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THE EMOTIONAL AGENCY OF FIFTEENTH-CENTURY DEVOTIONAL PORTRAITS: SELF-IDENTIFICATION AND FEELINGS OF PLEASURE*

di Dafna Nissim

Portraits of owners in fifteenth-century prayer books made for French royalty and other elite patrons had both secular and sacred functions for their owners and users. Art historians have long contended that portraits in devotional manuscripts and objects displayed the distinguished rank of the portrayed subject, documented ownership, assisted in devotion, represented visionary encounters, and more. Developments in medieval art studies that led to seeking new goals beyond deciphering the meaning of the imagery,¹ its style, and religious context opened the field up to new issues, among them the sensual and perceptual relationships that religious objects with images established with their viewers.² Building on approaches that explore «the purposes [the artworks] served and the ‘cultural work’ they performed for their makers, owners, and viewers»,³ I suggest that these por-

* I would like to express special thanks to Katrin Kogman-Appel, Sara Offenberg, and Roni Tzoref for offering invaluable suggestions; to Evelyn Grossberg for her language editing of various versions of this text; and to the anonymous readers of the manuscript.

¹ Katrin Kogman-Appel contends that «Once art historians began to rethink the conventional methodologies of their traditional discipline and noted that deciphering ‘meaning in the visual arts,’ to cite the title of the famous manifesto by Erwin Panofsky, is a means rather than a goal, reflections on the role of art as a message-bearer took on new directions». K. KOGMAN-APPEL, *Pictorial Messages in Mediaeval Illuminated Hebrew Books: Some Methodological Considerations*, «Jewish Manuscript Cultures: New Perspectives» 13, 2017, pp. 443–467: 445.

² For new approaches to medieval Christian objects, see B. WILLIAMSON, *Material Culture and Medieval Christianity*, in J. H. ARNOLD (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 60–75.

³ S. LIPTON, *Images and Objects as Sources for Medieval History*, in J. Th. ROSENTHAL (ed.), *Understanding Medieval Primary Sources: Using Historical Sources to Discover Medieval Europe*, London, Routledge, 2012, pp. 225–242: 225.

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traits served as agencies, which, by evoking emotional stimulation, could have influenced their owners' thoughts and behavior.⁴

In this essay, I relate to artistic production and human beings as agencies equally responsible for maintaining and enhancing social structures.⁵ The production and use of devotional portraits in the late medieval French courts testify to the way that they influenced the construction of court-society values through the relationships they established with different "actors" – patrons, artists, owners, and casual viewers at court. I point to the emotional role of the art of portraiture in conforming one's identity, which in medieval Europe was determined by place of birth, gender, religion, and social position, and promoting self-awareness among late medieval noble individuals. I take an approach that is somewhat different from that of recent scholarship on the subject. Whereas Joni Hand, Alexa Sand, and Maeve Doyle decipher the various ways by which portraits in late medieval France indicated identity and participated in its construction using diverse perspectives such as female patronage, sensual reception, and use, I adopt the perspective of emotional reception.⁶ The portraits were designed with a clear effort to elicit a sense

⁴ I draw on Alfred Gell's idea that works of art function as social agents that cause events «to happen in their vicinity». A. GELL, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998, p. 16. Multiple studies from the 1990s on explore the agency of medieval religious objects and the reciprocal relationships they established with their viewers. See for example, H. BELTING, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1994; B. V. PENTCHEVA, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010; J. E. JUNG, *Eloquent Bodies: Movement, Expression, and the Human Figure in Gothic Sculpture*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2020; A. PINKUS, *Visual Aggression: Images of Martyrdom in Late Medieval Germany*, Penn State Press, 2021.

⁵ Liana Chua and Mark Elliott underscore Gell's perspective on the symmetrical relationship between humans and objects that plays a role in social interaction. L. CHUA, M. ELLIOTT, *Adventures in the Art Nexus*, in L. Chua, M. Elliott (eds.), *Distributed Objects: Meaning and Mattering after Alfred Gell*, New York, Berghahn, 2015, p. 10; although not stating it explicitly, David Freedberg's perspective on human's responses to images relies on the same assumption. D. FREEDBERG, *The Power of Image*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991.

⁶ J. M. HAND, *Women, Manuscripts and Identity in North Europe, 1350–1550*, Surrey and Burlington, Ashgate, 2013; A. SAND, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014; M. DOYLE, *The Portrait Potential Gender, Identity, and Devotion in Manuscript Owner Portraits, 1230–1320*, Bryn Mawr College, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015.

of self-identification and affect of pleasure in the owners. The Middle Ages do not provide us with texts that express a detailed personal perspective on the experience of looking at a portrait, nor are there accounts on patrons' or artists' intentions in this regard. Thus, it is the work of art itself that remains as a historical source that allows us to apprehend its emotional and mental impact on its owner.

In the field of the history of emotions, scholars generally consider texts as the primary sources that can reveal standards of emotional expression and evaluation of a set of emotions, as well as their political, social, and individual applications in a given community. Barbara Rosenwein, Piroska Nagy, Damien Boquet, and others have developed various methods for dealing with medieval textual sources that disclose the emotional atmosphere of communities in Western Europe.⁷ However, owing to the essential role granted to material and artistic objects in the life of humans,⁸ the exploration of lavish utensils, tapestries, paintings, and furniture with the suitable methodological tools might also allow for an understanding of the emotional lives of their users. Drawing on Paul Binski's suggestion that medieval **artworks** were not merely illustrations of cultural ideas but were also visual tools that could help construct the cognitive, emotional, and sensual human experience,⁹ the present study demonstrates a perspective on works of art that historians can utilize to understand emotional expressions, norms, and concepts in past communities.

⁷ The last two decades have seen an evolution in medieval scholarship on emotions. I only cite two representative publication here: the first for its conceptual framework for understanding emotions and for its inspiring methodology and the second for its chronological and thematic approach that covers a thousand years of Western Christian life. B. H. ROSENWEIN, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2006; D. BOQUET, P. NAGY, *Medieval Sensibilities: A History of Emotions in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, UK, Polity Press, 2018.

