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## Adapting the Hellmouth in the Office of the Dead from the Hours of Catherine of Cleves: An Experiment in Using a Dramaturgical Approach to Medieval Studies

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Adapting the Hellmouth in the Office of the Dead from the Hours of Catherine of Cleves:  
An experiment in using a dramaturgical approach to medieval studies

A Thesis Presented  
by  
Tatiana Godfrey

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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May 2021  
Theater  
Dramaturgy

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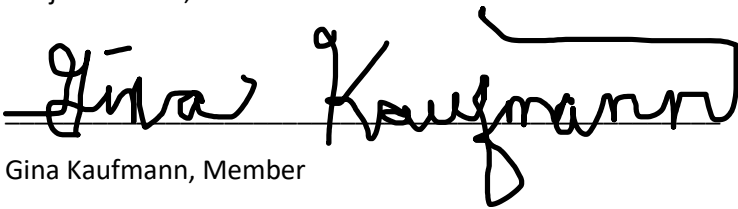
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Christopher Baker, Chair



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Sonja Drimmer, Member



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Gina Kaufmann, Member



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Torrey Trust, Member



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Harley Erdman, Department Head Theater

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ABSTRACT

ADAPTING THE HELLMOUTH IN THE OFFICE OF THE DEAD FROM THE HOURS OF CATHERINE OF

CLEVES:

AN EXPERIMENT IN USING A DRAMATURGICAL APPROACH TO MEDIEVAL STUDIES

MAY 2021

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Directed By: Professor Christopher Baker

This thesis is an artefact documenting the process of adapting a late medieval painting of hell into a short horror film. The process of adapting the *Three Mouths of Hell*, housed within the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, serves as an experiment in applying a dramaturgical approach to medieval studies. The process of adaptation and production, informed by critical research about the Hours of Catherine of Cleves and its *Three Mouths of Hell*, yields new frameworks for understanding the history of Catherine of Cleves, her Book of Hours, and the *Three Mouths of Hell*.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

For my thesis I have written and filmed an adaptation of the painting *Three Mouths of Hell* which prefaces the Office of the Dead in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, and used the process as an experiment in applying a dramaturgical approach to medieval studies. Any Book of Hours, like the of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, is a book housing a series of prayers to be performed at specific hours of the day. Wendy A. Stein from the Cloisters defines a Book of Hours as a functional prayer books made for the non-ordained, and the paintings in them were intended to foster reflection and devotion. The Office of the Dead was prayed for the souls of dead loved ones to expedite their liberation from purgatory. I am employing a dramaturg's analysis of the image of the *Three Mouths of Hell* in Catherine's Book of Hours which was used for private devotion. Specifically, I am using the theories and frameworks of performance studies, theatrical adaptation, and performance analysis, as well as the practical skills of production to explore this artwork in a contemporary context. This written portion of my thesis will outline my research and analysis and document the choices made in realizing the written adaptation and the film itself.

First, I would like to acknowledge some important intersections of my interests on which this thesis is built. I am a theater maker and budding medievalist. These elements of identity and interest of study are self-evident in this project. However, this project is also born of the current moment politically, socially, and culturally. I am choosing to adapt a medieval hellmouth during a pandemic and a nationwide racial reckoning.

Parts of these intersections are already being addressed within both medieval and theater studies. Medievalist Sierra Lomuto writes "Along with mainstream white America,

Medieval Studies has undergone a racial awakening over the past few years, as the Trump presidency has emboldened and even sanctioned a rise in openly avowed white nationalism” (1). She continues by actively calling for anti-racist critique within the field. Other medievalists, in decolonizing past scholarship, are actively looking for new methodologies of analysis, such as Andrea Myers Achi and Seeta Chaganti’s use of W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of the “sociology hesitant” to analyze the presentation of medieval African art in American museums. Following the call for new ways to address the current moment within scholarship, this thesis and its component parts will serve as an alternate methodology of analysis.

The primary function of a dramaturg is to ask questions of and provide context for a performance. This contextualization could be for the benefit of a playwright working on a new play, a cast, a director, a production team, a marketing team, an audience, or any other creative stakeholder. In fact, it might be a fair assertion to say that there are as many functions for a dramaturg as there are practicing dramaturgs in the world. This specific application of dramaturgy will work within the theories and frameworks of performance studies, adaptation, and production. The framework of performance studies stems from my understanding of the field as explored by Richard Schechner. In his *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, he defines performance studies in terms of being and doing.

“Being” is existence itself. “Doing” is the activity of all that exists, from quarks to sentient beings to supergalactic strings. “Showing doing” is performing: pointing to, underlining, and displaying doing. “Explaining ‘showing doing’” is performance studies (28).

This understanding of how performance and the study thereof works allows for a plurality of understandings of what constitutes performance. “In this regard, a painting or a novel can be performative or can be analyzed ‘as’ performance” (Schechner, 30). This definition opens the possibility of analyzing an illumination, in this case the *Three Mouths of Hell*, as a performance.



*Figure 1 Three Mouths of Hell, The Netherlands, Utrecht, ca. 1440  
7 1/2 x 5 1/8 inches (192 x 130 mm)  
MS M.917/945, ff. 168v*

There are many routes for analysis in viewing this illumination as performance: The illumination itself is a performance of hell; the illumination and the Office of the Dead in which it is housed are, like a play, an instruction manual for performance; the manuscript in which the illumination is housed is both a performative object and an object that was intended to be used in

performance; and in its many instances of presentation and uses since its completion in the 1440s, “the context of every reception makes each instance [each performance] different” (30).

Although viewing this specific illumination as a performance allows for multiple entry points for analysis, the analytical possibilities can all be explored through various dramaturgical methodologies. The first that will be utilized is adaptation. “In theater and performance studies, adaptation usually implies revising, devising, or interpreting a previously written text for the stage” (Barnette, 294). In her contribution to the *Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, Jane Barnette offers a summary of the adaptation process. This outline will serve as a foundation for my process. “The process of adaptation dramaturgy can be summarized in three steps: the development of the script, contextual research, and audience outreach. These steps are not necessarily sequential; often they occur simultaneously, or even in different orders for different projects” (295).

In adapting an illumination for the stage, the context is going to serve a large role in writing the script. Scholarly information about the Office of the Dead and the entire codex in which this hellmouth is housed will help anchor the script in its origins and is analyzed here in a historiography of the book, which analyzes the various ways Catherine’s Book of Hours and its depiction of hell has been studied over the years. Answering the dramaturgical questions of world building (who wrote it, why, where was it written, in what tradition is it written, what are the mood and tone, who has the power, whose voice is privileged, whose is not, etc.) that can be explored through the historiography will then build the foundation for specific adaptation choices.

This will need to be balanced with addressing the dramaturgical question “Why here, why now?” Why bring this hellmouth into the current moment? Attempting to answer this

question within the script will also anchor it within a contemporary context. One model for adapting a painting is Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*. Based on the painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of la Grande Jatte* by Georges Seurat, the musical is an autobiographical exploration of what it means to be an artist. The model of autobiographical exploration (what is *my* entry into the hellmouth?) will also help anchor the script in the current moment.

In addition to theories of adaptation, another dramaturgical methodology that I utilized for my thesis was developing a new production structure that is compatible with the limitations and opportunities that the current moment affords us. While the commercial production process of casting/bringing on designers, rehearsal and designing and creating the physical production, and then performing is the basic model under which the making of this production operated, given the current racial reckoning in the American theater industrial complex and the restrictions placed on us by Covid-19, certain aspects of a "traditional" production process were no longer tenable. The script itself was formatted for film intended to be viewed, not live, from a screening device. The production process brought in my artistic collaborators from around the country, working together via virtual communications apps. I led the production in a produceorial role and brought on a director of photography, a puppet designer, a composer, an editor, actors, and crew to actualize the adaptation.

This staging of the hellmouth also parallels the medieval performance of reading and contemporaneous understanding of the performative nature of the illuminated manuscript. Jessica Brantley explains the parallel in her introduction to *Reading in the Wilderness Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England*, in which she uses a performance structure to explain the nature of interaction with devotional illuminated manuscripts. "The

combination of the visual and the verbal that is central to this manuscript's art mimics the quintessential experience of theater-goers, who are equally audience and spectators. The similarity is structural, for of all literary forms, only performed drama and illustrated books join the visual with the verbal so explicitly, materially, and indissolubly" (5). This larger framework, modeled on Brantley's analysis of the manuscript known as Additional 37049, is the fundamental basis upon which the larger questions of this thesis are built. Through the adaptation and analysis process, with a structure born both out of the current moment and this medieval performance of reading paradigm, I am asking what will be illuminated about this illumination and the larger contents of Hours of Catherine of Cleves.

First, in the Historiography and Performance Analysis sections of this paper, I will outline the critical research that informed script and production choices. Then I will briefly describe the adaptation process and present the resulting script. After another brief description of the production process, I conclude with reflections about the adaptation and the production process and how they both relate to the source text and image.

## CHAPTER II

### AN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE HOURS OF CATHERINE OF CLEVES

#### A. Provenance

The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves was commissioned by and for the duchess herself sometime in the 1430s or 1440s and exists today as an exemplar of both early Netherlandish painting and of illuminated manuscripts. Illuminated by the Master of Catherine of Cleves and completed sometime in the early 1440s, probably in Utrecht, the manuscript served as a practical prayer book and possibly held a myriad of other functions in its commission.<sup>1</sup> While contemporaneous thoughts about the manuscript can be inferred from the extant documents surrounding Catherine of Cleves and comparison to other works by this master, there is no real documentation of the manuscript until it appeared for sale in 1856 by the dealer Jacques Joseph Techener for 15,000 francs. At some point after the initial commission, the complete manuscript was divided, through clever binding and reordering of the pages, into two separate volumes, advertised as complete unto themselves and independent from the other. The person who did this could have been Techener himself, but there is little evidence to support this claim. The two separate volumes then ended up in the hands of two

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<sup>1</sup> There is only one extant illuminated manuscript from this place and era in which we know the name of the illuminator. All other identifiable illuminators are named after the commissioner of their most famous piece. The Master of Catherine of Cleves is so named for this Book of Hours. Much of the scholarship points to the manuscript being a marriage commission, however the timeline of Catherine's marriage to Arnold of Egmond casts doubt on these assertions. Rob Dücker suggests it might have been commissioned in response to "bibliophilic jealousy" of Arnold's breviary, completed a few years before Catherine's Book of Hours. Further framing of women and their relationship to medieval objects is provided in the collection of essays *Medieval Women and their Objects* edited by Jenny Adams and Nancy Mason Bradbury, in which they consider the "intersections of objects and gender in the cultural contexts of late medieval France and England." Two relevant essays include a treatment on parchment and flesh and one on the Psalter-Hours of Mary de Bohun.

separate collectors, each believing they were in ownership of the complete Hours of Catherine of Cleves, and ignorant to the existence of a second volume.<sup>2</sup>

One volume was sold to Baron Adolphe de Rothschild and subsequently inherited by Rothschild's son. Confiscated by the Nazis in 1941, it was returned to the family in 1946. Rothschild's heirs put the volume in the hands of the family merchants, who in turn offered it to the Morgan Museum and Library. The library finally purchased this volume in 1963 and it was labeled Ms. M.917. The other volume was purchased by Prince Charles d'Arenberg as a gift to his wife. His wife later gifted this volume to her nephew. The book remained in the hands of this family until it was sold to New York art dealer Peter Kraus in 1958. Kraus found a buyer in Alastair Bradley Martin, who placed the volume in his collection, the Guennol Collection.

