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David Boffa
Beloit College

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Disfluency and Deep Processing as Paths to Devotion: Reading and Praying with the Veronica in the Psalter and Hours “of Yolande of Soissons” (M. 729)

By David Boffa, Beloit College

Among the pages of the late-thirteenth-century Psalter and Hours “of Yolande of Soissons” is an exceptional image

of the Holy Face (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 729; **fig. 1**).¹ It stares out from its surroundings, intently fixing its gaze upon the viewer. Floating behind the face is a circle inscribed with a cross, entirely containing the head but for two trails of hair that extend to the base of the image’s frame.

My interest in the Holy Face of M. 729 originated in a paper written for a seminar on the medieval image led by Erik Thunø in 2006. I am grateful to him and the seminar participants for the thought-provoking discussions that initially guided my thinking. Since then my research on this topic has taken new directions, and several individuals have been generous enough to share ideas and suggestions along the way. I would like to thank Susannah Fisher, Rebekah Perry, and Brenna Graham for reading drafts of this article. I am also particularly grateful to the two anonymous peer reviewers, both of whom provided excellent feedback. I have done my best to respond to their criticisms and suggestions, and I look forward to examining some of their broader claims in future research.

¹ New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 729; the Holy Face is on fol. 15r. On this manuscript, see especially: Karen Gould, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, Cambridge, MA 1978; Karen Gould, “The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons” (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1975); Alexa Kristen Sand, “Picturing Devotion Anew in the Psalter-Hours ‘of Yolande of Soissons’ (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M729)” (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1999); Alexa Sand, “Vision, Devotion, and Difficulty in the Psalter Hours ‘Of Yolande of Soisson’” *Art Bulletin* 87 (Mar. 2005), 6-23; Alexa Sand, “A Small Door: Recognizing Ruth in the Psalter-Hours ‘of Yolande of Soissons’” *Gesta*, XLVI/2 (March 2007), 19-40; Alison Stones, “The Full-Page Miniatures of the Psalter-Hours New York, PML, ms M. 729, Programme and Patron,” in *The Illuminated Psalter: Studies in the Content, Purpose and Placement of its Images*, ed. F. O. Büttner, Turnhout 2004, 281-307.

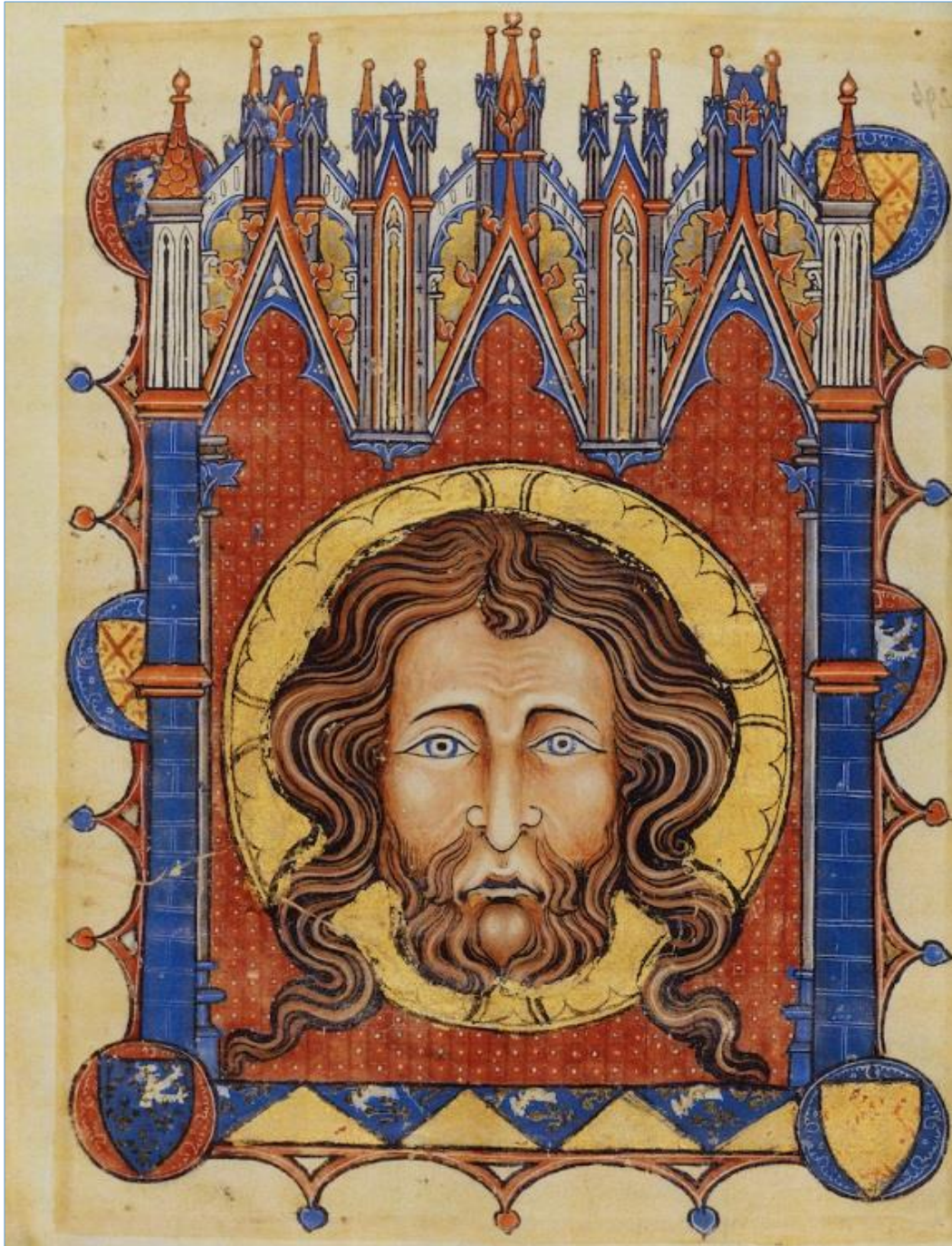


Figure 1 Psalter and Hours of “Yolanda of Soissons,” late 13th century, France. Photo: New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 729A.

patterned red field fills out the remainder of the background, surmounted by an impressive display of Gothic architecture. The text on the facing page (fol. 14v) makes explicit the illumination's connection to the Veronica—the *vera icon*, said to be a true image of Christ's likeness. Contained in the text is a short rubric in Old French as well as a prayer in Latin allegedly composed by Pope Innocent III in honor of the Veronica.

That the image and text were intended to be used together during the act of devotion is made apparent by their placement and thematic associations—that is, both text and image refer to the image-relic of the Veronica. In the following paper I will highlight the importance of certain characteristics of the text as they relate to the contemplation of the Holy Face. My intent is a recreation of the devotional experience by outlining how this book's user interacted with the words and images. Furthermore, I suggest that recent studies in cognition can help us understand the ways a medieval text could affect the responses of a reader.² One specific phenomenon I address is known as “disfluency,” defined as “the subjective, metacognitive experience of difficulty associated with cognitive tasks.”³ In the case of medieval manuscripts such as M. 729, I argue for a degree of difficulty that was an inherent part of both the script and language (in this case, Old French and Latin written in a Gothic book hand). The impact of working with difficult

² I recognize here that applying modern studies in cognition to historical objects and phenomena can be problematic. Several of the issues raised by such an approach are discussed in issue #2 of *nonsite.org*, “Evaluating Neuroaesthetics,” ed. Todd Cronan (<http://nonsite.org/issue-2-neuroaesthetics>). See especially Whitney Davis, “Neurovisuality” (<http://nonsite.org/issues/issue-2/neurovisuality>) and Jennifer Ashton, “Two Problems with a Neuroaesthetic Theory of Interpretation” (<http://nonsite.org/issues/issue-2/two-problems-with-a-neuroaesthetic-theory-of-interpretation>). I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing me in this direction.

