

This article was downloaded by: [Metropolitan Museum of Art]

On: 08 August 2011, At: 08:06

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Word & Image

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/twim20>

Excavating the page: virtuosity and illusionism in Italian book illumination, 1460-1520

Nicholas Herman

Available online: 02 Aug 2011

To cite this article: Nicholas Herman (2011): Excavating the page: virtuosity and illusionism in Italian book illumination, 1460-1520, *Word & Image*, 27:2, 190-211

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2010.526289>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Excavating the page: virtuosity and illusionism in Italian book illumination, 1460–1520

NICHOLAS HERMAN

So we must advance from the concrete whole to the several constituents which it embraces; for it is the concrete whole that is the more readily recognizable by the senses. And by calling the concrete a 'whole' I mean that it embraces in a single complex a diversity of constituent elements, factors, or properties. (Aristotle *Physics* 1.1)

It is unsurprising that one of the most illusionistically complex images of the late fifteenth century, the frontispiece for an edition of Aristotle's *Works* probably owned by Peter Ugelheimer and painted by Girolamo da Cremona, should accompany a written discussion of cognition. Framing the beginning of the first chapter of Aristotle's *Physics*, the miniaturist has constructed a remarkably multilayered image, incorporating the text block itself into an elaborate illusionistic game (figure 1). Similar to Aristotle's text, the image invokes several orders of observation interacting within a cohesive whole. On a primary level, the surface of the folio acts as an unframed two-dimensional support, explicitly emphasizing the terms of the illusion while challenging the notion, first codified by Leon Battista Alberti about half a century earlier, of the pictorial field as a finite, unified space within a framed window.¹ Inside the three-dimensional world of the painted page, mounted clusters of jewels, pearls, and antique cameos hang by red strings before the surface of the parchment, casting an ethereal blue shadow upon it. These objects are nearest to the viewer, their weight and precarious placement made apparent by the tears in the parchment they seem to have produced. Receding further back, the parchment itself constitutes a second visual layer. Girolamo's skillful shading has given it the appearance of an extensively torn sheet of vellum that curls toward the viewer. Significantly, the physical corners of the page, too, are integrated into the illusion; the central text block does not simply float in three-dimensional space but is connected to the seemingly dog-eared edges of the page. This aspect further problematizes the convention of the picture plane as an unruptured space and is perhaps the most original device employed by the illuminator. Visible through the lacerations in the vellum, an entirely separate scene takes place; in an antiquizing border-like space, the confines of which are hard to judge, playful satyrs and fawns jostle in front of what appears to be an ornately sculpted antique monument. Finally, in the upper area of the page yet another seemingly unconnected and spatially ambiguous event is depicted — Aristotle's disputation with Averroës.

These pictorial layers, their distance relative to the viewer, and their progression from literal presence (the clusters of jewels) to imaginary presence (the temporally impossible encounter between Aristotle and Averroës) parallel themes present in the introductory chapter of the *Physics*. According to Aristotle's text, the study of nature must proceed along a path that moves from 'concrete and particular' things immediately cognizable to more 'abstract and general' ideas that can be derived from analysis of the former. Likewise, the beholder of this particular frontispiece must move from the immediate sensory tactility of precious stones and metalwork, through the semantic understanding of the text itself, toward a visualization of the text's argumentative content, in this case represented by a conversation between its author and chief commentator. The frontispiece thus provides a visually appealing, accessible, and conceptually apt 'concrete whole,' a prolegomenon for a dense and difficult Aristotelian text that proceeds by the very method the philosopher recommends.

Although the variety of visual and epistemological themes that condense in this frontispiece is unprecedented, its imagery does not simply constitute a unique pictorial gloss of Aristotle's text by means of a particularly erudite miniature painter. Girolamo, who at this point had already been active for three decades, was making use of a visual device that had been employed by other book illuminators numerous times before and in a variety of circumstances. Namely, he undertook to reconcile the visual role of the patently two-dimensional text block (which in practice was nearly always written or printed before any illustration occurred) with a lavishly painted, illusionistically convincing scene. Responding to the inquisitive nature of the text he was asked to illustrate, Girolamo pushed several of the solutions derived by his predecessors to the point of rupture, where the illusionism of the composition collapses in on itself and raises more questions about the nature of representation than it answers.

The page within a page: its definition and study

Throughout the fifteenth century, book illuminators employed various strategies to incorporate the text block into the three-dimensional space of the painted image. In Italy, where patrons generally favored the concentration of decoration at the beginning of the volume, these tendencies culminated in what has been termed the 'architectural frontispiece,' whereby the first



Figure 1. Girolamo da Cremona and assistants, Frontispiece to Aristotle's Works, Venice, ca. 1483. New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library, PML 21194, folio 2r.

lines of text, the title and author of the book, or combinations thereof are incorporated into a fictive antique monument resembling a triumphal arch or an epitaph.² Occasionally, the introductory text was depicted as though it were an epigraphic inscription written in Roman majuscules, a tendency informed by the contemporary revival of interest in antique funerary monuments. In most cases, though, the preexisting and unalterable text block was rendered in an italic or gothic script unsuitable for classicizing epigraphy. This led to the more prevalent motif of the text block being represented as a lacerated sheet of parchment affixed to the classical monument. Such an approach could reconcile the two-dimensional text with the demands of perspectival space, but it could also raise a host of other issues regarding the status of the written word, the abilities and limitations of the artist, and the origins and (im)mutability of the text.

Though its inception predates the arrival of the printing press in Italy, which was first introduced at Subiaco in 1465 and then in Venice four years later, many examples of torn-page

frontispieces adorn luxury copies of printed editions and appear, at least obliquely, to problematize the consequences of the new technology.³ That this illusionistic motif became a locus for pictorial questioning is congruent with the view that book illumination was a theater for artistic invention and innovation, a place free from the constraints and conventions of large-scale commissions.⁴ Recent scholarship on this type of pictorial invention in manuscripts has tended to focus on northern Europe, particularly the Ghent-Bruges school of illumination.⁵ Nevertheless, there have been a handful of attempts to classify and call attention to the illusionistic frontispiece's various manifestations. In a brief study of the form, Margery Corbett used the term 'title-page' to designate a prefatory digest of the book's contents, author, and patron, restricting the term 'opening-page' to compositions actually containing the beginning of the volume's text, while using the adjective 'architectural' to denote any composition incorporating a fictive architectonic frame.⁶ Corbett stressed the humanist origins of the title-page, which gradually supplanted the medieval practice of either writing the book's title in the upper margin of every page or, more often, not including it at all.⁷ Elizabeth Welles, following Erwin Panofsky's and Peter Burke's influential ideas about the Renaissance sense of the past, associated this sequestration of essential information with new ideas of historical perspective.⁸ With regard to page decoration, where previous scholars had described a continuity of architectonic motifs from antiquity, Corbett focused on the connections that could be made between the specific motifs employed and the epigraphic compilations, or *sylogae*, of early antiquarians such as Cyriacus of Ancona (1391–1468), developments in contemporary Florentine tabernacle and tomb sculpture, and the afterlife of these forms in sixteenth-century printed books.⁹ Lilian Armstrong nuanced Corbett's analysis by distinguishing between various forms of architectural motifs from which parchment pages were suspended: triumphal arches and monuments resting on bases; and *stele*, across whose surface the words appear.¹⁰ There also exists a large body of literature on ensuing printed designs, and whereas the distinction between the title-page and the opening-page remains a valid one for bibliographers, for the purposes of this study any substantially hand-decorated page at the beginning of a volume will be regarded under the inclusive term 'frontispiece.'¹¹

Several foundational works of scholarship have helped to contextualize the illusionistic frontispiece within the wider trends of Renaissance book illumination, yet the genre remains largely absent from survey texts on Italian art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and its interface with the 'monumental' arts is seldom acknowledged.¹² However, Armstrong's work, beginning with her monograph on the Putti Master, has shed much light on the specific artistic personalities who first employed architectural frontispieces in the period when the printing press was being introduced in Venice.¹³ She has also explored the impact of printing on the practice of illumination in Venice, noting that in the last three decades of the fifteenth century, the exponential increase in the number of books being printed

heralded a period of great prosperity for miniaturists.¹⁴ As most printed books contained areas left blank for the addition of illuminated initials and rubrications, there was a surfeit of work to be done by miniature painters. Ever-larger print runs led to vast disparities in the quality of painted decoration, with some books having no decoration at all whereas luxury editions such as those associated with Ugelheimer continued to be produced with great lavishness.¹⁵ The exhibition entitled *The Painted Page*, held in New York and London in 1994–1995, enabled many of the most important examples of illusionistic Italian frontispieces to be exhibited together, and the well-illustrated catalogue that accompanied it is a fundamental resource for study of the topic, as are several further studies that have since appeared.¹⁶ This article is in part an attempt to take these existing treatments of the subject further.

On the whole, discussions of Italian humanistic frontispieces have focused on the depiction of architecture, a motif used in book illumination from the earliest days of the codex.¹⁷ The development and typology of the torn-parchment motif and associated illusionistic devices, which connect critically to aspects of humanism that extend beyond the recovery of ancient architecture, needs to be further studied. The current lack of attention afforded to developments in the trend toward pictorial invention south of the Alps is unfortunate and even paradoxical, given the richness of ancillary sources concerning artistic culture in Italy at the time and the larger variety of book-types illustrated in this tradition. In a certain sense, the paucity of textual sources relating to artistic theory in fifteenth-century northern Europe has spurred scholars in the field to undertake more sophisticated visual analyses that have yielded fruitful results.¹⁸ Furthermore, the fact that many of the most interesting examples of pictorial illusionism in Italian manuscript painting are found in early printed books presents a discipline-related barrier. As Armstrong has noted, the study of book illumination has traditionally remained the purview of manuscript-focused medievalists, and later material in the incunabulum format has therefore been left unexplored.¹⁹ Works such as those of Girolamo da Cremona exist in an artificial void; they are perceived to be medieval in medium while partaking in a Renaissance form, and are thus cast aside by specialists of each respective period.

The unique illusionistic treatments of manuscript and printed texts in late fifteenth-century Italy also lack a conceptual framework within which they can be discussed. Studies that have examined illusionism in Italian art of the period, including Sven Sandström's *Levels of Unreality* and, less directly, John White's *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space*, betray their outmodedness through an undue focus on monumental painting and a preoccupation with perspectival construction as a descriptive end.²⁰ The artistic self-reflexivity inherent in pictorial illusionism is left untreated, and the connections to contemporary thought and practice remain imprecise. Victor Stoichita's groundbreaking study, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-painting*, not only cast light upon the extraordinary

diversity of meta-pictorial techniques employed by northern European artists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also served to obscure the older and more geographically disparate precursors of these developments.²¹ Subsequent studies, interpreting the rise of this form of imagery as the product of Reformation image theory, have further obscured the full spectrum of meta-pictorial tendencies in the medieval and early modern periods.²² A recent exception, which broadens the approach of scholars such as Stoichita to include pre-modern Italy, can be seen in Klaus Krüger's *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren*, though the focus on panel and fresco painting reminiscent of Sandström and White remains.²³ An insightful account specific to Netherlandish book decoration occurs in the work of James Marrow, who has provided a preliminary analysis of the play of illusion and meaning in northern European manuscripts, noting that the myriad of illusionistic devices used was meant to 'defy customary expectations, contravene traditional conventions, and pose contradictions.'²⁴ In positing desiderata for future work in the field, Marrow also voices his concern for the lack of an adequate conceptual framework in which to discuss pictorial inventiveness.²⁵ Specifically, he bemoans the undiscerning and interchangeable use of the terms 'pictorial realism,' 'illusionism,' and 'trompe l'œil.'²⁶ A further goal of this article is to extend the purview of Marrow's important work, and his provocative questions, to coeval developments in Italy.

