

**The Female Manuscript-Owner Portrait in Late Medieval Books of Hours:
Time, Narrative, and the Performance of Self**

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by

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Abstract

Taking the female manuscript-owner portrait in late medieval Books of Hours as its topic, this thesis investigates the meaning and function of the owner figure as an active self-reflexive character in the manuscript illuminations. Drawing upon illuminations in women-owned manuscripts in the Walters Art Museum collection and referencing similar published manuscript illuminations in other collections, the thesis explores the relationship of the owner with her representational self as a surrogate presence, the model to which she aspires, with the book as an alternate space into which she might project her spiritual, mental and emotional energies in the interest of forming her feminine religious identity. It considers internal and external models set forth in the Book of Hours, and in view of the private performative nature of the devotions, speculates on the possibility of a resistant subjective reading by noble laywomen.

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Introduction

The manuscript-owner portrait is a curious figure which sometimes appears in the illuminated miniatures and historiated initials of late medieval Books of Hours. The figure is a stylized representation of the actual manuscript owner engaged in devotional practise, usually in a kneeling position with hands pressed palms together in a standard gesture of prayer. The figure is set into selected scenes with either the Virgin and Child or a saint or another scene of the Christian narrative such as the Crucifixion or the Resurrection. The level of interaction between the sacred characters and the manuscript-owner figure in these images can vary widely. Sometimes the characters make eye contact with, or even touch the owner, while in other cases they remain aloof and inaccessible to the patron who seems not to see them at all despite their obvious proximity. The manuscript-owner figure often has an open book before it which is sometimes drawn in such a way that pseudo-script, with red and black lettering exactly like that in an actual Book of Hours, is clearly visible on its tiny pages. The figure is readily understood as a self-reflexive representation of the manuscript owner, depicted as praying with the very book from which the actual owner is praying.

Not every Book of Hours contains an owner portrait; rather, they appear sporadically throughout the genre and, not surprisingly, are typically found in the more luxurious books commissioned for specific individuals. While many Books of Hours contain no owner portraits at all, others may have multiple portrayals of the owner and in a few cases may include a spouse or the whole family at prayer. Although referred to by historians as a portrait, there seems to be little effort made to capture a physical likeness of the person represented, who appears rather generic, but the sex of the owner is always

specified by the dress of the figure in the image and by gendered pronouns in the Latin and vernacular texts. A Book of Hours more often reflects its owner's precise identity and social status through family crests, coats of arms or other unique references instead of through any particularizing physical features of the owner. It must have been important to the owner that the owner portrait represent them to some degree, however, as portraits were sometimes over-painted when the book was acquired by someone else. In Walters Ms 222 the first owner is portrayed with an unidentified coat of arms on original folios while the second female owner, identified as Madame Tourotte, is depicted on folio 51v (figure 18), repainted over top of the first owner portrait.¹ On other added folios Mme Tourotte is depicted kneeling in prayer with her entire family. Blank pages at the back of many manuscripts contain handwritten inscriptions of birth, marriage and death dates of the multiple owners' family members as the book was handed down through generations, and these notations are used to establish the object's provenance.

The type of manuscript in which the owner portrait appears, the Book of Hours, is a kind of prayer book used by the late medieval laity to pray at set hours of the day, a secular parallel to the monastic tradition of chanting the Divine Office at the canonical hours. The Book of Hours is both an object and a practise. As an object, it is a careful combination of texts and images. The early twentieth-century medievalist Victor Leroquais' standard definition of the basic elements of a Book of Hours describes the book as it was known in the fifteenth century once it had become set in a fairly stable format. In all definitions, the main devotional text is the Little Office of the Virgin,

¹Lillian M.C. Randall, *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery, Volume II, France, 1420-1540*. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 211.

which features the Hours of the Virgin at its core.² The Hours of the Virgin is comprised of an Infancy Cycle and a Passion Cycle and may be followed by sets of other hourly prayers like the Hours of the Cross and the Hours of the Holy Spirit.³ The other essential ingredients as defined by Leroquais include the Calendar, Litany, Seven Penitential Psalms, the Suffrages and the Office for the Dead. Accessory prayers to the Virgin are often included as well. Leroquais conceived of the formation of the Hours as a process with changes and additions occurring gradually with usage.⁴ Thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Books of Hours, however, can be highly individual in their textual and visual programs. In the de Lisle Hours, for example, the historiated initials of the Hours of the Virgin contain a series of figures representing the Ages of Man. In each initial a female interrogator questions a male figure at progressive stages of his life while their lively conversation is recorded on banderols.⁵ Three full-page miniatures in the Neville of Hornby Hours depict the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans,⁶ while the de Bois Hours features a series of images that celebrate the finding of the True Cross, in illustrations for the Hours of the Cross.⁷ These unique pictorial programs are not considered basic elements of, or are even commonly associated with Books of Hours in

² Bella Millett, "Ancrene Wisse and the Book of Hours," *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*. Denis Renevey, and Christiana Whitehead, eds. (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 24.

³ Roger Wieck, *Painted Prayers: The Book of Hours in Medieval and Renaissance Art*. (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1997), 51.

⁴ Bella Millett, "Ancrene Wisse and the Book of Hours," 25.

⁵ Kathryn A. Smith, *Art Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: Three Women and their Books of Hours*. (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 59-62.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

general, supporting Leroquais' concession that "liturgical manuscripts are not noted for clear delimitations of genre."⁸

The addition of illuminated images to the lay version of the Little Office created an amplified contemplative effect for the reader. A typical pictorial program in the Hours of the Virgin, for example, would pair the Annunciation scene with Matins in the Infancy Cycle; the Visitation with Lauds; the Nativity with Prime, and so on.⁹ The addition of illuminations in the Hours aided the praying reader in contemplating the sacred mysteries. The manuscript-owner portrait was integral to the book, as it appears in the earliest surviving example the de Brailes Hours of c. 1240, and its presence served to personalize the prayers.

The core devotion of the Book of Hours, the Hours of the Virgin, is believed to have taken shape in the twelfth century and was sometimes appended to the Psalter. As mentioned, the praying of the Hours by the laity emulated the monastic tradition of praying at set hours, which developed sometime in the fifth century and was standardized and firmly entrenched in practise by the ninth century. These prayer times, beginning at 3 am and ending at 9 pm, are comprised of Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. In actual secular practise, some of the canonical hours were combined to accommodate the daily demands of lay schedules.¹⁰ By the second half of the thirteenth century the illuminated Hours was a fully formed separate prayer book with its own traditional pictorial program. The earliest surviving Books of Hours, dating from

⁸ Bella Millett, "Ancrene Wisse and the Book of Hours," 24.

⁹ Roger Wieck, *Painted Prayers*, 23.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

the mid-thirteenth century, are scant, with greater numbers of manuscripts enduring from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The practise of praying the Little Office of the Virgin is documented in the earlier thirteenth century, but no physical books exist to match these dates.¹¹ During the lengthy period of its use, something of what we would today call a ‘product life-cycle’ can be observed wherein the first objects were made at great cost and only for the very highest status individuals. Over time, people of lesser status emulated elite practise and eventually the ownership of Books of Hours filtered down through society. In the late fifteenth century this downward spread of the product was accelerated by print technology which allowed for even greater affordability through increased mass-production, making the book available to people of ordinary means. Throughout the period of the Book of Hours production and use, higher status men and women continued to commission lavishly illuminated and decorated versions which combined these prayers with pictures, and it is this luxury format of the picture prayer-book that normally comes to mind when we think of the genre. High-status manuscripts decorated in the earlier period of production display a high degree of variety and individualized themes in their imagery, often containing unique images such as crusading themes in the case of Hawisia De Bois’ Hours, linked to the patroness’ ancestry. Later manuscripts are often quite standardized, conforming to established text and image combinations.

As a text the Hours of the Virgin shares a formal structure and certain elements with the Divine Office. The psalms, gospel readings, prayers of intercession and the Lord’s Prayer figure prominently in both. In practise, the Little Office opens with the

¹¹ Bella Millett, “*Ancrene Wisse* and the Book of Hours,” 30.

same invitory phrases as the Divine Office: (Lord, open my lips...) followed by Psalm 95, but all the antiphons and versicles are oriented toward Mary, with lines from the Hail Mary interspersed between psalm stanzas. The antiphons in Lauds, for example, include “Into the odour of thy ointments we do run: young maidens have loved thee exceedingly”¹² and, “The Virgin Mary is assumed unto the heavenly chamber in which the king of kings sits upon his starry seat.”¹³ The Hours mainly addresses the Virgin rather than Jesus or God the Father (which the Divine Office does), asking for her intercession and contemplating the Christian narrative through her eyes. The Divine Office was (and still is) chanted in unison by congregations of monks and nuns, while by contrast, judging from the solitary manuscript-owner portrait occasionally joined by the portrait of a spouse or other family members, the Hours were most likely prayed audibly but individually or in small family situations, and in private.

The Book of Hours is often considered as a primarily female devotional form because Hours featuring female manuscript-owner portraits and feminine Latin pronouns outnumber those with indicators of male ownership by a ratio of 3:1.¹⁴ Furthermore, the evidence in wills and notations in the books themselves demonstrates that women regularly inherited these books through the female line. It is important, however, to keep in mind that Books of Hours were mainly a private rather than public form of devotion and that men also owned and used them. Books of Hours were sometimes commissioned

¹² *In odorem unguentorum tuorum currimus: adolcentulae dilexerunt te nimis.* Rogers, D.M. ed., “The Primer, or Office of the Blessed Virgin Marie, in Latin and English, 1599” *English Recusant Literature, 1558-1640*. (Ilkley, Yorkshire, and London: The Scholar Press, 1975). Accessed online at <http://www.medievalist.net/hourstxt/home.htm> courtesy of Glenn Gunhouse.

¹³ *Maria virgo assumpta est ad aethereum thalamum, in quo rex regum stellato sedet solio.* Ibid.

¹⁴ This ratio was calculated by Andrea Pearson who reviewed 150 owner portraits in collections worldwide. Her survey is based on a random sampling, so is not quantitatively conclusive, but her numbers indicate the general trend. Pearson, Andrea. *Envisioning Gender in Burgundian Devotional Art, 1350-1530: Experience, Authority, Resistance*. (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2005), 6-7.

by noblemen as wedding gifts for their brides; however, women also commissioned them. With these points in mind, the Book of Hours can be generally defined as an illuminated devotional text meant for private use that was particularly embraced by laywomen. The meaning and function of the female manuscript-owner portrait in the Book of Hours, as it relates to the actual laywoman, will be addressed in this thesis.

The social containment experienced by high status medieval laywomen led them to embrace the Book of Hours as an alternate space in which to construct an identity based on models of virtue. The female manuscript-owner portrait functioned as a key to this space, forging a link between the lady book-owner who performed the devotions and her portrait as a potent and active surrogate character that could connect her to sacred figures and events represented in the book. While it was meant to represent the owner and to encourage affect through pose and attitude, the owner figure was also conventionalized as an unchanging template onto which the owner could project her identity. The owner's identification with the book's content was amplified by means of the manuscript-owner figure's placement in various scenes. As it interacted compositionally in the scenes and with the text, the female manuscript-owner figure entered into the places and episodes of Christian history creating simulacra to be experienced vicariously by the owner. The figure's presence in contemplative and narrative scenes generated a model of the owner as a self-reliant spiritual adept, a witness, a visionary and an individual deeply involved with the shaping of her own soul's destiny. Interacting with other characters in the book, the figure appeared as an agent of the owner, symbolizing the negotiation of her relationships with divine personages,

particularly the Virgin, with whom she was encouraged to identify and emulate. The daily commitment of time and the private nature of the performance of the Hours, requiring a temporary withdrawal into solitude, created a gap in the dominant restrictive milieu in which the owner had some latitude for the construction of a traditional reading or a resistant subjective reading of her female identity. While the design and content of the Book of Hours was virtually the same for men and women, the female devotional practitioners, living more contained lives, were highly attracted to identification with the self-representational figure as a means of accessing the alternate space suggested by its structured prayer cycles and images. The owner used the image of her projected self, working through it in her quest for spiritual self-mastery, to model the desired qualities of an ideal devotee and to simulate the coveted visions achieved by renowned women mystics.

Literature Review

While much has been written about the Book of Hours in broad terms, there is little that treats the representation of the manuscript owner as a discrete figure that persists over some three centuries. Many scholarly publications define the book's purpose, form and use – those by Roger S. Wieck, Eamon Duffy and John P. Harthan readily come to mind. These studies often take the form of exhibition catalogues which tend to be oriented to medieval studies and book culture, and so make only passing mention of the manuscript-owner figure. There are many exemplary in-depth studies of individual manuscripts, in which medievalists explore selected books at great length, touching on how the iconography of the illuminations relates to the identity of the particular manuscript owner as part of their contextualization of the book as a textual and visual object. The most useful for the purpose of this project are those by Adelaide Bennett, Madeline Caviness, Claire Donovan, John Higgitt, and Kathryn A. Smith. Taken together, these thorough studies provide a breadth of experience that can be used to make informed comparisons of various manuscripts, from which common aspects of the figure emerge. As the figure of the female manuscript-owner portrait is usually depicted in the act of praying from an open book, the topic of women's literacy informs the general conception of the figure in its performative aspect. In this regard the work of scholars such as Mark Amsler and Joyce Coleman is also informative as it provides historical context to the practise of devotional literacy. Curiously, only a handful of writers has directly addressed the devotional figure as a topic of investigation in its own right, or touched on how this figure might function in the construction of identity or devotional practise within the Book of Hours, and these include: Jeffrey Hamburger,

Laura D. Gelfand with Walter S. Gibson, Andrea Pearson, and Joan Naughton. Their work has grappled with the meaning of this enigmatic self-reflexive figure in innovative ways, and has been of particular inspiration to this thesis. It is to an examination of the ideas presented by this last group of scholars that I will turn my attention first.

Jeffrey Hamburger has explored the origins and development of female devotional imagery as it arose out of devotional practise within the cloistered context of thirteenth-century German convents.¹⁵ At that time, the use of devotional exercises that relied upon step-by-step spiritual progression that encouraged the use of the imagination to arouse the emotions became widespread in Europe. Illustrations in manuals of devotional exercises provide documentary evidence of the increased reliance on imagery in these practises.¹⁶ Hamburger discovers a strong parallel between “devotional images and the imagery in contemporary visionary literature.”¹⁷ Unable to pinpoint which form came first, as they most likely co-evolved, he is convinced that both images and literature act as stimulants used to initiate, or documents to validate, personal visions and mystical experiences. Hamburger insists that “visionary accounts are a vital record of their authors’ and audiences’ spiritual aspirations.”¹⁸ In his 1998 essay, he traces the rapid transmission of devotional imagery into lay books, demonstrating that “visionary experience, once restricted to an exalted elite, became a commonplace aspiration.”¹⁹ He proposes that the female devotional figure’s original purpose and meaning were to orient the practitioner toward a personal identification with the illustrated practises and to direct the woman’s

¹⁵ Jeffrey F. Hamburger, “The Image in Late Medieval Monastic Devotions,” *The Visual and the Visionary, Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany*. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, ed., (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 114.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

mystical visions and experiences in concert with the devotional texts which outlined multi-step systems designed to promote the advancement of personal holiness.

Whereas Hamburger concerns himself with the origins of devotional art and the female devotional figure, Andrea Pearson delves into the social implications of devotional figures in both the Book of Hours and the devotional diptych. Her treatment of the two types of art forms together facilitates her book's thesis that devotional art was appropriated for political purpose. Pearson explores evidence of the appropriation of the owner portrait by men within the Burgundian court of the fifteenth century who adapted its religious signification to raise their political profile. She agrees with Hamburger that the use of art in devotional practise arose in the convents of thirteenth-century Europe. She sees this development as a response to male social and clerical control rather than purely a desire for holiness, however, so that for women in the secular world, the art form itself came to symbolize female agency in the circumvention of male authority.²⁰ Although both devotional art forms are considered 'private' by historians, Pearson develops a strong argument in her book that the private nature of their use was relative, and that devotional art was manipulated for political effect when high-status male leaders made something of a semi-public show of their piety in the presence of select and elite audiences.

Pearson points out that in addition to the female devotional figures in the hours and diptychs, contemporary popular hagiography depicts female saints reciting the hours and experiencing independent visions, suggesting female access to the divine and direct guidance from God without the intervention of male priests/spiritual directors. She

²⁰ Andrea Pearson, *Envisioning Gender in Burgundian Devotional Art*, 30.

claims that women in positions of power were “highly capable of exercising agency to circumvent patriarchal expectations when they saw fit” and that one of the ways they did so was to “forge Books of Hours into potent symbols of feminine religious clout and autonomy, principally by linking them to the Incarnational piety of religious women undertaken outside clerical intervention.”²¹

Both Hamburger’s and Pearson’s work suggest that the lay Book of Hours shares a textual and visual sensibility with the cloistered women’s devotional practise. For Pearson, the association suggested by the juxtaposition of the female owner portrait with images of the Virgin is fraught with meaning for male society, generating a good deal of anxiety over female expressions of independent power. Pearson briefly mentions the juxtaposition of the female owner portrait with the Annunciation scene in Matins of the Virgin, concluding that “the miniature boldly asserts an authoritative feminine identity and community.”²² Pearson states that the hours are inherently gendered by the very fact that they centre on the Virgin. Furthermore, she develops a discussion about the ways in which laywomen’s embrace of the Book of Hours represents the promotion of a shared inter-generational identity through reading, praying and bequeathing the book through the female line.²³

Particularly instructive to my thesis is Pearson’s development of the idea that women’s expressions of resistance in the face of social and religious enclosure were ultimately empowering in themselves. The author applies a Foucauldian pairing of dominance/resistance to show how Burgundian individuals (both male and female) who

²¹ Ibid., 25-27.

²² Ibid., 29.

²³ Ibid., 59.

felt marginalized by those in power “manipulated the types in order to resist societal norms and assert their own status.”²⁴ This idea supports my own sense that, on a broader scale, the Book of Hours was intrinsically a resistant formulation of spirituality; one which contained the necessary material for women to construct alternate readings of their religious and social identity.

In their essay on the *Rolin Madonna*, Laura Gelfand and Walter Gibson develop the concept that devotional portraits in diptychs and manuscripts functioned as ‘surrogate selves’ which were believed to be capable of constant prayer on behalf of the persons they represented. Gelfand and Gibson theorize that devotional figures, in both devotional diptychs and Books of Hours, “were understood to engage in endless prayer, even when the people they represented were unable to do so.”²⁵ The authors remind us that icons were believed to be to some degree ‘inhabited’ or at least empowered by the divinity they represented. Such iconic images, and they cite Robert Scribner’s definition, were believed to be “potent, participatory and possessing an indwelling personality.”²⁶

To support their interpretation, Gelfand and Gibson relate the devotional figure to the medieval concept of stand-ins represented by proxies and effigies. They point to examples of an individual hiring someone to pray the rosary for them by proxy in fulfilment of a vow, or the practise of placing a wax effigy of a person in church after their recovery from a serious illness.²⁷ Invoking these practises, the authors come to the

²⁴ Ibid., 25-27.

²⁵ Laura D. Gelfand and Walter S. Gibson, “Surrogate Selves: The ‘Rolin Madonna’ and the Late-Medieval Devotional Portrait.” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 29, no. 3/4 (2002), 131.

²⁶ Ibid., 131.

²⁷ Ibid., 133.

conclusion that the manuscript-owner figure was understood to pray in the owner's stead when she was not herself at prayer.

In their analysis of the *Rolin Madonna*, Gelfand and Gibson find a similarity between Chancellor Rolin's sharing of space with the Virgin and the Book of Hours' placement of the manuscript-owner figure with the Virgin. The authors remind us that images of the owner figure adoring the Virgin and Child, with the Virgin Annunciate at Matins, or at the accessory prayers to the Virgin, are closely connected with requests for intercession. They suggest that the proximity of the owner figure to the Virgin represents the owner's ingratiated position in relation to the Virgin and the latter's ability to dispense favours. Referring specifically to the manuscript-owner figure, the authors suggest that the 'surrogate self', often present at the phrase *Domine labia mea aperies*, was intended to function as a perpetual 'stand-in' for the owner, a surrogate who 'opens his or her lips,' repeating an endless plea to the Virgin and Child. The same is likely true, they surmise, in the *Obsecro te* prayer, since in some Books of Hours a rubric placed before the prayer promises special graces to the person who recites it every day.²⁸

Grouping donor portraits in panel paintings together with owner portraits in hours, Gelfand and Gibson suggest that in both cases the motivation for the figures is to pray for the owner's soul, to "negotiate the perilous road to the hereafter."²⁹ For this reason they put forward an understanding of the figure as "an active and engaged surrogate working efficaciously toward [the] soul's salvation."³⁰ The authors explain that, in the case of

²⁸ Ibid., 130.

²⁹ Ibid., 122.

³⁰ Ibid., 122.

patrons who also established religious or charitable foundations, the donor figure, like an effigy, reminded the benefactors to pray for the soul of the donor.³¹

The merit in their concept of the manuscript-owner figure as a surrogate self is in the notion of its having some self-representative power and agency within the space of the Book of Hours. In their essay, the manuscript-owner portraits in the Hours are grouped with patron portraits in stand-alone devotional diptychs; an association that blends the two forms together and blurs the differences between them. Gelfand and Gibson's reasoning works well in the case of the diptych patron figures commissioned for placement in religious foundations and in chapels of the patron's burial place, but the manuscript-owner portrait can be considered a separate form.

The devotional diptych is a single image orphaned from the Book of Hours, and without the plurality of the images provided by the book, the portrait is more exclusively focused on its singular object, the Virgin. Due to this concentrated attention, the owner portrait figure in the diptych does not have the same implied freedom or flexibility of movement to appear in different sacred places or to witness various events and its interactive quality is reduced because of the removal of the book's spatial property created through the necessity that the owner experience and perform the text and images through time. Furthermore, the diptych functions more publicly in the continuum from private to public formats, still closing like a book with its hinges, yet used for semi-public display.³² For these reasons and because the manuscript-owner portrait preceded the devotional diptych portrait, the two forms, while related, cannot be considered identical and the manuscript-owner portrait deserves consideration as a distinct form. The

³¹ Ibid., 124-126.

³² Andrea Pearson, *Envisioning Gender*, 19.

additional fact that women's manuscript-owner figures are found in greater numbers than men's warrants special attention to the investigation of the female version in order to understand the appeal of this practise and format.

Joan Naughton writes at length about the presence of manuscript-owner portraits in images of the Virgin in Books of Hours. She notes that the illuminations of the Virgin and Child in the accessory prayers to the Virgin do not rely on the same narrative sequencing as do the other illuminations in the hours, and that they are placed at the start of their respective sections. Such images effectively centre the viewer's attention on Mary and set a contemplative mood, imputing a more purely devotional function.³³ She rightly points out that illuminations in Books of Hours have a mundane tabbing function and tend to be placed at the beginning of each canonical Hour of the particular Office or prayer to help the book user find his or her place. Naughton interprets this placement trend further, hypothesizing that "the frequency with which the prayers attract large miniatures indicates their importance to the patron relative to other devotional texts."³⁴ It follows that the female manuscript-owner portrait is often placed in scenes with the Virgin, as the Virgin is the focal figure in the Book of Hours.

Naughton states that it is the contemplative images, as opposed to the narrative images, which depict the patron at prayer.³⁵ While it is true that the typical *Adoration of the Virgin and Child* illuminations are contemplative, other studies and my own observations establish that the manuscript-owner figure is also encountered with regularity in scenes of the *Crucifixion, Resurrection, Annunciation, and Adoration of the*

³³ Joan Naughton. "A Minimally-Intrusive Presence: Portraits in Illustrations for Prayers to the Virgin." in *Medieval Texts and Images: Studies of Manuscripts from the Middle Ages*. Margaret M. Manion and Bernard J. Muir eds., (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2003), 111.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

Magi, which are all narrative scenes set into storied sequences. The figure is also located at the beginning of the Gradual Psalms and at the Litany of the Virgin. It is possible that Naughton may be describing the effect and not the cause of the contemplative mood in the scenes she selects for analysis.

The main purpose of Naughton's essay is to explain the compositional strategies used by manuscript artists to integrate the patron in these illuminations. She lists the artist's techniques as: the sharing of colours between figures to create a connection between them, the use of scale to draw attention to hierarchies of importance, and the placement of the manuscript-owner figure on the selected pages.³⁶ Her analysis of the design and placement of the figure establishes a precedent for my investigation of the images at a deeper functional level.

Another particularly helpful issue Naughton raises is that of the relationship between the depicted figures of the Virgin and the manuscript-owner figure with the actual patron/reader of the book who looks at the image while praying its text. Naughton correctly describes the image of the Virgin and Child as "accessible" to the outside reader/viewer, through the compositionally frontal placement of the pair, and comments on the "immediacy and availability" of the Virgin and Child to the book viewer despite the presence of the patron figure off to one side (hence the adjective in her title, 'minimally-intrusive').³⁷ Naughton concludes that the manuscript-owner figure is an affective exemplar of the act of devotional prayer, pointing to the Virgin but without obscuring the visual access of the book's user.³⁸ The underlying premise of her essay is

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

that the patron figure is included in these contemplative, non-narrative images to display the desired affective response to the sacred figures.

