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Hell in Hand: Fear and Hope in the Hellmouths of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Introduction

Since its beginning the admonition of Christianity to humanity has been a call for a pressing concern for the eternal destination of the human soul. Ever increasingly during the late Middle Ages this imperative was being answered by the faithful in the form of purposeful personal devotion characterized by regularized daily meditations. In the northern Lowlands the writings of the *Devotio Moderna* stressed the importance of developing a profound interiority by reflecting on biblical subjects.\(^1\) As the most popular book of the Middle Ages, books of hours were essential in effecting this program of prayer and contemplation for the cultivation of the interior spiritual life of the faithful and assisting them in the consideration of last things. Time spent with these books facilitated the devout in following the Biblical exhortation to “make an end of your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).\(^2\)

The miniatures and borders adorning the folios of the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* (MSS M.917/945) in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York have long been widely accepted as the most imaginative and beautiful of any book of hours produced in the Netherlands up until their creation by their unknown master in 1440.\(^3\) Befitting their setting, the Hellmouths of Catherine’s book are innovative in their conception and fantastic in their execution of the “third last thing”. The triple Hellmouth in the Office of the Dead presents a horrific scene of human souls suffering the torture of devils as punishment for their earthly sins (Figure 1). Unprecedented in its presentation in prior books of hours (and singular within this book itself), this image was meant to frighten the viewer into attending to their own sin in order to avoid the pains of eternal Hell.

\(^3\) It should be noted here that *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* came to the Morgan Library as two manuscripts, having been taken apart and sold as two separate books in the mid-nineteenth century. MS M.917 is paginated while MS M.945 is foliated.
Smaller and less graphic in detail but arguably no less ghastly, are the three images of the Hell (Purgatory) mouth with souls writhing amidst the flames of its fiery interior in the Monday Hours of the Dead (Figure 2). Disturbing as they are, these miniatures assisted the meditative viewer in obtaining the necessary ingredient—fear—for creating what the Devotio Moderna writer, Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen, called an elixir of “remorse arising from fear”.\(^4\) Gerard asserted that meditating on fear would produce hope; hope ultimately leading to redemption.

This paper will demonstrate that Catherine’s book of hours was more than a mere devotional aid filled with prayers and pretty pictures, but rather an effective tool of meditative contemplation—one that engendered deep emotional connections with which she negotiated the path of her soul’s redemption. While my primary focus will be directed towards the miniatures of the Hellmouths, consideration will be given to various aspects of books of hours in general, such as their status as beloved objects and their devotional use, and Catherine’s more specifically. I will also attend to the various formal and iconographic elements of its borders and miniatures to highlight their innovative quality. This examination will show how parchment, images, and text became a sort of virtual portal of access to another realm. From the comfort and safety of her temporal world Catherine could visually anchor herself in the liminal space of the borders of her book of hours, peer into its “windows” (miniatures) to the world of the spiritual, and engage in a contemplative and sober self-examination of “last things”.

In the mid-nineteenth century the Hours of Catherine of Cleves fell into the hands of an unscrupulous dealer who disassembled it, rearranged its folios, and deceptively bound it into two separate books.\(^5\) There was some attempt to make each book look as though it was complete and


both were given titles indicating that they belonged to the Duchess. One of these two was eventually sold in 1957 to the collector Alastair Bradley Martin, owner of the Guennol Collection; the other came into the possession of the Rothschild family. The Morgan Library purchased the Rothschild volume in 1963. While it was not evident at first, it was later discovered that both books were part of the same manuscript. The Morgan Library acquired the second part of Catherine's book when it was offered for sale by the Guennol Collection in 1970.

In the early part of the twentieth century one of the volumes was put on exhibit in Germany and again in 1958 in the Netherlands. It wasn’t until 1989 that both books were included in The Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting exhibition in Utrecht and only one “opening” from each part was displayed. Finally, in 2009 at The Museum Het Valkhof in Nijmegen the Netherlands and 2010 at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York the exhibition, Demons and Devotion: The Hours of Catherine of Cleves made around one hundred of the disbound and re-grouped miniatures available for the public to see.

In 1966, John Plummer, the Morgan Library’s curator of medieval manuscripts published a book, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, which featured reproductions of all of the miniatures in the book of hours. Plummer’s work included an introduction containing the story of how the parts of the manuscript came to be reunited, a brief biography on Catherine, a broad stylistic

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6 Plummer, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, 10-11.
8 Ibid.
9 Plummer, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, 10-11.
11 Dückers and Priem, From the Hand, 6.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
overview of the miniatures and a discussion of its unknown master. Each miniature was accompanied by a brief iconographical description as well.

Since the reuniting of its parts the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* has become, in a manner of speaking, the “rock star” of medieval manuscript illumination. The compendious bibliography on the manuscript from the Morgan Library and Museum is twenty-two pages long with approximately two hundred seventy-five entries. One of the things that prevented scholars who examined the Guennol volume from noticing that it was not a complete book of hours was that it “appeared” to be complete; it was the average size for a book of hours and it had an extraordinary number of miniatures.\(^{14}\)

It would be impossible to address even a small fraction of what has been written about Catherine’s prayer book but I will attempt to mention a few of the high points here, acknowledging that others equally as significant may be left out. The innovative quality of its miniatures combined with their sheer number makes the book a rich source for art historians. Most of the bibliographical entries are not monographical but rather instances of where various miniatures have been used in investigations of Netherlandish art. In an article written in 1959 on the *Merode Altarpiece*, Meyer Shapiro used a depiction of a bait box from the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* as support for his argument that the board Joseph is working on in his carpenter shop in Campin’s work is indeed a mousetrap meant to trick the Devil in God’s plan of salvation.\(^{15}\)

Other scholars such as Robert G. Calkins and Diane G. Scillia address stylistic and codicological aspects of the Cleve’s manuscript in an attempt to learn more about the “unknown

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\(^{14}\) Plummer, *The Hours of Cathereine of Cleves*, 10.

master” of Catherine's book whose hand has been identified in a number of other Dutch manuscripts of the fifteenth century, and to shed light on Dutch manuscript illumination in general. Scillia compares miniatures from the Seven Days of Creation from the Bible of Henri Cherauz with a few from the Hours of Catherine of Cleves to show that the miniatures contained in the Bible were not created in Liege but rather were painted by the Circle of the Master of Cleves working out of Utrecht or Nijmegen.16 In his Distribution of Labor: The Illuminators of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves and Their Workshop, Calkins used a codicological approach, analyzing the arrangement of folios and text decoration in an effort to find out how the Cleves illuminators organized their method of work.17 The large catalogue edited by Rob Dückers and Ruud Priem, the Hours of Catherine of Cleves: Devotions, Demons and Daily Life in the Fifteenth Century from the 2010 exhibition at the Morgan Library and Museum was, except for a biographical sketch of Catherine written by Bert Thissen, also comprised of essays devoted to solely to the illuminator.

Barbara Lane has written two in-depth studies related specifically to iconographic aspects and themes of the miniatures within Catherine's book of hours. One of them, An Immaculist Cycle in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, shows how the miniatures from the Saturday Hours and Mass of the Virgin are related to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.18 In The Symbolic Crucifixion of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves Lane discusses the unusual iconography of The Crucifixion with God the Father, the Virgin, a Patron-Saint, and Catherine

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of Cleves in The Saturday Mass of the Virgin and proposes St. Bernard as the heretofore unidentified saint standing behind Catherine in the miniature. ¹⁹

My interest in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves began with the Hell (Purgatory) mouth images found in the Monday Hours of the Dead and the triple Hellmouth in the Office of the Dead. I wanted to try and understand what Catherine felt and saw when she looked at these miniatures. My research led me to do some in-depth readings of writings of members of the Devotio Moderna. As I read through Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen's The Spiritual Ascent I was struck by how well the miniatures in Catherine's book complemented his proscribed program of meditation. It seemed that the Hellmouth images in their detail and placement within the text of Catherine's prayer book were especially suited to help her navigate the daily path of her search for salvation.

Chapter 1

Learning to Die and Live

The Four Last Things—death, judgement, Hell, and heaven—were foremost in the minds of the faithful of the Middle Ages. In an age of relatively short life spans, inadequate medical care and the imminent threat of devastating plague, the specter of death loomed large in the medieval mind. In 1440 when her prayer book was completed Catherine was just 23 years old. She had already lost three children. ²⁰ In the next few years she would lose two sisters. ²¹ In her duties as the Duchess of Guelders Catherine was greatly aware of the deaths of members of the court. In 1460 when prominent court member Arnoldus van Goer died, plans were made for an elaborate

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²¹ Ibid., 104.
funeral paid for by the duke and duchess.\textsuperscript{22} His body was put on display at the court at Arnhem where three full masses were held.\textsuperscript{23} The procession to the church for the final, solemn mass, which was officiated by sixteen priests, was accompanied by the nonstop pealing of bells and the distribution of bread to the poor.\textsuperscript{24} It was usual for requiem masses to be repeated for all deceased, not just the high-born, on the week, month and annual anniversaries of their death.\textsuperscript{25} Every Monday Catherine would have prayed the Hours of the Dead from her prayer book and remembered friends and family who would need her supplications for God’s mercy to shorten their suffering from the pains of Purgatory.\textsuperscript{26} As with all people of her time-Catherine’s life was full of reminders of death.

