

Essays in Medieval Studies 6*[Page numbers of the printed text appear at the right in bold.]*

Please note: This essay contains 30 figures reproduced in 11 plates; many plates contain more than one figure, so many figures are small. Reference to a plate containing two or more figures is repeated whenever one of those figures is cited, e.g., (Figs. 2-3) appears for both fig. 2 and fig. 3.]

page 1**Sacred Image and Illusion in Late Flemish Manuscripts****Robert G. Calkins**

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One of the most remarkable phases of manuscript illumination occurs at the end of the Middle Ages, primarily in Flanders and France, when illusionistic borders are introduced into books for private devotion. Certainly the most famous and astonishing example of this illusionism is the miniature in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1857), showing Mary of Burgundy reading by an open window with a view into a church interior beyond. [1 \(Fig. 1.\)](#) Actually, this miniature encapsulates several major considerations that I want to bring together here. It invokes, first of all, certain aspects of the notion of the sacred image and of its use in devotional books at the end of the Middle Ages. It also raises questions about the reasons for various innovative sequences of miniatures and about the relevance of the remarkable illusionistic structural frames around some of the miniature and text pages in late Flemish manuscripts. These issues touch on the intrinsic nature of piety and devotion at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries.

No medieval painting captures better than the scene of Mary of Burgundy reading her prayer book the essence of the contemplative nature of private devotion, the purpose for which so many late medieval Books of Hours were made. evolving out of the Psalter, the 150 psalms of David that were to be recited in a certain sequence each week, the Book of Hours was a compilation of devotions to be said eight times during the day. These devotions were modeled after the offices for the canonical hours practiced in monastic communities. This series of daily devotions, known as the Divine Office, would be said starting at Matins, either at midnight or 2:30A.M., finally finishing with Compline in early evening. [2](#) Although the laity probably did not adhere completely to this rigorous schedule for its private devotions, their books were divided into the same eight parts, hence the name Book of Hours. By the fifteenth century these Books of Hours had become the most prevalent book of private devotions for nobles or wealthy merchants.

The core of any such book was the Hours of the Virgin, or Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, but this text was often supplemented with the Hours of the Cross, the seven Penitential Psalms followed by a litany

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listing the saints revered in that region, perhaps a Mass of the Dead, and frequently prayers to the saints, or suffrages, to be read on their feast days. [3](#) However, a Book of Hours such as the Spinola Hours in the Getty Collection (Malibu, J. P. Getty Museum, MS Ludwig lx.18), [4](#) dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century, to which I will be referring later on, not only has many of these standard texts but also augments them with a special series of weekday Offices and their masses, thus expanding the number of devotional sequences and increasing the possibilities for their illustration. In fact, the illustrations introducing each text were often augmented in ingenious ways, developing a tradition of narrative and symbolic elaboration that began almost as soon as normal sequences of illustrations had become standardized.

Before pursuing the matter of pictorial elaboration, however we must remember that, in principle, decorated initials or miniatures accompanied by decorative borders were used to demarcate the divisions of the text: they are decorative or pictorial bookmarks. Thus in the Hours of Katharina van Lochorst in Münster (Westfälische Landesmuseum, mv. 62-1: [\(Fig. 2\)](#), probably made in Utrecht circa 1450, [5](#) the two lines of rubrics in Dutch, the large elaborate red and blue "H," and the border of delicate pen flourishes on the right page, are an immediate indication to someone thumbing

through the book that a major new text starts at this point: here the beginning of Matins for the Hours of the Virgin. The facing full-page miniature (actually inserted), is an appropriate illustration relevant to the text that follows, providing a pictorial echo or amplification: here the Annunciation as the beginning of the story of the Infancy of Christ that usually illustrated the Hours of the Virgin.

But such pictorial bookmarks are more than just a starting point or an illustration: they invoke a moment of pause, of contemplation that established a mind-set appropriate to the devotion that follows. And for texts that have multiple parts, such as the Hours of the Virgin or Hours of the Cross, we find a sequence of miniatures that usually constitute an expanded narrative. Thus, although any number of variations were possible, in general the cycles of illustrations for the normal texts of the Book of Hours became more or less standardized in the fifteenth century.⁶ For the Hours of the Virgin, the sequence of miniatures usually told the story of the Birth of Christ, beginning with the Annunciation for Matins, as in the Lochorst Hours mentioned above. The cycle usually culminated at Compline with a scene, not from the life of Christ, that encompassed the theme of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven after her death—usually the Coronation of the Virgin by Christ. Thus pictorial reinforcement aided the worshiper to meditate on the events of the life of the Virgin and of Christ during the eight devotions each day.

A similar cycle of miniatures usually accompanied the Hours of

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the Cross, or of the Passion, generally beginning with scenes of Christ praying in the Garden of Gethsemane or of the Betrayal of Christ by Judas. This pictorial cycle therefore emphasizes the sacrifice and suffering of Christ, usually ending with either the Entombment or perhaps the Resurrection or the Ascension of Christ into Heaven, signifying his triumph over death.

