

A Small Door: Recognizing Ruth in the Psalter-Hours “of Yolande of Soissons”*

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Abstract

Long the subject of iconographic speculation, the miniature that currently opens the luxurious late-thirteenth-century Psalter-Hours “of Yolande of Soissons” (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M.729) can now be securely identified as a depiction of the opening scene of the book of Ruth. The identification rests on an iconographic peculiarity shared with two roughly contemporary vernacular Bibles, a connection that in itself gives some sense of the textual and pictorial environment in which the “Yolande” manuscript was conceived. The choice of this extremely rare subject for a pictorial preface to a devotional book created for an aristocratic laywoman indicates the interpenetration of devotional concerns with ideas about marriage, lineage, and the particular role of women in both sacred and family history. Recent research into the origins of the manuscript complements the argument that in selecting a subject from Ruth, the book’s creators focused on the female protagonists of the story as idealized models for the book owner’s own identity. The iconographic link to vernacular works suggests further that the viewer was intended to approach the illustration from a position of literate familiarity with the text, albeit in French rather than Latin, complemented by interpretative tools drawn from the oral culture of preaching and religious instruction. As such, the miniature challenges medieval and modern categories of literacy and illiteracy and reveals the integral role of pictorial representation in both articulating and formulating varieties of religious and social experience.

A picture or a series of pictures that are difficult to decode reveals the great gap between even a sophisticated understanding of history and the lived experiences of a given period and place. As Michael Camille demonstrated in his monograph on the Luttrell Psalter, the relations between the images in the margins of medieval manuscripts that appear to reproduce the texture of everyday life and the meanings they potentially bear are in fact unstable, multifaceted, and deeply embedded in an imaginative universe that we can only begin to reconstruct.¹ That is precisely why an iconographic riddle—a picture of elusive meaning—exercises such seduction; it promises a view into the strange country of past mentalities and ways of seeing. The picture discussed in this essay poses such a riddle and offers, in its solution, new insight into late medieval experiences of prayer, devotion, gender, and the family.

The picture in question is a full-page miniature at the beginning of the Psalter-Hours “of Yolande of Soissons” in the Pierpont Morgan Library, M.729 (Fig. 1). The manuscript, produced in or near Amiens in the late 1280s or 1290s, is a luxurious volume including the complete Psalter and three full Offices (dedicated to the Virgin, the Holy Spirit, and the Passion), as well as other texts in Latin and Old French, originally accompanied by at least forty full-page miniatures (of which thirty-nine survive), and numerous illuminated initials and marginalia.² While many of the full-page miniatures are iconographically unusual or even unique, the painting that now opens the book is the only one that has not been satisfactorily identified. When Eric Millar assessed the manuscript in 1928, he described the subject simply as “man, woman, and two children.”³ Others have sought more fully worked-out iconographic solutions. William Wixom, writing in 1967, suggested that this might be a portrait of the book’s intended owner and her family.⁴ In her doctoral thesis and subsequent monograph on M.729, Karen Gould supported this interpretation.⁵ François Avril has suggested that it might depict Lot and his family fleeing “Nineveh,” by which I assume he intends Sodom.⁶ Both of these ideas are problematic. Though the notion of the painting as a representation of the owner’s family is appealing, it seems very unlikely in light of its place in the prefatory pictorial cycle to a Psalter. Such cycles had their own conventions, which did not include portraiture, even in the broadest sense of images meant to evoke the identity of individuals living or recently dead.⁷ The identification with the episode from Genesis is more plausible in this context—Old Testament scenes were frequently included in Psalter prefaces—but the visual evidence does not support the association with Lot. Contemporary depictions of the flight of Lot and his family from Sodom clearly show the destruction of the city and the transformation of Lot’s wife into a pillar of salt. For example, in both the Morgan Old Testament Picture Book (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M.638, fol. 4) and the St. Louis Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 10525, fol. 9v), the towers of Sodom tumble down and Lot’s wife is colored a uniform gray to indicate that she has already been turned to salt. One further strike against the identification with Lot and his family is the fact that Lot has two daughters, whereas at least one of the children in M.729 is clearly a boy, a point to which I will return.



FIGURE 1. Peregrinatio (*Ruth 1.1*), *Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M.729, fol. 1v (photo: Pierpont Morgan Library).

Another possible Old Testament subject, first proposed by Belle da Costa Greene in 1934, is the opening scene of the book of Ruth, in which the Israelite Elimelech, his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahalon and Chelion, leave Bethlehem in a time of famine to sojourn in the city of Moab.⁸ I will call this the *Peregrinatio*, following John Lowden's descriptive title for this episode in the *Bibles moralisées*.⁹ The Vulgate text relates this voyage in bare language: "In the days of one of the judges, when the judges ruled, there came a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem Juda, went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and two sons."¹⁰ Gould objected that "this subject is unlikely" because it does not seem to fit with the extant iconography of the prefatory cycle in M.729 and because it does not resemble contemporary illustrations of the *Peregrinatio*. At the same time, she allowed that the episode might have provided some inspiration for an otherwise unprecedented secular scene.¹¹ I return to the *Peregrinatio* as a possible subject for the miniature, addressing the problem of its place in the prefatory cycle, reexamining the visual evidence of thirteenth-century approaches to representing the book of Ruth, and arguing, ultimately, that while the picture does represent the *Peregrinatio*, it is also, in its way, a kind of portrait. The way it engages with its pictorial sources, the nature of these sources themselves, and the relationship of this miniature to the larger program of the manuscript all speak to the probable intentions of the book's makers.¹² These intentions were closely tied to the imagined audience for the book and to late-thirteenth-century ideas about lineage, individual identity, and practices of private devotion.

The Painting and Its Manuscript Context

The miniature on fol. 1v depicts four people—large, solid figures that take up most of the space within the architectural frame of the painting. A diapered ultramarine blue ground and, on the left, a perspectively rendered gate in earth tones establish the setting of the picture. As in most of the miniatures in M.729, the human figures dominate the composition, actors on a shallow stage on which the elements of set design are only those absolutely necessary to the narrative. The figure farthest to the left is a man, standing in front of the gate. Dressed in a long, aristocratic robe with a decorated hem, his hair coiffed in a typical late-thirteenth-century, upper-class, male fashion, and bearded, he is the image of the *soigné* courtier. He holds his gloves loosely in his right hand, a graceful, casual gesture that adds to the impression of effortless, idealized nobility. With his left hand, he touches the woman, who stands in the center. His fingers flex slightly as he gently presses or squeezes her shoulder. It is an ambiguous gesture, which could indicate either restraint or urging. Nor does his pose resolve the question. His head inclines toward her while his shoulders draw back and his torso thrusts forward, his body thus describing a long arc down toward his trailing

right foot, giving his body the exaggerated, swaying posture characteristic of French art of the period.

The woman, her body somewhat obscured by the two children in front of her, sways gently as well, but because of the more erect carriage of her head and the frontal view of her shoulders, she seems more stable and weighty than the man. Her white wimple and long vermilion dress mark her as an aristocrat as well. While the man seems to hesitate between entreaty and admonishment in his gesture, her pose is less equivocal. Her hands bracket the shoulders of the two children who move energetically toward the right, while her head turns back to the left, as if listening to the man. Yet if she is listening, she is not complaisant; the intensity of the exchange of gazes between these high-bred people betrays a level of emotional tension rare in manuscript paintings of this period, with their standardized and often abbreviated attention to human physiognomy. The central component in the composition, the woman mediates between the children's headlong enthusiasm and the man's apparent reservations: her body both shields the children from him and connects them to him through his hand on her shoulder. The picture suggests that the narrative will revolve around this woman, a fitting emphasis if she is indeed Naomi, the only one of the four people depicted who survives long enough to play a leading role in the book of Ruth.

Directly in front of the woman, the smaller of the two children has already begun to walk away from the man and the gate. His right leg crosses over his left, and he raises his hands before his chest, as if acknowledging or exclaiming over something he sees beyond the confines of the miniature's frame. The woman's hand on his upper arm may be all that prevents him from dashing ahead, or it may gently urge him in the direction that his gaze already moves. In any case, his attention has already left the frame, and he shows no awareness of the man behind him. However, the two figures are not entirely disconnected: the youngster's hairstyle and his clothing (a long tunic with an embroidered band at the hem), so similar to those worn by the adult man, indicate his sex, while his diminutive size relates his youth. To the right, a second, slightly taller child, restrained by the woman's left hand, also gazes beyond the boundary of the frame, a movement of attention emphasized by the pointing finger that breaks the vertical line of the frame's innermost colonnette.

If this is the *Peregrinatio*, this child should be another boy, but on close examination, the second child's gender is at best ambiguous. The hairstyle, resembling that of the smaller child, could be masculine, but the addition of a slender fillet or ribbon across the hairline clouds the issue: it closely resembles the hairstyle worn by the seven maidens of the allegorical illustration of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Master Honoré's copy of *La Somme le Roy*, a roughly contemporary manuscript also very similar in artistic style.¹³ The hairstyle on its own is not enough to cast this child's gender in doubt, as males sometimes are depicted wearing a fillet in

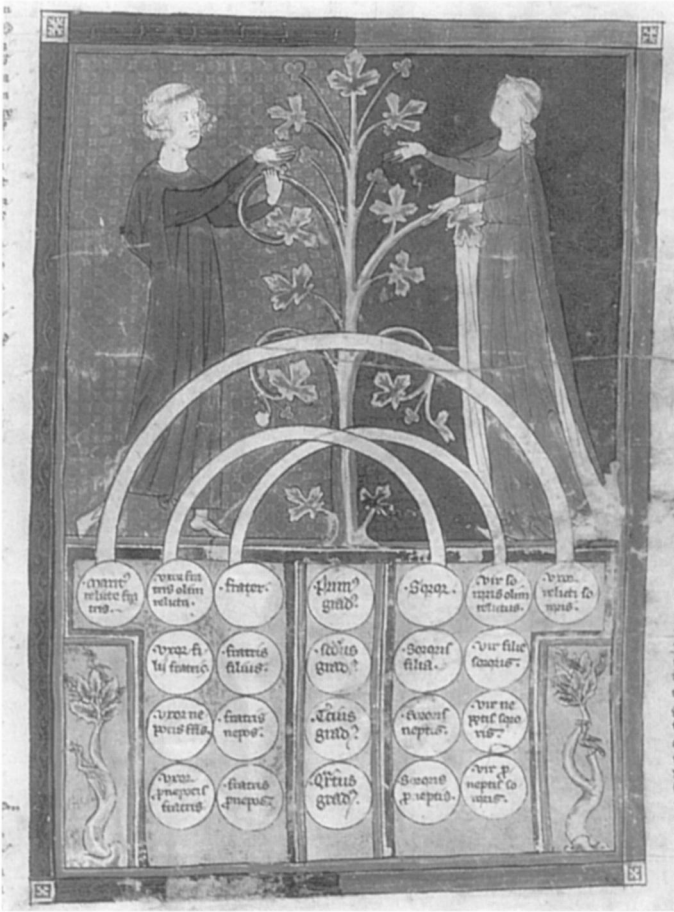


FIGURE 2. Table of Consanguinity, *Coutumier de Normandie*, ca. 1297. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS lat. 12883, fol. 34 (photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France).

this manner. For example, in the *Coutumier de Normandie* of about 1297, the male figure in the table of consanguinity sports a green fillet similar to that of his female companion (Fig. 2), and the youthful David wears a fillet in a number of scenes in the Morgan Old Testament Picture Book.¹⁴ Above all, the fillet is a feature of the coiffure characteristic of those fundamentally sexless creatures, angels. The coquettish head, now in the Musée Cluny but thought to originate from Poissy about 1300, provides a nearly identical example (Fig. 3). It is, however, the garment worn by the taller of the two children that is decidedly feminine. Quite similar to that worn by the adult woman, it bears little resemblance to the robes worn by the younger boy and the man. These fall just above the ankle, while this figure's garment covers the feet. This difference is emphasized by the way the painter has depicted the light-colored lining, visible where the skirt flutters open around the hem, revealing the heavy, puddling fabric of the underskirt. Since this child does not have wings, it cannot be an angel, but if this is a girl, how can the miniature represent the *Peregrinatio*? The answer lies in the similarity of this depiction of



FIGURE 3. Angel, probably from Saint-Louis de Poissy, ca. 1300, Paris, Musée national du Moyen Âge—Thermes de Cluny, Cl. 23246 (photo: Art Resource/Réunion des Musées Nationaux).

the subject, complete with its iconographic mistake, to a group of miniatures found in some Old French Bibles produced in the same period and geographic region.

