

5-11-2018

# Noble Taste, Noble Style: Exploring the Concept of Vivre Noblement in the Hours of Engelbert of Nassau

Ceallsach VonEhren Crouch

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/art\\_design\\_theses](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/art_design_theses)

---

## Recommended Citation

Crouch, Ceallsach VonEhren, "Noble Taste, Noble Style: Exploring the Concept of Vivre Noblement in the Hours of Engelbert of Nassau." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2018.  
[https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/art\\_design\\_theses/235](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/art_design_theses/235)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Art and Design Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gsu.edu).

NOBLE TASTE, NOBLE STYLE: EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF *VIVRE NOBLEMENT*  
IN THE *HOURS OF ENGELBERT OF NASSAU*

by

CEALLSACH CROUCH

Under the Direction of John R. Decker, PhD

ABSTRACT

The Master of Mary of Burgundy illuminated the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau* specifically to fulfill the needs of the nobility of the Burgundian Court. By analyzing three different pages, I reveal that the Master created an “alternative reality” through the use of *trompe l’oeil* and other modes of highly illusionistic representation. In order to appeal to the concept of *vivre noblement*, or “living nobly,” the Master introduces the page as an accessible mental environment, allowing the viewer to shift between layers of reality with ease. The visual and mental intricacy actively immerses the viewer and promotes ideas of positional and spiritual authority, connecting them to the ideas of a courtly splendor.

INDEX WORDS: Manuscripts, Early modern, Burgundy, Valois-Burgundian court, Ghent-Bruges, Master of mary of burgundy

NOBLE TASTE, NOBLE STYLE: EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF *VIVRE NOBLEMENT*  
IN THE *HOURS OF ENGELBERT OF NASSAU*

by

CEALLSACH CROUCH

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of the Arts

Georgia State University

2018

Copyright by  
Ceallsach VonEhren Crouch  
2018

NOBLE TASTE, NOBLE STYLE: EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF *VIVRE NOBLEMENT*  
IN THE *HOURS OF ENGELBERT OF NASSAU*

by

CEALLSACH CROUCH

Committee Chair: John R. Decker

Committee: Susan Richmond

Maria Gindhart

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Academic Assistance

College of the Arts

Georgia State University

May 2018

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this essay to my mom, my brother, and my sister who have always been my biggest support system.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the entire art history faculty at Georgia State University who have tirelessly supported me through my education and professional development. I would specifically like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Maria Gindhart and Dr. Susan Richmond, for multiple edits and suggestions that have contributed greatly to my work. I would also like to thank Dr. Glenn Gunhouse who has continually promoted my interest in manuscripts since the first day I walked into his class. I would finally like to acknowledge my committee chair, Dr. John R. Decker, whose mentorship is (and will always be) greatly appreciated.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 FORMAL ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3 SOCIAL ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4 CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>37</b>



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 The Master of Mary of Burgundy, The Prayer to the Virgin Page, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives .....	7
Figure 1.2 The Master of Mary of Burgundy, The Prayer to Saint Catherine of Alexandria, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives .....	8
Figure 1.3 The Master of Mary of Burgundy, The Prayers to St. Barbara, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives .....	9
Figure 2.1 The Master of Mary of Burgundy, Detail, The Prayers to St. Barbara, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives .....	24
Figure 2.2 The Master of Mary of Burgundy, Detail, The Prayers to St. Barbara, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives .....	25
Figure 2.3 The Master of Mary of Burgundy, Detail, The Prayer to Saint Catherine of Alexandria, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives .....	26

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*, now located in the Bodleian Library archives, was scribed by Nicolas Spierinc and produced in a workshop in Ghent led by the Master of Mary of Burgundy between 1470 and 1480.<sup>1</sup> Though multiple owners possessed the book over a number of years, a preponderance of evidence points to Engelbert II, also known as Engelbert of Nassau, as the manuscript's original patron.<sup>2</sup> The content of the manuscript is standard for books of hours of the period and includes a calendar of fixed festivals of the church; prayers dedicated to specific patron saints; a Passion Cycle that includes the Hours of the Cross; a Christological cycle that focuses on the Hours of the Virgin, King David, and the Penitential Psalms; and, finally, the Office for the Dead and Gradual Psalms. Miniatures illuminate each of these cycles and every page of the manuscript has some form of decorative element whether it be small textual interlace or a larger, more detailed section. Often, the images depict a specific scene or figure situated in a landscape or cityscape. The naturalism found in the landscapes carries over into several marginal illuminations that feature flowers, insects, and other objects on a colored or gilded background. There is an intimate connection between border and miniature within the manuscript. Not only are the two elements formally rendered in a unified style, they both interact and depend on one another for a cohesive and tangible reading.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> J.J.G Alexander, *The Master of Mary of Burgundy: A Book of Hours of Engelbert of Nassau* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1970), 2-6.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander, 2 -4. This is indicated by Engelbert's coat of arms (which has been painted over multiple times) found on plates 27, 93, and 97-99, famed motto: "Ce sera moy," (plate 101) and a number of other visual clues such as the use of peacock feathers in his crest (plates 72 and 73, plate 30) and the letter "E" (plate 103) being used repetitively in certain illuminations. This is a highly debated area when discussing this manuscript.

<sup>3</sup> Bret Rothstein, "The Rule of Metaphor and the Play of the Viewer in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy," *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Edited by Reindert L. Falkenburg and Walter S. Melion (Leeds: Brepols, 2007), 254, 259-263. Scholars like Bret Rothstein and Michael Camille discussed the interrelationship between text and image, specifically focusing on the relationship of the elements of the page and role of the viewer in interpretation of this relationship.

In the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*, the Master of Mary of Burgundy tends to treat the miniatures in each cycle as vignettes, using small, intimate spaces that depend on diffused color, atmospheric effects, and figural relationship to create unity on the page. The miniatures are usually small, but still an integral part of the page, and often not set apart from the text and border. The margins are large and typically use trompe l'oeil to project objects and scenery onto the page, playing with the viewer's notion of reality. Though the objects and scenery might be "available" to the viewer as aesthetic prompts through the techniques of tromp l'oeil, they are still out of reach from the plane of reality. The gap between the promise of sensory completeness and actual tactility encourages the activation of senses from the viewer (such as the smell of flowers or awareness of texture from the jeweled broaches). The tension this causes, then, has the potential to invite the viewer into a deeper form of contemplation, which in turn could become an immersive engagement with the page in its totality.

My focus in this paper will be to connect the visual and mental complexity that the Master of Mary of Burgundy demonstrates in the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau* to the needs of the nobles of the Valois-Burgundian Court. I will explore the concept of *vivre noblement* and how as a complex social system, it emphasized the importance of material culture to maintaining and projecting ideas of nobility and sophistication. Through the use of high-level illusionism, the Master of Mary of Burgundy displayed and fulfilled these social imperatives within the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*.

Three major folios in the first cycle include *The Prayer to the Virgin*<sup>4</sup>, *The Prayer to Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, and *The Prayers to St. Barbara* (Figs. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3). There are three

---

<sup>4</sup> In this folio in particular, scholars make note of fictional pilgrimage badges painted in the margins but instead of connecting them with the main miniature, claim that these "badges" are examples of souvenirs in a devotional book. While this observation partially connects the fictive badges, and hence the folio in which they are depicted, to a larger contextual theme (i.e. souvenir collecting), it does not specifically integrate the badges or the acts of

major elements to each page: the miniature, the text, and the marginalia. Each independent section emphasizes spiritual immersion, but their cohesive nature demands complex viewing from the reader. By presenting the elements of the page this way, the Master challenges the reader to move through the layers of reality just as they move through the elements of the page. I define layers of reality here as the multiple spaces that the Master of Mary of Burgundy establishes in his illuminations that often emphasize the reality of the viewer's space and the abstract plane of the page. These layers are often emphasized by the use of *trompe l'oeil* and inspire realistic responses from illusionistic techniques. Usually, this process would be challenging even to 15<sup>th</sup> century viewers who were adept at moving between elements of the page. The reader would be faced with abstract spiritual notions, such as prayer and meditation, but also have to focus on more practical perceptions such as the physical act of turning the page and the aesthetic appreciation of the illuminations. The Master's techniques allows for both of these concepts to be negotiated and recognized with ease so that the reader can shift between the layers of reality. Each miniature portrays a saint framed within a background that emphasizes environment, color, and figure. Though the marginalia is rendered on a two-dimensional surface, the Master's illusionistic techniques allow a tangible and realistic setting around the miniatures: pilgrimage badges, shining broaches, and vibrant wildlife function as emphatic and immersive stimuli. The dimensionality of the marginalia creates a visual pressure with the miniature, which seems to recede behind the picture plane, offers a visual emphasis on the content of the main miniature, and provides sensory prompts that can heighten the reader's experiences when viewing the page. These elements, both realistic and abstract, interact with one another to create

---

collecting into the manuscript as a whole. In other words, authors tend to treat marginal motifs like the fictive badges as unique instances localized to the folios involved. This form of isolation is further exacerbated by the tendency of authors to select a small number of illuminations out of any manuscript for study as seen in the works of Thomas Kren, Lucy Freeman Sandler, Emma Wells, Virginia Roehrig Kaufmann, Anne Margreet As-Vijvers, Megan H. Foster Campbell, Margaret Goehring, and A.M. Koldewij.

a holistic environment on the page. Further, each employs visual cues that serve to invoke the viewer's senses and help immerse the viewer in an "alternative reality," a term I would like to introduce.

