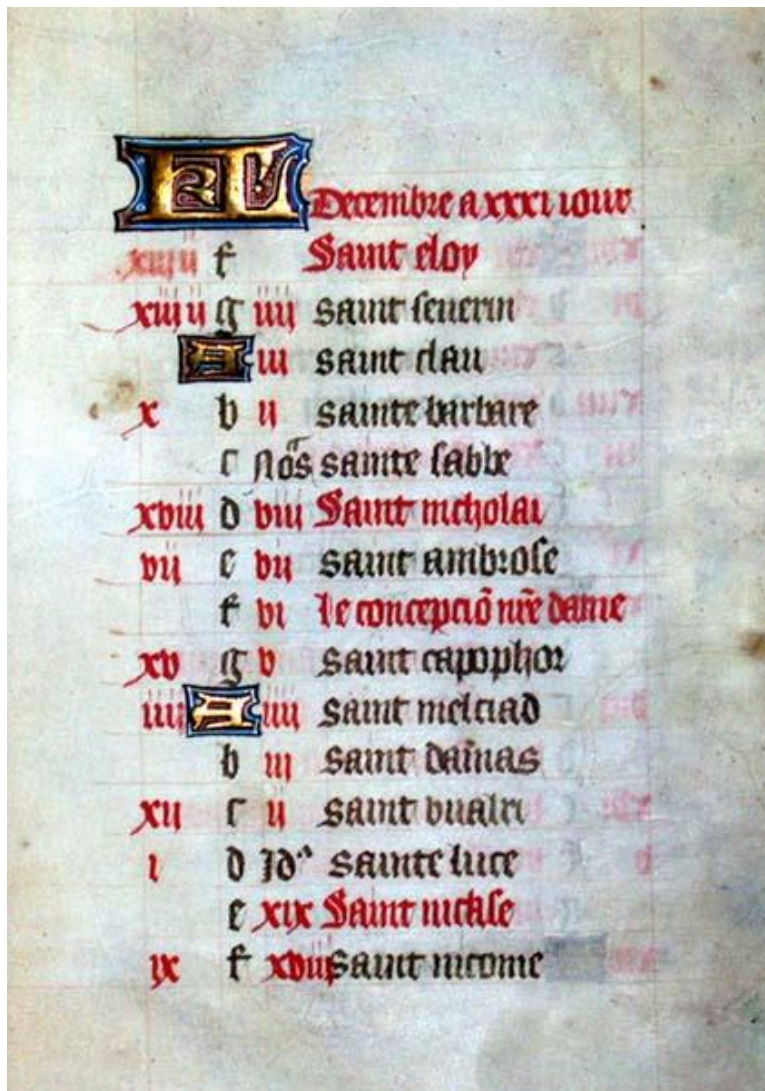




TRANSCRIPTION EXERCISE.

Past people and present society.





Along with the noteworthy feasts for December, as shown here, are as followed Saint Nicholas (December 6), the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (December 8) and Saint Nicasius (December 14). To the left of the manuscript is saints' named days.

here is a sequence of letters ranging from A to G: these are the Dominical letters that help to pinpoint the Sundays/ holy days in each year. As mentioned further down in the transcription exercise, There are also Roman numerals found in this transcription on the left are the Golden Numbers: these are to signify the forms of new moons and full moons during the course of the year. The other such significant column of roman numerals presents the ancient calendrical system of dating. It is important to state that the Glasgow University library had transcribed the quotation below. Which is as follows, 'The initials 'KL', picked out in glorious gold leaf at the top of the page, stand for 'Kalends', the first day of the month. The other fixed points in the month were the 'nones' and 'ides', found here in abbreviated forms. In the Roman system, all days were located by counting backwards from these fixed points: thus, the 'iiii' next to the entry for Saint Severin near the top of the page stands for 'four days before the nones of December'.



'Matins and Lauds: these were prayed together, during the night or upon rising. Prime: the first hour of the day (around 6am). Terce: the third hour (9am). Sext: the sixth hour (noon). None: the ninth hour (3pm). Vespers: evensong (at early evening). Compline: said before retiring.'

Both folios are from GLASGOW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT ' Book of the month, book of hours, 2003, <<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/files/special/exhibns/month/dec2003.html>>, [Last accessed 12/05/22]. As well as the boxed quotations, the software wouldn't allow me to footnote it.