Before turning to the visual evidence that helps support the identification of this miniature as the *Perigrinatio*, however, it helps to see the image in the context of the book in which it appears. As is so often the case with medieval manuscripts, there are a number of uncertainties about M.729, perhaps the least tractable of which is its codicology. The manuscript first appeared in the historical record on 12 May 1838, when it appeared at auction by Sotheby's in London as part of the William Young Ottley collection. At this point, it was in two lots, one comprising "twenty miniatures of fine vellum," and the other, "nineteen highly finished and illuminated miniature pages and upwards of seventy smaller ones."¹⁵ The manuscript had been cut up, and the most attractive of the miniatures excised from their folios and pasted into fresh parchment frames, presumably for display. The *Peregrinatio* was among these. The subsequent vicissitudes of the manuscript are too lengthy to detail here, but when the Morgan Library acquired it, in 1927, a rigorous reassembly was required. This took place under the supervision of Eric Millar, whose attention to both iconography and material considerations (such as

the texture of parchment leaves) facilitated what seems to be a reliable restoration of the original order of the cut miniatures and leaves.¹⁶ Subsequent scholarship on the manuscript, including my own, has generally accepted most of Millar's decisions as consistent with the iconographic and material evidence.¹⁷

Unfortunately, the place of the first miniature in the current binding is perhaps the least certain of all the reinsertions because of its up-to-now murky iconography. It is clear that it does not belong elsewhere in the manuscript. The Psalter and the three fully illustrated Hours in M.729 all have distinct programs of illumination, ranging from the public life of Christ in the Psalter to the Passion in the Hours of the Cross. Texts paired with single images, such as the Penitential Psalms (fols. 346–53) and the Office of the Dead (fols. 355–83), are codicologically intact, as are those without full-page miniatures, such as the important Marian prayer “O Intemerata” (fol. 212v). Finally, if I am correct in identifying fol. 1v as the *Peregrinatio*, it is an unusual iconographic subject for a Psalter prefatory cycle but one well within the established conventions for such cycles, which often included subjects drawn from the Old Testament as well as from the New Testament and from hagiography.¹⁸ The extant contents of the M.729 prefatory cycle otherwise conform to this pattern. They include two hagiographic images (St. Francis Preaching to the Birds, on fol. 2, and the Invention of the Relics of St. Firmin on fol. 3)¹⁹ and a series of four Christological scenes: a Crucifixion (fol. 4v), Christ in Majesty (fol. 5), the *Noli me tangere* (fol. 6v), and the Harrowing of Hell (fol. 7). The present order of these pictures, which are all on singletons (a result of the manuscript's having been dismembered), does not make much sense. Most Psalter prefaces organize their subjects more or less chronologically, and this was probably also originally the case with M.729. The cycle would thus have begun with the *Peregrinatio* and continued with the Crucifixion, the *Noli me tangere*, and the Harrowing of Hell. After these scenes, the hagiographic subjects would follow, with the series perhaps culminating in the image of Christ in Majesty.

A mutilated Psalter preface is difficult to reconstruct because the scenes in the cycle were often closely tailored to the specific concerns of its intended audience. For example, the long prefatory cycle of the St. Louis Psalter, created for Louis IX of France, focuses on battlefield heroics of such Old Testament figures as Gideon, Joshua, and Saul, all of whom could be (and were) held up as models for Louis' own crusading activities.²⁰ Meanwhile, the illuminations in the preface of the Psalter-Hours of Isabelle of France (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 300), perhaps made for Louis' queen, Marguerite of Provence, focus on episodes from David's kingship that resonate with concerns about the role of queens and the importance of maintaining the dynasty, as Kathleen Schowalter has argued.²¹ Within the prefatory miniatures of M.729, several paintings announce themes that persist throughout the manuscript, such as an affinity for Franciscan

approaches to devotion and a strong sense of local traditions of piety rooted in Picardy and the Soissonnais.²² The inclusion of the *Noli me tangere*, while common enough in Psalter prefaces, may also allude to the woman for whom the book was intended. In other manuscripts made for women to use in their private devotions, the Magdalen figures prominently as a model for the penitent woman whose devotion bears fruit in her special and intimate relationship to Christ.²³

None of this proves that the first miniature in M.729 represents the *Peregrinatio* rather than another Old Testament subject, but it does establish the possibility that the *Peregrinatio* might have been included in the preface to the manuscript, especially if it had some meaning specific to the book's intended owner. First, we must establish with greater certainty that this is indeed the subject, and then try to understand the choice of iconography in terms both of contemporary representations and interpretations of the book of Ruth and of the manuscript's provenance. This investigation ultimately comes back to the character of the Psalter preface, and indeed the whole manuscript, as carefully attuned to the particular concerns of an individual, as imagined by the book's makers.

The Girl Child: Common Error?

The plausibility of the *Peregrinatio* as a subject for a full-page miniature in a pictorial preface to a thirteenth-century French Psalter rests largely on the fact that this episode would have been familiar to anyone conversant with one of the major categories of book illumination in this period, namely, the so-called Paris Bibles. These were Latin manuscripts produced largely in Paris for upscale clients.²⁴ In these Bibles, the *Peregrinatio* was a standard subject for the historiated initial for the book of Ruth, when one appeared, though it is important to keep in mind that in the vast majority of examples, these books were not illuminated, and even in those that were, the book of Ruth most often received a decorated, but not historiated, initial. The iconography appears to have developed in association with the book of Ruth in the most lavishly illustrated of twelfth-century Bibles. By the 1250s that iconography had become fairly standardized.²⁵

The scene appears in the initial *I* that opens the book of Ruth, and the shape of the letter dictates that Elimelech and Naomi and their sons usually occupy at least two discrete niches in a vertical composition. Both children are quite clearly male in these initials, sometimes even bearded, as is the case in the Master Alexander Bible of about 1220 (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 11930, fol. 116).²⁶ A typical example is the initial from a Bible from northern France of about 1260–80 (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M.138, fol. 78v); here Elimelech stands in the upper register, wearing a pointed cap and carrying a stick with a burden over one shoulder, while Naomi, below, shepherds her two children in front of her (Fig. 4). One of the children has curly hair and wears a belt around his calf-length tunic while the other has close-cropped hair and wears a



FIGURE 4. Peregrinatio (Initial I), Latin Bible, northern France, ca. 1260–80, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M.138, fol. 78v (photo: Pierpont Morgan Library).

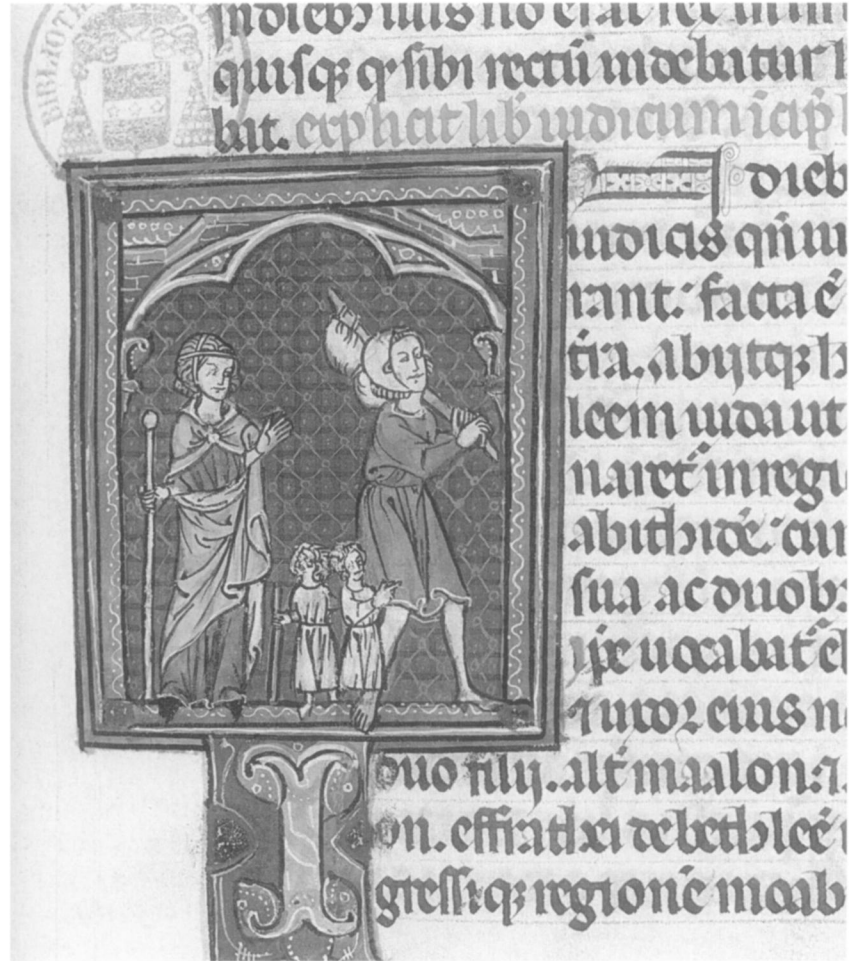


FIGURE 5. Peregrinatio, Latin Bible, Paris, third quarter 13th century, Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 29, fol. 76 (photo: Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris).

slightly longer, unbelted tunic. However, it is fairly clear that the illuminator meant to depict two boys.²⁷

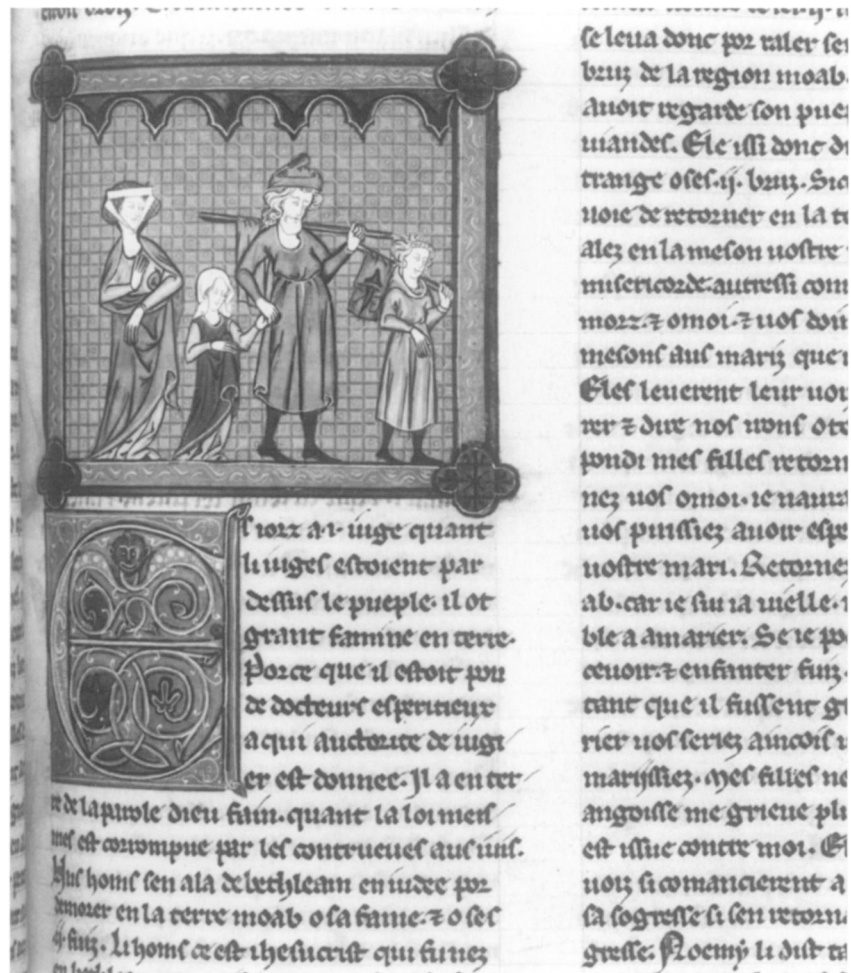
This grouping of Elimelech carrying a burden and dressed in the manner of a medieval Jew with Naomi and (usually) the two boys becomes, through repetition in illustrated copies of the Latin Bible produced in France in the thirteenth century, a visual sign not so much for the text of Ruth 1:1 but for the book of Ruth as a whole. In the illuminated Latin Bibles, the historiated initials that open each of the books are essentially pictorial indicators of the identity, rather than the exegetical sense, of the text they preface. Many of the historical books of the Old Testament in these manuscripts open with an episode drawn from the first verse or verses of the book, whether or not this scene includes the characters central to the overall narrative. In Morgan M.138, for instance, I Kings opens with an initial depicting Elcana, Anna, and the priest Heli, though these three characters play relatively minor and brief parts in the narrative that follows, which is dominated by

Samuel. This “first-verse” approach accords with the interest in the literal sense of scripture prevalent in the thirteenth-century schools and allows the picture to become a mnemonic device, a signifier for the entire content of the book.²⁸ So, when a reader familiar with this mode of illustration saw the characteristic “first verse” of any biblical text, the whole story, and probably also its moral and typological significance, was brought to mind.

