

[SLIDE] Good evening. One of the areas in which I teach and research is the medieval illuminated manuscript. Because the concert you will hear and see this evening was inspired by the medieval books of Mount Angel Abbey, I was asked to speak to you about the Mount Angel collection. I'm pleased to be able to do that.

[SLIDE] Here is one of the books from Mount Angel. I've provided a relatively full caption below this image. That caption may seem daunting--it's partially meant to be so. The world that produced and used this book, while it has ties to our own, is not our world. To render its culture in our terms takes the kind of specialized, technical language you see in the caption.

If this were a course on the Mt. Angel abbey books, or some other aspect of medieval studies, we could easily spend many, many hours explaining each element of that caption. But we don't have that time; and you surely don't have that patience. So, instead, I want to simplify things and concentrate on the caption's first three words

[SLIDE]: "Book of Hours." During the concert tonight you will be seeing images from several medieval manuscripts from Mt. Angel. All are of the type of manuscript called books of hours [SLIDE] or, to use the Latin form that is this concert's title, Horae.

The phrase "book of hours" is short and it links two very common English words--book and hours--with the simple preposition "of." Yet the phrase is hardly part of our normal usage and, indeed, it is almost impossible to construe. What does book have to do with hours? Tonight, I'll try to answer that question by breaking the term into its two key parts. [SLIDE] We'll start with book.

As you can see, the medieval book had much in common with the modern one. Like a book of today, the one on the screen is made up of individual pages, bound together at the spine. When it was opened, this construction created a two-page spread, just like the one you see here.

That medieval books of hours resemble our books is not to be taken for granted. The book of hours was a Christian book (and I will discuss its Christian aspects more in the second part of this lecture, on the hours). Yet at the time Christ lived, books in their modern form did not exist. This is not because there was no literacy--far from it. It is because writing took another form: the scroll. The kind of book you see on the screen, the kind we still use today, with binding and separate pages, is technically known as a codex [SLIDE] to distinguish it from a scroll.

How were medieval codices made? [SLIDE] A first answer to that question comes from a term I've already used several times: manuscript, which combines the Latin words for "writing" and "hand;" manuscripts were written by hand. This distinguishes them from printed books. All of the books you will be seeing during the concert tonight were made between 1400 and 1525. That means they are contemporary with the invention of printing with movable type, a development of the middle of the 15th century. While printing eventually pushed manuscripts to the side, that was a long and slow process and all but one of the books that will be shown during tonight's concert was written by hand, even though most of them were made after printing's invention.

Knowing that the book on the screen was written by hand hardly exhausts what we would like to know about how such a complex object came into being.

Unfortunately, we aren't able to handle any manuscripts tonight, so we must experience them through the rather immaterial medium of PowerPoint. This is a shame, for the materiality of these books--their feel, their smell, the sound they make when one opens and reads from them--all contribute to their effect; PowerPoint, by contrast, works only optically. So we will have to try to let historical reconstruction and imagination do their work.

[SLIDE] One important aid to that process is this image. It is taken from a medieval book and it shows how such a book was made, pretty much from start to finish. Because this image makes that long-distant process visible and vivid, I'll be using it in the first half of my lecture to lay out that process, which in most respects was the same

medieval book and it shows how such a book was made, pretty much from start to finish. Because this image makes that long-distant process visible and vivid, I'll be using it in the first half of my lecture to lay out that process, which in most respects was the same one used to make all of the books you will be seeing tonight.

The sequence begins to the left [SLIDE; POINT OUT]. A tonsured monk holds in his left hand a pair of elongated tablets with rounded tops. In his right hand he holds something up to the tablets. The image at first glance is mysterious, but here archeological evidence helps us. [SLIDE] This monk is shown using objects like these. These were the ancient and medieval equivalent of the scratch pad. They consisted of flat pieces of wood or ivory. A shallow trough was cut in each piece, as you can see on the right, and that trough was filled with wax. One wrote in the wax with sharp, pointed metal styluses like those in the photograph; that is precisely what the monk in the manuscript is shown doing. The great advantage of this kind of writing was that, once the writer was done with the text, he could erase the wax simply by rubbing it smooth and reuse the wax for a new text. As you can see, the styluses were made with a flat, wide end for just this purpose.