⁸ Michael B. Schiffer and Andrea R. Miller assert that «what is singular about *Homo sapiens* is the constant intimacy of people with countless kinds of things – our immersion in the material medium». M. B. SCHIFFER, A. R. MILLER, *The Material Life of Human Beings: Artifacts, Behavior, and Communication*, New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 4.

⁹ P. BINSKI, *The English Parish Church and Its Art in the Later Middle Ages: A Review of the Problem*, «Studies in Iconography», 20, 1999, pp. 1-25: 18-19.

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The illustrations I look at are from a Christian devotional co-dex known as a Book of Hours, one of a genre that was a best-seller in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance.¹⁰ Commissioned and purchased mostly by lay noble patrons, many of these manuscripts were lavishly illustrated and often included a portrait of the patron in prayer in front of saints, Christ, or Mary and the Child. Although they share similar visual content, the various owners' images reflect differences that allude to the fact that these manuscripts were customized artifacts, tailored to address spiritual ambitions, personal needs, and political or social issues. Patrons who ordered prayer books were often involved in their creation and contributed their perspective to the network of patronage, which usually included artists/designers, agents, and sometimes religious advisors.¹¹

In the following pages, I discuss the visual components, the artistic style, and the sensorial reception of three portraits executed in the fifteenth century for elite French patrons. Exploring the subject's posture, heraldry, and attendants discloses not only an iconographic significance but points to the emotional work imposed on the owners. The artists shaped the renderings so that they would appeal to the owners through the works' mimetic qualities and the ideal aura of the subject's representation. Further on, I associate pleasure with the process of self-formation of a Christian-aristocratic identity. Several paragraphs from *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*, a 1456 novel by Antoine de la Sale for Jean duke of Calabria and the son of King René d'Anjou, which provides an

¹⁰ The Hours of the Virgin were added to the quotidian prayers, mandatory for priests, monks, and nuns in daily religious practice. Since the mid-thirteenth century, literate lay people have chosen to adopt some features of monastic life and have been enchanted by the practice of routine prayer. R.S. WIECK, *Prayer for the People: The Book of Hours*, in R. Hammerling (ed.), *A History of Prayer*, Leiden, Brill, 2008, pp. 389–416: 389–390.

¹¹ For a survey on the state of research of medieval patronage, see J. CASKEY, *Whodunit? Patronage, the Canon, and the Problematics of Agency in Romanesque and Gothic Art*, in C. Rudolph (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Art*, Malden, Oxford & Victoria, Blackwell, 2006, pp. 193–212; on late medieval patronage in Charles V's French Court, see S. PERKINSON, *Portraits and Their Patrons: Reconsidering Agency in Late Medieval Art*, in C. Hourihane (ed.), *Patronage: Power and Agency in Medieval Art*, Princeton, Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, Department of Art and Archaeology, 2013.

account of the education of an “ideal knight,” reveal pleasurable reactions of court members as they see the gradual process of self-enhancement.¹² The pleasure response of noble members of the Bohemian Court to the evolution of the protagonist motivated him to continue engaging in the learning process and striving to acquire a courtier’s personality and a degree of prestige at court. Apparently, the portraits are visual evidence of the same emotional interaction observed in that text and they manifest the involvement of the affect of delight in self-construction.

1. *The Portraits in the Context of their Response*

The three portraits discussed herein were created in the 1430s to 1480s by different artists and in different French regions. René I of Anjou (1409–1480) is depicted in a close-up praying to the suffering body of Christ on the right-hand folio, who is held by a mourning angel (fig. 1, Paris, BnF, ms. Latin 1156 A, fol. 81v).¹³ René was an art lover who was known for his patronage as well as for his interest in the art of painting. Christian de Mérindol and others argue that the duke was involved in the production of the manuscript, if not as one of the illuminators, then as a patron.¹⁴ The second prayer book, which was



Figure 1: René of Anjou Praying to Christ, *The Hours of René of Anjou*, Paris, BnF, ms. Latin 1156 A, fols. 81v (Source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)

¹² A. DE LA SALE, J. H. M. TAYLOR, R. L. KRUEGER, *Jean de Saintré: A Late Medieval Education in Love and Chivalry*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

¹³ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000466t/f174.image> (last accessed on January 21, 2021). V. LEROQUAIS, *Les livre d'heures manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale*, Paris, Maçon, 1927, vol. 1, pp. 64–67.

¹⁴ J.-B. DE VAIVBE, *Christian de Mérindol, Emblématique et histoire de l'art. Le livre d'heures du roi René. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, latin 1156 A: Date et lieu d'exécution*, dans 109e Congrès national des Sociétés savantes, La Bourgogne. Études archéologiques, «Bulletin Monumental», 144, 1986, pp. 89–91.

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Figure 1: René of Anjou Praying to Christ, *The Hours of René of Anjou*, Paris, BnF, ms. Latin 1156 A, fols. 81v (Source: gallica.bnf.fr/ BnF)

made for Isabelle of Scotland (1426–1499) and executed in Brittany in 1455, shows the duchess in a praying posture attended by St. Francis of Assisi, (fig. 2, Paris, BnF, ms. Latin 1369, fol. 66).¹⁵ The last illustration is a full-page portrait of Anne of Beaujeu-Amplepuis (1425–1501), who was married to the marshal of France Jean de Baudricourt, which was probably illustrated by Jean Fouquet in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The artist depicted her in a visionary encounter with the Virgin and Child surrounded by angels (fig. 3, Paris, BnF, ms. Nal 3187, fol. 8r).¹⁶

Fifteenth-century portraits in devotional contexts beckoned their viewers to enact sensorial relationships with their images by gazing at and touching them. Prayer books were artifacts suitable for holding close to the body of the owner. They tended to foster long-lasting relationships with their users, who looked at them in the context of both their self-knowledge and the contemporary cultural codes of behavior and acceptable appearances.