But no sooner were the more or less traditional cycles of miniatures for the Hours of the Virgin and Hours of the Cross formulated than attempts were made to expand and elaborate upon the narrative detail of the incidents depicted, to provide meaningful thematic juxtapositions, to introduce typological references, or to add additional commentary by means of "pictorial glosses." Thus marginal figures among the lush colorful foliage around the Nativity miniature in a French Book of Hours dated 1407 from the workshop of the Boucicaut Master (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 144) relate the supplementary incident of the Annunciation of the Birth of Christ to the Shepherds.⁷

Such elaboration spills over into other texts, such as the Office of the Dead, which normally is introduced by only one miniature. In a French manuscript of about 1450 in London (British Library MS Egerton 2019, fols. 141v-142) one of the traditional scenes for this text, a burial, is surrounded with medallions with a death-bed scene, mourners in front of the coffin, and Death on a black horse rampaging toward a bishop, an emperor, a king, and a noblewoman: these are "pictorial glosses" implying that no one will be spared.

Frequently the compulsion to expand exposition resulted in a doubling of the miniatures. In the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, a remarkable Dutch manuscript of the 1440s now in the Pierpont Morgan Library (MSS M. 917 and 949), full-page miniatures consistently face half-page miniatures providing the opportunity to amplify the story of the Nativity and Passion of Christ for the Hours of the Virgin and Hours of the Cross.⁸ Thus, in the latter a scene of Christ brought before Caiaphas faces one of Christ blindfolded and mocked.⁹ In this instance, the elaboration of additional incidents of the story parallels, as Professor James Marrow has shown, the increasing circulation in fifteenth-century Flanders and the Netherlands of numerous popular tracts on the Passion that enumerated extended gory details and provoked an accompanying heightened emotional response to these incidents in private devotion.¹⁰

In fact, detailed narrative expansion, although frequently evident in many luxury manuscripts, came to be supplanted by a sophisticated and judicious combination of other images and other devices, as we shall see, to heighten the emotional impact of the theme and therefore the devotional fervor of the beholder. One common device was to juxtapose miniatures of incidents from the Passion of Christ with those for the Infancy of Christ as illustrations for the Hours of the Virgin. In the diminutive Book of Hours made for Jeanne d'E'vreux, queen of France, and decorated by Jean Pucelle, we find the Crucifixion facing the Adoration of the Magi (Fig. 3), purposefully juxtaposing not only acceptance by the Gentiles with rejection by the Jews but also sorrowful and joyous incidents of Christ's life, heightening their impact by contrast.

These devices of narrative amplification for heightening the devotional response of the worshiper became inexorably entwined with changes in the nature of the miniature and its surrounding border that ultimately altered the very aesthetic of the book. At the beginning of the fifteenth century: artists began to represent scenes as though they were seen through a window, the origin of the device we saw in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy. Thus, we find views of interiors as though seen through a proscenium arch: for example, a bourgeois interior in Mérode Altarpiece in New York (Fig. 4), and a similar, even more accomplished interior in the Turin-Milan Hours (Fig. 6).¹¹ The altarpiece lends itself to such treatment, for its frame, whether explicitly architectural or just a simple casing, as for the Mérode Altarpiece, easily serves as a "window." But the developing aesthetic of panel painting intruded into manuscript illumination, creating an illusion that a hole has been punched through the page, a page whose surface is otherwise reinforced by the foliate border decoration and the text itself. As we can see in the bottom margin of the Turin-Milan page, a similar phenomenon occurs with landscapes, where the illuminator has cleverly used the bars of the decoration to frame one of the most effective landscapes in all of early fifteenth-century art. The result is an apparent extension of the viewer's space into another world beyond what we call the picture plane. But this is, a purist--and a medievalist--might claim, antithetical to the intrinsic nature of the book, which consists of folios that one can turn, planes whose surfaces are constantly being restated by the planarity of the text and its decoration. In earlier medieval illuminations--exemplified here by facing pages in an Ottonian manuscript of the eleventh century (Fig. 5)--the flatness and colored patterns of pictorial representations and text dominate. Whatever the merits of this earlier aesthetic of the book, profound changes took place in the second half of the fifteenth century that show entirely different concepts of the nature of medieval illumination and transform the effect of the books that contain them.

After the middle of the fifteenth century we find an inexorable development of bravura exercises in illusionism: it became fashionable to depict real plants in the margins, as though laid out upon a colored or gold field. The border around a miniature of All Saints and facing text page in the Rothschild Prayer Book in Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. ser. nov. 2844: Fig. 19)¹² shows flowers, buds, and

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butterflies casting shadows against a matt gold ground as though they were placed upon it. Such illusionistic borders become a major form of French and Flemish manuscript decoration at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, often with a variety of subtle and intriguing relationships.

One impetus for such *trompe l'oeil* representations may be the fascination with the representation of actual objects, manifested not only in early fifteenth-century paintings, as we can see in the Me rode Altar-piece, but also in the margins of such manuscripts as the Hours of Catherine of Cleves of about 1440, where we find a Sears catalogue of medieval birdcages (Fig. 7), while in a Book of Hours made for Engelbert of Nassau (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 219-220)¹³ of perhaps the 1470s, shelves of glazed Valencia ware are displayed around the Adoration and Voyage of the Magi--like so much Wedgewood china in an expensive department store (Fig. 8). In both cases these extraordinary borders may be further symbolic amplification of the miniatures, the birdcages referring perhaps to Saint Cornelius, who was the patron saint of domestic animals, and the vessels to the expensive containers for the precious substances brought to the Christ Child by the Magi. In contrast with the birdcages, however, the page with the pottery exploits the illusion of a window; the miniature is seen through the opening in the cabinet, the text restates the page, but the cabinet itself now appears to exist in front of the folio. Admittedly, this last relationship is ambiguous, for no specific clues as to its placement are given.

