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Art, Imagination, and the Stained Glass Commissions of William of Wykeham in Fourteenth-Century English Colleges, Veronika Decker
Abstract

In the 1380s and 1390s, extensive and exceptionally fine glazing schemes were installed in the chapels of New College, Oxford and Winchester College, the two educational foundations of William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester and one of the most influential figures of later fourteenth-century England. This article studies a central iconographic feature of the stained glass programmes: the multifigured image of the Tree of Jesse that filled the large seven-light east window of Winchester College Chapel and the great west window of New College Chapel. It highlights close correspondences between medieval metaphors of learning and education at the university, such as the notion of the college as a nourishing mother and as a fertile vineyard, and key elements of the Tree of Jesse. This essay argues that the stained glass decoration of the chapels thus conveyed multiple layers of meaning linked to the colleges’ educational purpose and to the pious motivations of their founder.

Authors

Veronika Decker received her PhD in Art History at the University of Vienna with a thesis on the art patronage of William of Wykeham.

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In terms of the scale and range of his artistic patronage, William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester from 1367 to 1404, was an exceptional figure in fourteenth-century England. \(^1\) During his long tenure of the see of Winchester he engaged in a diversity of large building projects and promoted them with commitment and great financial power. \(^2\) In 1379 William founded New College at the University of Oxford and three years later Winchester College, a grammar school, which functioned as a feeder institution for his university college. \(^3\) Both colleges provided education for seventy poor scholars, and Wykeham commissioned buildings for their use on an equally ambitious scale. \(^4\) As bishop of Winchester he invested considerable sums in the reconstruction of his episcopal houses, among them, most significantly, the residence at Highclere and the palace at Bishop’s Waltham, whose monumental ruins remain to this day. \(^5\) At Winchester cathedral Wykeham was the driving force of the grand Perpendicular refurbishment of the nave and most likely also its main financier. \(^6\) Accordingly, his magnificent chantry chapel, whose façade stretches across the whole height of the nave arcade, was inserted between two nave-piers at the centre of the *novum opus* of the cathedral. \(^7\)

Wykeham’s buildings were richly embellished with sculpture and furnished with extensive glazing schemes. His provisions for the stained glass at the cathedral, the college chapels, and his episcopal residences, as well as the remains of the monumental sculpted reredos at New College Chapel and the (now empty) image-niches of his chantry chapel, are all evidence of the central role that figurative media occupied in his architectural commissions. \(^8\) The stained glass windows of the college chapel at Oxford originally showed an ambitious figure cycle that must have represented subjects from the beginnings of the world through to the Last Judgement, covering Old Testament prophets and patriarchs, saints of the Church, several representations of the Crucifixion, a Tree of Jesse, and the hierarchy of angels. \(^9\) At Winchester College Chapel, the representations of prophets, apostles, and saints were complemented by a monumental Tree of Jesse in the seven-light east window. \(^10\) His colleges were also among the first in western Europe to be decorated with figure sculpture on the exteriors. \(^11\) As previous scholarship has established, Wykeham’s architectural patronage at Oxford in the 1380s marks one of the most dynamic phases in the development of university architecture. As the first quadrangle to contain all rooms required for collegiate life in an enclosed, regular architectural space of ambitious design and dimensions, New College was to become an important model for collegiate buildings in England. \(^12\) But New College was
not only innovative in architectural terms. As Tim Ayers pointed out in his monumental study on the stained glass of Merton College, Wykeham’s college also set new standards for college chapel glazings. 13

Yet, the rich, closely connected glazing schemes of New College and Winchester College Chapel have never been studied in the context of the history of education or as components of the visual culture of the medieval university. 14 As New College Chapel was one of the earliest academic college chapels to receive an extensive stained glass cycle, one may ask whether new visual concepts were sought to decorate a space that constituted “the symbolic heart of collegiate life” and whether a programme was devised that referred to the educational purpose of the institution. 15 In the north and south windows of the east arm of Merton College Chapel (1310–11), the major earlier stained glass commission at an Oxford college, ideals of Christian community, fellowship, and collegiate identity were subtly expressed by the choice of subjects as well as the self-confident display of academic dress in the depictions of the donor, Master Henry Mansfield. 16

At New College and Winchester College we may argue that the colleges’ founder Wykeham was closely involved in the planning of the programme of the windows. Over many years, he had carefully prepared and devised the foundation of his two colleges, providing endowments, acquiring land to build upon, and securing royal and papal privileges. 17 For the organization of the daily life of the colleges, Wykeham had an extensive set of statutes drawn up, which he revised and improved several times. 18 The colleges' accounts also provide evidence for regular personal communication between Wykeham and the clerks of works and wardens of the colleges, as the expenses of their journeys to the bishop were carefully recorded. 19 As the statutes show, the college buildings were meticulously planned for use by the collegiate community. Wykeham’s ideals as a patron of education and his intentions for his foundations therefore must have also informed the iconographic programmes of his colleges.

