The south porch of the Cluniac abbey of Saint-Pierre at Moissac is such a familiar monument in the canon of Romanesque sculpture that it is easy to forget how striking it must have appeared to its first viewers early in the twelfth century (fig. 1). In contrast to the relatively simple, low-relief compositions that marked the initial revival of architectural sculpture in the eleventh-century, the Moissac porch comprises a deep barrel-vaulted space, in which the spectator is surrounded by complex, multi-figured narratives boldly projecting from the tympanum and supporting walls. In the tympanum, the imposing enthroned Christ, whose entire body is tilted towards the viewer below, seems to establish direct eye-contact, while the surrounding figures of the twenty-four elders engage the spectator with their intense gazes and dynamic poses as they strain to behold the theophany above. Equally remarkable is the frankly sexual imagery at eye-level on the left wall (fig. 3). Immediately adjacent the door, an almost life-sized female nude personifying Lust (fig. 3) is attacked at her breasts and genitals by toads and serpents. Further up, extending the biblical narrative of Dives and Lazarus, another female nude, presumably Dives’s wife, is tortured by demons in the fires of hell.

Nearly nine hundred years after they were carved, these figures still retain a certain shock-value that must have been crucial to their purpose. Although an extensive body of scholarship has explored references to the antique, the formal language, iconographic sources, and broader programmatic meaning of the Moissac porch, relatively little attention has been devoted to the question of how the form and content of its sculpture would have affected its medieval viewers.1

* The author thanks Kirk Ambrose and Robert Maxwell for their careful critique of this text, and Elisabeth Valdez del Alamo for sharing her stimulating work on Moissac prior to publication.

1 For Moissac see Irene Forreth, ‘Narrative at Moissac: Schérer’s Legacy’, Gesta, 41 (2002), 71-95 with previous bibliography. A notable exception is Peter Klein’s brief discussion of this issue in “Programmes archéologiques, fonction et réception historiques des portails du XIIe s. : Moissac—Beauvais—Saint-Denis”, Cahiers de civilisation médiévale, 33 (1990), 397-409, esp. pp. 342-46. [Editors’ Note: see also the contribution in this volume by I. Forreth.]
Fig. 2—Parable of Lazarus and Dives, Personifications of Avarice and Lust, left wall of porch, Saint-Pierre, Moissac (photo: author)

Fig. 3—Lust and demon, detail of left wall of porch, Saint-Pierre, Moissac (photo: author)
Fig. 2—Parable of Lazarus and Dives, Personifications of Avarice and Lust, left wall of porch, Saint-Pierre, Moissac (photo: author)

Fig. 3—Lust and demon, detail of left wall of porch, Saint-Pierre, Moissac (photo: author)

Focusing on the Moissac figure of Lust, the present paper explores the experience and affects of Romanesque sculpture, drawing upon recent discussions of vision and visuality. Equally applicable to medieval or modern art, visuality encompasses techniques of seeing, optical science, and the ways in which vision is culturally constructed. While the physical mechanisms of vision conform to certain norms that have remained essentially unchanged over time, the interpretation of what is seen by both the seer and the person seen is culturally determined and this helps explain the changing appearance of visual images. Much recent scholarship on vision and visuality in medieval art has focused on the role of the emerging optical science of perspective in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and its impact both on the representation of space and the depiction of the gaze of the devotee directed towards devotional images. The ascendency of the extramission model in the later twelfth century, the theory of vision which postulates that the eyes of the viewing subject send out rays to capture the object of sight, has also prompted historians of later medieval art and literature to examine the ways in which both seeing and being seen potentially impacted or controlled the viewer and the viewed. Still other studies have focused on the changing concept and form of the artistic image, its devotional functions, and its capacity to serve as a vehicle for spiritual seeing.

