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PIETY, NOBILITY AND POSTERITY: WEALTH AND THE RUIN OF NICOLAS ROLIN'S REPUTATION

Laura Gelfand

Scholars writing about Jan van Eyck's portrait of Nicolas Rolin in the *Rolin Madonna* have often described the depiction and the man negatively: while some have maligned Rolin's appearance others have identified him as a hubristic usurper. This essay seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of Nicolas Rolin's patronage by examining his role as chancellor, his status as a non-noble within the class-conscious and restrictive Burgundian court, and how that has affected our interpretation of the works of art he commissioned and in which he appears. DOI 10.5092/jhna.2009.1.1.3

- 1 “Cultural acts, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic forms, are social events like any other; they are as public as a marriage and as observable as agriculture.”
Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System”¹



Fig. 1 Jan van Eyck, *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin*, ca. 1435, oil on panel, 66 x 62 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. 1271 (artwork in the public domain)

- 2 **T**he painting Nicolas Rolin (1376-1462) commissioned from Jan van Eyck for his family chapel in the church of Notre-Dame du Châtel in Autun was but one piece of the chancellor's publicly staged *vivre noblement* (fig. 1).² Van Eyck's painting was part of an extensive network of gifts and foundations sponsored by Rolin and the inclusion of his portrait within the painting functioned something like the donor names we still find on nearly every cultural monument. However, interpretations of the portrait have frequently identified a hubristic quality

in Van Eyck's depiction of what appears to be the patron's equal status vis-à-vis the Madonna and Child. Negative commentary about Rolin began in his own lifetime, when commentators noted his rapacious quest for wealth and power. But no commissioner of a portrait, especially one with an intended placement near his or her place of burial, sets out to evoke a negative response. Like most important commissions, Van Eyck's painting was the result of varied motives but foremost among them was Rolin's wish for recognition as a nobleman who indulged in displays of magnificence, as evidenced by his contributions to Notre-Dame du Châtel, where the painting was originally located, as well as for his devotion to the Virgin, to whom the church was dedicated. Rolin was not alone in his fiercely competitive jockeying for social status at the Valois court, and jealousy of his success no doubt harmed his reputation among his contemporaries and damaged perceptions of Rolin up to the present day. This essay aims to reassess Jan van Eyck's depiction of Rolin by examining these negative perceptions in light of his status as a member of the Valois court and by re-evaluating his charitable activities in order to come to a greater understanding of what the act of *vivre noblement* involved and how it affected Van Eyck's painting.

Nicolas Rolin in the Eyes of His Contemporaries and in Ours

- 3 While Anne Hagopian van Buren believed that Rolin's moral character was impossible to establish,³ thanks to several recent biographies and a new understanding of the intricacies of public posturing and the mutability of social positions within the court, I believe it is now possible to allow for a more nuanced interpretation of Rolin's character than has previously been determined.⁴ Twentieth-century doubt about the authenticity of Rolin's piety follows that of his fifteenth-century contemporaries, who questioned the genuineness of his spirituality. Jacques du Clercq (1420-1501) said Rolin was, "reputed to be one of the wisest men in the kingdom, to speak temporally; with respect to the spiritual, I shall remain silent"⁵ Georges Chastelain (1415-1475) concurred, noting that Rolin "always harvested on earth as though earth was to be his abode forever."⁶ Louis XI (1423-1483) detested Rolin and said of his foundation in Beaune, "It is only right that Rolin, after having made so many poor during his life, should leave an asylum for them after his death."⁷ Although his public and lucrative life probably incurred the animosity evident in these comments, they also reflect the rigid social structure of the ducal court; a system contemptuous towards non-nobles, such as Rolin.⁸
- 4 Rolin spent the majority of his life working for the Valois dukes of Burgundy, and while he was wealthier than many of those with titles around him, he was not noble. Graeme Small explains that, "at a court where the *roturier*, whatever his office or wealth, was always second-best to the noble born-and-bred, lesser social origins were an embarrassment which one did not seek to expose or explain at length. Chastelain, a prime example of this himself, reflects the values of the milieu that had adopted him in his aloof treatment of those who climbed the social ladder."⁹ Chastelain was a member of the minor nobility with limited financial resources and his position at court may account, at least in part, for his unflattering description of Rolin. Peter Arnade noted that, "One of the consequences of the chronicle as literary construct is that it bears all the social marks of its court milieu, packing a host of assumptions and strategies about social worth and cultural value."¹⁰ Far from a reliable narrator, Chastelain was deeply involved in court politics, where he was an intimate of the Croy family, whose famous rivalry with the Rolin family limited and then ended Rolin's power in the final decade of his life.¹¹



Fig. 2 Rogier van der Weyden, *Nicolas Rolin, chancellor for the dukes of Burgundy*, reverse panel from the *Last Judgment*, 1434, oil on panel, Beaune, France, Hôtel-Dieu, inv. no. 135 (artwork in the public domain)

- 5 Rolin has consistently been viewed in a negative light from his time to ours. Johan Huizinga asked, “Are we to suspect the presence of a hypocritical nature behind the countenance of the donor of *La vierge*, Chancellor Rolin?”¹² Negative comments by Rolin’s contemporaries caused Erwin Panofsky to characterize Rolin’s physiognomy in Rogier van der Weyden’s *Last Judgment* as possessing “sunken eyes, a lean, deeply lined face and bitter mouth” (fig. 2).¹³ Further, Panofsky referred to Du Clercq’s assessment of Rolin, quoted above, and suggested that Rolin founded the Hôtel-Dieu because of his guilty conscience.¹⁴ Panofsky described Rolin as “mighty and unscrupulous,” again quoting Du Clercq, who wrote that Rolin was “unwilling to let anyone rule in his place, intent upon rising and expanding his power to the very end and dying sword in fist.”¹⁵
- 6 Molly Teasdale Smith, writing about the Rolin Madonna, postulated that Jean, Nicolas’s son, commissioned the painting in order to expiate the sins of his father. Smith quotes Philip the Good who, upon hearing of the aged chancellor’s death, raised his arms above his head and said, “If it be possible, O Lord, my creator and his, I beseech you to pardon all his faults.”¹⁶ Instead of disparaging the chancellor’s character, Philip’s statement more likely reflects the common belief that everyone but the most saintly was bound to die with sin staining his or her soul.¹⁷ Craig Harbison also focused on the chancellor’s sinful nature, suggesting that the painting shows him in the act of confessing his sins. Harbison writes that, although “other patrons were portrayed receiving priestly forgiveness, Rolin feels powerful enough to receive absolution directly from Christ.”¹⁸ But there is no reason to believe that Van Eyck depicted a public confession nor is it likely that Rolin would have commissioned such an image.
- 7 When scholars incorporate knowledge of Rolin’s reputation into analyses of the painting his motives are usually found wanting. Hermann Kamp saw Rolin’s patronage as reflective of a desire to show himself as equal to the nobles with whom he worked; in his view the chancellor’s patronage was a form of social climbing.¹⁹ Elisabeth Dhanens, analyzing the inscriptions along the hem of the Virgin’s robe in the painting, noted that although these honorific words are usually applied to the Virgin herself, “it is possible that here the power and elevation of Chancellor Rolin is intended,” adding “here is a strong implication that the man kneeling before the Virgin has just read these texts and is aware of his own importance in the scheme of things.”²⁰ In contrast, Bret Rothstein identifies the painting as “a carefully orchestrated display of piety,” one that “allows Rolin

more or less publicly to verify an intangible—and for his contemporaries, questionable piety.”²¹

