

HERE DOGGY! IT'S PRAYER TIME

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD, MAN, AND DOG IN THE FOURTEENTH-CENTURY *MARGARET HOURS*

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A high degree of intimacy between humans and other animals is expressed in the keeping of animals as pet companions. This practice was common as early as Ancient Greece and Rome and regained popularity during the thirteenth century. In this period, dogs began to play a vital role in domestic life and so became a favourite pet among nobles in the fourteenth century. Contrary to hunting or working dogs, pet dogs were given names and had privileges within their owners' households. By virtue of their special status, they even accompanied their owners to church, despite the condemnation of this practice by church officials. This reflects a special relationship that was established during the fourteenth century between man, animals, and the divine. This paper focuses on the trilateral connection of God, humans, and dogs in a book of hours known as the Margaret Hours (c. 1320), where a dog and the praying book owner are depicted side-by-side in various illustrations. Special attention is given to a framed miniature presenting the lady, in prayer, next to a dog and a collared bird. Through this miniature, this paper will demonstrate the participation of both the lady and the dog in prayer.

1 Translation of the tale in Sean Babbs, "Instruction from the Book of Creation: Animals and Mendicant Preaching in the Thirteenth Century," MA thesis, (University of Colorado, 2017), 40.

The thirteenth-century preacher Odo of Cheriton was famous for his use of animal characters in fables and exempla. In one of his tales, a knight asks a scholar, "Are there not dogs and birds in Heaven?" When the scholar affirms that there are none, the knight complains, "Certainly, if there were dogs and birds, I would more desire to go there".¹ This passage reflects the church's position on the exclusion of animals from Paradise.² However, the nobleman's

strong affection for dogs and birds is also apparent and is reflected in his wish to spend his time with these animals, even in Heaven. Thus, the story illustrates different approaches to the trilateral connection between God, man, and animal.

The subject of sharing the heavenly experience with other animals is not commonplace in medieval art, yet a distinct representation of it can be seen in a framed miniature located in a fourteenth-century book of hours known as the *Margaret Hours* (c. 1320).³ It presents a kneeling female figure gazing towards the initial on the following folio, which depicts the Ascension of Christ.⁴ The woman's position, together with the open book she is holding, indicates that she is in the midst of prayer. She is accompanied by a dog and a collared bird, which are looking in the same direction. Both the bird and the devotee look directly at the initial, while the dog must twist its head back to look at it (Fig. 1). The three figures appear in a distinct framed miniature format as well as against a gilded background, both elements highlighting their activity.

Human figures in prayer frequently appeared in this period in prayer books, including books of hours, which were often used in private devotion. These figures are widely recognized as representations of the book owners.⁵ Secular aristocratic women as owners, readers, and patrons of books of hours are prevalent in the literature,⁶ as are female devotee figures in devotional manuscripts.⁷ The praying woman in the *Margaret Hours* is identified as a representation of the book owner, a noble lady from St. Omer or Théroutane in northern France,⁸ although her identity remains unknown.⁹ In addition to the miniature in question, the praying woman appears approximately thirty times more throughout the manuscript. The figure is wearing a contemporary outfit, a heavy cloak, and her hair is covered with a veil and a wimple. While in the margins, she is praying in close proximity to the historiated initials, gazing towards the holy scenes.

2 Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 201–3.

3 The manuscript today is split between The British Museum, where it is catalogued as add. 36684, and The Morgan Library & Museum, where it is catalogued as MS. M. 754. Both parts are digitized and accessible online.

4 The Morgan Library & Museum, "Medieval & Renaissance Manuscripts," accessed May 26, 2019, <http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/202/128495>.

5 Adelaide Bennett, "Making Literate Lay Women Visible: Text and Image in French and Flemish Books of Hours, 1220–1320," in *Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture: Liminal Spaces*, ed. Elina Gertsman and Jill Stevenson (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2012), 125–58, especially 130–46; Alison Stones, "Some Portraits of Women in Their Books, Late Thirteenth–Early Fourteenth Century," in *Livres et lectures de femmes en Europe entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance*, ed. Anne-Marie Legaré (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 3, 7–14; Alexa Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

6 Susan Groag Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay

Piety and Ambassadors of Culture," *Signs* 7, no. 4 (1982): 742–67. See also: Virginia Reinburg, "'For the Use of Women': Women and Books of Hours," *Early Modern Women*, no. 4 (2009): 235–40; Adelaide Bennett, "Making Literate Lay Women Visible," 125–58.

7 Alison Stones, "Some Portraits of Women in Their Books," 1, 7; Adelaide Bennett, "Making Literate Lay Women Visible," 136.

8 Alison Stones, *Gothic Manuscripts 1260–1320, Part One* (London: Harvey Miller, 2013), 2: 593; Il Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 11, 53; Paula Gerson, "Margins for Eros," *Romance Languages Annual* 5, (1993): 47–48.

