secondhand records from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries contain information about the Amiens stalls that provide interesting insights into how the chapter funded their new set of stalls.\(^50\) The communal funds managed by


the fabric contributed the greatest amount of money to the project by far. These funds were augmented by the fines (marances) that the canons were obligated to pay for minor transgressions in the choir, such as arriving late, making noise or wearing inappropriate clothing. The chapter also supplied part of the necessary wood for the construction from capitular property holdings in La Neuville-en-Hez near Beauvais. In addition to this communal funding, some individual canons made personal donations, both monetary and non-monetary. Financial contributions ranged from twenty to 120 livres, and two canons provided wood for the construction.51 Outside donations might also be made towards choir stall projects. While most of the funding to build the choir stalls at Saint-Nicolas in Fribourg came from the fabric, there were contributions from a number of prominent citizens as well.52 The former avoyer,53 Jean Gambach, donated funds towards the choir stalls.54 At Estavayer-le-Lac, several outside donors contributed to the stalls at the Collegiate church of Saint-Laurent, including Sébastien de Montfaucon, bishop of Lausanne,55 and Claude d’Estavayer, bishop of Belley, who visited the town on September 19, 1523, while the choir stall project was underway.56 In the case of the choir stalls at the Saint-Jacques funerary chapel in Amiens, most of the money was raised through subscription. The richest and most important townspeople were invited to contribute to the stalls, which they agreed to on the condition that their coats of arms were carved on the stalls to ensure that their contribution was never forgotten.57 And, as mentioned above, funds might be reallocated from other sources, such as the money normally used

51Ibid., 47–48.
52Pfülg, Les stalles de Fribourg, 12.
54“Item audit maistre Anthon sur bon compte de la faczon desdits formeze per la main de mons. lancien advoyer Jehan Gambach...” Transcribed from Freiburg, Staatsarchiv, Kilchmeister Rechnung, fol. 64, 1462/63 in Rott, Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte, 302.
55Cited in Dellion, Dictionnaire historique et statistique, 140.
56Reported in Strub, Stalles fribourgeoises, 12.
to pay for the feast, Conrey, in Estavayer-le-Lac. Such outside donations show that choir stalls were considered important even by those who were not their primary users.

Artisan remuneration

Assessing the income that the artisans received is even more complicated. Workers might be paid by the day or by the piece, or a master might be allocated a predetermined amount to manage the project in whole or in part. Furthermore, exceptions that are difficult to recover might be included.\(^{58}\)

The surviving account rolls that document the construction of Saint George’s Chapel in Windsor, England include many payments by the piece for work done on the choir stalls, such as seven pounds paid to Dirike Vangrove and Giles van Castell for an image of Saint George with his dragon, and forty pounds paid to the carvers Robert Ellis and John Filles for six tabernacles for the canopy (e.g., Figure A.264).\(^{59}\) In Zamora, the contract specifies the price that the cathedral chapter agrees to pay for the main components of the set: Juan de Bruxeles is to receive 9000 maravedís for each stall (Figure A.265) and each corner (Figure A.266), and 3000 maravedís for each set of steps (Figure A.224).\(^{60}\) In Gentbrugge in the Low Countries, by contrast, the Rich Clares and Gillis van Dickele agreed to a fixed price of sixty-five Flemish livres for a set of choir stalls and a choir

\(^{58}\)For example, in the contract of October 30, 1510 that Jan Borchmans signed to make the choir stalls for the Averbode Abbey church in the Low Countries, it is stipulated that he and his team of five men will be paid fifteen stivers per day. However, if one of the five is absent, they will earn one stiver less, while if Jan himself is absent, they will earn five stivers less. “Anno xvc ende thien den XXXen dach in October heb ik Jan Borchman geloeft te maken een gestoelte zoe als mijnen Heere van Everbode believen sal ende ick hebbe mijnen heere geloeft te comen wercken in dierste vander vastenen met vyff knech ende met my selven ecklen dach voir 15 stuvers... Item oft enich van mynen vyff knechten uut den werck bleve soe sal myn heere ecklen dach dair voir inhouden eenen stover ende blyff ick uut den werck alzoe sal myn heere my corten 5 stuvers....” Transcribed from the Archief abdij Averbode, 1, reg. 4, fol. 148–149 in Fransolet, “L’auteur des stalles d’Averbode,” 157–158.

\(^{59}\)“Et solut. Robert Elis et Johanni Filles Kervers pro factura vj tabernaculorum (xl.li.) pro chor Ac Dirike Vangrove et Egidio vancastel pro factura Imaginis sancti Georgij et draconis (vij.li.)...” Transcribed from Saint George’s Chapel Archives, Accounts etc., Exchequer K.R. Bundle 496/17, 1477-8-1478-9 in Hope, Windsor Castle, 399.

\(^{60}\)... por cada sylla alta e baxa nueve mill maravedís... e cada rincón alto e baxo en el precio de las syllas alta e baxa... por cada una escalera tres mil maravedís....” Transcribed and reproduced from the Archivo Catedral de Zamora, Contratos y obras in Ramos de Castro, La Catedral de Zamora, 599.
In some cases, more than one method of payment was used, depending on the worker. In Rouen, Phillipot Viart, who was in charge of the cathedral choir stalls for ten years, and the joiners working under him, were paid a daily wage. The ymagiers hired to make figures and vegetal carvings, on the other hand, were generally paid by the piece. Occasionally, the method of payment even changed during the process. At Troyes Cathedral, the fabric originally paid each joiner, including the head of the workshop, a daily wage that varied according to skill and experience, but in January 1531, when a new contract was negotiated, the head was given a fixed sum for the rest of the project out of which he had to compensate his workers as well. At the collegiate church of Saint-Pierre in Saumur in Anjou, the joiners, Pierre Pintart and Raoullet Michau, who had been contracted to buy materials and build a set of choir stalls at a fixed price per stall, abandoned the work in 1475 after having completed only one side of the set. Shortly thereafter, day workers were hired in their place to complete the unfinished side, and the cost of materials was thereafter borne directly by the patrons.

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61 “Al dat voers. es beef Gillis voers. ghomen te makene ende te leverne mevrven ende covente om eene sekere somme van penninghen, te weten om vive ende tsestich ponden grooten vlaemsche,...” Contract transcribed from the Archives provinciales of Ghent in Busscher, Peintres et sculpteurs à Gand, 232n.

62 Lardin cites numerous daily wages earned by joiners and payments by the piece to carvers over the course of the 1450s and 1460s from the Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2492–G 2497.


64 A Pierre Pintart, menuisier, lequel et ung nommé Raoullet Michau, aussi menuisiers, ont prins à faire des dites chères et fournir de toutes matières pour la faczon d’icelles, ainsi que plus applain appert et est contenu ou marché ce fait le XIIIe jour de mars mil IIIe LXXXIII, qui est au pris de XI livres tournois par chacune chère...” The extant accounts pertaining to the construction of these choir stalls are partially transcribed from Archives départementales de Maine-et-Loire, Comptes de l’église Saint-Pierre de Saumur, 1475–1480 in Port, “L’histoire des arts et des artistes en Anjou,” 283. This and the following two excerpts are taken from these accounts.

65 “Autre despense et mise de deniers pour le parachèvement d’un des coutez desdites chesres,... que lesdits Pintart et Raoullet Michau avoient encommancé; lequel cousté desdictes chesres lesdits Pintart et Michau n’ont pas parachevé et l’ont lessé imparfait, et s’en sont allez et absentez du pays...lesdits procureurs ont fait parachever ledit cousté des dites chesres par les ourvriers cy après nommez et à journées:...” ibid., 284.

66 For example, “A Jehan Piau, pour XIIII toysses de menbrures qu’il a baillées pour faire lesdictionaries chaires, la somme de X s. VI d. qui est à raison de IX d. la toyssse, comme appert par quitstance, pour ce, cy.” Port, “L’histoire des arts et des artistes en Anjou,” 286.
Monetary bonuses also added to the cost of choir stalls. Sometimes they were specified in advance as incentive for the artisans to do their best work. In the contract of 1529 that Matthys de Wayere and Kersten Sweluwen signed with the abbot of Tongerlo, Antonius Tsgrooten, to make the stalls for the Premonstratensian monastic church, there was a promise of an extra thirty, forty or fifty florins on top of the 1000 florin price if the work was deemed superior to the approved model.\(^67\) Bonuses might also be promised for work that was completed by a deadline. In a document notarized in Brussels on February 26, 1529, Margaret of Austria tried to compel Loys van Boghem to quickly finish the construction of the abbey at Brou, including the choir stalls or seiges (sic), by promising him a substantial gratuity if he met her target date.\(^68\) At other times, bonuses seem to have been given spontaneously in appreciation for a job well done. Sometimes they were given during the project, no doubt to encourage the workers to keep up the good work. At Rouen Cathedral, the chapter gave the choir stall workers a bonus after visiting their workshop on February 9, 1458 to examine the sample stall that the workers had built.\(^69\) The chief carver of the Windsor Chapel stalls, William Berkeley, received a monetary reward at two different points during the construction of the stalls, the second time, along with the chief mason and the chief carpenter of the chapel, for diligence (diligencia).\(^70\) After the choir stall construction at Tréguier Cathedral was completed

\(^{67}\)“Van dezen werke zal Matthys hebben 1000 ryns-guld. te 20 st. en meer 30, 40, 50, is‘t beter als den patroon.” Transcribed in the eighteenth-century by canon and archivist of Tongerlo Abbey, Adrianus Heylen, in Adrianus Heylen, Historische verhandeling over de Kempen (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1837 (1790)), 159nCC.

\(^{68}\)“...si ledict maistre Loys, par son moien et bonne diligence fait tellement que les église et couvent de Brouz (dont il a charge) soient entièrement parfaictz tant de massonnerie, charpenterie, verrières, seiges, cloucher et autres choses nécessaires, ...en deans trente mois,...madicte Dame pardessus son salaire...luy donnera encoires la somme de cincq cens livres de quarante gros pour une fois en don et gratuité espéciale.” The full document is transcribed from Archives du Nord, série G, carton de l’église de Brou in Jules Finot, “Louis van Boghem : architecte de l’Église de Brou,” Réunion des sociétés des beaux-arts des départements XII (1888): 231–232. Margaret, unfortunately, died before the thirty months had passed and never saw the completed abbey.

\(^{69}\)Reported from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2492 in Lemé, “Le rôle joué par les chanoines”, 481.

\(^{70}\)Ac in regardis condonatis. videlicet Henrico Jenyns principali Cementario (lxxvj s viijd) Willemo Berkeley, principali Kerver (liijs iiijd) Johanni Squyer principali Carpentario (liijs iiijd) pro bono dili-
in November 1514, the joiners Girard Dru and Tugdual Kerguz were presented with a substantial gratuity of eighty-eight livres as appreciation for the grand, beautiful (grant et bel) set they had made.\textsuperscript{71} In Kalkar, in the Duchy of Cleves, the patrons rewarded each of Henrick Berntz’s workers with a Duke Philip Gulden after the stalls were put in place at Saint Nicolai church in 1508.\textsuperscript{72} The head of a project might request a special bonus to reward particularly accomplished work, perhaps to retain a worker on the job, perhaps as an incentive to others, or perhaps solely because the work stood out. In Troyes, the worker Maucomble received a bonus after his supervisor reported to the chapter how well he had executed the assembly of the seats for the choir.\textsuperscript{73} Bonuses might even be solicited by the artisans for themselves once the project was completed. In 1457, the chapter of Cuenca Cathedral commissioned two outside evaluators to assess the finished choir stalls to decide whether the artisans merited the additional 2 000 maravedis that they had requested for having exceeded what was required (alliende de lo que eran obligados). The evaluators agreed with the assessment, and the obrero of the fabric, who was responsible for overseeing the financing of church building and repairs, was ordered to pay them this bonus.\textsuperscript{74}
The issue that makes remuneration particularly difficult to compare is the wide variety of non-monetary payments that many workers received. As in many other contexts of artistic production, lodging, food and drink, as well as other kinds of bonuses are frequently mentioned in contracts and account books.

Accommodation was often part of a woodworker’s payment. While some choir stall makers, such as Jörg Syrlin the Elder who had his workshop and many commissions in Ulm, and Gillis van Dickele of Ghent working in nearby Gentbrugge beginning in 1506, had commissions close to home, others travelled extensively and therefore required housing with each move. In the late 1400s and early 1500s, Rodrigo Alemán worked in Spanish towns that are hundreds of kilometres apart: Toledo, Ciudad Rodrigo and Plasencia. The joiner, André Sulpice, made stalls in a number of places in southern France between 1461 and his death in 1490: Vence, Villefranche-de-Rouergue, Martiel (abbey of Loc-Dieu) and Rodez. When he was hired to build the stalls for Rodez Cathedral in 1478, it is noted in the contract that he is from Marvejols, more than sixty kilometres away. He was therefore provided with suitable lodging that would also accommodate members of his household. Similarly, in the contract for the stalls in Le Vigan, the joiner, Jean Moynié, who is described at the beginning of the contract

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75 For a summary of the commissions Syrlin’s workshop undertook, see Julius Baum, Die Ulmer Plastik um 1500 (Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag Julius Hoffmann, 1911), 16–17.

76 A document of 1511 shows Gillis and his son living on Brabantse Dam Street in Ghent. It is transcribed from Archives de Gand, Jaer-register, fol. 4 in Busscher, Peintres et sculpteurs à Gand, 233n.


78 “Et magistrum Andream Supplicii menuserium loci de Maroligio diocesis Mimatensis, ex altera :” The complete contract is reproduced from a transcription of the contract in the Archives de l’Areyron, Fonds du Chapitre de Rodez in Louis Bion de Marlavagne, Histoire de la cathédrale de Rodez (Angers, France: Imprimerie P. Lachèse, Belleuvre et Dolbeau, 1875), 303.

79 “Item providebitur sibi per dominum nostrum seu ejus ex parte de domo congrua et libera ad inhabitandum et operandum et perficiendum predictum opus pro se et famulis ac familia jam dictus durante dicto tempore nisi infra dictum tempus esset completum penitus juxta modum prenotatum.” Reproduced from a transcription of the contract in the Archives de l’Areyron, Fonds du Chapitre de Rodez in ibid., 304.
as a resident (habitator) of Martel, about thirty-eight kilometres away, is provided not only with housing, but also with some of the fittings, specifically bedding and food receptacles.\textsuperscript{80} The contract that Juan de Bruxelles, citizen (vecino) of León, signed in Zamora, some 119 kilometres away, provided a house for him to live in for three years,\textsuperscript{81} presumably the length of time that he and the chapter had agreed was necessary to complete the stalls. The value of the lodging is not noted in contracts, but some records of the cost of renting a place for workers to live are extant. In the account books for the choir stalls built between 1474 and 1478 for the church of Saint-Pierre in Saumur, there are two entries regarding rental costs for housing two of the seven joiners who worked on the project: Raouellet Michau was housed for one year and one of his replacements, Georget Leseure, for two years.\textsuperscript{82} Accommodations might also be leased by the worker, rather than being part of the earnings: Rodrigo Alemán rented an apartment from the cathedral chapter in Toledo,\textsuperscript{83} and an itemization of rental payments for 1467 made by Juan de Malinas, the presumed choir stall master for the León Cathedral at this time,\textsuperscript{84} are recorded in the cathedral chapter minutes at the end of that year.\textsuperscript{85} In cases like these, in which the patron was the landlord, such rentals could possibly have been subsidized by the patron as part of the agreement. Thus, even when records of rental payments

\textsuperscript{80}“Item debent sibi tradere domum in quia possit cum suis servitibus durante dicto opere remanere [...] garnitam de duobus lectis de pluma, lodice et lihtuminibus, una celha pro tenendo aquam, una olla pro parando prandium et cenam, una pinta et scutellis necessariis ad servicum dicti moynie et servitiorum suorum.” Transcribed in Freigang, “L’Ancienne Eglise Collégiale du Vigan,” 539.

\textsuperscript{81}“...e que la dicha yglesia dé al dicho maestro casa en que biva mientras las feziere turante los tres años...” Reproduced and transcribed from the Archivo Catedral de Zamora, Contratos y obras in Ramos de Castro, \textit{La Catedral de Zamora}, 594–595.

\textsuperscript{82}“A messire Guillaume Béart, prestre, pour le louage de sa maison, en laquelle ung nommé Raouellet Michau, menuiser, a demouré pour l’espace d’un an, comme il a besongné édictes chaires, la somme de L s. t. comme appert par quictance, pour ce, cy...” and “A Gilles Hubert, pour le louage de la maison de Fontaines, en laquelle ledict Georget Leseure, menuiser, a demeuré par deux années” (cost missing). The extant accounts pertaining to the construction of these stalls are partially transcribed from Archives départementales de Maine-et-Loire, Comptes de l’église Saint-Pierre de Saumur, 1475–1480 in Port, “L’histoire des arts et des artistes en Anjou,” 286.

\textsuperscript{83}Heim, \textit{Rodrigo Alemán}, 71. A rental receipt from August 1491 is transcribed as Document 165 on page 418.

\textsuperscript{84}Teijeira Pablos, \textit{La sillería de coro catedralicia}, 22.

\textsuperscript{85}The entry is transcribed as document 27 from the Archivo de la Catedral de León, Actas Capitulares 1467, Doc. 10.138. fol. 191v in ibid., 90.
exist, a contribution towards housing may nevertheless have been considered part of the workers' remuneration.

Food and drink were also often included as partial payment. In the contract that the Le Vigan chapter made with Jean Moynié, both food and beverages are specified as part of his remuneration: appreciable quantities of wine and Granada, as well as legumes and an annual supply of grains. André Sulpice received a yearly allowance of food and drink, including grain, wine, a steer and four salted pigs to maintain himself, his wife, a servant and seven woodworkers during the construction of the choir stalls in Rodez. In the contract Henrick Berntz signed for the choir stalls at Saint Nicolai in Kalkar, he was allotted a substantial amount of rye and beer on top of the monetary fee he was to receive for each choir stall he made. Day workers might be given a specified amount of food and drink each day that they were employed in addition to their daily wage. The account books for the church of Saint-Pierre in Saumur record the total wages paid to the joiners hired as day workers to make the second side of the choir stalls, followed by the total cost of the bread, meals and white wine given to them during the construction period of approximately seven months.

86 "quatuor piparum vini et tantum piparum de granada,...duorum cartonu m fabarum et unius cartonis de greysas aut alterius leguminis,...pro anno tria sestaria bladi tam fromenti quam segle dumtaxat...." Transcribed from the Archives diocésaines de Cahors, D 20/15 (Documents Albe) in Freigang, "L'Ancienne Eglise Collégiale du Vigan," 539. Note that equivalences for the liquid volume are given, showing how variable such measurements were at this time.

87 "Item et pro alimentis sui ipsius, sue uxoris et unius ancille ac dictorum septem famulorum artificium pro dicto opere et pro dicto tempore sibi dabuntur ...sexaginta sextaria mixtim ex frumento et siligine quolibet anno,...solendo pro quolibet anno quindecim pipas vini ...Item pro uno bove et quatuor porcis salsandis singulis annis...." Reproduced from a transcription of the contract in the Archives de l’Areyron, Fonds du Chapitre de Rodez in Marlavagne, Histoire de la cathédrale de Rodez, 303–304.


89 "Pour despence de pain faicte par lesdics menusiers dessus nommez par eulx faicte durant le temps qu'ils ont besongné à faire le cousté desdics chères et dont cy dessus est faicte mencion, qui est par l'espace de sept moys environ, a esté payé par lesdics procureurs la somme de XIII livres V d. t. pour ce cy" Similar entries follow for the total cost of meals: "Pour despence de pictance..." and wine: "Pour troys pippes de vin blanc,..." The extant accounts pertaining to the construction of these choir stalls are partially transcribed from Archives départementales de Maine-et-Loire, Comptes de l'église Saint-Pierre de Saumur, 1475–1480 in Fort, "L'histoire des arts et des artistes en Anjou," 286.
Bonuses of food or beverages are also seen at the conclusion of important steps in the project, particularly in the form of a celebratory drink. Subsequent to the signing of the contract for the choir stalls in Kalkar, those involved enjoyed wine at the local tavern, half of which was paid for by the church. Later, following the installation of the completed choir stalls by Berntz, the church accounts show that drinks were once again provided at the same tavern so that everyone could celebrate together. Similarly, after the joiner, Mathieu de Rommelles, presented the model drawing (pourtraict) for the choir stalls to the canons at Troyes Cathedral on December 30, 1524, the dean of the church instructed that ten sols tournois “pour boire” should be given to Mathieu. Bonuses in the form of grain were also given. The joiner Jacob Ruess and his gesellen (journeyman) Heini Seewagen received a considerable amount of spelt after they had completed the choir stalls at Bern Minster in 1525.

Clothing was another customary type of bonus. During the construction of Saint George’s Chapel in Windsor, the master carver, William Berkeley, who oversaw the choir stalls, was allocated a yearly allowance for a gown, as were the clerk of the works,

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92 Although the term pourboire originates from two separate words, as in this document, that were later combined to mean gratuity, this meaning is first recorded as part of the phrase avoir pourboire in 1683, almost 150 years after this document was written. Le Nouveau Petit Robert, ed. Josette Rey-Debove and Alain Rey (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1993), 1959. Therefore, I conclude that in this case the money was literally intended to be used to purchase drinks, much as the 100 sols tournois given to Mathieu’s mother-in-law in 1526 was intended to be used to buy a new dress (see below).


94 “Den tischmachern, so das gstül im chor gmachet hend, schenckend min herren von dem stift zu einer besserung IIII mt dinkel.” Transcribed from Staatsarchiv, Stiftsmanual VII (1522–1527), fol. 247, 1525 in Rott, Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte, 257.
the master mason, the master carpenter and the master smith.\textsuperscript{95} The wife of Adam d’Aubellemmer, the joiner working on the choir stalls of Troyes Cathedral, was given 100 sols tournois on March 17, 1526 for a dress as recompense for the care she took of the choir stall workers.\textsuperscript{96} And the wife of Henrick Berntz in Kalkar was presented with fabric to make a coat (\textit{tabbert})\textsuperscript{97} following the installation of the choir stalls made by her husband.\textsuperscript{98}

Another bonus that is occasionally seen is allowing the artisans to have the old stalls. In the agreement of 1451 between the chapter and the ouvrier en chaire, Jacques Barbelot, to make new stalls for Rouen Cathedral, Barbelot was promised the old stalls to use in other projects and to sell.\textsuperscript{99} Similarly, once the canons at Tréguier Cathedral decided in 1509 to completely replace their stalls instead of just adding more seats, the wood from the old stalls along with a lectern that was being removed were given to Girard Dru and Tugdual Kerguz, who had been recontracted to build the new set.\textsuperscript{100} In the case of the Rouen stalls, which seem to have been in great disrepair, the stalls might not have been worth much, but the Tréguier stalls must have been in relatively good shape since the canons had originally intended to continue using them in the first contract that they had signed with Dru and Kerguz only the year before,\textsuperscript{101} and so presumably the stalls had value beyond material for the substructure or scrap.

\textsuperscript{95}...et eciam pro una toga pro dicto Clerico operum xiijs. iiiijd. pro una toga pro magistro lathamo x.s. pro una toga pro magistro Carpentario xs. pro una toga pro magistro Kerver dicte edificacionis xs. et pro una toga pro magistro fabro x.s...." Transcribed from Saint George’s Chapel Archives, Accounts etc., Exchequer K.R. Bundle 496/17, 1477-8–1478-9 in Hope, \textit{Windsor Castle}, 399.
\textsuperscript{97}For references to the meaning of this obsolete term, see Rommé, \textit{Henrick Dowwerman}, 170n26.
\textsuperscript{98}"It. sijner huijsfr[ouw] dairbij ter liefnisse geschenckt tot ene[n] tabbert 5 ellen Ypers tuen, die eel 52st,..." The complete entry is transcribed as document IV.33 from 1508-1509 Kirchenrechnung, Bistumsarchiv Münster, Pfarrarchiv Saint Nicolai zu Kalkar, Karton 47, alte Signatur 14, Ausgaben fol. 90r in ibid., 294.
\textsuperscript{99}Reported from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2134 fols. 98v and 99 in Lardin, “Stalles de la cathédrale de Rouen”, 34–35.
\textsuperscript{100}Reported in Barthélemy, \textit{Mélanges sur la Bretagne}, 115.
\textsuperscript{101}See section The decision to construct choir stalls, above.
Finally, some bonuses seen in only one known choir stall project may have nevertheless been conventional. At Troyes Cathedral, the master received an annual bonus of ten livres to maintain his tools, and all of the workers were paid a *paste de veille* of twenty livres at the beginning of the winter so that they would agree to continue working summer hours by candlelight. Both tool maintenance and long winter workdays were issues that many workers would have wanted to negotiate, given the costs involved, and that many patrons would have been agreeable to, given their desire for high-quality work completed in as short a time as possible. Another unique bonus, however, was turned down by the artisans who were presented with it. When the canons of Tréguier Cathedral renegotiated with Girard Dru and Tugdual Kerguz on July 20, 1509 to have them build a whole set instead of only adding fourteen stalls, the offer included the right to a burial place in the cathedral for each of them and their heirs. However, both joiners eventually arranged to exchange the proffered burial site for fifteen livres, Girard Dru on October 26, 1512, and Tugdual Kerguz on September 20, 1514, each declaring a preference for a different bonus at that time. Not knowing the status or age of these joiners, perhaps they were single and young enough to be more concerned with money to live on than with their future burial and afterlife. Or perhaps they were itinerant workers without ties to the town of Tréguier, and had no desire to be buried far from

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106 He is recorded as saying that he would “…aimer myeulx pour le présent avoir quelque aultre gratuité.” ibid., 115.

107 He is recorded as saying that he would “…aimer myeulx avoir aultre don pour le présent que ledit lieu de sépulture.” Barthélemy, *Mélanges sur la Bretagne*, 115.
home. Examination of church records and church burials might reveal more about the prevalence of this last type of bonus in the early modern period.

Other expenses

Aside from the primary outlay for material and labour, there were other costs associated with the construction of choir stalls.

Travel expenses are frequently recorded. In Kalkar, the cost of a trip made by the Bürgermeister, Friar Wilhelm and the church master to nearby Wesel to secure the services of Henrick Berntz, as well as expenses for their trip with Berntz to Kleve a few days later to view the stalls at the Franciscan church are entered together in the account books. Compensation for trips made by various experts to see choir stalls in Geneva are recorded in the Bern ledgers of 1522. Ulrich Glurer from Augsburg, who designed the choir stalls at Freising Cathedral in Bavaria, had his expenses paid by the fabric for two trips to Freising near the beginning of the project in 1486. The first time, he and a servant came from Augsburg on horseback and stayed in Freising for three days to discuss the choir stall project; a few months later, Glurer returned for another three days to give the canons a drawn design for the stalls and no doubt to discuss the project further. In the case of the choir stalls for Saint George’s Chapel in Windsor, some...
of the woodwork was done in London. The head carver, William Berkeley, was reimbursed for his expenses in London while supervising the carvers who were making the canopies there.\textsuperscript{112} If a master did not have a large workshop and there were not enough qualified local workers, there might be recruitment trips to ensure a sufficient workforce to complete the choir stalls in a reasonable amount of time. During the construction of the Rouen stalls, there were various recruitment searches including one by a joiner, Guillaume Basset, in November of 1465 that took in more than ten places, lasted twenty days and went as far afield as Flanders and Brabant to try to find enough new joiners to expedite the ongoing project.\textsuperscript{113}

Delivery costs both for materials and the finished product are also seen in account books. The large amount of wood needed for a set of choir stalls, which was not usually available locally, would almost certainly have incurred some transportation costs. A number of payments are made for bringing wood to Fribourg for the Saint-Nicolas choir stalls, such as the fifteen panels of walnut that came from Vevey,\textsuperscript{114} also in Savoy. Henrick Berntz presumably built the stalls for the Saint Nicolai church in Kalkar at his own workshop in Wesel as the finished set had to be moved to the Saint Nicolai church to be installed. The costs for labourers involved in the transportation, as well as for the use of a cart and horses, are recorded in the church accounts.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{112}{"... in expensis Willelmi Kerver existentis apud London super factura tabernaculorum supervidienda." Transcribed from Saint George’s Chapel Archives, Accounts etc., Exchequer K.R. Bundle 496/17, 1477-8–1478-9 in Hope, \textit{Windsor Castle}, 399.}

\textsuperscript{113}{"A Guillaume Basset, huchier, pour avoir esté à Apville, à Montreuil-sur-la-Mer, à l’abbaye de Fécamp, à Hedin, à Brusselles en Breban, à Nyvelle en Breban, à Lisle en Flandres, à Tornay, à Arras, à Amyens et en plusieurs lieux, pour trouver et avoir des ouvriers de hucherie, pour abregier l’oeuvres des chaeres..." This partial entry is transcribed from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2501 fol. 83v in Deville, “Appendice”, 191–192.}

\textsuperscript{114}{"Pour la veitery de XV laus de noyer dix Vivey...” Excerpt transcribed from Archives de l’Etat, Fribourg, Fabrique de Saint-Nicolas, Registre des comptes (1463-1464), No. 1a, fol. 80 in Charles, \textit{Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle}, 259n141.}

Compensation had to be made to specialists who might be involved in particular steps in the process of constructing choir stalls. Notaries had to be paid for preparing contracts and other legal documents. The fabric accounts at Troyes Cathedral has a record of the payment made to two notaries for drawing up the chapter’s agreement with the joiners Adam d’Aubellemer and his son-in-law, Mathieu de Rommelles, in 1525. When outside construction experts were called in for a consultation, they too needed to be reimbursed. The master mason of the cathedral and two master masons from the church of Saint-Maclou were each given an écu for examining the sample stall that Philippot Viart had made for the Rouen Cathedral canons.

Unexpected expenses

Finally, there might be unexpected costs that arose due to changes in plans, errors made or problems related to the workforce.

Changes to the plans of other parts of the choir architecture or furnishings before a set of choir stalls was completed sometimes necessitated modifications to the stalls, too. At Saint-Nicolas in Fribourg, the original layout of the set had to be altered near the end of its construction when it was decided at the beginning of 1464 to have two doors on either side of the choir screen rather than one central entrance into the choir. After some discussion and the promise of compensation, Master Antoine adjusted the west end of the stalls: the last two seats in particular show the effects of this alteration.

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119 Item ensi comme maistre Anthon scelun lordonnance de messrs avoit fait et pose lovraige dez formes pour cloure le chour de lesglise seelant a une porte, et depuix ledit ouvraige se doit faire a duez portes, scelun lordonnance de messrs... ledit maistre Anthon a desmande pour tout le dit ouvraige XXVII florins de Rin et lesdits messrs lez ly on oultroye enclo ce que ledit maistre Anthon doit oster icelle clason et
Instead of forming a right angle so that the return stalls align with the screen, which is the most usual arrangement (e.g., Figure A.136), the stalls had to be angled outward, closely following the compound piers of the triumphal arch that frame the entry into the choir, to ensure that there was enough clearance for the doors to open (see Figure A.31). The second part of the choir stalls had not yet been put in place when the decision was made, so the patrons also hired the mason, Henri Pickynyot,\textsuperscript{120} to scrape the wall and pier to allow enough space to install the rest of the set.\textsuperscript{121}

Changes might also be made to the plans for the choir stalls themselves after the project was already underway. As mentioned above, at Tréguier Cathedral in July of 1509, more than one year after signing a contract to add fourteen new seats to the extant choir stalls, the canons signed another contract with the same joiners to remove the earlier set and build an entirely new one instead.\textsuperscript{122} Although it is not clear exactly what had been accomplished by this time and how much of the work on the new seats might have been usable in the new set, even under the best of circumstances, this change in plans must have resulted in a higher cost than if the canons had commissioned a complete set from the beginning of the project.

Errors were also a source of unexpected expenses. Unfortunately for the canons at Tréguier Cathedral, their decision to have a full rather than a partial set of stalls built was not the end of their unexpected expenses. In August of 1511, two years into the new project, the canons were dismayed to discover that the honorary stalls (\textit{dignités}) were too narrow and too small.\textsuperscript{123} After some disagreement with the joiners about responsibility

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{120}Pfulg, \textit{Les stalles de Fribourg}, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{121}He was paid, “Pour...escourchier le mur et le pilar pour assetar la secunde partie deis formes” Excerpt transcribed from Archives de l’Etat, Fribourg, Fabrique de Saint-Nicolas, Registre des comptes, No 1a, 1464–1465, fol. 100 in Charles, \textit{Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle}, 255n7.
\item \textsuperscript{122}Barthélemy, \textit{Mélanges sur la Bretagne}, 112–115.
\item \textsuperscript{123}“...estoient estroictes et petites en l’endroict des dignités:...” Excerpt transcribed in ibid., 115.
\end{itemize}
for this miscalculation, the chapter agreed to pay them sixty livres to refashion eight upper stalls as seven, thus ensuring adequate seat dimensions.\textsuperscript{124}

More serious errors led to even greater unforeseen expenses. In Rouen, when the assembly of the new stalls in the choir finally started more than nine years after the work had begun, it became evident that the pieces were not uniform, nor were the dimensions precise enough: some parts would not fit and had to be remade. Since it was the responsibility of Philippot Viart, as head of the project, to ensure that all the work was done correctly, the chapter summoned him to discuss the problems on September 3, 1467.\textsuperscript{125} At the end of October, the canons changed the payment method for most of the woodworkers: instead of working at the atelier for a day wage, they would be given the wood necessary to complete a particular task and would be paid by the piece,\textsuperscript{126} presumably because the chapter wanted to have a clearer idea of which person had made what so that individual woodworkers could more easily be held accountable. However, the chapter was still not satisfied with Viart’s work. At the end of November, they decided that they would let Viart go once they had hired a replacement supervisor.\textsuperscript{127} It took almost two months to find a suitable replacement. After one was found, the chapter officially applied to the civil court to fire Viart, evict him and his family, and possibly arrest him and seize his belongings. Their decision was recorded at their chapter meeting on January 19, 1468.\textsuperscript{128} In addition to the waste of both materials and time, it cost the canons twenty-four livres, equivalent to about one hundred days of work by a qualified

\textsuperscript{124}...despeceroit les ouict chaires soubsains du hault renc à commencer les premières o celles de monseigneur et du chantre , et d’icelles ouict on redifieroit sept chaires seulement ...” Excerpt transcribed in Barthélemy, \textit{Mélanges sur la Bretagne}, 116.

\textsuperscript{125}Reported from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2137, fol. 150v in Lardin, “Stalles de la cathédrale de Rouen”, 54.

\textsuperscript{126}Reported from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2137, fol. 159 in ibid., 55.

\textsuperscript{127}Reported from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2137, fol. 165v in ibid., 55.

\textsuperscript{128}“In materia cathedrarum conclusum fuit quam Philippus...licencietur et privetur ad hujusmodi onere, ac ponatur et familia sua unà cum bonis suis extra domum quam inhabitat, et exequatur ipsius conclusio auctoritate justitiae saecularis et alius viis possibilibus, arresteturque prisionarius et bona sua.” Transcribed from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2137, fol. 167v in Deville, “Appendice”, 195–196.
joiner, to pay for the new head, Pierre Rémond, to relocate from Cambrai along with his entourage. He and his three sons also received a barrel (poinçon) of red wine as a starting bonus.\textsuperscript{129}

In some cases, such errors were seen as too costly to consider rectifying, and presumably many were simply tolerated. At Averbode Abbey in Brabant, Abbot Gerard vander Schaft enumerated a list of problems, but initially decided to leave the stalls as they were given the amount of work that was needed to repair them.\textsuperscript{130} Eventually, however, the problems came to be seen as too serious to ignore. The resulting renovations took nine months and cost over sixty florins,\textsuperscript{131} close to one-fifth of the original cost of 342 florins.\textsuperscript{132}

Costs associated with the well-being of the members of the workforce seem to have been the most common of unexpected expenses. Illness, injury or the death of workers could not only cause delays, but also expenditures for caring for them as well as for finding replacement workers. These replacements not only had to have the same set of skills, but had to be instructed about the project and the point it was at, so that they could complete the work as desired. When it was the head of the project who could no longer work, the situation was more complicated and potentially much more costly.

The Rouen chapter had had such expenses associated with their choir stall construction some years prior to hiring the ultimately disappointing Philippot Viart. On September 6, 1449, the canons had written to Jacques Barbelot, a skilled worker living in Lower Normandy, who expressed interest in being in charge of their proposed new

\textsuperscript{129}Reported from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2503, fol. 118v–119 in Lardin, “Stalles de la cathédrale de Rouen”, 57.
\textsuperscript{130}“...om dat veel wercks soude hebben ende tyts nemen soe sal men dat dese tyr alsoe laten alst is.” Fransolet, “L’auteur des stalles d’Averbode,” 159.
\textsuperscript{131}“Item dictus Johannes cum 2 famulis Petro et Johanne incipit reformare stalla anno 17 [1517], 25 maii et recessit anno 18 [1518] 5 marcii. Infra quod tempus solvimus sibi pro dictis per Camerarium in parvo registro descriptis pariter in toto 60 florenos 4 stuferos exceptis clavis bitumine etc. Et recessit.” Transcribed from the Archief abdij Averbode, 1, reg. 4, fol. 148–149 as document VI in ibid., 160.
\textsuperscript{132}Steppe and Molle, “De koorbanken te Aarschot,” 248. For more details about this commission, see chapter Made to Order: The Construction of Space.
choir stall project. This operarius excellentissimus cathedrarum ecclesiae later came to Rouen where he was presented with four gold écus and a gallon of wine by a representative of the cathedral fabric. On March 17, 1451, he and the chapter agreed that in exchange for lodging and 200 gold écus plus the old set of stalls, he would furnish the necessary wood and construct a set of stalls for the cathedral. He was given an advance of twenty écus as part of the agreement. However, Barbelot never began the stalls, presumably for health reasons: within less than a year, he was dead, leaving the chapter slightly poorer and back where they had started in their search for a choir stall master.

In Bern, it is not certain why the master carver Bernhart Burenfind from Solothurn (like Bern, part of the Old Swiss Confederacy), who is mentioned between 1517 and 1519 with respect to the acquisition and preparation of wood for the choir stalls, was no longer involved in the project when the contract to build the stalls was finally made in 1522. Although it is possible that the patrons simply decided not to hire him, the five-year delay between the beginning of the project and the signing of the contract to build the stalls suggests that Master Bernhart was either unable or unwilling to continue his work as a carver, forcing them to find someone else. Unfortunately, some of the accounts from 1520 and 1521, which might have shed light on his disappearance from the project, are missing. The last record we have of Bernhart is his retirement to the monastery of

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133. "...un ouvrier fort habile, résidant en Basse-Normandie, qui désirait être chargé du chantier des stalles afin de faire un bon marché avec lui." Excerpt from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2134 fol. 9 translated in Lardin, “Stalles de la cathédrale de Rouen”, 480n1.


135. His death is noted in the chapter deliberations of January 21, 1452. Reported from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2134 fol. 152v ibid., 35n8.

136. "Denne meister Bernhart, dem bildhower zu Soloturn, fur angeben des holtzes zu dem gestül in dem chor, ouch es hat geholfen houwen, fur sin arbeit zu einem rock IX lb und dartzu II kronen geschänckt, tut alles XIII lb XVII β IIII &." This document is transcribed from the Staatsarchiv Bern, Seckelmeisterrechnung, second half of 1518 in Rott, Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte, 256. The three other documents that mention Bernhart with respect to this project are transcribed on the same page.

137. Mojon, Das Berner Münster, 373.

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Saint Urban on May 17, 1521.\textsuperscript{139} Perhaps he was no longer able to practice woodworking for health reasons and therefore withdrew to the monastery.

At Troyes Cathedral, the choir stall project was well under way when the health of the head of the project began to suffer. Adam d’Aubellemer first became ill in 1527, and the chapter showed its concern for his (and the project’s) well-being by paying a carter to deliver seven loads of earth to the joiners’ house so that a small storage area could be better insulated to provide the master joiner with a warmer place to sleep during his convalescence.\textsuperscript{140} When he fell ill again in 1529, the chapter paid for additional food in an attempt to hasten his recovery. By December 10, however, they must have realized that his illness was mortal: during a visit by some of the canons, he was urged to disclose anything that needed to be known to complete the choir stalls to someone in the workshop before he died.\textsuperscript{141} Master Adam died not long after this visit, presumably having passed any necessary knowledge on to his son-in-law, Mathieu de Rommelles, who was a co-signatory of the original contract. The chapter’s anxiety about potentially losing another workshop head and his knowledge is seen in their stipulation on December 24 that Mathieu pass on this knowledge in writing to several members of his workshop.\textsuperscript{142} A new agreement was then made on January 3, and work continued. However, the chapter and the bishop were not entirely satisfied with how things were proceeding, and later that year, after much debate, both Mathieu and two other joiners, Simon Collot and

\textsuperscript{139}Reported from Staatsarchiv Luzern, Schwarzes Buch des Klosters Saint Urban, 4b, fol. 193 in Rott, Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte, 172.

\textsuperscript{140}“...pour torché ung petit grenier qui est en la maison des menuisiers en la chambre du four, affin de le doubler, pour ce que le maistre menuisier y a volu coucher affin d’estre plus chauldement à cause de sa maladie derrenière.” Excerpt cited from Archives de l’Aube G 1282, fol. 104r in Piétresson de Saint-Aubin, “Deux menuisiers picards,” 389-390.

\textsuperscript{141}“Ad visitandum cathedrarum chori architectum egrotum, cui solventur diete intuitu paupertatis, et eleemosyne egritudinis que qua detinetur, commiserunt dominos et magistros Huyard seniorem, Turquan, Mergey, Colet, de Lirey et Pietrequin, ut suadeant ei ne pretermittat imperfectum opus, sed si quidpiam est occulti, secreti, communicet et declaret alciui de officina ante quam moriatur.” Transcribed from Archives de l’Aube, G 1282 fol. 233r in ibid., 394n2.