Though all portions of the page emphasize this alternative reality, it is primarily in the marginalia where the Master of Mary of Burgundy employs various forms of naturalism to create layers of reality within the folios.<sup>5</sup> By introducing multiple layers of reality that often are in tension with one another, the Master introduces an "alternative reality" that encourages the reader to consider and recognize the reality around her beyond the given page. The reader then also much consider the abstract, meditative, and immersive qualities the pages invokes. The Master simulates three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface, which emphasizes the ability of the painted surface to engage viewers in a fictive space both separate from and contiguous with their lived environment. This introduces a reality that transcends both the viewer's space and the page, emphasizing an immersive complexity. This technique appears to be designed to engage the viewer in various acts of careful observation and involvement.

These formal elements enable the Master of Mary of Burgundy to unite text, miniature, and marginalia into a comprehensive experience for the viewer where all elements of the page are considered a unified whole. This "alternative reality" ostensibly occupies and fills the space between the viewer and the plane of the page on which reality and visionary elements are combined. Often, the pages are overwhelming, where a tension occurs between all elements of the page. The Master, however, successfully unifies the page despite this tension. This element emphasizes the role of the viewer in a close and careful interpretation. The intense viewing that

---

<sup>5</sup> Discussions of the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau* often turn to the border imagery and the use of trompe l'oeil that the Master of Mary of Burgundy employed. Scholars such as Lucy Freeman Sandler, Emma Wells, Anne Margret As-Vijvers, Megan H. Foster Campbell, Margaret Goehring, and A.M. Koldewij reference boarder imagery in relation to broad themes such as "Flemish painting" or "symbolism," but do not analyze the illusionistic techniques in relation to courtly taste and interest in "alternative reality."

utilizes this cohesive concept, with various aesthetic and textual prompts designed to activate the other senses as well, might be seen as a means of bringing about mental immersion in the image and its accompanying text.<sup>6</sup>

The use of illusionism in illuminated manuscripts was common by the late fifteenth century and wealthy viewers, like Engelbert II, were familiar with the demands this illusionism placed on their reception. That said, the Master of Mary of Burgundy appears to have been especially proficient in his use of *trompe l'oeil* and other modes of illusionistic representation. The evocative textures and surfaces shown in these specific folios, in conjunction with the simulation of depth, allow the viewer to shift between layers of reality. The naturalism of the marginalia and the composition of the page easily complicate the viewing process but serve as tools to encourage and improve the process of attaining contemplative immersion. Their complexity requires a close and careful reading from the viewer, emphasizing their role as a participant in the mental environment.

Such alternative realities explored in the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau* appealed to the complexity desired by the noble class. The visual intricacy of the page and the mental activity it required actively immersed the viewer and promoted ideas of physical and spiritual contemplation. Courtly splendor demanded complexity on multiple levels. Multifaceted manuscripts, like the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*, were status objects used to accentuate the owner's identity and promote an interrelationship of *nobilitas* (the nobility), authority, and courtly representation. In other words, these objects helped develop and elevate the notion of

---

<sup>6</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Imago Pietatis* (Leipzig: 1927), 264. This technique actively displays Panofsky's idea of contemplative immersion, but also expands upon it by presenting something that surpasses the viewer's reality and turns instead towards a divine vision. Reindert L. Falkenberg, *The Fruit of Devotion: Mysticism and the Imagery of Love in Flemish Paintings of the Virgin and Child*. (John Benjamins: 1994). Falkenberg's scholarship discusses sensory immersion and when coupled with Panofsky's idea of contemplative immersion, serves to emphasize the link between the two.

nobility through the representation of courtly splendor. Items like this revealed personal piety, taste, and prominence and were highly valued by nobles.<sup>7</sup> This attitude was at the heart of aristocratic culture and formed the core concept of *vivre noblement* (living nobly).<sup>8</sup> The concept of *vivre noblement* was an intricate, encoded social process that involved demonstration of positional authority and materialized in a variety of media. Because the Master's folios requires a careful reading, they promote and demonstrate ideas of complexity that appealed to this process.

I will begin with an analysis of the Master's style demonstrating how his use of high-level illusionism, compositional organization, utilization of mnemonic devices, and mimesis that drive devotional immersion and require careful reading. This formal analysis will navigate the elements of the pages and reveal the components that define the Master's "alternative reality."

Along with this formal analysis, I will move on to explain the concept of *vivre noblement* and how the Burgundian dukes fostered and perpetuated this structure. I will expound upon the importance of material culture when "living nobly" and describe the cultural setting that promoted the need for such a model of living.

---

<sup>7</sup> These concepts are explored by scholars such as Wim P. Blockmans (*Philip the Bold*), Richard Vaughn (*Philip the Bold: The Formation of the Burgundian State, Charles the Bold: The Last Valois Duke of Burgundy*), and Laura Gelfand ("Surrogate Selves: The 'Rolin Madonna' and the Late-Medieval Devotional Portrait").

<sup>8</sup> Jean C. Wilson, *Painting in Bruges at the Close of the Middle Ages: Studies in Society and Visual Culture* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1998), 23-26.



Figure 1.1 The Master of Mary of Burgundy, *The Prayer to the Virgin Page, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives





Figure 1.2 The Master of Mary of Burgundy, *The Prayer to Saint Catherine of Alexandria, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives



Figure 1.3 The Master of Mary of Burgundy, *The Prayers to St. Barbara, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives

## 2 FORMAL ANALYSIS

Art historians often discuss the Master of Mary of Burgundy in terms of his illusionistic style. Otto Pächt, for example, claimed that the Master succeeded at addressing the plane of the page while his contemporaries failed.<sup>9</sup> Scholars often recognize the Master's role in transforming the page into an interactive plane through numerous techniques involving the division of the folio, juxtaposing forms and objects, and detailed use of *trompe l'oeil*.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the Master has a specific knowledge of the folio's plane. He recognizes the complexity of the page as more than a two-dimensional surface and expertly utilizes it, so the viewer can partake in meticulous reading and immersion. This is not meant to define the Master's strict intent, but to demonstrate his awareness and familiarity of the page's surface and its possibilities.

With this knowledge, the Master creates an "alternative reality," allowing not only contemplative immersion, but an alternative plane between reality and imagination. This plane exists between the viewer's reality and the plane of the page. This is not to say, however, that the plane is physical, but rather that it is a mental manifestation brought about by the Master's use of illusionism. It operates not as a tangible form but as a mediator between the plane of the viewer and the plane of the page. This is where the viewer can have a unique experience within the manuscript and question the concept of elevated reality. By carefully examining and deconstructing three separate folios, I will identify this "alternative" reality and how specifically the Master of Mary of Burgundy creates and perpetuates this particular phenomenon.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Otto Pächt, *The Master of Mary of Burgundy* (London, Faber and Faber: 148), 2. According to Pächt, the Master solved this underlying conflict by viewing the page surface as a support for the illusion of a recession of depth and complexity.

<sup>10</sup> There scholars include Otto Pächt and J.J. G. Alexander.

<sup>11</sup> I am aware of Ann H. van Buren's work in which she argues that the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau* could have possibly been executed and repainted by followers of the Master of Mary of Burgundy. She begins with Alexander's discovery that the borders of the miniatures (with the exception of the very last) were painted over and cites Janet Backhouse when claiming that this was not done by the Master himself, but by the artists / artist of the *Berlin Book of Hours* made for Mary of Burgundy and her husband, Maximilian of Austria. I am willing to concede that this is a

By examining the evolution of the Master of Mary of Burgundy's style, we can begin to understand his familiarity with technical illumination, developments of the time period, and courtly desire, and determine exactly how his individual style of illumination was successful to the viewer. The Master worked in the cultural milieu of the Burgundian Court in Flanders. The Master was familiar with rhythmic arrangements, paid attention to relationship between figures and planes, and used perspectival concepts of space—traits often associated with the so-called Ghent Bruges school of manuscript painting.<sup>12</sup>

In 1477, the Master started to paint *histoires en toutes couleurs*.<sup>13</sup> His particular style stresses the plane of reality (through realism in the form of *trompe l'oeil*), unifies spatial forms, and emphasizes the relationship between border decoration, text, and miniature illumination. His pages are often completely utilized, leaving no space between the three elements thus unifying them into an integrated composition. Such dense structures could easily impede the reading process, but the Master manages to equalize all three elements so that they emphasize one another on the two-dimensional plane. This perpetuates the complexity and depth of the page, requiring a close reading from the viewer. The Master's scenes also take advantage of the window-like effect, opening the page into several dimensions for viewing and interpretation.<sup>14</sup>

Because of these techniques, the master is said to “extend the naturalism of the principle image

---

possibility, but since the majority of my sources site the Master of Mary of Burgundy as the illuminator of the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*, I will be referring to him (and thus his workshop) as the principle illustrator. I would also like to emphasize that the purpose of my paper is not to identify the illuminator of the book, but to examine the formal techniques and methods used to create an “alternative reality” and elevate the manuscript into a social tool.

