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**Clothed with Virtue: Material and
Textile in the Life of Margaret of
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Clothed with Virtue:
Material and Textile in the *Life* of Margaret of Cortona

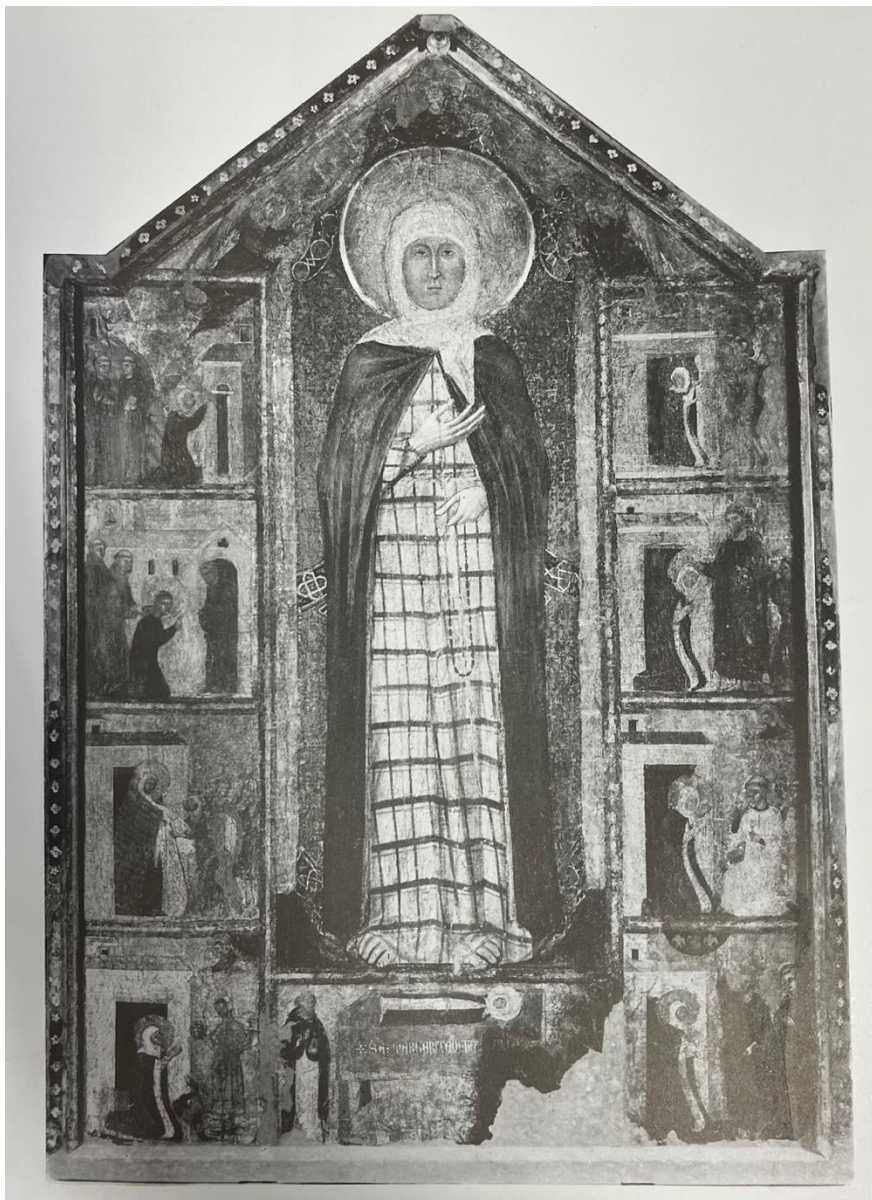


Figure 1. *Beata Margherita with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, c. 1297 – 1307, panel, 197.5 x 131 cm, Museo Diocesano di Cortona, Cortona.

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INTRODUCTION

*Therefore the friars, having heard these things, out of the love of him who clothed her with his virtue, clothed Margaret with the habit. Just as she changed into the habit, so also she adorned her spirit in the virtues...*¹

It was in these words that Fra Giunta Bevegnati recorded Margaret of Cortona's reception of a habit, marking her entrance into the Third Order of Francis. Margaret was an Italian thirteenth-century mystic and Franciscan tertiary. As a mystic, she was someone who claimed to have direct contact with, or knowledge of, God. Margaret's mysticism involved dialogue with Christ, ecstatic rapture, and bodily suffering, although the experiences that medieval mystics reported varied hugely.² As a Franciscan tertiary, Margaret was part of a Franciscan group of lay people, known as penitents, who were committed to a life of penance and poverty in imitation of Saint Francis of Assisi.³

Giunta's emphasis on both physical and metaphorical material at Margaret's entrance into the Order, is symptomatic of the centrality that material held in her wider life story. Prior to joining the Third Order, Margaret had committed many sins by living as the mistress of a nobleman in Montepulciano and flaunting the material abundance that came with this lifestyle.⁴ After the mysterious death of the nobleman, Margaret's relationship to material shifted.⁵ Now destitute, she headed to Cortona and established connections with the Franciscan Order of Penitents from c. 1272.⁶ She officially entered the Order in 1277 and assumed a lifestyle of extreme material poverty, giving her clothing and material possessions away to the poor.⁷

¹ Fra Giunta Bevegnati, *The Life and Miracles of Saint Margaret of Cortona (1247 – 1297)*, trans. by Thomas Renna, ed. by Shannon Larson, (Saint Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2012), p. 48.

² Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 81 – 86.

³ Bernard McGinn, 'The Changing Shape of Late Medieval Mysticism', *Church History*, 65:2 (1996), 197 – 219, p. 199.

⁴ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p.10.

⁵ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 10.

⁶ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 11.

⁷ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p.53.

The centrality of material to Margaret's lived experience is reflected in the record of her life compiled by her confessor, Giunta, after her 1297 death.⁸ Historians have limited biographical knowledge about Giunta. In the *Life*, he described himself as a Franciscan friar, and as Margaret's confessor, but beyond this, we know little of his person.⁹ While Giunta's biography is lacking, in his *Legenda de vita et miraculis Beatae Margaritae de Cortona* (*The Life and Miracles of Saint Margaret of Cortona*), we find certainty in his repeated depiction of Margaret's relationship to materiality.¹⁰ Throughout the *Life*, Giunta described physical materials (like veils and ropes), metaphorical textiles (including garments made of 'virtue' and 'grace'), and golden materials (used to make heavenly robes).¹¹ These diverse references to material and textile in the *Life* have not yet been studied, and will thus be the focus of this dissertation.

Accordingly, this study will explore Giunta's depiction of material and textile. In this exploration, it will also attempt to access Margaret's lived relationship with materials, through Giunta's textual representation. Beyond this, this dissertation will consider what Giunta's, and Margaret's, engagement with material meant for the material itself. Throughout this investigation, this dissertation will use 'material' to refer to any matter-based substance, and 'textile' to refer to fibre-based cloth. While scholars often leave these terms undefined, in the interest of clarity, this dissertation has derived these definitions from a synthesis of the *implied* meanings of the terms in scholarly dealings with medieval materiality.¹²

Literature Review

⁸ The date of compilation is unclear. Thomas Renna posits that Giunta compiled the *Life* c.1305 – 1308, as Cardinal Napoleon Orsini formally approved the work on 15th February 1308. And yet, by Renna's own admission, we only know that Giunta was commanded to write the *Life* by Friar John of Castiglione after Margaret, had died in 1297. Accordingly, this dissertation challenges Renna and assumes Giunta compiled the work within the period 1297 – 1308. See Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 17; p. 19.