- 8 Panofsky described the donor portrait in the Rolin Madonna as depicting, “a human being [who] has gained admission to the elevated throne room of the Madonna without the benefit of a canonized sponsor,” asserting that the chancellor had inappropriately insinuated himself into a holy space.²² Subsequent scholars have attempted to determine the location depicted within the painting, celestial or terrestrial, and the power of Panofsky’s words has influenced numerous interpretations.²³ It is important to approach the painting objectively in order to understand the formal and iconographic elements without the overlay of unquestioned aspersions on the donor’s character. Because they were looking for visual proof of Rolin’s rotten character, most scholars have misunderstood what is actually portrayed. Rather than an image of unparalleled hubris, in actuality the formal elements of the painting differ only slightly from numerous images of donors with holy figures that preceded it.²⁴ Rolin’s placement in the painting is no more shocking or hubristic than that of Jean de Berry in the Brussels Hours or Richard II in the Wilton Diptych (London, National Gallery; fig. 3). In fact, Rolin commissioned the same type of portrait made for the nobles with whom he worked but, because he was not of noble birth, his emulation of these men may have helped tarnish his reputation in their eyes.



Fig. 3 Anonymous, Wilton Diptych, ca. 1395-99, oil on panel, 53 x 37 cm. National Gallery, London, inv. no. NG4451 (artwork in the public domain)

Status and Envy at the Valois Court

- 9 It is important to consider class, status, wealth, and envy in order to untangle the threads that led to Rolin’s tarnished reputation and the negative interpretations of his portrait. Kamp believed that Van Eyck’s painting was symptomatic of the chancellor’s anxiety about his status at the Valois court.²⁵ Rothstein suggested that Rolin’s portrait in the Rolin Madonna acts as a form of ostentation—highlighting the chancellor’s devotional practices, while arguing against his contemporary’s perceptions of his venality.²⁶ Descriptions of Rolin by his contemporaries make it clear that the chancellor was the subject of sharp criticism despite, or perhaps because of, his numerous donations. But, the court chroniclers who made these long-lived evaluations, men like Chastelain and Du Clercq, were envious of Rolin’s status at the court and his wealth.²⁷ Unlike these men, Rolin was not a member of the nobility yet he attained the highest possible status at court for a non-noble, eventually even being knighted.²⁸ In 1454, at the famous Feast of the Pheasant, Rolin was the only non-noble seated at the high table with Philip the Good.²⁹ His wealth also opened the door for his children, allowing his sons to marry members of the Burgundian nobility.³⁰

- 10 Rolin's wealth and success caused his peers to envy him. Helmut Schoeck discriminated between two types of envy: one caused by righteous indignation and the other, "vulgar destructive envy," directed toward those of similar social status to one's self.³¹ Schoeck theorized that this second form of envy develops between those who are close to being equals, as was clearly the case with Rolin and his critics, all of whom fiercely guarded their positions within the court. Additionally, he writes that destructive envy can manifest itself in the desire to preserve inequality as well as in the desire for financial equality.³² Closely related to this type of envy, therefore, are the concepts of status and class. Joseph Berke offers the following definitions: "Status is a non-transferable blend of position and prestige, in contrast with class, which denotes wealth and power. These social states may complement each other, but it is not uncommon for the newly rich to have little status and for prestigious people to have little money."³³ Battles for status in the hothouse of the Burgundian court system caused the "vulgar destructive envy" that marks Rolin's relationships with his noble contemporaries.
- 11 The comments of Rolin's critics were the product of insecurity caused by a new fluidity in the established social order. From the twelfth century onward, an important shift marks European courts: the breakdown of traditional class barriers. Remarkable ascents were possible, but it is clear that they could be met with jealousy or even murder, as in the cases of both Thomas Becket and Robert of Aire in Flanders.³⁴ Walter Prevenier proposes that spectacular elevations in estate became possible thanks to the new class of officials who were often better educated than those they served.³⁵ Intermarriage was also a factor, as was the ability of the most important members of the royal entourage to accumulate tremendous wealth. Such wealth was the key to achieving nobility, but this could only truly be accomplished through strategic conspicuous consumption or displays of magnificence. Contemporaries of Rolin, like Peter Bladelin, who was not noble by birth but was extraordinarily wealthy, carried such display to remarkable extremes. As is well known, Bladelin founded the town of Middleburg, establishing a church dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul in its center and constructing an imposing castle for himself.³⁶ Rolin's patronage reflects a similar desire on the part of the chancellor to associate himself with the nobility and their behavior.

Chancellor Rolin and *Vivre Noblement*

- 12 Within the court the concept of *vivre noblement*, or "living nobly", played a considerable role. When first coined this term simply indicated that one lived off income from landholding. However, as Jean Wilson has shown, by the early fifteenth century the term was synonymous with conspicuous consumption; elaborate display came to be seen as proof of nobility, acting to construct public identity and authenticate claims of noble lineage.³⁷ Nobility is one of four types of capital enumerated and discussed by Pierre Bourdieu.³⁸ Rolin possessed three types: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital in spades. What he needed was the symbolic capital he would achieve by attaining noble status, because it was through that lens that all his other forms of capital were perceived. High-ranking officials in the Burgundian court, both noble and non-noble, went to great lengths and expense to show themselves as *vivre noblement*. Increasingly in the later Middle Ages, the greatest proof of nobility was to be found in acting noble; sometimes this was seen as more verifiable than transmission through blood. Howard Kaminsky succinctly describes this understanding of nobility: "The inner grace was a mystery, the outer signs could be

perceived.”³⁹

- 13 Acceptance by his contemporaries at court was difficult and it seems that even Rolin’s charitable acts were met with indifference (if the surviving commentaries are to be believed) if not suspicion. Lavish display formed a fundamental aspect of court life and Chastelain described in detail the various rites that took place during the three days of mourning Rolin ordered for his funeral as well as the elaborate clothing in which he was dressed for the occasion.⁴⁰ In his opulent posthumous display Rolin followed the lead of the nobles for whom he worked, and he was not alone in doing so; members of the middle class and the clergy acted similarly.⁴¹ Rolin had the wealth to *vivre noblement* and access to the best artists, but he did not have noble blood and without this his gestures may have appeared venal and gauche to the nobles around him.

Nicolas Rolin’s Origins

- 14 Of bourgeois origins, Rolin was born in Autun in 1376 and baptized in the family church of Notre-Dame du Ch, tel across the street from his home.⁴² Nicolas’s granduncle managed to parlay a small inheritance and some good luck into significant landholdings and his grandfather was a prominent, if not particularly wealthy Autunois. Nicolas’s father was a successful landholder who transformed his financial windfall into good marriages for his sons.⁴³ The rents and other income accrued from his properties, most of which were related to viniculture, were substantial enough that he had become fairly prominent by the time of his death in 1389, when he was buried in the Cathedral of Saint Lazare in Autun.⁴⁴ Coming into a significant inheritance in his teens, Rolin pursued his studies of law in Avignon as a wealthy young man. He inherited lands in such famous wine-producing areas as Mersault, Auxey, Volnay, Beaune, and Pommard, and his landholdings became even larger following the death of his brother, Jean.⁴⁵ Rolin also inherited his family’s home in Autun on the Rue de Bancs, which, throughout his long life, remained his primary residence.⁴⁶
- 15 Rolin began his career as a lawyer in the Paris parliament and was quickly made chief legal council for John the Fearless in 1408. He served as a chief legal advisor and as an ambassador for the duke until John’s brutal murder in Montereau in 1419. John’s son, Philip the Good, named Rolin chancellor of Burgundy on December 3, 1422, and with this new title Rolin continued his ascent, soon becoming one of the most important diplomats on the European political stage. Rolin was charged with interpreting, negotiating and enforcing the legal rights and regulations of the duchy as well as oversight of all accounting. He served as keeper of the duke’s seal and was involved in most domestic and foreign affairs of state. Performing this service during the years in which Burgundy’s relations with France and England were particularly strained, Rolin acted as a trusted counselor to Philip the Good, helping him navigate his way through treacherous political waters. Rolin’s third marriage, to Guigone de Salins, was also his most upwardly mobile since the bride was a member of the high nobility.⁴⁷ In 1423 or 1424, Philip the Good knighted Rolin, and Guigone was made a member of the duchess’s court.⁴⁸
- 16 In fact, the chancellor was the most important person in the duchy after the duke himself.⁴⁹ Rolin’s powerful position is clearly illustrated in the manuscript illuminations in which he is shown. In the presentation scene from the *Chroniques du Hainaut* by Jacques de Guise, Rolin is situated immediately to the right of Philip the Good while the duke’s son Charles is to his left (fig.