A step beyond this, and a motif that became popular in France with the work of Jean Colombe in the 1480s, was the total abandonment of decorative foliage and its substitution by a specifically architectural frame. Such a frame surrounding the Ascension of Christ in the *Très Riches Heures* (Fig. 9) is made to appear before the page, actually casting a shadow upon it.¹⁴ Moreover the text no longer merely restates the plane of the page, it is now a crinkled banner held at the corners by two angels in front of the architecture and casting a shadow upon it! We therefore have a complex four-stage progression from text surface, to architectural frame, to page, and then through the opening to the vista beyond. An early example of such a trick is the placement of an illusory scroll over, and casting a shadow on, the border and text in a book of hours in London, British Library, MS Add. 29433 (Fig. 10), illuminated in Paris by an Italian artist in the first decade of the fifteenth century.¹⁵

Colombe's manipulation of the relationship between page and miniature, a deliberate exercise in illusionism given

the visual dues he has provided, was only one of a number of aesthetic modes with which late fifteenth-century illuminators experimented. From here on, anything can happen--and it does.

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The Spinola Hours in the Getty Collection, containing expanded weekday devotions noted above, draws on these traditions and goes far beyond them. In so doing, it raises important questions about the nature and relevancy of the illusionistic framing devices to the function of the devotional image. Let us see what happens. For the Gospel Lessons, various prayers and suffrages, and throughout the text, we find many of the now-usual colored borders with *trompe l'oeil* flowers and foliage, usually facing similar borders around the text, as for the miniature of St. Michael ([Fig. 17](#)).

For the major blocks of text, the weekday Offices and the Hours of the Virgin, however, we find a repertoire of remarkable expanded scenes within innovative formats. In some instances framed full-page miniatures, occupying the normal space of a miniature and border, surround the text, which, in the case of the Heavenly Host Adoring the Trinity ([Fig. 11](#)), is itself framed and held by two angels; or, in the miniature of the Enthroned Trinity, the text is on a scroll *pinned* to the painting ([Fig. 12](#)). In one instance the text is *in* the miniature, in the other, it is *on* it.

In other instances, the text appears on a *hinged panel* attached to the architectural frame of the miniature, as in the miniatures of the Virgin and Child with Angels and the facing Tree of Jesse ([Figs. 13-14](#)). We also find frames with text at the bottom hanging from the outer frame, cutting across a unified landscape focusing us on the scene of Christ Carrying the Cross ([Fig. 16](#)), while below, in the same continuous setting, a different incident takes place, the Nailing of Christ to the Cross. This is computer windowing, long before the invention of the Macintosh.

Occasionally, this hanging frame provides us with a remarkable X-ray vision into a chapel where a requiem mass is taking place, while below we see into the crypt. Facing is a somewhat less effective view into the death-bed chamber of a patrician house, while outside death stalks three noblemen ([Fig. 15](#)). The external architecture of these buildings occupies the rest of what would have normally been the "border area."

But beyond serving as the armatures for meaningful pictorial amplification of specific themes, what are we to make of these illusionistic pyrotechnics? Are they merely examples of artistic bravura? A clue to the nature and perhaps the intent of some of the framing devices lies in an unlikely quarter. For, all of these remarkable variations of pictorial formats notwithstanding, it is surprising to find that some of the miniatures of the Spinola Hours, and indeed, many of the miniatures in similar books produced in Flanders at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries do not use original compositions. Some of the miniatures, particularly those for the suffrages, are identical to miniatures either by the same artist or by other artists in other Books

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of Hours produced in this milieu. So numerous are these copies that students in a seminar on late Flemish manuscripts at Cornell several years ago dubbed this the School of Plagiarism. I do not intend to run through all of these similarities; they have been referred to extensively in the literature.¹⁶ But to illustrate the nature of the problem, the St. Michael in the Spinola Hours is virtually repeated in the Rothschild Prayer Book in Vienna ([Figs. 17-18](#)); or the Procession of All Saints in the Grimani Breviary (Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Cod. Lat. I 99) is repeated in the same Vienna manuscript ([Figs. 19-20](#)).¹⁷

Copying single motifs such as this, or indeed larger segments of compositions, had been a frequent and long-standing practice evident in Flemish and Dutch manuscripts and panel paintings of the fifteenth century.¹⁸ Many compositions for miniatures have thus been traced back to famous panel paintings or other famous miniatures, as for instance the copies and variations of the calendar scenes of the *Très Riches Heures* of about 1415 updated in the Grimani Breviary and Hennessy Hours (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS II.158) of the beginning of the sixteenth century. Many of the partial copies were undoubtedly made from designs that artists collected in pattern books, as for instance the drawing of hounds attacking a boar in the sketchbook attributed to Giovannino de' Grassi that may predate the same composition used in the *Très Riches Heures* calendar scene for December and that later turned up in several Flemish manuscripts at the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹⁹ Numerous designs, particularly of the subjects that were traditionally used in devotional books of the kind we have been looking at, were obviously widely circulated

among the illuminators' workshops in Ghent and Bruges. Thom Kren has observed that such designs were probably distributed in order "to hasten (the production of the miniatures), and probably reduce costs."²⁰ This may be so, but it seems to me that there may be additional complex reasons that legitimized such flagrant copying in this period.

