

Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts

Sweet / materiality and the religious impulse / fall 2008

Review of reliquaries

Structuring Concepts/Questions

- Understand the difference between a *manuscript* and *book*
- Understand how books of hours, as a collection of textual and visual forms, functioned for the faithful
- Understand the origins of religious traditions derived from the Bible, or other sources/traditions, as they are collected and included in books of hours.
- Consider how image-making happened in the context of manuscripts.

Bibles, Manuscripts and Books in the context of Christianity

Jerome working on the vulgate, Durer

Christianity is a 'religion of the book.' -- its tenets, and beliefs are entirely based on the bible.

The **Vulgate** was the first (early 5th ce) Latin, orthodox version of the bible. St. Jerome was commissioned by Pope Damasus I in 382, to develop/translate a Christian bible in Latin.

Jerome translated (2) the books of the New Testament from the original Greek and Hebrew, as well as translating (2) the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin, drawing heavily on the Hebrew Tanakh (Bible)

The Vulgate became the definitive Latin version of the Bible of the Roman Christian Church.

Illuminated Manuscripts

Illuminated means painted.

It is important to be clear about the distinction between *manuscripts* and *books*.

Manuscripts are always hand-made, unique, one-of-a-kind objects (though several of the same content and design may be made, each is handmade and therefore unique).

Books are understood to be printed in editions in which each book is exactly the same.

Illustrations of parts of an illuminated manuscript

Illuminated manuscripts are codices in which text is supplemented by the addition of decoration such as:

- decorated initials
- borders and
- most are gilt with silver or gold

Division of labor: Often made in monastic scriptoria

- **Scribes** (or calligrapher) hand-wrote text

Image of unrubricated/ rubricated pages

- **Rubricators** added text in red ink (headings or marks between texts, or annotations in the margins)
- **Gilders** added metal leaf to pages
- Often several **illuminators** were responsible for painting various kinds of images from miniatures to borders to decorated or historiated capitals. Painters were typically assigned only one kind of painting.
- **Binders** stitched and bound the quires/signatures into a codice or book form

We will look at a few common kinds of manuscripts spanning the 8th century to the late 15th century:

- a gospel collection (drawn from the bible)
- an apocalypse (drawn from the bible)
- and two books of hours (draw variously from bible texts)

The Lindisfarne Gospels, England, approx. 715 ce

The manuscript was made to honor a local saint, St. Cuthbert was buried, and whose uncorrupted body was discovered, at the church of Lindisfarne.

Colophon text (indicating the makers of the manuscript) written by Aldred

The colophon states that the manuscript contains *two* versions of the Gospels, one in Latin (from St. Jerome's Vulgate) the other is the earliest English translation of the Gospels.

Detail from Jerome's letter to the pope showing both the Latin and English

Aldred wrote the English translation between the lines of Latin text about 250 years after the manuscript was made (late 10th ce).

Aldred indicated that that gloss was done with special intentions: The gloss of:

- Matthew for God and St. Cuthbert
- Mark for the Bishop
- Luke for the Lindisfarne religious community
- John for the sake of his own soul

Thus, for Aldred, the activity of transcribing/translating was attended with contemplative focus, similar to the icons.

This page presents a transcription of St. Jerome's letter to Pope Damasus informing the Pope that he had completed the translation of the bible from Hebrew and Greek to Latin, as commissioned.

carpet page and

Jerome's decorated capital

Jerome's letter employs the design that will introduce each of the Gospels:

- (1) one cross-designed carpet page, (2) the other a decorative page with decorated capital

miniature of Matthew

In addition to the carpet-page and decorative capital page, a miniature of the Gospel writer precedes each gospel. Here, Matthew is shown writing with his symbol, the winged man (who is blowing a horn).

Theodora, San Vitale

the drapery pulled aside which is reminiscent of the draperies of Byzantine images such as Theodora and her Court at San Vitale.

miniature of Matthew

The drapery may refer to mysteries that are partially revealed, partially concealed.