³ Connor Diemand-Yauman, Daniel M. Oppenheimer, and Erikka B. Vaughan, “Fortune favors the **Bold** (and the *Italicized*): Effects of disfluency on educational outcomes” *Cognition* 118 (January 2011), 111-115. But also see Carol L. Yue, Alan D. Castel, and Robert A. Bjork, “When disfluency is—and is not—a desirable difficulty: The influence of typeface clarity on metacognitive judgments and memory” *Memory and Cognition* 41 (February 2013), 229-241, for a refinement of these claims. As the authors of the latter study note (citing their own research and earlier work), perceptual difficulty may not always lead to improved memory performance, and indeed can occasionally impair performance. For the purposes of this paper, what is most important is whether manuscripts' texts and images can engage the deep processing of medieval readers through perceptual difficulties, which I argue they can.

texts, which would have required more concentration and more in-depth processing, had the potential to generate cognitive states that might have been considered especially contemplative or devotional. Although my discussion centers on the image-text pairing in this particular manuscript, I believe the phenomena outlined here can have implications for a wide variety of texts and readers in the Middle Ages.

The Psalter and Hours “of Yolande of Soissons”

The manuscript known as the Psalter and Hours “of Yolande of Soissons” was originally intended for use as a devotional book by a female reader. The style of the illuminations and the textual evidence suggest a production in or around Amiens, an important manuscript center in the thirteenth century.⁴ In its present state, the manuscript consists of 437 numbered folios, each approximately 134 by 182 mm. Included in the manuscript are a complete Psalter, a calendar, three sets of Hours, the Office of the Dead, the Penitential Psalms, the “Psalter of Saint Jerome”, and prayers, poems, and litanies in Old French and Latin.⁵ Though it is clear that the manuscript is composed of two types of prayer books used by the laity for private devotions (the Psalter and the Book of Hours) the arrangement of the folios was disrupted at some point and thus the

⁴ Gould, *The Psalter*, 13-60. The inclusion of a number of Amiens saints in the liturgical calendar; the phonological, morphological, and syntactic traits of the Old French dialect used; and the stylistic similarities between this manuscript and others from the area of Amiens and northern France seem to support her claims. For the textual analysis see Gould, “The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons,” 61-76, 345, and 363; and Gould, *The Psalter*, 13-23; for the stylistic evidence see Gould, *The Psalter*, 25-60. More recently, Stones, “The Full-Page Miniatures of the Psalter-Hours,” 282, argues for the importance of German models for the decorative program of MS M. 729. She suggests that “to judge from what remains, placing miniatures within the text seems to have been a practice more prevalent in Germany than elsewhere. The unusual density of full-page miniatures in M. 729 owes more of a debt to models from the Rhine and beyond than to models closer to the region of Amiens where the book was made.”

⁵ The sheets of parchment are consistently ruled for 19 lines of text in a space measuring 78 by 107 mm. The decorative program includes 40 full-page miniatures, 64 historiated initials, small calendar miniatures, a number of full-page and partial borders, and smaller decorated initials. Sand, “Vision,” 8.

present order may not reflect the original state. Complicating this problem that several folios appear to be missing.⁶

Information on the probable patron and owner of M. 729 comes from the coats of arms used in the borders surrounding the miniatures and historiated initials.⁷ Alison Stones argues that the Book of Hours was originally begun for the widowed Comtesse de la Table (Yolande's probable step-mother) but that with the death of Comtesse de la Table sometime before 1300, Bernard V and his wife Yolande took over the patronage of the manuscript.⁸ In light of this argument, the manuscript's production is likely to have occurred in two phases; the first stage, done for Comtesse de la Table, can range from 1270 to around 1300, while the second stage, during which time the likely patrons were Yolande and her husband, could have started as early as 1276 and lasted until around 1304 (the probable date of Bernard V de Moreuil's death).⁹

⁶ Gould, *The Psalter*, 1, 13; Stones, "The Full-Page Miniatures of the Psalter-Hours," 282. The current binding of blue leather was done in 1927 by Buprez Lahey after the Morgan Library purchased the manuscript.

⁷ Of the approximately 400 shields used, six are repeated throughout, four of which can be positively identified. Gould concluded that the identifiable combination made Yolande of Soissons the likely owner. Gould, *The Psalter*, 1-3. The identifiable coats are: *azure, semy of lis or with a demi-lion argent over all* (Moreuil family); *or, a lion passant gules with a border of the same* (Soissons counts); *argent, a cross gules charged with five scallops or* (Hangest family); and *barruly or and gules* (counts of Grandpré). These belong to the Moreuil family, the Soissons counts, the Hangest family, and the Grandpré family. Yolande was the wife of Bernard V of Moreuil; the daughter of Raoul of Soissons and his wife, Comtesse of Hangest; and possibly the granddaughter of Ade of Grandpré.

⁸ Stones, "The Full-Page Miniatures of the Psalter-Hours," 281-293, esp. 291-293. Gould, *The Psalter*, 7-11, 52, dated the manuscript to roughly the same time, though her conclusions differed from those of Stones. The use of the Moreuil coat of arms and the portrayal of the married couple with two of their four children in one of the miniatures (fol. 1v) suggested a *terminus post quem* of around 1275, though the possibility that the other children were too young to be depicted could extend her dating to as late as 1290. See Sand, "A Small Door," for a discussion of the problem of using the alleged family portrait to date the manuscript.

⁹ Little is known of Yolande aside from her marital and familial relations, all of whom were northern French nobility. She was born in either the late 1240s or early 1250s and married Bernard V by 1276 with whom she had three sons and one daughter. Gould, *The Psalter*, 4-6.

The Holy Face and MS M. 729

The face of Christ in M. 729 belongs to the centuries-old tradition of an image of God made without human hands. In the West this image was known as the *sudarium*, a piece of cloth reported to have been housed at St. Peter's in Rome since the twelfth century.¹⁰ According to the account of Matthew Paris in his mid-thirteenth-century *Chronica Majora*, in 1216, after Pope Innocent III had processed the *sudarium* from St. Peter's to the Hospital of the Holy Spirit, the image on the cloth miraculously turned upside down. Seeing this as an ill omen, the pope composed a prayer devoted to the Veronica and granted ten days' indulgence for its recitation.¹¹

The text on folio 14v that faces the Holy Face includes both the Latin prayer composed by Innocent III—explicitly linking this image to the *sudarium* of Rome—as well as a short introductory rubric in Old French. It reads:

(Rubric) [Old French] Innocent, Pope of Rome, gave this speech in forgiveness of all sinners. Whosoever shall utter this oration at the sacrament shall have sixty days' indulgence. (Rubric) [Latin] A Psalm of David. May God have mercy on us. Let it show [be seen]. Mark with me a token for good: that they who hate me may see how you, God, have come to my aid and have consoled me. (Rubric) Pray. God, you who wanted to leave behind for us, marked by the light of your face, a memorial of you, in the presence of Veronica, your image impressed on a [sweat]cloth. Through your passion and cross and your holy cloth, grant us that now, through the mirror, in an enigma, we may succeed to venerate, adore, and honor your image, just as then, safe and sound, we may see, face-to-face, the judge coming above us, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.¹²

¹⁰ Ernst von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende*, Leipzig 1899, 197-262; Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Chicago 1994, 218.

