

**Image and Meaning
in the
Floral Borders
of the
Hours of Catherine of Cleves**

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Introduction

The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves, produced in the Netherlands in the early 15th century, is one of the most beautiful and complex manuscripts of the late Middle Ages. The Master's remarkable originality in his choice and depiction of imagery in the borders of this manuscript has been the focus of much of the literature on the manuscript. Equally inventive is his symbolic use of the floral images in these borders, yet little has been made of this subject. An understanding of the meaning of these floral border images is, however, important to a complete understanding of the manuscript. Of particular interest are the realistic flowers seen in the borders of the illuminations of the first quarter of the manuscript—the Hours of the Virgin and the Hours of the Cross. These realistic floral images will be the focus of this paper.

The method the Master used to select and depict the realistic floral images in the borders of the Hours of the Virgin and the Hours of the Cross shows evidence of the influence of the *Devotio Moderna*, a vital philosophical movement in the Netherlands of the late Middle Ages having a strong influence on the culture within which the Master worked. I will structure this study of the Master's use of floral symbolic imagery on three of the tenets of this philosophy.¹

Three tenets of the *Devotio Moderna* in particular are in accord with the Master's choice of plant forms and his use of them as symbols in the border. The first tenet is the value of study of the immediate physical world as a means of understanding God's will. Accordingly, the Master looked to the immediate world to find his models for the images of recognizable plant forms seen in his borders.

The second tenet is the value of individual experience and interpretation in gaining that understanding of God's will. The Master found symbolic meaning in these real plants, based not only upon accepted canonical iconography, but also upon his own experience, including both experience with the plants as they grew and experience with the uses of these plants described in herbals. In several cases, these plants are seen for the first time in art in the borders of the Cleves Master.

The third tenet is the value of expressing this personal understanding of God's will in terms of daily common experience. While the Master used the flowers of established church symbolism, he also used plant forms that he had taken from daily experience, using these plants to convey a vernacular, rather than a canonical symbolic meaning. The Master went farther in his imaginative exaggeration to emphasize symbolism in these common plants with their vernacular meaning. This exaggeration of certain parts of an otherwise realistic floral image is one of the clues demonstrating which images were used symbolically. The influence of the tenets can be seen, then, in the Master's 1) observation of plant forms, 2) interpretation of these forms, and 3) expression of them in forms that emphasized that symbolism.

In the Hours of the Virgin and the Hours of the Cross, the Master used the rose, violet, pea, physalis, calendula, daffodil, strawberry, bindweed, nightshade, mugwort, and honesty in borders that relate to scenes of the life of the Virgin and the Passion of Christ. More specifically, he used *Rosa Gallica* var. *officinalis*, *Viola odorata*, *Pisum sativum*, *Physalis alkekengi*, *Calendula officinalis*, *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, *Fragaria vesca*, *Convolvulus*, *Solanum dulcamara*, *Artemisia vulgaris*, and *Lunaria annus*.

¹ L. M. J. Delaissé. *A Century of Dutch Manuscript Illumination* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: U of Cal P, 1960) 10–11.

Many of these images had not been seen in illumination before the Cleves Master. Those taken from church iconography were changed to emphasize their meaning in ways that had not been seen before.

Within the borders of the first two sets of hours, the Master further related these symbolic floral images to the imagery of the miniature. The result of this was twofold. First, the relationship of the border image to the symbolism of the miniature reinforced the meaning of the miniature. Second, the relationship of border image to miniature enlarged the meaningful area of the page.

The Master's breadth of choice and individual handling of the floral images in the borders of the Cleves Hours often make these images difficult to recognize and to interpret today. By a series of comparisons one can see that these images are important to a complete understanding of the Cleves Hours. By comparing the images in the borders to plants known to have grown in the Netherlands in the late Middle Ages, one can see that the Master did indeed choose his images from live models. By comparing his choice of plants to those plants described in herbals and used symbolically in literature, one can see that the Master's choice of plants was often guided by non-visual influences. By comparing the floral images in the borders with both the images of the real plants and the other images of the same plant within the borders themselves, one can see that the Master often exaggerated parts of the image to emphasize this symbolism. Finally, by comparing the meaning of the exaggerated image in the border to the meaning of the miniature, one can see that the border image does indeed reflect and support the symbolic meaning of the miniature, adding significantly to the meaning of the whole.

Visual Sources and Textual Influences

James Marrow observes that “There is no simple linear development of Dutch book illumination during the first half of the fifteenth century.”² More specifically he concludes that “the catholic interests of the Cleves Master frustrate attempts to establish a pervasive pattern of dependence upon any single artistic source. The Cleves Master was one of those rare personalities who successfully combined interest in a broad range of past and contemporary artistic currents with a good measure of his own invention. . . .”³ This is not to say, however, that lines of influence and development cannot be discovered for this inventive and ingenious artist, and the fact that one must look in disparate places to discover them makes the search all the more interesting. One example of this might be a possible relationship of the finials of the gate in “Meeting at the Golden Gate” [M-p. 144] with certain details of Hieronymus Bosch.

Visual sources for the Master’s floral images in the borders can be seen in Pucelle’s pea pods, the Limbourg’s larkspur, and such English manuscripts as the Ormesby Psalter. More immediate sources can be seen in the work the Boucicaut Master, Master Poincian, and the Master of Zweder of Culemburg. While the Master followed their pictorial traditions in his images of the rose and the violet, sources for specific plant images used by the Master other than the pea have not been found in earlier illumination.

To understand the textual influences upon the Master’s choice of plant and use of plant as symbol, we must place them in the context of the *Devotio Moderna*.⁴ This was a philosophy, strong in the Netherlands in the late Middle Ages, that fostered a “more direct, personalized approach to religious tenets” than the church had heretofore allowed.⁵ One principle of the group was that all the world, if studied directly, could tell the beholder both of God and of man himself. Related to the concepts of Nominalism, this philosophy encouraged the direct observation of the specific in the environment of the observer rather than the contemplation of the ideal in a more rarefied environment.⁶ Both artist and philosopher followed the direction of St. Thomas Aquinas in believing that, as Georges Duby puts it, “The soul derived its knowledge from the perceptible world. If man wished to see what God had shaped, he must open his eyes.”⁷

Panofsky comments on the difficulties of identifying which plants are used symbolically by any one artist when all plants were philosophically seen as a potential symbol. “We have to ask ourselves whether or not the symbolical significance of a given motif is a matter of established representational tradition (as is the case with the lilies); whether or not a symbolological interpretation can be justified by definite texts or agrees with ideas demonstrably alive in the period and presumably familiar to its artists. . . and to what extent such a symbolical interpretation is in keeping with the historical position and personal tendencies of the individual master.”⁸

2 Marrow, 51.

3 Marrow, 96.

4 Delaissé, *Dutch Manuscript Illumination* 10–11.

5 Randall, “Pea Pods” 378.

6 Panofsky, *ENP* 8.

7 Georges Duby. *The Age of the Cathedrals* trans Eleanor Levieux and Barbara Thompson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1981) 151.

8 Panofsky, *ENP* 142.

Of Panofsky's list of possible sources only one, established representational tradition, is visual. Also mentioned are texts, ideas, and "the position and personal tendencies of the individual master." All of these must be taken into consideration in a complete study of the symbolism of the floral images in the borders of the Cleves Hours.

A major textual source of inspiration was the herbal, a compilation of descriptions of plants and the medicinal properties of each. In accord with the philosophy of the *Devotio Moderna* was the concept, found in many herbals, that each plant bears upon it marks placed there by God indicating that plant's use, and that one can read God's message by studying the plant directly. This in turn was based upon ancient practices and the concept of sympathetic magic. What a plant looked like indicated the part of the body to be healed by that plant. Hepatica leaves remaining from the previous year look like diseased livers, hence its name and its use for medicine. Lungwort leaves are spotted like diseased lungs, again indicating the source of the name and the use in medicine. According to this concept, plants with red flowers cured diseases of the blood, and plants with yellow flowers were often used for jaundice. Color, shape, season of bloom, growing environment, taste, all were clues placed there by God to be read by every man who wished to see. Gertrude Schiller, in *Iconography of Christian Art*, points out that the flowers on panel paintings of the period "are intended as allusions to paradise and the new life in general. . . . Beyond this, the flowers have a special meaning based on earlier plant symbolism or on their properties as medicinal plants."⁹ Further, Haig writes in the *Floral Symbolism of the Great Masters*: "here herbalism and magic step very close to symbolism."¹⁰ Lynn White, Jr. adds that "Indeed, allegory was, in a sense, a critical method designed to unearth the sort of truth which that age wanted"—a truth to be used both in medicine and in art.¹¹

The herbals were a crossroads wherein plant, magic, science, and religious iconography met. It was a meeting point that was primarily textual rather than visual. Most of the herbals between 500 and 1500 were either not illustrated or were illustrated with copies that were themselves copies of classic works such as the Dioscorides *De Materia Medica*. Since the copies were made by monks chosen for their artistic ability rather than for their familiarity with the plants they drew, each consecutive copy become more of a stylized decoration—owing far more to the artistic traditions of the Middle Ages than to direct observation of the plants themselves. Those few herbals that were well illustrated were often intended as presentation pieces, and not for use in the field or workshop.