This could help to explain why the makers of M.729 might have chosen the *Peregrinatio* to represent the book of Ruth: it would function as a kind of visual shorthand for all the possible associations, both pictorial and textual, of the story. But it is still a long way from the illustrated initials of the Latin Bibles to the miniature under consideration. One important reservation, expressed by Gould, is that in the Latin Bibles, Elimelech (and sometimes also the sons) wear distinctively Jewish costume: a pointed cap and a knee-length tunic.²⁹ The man in the miniature in M.729, in contrast, is



FIGURE 6. (Above) *Peregrinatio*, BXIII (Old French Bible), Paris, 1280–90, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M.494, fol. 169 (photo: Pierpont Morgan Library). FIGURE 7. (Right) *Peregrinatio*, BXIII (Old French Bible), Paris, ca. 1280–90, London, British Library MS Harley 616, fol. 161 (photo: British Library by permission).



costumed in the fashion of an aristocratic Christian gentleman of the 1280s or 1290s, neither pointed cap nor stick and bundle in sight. Furthermore, in the format of the full-page miniature, all four characters interact within the same frame instead of being housed in separate compartments of a vertically oriented initial. This interaction occurs at the expense of the clear depiction of directional movement characteristic of the initials. The *Peregrinatio* scenes in the initials depict the family walking purposefully, usually left to right, whereas the scene in M.729 seems to capture the figures at a moment of some uncertainty. This is by no means a necessary alteration: a Parisian Latin Bible of the third quarter of the thirteenth century (Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 29, fol. 76; Fig. 5) reconfigures the usual vertical arrangement by placing the framed box on top of the initial *I*. From left to right, we see Naomi, two very small boys, and Elimelech. Elimelech and the child just behind him move strongly to the right, the boy making a pointing gesture similar to that made by the feminine child in M.729. Naomi and the other child look and gesture to the right, though they do not actually appear to be walking.

It seems clear that the miniature in M.729 does not directly or solely reproduce the *Peregrinatio* scenes in contemporary Latin Bibles. Furthermore, M.729 is a manuscript profoundly enmeshed in vernacular literary culture, in that it contains numerous texts in Old French, and many of its illuminations refer to texts in that language.³⁰ Accordingly, one might look for a closer resemblance to depictions of the *Peregrinatio* in versions of the Bible in Old French, which began to circulate just around the time M.729 was created. The makers of M.729 would likely have been familiar with one particular group of illustrated vernacular Bibles that belong to a textual stemma known as the *Bible du XIII^{ème} siècle* or, more conveniently, the BXIII.³¹ This translation of the Bible appeared in the 1280s and 1290s in a number of manuscripts remarkably similar in their visual elements such as *mise-en-page* and iconography. Just as the text itself was closely based on the Latin recension associated with the schools of Paris in the early part of the century,³² the visual appearance of the BXIII manuscripts also found inspiration in Parisian Bible production. For example, the text tends to be laid out in two columns, and each folio often bears a heading in blue or red majuscules. But instead



FIGURE 8. *Peregrinatio* (*Old French Bible*), Paris, ca. 1280–90, Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal MS 5056, fol. 174 (photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France).

of opening each book with a historiated initial, the BXIII manuscripts typically have small, framed miniatures depicting the usual iconographic subject for the book.

The iconography of the *Peregrinatio* in these vernacular Bibles varies from book to book much as it does in the Latin examples, but where the miniatures survive, the basic elements are fairly stable. Elimelech leads Naomi and two children on a purposeful journey similar to that depicted in the Latin Bible from the Mazarine Library (Fig. 5). One of the children may be depicted as an infant in arms, as is the case for the BXIII now in New York (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M.494, fol. 169; Fig. 6). In this jaunty miniature Elimelech and the elder son both wear the short tunic and conical hat and carry what appear to be extra shirts on sticks slung over their shoulders. They stride over the uneven ground while Naomi stands, cradling the infant, her long blue overdress caught up under her free arm to reveal an underskirt. With her white coif and elegant, swaying posture, she

resembles contemporary representations of the standing Virgin and Child, an example of the inter pictorial awareness typical of late-thirteenth-century manuscript illumination.

Several of the BXIII manuscripts have lost their miniatures, but of those that survive intact, two manuscripts, one in London (British Library, MS Harley 616) and the other in Paris (Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 5056), contain virtually identical iconographic programs. These two manuscripts seem to have originated from the same group of scribes and illuminators in Paris, a group evidently specializing in the production of this text, as suggested by their sharing a scribe with the manuscript in the Morgan Library.³³ In both the London and the Arsenal BXIII exemplars, the *Peregrinatio* features an unmistakably female child in place of one of the sons. In the London BXIII, the family walks from left to right (fol. 161; Fig. 7). A male child leads, his gender indicated by his dress and hairstyle. He is followed by Elimelech, similarly dressed, but with the addition of the pointed cap. Both father and son carry sticks with bundles attached to the end, further reinforcing their shared gender and echoing the Morgan Library example. Elimelech leads the second child by the hand, and contrary to the text, this child is unquestionably female. She wears a long smock over a full-length gown, and a veil covers her hair. Naomi, wearing a long robe and gown and a head-dress with a chinstrap, brings up the rear. The Arsenal example, though not identical, shares many of the same details (fol. 174; Fig. 8). The family moves from right to left, and Elimelech leads, with the male child following his unexpected sister, but otherwise, the details of dress and even the poses of the figures parallel those in the London example. Elimelech leads a girl child by the hand, and she wears a long dress that closely resembles that worn by Naomi. Both mother and daughter wear the same hairstyle and headgear as Naomi in the London example: a band around the forehead is secured under the chin by a V-shaped strap, and the hair appears to be gathered into two rolls on either side of the head, restrained by a snood.

Where did this strange error, obvious to anyone who could read the first lines of the book of Ruth, originate?³⁴ The remaining thirteenth-century witnesses to the tradition of the illuminated BXIII are unhelpful. The Morgan manuscript, with its substitution of an infant for one of the children, may indicate an illuminator, uncomfortable with the erroneous iconography of the other two books produced by the same group, seeking to sidestep the problem. More likely, however, this artist was simply turning back to a Latin Bible in which Naomi is depicted carrying an infant, as can be seen in a copy in the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève (MS 1181, fol. 80; Fig. 9). Unfortunately, two other closely related exemplars, the Sanford Bible and the Bible de Thou,³⁵ have lost their miniatures. However, the placement and size of these miniatures, combined with the textual linkage between these and the other three manuscripts, point to the likelihood of a common source. Of the surviving exemplars, the Bible de Thou is textually the closest to the London manuscript, putting it in



FIGURE 9. *Peregrinatio*, Latin Bible, Paris, third quarter 13th century, Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève MS 1181, fol. 80 (photo: Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Paris).

the same group with the Arsenal and Morgan manuscripts.³⁶ Another related manuscript, now in Chantilly (Musée Condé, MS 4), seems, like the Morgan BXIII, to follow an iconographic model drawn from a Latin Bible and is particularly close to the Mazarine example discussed above: both children are clearly boys.³⁷

Without creating an overdetermined visual stemma based on the method of common error, it seems safe to say that the

makers of M.729 were familiar with the peculiar iconography found in some copies of the illustrated BXIII.³⁸ Often, vernacular copyists—or perhaps better said, redactors—were less than scrupulous in their fidelity to the Latin biblical text; John Lowden has pointed out the “unbiblical” and “unscholarly” qualities of the texts found in the earliest *Bible moralisée* (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2554). There, he observed, the Old French text introduces the book of Ruth with a double error that “shows a truly stunning lack of knowledge of the Bible.” Next to a picture of Naomi, Ruth, and Orpha, the text reads, “Here is a woman named Boaz who has two daughters.”³⁹ The girl in some BXIII *Peregrinatio* miniatures likewise reveals an astonishing indifference to or ignorance of the text on the part of the illuminator. It also strongly suggests that these manuscripts were not produced to the most exacting standards, nor were those responsible for making them particularly intellectually engaged with the relation between text and image.⁴⁰ This makes it all the more puzzling that the error is repeated in M.729, a very sophisticated manuscript that draws on a huge range of visual and textual sources, some quite erudite. It seems unlikely that a piece of “bad” iconography would sneak in, unnoticed.

Furthermore, the highly personalized nature of a luxury devotional book such as M.729 meant that its makers could not simply copy an existing template. Instead, in composing both the textual and pictorial elements of the manuscript they had to choose among a wide array of precedents, reorganizing and reordering as they went. Indeed, the *Peregrinatio* miniature in M.729 does not look much like those in the Old French Bibles: its substantial, almost sculptural, figures and its subtle investigation of the psychological drama of Naomi and Elimelech’s departure from Bethlehem suggest an immediate engagement with the book of Ruth as a written text. Yet the picture betrays an awareness of the *Peregrinatio* miniatures in the Old French Bibles through its treatment of the taller child. Could the long gown and ambiguous hairstyle be symptoms of deference for, or at least reference to, one of the models that the makers considered? Perhaps the book’s owner was meant to recognize the familiar, if confusing, motif of the girl child. As an aristocrat with a modicum of vernacular literacy, as is implied by the manuscript’s inclusion of vernacular texts and rubrics, she was exactly the type of customer the producers of the BXIII had in mind.⁴¹ One might even imagine that the error was lifted directly from a book she may have known or owned, a copy of the BXIII with the erroneous girl child, or perhaps a copy, like that in Chantilly, where the sex of one of the children is ambiguous. The appearance of the error invokes not simply the general idea of the book of Ruth but a specific memory of an Old French version of the book of Ruth found in the BXIII.

The differences between fol. 1v in M.729 and the miniatures in the London and Arsenal BXIII manuscripts are at least as important as the similarities. Naomi and Elimelech in M.729 appear in the guise of very well-dressed, upper-class

people, without any distinctive markers of their Jewish identity. They may be leaving Bethlehem behind, as the city gate indicates, but they are not in much of a hurry, nor are they carrying their own baggage, as the figures of Elimelech and sometimes one of the sons do in both Latin and French Bibles. These shifts in emphasis stem from the very different pictorial logic behind the illuminations in Bibles and the Psalter preface. As suggested above, the *Peregrinatio* in a Bible manuscript serves as a kind of visual index, stating, “Here is the book of Ruth.” In a Psalter preface, this and the other miniatures function in another way. Their immediate visual relationships are pictorial, not verbal. Of course, they refer to texts, such as the book of Ruth or the Gospels, but their semiotic relation with these generative texts is complicated by their physical remove from them. As I have shown elsewhere, a seemingly straightforward illustration of a Gospel text in M.729 can turn out to incorporate visual elements that make reference to a Franciscan sermon that was most probably familiar to the manuscript’s makers and user through oral, rather than written, transmission.⁴² In short, these prefatory pictures are profoundly and self-consciously intertextual and inter pictorial—one might even extend this to say interperformative. To understand what has happened to the *Peregrinatio* in M.729, let us now examine the broader pictorial and textual environment that conditioned its selection for this manuscript and the alterations made to the basic (and mistaken) iconographic formula found in the BXIII tradition.