In the absence of systematic optical treatises, Romanesque visuality can be explored on the basis of biblical commentaries, ritual or devotional texts, and secular literature. What these sources tell us is that sight was increasingly valued along with the other physical senses as part of an imaginative process of visualization; what is more, sculptural images, which could be touched, seen, and even heard through the spoken texts of the liturgy, played a particularly significant role in stimulating a higher form of spiritual vision. It is by placing the nude personification of Lust at Moissac within this context that we can begin to recapture something of its affect on medieval audiences.

Before turning to some textual evidence for broader experience of sculpture, it is essential to trace the pictorial tradition from which the nude emerged as an independent figure of sexual fantasy in Romanesque art and to overcome some of the scholarly biases that have obscured recognition of its impact on medieval viewers. In his classic study of the genre, Sir Kenneth Clark defines the nude as an aesthetic category rooted in Hellenistic ideas of feminine beauty and male desire, and denies that such a genre exists in Romanesque art. Measured against the standard set in the idealised type of the

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Knidian Aphrodite by Praxiteles, the unclothed figures of Lust or Eve are assumed to elicit no desire from the male viewer: rather they embody the negative category of the 'naked' associated with the shame of sin. Émile Mâle and Jacqueline Leclercq likewise see the nude primarily as a vehicle of moralization, but their interest lies more in the transformation of iconographic conventions. In Carolingian art, Lust, like the other vices, was shown as a clothed personification trampled by a militant virtue dressed in armour, as in a ninth-century ivory in the Bargello, and the same conventions continued to be used in Romanesque sculpture of Poitou, as illustrated in the south portal of Saint-Pierre at Aulnay. The alternative personification of Lust as a female nude was gradually adapted between the ninth and eleventh centuries from the ancient iconography of Terra, the Earth Mother, as a naked woman either with children or animals suckling at her breasts. Although its appearance in French sculpture early in the twelfth century reflects, in part, the broader predilection for antique subjects in art and literature at the time, it has been argued that this startling representation of the fleshy nude in public sculpture must also have responded to the Gregorian reform movement's insistence on extending the monastic virtue of chastity to the clergy.

Meyer Schapiro was among the first scholars to suggest a relationship between form and content in the personifications of Lust. Commenting on the image of Lust and Avarice in the Silos Beatus (fig. 4), he interpreted the 'elementary realism' of these figures as a means of 'counter-imaging' the theme of profane desire that was so concretely represented in French vernacular poetry of the time. In analyzing the same theme in the sculpture of Moissac, it seems all the more imperative to consider the impact of representing the sexualized body in the tactile medium of sculptural relief in such a public location.

Although the period of Romanesque sculpture lacks the systematic, scientific theories of vision developed after 1200, theological and literary texts do establish a framework for understanding vision as an interactive and affective process that links the experiences of the corporeal senses with spiritual insight. For twelfth-century theologians, the capacity to behold God with corporeal eyes was predicated on the Incarnation and the ability to use all of the physical senses to perceive the traces of the invisible Trinity in the sacraments or visible signs of the created world. It is thus in the context of his Treatise on the Sacraments that Hugh of Saint-Victor pursues his theory of vision. Hugh argues that the Spirit or mind, which contains within it the image of God, lies midway between body and God

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Hugh's confidence in the capacity of the physical sense of sight to lead gradually towards a purer form of spiritual seeing was shared by a broad range of scholastic and monastic theologians. What is more, the belief in the affective powers of visual images, both imaginary images and manufactured ones, was fostered by the practices of both personal devotion and communal ritual.

The Cistercian, William of Saint-Thierry, for example, directs his reader to meditate upon mental images of Christ's infancy and Passion that evoke his presence to all the senses:

For, since we have not yet progressed through the elementary stage of sensory imagination, [...] may still-undeveloped soul dwells naturally on your lowliness by means of some mental picturing. You will allow her, to embrace the manger of the newborn Lord, to reverence the sacred gifts, to caress the feet of the crucified, to hold and kiss those feet, when he is risen, and to put her hand in the print of the nails and cry: 'My Lord and my God!' [...] In offering their prayers they might set this form before themselves [...] while they are still unable to gaze into the brightness of the majesty of your divinity.

