Article

The Transit of Mary Magdalene's Soul in Catalan Artistic Production in the 15th Century

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Abstract: There are a great many studies on the figure of Mary Magdalene in different areas of knowledge. Nevertheless, there is a gap as regards the image of this character in Catalonia, and specifically regarding the visual representation of her soul at the moment when she died. This text aims to analyze this matter based on two Catalan altarpieces: the *Altarpiece of Saint Mary Magdalene from Perella* (Bernat Martorell, 1437–1453) and *The Death of Mary Magdalene* (Jaume Huguet, 1465–1480). The analysis has been carried out based on the postulates from the tradition of studies on iconography and iconology: the relationships between image and text, the history of the iconographic types and the magnetic power of images. The basic hypothesis is that the representation of Mary Magdalene's soul in the 15th Century in Catalonia is visually borrowed from the iconographic type of the Dormition of the Mother of God. To test this, comparative analyses have been made of the visual representation of the two women and also of the textual sources, such as the canonical and extracanonical gospels, a variety of medieval legends and different hagiographies or *vitas* and sermons from the period.

Keywords: Mary Magdalene; Virgin Mary; soul; Transit; Dormition; Catalonia; Crown of Aragon; Bernat Martorell; Jaume Huguet; altarpieces

1. Introduction

Delving into a study of a figure such as Mary Magdalene involves the arduous challenge of finding the gaps that remain to be discovered about this character. Faced with the immense bibliography about her in different areas, art history (Haskins 1996; De Boer 1997; Maisch 1998; Jansen 2001; Antunes 2014), the history of religions and feminist theology (Bernabé 1994; Ricci 1994; Schaberg 2008), anthropology of religion (Fedele 2012) and other disciplines), it is difficult to find matters that are yet to be revealed. Even so, the many-faceted Mary Magdalene never ceases to surprise, offering an area for study in which, as difficult as it may seem, there are always as yet barren terrains in which to plant the seed for new research. Such is the case of the visual representation of this character in 15th century Catalonia. In that land and time, at least two altarpieces appear that pose a matter that has not yet been studied: the soul of Mary Magdalene. This study attempts to at least partially fill the lack of attention given to these images.

The artworks studied were created by two Catalan artists: Bernat Martorell (1390–1452) and Jaume Huguet (1412–1492). The former painted the *Altarpiece of Saint Mary Magdalene from Perella* (1437–1452, Episcopal Museum of Vic) (Figures 1 and 2), whereas Jaume Huguet created the panel that is today in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC) dedicated to the *Death of Mary Magdalene* (1465–1480) (Figures 3 and 4). The representations of Mary Magdalene that appear in these artworks share the characteristic of presenting the penitent as a hirsute woman, a typical characteristic from the Italian Trecento and Germanic lands but also with some examples in France and England. Although the presence of a hirsute Mary Magdalene is an aspect yet to be studied in the Crown of Aragon (which does not occur elsewhere), this text is going to focus on the main original feature in these images: the less studied and particularly noteworthy visual representation of Mary Magdalene's

soul, coming out of her own mouth then ascending to the heavens accompanied by angels. That soul, with a very specific physiognomy, is an exceptional aspect in the international panorama of representations of the Transit of Mary Magdalene. That same gesture of the soul coming out of the mouth is a specific feature of art in the Crown of Aragon in some exceptional images in the case of Mary Magdalene, but that is not the case in the Dormition of the Mother of God.

Figure 1. Bernat Martorell. *Altarpiece of Saint Mary Magdalene from Perella*, 1437–1452, Episcopal Museum of Vic.

Figure 2. Bernat Martorell. "Transit of Mary Magdalene". Detail from *Altarpiece of Saint Mary Magdalene from Perella*, 1437–1452, Episcopal Museum of Vic.

Figure 3. Jaume Huguet, Altarpiece of Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew; Calvary; Death of Saint Mary Magdalene, 1465–1480, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC).

Figure 4. Jaume Huguet. "Death of Saint Mary Magdalene". Detail from *Altarpiece of Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew; Calvary; Death of Saint Mary Magdalene*, 1465–1480, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC).

Therefore, the main aim is to study the arrangements in the visual representation of Mary Magdalene's soul as regards her physiognomy and her departure through her mouth and ascent to the heavens. Given that the representation of those moments is shown in images of a hirsute Mary Magdalene, some matters about the woman covered in hair will be introduced to achieve the objective, since it is no coincidence that it is in images of the hairy penitent where the soul is present. All of this plays a fundamental role in the corporeality of the penitent, both due to her hirsutism and the fact that the soul is leaving precisely through the same orifice by which Mary Magdalene, in her dissolute life, had sinned and then kissed the feet of Jesus at the time of her conversion, as well as being the orifice through which the demons that had possessed her left. All of these matters were formulated by the patristic exegesis and their configuration of Mary Magdalene as a hybrid of different women from the Gospel, a hybrid that was officialized as of the sermon that Gregory the Great pronounced in Rome in 591 (*Homily 33, Lectio S. Evang. Sec. Luc. VII*, 36–50; PL LXXVI, 1239). The Fathers of the Latin Church, in their desire to harmonise what the gospels said, attempted to understand the identity of the different women who anointed Jesus. This is how the hybrid of Magdalene came about, in which essentially the anonymous sinner in the Gospel of Luke stands out (Luke 7: 37–50), as well as Mary, the sister of Lazarus and the woman who carried out the anointment in Bethany (Foskolou 2011). Out of all of them, the one that had the greatest influence and lasted over time was the sinner, whose sin is not mentioned but due to the traditional Judeo-Christian association of female sin with sex was considered to be of a sexual nature: she was a prostitute (Monzón Pertejo 2020). Although there were significant precedents given by Lefèvre D'Ètaples (1519) and Peter Ketter in 1935 (Ketter 2006), it was not until the 20th century that feminist theologians began to review the gospels without the misogynistic, androcentric prejudices arising from the patristic, revealing the probably deliberate confusion that turned the apostle into a repentant sinner (Schüssler Fiorenza 1975; Ricci 1994).

The basic hypothesis to explain the Transit of Mary Magdalene, and specifically the visual representation of her soul, rests on it being a visual borrowing of images from the Dormition of the Mother of God in the Crown of Aragon. This hypothesis will be backed by comparative analyses with artworks showing this episode of the life of the Virgin as well as by recurring to evangelical, patristic and legendary sources, sermons and *vitas* (hagiographies) from the period, which show Mary Magdalene's high status only below the Virgin as well as the relationship between the two women. To complete the analysis, other characteristics that both women share in visual matters and theological aspects will also be mentioned.

2. Results

The *Altarpiece of Saint Mary Magdalene from Perella* is dedicated entirely to the woman from Magdala, enthroned as a saint in the central section under the scene of the Calvary. On the left, from top to bottom, the woman is represented during the supper at Bethany and the encounter with the resurrected Jesus. On the right, the episodes represented here do not belong to the patrology or the Gospel but to medieval legends: in the top section, the hirsute woman is raised to Heaven by angels while a hermit cleric looks on awestruck by such an event. The lower section shows the death of Mary Magdalene on a bed, with her long hair perfectly arranged over her chest and her eyes closed, accompanied by Jesus himself, who with his hands extracts the penitent's soul before the attentive gaze of a group of angels. The physiognomy of the soul is that of a small Mary Magdalene wrapped in white fabrics with a halo.