\textsuperscript{142}“Quod si conveniant, obligabitur dictus Mattheus in bona forma, nodumque et secretum perficiendarum aliquibus peritis ejusdem officine et scripto dabit, neque assumet in consortium aliquos nisi de consensu et scientia dominorum.” Transcribed from Archives de l’Aube, G 1282 fol. 235v in Piétresson de Saint-Aubin, “Deux menuisiers picards,” 394n3.
Jean Philippon, presented new proposals for the chapter to consider.\(^\text{143}\) In the end, the chapter adopted Mathieu’s proposal on January 18, 1531,\(^\text{144}\) despite the fact that he did not seem to have had the same skills as his father-in-law: he declared that the images on the eight stall ends were outside of his competence (\textit{non sunt sue facultatis}),\(^\text{145}\) forcing the employment of a carver, Yvon Bachot, to do this work for an additional sum, based on drawings given to him by the chapter.\(^\text{146}\)

Although illness, injury or death could not be predicted with any certainty, sometimes provisions for such events were written into contracts to ensure responsibility for and continuity of the project if the person contracted with could no longer complete the job, thus averting the added expense of a stalled project and a search for someone new. In the contract of 1506 that the Rich Clares in Gentbrugge signed with the joiner and carver, Gillis van Dickele, the nuns stipulated that his wife and sons, Pierin and Lievin, would be required to finish the project in the event that Gillis became ill, was incapacitated or died before the choir stalls and jube were made.\(^\text{147}\) Fortunately, for all concerned, there is no reason to believe that this clause of the contract ever came into play.

Interestingly, financial concerns on the part of the artisans could also potentially be costly to the patrons of a choir stall project. Whether the woodworkers had underestimated the amount of labour involved, the patrons had driven too hard a bargain or


\(^{144}\)Piétresson de Saint-Aubin, “Deux menuisiers picards,” 400.

\(^{145}\)“... exceptis imaginibus duntaxat octo extremitatatum tum bassarum tum altarum, quas crossas vocant, que quidem imagines non sunt sue facultatis...” Transcribed from Archives de l’Aube, G 1282, fol. 271v in ibid., 399n.

\(^{146}\)“... à Yvon Bachot, ymagier, auquel a esté marchandé par messieurs en leur chappitre de faire les quatre grande crosses des quatre quarrons desdictes chaières avec les deux basses, c’est assavoir de chascun costey une en entrant dedans le cuer, le tout selon le pourtraict à luy monstré et exibé par mes dicts sieurs,...” Transcribed from Archives de l’Aube, G 1592, fol. 143v–144v in Piétresson de Saint-Aubin, “Deux menuisiers picards,” 401n1.

\(^{147}\)“En waert dat Gillis voers. ziec cranc oft ghebreckelick hier in waert oft oec storve, er dwere voers. al ghelevert ware, so beloef zyne ghelsenede nyn jofr. zyn wyf, Pierin zyn zone ende Lievin zyn zone al dat voers. es te vulcommene ende vuldoene ghelyc of Gillis zelve ware oft [te doen doen].” For the full transcription of this document from the Provincial Archives in Ghent, see pages 228–233 Busscher, \textit{Peintres et sculpteurs à Gand}, 231n.
external factors had made the terms of the agreement less lucrative than they had been originally, if workers did not believe that they were being adequately paid, they might abandon the project before it was completed.

As mentioned above, Pierre Pintart and Raouilet Michau, the joiners who had been contracted to build the choir stalls for the collegiate church of Saint-Pierre in Saumur, quit the project after approximately one year, having finished only one side of the set. They claimed that the agreement they had made with the confraternity, Frères et soeurs de la confrérie des prêtres fondée en l’honneur du Saint-Sacrement de l’autel, which paid for and managed the complete refurbishing of Saint-Pierre during this period of religious fervour, was not sufficient to cover their costs, and that they had therefore suffered a financial loss. There is no record as to whether the joiners attempted to renegotiate the unsatisfactory agreement before they left, but perhaps they were never given the opportunity since replacement workers were found so quickly. Although there do not seem to have been serious delays and therefore significant extra expenses, indications in the accounts such as having to get the consent of the parishioners to hire new joiners, as well as the necessity of taking over more of the management since the new joiners were hired as day workers instead of being paid for the whole project, show that there was indeed more time investment on the part of the confraternity if not added expenses after Pintart and Michau resigned. It is clear from the insistence on the fact that the joiners had left without completing their task that the confraternity was aggrieved by their departure, but it seems doubtful from these account records that they tried to pursue them for breach of contract: rather, the wording suggests that the confraternity was concerned with documenting that they themselves were proceeding legally in the hiring of replacement workers.149

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149...lequel cousté desdictes chesres lesdits Pintart et Michau n’ont pas parachevé et l’ont lessé imparfait, et s’en sont alléz et absentez du pays pour la perte qu’ils disoient y avoir selon le marché autrefoiz sur ce fait, et à ceste cause et du consentement des paroissiens de ladite paroisse, comme appert par lettres de leurdit consentement données le XXVIIIe jour de may mil IIII LXXV (1475), lesdits procureurs
Legal action was definitely pursued in other cases of work abandonment on choir stall projects. Shortly after Rodrigo Alemán signed a contract to make a set of choir stalls for the cathedral in Ciudad Rodrigo in July 1499, he left town, leaving four of his workers there to build the stalls while he pursued more lucrative projects, first in Toledo, then in Plasencia. When Master Rodrigo’s workers stopped construction on the stalls, the canons hired two replacement carvers who were not associated with his workshop. The chapter also tracked Rodrigo down in Plasencia in the summer of 1501 or 1502, sending a representative, canon Alonso de la Guardia, to present documentation to Plasencia’s magistrate, Pedro de Tórtoles, demanding to either be financially compensated by the carver, or have him arrested and taken to Ciudad Rodrigo to finish the choir stalls. Rodrigo protested that he had been forced to accept a price per stall that was significantly below his normal rate, that the presence of his journeymen was adequate and that in any case the contract was no longer legitimate since the chapter had hired other workers without his consent, audaciously claiming 50,000 maravedis in compensation for his own losses. When the magistrate adjourned the trial until the end of September, on the grounds that it was critical for Rodrigo to first finish construction on the Plasencia bridge, the Ciudad Rodrigo chapter filed an appeal with the Real Chancillería in Valladolid, the highest court in Castile, citing the advance of 300,000 maravedis that

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150 Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 77–78.
151 "...Alonso de la Guardya, razinero de la dicha yglesia...paresçio ante el dicho licenciado Pedro de Tórtoles corregidor e presentó ante él un escrito..." ibid., 415.
152 "...o no dando las dichas fianças le mandase prender (roto), e le tuviese bien preso e recabdado, e se lo mandase entregar para que lo el llevase a la dicha Çibdad Rodrigo a acabar las dichas syllas..." ibid., 415.
153 The escrito that Rodrigo presented to the Plasencia magistrate is recorded in the final judgement. See Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 415–416.
154 "...e mandó suspender el dicho proceso de pleito fast de...setiembre primero...en el qual dicho tiempo se creya que se podra acabar de se faser la dicha obra de la puente..." ibid., 417.
155 Ibid., 79.
they had made to the carver’s workshop, as well as numerous other losses and damages they had suffered due to his irresponsible behaviour. Rodrigo did not respond to the new charges either by letter or in person, and was convicted in absentia on December 23, 1502. He was required to pay his bail within twenty days, complete the stalls within the following six months, and had to reimburse the chapter 100 000 maradevis. He also had to assume the legal costs, which came to 3 410 maradevis. Although the chapter succeeded in forcing Rodrigo to finish this work (Figure A.227) and even recovered some of the considerable costs involved, it was probably not six months, but another three or four years before the set was completed. Thus, the pursuit of Rodrigo was a costly one in terms of time.

In an even more unusual case, the Cistercian abbey of Melrose in Scotland had to send two representatives to Bruges in 1441 to discover what had happened to the set of choir stalls that they had commissioned some eight years earlier from the master carpenter, Cornelius van Aeltre. Although the work had been paid for in full at the time, the set had never been delivered. Unlike most choir stall commissions that were either made in situ by workers hired from elsewhere (e.g., Rodrigo Alemán, André Sulpice) or by a local workshop (e.g., Henrick Berntz, Gillis van Disekele), the Melrose monks chose to have their

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156. “...al dicho maestre Rodrigo él avía dado por mandado de los dichos deán e cabildo, fasta en trezientas mil mrs...” Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 415.
157. “...fue dada una nuestra carta de enplazmiento contra el dicho maestre Rodrigo para que dentro de cierto término...que viniese o enbiase en seguimiento de la dicha apelación la qual dicha nuestra carta le fuera noteficada e su persona e pidió traslado el qual no vino...” Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 417.
158. “...que devían mandar e mandavan al dicho maestre Rodrigo que dentro de veinte dias próximas siguientes diese fianzas legas, llanas e abondadas de le faser e cumplir e acabar la obra de las syllas del coro...dentro de otros seys meses...e cumplir pagase çien mill mrs al dicho deán e cabildo...veynte e tres días del mes de diziembre de Mill e quinientos e dos annos” ibid., 417–418.
159. “...fuere requerido el dicho Maestre Rodrigo entallador fasta seys dias primeros syguientes no diere e pagare a los dichos deán e cabildo...los dichos tres mil e quatreocientos e diez mrs de las dichas costas...” This quotation and all of those above related to this lawsuit are taken from the final judgement of the Real Chancillería in Valladolid on January 27, 1503, transcribed from the Archivo de la Real Chancellería de Valladolid, Reales Ejecutorios 176-47, January 27, 1503 as document 164 in ibid., 414–418. For further discussion of the circumstances surrounding this case, see 76–82.
160. There is no documentation about when the stalls were finished, how much had already been done or how many co-workers Rodrigo had when he resumed the project, so it is impossible to know exactly how long the construction took. Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 81–82.
new set built in Bruges, presumably because of their close ties to Cistercian communities in Flanders.\footnote{161} A serious disadvantage to this decision was that it was difficult to oversee the project from so far away. In the end, it required a special trip to Bruges on the part of a Melrose monk, John Crawfort, and a Scottish merchant, William Carebis, to discuss the matter with deputies of the magistrate of Bruges and two mediators, the abbot of Ter Doest and Master Johannes Cranach, an ecclesiast from the diocese of Brixen in Tyrol.\footnote{162} After hearing the abbey’s case, Master Cornelius acknowledged the terms of the contract and receipt of his payment, but explained that the devaluation of the Flemish currency shortly after he was paid had made both workers and materials far less affordable. The subsequent rebellion in Bruges had led to a shortage of workers. Finally, a famine had made it impossible for him to support his family let alone complete the work.\footnote{163} All of these circumstances are supported by the historical record.\footnote{164} Cornelius also included a technical issue that had added to his costs: after examining the Ten Duinen stall substructure, he altered the Melrose substructure to make it more solid, a supplement that he hoped to recoup.\footnote{165} A solution sympathetic to Cornelius’s situation was agreed upon by all. Payments would be made for the extended storage of the stalls, their transfer to Melrose and the return passage, as well as living costs during the trip for Cornelius and an assistant. The carpenter would also be given money for himself and his family.\footnote{166} The


\footnote{162}Ibid., 236–237.

\footnote{163}“...Cornelius respondit, recognoscens conventionem et pactem de dictis stallis perficiendis et erigendis cum dicto domino Johanne fecisse,...asserebat conventionem ipsam paulo ante mutationem monete Flandrie factam fuisse, et eam quam recepit pecuniam in veteri moneta...dum dictum opus per aliqua tempora fuisset inceptum, populi commotio in dicta villa Brugensi oriri cepit quo accidit ut operarii sui quorum aditio opus ipsum conficiebatur,...verum etiam facultatibus suis lapsus et fere ad penuriam destitutus, et uxore liberisque, gravatus,...” ibid., 251.

\footnote{164}Coomans, “Choir Stalls of Melrose Abbey”\footnote{165}, 239.

\footnote{165}“...et propterea quia fundamentum stallorum ecclesie de Dunis,...minus firmum sed debile pro tanto opere videbatur, ispe Cornelius stabilius et firmius fundamentum ultra formam conventionis sue pro utilitate ipsius operis composuit, sub spe conduciveis recompensationis de hoc in fine operis recipiende...” ibid., 251.

\footnote{166}“...dicti procuratores persolvent gardiano conventus fratum minorum Brugensium in quorum refectorio predictum opus per multos annos locatum steterat,...quatuor libras grossorum,...pro transferendo
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Abbey representatives cautioned that they could not guarantee further compensation, but promised to present his case to the community once the set had been installed. Since this agreement of 1441 is the only known document concerning the Melrose stalls, it is not known how Master Cornelius fared, but even without additional payments, the abbey had already incurred significant extra travel and storage costs. Thus, the close links between Melrose Abbey and Flanders led to a much more complicated and expensive choir stall commission than the monastery could ever have expected due to a series of unforeseen crises in Bruges in the 1430s.

Material

The rich stone carving on the baldachin, upper dorsals and bishop’s throne of the choir stalls at the cathedral in Albi, France of around 1500 (Figure A.130) transforms the choir into an ethereal space. Quarried from Puygouzon, very close to Albi, and/or Lombers, about fifteen kilometres to the south, the local white limestone facilitates such carving because it is soft when extracted, but hardens over time, allowing the creation of durable, but astonishingly delicate openwork stone carving. But while there are other examples of stone choir stalls, sedilia and honorary seats in the early modern period, the vast

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167. ...quod post ipsius operis perfectionem sibi fiet condecens compensatio de suis damnum et interesse, pro qua dicti procuratores intercedere et preces fundere apud dictum dominium abbatem de Melros et eius conventum, citra tamen obligationem aliquam...” ibid., 252.
168. Ibid., 235.
169. Thank you to Professor Thomas Coomans for bringing his article about this unusual commission to my attention. For more details and a transcription of a copy of the agreement (the original is not extant) from Groenboek A (1405–1458), Bruges, Stadsarchief, Stadscartularium 11, fol. 297 see ibid.
170. Biget, *Sainte-Cécile d’Albi : sculptures*, 14. Unfortunately, there are no extant documents about the construction of this choir or the carvers who created these stalls, 70.
171. For several examples in England, see John Charles Cox and Alfred Harvey, *English Church Furniture* (New York: E P Dutton, 1907), 256.
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majority of contemporary sets were made of wood. Wood had many advantages as a material: it was plentiful; it was ubiquitous; it is more practical than stone for parts of the stalls that come in contact with the body, as indeed the wooden seats of the Albi stalls indicate; it provides superior resonance for the singing and chanting that were central to the performance of the Divine Offices; and it can be carved in a myriad of ways, as a visual comparison of the sets such as those in Blaubeuren (Figure A.140) and Astorga (Figure A.74) clearly shows. Wood’s tensile strength allows for the construction of taller, lighter structures than can be achieved in stone (e.g., Figure A.1). And the fact that small wooden parts can be assembled into larger ones allows the production of intricate details that resemble ethereal metalwork more than stonework does (e.g., Figure A.267).

Oak was frequently used to make church furnishings. Its large trees produce substantial pieces of timber; it is a hard and robust wood; and it can be finely finished. It was therefore a wood recommended for joinery in statutes of master joiners (huchiers). The statutes of Rouen from 1416, for example, state that oak may be used for works that have closures or involve assembly. For prestigious ensembles, high-quality timber was often imported from places that were renowned for their wood, such as the forests of the Vosges. The most desirable oak at this time was grown in the Baltic region: not only was it less expensive due to the relative abundance of suitable timber in this region,

172See chapter The Construction of Space section Performative Space for more discussion about the properties of wood vis-à-vis choir stalls.
174Hugh Harrison, “Technical Aspects of the Misericord,” in Profane Images in Marginal Arts of the Middle Ages, ed. Elaine C. Block (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009), XX.
176“...en chef-d’oeuvre qui porte fermeure ou assemblement à celle,...l’en y puisse mettre boys de chesne...” Statuts des Huchiers de Rouen, 1416, item 5, transcribed from Ordonnances des Rois de France, t.x., p. 253 in Eustache-Hyacinthe Langlois, Stalles de la cathédrale de Rouen (Rouen, France: Nicétas Periaux, 1838), 218.
177Julien, “Naissance d’une miséricorde”, 12.
it was also larger and of better quality than the oak grown in northwestern Europe. Narrow annual rings and few knots meant that it was more stable under the changing atmospheric conditions that cause wood to expand and contract. The differences in wood characteristics seem to have been mainly due to the fact that Baltic oak came primarily from old growth forests, while oak grown further west came from managed forests; contemporary silviculture practices encouraged fast growth, resulting in smaller, more twisted, knotty trees with less uniform ring patterns, which was more suitable for firewood and certain types of construction that were not compromised by swelling and shrinking wood.\textsuperscript{178} The popularity of Baltic oak led to the depletion of forests near ports such as Gdansk during the fifteenth century, and Baltic oak had to be imported from farther and farther east.\textsuperscript{179} Since transportation was the largest cost involved in the timber trade, this was presumably a factor in the volatility of prices over the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{180} In the sixteenth century, walnut gradually became more popular, perhaps because good oak had become scarcer. Furthermore, walnut grows more rapidly and has the advantage of a finer, tighter grain, which allows more detailed carving.\textsuperscript{181} However, walnut is more susceptible to insect attack and is not quite as stable as oak.\textsuperscript{182}

There are regional differences seen in the type of wood used for choir stalls: in the fifteenth century, oak was dominant in northern France, while walnut was prevalent in areas south of the Loire: Burgundy, Provence and Savoy.\textsuperscript{183} Exceptionally, the former

\textsuperscript{181}Julien, “Naissance d’une miséricorde”, 12.
\textsuperscript{182}Stéphanie Diane Daussy, Sculpteur à Amiens en 1500 (Rennes, France: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013), 96.
\textsuperscript{183}Charles, Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle, 158.
Ávila, León, Miraflores, Toledo, Zamora, or Savoy: Brou. The Fribourg stalls are made of both oak and walnut.

The cost of the wood needed to build a set of choir stalls was a significant portion of the overall expense. The wood alone for the lower stalls of Toledo Cathedral came to approximately ten percent of the outlay; the wood for a set of upper stalls might make up an even greater percentage of the total cost due to the higher dorsals and the canopy, particularly if the carving on the set was relatively sparse (e.g., Figure A.170). Therefore, less wealthy churches tended to choose cheaper native woods, although the use of low-quality timber could possibly indicate that the patrons were misled into paying for inferior material. Thus, stalls were also made from elm, beech or local oak, which was frequently full of knots. A set of fifteenth-century stalls was made out of regional pine for Saint-Jacques church in Villefranche-de-Conflent, then part of Spain, and Jörg Sürlin the Younger’s most modest sets, all commissioned in the Ulm region, were constructed from spruce. Even in the best stalls, the quality of the wood might not be consistent. At Amiens Cathedral, although most of the timber that was used was excellent, some of the larger pieces contain sizable knots. Furthermore, different qualities of wood were generally used for different parts. The Ulm choir stalls are made entirely of oak (Figure A.168); however, the oak in the complex, but hidden, substructure is notably

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201 Teijeira Pablos, *La sillería de coro catedralicia*, 67.
203 Heim, *Rodrigo Alemán*, 92, 382.
204 José Ángel Rivera de las Heras, *Por la catedral, iglesias y ermitas de la ciudad de Zamora* (León, Spain: Edilesa, 2001), 41.
206 Schmid, “Stalles de Fribourg”, 149. For the main wood used in other choir stalls discussed, see the Appendix B.
207 For a table summary of the costs involved in the construction of these stalls, see Heim, *Rodrigo Alemán*, 97.
208 Harrison, “Technical Aspects of the Misericord”, XXII.
211 Tracy and Harrison, *Choir-Stalls of Amiens Cathedral*, 21–22.
inferior to that of the rest of the set. It was probably made from local oak that grew on low, damp land, whereas the high-quality oak for the visible part of the stalls was probably imported from the higher lands of the Allgäu, as was much of the high-quality wood used in Ulm at that time. Choir stalls might also be constructed from more than one type of wood, each with different qualities that are suitable for how they are going to be used. The stalls at Saint-Nicolas in Fribourg are primarily made out of oak, but the unseen floor of the platform is pine, and the carved dorsals are walnut (Figure A.207), which allows fine sculpture with cleaner contours and sharper edges than oak. This characteristic can be seen particularly in the faces of the dorsal figures (e.g., Figure A.268). Similarly, some of the busts from the Fugger Chapel stalls in Augsburg were made of pear wood, which lends itself to intricate carving, while the architectural parts were made of oak, but a whole set could never be made entirely of pear wood since the trees do not grow large enough to produce big boards. In Freising, among the choir stall accounts for the purchases of oak, is one for nineteen planks of limewood (Lindein). Oesterhelt presumes that the limewood was used to carve the busts of the bishops (e.g., Figure A.269). Given the frequent use of limewood during this period in sculpture of this region, along with its unsuitability for certain aspects of joinery, his conclusion is convincing.

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212 Gropp, *Das Ulmer Chorgestühl*, 53–54.
218 Oesterhelt, “Das Chorgestühl von 1488”, 117n27.
Wood preparation

Even before trees were cut down, there were precautions to be taken to ensure that the resulting timber would be of the highest possible quality. Ideally, trees were chosen according to age, state, the nature of the ground and exposure to the elements. They were traditionally felled in the autumn or winter when little or no sap runs,\footnote{Julien, “Naissance d’une miséricorde”, 10.} which lessens the danger of cracking from any shrinkage that occurs during the drying process.\footnote{Hans Westhoff, “Vom Baumstamm zum Bildwerk. Skulpturenschnitzerei in Ulm um 1500,” in Meisterwerke Massenhaft: Die Bildhauerwerkstatt des Niklaus Weckmann und die Malerei in Ulm um 1500, ed. Heribert Meuer (Stuttgart, Germany: Württembergisches Landesmuseum, 1993), 245.} Recommendation of this last practice goes back to at least the time of Vitruvius, as Leon Battista Alberti records in his summary of ancient authors’ advice about building materials in On the Art of Building.\footnote{Leon Battista Alberti, On the Art of Building (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 39.} In the early modern period, most timber, particularly if it was intended for structural purposes, would not have been seasoned, and would have been used within six months of felling.\footnote{Harrison, “Technical Aspects of the Misericord”, XXIV.} However, depending on the type of wood and what was going to be made with it, the wood might be seasoned before it was used. While oak becomes too hard to carve if it is stored for too long, studies of limewood sculptures show that both freshly felled and seasoned timber was used. For thin pieces used in veneers or delicate pinnacles, or for the construction of larger pieces of wood using dowels and glue, seasoned wood is necessary to ensure that the objects do not subsequently warp.\footnote{Westhoff, “Skulpturenschnitzerei in Ulm”, 259–260.} Thus, for choir stalls, seasoned timber would have been preferred or even required depending on who was commissioned to make them. The huchiers in Rouen were obligated to use seasoned wood for joinery, as the fifth item in their fifteenth-century statutes clearly states; although choir stalls are not specifically mentioned in the examples of furnishings included, the statute forbids its members from using green wood for any project that involves closure, assembly or the use of glue.\footnote{(5) Item. Que nul dudit mestier ne puisse ouvrer de vert boys en chef-d’oeuvre qui porte fermeure ou assemblement à celle, comme Coffres, Huches, Bans, Tables, Aulmaires, Huis en cassillez, Fustz à}
Given that green wood is subject to warping,\footnote{Daussy, *Sculpter à Amiens*, 97.} which would potentially interfere with any closures or attachments, such a stipulation is obviously sensible.

After felling, wood needs to be protected until it is ready for use. Alberti lists various traditional recommendations and procedures to preserve and strengthen the wood, including standing it upside down; shading it; burying it; smearing it with a protective substance such as dung; immersing it in water. Treating wood by immersion was certainly practiced during the early modern period, as Alberti himself observed.\footnote{Alberti, *Art of Building*, 39–41.} Water flushes the stored sap out of the logs, allowing them to subsequently dry faster and reducing the threat of large cracks.\footnote{Westhoff, “Skulpturenschnitzerei in Ulm,” 245–246.} Logs could be submerged in ponds or streams close to the forest after felling. In some places, such as Holland, massive stocks of wood were systematically soaked in a semi-industrial way. An important method of contemporary transportation was to float the wood from its source to its destination, which accomplished both goals at the same time, provided that the wood remained in the water long enough.\footnote{Julien, “Naissance d’une miséricorde”, 11.} For well-seasoned wood that was suitable for joinery, the length of time needed depended to some extent on how the wood had been treated beforehand. The Greek philosopher, Theophrastus (d. c. 287 BCE), maintained that wood required at least three years of curing for components such as door panels.\footnote{Alberti, *Art of Building*, 42.} This period is consistent with the time that elapsed between the felling of wood and the beginning of construction in some choir stall projects. In León, the fabric accounts record the summoning of carpenters to cut wood on February 8, 1458,\footnote{“Este (sic) fueron los carpeteros (sic) a cortar madera al ponjal. Diles para vino.” Transcribed as document 3 from Archivo de la Catedral de León, Libro de Cuentas a Fábrica 1458–1459. doc. 9394, fol. 16v in Teijeira Pablos, *La sillería de coro catedralicia*, 83.} while the stalls were not begun until 1461.\footnote{Teijeira Pablos, “Les stalles du groupe de León,” 61n14.} The oak for
the Bern stalls was felled in 1518, but the contract for the construction of the set was not signed until 1522, although part of the delay seems to have been due to the search for new artists.

Knowledgeable patrons were aware that seasoned timber was preferable for constructing choir stalls. In cases where the woodworkers were responsible for purchasing materials, it might be written in the contract that seasoned timber be used. The canons at Tréguier Cathedral stipulated that the stalls they had commissioned were to be made of good quality, dry oak. Proper drying not only decreases the amount of shrinkage and expansion that wood undergoes as humidity varies, but also makes the wood less vulnerable to insect attack and to wood-rotting fungi. At Cuenca Cathedral in Spain, there was a disagreement between the chapter and Master Egas Cueman as to whether the choir stalls that they had already contracted with him should be begun while the wood was still green. Master Egas was insistent that he could begin roughing out the stalls immediately, but the canons had reservations. To ensure a positive outcome for their commission, the canons hired a notary on March 6, 1454 to record their concerns as well as Egas’s reassurance that he knew how to begin construction while taking into account the drying process that was still ongoing. Egas also promised to take complete responsibility to pay for, rework or repair any damage that might result from working with green wood. In the end, the canons were pleased with his work: Egas received a bonus for

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233Mojon, Das Berner Münster, 373.
234See section Unexpected expenses above.
236Daussy, Sculpteur à Amiens, 96.
237“...los dichos sennores cabillo dixieron al dicho Egas que las paresçia porque la dicha obra non se confonda que devia dexar secar la madera porque non abra e ensangoste e luego el dicho Egas dixo que el entendia de començar a desbastar la dicha madera e que asy se yra enxugando e que sy algun danno vieniese a la dicha obra de las dichas sillas por estar la dicha madera verde asy en fender comno ensangotar que el...prometio a buena fe syn mal enganno de pagar e refaser e emendar todo e qualquier danno e perdida que en la dicha obra de las dichas sillas viniese por cause de estar verde la madera...” The full agreement is transcribed from Archivo Capitular de Cuenca SIGN, A-6. Secretaría. Actas Capitulares 1453–63, fol. 11v as Document 1 in Palomo Fernández, “La sillería de la Catedral de Cuenca,” 289.
these walnut stalls,\textsuperscript{238} which are now in the former collegiate church in the nearby town of Belmonte.\textsuperscript{239} However, their deterioration over time was perhaps exacerbated by the working of green wood.\textsuperscript{240}

Wood that was already sawn could also be purchased, as the use of the term \textit{lau} (board) indicates in various payments for wood for the Fribourg stalls,\textsuperscript{241} and the term \textit{Preter} (board or plank), used in Freising to describe the purchase of limewood, specifies.\textsuperscript{242} Ideally, boards would have been cut radially, as they were for the Ulm stalls. This method produces the smallest number of boards from a log, but ensures equal shrinkage, and therefore less warping of the stalls over time.\textsuperscript{243} Radial planks are cut from the centre of the log to the edge, thus along the radius. Quarter sawn planks are also of superior quality. In this method, L-shaped cuts are made to the centre with the cuts therefore getting increasingly shorter with a wedge left over. However, if the goal is to produce as many boards as possible, sawing is done tangentially: instead of cutting from the centre, the log is sliced from one edge of the circle to the other, tangential to the growth rings (Figure A.270). The disadvantage of this method for joinery is that the wood is much more prone to warping. The choir stalls from the late fourteenth-century at Saint Botolph’s in Boston, Lincolnshire show some of the effects over time of using tangentially sawn wood: the softer medullary rays have split open, creating numerous irregular surface cracks (Figure A.271).\textsuperscript{244} Sawing practices are rarely mentioned in extant commissions. Perhaps patrons relied on best practices as set out in statutes. Or perhaps such detail was not part of most patrons’ knowledge. Many of the boards used to make

\textsuperscript{238}See section Artisan remuneration, above.
\textsuperscript{239}Palomo Fernández, “La sillería de la Catedral de Cuenca,” 284.
\textsuperscript{240}Teijeira Pablos, \textit{La sillería de coro catedralicia}, 18n27.
\textsuperscript{242}See the account excerpt cited in the previous section.
\textsuperscript{243}Gropp, \textit{Das Ulmer Chorgestühl}, 53.
\textsuperscript{244}Harrison, “Technical Aspects of the Misericord”, XX–XXII.
the elaborate set at Amiens cathedral were not quarter sawn.\textsuperscript{245} The canons of Tréguier Cathedral, however, were well-enough informed to specify that the panels used to build additional stalls for their choir should be quarter sawn.\textsuperscript{246}

No matter which seasoning or sawing methods were used, wood storage during the lengthy construction time was also a serious consideration, especially in places like Northern France where there is a wide variance in temperature and humidity levels over the course of the year. Fluctuations in humidity can cause significant changes in the dimensions of wood; European oak in particular shows great variation. Completed choir stall parts had to be stored in as environmentally stable a site as possible to ensure that everything still fit together once it was time to assemble the set. Since all the different surfaces of the wood would have been exposed, expansion and contraction could be uneven within the same piece. Some components could have been refitted if necessary, but others would have been impossible to refit, thus wasting not only time, but also material. The best available storage space in the early modern period would have been a big building with thick walls, high ceilings and no heating, such as a cathedral.\textsuperscript{247}

While wood was most often furnished by the patron, as in León, Bern and Fribourg, it was sometimes the responsibility of the workshop head to procure it, as in Tréguier and Ciudad Rodrigo.\textsuperscript{248} The initial contract for the cathedral in Tréguier involved the construction of just fourteen new stalls,\textsuperscript{249} and Rodrigo’s first contract in Ciudad Rodrigo was for only two stalls.\textsuperscript{250} The purchase of enough wood to construct a complete set, however, would have been a serious financial burden to a workshop, particularly since

\textsuperscript{245}Tracy and Harrison, \textit{Choir-Stalls of Amiens Cathedral}, 22.
\textsuperscript{246}“Et le boys des pannaulx sera de bois de quartier de fante...” Transcribed from a fabric notebook in the Archives des Côtes-d’Armor (formerly Côtes-du-Nord) in Barthélemy, \textit{Mélanges sur la Bretagne}, 114.
\textsuperscript{247}Tracy and Harrison, \textit{Choir-Stalls of Amiens Cathedral}, 133–134.
\textsuperscript{248}“...el dicho maestro ha de dar asy la madera como la hechura e costa todo a su costa.” Heim, \textit{Rodrigo Alemán}, 414.
\textsuperscript{249}See section The decision to construct choir stalls, above.
\textsuperscript{250}“...maestro Rodrigo asentaron conel que haga dos syllas...” This excerpt and the previous one are from the contract transcribed from Archivo Capitular de Ciudad Rodrigo, Actas Capitulares Libro 43 (Contaduría de 1493–1504), fol. 104r as document 162 in ibid., 414.
full reimbursement would not have taken place until after the final assessment of the work.\textsuperscript{251} Such payment, therefore, would have occurred at least a few years after the acquisition of the considerable amount of wood needed for a complete set of stalls. Such a burden might influence the choice of wood that was used. The nuns at the convent of Sint-Klara in Gentbrugge near Ghent were obviously aware of potential cost-cutting measures when the purchase of wood was made by the choir stall maker rather than by the patron. Although they left the acquisition of wood up to the joiner/carver, to avert potential problems that might result from low quality wood, the abbess, (\textit{abdersse}) the sacristan (\textit{costerigghe}) and the bursar (?) (\textit{vorzierigghe})\textsuperscript{252} drew up a contract with Gillis van Dickele on April 30, 1506 that specified that the choir stalls must be constructed from pieces of wood that were both large and sturdy.\textsuperscript{253} Even if reasonable quality wood was acquired by the workshop, few woodworkers would have had the resources to import and purchase substantial quantities of the highest quality wood available, nor could they afford to discard boards that were not perfect. Rather, wood with knots, some of which would invariably be present among the large amount of wood needed to build choir stalls, would normally be positioned to ensure that such imperfections could not be seen, or knots would be cut out and filled in with another piece of wood. A comparison of the wood—how it was prepared and how it was employed to construct the almost contemporaneous sedilia and choir stalls at Ulm Minster made by the same joiner, Jörg Syrlin the Elder—reveals a significant difference in quality and practice. The wood for the sedilia, like most wood used to carve sculptures or make choir stalls at this time, has many irregularities that are hidden by the manner in which the work is constructed, such as by filling knot holes with small pieces of wood or by positioning figures in front of

\textsuperscript{251}Heim, \textit{Rodrigo Alemán}, 296.
\textsuperscript{252}I have been unable to find this word in any dictionary. Thank you to Professor Krista De Jonge for suggesting that the most likely third person to be involved in the commissioning of church furnishings would be the nun in charge of the abbey finances.
\textsuperscript{253}“...de welcke zittins moeten zyn van grootten ende stercte van houte...” For the full transcription of this document from the Provincial Archives in Ghent, see pages 228–233 Busscher, \textit{Peintres et sculpteurs à Gand}, 228n.
such irregularities. In contrast, the choir stall wood, quite exceptionally, has almost no imperfections, and, aside from the substructure, uniformly high-quality, radially-cut oak is used even in hidden places. Given these differences, in the absence of documentation, it seems most likely that Jörg Syrlin the Elder was himself responsible for acquiring the ordinary oak for the sedilia,\textsuperscript{254} while it is known from the extant contract that the status-seeking patrons supplied the superior wood used to make the Ulm choir stalls.\textsuperscript{255} While from a distance, this difference would probably not be noticed, close contact with the furnishings would have made the difference obvious to well-trained eyes.

**Devising an iconographic program**

Although some choir stalls from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries did not have an integral iconographic program, such as the set in the Coro de los Padres at the Charterhouse of Miraflores in Spain (Figure A.272), most high-quality stalls in this period did. Erudite as well as local references that appear in these iconographic programs suggest that they were generally created by educated members of the religious community who was going to use them.\textsuperscript{256} At León Cathedral, for instance, there is a complex typological program,\textsuperscript{257} which indicates an educated advisor; the inclusion of four minor saints who are particularly venerated in León (Marcellus, the patron saint of the city (Figure A.273) and his lesser known sons Claudius, Lupercus and Victorius, who were martyred in

\textsuperscript{254}Gropp, *Das Ulmer Chorgestühl*, 53.
\textsuperscript{255}"...dartzu im die pflegere das holtz, daruss er denne das gestiel machen soll, geben und antwortten sollen, one sin schaden, an das ende, do er denne arbaiten wirdet..." The full contract of June 13, 1469, now at Stadtarchiv Ulm, is transcribed in Rott, *Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte*, 51.
\textsuperscript{256}See chapter Construction of Identity section Proclaiming Identity for more discussion of this issue.
\textsuperscript{257}Teijeira Pablos, “Les stalles du groupe de León,” 58.
León about 298AD) implies a local advisor. At the monastery in Blaubeuren in Württemberg, the complex interaction of the imagery on the various media in the choir that together forms an integrated program must have been conceived by an educated theologian. As abbot of the monastery during most of the post-fire reconstruction of the choir, Heinrich III Fabri is the only plausible candidate who could have developed such a program. Not only do his arms appear throughout the choir, but an inscription on the choir stalls explicitly links him with the mid-fifteenth-century Melk reform movement that was crucial to the monastery’s self-identity: “Anno domini 1493 Anno vero regimini审视e dni Heinrici abbatis 18 Anno atem reformationis 42 elaborata sunt h[a]ec subsellia...” (Figure A.201). In rare cases, the creators of the iconographic program for choir stalls are recorded. These references support the presumption that members of the community generally devised the program. The chapter archives of the cathedral in Troyes from October 8, 1529, inform us that both archdeacons, the precentor and some other canons were delegated to consider which story, which series of themes or which statues would be made for the lower stalls of the choir. In other cases, chapter members are named to a supervisory role during the construction of choir stalls, which, although not specifically stated, might well include the design of the program. In Amiens, four members of the cathedral chapter were put in charge of directing and inspecting the creation of the stalls. However, the religious program itself is rarely

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259 See the plan of the upper stalls, which shows Marcelo (Marcellus) opposite Claudio (Claudius) on the western-most end, and Lupercio (Lupercus) opposite Victorico (Victorius) on the west side of the aisle, in Teijeira Pablos, “Choir Stalls of Leon,” 177.


261 Moraht-Fromm, “Raumprogramm und liturgische Dispositionen”, 52.


263 Unfortunately, these records are only known secondhand through fragmentary and sometimes contradictory seventeenth- and eighteenth-century copies of the original accounts. Durand, *Monographie de la Cathédrale d’Amiens*, 148.
mentioned in surviving contracts. One that does refer explicitly to iconographic themes is the contract of 1508 to add fourteen new stalls to the existing set at the cathedral of Tréguier. No complete program is laid out, presumably because of the already existing imagery, but along with general suggestions for the marginalia, the contract specifies that sculptures of the twelve apostles are to appear on the uprights on the dorsals, and that twelve angels holding scenes that display the mysteries of the Passion should be placed on the stalls wherever the canons would like. In the contract that Bartholomé Ordóñez signed with the Barcelona Cathedral chapter on May 17, 1517 to add wooden stall ends (e.g., Figure A.274) and a marble trascoro to their choir, the iconography of the stalls is not recorded, but two of the subjects in the model drawings that he was to use for the trascoro are specifically mentioned: the discovery of the True Cross and the martyrdom of Saint Eulalia. Furthermore, for a series of four statues for the front of the choir, of which only Saints Sever and Pacia had been decided upon, he is told that the others will be designated to him by the chapter, indicating that the Barcelona Cathedral canons are planning the iconographic program. Although no known sources completely describe choir stall programs, there are contemporary documents that detail religious programs for other types of church commissions, sometimes in the contract, at other times in a separate document. For example, the contract of April 15, 1501 that Tilman Riemenschneider signed with representatives of the parish church of Saint Jacob

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264 See chapter Singing from the Same Choir Book, section Historical factors for more details.

265 “...et dessus lesdiz montans y aura sur chacun montant ung ymaige d'appostre jucques à doze appostres ...” Transcribed in Barthélemy, Mélanges sur la Bretagne, 113.

266 “Et seront faiz jucques à doze anges, lequieulx doze anges porteront la représentation des mistères de la passion Nostre-Seigneur, et seront mis dedans l'eupre ou ainsi que plaira à messires du Chapitre les y faire mettre.” Transcribed in ibid., 113–114.

267 “...istòries de la inventió de Sancta Creu e lo martiri de Sancta Eulàlia,...de ymatges perfetes segons la traça o mostra que serà llurada al dit Reverend Capítol,” This excerpt and the following one are from a transcription of the contract in the Archivo catedralicio, Barcelona, Obra in J. Ainaud, “El contrato de Ordóñez para el coro de Barcelona,” Anales y Boletín de los Museos de Arte de Barcelona 6 (1948): 378.

268 “Irem, es concordat que en los dos biaxos que son en lo front de dit cor sien fetes quatre ymages en que sien sculptis Sanct Sever e Sanct Pacia o altres ymatges que designades li seran per lo Reverent Capítol.” Ainaud, “El contrato de Ordóñez,” 378.
in Rothenburg ob der Tauber in Franconia for the Holy Blood altarpiece specifies the desired scene for each component of the altarpiece.\textsuperscript{269} In another example, a record from the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century survives of an advisor’s comprehensive description of the events to be depicted on a tapestry representing the lives of Saint Urban and Saint Cecilia, which was commissioned for the papal collegiate church of Saint-Urbain in Troyes.\textsuperscript{270} The forty-six page document is based on written lives of the saints and outlines in detail each scene that is to be depicted.\textsuperscript{271} Although the name of the advisor is not known, he was probably a canon of the collegiate that had commissioned the tapestry.\textsuperscript{272} However, both of these examples are exceptional for the amount of detail they provide.\textsuperscript{273} A program might also be provided orally: Brother Didier, who was the overseer of accounts for the fabric of Saint Mary Magdalene church, also in Troyes, consulted with the weaver, Thibault Climient, on at least two occasions subsequent to the signing of a contract to make a tapestry depicting the life of Mary Magdalene, with the chapter paying for wine and dinner each time.\textsuperscript{274} Such oral consultations might help explain the dearth of documents that outline iconographic programs on choir stalls. The fact that references to the imagery on marginal areas of

\textsuperscript{269}For instance, “...item in den flügel zu der rechten seytten flach schneiden die figur des balmtags, als christus uff dem esel eingeritten ist mitsampt siner hystory und zugeherd,...” (...item on the right-hand wing, carve the scene of Palm Sunday in relief, when Christ rode in on the donkey, including the story and related material,...(translation mine)) The complete contract is transcribed in Justus Bier, Tilmann Riemenschneider: Die reifen Werke (Augsburg, Germany: Dr. Benno Filser Verlag, 1930), 171.

\textsuperscript{270}This church was begun by Pope Urban IV (1195–1264) to honour his birthplace and his patron saint, Pope Urban I. Legend has it that Urban I buried the martyred Saint Cecilia, so the two were closely associated. The canons of Saint-Urbain displayed a particular devotion to Saint Cecilia. Tina Kane, The Troyes Mémoire: The Making of a Medieval Tapestry (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2010), 18–19, 54–56.

\textsuperscript{271}Tina Kane recently published a new transcription of this document from MS 10 G 8, Archives Départementales de l’Aube along with a facing English translation in ibid. The document was first transcribed in Philippe Guignard, “Mémoires fournis aux peintres chargés d’executer les cartons d’une tapisserie destinée à la collégiale saint-Urbain de Troyes représentant les légendes de Saint Urbain et Ste Cécile,” Mémoires de la Société d’agriculture, sciences et arts du département de l’Aube 15 (1850): 421–425.

