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Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse, and Kathryn A. Smith, eds. *The Social Life of Illumination: Manuscripts, Images, and Communities in the Late Middle Ages*. Series: Medieval Texts and Cultures in Northern Europe, vol. 21. Turnhout: Brepols Publishing, 2013. xxiv + 552 pp. col. and b/w illus., separate bibliographies, and index. €120.00 (hb). ISBN 9778-2-503-53212-7.

Review by Diane E. Booton, Independent scholar.

Placed within the theoretical framework of a “social history of art,” the invited contributions by fifteen scholars from the fields of art history and literature focus in limited ways on the social life of illumination in medieval manuscripts. The essays explore how manuscript images, like other artefacts, might be agents of their makers or users and enable “social interactions that helped shape individual and communal experience and identities” (p. 1). Extending the agency of the manuscript user, the editors point to the influential role of patronage studies, as well as more recent theoretical investigative models from the fields of anthropology, literary studies, performance studies, and sociology. By viewing illuminations as culturally constructed vehicles for expression, the authors hope to reveal “new insights into the motivations behind and meanings of these images and of the books that preserve them” (p. 6).

Each insightful essay contextualizes the visual within a literary and historical interpretation and provides a thoughtful yet clear assessment, accompanied by adequate illustrations to support arguments. A section of works cited and bibliography concludes each essay. Though not apparent from the title of the book, the essays discuss only English and French manuscripts, likely a result of the research areas of those invited to participate in this project.

After an introduction and summary of the contributions by the editors, the book divides into two parts, though the editors acknowledge that many essays overlap the divisions. The first part, which focuses on “Spiritual Community,” begins with Marlene Villalobos Hennessy’s tracing Christ’s blood to ink on the page as a social metaphor. First, she examines medieval Latin and vernacular writings (Rabanus Maurus, Caesarius of Heisterbach, Odo of Cheriton, Pierre Bersuire, Richard Rolle), and second, two fifteenth-century English illuminated manuscripts, one a Carthusian charter and the other a devotional compilation that transforms blood piety as text into tangible image. The painted illustrations of Christ’s dripping blood allowed the reader to touch the drops of ink as a means to experience Christ’s suffering. Pigment worn away from touching or kissing the page points to the social interaction between readers and books, a way to meditate on Christ’s passion in literary and visual terms.

The topic of the Eucharist in an English setting continues in the next essay by Alixe Bovey, who studies the use of manuscript images as a means to offer readers a clearer view of the Eucharistic sacrament, at a time when the lay person had restricted access to the actual performance of the sacrament in church. Her focus on the six Eucharistic images in a French-English Decretals from the fourteenth century shows how such images could shape the understanding of transubstantiation by both patrons and other readers. She concludes that the images “depict the Eucharist as an essential opportunity for contact between the priest and the people” (p. 63).

Two illuminated psalters formerly owned by Humphrey de Bohun are the focus of Lucy Freeman Sandler's essay, which examines their pictorial narratives. In contrast to many other pictorial psalters and Bibles, these lack explanatory captions. Concentrating on how the pictorial program might be read in terms of the spiritual and social lives of the book owners, Sandler explores the circumstances of the manuscripts' production to elucidate the cleric-artists' social role vis-à-vis the Bohun household and interprets the pictorial program as part of the owner's religious formation. Sandler argues that it was also imbued with moral, ethical, and political implications that affirmed the owner's self-perception within aristocratic society. The role of artists in shaping and affirming social values of the book commissioner and family are issues addressed also in the next essay by Kathryn A. Smith. She focuses on the De Bois Hours and the Beauchamp-Corbet Hours, whose patrons are seen as a "viewing community" with shared social values and political aspirations that are given form in their manuscripts by the same group of artists. The pictorial and decorative programs are then interpreted through the lens of a shared visual vocabulary, which displays the motivations of patrons often linked to dynastic legacy and pious commemoration.

The pictorial cycle devised by Bishop Jean Germain for his apologetic treatise, "Debat du Crestien du Sarrasin," as described by David Joseph Wrisley, portrays the author as witness to the contemporary discourse on Christianity and Islam, as well as on papal triumphalism in the ecumenical debate. Viewing the debate sequence between the Muslim and the Christian as a performance underscored by the illuminator's selection of iconography and *mis-en-scène*, rather than an epistolary exchange, Wrisley maintains that a crusade was not the author's primary concern, as previous scholars have suggested. Rather, its complicated confessional discourse "establishes a visual equation between the defeat of Islam, in image and in debate, and the defeat of conciliarists and schismatics" (p. 199).