That the herbals, if they were illustrated, were most often illustrated with vague and distorted likenesses has important implications in any search for the sources of influence on the borders of the Cleves Hours.¹² Pächt overstates his case when he says that "we have in fact an uninterrupted pictorial sequence which stretches from the Greek and Roman plant portrait up to the beginning of nature studies in the early Renaissance."¹³ Granted there are herbals throughout the Middle Ages that can trace a heritage to fine classical examples of realism. These herbals are few, however, and were more often than not the products of a wealthy church or court atelier. The vast majority of the herbals available to artists of less wealthy ateliers had either no illustrations or illustrations so unrealistic or stylized that they were useless. In these cases, what was transmitted was not the form of the flower but its use. The herbals

9 Gertrude Schiller. *Iconography of Christian Art*. V. 1. Translated by Janet Seligman. (Greenwich, CN: New York Graphic Society, 1969) 81.

10 Elizabeth Haig. *The Floral Symbolism of the Great Masters* (NY: Dutton, 1913) 25.

11 Lynn White, Jr. "Natural Science and Naturalistic Art in the Middle Ages" (*American Historical Review* LII, 1947) 425.

12 Frank J. Anderson. *An Illustrated History of the Herbals* (NY: Columbia UP, 1977) 3.

13 Otto Pächt. "Early Italian Nature Studies and the Early Calendar Landscape" (*Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, Journal* XIII, 1950) 26.

gave the artist a textual basis for a plant's possible meaning rather than a visual schema for its depiction.

Illuminators of the late Middle Ages were faced with the problem of having no models for the plants they read about in the herbals. However, since the plants discussed in these herbals were spoken of as good or evil, it followed that these plants might be useful as symbols of good and evil in the visual arts.¹⁴ In the environment of the philosophy of the *Devotio Moderna*, it followed that the artist went into the garden and the field and looked for himself, as Adam of St. Victor did when he saw "Christ and the meaning of his passion in a walnut."¹⁵

In reading the herbals for sources of symbolism one should remember that the word "vertue" throughout the herbals meant power or strength, from the Latin *vir* meaning "man." The connotation of virtue or goodness as we use it came later as the religious meanings of the plants bypassed the medical use of them. The phrase "might makes right" would, under these circumstances, be reduced to a tautology. The problems encountered in this process of change from pagan to Christian, from medicinal to symbolic, and from verbal to visual were profound. They are reflected in these fragments of the *De Viribus Herbarum* of Macer Floridus.

Violet: "Neither the rose colour nor the lillie may overpass the violet, neither in beaute, neither in strength or vertue, neither in odour."¹⁶

Rose: "The rose as it seems to us may well be called flower of flowers since she over passeth all other flowers in savour and in kind of manner."¹⁷

Lily: "After the gentil and golden roses rightfully shall folowe next the silver lily, the which, if they be likened to the roses, gives not stead neither in savour nor fairness. And in many causes the lily is also profitable to man as the roses for medicines."¹⁸

In these fragments one can see several of the themes I have previously discussed. There is the judgment of the flowers as good based on appearance and "vertue." The use of gold and silver is intended to underline the worth of the plants. The writer uses poetic license in calling the rose of medicine golden because in fact the rose used by the apothecaries is a bright mauve magenta, or, as less poetic herbalists of the period call it, red. The concept of value here is more important than identifying or depicting the plant visually. The writer is a writer and not an artist. We also see the beginning of the conflation of connotations of the word "vertue," as well as the problem of priorities among these virtuous flowers. The last quotation reminds us of the fact that these are excerpts from a medical book and not a religious text. Actually, these are each quotations from much longer entries for each plant, the remainder of which are taken up with medicines to be made from them, for the *De Viribus Herbarum* was primarily a book of medicines.

The influences affecting the work of the Cleves Master included both church and vernacular sources and encompassed both visual and textual sources as well. Among these textual sources, one that shows considerable influence upon the Master's work is the writings on the *Devotio Moderna*, a major philosophical force in the Netherlands at the time that encouraged direct observation of the commonplace as

14 Haig, 25.

15 Plummer, *The Hours* 7.

16 Gosta Frisk. *A Middle English Translation of Macer Floridus* (Uppsala, 1949, Nendeln: Krouss Reprint, 1973) 76.

17 Frisk, 90.

18 Frisk, 93.

a means of understanding God. Medieval herbals were another source of influence on the Master's work. These gave the artist a rich textual vocabulary of plants seen to be either good or evil. The transmission of information about these plants was textual, with the visual illustration often either absent or very close to useless. It took the artist's going into the fields and gardens to bring this wealth of iconographical material back into the realm of the visual arts. Both the *Devotio Moderna* and the herbals of the early 15th century allowed, and even encouraged, him to do so. The Cleves Master thrived in this environment.

Image and Meaning in the Floral Borders

One can see that, particularly in the Hours of the Virgin and the Hours of the Cross, the first quarter of the volume, certain of these images have meaning, and that an understanding of that meaning is necessary to the understanding of the total iconography of the illumination. The images chosen for this study are those that fit the following list of criteria, derived from the previous discussion of the *Devotio Moderna* and its relevance to the understanding of the Cleves Hours in providing a context within which to study the Master's observation, interpretation, and expression of these plant images.

As each plant image is discussed, I will demonstrate how it is meaningful within the context of these three tenets. The first tenet is the value of study of the immediate physical world as a means of understanding God's will. The Master used recognizable images taken from his observation of common plants seen in daily life. The second tenet is the value of individual experience and interpretation in gaining that understanding. The Master used these common plants, many of them not previously seen in illumination, and interpreted their symbolic meaning based on visual as well as textual references to the plants in herbals and other literature. The third tenet is the value of expressing the understanding of God's will in terms of daily personal experience. The Master portrayed these plants realistically so that the image was recognized by the viewer as the plant, and therefore the symbol. Further, the Master exaggerated these plant forms to place stronger emphasis upon that symbolism.

The final step in the study of each of these plants in the context described above is to explore the possibility that the symbolic meaning of the plant relates the symbolic floral image in the border to the narrative scene in the miniature. Calkins's comment that "some margins contain iconographical elaborations on, or oppositions to, the themes of the miniatures," is true for the floral borders of the Hours of the Virgin and the Hours of the Cross of the Cleves Hours.¹⁹

The plants that fit the criteria based on the three tenets are the rose, violet, pea, winter cherry, calendula, daffodil, strawberry, bindweed, nightshade, mugwort (an *Artemesia*), and honesty (a *Crucifer*). A separate note on the use of an *Artemesia* in northern European border illumination in place of the more Mediterranean *Acanthus* will follow the discussion of the individual plants. All are known to have grown in northern Europe in the Middle Ages, and at least one, the daffodil, grew only in the north. All plants were common plants of gardens and hedgerows, in keeping with the influence of the *Devotio Moderna* on the use of common every-day objects as symbols. Most of them were described in the common herbals of the period and it is from these herbals that much of the symbolism was taken.

Significantly, more than half of these plants had not been seen in illumination before the work of the Cleves Master. Both the images and their symbolic use in art are original with the Master. Further, those that had been used in earlier illuminations are all seen in the Cleves Hours in forms differing from their previous depictions.

We will look first at the most canonical of floral symbols, the trinity of the rose, the lily, and the violet. Bernard of Clairvaux defined their meaning in his statement, "Mary is the violet of humility, the lily of chastity, the rose of charity."²⁰

¹⁹ Calkins, "The Master" 27.

²⁰ *French and Flemish Illuminated Manuscripts from Chicago Collections* (Chicago: Newberry Library, 1969) 7.

The rose is easily identified as the apothecary's rose—*Rosa Gallica* var. *officinalis* (Figure 1). “*Officinalis*” indicates its medical use, as does its common name of apothecary's rose. This is one of several plants seen in these borders having both medicinal and symbolic use. As Baumeister has noted, roses are depicted in two ways in the Cleves Hours, in paint and in pen and wash.²¹ The painted rose, identifiable as the apothecary's rose, is the one that indicates by its presentation that it may have symbolic meaning. It is depicted in a way that is realistic enough to allow for its positive identification. The loose placement of the mauve magenta petals around a boss of yellow stamens and the elongated green calyx indicate that this is the apothecary's rose. It is a plant of known symbolic meaning in the period. The painted full-blown rose is seen only twice, once in the border of the miniature depicting the Annunciation to the Virgin (Figure 2), and once in the border of the miniature depicting the Death of the Virgin (Figure 3). In both cases the flowers are seen from the front at the end of gently waving branches. The shape and placement of the leaves along the stem are also typical of this rose, although the Master sometimes gives a leaf an extra leaflet to balance the total form within the space of the border. The stem too is exaggerated in its wavy line to fit the balance of the decoration. A final aspect of the rose shown in changed form is of particular interest—the depiction of the



Figure 1: *Rosa Gallica* var. *officinalis*, the apothecary's rose.



Figure 2: Annunciation to the Virgin. (G-f. 31v [10])



Figure 3: Death of the Virgin. (M-p. 156 [14])

²¹ Baumeister, 83.

“thorns,” which are shown here not to be thorns but rather to be gracefully waving tendrils along the branch. This calls to mind the medieval metaphor of Mary as the rose without thorns.

Greetings to you, Mother of holy/healing plants
Thorn rose, Thorny place
Blooming sprig, yet thornless.²²

The image, with its thorns turned into tendrils, has been changed from its natural state into an image that even more closely symbolizes the Virgin. This fits the third criterion—the image changed or exaggerated to emphasize its symbolic meaning. Both miniatures bordered by this image of the thornless rose are miniatures specifically devoted to the Virgin—the Annunciation to the Virgin and the Death of the Virgin. Thus, the border image of the thornless rose relates to and emphasizes the meaning of the miniature. It does so by the unusual treatment of the visual image to conform to the textual image of the thornless rose.