The volume within the Guennol Collection was a prominent feature in various exhibits in the early 1960s and began to inspire scholarship about the manuscript itself and the Master of Catherine of Cleves. In his study of the extant works of this master, the Morgan Library's Curator of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts John Plummer made an in-depth comparison of the Morgan's volume of the Hours and the volume from the Guennol Collection. "His painstaking reconstruction of the original sequence of the leaves, achieved by iconographic, textual, and physical analysis, ha[d] proved beyond any doubt that they once formed a single rationally organized Book of Hours" (Plummer, 2). Despite Plummer's discovery, the Guennol volume remained within this collection until 1970, when it was sold back to Kraus. Later in the same year, the Morgan acquired the volume from Kraus, where it was labeled Ms. M.945 and reunited with its other half. Today it sits in the Morgan, restored to its fifteenth century

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<sup>2</sup> Records indicate that Techener only sold one of these volumes, but it possible and thought likely that he sold both to the two different buyers.



arrangement, bound in three volumes.<sup>3</sup> It boasts the texts, written on calfskin vellum in Latin in the script *quadrata*, of a Calendar, the Hours of the Virgin, the Hours of the Passion, the Hours and Masses for the Seven Days of the Week, Penitential Psalms and Litany, the Office of the Dead, Suffrages, and 157 miniatures. Since reunification, the Hours of Catherine of Cleves has been the subject of numerous studies and exhibitions and has served as the inspiration for other pieces of art (Dücker, 81-3; Plummer, 1-24; Wieck, 13).<sup>4</sup>

Although some of this scholarship is inaccessible to me as historiographer due to unfortunate language barriers,<sup>5</sup> the singular nature of the Hours has inspired a proliferation of scholarship about the manuscript itself, its illuminator, its patronage, and its legacy. Definite patterns emerge among the extant scholarship, and most can be categorized as one of three types of analyses: manuscript as a framework for understanding the Master of Catherine of Cleves, codicological analysis, and comparison to later Dutch art. Early groundwork in these analyses is laid within Plummer's preliminary report of the complete manuscript by art historians Harry Bober, L. M. J. Delaissé, Millard Meiss, and Erwin Panofsky. Bober and Meiss frame the manuscript as an early embodiment of a Dutch art aesthetic. Delaissé and Panofsky call for the analysis of the manuscript's formal style as it compares to other illuminated manuscripts and paintings from the mid-fifteenth century Netherlands. It is Plummer himself who lays the foundational groundwork for framing our understanding of the Master of Catherine of Cleves (Plummer, 1-24). These approaches to analysis, extant in the first scholarly

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<sup>3</sup> by Morgan conservators Maria Fredericks and Frank Trujillo

<sup>4</sup> Check out the 2015 album *Illuminations* by the Avalon String Quartet which features some pieces named after the illuminations in Catherine's Book of Hours.

<sup>5</sup> I am thinking specifically, here, about Friedrich Gorrissen's 1973 *Das Stundenbuch der Katharina von Kleve: Analyse und Kommentar*, in which he posits the manuscript was made in a workshop by a team as opposed to Plummer's early assertion that it was made by a single illuminator over the span of many years.

publication about the entirety of the manuscript, have remained fairly consistent in the almost sixty years that the manuscript has been widely available for study. Although there are many points of fact that are unknown about this Book of Hours, because of the widespread interest in this manuscript,<sup>6</sup> its study has yielded and contributed to formational research in the studies of early Netherlandish painting, manuscript illumination, Dutch art, penwork, scripting, and many other fields of interest that has clarified, corrected, and specified the various analyses offered within Plummer's preliminary report. As he noted, "...the 'new' book alters our judgement of the artist, enlarges our knowledge of Catherine's milieu and of the potential of contemporary Dutch patronage, and revises our understanding of the development of Dutch art in the fifteenth century" (15).

## **B. The Master of Catherine of Cleves**

Perhaps Plummer's greatest contribution to the study of this manuscript, and consequently the study of the person who illuminated it, is the observation that "Underlying the whole program of illustration, a program which must have taken a number of years to execute, is a remarkable orderliness and rationality." This observation implies the artist "delights in systems and in organizing large numbers of things" (16). The purposefully designed organizational scheme reveals patterns in the Master's style: a "taste for constructed objects" that is also reflected in the formal composition of the figures within his miniatures, an "appreciation of workmanship in various crafts," and a "delight in luxury" (16-18). Plummer complicates these observations by tracing the evolution of the Master's painting technique and

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<sup>6</sup> Really, it is stunning. It has attracted and inspired audiences across the globe. I will explicitly reference this concept at the conclusion, but this manuscript has a magnetism that has attracted widespread fame.

interest in subject matter throughout the manuscript.<sup>7</sup> Plummer asserts that the distinctive style of the Master, while extant in the entirety of the manuscript, is best exemplified in the latter miniatures, where the Master was “moving rapidly toward a greater individuality and originality” (19).

James Marrow’s research expands Plummer’s assessment of the Master’s style, contextualizing it in relation to another manuscript by Dutch illuminators from the early fifteenth century, the *Très Riche Heures of Jean de Berry*,<sup>8</sup> illuminated c.1410-1415 by the Limbourg brothers. One comparison Marrow draws is the “creative use of works of art in media other than painting” (*Multitudo*, 22). Specifying Plummer’s assertion of an appreciation of workmanship and a delight in luxury, Marrow points to the Master of Catherine of Cleve’s use of “fine inlaid woods and jeweled devotional aids depicted in the borders,” the reproduction of “actual pieces of contemporary money,” and the Master’s “creative use of textiles” (22-24).

Both Plummer and Marrow comment on the “trompe-l’oeil” effect of the painted textile surrounding the miniature St. Jerome:

Plummer’s observation aptly calls attention to what I consider the primary significance of the imagery of this page, which is not the mere evocation of the work of the textile arts or of an object employed in church ritual, but the manner in which its conception defies conventional expectations of the relationships among text, picture and marginal decoration—in other words, the way it provocatively reconfigures the elements of the page. ... The fundamental invention of this page, and the source of its power to engage the viewer’s imagination, is its radically new syntax (Marrow, 24).

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<sup>7</sup> This facet of the Master’s style will recur when discussing the comparison of the Master’s work to later Dutch art.

<sup>8</sup> Marrow considers the work of the Master of Catherine of Cleves to represent the height of Dutch manuscript illumination, as he asserts in his “Dutch Manuscript Illumination Before The Master Of Catherine Of Cleves: The Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle.”

Marrow's additions to Plummer's initial observations frame the Master of Catherine of Cleves as an innovative painter who was purposefully using the medium of manuscript illumination to "implicate viewers in the plot and the experience of religious events" (24).

Despite what scholarship is able to deduce about the Master of Catherine of Cleve's from a stylistic/formal analysis, little is known about the identity of the artist. However, as James Marrow does in his comparison to the *Très Riches Heures* of Jean de Berry, placing the manuscript within its contemporary historical context yields more information about the Master and how he worked. Through study of how contemporary manuscripts were made and through treatment of the *Book of Hours* of Catherine of Cleves as an archaeological specimen, not only can scholars construct ideas about the illuminator's work, but also gain deeper understanding of the significance of the manuscript in the time in which it was created.

### **C. Codicological Analyses**

While there is recent research that delves deeply into what M. J. Delaissé calls the "archaeology of the book,"<sup>9</sup> we once again see the groundwork for an analysis being laid in Plummer's preliminary report on the *Hours* of Catherine of Cleves. Plummer offers "archaeological" evidence as context for dating the manuscript.<sup>10</sup> By identifying other contemporaneous manuscripts, art, and artists who work in similar ways to the Master of Catherine of Cleves, such as the "two vernacular Dutch Bibles in the British Museum (Add. 15410 and Add. 38122)," the work of the Master of Zweder von Culemborg, and Flemish panel paintings, and the work of the Master of the *Grandes Heures* de Rohan, Plummer dates the

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<sup>9</sup> His "Towards a history of the medieval book" (1967) and "The importance of Books of Hours for the history of the medieval book" (1974) are seminal pieces that serve as a launching point for much of the recent in-depth research about manuscripts in general and the *Hours* of Catherine of Cleves, specifically.

<sup>10</sup> Which would also grow more specific in later research.

creation of the manuscript to about 1435. In his section of the forward to Plummer's preliminary study, Erwin Panofsky similarly called for an evaluation of the style in the illuminations as it related to other paintings from the era.<sup>11</sup>

In 1979 a new codicological study of the Hours by Robert G. Calkins, "Distribution of Labor: The Illuminators of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves and their workshop," upset previous theories that the manuscript was illuminated by one artist over many years and that the manuscript had one master of design that oversaw an assembly line-like process of illumination. Calkin concluded, through examination and comparison of the initialing, floral borders, the miniatures, layout, and iconographical patterns within the manuscript, that the book was made by a team of illuminators.

It becomes a matter of definition, therefore, who the person is who has been named the master of Catherine of Cleves. Should we consider him to be some erudite advis[o]r, a production chief of a carefully organized atelier, a talented illuminator in such a workshop, or one who worked in a more informal and loose aggregation of artisans? (Calkins, 11)

These questions are all tackled in Anne S. Korteweg's thorough analysis of how the Hours of Catherine of Cleves was made. In answering questions about how the book was likely put together, we also learn, as Calkins questions, what role the Master of Catherine of Cleves had in the illumination. Originally thought to have been made in Guelders, examination of the style of illumination reveals similarities to a type that was typically found in Utrecht workshops. Korteweg's analysis begins with acknowledgement of how the work of both Delaissé and Calkin changed the fundamental understanding of illumination. While modern scholarship tended to treat illuminations as small paintings independent of the piece in which it is housed, Delaissé and Calkin asserted that "knowledge of the whole manuscript itself, i.e. the discipline of

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<sup>11</sup> Erwin Panofsky is the author of *Early Netherlandish Painting*.

codicology, was essential for the study of painted illumination” (Korteweg, 49). Korteweg synthesizes research on how contemporaneous manuscripts were made and compares all fifteen extant instances of illumination proven to be by the Master of Catherine of Cleves.<sup>12</sup> From this analysis and synthesis, Korteweg was able to draw many conclusions about how the manuscript was made: The Master of Catherine of Cleves was the primary illuminator of the Book of Hours, he painted much of the floral borders, initialing, and all of the miniatures; the Master of Catherine of Cleves, possibly due to a time crunch, “subcontracted” the minor paint work to the Master of the Hague 69 B10; and some of the work was probably outlined by the Master of Catherine of Cleves and completed by an apprentice, or *compagnon* (69).

Rob Dükers, guest curator for the 2009 exhibit *Catherine’s World: Devotions, Demons, and Daily Life in the Fifteenth Century* which displayed the manuscript unbound, uses a codicological approach to understand the illuminations as responsive to the text they surround. “In fact, the primary function of the decoration (including the miniatures) of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves was to help the user navigate the text, not to enhance the appearance of the manuscript,” and Dükers suggests the illuminations were made in response to an “unusual and elaborate collection of texts” (75). Building on the scholarship of Korteweg and purposefully employing an archaeological approach to analysis, Dükers outlines the process of how this manuscript came to be.

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<sup>12</sup> She specifically refers to the model of London and Paris booksellers living and working within one to two streets, illuminator’s apprenticeship practices in the southern Netherlands and other Netherlandish centers of book production, penwork flourishing practices (see Gisela Gerritsen-Geywitz analysis of the styles of pen flourishing from Utrecht), and initialing practices. “They can be grouped into three categories, depending on his role in their production. In a number of cases he supplied no more than a series of miniatures on single leaves; in other cases he applied miniatures or drawings and border decoration, either alone or in cooperation with others; and in a few cases he was responsible for the entire illumination, sometimes with the assistance of a second illuminator for the decoration” (Korteweg, 53).