The call of the church for the care of the soul made dying a skill to be learned. First published in 1415 the long version of the \textit{Ars Moriendi}—called \textit{Tractatus de arte bene Moriendi} or \textit{The Book of the Craft of Dying}—gave detailed instructions on how to face one’s final hours and “die well”.\textsuperscript{27} The introduction reads:

\begin{quote}
For as much as the passage of death, of the wretchedness of the exile of this world, for uncunning \textit{[ignorance]} of dying—not only to lewd men \textit{[laymen]} but also to religious and devout persons—seemeth wonderfully hard and perilous, and also right fearful and horrible; therefore in this present matter and treatise, that is of the Craft of Dying, is drawn and contained a short manner of exhortation, for teaching and comforting of them that be in point of death. This manner of exhortation ought subtly to be considered, noted, and understood in the sight of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{22} Gerard Nijsten, \textit{In the Shadow of Burgundy: The Court of Guelders in the Late Middle Ages} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 340.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
man's soul; for doubtless it is and may be profitable generally, to all true Christian men, to learn and have craft and knowledge to die well.\textsuperscript{28}

The treatise is divided up into six chapters that provide practical knowledge on how to die, such as what temptations the dying should expect to encounter, the line of questioning that should be posed to the dying, and prayers that should be said “to them that be a-dying, of some men that be about them”.\textsuperscript{29} The instructions are methodical and the courses of questions or “interrogations”—there are two of them—are extensive. The aim is to ensure that the dying person has fully repented of sin and is trusting in Christ. A chapter devoted to advising the repetition of the five actions of Christ on the cross, one of which was praying, instructs the dying to pray, “My Lord God, most benign father of mercy, do thy mercy to me Thy poor creature. Help now Lord my needy and desolate soul in her last need, that Hell hounds devour me not.”\textsuperscript{30} Again, instruction is given that if the dying is unable to speak or if he does not know the words of the prayer, someone should stand in front of him and say the words for him.\textsuperscript{31} Dying well is clearly a group effort and explains, in part, the crowded scene in the bedroom of the dying man in the introduction to the Hours of the Dead of Catherine’s book. (Fig.3) Here, while a doctor examines the patient’s urine in the background, other figures immediately around his bed attend to more pressing spiritual matters.\textsuperscript{32} The summation of all this activity prescribed in the \textit{Ars Moriendi} is that everyone who is sick or in danger of dying should be encouraged “to maketh himself, before all other things, peace with God”.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{30} Comper, \textit{The Book of the Craft}, 29.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{32} John Plummer, \textit{The Hours of Catherine of Cleves} (New York: George Braziller, 1975), 41.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 33.
Of course the unpredictability of death would not always make the use of the program set out in the *Ars Moriendi* convenient. Learning to die well was a craft; nevertheless sudden death might prevent its full practice. Despite prescribing varied and sundry efforts to the dying Christian, the treatise recommends that knowing how to die is actually best practiced by having, “a heart and a soul every ready up to Godward, that when-that-ever death come, he may be found all ready...”34 While repentance on the death bed was possible—it was better to live as though death might come at any time.

*Learning to Live*

It was never the aim of the church that the hour of death should be presented as an opportunity for a free ticket to avoid the terrors of Hell. For all its detailed instruction on facing the final hours before death, even the *Ars Moriendi* advises the faithful to live as though death was imminent.35 In the mid-fourteenth century Henry Suso wrote a treatise which would become one of the most popular spiritual works of the late medieval period: *The Book of Eternal Wisdom* which offers advice on how a Christian should live. When Eternal Wisdom is asked what one must do to live a pious life, the answer is that above all one must engage in “divine contemplation”.36 It is in the pursuit of the exercise of this meditative lifestyle that a significant movement arose in the Netherlands that placed its emphasis on the conversion of the individual and perfecting of piety through prayer and self-examination.

The movement which later became known as the *Devotio Moderna* (New Devotion)—meaning *renewed* devotion—began in the late fourteenth century in an area about 22 miles north

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of where Catherine of Cleves lived most of her life. Founded on the teachings of Geerte Grote (1340-1384), son of a noble family from Deventer, this lay movement was made up of men and women who were determined to lead lives centered on a deep commitment to Christ and focused on developing a profound interiority.\(^{37}\) By the mid fifteenth century references to the “new (modern) devotion” needed no explanation; its influence in the Netherlands had spread far and wide.\(^{38}\) The book, *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis (1392-1399), still widely popular and deemed the “most influential devotional guide in Western Christian history” grew out of their teachings.\(^{39}\) People from all walks of life joined their ranks, even the daughters of a prominent member of the court of the Duke and Duchess of Guelders.\(^{40}\) Catherine’s husband, nicknamed “the monk”, had a private cell that he often used in the Carthusian Monastery, Monnikhuizen, in Arnhem where Geerte Grote had left his influence when he lived secluded there from 1375 to 1378.\(^{41}\) When he died, Duke Arnold donated a four volume set of *Vita Jesu Christi* by Ludolf von Saksen from his library to the monastery.\(^{42}\) This work was very influential among the members of the *Devotio Moderna*.

While they did not take formal vows, these “New Devout” (also known as the Community of the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life) lived in communal houses and did not take spouses. They were not concerned with producing a severe asceticism nor were they looking for mystical experiences or complete withdrawal from the world; they still moved in circles within


\(^{38}\) Ibid., 7.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 8-10.


\(^{42}\) Ibid., 426.
their towns and churches. What was most remarkable about them, however, was their deep commitment to personal piety expressed in charity and cultivated through intense personal introspection and meditation. The Devout used the word “exercise” to refer to many aspects of their lives but most notably it was applied to the structured, deliberate way they pursued their daily devotions which centered on scripture reading, prayer, and an emphasis on constant meditation. Biblical images were also employed, and although Grote cautioned about their use he believed they were necessary to impart spiritual truth and knowledge. The divine office was prayed by the brothers and sisters of the New Devotion regularly throughout the day. Grote himself translated the hours from Latin into Dutch of which around two thousand manuscripts are extant. Catherine’s book, while not of the use of Geerte Grote, is however, of the use of Windesheim. The Augustinian Canons Regular of Windesheim was founded by the Brethren of the Common Life as an attempt to gain legitimacy within the structure of the church. The penitential contemplative life of which the saying of the daily canonical hours was essential, was vital to the members of the New Devotion because, as à Kempis put it, “Blessed are the eyes which are closed to exterior things and are fixed upon those which are interior.”

43 Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna*, 22-44.
44 Ibid., 29.
45 Ibid., 44.
46 Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 98.
Chapter 2

Connecting With a Book of Hours

This chapter is an attempt to embark on an investigation of what Miri Rubin has termed “the coalescence of emotion, religion and matter” as embodied in the hours of Catherine of Cleves.\(^\text{50}\)

In so doing I hope to show how Catherine’s book was an effective devotional tool. It is my contention that various aspects of the book such as its thingness as a sumptuous luxury good and its use in religious devotion as well as the formal qualities of its miniatures and borders would have elicited positive emotional responses in Catherine. Such feelings associated with an object of daily personal use engendered a sense of contiguity between it and its owner which in turn would make it a “safe” or “comfortable” place from which to confront fear—in this case the terrors of the torments of Hell.

In the fifteenth century books of hours were typically made for a wide clientele but Catherine’s book was made for the Duchess of Guelders who, with her consort the Duke, presided over a medium-sized court that would have appeared rather visually splendid to those who visited from the outside.\(^\text{51}\) The extraordinary nature of her book reflects not merely Catherine’s elevated status as the Duchess of Guelders, but more significantly, as a daughter of Mary of Burgundy and granddaughter of John the Fearless, her membership in the family of the bibliophilic Burgundian dukes. The love of books and (presumably) the rivalry that had infected the great grandfather of Catherine of Cleves and his brothers was passed down to Philip the


\(^{51}\) Nijsten, In the Shadow, 67.
Bold’s progeny.\textsuperscript{52} Catherine’s uncle, Philip the Good had amassed one of the largest libraries in Europe composed of books that covered a wide range of subjects.\textsuperscript{53} Evidenced in his role as collector and patron, Duke Philip’s obsession with books—especially for those that had been sumptuously decorated—was a passion that ignited the same within his family and court.\textsuperscript{54}

\textit{The Beauty of Catherine’s Book}

The Duke and Duchess of Guelders commissioned, collected and inherited a wide variety of beautiful objects in a number of mediums; with their efforts in book illumination most impressive—as evidenced by Catherine’s hours.\textsuperscript{55} Her book is a beautifully crafted luxury item intended to last for ages; one that Rob Dückers and Ruud Priem have called “the absolute peak of Northern Netherlandish book illumination” and another art historian has deemed “epoch making”.\textsuperscript{56} As a personal possession of significant intrinsic and aesthetic value, in today’s terms it might, in some ways, best be compared to a beautifully-made cherished piece of jewelry.

As is the case with most medieval manuscripts, the \textit{Hours of Catherine of Cleves} has not retained its original bindings; however, given the extraordinary quality of its folios and the station of its owner we can safely assume it would have been made of the finest materials. Medieval books of its caliber were bound with wooden boards covered with fine, dyed leather and typically tooled, stamped, or embossed. Other ornamentation might include gilt bosses and

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{55} Nijsten, \textit{In the Shadow}, 4, 220-308.
jewels. The Morgan Library and Museum commissioned Faksimile Verlak Luzern, a company that specializes in creating historically accurate copies of important medieval books of hours to make a facsimile of Catherine's prayer book. The facsimile is covered with leather that has been stamped and embossed and ornamented with a single cabochon jewel set in gold (Figure 4). This treatment appears to be very similar to the prayer book being read by the Virgin in Pentecost (Figure 5). Clasps, often gilt and ornate, were essential for preventing the parchment from deforming due to changes in temperature and humidity.\textsuperscript{57} Many books of hours had a piece of fabric such as velvet or brocade, or soft leather attached to the cover which served the purpose of protecting the binding, and when large enough, could be bunched together as a support on which the book could lean during use.\textsuperscript{58} Such a feature, called a chemise, can be seen on the book being read by the Virgin Mary in a detail from Jan van Eyck's Ghent altarpiece—this one adorned with fine passementerie (Figure 6).

However splendid the outer binding with its adornments, surely it could have only offered a foretaste of the beauty of the decorated folios inside. The sheer number of miniatures alone is remarkable for a book of hours; and they, along with the borders as well as the text of Catherine’s prayer book, are meticulously and beautifully rendered.\textsuperscript{59} Jewel-like pigments and profuse gilding glow and glint against the mottled, luminous parchment pages (Figure 7). The natural and fanciful elements found in the borders are stunning in their detail and imaginative conception (Figures 8 and 9). While the opulence of Catherine’s prayer book was no doubt a reflection of her elevated status and would have been a source of pride, still, the pleasure gained

through the enjoyment of the beauty of its decoration and the tactility of its sumptuous materials is inestimable.

*Daily Use of a Book of Hours*

It is not unusual for someone to develop an affinity for personal objects that are used on a daily basis over time. As a noblewoman who was not primarily involved in ruling, Catherine would have spent many hours in leisurely pursuits. Utilized many times during the day and with its portability facilitated by its small size it can be imagined that her prayer book often accompanied her as she sat in her garden; perhaps she admired its miniatures while listening to music or while traveling from castle to castle. Books of hours were often used as primers to teach children to read. The disassembling of Catherine's book in the nineteenth century destroyed any evidence that the blank parchment spaces of its fly-leaves and pastedowns may have contained. However, books of hours were often the locus of family record keeping of births and deaths and other important events, and provided a likely place for the placement of pilgrim badges and other religious tokens either attached to the folios or loosely inserted. As highly personal objects these books accompanied their owners through the best and worst times of their lives and could easily become someone’s most cherished possession. Passed down through families, the survival of so many is evidence of how much they were treasured.

