Illuminating the *Visio Dei*:

Vision and Devotion in the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*

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Abstract

Illuminating the *Visio Dei*: Vision and Devotion in the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*

Emma Bell

The Psalter-Hours of Bonne of Luxembourg is a small illuminated manuscript and personal prayer book that was made in Paris in the mid-fourteenth century for the Duchess of Normandy's daily private devotional practice. While the texts are mostly in Latin, the manuscript concludes with a selection of prayers that meditate on Christ's Passion, written in vernacular French. The two final illuminated pages from this section, *The Crucifixion* and *The Wound of Christ*, form a distinctly climactic moment in the manuscript and have drawn much attention from scholars of Medieval piety.

In this thesis, the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* serves as a case study to examine how political and theological developments of the early fourteenth century influenced the private devotional practice of Bonne of Luxembourg. My analysis takes into account the historical context of lay women's use of devotional literature, Bonne's monastic upbringing, the Valois court and theories of vision from the Patristic era that were highly influential during the late Middle Ages. This thesis argues how the portrait of Bonne and her husband, John II of France, in the *Crucifixion* miniature along with its accompanying prayers and marginalia provide evidence that her prayer book may have facilitated a visual devotional strategy that prepared her for the *visio Dei*, or the beatific vision of God, which was a subject of particular importance in Paris during Bonne's lifetime.

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Introduction

The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg

The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg is a small illuminated manuscript and personal prayer book that was made in Paris sometime in the mid-fourteenth century for the Duchess of Normandy, Bonne of Luxembourg. This opulently decorated manuscript offers a glimpse of the flourishing visual culture of the French court as well as insight into the nature of personal devotion among aristocratic women during the late Middle Ages. On folio 328r, Bonne's likeness is depicted alongside her husband, John II of France, dutifully kneeling in prayer before a crucifix, upon which Christ assertively gestures toward the wound in his side (Fig. 1.). This miniature is followed by the miniature of the supposedly true measure[1] of Christ's disembodied wound on folio 331r (Fig. 2). These two miniatures, both of which focus on Christ's wound, are two of the most frequently reproduced images from this manuscript.

Bonne of Luxembourg was born in Prague in 1315 to King John "The Blind" of Bohemia. She endured a turbulent and itinerant childhood until moving to Paris at age 17 to marry the heir to the first Valois King.[2] It was sometime in between her marriage and her death that Bonne acquired this manuscript.[3] This exquisite personal prayer book was clearly made for Bonne, for her coat of arms appears fourteen times in its pages as "an integral part of the page design."[4] It was eventually passed on

[1]Annette Lermack, "Fit for a Queen: The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg at the Cloisters," (PhD dissertation, University of Iowa, 1999), 25.
[2]Joni M. Hand, *Women, Manuscripts and Identity in Northern Europe, 1350-1550,* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2013), 12-13.
[3]Annette Lermack has noted that the "heraldic devices date the manuscript to between 1332, the year of Bonne's marriage to John de Valois, and 1349, the year of her death, and place the book in the milieu of the fourteenth-century French court." Lermack, "Fit for a Queen," 7-8.
[4]Annette Lermack, "Spiritual Pilgrimage in the Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg," in *The Art , Science, and Technology of Medieval Travel*, ed. Robert Bork and Andrea Kann, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 98.

to her son, Charles V, and remained part of his extensive royal library.[5] The small prayer book now finds its home in the Cloisters Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.[6]

The miniature featuring Bonne at prayer—one of the only extant representations of her in existence—would have engaged her, the intended viewer, in an exercise of self-recognition and reflection which may have served both a personal goal and a political one. In many ways, the traditional expectations of an aristocratic woman of her time are embedded within this image; the portrait of the Duchess at her husband's side, focused intently upon Christ, is an overt visual demonstration of the loyalty, piety and humility expected of a woman. This image not only would have served Bonne as a standard for her own behavior during her lifetime, but it has also stood as her lasting legacy.

In this thesis, the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* serves as a case study to examine how political and theological developments of the early fourteenth century influenced the private devotional practice of the Duchess of Normandy. This study will build upon the work of other scholars who have looked at Bonne's prayer book, but will consider some details that have been previously overlooked or only discussed briefly. My analysis will take into account the historical context of lay women's religious practice, trends in illuminated manuscript design, Bonne's lived experience, the French court and theories of vision from the Patristic era that were highly influential during the late Middle Ages. I intend to argue how the portrait of Bonne in the *Crucifixion* miniature along with its accompanying prayers and decorative elements provide evidence that her prayer book was designed to facilitate

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[5] "Attributed to Jean Le Noir | The Prayer Book of Bonne of Luxembourg, Duchess of Normandy | French," The MET, accessed August 15, 2023, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/471883, n.p.

[6] Florens Deuchler, "Looking at Bonne of Luxembourg's Prayer Book," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 29, no. 6 (1971): 267–78.

frequent and sustained devotional meditation intent on preparing her for the *visio Dei*, or the beatific vision of God.

Visual motifs found in the *Crucifixion* miniature, such as the vines and leaves that fill the margins and the rabbits and other animals that populate the acanthus-leaf background, are repeated in other miniatures in the manuscript, such as *David in the Water* on folio 102v (Fig.3), thereby creating conceptual connections between the pages. The reader is encouraged to turn back and forth, tracing innumerable pathways, lingering, revisiting, and pondering ever deeper. This incessant engagement constitutes devotion itself in that the effort and focus exercised by the devotee strengthens her capacity and worthiness to experience the ultimate visual encounter with the divine, the *visio Dei,* which was a subject of particular importance in Paris during Bonne's lifetime.

The *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* contains devotional texts ordered for the use of the laity, which was common among books of hours. Despite being designed for lay use, the manuscript reflects Bonne's monastic education and upbringing, as will be discussed below. The book, measuring roughly 5x4x2 inches, contains a calendar, a collection of Latin texts, and finally concludes with a selection of prayers written in vernacular French that meditate on Christ's Passion.[7] The two final illuminated pages from this section, *The Crucifixion*, on folio 328r, and *The Wound of Christ,* on folio 331r, together form a distinctly climactic moment in the manuscript's devotional program that has drawn much attention from scholars of Medieval piety.

[7]Deuchler, "Looking at Bonne of Luxembourg's Prayer Book," 270.

The Literature

The Crucifixion and *The Wound of Christ* miniatures have appeared in a number of studies that investigate the visual culture of late-medieval Christianity, from Margaret Manion and Joni Hand's studies on illuminated manuscripts as "vehicles of identity,"[8] to Flora Lewis and Vibeke Olson's studies on the wound in Christ's side as a site of performative and reciprocal spiritual encounters.[9] Lewis has examined this pair of images as "a coherent devotional exercise" that invites the devotee to insert herself into the scene as an active agent:[10] her gaze follows Christ's pointed finger toward the wound in His side and draws nearer to it, entering a liminal space where the wound is disembodied and surrounded by the weapons of Christ.

Alexa Sand has investigated portraits of Medieval book owners at prayer painted within the pages of their personal devotional manuscripts—what she refers to as "self-reflexive images"—as examples of "how incorporeal human experiences like devotional meditation can leave indelible traces in the material record of history."[11] A "reflexive image," as defined by Sand, is a portrait of the viewer that invites her to "see herself seeing and thereby [attain] a heightened awareness of her own visibility and her own vision."[12] Sand surveys a number of devotional texts that were made between the 13th and 15th centuries in Western Europe, and argues that owner-portraits in devotional books were used as

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[8]Joni Hand, *Women, Manuscripts and Identity in Northern Europe,* 1.
[9]Vibeke Olson, "Penetrating the Void: Picturing the Wound in Christ's Side as a Performative Space," in *Wounds and Wound Repair in Medieval Culture,* ed. Larissa Tracy and Kelly DeVries (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015) 313-339.
[10]Flora Lewis, "The Wound in Christ's Side and the Instruments of the Passion: Gendered Experience and Response," in Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor (London: The British Library, 1997), 212.
[11]Alexa Kristen Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3.
[12]Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation,* 4.

visual tools in the critical process of examining the self, for "to peer into one's own soul was, after all, a necessary if grueling prerequisite for eternal life."[13]

The popularity of Bonne's portrait, Sand writes, "lies in the intimate glimpse it seems to offer into the private life of a woman who lived and died seven centuries ago."[14] Curiosity about Bonne's personal life has resulted in studies like William Land's book, *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg: A Personal Document*, published in 1984. Land claims through visual analysis that the manuscript's bas-de-page decoration at the beginning of the Psalms on folio 15r, depicting two lions flanking a heraldic device, is, in and of itself, a confession of a rumored affair between Bonne and Raoul de Brienne, Count of Eu, and that the manuscript's program was thus designed to facilitate her repentance for this indiscretion.[15] There is little to no historical evidence that validates this rumor, and in fact evidence suggests that the rumor emerged *after* Bonne's death as part of a continued effort to undermine the Valois' rule at the beginning of the Hundred Years War.[16] The lack of historical evidence supporting Land's visual analysis casts significant doubt on his findings.[17]

The discussions concerning identity and piety in Bonne's prayer book, which have fascinated scholars, can be deepened by thinking carefully about the date the book was created and the context of

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[13]Ibid., 4.
[14]Sand, "Vision, Devotion, and Difficulty," 6.
[15]William G. Land, *The Prayer Book of Bonne of Luxembourg: A Personal Document*, (Preliminary Edition, Washington D.C., 1984), 42-43.
[16]Lawrence Earp has pointed out how the rumors of Bonne's infidelity came about when John II abruptly arrested and executed Raoul de Brienne shortly after he became king in 1350. Later, when John II was imprisoned in England in the early years of the war, there were also rumors circulating that he had in fact killed Bonne, however, this was largely an attempt to alienate young Charles V from his father and further weaken the Valois position. Lawrence Earp, *Guillaume de Machaut: A Guide to Research*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 24-25.
[17]Land's presumptuous and potentially misogynistic interpretation sheds light on the ways that the scholarship surrounding women's religious practice in the Late Middle Ages can be vulnerable to gratuitous and anachronistic fascination with women's sexuality and transgression. There is a robust amount of nuanced scholarship that carefully investigates the entanglements of sexuality and spirituality in women's religious practice that discuss Bonne's prayer book, including the prolific work of Caroline Walker Bynum, Martha Easton, Flora Lewis and Karma Lochrie.

Bonne's life at that particular moment. The MET does not offer a specific date of completion for the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg,* only an indication that it was made "before 1349," the year of Bonne's death.[18] Shortly after the museum acquired the manuscript in 1969, the February 1971 volume of the *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* published all fourteen miniatures together side-by-side for the first time, and included a selection of articles by Florens Deuchler, the former Chairman of the department of Medieval Art and the Cloisters. Deuchler sought not only to debunk the prior assumption among historians that the illuminator responsible for Bonne's prayer book was Jean Pucelle, but by doing so, he also argued that the most probable date-range within which we can assume the manuscript was completed was between 1340 and 1349,[19] toward the end of Bonne's life. The MET now attributes the prayer book to John le Noir and his daughter and collaborator, Bourgot; both illuminators that are known to have been in the service of Bonne's husband.[20]

The period during which Bonne's prayer book was made was a turbulent historical moment: The Valois dynasty, Bonne's acquired family, had an urgent need to reinforce their pious image in order to establish themselves as worthy and legitimate rulers—an effort reflected in their patronage of luxury illuminated manuscripts.[21] Largely focusing on how the spiritual lessons within the texts constitute an educational program well suited for a future queen, Alexa Sand, Joni Hand and Annette Lermack have discussed how Bonne's manuscript foregrounds an ideal of female piety appropriate to the political and domestic needs of the precarious Valois dynasty. [22]

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[18]"Attributed to Jean Le Noir," n.p.
[19]Deuchler, "Looking at Bonne of Luxembourg's Prayer Book," 267.
[20]"Attributed to Jean Le Noir," n.p.
[21]As queen, Bonne's mother-in-law, Jeanne of Burgundy, commissioned well known artists favored by the late Capetians such as Jean Pucelle and his followers, including Jean le Noir. Jeanne is also credited for promoting the French language and culture in her patronage of vernacular translations. Lermack, "Fit for a Queen," 225-228.
[22]Ibid., 3.