This monk is likely being shown as he takes dictation, for most ancient and medieval texts were not written by their authors, but by trained scribes; writing itself, especially speedy writing, was a rare and specialized skill. [SLIDE] This image gives a good idea of the process. It shows a haloed Pope Gregory the Great dictating a letter. He is inspired by the ideas in the book in front of him and by the dove of the Holy Spirit, who perches on his right shoulder and speaks divine words into his ear. Gregory has paused to listen to the dove and that pause has worried the scribe writing down Gregory's words; the curious scribe uses his stylus to poke a hole in the curtain that separates him from the pope, in order to see what the delay is. The scribe holds a wax tablet in his left hand, ready for additional dictation.

[SLIDE] These images show what is for us the most familiar kind of writing, a new text coming into being. But most medieval books involved not the composition of new texts, but the transcription of old ones. The Bible, to take only the most obvious example, was a common type of medieval book; it, of course, did not have to be newly dictated each time a Bible manuscript was made. Instead, a new Bible was copied from an already existing one. The same process was followed for the book of hours, which was not a new text, but rather an assemblage of old ones. In that sense, then, the images now on the screen show a kind of writing that did not apply to the books we will be seeing tonight.

[SLIDE] However the words got to the makers of a medieval manuscript, they needed to be put onto the page. That required two things--a page and something to write with. The two images above and below the picture of the monk taking dictation show the key steps here. [POINT OUT] We'll start with the one just below. [SLIDE] Here, a monk is making a page. All of the books we will be seeing tonight were written on parchment, also known as vellum. Parchment is made from the skin of animals--often cows or calves, but also sheep, goats and, allegedly, squirrels. Here, the monk scrapes a piece of parchment that is stretched out on a wooden frame. This is a relatively late stage in the parchment-making process. After an animal was slaughtered, its skin was placed in a solution of lye, which softened the flesh and hair that adhered to the skin so that they could be removed. To this point, the process of making parchment resembles that of making leather. For parchment, however, after the flesh was removed, the skin was stretched tightly on a frame. This allowed the hair to be shaved off with a razor (that's what you see here) and served to set the skin.

The result was a remarkably durable writing material. It is essentially impossible to tear a piece of vellum--in that sense, a medieval book on vellum is much less fragile than a modern one printed on paper. The surface of the skin was lightly sized to make the parchment less absorbent of ink and paint. The result was not only durable, but exceptionally smooth and soft. This is especially so of the flesh side, since the flesh could be entirely removed from the skin, and it was the flesh side that was therefore usually used for the painting of images. The skin side, no matter how closely shaved and how well sized, retains just the faintest trace of stubble, making a surface rather like a very fine velour. Sensing this subtle alternation of hair and flesh sides is one of the

how well sized, retains just the faintest trace of stubble, making a surface rather like a very fine velour. Sensing this subtle alternation of hair and flesh sides is one of the characteristic experiences when one turns the pages a medieval book.

The Middle Ages knew other writing supports--in the early Middle Ages, papyrus; in the later Middle Ages, paper. But vellum was favored for books of any prestige or ones that were to be heavily used. Books of hours fell into both categories.

All of the horae at Mt. Angel (and almost all that were written) are on vellum. This continued even after the invention of printing. Although most early printed books are on paper, almost all of the many early printed books of hours are on vellum.

So far, we've seen how a text was composed and what it was written on. How was it written? [SLIDE] That process is shown in the top left corner. A monk holds a knife in his right hand and a pen in his left. These pens were typically quills, bird feathers, although reeds of various sorts were also used. Either way, the pen's tip needed to be cut sharply and at the angle that was appropriate for the kind of script to be used; this scribe has just cut his quill and is examining his work. Because of the frequent need to sharpen the quill, writing in the Middle Ages was a two-handed activity: quill in one hand, knife in the other. When the knife wasn't being used to sharpen the quill, it was employed to hold the page flat or to scrape out mistakes.

Our monk now has something to write on and something to write with. [SLIDE] But there is one more step needed to begin: the page had to be ruled. This meant deciding where the margins of the text would be and also ruling the area where the text would go, so that the scribe had a straight base line on which to place his letters. That is what we see in this roundel. Ruling was done in various ways; here we see dry ruling, where a slightly dull knife or a stylus was drawn along a ruler to make tiny furrows and ridges in the vellum. This was the procedure used in the early Middle Ages, when the manuscript we have been looking at was made. By the later Middle Ages, when the Mt. Angel manuscripts were made, dry ruling had been replaced by a kind more familiar to us, where a pencil or a pen was used to draw a grid of thin lines on each page, producing something not so different in appearance from a sheet of composition paper. Ruling, interestingly, was not simply viewed as a necessary part of the writing process; it was considered part of the text itself. [SLIDE] We know that from evidence such as this. In this printed book of hours, made in 1510, each text page has had ruling added to it by hand [POINT OUT]. This was done even though the printing process, with its firmly locked up lines of metal type, did not require ruling to keep the lines straight. As with printing on vellum, we see here a way in which deeply engrained manuscript habits continued well into the age of print.