¹¹ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, 126. Also see Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 220, and 291*-292* for information on the procession of Innocent III, and 294* and 297* for Matthew Paris's text on the events of 1216.

¹² The original text reads: "(Rubric) Ynnocens li papes de Rome fist cheste orison en remision de tous pecheurs quiconkes dira cheste orison au sacrement il ara .lx. iours de pardon. (Rubric) Psalmus David. Deus misereatur nostri. Signatum est. Fac mecum signum in bono ut videant qui oderunt me quam tu Domine adiuuisti me et consolatus es me. (Rubric) Orato [sic]. Deus qui nobis signatis vultus tui lumine memoriale tuum ad instanciam Veronice ymaginem tuam sudario impressam relinquere voluisti, per passionem et crucem tuam et sanctum sudarium tuum tribue nobis, ut ita nunc in terris per speculum in enygmate venerari adorare honorare ipsam valeamus ut te tunc facie ad faciem venientem super nos iudicem securi videamus Dominum nostrum Jesum

This prayer's constituent parts have been well addressed by Alexa Sand. She notes that the Old French rubric, likely composed by the manuscript authors, establishes the interdependence of word and image from the outset.¹³ The text's Latin portion is then a collection of prayers and scriptural readings. Included are three references to the Psalms, likely chosen for their significance within the context of confronting the face of God. These are Psalm 66:2 ("May God have mercy on us, and bless us: may he cause the light of his countenance to shine upon us, and may he have mercy on us"),¹⁴ Psalm 4:7 ("The light of thy countenance O Lord, is signed upon us: thou hast given gladness in my heart"),¹⁵ and Psalm 85:17 ("Shew me a token for good: that they who hate me may see, and be confounded, because thou, O Lord, hast helped me and hast comforted me").¹⁶

Legends surrounding the idea of an image of God made without human hands first date to the sixth century with the appearance of the *Mandylion* of King Abgar.¹⁷ According to this story,

Christum. Amen." Transcribed in Gould, *The Psalter*, 82 n. 35. I am grateful to Alexander Dickow for providing a translation of the Old French and to Ryan Fowler for the Latin text. In reading the number of days' indulgence provided I am following Sand's translation of "sixty" (Sand, "Picturing Devotion," 145), although the original office called for ten.

¹³ Sand, "Picturing Devotion," 145.

¹⁴ "*Deus misereatur nostri et benedicat nobis inluminet vultum suum super nos et misereatur nostri diapsalma.*" (emphasis added)

¹⁵ "*signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui Domine dedisti laetitiam in corde meo.*" (emphasis added)

¹⁶ "*fac mecum signum in bono et videant qui oderunt me et confundantur quoniam tu Domine adiuvasti me et consolatus es me.*" (emphasis added) The English translations are all taken from the Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition. Sand, "Picturing Devotion," 147, notes that "the Psalm references move from the metaphorical light of the face of God, to the mark it places upon a supplicant, to the supplicant's request for a visible sign from God." Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*, 355-358, notes how the prayer also quotes 1 Corinthians 13:12.

¹⁷ The seminal work on the Holy Face is Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*. For more recent scholarship, see Emanuela Fogliadini, *Il volto di Cristo: gli acheropiti del Salvatore nella tradizione dell'Oriente cristiano* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2011); Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf, eds., *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, Villa Spelman Colloquia, vol. 6, Bologna 1998, especially the following articles: Herbert L. Kessler, "Configuring the Invisible by Copying the Holy Face," 129-151; Gerhard Wolf, "From Mandylion to Veronica: Picturing the 'Disembodied' Face and Disseminating the True Image of Christ in the Latin West," 153-179; Christoph Egger, "Papst Innocenz III. Und die Veronica. Geschichte, Theologie, Liturgie und Seelsorge," 181-203; and Jeffrey F. Hamburger, "'Frequentant memoriam visionis faciei meae': Image and Imitation in the Devotions to the Veronica Attributed to Gertrude of Helfta," 229-246; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, especially chapter 11, "The 'Holy Face': Legends and Images in Competition," 208-224 and Appendix 37, 541-544; and Flora Lewis, "The Veronica:

Christ imprinted his features upon a cloth after a messenger sent by the king failed to capture Christ's portrait in a painted image. The image healed the king of an illness and subsequently copied itself onto a tile when it was walled up during a Persian invasion, events which underscored its supernatural provenance and powers. From its origins in the northern Syrian city of Edessa,¹⁸ the story and cult of the *Mandyllion* image in the Byzantine East eventually passed to that surrounding the Veronica in the Latin West.¹⁹ In the early part of the thirteenth century, the image cult in the West became increasingly popular, likely influenced by the influx of Eastern and Western icons in the years following the Fourth Crusade in 1204.²⁰

The face of Christ in M. 729 belongs to this tradition, and its link to the Veronica of Rome is undeniably stressed by the prayer of Innocent III on the facing page. The circle in which Christ's face is inscribed underscores this association, as its resemblance to a Host invites contemplation on what one author has termed the "profound connection" between the cult of the eucharist and that of the Veronica.²¹ As noted by Hamburger, representations of the Holy Face, and by extension, the Veronica,

Image, Legend and Viewer," in *England in the Thirteenth Century*, Proceedings of the 1984 Harlaxton Symposium, ed. W. M. Ormrod, Woodbridge, Suffolk 1985, 100-106.

¹⁸ By the middle of the tenth century the story and its accompanying image would be in Constantinople. For the tradition of the image from Edessa, see Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 102-196; and Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 208-215. Also see Hans J. W. Drijvers, "The Image of Edessa in the Syriac Tradition," 13-31; and Averil Cameron, "The Mandyllion and Byzantine Iconoclasm," 33-54, both in: Kessler and Wolf, *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*. For the sources that led to the belief that Christ and King Abgar had been in correspondence see Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. A. J. B. Higgins *et al*, ed. R. McL. Wilson and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, Philadelphia 1963, vol. I, 437-444.

¹⁹ See Isa Ragusa, "Mandyllion-Sudarium: The 'Translation' of a Byzantine Relic to Rome," *Arte Medievale* 5 (1991), 97-106.

²⁰ Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*, 320. See also Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 541. The legend of the Veronica was not at this time associated with the Passion; rather, in its earliest forms it was simply an image of the Holy Face owned by a woman named Veronica who had been cured of a blood issuance by Christ. Like the Abgar legend, the image in this story also managed to heal a sick ruler (in this case, the Emperor Tiberius). Cf. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, I, 457, 484, and Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 541.