\textsuperscript{272}Weigert, Weaving Sacred Stories, 2–7. Kane proposes that a lay professional writer, Pierre Desrey, was the author, but I find her argument unconvincing. See Kane, Troyes Mémoire, 162.

\textsuperscript{273}ibid., 1. Wolfgang Stechow, Northern Renaissance Art, 1400-1600: Sources and Documents (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 82.

\textsuperscript{274}Guignard, “Mémoires fournis aux peintres,” 427–430.
the stalls (e.g., Amiens, Basel, Gentbrugge, Tréguier, Veurne)\textsuperscript{275}, however general, are more common in extant choir stall contracts than references to the main program further suggests that oral consultations and/or separate written documents regarding the main program were more usual.

**Choosing a choir stall master**

There were a variety of factors involved in choosing a choir stall master such as the availability of woodworkers, their reputation and what kinds of objects they had previously made. Guild rules or city ordinances might affect the choice. As discussed in section *Financial matters*, above, fees were also a consideration.

While some woodworkers specialized in the construction of choir stalls, unlike members of certain subspecialties, such as altarpiece case makers (backmakers) in the Low Countries,\textsuperscript{276} choir stall makers did not form a cohesive group. As wooden objects, choir stalls could be made by any of the main woodworking professions: joiners, carpenters or wood carvers. Other professions were also involved in choir stall production to a lesser extent: many sets were originally partially polychromed, requiring painters, (e.g., Figures A.88 and A.95), and by the thirteenth century, stalls in northern Europe normally had misericords,\textsuperscript{277} which were usually attached with metal hinges, thus requiring the involvement of blacksmiths.\textsuperscript{278}

Customs and guild rules varied from region to region, and even from town to town. Furthermore, the differentiations among the woodworking professions were not always clear, and sometimes contested. Also, guild alliances varied from place to place, bringing

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\textsuperscript{275}See chapter Marginalia, section Historical factors for references to marginal imagery in contracts.


\textsuperscript{277}Robert Taussat, “Quelques notes sur les stalles de la cathédrale de Rodez,” in *Le miroir des miséricordes (XIII\textsuperscript{e}–XVII\textsuperscript{e} siècle)*, ed. Claude Rivals (Rodez, France: CEACM, 1996), 138.

\textsuperscript{278}In fact, many objects that joiners made, such as doors and furniture, required the involvement of blacksmiths.
some crafts together, while dissociating others. Even in cases where guild statutes are explicit in their distinctions, there was frequently a gap between official rules and actual practice.\footnote{Gervase Rosser, “Crafts, Guilds and the Negotiation of Work in the Medieval Town,” \textit{Past & Present} 154 (Feb. 1997): 5.}

Who made choir stalls?

In general, the construction of choir stalls was the purview of joiners since the creation of seating required competent joinery skills.\footnote{Woods, \textit{Netherlandish Late Gothic Sculpture in England}, 6.} However, carpenters were frequently in competition with joiners to make stalls. In Bruges, the construction of choir stalls officially became a carpenter’s task when the city tried to settle ongoing conflicts between the joiners’ and carpenters’ guilds. In the \textit{Keure der timmerlieden} of July 5, 1455, the city magistrate outlined who was responsible for different types of woodwork, giving two main criteria for distinguishing carpenters’ from joiners’ work: it must be immovable and it must use pegged joints for assembly, rather than glue.\footnote{Coomans, “Choir Stalls of Melrose Abbey”, 240.} In Ghent, an agreement made in 1481 between carpenters and joiners established what carpenters were authorized to make: all kinds of buildings, doors, windows, portals, writing cases on legs, and also seats, simple benches, installations used as shelter, panelling, and racks, both suspended on and embedded in the wall.\footnote{“...alle manieren van huysen, deuren, veynsters, portalen, upsstaande schriftscontoiren, voorts siegen, onghecoufert banken, schutsels, lambergeringhe ende locarissen aen ende inde mueren ghe-maeect...” Transcribed from Lieven Daenens, L’art du meuble in L’art flamand des origines a nos jours, Belgium, n.d. page 181 in Charles, \textit{Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle}, 259n145.} While choir stalls are not mentioned, the references to seats and benches suggest that choir stalls could have been assigned to carpenters.\footnote{Charles, \textit{Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle}, 259.} The ability of the master to carve figures could also be crucial,\footnote{Woods, \textit{Netherlandish Late Gothic Sculpture in England}, 6.} as can be seen on most important sets of this period (e.g., Figure A.115), and therefore carvers were also hired to make stalls. Given the variety of tasks involved, including the occasional use of

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marquetry (e.g., Figure A.275), the frequent need for painters (e.g., Figure A.276) and the requirement for metal parts, especially hinges (e.g., Figure A.277), the construction of a set of choir stalls was generally a collaborative effort that involved more than one craft. The stall master at Troyes Cathedral was even required to help the blacksmith attach the seats of the lower choir stalls. Depending on guild rules and how the crafts were divided up, this collaboration might be made easier. In Antwerp, a ruling by the joiners’ guild in 1497 made it possible for carvers to employ journeymen joiners with the guild’s consent. In Basel, joiners and carvers were part of the same guild, according to one of the arguments that two local carvers made in self-defence to charges that they had been paid for joiners’ work. However, as this defence shows, membership in the same guild did not necessarily protect woodworkers from accusations of working outside their purview. In the Amiens statutes of painters, carvers (entailleurs), embroiderers and illuminators from 1400, the first statute explicitly states that its members may only practice one profession, giving the example that painters are not allowed to make carvings, nor carvers paint. The professional collaboration needed to make choir stalls may have been smoother in places with no guilds, such as many towns in the lower Rhine. In fifteenth-century Geneva, resident artisans were not members of trades or

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285 Intarsia was much more commonly used on choir stalls on the Italian Peninsula. For more about the technique, see Donati and Genovese, Forme del legno. Intagli e tarsie fra Gotico e Rinascimento; Trevisan, Renaissance Intarsia: Masterpieces of Wood Inlay.

286 “...tenebitur assistere cum fabro serario et eum juvare in serrandis sellullis bassis...” Transcribed from Archives départementales de l’Aube, Troyes, Comptes, 1531, G 1282, fol. 273v in Charles, Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle, 256n53.


288 “Item zum dritten, so sindt disse biede handwerck bildhowen und dißmacher arbeit fur ein handtwerck geachtet hie zu Basel,...” The full document is transcribed from Handel und Gewerbe, R. R., nr. 10, ca. 1526 in Rott, Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte, 131–132.

289 “1. C’est à sçavoir que doresnavant tous ceux quy voudront ouvrer et besongner en ladicte ville desdits stilles ou mestiers ne se pourront entremettre que d’un mestier, se il n’est accordant audict mestier, c’est à sçavoir que un peintre ne poura ouvrer d’ouvrages de taille et un tailleur peindre, et ainsy de tous autres stilles ou mestiers.” The full set of statutes dated December 5, 1400 is transcribed from Archive de l’hôtel de ville d’Amiens, copie en papier, liasse cotée D 8, no. 16 in inventory of Gressnet in Recueil des monuments inédits de l’histoire du Tiers État, ed. Augustin Thierry (Paris: Institut de France, 1853), 5.

290 Woods, Netherlandish Late Gothic Sculpture in England, 7.

291 Rommé, Henrick Douwerman, 17.
corporations, but rather belonged to religious confraternities that were organized around neighbourhoods. Since these confraternities played almost no overt political role, they were not expressly concerned with protecting professional interests. Conversely, in Würzburg, crafts were organized with structures and regulations very similar to those of guilds despite the absence of official institutions.

In actual choir stall projects, different solutions were found to navigate the complex process. Some choir stall masters, such as the joiner, Mathieu de Rommelles, acknowledged lacking skills that were outside their workshop’s expertise, obliging the patrons to find artisans with the necessary skills to complete the stalls. Therefore, in Troyes, the ymagier, Yvon Bachot, was hired separately to carve the images on the stall ends. In other cases, the choir stall master acted more like an overseer, hiring workers from other guilds himself. In Ulm, Jörg Syrlin the Elder must have had both joiners and carvers in his workshop based on the workshop’s capacity, and the close interaction needed between the joiners and carvers to produce certain parts of the stalls. The dorsal reliefs and the figures in the canopy (e.g., Figure A.278) could have been commissioned from a carver’s workshop, then attached later, but the stall ends (e.g., Figure A.47) could only have been carved by someone in Syrlin’s workshop, either working on both joinery and carving, or in close collaboration with a joiner. Syrlin himself might have been trained as both a carver and a joiner, which may have been why he had both professions in his workshop: he is referred to as a joiner in the contracts for the Ulm stalls and altarpiece, but is called a carver (bildhower) in an account entry for the sedilia. For the stall project, however, he would primarily have been occupied with the organization.

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294 See section Unexpected expenses, above, for more information on this situation.
296 Ibid., 13. See section Sample stalls, below, for more details about this commission.
297 Ibid., 132–134.
the choir stall maker performed tasks that were perceived to be outside the scope of his profession, at least by other guilds. The Brussels joiner, Matthys de Waeyer, who became a member of the joiners’ guild in Leuven after signing a contract to make the choir stalls for the Augustinian abbey in that town, was taken to court by the Leuven masons’ guild for having made carved images on the stalls. This guild considered these images to be independent statues, and thus within their purview, since carvers (beeldsnijders) were also part of their guild. The joiners countered that such carving was an integral part of the stalls (see Figure A.279). In 1539, the joiner Estienne Couvrechel (aka Couvrechef) had to defend himself at Amien’s municipal court because the masters of the guild of painters and carvers accused him of practicing the profession of carver. The court decreed that joiners as well as carvers were allowed to make all types of relief and carvings in the round if they formed part of a larger work, but that if the carvings were separate, only carvers were allowed to make them. Such suits highlight the problem of delimiting the domain of guilds and professions, and how this problem was exacerbated in the execution of complex projects, such as choir stalls. In some cases, the choir stall maker was a member of both professions, thus avoiding such disputes. Although Gillis van Dickele had initially trained as a joiner, he also became a member of the sculptors’ guild on August 6, 1494 and was therefore permitted to make sculptural works in addition to joinery.

298 “...nyemandt...en sal moegen verdingen werck van metselryden, van beelsnyden, van houte noch van steenen, hy en sal ’tyerst en voer al int ambacht van den metsers zyn...” This excerpt and the following are taken from the judgement of January 9, 1544 (NS), Court of Aldermen's register 1545, Chamber 2, Leuven (Stadsarchief Leuven nr. 7828, fol. 199-199v, which is completely transcribed in Van Even, “Les auteurs des stalles à Louvain,” 61n1–62n1.

299 “...maer waren int werck gemaect als cyrate vanden selven wesende,...” ibid., 61–62n.

300 “...ponvaient faire dans les ouvrages de menuiserie et de charpenterie toutes ymages, mannequins et autre effigies, soit à boche et à demy boche eslevées et arrondies estans de l’essence, bois et pieches de leurs ouvrages et d’icelles charpenteries,...et quant aux ymages arrondies et séparées qui se ostent et l’event de la menuiserie et charpenterie,...ausdicts entailleurs appartient de ce faire et non ausdicts menuisiers.” Transcribed in Durand, “Le cimetière Saint-Denis à Amiens,” 257n2.

Extant contracts and financial records provide more specific information about who made choir stalls, although in some documents, the choir stall master is simply titled *Master*, and his profession is not mentioned: Meister Henrick Berntz (Kalkar); 302 Egas de Bruselas maestro (Cuenca). 303 Similarly, Ulrich Glurer, who designed the Freising Cathedral stalls, and Bernhard, who made them, are both titled “maister” in the account books. 304 In the contract made in Le Vigan, Jean Moynié’s profession is not mentioned either, but, surprisingly, he may not even have been a master as he is described as “viro Johanni moynié” initially, and designated by his surname thereafter. 305 However, in documents related to the Zamora Cathedral stalls, Juan de Bruxeles is only referred to by name in the contract of April 8, 1503, although he is called “Maestro” throughout the earlier contract of August 20, 1502. 306 Given the responsibility involved in making a set of stalls and the need to employ others for such a large enterprise, something a journeyman would not have been allowed to do, it seems more likely that the writer of the Le Vigan contract chose to refer to Moynié by name rather than as *Master*.

Despite the lack of precision regarding the profession of the choir stall maker in these examples, references from other choir stall documents, as well as from different documents related to these woodworkers, show a predominance of professions that can be referred to as joiners. In Bern, a “tischmacher” 307 and his journeyman made the stalls; in Saumur, two “menusiers” 308 were originally hired, and the work was completed by day workers.

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302 See references in sections Artist remuneration and Other expenses, above.
303 “...estando ende juntados y los honrados sennores cabillo de la dicha eglisia de Cuenca...e estando ende Egas de Bruselas maestro...” The full document is transcribed as Document 1 in Palomo Fernández, “La sillería de la Catedral de Cuenca,” 289.
304 See section, Design drawings, below, for excerpts.
305 For longer excerpts from this contract, see sections Artisan remuneration, above and Extant stalls as models, below. The complete document is transcribed from the Archives diocésaines de Cahors, D 20/15 (Documents Albe) in Freigang, “L’Ancienne Eglise Collégiale du Vigan,” 539.
306 See the reproductions and transcriptions of these contracts in Ramos de Castro, La Catedral de Zamora, 594–599.
307 See section The decision to construct choir stalls, above.
308 This term is first documented in the mid-fifteenth century and gradually superseded the earlier term *huchier*, *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, (DMF online: Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, 2005), www.curnl.fr/definition/dmf/menuisier?idf=chartesYmXdbh;str=0 and www.curnl.fr/definition/dmf/huchier?idf=dmfXeXrmXhchis;str=0 (accessed August 17, 2012).
each also described as a “menusier”\textsuperscript{309} two “ménussiers” were initially engaged to make additions to the stalls, then to build new ones at Tréguier Cathedral;\textsuperscript{310} in the Rodez contract, André Sulpice is referred to as a “menuserium;”\textsuperscript{311} Matthys de Wayere from Brussels joined the “scrynmaker” guild in Leuven to work on the stalls for the Augustinian monastery in that town;\textsuperscript{312} Jan Borchmans is referred to as a “Schrijnwercker” in accounts for the Oirschot set,\textsuperscript{313} and in documents related to his work on the Averbode choir stalls, he is called a “scrinifex” in a summary account recorded in Latin and a “scrynmaker” in the agreement to modify the stalls, which was written in Dutch.\textsuperscript{314}

In some cases, woodworkers were referred to by different terms in different documents. A reference to “maister jörgen bildhower” in an account entry that has been associated with the Ulm sedilia probably refers to Jörg Syrlin the Elder.\textsuperscript{315} He is called a joiner, rather than a carver, in all other extant documents, such as the contract for the Ulm choir stalls: “Jörgen Sürlin, dem schreiner”\textsuperscript{316} and the rediscovered Ulm altarpiece contract:

\textsuperscript{309}“A Georges Lefevre, menusier, pour avoir besongné de son mestier à parachever le cousté desdites chesres…” See section Artisan remuneration, above for the reference to the original choir stall makers. Port, “L’histoire des arts et des artistes en Anjou,” 284.

\textsuperscript{310}“…ménussiers demourans en la cité de Lantreguer,” Excerpt transcribed in Barthélemy, \textit{Mélanges sur la Bretagne}, 111–112.

\textsuperscript{311}See section Artisan remuneration, above.

\textsuperscript{312}“Matthysen de Waydere,…scrynmaker,” Transcribed from January 9, 1544 (NS), Court of Aldermen’s register 1545, Chamber 2, Leuven (Stadsarchief Leuven nr. 7828, fol. 199-199v) in Jan Crab, \textit{Het Brabants Beeldsnijcentrum Leuven} (Leuven, Belgium: Vrienden van het Museum Leuven, 1977), Document 12, 314.


\textsuperscript{314}“Item dictus Johannes Borchmans scriinifex…” April 30, 1513 and “…Jan Borchmans scrynmaker…” April 8, 1517 (NS), both transcribed from the register of accounts of the abbey reconstruction, Archief van Averbode, 1, reg. 4, fol. 148–149 in Fransolet, “L’auteur des stalles d’Averbode,” 157–160.

\textsuperscript{315}There has been a longstanding debate in the literature about whether this source does indeed refer to Jörg Syrlin. The entry is transcribed from Stadtarchiv Ulm (6967) and the debate is summarized in Gropp, \textit{Das Ulmer Chorgestühl}, 13.

\textsuperscript{316}The complete contract is transcribed from Stadtarchiv Ulm, Urkunde June 13, 1469 in Rott, \textit{Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte}, 51.
“Jorgen Sÿrlin dem schryner.” Dominique Bertin, who was employed as a “menusier” in the contract of 1552 to complete the stalls at Auch Cathedral, had achieved the title “architecte du Roy” by 1561, thus career trajectories may be registered in documents over time. Occasionally, a different term is used to describe a woodworker’s profession within the same project. Antoine de Peney is called “chapuis” and “debossiere” at different times in the account books for the Saint-Nicolas stalls. Chapuis means carpenter, but in the fifteenth century, also included the sense of joiner; debossiere was a joiner, but could include the meaning of sculptor. These differing terms probably reflected the presumably different recorders’ idiolects, particularly since debossiere seems to be a regional term seen mainly in archives in the Franche-Comté. However, the distinction might have been related to what Master Antoine was working on when the term was used, as may also have been the case in León when referring to the master who took over the stall construction from Juan de Malinas. In most documents, Maestre Copín is called an “ymaginero”, but in one document, he is lumped together with two other woodworkers as “carpenteros.” Or perhaps carpentero was considered a more general term that would encompass three differently trained woodworkers. In the vernacular financial records for the trascoro and the additions to the choir stalls made for Barcelona

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321 Ibid., 256.

322 “Este día los dichos señores deputaron de salario a Copín, yimaginero...” versus “...García de Mansilla, canóigo, pasó esta renta de los dezmos de la Renconada en Juan del Huelmo e en Pedro de León e en Copín, carpenteros...” Both entries are fully transcribed from Archivo de la Catedral de León, Actas Capitulares as document 28: 1473, doc. 9817, fol. 42v and document 30: 1474 doc. 9818, fol. 20r respectively in Teijeira Pablos, La sillería de coro catedralicia, 90–91.
Cathedral, Bartolomé Ordóñez is referred to either as “imaginayre” or “scultor,” while in a Latin document, he is referred to more generally as “artifex.” While the first two equivalent terms may reflect the word choice of the recorder, the use of the more general Latin term may acknowledge Ordoñez’s broad expertise: he was hired to make two very different church furnishings, one in wood, one in marble. Adam d’Aubellemner and Mathieu de Rommelles are referred to as “menuysiers” in the account books, which were kept in French, but in the chapter minutes, which were recorded in Latin, Master Adam is referred to as “cathedrarum chori architectum” and his son-in-law is called “architectus.” Although this Latin term may be used broadly, there are specific terms for joiner in Latin, as can be seen by the use of *menuserium* in the earlier Rodez contract and *scrinifex* in the Averbode account (see above). The difference between the Latin and French terms in the Troyes documents may have been due to the two record keepers. Interestingly, Pierre Piétresson de Saint-Aubin, who transcribed excerpts from the original documents, complained that the chapter secretary’s Latin was precious and affected, so perhaps *architectus* was part of his elevated writing style. Or perhaps these different usages reflect the “in-between” status of microarchitecture during the period of professionalization of the architect.

Less frequently, carvers, rather than joiners, were hired as choir stall masters, particularly in England and on the Iberian Peninsula. Rodrigo Alemán is consistently referred to as an “entallador” in the extant documents. Although Juan de Bruxelles’s

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325-See sections Artisan remuneration and Other expenses, above.

326-See section Unexpected expenses, above.


328-Given the relatively small number of documents examined, more study would be needed to find out whether this geographical distinction can be generalized.

329-See section Unexpected expenses, above and section Sample stalls, below.
profession is not referred to in the choir stall documentation, in the altarpiece contract of 1508 for the Monterrey Chapel in the monastery of Montamarta near Zamora, he is called an “entallador.” In León, chapter records refer to Juan de Malinas as an “ymaginero.” This term also refers to a carver or sculptor, but specifically of figural images, like imager in English and imagier in French. At Eton College Chapel, the “karver” Walter Nicholl was hired to make the new stalls and rood loft in 1475. As part of the larger chapel project in Windsor, the head of the choir stalls, William Berkeley, as well as other woodworkers involved in the construction of the stalls, are referred to in the Latin accounts, which are full of anglicisms, as “Kervers.” In only one known case, the man chosen to build the stalls was described as both a carver and a joiner in a single document. Gillis van Dickele is referred to as a “beeldesnydere ende scrynwerckere” in the contract he signed with the Rich Clares in Gentbrugge on April 30, 1506, and as mentioned above, there is evidence that he was indeed a member of both guilds.

How did patrons choose choir stall masters?

In many cases, local woodworkers were chosen to make choir stalls, particularly if they had made a reputation for themselves. Gillis van Dickele of Ghent already had a thriving

330: Juan de Bruxelas, entallador, veçino que soy de la noble çibdad de Çamora e yo, doña María Niño de Portugal, muger que fue de Vabtista de Monterey...” This document also tells us Juan’s surname: he signs the contract “Jan Yneres.” The complete contract is transcribed from Archivo Histórico Provincial de Zamora, Sección Notariales, Sig. 1, Protocolos de Alonso de Ayala, fols. 163, 166 in María Dolores Teijeira Pablos, Juan de Bruselas y la Sillería Coral de la Catedral de Zamora (Zamora, Spain: Instituto de Estudios Zamoranos “Florión de Ocampo”, 1996), 148–149.

331: “Juan de Malinas, ymaginero, por las casas que tien.” The full entry is transcribed from Archivo de la Catedral de León, Actas Capitulares, 1467, doc. 10.138, fol. 191v as document 27 in Teijeira Pablos, La sillería de coro catedralicia, 90.


334: Busscher, Peintres et sculpteurs à Gand, 227–228.
workshop in 1506 when the nuns of Sint-Klara in nearby Gentbrugge selected him to make their new jube and choir stalls.\footnote{Duverger, “Les menuisiers et les sculpteurs gantois”, 633–634. Among the works he made prior to this commission were a jube for a chapel in Kersselare and a church door for a Dominican church.}

Often local woodworkers had previously worked for the patrons on more modest commissions. Before being contracted to construct the choir stalls in Kalkar, Henrick Berntz had already made works for the Saint Nicolai church. In the 1505/1506 accounts, he was paid for creating and delivering two small angels mounted on poles,\footnote{“It. Meister Henrick Berntz to Wesell lait[en] macken twee engeltken op twee steue...van Wesell bist hijr to draegen...” The full entry is transcribed from 1505-1506 Kirchenrechnung, Bistumsarchiv Münster, Pfarrarchiv Saint Nicolai zu Kalkar, Karton 48, alte Signatur I4, Ausgaben fol. 43v as document IV.26 in Rommé, Henrick Douwerman, 293.} presumably to be used in church processions.

If the woodworker had not previously worked for the patrons, often a sample stall or a smaller, related piece, such as a bishop’s throne, was commissioned before the larger contract was signed, so that the patrons could better assess the woodworker’s competence for a long and costly project. Such an object also provided the patrons with a three-dimensional object that could be used as a reference point for the final set. In Ulm, Jörg Syrlin the Elder was contracted to make the sedilia for Ulm Minster almost as a practice piece prior to his commission for the choir stalls. The honorary stalls that Rodrigo Alemán initially made for Plasencia Cathedral were integrated into the complete set that he was subsequently commissioned to make (Figure A.213).\footnote{See section Sample stalls, below, for more details.}

In other cases, woodworkers specialized in choir stalls and became known for their work within a region. Both André Sulpice and Jörg Sürlin the Younger made names for themselves as choir stall masters. From 1461 until 1490, Master André was involved in at least six choir stall projects in southern France, often executing more than one of these multi-year projects at a time.\footnote{For a list of the start and end dates of these sets, see Cazes, “André Sulpice”, 149.} Sürlin the Younger made a career in Württemberg that was to a large extent based on his choir stall production. By taking over his father’s work-
and copying innovations that his father had made as a workshop signature, he capitalized on the fame of the stalls his father had built in Ulm. His first commission was a *Verspertolium* or sedilia for Ulm Minster in 1482, which is now destroyed. He went on to build five signed sets of stalls, another set that is only partially preserved at Ulm Minster, as well as the elaborate sedilia (Figure A.280) that was part of the Blaubeuren project.

If there were no suitable local woodworkers, searches might take place in areas which were known for their woodworkers. As mentioned earlier, the first choir stall master that the canons of Rouen found was a woodworker in Lower Normandy. Although they found their second master, Philippot Viart, closer to home, throughout the building campaign, there were recruitment searches to maintain the workforce. Near the beginning of the project, Master Philippot was sent to the Paris area for a day to visit workshops to find trained woodworkers. Over the course of the project, six more recruitment searches followed, to places such as Amiens and cities in the Low Countries that were presumably known to have a large pool of woodworkers. In Utrecht, a representative from the cathedral was sent on an eight-day trip to The Hague, Delft and ’s-Gravenzande to find a master carpenter to build a bishop’s throne and choir stalls for the chapter.

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339 Rommé, “Serielle oder massenhafte Produktion?”, 278.
340 See section Extant stalls as models, below.
344 Lardin, “Stalles de la cathédrale de Rouen”, 34.
345 “A Philippot Viart lequel fut au pardon à Saint-Denis et fut à Paris y visita les asteliers de son mestier et y vaquu par ung jour pour savoir s’il pourrait trouver ouvriers pour venir besongner aux dictes chaeres...” Transcribed from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2494 1460–1461 in Lemé, “Le rôle joué par les chanoines”, 481.
346 Kraus and Kraus, *Hidden World of Misericords*, 137, 188n2.
347 “Item Jacobus nuncius missus fuit xi decembris ad Hagacomitis in Delft in t Gravenzandt et adduxit quendam magistrum archicarpentarium de mandato capituli ad capienda cum eo consilium e formam novorum sedilium et stallorum in choro nostro fabricandorum; et fuit absens 8 diebus faciunt 50st.” Rek. 1517/18 fol. 33 This account entry and all others related to the Utrecht choir stalls are transcribed from Fabriekrekeningen, Utrecht Dom in W. H. Vroom, “Jan Gossaert van Mabuse als ontwerper van koorbanken in de Dom van Utrecht,” *Oud Holland* 79 (1964): 174.
In some cases, although the woodworkers did not specialize in choir stalls, their work on an earlier set of stalls was so successful that patrons from other places sought them out to make their new set. Along with Kersten Sweluwen, Matthys de Wayere, was commissioned in 1529 by the abbot of the Premonstratensian abbey in Tongerlo to make the stalls for their abbey church.\textsuperscript{348} About ten years later, the abbot of the Augustinian abbey in Leuven commissioned Matthys de Wayere to make their choir stalls. The Tongerlo stalls no doubt came to the attention of Abbot Was through his contacts with the larger monastic community,\textsuperscript{349} particularly since Master Matthys was a Brussels joiner,\textsuperscript{350} and the set is his only known work in Leuven. Similarly, Rodrigo Alemán’s work on the Toledo Cathedral choir stalls was so successful that they made his reputation as a carver. When he had to leave Toledo due to lack of work, he soon found not one, but two new choir stall commissions in Plasencia and Ciudad Rodrigo. In the former case, it was probably Enrique Egas, with whom he had worked in Toledo, who recommended him to the fabric. In the latter case, the bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo, Juan de Ortega, had been a friend of Cardinal Mendoza, Master Rodrigo’s patron in Toledo.\textsuperscript{351} Ortega would no doubt have been familiar with the stalls that were so closely linked with Mendoza and his politics.\textsuperscript{352}

In one known case, competing bids survive from a choir stall project. While it may have been a common practice, there is little documentation about soliciting multiple woodworkers to make proposals for a project or about how the decision among a set of proposals was made. In Zamora, a preserved proposal submitted by a well-known carver

\textsuperscript{348} This set was described in 1790 by the archivist of Tongerlo, Canon Adrien Heylen, as richly ornamented with over 350 pretty images and infinite leafwork. “Deéze gestoelten, vercierd met meer dan 350 aerdige beélden, en oneyndig loofwerk…” Heylen, \textit{Historische verhandeling over de Kempen}, 159mcc. It was destroyed after the suppression of the monastery under the French Republic. Van Even, \textit{Louvain}, 406.

\textsuperscript{349} Van Even, “Les auteurs des stalles à Louvain,” 60.

\textsuperscript{350} Steppe, Smeyers, and Lauwerys, \textit{Wereld van vroomheid en satire}, 288.

\textsuperscript{351} Heim, \textit{Rodrigo Alemán}, 74–76.

\textsuperscript{352} For more on the surprisingly political iconography that Mendoza chose to portray on the Toledo choir stalls, see chapter Preaching to the Choir, section Claiming Identity.
from Valladolid, Pedro de Guadalupe, shows his attempt to underbid Juan de Bruxeles for the stall commission. Interestingly, at this point Master Juan had already completed a sample stall, which Master Pedro used as a point of reference for his own bid. Offering the same contract conditions as Master Juan, he also included a lectern worth as much as two stalls at no extra charge. Given the better proposal offered by Master Pedro, it is not known why Master Juan was chosen instead.

What else did choir stall masters make?

While a few woodworkers, such as André Sulpice, specialized in choir stalls, most choir stall masters made a variety of objects. Even Jörg Sürlin the Younger, who was well known for his choir stalls and sedilia, made other church furnishings. In three of his choir stall projects, he was also responsible for an altarpiece for the same choir (e.g., Figure A.131). Furthermore, he made design drawings for at least three other works in Ulm: a font, a tower for the minster and a fountain.

In some choir stall contracts, the artisan was commissioned to make another church furnishing at the same time. Given the close physical relationship between choir stalls and the rest of the choir enclosure, whether jube, rood loft or trascoro, these structures are the most common ones to be commissioned in a single contract. Gillis van Dickele signed a contract with the Rich Clares to build a set of choir stalls as well as a jube (docksael). The prior of the Hôtel-Dieu Saint-Jean d’Angers in Anjou also commissioned both stalls

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354...e puso las syllas alta con baxa a diez mill maravedís segund las tiene puestas Juan de Bruxeles e de la mesma fechura que está fecha la silla alta e baxa que tiene fechas el dicho Juan de Bruxeles e que serán todos tales e que demás allende fará a su costa e misión, un atril para el coro que valga veinte mill maravedévis...” The complete bid is reproduced and transcribed in Ramos de Castro, *La Catedral de Zamora*, 596, 598.


356 “Eerst en elcke zyde van den choere hoven achtiene zetels ende beneden achte zetels commende tsamen twee en viftich zetels...Item noch heeft Gillis voers, verkent phenomen hebbende te makene ende leverne eenen DOCKSAEL voor den hooghen choor in de kercke...” Contract transcribed from the Archives provinciales of Ghent in Busscher, *Peintres et sculpteurs à Gand*, 228n–230n.
and a jube (pulpitre) in one contract. In the contract of 1475 for Eton College Chapel, Walter Nicholl was engaged to make both a set of stalls and a rood loft. Similarly, in a single contract, Bartolomé Ordóñez was commissioned to add wooden stall ends to the existing set and build a marble trascoro for the Barcelona choir.

Carved altarpieces seem to have been the most common other object that choir stall masters made. There are many similarities between these two types of works: they are usually made out of wood, they involve both carving and joinery, and they require collaboration with non-woodworking métiers, such as painters and blacksmiths. Since both were objects intended for churches, often the same patrons, such as abbots or cathedral chapters, ordered them, as was the case for some of Jörg Sürlin the Younger’s commissions. His father also made at least one altarpiece, which was part of the larger project he was involved in to furnish Ulm Minster; it was destroyed by iconoclasts in 1531, but the design drawing and contract survive. Rodrigo Alemán was hired by the chapter to make the frame and sculptural work for the San Ildefonso retable at Toledo Cathedral after completing the choir stalls. Juan de Bruxeles was contracted by the widow, María Niño de Portugal, to make an altarpiece for the family chapel at the

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357. "...un cuer neuf de XXXVI chaires, que haultes que basses,...garnies à crosses et entrec-los...avecques les huys et huisseries dudit cuer et un pulpitre au bout et au-dessus dudit cuer,...” While the word “pulpitre” could also refer to a pulpit, the fact that it is to be situated at the end of the stalls and above them indicates that a jube was being commissioned. The complete contract, now in the Archives de Maine-et-Loire, Hôtel-Dieu d’Angers, is transcribed in Port, “L’histoire des arts et des artistes en Anjou,” 282–283.

358. “And the said Walter Nicholl shall make fynysshe and set up or do to be made fynyshed and set up at the ferthest the said Rode loft stallez and garnysshyng of the said Quere...” The complete contract is transcribed from Audit Roll, 15–16 Edward IV, March 1475–March 1476 in Willis, Architectural History of University of Cambridge, 596–597.

359. “Primerament, és concordat e pactat entre dites parts que lo dit Mestre Barthomeu fará e fabricarà quatre potències mayors e XVI. menors de fusta per dar compliment a la obra de fusta del cor de la dita Yglésia.” and “Item, és concordat e pactat que lo dit Mestre Barthomeu farà e fabricarà de marbres bons...lo enfront del cor e portalada...” The complete contract is transcribed from the Archivo catedralicio, Barcelona, Obra in Ainaud, “El contrato de Ordóñez,” 378.


361. The account entries, which also include payments to several other woodworkers, are transcribed from the Archivo Capitular de Toledo, Obra y Fábrica 796 (1501) fol. 68r–70r “Retablo de Sto illefonso” as document 151 in Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 409–410.
monastery in Montamarta, presumably after she had seen or heard about the stalls that he had just finished for the cathedral in nearby Zamora.

Many made other types of wooden structures, such as lecterns and doors. Antoine Peney made a lectern for the Saint-Nicolas church in Fribourg; Jörg Syrlin the Elder signed and dated a church lectern he made that is now in the Ulm Museum; at Plasencia Cathedral, Rodrigo Alemán signed a contract to make a lectern for the choir two days after an agreement for the honorary stalls (Figure A.281). Gillis van Dickele made a wooden portal for a Dominican church, the year after finishing the choir stalls at the cathedral of Tréguier, Girard Dru received ten livres to make doors to close the entry, as well as the door for the new bell tower.

Non-religious works could also be part of their oeuvre, both for individual and corporate patrons. Jörg Syrlin the Elder made an elaborately carved, veneered and inlaid wardrobe, known as the Illerfelder Schrank, for Hans Huts and Veronika Gieger as a dowry chest on the occasion of their marriage. When the canons at the Cathedral of Santa María tried to force Rodrigo Alemán to return to Ciudad Rodrigo to complete their choir stalls, Master Rodrigo was working on a new bridge for the city of Plasencia.

Choir stall masters also made works from materials besides wood. The extant Punte Nuevo that Rodrigo Alemán built in Plasencia to replace the former wooden bridge

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362 See above.
363 “Primo a maistre Anthon de Peney pour al faczon du pulpit, cest assavoir de laigle quil a fait ez formes…” Transcribed from Freiburg, Staatsarchiv, Kilchmeister Rechnung, fol. 64, 1462/63 in Rott, Quellen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunsthgeschichte, 302. This lectern is no longer extant. Strub, Stalles fribourgeois, 10.
364 The lectern was in the town of Ottenbach when the museum acquired it, but may have been made for a church near Lorch. Baum, Die Ulmer Plastik, 16–20. For a photograph, see Tafel 4.
365a “maestre Rodrigo entallador se obilgo…de fazer un façistol par el coro de la yglesia catedral…” Transcribed from Archivo Capitular de Plasencia, Actas Capitulares Libro 5 (1499–1513), fol. 13v–14r as document 157 in Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 412.
368 Gropp, Das Ulmer Chorgestühl, 36. The cabinet is now at the Ulmer Museum. For an image, see http://ulmer-museum.ulm.de.
369 See section Unexpected expense, above.
is constructed from stone (Figure A.282). As noted above, Bartolomé Ordóñez was commissioned to make a marble trascoro for Barcelona Cathedral. Antoine de Peney, who made stalls at Saint-Nicolas in Fribourg, also worked on the stone porch statues. Antoine Avernier (or Ancquier), who was commissioned to carve seventy-two of the misericords for the Amiens choir stalls, was later hired to sculpt the stone choir enclosure on the south side as well as the stone tomb of Adrien de Hénencourt, who had been dean during the choir stall construction. A stone epitaph for the grave of Hans von Stadion at the Saint Martin parish church in Oberstadion, Württemberg was either a late work by Jörg Syrlin the Elder, or an early work by his son. Thus, like Tilman Riemenschneider and other famous artists of their day, most choir stall masters made a variety of objects, and many worked in stone as well as wood.

**Formal design**

Well before the fifteenth century, a traditional format had been established for a set of choir stalls that was designed to fulfill the needs of its users. This U-shaped arrangement separated the choir from the nave, reinforced church hierarchy, supported antiphonal singing, allowed necessary movement, and provided its users with certain bodily comforts, such as seats and arm rests. The dimensions of the choir and the number of members provided further restrictions on the set in terms of size. Nevertheless, within these parameters, there were many formal design issues to be considered, as a comparison between the closely contemporary Manchester collegiate (Figure A.129) and Zamora cathedral (Figure A.252) sets shows. To determine the formal features for a new choir

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370 Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 85.
374 Carved on the upper part of the frame are the words: “Jerg Surlin zu vlm 1489” Recorded in Baum, *Die Ulmer Plastik*, 48.
375 See chapter Made to Order: The Construction of Space for more about the format of choir stalls.
stall project, patrons might commission a design drawing, use extant sets of stalls as models or have the details worked out by the choir stall master on sample stalls. In some cases, more than one method was used to finalize the formal design.

Design drawings

Although there are few contract drawings for choir stalls that survive from this period, they are frequently referred to in extant contracts: in German: Jörg Syrlin the Elder is to build the Ulm stalls according to the *visierung* he has provided;\(^{376}\) in Spanish, Master Rodrigo must ensure that the honorary stalls in Plasencia are made according to the agreed upon *muestra*;\(^{377}\) in Dutch: the Gentbrugge stalls should be the same as their *patroen*;\(^{378}\) in Catalan: Master Bartolomé is supposed to make four large and sixteen small choir stall partitions according to the *traça* or *mostra*;\(^{379}\) in French: *pourtraict*;\(^{380}\) in Latin: Jan Gossaert is paid first for a small-scale and later for a full-scale *patrono* of choir stalls for Utrecht Cathedral.\(^{381}\) Such images were not necessarily new designs, as these terms might also refer to drawings of already extant sets, such as the *formam* or *protraitum* of the Béziers stalls that André Sulpice drew for the Rodez Cathedral project.\(^{382}\) Also, it is not always clear from the contract who made the drawing. It cannot be assumed that it would have been the choir stall master; sometimes there was an outside designer who provided the woodworkers with a design plan.

\(^{376}\)“...Da er denne arbeitten wirdet der visierung So er denne In furgehalten geben...nach...” The full contract at Stadtarchiv Ulm, Gloecklenische Sammlung, Nr. 2474 is transcribed in ibid., 152.

\(^{377}\)“...esta obra ha de ser segund una muestra que esta Asentada...” Transcribed from Archivo Capitular de Plasencia, Actas Capitolares Libro 5 (1499–1513), fol. 14v in Heim, *Rodrigo Alemán*, 412.

\(^{378}\)“...ghelyc daer af ons patroen es.” Contract transcribed from the Archives provinciales of Ghent in Busscher, *Peintres et sculpteurs à Gand*, 229n.

\(^{379}\)“Mestre Barthomeu farà e fabricarà quatre potències majors e XVI menors...segons la traça o mostra...” Transcribed from Archivo catedralicio, Barcelona, Obra in Ainaud, “El contrato de Ordóñez,” 378.

\(^{380}\)See section Artist remuneration, above, for the use of this term in the Troyes accounts of 1524.

\(^{381}\)See below for more details.

\(^{382}\)See section Extant stalls as models, below.
A project to build a new set of choir stalls for Utrecht Cathedral was begun in 1517: two masters were brought from The Hague to give their advice about the proposal, and drawings of both the stalls and a bishop’s throne were commissioned from the mason, Jan Andriesz. However, in 1520 the project changed completely when Jan Gossaert was invited to develop a new design that was to be built by local joiners. Gossaert’s longtime patron, Philip of Burgundy, had been appointed bishop of Utrecht in 1517; no doubt the bishop was behind the change in plans. After Gossaert’s arrival, permission was sought from the bishop to allow him to stay in Utrecht until the construction of the stalls had actually begun. Fabric records show that Gossaert was housed in nearby Egdam on the property of the chapter, his expenses were reimbursed, and he was paid for two design drawings: a small scale design and a large format working drawing, neither of which is extant. The final reference to these choir stalls occurs the following year in an account record for the cost of the wine that was drunk at a meeting between Gossaert and deputies of the chapter. No details of their discussion are documented, so it is not known why the project was given up, but financial concerns do not appear to have been the cause based on subsequent expenditures by the chapter. Several decades later in

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383 Item capitulum nostrum propinari mandavit duobus magistris demandatis huc venire ex Hagacomitis ad consulendum et tractandum cum eisdem pro novis sedilibus chori ecclesie nostre…” Rek. 1517/18 fol. 33v. This account entry and all others related to the Utrecht choir stalls are transcribed from Fabriekrekeningen, Utrecht Dom in Vroom, “Gossaert als ontwerper van koorbanken,” 174.

384 Item solvi de mandato capituli Johanni Andree pro patrono per eum confecto de construendas novis sedilibus in choro ecclesie nostre et simul pro patrono sedis episcopalis in eodem choro nostro…” Rek. 1517/18 fol. 33v. ibid., 174.

385 Ibid., 172.


387 Item solvi Johanni de Mabuge, pictori, de minore patrono per eundem depicto de sedilibus chori ecclesie nostre 15 flor. aur. philippi…” and “Item solvi mandato dominorum eodem magistro Johanni de patrono sedilibus in majori forma depicto 50 fl aur…” Rek. 1520/21 fol. 34v. See item 8 for information on Gossaert’s lodging and expenses in ibid., 174.


389 Ibid., 174.
1563, choir stalls were commissioned from Antonis Pietersz.; presumably the old stalls had been in good enough shape for the canons to use them in the interim.