[SLIDE] Although this page has a very full rendering of the making of a medieval manuscript, it doesn't actually show the book being written. This is odd, because images of writing were otherwise very common in the Middle Ages. Medieval books were frequently introduced with an image of the author writing his or her text.

[SLIDE] The most common and famous of these were the portraits of the four evangelists, with which many copies of the four gospels opened. This one shows the evangelist Luke writing his gospel. He holds a pen in one hand, an ink pot in the other. The text of his gospel lies open on the lectern, as he looks upward for inspiration.

[SLIDE] One possible explanation for the lack of a depiction of writing on this page may be that the medieval monks who made our manuscript, who had a long tradition of humility behind them, thought it was fine to show some of the more mundane aspects of book making, but not to depict themselves actually writing like the evangelists.

[SLIDE] For, when our narrative sequence picks up, at the upper right, the text is complete. The quill is now behind the monk's left ear and he is using his knife, held in his right hand, to follow along in the text he has just written. He compares that just-written text with the book from which he was copying, which he holds open with his left hand.

This is not the scribe who wrote the text, but the corrector, who is checking to make sure of the accuracy of the copy. If he finds discrepancies, he will correct them either by scraping out and rewriting or, if the correction is a major one (and we all know how easy, in this kind of copying, it is to drop an entire line), he will write the missing text in between the lines or in the margin.

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[SLIDE] Just below him, a monk engages in the next step of the process, sewing the gathering. [SLIDE] Medieval manuscripts were not written on individual pages, but on both sides of a large sheet of vellum that held two pages worth of text on the front, two more on the back. Each of these sheets, called a bifolium, thus held four pages of text. Four bifolia were assembled and "gathered" into a signature of eight leaves, a total of 16 pages. Each gathering was sewn together and then sewn to its neighbors, ensuring the book's pages remained in the correct order. [SLIDE] Two further stages in the binding process are shown in the lower margin--the cutting of wood to make the book's covers and the hammering of metal to make the clasps that will hold the manuscript closed. With these two images, the process of making a book is complete.

[SLIDE] In medieval art, the central axis is usually a place of special importance. This page is no exception to that rule. In the center of the top and bottom margins we see the finished product on display. [SLIDE] At the top, a monk holds up the completed book, perhaps showing it, perhaps reading from it. At the bottom, an older monk uses the book to teach a younger one.

So, in the space of this page, we've seen the process by which this book came into being, pretty much from start to finish. But one thing is missing--the making of the pictures. I have paid such great attention to this manuscript precisely because it shows images of a book being made. But who made those images? How did they get into this book? As I said, pride of place in medieval art is usually found in the center. [SLIDE] And, if we look closely at the center of this page, something we have not yet done, we will finally find the painter. At the bottom of this central panel, three monks in arcades look up at an image of the archangel Michael, who was the patron saint of the south German monastery in which this book was made. Directly above the three monks, a fourth monk, in a triangular gable meant to illustrate a roof, also looks up at Michael. To this monk's right is a fifth monk; he is shown painting the very miniature we are looking at. He holds a brush in his right hand, a pot of paint in his left. Not only is this monk shown in the closest proximity to the saint, but he shows himself bringing into being the very image we are looking at. He is the most important man on the page, for, without him, we would be seeing nothing. This is a remarkable assertion of his crucial importance.

[SLIDE] I want to turn now from medieval books in general to the book of hours, the type of book that provided the inspiration for tonight's concert. This image can help me make that transition. As I've emphasized in my walk through this page, this 12th-century image shows monks making a manuscript--everyone who works on the book has the robe and tonsure of the medieval monk. But it is important to recognize that it was not just monks who made books in the Middle Ages. Benedictine monasteries such as Mount Angel have their origins in the Middle Ages. So, too, does the book of hours. But that Mount Angel Abbey owns medieval books of hours is anything but expected. Let me try to explain.

In the early Middle Ages, monks made almost all books; the book now on the screen is one example. But, by the later Middle Ages, when all of the Mount Angel *Horae* were produced, manuscript making had passed from monks to lay professionals. These lay scribes, painters, and preparers of vellum made up a thriving trade in the growing urban centers of western Europe. [SLIDE] A witness to an early stage of this transition from monk to lay professional is this miniature, which shows a tonsured monk and an untonsured layman working side by side on a book; it may be that the monk is shown writing the text, the layman painting the images, but that is far from certain.