9 Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge*, 11; and Alison Stones, *Gothic Manuscripts 1260–1320*, 593 suggest the book owners' first name is 'Margaret', because the manuscript contains a text of the Life of St. Margaret. Paula Gerson, "Margins for Eros," 48 and Judith Steinhoff, "Pregnant Pages: Marginalia in a Book of Hours (Pierpont Morgan Library Ms. M.754/British Library, Ms. Add.36684)," in *Between the Picture and the Word: Manuscript Studies from the Index of Christian Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Dept. of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University

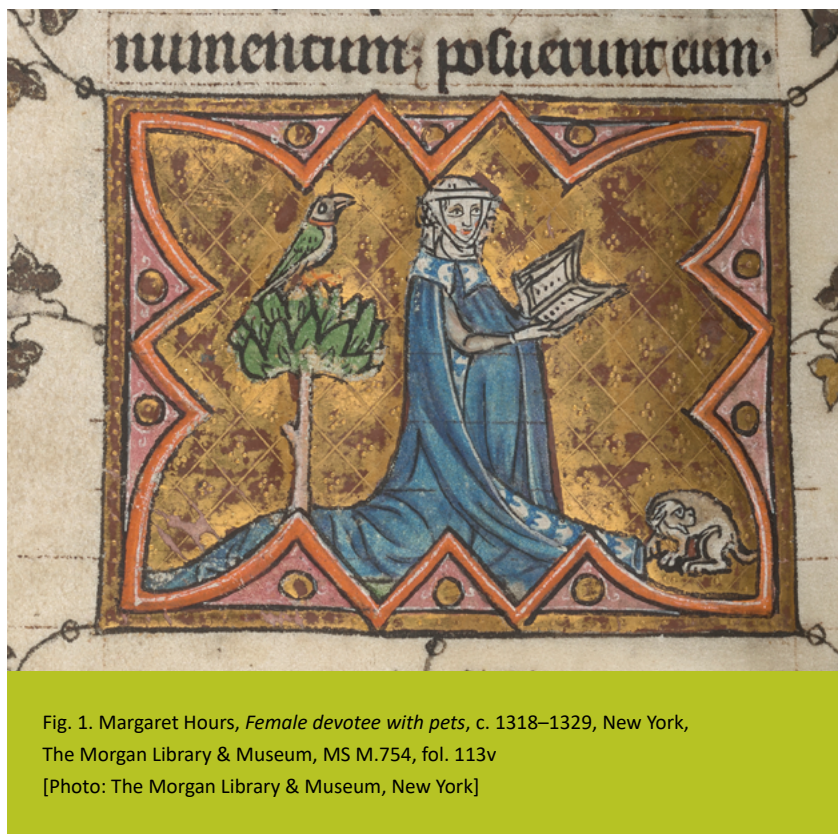


Fig. 1. Margaret Hours, *Female devotee with pets*, c. 1318–1329, New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.754, fol. 113v
[Photo: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York]

Since the artist has used framed miniatures only rarely, the noblewoman's devotional activity confined in the rectangular format stands out among the rest of the marginalia. Throughout the manuscript, there are only three more instances in which the artist has chosen this format. The additional framed miniatures are St. Lawrence on the Gridiron, at the end of a prayer addressed to archangels;¹⁰ the scene of St. Martin dividing his cloak in front of the Beggar, at the beginning of the *Hours of the Holy Cross*;¹¹ and the *Crucifixion*, in which a sword pierces the Virgin's chest, preceding the Passion according to John.¹² The connection of the depictions of St. Lawrence and St. Martin to the text they are paired with is not clear,¹³ but the images of the crucifixion and the

praying devotee present conventional subjects associated with the text they are prefacing.¹⁴ Following Michael Camille's analysis of the devotee's appearances in the margins,¹⁵ Judith Steinhoff identified the lady in the miniature as being pregnant, pointing to the drapery that emphasizes the curve of her belly. The devotee's pregnancy is compatible with the text on the recto, the Life of St. Margaret, who is known as the saint of childbirth.¹⁶ Contrary to the three other framed images, which depict scenes from the lives of saints and from the Holy Scriptures, the images of the book owner in private prayer address the themes of pregnancy and devotional activity in an intimate manner and express the book owner's personal wish to have a child.¹⁷ Yet, the framed miniature also emphasizes prayer in the company of animals. Furthermore, the book owner is shown in prayer with a dog lying at her feet in eleven of her depictions in the marginalia, and only once she is accompanied by a bird.¹⁸ The consistent recurrence of the dog indicates a unique theme — the significance of praying with animals — as well as the singling out of the dog figure in the context of prayer.

In order to examine this unique connection between the devotee and the pet dog, I will first compare it to two other manuscripts that share the same theme, a devotee praying in the company of a dog. Scholars have noted the symbolic ambivalence of the companion dog, as a signifier of fidelity on one hand, as distraction from prayer on the other hand, and additionally as a status symbol attesting the nobility of the woman.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the dog in the *Margaret Hours* is unique for his attentive presence close by the devotee. It has multiple appearances in marginalia in addition to the framed miniature, and it is usually looking at the devotee and the holy scene. These characteristics call for a reconsideration of the relationship between dog and devotee in the *Margaret Hours*. For this purpose, the historical developments in human–animal relations in the pertinent period will be outlined, providing the foundation for reviewing the relations between humans and dogs, as well as church conceptions regarding the relations between God and other animals. Finally,

in association with Penn State Press, 2005), 181 doubt this suggestion, since the integration of the Life of St. Margaret in devotional manuscripts owned by women was popular from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, and not all of the book owners were named 'Margaret'.

10 The image is available in the British library, add. 36684, folio 155r.

11 The image is available in the Morgan Library & Museum, MS. M. 754, folio 55r.

12 The image is available in the Morgan Library & Museum, MS. M. 754, folio 104v.

13 Paula Gerson, "Margins for Eros," 48.

14 Judith Steinhoff, "Pregnant Pages," 180–86.

15 Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge*, 53–54. Camille draws attention to another depiction of the female figure in the marginalia as pregnant. He suggests the pregnancy presents a liminal stage that is not resolved in a depiction of birth. This adds another dimension to his argument of the liminal status of the devotee figure between the sacred text and the profane images in the margins.