The lily, second of the trinity of canonical flowers, is *Lilium candidum*, simply called white lily in the Middle Ages because it was the only white lily known in Europe at the time. The lily had been used with the rose as a symbolic flower in Christian art at least as early as the 6th century when they were so used in the apse mosaic of Paradise with Christ enthroned in San Vitale, Ravenna (Figure 4). The lily was used in the visual arts even more than the rose because of its special iconographic importance in the scene of the Annunciation to the Virgin. It is used three times in the Cleves Hours, in the Annunciation to the Virgin (Figure 2), the Last Judgment (Figure 18), and the Fear of the Lord (M-p. 68 [58]). Each time, it is shown within the miniature itself rather than in the border. It is interesting to compare the treatment of the lily—the “compulsatory lily” as Wilfrid Blunt termed it—with the treatment of the plants in the borders.²³ The lily in the miniatures is reduced to a slender green line with shorter green lines extending outward along its length. Three tiny white flowers grow from the tip and sides of the stem. This is indeed a “compulsatory lily.” The Master has placed it in the miniatures exactly where tradition places it within the iconography of the scene. That is all he has done. There is none of the interest in form or meaning that is so striking in the less proscribed images of the borders. The comparison lends weight to the thesis that the more vital images in the borders are intended to be significant in terms of the illumination as a whole. This comparison is particularly striking in the miniature of the Annunciation to the Virgin (Figure 2) where the lily is barely noticeable in its pot at the hem of the Virgin’s cloak. Inches away from this spindly specimen, the rose and the columbine twine vigorously along the border.



Figure 4: Paradise with Christ enthroned (detail) San Vitale, Ravenna.

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Bernard’s violet of humility is seen often in the borders. It is seen most realistically in the border of the Death of the Virgin, (Figure 3), where its curving blue violet flowers and curled young green leaves twine in the corners of the trellis work together with the rose and the marigold. The plant is seen as a whole, as if it were still growing close to the ground in humility. There is a problem in the identification of one form that might be a violet seen from the side but has also been identified, with little evi-

22 Lottlisa Behling. *Die Pflanze in der mittelalterlichen Tafelmalerel* (Cologne: Bohlau, 1967) 51.

23 Wilfrid Blunt. *The Art of Botanical Illustration* (London: Collins, 1955, 3rd edition) 18.

dence or none, as a larkspur. This image is shown without the foliage that might make identification more sure.

I will discuss only those forms that can be identified with certainty as a violet. With this limitation, identification of the remaining examples of those forms with a real plant is certain, since they are depicted in a clear realistic style, and in the case of the Death of the Virgin border, are shown, as with the rose, with their distinctive leaves and stems. It is the *Viola odorata*, the fragrant violet. The violet suggests humility by its quiet coloring, its hanging flower heads, and its closeness to the earth. The violet is often depicted with its foliage, as if the whole low-growing plant were being shown, as is the case in the borders of the Death of the Virgin (Figure 3). It is often the case in this book of hours, that plants shown with their natural foliage are given more space and therefore more importance in the border. This treatment can be an indication that the plant is meant to signify as well as decorate.



Figure 5: Birth of the Virgin. (G-f. 20 [5])

In three cases—the Birth of the Virgin, (Figure 5). The Taking of Christ, (Figure 6), and Moses and John the Evangelist Kneeling before a Monstrance (Figure 7)—the violet is shown not at the bottom of the page as if growing from the ground as its symbolism of humility would suggest. It is shown rather at the top of the page, prominently shown just above the miniature. In all three cases, this obvious reversal of the violet's usual symbolic position can be taken to represent the triumph of humility. In the case of the miniature of the Birth of the Virgin (Figure 5), the meaning of the violet follows the canon of its dedication to the Virgin. In the case of the scene of Moses and John kneeling (Figure 7), in itself a humble act, the symbol of the humble violet become triumphant is reinforced by the presence, also at the top of the border, of a flower of the bindweed. The bindweed, as I shall show, also symbolized humility because of its humble stature and low growth. In both cases, it is not an exaggeration of form that emphasizes the meaning of the image in relationship to the miniature, but rather the placement of the image relative to the miniature that is noticeably and significantly the reverse of its usual placement based on its symbolic meaning. In this case the position signifies the triumph of humility.

In the miniature of the Taking of Christ (Figure 6), we see this meaning stated even more clearly. The violet with its foliage is the only flower at the top of this miniature of Christ's humble acceptance of the kiss of Judas. The flower form is realistically depicted against a plain background without pen work. While the foliage is exaggerated here to fill the decorative field, it is recognizable as violet leaves. The shape of the total image is echoed at the bottom of the page by matching sprigs of columbine. While the exaggeration of the leaves is done primarily for decorative reasons, it also simplifies the space that might otherwise be busy with rinceau. Our eyes focus on the flower of the violet in its place of triumph. The placement of the image reinforces the meaning of the miniature below it. Here the Master used a flower within the traditional canon of church iconography, but in a new and innovative way to emphasize that traditional meaning.



Figure 6: The Taking of Christ. (G-f. 47 [17])



Figure 7: Moses and John the Evangelist Kneeling before a Monstrance. (G-f. 133 [71])



Figure 8: The Annunciation to Anne. (G-f. 11 [3])

The garden pea, *Pisum sativum*, has had a long history in illumination, having been used previously in such manuscripts as the Ormsby Psalter and the works of Pucelle. It is worth mentioning here that this plant as it is depicted in the illuminations of the late Middle Ages is always the garden pea, *Pisum sativum*, and not the sweet pea, *Lathyrus odoratus*, as Randall has identified it. The sweet pea was not discovered until the 17th century.²⁴ Plummer and Marrow both comment on the use of peas in their pods as symbols of fertility. On the folio of the singing angels opposite the Annunciation to Anne (Figure 8), the Master fills three sides of the border with illusionistic open pea pods and flowers. However, the Master emphasizes further the importance of the contents of the pod-womb by showing the peas in gold, a color usually reserved for symbolic use as in the wings and haloes of angels. Aside from—and in contrast to—the gold of the peas, the border is done in a lifelike and illusionistic style, including careful detail and modeling of the flowers and stems—even to the

24 Alice M. Coats. *Flowers and their Histories* (NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956) 137.

inclusion of bits of the twig on which the plants had climbed in the garden. Gorissen calls this illusionistic approach the herbarium motif, with the branch simulating a real branch stuck through the page of an herbarium of pressed plants.²⁵ As with some of the other images that we have seen to be related symbolically to the miniature, the pea flowers and pods are very large relative to the size of the figures in the miniature. They are shown against a plain background, the three sprigs and their pods taking up three sides of the border. In this border, we see a commonly known plant with a known symbolic meaning—fertility—used in a way that further emphasizes that symbolism by depicting the peas in gold. The meaning of the symbol is tied closely to the miniature since the angels face the illumination of the Annunciation to Anne. This is the first time that we see the symbolic image painted in gold. These gold images have a special relationship to the Virgin.

Perhaps the Master was not content with the gold peas lined up in their pods as a fitting symbol of the Holy Birth, possibly because of the number of peas to each pod. A better symbol would seem to be an image having only one sphere within the womb-like pod.



Figure 9: Joachim and Anne at the Golden Gate. (M-p. 144 [4])



Figure 10: Detail of Figure 9.

In the folio immediately following the miniature depicting the singing angels is one depicting the meeting of Joachim and Anne at the Golden Gate (Figure 9). At the bottom of this page in a vortex of the traditional rinceau is a pod of gold with a red-orange ball in its center. A realistic depiction, again with the exception of the use of gold, it permits its identification as a winter cherry, *Physalis alkekengi* (Figure 11), a plant grown in medieval gardens. The pod growing in nature is like a small

inflated balloon holding a single bright red orange fruit in the center of the sphere. Possibly the pod shape, even more reflecting the shape of a womb, and the single berry at the center caught the master's eye as a better symbol for the Holy Child in the womb of the Virgin. While this image is never shown dramatically larger than its surroundings, it is seen at least fourteen times throughout the manuscript. In each of these occurrences, with only one exception, the figure is done in gold. If we accept the hypothesis that the use of gold in these figures is an indication of the symbolic value of the figure, then the consistent use of gold for this figure is appropriate for the image of the Virgin womb. Further, the gold can be seen to be specifically reserved for the Virgin. In the border of the Angels singing at the Annun-

25 Gorissen, *Das Stundenbuch* 826.

ciation to St. Anne, the peas in the pod—the unborn child image—are in gold. In the winter cherry the pod—the womb image—is gold. In both cases, the image in gold represents the Virgin. This use of the winter cherry seems to be original with the Master.

Another floral border image with a symbolic meaning related to the Virgin is a yellow petaled flower of the *Compositae* family. It is one of the flowers known to us now in English as a marigold, *Calendula officinalis*. The plant was commonly grown in gardens as a source of medicine, as we have seen before with plants named “officinalis.” The plant is shown in the miniature of the Death of the Virgin (Figure 3) , together with its natural foliage against a plain background. The smooth yellow green leaves against the plain vellum are easily identified as the leaves of the calendula, as are the yellow daisy-like flowers.