First, it was commissioned. Dükers notes the generally accepted date of completion of the manuscript as 1442, which makes determining the cause of commission difficult. This date places the completion well after Catherine's marriage to Arnold of Egmond, and so casts doubt on the prevailing theory that the manuscript was intended as a wedding gift.<sup>13</sup> Dükers uses what is known about other manuscripts in Catherine's family to propose that the commission was an act of "bibliophilic jealousy" in response to a breviary that her husband had commissioned some years earlier. After commission, the manuscript had to be planned. As Plummer noted in his initial report on the manuscript, layout suggests rational planning and organization. Owning a Book of Hours in medieval Europe means that the text was copied from another book; some of the texts within Catherine's Hours are rare; the scribe left space for the decorations and illustrations, implying that the "programme of illustrations had to be developed and approved before copying can begin;" the textual to iconographic relationship is unique among illuminated manuscripts: These archaeological facts about the Hours lead Dükers to conclude that the contents of the manuscript was probably arranged by a theologian or scholar (76).<sup>14</sup>

After planning, the manuscript had to be written. All text was completed by a single scribe in the script *literata textualis formata*, also known as *quadrata*. Based on style of script, it can be concluded that the scribe was definitely Dutch. In the initial copying of the texts, the scribe left space for the miniatures, decorative initials, and the rubrics. On the next pass of copying, the rubrics, or elements of the text that provide information for the reader, usually identifying the type of text that follows, were added. Although it is unknown whether the

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<sup>13</sup> This is later than Plummer's initial dating of 1935-38.

<sup>14</sup> Further research revealed this theologian or scholar to probably be either Sir Henrich van Hattem or Broder Johan, ducal chaplains, or Sir Simon, clerk to Catherine who was later canonized.

quires, or collections of leaves within the manuscript, were delivered to the illuminator all at once or in installments, the next step in the process was illumination.<sup>15</sup>

Illumination occurred in stages: a design scheme was drawn by the scribe to guide the illuminator, some kind of wet glue was applied to the places where gold leaf would be laid, then the application and burnishing of the gold leaf, illumination of the versals (initials that begin each verse) was followed by other text decorations, and after all of this was done, then the painting of the miniatures and their borders was completed. In outlining and applying this codicological approach, viewing through the lens of “the backdrop of the book as a physical object,” Dükers supports Korteweg’s conclusion that the Master executed all the miniatures and much of the pen flourishing work.

#### **D. Netherlandish Painting Tradition**

Once again, the groundwork for another type of analysis applied to the Hours of Catherine of Cleves is laid in Plummer’s initial assessment. He asserts it is the Master’s “transmutation of the ordinary into the precious which ... links him with later Dutch ‘alchemist,’ Jan Vermeer” (19). In the foreword to the same assessment, Harry Bober suggests that there is a direct relation between the miniatures and the panel paintings by the Master of Flémalle and Jan van Eyck and Millard Meiss identifies Plummer’s concept of the “transmutation of the ordinary into the precious” as a characteristically Dutch trademark.

Of course, Panofsky contributed greatly to the understanding of early Netherlandish art with his study *Early Netherlandish Painting*. In his chapter “The Regional Schools of the Netherlands and Their Importance for the Formation of the Great Masters,” Panofsky draws

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<sup>15</sup> Literally meaning “colored in red.”



direct lineage between the work of the Master of Flémalle and the Zweder Master to the painting within Catherine's Hours (103). Panofsky notes that while Guelders and Utrecht were at one time hubs of book creation, by the time the Master of Catherine of Cleves was working, "book illumination had ceased to be creative. North Netherlandish art was overtaken by the development of panel painting in Flanders" (104). Although *Early Netherlandish Painting* mostly focuses on the work of the Master of Flémalle, Jan van Eyck, and Roger van der Weyden, Panofsky's inclusion of Catherine's Hours marks it as part of a larger Netherlandish tradition.

Henri L. M. Defoer connects threads from Plummer and Panofsky in his comparison of the painting in the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves to works from the Dutch Golden Age of painting in the seventeenth century. Defoer argues that both Catherine's Hours and painting from the Dutch Golden Age have a propensity for, if not realism, then a reflection of everyday life that is characteristically Dutch.<sup>16</sup> One example Defoer points to is the similar depiction of Joseph carving a piece of wood in a miniature within the Hours of the Virgin in Catherine's Hours and in Rembrandt's *Holy Family*. Although Defoer highlights the similarities between paintings within Catherine's Hours and later Dutch art, he does not suggest that there is a direct lineage between the two periods. "The same kind of realism occurs again in Dutch art in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. I say 'occurs again' because no line of development runs from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. On the contrary, the art of the 16<sup>th</sup> century forms a distinct cut-off point" (42).

Analysis and study of the depictions of hell within Catherine's Hours is distinctly more contemporary than other analyses of the book, but still works comparatively. In her 2017 thesis on the depiction of hell in Catherine's Hours, Stephanie Lish compares the *Three Mouths of Hell*

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<sup>16</sup> Defoer posits that the depicting of everyday items in Catherine's Hours rose from Modern Devotion a "religious movement that gained momentum toward the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century in relation to the secularization of the power structure of the Church" (36).

to three other depictions of hellmouths within the same book, to later Netherlandish depictions of hell and sin, and to other medieval depictions of hell. In addition to *Three Mouths of Hell*, the Hours of Catherine of Cleves also houses three miniatures that depict smaller, singular mouths of hell. These are detailed in the Monday Hours of the Dead and their placement among the other miniatures in this section of the Book of Hours outline a Christian redemptive narrative that stressed the necessity of prayer for the dead.

There can be little doubt that the hellmouth scenes successfully touched an emotional chord within Catherine. As she prayed she would have not only thought of her own soul but also friends and loved ones that had already gone on before her and who needed her prayers to shorten their time in Purgatory. ... The Master of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves created an object that was able to engender emotional attachments with its owner that enhanced a lifetime of prayers, devotion and the pursuit of an interior life. The triple hellmouth in the Office of the Dead with its graphic depictions of punishments for sin provided a visual tool that effectively produced the ingredient of fear Catherine needed to create an elixir of remorse for sin leading to a pure heart. The narrative that played across the folios of the Hours of the Dead gave hope not only for the redemption of the souls of loved ones who had already died but also Catherine's own. (Lish, 49-50).

For Lish, the comparison of *Hell with Three Mouths* to the other depictions of hell within Catherine's Hours reveals a purposeful larger narrative and the personalization of that narrative to Catherine of Cleves. This assertion is then supported by a delve into a comparison of the iconography of hell within other well-known medieval depictions with which both Catherine and the Master of Catherine of Cleves would be familiar. Of note for Lish and used foundationally for the creation of hell within this adaptation are the various iconographies inspired by the story *The Vision of Tondal*, the various iconographies associated with the Apocryphal story of the Harrowing of Hell, and the medieval depiction of the demonic and evil, which are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this thesis.

## **E. Historiography Conclusion**

Since first displayed for the public in its entirety in 1964 and the subsequent publishing of a facsimile by George Braziller, the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves has garnered widespread fame,<sup>17</sup> both within and outside of academic study. Comparatively speaking, fifty-six years of public research about a medieval artefact is a small window of time from which to trace the history of study.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, in this short amount of time much has been learned from the manuscript. Most, if not all, of what has been learned about how and why it was made is influenced by Plummer's initial report and the contributions from the art historians Harry Bober, L.M.J. Delaissé, Millard Meiss, and Erwin Panofsky. In fact, each would go on to generate more scholarship on the manuscript. While the subsequent research has a definite overlap in content, art historians have largely focused their findings on three main questions that have yielded three main types of analysis: Who made the hours (framing the Master of Catherine of Cleves); how was the manuscript made (a codicological approach); and what does the manuscript tell us about Dutch art (a comparative analysis).

Current curator and department head of the Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts department at the Morgan Museum and Library explains:

The manuscript has had enormous influence. It could be argued that it possibly changed the history of art. I refer not to the impact after its creation on, say, Dutch art of the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but on American art appreciation in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Preface, 14)

It is this concept that bears further inspection. While the manuscript comes from and is, as we see in some of the arguments outlined above, representative of the Dutch painting tradition, since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has been housed in the United States and viewed by a

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<sup>17</sup> "Positive notice of the facsimile of Catherine's prayer book even appeared in *Playboy Magazine!*" (Wieck, 15).

<sup>18</sup> This is, of course, in comparison to medieval objects that have been written about and documented throughout their centuries-long journey to the current moment.

primarily American audience. Its widespread fame outside of academia has opened a period of history, a European painting tradition, and manuscript culture to audiences who would otherwise be ignorant to the research coming from these fields. Just how far reaching is the influence of this manuscript? When both volumes of the Hours were first displayed together at the Morgan in 1964, “A record 14,000 visitors lined up to see the first-ever exhibition at the Library devoted to a single book” (Wieck, 15). Since then, the fervor surrounding the manuscript has only increased. Wieck’s idea that the manuscript has changed the nature of American art appreciation perhaps suggests that an anthropological analysis of the manuscript’s reception could inform not only future reception of the book, but also inform what research surrounding the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves could look like in the next fifty years.

The conclusions drawn about the Master of Catherine of Cleves and his artistic process in these various analyses served as guidelines I used to mirror the Master’s process. Like the Master, the filmed adaptation: Features a focus on workmanship, craft, and constructed objects within the formal composition of the figures within the frame, has the director of the project as the primary designer of the visual look of the film and also includes work from collaboration with other colleagues in the field, purposefully draws from the Netherlandish painting tradition through Plummer’s idea of the “transmutation of the ordinary into the precious,” and Lish’s idea of hell’s use in a Christian redemption arc. I am using these purposeful mirrors of the Master’s process in producing the adaptation to learn what can be illuminated about his experience in creating Catherine’s Book of Hours.

### CHAPTER III

#### LAYERS OF PERFORMANCE

Before undertaking the task of adaptation, it is first necessary to redefine this painting and its conception in terms of performance. First and foremost, the Book of Hours serves the same function as a play: an instruction manual for performance, analyzed here through Catherine's performance of reading. Using Richard Schechner's broad definitions of performance to situate this specific illumination, and the entirety of the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves, we see performance emerge within the intersections of everyday life, art, and ritual. One tenet of any performance is that it is a "restored behavior" or "twice-behaved behaviour" (Schechner, 28).