The late medieval atmosphere promoted the reception of re-

¹⁵ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52501939c/f66.item> (last accessed on January 21, 2021). J.-L. DEUFFIC, *Le livre d'heures enluminé en Bretagne: Car sans heures ne puyt Dieu prier*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2019, pp. 93–97.

¹⁶ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8447775g/f25.item> (last accessed on January 21, 2021). For the identification of the lady on folio 8r, see P. DURRIEU, *La Peinture en France de Charles VII à la fin des Valois, de 1422 à 1589*, in A. Michel (ed.), *Histoire de l'art: depuis les premiers temps chrétiens jusqu'à nos jours*, 17 vols., Paris, Armand Colin, 1911, IV, p. 95.

ligious artworks in a prolonged gaze.¹⁷ Unlike commoners who only occasionally were able to view lavish rituals, for example, when there was a formal entry by a ruler into a city, which was accompanied by ceremonies and festivals,¹⁸ nobles could develop refined tastes for visual images as they engaged with the arts daily. Sumptuous objects that artisans produced for court audiences created spectacles for which appreciation and interpretation demanded an intent gaze. The style of painting north of the Alps promoted this approach as it displays an evolving interest in the physiognomic likeness and a disposition for depicting realistic details. The portrait of René of Anjou, for example, demonstrates this tendency. The artist paid attention to every strand of hair in the fashioned coiffure and the stylish beard. The materiality of the fur, embroidered fabric, and stiff collar evokes an imaginative sense of touch and can be associated with actual items in the duke's wardrobe.

Moreover, a new understanding linking visual attributes of body, facial traits, and corporeal likeness with one's core had a significant influence on the art of portraiture in this period.¹⁹ As the century continued, portraits were expected to be more



Figure 3: Anne in prayer, *The Hours of Anne de Beaujeu-Amplepuis*, Paris, BnF, ms. NaI 3187, fol. 8r (Source: gallica.bnf.fr/BnF)

¹⁷ R. N. SWANSON, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215–c. 1515*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, *passim*.

¹⁸ P. ARNADE, *Realms of Ritual: Burgundian Ceremony and Civic Life in Medieval Ghent*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1996.

¹⁹ S. PERKINSON, *The Likeness of the King: A Prehistory of Portraiture in Late Medieval France*, Chicago and London, Chicago University Press, 2009, p. 83.

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accurate and the level of realism combined with traditional artistic techniques to establish identity motivated the spectator's self-recognition. At the same time, as Stephen Perkinson asserts, court artists responsible for these renderings had to negotiate the artistic trend of realism with idealism.²⁰ Perkinson relates to court art at the turn of 1400, but his observation is relevant to later years in the century as well, where we can clearly trace a blend of realistic facial features, corporeal likeness, and ideal representation. The outcomes drew the viewers to observe and activate mental and emotional processes.

The human ability to associate an image with one's self and appearance is fundamentally related to one's intellectual capability for self-awareness. Writings from the thirteenth century on that deal with human psychology reflect an interest in the individual's ability to be aware of his body, emotions, and thoughts. Peter John Olivi (1248–1298) and others contended that the intellectual part of the soul was the locus of the awareness of the unity of these parts.²¹ It appears that moving from the human's ability to recognize the continuity of his self in his corporeal, cognitive, and intellectual modes to the act of differentiation of the portrait as a representation of his/herself involved further cognitive practices. Medieval noble audiences were visually literate and knew how to participate in religious and intellectual activities, which often included visual imagery. The practice of comparison while gazing at one's portrait enabled the subject to parallel the illustration to the mental image of him/herself acquired over a period of time and to trace visual likeness and personal links to the ideal nature of the image.

Alongside the ways such portraits moved the owners to think of the illustrations as representing their appearance and identity, they were meant to elicit feelings of delight. For aristocratic au-

²⁰ Ivi, p. 153.

²¹ M. YRJÖNSUURI, *Types of Self-Awareness in Medieval Thought*, in V. Hirvonen, T. J. Holopainen, M. Tuominen (eds.), *Mind and Modality: Studies in the History of Philosophy in Honour of Simo Knuuttila*, Leiden, Brill, 2006, pp. 153–169: 165.

diances, pleasure was an appropriate response in various social court contexts. Despite the Christian theological attitude that «to deserve otherworldly salvation and eternal beatitude one must endure sadness, pain, and suffering in this life»,²² the nobility in the Middle Ages did not forbid pleasures. Thomas Aquinas's ideas on feelings of pleasure supported elite attitudes regarding this passion. He noted that «the man is good and virtuous who takes pleasure in the works of pleasure; and the man is evil who takes pleasure in evil works».²³ Since Aquinas considered pleasure, as all the passions of the soul, morally indifferent and thought that it could be associated with the virtue of magnificence, the European courts viewed enjoyments elicited by things and events that promoted social awareness in a positive light.

Following my observations thus far, I move to an exploration of several elements in the portraits that were designed to reflect the featured individual's virtuous comportment, piety, and achievements in the social arena. Recent studies on the function of pleasure in the human brain decipher the link between the human motivational system and pleasure affect. In various studies, pleasure functions both as a stimulus and a reward. Nico Frijda delineates a process in which the individual encounters a stimulus that motivates him/her to strive toward additional goals. Each phase that leads to consummation of the desired goal can be accompanied by pleasurable feelings, which, in turn, encourage the individual to realize his/her target.²⁴ The portraits as a source of feelings of delight and satisfaction encouraged their owners to strive for enhancement of the self and their position in their social milieu.

²² N. COHEN-HANEGBI, P. NAGY, *Pleasure in the Middle Ages: An Introduction*, in N. Cohen-Hanegbi, P. Nagy (eds.), *Pleasure in the Middle Ages*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2018, pp. xi–xxiii, at xii.

²³ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1967, 6: 439.

²⁴ N. H. FRIJDA, *On the Nature and Function of Pleasure*, in M. L. Kringelbach, K. C. Berridge (eds.), *Pleasures of the Brain*, Series in Affective Science, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 99–112, 105–106.