4). Rolin is shown here wearing his customary *chaperon* with a long cornette that wraps around the hat and over his head. The large purse at the end of a low belt acts as a symbol of his office and, in a floor-length garment, he cuts a more somber figure than the elegant duke in his fashionably short tunic.⁵⁰ Rolin is depicted with slightly stooped posture showing his obeisance to the duke beside him.



Fig. 4 Philip III the Good, Duke of Burgundy, Receiving a Manuscript, dedication page, *Chroniques de Hainault*, 1468, 43.9 x 31.6 cm. Bibliothèque royale Albert I, Brussels, inv. no. Ms. 9243 (artwork in the public domain)

- 17 As Rolin became more involved in matters of state his wealth also increased and he began to fund projects directed toward his and his family's salvation. Nearly all his acts of beneficence were tinged with a desire for recognition, yet in this Rolin is no different from members of the Valois court on whom he modeled his patronage. Despite negative comments by his contemporaries, Rolin's patronage does not exhibit any more self-interest or conspicuous consumption than that of the nobility. That he established foundations on a scale typically associated with that of the nobility is a reflection of the chancellor's exceptional wealth and desire to *vivre noblement* rather than an indication of an unseemly desire for public display.

Establishment and Reform at the Hôtel-Dieu in Beaune



Fig. 5 Courtyard of the Hôtel-Dieu, Beaune, France. Photo: Author

- 18 Rolin's most well-known charitable foundation, the Hôtel-Dieu in Beaune (fig. 5), was endowed specifically to help the town's poor combat the disease and famine that devastated Burgundy in the first half of the fifteenth century. Guigone de Salins was an active and involved partner in the couple's charitable activities and the Hôtel-Dieu was one of several foundations they established together. Guigone's family had a history of creating charitable institutions, many of which she

maintained and expanded. After Rolin's death she retired to the Hôtel-Dieu, where she was eventually buried. Guigone was not just instrumental in the origin of the hospital but was also involved with its administration and her presence is evident there to the present day.⁵¹

- 19 In 1441 Pope Eugene IV granted Rolin the rights to found a hospital for the poor.⁵² The same day another papal bull established indulgences for visitors to the hospital of Saint-Esprit in Besançon and alms collected there were used to build Rolin's hospital.⁵³ The bull also stipulated that the hospital priest in Besançon could bestow a plenary indulgence on all of those who died after confession; this included all masters, brothers, sisters, servants who had aided the sick, and persons of both sexes.⁵⁴ In addition to funds raised from these indulgences Rolin pledged his own resources to the institution by providing annual revenue from salt mines in Salins.⁵⁵ These mines were part of Guigone de Salins's dowry, and she was undoubtedly involved in the decision to use the funds for this purpose.
- 20 In the foundation's charter, Rolin noted that the hospital was established in Beaune because the city had fewer charitable institutions for the poor than Autun and it was in great need. In the first half of the fifteenth century the citizens of Beaune suffered from a combination of disease, famine, and roving bands of violent thugs known as *echorcheurs*. A survey taken in 1443 found that nine-tenths of the 470 households in and around Beaune were in a state of extreme poverty.⁵⁶ Additionally, between 1400 and 1443 the population dropped 22 percent.⁵⁷ Beaune was also a highly visible place to establish a foundation; it was the location of the parliament and the seat of justice for the duchy. The ducal palace, where Rolin stayed when in town on business, and the parliament building were adjacent to the Hôtel-Dieu. Beaune's status as a center of high-quality wine production brought in merchants and other visitors from cities as far away as Milan and Bruges. Because the parliament met there frequently, Rolin was able to keep an eye on the hospital's progress during construction. The Hôtel-Dieu, like all of Rolin's charitable contributions, was a combination of public display and genuinely pious action.
- 21 After numerous appeals to Pope Nicolas V, on January 3, 1453, the Hôtel-Dieu was granted full independence.⁵⁸ The pope reaffirmed all of the rights and privileges that had previously been accorded and designated them as irrevocable. With this the hospital became independent of the local archbishop and was under the jurisdiction of the Holy See, to which it owed parish rights.⁵⁹ In 1455, Philip the Good visited the Hôtel-Dieu and was so impressed that he granted it tax exemptions, access to wood for heating from his forests, and, because Rolin's initial gifts had proven inadequate for upkeep and daily needs, the duke also gave the hospital the right to accept donations and made substantial gifts of his own.⁶⁰ Through his actions Philip the Good both expressed his pleasure with Rolin's donation and associated himself with a prominent and successful foundation.
- 22 In 1459 a significant change was made to the organizational structure of the Hôtel-Dieu. With some reluctance Rolin initially allowed a rigorous monastic order to oversee the women employed at the hospital,⁶¹ but when he heard that Alardine Gasquierre, the mistress of the hospital, abused the sisters who worked there and the impoverished patients, Rolin and Guigone de Salins stepped in.⁶² Forming a committee with nine important residents of Beaune, Rolin drew up new rules in which he and his heirs were given complete control in the hiring of rectors, mistresses,

confessors, and chaplains for the foundation.⁶³ Job descriptions for all employees, including the mistresses, were spelled out, with an emphasis on creating a place where the poor and sick received the best possible treatment, as did their caregivers. Most significantly, the women who worked at the hospital were no longer connected to a religious institution; under the new regulations the only requirements were that they be unmarried, with good reputations, and between eighteen and thirty years of age. While employed at the hospice they were to remain chaste, but they were free to leave to join a monastery or marry if they wished. The vow that they took upon entering the foundation was simple, temporary, and revocable.⁶⁴ The new regulations stipulated that the sisters were to be “gently and well-treated by the mistress, with discretion and prudence, without criticism, negative speech or jealousy.”⁶⁵ New rules established how often the sisters were to confess, take communion, and say prayers for Guigone and Nicolas. These changes led to vastly improved lives for all the residents of the Hôtel-Dieu.⁶⁶ Pope Pius II signaled his approval of these reforms when he reaffirmed the rights granted the foundation by his predecessors and made the indulgence granted by Calixtus III perpetual for visitors to the hospital on the five feast days of the Virgin and during the Easter Octave.⁶⁷