Representing the Book of Ruth: Word and Image

The book of Ruth was not a popular subject for visual representation before 1200. The cycles of multiple scenes found in the Munich Psalter (Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 835, fols. 104–104v), an English manuscript of about 1200, and some related miniatures from a Psalter possibly by the Oxford painter William de Brailes (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W. 106, fols. 18–18v) were exceptional.⁴³ Very occasional depictions of single characters or episodes from the book of Ruth before about 1220 can be found in illuminated Bibles, but no strong tradition of a pictorial narrative existed, comparable to those associated with other books of the Octateuch, such as Genesis or Joshua.⁴⁴ The story was given a sudden burst of pictorial attention in the thirteenth century, and not only in the initials of Bible manuscripts. In the first three decades of the century, the book of Ruth received extensive coverage in the series of *Bibles moralisées* produced for the Capetian royalty of France.⁴⁵ Each of the four extant early-thirteenth-century *Bibles moralisées* differs slightly in its account of the story, both in pictures and in the words that comment on the pictures, but they all share an unprecedented pictorial investment in the book of Ruth. Not only do they contain extended narrative cycles dedicated to the book, sometimes depicting episodes never before illustrated, but they also include a moralizing corollary illustration for each epi-

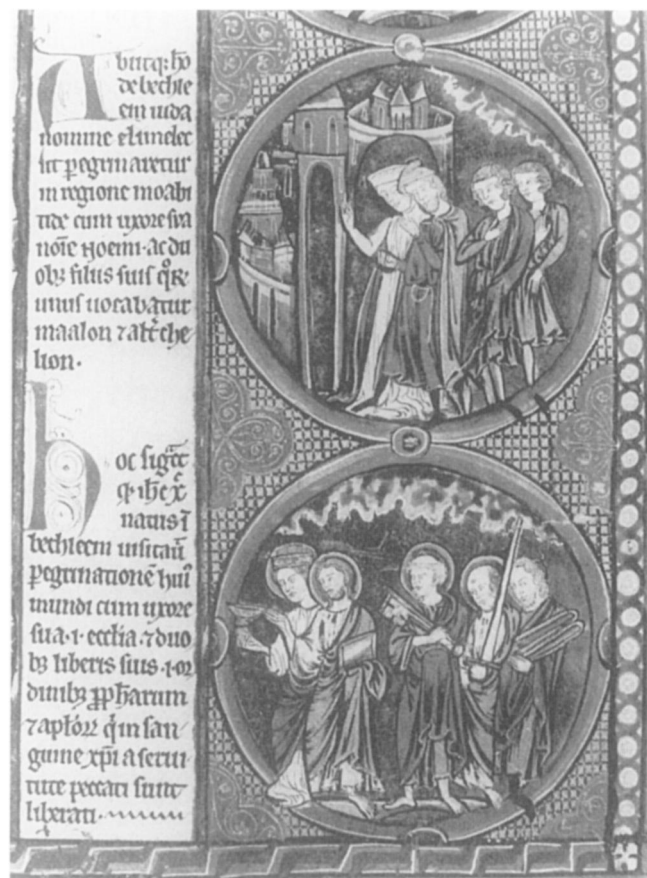


FIGURE 10. *Peregrinatio and moralization, Bodley Bible moralisée, Paris, after 1233, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford MS Bodley 270b, fol. 123v (photo: Bodleian Library).*

sode, significantly increasing the amount of pictorial material associated with the book when compared with any earlier example. The two earliest manuscripts, now in Vienna (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. 2554 and 1179), the first in Old French, the second in Latin, each devoted nine scenes to the book of Ruth, beginning with Ruth 1:6–16, when Naomi attempts to part with her daughters-in-law but Ruth declares that she will make Naomi’s people her people, Naomi’s God her God. The two slightly later manuscripts, both in Latin (Toledo, Cathedral Library, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 270B), each contain fourteen scenes, beginning with the first line of Ruth 1:1, describing the famine that drives Elimelech, Naomi, and their sons from Bethlehem. This is followed in both manuscripts by the *Peregrinatio*.

Both the Toledo and Bodley manuscripts depict the familiar group of Elimelech, Naomi, and their nearly adult sons marching purposefully toward a tall, narrow gate to a city indicated by towers and walls (Fig. 10).⁴⁶ As Lowden has observed, they move right to left, instead of left to right, as they do in most of the thirteenth-century Latin Bible initials and all but the Morgan copy of the BXIII.⁴⁷ The city gate

appears on the left side of the picture, as it does in M.729, and also has similarly exaggerated proportions. But this is quite clearly Moab—the family moves decisively toward it. In M.729, the city represents Bethlehem, for they appear to be leaving it behind, moving off to the right. Differences in the grouping and poses of the figures also suggest the divergent interests in the book of Ruth found in the *Bibles moralisées* and M.729. Whereas the *Bibles moralisées* depict Naomi and Elimelech almost as one body—Naomi strides along behind her husband, so that we see only the leading (left) contour of her body, her head, and her raised arm—in M.729, careful attention has been given to creating a sense of emotional tension between the two. Indeed, the drama is heightened: Elimelech, instead of confidently leading his family along, hesitates. Unlike the two sons in the *Bibles moralisées* who follow their parents obediently, the children in M.729 lead the way forward, striding, gesturing, and looking beyond the architecture of the frame.

In the *Bibles moralisées*, the deeper meaning—the moral sense—of the picture need not be embedded, since just below it appears a separate pictorial representation of that sense: Christ and Ecclesia leading the orders of the prophets and apostles in a peregrination of the world. Furthermore, the ensemble of pictures gives a good summary of the complete narrative of the book of Ruth, so that the individual miniatures need not work hard to convey even its literal sense. By contrast, the *Peregrinatio* in M.729 was almost certainly the only miniature in the volume to represent the book of Ruth. No sequential pictures and no text accompany it to help the viewer decode its meaning or understand what aspects of the book of Ruth its makers deemed important. All of this work has to be done by the picture itself. And that, I think, is what underlies the changes that the makers of M.729 wrought on their direct iconographic model in the BXIII. To convey something essential about the *Peregrinatio* and the book of Ruth, alterations and refinements had to be made. Like the illustrators of the *Bibles moralisées*, they deemphasized the characters' low status as immigrants by dressing them up in aristocratic garb and omitting the bundle-and-stick motif. In the *Bibles moralisées*, this probably has to do with the identification of Elimelech with Christ and Naomi with Ecclesia. In M.729, while this exegetical perspective might have been a factor, I suspect that the desire to make these Old Testament figures as familiar and sympathetic as possible played a more important role. Elimelech loses his Jewish identity with the removal of his peaked cap, and it becomes understandable that a modern viewer could see this picture as a representation of a medieval family.

Creating the shock of recognition—"that could be me and my family!"—may have been one of the factors in the choice and iconographic reconfiguration of the *Peregrinatio* in M.729. Such a personal form of address to the viewer was common in the pictorial strategies of books for private devotion. After all, one of the goals of such devotion was to fit oneself to the mold of holy people through an affective identification with

their experiences, and images both physical and mental played an important role in this imaginative work.⁴⁸ Another factor in choosing the *Peregrinatio* and depicting it in this idiosyncratic way must have been the larger implications not only of this episode but of the book of Ruth as a whole. Thirteenth-century laypeople were accustomed to thinking about biblical narratives in their literal, moral, and typological senses. Their exposure to this hermeneutic came in the form of preaching. Franciscan and Dominican friars, along with representatives of other preaching orders and the local clergy, often structured their sermons around a biblical text, expounding its implications for Christian life. The Dominican Nicholas of Hanaps, writing between 1260 and 1278, put together a useful index of examples drawn from sacred scripture for preachers to use in their sermons. Naomi, Boaz, and Ruth all appear several times. For example, under the heading "On the great faith of women," Nicholas cites Ruth 1:16, where Ruth declares to Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people, thy God my God," and Ruth 2:12, where Boaz says to Ruth, "Mayest thou receive a full reward of the Lord . . . to whom thou art come, and under whose wings thou art fled."⁴⁹

Another Dominican concerned with creating tools for preachers composing sermons, Hugh of St.-Cher, explained that despite its brevity, the book of Ruth could be quite spiritually nutritious. In his postils on the book of Ruth, he advised preachers not to overlook this relatively short text.

The Book of Ruth is a small door in terms of the letter, but inside it is filled by the greatness of its spirit. For just as in a nut the small sweet kernel is contained within the outer shell, and as sweet honey is held in the honeycomb, or medicinal grain is stored in the granary, so in this little story of Christ and the Church, the sacraments lie hidden.⁵⁰

In identifying the book of Ruth as the "story of Christ and the Church," Hugh was hardly breaking new ground: this was exegetical boilerplate, though expressed more poetically than most.⁵¹ But it could fairly be said that Hugh, more than earlier commentators, was interested in the social aspects of Ruth, and in keeping with his training and the times, he paid close attention to the literal sense of the text. Several times, he elucidated the text by remarking on practices or social conditions current in France in the thirteenth century. For example, he clarified the confusing legal discussion over the right to purchase Naomi's field (Ruth 4:3–7): "Naomi sold the field when she left, under a kind of contract whereby she might get it back again on her return, or under the type of contract where it could be bought back by her closest kinsman, as the law allows in France."⁵² Presumably, this practice would have been familiar to thirteenth-century French landowners who left their property behind when they went on crusade or pilgrimage.

Exegesis of the book of Ruth would also have been familiar to anyone who had read the BXIII. Paraphrases or direct

translations of various Latin commentaries are interwoven, to varying degrees, with the translation of the Vulgate in many of the BXIII manuscripts.⁵³ That such glosses could help shape visual representations of the book of Ruth is abundantly clear. Thirteenth-century French treatments of the book of Ruth as a visual narrative focus on three related facets of the character of Ruth: her typological sense as Ecclesia; her moral role as a model daughter-in-law, wife, and mother; and her literal place in the genealogy of Christ. All three elements are also central to the written tradition. As Hugh of St.-Cher demonstrated, medieval exegetes associated Ruth with Ecclesia, and specifically with the gentile church as the Bride of Christ. For instance, in the *Glossa Ordinaria*, Ruth 4:13, “Boaz therefore took Ruth, and married her,” was taken to mean “no other possession of the people than the union of the Church with Christ in marriage.”⁵⁴

As to Ruth’s genealogical significance, Hugh of St.-Cher summarized the tradition when he asked why the book was not named after Boaz, and concluded:

This was done to show the grace of Christ more strongly and clearly. For, as Jerome says, Ruth is one of the four sinful women whose names appear in the genealogy of Christ (Matt. 1). Only four women sinners are named there: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba. Therefore, the author means principally to show how Obed (from whom came Jesse the father of David, from whom comes Christ) was born from Ruth; and so from Ruth comes Christ. Whence (Isaiah 16.1), *Send lambs . . . by way of the desert*, that is Ruth, a Gentile deserted by God, *to the mountain of the daughter of Sion*, that is, to the Church.⁵⁵

Thus, for thirteenth-century viewers in France, Ruth and the book of Ruth were understood specifically in terms of the sacred dimensions of lineage, marriage, and reproduction. This made them ideal subjects for programs of illustration concerned with inculcating good conduct among an audience composed of hereditary aristocrats who, as Franks, viewed themselves as explicitly linked through sacred history to the Israelites of old.⁵⁶

In this light, perhaps the most intriguing feature of the extended cycle found in the Toledo and Bodley manuscripts of the *Bible moralisée* is the wedding-feast scene in which Ruth and Orpha celebrate their marriage to the two sons of Naomi and Elimelech.⁵⁷ This constitutes a visual elaboration on the scriptural account, which mentions the marriage of the Israelite men to the Moabite women in a single, terse sentence that makes no reference to a wedding feast.⁵⁸ The logic behind the wedding feast is spelled out in the moralizing texts of both manuscripts: the marriage signifies that the apostles gathered a fellowship of two peoples, the gentiles and the Jews, to form the early church.⁵⁹ In the Old French *Bible moralisée* (Vienna 1179), which does not include the first wedding-feast scene, a parallel feast scene for the marriage of Boaz and Ruth



FIGURE 11. Frontispiece to Ruth, Acre Bible (Arsenal Old Testament), Acre, ca. 1250–54, Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal MS 5211, fol. 364v (photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France).

appears on fol. 84 and is moralized thus: “Boaz who made a [marriage] contract with Ruth signifies Jesus Christ who coupled himself with the Holy Church through union in the Virgin’s womb.”⁶⁰ Lowden has pointed out that Toledo and Bodley 270B follow the lead of Vienna 1179, moralizing the marriage of Ruth and Boaz as “the union of Christ and Ecclesia in the Virgin’s womb.”⁶¹ He also noted that for the illustration of the marriage itself, they both replace the feasting scene with a simpler depiction of the couple under a canopy, with the infant Obed in Ruth’s lap, in accordance with the moralization’s added emphasis on the sons of this union, “brought forth . . . in the water of baptism.”⁶² Thus, literal genealogy and typology sit comfortably together in the representation of the book of Ruth and its heroine in the *Bibles moralisées*.