<sup>12</sup> Sixten Ringbom, *From Icon to Narrative The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up In Fifteenth Century Devotional Painting* (Netherlands: Davaco, 1965), 194; Stephanie Buck, “The Impact of Hugo van der Goes as a Draftsman” *Master Drawings* 41, 3 (2003): 228-229, Pächt, 21.

<sup>13</sup> Pächt, 36. *stories in all colors* Pächt states: “The monochrome technique[...] could no longer suit an illuminator who aimed at contrasting the close-ups of the still-life margins with the distant view in the centre.” Again, I do not believe that the sole factor of manuscript painting was the monochrome technique, but I do think that the Master of Mary of Burgundy was intimately familiar with it and utilized it in his earlier work. However, by improving upon its foundations and moving towards new techniques, the Master demonstrated a versatility that is shown also by his contemporaries of the time period.

<sup>14</sup> This “window-like” effect will be referred to later in the paper as a “double window effect” defined and described by both Pächt and Alexander.

to the decorative border enclosing it.”<sup>15</sup> This means that the Master employs techniques that reconciled the imaginary depth of the image to the regularity of the page. Keep in mind, however, that this might be an over simplification. The Master of Mary of Burgundy plays with several tensions in his works including what is “on” the page (what is depicted), what is “behind the page” (what is implied), and what “hovers” over the page (alternative reality). Though these levels could be seen as impediments, they actively promote unification and allow flexibility to the viewer who can traverse different planes of the page.<sup>16</sup> The Master does this by creating a filled space with interactive elements that emphasize the plane of the page and connect it to the reality of the viewer.

The vast complexity of the page and the Master’s techniques demanded a careful reading. This led to a style that succeeded in fulfilling the needs of his patrons to be seen as multifaceted and complex collectors of their time period, further perpetuating their aspiration to be seen as “noble.” To provide evidence for this, I will first introduce the patron and begin to examine *The Prayer to the Virgin*, *The Prayer to Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, and *The Prayers to St. Barbara*, focusing on the elements that the Master of Mary of Burgundy uses to create the complexity highly cherished by noble patrons. The cycle containing the devotions to saints is composed of seven prayers total.<sup>17</sup> Each page displays the “alternative reality” that the Master of Mary of Burgundy fosters, but three miniatures in particular display several key techniques and

---

<sup>15</sup> Sixten Ringbom, *From Icon to Narrative The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up In Fifteenth Century Devotional Painting* (1965), 198.

<sup>16</sup> I will emphasize here that this process involves negotiating different parts of the page along with the different planes. A viewer cannot be expected to process an entire page as a unified element, but I use “unified” as a description on how the Master of Mary of Burgundy combines the elements (text, border, and miniature) into a cohesive and manageable system.

<sup>17</sup> Prayer to the Holy Face (Saint Veronica) (fo.14-16v), Prayer to the Virgin (fo. 19v), Prayer to Saint Andrew (fol. 33), Prayer to St. Anthony (fol. 36v-37), Prayer to St. Christopher (fol. 38), Prayers to St. Catherine of Alexandria (fol. 40), Prayers to St. Barbara (fol.41)

methods in which he does so. These techniques include compositional unification of the page, the use of the “window effect,” and intricate and decisively executed *tromp l’oeil*.

The patron, Engelbert II, flourished in the cultural milieu of the Burgundian Court. He first entered service to Charles the Bold’s court as a lieutenant general in 1468 and continued to climb political and social ranks as a suitable candidate for the Burgundian regime. He continued his service under Charles’ daughter, and successor, Mary, Duchess of Burgundy, and her husband, Maximilian of Austria. He secured positions as member of the Order of the Golden Fleece, president of the *Grand Conseil* and lieutenant-general and principle representative of the Hapsburgs in the Low Countries. Georges Chastelain, court historian, emphasizes that Engelbert II, excluding the Hapsburgs, was the single most influential figure in the ruling elite in Flanders.<sup>18</sup> In interpreting some of Chastelain’s writings, Graeme Small also notes that it was Engelbert’s love of books, literacy, and manuscript patronage that extended his influence in the court of Burgundy.<sup>19</sup>

Engelbert II utilized his knowledge of the Burgundian court to navigate through the social elite. His titles and influences allowed him to establish an identity as a patron of the arts and to engage in literary and artistic pursuits. Engelbert used his offices at court to solidify his identity, maintain order, and perpetuate his power. Because of this, he was also able to shape the material items and spaces around him to define his identity and to emphasize his values, virtues, and complexity as a member of the Burgundian elite class.

---

<sup>18</sup> Graeme Small, *George Chastelain and the Shaping of Valois Burgundy: Political and Historical Culture at Court in the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 206-208.

<sup>19</sup> Small, 208. Additionally, Small notes: “On a superficial level this interest is to be explained by Engelbert II’s evident and- for an aristocrat nurtured at the Burgundian court- entirely conventional love of letters. The impressive personal library of Engelbert II ‘le Vert,’ as he jauntily style himself in his *ex-libris* included copies of Zenophon, Virgil, Froissart, and Monstrelet. His interest in literary matters appears to have qualified him for the job of preparing an inventory of the archducal library in 1485” (206-207).

His book of hours, now identified as *The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau* was an item that not only help to proclaim Engelbert's status and power but emphasized his role as a member of the noble class. The book of hours is a multifaceted tool that utilizes complex illusionism to assert and project Engelbert's identity as a complex, pious, and elite individual. The Master of Mary of Burgundy met his patron's needs by creating an "alternative reality" utilizing high-level illusionism capable of enabling Engelbert's devotional activities as well as signaling his noble status through its luxury and complexity.

The *Prayer of the Virgin* features a miniature in the upper right depicting the Virgin Mary holding Christ who clenches a flower in his right hand and gestures with his left. They are within a frame and against a plain red and blue-grey background. The pair seems to hover in an ethereal plane. The blue, outlined in gold, seems to billow around the pair like clouds and the red, also emphasized, by gold, swirls boldly in the background. The juxtaposition of the red and blue-grey provides an additional frame by enclosing the pair in this environment. This produces an effect that elevates and distances them from the viewer and the page. The Virgin, clothed in regal blue, gazes down at Christ in a stoic manner, her crown sitting elegantly on her head. Christ looks and gestures to the viewer with a pointed stare. Though the scene is rendered as an otherworldly vision, the naturalism of the miniature is overwhelming. The shading of the Virgin's hair allows each strand to be seen, the textured cloth and translucent veil fall naturally, and the flower in Christ's right hand is rendered naturalistically; the flower wilts according to his gesture.

Below the miniature and still within the framed border is the prayer "O Excellentissima," or "O Most Excellent Virgin Mary." This prayer was recited to gain an indulgence, or remission of sins and reduction of time in Purgatory, making it a suitable inscription inside a book of

hours.<sup>20</sup> The textual prompt would invoke a tangible response (prayer) from the viewer, much the like visual cues of the pilgrimage badges around it. The prayer is closely linked to the abstract image of the Virgin and Child that floats above it. This relationship speaks to a complex set of visual habits of the viewer, raising question on the response to the unity and composition of the page.<sup>21</sup>

The *trompe l'oeil* border allows only the absolutely necessary space for the partial prayer and miniature. Because it is so large, it dominates the visual field.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the text and the miniature become integrated into a singular piece, producing short columns of script attached to an illumination. The Master accomplishes this by filling the page to the edges of the picture and text space, blending the pictorial environments and allowing for a large and interconnected plane. Because of this, the individual spaces (the text, the miniature, and the border) become unified and merged into a cohesive field. Pächt notes that unlike older manuscripts and illuminators, The Master of Mary of Burgundy's manuscripts are the beginning of a "new style."<sup>23</sup> The integrated plane of the page, allows the viewer to move between spaces both visually and mentally, creating a unique immersive experience. Because the Master does not individually compartmentalize and isolate the distinctive sections of the page, the viewer is free to interpret the page as an integrated element. Typically, the borders would function as an organizational tool or to establish order, but the illusionistic border that the Master of Mary of

---

<sup>20</sup> Ambrose, St. John, *The Raccolta or Collection of Indulgence Prayers and Good Works*, Oratory of St. Phillip Neri, Birmingham. (London: Burns and Oates, 1910), 87. O excellentissima, gloriosissima atque sanctissima semper intemerata Virgo Maria [STOP] , Mater Domini nostri Iesu Christi, Regina mundi et totius creaturae Domina, quae nullum, qui ad te puro et humili corde recurrit, desolatum dimittis, noli me despiciere propter innumerabilia et gravissima peccata mea, noli me derelinquere propter nimias iniquitates meas, nec etiam propter duritiam et immunditiam cordis mei: ne abiicias me famulum tuum a gratia tua et amore tuo... This prayer continues on another page, but when originally paired with the visual prompt, the viewer would possibly be able to recite the rest from knowledge.