Toward a typology of illusionism

Rather than give a chronological outline of the artistic personalities and printers with whom these illusionistic devices were associated, I will analyze the variety of pictorial strategies deployed, both in manuscript and in printed books, to establish a typology of illusionism. The category of illusionistic device I am concerned with, as discussed above, is the fictive parchment page, because of its inherent nature as a critical commentary on the text. While closely associated with a renewed interest in classical inscriptions, it replicates time-worn parchment rather than marble, and is a type of illusionism specific to book illumination that has no direct equivalent in monumental painting.²⁷

The earliest use of this meta-pictorial device is closely associated with frontispieces that mimic epigraphical monuments, which became popular in the 1450s.²⁸ These imitations of Roman altars and sarcophagi first appeared in Veneto-Paduan books as monuments isometrically rendered but isolated from the blank background of the page, though they were soon integrated into receding naturalistic landscapes and animated by means of garlands, wreaths, and putti. The frontispiece to a copy of Solinus's *Polystoria*, written for the young Bernardo Bembo in 1457, incorporates the first initial of the text into a framed tablet, supported on either side by a winged cherub (figure 2). These forms are outlined and appear to cast a blue glow upon the page, an illusionistic technique that itself had already been used to highlight decorative elements in Italian



Figure 2. Frontispiece to the *Polystoria* by Solinus, 1457. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Canon Class. Lat. 161, folio 7r.

manuscripts for several decades. Below the tablet, a curling parchment contains the continuing text, but unlike the elements above, it is not set apart from the surface of the page by a shadow. Only a few years later, the English humanist John Tiptoft had a copy of Basino de Basini's *Astronomicon* made in Venice, and in its frontispiece a pair of putti are shown carrying a square parchment with its bottom edges rolled up (figure 3). In this instance, the parchment has been fully integrated into an illusionistic ensemble that nearly covers the entire surface of the page. The spatial ambiguities that existed in assemblages such as Bembo's *Polystoria* frontispiece have been minimized.

The motif of the curling page also appears in some of the earliest Venetian incunabula, printed in the city as of 1469. Part of the impetus for the widespread adoption of both the architectural frontispiece and the fictive parchment can be associated with the rise of the printed book.²⁹ The constantly diminishing area consigned to decoration necessitated creative solutions that could maintain the artist's stature and the visual power of his work. The layout of certain editions, especially newly



Figure 3. Frontispiece to the *Astronomicon* by Basinio de Basini, before 1461. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Bodl. 646, folio 1r.

printed works by classical authors, allowed no space for conventional, nested miniatures. The artist thus had to use the margins to his fullest advantage. Some frontispieces dispensed with the illusion of curled parchment in favor of a text placard inserted cleanly into an antique monument, but the result was flatter and less playful than other solutions. A detached page from the *editio princeps* of Livy's *Roman History*, printed in Rome but illuminated in Venice by the so-called Master of the Putti, was one of the first fully developed architectural frontispieces to depict an entire page of printed text as a suspended piece of parchment (figure 4).³⁰ Here, the page of text is ragged and worn, suspended from the architrave and pilasters of a monumental classical arch by red strings counterbalanced with hanging medallions, cornucopias, trophies, and vases. Mounted in the exact center of the arch, the parchment obscures only a relatively small amount of architecture, and its visual obstructiveness is reduced by the uniform grisaille tone of the composition. Other frontispieces, owing to uneven margin widths, purposely depict the parchment slightly off-center, so as



Figure 4. Master of the Putti, Detached Frontispiece to the *Roman History* by Livy, Venice, ca. 1469. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Inv. 2587.

to reveal more of the monument behind, often making it seem as though mischievous putti were responsible for the shift.

In addition to these conspicuous examples, visual responses to the dominance of the script could consist of the mere suggestion of pictorial depth. Several books decorated by the Master of the London Pliny, the artist sometimes identified as Joan Todeschino, contain inset miniatures that appear as though they are only partially visible through a square hole cut in the parchment, recalling contemporary French examples that made use of actual geometric cut-outs to display miniatures found on subsequent pages or even the present-day state of some medieval books that have been mutilated over time.³¹ The visual suggestion that more pictorial information lies under the surface of the parchment was likewise invoked in the first printed Italian edition of the Bible, published in Venice in 1471, which leaves only a third of its first page blank for the insertion of a miniature. A frontispiece of the first volume of this Bible attributed to the Master of the Putti cleverly extends the dominion of the illustrator by suggesting the continuation of the architectural feature behind the page of text,³² which is defined by curls that extend only a few inches down the sides and middle of the text block

before vanishing into the homogeneity of the actual parchment (figure 5).³³ Other works associated with the same artist incorporate this partial illusion not in frontispieces but in historiated initials, such as those in a manuscript copy of Giovanni di Dio's *Columba Tractatus Asceticus* (figure 6). In these examples, only part of the page appears torn back to reveal a scene underneath, and the tear does not extend to the edges of the page nor does it define an entire sheet of parchment. It is a physically impossible rupture. The 'peeling-back' effect is only partial, and rendered more visually surprising because of its ambiguity; it has become an economical but effective means of conveying more than meets the eye.

Selective revelation and its corollary, dissimulation, were sophisticatedly used as visual strategies throughout these compositions. Far more overtly than in monumental painting, illuminators could manipulate their compositions and leave more open to the powers of suggestion. This was in part a necessity, because the center of the book illuminator's pictorial field was occupied by the large and obstructive text block. Certain images seem almost to mock the unaccommodating nature of



Figure 5. Master of the Putti, First Page of the Book of Genesis, Venice, ca. 1471. New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library, PML 26983, folio 13r.



Figure 6. Master of the Putti, Initial from the *Columba Tractatus Asceticus* by Giovanni di Dio, Venice, ca. 1471. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1592, folio 69v.

the text and the harm it does to pictorial representation. These self-conscious critiques of the format also highlight the ability of the artist to surmount this difficulty. In the frontispiece to a book of donations made by Ludovico Maria Sforza to the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, the incipit, miniature, and introductory text are shown together on a piece of parchment hung by cords from the lintel of an open doorway (figure 7). Between the doorstep and the bottom edge of the parchment, the feet of two Dominican friars can be seen crossing the threshold, the remainder of their bodies obscured by the suspended page. The same figures are repeated in full above, stepping out of a similar doorway to receive an act of donation from Ludovico. Presumably, the endowed friars have displayed the document of donation across a doorway in their monastery and are about to enter upon the scene from behind it. By revealing in the upper scene the full identity of the partly hidden figures below, all ambiguity is prevented.



Figure 7. Frontispiece to the *Litterae ducales donationis ad monasterium S. Mariae Gratiarum*, Milan, ca. 1499. New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 434, folio 1r.

Petrus V—, the miniature painter whose name is only partially known to us, was especially adept at reducing the integrity of his fictive parchments to reveal selectively what could lie behind them.³⁴ In a frontispiece to Alexander Cortesius's *Laudes bellicae*, he strategically adjusts the placement of one of the right-hand pedestal's feet so that it aligns cleanly with a hole in the parchment (figure 8). He also subtly manipulates the anatomies of the putti to line up with two more holes above. In an elaborately painted Breviary page initiating the Common of Saints, the artist used the same tactic to an astonishing effect (figure 9). The right-hand edge of the fictive parchment outlines the profile of a face, with small curls describing lips and a forked slit acting as a nostril. An oval hole becomes the eye, and through it a bracket on the candelabra serves as a pupil, but compared with its fully visible twin, the volute's position has shifted upward to serve its double function. In this instance, selective revelation also supports dissimulation of another sort, as it partakes in this most extraordinary 'hidden face.' An exceptional instance of illusion upon illusion, this human profile has only a very few parallels in Italian painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth



Figure 8. Petrus V—, Frontispiece to the *Laudes Bellicae* by Alexander Cortesius, Venice or Rome, ca. 1487–1488. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 85.1.1 Aug.2, folio 3r.

centuries.³⁵ The Veneto-Paduan miniaturist Giovanni Corenti dissimulated human figures in the sky of a *John the Baptist in the Wilderness*, while Mantegna included a hidden face in the clouds of *Pallas Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue*, a work painted for Isabella d'Este.³⁶ Alberti, in his short treatise *De Statua*, posited that the arts originated by the accidental discovery in natural objects of 'certain outlines in which, with slight alterations, something very similar to the real faces of Nature was represented.'³⁷ Thus the observer of the Breviary page is invited to re-enact the process of man's discovery of artifice, finding form in deformity.

As if to draw yet more attention to this illusion, next to the parchment face, Petrus V— depicted a fly as though it had landed on the surface of the page. A number of paintings from this period include flies, and their use as a trope in early writings about art is well known.³⁸ The story of Giotto's painted fly, which he craftily tricked his master Cimabue into swatting, was



Figure 9. Petrus V—, First Page of the Common of Saints, from a Breviary, Padua or Venice, ca. 1478–1480. Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library, Harvard University, MS Typ 219, folio 484r.

most famously recounted by Giorgio Vasari, but a similar tale was included in Antonio Averlino Filarete's *Trattato de architettura*, completed in 1464.³⁹ The fly in the Breviary page closely mimics Giotto's prank because it appears to be posed directly on the pictorial surface, not on an oblique surface within the pictorial composition as is found in the contemporary panel paintings of Petrus Christus and Carlo Crivelli.⁴⁰ The distinction is an important one, because the example in the manuscript transgresses the viewer's space directly. If the incorporation of the fly *into* the image has been described as a 'rhetorical topos for artistic excellence,' so its appearance *on* a fifteenth-century image should be considered an even greater sign of creative self-awareness.⁴¹

Fundamentally, the trope of mimetic deception in painting, epitomized by the alighted fly but invoked in all instances of purposeful illusion, has its roots in book 36 of Pliny's *Historia naturalis*.⁴² In chapter 36, the author recounts the legendary competition between Zeuxis, the creator of an image of grapes so convincing that it attracted birds, and his challenger Parrhasius, who, having painted only a curtain, caused the proud but outwitted Zeuxis to request that it be drawn. As an addendum to the story, Pliny also recounts a subsequent painting

by Zeuxis of a child carrying grapes, which was only partially successful; that the birds still flew toward the grapes showed that they did not believe the boy to be real. Creighton Gilbert has suggested that the lack of any paintings that aim to replicate Zeuxis's famous ancient exemplars is due to an implicit understanding of the reasons for his failure, for true *trompe l'œil* effects must go beyond the merely very naturalistic and necessarily engage the object's physical preconditions.⁴³ It is because of this requirement that *trompe l'œil* is not simply representation but rather presentation. It conveys to our senses something that intellectually we know cannot be the case. Hence on a hanging, two-dimensional support it is most suitable to depict relatively flat items that also habitually hang on walls, as Parrhasius realized to his credit or as Fra Angelico invoked in the San Marco altarpiece when he depicted a curtain similar to those often installed in front of devotional paintings.⁴⁴ Additionally, as Gombrich pointed out, another requisite of *trompe l'œil* painting is that it should lack a (three-dimensional) frame so as to be continuous with the physical world and not bracketed out in accordance with the canonical Albertian schema.⁴⁵

The types of illusionism present in Italian manuscript illumination correspond to this twofold definition neatly, because the images under discussion lack projecting frames and rely on the surface materiality of their parchment medium for effect. By invoking the tears and gradations inherent to parchment surfaces, illuminators were also breaching the pictorial 'veil' that held such importance for Alberti. These projections into the space of the viewer, albeit in low relief, participate in the notion of *eminentia* described by Pliny in relation to virtuosic details painted by Apelles that appear to be in front of the pictorial surface.⁴⁶ Such protuberances, ignored by Alberti in favor of *ingenium*, or references to the external audience from within the sequestered pictorial space, are remarkably prevalent in both textual and visual sources that coalesce around a small circle of painters, illuminators, and antiquarians working in the Veneto as of about 1460, providing a fitting contextual backdrop to the illusionistic frontispiece.⁴⁷

