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Most glorious Mother; images of the Virgin Mary in women's books of hours

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MOST GLORIOUS MOTHER
IMAGES OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN WOMEN'S BOOKS OF HOURS

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Library and Information Science
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Library and Information Science

by
Joelle A. Mellon
May 1998

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Linda Main", written over a horizontal line.

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Debra Hansen", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Debra Hansen

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Anne Simonson", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Anne Simonson

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William Fish", written over a horizontal line.

Abstract

MOST GLORIOUS MOTHER

IMAGE S OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN WOMEN'S BOOKS OF HOURS

by Joelle A. Mellon

This thesis explores change over time in iconographic portrayals of the Virgin Mary in women's Books of Hours from the 14th to the 16th century. It also addresses the differences between Marian images commissioned by men for their wives and those ordered by women themselves.

Research on this subject reveals that female patrons in the 15th century tended to want artists to paint the Virgin as a powerful queen in their devotional volumes, while those in the 16th century usually preferred her to be portrayed as an ordinary wife and mother. During the 13th century, men often wanted Marian images they commissioned for their brides' Books of Hours to focus on the virtues the Virgin Mary personified, which they wanted their new wives to emulate. Contemporary women are still sometimes influenced by late medieval and early modern ideology about Mary.

Acknowledgments

I have received a tremendous amount of support from many people while working on this project and am enormously indebted to them. I couldn't have asked for a better thesis committee than my excellent professors Linda Main, Debbie Hansen and Anne Simonson. Their help enabled me to end my career in library school by thinking and writing about something that has meaning to me, instead of answering questions someone else devised. The comments they made on my work were always insightful, encouraging, and above all thought provoking. I also can't begin to thank enough my always-patient lifemate Danny Fahs, who insisted that I follow my heart and satisfy my intellectual curiosity, even when doing so was the least practical option for us. Finally, to whom could this thesis be dedicated but my mother, Christine Mellon? The best memories of my childhood are of her reading to me before bed, and I may never have become a bibliophile or writer without her.

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Introduction

During the past ten years, an increasing amount of historical research has been conducted on Books of Hours. This is, perhaps, because book history, in general, has seemed a particularly important field of study in what has been termed the "Information Age". If we are ever to understand how electronic information is influencing our society, we must examine how books changed the course of history in the past. When I first examined the recently published research about late medieval and early modern Books of Hours, I could not help but notice that the majority of research seemed to explore only one work at a time. In addition, very little comparison of the themes and images in various manuscripts was being made. It seemed that only medieval methods of research were being applied to Books of Hours.

Scholarship in the middle ages was very different from scholarship in the Renaissance, primarily because there were generally few books available to people before the printing press was invented in the fifteenth century. In the medieval era, a researcher usually was able to work with only one volume per year, but each text was studied in great depth and usually memorized in its entirety. After printing made books widely available, people naturally started to read more broadly. During the Renaissance, it became possible for many texts to be examined at the same time, so scholars began to do some comparative analysis of them. In this thesis, I apply Renaissance methods of study to texts dating from the 14th-16th centuries by focusing on how Books of Hours changed over this period of time.

Because it would be impossible to examine changes in all aspects of these

devotional volumes, I have chosen to look at how images of the Virgin Mary evolved. This is particularly appropriate because the vogue for Books of Hours stemmed from the lay populace's extreme devotion to the Cult of the Virgin. In working on this project, I have discovered a rich and complex Marian tradition that I have found consistently fascinating to study. Both the Marian Cult and Books of Hours were especially associated with women during the late medieval and early modern periods. Therefore, I have focused on women's devotional texts specifically, examining how the gender of the patron changed visual representations of the Virgin in these devotional works.

While working on this, I also found many aspects of the Catholic faith discontinued as a result of the Reformation which seem vitally important to reclaim. Mary was once seen as the female face of God, and I believe that many contemporary women would feel reassured by a divine presence that is female. The Virgin that women prayed to in the 14th-16th centuries may be just what women today are missing in their spiritual lives. Almost infinitely powerful, yet always empathetic, Mary was paradoxically the essence of humanity and divinity at the same time. Perhaps above all, she was seen as the representative and advocate of female interests in heaven, willing to provide for "the fair sex" what the Father and Son were not. I find this version of the Virgin Mary infinitely more appealing than the one the Catholic Church provided for me as a child in the 1970's. Like the pre-Christian goddesses, she does not need to hide behind her son. Wearing the crown that signifies her own power, she shelters mankind with her cloak while her outstretched hands bestow a rain of blessings.

In the course of researching this thesis, I have formed a personal connection with an important art form that is becoming increasingly threatened by the

advent of electronic information—the hand-illuminated, hand-bound book.

Sadly, most people I discussed my work with (other than my advisors, of course) did not even know what a Book of Hours is, and they certainly had never seen an original manuscript. It has been one of my greatest fears for society that in our rush to embrace the future, we will lose our past. Books of Hours are reassuring reminders that people are capable of making something beautiful and deeply spiritual that lasts for centuries. I sincerely hope that some of those who live in the 21st century will aspire to do the same.

I. Statement of Research Problem

The upper-class, secular women who commissioned Books of Hours from artists during the late medieval and early modern periods were exposed to ideas about the Virgin Mary which changed over time during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In what ways did such changes influence how these women wanted Mary portrayed in their Books of Hours? How is Marian iconography in Books of Hours ordered by women different from those commissioned by men as gifts to females during the same historical period?

II. Literature Review

To formulate a theory about the why female patrons of Books of Hours had different conceptions of how the Virgin should be depicted in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, it has been necessary to consider materials relating to both female literacy and the Marian cult during this time. Bell (1988), Caviness (1996), and Hutchison (1989) explain possible reasons why some late medieval and early modern secular women became owners, readers and patrons of devotional books. The history of the cult of the Virgin is explored in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, which provides a general overview of how she has been perceived by Catholics from the 5th century to the present. Henry Kraus (1982) and Donna Ellington's (1995) pieces also relate to medieval and early modern Mariology, but they are narrowly focused on specific aspects of this field. Kraus discusses how

the portrayal of Mary in art produced during the middle ages related to widespread societal views of women, and Ellington argues that changes in Marian sermons influenced what roles females were allowed to play in society. Interpreting the implications of a long Western tradition of Marian art and faith for the contemporary era is the main purpose of pieces by De Bles (1925) and Woodward (1997). Arthur De Bles focuses on the meanings of religious symbolism present in art produced during the 14th-16th centuries, while Woodward explores what effects hundreds of years of popular devotion to the Virgin could have on the Catholic Church of the 21st century.

Bell, S. G. (1988). Medieval women book owners: Arbiters of lay piety and ambassadors of culture. In M. Erler & M. Kowaleski (Eds.), Women and power in the middle ages (pp. 149-187). Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

In this extremely engaging piece intended for historians, Susan Bell writes about the unique relationship secular, upper-class women had with books during the medieval era. She argues that because females were excluded from participating openly in scholarly discourse, they were forced to depend on private reading for intellectual stimulation. Bell also states that upper-class mothers, who were primarily responsible for educating their children, often acquired books to use as teaching texts. She points out that Books of Hours were appropriate for fulfilling both of these important functions during the late middle ages, which is partly why so many of these volumes were commissioned by women who lived in that era. Susan Bell concludes her article by arguing that medieval female bibliophiles frequently wanted the Virgin Mary to be portrayed as an avid reader in the books they ordered. This piece is considered by many scholars to be seminal in the study of medieval women's history, and it has been

frequently cited by subsequent theorists.

Caviness, M. H. (1996). Anchoress, abbess and queen: Donors and patrons or intercessors and matrons?. In J. H. McCash (Ed.), The cultural patronage of medieval women (pp. 105-154). Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

This richly illustrated article has a unique focus which will probably cause it to be highly valued by its intended audience of historians. Madeline Caviness questions the current, commonly held belief that books were nearly always sources of delight and learning for wealthy, secular medieval women. She states that postmodern scholars sometimes fail to take into account the fact that many devotional texts, especially Books of Hours, were ultimately paid for by men, even when they were purchased for women's use. She urges current researchers to try to determine whether each medieval book was originally intended to be enjoyed by a female reader or whether it was supposed to serve as a reminder for its recipient of her duty and place in patriarchal culture. Caviness feels that works ordered for the latter purpose should be characterized as books made "against", not "for", medieval women. Despite the obvious radical feminist stance taken by this author, her warning not to forget the economics of medieval book production is an important one for current researchers.

De Bles, A. (1925). How to distinguish the saints in art by their costumes, symbols, and attributes. New York, NY: Art Culture Publications, Inc.

De Bles offers a thorough, systematic catalog of the ways in which the Virgin is most frequently portrayed by medieval and Renaissance artists. He elaborates on the meanings of symbols which are generally included in these images of

Mary, and he also discusses what artists meant to convey through the poses she assumes in their works. De Bles' writing seems basic enough to be intended for the "lay reader", and this book could even be used as a text in an undergraduate course on religious art. However, contemporary readers need to keep in mind that it was published in the 1920's, when it was taken for granted that Western art historians would have a very pro-Christian bias. De Bles frequently reminds the postmodern reader that he is not an objective analyst of his subject matter by slipping into pro-Christian rhetoric, such as criticizing early modern artists for failing to portray the Virgin Mary in a properly respectful manner.

Ellington, D. S. (1995). Impassioned mother or passive icon: The virgin's role in late medieval and early modern passion sermons. Renaissance Quarterly: XLVIII (2), 227-261.

In this innovative, scholarly work, Donna Spivey Ellington examines changes over time in how preachers claimed the Virgin Mary behaved during the Passion of her son. According to Ellington, Good Friday sermons evoked images of an empowered Mary in the late medieval mind. Preachers in this historical period often taught their congregations that she had the duties of a priest during Jesus' martyrdom, offering her son as a sacrifice to God. In addition, Mary's compassion for him was supposed to have been made manifest in very concrete ways, such as her experiencing his physical pain with her own body. Ellington then contrasts the medieval portrayal of Jesus' mother with the behavior ascribed to her by preachers of the early modern period. Sermons written during the Renaissance usually state that she merely stood near her son and remained utterly silent, showing almost no outward sign of grief. Donna Ellington argues that the primary reason for this shift is because men in the early

modern era wished to encourage women to keep out of all male society. She adds that the Virgin's physical participation in her son's Passion was downplayed when men's suspicions of the female body increased during the Renaissance.

Ellington assumes the reader has a significant amount of background knowledge in medieval Mariology, so it seems likely that she intended her article for an audience of historians. On the first page of this piece, she announces her intention to write from the specific perspective of a book historian. She also openly admits to having an agenda behind her work in a footnote stating, "My objective is to show that the changes in Marian devotion... [resulted] in part from the growth of literacy and literate modes of thought following the invention of printing" (p. 227).

Hutchison, A. M. (1989). Devotional reading in the monastery and late medieval household. In M. G. Sargent (Ed.), De cella in seculum: Religious and secular life and devotion in late medieval England (pp. 215-227). Cambridge, England: D.S. Brewer.

This work seems to have been intended for scholars of theology or church history, not art historians. It was originally presented at a conference honoring the eighth centenary of the consecration of St. Hugh of Avalon. Ann Hutchison's primary focus is on the reading habits of medieval nuns, but she does not neglect the topic of literate lay women entirely. She discusses reasons that secular females included reading religious literature in their daily routines—primarily because the clergy of the time taught that doing so would inspire feelings of love for God, the saints and the eternal life in heaven. The author then provides several interesting examples of upper class lay women who were regarded as pious during the middle ages because they read spiritual works daily. Unlike

most other historians who study the history of women's literacy, Hutchison is not writing from a feminist point of view. Instead, she seems to want to work toward objectively chronicling whether the inclusion of books in their spiritual lives helped medieval women to gain insights about Christianity.

Kraus, H. (1982). Eve and Mary: Conflicting images of medieval woman. In N. Broude & M.D. Garrard (Eds.), Feminism and art history: Questioning the litany (pp. 79-99). New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Henry Kraus begins his article with an exploration of the misogynistic themes inherent in art produced during the middle ages. He writes that women in this historical period often were portrayed by artists as wicked and lascivious because men believed all females were inheritors of the disgrace of Eve. Kraus then contrasts this negative gender image with medieval art featuring the Virgin Mary, who was presented as very feminine, yet still perfectly moral and worthy of men's adoration. He argues that initially the patriarchal society of the middle ages did not allow ordinary women to be identified with the Virgin, but over time Marian devotion caused artists to portray other females less negatively. This piece seems to have been written for an audience of art historians, but it is sufficiently lucid that people with little background knowledge of the subject would be able to understand the ideas presented.

New Catholic encyclopedia (vol. IX). (1967). Washington, DC: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

This reference work includes a very detailed entry under the heading, "Mary, Blessed Virgin", which chronicles her cult from the 5th century to the present. The writers are obviously not objective reporters of the history of Mariology.

They are self-professed Catholics, many of them priests or nuns, who are writing for an intended audience of Catholic Church members. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, there is information contained in these volumes not easily found elsewhere. For example, it is explained here that the early modern iconographic image of Mary crushing a serpent under her foot represents the Virgin's triumph over Protestantism. It is somewhat surprising that a work which is supposed to provide only a broad overview of Catholic liturgy, dogma, and history still includes Marian ideas not touched on in much more detailed texts.

Woodward, K. L. (1997). Hail, Mary. Newsweek: CXXX (8), 48-55.

Woodward intended to write a news article about current changes in Catholics' Marian devotion which would be accessible enough that nearly anyone would be able to understand it. However unintentionally, though, he ended up with a piece which explores the implications of medieval beliefs about Mary which still persist in contemporary society. Kenneth Woodward states that postmodern Catholics are greatly divided over the possibility that the pope might proclaim new Marian dogma in the year 2000. The author adds that, by papal decree, all Catholics may soon have to accept Mary as the Co-Redeemer with Jesus and as the Mediatrix for all mankind.