<sup>21</sup> Bret Rothstein, "Empathy as a Type of Early Netherlandish Visual Wit" *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments 1400-1700*, Walter Mellon, et al. (Netherlands: Brill, 2004), 189.

<sup>22</sup> The miniature and the text even appear to be placed over some of the medallions.

<sup>23</sup> Pächt, 33.



Burgundy illustrates indicates a new system of organization on the page.<sup>24</sup> Alexander describes a division on the page, but not in terms of visual elements. It is his belief that the Master depicts a “division of purpose,” by projecting a psychological experience.<sup>25</sup>

For all its unity, the page is still a puzzling space. It is a large amalgamation with no openings or opportunities for pause. Because of this, the viewer has to view the page as an immersive environment and is required to contemplate how each element enhances and blends into the other. This microscopic and macroscopic balance, though seemingly hard to navigate, is not oppositional but rather complementary. This element could be seen as a problematic factor in reading and interpretation, and though it is difficult, it is not at all an impossible task. The obstacles presented on the page actually emphasize all elements, allowing the reader to contemplate and cross physical and spiritual boundaries. This factor emphasizes the need for careful contemplation and the complexity highly desired by noble patrons.

The border of the *Prayer to the Virgin* is a good example of this complexity. It depicts a collection of twenty identifiable pilgrimage badges of varying size, color, and subject matter. This motif is common within certain Flemish manuscripts produced in the late-fourteenth through the mid-fifteenth centuries: a large collection of badges on one page for identification of specific churches, shrines, and martyrs. The badges include busts of bishops, Saint Veronica

---

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Goehring, “Taking Borders Seriously: The Significance of Cloth-Of-Gold Textile Borders in Burgundian and Post-Burgundian Manuscript Illumination in the Low Countries,” *Oud Holland*, 119, 1 (2006): 22.

<sup>25</sup> J.J. G. Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 149. Though, I agree with a division of purpose, I think Alexander defines this theory too literally. His focus is on the how the Master aids the viewer in understanding the “why” and “how” behind the stories. I disagree because it is impossible to know the intent of the illuminator when referring to these elements. The narrative structure of the miniatures is impressive, but if we are to accept that the Master’s style included a full and immersive experience, we need to look at the page as a unified element. Alexander goes on to imply that the text in the manuscript is much less consequential than the miniatures which depend on imagination. It is hard to see Alexander’s definition of imagination in this sense, but it is obviously directly related to the image rather than the page. Alexander goes on to describe this purpose as dependent on the imagination and empathy of the viewer and their ability to associate themselves with the page. Though imagination, as an immersive devotional component, plays a role in the Master’s work, it is not the only factor that should be considered.

holding the shroud of Christ, Saint Michael, Saint Hubert (kneeling before a stag), a Virgin and Child on the crescent moon, Saint Adrian, and Saint Godelina. The pilgrimage sites associated with these images include Aachen, Mont-Saint-Michael, Geraardsbergen, Gistel (for St. Godelieve), Saint Hubert-en-Ardenne, and Rome.<sup>26</sup>

Often patrons and owners of devotional manuscripts would pin physical pilgrimage badges in manuscripts for mnemonic purposes, often to either remind themselves of pilgrimages already taken or to invoke the idea of mental pilgrimage within their book.<sup>27</sup> The intricate *trompe l'oeil* used to render these badges inspire imagery of the sites and relics they were made from, allowing the viewer to experience a part of the pilgrimage journey. If the viewer had not visited any of the sites, the badges would aid them on journey through the folios. The badges themselves are rendered as part of the page, but not directly in the space of the viewer. However, their illusionism projects them as a component of “alternative reality,” where the viewer can contemplate their role in prayer and tangible application in between their space and the space of the page. Though the viewer does not get to directly interact with the object of the pilgrimage badge, when filtered through a manuscript, these badges allow the viewer to become a passive participant in an act of pilgrimage. This element invites the viewer to be part of the act of pilgrimage as an active participant invited to partake in a spiritual pilgrimage, emphasizing an immersive intention.

The painted pilgrimage badges are naturalistically rendered with an unseen light source above them. Their naturalism acts on two levels. The first is to display a tradition of pinning

---

<sup>26</sup> Alexander, *The Master of Mary of Burgundy*, 26.

<sup>27</sup> Megan H. Foster Campbell, “Pilgrimage Through the Pages: Pilgrim’s Badges in Late Medieval Devotional Manuscripts” *Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative, Emotional, Physical, and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art* Edited by Laura Gelfand and Sarah Blick, (Netherlands: Brill, 2011): 228-230. The notion of mental pilgrimage I mention here is based off of the works of Kathryn M. Rudy, specifically, *A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage: Paris, Bibliotheque de L’Arsenal Ms. 212* and *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent: Imagining Jerusalem in the Middle Ages*.

physical badges in devotional books. This serves to drive the page into the viewer's plane of reality and represents a very tangible method of devotion not only through the badges themselves, but also through the act of pilgrimage. This is not to say, however, that the fictive badges were supposed to be interpreted as real badges, but that they acted as devices to invoke an imaginative experience. Their purpose might have been to blend the reality of pilgrimage with the abstract and imaginative moment of spiritual journey, leading us back to the concept of an "alternative reality." Through illusionism, the Master's rendering of these badges transcends reality and invokes a mental journey not only from the badges, but from the page as a whole, creating a "pilgrimage of spirit," where the devotional practice acted as the journey itself.<sup>28</sup> By providing a richly detailed environment as material for the imagination, the Master leads his viewers through a pilgrimage in a rhythm of movement.<sup>29</sup> His narrative of the page escorts the viewer into an imaginative plane, accessible through his use of illusionism.

The *Prayers to Saint Barbara* depicts a miniature with both an interior and exterior scene that are framed separately but interact closely with one another (Fig. 2.1). Alexander calls this the "double window aspect."<sup>30</sup> This particular method transposes two "windows" together to

---

<sup>28</sup> Mitzi Kirkland-Ives, *In the Footsteps of Christ: Hans Memling's Passion Narratives and the Devotional Imagination in the Early Modern Netherlands* (Belgium: Brepols, 2013): xxiii. Why is the illusionism the key? Couldn't less "realistic" images of badges also call to mind lived experiences? These are questions often considered as I move through the paper. I would note that the illusionistic representations that the Master uses are purposeful in that they keep the reader engaged in both reality and the "alternative" reality that exists between themselves and the page. The less representative the badges are, the more likely the reader is to slip into a plane of imaginative response rather than a keeping a link to the tangible experiences. In this case, the pilgrimage badges but it also applies to the other sensory cues such as the smell of flowers and the noise of construction seen in the other folios. By keeping the reader suspended between reality and the imaginative aspect, the Master successfully integrates two seemingly contradictory elements to engage the reader in a new experience.

<sup>29</sup> Kirkland-Ives, 3.

<sup>30</sup> J.J.G. Alexander 36. He points out that the Master of Mary of Burgundy uses a number of times throughout the book, his other works, and by the contemporaries of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (The artist of the Vienna Hours). "The frame of the miniature acts as the first window and the doorway beyond as the second." It should also be noted that the "window aspect" is especially interesting in this miniature because of the context of the story of St. Barbara. This technique is also acknowledged by Sixten Ringbom who states that the Master of Mary of Burgundy "placed himself, and thus the beholder, inside the window aperture, relegating the main subject of the image to the outside."

create a double frame.<sup>31</sup> In this instance it is marked by the frame of the miniature around the scene and by doorway beyond Saint Barbara. This illusion creates depth to the page and invites the viewer to become immersed in the story and the levels of reality that the Master provides. Again, the page is a largely cluttered environment, in need of unpacking. Because the Master continues to move the miniature from the foreground of the page, it is the responsibility of the viewer to cross the planes of the page. The Master's technique also serves to invite the viewer to be a part of the scene itself, invoking a number of sensory experiences through various sensory prompts included within the miniature such as the fabric behind the Saint (touch), the flowers in front of her (smell), and the construction behind her (sound).