Certain types of illusionism consciously draw attention to the illuminator's skill in creating such *eminentiae*. Occasionally, the painter's mastery at depicting the topography of a suspended page could begin to make the rigid and predetermined text look unrealistically flat. Convincing shading was, after all, an effect difficult to achieve in the incipient woodcut technique, and book illuminators used their ability to depict shadow to its every advantage.⁴⁸ The elaborate printed frontispieces of the sixteenth century, which replicate so many other aspects of their hand-painted predecessors, fail to reproduce the smooth gradients that only the brush could deliver. The use of such virtuosic effects may have been the result of the illuminator's desire to affirm the superiority and continued validity of his craft, even in books that were still hand-written. The unknown artist who illuminated the frontispieces to a number of extremely grand Graduals for the cathedral of Cesena was so intent on drawing out the illusion of a torn musical sheet, gathered up and tied in

bunches along its edges, that his shading undercut the gilded letters of the antiphons, making them appear to be outside the illusion (figure 10). The astonishing tactility of this illustration seems to compensate for the regularity and rigidity of the text it surrounds. The internal logic of the composition breaks down, with the artist emphasizing his mimetic powers to the point of disjuncture. To stress further his supremacy over the antiphonary's scribe — in this case the famous *scriptor* Henry of Amsterdam — the unknown artist depicted a t-square and calipers, trademark instruments of the master mason, at the lower right-hand corner of the page, as though to emphasize his role as architect of this grandiose composition.⁴⁹

The most elaborate type of illusionistic composition integrated the fictive parchment sheet into a virtuosic assemblage of components, a montage that could tie the page together with a combination of classicizing architecture, monumental epigraphy, placards, escutcheons, jewels, paintings, and even stand-alone initials. Habitually, these constituent parts were held together by strands of red string and frequently animated and held aloft by putti. The earliest occurrence of this composite genre was developed by the Master of the Putti in a frontispiece



Figure 10. Unknown artist, Frontispiece from a Gradual, ca. 1486. Cesena, Biblioteca Comunale Malatestiana, Capitolo della Cattedrale, Corale D, folio 1r.

for the second volume of the 1471 Italian Bible, now paired with the first volume discussed above (figure 11).⁵⁰ To reconcile the position of the miniature, high above the logical horizon line of the page as a whole, the artist has inserted it into a frame held in place by two putti, reminiscent of the *quadri riportati* of Annibale Carracci and Nicolas Poussin.⁵¹ This type of composition was furthered, and integrated into a receding naturalistic landscape, by Petrus V—, an artistic personality especially interested in the possibilities that ruptures in the parchment could provide for the illustration of spatial depth. In the frontispiece to a copy of Eusebius's *Chronicon*, he playfully used a suspended, framed painting — an image within the image — to cover the usual position of the introductory initial, and compensated by hanging a diminutive letter *E* before it, from which a further placard dangles (figure 12). Throughout the composition, playful pictorial devices comment on the mutability of the text. The few well-placed guy strings of previous compositions have been replaced by a mass of rigging that clings haphazardly to the



Figure 11. Master of the Putti, First Page from the Book of Solomon, Venice, ca. 1471. New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library, PML 26984, folio 3v.



Figure 12. Petrus V—, Frontispiece to the *Chronicon*, by Eusebius, Venice, ca. 1480. Geneva, Bibliothèque de Genève, Ms. Lat. 49, folio 10r.

architecture, the parchment itself seems riddled with holes and hung in three separate sections allowing the viewer to glimpse the structure of the marble aedicula behind, putti precariously hoist up a heraldic escutcheon while others play with the surface of the parchment, and a satyr, his upper torso hidden, sticks an exploratory hand through a hole in the page. This playfulness, and the ability literally to stretch the text toward a multiplicity of compromises, has echoes in other works by Petrus V—; in a frontispiece to Lucretius's *De rerum natura* he uses many of the same devices but adds a gang of putti carrying a large initial away, while for Origen's *Opera* he inverts the occlusion of the Eusebius page and partially hides the introductory initial. Both these works were owned by Pope Sixtus IV, demonstrating that what might appear today as irreverence was a form of inventiveness acceptable in the highest circles of patronage.

Formal sources: a quest for the precedent

The roots of the illusionistic circumscription of writing are difficult to pinpoint, as marginal glosses that circle or highlight short passages of text occur in many manuscript cultures. But

the 'total' enclaving of text passages within a decorated page has an early manifestation in what is equally an archetype for the frontispiece itself: the opening page to Petrarch's Virgil painted by his beloved Simone Martini and now in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan. Here, in a nod to the tradition of pointing-hand marginal *aide-mémoires*, Simone ingeniously transformed two dedicatory couplets into fluttering scrolls held aloft by winged hands. His own laudatory couplet, however, remains outside the composition, at the bottom of the page.

Simone's extraordinary composition was a private and isolated *tour de force*, but it makes manifest the tensions between text and pictorial representation that had always been apparent in book illumination. But the desire to diffuse such tensions reveals itself more broadly and gradually in France and the Netherlands than in Italy. As more space in northern European manuscripts became devoted to marginal decoration and miniatures, line-fillers, tendrils, and figures began to encroach on the regions hitherto reserved for the text block — a trend especially prevalent in Books of Hours, the ultimate vehicles for pictorial meditation. The first instance of a full-page miniature that not only surrounds the text block, but also plausibly includes it within an illusionistic whole, occurs in the Sobieski Hours, a Parisian Book of Hours produced between 1420 and 1440.⁵² At such an early stage this motif can be interpreted as merely a pragmatic solution to a challenging pictorial brief, but soon its basic form was taken up with much greater sophistication by Jean Fouquet, the most influential French painter of the fifteenth century. In several miniatures from the Hours of Étienne Chevalier, painted in the 1450s for the treasurer of King Charles VII, Fouquet incorporated the central text block into fictive three-dimensional space by depicting it as a stone plaque, supported either by cherubs or by protruding brackets. Between the years 1446 and 1448, Fouquet had traveled to Italy, as mentioned by Filarete and, later, Vasari.⁵³ It is assumed that Fouquet's illusionistic treatment of the text block was derived from his experiences in Italy,⁵⁴ but given the motif's roots in the substantially older Sobieski Hours, this needs to be rethought.

Though Fouquet's interaction with Italian art greatly influenced his personal style,⁵⁵ little has been made of the impact he and his successors may have had on the Italian taste for the miniature as an illusionistic whole, a full-page image that subsumes the text block within it. Northern artists, with their regard for detailed and meticulous compositions, were much admired in Italy, and it is possible that the illusionistic placard or panel motif was derived, in part, from imported French or Flemish manuscripts.⁵⁶ Several recent catalogues have adumbrated the many northern Books of Hours surviving in the major libraries of Rome, Florence, Milan, and the Veneto.⁵⁷ Recognizing the difficulties in ascertaining when these books reached the Italian peninsula, Caterina Limentani Viridis has nonetheless emphasized the importance of their circulation in the diffusion of a visual language alternative to that of the prevailing, Italian-born humanistic trends.⁵⁸ A precisely contextualized, though quite late example of this alternate taste

is evinced by the Grimani Breviary, whose pages are replete with illusionistic text placards and marginal devices painted by Gerard Horenbout and Alexander and Simon Bening.⁵⁹ An Italian diplomat originally commissioned the book before selling it almost immediately to Cardinal Domenico Grimani of Venice in 1520 for the hefty sum of 500 ducats. The book's imagery is a compendium of many of the previous century's most successful Franco-Flemish iconographic formulae — including those developed by the Limbourg brothers and Fouquet — and its displays of pictorial invention were presumably appreciated by its cultivated Italian buyers. As a prestige object from the North, the Breviary also proved highly influential to the illuminator Benedetto Bordone, who closely studied its naturalistic foliate borders and even replicated the presence of a lifelike dragonfly in the margin of an Evangelary he created for the Paduan convent of Santa Giustina in 1523.⁶⁰

Precisely how particular visual strategies that address the tensions between text and image migrated across the Alps is a complex question, and insofar as it involves establishing artistic primacy or 'influence' is not necessarily a fruitful avenue for investigation. But with a self-reflexive motif that shows itself to be a conveyor of dense meaning, a search for formal sources can reveal much about the motivations for adopting that solution. If its particular derivation or the general concept of the page as a unified pictorial field stem from northern examples, then it can be associated more closely with aspects of courtly fashion intertwined with, and not opposed to, the activities of humanists. Just such an example of the complex feedback loop of artistic trends in the period manifests itself in the Hours of Frederick III of Aragon, attributed to Joan Todeschino, a Neapolitan court artist from Bergamo, and ascribed to the period in which he accompanied his patron during an exile to Tours beginning in 1501.⁶¹ The page introducing the suffrage to Saint Peter combines the virtuosic jeweled armatures and torn parchment framing devices of Italian pedigree with an illusionistic flower cutting slipped into the vellum, a hallmark of the Bruges-Ghent school (figure 13). In a further twist, the miniatures within the frames, painted by Jean Bourdichon, were pasted onto the folios before Todeschino completed the surrounding decoration.⁶² The result is a seamless collaboration that draws on illusionistic inclinations from Flemish, French, and Italian traditions. Additional instances of artistic cross-fertilization need to be pinpointed, but as an aggregate whole the northern Books of Hours present in Italy are a further example of the 'pluralism' in fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century fashion that saw luxury objects from the artistic centers of northern Europe avidly sought out by patrons and artists in Spain, Portugal, and Italy.⁶³

Stronger evidence exists for classical precedents, both codicological and archeological, to the architectural frontispiece motif, but the variety of sources are not mutually exclusive. Although the Philocalus Calendar of 354, the earliest known illustrated codex which survives only in later copies, contained the image of two putti supporting a placard of text, Pächt noted that it



Figure 13. Joan Todeschino (Master of the London Pliny?) and Jean Bourdichon, Page from the Hours of Frederick III of Aragon, Tours, ca. 1501. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. lat. 10532, folio 332v.

is extremely unlikely to have been known to fifteenth-century book illuminators.⁶⁴ The links with the drawings of antique monuments found in the *sylogae* of such antiquarians as Ciriacus of Ancona, Felice Feliciano, and Giovanni Marcanova provide a more direct link; these proved highly influential for Andrea Mantegna and Jacopo Bellini, the two chief protagonists of fifteenth-century Venetian visual forms.⁶⁵ Moreover, the antiquarians, working in close proximity to these and other influential artists, tended to modify or imaginatively to reconstruct their renderings into full-page, symmetrically arranged compositions — the direct predecessors of the architectural title-page.

Even if the illusionistic frontispiece's backdrop stems from these sources, the precedent for the curling page motif lies elsewhere. A plausible formal and ideological precedent exists in

the *cartellino*, an illusionistic paper depicted by painters, usually as a vehicle for a signature or dedicatory text.⁶⁶ The first known use of the device in a panel painting occurs in Filippo Lippi's *Tarquinta Madonna* of 1437, which dates from shortly after his stay in Padua and possible transalpine sojourn; its development could be considered the result of an encounter with the naturalistic details of Flemish and Veneto-Paduan painters.⁶⁷ Despite its apparently Tuscan origins, the *cartellino* became a favored device for later fifteenth-century Venetian painters, and as a form of fictive parchment shares many of the visual characteristics found in illuminated frontispieces: it can have creases suggesting it was recently unfolded, it is subject to lighting effects and can cast shadows, and it is often shown curling toward the viewer at its corners.⁶⁸ Moreover, as the *cartellino* almost always bore the signature of the artist, it became an overt demonstration piece, a virtuosic paraph that not only emphasized the artist's primacy and skill but also revealed the status of the painting as a work of artifice.⁶⁹ Unable to be considered as the finished object's principal author or transcriber, the book illuminator had very little prerogative to sign his work overtly, though the copyist could do so at the conclusion of the text in the colophon, according to a millennial practice. The illusionistic parchment, in this light, can be interpreted as a type of nonverbal signature, especially because its use can be linked to the activities of a small number of distinct artistic personalities.