Annette Lermack has contributed several in-depth studies on the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*, such as her 1999 doctoral dissertation, "Fit for a Queen," which demonstrated that the codicological evidence within the manuscript indicates that in its current state: all of the manuscript's pages constitute a unified program of texts and images in their originally intended order.[23] She has also examined it as a guide for Bonne both in her "pursuit of personal salvation," and in her "fulfillment of her duties as a [future] Valois queen,"[24] positing that the morally didactic contents of this manuscript demonstrate the nascent Valois dynasty's dedication to setting a pious example, possibly in the hopes that it would help shield them from English attempts to undermine their rule.[25] Lermack's framework seeks to examine each miniature as part of a unified whole and to establish how the illuminator of Bonne's prayer book intentionally paired the central imagery with texts and marginal motifs that would work together to deliver messages with many layers. Her analysis offers a thorough picture of the manuscript's idiosyncrasies within fourteenth century visual culture while also successfully outlining the themes that unify the work as not simply a collection of devotional texts, but a carefully curated guide that coheres together as a whole. The themes she discusses include royal privilege, dialogue with God, and ideal devotional behavior, which are all reinforced through the manuscript's consistent and unique visual language.[26] I will return to Lermack's methodology in section one and discuss several examples of her observations. My own treatment of the miniatures in Bonne's prayer book will build upon her observations.

[23]Lermack, "Fit for a Queen," 6.
[24]Ibid., 3.
[25]Ibid., 233.
[26]Ibid., 136-140.

Considering the literature surrounding *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*, it is evident that many scholars agree that the manuscript was designed to be a guide for Bonne, that it was a personal object which reflected her identity in the context of her life as a Duchess and that it was meant to be approached as a unified whole. My analysis will build upon these conclusions through exploring the manuscript's historical context and certain visual details in more depth. A close examination of the visual details of the *Crucifixion* miniature will reveal aspects that have been overlooked, which suggest that Bonne's prayer book was designed to aid in the advancement of her ability to achieve spiritual vision. The progressive stages of this goal and how they are embedded in Bonne's prayer book will be discussed in section three. I will now examine and describe *The Crucifixion* and *The Wound of Christ* miniatures in more depth to establish how the central scenes, accompanying prayers and various decorative motifs reinforce the general theme of spiritual vision.

The *Crucifixion* and *The Wound of Christ*

The *Crucifixion* miniature on folio 328r presents Bonne as both the seeing subject and a visible object. Upon encountering this image, she would have contemplated an aspirational image of herself occupying the same temporal space as Christ—meeting His gaze and listening to Him speak. The miniature establishes a personal intimacy between them. Bonne and her husband are abstracted out of a fixed point in history: the scene is placed on a decorative background, and the figures are all rendered in the same scale, collapsing the historical distance between the couple and Jesus. They are all active participants in the event of the crucifixion, about which Alexa Sand noted; "past, present, and future

are brought together in an unstable and temporary relationship generated and sustained by the book user's gaze."[27]

Christ himself is an active agent in the scene: He is alive and animated on the cross. His expression is confident and assertive, rather than contorted in pain or lifeless. The accompanying prayers establish a dialogue between Christ and the couple observing His suffering and wounds. Directly below the figures, four lines of text, written in vernacular French, read: *Ha homme et fame, voy que sueffre pour toy, voy ma douleur, mon anguexous conroi*.[28] Christ is directly addressing the couple—urging them to witness His pain and suffering. With a freed right hand, Christ points to the wound in his side as a site of focus. This emphasis is reinforced by two angels to the left of Christ who emerge from the background and adoringly reach out toward the wound.

Dense, dark, acanthus-leaf foliage lies behind the figures and various animals can be found hidden amongst the leaves: a hedgehog, a pelican, a fox, and numerous rabbits. This miniature in fact contains more depictions of rabbits than the rest of the manuscript combined, which suggests this animal may provide clues about the meaning of the miniature, as I will discuss later on. At the right of Christ's feet, one rabbit peeks out from behind the wooden cross. Close by, a fox quickly turns its head toward the rabbit. The viewer may interpret the gaze locked between the two creatures as a fearful anticipation of a chase. This tense exchange appears to mirror the eye contact between Bonne and Christ (Fig. 4).

[27]Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation*, 246.
[28]"Man and woman, see that I suffer for you. See my grief, my anguished state..." Transcribed and translated in Land, *The Prayer Book of Bonne of Luxembourg*, 29.

The written dialogue continues on to the following page where the viewer encounters a rather startling illumination of the side-wound. The wound, decontextualized from Christ's body, occupies the middle of a golden frame. It is rendered in a mandorla shape—a sharp, vertical oval—with a thick, white outline and a bright red, fleshy center that deepens into a dark, narrow void. Flora Lewis writes, "the text which accompanies the wound (which was written to accompany a life-size image), 'Beaulx tres doulx Jhesu Crist,' could be used by Bonne as her response to Christ's appeal."[29] Surrounding the wound are various instruments of torture, including a spear, a cross, a hammer, a sponge, spikes, pliers, whips, and a whipping post, all arranged vertically and orderly; suspended in space. These weapons are commonly referred to as the *arma Christi,* or the "weapons of Christ," which were used against Jesus during the event of the crucifixion. Here, the wound is included among them as an object in its own right.

Christ's instructions to *see* and to *witness* Him—as per the prayer text, and also his physical gesture—establishes spiritual vision as a key theme of the two miniatures, and especially of the *Crucifixion*. In fact, the fixed gaze between the rabbit and the fox further reinforces the theme of seeing in the *Crucifixion*. This emphasis may reflect a growing desire in late Medieval European culture to experience direct visual encounters with the Divine, which appears to be the objective of this devotional exercise.

[29]Lewis, "The Wound in Christ's Side," 212.

The *Crucifixion* miniature appears in a part of the manuscript where the text is written in French, Bonne's spoken language, rather than in Latin.[30] This change, in addition to the presence of her portrait, indicates the immensely personal element of this portion of the book. Numerous scholars have suggested that Bonne likely had a hand in choosing the themes in the French portion of her manuscript, citing the section's similarities with a Passional that belonged to the Abbess Kunigunde of St. George's convent in Prague—Bonne's great-aunt.[31] This Passional was compiled, inscribed and potentially also illuminated by Kolda of Koldice, the court theologian to Bonne's grandfather, Wenceslas II.[32] As will be discussed below, Bonne spent some time at her great-aunt's monastery, and it is possible she encountered this manuscript there.

The key similarities between Bonne's manuscript and Kunigunde's include the rendering of Christ's wound as a disembodied object—supposedly rendered as its true size—among the *arma Christi*, (Fig. 5), and the depictions of the book's owner praying to the wounded, yet animated, Christ (Fig. 6). As Margaret Manion states, both manuscripts "represent the figure on the cross coming to life and addressing the devotee, while the wound in Christ's side is not simply a reminder of his physical suffering, but a symbol of mystical union."[33] Further, Manion points out that Bonne's manuscript "is

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[30]To my knowledge, it is uncertain how fluently Bonne spoke and/or read Latin. According to Annette Lermack, women in convents and the laity were unlikely to be educated in Latin, and therefore vernacular translations would often serve a supplemental purpose in manuscripts. Devotees who could not understand Latin would simply memorize the prayers phonetically so that they could recite them during their daily devotions, while their understanding of the prayers' contents would be drawn from vernacular translations and instructions. Further, Lermack writes, "the vernacular language plays a larger role in the [*Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*] than in many contemporaneous books of hours. By the beginning of the fourteenth century it was not unusual for portions of devotional books to be written in vernacular languages. In books of hours, such as the *Hours of Jeanne de Navarre*, French is used to rubricate the main body of Latin text in each of the offices, and for supplemental prayers. In the [*Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*], however, the vernacular is used for each entire reading in the third section of the book, as well as for the calendar and the very brief rubrics in the Latin portion." Lermack, "Fit for a Queen," 146-147.

[31]Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation,* 246.

[32]Barbara Drake Boehm and Jirí Fajt, *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia 1347-1437,* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 5.

[33]Margaret M. Manion, "Women, Art and Devotion: Three French Fourteenth-Century Royal Prayer Books," in *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship,* ed. Margaret M. Manion and Bernard James Muir (University of Exeter Press, 2006), 38.

one of the earliest representations of the subject to appear in France and to be associated with a member of the laity," therefore it is likely not simply a coincidence that Bonne's manuscript includes details so similar to her great-aunt: the similarities suggest that Bonne was familiar with her aunt's prayer book and requested for the contents of her book to emulate it.[34]

Many scholars have drawn attention to the wound's resemblance to a vagina. For instance, Martha Easton has thoroughly examined the wound's connections to the vagina in Medieval visual culture,[35] and Karma Lochrie has suggested that the wound in Christ's side was a site of "sexual experiences of mystical union."[36] Additionally, Annette Lermack has pointed out that meditation on the side wound "focused the reader's attention on Christ's suffering, the ultimate role model for a Christian's suffering," and that for women, the wound could "operate as a mirror in which she could see her own suffering during childbirth as an imitation of Christ."[37] Imitation of Christ's suffering was a significant element of late Medieval religion, characterized by Caroline Walker Bynum as "affective piety."[38] This kind of devotion emerged from the notion of "the humanity of Christ as guarantee that what we are is inextricably joined with divinity."[39] Women would frequently contemplate Christ's humanity in terms of his maternal qualities, for example, the blood that flowed from the wound in his side was likened to a mother's breast milk, for it nourished the souls who would partake in it.[40] Christ's maternal qualities serve as a point of access for women to identify their experiences with His, as

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[34]Ibid., 38.

[35]Martha Easton, "The Wound of Christ, the Mouth of Hell: Appropriations and Inversions of Female Anatomy in the Later Middle Ages," in *Tributes to Johnathan J.G. Alexander,* ed. Susan E'Engle and Gerald Guest (Turnhourt: Brepols, 2006).

[36]Karma Lochrie, "Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies," in *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, ed. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken and James Alfred Schultz (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 190.

[37]Lermack, "Spiritual Pilgrimage," 109.

[38]Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 130.

[39]Ibid., 130.

[40]Ibid., 133.

Lermack writes; "as Christ suffered to give birth to the Church, so a good woman suffered to give birth to her children."[41] Bodily pain associated with childbirth becomes a virtuous reenactment of Christ's passion, bringing women closer to God through their pain. Lermack further notes:

> Considering that Bonne gave birth to four sons and five daughters, [the wound's] power to ensure fertility and to protect mother and child from harm during pregnancy and birth would likely have held special significance for her. Her sons ensured a future generation of kings for the Valois dynasty and provided a sign that the family could point to as divine favor of their rule.[42]

Research on the wound highlights the personal nature of Bonne's prayer book, for it spoke to her as both a mother and a Duchess. Perhaps the wound's suggestive sexuality is what makes it so captivating and intriguing, which draws the viewer to linger on the page and begin to notice the other instruments of the Passion that surround it, leading to deeper contemplation. The reading of the wound as a vagina in Bonne's prayer book has been discussed at length in other studies, and therefore will not be prioritized in this thesis. I do not dispute the conclusions of these studies, for they help support the notion that Bonne's prayer book was a highly personal object. However, some studies tend to decontextualize this miniature from the rest of the manuscript, whereas this thesis will explore how the miniatures in Bonne's prayer book are inter-connected through shared themes and marginal motifs.

