The Presence of the Church: Morgan Library MS M. 287

Danielle A. Fallon
CUNY Hunter College

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[The Presence of the Church: Morgan Library MS M. 287]

by

[Danielle Fallon]

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Thesis Sponsor:

May 2, 2017
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Date

Cynthia Hahn
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Signature

May 2, 2017
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Date

Wen-Shing Chou
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Signature of Second Reader
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Introduction

Books of Hours were an essential part of society in the fifteenth century. As objects they served an active part in the private and public devotion of individuals. Moreover, they functioned in a multitude of unforeseen ways which continued to evolve over the course of the Middle Ages. These objects can and have elicited many conversations for the modern scholar. Historically and religiously, Books of Hours reflected a growth of the cult to the Virgin Mary, which aided an individual’s devotion. Additionally, literacy had been the domain of the nobility and clerics, but with the spreading of Books of Hours, that domain had expanded to the laity and merchant class. This development would have a lasting economic and intellectual impact.

By the fifteenth century, Books of Hours were available to broader populations. Due to a distinct change in book production, their accessibility increased to a variety of class levels for purchase and possible commission. In addition, the translation of Books of Hours from Latin to vernacular languages allowed for the majority of the population, who were illiterate in Latin, to comprehend and actually read the prayers they heard in church. Manuscripts that were produced throughout the Middle Ages varied from Bibles, Gospel Books, Bestiaries, secular books containing common works of literature and of course, Books of Hours. As we will see, it is imperative for one to understand the codex as an object for devotion and illumination. This will apprehend the way in which we observe how the imagery functions separately from its appearance within the context of the book.

A Book of Hours was a book of prayers, primarily the Hours of the Virgin. These books possibly included other sets of Hours that a reader would attempt to recite on a daily basis for the benefit of their own salvation, as well as other individual prayers. The prayers of the Hours were presented according to the Roman hours of the day; Matins, prime, terce, sext, none, etc. In
precious editions of the Hours, illuminated miniatures were included alongside the prayers. These miniatures would not illustrate the text but, instead, represented an aspect of the life of Mary or Christ. The aesthetic of the images and their relationship to one another within the book varies greatly from one codex to another. Illuminated miniatures have the ability to represent historical, biblical and even current events. For the historian, images can reveal a facet of the purpose of the manuscripts production as well as aspects about the patron or church behind the commission.

This paper will discuss the function of specific miniatures within New York City’s Morgan Library’s MS M. 287. This manuscript was created in approximately 1445, either in Northern France or Flanders. My main focus will be an attempt to understand how the Church and its function is reflected in the miniatures within MS M.287, but I will also discuss how the book as a medium played an essential role in presenting the visual imagery of the manuscript. In addition, we will consider the architectural representation of church space and how this can elicit a metaphorical space of devotion for the reader and book owner. Both of these discussions will relate the object to patrons and medieval society at large.

In Chapter One, I will focus on the production of manuscripts, particularly Books of Hours, in relation to how and why there was a change in the way books were produced. The way in which these books were used, such as, to document and reflect a patron’s personal preference would be in relation to the patron’s devotion. All of this, and how sacred spaces of devotion reinforces the Church’s role will be discussed in Chapter 2. I will argue that the patron is represented in the multiple miniatures and as well as the entire manuscript – including the unique prayers specific to MS M. 287. Following the breakdown of MS M. 287’s prayers and foundational miniatures, Chapter 3 will discuss the specific details that distinguish MS M. 287
from other manuscripts produced within a similar setting and how these details can reflect the desires of the patron. Finally, the secular function which became inextricably linked to these objects and as a result, the relationship a patron had to its church, will be addressed in Chapter Four of this paper.

All of this will presumably reveal some information of the role the unnamed patron may have played in the book’s production. In order to clarify how MS M. 287 is typical and how it is unique, it will be compared to a variety of other Books of Hours from the Morgan Library in New York, and The British Library in London, England. As a whole, despite the manuscript’s responsive participation in the development of literacy and book production within contemporary society, this paper will affirm the Church’s unwavering and dominant role in controlling the content presented in the miniatures.
Chapter 1: Books of Hours and Society

It is crucial to understand the political background in France and Flanders during the early – mid fifteenth century to fully grasp the importance of Books of Hours, particularly MS M. 287. Beginning in 1337, England began a long lasting campaign to seize the French throne and assert its political and economic power. By means of many military campaigns and additional tactics the English sought to control the French land everywhere north of the Loire River, including Paris.¹ Success transpired in the form of an occupation for over a decade. From 1420-1436, the English were able to acquire a stronghold in France. Although unofficial until 1453, the end of what we now call the Hundred’s Years War, came shortly after this subjugation. The tides began to turn when Charles VII, Charles the Victorious of France asserted his authority as King in 1450 and the English were driven back across the channel. During this time of upheaval, lasting over a century, French provinces such as Normandy, Brittany, Berry, Burgundy and Savoy were growing in power throughout France, decentralizing social and royal order.²

Pockets of royal power were asserted during a time when France was in the midst of an authority struggle.

How does this political uncertainty and war affect Books of Hours? Since the twelfth century, scholars, students, and theologians were eager to travel to the epicenter of manuscript production, Paris. Due to the advent of Universities and the residency of the court and kings of France, Paris became the main center for manuscript activity. Aside from the religious manuscripts that had previously only been created by and for clerics, a new demand for


production regarding education and commentary began to flourish. However, over the course of three decades in the fourteenth century, a wavering and unreliable government, due to the Hundred Years’ War, resulted in Paris relinquishing its power as the unchallenged center of manuscript production. Gregory T. Clark explains,

...Paris clearly did not regain its position as the leading center for manuscript manufacture in France after the English occupiers departed the city in 1436. Instead, eastern French artists working at mid-century were just as inclined to look toward northeastern France and the southern Netherlands as they were to the French capital. Both artists and even books themselves began to move between different places of production. This travel between a variety of scribes and illuminators was a direct effect of the decentralization of Paris as the locus of manuscript production. Paris’s lack of fabrication allowed an opening for other affluent cities to assert their own manuscript fabrication.

In the case of Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good (1419-1467), we can see an example of a member of the royal family whose collecting patterns reveal and even stimulate new sources of production. The Duke, who moved throughout Brussels, Bruges, and Lille with his court, was focused on collecting a wide range of manuscripts and tapestries. His personal preference revolved around the assortment of images and histories concerning great rulers that preceded him. Specifically, he found an interest in amassing images of ancestors and descendants of Alexander the Great. The attention to collecting objects regarding previous rulers, is both

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indicative of a self-reflection on his own status as Duke and displays the agency the wealthy and noble individuals had over their collections. While the Duke of Burgundy’s manuscripts are thus not exclusively Books of Hours, his collection reveals the multitude of production sites and their success outside of Paris. All of this represents a significant change from earlier production models. “By the time they [Books of Hours] appeared, the production of illuminated manuscripts was no longer the monopoly of monastic scriptoria but had been taken over by lay scribes and artists whose workshops were located in the larger cities where there was wealthy clientele.”

Paris had once been the most important of those cities, however, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this was clearly no longer true.

MS M. 287, the main manuscript in this paper, has been briefly included in discussing the wide scope of manuscript illumination. With the exception of John Plummer’s short discussion of MS M. 287 in his catalogue The Last Flowering, it is not the subject of any noteworthy publication. Other catalogues and surveys mention this manuscript only very briefly. The context in which manuscript M. 287 has been mentioned is meant to be part of the descriptions

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for a standard Book of Hours, or for a general understanding of the placement and inclusion of
certain imagery and prayers. The curatorial description from the Morgan Library is the only
significant treatment of as Morgan Library manuscript M. 287.

There is little that is certain regarding the production and provenance of the manuscript. The Curator’s description notes that the binding is from the 15th century and it has been
determined that the miniatures had been partially repainted in the 19th century. MS M. 287 is
small in size, at 7 x 5 inches, these measurements most likely reflects the private use of the
manuscript. The book includes: The Calendar, Gospel sequences, Obsecro te, O intemerate,
[including Gaude flor virginali [Joy of the Virginal Flower] and prayers to Christ and the
Virgin], Missa beate Marie virginia, Hours of the Virgin for Rome, Seven penitential psalms,
Litany and short prayers, Hours of the Cross, Hours of the Holy Ghost, Offices of the Dead for
Liège, Prayer to the Trinity, Prayer against sudden death and miscellaneous prayers, Crux Christi
sit semper mecum (this specific prayer appears in another Bruges manuscript, found by
Leroquais, Les livres d’heures, II p.12, B.N.Lat. 10554) and other prayers to the Cross, Suffrages
to SS. John the Baptist, Christopher, Michael, Anthony, Nicholas, Sebastian, Adrian, Stephen,
Bartholomew, Peter, Paul, Andrew, and Claude. One of the most striking pieces of information
to understand from the contents of this manuscript, are the inclusion of prayers that are not part
of a standard Book of Hours, such as, the Crux Christi sit semper mecum prayer. In addition, the
suffrages include only male Saints, this indicates that the patron was a man and would allow us

8Ibid

9Pierpont Morgan Library, “Curatorial description on Ms.M.287,” 1-4,
http://corsair.themorgan.org/msdescr/BBM0287a.pdf

10 Pierpont Morgan Library, “Curatorial description on Ms.M.287,” 1-4,
to presume that this manuscript would not have been gifted to a woman at the time of its production.