⁹ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 18.

¹⁰ Iunctae Bevegnatis, *Legenda de vita et miraculis Beatae Margaritae de Cortona*, ed. by Fortunato Iozzelli O. F. M., (Roma: Editiones Collgii, S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1997); Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*.

¹¹ Select examples: Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 59; p. 100; p. 70; p. 287.

¹² Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*, (New York: Zone Books, 2011); *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion in the Medieval Age*, ed. by Sarah-Grace Heller, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018); Gale R. Owen-Crocker, 'Old Rags, New Responses: Medieval Dress and Textiles', in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, Vol 15., ed. by Robin Netherton, Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Monica L. Wright, (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), pp. 1 – 32.

In the broadest sense, this dissertation will contribute to the ‘material turn’ in the study of mysticism, through its focus on Margaret of Cortona. The turn was part of a wider shift in scholars’ approach to mystical studies in the 1980s and 1990s, where historians moved away from studying the invisible and intangible aspects of mystical experience, to concentrate on the visible and the external.¹³ As a product of the external approach, the ‘material turn’ centred on three topic areas: bodies, eroticism, and material objects.¹⁴ While at the end of the twentieth-century some of the most influential works in the field of study were marked by this turn, recent contributions to the field exhibit an ongoing ambivalence in historians’ adoption of an internal or external approach.¹⁵ In 2012 Amy Hollywood called for scholars to pay attention the external context of mystical experiences in order to best understand them.¹⁶ And yet, internality remains the focus of very recent studies, as in the case of E. A. Jones’ exploration of the interior lives of enclosed medieval anchorites.¹⁷ Even where recent work has straddled the internal-external approach boundary, one approach tends to reign dominant, as in the case of Hilary Powell and Corinne Saunders’ edited volume about voice-hearing, which in its totality, is concerned with an inward experience.¹⁸ Thus, the ‘material turn’ of the late twentieth-century was certainly not a total one, nor has its trajectory ended. Consequently, in its study of a thirteenth-century mystic, this dissertation must position itself in reference to the internal *versus* external debate. This study will assume an external approach. In part, this is because an attempt to study the invisible aspects of Margaret’s mysticism would not do justice to the reality of the suffering that she endured because of her material poverty. Moreover, by studying Giunta’s depiction of materiality, this dissertation contributes to the ‘material turn’. In doing so, it aims to make a step towards answering Hollywood’s call for more externally-focused

¹³ Barbara Newman, ‘New Seeds, New Harvests: Thirty Years of Tilling the Mystical Field’, *Traditio*, 72 (2017), 9 – 20, p. 9.

¹⁴ Newman, ‘New Seeds’, p. 12.

¹⁵ For example: Caroline Walker Bynum privileged female mystics’ bodies as she broke new ground in her analysis of food asceticism in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Moreover, Bernard McGinn argued that the physical performance of penance and poverty held more value in the eyes of medieval mystics than internal experience did, in his mammoth study of Christian mysticism in *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism, Vol III: The Flowering of Mysticism, Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200 – 1350)*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), p. 36.

¹⁶ Amy Hollywood, ‘Introduction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. by Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 1 – 34, (p. 8).

¹⁷ *Hermits and Anchorites in England, 1200 – 1500*, ed. by E. A. Jones, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

¹⁸ *Visions and Voice-Hearing in Medieval and Early Modern Contexts*, ed. by Hilary Powell and Corinne Saunders, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021).

scholarship through exemplifying the insight to be gained from studying medieval mysticism with an explicitly material lens.

Beyond its contribution to the extensive field of mystical studies, this dissertation also engages with the more specific study of medieval religious materiality. This relatively new field is concerned with objects that were deemed to be holy by medieval people, as the products of the ‘materialization of piety’ in the Middle Ages.¹⁹ The range of objects studied within this field is vast, from striped Carmelite habits to golden reliquaries, but this dissertation is concerned with the foundational assumption that underlies this scholarship: medieval materiality held meaning for medieval people.²⁰ This assumption has been applied by some scholars to the study of explicitly *Franciscan* materiality. Although few in number, these scholars are concerned with the medieval Franciscan habit.²¹ Cordelia Warr’s and Alejandra Concha Sahli’s recent treatment of the issue has produced some fruitful insight. Warr considered the physical experience of wearing the patched habit in order to get closer to God and Sahli suggested that the habit was used to signify a Franciscan identity when lay penitent orders were not clearly defined.²² Taken together, their work reinforces the foundational assumption of Christian materiality studies by demonstrating that Franciscan material held meaning in the eyes of medieval people too, and in doing so, legitimates the study of Franciscan materiality itself. Yet, Warr and Sahli do not consider Franciscan materials beyond the habit. Accordingly, this dissertation attempts to fill this gap by considering Giunta’s depiction of the habit, alongside his portrayal of veils, ropes, the act of dressing, and golden textiles.

Even more specifically, this dissertation will also extend the study of Margaret of Cortona herself. Between the 1960s and 1990s, Margaret was the subject of a significant amount of

¹⁹ Owen-Crocker, ‘Old Rags, New Responses’, p. 30; Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, p. 20.

²⁰ Michel Pastoureau, *The Devil’s Cloth: A History of Stripes*, trans. by Jody Gladding, (New York: Washington Square Press, 2001); Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, p. 70.

²¹ Alejandra Concha Sahli, ‘The Meaning of the Habit: Religious Orders, Dress and Identity, 1215 – 1650’, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College London, 2017) in UCL Discovery, <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1546082/1/Concha_Alejandra_PhD_Thesis2017.pdf> [Accessed 28 March 2023], p. 19.

²² Cordelia Warr, ‘Stitches and Patches: The Franciscan Habit in an Engraving by Lucas Vorsterman’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, 22:1 (2022), 43 – 58; C. Warr, ‘Touch, Sight and the Patched Franciscan Habit’ in *Aesthetic Theology in the Franciscan Tradition: The Senses and Experiences of God in Art*, ed. by X. Seubert and O. Bychkov, (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 209 – 233; Alejandra Concha Sahli, ‘Habit Envy: Extra-Religious Groups, Attire and the Search for Legitimation Outside the Institutionalised Religious Orders’, in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, Vol 15., ed. by Robin Netherton, Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Monica L. Wright, (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), pp. 137 – 156.

Italian scholarship which focused primarily on her spirituality and her relationship to the medieval Cortonese.²³ Aside from being inaccessible to this author, this Italian scholarship stagnated in the 1990s and is now outdated. For example, Thomas Renna's bibliography for his introduction to the *Life* is dominated by Italian scholarship, but as Shelley Amiste Wolbrink rightly noted, it does not include any work produced past 2001, despite being published in 2012.²⁴ Moreover, in Mary Harvey Doyno's study of Margaret, the 'recent' Italian scholarship that she refers to, by the likes of Jérôme Poulenc, Franco Cardini, Anna Benvenuti and Alfonso M. Pompei, dates from the 1980s and 1990s.²⁵ Thus, given the dated treatment of Margaret in Italian scholarship, this dissertation concerns itself with a contribution to Margaret's treatment in the far more recent scholarship that is in English.²⁶ Prior to the turn of the twenty-first century, there are only anecdotal references to Margaret in studies of mysticism written in English.²⁷ Yet, following a recent upsurge, Margaret has become a focus for historians' study of the relationship between medieval lay penitents and the mendicant Orders.²⁸ These scholars have approached the topic with reference to a multitude of issues: John Coakley considered Margaret's penitent-mendicant relationship in reference to power and authority, while Elaine Beretz applied the lens of motherhood in her work, and Doyno revealed the cracks in the relationship.²⁹ Among these varied approaches, scholars agree that Giunta manipulated his depiction of Margaret with the Franciscan Order was rocky, and that Giunta manipulated his depiction of Margaret in the *Life*.³⁰ In line with this, this dissertation maintains an awareness that Giunta's portrayal

²³ Joanna Cannon and André Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona and the Lorenzetti: Sienese Art and the Cult of a Holy Woman in Medieval Tuscany*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 2.

