Monks, Monsters, and The Theories of Humor:
Analyzing the Margins of the W.102 Book of Hours

By: Shannon Smith

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Art & Art History
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Bachelor of Arts in Art History at
Washington College

December 2024

Advised by Aileen Tsui & Benjamin Tilghman

I pledge my word of honor that I have abided by the Washington College Honor Code while completing this assignment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my professor and advisor, Benjamin Tilghman. I've learned so much from him over the years—not just about art history, but also about curiosity, passion, and dedication. His teaching and mentorship inspired this very capstone, and I can't imagine my academic journey without his guidance. And for that, I will always be grateful.

Additionally, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Aileen Tsui. She stepped in and advised me during a time when I truly needed direction and offered me support during my final semester.

Lastly, I want to thank my incredible friends and family, who were always there to lift me up during tough times and celebrate my victories with unmatched enthusiasm. Their unwavering support and love has been my rock. This work is dedicated to them, with all my gratefulness and affection.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

“If a painter chose to join a human head to a horse’s neck, and to spread feathers of many colors over limbs brought together from everywhere, so that what was at the top of a beautiful woman ended below an ugly black fish, would you, my friend, allowed to see such a picture, be able to hold back your laughter?”

- Horace

ABSTRACT

Medieval manuscripts, including their margins, provide valuable insight into the cultural, religious, and social aspects of the medieval and early modern eras. This SCE examines the relationship between the "grotesques" found in the English Book of Hours (W.102), created in the early 14th century, and three key theories of humor: Superiority, Incongruity, and Relief. Through visual and theoretical analysis, these theories will aid in the exploration of how marginalia within this Book of Hours serve a function beyond decoration, particularly in reflecting the tension between the religious and secular imagery within a medieval prayer book. The W.102 Book of Hours demonstrates how marginal illustrations employed humor to convey criticism, subtly subvert authority, and relate to its viewers. In this SCE, the focus will be on four specific folios from the W.102 Book of Hours to analyze how medieval artists employed humor and audiences interpreted it as both a form of entertainment and a vehicle for social and moral commentary.

INTRODUCTION

The Walters Art Museum's Book of Hours (W.102), an English manuscript from the early 14th century, is renowned for its elaborate and peculiar marginalia. These grotesques—also called drolleries—and humorous images sharply contrast with the serious tone of the devotional text, making W.102 a compelling subject for analysis. Examining its humor through the lenses of Incongruity, Relief, and Superiority theories reveals how both devotional and secular elements coexisted in medieval religious life, reflecting broader cultural dynamics.

The marginalia's irreverent and absurd imagery challenges traditional interpretations of devotional texts, inviting deeper inquiry into their purpose and meaning. The three humor theories provide a framework for understanding how these illustrations subverted expectations, offered social and emotional release, and critiqued hierarchies. This humor was not merely decorative but served as a tool for engaging viewers, enriching their experience, and fostering reflection on both human nature and religious devotion.

Humor in a religious manuscript creates a fascinating paradox. While devotional texts are often reserved for solemn reverence, W.102's margins blur boundaries by juxtaposing the sacred with the absurd. The Walters Museum houses several such manuscripts, many featuring grotesque creatures whose exaggerated forms provoke laughter while offering nuanced commentary on medieval life and values. These illustrations reveal the tension between orthodoxy and playfulness, inviting questions about the mix of authority, morality, and art.

The purpose behind such imagery is ambiguous, but its humor resonates even today. Detached from the devotional text's central message, the marginalia allow for multiple interpretations. Through humor theory and art historical methods, I analyze selected folios to

theorize how the grotesques functioned as both teaching tools and reinforcements of medieval Christian values, enriching their cultural and spiritual significance. In a pre-print culture, these manuscripts were vital teaching tools, designed to communicate theological and ethical concepts to early 14th century audiences who often could not read. Beyond their instructional role, the margins provided space for subtle social commentary, addressing issues like power, class, and hierarchy in ways that subvert the dominant narratives of the central text. This was realized through their vivid imagery, detailed craftsmanship, and creative use of materials, which offer insight into the techniques available to medieval artists and the ways art served moral and didactic purposes.

While previous research has laid the foundation for studying marginalia, there is room to expand upon these insights by applying modern theoretical frameworks and examining specific folios. This research builds on prior studies by exploring how marginalia influence viewer responses, employing humor theories to analyze individual examples, and using art historical analysis to propose new interpretations. This approach highlights how continued exploration can deepen our understanding of the complexity and relevance of medieval art.

The humor of W.102 engages both medieval and modern viewers, drawing attention to its bizarre contrasts and prompting reflection on religious authority, moral behavior, and the purpose of art. Through its playful yet provocative imagery, W.102 not only entertains but also challenges conventions, contributing to an ongoing dialogue about the boundaries of religious and artistic expression.

CHAPTER 1: THE THEORIES OF HUMOR

In the study of humor, three foundational theories provide an opportunity to understand why and how humor functions across various contexts: Incongruity Theory, Relief Theory, and Superiority Theory. Each approaches humor from a different perspective, explaining its psychological, social, and emotional dimensions. By examining these theories, we can gain insights into how humor operates, not just in modern life but also in historical and religious circumstances where it may serve unique purposes. In analyzing medieval manuscripts, like W.102, these theories allow us to explore how humor functioned as both a form of entertainment and a tool for social or moral commentary.

Incongruity Theory posits that humor arises from the clash between expectation and reality, where an unexpected or jarring element disrupts the anticipated outcome, creating a cognitive disconnect that is resolved with amusement rather than confusion. This concept can be traced back to philosophers like Aristotle, who in *Rhetoric* acknowledged the humor in subverted expectations, and Cicero, who noted in *On the Orator* that "the most common kind of joke is that in which we expect one thing, and another is said; here our own disappointed expectation makes us laugh."[1] Later, Immanuel Kant emphasized the pleasure derived from unexpected juxtapositions, refining the theory to encompass the enjoyment found in surprising deviations from mental patterns.

Manuscripts structurally exemplify Incongruity through the basic act of turning the folio of a manuscript (or, more commonly today, a page in a book). Turning a page in any book inherently involves a moment of anticipation; the reader expects to encounter new information,

[1] Cicero, *On the Orator*, book II, chap. 63, in *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*, ed. John Morreall (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), 18.

but typically within the same tone and context as the previous pages. This continuity sets up an expectation that each turn will reveal something consistent with what has come before. In most cases, turning a page leads to content that aligns with the established theme, whether in tone, subject matter, or style. However, when that expectation is disrupted—when the next page presents something wildly unexpected—the Incongruity theory of humor comes into play, as the reader experiences a jarring and often amusing shift from what they anticipated.

The incongruity of W.102 is heightened, as a turn of a folio leads to sudden and surprising contradictions of sacred text with bizarre marginalia. While one folio may depict solemn devotional scenes, the next may introduce fantastical monsters, grotesque figures, or absurd scenarios in the margins. This stark contrast between reverent religious content and irreverent imagery catches the reader off guard, transforming the simple act of turning the folio into an encounter with the unexpected. The humor arises precisely because these marginal scenes deviate so sharply from the established norms of a religious manuscript, reinforcing the Incongruity theory by using surprise to evoke both amusement and deeper contemplation on the coexistence of the serious and the absurd.

The W.102 *Book of Hours* does not maintain consistent imagery across its 105 folios, with alternating red and blue ink along the bottom of the text and odd figures across the folios, some detailed and others only contoured. Unexpected marginal illustrations disrupt the flow, creating moments of cognitive dissonance that challenge the viewer's expectations of what will come next. For example, the transition from the simply decorated folio 49r in the Seven Penitential Psalms to the following folio, which features a contour drawing of a man with a tail and an oversized head being devoured by a bird, highlights the incongruity and humor embedded within the manuscript's structure (Figure 1).

Relief Theory, defined by scholars like Sigmund Freud and Herbert Spencer, proposed that humor functions as a release for pent-up energy or psychological tension. In this view, laughter provides an emotional outlet for repressed feelings or anxieties, functioning as a safety valve for emotions that cannot be openly expressed. This theory is particularly applicable to medieval manuscripts, where humor within a religious context could allow for the controlled release of tensions around piety and the strictures of monastic life. By engaging with the bizarre and humorous illustrations in the margins, viewers could experience a temporary break from the rigidity of religious devotion. The strange and even sacrilegious elements within the manuscript offer a form of catharsis, permitting monks or lay readers to confront the contradictions and pressures inherent in their spiritual practices.