Possessions may be valued for their aesthetic qualities and their familiarity as part of our everyday lives, but a beautiful, useful object intimately associated with spiritual pursuits such as

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60 Nijsten, *In the Shadow*, 395-6.
61 Ibid., 68.
meditation and prayer clearly gives rise to a much deeper sort of attachment. Catherine's book would have been used in her praying of the hours eight times throughout the course of each day. These private times of devotion with the book would have elicited a variety and number of associations from Catherine, along with their corresponding emotions, especially related to her attendance at mass in the castle chapel or town church. The church interior as well as the liturgy was comprised of rich visual and sensorial elements—stained glass, vestments, music, singing, the elevation of the host and the smell of incense, and even the taste of the Eucharist—all things brought to mind through the textual and visual prompts of Catherine's book. One of the miniatures in her book, *Moses and Paul Observing the Celebration of Mass* (Figure 10), shows a priest kneeling in prayer before an altar on which sits the Eucharist displayed in a monstrance. Paul and Moses and an unidentified saint stand in the background to the left of the priest.\(^6\)

Below the image the text begins, “*Cibavit eos ex adype frumenti alleluia. Et de petra melle saturavit eos alleluia, alleluia, alleluia*” (He fed them from the fat of the grain alleluia. And he satisfied them with honey from the rock alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.)\(^6\) While reading this prayer adapted from Psalm 81:17, Catherine would have recognized it as the introit to the mass of the Holy Sacrament where it would have been sung by the officiants.\(^6\) The text below the miniature ends with the *doxologia minor*, ‘*Gloria patri et filio et spiritus sancto: Sicut erat in principio et nunc et [emper, et in saiecula saeculorum.]* (Glory be to the father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning now and shall evermore be world without end).’” This praise to the trinity, repeated every few pages in the text of Catherine's book of hours, originated

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\(^6\) Plummer, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, unpaginated, plate 78.
\(^6\) Latin translations by the author and comparison with the 1599 Geneva Bible.
in the early centuries of the church and was added after every hymn. Catherine would have heard this phrase sung or spoken during the liturgy and repeated it herself numerous times over the course of the day—no doubt with the sound of the notes of its chant from the mass recurring in her head. In this manner, and many like it, the book becomes a comforting conduit of emotions experienced during the mass, effecting a deeper affinity between it and its owner.

What’s Inside the Book

Catherine’s book connected most effectively with her through the content of its folios. It is here that she encountered representations of not only the mundane materiality of everyday life such as dress, household objects and the flora and fauna of her natural world, as well as the constantly repeated notification of familial ties, but she also quite literally—encountered herself. There are examples where image and text reach out to the viewer/reader directly, compelling Catherine to personally engage with what is presented. These references to Catherine and her world, liberally dispersed throughout the work, surely secured a sense of affinity between herself and the book.

One of the most interesting and sometimes endearing aspects of the borders and miniatures of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves are the anachronisms (sartorial and otherwise) used in portraying scenes with Biblical figures. In Christ before Pilate (Figure 11) Jesus stands before a Pilate clad in tights; short pointy boots called poulaine or crakow and a dagged hood. Mary, baby Jesus and Joseph—depicted in Holy Family at Supper (Figure 12) enjoy an evening in a home accoutered with fifteenth century appointments such as the shelf full of plate on the wall

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68 Frederick Niecks, A Concise Dictionary of Musical Terms (London: Augener and Sons, undated), 121; Elias Benjamin Sanford, Cyclopedia of Religious Knowledge: Biblical Biographical, Geographical, Historical, Practical and Theological (Hartford: The S.S. Scranton Co., 1912), 263.
behind Mary and the wooden-handled brass bed warmer in the wall rack above Joseph. All throughout the book Catherine would have encountered commonplace objects from her real world. Household furnishings and supplies such as furniture, flooring, fabrics, bed hangings, cooking supplies and tools, cages for pets; wattle fences and trellises in the garden—even many of the realistically depicted flowers in the borders—were all things she would have been familiar with in and around her home in the Netherlands. Architecture as well, especially that of the castles in the background of many of the miniatures, was clearly intended to mimic that of Catherine’s native Guelders.

Still, the renderings of objects that would have had the most resonance with Catherine would be the depictions of her own possessions. Strewn around the border of Adoration of the Magi (Figure 13) is Catherine’s rosary. Most likely made of coral, it is adorned with tassels, a gold cross, star and pearls. At the bottom center of the page is a small blue pouch, presumably a case for the rosary, embroidered in gold and pearls with the initials “CD” (possibly ED), suggesting “Catherina Duxissa”. This appears to be almost identical to the one from which she distributes coins to the poor in Piety: Lady Distributing Alms (Figure 20).

References to some of Catherine’s more profane pursuits are also represented. The border of the miniature of Saint Cecilia (Figure 14) is comprised of feathers superimposed with the initials C and D. The initials, joined by chains, make up part of a realistically depicted piece of equipment used to lure birds back to their trainer. St. Cecilia herself holds a hawk which she feeds with meat on a stick and she stands before a cloth decorated with the repeated motif of a

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72 Plummer, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, unpaginated, plate 116.
73 Ibid., unpaginated, plate 151.
winged figure holding a white hawk.\textsuperscript{74} There is a record of a book purchased in 1453 by the Duke and Duchess: "Buexken die vogele bereit te maken, dats te weten havicken ende sparweren" (on the training of birds, especially hawks and sparrowhawks).\textsuperscript{75} It is known that falcons were kept by the Duke and Duchess; and that falconry or hawking was a sport which was considered appropriate for ladies.\textsuperscript{76} While there is no known relationship between St. Cecilia and the sport, it is clear that it was an activity that Catherine enjoyed and one assumes she would have been pleased to find this personal, if profane allusion in her book of hours.\textsuperscript{77}

It is however, images of people, not things that are likely to provide the most powerful emotional prompts. Representations of family members long dead and still living, as well as those of Catherine herself, present themselves on the folios of her prayer book. The eight heraldic devices in the borders of the first two miniatures of Catherine's book (Figures 15 and 16) proclaim not only her status as Duchess of Guelders but also her noble lineage; especially the connection to one of her ancestors, Jean le Bon, King of France.\textsuperscript{78}

It is in fact, on the basis of these arms, that Catherine is identified as the owner of the book of hours.\textsuperscript{79} The eight coats of arms extend back four generations, each representing one of Catherine’s great-great grandfathers.\textsuperscript{80} More significant here than their denotement of status, these armorials represent deep ties to Catherine's past, indicating a strong sense of familial identity (as well as claim to nobility). In the center of the page in the margin below the miniature

\textsuperscript{74} Plummer, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, unpaginated, plate 151.
\textsuperscript{75} Nijsten, In the Shadow, 425.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 342.
\textsuperscript{77} Plummer, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, unpaginated, plate 151.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., plate 2.
\textsuperscript{79} Thissen, Catherine of Cleves, 121-122.
\textsuperscript{80} Plummer, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, unpaginated, plates 1-2.
is Catherine's own coat of arms impaled with those of her husband, Duke Arnold of Guelders.\textsuperscript{81} Duke Arnold as well as Catherine’s father, Adolph of Cleves makes a “cameo appearance” in the book, with Arnold, kneeling before Christ and identified in part by his fur hat lying in the middle of the scene of \textit{Fear of the Lord} (Figure 17).\textsuperscript{82} Adolph of Cleves, in turn is identified by the chain he wears and his similarity with other known portraits; he stands behind King Solomon as one of his courtiers in \textit{Queen of Sheba Fording a Stream} (Figure 18).\textsuperscript{83}

\textit{Catherine in her Book}

The images of Catherine found in her book are not primarily significant in their role as agents of vanity, at least for our purposes, but rather for what she is depicted as doing. Catherine kneels in the border of the first miniature, prayer book in hand, and gazes up at the figure of Virgin Mary holding the Christ child (Figure 15). Mary’s role in the life of the faithful grew in importance from around the twelfth century onward.\textsuperscript{84} As the human mother of Christ she was increasingly seen as a compassionate mediator between sinners and God; there was an increasing emphasis on her role as a sympathetic friend.\textsuperscript{85} Devotional texts sought to cultivate a deep affection for the Virgin and Christ. One of the most frequently read works of the followers of the New Devotion was \textit{The Life of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ} by the thirteenth century Franciscan, Bonaventure.\textsuperscript{86} St. Bonaventure asks his readers to fix their minds on Christ and meditate on scenes from the life of the holy family. He describes an intimate scene of Mary and Joseph just turned away from the inn, “Here let tenderness excite you to compassion towards the

\textsuperscript{81} Anne Margreet W. As-Vijvers, “Thirty-five Miniatures” in \textit{From the Hand of the Master: The Hours of Catherine of Cleves}, ed. Anne Margreet W. As-Vijvers, (Ghent: Ludion, 2009), 87.
\textsuperscript{82} Plummer, \textit{The Hours of Catherine of Cleves}, unpaginated, plate 18.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., unpaginated, plate 85.
\textsuperscript{84} Miri Rubin, \textit{Emotion and Devotion: The Meaning of Mary in Medieval Religious Cultures} (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009) 82-85.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Van Engen, \textit{Devotio}, 25.
august personage of this young and delicate Virgin. Consider her at the age of fifteen, wearied with the labors of a tedious journey, confused, terrified and abashed, amidst a crowded populace. After telling of Christ’s birth, Bonaventure asks the reader to meditate on a nativity scene and:

Throw thyself on thy knees, and in atonement for thy past neglects, most cordially worship the Lord thy God. Devoutly greet his holy Mother, and reverently salute the holy and venerable St. Joseph. Then in spirit tenderly kiss the feet of the infant Jesus, humbly extended on a bed of hay; and earnestly and devoutly request him of our blessed Lady, humbly entreating her to vouchsafe to permit you to take him: receive him into your arms, embrace him with tender affection, attentively contemplate the sweetness of his sacred features, and with the most profound respect salute him often, salute him tenderly. . . .When you have contemplated him sufficiently, restore him again to his Mother, and learn from her how to use him. See with what care, caution, and prudential tenderness she executes her charge, suckles him, nurses him, and performs every other little office as occasion requires. Be mindful often to meditate upon these subjects, take a pleasure and delight in them, and with all the devotion you are master of, endeavor to show your desire of aiding our blessed Lady and her divine infant Jesus.