The habits, rituals, and routines of life are restored behaviors. Restored behavior is living behavior treated as a film director treats a strip of film. These strips of behavior can be rearranged or reconstructed; they are independent of the causal systems (personal, social, political, technological, etc.) that brought them into existence. They have a life of their own. The original "truth" or "source" of the behavior may not be known, or may be lost, ignored, or contradicted – even while that truth or source is being honored. How the strips of behavior were made, found, or developed may be unknown or concealed; elaborated; distorted by myth and tradition. (34)

The concept of a performance being twice-behaved or restored behavior applies to many facets of the manuscript. The Book of Hours is a script and within that script are images which themselves can be understood as performance. The schedule of prayers laid out within a book of hours, like a play, dictates the ritual performance of these prayers. This directly addresses the function of "dealing with the sacred," which Schechner identifies as one of the possible functions of performance. In the study of medieval books of hours, this concept of establishing the readership of a manuscript is explored thoroughly in Virginia Reinburg's examination of the

history of the French Book of Hours. She frames the performance of reading as both speech and rite, asserting that each book of hours constituted a personal script for the owner that manifested a performance of prayer complete with specific gestural and postural language.<sup>19</sup>

Jessica Brantley takes this framework that Reinburg uses broadly to survey French Books of Hours and applies it more specifically to the manuscript Additional 37049.<sup>20</sup> She postulates not only that devotional reading in private is a type of performance, but also that it was influenced by and influenced, itself, dramas that were performed in the more traditional (theatrical) sense of the word. Through analysis of the audience of Carthusian monks that would have used Additional 37049 and their relationship to both the manuscript and its maker, Brantley notes that “The repetition of reading and viewing that the devotional books calls for, and that the medieval reader undoubtedly experienced, constitutes the kind of ‘restored’ or ‘twice-behaved’ behavior of which (as Richard Schechner has shown) both ritual and aesthetic performances are made” (Brantley, 21). This type of analysis, utilized generally by Reinburg and more specifically by Brantley, can be applied to Catherine of Cleves and her Book of Hours to establish the nature of Catherine’s performance of reading.

The texts, language, and images within Catherine’s Hours provide helpful clues to establishing the nature of Catherine’s performance. Being written in Latin and not the Middle Dutch that was common to Books of Hours from late medieval Northern Netherlands, it can be inferred that Catherine’s devotional life was overseen by well-educated clerics, who would inform not only the content of the prayer book but also how to perform the prayers. The prayers included within this book of hours is unusually extensive as compared to other books of

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<sup>19</sup> Reinburg, Virginia. *French Books of Hours : Making an Archive of Prayer, c.1400–1600*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Something about how it’s at the British Library.

hours from the period. In addition to the Calendar, Hours of the Virgin, Hours of the Cross, Seven Penitential Psalms and Litany, Office of the Dead, and a Prayer to God, which were the traditional elements found within a book of hours, Catherine's book also boasts an extended Suffrages of the Saints and a series of Hours and Votive Masses for each day of the week. The inclusion of these additional components also "permits us to posit the influence of such a clerical figure (or figures) in her life, as well as in the design of the manuscript" (Marrow, 19). Positing the guidance of a clerical figure, in addition to the already ritual nature of performing the prayers at specific hours of specific days, perhaps implies that Catherine's private performance of reading came with some of the theatrical/sensorial trappings of public devotion: incense, candle lighting, ritual movements.

The presence of ritual movements is implied also in the depiction of Catherine in the miniature for the Hours of the Blessed Virgin, kneeling before the Virgin and Child with what is presumably her Book of Hours in hand.<sup>21</sup> This depiction of Catherine serves to model the performance expected from her: referring and praying to the Virgin Mary, as is evident from her gaze which falls on the Mother and the banderol reading "O mater dei momento mei;" book in hand, kneeling in reverence. This model or script that is demonstrated through illumination lends insight to the actual performance of prayer that was enacted by Catherine.

The iconography of female prayerbook owner kneeling in prayer to the Virgin Mary was not novel to this Book of Hours. In Yolande de Soisson's Psalter-Hours, which date to 1290, some 150 years before Catherine commissioned her book, Yolande is depicted in prayer before a statue of the Virgin and Child, her book open for reference as she prays.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, in Mary of

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<sup>21</sup> Ms. M. 945, fol. IV, *Catherine of Cleves before the Virgin and Child, full-page miniature for the Hours of the Blessed Virgin, Matins*

<sup>22</sup> Ms. M. 729, fol. 232v, *Yolande de Soisson in Prayer*.

Burgundy's Book of Hours, which date to about 40 years after Catherine's, a miniature depicts Mary of Burgundy reading from her own Hours in front of a painting of the Virgin Mary and Child.<sup>23</sup> In the miniature of Catherine of Cleves before the Virgin and child, more similarities arise. The Virgin and Child are enclosed in an architecture which "A small chapel could be intended, or perhaps one of the casings that were so often used for statues in the late Middle Ages" (Konig, 224). These commonalities among the miniatures (book owner depicted in prayer with said book before a figure or image of a physically distanced Mary and Child), imply commonalities of practice. Reinburg posits such miniatures "suggest to us the gestures, feeling, and interiority of perfect prayer," while Roger Wieck posits an intention of "transport[ing] one from the distracting cares and temptations of this world to the divine pleasures of the next" (*Prayer*, 41; *Painted*, 10). Both assertions hint to Schechner's definition of ritual performance for the purpose of dealing with the sacred.

This miniature of Catherine in prayer before the Virgin and Child also begins an elaborate scheme designed to perform the self, i.e. a performance of Catherine, serving Schechner's idea of the function "to mark or change identity." As illustrated in the miniature for the Hours of the Blessed Virgin, Catherine is portrayed as reverent and pious. "Another [illumination] pictured the crucifixion with Catherine [sic] praying at one side of the cross, and the Virgin with milk spurting from her breast at the other, reminding Catherine of her expected duty as a chaste and merciful mother" (Bell, 754).<sup>24</sup> These depictions of Catherine in relation to the Virgin cast Catherine in the Virgin's image.

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<sup>23</sup> Vienna, Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1857, fol. 14v, *Mary of Burgundy Praying from her Book of Hours*

<sup>24</sup> Ms. M. 917, p. 160, *The Virgin and Catherine of Cleves under the Cross, full-page miniature for the Saturday Mass of the Virgin*



In yet another miniature, Catherine is shown dispensing alms, in a “posture befitting St. Elizabeth of Thuringia or Marburg, who may have been the model specified by Catherine” (Konig, 294).<sup>25</sup> In John R. Decker’s analysis of the role of jewelry in the marginalia of specific miniatures depicting women saints, he argues that “the images demonstrate Catherine of Cleves’s pious adoration of five influential female saints (the Virgin Mary, Agatha, Agnes, Cecilia, and Lucy)” and that “the marginal motifs establish personal, social-political relationships (some bordering on social equality and even a slight superiority on Catherine’s part) with each of the saints” (Decker, 34).

While the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves both dictates performance and performs in and of itself, the individual miniatures also each constitute a performance. Of specific interest to this thesis is the performance of hell within the miniature *Three Mouths of Hell*.<sup>26</sup> In her brief survey of depictions of hell, Pamela Sheingorn demonstrates that in the middle ages, the “hellmouth appeared with great regularity in both pictorial and dramatic arts” (5). Sheingorn also traces the development of the iconography of the hellmouth, evolving from the “metaphorical language of *Job* [sic] suggesting that Leviathan’s mouth functioned as a portal to a prison for humankind” in the Hebrew Bible (5). Although Roger Wieck makes the assertion that a depiction of hell is rare within the Office of the Dead section of Books of Hours, the iconography of the mouth of a beast to signify the entrance to hell became fairly concretized within illuminated manuscripts. The widespread repetition and use of the mouth of a beast as entrance to hell iconography constitutes Schechner’s “twice-behaved behavior,” and the depiction of the hellmouth generally, and specifically in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves served

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<sup>25</sup> Ms. M. 917, p 65, *Catherine of Cleves Giving Alms, head miniature for the Office of the Holy Ghost, Thursday Vespers*

<sup>26</sup> Ms. M. 945, fol. 168v., *Three Mouths of Hell, full page miniature for the Office of the Dead, Vespers*

multiple functions of performance. The introduction to *Medieval Monsters Terrors, Aliens, Wonders*, posits that medieval understanding and depiction of monsters (like the mouth of a beast) served the functions of “showing” and “warning,” which evoke Schechner’s functions of “to teach,” and to “deal with the sacred” (46). “During the European Middle Ages [sic], theologians accepted the existence of monsters as part of a divine plan. Moreover, they traced the meaning of the word *monster* back to the Latin verbs *monstrare* (to show) and *monere* (to warn)” (Lindquist & Mittman, 12). These monsters, including the hellmouth, served as a warning to spectators to about the horrors that awaited the sinful and taught the necessity of pious living.

One such hellmouth miniature (Fig. 2), which dates to the early fifteenth century, also prefaces the Office of the Dead. This miniature, from the Bedford Hours, “acts as a visual reminder to readers of what awaited them after death: elaborate detail and decoration to glorify Paradise and gore-ify Hell” (Ray).<sup>27</sup> Indeed, many scholars suggest the intent of a hellmouth is to generate fear of a fiery hell and inspire pious living. The hellmouth in the Bedford Hours is depicted in contrast to the glory of Christ.

Christ appears enthroned in judgement over human souls, flanked by saints and angels. Souls that have passed judgement are greeted by angels as they reach Heaven. The damned souls below are forced into a fiery Hell-mouth, and roundels feature demons grinning as they beat human figures with mallets and turn a torture wheel (Ray).

Similar to the hellmouth in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, demons and torment await the souls that have been damned to hell. In this way, the depictions of hell are performative,

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<sup>27</sup> *Glorification of Heaven, Gore-ification of Hell: Hell-mouth in a full-page miniature depicting the Last Judgement*, Bedford Hours, Add MS 18850, f. 157r

causing the reader to take action to avoid hell at all costs. The depictions also serve the function of teaching the reader what to expect should they follow a path of sin.



Figure 2 Glorification of Heaven, Gore-ification of Hell: Hell-mouth in a full-page miniature depicting the Last Judgement, Bedford Hours, Add MS 18850, f. 157r

The French illuminator Simon Marmion has a hellmouth in Margaret of York's manuscript of *The Visions of the Knight Tondal* (Fig. 3).<sup>28</sup> In this eleventh century story, an Irish knight is guided through hell and paradise. "The first devourer encountered by Tundale is the beast known as 'Acheron', which consumes the avaricious. Marmion depicts this creature as an immense mouth filled with fire—a vast crucible in which the damned are digested and broken down" (Pluskowski, 167).<sup>29</sup> In addition to outlining the relationship between the sin of avarice and

the damning of the soul to hell, Aleks Pluskowski, in their essay in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, suggests a more aesthetic function.

"Moving beyond the standardization of earlier depiction [sic], the growing diversity of monstrous devourers in art suggests that aesthetic considerations may have matched and perhaps eclipsed traditional didactic functions. ... Instead, such depictions may have been regarded as prestigious objects, works of beauty representing not only the spiritual but also the aesthetic tastes of their owners" (169).

<sup>28</sup> *Tondal* is also referred to as the Anglicized *Tundale*.

<sup>29</sup> *The Beast Acheron*, Franco-Flemish, 1475, Ms. 30 (87.MN.141.17), fol. 17.

Like the  
aforementioned hellmouths,  
the *Three Mouths of Hell* from  
the Hours of Catherine of  
Cleves serve multiple  
functions of performance. Its  
horrifying visage inspires  
piety, teaching and dealing  
with the sacred. There is a



Figure 3 *The Beast Acheron*, Franco-Flemish, 1475, Ms. 30 (87.MN.141.17), fol. 17

green monster on which the miniature of the *Three Mouths of Hell* rests that has scrolls spewing from its mouth; on each scroll is written one of the seven deadly sins, verifying that sin opens the path to a monstrous hell. Also like the aforementioned hellmouths, the inventiveness of hell in Catherine's Hours serves to make and reflect the aesthetic tastes of the owner and illuminator.