As for the provenance of this manuscript, it seems to have been originally made in the 15th century for the man depicted on fol. 21r (Figure. 1). The primary owner after the pictured individual is from the 17th century: The owner was Barbe de Lesaet, Comtesse du Saint Empire, wife of Balthazar de Rennel. Despite the fact that this book was written for a man it did not seem to prevent the woman owner from identifying with this object when it came into her possession. After Barbe de Lesaet died in 1637, the only remaining information is that this manuscript was repainted in the nineteenth century and in 1907 the Morgan Library purchased the book from Olschki.\(^{11}\)

Despite the changes made to the manuscript there are many attributes of the miniatures that relate to both Late Medieval Flemish and French manuscript production. Regarding what can be determined about the style of the miniatures before the repainting, there are two probable schools of artists or illuminators involved with the production. The School of the Egerton Master and the School of Guillebert de Mets are the most widely accepted artistic attributions for the miniatures.\(^{12}\)

The School of the Master of Guillebert de Mets had been most active from 1410-1445. It has been posited that the school may have been located in Ghent due to the inclusion of a Ghent calendar and specific saints associated with that locale in various Books of Hours he had previously illuminated, although this remains open to dispute.\(^{13}\) John Plummer catalogues MS


\(^{12}\) Plummer, The Last Flowering, 10.

M. 287 as produced by the “circle of the Master of Guillebert de Mets” with the possibility of someone from the Egerton school at work for a few of the illuminations. It does seem however—as would have been the case with most manuscripts- that the miniatures would have been a group effort, created by more than one illuminator. The style evident in the manuscript can be seen in another Morgan Library Manuscript MS. M. 304 fol. 22r (Figure. 2). MS M. 304 fol. 22r, produced in Flanders, around the year 1445. That illuminator is called “the school of Simon Marmion”. The use of the acanthus decoration, the wide floral frames, and landscapes in the background of the historiated initials are all indicative of common stylistic motifs found within the illuminated manuscripts produced by the Master of Guillebert de Mets. He was also known for the inclusion of marginal imagery that flowed within the acanthus leaves. In this particular manuscript folio, the husband and wife, patrons, are pictured within the margins. They kneel on either corner praying inward towards the liturgical ceremony depicted in the decorated initial. Next to the female patron is a nude torso of a man emerging from one of the decorative acanthus leaves.

While we can only identify that these miniatures are indicative of the circle or school of these major artists, the illuminators must be understood in terms of what is known of those artists. The Egerton Master was born in The Netherlands and became a popular manuscript artist in Paris. Rosy Schilling gives an in depth description regarding the style associated with the

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14 Plummer, The Last Flowering, 10.


16 Dogaer, Flemish Miniature Painting in the 15th and 16th Centuries, 33.

Egerton Master as revealed in Egerton MS 1070 [Hours of Renè d’Anjou] of The British Library in London. The British Library gives a detailed description of this manuscript. Egerton MS 1070 was produced around 1410, by a variety of artists and schools. The main illuminations are attributed to the Egerton Master, however, it is believed this manuscript was also illuminated by the Boucicaut Workshop, a follower of the Parement Master, and a follower for the Master of Mazarine. Rosy Shilling argues that he was influenced by the Limbourg Brothers as well as Italian tendencies in design and composition.\textsuperscript{18}

Although he does not copy entire illuminations from the Limbourgs, an obvious inclination to emulate their aesthetic becomes evident within the marginal acanthus decoration and the three-dimensional architectural space within certain miniatures.\textsuperscript{19} An example of the architectural representations created by the Egerton Master within the Hours of Renè d’Anjou can be seen in fol. 54v of Egerton MS 1070 (Figure. 3). The illumination on fol. 54v depicts the setting for the Office of the Dead. There are clear representations of architecture: the pink columns frame the center with the altar, retable, pall draped coffin, and candles. The ribbed vaults in the apse help create depth and height within the picture. The congregation is placed behind wooden barriers, the blacked-hooded figures to the left are professional mourners, usually monks, and to the right are lay mourners. Although there are many differences, both the architectural design and the wide floral frames can be related and compared to MS M. 287 fol. 29r (Figure. 4). The church architecture, the space it encompasses, and its significance regarding the illustrative program in the manuscript, MS M. 287 will be developed later within this paper.


It is imperative to compare a Book of Hours to others that may have been produced in the same environment. The place of production, as indicated by artists or codicology of the manuscript may indicate which prayers and images were to be included. The entire manuscript is accompanied by a calendar unique to each locale. Knowing what was typical in areas of production aids in understanding what may have been unique and therefore, was commissioned to be included by the patron.

It is essential to consider the patron of the Book of Hours when discussing these manuscripts. Even if he or she remains unidentified, as is the case in MS M. 287, the patron may have determined some prayers or accessory texts of the manuscript and may have asked for specific content in the images. The patron of MS M. 287 is evident in his portrait in fol. 21r (Figure. 1). In this miniature, we see a male patron represented kneeling before Mary and Child who is enthroned and flanked by two angels. While this manuscript includes the patron’s portrait, there are no inscriptions or family crests present in the manuscript to identify this particular male patron. Nevertheless, the image on fol. 21r (Figure. 1) of Mary and Child with the patron allows the historian to comprehend that this particular patron wanted to be known, recognized, and associated with this manuscript. The reasons for this could be many. Perhaps, as we have seen in centuries before, this was a manuscript to be gifted to someone else; or simply this could be to assert the patron’s piety and devotion to the Virgin through the commission and use of the book. An exploration of the patron’s relationship to this book will be carried out in a more specific context below, however, first it is important to look at fol. 21r (Figure. 1) and the way the patron is represented within this miniature.

In the miniature, the patron shares the same space with the enthroned Virgin and Child. Such a depiction, although not unusual, is perfectly representative of the spiritual closeness one
sought to gain from praying with a Book of Hours. The codex and the miniatures inside become self-reflexive of the spiritual purpose, and the performed prayer and object together act as an intercessor between person and God.\textsuperscript{20}

Books of Hours were used for multiple purposes. First and foremost, Books of Hours functioned as prayer books or guides for one’s own religious devotion regardless of where one was praying, either in church or home, “But these art objects, were also prayer books- guides to devotion that recorded religious practice for their owners.”\textsuperscript{21}


Chapter 2: The Presence of the Church

Since readers of Books of Hours view their illumination as a reflection of their own life and part of their devotion, these miniatures begin to act in a way similar to how Anne Harris describes stained glass windows.\textsuperscript{22} She says of the windows of Chartres: “when medieval viewers saw shoemakers holding a stained glass window, they saw an object from a liturgical complex, not the aesthetic visual field of modernist art history. They saw an associative and performative thing.”\textsuperscript{23} While relating these two art objects seems unusual, they reflect the metaphysical and meditative relationship imagery produced for and by the church space and the Church as an institution had on the medieval mind. Images from both a stained glass window and manuscripts influenced and reflected the devotional mindset of the individual Christian, because the way in which they were received. Images in MS M. 287 fol.29r (Figure. 4) and fol. 110r (Figure. 5) transcend the simple status of a visual aid in their function as devotional mediation, whether public or private, and become a reference to the actions from each participating party that the patron witnesses inside the church. Both miniatures depict a church environment, although they represent two different types of communal prayers. In presenting this topic there must be a consideration on the broader idea of how images functioned and were received during the medieval era.

In early Christian society and the beginning of early medieval culture, images were not widely accepted within the church. To a person in the Twenty-First century, the idea of imagery


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 8. http://differentvisions.org/issue1PDFs/Harris.pdf.
being wrong or forbidden seems foreign, however many theologians who spoke against images, were referencing Exodus, The Second Commandment, when they disavowed images:

> Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shall not bow down to them or serve them: for I The Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep My commandments.24

Nevertheless, in complete disregard of the biblical teachings, in the Middle Ages, art was a popular phenomenon and became an inevitable part of society. The acceptance of the reception of imagery in a church space became an essential part of the Christian mind.

Certain theologians accepted imagery as an aid in memorization and mediation of prayer. In the early seventh century, Pope Gregory the Great had much to say about the iconoclastic tendencies that were occurring under the rule of Bishop Serenus of Marseilles. Pope Gregory likened images to a form of reading for the illiterate. He asserted the importance of pictures within the laity’s own capacity for learning. Knowing the stories these images depicted reinforced their understanding of the content. Whether these pictures could actually be ‘read’ is a discussion all on its own, but the aid of these images for meditation and prayer was widely accepted, however, still challenged in the form and frequency they should be used during the mid-late Middle Ages.25 Imagery of biblical scenes, the lives of saints, and Christ and Mary’s life cycles all became a part of the devotional rituals of Christians.