The banderole in front of Catherine in the miniature reads, “O mater dei memento mei” (Oh mother of God remember me). Surrounded by a mandorla, the Virgin looks down at Mary and appears as if in a vision. Catherine is outside the frame of the border but the hem of her dress, quite extraordinarily, extends inside and enters Mary’s world. It is difficult to imagine what the duchess must have felt looking at herself inside her book kneeling before the holy figure.

Another portrait of Catherine appears in *Crucifixion with God the Father, the Virgin, a Patron-Saint, and Catherine of Cleves* (Figure 19). Here, in the most spiritually meaningful of scenes, Catherine has gone beyond the bounds of the border and frame and entered directly into

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88 Ibid., 50.
the presence of God the Father, Christ and the Virgin. Her gaze remains humbly lowered, eyes on her prayer book, while her petition makes its way up the heavenly “chain of command”. Catherine asks Mary to pray for her; Mary in turn pleads with Christ to be merciful to Mary. Jesus asks the Father to forgive Mary by virtue of his wounds. The Father replies, “Son, your request has been granted.” Barbara Lane believes that the prayer that concludes the Saturday Mass of the Virgin, of which this miniature is the opening, is an encomium specifically from Catherine to Mary:

Holy Mary, mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, in your hands and in the hands of your Son I commend on this day my soul, my life, my feeling, my sight, my lips, my eyes, my hands and feet, and my whole body. Protect me, lady, from misfortune and from sins and from the temptations of the devil and from the punishments of Hell. Illuminate my heart with the holy spirit and with your grace, make me forever obedient to your commands, and permit that I may never be separated from you . . .

Catherine’s representation in the immediate presence of the Virgin, Christ and God the Father represents a spiritual highpoint and when meditated upon would have engendered deep emotions.

In *Imitation of Christ* Thomas a Kempis wrote, “If I knew all the things that are in the world, and were not in charity, what should it help me before God, who is to judge me according to my deeds? . . . He only is truly great, who hath great charity.” Almsgiving was a way of showing Christian charity and a means to diminish time spent in Purgatory. Just in case someone had not been generous during life or wanted to insure they would not come up short of good deeds, wills frequently provided for acts of posthumous giving. Funerals were a last chance to donate

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89 As-Vijvers, “Thirty-five Miniatures”, 130.  
93 Ibid.
to the poor who would gather at the church or burial to receive alms bequeathed by the dead or
provided by the deceased’s family.\textsuperscript{94} When the Duke and Duchess of Guelders distributed bread
to the poor at the funeral of their courtier it was not just an isolated act of kindness but an already
established practice meant to benefit the souls of Arnoldus and the Duke and Duchess. There
was also inherent in the act an understanding that the recipients would pray for the souls of those
who had given.\textsuperscript{95} In \textit{Piety: Lady Distributing Alms} (Figure 20) the lady has been identified as
Catherine by her similarity to the portrait in \textit{Crucifixion with God the Father, the Virgin, a
Patron-Saint, and Catherine of Cleves} (Figure 19).\textsuperscript{96} In this scene, it is Catherine rather than a
holy figure who takes center stage. As she hands out coins from the small pouch that hangs from
her belt and places them in the begging bowl of one of the needy, the Holy Spirit—in the form of
a dove—alights on her head. A banderole above the heads of the beggars reads in translation,
\textit{Give alms, and all things are clean unto you”}.\textsuperscript{97} Here, in her prayer book, Catherine was able to
not only reflect on her own piety, but actually “see” herself engaged in the virtuous act of charity
and reap the satisfaction of knowing her actions would have a positive effect on her eternal
destination.

\textit{The Book Reaches Out to Catherine}

A book of hours is a tool with which one seeks to live a pious life and ensure the attainment
of eternal salvation. This endeavor, in its most earnest efforts, is highly personal and can only be
undertaken by the individual. Even without specific pictorial references to its owner a book of
hours is successful in eliciting introspection and self-examination. Several times a day Catherine
would have prayed the text that is part of the short introductory prayer of almost every one of the

\textsuperscript{94} Duffy, \textit{The Stripping.}, 359-360.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 360-361.
\textsuperscript{96} Plummer, \textit{The Hours of Catherine of Cleves}, unpaginated, plate 57.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
hours of her book, “Incline unto my aid O God. O Lord make haste to help me”. In the few hours where the introductory prayer begins with the collective “we”—“Convert us, O God our Savior. And turn away Thy wrath from us.—the words, “Incline unto my aid O God. O Lord make haste to help me.” follow, requiring the devout to fixate on themselves.

As with the introit and the doxologia minor, Catherine would have heard these words sung and said at mass innumerable times since her childhood. As signifiers of a deeply personal plea with God spoken in times of grief and distress and in the most intimate meditations on matters of profound theological significance, Catherine’s uttering of these words would have, over time, become automatic—almost chant-like—with their significance for her derived more from the associative emotions than from the individual words themselves. Such prayers would be even more effective when accompanying miniatures intended to arouse feelings of pity, sympathy and love for the Savior. In the miniature above the prayer for compline of the Sunday Hours of the Trinity (Figure 21) a wounded Christ—half standing, half sitting—is propped up by God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the form of a man. Beneath his feet is a golden globe of the Earth surmounted by a wooden cross which leans against his chest. The Father and Holy Spirit look sympathetically at the Son as he draws attention to the wound in his side and looks out from the “window” of the miniature towards the viewer. As Catherine prayed, “Incline unto my aid O God. O Lord make haste to help me,” and meditated on the piteous Christ supported by the other two members of the Trinity with their empathetic expressions, she could not help but feel sorrow and affection for the God who had died for her sins.

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98 Deus in auditorium meum intende. Domine ad adiuvandum me festina.
99 Converte nos, Deus salutaris noste. Et averte iram tuam a nobis.
One significant three-word sentence found in Catherine’s book of hours is not found in a text block or on a banderole—nor is it written in Latin. *Versinnet dat Ende* (“Think of the End”) is conspicuously inscribed with a griffoned flourish on the wall above the heads of the figures in “Christ before Pilate” (Figure 22).100 Reminiscent in its placement and attention-getting effect of Jan van Eyck’s signature in his *Arnolfini Portrait* (Figures 23 and 24), this phrase of ambiguous interpretation would have nevertheless been a very pointed means of addressing Catherine. Surely the words relate to Pilate washing his hands of the sentence imposed on the soon-to-be-crucified Christ as indicated by John Plummer. However, as the only words in the whole of Catherine’s book written in her own Middle Dutch tongue and presented as they are against a blank wall from an elevated vantage point, I believe they clearly serve to remind the reader of Christ’s sacrifice and the need to attend to “last things”.101 The forewarning to the Christian of Isaiah 53:5, “But he was wounded for our transgressions: he was broken for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes are we healed” was ever before the faithful as a caution to not fall into sin. In his counsel to be wary of the devil Geerte Grote wrote, “Take care lest your heart become hardened, lest you become calloused and insensitive.” and quotes Hebrews 6:6, “Such crucify the Son of God for themselves again and hold him up as a spectacle.”102 Catherine would not want to be responsible for crucifying the Savior again.

There is a group of images within the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* that I believe, along with the personalized prayers and the “writing on the wall”, compel the viewer to the specific end of focusing on their own last things. Found in the Hours of the Dead these miniatures illustrate a narrative that begins with the opening miniature for matins, a scene of a dying man in his bed

100 Plummer, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, unpaginated, plate 20.
surrounded by loved ones and others (Figure 3). What follows over the course of the next several miniatures is the story of what happens to the man’s body, and his soul. We will deal with the fate of his soul later and for now consider how the other images assisted Catherine in affectively meditating on her own death.

Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen (1367-1398) was one of the most highly educated members of the Devotio Moderna. Re-printed in English and Dutch into the twentieth century, his duodecimo-sized volume, The Spiritual Ascent was a staple in the houses of the members of the New Devotion and circulated throughout northern Europe. Zerbolt’s aim in his treatise is to guide the reader into returning to spiritual rectitude with God—to return the soul back to its condition prior to The Fall in the Garden of Eden—by climbing a series of steps or ascents. The goal of extirpating sin is attained through self-examination and meditation. Zerbolt describes how fear of the Lord “doth shake the heart violently” producing remorse which purifies it, and describes seven general ways that someone can produce that fear in their meditations. The first three involve self-examination from which one should come to the realization that one is sinful and deserves great punishment from God. Because “the judgments of God are inscrutable,” one cannot be sure if one is deserving of damnation or salvation. The fifth way to produce fear is to meditate on the brevity of life. Zerbolt says that, “A person must therefore meditate on the fact, never to pass from before his eyes, that after a little while he will pass from this life . . . you will leave everything behind . . . with every hour of every day you draw nearer to your final hour.” Zutphen advises the reader to imagine as if they were about to die and

103 Van Engen, Devotio, 56.
104 Ibid., 56-57.
105 Ibid., 57.
106 Zerbolt, The Spiritual Ascent, 30.
107 Ibid.
108 Van Engen, Devotio, 262.
consider how much fear they have. He also suggests to, “. . . place before your eyes the sight of a dying man, and carefully note the form, means and order by which he comes to die. His whole body withers, all its members grow stiff, the eyes turn up, and so on.”  

The viewer of the Deathbed Scene in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves overlooks the activity in the room from a raised vantage point. The eye is immediately drawn to the middle of the bed where a woman assists the dying man in holding a holy candle. One’s gaze is directed along the spindly, bare arm of the shirtless man and stops at his weary, dying face. It appears that some of those surrounding the man’s bed are assisting him in the art of a good death. A woman sits, lost in prayer with her chemised book of hours on her lap while a man, identified as possibly a priest by John Plummer, reads from another book; perhaps he audibly prays from the Ars Moriendi for the man in the bed because he is too weak to pray for himself. The heir in the back appears to be taking some bad advice from a nattily dressed friend as he is seen in the margin raiding his dying father’s chest of goods. 

Despite the number of figures and activity around the bed, one’s gaze always returns, and rests, on the kindly, if wizened, face of the dying man. That this was the illuminator’s intent is evidenced from the careful attention given in rendering the man’s facial features as well as his hair, while the faces of the other figures are much more cursorily executed (Figure 25).

