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**Mirrors and Windows:
Exploring Private Devotional Practice through
the Miniatures in The Hours of Mary of
Burgundy**

By

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Abstract: The miniatures in the *Hours of Mary of Burgundy* have been chronically understudied despite its acclaim. The present study aims to construct a comprehensive explanation of the spiritual use, theological implications, and devotional context of the illusionistic miniatures in *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* by first examining the theological context of the manuscript's creation before completing a deep iconographic, situational, and psychological analysis of the miniatures. Firstly, the present study argues that the devotio moderna was deeply connected to the mystic tradition, and that the beliefs and practices of mysticism and the devotio moderna inform the creation of the *Hours of Mary of Burgundy*. Secondly, the present study argues that the miniatures in the hours are effective tools of devotion to the owner through their illusionistic naturalism, reflexive structure, transitive quality, and reliance on user interaction. Ultimately, therefore, the miniatures each have components that act as mirrors and windows to the physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological state of the original owner, Mary of Burgundy herself. Lastly, the present study argues that books of hours as objects function as mirrors and windows as well.

The Hours of Mary of Burgundy is often used in art historical textbooks as the exemplar of Northern Renaissance innovation in manuscript painting and as emblematic of the intense spirituality characteristic 15th century Burgundian laity. The manuscript features one hundred and eighty-seven folios, each sumptuously decorated, including twenty full page miniatures. Two images in particular have delighted and intrigued scholars for decades, especially considering their self-referential nature: the frontispiece image featuring Mary of Burgundy praying in front of a window through which a scene of the Virgin unfolds; and another window scene through which the Nailing of the Cross can be seen. Despite its relative notoriety, however, very little in-depth scholarship has been written about the miniatures, and none have produced a satisfactory explanation regarding the spiritual applications of these miniatures for its reader. The present study is less concerned with the identification of the Master of Mary of Burgundy, with artistic commission, creation campaigns, and the iconography of the marginalia; it moreover seeks to go beyond the technical and descriptive to achieve the analytical and interpretive. Rather, it aims to understand how *The Hours* is reflective of contemporary religious practices, including the cultural importance of “gazing” (a prolonged absorption of images that emphasized the

development of visual wit), forming complex connections between images and ideas, and the stress placed on the supplicant by the *Devotio Moderna* and mystic practices to foster personal connection with the Divine. Moreover, the present study examines three full page-miniatures in *The Hours* as aims to reconstruct how the owner, Mary of Burgundy, used this devotional object as a tool to better her soul and bring her closer to Christ as she navigates and perfects her mind, body, and soul. Lastly, the present study goes beyond the immediate and situates *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* within mysticism, the *Devotio Moderna*, and Late Medieval devotional practices in general. This project allows for a further understanding of Late Medieval devotional practices, the objects used in devotion, and the historical realities and ideals of medieval worshipers. More specifically, this study provides a unique and in-depth analysis of an enigmatic and chronically underexamined book of hours, explores the daily spiritual practices of a medieval Christian (Mary of Burgundy), and highlights the connections between mystical practices and the *Devotio Moderna* and its practical application for an actual supplicant.

Examination of the Images

Before considering the current state of research, it may be beneficial to first describe the images, and provide a preliminary interpretation of their contents. The three images that are the concern of the present study are: the frontispiece, also known as “Mary of Burgundy at Prayer,” (fig. 1, folio 14 v.); “The Nailing of the Cross,” (fig. 2, folio 43 v.); and “The Crucifixion,” (fig. 3, folio 99v.). It is important to note here that the first two images, “Mary of Burgundy at Prayer” and “The Nailing of the Cross,” are the two most famous (and most commonly examined) images from *The Hours*; the miniature depicting the crucifixion, however, is stylistically and

thematically similar to those on 14 v. and 43 v.¹ It is therefore vital to examine this image with its sister images, rather than with other full page miniatures in *The Hours* that are stylistically different (see fig. 4). Moreover, according to the collation completed by de Schryver and work by Eric Inglis and Anne van Buren, each of these three miniatures were executed on separate pieces of parchment which were inserted into the book upon binding.²

As mentioned previously, folio 14 v. features a woman, presumably Mary of Burgundy, sitting before a window in contemporary dress; in her lap is a small dog and she holds a book protected by a green cloth.³ This book is a Book of Hours, identified by the large “O” that begins Marian prayers, either the “*O intermerata*” or “*Obsecro te.*”⁴ In the windowsill is a necklace embedded with pearls and other precious stones on a gold chain next to which a few carnation buds are scattered and a glass vase of irises sits. The irises draw the eye upward, around the frame, and into the scene taking place through the window. Within is a large chapel with tall, vaulted ceilings, arcades, and portals; in the center of the chapel, separated from the other figures by a gold carpet and several candle sticks, sits the Virgin Mary with the infant Christ in her lap in place of a traditional altar. Several figures surround the Virgin and Child in veneration—although their identification has been debated, I believe the most plausible reading is that of Mary of Burgundy appearing again in an opulent gold and blue brocade gown, with a red prayerbook

¹ This is especially important due to the apparent changes in artistic catalog and execution by up to three different artist/workshops; a theory proposed by Eric Inglis in *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1993) and examined at further length by Anne van Buren, “A Window on Two Duchesses in Burgundy” in *Tributes in Honor of James H. Marrow: Studies in Painting and Manuscript Illumination of the Late Middle Ages and Northern Renaissance* (Turnhout, Belgium: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2006).

² Inglis, *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, 11-12. Note that many of the full page miniatures were executed in this manner, but this collation allows that the Master of Mary of Burgundy would have worked on these three pages together.

³ The identification of this figure has been debated for decades, as will be discussed later in this paper. The present study agrees with the majority of scholarship and contends that this figure is Mary of Burgundy

⁴ Susie Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 274.

tucked beneath her arm.⁵ Her entourage of ladies in waiting sit behind her; opposite of the women is a male figure, who some scholars identify as a priest. Anne van Buren, however presents a compelling argument that the man is Maximilian, Mary of Burgundy's husband.⁶ In addition to the "long tradition" of the German Emperor being an ordained canon or deacon, the individual has the same haircut and color that appear in all of Maximilian's portraits— moreover, the carnations that sit directly below the figure was a symbol associated with their marriage in particular.⁷ The burning question that permeates this miniature is simple; why does Mary of Burgundy appear twice, both within an image which the "real" Mary would see in very prayerbook the portrait holds?

The second relevant image, on folio 43 v., features "The Nailing of the Cross." In the foreground, a rosary rests on an expensive brocade pillow next to an open book, ostensibly the same Book of Hours held by Mary in the frontispiece. To the left sits an open chest, which overflows with other precious, and perhaps devotional objects—gold chains, a pendant, rings, a velvet belt with a snail shell, a semi-transparent veil, and a green vial of liquid.⁸ Framing the scene, both literally and figuratively, are two *grisaille* relief sculptures depicting events from the Old Testament, the Sacrifice of Isaac, and Moses and the Bronze Serpent.⁹ The artist's ingenuity is at work here, illustrating two preludes to the Crucifixion while still maintaining the illusion of an interior and exterior space. Through the window Christ is Nailed to the Cross on Golgotha as swaths of people crowd around; John the Baptist (in red) holds back a desperate Virgin who reaches towards her son. In the group of ladies in the foreground, a woman in blue looks back

⁵ John Harthan, *The Book of Hours* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1977), 113. This feature has not been picked up by any other art historians.

⁶ Van Buren, "A Window on Two Duchesses of Burgundy," 515.

⁷ Van Buren, "A Window on Two Duchesses of Burgundy," 515.

⁸ Anna Eörsi "'Imaige a la Vierge Marie: The Hours of Mary of Burgundy, Her Marriage, and Her Painter, Hugo van der Goes'" in *Acta Historiae Artium* 61 (2020), 23.

⁹ Eörsi, "'Imaige a la Vierge Marie,'" 21

cooly at the viewer. Although this scene at first appears innocuous, especially to modern eyes, several Art Historians have individually pointed to small curiosities, which together cast this miniature as anything but ordinary. According to Anne van Buren, the subject matter itself is a clear departure from custom, as a Crucifixion scene traditionally introduces “The Hours of the Cross.” Van Buren argues that a nailing of the cross scene has “never introduced this office” in any other extant Book of Hours.¹⁰ She elaborates that the Master would have known this well, and in fact alludes to his departure in the miniature itself—the Book of Hours in the foreground is open to a tiny rendition of the Crucifixion. Susie Nash points out that a key individual is missing from the scene, “one of the most important figures in the Passion drama at this point” and one of Mary of Burgundy’s namesakes—where is the Magdalene?¹¹ It is certainly uncommon for a scene with this much detail to exclude such a significant figure, especially one that is the namesake of the owner, has a rich tradition of identification and veneration as a repented sinner, and was associated with Burgundy in particular given the purported discovery of her bones in 1050/1267.¹² Another curiosity has been put forward by Anna Eörsi, who asks where the Mary from the window in the frontispiece has gone, leaving her book and an identical pillow behind. Eörsi furthermore questions the significance of the chest is and its contents, and why it was left open and abandoned.¹³ Each author presents provisional answers to their concerns, but a unified theory adequately explaining all of these bizarre occurrences in this miniature has yet to be suggested.

¹⁰ Van Buren, “A Window on Two Duchesses of Burgundy,” 509.

¹¹ Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 276.

¹² Johnston, Barbara, “Sacred Kingship and Royal Patronage in the La Vie de la Magdalene: Pilgrimage, Politics, Passion Plays, and the Life of Louise of Savoy” (Florida State: Dissertation, 2007), 88–93 and Maisch, Ingrid *Mary Magdalene: The Image of a Woman through the Centuries*, translated by Maloney, Linda M (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1998).

¹³ Eörsi, “‘Imaige a la Vierge Marie,’” 23

The final miniature in this grouping depicts “The Crucifixion” on folio 99 v. and is notably less well known and much less examined than its sisters. This miniature is linked to those on folios 14 v. and 43v. by its frame and is visually similar in its decoration, pigmentation, and iconography—despite such connections, this miniature and its margins rarely appear in studies of *The Hours*. The margins depict the *Arma Christi*, the instruments of torture from Christ’s Passion, thus connecting the margins to the center. In the upper left corner an angel holds a crown of thorns and a lance; in the bottom left corner, another angel holds a column, scourge, and pincers. Both angels float serenely on a field of gold acanthus which blooms with vivid blue flowers encrusted with precious gems. The brooch on the right side of the frame looks suspiciously like the necklace that moves from the windowsill in the frontispiece to the chest in “The Nailing of the Cross,” thus further connecting this page with its two sister pages. The illusion of a window on this page is primarily lost—through the frame, however, we see a crucifixion; this scene, once again, represents a departure from the norm. Rather than depicting the crucifixion frontally, as was traditional (see fig. 5), the artist here chose to set the scene at an angle. According to Eric Inglis this technique enabled the artist to depict Christ lifting his head towards heaven to speak his final words. The oblique angle furthermore heightens the impact of the scene as it assigns the viewer a place *within* the scene rather than a separate one.¹⁴ One cannot help but wonder why the window motif is abandoned while the composition of the frame remains the same, and why the instruments of the passion surround the scene rather than the familiar setting of the previous miniatures.