Possibly the flower had its gold referent already in its name, which led it to be painted in gold, as in a canting color in heraldry, where the color of the image is a reference to or pun on the name. Because of its use as a gold offering to Mary, it then came to be known, in English at least, as the marigold. The Master depicts the marigold in two ways—realistically in the border of the Death of the Virgin with leaves and stems, and in an almost heraldic side view in gold in other borders.



Figure 11: *Physalis* species closely related to *P. alkekengi*.



Figure 12: *Calendula officinalis*, flower.



Figure 13: *Calendula officinalis*, flower from behind.

The French called the calendula “*soucie*” or “sorrow,” and used its image as a symbol of sorrow in such manuscripts as the *Livre du Cœur d’Amours Espris* of King René (1465), where the flower on the shield of the black knight is used symbolically to represent sorrow.²⁶ Since it was used medicinally in the medieval Netherlands, the connection of bitterness with sorrow might have established this symbolic use of the plant.²⁷ If so, then the plant’s use in the Cleves Hours may have this connotation of bitterness and sorrow as well in such borders as the one of the Birth of the Virgin (Figure 5). In such images the symbol of royalty—gold—is combined with the symbol of sorrow—calendula—and the two together make a fitting symbolic image for the Virgin. As I show, the meaning of at least one other floral image in the manuscript is based on its bitter taste.



Figure 14: *Narcissus pseudo-narcissus*.



Figure 15: *Narcissus p.* in Crucifixion by the Northwest German Master taken from *Die Pflanze in der Mittelalterlichen Tafelmalerei* by Lottlisa Behling.

The daffodil, *Narcissus pseudo-narcissus*, was not often seen as a visual symbol in the 15th century (Figure 14). Because it is a northern plant rather than a Mediterranean species it had no classic tradition in the arts. That it was foreign to that tradition is reflected in the Latin nomenclature. The daffodil was the false narcissus. Elizabeth Haig states conclusively that the daffodil was not used as a symbol in medieval art.²⁸ Lottlisa Behling and Margaret Freeman, however, both point to a panel painting by the Northwest German Master of the 15th century showing a clump of daffodil growing at the base of the Cross (Figure 15).²⁹ Dutch and German names for the plant, which usually blooms around Easter time,

26 *King René’s Book of Love*. Introduction and commentary by F. Unterkircher (NY: Braziller, 1975) Folio 18v, NP.

27 W. F. Daems. *Boec van Medicinen in Dietsche* (Leiden: Brill, 1967) 320.

28 Haig, 32.

29 Behling, 31-33. Margaret B. Freeman. *The Unicorn Tapestries* (NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dutton, 1976) 118–119.



Figure 16: Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple. (G-f. 23v [6])



Figure 17: Requiem Mass for the Deceased. (G-f. 104 [46])

include the word “Easter.” Behling lists the names as *osterblume*, *osteraglei*, *osterglocke*, *ostergloye*, and *osterlilie*.³⁰ Freeman comments that the plant can be seen as “perhaps suggesting the promise of Easter and the Resurrection.”³¹ I suggest that this is the symbolic meaning of the daffodil in the borders of the Cleves Hours.

The daffodil is seen six times in the borders of the Cleves Hours, twice in gold, twice in yellow, once in yellow and gold, and once in a light yellow green. Each time it is seen without stem or leaves in the center of a rinceau vortex. It is seen in yellow in the borders of the miniatures depicting the Buffeting of Christ (Figure 19), and the Entombment (G-f. 73 [30])—both miniatures depicting the Passion—and in gold in the borders of the Assumption of the Virgin (G-f. 42 [15]) and the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple (Figure 16)—both miniatures depicting the life of the Virgin. Here again we see that the images done in gold are reserved specifically for the Virgin. The only time the daffodil is done in other



Figure 18: The Last Judgement. (M-p. 28 [49])

³⁰ Behling, 209.

³¹ Freeman, 119.

than yellow or gold is in the border of the miniature for the Requiem Mass for the Deceased (Figure 17), where it is seen in light green. This depiction is in the second quarter of the Hours, where it is not unusual to see plant images changed in both color and form, with no symbolic meaning involved. It is an example of the difference in treatment of these images between the first quarter of the manuscript and the second quarter, where the Master turned to an investigation of form apart from meaning. The flower seen in the border of the Last Judgement (Figure 18) is done full front and necessitates the use of both yellow and gold to differentiate between the trumpet and the perianth of the flower. We see that the plant is shown twice in its natural yellow, both times in the borders of scene of the Passion, and in gold twice in borders of scenes of the Virgin, once more indicating that this flower is important symbolically and is related to the Virgin in the miniature. In the border of the scene of the Last Judgement, a scene showing both Christ and the Virgin, the flower is shown, as we have seen, in both gold and yellow. Possibly the combination of yellow and gold in this image is intended not only to differentiate between parts of the flower, but to indicate that the Virgin Birth and the Passion, the beginning and ending of Christ's life, are united in the scene of His triumph.



Figure 19: The Buffeting of Christ. (G-f. 61 [23])



Figure 20: Detail of Figure 19.

Two plants in these floral borders seem to have taken their symbolic meaning, like the violet, from their color and their growing habits. One of these, the strawberry, *Fragaria vesca*, is a recognized symbol in Christian iconography in the 15th century that was used frequently in the borders of illustrated manuscripts. The red fruit and the white flower together with the trifoliate leaves were used symbolically.³² The red fruit and the white flower appearing on the plant at the same time made the plant particularly fitting for the Virgin, the red and white calling to mind the symbolism in the red of the rose for charity and the white of the lily for purity. The two symbols appear in the plant at the same time, just as the two sets of virtues appeared in the Virgin at the same time.

³² Haig, 30, 269.

In the border of the miniature of the Birth of the Virgin, we see an image wherein the artist uses both fruit and flower of the strawberry not merely on the plant at the same time, but joined together to make one complete image (Figure 5). The five white flower petals form the base behind the red fruit, which is set in the center of the inflorescence. The effect is somewhat similar to a narcissus with a white perianth and a light red trumpet. The conflation of the two images further emphasizes the relationship to the Virgin, graced with the virtues symbolized by white and red at the same time and in the same form. The two parts of the plant thus shown united in one image are painted realistically except for their being joined in this way, as if the Master had joined the fruit and flower of his model in the studio and painted the results realistically rather than creating the joined image on the page.

The strawberry is used often in the borders of the Hours, but never again in this ingenious way. The Master reverts to the standard image, which, in spite of being used twelve more times, only once diverges from the form it had in the traditional rinceau patterns of his predecessors. The flower is shown only in the border of the Birth of the Virgin.



Figure 21: Bindweed, a *Convolvulus* species.

Another plant used for its color and habit of growth is the bindweed, a *Convolvulus* species (Figure 21). The bindweed had an established symbolic meaning in the 15th century of representing humility, based

on its low trailing habit of growth and its pure white and blush pink flowers blooming close to the ground.³³ Seldom seen in northern illuminated manuscripts, the plant is well represented in Italian Herbals.³⁴ The bindweed is seen six times in the Cleves Hours, first at the border of the Designation of Joseph (Figure 22) where the two faded flowers or buds are shown in a traditional rinceau vortex and echo the drooping head of the figure of Joseph in the miniature. The flowers were done in silver, which has tarnished, making what originally was, except for the silver, a realistic representation somewhat hard to interpret. The flowers, either faded or in bud, are seen next in the upper border of the Flight into Egypt (Figure 23). Again, as with the violet, we see the Master's penchant for representing humility exalted by the placement of those flowers representing humility at the top of the border, relating border image to miniature by the placement of one relative to the other.



Figure 22: The Designation of Joseph. (G-f. 24 [7])

The form of the flower, botanically termed "*complanate*," indicates its bell-like shape. At a time when clocks were first used on church towers as well as bells to tell time, as in the Hours of prayer, the word "*glocke*" shift-

³³ Haig, 29.

³⁴ Behling 56-57.

ed its meaning from “bell” to “clock.” Its former meaning is retained in the German word for the plant, “windglocke.”

We also see this in early use in the daffodil’s older German name of “*osterglocke*” meaning “Easter bell.” The light pink striations on the “face” of the flower suggest that indications of the hours on the face of a clock or sundial. This would reinforce the significance of the flower, both bell and clock, as a symbol of time present and time passing.

The bindweed is next seen at the border of Joseph of Arimathaea before Pilate (Figure 24). Here the Master uses the plant in the way we have come to expect when he wanted the flower to have a special relationship to the miniature. The flowers and faded blooms taking up the right hand border, are shown in a way that indicates the artist’s understanding of the way the plant grows, with the open blooms along the stem behind the faded ones at the tip of the twining stem. Most of the flowers are wide open here, making the round white flowers with their light pink stripes more easily identified as symbols of time present.