In speaking further on meditating on a dying man Zutphen writes, “Afterward follow the corpse to the burial, and see how the wretched flesh, for whose sake the man did so earnestly seek pleasure, is left to the earth, and made food for worms and given over to unending

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109 Van Engen, Devotio, 263.
110 Duffy, The Stripping, 361.
111 Plummer, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, unpaginated, plate 43.
112 Ibid.
The half-page miniature above the prayer for the hour of prime of the Monday Hours of the Dead entitled, *Preparation of the Corpse of the Deceased* (Figure 26) presents a grisly scene. The dying man seen earlier has now passed and is carried in a shroud by two men who are about to lay him on a bed of straw on the floor in preparation for burial. His naked, gaunt body lies exposed to our view. The face that had once elicited our pity and empathy now causes us to look away in horror. His eyes, opened wide are sunken and rolled back, his nose distorted and nostrils distended, the teeth are exposed in an unseemly grin. While the sight causes one to look away out the window to the distant landscape for relief, when focusing again on the scene one’s gaze immediately fixes on the gruesome face of the dead man.

The setting for the miniature for the hour of terce is inside a church (Figure 27). The body of the man is now enclosed in a cloth-covered casket supporting two burning candles. Beside the casket are two kneeling mourners clothed in black. Three singers in a choir stall dominate the scene; their pleasant, composed faces, indicating they are involved in their task, are a welcome respite from those of the dying and dead we have just seen. As with the other hours of this office, Catherine would pray, “Incline unto my aid O God. O lord make haste to help me.”

When Catherine viewed the miniature for the *Internment of the Deceased* (Figure 28), she would have been compelled, once again, to ponder death in a singularly pointed way. As two men lower the coffin into the ground a priest sprinkles it with holy water from an aspergillum as others look on. The light-colored casket juts across the scene and is its centerpiece—one cannot escape this confrontation with the finality of death. While the details of her features are not very clear, it appears that the mourner on the far left hand side of the scene looks out at the

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114 Plummer, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, unpaginated, plate 43.  
115 Ibid., plate 44.  
116 Ibid., plate 45.
viewer while all the other figures look elsewhere. This very effectively makes the viewer feel they are being challenged and perhaps beseeched to examine the scene more intently.

As Catherine prayed through the hours of the Hours of the Dead every Monday her prayers would have been efficacious for all those who had died before.\textsuperscript{117} What is most relevant here, however, is that Catherine’s prayer book very effectively compelled her to consider \textit{her own} death. The words written in Middle Dutch on the wall above the figures of \textit{Christ Before Pilate} become only incidentally related to the scene below but rather a directive to Catherine to consider what will happen to her in the end. The wearied and pale, gaunt man lying on his deathbed; grinning from the winding sheet and enclosed in a casket — because of his humanity, despite his gender—becomes the “me” of the viewer, in this case Catherine.

Through this investigation we are able to see how various aspects of Catherine's prayer book, such as its beauty as an object, its use and the formal qualities of its miniatures, served to engender a personal attachment between the object and its owner. Sarah Stanbury refers to Augustine’s theories of extramission when she writes, “In looking we are connected physically to the object we see by the agency of species, or visual rays. Images, through their species, literally touch us, linking us physically with them in ways that underwrite the dramatic physicality of late medieval effective piety.”\textsuperscript{118} For Catherine, the personalization of her book’s prayers and imagery were all effective in promoting a consistent internalizing of its contents. In this way her book became a familiar, useful tool that seamlessly connected with her sense of self and assisted in her daily pursuit of godly living.

\textsuperscript{117} Van Bergen, \textit{Passion, Salvation}, 19.
The Book as Sacred

Given its role in Catherine’s private meditation and when considered among the relics and other halidom we know the Duke and Duchess had in their residences, it is not unreasonable to assume that for Catherine her prayer book had some aspect of sacredness about it.\(^{119}\) Holy books were sometimes adorned with tiny relics mounted beneath glass or gemstones and it is entirely possible that the binding of Catherine’s book was treated in this way. As mentioned earlier, it was not unusual for the faithful to keep pilgrims badges or other talismanic objects in their books of hours thereby imparting their “power” to the book. While noting that the main function of a primer (book of hours) was as a book of prayers to be recited and not as a talismanic object to be handled, in his discussion of the incantatory aspect of speaking prayers and biblical texts, Eamon Duffy relates the story of a nobleman who used his book of hours “not the Gospels” on which to swear an oath in a promise of land.\(^{120}\)

Images themselves were capable of imparting a sense of the sacred. Just the viewing of an image of Veronica’s veil, found in the border of the image of Christ Carrying the Cross (Figure 29), offered an indulgence of 5,000 days. Likewise, tens of thousands of days off of time spent in Purgatory were gained for any prayer offered before images of the Man of Sorrows such as the one found in the Penitential Psalms of Catherine’s book.\(^{121}\) Here, Christ is portrayed in a way meant to elicit feelings of pity, compassion and love from the devout. Surely the high value of these indulgenced images is an indication of their “holiness” factor which is thereby transferred to the book in which they are contained.

\(^{119}\) Nijsten, *In the Shadow*, 318.
\(^{120}\) Duffy, *The Stripping*, 216-217.
\(^{121}\) Ibid., 238-239.
The Master of the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* rendered the miniatures adorning its pages with verisimilitude and the utmost attention to detail. It is possible, for example, to digitally zoom in on details in a miniature that is only 2 ⅜ inches square, such as the beggar’s bowl in *Piety: Lady Distributing Alms* (Figure 31), and see the tiny coins inside. The skillful rendering of the fine details of the human figures such as those on the dying man, the line of his collarbone and his realistically tousled tufts of hair, make the figures appear alive (Figure 32). Gesture and movement such as pointing, praising, praying, blessing, reaching, twisting, carrying, and kneeling, even speech in the form of unfurling banderoles, make the figures in the scenes appear actively engaged and animated. The miniatures are not frozen moments of time but views of another world trapped in their own continuous time loop; always engaged in activity but always there in the present to look upon. The miniatures appear not as flat images framed with fancy borders but scenes of another world seen through windows cut into the parchment. Therefore when one meditates on the *Crucifixion* (Figure 33), as the figures below the cross pray, faint, and gesture, and the blood of Christ streams out from his wounds and runs down the wooden cross, one can imagine they are witnessing the actual event. If we look at the miniatures as windows to another realm they are timeless. One can imagine that when the book is closed, the figures continue to live. Catherine could hardly consider her book anything less than sacred given that it contained the crucified bleeding Christ.

The Borders as Liminal Space

In their most obvious role, the borders of Catherine’s prayer book provide beautiful frames for the miniatures. However, if we consider the miniatures as being seen through openings or windows cut through the parchment, the borders then become the liminal spaces that locate the viewer who peers through to the other world. The borders remain part of the temporal world
outside the miniatures and therefore belong to the world of the viewer. Most of the borders are comprised of a background of gilded rinceaux overlaid with colorfully painted acanthus leaves and flowers. Many contain no other elements, but a number of them are interspersed with one or two drolleries engaged in a variety of activities. While these sometimes relate or react to what is going on within the miniatures, they remain, as does the viewer, outside, and do not enter in. For example, in the left-hand border of Adoration of the Child, a hooded man with mouth wide open leans out from his perch among the acanthus leaves while ringing two large hand bells to announce the birth of Christ. Below him a diminutive angel plays a rebec as if to put the baby Jesus to sleep (Figure 34). In another example from the border of Christ Before Pilate (Figure 11), a man pours water—presumably from the basin in which Pilate has washed his hands of the decision to crucify Christ—into the mouth of a dragon (Figure 35). Likewise, the world of the miniatures with one exception, does not intrude into the borders. In Flagellation of Christ (Figure 36) the bundle of sticks raised over the head of one of Christ’s assailants protrudes, quite alarmingly, well beyond the thin outer frame surrounding the miniature and into the border.

While the miniatures in Catherine’s book provide much visual interest, it is inevitable that as one meditates, prays, and ponders, the gaze—due to fatigue, boredom, or just for a bit of daydreaming—wanders into the borders. Here the drolleries can function in a number of ways. In pleasant or benign scenes such as Adoration of the Child, figures such as the bell-ringing man and the rebec-playing angel provide some visual interest and yet are subtle reminders of what is going on in the miniatures. Figures such as the pelican in her piety in the border of Agony in the Garden (Figure 38) portend or reinforce the theology of events in the miniature—in this case the

pelican feeding her young with her own blood foreshadows the crucifixion as Christ in the garden anticipates his sacrifice. The border surrounding the *Flagellation of Christ* (Figure 36) is primarily comprised of rinceaux but does contain one drollery, a demon-headed dragon that looks out and snarls at the viewer (Figure 37). As the only overtly menacing figure in the book his presence is clearly a reflection of the evil taking place in the scene he borders. When considered with the bundle of twigs that jut out into the border, it is clear that the illuminator wanted to drive home the gruesomeness of the beating of Christ. Perhaps by far the most visually strange border in Catherine's hours is that of the *Crucifixion with God the Father, the Virgin, a Patron-Saint, and Catherine of Cleves* (Figure 39). This border provides no visual rest for the eyes at all. In fact, its function appears to be to force the gaze back to the miniature—ironically one that includes a portrait of Catherine herself. As the gaze attempts to find a place to escape the brightly-colored, knotted motif, it bounces around and inevitably rests on the dizzying “optic block” patterned tile on the left and is then forced to look back out the window into the crucifixion scene. For the most part, the liminal spaces of the borders serve the very practical purpose of relatively safe and comfortable places for the viewer to rest their gaze while praying or doing a bit of daydreaming.

It can be concluded that Catherine would have grown quite fond of her book of hours. Not only was it a beautiful object but as a constant companion in prayer and meditation and as a source of comfort, it would have engendered strong emotions thereby increasing its appeal. The formal aspects of its miniatures, particularly those that referenced Catherine directly would have contributed to her sense of affinity with the book. All told her book of hours provided Catherine the perfect tool with which to engage in serious self-examination throughout her life in an effort to have a good death.
Chapter 3
Facing Hell

Had Gerard Zerbolt determined to put together a group of miniatures designed to aid the faithful in implementing his recommended program of self-examination, he could not have created anything more perfectly suited to the task than what the Master of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves produced in Catherine's book. More likely, of course, is that the Master of Catherine’s hours had read Zutphen’s The Spiritual Ascent and was influenced by it and other teachings of the Devotio Moderna. Whatever the source of his inspiration, the Hellmouths of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves are perfectly suited for mixing the ingredients for Zerbolt’s elixir of “remorse arising from fear”.123

The earliest use of the Hellmouth—or human “Hell head”—dating back to about the year 800 in illuminations illustrating the Psalms of David provided a way to give form to the abstract notion of wickedness. Later, its development into the gaping maw of a beast either giving up or engulfing unfortunate souls became ubiquitous in the visual milieu of the Middle Ages. Typically limited in its use to depicting one of a few Biblical events: the Last Judgment, the Harrowing of Hell, the fall of the rebel angels, and, rarely, the release of the fourth horseman of the apocalypse; the image of Hellmouths confronted the viewer from their settings in architecture, church murals, pews, and illuminated manuscripts and became universally recognized throughout Europe as the symbol for Hell.