2. Proper Control of Bodily Gestures

According to the Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary*, a gesture is «the use of motions of the limbs or body as a means of expression» or «a movement of the body or limbs that expresses or emphasizes an idea, sentiment, or attitude».²⁵ Marcel Mauss considered gestures not merely as biological capabilities but rather as culturally based human phenomena acquired by imitation and learning.²⁶ Thus, corporeal movements can convey a message to the spectator who is capable of decoding it in light of contemporary norms.

What can we learn from the movement of the owners' bodies? Straightforward observations of the figures of Anne de Beaujeu-Amplepuis, Isabelle of Scotland, and René of Anjou reveal that the posture reflects the devotional nature of the subject. The position of each body conveys a subtle message – that the supplicant manifests reverence before the Divine. However, if we abstract the gesture from the context of prayer and think about it in terms of its spread in space, another socio-cultural norm emerges – the virtue of moderation. Temperance was regarded as an important noble virtue. It was one of the virtues that was elaborated in *De regimine principum* (1280), a compilation by the Augustinian scholar Giles of Rome (ca.1247–1316), who wrote the book for the future Philip IV of France (1268–1314). The text was a popular guidebook for princes on virtues, emotions, and proper behavior.²⁷ Divided into three volumes, the first deals with the discipline of young princes, wherein he contended that the body of the royal youth should be governed from infancy to raise the

²⁵ *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, Springfield, MA, G. & C. Merriam, 1973, p. 483.

²⁶ M. MAUSS, *Techniques of the Body*, «Economy and Society», 2, 1973, pp. 70–88: 75. In his famous article on body techniques, Mauss stressed the character of corporeal movements/actions as a socio-psycho-physiological assemblage and the role of education through sociological institutions to retard the disorderly movements.

²⁷ In the words of Charles Briggs: «[The] profusion of copies and versions of the French *De regimine* shows how closely the French royalty and nobility identified with this text». C. F. BRIGGS, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum: Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University*, c. 1275–c.1525, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 16; see also Appendix C.

new generation of sovereigns according to the culturally established norms. The wise prince who wishes to refrain from inappropriate behavior was advised to live a sober life, using reason, especially regarding his physical desires.²⁸

Moderation and prudence were the prescribed virtues regarding manners and bodily gestures. Every gesture at any given event had to be performed following the prevailing notions of the proper nature of movement in space and time.²⁹ Regarding table manners, for example, Giles detailed various objectionable actions, among them taking a piece of meat too quickly. It was common knowledge that if they are hungry, uneducated people will grab the meat immediately it is brought to the table. Here he invoked the discipline that controls desires and obliges courteous men and women to conduct themselves in a moderate fashion. Moreover, the use of knives and forks, a gradual social change that served as an example of the civilizing process in Norbert Elias's seminal work, exemplifies an additional degree of attention to corporeal conduct in one's social interaction in space.³⁰ It shows care for refined gestures, as tableware led to a degree of separation between one's body and the food. All the strictures concerning good manners when dining taught one to restrict his/her body movements while eating. These kinds of notions were based partly on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which provided an account of how to manipulate the body and its senses in order to effect moderate behavior.³¹

²⁸ S. P. MOLENAER, *Li livres du gouvernement des rois: An XIIIth Century French Version of Egidio Colonna's Treatise De regimine principum*, New York, AMS Press, 1966, Book I, Part II, Chapter XV, pp. 54-56.

²⁹ N.-L. PERRET, *Les traductions françaises du De regimine principum de Gilles de Rome: parcours matériel, culturel et intellectuel d'un discours sur l'éducation*, Leiden, Brill, 2011, p. 305.

³⁰ N. ELIAS, *The Civilizing Process: The Development of Manners*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, New York, Urizen Books, 1978, pp. 122-129.

³¹ N.-L. PERRET, *Les traductions françaises du De regimine principum*, cit., pp. 312-313; Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* became a profound influence on the development of moral thought in Western Christianity. I. P. BEJCZY, *Introduction*, in Id. (ed.), *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages: Commentaries on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, 1200-1500*, Leiden, Brill, 2008, pp. 1-5. A French translation was commissioned by Charles V from Nicole Oresme in the 1370s and the translator's prologue indicates that its audience was to be the king and his counselors. C. R. SHERMAN, *Imaging Aristotle: Verbal and Visual Representation in Fourteenth-Century France*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. xxi.

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Figure 4: Gluttony, Book of Hours, New York, Morgan Library, ms. 10001, fol. 94r.

It seems that the gestures of the portrayed aristocrats involved restricting their bodies in terms of their spread in space – their arms touch their upper bodies, their hands are folded, and although their legs are not seen, it is clear that they are together. A comparison to a visual representation of Gluttony from a Book of Hours in the Morgan Library (fig. 4, New York, Morgan Li-

brary, ms. 10001, fol. 94r)³² underscores the superiority of the formulaic bodily gesture that reflects moderation. The personification of the Vice in this illustration arches the torso backward, the limbs create different, even contradictory vectors directing our attention to the space around the gormandizer. Textual or visual descriptions of Vices as personifications that can be traced back to Classical antiquity were didactic tools that guided the recipient toward an ethical life. Such an image was arranged into a systematic code comprehensible for medieval Christians, who were able to decipher the unequivocal message.³³ Evidently, the postures of the portrayed owners are very distant from the visualization of Gluttony. In contrast to the intemperate bodily movement of the hungry man eating in an uncontrolled manner, Anne, René, and Isabelle are imaged in positions of control over their bodily movements. Even if in their reality they would like

³² <http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/17/76937>.

³³ W. S. MELION, B. RAMAKERS, *Personification: An Introduction*, in W. S. Melion, B. Ramakers (eds.), *Personification: Embodying Meaning and Emotions*, Leiden, Brill, 2016, pp. 1-40: 16.

to bow down, cry, or beg (and maybe they did so), the illustrations are ideal reflections of the subjects that visualize the virtuous behavior of noble individuals. Thus, the ideal rendering of gestures enabled their owners to identify with their refined selves and enjoy their successes in employing Christian and courtly codes of behavior in the social arena.