Similar forms of imaginative visualization, drawing both on the narratives of Christ's Incarnation and Passion and on the bodily love poetry of the Song of Songs, were encouraged especially by mystics such as the late eleventh century, including Abelard of Clairvaux, Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter the Venerable, Julian of Vezelay, and Rupert of Deutz.

Cistercians generally opposed the use of visual images, particularly sculptures, as stimuli for meditation, except by the laity. But mainstream Benedictines (including the Cluniac monks of Moissac), secular clergy, and canons apparently believed that the multi-sensory experience of sculpture provided a salutary vehicle for spiritual union with God. Indeed a number of recent studies have called attention to the tactile and sensuous qualities of Romanesque relief sculpture, the representation of space and the explicit evocation of the senses as a

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14 For useful introductions to this material see Hamburger, St. John the Divine, pp. 183-201; and Gedun Schlessinger, Das Aug in der Mitwelt, 2 vols. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1945), 11, pp. 953-955.

15 Barbara Newman, "What did it mean to say 'I saw'? The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture," Speculum, 80 (2005), 1-43.


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means of fostering the viewer’s empathy for the subject. In applying a comparable approach to Moissac, we can begin to understand why it was considered appropriate and even desirable to represent the sexualized body of Lust in the public context of a monastic portal. In contrast to the positive objects of visualization discussed thus far, the female nude evokes the potentially dangerous side of the imagination or phantasia as a counterpart to the sacred narratives on the opposite side of the portal.

The concept of phantasia will be discussed in greater detail below, but it is essential to clarify briefly its meaning here. In ancient Latin usage, phantasia was both as a simple translation of the Greek term for apparition or vision and an equivalent to imaginatio, the imagination. Whereas ancient writers spoke of its creative potential, writers of the twelfth century tended to distrust phantasia as generating potentially unreliable phantasms (phantasmata). While the imagination could produce salutary visions of great insight for Christian contemplatives, it was also a mechanism by which diabolical phantasms were imprinted in the fabric of memory. In what follows, I will argue that the female nude in Romanesque sculpture visualized sexual fantasies from the mind in order to neutralize their destructive power, stimulating penance and conversion.

The distrust of the physical sense of sight and its tainted association with sexual fantasy can ultimately be traced to the narrative of the Fall in Genesis 3.6-7. Eve is tempted to partake of the forbidden fruit ‘seeing that it was fair to the eyes.’ Immediately upon eating the fruit, as ‘the eyes of them both were opened,’ the first couple perceived themselves to be naked. While pictorial narratives of the fall from the third century onward illustrated Adam and Eve’s awareness of their ‘nakedness’ simply through the covering of the genitals with fig-leaves, the awareness of sexual shame was greatly enhanced in Romanesque sculpture by the emphasis on Eve’s breasts, her frontal gaze, and display of the body. For example, in a capital dated to around 1100 in the Cathedral of Clermont-Ferrand (fig. 5), Eve is represented as a frontal nude with a wide-eyed expression and full, drooping breasts as she passes

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The acceptance of the nude Eve in public sculpture as visual embodiment of the consciousness of the eyes and model of penitence prepared the ground for the introduction of the autonomous female nude as personification of Lust during the same period. Lust appears in two remarkably frank capitals in the nave of the Benedictine Abbey of Vézelay in the first example, the nude Lust tugs nervously at her breasts as a serpent attacks her genitals (fig. 7). Her diabolical nature is made explicit by association with a naked demon that is identified either as Ira (anger) or despair. Distinguished by flaming hair, the demon gazes at the woman and lewdly sticks out his tongue. A second capital presents an even more explicit sexual narrative (fig. 8). In this case the female nude appears not so much as temptress but as victim, bending over to conceal her pubic area as the naked demon fondles her breasts. Here it is the demon that is attacked by his genitals by the serpent in punishment of lust.