The artwork by Huguet belonged to an altarpiece dedicated to Saint Anne, Saint Bartholomew and Saint Magdalene from the Church of Sant Martí de Pertegas, of which only the upper panels have been preserved today in the MNAC. In the preserved panels, the Calvary occupies the central part, flanked by the martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew and the death of Mary Magdalene. The woman is represented as completely hirsute on her death bed, accompanied by Saint Maximin and other priests and orants, before an altar presided over by the image of *Ecce Homo*. In this case, Mary Magdalene's soul, with the same physiognomy as in the work by Martorell, is ascended to Heaven by two angels.

They are two altarpieces that use the same technique (tempera on wood) and which resort to the same scenes in Mary Magdalene's life, especially as regards her penitence as a hirsute woman. In Martorell's work, the instant that the soul leaves the saint's mouth is represented; in Huguet's, it is the moment after the angels raise her soul to Heaven.

2.1. The Death of Mary Magdalene in La Legenda Aurea and Its Vernacular Translations

The sources linked to such images are studied below, demonstrating the difficulty in finding a textual source indicating the departure of Mary Magdalene's soul as well as her physiognomy.

As of the 13th century, images of Mary Magdalene were no longer restricted to episodes in the life of Jesus; hence, the conceptual image of Mary Magdalene began. After the officialization of Mary Magdalene's sinful past, and in consonance with the ecclesiastical ideas about the use of saints as exemplars of behavior, an entire series of images appear, representing the woman from Magdala's years of penitence (Haskins 1996; Foskolou 2011, pp. 272–73). The foundations having been created for the biography of the mythical Mary Magdalene with the patristic exegesis, the legendary side to this woman's life then grew, focusing attention on the post-ascension events. The *Vita eremitica* appeared in 9th century Italy, with Mary Magdalene assimilated as Mary of Egypt retiring to the desert with no clothes or sustenance for the thirty remaining years of her life to dedicate herself to penitence, prayer and contemplation, like a true hermit of the desert. In that same century, the *Vita apostolica* also spread, narrating the tasks of evangelization and miracles performed by Mary Magdalene after she traveled to France. Both legends ended up combined in the *Vita apostolica-eremitica* (Mycoff 1989; Auberger et al. 2008).[1]

In the 13th century, with *La Legenda Aurea* (LA) (1261–1267) by Jacobus de Varagine, these and other legends were compiled, combined and organized along with other legends that appeared throughout the Middle Ages. The Dominican author of the compilation dedicated chapter XCVI to Saint Mary Magdalene, described as a sinner full of guilt who, through penitence, reached eternal glory, thereby demonstrating the Gregorian fusion of characters to be completely consolidated. As this work was the most complete and widespread as of the 13th century, an analysis has been made of this source in its original version and in the translations in vernacular languages. Specifically, on dealing with the Iberian Peninsula, the *Flos Sanctorum* (FS) and *Vides de Sants Rossellones* (VSR) have been chosen since they were circulating in Catalonia at the time the two altarpieces being studied here were made.[2]

In these legends, it is Mary Magdalene herself in parallelism with the story of Mary of
Egypt who announces her own death to the hermit priest: "Our Savior has communicated
to me that very soon He will remove me definitively from this world" ("*Nuestro Salvador
me ha comunicado que muy pronto me sacará definitivamente de este mundo*"), entrusting her
with notifying Saint Maximin to tell him "that next Resurrection Sunday, when he rises
to sing the matins for the festive day, he should enter his oratory [. . .] and he will find
me there" ("*que el próximo domingo de Resurrección, cuando se levanter para cantar los maitines
de las fiesta, entre en su oratorio [. . .] y que allí me encontrará*"). The priest notified Saint
Maximin, who "on Resurrection Sunday, at the time he had been told, entered his oratory
alone and saw the Saint surrounded by a chorus of angels that had conveyed her there" ("*el
domingo de Resurrección, a la hora que se le había indicado, entró él solo en su oratorio y vio a la
santa rodeada del coro de ángeles que la habían transportado hasta allí*"). After the encounter with
Mary Magdalene, "Saint Maximin ordered all of his clergy to come into the oratory and the
priest who had acted as the saint's messenger, and in their presence he administered to her
the communion of the body and blood of Christ, received by her in her mouth while her
eyes flooded with tears" ("*San Maximino mandó pasar al interior del oratorio a todo su clero y
al sacerdote que había actuado como recadero de la santa y en presencia de ellos administró a ésta
en communion el cuerpo y sangre de Cristo, recibidos por ella en su boca, mientras sus ojos se le
inundaban de lágrimas*") (*LA*, vol. I, p. 388).

The original text by Varagine, which is longer than its vernacular translations, de-
scribes how Mary Magdalene looked when she received the communion before dying:
"Mary Magdalene's face, accustomed to the familiar encounters with the angels, had
acquired such a shine and glowed in such a way that nobody could have more easily
withstood the incidence of the sun's rays on their eyes than the glare emanating from her
face" ("*el rostro de María Magdalena, habituado al trato familiar de los ángeles, había adquirido
tal brillo y resplandecía de tal manera que cualquiera hubiera podido soportar más fácilmente la
incidencia sobre sus ojos de los rayos del sol que los fulgores que de aquella cara emanaban*") (*LA*: I,
p. 388). The *FS* maintains the description of Mary Magdalene's appearance: "thus shone
the Magdalene's face since she had seen the angels continually over a long time, because
more lightly could a man see the sun's rays than her face" ("*así resplandeció la cara de la
Madalena, porque muy grant tienpo continuadamente viera los ángeles, porque más ligero podría
omne ver los rayos del sol, que non la su faz*") (*FL*, p. 444). The Catalan version, the briefest of
all, insists that the light irradiated from the woman: "And thus with him he saw her face,
he could not stand it, due to the great brightness of her face, which blazed like the sun" ("*E
ayxí con él la gardà en la cara, no o poc sostener, per la gran clartat de la sua visa, qui flameyava
enayxí con sol*") (*VSR*, III, p. 85). Thus, these legends related the Magdalene's luminous
appearance with the celestial contacts she had experienced on being lifted by the angels to
Heaven in the canonical hours to receive divine sustenance, without mentioning her hairy
appearance at all.

After receiving the communion, "Mary Magdalene, right there, at the foot of the altar,
spread herself out on the ground, and in that pose her soul emigrated to the Lord. Just
after expiring, a smell began to emanate from her body so sweet that the entire oratory was
impregnated with it, and whoever entered that sacred place perceived the effluviums of
such an extremely smooth aroma, which lasted without disappearing for about seven days"
("*María Magdalena, allí mismo, ante la base del altar, tendióse en tierra, y estando en esa actitud
su alma emigró al señor. Nada más expirar, de su cuerpo empezó a emanar un olor tan exquisito
que todo el oratorio quedó impregnado de él, y cuantos entraban en aquel sagrado lugar percibían
los efluvios de tan suavísimo aroma, que duró sin desaparecer unos siete días*") (*LA*, I, p. 388).
Thus, Varagine's version limits itself to indicating that "her soul emigrated to the Lord"
and, as with the hirsute's appearance, does not give more details about the process or the
physiognomy of the soul, but it does indicate that the place filled with aromas. Consulting
FS (p. 444) does not clear up questions about the soul's physiognomy either, but indicates
that it entered Paradise: "and communed by the hand of the bishop with many tears. From
there, spread before the altar, that saintly soul left her body, and went to Paradise with

the angels. And after it ended, there remained such an aroma in the oratory that they continued to smell it for seven days." ("*e comulgó de la mano del obispo con muchas lágrimas. Dende, echada ante el altar, saliole aquella alma santa del su cuerpo, e fuese para Paraíso con los ángeles. E después ue ella finó, quedó tanto olor en el oratorio, que por siete días continuadamente lo olían*"). The same occurs in the Catalan version: "And appealing to all the clergymen and the aforementioned presbyter, she received the body of God from the bishop's hand, weeping humbly. Afterwards, her saintly soul went to God. In that place there was a great aroma smelled for vii days, by all those who entered there" ("*E, apelats tots los clerges e·l prevere ya dit, ela rebé lo cors de Déu de la mà del bisbe, ploran humilment. Enaprés/la sua santa ànima se n'anà a Déu. En lo qual loc fo mot gran odor sentida per ·vii· diez, per tots sels qui là intraven*") (*VSR*: III, p. 85). Hence, none of the three versions describes the visual characteristics of the Magdalene's soul, but all coincide in the fragrances that flooded the oratory.