Robert Clark and Pamela Sheingorn assert that "Performative presence" is achieved in a luxury illuminated drama by means of its pictorial narrative, rubrics, and pseudo stage directions, thereby allowing the viewer to re-experience the passion drama and encouraging affective devotion. The perspective of cognitive science informs the authors' interpretation of the viewer's sensory experience of the manuscript's *mise-en-page* and of the ways in which one might thus perceive events in one's world, assisted by gestures, body movement, imagined voices, colorful and perspectively designed images. Another performance text, *La vengeance nostre seigneur*, in a luxurious manuscript version and a printed playscript by Anthoine Vérard, is examined by Laura Weigert, who discusses the separate but related aspects of text and image. Whereas the dramatic text underscores the guilt of Jews for the death of Christ and subsequent violence, the images modulate this violence for greater emphasis on a crusading conquest of Jerusalem. Vérard's edition did not commemorate a particular performance, Weigert contends. Rather, it was "meant to commemorate a French tradition of urban drama," (p. 289) and thereby altered the playscript's original role in live performance.

The second part, "Social and Political Communities," begins with Logan Whalen's essay on the role of images in Marie de France's *Isopet*, her collection of Aesopic moral lessons. In examining Marie's adaptations to earlier Aesopic texts, Whalen investigates the consequent narrative transfer into its iconography and how text and image together bring the story to life, thus aiding its moral narration as well as memory retention. A textual citation localized to the city of Paris in an illustration in a *Roman de Fauvel* manuscript is the focus of the essay by Nancy Freeman Regalado. The narrative role of the illustration, which shows a double ladder of angels above the Seine, draws directly from the text, and with its reference to Jacob's vision, it bridges the secular and spiritual realms in a hierarchical way. With its inclusion of Parisians who witness the *scala celi*, Regalado argues that the illustrated text engages with the social world of its readers, as they too become witnesses.

The ways in which images might "inform and authenticate" legal cases to underscore royal power and even reshape history are examined by Anne D. Hedeman in her study of a compendium of legal documents concerning the 1332 judgment and banishment of Robert d'Artois and of the depicted

homage, pledged by the English to the French ruler in Charles V's *Grandes chroniques de France*. The images complement the text, she contends, by not representing the historical reality of events, but what should have happened and "thereby visually authenticate, official versions of social performances" (p. 350). The aural aspect of social performances in illumination, particularly a book's public reading, is taken up by Mark Cruse in his essay on the Bodleian *Roman d'Alexandre*, completed in Tournai in 1344. These "talking pictures" (p. 372) conflate the roles of author and teacher, as in the opening initial showing a public reading, and together with other miniatures and marginalia, assist in the pedagogical re-performance of the didactic text to a courtly community.

In her contribution, Joyce Coleman sets out to explain the absence of presentation imagery in illuminated manuscripts of Chaucer's works, as well as in works by other fourteenth-century authors. Drawing on her examination of John Trevisa's *Governance of Kings and Princes* at the Bodleian, datable to 1409, she argues that this first presentation miniature in a Middle English text, and its second instance in Thomas Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes* (ca. 1411-12), can be seen as a matter of genre. Such imagery is deemed suitable for prestigious literature derived from Latin authors, but not for court literature and poetry that are considered to have a high entertainment value. Dhira Mahoney continues the theme of presentation imagery in her essay on Anthony Woodville's deluxe manuscript, *Dictes and Sayings*, which shows a miniature of Woodville offering his work to Edward IV. She recounts the transformation of Woodville's original lost manuscript *cum* prologue that was subsequently printed by Caxton in 1477 with his own playful epilogue, and finally copied out on vellum, decorated with a single miniature and pseudo-Italian initials. The presentation reenactment can be interpreted with a political agenda, which not only underscores the Woodville's not-so-humble influence and legitimate succession, but also promotes the reciprocal benefits between the subject and his lord.

Elizabeth Morrison argues that personalization of iconography in the Vienna Hours of James IV, which was very likely a wedding gift from James IV to his young bride Margaret Tudor in 1503, connects both private and political aspirations. Her study of the historical context and illuminated treaty documents between England and Scotland helps to interpret the pictorial cycle of the hours of the Virgin, which in its departure from traditional iconography for the canonical hours, gives prominence to Joseph as a role model and sets up a parallel of expectation of James IV. Likewise, the Virgin Mary offers the exemplary model of wife and mother to Margaret. A different type of personalization is explored in the last essay by Mary Erle, who examines a book of hours owned by Jane Guildford (d. 1538), not for its pictorial program, but for its inscriptions within the context of a friendship album. As a court fashion, the gathering of mottos and signatures of friends, family and royals shows Jane's social circle from her lifetime service at court. Whereas the inscriptions typically request remembrance, Erle points out that the inscriptions, particularly the five royal names, might also have had the purpose of enhancing Jane's importance and reputation during her career.

The Social Life of Illumination offers well-argued and well-written essays of interest to graduate students, teachers, and scholars and will be a valuable addition to university libraries. Because of its subject restriction to English and French illuminated manuscript, the essays can connect and interweave aspects of social history and iconography into political currents and events happening on both sides of the Channel. In this way, the book presents a greater consistency than is often found in edited volumes of articles.

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