The mention of baptism in the *Bibles moralisées* accords with Hugh of St.-Cher’s observation that the book of Ruth

alludes to the sacraments. Meanwhile, the emphasis on the “union of Christ and Ecclesia in the Virgin’s womb” affirms a relation between the book of Ruth and the Advent. This understanding of the book, grounded in Ruth’s literal, genealogical relation to Christ, is also visible in the Acre Bible (Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 5211), a manuscript Hugo Buchthal placed within the orbit of Louis IX’s patronage while crusading in the Holy Land between 1250 and 1254.⁶³ The Old French text of this partial Old Testament seems to be a compilation rather than a translation of the entire Bible and did not enjoy the same success as its slightly later and more complete counterpart, the BXIII.⁶⁴ The manuscript gives two clues as to how mid-thirteenth-century consumers of such vernacular Bibles understood the book of Ruth. One is the frontispiece to the book, a full-page miniature depicting six episodes in the narrative (fol. 364v; Fig. 11). Buchthal thought that this miniature was probably based on the cycle found in the *Bibles moralisées*, and, indeed, all the depicted episodes appear in the expanded cycle found in the Toledo and Bodley manuscripts, though not always in identical form.⁶⁵ From left to right, top to bottom, the subjects are the *Peregrinatio*; the wedding feast of Mahalon and Chelion with Ruth, Orpha, and Naomi; Ruth and Orpha with Naomi at the gates of Moab; Ruth gleaning; Ruth’s nocturnal visit to Boaz; and the marriage of Ruth and Boaz. The inclusion of both possible wedding scenes, one depicted as a feast and the second as a ritual gesture of holding hands before a witness, returns to the theme of Ruth as both a literal and figurative model for the bride. And while the birth of Obed is not shown, several of the scenes make reference to Ruth’s fertility. The scenes of gleaning and of the nocturnal visit connect her bodily to her future spouse, Boaz: in the latter scene, she creeps under the end of his blanket, while behind him towers a massive pile of barley, a literal mountain of seed. More subtly, in the middle picture in the left column, which depicts Ruth and Orpha with Naomi at the gates of Moab, Ruth, standing in the center, points directly at the scene above, the *Peregrinatio*. This gesture probably illustrates Ruth’s statement “Whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go. . . . Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16), but it also encompasses an acknowledgment of what Naomi has lost in Moab—the husband and two sons who appear in the *Peregrinatio*. Furthermore, because the sons in this version of the *Peregrinatio* are young, chubby-cheeked children, the gesture also draws attention to Ruth’s future role in mitigating their loss through giving birth to Obed, who will become “a son born to Naomi” (Ruth 4:16).

The second way in which the Acre Bible stresses Ruth’s literal bridal and genealogical significance is by removing the book of Ruth from what had become, by the middle of the thirteenth century, its canonical place in the Old Testament.⁶⁶ Instead of following Judges (as suggested by its opening line, “In the days of one of the judges”), it comes after Maccabees. As Samuel Berger has observed, the last words in the manu-

script, “Ysai engendra David le roi. Ici fenie le livre de Ruth la Moabitiene,” explain not only the peculiar placement of Ruth but also the logic of the manuscript as a whole, “a history of the ancestors of Jesus Christ.”⁶⁷ Ruth’s motherhood is paramount, for it is she who steps in at a critical moment (the impending extinction of the line of Elimelech) and through her marriage to Boaz ensures the continuous line of descent through David to Jesus.

The centrality of the characters in the book of Ruth to this sacred lineage may account for the striking omission of any visual reference to their Jewishness in the Acre Bible frontispiece, a move similar to that found in the *Peregrinatio* of M.729. Elimelech, in the first scene, is bareheaded and wears an elegant red cloak over his contemporary long tunic. Boaz, in the last scene, likewise goes bareheaded and wears a long cloak fastened, Frankish-style, at one shoulder. The contemporary dress and hairstyles of the male figures are all the more striking because the women are costumed archaically, or at least in the fashion of the Near East, rather than of the Franks. For instance, Naomi in the *Peregrinatio* does not wear the stylish little pillbox hat from the *Bibles moralisées* but instead a long veil that covers her head and upper torso. This sartorial maneuver creates a sense of contemporaneity and banishes any association with the reviled Jews of the audience’s present day, while preserving the historical emphasis on the genealogy of Christ also implicit in the organization of texts in the Acre Bible.

The Morgan Old Testament Picture Book and the glass of the Sainte-Chapelle, associated like the *Bibles moralisées* and the Acre Bible with the patronage of the Capetian dynasty, Louis IX and his mother, Blanche of Castille, in particular, also evince a particular interest in the genealogical and historical significance of the book of Ruth. In the Morgan Old Testament Picture Book, the miniatures devoted to the book of Ruth follow the last-depicted episode from the book of Joshua, the kidnapping of the daughters of Shiloh by the Benjamites (a genealogical subject in its own right), while in the Sainte-Chapelle the subject occurs at the top of a lancet otherwise devoted to Joshua. Both cycles (eight half-page tableaux in the Morgan Old Testament Picture Book, nine scenes set into rondels and partial rondels in the Sainte-Chapelle glass) place particular emphasis on Ruth in her role as bride and mother. In part they do this by editing out that segment of the story in which Ruth plays no role, in other words, neither cycle depicts the *Peregrinatio*. Rather, both begin, like the earliest *Bibles moralisées*, with the scene in which Ruth announces that she will cleave to Naomi.

Although the Morgan Old Testament Picture Book and the Sainte-Chapelle cycles are different in their finer iconographic points, they share several of the same episodes featured in the *Bibles moralisées* and the Acre Bible: genrelike scenes of reaping, Boaz speaking to Ruth in the fields, and Ruth’s nocturnal meeting with Boaz in the barn. Although these scenes are of course open to moral and typological



FIGURE 12. *Boaz encounters Ruth gleaning in his fields*, detail, *Morgan Old Testament Picture Book*, ca. 1244–58, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M.638, fol. 17v (photo: Pierpont Morgan Library).

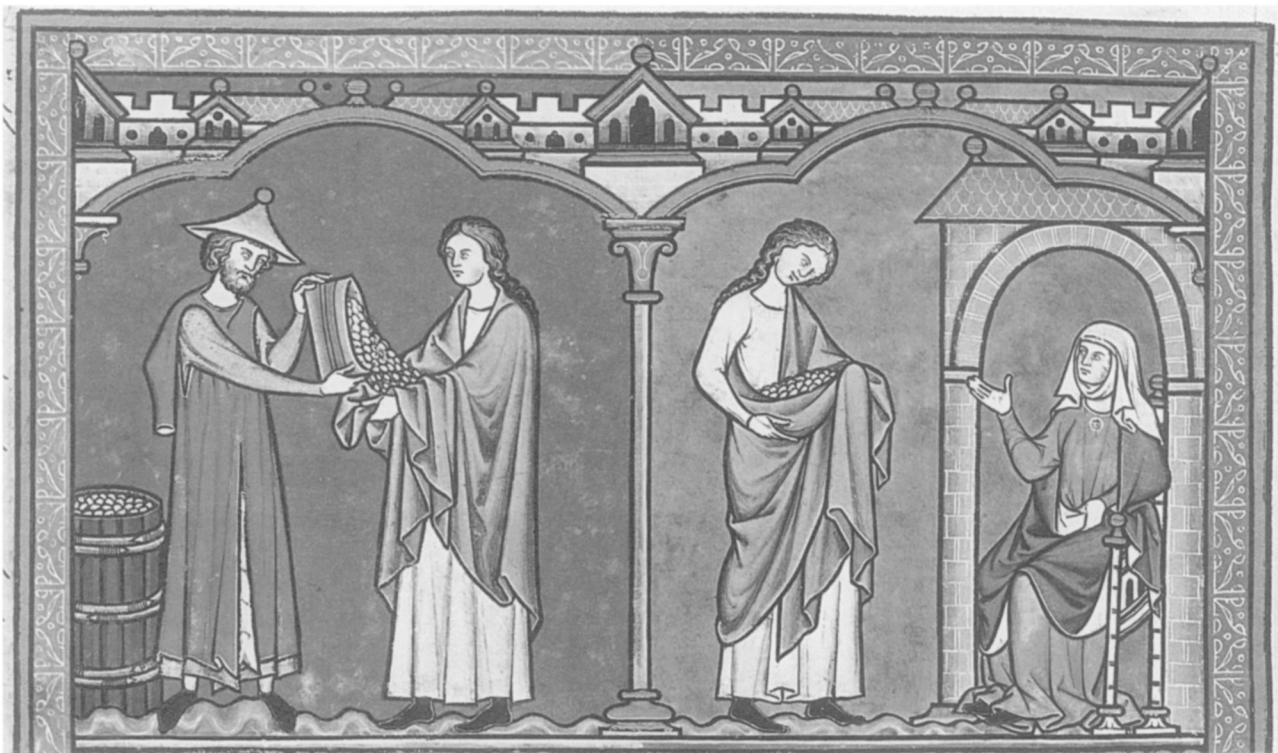


FIGURE 13. *Boaz gives Ruth six measures of barley, Ruth returns to Naomi*, detail, *Morgan Old Testament Picture Book*, ca. 1244–58, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M.638, fol. 18v (photo: Pierpont Morgan Library).



FIGURE 14. *Ruth observes the women of Bethlehem praise Naomi and Obed*, detail, *Morgan Old Testament Picture Book*, ca. 1244–58, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M.638, fol. 19 (photo: Pierpont Morgan Library).

exegesis (as the *Bibles moralisées* demonstrated), in their anecdotal quality they also create a sense of immediacy and specificity. In particular, the episode of the night meeting is perhaps one of the strangest and most memorable passages in the book of Ruth. In each of the four early *Bibles moralisées*, it received a different pictorial moralization, each one struggling to represent the parallel between Boaz spreading his coverlet over Ruth and God the Father covering Ecclesia with “the humanity of his flesh.”⁶⁸ The sexual and reproductive implications of this meeting between Ruth and Boaz could hardly escape notice, either, as the Acre Bible demonstrates. Likewise, in the Sainte-Chapelle and the Morgan Old Testament Picture Book, the night visit harmonizes with the overall interests of their pictorial cycles in the literal sense of the book of Ruth as a story about lineage and reproduction.

In the Sainte-Chapelle, the narrative culminates in the largest rondel at the top of the window, which depicts a wedding feast with a single bridal couple, presumably Ruth and Boaz.⁶⁹ This version of the wedding-feast iconography is similar to that found in Vienna 1179, but more immediately, it relates to the marriage of Tobit and Sara depicted in the Jeremiah window in the Sainte-Chapelle. Indeed, it may have been a direct copy of that rondel, in which the bridal pair is served by an angel. The human servant in the Ruth and Boaz scene evidently originally had wings—an angel being an appropriate attendant for Christ and Ecclesia.⁷⁰ While this

strongly indicates a typological reading of the book of Ruth, the literal sense comes back into focus immediately. Just above this rondel, at the very top of the window, Boaz and Ruth appear again, with their infant son, Obed, ancestor of David and, through David, of Christ.

The Morgan manuscript’s visual rhetoric is earthier and deeply concerned with not just the product but the process of procreation. Expanding the pictorial space devoted to scenes of agricultural labor, the artists of the Old Testament Picture Book gave themselves ample opportunity to allude to fertility. On fol. 17v, Ruth appears in the upper register carrying a generous sheaf of barley, in fact supporting it against her hip as if it were a fat baby (Fig. 12). Just across the opening, on fol. 18, we see her arriving home with her apron full of barley-corns, held in a plump bundle in front of her belly. In case this allusion to her future fertility fails to make the point, she appears again on the same page, in the lower right corner, creeping under Boaz’s cloak by night, while he sleeps on a gigantic pile of barley sheaves. Then on fol. 18v, in the top register, Boaz fills her mantle with barleycorns for a second time—the seeds spill into the fold of the cloak, positioned in front of her lower abdomen. In the other half of the register, she returns to Naomi again with a cloak full of grain (Fig. 13). This time she cradles it in her arms like the very newborn, in fact, who had been whisked from her grasp by Naomi in the facing miniature. In the top register of fol. 19 (Fig. 14),

Ruth sits up in bed and gestures toward Naomi, who cuddles the infant Obed while the women of Bethlehem proclaim (Ruth 4:17): “There is a son born to Naomi: called his name Obed: he is the father of Isai (Jesse), the father of David.” Through barley, babies, and thinly veiled scenes of insemination, this cycle makes visible its interest in the reproductive role of Ruth.