Scholars are unsure as to the identity of the figure peering out from behind the drapery – some suggest it is Christ.

The *Lindisfarne Gospel* was not made for reading; it was made for ceremonial/processional use in churches. It was a kind of liturgical prop in the drama of the mass. Therefore the decoration does not lend itself so much to reading as it does to a 'graphic enshrinement' of the Word of God. Like reliquaries, the richness of the book represents the glory of the word of God

The pages/leaves are about 15 x 12 inches. The manuscript contains 258 leaves requiring the skins of 129 calves.

carpet page

decorated capital I from Gospel of Matthew

and

detail of Matthew's carpet page design

detail of Matthew's decorated capital II

These designs may appear Celtic to us – indeed both the Irish and the English of this era were both influenced by celtic artistry...

Tara Brooch (3 inches) no date or origin available

...especially as it appeared in metal work such as the Tara brooch.

Details of carpet page bird circles and those in the Tara Brooch

miniature of Mark

Mark's symbol is the winged Lion

*carpet page and
decorated Capital from Gospel of Mark*

Like Islamic calligraphy, celtic design in this manuscript may visually suggest the complexity, inscrutability, and beauty of the divine.

celtic cross design

you also see the intricate line work of the Lindisfarne Gospels carried out in stone as well such as the celtic cross.

Miniature of Luke

Luke's symbol is the winged Ox

Carpet page and Decorated Capital from Gospel of Luke

Miniature of John

John's symbol is the winged eagle

John's image is quite iconic.

He sits – as do all the evangelists -- on a large cushion that, in Byzantium, would denote royalty and authority

Carpet page and Decorated Capital from Gospel of John

The Douce Apocalypse, 1265-70, English, 12.5 x 8.5 inches

Apocalypses

Apocalypses were popular in the middle ages, appearing in the 9 – 10th centuries, corresponding to a widely-held belief that the world would come to an end, and Jesus would return 1,000 years after his ascension into heaven.

The word *apocalypse* means "lifting of a veil" or to make something obscure clear – a revelation.

Apocalypses as a kind of text are based on the last book of the Bible, "Revelations," written (by traditional accounts) by John the Evangelist.

Recently the author of "Revelations" has been identified as John of Patmos. Owing to his self identification in the text as "John" and his location, exiled on the island of Patmos.

The text is a narrative of an 'apocalyptic' vision John observes involving the end of the world, the coming of Anti-christ, the Beast, the Whore of Babylon and the ultimate defeat of evil by the faithful and Christ.

The text takes the form of a letter composed by the author addressing the seven Christian churches in Asia.

a product of a mystical vision, and using symbol and metaphor extensively; the narrative takes place outside of history or earthly, daily contexts.

The text naturally lends itself to illustration.

The Douce Apocalypse

Named for an owner of the manuscript during the 1830s.

Originally there were 100 illuminated pages. Today only three are missing.

Prince Edward and Princess Eleanor of Castile before the Trinity

The original patrons of the manuscript were likely Prince Edward and Eleanor of Castile.

Edward holds a heraldic shield identifying him as the eldest son of England (of England's King)
Eleanor of Castile – holds her own heraldic shield of Castile

John Awoken by the Angel

John is instructed to write what he sees through his mystical vision and send it to the seven churches of Asia.

Notice the angel enters the picture plane on the *right*. This is the first picture in the book.

Letter to Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7 – 13)

This image illustrates the text written below

Christ holds the Key of David and gestures toward an open door 'which no man shuteth', directing John.

The Angel of Philadelphia remains in the tower, while John holds the knife and quill associated with writing.

The Second Seal: The Red Horse

the Lamb (symbol for Christ) holds a manuscript with four seals on it, breaking them one by one.

The breaking seals call forth/release the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse:

- Conquer
- War
- Famine
- Death

In this image appears the second horse of the Four Horsemen: the red horse carrying the rider called War.

The false prophet rises from the earth, calls down fire and orders the worship of the beast (Rev. 13:11 – 13)

Three beasts are summoned to serve AntiChrist.