16 Judith Steinhoff, "Pregnant Page," 181–82.

17 Ibid., 182, 185.

18 The pairing of devotee and dog appears in the marginalia of both parts of the manuscript. In the part catalogued as Add. MS. 36684 in The British Museum, the pair appears in folios 39r, 49r and 60r. In the part catalogued as MS. M. 754 in The Morgan Library & Museum, they appear in folios 9r, 38r, 51r, 63v, 71v, 78r, 113v and 114r.

19 Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets* (Woodbridge; Rochester: Boydell Press, 2012), 81–83; Nigel Morgan, “Gendered Devotions and Social Rituals: The Aspremont Psalter – ‘Hours’ and the Image of the Patron in Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth-Century France,” *Melbourne Art Journal*, 6 (2003): 17; Alexa Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art*, 218; Patrik Reuterswärd, “The Dog in the Humanist’s Study,” in *The Visible and Invisible in Art: Essays in the History of Art*, ed. Patrik Reuterswärd (Vienna: IRSA, 1991), 213; Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, “Piero della Francesca’s Fresco of Sigismondo Pandolfò Malatesta before St. Sigismund: ΘΕΩΛΙ ΑΘΑΝΑΤΩΙ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΙ ΠΟΛΕΙ,” *The Art Bulletin* 56, No. 3 (1974): 365–67.

20 The theme of dogs as companions in prayer is recognized in the literature, yet it has not been systematically addressed and calls for further exploration. The appearance of this theme between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries in

a re-examination of the interactions in the case study between the animals, the devotee, and God will be proposed. In contrast with the traditional symbolism, the dog and the bird in the miniature will be reconsidered as presentations of actual pet animals, accompanying their owner in her prayer. It will show how the interaction between the devotee and the pet dog suggests that the dog possesses a unique status, beyond that of a mere companion in prayer.

ICONOGRAPHY OF THE DOG AS A PRAYER COMPANION

The depiction of pet dogs as companions to a devotee can also be seen in other manuscripts made around the early fourteenth century.²⁰ The two additional manuscripts discussed below include the pairing of devotee and dog, with a dog looking at the praying book owner in a similar way as the *Margaret Hours* dog, which makes them suitable for comparison. They also share with the *Margaret Hours* other basic elements: they are French devotional manuscripts, used for private prayer and owned by wealthy secular women. The *Aspremont-Kievraing Psalter-Hours* (c. 1300) was probably produced in Lorraine and originally belonged to Joffroy, Seigneur d’Aspremont, and his wife, Isabelle de Kievraing, who came from the noble Hainault family.²¹ The majority of the portraits in the manuscript are identified as depictions of Isabelle, with over eighty appearances during prayer.²² Pet dogs accompany the patroness only three times.²³ The low frequency of pet dogs beside the noblewoman demonstrates the minor place of the theme in the manuscript. Moreover, only in one depiction is the pet dog actively responding to the devotee’s prayer. The dog stands behind the praying female figure with its head raised, as if glancing at the manuscript she is reading (Fig. 2). In contrast to the dog depicted in the *Margaret Hours*, in the *Aspremont-Kievraing* manuscript the dog shows interest in the prayer activity only once, and only at the *base-de-page*, as a marginal image. Not only the dog, but the scene of prayer in the *Aspremont-Kievraing* is different from the prayer in the *Margaret Hours* since the devotee in the former is not addressing a sacred scene. As a result of the



Fig. 2. Aspremont-Kievraing Psalter-Hours, *Praying book owner with a dog*, c. 1290–1300, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Douce 118, fol. 169r
[Photo: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford]

rarity of the dog-and-devotee-pair motif, the singularity of the attentive dog, and the marginal placement of the prayer scene, the act of praying with the dog is not emphasized as a theme in the manuscript.

Another illustration, which shows many similarities to the miniature under discussion, is a representation of a dog with a female praying figure in the *Psalter-Hours of Yolande de Soissons* (c. 1290) (Fig. 3). Current research shows that the manuscript was commissioned by Comtesse de la Table, Yolande's stepmother, an aristocratic woman who lived in the diocese of Amiens, in Picardy.²⁴ The prayer book includes thirty-nine full-page miniatures,²⁵ one of them depicting a kneeling devotee joining her hands in prayer, while her gaze is fixed on the altar where the Virgin and Child are sitting. An architectural frame separates

private prayer books is mentioned in Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, "Piero della Francesca's Fresco of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta before St. Sigismund," 365; Lilian Randall, *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 195–96; More recently, Kathleen Walker-Meikle further noted the theme also appearing in devotional manuscripts in the fifteenth and sixteenth century: Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 83.

21 Nigel Morgan, "Gendered Devotions and Social Rituals: The Aspremont Psalter – 'Hours,'" 5; Margaret M. Manion, *The Felton Illuminated Manuscripts in the National Gallery of Victoria* (Melbourne: Macmillan Art Publishing and National Gallery of Victoria, 2005), 100, 115. The manuscript is divided today between The National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, where it is catalogued as MS. Felton 1254/3, and The Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, where it is catalogued as Douce 118.