[SLIDE] What is certain is that no monk had a hand in the making of any of the Mount Angel *Horae*. They were entirely produced by professional lay men and women. Likewise, no monk would have ever read or owned one of these books of hours. It is thus a historical accident, not a historical continuity, that a monastery owns the books of hours that inspired tonight's concert.

If the book of hours was not a monk's book, what was it? Books of hours were prayer books for the laity--that is, for people who were not priests or monks. They are the most common type of medieval book; thousands survive and there is an unwritten rule that no lecture or publication can refrain from calling them "the bestseller of the Middle Ages." Not that I wish to diminish the importance of the books of hours, but

the most common type of medieval book; thousands survive and there is an unwritten rule that no lecture or publication can refrain from calling them "the bestseller of the Middle Ages." Note that I said that books of hours were prayerbooks for the laity; I did not say "prayerbooks for the common people." While the book of hours is a common type of book, its users were not common. A book of hours was not a necessity; it was a luxury. Many books of hours were owned by kings and queens, dukes and duchesses.

The ones at Mount Angel do not, so far as we know, rise to that level, but there are coats of arms in the margins of a few of them, indicating noble owners. But most of the books you will be seeing tonight were owned not by nobles, but by the rising urban bourgeoisie of northern and southern Europe, the merchants, bankers, and cloth manufacturers from cities such as Paris, London, Cologne, or Florence, and from the important trade centers of modern-day Belgium and Holland, towns such as Bruges and Ghent.

[SLIDE] To show you what the book of hours was, I'm going to walk you through this one. The book of hours was not a single, agreed-upon text, but rather an assemblage of texts. The precise contents of the assembly varied by region and by individual owner. But it is possible to make generalizations that hold for most books of hours and the features of the manuscript I will be showing are also present in all of the Mt. Angel Hours that you'll be seeing during the concert. The book I've chosen to illustrate the type is entirely representative. It was made in the Belgian city of Bruges around the year 1460, in the shop of a very successful book maker there named Willem Vrelant. There are literally hundreds of manuscript books of hours associated with Vrelant; you'll be seeing another one of them during the concert. This large number of manuscripts from a single workshop is a sign of the high demand for this kind of book and also of the degree to which, by the late Middle Ages, manuscripts were being mass produced.

This book currently resides in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. That means its fate was very similar to that of the books of hours here at Mt. Angel. Books of hours, as I've said, were made for private owners. They were, in other words, a consumer good at a time when a rising consumer class was growing across Europe. Because books of hours were private books and not church books, they could be traded on the market.

Medieval books of hours continued to be used for prayer well into the 18th century, but they eventually fell victim to the secularization we associate with events such as the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the 19th century.

But, it was precisely in the 19th century that the book of hours took on a new life. The 19th century was fascinated with the Middle Ages [SLIDE]; as a sign I shown you London's Houses of Parliament, which look medieval, but were actually constructed in the middle of the 19th century in the then wildly-popular Gothic revival style. It was during the 19th century that collectors began to buy books of hours, not out of piety but out of fascination with the Middle Ages. One such collector was Henry Walters of Baltimore, who owned almost 300 medieval books of hours and donated them to the museum he founded in Baltimore. It is one of his books that we will be looking at. The manuscripts at Mount Angel Abbey have a similar story. They came to the monastery as gifts from private donors.

[SLIDE] The Walters manuscript still has its original stamped leather cover. This view of the book's front edge shows the metal clasps that hold the book closed and allows you to make out the thickness and slight crinkling of the vellum. It is now, finally, time to undo the clasps and open the book.

[SLIDE] A book of hours begins with a calendar. This allowed the reader to find his or her place in the complicated Christian year, which has both solar and lunar elements. The solar year governed the fixed feasts or holidays, the ones that occur on the same day every year--Christmas, for example. If we look at this page, which is for this month, March, we can see that for today, March Xth, the calendar reads XXX, the feast of XX. In addition to this kind of fixed feast, the Christian calendar also has moving feasts, those that depend on the date of Easter, which is reckoned based on the lunar calendar and so changes its date each solar year. The Roman numerals in the left-hand margin are part of a complicated system that allows one to know, in a particular year, when those movable feasts fall. The calendar in this book of hours, then, is a kind of perpetual calendar, one that did not have to be replaced each year.