The multi-headed beast is the second and the black, draped figure is the third

The draped figure, known as the false prophet, commands the people of the earth to adore the AntiChrist

to show his power, he brings down fire from heaven. John holds the manuscript (implying that he is writing as he observes the vision).

The false prophet causes people to be marked (Rev. 13:15 – 17)

The wealthy wait to be marked by the false prophet

two figures who have already been marked with devilish names.

The poor are in the lower left corner, and

the right corner portrays the dead who refused to adore the AntiChrist

The Giving of the Vials (of the Wrath of God) (unfinished page)

This page is one of several that was never completed in the manuscript.

It gives us a sense about the detail of the drawing prior to the addition of gilding or color.

In this image the eagle (with halo) is distributing vials to angels to fight the AntiChrist and his converts.

Above the angels and eagle is a temple and an angel directing the rest of the angels to pour out their vials on the earth.

The Lamb and his bride (Rev. 19:6-7)

depicts a mystical marriage of Christ to his church/the faithful embodied in the woman on the left holding a ring.

The lamb on the right also holds a ring and represents Christ.

God the Father officiates from the clouds in which we see floating heads (cherubim? angels?), one with a trumpet other proclaiming loudly.

The Holy Ghost rises from a church below and John of Patmos on the far right sees everything in his mystical vision.

This strategy of portraying the mystic observing the vision steadily becomes a common pictorial strategy into the middle ages and employed to a great extent by Northern artists/patrons.

John comes before Christ who explains the significance of the visions (Rev. 22:16 – 19)

unfinished page does include gilding – the addition of gold leaf to the image prior to painting.

Christ appears in a mandorla/almond- shaped (also known as the *vesica piscis* – fish) aura, holds the Manuscript of Life.

An angel holds a manuscript, presumably the visions John has been writing the book of *Revelation*.

The text in the manuscript reads “I entreat every listener, and to each man who corrupts this prophecy, if there is any who does,”...[God shall add to him the plagues written in this manuscript].

Remember that the angel initially instructing John at the beginning of Revelation, entered the picture plane from the left.

This last image “brackets” the narrative as he appears on the right; thus closing the narrative.

Books of Hours

Books of Hours, the most popular devotional manuscript of the later middle ages, most common surviving form of illuminated manuscript.

The book of hours was the ‘best seller’ of the middle ages; if a family owned one manuscript it was generally a manuscript of hours – not a bible.

The manuscript did more than provide text and images for devotion.

- helped family keep track of time (it had a calendar),
- served as a family archive containing information about births, deaths and marriage
- it assisted children learning to read; the pages were decorated with young eyes in mind.

The Advent of Books of Hours

The religious orders had long recited the *Divine Office* (this was generally their primary responsibility) on behalf of the world.

Increasingly, lay people wanting to enhance their own religious practice wanted to also chant/recite the hours; but having lives and families, had less time to devote to such a practice.

“Little Office” was adapted from the regular church for use by the laity, permitting the lay a monastic-type devotion in their daily lives.

This desire to gain authority over one's prayer life is significant to understanding the Books of Hours. Increasingly, lay people wanted to pursue their own religious practice without relying entirely on the clergy or institution of the church.

Books of Hours linked public-church life to domestic devotion.

The Little Office

The liturgical hours slide

A compendium of devotional texts composed around the 9th ce called "the Hours of the Virgin" (aka "The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary").

"Hours" refer to the 7 or 8 liturgical hours of the day:

Matins (and Laud) – sunrise
Prime – 6 a.m.
Terce – 9 a.m.
Sext – noon
None – 3 p.m.
Vespers – sunset
Compline – evening/bedtime

By the 12th century the Little Office had been commonly combined with the Psalter (a collection of psalms) along with other texts and known as the Book of Hours:

- A calendar,
- the Little Office,
- the Penitential Psalms (the psalter),
- the Litany (a list of saints names, followed by the invocation "pray for us")
- The Suffrages or Memorials to selected saints (saints venerated in one's community or important to the individual)
- the Office of the Dead (for use in 'last rites')

These were generally the foundational texts found in most manuscript of hours.