A letter to *Newsweek* written by Roger Wieck, the curator of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts at the Pierpont Morgan Library, was printed several weeks after Woodward's article was published. In this letter, Wieck points out that Catholics in the late middle ages held all three beliefs about the Virgin which the Pope is now considering making official Church dogma. Roger Wieck concludes his letter with a criticism of 20th century organized Catholicism,

asserting that the current Catholic Church is revealing “itself to be centuries behind the insights of its own members” by taking so long to pronounce Marian devotional beliefs as dogma.

III. Research Methodology

First, a study of a representative sample of Books of Hours produced during the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries was undertaken. The primary focus was on one volume from the 15th century and one from the 16th, commissioned by a woman for herself. However, one Book of Hours from the 14th century ordered by a man for female use was also examined. Many other research materials related to this topic, discovered through extensive searching in *International Medieval Bibliography*, as well as other bibliographic sources, were utilized as background information and cited within the thesis itself. These references include both medieval and early modern primary sources in translation, as well as secondary sources on women’s literacy, Marian devotion, and iconography that focus on this historical period.

IV. Limitations

The primary limitation on this research has been that some relevant materials have not been translated into languages the researcher is able to read.

V. Definitions

1. Books of Hours

Roger S. Wieck (1988) explains in his introductory essay to *The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* that Books of Hours were created to serve as prayer books for by lay men and women in the late middle ages. The late medieval era

was a time of increasing secularization, and the laity began to covet the beautiful prayer books often owned by the clergy, called breviaries. They also were envious of the direct, intimate relationship that priests, monks and nuns had with God. The Church sanctified The Book of Hours for lay men and women, so that they could have a prayer book similar to a breviary but less complex and more pleasing to the eye (p. 27).

Books of Hours soon became extremely popular. According to Wieck (1988), more of them were produced from the late thirteenth to the early sixteenth century than any other type of book, including the Bible (p. 27). In his essay, "Social History and the Book of Hours", Lawrence R. Poos (1988) comments, "For the first time since classical antiquity, the most common book being produced was intended to remain in non-clerical hands." (p. 33). Wieck adds that editions owned by families were considered precious treasures and were handed down from parent to child over many generations. The Book of Hours would remain the preferred prayer book of lay people for over 250 years (pp. 27-28).

Wieck (1988) argues that Books of Hours were so popular partly because they contained some of the most beautiful pictures of the period. Illustrations were an integral part of almost all editions. In addition to being a feast for the eye, the pictures acted as bookmarks and aided the reader in meditation (pp. 27-28).

Poos (1988) comments that medieval people who owned a Book of Hours richly adorned with illustrations were able to show off their piety and wealth simultaneously. He writes:

More than one satirical broadside aimed at the social pretensions of the urban middle class singled out the vogue for carrying about richly adorned Books of Hours (p. 34).

According to Wieck (1988), another reason for the incredible popularity of these lay prayer books, however, was that they “offered the medieval reader an intimate conversation with one of the most important people in his or her life: the Virgin Mary” (p. 27). Wieck states that the Hours of the Virgin had been added to the breviary as an ancillary set of prayers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This devotion, however, was made the focus of the laity’s prayer book (pp. 27-28). In her essay, “Prayer and the Book of Hours”, Virginia Reinberg (1988) writes that one of the prayers most beloved by lay men and women in the middle ages was included in many Books of Hours—the expressive appeal to Mary, “Obsecro te” (p. 42).

Poos (1988) states that Books of Hours are valuable to postmodern historians because they reflect the social changes that occurred in the late middle ages. The very fact that so many of them were created during this time indicates that literacy was expanding (p. 33). He adds many of them were made for women, implying that even many medieval females had basic reading skills (p. 35). Reinberg (1988) writes that an early sixteenth century manual of spiritual advice for French laywomen recommended copying out prayers for Mass onto a slip of paper to be inserted into the Book of Hours brought with them to church (p. 42).

Sources for the previous definition:

Poos, L. R. (1988). Social history and The Book of Hours. In R. S. Wieck (Ed.), The Book of Hours in medieval art and life. (pp. 33-38). London: George Braziller, Inc. Interesting piece discussing the correlation between Books of Hours, literacy, and women’s rights.

Reinburg, V. (1988). Prayer and The Book of Hours. In R. S. Wieck (Ed.), The Book of Hours in medieval art and life. (pp. 39-44). London: George Braziller, Inc. Very readable essay discussing how Books of Hours were actually used by the laity in meditation and prayer.

Wieck, R. S. (1988). The Book of Hours in medieval art and life. London: George Braziller, Inc. This gorgeously illustrated volume contains many well thought out essays about The Book of Hours in social and art history.

2. Virgin Mary

The Catholic organization The Apostolate Alliance of the Two Hearts includes the following definition of Mary on their web site, which is located at <http://www.ici.net/mantle/alliance/2hearts/mary.html>:

The Blessed Virgin Mary

A Short Biography

Who is the Blessed Virgin Mary?

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the mother of Jesus Christ. She was born in Jerusalem about the year 19 B.C. and died there about the year 49 A.D. She lived a relatively obscure life and is known principally for being the Mother of Jesus Christ and His most faithful disciple. She was the first to believe in Him and She stood faithfully at His side when He was crucified and put to death under Pontius Pilate in 30 A. D..

Why is She called a Virgin?

The Blessed Virgin Mary is called a virgin because in Her was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that, "a virgin would conceive and give birth to a son, and would call his name Emmanuel, which means God-with-us." All the historical evidence and all those who knew Her testify that She had no other children after or before Jesus, and that She remained a virgin throughout Her entire life.

How can She be both Mother and Virgin?

Only by the power of God, who worked this miracle in Her to testify to the world that Her son, Jesus Christ, is His true natural Son, and has no human father.

How did She share in Christ's work of salvation?

At Mary's request Christ began His public ministry, working His first public miracle at Cana in Galilee. At the crucifixion, Mary stood at the foot of Her Son's Cross and united Herself perfectly in His self-offering to the Father for the redemption of mankind.

What happened to Her after the death of Jesus Christ?

Mary was present at Pentecost and thereafter spent many years instructing the new born Church with her example and her reminiscences of the teaching and life of Her Son, Jesus Christ. According to the New Testament and ancient historical evidence, the Blessed Virgin Mary lived in Jerusalem until the end of Her life. The consistent testimony of the Christians living in Jerusalem for the past 2000 years is that at the end of Her life, Jesus Christ came and took Her body and soul into Heaven. After Her assumption, Christ exalted Her with Himself in the Kingdom of Heaven, crowning Her Queen of Heaven and Earth, and establishing Her as sole Mediatrix of every grace and blessing that He is pleased to bestow upon both men and angels.

VI. Assumptions

It has been assumed that the patrons of late medieval and early modern Books of Hours have had the most influence on how the Virgin Mary has been portrayed in these devotional works, not leaving such choices primarily up to the artists themselves or clergy members who may have been consulted.

Chapter I

How Women Used Books of Hours

In the high middle ages, educated laymen began to covet the ostentatious prayerbooks called breviaries which were often owned by members of the clergy. Many wealthy, secular people had received some rudimentary schooling and knew how to read. Such people wanted to integrate devotional reading into their daily lives so that they could cultivate a more direct, intimate relationship with God. Possessing prayerbooks of their own would allow them to pray and meditate without clerical intervention for the first time. In response to the spiritual needs of its lay members, the Catholic Church sanctified a book of psalms, known as the Psalter, for their use. By the late fourteenth century, however, it had largely been replaced by the Book of Hours, which was significantly different in content. John Harthan (1977) writes that the basic text which appeared in Books of Hours was the "Little Office of Our Lady", a short service in honor of the Virgin Mary. It had often been attached as a kind of appendix to the Psalter until it became a separate prayerbook of its own (p. 13). In addition to the "Little Office", Books of Hours also contained various collections of Biblical and apocryphal material, as well as stories of saints' lives.

Secular demand for Books of Hours in the late middle ages was unparalleled. According to Roger Wieck (1988), more of them were created from the late thirteenth to the early sixteenth century than any other type of book, including the Bible (p. 27). Lawrence R. Poos (1988) comments, "For the first time since classical antiquity, the most common book being produced was intended to remain in non-clerical hands." (p. 33). The Book of Hours would be the

preferred prayerbook of lay people for over 250 years, and its influence would continue throughout the early modern period. Harthan (1977) argues that all subsequent lay prayerbooks derive from Hours. Even the title is frequently retained for later devotional volumes which bear only a slight resemblance to the beloved medieval prayerbook (p. 39).

Even today, hundreds of years after Hours have ceased to be bestsellers, it is obvious that most of them were highly valued by their owners. Laymen fortunate enough to possess these devotional works usually took excellent care of them. John Harthan (1977) states that in the Middle Ages an ingenious fine leather or silk covering for Hours called a chemisette was developed. The purpose was to keep the books' pages clean when they were being read (p. 37). Sandra Penketh (1997) writes that ladies who owned richly illustrated prayerbooks sometimes stored them with their most valuable jewelry and only took them out to use on special occasions (p. 269).

Owners of Books of Hours wanted to be sure that the volumes they treasured would be appreciated and cared for by their heirs. Harthan comments that people in the middle ages often left careful instructions in their wills about what should be done with their Hours (p. 33). According to Penketh (1997), concern over this matter among book owners was so prevalent that the volumes least likely to be left out of medieval wills were devotional works such as Hours. Intriguingly, many medieval ladies wanted to leave them only to other women. Most frequently, daughters would be named their heirs, but if a mother had only sons surviving her, one of her daughters-in-law would often be chosen to inherit. Occasionally, the owner would write such a bequest in the Book of Hours itself, so that there would be no mistake about her wishes after death (p. 271).

Although these prayerbooks were owned by both men and women, most contemporary scholars would with agree with Penkneth's (1997) statement that, "a special association existed between women and Books of Hours" (p. 270). Susan Groag Bell (1988) asserts that upper class ladies were unlikely to be without at least one copy (p. 161). In her essay "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture", she states why Hours may have especially appealed to women:

It is clear that Books of Hours were much more than simple prayerbooks. They could bring spiritual consolation, edification, and perhaps peace of mind; they could also instruct, distract, and amuse. To dismiss women's devotional books merely as books of piety would demonstrate a misunderstanding both of medieval women's need for spiritual nourishment and of the richly varied contents of their books of devotion (p. 161).

Contemporary feminist art historian Madeline Caviness (1996) offers another point of view in her article, "Anchoress, Abbess and Queen: Donors and Patrons or Intercessors and Matrons?". Although Caviness concurs that Hours were frequently made for women during the middle ages, she cautions that "they have all too easily been characterized as sources of delight and symbols of learning [for their female owners]" (p. 140). She argues that when a Book of Hours was commissioned for a woman, it was usually the lady's husband or another male who ultimately paid the artists. Most women had no say about what images appeared in their finest Books of Hours, since they typically received them as wedding gifts from their husbands. Because of this, Caviness believes that the images in Hours almost always reflected the religious messages husbands wished to convey to their wives, instead of satisfying the spiritual needs of their female owners (pp. 140-142).

Susan Groag Bell (1988), however, states that women's mothers may have

been as likely as their new husbands to commission Books of Hours for them when they married (p. 165). Most of these devotional works would probably have been more to their owners' tastes. Although many medieval mothers would also have had their own agendas, it seems likely that they would have been at least somewhat familiar with their daughters' preferences in art and religious matters. Most prospective husbands, however, would have had little contact with their brides before the wedding. At best, they would have tried to guess what their new wives might have wanted and, at worst, they would have commissioned devotional works intended to frighten their brides into "proper behavior". However, almost all women owned more than one Book of Hours, and the bride herself would have been free to commission one that was more to her liking after she married.

In "Women and Books of Hours", Sandra Penketh (1997) discusses how these prayerbooks were used, explaining that they were meant to be read eight times a day at the canonical hours (p. 270). Since it was common for people to read the prayers in the books aloud to themselves, this activity became known as "saying one's Hours". Henk van Os (1994) comments that this practice enabled pious lay people to "approach the monastic ideal, for it imposed a religious framework on daily life" (p. 80). Penketh adds that reading devotional works was sometimes a rather solitary activity, as owners did this alone at home or in private chapels. However, Books of Hours were also read very publicly in church, as some sections of them contained the prayers typically said by a medieval priest during Mass. The owner of the book could enhance her comprehension of the service by reading along (p. 270).

Medieval and early modern women's reasons for owning Books of Hours

were as varied as the works themselves. It has certainly been suggested that some ladies wanted to possess elaborately illuminated Hours primarily so that the books could be brought to church as vain, showy fashion accessories. Penkneth (1997) cites Eustace Deschamps' 14th century satirical poem about such women:

A book of hours, too, must be mine,
Where subtie workmanship will shine,
Of gold and azure, rich and smart,
Arranged and painted with great art,
Covered with fine brocade of gold;
And there must be, so as to hold
The pages closed, two golden clasps (p. 269).

John Harthan (1977), however, warns that the contemporary scholar should not judge medieval book patrons harshly for their ostentation, stating, "With piety often went display; luxury cannot be kept out of religion" (p. 32). Susan Groag Bell (1988) offers a more intriguing justification for women who could not resist elaborate Hours. She argues that because medieval ladies were prohibited from touching most of the artistic treasures used during liturgical rituals, they may have wanted the one item of devotion permitted to them to be as beautiful as possible (p. 162).