In the first place, all of the late Flemish illuminations that we have seen are by extraordinarily competent artists, and I suspect it was more effort and trouble to copy an image exactly, pose for pose, drapery fold for fold, than it was to come up with either an approximate or even a fresh composition, as in the case of the two miniatures of the procession of all saints in the Grimani Breviary and the Rothschild Prayer Book in Vienna (Figs. 19-20). I wonder, therefore, if certain designs, which were once innovative and therefore worthy of emulation, came to assume a quality of authority rightness, and even desirability for veneration that justified copies of them for reasons beyond just the expedient and economical. To explore this possibility we need to digress for a moment.

In one of the most important books on the development of late

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medieval devotional painting, entitled *Icon to Narrative*, Sixten Ringbom discusses the exponential increase in the number of narrative scenes and, in particular, the image he calls the "dramatic close up."²¹ The effect of such an image, Ringbom notes, is particularly strong in a Book of Hours such as the Huth Hours in London (British Library MS Add. 38126) in which one thumbs through a number of conventional full-length scenic and very beautiful miniatures typical of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century panel paintings,²² when one suddenly is brought up short, face to face with several intimate and powerful "close-up" images such as the Pietà (Fig. 21).²³ This is using a zoom lens for a visual knock-out punch, a devotional shock treatment. In his book, Ringbom is concerned with the development of this sort of dramatic close-up in panel painting: half-length or bust-length narrative scenes, as opposed to the hieratic, rigid, static contemplative icons of Byzantine or Italo-Byzantine painting. He sees this sort of image as an excerpt, a tight focusing on the figures in action, and the multiplication of such narrative scenes beyond the usual repertoire as a further manifestation of the propensity to give us every detail of the story.²⁴

Such expansion, especially seen in the context of a sequence of paintings in some Books of Hours and in the remarkable Stein quadriptych in Baltimore (Walters Art Gallery), which has sixty-four such scenes of the Life of Christ and the Virgin,²⁵ certainly does give us an almost cinematic sequence that presents us with every conceivable incident of the story. But I question Ringbom's assessment of the intrinsic nature of such a close-up image, especially when restricted to only a few scenes in a small devotional panel painting, particularly the kind of up-close diptychs formulated by Roger van der Weyden,²⁶ or as scattered images in a prayer book. Are scenes used this way *really* narrative? The close-up Christ and the Virgin (Fig. 22), an abbreviated Coronation of the Virgin for Compline in the Huth Hours in London,²⁷ is removed from the chatter and flutter of the heavenly host; it is a contemplative image. Similarly, the even more tightly focused Lamentation of Mary over the body of her son in this same book (Fig. 21) distills, focuses on, and removes the incident from the hurly-burly of pushy Roman soldiers and wailing followers; it is static image isolated from the perspectival world. I would contend that these images are, in fact a *return to the iconic image* in the best sense: sacred images that are the embodiment of timeless, enduring, never-ending moments of supreme spiritual pathos or joy. The possibility that many of these paintings are *revived* functioning icons leads us to reconsider the nature of the illusionistic frames around some of these miniatures.²⁸

It has been customary in writing about late Flemish illuminated manuscripts to comment upon the extraordinary illusionistic effects created by the artists. Indeed, I opened this paper with a repertoire of

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marvelous effects achieved by a variety of Flemish illuminators. Now we come to the major issue: what is the purpose of such illusionism? Why play games with the page and delude the spectator? James Marrow has suggested quite rightly that in some instances we have deliberate manifestations of artistic self-consciousness,²⁹ as in the Spinola Hours, that seem to say: "See how clever I am, placing the text in a frame *within* the miniature, or in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy, transforming the border into a window frame through which we see the scene beyond."

Because of these illusionistic gymnastics, Erwin Panofsky was led to comment that the late medieval book killed itself through an overdose of perspective,³⁰ while Otto Pächt saw the Master of Mary of Burgundy's illusionism of the

window frame as a deliberate attempt to reconcile the imaginary depth of the image with the flatness of the page with script.³¹ He finally concluded that, in this late period, "Book painting no longer offered a suitable medium for the artistic ideas of the time and consequently miniaturists... became a class of virtuosi, still exercising a craft which had outlived its *raison d'être*."³²

For all of my enchantment with the intricacies of the illusionistic and naturalistic borders, and especially with the tricks of perspective played by the illuminators, I cannot subscribe wholly to these assessments. There can be no doubt that these artists were aware of the flat page upon which they painted their perspectival manipulations, but I do not believe they felt there was a conflict of aesthetics that they had to resolve or make excuses for. Such analyses subject these medieval pages to a twentieth-century aesthetic that tries to resolve the conflict of now-traditional Renaissance perspective with the sense of surface and abstraction of contemporary art without answering the question "Why?" Close examination of these borders reveals that they are an integral part of the miniature and that they may refer to devotional attitudes and practices of the time. Moreover, I believe that we can find evidence that illuminators capitalized on the intrinsic nature of the book in using these frames to make their images even more effective. We have already seen this happen with the stark contrast of the up-close icon after a sequence of "more normal" narrative scenes. We therefore need to probe deeper into a possible significance for some of the illusionistic frames.