Most helpful are individual manuscript studies of woman-owned Books of Hours. In her essay, “A Woman’s Power of Prayer Against the Devil in a Book of Hours of ca. 1300,” Adelaide Bennett writes about Cambrai Bibliothèque Municipale Ms. 87, an extraordinary manuscript that features 108 manuscript-owner figures in scenes that represent the owner’s various temptations, showing how she will defeat each of these.³⁹ Bennett states that this manuscript presents a personalized version of the temptations of a particular woman (the book owner), rather than the standard personifications of sin.⁴⁰ This manuscript sets a model before the owner, which demonstrates to her how an attitude of spiritual self-vigilance and self-control will save her from sin. This is an example of a Book of Hours that is at once a prescriptive and a descriptive source; telling her what to do, and guaranteeing her a successful outcome in adopting the recommended process. It may also reflect a heightened concern on the part of medieval women with the examination of conscience, about which Dyan Elliott has written at length.⁴¹ Bennett reminds the reader of the new emphasis on penance for the laity, introduced at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, and the need for an examination of conscience as the preparation for the sacrament of confession. She writes that “[i]n the Cambrai Book of Hours, the lady was persistently reminded of the need to examine oneself and to confess

³⁹ Adelaide Bennett, “A Woman’s Power of Prayer Against the Devil in a Book of Hours ca. 1300.” in *Image and Belief, Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art*. Colum Hourihane, ed., (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 91.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

⁴¹ Dyan Elliott. “Women and Confession: From Empowerment to Pathology” in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*. Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds., (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

sins committed,”⁴² but Bennett differentiates this imagery from that directly associated with the sacrament, which would have involved depictions of a kneeling penitent before a priest. This distinction prompts her to call the manuscript “a manual to practise daily devotions, but also to guide the conscience along the path of holiness.”⁴³

Bennett makes a direct link between the placement of the manuscript-owner figure in the Annunciation at Matins of the Virgin, and the owner’s plea for help in overcoming temptations and sin through the virtues traditionally associated with the Virgin: obedience, chastity, humility.⁴⁴ As Bennett states, “[t]he Annunciation was considered the archetype of the Virgin’s humility and her most important virtue.”⁴⁵ The sin of pride – humility’s opposite – engendered a host of other sins and was considered the foremost sin because it was equated with rebelliousness against God.⁴⁶ The *Ancrene Wisse* author calls the vice of pride a lion with “very many cubs” which are fed and grow stronger when a person indulges them.⁴⁷ The Virgin’s perfect harmonizing of her will with God’s modelled the qualities that would assist the devotee to overcome her sinful tendencies. Identification with the Virgin would therefore nurture the development of the virtue of humility, a virtue with the widest possible range of ‘sin-immunity’.

In another well-known manuscript study, Madeline Caviness establishes a strong historical context in her presentation of the events surrounding the commissioning of the Hours of Jeanne d’Evreux. The ruling Capetian dynasty had repeatedly been scandalized by and disappointed in the sexual behaviour of its young people, but with the betrothal of

⁴² Adelaide Bennett, “A Woman’s Power of Prayer Against the Devil,” 102.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, transl., *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*. (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991), 120.

Jeanne to Charles IV, King of France, explains Caviness, a different outcome was hoped for by the royal family. They wished for a situation in which the young queen would be faithful to her husband and produce at least one male heir.⁴⁸ Our knowledge of the dynastic situation, combined with the fact that it was Philip who commissioned Jeanne's Hours, prepares us for Caviness' reading of the imagery "in the light of the sociological and psychosexual conditions and systems of belief in which the work was created and first read."⁴⁹ Though at times rather extreme, her analysis leads to some satisfying conclusions. She theorizes that this 'sexualized' imagery in a devotional book would have been shocking for the fourteen-year-old virgin bride and might have been intended to create a negative impression of male sexuality as "repulsive and bestial; and penetration as aggressive and wounding."⁵⁰

Caviness' analysis is a valuable illustration of how the book could be seen as a psychological tool used by a husband in a critical political situation to shape the desired behaviour of his young wife. Caviness' conclusion is instructive, as she writes, "we should not assume the female owner/reader exercised the control we normally ascribe to a patron; the term 'matron,' symmetric in gender but asymmetric in meaning, fits the role assigned to Jeanne."⁵¹ In this way Caviness raises a critical question about the degree to which the Book of Hours was descriptive of a spiritual process, since in this case the commission was the groom's and the book was aimed at achieving his goals for her.

One detail of Caviness' essay that anticipates the concerns of this study is her description of Jeanne kneeling in the historiated initial "D" of the Annunciation scene

⁴⁸ Madeline H. Caviness. "Patron or Matron? A Capetian Bride and a Vade Mecum for Her Marriage Bed." *Speculum*, 68, no.2 (Apr., 1993): 336-338.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 338.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 353.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 356.

(figure 10). “Locked in the initial of the Lord,” writes Caviness, “and guarded by a seneschal with a candle to light her midnight vigils, she begins the prayer.”⁵² For the purpose of this thesis, her observation that the social containment of the girl is visually represented by depicting her as locked within the first letter is as important as the balance of her essay, because the visual enclosure of the girl symbolizes the actual social and physical containment experienced by noblewomen.

Another invaluable study is Claire Donovan’s book about the de Brailes Hours, which places in context the earliest known Book of Hours, dated to c. 1240.⁵³ The original female owner is depicted four times, appearing in the historiated initials of Compline of the Virgin, the opening of the Gradual Psalms (figure 1), the Bible story of Susanna and the Elders (rarely used in Books of Hours) and at the end of the Litany.⁵⁴ In each of these cases, the manuscript-owner figure is depicted kneeling, alone inside the confines of the initial letter, hands together in prayer, with a “quietly composed” facial expression.⁵⁵ The presence of an owner figure in this earliest known Book of Hours tells us that the intimate self-representational aspect of the book was somehow an integral part of the devotional lay practise from the beginning.

Donovan characterizes William de Braile’s artistic style and pictorial program as straightforward, with an emphasis “on story-telling, on the depiction of emotion, and on the evocation of empathy with his characters.”⁵⁶ The glimpse of lay practise we are afforded in this early Book of Hours, writes Donovan, “suggests the importance of a

⁵² *Ibid.*, 339.

⁵³ de Braile Hours, London, British Library, MS Additional 49999.

⁵⁴ Claire Donovan, *The de Brailes Hours, Shaping the Book of Hours in Thirteenth-Century Oxford*. (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 23.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

private devotional life not dominated by church-going.”⁵⁷ Her book makes evident that it must have required considerable dedication of time when followed faithfully, with the first prayers said at early rising and the last at bedtime. Such a devotional program implies “a constant and unremitting pattern”⁵⁸ to be adhered to. Donovan takes the time in her book to move through the de Braile Hours with the reader progressing as the original devotee would have. She considers the manuscript’s images in the sequential order in which the practise of the Hours would have presented them. This gives a realistic sense of how the devotee would have experienced the devotions through time.

John Higgitt’s book, *The Murthly Hours*, is a thorough analysis of the recently rediscovered manuscript which dates from about 1280 whose original owner was an unidentified woman.⁵⁹ The lady appears in the historiated initial at the beginning of the first Gradual Psalm, folio 149v (figure 4), kneeling in prayer with a book before her, while above, a bust-figure of Christ in Majesty, unseen by her, looks down upon her. The text on the book she holds is clearly legible as *Domine labia mea aperies*, taken from Matins of the Virgin, rather than the text of the Gradual Psalms where the image is placed. The emotional tone of the owner figure is represented here as gentle and restrained, says Higgitt, and he contrasts it to another owner figure with the same placement at the beginning of the Gradual Psalms, found in the contemporary Nuremburg Hours.⁶⁰ In that depiction, an exuberant woman manuscript owner races up a flight of stairs towards Christ in a cloud, who blesses her with one hand and extends the other to

⁵⁷ Ibid., 132.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁹ Unidentified because the folio for Matins of the Hours of the Virgin is missing and it was typically on this page that we would have found heraldic devices that might have led to an attribution of ownership. John Higgitt, *The Murthly Hours: Devotion, Literacy and Luxury in Paris, England and the Gaelic West*. (London: British Library, 2000), 131.

⁶⁰ Nuremburg Stadtbibliothek Solger MS. 4.4°, fol. 179v. Ibid., 118.

her in welcome. Higgitt points out that the stairs are a literal interpretation of the Latin *gradus*, or step implied in the title *canticum graduum*, for Gradual Psalms.⁶¹ This visual charade, the acting out of a play on words, demonstrates that the owner figure could perform functions other than those suggested by co-authors Gelfand and Gibson or by Naughton; in this case, literally embodying ascent.

John Higgitt also addresses the issue of gender in Books of Hours. In relation to the Annunciation image at Lauds of the Murthly Hours of the Virgin,⁶² Higgitt concedes that “recent feminist readings of this iconography rightly draw attention to the relevance for literate women readers of images of the Virgin as a reader,” since she is depicted studying Scripture.⁶³ In his arguments he makes several critical points. While conceding that the majority of Hours in the thirteenth century were made for wealthy lady patrons and readers, and acknowledging recent feminist scholarship that has assumed a special association between women and Books of Hours, Higgitt insists that Books of Hours were never exclusively produced for women and cites numerous male manuscript owners who had themselves portrayed in their books.⁶⁴ He reminds us that

[b]eyond the feminine gender used in one of the prayers, there is nothing in the original textual contents of the Murthly Hours that could not have appeared in a Book of Hours for a man, although the significance of the Hours of the Virgin might well have been different for male and female audiences.⁶⁵

I believe this differentiation between the design and content of the hours and its reading is crucial, in that it makes the distinction that an alternate subjective reading by women is

⁶¹ Ibid., 166.

⁶² We would expect to see the Annunciation image at Matins, but in this book the order does not follow Leroquais’ usual French sequencing. Ibid., 132.

⁶³ Traditionally thought to be Isaiah 7:14, “Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son...” Ibid., 134.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 178.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 178.

entirely possible, without the book actually being gendered from its inception. The resonance for a female viewer seeing an image of herself kneeling before the Virgin would have differed greatly from that experienced by a male viewer seeing an image of himself kneeling before the Virgin. A woman manuscript owner would naturally tend to compare herself to the image of another woman, albeit the Virgin Mary, and identify with it. Higitt concludes that by comparison with other Books of Hours of the same time period, the Murthly Hours is rather conventional; that is, it does not have an unusual pictorial programme or theme apart from the standard devotional themes one would expect to find.⁶⁶

Kathryn A. Smith, in her book *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England*, analyzes and compares three women-owned Books of Hours, namely: the de Bois Hours of Hawisia de Bois, the de Lisle Hours of Margaret de Beauchamp, and the Neville of Hornby Hours of Isabel de Byron.⁶⁷ Because the stated purpose of her study is “to examine how these manuscripts mediated the religious experience and embodied the social values of their owners,”⁶⁸ her findings and analysis are closely aligned with the subjective reading approach I wish to employ. Assuming the female owner portrait as a vehicle for vicarious experience with the book’s imagery, I too will explore the ways in which the figure mediated the woman’s experience of devotional practise and try to discover the alternative meanings, potentially generated by her subjective female reading, which may have occurred to her in the combination of text and images.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁶⁷ The de Bois Hours, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 700, dated c. 1325-30; the de Lisle Hours, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS G. 50, dated c. 1320-25, and the Neville of Hornby Hours, London, British Library, Egerton MS 2781, dated c. 1335.

⁶⁸ Kathryn A. Smith, *Art Identity and Devotion*, 1.

By the early fourteenth century, says Smith, the justification for the use of religious imagery as tools for instruction was to fix the truths of the faith in memory and to arouse devotional feelings.⁶⁹ For its owner, “the images in a book of hours were more than didactic, mnemonic and devotional aids: they were potentially profound vehicles of ‘devotional communication’.”⁷⁰ Smith articulates a sense of how “the illustrations structured the reader’s experience of the texts, and vice versa, the texts inflected one’s experience of the imagery.”⁷¹ This thesis will similarly be concerned with reconstructing the experiential aspect of the book’s combined text and image for the female devotee.

In the second chapter of her book, Smith discusses medieval concepts of time as embodied in the Book of Hours. Time was mainly understood as cyclical, but also as teleological and eternal in terms of Christian eschatological salvation history. In these three woman-owned books, Smith finds that through their portraits “book owners could insert themselves into the sacred time and sacred history that shaped their manuscripts.”⁷² At the same time, the book served as a locus for the recording of human time in the form of family history, with inscriptions of births, marriages and deaths added to blank leaves near the covers. Not only were the Hours prayed at set daily hours, but the prayer cycles themselves, she points out, were temporally based, with the events of the Passion narrative, for example, taking place in a single day. Another temporal cycle was the Ages of Man, and the de Lisle Hours contains an illuminated version of these lessons.⁷³ The treatment of time in the Book of Hours is important to my exploration of how the images were experienced by laywomen. Since the time/space of the lady’s performance of the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 3-4.

⁷¹ Ibid., 4.

⁷² Ibid., 57.

⁷³ Ibid., 59.

book was conjured within the real time and space she set aside to practise her private devotions, the reality of the book's world was couched within, and dependent upon, her withdrawal from the outside world. This interrelationship of real time and space and the book's space strengthened the woman's sense of existence through her surrogate character – the female manuscript-owner portrait – in that other world of sacred time where the events of Christian history were powerfully portrayed for her.

An interesting observation made by Smith is that the psalms are non-narrative in nature and therefore required different kinds of illustrations. Sometimes the artists used word-illustration to overcome this lack of story content from which to draw.⁷⁴ Returning momentarily to Naughton's comment that owner portraits are regularly inserted into non-narrative contexts, the presence of manuscript-owner figures at the psalms may in part be due to the psalms' reliance on poetry instead of narrative action. The psalms are personal in tone, often addressing God directly, establishing both a preferred placement for the images and an affective function in the same way as the accessory prayers to the Virgin.

In her chapter dedicated to visual and textual strategies in Books of Hours, Smith cites the example of the presentation of the Three Living and the Three Dead in the de Lisle Hours as a divided diptych-style image, suggesting (following Paul Binski, in *Medieval Death*) that the artist used a split image in order to create a dialogic encounter with the doubled self as Other.⁷⁵ This concept establishes a valuable direction in thinking of the figuration of the manuscript owner as a vicariously experienced self within the sacred scenes. Another design strategy used in Books of Hours was to break the frame of

⁷⁴ Ibid., 100.

⁷⁵ In the case of the de Lisle Hours, the folio with the Three Dead, which was originally paired up with that of the Three Living, is missing, but the pair are presented together in the same divided diptych fashion in the related de Lisle Psalter, on which Smith bases her observations. Ibid., 154.

miniatures with elements projecting over the border into the text space. Smith explains that “this visual device was employed to connect the world of the viewer and the world in the picture and thereby to amplify the viewer’s imaginative experience of the event depicted.”⁷⁶ The subtle messages communicated through page layout and miniature composition will be important when considering the manuscript-owner figure’s relationships with the other characters in the book, and by extension the actual book owner’s relationship with her representative figure and those characters.

Smith characterizes medieval reading as a sustained act, one involving an unhurried discontinuous and comparative eye movement around the images and words.⁷⁷ In a process which might better be defined as visual digestion, she states that in this way, “through repetition, the prayers and images were internalized and memorized as a whole experience and knowledge.”⁷⁸ Smith’s exploration of the ways in which Books of Hours mediated devotional experience is valuable for its application of contextual understandings of how such combinations of texts and images were received by medieval readers.

The above review considers literature that directly impacts on our understanding of the meaning and function of the female manuscript-owner portrait in Books of Hours and raises critical questions, some of which remain unresolved. Does the manuscript-owner figure in the Book of Hours function the same way as the patron portrait in the devotional diptych? Andrea Pearson, Walter Gibson and Laura Gelfand are of the opinion that it does, even though they agree that the diptych evolved out of the book and

⁷⁶ Ibid., 163.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 168.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

certainly that the appearance of the first book significantly pre-dates the diptych.⁷⁹ The problem with lumping the two forms together, as previously mentioned, is that we end up attributing the same motives and functions to each, disregarding their distinct settings. The figure of the manuscript owner in the book format integrates the patron into the narrative and requires active engagement with the book object in the form of turning pages, reading the text aloud, performing various devotional bodily actions, and regarding the many images. We cannot assume that the owner portrait in the Book of Hours shares an identical meaning with the devotional diptych portrait, especially with the two types separated by at least a century, even if vestigial meanings were carried forward from the book. The Book of Hours and its devotional figure should be understood on its own terms, by investigating the religious and social conditions that preceded its creation and by taking into account the desires of its most ardent users.

It is the scholars who study the art of later devotional diptychs, interestingly enough, who group the two forms together. For them, casting a backward glance to the diptych's origins destines the Book of Hours as a historical forerunner. While it is logical to look back to the Book of Hours when studying the devotional diptych, since the diptych is believed to have developed from the Hours, the reverse is not true. To study the Book of Hours one must define it, not by what one of its elements later became; rather, it must be understood in its own time and context. The owner figure in the Book of Hours is profoundly connected to its origins in devotional practise.

⁷⁹ Andrea Pearson, *Envisioning Gender*, 5.

Next is the question of whether the Book of Hours was, as Andrea Pearson states, gendered from its inception.⁸⁰ A number of notable feminist scholars claim that Books of Hours were a largely female phenomenon, and when we consider the Book of Hours as originating out of devotional practises in the convents and being commissioned predominantly by laywomen in the thirteenth century, we can appreciate this viewpoint. But if we compare Books of Hours commissioned for men with those made for women we find no substantial difference between the two. The selections of text and image are the same, as John Higgitt remarks, and as I confirmed in my own research in the manuscript collection of the Walters Art Museum. We cannot claim, therefore, that the book itself is intrinsically gendered. The role that gender plays, as Higgitt also suggests, is in the reception of the Book of Hours and the different subjective experience the material would have allowed female as opposed to male readers. The juxtaposition of a female manuscript-owner portrait with the image of the Virgin in the illuminations of the Book of Hours had a resonance for women that caused them to adopt the book to a greater degree than did men; the enthusiasm of this embrace attributed to women's stronger personal identification with the book's heroine through the association of their portrait with her figure. While the Book of Hours was used by both men and women it was the female owners who practised the devotion in greater numbers, as for them the book allowed for specialized meaning and empowerment.

The question of the Book of Hours as a prescriptive or a descriptive source is more difficult to determine, since as Higgitt notes, in most cases we cannot know for certain whether a book was commissioned by the woman, her husband, or her spiritual

⁸⁰ Ibid., 5.

director/confessor.⁸¹ Jeffrey Hamburger has demonstrated that cloistered women's devotional imagery is a record of their visions and interest in visions, which would make them descriptive, but also that they represent a kind of 'how-to' manual of spiritual practise. Adelaide Bennett and Madeline Caviness have shown that pictorial programs can be prescriptive; Bennett's study of the Cambrai Hours demonstrating strategies for the female owner to defeat the wiles of the Devil, and Caviness' study of the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux exemplifying the commission of a book to influence a young bride's behaviour. Comparing the images of the manuscript owner in the Book of Hours with the devotional routine recommended to the anchoress in the *Ancrene Wisse*, we find that the owner figure performs the prayers to the same objects of devotion – the Virgin, Christ and the Cross – as the anchoress does. Yet the Guide for Anchoresses was also a prescribed text, albeit one that was written in response to the repeated requests of the reclusant women.⁸² The images in the Book of Hours modelled both the means and the desired ends of devotional practise, making them prescriptive sources. They retain a degree of descriptive quality by recording the religious sensibilities of the book users. Books of Hours in general can be seen as encompassing aspects of both types of sources at once, prescribing the performance of a devotional program and leaving a record of how actual practise was performed.

Both Joan Naughton and Kathryn A. Smith have considered the placement of the female manuscript-owner portrait in the Book of Hours. Naughton suggests that it complements the non-narrative, contemplative nature of the accompanying scene. While this is an attractive thesis, it resolves only part of the question of placement since it does

⁸¹ John Higgitt, *The Murthly Hours*, 178.

⁸² Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, transl., *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 47.

not account for the instances of owner portraits inserted into narrative scenes like the Annunciation, the Crucifixion and others. It is more probable that Naughton's theory explains *one* of the functions of the manuscript-owner figure's presence, in that it provides the devotional practitioner with an example to guide her to the desired emotional response in prayer. This may also be the function of the owner figure inserted at narrative scenes. The idea that the contemplative nature of the praying figure was used to demonstrate the appropriate empathic response would also be in agreement with Hamburger's appraisal that the female devotional figure's original purpose and meaning was to encourage direct personal identification with the devotional practises associated with the Book of Hours. Several of the medievalists surveyed above comment on the possible meanings generated by the association of the figure of the female manuscript owner and that of the Virgin, which is a recurrent pairing in the Book of Hours. Since the Virgin appears in exactly the same images with male manuscript-owner figures, however, this is a line of inquiry related to meanings created in reception rather than in production, and ultimately tied to a subjective reading by the female book owner. Smith's comment about the interiorization of the imagery is thought-provoking in suggesting that they begin to suggest an interior space in which the lady can interact mentally and emotionally with the text, figures and scene locations. Furthermore, her reference to Binski's application of the representation of the doubled self raises questions about the nature of the relationship between the lady owner and her imaged self in the book; such as to what degree the owner projected herself into the scenes where her portrait appeared and what effect that self-imaging had on her.

The existing literature that specifically references the female manuscript-owner portrait in Books of Hours presents directions of inquiry about the function and meaning of the figure to be developed in this thesis. The main areas that are unresolved include the nature of the relationship between the owner and her self-representational image and how the owner experiences the sacred characters, places and events in the book through this character-self. The effect of placement and composition on the figure's meaning and how modelling was achieved pictorially needs further investigation and elaboration, as does the reception of the Book of Hours, especially the possibilities for a uniquely female reading of the female manuscript-owner portrait.

Methodology

The manuscripts I have selected for analysis form two groups. The first consists of examples featuring female manuscript-owner portraits in the Walters Art Museum collection. Most of these manuscripts are French and Flemish, with dates ranging from c. 1250 to c. 1490. This collection was chosen for the relatively large number of female owner portraits in its Books of Hours and for its ease of access. American rail magnate Henry Walters inherited his father's nineteenth-century art collection and acquired additional manuscripts in the early twentieth century according to his own eclectic tastes. The resulting Walters manuscript collection, therefore, is rich but was not assembled with the kind of rationalized agenda used by art institutions to build a well-rounded collection representative of the genre.⁸³ The collection is an interesting supplement to some of the better-known published Books of Hours with female manuscript-owner portraits in world-wide collections that act as a foundation of well-known images around which significant discourse has already developed. From this second group I have tried to choose English examples as a counterpoint to the Walters collection's strengths. I strove to have Books of Hours represented from three areas of northern Europe – England, France, and the Netherlands – because while there were differences, there was also much cultural continuity and exchange between them especially among their elite classes.⁸⁴

The main medieval sources I will refer to in my thesis are *The Primer, or Office of the Blessed Virgin Marie, in Latin and English*, a concordance version of a Book of Hours printed in Antwerp at the end of the sixteenth century, after the genre had become quite set in its format; and the *Ancrene Wisse*, a manual of unknown authorship written in

⁸³ As I was informed by Ben Tilghman of the Walters Art Museum, Manuscript Collection.

⁸⁴ John Higgitt, *The Murthly Hours*, 25.

early thirteenth-century England for the guidance of anchoresses. The *Ancrene Wisse* was written around the turn of the thirteenth century for an exclusively female audience at their request and, for this and other reasons, is highly relevant to my thesis.⁸⁵ It contains a lengthy description of the recommended way of practising one's devotions, including the praying of the Hours, which gives some idea of the physical involvement of the body required in devotional practise. Some of the most prominent themes in the Guide for Anchoresses are critical to the exploration of the images; these being interiority, the self, virginity, and containment. As well, the confinement of the three solitary anchoresses for whom the *Ancrene Wisse* was written has similarities with the containment of married laywomen in castles and the enclosure of consecrated women in nunneries. Such noble laywomen had biological sisters in the three states of life and shared similar ideals in their devotional practises. I will take the anchoress as a model for the laywoman because, whereas nuns prayed the Divine Office in groups, the anchoress and the laywoman prayed the Little Office of the Virgin in solitude. These two groups of women were normally of the noble class, and sometimes there were family connections between lay and anchoritic individuals. The *Ancrene Wisse* details the devotions of the Hours in its first chapter, and while the anchoress practised a more completely withdrawn life than the noble laywoman, they shared similar devotional goals and methods.

After studying owner portrait images in twenty-four manuscripts first-hand at the Walters Art Museum, I came to the conclusion that the male owner portraits were indistinguishable from the female ones. The only observable difference in the books, apart from the male figure in the place of the female one, was the choice of a male patron

⁸⁵ Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, transl. *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 10.

saint. Otherwise the male owner figure was the visual counterpart of the male Latin pronoun used in the text. This impression of mine has since been reinforced and validated by John Higgitt's statements to the same effect in his book *The Murthly Hours*. In my opinion, the only way that the Book of Hours as an object can be considered gendered is in its reception. The Book of Hours does contain within it, however, ample visual and textual material from which women could have constructed gendered readings. It is this possibility of a subjective reading of the book that I will work to uncover.

In my exploration of the female manuscript-owner portrait I will first consider its nature as a self-representative portrait; since it does not seem to have a high degree of likeness I want to establish what kind of representational image it is. In this regard I will focus on the figure's self-reflexivity in terms of the twelfth-century awakening to the reality of the self. I will bring modern psychology into the discussion to establish a basic understanding of how the self functions in relation to its representations. Extending the definition of self-representation beyond the discrete portrait, I will work to establish the ways in which the entire setting – including characters, symbols, places and times – represents the self along with the owner figure.

I will proceed with an analysis of the figure's placement in the Book of Hours that will involve thinking about such issues as time, narrative, simulacra, and contemplation with the use of images. Approaching the subject of the figure's placement from another angle, I will consider the possible associative meanings created through juxtaposition with the Virgin, and how the Virgin is used to model virtues to the book owner, and how the owner figure models virtues to the owner as well. In thinking of the Book of Hours as an alternate space for the female self-construction of identity, my focus will be on the

performance aspect of the devotions, the subjective reception of the aforementioned scenes and the role of the female manuscript-owner portrait in this practise and reception. The discussion of the Book as a performed space will require the investigation of social theory that deals with how power is played out spatially between dominant and subjected groups.

Chapter Descriptions

The first chapter will deal with the manuscript-owner figure, separate from the settings and other characters of the Book of Hours. This will involve a consideration of its characteristics as a self-representational portrait which images the outward appearance, psychological profile, and religious construction of the self. The figure's physical qualities as a portrait will be set within the broader field of European portrait development in all media of c. 1300. A review of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century emergence of the self, and the origins of the figure's standard prayer pose will establish a meaningful historical context for the portrait. The connection between the mental visualization techniques of monastic tradition and the attitude and affect of the owner figure in the Book of Hours will be explored, as the portrait functioned as a cue to the devotional practitioner.