Similar to their Netherlandish counterparts, northern Italian painters were also interested in depicting semifictive frames and shadows around their compositions, and their use of these meta-pictorial devices can be correlated with contemporary developments in book illustration. The most radical exponent of this trend, reminiscent of Girolamo da Cremona's virtuoso illusionism, is a *Madonna and Child with Angels* of about 1470 attributed to a Ferrarese artist. A conventional central figure grouping is surrounded by an *entirely* fictive wooden frame that includes the remnants of a torn canvas and its tacked strapping (figure 14).⁷⁰ This unique work exists on a different ontological level from the paintings of Mantegna or Van Eyck, usually portrait-length, that only partially 'transgress' the space of their real frames with projecting fingers or illusionistic inscriptions and faux wood-grain. Assumed by most scholars to have also been a miniature painter, the Ferrarese artist invoked the same questions as did Petrus V — in his Breviary page (figure 9) by further depicting a fly posed on the curling edge of the lacerated surface.⁷¹

Meaning

Evidently, the torn-page frontispiece did not evolve from a single source — its origins stem from a combination of several preexisting visual techniques and from very current but still rather isolated trends in contemporary panel painting. But along with these formal precedents for its use, a number of ideological factors motivated its adoption and popularity. The various layers of visual representation operative in the frontispieces that have



Figure 14. Unknown Ferrarese artist, *Madonna and Child with Angels*, ca. 1470–1480. Tempera, oil and gold on panel. 58.5 × 44 cm. Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland.

been discussed are not merely creative enactments of Albertian picture theory, but may allude to the actual experience of consulting crumbling ancient texts (figure 15). Humanists who sought to recover lost texts from obscure monastic libraries often wrote about the pitiful condition of the codices they found. In a letter to Guarino of Verona written in 1416, Poggio Bracciolini mentioned finding among the books at St. Gall a ‘Quintillian still safe and sound, though filthy with mold and dust.’⁷² In the same year Cincius de Rusticus, a student of Bracciolini, wrote to his teacher that during the retrieval of ancient texts from the Monastery of St. Gall ‘in which countless books were kept like captives and the library neglected and infested with dust, worms, soot, and all the things associated with the destruction of books, we all burst into tears, thinking that this was the way in which the Latin language had lost its greatest glory and distinction.’⁷³ Bibliophiles expressed a great deal of concern for keeping new books clean and dirt-free.⁷⁴ Richard de Bury’s *Philobiblon*, a treatise on the love and care of books, provided a strongly argued justification not only for their jealous preservation but also for their renewal, equating the practice of replacing ‘volumes that are worn out with age by fresh successors’ with the dutiful perpetuation of divine

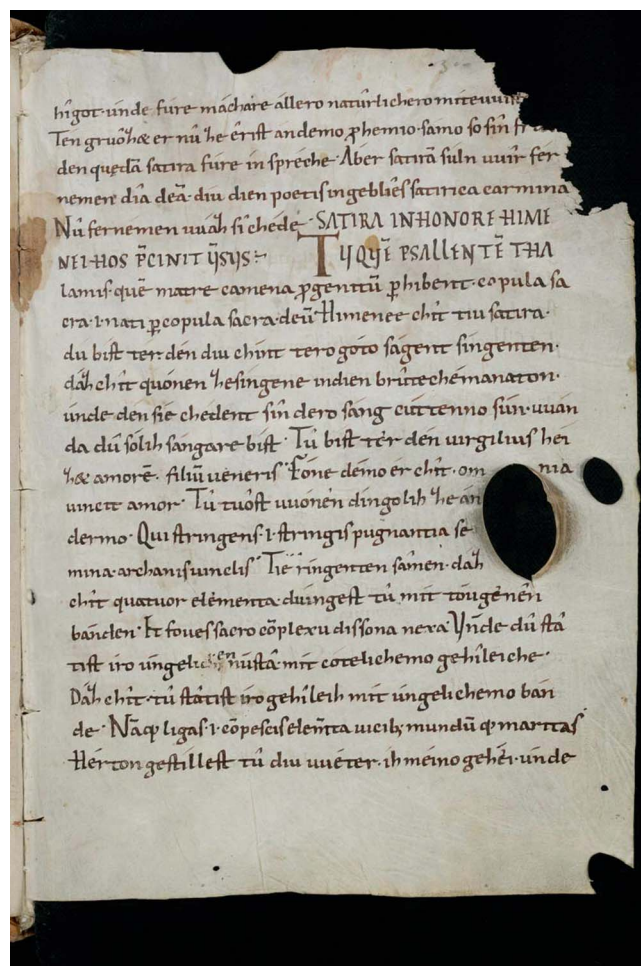


Figure 15. Page from the *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, eleventh century. St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 872, page 3.

truth.⁷⁵ Though de Bury’s text was written in the 1340s, it proved influential to later book collectors and was first printed in Cologne in 1473. It circulated in Italy at an early date, its popularity no doubt spurred by the famous unanswered letters written to him by Petrarch.⁷⁶ Throughout his letters, Bracciolini is likewise constantly preoccupied with the provision of pristine, crisp, good-quality parchment for the transcription of recovered ancient texts, intimating that a clean break should be made from the decrepit exemplars. Frontispieces that illusionistically frame an initial tattered page, followed by a sequence of pristine, largely unadorned folios, illustrate the rehabilitation of the text, from a deteriorated, transitory codex to the flawless redacted copy, all the while keeping the destructive nature of time and history fresh in the reader’s mind. They are a visual representation of the paleographical goals of the humanist project. The frontispieces confound the ontology of historical time, for the fictive architecture they depict, apparently so solid, was in reality largely ruined whereas the fragile, seemingly ephemeral pages of text had resisted the vicissitudes of time that stone and marble could not. Certain frontispieces make this tension

manifest, as they show the architectural surround crumbling and overgrown; these are an antitype to the more popular depiction of a re-animated antiquity, complete with putti, satyrs, and colorful garlands. Together, ancient monuments and aged parchment represented the two sources from which information about antiquity could be recovered by the fifteenth-century humanist. As De Rusticus lamented, 'two things used to stand out in Rome: the libraries and the monumental buildings.'⁷⁷

These two modes of recovery, textual and monumental, are also emphasized in a number of frontispieces that contrast the capital letters of epigraphic text with the italic or gothic script of the parchment page (figures 8, 12). These images can be brought to bear on discussions regarding the re-adoption of Carolingian and Romanesque scripts and their perceived historicity by humanists. This issue was first explored by Pächt, who suggested that the new form of Italian book-decoration was the result of an error in historical judgment that caused humanists to believe that 'the early medieval manuscripts from which they copied their classical texts were classical codices.'⁷⁸ Regardless of whether humanists perceived the text and decoration of the ninth-, tenth-, and twelfth-century books they so closely copied to be antique or not, the presence of a scribal mode in conjunction with an epigraphic one suggests an assumption that ancient codices had to have been written in a faster, less formal script than were the stone monuments that Cyriacus and his followers so avidly recorded. Welles has suggested that the humanist desire to preserve texts for posterity is analogous to the motivation behind building sepulchral monuments, especially when the text has been rescued from neglect; here these two related desires coalesce into a unified whole.⁷⁹

Works by classical authors were not the only texts introduced by curling-page frontispieces, however. Given the motif's association with the revival and re-engagement of antiquity, a cause famously dear to Petrarch, it is not surprising that the illustration of his work attracted its use. One of the most original of all historiated Petrarch texts, a printed edition of the *Canzoniere* and *Trionfi* illuminated by the poet-cum-painter Antonio Grifo around 1500 in Rome, contains two frontispieces that depict fictive parchments.⁸⁰ In the first composition, the central placard is shown hanging from a hole in the page while two subsidiary placards containing commentaries dangle from the branches of a sapling. In the frontispiece to the *Trionfi*, which begins with the highly charged words 'Nel tempo che rinnova . . .' (With time that renews . . .), the text is affixed to a frame anchored by two pilasters and surrounded by disconnected groups of characters from the narrative (figure 16). In both compositions the parchment not only is curling, but contains shadow lines indicating that it was once folded in on itself. The way these illusions are constructed by Grifo is different enough from other uses of the motif to suggest that they were not simply adopted as fashion but instead act as a commentary on the text, as do the remainder of the volume's highly imaginative illustrations. The motif's use may allude to an atmosphere of longing and worldly impermanence, a sentiment central to the



Figure 16. Antonio Grifo, First Page from the *Trionfi*, by Petrarch, Venice, 1470. Brescia, Biblioteca Queriniana, Inc. G.V. 15. fol. 137r.

Trionfi, whose final chapter, *The Triumph of Eternity*, was illustrated by a contemporary Veneto-Paduan artist with an image of a horse-driven chariot crashing, its cargo of precious books shown tumbling to the ground.⁸¹

The framing of Petrarch's text and other vernacular writings such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* as though they were precious ancient fragments also alludes to a growing awareness of vernacular historicism. From 1435 onward, a debate raged about the true age of the Italian language, and though Alberti disagreed with proponents of the Italian language's primordially,⁸² many influential thinkers believed that the *volgare* had been commonly spoken by the ancient Romans.⁸³ More pertinently, by the late fifteenth century many educated Italians had come to see the artistic and literary works of the previous century as historically important, worthy of rehabilitation and even veneration.⁸⁴

Scholastic texts, widely read throughout Italy despite the purported dominance of humanism, were also introduced by illusionistic frontispieces whose visual rhetoric was ideal for

problematicizing contemporary relationships to venerable but archaic theological texts. One of the grandest uses of the motif occurs in a set of four volumes on canon and civil law printed by Nicolaus Jenson, most probably for his patron and business partner Peter Ugelheimer.⁸⁵ In Girolamo da Cremona's frontispiece to Gratian's *Decretum*, the central blocks of text and the peripheral glosses are depicted as a heavily lacerated, interconnected sheet partially obscuring an inhabited bejeweled frame though not connected to it in any obvious way (figure 17). In this case the torn, curling parchment, twinned with the gothic type employed by Jenson, seems to be a purposeful reference to the scholastic tradition that saw the principal text glossed by a succession of commentators, often in secondary or tertiary borders. In the frontispiece to Justinian's *Digest* from the same four-volume set, the artist Benedetto Bordon has extended the tears deeper into the interlinear spaces while using red strings to tie the parchment together, perhaps alluding to the greater antiquity of the Byzantine Emperor's treatise, and the effects of Ugelheimer's own dictum, "Mit Zitt" (with time), itself included in gold letters



Figure 17. Girolamo da Cremona, Frontispiece to the *Decretum*, by Gratian, Venice or Padua, ca. 1477. Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek, Mon. Typ. 1477, 2° (12), folio 2r.



Figure 18. Benedetto Bordon, Frontispiece to the *Digest*, by Justinian, Venice or Padua, ca. 1477. Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek, Mon. Typ. 1477, 2° (13), folio 2r.

on the lower part of the monument (figure 18). In both compositions, a deliberate contrast is created between the old origins of the juridical text and the new visual language of the artist and patron. The dichotomy is even present in the two types of decorated initials used; those in the lower half of the Gratian page are in red and blue penwork of the type that had existed for almost three centuries, whereas those in the upper half of the composition are rendered in the newest classicizing style.