The only description of a human soul, albeit not of Magdalene's, is found in the episode in which the woman, by now a miracle-working saint and object of veneration, becomes the bearer of monk Stephen's soul "Mary Magdalene [. . .] took in her hands his soul which appeared in the form of a white dove, and [. . .] bore him to Heaven" ("*María Magdalena, [. . .] tomaba en sus manos su alma que presentaba la forma de una paloma blanca, y [. . .] la llevaba al cielo*") (*LA*: I, p. 388). *FS* (p. 446) only indicates that Stephen's soul was "white like the sun" ("*blanca como el cielo*"), while this episode does not even appear in *VSR*. Thus, the only reference to the physiognomy of a soul is found in the image of a "white dove". However, the representations by Martorell and Huguet do not use such a description, which is the only physiognomic reference to the human soul in the legend of the Magdalene. To sum up, the most widespread texts indicate the departure of the Magdalene's soul and its union with God in Paradise, without providing details that artists could use to lend visuality to such matters. As a result, it is necessary to turn to other resources to clarify this aspect: the representation of the departure of the soul in the Dormition of the Mother of God in works created in the Crown of Aragon.

2.2. The Soul of the Virgin in the Sources

Given that the Dormition of the Mother of God has been widely studied and is not the main subject of this study, only brief clarifications will be given about its representation in order to then focus our attention on the Magdalene. The Dormition or *Koimesis* of the Mother of God originated in Byzantium with the woman portrayed on her deathbed, her hands crossed on her chest, surrounded by the twelve apostles at the moment Jesus came to take her soul. This Byzantine arrangement remained unchanged for some time in Western art until it was modified and renewed, fundamentally as regards the posture of the Virgin, the representation of her as agonizing but not dead and the importance that Jesus gradually acquired toward the end of the Middle Ages as the bearer of the soul in detriment to the role of apostles (Reau 2000, pp. 619–32).

There are numerous panels representing this moment. Here, some have been selected from the Crown of Aragon to make a comparative analysis with the death of the Magdalene, with the ultimate aim of demonstrating the Magdalene's visual borrowing from the Virgin. Two types of soul are detected in this selection: one that specifies its visual representation as a newborn or infant wrapped in a tunic ending in the shape of a cone ("Dormition of the Mother of God" from the *Altarpiece of Saint Michael and Saint Peter* created by Jaume Cirera in 1432–1433 (Figure 5); the "Dormition" by Jaume Serra for the *Altarpiece of the Resurrection* in 1361 (Figure 6); the work by the Second Maestro of Estopiñán, "Dormition of the Mother of God", *ca.* 1450 (Figure 7), the "Dormition" by Pedro García de Benabarre (*ca.* 1450–1455) (Figure 8), the "Transit of the Virgin" by Joan Reixach (*ca.* 1460) (Figure 9) and the *Altarpiece of the Constable* by Jaume Huguet from 1462 (Figure 10),[3] and another less popular type in which the soul is also represented as an infant but kneeling, as seen in the *Altarpiece of the Virgin of the Commendator* (1367–1381) by Jaume Serra (Figures 11 and 12). In both types, the soul has a halo, and its hands appear in a gesture of prayer. In addition

to these physiognomic types, there are also two variants: the more popular one appears departing from Mary's mouth while being received by Jesus, whereas the other depicts the soul already far from the body in the upper part of the composition.

Figure 5. Jaume Cirera, "Dormition of the Virgin". Detail from *Altarpiece of Saint Michael and Saint Peter*, 1432–1433, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC).

Figure 6. Jaume Serra, "Dormition", *Altarpiece of the Resurrection*, 1361, Museum of Zaragoza.

Figure 7. Second Maestro of Estopiñán, "Dormition of the Virgin", ca. 1450, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC).

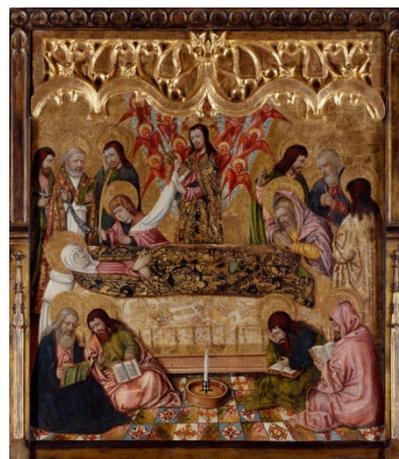**Figure 8.** Pedro García de Benabarre, "Dormition", ca. 1450–1455, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC).

Figure 9. Joan Reixach, "Transit of the Virgin", ca. 1460, Museum of Fine Arts of Valencia.
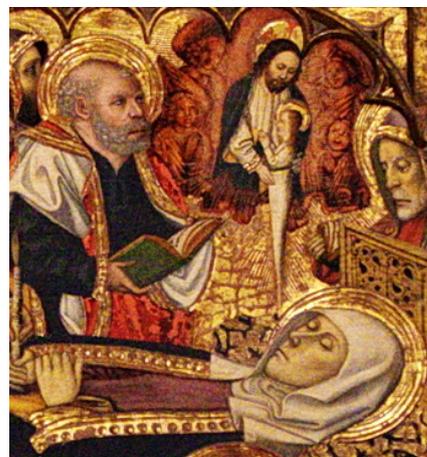

Figure 10. Jaume Huguet, "Dormition", *Altarpiece of the Constable*, 1462, Chapel of Saint Agatha, Barcelona.

Figure 11. Jaume Serra, "Dormition", *Altarpiece of the Virgin of the Commendator*, 1367–1381, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC).

Figure 12. Jaume Serra, "Dormition" (detail), *Altarpiece of the Virgin of the Commendator*, 1367–1381, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

Given that in the artworks by Martorell and Huguet on Mary Magdalene, the physiognomy shown is of the former type, the images of the Transit of the Virgin showing such a physiognomy will be taken more into account. As for the arrangement of the soul, in Martorell's altarpiece, it is clearly shown while being extracted by Jesus from the Magdalene's mouth, whereas in Huguet's version, the penitent's soul is seen ascending to Heaven accompanied by two angels. With this small selection of works demonstrating the abundant representation of the Virgin's soul in the Crown of Aragon in the 14th and 15th centuries, and due to the lack of a description of the Magdalene's soul in textual sources, it is most likely that the image of the Transit of Mary Magdalene is visually borrowed from the iconographic type of the Dormition of the Mother of God.