The marginalia in W.102 gains complexity when viewed through Relief Theory. The marginalia offered a safe space to engage with elements of satire, absurdity, and even irreverence without directly challenging the religious content of the text. As Camille argues in *Image on the Edge*, margins in medieval manuscripts often allowed artists to explore and subvert boundaries imposed by religious doctrine. Camille references Peter of Celle, a prominent 12th-century Benedictine abbot and theologian, who emphasized the importance of discipline and restraint in religious art. Peter of Celle, known for his influence on monastic reforms and his writings on the spiritual life, warned that "the painter's fingers must paint within the round circle of [the Law], And the first one should notice that the Law does not teach what or how you should paint, it only prohibits what you should not paint…"[2] reflecting his view that religious art should adhere to moral and theological boundaries.

[2] Peter of Celle, "The painter's fingers must paint within the round circle of [the Law]," quoted in Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), 56.

This guidance indicates that while religious art was subject to strict rules, creative freedom was allowedas long as it did not transgress into prohibited or blasphemous territory. Medieval artists, though limited by religious constraints, could use the margins as a space to incorporate humorous and grotesque images that provided a release for both the viewer and the artist. Thus, through Relief Theory, we can interpret the marginalia as more than just embellishment; they were intentional inclusions that provided a transient escape from the spiritual and social pressures of medieval life. While 14th-century manuscripts occasionally featured humorous marginalia, not all were created by monks or within monastic settings. W.102 itself was likely produced by laypeople in a professional workshop. Therefore, these additions may not necessarily reflect monastic decorum but rather a broader medieval engagement with the absurd and the irreverent, safely confined within the manuscript's margins.

The professional workshops of the 14th century, as opposed to monastic scriptoria—dedicated spaces within monasteries where monks copied and decorated manuscripts—would have been the ones most likely satirizing monks and religious figures in manuscripts like W.102. As manuscript production moved into urban centers and became driven by lay artisans, these workshops were less bound by the ecclesiastical propriety that governed monastic creation. Lay illuminators, often removed from the strict religious life of the church, had flexibility to incorporate playful, irreverent, or satirical elements into their work, including marginalia that poked fun at monks and other religious figures. This humor not only appealed to a growing secular clientele but also reflected the broader societal tensions and critiques of religious institutions. In this context, the satirical and absurd marginalia in W.102 is a hallmark of lay workshops, where artisans used their creative freedom to blend religious themes with sharp

social commentary, making it unlikely that monks themselves were responsible for such imagery.[3]

Superiority Theory, introduced by intellectuals like Plato, then expanded by Søren Kierkegaard, Immanuel Kant, and Arthur Schopenhauer, explains humor as a form of social hierarchy, where laughter arises from feelings of superiority over others. According to this theory, we find humor in the flaws or misfortunes of others, as these moments affirm our own comparative status or moral standing. Superiority Theory can be used to explore how the marginalia function as a subtle critique of religious or social figures, often depicting monks or authority figures in compromising or foolish situations. The humorous illustrations in the manuscript thus serve as a vehicle for social commentary, allowing the audience to mock figures of authority within a seemingly pious context. This form of humor could reinforce moral values by highlighting the weaknesses or sins of individuals who fail to uphold religious ideals, offering a lesson cloaked in absurdity.

According to this theory, the sense of superiority is closely tied to the German term, schadenfreude, meaning the pleasure derived from witnessing another's misfortune. The audience not only laughs at but also derives pleasure from the moral and social failings of these figures, reinforcing their own virtuous standing. With schadenfreude, the manuscript intensifies its moral critique, inviting readers to both ridicule and reflect upon the moral lapses of authority figures, bridging the gap between sacred ideals and human flaws.

Together, these three theories of humor—Incongruity, Relief, and Superiority—provide a comprehensive lens through which to examine the purpose and impact of humor within religious manuscripts. Applying these theories to W.102 reveals that humor served multiple roles: it could

[3] Greenhill, 8.

entertain, offer a psychological release from the demands of pious devotion, and critique. By understanding these different approaches to humor, we can better understand the layered complexity of medieval manuscripts and the ways in which they engaged readers on both a spiritual and a human level.

In imagining the contemporary audience's reactions to the marginalia in W.102, we are inevitably influenced by our own perspectives on the images. Christopher de Hamel, in *The British Library Guide to Manuscript Illumination*, notes:

> One can imagine medieval choirboys falling off their misericords in fits of giggles at the margins of their Psalters. One can sit in a library reading room today snorting with amusement from the very same thirteenth-century jokes to the indignant glares of more earnest readers at adjacent desks.[4]

Although de Hamel avoids delving into "modern psychological interpretations of medieval grotesques," these interpretations nonetheless shape the way we approach humor theory and art analysis. While the focus of this thesis is not the psychological explanations, they inevitably influence our understanding of the W.102 *Book of Hours*, revealing how elements of humor in medieval art continue to resonate today. The enduring amusement found in scenes like that of an unsuspecting man being shot in the buttocks illustrates a connection between early 14th-century humor and contemporary sensibilities.

[4]Christopher de Hamel, *The British Library Guide to Manuscript Illumination* (London: British Library, 2001), 33.

CHAPTER 2: THE HYBRID MONK (FOLIO 52r)

The visual composition of the marginal illustrations across all of the folios maintains similarities. Ornate designs extend from the last line of text, which serve as a ground for the selected absurd scenes. The contrast between the sophisticated illuminated text, elaborate initials, and filigree, and the simpler rudimentary marginal figures makes these folios particularly intriguing. On folio 52r, a humorous and striking scene unfolds: two anthropomorphic figures are engaged in a surreal confrontation (Figure 2). The exaggerated and elongated forms of the figures defy natural proportions, heightening the absurdity of the scene.

What is happening in this scene? Folio 52r depicts a fantastical fight scene featuring a winged, one-legged, shield-wielding hybrid battling a cloven-hooved, clawed-foot, naked monk-like figure with a tail. The figure on the right, which resembles a man, is notable for having the head of a monk, identifiable by its distinct tonsure—a haircut symbolizing devotion to divine service to an ascetic lifestyle (Figure 2). This depiction is paradoxical, as the monk's sacred appearance is at odds with his monstrous features and violent actions. While these figures are bizarre and unsettling, their strange nature should not obscure the broader significance of monsters in marginalia. In medieval contexts, the term "monster" served as an umbrella for hybrids and other fantastical entities, encapsulating their cultural and symbolic complexities. For instance, the Middle English term "babwyn" (the root of the modern "baboon") was used to describe such fantastical creatures that adorned manuscripts and architecture, blending whimsy with deeper theological and moral commentary.[5]

[5] Bovey, Alixe. *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts*. London: The British Library, 2002, 43.

The combination of natural and monstrous features reflects a deliberate exploration of the concept of monstrosity. These bizarre hybrids embody the grotesque and the otherworldly, challenging viewers to confront their fears and fascinations with the unknown. By blending human and animalistic traits, these monsters symbolize features and behaviors deemed dangerous or morally corrupt, such as gluttony, wrath, or lust. Monsters such as those on folio 52r serve as warnings, illustrating the consequences of abandoning reason and virtue. Through these depictions, the marginalia artists suggest that monstrosity arises when individuals stray from their humanity and divine likeness, transforming into beings that provoke both horror and reflection.

The animalistic depictions of the hybrid monk and its monstrous counterpart convey a distinct symbolic significance associated with animals. According to theologians, animals cannot exist without their bodies, therefore they are separated from God and the afterlife.[6] Interpretations of Ecclesiastes 3:21 create a stark separation between humans and animals: "Who knows if the human spirit rises upward and if the spirit of the animals goes down into the earth?" This hybridization emphasizes the monk's moral degeneration, suggesting that despite his outwardly religious role in the Church, he is driven by base, animalistic instincts instead of human qualities. By merging a human and multiple animals in such a grotesque form, the illustrator critiques the monk's failure to live up to his spiritual obligations, equating him with soulless animals that the Church would deem as unworthy of salvation. Disjointed creation serves as a visual metaphor for corruption and disfigurement, perhaps beyond the physical body.