As these examples demonstrate, the literal sense of the book of Ruth—and the moral parallels one might draw with one’s own situation—was visually interesting to an upper-class French audience in the thirteenth century. In particular, the identities of Ruth as an ancestress of Jesus and as a bride seem to have attracted a great deal of attention. In a royal context, where the heroes and kings of the Old Testament, along with their wives and daughters, served as models for authority and conduct alike, Ruth’s appeal makes sense. Particularly in the Sainte-Chapelle, where the involvement of Louis IX was direct and incontestable, the personages of the Old Testament were explicitly set out as a kind of mirror of king- and queenship. As Jean-Michel Leniaud and Françoise Perrot have observed, the order of the scenes in the windows on the long walls of the chapel is determined only secondarily by the Vulgate order of the biblical narratives they represent; primarily, the spatial logic of the chapel itself determines their order. In particular, the two windows that rise above the king’s and queen’s oratory niches deal explicitly with themes of male and female royalty.⁷¹ But even for nonroyal aristocrats, the literal sense of the book of Ruth, with its motifs of proper feminine conduct, the politics of marriage, and the preservation of lineage, had semiotic potential, as demonstrated in the Morgan Old Testament Picture Book’s treatment of the narrative.⁷² Turning back now to the *Peregrinatio* miniature in M.729, the logic of its inclusion begins to come clear.

Brides and Widows: The Role of the Peregrinatio in the Devotional Program of M.729

The *Peregrinatio* as it appears in M.729 shows a direct awareness of the BXIII tradition through the inclusion of the error of the girl child. However, its sympathy with some of the visual strategies of such manuscripts as the *Bibles moralisées*, the Acre Bible, and the Morgan Old Testament Picture Book, as well as the glass of the Sainte-Chapelle, demonstrates that the makers of this unusual miniature consciously tailored the picture for its prospective audience. In particular, the contemporaneity of the costuming and the finely tuned dramatic tension of the composition suggest that instead of simply copying or pasting together visual sources, the makers of M.729 rethought the subject in terms of inviting a personal and immediate connection with the viewer. That this book was intended for a woman’s gaze is clear from the inclusion of female endings in the prayers and from the full-page image of the owner on fol. 232v. The *Peregrinatio* appeals to this

female gaze by placing a strong female protagonist at the emotional and physical center of the composition—Naomi becomes the leading figure of a family drama in which Elimelech’s equivocal gesture balances the children’s apparent excitement about something beyond the frame. And in contrast to the Acre Bible, where Elimelech wears contemporary dress but Naomi’s clothing is more archaizing, here Naomi adopts the tight wimple and veil of a married (or possibly widowed) aristocratic French woman of the late thirteenth century.⁷³ While both the BXIII miniatures and the *Bibles moralisées* dress Naomi in contemporary garb, her fashionable headdresses in those manuscripts are less semiotically loaded than the wimple, which facilitates the viewer’s identification with Naomi and may allude to her immanent widowhood, giving a deeper sense of the narrative of the book of Ruth.

This extended meditation on the book of Ruth as a whole is encouraged by the iconographic association with the BXIII, and by the miniature’s other allusions to a story that extends beyond the depicted tableau, namely, Elimelech and Naomi’s fraught exchange of touch and gaze and the children’s movement toward something unseen, beyond the frame. It is very unlikely that an extended narrative cycle dedicated to the book of Ruth once appeared in the pictorial preface to M.729; in a sense, the whole story is already present. The children’s excitement is poignant for the viewer who knows their fate, but it also elicits an empathetic response in the devout Christian who understands the book of Ruth as having to do with the advent of Christ and promise of salvation.

The viewer is invited to identify with Naomi through the shock of familiarity and the emotional content of the scene, and then with Ruth, whose story is implicit in the miniature. This double identification with Naomi and Ruth makes sense because pictures in private devotional books needed to offer multiple points of entry into spiritual meditation: they were meant to be viewed frequently and repeatedly by the same individual over many years. It also accords with important new information about the provenance of M.729 recently brought to light by Alison Stones.⁷⁴ After a painstaking study of the armorial bearings that embellish the frames of the full-page miniatures and some of the texts in the manuscript, Stones convincingly demonstrated that the original intended owner of at least part of the manuscript was Comtesse de la Table, lady of Coevres, probably the stepmother of Yolande de Soissons, lady of Moreuil, with whom M.729 has long been identified. In the full-page owner portrait, the lady wears a wimple like Naomi’s on fol. 1v, signaling her status as a widow. This would accord with the probable date of the manuscript in the late 1280s or 1290s; Comtesse’s husband (and Yolande’s father), Raoul of Soissons, died of dysentery along with Louis IX on the seventh crusade, in 1270.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, Yolande’s husband was alive at least as late as 1302.⁷⁶ Stones reconstructed a history for the book that accounts for the peculiarities of its heraldic program and its exceptional abundance of text and image, arguing that it began in fact as two

separate books commissioned from the same group of scribes and painters, a Psalter for Yolande of Soissons, and a book of hours for her stepmother, that were skillfully combined when both books came into Yolande's hands, perhaps after her stepmother's death.⁷⁷ If this was indeed the case, and regardless whether Comtesse was alive when the books were amalgamated, the inclusion of the *Peregrinatio* takes on greater meaning in the complex web of family relations surrounding such an event.

Both Ruth and Naomi propose ideal *formae* for wives, widows, daughters-in-law, and mothers. The two of them, in fact, catalogue most of the important social and familial roles fulfilled by aristocratic laywomen in the thirteenth century, with one important exception, that of daughter. Ruth was a terrible daughter to her own parents, whom she rejected outright in favor of her mother-in-law and the lineage of her husband's relatives. Ruth's and Naomi's behavior, throughout the book of Ruth, reinforces the proper relations between women and men, in-laws and agnatic lineages, within a patrilineal system in which daughters are theoretically irrelevant. But the tidy picture presented by the story of these two women and called up by the miniature in M. 729 lay far from the lived experiences of the women Stones has identified.

Ruth's rejection of her parental lineage is absolute, but as the matrix of heraldry in M.729 attests, neither Comtesse nor Yolande cast aside her birth lineage when she entered the lineal calculus of her affines. In the frame of the *Peregrinatio*, for instance, the Moreuil arms of Yolande's husband, Bernard V, and the Coevres arms of Comtesse feature most prominently in the lower left and right corners, respectively. They are joined by two further charges, that of Grandpré and an unidentified charge that Stones speculates may have belonged to Comtesse's mother. Furthermore, she suggests that the Grandpré arms (upper right corner) may refer to Yolande's paternal grandmother, Comtesse's mother-in-law.⁷⁸ Elsewhere in the book, the arms of Hangest, associated with another lady named Comtesse, perhaps the first wife of Raoul de Soissons and the mother of Yolande, appear with some regularity. Thus, the pages of this devotional tour-de-force are seeded with visual references to female as well as male lines of descent and inheritance.⁷⁹

The inclusion of a visual reference to the book of Ruth serves to temper the manuscript's heraldic emphasis on bilateral kinship and reminds the female viewer of her primary responsibility to her husband's lineage. Illuminated prayer books such as M.729 were frequently commissioned to celebrate marriages or the passage into widowhood, and they tended to be inherited as part of a woman's bequest quite often to another woman in her family (for example, a stepdaughter or a daughter-in-law). In this respect, they reinforced the connections between generations of women connected to an agnatic line. Thus, if Stones is correct, Comtesse de la Table may have given or willed her book of hours, as yet unfinished, to her husband's heiress, Yolande of Soissons.⁸⁰

M.729 belonged to a typically messy late-medieval aristocratic lineal tangle, in which various lines of descent, affinity, and loyalty did not easily fit into a matrix of social explanation.⁸¹ Marc Bloch was the first to draw attention to such problems inherent in the medieval cognatic conception of lineage, in which both male and female lines of descent mattered, creating shifting circles of kinship, which were negotiated by each generation, indeed each individual.⁸² The book's original owners, who may in fact have collaborated on its contents (the disparate parts of the manuscript appear to have been produced by the same constellation of artists and scribes), were women who played nonnormative genealogical roles in terms of an idealized agnatic lineage in which property passes from male to male, and women's only role is to propagate the male line: Comtesse de la Table, as a second or third wife who did not produce any surviving children of either sex (that we know of), and Yolande of Soissons as an heiress.

The *Peregrinatio*, to a degree, performs a corrective and normalizing operation on the untidy genealogy of the Coevres-Soissons-Moreuil inheritance. Both in calling up the story of Naomi and Ruth and in dressing that story in contemporary, aristocratic costume, the miniature invites identification with the primary actors of the narrative. It puts the book's intended viewer—whether Comtesse or Yolande—in her place within an idealized and simplified version of family history that is by no means so ramified as the real lineal and genealogical situation of either Comtesse or Yolande. At the same time, it acknowledges the importance and centrality of women to lineal concerns and the sacredness of their role in the family. After all, Ruth and Naomi are both in their way foremothers of Christ. In the thirteenth century, and especially among the Franciscan-inspired devotional milieu of aristocratic laypeople toward which M.729 was geared, one of the primary functions of scripture was to inform and quite literally give shape and meaning to the way in which one experienced one's life.⁸³ Visually stimulating the owner of the manuscript to contemplate the book of Ruth, the miniature engages her in a spiritually transformative and beneficial process, inviting her to construct her identity according to the form proposed by the heroines of the narrative.

Even the way in which the *Peregrinatio* draws on and alters the formula presented by the vernacular Bible illuminations valorizes the intended audience for the book. Unlike the images in the Bibles with which it shares the error of the girl child, M.729 brings Naomi center stage, making of her calm form the still point of an emotionally charged episode. Naomi emerges as the leader who listens, absorbs, and stabilizes. The focus on Naomi proves suggestive, since it is she who, in the end, is proclaimed mother of Obed (Ruth 4:17), an homage to the woman who has worked ceaselessly on behalf of her husband's lineage, arranging the marriage between Boaz and Ruth, and thus ensuring the continuity of Elimelech's line. What was a matter of routine in a vernacular Bible—that is, illustrating the book of Ruth with Naomi, Elimelech, and their

sons fleeing the famine in Bethlehem—here becomes a deliberate and thoughtful choice. For Comtesse such emphasis on Naomi may have celebrated her successful negotiation of a marriage for her stepdaughter, resulting in the continuation of her late husband’s lineage and redressing her own failure to produce a male heir. For Yolande, it may have served as a reminder of her stepmother’s lineal piety and an encouragement to emulate not only Comtesse/Naomi but also Ruth, the dutiful daughter-in-law who successfully bears a son.

Conclusions

Gould long ago suggested that the sacred subject of the miniature could be read as a kind of family portrait. While the one-to-one correspondence between the figures in the miniature and the individuals of Yolande of Soissons’ nuclear family seems, considering Stones’ recent work, unlikely, the fundamental parallel between the living family and the Old Testament models would have been plain to the book’s intended audience. The manuscript’s insistent heraldry, its inclusion of the famous portrait of the owner, its invocation of the local saints and the local architecture of its place of origin, all gesture toward a strong interest in the book as a visual as well as textual repository of identity.⁸⁴ Again, many of the miniatures in the book invite identification with and emulation of their protagonists. In fact, in the more formal parts of the book, in and around the principal Latin texts of devotion, the predominance of the lively, elegant, and complex imagery sometimes overshadows the written words. By contrast, the vernacular texts of the book receive little illumination. Returning to the connection between M.729 and the illustration

for Ruth in the BXIII, this correlation between Latin words and images appears in fresh light.

The BXIII manuscripts are illustrated somewhat roughly, in a style associated with the Paris workshops that clustered around the rue Neuve Notre-Dame, specializing in the production of vernacular books for the wealthy laity.⁸⁵ Their illustrations are clearly secondary to their texts, which are themselves important because they make available to the reader literate primarily in the language of chivalric romance the first reliable and fairly accurate translation of the recently emended Latin Bible. The audience for these Bibles included literate, but perhaps not particularly Latinate, women, such as the royal peer Mahaut d’Artois, among whose belongings stolen in 1316 and subsequently partially recovered was “la Bible en romans.”⁸⁶ Like Mahaut, the first owners of M.729 could afford luxury books and had a taste for cutting-edge fashion in devotional art. In addition to the lavish Psalter-Hours, the library of Comtesse or Yolande may well have included a French Bible, perhaps even one of the two extant copies that contain the error of the girl child, as I have suggested. The pictorial reference to the vernacular Bible in the *Peregrinatio* would then function as a mnemonic, drawing on the stock of the viewer’s understanding of the book of Ruth, from her own vernacular reading and from the range of sermons, individual spiritual instruction, and pictorial representations to which she had been exposed. Recognizing the book of Ruth, she enters that small door and steps through it in the shape of wise Naomi, her role as caretaker of the lineage formed and made meaningful by “the hidden story of Christ and the Church” lying, sweet as honey, within.