²⁴ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 329; Shelley Amiste Wolbrink, 'Giunta Bevegnati. *The Life and Miracles of Saint Margaret of Cortona (1247–1297)*. Trans. Thomas Renna. Ed. Shannon Larson. Saint Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2012', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 66:3 (2013), 1017 – 1019, p. 1018.

²⁵ Mary Harvey Doyno, 'A Particular Light of Understanding': Margaret of Cortona, the Franciscans, and a Cortonese Cleric', in *History in the Comic Mode: Medieval Communities and the Matter of Person*, ed. by Rachel Fulton Brown and Bruce Holsinger, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 68 – 78, (p. 311, n. 3).

²⁶ Cannon and Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona*, p. 2.

²⁷ McGinn, *The Presence of God*, p. 140; Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 140 – 142.

²⁸ John Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and Their Male Collaborators*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Elaine Beretz, 'A Mystical Concubine: Giunta Bevegnati's Margaret of Cortona as a Spiritual Mother', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Haverford College, 2014) in TriCollege Libraries Institutional Repository, <<https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/handle/10066/14660>> [Accessed 23 March 2023]; More, 'Plantula Francisci'; Beverly Mayne Kienzle, 'Margherita of Cortona: Women, Preaching, and the Writing of Hagiography', *Medieval Sermon Studies*, 54 (2010), 38 – 50; Doyno, 'A Particular Light of Understanding'; Mary Harvey Doyno, 'The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint: Margaret of Cortona and Her 'Legenda'', *Past & Present*, 228 (2015), 57 – 91.

²⁹ Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power*, p. 130; Beretz, 'A Mystical Concubine', p. 17; Doyno, 'The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint', p. 90.

³⁰ Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power*, p. 145; Beretz, 'A Mystical Concubine', p. 9; More, 'Plantula Francisci', p. 165; Doyno, 'A Particular Light of Understanding', p. 78; Doyno, 'The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint', p. 66.

of Margaret's relationship with the Order is a textual construction, throughout its study of his depiction of material and textile in the *Life*. But beyond this, by focusing on material and textile itself, this dissertation makes an original contribution to the study of Margaret, as it tackles an as yet un-studied aspect of both Giunta's text and Margaret's lived experience. Therefore, as this study extends the scholarly treatment of Margaret in English, through its turn to material and textile in Giunta's text, it will also draw upon that existing scholarship, by considering Margaret's relationship with the Franciscans throughout.

Overall, this dissertation offers an original contribution to the study of Margaret, but also to the study of Christian materiality and mysticism more widely. To do so, it assumes the external approach of mystical studies and grounds itself in the foundational assumption of materiality scholarship. Though material in the *Life* has not yet been studied, the initial insight revealed in Warr and Sahlis' studies of the Franciscan habit demonstrates that this venture is a legitimate one.

Methodology

In making this contribution to the study of Margaret of Cortona, this dissertation will examine the *Life and Miracles of Saint Margaret of Cortona (1247 – 1297)*.³¹ This comes from Thomas Renna's translation of Fortunato Iozzelli's critical edition of Giunta's Latin *Legenda de vita et miraculis Beatae Margaritae de Cortona*.³² Iozzelli's edition is derived from Ms 61, the oldest and most accurate surviving manuscript of the *Legenda*.³³ Thus, Renna's translation, itself credited with accuracy and accessibility by its reviewers, is as close as historians can currently get to Giunta's original words in English.³⁴ Despite this, the *Life* has not been widely used in studies of Margaret, and thus it is ripe for study by this dissertation.³⁵

³¹ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*.

³² Bevegnatis, *Legenda*; Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 18.

³³ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 18.

³⁴ David Burr, 'The Life and Miracles of Saint Margaret of Cortona (1247 – 1297)', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 99:4 (2013), 785 – 786, p. 786; Wolbrink, 'Giunta Bevegnati', p. 1018.

³⁵ Examples of post-2012 scholarship which focus on the Iozzelli translation: More, 'Plantula Francisci', Doyno, 'The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint'.

The source itself is marked by Giunta's strategies of textual construction, which served his multiple reasons for writing the work. As Giunta notes in his 'Declaration of Authenticity' at the end of the text, he compiled the work between 1297 – 1308 at the command of Friar John of Castiglione.³⁶ Friar John likely did so at the behest of papal legate Cardinal Napoleon Orsini, who wanted to get Margaret officially canonised.³⁷ This indicates that Giunta wrote the *Life* with a view to a papal case for Margaret's canonisation. This indication is bolstered by Giunta's other two reasons for writing the *Life*. In the Prologue and 'Declaration', Giunta also stated that the *Life* should be used as preaching material so that Margaret's life story might serve as an example of penitence for the Cortonese laity.³⁸ This reinforces that Giunta wrote the *Life* with a view to canonisation, because in his recommendation of preaching, Giunta makes clear his intention for Margaret's sanctity to be widely known. Giunta's final reason for writing the *Life* was to extol the Franciscan Order, an attempt which is evident through Christ's repeated assertion that the Franciscan Order was above all other medieval mendicant Orders in the work.³⁹ If the *Life* was going to help make Margaret a saint, Giunta wanted to ensure that she would be an explicitly *Franciscan* one, to boost the status of his Order. Accordingly, this dissertation keeps Giunta's three explicit writing targets in mind, as it explores how these intentions manifested in his portrayal of Margaret through his depiction material in the *Life*.

Beyond this, this dissertation also attempts to access Margaret's lived experience through Giunta's portrayal of material. In this, it runs up against a methodological issue that sits at the centre of much of the scholarship concerned with Margaret: the nature of Giunta's authorial control and the extent of his textual construction of Margaret. In his introduction to the *Life*, Renna glosses over the issue by vaguely suggesting that the text is guided by Giunta's hand throughout.⁴⁰ While Renna's treatment of the issue is insufficient, other scholars have engaged with it more deeply. Scholars including Doyno, Beretz and Kienzle suggest that Giunta manipulated his depiction of Margaret to promote the Franciscan Order.⁴¹ Both Doyno and

³⁶ For discussion of the compilation date see Footnote 8 above; Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 327.

³⁷ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 21.

³⁸ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 43; p. 327.

³⁹ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 58; p. 89, p. 92; p. 105; p. 219; p. 223; p. 241; p. 288; Doyno, 'The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint', p. 63.

⁴⁰ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 19.

⁴¹ Doyno, 'The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint', p. 84; Beretz, 'A Mystical Concubine', p. 9; Kienzle, 'Margherita of Cortona', p. 46.