24 Exod 20:4-6 King James Version

By the time Books of Hours were created, owners were accustomed to meditate upon illuminations for spiritual inspiration, and their presentation in late medieval images accommodated such contemplation: “They are miniature spaces. They resemble three-dimensional shadow boxes in the way they frame and control the scenes they contain.” These spaces can reflect the physical world patrons imagine themselves within, but also function as a devotional guide to the viewer in their prayers. Cynthia Hahn shows how the visual contemplation of images such as, the crucifixion became a viable means for devotion in later medieval art objects and images.27

In the later middle ages it was believed that optical experience, combined with prayer and meditation, could lead the viewer towards a spiritual and faithful vision closer to God.28 The subject of vision has been researched and discussed on many levels regarding the nature of optical and visionary seeing. Beginning with commentary on Romans 1.20, Jeffery Hamburger breaks down the many ideas and theological perspectives on the metaphysical significance of sight. The omnipresent creation of God in the form of the natural world was the foundation of striving for visionary experience.

The art of meditative recollection was both imaginative and affective in so far as it recognized that the products of fantasy and memory are the matrix and materials of all human thought, and that those products are fictive image – not words and not concepts but images and pictures, constructions that you can hear, smell, taste, touch and above all see mentally.29

26 Reinburg, French Book of Hours: An Archival of Prayer, c. 1400-1600, 123.


28 Ibid.

29 Much more can be and has been said about this topic. The relationship the owner has to these books on a physical and metaphysical level is a topic in its own right. For the information above I cite Jeffrey F. Hamburger, “Speculations on Speculation. Vision and Perception in the Theory and Practice of Mystical Devotion,” in Deutsche Mystik im abendländischen Zusammenhang (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 2000), 396-397. But one would also find more on this subject through Cynthia Hahn, “Purification, sacred action, and the Vision of God: Viewing Medieval
I would argue that such devotions do not occur only in terms of biblical imagery. Depictions of the church space can also be valuable in moving the viewer towards a spiritual vision.

Connecting private devotion with a place of worship links viewers and their prayers to the spiritual realm and encourages an active or performative state. Whether people were praying for deceased family members, in an attempt to release them from purgatory – at this point it was believed only the living could save the souls of the dead- or praying in an act of devotion to place themselves closer to God, the Virgin, or saint, it was an act of piety.

The representation of a space and spatial forms becomes a complex constructed web between nature and society. Henri Lefebvre indulges in an extensive discussion about production, society and the eventual representation and segregation of nature and society. He argues that at the on-set of a capitalist society the integration of monumental products of community – i.e. sculptures and cathedrals- become disengaged with the space of the natural world. By the time Gothic cathedrals were being produced they became representative of much more than a space to dwell and separate from the natural space of the earth. “What is involved therefore, is a production – the production of a space. Not merely a space of ideas, an ideal space, but a social and mental space.”30 The familial and performative rituals that occurred in these church spaces were productions of a society striving to assert itself through its political and economic ties while still holding an innate desire to represent from their own perspective the world God had created. The representation of the church space we will see within illuminations

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of MS M. 287 reflect these ideologies, since the prayers and images were meant for recitation, devotion, and ritual.

**The Standard Production of Books of Hours**

Before discussing the specific depiction of space in MS M. 287, it is necessary to consider the standard format, use, and illumination of a Book of Hours. By describing the foundation upon which MS M. 287 was created, we will have a better understanding of the spiritual connotations medieval book owners associated with these manuscripts. Additionally, this background will allow the modern scholar to place this manuscript within the milieu of production at this time. The structure and format of a Book of Hours becomes a starting place for both the scholar and user since it can divulge to the reader place and time of use.

While it might seem as if these Books of Hours would be used exclusively in personal ritual, they were often utilized through prayer practice in the church. In ecclesiastical settings, private prayer and communal prayer were dependent on the ritual cues from the priest.\(^{31}\) Despite this dual function in prayer practice, the books do not present any conflict. In fact, Eamon Duffy states, “Everyone at Mass was expected to participate in two quite different modes – private prayer, focusing on the relation between the Host and the Passion of Christ, and ritual action, geared to the community.”\(^{32}\) Devotion may be private, but the act itself can become a communal ritual, part of a tradition steeped in orality and community.

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Books of Hours have a standard set of prayers, the Hours of the Virgin, and each codex begins with a calendar. The Calendar was essential to the reader, it let them know the special celebrations and feast days as well as days dedicated to saints. It was a guide for the devotions of the reader in essential ways, allowing the book to become a malleable tool for prayer.

The calendar however, has another use, invaluable to the modern researcher. Since it includes specific saint’s feats and variable liturgical elements it can tell one where the book comes from or where it would have been used. “A calendar thus conveys to the trained eye a synopsis of the history of a region and suggests where the book in which it appears originates or was intended to be used.”33 The standard collection in Books of Hours would include a set of prayers and hours, including Gospel sequences, the prayers Obsecro te and O intemerata. These would be followed by the Hours to Virgin, if the book was commissioned by someone of wealth, Hours of the Cross, and the Holy Spirit or specific sets of hours they requested would have been included. The last four standard sections would usually consist of: the Penitential Psalms, the Litany, the Office of the Dead, and Suffrages of the Saints. Since most of this was ordinary it is easy for the modern viewer to gauge whether or not a Book of Hours had been completed, added to, or was the result of an unfinished project.

Books of Hours were mainly a devotion to the Virgin Mary and her role as the bearer of Christ. The Hours of the Virgin are the core prayers of the book, included directly after the Obsecro te and O intemerata prayers.34 The strengthened cult of the Virgin which began in the twelfth century was a growing and continuous presence in the Middle Ages. While Christ’s Passion was a primary focus of prayer, Mary and her essential role in the Passion of Christ

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33 Harthan, ed., The Book of Hours, 16
34 Ibid., 17.
becomes the second most important cult in the Middle Ages. These prayers were the main 
function of the book and allowed a special relationship between the devotee and the mother of 
God. This was often conceived of as a more empathetic and emotionally charged relationship. “Reciting the Hours of the Virgin represented an avenue into a world of personal religious 
experience formed by centuries of Church tradition. By praying from a book of hours a lay 
person enjoyed spiritual privilege, usually reserved for the clergy.”

Prayers to the Virgin were meant to recognize her role in Christ’s life and by association 
herself. The miniatures associated with the Hours of the 
Virgin narrate her life and although they often represent extra biblical events, they also often 
reflect prayers, originating in Psalms or Old Testament scripture, prayers that she herself could 
have read during her life. Other images represent standard Gospel scenes from her life such as 
the Annunciation and Nativity. Perhaps most remarkable is that despite the fact that Books of Hours are dedicated to the Virgin, she is depicted relatively sparingly. Aside from the Hours of 
the Virgin cycle, she appears rarely, and it is evident that it is not the Virgin who is important but 
the fact that she is a vessel for salvation. As a whole, her representation is featured in scenes that 
emphasize her role in Christ’s life.

Many prayers included were meant to be recited every day, alternately some were for 
special occasions and liturgical ceremonies, such as the Office of the Dead. The prayers of the 
Office of the Dead were habitually included towards the end of the manuscript, mimicking 
deaths place within one’s own life. While it may seem unusual to pair funerary prayers with

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devotional prayers to Mary, an indirect association between with the Virgin and death is an essential element of her cult for medieval devotees. As Catherine Yvard writes, “…she [Mary] was a reassuring presence and was particularly solicited at the crucial moment of death: a mother for the last breath as everyone had for his first.”37 *Obsecro te*, the first prayer within Books of Hours relates to timely death. It is a prayer asking for serenity and forewarning of one’s eventual death. “And at the end of my life show me your face, and reveal to me the day and hour of my death. Please hear and receive this humble prayer and grant me eternal life. Listen and hear me, Mary, sweetest virgin, Mother of God and mercy. Amen.”38 Mary becomes without a doubt the second most important figure to whom a person would pray in preparation for his or her most vulnerable moment of life. It might be said that the medieval population found Mary more sympathetic than a judging God, since she herself experienced a great loss in her lifetime.

Liturgical rituals are essential to the entire function of these books and are often depicted in the imagery of the miniatures. The Office of the Dead was located at the end of Books of Hours and served as a reminder that one should always be praying for one’s own and a loved one’s salvation. The Office of the Dead miniatures could be depicted in many ways, since the funeral service had the potential to be an elaborate procession and ceremony. The depictions range from the liturgical proceeding of the Office of the Dead, to a burial scene, to a depiction of the procession to the burial site, or might represent the owner on his or her deathbed. Despite these many variations, a codex usually contained only one miniature that preceded this prayer. It should be noted that this particular prayer would have asserted an exceptional moment for the reader because the same prayer would have been recited by the priest at the altar. Therefore, the


reader was able to participate in the prayer instead of performing a parallel ritual act which was usual in their use of a Book of Hours inside the church.\(^{39}\)

The miniatures of the Office make it clear that death was meant to be present in these books, in the Church and by rumination in the devotee’s minds. Yvard explains that the performance of this prayer, the Office of the Dead, would usually take place inside the chancel and over the coffin of the dead—the situation we see depicted in fol. 110r of MS M. 287 (Figure. 5). The laity would be separated from the sacred space where this ritual was performed.\(^{40}\) These books allowed for their experience to become a supplement and for them to feel closer to the procession and proceedings.