22 Maeve Doyle, "The Portrait Potential: Gender, Identity, and Devotion in Manuscript Owner Portraits, 1230-1320," PhD diss., (Bryn Mawr College, 2015), 127, 133.

23 The part of the manuscript located in Melbourne as MS. Felton 1254/3 contains two out of the three appearances of a pet dog next to Isabelle. This part is not digitized,



but the images are available in the comprehensive research of Margaret M. Manion, *The Felton Illuminated Manuscripts*, 146, 153.

24 Alison Stones, *Gothic Manuscripts 1260–1320*, 236–37; Alexa Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation*, 1–2.

25 Alison Stones, *Gothic Manuscripts 1260–1320*, 234.

Fig. 3. Psalter-Hours of Yolande de Soissons, *Book owner praying*, c. 1280–1290, New York, The Morgan Library, MS M.729, fol. 232v
[Photo: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York]

the inner scene from the various little animals positioned in individual niches that flank the frame on the outside. Unlike these animals, the little black dog beside the devotee is shown sitting next to the open prayer book and looking towards the altar, as does the female figure. There are two other dogs outside the frame, but the little dog within the frame is significant due to his position in the inner space, close to the devotee. Similar to the framed image from the *Margaret Hours*, the full-page miniature is also accentuated by its frame, and furthermore by its large scale. Nevertheless, the dog's size is identical to that of the other dogs in the frame. In the inner scene, it is very small in comparison with the devotee, the holy figures, and even the open book. It may indicate its being secondary in importance to the main interaction between the book owner and the holy figures. That is, the black dog stands out relative to the animals in the frame, but its place in the miniature is marginal. The three dogs (Fig. 1, 2, and 3) are similar in that all the dogs are situated close to a praying woman and gaze in the same direction as the devotee they accompany, but the *Margaret Hours* is distinct in giving a prominent place to the dog in the context of prayer.

The recurring appearance of the dog at the praying female figure's feet in the *Margaret Hours* demonstrates the consistent representation of a pet dog. Kathleen Walker-Meikle distinguishes between the hound and the pet dog in this manuscript.²⁶ She argues that while the hunting dog is often represented in the act of hunting and is characterized by a plain collar on its neck (Fig. 4), the pet dog is frequently shown with a belled collar.²⁷ Walker-Meikle further points out that the marginalia throughout the manuscript includes various little dogs with belled collars, their fur colours alternating between brown and grey (Fig. 5–6).²⁸ The difference between the hound and the pet dog is displayed, for example, in an image of a confrontation between them (Fig. 7). The large and lean hunting dog bites the back of a fat little puppy, which in turn bites the larger dog on its nose. Because of the noticeable disparity in the sizes of the two dogs, the smaller one is recognized as a pet dog, even though

26 Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 81–83.

27 *Ibid.*, 82.

28 *Ibid.*, 82–83.



Fig. 4. Margaret Hours, *Hound chasing a rabbit*, c. 1318–1329, London, The British Library, Add. MS 36684, fol. 135r
[Photo: The British Library Board]

29 Ibid., 82.

30 Sophie Oosterwijk, "From Biblical Beast to Faithful Friend: A Short Note on the Iconography of Footrests on Tomb Monuments," in *Our Dogs, Our Selves: Dogs in Medieval and Early Modern Art, Literature, and Society*, ed. Laura D. Gelfand (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 243–45; Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 75–78.

31 Sophie Oosterwijk, "From Biblical Beast to Faithful Friend," 246–47, 257–60.

32 Sophie Oosterwijk, "From Biblical Beast to Faithful Friend," 245;

it wears a plain white collar.²⁹ Thus, while a belled collar clearly signifies a pet dog, a simple collar does not necessarily indicate a hunting one. Conversely, the absence of a belled collar does not necessarily contradict the identification of a dog as a pet. In our case, the dog beside the praying woman appears with no collar at all (Fig. 1). Yet, the relative connection of the dog to the devotee can identify it as a pet, and its curled-up and snuggling pose adds another dimension to its characterizations as such. In other words, in addition to the collar as an attribute, in certain cases the dog can be identified as a pet by its close proximity to the devotee.

The depiction of pet dogs close to women is a familiar motif that also appears, for example, in funereal effigies.³⁰ Stone animals positioned at the feet of the deceased served as allegories of virtues.³¹ In this context, pet dogs symbolize matrimonial fidelity.³² Researchers have ascribed similar symbolism to images



Fig. 5. Margaret Hours,
A brown lap dog, c. 1318–1329,
London, The British Library, Add. MS
36684, fol. 106v [Photo: The British
Library Board]



Fig. 6. Margaret Hours,
A grey lap dog, c. 1318–1329,
New York, The Morgan Library &
Museum, MS M.754, fol. 13v
[Photo: The Morgan Library &
Museum, New York]

of pet dogs next to a devotee in private prayer books. The pet dog's fidelity symbolizes the book owner's faithfulness to Jesus; thus, it serves as an allegory to the virtue of faith.³³ Yet, in the three devotional manuscripts mentioned above, researchers have endowed the pet dog figure with other meanings. Walker-Meikle recognizes the multiple postures of the pet dog near the devotee in the *Margaret Hours* as a reinforcement of its characterization as a

Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 75; Emile Mâle, *Religious Art in France: The Late Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Iconography and its Sources*, trans. Marthiel Mathews and ed. Harry Bober (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 387.