The interior scene shows Saint Barbara seated in front of a large tapestry actively engaging with the book on her lap. According to Christian belief, Saint Barbara converted to Christianity because of the written word of the bible, shown in the interior space. The intimacy of the interior scene acts as a contextual and visual mnemonic device because of the sensory nature of the scene. Recognizing the significance of her devotion to the word, the reader could be inspired to mimic her actions with the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau* that they hold in their own hands.<sup>32</sup> Beyond the walls that St. Barbara inhabits, the story continues to the scene of her father instructing the masons to build her a tower to protect her chastity. Because St. Barbara requested a third window in her tower to represent the trinity, her father had her executed for her conversion, and in turn, was killed for his actions.<sup>33</sup> The prayer below the scenes invokes the

---

(199). Please also keep in mind that Alexander was not the first scholar to use or observe the "window motif" in the context of Northern art.

<sup>31</sup> Maybe even a triple frame, if the page the viewer is looking at could count as a frame or window.

<sup>32</sup> There are, of course, other ways that a reasonable reader could respond to the image.

<sup>33</sup> Jacobus De Voragine, *Legenda Aurea (The Golden Legend)* Edited by F.S. Ellis vol. 6, (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1990), 93. This Dioscorus had a young daughter which was named Barbara, for whom he did do make a high and strong tower in which he did do keep and close this Barbara, to the end that no man should see her because of her great beauty...

Saint's intervention to secure the sacrament before death, emphasizing the reader's role in immersion of character. Because Saint Barbara provides an ideal model, a reader saved and enlightened by the devotional word, the viewer could be drawn to the imitation of the act. Beyond this, the Master imitates the same strategy used with the *Prayer to the Virgin*. By unifying border, text, and miniature, the viewer can transcend across planes of reality, allowing them to be associated with the Saint herself.

The border surrounding the miniature is an example of the Master of Mary of Burgundy's expertise with *tromp l'oeil* and visual illusionism. The three dimensionalities of the flowers and insects rendered on the two-dimensional surface allow the concept of reality to be challenged. The naturalism of the border's subjects transposed with the transcendental subject of the narrative scene invokes both the viewer's reality and the page's plane as a unified subject. Not only does the Master evoke realistic aspects through his rendering, he actually challenges reality by transposing it with the written word and illustration, perpetuating the "alternative" reality, invoked by deep contemplation and active observation.

The Master renders the page as an active environment, appealing to the senses of the viewer. Visually, the border is stunning: flowers sit delicately on the page, not flat or broken, but freshly plucked and set down. The moths practically flit from petal to petal and the dragonfly, perhaps the most intricately rendered aspect on the page, seems to be in constant motion (Fig 2.2). Its delicate and transparent wings even show the space beneath it, demonstrating the interactive environment. However, the page is not only visually striking. The mnemonic devices

invoke the smell of the fresh flowers, the sound of the fluttering of wings, and the texture and softness of the flower petals, emphasizing a spiritual and physical interaction.<sup>34</sup>

The Master employs various forms of naturalism here to create layers of reality. His borders here, and in the other folios, invoke devices that mimic the natural world. These layers actively engage the viewer in meticulous contemplation. Such intense viewing, complete with various prompts designed to activate the senses are means of bringing about mental and spiritual immersion in the unified miniature, border, and text. This technique actively supports Panofsky's idea of contemplative immersion, but also develops upon it by presenting something that surpasses the viewer's reality and turns instead towards a divine vision.<sup>35</sup> Keickhefer stresses the importance of "inwardness" during this time, where the importance of contemplative devotion could not be underestimated. It served as a linking force in religious culture, radiating between the ordinary and the extra ordinary.<sup>36</sup>

Immediately apparent in the *Prayers to St. Catherine of Alexandria* is the overloading of the page, as evident in the previous two folios. However, this page seems more so: the blue color of the background seems to blend in with the matching gems and decorations adorning it, the figures in the miniature are crowded, and the text spills over into the border illumination. The

---

<sup>34</sup> Reindert L. Falkenburg. *The Fruit of Devotion: Mysticism and the Imagery of Love in Flemish Paintings of the Virgin and Child 1450-1550* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub, 1994), 3-5, 18, 57, 84: Faulkenberg emphasizes the use of flowers (and fruit) as devices that aid prayer and meditation partially because they invoke the senses. He states that along with the five physical senses, there are also five spiritual senses so when biblical verses mentioned taste, touch, smell, etc, it was not only a physical reference, but a highly spiritual one as well. "[Fruit and Flowers]... can come to signify the practice of virtue in prayer or meditation as such..."

<sup>35</sup> Panofsky, 264. According to Panofsky, the main function of devotional images is to immerse the viewer in the contemplation of Christ's sufferings. Therefore, the real power of images comes from their ability to arouse an empathetic response from the viewer. For the sake of my argument, I will be focusing on the latter half of Panofsky's definition, since a specific emotion or response cannot be defined in the context of these three folios presented.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Keickhefer, "Convention and Conversion: Patterns in Late Medieval Piety," *Church History* vol. 67, 1 (1998): 37.

limited space again focuses the viewer on the multiple elements that shape the page's environment, requiring a close reading.

The miniature features the saint bowing before the image of the Virgin and Child. Again, the subject matter of the miniature is used to emphasize the abstract spirituality of the “alternative reality,” where the Master confronts the viewer with a plane between that of the page and of reality. Gerard Isaac Lieftinck asserts that the story depicted was especially popular in the Augustinian Congregation of Windeshiem, and perhaps popularized because of the idea of spiritual marriage.<sup>37</sup> St. Catherine, looking for guidance on who she should marry, consults a hermit who reveals to her that the immortal Christ would be the only suitable bridegroom.<sup>38</sup> In the scene, St. Catherine kneels and prays to the image of Christ Child and Mary to become worthy. In the background of the outdoor landscape are two other women, perhaps promoting the feminine nature of the scene, or perhaps relatives of Saint Catherine. The symbolic marriage is often described as “mystic” or “mystical,” promoting narratives of union with God. This type of mystical marriage could be described as an incommunicable experience relating a human encounter with God.<sup>39</sup> The Master's depiction of this scene contextually subscribes to the theory of the “alternative reality” promoted in the formal style of the manuscript.

The border is decorated with various pendants and jewels that shine and shimmer from a light source that seems to be coming from the opening of the book. The jewels are clearly pinned through the blue background, lending to the illusion of them being pinned on the page or through fabric that drapes down as the background. (Fig. 2.3). Very much like the badges on the *Prayer*

---

<sup>37</sup> G.I Lieftinck, *Boekverluchters uit de omgeving van Maria van Bourgondie en Rooclooster* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1969), Part II.

<sup>38</sup> Though the man holding the image of Christ and Virgin has been described as a hermit, one could argue that the figure is of a monastic order (possibly the Augustinians, based on the context described by Lieftinck). This is indicated by the garment he wears that could be a cassock or tunic identified with the order.

<sup>39</sup> Rabia Gregory, *Marrying Jesus in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe: Popular Culture and Religious Reform* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2016) 54.

to the *Virgin*, these pendants and jewels evoke their real-life counterparts, though they are fictitious. Much like the badges from the *Prayer to the Virgin*, these jewels serve as visual cues to prompt immersion from the viewer.<sup>40</sup> Again, the reader is presented with a space between reality and the plane of the page. These lavish jewels, undoubtedly a familiar subject in a courtly setting, are carefully pinned, draped, and placed onto the page, almost interrupting the mysticism invoked by the miniature. However, very much like the last two folios, the various planes of the pages are able to be traversed, possibly comparing and contrasting the abstract mysticism of the miniature with more “wordly” objects placed adjacently to it.

All three folios demonstrate the Master of Mary of Burgundy’s use of “alternative reality” through high-level illusionism, applicable subject matter, and the integration and organization of the page. Through this reality, the Master not only emphasizes contemplative immersion, but improves upon its presentation. The complexity and opulence of the Master’s techniques and intentions appeal to the desires of the nobility, as demonstrated in the social overview of the Burgundian Court.

Having analyzed the Master’s formal techniques and demonstrating the use of “alternative reality,” it is now necessary to provide the social context of the Burgundian court and a general overview of the concept of *vivre noblement* within said context. A social analysis will reveal the desire for opulence and complexity that the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau* provides.

---

<sup>40</sup> Additionally, the cameo towards the bottom of the page depicts a female figure that Alexander believes is the figure of Venus. The nude figure clutches an object in her right hand and covers up with her left. Though the figure could be Venus, it is more likely Eve or Eve as Venus, who has a religious and symbolic connection with the Virgin Mary and the notion of marriage and partnership. The posture and rendering of the figure is similar to Jan van Eyck’s detail of Eve in the Ghent Altarpiece. Certainly, the Master of Mary of Burgundy would have been very familiar with van Eyck’s work, and by imitating him, the Master not only asserts his knowledge and familiarity, but his skill as an artist that matches that of van Eyck. This reference would not be lost on the members of the court, who would be able to make a visual connection to other famous works of art. This device serves, again, to connect the plane of the manuscript to the plane of the viewer.