Given that the Morgan Library manuscript M. 287 contains little information concerning its history of production and use, it is imperative to decipher the imagery of the miniatures to try to comprehend the context for the commission of this particular Book of Hours. While the imagery on fol.29r and 110r (Figures. 4 and 5) is fairly consistent with the imagery found within other Books of Hours made within the fifteenth century, a close look at how the folios may relate to one another and to other comparative images is key to interpreting this manuscript and understanding how the representation of ecclesiastical space would affect the reader’s devotional experience. Despite the private nature of these prayer books, the inclusion of church space would certainly heighten the experience for these devout readers. The depiction of church space becomes a reflection of the ideas regarding meditation as well as the importance of the architecture found within society. A space within which the Christian community would perform their prayer and devotion was imperative, and through the pictorial reproduction of these spaces

\(^{39}\)Wieck, *Time Sanctified*, 104.

an association is made—a direct link between the mental space of the devotion and the physical space of a cathedral. The written word was directly connected to the visualization of space for this particular experience of prayer in society. The representation within Books of Hours such as MS M. 287 further connects space with devotion and would aid in a more seamless visionary experience for the reader, which coincides with the sensory experience regarding the use of images with devotion.\textsuperscript{41}

It is common for miniatures within Books of Hours, I would argue, to depict architecture and the clergy in an attempt to simulate the space in which liturgical ceremonies occurred. The recreation of church space previously mentioned in the Egerton Master’s MS 1070 [Hours of Rene d’Anjou] fol. 54v (Figure. 3) similarly occurs in fol. 110r of MS. M. 287 (Figure. 5).

In the foreground of this miniature there are candles and an elaborate funeral pall covering the bier. Professional mourners, draped in heavy black hooded robes are to the left of the miniatures, grieving along with monks, most likely represented in the midst of singing and reciting the Office of the Dead.\textsuperscript{42} The entire scene is set within an apse, radiating chapel, or even perhaps a chantry of a church or chapel, defined by the windows and arches set in the background of the entire scene. By viewing this three-dimensional space, the readers have the potential to reenact a physical liturgical experience; one that they had in church, now repeated in the act of personal prayer. The notion of such repetition in personal prayer and the prospective use of the book in private is literally depicted in the actions of the marginal figure below. Seated on a bench and enclosed within the decorated border of fol. 110r (Figure. 5), a mourner is

\textsuperscript{41} Lefebvre, \textit{The Production of Space}, 258-262.

\textsuperscript{42} Wieck. \textit{Painted Prayers}, 117.
represented, reading, praying, and meditating over a book. This image is a reflection of the moment the reader is experiencing alone and a recommendation that reflects a new spiritual custom. The ceremony of the Office of the Dead that is depicted within these folios, was a fairly new ritual practice for the church in the fifteenth century. It seems that although the prayers and Mass for the Office of the Dead existed beginning in the ninth century, it did not become a communal and daily ritual until the fifteenth century.

While private prayer is emphasized within the marginal frame, the miniatures in MS M. 287 also represent public ritual and shared space as we have seen in this miniature (although the depiction of the parallel of private devotion is unique to the miniature of the Office of the Dead). A shared space of ritual is apparent as well in the miniature on fol. 29r (Figure. 4), the depiction of Missa beate Marie virginis (Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary). A Priest and his acolyte are performing the Mass to the Virgin. The priest is tonsured, looking upwards at the Virgin enthroned with the Child. He raises his hands in the midst of prayer with an opened manuscript, paten, and chalice present on the altar. This Mass prayer and imagery is not common for a Book of Hours.

43 Pierpont Morgan Library, “Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, accessed January – May 2017, http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/22/76837. The online description describes the marginal figure as a mourner, perhaps it was a lay mourner due to the brown color of the clock. The face is covered by the cloak similar to the way the cloaks cover the faces of the professional mourners on the left side of fol. 110r. Either way the identification of this particular figure could be debated in many ways, however, I believe the dress does indicate a mourner with an indeterminable status.

44 Harthan, ed., The Book of Hours, 17.


46 The identification of the acolyte could be argued against. The idea that this figure is a deacon has merit, since the figure depicted is tonsured with white robes. However, the only description of this scene is found in the Morgan Library descriptions online. Morgan Library, “Medieval & Renaissance Manuscripts,” accessed January-May, 2017, http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/9/76837. The Pierpont Morgan Library, “Curatorial Description on Ms. M. 287,” 1-4, does not address or attempt to describe the figures in this particular image.
If a Mass does occur, it will usually be this Mass for the Virgin as depicted in MS M. 287. An illumination of a different Mass can be seen from another perspective in the Requiem Mass miniature on fol. 129v of MS M.157 (Figure. 6). MS M. 157 was created ca. 1440, in France.\(^47\) The miniature makes a telling comparison. Once again, this is a funerary prayer taking place inside a Book of Hours however, unlike the example in MS M. 287, rather than an emphasis on prayer, the miniature highlights the celebration of the Mass in a diagonal arrangement of the composition which allows for an open view of the three-dimensional space of the church as well as the ceremony of the Mass. Within both images, it may be assumed, the priests are in the midst of a prayer, either holding, or about to receive the Eucharistic wafer, but in MS M. 157 fol. 129v (Figure. 6) the ceremony receives a greater emphasis on the crucial role of the Eucharistic wafer. This essential object of the host is highlighted in MS M. 157 and reflects the importance of the material body of Christ for the late medieval Christian. The sight of the host was indeed a vision much to be desired and in both miniatures, the moment of viewing is depicted.

The worshippers who owned these Books of Hours are thus supplied with an opportunity for observation and meditation. In some sense by looking, they would be participating in this liturgical ritual in the same way they would in church. Most of the clergy would not have been closer to the action of Mass in the church than the vantage point in what is depicted in these two images. Thereby, viewing this image, as Roger S. Wieck has argued, the manuscript owner could once again enact “a spiritual Communion.”\(^48\)

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In *Illuminating Faith The Eucharist in Medieval Life and Art*, Roger S. Wieck reaffirms that, “...during the High and Late Middle Ages, the Eucharistic wafer and its Elevation became the focus of the ceremony.” He argues that depictions of the event became a way for lay people to continue their meditation and prayer towards the Eucharist and the Mass, which presented their devotion through the image on a private level. The moment the wafer rises is the pivotal moment of prayer. The entire church is meant to be physically present in their witness of the act of communion. This moment is equated to the ultimate sacrifice, the crucifixion, and the transformation of the corporeality of Christ. Eamon Duffy deepens this understanding one step further. He likens this act of raising the host during the Mass as a physical unification of Heaven and Earth. In its depiction it can stand to represent their earthly act of seeing, which promises a heavenly reward, which is followed in the ceremony and the independent personal aspect of silent prayer.

For the medieval reader the unification of prayer, devotion, and spiritual seeing is comprehended through the physical relationship one had with the book. What unifies this moment further is the relationship between the codex and reality. The depiction of the architecture and church accoutrements aid in reliving this moment, and the physical act of holding this book in his or her hands connects the patron to the essential meaning of the imagery though multiple senses -not just the visual- but through the sense of touch. This prospective transformative experience can only occur through this particular medium in a private moment.

Given that, as argued above, these books share imagery, approach, structure, and other aspects, and given that these books are ubiquitous, one must ask how can any one book be

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considered unique? How can any single example distinguish itself from the others? In attempt to answer these questions we must bring our attention to an aspect of their production. While Books of Hours became an essential part of the religious community in medieval society, and their production sites were numerous, it is important to remember that, they were also made singly, one by one. Each book is in some way a reflection of the requirements and demands of a patron. These are multi-layered objects that allow an exploration of medieval devotion and personal life. MS. M. 287 contains specific images that ‘open a window’ for the historian to inquire about the connection between a patron with his or her manuscript.
Chapter 3: Inside the Imagery

Many scholars, for example, Roger S. Wieck, Virginia Reinburg, and Kathleen Ashley have asserted the importance of Books of Hours as a functional meditation between Church and home and on a spiritual level between person and God. As discussed above, fol. 29r (Figure. 4), depicts a priest celebrating the Mass of the Blessed Virgin. At the altar inside of the church, both the priest and his acolyte stand in front of an image of Mary and the Christ child enthroned. Fol.110r (Figure. 5) is a depiction of the Office of the Dead, part of a person’s funerary ceremonies, which usually entailed services in the night that led to a burial procession at daybreak depending on the funds provided. In the miniature, the mourners are praying for the deceased in a formal occasion. Customarily, a deceased person of wealth and high status had paid mourners participate in the recitation of the Office of the Dead. These monks would, at this time, be the only people who could recite these certain prayers, specific to the funeral setting.\(^{51}\) By assessing the context presented inside these folios it is vital to understand what a viewer would have normally witnessed inside his or her own church. This chapter will focus on observing the imagery of the miniature that has been repeated throughout the manuscript MS M. 287, and it will be compared with miniatures in the Morgan Library’s, MS M. 19.

The observations we have made of MS M. 287, place this manuscript within its historical and religious context. A more meticulous look will attempt to discover what the patron desired from these miniatures and this book. By making a closer observation of the details we will try to uncover how the imagery found within the altar reredos in multiple folios of MS M. 287 specifically relate to the representation and the potential real church space, all in relation to the manuscripts patron.

\(^{51}\) Wieck, Painted Prayers, 117.
Above the altar of the miniature fol. 29r (Figure. 4) we see a striking emphasis on the ‘ornament’ of the chapel; its paintings are represented with a lively devotion to detail.