Fig. 8—'Lyre de Satan' or 'Profane Music', nave capital, Sainte-Marie Madeleine, Vézelay (photo: author)

Fig. 9—Dives Feasting (right) and Lazarus in bosom of Abraham (left), detail of left wall of porch, Saint-Pierre, Moissac (photo: author)
Among the most compelling images of Lust in French Romanesque sculpture is the example from Moissac (figs. 2-3). In contrast to the Vézelay figures, which appear on capitals high above the viewer, Lust is here more accessible, carved almost life-sized in a quite sensual style in high relief, and placed where she can be directly beheld and touched. Facing the symbolic threshold of the actual church, she is confronted by a monstrous demon that grabs her by the hand as she prays ineffectually, with outstretched arms. She is a figure of simultaneous attraction and repulsion, of sexual desire and diabolical phantasia. Tall and slender, with smoothly modelled skin, she boasts ample, swelling breasts and long tresses of hair falling over gently sloping shoulders. Simultaneously, her beautiful flesh decays before our eyes: the ribs of her upper torso are exposed and her fearful eyes sink within deep sockets.

Lust's role as embodiment of a fantastic vision is amplified within the larger program of the left jamb by the parable of Dives and Lazarus (fig. 9). In the sculpted frieze the wealthy man feasts in his hall (at right in fig. 9) while the pauper Lazarus, his half-naked body marked with leprous sores, lies prone outside his door. At left, Lazarus's body appears restored, resurrected, and protected in the bosom of Abraham. Separated from Lazarus by grimacing atlantes and shrieking women, Dives appears below on the right in a horrific deathbed scene (fig. 10). As his grieving wife looks on, demons grasp his soul and his money. To the left the interior battle of the dying man is echoed by a nightmarish vision in which the naked body of Dives is bent backward and trampled by a host of demons. Lust appears here again within the narrative of corporeal punishment: a naked woman emerges from the genitals of the central demon hovering over Dives.

As Schapiro emphasized, Lust is also related in pose and gesture to her antithesis, the Virgin Mary, in the scenes of the Annunciation and the Visitation on the opposite jamb (fig. 11). More recent scholarship has explored the meaning of this juxtaposition within the broader iconographical program by contrasting the monastic virtues of chastity and charity embodied in the figures of the Virgin Mary.

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and the Holy Family on the right jamb and the sins of gluttony, avarice, and lust—all sins of the flesh—on the left jamb. Ilene Forsyth has gone further to recognise the strength of the secund sexual imagery in the portal, including the juxtaposed lions and lionesses on the central trumeau. For Forsyth the program of the lower walls of the portal constitutes a parody or open-ended 'visual play' that draws upon monastic rhetoric and 'blue poems.' The chaste monastic life, represented allegorically by the narrative of Mary and Joseph at right, is juxtaposed with the appetites of the flesh, embodied in the narrative of Dives ('the rich man') and his wife, an extra-biblical figure, whom monastic commentaries sometimes identified as the lustful Jezebel. Another meaningful rhetorical contrast is highlighted in the use of the bed in the Adoration of the Magi and the Death of Dives: the fertile yet chaste locus of the Virgin Birth is parodied by the rich man's bed of fornication and death.

While monastic literature may help explain the visual structure and even the overt sexuality of the Moissac portal, we are still left to question why a diabolical sexual fantasy was depicted in such a public setting and how such a tactile image would have affected medieval viewers. A partial explanation is suggested by contemporary monastic visions of the afterlife. A particularly graphic account of the punishment of the flesh is found in Bernard of Cluny's On the Contempt for the World. This text is one that may well have been known by the monks of Moissac as the abbey was reformed by Cluny at the end of the eleventh century. After contrasting the fortunes of Dives and Lazarus in this world and the next, Bernard describes a vision of bodily punishment and decay with particular emphasis on the body parts associated with lust and desire:

Hereafter the worst flame of Gehenna, the punishment of pain, will burn those in whom now the flame of lust burns [...]. There the eyes, temples brow, lips, chest, innards, breasts, mouth, throat, penis, and legs are all food for flames. There eyes weep, they weep for sins long past; there is both frightful stench