This short article cannot discuss the programmes of the chapels in full, but instead focuses on one common motif—the monumental stained glass image of the Tree of Jesse—to show that it played an important role in Wykeham’s systematic establishment of a coherent architectural and visual environment for his educational foundations. As I will argue, this religious iconographic subject was on several levels closely connected to the vivid imagery employed to express ideals of learning and education in fourteenth-century England. Thus, the image of the Tree of Jesse in the college chapels opened up meaningful visual associations to emphasize the deep religious purpose of the colleges and the cultivation of education.
The Tree of Jesse windows at Winchester College and New College

In summer 1393, the decoration of Winchester College (fig. 1) must have been in full swing. At this time, an entry in the only preserved household roll of the bishop documents the transport of stained glass from Oxford to Winchester College in a strenuous journey of nine days, employing six men and twelve horses. 20 It is most likely that the glass panels, made by the workshop of Glazier Thomas, who was also responsible for the glazing of New College Chapel, were set up in the great east window of the college chapel (fig. 2). 21 Even though the original composition was dismantled and replaced by a faithful copy in 1821–22 (fig. 3), a substantial amount of the fourteenth-century glass is preserved within the college. Eleven figures from the Tree of Jesse, as well as smaller figures of the traceries and two panels depicting Wykeham and Richard II, were inserted into the west window of the Chantry Chapel of Robert Thurbern on the south side of the college chapel (figs 4 and 5). Seven further prophets and kings from the Tree of Jesse are now displayed in the east window of John Fromond’s Chantry Chapel, which stands in the garth of the cloisters at Winchester College. 22 It is therefore possible to analyze the overall composition of the great east window, while also studying some of the details of the original glass.
Figure 1.
David Loggan, Winchester College, 1675, engraving, 40 x 45 cm. Collection of Winchester College. Digital image courtesy of the Warden and Scholars of Winchester College.
Figure 2.
James Cave, Interior view of Winchester College Chapel, 1802, watercolour, 73 x 55 cm. Collection of Winchester College. Digital image courtesy of the Warden and Scholars of Winchester College.
Figure 3.
Figure 4.
Winchester College Chapel, west window of Thurbern’s Chapel, fragments of the stained glass from the original east window of the chapel, 1387–1395. Digital image courtesy of Gordon Plumb.
A monumental Tree of Jesse fills the seven-light window and provides the visual focus of the chapel (fig. 3). Referring to Isaiah’s messianic prophecy “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit” (Isaiah 11:1) and to Matthew’s genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:1–17) the image shows a giant vine which springs from the recumbent figure of Jesse, branches out to present Christ’s royal and spiritual ancestors, and converges into a central stem that supports the figure of the crucified Christ. The genealogical programme concentrates on the royal line running from King David to his successors mainly before the Babylonian Captivity. Despite some omissions in the genealogy, the Tree shows a systematic, chronological arrangement of generations in a composition that continuously ascends towards the figure of Christ. Old Testament prophets in
the first and seventh lights frame the group of royal ancestors. Integrated into the branches of the tree, they engage in conversations with the kings through a variety of expressive poses and gestures.

![Image of stained glass window](image)

**Figure 6.**
Winchester College Chapel, fragment of the stained glass from the original east window of the chapel, figure of the nursing Virgin, 1387–1395. Digital image courtesy of Gordon Plumb.

As the most important figures of the genealogy, Jesse, David, Solomon, the Virgin Mary, and the crucified Christ form the central axis of the window. Of these, the visual emphasis is placed on the Virgin Mary. As a towering figure twice the size of the other protagonists, she dominates the composition and stands at its centre. Of the original stained glass figure, sadly only the upper body remains (fig. 6), yet even this fragment still conveys some of the monumentality and physical presence that must have characterized Mary’s representation in the original window. The image shows her as a tall, standing woman, crowned and splendidly dressed in a golden overcoat,
bearing the infant Christ in her arm. Her breast is revealed and she gently looks down at her son while she nurses him. The Christ child holds on to her breast and in an intimate gesture their hands touch.  