NOTES

- * I am very grateful for the help of many individuals and institutions for their help while I worked on this article, in particular, Adelaide Bennett, Alison Stones, Roger Wieck, William Voelkle, and Geoffrey Fisher. Financial support from the AAUW Education Fund’s American Fellows Publication Grant program provided support to obtain high-quality image reproductions for study and publication.
1. M. Camille, *Mirror in Parchment: The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England* (Chicago, 1998).
2. Views of the date of M.729 have varied, but recent work by Alison Stones supports my conviction that a date after 1285 is most likely: see A. Stones, “The Full-Page Miniatures of the Psalter-Hours, New York, Morgan Library, M.729: Programme and Patron,” in *The Illuminated Psalter: Studies in the Content, Purpose and Placement of Its Images*, ed. F. Büttner (Turnhout, 2004), 281–307.
3. E. Millar, unpublished notes, 1928, in the object file on M.729, Morgan Library.
4. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, *Treasures from Medieval France* (Cleveland, 1967), ed. W. Wixom, 168.
5. Karen Gould is positive about the identification in her dissertation, “The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons” (Dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1975). She asserts (182), “the miniature representing Yolande and her family provides some guide for dating the manuscript.” However, in her later monograph (K. Gould, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, *Speculum Anniversary Monographs*, 4 [Cambridge, MA, 1978]), while still fairly sure that this is a “family portrait,” she wrote (9) more neutrally that, “the placement of this group at the beginning of the manuscript may have served as a visual identification for the original owner that enhanced the devotional purpose of the prayer book.”
6. F. Avril, in Paris, *Galleries nationales du Grand Palais, L’art au temps des rois maudits: Philippe le Bel et ses fils, 1285–1328* (Paris, 1998), no. 202, 300.

7. For a generic description of the contents of a "typical" twelfth-century Psalter preface, see G. Haseloff, *Die Psalterillustration im 13 Jahrhundert: Studien zur Geschichte der Buchmalerei in England, Frankreich und den Niederlanden* (Kiel, 1938), 8–9. He noted that these prefaces usually include Old Testament, Christological, and hagiographic scenes, but that the Old Testament scenes are seldom drawn from books after Joshua. This pattern continues in French Psalters of the thirteenth century, except that the range of Old Testament subjects is expanded, and scenes from the Revelation of John can also be found. See A. Bennett, "The Transformation of the Gothic Psalter in 13th-Century France," in *The Illuminated Psalter*, 211–21.
8. New York, New York Public Library, *The Pierpont Morgan Library Exhibition of Illuminated Manuscripts Held at the New York Public Library* (New York, 1934), ed. B. da Costa Green et al., no. 57, 29–30.
9. J. Lowden, *The Book of Ruth*, vol. 2 of *The Making of the "Bibles Moralisesées"* (University Park, PA, 2000), 28, 257 n. 3.
10. Ruth 1:1. All biblical citations from the Reims-Douay translation.
11. Gould, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, 9–10 n. 40.
12. I use the term *makers* to refer to those responsible for the commission, design, and execution of the manuscript. The workshop practices described by Robert Branner in his *Manuscript Painting in Paris during the Reign of Saint Louis: A Study of Styles* (Berkeley, 1977); and the models of textual production studied by Mary Rouse and Richard Rouse, particularly in *Authentic Witnesses: Approaches to Medieval Texts and Manuscripts* (Notre Dame, IN, 1990) and *Manuscripts and Their Makers*, vol. 2, *Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris, 1200 to 1500* (New York, 2000), are specific to Paris and may not provide an adequate picture of how books were produced in regional centers, such as Amiens, where M.729 was made, according to Gould, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, 23. Janet Backhouse, reviewing Branner's book, perhaps put it best, writing, "The gap in our knowledge which now urgently needs to be filled lies in the period immediately after the reign of Louis IX and concerns the history of book painting on the northeastern borders of France and its relationship with book painting in England." *BM*, 121/1049 (1990), 390. Though important work has been done (notably by Eleanor Greenhill, Alison Stones, Ellen Beer, Judith Oliver, and Ellen Kosmer) to clarify questions of style, reception, and influence in north French illumination, a systematic study of modes of production has yet to be undertaken.
13. London, British Library, Add. MS 54180, fol. 69v. The painting style of M.729 is very close to that of works attributed to or signed by Master Honoré. This was noted by Erwin Panofsky in his *Early Netherlandish Painting* (Cambridge, MA, 1953), 15 n. 3. Whether the painters of M.729 influenced the Parisian style or vice versa is uncertain; for a very good treatment of the problem, see Gould, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, 53–63.
14. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M.638, fols. 25v, 26, 26v, 27, 27v, 28, 30. The first six examples depict David as a child, and where he appears with other children, the fillet marks him as different, perhaps visually foreshadowing the crown he will wear later. On fol. 30, however, he wears the fillet as part of his wedding garb, as does his bride, Michal. David does not appear again with the fillet after this point, though on fol. 31v, two kneeling, boyish servants at Saul's banqueting table wear fillets. Subsequently, several more anonymous boys with fillets appear at intervals, and in some scenes Absalom also wears one (e.g., fol. 44v, the reconciliation with David). The fillet, then, is probably an indication of youth in males, which suggests it could also be used to indicate their nonnormative masculinity (that is, they are effeminate because they have neither yet developed a full set of secondary sex traits nor undergone a ritual passage into adulthood).
15. Transcription of Sotheby's catalogue, in Millar, notes in object file.
16. See Millar, notes. For a full discussion of the codicology of the manuscript and a graphic collation of its current binding, see A. Sand, "Picturing Devotion Anew in the Psalter-Hours of Yolande of Soissons" (Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1999), 22–27 and App. A.
17. Most notably, Gould, "The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons," 32–77; and eadem, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, 65–68. However, I have one reservation, discussed below, and that is the order of the miniatures in the prefatory cycle.
18. See n. 7 above.
19. For the identification of fol. 3 as *The Invention*, see K. Gould, "Illumination and Sculpture in Thirteenth Century Amiens: The Invention of the Body of St. Firmin in the Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons," *AB*, 59 (1977), 161–62.
20. On the St. Louis Psalter, see H. Stahl, *Picturing Kingship: The Psalter of Saint Louis* (University Park, PA, 2007).
21. K. Schowalter, "Capetian Women and Their Books: Art, Ideology, and Dynastic Continuity in Capetian France" (Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 2005), 156, 179–205.
22. On the persistence of Franciscan iconography in the manuscript, see Gould, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, 94–107; and A. Sand, "Vision, Difficulty, and Devotion in the Psalter-Hours of Yolande of Soissons," *AB*, 87 (2005), 16–19.
23. Probably the most scrutinized case of the correlation between individual biography and the prefatory material in a devotional book is that of Christina of Markyate and the St. Albans Psalter, in which the imagery of the Magdalen plays a prominent role. Several recent articles specifically address this problem: M. E. Carrasco, "The Imagery of the Magdalen in Christina of Markyate's Psalter (Saint Albans Psalter)," *Gesta*, 38/1 (1999), 67–80; K. E. Haney, "The Saint Albans Psalter: A Reconsideration," *JWCI*, 58 (1995), 1–28; and eadem, "The Saint Albans Psalter and the New Spiritual Ideals of the Twelfth Century," *Viator*, 28 (1997), 145–73. Meyer Schapiro also discussed the centrality of the Magdalen to Anglo-Saxon devotion in "Religious Meaning of the Ruthwell Cross," in *Late Antique, Early Christian and Medieval Art: Selected Papers* (New York, 1979), 164.
24. A vast literature exists on the redaction, production, and consumption of the Paris Bibles. From an art historical standpoint, the classic text remains Branner, *Manuscript Painting in Paris*. Also important is the work of Richard Rouse and Mary Rouse, particularly, "The Book Trade at the University of Paris, ca. 1250–ca. 1350," in *La production du livre universitaire au moyen âge: Exemplar et pecia*, ed. L. J. Bataillon et al. (Paris, 1988), 41–114.
25. Lowden cites a Languedocian Bible of ca. 1120 (London, British Library, MSS Harley 4772–4773, fol. 120v) as the earliest example. Lowden, *The Book of Ruth*, 28, Fig. 12.
26. The marginal sketch of a family group in this manuscript that closely resembles those of the *Peregrinatio* in the vernacular Bibles may indicate a visual, as well as textual, connection between the workshops producing Latin Bibles for clerical patrons and those producing vernacular editions for the laity.
27. Adalbert Eberhard Graf zu Erbach-Fustenuau, in his unpublished study of thirteenth-century Bibles, noted that the *Peregrinatio* frequently illustrated the opening initial in twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century examples, but that the motif of the two boys holding hands was the particular invention of the mid-thirteenth century. In addition to the Master Alexander Bible, he cites two midcentury Bibles at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, MSS 30 and 1185. Typescript in object file for BnF, MS lat. 11930–31. In some instances, the two children are omitted; such is the case in Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 9,