Immediately above the altar, there is a reredos with the imagery of the crucifixion surrounded by figures. The detail, seen in fol. 29r (Figure. 7) displays gold figures set into a blue background. Thus the reredos displays the key sacrificial moment of Christ’s life. But, this is not the only painting in the chapel or apse. The reredos is set below an altarpiece painting of the Virgin and Child. One remarkable aspect of the arrangement is that the image of the Virgin and child seems almost three-dimensional. There is a corresponding organization in the way the Christ child looks up to the Virgin and the acolyte looks up to the Priest. Simultaneously, the Virgin is seated on a bench in the painting and is turned toward the direct eye line of the Priest, almost as if she is looking at both Christ and the priest. Displaying the crucifixion scene below at the moment the priest is praying to the Virgin Mary develops a complex amalgamation of meaning. Pairing the imagery of the Virgin with the crucifixion allows for the crucifixion scene to act as a foreshadowing of the events to come for the Christ child who is seen above. This foreshadowing, illuminates the meanings of the prayers at the altar. Without both of these moments in biblical history - the Virgin’s birth of Christ and the crucifixion - there would be no reason for a priest to be praying to them, no salvation. Simultaneously, the addition of the crucifixion piece can be an indication of what was devotionally, most important to the patron of this Book of Hours and a reminder of ultimately, what he should be praying about. These scenes, within a prayer book, dedicated to the Virgin through this sort of detail reinforce reverence towards Christ:

Popular piety seems here to have absorbed and interiorized clerical objectives without any sense of incongruity and the cult of Mary appears to have been successfully harnessed to underline and reinforce a programme of Christian education, both in affective devotion to the Passion and in the elements of Christian life.  

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Mary’s relationship to the medieval book owner was not necessarily only about Mary, but also concerns the relationship to Christ.

Accessory texts, variants that could be added to a Book of Hours and that appear throughout the manuscript M. 287, aid our understanding of our patrons concerns. MS M. 287 includes prayers that feature the cross and others concerning death. Specifically, the prayer *Crux Christi sit semper mecum* (The Cross of Christ is Always with me), has been identified as occurring in a Bruges manuscript and is included in this manuscript spanning fol. 137v-142. Accompanying the prayer is a depiction of a cross in a marginal position. The cross is flanked by two angels with a crown of thorns around the vertical axis. Within this prayer on MS M. 287 fol. 139v (Figure. 8) however, the presence and value of the cross lies only in its relationship to the crucifixion. This imagery and prayer is not unprecedented in Books of Hours, but it is not typical either and its inclusion must have been requested by the patron.

Reinforcing our understanding of the patron’s concerns our attention is brought to other added prayers in the manuscript aside from the required core texts. In this Book of Hours, preceding the *Crux Christi sit semper mecum* prayer are the Hours of the Cross, prayers to the Trinity and prayers against sudden death. The Hours of the Cross were not unusual inclusions for Books of Hours, however, prayers against sudden death clearly represent a prominent fear during this time period due to the threats of plague and sickness and a concurrent desire to die a ‘good death.’ The fear of sudden death was even more urgent in the previous century due to the epidemic, the Black Plague, but cultural ideals had been established through this time period

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about proper death. It was agreed that one should be in their bed at home, surrounded by their loved ones who were praying for the individual’s soul. The moment of death should come only after he or she had taken their last communion and rites. The inclusion of these additional prayers against sudden death and the supplement of the crucifixion scenes in the miniature for the Mass to the Virgin, as well as the illustrated prayer point to certain devotional concerns of the patron. He was concerned with Christ’s death and made a connection to it, in hope for his own salvation through the cross.

Repetition of themes and of imagery is another important cue that helps further define the devotional emphases of this manuscript. The crucifixion scene appears once again, on the reredos above the altar in fol. 110r (Figure. 5) in the depiction of the Office of the Dead liturgy. In the detail seen in fol. 110r (Figure. 9) the crucifixion scene is portrayed in the same way with the blue background and gold figures. Here, it looks as though it is a bit smaller in size; however, it functions in the same way. It is once again depicted as a reredos, behind the altar, in front of the priest as he performs the liturgy for the Office of the Dead. The crucifixion scene acts as the same reminder it did in fol. 29r (Figure. 4), of the ultimate sacrifice, the purpose for the life and death of Christ, and perhaps, in this particular moment it gives solace to those experiencing a death or the pain of loss. Depicting the crucifixion scene in an Office of the Dead image is not unusual. MS. M. 159 fol. 104r (Figure. 10), -located in the Morgan Library- although, dated a bit later than MS M.287, is an example of another way the crucifixion could have been included for the Office of the Dead imagery.

55 Wieck, Painted Prayers, 117.

The crucifixion scene in MS M. 159 fol. 104 (Figure. 10) depicts a relief sculpture. Perhaps we can suggest that in general the iconography of the Crucifixion can help the viewer relate to the moment of salvation and perhaps, give those worshipping before this image a feeling of participation within the biblical moment and as part of a larger cultural context. In the detail of MS M. 287 fol. 110r (Figure. 9), however, the crucifixion reredos is situated right above the head of the priest. By locating the crucifixion directly situated with the sacrifice on the altar, this creates a clear line of focus regarding the meaning of the Mass.

Additionally, one wonders about the inclusion of repetition of the crucifixion reredos. Despite the above-noted reasons to include the crucifixion with the Office of the Dead, that is that prayers of the Mass to the Virgin and the Office of the Dead are directly and indirectly indicative of Christ’s sacrifice, the recurrence of the same reredos, in the same blue and gold, raises the question of whether the images in MS M. 287 are based on an actual reredos in the church that the patron frequented in his daily life.

Although the architectural space differs between the two folios, and the liturgical moments being depicted are two separate ceremonies enacted on two separate occasions they may refer to a particular church. Roger Wieck cautions art historians: “Accurate or ‘Journalistic’ reporting in the modern sense was far from the primary objective of illustrators whose main concern was rather to augment the Book’s religious content in a manner pleasing to the customers.”57 However, the repetition of the reredos involves both the spiritual nature of the context and its physical presence in the corporeality of the church. Given that we have already argued that a patron would want to use a manuscript of this nature to reaffirm his community, the

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57 Wieck, Time Sanctified, 35.
suggestion that he would want his own church depicted is not untoward.\(^58\) Whether MS.M.287 was utilized in private or public prayer, or perhaps both, the miniatures may indicate a specific church. The depiction of the patron’s ‘home’ church would have had the potential of both reinforcing devotional prayer and elevating the patron’s social status. Although the clues are scarce and our conclusions are speculative, they begin to paint a picture of the devotional life of the person who commissioned this art object.

As a contrast to the architectural depictions in MS M. 287, I would like to address MS M. 19. Also located at the Morgan Library, these two manuscripts have a similar historical context. MS M. 19 was created in approximately 1440, in Belgium, presumably Bruges, however, it seems that there may be a discrepancy and there is also evidence that this manuscript could have been produced in Northern France. In addition, there is an unidentified donor, who is depicted in one of the miniatures, fol. 16r (Figure 11). The style is attributed to The Master of the Gold Scrolls, according to the curatorial notes of the Morgan Library, however the illuminations are not to the same standard as the Master’s usual output.

Both MS M. 287 and MS M. 19 have a similarly complicated, uncertain history and provenance, but their aesthetics are strikingly dissimilar. Within the folios of MS M. 19 there is not one depiction of a church or architectural motif. The backgrounds are done in a decorative diapered design, gold scroll design or a landscape vignette. In addition, MS M. 19 was not completed, the Litanies are missing from the prayer sequence.\(^59\) The Morgan Library curatorial description states that there are most likely two illuminators and that the second was much


weaker in artistic ability. The one scene that is included within this manuscript that could have had an architectural design, judging by the examples we have already seen, would be fol. 100v (Figure. 12), a funerary service. This depiction, however, foregoes any type of altar, instead behind the draped bier there is a lectern with a large book, big enough for three tonsured clerics to recite the Office of the Dead. This scene depicts the most expansive interior space in the manuscript, as a mourner sits on a bench in front of the bier and two additional mourners stand to the left of the clerics. However, the identifiable gold scroll backgrounds are displayed behind the figures instead of an architectural depictions.60

Despite its difficult history and unfinished state, this manuscript is an appropriate comparison to MS M. 287. It serves as an example of the variety of manuscripts that were produced, their styles, and how the miniatures and prayers included can serve the patron, who is depicted in this manuscript, while notably foregoing the inclusion of recognizable spaces. While MS M. 287 was created by different illuminators, the comparison of these two manuscripts allows modern scholars to observe the variation of style and illumination which may reflect a patron’s commission.

In addition to both fol. 110r and fol. 29r in MS M.287, our attention should focus on the miniatures found on fol. 35r (Figure 13), which begins the Hours of the Virgin. Again, a crucifixion scene is included. Before I address the specific iconography that appears within this Annunciation folio, I would like to discuss the folio in its entirety. In observing fol. 35r (Figure. 13) as an entire folio, it is evident that it contains much more than the Annunciation scene. While the Annunciation does consume the larger part of the folio other biblical moments are depicted

as part of the marginal frame in small vignettes that briefly tell the story that led to this moment.