The central line of the composition is continued into the apex of the window by the representation of Christ in Judgement. As in earlier large Tree of Jesse windows in England, such as in the east windows of Wells Cathedral (1335–45) and of the Benedictine abbey of Selby, Yorkshire (1330–40), the upper traceries of the college chapel window were filled with figures from the Doom.  

A similar glazing scheme originally also existed at New College. Here, the east wall of the college chapel was decorated with a large stone reredos. The great west window in the antechapel was originally filled with stained glass showing a Tree of Jesse, which is in part preserved in a south choir aisle window of York Minster (figs 7, 8).  

The choice of prophets and kings, their lively interaction and their integration in a hexagonal grid-structure of branches within a seven-light window correspond closely to the Tree of Jesse at Winchester College, and suggest that the windows were alike in their overall design.
Figure 7.
York Minster, South Choir Aisle Window sVIII, with stained glass from the west window of New College Chapel, Oxford. Digital image courtesy of Gordon Plumb.
As a multi-figured composition, the Tree of Jesse iconography was a very popular subject in large stained glass windows in fourteenth-century England. Its flexible figure programme made it easily adaptable to different window designs, and the underlying arboreal structure made the interconnection of theological concepts more intelligible. The “stirps Jesse”-image firmly rooted the New Testament in the Old Testament, and in combination with the scene of the Last Judgement it visualized the divine plan from the Incarnation to the Second Coming of Christ in one coherent, well-structured decorative scheme. The image also highlighted the important role of the Mother of God in the history of salvation. According to the exegetical tradition established by Tertullian and the fathers of the Church, the shoot foretold by Isaiah, the *virga*, was to be identified with the
Virgo, the Virgin Mary. This reading inspired visual representations of the Tree, such as at Winchester College Chapel, which particularly highlighted the figure of the Virgin within the composition.

The development and pervasiveness of the Tree of Jesse from the eleventh century on was therefore closely connected to the cult of the Virgin, and many churches and chapels dedicated to her were embellished with this iconography. This is also true for Winchester College and New College, which were both founded in her honour and given the official name of “St Mary College of Winchester”. The buildings’ exteriors were decorated with sculptures of the founder kneeling in adoration before the Virgin of the Annunciation above the main gates (fig. 9), which might have prompted the scholars to say an Ave Maria whenever they were passing. The college chapels were conceived as spaces devoted to her cult. At New College, where the chapel was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the Annunciation, every day a mass was celebrated in her honour and an antiphon sung. The scholars were obliged to say fifty Ave Marias every day after mass.

Figure 9.
Winchester College, Middle Gate, William of Wykeham kneeling before the Annunciation, 1392. Digital image courtesy of Veronika Decker.

The decoration of the east window of Winchester College, and possibly also the related window at New College, honoured the Virgin as patroness of the college. At Winchester, the Virgin Mary was not only represented as a nourishing mother at the centre of the Tree of Jesse, but she also reappears in the scene of the Crucifixion and the Last Judgement. While Mary does not show her breast at the Last Judgement to appeal for Christ’s mercy, as in...
many English images of the Last Judgement, her monumental depiction as *Virgo lactans* in the same window would certainly have reminded the viewer of Mary’s powers of intercession. As Anna Eavis pointed out, this was particularly important in Wykeham’s colleges, which were founded as chantries for the bishop. Consequently, at the bottom of the Tree, Wykeham was depicted expressing his devotion to the Mother of God, once in a scene of the Annunciation and a second time kneeling in adoration of the Virgin with Child (fig. 4).

Yet recent scholarship has convincingly shown that the Tree of Jesse was a particularly rich, multifaceted and flexible iconography. Only a detailed study of the physical space which surrounded the image and its original audience uncovers the meanings addressed in each individual image. As I will show, the Tree of Jesse with the monumental figure of the Virgin at its centre cannot only be explained by Wykeham’s devotion to the Virgin Mary and his hope for salvation. Instead, the programme of the window was carefully adapted to the educational function of the college, and invested with further layers of meaning which were of particular importance to the collegiate audience.