In the same way that Filippino Lippi's *Vision of Saint Bernard* (figure 19) shows the twelfth-century abbot's collection of books as a ragged pile of curling and soiled volumes — not a neat collection of handsome new editions — so too could fictively deteriorated parchments be associated with scholastic learning, the virtues of poverty, and the passing of time. Painted depictions of Church fathers and theologians at study, including Lippi's, consistently show hourglasses alongside stacks of books, symbols of transience. As the *cartellino* in Lippi's painting exhorts the viewer to "Substine et Abstine" (bear and forbear) to receive divine recompense, illusionistically tattered pages recall



Figure 19. Filippino Lippi, Detail from *The Apparition of the Virgin to Saint Bernard*, 1486. Tempera and Oil on panel. 210 × 195 cm. Florence, Church of the Badia.

the futility of knowledge alone, issuing a brash and sometimes ambiguous warning against hubris. This was especially true for theological texts, whose virtues had to be reaffirmed in the face of humanist rhetoricians put off by their ineloquent language. The tattered page illusion could allude to the well-worn paths of meditative prayer and scholarship, with the partly hidden jewels beyond a reminder that disciplined learning and carefully trained memory are akin to a treasure chest, a path to the Biblical riches of heaven.⁸⁶ In this sense the curling parchment also recalls, in an example that would have been familiar to the Veneto-Paduan artists under consideration, one of the earliest and most tantalizing instances of selective revelation: Giotto's two angels who roll up the corners of the firmament in the Scrovegni Chapel's *Last Judgment*, heralding the end of time and offering a glimpse of a dazzling, bejeweled New Jerusalem beyond. Correspondingly, book illustrators implied through their images that there were lessons to be learned from the impermanent and fragile codex, fraught with material and redactional flaws, to reach the treasure beyond.

The contrast of the parchment's poor physical state with the splendor of jeweled armatures served a moralizing purpose, but it could also refer to the physical accessories or *realia* associated with affluent book ownership. The elaborate gilded armatures inset with cameos, jewels, and pearls that are shown either tied to the surface of the page or directly behind it, closely resemble contemporary jewelry of the highest quality. Because of their inherent fungibility, very few items of this type survive, but evidence from painting and illuminated decoration of the period confirms the appearance of these precious objects and can provide clues as to their use.⁸⁷ A sketch of the 1430s for a pendant by Pisanello shows the item hanging from a twig slipped into slits on the page, in a manner reminiscent of far later motifs in book illumination (figure 20). Portraits by Domenico Ghirlandaio and his follower Bastiano Mainardi depict brooch-like objects



Figure 20. Antonio Pisanello, Design for a Pendant, 1430–1440. Pen and ink on parchment, 8.5 × 6.8 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques, inv. 2274 recto.

encrusted with pearls and cut stones in close proximity to open books, suggesting that these items could have been laid across a page-opening as a form of paperweight or bookmark in much the same manner as small naturalistic bronzes of creatures such as satyrs and snakes were used in the following century.⁸⁸ A Madonna of about 1465 by Giovanni Bellini now at the Kimbell Art Museum shows a prayer book with an ornate fastener placed upon the upper margin of an open page and casting a shadow onto it. Part of a somewhat later moment of antiquarian bibliophilism, Raphael's portrait of Leo X depicts a similar circumstance (figure 21). This type of real-world superimposition is reflected in the distinctive stippled blue and purple shadows Girolamo da Cremona and others show being cast upon the parchment by jeweled objects (figure 1). These shadows, even when not paired with fictive parchment tears, offer a means of reconciling the hitherto dismembered and spatially ambiguous genre of foliate ornamentation with the exigencies of perspectival space and lighting effects. It was of course Alberti's stated conviction that gold and precious gems not be placed *on* paintings, but only *within* them (depicted skillfully using colors, not gold), or *around* them (studded in frames to signal their preciousness),⁸⁹ and images such as the Aristotle frontispiece cleverly fulfill both these exigencies and neither of them at the same time. In this new language of book illumination, the botanically impossible



Figure 21. Raphael Sanzio, Detail from *Portrait of Leo X*, 1517–1518. Oil on panel. 154 × 119 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi.

vines, disembodied busts, and out-of-scale marginal figures of the past are integrated into a system of human artifice: metalized in gold-work imitative of vegetal forms, crystallized in pearls and cut stones, or petrified into classicizing cameos. Yet such treatments are not simply aesthetic devices or concessions, but a response to the visual effects of a bejeweled book culture that later vanished as the library supplanted the study. The famously detailed inventories of Charles V of France, for example, record numerous books with gilded, pearl- and gem-studded clasps, straps, and *pippes*—the decorative metallic strips inserted into the top of the book to which bookmarks could be attached.⁹⁰ These decorative accessories, almost entirely lost today, were considered integral to the book's objecthood and often equaled or exceeded the value of its contents. Additionally, Italian portraits from the period show the elaborate display of strings of pearls hung from architecture in an aristocratic setting, demonstrating that stand-alone jewelry was not intended exclusively for personal adornment, but could also be used, together with costly books, in static displays of wealth and erudition.⁹¹ Whatever their specific uses, such appurtenances appear closely linked to humanist material culture.⁹²

Other illusionistic devices mirror codicological aspects of manuscript books and, though related to the philosophical issues of impermanence and renascence discussed earlier, are also phenomenological insofar as they refer to the direct physical experience of consulting a book. As Gilbert noted,

the validity of pictorial illusion often rests, paradoxically, on its continuity with the external world and its conformity to expected experience, as with the altar curtain Fra Angelico painted in simulation of a common real-world practice, or even the painted, wooden 'dummy' book given to the Duke of Berry by his beloved Limbourg brothers.⁹³ It follows that book illumination, which neither hangs vertically nor rests perfectly flat, should have its own language of illusionism invoking accessories and properties special to the vellum page. Thus, some of the most startling illusionistic images show the text block agape with holes sewn up summarily with thread, as lacerations in real parchment often were (figure 18). The stitched darns that the illuminator of the Cesena choirbooks so delighted in depicting mimic what was a very common repair method, especially for books such as antiphonaries whose larger folios were more likely to contain flaws (figures 10, 22). Although most medieval codices surviving today have had their edges cropped or have



Figure 22. Unknown artist, Frontispiece from a Gradual, ca. 1486. Cesena, Biblioteca Comunale Malatestiana, Capitolo della Cattedrale, Corale C, folio 1r.

been stabilized by modern repairs, the state of conservation of older texts was more variable before the advent of the modern library, and many seriously damaged texts were presumably discarded once they had been recopied. If the lacerations and repairs to these fictive parchments appear exaggerated, they may be an additional reference to material poverty or perceived antiquity. The red strings routinely shown affixing fictive jeweled objects to the parchment represent another sort of realia; they are similar to the page-markers that protrude from the edges of books in many fifteenth-century paintings. Likewise, the webs of string that support the parchments recall the practice of tying letters and assorted papers together with thread — a convenient method of organization.⁹⁴ The frontispiece to the Breviary illuminated by Petrus V— shows strips of parchment attached to the main page that contain both rubrics and the majuscule incipit text (figure 23). Such paper markers were often tipped onto pages for easy reference and glossing, and they can be seen protruding from books in contemporary paintings of scholarly studies. These types of inclusions, which mimic common addenda to manuscript books, have equivalents in northern Europe, where owners often pasted, pinned, or sewed medallions, pilgrimage badges, and even

naturalia such as feathers and plant specimens into their Books of Hours. Scholars have suggested these tendencies as a possible source for some illusionistic devices in the margins of Flemish manuscripts.⁹⁵ Similar to their northern equivalents, such add-ins have largely been lost in the intervening centuries, but represent a creative engagement on the part of artists with the experiential, largely haptic nature of pre-modern reading and book ownership.

Conclusions

The paradox of the fictive parchment device, and in fact any type of illusionism on a two-dimensional surface, is that it promotes the internal coherence of the image while compromising its external consistency. With a framed or otherwise fixed painted image, the Albertian ‘window’ effect becomes operative, and the illusion is reconciled with reality because the medium of panel- or canvas-painting is to a certain degree defined by such effects. In book illustration, the contradiction is heightened because the image is neither framed nor vertically displayed, and its much more intimate pictorial surface can be warped, shifted, and ultimately overturned by the hand of the viewer. Book illuminators were aware of this phenomenological difference and adjusted their imagery accordingly by creatively re-representing their surface as a subject: the page within a page.

Perhaps because of these properties peculiar to the book, Pächt considered there to be a fundamental conflict between the ‘page as a primarily planimetric organism and its treatment as an opening into a recession of depth,’ whereas Panofsky went even further by insisting that by the fifteenth century manuscript painting ‘had already begun to commit suicide by converting itself into painting. Even without Gutenberg, it would have died of an overdose of perspective.’⁹⁶ The examples discussed here, however, show the continuing vitality of the art form even as it partook in the Albertian paradigm and occasionally subverted it. The extinction of book illumination as an art form had nothing to do with pictorial aesthetics, but lay instead in the changing nature of the book brought about both by the growth of print technology and by changes in patterns of religious and secular reading. Far from being the final gasp of a self-consuming pictorial inertia, the adoption of an illusionistic space in book illustration allowed for an intensified engagement with large-scale painting. Wider circumstances of production and patronage required the artist to focus his principal attention in one zone — the frontispiece — in turn allowing him to lavish more time on a single composition. The *cartellino*, a minor addendum in panel painting, was expanded into a central element of design, while new pictorial forms developed by Mantegna and others were readily applied to a picture plane that, although smaller in scale, participated in the same Aristotelian space. But book illustration could also innovate without the mediation of monumental painting. Studies of antique monuments by humanists were adopted directly by book illuminators, bypassing monumental intermediaries and



Figure 23. Petrus V—, Page for the First Nocturn of Advent, from a Breviary, Padua or Venice, ca. 1478–1480. Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library, Harvard University, MS Typ 219, folio 2153r.

uniting the recovery of ancient text to the recovery of ancient image. By emulating the realia of book ownership and representing objects and aspects of the humanist study directly on the page, book illuminators engaged with the most recent paleographic and philological currents. To guarantee their relevance, these artists transformed decorative addenda into illusionistic devices that defined and subordinated the script, occasionally elucidating its textual meaning but always insisting on the ability of images to define the status of the text. Their playful vocabulary of dissimulation and selective revelation constituted a multivalent visual commentary on the nature of representation and cognition. With this in mind, we can briefly return to the first image discussed. The frontispiece to Aristotle's *Works* by Girolamo da Cremona shows an artist who clearly understood the precepts of Alberti's *Della pittura*, choosing to privilege illusionistic effects over strict internal consistency. The resulting ruptures are not a failure but rather a critical commentary on the limits of mimesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Portions of this paper were presented at a session entitled 'Images and the materiality of words' during the 44th *International Congress on Medieval Studies* in Kalamazoo (May 2009) and at a session entitled 'Reappraising the role of illusionism in early modern painting' during the 56th *Renaissance society of America Annual Meeting* in Venice (April 2010). I would like to thank Jonathan Alexander, Lilian Armstrong, Lina Bolzoni, and Mary Carruthers for the kind and helpful comments they provided at various stages in my research; my work would not have been possible without their assistance.