Ultimately, this disjointed appreciation for nature alongside a revulsion for the grotesque reflects an ongoing medieval critique of the human form, using the strange and unsettling images

[6] Camille, *Image on the Edge,* 73.

in the margins as an advisory tool. These images remind viewers of the moral consequences of surrendering to vice and neglecting their spiritual obligations, reinforcing the unity and expectations of the broader Christian community. “The monstrous race embody displacement from the city that is a metaphor for the spiritual community of believers that is Christianity.”[7] For monks and laypeople, these images may have functioned as visual metaphors for their own personal experiences of spiritual testing and physical hardship. The monstrous or exaggerated forms in the margins of 52r act as symbols of sin, temptation, and even the punishment of spiritual failure, embodying the monks' fears and the challenges they had to overcome in their pursuit of holiness.

How did wealthy laypeople view their relationship with the Church, and how might this tension be reflected in the Book of Hours? The patron, or commissioner, of a medieval Book of Hours was typically a wealthy layperson rather than a member of the Church. These books were intricately personalized, designed to guide the laity in their devotional practices while also displaying their social status and personal piety. However, the relationship between laypeople and the Church was often fraught with a mix of admiration and insecurity. Much like the way modern audiences engage with pop culture—idolizing celebrities while also critiquing their flaws—wealthy patrons likely admired the spiritual dedication of monks but may have also resented or envied their perceived proximity to the divine. This tension could manifest in the marginalia, where reverence and subtle critique coexist.

This sense of humor is closely aligned with the Superiority Theory, which explains the pleasure derived from the misfortunes or flaws of others, a phenomenon Hobbes termed "sudden

[7] Kate Brown, "Positioning, Place, and Penetration: The Marginal Sciopod of the Rutland Psalter," *Gesta* 53, no. 2 (2014): 7.

glory." This occurs when we witness a "deformed thing in another," which highlights our own superiority in comparison.[8] For laypeople, W.102 presented numerous instances where the margins depicted situations more dire or absurd than their own. These dynamics allowed viewers to experience a sense of relief and self-assurance, as the exaggerated flaws and absurdities of the marginal figures highlighted their own relative normalcy and virtue. By portraying grotesque scenarios or deformed characters, the manuscript invited lay audiences to laugh at these exaggerated misfortunes, reinforcing a sense of moral and social stability in their own lives.

Books of Hours were created to help laypeople follow the hours of daily prayer, emulating the structured devotion of monks. However, comparing oneself to a monk, whose entire life was dedicated to God and the ritual of prayer, could feel like an impossible standard. Unlike monks, regular medieval folk balanced spiritual practices with the demands of daily life, such as work, family, and survival. The disciplined, prayer-filled existence of monks was a world apart from the realities of laypeople, making the ideal of constant devotion challenging, if not unattainable, for most. The inclusion of satirical depictions of monks in the margins of manuscripts offered a means of addressing this tension. In response to Hobbes' "sudden glory," satirical marginalia allowed laypeople to "cut down" and feel superior to these figures of religious authority. This humor could make the lofty spiritual ideals monks represented seem less intimidating. By laughing at the flaws or hypocrisies of monks, laypeople might feel more confident in their own faith and moral efforts, reassured that their imperfections did not preclude spiritual success. Satire, therefore, became a subtle tool for making faith more relatable and attainable for everyday believers.

---

8 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, part I, chap. 6, in *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*, ed. John Morreall (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), 19.

Historian Roger Wieck asserts that, “The illustrations contained in a Book of Hours, particularly those dealing with other than strictly religious themes, also provide the most tangible evidence of late medieval life and the attitudes or mental world of their patrons and artists.”[9] In W.102, the illustrations highlight a compelling contrast between how laypeople and religious figures might have interpreted the satirical portrayals of monks and clergy as grotesque or hybridized forms. For lay audiences, such images may have served as both entertainment and critique. Satirizing monks as animalistic hybrids or absurd figures could resonate with laypeople who admired the spiritual ideals of monastic life but also felt alienated by its perceived inaccessibility. Mockery of the clergy might have provided a way for patrons to navigate their own insecurities about faith, highlighting the fallibility of those in religious orders and making the moral and spiritual goals of devotion seem less intimidating.

The Relief theory suggests that humor provided a release from the social and emotional tensions people experienced under medieval authorities. Imagery within a Book of Hours provided a subtle method of creating discourse, using humor without facing direct consequences. This form of humor would have also created a sense of communal relief for the audience. As Camille notes (quoting Mary Douglas’s theories), humor can be “frivolous in that it produces no real alternative, only an exhilarating sense of freedom from form in general.”[10] The creature of the 52r illustration, what could tentatively be called a monk, did not overtly pioneer a change in the way monks were expected to behave to incite change, but regardless, the choices within W.102 would have provided reprieve. The marginal undertones of satire of W.102 wouldn’t have proposed actual reform, but instead a temporary escape from strict social and moral codes.

[9] Wieck, Roger S. *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life*. New York: George Braziller in association with the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 1988, 35.
[10] Camille, *Image on the Edge,* 46.

When interpreting such imagery, monks might have seen it as a cautionary message about the dangers of moral decay or a representation of the ongoing struggle between spiritual ideals and human shortcomings. It is likely that, for them, the grotesque hybrids went beyond humor, serving as profound theological symbols that emphasized the perpetual conflict between sin and holiness. This divide highlights the layered nature of medieval marginalia. While lay patrons might have found the mockery amusing or even empowering in its critique of religious authority, those within the Church likely saw these images as reflections of the human condition and the need for spiritual perseverance. The same illustrations, therefore, operated on multiple levels, catering to the distinct perspectives and concerns of their diverse audiences.

CHAPTER 3: MARGINAL BATTLES (FOLIOS 81v – 82r)

This chapter will explore why the W.102 *Book of Hours* cannot be solely defined by humor, highlighting the relationship between comedic and somber elements within its contents. While humor in medieval marginalia is fluid and multifaceted, often defying simple categorization or theory, it coexists with—and even contrasts—the solemn themes of religion. Humor is not always overtly comedic but can manifest as strange, unsettling, or contextually absurd, offering a counterpoint to the serious spiritual messages within the manuscript.

The marginal battle depicted on folios 81v–82r exemplifies this kind of humor, deriving its comedic impact from its incongruity—juxtaposing human and demonic figures engaged in exaggerated combat (Figure 3). These scenes invite laughter through their absurdity, blending the familiar with the surreal in ways that challenge logic and natural order. In comparison to the monstrous drolleries commonly found throughout W.102, the demons here are less unexpected, aligning more closely with established motifs of medieval imagery. However, these depictions also seem to serve a deeper purpose, potentially engaging with Christian dogma and moral lessons.

One possible interpretation is that these scenes reflect battles—both spiritual and physical. The grotesque exaggeration of the demonic figures could highlight the chaos and peril inherent in moral and spiritual conflict, emphasizing the stakes of maintaining virtue amidst adversity. At the same time, these images might allude to the broader struggles of earthly life, where spiritual and physical challenges are intertwined. The exact intent behind these images remains ambiguous, and they may resist definitive explanation, reflecting the complex nature of the manuscript's marginalia.

What becomes clear is that these scenes operate on multiple levels, combining humor with deeper reflections on the human condition and spiritual struggle. By doing so, the margins of W.102 transcend straightforward categorization, blending entertainment with moral and theological reflection in a way that enriches the manuscript's overall narrative. Humor theory in the case of folios 81v–82r doesn't resonate in the same manner as the previously explored marginalia. This negative result tells us something important. While it is incongruous to see men fighting naked, the monsters that crawl upwards along the outside edge of the folio are a more traditional depiction of a demon, or, in a conceptual sense, the devil.