Notwithstanding all of the above, the visual representation is not the only possible reason upholding the thesis of this paper, nor is it sufficient in itself. Delving into both apocryphal and legendary sources, more links can be found that bolster the motives behind this visual borrowing. In fact, the sources describe the penitent with an appearance full of radiance, indicating that after her death the place was inundated with wonderful perfumes. The sources describing the Dormition of the Mother of God also allude to the fragrances emanating as well as the radiance. Take, for example, some of the apocryphal accounts of the Assumption[4] (written from the 4th to 6th centuries), which indicate that "at the moment when her immaculate soul departed, the place was inundated with perfume and an ineffable light" ("*en el momento de salir su alma inmaculada, el lugar se vio inundado de*

perfume y de una luz inefable") (*Ps. John the Theologian (Juan el Teólogo)*, XLIV: p. 320), "such a radiance ensued and a perfume so gentle, that all those around fell onto their faces" ("*sobrevino tal resplandor y un perfume tan suave, que todos los circunstantes cayeron sobre sus rostros*") (*Narration by Ps. Joseph of Arimathea* (José de Arimatea), XI: p. 347) and "she exhaled a perfume of a fragrance [so gentle] that all those around were overcome by sleep except only the apostles and three virgins" ("*se exhaló un perfume de fragancia [tan suave] que todos los circunstantes fueron dominados por el sueño, exceptuados solamente los apóstoles y tres vírgenes*") (*Book of John, Archbishop of Thessalonica (Libro de Juan, arzobispo de Tesalónica)*, XII: p. 338). As one can see, the great brightness and fragrances are revealed to be aspects shared by the Transit of both women. Furthermore, there is another parallelism: the reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Whereas in the case of the Magdalene, the legends indicate that her death happened on the day of the Resurrection, in the case of the Virgin, there are allusions to the death and resurrection of her son in his own words:

> "But after having suffered by men in accordance with what is written and after having resurrected on the third day and risen to Heaven after forty days, when you should see me come to you in the company of angels and archangels, of saints, of virgins and of my disciples, you can be sure then that the time has come for your soul to be separated from your body and conveyed by me to Heaven, where it will never suffer any tribulation or anguish". (*Narration by Ps. Joseph of Arimathea* (*Narración del Ps. José de Arimatea*), II: p. 344)[5]

Whereas there are no descriptions of the Magdalene's soul, in the apocryphal accounts of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, there is some information that helps to describe the physiognomy of both women:

> "He took her soul and put it in Michael's hands, not without having wrapped it beforehand in something like veils whose radiance it is impossible to describe. But we the apostles saw that Mary's soul, on being delivered into the hands of Michael, included all the bodily members, outside the sexual difference, with nothing but the semblance of all [human] bodies in her and a whiteness seven times greater than the sun's. Peter, for his part, overcome with joy, asked the Lord, saying: 'Who of us has a soul so white as Mary's?' To which the Lord replied: 'Oh, Peter! The souls of all who are born unto this world are the same, but on departing the body they are not so radiant because He sent them in one condition and in others [very different] He found them, on having loved the darkness of many sins. But if one keeps oneself from the tenebrous iniquities of this world, their soul will delight in such whiteness on departing from the body". (*Book of John, Archbishop of Thessalonica* (*Libro de Juan, arzobispo de Tesalónica*), XII: p. 338)[6]

There are several relevant aspects to the aforementioned excerpt. Firstly, there is the fact that the soul is wrapped in veils, which provides a source for the appearance of the soul covered in white, radiant fabrics. Furthermore, the physiognomy of the soul is being given, which "included all the bodily members" with "the semblance of all [human] bodies", establishing the visual representation of the soul as being typical of the human body, without resorting to other kinds of physiognomy such as birds or butterflies, frequent in representations from Antiquity. As well as the appearance of a human body, it is added that it was "outside the sexual difference". This reference may be linked to angelical aspects or the body of infants which, though physiologically different, are at a stage of pure innocence without manifesting any kind of sexuality. This matter would fit perfectly with the representations of the soul, both for the Magdalene and the Virgin, in the altarpieces from the Crown of Aragon, where the soul, wrapped in white fabrics, acquires the form of a newborn. However, the aforementioned paragraph also has other relevant aspects. The question posed by Peter to Jesus manifests his amazement at the whiteness of the soul. Jesus' response holds the key to that luminosity: the absence of sin. Thus, in the case of the Virgin, free of sin since her very conception, the whiteness of the soul is evident; and in the

case of the Magdalene, said whiteness and luminosity alludes to the healing effects that penitence has achieved on her previously sinful soul, leaving it clean and pure.[7]

2.3. Shared Visualities

Together with what has been mentioned above, Mary Magdalene and the Virgin share other aspects: a death surrounded by many witnesses and the ascension to Heaven.

2.3.1. A Death with Witnesses

In the sources as well as in the representations of the two women, the departure of the soul occurs in the midst of a great many characters. This fact is also emphasized in the literature of the time about Mary Magdalene: "With a great shedding of tears she took by the hand of Bishop Maximin the body of the blood of the Lord, and where being before the altar she passed on to eternal joys, as we know by authority of very high men, and after her passing to Heaven in the place she died" ("*Con gran derramamiento de lágrimas tomó por mano de Maximino obispo el cuero de la sangre del Señor, e donde seyendo ante el altar pasó a las eternales alegrías, segund lo avemos por auctoridad de muy altos varones, e después de su pasamiento al cielo el lugar do morió*") (de Luna 2009, p. 515). The presence of witnesses to the key events in Christianity is a constant as of their early visual manifestations. In fact, the first known representation of Mary Magdalene (Dura Europos, 2nd and 3rd centuries) is intended to present the woman as a witness to the Resurrection, a fundamental aspect in the early centuries of Christianity when the presence of witnesses was required to reaffirm the new faith. Although in the 15th century Christianity dominated the European panorama, it was not safe from the different heresies such as the Albigensian one, which rejected different sacraments, and especially the Waldensian one with its rejection of veneration of the Virgin and the saints. For this reason, presenting the death of the two main women in the life of Jesus with witnesses responded to the need to revoke heresies as well as dealing with a miraculous event in need of witnesses who were figures of authority.

2.3.2. Ascension to Heaven

In the Ascension of Mary Magdalene, one has to differentiate between two different situations: the daily ascensions during her penitence at canonical hours, and the ascension of her soul departing from her body lying down. The former had a multitude of representations in European art, shown as a woman covered in hair, with Italian and German productions being the most representative and numerous. On the other hand, as has been indicated, the ascension of her soul is a very infrequent element, such that the work by Jaume Huguet is one of the few examples in existence. In the case of the Virgin, the moment of her Assumption was widely represented. So, there are two women named Mary, the closest to Jesus, raised to the heavens by angels. It is in this matter wherein the Magdalene's hirsuteness plays a significant role, since it acts as an element to differentiate between the ascent of the penitent and the Assumption of the Virgin.