**The Cult of the Virgin Mary as Alma Mater in Medieval Colleges**

As patroness of scholarship and learning, the Virgin was venerated at medieval universities throughout Europe. Masses were read in her honour and university maces decorated with her image sought her protection and spiritual guidance. Her image featured on many seals of the early university foundations, among them most importantly the seal of the University of Paris. At Oxford, the early development of the institution was also closely connected with the cult of the Virgin. From the thirteenth century onwards, the Church of St Mary the Virgin functioned as the meeting place for the Great Congregation of regent and non-regent masters who agreed upon the statutes of the university at this church. Gradually, schools and halls were established close by and in the early fourteenth century Thomas Cobham, bishop of Worcester, financed the building of a congregation house, which was attached to the Church of St Mary. The Virgin was also a protectress of the earliest college foundations: in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Merton College, Balliol College, Exeter College, and Oriel College sealed their documents with her image. The dedication of Wykeham’s colleges has to be seen within this tradition of expressing devotion to the Virgin Mary within medieval educational institutions, which was inextricably linked to both the academic purpose of the colleges and the commemorative practices established by their benefactors.
The preamble to the 1351 foundation deed of Gonville Hall in Cambridge elucidates some of a founder’s motivations for dedicating a college to the Virgin. In this document Bishop Bateman directly links devotion to Mary as the seat of wisdom to the function of the college as a place of learning, by explaining: “Wisdom is to be preferred to all other powers . . . . For his good memory, Edmund de Gonville therefore proposed to create a perpetual college of scholars in the University of Cambridge in honour of the Virgin Mary, who carried the wisdom of God in her womb.” 46 Every day the scholars of the hall were to honour their patroness by saying fifty Hail Marys.

It is very plausible that not only Mary’s pregnancy with the wisdom of God but also her powerful role as nourishing mother were major factors for inspiring devotion to her within educational foundations. 48 Throughout the Middle Ages, the productive female body, its function as a childbearing vessel and as a source of nourishment, were important metaphors for describing the processes of language and knowledge acquisition. 49 This is made clear in a passage in the second chapter of the statutes of New College, which were promulgated by the founder in around 1400. Emphasizing the importance of a good grounding in grammar, the text describes how Winchester College will provide students with the necessary education, allowing them to absorb “the sweet and pleasant milk of the doctrine of the first science, whereby infants may be nourished”. 50 This metaphor comparing the ease and pleasure of basic learning to the drinking of sweet milk was rooted in a long tradition of thought. 51 In his Fons Philosophiae Godfrey of St Victor claimed that the Roman grammarian Aelius Donatus (whose Artes grammaticae were also studied at Winchester College) 52 poured the rules of grammar into the mouths of his pupils like a milky drink. 53 John of Salisbury called Grammar the first nurse of the whole study of letters, who “takes all of us as tender babes, newly born from nature’s bosom. It nurses us in our infancy, and guides our every forward step in philosophy. With motherly care, it fosters and protects the philosopher.” 54 In Alain de Lille’s Anticlaudianus, the art of Grammar is described as a virgin, from whose breasts milk flows in abundance and who nourishes the pupils like a mother, but also beats them like a father. 55 Building on this tradition, visual representations of Grammar in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries show the liberal art as a breastfeeding mother or as a figure seated in the midst of scholars displaying her lactating breasts (Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. lat. 8500, fol. 30v, c. 1330–40, fig. 10). 56
As *alma mater* the university absorbed this body of ideas. Several textual sources from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries show that the University of Oxford was perceived as a nourishing, maternal institution. In the poem “Tryvylam de laude Universitatis Oxoniae” a scholar addresses the university as the mother, from whose breast he suckled the milk of the first letters. In an epistle to Archbishop Arundel regarding an official visitation, the university reminded Arundel, a former student of Oriel College, that he himself had once been nourished by the university with her milk. The statutes of All Souls College of 1438 even compare the university to a fertile, parturient mother, who feeds her pupils at her breasts with the milk of wisdom. These ideas were also familiar to Wykeham: in the statutes of New College, students were not allowed to leave the college in order to pursue studies elsewhere as this would show disrespect towards the mother “from whose breasts one receives the milk which feeds the young” and whose maternal sweetness one forgets.
Planting a College