Folios 81v–82r are a part of the Hours of Jesus Crucified section, where the miniature within the initial presents a solemn scene of Jesus having his wounds cleaned before his entombment. This central image highlights the sacrificial nature of Christ's suffering, inviting the viewer into a moment of reflection and empathy. The marginal imagery of this folio diverges significantly from the humor found in earlier sections of the manuscript. Where many other folios feature contoured playful or grotesque scenes, folios 81v–82r take on a markedly somber tone within the initial that aligns closely with the devotional and reflective nature of the Hours of Jesus Crucified (Figure 3).

The Book of Hours includes various devotional texts and prayers, such as the Little Office of the Virgin Mary, selections from the Psalms, and other readings for specific occasions, like the Office of the Holy Cross, the Office of the Holy Spirit, and the Office for the Dead. Notably, the Hours of Jesus Crucified is an unusual inclusion in a Book of Hours, according to the Walters Museum, which further demonstrates W.102's variety and uniqueness. The Office of the Dead (folio 55r) is another curiously illustrated section, which we will return to in more detail in the following section. As John Harthan explains, the Hours of the Dead or Office of the

Dead was not included out of a morbid fascination with death. Rather, it stemmed from the Christian belief in the necessity of constant penitence and preparation for Divine judgment. The Office of the Dead (*Officium Defunctorum*), often included in these manuscripts, is not a funeral rite, but a collection of psalms and readings (primarily from the Book of Job) meant to offer consolation to the living. This section is near the end of the Book of Hours and includes prayers and readings three times a day. This combination of humorous and serious elements reflects the intricate balance in medieval life, where humor could coexist with solemnity, making it challenging to interpret the purpose of many folios in the marginalia. By articulating what is usually inhibited, humor releases the energy of repression. An example of this interaction between solemn ritual and unexplainable marginalia appears in the beginning of W.102's Office of the Dead in which Folio 55r demonstrates this contrast vividly. The decorated initial 'P' features an illustration of the burial of Jesus, which dominates the left side of the recto, juxtaposing sacred ritual with the humor of the fighting grotesques at the bottom of the page (Figure 4).

How might humor affect the Christian understanding of good versus evil? Folio 55r's contrast not only emphasizes the importance of spiritual discipline but also the manuscript's call to its audience to engage in self-reflection on sin, redemption, and the challenges of faith. By presenting a shift from humor to soberness, the artist accentuates the duality of the Christian life: the earthly struggles mocked in earlier pages versus the sacred, weighty struggles exemplified here. W.102 balances moments of levity with profound, reverent tones, with the humor of the marginalia serving as a reflection of the temptations, vices, and absurdities of worldly life, contrasting with the solemnity of spiritual discipline and redemption. Its oscillation between levity and gravity calls the audience to recognize the perpetual tension between sin and virtue,

folly and wisdom, and ultimately, the mortal journey toward divine salvation. This duality reinforces the manuscript's role as both a mirror of human frailty and a guide to spiritual triumph.

To effectively transition into a detailed analysis of folios 81v–82r, it is essential to address how the manuscript navigates between serious religious themes and moments of humor, using these shifts to deepen its devotional and thematic complexity. Throughout W.102, the marginalia alternate between absurd, grotesque humor and reverent depictions of spiritual struggle, creating a nuanced back-and-forth that reflects both the challenges of faith and the absurdities of earthly life. Earlier folios rely on humor to parody worldly foolishness, using grotesque hybrid creatures and caricatured figures to provoke laughter and undermine the authority or dignity of their subjects. This humorous tone provides a momentary reprieve from the manuscript's heavier religious content, offering viewers an accessible entry point for contemplation. Inversely, folios 81v–82r mark a striking departure from this comedic tone. The change toward refined, naturalistic human figures engaging in intense combat introduces a more serious and contemplative perspective. This deliberate shift sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how these folios relate to the manuscript's broader thematic and stylistic evolution. These folios bridge the humorous and the solemn, inviting viewers to reflect on the duality of earthly folly and spiritual redemption. This thematic progression aligns the marginalia more closely with the central religious narrative, as the artist transitions from mocking depictions of incompetence to portraying humanity's moral and spiritual struggles with dignity and gravity.

This change is particularly evident in the refined depiction of weaponry and the sophisticated stances of the human combatants. Unlike the simplified, contoured figures of earlier folios, these human figures are rendered with lifelike anatomical precision, with

emphasized details like ribs, obliques, and muscles that convey physical strength. Each combatant wields uniquely crafted, ornate weapons—swords and shields with distinct colors and patterns—demonstrating a high level of skill and sophistication. This naturalism and attention to detail not only heightens the intensity of their struggle but also elevates these figures.

The refined approach stands in stark contrast to earlier folios, such as folio 52r, where fantastical creatures engage in clumsy, almost laughable attempts at combat. In these earlier folios, figures are less stylized and lack detailed features; their movements appear stiff and awkward, reflecting an obvious lack of proficiency in combat. For example, the monk-like creature on folio 52r clumsily holds a bow and arrow, its hand struggling to grip the bowstring in a way that conveys ineptitude (Figure 2). This exaggerated lack of skill, combined with simplified, contoured forms, suggests that these monstrous figures are intended to be objects of humor or scorn, mocked for their grotesque incompetence. By portraying these creatures as caricatures of combat, the artist emphasizes their inferiority, both physically and spiritually, compared to the refined human figures of folios 81v–82r (Figure 3).

This deliberate distinction between the bumbling, humorous creatures of the early marginalia and the sophisticated, poised human combatants of folios 81v–82r serves a significant thematic purpose and aligns with the manuscript's core spiritual purpose as a Book of Hours. In the context of the Hours of Jesus Crucified, these refined human figures could symbolize a heightened level of spiritual or moral virtue, portraying humanity's battle with sin and temptation with a sense of dignity and strength absent in earlier depictions of hybrid creatures.

The difference between folios enhances the manuscript's emotional and thematic range, as the earlier folios introduce moments of levity through grotesque, awkward figures that serve as comedic relief, distancing viewers from the main religious narrative. Folios 81v–82r eliminate

that levity, shifting to a serious and intense portrayal of conflict. This stylistic change likely serves to elevate the viewer's contemplation of Christ's suffering, and the spiritual struggles represented in the Hours of Jesus Crucified. By presenting naturalistic, skilled human combatants in a moment of intense, realistic conflict, the manuscript invites viewers to recognize the weight of their own spiritual battles, symbolically aligned with the ultimate sacrifice of Christ.

In this way, the manuscript's progression from caricatured, incompetent figures to refined, skillful combatants reflects a broader medieval understanding of *contemptus mundi,*[11] or disdain for earthly frivolity, as articulated by Bernard of Cluny in his moralistic critiques of worldly corruption and human folly. The grotesque figures in earlier folios represent worldly foolishness, while the dignified human combatants embody a noble spiritual struggle, elevating the manuscript's devotional intent.

The two men fighting naked introduces a distinctly different kind of comedic effect. Their nudity and exaggerated physicality offer an absurd and unexpected visual narrative that, while humorous, is grounded in a raw and unembellished human experience. This contrasts with the more abstract and surreal humor aroused by the distorted and hybrid forms found elsewhere in the manuscript. Moreover, the stylistic choices in these folios enhance their unique comedic quality. The illustrations are rendered with full color and a level of detail that gives them a sense of weight and presence, diverging from the playful, almost flippant, nature of contour line drawings seen in the majority of illustrated sections. The intricate rendering of the figures suggests a level of seriousness that paradoxically amplifies the absurdity of their actions, creating a tension that heightens the humor. Both the humor and the style of the folios reflect the diverse approaches medieval artists employed in their marginalia. By contrasting the fully rendered

[11] Bernard of Cluny, *The Heavenly Land from the De Contemptu Mundi of Bernard de Morlaix, Monk of Cluny (XII Century)* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1867), Princeton Theological Seminary Library.

illustrations of the fighting men with the less formal line drawings found elsewhere, the artist not only plays with the expectations of the viewer but also highlights the multifaceted nature of humor itself. It invites a broader interpretation, challenging the notion that humor must always adhere to established norms or aesthetic consistencies.