Beretz argue that Giunta directed God's textual dialogue to do so, and Kienzle draws attention to his manipulation of Margaret's voice and visions for the same effect.⁴² This dissertation finds evidence of both forms of manipulation in the text (as will be explored throughout this study), and consequently sits in agreement with these scholars. Alison More takes this notion further by arguing that textual Margaret is entirely a construct of 'Giunta's creation', which he used to serve his own needs in compiling the text.⁴³ This dissertation takes issue with More's argument. In the *Life*, Giunta notes that at times Margaret withheld information from him regarding her mystical connection with God.⁴⁴ It seems unlikely that Giunta would portray Margaret as hiding information from him if he had entirely constructed Margaret in the text, as his admission holds potential to undermine the authority of the *Life* itself. On this basis, this dissertation acknowledges Giunta's authorial control and his mediation of our reception of Margaret's voice, but it does not go as far as More. In line with Bernard McGinn's suggestion, this study will treat the *Life* as an overheard conversation between Margaret and Giunta, at times being able to distinguish between the voices, and at others not.⁴⁵ With this methodological approach, this dissertation is able to search for, and at times access, Margaret's lived experience through Giunta's depiction of material in the *Life*.

Overall, this study will understand the *Life* as a source of both Giunta's textual manipulation of Margaret, and her lived experiences. By adopting this methodological approach, this study is able to examine Giunta's depiction of material as indicative of, at times, his three reasons for writing the *Life*, and at others, Margaret's true experiences.

Structure

Guided by the source material, this dissertation will employ a three-chapter structure to address the three different types of material that Giunta describes in the *Life*.

⁴² Doyno, 'The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint', p.84; Beretz, 'A Mystical Concubine', p.9; Kienzle, 'Margherita of Cortona', p. 46.

⁴³ More, 'Plantula Francisci', p. 171.

⁴⁴ Bevegna, *Life and Miracles*, p. 97; p. 168; p. 183; p.300.

⁴⁵ McGinn, *The Presence of God*, p. 17.

CHAPTER ONE – Physical Material: The Penitent will examine how Giunta used (textual) physical material to indicate Margaret’s penitent status.

CHAPTER TWO – Metaphorical Material: The Third Light will explore the language of metaphorical dressing and clothing that appears in the *Life*, and how Giunta used this to identify Margaret as the ‘Third Light’ of the Franciscan Order.

CHAPTER THREE – Transcendent Material: The Redeemed will turn to Giunta’s use of a gold material motif in presenting Margaret as redeemed by the end of the *Life*.

CHAPTER ONE

Physical Material: The Ideal Penitent

This chapter will explore Margaret's penitent status. Medieval Franciscan penitents were marked by two central beliefs: that they could experience God's presence without withdrawing to a cloister (a belief typical of all lay penitents), and that they needed to perform penance to repent for their sins, in imitation of St. Francis of Assisi's lifestyle.⁴⁶ Scholars agree that Giunta intentionally depicted Margaret as an 'ideal penitent' in the *Life*, so that sinners would follow her example.⁴⁷ He did so through repeated references to Margaret as a 'mirror of sinners' in God's dialogue throughout the work.⁴⁸ What scholars have not discussed, is that Giunta also used references to physical material to show Margaret's penitent status, in order to present her as the 'mirror of sinners'. Accordingly, in an extension of the scholarly discussion of Giunta's 'mirror of sinners' textual manipulation, this chapter will first explore how this manifested in his portrayal of physical material, and then turn to what this means for material itself.

Giunta portrayed Margaret as a model penitent through his description of physical material. He did so as he recalled a foundational moment in Margaret's relationship with God, when he described that, not long after joining the Third Order and living in central Cortona, Margaret endured an eight-day-long confession and earned the title of God's 'daughter'.⁴⁹

*Her general confession...was such a luminous display of all her sins, lasting eight days in my [Giunta's] care...Without her veil and with a cord around her neck, she devoutly approached the sacrament of the body of the Lord, and, having received the living bread which gives life to the world, Margaret heard Jesus Christ in the sweetest manner declare her his daughter.*⁵⁰

⁴⁶ McGinn, 'The Changing Shape', p. 198; Jean-François Godet-Calogeras, 'The Rule of the Franciscan Third Order', in *A Companion to Medieval Rules and Customaries*, ed. by Krijn Pansters, (New Brunswick: BRILL, 2020), pp. 343 – 366, (p. 345).

⁴⁷ More, 'Plantula Francisci', p. 165; Bornstein, 'The Uses of the Body', p. 169; McGinn, *The Presence of God*, p. 140; Cannon and Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona*, p. 25.

⁴⁸ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 109; p. 124; p. 184; p. 190; p. 230; p. 254.

⁴⁹ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 59.

⁵⁰ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 59.

Here, Giunta's mention of Margaret's absent veil marks her with the first characteristic of the penitent identity. It seems likely that Giunta alluded to 2 Cor 3:14 – 16, where St. Paul the Apostle told the Corinthians that if Jewish people turned away from the old covenant and towards Christ, a 'veil' of darkness would be removed from over their hearts.⁵¹ Giunta certainly knew of this biblical verse, as he made a direct reference to it elsewhere in the *Life*.⁵² But why might Giunta have been referring to 2 Cor 3:14 – 16 in his mention of Margaret's absent veil? To load *Margaret's* veil with *Pauline* meaning: as Paul called the Jews to Christ to remove the veil over their hearts, the absence of Margaret's veil signified that a barrier of sin, which had stood between herself and God, had been removed through her eight-day confession. Thus, by including a reference to the absent veil, Giunta presented Margaret's desire to know God and be closer to Him – in line with the first central belief of the medieval penitent identity, that an individual could know God in the secular world. Through this, Giunta's wider attempt to portray Margaret as a 'mirror of sinners' manifests in his mention of her absent veil. It does so because the absent veil is part of Margaret's exemplary turn to face God, which itself feeds into Giunta's portrayal of Margaret as a model for sinners to follow, by encouraging them to renounce their sins and turn to God themselves. This is not to suggest that Giunta fabricated Margaret's removal of her veil; it is possible that Margaret knew of Paul's veil reference. What is certain however, is that Giunta's mention of her absent veil exhibited the first half of Margaret's penitent status, and contributed towards his wider 'mirror of sinners' manipulation of the text.

Giunta indicated the second, and explicitly Franciscan, part of Margaret's penitent identity by his mention of the rope around her neck during this episode. His reference to the rope alludes to an incident recorded in Thomas of Celano's *Life of Saint Francis*.⁵³ According to Celano, St. Francis of Assisi once broke his commitment to poverty by eating some chicken, and for his penance, he tied a cord around his neck so that a friar could drag him around Assisi and publicly proclaim his sin.⁵⁴ As Renna contends in his analysis of Giunta's writing style, Giunta

⁵¹ II Corinthians 3: 14 – 16.

⁵² Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 129.

⁵³ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 23; Celano, 'The Life of Saint Francis'.