One way in which the Master of Catherine of Cleve's hellmouth differs from the aforementioned hellmouths is that it successfully merges architectural and bestial structures. Sheingorn asserts that the incorporation of architectural structures was demonstrated in the realm of medieval drama that "create[d] buildings with the quality of nightmarish reality" (8). This combination of beast and architecture, perhaps borrowing from an inherently performative medium, can also be seen in other static artistic renderings of hell. "An illustration in an English manuscript of the mid-fourteenth century, the Fitzwarin Psalter, shows this combination quite clearly, as does an English alabaster panel of the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century in the Castle Museum at Carcassonne." Having precedent on stage and in other manuscripts, the

architecture surrounding the three mouths establishes hell as a real location that can be visited, but should be avoided, adding to the performative nature of the miniature.

Another difference we see in the *Three Mouths of Hell* is that there is no visual reference to the salvation of Christ. In the *Bedford Hours* hellmouth, which depicts a scene from the Last Judgement, hell sits below an enthroned Christ who sits in judgement of human souls. In the depiction of Acheron in Margaret of York's *The Vision of Tondal*, Tondal is depicted with his angel tour guide. The angelic nature of the heavenly figure stands in stark contrast to the hellscape. In Catherine's *Three Mouths of Hell*, no such reminder of the heavenly exists, perhaps serving as a reminder that in the absence of Christ, there is only suffering.

The various levels of performance outlined here, performance of prayer, performance of self (i.e. Catherine), and performance of hell, are crucial to the understanding of how Catherine's miniature of the *Three Mouths of Hell* has been adapted for this thesis. The intersection of the performances of ritual, everyday life, and art is the foundation on which the adaptation, both the process and the product, is built. Although manifest in different ways than Catherine's daily performance of prayer, her performance of self, and the performance of hell, there are similarities in both performance and process that illuminate new ways of thinking about and framing Catherine of Cleves, her Book of Hours, and the miniature *Three Mouths of Hell*.

## CHAPTER IV

### ADAPTATION DRAMATURGY

My work in the completion of this thesis borrows from many dramaturgical skillsets which combine under the conceptual umbrella of adaptation dramaturgy. As Jane Barnette outlines in “Literary adaptation for the stage: A primer for adaptation dramaturgs,” adaptation dramaturgy lies in the work of contextual research and script development (295). The contextual research, outlined in the historiography and performance analysis sections of the thesis, situates my understanding of the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves and its miniature the *Three Mouths of Hell* as a source text. Linda Hutcheon outlines in *A Theory of Adaptation*, “adaptation can be described as the following:

- An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works
- A creative *and* interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging
- An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” (8).

With this theoretical understanding of adaptation, the contextual research of historiography and performance analysis, I was able to outline how I wanted to engage with the *Three Mouths of Hell*: I made specific choices in transposition and interpretation that are both inspired by and speaking to the source. This chapter will detail how this understanding led to choices in script development.

Catherine’s performance of self, as outlined in the previous chapter, immediately brought to mind another adaptation of a painting that deals with the autobiographical: Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine’s *Sunday in the Park with George* based on Georges Seurat’s *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. The content of the musical is about pointillist painter George Seurat and how he created art. The musical itself, whose lyrics and notes mirror the small colored dots of a pointillist painting, is Sondheim’s expression of and commentary on the artistic process. The music and lyrics of the song “Finishing the Hat” document Sondheim’s,

and perhaps Georges Seurat's, state of being as an artist: "Starting on a hat, finishing a hat / Look, I made a hat / Where there never was a hat" (lines 49-51). Theater director Jeanine Tesori said "Finishing the Hat" famously "captures what it's like to have a blank page and then put something down—the rush of it, the burden of it, and what it costs people" (Weinstock). This self-reflection evident in both Catherine's Hours and *Sunday in the Park with George* became a major tenet of my adaptation.

In the script of my film adaptation, the lines between reality and fiction are blurred, purposefully playing with the simultaneity of self and performance of self. The characters of Elliot, Aiden, Kirk, and Tatiana are also the names of the actors who play these roles (I play Tatiana). Additionally, the content of the script is about both the character and actual person Tatiana. The character Elliot writes and narrates a letter to the character of Tatiana; the actor Elliot delivered lines, written by me to me, setting up a paradigm of self-reflection. Elliot directly references this notion in the script, "I wrote you a letter. I suppose it was more writing myself a letter." With this understanding, the character of Elliot also becomes a performance of Tatiana. The script also features the performance of self through portraiture, borrowing directly from Catherine's use of portraiture in her Book of Hours. After Elliot (a performance of Tatiana) makes pretzels, it is revealed that a portrait of Tatiana (the character) has been present for the entirety of the pretzel-making montage, a literal embodiment of Tatiana watching a performance of Tatiana. This dynamic continues in the medieval tradition of self-representation. As Alexa Sand notes in her *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art*, "such pictures form a recursive loop between subject and object—the viewer sees herself seeing and thereby attains a heightened awareness of her own visibility and her own vision" (4).

The medieval performance of hell, also outlined in the performance analysis chapter, also served as a model for the adaptation. In the Apocryphal text the Harrowing of Hell, Jesus (between his death and resurrection) smites the devil and liberates all the souls in hell that were present due to original sin. For example, in the York Cycle version of the Harrowing of Hell, Adam, Eve, Moses, and John the Baptist are among the souls liberated. The major plot points of a trip to hell and the smiting of the devil were borrowed directly from the story of the Harrowing. In the film, due to the circumstances of the year 2020, the character of Tatiana, both literally me and a performance of me, has died and is mourned by her friends who end up traveling to hell to kill a demon and rescue Tatiana. While the performance of Catherine in her Book of Hours casts her as pious and saintly, the performance of Tatiana in this film casts Tatiana as possibly sinful (she does end up in hell), but a good friend who is worth fighting for. Through these plot points, I am mirroring Catherine's performance of self, performance of hell, and I am mirroring the performativity of the Office of the Dead. Through the performance of ending suffering (Catherine's prayers and my friend's rescue of me), the effect of ending suffering was enacted: Catherine literally believed that the prayers of the Office of the Dead would shorten her deceased loved ones' stay in purgatory; the gathering of friends and artists to make a movie was the most human interaction I had in a year's time, safely ending a self-imposed isolation.

In the writing, the performance of hell naturally led to the genre of horror. Referencing Ash Law's breakdown of horror tropes as they manifest in table-top role-playing games, I most wanted to explore the building of unease and its transition into dread (1). I first encountered this breakdown as a narrative improviser in a regular improvised (unscripted) horror film. Impro Theatre, located in Los Angeles, specializes in narrative, longform improvisation. They create plays in the styles of various genres and writers. In this time of Covid-19, they (like many other



theaters and myself regarding this thesis), began to explore presenting live theater in a digital medium. I was brought in as an improviser to help create these plays. In these live, unscripted, digitally presented horror films, the ensemble had to navigate together the building of tension into eventual terror and horror, with few or no practical effects to use. This practice of creating in-the-moment scripts with only the resources of technology and actors helped me determine what horror-moments could easily be created for this film within the limitations of social distancing and budget. Tangible takeaways that I incorporated from the improvised horror were scenes written with actors in their own spaces, time being taken to establish unease, utilizing the empty space, and the understanding that moments of terror and horror are fleeting and serve to release tension.

One such use of a moment of tension-relieving terror is in the pretzel making scene. The pretzel-making montage itself borrows from another painting within Catherine's Book of Hours, the portrait of St. Bartholomew in the Suffrages section of the book (Fig. 3). The portrait is surrounded by pretzels on three sides and on the fourth by crackers. This phenomenon is explored in the Netherlandish painting tradition section of the historiography, and points to the tradition of depicting trade and everyday life. After the depiction of the everyday, there is a transition to the horrifying, Elliot's tooth is ripped from her mouth after getting stuck in the pretzel. At the height of tension, the image then reveals the portrait of Tatiana who, as both subject and spectator, has witnessed the bloody event.



Figure 4 St. Bartholomew, Ms. M. 917/945, p. 228

One question I ask as a dramaturg when encountering any performance is “why here, why now?” What is the importance of *this* story being told *here* and *now*? This was something I directly wanted to address with the script. How could an adaptation of the *Three Mouths of Hell* be relevant to the current moment and population? I first encountered this miniature over a decade ago at an exhibition at the Morgan

Museum and Library and was immediately

enraptured by it; struck by a desire to see this entrance to hell before me. It had been my intention since that moment to deal with the hellmouth in a more substantial way, and an MFA thesis proved to be the perfect opportunity. More recently, as I began to formulate how this would manifest as my thesis, I was forced to reckon with the limitations and conventions brought about by the current moment. Because of the social distancing restrictions of Covid-19, I knew this could not be the in-person theater piece I was hoping to construct. I also knew that I wanted to in some way address these limitations and the dire affects the current moment has

had on the public. When I started writing the introduction to this thesis, there were 25,000 dead in the United States due to Covid-19. At my present time of writing, over 550,000 people in the United States have died. I, personally, have lost two people during this time and could not attend funerals, have a last goodbye, because of state health regulations. This medieval preoccupation with death, born again in the spreading of a pandemic, is directly addressed by the Office of the Dead. “The Office of the Dead was in the back of every Book of Hours the way death itself was always at the back of the medieval mind... the purpose [of praying the Office of the Dead] was always the same: to get one’s dearly departed out of purgatory and into heaven as soon as possible. The dead could not pray for themselves” (*Painted*, 117). The parallel I am drawing with this adaptation, both process and product, is that this liminal spacetime of social distancing, quarantine, masks wearing, etc. is purgatory; we are surrounded by the dead and dying. (Filming would literally take place in a cemetery.) The collective consciousness is trying to find ways to shorten our time here. While I am not a believer in God nor a practitioner of the Christian religion, I am interested in exploring how people have dealt with this psychological state before. An obvious answer was praying the Office of the Dead, which works in the same way as the adaptation: a process-based engagement meant to shorten the amount of time one suffers. The text of this prayer, spoken aloud in the script and by Catherine in her own time, serves the intention of ending suffering. Let’s look at these concepts by delving into the script itself.

CHAPTER V

THE SCRIPT- *OFFICE OF THE DEAD*

1 INT. ELLIOT'S STUDY — DAY

1

**Close up of Elliot's hands**

ELLIOT, 31, naturally curious and creative, is frantically writing a letter. The letter is narrated as Elliot writes.

ELLIOT (V.O.)

December thirty-first, twenty twenty. Dear Tati.  
You died on a Wednesday. I'm sure you'd make some sort of joke about not making it over the hump regardless that it's in poor taste and there are those of us, like myself, that are truly grieving your death. The day before you died, you texted me you hadn't touched another person in almost a year because of the virus. My two greatest regrets are that I couldn't attend your funeral because of the regulations and that I couldn't hug you before you died. Even before the virus, you hugged your friends like it was the last time you'd ever be held. I hope you weren't alone when you died and that someone had the temerity to hold you before you passed. I hope you know how much you were loved and

cherished and how much you'll be missed. Finally, selfishly, I hope that you're wrong about there being no God because my only moments of relief from this unending grief is the thought of you in a better place. If anyone deserved some form of peace, it's Tatiana Annaliese Godfrey. All my love, Elliot.

**INTERCUT:**

**2 EXT. CEMETERY — DAY**

**2**

A cemetery that moonlights as a park, both beautiful and haunting. There are green fields of gravestones, ponds with ducks, mausoleums, veiled columns and stone angels. Elliot, in her worn but cared for Ford Fiesta, drives the winding roads through the cemetery until she pulls to a stop in front of a small hill of graves. She parks, turns off the car, puts on a mask, grabs the letter whose narration is ending, and exits her car. She walks to the second row of footstones on the big hill that's across the road from her car to the stone bearing the name TATIANA GODFREY and places the letter on the footstone.