It appears that the Bern choir stalls, which were commissioned around the same time as the Gossaert stalls, also relied on an outside designer, although there are no references to design drawings in the surviving documentation. Two joiners were contracted to construct the stalls, but evidence suggests that Niklaus Manuel Deutsch, rather than the joiners, designed the set. The account books show that he was involved in the choir stall project: the chapter paid for his visit to view a set of stalls in Geneva not long before construction began in Bern. Furthermore, whereas nearby stalls from the former Savoy display full-length figures on the dorsals (e.g., Figure A.28), the use of half-length figures as in Bern (e.g., Figure A.175) is seen on Lombard stalls. Additionally, some of the images on the Bern stalls, such as the prophet Jonah who is shown second from the west on the south side, are similar to ones from the Certosa di Pavia. Manuel had just returned to Bern in 1522 after spending several years in Lombardy and he would certainly have been familiar with Lombard architecture, including the famous Certosa di Pavia. Finally, some of Manuel’s extant drawings show a close relationship with the imagery carved on the Bern set.

The Freising Cathedral chapter paid for the Augsburg joiner, Ulrich Glurer, to come to Freising in 1486 for a consultation on their choir stall project. He returned a few months later to deliver a drawing that had presumably been commissioned on his earlier

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390 The stalls are no longer extant, but parts of the canopies were used in seating built for important members of the Dutch Reformed church. These pews are now in the north transept. Bangs, *Church Art and Architecture*, 79.
391 Half-year accounts are missing from 1520, 1521, 1523, 1524 and 1525. Lehmann, *Das Chorgestühl zu Bern*, 12.
392 “Denne Manuel am Rit gan Jänff von des gestüls wägen…” Transcribed from Staatsarchiv Bern, Seckelmeisterrechnung, 1522, second half in ibid., 15.
393 See figures 387 and 388 in Mojon, *Das Berner Münster*, 381.
394 For example, see Plates XIV a and b in L. Stumm, Niklaus Manuel Deutsch von Bern als bildener Künstler, Bern 1925 ibid., 385.
395 See Other expenses, above.
However, this was not the first drawing that the chapter had ordered. Early on in the project, the journeyman of Master Bernhard, the joiner who was responsible for building the stalls, had been sent to Niederaltaich in Bavaria, about one hundred kilometres away, to bring two choir stalls drawings back to Freising. The choir stalls for the Benedictine abbey in Niederaltaich had been built between 1475 and 1480, so it seems likely that this first pair of drawings reproduced the recent set and was intended as a model for the Freising stalls. Since the Niederaltaich stalls were completely destroyed by fire in 1671, it is not possible to compare them to the Freising set, but the use of already extant choir stalls as a model for new ones was a common practice at this time. The need for another plan later in the project could have arisen for a variety of reasons. If Glurer had also designed the Niederaltaich stalls, he might have been brought in by the Freising chapter after they had worked out the iconographical program for their stalls, so that Glurer himself could incorporate it into his formal design. Alternatively, perhaps a more detailed drawing of the plan or some aspect of the plan was required at this point, or maybe certain modifications to the Niederaltaich design were needed that were believed to be beyond the abilities of Master Bernhard. Or perhaps the canons had simply decided that they wanted a completely new design. In any case, it is clear that Glurer was involved in the project as a designer: there are no records to indicate that he had any part in the actual construction of the stalls, which account entries

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397 “Item in die s. Thome apostuli hab ich gebn dem Jorgn, maister Bernhardts gesellen sch. 3 d. 15, von den zwein visierung die er von Nydernaltag her hat tragn” Freisinger Domkustodei Rechnungsbuch, Staatsarchiv für Oberbayern (now Staatsarchiv München), HL 3, Rep. 53, Fasz. 231 Oesterhelt, “Das Chorgestühl von 1488”, 115. Although this entry is not the first one under the heading of 1484, Oesterhelt interprets this event as occurring at the end of 1483 before the wood was purchased because he believes timber would not have been bought before the project was underway. However, the advance purchase of wood occurred in many choir stall projects. See section Material, above.

398 Ibid., 116.

399 See section Extant stalls as models, below.

400 Ibid., 116–117.

401 See chapter Construction of Identity section Proclaiming Identity for discussion of this program.
show were primarily made in Freising in Master Bernhard’s workshop, although the stall partitions with integral hand rests were made in Munich by Master Augustin Ewerl, then delivered to Freising (Figure A.283). Glurer does not appear in the accounts again until the end of the project in 1488, when he, his son, and Master Bernhard receive a substantial final payment, presumably for outstanding fees and perhaps also a bonus as appreciation of their work (see Figures A.204 and A.205).

Evidence that different types of design drawings might be made for different aspects of the stall design comes from descriptions of payments made for the stalls of Saint-Jacques chapel in the Saint-Denis cemetery in Amiens. After signing a contract with the master joiner, Philippe de Mortreux, to procure the wood and make a set of twenty-four stalls, a “pourtraict” of the stalls was commissioned from the master joiner, Estienne Couvrechef. Subsequently, the painter-architect Zacharie de Celers was paid for twenty-eight designs to give to Mortreux to use as models for carving the iconographical program on the dorsals.

One rare survival from northern Europe is an ink drawing on parchment from the early sixteenth century, which is believed to be a preliminary plan for the choir stalls made for the chapel at the Château of Gaillon (Figure A.284). It shows an elevation of two stalls with a canon seated in a third stall, partially screened by a desk. Both the late Gothic tracery of the canopy and the carving (or marquetry) on the seats are

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402Ibid., 117n27.
406The payment is recorded on November 15, 1553 in the account of 1553–54, GG 603, fol. 31, cited in ibid., 289.
407Durand records two payments made to Zacharie de Celers, first on September 3, 1554: “pour avoir fait vingt patrons des ystoires tant de Thoby que dez Macabré, pour les baillier au menuisier, et icelle fait tailler aux dossiiez des cheelles par nous marchandée en ichelles église de Saint-Jacques” and on March 2, 1555 (NS) for a further eight patrons. Transcribed from GG 700 in ibid., 293.
drawn in some detail.\textsuperscript{408} Three pen and ink contract drawings from the Italian peninsula survive, two from Bologna and one from Parma. Two of the drawings, both from the late 1460s, show a single stall with some sculptural detail (Figures A.285 and A.286); the third drawing, made in the mid-sixteenth century, depicts four upper and three lower stalls with few details (Figure A.287).\textsuperscript{409} From the north, two elevation drawings of tripartite sedilia survive in the Vienna collection of Gothic architectural drawings. One is dated to ca. 1455 and is attributed to Laurenz Spenning, while the other one from ca. 1465 shows sedilia baldachins and comes from the school of Spenning.\textsuperscript{410} Since the construction of sets was modular, truncated elevations were probably common in choir stall design. A unit, usually consisting of four to six stalls, was repeated to provide the necessary number of seats.\textsuperscript{411} On each of the three occasions that the canons of Troyes Cathedral wanted to examine the progress of the stalls they had commissioned, a subset of three stalls was erected in the choir for them to view,\textsuperscript{412} which suggests that these stalls were built in units of three. Thus, an elevation showing a three-seat sedilia could also have been used as the basis for a whole set of stalls. In the department of prints and drawings at Kunstmuseum Basel, there are five partial elevations of a set of choir stalls that demonstrate the modularity of such projects (Figure A.288). Although three upper stalls and two lower ones are shown along with a pair of terminal ends and part of a canopy, one can imagine that the groups of upper and lower stalls could be repeated to construct a set of the desired size, particularly given the disjunction at the edges of the

\textsuperscript{408} Reproduced from carton 37, Archives départementales de Vienne in Elisabeth Chirol, “Un dessin de stalles inédit du début du XVIe siècle : Projet pour le Château de Gaillon,” Bulletin Société de l’histoire de l’art français (1958): 57. For a plausible explanation as to how the drawing ended up in Vienne, see ibid., 55.

\textsuperscript{409} Allen, “Stalls in Venice and Northern Italy,” 73–75.


\textsuperscript{412} Reported from G 1282, fol. 152v; G 1282, fol. 194; G 1282, fol. 263v in Piétresson de Saint-Aubin, “Deux menuisiers picards,” 392–395.
central stalls and at the end of the terminal stalls, which clearly invites the attachment of another component. Two drawings dated 1517, which are now in the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna, are clearly related to this group and were probably copied from the same prototype. These drawings show two different sections of the upper dorsals and canopy (Figure A.289).\(^{413}\) The model from which these drawings were copied was likely a preliminary plan for the no longer extant Fugger chapel stalls in Augsburg,\(^{414}\) which, based on an eighteenth-century description and the sixteen dorsal busts that survived before the Second World War, consisted of at least sixteen (perhaps twenty) stalls (Figure A.2 shows the three surviving busts at the Bode-Museum in Berlin. The other surviving bust is at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, US).\(^{415}\) This relationship with a larger set of stalls supports the idea that modular design was used to plan the repetitive seating in choirstalls.

Related to these drawings and the Fugger Chapel stalls is the three-plate etching of a set of choir stalls made ca. 1518 by Daniel Hopfer (Figure A.176). The existence of such an etching raises the possibility that prints of stall sets may have circulated and been used as models for new choir stalls.\(^{416}\) Prints were certainly used in many choir stall projects as models for figural imagery, both for marginal images and for images in the main iconographical program. On the Ciudad Rodrigo stalls, there are six misericords that show an armed, naked man (e.g., Figure A.290), all of which derive from an engraving known as *Hercules and the Giants* that was made before 1500 (Figure A).\(^{417}\) The stance of the figure on this misericord is modelled on the fifth standing figure from the right, while


\(^{414}\) Ibid., 162.

\(^{415}\) 276–280. For photographs of all the busts, see Bushart, *Die Fuggerkapelle*, 293–297.

\(^{416}\) Kranz, “Chorgestühl”, 353.

\(^{417}\) For more details and images of three of the other misericords in this group, see Teijeira Pablos, “La sillería coral en Ciudad Rodrigo”, 276–277. The print is by a Paduan artist in the circle of Andrea Mantegna and is based on Antonio Pollaiuolo’s *Battle of the Nudes*. Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 86–87. The first state of Pollaiuolo’s engraving and dry-point, and a contemporary reworking of the etching are illustrated on page 75.
the shield, upraised arm and open mouth recall the second figure from the left. Similarly, the central part of a print by Agostino Veneziano that was made shortly before 1520 appears on two stall ends in Bern Minster (e.g., Figure A.291). On the Zamora stalls, some of the dorsal figures of the Double Credo are modelled on engravings by Martin Schongauer (Figure A.292). Saint Paul, who is pictured on the stall immediately to the south of the bishop’s throne (Figure A.293), is derived from Schongauer’s small format print of the apostles of ca. 1480. Schongauer’s influence is also seen on figures of apostles at Saint-Ours Collegiate Church in Aosta, and Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne Cathedral, both in Savoy. A significant portion of Schongauer’s prints, and his small format works in particular, were used as models by a variety of artisans, so it not surprising to see them used on choir stalls, too. Despite the employment of prints as models for isolated fields on choir stalls, however, there are no sets that are known to have been based on a print of a complete set, such as Hopfer’s etching, or even a section of stalls, such as the elevation drawings now in Vienna and Basel discussed above, as a model.

**Extant stalls as models**

One aspect of choir stall construction that is particularly common throughout Western Europe over several centuries is the use of an already extant set of stalls as a model. This custom was not confined to choir stalls commissions: it is also seen in contemporary

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418Mojon, *Das Berner Münster*, 386. Veneziano’s engraving is illustrated alongside a photograph of the same stall end on page 383. Other figures from the print appear on some parts of the canopy. See figure 389 on page 382.

419For an illustration of all of Schongauer’s twelve Apostles, see *Der hübsche Martin: Kupferstiche und Zeichnungen von Martin Schongauer*, ed. Pantxika Béguerie et al. (Colmar, France: Unterlinden Museum, 1991), 313–315.

420Heim, *Rodrigo Alemán*, 292–293.


contracts for architecture and other church furnishings. In Leuven in 1538, a contract for a sacrament house for St. Jacob’s church stipulated that it should be modelled on the sacrament house at nearby St. Peter’s Church.\footnote{\textit{...alsulcken steene op alsulcken grootte en wydde, breydde en hooghde, en opt selve patron als t’heylich Sacramentshuis in de kercke van Ste-Peeters, te Loven, nyet argher mair beter...} For more examples of architecture and microarchitecture in the Low Countries being modelled on earlier works, see Jan Klaus Philipp, “\textit{Eyn huys in manieren van eynre kirchen}: Werckmeister, Parliere, Steinlieferanten, Zimmermeister und die Bauorganisation in den Niederlanden vom 14. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert,” \textit{Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch} 50 (1989).}

For choir stalls, a contract made sometime between 1302 and 1319 is the earliest recorded example currently known of an extant set of stalls being used as a model for a new set, but there is no reason to believe that this practice was novel at the time. In this contract, which the Dominicans in Bern made with the master carpenter and later municipal master of the works, Rudolph Rieders, the friars specify that the stalls should be made in the manner and form of those of their Dominican brothers in Freiburg im Breisgau,\footnote{\textit{Wir brůder herman und all brůder des Conventtes ze prediger ordens tůn kunnt,... Das wir mit Růdolphen dem zimmerman Rieders moge sind über ein komen das er unß sol machen zwiffalttig stul in unßrem kor...In der wis und in aller form alls unßer bruder stule ze friburg jn brißgów gemacht sind...} Transcribed from \textit{Liber Reddituum conventus Praedicatorum}, Stadtarchiv, Bern III, 10, fol. 188r–v in Paul Hofer and Luc Mojon, \textit{Die Kunstdenkmäler des Kantons Bern: Die Kirchen der Stadt Bern} (Basel, Switzerland: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1969), 151n.} some 120 kilometres away. Over one hundred years later, the Cistercians at Melrose Abbey in Scotland chose not one, but two Cistercian abbey sets as models for the stalls that they commissioned: the master carpenter (\textit{artis carpentarie magistrum}), Cornelius van Aeltre, was instructed to use the set at Ten Duinen in Flanders as the model for the form, while the set at Ter Doest near Bruges was to be the model for the carving.\footnote{The agreement made on October 7, 1441 for the completion of the stalls reads in part: “...et conventionem fecit cum dicto Cornelio pro componendis, fabricandis et perficiendis certis sedilibus sive stallis, et in dicto monasterio de Melros erigendis, ad instar et similitudinem stallorum in choro ecclesie seu monasterii de Dunis in Flandria situatorum, cum scissura tali quam habet sedilia situta in choro ecclesie de Thosan iuxta Brugis...” The full agreement is transcribed in Coomans, “Choir Stalls of Melrose Abbey”, 236.} Surviving contracts from the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries do not show this pattern in choosing model stalls: rather than seeking out a prototype that was associated with a related monastic order or one that was modelled with the non-
monastic chapter in question, corporate identity was most often made manifest through iconographical programs that were frequently unrelated to or significantly different from the model set.\footnote{See chapter Construction of Identity for more details about types of programs used on choir stalls.} Formal models, on the other hand, might be chosen because they were nearby, and thus well-known and easily accessible. For the set commissioned by the Marian confraternity, \textit{Bruderschaft Unserer Lieben Frau}, for the parish church of St. Nicolai in Kalkar, the stalls at the Franciscan church, St. Mariä Empfângnis, in Kleve, only eleven kilometres away, were used as a model. On May 16, 1505, it is recorded that the Bürgermeister of Kalkar and representatives from the confraternity travelled to Kleve with Master Henrick Berntz, whom they had just hired to make choir stalls for their confraternity, to view the Franciscan stalls.\footnote{See section Other expenses, above, for a transcription of the relevant account entry. For more about this unusual commission, see chapter Construction of Identity, section Confraternities.} This still extant set, constructed in 1474 by Master Arnt,\footnote{Hans Peter Hilger, “Katalog der Ausstattung der Stadtpfarrkirche St. Nicolai,” in \textit{Stadtpfarrkirche St. Nicolai in Kalkar}, ed. Hans Peter Hilger (Kleve, Germany: Boss-Verlag, 1990), 228.} is formally similar to the commissioned Kalkar stalls in construction and in the arrangement of the figural program on the stall ends only (e.g., Figure A.294). However, instead of Franciscan saints, such as Louis of Toulouse, figures related to the town of Kalkar, its patrons and the church are shown (e.g., Figure A.295 shows the church’s titular saint).\footnote{Hilger, “Die Stadtpfarrkirche St. Nicolai”, 119.} In some cases, it seems that neither formal nor iconographic similarities were sought from nearby models; rather the model was used as a benchmark of quality.\footnote{In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century altarpiece contracts from the Low Countries, the use of extant examples as benchmarks of quality, rather than visual models, is normally intended. Liesbeth M. Helmus, \textit{Schilderen in opdracht: Noord-Nederlandse contracten voor altaarstukken 1485–1570} (The Hague: Koninklijke De Swart, 2010), 125. Since the only Flemish choir stall contract I have is also the only example that explicitly refers to a model as a standard of quality, it is possible that this practice was more common in the Low Countries.} In the contract of 1506 that the Rich Clares in Gentbrugge signed with Gillis van Dickele, the
nuns stipulate that the workmanship must be as good as or better than the carving on the stalls of the Augustinians in neighbouring Ghent.\(^{432}\)

In the absence of written records, the stalls themselves are sometimes the only testimony that an earlier model was used. There is no surviving contract regarding the construction of the stalls of the Cistercian Abbey of Hauterive (Figure A.136), but according to the monastery’s necrology of 1510, this set was built during the abbacy of Jean Philibert, which was from 1472 to 1486.\(^{433}\) Given Hauterive’s dependency on the abbey of Cherlieu in Burgundy, a Burgundian influence might normally be assumed,\(^{434}\) but the model is clearly derived from the local Savoy sets built in the 1460s: the parish church in Fribourg, only four kilometres away, (Figure A.296) and the collegiate church in Romont (Figure A.209),\(^{435}\) about twenty kilometres from Hauterive. In this case, iconographical as well as formal aspects have been copied, although the Double Credo theme, which was a common choice for choir stalls in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,\(^{436}\) has been tailored to the Cistercian context through the inclusion of saints important to the order, such as Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (Figure A.210). Given the close temporal creation of these sets, it is possible that there may also have been workshop links that contributed to their similarity. One of the rare account books preserved from Hauterive abbey at this time refers to payments made between 1482 and 1483 to “maître Claude charpentier” and “maître Claude charpentier de formes”, which possibly refer to Claude de Peney, who worked on the Fribourg stalls with his uncle, Antoine.\(^{437}\)

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\(^{432}\)“De beste snede die ten Augustinen te Ghendt, in den hooghen choer, boven haerlieder zetels gesneden es. Betre, maer met so goeden snede mach hy ontstaen;” The full contract is transcribed in Busscher, *Peintres et sculpteurs à Gand*, 229n.


\(^{434}\)Strub, *Stalles fribourgeoises*, 11.


\(^{436}\)See chapter Made to Order, section Institutional space for more details about this theme.

Chapter 4. Choir Practice: The Construction of Stalls

The model for the stalls that was used to construct the set for the Benedictine monastery church in Blaubeuren (Figure A.297) was both geographically close and had definite workshop ties. Ulm Minster is just sixteen kilometres from Blaubeuren, and its stalls (Figure A.168) were commissioned from Jörg Syrlin the Elder whose Ulm workshop was subsequently taken over by his son, Jörg Sürlin the Younger. This son was in charge of the Blaubeuren stalls about twenty years after the completion of the Ulm set. Workshop patterns seem to have been passed from father to son, as sixteen misericords at Blaubeuren that are very similar in size and form to ones found at Ulm suggest. Also, innovations seen on the stalls of Ulm, such as the three-dimensional stall end busts and the use of intarsia (e.g., Figure A.47), are repeated at Blaubeuren (e.g., Figure A.298), much like a workshop signature.

Besides proximity, patronal relationships may also have played a part in choosing a particular choir stall model as they did in cases where particular carvers or joiners were hired by patrons who were linked through social networks, as discussed in section Finding an artist. Direct recommendations are inferred but not documented, however. It is most likely that these endorsements came about through less formal interactions, such as conversations or viewings of others’ commissions.

In the case of a set of choir stalls in the old province of Quercy in France, while proximity to the model stalls was no doubt a factor, the contract suggests patronal connections as well. This set was commissioned in 1488 by the canons regular of Le Vigan for their church, Notre-Dame de l’Assomption. They stipulate in the contract that the stalls be modelled on those at the Franciscan monastery in Martel, a town also in Quercy, about thirty-eight kilometres from Le Vigan. To construct these stalls, the

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439 “...tradiderunt dictum corum ad faciendum in modum quod est constructum et edificatum corum seu monasterium fratrum minorum de martello...” Neither set of stalls nor the original contract survives, but a transcription of the contract at the Archives Diocésaines de Cahors (D 20/15, Documents Albe) is published in Freigang, “L’Ancienne Eglise Collégiale du Vigan,” 539–541.
canons chose a resident of Martel, Jean Moynié,\textsuperscript{440} who would presumably have been familiar with the Franciscan set. Interestingly, one of the witnesses to the contract is Brother Ramundo de Polhaco from the Martel monastery itself.\textsuperscript{441} The choice of a joiner from Martel and the presence of one of Martel’s friars at the signing of the contract indicate that the canons had close ties with the town and specifically with the monastery. Indeed, it seems likely that Jean Moynié had been recommended to them by the friars of Martel for work he had done at their church.

A set of choir stalls whose similarity to a closely contemporary but geographically distant set that may also have been a result of patronal relationships, is the one built for the Carthusian monastery church of Miraflores near Burgos in Spain. This monastery was founded by Isabel of Castile’s father, Juan II, but he never completed the complex. At the beginning of Isabel’s reign, she resumed the building campaign,\textsuperscript{442} including the construction of choir stalls that were built from 1486 to 1489 for the monks’ choir by Martin Sánchez of Valladolid and his workshop.\textsuperscript{443} The close formal similarities to an earlier set of choir stalls in the Dominican convent of Santo Tomás in Ávila, Spain has led researchers to surmise that these stalls of about 1482 were made by the same workshop (compare Figures A.192 and A.299).\textsuperscript{444} While the strong similarities between the two sets may indeed be related to having been built by the same workshop, sets built by the same workshop did not necessarily resemble one another so strongly: Rodrigo Alemán’s simultaneously constructed sets in Plasencia (Figure A.300) and Ciudad Rodrigo (Figure A.301), while structurally similar, do not share strong formal affinities.\textsuperscript{445} The similarities could just as plausibly have resulted from Santo Tomás being used as a model. Although these

\textsuperscript{440}...viro Johanni moynié...nunc vero habitator loci de martello...” ibid., 539.
\textsuperscript{441}“Presentibus domino anthonio de Vinhalibus presbiterio Johanne Bonal dicti loci fratre Ramundo de Pollhaco de Martello et Johanne de manso de las Gastandias.” ibid., 540.
\textsuperscript{442}Beatrice Gilman Proske, Castilian Sculpture, Gothic to Renaissance (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1951), 2.
\textsuperscript{443}Ibid., 195.
\textsuperscript{444}Martínez, “Sillerías Castellanas”, 208.
\textsuperscript{445}Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 90.
two monasteries are over two hundred kilometres apart, their patrons were very close: Santo Tomás was promoted and built by Isabel’s confessor, Tomás de Torquemada.\textsuperscript{446} Thus, in the case of Miraflores, it seems most likely that the resemblance was specified by its patron, Isabel, who would have known about the set at Santo Tomás since it had been commissioned by her confessor. Finally, although it is a male convent, both Isabel and her husband had stalls in the choir,\textsuperscript{447} so it seems likely that they participated in ceremonies held in the choir on occasion (see Figure A.302).\textsuperscript{448}

Sometimes it is difficult to identify a connection between a commission and the church with the stalls used as a model. In the absence of evidence pointing to close geographical, institutional or patronal connections between the two, the prestige alone of a set of stalls might well have been the deciding factor in choosing the model. In the contract of 1478 for the stalls at Rodez Cathedral in France, Master André Sulpice was required to furnish a drawing, which does not survive,\textsuperscript{449} of a set of choir stalls in Béziers in Provence, that he was to use as a model in form and image (\textit{ad totalem modum et effigem}). To ensure that this drawing (\textit{portraiture}) was kept safe, one of the signatories was entrusted with a copy, showing just how important this model was to the patrons.\textsuperscript{450} Béziers is 124 kilometres from Rodez as the crow flies,\textsuperscript{451} thus the canons would have had to pay for


\textsuperscript{447} It was rare for a woman to be given an honorary seat in a choir, but it was not unprecedented. The fourteenth-century furnishing at Saint George’s Chapel, Windsor included a pew for the queen. Tracy, \textit{English Gothic Choir-Stalls}, 1200–1400, 56n9.

\textsuperscript{448} I have been unable to find any documents that indicate whether either of the monarchs ever sat in their stalls at Santo Tomás. Unlike the monarch stalls at the cathedrals in Plasencia and Zamora, the iconography does not distinguish the queen’s stall from that of the king. However, in Zamora and Plasencia, the queen’s seat is on the south side, a side often associated with Mary. See Chapter Construction of Space, section Institutional Space.

\textsuperscript{449} Cazes, “André Sulpice”, 152.

\textsuperscript{450} “...quod dictus magister Andreas debet tenetur et promisit facere totum chorum Ruthenensis ecclesie ...et ornatum sive fabricatum ad totalem modum et effigiem chori ecclesie Bitterensis; cujus ibidem forman seu protraitum idem magister ostendit; quam formam dominus Petrus Valentin secum retinuit.” The contract is transcribed from Archives de l’Aveyron, Fonds du Chapitre de Rodez, caisse de la Fabrique in Marlavagne, \textit{Histoire de la cathédrale de Rodez}, 302–305.

\textsuperscript{451} Since roadways have changed over time, I am using the distance as the crow flies, thus in some cases the actual travelling distance might be much longer.
a return journey of probably at least five days for Master André.\textsuperscript{452} The contract refers only to ecclesie, so it is not certain which church is meant, but the no longer extant set in Béziers Cathedral is the most likely model.\textsuperscript{453} In that case, since both churches are cathedrals, their respective bishops and canons would likely have had some interaction. However, there are other cathedrals that are closer to Rodez, such as Albi or Mende, and other churches with stalls that are even closer, such as the three sets that Sulpice himself was building or had already completed in Villefranche-de-Rouergue and environs,\textsuperscript{454} just forty-two kilometres away. The patrons of the Rodez stalls would definitely have known of Sulpice’s nearby work, so there must have been something special about the Béziers stalls that they were intent on replicating.

In Bern, too, it seems that the chosen model was one that must have enjoyed some renown at the time. The city government, who commissioned the stalls for the parish church in Bern, reimbursed three experts for their trip to Geneva, about 127 kilometres from Bern, to see the stalls in the church there.\textsuperscript{455} Subsequently, Niklaus Manuel Deutsch was compensated for his journey to view the same stalls.\textsuperscript{456} At this time, there was more than one set of choir stalls in Geneva,\textsuperscript{457} and, as in the Rodez contract, the name and status of the church where the stalls were viewed is not recorded. The cathedral stalls seem to be the most likely candidate, however: the cathedral would probably have been the best known church in Geneva, and the fifteenth-century stalls there have the same main iconographic program as the Bern set: the Double Credo.\textsuperscript{458} In any case, even if they were initially considered as such, the stalls in Geneva were not ultimately used as a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{452} The minimum travel time is based on an estimate of fifty kilometres a day for a small group of riders.
\item \textsuperscript{453} Erez, “Misericords Carved by André Sulpice,” 286.
\item \textsuperscript{454} Cazes, “André Sulpice”, 149.
\item \textsuperscript{455} “Denne den dryen, so gan Jäuff luffen, das gestuel in der kilchen zu besichtigen, an ir zerung vj kronen.” Seckelmeisterrechnung, 1522, second half. These and other relevant excerpts regarding the construction of the St. Vinzenz choir stalls from the Seckelmeisterrechnung and the Ratsmanuale, which are held in the Staatsarchiv Bern, are transcribed in Lehmann, \textit{Das Chorgestühl zu Bern}, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{456} See account entry, above.
\item \textsuperscript{457} For a comprehensive list and description, see Charles, \textit{Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle}, 147–155.
\item \textsuperscript{458} Ibid., 62.
\end{itemize}
formal model for the set in Bern: the St. Vinzenz stalls are the first set anywhere in this region that use an Italianate vocabulary, in ornament (e.g., Figure A.178), architectural and figural style (e.g., Figure A.303), and even to some extent iconographically, such as the four cardinal virtues that are prominently displayed on the upper corners of the stalls (e.g., Figure A.304). These features are much more similar to those seen on stalls in Lombardy, like the set at the Certosa di Pavia of 1487 to 1498, which Manuel would certainly have known.\textsuperscript{459} In fact, it is surprising that a journey to Geneva was undertaken at all if it was only to view the iconography, given the many sets of stalls much closer to Bern that also display the Double Credo: Saint-Nicolas in Fribourg, Our Lady of the Assumption in Romont, and the Abbey of Hauterive among others. Perhaps there were significant connections between the Bern city government and Geneva that account for these trips, perhaps there were other aspects of the stalls there that the Bern patrons considered important enough for their experts to examine, perhaps the Geneva model was considered and subsequently rejected, or perhaps the Geneva stalls simply enjoyed greater fame than other stalls in the region.

Some documents indicate that more than one set of choir stalls was visited in search of a model. It is not always clear from these records whether patrons wanted to select a single model from a short list of suggested models or whether different aspects were being chosen from among the sets visited to meet their needs and tastes. Changes to or losses of the relevant sets make it impossible to answer this question in some cases.

An exceptional example of visiting multiple sets is recorded in the contract made in Barcelona in 1394: the bishop and cathedral chapter sent the master, Pere Ça Anglada, on an extended trip to Girona, Elne, Narbonne, Carcassone and other unnamed places in France to see stalls in the most beautiful and solemn (\textit{pus bels e sollempnes}) choirs prior to beginning his work on their set.\textsuperscript{460} The sixty-five stalls that Pere Ça Anglada

\textsuperscript{459}Mojon, \textit{Das Berner Münster}, 386.
\textsuperscript{460}“Primerament pague a ... Anglada que fo tramés per mosseny lo bisbe e lo capitol en les parts de France per reconexer los cors de Girona, de Eune, de Narbona, de Carcassone e per altres lochs, per
subsequently built form the second row of the Barcelona stalls today (Figure A.217),
but the tabernacles that were behind the seats are now gone. Nevertheless, a variety
of influences can be seen in his remaining work, suggesting that no single choir stall
model was followed.

More commonly, multiple sets much closer to home were viewed. The city of Troyes
was well situated with a large number of religious houses in the vicinity. Thus, when
the chapter at the collegiate church of Saint-Etienne formed a committee on October
15, 1532 to visit local stalls, there were many possibilities. Mathieu de Rommelles, who
was still working on the cathedral stalls at that time, was invited to accompany them on
their visits to the Franciscan, Dominican, Carthusian and Augustinian churches in the
area as well as other places that had recently had new choir stalls built. Evidently
the committee did not decide upon a final design during these visits because Master
Mathieu, his woodworker associates and delegates of the chapter went to see the stalls at
the Cistercian abbey in nearby Vauluisant after the contract had been signed in 1536.
Unfortunately, the Saint-Etienne stalls were destroyed during the French Revolution,
and it is not known which model or models were chosen in the end.

Occasionally, particular characteristics from more than one choir stall set are cited in
documents as models for the new choir stalls, as at Melrose Abbey. Similarly, in their
contract of March 26, 1455, the nuns at San Zaccaria Convent in Venice specifically refer
to certain formal features of three different Venetian sets that they wanted incorporated
into their new choir stalls. The arms, dorsals, and canopies of their new stalls were to be

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461 Kraus and Kraus, Gothic Choirstalls of Spain, 104–107.
464 Ibid., 405.
Sample stalls

Given the size and complexity of such a project, sometimes neither a design drawing nor an extant prototype was sufficient to provide the patrons with enough information about the final product before they were willing to commit to signing a contract for a set of choir stalls. However, unlike some forms of architecture and microarchitecture, such as towers, or tombs, it does not appear that small-scale models of choir stalls were ever made. Rather, since sets consist of repeated seats, a full-scale model stall that could actually be sat in was a more practical solution. Sample stalls not only provided patrons

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466 “…migliore che il fogliame posto in una sedia nella giexia de sancta foscha edi quella o piu grosseza” This excerpt and the following one are transcribed from Archivio di Stato, Venice, San Zaccaria, B. 1 pergamene in Susan Connell, The Employment of Sculptors and Stonemasons in Venice in the Fifteenth Century (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 205.

467 “…ligamenti de tarsia e Intenda simile ale prime sedie Cinque per banda del Coro de sancta Lena // or euro altri ligamenti che nonse diminuischa de quella bonta eperfectione.” ibid., 205.

468 Radke, “Nuns and Their Art,” 449.

469 Kavaler, “Renaissance Gothic in the Netherlands,” 240–241. For a detail of the still extant stone maquette of the upper part of two towers for the proposed west facade of Saint Peter’s in Leuven, which was built by Joos Massys and Jan Baeyert between 1524 and 1530, see figure 23.

470 The contract of December 3, 1511 between Michel Colombe and Margaret of Austria for the subsequently cancelled tomb project at Brou provides interesting details about the process of the production of such small-scale models from drawing to terracotta model to painted stone model. It is transcribed in Paul Vitry, Michel Colombe et la sculpture française de son temps (Paris: Librairie centrale des beaux-arts, 1901), 487–490.
with a better idea of what the final product would look like than a drawing could, they also allowed patrons and outside experts to inspect the quality of the joinery and carving, as well as the comfort of the seats.

There are a number of known cases in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries where a sample stall or sedilia, which is essentially a very small choir stall set, was commissioned prior to giving an artisan a contract for a full set of choir stalls. Sometimes, sample stalls would be ordered, and once found satisfactory, complemented with the complete array according to a new contract. Rodrigo Alemán signed a contract on July 10, 1498 to make one upper and one lower stall for the cathedral choir in Ciudad Rodrigo which were to be assessed by two masters prior to his completion of the other stalls (Figure A.305 shows differences between the upper and lower stalls in this set). Similarly, in Zamora, an agreement was signed between the cathedral chapter and Juan de Bruxeles that laid out how he was to proceed in the construction of the set of choir stalls, including the creation of one upper and one lower sample stall (Figure A.228 shows differences between the upper and lower stalls of this set). Not only did these sample stalls provide the chapter with a concrete work to judge, they even presented an opportunity for a rival to bid against Juan: in Pedro de Guadalupe’s ultimately rejected submission to secure the contract for the stalls, he cites Juan’s sample stalls as models for the set that he himself proposes to build. The construction of sample stalls was not necessarily stipulated

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471 “...maestro Rodrigo aleman asentaron con el que haga dos syllas para el coro una alta e otro baxa...que tomen dos maestros el uno de la una parte y el otro de la otra que determinen lo que menos valieren e no lo que mas segun dicho es e determinado por los dichos maestros que los dichos senores estaran por ello y se obligan que el dicho maestre Rodrigo hara todas las otras sillas que son menester en el dicho coro...” The full contract is transcribed from Archivo Capitular de Ciudad Rodrigo, Actas Capitulares Libro 43 (Contaduría de 1493–1504), fol. 104r as document 162 in Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 414.

472 “...que el dicho Maestro...faga una sylla alta e otro baxa...” The complete contract is reproduced and transcribed from the Archivo Catedral de Zamora, Contratos y obras in Ramos de Castro, La Catedral de Zamora, 594–595.

473 “Pedro de Guadalupe...puso las sylla alta con baxa a diez mill maravedís segund las tiene puestas Juan de Bruxeles e de la mesma fechura que está fecha la silla alta e bax que tiene fechas el dicho Juan de Bruxeles...” Reproduced and transcribed from the Archivo Catedral de Zamora, Contratos y obras in Ramos de Castro, La Catedral de Zamora, 596, 598.
from the outset, however. In Rouen, the request to build a sample stall was a later addition to the procedure because the cathedral chapter was not fully satisfied by the drawn plans that the master joiner, Philippot Viart, had provided. As in Ciudad Rodrigo, the canons enlisted the aid of artisans who were not involved in the commission to assist them in their evaluation of this sample stall: in February 1458, the master of the masonry works of the cathedral, Geoffroy Richier, and two unnamed master masons from the parish church of Saint-Maclou came with the canons to inspect the sample stall.

Sample stalls also served as a point of reference for the subsequent seats. In the contract that Juan de Bruxeles signed in Zamora, the shape and height (la fechura e altura) of the sample upper and lower stalls are explicitly mentioned as guidelines for the rest of the seats that were to be made. The nuns of Santa Chiara in Murano in the Venetian Republic made changes to both measurements and appearance after having carefully examined and no doubt sat in their sample stalls to ensure that they would find the resulting seats both aesthetically pleasing and comfortable during the long offices. In a contract of June 26, 1478, they ordered that the stalls should be like the two (presumably an upper and a lower stall) that had already made except that the placement of the hoods be changed, the tracery on the partitions be simplified, and the arm rests be lowered and lengthened.

There were also cases in which a similar, but smaller piece of church furniture was commissioned before a contract for the much larger stall project was signed. Such projects

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474 Reported from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2492 in Lemé, “Le rôle joué par les chanoines”, 481.
475 Reported from Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, G 2492 fol. 29v in Lardin, “Stalles de la cathédrale de Rouen”, 41.
476 “...para quel faga las sillas del coro de la dicha yglesia e que sean de la fechura e altura de las dos sillas alta e baxa que agora tiene fechas...” Reproduced and transcribed from the Archivo Catedral de Zamora, Contratos y obras in Ramos de Castro, La Catedral de Zamora, 595–599.
477 Radke, “Nuns and Their Art,” 450.
478 “...vol esser djtte sedje lavorade chome son queste do fatte, ma prima la suo meza veta dj sobra vol esser 1/2 pe piuj jn fuorj de queste zoe piuj jn vollto, el traforo de la partjson delle sedie piuj schieto [piu semplicemente lavorato] si po, e le suo brazieri over pozj piuj bassj e piuj longj de queste...” An excerpt of the contract is transcribed as Document 31, Miscellanea Documenti in Osvaldo, L’architettura e la scultura, 93. Thank you to Dr. Susannah Rutherglen for her help with Venetian.
not only provided patrons with similar information that could be gleaned from a sample stall, but even if they decided not to give the contract for the choir stall set to the same person, they would nevertheless acquire a functional object. Rodrigo Alemán signed a contract with the cathedral chapter of Plasencia on June 7, 1497 to make two honorary seats for the corners of the choir.\footnote{...maestre Rodrigo entallador se obligo ...faser dos syllas que se han de Asentar en los cabos del coro...” The contract is transcribed as document 156 in Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 412.} Although the contract to construct the rest of the set does not survive, wording in the judgement of the Real Chancillería of January 27, 1503,\footnote{...eldichomaestre Rodrigo que lestavaprestoeacabarlas dichassyllas despuésquefizieseeacabase çiertas(lasdichassyllastachado)çiertasobrasquetomaraeteníaenladichaçibdadde Plazençia después de estar obligado a las dichas sus partes, comenzada su obra e recibidas dellos grandes quantya de mrs segund que lo suso dicho constava e pareçía por çierto testimonio...” Transcribed in ibid., 346n60.} with respect to Rodrigo’s failure to fulfill the contract signed with the Ciudad Rodrigo chapter in July 1499,\footnote{The date of this contract is also known only from the judgement: “…E que después que se otorgara el dicho contrato, que fuera en el mes de jullio pasado del anno de noventa y nueve…” transcribed from the Archivo de la Real Chancellería de Valladolid, Reales Ejecutorios 176-47, January 27, 1503 as document 164 in ibid., 415.} indicates that Rodrigo signed a contract with the Plasencia chapter to construct their choir stalls after he signed the contract with the canons of Ciudad Rodrigo,\footnote{Heim, Rodrigo Alemán, 81.} thus subsequent to making the honorary stalls. These “sample” seats were integrated into the full Plasencia set: the queen’s stall on the upper southeast corner of the stalls and the king’s stall is positioned on the upper northeast (Figures A.213 and A.306, respectively).