⁵⁴ Thomas of Celano, 'The Life of Saint Francis', in *The Francis Trilogy of Thomas of Celano: The Life of Saint Francis, The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul, The Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis*, ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short, (New York: New York City Press, 2004), pp. 22 – 148, (p. 68).

would have read Celano's *Life* as a committed Franciscan.⁵⁵ This suggests that by mentioning the rope around Margaret's neck, Giunta intentionally presented her as imitating Francis. This suggestion is made certain by Giunta's later mention of a rope, where he recalled that Margaret hoped to tie one to her neck and ask a woman to lead her around the town of Montepulciano and proclaim her sins.⁵⁶ This later explicit allusion to Francis' penance reinforces that Giunta's earlier reference is also a Franciscan allusion. Thus, the rope around Margaret's neck when she became Christ's daughter signalled her imitation of Francis' penance, and in doing so, it also signalled that she, like Francis, had sinned.

To do so, the rope carries the meaning that it acquired in Francis' penance, where it acted as physical marker of his acknowledged sins, into the *Life*, where it exhibits Margaret's past wrongdoing. The writing of Margaret's contemporary, Angela of Foligno, reinforces this. Angela, who was also an Italian Franciscan and mystic, wrote that she wished to have rope tied to her neck so that she might be dragged into public squares as a show of her own wretchedness.⁵⁷ In this, the rope publicly marks Angela as disgraced, and sits at the centre of her hypothetical act. When viewed alongside the *Life*, Angela's writing indicates that the rope was a recognised symbol of depravity in Franciscan discourse, which reinforces that, in Margaret's imitation of Francis, the rope renders Margaret sinful. Given that Margaret wears the rope after her confession and during her turn to God, this may seem contradictory. Yet, by depicting Margaret as still tainted with sin through his rope reference, Giunta implied that Margaret had more sins to repent for, and more penance to complete. He did this, so that she would legitimately remain his 'mirror of sinners', whilst also being God's 'daughter'. It is possible that Margaret, like her contemporary Angela, understood the rope's Franciscan significance, and while we can keep this possibility in mind, it is not a certainty. Instead, it is evident that Giunta indicated the second part of Margaret's penitent identity through his rope reference. He did so by using the rope to demonstrate Margaret's ongoing need to perform (Franciscan) penance in atonement for her ongoing sinfulness, in contribution to his wider attempt to portray her as a 'mirror of sinners'.

⁵⁵ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 23.

⁵⁶ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 70.

⁵⁷ Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works: The Classics of Western Spirituality*, trans. by Paul Lachance, O. F. M., preface by Romana Guarnieri, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), p. 16; p. 22; p. 220.

As material displayed Margaret's penitent identity throughout this description, Giunta established a relationship between material and the interior state of Margaret's soul. Through his mention of the absent veil, Giunta indicated that Margaret had turned to God with a cleansed soul. Yet, in his reference to the rope, he revealed that her soul was not *totally* cleansed, as it remained tainted by sin. Taken together, the materials act as external indicators of the complex state of Margaret's soul: cleaner than it had been pre-confession, but still polluted by wrongdoing. That Giunta presented physical material as an exterior indicator of the condition of Margaret's soul is significant. During the medieval period, the workings and state of the soul were highly debated by medieval theologians.⁵⁸ Despite their theorising, for the theologian and the layperson alike, it was hard to tell divine and demonic interior happenings apart because they resulted in similar external behaviours.⁵⁹ In light of this context, Giunta's use of tangible material to portray the ambivalent condition of Margaret's soul solidifies his 'mirror of sinners' manipulation through the very externality of material itself.

As mentioned above, Margaret may have understood the significance of the veil and rope and may have used them intentionally to show her turn to God and perceived need to repent. Giunta narrates Margaret's commitment to a religious life throughout the work, such that in its totality, the *Life* testifies to her religious devotion and perceived need to repent for her early sins. Yet, to suggest that Giunta's description of physical material provides us with a view to how Margaret truly used the materials would rely on an assumption that she understood his material-soul relationship. This assumption flattens the nuanced issues of Giunta's authorial control and Margaret's textual construction. Consequently, this study posits that Giunta's depiction of physical material is more likely the product of his pen, rather than a reflection Margaret's lived experience. And thus, the material-soul relationship inherent in Giunta's description of physical material must be taken by scholars as his own.

This chapter has explored how Giunta used his description of physical material to model Margaret as a 'mirror of sinners' in the *Life*, by using it to present her as a penitent. In doing so, this chapter has identified a manifestation of his textual manipulation in an aspect of the *Life* which has not been previously discussed in scholarship. In using material to depict

⁵⁸ Nancy Caciola, 'Mystics, Demoniacs and the Physiology of Spirit Possession in Medieval Europe', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 42:2 (2000), 268 – 306, p. 295.

⁵⁹ Caciola, 'Mystics, Demoniacs and the Physiology of Spirit Possession', p. 295.

Margaret as a penitent, Giunta established textile and material as an exterior indicator of the interior condition of Margaret's sinful soul. This relationship appears in Giunta's description of Margaret's removal of her veil and tying of a rope around her neck. The material-soul relationship is a product of Giunta's manipulation of the text, and while it does hint towards Margaret's authentic use of material and her struggle with her sinful soul, it does not conclusively reveal her lived experience.

CHAPTER TWO

Metaphorical Material: The Third Light

While Chapter One explored the role of physical material in the *Life*, this chapter will turn to metaphorical material and the language of dressing that appears in God's dialogue throughout the work. Though scholars have not addressed this feature of the *Life* before, this chapter will suggest that the language of dressing is part of a manipulation of the text by Giunta that scholars have previously identified: his attempt to model her as the 'Third Light' of the Franciscan Order.⁶⁰ To explore this, this chapter will first examine how Giunta used the language of dressing to depict Margaret as Franciscan and as chosen by God, as part of his 'Third Light' textual manipulation. Then it will turn to what this means for the material-soul relationship in the *Life*, and how this relationship provides us with an insight into Margaret's lived experience.

The language of metaphorical dressing presents Margaret as both Franciscan and chosen by God. At the beginning of the *Life*, Giunta linked the language to Margaret's assumption of the Franciscan habit. He described how the friars, 'out of the love of him [God] who clothed her with his virtue, clothed Margaret with the habit.'⁶¹ In this, Giunta attached a Franciscan connotation to the language of being metaphorically 'clothed' by drawing a parallel between Margaret's metaphorical dressing and her physical assumption of the Franciscan habit. Moreover, that Margaret's assumption of the habit marked her entrance into the Franciscan Third Order strengthens Giunta's connection between Franciscanism and the language of dressing, because her official adoption of a Franciscan identity is a recognition of the fact that God clothed her in virtue. In this way, Giunta loaded the language of metaphorical clothing with Franciscan connotations. Beyond this, the language appears throughout the *Life* in God's dialogue, in which the language portrays Margaret as chosen by Him. God repeatedly uses the language to communicate that he had conferred benefits onto Margaret.⁶² In perhaps the most explicit example of this motif:

⁶⁰ More, 'Plantula Francisci', p. 159; Doyno, 'The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint', p. 63; Cannon and Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona*, p. 204; Bornstein, 'The Uses of the Body', p. 169.

⁶¹ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 48.

⁶² Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 48; p. 60; p. 69; p. 100; p. 117; p. 140; p. 178; p. 230; p. 278.

Lord answered: "Remember that I can grant my favours to anyone I wish. Have you forgotten Mary Magdalene... the publican Matthew... and the thief, to whom I promised paradise?"

Margaret: "Yes, I remember all these and many other people on whom you have conferred benefits. Yet I have no doubt that all of them were more deserving of your grace than I..."