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when those movable feasts fall. The calendar in this book of hours, then, is a kind of perpetual calendar, one that did not have to be replaced each year.

This page also shows two decorative features that are typical of the calendar in the book of hours--images of the zodiac sign appropriate to each month (in this case, Aries, the ram) and of a figure representing a typical activity or labor of the month. Here, we see a man chopping wood. [POINT OUT]

[SLIDE] Here's the June page from the same manuscript. I show it because it displays an interesting feature of medieval calendars. While the bulk of the text is written in black-brown ink, the entry on June 11 is written in red. [POINT OUT] This is the feast of the Apostle Barnabas. In this manuscript, as in many medieval Horae, the most important days are written in red; this common medieval practice is the origin of our modern expression "red-letter day" to denote a particularly special occasion.

In the Walters manuscript, as in most books of hours, the calendar is followed by the hours themselves, the text that gives the book its name. The English word "hour," like its Latin cognate hora, comes from the Greek word for "time" or "season." It was used to name the divisions of a particular period of time. For us, that tends to be the 24 hours of the solar day. The Middle Ages knew that sense of the word hour, but the hours of the book of hours refer to another kind of division [SLIDE]: the division of the day into eight periods of prayer, the eight canonical hours.

This system originated at the very beginning of the Middle Ages with monks, who prayed eight times a day. Quite early on, it was also adopted by priests. I mentioned earlier that no monk and no priest ever used a book of hours. That is because what the book of hours contains is a simplified version of the elaborate ritual followed by monks and priests; the book of hours imitates, but strips down, the rule of prayer followed by monks and clerics. It is not entirely clear what to make of this. Some scholars see the popularity of the book of hours as an indicator of the growing power of the laity; they are literally taking the practices of the institutional clergy into their own hands. In this sense, the book of hours is a sign of increasing individual Christian freedom and so is a direct forerunner of the Protestant Reformation, an event that happened towards the end of the heyday of the book of hours.

Other scholars, however, understand the widespread use of the book of hours in just the opposite way, as a sign of the subservience of the laity to their spiritual superiors. Under this view, the popularity of the book of hours shows that the monastic and clerical ideal was all that the laity could imagine and so the book was a sign of the total dominance of the church over even daily life. Support for this view comes from the fact that the hours are almost invariably in Latin, the language of the clergy, even though, by the 15th century, Latin was no longer a living language for the lay readers of these books. Surprisingly few hours are written in the French, German, and Dutch that were actually spoken by the kinds of people who owned them.

The bulk of any book of hours was devoted to prayers. The book of hours was a Christian book, but the focus of these prayers was not, as we might suspect, Christ. The longest, most prominent text in virtually any book of hours was the Hours of the Virgin Mary. That's true of all the Mt. Angel books and of the manuscript I will be showing you. The hours of the Virgin are what inspired tonight's concert.

In most books of hours, each of the eight hours of the Virgin opened with an image from Mary's life. This pattern of correspondence between image and hour was not entirely fixed, but it was pretty firm. All the manuscripts you will be seeing during the concert tonight follow more or less the same pattern as the one I'll be showing from the Walters manuscript. [SLIDE] The first hour was called Matins. It fell at daybreak and is invariably introduced as it is here: with an image of the Annunciation. The angel Gabriel comes to the Virgin and tells her that she will bear God's son. [SLIDE] Next came Lauds, also at daybreak, which was illustrated with the Visitation, the scene where Mary and her cousin Elizabeth both discover, against all expectation, that each is pregnant--Mary with Jesus and Elizabeth with John the Baptist. [SLIDE] Next in the series is Christ's birth, illustrating the hour known as Prime, at about 6 in the morning.

[SLIDE] The cycle continues with the hours of Terce and Sext. News of Christ's birth has travelled quickly, to both high and low--on the left, the Messiah's birth is announced to the humble shepherds in the field, while, on the right, we see the adoration of the Magi, an event that, according to Christian belief, signals the recognition of the

birth has travelled quickly, to both high and low--on the left, the Messiah's birth is announced to the humble shepherds in the field, while, on the right, we see the adoration of the Magi, an event that, according to Christian belief, signals the recognition of the infant divine king by earthly kings.