Figure 24: Joseph of Arimathaea before Pilate. (G-f. 67 [27])



Figure 23: The Flight into Egypt. (G-f. 36 [13])

Gray tarnish shows around the edges of the flower, indicating again that the flowers were originally highlighted with silver. The forms at the tip of the stem can now be accurately identified as faded blooms rather than buds, since the faded flowers appear first at the tip of the plant as the plant grows in nature. The stem is a lightly drawn pen stroke, the leaves the traditional leaves of the rinceau. While these are drawn rather than painted, and in that way resemble the traditional rinceau, they are definitely subordinate to the pattern of the flowers, and support rather than detract from the pattern of their forms. The flowers themselves are shown against a plain background. The silver, like the gold of the plants we have discussed earlier, puts special emphasis on the image. This recalls the herbalist’s use of the word “golden” to describe the rose and “silver” for the lily, used in terms of reverence as much as color. The relationship of the plant to the miniature should be investigated. The flowers, painted realistically, take up one side of the border. The flowers, outlined in silver, are not enclosed in the traditional rinceau but shown against small spaces of blank vellum. In the miniature we see, as Plummer notes, Joseph, the “rich man of Arimathaea and secret disciple of Christ, bending forward humbly, his hat removed, as he approaches the enthroned Pilate to beg for the body of Jesus.”³⁵ Joseph, the rich man

35 Plummer, *The Hours*, comment on G-f. 67, Plate 27.



Figure 25: The Trinity in an Apse. (G-f. 77v [32])



Figure 26: Detail of Figure 25.

humbled, relates both visually and symbolically to the lowly bindweed, done in rich silver bowing humbly down the side of the border, the lines echoing the bent body of Joseph. The passing of time is also symbolized by the ratio of open flowers to faded ones. With each use of the plant in the series of illustrations of the passion more and more flowers are fading. Time itself is fading.

The plant is seen finally in the border of the miniature of the Trinity in an Apse (Figure 25), again along the right side of the border. The flowers, all of them faded here, are done realistically, and the leaves and stem are done in pen stroke reminiscent of the rinceau. These lines are even more slight and graceful than those of the former border, as if to lessen their weight still further in comparison to the fragile figures of the faded blooms. Here is a scene of triumph, with the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost reunited on the throne of Heaven. The humble bindweed here shown with all blooms spent is a statement of the passing of all relevance of time, indicating that the time for humility is over. Christ's earthly life culminates in his passion and His return to timeless Glory is complete.

The bittersweet nightshade, *Solanum dulcamara*, seen in the borders of four of the miniatures, might



Figure 27: Bittersweet nightshade, *Solanum dulcamara*.



Figure 28: Grandes Heures of Anne of Brittany.

be surprising if the Master's wide-ranging curiosity and choice of sources had not been previously established (Figure 27). Nightshades were not garden or field flowers, but rather hedge weeds occasionally brought into the borders of the herb gardens for their medicinal uses.^{36, 37} As I have shown, the herbals that might have shown this plant were without illustrations of sufficient quality to allow the artist to use them as models. While *S. nigrum*, a closely related species is more often cited as a medicinal herb, the *S. dulcamara* has the more colorful flower, which can be seen again in even greater detail in the Grandes Heures of Anne of Brittany c. 1500-08 (Figure 28). I have not found the plant in illumination before the Cleves Master. The common name of bitter-sweet is a reversed translation of the Latin *dulcamara*—*dulca* "sweet" and *mara* "bitter," alluding to the taste. That it was a member of a medicinal family could have established a meaning for the flower, like that of the calendula, as symbolizing medicine that is bitter but necessary for health.

In the border of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple (Figure 16) we see the bitter-sweet nightshade in the upper part of the left hand border, between the peacock of eternal life and a yellow green bird that might safely be called fantastic. Below this bird is another plant we have already seen—the gold daffodil, symbolic of Easter and of the Virgin. The petals of the nightshade here are dull gray violet, true to, but slightly duller than,

the plant in real life. This violet is also the color seen in the little crucifer that we have seen in other floral images relating to the Crucifixion. The yellow cluster of stamens extends well away from the petals in the center of the flower, seemingly fused into one element. Here they are done in dull yellow, not the bright yellow of the plant in real life. The flower's presence here in a border of the Crucifixion with the daffodil and its representation in the dark dull colors fitting for symbols of the Crucifixion support the hypothesis that this flower is indeed used to refer to the Crucifixion. This is in keeping with the symbolism of the plant in relationship to the Crucifixion as the bitter medicine of sacrifice that leads to the health of salvation.

Bittersweet nightshade is seen again in the upper part of the left hand border of the Flagellation of Christ (Figure 33). Once again it is in the company of a crucifer. The colors and the form are highly realistic in all details. The next use of this flower is in the borders of the Preparation of the Cross (Figure 29). The relationship of the plant to the Crucifixion seems clearly established by this point. The border of this miniature, an unusual one in the series of the Passion in book illumination, is itself unusual. While the rinceau is there, it is light and airy, almost Italianate in feeling. The images within the framework of the pen stroke stems are highly abstract and seem at first glance to be merely fantastic. Some of them are, some are not. Two can be identified with assurance. One is the winter cherry that we have

36 Rose Standish Nichols. *English Pleasure Gardens* (NY: Macmillan, 1902) 80.

37 Geoffrey Grigson. *The Englishman's Flora* (London: Phoenix House, 1958) 294.



Figure 29: The Preparation of the Cross. (G-f. 64 [25])



Figure 30: *Solanum dulcamara* growing in dry soil.

seen before. Another is the nightshade. Here the form has been exaggerated to emphasize the stamen cluster, which has been greatly elongated in relation to the petals, which are seen tightly curled back almost into a ball. This configuration of the petals and stamens is true to life in a plant that is grown in a very dry soil. Even here the Master may have taken as a model a real plant seen in a dry garden or hedgerow (Figure 30). The stamen cluster provides the symbolic meaning, the greatly extended cluster giving the Master a long form, sharp at the point, that restates the forms of the nails seen in the foreground of the miniature in a small cup for use in the preparation of the cross for the Crucifixion.

One of the more subdued of the floral images of the borders of the Cleves Hours is a small violet gray blossom, always seen without leaves and usually in the vortex of the rinceau. It is the flower of honesty, *Lunaria annua*, a member of the *Cruciferae* family. This, as might be suggested from the Latin family name—the cross-bearer—is enough to indicate its meaning (Figure 31). The name comes from the shape of the flowers, with four petals forming the shape of a cross. The flower is first seen early in the manuscript at G-f. 23v [6] (Figure 16) at the bottom of the border of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple. The color—shadowed with gray to a dull violet—is fitting for flowers suggesting the Cross.

The four petals are shown, as they grow, in a cross shape. A saying about this family of plants is “*in cruce salus*,” “health is in the

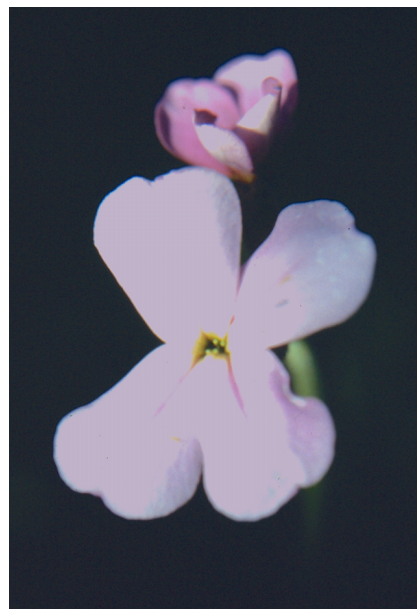


Figure 31: *Crucifer* species.



Figure 32: God Dispatching the Angel of the Annunciation. (G-f. 28 [9])



Figure 33: The Flagellation of Christ. (G-f. 60v [22])

Cross.”³⁸ The family contains, along with cabbage and its tribe, mustard and the various cresses, many of which were used medicinally. The saying points out the close relationship between health and holiness seen in the Middle Ages, shedding light on the Master’s use of medicinal plants to express spiritual symbolism. Today we use “salve” to indicate medicine, “salvation” is obviously rich with religious meaning, and “salvia” is well known as a garden plant—sage—from which salve is still made.

The flower is seen four more times in the manuscript, at God Dispatching the Angel of the Annunciation (Figure 32), in a redder tone at the Flagellation of Christ (Figure 33) (possibly referring to the blood running from the wounds), the Buffeting of Christ (Figure 19), and God the Son (Figure 34). The color is, except for the one noted, consistently a very grayed violet. All of the images refer to the coming of the Crucifixion with the exception of the last, which is shown in the top border of the miniature of God the Son (Figure 34). It is significant that this is a scene of Christ after the Crucifixion. This humble



Figure 34: God the Son (G-f. 80v [34])

38 Alice M. Coats, 155.

gray flower is shown at the top of the border, again indicating humility exalted. Moreover, the flower is shown from the back, giving the impression that the model was manipulated simply by turning it around and painting its image from the back. This change in position, as with the bindweed seen before, indicates that the time for the pain and humiliation of the Crucifixion is past and Christ is enthroned once more.



Figure 35: Detail of Fortitude: Jacob Struggling with the Angel (M-p. 73 [55]) and dried mugwort leaf.

Further, and again in keeping with the tenets of the *Devotio Moderna*, as well as the three tenants of this discussion, are the long curling leaves seen as a design detail in many of the borders, and best seen in G-f. 69 verso, G-f. 35v, G-f. 61, and G-f. 73v. “Mug” meaning “midge,” and “wort” meaning “plant” indicate that the plant was an herb used against insects. This is not the classic acanthus of the South, but rather the homely common mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*, seen directly and painted from life. This has perhaps not been previously identified because the decorative curl of the leaf, used to such advantage by the Master, comes only after the leaf is dried. The Master would have been very familiar with these dried leaves because they were used to keep vermin from destroying clothes and, among other things, books. These dried leaves would have been common in the scriptoria for just that reason.



Figure 36: Detail of The Nativity (G-f. 35 [12]) and dried mugwort leaf.