Figure 2.1 The Master of Mary of Burgundy, Detail, *The Prayers to St. Barbara, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives



*Figure 2.2* The Master of Mary of Burgundy, Detail, *The Prayers to St. Barbara, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives

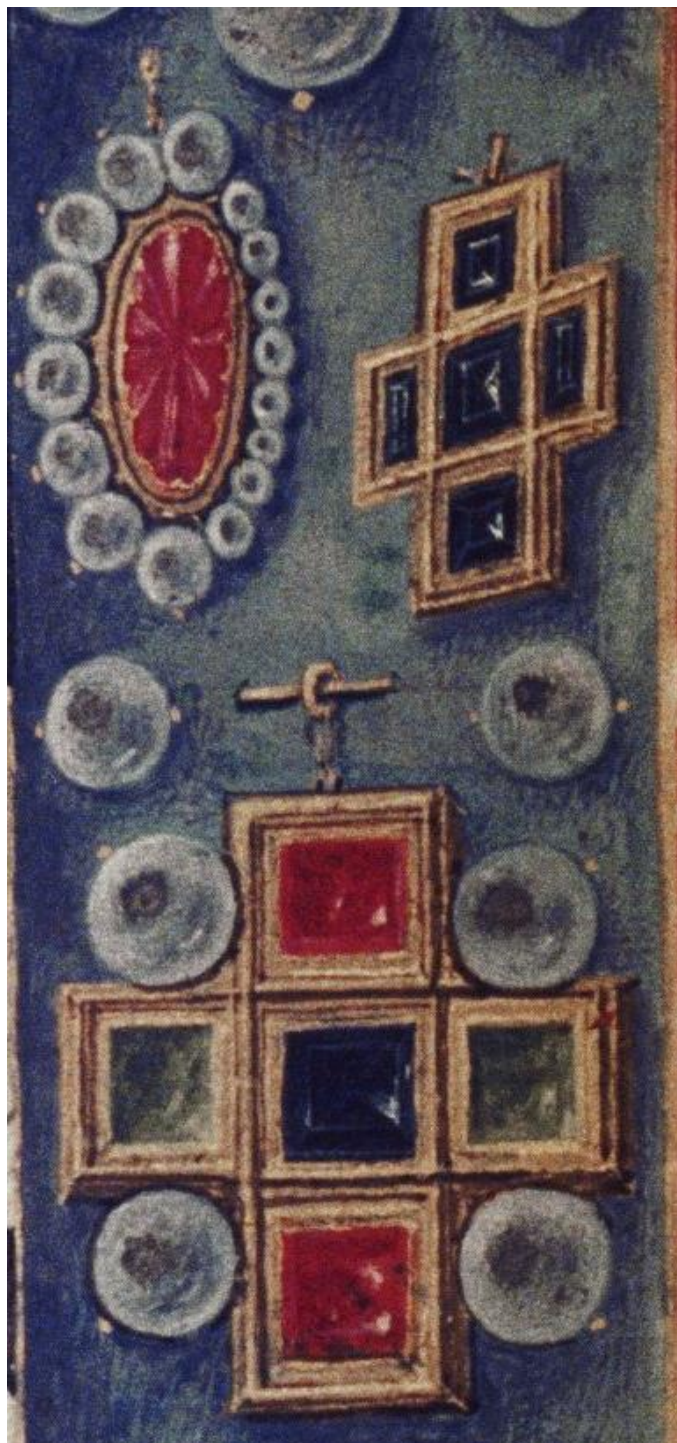


Figure 2.3 The Master of Mary of Burgundy, Detail, *The Prayer to Saint Catherine of Alexandria, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau*, 1470-1480. Photo ©Bodleian Library Archives

### 3 SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Material goods in the Burgundian court facilitated and defined social relationships. Through material display, people were able to advance their status, maintain social networks, and promote their identities. Further, these material goods functioned as tools to develop social standing and communicate shared social principles. Material culture provides insight into how people understand themselves, and also offers means to organize and interact with the social environment.<sup>41</sup> Tangible materials conveyed abstract messages of power, status, and nobility and through these materials, patrons were able to construct identity in their physical, social, and intellectual spaces.<sup>42</sup> By studying material goods and the ways the people interacted with them, we can begin to identify the social framework of Valois-Burgundian court culture, which in many ways revolved around the concept of *vivre noblement*, or living nobly. *Vivre noblement* was a multifaceted model that drew from changing ideas of nobility: from the idea of being noble from birth to becoming noble through actions, taste, and achievements. Literature and art of the time often debated the meaning of true nobility, listing treatises and poems that describe the actions and traditions that one could study and emulate to understand such a concept.<sup>43</sup> This notion shaped and defined objects to suit a specific need for opulence and complexity. By exploring the relationship between material culture and *vivre noblement*, I provide evidence that the Master of Mary of Burgundy proficiently catered his formal style to appeal to the court and their desires.

---

<sup>41</sup> Richard Grassby, "Material Culture and Cultural History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XXXV, 3 (2005): 594-595.

<sup>42</sup> Wim De Clerq, Jan Bumolyn, and Jelle Haemers "'Vivre Noblement': Material Culture and Elite Identity in Late Medieval Flanders," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XXVIII, 1 (2007): 20.

<sup>43</sup> Charity Cannon Willard, "The Concept of True Nobility at the Burgundian Court," *Studies in the Renaissance* 14 (1967): 42 One example of this is *Advertissement au duc Charles*, written after the death of Phillip the Good.

An understanding of “living nobly” begins, among other places, with analyzing an ingrained social code and fundamental practice in the Burgundian State.<sup>44</sup> This concept required a significant amount of demonstration to emphasize ideals important to the nobility, such as the establishment or maintenance of ‘houses’.<sup>45</sup> Material goods flourished because nobles and bourgeoisie alike often employed objects to project proclaim, and perpetuate identity and power. By examining a brief history of the Burgundian dukes, their social foundations, and their patronage, we can begin to understand part of the genesis of this societal tradition.

Phillip the Bold, or Phillip II, who was the first Duke of Burgundy (1363-1404) ruled over Burgundy, Nevers, Rethel, Artois, and Flanders as a unified (more or less) and independent state.<sup>46</sup> Though he shaped the habits of the Burgundian Court, Phillip the Bold did so by following practices common in the French court in Paris. Phillip was a prince of the blood and a native of France; his ruling policies reflected this politically, socially, and economically.<sup>47</sup> He believed strongly in divine rule, which he introduced to his newly acquired Franco-German territories. The concept of divine kingship was perpetuated by the nobility through lavish displays, sophisticated ownership, and the desire for opulent materials.<sup>48</sup> Court life grew in extravagance and complexity because ruling members encouraged lavish displays to perpetuate a

---

<sup>44</sup> Lorne Campbell. *The Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Schools (National Gallery Catalogues)*, (London: National Gallery Company, 1998), 3-36.

<sup>45</sup> Wilson, 23.

<sup>46</sup> I say “more or less” here because Burgundy was given to Phillip II because of his conquests in battle. The other territories came by marriage, conquest, or other means. These territories were loosely bound together by his power and were not well organized in terms of government or administration. Each group of territories was equipped with its own institutions and administration and had no central government. However, they were united underneath his name.

<sup>47</sup> Otto Cartellieri, *The Court of Burgundy*, (New York: Routledge, 1929), 52-57.

<sup>48</sup> Cartellieri, 54

divine and untouchable identity. The Burgundian court became a *de facto* center of art and culture, continually growing in excellence and patronage.<sup>49</sup>

Philip the Bold continually emphasized opulence and complexity, which increasingly created the foundation for courtly identity. He had a very large collection of material items that promoted his power and excellence but is most well-known for his collection of illuminated manuscripts. Though smaller than the libraries of Jean of Berry and Charles V, it is still considered one of the most coveted collections of the time.<sup>50</sup> Phillip the Bold appears to have employed manuscript in part as multifaceted tools to enhance his prestige among his peers of the court. Though Phillip constantly relied on festivities, such as wedding or jousts, to use for his personal promotion, he recognized the longevity that books could provide as a permanent collection. This permanent collection passed through John the Fearless to Phillip the Good and was considered a “principle” ornament of the Burgundian Court. These books actively enhanced the ruler’s prestige in the eyes of his subjects and peers. Phillip II physically traveled with his collection to these various festivities (weddings, jousts, diplomatic negotiations) to enhance his participation and identity.<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, *vivre noblement* was a critical concept for the founder of the Burgundian court. It, however, was not a notion only embraced by nobles. The merchant and bourgeois classes who desired to mimic, or perhaps one day attain, the status of nobles also accepted the concept of living nobly. Wilson emphasizes: “In fact, ‘living nobly,’ ...would become an increasingly

---

<sup>49</sup> Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Bold: The Formation of the Burgundian State*, (Boston, Harvard University Press: 1962), 188.