Through an exploration of modern theories of the psychology of self and identity, and building on Naughton's idea of the owner figure as a model of affect, this chapter will consider the issues arising from the notion of the manuscript-owner figure as a self-model to which the owner might strive in shaping her moral behaviour and Christian identity. It is in this chapter that I will establish grounds for considering the manuscript-owner figure in Books of Hours as a projection of the owner's ideal-self, constructed by the reader through narrative, and integral to her concept of devotional identity. Beyond the self-model, I will show that the Book of Hours functioned as a kind of alternative time/space landscape in which this projected self could move about and experience all that she needed to.

In the second chapter, using the concept of self and its pictorial representation in the imaginal landscape and space of the book, the effect of the female manuscript-owner figure's placement and presence in the settings of the Book of Hours will be investigated. This will involve an analysis of how the manuscript-owner figure functions in contemplative and narrative scenes. While the owner figure's role has been analyzed in contemplative scenes, its placement in narrative scenes has been overlooked and this has resulted in an incomplete assessment of its function. Particular attention will be paid to how the placement of the figure affected the book owner's reading/viewing of the manuscript. A greater significance than previously given will be granted to the owner's private performance of the text, which was a multi-sensory production that included her voice, hearing, vision, touch and bodily actions, coordinated by the text and images that constituted a separate time/space representative of her interior devotional identity.

In the third chapter the internal and external models available to women users in the Book of Hours will be examined. This will involve a consideration of how the figure of the manuscript owner in selected illuminations models an ideal to the owner, and what the qualities of that model are. I will also involve an examination of the Virgin as a model of ideal female virtues, and how the Virgin's attributes are symbolized mainly as containment. The link between virginity and containment will be explored, as will the social and religious reality of enclosure in the lives of noble laywomen practitioners of the Book of Hours. Finally, the chapter will entail a proposal for how the Book of Hours and the devotional figure may have allowed for a resistant subjective reading on the part of women readers/viewers, through the same texts and images interpreted differently.

Chapter 1 - The Female Manuscript-Owner Portrait

This chapter will consider the female manuscript-owner portrait in the Book of Hours as a projection of the laywoman's inner self, a symbolic objectified self-representation constructed by the narrating subject of the book owner. I will explore the ways in which this figure is intimately connected to the reader and her devotional experience and dependent on her activation as the key to her self-awareness and interiority. I will show that the self-referential figure of the manuscript-owner portrait, and the Book of Hours itself, fulfilled an important role in the expression and formation of identity.

In this chapter I will examine the owner figure and consider its self-representational nature as used in devotional practise. I will then discuss the twelfth-century shift into the conceptualization of the self and its manifestation in cultural developments and religious practise. Finally, I will consider the manuscript-owner figure in terms of a modern psychological model of the self as a way of theorizing how it represents, constructs and regulates personal identity and behaviour. This chapter's discussion of the manuscript-owner figure will set the stage for an exploration, in the following chapters, of the projected self-image as a key entry point into the constructed, self-representative space of the book, which allowed for a personal participation in the Christian narrative, and for the modelling of self through the subjective reading/viewing of the book.

In the selected female manuscript-owner portraits (figures 1 through 19),⁸⁶ as in the vast majority of known examples, the owner is portrayed in a kneeling position with hands pressed palms together out in front of her, elbows slightly raised. In this aspect the owner portrait is very consistent, whether the owner/figure is male or female, and whether it is shown in profile or in three-quarter view. In about half the figures in this study, the portrait figure has an open book either in her hands or resting upon a surface before her. In some cases she looks up to the Virgin or other sacred characters, while in other instances she sticks to her reading. The direction of the owner portrait's gaze in the images does not seem to depend upon her having a book in any case. In the de Bois Hours (figure 11), the figure of the lady is joined by other family members on their knees in veneration of the Virgin. Meanwhile, in Walters Ms 98, fol. 1 (figure 2), a Franciscan nun joins the lady in prayer. Exceptional for its prayer position is the manuscript-owner figure in Walters Ms 289, fol. 15 (figure 13), who stands at a side altar gazing up to a Crucifixion scene.

In the samples from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the owner figures are very two-dimensionally drawn, yet they still exhibit some individualizing traits. Hair colour varies among them, as does dress and headgear. One constant quality they share is a kind of noble isolation and intensity of purpose in the gesture of their performance. For example, in Walters Ms 98 (figure 2) the two women lean backward a little, and the Franciscan's gesture is almost cringing, while in the Murthly Hours, folio 149v (figure 4) the lady's body language has her leaning forward into her book, poring over it with concentrated absorption so that the Christ in majesty above her appears as the content of

⁸⁶ With the exception of Walters Ms. 289, fol. 15 in which the owner figure is standing.

her thought, not an actual vision to her, but a vision to the book viewer. In the fifteenth-century examples, the manuscript-owner figures are more three-dimensionally developed in space, and are accordingly given three-quarter poses rather than profile ones. Once again hair colour varies with the individual, and the headdress probably reflects the country of origin and period style. In the fifteenth-century examples from the Walters collection (figures 13, 14, and 15 through 18), the manuscript owner is often pictured with a group of figures expanded from the Virgin and Child to include a saint and attendant angels. This group setting makes for a more cosy and familial tone of anecdotal intimacy in contrast to the earlier woman devotee alone with the Virgin, or woman before a scene of Christian narrative.

An interesting observation gained by seeing a fair number of images of the Virgin and Child adored by a female manuscript owner is the contrast between the relaxed, varied poses of the Virgin and Child and the owner's stiffly kneeling posture. The rigidity and consistency of the owner pose is effectively heightened by contrast with the varied poses of the other characters in these images. This consistent posture suggests a sense of self-control and containment of the body signalling an intensely personal devotional state through its trancelike immobility. This is a feature shared by almost all owner portrait figures no matter where they are placed in the book and it is a feature sustained over the centuries of the Book of Hours production. The rigid sameness of the form suggests that the figure may have functioned within the book as a kind of cue to bring about a ritually induced rapturous state resulting from enacting the requisite bodily forms within the repetitious rounds of daily prayer. Just as the illuminations placed at the start of each hour functioned as physical tabs to bring the reader to the desired place, the

female manuscript-owner figure may have functioned as a psychological tab allowing access to the desired state, triggering her body memory as she began the prayer by conforming her position to match that of the image. The sight of herself kneeling in the image initiated a link between the devotee and her representation, operating as a shortcut does to bring her more quickly into a devotional state of mind. In this sense an embodied connection may have been experienced by the owner, brought on by this rigid and repeated form and the rigidly laid out and repeated bodily devotional practises.

We know that the manuscript-owner figure is meant as a representation of the owner because it is sometimes accompanied by the owner's name, as in Walters Ms 269, folio 76r (figure 17) where a banderol over the lady is inscribed with a prayer and the name Collette and because of the aforementioned practise of new book owners having the figure over-painted to represent them better as in Walters Ms 222, folio 51v (figure 18). Since the figure is a portrait of a certain type within broader period characteristics, we should not neglect a consideration of its physical qualities in the context of European portrait developments over at least the first century of the book's existence, c. 1250-1350.

Today we look to portraits for identity, an expression of individual character and physical likeness, but in most earlier medieval representations of individuals we find instead a heavy reliance on markers of social rank and noble ancestry, such as symbols of office and heraldic shields or crests, with little real attempt at likeness. As a result of the twelfth-century interest in the self, however, as Colin Morris explains, in the thirteenth century portraits gradually begin to display more recognizable physical traits, although

these are still *very* stylized.⁸⁷ As examples of this slow trend toward the personalization of the portrait, Morris cites the tomb sculptures of Henry III of England, Louis of France - the son of the canonized Louis IX, and the reliquary Cappenberg Head representing Frederick Barbarossa. The effigy of Henry III (d.1272) in Westminster Abbey and the sculpture of Louis IX's son (d.1260) are believed to have been prepared from death-masks which accounts for their supposed portrayal of individual features.⁸⁸ In the case of the Cappenberg Head, at the time it was presented as a gift to his godfather it was recorded in an inventory as a likeness of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa.⁸⁹ Although the head is heavily stylized, some of its features correspond with a documented description of the emperor's facial appearance.⁹⁰ These examples illustrate the beginning of a trend in the later Middle Ages towards a recognition of the individual's uniqueness and a desire to capture those qualities in art.

In spite of this incipient trend toward the portrait in the modern sense, the manuscript-owner portrait in the Book of Hours does not seem to be a convincing rendering of any particular individual. Apart from it clearly representing either a male or a female devotee with easily achieved details as hair colour, the features, by modern standards, are rather generic. One possible reason for this is the small scale of the illuminations, which as miniatures or historiated initials sometimes depicted the owner at the height of an inch or two in size. Keeping in mind that the dimensions of most of these books are on average about four by six inches (some larger, but some smaller) it is

⁸⁷ Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050-1200* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 88. Morris quotes from Harald Keller, "The Origins of the Portrait in the Later Middle Ages." *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 3 (1939): 229.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 89

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 93

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 94

doubtful that any medieval artist could be expected to create a likeness on such a small scale, even if he or she wanted to. The same situation is seen with medieval portraits on coins, which because of their minute size, relied more upon symbols to convey the ruler's identity. Another possible contributing factor to the lack of individuating features of manuscript-owner figures in Books of Hours is the conception of the undifferentiated individual inner self as soul. Nicholas Watson writes that "in Christian, as in Platonic and Stoic thought, the inner self is in some respects less 'individual' than the outer because closer to the image of God in which it was made."⁹¹ As the Book of Hours was concerned with the development and devotional life of the inner self as a soul, it is perhaps less reasonable to expect patrons to demand and artists to be able to execute a close resemblance. The introduction of the owner figure at this time in history, nevertheless, signals a new interest in individuality – a shift noted in the previous century and termed by historians the 'twelfth-century discovery of the self' that deepens over the period. From the mid-eleventh century and continuing until the mid-thirteenth century, there was a new emphasis on the self set forth in terms of self-knowledge, or self-awareness that was evidenced in many disciplines. After a brief consideration of some of the changes in other fields we will focus on the effect of the new inwardness on the practise of religion.

Looking back on the twelfth century, it is tempting to characterize it as a period of emergent humanism and individuality; yet scholars of the period caution that these

⁹¹ Nicholas Watson, " 'With the Heat of the Hungry Heart': Empowerment and *Ancrene Wisse*" in Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski eds., *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), (52-70) 52.

modern terms are not how the people actually thought of it themselves.⁹² While there was an awareness of self, it was not individualism in the modern sense, but was based more upon defining one's identity by conforming to roles or models. As R.N. Swanson explains, "the major psychological thrust was perhaps more toward conformity, a training of the person, mentally and behaviourally, to match a model."⁹³ The following of models was an important shaper of identity since it was based to a large degree in terms of belonging to a group and associating one's identity with that group's professed goals.⁹⁴ As we will see, following a model as the means of growing toward an ideal of perfection plays a key role in the picturing of the self and the shaping of it in the Book of Hours.

Evidence for the new self-awareness can be found in literature, lyric poetry, theology, portraiture, and religious practise. In literature the new interest in the self was exemplified by autobiography and the publication of letters which revealed the inner man's thought and character, and in the personal voice of the lyric poet, often expressive of desire.⁹⁵ We also see at this time the rise of the romance and the centrality of the questing knight character, who journeys alone through the world in search of his destiny.⁹⁶ In theology the new preoccupation with the self was exemplified by the writings of the scholastic philosopher Peter Abelard and the Benedictine historian Guibert of Nogent, who wrote his personal memoirs modelled after Augustine's *Confessions*.⁹⁷ Like the moral theology of the time, their writing was concerned with the recognition of

⁹² R.N. Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance*. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 139.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁹⁵ Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual*, 67.

⁹⁶ Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self: Individuality in the Ancrene Wisse*. (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), 2.

⁹⁷ Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual*, 70-75.

the role of sinful intention. Peter Abelard's writing in particular is concerned with shifting the responsibility of working against sin from external clerical arbiters onto the individual person "who alone can recognize and articulate the motivations and desires that define his moral life."⁹⁸

The changing attitude toward sin included a growing awareness of the need for inward sorrow and true penitence for sins.⁹⁹ Prior to c.1050, a contrite spirit was not required before one confessed one's sins.¹⁰⁰ The new awareness of the inclination toward sin can be seen as "another manifestation of the 'inwardness' of the time."¹⁰¹ This move away from external regulation and toward a view of sinful intention as the essence of sin corresponds to the twelfth-century interest in the inner self and the inner workings of character.¹⁰² Another indicator of this trend is the decision by the Church at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 that confession should be an annual event for every Christian. This necessitated a full examination of conscience, further encouraging the development of self-awareness on the part of the laity.¹⁰³

The movement away from external punishment and toward personal regulation is also exemplified in the rule and structure of the *Ancrene Wisse*, which elevates the inner rule over the outer rule, recommending that it is the inner rule which guides and purifies the heart from within. Linda Georgianna sees the *Ancrene Wisse* as the text which best exemplifies "the complexity with which medieval writers could examine and describe the

⁹⁸ Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, 2.

⁹⁹ Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual*, 73.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 73.

problems of the self.”¹⁰⁴ In fact the widespread practise of anchoritism among women, especially in England after the Norman Conquest, strongly suggests that there was a reaction against the traditional idea of the community taking precedence over the individual in religious life.¹⁰⁵ The *Ancrene Wisse* author’s “concern with the paradoxical effects of self-knowledge lead him inevitably toward Christianity’s solution to the problem of the self: the sacrament of confession, wherein temporarily at least, self-reflection and the awareness of sin that it engenders win for the sinner God’s forgiveness and a return of innocence.”¹⁰⁶

In the twelfth century, religion generally became more personal as a new awareness of the self and its relationship with God developed throughout western Christendom. Whereas previously the Passion of Christ was predominantly interpreted as God’s victory over the Devil on an impersonal cosmic scale, during the twelfth century the impact of Christ on the individual became more important.¹⁰⁷ More emphasis was placed on Christ’s human sufferings and his sacrificial love, with compassion arising as the appropriate emotional response to Christ’s suffering. Morris describes it in terms of empathy as “[t]he movement towards a more inward and compassionate devotion in which the individual strove imaginatively to share in the pain of his Lord.”¹⁰⁸

The call for the person to take an active role in his or her spiritual self-monitoring contributed greatly to the private devotional trend that took root and found particular expression in the form of the Book of Hours in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

¹⁰⁴ Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, Volume II: From 1000 to the Reformation*. (Ottawa: Novalis, Saint Paul University Press, 2002), 226.

¹⁰⁶ Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, 7.

¹⁰⁷ Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual*, 139.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 140.

The urge toward the personal and private rather than the corporate in Christianity was not a movement away from the formal institutional church, but a movement toward deeper conformity with its ideals through intense personal re-formation of the self. Dyan Elliott speaks of the “astonishing surge of popular piety” in the period and notes that laywomen were at the forefront of this trend to examination of conscience and confession. Women’s holiness was usually authenticated by a priest confessor who validated their absolved state¹⁰⁹ and confession was, in fact, at the very core of women’s spirituality in the thirteenth century.¹¹⁰ In the Cambrai Ms 87 Book of Hours with its 108 manuscript-owner figures struggling to overcome various temptations, we find an explicit concern with modelling the self’s movement toward an ideal through examination of conscience.¹¹¹

Introspection, the examination of conscience, awareness of intention – all necessitated new tools with which to contemplate the problems of sin and self. Monks and nuns learned visualizing exercises which were used as tools in this pursuit and recluses learned to think metaphorically through the *Ancrene Wisse* and other related texts. Although laywomen were not reclusant anchoresses, they did share much in common with them by being highly contained and regulated in society. Described by Elliott as “socially hobbled,”¹¹² laywomen were confined to their domestic spaces (as an upcoming chapter in this thesis will elaborate). As Nicholas Watson points out, the *Ancrene Wisse* author recommends that anchoresses employ “the exercise of mental vigor” supplying them with a plethora of literary images that serve to discipline them.

¹⁰⁹ Dyan Elliott, “Women and Confession: From Empowerment to Pathology,” 31.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

¹¹¹ Adelaide Bennett, “A Woman’s Power of Prayer Against the Devil,” 91.

¹¹² Dyan Elliott, “Women and Confession: From Empowerment to Pathology,” 36.

These mental exercises are substitutions recommended by the *Ancrene Wisse* author, taking the place of the physical mortifications that were commonly associated with male hermits, such as self-flagellation, fasting or the wearing of hair-shirts next to the skin.¹¹³ The popularity of the *Ancrene Wisse* is more evidence of twelfth- and thirteenth-century spirituality moving inward, more focussed on internal intentions and desires and less concerned with externals. The focus of this new approach on interior work meant also that it was open to all Christians as it could be lived discreetly, privately while one lived ‘in the world’. The tendency to use mental vigour or mentalization techniques is not new. Rooted in the monastic practise of meditation which involved “making mental images or cognitive ‘pictures’ for thinking and composing,”¹¹⁴ it is an ancient technique articulated in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and revived in the thirteenth century, transmitted into medieval culture by the orders of canons and friars.¹¹⁵

Mentalization techniques of the period are inseparable from the *Ars Memoria*, with its practises of concrete imaging. As Carruthers notes, “[m]onastic *memoria* is a locational memory, [which] cultivates the making of mental images for the mind to work with as a fundamental procedure of human thinking.”¹¹⁶ The Book of Hours can be understood within these practises as a physical object that embodies in figures and narratives the interior action going on inside the devotee’s mind; it is also an object that is simultaneously generative of those activities. The tradition of *res memoria* recognized the powerful emotional aspect of memory. It was believed that “[m]emory images [were] composed of two elements: a ‘likeness’ (*similitudo*) that serves as a cognitive cue or

¹¹³ Nicholas Watson, ‘With the Heat of the Hungry Heart’: Empowerment and *Ancrene Wisse*, 61.

¹¹⁴ Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images, 400-1200*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

token to the ‘matter’ or *res* being remembered, and *intentio* or the inclination or ‘attitude’ we have to the remembered experience, which helps both to classify and to retrieve it.”¹¹⁷ Not only did these pre-modern traditions recognize the emotional element of memory, they also “considered memories to be bodily ‘affects’.”¹¹⁸ According to Cicero, *intentio* as practised by Greek and Roman orators involved the whole body in the aims of persuasion; in the revived thirteenth-century monastic version of *intentio*, the emphasis is on the spiritual and emotional, using the feelings aroused by the images to bring the practitioner to the desired spiritual goal.¹¹⁹ The female manuscript-owner portrait carried a resemblance to the book owner sufficient to act as a cue to aid her in cultivating the desired attitude toward the image: one of reverence that allowed her to closely identify with the expression of empathy modelled by the pose of the kneeling owner figure. Medieval images then (both mental and physical ones) were valued as generators of cognitive processes internal to the perceiver and thus, as in the Books of Hours owner portraits, were less concerned with the individuation of physical features.¹²⁰

The changes in attitude toward the self in the twelfth century can be summarized as follows. There was a trend toward personal expression and knowing one’s inward character along with a recognition of unique physical characteristics just beginning to be expressed in art. There was also a realization of the role of intention in human action and a sense of the self’s accountability to a personal God who is concerned with the deliverance of each individual. We find, furthermore, an emphasis on compassion as the appropriate response to Christ’s suffering, the use of visual imagination in arousing

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 14.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 15.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 72.

devotional compassion, and a preference for behavioural models towards which one might grow and in relation to which one might construct one's identity.

The emergence of Books of Hours with the use of the female manuscript-owner portrait coincided with these developments and the new environment of self-awareness. With the introduction of the owner figure, a special relationship was established that modelled the devotee's personal spiritual development. While on the one hand the scenes in which the owner portrait appears grow in their emphasis on naturalism, becoming more adept at eliciting empathy, the same cannot be said of the owner figure. The same culture of empathy or interiorization is not applied to the conventionalized owner figure; rather it remains in some sense unchanging, a flat receptor for the projections of the book owner's subjectivity and interiority.

The kneeling prayer position was a ritualized bodily affect that arose in the Middle Ages. In the early Christian and late Antique eras, the bodily posture associated with Christian prayer was the *orans*, a standing position with arms outstretched, palms turned upward. The kneeling position defined a more contemporary relationship of self to divine. It originated in the feudal 'act of homage' ceremony (*commendatio*) performed by a vassal to his feudal lord. The ceremony was performed in order to swear personal loyalty, and the bodily position of the vassal was expressive of submission to an individual of higher authority, to whom the vassal's personal allegiance was due. According to Michel Rouche, the core of the ceremony was pagan in origin, and its performance in the feudal context initiated "a restructuring of social obligations that was

radically new.”¹²¹ When transferred to the devotional context, the bodily position carried this new meaning with it affecting the relationship between the practitioner and the sacred figure being invoked.

The power of the lord over his vassal in feudal society is characterized as having been at once possessive and protective, meaning that, as in Roman and pagan religion, the relationship was fairly contractual in nature. The adaptation of the vassal’s bodily posture as a devotional prayer position carries several meanings along with it into the new context. As with the vassal’s relationship with his lord, the devotee had to fulfill certain obligations and pray certain prayers, but would be compensated by the direct, personal protection and intercession of the sacred character. Unlike Roman religion, the good will of the divinity was further dependent upon the devotee’s moral and ethical behaviour, and this is where the examination of conscience comes into play. The deference implied by the kneeling gesture harmonized humankind’s relationship to its God with the hierarchical medieval social structure and its chain of command, establishing, through systems of obligation and exchange, the possibility of a personal if unequal relationship to the divine.

Reinforcing the kneeling position, and the kneeling owner figure’s popular placement at Matins in the Hours of the Virgin, was the invitatory psalm of Matins, Psalm 95, the text of which exhorts “let us adore and fall down before God; let us weep before our Lord that made us.”¹²² Placed among the opening stanzas at the beginning of the first

¹²¹ Michel Rouche, "Private Life Conquers State and Society," in Paul Veyne, ed., *A History of Private Life, Volume I*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 429.

¹²² *Venite adoremus et procidamus ante Deum: ploremus coram Domino, qui fecit nos*. Later translators of this sentence took the liberty of substituting the word “kneel” for *procidere* which is literally “to fall down prostrate”. D.M. Rogers, “The Primer, or Office of the Blessed Virgin Marie, in Latin and English, 1599,” Matins, Hours of the Virgin, Psalm 95.

Hour, the devotee would have spoken these words as she knelt, beholding her mirror image kneeling before the Virgin Annunciate, thus uniting the multiple threads of action, sight and speech.

The very presence of the owner portrait in medieval manuscripts was a remarkable innovation – one very much in keeping with the twelfth-century's new awareness of self. Representations of the female manuscript owner praying the Hours, in that same Book of Hours, have been discussed as self-reflexive. This is because the figure in the book refers back to the owner in such a way that it affects the owner in the act of using the book. In Literary Studies, the term 'self-reflexive' is applied to "literary works that openly reflect upon their own processes of artful composition."¹²³ Often in such works, the fictional narrator is involved both with the story and with the audience, making reference to his or her own fictional status. But the owner portrait in the Book of Hours is not the visual equivalent of a post-modern self-conscious narrator in a work of fiction. In the post-modern novel, the self-conscious narrator serves to interrupt the suspended belief of the reader and breaks the reality of the constructed story highlighting its artificiality. In contrast, the owner figure draws attention to the very purpose for which the book is being used. This serves not to interrupt but to support the narrative, feeding energy back into the circuit rather than diverting it. The sense of self-awareness is underlined in both, but the modern reader is a different person from the fiction's author, whereas in the Book of Hours the reader and the image of the reader refer to the same person. Current psychological models of how the self views itself and constructs its identity help to illuminate these self-reflexive strategies.

¹²³ *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Chris Baldick. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press, 2008. "self-reflexive".

It may seem anachronistic to apply psychological theory to a medieval case, but Mary Carruthers has set a successful precedent with her comparison of ancient and medieval models of memory with models of memory used in modern neuropsychology.¹²⁴ In their summation of the current state of self and identity studies, psychology researchers Margaret Foddy and Yoshihisa Kashima identify the major contemporary approaches to self-related processes. They observe that “the content of the self may vary across cultures, across social class, and across history, but the processes of self-conception formation are seen to be constant.”¹²⁵ This implies that the end results of the formation may vary by time period and location, but the process under which the human self is formed is constant and universally relevant.

The current model of self and identity makes certain core assumptions which the authors are mindful to point out. Remarkably, they conceptualize the structure and workings of the mind as an architecture – a metaphor that seems to have been intuited correctly by the Greeks and Romans, for as Mary Carruthers has pointed out, Cicero’s *New Rhetoric* describes “an art of memory based upon the building plan of a familiar house, in whose rooms and recesses an orator should ‘place’ images that recall to him the material he intends to talk about.”¹²⁶ At its core, state Foddy and Kashima, the mind “is assumed to be a symbol processor, which creates, manipulates, stores and retrieves

¹²⁴ Mary Carruthers. *The Book of Memory, A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) Chapter 2 is entitled: “Descriptions of the Neuropsychology of Memory”

¹²⁵ Margaret Foddy and Yoshihisa Kashima. “Self and Identity: What is the Conception of the Person Assumed in the Current Literature?” in *Self and Identity: Personal, Social, and Symbolic*. Yoshihisa Kashima, Margaret Foddy and Michael Platow eds., (Mahwah New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2002), 10.

¹²⁶ Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 7.

various symbols.”¹²⁷ Beyond processing images, the mind is also equipped with a mechanism for self-regulation. This psychological mechanism works by measuring the discrepancy between the desired ideal-self and the actual self. The executive part of the self, informed by this comparison, works on closing this gap. It is assumed that the mind’s symbol processor “is a limited-capacity processor: both attention and memory are understood to be relatively limited resources.”¹²⁸ This would suggest that the internal processes could be assisted by external means, such as techniques or props.

In terms of human self-awareness, a distinction is assumed between the self-as-subject (the “I”) and the self-as-object (the “Me”). It is established that “[t]he duality of the self presupposes the capacity that *I* is capable of observing *Me*, a clear recognition of self-awareness.”¹²⁹ It is worth noting here that certain values, in regard to identity, are also understood to be attached to the *I* and the *Me*. While the *Me* is associated with the values of the group, the *I* is attached to the individual.¹³⁰ This allows the self to have both a sense of belonging within groups with which it identifies, while the sense of uniqueness keeps the self from being lost within any group. The self-as-object could be in the form of “a mental representation, a prototype, or a schema, [or alternately] a story, a theory, a visual representation, or measurements.”¹³¹ The self can be symbolized in any of these forms, any of which may be considered significant.¹³²

¹²⁷ Margaret Foddy and Yoshihisa Kashima, “Self and Identity: What is the Conception of the Person Assumed in the Current Literature,” 5.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Herbert J.M Hermans, “The Dialogical Self: One Person, Different Stories,” in *Self and Identity: Personal, Social, and Symbolic*. Yoshihisa Kashima, Margaret Foddy and Michael Platow eds., (Mahwah New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2002), (71-99), 79.