...[Lord in response]: "I tell you, my daughter Margaret, that I have dressed you in grace and have adorned you with virtue from head to foot." ⁶³

Here, the language of dressing presents Margaret as elect among humanity by grouping her with other elect biblical figures, including Magdalene and Matthew. Moreover, the act of dressing a person involves physical contact and a closeness between the bodies of those involved. Hence, that Margaret receives her benefits through God's 'dressing', while Magdalene and Matthew are simply granted favours, suggests a certain level of intimacy in God's relationship with Margaret, marking her not only as elect, but as *particularly* close to God. Thus, the metaphorical clothing in God's dialogue shows Margaret as chosen by Him, and also connects back to Margaret's entrance into the Third Order, reminding the reader of her Franciscan identity. Therefore, the motif of metaphorical dressing pictures Margaret as simultaneously elect and Franciscan, throughout the *Life*.

In doing so, the language of metaphorical dressing becomes part of Giunta's attempt to model Margaret as the 'Third Light' of the Franciscan Order in the work. Scholars agree that Giunta made a concerted effort to establish Margaret as the lay patron of the Third Order by emphasising her connection to the Order in the *Life*.⁶⁴ He did so, because when Friar John commanded Giunta to write the *Life* after 1297, probably with a view to Margaret's canonisation, the Franciscan Order was unstable.⁶⁵ Its tertiary division, the Third Order, was only formally founded in 1289 by Pope Nicholas IV, and Franciscans squabbled amongst

⁶³ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 100.

⁶⁴ More, 'Plantula Francisi', p. 159; Doyno, 'The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint', p. 63; Cannon and Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona*, p. 204; Bornstein, 'The Uses of the Body', p. 169.

⁶⁵ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 327; p. 21.

themselves over the extent to which they should commit to poverty.⁶⁶ In view of this, Giunta depicted Margaret as a patron of the Third Order in order to secure the institution by providing tertiaries with a lay Franciscan saint to worship and rally behind.⁶⁷ However, this involved Giunta's manipulation of the textual Margaret, because, in reality, there was tension in Margaret's relationship with the Franciscan Order. From c.1290 she distanced herself from the Franciscans by moving from her cell near the Franciscan Convent of San Francesco to one in the Church of San Basilio.⁶⁸ Margaret stayed there under the spiritual guidance of the secular cleric, Ser Badia, until she died.⁶⁹ Giunta had to downplay this tension to present Margaret as the Franciscan 'Third Light', textually manipulating Margaret's portrayal. As Coakley noted, Giunta did this through God's dialogue, most evidently when Giunta reported that God had declared Margaret was 'the third light given to the Order of my blessed Francis'.⁷⁰ With this in mind, God's use of language of dressing in the text can, and *should* be understood by scholars as another of Giunta's dialogic manipulations. Giunta's association of metaphorical dressing with Margaret's Franciscan identity, and her election by God, fulfils and feeds his 'Third Light' manipulation of the text. Therefore, Giunta's use of the language of dressing is part of his wider attempt to depict Margaret as the lay patron saint of the Order, in line with his 'Third Light' textual manipulation.

There is an implicit relationship between material and the condition of the soul in Giunta's use of the language of dressing to depict Margaret as the 'Third Light'. When God metaphorically dresses Margaret, he places metaphorical textiles onto her, and she receives 'virtue' and 'grace' from Him.⁷¹ In this, Margaret's reception of the metaphorical garments causes internal change within her soul, as through them she receives the spiritual benefits that mark her as elect and chosen by Him. Thus, there is an implicit relationship between material and the condition of Margaret's soul in Giunta's portrayal of Margaret as elect through dialogic manipulation. This material-soul relationship shifts away from that discussed in Chapter One, as material is no longer an external indicator of the interior condition of a soul. Instead, material has the ability to sanctify Margaret's soul, changing the extent to which it is sinful or holy. This relationship

⁶⁶ Alison More, 'Institutionalization of Disorder: The Franciscan Third Order and Canonical Change in the Sixteenth Century', *Franciscan Studies*, 71 (2013), 147 – 162, p. 150; Angela, *Complete Works*, p. 30.

⁶⁷ More, 'Plantula Francisci', p. 159.

⁶⁸ Doyno, 'The Creation of a Lay Franciscan Saint', p. 58.

⁶⁹ Doyno, 'The Creation of a Lay Franciscan Saint', p. 58.

⁷⁰ Coakley, *Women, Men and Spiritual Power*, p. 145; Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 290.

⁷¹ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 48; p. 60; p. 69; p. 100; p. 117; p. 140; p. 178; p. 230; p. 278.

persists in Giunta's use of the language of dressing to emphasise Margaret's Franciscan identity. He described that when Margaret entered the Order and changed into the habit, 'she adorned her spirit in the virtues', (where 'spirit' means soul).⁷² It is not clear if Margaret's reception of the physical habit caused her reception of virtue, but the language of metaphorical adornment *does* indicate that there was authentic change in the state of Margaret's soul during the process. Moreover, after receiving the habit, Giunta noted that Margaret 'seemed to be a new woman through the infusion of the Holy Spirit'.⁷³ Here, Renna's translation of 'infusion' comes from Giunta's original use of the Latin '*infusionem*', which means the pour-in or the flow.⁷⁴ Thus, Giunta's use of 'infusion' conveys that the Holy Spirit actually flowed into Margaret, which confirms that Margaret's reception of metaphorical garments hallowed her soul, causing a change in its previously sinful condition. Therefore, as Giunta used metaphorical material to emphasise Margaret's Franciscan identity, as well as her election by God, he endowed textile with the ability to consecrate Margaret's soul and affect its condition, in modelling her as the 'Third Light'.

Understanding this material-soul relationship allows us to gain an insight into the reality of Margaret's relationship with God, through the language of dressing in the *Life*. Throughout the *Life*, there are references to Margaret's concern that God will withdraw His favours from her.⁷⁵ These references held the potential to undermine Margaret's authority to speak on the knowledge which she claimed God had given her, by exposing her lack of confidence about her relationship with Him. Authority was a critical issue for medieval female mystics, and thus, it is unlikely that the appearance of these references in the *Life* are a result of Giunta's textual manipulation to portray her as the 'Third Light'.⁷⁶ Hence, we can assume that they reflect Margaret's true angst. Giunta used the language of metaphorical dressing to authorise Margaret's anxiety, so that it couldn't undermine her mystical authority and 'Third Light' identity. For example, in another of Giunta's dialogic manipulations through the language of dressing, God told Margaret that 'although my grace will clothe you, you will feel naked,

⁷² Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 48; Nancy Mandeville Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 181.

⁷³ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 51.

⁷⁴ Bevegnatis, *Legenda*, p. 185.

⁷⁵ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 100; p. 109; p. 115; p. 150; p. 161; p. 164; p. 166; p. 170.

⁷⁶ Barbara Newman, 'What Did It Mean To Say 'I Saw'? The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture', *Speculum*, 80:1 (2005), 1 – 43, p. 41.

because I will not allow you to be aware of me.’⁷⁷ Here, God uses the language to tell Margaret that she should expect to feel His absence. In this, Giunta essentially sanctioned Margaret’s anxiety through God’s voice. Crucially, the language of dressing could only facilitate this reassurance because of its material-soul relationship. God’s reminder provides comfort to Margaret *because* the metaphorical act of dressing signified that her soul had truly received His blessings, such that despite not being able to feel Him, Margaret remained and internally changed and chosen by God. In this way, Giunta relied on and reinforced a material-soul relationship so that God’s words of reassurance could legitimise Margaret’s feelings of worry. Thus, as Giunta perpetuated the material-soul relationship ingrained in the language of metaphorical dressing, and authorised Margaret’s anxiety through this, we glimpse an aspect of her true experience of her relationship with God: her fear of losing Him.