**ELLIOT**

Hi Tati. Sorry it's taken so long to get here. They weren't allowing more than ten people to gather for your funeral or I would have said goodbye then. I heard

it was lovely, as lovely as funerals ever are. I wrote you a letter. I suppose it was more writing myself a letter. But, if you could read it, you would know how much I love you and how much I miss you. How much everyone really misses you. Kirk said he bought flowers and would be by tomorrow. So that's something to look forward to.

Beat.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I'll, um, see you around, I guess.

**3 INT. VIRTUAL CONFERENCE SCREEN — NIGHT**

**3**

Three different squares of the living room spaces of Elliot, AIDEN, a pragmatic mixed race young professional, and KIRK, a free-wheeling older white man. They are in the standard living room spaces of young professionals or bachelors. In each home, an open door to another room is visible. They start with alcoholic beverages held close to the camera, which they lower as the scene begins.

ELLIOT, AIDEN, KIRK

Happy new year!

They drink.

ELLIOT

And good riddance.

KIRK

May 2021 be literally in any way better than 2020.

AIDEN

Here, here!

They drink. Beat. 2020 was difficult.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

So, do y'all wanna share your New Year Resolutions?

KIRK

YES! This is the diet year. But for real this time.

ELLIOT

Well, the sixth year's the charm.

KIRK

That is what they say.

They laugh.

AIDEN

I think my resolution for myself is to maintain reasonable expectations about what I and others can actually accomplish in this world of Zoom.

ELLIOT

That's a great resolution.

KIRK

Yeah, I think I'mma steal it. That sounds a lot better than diet and exercise.

AIDEN

Wow. It took you less than a minute to abandon that diet. That has to be a New Year's Resolution record.

KIRK

Watch, it, Aiden.

AIDEN

What about you Elliot, any resolutions?

ELLIOT



I want to make sure I actually tell the people I love  
that I love them. Make sure I appreciate people  
when I have them.

A solemn beat.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I went to see Tati yesterday.

Another beat. It's solemn and lasts too long. It's interrupted by a knock on Elliot's front door, heard but not seen. Everyone on Zoom is startled by it. Elliot looks off camera to where her front door is.

AIDEN

Expecting company?

KIRK

It's kinda late for a visitor.

ELLIOT

No, I wasn't expecting company. Hold on, I'll be  
right back.

Elliot leaves the Zoom frame, all that is visible in her square is an empty living room. Her footsteps, a door opening, then closing, and more footsteps are heard before she reappears in her Zoom frame and sits back in front of her camera.

KIRK

Who was it?

ELLIOT

Nobody. No one was there.

AIDEN

Prolly just some kids.

KIRK

Yeah. New year, new tricks.

ELLIOT

Right. You're probably right.

Elliot finishes her drink, pours herself another.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Maybe I'll get a gun. Go sit out on the lawn and threaten any kid who passes by. Become my grandmother.

AIDEN

That's a great idea.

KIRK

Now that's a new year's resolution! Threaten more  
children than you did in 2020.

They silently toast each other. It's tinged with the sadness of loss and not actually being able to come together for the new year.

**4 INT. ELLIOT'S KITCHEN — DAY**

**4**

**Begin Montage:**

Elliot kneads the dough—Elliot rolls the dough in to ropes—Elliot shapes the pretzels—Elliot boils the pretzels—Elliot places the pretzels on a baking sheet—Elliot salts the pretzels—The pretzels are baking—Elliot takes out the pretzels.

**End Montage.**

**5 INT. ELLIOT'S LIVING ROOM — DAY**

**5**

Elliot sits down with a plate of pretzels she just made with a cup of mustard. She's excited to eat them. She rips a piece off a pretzel, dips it into the mustard, and pops it into her mouth. After only one bite, she yells out and spits out the pretzel in pain and horror back onto the plate. On the plate there is chewed up pretzel and mustard intermingled with blood. Stuck in the pretzel is Elliot's tooth. Blood flecks Elliot's teeth, lips and chin; the whole where her tooth once was is bleeding freely. Elliot stands in horror, dropping the plate on the floor and backing away from it. From a new angle, we see the head shot of Tatiana Godfrey, looking on in disgust and judgment. The photo has been there the whole time. Elliot stares at the photo, breathing heavily, the photo stares back.

**6 EXT. CEMETERY — DAY**

**6**

Elliot, in her Ford Fiesta, slams on her brakes in front of the small hill of graves.

ELLIOT (V.O.)

January twenty-third, twenty twenty-one. Tati- what kind of fuckery is this? Am I mad? Are you responsible for this? Did you do this? There's blood on my paper, Tati.

Is it yours? Elliot.

Elliot parks, turns off the car, puts on a mask, grabs the letter whose narration has ended, and exits her car. She stomps her way towards Tatiana's grave then throws her letter down. She is angry. She takes a moment of self-reflection to compose herself.

ELLIOT

I came here instead of asking for help.

Elliot looks around, as if just realizing she has driven to the cemetery to confront her dead friend about pretzels.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I came here instead of calling Aiden or Kirk.

Beat.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Or a dentist. Sorry, Tati.

Elliot slumps back to her car, gets in, and drives away.

**7 INT. ZOOM SCREEN — NIGHT**

**7**

Three different squares of the living room spaces of Elliot, Aiden and Kirk. They are the standard living room spaces of young professionals or bachelors. In each home, an open door to another room is visible.

ELLIOT

Is it something you attend in your county that's sort of like a carnival?

AIDEN

No, it's not "the fair."

KIRK

Is it a beloved actress and diva who once speculated  
what she would do if she could turn back time?

AIDEN

No, it's not "Cher."

ELLIOT

Is it something that can't be found with frequency or  
in abundance?

AIDEN

No, it's not "rare."

KIRK

Is it a former prime minister of Great Britain?

AIDEN

No, it's not "Tony Blair."

ELLIOT

Dilexi, quoniam exaudiet Dominus: vocem  
orationis meae. Quia inclinavit aurem suam

mihi: et in diebus meis invocabo.

Circumdederunt me dolores mortis: pericula  
infernī invenerunt me.

Beat.

AIDEN

Um. No, it's not a prayer?

ELLIOT

What?

AIDEN

Wut?

ELLIOT

Wut?

AIDEN

Wut?

KIRK

Wut?

Another person logs on to the Zoom screen. They appear only as a headshot of Tatiana Godfrey; their camera is not yet on.

ELLIOT

Woah. Who is this? Why's that on the screen?

AIDEN

Maybe someone hacked Tati's account and is video bombing us? Or is using her headshot as profile picture... and is video bombing us?

KIRK

That's shitty.

AIDEN

Elliot, you can boot them from the room.

ELLIOT

Oh, yeah.

Elliot finagles the virtual room controls.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

It's not... working? What do I have to click?



KIRK

You should be able to click on Tati's name under "participants," and then hit remove.

ELLIOT

Okay, I'm doing that, and it's not working.

The chat pops up. It is a string of Latin.

AIDEN

Um, this person is typing in the chat.

ELLIOT

What are they saying?

AIDEN

Dilexi, quoniam exaudiet Dominus: vocem orationis meae. Quia inclinavit—

KIRK

Isn't that what you were just saying, Elliot?

ELLIOT

When was I just saying that?

AIDEN

When you were guessing “prayer.” You said this string of Latin and I was like, “Oh, she’s guessing prayer.” What is it? What does it mean?

ELLIOT

I didn’t guess prayer. And I didn’t speak any Latin just now. I don’t even know any Latin to tell you.

KIRK

Well, that’s obviously not true. You just recited this whole thing that’s in the chat.

ELLIOT

And I’m telling you I didn’t do that.

Suddenly, the open doors in the background of each Zoom square slam shut simultaneously. Elliot, Aiden, and Kirk stand abruptly, in terror. They look to the closed doors, then back to their cameras to check in with each other. They are terrified.

KIRK

Alright now, what the fuck is going on?

AIDEN

I dunno. I dunno.

ELLIOT

Tati? Tati?! Is this you?!

Tatiana's camera turns on, briefly, to reveal a flash of a human head cooking on a fire.

Foreshadowing. The camera turns off, and the display of Tatiana's head shot returns to the square. Elliot, Aiden, and Kirk stare at each other in confused terror, breathing heavily.

**8 EXT. CEMETERY — DAY**

**8**

Elliot, Aiden, and Kirk are gathered around Tatiana's grave. They are masked and standing in a triangle six feet apart from each other. The conversation, heard mid-way, is urgent.

KIRK

...and video conference bombing is pretty common.

ELLIOT

But why would someone bomb us as Tati? That's either extremely cruel or it has to be some sort of sign. Listen, before I went to the hospital for tooth and exposed nerve, I came here. It's like Tati was watching

me and could see everything that was happening. And you know what they said at the hospital?

AIDEN

That it was a hallucination.

ELLIOT

Right, a hallucination brought on by trauma. But when I got home after that, I found my plate, covered in pretzels and blood. I didn't have any hallucination. That shit was real. And I think it's Tati. Trying to communicate or... asking for help, or—

KIRK

Why would Tati, who is dead, bee tee dubs, make you hallucinate losing a tooth in a pretzel?! Number one, Tati loved pretzels, she wouldn't malign them with hallucinations of inedibility. Number 2, TATI IS DEAD AND CANNOT CREATE HALLUCINATIONS!

Beat.

AIDEN

I entered that Latin that showed up in our chat into

Google. It IS a prayer. Apparently, you'd recite it to help free your dead loved ones from purgatory.

Beat.

ELLIOT

I think there's reason to believe it's Tati sending us a warning or asking for some sort of help.

KIRK

Help? Help what? Release her from purgatory? Even if any of this shit was real, Tati ain't in purgatory. And she's certainly not in heaven!

ELLIOT

Woah, bruh. Tati was a good person; she was a good friend. And if there's the slightest chance that she's trying to communicate with us, don't we owe it to her to listen to what she's trying to say?!

AIDEN

Okay. Alright, y'all. Settle. I don't know what to believe here. But I can't deny that some strange shit has been happening and I don't have an explanation for it.

KIRK

Yeah, strange shit is happening. And our conclusion is...  
What? Our dead friend is in hell and wants out? The  
fuck outta here.

ELLIOT

Then you tell me what it is. Come up with some sort  
of explanation for all this. I'll concede that maybe it's  
just wishful thinking on my part that Tati is talking to  
us, but then you give me some other plausible reason  
that all this has been happening!

KIRK

You want a reason? We're living through ongoing  
trauma and don't have the emotional or psychological  
capacity to deal with this much death! Let alone the  
death of someone who meant the world to us. We  
didn't get to go to her funeral. I learned that I missed it  
from a post on Instagram! Latin prayers and bloody  
pretzels aren't any more fucked up than all of the other  
shitty things that have happened recently. And you  
wanna knowhow I know Tati's not in hell? Because THIS  
IS HELL! And Tati's not here!