To appreciate the particularities of Bonne's manuscript further, sections one and two will situate it in the historical context within which it was made. I will first turn to the trends in lay devotional practice that informed the design and function of personal prayer books made for women during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Understanding the ways in which these prayer books were personalized through individually curated combinations of images, texts and marginal

[41]Lermack, "Spiritual Pilgrimage," 109.
[42]Ibid., 110.

decorations will help to articulate the methodological lens through which I will discuss Bonne's portrait later on. In section two, I will provide background regarding Bonne's peripatetic upbringing: this is the turbulent story of a frequently uprooted child whose only sense of continuity may have rested in the austere halls of monastic life. I will then turn to the history of the nascent Valois dynasty, of which Bonne became an integral member after her marriage in 1332. The early 1330's witnessed a great public debate regarding spiritual vision—the controversy of the *visio Dei*—in which Bonne's father-in-law, King Philip VI, was deeply involved. Situated within this context, my analysis can draw important connections between the devotional strategies in Bonne's prayer book and the political and theological atmosphere that shaped her life. Section three will then establish the ambition of experiencing the *visio Dei* as an important theme in Bonne's prayer book. I will refer to the highly influential bishop and patristic philosopher Saint Augustine's theory of vision to help unpack how ascending from physical, bodily vision toward spiritual vision, or brief Divine encounters during one's lifetime, may have been a devotional strategy within *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*. I suggest that this devotional strategy may have helped Bonne pursue a life worthy of salvation: worthy of the *visio Dei.* Finally, section four will then offer evidence that the prayer book may have been designed to facilitate a non-linear, contemplative method of reading that created the conditions for Bonne to partake in this devotional strategy, especially in the *Crucifixion* miniature.

Section 1—Women Book Owners of the Middle Ages

Between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, France—among other deeply Christian European kingdoms—underwent significant cultural shifts. Most notable was the increasing distance between the laity and the clergy, largely widened by unstable religious leadership and rapid improvements in literacy among lay men and women.[43] In her foundational essay on Medieval women book owners, Susan Groag Bell noted that "the breakdown of institutional Christian unity, epitomized by the schism in the papacy, led concerned individuals to question the authority of the Church," resulting in a "widespread quest for spiritual certainties."[44] This period is thus characterized by a movement toward highly personalized, private devotional practice that took place outside of traditional religious institutions—especially amongst the aristocracy, and even more prominently amongst women.[45] Owing to technological developments that increased literacy rates along with accessibility to manuscripts—such as eyeglasses and more affordable book production—individual devotees could more easily seek spiritual fulfillment through the use of books.[46] Additionally, accessibility increased as more religious and secular texts were commissioned in vernacular languages, which significantly contributed to lay women's spiritual independence.[47]

The aim of this section is to explore how manuscripts like the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* were personalized through the curation of texts, images and decorative elements within them. An important part of the methodological lens through which I intend to examine the *Crucifixion*

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[43]Susan Groag Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture," *Signs* 7, no. 4 (1982): 742.
[44]Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners," 743.
[45]Ibid., 752.
[46]Ibid., 746.
[47]Ibid., 743.

miniature is the relationship between the center and the margins of the page. I wish to examine how the marginalia, or the motifs that populate the periphery of the page, speak to the central image and the written word in order to generate a more highly personal experience for the intended reader. Across the pages of Bonne's prayer book, distinct marginal imagery is repeated, which may have prompted her to turn back and forth in an inquisitive search for conceptual connections between the miniatures. This practice may have generated an inter-textual space of contemplation in her mind, sustained by both her painstakingly attentive gaze and her memory. The examples explored in this section will establish that this was not an uncommon phenomenon in late medieval manuscripts.

Bell asserts that during the late Middle Ages, "women's public participation in spiritual life was not welcomed by the hierarchical male establishment," therefore "a close involvement with religious devotional literature, inoffensive because of its privacy, took on a greater importance for women."[48] Wealthy, devout lay women emerged as a new kind of patron of the arts in the early Gothic period. Between 1220 and 1320, opulently illuminated books of hours developed as a popular genre amongst aristocratic women.[49] In the following decades, pious female royalty would increasingly incorporate monastic devotional strategies—such as the recitation of prayers at the eight canonical hours of the day—into their daily religious practice, which influenced the development of the combined psalter-hours style of personalized prayer books.[50]

[48]Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners," 752.

[49]Adelaide Bennett, "Making Literate Lay Women Visible: Text and Image in French and Flemish Books of Hours, 1220-1320," in *Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture: Liminal Spaces*, ed. Elina Gertsman and Jill Stevenson (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 125.

[50]Manion, "Women, Art and Devotion," 22.

Psalter-hours were modeled from breviaries, which are collections of abridged devotional texts that were used in monastic worship.[51] Unlike breviaries, psalter-hours ordered for the laity were lavishly illuminated, and combined the rotation of prayers meant for the canonical hours with additional selections of texts, often the Psalms, the lives of the saints, or even unique, personalized narratives, such as the tale of the life of Saint Louis in the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreaux*.[52] The *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* follows this model and is often referred to as a Psalter-hours; it contains a calendar of holy dates and feasts and a Latin psalter that includes scenes of the life of king David, followed by a selection of religious texts in Latin. The book ends with a selection of vernacular French texts that focus on Christ's Passion.[53]

Devotional manuscripts commissioned for laywomen were highly personalized objects that are considered archives of identity for the women who owned them.[54] Not only was the likeness of the owner memorialized through miniature portraits integrated into the decoration, but her vernacular language, her aesthetic preferences, and her spiritual concerns were preserved for future generations to look upon as a model of ideal behavior and sensibility; books were often passed from mother to daughter as reminders "of the expected religious devotion of a noblewoman."[55] By investigating these manuscripts, present-day historians may gain a deeper understanding of the values, tastes and devotional methods that were an integral part of Medieval patrons' intimate daily lives.

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[51]Manion, "Women, Art and Devotion," 28.
[52]Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners," 753.
[53]Deuchler, "Looking at Bonne of Luxembourg's Prayer Book," 270.
[54]Hand, *Women, Manuscripts and Identity*, 11.
[55]Ibid., 11.

Comparing the *Savoy Hours* (or the psalter-hours of Blanche of Bourgogne), the *Hours of Jeanne of Navarre*, and the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*, Manion has observed how these three books "provide insight into the ways in which forms of prayer, originally developed for liturgical worship, were adapted for private use" as well as how they "testify to the interest of their immediate patrons, and to the importance of family custom."[56] Manion considered the structure of the prayers included in the books along with the connections between the texts and images in order to reveal how "these books reflect the interests and needs of the clientele for which they were produced."[57] Personally selected meditations, especially those in vernacular language, are found in both the *Hours of Jeanne of Navarre* and the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg.* The most significant characteristic shared among these examples is the way the "visual imagery [is] designed to accompany the text" and that these elements are meant to be contemplated together to form a unique personal experience.[58] The abundance of illustration marked a significant departure from the breviaries after which the books of hours are modeled.[59] With this in mind, I will now turn to the relationship between centre and periphery in Medieval manuscripts in order to establish the various ways that marginalia could amplify, complicate and personalize the subject matter and the reader's experience.

Michael Camille has pointed out how marginalia is a means of engaging with a text: "things written or drawn in the margins add an extra dimension, a supplement, that is able to gloss, parody, modernize and problematize the text's authority while never totally undermining it."[60] The margins

[56]Manion, "Women, Art and Devotion," 22.
[57]Ibid., 25.
[58]Ibid., 32.
[59]Ibid., 28.
[60]Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art,* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 10.

were a space for private, critical contemplation of a text, especially since "the idea of the text as written document superseded the idea of the text as a cue for speech" in monastic settings.[61] Increasingly, the organization of words on a page mattered as they were now being silently read, rather than orated aloud. Marginal imagery began to appear not only as commentary on the dominant texts and images, but as an integral and intentional element of the page design.[62] As the art historian Emile Mâle perceptively wrote: "In the art of the Middle Ages care for disposition of parts extended to the smallest detail and led to ingenious devices."[63]

Playful marginalia has occasionally served as a deterrent against transgression. *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* shares similarities with other manuscripts of its time produced not only as spiritual but behavioral guides for aristocratic women, such as the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreaux,* which belonged to the last Capetian queen. Madeline Caviness has observed how Jeanne's prayer book was designed as a guide to maintain her focus on holy subjects and avoid the sinful behaviors that threatened the dynasty.[64] The pages contain intricate miniatures of sacred subjects surrounded by disturbing and sensual details in the margins. For example, the *Annunciation-Betrayal* page in the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreaux,* features the young Queen kneeling with her book open in front of her, framed and protected by the first initial of the written prayer (Fig. 7). She is placed facing the Virgin Mary who is receiving the news that she will bear the son of God. In the margins below, several comical figures engage in what Caviness describes as a sexually "flirtatious party game," which she interprets as a

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[61]Ibid., 18.
[62]Ibid., 31.
[63]Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Dora Nussey (Harper & Row, 1972), 8.
[64]Madeline Caviness, "Patron or Matron? A Capetian Bride and a Vade Mecum for Her Marriage Bed," *Speculum* 68 (Apr., 1993): 333-362.

clear dichotomy between temptation and duty.[65] Here, the dynamic between the center and periphery seems to teach Jeanne d'Evreaux to practice resisting the powerful, sinful distractions that led her predecessors into ruin while she performs her devotions.[66] This imagery may have been effective for Jeanne d'Evreaux, considering the fact that she was only fourteen years old when the manuscript was given to her upon her marriage, and at which age sexuality was likely still an uncomfortable subject for the child-bride.

The *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* also makes use of the combination of text, marginalia and central imagery to reinforce warnings against sin. Annette Lermack's examination of the *Two Fools* miniature on folio 83v of Bonne's prayer book demonstrates how the central scene depicting two men—one drinking from a goblet and another wielding a club—was designed to illustrate the accompanying text, Psalm 53.[67] The Psalm begins, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Ps. 53:1 NIV).[68] Lermack argues that not only is the miniature an appropriate image for this text, but the image also includes subtleties that urge the reader to consider the whole page as a warning against unbelief (Fig. 8).[69] Lermack points to the animals that populate the background and margins of the page, and argues that their moralizations—stemming from medieval animal lore recorded in bestiaries—served to remind the reader of the struggle between good and evil in the context of the theme of Psalm 53: foolish disbelief in God. For instance, behind the two fools, subtly blended into the rich, blue foliage, are two jousting apes, one mounted atop a lion and the other a unicorn. Apes were

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[65] Caviness, "Patron or Matron?," 339.
[66] Ibid., 348.
[67] Lermack, *The Pivotal Role of the Two Fools Miniature,* 79.
[68] The New International Version of the Holy Bible will be used throughout this thesis.
[69] Ibid., 79.

considered duplicitous animals that were described as the Devil incarnate—their nature was inherently hypocritical and heretical; however, lions and unicorns had strong associations with Christ's goodness.[70] The Lion in particular was strongly associated with Christ and His Crucifixion.[71] The lion was also a "symbol of triumph over evil" as well as "the heraldic device of Bohemia;" a fond subject of Bonne's brother, who was a prolific patron of the arts.[72] This vignette of two evil animals controlling the two sacred animals offers the reader a complex, perhaps also ambivalent angle from which to consider the central theme—thus perhaps captivating her and prompting her imagination. Lermack posits that "the inversion of evil controlling good" reminds the viewer of the evil treatment of Jesus and His suffering on the cross, remarking that this inversion "is only temporary. In the end Christ and good will be triumphant."[73]

The marginalia in *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* also encouraged different methods of handling the manuscript, such as reading it in a non-linear fashion. Camille has pointed out that "another important aspect of the way marginal motifs work is not by reference to the text, but by reference to one another– the reflexivity of imagery not just across single pages but in chains of linked motifs and signs that echo throughout a whole manuscript or book."[74] This relationship between not only the central content and the details on one page, but across many pages, demands the rigorous focus of the reader.