²¹ Wolf, "From Mandyllion to Veronica," 172.

were linked to an incarnational aesthetic elaborated in and mandated by eucharistic theology. Disembodied representations of the Holy Face came to stand by synecdoche for the whole of Christ's body, especially Christ's body as present in the Eucharist.²²

The combination of a Host-like circle with the face of Christ in the manuscript of Yolande of Soissons seems to support this thesis.²³ That the medieval mind was primed to accept this intricate relationship between image and eucharist, part and whole, and relic and copy, is attested by various other relational aspects of Holy Face images, in which they are simultaneously considered dark and light, human and divine, ugly and beautiful.²⁴ The eucharistic association is strengthened when considered with relation to the female patron or patrons of M. 729, as eucharistic devotion was "the most prominent, characteristically female concern in thirteenth-century religiosity."²⁵

If we accept that the circumscribed face of Christ stands as a symbol of the eucharist and Christ's Incarnation and ultimate sacrifice, then we should also consider the significance behind the patterned and colored decoration that serves as a background and thus support for the image of Christ. In its reference to the cloth on which the face of Christ was impressed, the background manages to suggest both the veil of Christ's humanity as well as the temple veil that previously

²² Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*, 333; this is contrasted with the Byzantine East, where "representations of the Holy Face occupied a central place in disputes over Christology and, hence, over the nature and limits of representation itself [...]"

²³ Sand, "Picturing Devotion," 146, also notes the possible links between the style of Mandylion iconography and the sacrament of the eucharist.

²⁴ Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*, 359-368. Lewis, "The Veronica," discusses the so-called "black Veronicas" that exhibit an especially dark portrayal of the Holy Face.

²⁵ Caroline Walker Bynum, "Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century," in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, New York 1991, 121. Bynum, 122, notes that "it is glaringly obvious that laywomen, recluses, tertiaries, beguines, nuns of all orders and those women (especially common in the early thirteenth century) who wandered from one type of life to another were inspired, compelled, comforted and troubled by the eucharist to an extent found in only a few male writers of the period." For a discussion of the Eucharist within the larger context of food as it relates to medieval female piety see her seminal book *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, Berkeley 1987.

limited access to the tabernacle.²⁶ In Christian theology allusions to veils were loaded with meaning: it was only through assuming the veil of humanity that Christ was able to erase the first sin of mankind and ensure its salvation.²⁷ Additionally, the rending apart of the curtain or veil that covered the tabernacle was a key moment in humanity's salvation. Only through Christ's death was this plan made complete, as it was at the moment of the crucifixion that the tabernacle curtain, representative of the old covenant, was rent apart.²⁸ The destruction of the old covenant allowed for the establishment of the new covenant, represented here by the face of Christ. In assuming bodily form, Christ replaced the old temple/tabernacle "with a new more spiritual covenant" that granted everyone access to the most sacred.²⁹ In M. 729, the placement of the Holy Face over and in front of the curtained background seems to underscore this notion; in covering and displacing the old temple veil, the face of Christ highlights the new promise of accessibility made possible through Christ's Incarnation and sacrifice.³⁰ Given this interpretation, it is perhaps interesting to note that the Nativity depicted on fol. 246v features an image of a curtain that has literally been drawn aside to allow the reader access to the scene. Additionally, there are particularly striking examples of patterned backgrounds (which appear throughout the manuscript) in two of the Crucifixion scenes. Folios 4v and 337v, both images of the Crucifixion, have a patterned background whose color is split by the dividing line of the cross's vertical member. In fol. 4v the background is blue on the left of the cross, red on the right; the

²⁶ See Herbert L. Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil: The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity," *Kairos* 32-33 (1990-1991), 53-77.

²⁷ Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*, 368.

²⁸ Cf. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*, 367-368; also see 375-380, where the veil is compared to the marriage veil that Christians must assume to attain salvation. Also see Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil," 71-75.

²⁹ Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil," 67.

³⁰ I am grateful to Erik Thunø, as well as the participants of his Spring 2006 seminar, for these suggestions.

arrangement is then reversed in the image on fol. 337v. Perhaps this unusual shift in colors was meant to underscore the above-mentioned notion of a shift from old to new covenants.

Text and Image, Reading and Seeing

As mentioned earlier, the association between the M. 729 image and the *vera icon* of St. Peter's is made clear through the use of the Latin prayer that faces the image. Yet the importance of text and image goes far beyond either one serving as mere commentary or explanation; each must be considered to be in dialogue with the other, a dialogue which engaged the reader during the act of private devotion.³¹ Text and image were quite clearly intended to work in unison. That such a strong relationship exists is evidenced by the entire manuscript program. Sand has proposed that the images in the Psalter were "intentionally difficult," and that this interpretive difficulty was a critical part of the devotional act of viewing the images and reading the text.³²

In the case of this prayer and image—and likely in many manuscripts' texts and images—the viewer's contemplation and reception of the Holy Face would have been directly influenced by the text's inherent characteristics. To better understand the specifics of these nuances I will more closely examine several important aspects that would have affected the use and reception of this prayer and image: the languages employed in the rubric and prayer, the script in which the

³¹ Sand, "Picturing Devotion," 148, in discussing this arrangement, notes: "Through the interpretive work of devotion, moving back and forth between the Old French rubric, the Psalm references and prayer in Latin, and the picture, the viewer comes very close to a face-to-face meeting with Christ, prefiguring her ultimate union with the godhead after death."

³² Sand, "Vision," 6. She later notes: "The resonance between the [psalms'] miniatures and the words that follow indicates the complex interplay of ideas both visual and verbal that the manuscript's makers apparently intended the user to engage." Sand, "Vision," 12. For another exploration of text and image and female lay devotion, see Kathryn A. Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: Three Women and their Books of Hours* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), especially 152-248.

text is written, and the method in which the text was likely to have been read. I suggest that the desired devotional state can be better understood when we consider the specific processes that might have been at work during the acts of reading, seeing, and contemplation.³³

The use of Old French in the rubric introducing the prayer and Latin for the prayer itself is the first aspect under investigation. In the majority of the manuscript the dominant text is Latin; Old French only occurs in rubrics preceding four prayers (fols. 14v, 202v, 207r, and 208v), in two longer prayers (fols. 207r-208v), and in two poems devoted to the Virgin (fols. 217r-220r and 220r-222r).³⁴ For two of the Old French prefatory rubrics the prayers that follow are also in Old French; in those instances, the choice of Old French in an introductory context seems natural, as it results in a unity between rubric and prayer. The remaining two prayers that are accompanied by rubrics, of which the office of Innocent is one example, are both in Latin. The distinction between the two languages, further highlighted by the different color inks used, demands consideration.³⁵

As readily as the modern reader is able to discern between the two, the medieval mind would have been even more primed to appreciate this distinction; indeed, the languages' separate histories and associations were unavoidable.³⁶ In considering a medieval hierarchy of languages

³³ Although we have no information on the education of Yolande of Soissons or the other possible female patron of M. 729, it is safe to assume that, as noblewomen, they would have been taught to read at the very least. See Shulamith Shahar, *The Fourth Estate: A history of women in the Middle Ages*, trans. Chaya Galai, New York 2003, 154-165; also see Susan Groag Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture," in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Judith M. Bennett, Elizabeth A. Clark, Jean F. O'Barr, B. Anne Vilen, and Sarah Westphal-Wihl, Chicago 1989, 135-161.

³⁴ Gould, *The Psalter*, 20, and Appendix A, 117.