Sometimes, certain 'essential parts' were omitted (ex, the Catherine of Cleves B of Hs is missing a calendar).

Additional texts might be added such as The Mass or other elements.

The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, about 1440, Netherlands

The illuminator is unknown, a Dutch miniaturist.

The manuscript was divided into two manuscripts around 1850.

In the 1960s, the missing second volume was identified and linked to what had previously been identified as the complete manuscript.

Book of hours parts we'll focus on in this text slide:

Little Office and Suffrages/Memorials

Little Office (The Hours of the Virgin)

(Matins) Catherine of Cleves Kneeling before the Virgin and Child

Crowned virgin holds infant Jesus and an inkpot;

a scroll case slung over her right arm.

Jesus has pen and scroll (presumably writing names in the Book of Life)

gold mandorla, an aura or halo around the body.

Catherine of Cleves kneels, holding her manuscript of hours and meditating outside the architectural structure.

The banderole rising from her manuscript says *O mater dei memento mei (O mother of God, remember me (?))*

depicted as if she sees Mary and the child in a contemplative or mystical vision (like Julian of Norwich).

Coats of arms of Catherine's great or great-great grandparents.

(Lauds) Singing Angels

The abstract background is a reference to heaven – we can't know what it looks like so an obvious invention is necessary.

Banderole says *Te deum laudamus*.

Scholars believe that this image may have been facing an illumination of St. Anne, the mother of V. Mary.

peas are a reference to fertility.

(Prime) Meeting at the Golden Gate

Joachim and Anne were married but childless.

An angel informs Anne of her conception, while at the same time asking her to meet her husband at the city gate in Jerusalem, where Anne tells Joachim she is with child.

A polite embrace outside the Gate of Jerusalem (no kissing).

(Terce) Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple

The high priest Zacharias turns to the child, Mary, with a gesture of surprise.

Two girls sit beneath him weaving and spinning (may be a reference to Mary's ability to spin).

Mary and Joachim stand outside the temple watching Mary go into the Temple where she will be reared (?)

Joachim with some anxiety holds amber beads and looks toward the temple.

(Sext) God Dispatching the Angel of the Annunciation

Two angels before God, who wears a conical hat and holds a gold orb in his lap.

From his right hand unfurls a banderole with Isaiah's prophecy of the coming Messiah (Jesus) as quoted at his entry into Jerusalem (*Dicite filiae syon Ecce rex tuus venit* = "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh").

Gabriel the chosen angel appears on the left

(None) Annunciation to the Virgin

This may be depicted as if taking place in the temple.

Gabriel brings his message, depicted again in a banderole.

The lectern holds a manuscript (netherlandish pictorial tradition, generally depicts Mary interrupted from reading by Gabriel).

The book case holds a metal bowl, symbolic of her virginity, as is also the lily

(Vespers) Adoration of the Child

Nothing to add

(Compline) Death of the Virgin

Mary and St. Peter hold a candle St.

Peter also holds an aspergillum (liturgical implement for sprinkling holy water)

St. Paul reads from a manuscript another apostle at the foot of the bed holds a censer (these were medieval objects – anachronistic in the historical event).

The canopy above the bed suggests the cosmos – Mary’s cosmological entrance into the world and may suggest her exit – assumption – as equally cosmological.

(Compline) Assumption of the Virgin

A non-scriptural tradition (origin: 5th ce among apocryphal texts / authorized in 1950): Mary’s body, having carried the body of Christ, could not have deteriorated as ordinary human bodies do.

she was assumed whole, into heaven.

This image depicts her in a mandorla (aura) on a crescent moon between heaven and earth. God is surrounded by cherubim above her.

Suffrages / Memorials to Saints

St. Simon Apostle

This image confuses St. *Simon* with the *Apostle Simon* whose name was changed to “Peter” by Jesus

This confusion would explain the fish nets which generally refer to Simon Peter as one of Christ’s “fisher of men.”