As mentioned previously, there has been much discussion concerning *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, ranging from catalog entries and analytical descriptions to in-depth studies of the

¹⁴ Inglis, *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, 40.

marginalia and examinations of the larger meaning of the miniatures. None of these studies has been successful in determining a comprehensive explanation of the manuscript's spiritual use to its original owner, Mary of Burgundy. Early scholarship concerning *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* was more technical and descriptive than analytical and interpretive. Works by Antoine de Schryver, Otto Pächt, and Eric Inglis, while foundational to later generations of research, read more like extended catalog entries. De Schryver was the first to contend that this book of hours was intended from its inception as a book for Mary of Burgundy, rather than for Charles the Bold (her father) as was formerly proposed by James Weale.¹⁵ Otto Pächt was one of the earliest scholars to equate the illusionistic window scenes by the Master of Mary of Burgundy to an application of van Eyckian techniques to manuscript painting.¹⁶

Historiography

Much of the scholarship concerning *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* has been advanced by brief mentions of *The Hours* in larger studies. Craig Harbison's *The Mirror of the Artist*, Michael Camille's *Gothic Art: Glorious Vision*, Susie Nash's *Northern Renaissance Art*, and *The Book of Hours* by John Harthan each give the famous miniatures ("Mary of Burgundy at Prayer" and "The Nailing of the Cross") a few paragraphs of provisional treatment, although each also offers some brief curious insights— Harthan, for example, is the only scholar to identify that the Mary of Burgundy in the background of the frontispiece is holding a prayer book under her arm; Nash is the only scholar to note the Magdalene's absence in the Nailing of the Cross. Individually, these acknowledgements simply elevate the notoriety of the miniatures without offering a detailed or complete analysis of the iconography, theological context, or the relationship between

¹⁵ See Inglis, *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, 13; James Weale, "Documents inédits sur les Enlumineurs de Bruges" in *Le Beffroy IV* (Bruges, 1872).

¹⁶ Otto Pächt, *The Master of Mary of Burgundy* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1948), 21, 27.

the miniatures. More lamentable is that they do not, or only briefly, propose how these images would have been used by the reader in a devotional context, or what the theological impact these discrepancies have on the object's utility.

One focal point of intense deliberation has been the identification of the figures in the frontispiece. Given the feminine endings of the prayers, one must assume that the book was intended for a woman, and de Schryver was the first to propose that the woman seated in the foreground of the miniature was Mary of Burgundy, an identification which is now largely accepted.¹⁷ Less certain is the identification of the woman in gold and blue in the background, appearing before the Virgin with her ladies in waiting (See fig. 6). Susan Groag Bell was the first to distinguish the woman as Mary of Burgundy, writing “[Mary] sits in the window overlooking a magnificent gothic church, in which an additional replica of herself adores a majestic Virgin and Child.”¹⁸ Other scholars, such as Andrea Pearson and Anne van Buren argue that the woman in the background is Margaret of York— the patron of the book and step-mother of Mary. Pearson's primary evidence is that the face shapes between the two figures are different, with the foreground portrait having “similarities in the shape of the skull” with Mary's exhumed remains and the same “smallish round heads, petite features, thin moon-shaped eyebrows, high foreheads, and longish noses” as Mary's effigy.¹⁹ The background figure, in contrast (according to Pearson), has puckered lips and a flat nose and “seems taller.”²⁰ One must keep in mind that the manuscript itself measures 225 x 163 mm, and the face of the figure in the background measures only 3.6mm wide by 6.4mm tall, about the size of a pencil's eraser. Given how small such details are,

¹⁷ Franz Unterkircher and Antoine de Schryver, *Gebetbuch Karls des Kühnen vel Potius, Stundenbuch der Maria von Burgund* (Graz; 1974), via Inglis, *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, 14

¹⁸ Susan Groag Bell, “Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors Of Culture” in *Signs* 7.4 (1982), 761.

¹⁹ Andrea Pearson, *Envisioning Gender in Burgundian Devotional Art, 1350-1530: Experience, Authority, Resistance* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 53-56

²⁰ Pearson, *Envisioning Gender*, 53.

the present study finds it difficult to ascribe differences in facial features such large significance, thus causing difficulty with Pearson's claims. It is moreover interesting that van Buren, who agrees with Pearson's identifications states that the "idealized features [of the foremost portrait] bear little resemblance to Mary's portraits."²¹ Facial features aside, the figure in the background appears in gold and blue, whereas Margaret was associated with crimson, gold, and black almost infallibly in both her public appearances and patronage as well as her private commissions.²² Considering Margaret commissioned *The Hours*, it seems unlikely that she would depart from her own self-fashioning for this particular project.²³ Erica O'Brien, alternatively, identifies the figure in the background as Isabella of Bourbon, Mary's mother who died when Mary was still young. In addition to scrutinizing facial characteristics and heraldry, O'Brien's primary evidence for the woman's identity is Mary of Burgundy's active patronage to keep her mother's image alive in the public eye, which (as an added bonus) solidified her right to rule. O'Brien, however, does not explain how public display of legitimacy correlates to a private devotion, especially as Isabella had died when Mary was only eight and at that time "had not seen her mother for two years."²⁴ Her argument additionally does not account for how Margaret of York, as the patron of the manuscript, fits into such a scheme of remembrance and authority.

Another category of research is that which is primarily concerned with marginalia, although these studies do consider the theological implications and practical use of *The Hours*. Sherry Lindquist argues that the marginalia both provide "anti-models" for Mary and allow for "whimsical distraction" in a form of intelligent recreation that ultimately leads the reader back to

²¹ Van Buren, "A Window on Two Duchesses in Burgundy," 515.

²² Erica O'Brein "Mothers and Daughters: Isabella of Bourbon in the Vienna Hours of Mary of Burgundy" in *Mary of Burgundy: 'Persona', Reign, and Legacy of a Late Medieval Duchess* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 186.

²³ O'Brien, "Mothers and Daughters." 186.

²⁴ O'Brein "Mothers and Daughters," 187.

the devotional subject at hand.²⁵ Lindquist argues that the purpose of the margins (and the book itself) was to provide a system through which the user “might forge a better self,” aiding Mary in becoming a “conventional lady of piety” who is able to overcome her gender.²⁶ Women were seen as the weaker sex— physically, intellectually, and spiritually— and were fundamentally associated with the body, the sensual, and the fleshly, all of which was an impediment to soul formation.²⁷ According to Lindquist, the marginalia allude to gender, sexuality, and animalistic tendencies which would serve as a visual reminder of Mary’s duties to produce an heir and to refine her piety. While I agree that *The Hours* helped Mary shape herself in a particular way, I argue that the implications are much more spiritual than social.

Bret Rothstein addresses the margins and two of the full page miniatures which are of present concern (“Mary of Burgundy at Prayer” and “The Nailing of the Cross”) and argues that the relationship between variation and repetition in the decoration of *The Hours* results in “visual interplay and reflexivity” that both guides and challenges the reader in devout reading.²⁸ More specifically, Rothstein argues that the book as a whole functions much like the infant’s walker pictured on folio 141 r.; “both provide considerable enjoyment for their users, both constitute significant aesthetic engagements, both invite the cultivation of specific skills— one set physical, the other intellectual and spiritual.”²⁹ The images, through their “dynamic” manner of viewing and refinement of visual agility, allows the user to progress from the soul’s post-lapsarian

²⁵ Sherry Lindquist, “Beauty and the Beasts: Rereading the Hours of Mary of Burgundy” in *Mary of Burgundy: ‘Persona’, Reign, and Legacy of a Late Medieval Duchess* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 162; 179

²⁶ Lindquist, “Beauty and the Beasts,” 163-164

²⁷ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 101; Caroline Walker Bynum, “The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages” in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 183; Alexa Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 20.

²⁸ Bret Rothstein, “The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer In The Hours Of Mary Of Burgundy” in *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Reindert L. Falkenburg, Walter S. Melion, and Todd M. Richardson (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007), 254.

²⁹ Rothstein, “The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer,” 273.

spiritual infancy to its closeness with God through spiritual maturity.³⁰ Moreover, Rothstein argues, the decoration cultivates both “the aims and means of visualization,” which is key to understanding *The Hours*.³¹ Rothstein’s careful consideration of the spiritual implications of this devotional text, rather than the courtly and social concerns, is what pushes his argument over Lindquist’s interpretation.

The final category of previous scholarship is those that actually examine all three images (figs. 1-3) and offer some theological and practical applications thereof, but each is arguable in some specific regard. The first, published by Angelika Gross in French in 2003, argues that the practical use of *The Hours* works in archetypes rather than specifics; for example, the cathedral in the background of the frontispiece is not a specific cathedral, but rather an archetype of the church.³² Similarly, the woman in the foreground is not a specific portrait, but rather stands for the idealized contemplative, pious laywoman.³³ In regards to the window motif, the author argues that the artist “transposed the Eyckian compositional scheme” in order to “amplify” the impression of space and depth, the effect of which is the creation of a fictitious, three dimensional world. According to Gross, this shunning of traditional filigree in the marginalia in favor of illusionistic ones challenges the miniatures they envelop. These pages therefore become the ideal surface for the viewer to contemplate both the “union and tension between the visible and invisible, the temporal and non-temporal, and corporeal and spiritual worlds.”³⁴

Unfortunately, Gross does not see a “thematic unity” between the miniatures and refrains from providing a more detailed theory as to their use.

³⁰ Rothstein, “The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer,” 245, 259, 273.

³¹ Rothstein, “The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer,” 245.

³² Angelika Gross, “Vision et Regard: la Métaphore de la Fenêtre dans une Enluminure du Livre d’Heures de Marie de Bourgogne, cod. vind. 1875.” in *Par la Fenêtre: Études de littérature et de Civilisation Médiévales*, (Provence: Publications de l’Université de Provence, 2003), 201. Note: The translations from French are my own.

³³ Gross, “Vision et Regard,” 201.

³⁴ Gross, “Vision et Regard,” 204.