3. *The Role of Attendants*

Two kinds of figures accompany the owner of a Book of Hours. Until the beginning of the fifteenth century, the patron was usually introduced to the holy figures by a patron saint. However, from the 1400s, alongside this model, which can be traced in the portrait of Isabelle, we find a tendency to depict the owner together with real people, most of whom lived at court during the time the manuscripts were produced. The portrait of Anne of Beaujeu-Amplepuis reflects the new iconography as it depicts court ladies that in the vicinity of their noble patroness. The artist imaged the ladies-in-waiting dressed in the latest French court fashion.³⁴ He did not portrayed them kneeling as Anne of Beaujeu-Amplepuis, but rather sitting on pillows gazing at codices, probably Books of Hours, held gently in their hands.

What was implied by the inclusion of known court attendants in her devotional portrait? I argue that representations of noble attendants rendered naturalistically with attention to such details as attire and gestures (but not necessarily with concern for facial traits) were meant to enhance the message of the owner's power and status. They are images adopted from reality that join more symbolic signs of rank such as heraldry. In a way, the role of court attendants is linked to the question that artists have struggled since time immemorial regarding the proper way to represent an individual. Until the mid-fourteenth century, a por-

³⁴ A. H. VAN BUREN, R. S. WIECK, *Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands 1325–1515*, London, Giles, 2011, p. 224.

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trait in a prayer book was a symbolic representation of the worshipper, a rendering that reflected the status and gender of the depicted subject through dress, through the presence of a book in the composition, and through heraldic signs that often decorated the margins. Elite patrons' bibliophilic jealousies and their wanting to display social superiority through lavish and innovative works of art drove artists to develop new rhetoric to portray their patrons.³⁵ Apart from the evolving interest in the visual, since the beginning of the fifteenth century, we find artistic production of works including scenes of real events³⁶ and depictions of court attendants in prayer with their lord or lady reflecting actual religious life at court.

The portrayal of courtiers is connected to a reality in which the nobility was surrounded by attendants day and night. We can learn about the gradation in status of members of the court from a 1474 description of the household of Charles the Bold by Olivier de la Marche, chronicler, poet, and member of the court of the Duchy of Burgundy. The author devoted a significant part of the text to a description of the internal hierarchy of the noblemen that resided at court and provided escort for the Duke of Burgundy.³⁷ Access to the duke's person was determined by lineage as well as by the degree of virtuous behavior.³⁸ As the account moves from the public areas of the residence to the duke's chamber, we find more and more privileged esquires who kept

³⁵ R. S. WIECK, *Bibliophilic Jealousy and the Manuscript Patronage of Jean, Duc de Berry*, in R. Dücker, P. Roelofs, B. Bakker (eds.), *The Limbourg Brothers: Nijmegen Masters at the French Court 1400–1416*, Ghent, Ludion, 2005, pp. 121–134.

³⁶ See, e.g., the well-known January illustration from the *Très Riches Heures* (Chantilly, Musée Condé, ms. 65, fol. 1v) created by the Limbourg brothers for Jean, Duke of Berry, in 1412–1416. It represents a secular feast known as *étrennes*, a traditional court ceremony that was always held on January 1, where Valois princes exchanged gifts with their peers and courtiers.

³⁷ O. DE LA MARCHES, *L'état de la maison du duc Charles*, in H. Beaune, J. d'Arbaumont (eds.), *Olivier de la Marche: Mémoires*, vol. 4, Paris, Librairie Renouard, 1883–1888, IV, pp. 1–94. Parts of this text are translated into English in A. BROWN, G. SMALL, *Court and Civic Society in the Burgundian Low Countries c.1420–1530*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007, pp. 94–104.

³⁸ Olivier de la Marche detailed the enormous number of functionaries in the prince's household and emphasized the ability of the those of lesser nobility to climb to the rank of esquire. A. BROWN, G. SMALL, *Court and Civic Society*, cit., p. 99; for parts of La Marche description of the household of Charles the Bold, see *ivi*, pp. 94–104.

the duke amused in his private quarters after he finished dealing with his political and communal affairs. «For his bedchamber, the duke has sixteen esquires who are men of high birth. They take care of his person and clothes». The account continues with a description of how they kept him company as some sang and others read to him from works of literature.³⁹ These kinds of descriptions reveal the reason behind court hierarchy – the most prestigious roles were those that involved close to the person of the duke or duchess, which underscored a high position at court.

Returning to the issue of devotional practices at the courts of France, one must understand that what scholars usually describe as “private devotion” was not really a ritual that the devotee always performed in a separate or exclusive domestic space. In this connection, I adopt Andrea Pearson’s clarification of the nature of devotion in the late Middle Ages. The piety of a noble Christian who sought a relationship with the Divine and engaged in various practices without involving the priesthood can be defined as “personal” rather than “private”.⁴⁰ Privacy in every respect is a term from a later period, whereas in the fifteenth century we can only discuss the presence of more or fewer attendants. Residences were designed to accommodate public affairs and semi-private activities. As was described earlier, the chamber of the duke or duchess was an architectural space for the utilization of the noble individual and his/her attendants. That is not to say that they were never alone but rather that it would have been a rare event.

The nobility engaged in their acts of piety with the aid of prayer books and other religious devices in many different ways – with a family member, with their closest courtiers, or, infrequently, alone. The different models for the rituals disclose the blurred boundaries between the social and the personal. Moreover, one of the roles of a noble lady was to take care of her at-

³⁹ Ivi, p. 96.

⁴⁰ A. G. PEARSON, *Personal Worship, Gender, and the Devotional Portrait Diptych*, «Sixteenth Century Journal», 2000, pp. 99-122: 104.