Usually such frames were architectural, and architectural frames had been around a long time and were used in different ways. An early example of such a frame, as pointed out by James Marrow, was the floating Annunciate chamber held up by marginal caryatids, in the Hours of Jeanne d'E'vereux by Jean Pucelle of about 1325 (cf. Fig. 3).³³ We have already seen how, much later, about 1480, Jean Colombe made a mockery of the usual relationship between page, text, and framing architecture in the *Trés Riches Heures* (Fig. 9), which further developed

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this idea of the projecting architectural structure. The banner with text is similar to the pinned text scroll that we have seen in the Spinola Hours. The Book of Hours by the Master of Catherine of Cleves in Mu"nster shows the Annunciation within a gothic chapel (Fig. 2) that appears to recede into the page, and it would appear that the Spinola X-ray views into buildings (Fig. 15) are but a logical extension of this device with the exterior and landscape occupying the "border space." The Mary of Burgundy miniature and border (Fig. 1) make a clearer distinction between the window of the miniature, and the space on our side of the opening in which the donor is seated. The observer is thus brought into this first space, which Ringbom called appropriately an "oratory interior."³⁴

But a simulated wood frame with blind gothic tracery around the miniature of David Praying in the Rothschild Prayer Book in Vienna (Fig. 23), and also around the text block on the opposite page, reveals a different concept of the use of the frame. This book and many other Flemish manuscripts of this period contain a remarkable variety of similar simulated wood tracery frames.³⁵ Such a device may have appeared first in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, where simulated carved roundels on a wood frame surround the miniature of St. Matthew, or where a beveled stone frame with polychromed acanthus surrounds that of St. Anthony (Figs. 24-25). In the Rothschild Prayer Book, however, the text has become an equivalent image, framed in the same way as the miniature. Ringbom considers such tracery frames as a "perfectly natural extension of the illusionism of the borders."³⁶ He sees three functions for these borders: first, the "niches and tiny statues convey the effect contrived by the Master of Mary of Burgundy in his oratory interiors"; second (to give a precis), they convey the illusionistic "window effect,"³⁷ and finally "the borders present a pseudo frame to the paintings they enclose."³⁸ While all of this is certainly true, I think that we can see them as something else: these are not *window* frames, they are *altar* frames.

In the fifteenth century there was a growing preoccupation with the altar frame: it was becoming more and more elaborate, with delicate tracery and a myriad of carved figures that expanded the message of the painted or sculpted panels. Even if the extravagant altar frame in which the Ghent Altarpiece was set, as postulated by Lotte Brand Philip, is not entirely accurate, other elaborate wood frames, or *Aufsätze*, with blind arcades, statuary in niches, and elaborate gothic tracery such as that found on the St. Wolfgang Altarpiece by Michael Pacher were virtually mass-produced in Germany and in Flanders in the fifteenth and into the sixteenth century.³⁹ Inspiration for the adaptation of these frames into manuscript illumination may derive from panel paintings with painted pseudo frames of blind tracery provided by Roger van der Weyden and

Dirc Bouts for some of their altarpieces in the mid-fifteenth century.⁴⁰ I do not dispute that there is a strong and deliberate manipulation of the "window" or "portal" effect of the frames of many of these altarpieces, such as Memlinc's Martin Nicuwenhove diptych in the Bruges hospital, complete with mirror showing the Virgin and the sitter leaning against window sills.⁴¹ Such a painting follows the developing tradition of devotional portraits, often in diptych form, in which the worshiper is brought into a parallel confrontation with the object of his devotion.⁴²

A variation on the idea of the framed diptych is found in the Hours of Joanna of Castille in London (British Library, MS Add. 18852: [Fig. 26](#)),⁴³ where the patron is shown on the right page kneeling with her patron saint in an architectural frame that becomes an oratorio, a Renaissance variant of the gothic structures we have just seen. She is adoring a framed copy of a Roger van der Weyden workshop Madonna and Child.⁴⁴ She is not contemplating a vision through a window, but rather an altarpiece complete with its simulated frame. Throughout the Hours of Joanna of Castille, these architectural frames function as oratorios, more complete and inclusive than the ones implied by the borders of the Hours of Mary of Burgundy, which here, by virtue of their openness and leading steps, invite us into the space. But what do we find when we mentally mount these steps or kneel upon them? Perhaps we are drawn into the space of the Mass of St. Gregory ([Fig. 27](#)), but I am not so sure, for the apparent "window" projects toward us in a way that contradicts the aisle on the left which appears to lead behind the frame. Even more emphatically, the Transfiguration ([Fig. 28](#)), with the architectural space receding behind the left edge of the miniature space, has the effect of a monumental altarpiece such as Titian's Assumption of the Virgin in the church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice (I am not implying any direct connection although it is contemporary: 1516-18). Thus on many of the pages of this book, and I would contend in a number of other Books of Hours in which such frames appear,⁴⁵ we may be dealing with a deliberate depiction of the *altarpiece* as such, complete with frame. This does not negate any use of perspective *within* the painting copied: the Mass of St. Gregory has a convincingly rendered architectural interior; the Transfiguration is more spatially indeterminate. The artist simply copied the appropriate interior composition of the altarpiece, as well as its frame, and put the entire image within a setting on the page.