[SLIDE] The next two scenes illustrate None and Vespers. These images serve to make clear the connection between Christ's birth and the Jewish tradition. On the left we see Mary bringing Christ to the Temple in Jerusalem to fulfill the Jewish prescription that every first-born son be offered to God in the Temple. The woman in red behind Mary reaches under her cloak to present the two doves she has purchased that will be offered to the High Priest to redeem the son from him. On the right is the flight into Egypt. In this story, Mary and Joseph reverse Moses' pattern in the exodus; they take their son into Egypt to save him from Herod's command that all first-born sons be slaughtered, a command that, itself, was modeled on Pharaoh's order to kill the first born of the Hebrews, a key moment in Exodus. [SLIDE] In the last miniature in the cycle, Herod is shown ordaining the slaughter, a slaughter that Christ avoids because he is in Egypt.

Books of hours typically have other texts in them--prayers for the dead; sometimes other sets of hours, and many prayers to individual saints. Often, these also received decoration, but time does not allow me to discuss them this evening. But I do want to say something about the readers of these books. [SLIDE] To do that, I want to return to the beginning of the cycle, the image of the Annunciation to the Virgin. This is a remarkably bookish image. Mary is shown reading. The book she holds is just about the size of the book of hours in which she is represented, so her activity in this picture is just like that of the book's user. Note that Mary doesn't just read casually; she is so engrossed in her reading that she doesn't, against all probability, notice the angel who kneels before her. And she is so absorbed in her book that she also doesn't see the figure of God the father in the sky outside the window or even the dove of the holy spirit he has sent down to her and that is just above her head. Nor is Mary represented as just an occasional reader; an impressive pile of books sits on a shelf behind her. The angel, too, has a text, although his is in the form of a scroll; it renders in Latin the words with which he greeted Mary ("Hail Mary, full of Grace, the lord be with you). This scroll, the older form of writing, is thus juxtaposed to the more modern codex held by Mary. This is not accidental--remember that we are seeing the moment where, according to Christian theology, the "Old Law" of the Hebrew Bible gives way to the "New Law" of Christianity. That transition is indicated by the juxtaposition of the two forms of writing. Mary, who will literally bring the New Law into the world when she gives birth to Christ, also holds the newer form of writing.

In this image, the Virgin Mary is represented as the model reader. This may surprise us if we imagine the Middle Ages as an era of masculine dominance, one in which privileged activities, such as reading, would be represented as part of the male domain, not as a female activity. Yet here, reading is Mary's specialty. The Middle Ages no doubt was an era in which men dominated (think here of the exclusion of women from the priesthood), but the Book of Hours goes to show just how important women also were as models. Remember that the Book of Hours, as we've seen, concentrates not on the life of Christ, but on the life of Mary as the mother of Christ.

It is not just books of hours themselves that make this association of women with reading. [SLIDE] Here is a painting from 15th-century Belgium; precisely the world of many medieval books of hours. It shows the Virgin enthroned with the infant Jesus; she, again, holds a book, one that Jesus is treating rather roughly. Flanking the Virgin and child are other Christian saints, but it is the kneeling donors in the foreground to which I want to call you attention: a man to the left and, on the right, his wife and their daughter. It is striking that the man does not use a book, while the woman does. She, in other words, is shown as the literate one. And she is shown as like the Virgin, as both women are reading. There may also be other gendered beliefs at work here--for example, the implication may be that the man has direct access to the Virgin via vision, while the woman needs a book as a spiritual aid to reach the same vision. Still, the understanding of literacy as particularly feminine, an understanding that underlies the book of hours and its popularity, may come as a surprise.

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of literacy as particularly feminine, an understanding that underlies the book of hours and its popularity, may come as a surprise.

This is not to say that the Middle Ages was an era without misogyny. And that misogyny could affect how the book of hours was seen. A French poem of the late 14th century written by Eustace Deschamps has a woman say: [SLIDE]

Get me an Hours of the Virgin,
Matched to my high degree;
The finest the craftsman can manage--
As graceful and gorgeous as me:
Paint it with gold and with azure
With gold clasps to fasten it down,
So the people will gasp when I use it,
'That's the prettiest prayer-book in town.'

This is a remarkably large and complete collection of stereotypes about women to be jammed into one short poem: the woman in this verse is vain about both her beauty and her rank; she is acquisitive, obsessed with worldly goods, which implies that she is impious, valuing the material over the spiritual; she is not using the book of hours for its intended purpose. [SLIDE] It's hard to square the tone of the poem with the image of Mary, so humbly reading in her rather simple book that she doesn't even notice the angel in front of her. It is that image, rather than this poem, that seems to me a proper ending to a lecture introducing a concert on the book of hours performed by a group with the name In mulieribus, among women. Thank you.

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