27 Forsyth, 'Narrative at Moissac'.
28 Schapiro partly addresses this question in Romanesque Architectural Sculpture (pp. 27-31), but by insisting that the abbey is preaching morality and projecting power to an exclusively lay public in the portal, he sets up too sharp a barrier between lay and monastic audiences, exterior public and interior ritual spaces.
29 De Contemptu Mundi, ed. and trans. by Ronald E. Pepin, Scorn for the World: Bernard of Cluny's De Contemptu Mundi, Medieval Texts and Studies, 8 (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1991). I thank Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg for recommending this text to me.
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29 TERRE HIC TERROR QUOS TERREUS ALLAGAT ERBO. NAM PORE SIC VERUM NOTAT HIC HOBOR.
30 Ibid., p. 90.
for Mary and Christ in receiving gifts of the Magi represented by human actors. In the popular imagination, the distinction between image and prototype was blurred to the extent that such images were often the object of curious votral rites. Compelling are the accounts of St. Faith at Conques compiled by Bernard of Angers in his Book of Miracles of Sainte Foy. Not only was the image routinely carried in religious processions; it was also carried out into the countryside to encourage the abbeys' territorial claims against lay landowners. And the experience of the golden image, customarily set in the sanctuary and seemingly hovering over the high altar, so forcefully impressed itself on the minds of both clergy and laity that it inspired a series of dreams in which the saint appeared in the form of her image to demand tribute or to punish evildoers, transfixing them with her penetrating eyes.

A third category of sculpted images affords us a glimpse into a potentially more sensual aspect of phantasia. The life-size sculpted crucifix, which came into its own during the eleventh century, was the object of a series of highly erotic religious visions experienced by the monk Rupert of Deutz early in the twelfth century. In his Commentary on Matthew, composed in 1127, Rupert describes how a sculpted crucifix set behind or on the altar opened its eyes to look upon him, and then bent its head to speak to him. Anticipating later visions of bridal mysticism based on the Song of Songs, Rupert describes how he immediately desired to seize Christ in his hands and to kiss and embrace him. Christ himself, desiring this embrace, opened up the altar so that Rupert could reach his image. And then Rupert seized "whom my soul loves (Song of Songs 1:6)," embraced and kissed him for a long while. As Christ was being kissed He also opened his mouth, so that Rupert could kiss him more deeply.

This strikingly erotic vision must be understood in the context of the gradual transfiguration of the sculpted crucifix in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries into a highly sensual, life-sized, almost naked image of the dead or suffering Christ subtly modelled and often painted to highlight the blood and pale flesh. At the same time, interpretations of the lovers in the erotic poetry of the Song of Songs as an allegory of the love between Christ and His mother, as well as Christ and his devotees, nourished a strong belief in the capacity of sensual experiences, including the prolonged gaze at the face of the body, as a path towards transcendent love of and union with Christ. Thus it is not surprising that Bernard of Clairvaux, who condemned artistic images as a distraction for his own monks is said to have experienced a similar, miraculous embrace of a living crucifix, as well as a vision in which


turnal emissions, the author describes how dreamers, who lack the self-control of those who are chaste when awake, are aroused by seeing corporeal images in the imagination as they sleep.\textsuperscript{36}

I would argue that the translation of disturbing visions or dreams into sculpted images is predicated upon an increasingly somatic conceptualization of vision. As Suzannah Biernoff has recently shown, vision was already understood in the twelfth century to be a reciprocal process, linking beholder and object in a palpable, corporeal fashion through the images imprinted in the fabric of memory.\textsuperscript{37} That seeing or beholding could inflame the viewer’s passions is amply demonstrated in both secular and theological literature of the early twelfth century. In the French romance of Eneas, the heroine Lavine is wounded by Love’s penetrating gaze as she herself gazes upon her lover, Eneas, from her window.\textsuperscript{38} Transfixed by Love’s gaze and by the sight of her lover, Lavine is aroused to the extent that she perspires, shivers, and moans as if in the ecstasy of love-making. We find a similar emphasis on the fleshly ramifications of seeing in monastic writings, with the important difference that the blame is placed not on Love but on women and their hapless male viewers.\textsuperscript{39}