¹³¹ Margaret Foddy and Yoshihisa Kashima, “Self and Identity: What is the Conception of the Person Assumed in the Current Literature,” 5.

¹³² *Ibid.*

The mind processes symbols, but is also influenced by feelings and desires which shape, and in turn are shaped by, the symbolic representations of the self.¹³³ As a result, how an individual feels about him or herself plays a role in his or her self-image and subsequent behaviour. Psychology recognizes that mental models of the self act as guides with respect to self-regulation. According to discrepancy theory, the gap between the representations of the actual self and the ideal self creates the mental model called the self-guide, which motivates the individual to change.¹³⁴

In the same vein, psychologists Jean M. Twenge and Roy F. Baumeister have explored the area of self-regulation, also referred to as self-control. Their specific area of research is the self-regulation of behaviour to bring about healthy balance and moderation in the individual, so that in their examples are cases where self-control is critical, as in addictions, criminal impulses, overeating; and the safe expression of anger, or the appropriate expression of sexual feelings. At the other end of the spectrum, they consider how people are able to endure temptation to live in accordance with their moral values, or to delay gratification in order to achieve higher personal goals.

It is theorized that self-regulation is an essential function and perhaps a master function of the self, which is composed of three basic parts: self-awareness, self-regulation and an executive function which is the decision-making part that makes choices relevant to the self-regulatory part.¹³⁵ Through various research experiments Twenge and Baumeister have demonstrated that self-control can be depleted through use, but that positive emotions and short periods of meditation can offset these so-called

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³⁵ Jean M. Twenge and Roy F. Baumeister, "Self-Control: A Limited Yet Renewable Resource" in *Self and Identity: Personal, Social, and Symbolic*. Yoshihisa Kashima, Margaret Foddy and Michael Platow eds., (Mahway, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2002), (57-70), 67.

“deficits in self-control.”¹³⁶ Furthermore they discovered that self-control, much like muscular strength, can be increased by training and practise.¹³⁷ The fact that each act of self-control causes depletion of the resource forces people to implement their choices through adopting habits rather than by making executive decisions concerning their behaviour at every turn. The authors conclude that human beings have an ability to choose and regulate their behaviour and that this exercise of will includes the ability to resist immediate temptations and control natural impulses in order to achieve desired long-term goals or moral ideals. In addition self-regulation can be significantly aided by the use of external practises.¹³⁸

Returning to the self as the *I/Me* configuration, the self-as-object (*Me*) is not limited strictly to a representation of the discreet individual. The person experiences him or herself interacting with the world outside and with others, and *that* experience is further integrated as part of the self. Psychologist Herbert J.M. Hermans approaches the *I/Me* model as multiple acts of a kind of internal role playing referred to as the dialogical self: “in its most concise form, the dialogical self can be defined as a dynamic multiplicity of *I*-positions in an imaginal landscape.”¹³⁹ The process of self-reflection has been conceived of as a kind of storytelling, in which the *I/Me* relationship between the self-as-subject and the self-as-object is a narrative one. Recapping the consensus of James, Mead and Freud, Hermans explains that,

The uttered pronoun *I* stands for the author, whereas the *Me* represents the actor or narrative figure. In this configuration, moreover, the *I* can imaginatively construct a story with the *Me* as the protagonist. Such a

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Herbert J.M. Hermans, “The Dialogical Self: One Person, Different Stories,” 71.

narrative construction is possible because the self as author can imagine the future and reconstruct the past.¹⁴⁰

From the standpoint of narrative construction, the *I* is able to place the *Me* in various contexts, or places in time and space – what Hermans dubs the *imaginal landscape*. In contrast to Descartes’ sense that the ‘outside world’ is only a probability that must be proved, the lived-self experiences the self, the world and others all at the same time. Hermans concludes that Descartes’ ‘outside world’ is not solely outside the self but, through the processes of the mind, is also within the self. Hermans reiterates Julian Jaynes’ anti-Cartesian view that “[t]he *I* constructs an analogue space and metaphorically sees the *Me* moving in this space.”¹⁴¹ Thus, according to Hermans, Jaynes believes that the activity of narrating goes far beyond story-telling. “In Jaynes’ view,” says Hermans, “the conscious mind and the self, in particular, are a spatial analogue of the world, and mental acts are analogues of bodily acts. The self functions as a space where the *I* observes the *Me*, and orders the movements of the *Me* in a story-like fashion.”¹⁴² The term *imaginal space* is used to describe the mentally constructed space which includes the experiencing subject, the experienced object and the field of experience. This *imaginal space* is not the same as imaginary space or inner space, but rather the holistic space that we experience as we move through the world and think in the world and, as such, it “transcends the simple subject-object dichotomy so characteristic of Cartesian thinking.”¹⁴³ Symbolically, therefore, the self-as-object can be represented as the

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 73.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 77.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 77-78.

individual alone (as in a portrait for example), and as the individual in the extended realm of his/her imaginal space. Both are valid representations of the self.

To summarize this extended detour into the psychological functioning of the self we can state that modern theory understands the self as having distinct parts with separate functions: awareness, regulation and execution with the mind as a symbol processor. Behaviour is shaped by a mechanism for self-regulation that works by comparing the present self with models or an ideal-self. But self-control is limited and in need of regular replenishment, which can be aided by the implementation of pre-selected habits and meditation, and can be strengthened through regular exercise. The self reflects upon itself by the division and interaction of the *I* who observes the *Me*. The *I* is associated with individual identity and functions as the self-as-subject, whereas the *Me* is associated with group identity and functions as the self-as-object. The self-as-object is further conceived symbolically as a visual representation or story (among other possibilities), and this symbolic conception is experiential and spatial in nature, as it includes the mental view of the self in action with its environment and others in the imaginal space.

Returning to the female manuscript-owner portrait in the Book of Hours, these post-Cartesian theories of the self shed light on the pre-Cartesian relationship between the manuscript owner and her representative double in the book. I will now consider that relationship in terms of *I/Me*, the function of models and the ideal-self, of external aids to self-regulation, and the extended version of the self-as-object which includes the imaginal space.

The self-as-subject *I*, associated with the individual, corresponds to the real-life devotional practitioner who is enacting a private and personal relationship with the divine

figures to whom she prays. As the book owner, she is cast in the position of narrator constructing an identity through her manipulation of the words and pictures about herself-as-object which interacts with the other characters in various settings and stories. As the reader/viewer she observes herself as the *Me* character. The reader's position of self-as-subject would encourage her to identify with the manuscript-owner figure because of the personal tone of the psalms used in the book, and the first person address in the vernacular prayers. Other techniques of address could further enhance the *I*-position. In the Neville of Hornby Hours, for example, the Passion cycle is recounted in the first person vernacular, heightening the emotional impact by situating the reader in the events of the story as she views the images.¹⁴⁴

The self-as-object *Me*, associated with the group, corresponds to the owner figure symbolized as a drawn and painted character in the Book of Hours, both as a character among characters in the book and within her social reality as a member of a class of literate noble laywomen who practised such devotions. She might identify herself more broadly with all spiritual-seeking Christian women, including enclosed anchoresses and cloistered nuns. The rigidity and conventionality of the female manuscript-owner figure in its ritualistic pose allows for this broad group identity, as it identifies a field of action that is strictly devotional, since the figure is never pictured engaged in any other activities that laywomen would have performed. Rather, the kneeling prayer pose is representative of a highly focused practise involving the entire being – body, mind and spirit. We know from the text of the *Ancrene Wisse* that the devotee was required to perform particular bodily movements or positions in concert with particular prayers, or with specific words

¹⁴⁴ Kathryn A. Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion*, 85.

in the prayers. As with Julian Jaynes' notion that mental acts are analogues of bodily acts, the praying devotional *Me* figure was a symbolic agent in the woman's efforts at bodily self-control during these sessions.

Naughton has shown that the manuscript-owner portrait modelled an ideal affect to the owner in the act of devotional prayer. Regarding the theoretical mechanism of self-regulation, it would seem that there are two possible types of modelling going on in the Book of Hours: that of the external model and that of the ideal-self. External modelling on a personal basis would be created by the juxtaposition of the owner figure with characters such as the Virgin or female saints. This would encourage the owner to identify with the characters and try to emulate their virtues. In scenes with more narrative content, the emphasis would be on the owner figure's witnessing to events like the Adoration of the Magi, the Crucifixion or the Resurrection. It is difficult to argue that shaping emotional response was the goal in these cases, as Naughton suggests, as the owner's affect is the same throughout the book – rigid and absorbed. Modelling based on the owner's ideal-self image would depend on the discrepancy theory by which the owner compares herself with the devotional figure in the book who is praying, gaining access to the divine characters and having visions. In this way the illuminations would model her desired self and outcome of achieving behavioural goals and spiritual aspirations.

If the work of shaping and regulating the self was demanding, with its examinations of conscience and self-denial, then the use of the Book of Hours in daily and hourly rounds of prayer may have functioned as a significant aid. Following Twenge and Baumeister's concept that the self is prone to ego-depletion in the exercise of volition, that self-regulation is a limited yet renewable resource, yet essential in that self-

control aids in the conformation of behaviour to achieve long-term goals formed by moral ideas, it would seem that external aids would be desirable in a program of self-improvement. Since self-control is strengthened by practise, praying the hours at regular intervals through the day, with the book's images providing a positive reinforcement of the ideal-self as close to God and as succeeding against sin (undesirable behaviour) would have kept the devotee on track with their devotional program. With practise they could be more proficient in their ability to self-regulate and the meditational aspect would restore their willpower more quickly after it had been tested and strengthen it for future trials with the goal of constructing an identity in line with their moral values. Thus recent psychological theory confirms what medieval Books of Hours provided – the power of the repetitive nature of the prayers and practises.

In keeping with the concept of the imaginal space, as the self's symbolization is extended to include the experienced world and others, the actual book owner is represented primarily, but not exclusively by the portrait, so that the entire book with all of its images, settings, and stories, and with all of its textual content represents the manuscript owner's inner reality in her devotional aspirations. This is because the imaginal space includes the reality of the self, its actions, ideals and the 'outside' world combined. As Hermans explains, "imaginal space is not simply 'internal,' because the experiencing subject and the experienced object (out there) are both functioning in a spatial field of which they are constituting parts."¹⁴⁵ The images and related practises in the Book of Hours presented the devotee with an arena of imaginal space by representing places, events and figures to which the manuscript-owner figure related. The owner

¹⁴⁵ Herbert J.M. Hermans, "The Dialogical Self, One Person Different Stories," 78.

figure represented the owner in such a way that, while performing the devotions, she might mentally project herself onto its form within this imaginal field of experience. In this way the devotee and her interior reality together represent her imaginal space in the Book of Hours. This will be addressed at greater length in the next chapter of this thesis.

In this chapter I focused exclusively on the female manuscript-owner figure, temporarily separating it from other visual elements within the book's illuminations in order to think about its identity, relation to the book owner and classification as a portrait. Using examples from the Walters Art Museum manuscript collection and from among well-known manuscripts in the relevant literature, I established the defining characteristics of the manuscript-owner portraits and explored some first impressions about them. I considered the manuscript-owner figure in the context of late medieval portrait representations and in the context of the developing awareness of the self since the twelfth century. Particularly relevant were the changes in religious practise which emerged with the heightening of self-awareness. While the kneeling prayer position of the owner figure invoked personal relations to divinity based on medieval feudal models, I discussed how recent psychological theories of the construction of self illuminated the function of the owner figure as an externalized narrated self within the imaginal space of the Book of Hours through its devotional practise.

As such, the book and the female manuscript-owner figure reflect the period's preoccupation, particularly among laywomen, with the examination of conscience and the new sense of personal responsibility for sin through the role of intention. The owner figure's presence in the Book of Hours encouraged the owner's growth toward an ideal of

perfection in conformity with an identity based on models with group values. The presence of the owner figure further embodies a more personal approach to devotion to Christ and the Christian narrative, through its efforts to link the individual with the narrative. The manuscript-owner figure aided the Christian laywoman by providing images to think with, in the tradition of monastic meditation. Finally, the self-reflexive nature of the figure was part of a total strategy (conscious or not) provided through the Book of Hours which assisted the devotee in self-awareness and self-regulation. This understanding of the identity of the owner figure lays the ground for an exploration of how the female manuscript-owner figure interacts with other elements in the Book of Hours and how it functions within the book's images as a projected self.

Chapter 2 - The Setting: Time, Narrative, and Performance

In the previous chapter, the female manuscript-owner figure was considered apart from the book's setting in order to define its individual character and its intrinsic relationship to the lay book owner. Now I will widen the investigation to include the figure in relation to its setting, and to focus my view on the manuscript owner as a female reader/viewer, because different connotations and meanings are generated depending on the sex of the manuscript-owner figure. In chapter one, the concept of the imaginal landscape was defined as the total experience of self, world and others in various contexts or places in time, space and memory as mediated through narrative in relation to the self-as-object *Me*. I will argue that, according to this concept all the figures, symbols, places and stories and implied relationships in the Book of Hours, in addition to the devotional portrait itself, comprise an alternate space, representative of the lady's inner devotional reality, and as such the imaginal landscape contributes to the symbolic representation of the manuscript owner's identity. As will be elaborated upon in the next chapter, this alternate space was an outlet for the laywoman's spiritual aspirations (as, in real life, her field of action was highly circumscribed). This rich alternate space, an inner landscape in which the portrait was located as the laywoman's agent, was activated by her devotional practise as she performed the text of the Book of Hours, aloud and alone, while contemplating its images. As an alternate space, the Book of Hours was a medium in which time and narrative were at work, time being represented spatially and narrative as the tool of both history and the subject self's construction of identity.

In this chapter I will explore how the meaning of the female manuscript-owner figure was affected by its placement in the Book of Hours; both the placement within the

illumination and folio design, as well as the positioning of the image within the book's textual and pictorial program. I will consider the ways in which time, narrative and the owner's performance of the texts and interaction with the images combined to form the Book of Hours as an imaginal space of simulacral experience for the lady, through her identification with her owner figure as a projected ideal-self. Whether manuscript-owner portraits are understood as representative of actual visionary experience or as expressions of the desire for religious visions, as contemplative or vicarious images they elicited an empathic response leading to devotion.

As noted by Joan Naughton, the positioning of illuminations in Books of Hours has a tabbing function which orients the user to the first page of each Office and each Hour.¹⁴⁶ Female manuscript-owner portraits often appear on the opening folios of Offices, presumably to implicate the praying user from the outset and to encourage her emotional participation, but such portraits were also placed at other Hours in the middle of the daily devotions.¹⁴⁷ There are two main types of devotional images which, as discerned by Hans Belting, either "opened a private dialogue or made visible past events from the story of salvation."¹⁴⁸ Within the Book of Hours, the placement of the female manuscript-owner portrait provided the owner with simulacra of the central events of Christian narrative and simulated encounters with divine personages and objects, especially the Virgin and Child. The manuscript-owner portrait's presence invited the owner's involvement with the images on a personal level either as participant or as

¹⁴⁶ Joan Naughton, "A Minimally Intrusive Presence," 112.

¹⁴⁷ It is not clear why portraits should appear at Hours other than the opening ones, but it seems likely that it may indicate that the book owner had need or desire of a virtue or theme that was associated with that specific Hour, as certain themes were associated with each of the Five Joys. The modern Rosary similarly has virtues to be prayed for, attached to each decade.

¹⁴⁸ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*. Edmund Jephcott, transl., (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 412.

witness using contemplative and narrative scenes in different ways. The contemplative scenes represent a private encounter and dialogue, usually with the Virgin, which is inclusive of the female manuscript-owner figure who participates directly in a present-time mystical event. The narrative scenes exclude the owner figure, which is separated from the scene by a framing device, observing a historical event of salvation as a private witness. It could also be that the depiction of divine personages in these images is meant to represent the lady's prayer content or thought content, like a modern cartoon thought-bubble.

In the case of contemplative scenes, it has been noted that the female manuscript-owner portrait is often placed at scenes involving the Virgin. These include: Adoration of the Virgin and Child coming just before Matins, and the Annunciation at Matins of the Hours of the Virgin; the accessory prayers *Obsecro te*, which beseeches the Virgin for her help and protection, and *O Intemerata*, which implores the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist for spiritual and physical health; the Five Joys (or Fifteen for continental Books of Hours) of the Virgin; and the Litany of the Virgin. Joan Naughton has described the role of the manuscript-owner portrait in the Book of Hours as mainly affective in these non-narrative images.¹⁴⁹ That is to say, it is placed at contemplative non-narrative images in order to model the desired affective response for the real-life praying book-owner. According to Naughton, these illustrations are “both a means to devotion and the visualisation of its result,”¹⁵⁰ since they influence the viewer's emotional state, direct her attention to the Virgin and depict the resulting intimate encounter. At the same time however, even in the small sampling of manuscripts that form this study, the

¹⁴⁹ Joan Naughton, “A Minimally Intrusive Presence,” 113.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

owner figure is often found at narrative scenes such as the Annunciation, Adoration of the Magi, Crucifixion and Resurrection. In these instances, it is not that the owner figure is placed in contemplative scenes, but rather that its presence in the image brings about a contemplative mode by signalling a slowdown in the visual action and by working as a cue that this scene is to be pondered and digested more slowly. The presence of the owner figure connects the owner to the image with a unique immediacy.

Mary C. Olson's analysis of the graphic representation of time and space on the manuscript page reveals that the changes in script size and the individualized layout of medieval folios result in a variable reading effect where "the rhythm and tempo of leaf flow depend on the nature of the visual, mental, and emotional engagement with the graphai."¹⁵¹ Complex arrangements of image and text, therefore, demand visual processing at varying speeds as the viewer/reader lingers over some elements and absorbs others more quickly. In accordance with this phenomenon, we can expect that the book owner experienced a subjective encounter and recognition of her self-as-object in the scene through her emotional engagement with the portrait figure. At the same time, the figure's presence would necessitate a slowing in the momentum of the owner's reading/viewing pace to absorb this encounter. In experiencing herself as imaginatively there, the folio's design and imagery encouraged her to pause and fully absorb the experience vicariously. The presence of the owner figure undoubtedly modelled affect to the book owner; it also had a powerful effect on her viewing of both types of images, contemplative and narrative.

¹⁵¹ Mary C. Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms: Visual Textuality in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts*. (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 60.

Even the most static of images of the devotee venerating the Virgin and Child take on a narrative cast through anecdotal interaction with the manuscript-owner figure. For example, in the image of a nun and lady kneeling before the Virgin and Child in Walters Ms 98 (figure 2), there is little narrative action but a conversational anecdote between the characters is substituted for action. The private meeting between devotee and divine becomes the story, while the accompanying text acts as the dialogue for the encounter. The Matins text in the Hours of the Virgin, in Walters Ms. 98 (figure 2) at which the nun and the lady are depicted, consists of standard psalms, a hymn and Hebrew Bible Lessons, and ends with a versicle asking the Virgin to “pray for the people, be a mean for the clergy, make intercession for the devout feminine sex.”¹⁵² The text uses the standard format of response and versicle like that of the Divine Office and the prayer has an intercessory function, in which the devotee alternately praises and requests favours. Representations of the female manuscript owner placed in such non-narrative images, typically featuring a core composition of the lady kneeling before the Virgin, were accompanied by prayers addressed in the first person indicating an interpersonal dialogue between the lady and the Virgin. The personal tone is heightened in some manuscripts, through use of the owner’s native vernacular for prayers like the Fifteen Joys, as in Walters Mss. 262, 269, 222, and 241 (figures 14, 16, 17, and 18 respectively) from the fifteenth century. The private dialogue of the performed prayer is the textual basis for such scenes where the manuscript-owner figure kneels before the Virgin.

In narrative scenes, the second category of images identified by Belting, the presence of the owner figure lends a visionary quality, reducing the sense of action and

¹⁵² *Ora pro populo, intervene pro clerc, intercede pro devote foemineo sexu.* D.M. Rogers, “The Primer, or Office of the Blessed Virgin Marie, in Latin and English, 1599.”

increasing the contemplative aspect, so that the manuscript-owner figure is depicted as if beholding a tableau. The Coronation of the Virgin in the de Lisle Hours (figure 9), for example, places the owner figure in the central of three gothic arches, the columns of which form the supports of an upper register where Christ and Mary sit upon cushions. The separation of space into cosmic and earthly zones is commonly seen in medieval manuscripts, where Christ may appear in a *mandorla* or God in his heaven framed with curly cloud edges. This mode of representation is a function of the medieval understanding of time, which in the visual dimension can only be represented spatially.¹⁵³ Late medieval thinkers considered time and eternity to be essentially different; God thought to exist outside of time in eternity and humankind living within time's power, yet God having the ability to break through into human time.¹⁵⁴

In the de Lisle Coronation of the Virgin (figure 9), the separation of the sacred characters from the manuscript-owner figure by means of the gothic arches conveys the conception of sacred time as a separate and eternal reality existing outside of natural time, yet understood as a historical event. The devoutly kneeling lady remains within the historiated initial, signalling that her devotion has drawn her up out of the mundane world into a more spiritual sphere. The action of the Coronation scene is stilled into a mystical moment as the lady, not directly involved, regards above her a vision of the imagined past event. Thus in narrative scenes the presence and gaze of the manuscript-owner figure suspends natural time, while in contemplative scenes the anecdotal dialogue implied by her presence generates narrative action. While the size and placement of the owner-

¹⁵³ Mary C. Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 100.

¹⁵⁴ John D. North, *Time and the Scholastic Universe*. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2003), 9-17.

figure may be minimally intrusive, the effect of its presence in the book is not minimal but suggestively and subjectively powerful.

The compositional placement of the female manuscript-owner figure and the other characters in the book suggests various things about the nature of the devotional relationship. Most of the images containing an owner figure have some kind of vision-like quality; the contemplative images, which indicate at their core a private encounter between the lady and the Virgin, tend to diagram the nature of this relationship through composition and body language. In the case of the mid-thirteenth century Walters Ms. 98 (figure 2), the relationship between the figures is hieratic, with the Virgin drawn larger than the manuscript-owner figure who appears awe-struck by the Virgin's presence, and whose body language is submissive and pleading. The intimacy of the encounter is indicated by all the figures sharing the space inside the historiated initial. In the later manuscript examples, the setting of the historiated initial is abandoned for a more realistic spatial enclosure like a fenced garden or a screened chapel interior which is less confining and allows the illuminator room for the development of more extensive symbolism (figures 14, 16, 17 and 18). The nature of the intimate encounter also changes in these later manuscripts. Although the devoted lady is still kneeling and respectful, she now seems warmly welcomed into the group. In these images the intimacy between the figures is depicted by physical closeness and the overlapping of outlines, by the direction of gazes and in some cases, even by touch; the physical proximity represents the worshipper's level of access to the divine. Kathryn A. Smith identifies a number of aspects of book design in the Neville of Hornby Hours that promote an intimate religious experience where text and image are arranged to encourage the greatest possible

emotional identification for the reader.¹⁵⁵ In Books of Hours, the female manuscript owner's portrait is positioned in close proximity to the divine figures denoting spiritual intimacy.¹⁵⁶ The female manuscript-owner portrait, in general, functions as an empathetic cue which visually constitutes the book owner within the sacred scenes. In doing so it personalizes the text and locates her in proximity to the divine personages.

In the example of Walters Ms. 262 folio 135r (figure 14), the anecdotal quality of the meeting is heightened by the gesture of Saint John the Baptist who lays one hand on the lady's shoulder while holding out a lamb to the infant Christ who touches its muzzle. From his place on the Virgin's knee, Christ reaches out his other hand to touch the lady's fingertips. The respectful lady is kneeling very close to the Virgin and Child and her proximity and placid body language convey a feeling not of awe or fear, but of filial love and comfortable intimacy. In addition to this circuit of touch, a network of gazes is created in which all eyes converge on Christ. He looks up at the lamb while the Virgin, John the Baptist and the lady look back to him. These multiple gazes and tactile interactions support the anecdotal subject matter by heightening the sense of intimacy between the figures. The position and attitude of the female manuscript-owner portrait in the images communicate the nature of the owner's relationship to divine personages, inviting the book owner to consider herself as having access to them.

The private encounter between the female manuscript-owner figure and the divine in the Book of Hours is alternately imaged as a miraculous experience of a material object, such as a crucifix or statue, as illustrated by folio 232v in the Psalter-Hours of

¹⁵⁵ Kathryn A. Smith, "The Neville of Homby Hours and the Design of Literate Devotion." *The Art Bulletin*, 81, no. 1, (1999), 82.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

Yolande of Soissons (figure 6) and by folio 15 of Walters Ms. 289 (figure 13). In these fourteenth and fifteenth-century miniatures each of the praying ladies beholds a religious statue. In the case of Yolande of Soissons (figure 6), the architectural framework surrounding the luxurious full-page miniature indicates a chapel interior, where Yolande kneels before a small statue of the Virgin and Child placed high on a draped altar. Yolande is praying to the statue which is depicted as coming alive, with the Christ Child reaching out a hand to bless her. This image of a miraculous statue coming to life is part of a long-standing Christian tradition of praying with, to, or through images, and demonstrates the belief that the supernatural could animate the natural. The emotional power of a picture or statue, especially when used in a religious or ritual context, can be so great that in the eyes of believers they “not only represent but actually *become* the object represented.”¹⁵⁷ The image of the Virgin responding to a faithful woman’s prayer with such a miraculous manifestation from the divine realm exemplified the event as a potential result of intensely practised devotions, reassuring the viewer that her prayers are indeed heard and therefore motivating the viewer to persevere in her program.