<sup>50</sup> Vaughan, 195

<sup>51</sup> Vaughan, 195.

important force within the life of the community and would serve as an example for all those who... [aspired]to a place within... the upper echelons of Bruges society.”<sup>52</sup>

The concept of living nobly flourished under Phillip II’s grandson, Phillip the Good. Court life under Phillip the Good was orderly and strict, following specific protocols and traditions. In some cases, these protocols had been established by Phillip the Bold: “From prayer-book to sword... everything was overlaid with gold and silver. The sovereign’s hand might touch nothing common...”<sup>53</sup> These traditions spread throughout Burgundy, and courtly art that enhanced schools, workshops, and guilds, flourished underneath the princely patronage.<sup>54</sup> Phillip the Good, who desired to be crowned King, sustained and even enhanced the desire to live nobly through his desire for Burgundian independence. When he established *Toison d’Or* or the Order of the Golden Fleece, he perpetuated ideas of complexity and opulence, bringing forth models of nobility to his domain.

Most importantly, Phillip the Good (and later, Charles the Bold) attempted to construct an independent state by employing the services of well-trained leaders of Flanders to enhance respect in both the political and social arena.<sup>55</sup> This effectively helped break down the barriers between social classes because the state needed a restructured bureaucracy that was efficient in politics, finances, and other administrative duties. Opportunities for social advancement were extended to the elite within major towns, especially members of urban administration who were highly sought after.<sup>56</sup> Phillip the Good would award ducal patents of nobility through official letters, granting status to those who did not have it before. However, letters of patent from the

---

<sup>52</sup> Wilson, 23.

<sup>53</sup> Vaughan, 54.

<sup>54</sup> Joseph Calmette, *The Golden Age of Burgundy: The Magnificent Dukes and Their Courts*, trans. Doreen Weightmen (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson: 1962), 210.

<sup>55</sup> However, as Vaughn speculates, this service requirement could also be a way for Burgundian dukes to further assert their power and to assure no plots against them.

<sup>56</sup> Wilson, 25.



dukes were merely official titles. In order to perpetuate social acceptance, these new nobles, and those striving to join the group, would have to construct a long-lasting identity in their communities through the careful use of material culture. The recognition and acceptance of one's nobility by peers and the public at large was an important factor. In addition to the ducal letters, individual's behavior, appearance, and possessions were carefully regulated and scrutinized.<sup>57</sup>

As an emerging power, the Burgundian state had to explore and access its citizens as tools to promote and advance itself. These functionaries, who were highly sought after, would see the benefit of "living nobly" as a means of demonstrating that they deserved to be elevated. By projecting this concept through their life style and material goods, these individuals could build and maintain an identity equal to their new standing and demonstrate to their subordinates and peers their conformity and ability to uphold the norms of the court.

These dukes recognized a need for a reconfiguration of the state as an independent power and rewarded their citizens with money and influence, allowing the accumulation of wealth and a new "state nobility."<sup>58</sup> This redefined the upper class through accessibility. More people had access to new social networks, new means of advancement, and more prestige and power. Because of this, the concept of nobility was seen as a form of wealth or capital.

For those desiring to ascend above their stations, "living nobly" became paramount within Burgundian society. Forms of personal display, extravagance, and knowledge were of utmost importance. Creating a distinctiveness that fit with the noble way of life promoted house and family as well as a preserved legacy. By mimicking the splendor and culture of the Burgundian Court, citizens were able to establish a long-lasting identity that directly affected their personal and professional development. This is not to say that these behaviors are mere

---

<sup>57</sup> Wilson, 28.

<sup>58</sup> Wim De Clerq, Jan Bumolyn, and Jelle Haemers, 3. Dukes like Engelbert of Nassau.



reflections or “second order” splendor. *Vivre noblement* was not just a form of mimicry but a complex social code that focused on establishing and maintaining a standard of identity. This behavior is indicative of Burgundian ideas of magnificence which partly relied upon material culture to project ideals of the court.

Providing visible forms of nobility was a principle concern of the nobility and those striving to reach it. Norman Elias has described this type of consumption-based prestige:

On one hand we have the social ethos of the professional bourgeoisie, whose norms oblige the bourgeoisie to subordinate expenses to income, and where possible, to keep present consumption below the level of income so that the difference can be invested in savings in the hope of increased future income... Prestige consumption diverges. In societies in which the status consumption ethos predominated, the mere preservation of the existing social position of the family, not to speak of an increase in social prestige, depends on the ability to maintain one's household and one's expenditure to match one's social rank, the status one possesses or aspires to.<sup>59</sup>

“Prestige consumption” dominated in the Burgundian court, and those who wished to advance had to mimic the nobility's example to even begin to lay the foundations for any desired changes in status.

As a social strategy, *vivre noblement* was dependent on high-profile displays of wealth. There were several ways to utilize and perpetuate the accumulated wealth and power gained by the noble mode of living. For example, some would trade favors and other communicative ties for political gain, as emphasized by Blockmans and Prevenier.<sup>60</sup> Ceremonies and events like weddings, funerals, and dinners provided wealthy families an opportunity to display their success

---

<sup>59</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, (Dublin: University of Dublin Press, 1969): 67.

<sup>60</sup> Walter Prevenier and Wim Blockmans *The Burgundian Netherlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 139. I would like to point out that in this chapter (Nobility and the Bourgeoisie, the authors define “*vivre noblement*” as “to live from the income of one's own domains.” Early in the chapter, the authors emphasize that material culture / material domain could not have been the prime motive for seeking out noble status and that social prestige was the prime factor behind “seeking aristocratic status.” Though I agree, and my paper reflect this, I would like to reemphasize that although material goods were not an “end goal,” they were paramount in claiming prestige and power during this time.

and wealth to their peers. In addition to public rites and events, one could also employ a wide range of material objects in a variety of ways to express one's capacity to live nobly. As patrons, nobles and bourgeoisie alike could establish a public identity by commissioning public artwork throughout the state to be displayed at hospitals, public meetings spaces, and most importantly, churches. Artists understood the desires of the court and responded to it based on their patron's tastes. Many talented painters and illuminators from the Netherlands migrated south to pursue the opportunities at the Valois court.

This wealth was particularly important in the public arena. Evelyn Welch emphasizes the importance of "knowledge of sophisticated ownership" where patrons would amass large collections of books, jewels, and other items to show wealth and accentuate prestige.<sup>61</sup> Even when items were not on display, often they were visible to those in the owner's personal spheres of influence. And though these collections and objects were not readily and physically available to the public eye, they were emphasized and promoted through various means, spreading knowledge about them. Personal patronages and collections were often made known largely to the public. The "fame" of a collection ensured that their collectors, noblement like Alfonso of Naples, Phillip the Bold, Jean de Berry, and Engelbert II were famous throughout Europe.

Court historians such as Olivier de la Marche and Georges Chastelain often praise and describe the court's complexity, but also note the obligation the court and dukes had to their "prosperous" subjects. Such references ignited the desire to be seen as noble by patrons of the bourgeois class, who made up a large number of patrons of the arts at the time. The report of lavishness of the Burgundian court was continually reported by historians and chroniclers alike, especially in the reign of Charles the Bold, son of Phillip the Good. Detailed bills of his court

---

<sup>61</sup> Evelyn Welch "Public Magnificence and Private Display: Giovanni Potano's *De splendore* (1498) and the Domestic Arts," *Journal of Design History* 15, 4 (2002) 216.

showed the need to attain noble perfection even through economic hardships. As chances to maneuver within social classes became more available, the meaning of true nobility became highly debated, but this served to only bolster the fundamental process as more and more people promoted their identities through material goods. Analyzing the social context based on the concept of *vivre noblement*, reveals that artists like the Master of Mary of Burgundy were keenly aware of the Burgundian desire for complexity and opulence.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

By discussing the formal analysis of the Master of Mary of Burgundy's use of illusionism and the needs of the nobles of the Valois-Burgundian Court, I have attempted to present the Hours of Engelbert of Nassau as a multifaceted tool specifically illuminated to promote the values and intricacies of Engelbert II's identity as a noble. In other words, the Hours of Engelbert of Nassau developed and elevated the notion of nobility through the representation of complexity and opulence, highly sought after in the Burgundian' court. My focus in this paper has been to formally analyze three specific folios and demonstrate how the Master of Mary of Burgundy specifically tailored his style to appeal to the complex social system emphasized in the court of Burgundy.