The ground shakes. The earth roars, the sound of shifting tectonic plates and something bestial. Elliot, Aiden, and Kirk struggle to keep their balance, but eventually fall. Mid fall—

**SMASH TO:**

**9 EXT. MOUTH OF HELL — NIGHT**

**9**

Boiling human head in pot. The pot is tended by a demon. It sits within the open toothless mouth of a beast which in turn sits within the head of a beast whose open mouth reveals sharp fangs with claws around the jowls. The faces are vaguely mammalian. On either side of the beast within a beast are two stone turrets, connected by a balcony. The balcony sits at the entrance of the yawing mouth of the third beast head whose open maw reveals another demon tending a fire. Elliot, Aiden, and Kirk land, hard, on the cold ground in front of the spectacle. They are dwarfed by its size. It is horror inducing: A large castle composed of three heads atop each other, housing death and devils. At the base of this castle is another demon, carting humans and body parts into the innermost mouth. The roaring, a low hum before their fall, is now nearly deafening. This demon with a pitchfork and wheelbarrow that very obviously has a full body with various other body parts in it steps in front of Elliot, Aiden, and Kirk. The demon smiles to reveal entirely too many teeth, sharpened. Elliot looks into the wheelbarrow and realizes the full body belongs to none other than her dead friend, Tatiana. Tatiana is very obviously dead: pale, receding skin, burns, emaciation. Despite her death, she still retains the semblance of life, twisting unnaturally to look at and recognize Elliot. Elliot reaches towards Tatiana but is bodily

stopped by the demon. Elliot screams in pain at the touch of the demon and falls back to the ground. Aiden and Kirk get up and attack the demon. A ruthless fight ensues.

Aiden begins with a tackle to the demon's midsection. It is rooted to the ground, unaffected. With its hand, the demon swipes Aiden away and she is swept through the air only to land feet away. Seeing this, Kirk charges the demon in a similar tackle. Prepared this time, the demon stops Kirk with a hand covering Kirk's face. Kirk's skin is burning underneath the hand, which the demon enjoys. The demon pushes Kirk by the face to the ground to reveal a handprint burn on Kirk's face that is still smoking. Now recovered from the original encounter with this demon, Elliot tries again to reach toward Tatiana. The demon gets a claw around Elliot's midsection and eviscerates her, what once was inside now spilling out. Elliot is down for the count. Having witnessed this, Aiden and Kirk are horrified. They both notice the demon's discarded pitchfork on the ground. They look to each other in silent agreement. Kirk runs at the demon full speed in an attempt at another tackle; Aiden goes for the pitchfork. As Kirk is carelessly brushed aside by the demon, Aiden runs behind the demon and pitchforks it through the head. It falls to the ground.

Once convinced that it is not capable of further retaliation, Aiden and Kirk empty out the extraneous body parts from the wheelbarrow. They gently pick a near dead Elliot up and place her next to Tati in the wheelbarrow. Elliot tries to talk to Aiden and Kirk, but nothing can be heard above the deafening roar. Exhausted, Elliot points back to the mouth of the beast, Aiden and Kirk follow her gaze. The only way out of this hellscape is through. Kirk and Aiden eventually understand. They both maneuver the wheelbarrow that holds Tatiana and Elliot to the mouth, battling flying demons and dodging balls of fire. Reaching the open mouth, they knock away the



head boiling in a pot and push the full wheelbarrow into the beast/castle's innermost mouth.

Aiden goes next, followed by Kirk. Blackness.

**SMASH TO:**

**10 EXT. CEMETERY — DAY**

**10**

The peace of the cemetery is conspicuous after the roar of hell. Aiden, Kirk, and a violently shaking Elliot and TATIANA, 32 Black and beloved, no longer dead or wounded, sit up abruptly surrounding Tatiana's footstone, as if jerking awake from a horrible nightmare. The footstone has no date of death. Elliot, Aiden, and Kirk look to each other silently, look at Tatiana, and hug her desperately. The sky is bright and lovely, and the day is fine.

DISSOLVE TO WHITE

## CHAPTER VI

### PRODUCTION PROCESS

Jessica Brantley's writing on Additional 37049 was key to my understanding of taking something from the medieval page and framing it for the screen. "The combination of the visual and the verbal that is central to this manuscript's art mimics the quintessential experience of theatergoers, who are equally audience and spectators. The similarity is structural, for of all literary forms, only performed drama and illustrated books join the visual with the verbal so explicitly, materially, and indissolubly" (Brantley, 5). Through a brief survey of late-medieval manuscripts, Brantley is also able to conclude that "fifteenth-century reading culture [sic] depends upon the mixing of media, upon interactive methods of apprehending both pictures and words, and upon the performative effects of such imagetexts" (6). The idea of words and pictures working together and informing each other to create meaning to an audience is not only a concept familiar to fifteenth-century consumers of liturgical manuscripts, but also is the way contemporary audiences interact with theater and film, making, as Linda Hutcheon would assert, the transposition of medium from one that "shows" (as opposed to tells) to another medium that "shows." This change in medium from a painting in a book that prefaces a list of prayers for the dead into a narrative movie was both practical and rooted in medieval scholarship. Practically, I wrote scenes that were meant to take place, and were ultimately filmed, remotely from the actors' and crews' own spaces.

There was only one day of filming in which the entirety of the crew and cast were together to film, everyone was masked, and everyone on set had been tested for Covid-19 prior to filming. The medium of film, and the process by which it is made, allowed for a safer work environment than the theater piece I had originally intended to make. The commonalities in the different

media (an illumination from a Book of Hours and a short film) led me to bring on a director of photography, Jay Taylor, to build and highlight artistic choices inspired by hell iconography. Jay Taylor and I went to a performing arts high school and there performed in many plays together. He went on to get a degree in Film from Wright State University; I acted in some of his short films. Knowing the quality of his work, I was eager to invite him onto the project to fulfill both a producing and picture-framing role. Together, we addressed the question of what the adaptation was going to look like.

Central to the conceit of the production was that I wanted to actualize the miniature *Three Mouths of Hell*. Very simply, this concept meant that I had to figure out how to build a hellmouth. I decided to draw from my limited theatrical scenic design experience and to build the two towers that connect the mouths of hell out of lumber. This process began with preliminary drawings of what the towers would look like. Essentially, the towers each consisted of a six-foot-tall box that sat atop another six-foot tall box. After the drawings were finalized, I determined how much lumber would be needed and priced different woods. Deciding on the least expensive option of whitewood 2x4 studs and 5mm poplar sheets of ply, I ordered the needed amount of lumber from the local Lowes and had it delivered to my parents' house. (My parents graciously agreed to let me build in their garage.) The boxes were constructed from the 2x4 and faced in the 5mm ply. During construction it became clear that the desired height of 12 feet for the towers was untenable; I shortened the height to ten feet. A faux stone exterior was adhered to the facing and the boxes stacked atop one another for the final design. The mouth portion of the hellmouth was commissioned from puppeteer Gabriel Harrell. He (and his brother Noah) built the hellmouth in their families' department store in Burgaw, North Carolina. The mouth stood 9 feet tall and was made of a coaxial cable frame and cardboard. I rented a cargo van and drove from Cincinnati to Burgaw to pick up the mouth. After receiving assembly

instructions and driving the mouth back to Ohio, it was hung between the two towers that I had erected in my parents back yard. Early drafts of the design made provisions for a tower with three heads. However, the limitations of time and budget necessitated the focus be on one large hellmouth.<sup>30</sup>

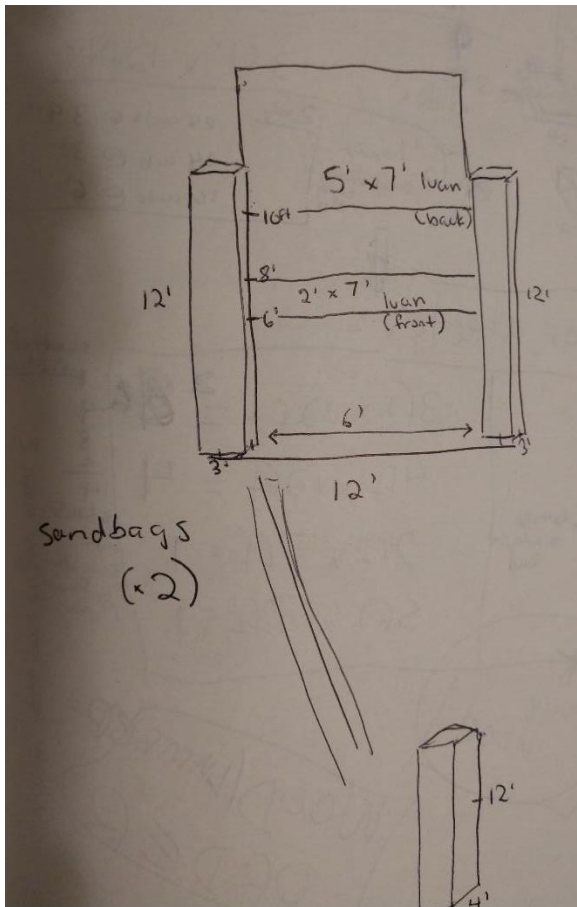


Figure 5 Original Hellmouth design

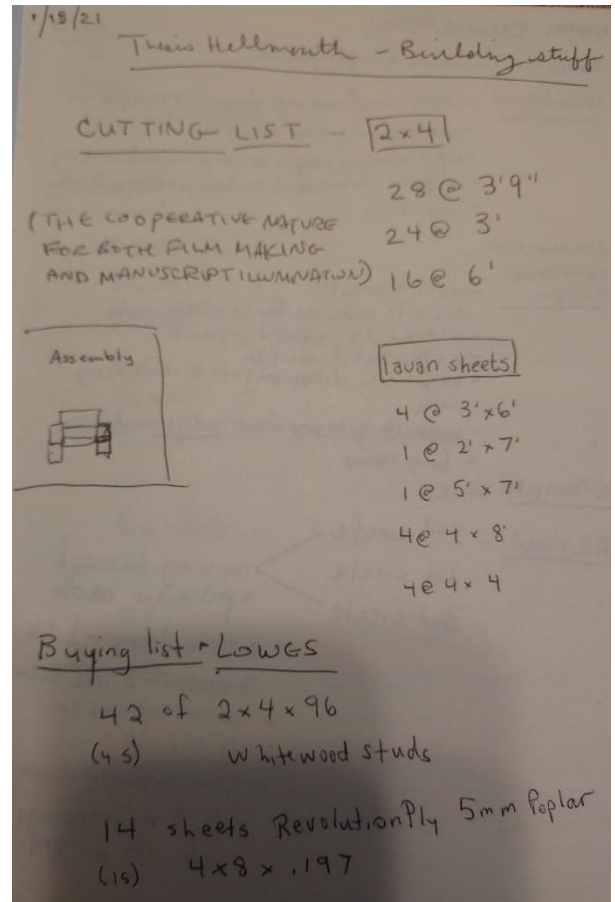


Figure 6 Lumber purchasing list

<sup>30</sup> This process is visually documented in Figures 5-16.