I have already mentioned the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, with its juxtaposition of joyful and sorrowful scenes. Such a manipulation of contrasting themes also occurred in many ivory diptychs, two-panel folding ivory shrines that served for intimate private devotions or altars for the laity during the fourteenth century. It is probably no coincidence that both the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux and such diptychs are more or less

contemporary and that Jean Pucelle's innovative technique of using *grisaille*--modeling the figures entirely in shades of white to grey--may be a deliberate emulation of the effect of light raking across these subtle ivory reliefs. Both are therefore aids to private devotion, ordering the pious thoughts of the worshiper and juxtaposing the emotional highs and lows of the religious experience. One can think of this book as a succession of such ivory diptychs--real or imaginary--to which the worshiper has access merely by turning the pages.

In the fifteenth century with the proliferation of panel painting in the north, the close relationship between personal diptychs and devotional books is evident in a miniature showing Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, kneeling in his tapestry-enclosed oratorio, reading from an open prayer book, while before him on the wall hangs a diptych, perhaps of himself kneeling before the Virgin and Child.⁴⁶ Around the altar, however, are the words he is uttering: the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, "Pater noster." It is but a small step to inscribe similar opening phrases or devotional responses *on* the frame of such a diptych, such as on a diptych with the Virgin and Child painted by Jan Gossaert.⁴⁷

It is not surprising, therefore that similar inscriptions turn up on the simulated wood tracery frames in the books we have been considering, such as the Rothschild Hours in London, or even around text pages, as in the Spinola Hours ([Fig. 29](#)).⁴⁸ In the case of the Hours of Joanna of Castille, and also in many other books with similar architectural frames, it seems evident that we are dealing not with an adaptation of the window aesthetic of panel painting, whether full-length narrative or dramatic close-up, but rather with the adaptation of the *effect of the altarpiece* in its entirety, the framed sacred image, to the illuminated book. Even the text becomes a framed divine image in some cases, and in others, the devotional phrase becomes part of the frame. The beholder is no longer restricted to a single diptych on a wall for his meditations, but to a succession of diptychs appropriate for the occasion, providing a continuing variety of symbolic commentaries and devotional experiences like the turning of the panels of a polyptych. We find, therefore, a

fusing of the capabilities of the monumental polyptych and the smaller, more intimate diptych. Thus, the many-paneled altarpiece, or polyptych, the wings of which could be opened and closed to display different combinations of scenes, whether for weekday Masses and Sunday Masses, as in the case of the St. Wolfgang Altar in Austria by Michael Pacher⁴⁹ could now be reduced to an intimate scale in one's hands. One has only to turn the pages to achieve similar changes, not just for different feast days but for different times of the day. Even in the fourteenth century, there had been multi-leaved ivory "booklets" that worked in the same way.⁵⁰

This is why, I am sure, we have *hinged* panels with text on the

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very altarpiece-like arrangement of the miniatures of the Virgin and Child and the Jesse-tree (that look like polychromed statuary) in the Spinola Hours (Fig. 14). It is why we can get away with *pinning* scraps of text on a vision of the Enthroned Trinity (Fig. 12)--a vision is pretty insubstantial stuff--until one realizes that it is enclosed in a gothic tracery altar frame. The scroll is not pinned on light and cloud, it is pinned on the simulated painted surface of a framed panel. It is also perhaps why the floating scroll of text casts a slight shadow on the equally insubstantial image of the Salvator Mundi although admittedly the panel-painting effect here is not as strong.⁵¹ I must also admit that the effect is not always as rigorously consistent as I would have liked: altarpieces might face altarpieces frequently in the Vienna Rothschild Prayer Book (Fig. 23) and in the London Rothschild Hours (British Library, MS Add. 35313), but a framed tapestry faces the gothic tracery woodwork in the Hours of Isabel the Catholic in Cleveland.⁵² Nevertheless, wherever this motif occurs, I believe the reference is dear, and that its use provides some answers to the nature of the images we have examined in these devotional books. Earlier we saw examples of the repetition of images by the same artist and by different artists. It was not only a common artistic practice, it was given further legitimacy by the desire to *repeat* images that were especially revered, perhaps in a manner analogous to the repetition of images in Byzantine icons: the closer they were to the original, the greater their authenticity and evocative spiritual power. Thus we return to the idea of the icon underlying the nature of many often represented altarpieces, and especially effective in what I am inclined to re-label as the "iconic close-up" as in the Huth Hours in London (Figs. 21-22).

There is also another factor that is worth considering. With the advent of the printed single-sheet devotional image and the printed book, the repeated image was now customary; if one had a copy of the same edition as someone else, one had exactly the same illustrations, as well as text. Thus the proliferation of printed books with illustrations may have lent additional validity to the repeated identical image. Could it be that patrons may even have requested, in their handmade books, images identical to those they may have seen in someone else's book?⁵³ These repeated sacred images, therefore, may have been sought after precisely because they assert the continuity of the traditional, preferred devotional icon, reinforced by the illusionistic devices surrounding them.

The preoccupation with the altarpiece as an aid to devotion may have been a passing phase, but in the Spinola Hours and in the Prayer Book of Albrecht von Brandenburg, in a miniature of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin (Fig. 30), the altar format, whether simple or complex, is still strongly asserted. Although not always consistently used for every

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decorative opening, when it appears, whether in the context of the visionary images or a didactic polyptych, whether with full-length narratives or startling dramatic close-ups, the owner had in his or her possession a series of devotional panels, miniature altarpieces whose leaves could be changed not only according to the liturgical calendar but also according to the office of the week or canonical Hour of the day. Given its remarkable series of miniatures, attention to the consistent but varied effect of its double-page openings, and extraordinary framing devices, I believe that the Spinola Hours does not constitute a last gasp of artistic manipulation that killed the medieval book but rather that it manifests the last great cohesive example of medieval book illumination in which its format, sequence, and amplification of sacred images and use of illusionistic framing devices all reinforced and deepened its devotional character.