Similarly, the honorary seating that was made for the parish church in Ulm seems to have been treated as a trial piece for Jörg Syrlin the Elder (Figure A.156):\footnote{Gropp, Das Ulmer Chorgestühl, 67.} the same year that he completed this commission, Syrlin signed a contract to construct the choir stalls.\footnote{Weilandt, “Der wiedergefundene Vertrag,” 456.} Although a no longer extant design drawing of the set is referred to in the contract, the Dreisitz is explicitly mentioned at the same time as a model for the stalls.\footnote{“...der visierung So er denne In furgehalten geben Und den dry stemnden [drei Ständen] nach...” The full contract at Stadtarchiv Ulm, Gloecklenische Sammlung, Nr. 2474 is transcribed in Baum, Die Ulmer Plastik, 152.}
The drawing would no doubt have been used to detail the iconographic program and show the more complex arrangement of the significantly larger set of ninety-one planned seats, but the honorary seating was clearly a model both for figural and non-figural ornament, such as the stall end busts and the use of intarsia as a framing device (see Figures A.168 and A.307, the north and south sides of the stalls respectively). And although there are functional differences between the two pieces that result in constructional variations, most of the same formal solutions are used again in the choir stalls.\textsuperscript{486}

**Deviating from the model**

Whatever kind of model was agreed upon by the choir stall master and the patron, it served first and foremost as a legal transaction.\textsuperscript{487} There is no document known for woodworkers of this period that discusses the commitment implied in drawn plans,\textsuperscript{488} but the ordinance of 1459 for masons in Regensburg sets this obligation out in writing: if any master provides a drawn plan for work he is to make, he should not deviate from it, but make it just as in the drawing he showed his patrons.\textsuperscript{489}

While adherence to a model seems like a straightforward stipulation that could easily be enforced, the dispute between the joiners and the chapter during the construction of the stalls for Troyes cathedral shows that factors beyond the interpretation of the model may influence the outcome. About six weeks before signing a contract in February 1525 to build the Troyes stalls, Mathieu de Rommelles presented a drawing to the cathedral chapter that he and his father-in-law, Adam d’Aubellemere, had made of the stalls at the Franciscan church in Châlons-en-Champagne, which was to be used as a model for the

\textsuperscript{486}Gropp, *Das Ulmer Chorgestühl*, 67.
\textsuperscript{487}Weilandt, “Der wiedergefundene Vertrag,” 448.
\textsuperscript{488}Charles, *Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle*, 67.
\textsuperscript{489}“Item: wen ein jeglich Meister ein Werk verdinget und eine Vysierunge dazu git, wie das werden sol: dem Werk sol er nit abbrechen an der Vysierunge, Sunder er sol es machen, wie er die Vysierunge den hern, Stetten oder im Lande gezeiget hett, also dass es nit geschweche werde.” Cited from a transcription of Die Steinmetzordnung 1459, article 10 in Ferdinand Jamner, *Die Bauhütten des deutschen Mittelalters* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1876), 254.
new stalls. Work began in April and proceeded regularly for the first two years. Nevertheless, there were concerns on the part of some canons during this time that the joiners were not following the model. At a chapter meeting a few years later, subsequent to Master Adam’s death, the head of the fabric, Canon De Lirey reported that whenever someone had pointed out to the late choir stall master that he was not following the model, he had replied that they should leave him alone and he would make a masterpiece that would well fulfill their expectations. However, when three stalls were assembled in October 1527, the chapter was not pleased because the work lacked the simplicity they desired. Since some parts were already carved, however, the work would have to continue as it was. The chapter minutes record nothing more with respect to the project until December 2, 1528, when the newly-appointed bishop, Odard Hennequin, suggested that a commission be formed to look into why the workshop was proceeding so slowly; on December 11, this commission reported that the joiners had deviated from the model; on December 18, three stalls were erected on the right side of the choir to be examined by outside experts. The chapter was particularly concerned with the considerable height of the dorsals and canopy as it seemed likely that the full set would darken the space in the choir. Five days later, they made Master Adam promise to finish within five years and to simplify the stalls, both to lower the cost and facilitate their maintenance. Neither the stalls nor the drawing survive, and the faults that the

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491 Reported from G 1282, fol. 128r in ibid., 392.
492 “Finite et permitte me agere ; conficiam vobis, Deo opitulante, cathedrarum opus non contemnendum et quod omnium vestrum votis abunde satisfaciet” This excerpt and Saint-Aubin’s report are from G 1282, fol. 270v–272r in Piétresson de Saint-Aubin, “Deux menuisiers picards,” 397.
493 “...quia ligna sunt omnino mordesiis et tenonibus adaptata” This excerpt and Saint-Aubin’s report of the situation are from G 1282, fol. 152v ibid., 392.
494 “...quia...opifices exsesserunt protractum et liniamenta ordinationis” Excerpt transcribed from G 1282, fol. 194r–v in ibid., 393.
495 Reported and partially transcribed from G 1282, fol. 194r–195r in ibid., 393.
Chapter 4. Choir Practice: The Construction of Stalls

Chapter finds with the new stalls are not precisely described, but since the stalls were criticized for not being simple enough in 1527 and again in 1528, presumably the stalls in Châlons-en-Champagne were less elaborate than Adam d’Aubellemer’s stalls. However, the chapter’s primary concern was evidently the length of time that the work was taking, and simplifying the carving was an obvious solution, whether or not the carving on the model was simpler. Unfortunately, Master Adam died the following year, not having completed the stalls. When the chapter eventually renegotiated the contract with his co-signatory and son-in-law, Mathieu de Rommelles, they had significantly changed the project: they even required a new drawing to be submitted.

In cases where the patron and woodworker could not come to an agreement, the matter might end up being pursued in court, as happened in Venice in 1468 regarding the choir stalls for the church of Sant’ Antonio. The woodcarver, Giacomo, and Biagio de’ Cesani, the son of the deceased patron, disagreed over the final price of the stalls. One important factor in the court’s decision about the price was the observation by the valuers who examined the set that Giacomo had deviated from the contract drawing. He was ultimately penalized for his lack of adherence.

Completion of choir stalls

The completion of a set of choir stalls was a cause for celebration, as was seen in Kalkar when both patrons and woodworkers assembled for a celebratory drink after the instal-

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496 Since I only have access to Saint-Aubin’s partial transcription of the chapter minutes, perhaps a new examination of the extant documentation would provide more information. However, such an examination remains for future work.

497 Reported from G 1282, fol. 271v in ibid., 399. See section Unexpected expenses, above, for details about their renegotiation.

498 Maistro piero da vizenzia [illegible word] e maistro antonio de marco. e maistro lunardo. avemo visto chon lizenzia de vui magnifici signiori zustizieri de vostro commandamento el choro he fato de la giesia de sant’antonin per man de maistro Jacomo e per non esser fato chome se contien intro el desegno le de pezo L. 23 s. 14” For a transcription of a copy of the proceedings from Proc. di S. Marco de Citra, B. 148, Comm. Biagio de Cesanis, loose papers, see Connell, Sculptors and Stonemasons in Venice, 286–288.
lation of the new stalls. But as church furnishings that are not fundamental to the Christian liturgy, choir stalls do not require consecration rites before they are used. Nor is there any particular expense or chapter decision associated with their first use. Therefore, since most extant documents that inform us about choir stalls come from contracts and financial records, accounts about the first time a new set was used are rare. Beginning in the late fifteenth century, however, the completion date was often conspicuously recorded on the stalls themselves. In Freising, the painter Sigmund was hired not long after the set was completed to paint the date on all four stall ends. On the second last dorsal on both the northeastern and southeastern sides of the Ulm stalls, *Jörg Sürlin 1474 cöplevit hoc opus* is proudly proclaimed in large, clear letters (e.g., Figure A.33). Unlike the easternmost stalls that are angled towards the altar, these unusual dorsals are not flat, and the sides with the text face the rest of the choir and the honorary Dreisitz, where they could presumably be read, or at least seen, by most members of the choir. Fine new stalls were also a source of pride for patrons as the inscription on the Blaubeuren stalls shows: both the patron, Abbot Heinrich Fabri, and the joiner, Jörg Sürlin the Younger, are named on the abbot’s seat along with the completion date of 1493 (Figure A.201). Similarly, the choir stall canopy for the collegiate church in Aarschot has a carved inscription on a blue background that presumably ran the whole length of the canopy originally. Now installed at St. Andrew in Gatton, England, in the wrong order with sections missing,

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499See section Artisan remuneration, above.
502The inscription ends “…a Geor[g]io Sürlin de Vlma hui[u]s artis p[er]ïtissimo.” Morah-Fromm, “Raumprogramm und liturgische Dispositionen”, 52. For a transcription of the first part of the inscription with the date and name of the patron, see section Devising an iconographic program, above.  
503Lord Frederick John Monson, purchased them from the cash-strapped church in 1833 and installed them along with other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century church furnishings in his private church. Cumps, *De Koorbanken te Aarschot*, 26.
the inscription includes, “In the year of our lord MCCCCCXV is this...completed by us Churchwardens Stasen van Diest, Jan Kaermerlinck [?] and Jan Borchma[ns] have made...” (The date can be seen in Figure A.308).\textsuperscript{504} The stalls at the collegiate church in Dordrecht have the beginning and end dates carved on the northeast and southeast stall ends: 1538 and 1540 respectively (Figure A.309).\textsuperscript{505} 1540 is the same year that Charles V held a triumphal entry into Dordrecht. Once the date for the entry had been announced, it seems likely that the stall workers would have been exhorted to complete the set in time for his visit. A mass was normally part of the festivities associated with a triumphal entry and since Dordrecht had no cathedral, the mass would have been held in the choir of the collegiate church,\textsuperscript{506} as occurred in 1549 when Charles V’s son and heir, Philip, made his entry into Dordrecht.\textsuperscript{507} Charles V’s entry would have been the ideal inauguration for the new choir stalls, particularly given the emphatic triumphal (e.g., Figure A.310) and imperial imagery depicted on these stalls (e.g., Figure A.311),\textsuperscript{508} which mirrored Charles’s actual entry on July 21, 1540.\textsuperscript{509}

At the cathedral in Saint-Bertrand-les-Comminges, there is no archival information about the construction of the elaborate new stalls that replaced the fourteenth-century set

\textsuperscript{504}“In de jaer ons heren MCCCCCXV Is dit gh[eb](eb)urt Volmaeckt bi ons kerikmeisters stansen [?] van diest Jan Kaemerlinc [?] in Jan Borchma[ns] hevnet gema” Transcribed and translated in Tracy, \textit{Continental Church Furniture in England}, 240. The text could not be put back in order after a recent restoration because the wood has warped and would not fit together in an altered configuration. Oral communication, Mr. Stephen Robinson, St. Andrew’s church warden, September 9, 2010.

\textsuperscript{505}Duinen, \textit{De koorbanken te Dordrecht}, 167.

\textsuperscript{506}Bangs, \textit{Church Art and Architecture}, 78.

\textsuperscript{507}Duinen, \textit{De koorbanken te Dordrecht}, 50.

\textsuperscript{508}See chapter Construction of Identity, section Choir stalls as sites for secular promotion for more information about the iconography of these stalls.

\textsuperscript{509}Despite the prominent end date of 1540 carved on the stalls, Herman Duinen believes that the set was not installed until 1541 based on the carving of this date on one of the pilasters on the south side. He points out that stalls built off site were typically installed only after they were completed. ibid., 49–50. However, there are cases where an incomplete, but usable set was installed before completion, such as the set at Auch Cathedral, which was in place before Dominique Bertin was hired to finish it in 1552: “Et pour conclusion de tout ce dessus, led. Bertin rendra les piliers et dossiers tant des haultes chaires que des basses parfaictz, comme ceulx qui sont desjà po[u]sez aud. cueur...” This excerpt is transcribed from Archives des Notaires de Toulouse, liasse: Baux in Douais, “Stalles de Sainte-Marie d’Auch,” 298. Given the importance of the occasion, it seems likely that if enough of the Dordrecht set had been considered serviceable and presentable, it would have been installed for the occasion of Charles V’s entry.
that had presumably been damaged by a lightning strike on August 5, 1522. However, an inscription along the jube under a row of saints not only records the patron of the completely refurbished choir, the bishop of Comminges, Jean de Mauléon, but also the first time that the stalls were used: on December 25, 1535, prime, the first office of the day, was the inaugural celebration in the renovated choir (Figure A.312). The choice of prime on the day of Christ’s birth for the initial use of the choir stalls designed to support the canons in their performance of the Divine Offices was a fitting initiation for a sumptuous set of choir stalls that still draws admiration almost five centuries later.

Conclusion

While no single procedure emerges in the study of these documents, patterns appear that inform us of the most common ways that the construction of choir stalls proceeded in the early modern period. Many of these practices are also seen in contemporary commissions for architecture and other forms of microarchitecture: artisans might be sought out based on reputation, previous work or simply hired on speculation; both design drawings and earlier sets were used as models for new commissions; remuneration took a variety of forms. Comparisons also allow practices that are distinctive to choir stall construction to be recognized. The commissioning of sample stalls or honorary seats prior to awarding a choir stall contract or requesting them early in the building process shows the advantage of the modular construction of choir stalls not only to their makers for facilitating construction, but also to their patrons for assuring the quality of the set. The re-use of sets as choir stalls in chapels or in other churches, as pews, as desks or even as building material emphasizes the value of stalls as furnishings as well as

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510 Augé et al., *Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges*, 46–49.
511 *ERIGENDO HVIC CHORO SVMPVS FECIT DOMINVS IOANNES MAVLEO HVJVSCE CONVENARVM DIOCESIS EPISCOPVS IN QVO PRIMVS OFFICIVM NATALIS DOMINI CELEBRAVIT ANNO MILLESIMO QVINGENTESIMO TRICESIMO QVINTO* ibid., 57. For a photograph of the complete jube, see page 51.
512 For a photograph of the set, see ibid., 76.
materially. Examining these documents as a whole also increases our knowledge about workshop practices of woodworkers in northern Europe more generally. Distinctions among joiners, carpenters and carvers are particularly foregrounded since unlike most other wooden objects, choir stalls require woodworking skills associated with all three professions.
Chapter 5

Preaching to the Choir:
The Construction of Identity

One of the most magnificent sets of early modern choir stalls was built in the choir of Ulm Minster between 1469 and 1474 (Figure A.168). Such a structure is unexpected, however, because Ulm Minster was a parish church with no ritual need for a set of choir stalls.\(^1\) Officially, all clergy were obligated to take part in the divine office during most of the medieval period. As a practice that developed in the monastic setting and was adapted early on to the cathedral setting, it was customarily performed communally,\(^2\) but by the tenth century, the private recitation of the offices was widely permitted in Western canonical sources if a cleric was not able to be in church during the hours. By the fifteenth century, it was normal for parish clergy to recite the divine office privately, rather than communally.\(^3\) Nevertheless, sets of choir stalls were commissioned for parish churches in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in urban centres as geographically and politically distinct as Haarlem in the Low Countries,\(^4\) and Yverdon in Savoy.\(^5\) While each

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\(^1\) Gropp, *Das Ulmer Chorgestühl*, 21–24.
\(^4\) Bangs, *Church Art and Architecture*, 69.
of these non-traditional sets was built to fulfill specific local ambitions, their histories all point to how early modern patrons used choir stalls as important signifiers of identity to construct or reconstruct both individual and group identity during this period of political and religious transformation.

Choir stalls of the Latin church were closely tied to the duty and identity of monastic and capitular communities who assembled in them eight times each day to perform the divine office collectively. As on most church furnishings in the early modern period, imagery associated with the identity of their donors and users, such as heraldic devices or patron saints, was commonly displayed on choir stalls. This ubiquitous imagery reflects patrons' concern for both worldly and divine recognition of their benefaction. However, imagery connected to identity was also exploited to create more elaborate connotations. It became more frequent at this time for communities to take advantage of the large and varied but contained surface of the stalls to display iconographic programs specifically related to themselves and their mission. Such programs might be used to promote a community’s reputation to the larger world, following in the tradition of monastic chronicles and *Gesta Episcoporum*. At other times, programs might be conceived as models that reminded community members of the venerable institution with which they were connected and of their role in upholding its customs, much as monastic rules, ecclesiastic decrees and canons, and clerical reforms were employed. The self-consciousness of such constructions is evident in the inventive ways that these programs were presented. Multiple programs might intersect and reinforce one another. Traditional imagery might be judiciously placed in a marked site to create a fresh association. Programs might be borrowed from other media, placing already established conventions in a surprising new context. Even the absence of special imagery where it is normally expected could be a comment on the identity of those who sat there. And in some cases, programs were actually used to help establish a new identity for a community. Choir stalls not only shaped the community ideologically, however: they also physically shaped the space in which the divine office...
was performed. Along with the choir screen or jube, choir stalls divided the choir from the nave of the church, reinforcing not only the status of the space, but also the status of those who had access to the space. As lay entry to the choir increased over time, so too did the imagery associated with lay patronage. Not satisfied with conventional markers of identity, some lay patrons emulated ecclesiastic communities in projecting more elaborate conceptions of themselves through iconographical programs, much as the aristocracy had earlier adapted ecclesiastical chronicles to create princely genealogies. Noble patrons might employ programs that reflected dynastic or larger political aspirations in the same way they used more portable public media, such as tapestries. Other lay patrons, such as confraternities, entered the space to use it for their own rituals, marking such events for posterity. Some lay groups, such as city governments, even appropriated the space by building choir stalls in churches that traditionally had none, and turning the stalls to novel purposes. By inserting themselves, whether representationally or physically, into a space where sacred rituals took place, lay individuals and groups accrued a symbolic prestige not equated with more mundane sites. And while some choir stall sets had a limited audience, it was a privileged one with significant connections to both patrons and users. By visually claiming this restricted sacred space, patrons and users were able to present their merits and status to this elite audience. Thus, due to its close association with the most significant communal work of the Christian church, and the large, flexible canvas it provided for complex iconographical programs, the early modern choir stall not only became a synecdoche for the communities who required stalls, but in some cases

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6 This aspect is discussed in detail in chapter Construction of Space.
represented individuals and groups who were powerful enough to penetrate the choir and refashion choir stalls for their own ends.

Methodology

My approach to how choir stalls were used for identity construction is predominantly anthropological. I am primarily interested in the cultural symbolism associated with choir stalls in the early modern period and how the imagery on choir stalls could be designed to convey a specific message to a defined audience according to socially established codes. I take as the starting point for my analysis Clifford Geertz’s contention that human behaviour is a symbolic action and that the analysis of culture must therefore be interpretative. Consequently, while the construction or renovation of a set of choir stalls was ostensibly to provide seating for ecclesiastic communities to carry out prescribed rituals (an example of “thin description”), many other goals could simultaneously be achieved by this action, such as an assertion of power or an attempt to gain favour from authorities. Furthermore, some sets were replaced or renovated when there was no functional need to do so, and there were even sets built for communities who had no liturgical use for them, by people who would never occupy them, or for audiences who might never see them. It is only through such “thick description” that layers of meaning are revealed that allow an analysis of the symbolic nature of such a construction and thereby a deeper understanding of the action.\(^{10}\) Thus, using a wide variety of data, the ethnographer interprets meanings, evaluates these interpretations and draws conclusions based on the most likely interpretations, then uses this information to support larger claims about a culture.\(^{11}\)

Since my analysis principally uses the stalls as evidence for early modern identity formation, I specifically rely on assumptions from material culture studies: ob-


\(^{11}\)Ibid., 20–28.
jects provide information about how their creators and users viewed themselves by giving material form to their beliefs and values.\(^{12}\) Appropriation theory is also relevant to my work because choir stalls were adapted by new groups for new purposes at this time, and the analysis of how and why this was done provides further information about how choir stalls functioned within the social context of the period.\(^{13}\) Finally, approaches to identity formation in the early modern period, both individual and group, are important to my analysis. As Richard C. Trexler points out, social spaces are key to creating, articulating, and modifying both individual and group identities. These publicly presented identities were not only intended for outside recognition, but also for self-recognition by members.\(^{14}\) In creating such identities, people often drew on stories from the past to make them more memorable;\(^ {15}\) this strategy is seen in choir stall iconography. Natalie Zemon Davis’s analysis of how women in sixteenth-century France presented themselves as individuals shows how the undersanding of the self at this time was made in response to one’s relationships to various social groups;\(^ {16}\) individual choir stall patrons I investigate demonstrate this type of awareness in their choice of iconography. Thus, through my thick description of early modern choir stalls based on historical data, contemporaneous documents and the stalls themselves, I will interpret what meaning choir stalls had with respect to those who commissioned them and those who used them, and how the stalls were used to construct both individual and group identity.


\(^{15}\)Ibid., 7.

Proclaiming Identity: Choir Stalls as Promotional Sites

As the site of celebration of the divine office, the raison d’être of monastic and capitular communities, choir stalls were crucial to the definition of the community that used them: they formed the principal work place for groups of monks, nuns, canons, canonesses, and friars during their ten to twelve hours of daily prayer.\textsuperscript{17} Stalls provided support for the body, a place for liturgical books, protection from draughts, damp and interruption, and a resonance chamber to enhance the voices lifted in praise to God. This shared, enclosed space also contributed to group cohesion:\textsuperscript{18} such spatial demarcation emphasized the separate, privileged identity of its members.\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, each person was assigned a seat according to rank, age and/or date of entry into the community;\textsuperscript{20} thus choir stalls concretized members’ positions within the hierarchical church organization.\textsuperscript{21} Finally, the possession of high-quality stalls reflected positively on the status of the community and its members. It is therefore not surprising that communities took great interest in the construction of choir stalls.

In fact, the majority of sets for which there are extant records were commissioned and overseen by members of the community that used them. While lay patrons might finance the furnishings in monasteries and collegiate churches, choir stalls in cathedrals were almost exclusively commissioned by the chapter, a subset of its members, the bishop or a combination thereof. In France, the responsibility for building choir stalls in cathedrals rested with the chapter until the end of the fifteenth century, after which the bishop or deacon sometimes commissioned the stalls,\textsuperscript{22} as was the case for the choir stalls at the cathedral in Albi, France, which were built by Bishop Louis I d’Amboise, as part of the

\textsuperscript{17}Harper, \textit{Western Liturgy}, 74.
\textsuperscript{18}Weigert, \textit{Weaving Sacred Stories}, 111.
\textsuperscript{20}Charles, \textit{Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle}, 31.
\textsuperscript{21}See chapter Made to Order: The Construction of Space for more discussion of these issues.
\textsuperscript{22}Lemé, “Le rôle joué par les chanoines”, 490.
reconstruction of the choir. In Spain, civic patrons had almost no role in the commissioning or development of choir stalls, and even individual participation by members of the chapter was less frequent than in other parts of Europe. Maria D. Pablos Teijeira speculates that in Spain the greater power of the religious establishment with respect to civilians discouraged individual participation in such works. Nevertheless, here too, powerful fifteenth- and sixteenth-century ecclesiasts, such as Cardinal Pedro González de Mendoza, Archbishop of Toledo, occasionally took control of the construction of choir stalls. Certainly, cathedrals did not have the same tradition of lay patronage that monasteries or collegiate churches had, since few cathedrals are deemed to have had a founder. The cathedral’s first bishop might be recognized as the founder, but in that case the incumbent bishop and the chapter would be considered his successors, which might explain why furnishings specifically related to the chapter generally remained under the control of its members. However, even in monasteries and colloegiates where there was greater outside patronage, internal patronage was common. Records from fifteenth-century female monasteries on the Italian Peninsula show that there was an expectation for nuns to contribute money towards church furnishings, as well as for other expenses of the abbey. Male monastics and canons also regularly financed community projects. Canons might be required to make a monetary gift to support church upkeep. At the collegiate church of Sint Jans in ’s-Hertogenbosch in the Low Countries, as of 1463, new canons were obligated to give their first year of prebend to the fabric; at Rouen Cathedral, the one-year donation of a new canon’s prebend to the capitular coffers was

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26Radke, “Nuns and Their Art,” 440.
increased to two years in 1420. Voluntary contributions were also widespread: among the numerous donations mentioned in his obituary, Abbot Pierre Was had had the choir stalls built during his abbacy of 1527 to 1553 at the Augustinian abbey church of Saint Gertrude in Leuven, and James Stanley, the warden at Manchester Collegiate from 1485 until 1506, paid for the south side of its sixteenth-century choir stall set.

Given communities’ need for choir stalls and their financial investment, it is not surprising that most documents about their construction, such as contracts and chapter minutes, are primarily concerned with the cost and completion date of the stalls, although documents also show the attention that members paid to other aspects of choir stall construction, such as material and formal design. But while documents record communities’ interest in the construction of choir stalls, there are few extant written references to the imagery that they chose for their stalls. Unlike the detailed descriptions contained in some contracts for other types of church furnishings, surviving choir stall contracts are quite terse. And separate documents describing a choir stall iconographic program, such as the one known as the Troyes Mémoire that was written for a series of tapestries commissioned in Troyes, France at the end of the fifteenth century, are unknown. However, the complexity of some choir stall programs suggests that detailed plans must have existed for such commissions, for example, that of Ulm Minster. While written documents make clear the personal and corporate investment communities made in their choir stalls, the stalls themselves must be examined to see how ecclesiastical com-

30Bangs, Church Art and Architecture, 75.
31Tracy, English Gothic Choir-Stalls, 1400–1540, 21. This church later became a cathedral.
32See chapter Choir Practice: The Construction of Stalls for more details.
33See for example, the contract with Tilman Riemenschneider for the Altarpiece of the Holy Blood in Rothenburg ob der Tauber. Stechow, Northern Renaissance Art, 82–84.
34Kane, Troyes Mémoire.
35Gropp, Das Ulmer Chorgestühl, 11.
communities used them to represent themselves and their tenets. It was customary for early modern patrons to display models and ideas that they wanted to be associated with on the work that they commissioned.\textsuperscript{36} Since capitular communities had close, daily contact with choir stalls in a way that was unusual or impossible with many other supports for large iconographic programs, such as stained glass or portal sculpture, their interest in assuring a close fit between the program and their community seems certain.

The most obvious signs of identity seen on choir stalls are coats of arms. By the fifteenth century, there was a long tradition of including the heraldic devices of patrons on all sorts of church furnishings, such as stained glass and altarpieces. The custom was so well established that in cases where there is no written documentation regarding the patronage of choir stalls, such devices are used to infer the identity of the patron, as at Albi Cathedral where the bishop’s family coats of arms, sometimes paired with the episcopal cross, are repeated an estimated 550 times throughout the choir (see Figure A.143).\textsuperscript{37} Coats of arms of both communal affiliation (e.g., the Dominican arms at Santo Tomás in Ávila (Figure A.313); the Cîteaux emblem at the Cistercan monastery of Hauterive) and individual members (e.g., the heraldry of the warden at Manchester Collegiate, James Stanley (Figure A.314); the insignia of Pierre Was, the abbot of the Augustinian monastery of Saint Gertrude in Leuven (Figure A.315)) frequently appear on choir stalls confirming both individual and communal investment on the part of the monastery or chapter. At Freising Cathedral, each upper stall has a wooden shield where the respective occupant would have had his arms painted (Figure A.316),\textsuperscript{38} suggesting corporate involvement in the construction of the stalls, whether financial or only administrative. At Saint-Tugdual Cathedral in Tréguier in Brittany, a surviving register from the cathedral fabric shows that it was indeed the canons who commissioned an addition


\textsuperscript{38} Oesterhelt, “Das Chorgestühl von 1488”, 99.
to their existing choir stalls in 1508. This project includes the carving of escutcheons above both the regular stalls and the bishop’s throne that were to display whichever arms suited the canons.  These devices frequently appear in prominent places, such as canopies, upper dorsals or stall ends, but also in more marginal places, such as misericords and corbels, where they presumably indicate the occupant of the seat (e.g., Figure A.219).  Most arms would originally have been more conspicuous since even the carved ones might have been partially polychromed, although few retain their colour as the shields in Albi Cathedral do (Figure A.317).  The presence of these coats of arms would have reminded users every day of the donor’s role both as patron and member. Such visible reminders reinforced the praiseworthiness of making such donations to benefit the community, encouraging members to contribute to the ongoing construction and maintenance of their communal space. For donors, there would have been both worldly and salvific benefits: a physical reminder to the community to feel gratitude towards the patrons and, more importantly, to remember to pray for their souls.

Heraldic devices, however, are limited in the messages that they can impart. More explicit as well as more subtle ideas regarding the community, its membership and its values could be communicated through an iconographic program. A longtime practice in Christian iconography was the choice of an appropriate theme to reinforce an object’s

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39 “et y aura ... quinze autres anges qui porteront chacun d’eulx ung escuczon de telles armes qu’il plaira à messires du chapitre et lesquieulx quinze anges seront au dessus des chaires des dignités et chanoynes. Item y aura dessus la chaire de monseigneur l’évesque ung tabernacle... et auxi aura deux anges suspenduz dudit tabernacle qui porteroient chacun son escuczon de telles armes quie plaira à mesdiz seigneurs.” Transcribed in Barthélemy, Mélanges sur la Bretagne, 114.

40 At Hauterive Abbey, arms on the misericords identify the seats of the abbot and the prior. Strub, Stalles fribourgeoises, 89.

41 The only part of the choir stalls that may never have been painted are the seats and misericords due to the constant handling and friction that would have quickly worn away any polychromy. Tracy, English Gothic Choir-Stalls, 1200–1400, 4. Although there are two late fifteenth-century misericords at the Musée des Antiquités in Rouen that are partially polychromed, there is no indication in the literature as to whether the paint is original. See pages 164 and 165 for photographs; for a description of the two misericords, see Vivre au Moyen Age : archéologie du quotidien en Normandie, XIIIe-XVe siècles, ed. Sandrine Berthelot, Jean-Yves Marin, and Monique Rey Delqué (Milan: 5 Continents, 2002), 274.

function so that the rituals performed with it became part of an unbroken sacred history.\(^{43}\) For example, in the choir of Albi Cathedral, Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of music and of the cathedral, presides over a chorus of painted angels, all wearing liturgical robes, who stand beneath intricate baldachins on pedestals that hover above the seats of their human counterparts (see Figure A.143).\(^{44}\) The stalls in Constance Minster contain prominent eucharistic imagery, including the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek, Saint Clare holding a monstrance, and the drunkenness of Noah surrounded by lush grape vines (Figure A.318),\(^{45}\) symbolizing the daily performance of mass in the choir. The great popularity of the theme of the Double Credo on choir stalls was no doubt due to its aptness in highlighting the biblical sources of the liturgy,\(^{46}\) in reflecting the doxological goals of communal prayer shared by these monastic and canonical communities,\(^{47}\) and in representing the lineage of the practitioners.\(^{48}\) Unfortunately, not only do few paper documents survive that mention iconographic programs of choir stalls, how choices were made or even records of who devised them are rare, although occasionally, members of the chapter who were in charge of planning the program are mentioned in capitular records. The generally complex religious iconography and the frequent inclusion of Latin inscriptions indicate that most programs were developed or overseen by an educated clergy. Moreover, there was a long tradition that learned advisors were the only ones capable of ensuring that sacred truths were properly represented on objects created for religious purposes.\(^{49}\) Additionally, since patron saints were crucial in constructing a community’s identity,\(^{50}\) the presence of saints associated with the locale, the building and


\(^{44}\)Biget, Sainte-Cécile d’Albi : sculptures, 266–268.

\(^{45}\)Reiners, Das Münster zu Konstanz, 354–357.

\(^{46}\)Pfulg, Les stalles de Fribourg, 8.


\(^{48}\)For more about the Double Credo, see chapter Construction of Space, section Institutional space.

\(^{49}\)Kessler, “Medieval Art History,” 181.

\(^{50}\)Weigert, Weaving Sacred Stories, 11.
the community itself suggests that these programs were designed, in whole or in part, by
the members themselves, rather than by an outside expert. Saints who are particularly
venerated in a region appear in local variations of the Double Credo: Saint Felmasius, the
first bishop of Maurienne is included in the version of 1498 at the Cathedral of Saint-Jean-
de-Maurienne, and Saint Gratus, the patron of Aosta, and Saint Ursus, a sixth-century
preacher in the area of Aosta, both appear alongside the traditional figures on the stalls at
the Cathedral of Aosta in the former Savoy from the late 1460s. Similarly, on the stalls
built for the Cathedral of Saint-Pierre in Geneva, scenes from the life of the patron saint of
the cathedral were deemed more appropriate than those of Saint Francis, whose vita was
depicted on the Franciscan stalls that the chapter had chosen as a model. Finally, at the
Cistercian abbey of Hauterive, both Saint Benedict, whose Rule the Cistercians follow,
and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, who was a key figure in the spread of this Order in the
twelfth century (Figure A.210), are prominent additions to the partially polychromed
relief series of prophets and apostles of the Double Credo displayed on the dorsals. The
few documents that do list the chapter members who were responsible for providing the
artists with the main iconographical program support the presumption that most choir
stall programs were designed by the communities that used them.

The imagery on choir stalls is not limited to a single program or category, however.
Given the size and complex nature of choir stalls, there is ample space to display a
variety of image types, as well as various series, to present a complete picture of their
patrons and users. At the Benedictine monastery of Blaubeuren, for example, heraldic
devices, depictions of saints, biblical figures and founder portraits are all used to refer
to the foundation’s history and allegiances, each reinforcing the other in emphasizing
the monastery’s current as well as historical importance. This monastery was founded

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51 Charles, *Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle*, 164.
52 Ibid., 236–238.
53 Rudolph, *Bernard of Clairvaux’s Apologia*, 5.
55 See chapter Choir Practice section Devising an iconographic program for more details.
in the 1080s by three brothers: Counts Anselm and Hugo von Tübingen and Count Sigiboto von Ruck, but the monastery complex, including the church furnishings, was completely rebuilt in the late fifteenth century after a devastating fire. Unfortunately, there is little surviving documentation to provide insight into the intentions of the patrons or designers as they remade the complex. Much of the reconstruction, including the choir stalls, occurred under Abbot Heinrich III Fabri at a time when the abbey was at its peak both in influence and economic power. Under the central baldachins on both sides of the choir, the arms of the monastery, of the abbot and patron, as well as of the Agnus Dei (Figure A.88), are emphasized by vivid polychromy, making clear the monastery’s affiliations. Saints who were closely associated with the monastery, such as John the Baptist (the titular saint), Benedict (the founder of the rule they followed) and Scholastica (Benedict’s twin sister who led a female community near Benedict’s abbey) originally appeared in prominent positions under the baldachin towers or above honorific seats. On the stall ends, seven busts of Old Testament prophets are identified by their names and a relevant biblical quotation: Job, Joshua, and Elias on the north side; Isaiah (Figure A.319), Solomon, Amos and Obadiah on the south side. Their presence in the choir refers directly to the texts that formed part of the offices that were read and sung by the monks every day, hence such Old Testament figures were frequently depicted on choir stalls. The other three stall end busts form part of a series depicting noble donors that continues on reliefs framing the entrance to the choir (e.g., Figure A.298). These

56 Eberl, “Einführung in die Geschichte des Klosters”, 15.
57 Morah-Fromm, “Raumprogramm und liturgische Dispositionen”, 41.
60 Unfortunately, the stalls were badly damaged during the nineteenth century and the statues on the canopy are now missing. A seventeenth-century document by Gregorius Knauss names the most important figures on the canopy, but the approximately fifty statuettes that were originally placed above the seat rows were not recorded. ibid., 116.
61 The faces of all of the busts were restored in the nineteenth century to disguise earlier deliberate defacement, such as the cutting off of their noses. ibid., 116–117. For photographs of two of the busts (Job and Adelheit) prior to restoration, see Baum, Die Ulmer Plastik, plate 21.
are not fifteenth-century patrons, however. Rather, they are patrons of the original abbey’s foundation and construction in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, outfitted in old-fashioned clothing (from about 1400) to make clear to contemporaries that these were historic figures, thus lending weight to the traditional authority of the monastery (e.g., Figure A.320). Finally, a statue of Christ as Salvator Mundi was originally centrally placed on the western part of the canopy as a reminder of the ultimate goal of the abbey that all the other figures supported. Thus, the choir stalls at Blaubeuren show how different series of images and a variety of image types can be used to convey the identity and goals of those who commissioned and used choir stalls.

Choir stalls were not limited to conventional iconography, however. The cathedral in Freising has a unique main program: rather than a biblical or doctrinal theme, it is a catalogue of the bishops of Freising beginning with the founder of the diocese, who is also one of the titular saints of the cathedral, Saint Corbinian (Figure A.269), and ending with the thirty-second bishop, Johan I, who died in 1324. While the documentary evidence does not relate who designed the program of bishops, it is most likely that the chapter, the bishop or someone in the bishop’s entourage was responsible, perhaps based on an older written history of the bishopric. There was a long tradition of interest in their own history among Freising ecclesiasts. The fourth bishop, Arbeo (764–783), wrote a vita of the first bishop, Saint Corbinian, which was recopied numerous times in manuscript form up to the fifteenth century. In 824, the sixth bishop, Hitto (811–834), ordered the priest Cozroh to document the history of the church, which Cozroh continued until

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63 The other patrons shown on the stalls are: Countess Adelheid and Count Sigiboto von Ruck, Count Palatine Friedrich of Tübingen and his wife, and Count Sigfrid with his son Walter. Meurer, “Die bewegliche Ausstattung”, 117.
64 Oesterhelt, “Das Chorgestühl von 1488”, 100.
65 Ibid., 118.
the end of the episcopate of the bishop’s successor, Erchanbert, in 854. In the twelfth century, the sacristan, Conradus, broke with the Bavarian tradition of foregrounding church patrons in such histories, giving pride of place to the Freising bishops instead. His work has therefore been identified by some as the beginning of the Freising bishop chronicle tradition. His illuminated manuscript includes a page with distichs identifying the bishops, whose busts appear in medallions beside the text. Such depictions had an earlier history: around 1100, a series of enthroned bishops surrounded by architectural arches had been painted in the sanctuary of the cathedral.

Perhaps these paintings and illuminations influenced the decision to display framed relief busts of the bishops on the choir stalls. The carved figures are shown in a variety of poses on the dorsals of the upper stalls directly under the canopy. The busts are cut off by a ledge on which a heraldic shield appears that originally would have been painted with the coat of arms of the seat’s occupant, thus connecting the members of the chapter with their spiritual forebears. Below the ledges are large fields of inventive patterns that alternate among window, vegetal and ribbon tracery. Beneath the tracery, each bishop is clearly labelled in Latin with his name, the length of time he held the title of bishop and his position in the series, similar to the information recorded in chronicles (e.g., Figure A.96).

The bishop theme is also apparent in other carving on the stalls, with one of the hand rests exemplifying the insistence on this theme: while the tops of choir stall hand rests are normally rounded for comfort, here, the pointed mitre of a hand rest that represents a bishop’s head remains a sharp reminder that Freising is indeed a bishopric.

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68 Ibid., 36. View the codex online at: www.bayerische-landesbibliothek-online.de/enconradussacrista (accessed April 17, 2015).
69 Ibid., 21.
(Figure A.321). While Old and New Testament figures, saints and church fathers also make an appearance, these statues are much smaller than the relief busts of the bishops and seem to primarily serve a framing function both visually and thematically. Visually, they connect the columns that separate the dorsals with the finials that punctuate the canopy. From the opposite side of the choir, these small statues are almost indistinguishable from the non-figurative dividers, while the reliefs, with their elaborate crosiers and pointed mitres, remain clearly recognizable as bishops (e.g., Figure A.204). Thematically, important saints and prophets frame the bishops, who are responsible not only for the administration of Freising cathedral, but also for the continuation of the Christian church that was prefigured in the Old Testament, founded on the New Testament, and promulgated by martyrs and church fathers.

Michel Sot’s examination of six ninth-century Gesta Episcoporum from a variety of cathedrals suggest that the goal of such chronologies, much like genealogies, was to legitimize episcopal succession by showing its ancient origins and its continuous history, establishing a pseudo-lineage as close as possible to that of Christ himself, reinforced by carefully-selected references to the Bible and to particular saints. This time-honoured written genre appears to have been visually translated on the Freising stalls. Usually, the Gesta Episcoporum included bishops from the founding of the church up until the time they were written, but the Freising stalls present a truncated episcopal chronology that ends almost two hundred years before the set’s construction. However, Berndt Oesterhelt’s careful examination of the stalls shows that they were altered after con-

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71 In contrast, the bishop’s head on an elbow rest of ca. 1360 at the Foundation of Saint Katherine, London is oriented leaning to one side to avoid the pointed mitre being upright. For an image, see Grössinger, World Upside-Down, 50.
72 The majority of these are not specifically identifiable due to the absence of attributes. Oesterhelt, Der Chorraum des Freisinger Domes, 40.
73 The finials and pinnacles of the canopy were altered multiple times during the nineteenth century. Dehio, Handbuch der Deutschen Kunstdenkmäler, 310. However, I think it is unlikely that their relative positions with respect to the dorsal columns have changed.
75 Ibid., 433.
struction and are now at least one stall-width narrower at the west end of each side than when they were built.\textsuperscript{76} Documentary evidence also suggests that more than the sixty-two existing stalls were initially constructed: for example, the chapter paid for seventy-four misericord hinges in 1488.\textsuperscript{77} Furthermore, there are indications that some of the dorsals were later moved and new inscriptions were made, which would be consistent with maintaining the chronology of the bishops after shortening the set at the west end.\textsuperscript{78} Oesterhelt speculates that since late Gothic iconographic programs tended to be comprehensive and since these stalls were built during the episcopate of the forty-fourth bishop, Sixtus von Tannberg (1473–1495), the program may originally have shown all of the bishop’s predecessors: forty on the choir stalls and three on the now missing sedilia. Sixtus himself would have completed the series as he took his place on the episcopal throne.\textsuperscript{79} Thus, the stalls reflect the eminent lineage of the bishop under whom they were built,\textsuperscript{80} linking him through generations of bishops to the founding patron saint,\textsuperscript{81} and validating him as a member of this lineage.\textsuperscript{82} It is not known why new choir stalls might have been constructed at this time, nor why the theme of lineage figures so prominently. Sixtus van Tannberg was unanimously voted as the successor to the outgoing bishop.\textsuperscript{83} Therefore, the choice does not seem to be linked to a necessary show of control on his part. However, there was an active pursuit of reform of the diocese under his leadership and the period was also one of political interference in church affairs on the part of various powers,\textsuperscript{84} either of which might have suggested a long-established

\textsuperscript{76}Oesterhelt, “Das Chorgestühl von 1488”, 102–106.
\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., 111–112.
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., 107–108.
\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., 101.
\textsuperscript{81}Laura Weigert, “Performing the Past: The Tapestry of the City and Its Saints in Tournai Cathedral,” \textit{Gesta} 38.2 (1999): 162.
\textsuperscript{82}Even if the original program did not include all forty-three predecessors, the idea of lineage is clearly intended.
\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., 208.
theme to assert the bishop’s authority. Whether or not the message might also have been intended for outsiders, it was certainly a self-conscious affirmation of the chapter and the bishop that validated the ongoing significance of Freising as a bishopric, and the important participation of its members in this venerable tradition.

Not all choir stalls were commissioned by ecclesiasts, however: the custom of aristocratic lay patronage of monasteries goes back to the early Middle Ages. There were many reasons why wealthy laity supported the construction and embellishment of monasteries, which reflected both their religious faith, and the interdependence of monastic and secular communities in the medieval period.\footnote{85Hill, “Norman Abbey of Savigny”, 174.} In addition to conferring both spiritual and material benefits, the founding of a monastery was a respected, concrete symbol of a patron’s status.\footnote{86Karen Stöber, Late Medieval Monasteries and Their Patrons: England and Wales, c.1300-1540 (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2007), 22–23.} Collegiate churches were also important sites of noble patronage, and the establishment of one was considered almost as prestigious as the founding of a monastery.\footnote{87Krista De Jonge, “Les fondations funéraires de la haute noblesse des anciens Pay-Bays,” in Demeures d’éternité : églises et chapelles funéraires aux XVVe et XVIe siècles : actes du colloque tenu à Tours du 11 au 14 juin 1996, ed. Jean Guillaume (Paris: Picard, 2005), 130.} During the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, a period in which the laity spent increasing amounts on religious commissions,\footnote{88Richard Goldthwaite, Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 121.} the patronage of religious foundations continued to be important. At the Burgundian court, for example, the establishment of a religious foundation was essential if one wanted to rise in rank.\footnote{89De Clercq, Dumolyn, and Haemers, “Material Culture and Elite Identity,” 4.} Since the founding of monasteries and collegiate churches was tied to concern for the souls of oneself and one’s family, they were important sites for the expression of piety. Prior to the twelfth century, this concern had been fulfilled by rituals: prayers, obits and anniversaries. Subsequently, physical monuments began to be erected to meet these requirements, thus churches became stages for personalized piety in addition to traditional
relational programs.\textsuperscript{90} Sophisticated early modern patrons used such sites to construct multivalent testaments to their power and wealth, as well as to their religiosity.