³⁵ Although rubrics in Latin regularly use red ink in this manuscript, I do not think that fact takes away from the effect created here via both color (red and black) and language (Old French and Latin).

³⁶ See, e.g., Franz H. Bäuml, "Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy" *Speculum* 55 (1980), 237-265, especially 263. Among other points, Bäuml notes that vernaculars, compared to Latin, "carried an entirely different set of associations: their lexicon and imagery, as well as the entire cultural context of their past use, were—although not untouched by the Latin tradition—distinctly their own." (263) Also see Alexa Sand "Cele heure

Latin was no doubt more esteemed in the mind of the thirteenth-century reader than the everyday speech of the early Romance languages. As the language of the Roman Church, Latin, in the West, was inherently authoritative, far above the innumerable vernacular tongues spoken across medieval Europe. Its association with antiquity, and thus with ancient knowledge and erudition, only increased its prestige. Finally, as is the case in so many instances of social or cultural stratification, the very exclusivity of the Latin language would have lent it further weight for those educated enough to read it.³⁷ The use of Old French for the rubric and Latin for the prayer in M. 729 is thus far more than mere bilingualism; it is rather a deeply significant example of linguistic ordering, whereby the one language, Latin, is laden with far more meaning and import than the other, Old French. For the medieval reader, who spoke primarily Old French and encountered Latin during special religious experiences, the ability to appreciate different linguistic spheres would have been especially acute.

Another important consideration is that Latin—which would not have been the reader’s mother tongue—likely presented different challenges while reading. A sermon delivered at Amiens Cathedral in the second half of the thirteenth century suggests a degree of exclusivity and potential difficulty for Latin, as the overwhelming majority of the text is in Old French, with Latin used only sparingly.³⁸ Yet while it is tempting to assume a greater facility in reading

memes: An Eccentric English. Psalter-Hours in the Huntington Library” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 75 (2012), 171-211, especially 193-98.

³⁷ As early as the ninth century the Church was aware of a significant rift between spoken, Vulgar Latin and the official, literary Latin used by the Church. In Gerhard Rohlfs, *From Vulgar Latin to Old French: An Introduction to the Study of the Old French Language*, trans. Vincent Almazan and Lillian McCarthy, Detroit 1970, 68, the author notes how the Church “recognized that the care of the spiritual needs of her flock could not be assured by means of a language no longer comprehensible to the great masses of the people.” Thus, in 813 “the assembled synod of Tours decreed that henceforth the exegesis of the holy scriptures by the clergy might be given also in Romance or in the German vernacular.”

³⁸ For the text and a discussion see Stephen Murray, *A Gothic Sermon: Making a Contract with the Mother of God, Saint Mary of Amiens*, Berkeley 2004. Of the approximately thirty Latin fragments most are derived from scripture. Murray, citing Michael Zink (in *La prédication en langue romane avant 1300*, Paris 1976), notes how “the scriptural text that provided the theme of a vernacular sermon was commonly rendered in Latin, allowing the preacher to

vernacular texts,³⁹ for a medieval lay reader this is not a foregone conclusion. There is evidence that a number of noble and aristocratic women in the later Middle Ages were patrons of vernacular literature, suggesting better abilities reading vernacular texts,⁴⁰ although this claim depends on a number of other variables. For one, devotional texts may have been used with a confessor; it is also possible that the Latin portions of the text were known by heart. In this case, it is not impossible to assume that the reading of Old French was as or more difficult than the reading of Latin. What is of primary importance is the recognition that the different languages likely involved different mindsets and modes of reading, and that for both the Old French rubric and the Latin prayer a certain level of difficulty can be assumed.

The Gothic script in which the text was written, a highly formal type of Gothic *textualis*,⁴¹ might have forced the reader to move even more slowly and deliberately over the words. This type of reading, very different from that with which most modern readers are familiar, had the potential to do more than simply impart a greater degree of solemnity. Recent research in cognitive science suggests that difficult cognitive operations, such as reading something in an unconventional script, can lead to deeper processing.⁴² This phenomenon of experiencing difficulty during cognitive tasks—disfluency—can have significant and measurable effects on

express respect for the language of the church. The practice also lent the speaker the aura of a learned person [...]” Both points highlight the esteem held for the Latin language in this period.

³⁹ An earlier version of this paper did just that, and I thank the anonymous readers for highlighting some problems with that claim.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion*, 194.

⁴¹ B. Bischoff, “La Nomenclature des Écritures Livresques du IX^e au XIII^e Siècle,” 7-14, and G. I. Lieftinck, “Pour une Nomenclature de l’Écriture Livresque de la Période Dite Gothique,” 15-34, esp. 16-17, both in: *Nomenclature des Écritures Livresques du IX^e au XVI^e Siècle*, Colloque International de Paléographie Latine, Paris 1954. Also see Carl Wehmer, “Die Namen der ‘Gotischen’ Buchschriften” *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 49 (1932), in three parts: Jan/Feb, pp. 11-34; April, pp. 169-76; and May, pp. 222-34. For a detailed examination of *textualis*, as well as Gothic script in general, see Albert Derolez, *The Paleography of Gothic Manuscript Books*, Cambridge 2003, especially 72-101.

⁴² Diemand-Yauman *et al.*, “Fortune favors the **Bold** (and the *Italicized*)”, 112.

memory, learning, and retention. These can include deeper processing of information, more abstract and careful processing, and better comprehension of materials.⁴³ While recognizing the inherent problems of applying modern scientific studies to historical phenomena, I would like to suggest that insights into the processes of reading and memory may have relevance for how we approach manuscripts like M. 729. Research that teases out the particulars of what, for modern readers, are relatively automatic activities can prove illuminating for the more deliberate activities of medieval devotional reading. Furthermore, as scholars like Whitney Davis have noted, ignoring experimental research may introduce its own set of problems and biases.⁴⁴

Whether the script employed in this manuscript produced the effect of disfluency, and thus potentially deeper processing, in the female patron is at least partly dependent upon the reader's degree of familiarity with the script.⁴⁵ It is critical to note, however, that the degree of difference does not need to be great (and indeed too much difficulty can be counter-productive).⁴⁶ In the

⁴³ Diemand-Yauman *et al.*, "Fortune favors the **Bold** (*and the Italicized*)", 112, citing the following: A. L. Alter, D. M. Oppenheimer, N. Epley, and R. Eyre, "Overcoming intuition: Metacognitive difficulty activates analytic reasoning" *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 136 (2007), 569-576; A. L. Alter and D. M. Oppenheimer, "Effects of fluency on psychological distance and mental construal (or why New York is a large city, but New York is a civilized jungle)" *Psychological Science* 19 (2008), 161-167; H. Song and N. Schwarz, "Fluency and the detection of misleading questions: Low processing fluency attenuates the Moses illusion" *Social Cognition* 26 (2008), 791-799; M. Corley, L. J. MacGregor, and D. I. Donaldson, "It's the way that you, er, say it: Hesitations in speech effect language comprehension" *Cognition* 105 (2007), 658-668. For a discussion of studies that show no effect, or a negative effect, see Yue *et al.*, "When disfluency."