It cannot be denied, however, that some of the uses women found for their Books of Hours seem somewhat frivolous. Henk van Os (1994) points out that it became fashionable for ladies to seek out uncommon prayers to be inserted into their Hours. Some women in the middle ages even went so far as to pay priests to write unusual prayers for them. Henk van Os states, "Prayers that were out of the ordinary were eagerly collected, just as cooks collect recipes today" (p. 80). According to John Harthan (1977), owners also sometimes used their Books of Hours as albums in which to keep the pilgrims' badges they acquired on their

travels and other religious knickknacks (p. 35). An obvious postmodern parallel for this practice is the current vogue among young girls for collecting stickers or trading cards to be displayed in albums.

Ladies also employed their Hours as fetishistic talismans to ward off ill health. Paul Saenger (1985) asserts that many lay people felt these prayerbooks could preserve them from sickness if always carried somewhere on their bodies. It was also believed that certain prayers contained within Books of Hours would protect women from childbirth complications if placed above their heads while they were in labor (p. 76). Harthan (1977) writes that an obscure martyr, Apollonia of Alexandria, appeared frequently in these prayerbooks because she was considered the patron saint of those suffering from toothache (pp. 35-36).

Many women also owned devotional works for more intellectual reasons, however. Women who lived during the middle ages were often responsible for the education of their children, especially their daughters, and Hours served as textbooks. Penketh (1997) writes, "Books of Hours were frequently employed as 'first reading books'. Some even contain the laboured A's and B's of someone learning to write" (p. 270). According to Bell (1988), it was generally considered important that girls first read devotional texts. Many theologians such as St. Jerome believed that the primary reason to educate females at all was to distract them from their own vain or sexual thoughts (p. 162). The Virgin Mary was frequently depicted reading in medieval art partly to show that she kept her mind too occupied to think of sinful things.

Even the respected late medieval female writer Christine de Pizan (1405/1989), who penned one of the most famous women's advice manuals ever published, *A Medieval Woman's Mirror of Honor: The Treasury of the City of Ladies*,

considered saying Hours important for young girls' moral development. She recommended that they do so every morning immediately after getting dressed (p. 128). De Pizan also emphasized the importance of exposing girls to such devotional literature early, stating:

When the princess's daughter has reached a suitable age, she will be taught to read and thereafter to learn her Hours and her prayers.... She will not be allowed to read of vain things, folly or loose living. No such books will be permitted in her presence, for a child's learning and what is taught to her in her early youth remains with her throughout life (p. 104).

Just as new husbands sometimes commissioned Hours for their brides that illustrated how to be a good wife, mothers chose images for their children's prayerbooks which incorporated the values they wished to impart. Books of Hours originally used as first reading texts for small girls frequently contained touching, intimate images of the Virgin Mary as a child being taught to read by her mother, St. Anne. Women who commissioned such pictures for their daughters to see every day probably wished to remind them that learning to read could be a pleasurable bonding experience for them. Bell (1988) comments:

It is important to consider as well the power and influence that women, as commissioners of educational volumes, were able to exercise in their choice of subject matter. By commissioning books and instructing children they were able to influence both artistic and ideological developments.... A patron could decide...whether, for example, to include the story of Solomon's judgment between the two mothers (emphasizing maternal unselfishness) or whether to include the story of Salome and the beheading of John the Baptist (demonstrating female power) (p. 165).

It has frequently been mentioned by historians that commissioning Books of Hours allowed laymen to express their personal spiritual convictions, since the Church permitted them to personalize these books greatly. Bell (1988) argues, "It seems likely that the laywoman would be even more interested in this escape

from church control, which provided for private devotional reading." (p. 160). In "Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages", Paul Saenger (1985) emphasizes that Hours were small, intimate texts, designed to be always kept on the owner's person and, when they were used, read silently. This practice allowed pious readers to experience vicariously the Biblical events described and portrayed in their prayerbooks (pp. 239, 267, 269). Many women found that saying their Hours and their rosaries (which also became popular in the fifteenth century) alone allowed them the autonomy to develop their own ideas about religion.

According to Wieck (1988), however, perhaps the most important reason for the incredible popularity of these lay prayerbooks was that they "offered the medieval reader an intimate conversation with one of the most important people in his or her life: the Virgin Mary" (p. 27). It certainly stands to reason that women brought up in the highly patriarchal medieval Catholic Church would particularly like a book which helped them get closer to the most powerful and revered female in popular religious belief. Harthan (1977) concurs with this argument, stating:

[Mary] became, through the mystery of the Incarnation, the central figure in an unprecedented devotion in which many of the deepest emotions of men and women were involved.... Through the intensity of her cult she became the most popular expression of faith and devotion in the Middle Ages.... For the devout laity her image was always before them in their Books of Hours (pp. 13-14).

Henk van Os (1994) points out that it was considered extremely important to form a clear mental image of the saint a medieval devotee was addressing when she prayed because "an image not only represented the person of the saint, but in a sense was that person" (p. 170). He adds that it was believed that a strong

internal image achieved through meditation could become more powerful than the 'real' images of things that existed in the material world. The pious felt that with the help of such a strong visualization of the supernatural, it could become possible to "transcend visible reality and gain admission to Heaven" (p. 172). Books of Hours were thought to be an essential tool for helping their owners achieve such a clear mental picture of their favorite saints, especially Mary.

Sandra Penketh (1997) discusses the famous patron portrait page included in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy, where the owner is shown simultaneously reading her prayerbook and appearing before the Virgin. Penketh states that what is being portrayed is not the owner having an actual vision in which the Virgin appears to her. Instead, what the artist has painted here should be seen as a "visualization of the prayer [Mary of Burgundy] reads, an attempt to create—by some empathetic turn of the imagination—an exact replica of the words she looks at" (p. 266). Penketh adds that a similar portrait page is included in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, where the artist accomplishes the complex task of painting a picture of the owner conjuring up a mental image. He shows Catherine's visualization of the Virgin Mary as she meditates (pp. 271-272).

In these examples, however, the Virgin in each miniature is either enormous or distant from the devotee. Other female owners of Hours chose to envision Mary in a far more intimate manner. Penketh (1997) writes that the anonymous woman who originally owned the Buves Hours has been portrayed imagining herself actually present at the Annunciation. The owner and the Virgin have been painted the same size and are juxtaposed near each other (p. 272). The Angel Gabriel, who will momentarily greet Mary, stands behind the unknown

lady, placing his hand on her shoulder encouragingly as she says her Hours. All of these elements in the miniature promote the feeling that the book owner is witnessing the Annunciation personally. Penkneth states "the extreme empathetic nature of this visualization creates an atmosphere of the utmost intimacy, an intimacy necessary to facilitate true and effective dialogue between the devotee and the Virgin" (p. 272). Such desire to actively take part in events described in the New Testament was encouraged by devotional writers during the late medieval period. Sally Cunneen (1996) comments that *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, a popular medieval devotional text by an unknown Franciscan friar, urged its readers in a section on the Nativity to "pick up the child [Jesus], kiss him, and if possible help the mother" (p. 187).

According to Henk van Os (1994), however, yet another level of communion with the divine was available to those who owned Books of Hours. Similar to those who believed they brought themselves closer to Jesus by following the path of 'imitato Christi' (imitation of Christ), devotees of Mary could actually identify themselves with her. By doing so, they tried to become part of the Annunciation or the Nativity not just as a witness but instead to actually experience the event from the Virgin's point of view. In some Annunciation scenes Mary holds a book which displays the opening words of the Hours of the Virgin, which could then be repeated aloud by readers. Thus, they could say their Hours along with the her and "become inwardly absorbed in Mary, to whom an angel appeared after long and intense prayer" (p. 20). Henk van Os states:

The faithful were given the opportunity of having the Christ Child born in their own hearts. In those days that was experienced far more realistically than we can imagine. Like Mary, who became anxious and searched for Jesus high and low when he was disputing with the Doctors in the

Temple, believers could also lose Christ and find him again. Empathizing with Mary, you could share her feelings of guilt, and wonder whether you were taking proper care of him (p. 98).

It cannot be explained precisely what combination of factors caused Books of Hours to catch hold of medieval women's imaginations so strongly and hold on for so long. Women during this time had such a wide variety of reasons for possessing Hours that it became impossible to tell if an individual laywoman longed for a sublime, mystical understanding of the Virgin or simply wanted to follow the fashions of the day. It is true, however, that even the most frivolous lady most likely felt some attachment to Mary, and even the most crude copy of the beloved medieval prayerbook contains emotionally powerful artistic representations of the Virgin. Whether she is portrayed as a sweet child in St. Anne's embrace, a loving, affectionate mother to the infant Jesus or a powerful queen protecting her followers, images of Mary often move even those who do not believe in her. To women who lived during a time when no one openly doubted her daily benign presence in each person's life, there can be no doubt that gazing on such pictures daily helped them feel closer to the female face of God.

Chapter II

Lay Women's Relationship with the Virgin Mary during the Late Medieval and Early Modern Era

The supernatural power of Mary was acknowledged as early as the fifth century, when it was decreed by the Church that all believers must acknowledge her as the Theotokos, or "God-bearer". During the high middle ages, however, she was credited with being an indispensable participant in the redemption of mankind. According to Jaroslav Pelikan (1996), by the twelfth century, it was believed by most theologians that the incarnation of Jesus and mankind's subsequent salvation at his hands could not have been possible without Mary. The Virgin's agreement to bear Christ was supposed to have caused heaven to be filled with the saved and emptied hell of sinners who would have been condemned except for her. Clergy during this time also preached that her intervention had restored the hosts of angels to the number there had been before Lucifer and many others fell. The elect saved through her (and presumably transformed into angels) made up for those lost to the ranks of the devil (p. 131).

Some contemporary feminist historians who have examined these religious beliefs have reached some surprising new conclusions. Many postmodern scholars such as Marina Warner and Caroline Walker Bynum feel that Church patriarchs were responsible for setting up an ideal of womanhood personified by the Virgin Mary which no mortal woman could possibly achieve. It has recently been argued that, as a result, many women who lived during the late middle ages and early Renaissance did not truly believe that the Virgin Mother could be a model for their lives, since her singularly holy state was achieved through

supernatural intervention. Many feminists now believe that those who actually accepted Mary as their ideal grew to despise themselves for never being able to reach her perfection.

Maurice Hamington (1995) characterizes such feminist scholars as proponents of radical theological Catholicism. They often feel that Mary's story is so inherently misogynistic that she cannot be viewed as a positive force in women's lives, past or present (pp. 45, 52). However, there is much evidence which contradicts the idea that lay women viewed the Virgin as either an impossible ideal or an oppressive model being forced upon them by the Church patriarchy. Hamington considers feminists who take a more pro-Marian stance to be either conservative or moderate/reformist in their thinking, depending upon whether they believe that the Virgin must be "reimaged". A conservative thinks that Marian tradition as it stands actually encourages female autonomy and power, while a moderate/reformist wants to reinterpret Mariology to remove patriarchal elements (pp. 45, 52).

Most radical feminists agree that the Catholic Church's encouragement of Mary as the feminine ideal has always had an adverse effect on women's self-image, but each theorist seems to have different ideas about why. Henry Kraus (1982) writes in his essay "Eve and Mary: Conflicting Images of Medieval Woman" that the Virgin who was revered in the middle ages was, "the Woman-Without-Sin, the non-woman Woman, the anti-Eve" (p. 84). He adds that iconography which depicted Mary performing miracles or showed her coronation by Christ only put her further out of mortal reach. Artwork featuring ordinary medieval women, he states, often compared them to sinful Eve, instead of immaculate Mary. As a result, women had little opportunity to associate

themselves with the ideal Catholic woman in their own thoughts (pp. 84-85).

Marina Warner (1983) asserts that in the fifteenth century, the virtues specifically associated with the Virgin were those that the male clergy wanted women to cultivate in themselves. Among these qualities were humility, patience, obedience, compassion, and purity. She notes that of the traditional cardinal virtues, Mary was thought to have had only prudence, not those which were generally considered more masculine, such as fortitude and justice (p. 185). Warner summarizes the negative consequences of assigning only "female" qualities to the Virgin:

The virtues that the Virgin Mary came to represent under the influence of the cult of poverty and humility in the middle ages are not to be scorned in themselves. But the web of social approval and religious taboo forced women in particular to cultivate those virtues or forfeit the name of women.... And the type of virtues decreed feminine degenerate easily: obedience becomes docility; gentleness, irresolution; humility, cringing; forbearance, long-suffering (p. 190).

Caroline Walker Bynum (1991) makes what may be the most radical of the feminist arguments about late medieval and early modern women's relationship with Mary. She states that only men were particularly attracted to the Marian cults and to female saints in general. Women, she believes, were more interested in viewing Jesus as their ideal because they did not consider having a model of specifically feminine holiness important (pp. 152-153). Bynum writes:

Historians have suggested that chastity was the central religious issue for women and that Mary, God's ever-virgin mother, was the dominant symbol.... We find that the [late medieval] woman herself tended to ignore the female model to discuss instead the imitation of Christ.... There was, in the middle ages, no clear association of ordinary women and men with saints of their own sex (p. 153).

There is a great deal of historical evidence, however, which contradicts the assertions of these scholars and instead supports the idea that women

increasingly came to identify themselves with the Virgin Mary throughout the late medieval and early modern periods. Many lay women, instead of feeling discouraged about how unlikely it was that they would attain Mary's perfection, believed that holding her up as the model of womanhood elevated them closer to her divine holiness. In the thirteenth century, the cult of *Imitatio Mariae*, the Imitation of Mary, arose in Italy for women to follow as a positive, gynocentric alternative to *Imitatio Christi*.