St. Simon, conversely appears with his attributes a manuscript and the saw with which he was dismembered until he died by ‘heathen priests’

St. Cornelius and Cyprian

Cornelius appears with his attributes, a curved golden horn, papal cross, and papal tiara.

Cyprian holds a sword and crozier and wears a bishop’s miter.

The bird cages are specific: the top, spiraled one and the bottom, rolling-drum designs were intended to discourage flight, one perch (right side) and five cages (two of them draped).

While Cornelius is the patron saint of domestic animals, these images may more appropriately indicate Catherine of Cleve’s interest in birds.

St. Fabian and Sebastian

Fabian was chosen pope in 236 and martyred; he holds the possible implement of his martyrdom.

The border decoration – bows and arrows, and cross bows, refer to Sebastian’s torture and intended murder/martyrdom.

He actually recovered from the arrows and was finally beaten to death.

The Tres Riches Heures of Jean duc de Berry, 1412 – 1489, French

Jean, Duke of Berry, son of the Jean II, king of France.

Had an insatiable appetite for castles (of which he had 17) exotic animals, jewels and works of art.

His collection of commissioned manuscripts was among the best in France.

The Tres Riches Heures was partially illuminated between 1412 and 1416 by the Limbourg brothers.

The calligraphy, illuminated capitals, border decorations, and gilding were executed by other specialists who remain unknown.

The Limbourg brothers left the manuscript unfinished and unbound at their, and the Duke's, death in 1416.

The work passed to the Duke's cousin, Rene of Anjou, who commissioned an unidentified artist, (possibly Barthélemy van Eyck) to work on the manuscript in the 1440s.

Forty years later Charles I, Duke of Savoie commissioned Jean Colombe to finish the illuminations between 1485 and 1489.

Parts of a book of hours we'll focus on: Calendar and Office of the Dead

Calendar

Generally, the calendar in a book of hours did not function as our calendars do today (listing each day in the month of January: 1 – 31).

Rather they listed the important liturgical feast days (saint's feast days, high holy days, etc.) in each month and recorded the liturgical seasons of the year (Advent Christmas season, Lent, Easter season, and Ordinary times).

They also, often recorded the zodiacal seasons.

In most books of hours, the calendar portrays each month and activities or chores that are undertaken each month.

Most of the architectural structures in this particular manuscript depict historic buildings.

You'll see the hand of all three illuminators in the *Tres Riches Heures* calendar pages.

January (the Limbourg brothers)

Duke of Berry portrayed sitting at a feast in front of a round, wicker screen shielding him from the heat of a fire. The screen implies a halo.

The duke's small dogs move about the table which is covered with silver and gold plates of food.

The textile above the fire is decorated with wounded bears and swans, symbolizing the duke's love for a woman named Ursine (Ur = bear; sine = swan).

The battle in the background is a medieval rendering of the Trojan War. (the white poetic text above suggests this reading).

The 'sun' chariot in the tympanum, refers to a medal the Duke owned portraying the Emperor Heraclius returning the True Cross to Jerusalem);

the outer ring depicts astrological signs: Capricorn and Aquarius.

The calendar remained incomplete – the grids would have been filled in with dates (see June)

May (Barthelemy van Eyck?)

A spring pageant of courtly princes and princesses with their retinue.

These outings were immensely enjoyed by the Duke of Berry and the garments are depicted with rich colors and gold leaf.

Heraclius is in the tympanum like the January page,

this calendar is incomplete. Aries or Taurus(?) and Gemini (the twins) appear.

June (the Limbourg brothers)

Reaping and binding hay.

The calendar (Heraclius, Gemini, Cancer) in this image is complete.

November by Jean Colombe

Acorn harvest, the peasant is throwing sticks into the oak canopy to bring down acorns.

The acorns are pig feed.

Office of the Dead

illuminations depicting the Office of the Dead, interspersed with psalms.

The Office of the Dead is exactly the same text as that used by the clergy.