By contrast, the redemptive powers of seeing are highlighted by Bernard of Clairvaux in his sermons \textit{On Conversion}, addressed to clerics whom he hoped would join the Cistercian order.\textsuperscript{40} According to Bernard, images from the sensual world enter into memory through the eyes to be left as ‘certain bitter marks’ imprinted or stamped in the memory, long after the ‘evil pleasure’ had passed.\textsuperscript{41} The novice begins the process of conversion to the monastic life by beholding God’s inner voice as a ‘beam of light, both informing men of their transgressions and bringing to light things hidden in darkness’.\textsuperscript{42} Bernard affirms that by this beam of light, ‘reason is enlightened and what is in the memory is unfolded as though set out before each man’s eyes.’\textsuperscript{43} Then the monk is called to enter into a period of physical enclosure within the monastery, so that deprived of outward vision, the eyes might cast their gaze inward. It is finally at this point that the convert is able to repent and, according to Bernard, ‘his sight will become keen so he will be able to turn his gaze towards the brightness of glistening light.’\textsuperscript{44} Finally, to complete the conversion, the novice must purify his memory. Bernard likens memory to a sheet of parchment that has soaked up the ink with which the scribe has written on it.\textsuperscript{45} Like parchment, memory can be blanched, but not completely purged, because the scribe’s quill leaves an indelible mark. But Bernard argues that even if it were possible to erase memory completely, this would not be desirable, since without the memory of sin there would be no awareness of its remission and thus no humility or gratitude.

Although we do not have explicit accounts of how a relief sculpture of lust affected medieval viewers, there is considerable documentation of the ways in which other forms of sculpture engaged the senses and imagination. Ilene Forsyth has shown that the ubiquitous images of the enthroned Madonna and Child in Romanesque France were animated through religious processions and liturgical drama: in the \textit{Officium Stellaee}, for example, the wooden image, placed on the high altar, stood in

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\textsuperscript{37} Biernoff, \textit{Sight and Embodiment}, pp. 41-57; 87-88.


\textsuperscript{39} Biernoff, ibid., p. 47; and Caviness, \textit{Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages}, pp. 20-21.


\textsuperscript{41} \textit{De conversione}, III.4, pp. 218-19; \textit{Sermons on Conversion}, trans. by Saïd, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{De conversione}, II.3, p. 218; \textit{Sermons on Conversion}, trans. by Saïd, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{De conversione}, XI, 23, p. 231; \textit{Sermons on Conversion}, trans. by Saïd, p. 58.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{De conversione}, XV, 38, pp. 334-35; \textit{Sermons on Conversion}, trans. by Saïd, p. 64.
he was suckled by the Virgin Mary. He also supported the utility of the laity contemplating the physicality of Christ's wounded body in the form of a visual image, as a first step towards an inner meditation in the heart.

We come closer to gauging the potentially erotic attraction of the nude in Romanesque sculpture in the text of an English School Master named Gregory from as early as 1150, known as the *Marvels of Rome*. It was in surviving sculptures from antiquity that this medieval pilgrim to the Eternal City discovered both shocking and alluring nudes. Although modern beholders would hardly perceive it as such, the bronze Spinario or Thornpuller, once displayed in front of the Lateran Palace, struck Master Gregory as a 'ridiculous statue of Priapus' and he remarks that 'if you lean forward and look up to see what he's doing, you discover genitals of extraordinary size'—an impression enhanced by the display of the Spinario atop a column. Most compelling for Master Gregory, however, was an ancient marble statue of Venus, fashioned 'with such wonderful art that it seemed to be more a living creature than a statue.' He reveals his genuine passion when he describes how he felt compelled 'perhaps (by) some magic spell' to return to see the statue no less than three times, even though it was far from his lodgings.