NOTES

- 1 – 'First of all, on the surface on which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen.' Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, ed. Martin Kemp, trans. Cecil Grayson (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 54 (Book 1, Chapter 19). Daniel Arasse has suggested that the very definition and use of the Albertian frame relies on an Aristotelian concept of space in 'Fonctions et limites de l'iconographie: sur le cadre et sa transgression,' in *Die Methodik der Bildinterpretation: Les méthodes de l'interprétation de l'image: Deutsch-französische Kolloquien 1998–2000* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002), p. 557. While Alberti was surely aware of this dependence on Aristotle's 'finite and anisotropic' (varying in magnitude according to the direction of measurement) space, Girolamo's image seems to flout such a linear-perspectival definition, which is understandable considering the content of the text being introduced. 'Strictly speaking the Physics does not advance a theory of space at all, but only a theory of place or a theory of positions in space.' Max Jammer, *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 17, 54. The unusual *miseenpage* is concerned instead with just such relations between various bodies. Nor is it necessarily appropriate to characterize contemporary perceptions of Aristotle's spatial theories as unified and universally held by commentators, patrons, and artists alike.
- 2 – The principal studies of the form will be discussed in more detail subsequently. Among the most foundational are Otto Pächt, 'Notes and observations on the origin of humanistic book-decoration', in *Fritz Saxl 1890–1948: Memorial Essays*, ed. D.J. Gordon (New York: T. Nelson, 1957), pp. 184–94; H.D.L. Vervliet, 'Les origines du frontispice architectural',

- Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 33 (1958), pp. 222–31; Margery Corbett, 'The architectural title-page: An attempt to trace its development from its humanist origins up to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the heyday of the complex engraved title-page,' *Motif* 12 (1964), pp. 48–62; Giordana Mariani Canova, *La Miniatura veneta del Rinascimento, 1450–1500* (Venice: Alfieri, 1969); Jonathan J.G. Alexander, 'Notes on some Veneto-Paduan illuminated books of the Renaissance,' *Arte veneta* (1970), pp. 9–20; and Lilian Armstrong, *Renaissance Miniature Painters and Classical Imagery: The Master of the Putti and His Venetian Workshop* (London: Harvey Miller, 1981), esp. Chap II, part 4, 'The architectural frontispiece,' pp. 19–25.
- 3 – For the origins of the printing press in Rome, see A. Modigliani, *Tipografi a Roma prima della stampa: due società per fare libri con le forme (1466–1470)* (Rome: RR inedita, 1989); and Anna Modigliani, 'Tipografi a Roma (1467–1477),' in *Gutenberg e Roma: le origini della stampa nella città dei papi (1467–1477)*, ed. Massimo Miglio and Orietta Rossini (Naples: Electa, 1997). For its origins in Venice, see Leonardas Vytautas Gerulaitis, *Printing and Publishing in Fifteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1976); Neri Pozza, ed., *La stampa degli incunaboli nel Veneto: saggi e note* (Vicenza: N. Pozza, 1984); and Martin Lowry, *Nicholas Jenson and the Rise of Venetian Publishing in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
 - 4 – Otto Pächt, *Book Illumination in the Middle Ages: An Introduction*, trans. Kay Davenport (London: Harvey Miller, 1986), pp. 9–10. Pächt, however, saw the advent of cogent three-dimensional space within the fifteenth-century manuscript page as a development fatal to the art form; *ibid.*, pp. 200–02; *The Master of Mary of Burgundy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), p. 19; as did Erwin Panofsky in *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 28.
 - 5 – See, chiefly, James H. Marrow, *Pictorial Invention in Netherlandish Manuscript Illumination of the Late Middle Ages: The Play of Illusion and Meaning*, eds Brigitte Dekeyser and Jan van der Stock (Paris: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2005); and Brigitte Dekeyser, *Layers of Illusion: The Mayer van den Bergh Breviary* (Ghent: Ludion, 2004), pp. 18–27; but also Anja Grebe, 'The art of the edge: Frames and page-design in manuscripts of the Ghent-Bruges School,' in *The Metamorphosis of Marginal Images: From Antiquity to Present Time*, eds Nurith Kenaan-Kedar and Asher Ovadia (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2001), pp. 93–102; and Kate Challis, 'Marginalized jewels: The depiction of jewellery in the borders of Flemish devotional manuscripts,' in *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*, ed. Margaret M. Manion and Bernard J. Muir (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), pp. 253–89.
 - 6 – 'The main features of the architectural title-page are the arch or pediment, the flanking columns which enclose the title, the bases or the continuous plinth on which the columns rest.' Corbett, 'The architectural title-page,' p. 49.
 - 7 – For a discussion of continuities and innovations in book production, see Margaret M. Smith, 'Medieval roots of the renaissance printed book: An essay in design history,' in *Forms of the 'Medieval' in the 'Renaissance': A Multidisciplinary Exploration of a Cultural Continuum*, ed. G.H. Tucker (Charlottesville, VA: Rookwood Press, 2000), pp. 143–53. Especially relevant is the section entitled 'The title-page: A new feature in the book,' pp. 147–49.
 - 8 – Elizabeth Welles, 'Umanesimo e petrarchismo nella miniatura del Quattrocento,' in *Letteratura italiana e arti figurative: atti del XII convegno dell'Associazione internazionale per gli studi di lingua e letteratura italiana*, ed. Antonio Franceschetti (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1985), pp. 383–84; Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1991); Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970).
 - 9 – On antique exemplars for architectonic decorative motifs in books, see Vervliet, 'Les origines du frontispice architectural,' pp. 222–31.
 - 10 – Armstrong, *Renaissance Miniature Painters*, pp. 19–29.
 - 11 – The most recent survey of early printed title-pages or frontispieces is Margaret M. Smith, *The Title-Page, Its Early Development, 1460–1510* (London: British Library, 2000). The author discusses the problems of terminology, across various academic fields, in the section entitled 'The title-page and the frontispiece: Terminology,' pp. 12–15.

12 – J.J.G. Alexander, *Italian Renaissance Illuminations* (New York: Braziller, 1977); Mariani Canova, *La miniatura veneta*; Giordana Mariani Canova, Giovanna Baldissin Molli, and Federica Toniolo, *La miniatura a Padova: dal medioevo al Settecento* (Modena: F.C. Panini, 1999). Here, the recent conference paper entitled ‘Benedetto Bordon and monumental painting’, delivered by Lilian Armstrong at the Fifty-Sixth Annual Conference of the Renaissance Society of America, held in Venice, Italy, April 8–10, 2010, should be noted.

13 – Armstrong, *Renaissance Miniature Painters*; Armstrong, ‘Il Maestro di Pico: Un miniatore veneziano del tardo Quattrocento,’ *Saggi e Memorie di Storie dell’Arte* 17 (1990), pp. 7–39; Armstrong, ‘Opus Petri: Renaissance Miniatures from Venice and Rome,’ *Viator* 21 (1990), pp. 385–412.

14 – Lilian Armstrong, ‘The impact of printing on miniaturists in Venice after 1469,’ in *Printing the Written Word: The Social History of Books, Circa 1450–1520*, ed. Sandra Hindman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 174–202. The complex and often unexpected interface of print and manuscript, illuminator, scribe, and woodcut that continues for several centuries from the introduction of the printing press is investigated in David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). The conclusions drawn challenge the view that the introduction of movable type revolutionized approaches to the book. See Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

15 – A number of presentation copies of each edition were printed on vellum and reserved for patrons, collaborators, or owners of the printing press. See Armstrong, ‘The impact of printing,’ 200.

16 – J.J.G. Alexander, ed., *The Painted Page: Italian Renaissance Book Illumination, 1450–1550* (Munich: Prestel, 1994), especially entries by Jonathan Alexander on manuscripts illuminated by Gasparo Padovano, and entries by Lilian Armstrong on hand-illuminated incunables. See also Armstrong, *Studies of Renaissance Miniaturists in Venice* (all of Armstrong’s essays cited in this paper are included in this reprint edition), and Lew Andrews ‘Pergamene strappate e frontespizi: i frontespizi architettonici nell’epoca dei primi libri a stampa,’ *Arte veneta* 55 (1999), pp. 6–29.

17 – Vervliet, ‘Les origines du frontispice architectural,’ pp. 229–30.

18 – See, for example, Robert G. Calkins, ‘Sacred image and illusion in late Flemish manuscripts,’ in *Essays in Medieval Studies*, eds John B. Friedman and Patricia Hollahan (Chicago: Illinois Medieval Association, 1989), pp. 1–18; and Marrow, *Pictorial Invention*; for several highly perceptive exercises in assessing visual evidence, see James H. Marrow, ‘Symbol and meaning in northern European art of the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance,’ *Simiolus*, 16, 2/3 (1986), pp. 150–69; Alfred Acres, ‘The Columba altarpiece and the time of the world,’ *Art Bulletin* 80 (1998), pp. 422–51; and Bret Louis Rothstein, *Sight and Spirituality in Early Netherlandish Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

19 – Armstrong, *Studies of Renaissance Miniaturists*, pp. vii–viii.

20 – Sven Sandström, *Levels of Unreality: Studies in Structure and Construction in Italian Mural Painting During the Renaissance* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1963); John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957).

21 – This unintentional obfuscation is heightened for the text’s English-language readers: its adapted title forgoes the difficult translation of the French *tableau* and thereby widens the nominal scope of what was originally a localized area study to include all types of self-reflexive image, though earlier media such as manuscript illumination and panel painting remain left out. Compare Victor Ieronim Stoichita, *L’instauration du tableau: Métapeinture à l’aube des temps modernes* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1993) with its English translation *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-painting*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

22 – Even Stoichita himself states that ‘the recognition of the image as an image was a process widely encouraged by the Reformation’ (*The Self-Aware Image*, p. 89). Nevertheless, he also concedes elsewhere that

‘around 1400, after a long period in which the concept of mimesis, or rather that of “similarity” (homoiosis, adadaequatio/similitudo) had been strongly questioned, art as *techné mimetiké* made a new appearance onto the stage of Western culture.’ Stoichita, Introduction to section entitled ‘Mimesis vor und nach 1500/Pictorial Mimesis before and after 1500,’ in *Künstlerischer Austausch/Artistic Exchange: Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte: Berlin, 15–20. Juli 1992*, ed. Thomas W. Gachtgens (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994), p. 410.

23 – See Klaus Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren: ästhetische Illusion in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit in Italien* (München: W. Fink, 2001); to be published in English as *Veiling the Invisible: Art and Aesthetic Illusion in Early Modern Italy* (New York: Zone Books, forthcoming).

24 – Marrow, *Pictorial Invention*, p. 33.

25 – James H. Marrow, ‘Scholarship on Flemish manuscript illumination of the renaissance: Remarks on past, present, and future,’ in *Flemish Manuscript Painting in Context: Recent Research*, ed. Elizabeth Morrison and Thomas Kren (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), pp. 163–76.

26 – ‘“Pictorial realism” can be used to evoke our experience of the inhabited world, “illusionism” to alter our consciousness of the nature of works of art and our relationship to them, and “trompe l’œil” overtly to contradict our logic and experience.’ *Ibid.*, p. 169. I would further contend that the notion of ‘trompe l’œil,’ a linguistic expression of the late eighteenth century, has an application to the fifteenth-century material discussed here only insofar as it recalls the trope of mimetic deception. It seems better suited to describe an effect — literally a fooled audience or a ‘double take’ — rather than a visual strategy. Creighton E. Gilbert tentatively states that ‘actual trompe l’œil seems to lack a definition (other than the one in its name), having only implicit recognition case by case.’ Creighton E. Gilbert, ‘Grapes, curtains, human beings: The theory of missed mimesis,’ in *Künstlerischer Austausch Artistic Exchange*, p. 415. The 2002 exhibition held in Washington entitled *Deceptions and Illusions: Five Centuries of Trompe l’Œil Painting*, which included the Girolamo da Cremona frontispiece discussed above (cat. no. 79, entry by Lilian Armstrong, pp. 292–3), did not directly confront the problems of terminology identified by Marrow. The exhibition section related to illusionistic depictions of paper, ‘Temptations for the hand,’ contained no images by Italian artists. Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, ed., *Deceptions and Illusions: Five Centuries of Trompe l’Œil Painting* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2002), pp. 181–211.

27 – Apart from certain types of *cartellini*, or fictive inscriptions on monumental paintings, which I shall discuss later.

28 – Corbett, ‘The architectural title-page,’ p. 50.