NOTES

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1. See also the miniature of Christ Being Nailed to the Cross in the same manuscript: Otto Pächt, *The Master of Mary of Burgundy* (London, 1948), p1. 13. For the complete facsimile, see F Unterkircher and A. de Schriver, *Karls des Kühnen vel potius Stundenbuch der Maria von Burgund*, Codices Selecti, 14 (Graz, 1969).
2. See Robert G. Calkins, *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1983), 207.
3. *Ibid.*, 24-82.
4. J. Plotzek and A. von Euw, *Die Handschriften der Sammlung Ludwig*, vol. 2 (Cologne, 1982), 256-85.
5. For a discussion of this manuscript, see Paul Pieper, "Das Stundenbuch der Katherina von Lochorst und der Meister der Katharina von Kleve," *Zeitschrift Westfalen*, Hefte für Geschichte, Kunst und Volkskunde, vol. 44, part 2 (1966), 97-163.
6. For a discussion of some "normal" cycles, see Calkins, *Illuminated Books*, 243-82 and 308-13.
7. The Boucicaut Master is named after the Book of Hours this anonymous miniaturist painted for Jean le Meingre, Marshall of France in the first decade of the fifteenth century (Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André, MS 2). For an illustration of Douce 144, see Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Boucicaut Master* (New York, 1968), fig. 63.
8. John Plummet, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* (New York, 1966).
9. *Ibid.*, pls. 18-19.
10. James Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: A Study of the Transformation of Sacred Metaphor into Descriptive Narrative* (Kortrijk, Belgium, 1979).

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11. This page, now in the Museo Civico in Turin, is among several folios frequently attributed to Jan van Eyck that are in a portion of a manuscript perhaps begun for Jean, Duke of Berry in the 1370s and subsequently finished by artists in Flanders about 1440. For this particular fragment of the manuscript see P. Durrieu, *Heures de Turin, quarante-cinq feuillets à peintures provenant des Très Belles Heures de Jean de France, duc de Berry* (Paris, 1902; rpt. Turin, 1967), and for an evaluation of the thorny problems this manuscript poses, see J. Marrow's review in *Art Bulletin*, 50 (1968), 203-9.
12. For a full facsimile edition, see E. Trenkier, *Rothschild Gebetbuch: facsimile und comentarium*, Codices Selecti, 67 (Graz, 1979).
13. See J. J. G. Alexander, *The Master of Mary of Burgundy: A Book of Hours for Engelbert of Nassau* (New York, 1970), and for a discussion of the illusionistic innovations of this artist, see A. van Buren, "The Master of Mary of Burgundy and His Colleagues: The State of Research and Questions of Method," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 38 (1975), 286-309.
14. Jean Longnon and R. Cazelles, *The "Très Riches Heures" of Jean, Duke of Berry* (New York, 1969), p1. 128 (fol. 184r).
15. This artist is now known as the Master of the Brussels Initials, after the book of hours illuminated for John, Duke of Berry, in which he participated, now in Brussels (Bibliothèque Royale, MS 11060-61): see Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of John, Duke of Berry: The Patronage of the Duke* (New York, 1966), 229-46; Calkins, *Illuminated Books*, 250-82; and Patrick de Winter, "Art, Devotion and Satire: The Book of Hours of Charles III, the Noble, of Navarre, at the Cleveland Museum of Art," *Gamut, A Journal of Ideas and Information* 2 (Winter 1981), 42-59, for a sense of the controversy surrounding this illuminator.
16. Most recently, Thomas Kren, *Renaissance Painting in Manuscripts: Treasures from the British Library* (New York, 1983); Patrick de Winter, "A Book of Hours of Queen Isabel la Catolica," *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 67, no. 10 (Dec. 1981), 342-427, and Donald Royce-Roll, "A Reconstruction of a Hypothetical Model Book Used for Saints Depicted in Suffrages of Late Flemish illuminated Manuscripts," a paper delivered at the 24th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Mich., May 1989 (a paper that grew out of the Cornell seminar).
17. See also the Christ Child with the Instruments of the Passion in the Prayer Book of Albrecht von Brandenburg (Malibu, J. P. Getty Museum, MS Ludwig IX.19, fol. 31v), which is also repeated in the Vienna Rothschild manuscript, fol. 199v. Sometimes, only a single figure is copied, and placed in a different setting, as in the case of the St. Sebastian in armor in the Older Prayer Book of the Emperor Maximilian I in Vienna (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1907), placed with a bishop saint in the Grimani Breviary For the Grimani Breviary, see A. Grote, *Breviarium Grimani*: 17

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Faksimilieausgabe der Miniaturen und Kommentar (Berlin, 1973).