Throughout the paper I present the concept of "alternative reality," a concept that transcends both the viewer's space and the physical page. This is where the reader considers and recognizes the reality around them while also contemplating the abstract qualities of the page in front of them. The Master of Mary of Burgundy demonstrates this through high-level illusionism and through the organization of the illuminated page. I identify the Master as having set up an "alternative reality," through these means, because the Master's methods allow the viewer to shift between layers of reality, establishing the page as an accessible mental environment. The Master's methods encouraged and improved the process of attaining contemplative immersion through viewing. By creating the "alternative reality" through his various formal techniques, the Master of Mary of Burgundy emphasizes the ideas of opulence and complexity, establishing the manuscript as a status item used for maintaining and promoting courtly identity. By focusing on how the Master creates an "alternative reality," I am not only able to emphasize his formal and

technical facility but provide scholarship for future discussions on how exactly status objects were constructed, perceived, and utilized in the Burgundian Court.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander, J.J. G. *The Master of Mary of Burgundy: A Book of Hours of Englebert of Nassau*. Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Medieval Illuminators and their Methods of Work*. New Haven, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "One Hundred Years of the Study of Netherlandish Manuscripts," *Flemish Manuscript Painting in Context: Recent Research*, Edited by Elizabeth Morrison and Thomas Kren. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006.
- Ambrose, St. John, *The Raccolta or Collection of Indulgence Prayers and Good Works*, Oratory of St. Phillip Neri, Birmingham, London: Burns and Oates, 1910.
- As-Vijvers, Anne Margreet W. "Marginal Decoration in Ghent-Bruges Manuscripts." *Sources for the History of Medieval Books and Libraries*, Edited by Rita Schlusemann, Jos. M.M. Hermans, and Margaret Hoogvliet. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1999.
- Benecke, Gerhard. *Maximillian I (1459-1519): An Analytical Biography*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1982.
- Blick, Sarah and Laura D. Gelfand. *Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative, Emotional, Physical, and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*. Boston: Brill, 2011.
- Blick, Sarah and Rita Tekippe. *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles*. Vol 2. Boston: Brill, 2005.
- Buettner, Brigitte. "Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, ca. 1400," *The Art Bulletin* 83, no. 4 (2001): 698-625.
- Campbell, Lorne. *The Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Schools* (National Gallery Catalogues). London: National Gallery Company, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Early Flemish Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Campbell, Megan H. Foster. "Pilgrimage Through the Pages: Pilgrim's Badges in Late Medieval Devotional Manuscripts," Edited by Laura Gelfand and Sarah Blick, *Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative, Emotional, Physical, and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*. Brill, 2011.
- Camille, Michael. *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1992
- Cartellieri, Otto. *The Court of Burgundy*. New York: Barnes and Noble Publishers, 1972.
- Caviness, Madeline. "Reception of Images by Medieval Viewers." *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Reframing Medieval Art: Difference, Margins, Boundaries*. Tufts University, 2001. ebook.
- De Clerq, Wim, Dumolyn, Jan, and Haemers, Jelle. "Vivre Noblement: Material Culture and Elite Identity in Late Medieval Flanders." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28 (2007): 1-31.
- De Voragine, Jacobus. *Legenda Aurea* (The Golden Legend). Edited by F.S. Ellis. Brill, 1990.
- Eade, John and Sallnow, Michael J. "Introduction." *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*. London and York, 1991.
- Elias, Norbert. *The Court Society*. Dublin: University of Dublin Press, 1969.
- Falkenburg Reindert L. *The Fruit of Devotion: Mysticism and the Imagery of Love in Flemish Paintings of the Virgin and Child 1450-1550*. John Benjamins Publishers, 1994.

- Farquhar, James Douglas. "Identity in an Anonymous Age: Bruges Manuscript Illuminators and their Signs." *Viator* 11 (1980): 371–83.
- Goehring, Margaret. "Taking Borders Seriously: The Significance of Cloth – of – Gold Textile Borders in Burgundian and Post-Burgundian Manuscript Illumination in the Loew Countries," *Oud Holland*. 119 (2006): 22-40.
- Grassby, Richard. "Material Culture and Cultural History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XXXV (2005): 594-561.
- Gregory, Rabia. *Marrying Jesus in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe: Popular Culture and Religious Reform*. Columbia: University of Missouri, 2016.
- Kaufmann, Virginia Roehrig. "The Theme of Pilgrimage in the Miniatures of the 'Hours of Engilbert [sic] of Nassau'." *Pielgrzymki w Kulturze Sredniowiecznej* Poznan, 1993.
- Kieckhefer, Richard. "Convention and Conversion: Patterns in Late Medieval Piety," *American Society of Church History* 67, no. 1 (1998): 32-51.
- Kirkland-Ives, Mitzi. *In the Footsteps of Christ: Hans Memling's Passion Narratives and the Devotional Imagination in the Early Modern Netherlands*. Brepols Publishers, 2013.
- Koldewij, A.M. (Jos). "Pilgrimage Badges Painted in Manuscripts: A North Netherlandish Example." 1992.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. "Medieval Pilgrim Badges found in the Netherlands." *Art and Symbolism in Medieval Europe*, 7. York: Medieval Europe, 1992: 41-6.
- Kren, Thomas. "The Importance of Patterns in the Emergence of a New Style of Flemish Manuscript Illumination after 1470." *Manuscripts in Transition: Recycling Manuscripts, Texts and Images*. (Brigitte Dekeyzer and Jan Van der Stock, eds.). Leuven: Peeters, 2005: 357-377.
- Kroon, Marike de. "Medieval Pilgrim Badges and Their Iconographic Aspects," *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- Lieftinck, G.I. *Boekverluchters uit de omgeving van Maria van Bourgondie en Rooclooster* Brussles: Paleis der Academiën, 1969.
- McKendrick, Scot and Thoman Kren. *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting of Europe*. New York: Getty Publications, 2003.
- Pächt, Otto. *The Master of Mary of Burgundy*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1948.
- Panofsky, Erwin. *Imago Pietatis*. Leipzig, 1927.
- Previner, Walter and Blockmans, Wim. *The Burgundian Netherlands*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1986.
- Putnam, Ruth. *Charles the Bold: Last Duke of Burgundy: 1433-1477*. New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1908.
- Reinburg, Virginia. "Hearing Lay People's Prayer," *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800): Essays in Honor of Natalie Zemon Davis*. Edited by Barbara Diefendorf and Carla Hesse. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993.
- Ridderbos, Bernhard. "Objects and Questions" *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception, and Research*. Edited by Berhard Ridderbos, Anne Van Buren and Henk Van Veen. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005.
- Ringbom, Sixten. *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth Century Devotional Painting*. Doornspijk: Davaco, 1983.
- Rothstein, Bret L. *Sight and Spirituality in Netherlandish Painting*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Rule of Metaphor and the Play of the Viewer in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy," *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Edited by Reindert L. Falkenburg and Walter S. Melion Brepols, 2007: 237-275.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Empathy as a Type of Early Netherlandish Visual Wit" *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments 1400-1700*, Edited by Walter Mellon, et al. Brill, 2004.
- Rudy, Kathryn. "A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage: Paris, Bibliotheque de L'Arsenal Ms. 212." *Zeitschriften für Kunstgeschichte*, 63 (2000): 494-515.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Postcards on Parchment: The Social Lives of Medieval Books*. Yale University Press, 2015.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Words as Devotional Objects." *Simulacrum* 15 (2007): 29-33.
- Saenger, J. Paul. "Books of Hours and Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages." *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*. Edited by Roger Chartier. Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Sandler, Lucy Freeman. "The Study of Marginal Imagery: Past, Present, and Future." *Studies in Iconography* 18 (1997): 1-49.
- Silver, Larry. *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Small, Graeme. *George Chastelain and the Shaping of Valois Burgundy: Political and Historical Culture at Court in the Fifteenth Century*. Boydell Press, 1997.
- Spencer, Brian W. "Medieval Pilgrimage Badges: Some General Observations Illustrated Mainly From English Sources," J.G.N. Renaud, *Rotterdam Papers*. Rotterdam, 1968
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*. Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2010.
- Sumption, Jonathan. *Pilgrimage: An Image of Medieval Religion* New Jersey: Totowa, 1975.
- Turner, Victor and Turner, Edith. *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*. New York, Columbia Press, 1978.
- Ure, John. *Pilgrimages: The Great Adventure Of The Middle Ages*, 1st ed. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006.
- Vaughn, Richard. *Philip the Bold: The Formation of the Burgundian State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Webb, Diana. *Pilgrimage In Medieval England*, 1st ed. New York: Hambledon and London, 2000.
- Weightman, Doreen. *The Golden Age of Burgundy: The Magnificent Dukes and Their Courts*. Translated by Joseph Calmette. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1949.
- Welch, Evelyn. "Public Magnificence and Private Display," *Journal of Design History* 15, no. 4 (2002): 211-221.
- Willard, Charity Cannon. "The Concept of True Nobility at the Burgundian Court." *Studies in the Renaissance* 14 (1967): 33-48.
- Wilson, Jean C. *Painting in Bruges at the Close of the Middle Ages: Studies in Society and Visual Culture*. Pennsylvania: University Press, 1998.