CHAPTER 4: THE FUNERARY BIRD (FOLIO 55r)

This chapter examines the potential meanings and implications of both the primary scene and the marginalia of folio 55r, analyzing how these elements reflect broader social and theological beliefs of the medieval period. Through an exploration of the interactions between the figures and their placement within W.102, the layered messages within this folio are revealed, showing how boundaries within religious art are navigated. Analysis of folio 55r demonstrates how Relief theory is employed within the marginalia as a psychological release from the intensity of a religious life (Figure 4). This folio employs this theory, offering viewers a playful outlet that contrasts sharply with the formal religious script and imagery.

A striking example of how the real and fantastical are blurred appears on this folio, where a grotesque, hybrid creature occupies the margins along the bottom of a funerary text (the Office of the Dead). This figure, part bird and part human, stands upright with elongated legs and clawed feet, its skeletal, emaciated body hinting at a creature that may be caught between life and death. Feathered wings adorn its shoulders, while a long beak protrudes from a face bearing disturbingly human features. The figure seems to interact with a small green leaf or clover, delicately connected by a curling vine, drawing the viewer's eye along the intricate lines and curves of the folio's border.

Positioned beneath the solemn words of a funerary text, this creature's unsettling form and ambiguous action evoke both amusement and discomfort, embodying the type of visual humor that permeates the Book of Hours' margins. Such hybrid figures defy easy categorization, merging the familiar with the monstrous, and invite the viewer to reflect on themes of

transformation, mortality, and the unnatural. This initial encounter with the marginalia sets the tone for the manuscript's complex interaction between reverence and absurdity, establishing the margins as a space where medieval artists could explore unconventional and even subversive ideas within the format of a devotional text.

Within the initial "P", a somber scene unfolds, depicting figures praying at a funeral mass over the covered body of Christ, set upon a bier. Each figure's expression is meticulously detailed, capturing both the solemnity of the scene and the depth of human emotion. In a striking and unconventional detail, a yellowish-green leg of the deceased, wearing a shoe, dangles from the cloth covered the body (Figure 4). This foot extends beyond the boundaries of the initial, breaking the formal lines and introducing a sense of intrusion or disruption to the composition. This visual choice emphasizes the deceased body's presence, pushing against the confines of the initial and drawing the viewer's attention to the unsettling and unexpected nature of the scene. The interaction between the carefully composed figures and the protruding limb invites a complex response, balancing reverence with a hint of irreverent visual humor from the inconsistency of expectation.

The central text of folio 55r serves as a deeply pious reflection. The illuminated initial and the surrounding text urge the reader to focus on their spiritual obligations, perhaps even prompting contemplation of human frailty and mortality. In the context of such profound themes, the whimsical and grotesque figures that populate the margins offer a kind of respite—a break from the seriousness of the religious content. Utilizing Relief theory, we can interpret these humorous depictions as intentional contrasts, designed to alleviate the emotional and cognitive burden of the manuscript's core messages.

In the lower margin, a hybrid creature engages in an exaggerated, comical interaction, providing a moment of lightheartedness. This figure is juxtaposed with the script, reminding viewers of the unpredictability and irrationality of the world beyond the ordered text. For a medieval viewer, the grotesque might evoke laughter, which would temporarily lift the weight of religious contemplation. The function of these scenes, then, may not be exclusively decoration or indulgence in whimsy. Instead, they serve to disrupt the manuscript's serious, introspective tone by creating an unsettling contrast. While their absurdity might provoke laughter, the strange, exaggerated, or grotesque elements could also evoke a sense of unease, confronting viewers with the unpredictable and chaotic nature of the margins. This duality allows the scenes to oscillate between humor and horror, adding depth to the viewer's experience.

Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) provides a theory for understanding the strange and unsettling feelings evoked by certain images or experiences. The uncanny arises when something is both familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously, creating a sense of dissonance. The "uncanny element is in actuality nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed."[12] Freud associates the uncanny with moments where the boundary between the known and the unknown blurs, eliciting a mixture of fascination and discomfort.

While not formally part of the Relief theory, the uncanny offers valuable insight into the odd and eerie feelings provoked by marginalia such as the bird figure. The bird combines human and non-human elements in a way that distorts natural forms, evoking a sense of both recognition and alienation. The expected humanness of the bizarre bird unsettles the viewer, making the

[12] Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. New York: Penguin Books, 2003, 148.

humor ambiguous and layered. Instead of purely comic relief, such imagery teeters on the edge of the uncanny, drawing the audience into an experience that is as perplexing as it is entertaining.

This dynamic is particularly evident in folio 55r, where unsettling imagery is imbued with a sense of playfulness. The humor arises from the recognition of the absurd in what could otherwise be frightening or ominous, transforming a source of fear into something manageable and even entertaining. By incorporating unnerving elements, the marginalia plays on the reader's subconscious anxieties, creating a humor that is cathartic precisely because it engages with fear. This suggests that the humor of the uncanny is not just about relief from tension but about the transformation of discomfort into delight to deepen the reader's connection to the manuscript by confronting and diffusing their fears.

Why might this 'funerary bird' be considered scary? The hybrid bird in the marginalia evokes an uncanny and frightful presence because of the symbolic weight birds carry in mythology and cultural belief systems. In her work *Birds: Metaphor of the Soul*, Maria-Àngels Roque explains that "birds are the messengers of gods; at a symbolic level, this gives them the capacity to predict, with their very presence, beneficial or harmful future events."[13] This association imbues birds with a duality of power: they can signify both divine guidance and ominous warnings, not only within the Christian religion. The hybridization of the bird, blending human or grotesque features with its natural form, disrupts this symbolic purity and transforms the creature into an unsettling figure. It no longer represents a straightforward divine messenger but instead suggests a distortion or corruption of that role.

Additionally, the connection between "nocturnal birds" and "ghosts, the souls of the dead,"[14] intensifies the unsettling nature of the hybrid bird. If nocturnal birds are already linked

[13] Roque, Maria-Àngels. "Birds: Metaphor of the soul." *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* 12 (2010): 97.
[14] Roque, 102.

to death and the supernatural, then a hybrid bird—unnatural in its form—compounds that fear by embodying a grotesque fusion that blurs the boundary between life, death, and the monstrous. This distortion undermines the comforting or familiar roles birds may traditionally hold, replacing them with something alien and frightening. Together, these symbolic associations render the hybrid bird a potent emblem of the uncanny, a figure that unsettles the viewer by embodying distorted divinity and haunting mortality.

The hybrid bird's presence is a feature of the folio's focus on death and the afterlife. This theme is further emphasized by the inclusion of a funeral scene and a fragment of the deceased's body, which serve as stark reminders of mortality and create a tangible connection between the earthly and spiritual realms. The bird's distorted and unnatural form amplifies this sentiment, transforming the symbolic role of birds as intermediaries into something eerie and foreboding. Instead of offering comfort or divine guidance, the bird's grotesque appearance evokes unease, heightening the theme of death. Its uncanny nature, paired with the funeral imagery, forces the viewer to confront the liminal space between life and death, infusing the scene with a haunting resonance that reflects our deeper anxieties surrounding mortality and the unknown.

Such anxiety is what drives the Relief theory. The humor that the figure provides, at least in comparison to the visual of a dead body, might help to sustain a reader's focus and emotional investment, fostering a connection between the sacred and the wearisome aspects of life. The interspersing of humor alongside devotion reinforces the idea that even in pious reflection, there is room for lightness—a subtle acknowledgment that faith, too, exists within the full spectrum of human experience.

CHAPTER 5: ‘ARROW TO THE HINDQUARTERS’ (FOLIOS 89v – 90r)

A common motif amongst manuscripts is an “arrow to the hindquarters.” “In most cases, the arrows might be seen as metaphors for God’s punishment of sinners, where the victims are monsters or monkeys.”[15] For the W.102 *Book of Hours*, with its significant number of grotesques, it was highly likely that this motif would be included.Spanning across folios 89v and 90r, instead of a monster, the illustrator depicts a man being targeted by an archer (Figure 5). What might dizzyingly be considered a centaur on folio 90r contorts its body to face the man to its left, pulling the bowstring, aimed to shoot at his hindquarters. This motif is not random, nor unimportant. The Psalmist describes God striking His enemies “in the hindquarters” (Psalm 78:66). Additionally, arrows symbolize “evildoers who, like arrows, aim their bitter words, shooting....at the innocent man” (Psalm 64:3–5).[16]

In the medieval era, the bow and arrow were considered unchivalrous weapons, as they allowed for killing from a distance without direct confrontation, bypassing the honor associated with face-to-face combat. Would it still be considered an unchivalrous weapon if a grotesque were the one using the bow and arrow? Certainly, seeing a horse head and body with an anatomically detailed torso of a man is unnatural enough, let alone seeing him wield a bow. Both figures on these folios are benighted: the man crudely picks his nose and the centaur’s butt crack is seemingly on display.