One example of such a religious foundation, which included a new set of choir stalls, is the magnificent Augustinian abbey in Brou, commissioned by Margaret of Austria. She initiated the construction of the abbey in 1506 to fulfill a vow originally made by her deceased mother-in-law, Margaret of Bourbon, to rebuild a crumbling Benedictine monastery near Bourg-en-Bresse after her husband’s miraculous recovery from a hunting accident.\textsuperscript{91} However, over the course of the planning and construction of the abbey, changes in Margaret of Austria’s social position led to a transformation of the enterprise from a traditional, modest complex that would have been appropriate for the widow of Philibert of Savoy, to an impressive burial site worthy of the Regent of the Netherlands, a position she acquired in 1507 following the death of her brother.\textsuperscript{92} This transformation also affected the iconography: after 1512, the Bourbons, whose vow she was ostensibly realizing, moved to second place behind Margaret herself and her maternal line, which she wanted to emphasize. Thus, the most common emblems in the complex are affiliated with her Valois ancestors, the Dukes of Burgundy.\textsuperscript{93} Although the choir stalls that form part of the monastic complex were completed in 1532,\textsuperscript{94} subsequent to Margaret’s death,\textsuperscript{95} the personal and dynastic iconography, as well as the surprising absence of saints associated either with the church or with the monastic order of the abbey,\textsuperscript{96} suggest that she had been involved in the iconographical choices. Furthermore, although she had not been to

\textsuperscript{90}Martindale, “Patrons and Minders”, 143–149.
\textsuperscript{92}Ibid., 148–152.
\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., 153–156.
\textsuperscript{95}Ibid., 51.
Brou since being recalled to Mechelen a few months after laying the first stone in 1506, she directed and was kept well-informed about the construction until she died.97

While Margaret’s personal arms and name saint are present in other areas of the church,98 these most traditional signs of patronal identity are absent from the choir stalls. Instead, more subtle iconography permeates the intricate stalls, such as the Burgundian fire-steel, the Cross of Saint Andrew, who was the patron saint of the Dukes of Burgundy, and the intertwined initials of Margaret and Philibert (Figure A.322),99 some of it half-hidden within the delicate tracery. Even one of the large Old Testament scenes, Gideon and the Fleece (Figure A.323), while typologically related to the Immaculate Conception and thus the pervasive Marian imagery of the abbey,100 also has a specific Burgundian allusion. As Olivier de la Marche explains in his memoirs of about 1500, although Philip the Good was originally referring to the Greek hero, Jason, when he chose the Golden Fleece as the symbol for the order he founded, one of the chancellors of the Order, Jehan Germain, Bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône, persuaded him to replace the pagan Jason with the biblical figure of Gideon as a more appropriate symbol for a religious confraternity.101 Here, this infrequently depicted scene is prominently carved on a stall end, among more customarily shown episodes from the Old Testament, such as Moses and the burning bush. This dynastic iconography at Brou does not seem to have been intended solely for the Augustinian canons whose duty it was to pray for Margaret and her extended family. Rather, it is likely that it was also designed to remind visiting nobles and diplomats

97Laura D. Gelfand, “Regional Styles and Political Ambitions: Margaret of Austria’s Monastic Foundation at Brou,” in Cultural Exchange between the Low Countries and Italy (1400–1600), ed. Ingrid Alexander-Skipnes (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007), 194.
100Ibid., 96.
of Margaret’s high personal status and important political position. The presence of this iconography on the choir stalls further suggests that Margaret of Austria expected prestigious visitors to be admitted to the choir, much as her brother and his wife were admitted to the choir at the Cartuja de Miraflores when they visited Spain in 1501. Thus, Margaret posits an audience besides the canons, and while it would necessarily be a transient one, this significant lay audience would nevertheless be attentive to the dynastic and political import of her self-representation.

Reclaiming Identity: Reform and the Struggle for Power

While many iconographical programs reflect the identity of a community or patron, their history and their allegiances, some iconographical programs seem to have been specifically selected as part of an attempt to reclaim former aspects of the identity of the community that they were built for. Whether directed solely at the community itself, or also intended for an outside audience, the relationship between certain programs and the circumstances surrounding the construction of the choir stalls suggests that imagery could be self-consciously chosen as part of a message of reform or to show resistance to the erosion of traditional privileges.

During the period of religious turmoil preceding and following the Reformation, there were many power struggles within the church. Three frequent areas of conflict involved reform of church practice, the right of appointment to influential ecclesiastic positions, and the extent of secular involvement in church matters. Often these areas of conflict overlapped. In response to problems that numerous critics had identified within the church, many aspects of religious practice were criticized and reforms were called for, with some attempts at reform being aimed specifically at monastic, capitular and/or collegiate communities. Typical concerns at this time were the ideal of poverty, par-

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particularly among the mendicant orders, the elimination of blasphemy and gambling, and the reform of dress and psalmody. This broad reform, known as the Observant Movement, began in Bohemia in the 1330s and had spread throughout western Europe by 1400, ultimately influencing Augustinian, Franciscan, Dominican and Benedictine orders. As a response to a perceived relaxation of discipline within monastic communities, it was also supported by many secular leaders, such as the Catholic Monarchs.

In fifteenth-century France, general church councils, after resolving specific issues around the Great Schism, turned to the proper conduct of members of French cathedral and collegiate chapters as one of their primary concerns. Since all religious communities were subject to a variety of overlapping and divergent authorities (although monastic communities were traditionally much more independent), power struggles were at the centre of many of these reforms, both general and local: with their accretion of power in other domains, secular rulers sought to increase their influence on ostensible church matters; bishops and popes endeavoured to consolidate their positions; and clerics strove to maintain their independence from would-be overseers, whether lay or ecclesiastic. In these bids for power, the right to choose church officials became a particularly fraught battleground, as both rulers and religious communities sought to ensure that sympathetic (or easily-controlled) individuals obtained important posts. Sovereigns in many western European lands attempted to exert their authority over episcopal appointments by appealing to the twelfth-century papal decretals that allowed lay rulers to veto the pope’s appointment of a bishop if the man or his family was suspected of criminal behaviour or treachery towards the ruler. They also appealed to local custom and even

directed their legal advisors to search through historic legislation in the hope of finding documented evidence of royal precedence over the church. At the same time, chapters, whether monastic, collegiate or cathedral, sought to defend or reclaim certain traditional privileges that were being threatened, such as the right to episcopal elections that had begun to be eroded by the rise in pontifical power in the thirteenth century. By the fifteenth century, both ecclesiastic and lay officials, particularly popes and monarchs, had even gained significant control over formerly self-determining abbatial elections. But it is secular rulers who seem to have made the greatest gains at this time: at the end of the fifteenth century, the Catholic Monarchs intervened repeatedly in the choice of Spanish bishops; in 1516, Francis I of France received the privilege of participating in the appointment of high ecclesiastical positions; and the right to name abbots and abbesses in the Low Countries was conferred upon Emperor Charles V by the pope in 1522.

Performing monastic reform

The conflict between the Bishop of Rodez, François d’Estaing, and the monks of Conques shows how bitter church power struggles could become. It also shows how choir stalls, as potent symbols of power, could be used as a venue to play out such disputes. In December 1516, during the bishop’s unwelcome visit to the Benedictine abbey of Sainte-Foy in Conques in the County of Rodez as part of his effort to assert diocesan authority over the monastery’s claims of exemption, a violent incident that began in the choir resulted

109 Edwards, *Ferdinand and Isabella*, 89.
110 For an interesting selection of documents regarding elections within the Latin church up to the sixteenth century, see Jean Gaudemet, “Evêques et chapitres (Législation et doctrine à l’âge classique),” in *Mélanges offerts à Jean Dauphier*, (Toulouse: Centre d’histoire juridique méridionale, 1979), 8.
112 Teijeira Pablos, “Le cas de la cathédrale de Zamora”, 86.
113 In exchange, he had to pay the pope one year’s income for each office in which he interceded. Wim Blockmans, *A History of Power in Europe: People, Markets, States* (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator Paribas, 1997), 236.
in a long trial at the parliament of Toulouse.\textsuperscript{115} The friction between the monastery and the bishop went back to at least 1501 when Antoine de Marcenac, abbot of Conques from 1496 until 1519,\textsuperscript{116} was the first of several ecclesiasts to register his opposition to the election of François d’Estaing as bishop.\textsuperscript{117} The ongoing tension between the monastery and the bishop culminated in violence after the bishop’s performance of a highly symbolic and very public act: upon entering the monk’s choir with his entourage during a time that the choir was open to the laity,\textsuperscript{118} the bishop took the abbot’s seat in the choir stalls that the abbot himself had commissioned.\textsuperscript{119} During the trial, the monks recounted that this transgression is what led to the violence: “...they said that as soon as the aforementioned bishop was in the choir, he went to sit in the place where the aforementioned abbot customarily sat during the divine office...”\textsuperscript{120} Although there was no official location of the abbot’s seat in the choir, it was traditionally the first seat on the south side of the entrance to the choir,\textsuperscript{121} where the abbot would have the whole community under his observation. One of the witnesses at the trial in Toulouse points out that this seat assignment is not arbitrary, but is closely connected with the abbot’s role as an educator and disciplinarian.\textsuperscript{122} Additionally, there was a custom of elaborate

\textsuperscript{115}Belmon, \emph{François d’Estaing l’évêque de Rodez}, 295–298. No definitive ruling seems to have ever been made in the trial, and the controversy over the respective rights of the bishop and the abbot was not resolved until 1544 with the dispossesion of the Benedictines and the establishment of the rule of Saint Augustine at Conques, 322–324.


\textsuperscript{117}For the complete story of François d’Estaing’s contested election, see Lemaître, \emph{Diocèse de Rodez}, 217–223.

\textsuperscript{118}The door that separated the monk’s choir from the nave was opened at certain junctures to allow pilgrims and the congregation of this double-usage parish and monastic church access to the famous relics of Sainte-Foy. Belmon, \emph{François d’Estaing l’évêque de Rodez}, 296–297.

\textsuperscript{119}No contract survives, but date of construction and the presence of de Marcenac’s arms on the stalls suggest that he was the primary patron. These stalls are no longer in situ. Bournot-Didier, “Les stalles de Conques”, 159–160.

\textsuperscript{120}“...disent que incontinent que led. evesque fut dans le queur, il se alla asseoir au lieu ou led. abbé a coutume sasessoir quant le divin service se faict...” Translation mine. Transcribed from the Archives Départementales de l’Aveyron, G 420-14, fol. 18 v. in ibid., 160n4.

\textsuperscript{121}Tracy, \emph{English Gothic Choir-Stalls}, 1200–1400, xx.

\textsuperscript{122}“Item et dudit lieu et siege en fores l’on veoit tous les autres sieges et estalles dud. queur af que led. abbé ou autre pour luy que y sont assiz puissent meyuls veoir les religieux et leur serumonies pour les meyux dreer et corriger.” Transcribed from the Archives Départementales de l’Aveyron, G 420-14, fol. 18 v. in Bournot-Didier, “Les stalles de Conques”, 160n4.
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decoration on an abbot’s seat to distinguish it from the others. Both of these customs make it unlikely that d’Estaing sat in the abbot’s seat by chance. His subsequent refusal to move when initially informed by a young monk that the seat belonged to the abbot and again when asked to do so by a group of monks are further proof that his act was deliberate. In response to his steadfast refusal, the monks eventually removed him bodily from their choir, either courteously or roughly depending on the witness’s alliance. His removal culminated in a general melee.

This account shows how strongly a seat in the choir was identified with the person who sat in it, his or her office, and the power associated with that office, particularly when it was an influential position. Thus, it is not surprising that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries many conflicts that arose around questions of reform, authority and control were inscribed on choir stalls, whether as signs of warning, resistance or victory. Sometimes heraldic devices and conventional religious images were displayed in inventive ways, at other times patrons might choose less common, more specific iconography as part of an effort to enforce a reform or reclaim the rights they felt entitled to, presenting their own perspective and refuting that of their adversary.

The mid-fifteenth-century stalls, which were made for one of the churches at the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Oyend and Saint-Claude in the Franche Comté, were paid for by the abbey as part of a larger reconstruction and renovation that was linked to a reform of the monastery. A movement away from conventual life had begun in

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123 See chapter Construction of Space section Institutional space: Community, hierarchy, surveillance for more discussion on the placement and the differentiation of special stalls in the choir.
124 Belmon, François d’Estaing l’évêque de Rodez, 305–308. While Belmon’s hagiographic version of events is strongly biased in the bishop’s favour, it contains paraphrases from the trial records that provide a sense of the position of both sides.
125 The monastery had two churches: Saint-Pierre, which was also called the Three Apostles (Pierre, Paul and André) in some documents and is now Saint-Claude Cathedral, and another church that was called Saint-Oyend and Saint-Claude. It is no longer extant. Charles, Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle, 133. I will refer to the church by its current name, Saint-Claude.
126 Benoit, Histoire de l’abbaye et de la terre de Saint-Claude, 149.
127 Unfortunately, the receipt from 1449 is the only contemporaneous textual document regarding the construction of these stalls. Henri Hours, “Re-dater les stalles de Saint-Claude : examen critique des
many monasteries in the thirteenth century as part of a larger social change. Despite efforts on the part of the church hierarchy from at least the fourteenth century to bring communities back in line, this tendency continued. The reform of Saint-Claude was specifically connected to interventions on the part of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. Due to the strategic location of Saint-Claude and its importance as a local pilgrimage site, the duke wanted control of its land and succeeded in incorporating it into the duchy of Burgundy. He then set about creating an exemplary monastery to serve both his religious and personal interests. The duke first ensured that a sympathizer with his goals, Etienne Fauquier, whose family had important ties with the duke, was elected as abbot in 1445. Philip the Good then began a campaign of reform of the abbey by notifying the pope that its members had deviated from traditional conventual habits. Following recommendations from the subsequent visit of a papal delegation, statutes of reform were drawn up in 1448 by a committee of five Saint-Claude monks. The statutes initially met with resistance, but were eventually revised to everyone’s satisfaction following more intervention on the parts of both the duke and the pope, and were finally accepted by the community in 1462. The reform, both religious and administrative, was a moderate one, allowing the monks to retain certain privileges that they had acquired over the years.\textsuperscript{128} The main emphasis of the reform was on the regular, collective celebration of the divine office, and the statutes included detailed directives regarding its proper performance: Everyone was required to participate in all hours so that they performed the offices as a community; the hours were to be said slowly, clearly, and with appropriate solemnity and devotion.\textsuperscript{129} Thus, the construction of a new set of stalls during this campaign of reform

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\textsuperscript{129}“Item, & cum nihil divino Servitio praeponendum existat, mensque psallendo voci concordare debeat: statuimus & ordinamus, quod in choris Ecclesiarum praefati Monasterii dum psallitur in eisdem, Horae Canonicae tractim & cum debita gravitate & devotione, proununtiative & sententialiter dicantur ;...cantent omnes simul, & servitium divinum non impedientes cum debita gravitate laudabiliter
\end{flushright}
specifically reflected the focus of the reform.\textsuperscript{130} Moreover, the stalls replaced a set that had been made only about twenty years earlier,\textsuperscript{131} which was unlikely to have needed replacing so soon due to wear. Finally, the implication of conventual reform is reified in an unusual addition to the theme of the Double Credo: on the dorsals, full-length reliefs of twelve prophets and the twelve apostles were joined by twenty-two (or twenty-four)\textsuperscript{132} monks, abbots and bishop-abbots. Since any original painted text has now disappeared, these haloed figures can only be identified by their appearance: tonsures, skull caps, hoods, cowls, and choir habits, and by the crosiers that most of them carry. One figure (now destroyed) was traditionally identified as Saint-Claude, one of the titular saints, because of his unique halo.\textsuperscript{133} Given the long history of the monastery, first founded by three saints, Eugendus (Oyend), Romanus and Lupicinus, in the fifth century, revived during the Carolingian era under Saint-Claude, then again at the end of the twelfth century,\textsuperscript{134} there was a long line of sainted abbots who could be alluded to by the fifteenth-century reformers, much as the line of bishops was portrayed on the slightly later choir stalls at Freising Cathedral.\textsuperscript{135} Whether the rest of these saints were associated with the monastery or associated with the Order, such as St. Benedict, these haloed abbots, monks and bishop/abbots provided additional role models for the newly reformed monks, who, as the modern inheritors of the apostolic tradition, were charged with putting into

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{130}] Locatelli, “La réforme de Saint-Claude”, 24.
\item[\textsuperscript{131}] Lacroix and Renon, “Les stalles de Saint-Claude”, 36.
\item[\textsuperscript{132}] Ten dorsals were on each side before the south side was destroyed by fire in 1983. In 1985, two additional dorsals were discovered for a total of twenty-two. However, Lacroix and Renon speculate that originally there were twenty-four, a more satisfying number that would make the connection to the twelve apostle/prophet pairs perfectly symmetrical. ibid., 42.
\item[\textsuperscript{133}] In Savoy, the banderoles held by the figures of the Double Credo usually had the text associated with the saint or prophet painted on it, sometimes with his name, but the banderoles at Saint-Claude are blank, suggesting that any original text has been effaced by time and the removal of the yellow wash that had been applied to the set in the eighteenth century. Berton, \textit{Les stalles médiévales d’Aoste}, 406–409.
\item[\textsuperscript{135}] See previous section, Proclaiming Identity.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
action the message of the prophets and apostles, thus actualizing the Double Credo (e.g., Figures A.324 and A.325), just as their monastic forebears had done.\textsuperscript{136}

The stalls at Saint Gertrude monastery in Leuven in Brabant were also built during a monastic reform; however, the reform seems to have been much less tendentious, at least during the period when the choir stalls were built. Pierre Was, who became abbot of the Augustinian monastery in 1527, did not institute the reform, but rather continued a reform begun in 1486 by Abbot Van der Moere and carried on by Abbot Van Nieuwenhoven, Van der Moere’s successor and Was’s predecessor. Their goal was to ensure the strict observance of the Rule of Saint Augustine. While references to his reform in the monastery archives (\textit{reformavit labefactatam religionis observantiam... and restituta ac reformat, collabescente religionis ac conventus sui regula.})\textsuperscript{137} have been interpreted to indicate that there had been a relaxation of discipline in the monastery at this time, J. L. Alph. Jacobs argues that the issue of discipline had long before been resolved, and in fact the reform was related to the intentions of the Council of Trent and the re-establishment of certain monastic rites that Was implemented at Saint Gertrude in the spirit of the reform underway.\textsuperscript{138} Was’s abbacy was also associated with significant reconstruction and refurnishing of the abbey, including the new set of choir stalls donated by the abbot himself that replaced an earlier set. In contrast to this still extant former set, the richly carved stalls from about 1543 present a coherent theme: beginning with the Creation and culminating in the Resurrection, where a kneeling Abbot Was, identified by his coat of arms, is presented by his patron, Saint Peter (Figure A.315), the theme of Redemption runs throughout the Christological scenes carved in relief on the dorsals beneath elaborate open tracery arches (e.g., Figure A.326). Related series, such as statuettes showing the royal lineage of Jesus on the stall dividers and prefiguration scenes

\textsuperscript{136}\textsc{Lacroix and Renon}, “Les stalles de Saint-Claude”, 42.
\textsuperscript{137}\textsc{Respectively from Vita S. Gertrudis} and \textit{Chorographia sacra abb. S. Gertrudis}. Cited in Jacobs, \textit{L’abbaye de Ste-Gertrude à Louvain}, 51.
\textsuperscript{138}Was died in 1553, a decade before the final session of the Council of Trent. ibid., 51–53.
from the Old Testament on the stall ends and misericords, support the main theme.\textsuperscript{139} In fact, unlike the majority of choir stalls with figural sculpture, the iconography at Saint Gertrude is exclusively religious,\textsuperscript{140} suggesting that the entire program was devised ahead of time by the patron or a religious advisor. On the misericords, events from the lives of the patron saint of the abbey, Gertrude of Nivelles, and the titular saint of the Augustinians, Augustine of Hippo, are included.\textsuperscript{141} Given the care taken in designing this program, these scenes could be read as models for proper Augustinian observance that the canons should espouse to ensure their own redemption and the redemption of those for whom they prayed. Since Abbot Was financed the stalls and was concerned with maintaining the regularity of observance in the monastery,\textsuperscript{142} there is little doubt that he was involved in designing a program that included reminders to its members of exemplary models for their communal life (e.g., Figure A.327).

**Conflict in the cathedral**

While less a site for reform than monasteries, cathedrals also saw their share of power struggles during this period of religious change. The imagery on the choir stalls at Zamora Cathedral is traditional, but the careful placement of specific themes on the bishop’s and monarchs’ stalls clearly refer to a contemporary political issue: ecclesiastic opposition to royal interference in church affairs. The elaborate stalls were begun in 1502, replacing earlier stalls that did not have dorsals, but only painted fabric hanging behind the seats.\textsuperscript{143} While the contract for the new stalls was made between the stall maker, Juan de Bruselas, and the cathedral chapter,\textsuperscript{144} the presence of the arms of Zamora’s bishop, Diego Meléndez de Valdés, in prominent places on the stalls, including above the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[139]{Bangs, *Church Art and Architecture*, 75–76.}
\footnotetext[140]{Courtens, “Les stalles sculptées,” 323.}
\footnotetext[141]{Jacobs, *L’abbaye de Ste-Gertrude à Louvain*, 166.}
\footnotetext[142]{Ibid., 51.}
\footnotetext[143]{Teijeira Pablos, “Le cas de la cathédrale de Zamora”, 79.}
\footnotetext[144]{The documents from the cathedral archives concerning the Zamora stalls are reproduced and transcribed in Ramos de Castro, *La Catedral de Zamora*, 594–600.}
\end{footnotes}
bishop’s throne (Figure A.328), suggests his direct participation in the construction of the stalls.\textsuperscript{145} Not only was Meléndez Valdés the bishop of Zamora at the time, he was also a native son. Although he did not reside in Zamora during his episcopate,\textsuperscript{146} his contribution to a variety of contemporary works in the cathedral, as attested to by the presence of his arms,\textsuperscript{147} in addition to his personal and professional ties, make his active involvement in the stalls very likely. It is not known who designed the program, but the main theme is adapted from an earlier set of stalls at the cathedral in León.\textsuperscript{148} Depicted on the dorsals are a set of hierarchically arranged relief figures who represent a synthesis of Christian history: busts of pre-Christian and Old Testament figures who predicted or prefigured the Virgin or Christ; full-length reliefs of the apostles and important saints, including founders of the principal religious orders; a depiction of the Annunciation; and in the place of honour on the bishop’s stall, a monumental Christ the Redeemer, patron of the cathedral (Figure A.223). The traditional hierarchic organization and the insistence on Christian history reinforces the status and customs of the church, both of which were being threatened by secular powers at this time. Furthermore, this general stance is accompanied by a more pointed criticism of Spanish royal intervention in church matters that is displayed on the three most prestigious seats in the choir: the bishop’s stall in the centre of the returns on the west side of the choir and the monarchs’ stalls on the north and south sides at the far east end of the choir, all crowned by elaborate soaring canopies. Conventional figures associated with the monarchy appear on the dorsals of the royal stalls. Standing on pedestals and framed by a rounded arch, King Solomon on the south side (Figure A.224) and King David on the north (Figure A.329) are significantly larger than the figures of saints beside them. These secular kings stand in contrast to

\textsuperscript{145}Teijeira Pablos, \textit{El grupo leonés}, 210.
\textsuperscript{147}Teijeira Pablos, \textit{El grupo leonés}, 210.
\textsuperscript{148}Teijeira, “Juan de Bruselas : artiste flamand,” 50–51.
the heavenly king on the bishop’s stall who is similarly framed and also towers over his neighbours. On the pedestals beneath Solomon and David, angels display arms, but rather than the arms of the monarchs, they are the arms of the cabildo (chapter). On the bishop’s stall, in contrast, the angels on the pedestal upon which Christ stands present Bishop Meléndez Valdés’s personal coat of arms. On the misericords of the royal stalls, lowly secular scenes are shown (a peasant meal; a monkey sniffing a man’s bottom), while the bishop’s misericord displays a gryphon feeding its young, a symbol of Christian charity. Even the hand rests maintain a distinction: those on the monarchs’ stalls depict battling monsters, while the bishop’s hand rests contrast fighting Muslims with embracing Christians. However, it is the imagery far above on the pinnacle of the canopies of the stalls that alludes unmistakably to the dissatisfaction of many Spanish clerics over the intervention of the Catholic Monarchs in matters they deemed to be ecclesiastic: an abashed Adam appears on the northern monarch stall (Figure A.237), and Eve stands hunched over on the southern one (Figure A.238), while a formidable angel above the bishop’s stall expels them both from paradise (Figure A.236). Taken together, the iconography of the bishop’s and monarchs’ stalls at Zamora Cathedral reflect ecclesiastical opposition to the selection of bishops by the monarchs. Since canons had traditionally elected their own bishop during the middle ages, this issue was a particularly contentious one among most cathedral chapters at the time, but the contemporary bishop of Zamora had a very personal interest in this topic. In 1482, Meléndez Valdés was working as an ambassador for the Catholic Monarchs when they sent him to Rome to meet with the pope to negotiate various matters including the appointment of specific churchmen for vacant Spanish churches. While Pope Sixtus IV agreed to most of the appointments proposed by Ferdinand and Isabel, he substituted their choice of Hernando de Talavera as bishop of Salamanca with the ambassador himself, Meléndez Valdés.

monarchs strenuously opposed the nomination and were able to prevent Meléndez Valdés from ever taking this seat. Meléndez Valdés finally renounced the title to Salamanca in 1491, and was subsequently appointed bishop of Astorga in 1493, then bishop of Zamora in 1494.\textsuperscript{151} Whether or not Meléndez Valdés designed the program for the bishop’s and monarchs’ stalls at Zamora Cathedral, there is little doubt that he supported its message.

The designer of the program for the stalls of Amiens Cathedral also strategically located traditional imagery on the extravagant honorific stalls to impart specific messages to the occupants of these stalls, in this case reminding them of the responsibilities associated with their positions. This set of stalls was begun about 1508, replacing a set that was probably from the thirteenth century,\textsuperscript{152} when the cathedral was built. While the prominent placement of the arms of the dean, Adrien de Hénencourt, on a misericord of the upper stalls has led some to conclude that he was the patron, extant documents show that the construction of the stalls was a communal project on the part of the whole chapter. Due to the loss of the chapter accounts, nothing is known about the deliberations to build new stalls, but it is known that they were financed by the fabric as well as through contributions from individual canons. Further funds were taken from the fines that canons were forced to pay for inappropriate behaviour (“marances”).\textsuperscript{153} Unlike most stalls, the dorsals do not carry an iconographical program. Rather, chronological scenes from the life of the Virgin, who is the titular saint of the cathedral, are elaborately carved on the stall ends of the south or epistle side, while Christological scenes continue in sequence on the stall ends of the north or gospel side (e.g., Figure A.330).\textsuperscript{154} This division reflects a traditional association of Mary with the epistle side and Christ with the gospel side of the choir.\textsuperscript{155} Even more unusually, the misericords display a series of

\textsuperscript{151}Sánchez Herrerro, “El clero”, 165.
\textsuperscript{152}Tracy and Harrison, Choir-Stalls of Amiens Cathedral, 17.
\textsuperscript{155}The same division is seen on the Ulm choir stalls. Vöge, Jörg Syrlin der Ältere, 44.
detailed Old Testament scenes that supports the main program. A few of these scenes share space with New Testament ones on the honorific stalls. This mixing of Old and New Testaments,\textsuperscript{156} as well as the exchange of the episode of the Massacre of the Innocents with the command given to Joseph to flee into Egypt, according to the order given in the Gospel, suggests that the scenes on the honorific stalls were chosen for specific reasons, rather than misplaced out of carelessness.\textsuperscript{157} On the end of the magnificent dean’s stall, God’s creation of Adam and Eve appears above the Virgin of the Litanies, while on the inside there is a scene of original sin, surmounted by a scene showing Mary crushing a serpent, thus vanquishing sin. These scenes refer to the dean’s responsibility to warn the community away from sin and guide his flock towards salvation. On the outside of the other honorific stall, which was reserved for the king or his representative, there are several scenes of the Old Testament patriarch, Joseph, being rewarded by the pharaoh for his wise administration of Egypt, while below is a panel showing King Herod on his throne surrounded by soldiers carrying out his orders to massacre male infants around Bethlehem (Figure A.331). The juxtaposed images of Joseph and Herod thus contrast good and bad governments, an apt reminder to the king and his representatives of their proper duty and resulting recompense.\textsuperscript{158} This message does not appear to have been specifically addressed to either Louis XII or his successor, François I, but rather seems to have been generally aimed at any holder of this secular office.\textsuperscript{159} In contrast to these two elaborate honorific stalls, the bishop’s stall, where the bishop sat during celebrations with the canons, is located on the north side of the upper stalls and blends in discreetly with the other stalls (The bishop’s stall is third from the right in Figure A.332.\textsuperscript{160} The fact that this stall is not specially demarcated is exceptional: other contemporary

\textsuperscript{156}Olivier, “Le programme iconographique des jouées d’Amiens”, 57.
\textsuperscript{157}Lemé-Hébuterne, Les stalles d’Amiens, 124–125.
\textsuperscript{158}Olivier, “Le programme iconographique des jouées d’Amiens”, 57–60.
\textsuperscript{159}Lemé-Hébuterne, Les stalles d’Amiens, 125.
\textsuperscript{160}When officiating without the chapter, the bishop sat in a special seat located in the sanctuary. ibid., 24.
French cathedral choir stalls, such as those at Auch and Albi, have elaborately decorated bishop’s thrones that are immediately distinguishable from the surrounding stalls not only because they stand out visually, but also because they are prominently placed at the edge of a return (Figure A.333) or the end of a row (Figure A.334), both traditional sites for the seating of dignitaries. Given the extremely rich ornament of the dean’s and king’s stalls at Amiens (Figure A.1), the inconspicuous bishop’s stall is especially surprising. A bishop in the seventeenth century even tried to rectify the situation to some extent by removing a partition, thus creating an extra wide seat,\(^\text{161}\) which was another way that important seats were distinguished.\(^\text{162}\) There is no documentation to explain the anomalous bishop’s seat, but since it was the chapter who commissioned the stalls, the cool relationship between the chapter and the bishop at this time would seem to have been the most likely cause. François de Halluin became bishop of Amiens in 1503, but did not make his official entry into Amiens until four years later. Furthermore, his interactions with the chapter were sometimes conflictual as the chapter tried to preserve its autonomy instead of bowing to the bishop’s wishes. De Halluin became involved in many legal proceedings with the chapter and even excommunicated several of its members.\(^\text{163}\) Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that the chapter would want to assert that the dean, with his elaborate stall opposite that of the king’s, was the most significant figure at the cathedral, while the bishop had no more say than any other senior member. Since it was customary at the time for important stalls to be decorated with textiles,\(^\text{164}\) perhaps de Halluin tried to reclaim his status through the addition of sumptuous tapestries. Nevertheless, his seat could never have competed with the soaring honorific stalls of the dean and the king that dominate the Amiens choir.

\(^{161}\) Durand, *Monographie de la Cathédrale d’Amiens*, 155.

\(^{162}\) For more discussion about how dignitaries’ seats in the choir were traditionally made distinctive, see chapter Made to Order: The Construction of Space, subsection Reinforcing hierarchy: Brother, go up higher.


\(^{164}\) Charles, “Tentures de chœur,” 42. See chapter Construction of Space, section Institutional Space for more details.
Chapter 5. Preaching to the Choir: The Construction of Identity

Claiming Identity: The Appropriation of Sacred Space

As costly objects located in a privileged space, choir stalls both reflected and contributed to the status of their patrons and users. It is therefore not surprising that some patrons and users began to appropriate choir stalls in the early modern period in an attempt to accrue status. In certain cases, the goal was to establish a new capitular chapter; in other cases, the stalls became sites for secular promotion; in still others, the stalls were turned to new purposes. This last strategy has been described in appropriation theory as cultural poaching: a culturally-defined object or role is taken over by someone, usually of a lesser status, who was not previously associated with it. The poacher then acquires some of the object’s or role’s cultural meaning, while at the same time the act of poaching modifies the original meaning of the object or role.  

Choir stalls as bootstrapping aids

The set of choir stalls at the cathedral of Saint-Nicolas in Fribourg, then part of Savoy, was built between 1462 and 1464 (Figure A.31). Unlike any of the other sets discussed in this chapter so far, these stalls were not made for an established capitular community: at the time of their construction, Saint-Nicolas was a parish church, and therefore had no ritual need for choir stalls. Why then are choir stalls from this period found in this and some other parish churches? As an important church furnishing, a set of choir stalls would have been considered a desirable asset to any church, and there are a variety of circumstances that might explain their presence in a parish church. Some sets are not original to the church. Dozens of choir stalls that are now in English

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166 The church became a cathedral in 1924. Schmid, “Stalles de Fribourg”, 149.
167 While seating for parish clergy was found in many churches in the German-speaking lands at this time, it normally took the form of a long wooden or stone bench. Arnd Reitemeier, Pfarrkirchen in der Stadt des späten Mittelalters: Politik, Wirtschaft und Verwaltung (Munich: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), 266.
168 Kroesen, Staging the Liturgy, 168.
parish churches were acquired following the Dissolution of the Monasteries. In other parts of Europe when monasteries closed, but as in the English examples, written evidence is scarce. In other cases, stalls were built for a chantry. Endowments for chantries were popular throughout Europe beginning in the second half of the thirteenth century. While many chantries were temporary and involved nothing more than a daily intercessory mass said by a single priest, more elaborate, permanent foundations included a group of priests performing the hours, or more often, a portion of the hours. In the best endowed foundations, chantry priests formed a college and lived together as a community. By the fourteenth century, some parish churches in England and Wales had chantry colleges, but remained independent of the college (i.e., did not become a collegiate church); by the fifteenth century, some large parish churches were served by multiple chantry priests who did not unite to form a college. An example of the former is the parish church of Saint Mary in Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire. The chantry was founded in 1422, and was made up of eight canons, four clerks and six “singing men.” Its twenty choir stalls date from this period. An example of the latter is the church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Salle, Norfolk, which in 1417 was served by seven independent chantry priests. It has twenty-six fifteenth-century choir stalls.

Other groups, such as confraternities or guilds, might create an “imitation chapter” to perform some or all of the offices together. At Sint Martinuskerk in Venlo in the Duchy

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169 Remnant, *Catalogue of Misericords*, xviii. For a list of several dozen examples, see 201–202. There are also some other examples in the main text that are not on this list, such as St. Helen, Ranworth, Norfolk, 109.
170 Ibid., 201.
177 Kroesen, *Staging the Liturgy*, 162.
of Guelders, the parish priest was part of a twelve-member confraternity, *Congregatio Dominorum Horarum*, that used choir stalls to perform the Divine Offices on Sundays and feast days. Financial support came in part through chantry endowments and donations from lay brotherhoods. The presence of the coat of arms of the burgomaster, Jan van Stalbergen, on the late fifteenth-century set suggests that there was also support from the city government. In the prosperous parish of St. Botolph in Boston, Lincolnshire, the church was outfitted with a large set of choir stalls in the late fourteenth century so that the priests from each of the many guild chapels in the church could use the choir to perform the Divine Offices together. In most cases, however, choir stall sets that were constructed for parish churches were modest in size and appearance with only a single row of stalls, suitable for a chantry foundation. Given the very small number of seats in many cases, some of the seating might even have been built as sedilia rather than choir stalls.

In contrast, the finely carved, partially polychromed set of choir stalls at Saint-Nicolas has fifty seats arranged in two tiers (Figure A.31). It was constructed as part of a deliberate campaign to elevate Saint-Nicolas from parish to collegiate church, thus forming a chapter of canons from the group of ecclesiasts that was already associated with the church. Since the mid-fifteenth century, there had been a priest, a vicar and about fifteen chaplains to look after Saint-Nicolas’s many altars, who formed a spiritual community

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180 George Remnant lists the number of misericords, not the number of stalls, which in some cases is higher. Also, some of the stalls are clearly only a portion of the original seating. Nevertheless, there are so many examples with five or fewer seats that certainly some are complete. Sedilia are benches or attached seats with two to five places that are used by celebrants during the mass, and they do not usually have misericords. I am assuming that the presence of misericords was used to make the distinction between stalls and sedilia. ibid., 1–200. There are some examples of sedilia with misericords, however, such as the one from ca. 1530 in Kiedrich, Hesse. Most of the seating in the village churches discussed by Justin Kroesen and Regnerus Steensma in their section on choir stalls also have very few seats. Kroesen and Steensma, *Medieval Village Church*, 152–173.
that presented itself as a collective.\textsuperscript{182} When the avoyer, Jean Gambach, gave 1200 gold florins to establish the office of Prime at Saint-Nicolas in 1453, the clergy took their first step towards adopting the lifestyle and institutions of a college chapter in their effort to promote Saint-Nicolas. In 1458, music was composed for the main festivals of the liturgical year and subsequently recorded in new, high-quality antiphonaries.\textsuperscript{183} By 1459, wood was being prepared for the choir stalls, which were begun in 1462.\textsuperscript{184} The choir screen, built from 1464 to 1466 by the iron worker Ulrich Wagner of Munich,\textsuperscript{185} completed the preparations that allowed the Saint-Nicolas clergy to participate in the offices as a chapter of canons would. The iconographical programs on the choir stalls were obviously chosen with care to promote their goal of forming a collegiate chapter. On the dorsals of the upper stalls, framed by blind tracery arches and separated by columns, full-length, partially polychromed reliefs of Old Testament prophets and apostles are displayed in pairs (Figure A.222). The choice of the Double Credo as the main iconographical theme reinforced their self-construction as canons: they saw themselves as worthy successors to the prophets and apostles. Furthermore, on the eastern openwork terminal stall ends, by juxtaposing Mary, who represents the universal church, with Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of their particular church (e.g., Figure A.335), they inserted themselves as actors in an ongoing history of salvation that continues with them in the present.\textsuperscript{186} Additionally, references to moral decisions, such as the terminal stall end relief of Joseph repelling the advances of Potiphar’s wife,\textsuperscript{187} indicate their moral fortitude and hence their suitability to form a collegiate chapter. Finally, perhaps even the reliefs on the two northwest dorsals

\textsuperscript{183}Pfulg, \textit{Les stalles de Fribourg}, 5, 11.
\textsuperscript{184}Schmid, “Stalles de Fribourg”, 149.
\textsuperscript{185}Pfulg, \textit{Les stalles de Fribourg}, 5.
\textsuperscript{186}Kurmann-Schwarz and Gasser, “Les stalles”, 196-198.
\textsuperscript{187}Pfulg, \textit{Les stalles de Fribourg}, 9.
that show the creation of earth and sky, and the creation of Eve (see Figure A.30) hint at the ecclesiasts’ own creation of themselves as canons. Thus, the set of stalls at Saint-Nicolas is an important reflection of the group’s aspirations and their self-promotion, deliberately intended to show how seriously ecclesiastical authorities should take their campaign, while at the same time shaping the self-image of their members.

Individual patrons also had choir stalls built in parish churches with the aim of raising the church’s status to thus promote themselves and their piety. Shortly after Hoogstraten in Brabant was elevated to a county in 1518, Count Antoine de Lalaing, lord of Hoogstraten, and his wife, Elisabeth van Culemborg, began the construction of Sint-Katharinakerk. Through the incentive of partial financing, the count persuaded the citizens of Hoogstraten to erect a grand building as a replacement for their small parish church in his bid to establish a collegiate church where he and his wife could then place their founders’ tombs. Construction began in 1525, and unlike the Fribourg ecclesiasts, the count and his wife did not have long to wait to achieve their goal: the pope, Clement VII, recognized the existing chapelries as a collegiate chapter in 1534, just two years after the choir stalls were begun. In return for their investment, de Lalaing and his wife were commemorated throughout the church: on their magnificent tombs in front of the altar, in the splendid stained glass windows of the choir, and on the remarkable choir stalls. These oak stalls, which were built by the joiner, Albrecht Gelmers, and

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188 These dorsals begin an abbreviated history of Genesis that precedes the parade of apostles and prophets. They are followed by the Fall (a later addition) and the Expulsion, Kurmann-Schwarz and Gasser, “Les stalles”, 194–196.
189 Despite these efforts, however, it was decades before the clergy achieved their goal: Saint-Nicolas did not become a collegiate church until 1512. Schmidt, “L’église Saint-Nicolas de Fribourg”, 22.
190 De Jonge, “Fondations funéraires”, 129.
191 Also referred to in the literature by the Dutch form of his name, Anton van Lalaing. For example, in Bangs, Church Art and Architecture, 128.
192 Ibid., 73.
193 De Jonge, “Fondations funéraires”, 130.
194 De Ceulaer, De Sint-Catharinakerk te Hoogstraten, 75.
195 De Jonge, “Fondations funéraires”, 130.
completed in 1548,\textsuperscript{196} do not have a coherent iconographical program,\textsuperscript{197} but rather a loosely typological theme comprised of prophets, apostles and saints that was probably designed by the Hoogstraten clergy.\textsuperscript{198} Tellingly, whether of their devising or, more likely, at the behest of the count, opposite the south terminal stall statues of the patron saints of the parish and the church, Saints Barbara and Catharine respectively, Anthony Abbot and Elizabeth of Hungary, the name saints of the founders, were prominently carved on the north terminal stalls both in the round, as well as on reliefs containing scenes from their lives.\textsuperscript{199} Furthermore, the conspicuous wooden shields presented by putti, lions and gryphons that appear on the lower stall ends (e.g., Figure A.199) were painted with significant coats of arms, including, or perhaps exclusively, those of the founders. While the larger building campaign, which also included a new château and an imposing city hall, was clearly intended to impress de Lalaing’s peers, particularly his chief rival, Guillaume de Croÿ, who had recently completed his own major building project,\textsuperscript{200} the insistent personal iconography throughout the choir was no doubt meant to confirm in the minds of the canons the generosity and piety of the count and his wife who had built their church and established their chapter.\textsuperscript{201} Wherever the canons looked when they took their place in the choir stalls for their daily offices, they saw references to their benefactors, to whom they were indebted and for whom they should pray.