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[70]Lermack, *The Pivotal Role of the Two Fools Miniature,* 87.
[71]Ibid., 87.
[72]Boehm and Fajt, *Prague*, 6.
[73]Lermack, *The Pivotal Role of the Two Fools Miniature,* 88.
[74]Camille, *Image on the Edge*, 43.

For example, Lermack observes where motifs in the *Two Fools* miniature appear elsewhere in Bonne's manuscript. The distinct facial profile of the man on the left, for instance, appears in the margins of the calendar page for January at the beginning of the manuscript (Fig. 9). Lermack argues that the repetition of this motif provokes the reader to turn back and reflect on the possible conceptual connections between the pages where it appears.[75]

Joni Hand has proposed another way that the relationship between the centre and periphery in the miniatures in *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* created a personal experience for its intended reader. Hand suggests that Bonne may have been seeking to advance her devotional practice to a point where she could meditate on the Passion without the aid of images.[76] Hand points to the evolution in the imagery of her prayer book from overt to symbolic moving from the center of the page to the margins; "Perhaps as the complexity of the images increased in Bonne's psalter, so too did her ability to think abstractly about the Crucifixion."[77]

Hand points to the motif of the Goldfinch that appears in the margins of *The Wound of Christ* as an example. The Goldfinch was a particularly sacred symbol in France in the Middle Ages, for it "played a part in the themes of Resurrection, Redemption, and fertility, warded off the plague," and was closely associated with Christ's Passion.[78] According to French lore, the Goldfinch acquired the red color in its face when it was injured attempting to pull the thorns from Christ's crown as He was dying on the cross.[79] Hand argues that because the Goldfinch seems to have been included in Bonne's prayer

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[75]Lermack, *The Pivotal Role of the Two Fools Miniature,* 85.
[76]Hand, *Women, Manuscripts and Identity,* 148.
[77]Ibid., 148.
[78]Ibid., 280.
[79]Hand, *Women, Manuscripts and Identity*., 281.

book as an abstract symbol of the Crucifixion rather than a literal representation of it, it allows Bonne to practice contemplating Christ's Passion without the aid of a more overt image like the *Crucifixion* scene.[80] Hand concludes that "this devotional practice may have brought Bonne closer to the point where she could eliminate all imagery from her prayers."[81]

Hand is proposing that the imagery may be designed to become eventually obsolete, however I am more inclined to think of the images in Bonne's manuscript in terms of a threshold through which she could access a glimpse of God. Elina Gertsman and Jill Stevenson define a threshold in Medieval visual culture as "an unfixed boundary between physical, devotional, and temporal loci; a liminal space between the material and the imaginary; a fluid stratum between the spoken, the written, the depicted, and the experienced; a bridge between the object and its female devotee, who is cast as the viewer–reader–spectator–performer"[82]. The image remains necessary for it is Bonne's point of departure, it is a portal through which her mind's eye can penetrate and see beyond. The interaction between the viewer and the page generates a triangulation between the image, the eye, and the imagination. As Saint Bonaventure wrote in *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (*The Journey of the Mind to God*), "proceeding from the sign to the thing signified, these minds of ours may be guided through the sensible objects they do perceive to the intelligible world they do not."[83] The Goldfinch is an essential guide that directs Bonne toward the Crucified Christ and helps her reach out to Him. Emile Mâle has remarked that the "true genius of the Middle Ages" lies in "the profound conviction that in reaching

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[80]Ibid., 147.
[81]Ibid., 147.
[82]Elina Gertsman and Jill Stevenson, Introduction to *Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture: Liminal Spaces* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 2.
[83]Bonaventure, "The Journey of the Mind to God (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*)," In *The Works of Bonaventure: Cardinal Seraphic Doctor and Saint: I. Mystical Opuscula,* trans. José de Vinck (Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1960), 26.

out to the immaterial through the material men may have fleeting visions of God."[84] In other words, a glimpse of God may be accessed through engagement with images—a concept the medieval world inherited from classical understandings of vision and devotion. This notion may be better understood in the context of the theories of vision espoused by the highly influential patristic philosopher St. Augustine, which will be further discussed in section three.

As Alexa Sand has argued concerning the *Psalter Hours of Yolande of Soissons,* "intentionally difficult, these pictures engage the manuscript's devotional user in an open-ended interpretative struggle. The effort they demand is the point."[85] The appearance of this devotional strategy in the prayer book of a Duchess offers evidence of the incorporation of monastic techniques into lay religious practice, for, as Sand writes, "the idea that devotion should be accomplished through difficult intellectual labor is on one level profoundly conservative."[86] Given that Bonne was educated in cloistered environments, this manner of rigorous devotion was likely familiar to her, suggesting that this strategy was intentionally incorporated into her prayer book as a personalization.

Considering all of these examples, it is evident that the relationship between marginal details and central imagery in devotional manuscripts may have informed the ways in which readers' approached their prayer books as cohesive, personalized tools. According to the unique needs of the reader, marginal motifs could serve to direct her attention toward the central subject matter as a deterrent against transgression; they could encourage her to deepen her contemplation through amplifying and complicating the central themes; they could prompt her to turn back and forth

[84]Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image*, 20.
[85]Sand, "Vision, Devotion, and Difficulty," 6.
[86]Ibid., 10.

between miniatures and draw conceptual connections; and finally, they could serve as abstract symbols that may aid in the pursuit of highly ambitious spiritual goals. Keeping these possibilities in mind will help to explore the marginalia of Bonne's prayer book in more depth in section four.

The following section will serve to thoroughly situate my discussion of Bonne's prayer book in the turbulent historical moment within which it was made, following Bonne's itinerant experience as a young child until she finally moves to Paris to find herself entangled in the controversial political and theological atmosphere of the French court in the early 1330's.

Section 2—The History of Jutta of Luxembourg, the Valois Court, and the *Visio Dei*

2.1—Jutta of Luxembourg

Bonne of Luxembourg was christened Jutta—or Guta; both German versions of the name Judith—after her maternal grandmother, Judith of Hapsburg.[87] Taking the events of Bonne's life into consideration will help reveal how the design of her personal prayer book may have reflected the political and theological environment within which it was made. The following biography of Bonne of Luxembourg shows that she was raised and educated in several convents—estranged from her parents—as she was offered in several failed betrothals and consequently moved around central Europe. This might have shaped her approach to private devotion, for perhaps the only consistency she experienced was her devotion to God.

Bonne was the second child of John of Luxembourg, King of Bohemia, and Elizabeth of Bohemia. Elizabeth was the daughter of Wenceslaus II and a princess of the Bohemian Přemyslid Dynasty.[88] Elizabeth and her father are both known to have been patrons of the arts—a value that was clearly passed down to Bonne and her siblings.[89] Bonne had one older sister, Marguerite (b. 1313); three younger brothers, Wenceslas (b. 1316)—who would one day become Charles IV, Holy Roman Emperor—Ottokar (b. 1318), and John Henry (b. 1322); and finally, Bonne also had two twin younger sisters, Ann and Elizabeth (b. 1323).[90]

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[87]Lermack, "Fit for a Queen," 41.
[88]Boehm and Fajt, *Prague*, 3.
[89]Ibid., 3.
[90]Boehm and Fajt, *Prague*, xvi-xvii.

The end of the Přemyslid Dynasty in 1306 resulted in political turmoil in Bohemia until John, Count of Luxembourg and eldest son of Henry VII, Holy Roman Emperor, was elected king in 1311. John is remembered as a neglectful King who spent most of his time traveling.[91] In 1319, John exiled his wife, Bonne's mother, to her dower city of Mêlík under the suspicion that she had participated in a plot to oust him and replace him with his oldest son, Wenceslaus.[92] In 1322, Elizabeth accompanied her nine-year-old daughter, Marguerite, to Landshut in Bavaria, where they would both live with the family to whom Marguerite had been betrothed; in 1325 both of them returned to Prague.[93] Seven-year-old Bonne was also sent away in 1322; as part of a treaty she was betrothed to marry the son of Frederick of Meissen and went to live with his mother in Wartburg.[94] This treaty did not last, and after only a year she was sent back to Prague to be educated at the convent of St. George where her great-aunt Kunigunde had been abbess until her death in 1321.[95]

In 1325, Elizabeth and her daughters briefly lived together in Vysehrad, a fort only a couple of miles away from Prague Castle.[96] This was likely the last time Bonne saw her mother, for in 1326 she was betrothed again, this time to Henry of Bar, and sent to live in Luxembourg.[97] The treaty that included this betrothal was also broken, and Bonne was then sent to the abbey of Saint-Esprit in Luxembourg.[98] This abbey was home to an order of nuns dedicated to St. Clare, known as the Clarisses-Urbanistes.[99] Here she remained until 1332, when an alliance treaty between King John and

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[91]Lermack, "Fit for a Queen," 41.
[92]Ibid., 40-45.
[93]Ibid., 42.
[94]Ibid., 42.
[95]Joni Hand, *Women, Manuscripts and Identity in Northern Europe,* 12.
[96]Lermack, "Fit for a Queen," 42.
[97]Ibid., 42.
[98]Joni Hand, *Women, Manuscripts and Identity in Northern Europe,* 12.
[99]Ibid., 12.

the French King Philip VI of Valois gave Philip the right to select one of John's two daughters as a bride for his son, John II of France.[100]

Joni Hand has suggested that lavish court life was an abrupt change for Bonne, who was accustomed to an austere convent lifestyle; "the nobles that frequented the courts were cultured and worldly, unlike the nuns who educated her," Hand writes.[101] The French court did have, however, a distinct "atmosphere of ceremonial piety," which Bonne's brother Wenceslaus experienced as a young boy, when he moved to Paris in 1323 to marry Blanche of Valois, sister of the future King Philip VI.[102] Wenceslaus had witnessed "the ceremonial events at the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris that focused on adoration of the Passion relics," which left an impression on the future King of Bohemia.[103] Bonne may have had a similar experience, for it was in the Valois court's best interest to display their royal piety in public events visible to important people, which I will discuss in the following section. Ultimately, Bonne's peripatetic early life in numerous cloistered environments may have encouraged a rigorously disciplined and highly personal devotion, which may have been a relief from her otherwise unstable life. When examining Bonne's prayer book, it is important to take her monastic upbringing into consideration, for this may have prepared her to engage with the manuscript more piously.