- 23 Despite these precautions, after Rolin’s death his oldest son attempted to undermine the new regulations. Cardinal Jean Rolin, bishop of Autun, conspired with the administrators of the Hôtel-Dieu to alter the regulations for the women who worked there with a goal of reinstating the hospital’s affiliation with a strict religious order. Guigone de Salins struggled for six years to bring the matter before the parliament of Paris and in 1469, the legality of the rules and privileges she and Nicolas had established was upheld.⁶⁸ An obvious reason for Jean Rolin’s actions was that restructuring the Hôtel-Dieu’s ordinances made it exempt from the jurisdiction of all courts except for the Holy See and the foundation’s statutes specifically excluded the jurisdiction of the bishop of Autun.⁶⁹ Like most important medieval ecclesiastics, Jean Rolin jealously protected the properties he oversaw and sought to increase rents and other funds that could supplement his coffers. A wealthy foundation like the Hôtel-Dieu would have provided plenty of opportunities for financial enrichment.
- 24 Rolin’s concern for the women who worked at the Hôtel-Dieu resulted in his reworking its governance and, while such restructuring was obviously important to him, it would not have interested many outside the hospital walls (his son Jean is a notable exception). Given how important these reforms were to both Nicolas and Guigone it is difficult to see their actions in anything other than a positive light. Like most charitable actions, establishing the Hôtel-Dieu was probably motivated by a complex set of concerns, including earthly recognition. But for the donors to revisit the foundation to guarantee that its patients and staff were well treated is behavior inconsistent with purely selfish motives. Hermann Kamp and Didier Sécula both attributed Rolin’s founding of the Hôtel-Dieu to his desire to emulate the patronage of the Valois dukes, but this accounts for only part of it.⁷⁰ In the founding charter Rolin states that the Hôtel-Dieu was established to exchange earthy goods for celestial ones and to exchange the impermanent for the eternal.⁷¹ Similar desires are frequently noted in such documents, but in this case Rolin’s continued involvement with the hospital may indicate that with this foundation he was less concerned with *vivre noblement* and more concerned with genuine charity. With this in mind it is now possible to see Jan van Eyck’s painting and its donor, in a new light.

Jan van Eyck's Rolin Madonna

- 25 The Rolin Madonna was originally housed in the church of Notre-Dame du Châtel in Autun, a church that Rolin dramatically renovated. Rather than primarily broadcasting Rolin's wealth or power, Jan's painting was commissioned and composed with two main goals: the painting showcases the chancellor's devotion to the Virgin while simultaneously connecting him to his patronage of the church. While the original location of Jan van Eyck's painting in Notre-Dame du Châtel is fairly certain, the dating of the work is less secure with dendrochronological analysis indicating a likely execution date in the mid-1430s.⁷² Rolin was particularly attached to Notre-Dame du Châtel, where he was both baptized and buried. His donations to the church began in 1426, prompted by the building's poor condition.⁷³ Starting with funds to found and maintain a chapel, he continuously increased his donations to the building over the following decades. By 1450, he had convinced the pope to elevate Notre-Dame's status from parish to collegiate with eleven canons (a twelfth was added in 1456), all paid for by Rolin, who was named official patron.⁷⁴ Eventually the nave, choir, and chancel were entirely reconstructed and lateral chapels were added, together with a large new chapel on the south side of the church.⁷⁵ Rolin also funded a tall bell tower renowned for its decorative gold tiles.⁷⁵ The Rolin family house was connected to Notre-Dame's tribune by an elevated and covered walkway that crossed the cul-de-sac du donjon, the narrow passageway that separated the house from the church.⁷⁶ This allowed Rolin to access the church whenever he wished, particularly when saying Matins early, a privilege for which he had received special dispensation.⁷⁷ The chancellor was buried in Notre-Dame du Châtel beneath a tomb slab that detailed his gifts to the church and other charitable activities and requested prayers from passersby.⁷⁸ Thanks to the promise of indulgences for prayers said before Jan's painting, pilgrims and others were encouraged to visit Notre-Dame and pray for its patron.⁷⁹



Fig. 6 Plan, former Church of Notre-Dame du Châtel, Autun (destroyed), 1773. Photo: Archives de la Côte-d'Or.

- 26 Granting Rolin's need to *vivre noblement* and the authenticity of his charitable donations allows us a new understanding of his portrait. Jan van Eyck's painting features interior and exterior views of Notre-Dame du Châtel. By emphasizing the specifics of Rolin's charity as reflected in the church's architecture, the Rolin Madonna visually captured Rolin's publicly pious behavior. In doing so, the painting followed the widely accepted pattern of announcing a patron's gifts by showing him or her making a humble offering before the Virgin and Child. Many of the painting's details bring to mind the rebuilding and endowment of Notre-Dame du Châtel. The Romanesque arcade behind

Rolin and the Virgin resembles the arcade that separated the chapel of Saint Sebastian from the main body of the church (fig. 6).⁸¹

- 27 When the Rolin Madonna was displayed in the chapel of Saint Sebastian visitors to the church would have looked from the side aisle through the actual arcade to see Jan's painting, which featured a similar Romanesque arcade.⁸² Perhaps the extension of the real church of Notre-Dame into the fictive world created by Van Eyck indicated that the Virgin and Child's space was accessible through devout prayer as modeled by Chancellor Rolin. The mirroring effect results in a reflexive temporality, wherein the present and the past form a continuum in which the perpetual prayer of Nicolas Rolin and that of the viewer looking at his portrait unify and become more efficacious.⁸³
- 28 The two men in the painting's middle ground who look out over the parapet draw our attention into the distant landscape and continue the interaction of reality and fiction.⁸⁴ A river divides the landscape and the city behind the Virgin and Child bristles with ecclesiastical architecture in contrast to the more secular vista to the left,⁸⁵ the details of which emphasize Rolin's pious use of the abundance depicted therein. As James Snyder noted, much of Rolin's wealth was attained through ownership of vineyards and the verdant slope behind him attests to this connection.⁸⁶ Within the city behind Rolin we find only one church and it is painted just above his hands (fig. 7): the church that is represented here is almost certainly Notre-Dame du Châtel, with its single spire covered with gold tiles, which Jan has carefully indicated with tiny dots of yellow paint, and a covered passageway to an adjacent house.⁸⁷



Fig. 7 Jan van Eyck, detail from *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* (figure 1)

- 29 Forcefully connecting Rolin and his landscape with the Virgin and Child, Van Eyck's painting uses foreshortened perspective to push areas of the background into the foreground. John L. Ward noted that because of this effect the tips of the Christ Child's fingers in the foreground seem to connect to the bridge over the river in the distance.⁸⁸ The deliberate compression of space makes it look as if Christ's gesture begins in the foreground but is carried through the background and arcs over the distant river, literally bridging the divide between the Virgin and Child's side of the landscape and that of Rolin. Once the viewer becomes aware of this deliberate manipulation of our perception of space within the painting we naturally look for additional examples. Yet this manipulation does not necessarily reflect a hubristic view, rather, it follows long-accepted schemes for the presentation of donors.