However, it was not only clerics with religious goals and nobles with dynastic ambitions who tried to claim a place for themselves in the choir at this time: both lay and

\textsuperscript{196}Bangs, \textit{Church Art and Architecture}, 73.
\textsuperscript{197}Of course, it is possible that the damage and modifications that the stalls have endured have obscured the original logic. For a catalogue of changes, see De Ceulaer, \textit{De Sint-Catharinakerk te Hoogstraten}, 75.
\textsuperscript{198}\textit{Ibid.}, 91.
\textsuperscript{199}Bangs, \textit{Church Art and Architecture}, 73. The statues of both saints Elizabeth and Anthony were remade in the nineteenth century. De Ceulaer, \textit{De Sint-Catharinakerk te Hoogstraten}, 75.
\textsuperscript{200}De Jonge, “Fondations funéraires”, 126–129.
\textsuperscript{201}An earlier, smaller set of stalls from the old church are still extant in the new church. These are believed to have served a chantry function: in 1422, the year of his death, Jan IV van Kuik, Lord of Hoogstraten, had charged four chaplains with the singing of the hours. De Ceulaer, \textit{De Sint-Catharinakerk te Hoogstraten}, 69.
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Ecclesiastical groups and individuals appropriated choirstalls for a variety of religious and secular interests outside of the traditional usage. As mentioned earlier, monuments to laity appeared in churches from the twelfth century on, and important fifteenth- and sixteenth-century patrons continued this custom. Also, honorific seats had been provided for influential secular nobility in many cathedral choir stalls throughout Western Europe since the eleventh century when Holy Roman Emperor Henry II was made an honorary canon of several cathedral chapters.\(^{202}\) In addition to these ongoing traditions, unconventional imagery, unprecedented users and novel uses for choir stalls show how certain groups and individuals adapted choir stalls for new purposes in the early modern period to augment their power and prestige.

**Choir stalls as sites for secular promotion**

Since at least the tenth century, secular rulers were considered to have been elected by God and had therefore been entrusted with a responsibility to protect the church.\(^{203}\) The title of Holy Roman Emperor, in particular, was closely associated with the church ever since it had been bestowed upon Charlemagne by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day, 800.\(^{204}\) In the wake of the Reformation, the contemporary Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, vigorously advertised himself as defender of the Church of Rome, as can be seen by his organization of the Imperial Diet of Augsburg in 1530.\(^{205}\) While Charles V’s political stance was declared in a myriad of ways – through wars, through diets, through ceremonies, through visual arts – most of these events or displays were realized in a public, secular sphere. However, a unique iconographic program on the choir stalls in


\(^{203}\) Ibid., 34.


the collegiate Church of Our Lady in Dordrecht, built between 1538 and 1541, presents this interpretation of Charles V in a private, sacred space: placed at eye-level directly opposite friezes on the south choir stalls that depict the Triumph of Christ and a procession of the Holy Sacrament, two friezes display secular triumphal processions: one of an ancient Roman hero, Mucius Scaevola (Figure A.310), and the other of Charles V (Figure A.336). Thus shown isomorphically, rather than following traditional church practice of subordinating worldly themes to religious ones through size and/or placement, the secular and sacred frieze reliefs are assigned equal stature within the holiest part of the church.

The theme of the Roman triumph was revived on the Italian Peninsula during the early modern period, and triumphs became popular throughout Europe, as can be seen by their depiction in a variety of media in the visual arts, including stained glass (e.g., Triumph of Faith at Saint-Nicolas de Tolentino in Brou), painting (e.g., Andrea Mantegna’s cycle of the Triumphs of Caesar for his patron, the Duke of Mantua) and, most widely, print. Triumphs were also used in religious and secular texts, and were models for actual processions. By adjusting the figures participating in the procession, the triumph was easily adapted to disparate subjects, from the exotic King of Cochin to the holy Triumph of Christ. A variety of prints, such as Albrecht Dürer’s Great Triumphal Chariot were used as models for the Dordrecht stalls. What is not known is who might have commissioned these stalls, and why the theme of secular and sacred triumphs was chosen: there are no extant documents indicating either the patron or the designer.

Given the emphasis on imperial imagery on the stalls, Jeremy Bangs

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208 Ibid., 35.
209 Ibid., 39.
211 Duinen, De koorbanken te Dordrecht, 164–170.
has suggested that Charles V himself might have been the patron. Furthermore, the explicit reference to the stamping out of heresy on the frieze of the Holy Sacrament, where the words Heretici Sacramentarii (Sacramentarian Heretics) identify those being run over by the triumphal chariot, aligns with Charles V’s self-identification as defender of the church. It is also possible that the imagery was chosen by strong supporters of Charles. For example, the abbot and patron of the convent of Santo Tomás in Ávila, Spain, Tomás de Torquemada, had close ties with the Catholic Monarchs; his personal connection with them is reified in the symbols of the monarchs that are prominently displayed on the Santo Tomás choir stalls (e.g., Figure A.337). Charles V had no known connection with the collegiate chapter; nevertheless, Dordrecht held an important place in Charles V’s history and was therefore an appropriate site for imperial imagery: on June 3, 1515 he was recognized as count of the states of Holland upon his official entry into the city. Whether his subsequent visit to Dordrecht on July 21, 1540 was meant to coincide with the inauguration of the stalls is not known. Normally, a mass of honour was part of the ceremony of a triumphal entry; therefore, it seems likely that the mass would have taken place in the choir using the new stalls. The stalls were not completed until 1541, however, so they might not have been set up in the church during the two days that Charles V visited Dordrecht. This possibility does not rule out that they were commissioned by Charles V or his followers, however. In any case, whoever chose the program was making a strong statement that suggested parity between church and state. The triumphal entry was a particularly apt theme as it was already associated with

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212 Bangs, *Church Art and Architecture*, 60.
213 Ibid., 77.
215 In this image, yokes for Isabel, arrows for Ferdinand, their joint royal coat of arms and pomegranates symbolizing Granada can be seen.
216 Duinen, *De koorbanken te Dordrecht*, 49.
217 Bangs, *Church Art and Architecture*, 78.
218 Duinen, *De koorbanken te Dordrecht*, 166.
the idea that secular rulers had both a divine and an imperial nature.\textsuperscript{219} Furthermore, the emperor had authority in both confessional and secular politics of the day, and the interaction of these two spheres made it impossible to completely separate the two.\textsuperscript{220} Thus, it is not surprising that sacred as well as secular spaces were used in the early modern period to assert the dual nature of the Holy Roman Emperor.

On the lower choir stalls of Toledo Cathedral,\textsuperscript{221} secular imagery did not compete with religious imagery, but actually superseded it.\textsuperscript{222} These stalls, which were built in three stages from 1489 until 1496,\textsuperscript{223} have fifty-four scenes from the Granada War, which did not end until halfway through their construction, prominently displayed on the dorsals,\textsuperscript{224} framed by marginal imagery that is almost exclusively secular (e.g., Figure A.338).\textsuperscript{225} Advertised as a Christian crusade, the depiction of this last stage of the \textit{Reconquista}\textsuperscript{226} in the \textit{Iglesia Primada}, Spain’s centre of Christian worship,\textsuperscript{227} lent legitimacy to this claim. Although officially overseen by the fabric of Toledo Cathedral, it was Cardinal Pedro González de Mendoza, the archbishop of Toledo, who commissioned the stalls, as Dorothee Heim’s research has shown.\textsuperscript{228} Why might this ecclesiast, who held the most powerful position in Spain after the monarch,\textsuperscript{229} have chosen the theme of a contemporary

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item Cuneo, \textit{Jörg Breu the Elder}, 150.
\item Ibid., 11.
\item The question of whether the upper stalls were also originally intended to be replaced at this time has been raised in the literature; however, a notice from December 1496 shows that Rodrigo Aleman was commissioned to do no more than renovate the upper stalls. There is little information on these no longer extant thirteenth-century stalls except for the fact that they were painted. Heim, \textit{Rodrigo Alemán}, 92–96.
\item It is of course possible that there was religious imagery on the upper stalls that the lower stalls were intended to complement.
\item Ibid., 92–96.
\item Block, \textit{Medieval Misericords Iberia}, 48–52.
\item Ryan, “Choir Stalls of Toledo”, 196–197.
\item Toledo’s cathedral was thus designated from 1085 until the sixteenth century. Lynette M. F. Bosch, \textit{Art, Liturgy and Legend in Renaissance Toledo: The Mendoza and the Iglesia Primada} (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 24–27.
\item Heim, \textit{Rodrigo Alemán}, 142–143.
\item Peggy K. Liss, \textit{Isabel the Queen: Life and Times} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 359.
\end{thebibliography}
war spearheaded by secular rulers? Moreover, although Mendoza participated in some of the Reconquista campaigns and appears in nine of the scenes (e.g., Figure A.46), King Ferdinand receives far more emphasis: he appears in forty-one of the fifty-four scenes. Why might Mendoza have chosen to highlight the king in the series, rather than himself as the primary representative of the Spanish church? Cardinal Mendoza had intimate ties with the Catholic Monarchs: he was Isabel’s closest advisor and main minister for twenty years, and he played a crucial role in placing her on the Spanish throne. He also arranged for the Spanish church to lend the Catholic Monarchs money to complete their war preparations in 1475 after they had exhausted their own resources. In fact, Mendoza was so closely associated with the Catholic Monarchs that he was referred to at the time as “El Tercer Rey,” or third monarch of Spain. At the same time, Mendoza had the confidence of the papacy, something the Catholic Monarchs did not always enjoy. There is also the question of why Isabel is almost absent: she appears only twice, despite the fact that unified royal iconography showing entwined initials and devices, and combined coats of arms formed a key part of the Catholic Monarchs’ political campaign, as can be seen at Isabel’s commissions of the Cartuja de Miraflores near Burgos and San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo, and was also used by their first Inquisitor General, Tomás Torquemada, at Santo Tomás (e.g., Figure A.164). Furthermore, the massive representation of Ferdinand cannot be explained by a concern with historical accuracy: while some aspects of certain scenes on the stalls are realistic, many are not. For

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231 Liss, *Isabel the Queen*, 356.
232 Bosch, *Mendoza and the Iglesia Primada*, 75.
233 Ibid., 109.
234 Liss, *Isabel the Queen*, 356-357.
236 Heim, *Rodrigo Alemán*, 147.
239 Ryan, “Choir Stalls of Toledo”, 208.
example, on the stalls, Ferdinand is present at the surrender of Casarabonela, although he had not actually been there.\textsuperscript{240} Rather, the stalls borrow primarily from the late medieval pictorial tradition of northern European illuminated manuscripts and tapestries, particularly contemporary historical chronicles.\textsuperscript{241} The depiction of warfare in western culture goes back to Egypt and Greece, and was almost invariably designed to glorify the ruler and to establish his identity and that of his subjects through a confrontation with the “other.”\textsuperscript{242} Seen thus, the fifty-four scenes from the Reconquista show Ferdinand as a worthy ruler of the true Spanish people, who has succeeded in expelling non-Christian interlopers from Spain. It therefore appears that the primary goal of Mendoza’s depictions of the war of Granada on the Toledo choir stalls was to champion Ferdinand. As regent rather than king in his own right, Ferdinand held a weak position in Castile, and powerful noble Castilian families could potentially cause trouble for the monarchs and for a unified Spain, both of which Mendoza supported. By showing Ferdinand’s dedication to the Castilian war within the most important church in one of the most significant cities in Castile, Mendoza, as a member of an influential Castilian family, as well as a high ranking church leader, strengthened Ferdinand’s position in the eyes of prominent Castilian families:\textsuperscript{243} here was a nobleman worthy of ruling Spain.

The cultural poaching of choir stalls

There is a long history of secular use of ecclesiastical buildings for both religious and non-religious purposes that began in the early Middle Ages at a time when ecclesiastical and secular societies tended to be much more closely interconnected than they are today.\textsuperscript{244} The interaction between religious and secular life can also be seen in the develop-

\textsuperscript{240}Heim, \textit{Rodrigo Alemán}, 147.
\textsuperscript{241}These models most likely came mainly through the mediation of prints. ibid., 128–134.
\textsuperscript{242}Cuneo, \textit{Jörg Breu the Elder}, 95.
\textsuperscript{243}Heim, \textit{Rodrigo Alemán}, 147.
\textsuperscript{244}Paul Trio, “Introduction,” in \textit{The Use and Abuse of Sacred Places in Late Medieval Towns}, ed. Paul Trio and Marjan De Smet (Leuven, Belgium: Louvain University Press, 2006), vii.
opment of confraternities, which were primarily lay organizations with varying religious goals and functions.\textsuperscript{245} While Jacob’s words, “Quam terribilis est locus[ . . . ] iste. Non est hic aliud domus Dei et porta caeli” (Gen. 28:17),\textsuperscript{246} which are included in the medieval church consecration mass, can be interpreted as excluding the secular use of a church,\textsuperscript{247} and while many medieval ecclesiasts explicitly denounced secular practices in churches, such practices continued to develop over time in response to changing social conditions.\textsuperscript{248} There were numerous practical reasons why churches might be used for secular purposes: as often the only large stone construction in a town, particularly before the later Middle Ages, they were ideal sites for various emergency as well as everyday functions, some of which were considered so normal by the local population that they are not even mentioned in written sources.\textsuperscript{249} Furthermore, many lay individuals and groups contributed to the construction, maintenance and embellishment of churches.\textsuperscript{250}

In the Low Countries, the building of parish churches was usually instigated, overseen and financed by the city, and church curatorship generally remained in the hands of the laity.\textsuperscript{251} In other cases, confraternities were the principal bodies that furnished and maintained parish churches, particularly in England.\textsuperscript{252} In fifteenth-century England, aspirants to gentry status and wealthy merchants were also important patrons of parish churches.\textsuperscript{253} Guilds often had a presence in their local church, too, usually in the form of


\textsuperscript{246}“And he was afrayde and sayde how fearfull is this place? it is none other but euen the house of God and the gate of heaue.” (WTT)


\textsuperscript{248}Davies, \textit{Secular Use of Church Buildings}, 38.


\textsuperscript{250}Davies, \textit{Secular Use of Church Buildings}, 39.

\textsuperscript{251}Kuys, “Weltliche Funktionen spätmittelalterlicher Pfarrkirchen”, 28.


a guild altar or chapel. This presence often included both religious and secular activities, such as a service on the guild’s saint’s day followed by a celebratory banquet. Such arrangements further promoted the secular use of churches. Thus, for centuries, urban churches, especially parish churches, formed the centre of the community where, among other secular activities, dances, markets, meetings, elections and legal proceedings might take place. Despite the role model of Christ expelling merchants and money changers from the temple, the sale of goods within church precincts was sometimes encouraged through exemptions from secular jurisdiction. The canons of Chartres cathedral even had a tavern in their cloister in the early fourteenth century. Not all churches fulfilled or could fulfill the wide range of secular functions churches were put to, as much depended on local needs. Also, it is difficult at times to separate ecclesiastical from secular functions: religious customs informed secular society just as secular customs influenced religious communities. Nevertheless, the view that the church was exclusively a site of religious ritual is largely a nineteenth-century misinterpretation. While the conspicuous separation of nave from choir might appear to maintain a distinction between the religious and the secular within the church, there is both visual and textual evidence that lay participation in religious rituals inside the choir was not exceptional. Since the eleventh century, when Holy Roman Emperor Henry II was made an honorary canon at several cathedrals, important secular rulers throughout Europe had been granted the

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256 All four evangelists recount this event: Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45; John 2:13–16


263 Blumenthal, *Investiture Controversy*, 44.
same privilege, including a stall in the choir.\textsuperscript{264} For example, the two western-most upper stalls at Plasencia Cathedral were reserved for the Catholic Monarchs (e.g., Figure A.213), and the Counts of Armagnac had a stall at the cathedral in Auch.\textsuperscript{265} From as early as the thirteenth century, church authorities in England officially gave patrons and other elite laity access to the choir during the divine offices.\textsuperscript{266} And as prohibitions from the Synod of Angers in 1423 against lay disturbances of the divine office and mass make clear, by the beginning of the fifteenth century, lay participation was so prevalent that it sometimes led to the disruption of services in the choir.\textsuperscript{267} Just as lay groups penetrated the choir, lay practices also entered this space. It is difficult to establish exactly when choir stalls were first used for non-liturgical events, but it is likely that chapters themselves were the first to use choir stalls in this way, probably to conduct church business. In fifteenth-century Spain, for example, capitular records document that some chapter meetings, particularly those that were scheduled immediately after a canonical hour, took place in the choir rather than in the chapter house where such meetings normally took place.\textsuperscript{268} Thus, the stage was set for non-liturgical rituals by secular groups within the sacred space of the choir.

Confraternities

One of the best-recorded examples of the lay use of choir stalls is by the Order of the Golden Fleece, whose archives are still preserved in Vienna.\textsuperscript{269} This influential political and social institution was inaugurated by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, in Bruges

\textsuperscript{267}Jung, “Beyond the Barrier,” 628.
\textsuperscript{268}References to three such examples are provided from the Archivo de la Catedral de León, Actas Capitulares of the 1460s and 1470s, but are not transcribed in Teijeira Pablos, \textit{El grupo leonés}, 27n19.
\textsuperscript{269}Raphaël de Smedt, \textit{Les Chevaliers de l’Ordre de la Toison d’or au XVe siècle} (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994), 15.
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on January 10, 1430,\textsuperscript{270} and held twenty-three chapter meetings in sixteen different towns between 1431 and 1559. Along with their official conclave and a banquet, each chapter meeting also included religious rites,\textsuperscript{271} which took place in the Order’s chapel,\textsuperscript{272} or in a church choir of the town where the meeting was held.\textsuperscript{273} As soon as the location of the next meeting of the chapter had been established, documents show that administrative officers of the Order began to plan how to outfit the spaces that they would use to ensure an appropriately splendid setting for their events; tapestries, church ornaments and reliquaries were commissioned or selected from the Order’s treasury to display in the choir.\textsuperscript{274} As well as using such portable objects to set the stage, more permanent markers of the Order’s meetings were also commissioned.\textsuperscript{275} It was their custom to have the choir stall dorsals painted with the coats of arms of current members of the Order to mark each one’s assigned position at the meeting.\textsuperscript{276} Furthermore, their statutes declared that these arms should remain in the choir in perpetuity; therefore, to avoid having to paint over the arms of earlier members when meetings were held in cities where the Order had previously convened, they chose a new location for their religious services, although

\textsuperscript{270} Paul Saintenoy, \textit{Les arts et les artistes à la cour de Bruxelles} (Brussels: M. Lamertin, 1934), 58.

\textsuperscript{271} The services primarily revolved around St. Andrew because originally the meetings began on the Vigil of St. Andrew’s Day. They were usually comprised of Vespers and Compline, a mass, the Office of the Dead, a Requiem Mass, a mass of Our Lady, and a Marian Office. William F. Prizer, “Brussels and the Ceremonies of the Order of the Golden Fleece,” \textit{Revue belge de Musicologie / Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Muziekwetenschap} 55 (2001): 71–72.

\textsuperscript{272} Saintenoy, \textit{Les arts et les artistes}, 67.

\textsuperscript{273} For a list of the churches where their services were held, see Prizer, “Order of the Golden Fleece,” 71.

\textsuperscript{274} Saintenoy, \textit{Les arts et les artistes}, 74–77.

\textsuperscript{275} Harold E. Wethey assumes that the renovation of the Barcelona choir stalls by Bartolomé Ordóñez and others was made in preparation for the meeting of the Order of the Golden Fleece. Harold E. Wethey, “The Early Works of Bartolomé Ordóñez and Diego de Siloe,” \textit{The Art Bulletin} 25.3 (Sept. 1943): 226. However, more recently discovered documentary evidence shows otherwise: the new stall ends were commissioned by the cathedral chapter, not the Order, and the canons officially selected Ordóñez to conduct this work on May 7, 1517. Baudes, “Bartolomé Ordóñez,” 126. This contract was therefore drawn up well before December 1518 when Charles V selected Barcelona as the venue for the next meeting of the Order. Baron de Reiffenberg, \textit{Histoire de l’Ordre de la Toison d’Or depuis son institution jusqu’à la cessation des chapitres généraux} (Brussels: Fonderie et Imprimerie Normales, 1830), 344.

\textsuperscript{276} Ros-Fabregas, “Charles V’s Visit to Barcelona,” 382. In cases where a member did not attend, he sent a representative to sit in his place, 384.
there were a few exceptions.\textsuperscript{277} Examples of panels with chivalric arms survive in the church of Sint-Bavo in Ghent from the seventh chapter meeting in 1445,\textsuperscript{278} on the stalls at Sint-Salvator, Bruges, which were painted for the Order’s thirteenth convocation in 1478,\textsuperscript{279} as well as on the dorsals of the cathedral of Santa Cruz y Santa Eulalia in Barcelona (Figure A.217),\textsuperscript{280} the site of the first, and last, meeting of the Order on Spanish soil. Charles V further appropriated the Barcelona choir stalls for the funeral of his grandfather, the Emperor Maximillian, who died while Charles was en route to the city for the Order’s meeting. During the obsequies held on March 1 and 2, 1519, Charles positioned himself on the episcopal throne while ambassadors, aristocrats and his retinue were seated in the choir stalls.\textsuperscript{281} Painted and gilded by Joan de Burgunya, a Burgundian artist who was resident in Barcelona, for a meeting that was only scheduled to last four days (March 5–8, 1519 (NS)),\textsuperscript{282} the set of fifty colourful arms, each surrounded by the collar of the Golden Fleece, four representations of emblems of the Order and eight related inscriptions continue to dominate the space almost 500 years later.\textsuperscript{283} The size and placement of the emblems and inscriptions ensures that they cannot have been overlooked by the canons who have used the stalls since 1519. For as long as the Order of the Golden Fleece remained an important force in Europe, the knights had guaranteed that canons throughout the Burgundian territories would be reminded daily of this secular group that was powerful enough to leave its mark within the sacred space of the liturgical choir.


\textsuperscript{278}Jeffrey Chipps Smith, “Venit nobis pacificus Dominus: Philip the Good’s Triumphal Entry into Ghent in 1458,” in \textit{All the World’s a Stage ...}: \textit{Art and Pageantry in the Renaissance and Baroque}, ed. Susan C. Scott and Barbara Wisch (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1990), 265.

\textsuperscript{279}Coomans, “Choir Stalls of Melrose Abbey”, 249.

\textsuperscript{280}For an itemized plan of the arms and inscriptions, see Ros-Fabregas, “Charles V’s Visit to Barcelona,” 383.

\textsuperscript{281}Ibid., 378.

\textsuperscript{282}Ibid., 382.

\textsuperscript{283}The paint was restored in the eighteenth century, and some supplementary decoration was added at that time. ibid., 390n34.
Local, less eminent secular groups also appropriated choir stalls for their own use in the early modern period. One example is the Bruderschaft Unserer Lieben Frau, which appears to have been the first confraternity established in Kalkar, in the Duchy of Cleves. This Marian brotherhood was founded in 1347, at the beginning of the town’s economic boom that lasted until the sixteenth century. In contrast to most confraternities whose membership was primarily made up of lay men, it had a high percentage of clerics among its original members. Like many confraternities, one way that it expressed its religiosity was through commissions of church furnishings: its assets were primarily used to purchase religious objects for the parish church, St. Nicolai, and at its apogee in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the brotherhood was the most important patron of the church’s furnishings. It was during this time that the members commissioned new choir stalls for St. Nicolai (see Figure A.76). Rather than being built to serve a clerical or monastic chapter, however, these stalls were intended to be used by the confraternity itself to perform its other principal activity: communal prayer. According to their founding charter, along with other regular, less frequent communal prayer obligations, members were required to assemble every Wednesday to participate in a mass in honour of their patron saint, Mary. Moreover,

287 Kistenich, Geschichte der Bruderschaften und Gilden, 31. It also included women and people from low socio-economic backgrounds, such as maids. Ibid. 97.
290 Kistenich, Geschichte der Bruderschaften und Gilden, 158.
all of the members who were clerics or trained singers gathered in the church’s choir stalls for the service,\textsuperscript{293} as if they were canons,\textsuperscript{294} although there is nothing to indicate that the establishment of a chapter was a goal of the confraternity. Thus, the two main functions of the confraternity were represented by this single commission.\textsuperscript{295} It is not known who designed the iconography of the stalls, and there are no specific references to the Marian brotherhood on the stalls, presumably because like most confraternities they would not have had an official seal or coat of arms.\textsuperscript{296} Moreover, the iconography does not appear to have a cohesive, overarching program that might symbolize the confraternity.\textsuperscript{297} However, the prominent Marian imagery on the stall ends in a church dedicated to Saints Nicholas and Agnes speaks of the brotherhood’s involvement: Mary appears three times (for example, Figures A.229 and A.339), while Nicholas and Agnes each appear only once (e.g., Figure A.295). The town’s patronage is made visible through the presence of its coat of arms borne by a herald who is depicted beneath the statue of Saint Nicholas on the northwest terminal stall,\textsuperscript{298} as well, perhaps, in the unusual, possibly unique, trompe l’oeil brocade-like pattern punched and painted on the upper dorsals (Figure A.340),\textsuperscript{299} which may refer to the importance of the wool weaving industry to Kalkar.\textsuperscript{300} Given that the height of both the town’s and the confraternity’s prosperity coincided,\textsuperscript{301} as did many of their distinguished members, the choir stalls seem to be a manifestation of the

\textsuperscript{293}Ibid., 151–152.

\textsuperscript{294}Kaldewei, “Kalkar als Stadt des Mittelalters”, 156.

\textsuperscript{295}Presumably, an earlier set had also been commissioned by the confraternity since choir stalls were not a normal part of a parish church’s furnishings. However, the only reference I have come across is with respect to the demolition of this set before the new one was installed. The confraternity also commissioned a jube at some point. Militizer, “Bruderschaften als Auftraggeber für Kunsthandwerker”, 35. A jube was also an unnecessary fixture in a parish church. Aside from its destruction date of 1818, not much seems to be known about it. Hilger, “Ausstattung der Stadtpfarrkirche St. Nicolai”, 117.

\textsuperscript{296}Militizer, “Bruderschaften als Auftraggeber für Kunsthandwerker”, 43.

\textsuperscript{297}However, a few statues as well as the original canopy are now missing. For a plan with an itemization of the iconography, see Werder, \textit{St. Nicolai – Kalkar}, 27.

\textsuperscript{298}Hilger, “Ausstattung der Stadtpfarrkirche St. Nicolai”, 228.

\textsuperscript{299}Charles, “Tentures de chœur,” 41.

\textsuperscript{300}Hilger, “Die Stadtpfarrkirche St. Nicolai”, 17. Actual choir tapestries would have been reserved for special feast days. Weigert, \textit{Weaving Sacred Stories}, 1.

\textsuperscript{301}Kistenich, \textit{Geschichte der Bruderschaften und Gilden}, 32–33.
civic pride felt by citizens of affluent towns in the early modern period.\textsuperscript{302} With the construction of the choir stalls, they elevated the status of their parish church, no doubt as part of their competition with rival towns, such as Xanten and Kleve, both of which had more significant churches and richer furnishings.\textsuperscript{303} At the same time, they elevated a considerable proportion of their members by appropriating the prestigious place and format of a set of choir stalls for their communal prayers. Thus, the choir stalls were used to shape their identity both as citizens of Kalkar and as members of its foremost confraternity.

Local governments

Although the pre-Reformation nave has long been characterized as an open, pewless space where the congregation was forced to stand during mass, as early as the fifth century, Augustine of Hippo recommended that the laity be allowed to sit during services as was the custom in certain overseas churches he had visited.\textsuperscript{304} While early lay seating in churches was scanty, often movable and primarily intended for the elderly or infirm, fixed seating appeared first in chantry and guild chapels, then in the nave by the thirteenth century,\textsuperscript{305} when the first official references to lay seating appear, most notably, a decree from the synod at Exeter in 1287 in which seating is henceforth restricted to nobles and patrons to prevent the unseemly behaviour of parishioners arguing over seats.\textsuperscript{306} Associated with a new emphasis on preaching and the delivery of sermons, some

\textsuperscript{302} Hilger, “Die Stadtpfar Kirche St. Nicolai”, 117.
\textsuperscript{303} Dehio, \textit{Handbuch der Deutschen Kunstdenkmäler}, 262.
\textsuperscript{304} St. Augustine does not specify which churches or where they were beyond this description. Signori, “Umstrittene Stühle,” 189.
\textsuperscript{305} Davies, \textit{Secular Use of Church Buildings}, 138.
of the oldest extant pews date to this period,\footnote{In contrast, few medieval pews survive in present-day Austria, Germany or Switzerland except in village churches. ibid., 201–202.} including the late thirteenth-century ones at Saint Mary and All Saints, Dunsfold, Surrey,\footnote{Draper, Architecture and Identity, 205.} and the coeval fixed pews in Clapton, North Somerset, England.\footnote{Cox and Harvey, English Church Furniture, 277.} By the end of the fifteenth century, the provision of church pews in the nave had become customary.\footnote{Signori, “Umstrittene Stühle,” 212.} Many city governments, particularly in the Low Countries,\footnote{Kuys, “Weltliche Funktionen spätmittelalterlicher Pfarrkirchen”, 39.} and the German-speaking lands, also had their own church seating by this time.\footnote{Reitemeier, Pfarrkirchen in der Stadt des späten Mittelalters, 268.} This seating might be located in the nave along with the pews or might be in a dedicated chapel, such as the seating in the Bürgermeisterkapelle in the Marienkirche in Lübeck, which was built in the mid-fifteenth century (Figure A.341). It is therefore not surprising that at this time, with lay seating in the church well established, some government officials decided that they would prefer a more privileged position for their seating: inside the choir.

The long-running conflict in Villefranche-de-Rouergue between the municipal government and the canons of the Church of Our Lady, both in and out of court, over the new choir for their dual purpose collegiate and parish church is one telling example of the significance that choir stalls might have for local governments in the early modern period.\footnote{For a detailed history of these stalls, see Etienne Cabrol, Annales de Villefranche de Rouergue (Paris: 1860. Reprint, Livre d’histoire, 2003), 431-497.} In April 1487, upon completion of the new choir, which was paid for by the chapter, members of the government (consuls) insisted that eight of the seventy choir stalls be removed.\footnote{Ibid., 466–467.} They claimed that the set was too large for the church and that the stalls completely concealed the two lateral chapels in the transept where the consuls had their special seats.\footnote{Lafon, Stalles de Villefranche-de-Rouergue, 8.} That August, in an aggressive attempt to force the canons to respond to these demands, the government locked the sacristy shortly before an important
Assumption celebration, depriving the canons of all the necessary liturgical objects and vestments. Next, the consuls had the deacon and sub-deacon removed from the church, positioning armed officers at the pulpit to prevent the morning sermon by renowned theologian, Amans de Valle, whom the chapter had invited to speak. In the afternoon, the government members urged the townspeople to return to the church to hear their own preacher speak out against the chapter.\textsuperscript{316} Despite such forceful measures, it took another four years to finally reach a compromise through the deliberations of the town council. In the end, the council achieved what was perhaps the underlying goal of certain members all along:\textsuperscript{317} not only were four seats removed from each side of the choir, but eight of the seats in the choir were henceforth reserved for the most prestigious lay officials in the town: the chief judge (juge mage), treasurer (Tresorier), royal lawyer (Avocat royal), Procureur du Roi (crown prosecutor) and the four main magistrates (consuls) of the town.\textsuperscript{318} Clearly, this conflict involved a power struggle between the government, who saw themselves as patrons of the parish church, and the canons, who felt that it was within their rights to refurbish the collegiate church as they saw fit. The provision of permanent seats for certain members of the town government within the choir confirmed the power of local secular authorities within the church every time they took their place alongside the college canons.

Finally, there is the puzzling construction of a magnificent set of eighty-nine choir stalls at the parish church in Ulm (Figure A.168). Little is known about why they were built or how they were used. While some researchers have speculated that they may have been intended for communal clerical celebrations by the large number of clergy who were responsible for the more than fifty altarpieces in the church, there is no corroboration for such a hypothesis,\textsuperscript{319} nor is there any evidence that these clerics sought to form a

\textsuperscript{316}Cabrol, \textit{Villefranche de Rouergue}, 467–468.
\textsuperscript{317}Kraus and Kraus, \textit{Hidden World of Misericords}, 131.
\textsuperscript{318}Lafon, \textit{Stalles de Villefranche-de-Rouergue}, 8.
\textsuperscript{319}Gropp, \textit{Das Ulmer Chorgestühl}, 24.
collegiate chapter. Rather, in the most recent research on the Ulm stalls, David Gropp concludes that it is more plausible that the stalls were specifically built to be used by the city government. First, a polychromed city coat of arms appears prominently on the central dorsal on each side of the stalls as well as on the honorary seating, thus visually proclaiming the government’s involvement. Second, the patronal signatories of the contract were church administrators who were appointed by the city council. Third, the complex iconographical program was almost certainly designed by leading members of the early humanist movement in Ulm, many of whom were also involved in the city government, such as the mayor, Hans Neithart der Jüngere and the city doctor, Heinrich Steinhöwel. While the inclusion of sibyls and pagan philosophers in large typological programs had precedents in medieval Christian works, such as the thirteenth-century frescoes at Limburg Cathedral, the choice of quotations that represent antique rather than Christian ethics, such as Seneca’s (apocryphal) pronouncement that death cuts off all fears, points to the supervision of a humanist rather than a religious scholar. Furthermore, this iconography is an important component in the city’s self-definition: the complex program reflects the scholarly interests of early German humanism, of which the Ulm school was a widely-known and respected representative. The ninety-nine figural sculptures divided by gender on the north (male) and south (female) sides of the choir, and arranged in a vertical hierarchy from pagan savants through Old Testament heroes to Christian saints, form a remarkable display of understanding of both Christian and pre-Christian knowledge and thought. Moreover, the program is linked thematically,

320Ibid., 25.
321Weilandt, “Der wiedergefundene Vertrag,” 438. For a transcription of the choir stall contract, see Baum, Die Ulmer Plastik, 52.
323Vöge, Jörg Syrlin der Ältere, 21.
324“Ceteri timores habent aliquem post se locum, mors autem omnia abscondit.” ibid., 29.
325Ibid., 40.
327Wortmann, Das Ulmer Münster, 64.
as well as through patronage and design, to the earlier honorary seat (Figure A.156) and the later altarpiece to form a Gesamtkunstwerk within the choir. Fourth, it seems likely that by constructing costly, but unnecessary, choir stalls, the municipal government wanted to reinforce its presence within Ulm’s parish church, which it had taken control of in the 1380s as an assertion of its power as a city. It is clear from reading Felix Faber’s description of Ulm Minster in the treatise that the Dominican wrote about his adopted city of Ulm in 1488 that this church was a great source of civic pride: “...it is ...but a simple parish church, yet larger than many episcopal churches and more majestic than most cathedrals.” Finally, Ulm was a dominant city at the time the stalls were built. It had gained all the rights of an Imperial city by 1376, and had achieved complete independence in 1446. Its economy flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, making it one of the largest cities in the Holy Roman Empire. However, Ulm was not a cathedral city, and the construction of a large, elaborate set of choir stalls may well have reflected Ulm’s rivalry with the nearby city of Constance, whose see Ulm was in, and whose cathedral had recently been furnished with a new (smaller) set of stalls.

How might the Ulm government have used these stalls? Certainly, the practice of holding town council meetings in churches was not unusual in this period, and in the

328 The altarpiece was destroyed during the iconoclastic riots in 1531. Weilandt, “Der wiedergefundene Vertrag,” 437.
329 Ibid., 456.
330 Gropp, Das Ulmer Chorgestühl, 25.
331 Unfortunately, Faber does not mention the choir stalls, which had been completed fourteen years earlier.
332 “...quod est...sed tantum simplex parochialis, major multis episcopalibus, et plerisque patriarchalibus solemnior.” Felix Faber, Fratris Felicis Fabri Tractatus de civitate Ulmensi ed. Gustav Veesenmeyer (Tübingen, Germany: Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 1889), 39. Translated in Stechow, Northern Renaissance Art, 78–79.
335 Gropp, Das Ulmer Chorgestühl, 25.
absence of separate government seating, there is evidence that cathedral choir stalls were occasionally used by civic authorities to hold administrative meetings, as occurred in León in the late fifteenth century.\(^{337}\) If the choirstalls in Constance or other influential neighbouring cities were similarly being put into service by the local government, there might have been added incentive for Ulm’s city council to construct its own set. Given Ulm’s large, well-appointed and nearby Rathaus, however, there was no reason to use the stalls to conduct regular government business.\(^{338}\) The stalls could have been built as seating for government members during regular services, but in most churches, such seating was located in the nave or a side chapel. The significant site of the Ulm seats in the sanctuary makes it unlikely that they were used routinely as pews for the councillors. There is evidence, however, that the Ulm government and other important city representatives used the choir in this period during important processions and masses.\(^{339}\) Gropp, therefore, conjectures that the stalls were employed by the city council in a ceremonial fashion: before important sittings, members would assemble in the stalls for a religious service followed by a formal procession to the adjacent city hall,\(^{340}\) whereby the parish church would become an extension of the city hall, a common relationship in the late medieval period.\(^{341}\)

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\(^{337}\)References to two examples from the 1460s and 1470s from the Archivo de la Catedral de León, Actas Capitulares are given, but are not transcribed in Teijeira Pablos, *El grupo leonés*, 27n20.

\(^{338}\)In his treatise of 1488 on Ulm, Felix Faber described this building as, “...excellent and beautiful, with a golden clock tower on each side and many chambers...” Translation mine. “Domus Consulum egregia est et decora, habens campanile deauratum undique et multa habitacula...” Faber, *Tractatus de civitate Ulmensi*, 52.

\(^{339}\)For example, “...daß der Rat meine, es wäre ein löslich Werk, wenn die Zunftmeister Sorge träfen, daß auch jede Zunft ihre Kerzen wie des Rats Kerzen bei der Prozession und bei der Messe in der Ablaßwochen zu den sieben Zeiten brennen lasse. Mit unserer l. Fr. Kirchenpfleger habe der Rat bereits geschafft, daß im Chor auch Blöcke gemacht werden, um die Kerzen der Zünfte zierlich nach der Ordnung darauf zu stecken.” Undated entry beside entry 255, October 18, 1474 from Ulm Stadtarchiv, transcribed in *Urkunden zur Geschichte der Pfarrkirche in Ulm aus Anlass des Münsterfestes*, ed. Hugo Bazing and Gustav Veesenmeyer (Ulm: L. Frey, 1890), 115.

\(^{340}\)Gropp, *Das Ulmer Chorgestühl*, 25.

\(^{341}\)Kuys, “Weltliche Funktionen spätmittelalterlicher Pfarrkirchen”, 44.
No matter how they were used, however, when innovative artistic techniques, such as the openwork vegetal carving (e.g., Figure A.342) and one of the earliest uses of intarsia north of the Alps (e.g., Figure A.343) are also considered, there is no doubt that contemporary visitors must have been impressed by these elaborate choir stalls, their talented constructors, and most importantly, their learned lay patrons and users, who had appropriated a space associated with sacral power to add prestige to themselves, their office and the impressive imperial city that they represented.

342 Gropp, *Das Ulmer Chorgestühl*, 168.
343 The intarsia on the Ulm stalls would have originally appeared much more striking than it does now due to the later application of a dark coating that dulls the colour contrasts. Syrlin used intarsia as early as 1458 on a lectern he made in Ottenbach. Gropp speculates that Syrlin learned the technique in South Tyrol, perhaps under Hans Multscher, who made an altarpiece for the parish church in Sterzing in the 1450s. ibid., 35–36. For more about the use of intarsia, including its extensive use on choir stalls on the Italian Peninsula in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Donati and Genovese, *Forme del legno. Intagli e tarsie fra Gotico e Rinascimento*; Trevisan, *Renaissance Intarsia: Masterpieces of Wood Inlay*
Chapter 6

Conclusion

Since the nineteenth century, most of the extant choir stall busts from the Fugger Chapel in Augsburg have been part of the city of Berlin’s sculpture collection, now housed at the Bode-Museum (Figure A.2).\(^1\) Originally made for a chapel that is said to display the earliest reception of the Italian Renaissance in the German-speaking lands, a chapel that was commissioned by important members of the newly wealthy and powerful merchant class, and may have even been designed by Albrecht Dürer,\(^2\) in many ways these busts epitomize art historical and collecting interests in sixteenth-century Northern European art. But this is an old, familiar story. Most fifteenth- and sixteenth-century choir stalls have a different story to tell, and it is time for these stories to enrich our understanding of the early modern period.

A set of choir stalls was a crucial component of the choir in most churches before the Reformation, and in the heavily-frequented venue of the church, choir stalls were seen by many eyes beyond their users. While barriers to the choir could be real, depending on the type of church and depending on the occasion, both visual and physical access to the choir, and therefore to the choir stalls, was possible not only to clerics, but also to

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\(^1\) Aside from the busts, the stalls were deliberately destroyed in the nineteenth century. The twelve other busts in the Berlin collection were lost during the Second World War. The sixteenth bust has been at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston since 1949.

\(^2\) Bushart, *Die Fuggerkapelle*, 366.
many lay people in many churches at many times.\(^3\) Sometimes sovereign lay nobles, such as the King of England (Figure A.344)\(^4\) and the Count of Armagnac (Figure A.333)\(^5\) were made honorary canons of one or more cathedrals, and were therefore entitled to a stall in the church’s choir.\(^6\) By the sixteenth century, as we have seen, the privilege of occupying a choir stall, whether regularly or on occasion, was even more widespread (e.g., Figure A.345). As a significant part of the artistic production during the medieval and early modern periods, choir stalls themselves and the documents relevant to their production broaden our knowledge of patronage and artistic practice. As large structures with multiple parts, they allowed varying and potentially interacting visual programs to be displayed in diverse ways. As important objects that helped define the sacred space of the choir, their form and iconography tell us about the values, beliefs and aspirations of the patrons who commissioned them and the communities who used them. Dismissed as furniture made by anonymous workshops or appreciated only for a relatively small group of earth\[l\]y misericords, choir stalls have remained on the periphery of art historical research. In my study of a range of choir stalls, I have examined their contribution to some of the topics that are relevant to art history in order to reinstate them as significant objects in our understanding of the arts of the early modern period.