On the bottom right, the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib is set within a landscape. God, depicted as creator, stands to the left with a golden halo above his head as he greets Eve. Directly above this vignette, in the upper right corner of the page, God the Father, holds an orb of celestial power, and is accompanied by two angels. His power and word is represented as descending from his blessing hand through rays of light that culminates in a dove flying towards Mary. In the bottom left corner, a small vignette includes the symbolic figures of Synogoga and Ecclesia, Synagogue and Church. Ecclesia is nimbed and crowned as she holds a cross inscribed host; Synogoga is veiled with a cloth, blinding her to the realization of Christ as Savior as she holds the Tables of Law and a broken staff. A beautiful peacock fills the letter D. These auxiliary scenes add to the depiction of the Annunciation and act as a shorthand of the story and the role Mary plays in God’s plan. The foreshadowing of events that occur in the Adam and Eve vignette, the symbolic parallel of church and synagogue and the direct transfer of power incarnation from God to Mary fulfill the significance of the main scene. Finally, the vault of the chapel ceiling comes down to frame altar reredos that appears in the background of this folio.

While fol. 35r (Figure. 14) depicts a biblical moment, Mary’s Annunciation, in the background of the space, once more in an anachronistic touch, there is an altar with a gold reredos. While it is impossible to be sure of the imagery given its small size, it would seem to once more be a crucifixion scene. Altars were sometimes included in an Annunciation scene because Mary was always in a state of devout prayer at the time of her conception of Christ, reciting Psalms, or other prayers, as for example in this scene where she reads from the open codex. The Annunciation is the preface in a sense for the crucifixion, the two scenes together allows for the convergence of the Trinity.
Ultimately, I would argue that the inclusion of the three reiterations of the gold and blue reredos in MS M. 287 serves as a focal point and a reminder for this particular patron. A reference to a particular church suggests the comfort of his own community. The connection through prayers emphasizes Mary’s significance and serve as a reminder of the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. The patron could make this devotion, whether physically inside the church or focused on the church within the manuscript during his prayers.

In addition to the mirroring of the liturgical moment, in these three miniatures of MS M. 287, I would like to argue that there is yet one other reflection of the patron’s devotion in the manuscript. On fol. 29r (Figure. 4) the priest and acolyte are praying to the Virgin and Child enthroned during the celebration of mass. While this could be seen as a depiction of an actual liturgical experience in church, it could also be construed as a version of the imagery within fol. 21r (Figure. 1) in which the patron is pictured with the Virgin and Christ Child. Since the miniature of fol. 29r (Figure. 4) is pictured with the priest’s back towards the reader it is illuminated in a point of view that corresponds to the lay person’s experience of mass at church. By illuminating a Mass prayer in front of an image of the Virgin and Child enthroned, one can think of a repetition of the patron’s experience, and an opportunity to visually meditate on becoming spiritually close to the Virgin and Christ. This particular prayer scene enhances this spiritual presence of devotion that was already depicted in the image of the Virgin enthroned on fol. 21r (Figure. 1). The patron was already occupying the same space as the Virgin and Christ Child, but now he can experience the devotion he takes part in within his community through the folios of the Office of the Dead and the Missa beate Marie virginis.

Although I am arguing for specific associations for the patron of the reredos depiction, the imagery of the crucifixion appears in many of the funeral service illuminations in Books of
Hours. The iconography of the crucifix would have been seen as imperative to an understanding of Christ’s sacrifice, becomes a model of the life Christians hoped to live, and also served as a solace to loved ones to know that the deceased is meant to be with the ultimate savior in death. The repetition of this imagery in representations of funeral services makes it evident that the iconography of the crucifixion is necessary in a funerary setting. The crucifixion links death and spiritual afterlife through Christ’s salvation present for both the reader and for those that may have attended these ceremonies. Notwithstanding this clear significance, the depiction of any Mass scene is not a standard inclusion in Books of Hours. While the liturgical Mass prayers were added especially if they were to be used within the church, if a Mass prayer and its illustration was is included, it is usually the Mass to the Virgin. The depiction of this Mass would vary from manuscript to manuscript.  

We have talked extensively about what the patron may have wished to have depicted in his Book of Hours but not of the presence of his own portrait. Patrons that depicted themselves within Books of Hours most likely had more than one goal. Aside from representation of their devotional piety there were other underlying reasons for inserting themselves within the scene. While a donor placing himself at the feet of Mary and Christ Child enthroned –as in fol. 29r (Figure. 4) - is a fairly typical representation, it does literally bring the donor closer to the image of Mary. This may constitute a visual representation for the spiritual closeness the patron felt or wanted to feel in his private prayers. In both instances he would celebrate the Virgin’s role in Christ’s life, and by association glorify himself in the Christian community. As Corinne Shleif writes:

An integral part of the picture, the figure provided a bridge between the viewer and the holy person or scene from salvation history: either the venerator looked out towards the

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viewer, as if meditating or narrating the event and thus acting as interlocutor, or the viewer could find a way into the work by identifying him- or herself with the venerator as a compatriot closer in time and space than the intercessor saints.\(^{62}\)

The representation of the donors within their manuscripts, not in the margins, but integrated into the scenes themselves, was a common phenomenon in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Although, it did occur in earlier depictions, it seems as if the custom of depicting donors in the same space as holy persons became common with the beginning of books being produced in massive numbers in the later middle ages.

A comparable example can be found at the Morgan Library is MS. G. 1 II fol. 295r (Figure. 15). MS. G. 1 II is a French manuscript from the later fifteenth century, around 1475 and has been divided into two manuscripts. Fol. 295r (Figure. 15) depicts a scene of Mary and Christ Child enthroned which fills the manuscript page. To the right the donor is kneeling in prayer. The scene may be taking place in a church, and contains vaults and pointed windows, a familiar setting for the viewer. The patron is kneeling in front of the Virgin, reflecting the act of praying to the image. Spiritually and through meditative vision of the patron, this allows for the enthroned Mary to appear in front of this pious donor.

MS. G 1 II fol. 295r (Figure. 15) is similar to MS M. 287 in that the donor cannot be identified, despite the fact that the donor is portrayed and has his initials and crest illuminated on fol. 149r (Figure. 16).\(^{63}\) The donor is depicted kneeling with clasped hands in prayer as he looks towards and prays to a haloed and enthroned Mary. An intimate scene is depicted as the child embraces the Virgin’s breast and suckles. Mary sits underneath a bell-shaped tapestry, on a red


and gold throne so that her spiritual space is identifiable as heavenly compared to the gray stone floor and walls the patron kneels upon. The Apostle Peter stands behind the donor, one hand on the donor’s shoulder, the other hand holding his attribute of the key to heaven.

One choice that a patron may have made in commissioning a manuscript might have been the selection of which a scene from Mary or Christ’s life he would be depicted. Two previously discussed examples chose the enthroned Mary and child in a church interior, however in the late fifteenth century manuscript MS. M. 250 fol. 14r (Figure. 17) made in Tours, an image shows King Charles VIII as a witness to the resurrected Christ in a landscape. He is represented in a garden, alongside Mary Magdalene who is depicted standing behind him. Such a variant demonstrates the possibilities of the donor’s options.64

One other option does not depict an identifiable space at all. The miniature in MS M. 19 fol. 16r (Figure. 11) depicts the unnamed donor, a woman, wearing a headdress indicative of the early-mid fifteenth century. She kneels in prayer with clasped hands in front of her opened book, perhaps even the manuscript in which this illumination occurs. In showing a manuscript in this way, the woman emphasizes her piety while at the same time honoring her patron saint. Behind the draped table holding the open book stands Apostle Andrew with his attribute, the saltire cross. In comparison to MS M. 287, the imagery does not depict a church space; instead the scene is depicted within a shallow pictorial space with a diapered background. This diapered background is consistent with most of the illuminations in the manuscript and although they are beautiful, they do not specify a location.

Although stylistic differences and approaches to illuminations, when depicting architecture or creating a decorative background, can be a result of customary practices of

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workshops, of scribes and illuminators in the many urban production centers during the fifteenth century, they can also express the explicit desires of the donor. As discussed above, the commissioner of the book could request certain prayers or illuminations to be included in his or her book. As we have seen, although the images were not unexpected they could be directly linked to the donor and the context of the donor’s life in many ways. Each one opens a window, into the secular and secondary function of Books of Hours. In the case of MS M. 287, we can argue that the depiction of the space of the church as a setting for a prayer creates a devotional world for the reader.
Chapter 4: Private vs. Public & Social Status

Although the devotional use of Books of Hours continues to be a subject for further research and documentation, in conjunction with its devotional use, scholars have become increasingly interested in the material qualities of these manuscripts and have begun to focus on the book as an object in its own right. Research has begun to focus on books as objects that enrich the owners’ social and secular life, especially Books of Hours beginning in the fifteenth century. The growing nonspiritual function of Books of Hours is directly linked to the importance of familial ties and the increase in literacy throughout society. “Self-referential, yes: these devices were for their own eyes, but they were also for the eyes of their friends, family, and descendants.”

Kathleen Ashley has shown the way in which Books of Hours became a documentation of family life and discussed their critical role in producing social status in late medieval culture. Noble and courtly families would add their own personal information into their Books of Hours as documentation of important events and records for future descendants. These manuscripts are already objects created with imagery and prayers chosen by the patron or commissioner, but this written documentation begins to make Books of Hours much more than a personal prayer book.