Transcription Exercise

The leaf's for this transcription exercise that I will be analysing come from the mid-fifteenth-century 'Book of Hours' made in Spain for King Alphonso V of Aragon, who features in some of the illumination (Additional 28962, f.281v). Taken from the British Library dating circa 1400-1600 the renaissance watched an insurgence of secular patrons. Historical texts and all documentation saw influences from the Italian humanist era. From the 1450's handmade books started to fade out due to the so-called Guttenberg printing press; a very important piece of history that paved the way for mass production. Despite this spike in mass production manuscripts continued throughout the late Middle Ages.

The book of hours was none other than an ecclesiastical text, comprising of devotional prayers and psalms, placing virgin Mary and her stories at the centre of the codex. The book features a gothic script on each foliage – this was typical for circa c1250- 1500. Furthermore, the outer design of the folios in the book of hours features in what resembles an early 15th century French boarder. The codex opens with a calendar to which each month, shows a listing of a saint and a feast marked out in red ink¹. The leaf of the manuscript also shows visible pricking marks and ruled lines to which the binder would have used to create the codex. The fact that the time was taken in making, each page was and continues to still be as fascinating as ever. It is important to state that the dates shown in this transcription are as follows:- Saint Nicholas (December 6), the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (December 8) and Saint Nicasius (December 14). Moreover, on the left column before the saint's days were labelled are a set of letters ranging from A-G; the purpose of this is dominical lettering is chosen for the well-respected well to do family to understand and remember when and were each day of worship and sabbath laid upon. This foliage also features golden Roman Numerals at the far left of the page signalling what is either a new moon or full moon at the time of worship. additionally, it remains important to discuss the fact that the roman system days were positioned and understood by counting backwards from both the fixed letters G to A and with the help of the stages of the moon, the saint's day will line up. 'Thus, the 'iiii' next to the entry for Saint Severin near the top of the page stands for 'four days before the nones of December'.² From a printer's point of view these extravagant details connote two significant factors; the first being, the attention to detail that the printer/author or patron (if one will allow) would have taken to make this manuscript in order for a daily worship to proceed. The second as noteworthy factor would be the way in which these attention to details connote the wealth, status and power of the family who wanted to worship Christ the lord. Thus, thereafter the printers had produced a manuscript for Alphonso 1st. it eventually went on to be a medieval best seller; hence a less extravagant versions after circa c1500.

Medieval well known and renowned historian 'Christopher du Hamel comments, their cultural impact was wide and deep: 'to the great majority of the medieval population of Europe, the first book they knew, and often the only one, must have been the Book of Hours'. They were even used to teach children how to read, the term 'Primer' coming from the Hour of Prime, recited early in the morning'.³ It has even been suggested that the book of hours were used for day to day activities, with a few differences between the folios such as 'three Psalms said at Matins changing according to the day of the week. Designed to be a constant companion throughout the day and easily held in the

¹ Origin for the word red letter days which is now widely used in today's society.

² GLASGOW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY : SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT ' *Book of the month, book of hours*, 2003, <<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/files/special/exhibns/month/dec2003.html>>, [Last accessed 12/05/22].

³ Glasgow University,2003.

hand, copies are often small and eminently portable. Although our manuscript is by no means a vast folio volume, at 23 x 17 cm nor can it be described as pocket sized. It's generally clean appearance makes it difficult to imagine it being used on a daily basis as it was intended.' Clearly, from this quotation studies show now that the book of hours is a complex and a misunderstood source as its clear intended use has still not been established. As time progresses historians will be able to decipher what and why the book had so much significance on medieval society.