Kate Greenspan (1990) argues that, unlike those who wished to imitate Christ, medieval Italian women who truly identified themselves with the Virgin were spared from having to experience physical pain in the service of God. Women who followed the path of *Imitatio Christi* often believed it was necessary to hurt themselves in order to suffer as Jesus did. They would "mortify their flesh" by doing such things as flogging themselves or refusing food for long periods of time. However, all that was necessary for a woman to identify herself with Mary was to have, or at least claim she had, a vision in which the Holy Mother allowed her to hold the Christ Child (pp. 26-28). Greenspan states:

The Virgin's gift of the Christ Child's embrace was seen to confer Marian identity and function upon the visionary, placing her on the path to mystical union that contrasted dramatically with the more familiar way through *imitatio Christi*... in which the visionary saves as Christ saves, through an inner conformity born of suffering as he did. Union achieved through the Virgin's gift of the Christ Child's embrace did not require a journey through physical pain. Rather, it was with desire, delight and joy that the mystic received the Holy Child (pp. 26-28).

Clarissa Atkinson (1991) writes that similar Marian visions also occurred among fourteenth century German Dominican nuns. Many of these visionaries saw themselves nursing the Christ child after Mary placed him in their arms. Atkinson comments, "Maternal encounters with the infant Jesus, which

increased in number and intensity during the late Middle Ages, offered a significant alternative to traditional bridal mysticism" (p. 163), in which the nun saw herself as the spouse, not the mother, of Christ. After nuns envisioned themselves in the role of the Holy Mother, they were often given unique positions of power in the Church. According to Greenspan (1990), a woman who had this type of experience was perceived both by the laity and the clergy to be an effective mediator between heaven and earth, like the Virgin herself. As such, she was often asked to intercede with God through her prayers on the behalf of somebody in need (p. 27). Also like Mary, such women could always refuse to mediate if they were displeased.

By the 15th century, such visions were no longer restricted to nuns—lay women sometimes saw themselves acting as the mother of the infant Jesus. Gail McMurray Gibson (1989) states that Margery Kempe, the famous Norfolk burgess' wife who penned *The Book of Margery Kempe*, the first autobiography in the English language, claims she had one. Kempe wrote of seeing Mary give her the Christ Child's swaddling clothes and allowing her to dress him (p. 51). Although this may seem somewhat presumptuous for a lay woman, the idea of married women identifying themselves with Mary was actually nothing new to the Catholic church of the late middle ages. Possibly as early as the seventh century, they began to do so when they participated in a rite called churching.

Churching has seldom been studied by scholars, even though it became so important to women over time that their efforts have largely kept this ritual in practice up through the present day in some Anglican parishes. It seems to be the only rite in the Christian faith which overtly associates ordinary women with Mary, and by extension, the divine and holy. The origins of churching can be

found in Leviticus, in which God tells Moses that each woman should go through a religious ceremony after she has had a baby. It is to take place forty days following the birth of a son and eighty days after a daughter is born. The purpose of this Jewish ritual is to cleanse the new mother's body from all the spiritual impurities associated with conception and childbirth. Until a woman has been purified in this way, entering the temple to worship after she gives birth is forbidden to her.

The reason mothers were given for participating in this rite changed when the Catholic clergy adapted it for their own faithful. Christians emphasized the fact that the Virgin Mary had participated in this ceremony, even though the conception of her son was accomplished without sin. Perhaps as a result of this, Gibson (1996) writes, Catholics taught that churching was not a rite of purification but one in which mothers gave thanks to God for the safe delivery of their infants (p. 143).

The Catholic feast of Candlemas, celebrated on February 2, is the annual commemoration of Mary's churching. According to Marina Warner (1983), it was believed in the middle ages that instituting Candlemas in the liturgical calendar caused the Virgin to eradicate the plague in Byzantium (p. 67). Warner also comments that in 701 Pope Sergius chose to move this feast to February 2 so that it would coincide with Imbolc, a traditional pre-Christian festival of lights, when torches and candles were carried in night processions to exorcise evil. As with many other pagan festivals, Catholics assimilated the symbolism of Imbolc and subverted it to fit within their religious views. Christian clergy taught that the flames carried on Candlemas had supernatural powers to ward off evil because they represented the immaculate sinlessness of the Virgin Mary.

Warner writes:

To this day, on February 2, young Catholic girls walk in procession in white veils and lighted candles to pierce through the night's shadows with new light. Mary's holiness, her incandescent purity, is the source of this power over darkness (p. 67).

Gayle McMurray Gibson's (1996) description of the late medieval celebration of Candlemas reveals that it was a much more elaborate, inclusive ritual during this time than it is today. The procession was made up of not only the young girls of the church, but "men and women, young and old, maidens and widows [who] ritually enacted... a blessing of candles in parish churches and... a joyful public candlelit procession" (p. 140). She adds that in this procession, members of the church sometimes even took on the roles of the Virgin, Joseph, and other various saints, as well as assuming the roles of the prophets Simeon and Anna, who received Jesus when he was presented at the temple (pp. 140-142). Gibson believes that these elaborate pageants had particular significance for women in the middle ages. She states:

If we look at late medieval Candlemas plays, then, as a medieval woman was likely to have viewed them, we may see that these plays of Mary's "churching" are about the powerful centrality of Mary's female body in a preordained plan for salvation—and also in the redemption of womankind.... The Mary of medieval Christianity subverted the authority of the Jewish law by submitting to it.... Mary submits her body as a meek mother only to be transformed into a powerful healer and intercessor (p. 147).

Women who lived in this era almost certainly associated their own churchings with that of the Virgin, which they commemorated annually. David Cressy (1993) writes that each year at Candlemas, preachers exhorted women to follow the example of Mary and participate in the churching ceremony when they had a baby (p. 142). According to Peter Rushton (1983), women

traditionally wore veils and carried candles during their churching rites (p. 122). The headgear made them think of the Virgin, since she has traditionally been depicted wearing a veil in most iconographic art in general, and the candles were strongly associated with Candlemas. Gibson (1996) explains:

The lighted candle of the feast [of Candlemas] signaled not only the purity of Mary's body but also the ritual purification of the individual female body. The lighted, blessed candle was a familiar prop held in the hand of each medieval Christian mother... in the womanly rite of churching (p. 143).

According to Donna Spivey Ellington (1995), it was also believed during the middle ages that the candles blessed on Candlemas, some of which were set aside for women to carry during their churchings, were symbolic of more than just Mary's purity. They also represented "the supreme candle, the light of the world [Jesus] offered by the Virgin" (p. 235). She adds that worshipers who participated in the Candlemas service were taught that they were actually taking on the role of Mary. Like her, they offered Christ (albeit symbolically, in the form of a candle) to God the Father, who rewarded them by blessing the candles in return (p. 235). Women being churchied probably believed that the candles they held had a sort of dual symbolic nature. They stood for both their own and the Virgin's purity as well as representing Jesus himself. As they brought their candles into the church, they symbolically carried the Christ child with them, as Mary had originally done for his presentation at the temple.

It is interesting to note that when the churching ceremony was done away with during the Reformation, many Protestant women continued to seek out ministers who would perform it for them in secret. Rushton (1983) argues that "churching is women's business, and... only pressure from other women ensures its survival". He adds that a host of superstitions probably thought up by

women themselves about those who remained unchurched became accepted as truth in English society. These included a belief that if an unchurched woman visited someone's home, the lady of the house would become pregnant within a year. More disturbingly, it was also commonly said in the north of England that it was acceptable to insult or attack an unchurched woman without any legal consequences for the perpetrator. Ultimately, there was strong public pressure from church-going women over the years for parishes to bring back the churching ceremony. It was reinstated by the Anglicans in the nineteenth century for any woman who requested it (p. 125).

David Cressy (1993) argues that women continued to want the churching ritual after it was discontinued because it offered them public recognition of their endurance of the pains of childbirth and celebrated their survival of its dangers (p. 145). Although this probably contributed to modern women's strong desire to be churched, it also seems likely that they wanted to continue publicly associating their experiences of motherhood with that of the Virgin Mother.

In the 15th century, the Pope gave women yet another means through which they could communicate with and imitate Mary when he approved the rosary as a devotional aid. Sally Cunneen (1996) states, "The use of the rosary was similar to that of devotional art: to help the one praying to think and act as Mary did" (p. 190). This religious jewelry has always been particularly associated with female devotees. Anne Winston-Allen (1997) quotes a study by Christopher Black, in which he called praying the rosary during the sixteenth century a predominantly female devotion (p. 117). Winston-Allen adds that this type of meditation was encouraged for women because it was free of charge (after the rosary was initially obtained) and could be done at home, even while doing

housework at the same time (pp. 117-118). According to Cunneen, many people who could not read “said the rosary” as a substitute for another devotional exercise primarily associated with women, namely reciting the prayers included in a Book of Hours (p. 190).

Like the Book of Hours, the Rosary has also always been an integral part of the Cult of the Virgin. Peggy Streep (1997) writes, “For the last almost eight hundred years, the Rosary has been indistinguishable from devotion to Mary” (p. 104). Cunneen (1996) explains that a rosary includes 150 beads arranged in five decades, or groups of ten. Every bead in the decade represents a “Hail Mary” devotees are supposed to say (p. 190). While they do this, they are supposed to meditate in turn on each of the fifteen joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries of the Virgin, which include such events as the Annunciation, the Nativity, and her Coronation in heaven. Cunneen states, “[The Rosary’s] emphasis is clearly Marian; it does not dwell on the teaching or mission of the adult Jesus” (p. 190).

According to Michael Durham (1995), it has traditionally been believed by Catholics that in the early 13th century, Mary herself appeared to St. Dominic, who was particularly devoted to her, and gave him the rosary. She is said to have told him that using it would invoke her aid against heresy and sin (p. 128). Marina Warner (1983) argues that the fifteenth century Dominican priest Alanus de Rupe probably made up this story of St. Dominic’s vision in an excess of pious enthusiasm for the founder of his order. Despite this, she states, “The direct intervention of the divine in human affairs gave the rosary a vital claim to direct ordinance and hence validity” (p. 308). According to Winston-Allen (1997), late medieval and early modern folk belief reinforced the association of

the rosary with the Virgin Mary. She writes of the popular beliefs of the time:

By being kept near a picture of the Virgin...the beads [supposedly] gained greater strength to fend off evil powers or to help the wearer to achieve a particular aim.... It was not uncommon for people to sleep with a rosary around the neck so as not to be overtaken by death in the night without this vital link to the Virgin (p. 116).

Throughout history, Mary, the Virgin Mother, has always been an impossible figure to emulate by her very nature. Despite this, late medieval and early modern women did not feel conflicted about her. Donna Spivey Ellington (1995) writes, "Neither the Virgin's sinlessness nor her paradoxical status as virgin mother prevented her from being a positive component in the lives of late medieval women, whether religious or secular" (p. 257). Yet, her inherent duality has never been more evident than during the late middle ages and early Renaissance. The Mary that many women looked to as the ideal of womanhood was infinitely powerful due to her participation in the redemption of mankind and yet simultaneously the essence of ordinary humanity.

During the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the Church taught that the Virgin not only helped to bring about the incarnation of Jesus but also took part directly in his passion and martyrdom. Sally Cunneen (1996) discusses a double sided crucifix which was created in fifteenth century Provence that graphically illustrates this idea. It shows Jesus nailed to the cross on one side and Mary crucified on the other, holding a decapitated Christ child (p. 192). Ellington (1995) explains that late medieval Christians believed Mary suffered "with Christ and in Christ and by the same blows as Christ" (p. 238). Ellington adds:

At times preachers ascribed to the Virgin the duties of a priest offering the sacrificial victim to God, at others they scarcely distinguished between the physical passion of Christ and what was generally understood to be a

reflection of his pain in the compassion of Mary's soul.... The importance of this... for the cult of Mary in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is the dignity that it bestows on her as a coparticipant with God in the act of offering Christ for the salvation of the world (pp.234, 236).

Indeed, the Virgin was at times equated with Jesus, since it was taught that she suffered as much as he did at his crucifixion. She was also compared to God the Father, with whom she was linked as an anguished parent who offered up her son to death, a Mother who grieved with the Father. Sally Cunneen (1996) states that a Franciscan monk who lived during this time even made the somewhat radical declaration that she became the mistress of the world when Jesus was killed. This Franciscan reasoned that since a son who dies childless is succeeded by his mother, and the world had belonged to Christ, the Virgin inherited it (p. 193). Ellington comments that this acceptance of Mary as the equal of Christ and God died down in the second half of the sixteenth century, when European society as a whole grew more suspicious of women (1995, p. 254).

The Virgin who acted as a powerful participant in the salvation of mankind coexisted in the minds of most believers during this time with an image of Mary as the thoroughly human peasant girl who loved her mother, husband, and baby. The rise of the cults of St. Joseph, the Virgin Mary's earthly husband, and St. Anne, her mother, in the fifteenth century encouraged a new concept of the Virgin to which most women could easily relate. Clarissa Atkinson (1991) states in *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*:

In late medieval Europe, the Holy Kinship, centered on Anne, coexisted with the growing cult of the Holy Family with the reconstructed Joseph at its head. Artists and writers portrayed Jesus with Mary and Joseph in domestic roles and relationships that might be emulated by ordinary people. The special obligations and characteristics of fathers, mothers and children were elaborated and sentimentalized in continuing attempts to

link human families with the family of God (p. 161).

As a result of these family-oriented cults, secular women found that their societal roles as mothers and wives took on new spiritual importance. Though they were still not considered as holy as nuns, lay women were suddenly offered images of Mary, the most ideal woman, performing domestic duties just as they themselves did. Especially prevalent in art was the depiction of Mary nursing her baby with an expression of motherly love on her face. For the first time since classical antiquity, women who became mothers could feel that their life choice was not only acceptable to God, but in its own way, a path to higher spirituality. Marilyn Yalom (1997) explains:

From the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the nursing Madonna was the prototype of female divinity. Pressing her breast with two fingers so as to facilitate the flow of milk, smiling serenely at the baby held in her arms, she infused holiness in the common maternal act.... The *Virgo lactans* made of breastfeeding a sacred occupation (p. 48).