- fol. 93v, a Parisian Bible of ca. 1260–80. In other cases, Elimelech leads one son by the hand while Naomi leads the other (Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 13, fol. 213v, ca. 1270–80).
28. On the importance of the literal sense to the composition of the Paris Bibles, see L. Light, “French Bibles c. 1200–1230: A New Look at the Origin of the Paris Bible,” in *The Early Medieval Bible*, ed. Rich Gameson (Cambridge, 1994), 163.
 29. See n. 5 above.
 30. Gould, “The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons,” 193; and eadem, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, 76–81. See also the discussion of the relationship between the manuscript’s imagery and vernacular texts in Sand, “Picturing Devotion Anew,” 53–54; and eadem, “Vision, Difficulty, and Devotion,” 12.
 31. S. Berger, *La bible française du treizième siècle* (Paris, 1884; rpt. Geneva, 1967). Although Berger dated the translation to between 1226 and 1239, subsequent research has shown that the translation was based on Hugh of St.-Cher’s recension of the Vulgate of ca. 1230 and that the complete translation into Old French was not in place until ca. 1280. C. Sneddon, “The ‘Bible du XIIIe Siècle’: Its Medieval Public in Light of Its Manuscript Tradition,” in *The Bible in Medieval Culture*, ed. W. Lourdeaux and D. Verhelst (Louvain, 1979), 135–37. The current consensus seems to be that these manuscripts date from the last two decades of the thirteenth century.
 32. It should be noted, however, that the relation of BXIII to the Latin Bibles is one of adaptation rather than strict copying. This is particularly evident in the quality of the translation, which “varied considerably between groups of books.” Sneddon, “The ‘Bible du XIIIe Siècle,’” 132.
 33. Pierpont Morgan Library, object file, M.494, typescript, 1942, 3. The stemma of the BXIII is quite complex, and even among very close manuscripts there is strong evidence of scribes consulting secondary sources (including copies of Hugh of St.-Cher’s Vulgate) and emending the text freely. The presence of Picard elements in several of the manuscripts provides a connection between this Parisian enterprise and the original owner of M.729, in Amiens. See M. Quereuil, *La bible française du XIIIe siècle, édition critique de la Genèse* (Geneva, 1988), 37–51.
 34. The text itself does not make any mistake, reading “his wife and his two sons” (sa fame et o ses ii fuiz). My thanks to Roger Wieck of the Morgan Library for clarifying this for me.
 35. Sanford: London, British Library, MSS 40619–40620; Bible de Thou: Paris, BnF, MS fr. 899.
 36. The Bible de Thou was Berger’s “best manuscript” and as such could have been the source of the error, but the stemma constructed by Michel Quereuil suggests that in fact this manuscript was a half sister to the Harley manuscript and more distantly related still to the Arsenal copy. Quereuil, *La bible française*, 37–51.
 37. Fol. 194. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for this article who called my attention to this manuscript and who suggested that the two children in the Chantilly manuscript closely resemble those in M.729, and that the closest connection between M.729 and the BXIII manuscripts might in fact lie here. On examination of the miniature, however, I find that the two children are clearly rendered as male.
 38. The “Lachmann method” or the “method of common-error” describes the approach to establishing textual stemmata and editing premodern texts attributed to the nineteenth-century German philologist Karl Lachmann. Although current philological scholarship tends to reject the positivist assumptions that generated the method (e.g., that an original text can be reconstructed through comparison of its flawed copies), it is still an important tool for preparing scholarly editions. An excellent summary of the method and its critics can be found in A. Foulet and M. B. Speer, *On Editing Old French Texts* (Lawrence, KS, 1979), 8–39. For a critique of the application of philological methods to the study of manuscript illumination, see J. Lowden, *The Octateuchs: A Study of Byzantine Manuscript Illustration* (University Park, PA, 1992), 37, 122–23.
 39. Lowden, *The Book of Ruth*, 72–73: “Ici a une fame qi a nom Boaz qi a dous filles.”
 40. On the extremely wide variation in quality and attention to detail in books produced on a speculative, rather than bespoke, basis, see R. Rouse and M. Rouse, “Production of Manuscript Books in 13th/14th Century Paris,” in *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society*, British Library Studies in the History of the Book (London, 1993), 45–61; and J. Diamond, “Manufacture and Market in Parisian Book Illumination around 1300,” in *Europäische Kunst um 1300*, Akten des XXV internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte, 6, no. 6 (Vienna, 1986), 101–10. Clive Sneddon argues that Parisian or Picard stationers commissioned the compilation of a complete Old French Bible between 1280 and 1290 for prospective aristocratic buyers—that is, the manuscripts were made with a general type of, rather than a specific, reader in mind. As the iconographic slip and many a scribal slip indicate, the production may have been relatively hasty, and the illuminators may not have been given specific directions by those in charge of the project. C. Sneddon, “The Origins of the ‘Old French Bible’: The Significance of Paris, BNF ms. fr. 899,” *Studi Francesi*, 117 (1999), 129.
 41. See Sneddon, “The ‘Bible du XIIIe Siècle,’” 135–40; and P.-M. Bogaert, ed., *Les bibles en français: Histoire illustrée du moyen âge à nos jours* (Turnhout, 1991), 30.
 42. Sand, “Vision, Difficulty, and Devotion,” 17–18.
 43. The Munich Psalter features eleven episodes arranged on two pages divided into three horizontal rows and two vertical columns. The Psalter leaves now in Baltimore are detached from their original manuscript context; they feature four scenes spread over two pages divided into two horizontal registers.
 44. The Byzantine Octateuch manuscripts studied by Kurt Weitzmann (“The Octateuch of the Seraglio and the History of Its Picture Recension,” *Actes du X. congrès d’études byzantines, Istanbul, 15–21 Septembre 1955* [Istanbul, 1957], 183–86) depict Naomi’s widowhood (Ruth 1:3) or Ruth’s nocturnal encounter with Boaz in the threshing barn (Ruth 3:7–11). Some Romanesque Bibles, such as the Admont Bible (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. ser. nov. 2701, f. 105v), of ca. 1140–50 (from Salzburg), seem to follow the Byzantine model. Other Romanesque examples focus on different aspects of the book of Ruth: for example, the Spanish Roda Bible (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 6) of ca. 1000 shows the *Peregrinatio* and marriage of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 4:10–13). The mid-twelfth-century English Lambeth Bible (London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 3, fol. 130) depicts Ruth 2:3–17, in which Ruth gleanes in the fields of Boaz under his explicit protection. As Walter Cahn has observed, however, Romanesque Bibles generally pay only “modest attention” to the book of Ruth, typically employing only a foliated initial to mark the opening of the book. W. Cahn, *Romanesque Bible Illumination* (Ithaca, NY, 1982), 184. John Lowden cited the relatively limited scope of medieval Ruth imagery as one of the criteria that made the book of Ruth the ideal subject for the second half of his study on the *Bibles moralisées*. Lowden, *The Book of Ruth*, 5.
 45. Lowden’s genealogical chart of the patronage and ownership of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century exemplars of the *Bible moralisée* makes the royal context of these books exceptionally visible: eight of the twelve major manuscripts are associated with royal owners and/or patrons. Lowden, *The Book of Ruth*, x–xi.
 46. For the Toledo manuscript, see *ibid.*, Fig. 7.
 47. *Ibid.*, 28–30. The two twelfth-century initials Lowden illustrated (Figs. 12 and 13), however, show the group moving right to left.
 48. An excellent example of how devotional books figured in this imitative practice was explored by Judith Oliver in the context of devotion to the

- Merovingian female saints of northeastern France in the diocese of Liège: J. Oliver, "'Gothic' Women and Merovingian Desert Mothers," *Gesta*, 32/2 (1993), 124–34.
49. Nicholas of Hanaps, *Liber de Exemplis Sacrae Scripturae*, chap. 123, in G. de Martel, *Répertoire des textes latins relatifs au livre de Ruth (VIIe—Xve s.)*, Instrumenta Patristica, 18 (Dordrecht, 1990), 96.
 50. Hugh of St.-Cher, "Postills on Ruth," trans. L. Smith, in *Medieval Exegesis in Translation: Commentaries on the Book of Ruth* (Kalamazoo, 1996), 41.
 51. Some examples: Isidore of Seville, *Allegoriae Quaedam Sanctae Scripturae ex Veteri Testamentum*, par. 82, col. 112, line 7: "Ruth alienigena qua Israelitico viro nupsit, Ecclesiam ex gentibus ad Christum venientem ostendit." Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sententiae*, sermon 3, sentence 51, verse 6, 2: "Ruth Moabitica anima peccatrix quae seluta nurum suam, ecclesiam, de regione tenebrarum venit in Judeam, confessionis terram." Richard of St.-Victor, *Allegoriae in Vetus et Novum Testamentum*, Book 4, chap. 18, "Terra Moab significant gentilitatem; Ruth, ecclesiam." All cited by de Martel, *Répertoire*.
 52. Hugh of St.-Cher, "Postills on Ruth," 44.
 53. Sneddon, "The 'Bible du XIIIe Siècle,'" 132. Berger described the gloss of Ruth as "mystique et bien peu littérale," to the point that when Naomi sends Ruth to visit Boaz by night, to approach him, raise his bed-clothes, and lie down at his feet (Ruth 3:4), the text reads, "Autressi com si elle deist: Saches que Jhesucrist souffri mort por toi, et vien a lui o devote pensée, et oste la couverture du Viel Testament." Berger, *La bible française du treizième siècle*, 127.
 54. Hugh of St.-Cher, "Postills on Ruth," 27.
 55. *Ibid.*, 41.
 56. See D. Weiss, "Biblical History and Medieval Historiography: Rationalizing Strategies in Crusader Art," *Modern Language Notes*, 108/4 (1993), 710–37, esp. 733–37; G. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1993), 315.
 57. Toledo, fol. 94; Bodley 270B, fol. 124. A version of this scene was first depicted in the Munich Psalter.
 58. Ruth 1:5: "And they took wives of the women of Moab, of which one was called Orpha and the other Ruth." There is no immediate precedent in the illustration of the book of Ruth for this scene. The Munich Psalter contains a scene in which the two sons and their Moabite wives sit crammed together, but there is no indication of a feast (fol. 104); see Lowden, *The Book of Ruth*, 79, Fig. 39.
 59. This is a paraphrase of Lowden's translation. For the comparison of the Toledo and Bodley manuscripts' texts, see *ibid.*, 53–54.
 60. *Ibid.*, 178. Lowden (171–83) also discusses the considerable variation among the early-thirteenth-century renditions of this episode and its moralization.
 61. *Ibid.*, 180.
 62. *Ibid.*
 63. H. Buchthal, *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford, 1957), 54–60. D. Weiss, "The Pictorial Language of the Arsenal Old Testament: Gothic and Byzantine Contributions and the Meaning of Crusader Art" (Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 1992), 30.
 64. This is the view of Berger, *La bible française du treizième siècle*, 107. It has since been confirmed by the identification of a small number of unillustrated copies of the text. C. A. Robson, "Vernacular Scriptures in France," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1969), 443–45.
 65. Buchthal, *Miniature Painting*, 56.
 66. Standardizing the order of the books of the Bible was a thirteenth-century enterprise: it is discussed, in passing, in B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN, 1964), 264–91; and by C. de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 2nd ed. (London, 1994), 118–23, who remarks (260n), "Surprisingly, considering the importance of the subject, there is no standard account of the publication of the one-volume Bible."
 67. Berger, *La bible française du treizième siècle*, 107. Also see Weiss, "The Pictorial Language of the Arsenal Old Testament," 144; and *idem*, "Biblical History and Medieval Historiography," 733.
 68. Lowden, *The Book of Ruth*, 149–54.
 69. See M. Aubert et al., *Les vitraux de Notre Dame et de la Sainte-Chapelle de Paris*, Corpus Vitrearum Media Aevum, France, 1 (Paris, 1959), 143.
 70. *Ibid.* For parallels in which an angel or angels attend the pair of Christ and Ecclesia (as represented by the Virgin Mary), the iconography of numerous Gothic portals comes to mind: angels attend the Coronation of the Virgin at Senlis (west facade, center portal tympanum), Paris (west facade, north portal tympanum), Chartres (north transept, center portal tympanum), Strasbourg (south transept, center portal tympanum). This draws attention to the allegorical sense of Ruth and Boaz as types for Ecclesia and Christ.
 71. The windows depict Numbers and Esther, respectively. J.-M. Leniaud and F. Perrot, *La Sainte Chapelle* (Paris, 1991), 192–95.
 72. Although many scholars associate the Morgan Old Testament Picture Book with the direct patronage of Louis IX, some very respectable opinions differ. See D. Weiss, "Portraying the Past, Illuminating the Present: The Art of the Morgan Library Picture Bible," in *The Book of Kings: Art, War and the Morgan Library's Medieval Picture Bible* (London, 2002), 34 n. 25.
 73. Wimples are worn by married women and widows in later medieval art, and J. Lowden, *The Making of the Bibles Moralisesées*, vol. 1, *The Manuscripts* (University Park, PA, 2000), 130 n. 70, cautions against automatically assuming that wimples make widows.
 74. See n. 2 above.
 75. Stones, "The Full-Page Miniatures," 288–91.
 76. Gould, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, 8 n. 35.
 77. Stones, "The Full-Page Miniatures," 293.
 78. *Ibid.*, 291.
 79. The property of Coeuvres, associated with Comtesse de la Table, was inherited, along with the comital title to Soissons, by Yolande's grandson Rogues. See P. Anselme de Sainte-Marie, *Histoire généalogique de la maison royale de France*, 9 vols. (Paris, 1726–33), 6:717; cited by Stones, "The Full-Page Miniatures," 290 n. 61.
 80. The best discussion of women and patterns of book ownership and dispersal remains S. G. Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture," *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society*, 7/4 (1982), 742–68. She notes (749–50) that while "Wills and testamentary settlements attest to women's inheritance of books from men . . . testamentary evidence of women's bequests of devotional books to their daughters is scarce, which may suggest that such bequests were customary (as in the *Sachsenspiegel*) and required no documentation."
 81. Sometimes property brought into a family through marriage (e.g., dowry goods) became the property of descendants of that lineage not by legacy but by litigation. Like Yolande de Soissons, Mahaut, countess of Burgundy and Artois (r. 1303–29), was the female heir of a major fief (Artois) but whose father had made a late remarriage that did not

produce any living offspring. In Mahaut's case, it appears that relations between stepmother and stepdaughter were less than cordial, since Mahaut took her stepmother, Marguerite of Hainault, to court over the disposition of goods Marguerite had brought into her marriage with Mahaut's father. Mahaut won (although she lost other cases against Marguerite) and laid claim to numerous items of furniture, clothing, tableware, and jewelry. J. M. Richard, *Une petite-nièce de Saint Louis: Mahaut, Comtesse d'Artois et de Bourgogne* (Paris, 1887), 167. Thus, it could also be the case that Yolande received her stepmother's unfinished book not as a gift but as part of a legal dispute over the dispersal of the Soissons estate.

82. M. Bloch, *La société féodale*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1968).

83. This tendency in Franciscan spirituality began with Francis, whose life as an itinerant, voluntarily poor preacher was explicitly modeled on that

of Christ. On the Franciscan emphasis on *imitatio* and its bearing on visual representation, see A. Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant* (New York, 1996).

84. See, in particular, C. F. Barnes Jr., "Cross-Media Design Motifs in XIIIth-Century France: Architectural Motifs in the Psalter and Hours of Yolande de Soissons and in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame at Amiens," *Gesta*, 17/2 (1978), 37-40; and Gould, "Illumination and Sculpture in Thirteenth Century Amiens," 161-66.

85. Diamond, "Manufacture and Market in Parisian Book Illumination."

86. Richard, *Une petite-nièce de Saint Louis*, 102. On Latinity versus literacy: Mahaut apparently read her classics in translation; in 1327 she ordered a copy of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* in French from the friar Pierre de Bame. *Ibid.*, 104.