

Book of Hours (use of Rome)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment

Southern Netherlands (Bruges), dated 1464

i (modern parchment) + *ii* (parchment) + 147 + *ii* (parchment) + *i* (modern parchment) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto, text is complete, but missing one leaf, possibly with a miniature (collation *i*⁶ *ii*⁸ *ii-vi*⁶ *vii*⁶ [-1, before f. 39, no loss of text, but possibly loss of a miniature] *vii-xii*⁶ *xiii*⁴ *xiv-xv*⁶ *xvi*⁶ *xvii-xv*⁶), ruled in red ink with the top and bottom rules full across, single full length vertical bounding lines (justification 86 x 54 mm.), written in nineteen long lines in a rounded gothic bookhand, red rubrics, gold and blue line fillers, one-line alternately blue and gold initials with contrasting pen decoration in red or black, two- to three-line polished gold initials (and KL-initials in the calendar), infilled with bright pink or blue with white highlights, on grounds of both colors, with delicate short black pen sprays extending from the initials with blue and pink flowers and tiny gold leaves, fifteen seven- to four-line white patterned blue or pink initials on highly polished gold grounds (initial on f. 44, on pink and gold ground), infilled with thin stems terminating in small flowers in red, pink, blue, and/or green on polished gold, edged in black, SEVEN FULL and EIGHT THREE-QUARTER SCATTER BORDERS by an artist who worked with the Gold Scrolls group (see below), with gold and blue acanthus, realistic strawberries, violets, and pink flowers, many with birds, and small figures (described in detail below), f. 15, border in outer margin stained ff. 36-93, stains from water/damp in the gutter, a few small rust stains (from an earlier binding?), top and outer margin front flyleaf and ff. 1-3, otherwise clean and in very good condition. Bound in modern white pigskin, spine with three raised bands and green leather spine label, lettered "HORAE/ B.V.M./ [N. France]/ 1464," in excellent condition, brown fitted box, lettered in gold. Dimensions 139 x 98 mm.

Books of Hours are essential to any course or exhibition related to the history of the book in the Middle Ages. This is an affordable example from Bruges, one of the most important centers for book illumination in the fifteenth century, illustrated only with a series of very high quality borders. The scribe of this book finished his work by writing the date, 1464, and asking his readers to pray for him. Very few Books of Hours are signed or dated by their scribes, and this securely dated book offers new insights to historians studying the book trade in Bruges.

PROVENANCE

1. Dated by the scribe at the end of the text on f. 146, "Finis. Orate pro scriptore. 1464" (The end. Pray for the writer. 1464). The evidence of the calendar and the style of the borders establishes that it was copied in Bruges. The fastidious, rounded gothic bookhand suggests that a scribe trained in Italy (or an Italian) may have copied the manuscript, possibly for export to Italy.

The calendar is a general one (possibly an attempt to make it suitable for buyers from outside of Bruges?). It does include many of the saints common in books made for use in Ghent and Bruges, including Remigius and Bavo (1 October), in red, Livin (12 November), and Adrian (4 March), but the usual Bruges saints, Basil (14 June), and Donatianus (14 October and 30 August) are lacking. It also includes Nicasius, bishop of Reims in red (14 December), Vincent, patron of Lisbon, in red (22 January), and Milburga (23 February), an English saint. It is an up-to-date book; the calendar includes St. Bernardinus, canonized in 1450; and the litany includes St. Nicholas of Tolentino, canonized in 1446.

2. Two borders include coats of arms, almost certainly associated with the original owner of the manuscript, but still unidentified; the first is found in a prominent impaled shield supported by two angels in the bottom margin, f. 7v, Party per pale, in one, or, seven balls in orle gules, in chief a larger ball, sable with a cross or, second party per fess, in chief azure a cross or on sable between two fleurs-de-lis or, over vert, two sun bursts or divided by a bend or. The similarity to the augmented arms granted to the Medici in 1465, is likely coincidental: Or, five balls in orle gules, in chief a larger one of the arms of France (that is, Azure, three fleurs-de-lis or. On f. 15v, another shield is emblazoned with the second part of the arms on f. 7v.
3. Seventeenth- or eighteenth-century ownership note, in ink, front flyleaf, f. i, "Ex Dono Moses Coe Clerico."
4. Owners's and dealers's annotations: inside front cover, in pencil, "A-2089," in pen, "JEANNIE (?)," and in pencil, "D 6033"; front flyleaf, f. i, in pencil, "£140," and "439"; cuttings from several catalogues housed with the manuscripts, including one in English, lot 73, described as bound in old red and gold damask over wooden boards with ribbon marker (this ribbon marker is still preserved in the manuscript's case), with pencil annotation, "A-2089"; exhibition label, no. 19 (at end, "A-2089").
5. Sold at Drewatts Bloomsbury, New York, April 4, 2009, lot 13.