The folios from W.102 are unique in a number of ways. The marginalia and their narrative elements are not restricted to a single folio, as 89v and 90r are a prime example of this

[15] Camille, 108.
[16] Camille, 106.

interactive bifolio. From across one side, anticipated movement from the arrow into the man’s behind creates a sense of expectation. Other manuscripts with this same motif, such as *Queste de Saint Graal*, illuminate for us that someone is meant to be punished in this depiction. The man on 89v receiving the arrow is not afraid of the centaur or its intentions, but instead he gestures to his own behind and nose (Figure 6).

As explored in the introduction, rules against humor and frivolity were austere during the medieval period, and even in prior eras. Basil the Great, an influential theologian and bishop in the 4th century, addressed the topic of humor in his writings, notably in *The Long Rules*, a guide he wrote for monastic life. Basil advocated for a disciplined, devout lifestyle and was cautious about humor, which he viewed as potentially undermining spiritual focus and moral integrity. Basil saw laughter and jesting as potentially corrosive to the monastic ideals of humility and self-restraint, as they might encourage pride, looseness in speech, or indulgence in worldly concerns. According to him, “raucous laughter and uncontrollable shaking of the body are not indications of a well-regulated soul, or of personal dignity, or self-mastery.”[17] An even stronger statement comes from Ephrem the Syrian, a 4th-century Christian theologian, poet, and hymnist who strongly stated, “Laughter is the beginning of destruction of the soul, o monk; when you notice something of that, know that you have arrive at the depth of the evil. Then do not cease to pray God, that he might rescue you from this death.”[18]

Early texts of Greek philosophy and early Christian thought suggest that laughter served no function beyond deviation from religious limitation, however, the motif found on folios 89v and 90r suggests otherwise. While the “arrow in the hindquarters” image in W.102 may seem

[17] Basil the Great, *The Long Rules,* trans. M. Wagner, *The Fathers of the Church Series,* vol. 9 (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1950), 271.
[18] P.S. Frank, *Angelioks Bios* (Munster: Aschendorffsche: Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964), 145.

purely humorous at first glance, its mischievousness does not entirely abandon religious meaning or discipline. Medieval artists and scribes often used humor not as an overt method to undermine religious values, but rather to engage viewers in a deeper, multifaceted experience of faith. The humorous image of a figure being shot in the backside exists to emphasize religious meaning by reminding viewers of human vulnerability, fallibility, and the need for humility—key virtues in Christian doctrine. This type of humor strongly aligns with the Superiority theory, inviting viewers to laugh at the figure’s misfortune while also subtly reflecting on the consequences of pride or folly. In a religious context, such imagery serves as a warning or reminder of one’s position in the moral hierarchy, encouraging humility and self-awareness. Humor works as a teaching tool, reinforcing moral lessons through a lighthearted but effective approach, which is, in essence, an indirect method of maintaining discipline. Rather than contradicting religious values, the playfulness in the marginalia serves to reinforce them by offering an accessible, memorable depiction of human flaws and the divine order.

CONCLUSION

The Walters Museum's W.102 Book of Hours provides a fascinating lens through which to explore the role of humor in medieval religious manuscripts. This study examines the manuscript's elaborate and often irreverent marginalia through art historical analysis and the three primary theories of humor—Incongruity, Relief, and Superiority—using Morreall's humor theory anthology as a foundation. These illustrations offer not only spiritual lessons but also subtle critiques of societal and moral norms, creating a complex relationship between devotion and humor within the manuscript.

The folios of W.102 exemplify the depth and versatility of humor in medieval marginalia, each engaging with humor theories in distinct ways. The hybrid monk on folio 52r encapsulates all three major humor theories—its incongruity arises from the clash between animalistic features and monastic sanctity, Relief emerges through exaggerated moral failings, and Superiority reinforces a critique of corruption. The chaotic battles on folios 81v and 82 similarly blend Relief and Superiority, offering both catharsis and commentary on disorder. The funerary bird on folio 55r juxtaposes solemnity and humor through Incongruity and Relief, subtly engaging with Freud's concept of the uncanny to unsettle the viewer. Lastly, the "arrow in the hindquarters" motif on folios 89v and 90r employs Superiority to turn misfortune into a humorous reflection on human vulnerability.

Altogether, the humor in medieval marginalia serves as a dynamic tool for social critique, emotional engagement, and theological reflection, reinforcing the manuscript's multifaceted role in medieval devotional life. Through this interdisciplinary approach, the W.102 *Book of Hours*

emerges as a cultural artifact that reflects the tensions, anxieties, and paradoxes of medieval culture. The manuscript's marginalia—ranging from playful grotesques to absurd, irreverent scenarios—challenge conventional boundaries between reverence and sacrilege within religious art. These illustrations provide a unique insight into the medieval worldview, in which spirituality and humor were not mutually exclusive but intricately intertwined.

FIGURES

Figure 1: The Walters Art Museum. *Book of Hours* (W.102), fol. 49r. Baltimore, MD, 14th century.