- 30 One of the most obvious of these spatial conflations is the church located just above Rolin's joined hands, discussed above, which looks as if it is resting on the chancellor's hands. This placement recalls archetypal donor images, such as Giotto's famous donor portrait of Enrico Scrovegni in the Arena Chapel, shown presenting his chapel to three saints (fig. 8).⁸⁹



Fig. 8 Giotto di Bondone, detail with Enrico degli Scrovegni from the *Last Judgment*, 1305, fresco. Scrovegni Chapel, Padua (artwork in the public domain)

- 31 By positioning the church above Rolin's praying hands Jan cleverly conflates the image of the donor presenting a gift with that of the donor as *priant*, representing the prayerful devotion of the person portrayed. By fusing both portrait types Van Eyck shows Rolin as both donor and devotee and highlights Rolin's desire to be remembered as both in perpetuity.
- 32 The crown held above the head of the Virgin in Jan's painting may be specifically connected to one of Rolin's gifts to the church. Rolin donated a crown to the church of Notre-Dame du Châtel that was placed on a sculpted image of the Virgin,⁹⁰ and Jan's painted crown probably refers to this donation.⁹¹ The crown has also been connected with the Coronation of the Virgin and the Virgin as *Ecclesia* and interpreted as the Crown of Life.⁹² As Ward noted, this crown creates a visual balance and iconographic correlation between its elaborate design and placement and the fictive architectural reliefs in the painting.⁹³ These sculpted capitals show scenes from Genesis, including two specifically related to wine: the Drunkenness of Noah on Rolin's side and Abraham and Melchizedek on the Virgin's. Many scholars have offered interpretations about the meaning of these particular scenes, but at the most fundamental level they should be associated with the profitable vineyards that enabled Rolin to renovate the church.⁹⁴ Of course, like the vineyards in the distance, these scenes also have Eucharistic references and this meaning would have been amplified by the painting's placement near the altar in the chapel of Saint Sebastian.⁹⁵
- 33 Finally, the level of Rolin's physical and emotional engagement with the Virgin and Child deserves consideration since it is his proximity to the holy figures that has led to so much criticism. When following the path of his gaze it is clear that the chancellor looks across the center of the picture but misses the holy figures, focusing instead somewhere to the Virgin's left.⁹⁶ The two-dimensionality of Rolin's pose allows neither the viewer nor the holy figures to engage in any sort of communication with him, and it is decidedly different from the three-dimensional placement of the Virgin and Child. Rolin's prayerful position is calculated to appear as permanent and unceas-

ing as possible. The Virgin looks toward him and the Christ Child blesses him, but there is no real interaction. Most importantly, a clear vertical line, like the crease in a book or the hinged frame of a diptych, separates these figures.⁹⁷ Rolin and the Virgin and Child share the same imaginary space, but they should not be seen as actually inhabiting this space together.



Fig. 9 Rogier van der Weyden, *Nativity with the Donor Pieter Bladelin*, center panel of the Middleburg (Bladelin) Altarpiece, ca. 1445, oil on panel, 91 x 89 cm. Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin, inv. no. Nr. 535 (artwork in the public domain)

- 34 Rolin does not have any saintly intercessors here, but he is shown at a respectful distance from the holy figures, both in terms of his physical presence and his emotional engagement. In fact, he is placed much farther away from the Virgin and Child than donors in other contemporary paintings. For example, in the central panel of Rogier van der Weyden's Bladelin Altarpiece (fig. 9) Peter Bladelin appears without a holy intercessor and acts as a third participant in the Nativity. Like Joseph and Mary he devoutly directs his gaze toward the radiant Christ Child resting on the Virgin's blue mantle. Rogier simultaneously includes and isolates Bladelin through formal means, such as the proximity of his hands and tunic to the edges of the Virgin's clothing, which align without overlapping. Middleburg, the city Bladelin founded, fills the landscape beyond the ruined structure in the foreground.⁹⁸ Bladelin's long black sash directs our gaze toward the city, clearly associating the donor with his foundation.⁹⁹ Like Rolin, Bladelin was not noble by birth, but his wealth and strategic display of *vivre noblement* enabled his meteoric rise in the Valois court. Paintings like the Rolin Madonna and the Bladelin Altarpiece serve many of the same functions and, although they are iconographically very different, they were both intended to assert specific assets of their respective donors: piety, generosity, and nobility.
- 35 The Rolin painting is a permanent evocation of his desire to *vivre noblement*. In terms of display and magnificence, the painting, especially when originally situated within its elaborately reconstructed and endowed setting, demonstrated Rolin's desire to appear noble. Like the Hôtel Dieu in Beaune, his most important foundation, it served as an example of conspicuous consumption, as expected from nobility. But, as we have seen, Rolin's hospital was also the result of his genuinely beneficent wish to help those in need. These twinned and competing impulses—genuine piety and the desire for noble status—mark Rolin's donations, just as they do those of his non-noble contemporaries. Rolin is not exceptional, either in his supposed malevolence or beneficence; rather, he is a man of his time. However, in part because of negative preconceptions, historians have frequently branded him as hubristic and insincere and have seen his portrait as inappro-

privately assertive. If we, as twenty-first-century viewers, can look at Jan van Eyck's portrait of Nicolas Rolin and, rather than seeing him through the envious gazes of his contemporaries, see what Rolin intended and what his actions as patron of both the Hôtel Dieu and Notre-Dame du Châtel reveal him to be, we see a wealthy man striving for salvation and status in a courtly world in which blood was in many ways thicker than gold.

Acknowledgements

This essay is dedicated to Carol Purtle, an outstanding scholar with whom I had the great pleasure of discussing Jan van Eyck's work while standing in front of the *Van der Paele Madonna* in Bruges, a memory I will long treasure. My sincerest thanks go to Diane Wolfthal, Anne Derbes, Sarah Blick, the anonymous JHNA reviewers, and the journal editors for their careful readings and helpful suggestions on earlier drafts of this essay.

Laura Gelfand's research focuses on art and architecture of Northern Europe from 1400-1520. She has published widely on the paintings of Jan van Eyck, the commissions of Margaret of Austria, and art and architecture related to pilgrimage practices. She is currently co-editing two volumes entitled "Push Me, Pull You: Interaction, Imagination and Devotional Practices in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art," which are forthcoming with Brill in 2010. She holds the position of Professor of Art History at the Myers School of Art, University of Akron, Akron, OH.

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¹ Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Michael Lambek (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 64.

² A complete list of the extensive bibliography on this painting may be found in Héne Mund and Cyriel Stroo, *Early Netherlandish Painting (1400-1500): A Bibliography (1984-1998)* (Brussels: Centre international d'Étude de la peinture médiévale des basins de l'Escaut et de la Meuse, 1998), 244-46. *Vivre noblement* is a concept that has been discussed by many authors, including Wim De Clercq, Jan Dumolyn, and Jelle Haemers, *Vivre Noblement? Material Culture and Elite Identity in Late Medieval Flanders*, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 38, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 1-31; Howard Kaminsky, "Estate, Nobility, and the Exhibition of Estate in the Later Middle Ages", *Speculum* 68 (1993): 684-709; and Jean C. Wilson, *Painting in Bruges at the Close of the Middle Ages: Studies in Society and Visual Culture* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

³ Anne Hagopian van Buren, "The Canonical Office in Renaissance Painting, Part II: More about the Rolin Madonna," *Art Bulletin* 61 (1979): 631 and note 67.

⁴ The books by Marie-Thérèse Berthier and John-Thomas Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin, 1376-1462: Ambition, pouvoir et fortune en Bourgogne* (Precy-sous-Thil: Editions de l'Armançon, 1998) and *Guigone de Salins 1403-1470: Une femme de la Bourgogne médiévale* (Beaune: Editions de l'Armançon, 2003), are a welcome new resource. For more on how non-nobles and nobles operated within the courts, see Walter Prevenier, "Officials in the Town and Countryside in the Low Countries: Social and Professional Developments from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century," *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae* 7 (1997): 1-17; and Kaminsky, "Estate, Nobility," 684-709. Also see the volume, *Showing Status: Representations of Social Positions in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Wim Blockmans and Antheum Janse (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999).