⁴⁴ Davis, "Neurovisuality," writes: "On the other hand, however, art history must be just as unsatisfyingly partial as experimental neuropsychology, though for inverse reasons. Art historians writing in the main lines of formalism and historicism from Wölfflin (and before) to Baxandall (and beyond) have usually addressed human beings in visuality without any direct *experimental* access to the experience of many of the people they purport to survey, and whose configurations and figurations they claim to interpret, even if such access is available. Since its consolidation in the late eighteenth century, to be sure, professional art history has had many *opportunities* for such experiment, notably among living human populations who have made and used the visual arts. But usually it has eschewed laboratory or clinical evidence about these experiences unless there has been a special art-historical reason—usually a biographical reason—to investigate them (for example, in the case of artists who have suffered damage to the visual brain)."

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Song and Schwarz, "Fluency," 792-794.

⁴⁶ In the Diemand-Yauman study, the authors used either Comic Sans MS or Bodoni MT (both in 12-point, 60% grey-scale) for disfluent examples and 16-point black Arial for fluent (or easy-to-read) examples. In discussing these different fonts, they note: "[...] the disfluency manipulation is quite subtle. While there is no question that the disfluent text feels harder to read than the fluent text when they are presented side by side, in the absence of a fluent

case of this manuscript, and for many contemporary manuscripts produced for lay readers, we might propose subtle difficulty or disfluency for formal Gothic scripts based on several points of evidence. For one, the inherent characteristics of the Gothic book hand make it a more difficult script compared to later cursive examples. Gothic formal characteristics favor uniformity in appearance rather than distinctive letter shapes. This uniformity increases the degree of difficulty in letter and whole-word recognition.⁴⁷ Words with *m*, *n*, *i*, and *u*, for example, can be particularly troubling, as these letters are all written using identical minim strokes.⁴⁸

Additionally, it is unlikely that many lay patrons would have learned to write in a formal book hand. Instead, lay readers, when they learned to write, would likely have learned a more rapid and informal script that was used in areas of commerce, law, and administration.⁴⁹ These scripts used outside of books were generally much looser and freer, with an eye toward speed. Perhaps significantly, the cursive hands that developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as the Gothic script was becoming the choice for book hands, featured word separation (in contrast

sample to contrast against, it is unlikely that a reader would even be consciously aware of the added difficulty that the disfluent text engenders.” (112) Examples of the fonts used are: **Comic Sans MS**, Bodoni (though their version was Bodoni MT), and Arial. Yue *et al.*, “When disfluency,” chose instead to render their disfluent version via a computer program that blurred the regular font (Calibri, 44) by dispersing the pixels 10 percent. In their studies they found better or similar recall for clear versus blurred words, suggesting that not all difficulties produce the sought after effects of improved retention and recall.

⁴⁷ Colette Sirat, *Writing as Handwork: A History of Handwriting in Mediterranean and Western Culture* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 327.

⁴⁸ Paul Saenger, “Reading in the Later Middle Ages,” in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, Amherst 1999, 120-48, here 142. Saenger notes: “When in the fourteenth century noble laymen began to read to themselves, they found the Gothic *textualis* difficult to read. A major source of difficulty was the confusion in recognizing the letters *m*, *n*, *i* and *u* composed of the identical minim strokes that had troubled earlier readers of Latin.” Interestingly, Derolez, *Paleography*, 70, notes that some scholars have argued Gothic script was *more* legible than the earlier Carolingian script. Their basic claim is that the Gothic script stressed *words* as basic units in a line of text, which would have resulted in a “clarifying effect.” Derolez, however, is unconvinced, and his book works from the position that the Gothic script had a “complicating effect.” Per Derolez, see W. Oeser, “Das *a* als Grundlage für Schriftvarianten in der gotischen Buchschrift,” *Scriptorium* 25 (1971), 25-45.

⁴⁹ Sirat, *Writing as Handwork*, 98-99. The seminal work on what little is known about the teaching of writing in the Middle Ages is István Hajnal, *L’enseignement de l’écriture aux universités médiévales*, 2nd ed., ed. L. Mezey (Budapest: Académie des Sciences de Hongrie, 1959).

to the far more difficult cursives of antiquity),⁵⁰ which would have helped with reading fluency. As will be discussed below, word separation has been noted to facilitate reading.

What is important for my suggestion is that a female lay reader without university training would have experienced some degree of difficulty when faced with a bilingual text written in Gothic script, potentially introducing a degree of disfluency.⁵¹ It is worth noting that scribes catering to the aristocratic market at the end of the fourteenth century began using a *cursiva formata* that was similar to the scripts used for the vernacular documents of the Royal Chancery; presumably, the shift came about because of a demand for a script that was easier to read than Gothic.⁵² This difficulty is critical for how we assess the usage and reception of medieval devotional texts. Indeed, it seems that difficulty would have been a characteristic feature for the reading of *many* lay devotional texts, rather than a unique feature of this manuscript.

As noted, the higher levels of attention required for difficult texts can result in better processing. The combination of reading Old French and Latin with a formal Gothic script likely resulted in some sort of deep processing—disfluency or otherwise—leading to a state of mind that could have been perceived as one of greater sanctity within the context of medieval devotion. Furthermore, the unusual arrangement of the folios—text on the left, image on the right, in contrast to all other folios in the manuscript—had the potential to impart yet another layer of slightly more engaged processing, as it was at odds with what the reader would have expected. Thus linguistic, stylistic, and physical characteristics all contributed to a cognitive state

⁵⁰ István Hajnal, “Universities and the development of writing in the XIIth-XIIIth centuries” *Scriptorium* 6 (1952), 177-195, here 179. Also cited in Jeffrey Kittay, “Utterance unmoored: The changing interpretation of the act of writing in the European Middle Ages” *Language in Society* 17 (1988), 209-230, here 224.

⁵¹ Although as one of the anonymous reviewers astutely noted, this might also depend on how often a reader interacted with devotional objects that employed Gothic script.

⁵² Saenger, “Reading in the Later Middle Ages,” 142.



that demanded the reader attend closely and carefully to the rubric and prayer. Perhaps the rabbit at the bottom of the page is still another component of the text's difficulty, as it attempts to distract the reader from her higher purpose.⁵³

An additional component for understanding this text's use and reception is a consideration of how exactly it was read. From antiquity to the early Middle Ages the primary mode of reading

⁵³ In Herbert L. Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, Ontario 2004, 102, the author writes of marginalia in which "a hound shown chasing a rabbit and hybrid creatures threaten to distract the reader's attention from God's word and face, thus setting up a spiritual struggle." The margins of M. 729 are filled with images of beasts both real and mythical. For marginal illustrations in the Hours and Psalter of Yolande of Soissons see Lilian M. C. Randall, *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts*, Berkeley 1966, 34-235, passim, and fig. 383.

was oral recitation.⁵⁴ Textual sources suggest that as late as the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries the written word was typically intended to be read aloud.⁵⁵ This affected all areas of texts' production and use, from the ways in which words were written to the organization and lending practices of libraries (oral reading, being slower than silent reading, required far longer loan periods).⁵⁶ The act of reading was often conceptualized as a far more physical activity than what modern readers are accustomed to, involving not only the eyes but also the mouth, ears, and even the entire body. Bodily movements, rhythm, and sound could all contribute to the understanding of a text.⁵⁷

Only by the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries did the practice of silent reading begin to overtake oral recitation as the standard means of using a text. And just as the practice of oral reading had affected all areas of the literary world in the past, so too the new method of silent reading would profoundly alter the shape and nature of texts (as the texts themselves altered the nature of reading). More legible scripts, clearly defined word spacing, and libraries that catered to a silent environment (with shorter loan periods) were just some of the substantial changes that resulted from this new form of interacting with the written word.⁵⁸ In turn, readers'

⁵⁴ Paul Saenger, "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society," *Viator* 13 (1982), 370-377; Paul Saenger, *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading*, Stanford 1997; and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*, Baltimore 1997, 184.