It was also at this point in history that the use of heraldry became standard in society, and it became an integral part of the decoration of Books of Hours. The individuality of family or personhood was becoming a prominent aspect in society. As we observed previously, MS M. G 1 fol. 149r (Figure 16) located in the Morgan library, contains a depiction of the family crest of

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the patron of the manuscript. Unfortunately, due to damages to the imagery within this folio, the crest is unidentifiable, but heraldry was a growing common attribute in manuscripts that supplemented the depiction of the patron. The damages this crest has suffered looks as though it may have been intentional. While the crest shape is still fairly intact only the symbol that would have been identifiable is essentially rubbed or smudged out of the manuscript page. Perhaps, an owner of the book who came after the original did not want to be associated with this coat of arms. Unfortunately, the provenance regarding this manuscript only speaks of the seventeenth century owners who came after the original.

In addition to the family crests, however, the patron’s initials are interwoven in the form of knots, which end in a loose shape of the crucifix, within the floral frame. Both the rubbed-out family crest and the illuminated initials can be seen in Figures. 18 and 19. While the majority of Books of Hours did not become a place of documentation, the fact that courtly and royal families believed such a book could function that way, shows how close the owners and families were to these books. It became increasingly imperative to distinguish oneself and one’s family within these books, in a self-reflexive way, so that others in society might attach one to such opulent objects.

Along with ordering manuscripts for oneself, it is crucial to recognize that patrons may have commissioned manuscripts for presentation or for gifts. Gifting manuscripts was a common

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practice in medieval society.\textsuperscript{69} Many Books of Hours were intended for and given to women, to further their devotion and help instruct their children, since it was up to the mother to educate her children, especially her daughters. Women were supposed to reflect on the state of devotion Mary had during her life and use her as inspiration to direct their own teachings. This educational or informative aspect includes the laity. The production of Books of Hours at an affordable cost allowed for the general population to contribute to society and the church in their own way. The laity who were new to the written word were able to further their participation in church services when books explaining the prayers and text recited began to be reproduced in a vernacular language. “Texts to assist the devout laity to a fuller participation in the Mass were produced throughout the later middle Ages, of which the best known is the rhyming \textit{Lay Folk’s Mass Book}, perhaps originally produced in Norman French…”\textsuperscript{70} These Books began to reflect on a spiritual and social use both within and outside of the church.

While manuscripts may have served as gifts or as a place for family documentation within the noble and wealthy population, they also appeared in the community within municipal churches as general service items. Wealthy patrons began to display the piety of themselves and their families, by supplying liturgical or processional items, including highly decorated illuminated manuscripts.\textsuperscript{71}

Since the laity were able to assert themselves within society through a growing merchant economy, the ubiquity of books enabled a response in turn of further lavish production within the noble community. The upper classes desired to distinguish themselves from the non-noble


\textsuperscript{70} Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars}, 118.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 302.
populace by commissioning ever more extravagant and beautiful objects, specifically church objects, décor, and manuscripts. Ashley sums up the situation:

The spirituality symbolized by the Book of Hours was no longer the exclusive property of the religious orders; it could be validly possessed by the laity as well. By the fifteenth century, the locus of spiritual practice has increasingly shifted to the lay family which own private prayer books and, among the wealthy might even order personalize liturgical commemorations in the family chapel whose clergy they helped select.  

By the late fifteenth into the sixteenth century, families of both bourgeois and noble status expanded their commissions, beyond personal Books of Hours to larger prayer environments. Families associated with the royal court could distinguish themselves as especially dedicated to the church and as pious individuals manifested this notion in their construction of entire family chapels inside churches. They even employed ecclesiastics to pray for them in these spaces, but books were also required. The church and with its varied architectural space and religious institution are woven into the devotional and secular lives of its congregation in many forms.

When they found themselves inside the church or inside their chantry, patrons would have been able to present a tangible manifestation of their spiritual efforts-- their gift of the chapel and their presence in prayer was a testimony to their piety. Barbara J. Harris discusses the types of chantries that were commissioned – by women – mostly within the sixteenth century. She emphasizes how these commissions are similar to, yet under-researched in comparison to manuscripts. The tombs, altars, and chapel spaces that they commissioned for their families could be seen as a direct reflection of how they saw themselves within society and the

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73 Along with Kathleen Ashley, Eamon Duffy and Brigitte Buettner research and discuss the secular and opulent courtly assertion of status through church objects and donations in direct relationship to the growing production of manuscripts from the 13th-15th centuries.
importance of having this vision physically engraved into stone for themselves, their family and their peers to view. Despite the seemingly virtuous nature of these acts, of course, they reflect a self-serving motivation attached to these good works. Whether the reason is for salvation or increased familial and societal status, these commissions make important alterations in the same way devotees would associate themselves with the church space.

Above we discussed the private use of a Book of Hours and noted that private meditation was not exclusive to the private use of Books of Hours, but also occurred in their public use. One version of prayer was no longer considered superior over the other and private devotion does not necessarily mean isolated or secluded, but refers to the way in which one could meditate on the prayer in one’s mind. The images in books aid in this meditation, allowing for the prayer to center all aspects of the mind, thought, and eventually memory on the spiritual goal. It might be imagined, that communal yet, private devotion which occurred within a public setting could be enhanced by the use of donated objects which were presented in these liturgical ceremonies, including, a highly decorated manuscript used for display purposes. Such a participatory function of the noble and laity is explained by Eamon Duffy’s “efficacy of good works.” Objects gifted by those within the affluent status had the potential to deepen the prayers performed by the laity. Depending on the donor’s wealth, devotional gifts could range from assistance in rebuilding a church, to commissioning a processional cross, or gifting a Gospel Book for display at the Altar.

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75 Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 118-123.

76 Ibid., 118-123.

77 Ibid., 302.
MS M. 19 fol. 100v (Figure 12) and MS G. I fol. 149r (Figure 16) depicts the way in which liturgies would utilize large format communal manuscripts. Although the books represented in the miniatures are not Books of Hours, one sees the variety of books produced at the time, and note that larger manuscripts rarely left the church space. This communal use of grander manuscripts all the more reinforces the function of the Books of Hours. They serve as mobile, personal mediation between the churches as communal space and the private space of personal devotion within the home or mind.

I would re-emphasize, however, that this distinction between what the nobility could provide for the church and what was possible for the merchant class did not create a chasm in the quality of devotion between rich and poor in late medieval societies. It seems both classes were striving for the same outcome. As Eamon Duffy notes:

The illiterate gazing during Mass on a cheap indulgenced woodcut of the Image of Pity was not necessarily worlds away from the gentleman reading learned Latin prayers to the wounds of Jesus, and both of them would have responded in much of the same way when summoned to put aside the book or block-print to gaze at the host. 78

Many Books of Hours survive because they were passed down their familial line. Patron’s portraits display the way in which the original donors would have wanted to be remembered and these books allowed them this agency. The more beautifully adorned and illuminated a Book of Hours, one owned, the more elevated one was in society since only the wealthy could afford a certain level of ornamentation:

For the noble patron, manuscripts afforded not only access knowledge; they were also objects with added value, worthy of collecting exhibiting, offering, and exchanging. The reification of books was certainly favored by a rapidly expanding market economy, and some categories of books, like Books of Hours were virtually mass-produced. 79

78 Ibid., 123.

It is the evolution of society in production and economy for both the affluent and lay-people which allowed one to assert themselves in the church in society in a similar way, through their individual means.

In fact, Books of Hours were not the only use of illuminations by the pious for devotional use in the church. Roger Wieck discusses folios that were produced in the style of illuminated manuscripts that were used for devotion beginning in the fifteenth century: “While most of these single pictures seem to have been produced to be interleaved into books of hours, some also made their way onto people’s walls, as devotional images and aids for meditation and prayer.”

Since illuminated manuscripts were filled with images, the separation of the image from its book parallels the experience one would encounter with a panel painting or an altarpiece since they were meant to be images on display, for a populace to view and venerate. Devotional images such as these were never specific to the codex and emphasizes that images were used in this way. Their fictive spaces expanded the space of the church, chapel, or private space one was praying within, to include heavenly spaces. For the purposes of this paper, we will not be looking at any panel paintings however, thinking of such artistic expansion of the ecclesiastical space is a reminder that the Books of Hours also participated in this liturgical and communal experience.

As Corinne Schleif notes:

> Although the figures themselves nearly always give the impression of having been created with a kind of universal stencil, appearing static in pose and austere in artistic elaboration, the freedom to manipulate the immediate pictorial context enabled the sponsor radically to structure his or her own reality.


Consistently, such pictorial objects would connect the devotee to the spaces of the church but also expand his or her own imagination. The entire congregation could enjoy a sense of contemplation and connection to sacred space for deeper rumination. “In the Middle Ages, piety was an important means of self-expression, obligatory for the professed religious, unquestionably accepted by the vast majority of layfolk.”