The twin ideals represented by Mary the redemptrix and Mary the wife and mother only increased her appeal for late medieval and early modern women. She was an infinitely powerful saint, sometimes considered the equal of Jesus, who could relate to the sorrows and joys of daily family life. According to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967), Mary was mainly thought of as the "mantle virgin" by most fifteenth century believers. This Virgin Mary had endless compassion for all, since she had shared their human frailties, and as a result, was willing to offer everyone all-encompassing protection by gathering them into the folds of her cloak (p. 366). Such images were so powerful for their perceivers that many Protestant reformers, who believed that the Virgin had no supernatural powers of her own, decided it was necessary to destroy much art that depicted her.

Women who lived in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries identified with the Virgin so strongly that it is not surprising that they wanted her portrayed in ways they could relate to in their Books of Hours. Female patrons of Hours had her shown engaged in activities that they themselves did, feeling emotions that they felt. Occasionally, a lady would even desire to have herself painted in her own devotional text as the Virgin. Susan Groag Bell (1988) points out that as lay women read more, demand arose for art that showed Mary reading in Books of Hours:

Artists' insistence on portraying the most significant medieval female ideal, the Virgin Mary, as a constant reader was surely based on the reality of their patrons' lives. It suggests that women were not only acquiring books but spending much of their time perusing them. The developing association of the Virgin with books in fact coincides with the rise in numbers of women book owners during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.... This symbolism showing the Virgin as a constant reader in turn added respectability to laywomen occupying themselves with books (p. 173).

John Harthan (1977) discusses one example of a Book of Hours in which the woman who owned it was portrayed as the Virgin—the *Hours of Mary of Guelders*. In this early fifteenth century manuscript, the patron has been painted as Mary in an Annunciation scene, wearing her blue robes and standing in an enclosed garden (p. 80). The setting is a reference to one of the Virgin's titles derived from the Biblical Song of Solomon, the Garden Enclosed, which points out her perpetual virginity. Harthan adds that the owner of this Book of Hours, Marie d'Harcourt, chose to have herself painted as the Virgin in part because she too was named Mary. Her primary motivation for having herself depicted in this seemingly irreverent way, however, had to do with the fact that she had borne no children during her ten year marriage to the Duke of Guelders. Marie was still hoping for what would have seemed to be, after ten years of barrenness,

the miraculous conception of a child. Although many women of the late middle ages who had no sons appealed to the Virgin Mother in their Books of Hours, Marie “went a stage further” in actually identifying herself with Mary so directly (pp. 80-81).

Through church rituals, their own visions, and devotional aids such as rosaries and Books of Hours, women not only communicated with Mary, but also tried to see the events of the New Testament through her eyes. It is not surprising, then, that women wanted to see reflections of themselves when they viewed images of the Virgin created by the artists of their time. Throughout history, Mary has frequently been depicted by artists wearing the current fashions of the day. It has also been common for art to show scenes from her life to taking place amidst the most contemporary architecture of the time. Perhaps women who commissioned artists to paint the Virgin wanted to see something of themselves and their lives in images of her so that they, in turn, could see this powerful, holy woman as a part of themselves.

Before the Catholic Church redefined Mary’s role in the mid-sixteenth century, she was considered a very powerful redeemer of mankind who was also so human that ordinary women could easily identify with her. This changed somewhat when Catholic theologians at the Council of Trent (1545-1563) forbade the extremely widespread belief in the apocryphal Marian legends. According to Sally Cunneen (1996), in response to challenges from Protestant reformers, Church officials there decreed that the apocryphal stories largely chronicled in *The Golden Legend* were “false doctrine”. Artistic representations of Mary not based on Scriptural accounts were forbidden, and the extremely popular matrilineal imagery associated with the veneration of St. Anne was proscribed

(pp. 207, 209). With this rich source of popular Mariology declared untrue by their Church, female Catholics were left only with the considerably less inspiring figure of the New Testament Virgin. Not surprisingly, the Marian cult declined in Europe until the mid-nineteenth century, when the famous "Marian apparitions" in La Salette and Lourdes, France inspired a resurgence of devotion.

Chapter III

Comparison of Two Books of Hours Commissioned by Women: the *Rohan Hours* and the *Hours of Anne of Brittany*

During the middle ages and the early modern era, most patrons of artistic works, including Books of Hours, were men, as the very word “patron” implies. Throughout history, however, there have always been a few cultured, independently wealthy women who became patrons (or, perhaps more accurately, matrons) of the arts in their own right. Cynthia Lawrence (1997) states in her introduction to *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe* that as early as the fourth century B.C.E., the wealthy widow Artemisia of Caria commissioned the Mausoleum of Hallicarnassus, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (p. 5). In the medieval and Renaissance periods, artists continued to be hired by women of means. Lawrence comments, “During the Middle Ages artistic matters were considered the prerogative of queens and noblewomen, whose tastes were instrumental in the development of particular styles or iconographies” (p. 6).

Two ladies whose artistic sensibilities indeed influenced the art world as a whole during their lifetimes were Yolanda of Aragon and Anne of Brittany. They commissioned many Books of Hours particularly noteworthy for their beauty and artistic merit, and as a result, these women gained reputations in aristocratic society for being book art connoisseurs. Like many wealthy bibliophiles of that era, they ordered large devotional volumes to keep in their libraries, small, more portable ones to carry around with them, and several others as gifts. However, the *Rohan Hours*, commissioned by Yolanda, and the

Hours of Anne of Brittany, named for its patron (both works were “grandes heures”, intended to be left in libraries), are probably the most lasting legacy of these great book art collectors. Even when compared to the many elaborate manuscripts ordered by other nobles who were their contemporaries, the *Rohan Hours* and the *Hours of Anne of Brittany* are outstanding. John Harthan (1977) calls Yolanda of Aragon’s manuscript, “one of the most... forceful in religious expression of all Books of Hours” (p. 85). Anne of Brittany’s devotional text is at least as impressive. According to David MacGibbon (1933), the goal of Jean Bourdichon, the manuscript’s artist, was make it the most elaborate Book of Hours ever created, since Anne had instructed him to “employ all means in his power to make it a work worthy of a Queen who was a patroness of the Arts” (p. 50).

It is important to note that no hard documentary evidence, such as a will or record of payment to the artist, is in existence today to prove that Yolanda commissioned the *Rohan Hours*. However, it is generally accepted by most contemporary scholars, such as Jean Porcher and John Harthan, that she did so. Those, such as art historian Millard Meiss, who have argued against the theory that Yolanda of Aragon was its patron have generally offered as their primary argument that the Latin prayers in the volume were written in their masculine form. Because of this, some historians believe that the *Rohan* manuscript was, in fact, ordered by a man. Harthan (1977) dismisses this contention, saying that even the *Hours of Anne of Brittany* contains prayers written in masculine form, and it has been proven decisively that Queen Anne was, in fact, its patron (p. 85). Porcher (1959) explains that it has been assumed that Yolanda commissioned the *Rohan Hours* primarily because the books its artist used as source material were

all from her personal library (p. 6).

Although both Yolanda of Aragon and Anne of Brittany are probably now only remembered because they commissioned these gorgeous Books of Hours, each led a remarkable life. Yolanda was a member of one of the most book-loving families in late medieval Europe. Born to the King and Queen of Aragon toward the end of the fourteenth century, she was also the niece of the famous Jean, Duc de Berry. More so than any other late medieval noble, the Duc de Berry spared no expense where his library was concerned, and his name is still synonymous with book art. He was the patron of the most well-known Books of Hours ever created, including the *Tres Riches Heures* and the *Belles Heures*, both illuminated by the venerable Limbourg brothers. Jean Porcher (1959) states that when Jean de Berry died in 1416, Yolanda bought his *Belles Heures*, which had been valued by experts at 700 livres. She, however, only paid 300 livres, getting one of the best bargains in the history of book collecting. She was able to obtain this manuscript at such a low price chiefly because her husband of sixteen years, Louis II, King of Sicily and Duke of Anjou, was one of the executors of her uncle's will (p. 5).

According to Porcher (1959), Yolanda and Louis had three children—Louis III, Yolande and Rene. She commissioned a sumptuous Book of Hours for each of them. It is unknown what happened to Louis III's volume, but Yolande's devotional text, now called the *Hours of Isabella Stuart*, is in the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, England. Rene's Book of Hours also survived the ravages of time and is currently held by the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris (p. 5). John Harthan (1977) writes that after Yolanda of Aragon's husband died in 1417, she and her children really came into their own. Her

eldest son inherited his father's titles and lands, and her daughter Yolande married the King of France, Charles VII (p. 85). Porcher states that it was then that Rene, Yolanda's youngest child, began his career as the talented artist-prince Rene of Anjou, "to whom we owe more than one masterpiece of French painting" (p. 6).

According to Harthan (1977), Yolanda herself was able to use her new position as royal mother-in-law to Charles the VII to become the real leader of the French legitimist party. She persuaded many of her son-in-law's vassals to stop allying themselves with the English king (p. 85). Harthan believes that she commissioned the *Rohan Hours* in the 1420's, soon after she became a widow (p. 84). At that time, she would have had plenty of money inherited from her husband, and with his death, she would have gained an independence not allowed to her while married. Like most early modern women who became patrons of the arts, Yolanda of Aragon pursued her passion for fine books most actively when she had finished childbearing and her husband died. Cynthia Lawrence (1997) comments on this phenomenon:

Released from marital responsibilities as well as those of childbearing, no longer accountable to a husband, and most important of all, having gained control of their financial resources... women could turn their attention to projects... which provided them with a significant creative or social outlet (pp. 13-14).

The historical evidence that can be cited to prove that Anne of Brittany was responsible for commissioning her own devotional text is a document she issued ordering payment for it. David MacGibbon (1933) writes that she had a *mandat* prepared in which she ordered her treasurer to pay Jean Bourdichon, the Hours' artist, 1050 livres and 600 ecus for his work. This document is now held by the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris (p. 50). In general, much more information is

currently known about Anne than about Yolanda. Yolanda's of Aragon's fame mostly stemmed from the fact that she was the niece of Jean de Berry and the mother of Rene d'Anjou. Anne, however, was the last independent ruler of Brittany before it became a French province, the only consort in history to two successive Kings of France, and a great patroness of the arts.

Anne was the eldest daughter of the Duke of Brittany, Francis II. In 1490, her father died, and she inherited all his lands and titles, since he had had no sons. Remarkably, there was no law in Brittany prohibiting daughters from inheriting their fathers' estates. Harthan (1977) writes that in 1491, when she was only fourteen years old, the King of France, Charles VIII, invaded Brittany and only ended his siege when she agreed, against her wishes, to become his wife. Anne's marriage to Charles was destined to be short, however. Seven years later he died from a concussion after striking his head on a low doorway while hurrying to watch a tennis match. She had borne no children that lived to succeed him (p. 129).

According to John Harthan (1977), Anne had planned to return to Brittany and live out the rest of her life as a widow. However the successor to the French throne, Louis XII courted her as a suitor (instead of invading her country, as her previous husband had) to gain her hand in marriage. Less than a year after her first husband died, she married Louis and became Queen of France a second time (p. 129). Anne of Brittany was a very popular queen with both the nobles and the commoners of France. Italian aristocrat Baldesar Castiglione (1528/1959) praised her in his famous work *The Book of the Courtier*, stating:

Remember that in our day we have seen Queen Anne of France, a very great lady no less in ability than in station; and if you will compare her in justice and clemency, liberality and uprightness of life, with Kings Charles and Louis (to both of whom she was consort), you will not find her to be

the least bit inferior to them (p. 236)

Mildred Allen Butler (1967) comments that, although Anne and Charles VIII had not been fortunate enough to have any children that lived beyond the age of three, with Louis XII, she had two daughters that survived her. Claude, who became Queen of France after Anne died, was born in 1499 and her sister Renee in 1510 (pp. 149, 174). For most of Claude's childhood, her mother vigorously fought against the marriage Louis XII arranged for her to his designated heir, Francis of Savoy. Anne partly opposed the match due to a personal antipathy she held for Francis' mother. However, according to Harthan (1977), Queen Anne died in January 1514 (p. 129). Claude's wedding to Francis took place only a few months later, perhaps because it had been feared that her mother would have protested against the marriage too strongly if it actually had taken place while she was alive.

MacGibbon (1933) believes that Queen Anne probably ordered Jean Bourdichon to create the *Hours of Anne of Brittany* in 1501 (p. 50). This would have been while she was married to her second husband, shortly after Claude was born. It was not the typical time of life for an early modern woman to commission works of art, but Anne of Brittany was a fairly unusual woman. Butler (1967) states that Queen Anne was particularly proud of her reputation as a patroness of the arts throughout her entire second marriage (pp. 151-153). Also, unlike most women who lived in the sixteenth century, because she was the independent ruler of Brittany, she had plenty of money to spend however she pleased.

Both the *Rohan Hours* and the *Hours of Anne of Brittany* contain many images of the Virgin Mary. Under Yolanda's direction, the artist most often represented

the Virgin as other-worldly and powerful. In the Rohan manuscript, Mary is shown communicating directly with God the Father even while she is on earth, and she is often surrounded by angels, who make obeisance to her. Anne of Brittany's Virgin, by contrast, seems to be simply a woman who has to exist in the ordinary world like any other mortal while she is alive. She is not shown surrounded by angels but instead is often surrounded by members of her earthly family, such as her husband, mother and sisters.

The differences inherent in the two manuscripts' images of the Virgin Mary partially stem from the fact that Catholic theologians changed what they told the faithful about her in each century. According to Marina Warner (1983), the image of the Virgin who was an ordinary wife and mother was first encouraged around 1414 by Jean Gerson, the chancellor of Paris, when he writing sermons about the Holy Family (pp. 188-189). During Yolanda of Aragon's lifetime, Gerson's ideas about the Virgin Mary would still have been new and somewhat radical. She almost certainly imagined Mary as the regal Queen of Heaven, who crowned and enthroned, was featured in French cathedral sculpture as early as the twelfth century. Intriguingly, however, Yolanda's manuscript contains several paintings of the Virgin in which she seems entirely human, indicating that the patroness may have heard of Gerson's theological theories and approved of them. Conversely, Queen Anne's Book of Hours includes a few images of Mary as a powerful, even awe-inspiring, regal figure, which seems to show that the concept of the Virgin Mary as a queen did not entirely die out after the cult of the Holy Family took hold.