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tendants' religiosity and conduct and a personal prayer practiced together had been an important feature of their education. Observation of court attitudes to the practice of devotion elucidates its social significance.⁴¹ Thus, the ritual rendered in the illustrations under discussion was a powerful vehicle of identity that was both personal and social.

We can now examine the portrait of Anne and consider the role of her female attendants in the context of mundane court conduct and contemporary devotional attitudes and practices. The owner of the manuscript kneels at the lower register of the composition; her figure stands out owing to her size and her slightly arched torso. The closeness of her body to the *prie-dieu* on which a prayer book is opened make a triangle in the center of the picture. The ladies, seen in a group on the left, are smaller in size, reflecting their comparatively subordinate status in court. The artist employed another technique to differentiate Anne from her female company. Whereas she is experiencing a spiritual encounter with the Virgin and Child, they are ignoring the holy vision. The visual features support my contentions regarding the dual role of the portrayed attendants in the composition. Along with the dress, position, and the heraldic sign on the cover of the *prie-dieu*, the ladies-in-waiting mark the social superiority of their lady. On one hand, their exclusion from actual participation in the holy visionary event testifies to their marginal role in the illustration. They are visual vehicles of the lady's rank and never protagonists in their own right. On the other hand, their appearance in the illustration amplifies the reality that the miniature reflects. The painting encapsulates a personal imaginary connection with the Divine and at the same time resonates with an event that required social awareness on the part of the owner and attested to Anne's role as the head of her court.

⁴¹ M. FAINI, A. MENEGHIN, *Introduction*, in M. Faini, A. Meneghin (eds.), *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World*, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2018, pp. 1-29: 12.

4. Heraldic Signs and Emblems

Coat of arms and para-heraldic symbols were among the visual elements that decorated all sorts of manuscripts produced for the aristocracy. The owner's gaze at his heraldry could and was meant to elicit self-identification and feelings of pleasure and satisfaction. The ability of the owner to decode the semiotic language of the manuscript fostered awareness of his/her inherited rights, achievements, and virtuous personhood.⁴² The three portraits under discussion include coats of arms in the book's margins or imaged as embroidery on draperies or on the worshipper's apparel. The portrait of René of Anjou features a more complicated example. It displays various kinds of artistic signs, some more symbolic than others, and creates a holistic portrait that was meant not only to visualize the duke's appearance, but also, through a pleasing presentation of his emblems and heraldic signs, to evoke a sense of delight that could enhance his motivation to fulfill the role and uphold status he was granted through heritage and marriage.

René is portrayed in a close-up gazing at the right-hand folio. His lavish outfit, coiffure, and pleasing complexion testify to his distinguished status as a high-ranking elite member.⁴³ Folio 81v shows several heraldic symbols and personal emblems in various places in the illustration. A powerful eagle wearing a gold pendant in the form of the Cross of Lorraine (a vertical line crossed by two shorter horizontal bars) with a raised leg stretched and extended claws is imaged in the left margin. A sail blowing in the wind inscribed with the motto *en dieu en soit* (according to God's

⁴² C. DE MÉRINDOL, *Le Livre peint à la fin du Moyen Age, support privilégié d'une politique dynastique, familiale ou personnelle: Les Miracles de Notre-Dame (B.N., n. a. fr. 24541) et le Livre d'heures de Pierre II de Bretagne (B.N., lat. 1159)*, in M. Ornato, N. Pons (eds.), *Pratiques de la culture écrite en France au XVe siècle*, Louvain-La-Neuve, Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 1995, pp. 499–514: 500–501.

⁴³ The ideal complexion was a blend of cream and pink on one's cheeks. D. RÉGNIER-BOHLER, *Imagining the Self*, in G. Duby (ed.), *A History of Private Life, II, Revelations of the Medieval World*, Cambridge, MA, Belknap, pp. 313–393: 359.

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will) is hanging from a leghold trap atop a symbolic crown of thorns in the bottom margin, and that image is repeated several times around a crown in the rectangular band under the image of the duke.

The portrait was executed with careful attention to volume and space. The artist chose to depict René standing close to the painted frame done using a *trompe-l'œil* technique; his three-quarter position leads the eye to the depth of the space. It seems that the duke is practicing his devotion in a secluded interior, separated from the main space by a black curtain trimmed in gold. The partially opened drape allows us to see a second curtain decorated with six coats of arms arranged in two rows. Those in the first register suggest the heraldry of the kingdoms of Hungary, Sicily, and Jerusalem and those in the second represent the duchies of Anjou, Bar, and Lorraine.⁴⁴

The selections of heraldic signs and personal emblems favored by noble patrons in the late Middle Ages can be used to date a manuscript. Whereas Millard Meiss and Charles Sterling argued on stylistic grounds that René's Book of Hours was created in the 1420s, Paul Durrieu, François Avril, and Merindol determine it was done after 1434 by noting that he acquired several new titles in 1435.⁴⁵ From his tenth birthday and throughout the 1430s, political and personal circumstances led to his becoming a leading public figure in both France and Italy. In 1419, following the intercession of his mother, Yolande of Aragon, Duke Louis of Bar, who had no son, declared René his heir. Several months

⁴⁴ Described from the left-up corner: the coat of arms of Hungary – horizontal bands painted alternately with gules and argent; Anjou-Sicily – azure sown with fleurs-de-lis with a label of three gules pendants; Jerusalem – Anjou – azure sown with fleurs-de-lis with a gules border; Bar – small golden crosses on an azure background; two golden bass back to back at the center of the device; Lorraine – gold with a slanting gules strip featuring three argent alerions (baby eagles). C. DE MÉRINDOL, *Le roi René et la seconde maison d'Anjou: emblématique art histoire*, Paris, Le Leopard d'Or, 1987, pp. 55-60.