TEXT

ff. 1-6v, Calendar, rather empty, including Aldegundis (14 January), Vincent, in red (22 January), Chair of St. Paul, red (22 February), Milburga (23 February), Romanus (28 February), Adrian (4 March), Longinus (15 March), Patrick (March 17), Quintin (30 March), Peter deacon (17 April), Victor (20 April), Nicholas, bishop (9 May), Sophia (May 15), Eligius, bishop, in red (25 June), Sophia (15 May), Bernardinus (20 May), Amelberga (13 July), Bertin, abbot (5 September), Lambert (17 September), Simon and Thadeus (sic, 28 September), Remigius and Bavo, in red (1 October), Dionysius, in red (9 October), Calixtus (here October 13, usually 14), Leonard (6 November), Martin, in red (11 November), Livin (12 November), Machut, bishop (15 November), Katherine, in red (25 November), Nicasius, in red (14 December), Lazarus (17 December);

ff. 7-14, *Oratio de sancta maria*, incipit, "O sancta uirgo uirginum. Que genuisti filium ..."; "Interueniat pro nobis domine ihesu christe nunc et in hora mortis ..."; "O domina glorie. O regina leticie ..."; "In manus tuas misericordissima uirgo ..."; "Obsecro te ... Et michi famule tue ..."; *De sancto francisco. Ant.*, incipit, "Franciscus uir catholicus ..."; *De sancta cecilia. Antiphona*, incipit, "Columba et immobilis cecelia ..." [Ends top f. 14, remainder and f. 14v, blank];

ff. 15-35, [Office of the Passion], *Incipit officium passionis domini nostri ihesu christi*, ... [ends top f. 35; f. 35v, blank];

ff. 36-38v, Hours of the Cross;

ff. 39-43v, Hours of the Holy Spirit [ends top f. 43v; remainder blank];

ff. 44- 86, Hours of the Virgin, use of Rome, *Incipit officium beate marie uirginis secundum consuetudinem romane curie*, Matins [ends f. 58; f. 58v, blank]; ff. 59-62, lauds [ending top f. 62; f. 62v, blank]; ff. 63-66v, prime; ff. 67-69v, terce; ff. 70-72v, sext; ff. 73-75v, none; ff. 76- 81v, vespers; ff. 82-86, compline [ending f. 86; f. 86v, blank];

ff. 87-93v, Changed Office, Hours of the Virgin [ends top f. 93v; remainder blank];

ff. 94-111, Penitential Psalms and litany, with Benedict, Paul the first hermit, Nicholas of Tolentino, Anthony, Bernard, Francis, Dominic, and Alexis as the holy monks and hermits, priests and levites, and with Clare, Elizabeth, and Ursula among the virgins and widows [ending top f. 111; remainder and f. 111v, blank];

ff. 112-146, Office of the Dead (Roman use), concluding, ... *finis. Orate pro scriptore, 1464* [ending mid f. 146, remainder and ff. 146v-147v, blank, but ruled].