It cannot be proven that Yolanda and Anne specifically requested certain images of the Virgin, instead of leaving choices about how she was portrayed up

to the male artists they hired. However, many historians such as Susan Groag Bell and Roger Wieck have emphasized that one reason Books of Hours were so popular in the late medieval and early modern eras was because the Church allowed patrons to personalize them. Certainly both women ordered the artists in their employ to do some specific things. Porcher (1959) comments that Yolanda of Aragon instructed the Rohan Master to base his work on the *Belles Heures* she had acquired from the Duc de Berry (p. 6). According to Butler (1967), Queen Anne was particularly fond of the *Hours of Anne of Brittany* because it contained paintings of the flora and fauna native to her homeland, which she may have specifically requested Bourdichon to paint (p. 152). It also seems likely that Anne would have been interested in how Mary was portrayed, since she felt some particular devotion to the Virgin. Butler writes that when Anne's second husband recovered from a life-threatening illness in 1505, she made a five-month pilgrimage to the Marian sanctuary Notre Dame de Folgoat in Brittany to give thanks and donate funds (pp. 168-170).

The contrast between how Yolanda and Anne perceived Mary is immediately obvious when one looks at how events described in the New Testament are represented in each manuscript. Like nearly all other devotional volumes, the *Rohan Hours* and the *Hours of Anne of Brittany* feature an Annunciation scene. In Yolanda of Aragon's devotional text, the Virgin Mary sits regally enthroned on a raised dais, while the angel Gabriel kneels humbly before her to give the famous greeting "Ave, Maria" (Fig. 1). In this image, the Virgin is shown literally surrounded by angels on all sides, who watch with great interest and point out what is happening to God, who looks on personally, making a sign of blessing with his right hand. Because Gabriel is shown in an obeisant posture to the

Virgin Mary, and she is portrayed sitting on a throne, it seems that here she is represented as the Queen of Angels. As noted in chapter two, Jaroslav Pelikan (1996) points out that Mary was given this title in the high middle ages because she supposedly caused so many people to be saved that their number made up for the angels who had fallen (p. 131). As a result, she was strongly associated with angels, who were often depicted kneeling to her as their Queen in medieval iconographic images.

The Annunciation scene that Bourdichon painted for Anne of Brittany's Hours is strikingly different (Fig. 2). Gabriel stands close beside her, as a friend would, hands gesturing expressively as he speaks. Mary's own hands are clasped in prayer as she listens, her eyes demurely lowered. She has an open book in her lap, which, according to De Bles (1925) symbolizes wisdom (p. 46). The book could also be somewhat self-referential; Anne of Brittany reads her devotional text while Mary studies her own. This image of Mary is a far more intimate, less intimidatingly regal version of her than is shown in the *Rohan Hours*. The Annunciation here is not an event directly watched by God and angels who wait anxiously for her reply. Instead, it consists of a quiet, private conversation between Mary and Gabriel, who seem to be on friendly terms.

In the Visitation scene in the *Rohan Hours*, Mary is again portrayed as queenly, directly associated with the supernatural world, and somewhat intimidating (Fig. 3). Mary's cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist, kneels down humbly before her, as does an angel in the foreground, his hands outstretched in what might be supplication. Angels in heaven look down upon this scene as they did on the Annunciation, so that the reader of the Hours never forgets the supernatural nature of the Incarnation. In the *Hours of Anne of*

Brittany, however, Elizabeth approaches Mary not as a humble subject might welcome her Queen, but as a friend would greet a dear friend (Fig. 4). She stands beside the Virgin, holding her hand in a supportive, sisterly gesture, as any woman's female cousin might upon hearing that she was pregnant. No angels, saints, or deities intrude upon this intimate moment between two women.

Surprisingly, in the *Rohan Hours*, no miniature represents either the Nativity or the Adoration of the Magi, two of the most touching scenes in the Bible. Instead of including an actual Nativity scene, Yolanda of Aragon chose to have the artist paint Eve, dressed in the Virgin's traditional veil and robes, maternally cuddling a nude baby Cain (Fig 5). The idea of conflating Mary with Eve was old, even in the fifteenth century. According to the *Dictionary of Mary* (1985), Saint Irenaeus first pronounced Mary the New Eve in the second century, stating that just as Adam was redeemed through Christ, the new Adam, so Eve was saved through the grace of Mary (p. 251). This particular image in the *Rohan Hours* is still remarkable, however, because although Mary had sometimes been portrayed in medieval art with some of Eve's attributes, such as the apple, it was rare for Eve to be painted as the Virgin. Perhaps through this seemingly simple image, Yolanda of Aragon wished to express a radical idea. Henry Kraus (1982) states that in the middle ages, ordinary women were always associated with Eve, not Mary. They were sometimes referred to as the Daughters of Eve, and many men held them in disgrace for bringing about man's fall in the Garden of Eden (p. 81). Yolanda probably wished to suggest that even mortal women who were not free from sin such as herself could, at times, emulate the immaculate Virgin.

The miniatures depicting the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi in the

Hours of Anne of Brittany show a Virgin who is gentle, human, and approachable. The Nativity scene shows her praying over the newborn Christ child, perhaps giving thanks to God for his birth, while Joseph stands by, holding a lantern (Fig. 6). Shepherds peer through the window while a donkey and ox stand near the manger. Mary is oblivious to all onlookers. Her overwhelming maternal love allows her to commune only with her baby. In the Adoration of the Magi scene, she seems to be the quintessential proud new mother, displaying her beautiful infant to the kings who have come to visit him (Fig. 7).

Yolanda's *Rohan Hours* contains reminders that Mary is connected with the spiritual realm throughout all the remaining scenes from Christ's infancy cycle. His Presentation at the Temple is attended by four angels (Fig. 8). Perhaps the most interesting Marian image in the *Rohan Hours*, however, is one which depicts her personal supernatural power—the miniature showing the Flight into Egypt (Fig. 9). This painting depicts the Grain Miracle, one of the best-known legends of the Virgin, which made her seem the natural successor to pagan fertility goddesses. It is also one of the few miracles which she supposedly performed before her death and ascension without having to enlist her son's aid. Peggy Streep (1997) notes that although the tale of the Grain Miracle was first recorded in the 12th century, it had been passed down by mouth for centuries before this. She further comments that the legend revealed Mary's fruitfulness and her strength against evil, as well as establishing her as the "revealer and enabler of truth" (p. 46). Streep relates the story:

On their journey to safety [into Egypt], Mary, carrying the infant Jesus on her back, and Joseph meet a farmer plowing his field to ready it for sowing. The Virgin instructs the farmer to say, should Herod's men question him, that he saw a mother and child pass while he was plowing. The field is not yet even seeded. As the Virgin and child leave, the grain

springs up miraculously, ready to be harvested. When Herod's men arrive a short time later and question the farmer, he answers them truthfully, and assuming their quarry has passed months before, they give up the chase (p. 46).

In the *Hours of Anne of Brittany*, the Presentation of Christ takes place entirely in the earthly realm, attended by temple priests, not angels (Fig. 10). The Flight into Egypt miniature does not show Mary magically assisting her family's escape, either (Fig. 11). Instead, in this image, she calmly holds her baby as she rides a donkey, seemingly unworried as Herod's soldiers behind her look in every direction other than the one her family has taken.

Yolanda of Aragon seems to have been particularly interested in the role of Mary at the Crucifixion. Her Hours contains two depictions of the Virgin standing at the foot of the cross and two of her mourning over Jesus' body just after it had been taken down. Jaroslav Pelikan (1996) points out that during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it was believed that "Mary had simultaneously lamented the death of Christ because he was her Son and welcomed it because he was her Savior and the Savior of the world" (p. 126). Yolanda solves the dilemma of whether to show the Virgin Mary in the *Rohan Hours* as the miserable Mater Dolorosa or the serene believer by including images of her experiencing both states of mind. In one representation, she mourns at the foot of the cross, so grief-stricken that she is unable even to look at her suffering son (Fig. 12). In another, she seems unaffected by the tragedy before her, ignoring it to look instead at the angels that crowd the sky behind the crosses (Fig. 13). Mary is shown wracked with sorrow in a third depiction of her at Jesus' death—unable to even stand, she swoons over his body after it has been removed from the cross (Fig. 14). Finally, she is shown calmly holding her son's bloodied body in her lap while she peacefully looks into heaven at God the Father (Fig. 15).

According to Donna Spivey Ellington (1995), preachers in the sixteenth century changed the public's perception of how Mary reacted to the Crucifixion of Jesus. Catholic theologians, wanting women to take on more passive roles in early modern society, taught that the Virgin did not outwardly show grief when her son was killed. Instead, she was supposed to have serenely accepted his fate. Ellington elaborates on what women were taught during this time about Mary by Saint Francois de Sales:

She did not faint or make an excessive show of grief, as some painters falsely portray. She remained upright and firm, her only grief an inward pain from the interior crucifixion of her soul (p. 246).

The Virgin at the Crucifixion portrayed in Anne of Brittany's Hours is another example of how the patronesses were influenced by the Church teachings current during their lives. Mary here is certainly very much the essence of self-control. In one image, she looks up at the body of Jesus hanging on the cross and cries a little, but she is otherwise calm (Fig. 16). She does not turn her face away or dramatically faint, as she is sometimes portrayed doing in other iconographic art of the Crucifixion. In another miniature included in this Book of Hours, the tortured body of Jesus is laid in her lap, but she receives it serenely, eyes turned placidly toward the heavens (Fig. 17).

The *Hours of Anne of Brittany* contains one Scriptural image which does not occur in the *Rohan Hours* —a painting of Mary at Pentecost (Fig. 18). This is one of the few depictions of Mary included in Anne's Hours in which the viewer is reminded that she is not merely any mortal woman. Queen Anne seemed to believe that although the Virgin spent most of her life on earth as an ordinary wife and mother, after the Ascension of Christ, she began to receive supernatural rewards from God. The first of these supposedly came at

Pentecost, when she, along with the twelve apostles, was given the gift of tongues (the ability to speak foreign languages). Marina Warner (1983), describes the typical iconographic depiction of Mary at Pentecost, which seems to be how she is represented in this miniature in the *Hours of Anne of Brittany*:

In iconography of medieval Christendom and later, she often holds centre stage... at the gift of tongues; a towering figure, she becomes the very embodiment of Mater Ecclesia [Mother of the Church], brimming over with the grace and power of the Spirit, and before whom the apostles sometimes kneel in awe (p. 18).

Yolanda and Anne's Books of Hours also contain many paintings of her that were taken from miracle legends and apocryphal stories popular in the late medieval and early modern era, such as the "Death and Triumph of the Virgin" sequence. Despite the questionable origins of these tales, they were nonetheless believed in by faithful Catholics as ardently as the scriptural accounts of Mary's life. Indeed, in the minds of many Christians, stories about such things as the Virgin Mary's parents conceiving her sinlessly with only an embrace were as true as anything written in the New Testament. One of the apocryphal images that most commonly appeared in Books of Hours was the Triumph of the Virgin, depicting her coronation in heaven after her bodily assumption. Peggy Streep (1997) writes that as early as the 7th century, it was maintained that the Virgin's body did not decay in an earthly grave when she died. Instead, Catholics felt that Christ assumed her body as well as her soul into heaven. The Church declared August 15 the annual Feast of the Assumption to commemorate this event (p. 94). John Shea (1888) comments on the annual feast:

[On August 15] the Church commemorates the happy departure from life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and her translation into the kingdom of her Son, in which she received from Him a crown of immortal glory, and a throne above all the other Saints and heavenly spirits (p. 355).

A painting of the Virgin being honored in heaven after her death is frequently included in devotional texts—usually she is shown being crowned by angels or Christ. However, Yolanda of Aragon seemed to have a very different perception of how Mary was rewarded in the afterlife. In the *Rohan Hours*, the Triumph of the Virgin miniature consists of an image of a very humanized Mary, shown with her head in the lap of God the Father, while he places a paternal hand on her shoulder (Fig. 19). Her reward is not a stately coronation with a lavish crown of jewels, but the opportunity to become God’s daughter far more literally than she ever could on earth. In this manuscript, Mary is portrayed as a noble queen throughout her life, with angels and even her own cousin kneeling before her. But it seems that she finds her queenship to be at least as much a burden as it is an honor. After her death, however, she is free to shed her regal bearing.

The *Hours of Anne of Brittany* takes exactly the opposite approach to the life and afterlife of the Virgin. It contains only one image of Mary after her earthly death and subsequent assumption. She is shown, crowned and seated next to Jesus, literally enthroned above the other saints and patriarchs, some of whom look up at her with reverence and awe (Fig. 20). If receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the beginning of her exaltation, the full extent of her heavenly reward is shown here—she reigns beside her son. It seems that, unlike Yolanda, Queen Anne believed that dying allowed Mary to trade her humble life as an ordinary woman for an eternity of ruling in heaven.

Yolanda of Aragon’s manuscript and Anne of Brittany’s *Hours* have an apocryphal image of Mary in common—they both contain pictures of her as a young girl with her mother, St. Anne. Along with images of the Virgin nursing

her child, this type of depiction tends to emphasize to the viewer that Mary was human and vulnerable. Female devotees in the middle ages and early modern period were generally encouraged by the Church to think of the Virgin as their mother. However, pictures of her with St. Anne painted during this time often seem as if they were intended to inspire maternal feelings toward Mary. In the *Rohan Hours*, although she wears a crown, reminding the viewer of her regal nature, she clasps her mother's hand and gazes up at her in a touching display of girlish affection (Fig. 21).