The notion of nourishment was only one metaphor employed by the founder to illustrate the purpose of his colleges. In the statutes of New College, Wykeham explains that having received the milk of the first science and “having tasted the honey-sweet taste of this first art” (ejusdem scientiae primitivae melleo rore dulciter degustato) the students grow so that they “may more easily receive solid food” (ad concipiendum facilius solidum cibum) and finally advance to a true understanding of the mysteries of scripture and produce “mature and abundant fruit in the holy Church of God” (in ecclesia sancta Dei fructus producat fertiles et maturos). In profuse language this metaphor is further enriched by describing the organic nexus between the two institutions at Oxford and Winchester:

Thus our college in Winchester, the origin and source of our college at Oxford, may like a well-watered garden and a budding vine engender a fruitful progeny for our college at Oxford, to bring forth many flowers and honeyed fruits in the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts by his grace:

quodque idem collegium nostrum propre Wintoniam, principium et origo collegii nostri Oxoniae praedicti, velut hortus irriguus ac vinea pubescens in gemmas ipsum collegium nostrum Oxoniae fructifera prole foecundet, flores et fructus mellifluos in vinea Domini sabaoth per ipsius gratiam allaturum. 61

The first part of this passage describes the acquisition of grammatical skills as a physical process of taking in nurture, which is of a honey-sweet and milky taste like heavenly nourishments. It employs the metaphor of Christian tuition, introduced by St Paul (1 Cor. 3: 2) and reaffirmed by St Augustine, which describes how the milk of the first education nourishes the young and prepares them for the solid food of scripture. 62 The notion of the university college as a fruit-bearing garden, firmly rooted in the education in grammar provided at Winchester College, was also inspired by a long tradition of thought. 63 In the Metalogicon, John of Salisbury speaks of grammar as the root of scientific knowledge which “implants, as it were, the seed [of virtue] in nature’s furrow after grace has readied the ground. This seed, provided again that cooperating grace is present, increases in substance and strength until it becomes solid virtue, and it grows in manifold respects until it fructifies in good works.” 64

In fourteenth-century England, the topos of the university as a garden was employed in official documents: a charter of privileges issued by Edward III in 1355 likens the University of Oxford to a vineyard producing many fertile
fruits. 65 This idea of his foundation as a vineyard must have been particularly important to Wykeham, as it is also referred to in his correspondence. In a letter of 1385, the bishop, informed of the misconduct of his scholars, expressed his disappointment by referring to Isaiah’s parable of the vineyard: “In our vineyard which we planted, wild growths have sprung up deficient of grapes, and fruitful branches which we hoped would fructify have been changed to spurious offshoots with bitter taste.” 66 This notion of planting a college or university was not uncommon: Henry Rubinow, a major benefactor of Greifswald University, also described his foundation as “novella mea plantacio”. 67 In visual terms, a very similar idea was expressed in the design of the seal of Trinity Hall in Cambridge. Here, two tendrils that incorporate the heads of the twenty scholars of Bishop Bateman’s flourishing foundation grow from the founder’s coat of arms (fig. 11).

View this illustration online

**Figure 11.**
Mental Images and Stained Glass Images: The Tree of Jesse Windows in Context

Scholars and fellows of New College were encouraged by the founder to read the college statutes regularly in private, and three times a year the collegiate community assembled in the college chapel to read the text. The carefully crafted passage in the second chapter, which illustrates the idea of the college as a garden and vineyard, would have caught the reader’s particular attention, as its vivid language distinguishes it from the more sober tone of most of the sixty-eight statutes. In this section, the topos of the vineyard, also employed in other university documents, was further elaborated and enriched by a repetitive structure of synonyms or words of related meanings, such as virescere, florere, pubescere, incrementum, and hortuus irriguus, to evoke a prospering garden, and fructus, fertilis, maturus, fructifere, and foecundere to emphasize abundance and fertility within this collegiate foundation. While this pictorial language of the text inspired mental images, the Tree of Jesse in the west window of New College, which the scholars saw when entering and leaving the chapel and in part also from the choir stalls, provided a visual response. The notions that lie at the heart of the Tree of Jesse—vegetal growth, vitality, and fertility—provide a first level of correspondence with Wykeham’s ideas of the two prolific, organically connected colleges. The interpretation of the Tree of Jesse as a vine, which can be traced to the thirteenth century, created an even closer relationship: the image of the prospering vine with its rich progeny, lush branchwork, green leaves, and multicoloured grapes acted as a strong visual counterpart to the mental images and ideals of education, so vividly evoked in the statutes.