Herbals of the time and earlier called this plant, now a common weed of the roadside both here and in Europe, the *Mater Herbarum*—the Mother of all Herbs. It was widely used both as medicine and as an apotropaic shield against evil. *Religiae Antiquae*, by Wright and Halliwell, records the following of the plant when it is hung up in the house “na elves na na evyll thynges may com therin.”³⁹ The herb hanging over the door would dry with the same curl of leaf that you see in the borders of this manuscript, protecting both the miniature and its viewer from evil.

A closely related *Artemisia*, *absinthium* or wormwood, was pressed to extract the juice, which was then added to the ink used by the scribes in order to keep the vellum safe from mice.⁴⁰ The image of the leaf

39 Thomas Wright & James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, *Religiae Antiquae: Scraps from Ancient Manuscripts, Illustrating Chiefly Early English Literature and the English Language*, Volume 1, 53.

40 Wright & Halliwell-Phillipps.

of *Artemisia absinthium* in the border can be seen as a symbolic means of preserving the illustration it surrounds. The bitterness of the plant also adds to the symbolic use of its leaves in the border. It is a continuing reminder of the bitterness of the passion, an image taken directly from the dried herb in the scriptorium.

A review of the eleven plant images studied in this paper shows that all share certain characteristics. All show evidence of direct observation of the plant as it grows. Each depiction is realistic enough to allow identification. All show evidence of symbolic interpretation, with that interpretation taken from a wide variety of religious and vernacular sources. All show evidence of exaggeration or change of image in its expression or depiction that further identifies and emphasizes the symbolic meaning of the image. Further, all show evidence that the symbolic meaning relates the image to the miniature, thus enlarging and strengthening the impact of the illumination as a whole.

Description of the Manuscript

The manuscript of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves is currently housed in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, with the Guennol Volume given the identification number M 945 and the Morgan Volume given the number M 917. In this study we will treat the manuscript as one integrated piece, as it must have been originally.

The complete manuscript totals 357 leaves, each measuring 7 and $\frac{9}{16}$ inches by 5 and $\frac{1}{8}$ inches. The 157 miniatures are of two sizes. The larger, with its border, fills an entire side of a folio and measures roughly 6 by 4 and $\frac{1}{4}$ inches while the smaller shares the space with eight to eleven lines of text and measures 2 and $\frac{3}{8}$ inches by 2 and $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The Latin text on the sides of the folios with the smaller miniatures includes a few lines of prayer and the Gloria usually followed by an indication of a hymn. Borders appear around all miniatures. The text and illuminations, on very fine parchment, are in excellent condition.⁴¹

The manuscript is divided into three sections. The first section, comprising the first quarter of the manuscript, begins with the Hours of the Virgin and the Hours of the Cross. The images treated in this paper appear either solely or for the first time in the borders of the miniatures of this first section. Calkins distinguishes this first section from the others by the allotment of miniatures to the text.⁴² In these first two sets of hours only, each devotion is given two miniatures to illustrate it—one larger and a smaller one on the facing folio. Calkins points out that “the Weekday Offices and their Masses are not insertions, but are an integral continuation of the normal text, intended from the start.”⁴³ The Hours of the Virgin and the Hours of the Cross, thus, have sixteen miniatures illustrating them, with scenes that were originally planned and executed as part of the total program of the work. The miniatures were chosen specifically to fit the text of each devotion. It seems plausible that the borders in turn would be chosen to fit the symbolism of the scene in the miniature, and this is indeed the case.

The story of the manuscript’s appearance in two separate and seemingly complete volumes and of the detective work that made possible its restoration at the Pierpont Morgan Library in the 1960’s is by now well documented.⁴⁴ Since this recent history has a bearing on the chronology of the literature on the manuscript, I will briefly summarize it here. The section now in the Morgan Library, M 945, has the more easily traced history of the two. Offered for sale by Jacques Joseph Techner in 1856, it was in the collection of the Dukes of Arenberg by 1896. M 945 was exhibited briefly at Brussels in 1904 at which time several black and white photographs were taken. Most of the literature on the manuscript was based on these photographs until 1958 when that half of the manuscript was exhibited in Amsterdam. Harry Bober notes, “It is probable that no scholar ever even saw the manuscript between 1904 and 1958. . . .”⁴⁵ Previously called the Arenberg manuscript, it became the Guennol manuscript in 1958—a name it was to keep until it was combined with the other piece at the Morgan Library in 1964. This

41 Frederick B. Adams, Jr. *Foreword to The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, by John Plummer. (NY: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1964).

42 Calkins, *Distribution of Labor* 9.

43 Calkins, *Distribution of Labor* 9.

44 Plummer, *The Hours* 10-12.

45 Harry Bober. *The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, by John Plummer (NY: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1964) introduction 5.

portion of the work has also been known as the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, although, as we know now, it was only half of the original work.

In 1963 the Morgan Library bought a manuscript (M 917) that proved to be not only by the hand of the Master of Catherine of Cleves, but actually a part of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves. After a thorough comparative study of the two books, they were disassembled and the folios replaced in their original order. In 1964 the reconstructed manuscript was exhibited at the Morgan Library, and a book edited by John Plummer, entitled *The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, was published by the library. This book included comments and reappraisals by Harry Bober, L. M. J. Delaisse, Millard Meiss, and Erwin Panofsky. In 1966 Plummer edited a facsimile edition. Since that time, the literature on the manuscript has been based on this facsimile and on the manuscript itself, now in the Morgan Library still listed as M 917 for the Morgan manuscript and N 945 for the Guennol manuscript. This study is based on the facsimile. A third printing of the facsimile was published in 2002.

I have included the plate numbers from the Plummer facsimile, partly for the convenience of the reader in referring to the volume and partly because the plate number indicates the original order of the pages. The manuscript identification prefix—G-f. for the folios of the Guennol manuscript and M-p. for the pages of the Morgan manuscript—indicates the arrangement of the folios when the volume was divided in two during the nineteenth century. The titles used for each miniature are those from the Plummer facsimile, as are the illustrations of the manuscript reproduced in this paper.⁴⁶

46 Plummer, *The Hours*.

Review of the Literature

In giving here an overview only of the literature relevant to the painted floral borders of the Cleves Hours, special attention is given to works either identifying specific plants or to those discussing the iconologic significance of those plants in relation to the miniatures within the floral borders.

Until the early part of this century, the scholarship on book illumination in the 14th and 15th centuries focused upon the products of the International Style, centered around the court of France in Paris, and the products of the Italian Renaissance. This tendency, as Delaissé and others have pointed out, overlooked the work being done by the illuminators of northern Holland.⁴⁷ Study of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves in particular was even more limited due to the history of the manuscript. Because of this, much of the early work by Byvanck and others focused primarily on the other works of the Cleves Master.⁴⁸

For a discussion of the early literature relevant to the iconography of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves and more specifically to the possible iconography of the floral borders, one must begin with Stephen Beissel's article "Un Livre d'Heures appartenant à S. A. le duc d'Arenberg à Bruxelles: Etude iconographique" in *Revue de l'Art chrétien* published in 1904, the year the manuscript was exhibited at Dusseldorf. Beissel's primary focus is on the iconography of the Trinity, and on the representation of the Holy Spirit in particular. His concern is whether the non-traditional iconography of the Cleves Hours is theologically sound. His conclusion is that while religious art should "rester dans les voies traditionnelles de son iconographie," the religious art of the Middle Ages, and by inference this particular manuscript, is an abundant source of inspiration for a rich iconography within those traditions.⁴⁹ This creative tension between tradition and a more expressive individual interpretation is a common theme in analyses of this master's work.

In *Early Netherlandish Painting*, published in 1953, Panofsky clearly outlines the milieu within which the Master worked. Panofsky's theory on the role of "disguised symbolism" in the art of the period, and his comments on the difficulty of accurately establishing the symbolic use of any one detail, are important to the study of border symbolism in the Cleves Hours.⁵⁰

In 1958, Friedrich Gorissen published a study of the heraldic iconography of the blazons in the borders of the first two miniatures of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves.⁵¹ This study demonstrates that certain images in the borders were used to convey particular meanings rather than functioning as pure decoration.

47 Delaissé, *Dutch Manuscript Illumination* 1-2.

48 A. W. Byvanck. *La Miniature dans les Pays-bas Septentrionaux* (Paris: Les Editions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1937) 66.

49 Stephen Beissel. "Un Livre d'Heures appartenant à S. A. le duc d'Arenberg à Bruxelles: Etude iconographique" (*Revue de l'Art Chrétien* ser 4, vol XV, 1904) 447.

50 Erwin Panofsky. *Early Netherlandish Painting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 1953) 141.

51 Friedrich Gorissen. "Historisch-Heraldische Betrachtungen über ein Stundenbuch der Katharine von Kleve Herzogin von Geldren" (*Gelre*, 1958).

In the early 1960's, Ulrick Finke and G. J. Hoogewerff, both writing in *Oud Holland*, continue the study of the provenance of the manuscript.⁵² This study has since been followed by work by Diane Scillia and others.⁵³

The comments on the newly reconstructed manuscript by Bober, Meiss, and Panofsky in the introduction to Plummer's book of 1964, *The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, indicate a new direction in the study of the manuscript. The emphasis is increasingly on the profound originality of the artist. Meiss notes the originality of the master, both in color tonality and in choice of subject matter in the borders.⁵⁴ Panofsky also focuses his comments on the "amazing originality which shines forth in his [the Master's] marginal decorations."⁵⁵ This new direction was a response to having the actual manuscript available for study rather than the earlier black and white photographs, as well as a response to the impact of being able to see the entire manuscript together at one time.