⁴⁵ J.-B. DE VAIVRE, *Christian de Mérimond, Emblématique et histoire de l'art: Le livre d'heures du roi René*. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, latin 1156 A : *Date et lieu d'exécution*, dans 109e Congrès national des Sociétés savantes, La Bourgogne. Études archéologiques, «Bulletin Monumental», 144, 1986, pp. 89-91: 90.

after this declaration, the ten-year-old René was married to Isabelle, the daughter of Charles II of Lorraine (1364–1431), who had no legitimate son. According to the local social custom and law, Isabelle could succeed her father and the people of Lorraine expected that the arranged nuptials would to put an end to the ongoing conflict between Charles II and his nephew Antoine of Vaudemont (d. 1458), who demanded a part of the inheritance.⁴⁶ The years 1434 and 1435 marked other changes in René's status. His older brother Louis III (1403–1434), the declared successor to the Duchy of Anjou, died in Italy. Louis was to have been the heir of Jeanne, Queen of Sicily, Hungary, and Jerusalem, who died in 1435. As the next in the line of succession, René received all his brother's titles,⁴⁷ so it is clear that the six heraldic devices were painted after the death of Louis III.

The hanging from a trap and a symbolic crown of thorns clearly allude to a period in his life that the duke would rather not have remembered. In 1431, when Isabelle's father passed away, René had to invoke his rights over Lorraine. The support he received for his claims from Sigismund, the Holy Roman Emperor (1368–1437), and of most of the citizenry of Lorraine was not sufficient to block Antoine. René's campaign against his rival, who was supported by allies from Burgundy in Bulgnéville, failed, resulting in the beaten René becoming a prisoner of Philip the Good (1396–1467),⁴⁸ who twice imprisoned him in Dijon. Mérindol underscores the symbolic meaning of the emblem in this situation, which enables him to date the manuscript to the second time René was in captivity in Dijon (1435–1436).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ F. L. DE VILLENEUVE, *Histoire de René d'Anjou, roi de Naples, duc de Lorraine et comte de Provence*, Paris, Blaise, 1825, pp. 1: 25-31.

⁴⁷ M. L. KEKEWICH, *The Good King: René of Anjou and Fifteenth Century Europe*, Hamshire, UK, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 30.

⁴⁸ For the events of 1431, see F. L. DE VILLENEUVE, *Histoire de René d'Anjou, roi de Naples, duc de Lorraine et comte de Provence*, Paris, Blaise, 1825, 1: 123-127.

⁴⁹ C. DE MÉRINDOL, *Le livre peint à la fin du Moyen Âge, support privilégié d'une politique dynastique, familiale ou personnelle*, cit., p. 502.

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Another piece of telling evidence that helps to date the manuscript is the duke's bifid beard. Margaret Kekewich notes that after he was released from captivity in Dijon so that he could raise the money of his ransom, Philip the Good demanded that he return to prison. Kekewich quotes a report by the Milanese ambassador that describes the duke's poor condition: «I found him in a chamber, closely guarded wearing a long beard».⁵⁰ The portrait in the *Hours of René* is the only visual evidence of the duke having had a beard. Following this line of thinking, the image of the bearded duke and the emblem of the sail in the wind might have symbolized something of a parallel between Christ's suffering and the duke's imprisonment, which served to enhance René's devotion and spirituality.

René might have experienced two levels of enjoyment while gazing at this folio. The first would have been derived from an awareness of his power reflected in heraldic devices. René was a player in the game of expanding authority in which all the princes of ruling families and distinguished European noblemen were taking part. Historians tend to describe the duke as an unfortunate ruler who had a monarch's title but did not really exercise his authority over the territories he was supposed to rule. In many biographies he is described as a sovereign who chose to stay in his castle in Provence and enjoy festivals, tournaments, and music.⁵¹ However, there are new voices in scholarship arguing for the way he employed politics, diplomacy, and cultural endeavors in his attempts to extend his authority to the lands he justly acquired.⁵² After the Treaty of Lille in 1437, which delineated several terms for his liberation, René was able to leave the quarrel with Burgundy behind him and prepare himself to impose his authority as king of Sicily. Hence, folio 81v with his por-

⁵⁰ M. L. KEKEWICH, *The Good King*, cit., p. 29.

⁵¹ See, e.g., J. FAVIER, *Le roi René*, Paris, Fayard, 2008.

⁵² Oren Margolis, e.g., claims that René had a crucial role in the crises and political conflicts that swept Italy during the Quattrocento. O. MARGOLIS, *The Politics of Culture in Quattrocento Europe: René of Anjou in Italy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, Historical Monographs, 2016, pp. 4-5.

trait, coats of arms, and emblems reflects the way René sought to be perceived – as a ruler of great stature whose suffering prepared him to fulfill his mission as a king and a duke.

The second kind of pleasure might have been derived from René's awareness of his competence in utilizing a network of contemporary signifiers associated with his identity. Folio 81v incorporates the portrait of the duke at prayer, coats of arms, and two mottos – the eagle with the cross of Lorraine and the sail. This aggregate of symbols demonstrates the development in the relatively fixed system of heraldic emblems that helped to convey lineal, social, and political messages. From the mid-fourteenth century, aristocrats adorned their clothes, furniture, and personal objects with mottos and signs. The art of the emblem constituted a new form of representation that integrated the familiar and the elusive.⁵³ Whereas the former provided a straightforward interpretation, the latter implied a multilayered and enigmatic import.⁵⁴ When such devices were observed they were associated in accord with the cultural knowledge of the elite audiences that sought ingenuity and cleverness in visual and material objects made for their circle. The folio reveals an effort to address elements that would allude to the duke's status in socio-cultural affairs of his time. Laurent Hablot argues that throughout his life René demonstrated a proficiency at portraying power, both as mandated conduct of his rank but mostly as an outcome of his refined tastes.⁵⁵ The portrait in the *Hours of René* offered him an image of royal and ducal authority and cultural leadership as one of the most influential French rulers.

⁵³ C. BOUTELL, *Heraldry, Historical and Popular*, London, Richard Bentley, 1864, p. 4.

⁵⁴ S. CRANE, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity during the Hundred Years War*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002, p. 16.