⁵ Jacques du Clercq, *Collection complete des Mémoires relatifs · l'histoire de France*, ed. M. Petitot, vol. 11 (Paris: Foucault Libraire, 1820); The *Mémoires* were originally written between 1448 and 1467. Quoted and translated in Bret Rothstein, "On Devotion as Social Ornament in Jan van Eyck's Virgin and Child with Chancellor Nicolas Rolin," *Dutch Crossing* 24 (2000): 96-132, esp. 107. Other biographies of Nicolas Rolin include Florence Pridat, *Nicolas Rolin, chancelier de Bourgogne* (Dijon: Editions Universitaires de Dijon, 1996), and Marie-Thérèse Berthier and John-Thomas Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*.

⁶ Quoted in Craig Harbison, *Jan van Eyck: The Play of Realism* (London: Reaktion, 1991), 118.

⁷ "Il est bien juste que Rolin, après avoir fait tant de pauvres pendant sa vie, leur laisse un asile après sa mort": Gaston Abord, *Nicolas Rolin, chancelier de Bourgogne au XVe siècle* (Dijon: Darantier, 1898), 28.

⁸ For more on this, see Kathryn A. Edwards, *Families and Frontiers: Re-creating Communities and Boundaries in the Early Modern Burgundies* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2002). See also John Bartier, *Légistes et Gens de Finances au XVe Siècle: Les conseillers des ducs de Bourgogne Philippe le Bon*

et Charles le Téméraire (Gembloux, Belgium: Editions J. Duculot, 1952), 190-207.

⁹ Graeme Small, *George Chastelain and the Shaping of Valois Burgundy* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1997), 33. Chastelain's matrilineal family was minor nobility, but his father was not and the author entered the Burgundian court through a combination of connections and influence.

¹⁰ Peter Arnade, "City, State and Public Ritual in the Late-Medieval Burgundian Netherlands," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39 (1997): 306.

¹¹ The financial resources of Chastelain's family came from shipping and trade in Ghent; see Small, *George Chastelain*, 9-32 and 78-80.

¹² Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. R. J. Payton and U. Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 317. Huizinga's approach is also discussed in Francis Haskell, *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 490-91; and Bernhard Ridderbos, "Creating Frameworks: The Social Function of the Ghent Altarpiece," in *Vision in Text and Image: The Cultural Turn in the Study of Arts*, ed. H. W. Hoen and M. G. Kemperdink (Louvain: Peeters, 2008), 33-52.

¹³ Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 1:193. Arsène Pérrier, *Un chancelier au XVe siècle, Nicolas Rolin 1380-1461* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1904), relying primarily on Chastelain's book, characterizes Rolin as morally reprehensible throughout his biography. See also Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*.

¹⁴ Panofsky, *ENP*, 1:268.

¹⁵ Panofsky, *ENP*, 1:268n4. "Nul si eust voulu souffrir régner en son lieu pour luy retraire en la paix, mais contendoit à monter tousjours et multiplier jusqu'à son darrenier et de mourir l'espée au poing, triomphant sur fortune": *Biographie nationale de Belgique*, vol. 14, col. 834, s.v. Jacques du Clercq:

¹⁶ Perier, *Un chancelier*, 379, quoted in Molly Teasdale Smith, "On the Donor of Jan van Eyck's Rolin Madonna," *Gesta* 20, no. 1 (1981): 278n15.

¹⁷ See Laura D. Gelfand and Walter S. Gibson, "Surrogate Selves: The Rolin Madonna and the Late-Medieval Devotional Portrait," *Simiolus* 29 (2002): 125. For those who died with the stain of sin on their souls time in purgatory is required before admission to heaven. There is a vast trove of literature on purgatory, but the best introduction to the concept is still Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

¹⁸ Harbison, *Jan van Eyck*, 100-118.

¹⁹ Hermann Kamp, "Le Fondateur Rolin, le salut de l'âme et l'imitation du duc" *La splendeur des Rolin: Un mécénat privé à la cour de Bourgogne*, ed. Brigitte Maurice-Chabard (Paris: Picard éditeur, 1999), 78. For a detailed analysis of Rolin's patronage, see Hermann Kamp, *Memoria und Selbstdarstellung: Die Stiftungen des burgundischen Kanzler Rolin* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1993).

²⁰ Elisabeth Dhanens, *Hubert and Jan van Eyck* (New York: Tabard Press, 1980), 274.

²¹ Bret Rothstein, "On Devotion as Social Ornament," 96 (in the abstract preceding the article) and 105.

²² Panofsky, *ENP*, 1:139.

²³ Christine Hasenmueller McCorkel, "The Role of the Suspended Crown in Jan van Eyck's *Madonna and Chancellor Rolin*," *Art Bulletin* 58 (1976): 517n1, summarizes the various arguments about Rolin's placement, including Erwin Panofsky's assertion that Rolin is actually visiting the Virgin's chamber. James Snyder, *Jan van Eyck and the Madonna of Chancellor Rolin*, *Oud Holland* 82, no. 4 (1967): 165, proposes that the Madonna is visiting Rolin. Craig Harbison, "Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting," *Simiolus* 15 (1985): 100-101, argues that

Rolin is experiencing a vision of the Virgin but does not specify if this is occurring in a celestial or terrestrial realm. See also C. Ferguson O'Meara, "At the Right Hand of the Lord': On the Placement of Figures in the Rolin Madonna," in *Rencontres de Fribourg (14 au 16 septembre 1984): Activités artistiques et pouvoirs dans les états des ducs de Bourgogne et des Habsbourg et les régions voisines*, Publication du Centre européen d'études bourguignonnes (XIVe-XVIe siècle) 25 (Basle, 1985), 91-101.

²⁴ Both Panofsky and Millard Meiss noted the similarity of the composition of the Rolin Madonna to those found in books of hours, including one from the workshop of the Boucicault Master (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 1161, fol. 290). See Panofsky, *ENP*, 1:192, fig. 78, and M. Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Boucicault Master* (London and New York: Phaidon, 1967-74), 2:72, figs. 204, 493. Similar compositions are found in several early devotional portrait diptychs in both books of hours and panel paintings. For more on the relationship between books of hours and devotional diptychs, see Laura D. Gelfand, "The Origins of the Devotional Portrait Diptych in Manuscripts," in *Portraits and Prayers: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych*, ed. Ron Spronk and John Hand (Cambridge, Mass., and New Haven: Harvard University Art Museums and Yale University Press, 2006), 46-59.

²⁵ Kamp, *Memoria*, 228 and 256-60. There is no indication that Rolin's position at the court was insecure at this moment, and his representation in a painting located in his family chapel in Autun would have had little or no impact on perceptions of him at court.

²⁶ Bret Rothstein, "On Devotion as Social Ornament," 100.

²⁷ Wilson, *Painting in Bruges*, 25, writes that there are three components to official designation as noble: "a demonstrable lineage that marked an individual's direct ancestral blood ties with generations of noble families; a record of military experiences in service to a ruler; and, in general, the participation in the noble mode of life (*vivre noblement*)."

²⁸ Rolin was knighted in 1422 or 1423; see Périer, *Un chancelier*, 19; also see Wilson, *Painting in Bruges*, 24-32. For his rank and title, see Werner Paravicini, "Soziale Schichtung und soziale Mobilität am Hof der Herzoge von Burgund," *Francia* 5 (1977): 127-82, esp. 148.