2.4. The Relationship between the Virgin and Mary Magdalene
2.4.1. Chastity and Virginity

Sexuality, or the lack of it, is another fundamental aspect to link the two women. Both opted for a life of chastity: the Virgin always, the Magdalene after her conversion. During her years of penitence, Mary Magdalene was committed to a contemplative life and recovered her chastity by depriving her body of the mundane pleasures of her previous life as a sinner. This woman was described as the utmost example of *castissima meretrix*. This name comes from the formula used by Ambrose to name the Church itself, *casta meretrix*, and thus extol her as the Spouse of Christ based on the *Song of the songs*. Ambrose (*Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* 3.17) mentions the genealogy of sinning women in detriment to some women saints who are omitted. Other Fathers of the Church also take up the idea of the Church as a sinning female saint or a prostitute turned into a virgin. John Chrysotom indicates that "with Christ, she who before was a prostitute, once she became the wife,

became virgin" ("*con Cristo la que antes era una prostituta, una vez hecha esposa, se convierte en virgen*") (PG 52, 402) and Gregory of Elvira indicates that "she who was a deserving sinner becomes a virgin–as the Lord said to the Jews: *The prostitutes will precede them in the kingdom of Heaven*" ("*se hace virgen la que antes era pecadora meretriz –como decía el Señor a los judíos: Las prostitutas los precederán en el reino de los cielos*") (*Tractatus*, 12, 10). These are just two brief examples of how the Church was understood as a sinner turned into a chaste virgin. Likewise, the Fathers of the Church used this same name for different repented women sinners, such as the Magdalene and Rahab, the prostitute from the *Book of Joshua*, to whom Fulgentius of Ruspe dedicates the following words: "She, who until now had prostituted herself with idols and had been an impious prostitute, was converted on receiving Jesus' messengers into a believing, faithful and chaste woman" ("*Ella, que hasta ahora se había prostituido con ídolos y había sido una prostituta impía, se convirtió al recibir a los mensajeros de Jesús en una mujer creyente, fiel y casta*") (*Ad Euthymium de reimisione peccatorum*, 1, 21) (Giudice 2012). Hence, Mary Magdalene as *castissima meretrix* can also be understood as a sinner who, thanks to Jesus' mercifulness and to practicing asceticism, recovers her virginity.

This aspect is backed by the presence of Mary Magdalene in the litanies of saints, at the head of a group of virgins: "St. Mary Magdalen,/St. Agatha,/St. Lucy,/St. Agnes,/St. Cecilia, /St. Catherine,/St. Anastasia,/All ye holy Virgins and Widows" (McGinnis 2012, p. 205).[8] Indeed, in the miniatured manuscript preserved in the British Library (Figure 13), there is a representation of Mary Magdalene in the Chorus of Virgins. The Magdalene's virginity requires a deeper reflection and debate, which will be taken up again in the Discussion section. In this point, the aim is to point out another of the characteristics shared with the Virgin, with the matter of her chastity being clear, whereas the matter of virginity needs greater depth. It should be a remembered that in the exegesis of the Eastern Church, Mary Magdalene never acquired the facet of a sinner, being considered a holy woman, as of her role as a Myrrh-bearing witness to the Resurrection, revered as an equal to the apostles with no shadow of sin (Saxer 1958).

Figure 13. *The Benedictional of St Aethelwold*, f. 1v: Full-page miniature of the Chorus of Virgins, ca. *963–984*, British Library, London.

2.4.2. Incarnation, Pain and Resurrection

Both the Virgin Mary and Magdalene appear in the Gospel and in the legends as the two women closest to Jesus. The Virgin Mary appears as the one chosen for Incarnation, and the Magdalene as the predilect disciple:

"The Lord gave immense benefits to Mary Magdalene and He distinguished her with very significant shows of predilection [. . .]; He honored her with his trust and friendliness; [. . .] He treated her constantly with understanding and gentleness [. . .] for love for her He resuscitated her brother Lazarus [. . .] she was the first one to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared and the one entrusted by Him to communicate His resurrection to the others, thus becoming *apostle of the apostles*". (*LA*, I, p. 384)[9]

The women are the two pained figures at the foot of the cross. In the visual repertoire of the 14th and 15th centuries, it is Mary Magdalene who is seen to have the more visible pain, agitated and externalized, whereas the Virgin contains her grief without this diminishing her pain. In Masaccio's *Crucifixion*, the Magdalene appears as a figure in exalted pain, which she conveys through the gesture of her entire body, especially her arms. The Virgin, on the other hand, is seen with a more contained, repressed sorrow. The Magdalene, in pain and weeping, becomes an element that more intensely channels emotions among those contemplating the representation. In the *Life of our lord and savior Jesus Christ* by Saint Bonaventure, it is indicated that the Virgin showed moderate, silent pain as opposed to the Magdalene, who wept inconsolably. One explanation for the Virgin's contained pain is given by Saint Ambrose, who understands that her sorrow was much lighter since she knew of the future resurrection of her son (Haskins 1996, pp. 219–30). The Calvary is also represented in the panels analyzed, with Huguet repeating the formula of the Virgin's contained pain, which loses power compared to the impassioned pain of a Magdalene embracing Jesus' feet (Figure 14). Although the Crucifixion shows the two women's pain differently, in medieval literature, the Virgin's pain is also described. This occurs in the *Planctus Mariae* or lamentations. The best example of *planctus* from medieval times in the Iberian Peninsula is that of the Virgin at the foot of the cross, the utmost lament in Hispanic poetry from the 12th to 15th centuries. In Catalan, among others, there is the *Plany de la Verge, Les trobes en Lahors de la Verge Maria* and *Augatz seyós* (Disalvo 2010).

Figure 14. Jaume Huguet. "Crucifixion", *Altarpiece of Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew; Calvary; Death of Saint Mary Magdalene*, 1465–1480, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC).

There is also another fundamental element that links the two women in the Gospel: The birth and resurrection of Jesus. Whereas the Virgin is the first to have news of the Incarnation of the son of God, Mary Magdalene is the first to have news of his resurrection. Hence, both are presented as crucial witnesses to the beginning of Jesus' earthly and celestial life. This idea is also found in *LA* (I, p. 384), emphasizing the fact that the two main witnesses of the life of Jesus are women: "Just as the woman was not excluded from knowledge of the mystery of the Lord's Incarnation or of his Resurrection, neither were the angels. That is why God expressly used them [the angels] to announce one and the other mystery to the woman: the Incarnation to the Virgin Mary and the resurrection to the Magdalene" ("*Así como la mujer no fue excluida del conocimiento del misterio de la Encarnación ni del de la Resurrección del Señor, tampoco lo fueran los ángeles. Por eso Dios expresamente se sirvió de ellos para anunciar uno y otro misterio a la mujer: el de la Encarnación a la Virgen María, y el de la Resurrección a la Magdalena*"). *LA* (I, pp. 231–33) also explains that, although the evangelists do not mention it, the resurrected Jesus appeared to the Virgin before anyone else, given that "the mere idea that such a Son should have acted with such disregard and such detachment with such a Mother is repugnant to any conscience" ("*la sola idea de que semejante Hijo se hubiera conducido tan desatentamente y con tanto despego con semejante Madre repugna a cualquier conciencia*"). Thus, Varagine explains that the silence of the evangelists is because the appearance of the resurrected one to his mother is an obvious matter that does not need commentary, but also because using the Virgin as a witness would be subject to derision on being understood as "hallucinations due to the intense love she felt for her Son".

2.4.3. Sermons and Writings from the 15th Century in the Crown of Aragon

The Dominican Vicente Ferrer was one of the main preachers at the time in which the altarpieces being studied here were created. Among the matters dealt with in his sermons, he dedicated a part to the symbolic facet of the clothes necessary for the faithful's souls to reach Heaven. This shows the general feeling in the medieval panorama in which vanity and beauty, intimately related to lust, constituted the utmost feminine sins that linked them to the Devil. The main paradigm was provided by Mary Magdalene before her conversion, the "devil's daughter" ("*filla del dyable*"), later named by Ferrer as "the one in love with Jesus Christ" ("*la enamorada de Jesuchrist*"). At the same time, the Virgin Mary was the ideal model for women as of the 13th century for her purity, virginity and maternity, as opposed to the first woman, Eve (Toldrà i Vilardell 2019, pp. 434–41). Mary Magdalene is found in between, as due to her penitence, she achieves redemption for all her sins and comes close to the level of the Virgin thanks to the saving effect of penitence on her soul.