ILLUSTRATION

Seven full illuminated borders with 5- (one 7-) line white patterned pink or blue initials infilled with trilobed flowers on thin stems on highly polished gold, with u-shaped bar borders of thin gold and pink bars framing the text, and a full scatter borders, rather empty in the inner margin, of scrolling acanthus (blue and gold, and on some pages, blue and pink), interspersed with bright flowers (red, pink, blue) and strawberries, and tiny gold dots with black tendrils; with figurative details as follows:

f. 8, top margin a large yellowish bird with dark wings; in the outer border a striking bird with a blue head and long tail, and in the lower border a coat of arms flanked by two kneeling angels (described above, Provenance);

f. 15, outer border smudged, but with a woman wearing a peaked hat and riding a long-tailed animal (a martin?) in the outer margin, and in the lower margin, a peacock, perched sideways on a coat of arms (described above, Provenance);

f. 36, outer margin, man holding a shield and lance, dressed in a blue tunic, astride a short animal (sort of dog-like, or perhaps a wild boar?); lower margin, a standing man with lance and shield, dressed in blue and yellow;

f. 39, outer border a pink bird with brown wings; lower, a bearded hybrid man-beast holding a staff;

f. 44, outer margin, a lady dressed in pink with a tall peaked hat and veil, holding a harp (half length, as the top of a flower); lower margin, a pink bird with brown wings;

f. 94, [7-line initial], outer margin, a man in a hooded robe (a monk), half-length as a top of a flower; lower margin, a blue-headed bird;

f. 112, outer margin, a figure of a man holding a shield or a hat, half-length as a top of a flower, a peacock in the lower margin;

Eight three-quarter scatter borders: ff. 59, 63, 67, 70, 73, 76, 82, 87, with four-line white-patterned pink or blue initials with vines on highly polished gold, an L-shaped border of thin bars of gold and pink partially framing the text, and with a three-quarter scatter border similar in style to the full borders (top, inner, and bottom margins); the border on f. 87 includes a gorgeous bright green bird with a red beak in the lower margin.

The collation in our *Horae* is completely regular except in the seventh quire which is missing its first leaf. Although there are offsets facing many of the painted pages (since the book was damp once, as evidenced by the stain in the gutter), in all cases the offset is from the existing painted pages – there are no offsets here that seem to indicate missing pages (including on f. 39).

The borders are very similar to those in three Books of Hours illuminated by the Gold Scrolls masters, Besançon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 50, a Book of Hours formerly *Les Enluminures*, BOH 76, and Berlin, Kunstbibliothek, MS Grisebach 4 (Hindman and Bergeron, 2012, cat. 6, pp. 94-113); the borders in these four manuscripts are executed in the same style, and share numerous small details; compare for example the green birds here on f. 87, and those in BOH 76, ff. 17 and 38, as well as the half-length figures growing out of blossoms, here on ff. 94 and 112, and those in BOH 76, ff. 99v-100, and MS Grisebach 4, ff. 122v and 17v (Hindman and Bergeron, 2012, pp. 108-109, 122).

First coined by F. Winkler in 1925, the Masters of the Gold Scrolls is now thought to refer to a style practiced by a group of artists, not to a single hand. Art historians currently suggest date the activity of this group between about 1415 and 1455 probably in Bruges (see the recent assessment, [Exhibition], Brussels and Paris, 2011, pp. 140-147). The late manuscripts produced by the Gold Scrolls masters are closely connected to the manuscripts produced by Willem Vrelant, who arrived in Bruges in the 1450s.

The Book of Hours was the bestseller of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. From the mid-thirteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, more Books of Hours were commissioned and produced, bought and sold, bequeathed and inherited, printed and reprinted than any other text, including the Bible. Generally small and attractively illustrated, Books of Hours were chiefly made for the use of lay people, not for priests or monks. The Book of Hour was the first text read across Europe by people at every level of literacy. Its words reached an enormous audience, more than any written text had ever done. It was the book from which medieval children were taught to read; a text which most people knew by heart. Its phrases were the most familiar usage of the Latin language for several centuries.

Given their popularity, it is not surprising that Books of Hours varied considerably in expense when they were first made, as, indeed, they still do today. Books were tailored to fit all ends of the market; some included numerous full-page miniatures; others, like the manuscript described here, included only illuminated borders. A Book of Hours now in Brussels made for an employee of the Duke of Burgundy never included figurative miniatures. Our manuscript is a good example of this understudied category of Book of Hours; one that was copied by a skilled scribe, and decorated with high quality borders (doubtless executed by artists who specialized in borders). The result was a lovely, and (relatively) more affordable book.

LITERATURE

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