*Figure 8 The purchased lumber in my parents' garage.*



*Figure 7 The bottom parts of the towers. These are each six feet tall and can support at least 250 lbs.*



*Figure 9 The tops of the towers. Four feet tall, with faux stone finish.*



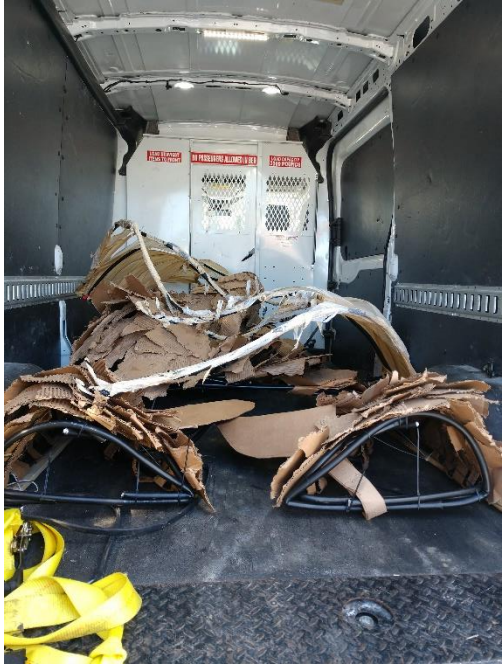
*Figure 10 The two towers, deconstructed, in my parents' basement.*



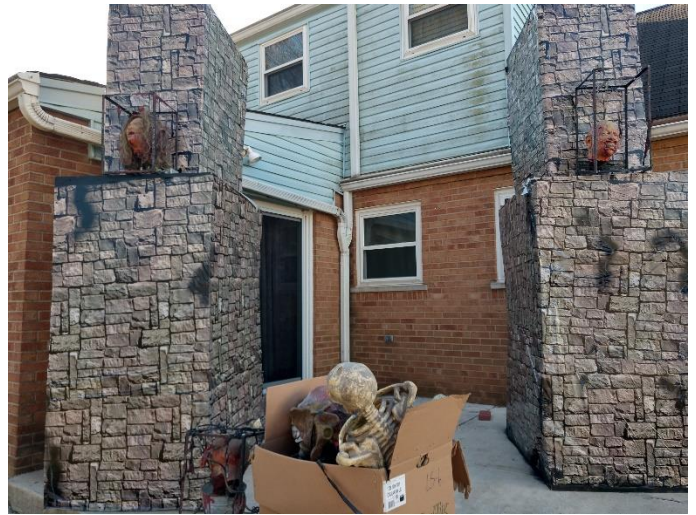
*Figure 11. Harrell's Department Store.*



*Figure 12 The mouth of hell. It was hanging in Harrell's Department Store.*



*Figure 15 The mouth of hell in the back of the cargo van.*



*Figure 14 The towers erected.*



*Figure 13 Completed Mouth of Hell*





*Figure 16 Tati, triumphant, before the mouth of hell.*

The next concept that I wanted to capture was a feeling of verticality and falling. This feeling is evident in the verticality of the miniature *Three Mouths of Hell*, and Pamela Sheingorn asserts that “Play texts of this subject [of hell] put so much emphasis on the physical action of falling that the stage composition must be vertical” (5). This verticality draws from medieval iconography of hell being depicted below the earth which is in turn depicted below heaven. In the script and film, this feeling is captured through the literal action of falling to hell. This verticality is evident in the graveyard scenes, which take place on a hill. Time is spent in the first graveyard scene establishing that Elliot walks uphill to the grave and downhill back to her car, foreshadowing her eventual descent. Just before the descent to hell, the camera follows the main character as she falls to the ground and reappears before the mouth of hell. Taylor accomplished this shot by falling, camera in hand, with the actor playing Elliot as she fell. It was important to the verticality that the hellmouth dwarf the actors. The towers that structurally supported the mouth puppet stood ten feet tall and eight feet across. The mouth itself was nine feet tall and had an opening six feet wide and tall through which actors could be swallowed. Another aspect of filming that contributed to verticality was filming on hills. The scenes in the movie taking place in the cemetery near the top of a hill, evoking feelings of aspirational ascendance. The scene at the hellmouth places the actors downhill from the entrance to hell, evoking a feeling of complete descent. Once in hell, the camera footage is handheld, inducing the feeling of chaos and drawing from the more horizontal iconography from depictions of the Harrowing of Hell, from which the plot borrows.

The planning of building and filming the hellmouth paralleled the making of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves. As previously asserted, both are crafts that use the combination of image and spoken text to communicate meaning. As such, the artistic process of production presented

some practical parallels as well.<sup>31</sup> The first step in the production of the film was to write a script, the creation of which, like the creation of any Book of Hours, drew from Biblical writings and iconography.<sup>32</sup> Once scripted, I found myself in a creative headspace that I (like to) imagine that both Catherine of Cleves as commissioner of a Book of Hours and the Master of Catherine of Cleves as producer of this specific Book of Hours also once found themselves in: What visuals can I create that support and highlight the text of this script? Also like the Catherine and the Master of Catherine of Cleves, I brought other creative minds onto the project.<sup>33</sup> Both in the filming and editing process, director of photography and co-producer Jay Taylor practically helped me to determine what visuals would be seen in conjunction with the dialogue.<sup>34</sup> Together, Jay and I constituted the entirety of the art department. I secured permission to film at Walnut Hills Cemetery, coordinated costumes with the actors, designed and built the towers, commissioned a hellmouth puppet and facilitated its transfer from North Carolina to Ohio, and designed and purchased props. Jay provided camera and sound equipment, designed the lighting, and rented the necessary instruments for lighting, and added visual and sound effects during the editing process. This planning happened via the process of storyboarding, in which the visuals are drawn and laid out with the accompanying text in the order in which they will be viewed. This process directly mirrors the way the miniatures were laid out around the text in Catherine's Book of Hours.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Nice use of the alliteration.

<sup>32</sup> The aforementioned self-insertion and use of portraiture as well as the obvious iconography of the hellmouth and drawing from both the Office of the Dead and the Harrowing of Hell.

<sup>33</sup> As previously stated, it is theorized that educated clerics helped Catherine decide both the included texts and layout of them within her Book of Hours. Also, as previously stated, the Master of Catherine of Cleves brought on another illuminator and used the help of an apprentice to complete the illuminations.

<sup>34</sup> By practically, I mean that he framed the shots, held the camera, and edited the film in Adobe Premier.

<sup>35</sup> Calkins in his "Distribution of Labor Illuminators of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves and their Workshop" argues that "it is apparent that the integration of the vast program of illustration into the text was the result of careful planning from the start" (7).

Simultaneously as the visual and aural design was finalized, actors were brought on and the script was edited after receiving feedback from Jay and my thesis committee. The edits helped to clarify storyline and further establish the genre. Filming occurred the first weekend in March of 2021 and Jay and I subsequently entered the editing process. This process involved watching the footage, organizing it, and digitally cutting it into usable pieces. The visual narrative was then strung together, using the script as a guideline for pairing image and text. Some forty hours of editing later, the film was what is called “picture-locked,” which means the overall timing of the shots and footage would no longer be edited. Internal color, sound, and graphic effect editing was still being worked on while the “picture locked” version was sent to Connor Chee to compose a score. Connor, along with Jay and four out of five of the actors in the cast, was also a graduate of the same performing arts high school. Now a Grammy voting pianist and composer, Connor wrote and recorded the score within three days, digitally sent it back to Jay and me, who then incorporated it into the ongoing edits of the film. The final product was then presented via livestream on Vimeo on April 23, 2021 and can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/akl-R3pKu3U>.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

During the editing process, Jay asked me what I learned from the experience of adapting the miniature into a film. The first thing of note was a reaffirmation of the notion of taking things one at a time. Doing the critical research, adapting a script, and then actualizing that script as a producer, director, an actor was a large task that I gave myself. Additionally, because I was producing this film without the resources of the school, I took on an additional part time job to help fund the making of it. My successful completion of all these tasks comes from only dealing with the content that was in front of me at any given moment. Because of the amount of tasks I had to complete, I worried a lot about how and if I would get them done. The worry, however, kept me from dealing with what was right in front of me. Reminding myself to only deal with the task at hand and to dedicate 100% of my focus to that task allowed me to get everything done in a timely fashion.

Another aspect of this project that was integral to its successful completion was the onboarding of artistic collaborators and stakeholders who not only did the work well but were also flexible enough to accept new ideas and new plans when presented to them. For this, I relied heavily on relationships that I have built over the past 20 years. Jay Taylor, who served as my director of photography and editor, Connor Chee who wrote the score, the actors playing Aiden, Elliot and the demon, and half of the crew were people with whom I attended high school. I can attest to not only their work ethic and their friendship, both of which were integral into making this piece joyful and fun in its production.

The notion of bringing on people who are good at what they do, but also who are good people, became an anchor for me during the production process. At another point while editing, Jay asked me what I thought this film was about. And while I wanted to purposely play with the

performance of hell and the notion of the performance itself, I told Jay that I feel like I have been grieving for the past year due to the pandemic. This grief has been embodied and I carry it around with me. The grief that is extant in the script is also a grief it was extant in my life. Like Kirk learned about Tatiana's funeral from a post on Instagram, I learned I missed my cousin's funeral from a Facebook post. Having a group of friends come together for an artistic project in which we explicitly talked about and dealt with how grief has been manifesting in our lives was not only a part of the artistic process but also a part of the healing process, which mirrors Catherine's use of her book of hours to deal with the spiritual.

While taking the process one step at a time and bringing on trustworthy artistic stakeholders contributed to the overall success of this process, there were some aspects of the adaptation that I was unable to address. Perhaps most disappointingly, I was unable to build a hellmouth that had three mouths. This was due to resource limitations, both in time and in funding. My original plan for building the hellmouth envisioned the towers being two feet taller, and the topmost two mouths to be non-practical. After returning from Burgaw, NC with the practical hellmouth that actors could enter an exit out of, and mounting it to the towers, it became evident that a new design would be necessary to add the additional mouths. Because the practical mouth was mounted the day of hellmouth filming (in my parents' backyard), I was unable to quickly redesign and execute the additional mouths.

Another aspect of the adaptation that I wanted to address, but was unable to, was demon iconography as it specifically relates to the seven deadly sins and the depiction of the human body. The miniature of the hellmouth within the Book of Hours rests atop a beast's back. The beast is small and green, and from its mouth spews several scrolls, on which are written the seven deadly sins. In her analysis of the depictions of hell within Catherine's Book of Hours,

Stephanie Lish analyzes the iconography of demons who embody specific sins, especially in the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch. Martha Easton also provides insight to the depiction of bodies in hell in her “The Wound of Christ, The Mouth of Hell: Appropriations and Inversions of Female Anatomy in the Later Middle Ages.” In various drafts of ideas pertaining to my production of Hell, there were more and different demons and I would have been filmed naked and bloodier. These ideas were untenable because of my bandwidth for the amount of research I could undertake, because of the number of actors I could cast (both in the amount of actors I could pay and keeping the number of people in one place due to Covid regulations to a minimum), because I thought it would be odd for my friends to film with me naked on a cart, and because it was fairly cold the day we filmed.

Looking forward with this film, I would like to engage with the medieval community, both the academic and the hobbyist. One of the major questions I was asking in undertaking this adaptation is what intellectual work is being done through taking a dramaturgical approach that has not been addressed by the analyses I wrote about in the historiography. At the risk of moving into the realm of the purely speculative, I cannot help but wonder how different the artistic process is between making an illuminated manuscript and producing a film. For both the production of the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves and for this film, the creators were relying on the purposeful performance of image and text interacting together, trusting collaborators to understand and fulfill an artistic vision, and building from medieval Christian iconography. Both products deal with the performance of self and of hell. Both the script of the *Office of the Dead* and the Book of Hours itself serve as an instructional for performance. These similarities of process and product lead me to wonder what moments I have had in the making of this film that mirrored moments the Master of Catherine Cleves had in illuminating this manuscript. Sitting shoulder to shoulder with a friend and collaborator as you work together on

something that requires exacting detail; letting go of an idea because a collaborator presented a better alternative; coordinating different schedules and setting deadlines; having to think creatively when certain ideas don't pan out; letting go of ideas you desperately wanted to fulfill but didn't have the time or resources to accomplish; conversations about artistic intention with people who are invested in the quality of the work; feeling overwhelmed at the amount of work taken on; the feeling of satisfaction when the work is complete and beautiful and imperfect. These are the moments that made the artistic process worthwhile for me as a practitioner that I posit also made up the artistic process for the Master of Catherine of Cleves when building this hell of our own making.



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