2.2—The Late Capetians and Early Valois

Having married into the French royal family, Bonne entered a context in which piety had a longstanding importance. The Capetian dynasty had been perceived as deeply Christian and pious

[100]Ibid., 12.
[101]Ibid., 13
[102]Boehm and Fajt, *Prague*, 4.
[103]Ibid., 4

dating back to the reign of St. Louis IX, King of France for much of the 13th century. The efforts of Louis' grandson, Philip IV, to maintain the French throne's holy reputation during his reign were devastated by scandal in 1314 when all three of his daughters-in-law were accused of adultery, publicly humiliated, and imprisoned.[104] Their alleged lovers were promptly tortured and executed. In addition to this event, other reputation-destroying accusations of homosexuality and witchcraft were made against other members of the aristocracy, burdening the subsequent monarchs with the task of repairing the dynasty's virtuous legacy.

The scandals of Philip IV's daughters-in-law contributed toward rising prejudices against women's succession to the throne, which further threatened the stability of the direct Capetian line. Along with the aftermath of the affairs, the Capetian dynasty was threatened by the fact that Philip IV's three sons, Louis X, Philip V, and Charles IV, all failed to produce a male heir before sequentially passing away between 1314 and 1328. By the time Charles IV died in 1328, what is now known as "Salic Law" forbade any female successor from either inheriting or transmitting a claim to the throne. This ultimately barred Charles IV's closest male relative, his nephew Edward III of England, from becoming King through what would have been his mother Isabella's claim. The last hope of a direct Capetian heir rested on the shoulders of Charles IV's pregnant widow, Jeanne d'Evreaux, who ultimately gave birth to her third daughter. Thus, Charles' cousin, Philip VI of Valois, would ascend to the throne—very aware of the doubt surrounding his succession. Within a decade, hostilities between

[104]The following sketch of the circumstances that led to the end of the Captetian line is summarized from Michael Jones, "The Last Capetians and Early Valois Kings, 1314–1364," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History,* ed. Michael Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 394-395.

England and France that date back to the 11th century erupted when Edward III made a formal bid for his claim to the French throne, marking the beginning of the Hundred Years War.[105]

Philip VI's arrangement for his son John II to marry Bonne of Luxembourg in 1332 was a strategic alliance that strengthened the Valois position as tensions with England were rising. Bonne's impeccable lineage made her an ideal candidate—both of her parents were the children of emperors. Bonne, now the Duchess of Normandy, had the vital role of producing as many male heirs to the Valois line as possible, a task in which she ultimately succeeded, single handedly securing the dynasty for several generations. Between 1337 and 1348, the Duchess prolifically gave birth to at least nine children, seven of whom survived into adulthood. Of those who survived, four of them were sons; Charles V (1337-1380), who eventually succeeded his father as king of France; Louis, Duke of Anjou (1339-1384); Jean, Duke of Berry (1340-1416); and Philip, Duke of Burgundy (1344-1404).[106] Her three surviving daughters were Jeanne of France (1343-1372), Marie of France (1344-1404), and Isabel of France (1348-1372).[107] Despite this accomplishment, Bonne was never crowned queen; in 1349 she succumbed to the plague mere months before her husband became king.

Through an evaluation of trends in artistic patronage within the early Valois court, Annette Lermack has suggested—quite convincingly—that Bonne's manuscript was most likely ordered for her by her husband; as Duke, John II is known to have commissioned a number of personal devotional books in the 1340's, which is likely when *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* was commissioned.[108] Given the likelihood that Bonne's prayer book was made during this precarious period, when

[105]Jones, "The Last Capetians," 395.
[106]Hand, *Women, Manuscripts and Identity,* xvi.
[107]Ibid., 13.
[108]Lermack, "Fit for a Queen," 239.

examining the manuscript's contents it is important to keep in mind the royal family's need to establish a pious reputation. The manuscript's design and function as a devotional guide was likely informed by this need.

2.3—The *Visio Dei* Controversy

After her marriage to John II, Bonne may have witnessed the theological debates being held in Paris during her time as Duchess of Normandy, for Bonne and her husband were living at Vincennes as the controversy surrounding the *visio Dei* was unfolding there.[109] Here, I will provide an overview of the controversy and why it was important to the Valois, and I will then discuss in section three where the concept of aspiring toward the *visio Dei* may be found in Bonne's prayer book.

From the moment Philip VI became king, the Valois would make great efforts to establish themselves as legitimate rulers, largely relying on grandiose displays of piety in order to reinforce their connection to their canonized ancestor, St. Louis.[110] For example, Philip VI hosted a public theological conference at Vincennes to settle the debate on one of the most controversial issues of the early 1330's in France: the question of the *visio Dei*, also referred to as "the beatific vision," or that "face-to-face encounter between the souls of the blessed dead and [God]."[111] Ultimately, Lermack writes, Philip VI's "public display of interest in the matter showed that as king he was willing to play a leading role in church matters," and the triumph of his views becoming the consensus of the conference greatly benefitted the dynasty's position.[112]

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[109]Ibid., 45.
[110]Lermack, "Spiritual Pilgrimage," 106.
[111]Lermack, "Fit for a Queen," 186.
[112]Lermack, "Fit for a Queen," 189.

Medieval art historian Caroline Walker Bynum has discussed the controversy of the *visio Dei* at length in her book *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*, based on which I will provide a general summary of the debate's opposing points of view.[113] Since my analysis of Bonne's manuscript will discuss her aspiration for spiritual vision, it is important to consider the details of this debate, which reveals the entanglements between medieval understandings of vision and salvation. Further, the Valois' position may have been intentionally embedded into the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*, the evidence of which will be discussed further in the next section.

Bynum prefaces her chapter on the controversy with a discussion of the changing eschatological notions in the preceding centuries that lead up to this debate, particularly the doctrine of purgatory. Citing Jacques Le Goff's *The Birth of Purgatory*, Bynum points out that "between the later twelfth and fourteenth centuries, preaching as well as formal theology paid increasing attention to an 'in-between' time and place for the separated soul."[114] Purgatory offered a space of expiation for those who were destined for heaven but were in need of cleansing.[115] Bynum emphasizes that this notion of an afterlife where the separated soul may experience significant moments in-between death and the Last Judgment "prepared for the view, which triumphed in 1336, that the beatific vision might come to the blessed whenever they were spiritually cleansed. Resurrection and the resurrection body were not necessary in order to see God."[116] The problem at the root of the controversy was whether or not the soul—separated from the body at the moment of death—would witness the face of God

[113]The following summary of the *visio Dei* debate relies heavily on the scholarship of Caroline Walker Bynum, whose chapter on the beatific vision and its background offers a rigorous and thorough discussion of the specific positions of those who participated in the debate and the evidence they provided. Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 279-317.
[114]Ibid., 280.
[115]Ibid., 280.
[116]Ibid., 282.

immediately after dying, or during this in-between period once the soul had been cleansed, rather than when body and soul were rejoined and resurrected for the Final Judgment.

Many Medieval writers stressed the notion that the miraculous reconstitution of the body at the end of time constitutes salvation itself; "the reassembling and reanimating of dust and bones, the restoration of every organ and fingernail."[117] For them, salvation is the ultimate "fulfillment of Christ's promise that not a hair of our heads shall perish."[118] This point of view emphasized that a person is "inextricably flesh and spirit," which consequently fueled the veneration of the fragmented bodies of saints as relics during this period.[119] This understanding, however, was inconsistent with another belief commonly held in the thirteenth century, which maintained that a person's destiny for heaven or hell was determined upon their earthly death, and that the saved could witness the beatific vision before the final resurrection at the Last Judgment.[120] This would imply that the disembodied soul could see God without physical visual faculties—the literal eyes it once used on earth were no longer necessary. If the soul's reunification with its resurrected body was not an essential prerequisite for experiencing the *visio Dei*, then this would contradict the belief that the self was embodied, and it would imply that the separated soul can have corporeal experiences—such as vision—independent of the body. Those in favor of this position "spoke of body as a manifestation or flowing out that appears almost timeless," and "imagined the soul that achieved beatitude as if it already in some way possessed, or expressed itself in, its body."[121]

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[117]Ibid., 213.
[118]Ibid., 214.
[119]Ibid., 213
[120]Ibid., 213
[121]Ibid., 283.

By early 1331, pope John XXII expressed his dissatisfaction with this latter notion, and asserted in his sermons that in order to experience the beatific vision, the souls of the blessed dead had to wait "in contemplation of Christ's humanity" until the Last Judgment, arguing that the "separated soul is imperfect" and "is therefore incapable, until reunited with its body, of attaining the goal of all desire: full vision of the divine essence 'face to face,'"[122] What troubled those who opposed John's perspective was the idea that these imperfect souls would thus yearn to be reunited with their bodies, in addition to their continued yearning for the vision of God; "John's position meant there was no rest for the separated soul, which would ebb and flow, drawn by sadness, like a troubled sea."[123] This ache, the pain of this desire, seemed a cruel and inappropriate punishment to be inflicted on the souls of the good. Members of the French royal family, along with theologians at the University of Paris, strongly believed that the soul's encounter of the beatific vision occurred at the moment of death, arguing that "*visio Dei* had to come before the end of time lest souls remain tossed in a sea of longing."[124] This perspective emerged as the final consensus of the debate, and Pope John XXII eventually, on his deathbed, revoked the views that he had once held that departed from it.[125]

Given that Bonne's manuscript was likely made within a decade of this historical event and that it includes an image of her making direct eye contact with Christ in the *Crucifixion* miniature, it appears that *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* reflects the Valois position that the blessed dead will see God at the moment of their death. In her study of the theme of pilgrimage in *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*, Annette Lermack has pointed out that the depiction of God in the miniature of the

[122]Ibid., 283.
[123]Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,*" 287.
[124]Ibid., 289.
[125]Lermack, 'Spiritual Pilgrimage," 103

Throne of Charity (Fig. 10) "reflects the views ratified at [Philip VI's] conference," for the figure ascending the metaphorical staircase in this miniature represents a spiritual journey toward salvation, where God awaits at the top.[126] I would suggest that Bonne's devotional practice may have been designed to help minimize the spiritual cleansing needed by her soul in purgatory before she could experience the *visio Dei*.

In the next section, I will discuss St. Augustine's understanding of vision, which helps to understand how a devotee could train her mind's eye to achieve spiritual vision during her earthly life through a rigorous devotional strategy. I suggest that it is possible that this training may help her to simultaneously prepare for the *visio Dei*. The stages necessary to train the eye of the mind to experience spiritual vision align with the ascending virtues necessary to achieve the worthiness to witness the beatific vision, the latter of which is illustrated in Bonne's prayer book in *The Throne of Charity*. Section four will then explore previously-overlooked visual evidence, in the *Crucifixion* miniature and elsewhere in the manuscript, which suggests that the book was designed to facilitate a method of non-linear, concentrated contemplation, which in turn created the conditions for Bonne to train her mind's eye.

[126]Ibid., 103

Section 3—Locating the *Visio Dei* in the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*

As established in the previous sections, during the late Middle Ages, members of the aristocracy—women in particular—were increasingly engaging with private devotional literature. Personalized prayer books grew in popularity, and their personalization is evident in the marginal decoration, the central miniatures and the texts, all of which appealed to the interests, tastes, values and concerns of their patrons. The inclusion of prayers translated into the vernacular language of their intended recipients also made the books more personalized. The fact that the portrait of Bonne and her husband appears in the section of the manuscript translated into French indicates the special significance of this part of the book, and suggests that its themes were prominent in Bonne's regular devotional practice.

Simultaneously, as mentioned in section two, in the early fourteenth century, members of the nascent Valois dynasty were promoting themselves as worthy and pious rulers in the aftermath of their abrupt and precarious ascension to the French throne. Following his involvement in the *visio Dei* debates, the support Philip VI received from theologians in Paris for settling the controversy helped strengthen public support for the royal family. Given the increasing personalization of prayer books, it is not impossible that this controversy shaped both Bonne's private religious practice and the design of her prayer book.