frivolous and playful pet. She describes the dog as a symbol of earthly pleasures, as well as distractions during prayer.³⁴ Nigel Morgan offers a similar interpretation of the white dog behind the devotee in the *Aspremont-Kievraing Psalter-Hours*. He suggests viewing the mirroring of the devotee by a dog as a satirical representation of the act of prayer. The dog's mimicking is understood as mocking the devotee's act of prayer. By this contradiction, the purpose of the dog is, according to Morgan, to draw the reader's attention to the need to concentrate during prayer.³⁵ Alexa Sand suggests a different function of the dog figure in the *Psalter-Hours of Yolande de Soissons*. She identifies it as a pet, attesting to the social status of the aristocratic woman.³⁶ At the time, the pet dog was seen as an attribute of noble ladies, confirming their wealth.³⁷ Accordingly, the little black dog is recognized as a status symbol of the wealthy devotee. This interpretation addresses the cultivation of pet dogs in historical-social terms but also indicates the pet dog's marginality in the scene, as it emphasizes the dog as an object of human possession. Thus, the symbolic-iconographic lens emphasizes human traits, the pet dog functioning as a detail in the characterization of the female devotee. In comparison with the two psalter-hours mentioned above, the connection between the female

33 Patrik Reuterswärd, "The Dog in the Humanist's Study," 213; Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, "Piero della Francesca's Fresco of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta before St. Sigismund," 365–67.

34 Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 81, 82–83.

35 Nigel Morgan, "Gendered Devotions and Social Rituals: The Aspremont Psalter – 'Hours,'" 17.

36 Alexa Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation*, 218.

37 Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 80–81.



Fig. 7. Margaret Hours, *A hound bites a lap dog*, c. 1318–1329, London, The British Library, Add. MS 36684, fol. 91v
[Photo: The British Library Board]

devotee and the dog in the *Margaret Hours* is distinct in its intensity, which is illustrated by the dog's multiple appearances in close proximity to the praying devotee, and its gazing towards the holy scene in the initial. It is underscored as well in the context of prayer in the framed miniature. The dog breaks out of its traditional marginality in relation to the devotee. For this reason, it indicates a strong connection between humans and dogs, which may be reconsidered in light of the changes in human–animal relationships during that period.

ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND BEYOND: COMPLEXITY IN GOD–HUMAN–CANINE RELATIONS

The dominant perception of human–animal relations is the anthropocentric approach, which determines human supremacy over the animal kingdom. This approach has been rooted in Western culture since Aristotle and throughout the Holy Scriptures. Over the years, thinkers and theologians have grounded this perception by rejecting the existence of rational capacities in animals.³⁸ The distinction between humans and other animals is also reflected in the meaning of the term “animal” during medieval times. Medieval Christians used the Latin word *animal*, in its original sense, to refer to all living, moving, breathing beings, human and non-human alike. For example, in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*, written early in the seventh century, humans are included under the definition of *Animalia*.³⁹ A linguistic distinction between humans and other animals appears only in the twelfth century in vernacular languages, such as English and French.⁴⁰ These developments became an established boundary in language, which reinforced the human–animal divide.

As Sophia Menache notes, the basic elements in the anthropocentric conception of human–animal relations are also demonstrated in hostility towards canines. Our understanding of the negative symbolism of dogs in medieval imagery is in accordance with the anthropocentric perception.⁴¹ This attitude towards canines is rooted in the Bible and the New Testament, where dogs are

38 Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals*, 1–3, 12–16, 195–98; Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500–1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 30–31; Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 5–6.

39 Cited in Brigitte Resl, “Introduction: Animals in Culture, ca. 1000– ca. 1400,” in *A Cultural History of Animals in the Medieval Age*, ed. Brigitte Resl (New York: Berg, 2007), 9–10.

40 Brigitte Resl, “Introduction: Animals in Culture, ca. 1000– ca. 1400,” 9–10.

41 Sophia Menache, “Violence Toward Animals in Medieval Christendom: the Case of the Dog,” in *Human Beings and Other Animals in Historical Perspective*, ed. Sophia Menache, Benjamin Arbel, and Joseph Terkel (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2007), 207–9 (published in Hebrew).

42 Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 105; Sophia Menache, "Dogs: God's Worst Enemies?" *Society & Animals* 5, no.1 (1997): 28–29.

43 Sophia Menache, "Dogs: God's Worst Enemies?" 33–34.

44 Dominic Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2008), 132–33, 138.

45 Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 7–8; Sophie Page, "Good Creation and Demonic Illusions: The Medieval Universe of Creatures," in *A Cultural History of Animals in the Medieval Age*, ed. Brigitte Resl (New York: Berg, 2007), 27; Brigitte Resl, "Introduction: Animals in Culture, ca. 1000–ca. 1400," 9–26.

46 Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 81–107.

often mentioned in a derogatory sense. Obscene habits were attributed to the dog, such as eating carcasses and their own vomit.⁴² For example, *The Book of Proverbs* mentions that "Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who reverts to his folly" (Prov. 26:11). The dog here embodied the impure and the profane. The antagonism towards canines was also expressed in hagiographic literature, where in certain cases they were depicted as messengers of the Devil,⁴³ as in the *Vita* of the hermit Bartholomew of Farne (d. 1193): some monks are at Bartholomew's deathbed when a monstrous dog approaches them. Even near his death, the holy man managed to banish the dog.⁴⁴ A visual example of a dog as hellhound appears in the *Taymouth Hours* (c. 1330) (Fig. 8), where the Devil and his demonic dog are attacking souls.