The central image of the tall nursing Virgin, which is in part preserved at Winchester College and might also have existed at New College, must have been even more compelling. The iconography made explicit the close physical bond of the Virgin and Christ Child, who was formed from his mother’s blood, and thereby drew attention to Mary’s central role in the incarnation. Most importantly for the medieval viewer, it was a reminder of Mary’s love, her care for all humans and intercession on their behalf. Yet, within the physical setting of a college chapel, the imagery of lactation and nourishment, so rich in associations within the medieval culture of learning, also conveyed further layers of meaning: it visually satisfied the desire of being nourished at college and alluded to the maternal role of the institution. Further, the monumental image of the Virgo lactans at the centre of the window visualized Mary’s powerful role as a spiritually and intellectually nourishing patroness of the colleges.
The importance of the above described metaphors of maternal care and vegetal growth in documents of the medieval university and other educational institutions shaped the viewers’ reception of the Tree of Jesse windows at New College and Winchester College. By selecting and adapting a popular, yet inherently multifaceted iconography for the decoration of the chapels, the colleges’ founder exploited the metaphoric potential of the Tree of Jesse and invested it with new meanings. The monumental Stirps Jesse in the main window of the colleges provided a “lucid summary of salvation history” that outlined the importance of the colleges’ patron, the Virgin Mary. The imagery of the huge, fruit-bearing tree that dominates the picture further gave life and visual form to Wykeham’s ideal conception of two prospering colleges and articulated his objective of contributing to the vineyard of the Lord.

Footnotes


2 The bishopric of Winchester was the richest in medieval England with an annual income of almost £4,000 in the late thirteenth century; see Mark Page, The Medieval Bishops of Winchester: Estate, Archive and Administration (Winchester: Hampshire County Council, 2002), 2. For Wykeham’s biography, see Virginia Davis, William Wykeham: A Life (London: Hamledon Continuum, 2007).

3 The foundation documents are published in Cartae de fundatione Collegii Beatae Mariae Wynton in Oxon (Oxford, 1879) and Thomas Frederick Kirby, Annals of Winchester College: from its Foundation in the Year 1382 to the Present Time: with an Appendix containing the Charter of Foundation, Wykeham’s Statutes of 1400, and other Documents and an Index (London: H. Frowde, 1892), 440-44.


6 He is documented to have negotiated with the cathedral chapter to secure its cooperation in the rebuilding, and in his will of 1403 he left clear instructions on the building sequence as well as on the choice of the master mason and the clerks of works. At his death he bequeathed 3,000 marks to the rebuilding of the nave and to its stained glass decoration, but we have no evidence of how much he contributed during his lifetime. According to the chantry contract with the cathedral chapter Wykeham had repaired the fabric of the cathedral at great personal expense. For the history of the rebuilding and Wykeham’s role as patron, see Robert Willis, “The Architectural History of Winchester Cathedral”, Proceedings at the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (1846), reprinted in The Architectural History of Some English Cathedrals, A Collection in Two Parts of Papers Delivered During the Years 1842-1863 (Chicheley: Minet, 1972), 54–75; John Crook and Yoshio Kusaba, “The Perpendicular Remodelling of the Nave: Problems and Interpretation”, in Winchester Cathedral: Nine Hundred Years, 1093-1993, ed. John Crook (Chichester: Phillimore 1993), 215-30; John Hare, “The Architectural Patronage of Two Late Medieval Bishops: Edington, Wykeham and the Rebuilding of Winchester Cathedral Nave”, The Antiquaries Journal 92 (2012): 1-33; and Decker, William of Wykeham (forthcoming).
Staatsrepräsentation und politischer Aristotelismus in der französischen Kunst, 1270–1380

Injunctions of Visitors, and Catalogues of Documents relating to the University, preserved in the Public Record Office

Cambridge and Eton

See Ayers, Chapel, which might have also contained a Tree of Jesse, is stylistically related to the glass at Winchester College.

Oxford at the time. A later glazing scheme at Oxford, the great north window in the transept of Merton College

The Medieval Chantry in England

Development of the English ‘Stone Cage’ Chantry Chapel”, in The Medieval Stained Glass of Merton College, Oxford


To my knowledge there is no evidence of statues on the exteriors of colleges in Oxford or Cambridge in the fourteenth century. At the University of Paris, sculptural representations of the patron saints and college benefactors are documented at the Collège de Navare, the Collège de Beauvais, the Collège de Dainville, and the Collège de Hubant. See Astrid L. Gabriel, Student Life in Ave Maria College, Mediaeval Paris: History and Chartulary of the College (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1955), 322; Wolfgang Brückle, Civitas Terrena: Staatsrepräsentation und politischer Aristotelismus in der französischen Kunst, 1270–1380 (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2005), 139–42; Aurélie Perrault, L’architecture des collèges Parisiens au Moyen Âges (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne 2009), 170–72.