The image of Mary as a child with St. Anne which appears in the *Hours of Anne of Brittany* is one of a type that frequently appeared in Renaissance iconography. It shows her being taught to read by her mother (Fig. 22). The humanity of the scene in Anne's Hours is reinforced by the inclusion of Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome, the Virgin's two half sisters. Peggy Streep (1997) relates that St. Anne was popularly believed to have married three times and to have produced one daughter named Mary by each of her husbands. This apocryphal tale called the "Holy Kinship" was devised in the ninth century primarily to explain why St. Matthew wrote in the New Testament that Jesus had "brethren". The faithful in the medieval era came to feel that in truth, these men were his cousins, sons of his mother's half-sisters (pp. 28-29). Because her sisters have been included in this miniature, it seems to be not only a painting of Mary learning to read, but a kind of portrait of all Christ's immediate female relatives.

Both the *Rohan Hours* and the *Hours of Anne of Brittany* also contain four representations of Mary as the Madonna. In the Rohan manuscript, these images seem to reinforce the idea that the Virgin Mary is an other-worldly power, while

in Anne of Brittany's text they emphasize her humanity. In one image in Yolanda of Aragon's book, she is shown in heaven holding her child, being adored by the saints and gazed on by the Holy Trinity (Fig. 23). She is shown in another miniature with her baby in her arms sitting on a crescent moon (Fig. 24). Here, the artist has represented her as the "woman clothed with the sun" from the Apocalypse .

Another image in Yolanda's Hours depicts the Virgin Mary seated on a throne with the infant Christ (Fig. 25). According to De Bles (1925), this type of iconography is the "most regal and splendid of all the representations of our Lady" because she is being portrayed as both the "Sacred Mother of God" and the "Queen of Heaven" (p. 44). The fourth painting of Mary as the Madonna in the *Rohan Hours* represents a much more human aspect of her, showing her suckling baby Jesus (Fig. 26). This final portrayal of the Madonna indicates that although Yolanda of Aragon perceived her first and foremost as a queen with supernatural power, the idea that she was also a mortal mother was not entirely absent from her thinking.

All four apocryphal representations of the Madonna in the *Hours of Anne of Brittany*, however, definitely emphasize the Virgin's most human aspect. Visibly exhausted from her flight into Egypt, she is portrayed preparing to nurse the sleeping Christ child (Fig. 27). Other miniatures included in this book show her with Jesus in a sort of series of family portraits. In one painting, her mother, sisters, and husband cluster around her and the baby (Fig. 28), while another image reveals a more intimate scene in which she is accompanied only by her husband and child (Fig 29). Finally, in a particularly interesting portrayal that echoes the "St. Anne teaching the Virgin to read" type of iconography, Mary is

shown giving the young Christ a reading lesson as Joseph looks on (Fig. 30).

Perhaps the most interesting Marian image in the *Hours of Anne of Brittany* seems, at first glance, not to be one at all. Close examination of the calendar page for April, however, reveals that it is actually a subtle portrayal of Queen Anne as the Virgin (Fig. 31). Butler (1967) identifies the woman in this miniature, who is being offered a bowl of strawberries as she sits in an enclosed garden, as Anne of Brittany (p. 152). The enclosed garden itself was one of the most recognizable visual metaphors for Mary in existence during the early modern era. This imagery was derived from the Biblical Song of Solomon, which St. Bernard of Clairvaux was the first to associate with Mary. The enclosed garden symbolizes Mary's purity. The woman kneeling before Anne is in the pose the angel Gabriel is shown assuming in most iconographic Annunciation scenes. She offers Anne fruit, which has symbolized fertility since ancient times.

Anne's choice to portray herself as the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation may at first seem irreverent or even blasphemous to contemporary viewers of this image. However, Queen Anne herself probably considered the painting a means of appealing to the Virgin for a son. At the time when she commissioned her Book of Hours, Anne had only managed to bear one child to her husband, King Louis, who survived. That child was a girl, prohibited by law from inheriting the throne because of her gender. Anne of Brittany was not the first to portray herself as Mary in a Book of Hours in an effort to conceive an heir for her husband. As stated in chapter two, during the early fifteenth century, Mary of Guelders, who was childless, also had herself painted as the Virgin in an enclosed garden to represent her hope that she, like the Virgin Mary, would miraculously bear a male child.

It is certainly true that both Yolanda of Aragon and Anne of Brittany were very influenced by the perceptions of Mary popular in their day when they chose images for their Books of Hours. However, neither of them limited themselves to only the most commonly held views of her. Yolanda was aware that the Virgin was beginning to be seen as not just an other-worldly queen, but also as a real woman who raised a child and watched him be executed. Most people in the early modern era saw Mary as merely a humble wife and mother. However, Anne felt free to commission images that reminded her of this mortal woman's transformation into the awe-inspiring Queen of Heaven. Most intriguingly, each of these patronesses did not hesitate to use familiar Marian imagery as a means of advancing their own earthly agendas. Yolanda dressed Eve in the Virgin's clothes possibly as a way of showing that all women, even earthly sinners, could emulate Mary. Anne of Brittany surrounded herself with Marian symbolism as a means of identifying herself with the Virgin strongly enough that she hoped God could not resist granting her a similar miraculous conception.

Chapter IV

Medieval Men's Use of the Virgin Mary as a Role Model for Women as Exemplified by the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*

Mary is the consummate woman because, along with her exceptional vocation of virgin, wife, and mother, she takes upon herself in its entirety her feminine condition, expressing its proper qualities of intuition, refinement, sensitivity, and attention to others and their needs (p. 380).

Dictionary of Mary (1985)

Some contemporary feminist historians have rejected the idea that lay women in the late medieval and early modern eras considered the Virgin a positive role model for themselves. Instead, scholars such as Bynum, Caviness, and Warner usually believe that men demanded that women try to live up to the unattainable ideal of Mary, the Virgin Mother. It seems possible that part of the reason some female theorists today so vehemently deny that Mary could have truly served as an example of perfect womanhood is that they themselves cannot view her in this way. Any assertion that postmodern feminist scholars are thinking about historical evidence more subjectively than their male counterparts must be made with extreme caution, however. It has traditionally been a patriarchal contention that women are ill-suited for many intellectual activities because they cannot remain as coolly objective and dispassionate as men. This point of view unfortunately excluded women from many areas of study, until very recently. Yet, the zeal with which some women reject the Virgin as a former ideal is startling.

Many feminists who study Mariology freely admit that they became

interested in the discipline as a result of their own negative personal experiences as children and young adults raised Catholic. In their writing, they often discuss how an intense adoration for Mary which they felt as little girls gradually changed into skepticism about her as they entered adolescence. In most cases, these scholars ultimately rejected the Virgin because they decided she was an inappropriate figure to whom to address prayers. One such historian, Marina Warner (1983), comments in the introduction to her Mariological work *Alone of All her Sex* that her decision to write a book about Mary was “the outcome of a private journey” (p. xxi). However, it is her self-described reaction to visiting the medieval cathedral Notre Dame that reveals just how personal her interpretation of Marian history is. She states:

I remember visiting Notre Dame in Paris and standing in the nave, tears starting in my eyes, furious at that old love’s [for Mary] power to move me. But though my heart rebelled, I held fast to my new intimation that in the very celebration of the perfect human woman, both humanity and women were subtly denigrated (p. xxi).

It is arguably difficult for a researcher to be objective about the significance of Marian iconography for medieval women when seeing the art itself makes her cry. Despite this, however, it must be stressed that many feminist arguments about how the Virgin’s image was used by patriarchal society can be substantiated with historical evidence. Late medieval and early modern documents such as wills, diaries, and the published literature of the era prove that men during this time indeed used Mary’s image to control women. Donna Spivey Ellington (1995) translated and examined transcripts of Passion sermons dating from the late middle ages and early Renaissance. Her research showed that changes in how Mary was perceived by male clergy members affected societal standards about what constituted appropriate behavior and activities for

women. Ellington states:

Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, the Virgin Mary has served, along with her son, as a convenient role model for the Christian life. As a woman, the Virgin was also useful to preachers as a means to illustrate behavior that they felt to be appropriate specifically for the female sex. This was usually accomplished by stressing the differences between the way that Mary lived her life and the way that contemporary women chose to conduct themselves (p. 247).

A fairly complex picture of how the Virgin Mary was viewed by men during this time in history arises. Men seem to have held the Virgin out as a role model to lay women while simultaneously believing that these sinful “daughters of Eve” could never truly be like her. It was not only priests, however, who maintained that Mary was the model of ideal female behavior. Particularly in courtesy literature, laymen frequently advised their wives and daughters to follow her example of a life of chastity, humility and motherhood. These men argued that it was only through emulating her that women could undertake the difficult task of subjugating their naturally lustful natures. The instruction to follow the Virgin’s good example was implicit in many Books of Hours commissioned for women by their husbands. Sandra Penketh (1997) reminds readers that devotional works were most often commissioned by wealthy husbands-to-be as wedding presents for their brides. These men did not hesitate to use their expensive gifts as a means of conveying their expectations about appropriate wifely behavior as exemplified by Mary. Penketh writes:

It would be too obtuse to claim that books of hours were bought by men to give to their future wives as ‘code books of behaviour’; they were, after all, religious devotional texts. However, the very figure of the Virgin as the main emphasis of the book, and the attempts at identification with her through intimate prayer, must have made any underlying messages concerning female character and behaviour all the more clear (p. 275).

Perhaps the most famous example of a Book of Hours commissioned by a

man for his new wife is *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*, which was painted by the celebrated French artist Jean Pucelle around 1325. Harthan (1977) describes this work as "one of the choicest early Books of Hours, with miniatures as delicate as contemporary ivory carvings and displaying a freshness of spirit which looks to the future" (p. 40). It is now almost universally accepted by scholars that the patron of this volume was the Capetian King of France, Charles IV. He commissioned it as a gift for his third consort, Queen Jeanne d'Evreux. According to Joan Holladay (1994), the main reason for this unusual level of certainty about the manuscript's provenance is that Queen Jeanne's will is still in existence. In this document, she left instructions for the future of a very small book of prayers, later identified by researchers as *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*. Specifying that this volume was illuminated by Pucelle at the request of King Charles IV, she bequeathed it to the man who had inherited his throne, Charles V (p. 585). This thorough documentation about the devotional work's patron and owner allows contemporary scholars a unique opportunity to study what Charles IV felt was appropriate for his young wife. Holladay comments:

Jeanne's declaration that the codex was made for her by her husband permits an examination of the unique features about the image programme as reflections of his ideas and decisions about the content and practice of her devotions (p. 585).

Jeanne d'Evreux was born in 1310, during the reign of King Philippe IV. According to Madeline Caviness (1993), when Jeanne was only four years old, the wives of King Philippe's three sons were all accused of adultery. The lady who was married to Louis, the eldest prince, was imprisoned and ultimately died under mysterious circumstances in jail. The wife of the king's second son, Philippe le Long, was tried but found innocent and reinstated as a princess. Charles, the youngest prince, also had his wife imprisoned, and he eventually

repudiated her. After the death of Philippe IV, Louis and Philippe le Long each reigned briefly, but they sired only female children, so their brother Charles inherited the throne after them (pp. 336-337).

Caviness (1993) writes that shortly after Charles was crowned King of France, he married Marie de Luxembourg, who probably was a Dominican nun when he proposed marriage. Apparently, Charles IV did not want to take any chances that his second wife might stray as his first had. Marie, however, soon died in childbirth along with their premature son. Desperate for an heir that would ensure the continuation of the Capetian line, the King married again only four months after his second wife's death in 1324. The third queen was Charles' fourteen year old cousin, Jeanne d'Evreux, a girl well-known for her piety but so closely related to him that their marriage required a papal dispensation (pp. 336-337). With his previous experience, it is not surprising that Charles felt compelled to give his young bride a wedding present that stressed the importance of remaining faithful to him and producing male heirs. Caviness comments:

In the fraught atmosphere of a failing dynasty, betrayed by female lasciviousness and punished by a lack of male heirs, more than lessons of conventional piety had to be directed at the girl-bride who was supposed to become the chaste mother of indubitably legitimate male children (p. 338).

At King Charles' request, Pucelle used the marginal space in Jeanne d'Evreux's manuscript to portray a sort of Freudian carnival taking place alongside the scriptural images. Men and devils wielding phallic weapons or playing erotically shaped musical instruments cavort around the devotional panels. They are accompanied by a menagerie of animals which were widely understood during Jeanne's lifetime to be symbolic of lust. The ribaldry in the

margins contrasts sharply with the serenity and purity conveyed by the images of the Virgin in this devotional volume. Obviously, the lascivious marginal figures display inappropriate behavior, while the portrayals of the life of Mary show proper womanly conduct.

Sandra Penkneth (1997) writes of another Book of Hours, the Rouen manuscript, in which a message of morality was similarly conveyed. In the Rouen Hours, the artist painted a marginal illumination of monkeys, traditional symbols of carnality, which were frequently included in medieval images as a means of satirizing human behavior. The implicitly sexual nature of monkey symbolism was usually emphasized to viewers by how the animals' behavior was depicted. The Rouen text features a page with two monkeys carrying a man upside down to display his genitals. Penkneth points out that the Virgin depicted on the same page represents purity, in contrast to the literally animal lust shown in the margins (pp. 275-276).