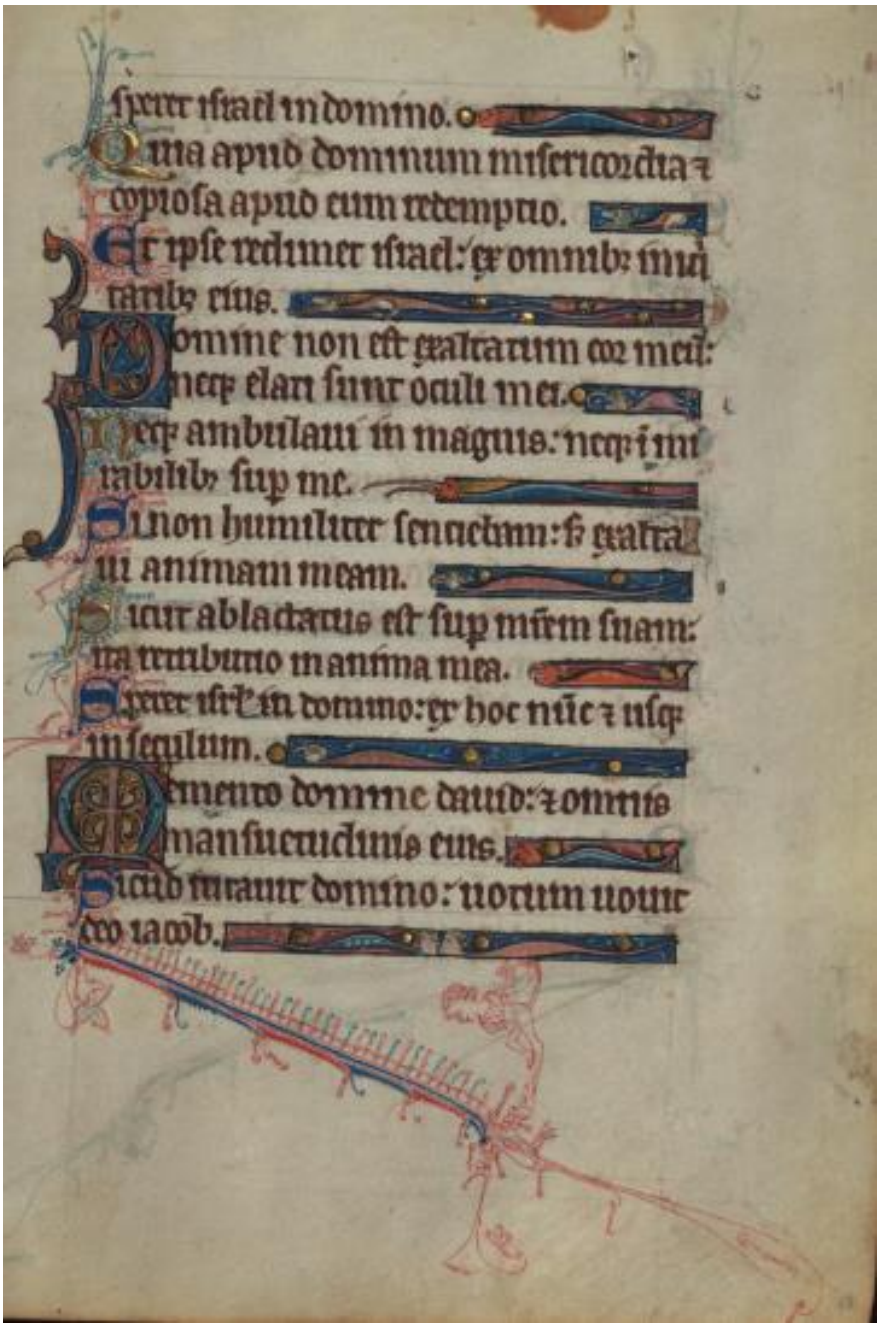


Figure 2: The Walters Art Museum. *Book of Hours* (W.102), fol. 52r. Baltimore, MD, 14th century.

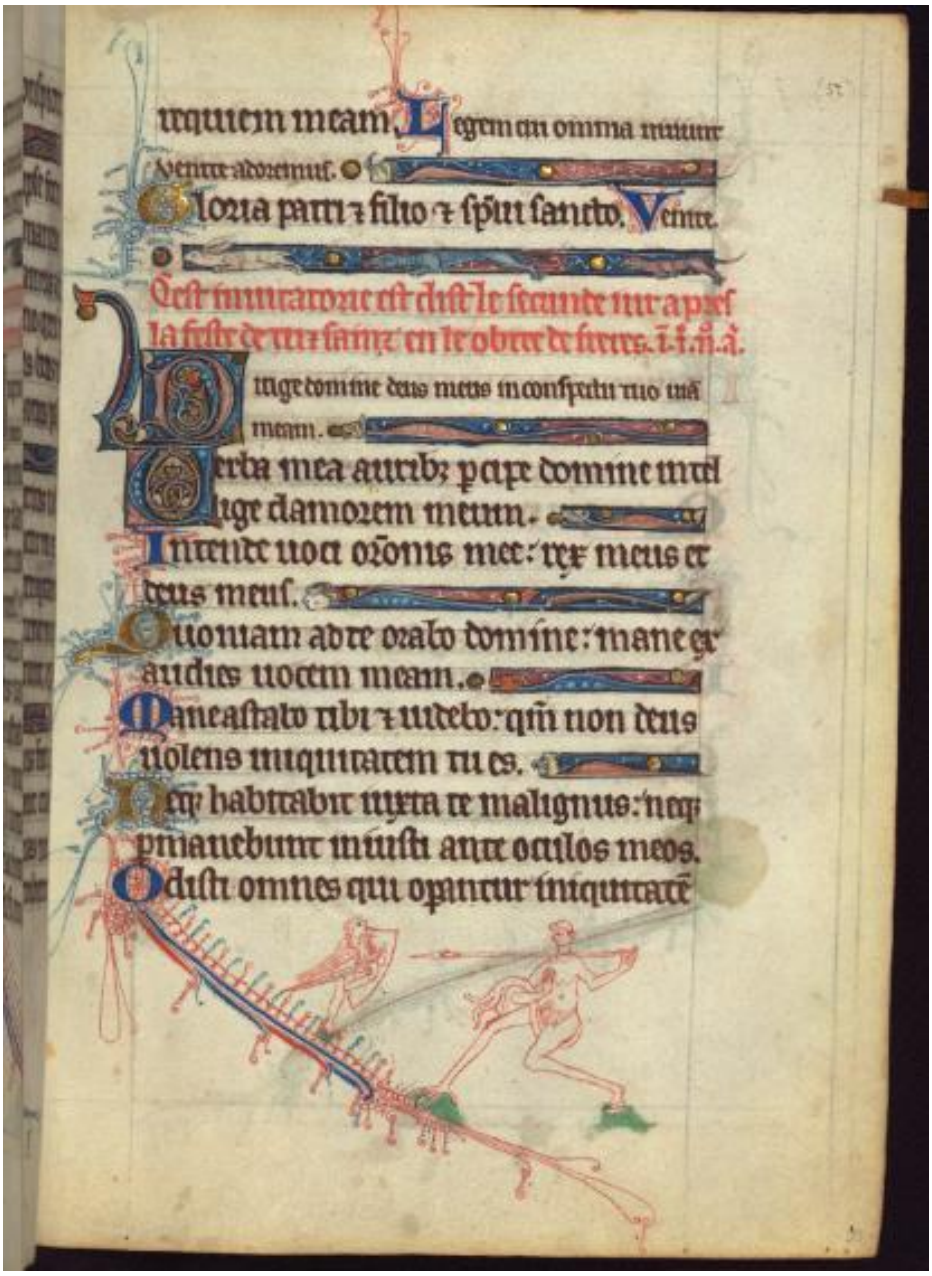


Figure 3: The Walters Art Museum. *Book of Hours* (W.102), fols. 81v–82r. Baltimore, MD, 14th century.

Figure 4: The Walters Art Museum. *Book of Hours* (W.102), fol. 55r. Baltimore, MD, 14th century.