Images or sculptures used for meditation, such as those featured in the Book of Hours, aroused religious feeling and functioned as a symbolic tool used to achieve a meditative focus on something tangible; a devotional springboard from which the practitioner could launch his or her soul’s ascent upward to God. Beyond this, as David Freedberg has pointed out, according to the philosophy of the Franciscan, St. Bonaventure, the soul is actually in contact with the divine in the moment of seeing the sacred image because “[w]e are with God the moment we see his exemplifications; and

¹⁵⁷ Mary C. Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 15-16.

these are not just traces of him, *vestigia*; they are *simulacra* – divinely given signs.”¹⁵⁸

This suggests that a religious image was more than a symbol of something divine, but was held as actually supernaturally empowered by the divinity it represented. Religious simulacra were accordingly treated as if they were equivalent to the real thing, and this was encouraged through devotional practises and personal performance.¹⁵⁹ Legends of miraculous images and statues were popular in the thirteenth century, pointing to the suggestive power of the beholder’s meditation. As Freedberg comments, “it is plain that experience of the miraculous event proceeds directly from the pious attentiveness of the contemplative beholder to the image,”¹⁶⁰ its dynamism originating in the intimacy of the experience of the viewer.

In Walters Ms. 289, folio 15 (figure 13), the scene is split in two by a fine column that divides the space into, on the right, a dark chapel interior with receding perspective in which a lady stands in profile, and on the left a brightly lit apse with three statues of the Crucifixion on a draped altar. The two halves of the picture have conflicting perspectives, with the apse positioned frontally and the right hand side at a sharp angle to the apse, yet even though from her vantage point she would not be able to see it, it is intuitive that the sculptural group upon the altar is the object of the lady’s attention. The apse is shown frontally so that the book owner may contemplate it as her immediate vision. The Crucifixion group, a sculptural interpretation of a past event from the story of salvation, comes to life as indicated by Christ’s blood which runs down the base of the cross to pool on the brilliant whiteness of the altar cloth, visibly soaking it a dark red.

¹⁵⁸ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 166.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 177-178.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

Unlike the Crucifixion scene in folio 32 in Walters Ms. 85 (figure 7), in which the pious lady's imagination has the power to bring the past into the present within the historiated initial, in the Walters Ms 289 (figure 13), the woman's piety prompts a living bleeding vision from church statuary to which she responds with surprise. Kathryn A. Smith has noted that women owners of religious manuscripts cherished images of Marian miracles throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and that these pictures often involved miraculous statuary of the Virgin and Child, or of the Crucifixion with the Virgin and St. John. The legend of Theophilus, in which a statue of the Virgin comes to life to redeem the repentant priest who has sold his soul to the Devil, was especially popular and was included in several manuscripts of the period.¹⁶¹ These examples demonstrate the importance devotional practitioners placed on mystic vision and the personal nature of their relationship with the divine, which they believed could be cultivated through material objects as a starting point. The female manuscript-owner portrait's interaction with the characters in these scenes defines her religious identity through the emulation of visions and miraculous statuary.

Scenes in which the female manuscript-owner portrait appears have a powerful visionary quality about them, as the kneeling figure beholds Marian apparitions, miraculous statues, or scenes of the Infancy or Passion. This preoccupation with visions reflects the value placed on mystic visions, which were admired and actively sought at the time. "Visionary experience," explains Jeffrey Hamburger, "once restricted to an exalted elite, became a commonplace aspiration," one that was inherited by the laity, especially

¹⁶¹ Kathryn A. Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion*, 223.

evident in the Book of Hours.¹⁶² The laity may have aspired to visions but could not realistically devote the required time or the level of withdrawal from the world necessary to reach the true mystic stages of contemplation, so practises such as praying with the Book of Hours allowed them at least a closely simulated version of the experience.

The placement of the manuscript-owner figure at scenes of the Christian narrative further suggests a witnessing aspect, offering a visual parallel to the medieval devotional manuals in which people were encouraged to picture themselves present at the events of salvation history mentally and to become emotionally immersed in them.¹⁶³ The representation of these past events creates simulacra of the time and place of the Holy Land for the pious lady's gaze and contemplation with each image being part of a progressive episode in the story. The female manuscript-owner figure is excluded from the direct action of the scene, instead observing past historical events as reconstituted in the present. By means of her identification with the manuscript-owner figure, the lady inserts herself into sacred time, while remaining compositionally detached and outside the story that privileges her as viewer. The female manuscript-owner figure's gaze is imbued with potency making her act of witnessing as much the subject of the narrative image as the sacred scene itself. By extension, the laywoman book owner is identified as a witness – an important role in Christian culture. In Walters Ms 88, folio 100v (figure 8), from within a large letter “D” a somewhat clumsily drawn Christ emerges from the tomb glancing backward at the manuscript-owner figure, bestowing a blessing on her as she kneels just outside the vertical base of the letter. This casts the owner figure in the role of Mary Magdalene, the first of Christ's followers to see him resurrected.

¹⁶² Jeffrey Hamburger, “The Visual and the Visionary,” 148.

¹⁶³ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 171.

In the Book of Hours, as in many other medieval texts, time is assumed to have a flexibility which is used creatively to orient the devotee to the contemplation of different moments in time. The manuscript-owner portrait functions as a vehicle for the pious lady's entry into this multivalent sacred time of the book. Olson describes the medieval Christian model of time as consisting of overlapping systems. It is linear in the long-term sense of the creation having a definite beginning and end, with the redemptive act occurring only once. The cyclical aspect of time, she explains, is expressed in the celebrations of the liturgical calendar, in which the events of salvation history recur. Paradoxically, these are commemorated as past events, yet the church "lives them as for the first time."¹⁶⁴ In the medieval notion of allegorical time applied in exegesis, events in different time periods are linked by virtue of their eschatological meaning. That is, "[t]he meaning event which takes place in the time of the Hebrew scriptures foreshadows the same meaning-event in the New Testament, recurs in the life of the reader, and again in the end times," so that time is warped by eternity as Christ in the Incarnation breaks through natural human time, affecting everything before and after.¹⁶⁵ As the historian of religion, Mircea Eliade has theorized, in this belief system the linear flow of profane time is experienced as ruptured by the Incarnation of Christ, whose historical person "has become mythological and is therefore able to recur in profane time "as if for the first time every time."¹⁶⁶ While situating the owner vicariously in the scene, just as the contemplative images do, inviting her to identify and project her mental energies into the scene via its presence, the placement of the owner figure in the narrative compositions

¹⁶⁴ Mary C. Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 55.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

affects the owner's experience by positioning her as a witness to events which present themselves as windows on the past; events accessible to her through the power of sacred time over profane time, appearing as simulacra of the real events of her faith history.

Female manuscript-owner portraits in early Books of Hours are often located compositionally at historiated initials, either outside looking in or placed within them. When the owner figure is positioned in or at the initial letter of the canonical hour, it implicates her as the initiator of the cycle or prayer. This originating moment of the prayer in the mouth of the devotee is strongly communicated in some of the examples of manuscript illuminations and seems to have been given deliberate prominence in the layout. On folio 64 of the de Brailes Hours (figure 1), the page layout is incredibly simple with only a figure in a letter, a page of text from one of the gradual psalms and no scene at all. Yet here the generative power of the kneeling patron's prayer is strikingly depicted. Her raised hands and upward tilting head set the composition in motion, with the energy of her gesture travelling through the tail of the letter "G", circling around her to spin off into the first line of text. The bodily act and the verbal act of the lady's performance are harmonized with the symbolic representation of the initial letter.

A similar effect is achieved in the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux where Jeanne is kneeling inside the letter "D" (figure 10). Jeanne does not gaze heavenward but looks down, engrossed in the pages of her own book. The letter "D" of the first word she prays aloud from the Invitatory, "Lord open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise,"¹⁶⁷ not only initiates the sentence but compositionally generates the action of the entire upper half of the page, as from out of the letter's upward thrust the angel Gabriel

¹⁶⁷ *Domine labia mea aperies et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam.*

springs full of intentional motion towards the Virgin. Both of these layouts represent the lady as the generator of the images and words, corresponding to the real-life lady whose voice and mind make mental images of the prayers. Furthermore, they represent the woman's potency in performing of the text and as such, they activate and constitute the sacred present of the book.

A variant of the generative power of the word is seen in other illuminations in which the lady is positioned outside the confines of the large initial letter, gazing in contemplation upon the scene her words are creating. In the tiny Walters Ms 85, on folio 32 (figure 7) the devout lady holding her book perches outside of the large initial, while the letter's interior is filled by the scene of Crucifixion. Likewise in folio 46v of the St. Omer Hours (figure 5), the lady's book droops a little as she gazes self-forgetfully on the scene of the Adoration of the Magi. The enclosure of these scenes within the historiated initial lends to them a visionary quality, as if they were a mystic 'showing' appearing for the lady's spiritual edification. In both of these manuscripts, the praying female figure ignores or is oblivious to the antics of the marginal figures who romp or play games.

In these two examples, the placement of the owner figure at the beginning of the prayer and the symbolic representation of her generation of the prayer invoked by the layouts underscores the centrality of the laywoman's verbal performance of the text which activated the words as a speech-act. The concept of the speech-act was an important phenomenon in medieval culture and its assumption can readily be seen in vows, verbal contracts and sacramental or feudal pronouncements. The devotee's sincere intention was linked with her bodily and verbal actions in the performance of the prayer. According to modern speech-act theory, language has performative as well as descriptive

powers. It is in the saying of the words that they constitute themselves as actuality.¹⁶⁸

The power of the speech-act depends upon certain conditions being met which include sincerity of intention, completion of the speech, following of conventions, and the involvement of appropriate participants. The devotional practise, as described later in this chapter matches all of these requirements and adds to them a regimen of performed bodily actions. In the Book of Hours, the opening lines of the accessory prayer *Obsecro te* provide an example of a speech-act. The lady begins the prayer with

I beseech thee O Holy Lady Mary, [this invocation is followed by a very long list of praises constituting Mary's virtues] come with the Saints and elect of God and hasten unto my help, and my counsel in all my prayers, and petitions, in all my distresses and necessities. As also in all those things, wherein I am to do anything, speak, or think, all the days and nights, hours and moments of my life.¹⁶⁹

The *Obsecro te* includes every bodily and spiritual request a medieval Christian could ask of the Virgin, ending with a plea for intercession and mercy, with its opening words, *I beseech thee*, constituting a speech-act in which form and content are equally potent.

Following the same structure as the Divine Office, the Hours of the Virgin is rich in speech-acts through the use of psalms, which set a precedent for the speech-act, when they invoke the generative power of God's word. At Vespers in the Hours of the Virgin the book owner would read in Psalm 147, "He sends out his word to the earth and swiftly runs his command. The waters are frozen at his touch; he sends forth his word and it melts them."¹⁷⁰ In Psalm 145 (in the Divine Office) God is characterized as "faithful in

¹⁶⁸ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/speech-acts/>

¹⁶⁹ *Obsecro te*, D.M. Rogers, "The Primer, or Office of the Blessed Virgin Marie, in Latin and English, 1599."

¹⁷⁰ Vespers, Hours of the Virgin. Psalm 147 quoted from the Divine Office, (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1976), 984.

all his words,”¹⁷¹ while in Genesis, God begins the creation by a speech-act, proclaiming, “Let there be light.”¹⁷² The speech-act is prominent in prayer and is linked to godliness by these representations of a God whose very words cause things to occur in the material world, and the Book of Hours follows this tradition.

There is one manuscript example that appears to be something of a hybrid, as it includes elements and aspects of both contemplative and narrative categories. This is the Buves Hours, Walters Ms. 267, folios 13v and 14 (figure 15) – a two-page spread with the angel Gabriel and the lady on the left folio and the Virgin Annunciate on the right. This scene brings the figures together in a rationalized space in which the perspective of the architectural interior in the two separate images is linked by logic of the spatial extension of the ceiling vault ribs. It is a narrative scene because it depicts the Annunciation episode, but it is inclusive and participatory like the contemplative scenes with the full integration of the owner figure into the story, positioned as she is between the angel Gabriel, who, in the role of a patron saint, presents her, and the Virgin. This central position implicates the owner figure’s spirituality as Incarnational as she mirrors the action of the Virgin, becoming a reflection of the Virgin by association. Just as the Virgin has, through the study of the word indicated by the open book at her altar, become pure enough to receive the living flesh of Christ within her, indicated by the tiny dove winging its way from heaven, so the female manuscript-owner figure achieves purity of heart and receives Christ through the text from which she prays.

¹⁷¹ *The Divine Office*, 985.

¹⁷² Genesis 1:3. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. New Revised Standard Version with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, Third Edition. Michael D. Coogan, ed., (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11.

Medieval writers were fond of investigating the nature of history, notes Jeffrey J. Cohen, which they defined as “the transformation of time into narrative.”¹⁷³ Medieval narrative assumes a certain flexibility in the functioning of time and space, often disregarding chronological sequencing and combining disparate elements to achieve the desired literary or religious impact. This quality of medieval narrative to bend time and space is evident in illuminations of the Book of Hours where the kneeling lady peers into scenes of salvation history set within large initial letters. The presence of a female manuscript-owner figure in the Book of Hours implicates the book owner in the narrative. A scene may be narrative or contemplative in type, but the owner figure facilitates the living book owner as the narrator (*I*) telling the story of the self-as-object interloper who envisions, witnesses or encounters the sacred figures and events. Through the owner figure, the narrative of the Book of Hours takes on a highly personalized tone and becomes a story in which the individual particular Christian is the protagonist.

The narrative aspect of the Book of Hours illuminations is the equivalent of the monastic devotional method of thinking with pictures, and the involvement of the manuscript-owner figure parallels the practise of projecting the self into sacred scenes in order to arouse an empathic response and lift the soul toward God. In this method, mental images were crafted as “the devices and machines” of religious cogitation.¹⁷⁴ The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, transmitted primarily through the Canons and Friars of the thirteenth century, was adapted from oratorical to devotional purposes setting forth a system for recollecting and recombining things in order to think about them and speak

¹⁷³ Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 2.

¹⁷⁴ Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 2.

about them; essentially a memory system called a *machina memorialis*. The adapted monastic version cultivated the use of all the senses in arousing an empathic response on a personal level.¹⁷⁵ In the Book of Hours a comparable devotional attitude was expressed through voice and coordinated movements, bringing the emotions into play through the senses, imagination and body. In Mark Amsler's view, devotional reading practises, which he terms "affective literacy" involved gestures toward the book which were also highly embodied.¹⁷⁶ These gestures represented an attitude in which the practitioner used the book images as substitutes for the things they represented which were made more tangible by illumination. In this sense the inclination or attitude could be described as "a movement of the mind toward something," and because of the medieval definition of a machine as an apparatus with moving parts that moves and lifts things, Carruthers considers the medieval book to be a machine.¹⁷⁷ The Book of Hours, as a machine of contemplation, emulates the monastic model of conjuring up images and contemplating them on a personal level with a view to drawing the soul toward God. In relation to time and narrative, the images bring to mind events of the Christian past, using them as present motivation with which to affect future personal behaviour. For the medieval devotional practitioner, this remembering through images was also "a matter of *will*, of being *moved*, pre-eminently a moral activity rather than what we think of as intellectual or rational."¹⁷⁸ The Book of Hours as a devotional apparatus, then, relied on narrative and through the female manuscript-owner portrait, drew the owner more completely into its stories.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 10.

¹⁷⁶ Mark Amsler, "Affective Literacy: Gestures of Reading in the Later Middle Ages" *Essays in Medieval Studies* 18 (2001), 84.

¹⁷⁷ Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 16-22.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 67.

The images combined with the book's prayers to produce a thought structure whose goal was a devotional one of interiorization, fixing in memory, and the arousal of feelings toward the prime personages of the religion. Devotional empathy was geared to awaken a desire for humility, the examination of conscience, and contrition for sins. The images encouraged this process by their materialization of the Virgin and the suffering Christ as role models. No longer simply words or concepts, narratives were made concrete for the viewer/reader through images. Images of devotees having visions held out the promise of someday reaching the heights of the mystics if only one were holy enough.

Time and narrative also figure prominently in the performance of the Book of Hours. The noble lady's use of the book required a regular routine of returning over and over to the devotion on an on-going daily basis, constituting a sustained practise over time. The devotions are organized around cycles of prayers directed toward the Virgin, the Cross and the Holy Spirit, to name the most common. These prayer cycles are narrative in nature and have a steady progression through the hours of the day, from Matins through Compline. The Hours of the Virgin are made up of two main cycles, the Infancy Cycle and the Passion Cycle. In the Passion Cycle, for example, the narrative begins with the Agony in the Garden at Matins and recounts each episode through to the Deposition at Vespers and the Entombment at Compline, so that the entire story fits neatly into a single day.¹⁷⁹ Through the narrative of these cycles, the rules of time are relaxed and the ancient events made visually accessible; manifested for the benefit of the lady as if she were there in person.

¹⁷⁹ Roger S. Wieck, *Painted Prayers*, 23.

While the purpose of this temporal conjugation is contemplative, the time bending also serves as a simulacral space as a “practise of place” that conjures up the Holy Land which was often inaccessible because of its distance and periodic Muslim occupation.¹⁸⁰ In distinguishing space from place, Michel de Certeau emphasizes the performed or practised aspect as that which constructs space, so that the action of the user is what makes the space real.¹⁸¹ The desire to go to the Holy Land included a desire to practise its place by following in the very steps Christ was believed to have trod in his life and, especially on his way to Calvary. In this practise pilgrims re-enacted and mapped out with their feet the space that witnessed the salvific events of their faith. The Passion Cycle in the Book of Hours allowed the devout lady to engage in an abstract mental version of this practise of place, creating a space redolent with the look and feel of the real experience.

In this sense the Book of Hours was constituted as a space by individuals through performance. For the devotional practitioner, the book was a space in which the events of Christian history were relived on a daily and hourly basis through the canonical hours, a reliving which must have been an intense experience when approached with conviction. A narration’s discourse, writes de Certeau, “is characterized more by way of *exercising itself* than by the thing it indicates, it produces effects, not objects.”¹⁸² When the Book of Hours is seen as a means to an experience (i.e., orthopraxis) and part of a meditational process which functioned more like a medieval machine, then it can be seen less as an object and more as the trace of a method whose power was in its ritualistic performance.

¹⁸⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven Rendall, transl., (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1984), 117.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 79.

The traces of the performance and the experience of the manuscript owner can be sensed in the effects produced by the book's manipulation of time and narrative through visual composition.

From what is known, the Book of Hours was a private devotion, performed alone or in family groups, prayed out loud, and accompanied by gestures. Being said in private by women, often within their chambers or in a chapel, the practise encouraged development of the inner world and shut out the outer world. Being prayed aloud and with ritualized gestures, it encouraged individuation and personal agency in its formulation of a direct relationship with the divine. The laywoman said her hours in private, as we know from the evidence of the bishop of Rochester's eulogy for Lady Cobham's funeral in 1344, wherein he describes her practise of always performing her Hours before leaving her private chambers or speaking with anyone.¹⁸³ The *Ancrene Wisse* also stresses the importance of the Hours being said in private – an easy enough requirement for an anchoress to meet. The Hours of the Virgin, said in solitude, was believed to nurture the devotee's inner prayer life.¹⁸⁴

The praying aloud of the Book of Hours is further implied by the existence of a rubric found in some manuscripts which instructs the reader that the Lord's Prayer is to be said 'secretly', that is, silently. This would strongly support the notion that the rest of the hours were prayed audibly, else why make a point of instructing that a certain prayer be performed silently? This created the effect that the prayers engaged the maximum number of senses; being read with the eyes, spoken with the mouth and heard with the ears, the pages touched with the hands. The *Ancrene Wisse* spends much of its second

¹⁸³ John Higgett, *The Murthly Hours*, 169.

¹⁸⁴ Claire Donovan, *The de Brailles Hours*, 135.

chapter discussing the occupation of these external senses – how they are corrupted and how they are to be purified by engaging them with holy tasks. That the Hours were prayed out loud is supported by the fact that the Divine Office, which was the monastic practise the Hours emulated, was traditionally chanted. Writing of late medieval English literature and its audience, Joyce Coleman stresses the general importance of this culture of reading out loud. Reading was normally a shared group activity in court settings, despite the fact that the elite were highly literate and often even multi-lingual and were able to read silently to themselves if they wished. Writers expected their works to be read in group settings and wrote accordingly with built-in asides and entreaties to the audience for interaction, which the reader then seemed to perform by reading out loud. The reader activated the text in this group-setting and the performance served as a mediating agency through which the works were experienced.¹⁸⁵ Similarly, the laywoman activated the Book of Hours' text through her performance and mediated the text with her body and voice, but remained the sole audience member. This kind of performance would have been a mode that emphasized the individual as reader, listener, viewer and performer.

Performing the Book of Hours out loud would be an individuating experience at a time in history when such a great emphasis was being placed on self-knowledge and taking responsibility for one's sinful intentions. Coleman coins the term "dividual" to describe a new reading experience for medieval people; a term she uses to avoid the prejudice against aurality assumed by most moderns who study medieval modes of reading.¹⁸⁶ A dividual experience would be a private reading experience; one not shared

¹⁸⁵ Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 30.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

in a group setting, which could be a “non-social, individualized and potentially individuating reading experience.”¹⁸⁷ Coleman’s careful distinction between orality and aurality emphasizes for modern readers that silent reading was the exception not the rule and that late medieval texts were meant to be heard. She suggests that even private reading was aural and that this is one of the reasons it was a “dividual” experience; because it was a private experience of one’s own externalizing voice, a closed circuit in which the reader was both performer and audience at once, and in which no outside social pressures could influence or disturb the reception and response between performer and audience. The private nature of this aural and visual rendering and consumption of the book would have provided a sheltered space in which the lady’s subjective response to the text could be free of outside interpretation – a topic for further discussion in chapter three.

In a chapter instructing the anchoresses on their devotions, the *Ancrene Wisse* contains a valuable piece of evidence on how the Hours were prayed. A mind-boggling array of prayers, bodily positions and actions are outlined for the anchoress to perform from rising until she comes to say the Hours, which she begins in the following way:

Then right away say our Lady’s Matins in this way: if it is a workday, fall to the earth; if it is a holy day, bowing somewhat downward, say the *Our Father* and *I believe*, both silently. Stand up then and say *O Lord, open my lips*. Make a cross with the thumb on your mouth; at *O God, come to my help*, a large cross with the thumb and with the two fingers, from above the forehead down to the breast. At *Come Creator Spirit*, bow or kneel according to what sort of day it is. At *Remember, Author of our salvation*, always fall down, and at these words, *Being born, you took our form*, kiss the earth, [etc.]¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁸⁸ Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, transl., *Anchoretic Spirituality*, 54-55.

The performative nature of the anchoress' devotions in her daily routine is described in minute detail for an entire chapter of the *Ancrene Wisse*, underlining the importance placed on using the appropriate gesture for each phrase of the prayer. Mark Amsler has written of such "gestures toward the text" as ways of interacting with it somatically.¹⁸⁹ Amsler refers to performative reading of devotional texts as "affective literacy" in which even reading a text aloud is considered a textual gesture, as is holding the text, leafing through it, interacting with it in any bodily way. Moreover, the anchoress is enjoined to say her Hours "as she has written them out."¹⁹⁰ In the case of the anchoress, the scribal function implied places an even more personal connection between the Hours and the lady's body as she has written them with her own hand, although for laywomen it is more likely that she commissioned manuscripts rather than handwrote them.

The importance placed on bodily movements and gestures in devotional practise is embodied in the rigidity of the manuscript-owner figure's poses in the Book of Hours. The sameness of the owner figure, always kneeling stiffly with palms pressed together, points to the rigidity of the devotional practises as described in the *Ancrene Wisse*, requiring the practitioner to perform specific movements in concert with certain prayers, or with specific words in the prayers. This ritualistic practise, involving the entire being, has a mechanical aspect to it, which Gelfand and Gibson hint at in their description of the way in which the rigid forms of the devotee's gestures repeat their pleas to the Virgin for intercession.¹⁹¹ Like Carruther's concept of the book as a machine, the rigid owner figure acts as a key part of the machine, setting it into motion through the power of her living

¹⁸⁹ Mark Amsler, "Affective Literacy", 84.

¹⁹⁰ Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 55.

¹⁹¹ Laura Gelfand and Walter S. Gibson, "Surrogate Selves", 130.

counterpart's devotion. The Book of Hours can be seen as another medieval identity machine as described by Jeffrey J. Cohen, which becomes a vehicle for spiritual desire lifting the noble laywoman above the confines of female containment. Identity, as Cohen conceives of it, "cannot be considered outside of its constant escape from the limits of corporeal form."¹⁹² Through her strong identification with her ideal-self represented in the female manuscript-owner portrait, the lady escaped from the physical restrictions of her life as a medieval woman into various scenes of contemplation and projected herself into scenes of salvation history. Cohen theorizes identity machines as apparatuses that "convey subjectivity into impassioned and mutually transformative encounters with landscapes and material objects, with texts, and with worlds."¹⁹³ The landscapes, texts and worlds conjured up in the Book of Hours were religious ones represented in words and pictures that created an intensely meaningful alternate space in which the lay woman could vicariously experience the events that might lift her up into a transformative devotional state.

In this chapter I have discussed the relevance of the female manuscript-owner portrait's placement within the book and within the images, with an examination of the role of page layout. The two main categories of images within which the owner figure is placed are the narrative and the contemplative scenes. The presence of the owner figure in narrative scenes has the effect of suspending the action, freezing the scene into a tableau for contemplation. In the contemplative scenes, the interchange implied by the

¹⁹² Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, 33.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 33.

meeting depicted between lady and Virgin creates a narrative anecdote and is supplemented by the first person address in the prayers to the Virgin.

The compositional placement of the manuscript-owner figure also carries with it various meanings. In the contemplative scenes of encounter with the Virgin, the earlier manuscript images often portray the relationship as one of awe, communicated through the difference in scale and in the bodily postures of the figures, as well as through the direction of their gazes. In the images of women witnessing miraculous statues coming to life, the visionary aspect reflects the contemporary interest in mystic visions and the close connection between images and visions, which reinforced one another in religious practise. In the narrative scenes, the witnessing role of the manuscript-owner figure was intended to create a connection to the owner who would identify with her protagonist self. Her personal witness to the scene was meant to arouse an empathic devotional response toward Christ and the Virgin especially. The page layout sometimes situated the owner figure as the generator of the image and the words, as though the meditational images drawn on the manuscript page were crafted by her very thought energy. The layouts and designs reflect the medieval understanding of time in Christian narrative, which is linear in its eschatology, cyclical in its performance and multidirectional in the way it connects past, present and future with the Incarnation.