29 – Lilian Armstrong, ‘The hand-illumination of printed books in Italy 1465–1515,’ in *The Painted Page: Italian Renaissance Book Illumination, 1450–1550*, ed. J.J.G. Alexander (Munich: Prestel, 1994), pp. 36–37; Armstrong, ‘The impact of printing,’ pp. 200–02.

30 – Armstrong, *Renaissance Miniature Painters*, pp. 21–22, 102; and cat. no. 80 (entry by Lilian Armstrong) in Alexander, ed., *The Painted Page*, pp. 165–66.

31 – For the possible identification of Joan (or Giovanni) Todeschino with the ‘Master of the London Pliny,’ see Teresa D’Urso, ‘Joan Todeschino (Il Maestro del Plinio di Londra?)’ in Toscano, ed., *La Biblioteca reale di Napoli*, pp. 165–82; D’Urso, *Giovanni Todeschino: La miniatura all’antica tra Venezia, Napoli e Tours* (Naples: Arte Tipografica, 2007). For a French Book of Hours with such cut-outs, see Marrow, *Pictorial Invention in Netherlandish Manuscript Illumination*, p. 5, figs. 13, 4.

32 – Although both volumes are from the same 1471 edition, translated by Niccolò Mallerini and printed in Venice by Vindelino de Spira, they may not have originally belonged together. The frontispiece for the second volume, also by the Master of the Putti, is discussed below. See the entry by Lilian Armstrong for cat. no. 81 in Alexander, ed., *The Painted Page*, pp. 166–67.

33 – Armstrong, *Renaissance Miniature Painters*, pp. 15–16, 25–26, 106–07; and cat. no. 81 (entry by Lilian Armstrong) in Alexander, ed., *The Painted Page*, pp. 166–67.

- 34 – For a survey of this miniaturist's work, see Armstrong, 'Opus Petri.'
- 35 – The presence of this profile face has only been remarked upon once, in passing, by Millard Meiss in *Andrea Mantegna as Illuminator: An Episode in Renaissance Art, Humanism, and Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 62, fig. 9.
- 36 – The work by Correnti is now in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, inv. 37. 1162. Mantegna's clouds were famously discussed by Ernst Gombrich in *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), p. 190, while the decipherment of hidden faces is also dealt with in his chapter entitled 'The mask and the face: The perception of physiognomic likeness in life and art,' in *Art, Perception and Reality* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), pp. 1–46.
- 37 – 'Aliquando intuebantur lineamenta nonnulla, quibus paululum immutatis persimile quidpiam veris naturae vultibus redderetur.' Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and on Sculpture. The Latin Texts of De pictura and De statua*, trans. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), pp. 120–01.
- 38 – Mirella Levi d'Ancona suggested that in certain instances the presence of a fly signifies the plague visited upon Israel to punish David, and relates to the local pestilence of 1478. See 'Il "Maestro della Mosca"', *Commentari* 26 (1975), pp. 145–57. For further information about flies in fifteenth-century painting, see Norman Land, 'Giotto's fly, Cimabue's gesture, and a Madonna and Child by Carlo Crivelli,' *Source* 15 (1996), pp. 11–15; and Jonathan Watkins, 'Untricking the eye: The uncomfortable legacy of Carlo Crivelli,' *Art International* 5 (1988), pp. 48–58. For a discussion of the demonic symbolism of the fly, see André Chastel, 'Iconology of the fly,' *FMR* 4, 19 (1986), pp. 61–82; and Harry Kuhnel, 'Die Fliege: Symbol des Teufels und der Sündhaftigkeit,' in *Aspekte der Germanistik: Festschrift für Hans-Friedrich Rosenfeld zum 90. Geburtstag*, ed. Walter Tauber (Göppingen: Kummerle, 1989), pp. 285–305.
- 39 – 'Diceci che stando Giotto ancor giovinetto con Cimabue, dipinse una volta in sul naso d'una figura che esso Cimabue avea fatta una mosca tanto naturale, che tornando il maestro per seguitare il lavoro, si rimise più d'una volta a cacciarla con mano pensando che fusse vera, prima che s'accorgesse dell'errore.' Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. Rosanna Bettarini, 6 vols. (Florence: Sansoni, 1966), vol. 2, p. 121; 'E anche di Giotto si legge che ne' principii suoi lui dipinse mosche, e che 'l suo maestro Cimabue ci fu ingannato, che credette che fussono vive, con un panno le volse cacciare via.' Antonio Averlino Filarete, *Trattato di architettura*, ed. Anna Maria Finoli and Liliana Grassi, 2 vols. (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1972), vol. 2, p. 665 (fol. 181.).
- 40 – Petrus Christus, *Portrait of a Carthusian*, 1446 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). A number of works by Carlo Crivelli contain flies posed on ledges or frames, including a Saint Catherine of Alexandria in the National Gallery, London; a Madonna and Child in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and two Madonnas in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. With regard to the Metropolitan's Madonna and Child formerly in the Jules Bache collection, Norman Land has suggested that the location of the fly is ambiguous, both on the painting and within it. 'Giotto's fly, Cimabue's gesture,' pp. 11–13.
- 41 – Ebert-Schifferer, *Deceptions and Illusions*, p. 163. The exhibition catalogue contains a section entitled 'Giotto's fly and the observation of Nature' (pp. 71–79), which discusses a number of images with illusionistic flies.
- 42 – In this context it should also be noted that the 1469 Johannes Spira edition of the *Natural History* was probably the first classical text to be printed in Venice. Many of the illuminators discussed in this paper decorated copies of it and other early editions of the same work.
- 43 – There are, however, two fifteenth-century literary references to deceptive paintings of fruit, both of which invoke the Plinian trope and concern the painter and illuminator Marco Zoppo. See Creighton Gilbert, 'Why still-life paintings: A quattrocento answer,' in *Abstracts of Papers Delivered in Art History Sessions: 64th Annual Meeting, College Art Association of America, February 1–4 1976, Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago*, ed. Herbert Kessler (New York: College Art Association, 1976), p. 86; and *Italian Art, 1400–1500: Sources and Documents* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992), pp. 186–87.
- 44 – Gilbert, 'Grapes, curtains, human beings: The theory of missed mimesis,' pp. 414–5.
- 45 – Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, p. 277.
- 46 – 'Apelles . . . pinxit et Alexandrum Magnum fulmen tenentem in templo Ephesiae Dianae . . . digiti eminere videntur et fulmen extra tabulam esse.' *Historia naturalis*, Book 35, chapter 36. For a discussion of this concept see Patricia Trutty-Cooill, 'La "eminencia" in Antonello da Messina,' *Antichità Viva* 21, 4 (July–August 1982), pp. 5–9.
- 47 – To the examples cited above (Mantegna, Zoppo) can be added the testimony of the scientific writer Giovanni da Fontana, who in 1454 claimed to have explained, in a book dedicated to Jacopo Bellini, how to make parts of images appear to be coming outward. See Giordana Mariani Canova, 'Riflessioni su Jacopo Bellini e sul libro dei disegni del Louvre,' *Arte Veneta* 26 (1972), pp. 22–23; republished in English in Gilbert, *Italian Art, 1400–1500: Sources and Documents*, pp. 174–75.
- 48 – For a discussion of the relationship between woodcuts and painting techniques, see Lilian Armstrong, 'Venetian and Florentine Renaissance woodcuts for bibles, liturgical books, and devotional books,' in *A Heavenly Craft: The Woodcut in Early Printed Books*, ed. Daniel De Simone (New York: Braziller, 2004), pp. 25–45. Recent scholarship has also drawn attention to the role of colorers who were employed to paint prints, often highly naturalistically, presumably to render them more like paintings or illuminations. See Susan Dackerman, ed., *Painted Prints: The Revelation of Color* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).
- 49 – This antiphony, corale Duomo D in the Biblioteca Comunale Malatestiana of Cesena, contains a colophon on folio 141v that identifies the patron and scribe, but not the illuminator. For a transcription of the colophon, and additional information on the Cesena choirbooks, see cat. no. 125 (entry by Federica Toniolo) in Alexander, ed., *The Painted Page*, pp. 234–35; Fabrizio Lollini, 'Volumi liturgici miniati nel territorio cesenate', in *Storia della chiesa di Cesena*, ed. Marino Mengozzi (Cesena: Stilgraf, 1998), pp. 240–49; and also Daniela Savoia, 'I corali della Cattedrale,' in *La casa dei libri: Dalla Libreria Domini alla Grande Malatestiana* (Cesena: Biblioteca Malatestiana, 2007); for a brief discussion of illusionism in corale Duomo D and its sister volume, corale Duomo C, see Maria Francesca Ciucciomini, 'Su alcune pagine miniate della Biblioteca Malatestiana di Cesena,' *Paragone*, 37, 431–33 (1986), pp. 29–35; and Alessandro Conti, 'Decorazione e pittura nel manoscritto umanistico,' in *Libreria Domini: I manoscritti della Biblioteca Malatestiana: testi e decorazioni*, ed. Fabrizio Lollini and Piero Lucchi (Bologna: Grafis, 1995), pp. 229–30.
- 50 – Cat. no. 81, entry by Lilian Armstrong, in Alexander, ed., *The Painted Page*, pp. 166–68.
- 51 – A similarity suggested in Armstrong, *Renaissance Miniature Painters*, p. 16.
- 52 – Mark L. Evans, 'An illusionistic device in the Hours of Étienne Chevalier,' *Scriptorium* 35 (1981), pp. 81–83, here p. 82.
- 53 – Antonio Averlino Filarete, *Trattato di architettura*, eds Anna Maria Finoli and Liliana Grassi, 2 vols. (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1972), vol. 1, p. 269; Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Rosanna Bettarini, 6 vols. (Florence: Sansoni, 1966), vol. 3, p. 247; these early sources relating to Fouquet are discussed and reprinted in Claude Schaefer, *Jean Fouquet: an der Schwelle zur Renaissance* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1994), p. 345.
- 54 – Michel Laclotte, 'A propos de Fouquet: des putti et un boeuf,' in *Napoli, l'Europa: ricerche di storia dell'arte in onore di Ferdinando Bologna*, ed. Francesco Abbate and Fiorella Sricchia Santoro (Cantanzaro: Meridiana, 1995), pp. 95–100.
- 55 – Mark L. Evans, 'Jean Fouquet and Italy: ". . . buono maestro, maxime a ritrarre del naturale" .', in *Illuminating the Book: Makers and Interpreters: Essays in Honour of Janet Backhouse*, ed. Michelle P. Brown and Scot McKendrick (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 162–89; Fiorella Sricchia Santoro, 'Jean Fouquet en Italie,' in *Jean Fouquet: Peintre et enlumineur du XV^e siècle*, ed. François Avril (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2003), pp. 50–63.

56 – For a compilation of contemporary Italian opinions on northern painters see Paolo Torresan, *Il dipingere di Fiandra: La pittura neerlandese nella letteratura artistica italiana del Quattro e Cinquecento* (Modena: S.T.E.M. Mucchi, 1981), pp. 7–34. For a study of North–South artistic exchange in its monumental context, see Paula Nuttall, *From Flanders to Florence: The Impact of Netherlandish Painting, 1400–1500* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) and also Bert W. Meijer, ed., *Firenze e gli antichi Paesi Bassi, 1430–1530* (Florence: Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, 2008).