Marginalia has been a topic of interest to art historians for some time. In particular, Meyer Schapiro’s famous essay “On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art” drew attention in the 1940s to marginal Romanesque stone sculpture, while in the 1960s, Lillian Randall’s comprehensive study *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* highlighted book marginalia of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In 1992, Michael Camille’s influential book *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* examined a range

\(^3\) Jung, “Beyond the Barrier,” 627.

\(^4\) In the previous mid-fourteenth-century set, there had also been a choir stall for the king; the queen had been provided with a pew in the choir. Tracy, *English Gothic Choir-Stalls, 1200–1400*, 56.


\(^6\) For a list of some of the other emperors, monarchs, princes, dukes and counts who received this honour, see Walcott, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Art and Institutions*, 105–106.
of marginal imagery, including misericords, but such a broad approach remains rare. Partly due to periodization, partly due to partitioning according to medium, the rich array of marginal imagery carved on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century choir stall armrests, canopies, dorsals and even misericords (e.g., Figure A.306) remains largely outside of wider discussions. Considering that most early modern woodworkers who made choir stalls would have been familiar with Romanesque stone sculpture, and that by the fifteenth century a variety of prints displaying images that have come to be seen as typical marginal imagery, such as playing cards, were in general circulation, a more comprehensive analysis of medieval and early modern marginalia is needed. Such an approach would also address the problem of over-interpretation since the examination of an image within a wider chronology and in varying contexts requires a more nuanced explication. Studies of sets such as those at Amiens Cathedral or the Augustinian abbey church in Leuven (e.g., Figure A.182), both of which present a programmatic use of misericords, demonstrate that marginal spaces on choir stalls were used in a variety of ways and help challenge the stereotypes that have been propagated for so long by many publications. While this dissertation, among other studies, has shown that our understanding of misericords has been too narrowly focused, the re-evaluation of misericords remains an ongoing project.

As a form of microarchitecture that creates a “church within a church,” the spatial properties of choir stalls fall in to another area of art historical interest. While the shells of many pre-Reformation choirs survive, such a large number of their furnishings have been lost or reconfigured that it is difficult to recover how the space of the choir influenced and reinforced the way in which the choir and its furnishings were used. At the Augustinian abbey church of Sint-Geertrui in Leuven, for example, the stalls have been moved closer to the altar, their original canopy and return stalls are gone, as are the jube, the high altarpiece and any textiles that were originally present (Figure A.14). By examining a range of choir stall sets, I have been able to analyze performative aspects
of choir stall design more generally. I have shown how the form sustained not only the activities that took place daily in the choir during the early modern period, but also how the creation of the enclosed space assisted in warding off distraction, while the rich visual fields may have been beneficial in alleviating boredom and refocusing wandering minds (e.g., Figure A.74). At the same time, the design promoted institutional ideals. Enclosure and facing rows helped augment the sense of community among the participants. The strict seating plan along with traditional indicators of rank, such as seat height, reinforced church hierarchy. And the panopticon-like space allowed close scrutiny of all members, particularly by abbots, deans and bishops, whose privileged seats in the upper rows of the return stalls or the eastern ends provided the best vantage points in the choir (e.g., Figure A.1), as a witness at the Bishop of Rodez’s lawsuit against the monks of Conques emphasized.\footnote{Item et dudit lieu et siege en fores l’on veoit tous les autres sieges et estalles dud. queur afin que led. abbe ou autre pour luy que y sont assiz puissent myeulx voir les religieux et leurs seremonies pour les myeulx drecer et corriger Transcribed from the Archives Départementales de l’Aveyron, G 420-14, fol. 18v. in Bournot-Didier, “Les stalles de Conques”, 160n4.} Examining the design of the individual stall using two twentieth-century ideas, \textit{habitus} and \textit{affordance}, allowed a better understanding of and appreciation for the traditional stall. The balance between constraint and support for the performing body is borne out not only in the enduring form, but also by contemporary documents that highlight the need for proper proportions to allow the body to repeat the required postures automatically and with ease over a lifetime in the choir (e.g., Figure A.346). Finally, the association of the choir stalls with heaven was crucial in helping to mark them as a significant site in the church. Height was an important factor. Within the enclosure of the church, the tall, often delicate, structure of the choir stall canopy seems to approach heaven. Choir stall designers also capitalized on the long textual association between angels and the divine office, and therefore angels abound on many sets, particularly in the higher reaches of the canopy. And the intricate carving on many stall ends and canopies resembles the fine metalwork that had come to be identified with the Heavenly
Jerusalem (e.g., Figure A.255). Such strategies were used to reinforce the prestige of choir stalls and their users.

The practice of constructing choir stalls was examined next. With reference to a wide range of published primary documents, a picture emerged of the complex and expensive process of creating choir stalls, as well as a better understanding of the people involved. While contracts are notoriously laconic, some contain a great deal of detail, giving insight into the expertise of certain patrons, as well as hinting at problems they might have encountered in previous commissions. We saw that while some projects had significant cost and time overruns due to poorly defined outcomes or unexpected circumstances, well-prepared patrons, such as the Rich Clares in Gentbrugge, left no potential problem unforeseen. The nuns furnished a drawn model, specified the quality of the wood, gave precise measurements, and even planned for the possibility that illness or death might strike their contractee. Contracts also clarify who made choir stalls. While wooden choir stalls could potentially be made by any type of woodworker, in the majority of cases, contracts were signed with joiners. Carvers were also hired to oversee choir stall projects, particularly in England and Spain. In a few cases, specialized piecework was contracted out of town, then transported to the site to be integrated into the choir stalls. The tensions that could arise among the woodworking trades who were vying for such commissions is seen in various guild rules, agreements and lawsuits that came about to settle conflicts regarding jurisdiction. Account books often provide information about material aspects: what kind of wood was used, where it came from, and even how it was prepared. Along with contracts, accounts also enumerate the costs involved in the creation of choir stalls, revealing a broad picture of the process: travel expenses, materials, wages, lodging, provisions, bonuses. Unfortunately, no known drawings survive from Northern European choir stall contracts, but references to drawings are common in choir stall commissions. In some cases, an extant set of stalls was used as a model, and a drawing might be made of it. In other cases, a novel design drawing was commissioned. Sometimes the design was
made by a better known artist while the stalls were constructed by local woodworkers. At Freising Cathedral, the Augsburg joiner, Ulrich Glurer, created the model drawing, but the stalls were built by Master Bernhard, a local joiner. Documents about sample stalls show another way that designs could be presented. Unlike commissions for architecture and other forms of microarchitecture, full-sized models were made for choir stalls, since sample stalls could easily be incorporated into the final set. Surprisingly, iconography is rarely mentioned in choir stall contracts, and when it is, it is rarely specific and is more likely to suggest themes for marginal rather than central imagery. Finally, documents give information about the careers of woodworkers. Some, like André Sulpice, specialized in building wooden choir stalls for religious communities; others, like Jörg Syrlin the Elder, worked on many different types of objects using a variety of materials for both corporate and independent patrons. In sum, while many of the practices seen in choir stall construction are also common in other contexts of artistic production, such as altarpieces, a few practices appear to be unique. In both cases, the documents on choir stalls provide further insight into artistic practices in this period.

In the final chapter, I explored issues around patronage, status and identity. As costly objects located in a privileged space, choir stalls were highly desirable and had become accessible to a greater range of stakeholders in the early modern period, all of whom used them for self-promotion. Obvious devices, such as coats of arms, were often displayed on choir stalls. Religious iconography was also frequently used to express the identity and status of the patron or community. Images of local saints and saints that they particularly venerated helped religious communities establish their unique identity, while the depiction of the Double Credo, so commonly shown on choir stalls, was used to assert their importance as followers in the apostolic tradition. Programs such as the catalogue of bishops at Freising Cathedral (Figure A.204) also insisted on the significance of the community due to its position within a larger historical narrative. Occasionally, the identity of the community was suppressed in favour of the patron. At the Augustinian
abbey in Brou, there is nothing on the choir stall set that hints at who its users might be, but references to Margaret of Austria, and her marital and dynastic relationships abound (e.g., Figure A.323). Some choir stalls became sites that registered conflict during a period marked by many power struggles within the church, as well as between the church and increasingly powerful secular rulers. The set built at the monastery of Saint-Oyend and Saint-Claude during a campaign of reform reflects one of the main concerns of its reformers: the proper performance of the office. Alongside figures of the Double Credo, monastics are displayed as models for the initially resistant, but subsequently acquiescent Benedictine monks (Figure A.325). At Zamora Cathedral, the significance of a commonly-depicted Old Testament story became intentionally admonitory through the strategic positioning of the main figures. The Catholic Monarchs were intervening in many ecclesiastical affairs at this time, and the bishop of Zamora, Diego Meléndez Valdés, had been one of their casualties. On the choir stalls he commissioned, the monarchs’ stalls are topped with chastened figures of Adam and Eve, while the angel on the pinnacle of the bishop’s stall expels them from paradise (Figure A.236). In some cases, choir stalls were constructed as part of an attempt to elevate the status of a church, and thereby of its patrons and clergy. Count Antoine de la Laing swiftly accomplished this goal in Hoogstraten, while the clergy in Fribourg had to wait decades, despite their best efforts. In other cases, the canvas of the choir stalls was taken over to promote a secular political agenda, which shows how significant choir stalls were as sites of promotion that reached well beyond the choir. The most famous example is the set of fifty-four carvings on the dorsals of the lower stalls at Toledo Cathedral that commemorate the Granada War. Commissioned by its bishop, Cardinal Pedro González de Mendoza, who was an active participant in the Reconquista, a close examination of the iconography revealed that his agenda was not simply the celebration of this “Christian crusade,” but also the buttressing of the Aragonese Ferdinand’s weak position in Castile (e.g., Figure A.347). Choir stalls even came to be used by secular groups in this period. While some nobles
had been granted a stall in the choir from at least the eleventh century, it was only in this later period that groups such as confraternities attained this privilege. In some cases, these groups were allowed to use choir stalls for non-traditional purposes. In the unusual example at Ulm Minster, the choir stalls appear to have been built for non-traditional purposes. As a prestigious object in a privileged site, the early modern choir stall was used by both patrons and users, secular and religious to proclaim their identity, augment their status and even appropriate choir stalls to new ends.

**Future work**

Much work remains to be done on choir stalls. Widening the discussion geographically and chronologically will provide more insight into the ways that choir stalls could be adapted to meet different needs at different times in different places. Similarly, studies of stalls built for female communities or for particular orders might reveal specific institutional approaches to patronage, form, iconography and use. And while recent monographs have been written on the best known sets of choir stalls, such as those in Amiens and Ulm, other sets have been largely neglected. The last study of the Freising Cathedral set, with its catalogue of bishops and inventive non-figural panels, was in the 1960s, while virtually nothing has been published on the choir stalls at the Dominican convent in Ávila despite its close associations with Torquemada and the Catholic Monarchs.

More broadly, choir stalls speak to larger topics that are of interest to art historians. As forms of microarchitecture, how were choir stalls influenced by larger architectural models? As smaller structures that could be built much more quickly with fewer structural concerns, how might they in turn have influenced architecture, as François Bucher’s essay “Micro-Architecture as the ‘Idea’ of Gothic Theory and Style” proposes? Materiality is another current topic, particularly as scientific tools become more widely available. Further technical examinations, such as dendrochronological, will not only reveal more about the materials used to make choir stalls, but also where these materials
came from, how they were prepared, and how similar these practices were in the construction of other wooden microarchitecture, such as altarpieces. Technical examinations of the polychromy would be similarly revealing. Networks of artisans and patrons, and how these networks developed over time in response to changing political and economic conditions is a topic that is only touched upon in this thesis, but the careers of people like Rodrigo Alemán and examples like Jan Gossaert’s choir stall design for Utrecht Cathedral point to the importance of networks for many choir stall commissions. Related to networks is the diffusion of imagery; while paper models travelled easily, woodworkers too were involved in their transmission, and were even more crucial to diffusion prior to the fifteenth century. The five senses is another relevant topic that is currently being explored by art historians. While there have been some recent studies of the auditory aspects of choir stalls, more work on this subject, as well as a more integrative approach about how the rituals performed in choir stalls engaged all five senses of participants would be a valuable addition to this area of study.

Finally, the new methodological approach I used to examine the design of choir stalls may be a useful tool in examining other types of microarchitecture. Jubes, pulpits and sedilia, even fonts, sacrament houses and winged altarpieces, had to support the postures and actions of ritual performances that were repeated throughout a lifetime. How might habitus have been shaped by certain aspects of the designs? What constraints might have restricted their use? What affordances might have ensured proper performance?

The study of choir stalls takes time and imagination. Choir stalls are large, complex structures that are rarely physically intact and have lost so much of their ritual and sensory accompaniment. As objects that were built for people who used them daily for hours at a time, choir stalls can be apprehended only generally in a single view or from a single viewpoint. They were intended to be viewed again and again from multiple viewpoints: sometimes moving, sometimes stationary, alternately standing, sitting, kneeling, prostrate. Functional and decorative, repetitive and unique, distant and im-
mediate, they may leave uninitiated modern viewers perplexed by their impenetrability or overwhelmed by all they have to offer. They warrant closer looking and they warrant further investigation. They have much to add to the art historical conversation.
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Figures

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are mine.

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Appendix B

Choir Stalls Discussed

This appendix contains a list of the choir stalls that are discussed in this dissertation, whether briefly or in some detail. It is by no means an exhaustive list of northern European choir stalls made in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: this was a period when a great number of choir stalls were constructed. The sets are arranged in alphabetical order by country (as it is known now), then by town or city. If the church has a different designation than it did at the time that the stalls were built, it is noted. Some sets are from outside the time period or the geographic area that are the focus of the thesis; they were included in the dissertation discussion because of relevant documents or research that helped shed light on certain aspects of choir stalls. Some of the choir stalls are no longer extant, some are no longer in situ; where known, the date of destruction or a new location is provided. I have been unable to find a reference to the type of wood used to make the majority of the English choir stalls listed below. However, general discussions about English woodwork, and in particular choir stalls, suggest that they were all made out of oak.1 Many choir stalls had partial polychromy, little of which survives. According to Charles Tracy, the superstructure of English choir stalls was always poly-

Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

chromed, but most of these sets were stripped during the nineteenth century.² Where
known, I have indicated original polychromy as well as the date of any paint that was
added during the fifteenth or sixteenth century. If it is known that there were originally
more stalls, but it is not known how many, I have signalled this with the word “extant.”
Note that the cost given would almost certainly have included additional non-monetary
compensation, such as wine or lodging, and that occasionally non-monetary donations,
such as wood, were made by patrons (see chapter Choir Practice for more details). The
value of these additional elements is difficult to assess unless the cost was recorded at
the time, in which case it is included in the cost given below. Some of the details about
the sets vary in the literature (e.g., original number of stalls, dates of construction); I
have included the most reliable data that I could find at the time of writing. For further
information, one or two short form references are listed for each set, but for most sets,
additional references can be found in the bibliography.

²Tracy, English Gothic Choir-Stalls, 1200–1400, 44.
Austria

Vienna
Domkirche St. Stephan
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1476–1488: destroyed 1945
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Wilhelm Rollinger?
Material: oak, limewood
Number of stalls: 84
Cost:
References: Keil-Budischowsky 1986

Belgium

Aarschot (Brabant)
Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: ca. 1515: dorsals, canopy now at St. Andrew, Gatton, Surrey, England
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Jan Borchmans
Material: oak, painted background on canopy
Number of stalls: 45 (at least 53 originally)
References: Cumps 1978, Theunissen et al. 2011

Averbode
Abdij Averbode
Church type: Premonstratensian
Constructed: 1511–1513, 1517: removed 1664
(Norbertine) male abbey
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Jan Borchmans
Material: wood
Number of stalls:
Cost: 402 Rhenish florins
References: Fransolet 1930, Steppe and Van Molle 1950

Bruges (Flanders)
Sint-Salvatorskathedraal
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: ca. 1430
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood; dorsals painted 1478
Number of stalls: 48
Cost:
References: Coomans 2004

Gentbrugge (Flanders)
Sint-Klara
Church type: Rich Clares' (Urbanist Sisters) convent
Constructed: begun 1506: destroyed 1566
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Gillis van Dickele
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 52
Cost: 65 Flemish ponds (includes cost of jube)
References: Busscher 1866
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

**Ghent** (Flanders)
Sint-Janskerk (now Sint-Baafskathedraal)
Church type: parish
Constructed: by 1445
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood; painted 1445 either on existing stall dorsals or on separate panels (incorporated into later stalls)
Number of stalls: 36 out of 52 panels with coats of arms from 1445 survive
Cost:
References: Dhanens 1965

**Hoogstraten**
Sint-Katharinakerk
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: ca. 1532–1548
Patron(s): Antoine de Lalaing, townspeople
Maker(s): Albrecht Gelmers
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 56 (now 54)
Cost:
References: de Ceulaer 1988, Bangs 1997

**Leuven** (Brabant)
Sint-Geertruikerk
Church type: Augustinian abbey (now parish)
Constructed: ca. 1540–1542
Patron(s): Abbot Pieter Was
Maker(s): Mathys De Wayere
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 52
Cost:
References: Van Even 1875, Smeyers and Buyle 1991

**Tongerlo** (Flanders)
Abdij Tongerlo
Church type: Premonstratensian (Norbertine) male abbey
Constructed: 1529–1530: destroyed during French Revolution
Patron(s): Abbot Antoine Tsgrooten
Maker(s): Mathys De Wayere & Chrétien Sweluwen
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 90?
Cost: 1000–1050 gold Rhenish florins
References: Heylen 1837 (1790), Steppe and Van Molle 1950

**Tournai/Doornik** (France)
Notre Dame
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: ca. 1400 (damaged 1566 and French Revolution)
Patron(s): grand vicar Nicolas Raimond?
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Pycke 2004

**Veurne/Furnes** (Flanders)
Sint-Niklaaskerk
Church type: Premonstratensian (Norbertine) abbey
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

Construct: begun 1519?
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Steppe et al. 1973

England

Beverley (Yorkshire)
Saint Mary
Church type: parish
Constructed: ca. 1445
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 28
Cost:
References: Tracy 1990, Hardwick 2003

Boston (Lincolnshire)
Saint Botolph
Church type: parish (priests from guild chapels performed offices together)
Constructed: late fourteenth century
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 64
Cost:
References: Cox and Harvey 1907, Harrison 2009

Coventry
Cathedral of Saint Michael
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: late fifteenth century: destroyed 1940
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 17 extant in 1927
Cost:
References: Harris 1927, Remnant 1969

Coventry
Saint John’s Hospital Chapel
Church type: chapel
Constructed: last quarter of fourteenth century
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: at least 10
Cost:
References: Tracy 1997

Coventry
Whitefriars Church
Church type: Carmelite friary
Constructed: mid-1380s: parts now in Saint John’s Hospital, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Holy Trinity Church
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: probably 52 originally
Cost:
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

References: Tracy 1997

Durham
Durham Cathedral?
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: thirteenth century:
now in Durham Light Infantry
chapel in cathedral
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 2 extant
Cost:
References: Tracy 1993

Eton (Berkshire)
Eton College Chapel
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: begun 1475: replaced 1840s
Patron(s): Bishop of Winchester
Maker(s): Walter Nicholl
Material: oak
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Willis 1988

Halsall (Lancashire)
Saint Cuthbert
Church type: parish
Constructed: end of fifteenth century
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: six seats extant
Cost:

References: Tracy 1990

Higham Ferrers (Northamptonshire)
Saint Mary
Church type: parish
(stalls used by chantry college)
Constructed: ca. 1422
Patron(s): Henry Chichele,
Archbishop of Canterbury
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 20
Cost:
References: Remnant 1969

Lincoln (Lincolnshire)
Lincoln Minster
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1363–1372
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 62
Cost:
References: Tracy 1987, Allen 2008

London
Austin Friars
Church type: Augustinian friary
Constructed: destroyed 1862
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls:
Cost:
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

References: Tracy 1997

**Manchester**
St. Mary, St. Denys and St. George
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: 1506
Patron(s): Richard Beswick, Bishop James Stanley (warden)
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 30
Cost:
References: Hudson 1924, Tracy 1990

**Salisbury**
Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary (now Salisbury Cathedral)
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: ca. 1245
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 106
Cost:
References: Tracy 1987

**Salle** (Norfolk)
Saint Peter and Saint Paul
Church type: parish
(stalls used by chantry priests)
Constructed: fifteenth century
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 26
Cost:
References: Remnant 1969

**Tong** (Shropshire)
Saint Mary with Saint Bartholomew
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: ca. 1480
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 16
Cost:
References: Remnant 1969, Tracy 1990

**Winchester** (Hampshire)
Winchester Cathedral
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: ca. 1305
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood, gilding
Number of stalls: 68
Cost:
References: Remnant 1969, Tracy 2009

**Windsor**
Saint George’s Chapel
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: 1478–1483
Patron(s): King Edward IV
Maker(s): William Berkeley and others
Material: oak, some walnut
Number of stalls: 90 originally?
Cost:
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

References: Hope 1913, Tracy 1990

Worcester
Worcester Cathedral
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1379
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 39 extant
Cost:
References: Cox 1959

France

Albi
Cathédrale Sainte-Cécile
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: ca. 1490
Patron(s): Louis Ier d’Amboise
Maker(s):
Material: oak, limestone,
partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 120
Cost:
References: Chabbert 1996, Biget 1997

Amiens
Cathédrale de Notre-Dame
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: ca. 1508–ca. 1522
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Antoine Avernier, Arnould Boulin, Alexandre Huet and others
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 118 or 120 (now 110)
Cost: 9488 livres
References: Tracy and Harrison 2004,
Lemé-Hébuterne 2007

Amiens
Chapelle Saint-Jacques
Church type: funerary chapel
Constructed: 1553–1556: destroyed
Patron(s): confraternity, city,
citizens of Amiens
Maker(s): Estienne Couvrechef
(designer), Philippe de Mortreux
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 24
Cost: 384 livres
References: Durand 1927

Angers (Anjou)
Hôtel-Dieu Saint-Jean
Church type:
Constructed: begun 1426: now destroyed
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Conradin Chappelle
Material:
Number of stalls: 36
Cost:
References: Port 1868, Lemarie 2000

Auch (Armagnac)
Cathédrale Sainte-Marie
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: ca. 1515–1554
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Dominique Bertin (1552–1554)
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 113
Cost:
References: Villotte 1930,
Martin-Cortés 2001

**Brou** (Savoy)
Saint-Nicolas de Tolentino
Church type: Augustinian abbey
Constructed: 1530-1532
Patron(s): Margaret of Austria
Maker(s): Pierre Berchod, aka Terrasson
Material: walnut
Number of stalls: 74
Cost:
References: Poiret 1994, Woudenberg 2009

**Conques** (Rodez)
Sainte-Foy Abbé
Church type: dual purpose:
Benedictine abbey, parish
Constructed: early sixteenth century:
removed in 1970s
Patron(s): Abbot Antoine de Marcenac
Maker(s):
Material: walnut
Number of stalls: 
Cost:
References: Bournot-Didier 1996

**Gaillon** (Normandy)
Chapelle du Château de Gaillon
Church type: private chapel
Constructed: 1508–1518:
now at Saint-Denis Cathedral, Paris;
parts at Musée de la Renaissance, Ecouen
Patron(s): Archbishop Georges d’Amboise
Maker(s): Richart Carpe, Richart de la Place, Pierre Cornedieu, Colin Castille
Material: oak, other woods (intarsia)
Number of stalls: 14? (now 12)
Cost:
References: Deville 1850,
Bos and Dubois 2007

**Gassicourt**
Eglise Sainte-Anne
Church type: Cistercian abbey
Constructed: late fifteenth to early sixteenth century
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 32
Cost:
References: Bethmont-Gallerand 2003

**Le Vigan**
Notre-Dame de l’Assomption
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: 1488: destroyed French Revolution
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Jean Moynié
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 31
Cost:
References: Freigang 1989
Mirepoix
Cathédrale de Saint-Maurice
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: beginning of sixteenth century: destroyed 1794
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Augé et al. 2000

Rodez
Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Rodez
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1478–1490
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): André Sulpice
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 110 extant
Cost:
References: Villotte 1930, Rivals 1996

Rouen
Notre-Dame de l’Assomption
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1457–1469
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Phillipot Viart; Pierre Rémond
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 96
Cost: 6961 livres
References: Langlois 1838, Block and Billiet 2003

Saint-Bertrand-les-Comminges
Cathédrale Sainte-Marie
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: completed 1535
Patron(s): Bishop Jean de Mauléon
Maker(s): Nicolas Bachelier de Toulouse, Karolus Vaip
Material: oak, other woods (intarsia)
Number of stalls: 66
Cost:
References: Villotte 1930, Augé et al. 2000

Saint-Claude (Franche-Comté)
Saint-Oyend et Saint-Claude
(now Saint-Claude)
Church type: Benedictine abbey (now cathedral)
Constructed: 1449–1465
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Jean de Vitry
Material: walnut

Rouen
Saint-Etienne-des-Tonneliers
Church type: parish?
(destroyed World War II)
Constructed: late fifteenth century:
statues at Eglise Saint-François; 2 misericords at Musée des Antiquités
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Charles Lefebvre
Material: painted wood
Number of stalls: 2 misericords extant
Cost:
References: Berthelot et al. 2002
Number of stalls: 86? (now 37)
Cost: 600 florins
References: Lacroix and Renon 1993

**Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne** (Savoy)
Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1498/1499
Patron(s): Bishop Etienne de Morel, some canons
Maker(s): Pierre Mochet?
Material: walnut
Number of stalls: 81 extant
Cost: 2086 florins
References: Lapaire and Aballéa 1991

**Saint-Martin-aux-Bois**
Abbaye de Saint-Martin-aux-Bois
Church type: Augustinian abbey
Constructed: end of fifteenth century
Patron(s): Abbot Guy de Baudreuil
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 28
Cost:
References: Espel 2001

**Saint-Riquier**
Abbatiale de Saint-Riquier
Church type: Benedictine abbey
Constructed: destroyed 1554
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Augé et al. 2000

**Toulouse**
Cathédrale Saint-Etienne
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: destroyed by fire 1609
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Augé et al. 2000

**Tréguier** (Brittany)
Cathédrale Saint-Tugdual
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1508–1514
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Girard Dru & Tugdual Kerguz

**Saumur**
Eglise Saint-Pierre
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: 1474–1478
Patron(s): Frères et soeurs de la confrérie des prêtres fondée en l'honneur du Saint-Sacrement de l'autel (confraternity)
Maker(s): Pierre Pintart, Raoulet Michau, various day workers
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 31
Cost:
References: Port 1868, Kraus and Kraus 1975
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

Material: oak
Number of stalls: 46
Cost: 773 livres bretons
References: Barthélemy 1856, Kraus and Kraus 1975

Troyes
Saint-Etienne
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: 1536–1538: destroyed
French Revolution
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls:
Cost: 2 200 livres
References: Piétresson de Saint-Aubin 1924

Villefranche-de-Rouergue
Collégiale Notre-Dame
Church type: dual purpose: collegiate, parish
Constructed: 1473–1487
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): André Sulpice
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 70 (now 62)
Cost:
References: Cabrol 1860, Cazes 1996

Germany

Augsburg
Fugger Chapel, St. Anna-Kirche
Church type: chapel in Carmelite friary (now Lutheran)
Constructed: 1512–1518:
architecture destroyed 1832,
12 busts destroyed World War II,
3 busts survive at Bode-Museum, Berlin,
1 at Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Patron(s): Fugger brothers
Maker(s):
Material: pear and limewood (busts), oak,
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 16 or 20
Cost:
References: Halm 1920, Bushart 1994

Blaubeuren (Württemberg)
St. Johannes der Täufer
Church type: Benedictine monastery
Constructed: 1493
Patron(s): Abbot Heinrich III Fabri
Maker(s): Jörg Sürlin the Younger
Material: oak, other woods (intarsia), partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 68
Cost:
References: Rommé 2000, Moraht-Fromm and Schürle 2002

Cappenberg (Mark)
Kloster Cappenberg (now St. Johannes Evangelista)
Church type: Premonstratensian (Norbertine) male abbey (now parish)
Constructed: 1509-1520
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Meister Gerlach
Material: wood, partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 54 (now 44)
Cost:
References: Dethlefs 2009

Freising (Bavaria)
Dom Mariä Geburt und St. Korbinian
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1484–1488

Kalkar (Cleves)
St. Nicolai
Church type: parish
Constructed: 1505–1508
Patron(s): Liebfrauenbruderschaft (confraternity)
Maker(s): Henrick Berntz
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 38
Cost: 400 Hornsche Gulden
References: Hilger 1990, Kaldewei 1994

Kleve
St. Mariä Empfängnis
Church type: Franciscan friary
Constructed: completed 1474
Patron(s): Johann I, Duke of Cleves (?)
Maker(s): Meister Arnt
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 32
Cost:
References: Meurer 1970, Block 1996

Konstanz
Münster Unserer Lieben Frau
Church type: cathedral
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

Loccum
Klosterkirche St. Maria und Georg
Church type: Cistercian monastery
(now Protestant parish church, St. Georg)
Constructed: thirteenth century
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 18 upper stalls,
lower benches
Cost:
References: Busch 1928

Magdeburg (Saxony)
St. Mauritius und Katharina
Church type: cathedral (now Protestant)
Constructed: mid-fourteenth century
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 56
Cost:
References: Porstmann 1997,
Porges-Watson 1995

Marienheide
St. Mariä Heimsuchung
Church type: Dominican male convent
and pilgrimage church (now parish)
Constructed: ca. 1504
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 16
Cost:
References: Oesterhelt 1967

Munich
Dom zu Unserer Lieben Frau
Church type: collegiate (now cathedral)
Constructed: ca. 1495–1502: architecture
destroyed WWII
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Erasmus Grasser
Material: oak
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Rohmeder 2003

Niederaltaich, Bavaria
Abtei des hl. Mauritius und des hl. Nikolaus
Church type: Benedictine abbey
Constructed: 1475–1480: destroyed by fire
1671
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Oesterhelt 1967

Constructed: 1467–1470
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Symon Haider
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 72 (now 64)
Cost:
References: Reiners 1955
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

Ratzeburg
Ratzeburger Dom
Church type: Premonstratensian
(Norbertine) male abbey (now Lutheran)
Constructed: twelfth century
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: oak
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Tracy 1987

Rothenburg ob der Tauber (Franconia)
Jakobskirche
Church type: Teutonic Order
(now Lutheran)
Constructed: fourteenth century
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 40
Cost:
References: Busch 1928

Ulm
Ulmer Münster
Church type: parish (now Lutheran)
Constructed: 1469–1474
Patron(s): city council
Maker(s): Jörg Syrlin the Elder
Material: oak, other woods (intarsia),
partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 89
Cost: 1188 gold florins
References: Wortmann 1972, Gropp 1999

Zwiefaltendorf (Württemberg)
St. Michael
Church type: parish (?)
Constructed: 1499
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Jörg Sürlin the Younger
Material: spruce
Number of stalls: 10
Cost:
References: Baum 1911, Rommé 2000

Italy

Aosta (Savoy)
Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta e San Giovanni Battista
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1466–1469
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Jean de Chetro & Jean Vion de Samoens
Material: walnut, partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 56 (5 moved to a museum 1838)
Cost:
References: Berton 1996

Aosta (Savoy)
Sant’Orso
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: 1494–1504
Patron(s): Georges de Challant, prior
Maker(s):
Material: walnut
Number of stalls: 44
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

**Murano**
Santa Chiara
Church type: Poor Clares’ monastery
Constructed: begun 1478
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Berton 1996

**Pavia (Lombardy)**
Certosa di Pavia
Church type: Carthusian
Constructed: 1487–1497
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Bartolomeo de Poli da Modena,
Pantaleone de Marchi da Cremona,
Giacomo dei Crocefissi, Cristoforo de Rocchi
Material: wood (intarsia)
Number of stalls: 42
Cost:
References: Paoletti 1893, Radke 2001

**Venice**
Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari
Church type: Franciscan
Constructed: 1468
Patron(s): Correr family
Maker(s): Marco Cozzi
Material: walnut, limewood, poplar,
  larch, conifer, fir, partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 124
Cost:
References: Howard and Moretti 2009,
  Allen 2010

**Venice**
San Michele in Isola
Church type: Benedictine monastery
(Camaldolese)
Constructed: 1532–1534
Patron(s):
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

Maker(s): Alessandro Bigno
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 29
Cost:
References: Howard and Moretti 2009, Allen 2010

Venice
San Zaccaria
Church type: Benedictine female convent
Constructed: 1455–1464
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Francesco & Marco Cozzi
Material: walnut, larch, conifer, partial polychromy
Number of stalls:
Cost: 590 ducats
References: Radke 2001, Allen 2010

The Netherlands

Dordrecht
Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk (Grote Kerk)
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: 1538–1541
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 60 plus benches for about 40 (altar boys, officiants)
Cost:
References: Bangs 1997, Duinen 1997

Haarlem
Sint-Bavokerk (Grote Kerk)
Church type: parish (now cathedral)
Constructed: ca. 1512
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Jasper Pietersz., Mychel Claesz.
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 44
Cost:
References: Bangs 1997

Oirschot
Sint-Pieterskerk
(Petrusbasiliek since 2013)
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: 1508–1511: destroyed WWII
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Jan Borchmans
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 40 (perhaps 52 originally)
Cost: 300 Rhine gulden
References: Steppe and van Molle 1950, Theunissen et al. 2011

Utrecht
Sint Maartenskerk (now Domkerk)
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: never built
Patron(s): Bishop of Utrecht, Philip of Burgundy?
Maker(s): Jan Gossaert (designer)
Material: oak
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Vroom 1964
Venlo
Sint Martinuskerk
Church type: parish (confraternity performed offices on Sundays)
Constructed: last quarter of fifteenth century
Patron(s): Congregatio Dominorum Horarum (confraternity), burgomaster?
Maker(s):
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 24
Cost:
References: Elias 1946, Verspaandonk 1993

Scotland

Melrose
Saint Mary’s Abbey
Church type: Cistercian abbey
Constructed: 1433–1443: destroyed
Patron(s): Abbot John Fogo
Maker(s): Cornelius van Aeltre
Material: wood
Number of stalls: about 100
Cost:
References: Coomans 2004

Spain

Astorga
Santa Apostólica Iglesia Catedral de Santa María
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1520–ca. 1547
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Juan de Colonia; Tomás Mitata, Pedro del Camino, Nicolás de Colonia
Material: walnut, painted inscriptions
Number of stalls: 97
Cost:
References: Gómez-Moreno 1980 (1925), Teijeira Pablos 1997

Ávila
Real Monasterio de Santo Tomás
Church type: Dominican male convent
Constructed: 1482–1483
Patron(s): Tomás de Torquemada
Maker(s): Martín Sánchez
Material: walnut
Number of stalls: 81
Cost:
References: Laya, Martínez 2001

Barcelona
Catedral de la Santa Cruz y Santa Eulalia
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1518 (final phase)
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Bartolomé Ordóñez, Jean Mone
Material: wood, fourteenth-century dorsals painted 1519
Number of stalls: 61 upper stalls
Cost:
References: Ros-Fabregas 1995, Carbonell 2000

Burgos
Cartuja de Santa María de Miraflores
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

Church type: charterhouse
Constructed: 1486–1489
Patron(s): Queen Isabel of Spain
Maker(s): Martín Sánchez of Vallodolid
Material: walnut
Number of stalls: 40
Cost:
References: Proske 1951

Ciudad Rodrigo
Catedral de Santa María
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1498–1508
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Rodrigo Alemán
Material: walnut, some chestnut (platform)
Number of stalls: 72
Cost:
References: Martínez 2001, Heim 2008

Cuenca
Catedral de Nuestra Señora de Gracia
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1454–1457: now in Colegiata Parroquia de San Bartolemé Apóstol, Belmonte
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Egas Cueman
Material: walnut
Number of stalls: 41
Cost:
References: Palomo Fernández 1994

Guadalupe
Real Monasterio de Santa María
Church type: Hieronymite monastery
Constructed: fourteenth century (?) (replaced in eighteenth century)
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: cedar?, polychromy
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Lalaing 1501

León
Santa María de Regla
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: ca. 1461–1481
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Master Enrique, Jean de Malines, Master Copin
Material: walnut, painted inscriptions
Number of stalls: 84 (now 74)
Cost:
References: Teijeira Pablos 1993

Oviedo
Santa Iglesia Basílica Catedral Metropolitana de San Salvador
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: ca. 1490–1497
Patron(s): Bishop Don Juan del Villar?
Maker(s):
Material: walnut, boxwood
Number of stalls: 80 (now 28 restored)
Cost:
References: Kraus and Kraus 1986, Teijeira Pablos 1997
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

Plasencia
Santa María de la Asunción
(Catedral Nueva)
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1497–1508
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Rodrigo Alemán
Material: various woods (intarsia)
Number of stalls: 66
Cost:

Toledo
San Juan de los Reyes
Church type: Franciscan friary
Constructed: 1494–1496: destroyed Peninsular War
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Juan Millán
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 80
Cost:
References: Proske 1951, Kraus and Kraus 1986

Switzerland
Basel
St. Peter
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: 1494–1499
Patron(s): chapter
Maker(s): Ulrich Bruder
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 56
Cost: 200 Basel pounds
References: Rott 1936

Bern
St. Peter und Paul
(now Französischekirche)
Church type: Dominican male convent
Constructed: first quarter of fourteenth century
Patron(s): chapter

Zamora
Catedral de San Salvador
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: 1502–1506
Patron(s): Bishop Diego Meléndez Valdés
Maker(s): Juan de Bruxelles (Jan Yneres)
Material: walnut, partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 85
Cost:
References: Ramos de Castro 1982, Teijeira Pablos 2001
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

**Bern**

St. Vinzenzenmünster
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: 1522–1525
Patron(s): town council
Maker(s): Niklaus Manuel Deutsch (designer), Jacob Ruess & Heini Seewagen
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 48
Cost:
References: Mojon 1960

**Estavayer** (Savoy)

Saint-Laurent
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: 1521–1525
Patron(s): Estavayer townspeople
Maker(s): Mattelin Vuarser
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 47
Cost:
References: Strub 1976, Cassina 1991

**Fribourg** (Savoy)

Saint-Nicolas
Church type: parish (now cathedral)
Constructed: 1462–1465
Patron(s): church fabric, lay donors
Maker(s): Antoine & Claude de Peney
Material: oak, walnut, partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 50
Cost: 375 livres
References: Strub 1976, Kurmann-Schwarz and Gasser 2007

**Geneva**

Sainte-Claire
Church type: Clarissine convent
Constructed: late fifteenth century:
destroyed by Protestants 1535
Patron(s): Yolande de France, founder of convent
Maker(s):
Material: walnut
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: de Jussy 1853 (1611)

**Geneva**

Eglise Saint-François
Church type: Franciscan friary
Appendix B. Choir Stalls Discussed

**Lausanne** (Savoy)
Chapelle des Martyrs thébains
Church type: cathedral chapel
Constructed: 1509 (including reused parts from late fifteenth-century stalls)
Patron(s): Bishop Aymon de Montfalcon
Maker(s):
Material: walnut
Number of stalls: 27
Cost:
References: Bach, Blondel and Bovy 1944, Lapaire 1991

**Romont** (Savoy)
Notre-Dame de l’Assomption
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: ca. 1466–1468
Patron(s): townspeople, Duke of Savoy
Maker(s): Rodolphe Pottu and sons
Material: oak, some walnut, partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 40
Cost:
References: Strub 1976, Berton 1996

**Hauterive** (Savoy)
Abbaye d’Hauterive
Church type: Cistercian abbey
Constructed 1472–1486
Patron(s): Abbot Jean de Philibert
Maker(s): Claude (de Peney?)
Material: oak, partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 54
Cost:
References: Strub 1976, Berton 1996

**Yverdon**
Chapelle Notre Dame
Church type: parish
Constructed: ca. 1499
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Claude de Peney, Bon Bottolier
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 24 upper stalls (now 14)
Cost:
References: Lapaire and Aballéa 1991,

**Geneva**
Cathédrale Saint-Pierre
Church type: cathedral
Constructed: ca. 1432–1436
Patron(s): 
Maker(s):
Material: walnut, partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 26 upper stalls in situ,
2 dorsals at Musée d’art et d’histoire, Geneva and Musée des beaux-arts, Dijon.
(probably 16 lower stalls originally)
Cost:
References: Charles 1999

**Lausanne** (Savoy)
Chapelle des Martyrs thébains
Church type: cathedral chapel
Constructed: 1509 (including reused parts from late fifteenth-century stalls)
Patron(s): Bishop Aymon de Montfalcon
Maker(s):
Material: walnut
Number of stalls: 27
Cost:
References: Bach, Blondel and Bovy 1944, Lapaire 1991

**Romont** (Savoy)
Notre-Dame de l’Assomption
Church type: collegiate
Constructed: ca. 1466–1468
Patron(s): townspeople, Duke of Savoy
Maker(s): Rodolphe Pottu and sons
Material: oak, some walnut, partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 40
Cost:
References: Strub 1976, Berton 1996

**Hauterive** (Savoy)
Abbaye d’Hauterive
Church type: Cistercian abbey
Constructed 1472–1486
Patron(s): Abbot Jean de Philibert
Maker(s): Claude (de Peney?)
Material: oak, partial polychromy
Number of stalls: 54
Cost:
References: Strub 1976, Berton 1996

**Yverdon**
Chapelle Notre Dame
Church type: parish
Constructed: ca. 1499
Patron(s):
Maker(s): Claude de Peney, Bon Bottolier
Material: oak
Number of stalls: 24 upper stalls (now 14)
Cost:
References: Lapaire and Aballéa 1991,
Berton 1996

**Zurich**
Grossmünster
Church type: dual purpose:
  collegiate, parish (now Protestant)
Constructed: destroyed 1524 by Protestants
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls:
Cost:
References: Finsler 1901

**Wales**

**Gresford (Clyd)**
All Saints
Church type: parish
Constructed: ca. 1500
Patron(s):
Maker(s):
Material: wood
Number of stalls: 11
Cost:
References: Tracy 1990
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