In the introduction to the 1966 facsimile, Plummer notes that "Medieval thought, preoccupied as it was with parallels, analogies, and symbols, found the broadest meanings in small things, as Adam of St. Victor found Christ and the meaning of His passion in a walnut."⁵⁶ The example follows the Philosophy of the *Devotio Moderna* in finding significance in ordinary objects. Plummer also notes the Master's choice of subject matter, varying, as he says, from jewels to vegetables. With other critics, Plummer points to the use of "border motifs to reinforce or to contrast with the meaning of a miniature."⁵⁷ In this case, the border images referred to are images of people or animals set in small scenes within the borders, rather than plant forms, which Plummer seems to consider to be simply part of the decorative border.

Robert Calkins, in his dissertation *The Master of Catherine of Cleves*, 1967, argues that the organization of the hours, coordinating text and illustration as it does in terms of format and iconography, must have been the result of a high degree of cooperation between the artist and an "ecclesiastic of considerable learning."⁵⁸ Calkins traces the early influences on the Master of Catherine of Cleves from the Master of Zweder von Culemborg through Master Poncian, pointing out the Master Poncian flower border in the Münster Missal as a forerunner of the realistic floral borders of the Master of Catherine of Cleves. He sees possible influence on the Master from the works of the Limbourg brothers and cites examples of realistic flowers in the borders of the *Très Riches Heures* of Jean, Duke of Berry. Calkins notes the influence of the Limbourgs and the Boucicaut Master. He cautions, however, that the artists and ateliers of the early 15th century Netherlands were strongly independent of each other and found sources in many other media.

Calkins states that, "If we examine the standard borders in the first half of the manuscript we find that the Cleves Master varied the conventional system with increasing frequency."⁵⁹ A dominant theme in his dissertation is the remarkable inventiveness and originality of the Master's work. The Master, in Calkins's words, "appeared unanticipated by his predecessors, remained unrivaled by his contemporaries, and vanished virtually unfollowed by his successors."⁶⁰

52 Ulrich Finke. "Utrecht—Centre of Book Illumination on the North Netherlands in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century" (*Oud Holland* 78 pp 27–66, 1963).

53 Diane Scillia. "A Late Work from the Circle of the Master of Catherine of Cleves" (*Oud Holland* 92 1:1–6, 1978).

54 Millard Meiss. *The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, introduction, 9.

55 Erwin Panofsky. *The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, introduction, 10.

56 Plummer, *The Hours* 7.

57 Plummer, *The Hours* 15.

58 Robert G. Calkins. "The Master of Catherine of Cleves" dissertation (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1967) 18.

59 Calkins, "The Master" 31.

60 Calkins, "The Master" 304.

In *A Century of Dutch Manuscript Illumination* (1968), L. M. J. Delaissé outlines the influence of the philosophies of the *Devotio Moderna* and the Brothers of the Common Life in early 15th century northern Netherlands. Delaissé added to this book a lengthy postscript on the newly reconstructed manuscript of the Cleves Hours. He comments that the Morgan fragment in particular “is undoubtedly the source of inspiration of the realistic and illusionistic borders which were thought to have been created in Flemish manuscripts made a few decades later.”⁶¹ With other writers, Delaissé points out the artist’s “urge toward the unconventional.”⁶²

J. H. Marrow, in “Dutch Manuscript Illumination before the Master of Catherine of Cleves: the Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle” (1968) also traces the effects of the cultural milieu on the illuminators of the time. He points to “widespread signs of vigorous growth and experimentation” in book illumination.⁶³ Marrow shows that the Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle also experimented with using plants drawn from life in his borders and that this is a change from the earlier borders that “fulfilled an essentially neutral role.”⁶⁴ He notes that this master thus “breaks with tradition where he abandons this neutrality of conception in favor of a more assertive canon.”⁶⁵ Marrow shows that both the Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle and the Master of Catherine of Cleves invented new decorative motifs both from imaginary forms and from real plant forms, developing both types of form simultaneously. In this development, the border decorations “assume a positive function” and “claim our attention as objects and constructions independently of their part as accessories in the organization of the page.”⁶⁶ At the same time, Marrow notes the use of plant forms in the borders as symbols reinforcing the meaning of the miniatures. Both Marrow and Plummer point out the fertility symbolism in the use of the pea pod in reference to the Annunciation to St. Anne in the Cleves Hours. Marrow finds relationships between border and miniature in both the Morgan Infancy Cycle and the Cleves Hours.

Friedrich Gorissen, in his encyclopedic *Stundenbuch der Katharina von Kleve* (1973), identifies several of the plants in the borders, some more tentatively than others, but makes little attempt to decipher their relationships to the miniatures. Gorissen briefly refers to the Italian illuminators of the first half of the 15th century and their possible influence on Netherlandish book illumination. He notes that the illumination in the Cleves Hours indicates direct observation of nature at an earlier time than previously recognized. He points to the Master’s “herbarium motif” as an indication of realistic representation.⁶⁷

While Gorissen states that it would be interesting for a botanist or horticulturist to make a study of the flowers and fruit in the borders, he does not do so himself. His primary interest is in analyzing and categorizing the less botanical motifs: the grape leaves, the T leaves, and the trefoils. The only plants he identifies are the *Acorus calamus* (sweetflag), which he tentatively identifies in the curls of some of the “acanthus” scrolls, the “Jew’s Cherry” (*Physalis sp.*), and the columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*).⁶⁸

Annette Baumeister’s dissertation *Der Ornamentik des Meisters der Katharina von Kleve*, also published in 1973, discusses various types of border ornaments with a good deal of the discussion based on the ornament of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves. She discusses the forerunners of these realistic im-

61 Delaissé, *Dutch Manuscript Illumination*, 82.

62 Delaissé, *Dutch Manuscript Illumination*, 82.

63 James H. Marrow. “Dutch Manuscript Illumination before the Master of Catherine of Cleves” (*Nederlands Kunsthist. Jaar 19:51–113*) 52.

64 Marrow, “Dutch Manuscript” 83.

65 Marrow, “Dutch Manuscript” 87, 101.

66 Marrow, “Dutch Manuscript” 88.

67 Friedrich Gorissen. *Das Stundenbuch der Katharina von Kleve: Analyse und Kommentar* (Berlin: NP 1973) 813.

68 Gorissen, *Das Stundenbuch* 813–845.

ages in the borders of the Cleves Hours, beginning with the English examples, including the Ormsby Psalter, through Pucelle, and—following Pächt—on to the Italian schools of the late 1300's, mentioning the work of the Boucicaut Master and the Master of Zweder van Culemborg as sources for the pen-stroke and “acanthus” borders, but not as models for realistic elements.⁶⁹ As in Gorissen, Baumeister focuses more on the purely decorative motifs than on those representing actual plants and does not go into any possible symbolic meaning of the images.

In a 1974 article “Pea Pods and Molluscs from the Master of Catherine of Cleves Workshop,” L. M. C. Randall, commenting on another manuscript from the workshop of the Master of Catherine of Cleves—the Walters MS 782—refers to a border related to an Annunciation miniature in which the artist used symbolic flowers. “Unquestionably associated with the Virgin and Child theme dominating the design of this page are the popinjay, pea-pods, sweet pea, peacock, violet, rose and carnation scattered through the margin as emblems of perpetual virginity, fertility, immortality, modesty, love and the Passion.”⁷⁰

In “Parallels between Incunabula and Manuscripts from the Circle of the Master of Catherine of Cleves,” (1978) Calkins refers to the animals and some of the plants in the margins of some of the borders done by the circle of the Master of Catherine of Cleves, saying that “undoubtedly these compositions and motifs, and many others like them, circulated back and forth by a variety of means, and the derivation of any particular image may have been, therefore, exceedingly complex.”⁷¹

Finally, Calkins, writing on “Stages of Execution: Procedures of Illumination as Revealed in an Unfinished Book of Hours” (1978) sheds light on the process by which the miniatures and their borders were completed and thus on the possible relationship between the two.⁷² He proposes that the artist who painted the miniatures was the same artist who did the major marginal images.⁷³ This conclusion is consistent with his own and others’ that the Cleves Master was responsible for both the miniatures and the major border images in the Cleves Hours.

A brief review of the literature on this manuscript shows that present writers are in agreement that the Master was original, innovative, and unconventional. Writers also agree that the Master was most innovative in the borders of the miniatures. Calkins and others argue that the majority of the major images in both miniatures and borders was the work of one artist—the Cleves Master. Marrow and others have noted that some of the major figures in the borders have a relationship with the miniature. Randall has pointed out that artists in the Cleves workshop used some floral images in the borders symbolically. Few of these writers have studied specific floral border images and the meaning they might have. Marrow’s noting the use of the pea pod as a symbolic border image that relates to the meaning of a miniature in the Cleves Hours is the only discussion of symbolic use of floral images in the borders by the Master himself. Randall’s brief mention of symbolic flowers being used in a border of the Virgin and Child done by a member of the Master’s workshop is the only reference that I have found relating to any such work done within the workshop of the Cleves Master, aside from the pea image discussed by Marrow.

69 Annette Baumeister. *Der Ornamentik des Meisters der Katharina von Kleve. Dissertation.* Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität zu Münster. (Herne: Westfallen) 95.