⁵⁵ Saenger, "Silent Reading," 379-381. Even the act of composing was oral, as authors dictated to scribes and scribes in turn dictated to their pens. See Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, Chicago, 1993, especially 86-92.

⁵⁶ Saenger, "Silent Reading," 396, writes, "The cloister libraries of the twelfth century had been suited to a culture of oral reading. Books had been kept in closed chests and were customarily lent at Easter for a period of one year. The lengthy loan period had reflected the slow pace of reading orally either to oneself or to others in small groups. The carrels of the cloister library, divided by stone walls, had allowed monks to read softly to themselves or to compose by dictating to a secretary without disturbing their conferees."

⁵⁷ Illich, *Vineyard*, 54-57. On 54, Illich, speaking of twelfth-century monastic readers, notes that "reading is a much less phantasmagoric and much more carnal activity: the reader understands the lines by moving to their beat, remembers them by recapturing their rhythm, and thinks of them in terms of putting them into his mouth and chewing." He goes on to list several accounts of "mumbling and munching" on texts, accounts which are occasionally explicit in their description of Scripture's sweetness.

⁵⁸ See Saenger, "Silent Reading," 388-398, and Saenger, *Space Between Words*, 256-276, for discussions on how silent reading affected nearly all areas of textual production and use. The development of consistently separating

relationship to the symbols on the page shifted; as Ivan Illich notes, “the shapes on the pages [...] became less triggers for sound patterns than visual symbols of concepts.”⁵⁹

The Psalter-Hours “of Yolande of Soissons” was produced during this period of change, as attested by several elements of the text, though oral components of reading remained a crucial part of its usage. The punctuation, spacing, and textual divisions employed are some of the developments that served to aid visual reading.⁶⁰ Yet the highly formal Gothic *textualis* did not readily lend itself to silent reading, especially for those without university training.⁶¹ Furthermore, the rubric accompanying the Holy Face image, along with what is known about private devotion in the late Middle Ages, suggest that the office of Innocent III was meant to be used according to the older and more established tradition of oral recitation. That the opening lines of Old French state, “Whosoever shall *utter* this oration at the sacrament”⁶² clearly implies that the Latin prayer was meant to be read aloud, as the verb used here is “dire” (to say) as opposed to “lire” (to read, in which case silent or oral reading is not specified).⁶³ In addition, it must be remembered that prior to the mid-fourteenth century the practice of private, silent prayer was largely unknown to the laity; praying, even if done privately, meant praying aloud.⁶⁴ The one portion of the text that might have been read silently was the Old French rubric, in which

blocks of text into words varied across England and the Continent (as well as by the language in which a text was written), though Saenger, *Space Between Words*, 44, marks the twelfth century as the point at which word separation became characteristic of nearly all Latin texts. See esp. 18-51.

⁵⁹ Illich, *Vineyard*, 95.

⁶⁰ Saenger, “Silent Reading,” 392.

⁶¹ Saenger, *Space Between Words*, 269-270; and Saenger, “Silent Reading,” 386-388.

⁶² “...quiconkes *dira* cheste orison au sacrement...” (emphasis added)

⁶³ See Algirdas Julien Greimas, *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français: Le Moyen Âge*, Paris 1992, for an excellent dictionary of Old French.

⁶⁴ Paul Saenger, “Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages,” in: *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Roger Chartier, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, Princeton 1989, 143.

case a clear division would have been created between how the rubric and the prayer, already distinguished by their differing languages, were used. Thus I would argue that one of the most critical elements to consider in understanding this image-text grouping is the act of oral reading.

The significance of reading the Latin prayer orally must be understood within the context of medieval recitation. When read aloud, the office of Innocent III became, as all medieval texts that were read aloud had the potential to become, a reenactment and thus a form of ritual. As Gabrielle Spiegel has noted, the goal of oral recitation and its accompanying ritual aspect is “to revivify the past and make it live in the present, to fuse past and present [...] into a single collective entity.”⁶⁵ The first line of the Old French rubric, “Innocent, Pope of Rome, *gave this speech* in forgiveness of all sinners,”⁶⁶ further strengthens this argument, for Spiegel continues by noting how the “transcription of a once-live recital, commemorates both the past which is sung about and the performance itself.”⁶⁷ Underscoring the importance of this ritualistic moment is the Latin language itself, as it carried with it the weight of ecclesiastical and papal authority.

This gravity of ecclesiastical and papal authority would have been further emphasized by the means in which the gothic architecture surrounding the Holy Face (and the Holy Face itself) could stand for the Church entire. Carl F. Barnes, Jr. has noted the similarities between Amiens

⁶⁵ Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, 184. Though Spiegel’s discussion of oral recitation includes an “audience” the concept remains valid in our example of private devotion, for the audience in this case is both the reader herself as well as the Divine to whom she addresses her prayer. Also see Eugene S. McCartney, “Notes on Reading and Praying Audibly,” *Classical Philology* 43 (1948), 184-187; and Saenger, “Books of Hours,” 143.

⁶⁶ “Ynnocens li papes de Rome *fist cheste orison* en remision de tous pecheurs...” (emphasis added)

⁶⁷ Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, 184.



Cathedral and the architectural borders found in a number of the miniatures.⁶⁸ The fictive architecture thus calls to mind the real architecture of Amiens Cathedral,⁶⁹ itself a building that—especially via its status as the seat of the bishop—was associated with the concept of the universal Church. In creating such associations the imagery reinforces the notion of specific sites of worship and the more general concept of the Church as an institution. Working within this ecclesiastical framework supplied by both text and image, the Latin lends the oration an aura of sanctity and reverence especially appropriate for an act of devotion, particularly when its recitation is contrasted with the vernacular rubric of Old French.⁷⁰

In speaking the words of Innocent III the reader is thus ritualistically reenacting the miracle of the *vera icon*, bringing the past to life in the present though an act of devotion that engaged the highest levels of attention and processing. The penultimate devotional act would then occur when the Holy Face, a visual representation of the image-relic associated with the miracle being

⁶⁸ Barnes, “Cross-Media Design Motifs,” 38-40; on 39 he notes that “a certain and unmistakable relationship between manuscript and cathedral is found [...] [T]he miniaturist has made a successful attempt to show the buttress pinnacles turned at 45°-angles to the buttress uprights, as in the Amiens choir buttresses; and he has carefully replicated in the correct sequence the thin tracery pattern and pointed trefoil found on the actual buttresses.” The most thorough discussion of the architecture at Amiens Cathedral is found in Stephen Murray, *Notre-Dame, Cathedral of Amiens: The Power of Change in Gothic*, Cambridge 1996.

⁶⁹ Cf. Barnes, “Cross-Media Design Motifs,” 40 n.16.