The intention of this office was to speed the deceased's journey to heaven.

This Office, comprised of vespers, matins and lauds, along with the Mass were the only means the living had to help the dead in Purgatory.

The Office was prayed at funerals, and the clergy prayed it daily, while the laity was urged to pray it as often as possible.

The speed with which the dead moved through purgatory depended on the living; the dead could not pray for themselves.

Job Mocked by his Friends (by Jean Colombe)

The Old Testament story of Job who suffers humiliation and pain is used to open the Office of the Dead

invokes a sense of bitterness and suffering; weariness of life and anguish before death and judgment.

Job appears in a dung heap before his destroyed home, jeered by his friends: “Where is thy fortitude, thy patience?”

The French house is probably a favorite house of the Duke of Savoy (who now owned the manuscript).

The borders are decorated with an architectural structure favored by Colombe and depicting corpses.

Below on the right is a funeral procession.

On the left is an interment in a church burial vault.

The Funeral of Raymond Diocres (possibly Limbourg bros.)

Depicts the suddenness, anguish and terrible judgment of medieval death.

The main image depicts the funeral of Raymond Diocres, a pious canon at Notre Dame in Paris.

The scroll issuing from his mouth; Diocres rises up in his coffin to say:

“I have been called by the just judgment of God, I have been judged by the just judgment of God,
and I have been condemned by the just judgment of God.”

In the panel below, the narrative of the Three Dead and the Three Living appears. This was a popular, edifying legend in which three young noblemen pass a cemetery as three corpses address them:

“I was Pope. I was a cardinal. I was an apostolic notary.
You will be like us, power, honor and riches are naught.”

The Horseman of Death (by Jean Colombe)

Located in a graveyard, this image portrays the fourth rider (Death) of the Apocalypse

“And behold a pale horse and he that sat upon him, his name was Death and hell followed with him.”

The tranquil town is contrasted by the legion of corpses bisecting the picture plane diagonally, separating the fearful soldiers from the rider, Death.

(Lauds) The Penance of David (by Jean Colombe)

King David pleads for God's mercy, having seduced Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, and sent Uriah into battle and his death in order to marry Bathsheba.

The battle scene below depicts King David's troops at war.

Hell (Limbourg Brothers)

The devil in center of the image concurs with the Old Testament depiction of the devil as a leviathan

“out of his nostrils goeth smok, like that of a pot heated and boiling.
His breath kindleth coals and flame cometh forth out of his mouth” (Job XLI 12-13).

Notice how many of the damned wear tonsures of the monastic orders.

Bodies are squeezed in the fists of the Devil and spewed from his mouth.

Purgatory (by Jean Colombe)

one of the few attempts prior to the 16th century to illustrate *The Divine Comedy* by Dante

Here, purgatory is portrayed as a (1) fiery river, (2) an icy river and (3) a rocky mountain from which souls having completed their penance, are lifted by angels and carried to heaven.

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I. sweet / materiality and the religious impulse / fall 2008



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- Consider how image-making happened in the context of manuscripts.

Terms

illumination (illuminated)

apocalypse

carpet page

decorated capital

Little Office

litany

The Lindisfarne Gospels, England, approx. 715 ce

carpet page

Jerome's decorated capital

miniature of Matthew

carpet page from Gospel of Matthew

decorated capital I from Gospel of Matthew

miniature of Mark

carpet page

decorated Capital from Gospel of Mark

miniature of Luke

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miniature of John

carpet page

decorated capital from Gospel of John

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Prince Edward and Princess Eleanor of Castile before the Throne of the Trinity

John Awoken by the Angel

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The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, about 1440, Netherlands

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(Matins) Catherine of Cleves Kneeling before the Virgin and Child

(Lauds) Singing Angels

(Prime) Meeting at the Golden Gate

(Terce) Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple

(Sext) God Dispatching the Angel of the Annunciation

(None) Annunciation to the Virgin

(Vespers) Adoration of the Child

(Compline) Death of the Virgin

(Compline) Assumption of the Virgin

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