²⁹ Agathe Lafortune-Martel, *Fête noble en Bourgogne au XVe siècle* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1984), 104-5. Rolin and his wife were seated to the left of the duke, who was at the center of the table. Those seated to the left, in order, moving away from the duke were: Mademoiselles d'Etampes; Isabelle de Bourgogne, wife of Jean de Clèves; Louis de Luxembourg, count of Saint-Pol; Madame de Beures; Marie de Vieville, wife of Anthony the Grand Bastard; Jacques, the seigneur of Pons of Poitou; and Rolin and his wife.

³⁰ Marie-Thérèse Caron, *La noblesse dans le duché de Bourgogne* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1987), 508. Rolin's sons, Antoine and Guillaume, made 1,090 and 981 *livres* annually, making them respectively the fifth and eleventh wealthiest men in all of Burgundy.

³¹ Helmut Schoeck, *Envy, A Theory of Social Behavior* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1987), 260.

³² Schoeck, *Envy*, 275.

³³ Joseph H. Berke, *The Tyranny of Malice: Exploring the Dark Side of Character and Culture* (New York: Summit Books, 1988), 217.

³⁴ Walter Prevenier, "Officials in Town and Countryside in the Low Countries: Social and Professional Developments from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century," *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae* 7 (1997): 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Wim De Clerq, Jan Dumolyn, and Jelle Haemers, "'Vivre Noblement:': Material Culture and Elite

Identity in Late Medieval Flanders,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 38 (2007): 14. The authors detail the history and construction of the castle together with an insightful analysis of Bladelin’s role at court.

³⁷ Wilson, *Painting in Bruges*, 1998.

³⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Praxis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977). De Clerq, Dumolyn, and Haemers, “*Vivre Noblement*,” 2-4, analyze how *vivre noblement* functioned within the Valois court.

³⁹ Kaminsky, “Estate, Nobility, and the Exhibition of Estate,” 699.

⁴⁰ Harbison, *Jan van Eyck*, 100. The burial is recorded in *Biographie Nationale*, col. 835. Rolin was dressed in a “white shirt, rich doublet, hose, new shoes, a velvet robe, a sword buckled on one side, a dagger on the other, golden spurs on the feet, a hood at the neck, a hat on his head, and above all a golden pin on the front of his hat.”

⁴¹ For an extended discussion on some of the members of Bruges society and their commissions, see Wilson, *Painting in Bruges*, 61-80.

⁴² This and other biographical information is found in Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*, 70. Further information on Rolin’s patronage may be found in, *La bonne étoile des Rolin: Mécénat et efflorescence artistique dans Bourgogne du XVe siècle*, ed. Brigitte Maurice-Chabard (Autun: Musée Rolin, 1994), and *La splendeur des Rolin: Un mécénat privé à la cour de Bourgogne*, ed. Brigitte Maurice-Chabard (Paris: Picard, 1999).

⁴³ Caron, *La noblesse dans le duché* 393.

⁴⁴ Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*, 23-28.

⁴⁵ Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*, 40. The inherited lands split between Nicolas and his brother Jean gave each of them possession of more than six hectares of some of the finest vineyards in Burgundy.

⁴⁶ He inherited the house in 1403; it is currently the site of the Musée Rolin in Autun. Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*, 34.

⁴⁷ Caron, *La noblesse dans le duché* 393.

⁴⁸ The exact date is unknown. See Jacques Laurent, *Les Fiefs des Rolin* (Beaune: Imp. Beaunoise, 1989), 13.

⁴⁹ Caron, *La noblesse dans le duché de Bourgogne*, 508.

⁵⁰ This illumination shows the presentation of a text commissioned by Philip to celebrate his successful conquering of Hainaut, Holland, and Zeeland, and the text’s narrative attempts to establish the duke as the descendant of a long line of rulers whose brilliant martial origins began with the Trojan War. See Thomas Kren and Scot McKendrick, eds., *Illuminating the Renaissance* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), 91-93, cat. no. 3, fig. 3.

⁵¹ The museum housed in the Hôtel-Dieu includes a textile that is attributed to Guigone de Salins’s own hand. Information on Guigone de Salins and her family is found in Berthier and Sweeney, *Guigone de Salins*, 136-39.

⁵² Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*, 212. Archives de l’Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune (A.H.D.B.) layette 1 n. 1-B

⁵³ Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*, 212. A.H.D.B., layette 1 n. 1-B.

⁵⁴ Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*, 212. A.H.D.B., layette 1 n. 1-B.

⁵⁵ Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*, 212. A.H.D.B., layette 75.

⁵⁶ Didier Sécula, “Le ‘grand hotel-Dieu de Beaune’ au XVe siècle: La foundation, le personnel et les bâtiments,” in *Bruges à Beaune: Marie, l’héritage de Bourgogne* (Beaune: Somogy Éditions d’art,

Hospices civils de Beaune, 2000), 143.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Jean-Baptiste Boudrot, *Petit cartulaire de l'Hostel-Dieu de Beaune: Inventaires, bulles pontificale, lettres patentes des ducs de Bourgogne et des Rois de France* (Beaune, 1880), 77.

⁵⁹ Berthier and Sweeney, *Guigone de Salins*, 142-43.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Discussed in Wim Swaan, *The Late Middle Ages: Art and Architecture from 1350 to the Advent of the Renaissance* (London: Paul Elek, 1977), 104.

⁶² Berthier and Sweeney, *Guigone de Salins*, 144-45. Gasquierre publicly humiliated the sisters and punished them in extreme ways, including forcing them to kiss all of their companions and insisting that they go to confession for so minor a crime as drinking a glass of water without permission.

⁶³ Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*, 319.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ The original quote is, “doucement et bénignement traitées par la maitresse, avec discrétion et prudence, sans murmure, médisance ou jalousie”: Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*, 320.

⁶⁶ Berthier and Sweeney, *Guigone de Salins*, 146.

⁶⁷ Boudrot, *Petit cartulaire*, 67-72.

⁶⁸ Berthier and Sweeney, *Le chancelier Rolin*, 333-4; Berthier and Sweeney, *Guigone de Salins*, 167.

⁶⁹ “L’authorité du Sainte-Siège a décidé que lesdits maitres, serviteurs, servants, maladies et autres personnes de l’un et de l’autre sexe, ainsi que l’hôpital, [seront] exempts de la jurisdiction de monseigneur l’évêque d’Autun alors existent, de celle des chapitres des églises d’Autun et de Beaune et de toutes autres personned ecclésiastiques”: *Fondations et statuts de l’Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune*, ed. and trans. Abbé Boudrot (Beaune, 1878), 84-85. Quoted in Didier Sécula, “Nicolas Rolin, fondateur de l’Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune (1443): Réflexions due son rôle dans la conception du programme architectural,” in *L’artiste et le commanditaire aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age, XIIIe-XVIe siècles*, ed. Fabienne Joubert (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2001), 115-30, esp. 124.

⁷⁰ Kamp, *Memoria*, 75-76, and Sécula, “Nicolas Rolin, fondateur,” 128-9.

⁷¹ Sécula, “Le ‘grand hotel-Dieu de Beaune,’” 142.