The Hellmouth was also a part of medieval theater. The popular Dutch morality play Mariken van Neuemeghen (Mary of Nijmegen), adapted from a work of prose that ironically directly refers to political strife between Catherine’s husband, Duke Arnold of Guelders and their

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123 Zerbolt, The Spiritual Ascent, 261.
son, Adolph, tells of a young girl (Mary), who finds herself alone without lodging in Antwerp. Having been turned away by a mad relative, Mary is befriended by the devil in the form of a young man who seeks to win her soul. At one point the devil boasts, “What marvels I can perform! If I am in charge here for a while, I shall thrust still more down into the mouth of Hell”.

In reporting on the Passion play in Metz, the chronicler, Phillippe de Vigneulles, observed, “The gateway and mouth of Hell in this play was very well made, for by a device it opened and closed of its own accord when the devils wanted to go in or come out of it. And the great head had two great steel eyes which glittered wonderfully.”

A full page miniature from the Book of Hours of Étienne Chevalier illuminated by Jean Fouquet, depicts a play about the martyrdom of St. Apollonia (Figure 40). A crowd is depicted as audience positioned on two levels at the back of the stage. Situated in its traditional position a curious prop, a Hellmouth, presumably made from wood and painted cloth, gapes from downstage left.

Renditions of the Hellmouth were common in books of hours and provided familiar touchstones, most typically in scenes representing the Harrowing of Hell as in the Lisle Hours in the Morgan Library and Museum (Figure 41). Christ is shown holding the hand of a naked Adam as he leads him and Eve and a number of other souls out from the gates of Hell. Here, as was typical, the mouth has the appearance of an inanimate object—a shell in form and function—evidenced by its visual stiffness and lack of vitality, and acts as merely a signifier of Hell. Another Harrowing scene from the Très belles Heures de Notre-Dame, this one from a

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125 Ibid., 206.
bas-de-page scene, is more carefully modeled and realistically detailed but still appears stiff and lifeless (Figure 42).

Unlike what had been before, the Hellmouths of the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* do not function as cut-outs or theater props standing in the sinister corner to signify the entrance to the underworld, but provide animated centerpieces in innovative settings of Hell. While employing already existing iconography derived from a variety of sources both ancient and contemporary—such as the Bible, apocryphal writings, visionary literature as well as church teachings and popular belief—the atypical Hellmouths found in Catherine’s book stood at the forefront of a sea change—a profusion of extraordinary and fantastically-imaged depictions of “the third last thing” in paintings and manuscript illuminations. This was a development that would extend well into the sixteenth century. The compelling nature of the Hellmouths in Catherine’s book, particularly the triple Hellmouth found in the Office of the Dead, served the practical function of assisting Catherine in creating the decoction of which Zerbolt spoke; one made with fear that would make all the “earthly delights” of the world bitter and would lead to a pure heart.\(^{127}\) Of this practice he advised, “Do not neglect therefore to make a kind of elixir from these and similar meditations, which, though it be bitter, is wonderfully purgative of all evil humors, meaning, evil desires.”\(^{128}\)

In a sermon on original sin the early fifth century the archbishop of Ravenna, Peter Chrysologus lamented,

“O sin, you cruel beast—and not content to vent your fury against the human race from merely one head. We have seen this beast, brethren, devouring with a triple mouth all the highly precious sprouts of the human family. Yes, brethren, with a

\(^{127}\) Van Engen, *Devotio*, 260.

\(^{128}\) Ibid., 260-261.
mou...t that is triple: as sin this beast captures, as death it devours, as Hell it swallows down.”

The most arresting and innovative miniature in the Cleves manuscript is found at the opening of the Office of the Dead (Figure 1). Resting on the back of a green demon with seven banderoles trailing from its mouth, each printed with the names of the seven deadly sins (Figure 43), the triple Hellmouth is the consummate manifestation of its illuminator’s skill. More than just one opening, there are three mouths and two heads that comprise this “Hell gate” which presents us with a remarkable full-blown bird’s eye view of the entrance to Hell. Eyes closed and lifeless with mouth wide open, the uppermost head forms part of the dark grey bulwark which provides a backdrop for the animated, colorful and hideous head in the foreground. Two blast furnace-like crenellated towers spew out flames, forming part of the bulwark. Each tower supports a cauldron atop the flames over which demons dangle naked human souls. The hideous head rendered lifelike and colorful has its jowls flared out displaying their yellow interior; a series of claws rim the edges. Within, and beyond the fangs of this first mouth is the repulsive and startling sight of another face, glowing bright orange with mouth wide open to reveal a caldron filled with sinners attended by demons who exacerbate their suffering. The border of the image contains no drolleries other than the demon spewing out the sins. The whole miniature itself is set—rather uncharacteristically for a work so meticulously designed and executed—significantly askew on the vellum, reinforcing the uneasy feeling within the viewer that something here is not quite right.

Catherine would have prayed the Office of the Dead frequently, ideally once a day, as it was believed to benefit not only her but also the souls of her family and friends who had died.\textsuperscript{130}

Still, the triple Hellmouth would have been most effective in her own self-examination. In his instructions on how to obtain fear and remorse through meditation on Hell Zerbolt instructs:

Turn your eyes next to the region of the damned and the prison of the miserable, carefully examining what goes on there, what for a house and place it is. . . . See therefore Hell itself, a most horrible chaos, a subterranean place sunk in the depths, totally dark, the deepest pit and yet totally enflamed, all a great burning furnace with terrible leaping flames, a great city dark and murky, totally alight and burning, full of an infinite multitude of people crying out, giving forth the most miserable sounds, screamed out with grief and ardor, people mutually tearing at one another in envy like mad dogs bound together. Think next of the bitterness of the pains: a heat there greater than any comparable here, but also an intolerable cold without equal here. . . . Think too of the excruciating intensity of the individual punishments, and of their multitude. . . . There is punishment for every sense and in every member.  

Meditation was not a random act of praying and looking at images but was meant to be purposeful and deeply introspective. In the words of Zerbolt “By meditation is meant the process whereby thou dost diligently turn over in thine heart whatsoever thou hast read or heard, earnestly ruminating the same . . . especially those things which help thee to progress in purity, which strike terror or increase love in thee.” He made it clear that meditating on one’s own sins and the punishments they deserve is one of the most effective was of creating fear, a main ingredient in concocting the elixir of remorse; “. . . let a man reflect on the magnitude and variety of punishment in Hell and recognize himself worthy of it, and then he will begin to grieve and to fear deeply”. The triple Hellmouth in Catherine's prayer book provided a scene rich in detail and iconographical interest that would be extremely useful in examining her own sins and leading to a pure heart.

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131 Van Engen, *Devotio*, 265.
133 Van Engen, *Devotio*, 261-264.
In the fourth century Evagrius Ponticus formulated the idea of classifying sin into the eight “evil thoughts”.\textsuperscript{134} Introduced to the west in the early fifth century by John Cassian as the eight “principal vices” and reformulated by Pope Gregory the Great into the seven “capital vices” (sloth, greed, lust, pride envy, anger, gluttony), this list of human faults capable of causing the eternal separation of the human soul from God became known as the seven deadly sins.\textsuperscript{135} Formerly presented as myriad and varied vices, it wasn’t until the late medieval period in art that these human failings began to be specifically addressed as the seven deadly sins.\textsuperscript{136} Tales associating specific punishments for the seven deadly sins had existed from the early 1200s with *The Vision of Lazarus* being among the most popular.\textsuperscript{137} These provided the sources for some of the most frequently recurring associations of sins and punishments in scenes of Hell found mostly in manuscripts that appeared after the creation of the Cleves Hours such as: the proud exposed on giant wheels, the angry butchered, the greedy boiled in molten metal, the slothful tormented in snake pits, the envious submerged in freezing water and then blasted with icy winds, the glutinous fed toads and the lustful put in pits of fire and brimstone.\textsuperscript{138} While already a manuscript illumination from the eleventh century had the names of the sins written on a circular diagram with radiating axes, the practice of labeling depictions or personifications of sins —derived presumably from the walls of French churches—began at the end of the fourteenth century as seen in an example of envy riding on the back of a dog from 1392 (Figure 44). A thirteenth century theological handbook, *Die Heilige Regel* linked each sin to an animal

\begin{itemize}
\item Richard Newhauser, ed., *In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages*, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005). x-xi.
\item Ibid.
\item Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly*, 142.
\end{itemize}
and also a demon. Labeling was intended to clarify and confirm the meaning of a wealth of what were often complex and nonspecific symbols found in manuscripts with unrelated texts.

The origins of the iconography used in depicting the torments of Hell in any given work may be as wide and varied as the vast wealth of textual, oral and visual references available. These sources can generally be divided into two categories; those that specifically relate particular punishments to each of the seven deadly sins, and those that relate punishments to various combinations of non-specific human faults and vices on their own, or accompanied by—usually some of—the seven deadly sins, such as the Vision of Lazarus and its many versions. Dagmar Eichberger has pointed out that in manuscripts where there are no specific, clear descriptions of Hell in the accompanying text, such as would be the case in a book of hours, “generic” scenes with iconography derived from a number of literary and visual sources are used. The Hell scene from a fourteenth century manuscript of Saint Augustine’s Cité de Dieu (Figure 45) is an example of a punishment scene illustrating a text which provides no detailed imagery of the workings of Hell. Furthermore, there are no indications in the miniature, such as labeling, that the artist was intentionally relating his punishments to the seven deadly sins. Similarly, while there is no specific Hell imagery contained in the text of the Office of the Dead of Catherine’s hours, the artist’s use of the banderoles listing the names of the seven deadly sins—Invidia, Accidia, Ira, Gula, Avaritia, Superbia, and Luxuria (Envy, Sloth, Wrath, Gluttony, Avarice, Pride and Lust)—suggests his specific intent to have the viewer associate the seven deadly sins with the scene before him.