Eberhard König, in contrast, creates a strong argument about the utility of these images. He argues that the three illusionistic miniatures allowed Mary of Burgundy to reenact the liturgy in her private devotion, an argument shared by Thomas Lentès. He shuns readings such as Pächt's and Gross' that advocate that the pages are "artistic virtue-games of near and far."³⁵ According to Lentès, "the liturgy was the force behind the private image cult" and hourly prayers, such as those constructed by books of hours, were "always" based in the liturgy and the "individual stages of the passion."³⁶ König advocates that through the images the owner could "take part in the service unseen and from a distance" and that the trompe l'oeil decoration refers to the specific spaces from which Mary of Burgundy would have viewed the mass—her lodge at St. Mary's cathedral.³⁷ König moreover claims that by depicting such a space, Mary is able to "relive" liturgical experience. A recreation of the liturgy, however, fails to explain why Mary of Burgundy appears twice in the frontispiece or the lack of the Magdalene. It is further important to consider that König's argument, places the onus for the theological uniqueness of these miniatures entirely on the artist, going as far to say that the artists' liturgical aims went against mainstream teachings by the church. Such a reading is at odds with a majority of scholarship, which agrees that books of hours were generally overseen by personal spiritual advisors and correlate to the larger cultural shift away from "social and cultural aspects" of religion to an emphasis on "personal experience."³⁸ This religious culture emphasized developing a personal relationship with God rather than relying on the clergy, confession, and the liturgy. As such, individual accountability,

³⁵ Eberhard König, "Zur Wirklichkeit in Fensterbild der Kreuzannagelung des Wiener Stundenbuchs der Maria von Burgund," in *Tributes in Honor of James H. Marrow: Studies in Painting and Manuscript Illumination of the Late Middle Ages and Northern Renaissance* (Turnhout, Belgium: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2006), 280.

³⁶ Thomas Lentès, "'As Far As The Eye Can See...': Rituals of Gazing in the Late Middle Ages" in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 366, -368.

³⁷ König, "Zur Wirklichkeit in Fensterbild der Kreuzannagelung des Wiener Stundenbuchs der Maria von Burgund," 280.

³⁸ John Peter Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Re-Reading the Confessions* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 1.

personal relationships with the Divine, and “scrutiny of the spiritual self” became key to a new emphasis on spiritual self-improvement. Craig Harbison moreover argues that “fifteenth century Flemings did **not**, as far as we can tell from the documentary evidence, look to the liturgical forms of the church in order to express their religious feelings.”³⁹

The most recent publication that concerns all three images is a study by Anna Eörsi, who argues that both contemporary reverence and *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* repeatedly casts Mary of Burgundy as the Virgin and that the miniatures are overt celebrations of Mary’s marriage to Maximilian of Habsburg. Eörsi perceives many of the objects that proliferate the realistic margins as direct references to the marriage including the dogs, forget-me-nots, daisies, carnations, and irises in the frontispiece, and the gold chains, rosary, pomander, phial of perfume, and, of course, the book of hours sitting in the windowsill in “The Nailing of the Cross,” but does not elaborate if these items are merely decorative or hold some other purpose.⁴⁰ Most interesting of her arguments is that the three pertinent miniatures were commissioned very late in the production of the manuscript through the involvement of Maximilian himself; Eörsi argues that each of the three images are actually Maximilian’s visions, not Mary’s.⁴¹ In the frontispiece, we see the idealized portrait of the Virgin in the guise of Mary of Burgundy sitting in the windowsill; in the background, we see a reversal. The “Virgin” being venerated is, according to Eörsi, actually Mary of Burgundy dressed as the Virgin Mary, holding her newborn son Phillip as the infant Christ.⁴² While intriguing, Eörsi’s argument presents some issues; she does not explain how these images would have been used by Phillip, and some of her equations between Mary of

³⁹ Craig Harbison, “Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting,” in *Simiolus: Netherlandish Quarterly for the History of Art* 15.2 (1985), 89, emphasis added.

⁴⁰ Eörsi, “‘Imaige a la Vierge Marie,’” 23-25.

⁴¹ Eörsi, “‘Imaige a la Vierge Marie,’” 20.

⁴² Eörsi, “‘Imaige a la Vierge Marie,’” 28, 30.

Burgundy and the Virgin Mary are tenuous at best—for example: why would Mary appear as the coy figure dressed in blue on folio 43 v., who apparently also represents the Virgin, instead of simply appearing as the Virgin reaching for Christ? Moreover, the general consensus is that Margaret of York commissioned this book of hours for her step-daughter; there is no concrete evidence of Maximilian’s involvement, which seems more improbable when one considers that Mary had to continually send money to him on his journey from the holy Roman Empire to Flanders, due to his “lack of funds” to pay for his retinue or to buy the wedding jewels.⁴³

As I hope to have made clear, past scholarship has neglected to construct a comprehensive explanation of the spiritual use, theological implications, and devotional context of the illusionistic miniatures in *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*. The present study asserts that “Mary of Burgundy at Prayer,” “The Nailing of the Cross,” and “The Crucifixion” were used by their owner to cultivate a deeper comprehension of the Divine, purify their soul, and further their spiritual journey. To better understand the use of *The Hours* one must first understand the theological context of Mary of Burgundy’s devotion; namely, the mystical practices of meditation, speculation, and contemplation that were adapted by practitioners of the “Devotio Moderna.” Ultimately, the images aid Mary of Burgundy in her devotions through their illusionistic naturalism, reflexivity, interactivity, and transitive qualities; thus, each image becomes both “mirror” and “window” to Mary as the viewer. These images therefore assisted Mary to purify and transform her soul in a way that brought her closer to Christ— the ultimate goal of each Christian.

⁴³ Van Buren, “A Window on Two Duchesses in Burgundy,” 520.

In order to recognize the complex interactions between viewer and text, however, one must first have a firm grasp on *The Hours*' theological milieu in mystic practices and the Devotio Moderna, including the context of its commission.

Theological Context

Some of the characteristics of the miniatures in *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* are firmly rooted in the Christian mystic tradition. Bernard McGinn, the preeminent scholar of Christian mysticism, succinctly defines mysticism as “a part or element of Christian belief and practice that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the effect of what the Mystics themselves have described as a direct and transformative presence of God.”⁴⁴ McGinn further emphasizes that the mystics stressed the need of a pious life to succeed in their journey to the presence of God, rather than simply achieving a brief state in which one is in the immediate company of the Divine.⁴⁵ Reflective of mystical practices in general, visions were “the fruits of a complex spiritual discipline.”⁴⁶ It is important to note that although mystical union with God was the desired outcome, mystical texts warn repeatedly that visions cannot be forced and must be preceded by a properly sustained “moral, intellectual, and spiritual” life which emphasized prayer, imitation of Christ and his followers, shunning of material world, meditation, and humility.⁴⁷ Although visionary experiences such as rapture, ecstasy, and union with the Divine (often in the form of Christ) are often the forefront “characteristics” associated with mysticism, the fact that the purpose of these visionary experiences was not the vision in itself is worthy of

⁴⁴ Bernard McGinn, ed. *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Modern Library, 2006), xiv

⁴⁵ McGinn, *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism*, xiv

⁴⁶ Barbara Newman, “What Did It Mean to Say, ‘I Saw’? The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture” in *Speculum* 80.1 (2005), 3.

⁴⁷ Julia Lamm, “A Guide to Christian Mysticism” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Mysticism* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2012).; McGinn flowering 6;9;12; W.H. Dyson, *Studies in Christian Mysticism* (London: James Clarke & Co, 1913), 7, 112

attention; according to McGinn, what defines a mystical visionary experience is not the contents of the vision itself, but rather the effect it has on the recipient, it relies on “the transformation... of the consciousness.”⁴⁸ It is important to note that these practices, which began in a monastic context, spread “beyond the cloister” and were “diffused among the laity” beginning in the late thirteenth century.⁴⁹ The spread of monastic devotional practices to the laity coincides with the “democratization” of Mysticism, or a spread of the conviction that it was “**practically and not just theoretically possible** for all Christians [including the laity]... to enjoy the immediate consciousness of God’s presence.”⁵⁰ Another principal aspect of mysticism is the role of images. Although an earlier generation of scholars often saw mysticism and art as “antitheses,” recent scholarship— spearheaded by Jeffrey Hamburger— has argued that art held a crucial role in mystic practice despite the fact that imageless contemplation was the “ideal.”⁵¹ Images served several key functions in devotional practice, and their use was considered a natural step in one’s spiritual journey to eventual imageless devotion.⁵² One utility of images was their role as links between worlds due to their ability to appeal to both the earthly and Divine parts of men; they mediated between the sensible and the Divine and fostered earthly contact with the heavenly.⁵³ Moreover, artistic depictions had an ability to manifest both the appearance and the power of the Divine as something comprehensible to humans. The result was that corporeal images and

⁴⁸ Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism: 1200—1350* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 27.

⁴⁹ Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation*, 107-108

⁵⁰ McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 13. emphasis added

⁵¹ Jeffrey Hamburger, “Speculations on Speculation: Vision and Perception in the Theory and Practice of Mystical Devotion” in *Duetsche Mystik* (2000), 358; Harbison, “Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting,” 113.

⁵² Harbison, “Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting,” 113.

⁵³ Walter Melion, “Introduction: Meditative Images in the Psychology of the Soul” in *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Reindert L. Falkenburg, Walter S. Melion, and Todd M. Richardson (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007), 2; Thomas Lentens, ““As Far As The Eye Can See...,”” 360; Jerry Root, *The Theophilus Legend in Medieval Text and Image* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), 107-108.

spiritual images were at times indistinguishable from one another.⁵⁴ As such, images were used as “instruments of soul formation” —essentially, the devotee would experience, monitor, evaluate, and manipulate their soul’s powers of “sensation, cognition, and transformation” in order to further their spiritual journey.⁵⁵ Contemporary theological treatises, such as Ludolph of Saxony’s *Vita Christi*, furthermore claimed that the spiritual use of images is that they make one aware of their spiritual condition, thus inspiring the conforming of oneself to God; this is possible because Christ himself is an image, the *Imago Dei*.⁵⁶ An image’s relationship to what is being depicted has a similar relationship as the soul does to Christ, a likeness to the original— a similitude.⁵⁷

Critical to understanding the Hours of Mary of Burgundy is understanding the philosophical and practical context regarding the function of images in Late Medieval Devotion. Cynthia Hahn argues that in this period viewing images was a task undertaken by “receptive and active soul, cleansed and trained” and exposed during solitary contemplation; images were meant to be viewed over a long period of time, where one contemplated the individual parts in relation to the whole, compared it with other images and texts, meditated on the deeper meaning and imagined the image in the mind’s eye or the soul.⁵⁸ The value of the images in *The Hours*, then, is their ability to initiate Mary of Burgundy’s process of meditation in her devotions; according to Saint Bernard, one of the most prominent mystic writers and some of whose work is found in Margaret of York’s collection, images allowed the viewer to move from *meditatio* to *speculatio*

⁵⁴ Harbison, “Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting,” 113.

⁵⁵ Melion, “Introduction: Meditative Images in the Psychology of the Soul,” 1-2.

⁵⁶ Melion, “Introduction: Meditative Images in the Psychology of the Soul,” 3.

⁵⁷ Melion, “Introduction: Meditative Images in the Psychology of the Soul,” 3.