Time and narrative worked together in the Book of Hours, which functioned like a machine of contemplation to draw the laywoman out of the real world and into a created simulacral space in which she might encounter the divine. The presence of the female manuscript-owner figure in the Book of Hours images provided the added dimension of

encouraging her to identify on a personal level with the narratives and transformed her performance of the book into a performance of self through those narratives.

In the performance of the Book of Hours, the female book owner would have read the prayers aloud to herself and contemplated its images alone in seclusion. Judging by the devotions practised by anchoresses when they prayed the Hours, the noble laywoman's performance would most likely have included many devotional gestures directed toward the text or cued by the text. Her private performance would have given her an opportunity to respond in an individual and subjective way, despite the many social and religious directives associated with the text.

Chapter 3 – The Owner’s Models and Subjective Reading

In chapter one I discussed the female manuscript-owner figure as a projection of the book owner’s inner self; a symbolic representation of the self-as-object; a constructed *Me* imagined by the narrating *I*, whose meaning and devotional identity were shaped in the prayer cycles and images of the Book of Hours. In the wake of the twelfth-century emergence of the new concept of self, recognition of the role played by intention in sin made it important for devout Christians to become adept at examining their consciences. The self-reflexivity of the manuscript-owner figure in the late medieval Book of Hours provided visualized models which the book owner could reflect upon and use to organize her own behaviour. The concept of individuality which took form beginning in the twelfth century was defined by conformation to group ideals, so that mental and behavioural models were central to the shaping of personal identity. Modern psychology supports this connection between the book owner and her figure, through its association of the representational self-as-object with group identity. Literate lay Christian noblewomen were aware of the trends in devotional practise through their contact with other women of the elite classes of Europe, whether married, cloistered, or reclusant. Their shared group identity was shaped by embodied codes of practise that distinguished them as exemplary readers and devotees.

In terms of models, the Book of Hours presents at least two main possibilities for a female reader/viewer: the internal model of the ideal-self represented by the female manuscript-owner figure and the external model of the Virgin as a sacred personage for the owner’s emulation. In chapter two it was shown that the contemplative-type images simulate an encounter of lady and Virgin, and represent a close dialogic relationship

between the two figures that is supported by the accompanying text. The narrative-type images, on the other hand, position the female manuscript-owner figure as a privileged external witness. Both are indicative of the high regard for religious visions. In this chapter I will concentrate on the subjective reading and viewing of these models by the female manuscript owner.

The models available to the female book owner in the Book of Hours that I will focus on are the internal model of the ideal-self and the external model of the Virgin. To begin with the ideal-self, her characteristics would probably have been those of a perfect female devotional practitioner in a perfect medieval world. Considering the modelling in the Book of Hours, the ideal-self would be able to pray her hours at the correct canonical times, devout in word and deed, adept at ritual gestures, aware of the accounts of Christian narrative, gifted with visions, a close associate of the Virgin and under her protection. According to the discrepancy theory in psychology, these qualities of the ideal-self would pose as a standard against which the lady measured herself and her performance. Having such an ideal would give her something to aim for in a clearly visualized symbolic form. Realistically such an ideal of perfection would have been unattainable. The pursuit of it, however, would surely have kept a noblewoman too busy to engage in much sinful activity. The daily and hourly demands of the prayer schedule would have made her aware of the gap between the reality of her own imperfections and her ideal. This would create an internal pressure and the means to shape her toward her models. The imagined rewards of devotional practise were alluring, including not only a clean conscience and a pure heart, but mystic visions and the special status of being among the Virgin's select vassals.

Some of the attributes of the ideal-self represented in the female manuscript-owner figure are depicted in the illuminations in this study. In the panel miniature of the Prayer to the Cross in Walters, Ms. 438, folio 85v (figure 19), a Flemish prayer book from the late fifteenth century, a lady kneels before a crucifix in a chapel interior. With a mastery of form and perspective, the artist has depicted the scene from a high vantage point, on a level with the head of Christ on the cross, looking down into the space. Although her praying hands are pointing to the cross, the rest of the lady is turned awkwardly toward the book viewer, so that her facial expression is clearly seen and the cross is actually behind her left shoulder. The point of view is taken from ceiling height and the lady's upturned face give an impression of how her demeanour would appear to Christ if he were to look down from the cross. Here the woman's devotional act is the subject of the image, modelling an ideal-self by depicting her as a competent performer of the ritual and prayer.

The compositional strategy recalls the design of Walters Ms. 289, folio 15 (figure 13), in which the scene is split in two parts, a side-view of the awe-struck lady and a view of the scene facing her. In this miniature the lady's devotional act is also depicted and she is graced with a visionary ability, witnessing the miraculously bleeding sculpture of Christ. In both of these miniatures, the book viewer becomes the third character of the image, forming a triad of self-as-subject, self-as-object and object of devotion. This is implied by the way the particular elements of what the owner figure is looking at are positioned frontally for the book viewer's gaze. By this strategy the viewer is drawn into the scene and is more likely to experience a strong emotional identification with the female manuscript-owner figure.

Historiated initials with narrative scenes and a female manuscript-owner figure positioned outside gazing in depict an ideal-self who is knowledgeable about Christian lore, recollecting the canonical and ever popular apocryphal stories and contemplating them. Examples of such images include the Adoration of the Magi in the Hours of St. Omer, (figure 5), the Crucifixion (figure 7) and the Resurrection (figure 8). These scenes feature the lady as witness, which also creates a link to the model of the Virgin, who was thought to have been a privileged witness and “a protagonist in the drama of the Incarnation and the Redemption of Christ.”¹⁹⁴ The rigidity of the figure’s unchanging prayer position in the majority of Books of Hours, furthermore, communicates a model with great bodily self-control, who is adept at maintaining the proper position. This conveys a sense of the lady as an ascetic, in control of her outward senses and by implication her inward feelings too. Such a state of self-control is advised and outlined in chapters 2 and 3 of the *Ancrene Wisse*.

The female manuscript-owner figure, as an ideal-self, oriented the lady toward her group-defined mode of spiritual betterment, while the Virgin modelled the accepted Christian virtues to which she aspired as a woman and chaste mother. In the case of the Virgin as a model for the lady, the gap between actuality and ideal was virtually insurmountable, so that the lady was to emulate the Virgin’s ideal but also to realize that it was a perfection beyond her reach. While women in medieval Christian culture were held responsible for the downfall of mankind by association with Eve, the Virgin was elevated as a sinless model of perfection.¹⁹⁵ According to her mythic medieval status,

¹⁹⁴ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), xxiii.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, xxiv.

Mary was a virgin-mother and queen of heaven whose perfect conformity to the will of God reversed the sin of Eve.¹⁹⁶ In spite of this impossible gap, which no real woman could bridge, women were encouraged to take the Virgin as a model of virtue. The most important of her attributes centred on virginity (or chastity where virginity was lost) humility, obedience, silence and interiority. Marina Warner, in her landmark treatise, characterizes the myth of the Virgin Mary as a tool for female subjugation because it demanded that women be extremely submissive in their attempts to follow her example.¹⁹⁷

The qualities of humility and obedience are best symbolized by the Virgin's pose in medieval images of the Annunciation. The scene, illustrated from Luke's Gospel 1:38, represents the Virgin's *Fiat*, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word" often depicted in medieval representations by the crossing of her arms over her breast or by her placement of one hand on the Scriptures. The Virgin's spiritual interiority in the Book of Hours was conveyed by her presence in the scenes of Christian narrative and by the depiction of her studying Scripture. The Gospels hold few direct quotes from Jesus' mother; rather tradition relates that she pondered all she witnessed within her heart.

The primary attribute of the Virgin, her virginity, is symbolized iconographically by the white lilies she holds in Walters Ms. 269 (figure 16), but is formulated compositionally as containment in the Book of Hours. Virginity was prized in the Middle Ages and it was seen not only as the technical intactness of the hymen, but as involving the whole person, which was partly why the anchoress was sealed in to her anchorhold

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 58, 104, 177.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

like a tomb. The perfect virginal state was therefore equated with the enclosure of the entire female body.¹⁹⁸ Virginity, or chastity where physical virginity is no longer possible, was further equated with purity of heart and praised in the *Ancrene Wisse*.¹⁹⁹ The association of containment with virginity pre-existed the Christian west as evidenced by the Hebrew Bible texts selected by the Patristic writers as foreshadowing a virgin-birth, such as the following poetic imagery from the Song of Solomon 4:12, “[a] garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”²⁰⁰ An image of the Virgin Mary enclosed in a garden is common in the Book of Hours, usually placed with the Saturday Mass of the Virgin. In Walters Ms 189, folio 109v (figure 20) from the late fifteenth century, a Virgin lactans is enthroned in a fenced garden, and further contained within a walled enclosure. Her form is contained two-dimensionally by the outline of the draped seat and hanging cloth of honour. The grisaille panel miniature is contained one step further by being inset into a colourful margin of shallow depth with naturalistic flowers and insects, the shallow margin emphasizing the spatial depth of the grisaille. These multiple levels of enclosure symbolically intimate a high level of purity. Compositionally, most illuminations in the Book of Hours in this study symbolize containment with fewer levels. In other examples, containment of the figure is achieved through a simple architectural framework of gothic design, such as that of Yolande of Soissons (figure 6), or placement within a large historiated initial, or by means of separating a smaller area within an interior by use of a screen, as in the Walters Hours of Isabelle de Coucy (figure 12). A throne, a wall or fence, a screen, canopy, or the

¹⁹⁸ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, “Chaste Bodies: frames and experiences,” *Framing Medieval Bodies*. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin, eds., (New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 26.

¹⁹⁹ Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 48.

²⁰⁰ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 62.

delineation of an initial letter – any of these could be used as compositional strategies to demarcate sacred space and to isolate and contain the Virgin visually.

In addition to representing a virginal state, containment as social and religious enclosure was the actual experience of noble laywomen in medieval society, who endured a variety of legal and social restrictions, conditioning them to identify with the contained figure of the Virgin. We may conjecture that this aspect of the Virgin was emphasized because of the social conditions of women. The noblewomen who practised the devotions in the Book of Hours led highly circumscribed lives, as did all high-status medieval women. Whether they were married women living in castles, recluses dwelling in anchorholds, or nuns living in cloistered convents, medieval noblewomen had much in common. Though living in different circumstances, these women were often connected by familial ties.

Noble families did not wish to disperse family assets through inheritance laws, so certain offspring would be provided with livings, land or marriage opportunities while others would choose or be forced into roles in the Church. Sons destined not to inherit would go into the clergy, and daughters would go into convents. In this way, a married laywoman might have one or more biological sisters in a nunnery. Only women from the nobility could be accepted as nuns; lower-class women could only be lay sisters or maidservants, and convents were often closely connected with noble families for generations, sometimes due to a founding family member, and a noble family might maintain ties with and protect an institution on its hereditary lands.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Shulamith Shahar, *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*. Chaya Galai, transl., (London, New York: Methuen, 1983), 39-40.

Consecrated religious women were even more contained than laywomen by their physical consignment to the cloister. Prohibited from engaging in preaching or local missionary work, their energies were suppressed and found other modes of expression, often interior in nature. Women in convents enjoyed a higher status than unmarried, married or widowed women, because of their virginity and vow of chastity. In spite of this, women in convents were prohibited from administering the sacraments, from preaching and from leaving the cloister; they required the services, known as the *cura monialium* (care of women) of male monk-priests to maintain them in that contained and artificially helpless state.²⁰²

Another option for noblewomen was the anchorhold. Complete withdrawal from the world had always been a valid holy way of life since early Christianity's men and women hermits of the desert, but most hermits were traditionally men.²⁰³ In the twelfth century there is abundant evidence of women living as anchorites in Europe. Women embraced this vocation in far greater numbers than men in the later Middle Ages, and England had the largest reclusant female population.²⁰⁴ Anchoresses followed no specific monastic rule, "but their way of life was still hedged around by many customary regulations."²⁰⁵ The *Ancrene Wisse* author counselled that the anchoress should vow obedience, chastity and not to leave the anchorhold "except only in case of need, such as force and fear of death, obedience to her bishop or his superiors," else she would be in

²⁰² Fiona Griffiths, "The Cross and the *Cura monialium*: Robert of Arbrissel, John the Evangelist, and the Pastoral Care of Women in the Age of Reform." *Speculum* 83, no. 2, (2008), 312.

²⁰³ Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, Volume II: From 1000 to the Reformation*. (Ottawa: Novalis, Saint Paul University Press, 2002), 226.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 227.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

mortal sin.²⁰⁶ It was a total containment; a symbolic death to the world, as the anchoress lived out her life virtually cut off from regular society.

Sisters of the same noble families, therefore, might find themselves consecrated and living in a convent, enclosed in an anchorhold, or married and living in a castle. We tend to think only of the religious vocation as confining, but married women living in castles were also contained and their lives circumscribed. Roberta Gilchrist's work integrates recent archaeological and sociological theory with medieval material culture, exploring, "space [as it] reproduces social order and sometimes acts as a metaphorical extension of the body."²⁰⁷ Gilchrist takes late medieval castle architecture as a case study and analyzes its layout in terms of boundaries and spatial organization as a reflection of social organization. The castle household consisted mainly of men, except for the noble ladies of the family and their maidservants. The structure of the building was so arranged as to keep the high status women in the inner depths of the building, contained beyond the reach of the male members of the household. As Gilchrist explains, "[t]he bodies of high-status women [in late medieval castles] were hidden through architectural mechanisms of segregation and enclosure which included towers, private facilities for worship, exclusively female retinue, and physical boundaries such as walls, gardens and architectural filtering systems which regulated access."²⁰⁸ The containment imposed on high-status secular women by the design of castle architecture brings to light the similarity of lifestyles shared by late medieval women in cloisters, anchorholds and castles.

²⁰⁶ Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 49.

²⁰⁷ Roberta Gilchrist, "Medieval Bodies in the Material World: Gender, Stigma and the Body." *Framing Medieval Bodies*. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin, eds., (New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 45.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

The pressures of external control and repression causing physical, emotional, and spiritual compression of the self may well have resulted in women's energies being forced to move in other directions, turning inward and developing extreme interiority as an alternate space in which to function more freely on at least one level. The Book of Hours, with its capacity for the representation of extended imaginal space, presented an opening for the expansion of energy where women could find meaning and identity in a symbolized interior space with room for subjective interpretation. The social reality of female enclosure and the pressure it placed on women may account for the great popularity of devotional books and practises.

The interiority of the Virgin, corresponding with the inward expansion of women's energies, was modelled in the plastic arts in the popular and contemporary *Vierge Ouvrante* form, with its capacity for figurative containment or display of the narratives contemplated by the Virgin within the very cavity of her hollowed body. This art form further models the concept of Mary as container of God. Among contemporary texts, the emulation of the Virgin's interiority is best understood through the *Ancrene Wisse* (Guide for anchoresses), first and foremost of female anchoritic writings. Part 1 of the Guide sets forth the ideal devotional routine of the anchoress and describes her performance of the major textual components that, within a few decades, would be bound together and illuminated as the Book of Hours.²⁰⁹ From the way the Guide's author writes of these diverse prayer elements, they were a loose collection of sheets and scrolls with the texts sometimes copied out in the lady's own hand, and not in the form of a

²⁰⁹ Bella Millett, "Ancrene Wisse and the Book of Hours," 23.

single book as yet.²¹⁰ Among the anchoress' devotions were the Little Office of the Virgin²¹¹ and the Five Joys of the Virgin. Moreover, the Guide was written to an audience of high-status women entering the anchorhold directly from the world, as an increasingly popular alternative to a nunnery, so that the Guide's link to laywomen is particularly strong.²¹² The Guide's author advises the anchoress to take the Virgin Mary as a model of the anchoritic life.

Containment and interiority figure prominently in the structure and imagery of the Guide. The inner Rule is referred to as 'the lady' which guides the heart and "makes it even and smooth, without the lumps and hollows of a crooked and accusing conscience."²¹³ The outer Rule, with its external regulation of the body, is figured as 'the handmaiden' because its role is to support of the success of the inner Rule.²¹⁴ The body is compared with a building and the eyes with windows.²¹⁵ The author equates body with cell, so that the anchoress shuts her external senses and goes within herself, proceeding through successive stages of purification to her innermost being where she will encounter Christ. The anchoress is thus presented with "a body model, structuring the anchoress' physical and spiritual existence as a series of enclosures: her cell and her body enclosing her heart."²¹⁶ Wogan-Browne dubs this a "template body," created by the combination of inner and outer Rules, to which the reclusant women try to form themselves.²¹⁷ The notion of a template body conforms closely to the notion of ideal-self, or external models

²¹⁰ Ibid., 26.

²¹¹ Substituted in place of the Divine Office by the Guide's author, unlike Aelred of Rievaulx's Guide to his anchoress sister of c. 1160, on which the *Ancrene Wisse* was partly based. Ibid., 21.

²¹² Ibid., 22-26.

²¹³ Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 47.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 48.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 71.

²¹⁶ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Chaste Bodies: Frames and Experiences," 26.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 27.

for religious self-regulation as discussed earlier in this thesis. Furthermore, a template body would be an excellent descriptor for the rigidly posed female manuscript-owner figure.

The literary structure of the *Ancrene Wisse* reflects the author's preoccupation with balancing the relationship between inner and outer realities. Janet Grayson observes that the text is designed so that parts 1 and 8 stand 'outside' parts 2 through 7 to enclose it, as the outer Rule encloses the inner, the anchorhold encloses the woman as her body encloses her heart, and her heart will enclose Christ its prize. The Guide further allegorizes virginity as a precious vessel, so that "the body as building and the body as vessel reinforce each other in a powerful and complex account of the container contained."²¹⁸ The idea is that the containment of the fragile vessel protects it from accidental breakage and tragic spilling of its contents which, once lost, can never be replaced. This image extends the containment metaphor, as the body itself becomes a container, a vessel holding a precious balm. The rules for the anchoress' behaviour are highly regulating, so that "contained and containing, the recluse's body-boundaries are as intensely regulated as those of the cell itself."²¹⁹ Mary stands as a model for a specific kind of container, since during the Annunciation in Luke's Gospel she is equated with the Ark of the Covenant, by Luke's use of language when he uses the same phrase as that of Exodus in describing the power of God overshadowing both Mary and Ark.²²⁰ Part of the allure of the intimate encounter between lady and Virgin depicted in Walters Mss 269, 222 and 241 (figures 16, 17 and 18 respectively), is the intimate tone of the gathering of

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 11.

figures. Considering Christ as the final prize of the anchoress' most inward journey, the enthroned Virgin is a model who has already achieved this prize. In these images the Virgin seems to offer to share Christ with the devout lady. In the innermost chamber of her contained purity, symbolized by the canopy or arch emphasizing her role in the Incarnation as a pure vessel, the Virgin condescends to welcome the devotee into her sacred presence, acting as a facilitator to the spiritual implantation of Christ into the lady's own pure heart.

Janet Grayson considers *The Five Joys of the Virgin*,²²¹ written about in the first chapter of the *Ancrene Wisse*, to have, "certain structural affinities with the whole inner Rule."²²² *The Five Joys*, with its Marian point of view, also forms an important meditation in the Book of Hours. The devotion is centrally placed among those described in the first chapter of the Guide, and is the longest and most passionate of the devotions, positioning Mary as the centre of the Christian mystery, her virginity critical to the Incarnation.²²³ This innermost placement emphasizes the contemporary view of the Virgin as central to God's plan for redemption.²²⁴ It also reinforces the theme of interiority. According to Grayson, devotion to the Five Joys "appeals to the 'interior comfort,' a spiritual peace attainable through physical denial and imitation of Mary."²²⁵ Within the Joys, the Virgin is passive; her virginity is a recurrent theme bespeaking the ascendancy of spirit over matter. In the Joys, she becomes a model of ascent.²²⁶

²²¹ The Five Joys were common in English manuscripts; the number of joys was expanded to fifteen on the continent, however, so that French and Netherlandish manuscripts feature Fifteen Joys.

²²² Janet Grayson, *Structure and Imagery in the Ancrene Wisse*. (Hanover, New Hampshire: The University Press of New England, 1974), 16.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 18.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

Apart from Matins of the Hours of the Virgin, which usually depicts the Annunciation, one of the most common placements for female manuscript-owner portraits is at the first of the Five Joys, which similarly depicts the Annunciation. Each Joy has a theme and that of the first is to cleanse in preparation for the spiritual reception of Christ, much as the Virgin physically received him. The accompanying prayer “implies that by emulating the Virgin – that is, the life of the model anchoress – it is possible to receive Christ.”²²⁷ This leads to the second Joy, whose theme is to restore spiritual virginity if physical intactness is lost.²²⁸

As I have previously suggested, the performance of the Book of Hours symbolizing the lady’s inner reality was a kind of private self-performance, with aural and visual dimensions. This practise opened up a devotional gap of time and space in an otherwise tightly confined and controlled milieu, in which the lady might have found some freedom to re-imagine herself. Naturally, her identity must be understood as mainly constructed in line with the dominant and pervasive social and religious values of her day, but the opportunity for an alternative or resistant reading by a female reader/viewer was also available in the images and texts she performed. Through these she could have generated some empowering meanings about her female identity as well as the traditional ones.

In her discussion of page layout, Mary C. Olson remarks that among the symbols and sub-codes of the visual and textual elements on a manuscript page, tensions and underlying contradictions may surface as the viewer/reader takes in the messages and

²²⁷ Ibid., 25.

²²⁸ Ibid., 26.

meanings built into the design.²²⁹ This suggests that multiple readings are possible and that the reader/viewer's personal subjectivity comes into play in the reading/viewing process. How much stronger must the identification with the words and images be when the reader experiences herself projected and objectified as a character in the manuscript through the presence of the female manuscript-owner portrait, and how much more would subjectivity be activated. I would argue that in this case there would be a high degree of identification and therefore a strong tendency toward a personalized reading. The possibility of an alternate reading of the Book of Hours is also supported by de Certeau's work on reception and consumption. Michel de Certeau has highlighted the numerous ways in which the meaning intended by the designer may be subverted or turned to other purposes through the inventiveness of the receiver, because of the power of agency in subjective experience.²³⁰

Considering the Book of Hours as an imaginal space constituted through its private performance in time, the possibility of alternate and resistant readings is further substantiated by the work of Sharp, Routledge, Pilo and Paddison, who, together, have explored the spatial manifestations of power. They claim that power is spatially entangled, manifested in unpredictable ways, with resistance arising in pockets here and there, as the power of a dominant group can never be all-pervasive.²³¹ In their discussion of the possibility of collective agency on the part of subjected groups, Sharp and her co-authors note the tendency of many social theorists to "situate conflict theoretically within and between the practises of everyday life (e.g. the family, church, community) and the

²²⁹ Mary C. Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, 60-61.

²³⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

²³¹ Joanne P. Sharp, Paul Routledge, Chris Philo and Ronan Paddison., *Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Dominance/Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 7.

socio-political processes of the state and regional or national institutions.”²³² This statement suggests that a resistant reading of the Book of Hours by laywomen is not only possible, but is one of the more likely kinds of places resistance might be expected to surface. Practised daily, as a religious routine, passed on through family inculcation, and backed by the institutional church, the Book of Hours had potential as a site of agency for women.

Research which follows up on this theoretical model considers “cultural expressions of resistance and transgression embedded in the rituals, attitudes and lifestyles that exist in very ordinary circumstances.”²³³ Adapting such a theory to the medieval context, it is in such seemingly small and unexpected places such as the everyday ritualized prayer practise of the Book of Hours that a laywoman could have subverted the expected interpretation by reading resistant meanings in the combination of texts and images.

It is most especially probable in private performances of the self, such as that implied in the Book of Hours, that an opportunity for a resistant self-conception could arise. According to Sharp and her co-authors, Foucault’s later work on self-fashioning opens up the possibility of gaps in the model of dominance/resistance – gaps in which individuals might operate creatively to perform a resistant self which complicates the relationships of power. As the authors comment, “we would propose that in his later work something of a gap *does* open up between discourse and practise, between scripted invocations of what embodied selves should be like and the particular performances of

²³² Ibid., 11.

²³³ Ibid.

self that individuals fabricate in their everyday lives.”²³⁴ With so many avenues of action in the real world closed to high status laywomen, a reading experience resistant to the dominant milieu through the medium of the Book of Hours could be contrived as a “thwarting of ‘external’ forces from an imagined space of autonomy conceived as somehow outside of power.”²³⁵ The sphere of power thought to be controlled by the Virgin would have qualified as such a space because the Virgin was believed to intercede on behalf of her devotees and to have great influence with Christ – making her an incorruptible advocate. The book owner’s existence within such a space via the presence of her self-as-object agent, the manuscript-owner figure, could well have been an empowering experience as well as an individuating one. From the possibility that a medieval laywoman could use a manuscript to promote and nurture an alternative space of pseudo-action, it does not follow that she did so or that such a space had any revolutionary power in the real world. Writing of the reality of the concept of counter-spaces, the social use of space that runs counter to the overriding norm and entails resistance to the dominant economic forces, Henri Lefebvre cautions that while they may “simulate existing space,” counter-spaces do not necessarily lead to an escape from the dominant use of space.²³⁶

Women, while hidden away in castles, convents and anchorholds and encouraged to practise self-surveillance and regulation through the Book of Hours, still may have managed to find unpatrolled gaps within the space created by their regular devotional practise. Sharp, Routledge, Pilo and Paddison define resistance as existing in interwoven

²³⁴ Ibid., 19.

²³⁵ Ibid., 24.

²³⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. Donald Nicholson-Smith, transl., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1974), 382.

networks of spatial gaps powered from above, below or even *from within*, as in the case of spiritual power.²³⁷ The imaginal space defined in the Book of Hours and powered from within was a place accessible to women in which they might shape their own identity as a sanctioned one that was obedient, chaste, and silent, but perhaps also as an identity with other, more resistant features.