Despite the undisputed dominance of the anthropocentric perception, recent studies have pointed out some cracks in this reductive view, which appeared as early as the twelfth century.⁴⁵ For example, Joyce Salisbury has described the blurred line between humans and other animals in medieval literature.⁴⁶ The growing interest in animals as protagonists is evident from the twelfth century onward. Familiar animals were integrated into various genres, including sermons, bestiaries, and fables. For example, fables had been used in monasteries

Fig. 8. Taymouth Hours, *Devil and Hellhound attacking souls*, c. 1330, London, The British Library, Yates Thompson MS 13, fol. 147v [Photo: The British Library Board]



until the twelfth century, as educational tools for teaching rhetoric, especially in France, when they started to proliferate into courtly society and became a popular source of entertainment. Many animal protagonists were familiar to the audiences from daily life, and they were used as allegories, as exemplars that reflect human attributes and social situations. However, Salisbury suggests that the very analogy of animal and human behaviour has obscured their binary relationship.⁴⁷ The developments and changes in human–animal relationships around the twelfth century have also led to a growing recognition of the positive characteristics of dogs, which existed alongside the traditional negative symbolism attributed to them.⁴⁸ The virtue of faithfulness ascribed to dogs entered the arts, as mentioned above,⁴⁹ as well as the religious literature. For example, the dog is emphasized as a loyal companion of St. Roch (d. 1327) in his withdrawal into the woods.⁵⁰ Thus, the dog figure became an ambivalent symbol, representing negative as well as positive traits.

Along with the artistic and literary evidence of the change in perception, practical changes are also apparent. One notable change in this respect is the increased cultivation of non-human companions in the thirteenth century, apparent in the popularity of raising dogs.⁵¹ Studies identified these companions as pets, even though the term ‘pet’ was not in use until the sixteenth century, in England.⁵² Following Keith Thomas, Walker-Meikle has defined the medieval pet as an animal that is kept indoors, given a name, and not eaten. The role of these chosen animals, to entertain and accompany their owners — mostly aristocratic women and clerics — reflects the blurry boundaries between animal and human status.⁵³ Furthermore, Walker-Meikle adds the characteristic of emotional connection to these chosen animals.⁵⁴ The high level of intimacy between pet and owner is expressed in the privileges a pet would have in its owner’s household. For example, pets were allowed into the intimate, private chambers.⁵⁵ From this social-historical view, Sand suggests another interpretation of the devotional scene in her study of the *Psalter-Hours of Yolande de Soissons* (Fig. 3). The very presence of the dog beside the

47 Ibid., 81–82, 89–95, 101–2, 105.

48 Sophia Menache, “Dogs and Human Beings: A Story of Friendship,” *Society & Animals* 6, no.1 (1998): 74, 79.

49 See above p. 6.

50 The faithful dog refused to leave St. Roch alone in the woods, cared for him, and miraculously healed his wounds. Sophia Menache, “Dogs and Human Beings: A Story of Friendship,” 78.

51 The faithful dog refused to leave St. Roch alone in the woods, cared for him, and miraculously healed his wounds. Sophia Menache, “Dogs and Human Beings: A Story of Friendship,” 78.

52 Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 116; Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 1.

53 Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 110, 112–17; Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 1, 3–5.

54 Walker Meikle remarks that emotional connection with other animals was not exclusive to relationships with pets. Owners could have close and caring relationships with working animals as well, like falcons and horses. Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 1.

female devotee, and its proximity to the altar, she claims, reinforce the identification of the prayer space as private and domestic, rather than as a public church space.⁵⁶ This demonstrates the role of the pet dog as a companion in private chambers, even in the most intimate act of private prayer.

The privilege of the pet dog's presence in the owner's house, even during prayer, raises the question of how contemporaries would have reacted towards pet dogs in public sacred spaces. Contemporary evidence reveals criticism of the practice of bringing pets to Mass. For example, thirteenth-century letters from bishops to abbesses in Rosedale and Romsey reveal that the nuns' practice of bringing pets to church was strictly forbidden, leading to penalties.⁵⁷ Similarly, a fourteenth-century French poem by Eustache Deschamps condemns the practice of taking dogs everywhere. It describes the dog's conduct in various spaces, including misbehaviour in church.⁵⁸ A negative attitude is also directed towards raising dogs in monasteries, as evident in the description of the prioress Madame Eglentyne's relationship with her pet dogs in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer.⁵⁹ The prioress is presented as belonging to a Benedictine nunnery in England. Although Benedictine regulations forbade raising pets, the sensitive prioress kept pet dogs and was very affectionate to them.⁶⁰ John Steadman has shown that Chaucer's criticism was aimed at the prioress's compassion being directed at animals rather than toward humans. The virtue of charity was highly valued in Benedictine doctrine, but it was directed towards humans and God as the only worthy objects of charity and compassion. For this reason, the prioress's affection for her dogs cannot be viewed as a truly charitable act, and it is presented as an ironic account of charity.⁶¹ The criticism of the practice of bringing pet dogs as companions to churches and monasteries shows a perception that there is no place for animals in the sacred spaces. Thus, it sets a barrier between the animals and the worship of God. Furthermore, pet dogs may have served as a distraction from the fulfilment of religious duties, such as charity. This negative attitude toward pet dogs has been addressed by scholars

55 Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 55–57, 59.

56 Alexa Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation*, 2, 18.

57 Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275 to 1535*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 61, 306–7.