⁵⁵ L. HABLLOT, *L'emblématique du roi René: outil de pouvoir et de gouvernement*, in J.-M. Matz, N.-Y. Tonnerre (eds.), *René d'Anjou (1409–1480). Pouvoirs et gouvernement*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011, pp. 327–337. < <https://books.openedition.org/pur/124779> > (Accessed: October 2020).

5. *Pleasure Motivates the Process of Self-Construction in Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*

After examining how different elements in the portraits were designed to motivate pleasure and self-recognition, I turn to late medieval concepts regarding the link between delight and self-formation. The process of enhancing one's identity according to the norms and ideologies of society is a gradual and ongoing process that lasts a lifetime, and an individual should be engaged in learning throughout all of its different stages. Late medieval literary sources tell us about the way the process of socialization and the construction of an identity can be reinforced by expressions of delight on the part of others to one's ability to internalize social norms. *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré* tells the story of the cultivation of a boy of relatively low noble descent in the court of the king of Bohemia. Owing to the guidance of a respectable young widow, Madame des Belles Cousines, he grows into a renowned knight. The story of his growing up while acquiring a chivalrous and noble identity is steeped in the expressions of pleasure of various people in the Bohemian Court as they witness his evolution.

The education of the page boy is accomplished in several stages; one of the first steps was to dress him up in a higher manner than his own rank would dictate. To become a knight, one needed significant financial resources. Madame generously gives him a purse with 12 écus, telling him to buy «a crimson doublet in damask or silk and two pairs of fine hose – one of fine scarlet cloth and the other of *brunet* from Saint-Lô.... You should also purchase four pairs of linen underwear and four fine kerchiefs, as well as well-made shoes and pattens...».⁵⁶ Her detailed instructions for the components of dress, their quantity, and materials are indicative of the importance associated with noble garb.

⁵⁶ A. DE LA SALE, J. H. M. TAYLOR, R. L. KRUEGER, *Jehan de Saintré*, cit., p. 35.

Saintré expresses satisfaction and enthusiasm at the beginning of the scenario when he receives the purse from Madame. We read that «[H]e was delighted. His heart was so overcome with joy... He made many happy little plans about how he would do what Madame had commanded and full of joyful little thoughts about how elegant he would look the following Sunday».⁵⁷ For Saintré, receiving the money is the first step toward becoming a distinguished courtier. He is also highly rated by his peers and patrons and their expressions of delight accentuate and reinforce his progress. The king responds positively when he notices the change in the page's outfit. When he voices his surprise at the young boy's new look, his squire gives him some details from the morning's occurrences after which the king declares: «I wish he were three or four years older; he would be my *varlet-tranchant*».⁵⁸ The king's response to Saintré's outward evolution demonstrates that the change was appreciated and that the king could imagine him as one of his most prestigious squires.

Madame, as a major figure in Saintré's evolution, expresses her delight at her protégé's progress on several occasions. The framework of the first part of the novel is based on more or less the same structure. First, she instructs him to perform certain acts; then he thanks her for her caring concern and carries out her recommendations. Afterward, she clearly sees the actions he undertook according to her suggestions and expresses her pleasure at the outcome. After her initial demands that he buy a whole new wardrobe and that he keep their relationship a secret, she sees him in public after Sunday Mass: «As they walked back after Mass, Madame saw little Saintré in the distance, dressed so very elegantly. Coming up to the queen, she said, "Ah, Ma'am,

⁵⁷ Ivi, p. 36.

⁵⁸ Ivi, p. 38. The title refers to a prestigious squire position, wherein he accompanies the king at table and cuts his meat. See glossary in A. DE LA SALE, J. H. M. TAYLOR, R. L. KRUEGER, *Jean de Saintré*, cit., p. 227. Elias describes the importance of the office of carving the meat during banquets. N. ELIAS, *The Civilizing Process*, cit., p. 119.

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look at how pretty the little Saintré boy is!».⁵⁹ Later on, the author tells us that «while they were dancing, Madame's gaze was fixed on Saintré, so well did he sing and dance.... For the more she observed him, the more he pleased her – since there was no man or woman at court who did not think him a worthy gentleman».⁶⁰ His quick learning of courtly codes of behavior and his ability to participate in the social arena in accord with nobility's norms evoked a delighted response.

The positive attitude toward expressions of delight in *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré* is compatible with recent findings in neuroscience and cognitive psychology regarding the role of pleasure affect in the human motivational system.⁶¹ Saintré, his peers, and patrons reacted to his transformation and their responses eventually determined the degree of assimilation of his changed self. The portraits reflect a similar interaction. In the owners' engagements with their artistic illusions they could bond with their portraits owing to the interface between mimetic style and ideal appearance. The iconographic details showed that they had an emotional role in the viewer-portrait interplay. The portraits conveyed the notion of ideal conduct and visibility, which addressed the mode of representation sought by every aristocrat and their acquisition was meant to evoke positive feelings on his/her behalf. Thus the portraits channeled their referents to continue adhering to their congenial community and encouraged their owners toward furthering their devotional practices and continuing in their efforts to construct their noble selves.

The portraits were a point of departure for exploring delight and enjoyment in an interaction between the community and the individual, between a person and his/her material image, and between one's visible and inner qualities. As in other issues involved in the creative arts, the Middle Ages have few verbal ref-

⁵⁹ LA SALE, *Jehan de Saintré*, cit., p. 38.

⁶⁰ Ivi, pp. 38-39.

⁶¹ See note 24.

erences to artists-patrons' intentions to elicit certain feelings in the viewer. In the light of the scarcity of such materials, the artistic vocabulary and style of work coupled with an exploration of the verbal expressions of emotions in texts from the period can spark a discourse on the emotional reception of works of art by contemporary audiences. Further, it can lead to an understanding regarding the role of emotional stimulation in motivating the owners' self-negotiation and processes of identity construction. As in textual sources that had an essential part in shaping the emotional interiority and conduct of their audiences, the portraits reveal their natures as affective agencies contributing to the processes of self-enhancement that never cease.