18. See for instance Pieper, "Stundenbuch der Katherina von Lochorst," figs. 12 and 32, for a comparison of the Deposition from a Book of Hours in Münster by the Master of Catherine of Cleves, and a copy of a lost Deposition by Robert Campin.
19. Cf. Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries*, vol. 2, figs. 714 and 549. For the Hennessy Hours, see J. Destrée, *Les Heures de Notre Dame dites de Hennessy* (Brussels, 1923); and for a copy by Simon Bening in a series of detached Calendar miniatures (London, British Library, MS Add. 18855, fol. 108v) see Thomas Kren and Johannes Rathofer, *Simon Bening: Flemish Calendar. Clm 23638 Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München* (Luzern, 1988), fig. 38. For model books in general, with an entry on the notebook of Ciovannino de' Grassi, see Robert Scheller, *Medieval Model Books* (Haarlem, 1963), 142-54.
20. See Kren, *Renaissance Painting*, 60.
21. Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Closeup in Fifteenth Century Devotional Painting*, 2nd ed. (Doornspijk, 1984), 53.
22. See Kren, *Renaissance Painting*, 31-39, especially the miniature of St. Jerome in Penitence, pl. IV.
23. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 198.
24. *Ibid.*, 201.
25. *Ibid.*, figs. 191-94. Bening's Stein Quadriptych, with sixty-four scenes of continuous narrative set in four panels, contains many more scenes than could have been used in even the most expanded cycles of manuscript illuminations.
26. See, for instance, M. Friedlander, *Early Netherlandish Painting* (Leyden, 1967), vol.2, pls. 50-51 and 52-53.

27. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, fig. 171.
28. The repetition of icons has been noted in Byzantine manuscripts: see Annemarie Weyl Carr, *Byzantine Illumination, 1150-1250* (Chicago, 1986), and a recent paper by Robert Nelson.
29. James Marrow, "Artistic Self-Consciousness in the Middle Ages: Some Perspectives," paper presented at the 23rd International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich., May 1988.
30. Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953): "It has been said that book illumination was killed by the invention of printing: but it had already begun to commit suicide by converting itself into painting. Even without Gutenberg it would have died of an overdose of perspective" (1:28).
31. Pächt, *Master of Mary of Burgundy*, 24 f. See also Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 198.

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32. Pächt, *Master of Mary of Burgundy*, 42.
33. Marrow, "Artistic Self-Consciousness."
34. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 199.
35. See in particular, the Flora Book of Hours in Naples (Biblioteca Nazionale, MS I. B. 51): Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, figs 163-70); and a Book of Hours in Munich (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cim 28345: *ibid.*, figs.174- 84).
36. Similar frames into which cutout miniatures by the French illuminator Simon Marmion were inserted were used extensively in the so-called Flora Hours in Naples (Biblioteca Nazionale, MS I. B. 51) in the 1480s. Most of these miniatures are close-up images, which, it has been suggested, Marmion may have developed as a result of a sojourn in Flanders: Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 199.
37. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 43, cites the example of St Luke painting a portrait of the Virgin in Huntington MS HM 1173, fol. 15v, where the Virgin is leaning on the edge of a window opening with a tapestry over the sill. The image of the Virgin that is being painted, however, is simply enclosed in a standard frame without any "window effect."
38. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 199.
39. L. Brand Philip, *The Ghent Altarpiece and the Art of Jan van Eyck* (Princeton, N.J., 1971), facing p. 26. For other altar frames see figs. 13-17 and 41-42. For the elaborate late gothic wooden tracery setting for the St. Wolfgang Altar by Michael Pacher, see Nicolò Rasmò, *Michael Pacher* (London, 1971), figs. 73-75.
40. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 200, notes that the pseudo frame was used earlier, in altarpieces, but was later left out. See the painted "portal" frames of Roger van der Weyden's Granada Altarpiece in Friedlander, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. 2, p1. 1, and Dirc Bouts's Prado Altar of the Virgin, *ibid.*, vol. 3 (Leyden, 1968), p1. 1.
41. *Ibid.*, vol. 6 (Leyden, 1971), pls. 52-53.
42. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 46-46 [*sic*].
43. For this manuscript, see Kren, *Renaissance Painting*, 59-62.
44. A close copy exists in the Musée des Beaux Arts, Brussels: see the comparison made in de Winter, "Hours of Queen Isabel," figs 5-6.
45. See Kren, *Renaissance Painting in Manuscripts*, 59, for a list of manuscripts with similar architectural frames.
46. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, fig. 5. See also his "Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions: Notes on the Place of Art in Late Medieval Piety," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 6^e serie (Mar. 1969), 165.
47. Friedlander, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. 8 (Leyden, 1972), pls. 4-5.
48. See de Winter, "Hours of Queen Isabel," figs. 66, 68, 70-71, 98, 113, as well as the illustrations of the Spinola Hours in Plotzek and von Euw, *Handschriften der Sammlung Ludwig*, for numerous other examples.

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49. See note 39 above.
50. See the North German ivory devotional booklet in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Inv. Nr. 11-72) illustrated in Jeffrey Hamburger, "The Use of Images in the Pastoral Care of Nuns: The Case of Heinrich Suso and the Dominicans," *Art Bulletin* (Mar. 1989), figs. 4-5.
51. Plotzek and von Euw, *Handschriften der Sammlung Ludwig*, fig. 400.
52. For the London Rothschild Hours, see Kren, *Renaissance Painting*, p1. X. For the Hours of Isabel the Catholic, see de Winter, "Hours of Queen Isabel," color pl. IV.
53. A point brought up by Donald Royce-Roll in the seminar on late Flemish manuscripts held at Cornell University, and presented in his paper; see note 16 above.