What is distinctive in the case of the figure of Luxuria and most other female nudes in Romanesque sculpture is the insistence on a prolonged viewing or meditative gaze as the means to sublimate sexual, fleshly desire in favour of its spiritual counterpart. Mary Carruthers has anticipated, in part, my argument that the nude in Romanesque relief sculpture could stimulate the transformation of memory. The act of moving through the porch at Moissac, she suggests, constitutes a 'sequence of conversion.' The punishment of Lust evokes the emotion of fear that is central to the monastic practices of meditation; the Incarnation narratives present model journeys to one's distant goal as represented in the heavenly vision of the tympanum above.

Although such a journey of conversion could be prompted at any time the beholder entered into the monastic church through its principal entrance, pausing to ponder the sculpted narratives, a more precise context is offered by the liturgy at Moissac. In a twelfth-century Processional from Moissac, now in Paris's Bibliothèque Nationale (MS lat. 2819), the words accompanying the antiphons for the feast of the Presentation cast the Christ child's reception in the Temple by Simeon as the anticipation of the participant's entry into the church portal and ultimately his entry into the heavenly gateway (*celestis porta*). At the same time, as the feast also refers to Mary's Purification, the liturgy emphasizes the Virgin's particular role as chaste yet fecund mother, which is so prominently represented on the right jamb of the portal.

The Advent procession also evokes much of the imagery found in the sculpture, including the ultimate vision of Christ's majesty, the journey to the altar and the preparation for the mortal's journey into the afterlife by Christ's own journey in the flesh, 'proceeding' from the chaste yet fecund womb of the Virgin Mary. The processional begins by comparing the entrance into the temple/church with Christ's entrance into the Virgin's womb:

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51 For Bernard's vision of the cross, see Lutz, *Das Bild des Gekreuzigten*, p. 34; and Lipton, 'The Sweet Lean of His Head,' p. 1189. For the later legend of Bernard's suckling at the Virgin's breast, see David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 305, 488, n. 44.


54 Ibid., ch. 7, p. 23.


58 Paris, BNF, MS lat. 2819, fol. 79r: 'O quam casta mater et virgo secunda Maria. Quae nullam novit maculam debum portare meruit. O quam casta mater que sine ullo contaminacione conceptet et sine dolore genuit Salvatorem.'
he was suckled by the Virgin Mary. He also supported the utility of the laity contemplating the physicality of Christ’s wounded body in the form of a visual image, as a first step towards an inner meditation in the heart. We come closer to gauging the potentially erotic attraction of the nude in Romanesque sculpture in the text of an English School Master named Gregory from as early as 1150, known as the Master of Rome. It was in surviving sculptures from antiquity that this medieval pilgrim to the Eternal City discovered both shocking and alluring nudes. Although modern beholders would hardly perceive it as such, the bronze Spinario or Thornpiller, once displayed in front of the Lateran Palace, struck Master Gregory as a ‘ridiculous statue of Prissus’ and he remarks that ‘if you lean forward and look up to see what he’s doing, you discover genitals of extraordinary size—an impression enhanced by the display of the Spinario atop a column.’ Most compelling for Master Gregory, however, was an ancient marble statue of Venus, fashioned ‘with such wonderful art that it seemed to be more a living creature than a statue.’ He reveals his genuine passion when he describes how he felt compelled ‘perhaps (by) some magic spell’ to return to see the statue no less than three times, even though it was far from his lodging.

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Porta monteasteri, cum incipit a (stonum) Cum indicare.

Ibid., ‘Converse nos Deus et pone lacrime nostras in conceptus tuos et sanas valvulas nostra medicamentum penetrantur ne permeres.’

Ibid., ‘O quam fides erant illi qui nesciit illisdem mercede aurum.’