Ayers, Medieval Stained Glass of Merton College, Part 1, lxxxiv–cii.

Storey, Foundation, 7–10; Davis, Wykeham, 143–60; Arnold Shipp, "William of Wykeham and the Founding of Winchester College" (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2008), esp. 155–90.

The statutes of New College referred to in this article, date from c. 1400 and were printed in 1853: “Statutes of New College”, in Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford, with Royal Patents of Foundation, Injunctions of Visitors, and Catalogues of Documents relating to the University, preserved in the Public Record Office, Vol. 1 (Oxford: J. H. Parker and London: Longman, Green and Brown, 1853). Earlier versions and copies are preserved in the Archives of New College. At Winchester College the final version of the statutes was promulgated in 1400; see Shipp, William of Wykeham, 12.

This is explored in more detail in Decker, William of Wykeham (forthcoming).

Household account roll of the bishop (April–September 1393), Winchester College Muniments 1, undated entry on the recto: “In expensis ij chariettis de Esshere usque Oxoniam et de ibidem usque Clere et Wyntoniam carriantis vitrum pro fenestris Collegii domini Wyntoniensis per ix dies cum xij equis et vj hominibus charettis xix s iij d.” A full transcript of the household roll has recently been made available by Winchester College: http://www.winchestercollege.org/william-of-wykehams-household-account-roll1393.

Woodforde, Stained Glass of New College, 4–5; Richard Marks, Stained Glass in England during the Middle Ages (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 171–74; Eavis, “Commemorative Foundations”, 179.
The window of Thurbern’s Chantry Chapel (fig. 4) mainly contains figures that originally belonged to the fifth, sixth, and seventh lights of the great east window, which were arranged in a new composition. The figures are: Wykeham kneeling before the Virgin Mary, Nathan, Micah, Richard II with his patron saint John the Baptist, Jehoash, Jehoshaphat, Absalom (fig. 5), and Ahaziah (Ochozias). Manasseh, Zechariah, Achaz, and St. John are preserved as busts. The image of the nursing Virgin Mary originally filled the central light of the east window and is now surrounded by the figures of St Peter, St John the Baptist and other small figures from the Scene of the Last Judgement. The figures of Jeconiah, Jehoram, Solomon, Samuel, Josiah, Elijah, and Amos were inserted into the east window of Fromont’s Chantry Chapel. For a panel-numbering diagram and a short history of the dispersal of the glass after the dismantling of the east window and its reinstatement in the window of Thurbern’s Chantry Chapel in 1951, see Harvey and King, “Winchester College Stained Glass”, esp. 155–58, 161–63, and fig. 2. The north and south windows of the chapel were also replaced by copies in the nineteenth century. Three figures were bought by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1855 (museum number: 4237:1 to 9-1855).


The Tree of Jesse at Wells Cathedral also shows the Virgin breast-feeding, but here she is seated. For the window, see Tim Ayers, The Medieval Stained Glass of Wells Cathedral, Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi, Great Britain 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Part 1, 283–376.


Close correspondences were first described by Woodforde, Stained Glass of New College, 102.


Watson, Early Iconography, 1. 3.

Good examples are Mary’s large representation in the the frontispiece to the Book of Jesaja in the mid-twelfth-century Lambeth Bible (London, Lambeth Palace, Library MS 3, fol. 198r) or her central position in a fourteenth-century English psalter (London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 346, fol. 7). In the medium of stained glass, a much-restored early fourteenth-century Tree of Jesse in the nave of York Minster (sXXXIII) shows a seated, large figure of the Virgin.


Cartae de fundatione Collegii Beatae Mariae Wynton in Oxon, 16; Bond, ed., “Statutes of New College”, 1; Kirby, Annals of Winchester College, 442.


His image was paired with the depictions of Edward III and Richard II, each kneeling in veneration of the Trinity and John the Baptist, respectively. The panel showing Richard II is now displayed in the west window of the Chantry Chapel of Robert Thurben.