70 Lilian M. C. Randall. “Pea Pods and Molluscs from the Master of Catherine of Cleves Workshop” (*Apollo* 100.) 375.

71 Robert G. Calkins. “Parallels Between Incunabula and Manuscripts from the Circle of the Master of Catherine of Cleves” (*Oud Holland* 92 3:137–60) 138.

72 Robert G. Calkins. “Stages of Execution: Procedures of Illumination as Revealed in an Unfinished Book of Hours” (*Gesta*, 1978)

73 Calkins, 63.

Conclusion

The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves is one of the most complex manuscripts of the 15th century. One aspect of this complex manuscript that has not been discussed in the literature heretofore is the use of floral border images as symbols reflecting and reinforcing the symbolic imagery of the miniatures. Using a set of criteria based on three of the tenets of the *Devotio Moderna*, eleven plants, known to have grown in northern Europe in the 15th century, are seen to have been used as symbolic images in the borders of the Hours of the Virgin and the Hours of the Cross, the first two sets of hours in the book, and further these symbolic floral images reinforce and emphasize the meaning of the miniatures. Three tenets of the *Devotio Moderna* in particular are in accord with both the Master's choice of plant forms and his use of them as symbols in the borders. These tenets are: 1) the value of study of the immediate physical world as a means of understanding God's will, 2) the value of individual interpretation in gaining that understanding, and 3) the value of expressing that understanding of God's will in terms of personal experience.

The Master used the rose, violet, garden pea, winter cherry, calendula, daffodil, strawberry, bindweed, nightshade, mugwort, and a crucifer to relate to scenes of the life of the Virgin and the Passion of Christ. Reviewing these plants individually, we see the pattern in the Master's observation, interpretation, and depiction of these plant images that sheds considerable light on their symbolic use in the borders and their relationships to the miniatures.

The red mauve flower with a yellow boss, wavy branches, and green foliage is depicted realistically enough to be identified as the apothecary's rose, *Rosa gallica* var. *officinalis* (Figure 1). The symbolic meaning of the rose as a flower dedicated to the Virgin was taken from church iconography. The metaphor of the Virgin as the thornless rose is seen in religious poetry of the period. I have not found this metaphor depicted in the visual arts before the Master's use of it. The thornless rose image is used in two miniatures relating directly to the Virgin—the Annunciation to the Virgin (Figure 2) and the Death of the Virgin (Figure 3). This symbolic image reinforces the visual impact of the total illumination.

The small violet flower, often shown with green foliage, is recognizable as the fragrant violet, *Viola odorata*. Its symbolic meaning of humility is noted by Bernard of Clairvaux. The Master's use of the violet prominently above the miniature contrasts with its usual symbolic position at the lower borders, giving the paradoxical image of humility exalted. This paradoxical image relates to miniatures such as the Taking of Christ (Figure 6) where the paradox reinforces the meaning of the miniature. I have not found examples of this use of position relative to the miniature for symbolic impact in illuminations other than those of the Cleves Master.

The interpretation of *Pisum sativum*, the garden pea, as an image of fertility had been established in illumination before the Master's use of it. However, the Master's depiction of this symbolic image again creates a contrast that heightens the impact of the image (Figure 8). The pods are shown illusionistically with the twig upon which the stem twines shown as if attached directly to the vellum. Contrasting to that illusionistic touch, the peas within the pod are shown symbolically in gold. Since this image is related to the miniature of the Annunciation to Anne, the peas themselves relate to the unborn Virgin. This is the first of several plant images depicted almost heraldically in gold that refer directly to the

Virgin. I have not found earlier works reserving gold to be used specifically in those plants referring symbolically to the Virgin.

The round husk form enclosing a red sphere is identifiable as the winter cherry, *Physalis alkekengi*—a plant grown in medieval gardens (Figure 11). The Master seems to have been unique in his interpretation of this image as symbolic of the Virgin womb with the unborn Christ symbolized as the perfect sphere enclosed within it. In the borders of the Hours of the Virgin and the Hours of the Cross this image is depicted relating to the Virgin and Christ. The husk is shown in gold, again claiming it as the symbol of the Virgin.

The daisy-like flower, seen once in yellow with yellow green strap-shaped leaves and at other times in gold with no stem or leaves, is recognizable as *Calendula officinalis*, known in English as the marigold, from “Mary’s gold” (Figure 12, Figure 13). I have found this flower readily identifiable in illumination before the Master’s work only once.

It is seen, however, slightly later in King René’s *Livre du Cœur d’Amour Espris* (1465), where it is used heraldically to signify sorrow. The Master shows it once realistically in the border of the Death of the Virgin and frequently in gold in other miniatures relating to the Virgin (Figure 3).

Another flower seen in yellow and in gold, both without foliage or stem, can be identified as the daffodil, *Narcissus pseudo-narcissus* (Figure 14). Seldom used symbolically in art in the Middle Ages, it is used in the Cleves Hours in the borders of miniatures relating to the Virgin and to Christ. The Master consistently uses this flower in yellow, its natural color, in borders of miniatures relating to Christ, and in gold in borders of miniatures relating to the Virgin. In one instance, the border of the miniature of the Last Judgement, the perianth is done in yellow and the trumpet is done in gold (Figure 18). This could signify that the beginning and the end of Christ’s life have been reconciled in one image. This particular use of natural color and gold together in one symbolic image is one I have not seen elsewhere.

A strange image in the right border of the miniature of the Birth of the Virgin, joining a white five pealed flower with a red fruit, can be recognized as an image combining the fruit and the flower of the strawberry, *Fragaria vesca* (Figure 5). The separate parts of the image are depicted realistically, to allow recognition of a plant having an established symbolical meaning in church iconography. The traditional meaning of the strawberry in religious art is that the plant, in having a white flower and a red fruit on the plant at the same time, signifies the white of purity and the red of charity existing at the same time in the Virgin. The Master’s conflation of two symbolic parts of the plant into a single image further heightens the impact of the symbolism. I have not found any other use of the combination of the parts of a symbolic plant form into a single image that thereby intensifies by juxtaposition the symbolic meaning of the image.

A plant seen twining down the side of several borders can be identified as a species of *Convolvulus* (Figure 9). The symbolism of the bindweed is taken from its pale pink and white flowers and its low twining growth, which were seen to indicate humility. Not generally seen in Netherlandish illumination, the plant is seen in herbals done in Italy at the time. The Master uses the bindweed several times in the Hours of the Virgin and the Hours of the Cross. In the border of the miniature of Joseph of Arimathea before Pilate (Figure 24), the entire right-hand side is taken up with a stem of bindweed that echoes the lines of Joseph bending in humility before Pilate. Here the flowers are both open and closed. In a later border around the scene of The Trinity seen in an Apse, the bindweed is seen again taking up the righthand side of the border (Figure 25). The flowers here are all closed, possibly indicating that

with Christ eternally triumphant there is no further need for symbols of humility. The flower's campanulate form and clock-like face, both suggest symbols of time present in the open flower, and time past in the faded bloom.

A violet and yellow flower is used by the Master both in a realistic depiction and in a stylized form. In its realistic depiction it is recognizable as the flower of the bittersweet nightshade, *Solanum dulcamara* (Figure 27). The symbolism of this flower is based on its use in medicine as described in the herbals. It was a roadside weed that was used to make a bitter medicine. The Master used this image in borders of miniatures relating to the Passion. The image seems to symbolize the concept of the Passion as bitter but necessary for health, as the medicine made from the plant was seen. I have found no use of this plant either as image or symbol in work before the Master. It was used later in the Hours of Anne of Brittany, where it could also be used for the symbolic meaning given it by the Master in the Cleves Hours (Figure 28). The Master used the nightshade flower in a stylized form in the border of the Preparation of the Cross (Figure 29). Here he emphasized the central yellow stamen cluster in a way that relates to the long shapes of the nails in the cup in the foreground of the miniature, further relating the floral images in the border to the significance of the miniature.

A small violet or reddish violet flower with four petals growing in the shape of a cross can be identified as a member of the *Crucifer* family, *Lunaria annua*, (Figure 31). The name, cross-bearer, and symbolism was based on the form of the flowers of this family of plants and their use as described in herbals. The Master used the image of the crucifer much as he did the image of the nightshade, in borders of miniatures relating to Christ and the Passion. Seen in panel painting after the time of the Master's work, this plant image is seldom seen before the Cleves Hours. The Master further extends the symbolic use of the image by showing it at the top of the border of the miniature of God the Son (Figure 34), indicating another symbolic image in medieval use—the Cross Triumphant. The Master uses his depiction of the flower to suggest even further symbolism. He shows the flower from the back, suggesting in a way similar to the use of the bindweed, that the time for the Passion is over, and the Cross has triumphed.

The curled leaves in the borders, interpreted by art historians as the Mediterranean *Acanthus*, is actually *Artemisia vulgaris*, a common plant in the Netherlands and used as a bitter preservative and an apotropaic protection against evil as well as against vermin. Its symbolic use includes both the preservation of the illustration it surrounds and the bitterness of the Passion that the illustration expresses.

A study of these eleven plants and the ways the Master used them in the floral borders of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves gives us insights into the Master's observation, interpretation, and expression of these plants, seen within the context of the *Devotio Moderna*. This understanding further allows us to appreciate the subtle ways in which the floral images relate to the miniatures, thus expand the meaning of the miniature to include the entire illustration of this beautiful and complex manuscript.

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