⁷² There is disagreement about the precise dating of this work; proposed dates and an up-to-date bibliography are included in the catalogue entry in Micheline Comblen-Sonkes and Philippe Lorentz, *Musée du Louvre: Paris III* (Brussels: Centre international d’Étude de la peinture médiévale des basins de l’Escaut et de la Meuse, 2000), 1:47-50. Peter Klein’s dendrochronological analysis indicates that the earliest possible date for the execution of the work is 1428, but that it is more likely to have been painted in the mid-1430s; see Peter Klein, “Dendrochronological Analyses of Netherlandish Paintings,” in *Recent Developments in the Technological Examination of Early Netherlandish Painting: Methodology, Limitations and Perspectives*, ed. Molly Faries and Ron Spronk (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums; Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 71. See also Jules Desneux, “Nicolas Rolin, authentique donateur de la Vierge d’Autun,” *La Revue des arts* 4 (1954): 195-200; Pierre Quarré, “Le chancelier Rolin, donateur du polyptyque de l’Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune,” *Mémoires de la commission des antiquites de la Côte-d’Or* 24 (1954-58): 191-202; Helene Adhémar, “Su la Vierge du chancelier Rolin de van Eyck,” *Bulletin de l’institute royal du patrimoine artistique* 15 (1975): 9-17; and Philippe Lorentz, “Nouveau repères chronologiques pour la Vierge du chancelier Rolin de Jan van Eyck,” *Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France* 1 (1992): 43.

⁷³ Lorentz, “Nouveau repères,” 48.

⁷⁴ Bernhardt Serexhe, “Gothicisation’ de la Cathédrale Sant-Lazare d’Autun sous l’épiscopat de Jean-Baptiste Rolin,” in *La bonne étoile des Rolin: Mécénat et efflorescence artistique dans la Bourgogne du XVe siècle*, ed. Brigitte Maurice-Chabard (Autun: Musée Rolin, 1994), 96-98.

⁷⁵ Harold de Fontenay. “Notre-Dame: Église paroissiale et collégiale,” *Mémoires de la Société Eduenne* 8 (1879): 396-97.

⁷⁶ Serexhe, “Gothicisation’ de la Cathédrale Sant-Lazare d’ Autun,” 98.

⁷⁷ Fontenay, “Notre-Dame,” 387.

⁷⁸ Philippe Lorentz, “Les Rolin et les ‘Primitifs Flamands’” in *La bonne Étoile des Rolin*, 28. This document is reprinted in Lorentz, “Nouveaux repères,” 48.

⁷⁹ Fontenay, “Notre-Dame,” 27, publishes the full text of the inscription on the slab. Rolin was buried in the chapel of Saint Sebastian as he wished. The text on his tomb slab indicates his anticipation that Guigone de Salins would be buried there with him, but she chose to be buried at the Hôtel-Dieu in Beaune instead.

⁸⁰ Lorentz, “Les Rolin et les ‘Primitifs Flamands’” 26. Although he had been bested in the earlier conflict in Beaune, Jean Rolin, bishop of the adjacent Cathedral of Saint Lazare, successfully thwarted his father’s long-term ambitions for Notre-Dame by blocking shipments of salt to the canons, contributing nothing to the completion of the spire, and allowing the church to fall back into ruin after his father’s death; the ruined church was completely destroyed in 1793. See Helene Adhémar, “Su la *Vierge du chancelier Rolin* de van Eyck,” 16.

⁸¹ This Romanesque arcade was one of the few original features maintained when the building was reconstructed and it was one of the most distinct architectural features in the renovated church.

⁸² This is discussed at greater length in Laura D. Gelfand, “Reading the Architecture in Jan van Eyck’s *Rolin Madonna*,” in *In Detail: New Studies in Northern Renaissance Art*, ed. L. Dixon (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 19-20.

⁸³ The idea of Rolin’s painted prayer having an affective function that is intended to act as perpetual prayer is explored at length in Gelfand and Gibson, “Surrogate Selves,” 124-26.

⁸⁴ For an investigation of these figures and their complex relationship to those depicted in Rogier’s Boston *Saint Luke Painting the Virgin*, see Alfred Acres, “Luke, Rolin, and Seeing Relationships,” in *Rogier van der Weyden: St. Luke Drawing the Virgin; Selected Essays in Content*, ed. C. Purtle (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 23-38.

⁸⁵ Carol Purtle, *The Marian Paintings of Jan van Eyck* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 80, connected this church-filled city with Augustine’s *City of God*, which he believed began with the new era brought in by Abraham, who is pictured on the relief on the Virgin’s side of the interior chamber. Van Buren, “The Canonical Office,” 620, identified this city as Paradise and the Heavenly Jerusalem.

⁸⁶ James Snyder, “Jan van Eyck and the *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin*,” *Oud Holland* 82, no. 4 (1967): 169.

⁸⁷ Gelfand, “Reading the Architecture,” 20.

⁸⁸ John L. Ward, “Disguised Symbolism as Enactive Symbolism in Van Eyck’s Paintings,” *Artibus et historiae* 29 (1994): 14. Ward attributes his interpretation of the meaning of this gesture to Carol Purtle’s analysis in *Marian Paintings*, 82.

⁸⁹ Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, “Barren Metal and the Fruitful Womb: The Program of Giotto’s Arena Chapel in Padua,” *Art Bulletin* 80, no. 2 (1998): 274-91; and idem. “Reading the Arena Chapel,” *The Cambridge Companion to Giotto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 197-220.

⁹⁰ Brigitte Maurice-Chabard, "L'église Notre-Dame du Châtel," in *La bonne étoile des Rolin*, pp. 19-22.

⁹¹ Others who have suggested this include Harbison, *Jan van Eyck*, 112, and Dhanens, *Hubert and Jan van Eyck*, 278.

⁹² Panofsky, *ENP*, 1:139n2, and 192ff.; Lotte Brand Philip, *The Ghent Altarpiece and the Art of Jan van Eyck* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), 190ff.; James Snyder, "Jan van Eyck and the *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin*," 165; and McCorkel, "The Role of the Suspended Crown," 519. Ward identifies her as Ecclesia, "Disguised Symbolism as Enactive Symbolism," 32.

⁹³ Ward, "Disguised Symbolism as Enactive Symbolism," 30.

⁹⁴ These ideas have been proposed earlier. See Ward, "Disguised Symbolism as Enactive Symbolism," 32, who notes that the scene of Melchizedek and Abraham should be equated with the bread and wine of the Mass. Purtle notes that Panofsky, *ENP*, 1:139, had negative readings for these scenes, in which she recognized an overriding theme of sacrifice and God's forgiveness. Purtle, *Marian Paintings*, 75-76.

⁹⁵ In analyzing the iconography of the sculptures Purtle noted that the figures on the corners of the piers are those that refer to the results of sin, and importantly for Rolin and his role in the court, specifically the sin of envy. Purtle, *Marian Paintings*, 76.

⁹⁶ This gaze has been interpreted in numerous ways. Van Buren, "The Canonical Office," 624, believed that the blank stare could be related to the fact that the holy figures were modeled on thirteenth-century Mosan sculpted models of the Madonna and Child. Purtle, *Marian Paintings*, 67, asserted, more accurately, that we are seeing Rolin's "visualized prayer." Two other scholars also point out that this is unlikely to be a vision because the chancellor doesn't actually look at the Virgin and Child, see Marvin Feldheim and F. W. Brownlow, "Jan van Eyck's *Chancellor Rolin and the Blessed Virgin*," *Art Journal* 28, no. 1 (1968): 24.

⁹⁷ For more on this, see Gelfand, "Origins of the Devotional Portrait Diptych," 46-59.

⁹⁸ De Clercq, Dumolyn, and Haemers, "*Vivre Noblement*," 9-11 and 13-19. Recent archeological evidence suggests that this cityscape shows a portion of Bladelin's castle as seen when approaching from Bruges with a view of one of the city's church spires somewhat in the distance.

⁹⁹ Alfred Acres, "The Columba Altarpiece and the Time of the World," *Art Bulletin* 80 (1998): 428.

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