Monkeys are also frequently present in the marginal art of the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*. On the Annunciation page, there is one climbing up toward Queen Jeanne, who is safely enclosed in the initial letter "D" while reading her prayers (Fig. 32). The monkey symbolism returns in the margins of the Presentation at the Temple page, where one stands on its hands (Fig. 33). A male grotesque, with a human face where its genitals should be, beats it with a very phallic wand. The crude contemporary slang for male masturbation, "spanking the monkey", is brought to mind by this image. Madeline Caviness (1993) comments that the King wished to remind Jeanne that her sexual impulses could be kept at bay by invoking God in prayer. On the Flight into Egypt page, the lascivious monkey is kept contained in the initial letter "D" of the word "Deus"

(Fig. 34) (p. 341).

Another animal that was traditionally associated with lust which appears in Jeanne's manuscript is the rabbit, painted in the margin of the Visitation panel (Fig. 35). Even today, rabbits portrayed in art carry a connotation of sexuality because they reproduce so frequently. Caviness (1993) writes that in medieval times, they were so strongly associated with fertility that one remedy prescribed for women having trouble conceiving was dried, powdered rabbit intestines or testicles in wine (p. 344). (It is worth noting that there is also a monkey on this page, reinforcing the idea of uncontrolled sexuality.) The Nativity page features far less subtle erotic animal symbolism than the implicitly sexual rabbit and monkey in the margins of the Visitation leaf. Contrasting with the Virgin birth, a dog is depicted on its hind legs with its erect penis clearly visible (Fig. 36).

Madeline Caviness (1993) states, "the margins and line endings... constitute a discrete zone, one that is negatively defined as outside the sacred spaces of the picture frames and written words" (p. 349). Indeed, it is striking how separate the devotional illustrations are kept from the illuminations in the margins. Almost without exception, Pucelle enclosed the Biblical figures on all four sides by the words of prayers and thick lines. To Jeanne, it probably seemed as if the scriptural events were taking place inside church buildings, while the ribaldry happened outside sacred walls. Using this manuscript, Charles showed his wife allegorically that the behavior of the Virgin kept her in a "safe zone", isolated from lustful, dangerous behavior. Thus, he was able to suggest to Jeanne how she, too, should conduct herself in order to remain undefiled.

It is important to note that the most sexually charged images in Jeanne d'Evreux's Hours are painted on pages which also illustrate scriptural events

specifically related to Mary's chastity—the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, and the Presentation at the Temple. At the Annunciation, the Virgin conceived without sin, and her pregnant cousin Elizabeth recognized that Mary had had an immaculate conception at the Visitation. During the Nativity, the Virgin was supposed to have given birth painlessly because she conceived without “knowing a man”, and at the Presentation, she humbly offered to be purified from the unclean act of childbirth even though she had not sinned.

When studying the imagery in *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*, Caviness tends to overemphasize the sexually oriented marginal art, probably because it is so noticeable and shocking. It should probably be regarded, however, merely as a reminder to the young Queen to imitate one aspect of the Virgin's behavior—her chastity. By contrast, on the page depicting the Adoration of the Magi, there is no erotic symbolism at all in the marginal illuminations (Fig. 37). Instead, the margins feature Herod commanding the massacre of the innocents while the main panel portrays the Virgin proudly showing her baby to the three kings. The behavior that Jeanne was supposed to be learning from Mary here was good motherhood, which probably would have been nearly as important a virtue for her as chastity in her husband's eyes. He did, after all, marry her primarily to sire an heir to the throne. The marginal images as a whole are not there only to frighten Jeanne away from lascivious sexuality. Instead, they provide strong contrasts to all the virtues of the Virgin, reminding Queen Jeanne of what she must avoid as the Marian images illustrated what she must do.

One of the most compelling questions a scholar could ask about Jeanne's Hours is how she reacted to her husband's gift. Did she like it, or was she frightened by the sexual and violent images it contained? It is evident that she

valued the manuscript at least somewhat, since she considered it important enough to include in her will. However, Caviness (1993) writes that she bequeathed it to her cousin Charles V, who inherited the throne from her husband, even though she left three other Books of Hours to her only surviving daughter, Blanche (p. 338). This choice of Charles V as the volume's heir was also particularly unusual because it was customary for women to leave all their devotional texts to their daughters during the middle ages. Perhaps Queen Jeanne considered some of the images or inherent messages contained in this particular Book of Hours inappropriate for her daughter.

It is also interesting to analyze whether Jeanne d'Evreux took her husband's unspoken advice and actually tried to live up to the ideal of the Virgin Mary portrayed in her Hours. Given what an exemplary Christian life Jeanne chose to live after her marriage, however, it seems likely that she indeed regarded Mary as a worthy role model. Charles IV died after only four years of marriage to Jeanne, and she spent most of her life as a widow, enjoying the economic and social independence that status generally accorded to women in the middle ages. She became a patroness of the arts in her own right fifteen years after her husband died, commissioning an elegant chapel of the Virgin, Notre Dame la Blanche, at the abbey of Saint-Denis. According to Carla Lord (1997), in addition to the building itself, she also ordered two beautiful statues of the Virgin for the chapel, now both considered important examples of Gothic art (pp. 29-31). The Madonna statue for which the chapel itself was named is particularly striking because it portrays an exceptionally tender, intimate relationship between Mary and the infant Jesus. It was believed during Queen Jeanne's lifetime that the vial in the statue's hand contained a sample of the Virgin's tears. If Jeanne had

resented her husband's implicit demands that she imitate Mary, it seems unlikely that she would have chosen to commission gorgeous Marian art that she paid for herself after he died. That she did so implies a genuine devotion to the Virgin not influenced by any patriarchal pressures.

Jeanne d'Evreux was particularly noted during her life and even after her death for her devotion to Christianity. Lord (1997) argues, "her piety may have been a major reason that she was chosen as the third wife of Charles IV" (p. 21). Caviness (1993) states that after Queen Jeanne's husband died, although she was in the enviable position of being able to remain in public life without a husband, she chose to retire to a Cistercian nunnery, where she eventually died (p. 339). According to Holladay (1994), in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century, three authors (Watriquet de Couvin, the Chevalier de la Tour Landry, and Christine de Pizan) praised Jeanne's religious devotion and goodness, actually holding *her* up as a model for other women to emulate (p. 605). It seems that this virtuous lady needed little urging from her husband or anyone else to imitate the Virgin—she probably would have done so regardless of outside encouragement.

Epilogue

Marian Ideas and the Contemporary Woman

Books of Hours remained popular, even trendy, among lay people for around three hundred years. It is certainly not surprising that patrons' preferences changed about how the Virgin Mary was portrayed in their devotional texts over such a large span of time. In the fourteenth century, Mary was usually shown in textual iconography as the model of all feminine virtues, but she changed during the fifteenth century into the regal Queen of Heaven. Throughout the sixteenth century, the Virgin assumed the role of everywoman in Books of Hours, as artists portrayed her caring for her home and family like any ordinary, earthly housewife. It is also important to remember, though, that however much people's perceptions of the Virgin changed between 1300 and 1600, some aspects of how she has been regarded have remained the same throughout the centuries. Even today, Catholics' views of Mary have evolved a great deal over time, but yet, in some ways, people's general mental image of her is much as it was in medieval times.

People in the 1990's tend to be more interested in looking toward the future than analyzing the past, and, as a result, we sometimes do not know when ideas considered innovative today are actually not new at all. Several contemporary theological concepts about the Virgin Mary that are considered somewhat radical now were actually commonly held beliefs in the middle ages. One such idea was recently discussed by Kenneth Woodward in his August 1997 article for *Newsweek*, "Hail Mary".

Woodward wrote that the current Pope, John Paul II, is being deluged with petitions from all over the world appealing to him to declare "new" dogma about the Virgin in the year 2000. The petitioners want all Catholics to be obliged to accept as articles of faith that Mary redeemed mankind along with her son, that she grants humanity the graces made possible by the Crucifixion, and that all prayers must be addressed to her (p. 49). These Marian concepts are touted by supporters as progressive, acknowledging Mary's true power for the first time in history. In reality, however, there is nothing new at all about any of these beliefs—they were essential parts of the medieval Cult of the Virgin.

Also, just as in the middle ages, today there is still conflict between how Catholic clergy members teach their parishioners to regard Mary and how she is venerated in popular piety. Female Catholics, especially, tend to think of her in ways not officially sanctioned by the very patriarchal Church establishment. Both fourteenth century and twentieth century theologians have often held the Virgin out to women as the perfect, sinless role model, while female Catholics quietly refashioned her image into more of a reflection of themselves. Pope John Paul II (1988) characterized Mary in a recent encyclical as possessing "the self-offering totality of love, the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows, limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work" (p. 145). He urged women to emulate all of these admirable traits, but a Western woman who genuinely did so now would probably seem to have antiquated personal values, more suited to a time before a majority of women worked outside the home. Like their foremothers, contemporary women often feel that they must redefine Mary for themselves or lose her entirely as a source of inspiration.

Many women today seem to identify with the Virgin regardless of whether

they have assumed the traditional female roles of homemaker, wife, and mother or rejected them entirely to become career women. According to Sally Cunneen (1996), housewives sometimes think of Mary doing her chores at home in order to remind themselves that their work, however tiring, is ultimately service to fellow human beings (p. 273). More surprisingly, Woodward (1997) writes that feminists, who had largely dismissed the Virgin twenty years ago as an oppressive, patriarchal influence on women, have now reclaimed her. She is currently regarded by many progressive female thinkers as “a ‘free woman’ who chose to say yes to God where Eve said ‘no’ in the Garden of Eden—and thus made salvation history possible” (p. 51). In her article, “The Real News about Mary”, Sally Cunneen (1997) compares the Virgin with Princess Diana, whose recent death brought an outpouring of grief from women of all social and economic backgrounds. Cunneen explains that Diana and the Virgin Mary are each “a human icon: someone good and beautiful with whom we can identify, who is more than us but not impossibly so” (p. 21).

Perhaps the most strikingly unusual testimony about how Mary appeals to women of literally all backgrounds today comes from Heather MacAllister (1997), a professional dominatrix. MacAllister comments that she keeps images of the “cool, distant beautiful Virgin” in her home partly because she identifies with Mary when she is with her clients. She does not engage in sex with them or even remove her clothes, yet she emphasizes that the men who pay for her services still regard the experience as intensely erotic. MacAllister tells readers of her experiences identifying with the Virgin Mary in her work, stating “I emphasize my divinity, my body as a temple, and [my client’s] baseness, his weakness in the face of carnal desire” (p. 35). This raises the question of how

much late medieval and early modern prostitutes identified with the Virgin, despite clerical insistence that they were, in fact, daughters of Eve. In any case, MacAllister's essay seems to show that contemporary women no longer feel pressured to choose between the archetypical roles of Virgin or Whore (Mary or Eve), if they ever truly did in the past.

One extremely significant change that has taken place in women's relationships with the Virgin Mary since the early modern period is that today, female artists are free to create Marian art with their own hands. As late as the sixteenth century, even a wealthy, powerful queen such as Anne of Brittany was forced to describe her mental images of Mary to a male artist and hope that he would paint something close in her Book of Hours. Several contemporary female Marian artists are profiled in Cunneen's (1996) text, *In Search of Mary: The Woman and the Symbol*. One female artist she wrote about made an image of the pregnant Virgin to pass around at a 1976 hearing of American Catholic bishops. When asked why she had chosen to portray Mary in this way, the artist replied that she had always wanted to see a statue of the Virgin pregnant. She claimed that married women identified far more with the Blessed Mother than the Blessed Virgin (pp. 279-280).

Cunneen (1996) later focuses on Yaroslava Mills, who has created very well-known contemporary images of the Virgin. Primarily an icon painter, Mills has also designed spectacular Marian art for church ceilings and stained-glass windows. Most of her icons portray the Virgin Mary as a loving mother figure. She chooses to represent the Virgin in this way so frequently because she considers raising her own son the best and most significant experience of her life (p. 318). Cunneen points out that not all of this artist's Marian work emphasizes

motherhood, however. Mills also worked on an extremely powerful painting for the ceiling of St. Demetrius church, in which the Virgin is shown sitting in heaven on a red pillow, raising her hands protectively. The artist comments that she wanted to convey the idea that death could be positive through this image (p. 321).

Meinrad Craighead and Cherry Denman are both female artists who do not create specifically Marian art, but their paintings are sometimes inspired by iconographic depictions of the Virgin. Craighead's piece, "Crow Mother: Her Eyes, Her Eggs", features a faceless, veiled woman with enormous black wings holding eggs in her lap. According to Sally Cunneen (1996), Craighead herself refers to the Crow Mother work as her "southwestern Madonna". The artist claims she derived it from images of the Virgin she had seen on holy cards as a child (p. 330). Cherry Denman's (1989) *A Modern Book of Hours* was certainly inspired by late medieval and early modern lay prayerbooks, especially the joyful scenes typically found in the Hours of the Virgin. Denman's work differs significantly from medieval and early modern devotional texts, however, because it does not include prayers, nor does she paint overtly Christian themes. Instead, she whimsically illustrates quotes taken from both male and female writers throughout history, perhaps because she considers such material more appropriate for meditation in today's multifaith world.

It seems that it is not people's perceptions of Mary that have changed greatly since the middle ages. Instead, what is truly different is who now has the opportunity to express their thoughts about her in the form of visual art. Contemporary scholars can only speculate about what medieval and early modern women would have painted into their own Books of Hours if they had

been given the opportunity. Until recently, however, women's creative ideas could usually only be expressed through their weaving and embroidery, very little of which survives today, due to its practical nature. Women's fabric art was worn on the body or used to cover drafty cracks on walls, while large devotional texts, with their rich illuminations by male artists, were carefully stored in private libraries. It was only through patronage that women were able to have their spiritual ideas expressed at all, which is why it is so vital to study art commissioned by them. Books of Hours are one of the few documents available to historians today which represent late medieval and early modern women's thoughts about religion, morality, and aesthetics.

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Appendix:
**Images from the *Rohan Hours*, the
Hours of Anne of Brittany, and the
*Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux***

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

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