⁵⁸ Cynthia Hahn, “Visio Dei: Changes in Medieval Visuality,” in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 169.

and then to *contemplatio*.⁵⁹ Saint Bernard's theory, of course, was based to the pervasive Augustinian three-stage theory of vision—corporeal sight, moving to spiritual sight (imagination), and then intellectual sight (the unseeable, the Divine). According to Herbert Kessler, the miracle of images was their ability to make seen the unseen. Images of Christ and the Saints were representations of the earthly presence of God; such images then “attracted the viewer and excited religious desire.”⁶⁰ This energy was then channeled toward the Divine God himself, who remains unseeable and unknowable. This channeling of devotion from corporeal images was made possible only by Christ's dual nature, simultaneously earthly and heavenly.⁶¹ Although many mystics still asserted that imageless devotion of God was the ideal, images nevertheless were a staple in mystic practice— for both neophytes and experienced practitioners—due to their assistive role in entering a meditative state and ability to quickly move a viewer from a corporeal to a mental image of the Divine.⁶²

Another, later, devotional movement that similarly encouraged individuals to seek a connection with the Divine was the “Devotio Moderna”. The Devotio Moderna was a late medieval religious lay movement that began in the latter half of the fourteenth century in the Netherlands and quickly spread to neighboring countries, including Burgundy and the Holy Roman Empire. It was a lay movement that encouraged its practitioners, the “Devout,” to foster their own personal connection with God— largely in response to perceived corruption of the clergy following the Avignon Papacy and the Great Schism—and called for apostolic renewal,

⁵⁹ Thomas Kren, *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and the Visions of Tondal* (Malibu, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1992), 258-259; Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 271

⁶⁰ Herbert L. Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art* (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 2004), 166.

⁶¹ Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, 166.

⁶² Hamburger, “Speculations on Speculation, 358; Harbison, “Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting, 113; Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 271.

sober piety, and strict moralism by its followers.⁶³ Prayer, therefore, was extremely important to the Devout; ideally, it comprised of “the intellect as well as the affect, of the heart as well as the mind, of the tongue but also of the understanding, of the breath but also of the attention.”⁶⁴ Its constituents were “self-disciplined, self-aware, and interiorly-focused” and “above all... [practiced] self-surrender that proves itself in acceptance of suffering as a manifestation of God's will.”⁶⁵ The Devotio Moderna was moreover practical, urging reading, meditation, and writing, and taught that all aspects of daily life—exercise, sleep, meals, labor, mindfulness, leisure, etc.—were important in the development of their souls.⁶⁶

The connection between mysticism and the Devotio Moderna cannot be denied. While many authors such as Jill Raitt, John van Engen, Ross Fuller, and R. Post (as well as countless others) allude to the similarities between practices and the influence of mystical texts on the teachings and writings of the founders of the Devotio Moderna, significantly fewer authors present such connections as the forefront of their arguments; examples include Bernard McGinn's “Mystical Aspects of the Modern Devotion” and Wybren Scheepsma's “Mysticism and Modern Devotion.”⁶⁷ Both mysticism and the Devotio Moderna emphasize discipline, prayer, imitation of Christ, at least a partial shunning of the material world, visualization, humility, and meditation. Perhaps one of the most intriguing connections is that the Devout “never excluded the possibility of mystical states, even of union with God” although they

⁶³ Bernard McGinn, *The Varieties Of Vernacular Mysticism: 1350 to 1550* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2012), 96-97. The present study for efficiency's sake has chosen to adapt Bernard McGinn's use of “the Devout” with a capital ‘D’ to refer to the practitioners of the Devotio Moderna.

⁶⁴ Rachel Fulton Brown, “My Psalter, My Self; or How to Get a Grip on the Office According to Jan Mombaer: An Exercise in Training the Attention for Prayer” in *Spiritus* 12 (2012), 82.

⁶⁵ Fulton Brown, “My Psalter, My Self,” 80; McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 96, 102.

⁶⁶ Fulton Brown, “My Psalter, My Self,” 80; John Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 6, 266.

⁶⁷ Bernard McGinn, “Mystical Aspects of the Modern Devotion” in *The Varieties Of Vernacular Mysticism: 1350 to 1550* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2012). Wybren Scheepsma, “Mysticism and Modern Devotion” in *Spirituality Renewed: Studies on Significant Representatives of the Modern Devotion* (Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2003).

primarily thought that such states and true visions were “primarily rewards to be attained in heaven by virtuous practice in this life, and only rarely tasted here below.”⁶⁸ Also significant is that both mysticism and the Devotio Moderna emphasized the imitation of Christ, found in many mystical and Modern Devotional texts, but epitomized by Thomas of Kempis’ *De Imitatione Christi (Imitation of Christ)*. Surviving in over nine hundred manuscripts, the book guides the reader through several stages: the Book I is largely ascetic in nature, moving to a deeper spiritual attainment in Book II, while Book III contains an “interpersonal conversation” with a Eucharistic Christ.⁶⁹ The text culminates with Book IV, an “interior conversation with both God and the self” that urges the reader to fashion themselves after Christ, the model of a perfect Christian.⁷⁰ Important to note is the similarity between Kempis’ “internalized imitation and surrender to the Divine will” correlate to mystical practice of “detachment and releasement” but in a more functional sense.⁷¹ The key difference between the Devotio Moderna and mysticism is that while both prioritize interiorization, mysticism was essentially monastic, meaning its constituents were usually formally educated or brought up in a religious community, and their lives centered completely on serving God. The Devotio Moderna, on the other hand, was a lay movement, and although interiorization, meditation, and prayer were important, the Devout focused on practical piety that allowed for other functions. How both mysticism and the Devotio Moderna are connected to *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* can be understood through its commission.

The Hours of Mary of Burgundy was commissioned by Margaret of York for her step-daughter, Mary of Burgundy most probably around 1477.⁷² Margaret became Mary’s step-mother

⁶⁸ McGinn, *The Varieties Of Vernacular Mysticism*, 96-97.

⁶⁹ McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 101.

⁷⁰ McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 102

⁷¹ McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 102

⁷² Although its commission was debated, at least in early publications, it is now widely accepted that Margaret was the patron of the manuscript. O’Brein “Mothers and Daughters,” 181; Pearson, *Envisioning Gender*, 56; Van Buren,

upon her marriage to Charles the Bold in 1468, when Mary was eleven; the two became quite close, Margaret would have likely been quite involved with Mary's education, as mothers often were in that time, and may have taught Mary to read through religious books such as Books of Hours.⁷³ Margaret was an active bibliophile; she had about twenty five books in her possession all but two of which were commissioned before *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*.⁷⁴ Although a small number by modern standards and in comparison to contemporary men's royal or ducal libraries, Margaret had one of the largest collections of books belonging to a woman.

Considering we have no records of Mary's access to the massive ducal libraries of her father and grandfather, and no records of her own collection or commissioning of books, we must rely on Margaret's collection as the theological milieu surrounding the commission of *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* and on Margaret's probable influence on Mary's religious and educational upbringing. As the present study will demonstrate, Margaret's collection of books has connections to both mysticism and the *Devotio Moderna*, which in turn must affect our reading of *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*.

Just as Margaret educated Mary, Margaret's mother Cecily of York, would have educated her; Cecily was known for being particularly devout and her private devotions "followed the path of the mystics," many of whose works were collected for her personal library.⁷⁵ Furthermore, Margaret's family had a direct and personal connection with Margery of Kempe through Joan Beaufort. This interest in mysticism evidently influenced Margaret, whose books demonstrate

"A Window on Two Duchesses in Burgundy," 512; Pächt, *The Master of Mary of Burgundy*, 24; Lindquist, "Beauty and the Beasts," 167; etc.

⁷³ Kren, *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and the Visions of Tondal*, 17

⁷⁴ See Kren, *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and the Visions of Tondal*, Appendix I. One was a book of hours, now destroyed but it was most likely not particularly relevant, at least theologically, to the present study. The second only survives as a fragment; it is a gradual, and therefore is also not particularly relevant to the present study. There is one more book whose dating is debated; it is a guide to pilgrimage churches in Rome.

⁷⁵ C.A.J. Armstrong, "The Piety of Cecily, Duchess of York" in *England, France, and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1983), 142.

her interest in “fairly advanced writings” on prayer, meditation and contemplation, including some unusual texts that were “rarely found in the collections of the laity” such as translations from Saint Augustine and Saint Bernard.⁷⁶ *Contemplations* by Saint Augustine are of particular interest here because it is an foundational mystic text that describes three levels of vision (corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual), on which Saint Bernard builds his idea of a three step mystical contemplation, which begins at meditation, then moves to speculation, and then to contemplation.⁷⁷

Margaret’s library also featured many relatively recent works including those by Jean Gerson, Peter of Luxembourg, Jacobus van Gruytrode, and Jean Mielot. As a corpus, these works emphasize living a moral life, penance, judgement, prayer, and meditation; texts by Gruytrode and Bonaventure advise the reader to reject the material world and their possessions, while one of these treatises, “*la Sainte Abbaye*,” is specifically concerned with “the care of the soul...prayer, and meditation.”⁷⁸ The most important work for the present study is Thomas of Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ*. Knowing that this book was in Margaret’s possession, in two copies, we know that she and Mary were likely both familiar with the text and the larger tradition of following the *Vita Christi*. As mentioned previously, Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ* aides the reader in their spiritual journey towards God, that “ennobles, empowers, and transforms” the reader as they progress from a superficial life to one embodies the “spiritual notion of perfection” in its conformation to Christ.⁷⁹ Keep in mind essential to that goal is the practice and process of

⁷⁶ Kren is unclear about what exactly the contents of these books *are*; they seem to be individual compilations/translations made for Margaret personally. Apparently, both of these texts appeared in a single manuscript that has since been destroyed, but both texts appear to be fairly advanced text that would have required a fair amount of depth and understanding for a lay-reader such as Margaret.

⁷⁷ Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 271.

⁷⁸ Kren, *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and the Visions of Tondal*, 68-69.

⁷⁹ P.G.R. de Villiers, “Peace in the Spirituality of Thomas á Kempis: An Aesthetic Perspective on the Imitatio Christi” in *Acta Theologica* 42 (2022), 144.

meditation and “deep interiority.”⁸⁰ According to Bernard McGinn, the goal of “true interiorization” leads the soul into direct contact with God and connects to mystical themes such as rapture, fruition, and true union with God (in a way that is more aligned with mysticism than most *Devotio Moderna* teachings) though these heavenly experiences are always spoken of in a subjunctive rather than an imminent sense.⁸¹ When one considers the similarities, parallels, conflations, and blurring of boundaries between the *Devotio Moderna* and mysticism, especially in terms of meditation, prayer, and their emphasis on the *Imitation of Christ*, it becomes clear that while there are many areas of difference, there are areas of little distinction—it may therefore be vital that certain theories historically applied to the study of mysticism can also be applied to our consideration of *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*.