58 Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 63–64.

59 John M. Steadman, "The Prioress' Dogs and Benedictine Discipline," *Modern Philology* 54, no. 1 (1956), 1–6.

60 Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury tales*, trans. and ed. David Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), x, 6–7; John M. Steadman, "The Prioress' Dogs and Benedictine Discipline," 1.

61 John M. Steadman, "The Prioress' Dogs and Benedictine Discipline," 3–5.

of medieval art. As mentioned before, the pet dog's presence near the devotee figure in devotional manuscripts was identified as a symbol of distraction from prayer.⁶²

Nevertheless, the church also recognized the special connection between animals and holiness. The physical world, including all living beings, was conceived as an expression of the thought of God, through which his teachings could be uncovered.⁶³ Consequently, the close intimacy and harmony between animals and humans could be interpreted as evidence of their function in the service of God, in favour of man. Thus, animals were perceived as intermediaries through which God was revealed.⁶⁴ The harmony between animals and humans as an ideal is evident in the genre of hagiography, in which St. Francis and his Sermon to the Birds is a prominent example. In all versions of the story, the saint preached to the birds, calling upon them to show God gratitude for providing all of their needs.⁶⁵ The birds responded with attentive listening, which may be perceived as a miraculous occurrence, as the birds had behaved in an unusual manner according to God's will.⁶⁶ In another view, Thomas mentions that the story can also demonstrate a popular approach that regards non-human animals as possessing religious instincts.⁶⁷ This approach has its origins in the Bible, as is expressed in the Book of Psalms, which declares that all creatures praise God, including "wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds" (Psalm 148: 10). Roger Sorrell regards this verse as a source of inspiration for the Sermon to the Birds.⁶⁸ Through this lens, the story shows a reciprocal relationship between God and the birds, when the Saint urges the birds to show love to God in return for his love for them. Sophie Page further addressed the story as extending the evangelical mission by the call to other animals to worship God.⁶⁹ This call exemplifies the concept that animals do not live their lives only in relation to humans, but also in direct relation to God.⁷⁰ Thus, both Thomas and Page address the behaviour of the birds as expressing the idea of other animals' natural recognition of the divine.

62 See above p. 6.

63 Sophie Page, "Good Creation and Demonic Illusions," 33.

64 Ibid., 45–46.

65 Edward A. Armstrong, *Saint Francis, Nature Mystic: The Derivation and Significance of the Nature Stories in the Franciscan Legends*, (1973; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 57–60.

66 Roger D. Sorrell, *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature: Tradition and Innovation in Western Christian Attitudes toward the Environment*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 62–63.

67 Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 137, 138.

68 Roger D. Sorrell, *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature*, 64.

69 Sophie Page, "Good Creation and Demonic Illusions," 31.

70 Ibid., 31.

AT THE SHRINE – GOD, MAN, AND DOG RELATIONSHIPS RECONSIDERED

The historical context of human–animal relations shows that the growing interest in familiar animals as allegories in literature corresponds to the increase in the cultivation of pets in medieval times, especially dogs, and even the willingness to include them at prayer time. This illustrates a caring attitude towards pets, showing that their companionship was cherished by their owners. The presence of the dog beside the praying female figure in the *Margaret Hours* can thus also be viewed as a representation of an actual dog, and not only as a symbol. In comparison to the static devotional posture of the noblewoman, the curled-up dog is dynamic, turning its head to the opposite side of its reclining body. This is the way in which dogs alertly rise from their rest, snuggled yet attentively looking towards an object of attraction, as demonstrated by the behaviour of the dog in the photograph (Fig. 9). The bird on the devotee's other side sits on the tree in a pose that reflects the human's. Walker-Meikle