Klaus Schreiner, Maria: Jungfrau, Mutter, Herrscherin (Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1994), 135–36.

praedicti, velut hortus irriguus ac vinea pubescens in gemmas ipsum collegium nostrum Oxoniae fructifera prole fertiles et maturos: quodque idem collegium nostrum propre Wintoniam, principium et origo collegii nostri Oxoniae foecundet, flores et fructus mellifluos in vinea Domini sabaoth per ipsius gratiam allaturum.

necnon, ad veram cognitionem mysterii scripturarum studiose provecta, in ecclesia sancta Dei fructus producat Aurelius Augustinus, cogatur, ac demum, coruscantibus radiis et inflammatis caloribus profectionis studii grammaticalis, ad concipiendum ejusdem scientiae primitivae melleo rore dulciter degustato virescat, et progressu placido exercitii soliciti florere doctrinae ipsius primitivae scientiae potus reperiatur lacteus, quo tenera ipsorum nutriatur infantia, quatenus Bond, ed., “Statutes of New College”, 6: “Cupientesque ut in ipso nostro collegio prope Wintoniam dulcis et suavis

ad exemplum ejus tanquam devota filia se componens, etiam suos, quos per Dei gratiam fertilis parturire conabitur, abolim consueverat erudire; ut dictum Collegium quod quasi in ejusdem almae matris gremio subsistere dinoscitur, lacte nutrit, nedum in philosophia artibusve imbuat, verum etiam in theologia, quae omnium scientiarum merito dicta Universitas Oxoniensis alumnos suos, quos, tanquam foecunda mater parturiens, ab uberibus jugiter sapientiae magistra est, ac jurium canonici et civilis facultatibus, quae pro regimine politico perquam utiles et necessariae sunt, The Metalogicon: A T welfth-Century Defense of Verbal and Logical Arts of The Trivium

John of Salisbury,

However, he did not explore this idea in further detail: Schreiner, “Bishop Bateman’s Statutes of Gonville Hall”, in Documents Relating to the University and Colleges of Cambridge, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), 2: 227.

In his study on the cult of the Virgin Mary, Klaus Schreiner drew a comparison between the Mother of God, who was venerated in hymns as the alma mater redemptoris, and the medieval university that was also seen an alma mater. However, he did not explore this idea in further detail: Schreiner, Maria, 136.


Kirby, Annals of Winchester College, 457.


Elke Reichert, Die bildlichen Darstellungen der Grammatica bis um 1600 (Hamburg: Kovac, 2004), 61-75.


George Williams, ed., Official Correspondence of Thomas Bekyngton, secretary to the King Henry VI, and Bishop of Bath and Wells (Cambridge: University Press, 1872), 1: 277.


Bond, ed., “Statutes of New College”, 6: “Cupientesque ut in ipso nostro collegio prope Wintoniam dulcis et suavis doctrinae ipsius primitiva scientiae potus reperiatur lacteus, quo tenera ipsorum nutriatur infantia, quatenus ejusdem scientiae primitiva melioe more dulciter degustato virescat, et progressu placido exercitii solliciti florere cogatur, ac demum, corroscanthus radiis et inflammatis caloribus profectioris studii grammaticalis, ad concipiendum facilius solidum cibum, quo robusta perfectorium juruans virtutum suscipiat incrementa, reddata promptior; necon, ad veram cognitcionem mysterii scripturarum studiose praeverta, in ecclesia sancta Dei fructus producat fertiles et maturos: quoque idec collegium nostrum prope Wintoniam, principium et origo collegii nostri Oxoniae praecidit, velut hortus irriguus ac vinea pubescens in gemmas ipsum collegium nostrum Oxoniae fructifera profe cocundet, flores et fructus mellifluos in vinea Domini sadoth per ipsius gratiam allatumur.”


John of Salisbury, Metalogicon, 1: 23.

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Primary sources


For the interpretation of Tree of Jesse as vine, see: Ayers, *Medieval Stained Glass of Wells Cathedral*, 309. See, for example, the Tree of Jesse in the Queen Mary Psalter (London, British Library, Royal 2 B VII, fol. 67v, 1310–1320).


Rubin, *Mother of God*, 211.


For a much later, yet in many ways comparable visual interpretation of the university as a garden, see Francisco Stastny, “The University as Cloister, Garden and Tree of Knowledge: An Iconographic Invention in the University of Cuzco”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 46 (1983): 94–132. I would like to thank Julia Rüdiger for drawing my attention to this article.

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