Before examining the full page miniatures in *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, it is important to examine two more items in Margaret’s collection; *Dialogue de la Duchesse de Bourgogne à Jésus Christ* by Nicolas Finet and a book of moral treatises. The first is an exposition written by Margaret’s spiritual advisor, Nicolas Finet, in which the reader is spoken to directly by Christ. In the only miniature in the volume, (fig. 7), Margaret kneels in a contemporary bedchamber in her typical dress of gold and black, and Christ appears before her. Christ and Margaret almost touch, but are stopped as Christ arches away from Margaret; according to Andrea Pearson, this scene is a reenactment of the *noli me tangere* (“touch me not”) whereby Margaret would see herself conflated with the Magdalene.⁸² The text, however, urge Margaret not to fall victim to the moral shortcomings Mary Magdalene once held and to instead follow the *vita contemplativa* “of which Mary Magdalen was a principal exemplar” and to focus

⁸⁰ McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 103

⁸¹ McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 104-105

⁸² Andrea Pearson, “Gendered Subject, Gendered Spectator: Mary Magdalen in the Gaze of Margaret of York” in *Gesta* 44.1 (2005), 49.

on Christ's Passion (emphasized by the figure's wounds).⁸³ Scholars note that this treatise is typical of fifteenth century devotion, "whether specifically the *Devotio Moderna* or more generally derived from the 14th century writings of English and German Mystics" is more difficult to assess.⁸⁴ Secondly is a book of moral treatises including more works by Nicolas Finet and Thomas of Kempis; the present study, however, is more concerned with its decoration than its contents— a miniature completed by the Master of Mary of Burgundy on folio 182 (fig. 8). In this miniature, Mary of Burgundy appears in her typical gown praying before an altar with an "unusual representation" of the Trinity: God the father holds the crucified Christ in his lap in a parallel to the *Pieta*, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovers above the deceased saviors face in equal shock and sadness.⁸⁵ From this image we now know that the Master of Mary of Burgundy (who completed "Mary at Prayer," the "Nailing of the Cross," and the "Crucifixion" in *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*) was working closely with Margaret of York and her spiritual advisor in the mid-1470s, just before the commission of *The Hours* in approximately 1477. Moreover, we can assume that the Master was familiar with, or at least associated with, Saint Bernard's *Meditations*, works by Thomas Gerson, and most importantly Thomas of Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*. Furthermore, this manuscript is evidence that the Master has a history of creating unconventional and theologically complex compositions, which is vital to understanding the miniatures in *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*.

⁸³ Pearson, "Gendered Subject, Gendered Spectator," 49.

⁸⁴ Kren, *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and the Visions of Tondal*, 70.

⁸⁵ The composition of God the Father supporting the crucified Christ, sometimes known as the "Throne of Grace Trinity" was a rare subject, gained some popularity in Late Medieval English Stained Glass, especially in the York School. It was known in the 16th century in some continental panel paintings, but those are too late to be relevant to our discussion. There are a few contemporary Flemish manuscripts that depict the "Throne of Grace" (see figs 9 & 10 from the Getty Museum), but it should be noted that the Master of Mary of Burgundy did not depict this scene in a standard way; it is illustrated in the guise of a wood cut statue that sits on the altar before which Margaret appears. See John A. Knowles, *Essays in the History of the York School of Glass-painting* (New York, Macmillan, 1936). Liz Herbert McAvoy, et al, *A Companion to Julian of Norwich* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2008), 50.

Examination of the Images

The present study argues that the three full page miniatures in *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* utilize their illusionistic naturalism, reflexive structure, transitive quality, and reliance on user interaction in order to aid the viewer/reader in their devotions. The effect of such devices is that the images function metaphorically and theologically as both mirror and windows to the user. Ultimately, these images facilitate Mary of Burgundy's spiritual journey towards a deeper communion with Christ. It is crucial to understand that these images were, by necessity, visually complex. Text, image, and inter-image relationships in prayer books such as *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* were "seldom straightforward."⁸⁶ Rather, artists provided "multivalent, interactive, open-ended imagery" with the express purpose of encouraging consumers to create their own meaningful associations and experiences over a prolonged period of time.⁸⁷ As such, we must keep in mind Bret Rothstein's proposal that *The Hours* functioned as a "walker" or structured aide, allowing the viewer to develop both visual agility and "the aims and means of visualization" in order to spiritually mature.⁸⁸ The visual culture exemplified by these miniatures was extremely complex yet also "remarkably self aware."⁸⁹ The cultivation of a spiritually disciplined gaze allowed for an "automatism of salvation" as the viewer aimed for the transformation of their soul in preparation for redemption.⁹⁰

In Hans Belting's formative article "The Gaze in the Image," the author discusses the concept of mirrors and windows, defining them (respectively) as that which "reflects our gaze

⁸⁶ Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation*, 20.

⁸⁷ Lindquist, "Beauty and the Beasts," 166.

⁸⁸ Rothstein, "The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer," 245

⁸⁹ Rothstein, "The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer," 275

⁹⁰ Lentés, "'As Far As The Eye Can See,'" 361; Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation*, 15.

back to us” and that which “sends our gaze out into the world.”⁹¹ The present study offers alternative definitions. A “mirror” is that which reflects our nature back towards us; as such, the object that becomes the mirror does not necessarily need to meet the gaze of the spectator, as Belting suggests, or even that a gaze needs to be depicted. Rather, for an object to become a mirror it needs to reflect either the physical surroundings or mental state of the viewer upon its viewing, which triggers a heightened awareness on the part of the viewer of those physical surroundings and/or mental state, or, especially in the medieval and early modern era, the devotional state. A “window,” in contrast, is that which shows us what our true nature can be; it therefore must depict some phenomenon that is markedly different from the viewer’s current state yet also represents an aspiration of the viewer. Such phenomena can obviously vary widely, for example a “window” may depict devotional ecstasy, new surroundings, a state of the afterlife, the presence of lost family, a deep meditative state, or the appearance of the divine. It is important to note that either mirrors or windows can be a depiction of the intended owner, but do not necessarily have to be in order to properly function—a depiction of one’s mother in prayer may reflect one’s own familial situation or devout practice, or a local saint in heavenly bliss may represent a window to the viewer’s heavenly bliss or aspirations of saintliness. At last we can return to the images themselves and further develop these concepts and how they apply to the miniatures.

The most famous image from this book of hours, the image of “Mary at Prayer,” has been the subject of constant debate; some scholars identify the woman in the background as Margaret of York, others as Isabella of Bourbon, and still more as another version of Mary of Burgundy.

⁹¹ Hans Belting, “The Gaze in the Image: A Contribution to an Iconology of the Gaze” in *Dynamics and Performativity of Imagination: The Image Between the Visible and the Invisible* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 95.

Arguments continue even among studies that agree that the figure in the background is Mary of Burgundy, reading the miniature variously as Mary predicting her heavenly condition of perpetual veneration, a proclamation that Mary's devotions do not require a priest or intercessor, a vision of the virgin appearing to Mary, a visitation of Mary to the virgin, and an allegorical division between public and private devotion.⁹²

Fortunately, Alexa Sand's foundational work *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* provides an excellent framework for understanding owner portraits such as this image of Mary of Burgundy. Although Sand's focus is nearly three centuries earlier than *The Hours* and none of her images feature the curious doubling seen in the frontispiece, many of her arguments remain relevant into the fifteenth century, as many of the theological changes that inspired owner portraits in the thirteenth century, for example, grew stronger and complexified into the fifteenth rather than disappear entirely. As such, Sand provides a clear point of departure for dissecting "Mary at Prayer."

Both because it is the first miniature in *The Hours* and because the frontispiece allows for seeing oneself as an exterior image, "Mary at Prayer" acts as a catalyst for meditation in the original owner. Seeing an image of oneself externalized "inculcates a high level of self-consciousness" by which the viewer can move into a "a more imaginative, purely devotional realm."⁹³ Moreover, according to Sand, owner portraits that include the object of devotion act as "pictorial nudges" which insinuate to the owner that with proper prayer and devotion, they may be able to experience what she sees her "pictorial double" seeing; in this case, it suggests to

⁹² Craig Harbison, *The Mirror of the Artist: Northern Renaissance Art in Its Historical Context* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1995), 95; Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 274.

⁹³ Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation*, 12; Harbison, "Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting," 113.

Mary of Burgundy her ability to visualize the Virgin Mary.⁹⁴ When considering the function of the image, it is critical to understand that there is not just a foreground Mary and a background Mary at play here— there is a third Mary, the “real” Mary, for whom *The Hours* was made. As such, understanding the gaze becomes essential to understanding the image of “Mary of Burgundy at Prayer” and the book as a whole.

Hans Belting has argued that “gazes have never been disembodied,” even when paintings appear to stare back or out to the viewer (see fig. 11).⁹⁵ I argue, however, that the gaze is disembodied in the frontispiece once one considers the context of its original viewing. The “real” Mary of Burgundy would have held this book in a private oratory or other familiar location, with personal affects around her such as a pillow, rosary, and perhaps some jewelry. She would have been wearing contemporary dress like the elegant woman in the windowsill wears, held a book protected by cloth, perhaps with her dog in her lap or nearby as the dog in the background appears. In her actions and the conditions of viewing, then, the image becomes its own *mise en abyme*. The “real” Mary’s gaze down onto her book is an animating force in which the image and the original viewer would be thrown into a reflexive loop, one of many examples of *The Hours*’ reliance on viewer interaction to succeed in its goals. Because of their own gaze, the owner becomes hyper-aware of the visibility of her own physical self (which should ideally mirror the portrait sitting in the windowsill) and the vision of her mind’s eye. The painting therefore “represents the conditions of its own viewing” in a much more existential way than the original images Sand examined (compare figs. 1 & 12), in large part to the miniature’s illusionistic naturalism.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation*, 17.

⁹⁵ Belting, “The Gaze in the Image,” 93.

⁹⁶ Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation*, 2.

A correct reading of the background is essential to understanding the complex relationships within the page and this miniature as a whole. While there are several theories concerning the adoration taking place in the chapel, the present study argues that the scene represents a visualization rather than a vision or visitation of the Virgin. As mentioned previously, while the practitioners of the *Devotio Moderna* did not outright exclude visions or unmediated union with the Divine, they did primarily believe that such interactions were “primarily rewards to be attained in heaven.”⁹⁷ What the Devout hope to experience through diligence and prayer is not a vision, which is conventionally unprompted ecstasy that “comes directly from heaven,” but is rather a mental picture formed by the pious individual through concentration and a “a well-stocked memory” of scripture, liturgy, and images partnered with concentrated devotion.⁹⁸ This book of hours, of course, was well designed to present with a variety of images to add to their memory’s repertoire. According to Lenten, “The inner person was perceived as a place under which images that penetrated the external eye could be projected.”⁹⁹ As such, one might view the Mary in the foreground as a representation of the inner-self through which we see the vision projected.

It is clear that the image as a whole, as suggested by Alexa Sand, functions as a prompt or “nudge” for the user, which suggests that such a scene is possible with proper devotion; as such the scene in the background must represent the impending, but what *manner* of futurity? Other scholars, such as Harbison, argue that the image “predicts [Mary of Burgundy’s] heavenly state;” the present study, however, contends that the image remains earthly. When one examines the fine details of the scene (see fig. 6) it becomes clear that the setting is not a heavenly one.

⁹⁷ McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 96-97

⁹⁸ Newman, “What Did It Mean to Say ‘I Saw,’” 5, 27.