In the Sermon of the Feast of Saint Magdalene, Ferrer detects five phases in her life: the life of vice, the virtuous conversion, the gracious perfection, fruitful preaching and glorious contemplation.[10] This sermon maintains the typical characteristics of hagiographic sermons, in other words, the selection of a biblical passage to turn it into a moral lesson, also adding elements from the *Summa Theologica* and the *Vitae Patrum*. Nevertheless, for the case of the women who lived at Jesus' side, as happened with the hirsute's appearance, Ferrer often resorts to the work of Jacobus of Varagine, as well as to the hymns dedicated to these characters. Ferrer points to the paths that Christ had indicated for salvation: pure innocence, whose ultimate example is the Virgin; and penitence, exemplified by the woman from Magdala. As for the contemplative side of Mary Magdalene and her ascent to the heavens, Ferrer resorted to a hymn in honor of the saint, which has been identified with the hymn attributed to Alan de Lille that appears in numerous Dominican manuscripts from the 14th and 15th centuries (Viera 1991, pp. 61–66).

In another of his sermons on the Magdalene, after explaining the entry of souls into Heaven after the arrival of the Last Judgement, Ferrer indicates that Jesus left two paths marked to achieve it: one of pure innocence and the other of penitence. The former is exemplified by the Virgin, the latter by Mary Magdalene through her years of penitence, thereby insisting again on the ways of reaching salvation. At the same time, he refers to the

Magdalene's chastity; a chastity and purity that likens the penitent to the Virgin. In this way, Magdalene becomes an *exemplum* accessible to the congregations. As for the death of the penitent, Ferrer broadens what had been seen up to then in the sources: not only does he insist on the woman's desire to commune, but he also describes how the woman explains to Saint Maximin that she will enter Paradise. Magdalene prays, repeating the words that Jesus said on the cross: "In your hands I entrust my spirit". Once her soul left her body after the communion, a multitude of angels took her to Paradise (Ferreiro 2010).

In the sermon for the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, the preacher again establishes a link between Mary Magdalene and her contemplative life with the Virgin, pointing to three aspects. Firstly, there is Mary Magdalene's listening at the feet of Jesus related to the Virgin's awareness of Jesus' great wisdom, who "would sit at his feet", too. Next, Ferrer explains what Jesus entrusted to his mother: "you will take my place for some time; you will console my brothers, the apostles, who will resort to you when they doubt. As of that moment, the life of the Virgin was contemplative" ("*vos ocuparéis mi lugar durante cierto tiempo; consolaréis a mis hermanos, los Apóstoles, los cuales recurrirán a vos en sus dudas. Desde este instante la vida de la Virgen fue contemplativa*"). Lastly, he explains that "the third task of the contemplative life is signaled by the topic: Mary [Magdalene] chose the best part. In that phrase you have the story of the today's feast. After twelve, or twenty-four years, the Virgin one day was praying and said: 'Oh, my son! It has been so many years that I have been among the Jews; the Apostles have dispersed around the world; receive me unto You'; and she wept [. . .] Christ shows us in his Mother an example to desire Paradise" ("*La tercera obra de la vida contemplativa la señala el tema: María eligió la mejor parte. En esta frase tenéis la historia de la fiesta de hoy. Después que transcurrieron doce, o veinticuatro años, la Virgen cierto día estaba orando y decía: ¡Oh Hijo mío!, hace tantos años que estoy entre los judíos; los Apóstoles están dispersos por el mundo; recibidme con Vos; y lloraba... Cristo nos muestra en su Madre un ejemplo para desear el Paraíso*") (Ferrari 1695).[11]

Although the link between the two women has been demonstrated in Vicente Ferrer's preaching, it is with two subsequent writers that the link between the two is completely reinforced. Joan Roís de Corella and Isabel de Villena explicitly set out a relationship of friendship and mutual help between the two women.[12] Although the writings of Corella and Villena come after the altarpieces by Martorell and Huguet, their sources are from prior translations. In the work by Corella, *Història de la Gloriosa Santa Magdalena*, the significant friendship between the two women stands out: the Magdalene remained at the Virgin Mary's side during her son's suffering and, after his death, she served and helped her for twelve years. After the death of the Virgin, the Magdalene dedicated herself to preaching and penitence. Corella also describes Mary Magdalene's death in detail, specifically the arrival of her soul in Heaven, where she is welcomed by the Virgin and Jesus, who had gathered all of the hierarchies to receive the penitent's soul, which would remain at his feet for all eternity. Hence, the work by Corella, published in 1490 but written in the previous decade, is one of the first to insist not on the sins of the woman from Magdala, but on the positive aspects of her life, among them Jesus' preference for her over the other saints, the relationship with the Virgin and her function of compensating for Eve's sin, as well as the reception of her soul in the midst of the celestial court (Juan-Mompó 1999, p. 17).

In the *Vita Christi* by Isabel de Villena, the female characters acquire the utmost roles, defending their superiority against men. Despite this great new turn, Villena's work remains a part of the tradition of the end of the Middle Ages of narrating the life of Jesus in a novelesque way, developing the characters' feelings to convey the emotion to the faithful. These works, which also include the *Vita Christi* by Eiximenis (1403), took the aforementioned work by Bonaventure as their point of reference. In Villena's text, seeing the Magdalene's pain the day before his death, Jesus entrusts her with being at his mother's side, as happens in the work by Corella:

> "Magdalena: see to it that my mother is the most important thing I leave behind in this world and thus you will serve me. Love her and serve her: I leave her to take my place to console all of you. [. . .]. Do not stray from her authority and attend

to her advice and obey her. She will be your mother and your teacher. [. . .] You will stay by my beloved mother's side for twelve years, and afterwards you will be completely orphaned of father and mother [. . .]. Magdalena, for your harsh and great penitence, you will be given invaluable consolations. [. . .] And at the end of your life, I will come for you and bear you to my Glory". (de Villena 1987, p. 111)[13]

3. Discussion

Except for the brief mention by Baschet (2016) about Mary Magdalene's soul, there is no bibliography about it. For this reason, the discussion revolves around the elements that have been used to defend the hypothesis that the visual representation of the soul of the woman from Magdala has been borrowed from that of the Virgin. There are elements to be gleaned from said discussion that serve to broaden these matters in future studies on the topic, about which this text has made a preliminary approach.

Baschet (2016, pp. 145–46) describes the Magdalene's soul in Martorell's altarpiece as follows: "the upper half of the soul is somatomorphic, while its lower part stretches out and thins until it becomes a fine white filament that seems to come out of the saint's mouth". Far from delving into the origins of the representation, which Baschet himself describes as peculiar and circumscribed to the Crown of Aragon, he inquires into its possible meanings. The author explains that the fine filament alludes to the soul's movement, emphasizing its separation from the body, enabling two of the era's main concerns about the body and soul to be reconciled: "on the one hand, to show the link and continuity between the soul and the living person [...] and, on the other, to differentiate the soul from the body". Baschet also explains the possible meanings of the departure through her mouth, a resource used not only for saints and the Virgin, but also occasionally for sinners. Although Baschet recognizes that the physiognomy of Mary Magdalene's soul is "peculiar", as well as its belonging to the Catalan sphere, his work is restricted to the description and its possible meanings; it does not clarify the origins of the representation.