This chapter has demonstrated that Giunta portrayed Margaret as the ‘Third Light’ of the Order of Francis through the language of dressing. To do so, he presented Margaret as chosen by God and emphasised her connection to the Franciscan Order. In this, the material-soul relationship discussed in Chapter One shifts: (metaphorical) material is able to affect the soul’s condition by sanctifying it. Giunta relied on this relationship in his use of the language of dressing to authorise Margaret’s anxiety around God’s absence, and in doing so, provides us with a view to the reality of Margaret’s concerns about her relationship with God. Thus, the language of dressing and metaphorical material gives scholars access to both Giunta’s textual manipulation and Margaret’s lived experience.

⁷⁷ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 140.

CHAPTER THREE

Transcendent Material: The Redeemed

Whilst Chapters One and Two have explored tangible and intangible material forms, this chapter turns to Giunta's portrayal of a material which transcends these states: golden textile. In the beginning of the work, Giunta described Margaret's adornment in earthly gold material during her early life in Montepulciano, prior to joining the Third Order. Yet, by the end of the *Life*, golden textile transcends into the heavenly realm and appears in the visions that Margaret received from God. Although scholars have not addressed Giunta's varied references to golden material, this chapter understands them as part of a consistent motif. In doing so, this chapter will suggest that Giunta used this shifting motif to depict Margaret as redeemed across the *Life*. Firstly, this chapter will address how Giunta narrated Margaret's redemption through gold material, in service of his wider attempts to textually model Margaret. Secondly, this chapter will discuss what transcendent golden material meant for Giunta's material-soul relationship, and how it provides us with access to Margaret's lived experience.

At first, Giunta used gold material to indicate that Margaret's lifestyle, prior to joining the Third Order, was sinful. When Margaret lived in Montepulciano, before coming to Cortona, she had committed many sins, including living as a mistress and bearing a child out of wedlock.⁷⁸ And yet, when Giunta described Margaret's plan to return to Montepulciano to do penance, he referred to it as the place where she 'used to appear wearing fine clothes, her hair plaited with gold, her face painted'.⁷⁹ In doing so, Giunta used adornment in golden materials as a shorthand for Margaret's wrongdoing, even though she had committed an array of sins in the town. Moreover, Giunta implied that Margaret had committed her early sins *through* the golden material itself. According to Giunta, in her early life, Margaret had injured the souls of the people living in Montepulciano by wearing luxury materials, as doing so provided the Tuscans with 'wicked examples'.⁸⁰ He repeated this material-sin connection when he later explained that Margaret's creation of a veil of rags was penance for adorning her head with

⁷⁸ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 10.

⁷⁹ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 70.

⁸⁰ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 70.

‘gold and pearls’ during her early life.⁸¹ In this, he once again indicated that golden material was the mechanism through which Margaret committed sin.

In Giunta’s depiction of gold material as the apparatus of Margaret’s early wrongdoing, he contributed towards his wider project of modelling Margaret as the ‘mirror of sinners’. As Cannon has argued, Giunta evoked Margaret’s youth in the ‘blackest of terms’ so that her turn to God might encourage other sinners to do the same.⁸² Giunta’s portrayal of gold material plays into this – the golden material manifests the extremity of Margaret’s sinfulness prior to joining the Third Order, so that her subsequent commitment to religion signifies how even the worst of sinners can receive God’s mercy. In this, Giunta’s textual use of gold material fulfils the demands of his wider ‘mirror of sinners’ model, and thus, this study takes it as part of Giunta’s contribution to the textual manipulation.

Yet, Giunta also used golden material to depict Margaret as holy. Near the end of the text, Margaret received a vision from God where she saw herself, ‘crowned with a precious diadem and dressed in a white garment interwoven with the purest gold.’⁸³ The textile in this vision parallels the material which appears in another of Margaret’s visions, where she saw Christ, ‘dressed in a white garment with stars of gold’ – a garment that matched her own.⁸⁴ The explicit similarity between Christ’s and Margaret’s visionary garments demonstrates that there is a connection between them. Moreover, Christ made the meaning of these golden textiles clear when He later explained that ‘my golden head and my robe stand for my divinity’.⁸⁵ In Christianity, Christ is understood to be both fully man and fully God, and here, Christ presented golden textile as an external indicator of his internal godly quality.⁸⁶ Thus, in Margaret’s vision of herself clothed in gold, the textile marks her as holy as it parallels Christ’s robe, and acts as an external indicator of her own inner quasi-divinity.

⁸¹ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 83.

⁸² Cannon and Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona*, p. 25.

⁸³ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 287.

⁸⁴ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 175.

⁸⁵ Bevegnati, *Life and Miracles*, p. 188.

⁸⁶ There are multiple references to Jesus simultaneous humanity and divinity in the Bible. See: Titus 2:13-14; John 20:28.

This representation of Margaret's quasi-divinity is part of Giunta's attempt to model Margaret as the 'Third Light' of the Franciscan Order throughout the *Life*. As discussed in Chapter Two, Giunta's textual manipulation had two parts: he portrayed Margaret as chosen by God and emphasised her connection to the Franciscan Order, and the visionary gold material fulfils both functions. As God endows Margaret with a golden garment that is like one which Christ already wears, Margaret's receipt of the robe presents her as chosen by God. It also connects her to the Franciscan Order, as for both Margaret and St. Francis, rich clothing is their avenue of access to Christ. Marking his conversion to God, Francis stripped himself of his luxury, scarlet attire in front of the Bishop of Assisi and assumed poor garments, and throughout his life, remained committed to material poverty in *imitatio Christi*.⁸⁷ Giunta would have known that Francis established and maintained his connection to God through rejecting rich material, as Thomas of Celano recorded it in his *Life*, which, as previously discussed, this dissertation takes Giunta to have read. Thus, it seems that Giunta intentionally linked Margaret to Francis through their respective (and parallel) means of access to Christ. While this is not definite, given Giunta's wider, and scholarly validated, attempts to portray Margaret as the 'Third Light' through his depiction of material, this seems likely.⁸⁸ Consequently, as visionary gold textile reveals Margaret's chosen-ness and hints at her Franciscan-ness, it fits into Giunta's 'Third Light' model, and thus, this dissertation suggests that Giunta's depiction of visionary gold material is a product of the model.

When viewed together, Giunta's contrasting depictions of gold material in the *Life* reveal Margaret's redemption. In the beginning of the work, Giunta portrays Margaret as sinful through gold material, in line with his 'mirror of sinners' manipulation, and by the end of the work, he uses gold textile to depict Margaret as (quasi-)divine, in line with his 'Third Light' manipulation. In doing so, Giunta draws together his attempts to textually model Margaret through one material motif and narrates Margaret's transition from sinner to sacred. This transition presents Margaret's achievement of redemption by the end of the *Life*. It is evident that this is, in part, a textual ploy by Giunta, on the very basis that the motif unites his two textual models of Margaret. Yet, it is also a reflection of Margaret's lived experience, as the gold material motif testifies to the core essence of the *Life*: Giunta's admiration of her. Why

⁸⁷ Celano, 'The Life of Saint Francis', p. 99; p. 33; p. 34.