⁹⁹ Lenten, ““As Far As The Eye Can See,”” 366.

Disregarding the fact that the scene unfolds in a contemporary cathedral, the background Mary's ladies in waiting whisper with one another, looking away from the resplendent Virgin that is seemingly mere feet away from them; further down the nave two contemporary gentlemen converse unaware of the scene taking place behind them as a dog runs between them. The man in priestly garb seems to look past the Virgin towards the altar behind her.¹⁰⁰ The only one who appears aware of the Virgin Mary and the Christ child's presence is Mary of Burgundy. In a minuscule detail that thus far has been unnoticed except by John Harthan, background Mary has a red prayer book tucked under her arm. In light of this, the background scene is reminiscent of the famous *The Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele*, (figs. 13 & 14) in which the donor removes his glasses and looks up from his book to see a visualization of the Virgin before him. Considered together, these details point away from both a vision of eternal heavenly veneration or a revelation of the beyond revealed to the supplicant by the Divine; rather, what we see is the visualization of the foreground Mary as she remains immersed in her devotions.

Taking the foreground Mary and the background Mary concurrently, then, one can see how the foreground Mary functions as both a mirror and a window, both the "representation and prototype."¹⁰¹ As mentioned previously, when the "real" Mary first sees this image, she is confronted with the visual similarity of her actions and the conditions in which she views the picture. The foreground Mary therefore reflects Mary's physical and mental nature back toward her. Yet, she also acts as a window, an idealized version of Mary in her devotion and therefore provides an avenue through which the real Mary can improve; foreground Mary, through her careful concentration and visual acuity in reading her book is experiencing a visualization of the

¹⁰⁰ To be fair, the details of the gaze of the priest are quite small, he could very well be looking at the Virgin; considering the other figures (besides Mary) seem oblivious, I feel that the most probable option is that the priest is also unaware.

¹⁰¹ Root, *The Theophilus Legend in Medieval Text and Image*, 107.

Virgin. It then follows that the “real” Mary is subjected to the expectation of “embodying all that devotion itself can be” in order to experience the same or a similar visualization, which is the goal of deliberative prayer.¹⁰² In his examination of Petrus Christus’ *Young Man at Prayer*, Brett Rothstein states “like the young man, we are presented with religious imagery. Like him we are thus “assigned the task of seeing rather than merely looking.”¹⁰³ The concept of the image assigning tasks to the viewer is intriguing yet extremely compelling, and applicable to the frontispiece of *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*. The image itself becomes an admonition to the “real” Mary if she is not taking her daily devotion seriously, yet also provides the exemplar for its refinement.¹⁰⁴ According to Craig Harbison, fifteenth century Flemings viewed paintings as literal embodiments of visionary experience as well as “literal standing of a vision”— in viewing the painting the object is literally transformed into the vision itself, and is no longer simply an object depicting a visionary experience.¹⁰⁵ This concept further demonstrates *The Hours*’ need for interaction from the viewer. Moreover, while the image can chide the viewer, this power is transitive—if Mary is “embodying devotion” the object acts instead as a mirror, showing Mary her own devout nature and its rewards (the visualization of the Virgin). Sand suggests that owner portraits often set the tone of the “visual themes” that span the manuscript; it is clear that our frontispiece sets the tone for the entire *Hours* as well, as it is representative of the illusionism, reflexivity, interactivity, and transitive nature prevalent in the other miniatures in the book.¹⁰⁶ Essentially, by following the example of her portrait in the foreground in being self-disciplined, completely attentive, and interiorly focused on her devotions, the real Mary is able to conjure a

¹⁰² Rothstein, “The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer,” 239.

¹⁰³ Rothstein, “The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer,” 261.

¹⁰⁴ Rothstein, “The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer,” 261.

¹⁰⁵ Harbison, “Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting,” 117.

¹⁰⁶ Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation*, 173.

visualization of the Divine: the Virgin and Child. Through concentration on the image and recognition of the window-like function of the foreground portrait, Mary of Burgundy is able to move from a corporeal image to an intellectual one, thus reforming her soul and becoming closer to Christ.

The mirror-window in the second image, “The Nailing of the Cross,” is not as easy to discern (See fig. 2), although this miniature has clear visual similarities to the frontispiece. “The Nailing of the Cross” is framed by a similar interior with a trompe l’oeil window, through which a biblical scene rather than a contemporary cathedral can be seen. Personal objects are strewn about the foreground, many of which are identical to those in the foreground of “Mary at Prayer,” most prominently a gold and black brocade pillow and an open book of hours. Upon closer examination several more items from the frontispiece appear in the black chest in the corner of the miniature; a semi-opaque veil that once rested in the windowsill and a black velvet brocade belt that the foreground portrait once wore; tantalizingly close to falling on the unseen ground, a gold chain creeps out of the chest, leading to a large jeweled brooch—this is the same necklace that appeared in the center of the windowsill in the frontispiece.

The Master has a unique ability to effectively convey a variety of textures and “build up” of tactile sensations.¹⁰⁷ Velvet, marble, glass, jewel, paper, wood, gold, and feather, are all meticulously displayed in this image. Such naturalism calls the viewer to linger on the items and imagine their surfaces, yet one simultaneously knows that it is an illusion on a page; according to Caroline Walker Bynum, artists of this period often “unabashedly” calls attention to the materiality of their materials.¹⁰⁸ The tension as one alternates between the illusion and the

¹⁰⁷ König, “Zur Wirklichkeit in Fensterbild der Kreuzannagelung des Wiener Stundenbuchs der Maria von Burgund,” 280.

¹⁰⁸ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 38.

materiality reflects a tension that permeates Christianity at the time; the question of matter. Matter, such as relics, icons, paintings, rosaries, even books of hours could serve to bring one closer to the Divine—yet concurrently it was viewed as dead, “the lowest stuff in nature” and furthest from God.¹⁰⁹ The prayer book and the rosary beads in the foreground acknowledges the utility of such objects, while simultaneously calling the reader to leave them behind. Sculptures, such as the *grisailles* that frame the miniature, were especially seen as “undeniably material” and were repeatedly depicted as such in panel paintings which the Master here attempts to emulate.¹¹⁰ Taken together, the objects in the foreground call attention to their materiality, reminding the viewer of their utility but also their eventual uselessness—salvation requires more than objects, more than even a Book of Hours can provide. Beyond the objects, through the window lies “The Way” and “The Word” in Christ. The vibrant scene outside the window lies in contrast to the objects in the foreground that comparatively lack color, making the biblical scene just outside seem much more vivid, more lifelike, more alive—it is alluring. Near the window’s edge a woman in blue turns slyly back towards the sill, making eye contact with the viewer, building on the invitation for Mary to abandon the material objects around her and metaphorically step through the window and concentrate on the Christological narrative.

Markedly missing from the foreground is the owner of these objects, the portrait from the frontispiece, Mary of Burgundy—many scholars have asked: where has she gone, and why did she leave her devotional and personal accoutrements? To understand what (or who) is missing, one must first understand what **is** being shown; a scene of “The Nailing to the Cross.” In the fifteenth century, biblical narratives were popular subjects for both devotion and visionary art, as

¹⁰⁹ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 49.

¹¹⁰ Harbison, “Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting,” 116.

graphic depictions could “awaken the reader’s visionary imagination”¹¹¹ The reader was encouraged to picture the narratives in their mind’s eye, carefully imagining and meditating on each stage of the Passion in as much detail as possible; *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* with each of its sumptuous full page miniatures then provide ample fodder for their imaginative library and provided a strong base on which the supplicant can build. The goal of such meditation was to “make imminent and present” the crucifixion through visualization, so that the imagination was “filled up with the event and the soul thus have fertile ground in which to grow.”¹¹² The *grisaille* statues on either side of the window encourage the viewer to connect the Old Testament precursors— the Sacrifice of Isaac and Moses and the Bronze Serpent—to the New Testament crucifixion¹¹³ Keeping in mind Harbison’s previous assertion that images could transform from depictions of visualization to a visualization itself, the “Nailing of the Cross” could easily become the object of Mary’s visualization.¹¹⁴ The participant was encouraged to visualize the Passion of Christ and “come to participate in each of the events of the story and indeed to see himself in some part of each scene, bearing some relationship with the actors in each episode” in their meditations.¹¹⁵

Considering the urge for constituents to imagine each detail of the Passion, it is odd that Mary Magdalene is notably missing from the “Nailing of the Cross” that takes place through the window.¹¹⁶ This is especially peculiar considering the amount of detail in the scene; while many

¹¹¹ Harbison, “Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting,” 95; Newman, “What Did It Mean to Say ‘I Saw,’” 27.

¹¹² Charles Abbott Conway, *The Vita Christi of Ludolph of Saxony and Late Medieval Devotion Centered on the Incarnation: A Descriptive Analysis* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1976), 123;124.

¹¹³ Eörsi, “Imaige a la Vierge Marie,” 21.

¹¹⁴ Harbison, “Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting,” 117.

¹¹⁵ Conway, *The Vita Christi of Ludolph of Saxony*, 127.

¹¹⁶ Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 276. Nash is the first (and possibly only) scholar to note the absence of Mary Magdalene

crucifixion scenes in books of hours were simplified, the Magdalene was often one of the first characters added to such scenes (see fig. 15). Further complicating matters is that Mary Magdalene is one of Mary of Burgundy's namesakes, Burgundy in particular had a rich tradition of venerating the Magdalene, and—perhaps most astonishing— is that the Magdalene **does** appear on a sister page, “The Crucifixion” (See fig. 2, compare to figs. 3 & 15). Mary Magdalene's absence at first seems completely inexplicable, until one considers the viewer and the utility of the image; the scene is only complete when Mary interacts with the book, inserting herself into the narrative of the Passion as the Magdalene. Further credence for this theory lies in the fact we have already seen a Burgundian woman inserted into a biblical narrative under the guise of Mary Magdalene— Margaret of York in her *Dialogue de la Duchesse de Bourgogne à Jésus Christ* (fig. 7).

Here we see the Master create visual complexity through absence— the Magdalene, or lack thereof, is the mirror and window of this piece. As a mirror, Mary Magdalene is Mary of Burgundy's namesake, associated with Burgundy, and a sinner. One may even consider her absence reflective of Mary of Burgundy's absence from the Passion. Anselm of Canterbury's prayer to Mary Magdalene similarly places the supplicant in the scene; his prayer focuses on the Magdalene's search for Christ and her longing for Him—Mary Magdalene's arch therefore mirrors Mary of Burgundy's; a search for their savior, “seeking the one who had defended her even in her sins.”¹¹⁷ The Magdalene also acts as a window; she was “an enduring model for noble women in the later Middle Ages” as the prototype of the reformed sinner, an exemplification of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, and her absence allows the “real”

¹¹⁷ Rachel Fulton Brown, “Anselm and Praying with the Saints” in *Studies on Medieval Empathies* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2013), 131.