⁷⁰ I am grateful to Erik Thunø for suggesting these points on the ecclesiastical and papal implications of the language and imagery.

commemorated, was itself contemplated.⁷¹ Hamburger has already noted how the Veronica, as “an image of presence, serves as the nexus between recollection of the past and promise for the future, between creation *ad imaginem domini* and its restoration at the end of time.”⁷² In the context of M. 729, the recitation of Innocent III’s prayer and the meditation on the image become a means of conflating both the more recent past (the 1216 miracle of the *sudarium*) and the Biblical past with the present moment of devotion as well as with the promised future of salvation. Only through Christ’s Incarnation (referenced through the image’s eucharistic associations) and ultimate sacrifice (in which the temple curtain was rent apart and a new covenant made) has this salvation been made possible.⁷³ Text and image thus collapse the distance between past, present, and future, as the boundaries of time are crossed through reading, seeing, and contemplation.

All that remains for the viewer at this point is for her to turn her thoughts inward, away from the baser corporal senses. Sand, in her keen examination of the owner portrait in this manuscript (fol. 232v), notes that the portrayed reader looks not at the text before her but at a statue of the Virgin and Child on an altar. The image thus shows the reader as she “moves beyond the words and images in her book to a more direct contemplation of the divine.”⁷⁴ Only by doing this can the book’s actual reader hope to understand the full import of the prayer. In the

⁷¹ Contemplation of the Holy Face in this ritualistic, sacramental act would likely inspire thoughts on the ultimate sacrament, that of the eucharist, noted above as an element of special significance in the religious lives of medieval women. Sand, “Picturing Devotion,” 146, notes that the “sacrament” of the opening rubric in Old French likely refers to the eucharist. Illich, *Vineyard*, 109, in discussing the functions of early medieval illuminations, addresses a similar type of image contemplation: “Medieval illuminations invite the mumbler to fall silent adoring what no word could express.”

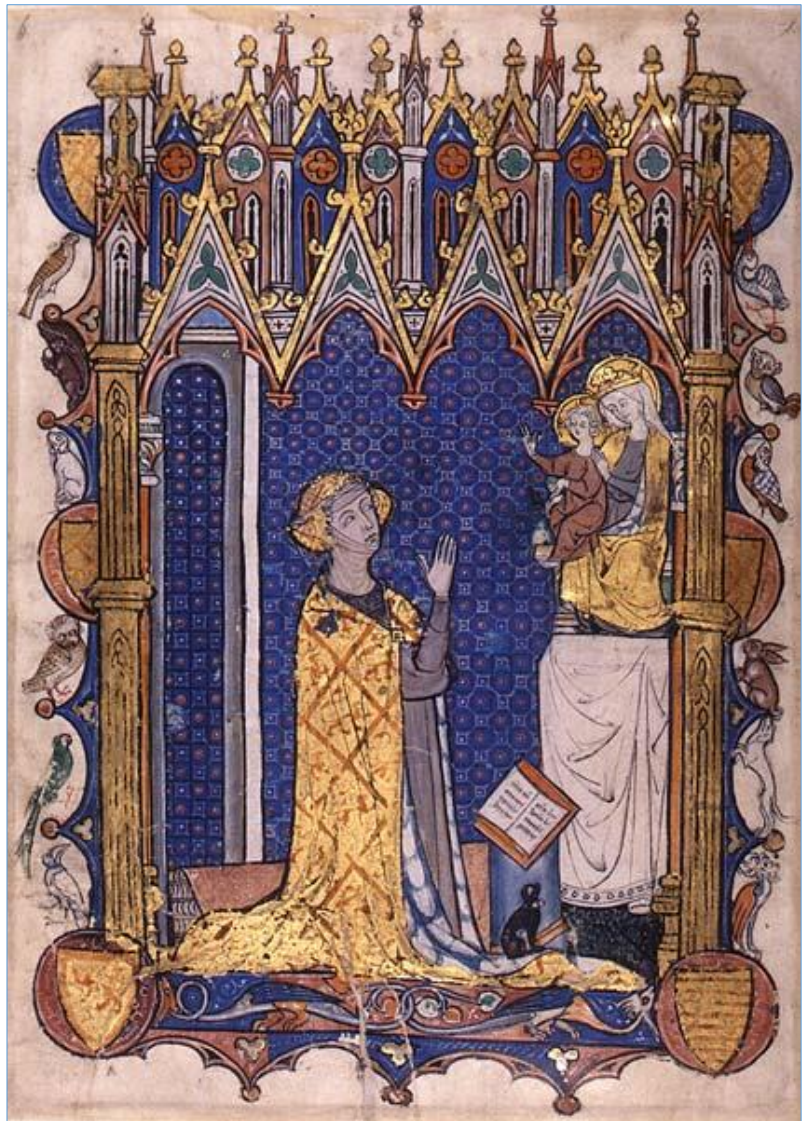
⁷² Hamburger, “Frequentant memoriam visionis faciei meae,” 236.

⁷³ Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*, 322-323, notes that the Feast of the Veronica fell on the second Sunday after Epiphany (rather than during Passiontide) linking the image “liturgically with Christ’s manifestation to the world.”

⁷⁴ Sand, “Vision,” 20.

silent meditation that would ensue after the office of Innocent III had been read aloud, the reader would then be moved to approach that highest plane of seeing, inaccessible through either the written word or pictorial arts alone, a realm accessible only during the intangible and atemporal moments of ritual and devotion. Precisely how this occurred was likely the result of very tangible phenomena: the reading of the prayer aloud, the acting out of a ritual, the difficult task of working through Gothic script, and the associated memories that were called to the reader's mind during all of the work involved. When the reading was finished and the image was contemplated the deeper processing that had been required during the act

Yolande de Soissons in Prayer,
Psalter-Hours of Yolande de
Soissons, MS M.729, fol. 232v,
France, Amiens, c. 1280–90.
Photo: New York, Pierpont
Morgan Library.



of reading potentially allowed for a better recall of the contents even when they were no longer being read. In this way the face of Christ is able to be seen in conjunction with the sacred words, whose presence in the reader's memory might be taken as the divine presence itself.

Like so many medieval images of the Holy Face, the Veronica found in the Hours “of Yolande of Soissons” is a complex entity that must be considered within the context of its production, history, and use. The legend of the *vera icon* and its history, the association of image with the body of Christ, and the means of seeing afforded by pictorial representation all derive from and contribute to our understanding of medieval piety and theology. For the Holy Face in M. 729, the interplay of text and image is contingent upon these factors and a host of others, most important among them the significance of language and reading in the context of medieval theology.⁷⁵ In the complex devotional actions allied to this manuscript the corporal senses of viewing and reading were engaged in such a way that sought to transcend and even deny their very physicality, for only then could one hope to approach the true Holy Face, the original prototype from which all copies were derived. Yet it was through responses rooted in physicality—such as difficulty, close attention, and deep cognitive processing—that medieval readers of this and other texts might have been offered glimpses of the divine.

⁷⁵ Saenger, “Silent Reading,” 399-402. Interestingly, Saenger argues it was this new method of reading that played a part in the rise of critical thinking and, by extension, the questioning of ecclesiastical authority. Also see Saenger, *Space Between Words*, 264-265, and Illich, *Vineyard*, 93-124, for more on the significant changes brought about by texts and reading in the later Middle Ages.