What might an alternate, resistant reading of the female manuscript-owner figure with the Virgin as model look like to a noble laywoman reading/viewing and performing her Hours alone in her chapel or chamber? In juxtaposing the female manuscript-owner portrait with the figure of the Virgin, a link was forged that transferred certain meanings from the Virgin as model to the female devotee by the strength of their symbolized association and closeness. In the medieval Christian west, the Virgin was held to be approachable and merciful, but also, assumed body and soul into heaven and enthroned there by Jesus as its queen, the most powerful female 'deity'. A resistant reading might be based in this view of the Virgin as a powerful and divine female figure, as Mary was seen to operate as a special intercessor to the Trinity. The aspects of the Book of Hours that could foster a resistant reading would include the Virgin's interiority, the sense of impending reversal of the strong and the weak in the *Magnificat* recited at the First Joy, the privileging of a female/mother vantage point on salvation history, the positing of a female as a virtuous reader, and a connection to an extended community of solitary, self-regulating, religious women not under the control of any Order or Rule.

By modelling interiority, the Virgin also modelled the highly prized quality of self-knowledge. Interiority, while manifested externally as silence and passivity, also

²³⁷ Joanne P. Sharp et al., *Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Dominance/Resistance*, 30.

implied the existence of a vital inner world carried within the laywoman which she could access at will; a space beyond the reach of the dominant worldly powers. This kind of masterful knowledge of one's inner landscape was greatly encouraged in the *Ancrene Wisse*. The Guide fostered an interiority that was a brand of spiritual self-reliance, instructing the anchoress on how to do battle with her demons and vices, and guiding her through a solitary process of becoming holy.

Studies of the *Ancrene Wisse* suggest ways in which an undercurrent of resistance to authority can be read into the Book of Hours. The *Ancrene Wisse* author's inner and outer rules, which he stresses are not a Rule, as was the Benedictine Rule for example, could be interpreted as anti-institutional, or what Linda Georgianna has called an anti-Rule, which is at once capable of being inclusive and individualized²³⁸ Georgianna senses a current of resistance to authority in the *Ancrene Wisse* which champions the interiorized spirituality of the individual path over the externally ruled monastic mode of life.²³⁹ The *Ancrene Wisse* author stresses to his anchorite audience that the outer rule is subservient to the inner rule and so elevates interiority, accessible to all.²⁴⁰ The author writes out of a collapse in the traditional divide between elite and lay theology, writing a process-oriented guide that can be used by all Christians in any walk of life.²⁴¹ From the early thirteenth century, the Little Office of the Virgin was embraced by anchoresses and laywomen as a voluntary private devotion, unrelated to any Order or Rule. This differed from the practise of nuns and monks who chanted the Divine Office daily in a group setting, and whose lives were overseen in their orders. Devotional practise with the Book

²³⁸ Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self: Individuality in the Ancrene Wisse*, 9 and 31.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

of Hours resulted in a situation where women were praying alone, relying on the text rather than being closely supervised and directed personally by a religious superior. Like anchoritic spirituality, the solitary pursuance of holiness on the part of laywomen encouraged mature self-reliance.

As Wogan-Browne has pointed out, the three young women who were the audience of the original *Ancrene Wisse* manuscript were solitaries, yet together they also formed a small group. She argues that based on the evidence of the Guide, “we should see here not only a single enclosed female body, but a miniature female community,” as later copies made from the original manuscript refer to larger communities which have formed around the few beginning anchoresses, a network that “includes nuns, anchoresses, married women and virgins.”²⁴² The anchoress was, therefore, not simply a woman alone in a cell, but part of an extended community of solitary, self-regulating, religious women. By taking up the same devotional practise as an anchoress, the noble laywoman became part of this extended network of spiritually self-reliant women and branded herself with similar independent attributes.

The Virgin as model is an exemplar of the female as a virtuous reader.²⁴³ In images of the Annunciation she is often depicted poring over Scripture. In the Hours of Jeanne d’Evreux (figure 10), the Virgin Annunciate holds a red-covered book, the same colour as her halo and the space enclosing Jeanne. The repetition of this colour links the virtuous reading of the Virgin with the reading of Jeanne. In the Virgin’s case the depiction of reading from Scripture is iconographic because of the belief that Jesus was

²⁴² Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, “Chaste Bodies: Frames and Experiences,” 34.

²⁴³ Sarah Spence, *Texts and the Self in the Twelfth Century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7.

the word of God made flesh, a most authoritative confirmation of the constitutive power of the word, and, for women readers, of their power to access it. According to Mark Amsler the evocative imprint on a female reader of the image of the Virgin with a book and the Christ Child “constructed an intimate reading scene in which a female body and the infant Jesus are visually or physically linked with a text.”²⁴⁴ This kind of linking encouraged the reader to recast herself in the image of the Virgin, aligning herself with literacy and especially devotional literacy.

Reading and contemplation were activities associated with women saints in the later Middle Ages. Contemporary popular hagiography depicts female saints reciting the Hours and experiencing independent visions, suggesting female access to the divine and direct guidance from God without the intervention of male priests/spiritual directors.²⁴⁵ The image of a reading person holding a book is often used to indicate the figure as an authority and many suffrages to women saints in Books of Hours portray them holding books, so women could envision modelling themselves as authorities in the sphere of devotional practise.

The viewpoint taken in many of the devotions in the Book of Hours is a decidedly Marian one. The Hours of the Virgin and the Five Joys in particular privilege Mary as mother of God and as a special witness to the life, death and resurrection of her son. While the female manuscript-owner figure may be the protagonist in this book, the Virgin is the heroine. With her rise from lowly origins, the Virgin is witness to the drama and mystery of the Incarnation, her assumption and coronation ensured her continued existence and influential position enthroned above. Identification with Mary as a model

²⁴⁴ Mark Amsler, “Affective Literacy: Gestures of Reading in the Later Middle Ages”, 92.

²⁴⁵ Andrea Pearson, *Envisioning Gender in Burgundian Devotional Art*, 25.

could have encouraged women to consider their unique Christian experience as women as something spiritually privileged by being the same sex as the Virgin.

Finally, the invocation of the *Magnificat* recited at the First Joy in place of a psalm²⁴⁶ emphasizes the theme of reversal when Mary says,

He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit, He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.²⁴⁷

While this is meant to communicate the Judeo-Christian notion that those who humble themselves before God will be raised up, it could have been a potentially threatening message if interpreted politically. God was believed to have chosen to work through the Virgin directly, to use the weak to confound the strong, echoing similar biblical themes such as that of David and Goliath. In the *Magnificat*, Mary praises God, “but she also extols herself” and claims that all future generations will bless and revere her.²⁴⁸ The image accompanying the First Joy is traditionally the Annunciation, the same image as Matins of the Hours of the Virgin, and another popular location for the female manuscript-owner portrait, as seen in Walters Mss 262, 269 and 241 (figures 14, 17 and 19 respectively).²⁴⁹ In the text of the prayer, the Virgin proclaims how God has shown his power in favour of the weak and lowly and not in support of those with power. This tone implies that it is the small and the weak – women in medieval society – who are favoured by God, and through whom He chooses to work, not through the proud, rich or powerful.

²⁴⁶ Janet Grayson, *Structure and Imagery in the Ancrene Wisse*, 24.

²⁴⁷ *The Divine Office*, 696.

²⁴⁸ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 12.

²⁴⁹ As these are continental manuscripts, they feature the Fifteen Joys rather than the Five; but the First Joy is the same in both forms.

The practise of the Book of Hours was a private, individuating reading/viewing experience that placed the self-as-subject in a position of control as narrator and director of the performative devotions. The devotions collected in the Book of Hours developed out of a strain of orthopraxis that was resistant to institutional domination and control, existing at arm's length from any official Order or Rule. The practise of these devotions by anchoresses reflects the existence of a growing network of solitary (unmarried) literate women, who were soon joined by married laywomen with their illuminated versions of the devotions bound together in the Book of Hours. Devotional practise of the Book of Hours can be seen as modelling both traditional attributes of the Virgin, and other qualities that were resistant to the dominant powers.

In this chapter I have considered the impact of two kinds of models used in the Book of Hours – the internal model of the self and the external model of the Virgin – and how those models might have been viewed subjectively by a woman devotee. I have looked at how the attributes of the ideal-self and the Virgin have been symbolically represented in the selected manuscript illuminations, showing how containment and virginity were symbolically linked and that physical containment was a fact of life for all noble women regardless of their situation in life. This reality would have conditioned the female reader of the images to identify all the more closely with the Virgin figure in the Book of Hours, an identification that carried within it both traditional prescriptive models and the possibility of resistant meanings of empowerment for the female practitioner.

Conclusion

At the outset of this project the female manuscript-owner portrait was briefly sketched, described by most scholars as an enigmatic figure whose importance was not fully realized. The understanding of the female manuscript-owner portrait is expanded in this thesis to include a performative aspect that is constitutive of identity; an interactive connection between owner and owner figure. In the first chapter of this thesis, the female manuscript-owner portrait was described as representing the owner as a likeness only in a generic way, while the figure's function as template, through which the book owner could project her devotional actions into the scenes of the book, took priority. The kneeling prayer position, adapted from feudal custom, brought with it into the religious context associations of a direct personal contract between devotee and divinity. The owner figure's pose and attitude modelled to the owner the appropriate affects of reverence and compassion to the suffering Christ and the merciful Virgin; yet the figure became conventionalized in later Books of Hours, while the other figures and figural arrangements continued to be modified. This rigidity of the owner figure further references the high level of bodily involvement and self-control required in practising the Hours, as supported by descriptions in the first chapter of the *Ancrene Wisse*. In a functional sense, the female manuscript-owner portrait can be defined as a key, a cue or shortcut to bring the devout lady to the desired state of mind and spirit in the prayers.

Appearing just after the twelfth century, when the interest in the self was waxing, the figure echoes the concerns of its time period; introspection, examination of conscience and the awareness of intention. The self-reflexivity of the owner figure draws the owner more deeply into the images of the Book of Hours by her natural identification

with it. This identification, as revealed by modern psychology of the self, is one that positions the book owner as narrator, associated with the individual self, while at the same time the owner observes herself as an object/character in her book, a position associated with her group identity. The book owner's association with her owner figure is strengthened by the invocation of these two types; individual and group identity. The foray into the psychology of the self necessitates the expansion of the representation of the book owner from the portrait of the discrete individual to encompass the figure's entire field of action within the book, including the scene locations, events and other characters, as an extension of her identity.

In the second chapter, the Book of Hours is hypothesized as a machine of contemplation presenting the devotee with both narrative and contemplative scenes inviting her to project herself into them, via the owner figure, and assisting her to lift her attention and energy from the earthly to the heavenly reality. The devout book owner was encouraged to imagine herself as a visionary or witness to the simulacral events of Christian narrative through the episodic scenes and to converse with the Virgin as if kneeling before her actual presence, as depicted in the contemplative scenes. The laywoman's relationship to the sacred figures in the Book of Hours is conveyed through networks of touch and gaze that confirm her special status as a Christian with direct access to Mary and Christ through prayer. The depiction of time and narrative has an effect on the way images are designed in the Book of Hours, and is also affected subjectively by the presence of the female manuscript-owner portrait, whose gaze in the narrative scenes seems to suspend time (while in the more static contemplative scenes, her presence seems to expand time through the generation of anecdotal narrative).

In the third chapter, the private and solitary performance of the Book of Hours and the shaping of identity through visualized models are elaborated upon. In the thirteenth century, the conformity to mental and behavioural models was important in the shaping of identity to group ideals. Through the self-models provided by the female manuscript-owner portrait in the Book of Hours, the owner could see herself depicted as a spiritual adept: a devout, visionary, self-aware vassal of the merciful and highly influential Virgin. Taking the Virgin as an external model, the laywoman could seek to emulate virtuous attributes of purity, spiritual virginity, interiority and humility. The visual containment of the Virgin in the Book of Hours' illuminations resonated with women's restricted lived experience, as lay, consecrated and anchoritic women were all spatially and socially confined. As a model of interiority, the Virgin suggested to women an inward movement of the imaginative and spiritual energies, as outward expansion was not a possibility for medieval women.

The laywoman's performance of the Hours, supported by the illuminations, created a temporal and spatial refuge relatively free of coercion in which she might receive and interpret the devotional material on a more individual and subjective level, without the direct mediation of any supervisor. This experience could have been an individuating and empowering one, as she compared herself with the internal and external models of female virtue provided in the book. A resistant reading would have been possible if the laywoman focussed on specific elements. These may have included the messages of reversal in the *Magnificat* which champion the weak over the strong, the founding of an interiority as an inner retreat beyond the reach of dominant external forces, and images of virtuous literate women saints and the Virgin whose holiness was

linked to their authoritative connection to the word. Beyond these potentially empowering and resistant interpretations, a measure of self-reliance was nurtured by the devotion itself and supported by the close relationship between the Book of Hours and the *Ancrene Wisse*, a manuscript that emerged out of a resistant, even anti-institutional formulation of female spirituality. The implication of an extended community of women practising such devotions reinforces the possibility that the noble laywoman was encouraged to create a resistant subjective reading of her female identity through the illuminations and texts of the Book of Hours.

The Book of Hours, as a devotional machine of contemplation, functioned as an alternate space into which contained laywomen projected themselves and recast their identity through the female manuscript-owner portrait as the key that activated the apparatus. The Book of Hours, in achieving this, became the most popular devotional text to be embraced by laywomen in the later Middle Ages.

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Illustrations

Figure 1

The de Brailes Hours
 London, BL Ms. Additional 49999, fol. 64
 c. 1240, Oxford England
 Historiated initial at gradual psalms

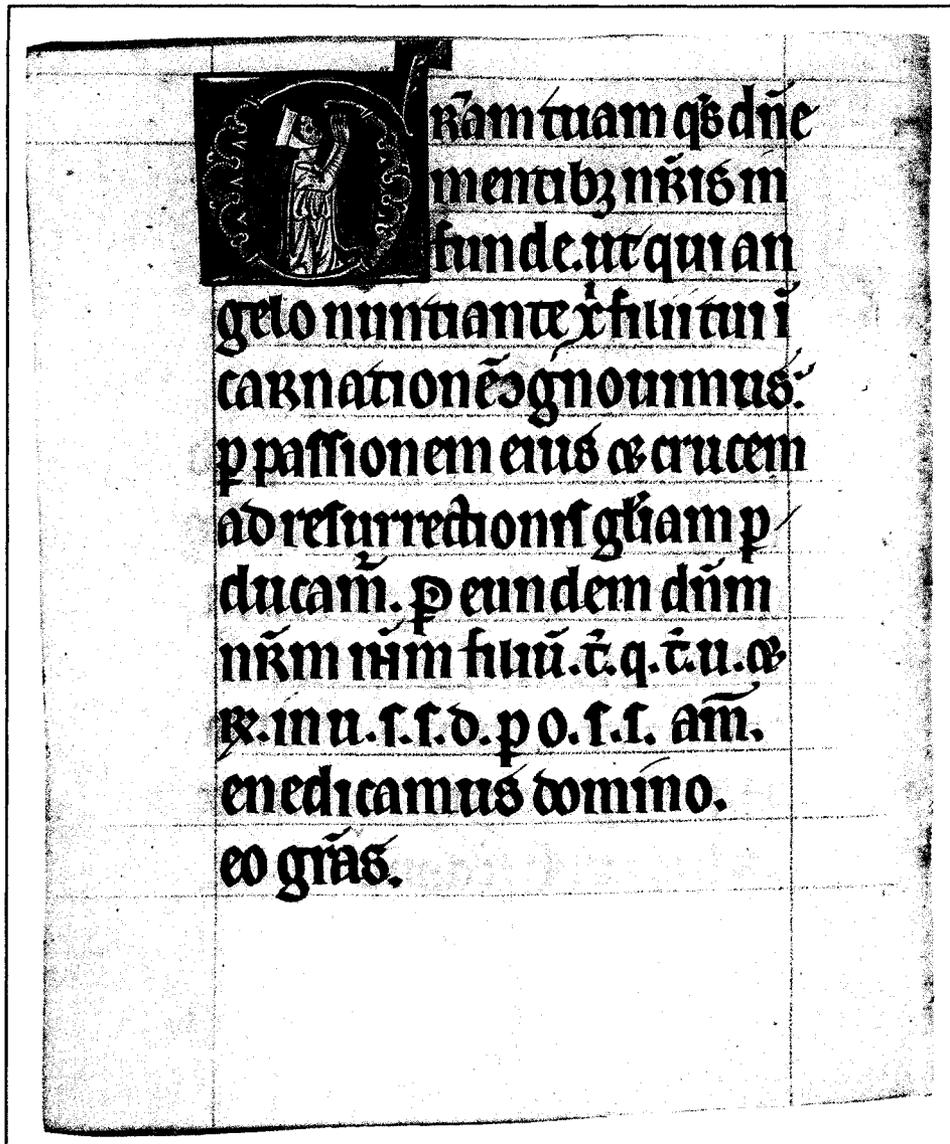


Figure 2

Baltimore, Walters Ms 98, fol. 1
c. 1250, Champagne France
Matins, Hours of the Virgin

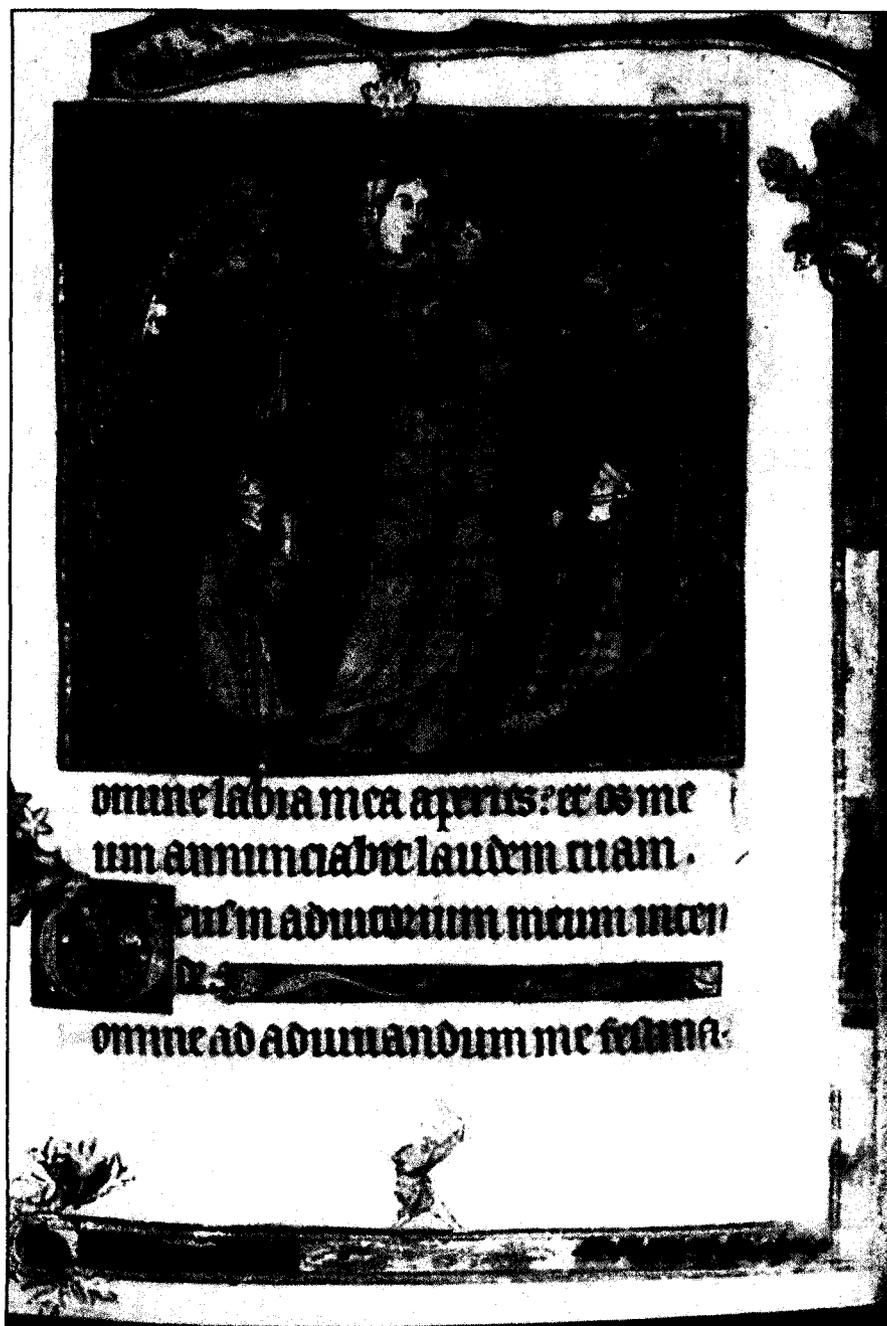


Figure 4

The Murthly Hours

Edinburgh, NLS, Ms 21000, fol. 149v.

c. 1280, England

Historiated initial in the gradual psalms (with the owner reading from Hours of Virgin)

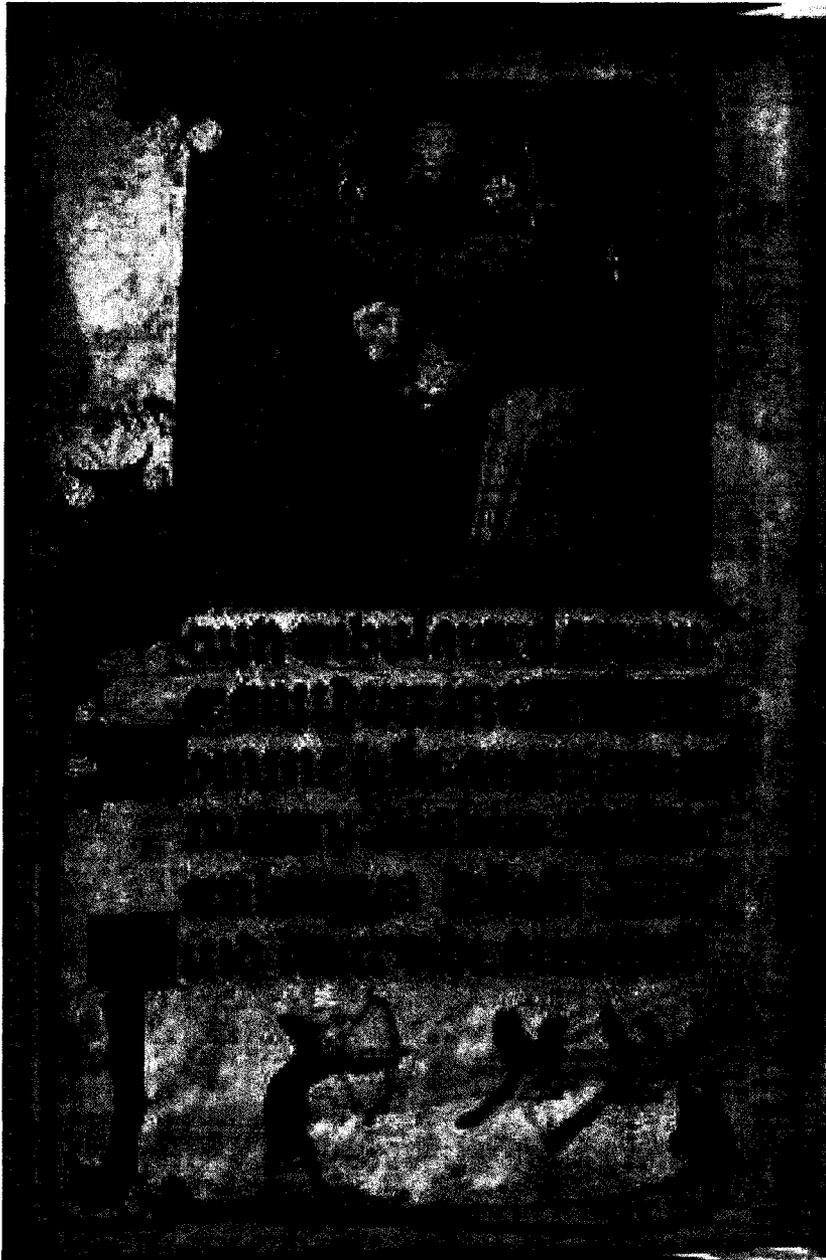


Figure 5

Hours of St. Omer
 London, BL, Additional Ms 36684, fol. 46v
 c. 1280, France
 Adoration of the Magi