45 For Bernard’s vision of the cross, see Luz, Das Bild der Gerechtigkeit, p. 342; and Lipton, The Sweet Lens of His Head, p. 158. For the later legend of Bernard’s suckling at the Virgin’s breast, see David Freedberg, The Power of Imagination: Theory and Image in Medieval Christian Art (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 205, 488, n. 44.


49 Cassirer, Craft of Thought, pp. 264–66.

50 For the presentation of Moissac and a study of its history, see Jean-Louis, La bibliothèque et le scriptorium de Moissac, Hautes Baudes Médiévales et Modernes, 13 (Paris & Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1972). For a recent general survey of the decoration of Moissac manuscripts, see Chantal Frosini, L’endormissement à Moissac au XIe siècle (Anch: Edi-Service, 1999).

51 Paris, BNF, MS lat. 2839, fol. 272: ‘O quam canta mater et virgo facundia Maria. Qua nullam novum matulam deum porcius manserat. O quam canta mater qui sine alias contaminiatias conceptu et sit sine doloris genui salvaverte.’

52 Carruthers, Craft of Thought, pp. 264–66.

53 For the description of Moissac and a study of its history, see Jean-Louis, La bibliothèque et le scriptorium de Moissac, Hautes Baudes Médiévales et Modernes, 13 (Paris & Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1972). For a recent general survey of the decoration of Moissac manuscripts, see Chantal Frosini, L’endormissement à Moissac au XIe siècle (Anch: Edi-Service, 1999).

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56 Paris, BN fr. 2839, fol. 272: ‘O quam canta mater et virgo facundia Maria. Qua nullam novum matulam deum porcius manserat. O quam canta mater qui sine alas contaminiatias conceptu et sit sine doloris genui salvaverte.’

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setting for burial because of its association with the threshold between two realms—the earthly and the heavenly. At the same time the funerary associations of the space made it an apt place for thoughts related to penance and conversion in preparation for Judgement.

Returning to the question of the impact of the female nude in Romanesque sculpture, it would appear that these figures of lust were designed to affect the beholder in ways that reflect the powers ascribed to vision. Much like the protagonists of romance literature, the viewer of Lust at Moissac was intended to be captivated by the gazes of these beautiful yet fallen women, and thus cast in the role of voyeur. Following Bernard of Clairvaux’s lead, we might also see these compressed sculptural reliefs as the images imprinted in memory—past phantasms that still aroused the monk sexually, but also evoked the terror of corporeal punishment and decay. Here, the very form and medium might contribute meaning. Carved in relief and set within orderly compartments, these sculptural images suggest the phantasmata (fantasies) of the imagination that were projected onto architecture as a locational device in medieval practices of memory. At the same time, the fact that these sculptural images are both palpable yet ‘one step removed from the real’ makes them a little less dangerous than free-standing nudes such as the ancient Venus that aroused Master Gregory. Like the once threatening gorgons evoked by Bernard of Cluny, they are quite literally imprisoned in stone. By neutralizing the fantasies of memory in this way, the nude figures of Lust in Romanesque sculpture thus prepared the mind to behold the more spiritual vision of the Almighty with the inner eye of the cloistered monk.

As this case study shows, theories and practices of vision help to bridge the perennial divide between form and content to understand the affective powers intrinsic to the medium of sculpture. Processing through the portal of Moissac, the participant in the liturgy would be stimulated to see spiritually through the corporeal senses in a number of ways: through singing and/or hearing the words and music of the chant as well as through seeing and perhaps even feeling the tactile images in high relief. The connections between vision, the other senses, phantasia, and memory might ultimately help explain why it was considered desirable to revive architectural sculpture after a hiatus of nearly seven centuries.


66 This theme has been emphasized by both Schiefele, 'Path to Salvation'; and Dixon, 'The Power of the Gate'.


68 Carruthers, Craft of Thought, pp. 7-24.

69 Forsyth, ‘Narrative at Moissac’, p. 79, has noted how the breasts of the females accompanying Dives in the scene of punishments in Hell have been substantially worn by repeated touching over the centuries.