Let us return to MS M. 287, and recapitulate the evidence in light of what we have learned. There is clear evidence for the manuscript’s private use, explicitly pictured in the portrait of its patron, but certain other aspects are also intriguing evidence concerning its possible use. MS M. 287 is written in Latin, excluding the Calendar and rubrics which are both written in French. At this point in manuscript production Latin usually indicated that a manuscript was meant for and used by a learned man. It was thought that manuscripts in Latin were usually meant for the literate, but it seems that for Books of Hours many asked for the Latin texts, and many would have understood the main prayers since those were what one would have heard in church.

Furthermore, the use of the manuscript in earlier centuries was thought to indicate in what region the manuscript was produced. However, by the fifteenth century many were produced for the use of Rome, as was MS M. 287, a standard liturgical use that belies its manufacture elsewhere. It seems this may have occurred so that the book could be utilized in more than one place.

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82 Harthan, *The Book of Hours*, 32.

83 Buettner, “Profane Illuminations, Secular Illusions,” 75.

84 Wieck, *Time Sanctified*, 149.
As discussed above, the patron has had himself depicted in MS M. 287 within the very same space as the holy figure (this occurs as well in other manuscripts we have discussed, including MS G 1 II). Books of Hours are not the only medium to depict the patron, but this spiritual and perhaps, self-indulgent representations allow a unique relationship to occur between the book user and the manuscript that he held in his hands.

Although the commissioning of manuscripts was a regular practice in the fifteenth century, certain aspects of MS M. 287 affirms the belief that it was meant for personal use. The dimensions of this manuscript, at only 7 x 5 inches indicate a private use. Unlike the grand communal use of books as depicted in other manuscripts, MS M. 287 supplies a much more intimate engagement for the reader.

The grand architectural spaces of a church both draw the devotee in and yet keep him or her at a distance, only the priest closely approached the altar. Nevertheless, in the images of MS M. 287 an intimate space is shared in both fol. 29r and 21r (Figure. 4 and 1) – instead of a whole community this celebration of Mass before the image of the Virgin is meant only for the priest and his acolyte and of course, the reader of this manuscript. Each of the figures are composed in a way that directs the focus of the image for the reader. Such intimate spaces are reflections of an imagined and prayerfully realized closeness between Mary, the Christ child, and the patron. As in fol. 21r (Figure. 1) although humbled and strikingly diminished in size compared to the seated Mary, the patron is portrayed on the inside edge of the frame in the very space of the holy Virgin.

While currently, we cannot be certain if the altar depicted in the Morgan Library’s MS M. 287 was the patron’s own church, the evidence displayed and the context in which this manuscript was created substantiates this possibility. The repetition of particular crucifixion
imagery could be an indication of a specific church, one with which the patron may have been affiliated.

Whether the reiterated image of the crucifixion identifies a specific church or not, it does however at least reflect the spirit of a place (Any idea of copying or reproducing a space was strikingly different during the Middle Ages compared to the modern idea of copies).85 The repetition within the detailed imagery of the crucifixion reredos asserts how patrons used Books of Hours to convey a high level of piety. It would not be difficult to imagine a noble or affluent individual’s desire to depict his recognizable place of worship. He may have wanted to able to bring the images he saw in worship, in his home or place of personal refuge into this most precious and private book. Doing so would only deepen the connection and relationship he had to with his Book of Hours. Reinburg asserts, “Images were rooted in Christianity’s theology of incarnation and belief in a God who assumed human form. They lent a material presence to the persons addressed in prayer and the liturgy, aroused feelings of devotion among the faithful, and marked particular places as sacred.”86

The growing involvement of the patron in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the forms of personal devotion, or their production of objects to be treasured by their descendants suggests that as scholars we should imagine the manuscript to exist as larger and more expansive objects. These books exist beyond a container of the standard images and prayers. In this environment, the objecthood of Books of Hours begins to take on a more prominent role and the manner in which such books are used, collected, and valued allows for the imagery within these


miniatures and the prayers inside these books to become a reflection of the person, family, or commissioner of the manuscript in many ways in addition to its obvious spiritual nature.

Moreover, the tangibility of the codex, its accessibility, its nature to-be-handled, is unlike any other artwork that is inside and associated with the church space. The ownership of these books forges a special relationship that is performed and displayed in the owner’s church and his home. These manuscripts are a personal and communal aspect of devotion; however, their ability to conform to the societal needs and expectations of the fifteenth century population, regardless of status, brings a much fuller history and materiality to Books of Hours, such as MS M. 287.
Conclusion

In the broadest sense, the imagery within MS M. 287 from the Morgan Library helps substantiate a notion of the patron’s importance in the production of Books of Hours. Even the circumstances surrounding these manuscripts as amalgamations of regional and artistic style drives home the idea that these books were always meant to be part of a community, from the moment they are created. From France, to Bruges in the Netherlands, the manuscripts mentioned in this paper contain much more than prayers: they exist within and outside of many places and spaces, both figuratively and literally. It is essential to not only observe the illuminated miniatures, and the prayers provided, but also to understand the context in which the manuscript was produced. The prayers one would hear inside the church, once again recite at home, or in a chapel, aloud or silently, within the mind become the foundation for the illuminations. The standard prayers created a framework that patrons could use to form their own identity through a devotional context.

While the identity of the patron depicted in MS M. 287 remains unknown this lack of information in a certain sense is an advantage to the perspective of this paper. The patron’s anonymity allows us to envision the imagery as a window into how the depicted space of the church and the imagery within that represented space creates an imaginary vision for the reader of this Books of Hours. No longer is the main focus about the book as object but it becomes the signification of its function as intercessor. These images do not hold the same meaning unless they are witnessed and observed in this particular form of the codex. The act of opening the book and observing the images, produce a visionary experience on the religious imagination.

The Morgan Library is home of the most remarkable Books of Hours, some very famous, while MS M. 287 is not the most coveted, or the most widely known, it contains illuminations
that evoke the circular relationship in the Late Middle Ages between individual, church, God and art object. Through the imagery serving as anticipation as well as a reflection of what the patron may have been enacting in his own life, the imagery both transcends and becomes intrinsic to the codex as object. As we have seen, this manuscript serves many purposes in many ways, as material object, as image and as a document for its own history. All of these relationships operated to allow devotion to reach a higher level of vision and meditation which was the goal of the devout during this time. Set in opposition to and sharing similarities with other manuscripts within a similar context, it is telling that the miniatures of MS M. 287 present its own individuality. The representation of the church space in conjunction with the depiction of the patron, distinguish itself from the other Books of Hours presented within this paper.

Despite the fact that, Books of Hours seem to be a straight forward product of popular manufacture, they become complex interwoven art objects. Codices are indeed more complex than they first appear. The images themselves extend beyond devotional subjects and ultimately adhere to the needs and fears of the medieval subject. At the same time, on the opposite end of this devotional spectrum the manuscript, while asserting piety also, allowed the patron to elevate himself amongst his own community, through prayer, commission, and donation. These manuscripts became a part of the general populations every day, devotional, and ceremonial life. We have seen in MS M. 287 an experience of the Church but also the personal church, its spaces and images. Even in the case of the patron’s death these books were meant to be a guidance, containing the rituals for that moment as well. On earth and within the sight of God, patrons of Books of Hours were on a perpetual mission to evoke their own presence both within their own world and within the celestial realm
Figure. 1  Circle of Master of Guillebert de Mets and The Egerton Master, MS M.287 Fol. 21r, c.1445, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 2  School of Simon Marmion, MS M. 304 Fol. 15r, c.1445, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 3  Attributed to the Egerton Artist and Workshop, Boucicaout Workshop, A follower of the Parement Master, and a follower for the Master of Mazarine.  Egerton MS 1070 [Hours of Renè d’Anjou] Fol. 54v, c.1410, London, The British Library
Figure 4  Circle of Master of Guillebert de Mets and The Egerton Master, MS M. 287 29r, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 5  Circle of the Master of Guillebert de Mets and The Egerton Master, MS M.287

Fol. 110r, c.1445, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 6  MS M. 157 Fol. 129v, c.1440, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 7 [Detail]  Circle of Master of Guillebert de Mets and The Egerton Master, MS M. 287 29r, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 8    Circle of the Master of Guillebert de Mets and The Egerton Master, MS M. 287

Fol. 139v, c.1445, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 9 [Detail]  Circle of the Master of Guillebert de Mets and The Egerton Master, MS M.287 Fol. 110r, c.1445, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 10  MS M. 159 Fol. 104r, c.1475, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 11  Circle of the Master of the Gold Scrolls, MS M. 19 Fol. 16r, c. 1430-1440, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 12   Circle of the Master of the Gold Scrolls MS M. 19 Fol. 100v, c. 1430-1440, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 13  Circle of Master of Guillebert de Mets and The Egerton Master, MS M.287 Fol. 35r, c.1445, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 14 [Detail]  Circle of Master of Guillebert de Mets and The Egerton Master, MS M.287 Fol. 35r, c.1445, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 15  Followers of the Coëtivy Master, MS M. G. II Fol. 295r, c.1475, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 16  Followers of the Coëtivy Master, MS M. G. 1 I Fol. 149v, c. 1475, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 17 MS M. 250 Fol. 14r, c.1510, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 18 [Detail]  Followers of the Coëtivy Master, MS M. G. 1 I Fol. 149v, c. 1475, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
Figure. 19 [Detail]   Followers of the Coëtivy Master, MS M. G. 1 I Fol. 149v, c. 1475, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
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