This section explores how the desire for the *visio Dei* may be prominent in *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*. I note particularly how the manuscript may have been designed to help Bonne improve her ability and worthiness to experience the beatific vision. The nature of the *visio Dei* must be understood in terms of early beliefs about the sense of sight as a physical encounter: continuing from

the Patristic era into the Medieval period, to see God was to literally be one with God.[127] The *ability* to gaze upon God, however, was contingent upon the worthiness of the devotee.[128] This section will consider the work of two writers, Saint Augustine of Hippo (b. 354), the important early church father, and Saint Bonaventure (b.1221), a Franciscan who studied at the University of Paris and taught theology there for twelve years.[129] The work of these two theologians will help to understand how the progressive stages toward spiritual vision may be perceived in the texts and images in Bonne's prayer book, in which sustained devotion prepares the mind's eye for a glimpse of God and, simultaneously, prepares the soul for the *visio Dei.*

Margaret Miles has discussed how Augustine's *De Trinitate* (*On The Trinity*) and *Confessiones* (*Confessions*) both suggest that sustained and calculated use of the sense of sight–the act of looking with bodily eyes–could prepare the mind and soul for the experience of "spiritual vision"—a glimpse of God via the mind's eye.[130] It is important to point out the term *glimpse* here, for Augustine distinguishes between the *glimpse* of God and the *gaze*.[131] To experience the beatific vision upon entering paradise, or to *gaze* upon God, face to face, at the time of one's death, was the reward for reaching the climax of a life-long spiritual progression toward salvation.[132] Though this reward might await a devotee at death, Augustine maintains that through rigorous spiritual training, the devout may catch a glimpse of the Divine while alive.[133] Miles writes, "the present glimpse gives human beings an

[127]Margaret Miles, "Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's 'De trinitate' and 'Confessions,'" (*The Journal of Religion* 63, no. 2, 1983): 127.
[128]Ibid., 128.
[129]José de Vinck, *The Works of Bonaventure: Cardinal Seraphic Doctor and Saint: I. Mystical Opuscula,* trans. José de Vinck (Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1960), x.
[130]Miles, "Vision," 125.
[131]Ibid., 136.
[132]Lermack, "Spiritual Pilgrimage," 103.
[133]For clarity, I will discuss Augustine's notion of spiritual vision that is accessible to the living in terms of the *glimpse* of God, while the beatific vision that is only experienced by the blessed dead will be discussed in terms of the *gaze* upon God. Miles, "Vision," 136.

appetite for the timeless gaze."[134] *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* may have been designed to fuel its reader's desire for the *visio Dei*.

During the Medieval period, the sense of sight was an intimate, physical entanglement between the seeing subject and the visible object.[135] Medieval people inherited the classical understanding of the physics of vision, which maintains that sight physically connects the beholder to the object of their gaze; the model of vision to which Plato and later Augustine adhered posits that during the act of seeing, "a ray of light, energized and projected by the mind toward an object, actually touches its object, thereby connecting the viewer and the object."[136] To look at something was tantamount to touching it. To initiate this connection, the eye requires the intentional concentration of the beholder—in other words, in order to project the ray of light onto an object, the beholder must make the decision to direct their attention to the object, they must actively *reach out for it*.[137] Once the connection is made, even if it is brief, not only is the visible object touched by the projected gaze of the seeing subject, but, in return, the object leaves an impression on the soul of the subject. Thus, the soul will inevitably "take the shape of the objects of its focused attention."[138]

There are three prerequisite stages in which one must invest in order to catch a glimpse of God that Miles has drawn from Augustine's *Confessiones* and *De Trinitate.* Miles writes; "just as the bodily eye requires the most strenuous exercise and strengthening before it can see strongly illuminated objects, so the eye of the mind requires intensive exercise and training before it can see—even

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[134]Miles, "Vision," 142.
[135]Alexa Sand, "Visuality," (*Studies in Iconography* 33, 2012), 92.
[136]Miles, "Vision," 127.
[137]Ibid., 129.
[138]Ibid., 128.

momentarily—eternal truth."[139] The first stage is faith; "the faith that there is something there to see and that it can be seen by human beings."[140] To have faith is to deserve to witness God, it is "the initial investment of attention and affection, of love and longing, in God who is not yet seen;" the willingness on the part of the believer to prepare the mind's eye for a glimpse of the Divine; the *desire* to reach out.[141]

The second stage is named continence, or "the collection of the soul's central energy of attention and affection."[142] Continence is the gathering of the soul's scattered energy; bringing it together and healing it; it is the intentional and habitual search for God—consistently directing the soul's attention away from distracting objects and *inward* toward a mental image of God.[143] The practice of continence could be interpreted as the shaping of the soul into an ideal, homogenous form through the intentional focus on the image of what it wants to become unified with, God Himself. Once the soul has taken on the shape of the object of its desire, it no longer needs to rely on an external image, for it "can see now through a darkened mirror."[144] In other words, the images that the devotee had previously focused on with her bodily eyes have left such a strong impression on her soul that she need now only look inward at those impressions, with the eye of her mind, to be reminded of the images.

This search for God through the mind's eye then leads the devotee to the third step where disciplined focus develops into transfixed longing: the healed soul desires a glimpse of God to the

[139]Miles, "Vision," 135.
[140]Ibid.,130.
[141]Ibid., 131.
[142]Ibid., 133.
[143]Ibid., 133.
[144]This quote comes from 1 Cor. 13:12, which according to Miles, Augustine would frequently repeat. Ibid., 135.

extent that it has turned away from all external things in order to look inward toward the impression of God, and eventually, Miles writes, "longing, the visual ray of the soul, contacts its object."[145] Like the projected ray of the bodily eye of the objects it beholds, the projected ray of the mind's eye may, even momentarily, touch its object: this is the glimpse of God.[146]

Emphasis on direct, focused and visual attention toward God is an important theme in Bonne's prayer book, and it is particularly evident in the *Crucifixion* miniature, in which it is established in the sustained eye contact between Bonne and Christ and the written prayer that urges the reader to witness Christ. There are a number of scenarios that can be imagined in which Augustine's threefold process toward a glimpse of God could be facilitated by this miniature. Perhaps the portrait of Bonne gazing up at Christ could help deepen her faith, for upon encountering this portrait, she contemplates an image of herself depicted as a believer: an eye-witness to the event of the Crucifixion. Or, perhaps this miniature could serve as a point of departure for Bonne, to which she could return habitually as a reminder of the necessary action—visually focusing on the image of Christ—to impress His image upon her soul.

The spiritual training method found in the writings of Augustine appears to align with a similar strategy found in Bonaventure's *De triplici via* (*The Triple Way*), a portion of which is inscribed below the *Throne of Charity* miniature in the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg*.[147] The text describes, in detail, the life-long spiritual progression toward the *visio Dei* in six ascending steps. Bonaventure conceptualizes the life-long spiritual progression toward salvation—the steps that lead up

[145]Miles, "Vision," 135.
[146]Ibid., 134.
[147]Lermack, "Spiritual Pilgrimage," 98-99.

to the beatific vision—as a staircase: in order to gaze upon God, one must climb the "six ascending steps of illumination, starting with creatures and leading all the way up to God, to whom there is no access except through the crucified."[148] As Lermack summarizes;

> The first step on this stairway to heaven is *Suavitas*, described as learning to taste how sweet God is; the second step is *Aviditas*, in which the soul develops an eager longing for the sweetness of god; the third is *Saturitas*, when the soul becomes so filled with the desire for God that it turns from all worldly things which could hinder its ascent; the fourth is *Ebriatas*, in which the soul is so filled with love for God that it rejoices in suffering for that love; the fifth is *Securitas*, where the soul rests secure in god's love and fears nothing; and the sixth is *Tranquillitas*, where the soul knows true peace and rest, having achieved unity with God.[149]

In other words, the devotee achieves each step as she learns to desire God so completely that she abandons all earthly pleasures and rejoices in suffering until she is truly free and at peace: finally unified with God through the ultimate visual encounter with Him upon her earthly death.[150] These steps appear to correspond with the preparatory stages toward a glimpse of God as laid out in Augustine's writings: willingness, discipline and longing define the devotee's journey. As Annette Lermack has pointed out, *The Throne of Charity* explicitly illustrates this progression: a veiled woman kneels before a staircase that leads upward toward God enthroned. The woman appears again, halfway up the stairs, surrounded by angels wielding snake-like scrolls that reach out to her. I would further point out that the figure is not distracted by them, for her eyes are fixed on the divine figure above.

In comparing Augustine's preparation for the glimpse of God and Bonaventure's steps toward the *visio Dei*, illustrated in Bonne's prayer book, it appears that both describe a rigorous, systematic devotional strategy for those who desire to see God, and thus be unified with Him, whether

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[148]Bonaventure, "The Journey of the Mind to God (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*)," In *The Works of Bonaventure: Cardinal Seraphic Doctor and Saint: I. Mystical Opuscula,* trans. José de Vinck (Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1960), 6.
[149]Lermack, "Spiritual Pilgrimage," 99.
[150]Ibid., 99.

momentarily (the glimpse of spiritual vision) or permanently (the gaze of the beatific vision). Both writers emphasize the devotee's initial willingness to seek out God, followed by her disciplined investment in focusing on God at all costs and, finally, her incessant longing for God that ultimately unites her with Him. Frequently seeking out a glimpse of God during one's lifetime may strengthen the devotee's desire for the timeless gaze of God, the *visio Dei,* and consequently urge her to lead a good life.

Lermack has argued that the *Throne of Charity* miniature serves a didactic purpose for Bonne, for it "encourages its royal reader to seek the gift that will allow her to live her life practicing the other virtues expected of a ruler."[151] This miniature teaches humility, obedience, penance, self-denial, and desire for God, and living these virtues would not only allow Bonne to personally ascend the metaphorical staircase toward the beatific vision, but would simultaneously allow the Valois to "acquire a reputation for piety that would enhance their prestige and strengthen their claim to the throne. Like their illustrious ancestor St. Louis, the Valois would be associated with spiritual leadership worthy of the crown."[152] This observation suggests that the theme of the *visio Dei* may have been intentionally integrated into the devotional program of Bonne's prayer book to make the manuscript more pertinent to Bonne's personal context.

Lermack has drawn connections between the *Throne of Charity* and *The Wound of Christ* miniature that follows the *Crucifixion.* She points out how the marginal motif of the ladder found in the top left-hand corner of *The Wound of Christ* makes reference to the staircase in the *Throne of Charity*. The connection between the two may be explained by the fact that Kolda of Koldice, the

[151]Lermack, "Spiritual Pilgrimage," 104.
[152]Ibid., 104.

theologian who inscribed the *Passional of Kunigunde*, maintained that the "ladder used to remove Christ's body from the Cross corresponds to the ladder which takes believers from earth to heaven via Christ's Passion."[153] This tiny marginal motif subtly yet clearly connects these two miniatures.

It is appropriate for the *Wound of Christ* to be connected to the *Throne of Charity* since, as Lermack has stated, the *Wound of Christ* may be a "[symbol] of Christ's perfect sacrificial love" that stands for the beatific vision itself.[154] Lermack also has described the wound as a doorway through which the devout could enter Christ and reach his heart, accessing unity with God, which is illustrated by the "vertical positioning that emphasizes the door-like opening of the wound."[155] Vibeke Olson has made a similar observation regarding the wound in Medieval visual culture, referring to it as a gateway which "signified the transition between secular space (the here and now of the beholder) and sacred space (salvation and life-everlasting)."[156] These observations suggest that the wound in Bonne's prayer book may function as a threshold between the beholder and the Divine object of desire that lies beyond the page.