Mary an opportunity to gain closeness with Christ, acting as His beloved.¹¹⁸ The Magdalene moreover acts as a mirror in that, according to Rachel Fulton Brown, Mary Magdalene “knew what it was like to long for God and find him suddenly in her midst,” a situation Mary of Burgundy is certainly hoping to evoke equally in her prayers to God and in her imagining of herself as the Magdalene.¹¹⁹ As a prototype that acts as both mirror and window, the Magdalene can also serve as a source of praise and admonishment, similar to the foreground portrait from the frontispiece— Mary Magdalene’s absence from the scene can admonish the viewer, as a reminder that the viewer is not making themselves present at the scene. However, if Mary of Burgundy *is* embodying devotion and inserting herself into the narrative, Mary replaces Mary. We must, once again, keep in mind the context in which the owner would see this image; they would be looking down at their prayer book, seeing the similar devotional and personal objects scattered about them mirrored within the pages of their book. The belt and veil are of particular note here, as they may be the same belt and veil worn by Mary of Burgundy in the frontispiece. Perhaps the owner was to imagine herself physically removing her contemporary dress and symbols of her own wealthy status in order leave them behind; as she steps through the window into the realm of biblical history, she is leaving her affluence and considerable rank behind and assuming the socio-political role of the Magdalene as she participates in the scriptural narrative.

As mentioned previously, the “Crucifixion” page on 99v. (fig. 3) is only rarely examined with its two sister images. Instead of a contemporary interior with personal objects, the margin is filled with gold acanthus and precious gems, as two angels hold instruments of The Passion. It is important to note that while the subject of the margins is quite different, the Master still

¹¹⁸ Pearson, “Gendered Subject, Gendered Spectator,” 53; Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 276.

¹¹⁹ Fulton Brown, “Anselm and Praying with the Saints,” 132.

maintains illusion and naturalism—twisting vines and curling flowers receive meticulously placed drop shadows. The edges of acanthus are delicately brushed with gold leaf, giving a precise and realistic highlight to intensify the feeling of depth (see fig. 16). In the center of the flowers rest expertly rendered pearls, whose faces glint both blue and gold as they reflect the lapis petals and gold pods of the plants that encase them (see fig. 17). The transformation of traditional acanthus and floral motifs into precious materials is reminiscent of the jeweled borders that decorate many fourteenth and fifteenth century books of hours (compare to fig. 18 & 19). According to Kate Challis’s article “Marginalized Jewels,” the gems in the borders served a dual purpose. Firstly, they create the illusion “of an intimate and accessible reality,” which correlates exactly to the Master’s intentions of the borders in “Mary at Prayer” and the “Nailing of the Cross.”¹²⁰ Secondly, many medieval treatises argued that due to jewels’ transmission of heavenly light, “God was manifest in gems” and cited scripture that stated precious materials reflected the glory and beauty of the “Heavenly Jerusalem.”¹²¹ The jeweled borders therefore also served a meditative function and an aid to contemplation due to their illusionism.

For mystics and the Devout one of the spiritual benefits of images was their ability to make the user aware of their spiritual condition, thus inspiring the conforming of oneself to God through Christ who is the *imago Dei*.¹²² The Imitation of Christ was a vital part of the *Devotio Moderna* and inspired several treatises that guided the reader “to pursue the imitation of God;” one such treatise, Thomas of Kempis’ *Imitatione Christi* which was in Margaret of York’s collection, incorporates more mystical themes such as “contemplation, fruition, rapture, and

¹²⁰ Kate Challis, “Marginalized Jewels: The Depiction Of Jewellery In The Borders Of Flemish Devotional Manuscripts” In *The Art Of The Book: Its Place In Medieval Worship*, ed. Margaret M. Manion and Bernard J. Muir. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 254

¹²¹ Challis, “Marginalized Jewels,” 267.

¹²² Melion, “Introduction: Meditative Images in the Psychology of the Soul,” 3.

union with God” in its last two books.¹²³ Such imitation included not only meditation on the attitude of Christ, as the “humble, obedient, and self-abnegating” ideal of a true Christian, but also through true interiorization of the Passion.¹²⁴ The “imitation” tradition emphasized that “unless one shares in the suffering of Christ’s manhood, one cannot hope to share in the joy of Christ’s divinity.”¹²⁵

The suffering of Christ is made material in the *Arma Christi*, present in the borders of the miniature by the angels bearing them; in the upper left corner an angel holds a crown of thorns and a lance and in the bottom left corner another holds a column, scourge, and pincers. It is important to mention at the outset that depictions of the *Arma Christi* vary widely between representations. Such variety renders concrete and individual assessments allusive, yet also reveals that each depiction was personalized for its particular context.¹²⁶ The *Arma Christi* by their nature invite meditation due to their “list-like character” and are fundamentally “detached from narrative.” Yet, in the “Crucifixion” page, they are simultaneously connected to the Christological narrative by the biblical scene through the “window,” thus forming a recursive loop in which the viewer can work back and forth between the instruments of the Passion and the image of the crucifixion itself. Supplicants, however, were ultimately encouraged to move beyond an empathetic response and interact with the *Arma Christi*, “retooling” them into devices to examine one’s *own* consciousness by reliving their purpose in the crucifixion and meditating on humanity’s fallen state that Christ had to come to restore.¹²⁷ According to John Decker, such exercises “scourged” the soul with repentance, “preparing their souls for the transition out of the

¹²³ McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 101, 104.

¹²⁴ McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 102.

¹²⁵ Conway, *The Vita Christi of Ludolph of Saxony*, 132

¹²⁶ Daniela Wagner, “Aesthetics of Enumeration: the Arma Christi” in *Forms of List-Making: Epistemic, Literary, and Visual Enumeration*, ed. Roman Alexander Barton et. al. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 252.

¹²⁷ Lisa H. Cooper, Andrea Denny-Brown, and Mary Agnes Edsall, *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture: With a Critical Edition of 'O Vernicle'* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014), 14.

vita quotidiana and into the *vita perfecta*” and bringing their innermost selves closer to Christ through true *Imitatione*.¹²⁸ As such, the *Arma* themselves take on a transitive nature; they are instruments of suffering, evidence of humanity’s fall from grace that caused the death of Christ. Yet, they are transformative, purifying, and allow for the rebirth of both the sinner and Christ.

This purifying quality relates to the floral motifs in the margins as well; the two blue flowers with a row of pearls represent hyssop, an important biblical plant.¹²⁹ Its purifying powers are noted in Numbers 19 and Hebrews 9:19. One of the Penitential Psalms, Psalm 50:9 (Douay-Rheims) states “Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.”¹³⁰ The plant is also more directly connected to the crucifixion— John 19:29 states “and they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to his mouth.” Although rarely, hyssop sometimes appeared in devotional objects with the *Arma*, such as this bronze panel from Collonges-la-Rouge (compare figs. 18 & 20); the sponge on a long stick, however, is much more common. In addition to its allusion to other biblical passages, the flowers in the margins play another important role; flowers have a transitive purpose—they both allow the mind a place of rest, of play, and of concentration.¹³¹ Of play, because they are beautiful and quotidian, part of one’s daily life rather than part of the divine; of play, because they relate to Lindquist’s idea of “whimsical distraction” in a form of intelligent recreation as they allow one’s imagination to “conjure from absence;” and of concentration as they allow one

¹²⁸ John R. Decker, “Engendering Contrition, Wounding the Soul: Geertgen Tot Sint Jans’ ‘Man of Sorrows.’” *Artibus et Historiae* 29.57 (2008), 61.

¹²⁹ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 32.

¹³⁰ For more information, see Lytton J. Musselman, *A Dictionary of Bible Plants* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 74.

¹³¹ Rachel Fulton Brown, “The Virgin in the Garden, or Why Flowers Make Better Prayers,” in *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 4 (Spring 2004), 20.

to hold the object of their concentration more steady in their mind's eye, and "fill in the gaps in our memories and in our attention."¹³²

The conceptual mirror and window have progressed from the last image—a vital participant in biblical narratives—to being Christ himself. It is Christ himself who, in this final miniature by the Master, functions as mirror and window to Mary of Burgundy, the user and owner of the manuscript. Christ's sorry state reflects human suffering, death, and sin conceptually back to the viewer. The angels hold the instruments of the passion and, should the user choose to interact with them and use them to examine and "scourge" one's inner self, the image of Christ becomes a window, reminding the viewer of their most ideal nature as one who conforms to Christ as closely as possible. Importantly, Christ's example is not mere embracing of suffering for suffering's sake but is rather to "encourage the believer to look beyond the unpleasant conditions of human life and to understand that a final comfort exists beyond the worldly dimension."¹³³ Utilizing this image in prayer and meditation therefore "attaches the meditant to Christ's suffering and enables him to move beyond it, ultimately to attain salvation."¹³⁴

Despite the dizzying visual complexity in *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*—of which only three miniatures could be discussed here—it becomes clear that the miniatures on 14 v., "Mary of Burgundy at Prayer," 43 v., "The Nailing of the Cross," and 99v., "The Crucifixion," are each highly illusionistic, reflexive, interactive, and transitive. In effect, they both reflect the user, Mary of Burgundy's, nature back toward her and shows her an ideal nature towards which to strive thus allowing the spiritual transformation of her soul and personal growth. Yet, one

¹³² Lindquist, "Beauty and the Beasts," 162; Fulton Brown, "The Virgin in the Garden," 20.

¹³³ Conway, *The Vita Christi of Ludolph of Saxony*, 143

¹³⁴ Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 130.

could argue that these attributes, effects, and goals are not just characteristic of the three full page miniatures, but the book of hours as an object, an object that “can be said to have a kind of agency of its own.”¹³⁵ The book of hours, as we have seen, is central to the Devotio Moderna—it was developed by it yet also shaped its practice. For example, the book of hours acted as a theological guide in absence of clergy, either when the constituent had a distrust of the clergy or as an additional guide in home practice. Moreover, the book of hours was an aide in prayer, one of the key components of daily practice in the Devotio Moderna and central to “living well.”¹³⁶ Most importantly, however, the book of hours was a tool for successful soul formation; as demonstrated above, *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* helps the reader meditate, read, become self-disciplined and self-aware, and focus on the alignment of oneself with God's will. In order to do so, I argue, **all** books of hours were by necessity naturalistic, reflexive, interactive, and transitive.

As a myriad of scholars have identified, the Master of Mary of Burgundy and his colleagues were familiar with the van Eyckian window theme, and the conceptualization of the painting as a window into another world is well established. All of the miniatures and historiated initials in *The Hours* utilize depth, naturalism, physiology, and perspective to achieve some degree of simulacrum in an effort to “unleash the power of the prototype.”¹³⁷ As innumerable exhibition catalogs, museum collections, manuscript compendium attest, these attributes are not unique to *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* and are, in fact, commonly found in books of hours of varying degrees of luxury. It is moreover important to consider that devotional objects themselves are illusionistic, as they each claim to conjure the unseen and “manifest [Divine]

¹³⁵ Lindquist, “Beauty and the Beasts,” 166.

¹³⁶ Fulton Brown, “My Psalter, My Self,” 84.