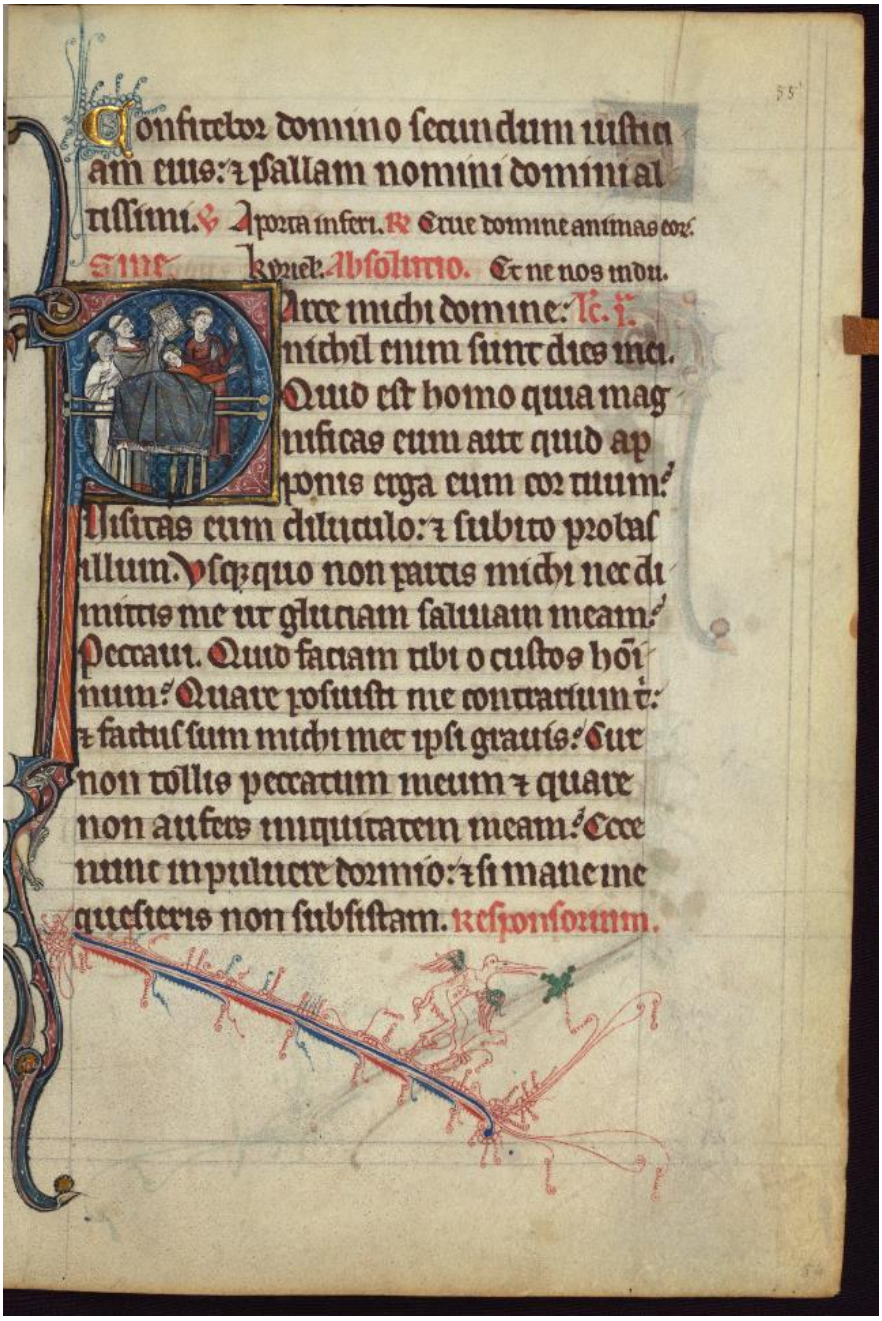
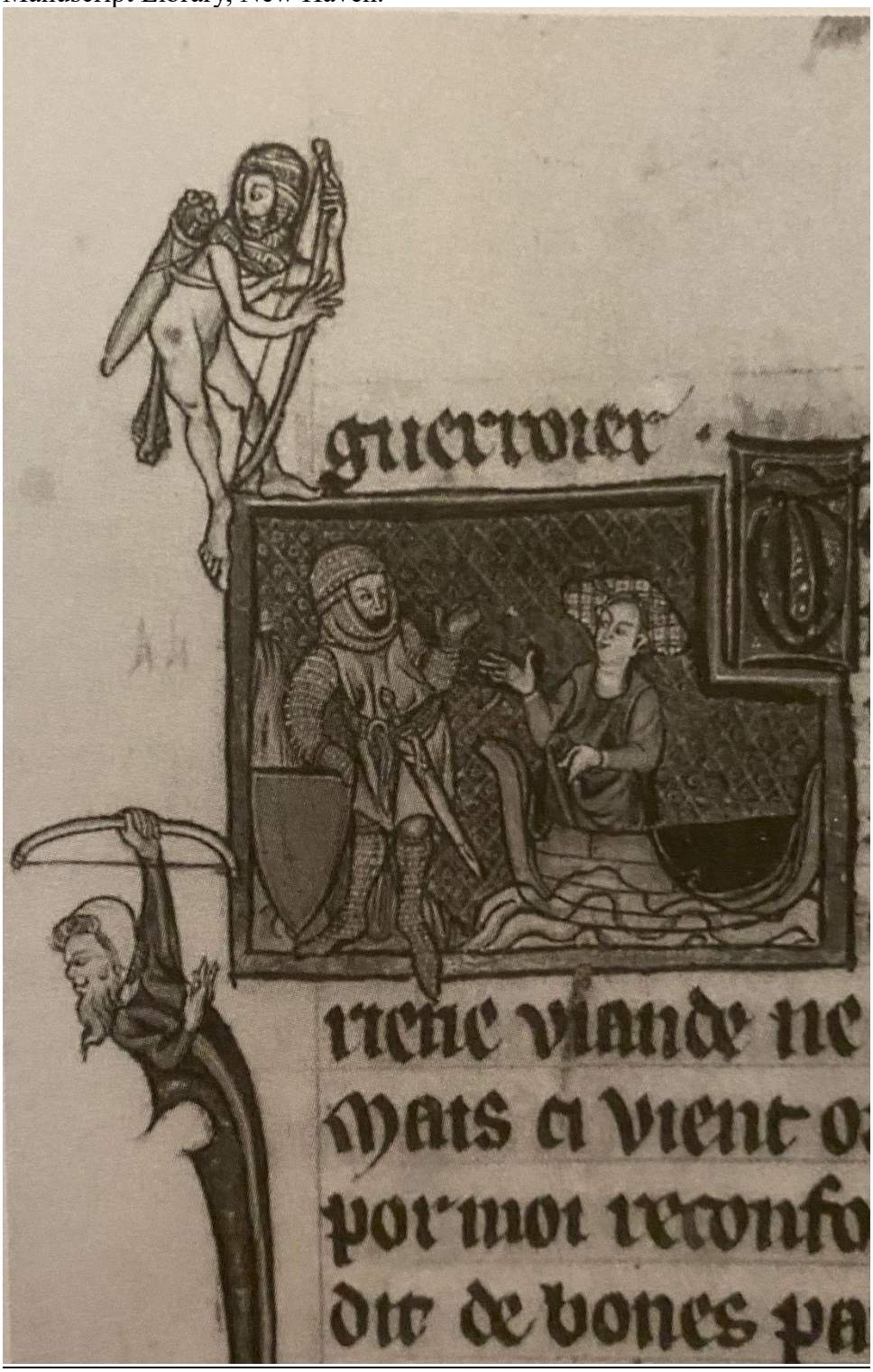


Figure 5: The Walters Art Museum. *Book of Hours* (W.102), fols. 89v-90 Baltimore, MD, 14th century.

Figure 6: *Queste de Saint Graal* (c. 1290-1300). MS 229, fol. 220r. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Book of Hours (c. 1300), MS W.102, The Walters Art Museum.

Bovey, Alixe. *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts*. London: The British Library, 2002.

Brown, Kate. "Positioning, Place, and Penetration: The Marginal Sciopod of the Rutland Psalter." *Gesta* 53, no. 2 (2014): 145–163.

Camille, Michael. *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*. London: Reaktion Books, 2019.

Celle, Peter of. *Peter of Celle: Selected Works*. Translated by Hugh Feiss. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987.

Cluny, of Bernard. *The Heavenly Land from the De Contemptu Mundi of Bernard de Morlaix, Monk of Cluny (XII Century)*. New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1867. Princeton Theological Seminary Library.

Dadlez, E. M. "Truly Funny: Humor, Irony, and Satire as Moral Criticism." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 45, no. 1 (2011): 1–17. https://doi.org/10.5406/jaesteduc.45.1.0001.

Da Rold, Orietta. "Medieval Clerical Culture: The Sociology of Scrips and the Significance of Scribal Quirks". *Speculum*, vol 99, no. 3 (2024) https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/epdf/10.1086/730679

De Hamel, Christopher. *The British Library Guide to Manuscript Illumination*. London: British Library, 2001.

Douglas, Mary, 'Jokes', *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology,* London, 1975.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. New York: Penguin Books, 2003.

Greenhill, Eleanor S. "A Fourteenth-Century Workshop of Manuscript Illuminators and Its Localization." *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 40, no. 1 (1977): 1–25. https://doi.org/10.2307/1482032.

Harthan, John. The Book of Hours: With a Historical Survey and Commentary. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1977.

Heintzelman, Matthew Z. "Gone, but Not Forgotten: The Office for the Dead in Books of Hours." https://hmml.org/stories/series-death-gone-but-not-forgotten/.

Horace. *Satires, Epistles, Ars Poetica*. Translated by H. Rushton Fairclough. Loeb Classical Library 194. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926. Lines 1–5.

McGraw, A. Peter, and Caleb Warren. "Benign Violations: Making Immoral Behavior Funny." *Psychological Science* 21, no. 8 (2010): 1141–49. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41062345.

Morreall, J. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987.

Morreall, J. *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor.* Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Panofsky, Erwin. *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1939.

Prudentius. *Prudentius*. Translated by H.J. Thomson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1949.

Queste de Saint Graal (c. 1290-1300). MS 229, fol. 220r. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven. 467 x 343 mm.

Reiss, Edmond. "Medieval Irony." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42, no. 2 (1981): 209–26. https://doi.org/10.2307/2709317.

Roque, Maria-Àngels. "Birds: Metaphor of the soul." *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* 12 (2010): 96-108. https://www.iemed.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Birds.pdf

Van Dijk, Wilco W., and Jaap W. Ouwerkerk, editors. *Schadenfreude: Understanding Pleasure at the Misfortune of Others*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Wieck, Roger S. *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life*. New York: George Braziller in association with the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 1988