Considering that the *visio Dei* controversy was so important to the French court, it makes sense that the theme of preparing the soul for the beatific vision through the disciplined practice of spiritual vision was integrated into the design of her prayer book, and Lermack's discussion of the *Throne of Charity* provides a clear indication of where this method is most overtly illustrated in the manuscript. Given that the Medieval world conceptualized vision as a physical connection between the beholder and the object of her gaze, it is clear how unity with God was understood in terms of a visual

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[153]Ibid., 108.
[154]Lermack, "Spiritual Pilgrimage," 108.
[155]Ibid., 108.
[156]Olson, "Penetrating the Void," 315.

experience—the beatific vision is the union between the separated soul and God. The ascending stages of the soul's preparation for spiritual vision appear to align with the ascending stages of the *Throne of Charity* in Bonne's prayer book, thus suggesting that the intentional and habitual gathering of the soul's focused energy, the rigorous work required to redirect all of that energy toward God, and the maintenance of this focus through disciplined longing is what constitutes one of Bonne's spiritual ambitions, if not the most important of them. The purpose of my final section will be to further support this through additional evidence found in Bonne's prayer book, particularly in how the marginalia informs the reader's engagement with the book's contents.

Section 4—Training the Eye of the Mind in the *Crucifixion* Miniature

Having now established the aspiration of preparing for the *visio Dei* as an intentional and important theme in *The Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg,* in this section I examine how the portrait of Bonne in the *Crucifixion* miniature along with its decorative elements suggest that her prayer book was designed to facilitate frequent and sustained devotional meditation.

As discussed in section three, according to Augustine, a devotee's focused concentration on images with her bodily eyes could support her ability to see those images with her interior mind's eye, for those images have been impressed on her soul. The more she focuses inward on those mental images, the stronger the ray of her mind's eye will become, which may result in a glimpse of the Divine. Frequently seeking out God in this manner might have been thought to increase Bonne's desire for the ultimate beatific vision, which in turn would have encouraged her to lead a good life fit for a Duchess. The steps toward the beatific vision found in Bonaventure's writing constitute the progression of a good life that will culminate in the *visio Dei,* and these steps are overtly illustrated in the *Throne of Charity* miniature.

As discussed in section two, in Bonne's prayer book, the relationship between the centre of the page and the margins demonstrate how the book was designed to encourage non-linear, contemplative reading in two distinct ways. Lermack's analysis of the marginalia in the manuscript demonstrates that not only do the motifs amplify and complicate the central themes of the miniatures, such as the animal vignette in the *Two Fools* miniature, but also that they can remind the reader of other miniatures, thereby prompting her to draw conceptual connections between them; as was discussed in the previous

section, the ladder in the margin of the *Wound of Christ* miniature may have reminded the reader of the *Throne of Charity*.

In this section, I will discuss how the page design of the *Crucifixion* miniature functions in both of these ways: the motifs found in the margins and in the background may amplify and complicate the central theme, and, at the same time, they may have reminded the reader of other miniatures in the manuscript. I will first discuss how the relationship between the centre and periphery of the *Crucifixion* miniature prompts the reader to immerse herself into the central scene and focus on the image of Christ. This may aid in the initial stages of Augustine's strategy toward catching a glimpse of God: the willingness to direct her attention to the image of Christ habitually may impress His image upon her soul, eventually allowing her to return to the image by turning her mind's eye inward toward her soul rather than toward the page.

I will then discuss how the motifs in the background, specifically the rabbits and the warm-toned acanthus leaves, may have reminded Bonne of another miniature, *David in the Water*, in which these two motifs are repeated in ways not found elsewhere in the manuscript. Connections like these generate pathways throughout the manuscript for the reader to follow, where the themes of the pages overlap and become more complex. This may have prompted Bonne to turn back and forth between the pages in an inquisitive search for conceptual connections between the miniatures beyond their overt meanings. As a result, she may have turned inward toward her memory—the cumulative impressions made on her soul—in order to make connections between what she sees with her bodily eyes on the page and what she remembers from previous encounters with the manuscript. This

practice may have served to strengthen her mind's eye to see that which is not in front of her, but within her.

4.1—Centre and Periphery

The design choices seen throughout the entire page of the *Crucifixion* miniature illustrate how the viewer might have become immersed in the image. Moving from the periphery to the centre, the illuminator seems to have designed the page so that the imagery appears closer to the reader around the edges, but farther away in the centre. This design is similar to the technique known as atmospheric perspective—developed a few centuries later—which creates the optical illusion that the background of an image is receding into the distance, deepening into the page. The edges of the page are richly decorated with bold lines and bright colors. The central scene is surrounded by an ornate, blue and gold frame surrounded by blue, red and gold vines and leaves that elegantly dance around the margins. The bold, graphic lines create high contrast, resulting in the illusion that these details are closer to the reader. Additionally, the vines are populated with a variety of birds, which are rendered so naturalistically that the different species can be properly identified.[157] The incredible detail in the birds has the same result as the high contrast of the vines, for their detail and naturalism against the blank background of the margin makes them seem closer to the viewer.

On the other hand, the central scene lacks bold linework and makes use of softer values, creating a flatter, muted and seemingly more distant appearance. The background that lies behind the figures is soft and monochromatic. Many of the details that emerge from the background are only

[157]There are almost two hundred birds, accounting for over forty species, in the margins of the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg,* and the fidelity of the depictions suggest that the illuminator must have known birds very well. Vaurie, *Birds in the Prayer Book of Bonne of Luxembourg*, 279.

visible to those who spend time with the miniature—the longer the reader looks, the more is revealed. The eye must pass through the exterior frame, as if it were a gateway, to access the sacred scene in the centre. This border can be found surrounding all fourteen miniatures in Bonne's prayer book, not only unifying the object stylistically, but presenting each scene as if it lay beyond a threshold.

Once the eye is immersed in the central image, it is immediately drawn to the wound in Christ's side, to which he gestures. Christ's luminous and delicate body ultimately demands the most attention—no matter where the eye wanders, it is always drawn back to His pointed finger. Christ gazes assertively toward Bonne and her husband who kneel in the bottom left corner, who in turn gaze back toward Christ and toward the wound. This motion toward Christ is reinforced again by the two angels that reach out for the wound as their bodies emerge from the background. Directly above Bonne, a rabbit hidden among the acanthus-leaf foliage sharply turns its head toward Christ, thus adding to the details that reorient the reader's gaze toward the wound. This repeated action of looking at Christ could remind the reader to gather and direct her focus and maintain it on the wound, bringing her closer to her goal of impressing the image of Christ upon her soul.

The subtle rabbit motif that appears numerous times throughout the *Crucifixion* miniature is of particular interest, for on no other page in the manuscript do so many rabbits appear. There are seven rabbits found on this page; one is rendered naturalistically in the bottom left margin, and the others can be found among the acanthus leaves that lie behind the central figures. The repetition of this motif on this page suggests it had a symbolic importance in relation to the themes of this miniature.

The rabbit was a fairly multivalent symbol in medieval visual culture. Lermack points out that, while hares or rabbits are not found in medieval bestiaries, they are quite popular motifs in manuscript

marginalia.[158] Other manuscripts made in France during the early fourteenth century included rabbits in the margins as both references to sexuality and fertility as well as comic relief. Caviness has pointed out that because rabbits were well known for "frequency of copulation and conception," in the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreaux* they would "remind Jeanne of her duty to produce an heir, and might enhance her desire for offspring." [159] Caviness counts just over 50 images of rabbits in Jeanne's prayer book, many of which are being chased by dogs, creating a tension that would not have escaped the young reader's imagination.[160] Rabbits are often depicted as timid creatures that seek God's protection as they are hunted by dogs; on other occasions, they are transformed into hunters themselves.[161] Camille writes, "the medieval image-world was, like medieval life itself, rigidly structured and hierarchical. For this reason, resisting, ridiculing, overturning and inverting it was not only possible, it was limitless."[162] For example, a manuscript made in southern France known as the *Smithfield Decretals* contains over 600 *bas-de-page* scenes, many of them demonstrating a role-reversal between predator and prey, where rabbits are reimagined as the aggressor in the marginal vignettes.

Lermack has interpreted the rabbits that appear in the *Two Fools* miniature—where one rabbit is pictured being stalked by a hound in the blue acanthus-leaf background—as "symbols of believers."[163] The rabbit as a symbol of a meek believer can be traced to the "common perception of their timidity in the late medieval period."[164] In the case of the *Two Fools* miniature, Lermack writes

[158]Lermack, "The Pivotal Role of the Two Fools Miniature," 88.
[159]Caviness, "Patron or Matron?," 344.
[160]Ibid., 344.
[161]Lermack, "The Pivotal Role of the Two Fools Miniature," 88.
[162]Camille, *Image on the Edge*, 26.
[163]Lermack, "The Pivotal Role of the Two Fools Miniature," 93.
[164]Ibid., 88.

that "the hound stalks the timid hares who trust in God to save them."[165] While Lermack's interpretation is convincing, she does not attempt a larger exploration of the meaning of the rabbit, although she briefly suggests that the same interpretation can be applied to the rabbits in the *Crucifixion* miniature.[166] I would point out that if the rabbits were meant to symbolize believers, this would amplify what I suggest is the theme of the *Crucifixion*—spiritual vision—for the first step toward a glimpse of the Divine, according to Augustine, was faith.

The theme of faith in God is most likely implied in the *Crucifixion* scene by the very fact that Christ gestures toward his wound, which may have reminded the reader of the biblical story of doubting Thomas. As per the Gospel of John, Thomas refused to believe in Christ's resurrection, therefore Jesus said to him; "Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas responds; "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:27-29 NIV).[167] In Bonne's prayer book, Christ's plea for the couple to witness him, paired with his pointed finger directed toward his wound, is highly reminiscent of this story and the lesson at its core. The message of the *Crucifixion* may have been to urge the reader to have faith in God whom she cannot yet see: the essential first step in Augustine's progression toward a glimpse of the Divine.

Another detail in the *Crucifixion* miniature that appears to support Lermack's interpretation that rabbits are symbols of believers is the rabbit who locks their gaze with a fox at the bottom right of

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[165]Lermack, "The Pivotal Role of the Two Fools Miniature," 88.
[166]Ibid., 93.
[167]Other translations of the Bible, such as the New Revised Standard Version, present this quotation as a rhetorical question: "Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe'" (John 20:29 NRSV).

the scene. This moment, upon first glance, illustrates the timid behavior of the rabbit: it peeks its head out from behind the cross and its body is hidden behind Christ's feet. The viewer may surmise that the rabbit is seeking Christ's protection from the threatening fox below.

The rabbit gazing at the fox also seems to mirror the direct eye contact shared between Bonne and Christ, in which case the animal pair may serve to simply remind the reader of the gaze between the central figures. This may also complicate and invert the dynamic between Bonne and Christ: given the placement of the animals, the timid hare may be identified with Christ, and the threatening fox with Bonne. If the fox is interpreted as a predator or hunter that searches for the rabbit, perhaps that could mirror Bonne's longing search for God. Perhaps the rabbit's vulnerability was intended to mirror that of the crucified Christ, further emphasizing the written prayer that urges the reader to witness His anguished state. Ultimately, the process of questioning the possible meanings of this vignette is precisely the point: the miniature lures its reader in through these complications, urging her to stay with the image. However, she then may turn to other pages where the motifs are repeated to seek answers. Exploring the presence of the rabbit in other pages of the manuscript can provide insight into the meaning of the *Crucifixion* miniature and demonstrate how Bonne's prayer book was designed to facilitate non-linear, contemplative meditation.