57 – See Giovanni Morello, *Libri d'ore della Biblioteca apostolica vaticana* (Zürich: Belser Verlag, 1988), (157 books of hours listed, mostly from northern Europe); Cristina Gnoni Mavarelli, Maria Jole Minicucci, and Maria Grazia Ciardi Dupre Dal Poggetto, *I Libri d'ore della Biblioteca riccardiana. Vol. 1: I Libri d'Ore francesi e fiamminghi* (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e zecca dello stato, 1986) (seven books listed); Carlo Marcora, *I libri d'ore della Biblioteca Ambrosiana* (Milan: l'Ariete, 1973) (51 books listed, of which eleven are Italian); Paolo Torresan, 'Libri d'ore neerlandesi del XV e XVI secolo conservati nelle biblioteche del Veneto' (Ph.D. thesis, Università di Padova, 1972); Torresan, 'Libri d'ore franco-fiamminghi del XV e XVI secolo conservati nelle biblioteche del Veneto,' *Arte illustrata* 7 (1974) (5 books listed); Caterina Limentani Virdis, ed., *Codici miniati fiamminghi e olandesi nelle biblioteche dell'Italia nord-orientale* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1981) (26 listed).

58 – Limentani Virdis, ed., *Codici miniati fiamminghi e olandesi nelle biblioteche dell'Italia nord-orientale*, pp. 27–28. Curiously, Ms. Ricc. 466, a Parisian Book of Hours from 1407 to 1408 in the Biblioteca Riccardiana, Florence, contains an illusionistic depiction of a papal bull on folio 140r; see Gnoni Mavarelli, Jole Minicucci, and Ciardi Dupre Dal Poggetto, *I Libri d'ore della Biblioteca riccardiana. Vol. 1*, 41, pp. 71–102.

59 – Gian Lorenzo Mellini and Mario Salmi, *The Grimani Breviary, Reproduced from the Illuminated Manuscript Belonging to the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972).

60 – Giordana Mariani Canova, 'Fiori fiamminghi a Venezia: Benedetto Bordon e il breviario Grimani,' in *Per ricordo di Sonia Tiso: scritti di storia dell'arte fiamminga e olandese*, ed. Caterina Limentani Virdis (Ferrara: Gabriele Corbo, 1987), pp. 5–12; Limentani Virdis, ed., *Codici miniati fiamminghi e olandesi nelle biblioteche dell'Italia nord-orientale*, p. 28. The book's miniatures even influenced Titian. See Bert W. Meijer, 'Titiaan en het Breviarium Grimani,' in *Relations artistiques entre les Pays-Bas et l'Italie à la Renaissance: Études dédiées à Suzanne Sulzberger*, ed. Nicole Dacos (Brussels: Academia Belgica, 1980), pp. 179–83.

61 – François Avril and Nicole Reynaud, *Les Manuscrits à peintures en France, 1440–1520* (Paris: Flammarion, 1993), pp. 196–7; for further information on Todeschino see D'Urso, *Giovanni Todeschino*.

62 – François Avril and Yolanta Zaluska, *Dix siècles d'enluminure italienne: VIe–XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1984), p. 179, cat. no. 58.

63 – Marina Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance: Burgundian Arts Across Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 3, 46. Following Belozerskaya's example, I have generally tried to avoid the term 'Renaissance' in this article.

64 – Pächt, 'Notes and observations,' p. 193. Pächt was presumably implying that the now lost copy of the calendar from which the present seventeenth-century reproduction by Nicholas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc derives, the Codex Luxemburgensis, was Carolingian, with no evidence to suggest that it ever left northern Europe.

65 – Patricia Fortini Brown, 'The antiquarianism of Jacopo Bellini,' *Artibus et Historiae* 13 (1992), pp. 69–77; Corbett, 'The architectural title-page,' pp. 49–52. Corbett states that Ciriaco's scruples were 'overcome by contact with artists' and that he consequently modified and changed his depictions of monuments 'to conform with contemporary taste.' I would suggest, however, that the antiquarians were themselves creating what became a fashion for epigraphy.

66 – 'Broadly defined, a cartellino is any form of fictive paper carrying an inscription' (Louisa C. Matthew, 'The painter's presence: Signatures in Venetian Renaissance pictures,' *Art Bulletin* 80 (1998), p. 620. For additional insights into the changing status of the signature between the late Middle

Ages and the Renaissance, see C. Sala, 'La signature à la lettre et au figure,' *Poétique* 69 (1987), pp. 119–27.

67 – For information on Lippi's journey to Padua and its effect on his art, see Francis Ames-Lewis, 'Painters in Padua and Netherlandish art, 1435–1455' in *Italianische Frührenaissance und nordeuropäisches Spätmittelalter: Kunst der frühen Neuzeit im europäischen Zusammenhang*, ed. Joachim Poeschke (Munich: Hirmer, 1993), pp. 179–98 and also Eliot Wooldridge Rowlands, 'Filippo Lippi and his experience of painting in the Veneto region,' *Artibus et Historiae* 19 (1989), pp. 53–83.

68 – Rona Goffen, 'Signatures: Inscribing identity in Italian Renaissance art,' *Viator* 32 (2001), pp. 303–70, here p. 317. Goffen specifies that a cartellino must bear the artist's signature as opposed to other forms of fictive paper also found in paintings, such as scrolls and parchments.

69 – Omar Calabrese and Betty Gigante, 'La signature du peintre,' *La part de l'œil* 5 (1989), p. 39.

70 – Joseph Manca, 'A Ferrarese painter of the Quattrocento,' *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 116, 1462 (1990), pp. 157–172; see also the catalogue entries in Hugh Brigstocke, *Italian and Spanish Paintings in the National Gallery of Scotland*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 1993), pp. 61–63; Ebert-Schifferer, *Deceptions and Illusions*, pp. 294–95 (entry by David A. Brown); and in Mauro Natale, *Cosmè Tura e Francesco del Cossa: l'arte a Ferrara nell'età di Borso d'Este* (Ferrara: Ferrara Arte, 2007), pp. 464–65.

71 – Roberto Longhi suggested that the painting was the work of a miniature painter. *Officina ferrarese 1934, seguita dagli Ampliamenti 1940 e dai Nuovi ampliamenti 1940–1955* (Florence: Sansoni, 1956), p. 48, 105.

72 – Poggio Bracciolini and Niccolò Niccoli, *Two Renaissance Book Hunters: The Letters of Poggio Bracciolini to Nicolaus de Niccolis*, trans. Phyllis Walter Goodhart Gordan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 195; book 1, letter 5 in Poggio Bracciolini, *Epistulae*, ed. Tommaso Tonelli, 3 vols. (Florence: Marchini, 1832–1861), vol. 1, pp. 22–25.

73 – Bracciolini and Niccoli, *Two Renaissance Book Hunters*, pp. 188–89; Ludwig Bertalot, 'Cincius Romanus und seine Briefe,' *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 21 (1929–30), pp. 209–55.

74 – Dora Thornton, *The Scholar in His Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 133–36.

75 – 'Vetustate tabefacta volumina innovatis successoribus instauri.'

Richard de Bury, *Philobiblon*, trans. Ernest Chester Thomas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), pp. 146–47; for a psychologizing study of de Bury's fetishization of the book, see Michael Camille, 'The book as flesh and fetish in Richard de Bury's Philobiblon,' in *The Book and the Body*, eds Dolores Warwick Frese and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), pp. 34–77.

76 – A fourteenth-century manuscript copy of the *Philobiblon* with an old Venetian provenance survives in the Biblioteca Marciana Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms. lat. I 41. See Richard de Bury, *Philobiblon*, ed. Antonio Altamura (Naples: F. Fiorentino, 1954), p. 36.

77 – Bracciolini and Niccoli, *Two Renaissance Book Hunters*, p. 189; Bertalot, 'Cincius Romanus und seine Briefe,' pp. 209–55.

78 – Pächt, 'Notes and observations on the origin of humanistic book-decoration,' p. 188; the paleographical development is further traced by B.L. Ullman, *The Origin and Development of Humanistic Script* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 1960); and Albinia Catherine De la Mare, 'Humanistic script: The first ten years,' in *Das Verhältnis der Humanisten zum Buch*, ed. Fritz Krafft and Dieter Wuttke (Boppard: Boldt, 1977), pp. 89–110.

79 – Welles, 'Umanesimo e petrarchismo nella miniatura del Quattrocento,' p. 385.

80 – Giordana Mariani Canova, 'Antonio Grifo illustratore dell'incunabolo queriniano G V 15,' in *Illustrazione libraria, filologia e esegesi petrarchesca tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento: Antonio Grifo e l'incunabolo queriniano G V 15*, ed. Giuseppe Frasso, Giordana Mariani Canova, and Ennio Sandal (Padua: Antenore, 1990).

81 – See Lilian Armstrong, 'Master of the Rimini Ovid,' *Print Quarterly* X (1993): 353ff, and fig. 208.

82 – Leon Battista Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence: I libri della famiglia*, trans. Renée Neu Watkins (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 152–53 (prologue to Book 2).

83 – See Angelo Mazzocco, *Linguistic Theories in Dante and the Humanists: Studies of Language and Intellectual History in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993); Mirko Tavoni, ‘The 15th-century controversy on the language spoken by the Ancient Romans: An inquiry into Italian humanist concepts of “Latin,” “grammar,” and “vernacular,”’, *Historiographia linguistica* 9 (1982), pp. 23–59; and Tavoni, *Latino, grammatica, volgare: storia di una questione umanistica* (Padua: Antenore, 1984).

84 – See, for example, Cathleen Sara Hoeniger, *The Renovation of Paintings in Tuscany, 1250–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

85 – For a discussion of these famous volumes see Mariani Canova, *La miniatura veneta*, pp. 62–72; *The Painted Page*, cat. nos. 96–98, (entries by Lilian Armstrong); *La miniatura a Padova*, cat. nos. 145 and 148 (entries by Andrea de Marchi), 146 and 147 (entries by Giordana Mariani Canova).

86 – Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 246.

87 – See the chapter on Italy in Yvonne Hackenbroch, *Renaissance Jewellery* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1979), pp. 2–25.

88 – Thornton, *The Scholar in His Study*, pp. 131–33.

89 – ‘[T]here is greater admiration and praise for the artist in the use of colours [than gold] . . . Other ornaments done by artificers that are added to painting, such as sculpted columns, bases and pediments, I would not censure if they were real silver and solid or pure gold, for a perfect and finished painting is worthy to be ornamented even with precious stones.’ Alberti, *On Painting*, pp. 85–86 (Book II, chapter 49).

90 – Quoted in Léopold Delisle, *Recherches sur la librairie de Charles V, roi de France, 1337–1380*, 2 vols. (Paris: H. Champion, 1907; reprint, Amsterdam:

G.T. van Heusden, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 15, 47–48, 209. Jan van Eyck’s *Virgin of Chancellor Rolin*, in the Louvre, depicts a pearl-encrusted boss, a circular version of the *pippes* described in French inventories, at the head of the donor’s prayer book, from which page-markers radiate.

91 – See the chapter entitled ‘Betrothal, marriage and virtuous display’ in Luke Syson and Dora Thornton, *Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy* (London: British Museum, 2001), pp. 37–76. See also Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, *Art Marriage, and Family in the Florentine Renaissance Palace* (London: Yale University Press, 2008) especially Chapter 3. The most expensively bound and decorated books were often included in inventories of furniture, jewelry, and other precious objects.

92 – Pächt, ‘Notes and observations on the origin of humanistic book-decoration,’ pp. 184–85; see also the section entitled ‘Consumption and the generation of culture’ in Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 243–55; and the chapter entitled ‘All’antica style’ in Syson and Thornton, *Objects of Virtue*, pp. 78–133.

93 – Gilbert, ‘Grapes, curtains, human beings: The theory of missed mimesis,’ pp. 414–15.

94 – Thornton, *The Scholar in His Study*, p. 130.

95 – Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Virginia Roehrig Kaufmann, ‘The sanctification of nature: Observations on the origins of trompe l’oeil in Netherlandish book painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries’, *J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 19 (1991), pp. 43–64.

96 – Pächt, *The Master of Mary of Burgundy*, p. 25; Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, p. 28; both quoted in Myra D. Orth, ‘What goes around: borders and frames in French manuscripts,’ *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 54 (1996), pp. 189–201, here p. 190.