⁸⁸ More, 'Plantula Francisci', p. 159; Doyno, 'The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint', p. 63; Cannon and Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona*, p. 204; Bornstein, 'The Uses of the Body', p. 169.

would Giunta, or any of the Franciscans for that matter, want Margaret as the ‘mirror’ for their penitents or as their ‘Third Light’ patron saint, if they did not believe that she truly spoke with God? At the heart of the Franciscans’ relationship with Margaret was the friars’ recognition that she was special – and Giunta’s presentation of gold material testifies to this. By narrating Margaret’s achievement of redemption and sanctitude, it manifests the respect and awe that Giunta had for Margaret. In this way, transcendent gold material provides a view to Margaret’s lived experience as it reveals, in part, the reality of the dynamic between Giunta and Margaret. Therefore, Giunta united his textual models through gold material, and in doing so, he presented Margaret as redeemed, which provides us with a view to an aspect of Margaret’s lived reality.

Beyond this, Giunta’s motif of gold material draws together the contradictory forms of the material-soul relationship in the *Life*. In his depiction of gold material as the cause of Margaret’s Montepulciano sins, Giunta presented gold material as having the ability to change the interior state of Margaret’s soul. And yet, in Giunta’s depiction of Margaret’s reception of the visionary golden garment, gold material transcends beyond the earthly realm and acts as an exterior indicator of the unblemished condition of Margaret’s soul. Through this, Giunta demonstrated that one type of material could do both: it could affect the condition of the soul *and* act as an external translator of the soul’s state, without influencing it. In doing so, Giunta broke the material-soul relationship out of the temporary binaries in which he had placed it elsewhere in the *Life*, where he had presented materials as only agents *or* as indicators, of sin *or* of holiness. Giunta’s depiction of gold material dissolved these limits, showing that material had the ability to cause *and* indicate, both sin *and* holiness. Just as this facilitated Giunta’s use of gold material in illustrating the culmination of Margaret’s journey from sinner to redeemed, the transcendent gold material itself culminates the fluidity of material-soul relationship in the *Life*, by removing the confines that previously seemed to bound it. This reminds us that the material-soul relationship is ultimately at the mercy of Giunta’s pen, and that its fluidity is part of his textual control.

This chapter has explored Giunta’s shifting depiction of golden textile in the *Life*. In doing so, it has shown that Giunta used this motif to depict Margaret as both a sinner and as redeemed, in contribution to his ‘mirror of sinners’ and ‘Third Light’ textual manipulations. In this,

Giunta's gold material motif traces Margaret's move from sin to sanctity. Through doing so, the motif testifies not only to Giunta's textual manipulation, but also to the admiration that he held for Margaret's achievement of redemption. In this, we can see some aspect of the true dynamic between Margaret and Giunta. At the same time, in transcendent gold material, we can also see the essential fluidity of the material-soul relationship that Giunta established.

CONCLUSION

In its examination of Giunta's depiction of material and textile in the *Life*, this dissertation has demonstrated that Giunta used it to portray Margaret as a sinful penitent, as the elect 'Third Light' of the Franciscan Order, and as divinely redeemed. In doing so, he established a relationship between material and the condition of Margaret's soul. As discussed in Chapter One, Giunta marked Margaret as 'mirror of sinners' in his description of the physical material that she put onto her body. Modelling Margaret as an ideal penitent, Giunta depicted her desire for God *and* her acknowledgement that her soul was tainted with sin, through his description of physical material. In this, physical material acts as a translator and external indicator of the sinful condition of her soul. This material-soul relationship changes in Giunta's use of metaphorical material and the language of dressing to cast Margaret as the 'Third Light' of the Franciscan Order, as discussed in Chapter Two. Implicit in Giunta's description of Margaret as elect and Franciscan, is the idea that material was able to make real change to Margaret's soul, and make it more holy. In Chapter Three, Giunta's textual manipulations and depiction of the material-soul relationship, combine. In his shifting depiction of gold material, he narrated Margaret's move from sinner to redeemed. In showing her process of redemption, transcendent gold material acts as both the cause of Margaret's sin (in contribution to Giunta's 'mirror of sinners' manipulation), and the indicator of her holiness (as part of the 'Third Light' model). Thus, throughout the *Life* and across Giunta's manipulations of it, material and the state of Margaret's soul consistently remain connected, though the nature of that connection is marked by fluidity. Through the physical, metaphorical, and transcendent materials in the *Life*, Giunta exhibited each combination of the agent/indicator of sin/holiness mechanism. Within this framework, he presented material's relationship with the soul as ultimately fluid and changeable.

Through this argument, this dissertation draws together the study of medieval materiality, mysticism, and Margaret of Cortona. Scholars recognise that the study of Franciscan materiality is a legitimate venture, and yet, this dissertation is the first to consider Giunta's depiction of material and textile.⁸⁹ In doing so, it hopes to make a step towards filling the historiographical gap in English scholarship concerned with Margaret. In addition, it aims to

⁸⁹ Warr, 'Stitches and Patches'; Warr, 'Touch, Sight and the Patched Franciscan Habit'; Sahli, 'Habit Envy'.

encourage the further study of medieval mystics' negotiation of materiality more widely. Mystics do feature within the growing scholarship on Christian materiality and the 'material turn' of mystical studies does place emphasis on material objects.⁹⁰ And yet, this dissertation advocates for scholarly consideration of the *relationship* that mystics had with material. For this, hagiographical works and mystical texts are fruitful source bases, as this dissertation has shown in its examination of the *Life*. One potential subject for this further study is Margaret's contemporary, Angela of Foligno, who stripped herself in front of a crucifix so that she might give herself wholly to God, according to her male scribe.⁹¹

Beyond any historiographical contributions, the true significance of this dissertation lies in its attempt to access Margaret's lived experience. This study has argued that Giunta's depiction of material contributed to his textual manipulation of her, yet it has also shown that material can provide us with a view to the true Margaret. In Giunta's discussion of physical material in Chapter One, it is not clear whether we are faced with Margaret's actual usage of materiality or not. While frustrating, this study finds it necessary to acknowledge this uncertainty to avoid tenuously postulating the reality of Margaret's experience. Happily, Giunta's depiction of material *does* reveal the anxiety that Margaret felt about her relationship with God (Chapter Two), and the respect that she commanded from Giunta in both life and death (Chapter Three). In this, material in the *Life* is both a mechanism for Giunta's textual manipulation, and a circumvention of his construction. This circumvention is not a form of Margaret's resistance to Giunta's authorial control, because he compiled the *Life* after she had died. Nevertheless, material does, at times, make our view of Margaret somewhat clearer. We cannot know if Giunta's depiction of material in the *Life* aligned with how he or Margaret actually understood it. But what we *can* say, is that material was central to his projects of textual manipulation and his more unadulterated depictions of Margaret. This in itself indicates that material and textile held meaning in Giunta's and Margaret's minds, as this dissertation has demonstrated. It is perhaps ironic that material – the very thing that Margaret spent her religious life trying to reject – would become a means for her posthumous manipulation by Giunta, and our avenue through which to access her.

⁹⁰ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, p. 18; Newman, 'New Seeds', p. 12.

⁹¹ Angela, *Complete Works*, p. 126.

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