140 Norman, Lay Patronage, 218.
Only a few of the sin/punishment associations that would later become popular in illuminations have been used here. Inside the lower mouth is a cauldron filled with the greedy boiling in, what can be assumed to be, molten metal. Atop the upper right tower is the punishment for anger as a demon splits a victim in two—here though without the use of a sharp implement—and in the lower right those guilty of the sin of lust suffer in a molten fiery pit. Beyond these few examples, deciphering additional, possible allusions to the rest of the sins within this miniature presents more of a challenge. Still, it would appear that, as in the case with the other illuminations in this manuscript, the master has rivaled his skill for creating unusual visual imagery with his clever use of numerous, intriguing and often obscure iconographical references.

The castle was a popular motif central to battles of good and evil in secular prose of the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, and it was used with a wide range of meanings—as an allegory of the Virgin Mary, of the human soul, even of Hell. The French text, Songe du castel, from the late 1200s tells the story of an attack on a castle, (shaped like a person), the battle waged by personifications of the seven deadly sins. In Catherine’s book the illuminator placed the castle as the backdrop to showcase his presentation of Hellish tortures and the general mayhem inflicted by demons. Gluttony overtakes the castle by entering through the mouth. The two demons hurling fireballs from behind the parapet in front of the upper Cleves mouth (Figure 46) aptly represents not only the demons who “each bearing a large mass of slag…flung them” at St. Brendan and his godly companions in the saints trip through Hell in the tale, St. Brendan’s Voyage of the early tenth century, but more appropriately for our purposes,

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142 Warton, The History, 450.
143 Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly, 121,135,141.
144 Ibid., 135.
covetousness (or greed) in the anti-Lollard polemic of the early 1200’s, *Reply of Friar Daw Thopias*. Thopias is the “fire-thrower” in the army of the Antichrist laying siege to the “one true Church”. 145

Zerbolt exhorts, “Think of that most miserable society of demons and their cruel tortures, for they are without mercy. They never tire of torturing and are never moved to mercy but rather increase the pain by every means possible.”146 Another work, a Lollard tract from the fifteenth century assigns demons to each of the seven deadly sins.

**Demons and Sins**

The depiction of demons in medieval art has a long history and complex iconography, however, I have attempted to identify plausible relationships between demons and their and associated sins within the triple Hellmouth. Medieval demons are frequently depicted as hybrids, such as those having a dog’s head and bird’s feet or other such combinations. However, one particular demon in the Cleves mouth stands apart from the general run of demonic images found in manuscripts that had come before. Staring out at the viewer and wielding a three-pronged pitchfork which he thrusts into the chest of a soul is a—quite literally—bug-eyed demon which gives the unmistakable impression of a fly (Figure 47). In the Lollard tract we find that the demon Beelzebub, lord of the flies, rules over the envious. 147 The sin of gluttony may be signified by the red pig-demon perched just below the left eye of the bottom “outer” Hellmouth or perhaps, in an example of making the punishment fit the crime, by the demons that appear to

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146 Van Engen, *Devotio*, 265.
be gnawing on human body parts (Figures 48).\textsuperscript{148} A late fourteenth century reference manual used by the clergy for preaching describes a castle belonging to the devil as having “towers of vanity and pride”. It may be that the scene on the left tower depicts the sin of pride. Perhaps the “proud”, poked by a demon in his “puffed up” chest, is about to be tossed from his lofty position, but this may be assuming too much (Figure 49).\textsuperscript{149}

A possible identification of the sin of sloth, depicted by the demon attacking a soul with a hammer found just below the gluttonous pig (Figure 50), is found in a work by Hieronymus Bosch, \textit{The Tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins} (Figure 51), but the Bosch painting reflects an earlier visionary tale from the twelfth century of a knight named Tondalus. A compiled list of books owned by Duke Arnold and Duchess Catherine shows that in 1453 they acquired a copy of \textit{Tundelus}, one of the most well-known visionary or “soul journey” tales of the twelfth century and one that was particularly well-read in the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{150} The \textit{Vision of Tondal} written by a monk from Ireland named Marcus tells the story of how Tondal’s soul leaves his body and goes on a tour of Hell and Purgatory after he becomes ill and faints at a dinner party.\textsuperscript{151}

Bosch’s late fifteenth century work, \textit{Tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins} serves the same basic purpose as I have proposed for Catherine’s hours, stated on the banderole on top of the work and echoing the writing on the wall in Catherine’ book, “that they would consider their latter end.”\textsuperscript{152} Unlike the Cleve’s master, Bosch has been more precise and labeled the sins directly next to the corresponding punishment, leaving no doubt as to their identification. His punishments for lust, pride and gluttony have been made more specific to each sin with a lustful couple attacked in bed.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{148} Morton, \textit{The Seven Deadly}, 222- 223.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 131.
\textsuperscript{150} Nijsten, \textit{In the Shadow}, 425.
\textsuperscript{152} Kren, \textit{Margaret of York}, 306.
\end{flushleft}
by demons and the gluttonous fed snakes and toads—as in the Vision of Lazarus. A prideful pair, assailed by strange creatures, admires themselves in a mirror held up by a demon. The punishments for greed and wrath are the same as in the Cleves image. Bosch has labeled the scene of a soul being hammered on an anvil (Figure 52) as “sloth” providing an interesting clue for the scene in the Cleves image. In *The Vision of Tondal* we read of the main character’s horror at the sight and sound of souls hammered into a solid mass on anvils. However in the knight’s tale this torture is not linked with any specific deadly sin. Charles Cuttler has stated that Bosch had adopted this imagery from two miniatures: St. Augustine’s *City of God* (Figure 44) and the Hell scene from *The Traité des Quatre Dernières Choses* (Figure 53), but neither of these works, created well after the Cleves manuscript, attempt to relate specific sins with punishments and the miniatures are not labeled with the sins. Still, Bosch has specifically assigned this punishment to the sin of sloth. While there is no anvil in the Cleves manuscript, it may be that the hammer-wielding demon about to pound on a naked soul represents sloth. Perhaps a definitive source for assigning “hammering” to the sin of sloth predating the Cleves manuscript will be found but more investigation must be done.

It should be clear that when Catherine opened up her book of hours to pray the Office of the Dead and meditate on the *Mouth of Hell* she would have much more to contemplate than simply a frightening image. While here I have made an attempt to decipher some of the iconographic cues contained in the miniature, it is certain that many more would be discernible to Catherine. Zerbolt’s treatise devotes multiple chapters instructing the reader on how to extirpate sin from their lives through their daily examinations, with each of the seven deadly sins having its own chapter. As Catherine’s gaze looked for a respite away from the Hellish scene before her it

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would be allowed to rest for only short second before being drawn back to the demon spewing out the seven deadly sins. She would have no difficulty arousing the fear needed to make Zerbolt’s elixir.

**Conclusion: Hope Between Hell and Heaven**

It took more than eight hundred years from Augustine’s early fifth century reflexions over the efficacy of prayers for the dead until the doctrine of Purgatory was defined by the church. Like most Christians, Catherine did not really expect to go to Hell. Even the spiritually slovenly who died well expected to escape its eternal punishment, yet all could expect to spend time in Purgatory.\(^{155}\) Still, then, as now, while its purpose of purging believers of all sin remained unquestioned, the details of its location and method of operation were open for debate. Dante presented Purgatory as a part of Heaven, but among the laity of the late Middle Ages it was considered to be a part of Hell.\(^{156}\) Visionaries such as St. Brigit of Sweden, or the knight Tondal claimed that Purgatory was a place of the most brutal suffering to be found in Hell. In either case, Purgatory was at least also a place of hope. The first three “Hell” mouths in the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves*—found in the Hours of the Dead— are fiery settings of torture and suffering but present a narrative that concludes in a happy—as well as theologically sound— ending, permitting us to conclude that they do indeed represent Purgatory. The first mouth, open wide, contains several naked souls amidst the flames, most with hands and eyes uplifted in attitudes of prayer (Figure 2). As one soul swoons from the heat and discomfort, another, eyes still uplifted, offers a comforting gesture. The next three miniatures, discussed earlier, are the preparation of the body, funeral mass, and burial of our dying man, while the fourth introduces the efficacy of


\(^{156}\) Ibid., 343-344.
the offering of the Eucharist in freeing souls from Purgatory. In his Dialogues Pope Gregory the Great expressed that the dead would desire that the offering of the “holy host” be used to pardon their sins.157 This theme, elucidated within the two mouths of Hell that follow, provides just one example of iconography derived from myriad diverse—both chronologically and thematically speaking—and often obscure sources. In the late sixth century, the pope told the story of a priest who was charitably assisted by a stranger he met at a warm spring where he frequently bathed. One day the priest decided to bring the man, who was actually a spirit, two loaves of “singing bread” in thanks for his service, but the soul refused the gift, explaining that he was doing penance for his sins.158

‘…Why do you give me these, father? This is holy bread, and I cannot eat of it,…but if you desire to please me, offer this bread unto almighty God, and be an intercessor for my sins: and by this shall you know that your prayer be heard, if at your next coming you find me not here.’ … The good Priest all the week following gave himself to tears for him, and daily offered up the holy sacrifice: and afterward returning to the bath, found him not there: whereby it appeareth what great profit the souls receive by the sacrifice of the holy oblation, seeing the spirits of them that be dead desire it of the living.159

The image of a mourner first presented in the burial scene, looks out at the viewer as if inviting them to contemplate what is occurring; an assistant has just placed two loaves of bread upon the altar (Figure 54).160 These same loaves are then transported by a purple-robed angel from the altar table to a table in the Hellmouth of folio 105v at which four souls kneel in supplication (Figure 55).161

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158 Ibid., 249-50; “Singing bread” is defined by the MED as the large wafers to be used by the priest for consecrating at mass. Regents of the University of Michigan, 2001. The Electronic Middle English Dictionary, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED40453. Kathleen Oliver mentions that the term may be used for either consecrated or unconsecrated hosts. Kathleen M. Oliver, “Singing Bread, Manna, and the Clergeon's 'Greyn', “The Chaucer Review 31, no. 4 (1997) 361.
The last of these three similar Hellmouths reveals the happy ending effected for the captive souls held in Purgatory by the offering of bread—the Eucharist (Figure 56). An angel, this time robed in white and standing outside the mouth, has grasped the wrist of one of the souls within to lead them out of the mouth while the others prepare to follow. One soul, swinging his arms to the side appears to dance with joy while another, seemingly looking straight out at the viewer jubilantly claps their hands in the air. The loaves of bread in the Cleve’s miniatures first offered on the altar and then brought to the table of the suffering faithful in Purgatory, provide a visual representation of their double meaning as presented in Gregory’s tale.