The second transcription this essay is analysing is folio 40 entitled the Nativity. Which was an equally important notion as the book depicts the holy virgin Mary's life in the infancy stages with Christ the lord. The 'Illustration of the Annunciation accompanying Matins (folio 22r),(moreover) the Blessing is placed at Lauds (31v), (and) the Nativity is located at Prime (40v), (with) the Annunciation to the Shepherds at Terce (45v). Further down below, Sext is illustrated by the Adoration of the Magi (49r), and the Flight into Egypt at Vespers (55r).⁴ It has also been said that there were two miniatures not presented in the book of hours to perfect the sequence for the Hours of worshiping for the Virgin Mary within this manuscript: Not forgetting 'the Presentation in the Temple for None (52r), and the Coronation of the Virgin for Compline (61r)'⁵. There was definite inclusion of characters undeniably aided the popularity of Books of Hours, it is apparent and imperative that they also perform both a functional role in acting and a visual aids to the transcripiture text.....' as the Guttenberg's press, was only just introduced, this so called functional role for a viewing aid becomes extremely important as it introduced a corridor for all classes to worship the Lord. Universally this also helps both the prospects of the kingdom in regard to monetary value and the way in which societies ranks where able to relate to each other when mutually addressing God.⁶ Like bookmarks, they flag up major sections of the work and also provide themes upon which to meditate - or, as Roger S. Wieck describes it, they are themselves 'painted prayers'.⁷ Thus, leading the medieval nation to see the book of hours and the story of Jesus through their minds eye, not just through reading these stories but through depictions, that all ages and abilities can interpret. The wider historical insights that can be derived from this is that religion was in essence a universal language that had no barriers when it came to religion. One could even go as far as saying that these key signifiers or painted prayers became the foundation of popular books we know today. For example, children's books in today's modern society, almost all incorporate illustrations to which children cherish right the way through to adulthood.

The final component transcription this essay is to compare and contrast the way in which historians have deciphered how to transcribe these two folios from the book of hours. The book itself were not translated into a legible English language up until the mid-1990s. There have been older translations by Babette Deutsch in 1947 and Arthur L Peck again in 1961 along with many other historical journals. Most recently Annemarie s Kidder in 2001, whose translation seemed to be the foundation of new historical plausibility within the book of hours. It has been said that stunden-Buch, the infamous 'religious poet, it fell out of favour in the later twentieth century, as he came to be understood as a pillar of literary modernism, before being subsequently rediscovered, not as a Christian text, but as a work of turn-of-the-century Lebensphilosophie and literary Jugendstil. In recent translations, however, this shift of emphasis from the spiritualto the aesthetic and the contextual is not so apparent. It is striking how many of the translators approach the text from a

⁴ Glasgow University, 2003.

⁵ Glasgow University, 2003.

⁶ Glasgow University, 2003.

⁷ Glasgow University, 2003.

religious or ideological perspective’⁸. Thus, an interesting approach indeed to understand and interpret the book of hours, on the one hand, religion is an open interpretation to all however they will, but at the same time; the old Latin language and pictures depict a purpose in order for audiences to understand. The previous historian’s methodology could be proposed as faulty to an extent as the on the other hand, history is built upon facts, and an ideological perspective leads one to think that the way in which historians have translated this could be somewhat inaccurate. No historian has been labelled as atheist to the study. This statement is by no means trying to demean or diminish any of the good work translated over the years. But it is however, raising an awareness to the study itself and the way in which study’s should be interpreted both with and without said attitudes, beliefs and values added to the equation. The way in which historian Helen Bridge states that ‘problem posed by translating the Stunden-Buch has less to do with how one interprets the ‘God’ the poems address, or with whether one believes they were divinely inspired, than with the question of how to create an equivalent tone in English. While the imagery of the poems is often opaque and enigmatic in its merging of the physical and the spiritual, their vocabulary and syntax create an air of simplicity which is further underscored by melodic rhythms, insistent rhymes, and repetitions of sounds’.⁹ Thus leading future historians to lean on the fence when it comes to buch’s theory of the study, on the one hand hymns in the bible are of course melodic and the stories of Mary and Jesus are famously renowned but on the other hand this again is underpinned by a historian whom uses their religion to influence the ways in which society now interprets the book of hours. Suggestions to the study would be that later historians may want to use a non-religious approach in order to understand the book and its purposes within the medieval period. This essay served to understand, approach and transcribe the two folios above. The essay done this by understanding the already transcribed texts, interpret the histories surrounding the book and therefore moved on to critically analysing historians approaches to the study, all approaches are valid, but wider history suggests that we have only scratched the surface of the book of hours and what its purpose may have been.

Approx. words 2000.

⁸ Helen Bridge, ‘reviewed work of Rainer Maria Rilke; The Book of Hours by Christine McNeill and Patricia McCarthy: Rainer Maria Rilke’s The Book of Hours; A New translation with commentary by Susan Ranson and Ben Hutchinson, (Translation and literature, Edinburgh university press, vol,18, no,2), 2009, p.260.

⁹ Helen Bridge, Reviewed works of the book of hours, 2009, p. 262.

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