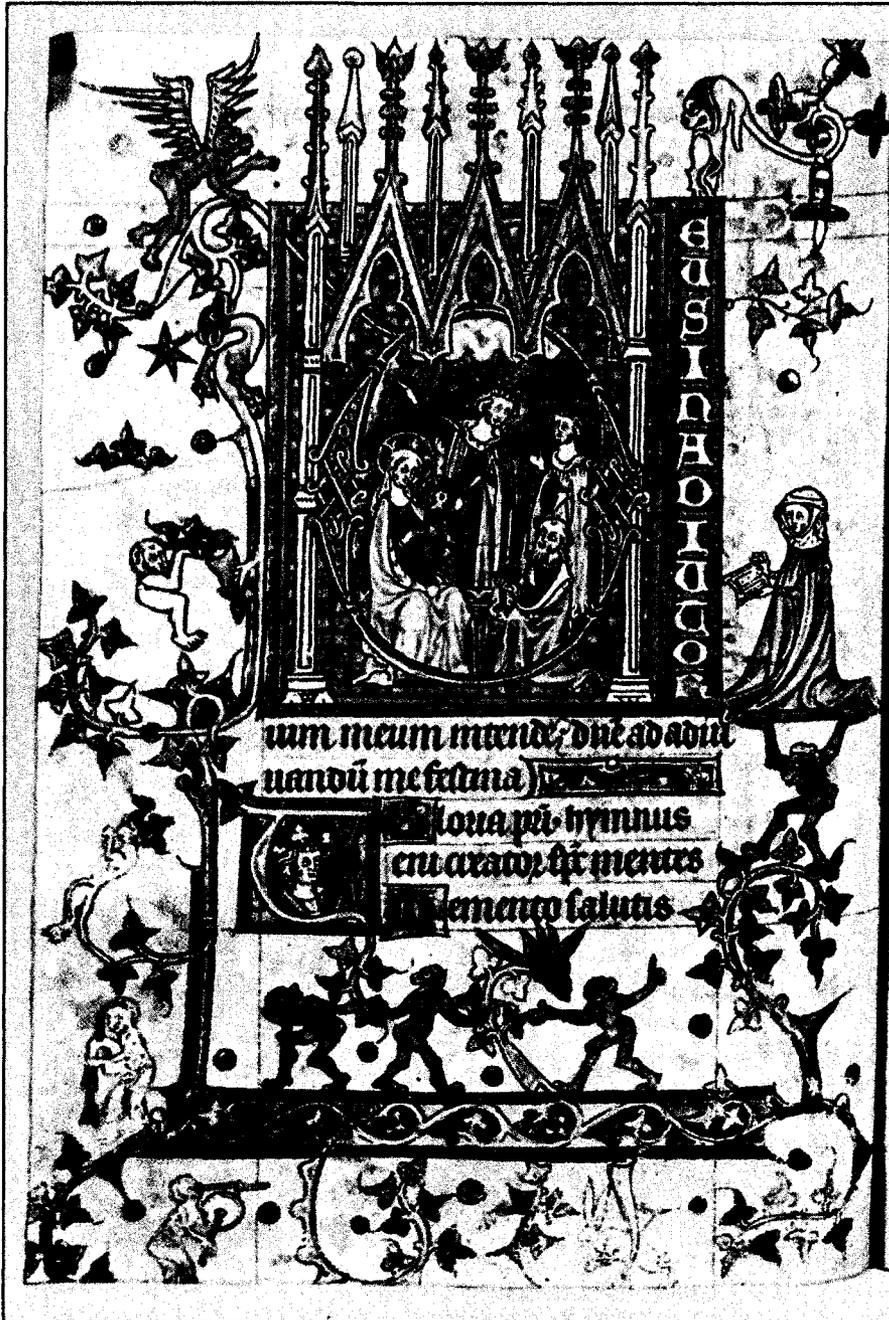


Figure 6

Psalter-Hours of Yolande of Soissons
New York, PML, Ms. M729, fol. 232v
c. 1280-90, Amiens France
Virgin and Child adored by owner



Figure 7

Baltimore, Walters Ms. 85, fol. 32
c. 1300-10, Ghent
Crucifixion, at None, Hours of the Virgin

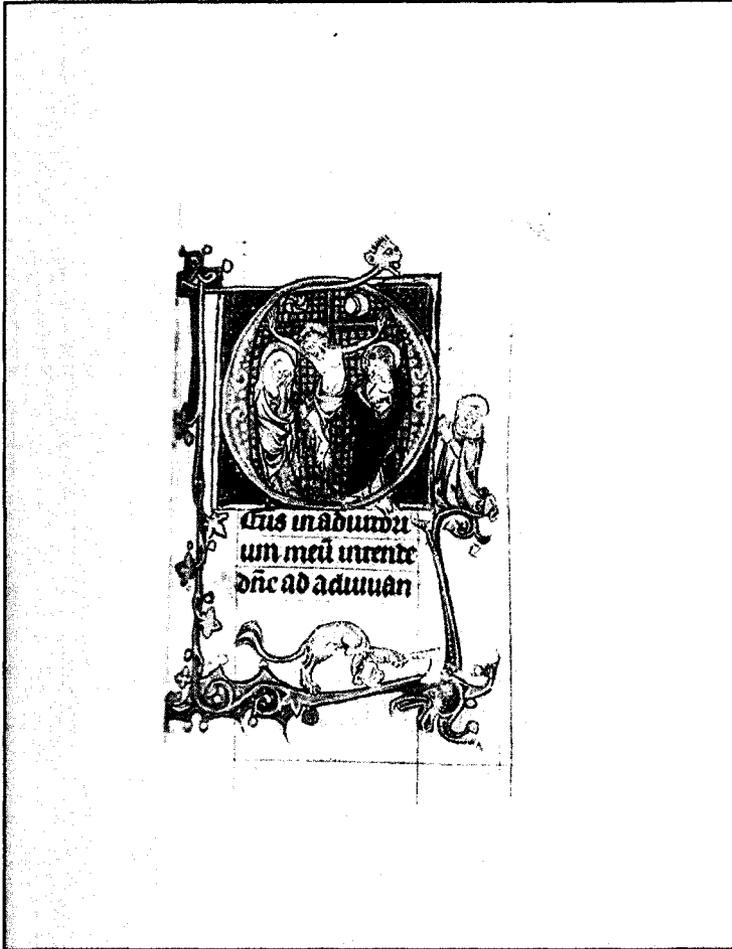


Figure 8

Baltimore, Walters Ms 88, fol. 100v

c. 1300-10, Flanders

Resurrection, at Compline, Hours of the Virgin

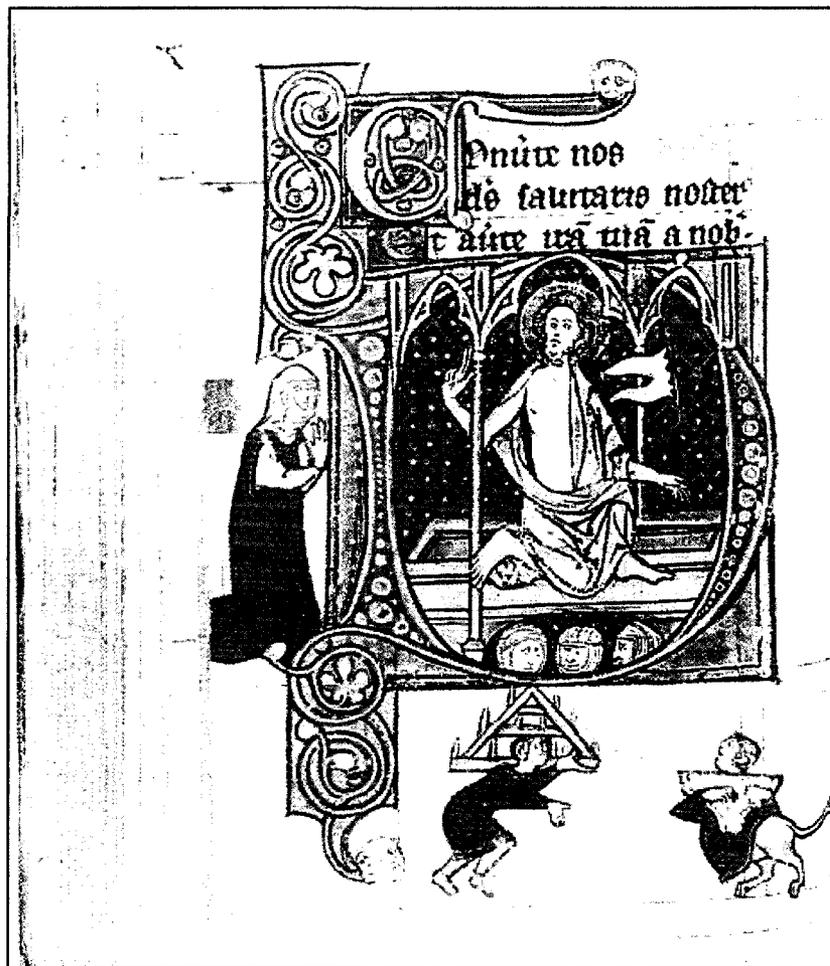


Figure 9

The de Lisle Hours
New York, PML, Ms G50, fol. 19r
c. 1320-25, England
Coronation of the Virgin

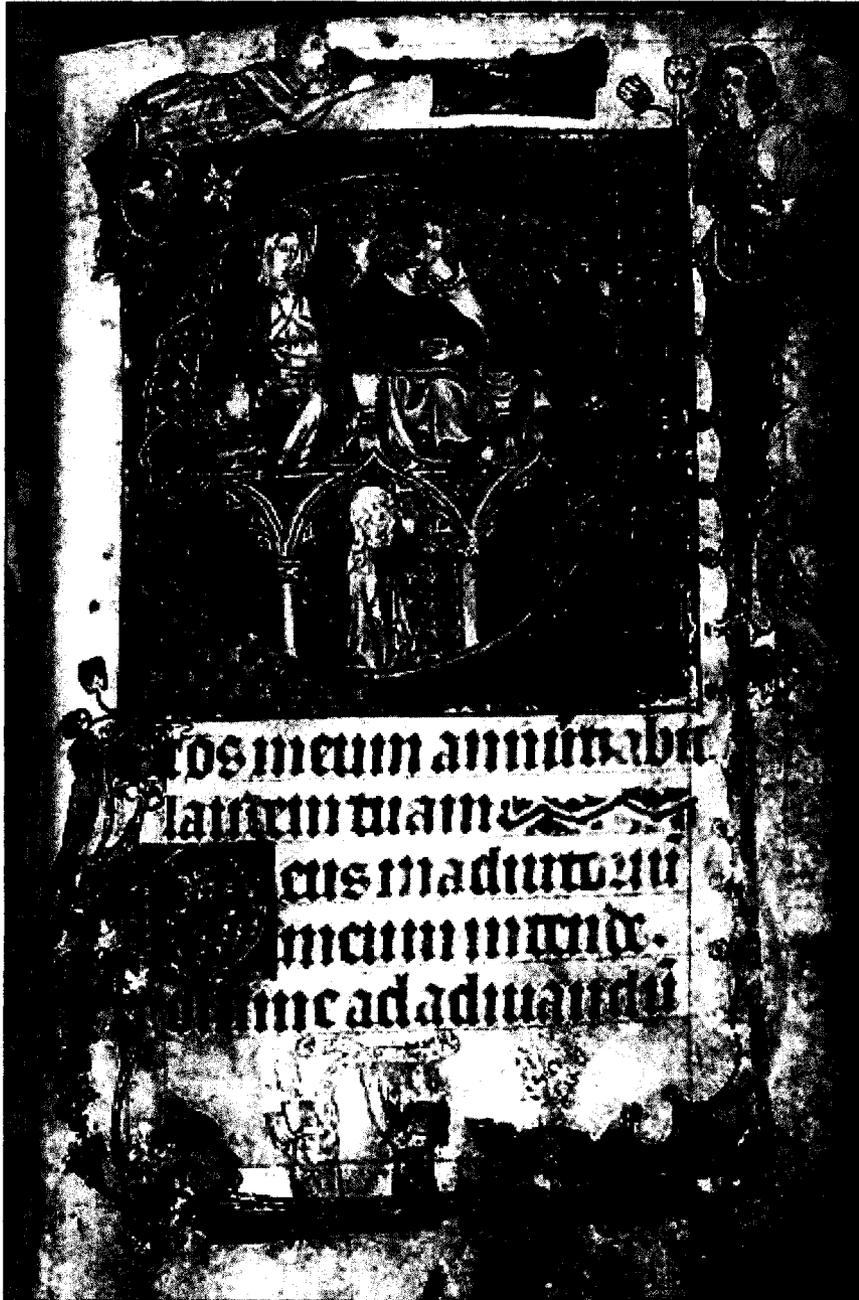


Figure 10

The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux
New York, Cloisters, MS 54.1.2, fol. 16.
c. 1324-28, France
Annunciation



Figure 11

The de Bois Hours
New York, PML, Ms M700, fol. 3v
c. 1325-30, England
Virgin and Child adored by owners



Figure 12

The Hours of Isabelle de Coucy
Baltimore, Walters Ms 89, fol. 3v
c. 1380, Paris France
Virgin and Child adored by owner
Preceding Hours of the Virgin

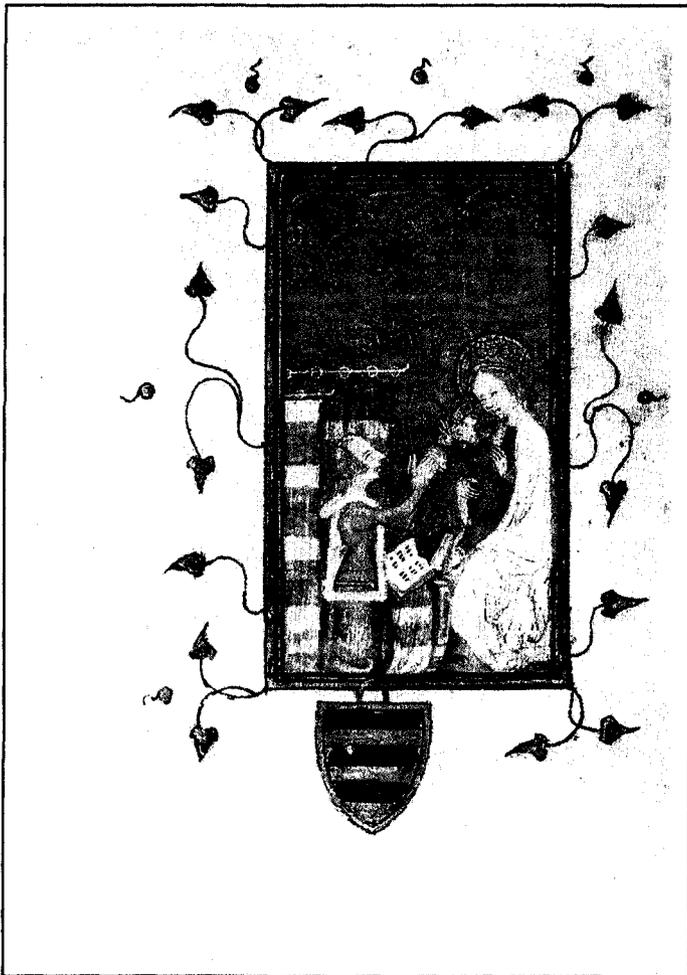


Figure 13

Baltimore, Walters Ms 289, fol. 15

c. 1425-35, Poitiers France

Crucifixion with Virgin and St. John Evangelist on altar
(vision or painted sculpted group)
at Psalms for Hours of the Virgin

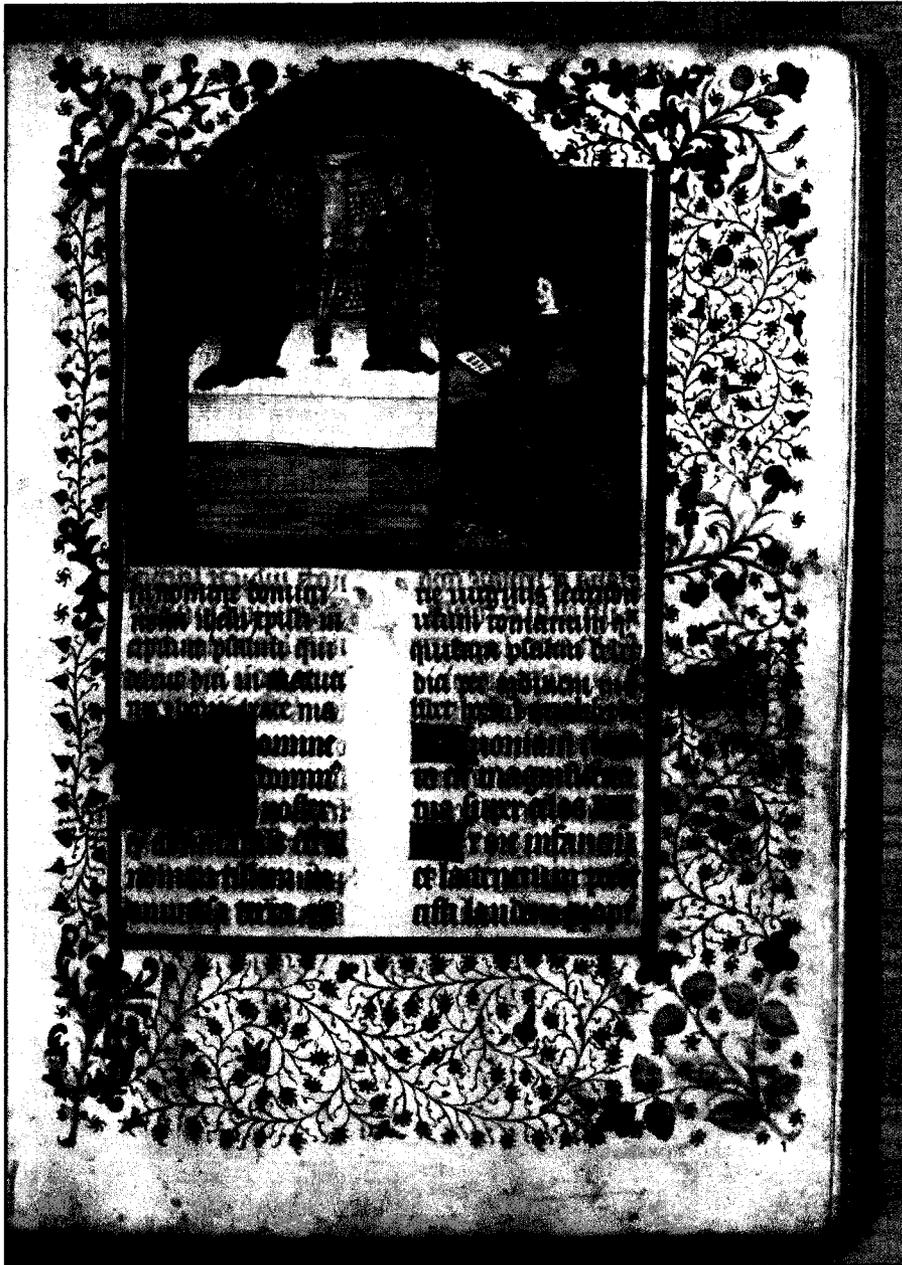


Figure 14

Baltimore, Walters Ms 262, fol. 135r

c. 1435-40, Amiens France

Virgin and Child enthroned, adored by female manuscript owner and presented by St.
John the Baptist
at 15 Joys of the Virgin

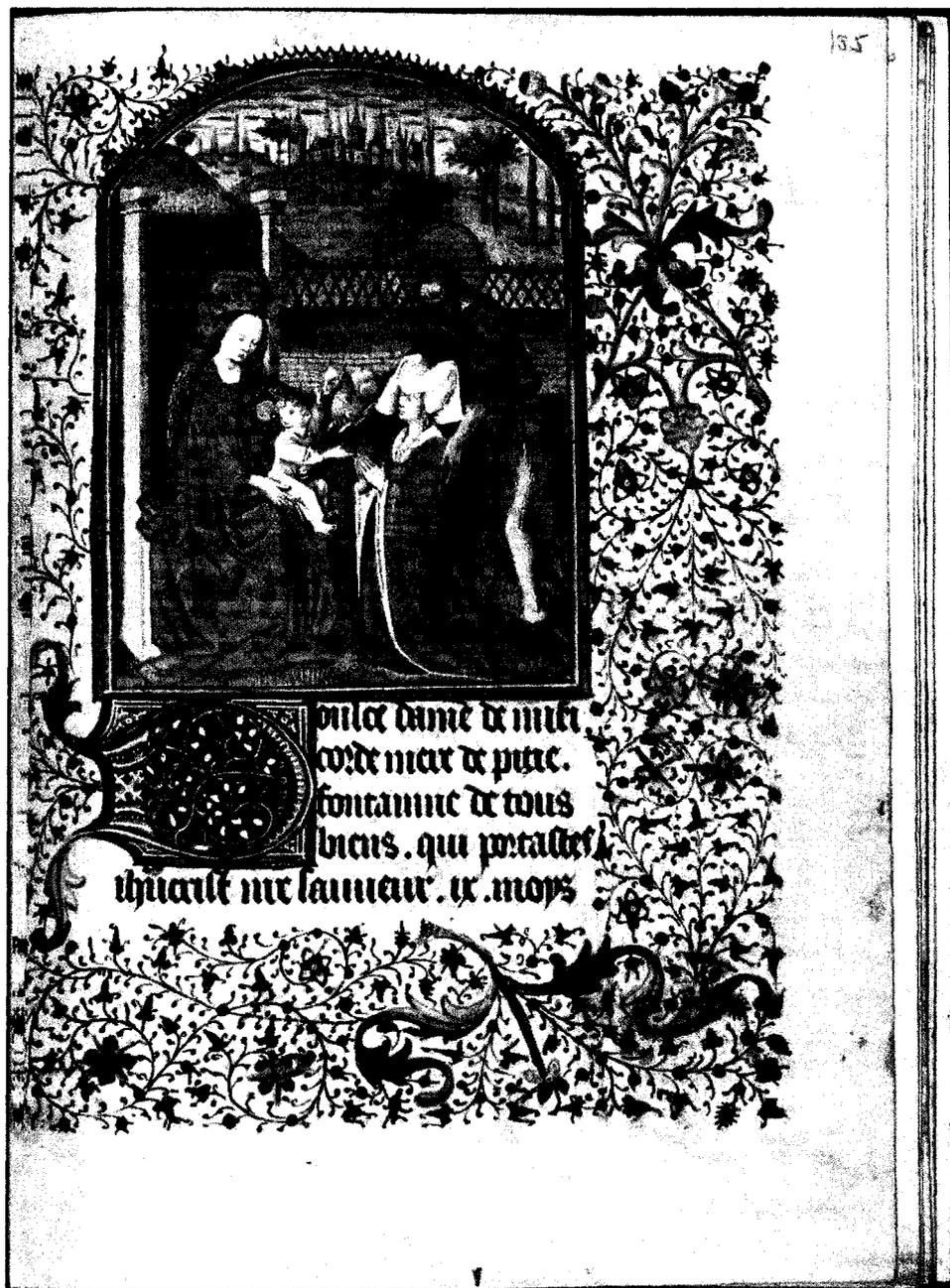


Figure 15

The Buves Hours
 Baltimore, Walters Ms 267, ff. 13v and 14
 c. 1450-60, Hainault Belgium
 Annunciation, at Matins, Hours of the Virgin



Figure 16

Baltimore, Walters Ms 269, fol. 76r

c. 1460, Rheims France

Virgin and Child adored by female manuscript owner named Collette
at 15 Joys of the Virgin



Figure 17

Baltimore, Walters Ms 222, fol. 51v

c. 1465, Poitiers France

Virgin and Child enthroned, attended by angel, and revered by female manuscript owner who is presented by St. Clare
at *Obsecro te* prayer



Figure 18

Baltimore, Walters Ms 241, fol. 121r

c. 1480, Rouen France

Virgin and Child enthroned, two angels crowning Virgin, adored by reverent female
manuscript owner

at Fifteen Joys of the Virgin



Figure 19

Baltimore, Walters, Ms 438, fol. 85v
c. 1480-90, Bruges or Ghent
at Prayer to the Cross

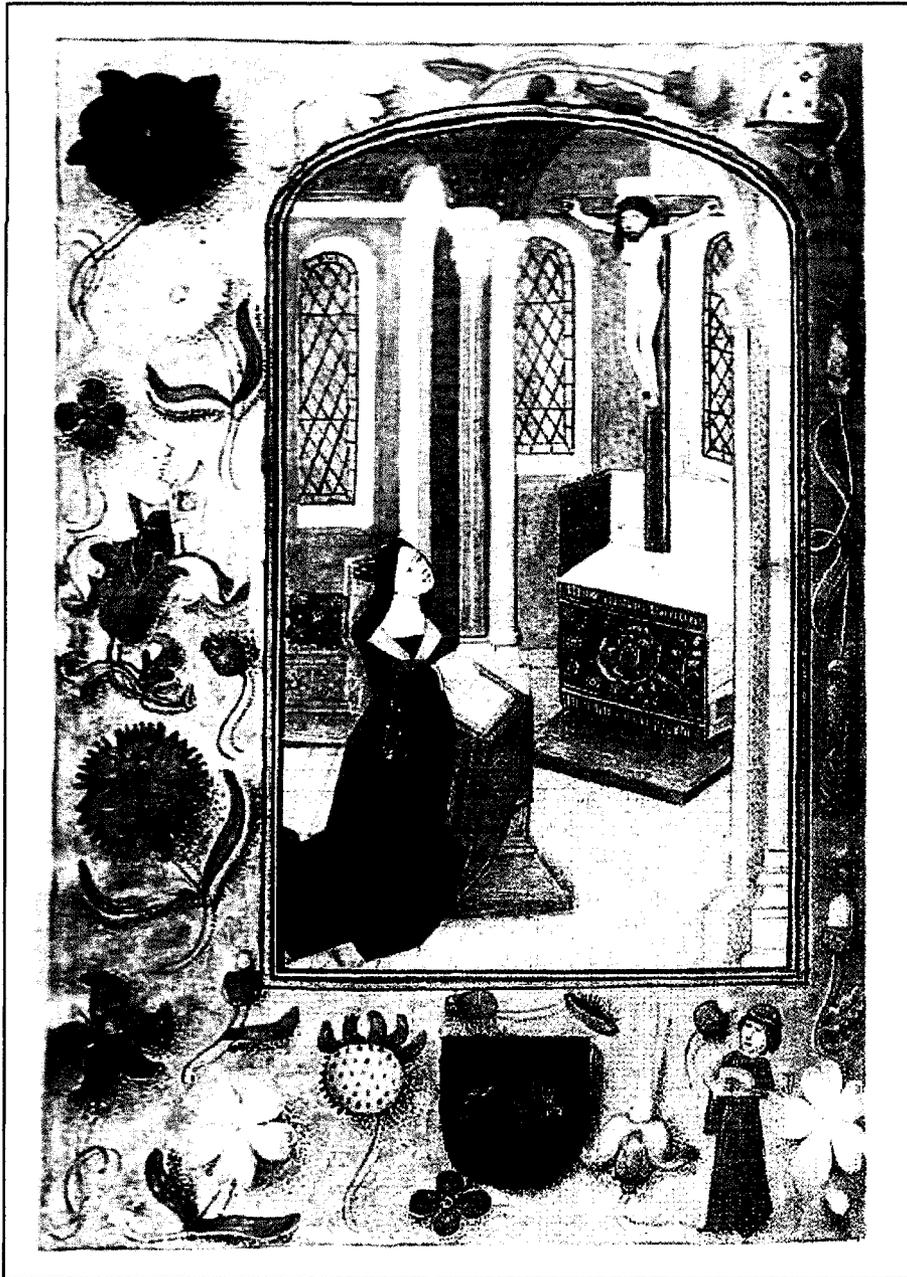


Figure 20

Walters Ms 189, fol. 109v

c. 1480-90, Bruges

Virgin lactans enthroned, with angels in walled garden
at the Mass of the Virgin