4.2—Turning Back and Forth

There is another miniature where the rabbit appears in a miniature that not only emphasizes belief in God and visual attention toward Him, but which also depicts two central figures who make eye contact in a way that is very similar to Bonne and Christ in the *Crucifixion*. Folio 102v of the

Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg features the scene of *David in the Water*, which accompanies Psalm 69. Here, the central scene depicts King David naked and submerged in water, his hands brought together in prayer. He desperately looks upward at God, who is rendered in human form, occupying a celestial space that opens up into a golden portal, from which He looks back down upon David. Their direct eye contact is immediately reminiscent of the shared gaze between Bonne and Christ in the *Crucifixion* miniature. Upon closer inspection of *David in the Water*, two tiny rabbits appear directly behind David, hidden among the dark, warm-toned acanthus-leaf foliage (Fig. 11). Notably, warm-toned acanthus-leaf foliage only appears behind this scene and the *Crucifixion* scene, making the two miniatures stand out as a visual pair. Other appearances of the acanthus-leaf background are cool-toned. These similarities in particular draw interesting connections between the subject matter of the two miniatures—they are united in their shared emphasis on faith in God.

I would suggest that the rabbit is an appropriate symbol for belief, for it helps to reinforce this theme in *David in the Water*. The determination to have faith in God at all costs is a core message of Psalm 69. The Psalm begins with David's plea to God to save him from the hatred he has endured by nonbelievers, which he likens to drowning; "Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God" (Psalms 69:1-3 NIV). As David calls out to God, he describes his maltreatment at the hands of other men and how he has been scorned for his devotion. He begs God to relieve him; "Do not hide your face from your servant; answer me quickly, for I am in trouble. Come near and rescue me; deliver me because of my foes" (Psalms 69:17-18 NIV). David's suffering at the hands of non-believers is then

described in a way that may have provoked contemplation Christ's suffering for Bonne, for medieval Christians would have typically interpreted the Old Testament as foretelling Christ's salvation; David complains, "they put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst" (Psalms 69:21 NIV), which was a method of torture inflicted upon Christ during the event of the crucifixion. This moment in David's plea draws a thematic connection between the two miniatures in Bonne's prayer book, for both texts prompt contemplation of suffering for belief in God.

Given that the miniatures of *David in the Water* and the *Crucifixion* share both thematic and visual similarities, it is likely that upon encountering one of them, the reader was reminded of the other. In her study of memory in medieval culture, Mary Carruthers writes; "images are themselves words of a sort, not because they represent words in our sense of 'represent,' but because, like words, they recall content to mind."[168] While the reader gazes upon the image of David and contemplates his suffering, perhaps suddenly the image of the crucified Christ emerges in her mind's eye, surrounded by swirling red acanthus. A possible pathway through the manuscript is apparent in this example; perhaps she is reminded of Christ's plea to witness him written below the *Crucifixion* miniature, urging her to return to that folio. Upon visiting it, she is drawn to Christ's finger that points to His wound. She may then turn to *The Wound of Christ* miniature and encounter the ladder in the top margin, reminding her of the *Throne of Charity*, which she turns to next. All of the connections between these miniatures send the reader on a ceaseless search for God, driven by curiosity, desire and faith, and sustained by her memory.

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[168]Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 276.

In summary, the *Crucifixion* miniature may have been designed to facilitate a devotional strategy that could aid Bonne in her pursuit of spiritual vision, and in turn increase her desire for the *visio Dei*. The marginalia appears to redirect her focus onto the image of Christ, which could result in the image leaving an impression on her soul. In other words, the more time she spends contemplating the miniature, the more vivid her memory of it becomes. This memorization constitutes the initial stages of Augustine's progression toward a glimpse of God: once she has memorized the image, she may now return to it even if it is not physically in front of her; she need only look inward. This initial stage is necessary for Bonne to be able to follow the possible pathways of her prayer book, for it is her memory she ultimately relies on in order to draw connections between the pages and search for a glimpse of God in between them. According to Augustine, the consistent return to the images of God in her mind evolves into a longing for God that may never be quenched until the final beatific vision. If the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* encourages a method of devotion that cultivates this longing, then its reader may be more inclined to lead a life worthy of that which would satisfy the longing: the *visio Dei*.

Conclusion

This examination of the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* reveals how political and theological developments of the early fourteenth century influenced Bonne's private devotional practice. My analysis of the history of women's ownership of devotional books in section one revealed that during the Middle Ages, prayer books made for women were often highly personal objects, in which the curation of texts, images and decorative elements appealed to the unique tastes and concerns of the book's intended reader. The possible tastes and concerns of Bonne of Luxembourg were examined in section two: my analysis of Bonne's early life leading up to her married life as Duchess suggested that her private devotion to God may have given consistency to her otherwise turbulent life, and that she may have been impacted by the Valois' position in the controversy surrounding the *visio Dei*: a subject that appears to be a theme in her prayer book.

I discussed the theme of the beatific vision further in section three, situating it in the context of medieval understandings of vision. Here, I suggested that Bonne's prayer book may have been designed to facilitate a devotional strategy that could increase her desire for the *visio Dei*, which in turn would encourage her to live a good life worthy of salvation: a life appropriate for a ruler. Finally, in section four, my analysis of the page design of the *Crucifixion* miniature argued that the miniature may have served as a point of departure for Bonne to initiate the stages toward strengthening her mind's eye to catch a glimpse of the Divine: it encouraged her to have faith in God who is not yet seen, to focus on His image, and to incessantly search for Him. As Augustine writes, "the more ardently we love God, the more certainly and calmly do we see him."[169]

[169]Augustine, of Hippo, Saint, 354-430, *De Trinitate: Books 8-15*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews, trans. Stephen McKenna, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 22.

Works of art from the Middle Ages offer an insightful glimpse into the ways that medieval people understood themselves and the eternal consequences of their actions. This study of the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* may serve as a reminder for modern individuals that the objects of our focused attention may leave indelible traces on us and thus shape our awareness and understanding of ourselves. We may also learn the importance of taking the time to pay close attention to the details and patterns that emerge in our daily lives, for in noticing their reoccurrence, these patterns ultimately help us draw throughlines between our experiences and guide us toward fulfillment and contentment.

Figures

Fig. 1
Attributed to Jean Le Noir, *Crucifixion, Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg,* New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1969 (69.86), fol. 328r (image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art), before 1349.

Fig. 2
Attributed to Jean Le Noir, *The Wound of Christ, Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg,* New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1969 (69.86), fol. 331r (image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art), before 1349.

Fig. 3
Attributed to Jean Le Noir, *Psalm 69 (68 Vulgate); David in the Water, Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg,* New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1969 (69.86), fol. 102v (image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art), before 1349.

Fig. 4
Detail, Attributed to Jean Le Noir, *Crucifixion, Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg,* New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1969 (69.86), fol. 328r (image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art), before 1349.

Fig. 5
The Wound of Christ Among the *Arma Christi*, *Passional of Abbess Kunigunde*, parchment, 1312 to 1321. Bohemia. Prague, The National Library of the Czech republic.

Fig. 6
Kunigunde praying to Christ, *Passional of Abbess Kunigunde*, parchment, 1312 to 1321. Bohemia. Prague, The National Library of the Czech republic.

Fig. 7
Attributed to Jean Pucelle, *The Annunciation*, *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreaux*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1954 (54.1.2), fol. 16r (image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art), c. 1324-28.

Fig. 8
Attributed to Jean Le Noir, *Psalm 53 (52 Vulgate): The Two Fools, Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg,* New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1969 (69.86), fol. 83v (image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art), before 1349.

Fig. 9
Attributed to Jean Le Noir, *Calendar page for January, Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg,* New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1969 (69.86), fol. 1v (image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art), before 1349.

Fig. 10
Attributed to Jean Le Noir, *The Throne of Charity, Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg,* New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1969 (69.86), fol. 315r (image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art), before 1349.

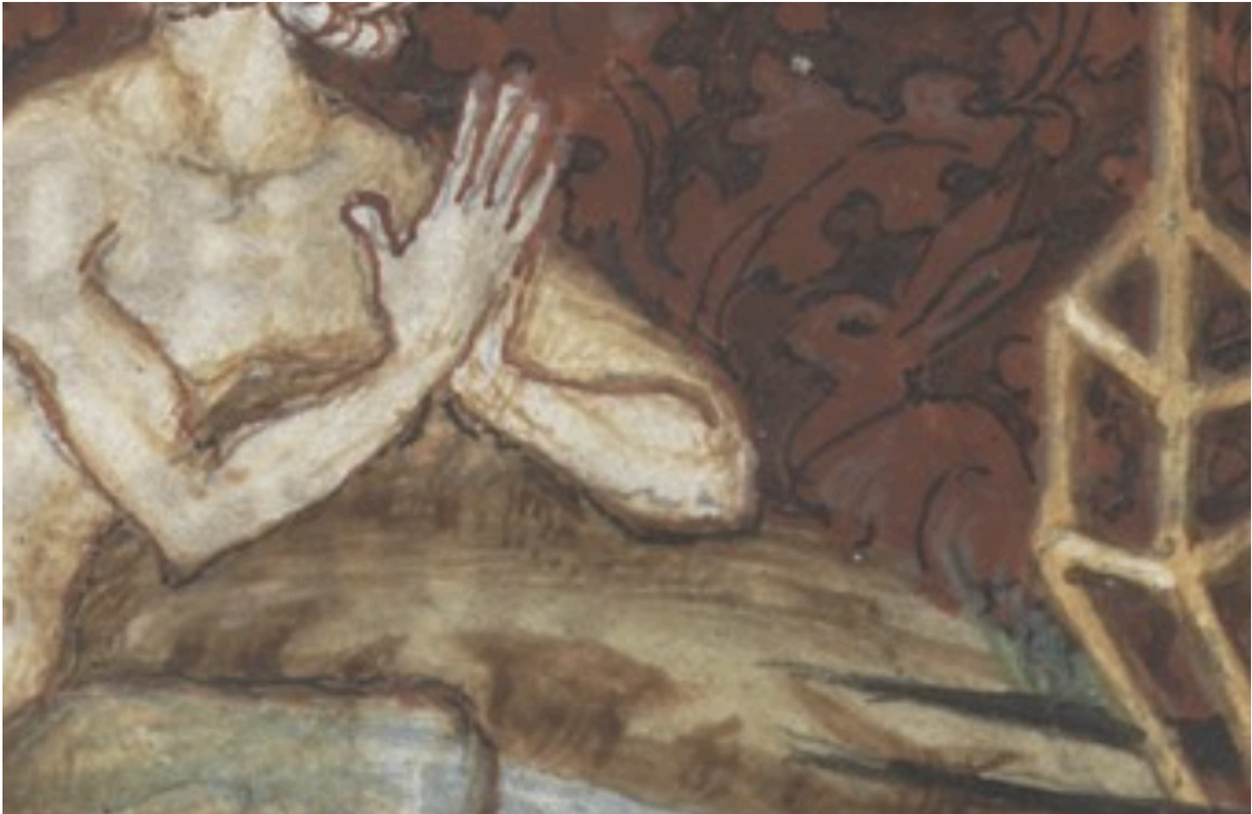

Fig. 11
Detail, Attributed to Jean Le Noir, *Psalm 69 (68 Vulgate); David in the Water, Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg,* New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1969 (69.86), fol. 102v (image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art), before 1349.

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