As with the triple Hellmouth in the Office of the Dead, the form and function of the Hellmouths in the three miniatures discussed above are clearly an abrupt departure from what had been seen in Hellmouths before. Frontally presented, and pushed up against the front of the picture plane to display what takes place inside the mouth, the head of the beast itself has been cleverly animated and varied across the three scenes in a way that fits the events within. The fire of Purgatory in the first mouth (Figure 2) burns intensely and engulfs its suffering victims from all sides. The artist has carefully delineated individual orange tongues of flame that stand out from the pale bodies of the nude figures, lap over and around the lips and jowls and are visible on the ears and eyelids. The lids themselves standing out from the eyes as if propped up with toothpicks, serve to emphasize the intensity of the flames that burn within the head. A small black demon peers out at the viewer just below the nose and four curved fangs loom large and threatening. The appearance and presentation of this demon, while not conforming to the full description, calls to mind the knight Tondal’s accounting of a creature he saw in the mouth of a

beast on a visit he made to Hell: “…in his mouth he had two very unusual parasites…One of them had his head against the upper teeth of this beast.”¹⁶² The tiny, spindly, demon with insect-like face and attenuated “fingers” tucked beneath the upper lip does indeed look like a parasite (Figure 57). While still present, the flames in the second mouth are much less intense and no longer surround the souls; their knees and the legs of the table rest on a ground that is not burning. The eyelids of the beast are no longer drawn up in the dramatic manner of the previous image and its fangs are rendered less prominent and have lost some of their visual effectiveness. Orange flames shoot out from the creatures ears (as if repelled away from the offering within) and the demon is no longer there. The use of a darker color for this head has obscured its details by blending it into the background. Indeed, the illuminator has been successful in presenting an image which expresses the amelioration of the intensity of the Hellmouth’s fury. The final mouth in the group still glows with fire but has no effect on those who are leaving its captivity. The souls step through the opening between the fangs (now fewer in number) and are not threatened. The eyelids, once again extended, are rimmed with white, yet their extension seems to express the shock of the beast at being robbed of its victims rather than the ferocity of any internal inferno.

These images of Hellmouths were strategically placed among the other miniatures of the Monday Hours of the Dead, discussed earlier, to present a profound didactic narrative to the viewer. In the first miniature of the office, the viewer’s attention is drawn immediately to the fading figure of the man on his deathbed. Amplified by the kindly gesture of the caregiver gently touching his head, a feeling of sympathy is elicited by the kindly face and drooping eyes

of this man. The first Hellmouth brings to mind the immediate suffering he would endure upon his death. The next image presents the macabre image of the body being prepared for burial, the skeleton grin staring eerily out the viewer; one’s revulsion is relieved to turn the page and see the comparatively pleasant, if sad scene of the funeral. The finality of the burial is punctuated by the mourner on the left who seems to look out at the viewer. There can be little doubt that the Hellmouth scenes successfully touched an emotional chord within Catherine. As she prayed she would have not only thought of her own soul but also friends and loved ones that had already gone on before her and who needed her prayers to shorten their time in Purgatory.

As an inanimate object of exceptional beauty containing personal pictorial allusions Catherine’s book of hours certainly would have endeared itself to her even without its spiritual content. However, it was in its frequent daily use as a devotional tool that the book really became extraordinary and indispensable to its owner. Even when new, the texts and the subjects of its miniatures would have been known to Catherine and provided familiar cues that sparked emotional attachments. As she went about praying the hours several times a day; as she used the book at funerals and in times of self-examination and in the search for solace, her emotional connection with it would have deepened.

It should be remembered that for Catherine, preparation for death was a way of life. The pervasive medieval focus on the significance of death and the emphasis on preparing for its inevitably made the constant extirpation of personal a necessity. It was in this pursuit that meditating on the miniatures of her prayer book and the practices espoused by the teachings of the Devotio Moderna were so indispensable.
I have attempted to show that the miniatures in Catherine’s prayer book are best viewed not as flat images with pretty borders on a page but as windows—or holes—cut into the parchment. I have found that once I looked at the miniatures as truly three dimensional scenes seen through a window, I was able to fully appreciate their potential for facilitating meditation in a whole new light. When used by candle or lamp light the busy, swirling patterns of the glittering gold rinceaux in the borders along with the brightly colored acanthus leaf patterns would certainly increase this effect. This three dimensional effect along with the detail in the miniatures greatly increases their visual interest for the user.

The Master of the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* created an object that was able to engender emotional attachments with its owner that enhanced a lifetime of prayers, devotion and the pursuit of an interior life. The triple Hellmouth in the Office of the Dead with its graphic depictions of punishments for sin provided a visual tool that effectively produced the ingredient of fear Catherine needed to create an elixir of remorse for sin leading to a pure heart. The narrative that played across the folios of the Hours of the Dead gave hope not only for the redemption of the souls of loved ones who had already died but also Catherine’s own.


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Figure 1. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *The Mouth of Hell*, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.97r.
Figure 2. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *The Mouth of Hell with Tormented Souls, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.168v.

Figure 4. *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, facsimile. Faksimile Verlag, 2009 (used with permission).

Figure 5. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Pentecost, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.52 (detail).
Figure 6. Jan van Eyck, *Virgin Reading, Ghent Altarpiece* (detail), 1432. Oil on panel, St. Bavo's, Ghent.

Figure 7. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *St. Lucy, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.310 (detail).
Figure 8. *St. Augustine, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.168v (detail).

Figure 9. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *St. Valentine, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.269 (detail).

Figure 10. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Moses and Paul Observing the Celebration of Mass, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.143r.

Figure 11. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Christ Before Pilate, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.38.
Figure 12. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Holy Family at Supper*, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.151.


Figure 14. Master of Catherine of Cleves, St. Cecilia (with detail), *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.308.
Figure 15. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Catherine of Cleves Praying to the Virgin and Child, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.1v.

Figure 16. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Joachim Praying, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.2r.

Figure 17. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Fear of the Lord, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.68.

Figure 18. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *The Queen of Sheba Fording a Stream, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.109.
Figure 19. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *The Virgin and Christ intercede for Catherine of Cleves, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.160.

Figure 20. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Piety: Lady Distributing Alms, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.65.

Figure 21. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Trinity with Son Showing Wounds, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.88r.
Figure 22. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Christ before Pilate* (detail). *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.38 (detail fig. 11).


Figure 25. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *The Deathbed Scene, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.180 (detail fig. 3).

Figure 27. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Office of the Dead* (with detail), *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.101r.

Figure 28. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Internment of the Deceased*, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleve*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.102v.

Figure 29. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Christ Carrying the Cross* The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.63v (border detail).

Figure 30. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Man of Sorrows with Kneeling Franciscans*, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.151r.
Figure 31. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Piety: Lady Distributing Arms*, (shown actual size) and detail, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.65.

Figure 32. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *The Deathbed Scene*, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.180 (detail fig. 3).
Figure 33. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Crucifixion*, (with detail), *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.945 f.66v.

Figure 34. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Adoration of the Child*, (with detail), *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.35v.
Figure 35. Master of Catherine of Cleves, Christ before Pilate (detail). The Hours of Catherine of Cleves Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.38.

Figure 36. Master of Catherine of Cleves, Flagellation of Christ. The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.60v.

Figure 37. Master of Catherine of Cleves, Flagellation of Christ. (with detail), The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.60v.
Figure 38. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Agony in the Garden, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.120 (detail).

Figure 39. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Crucifixion with God the Father, the Virgin, a Patron-Saint, and Catherine of Cleves, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.917 p.160.
Figure 40. Jean Fouquet, Martyrdom of St. Apollinia, Book of Hours of Étienne Chevalier, ca. 1460. Musée Condé de Chantilly, Ms 71.

Figure 41. Harrowing of Hell, The Lisle Hours, 1316-1331. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS G.50 fol.080r.
Figure 42. Limbourg Brothers, *Harrowing of Hell*. *Très Belles Heures de Notre-Dame*, Paris or Bourges, ca.1420-25. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms. lat. 3093, fol. 155r.

Figure 43. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *The Mouth of Hell*. *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f. 97r, (detail fig. 1).
Figure 44. *Envy* (detail). France, 1392. Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, Ms. fr. 400, fol. 53v

Figure 45. *Hell*. Saint Augustine, *Cité de Dieu*, France, 14th c. Strasbourg, Bibliothéque Universitaire et Municipale, Ms. 523, f. 290.
Figure 46. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Demons Hurling Fireballs, The Mouth of Hell, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 fol. 168v (detail fig. 1).

Figure 47. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Beelzebub, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.945 f. 168v (detail fig. 1).
Figure 48. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Gluttony*. The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, Utrecht, ca.1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.97r (detail fig. 1).

Figure 49. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *The Hell Mouth, Pride, The Hours of Cathereine of Cleves, Utrecht*, ca.1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 fol. 168v (detail fig. 1).
Figure 50. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *The Hell Mouth, Sloth, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca.1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M..945 fol. 168v (detail fig. 1).

Figure 51. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things, The Punishment of the Damned in Hell* (detail) late 15th c. Flemish. Oil on panel 120 cm x 150 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado.
Figure 52. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things, The Punishment of the Slothful* (detail) late 15th c., Flemish. Madrid, Museo del Prado.

Figure 53. *Hell Scene* (detail), *The Traite des Quatre dernieres Choses*. Brussels, Bibliotheque Royale, Ms. 11129, f. 90.

Figure 54. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Requiem Mass for the Deceased, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*. Utrecht, Netherlands, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.97r (detail).
Figure 55. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *The Mouth of Hell with Three Souls at a Table*, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, Netherlands, ca.1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.105v (detail).

Figure 56. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Release of Souls from the Mouth of Hell*, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, Netherlands, ca.1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.105v (detail).
Figure 57. Master of Catherine of Cleves, *The Mouth of Hell with Tormented Souls, The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, Utrecht, ca. 1440. New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.945 f.168v (detail fig. 2).