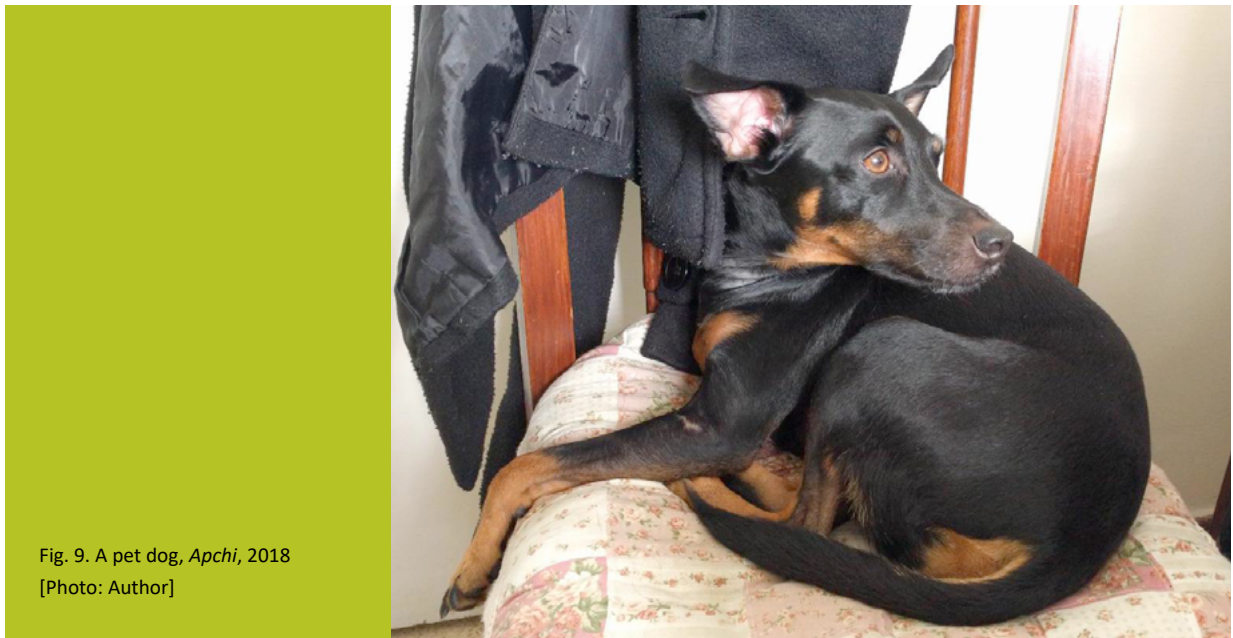


Fig. 9. A pet dog, *Apchi*, 2018
[Photo: Author]

identifies representations of similar birds throughout the manuscript as consistent representations of a pet parrot, citing their green or blue-green wings and their orange beaks.⁷¹ Research has established that the rose-ringed parakeet (a parrot species) was brought to Europe in the thirteenth century.⁷² This reinforces Walker-Meikle's claim that the bird represents an actual pet parrot. According to this view, the parrot mimics its owner's pose.

Though both the dog and the parrot represent pet companions, the different status of the dog is emphasized in the manuscript (Fig. 10). On f.113v, the dog, parrot, and devotee are all looking towards the illustrated initial of the Ascension on the facing page. On this folio, f.114r, the praying woman is again accompanied by the dog, both gazing at the initial (Fig. 11). The parrot also appears at the top of this folio, facing in the opposite direction. The parrot appears a second time on the left side of the page, flying upwards, parallel to the holy scene in the initial and to the devotee. That is, in the marginal images of f.114r, the parrot is in attendance near the woman, but it seems detached from the act of prayer. In contrast, the dog lies near the devotee in a pose that mirrors its depiction in the framed miniature. While the parrot does not seem to react to the devotee or the holy scene, the dog is twisting its head back to look at the initial. The different responses of the dog and the parrot to the holy scene in the initial emphasize that both the dog and the noblewoman are looking in the same direction, at an object of mutual interest. This indicates a deeper connection between the dog and the praying book owner, more than that between her and the parrot, which is positioned quite apart in most instances.

The comparison between the pet dog and the pet parrot in the miniature and marginalia, in their role as companions in prayer, shows that the dog's depiction indicates strong companionship between woman and dog. Although in some cases the dog shifts its gaze from the holy scene, in nine out of eleven joint appearances, the gaze of the dog aligns with that of the devotee. The dog's posture may vary from one instance to another, but either crouching or lying down,

71 Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 82.

72 Meredith T. McMunn, "Parrots and Poets in Late Medieval Literature," *Anthrozoös*, 12, no. 2 (1999): 69; Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets*, 15; Brunsdon Yapp, *Birds in Medieval Manuscripts*, (London: British Library, 1981), 43.



Fig. 10. Margaret Hours, *Female devotee with pets*, c.1318–1329, New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.754, fol.113v-114r
[Photo: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York]

it looks attentively in the same direction as the female figure in the majority of their joint appearances. That is, the dog's gaze and its close proximity to the praying woman suggest a direct relationship between the dog, the book owner, and the holy scene. Conversely, the parrot in the miniature is placed close to the devotee and copies her pose, but it is unusual compared to its other appearances near the praying woman or near the holy event in the initials. It is a singular depiction of the parrot as a companion in prayer. Thus, it indicates that the dog as a companion has a different status from the parrot.

Finally, the pet dog has a privileged relationship with the devotee and the divine, even for a pet companion. Considering the emergent ideas of harmonious relations between God and animals in this period, I suggest that representations



Fig. 11. Margaret Hours,
Female devotee with pet dog,
c. 1318–1329, New York,
The Morgan Library & Museum,
MS M.754, fol.114r
[Photo: The Morgan Library &
Museum, New York]

of the pet dog in the *Margaret Hours* are beyond an allegory of human traits, and thus reveal another dimension of the God-devotee-dog relationship. The function of animals as a means to get closer to God is not compatible with the depictions of the dog, which is shown as an independent and naturalistic animal in various typical positions. Moreover, in most of the representations of the dog, it is placed behind the devotee. Only once, in the framed miniature, is it in front of her. In all of their joint appearances, the female figure does not glance at the dog, as both are focusing their gazes on the holy scene. That is to say, the devotee interacts directly with the sacred scene in the initial. This further indicates that the dog is not a mediator between the female devotee and the holy scene. Yet, the dog at the devotee's feet maintains a consistent relationship with the divine by fixing its gaze on the sacred scene, showing the dog's interest in it. This visual alertness is like the description of the birds in the Sermon to the Birds, which listen to Saint Francis attentively. The birds' response of careful attention points to the notion that they have natural recognition of the divine. I suggest that the emphasis on the dog as a companion in prayer in the manuscript's marginalia and in the framed miniature also demonstrates the idea of other animals' religious instincts. It sheds another light on the dog as companion in prayer, as a participant in the religious experience of the devotee. I hold that the dog demonstrates a religious inclination of its own, as an independent living being. Viewing the dog as a depiction of an actual companion dog, the pairing of devotee and dog appears as a doubled portrait of the book owner with her doggy during prayer.

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