For his part, without alluding to Magdalene, Barasch (2005, pp. 13–25) underlines the variability in representing souls until medieval times, when an attempt is made to establish some fixed characteristics, especially two: their small size, taking on the appearance of a newborn, and their anonymity; in other words, the souls have a face that is not linked to the deceased. Unlike Baschet, Barasch does resort to images of the Dormition of the Mother of God as an example to detect said characteristics, concluding that the soul's appearance, resembling an infant, and its anonymity would oblige the onlookers to look at the deceased to identify them. Furthermore, toward the end of the Middle Ages, Barasch indicates that the departure of the soul gave information about its destiny: depending on whether it was taken by angels or demons, or whether there was a struggle between those beings to take it, the judgment the soul received would be revealed, and thus whether or not the deceased would be condemned or saved.

Hence, Baschet confirms the exceptional nature of the altarpieces under study here, and their approximation to the meaning gives valuable information for future research to delve not only into the origins of the visual representation of Mary Magdalene's soul, but also into its meanings. Meanwhile, Barasch's proposals, while not mentioning Mary Magdalene's visual repertoire, collaborate in reinforcing some of the proposals previously developed such as the link with representations of the Virgin. He also adds an important aspect for future studies: the significance of being raised to the heavens by angels. This is a matter which has not been developed in depth due to space limitations.

In order to finally reaffirm that hypothesis put forward here regarding the physiognomy of Mary Magdalene's soul and its departure through her mouth as an element typical of Catalan art, one can allude to other scenes where Mary Magdalene's soul is portrayed, such as in the altarpiece with stories of Mary Magdalene in the Museo Civico d'Arte Antica (Palazzo Madama in Turin, ca. 1330) and the Madonna Triptych by the Maestro of Offida (Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Tursi, ca. 1340). In both the aforementioned altarpiece

and triptych, the Magdalene's soul is shown rising to heaven with the help of angels. Although her size is smaller, her physiognomy differs a great deal from what is seen in the Catalan altarpieces, in addition to the fact that the soul is not seen departing from her mouth. Consequently, it can be affirmed that the portrayal of the Magdalene's soul can be seen in other geographical places, but the specific physiognomy and the deceased departing through the mouth is a characteristic of Catalan painting in the 15th century. This aspect, demonstrated with the analysis put forward and relying on a comparison of artworks from other countries, is also supported by Baschet's aforementioned statements.

As for Mary Magdalene's virginity and its connection to the Virgin, Katherine Jansen has carried out two important studies in this regard (2000 and 2001). Jansen tackles the matter by resorting to the preachings of the Franciscan and Dominican orders in Italy which, like the Crown of Aragon, insist on the paths to salvation exemplified by the Virgin and the Magdalene, emphasizing aspects of the latter that make her similar to the Virgin, and also coinciding with what has been presented above. Whereas the Dominican Vicente Ferrer, among others, has been used for the Crown of Aragon, Jansen (2000) resorts to Friar Ludovico, who indicates that the two luminaries of Heaven are the Virgin and the Magdalene: the former for the innocent, the latter for the sinners, as well as insisting on the Magdalene's position at the head of the virgins. This idea is repeated by the Dominican Tommaso Agni da Lentini, who indicates Mary Magdalene's superiority not only over the other virgins but also over the saints and apostles, with only the Virgin Mary remaining above her. The same aspects seen in Catalan lands are repeated in the Italian context. In addition to the sermons, Jansen also uses the *vitas* of different women devotees of the time, such as Caterina Da Cortona and Saint Humility of Faenza, insisting on the Magdalene's virginity and her relationship with the mother Mary.

Jansen's studies are of great relevance not only because they complement and bolster what is posed for the Crown of Aragon, but also because they include an ulterior explanation of the significance of recovered virginity. As of the 13th century, the author explains, the state of virginity was no longer exclusively linked to physiological matters in order to be understood in moral terms, differentiating corporeal from spiritual virginity, while the two were not exclusive: whereas corporeal virginity was unrecoverable, the spiritual one could be reached through penitence, with Mary Magdalene as the utmost example. Jansen also detects two visual borrowings that did not appear in the Crown of Aragon: Mary Magdalene's maternity, mother of penitents, giving the example of the Church of Saint Mary Magdalene in Bergamo and the representation of the Magdalene as *Christophora* or Christ-bearer, whose origins are also to be found in representations of the Virgin (Jansen 2000, 2001). Mary Magdalene's relationship with maternity comes from some of the miracles she performed during her journey and stay in Marseilles, such as the miracle she performed on the governor and his wife, bestowing upon them the ability to have descendants. As for the portrayal of the Magdalene as Christophora, with the face of Jesus appearing sometimes on her breast and other times on her hands, Jansen (2000, pp. 134–37) explains its origins as regards devotion to the worship of Saint Veronica. Vannucci (2012, pp. 118–19) also explains this portrayal of the Magdalene in her hermit's life, indicating that it is borrowed from Virgin Cristofora, typical of Byzantine iconography. Although this typology does not appear in the Catalan artworks studied here, it is without a doubt another connection between the Magdalene and the Virgin.

As regards the relevance of the Virgin and Mary Magdalene in the life of Jesus, Ingrid Maisch strengthens the idea that the two women were the most important, referring as is being done here to the events of the Incarnation and the Resurrection (Maisch 1998, pp. 37–39). As for the pain shared by the women, Olson (2012, pp. 361–81) makes a relevant contribution by connecting the Virgin's pleas in the songs of *Salve Regina* with the intensity of Mary Magdalene's pain and tears at the moment of the Crucifixion. Olson indicates that the pain and suffering are presented as examples for the faithful, analyzing the *planctus mariae*, as has been done on previous pages. She also makes a meticulous analysis of the women's tears, a matter to take into account for future studies on the topic.

As for Mary Magdalene's hirsutism as an element that differentiates her from the Virgin, Antunes (2014) indicates that the ascent of the Magdalene could lead to a significant confusion with the Virgin, which is why the hirsute aspect of the woman from Magdala was introduced. However, while that explanation has also been proposed in its corresponding place, the Magdalene's hirsutism entails other matters that have been studied by numerous specialists (Pinto-Mathieu 1997) and are outside the objectives proposed in this study. Nevertheless, Antunes contributes an element of the hirsute Magdalene that may help to bolster the concept of the Magdalene as a virgin, at least in spirit. Specifically, in agreement with Maisch (1998), Antunes detects the origin of the hairy Magdalene not in Mary of Egypt but in Saint Agnes, a virgin martyr, whose life is also narrated in *LA* (I, pp. 116–20). Both Maisch (1998, pp. 48–40) and Antunes (2014, pp. 121–22) indicate that based on that borrowing from Saint Agnes, Mary Magdalene begins her life as a hairy penitent, years in which through contemplation and penitence she recovers her chastity, the purity of her soul and is sanctified.

Schaus (2006, p. 355) also studies the link between the Magdalene's hirsutism and chastity, indicating that while the Virgin was the utmost paradigm, the woman from Magdala became the utmost example for penitents, especially for women whose greatest virtue was chastity. In this vein, Antunes' affirmation clarifies a great deal (Antunes 2014, pp. 123–24): "The experience of the desert was a way to recover a long-lost virginity through a physical subjection of the body to the pains and ordeals of ascetic discipline, using the example of Mary Magdalene, who was a more accessible example than the Virgin".