¹³⁷ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 28.

power in the matter of the object.”¹³⁸ A book of hours furthermore inspires reflexivity in that its purpose is to turn the user’s focus inward to achieve spiritual maturity. Bret Rothstein has noted that *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* in particular is self-referential in its constant repetition of the “book motif” which reinforces the idea of reading “as a moral imperative.”¹³⁹ All books of hours, however, allude to their own form in two ways. The first way is through self-referential miniatures (such as the portrait of the book owner, explored by Alexa Sand, or in miniatures that depict books, common in scenes such as “The Annunciation”), examples of which we see in *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, *The Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, and even less luxurious or little known books such as *The Hours of Daniel Rym* (see fig. 21). Other manuscripts are reflexive in their allusions to their own materiality; marginalia, for example, are self-referential in their strict adherence to a ruled frame that is rarely broken. Similarly, the decoration of historiated initials conform to the shape of the letter, referencing the actual purpose, to depict a letter used in the reading of the passage. Reflexivity often piled on reflexivity, as the decoration contributes to success of the book, which rests on the act of reading itself.¹⁴⁰ Books of Hours are therefore clearly connected to its call for interaction; after all, a book by its very nature relies on its reader’s use. *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* in particular encourages the reader to work “from marginalia to illumination, illumination to text, text back to marginalia, recto to verso, verso to recto, and so forth” in due to its repetitiveness and multivalence, but these techniques are not isolated to this book alone.¹⁴¹ *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* and *The Prayerbook of Charles the Bold* (as well as countless others) have similarly repetitive margins, text, and miniatures that

¹³⁸ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 28.

¹³⁹ Rothstein, “The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer,” 264.

¹⁴⁰ Rothstein, “The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer,” 264.

¹⁴¹ Rothstein, “The Rule Of Metaphor And The Play Of The Viewer,” 254.

refer to one another and back to themselves.¹⁴² It once again stands to be emphasized that visual wit and acuity were both required and cultivated by books of hours. The book of hours “as a tool to forge a better soul” therefore relied on its wielder.¹⁴³ Lastly, of course, the book of hours as object is transitive; it was designed to last the user’s entire life, through marriage, children, deaths, and more, but also was to be inherited by one’s family members. The meanings and use of the texts, images, and margins therefore shifted with the user’s mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, political, and even familial state. The book of hours did not assume a stable subject, but rather “the transforming subject.”¹⁴⁴ Ultimately however, the goal and use of this manuscript was to guide the devout on a journey that results in an afterlife fulfilment in the heavenly realm, united with Christ.

¹⁴² See Grace Baker, “Marginal Message, Monumental Meaning: The Hours of the Virgin in *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*,” (Masters Thesis, University of South Florida, 2021). and Lindquist, “Beauty and the Beasts.”

¹⁴³ Lindquist, “Beauty and the Beasts,” 165.

¹⁴⁴ Lindquist, “Beauty and the Beasts,” 166.

Figures



Figure 1. “Mary of Burgundy at Prayer” from *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* (c. 1477), folio 14 v. of Vienna ONB cod. 1857. Image Courtesy of Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek

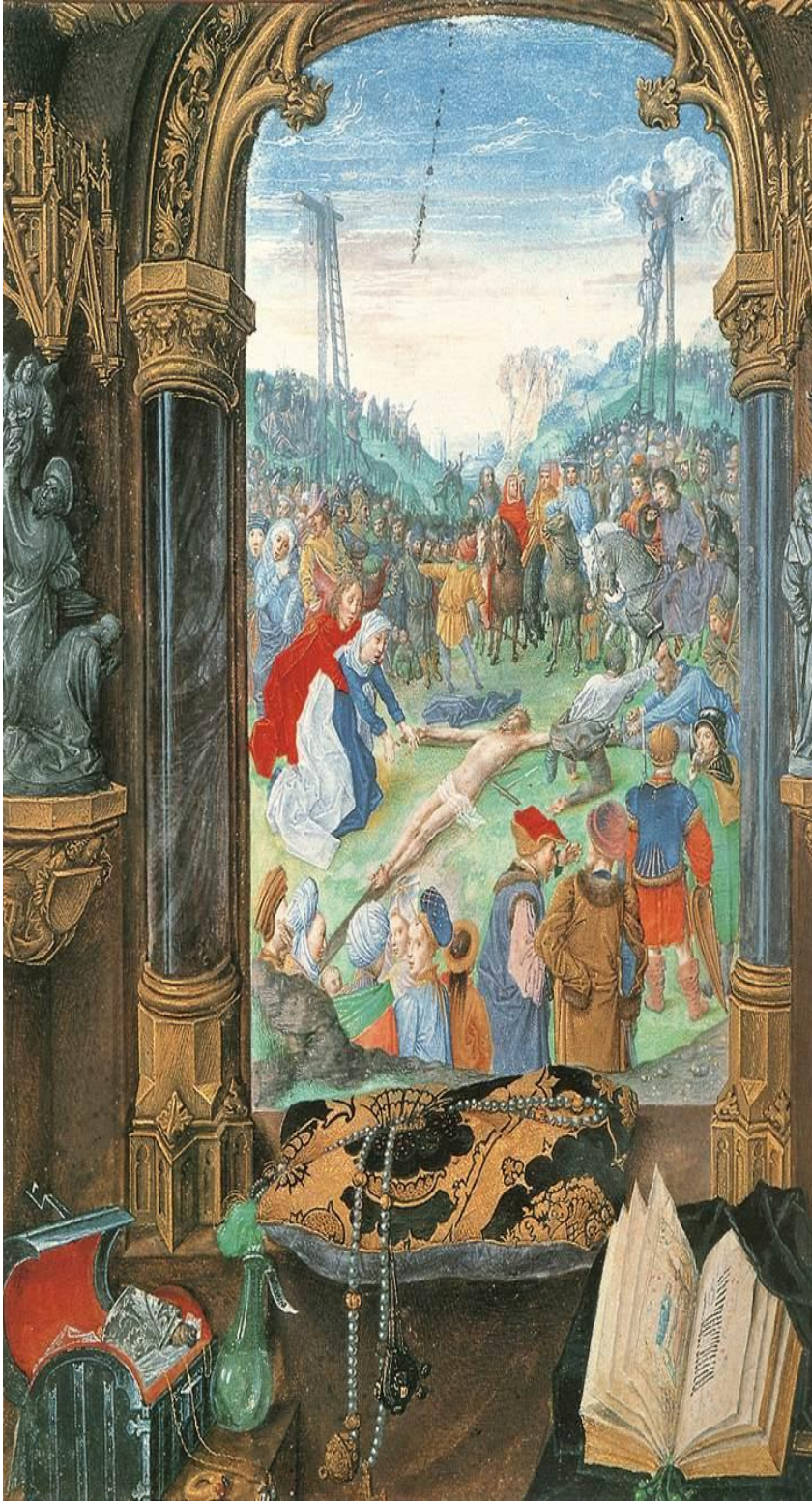


Figure 2. “The Nailing of the Cross” from *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* (c. 1477), folio 43 v. of Vienna ONB cod. 1857. Image Courtesy of Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek



Figure 3. “The Crucifixion” from *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* (c. 1477), folio 14 v. of Vienna ONB cod. 1857. Image Courtesy of Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek



Figure 4. “Mark the Evangelist” from *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* (c. 1477), folio 14 v. of Vienna ONB cod. 1857. Note the stylistic differences in the borders between this image and figures 1-3; the more traditional floral details on a white background, the lack of illusionary imagery, etc. Image Courtesy of Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek



Figure 5. "Crucifixion" from a Book of Hours (c. 1500), folio 79 r. of Morgan MS H. 5



Figure 6. Detail of “Mary of Burgundy at Prayer” from *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* (c. 1477), folio 14 v. of Vienna ONB cod. 1857. Image Courtesy of Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek



Figure 7. “Margaret of York in Prayer Before the Resurrected Christ,” fol. 1 v. frontispiece in Nicolas Finet, *Le Dialogue de la Duchesse de Bourgogne à Jésus Christ*, British Library Add. MS 7970



Figure 8. “Margaret of York at Prayer” by the Master of Mary of Burgundy, fol. 182 in a book of moral treatises, Bibliotheque Royale MS. 9272-76. Image courtesy of Thomas Kren, ed., *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and The Visions of Tondal* (Malibu: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1992), p. 52.



Figure 9. “Throne of Grace Trinity” by Workshop of Master of Jean Chevrot (Flemish) c. 1450s, folio 25v. MS Ludwig IX 7. Image Courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum.



Figure 10. “Throne of Grace Trinity” from *The Arenberg Hours* (Flemish c.1460s), folio 40 of MS Ludwig IX 8. Image courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum.



Figure 11. Amédée Van Loo, *Laterna Magica*, oil on canvas, 1764. Image courtesy of Claire H. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/unforth/4223965098>



Figure 12. “Portrait of the Book Owner at Prayer,” *Psalter-Hours of Yolande of Soissons* folio 232 v. c. 1280-1290, Morgan Ms. M. 729.



Figure 13. Jan van Eyck, *Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele*, oil on canvas, 1436. Image courtesy of Groeningemuseum, Bruges.



Figure 14. Detail of Jan van Eyck, *Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele*, oil on canvas, 1436. Note the prayerbook and the glasses in his hands. Image courtesy of Groeningemuseum, Bruges.



Figure 15. “Crucifixion” from *Hours of Albrecht of Brandenburg*, folio 294 a. (sic). Note the simplified composition and inclusion of Mary Magdalene. Also note the similarity between the Magdalene in this image and the Magdalene on folio 99 v. of *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* (fig. 3). Image courtesy of the Fitzwilliam Museum.

<https://collection.beta.fitz.ms/id/image/media-988952546>



Figure 16. Detail of “The Crucifixion” from *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* (c. 1477), folio 14 v. of Vienna ONB cod. 1857. Note the brighter yellow spots on the acanthus where gold leaf was delicately applied. Image Courtesy of Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek



Figure 17. Detail of “The Crucifixion” from *The Hours of Mary of Burgundy* (c. 1477), folio 14 v. of Vienna ONB cod. 1857. Note how the Master realistically depicts the reflection of light on the pearls; a blue highlight on the top and a gold highlight on the bottom of each. Image Courtesy of Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek



Figure 18. Example of jeweled borders in CLM 28346. <https://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/0010/bsb00108473/images/index.html?fip=193.174.98.30&seite=159&pdfseitex>



Figure 19. Example of jeweled borders in *The Rothschild Prayer Book* (Ghent or Bruges, c.1505-1510). Ghent or Bruges, c.1505-1510. Image courtesy of Christie's.

<https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-the-rothschild-prayerbook-a-book-of-hours-5766082/>



Figure 20. Example of *Arma Christi* with Hyssop. Image courtesy of https://www.traditioninaction.org/religious/f039_Arma.htm



Figure 21. “The Annunciation” in *The Hours of Daniel Rym* (1420-1430), folio 1v. of Walters W 166. Image courtesy of The Walters Museum, <https://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W166/>

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