4. Materials and Methods

The method used follows some of the basic principles in the tradition of studies on iconography and iconology, fundamentally as regards the iconographic analysis in connecting image to text. Nevertheless, the study by Saxl (1989) on the magnetic power of images has also been essential[14], from which all of the reasoning stems, supporting the thesis that the representation of Mary Magdalene's soul is visually borrowed from the scenes of the Dormition of the Mother of God. To do so, comparative analyses have been carried out as regards both the visual representations and the sources. In this sense, recourse has constantly been made to the sources throughout the study, using neo-testamentary sources and medieval legends in their different translations, as well as the sermons and preachings given around the time the altarpieces were made, pious literature and the different *vitas*.

5. Conclusions

The representation of death works as a mediation "through which we experience the deaths of others and, in turn, anticipate our own" (Kinch 2013, p. 1). Hence, the death of a converted sinner, assimilated to the death of the Virgin, whose souls reach heavenly glory, meant for the faithful, is a reinforcement of the insistence on the benefits of penitence (with prior confession and communion), which is seen to be even more reinforced by visually borrowing from the Dormition of the Mother of God. If Mary Magdalene is the *exemplum* for women of flesh and blood, the assimilation of her death with that of the Virgin Mary bolsters the message given from medieval pulpits, the sermons from the mendicant orders and the *vitas* from different authors of the age. This aspect is emphasized by the fact that the images analyzed are in altarpieces, whose aims included "the remission of guilt together with the desire for personal salvation" on choosing the images represented (Molina i Figueras 1999, pp. 11–12). Here, the function of the saints played an essential role in late medieval spirituality and its heavy insistence on saving souls. Specifically, it was the souls of women that most needed *exempla* such as Mary Magdalene since the traditional Judeo-Christian association of feminine sin with sex still existed in those times.

Penitence was one of the maxims proposed from medieval pulpits, and sex the principal sin that the clergy saw in their society, with women as the main sinners. The Virgin

Mary is presented as the antithesis to Eve since she was pure and had not taken part in any sin. The choice of Mary Magdalene as the main *exemplum* came about in an age in which repentance, confession and penitence were the fundamental pillars of ecclesiastical discourses and sermons, fundamentally as of 1215 in the Fourth Council of the Lateran, when these sacraments were established, bestowing great importance on penitence and communion, the two main aspects of the Magdalene before the ascent of her soul to the heavens, obtaining salvation and entry to Paradise in images that linked the woman from Magdala with the utmost yet unachievable example of the Virgin. It is here that the role of Mary Magdalene is essential: she was an intermediate point between Eve and the Virgin since she took part in sins of the flesh and repented; she has changed cardinal sin for celestial love, becoming the utmost example of behavior for real women. Hence, the medieval Mary Magdalene became a model for the faithful who, even if they had sinned, provided they followed the saint's example of penitence they could manage to save their souls. Through the hybrid nature of her character and the legends arising about her life, Mary Magdalene became the perfect vehicle for teaching about repentance, penitents and salvation.

Notes

[1]   For more information on the different legends about Mary Magdalene (see Collet and Messerli 2008; Saxer 1959).

[2]   For *Legenda Aurea*, the translation from Latin by Macías (2001) has been used; for *Flos Sanctorum* the medieval version by Cortés (2010); and for *Vides de Sants Rosselloneses* the edition by Maneikis Kniazzeh et al. (1977). Sources are author's translation.

[3]   In order to study the fact that Jaume Huguet depicts the departure of the Virgin's soul and that of Mary Magdalene in the same way, it would be essential to count on sources that are not accessible today, such as the contract for those works of art. Nevertheless, a hypothesis can be put forward by turning to the concept created by Bialostocki (1972) of a "framing theme" (*Rahmenthemen*), given that this would be a solution when creating a new kind of iconography making use of a previous compositional layout along with another series of artistic aspects.

[4]   From among the numerous apocryphal accounts of the Assumption, only the ones most representative for the proposed aims ones have been selected, using the Santos Otero edition (Santos Otero 2001).

[5]   "Más después que hubiere sufrido por los hombres conforme a lo que está escrito y después que hubiere resucitado al tercer día y subido al cielo al cabo de los cuarenta días, cuando me vieres venir a tu encuentro en compañía de los ángeles y de los arcángeles, de los santos, de las vírgenes y de mis discípulos, ten por cierto entonces que ha llegado el momento en que tu alma va a ser separada de tu cuerpo y trasladada por mí al cielo, donde nunca ha de experimentar la más mínima tribulación o angustia."

[6]   "Él tomo su alma y la puso en manos de Miguel, no sin antes haberla envuelto en unos como velos, cuyo resplandor es imposible de describir. Mas nosotros los apóstoles vimos que el alma de María, al ser entregada en manos de Miguel, estaba integrada por todos los miembros corporales, fuera de la diferencia sexual, no habiendo en ella sino la semejanza de todo cuerpo (humano) y una blancura que sobrepasaba siete veces a la del sol. Pedro, por su parte, rebosante de alegría, preguntó al Señor, diciendo: '¿Quién de nosotros tienen un alma tan blanca como la de María?'. El Señor respondió: '¡Oh Pedro!, las almas de todos los que nacen en este mundo son semejantes, pero al salir del cuerpo no se encuentran tan radiantes, porque en unas condiciones se las envió y en otras (muy distintas) se las encontró, por haber amado la oscuridad de muchos pecados. Mas, si alguno se guardare a sí mismo de las iniquidades tenebrosas de este mundo, su alma goza al salir del cuerpo de una blancura semejante.'"

[7]   This matter can be amplified by turning to *Transitus Mariae*, texts that include the oral traditions of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, which repeat the luminosity and aromas at the moment of the Dormition.

8   The litanies were extended or reduced depending on their uses. This is why Mary Magdalene varies her position: she appears among the apostles, the saints or the virgins. This does not make it any less important that in some forms of the litanies she may appear presiding over a group of virgins.

9   "El Señor hizo a María Magdalena inmensos beneficios y distinguióla con señaladísimas pruebas de predilección (. . .); honróla con su confianza y amistad; [. . .] la trató constantemente con comprensión y dulzura [. . .] por amor a ella resucitó a su hermano Lázaro [. . .] fue la primera a quien Jesús resucitado se apareció y la encargada por El de comunicar su resurrección a los demás, convirtiéndose de este modo en *apóstola de los apóstoles*."

10   Translation by Esponera Cerdán (2002).

11   Translation by Forcada Comins. There is no date in the website of reference; I have also indicated this in the final bibliography.

12   These and other texts are part of the *Querella de les Dones*, in which female characters were an important focus of discussion (See Piera 2006; Criado 2013; Cortijo 2014).

13   "Magdalena: recoman-vos la mia mare així com la pus cara cosa que en aquets món lleixe: servireu a mi. Amau-la e reveriu-la: en lloc meu la lleixe per consolació de tots vosaltres. No us parteixcau de sa senyoria e estau a consell e obediencia sua Ella será mare e maestressa vostra. [. . .] Magdalena, per confort de la vostra aspra e fort penitencia, seran-vos donades consolacions inestimables [. . .]. E, finit lo terme de la vostra vida, io vendré per vós e us portaré a la Glòria mia".

14   Saxl, interested in the life in the images, its processes of lethargy and rebirth, as well as the variety and continuity of the images, also introduced the idea of their magnetic power; in other words, how some images can be subject to contamination by others, thereby giving rise to migrations of certain visual characteristics and also of content from some images to others. In fact, this is precisely what has been dealt with throughout this study.

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