

Hours of Nicolas Lancel (use of Arras)

In Latin and French, illuminated manuscript on parchment

Northern France (Arras?), c. 1450, with additions from the seventeenth-nineteenth centuries

i + 89 + *ii*, folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil 1-89, lacking several leaves (collation *i*⁶ [-1 and 2, +1 and 2, ff. 1-2 replacing two missing leaves] *ii*⁶ [+one leaf, f. 13, with a miniature on the verso added after 6] *iii*⁶ [-1 and 6, two leaves following ff. 13 and 17, probably with loss of two original miniatures] *iv*¹⁰ [-9, one leaf following f. 25 with loss of text] *v*⁸ *vi*⁸ *vii*⁸ [-3 through 7, five leaves following f. 44, with loss of text] *viii*² [+two leaves, ff. 46 and 49, with miniatures on the versos added before 1 and after 2] *ix*⁸ [+one leaf, f. 56, with a miniature on the verso added after 6] *x-xii*⁸ *xiii*⁸ [-8, one leaf following f. 89, with loss of text]), ruled in brown ink (justification 95 x 75 mm), written in brown ink in a gothic bookhand on seventeen long lines, 1-line penwork initials alternating in gold and blue and 2- to 3-line gold initials infilled and on red or blue grounds throughout, ten 4- to 5-line initials in red or blue with white highlights on gold grounds and with FULL BORDERS of bars and hairlines with flowers and ivy leaves in gold, FOUR ADDED FULL-PAGE MINIATURES AND A COAT OF ARMS (described below), smudging and some signs of wear, some worming especially at beginning and end. Bound in sixteenth-century(?) dark brown calf, covers blind tooled with a rectangle of floral decoration, fleur-de-lys corner pieces and small central fleurons, later flyleaves, rubbed and worn, a few wormholes. Dimensions 150 x 105 mm.

According to a contemporary inscription, this volume was owned by Nicolas Lancel, who lived on the rue de la Justice in Arras. Nicolas offered a reward of good wine for the manuscript's safe return. All the essential texts are present in this Book of Hours, although it is possible some of the texts are now out of order. Its original miniatures (now lost) were replaced with later miniatures and borders, added with no regard for the text they accompany. These transformations pose interesting questions for scholars studying the use of medieval manuscripts in the modern age.

PROVENANCE

1. Written in the middle of the fifteenth century for use in the diocese of Arras in Northern France, based on the style of the script, decoration, and the liturgical evidence of the calendar, Office of the Dead and Hours of the Virgin (as far as can be determined given the number of missing leaves). Arras is the capital of Artois, the region that separates Picardie from Flanders. This localization is further confirmed by the style of the original decoration, and various spellings in the Picard dialect, including the palatalized dental consonants pronounced with a whistling sound as in "chi" (ci) in the rubric on f. 69v and "Franchois" (François) in the calendar, the [ei] diphthong closing into [i] as in "orison" (oraison) in the rubric, the partially palatalized velar consonants as in "Mikiel" (Michel), the absence of epenthesis as in "Kateline" (Katherine) and other particular local forms, such as "Bietremien" (Barthélemy) in the calendar.
2. A fifteenth- or sixteenth-century inscription in a remarkably inexpert hand on f. 15v reads: "Cest livre appartient a Nicolas / Lancel demourant en la rue de / la justice celui ou celle qui le / trouvera ie prie qu'il le veut / ce rendre ie lui donnerai dusi / bon vin qu'il s'en contentera." The owner gives his address: rue de la Justice and offers good wine to whoever will return the manuscript. One such Nicolas Lancel (same family?) is recorded in Arras in the seventeenth century when he sells his share of a house, in which he lives with a carpenter and a stained-glass maker (A. de Cardevacque, Les places

d'arras: *etude historique et archeologique sur la grande place...* 1881, p. 197). It is not an uncommon name.

There appears to be an erasure below this note. Another contemporary hand wrote the alphabet to the lower margin of f. 80.

3. After 1623, and possibly much later, four miniatures and the coat of arms of Pope Urban VIII (Maffeo Barberini, 1568-1644, elected pope in 1623) were painted and inserted in the book. The arms were most likely copied from a black-and-white etching, because the colors are wrong. The bees of the Barberini family are painted "gules" (red) instead of "or" (gold). Michel Pastoureau has remarked (oral communication) that the copying of heraldic arms was a common exercise given to nuns, as well as to girls not ordained within religious houses. It is possible that the owner of the book painted the arms of the current pope, thus dating these additions to 1623-1644.
4. Two leaves were transcribed and added to the beginning of the calendar to replace missing text in the nineteenth century. The book may have been in considerable disarray at this point, and was imperfectly understood by this owner/restorer, since it may now be out of order, and the images do not accompany appropriate texts.
5. Private European Collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-12v, Calendar, in French, including saints venerated in the Artois region: Walric, the founder of the abbey of Leuconay (Saint-Valery-sur-Somme; 1 April), Medardus of Noyon (8 June), in red, Piatius of Tournai (1 October), Fuscien and Victorin of Amiens, two martyrs venerated in Sains-en-Amiénois and Saint-Quentin (11 December), and Aubert of Cambrai (13 December). The first two leaves (ff. 1-2) containing January and February were transcribed in the nineteenth century and replace missing original leaves;

f. 13v, inserted leaf, blank on the recto, added to the end of quire two;

ff. 14-15v, Short Hours of the Cross;

ff. 16-17v, Short Hours of the Holy Spirit;

ff. 18-21, Gospel Sequences, beginning (unusually) with Luke, followed by John, Matthew and Mark;

ff. 21-24, The prayer, "*O intemerata*";

ff. 24-25, The prayer, "*Obsecro te*" (masculine forms);

ff. 25-26v, Suffrages of the saints: Peter, Christopher, Martin (ends imperfectly on f. 25v), Catherine, Lawrence, and Stephen;

ff. 27-55v, Hours of the Virgin with ff. 27-45, Matins (lacking five leaves after f. 44); f. 45v, Lauds (only the beginning, ends imperfectly in Psalm 99); f. 46, inserted leaf, blank on the recto, with a miniature on f. 46v; f. 47, the end of Terce; ff. 47-48v, Sext; f. 49, inserted leaf, blank on the recto, with a miniature on the verso; ff. 50-51v, None; ff. 51v-53, Vespers; ff. 53-55v, Compline.

Lacking five leaves containing parts of Matins, as well as a quire of about six leaves (between quires seven and eight) containing the end of Lauds, Prime, and the beginning of Terce.

The liturgical use of the Hours of the Virgin is probably that of Arras, but this is difficult to confirm due to the missing leaves. There is no antiphon in None, and although the capitulum in None, "Per te Dei," is that of Arras, it is shared by other uses.

f. 55v, Suffrage of John the Baptist;

f. 56, inserted leaf, blank on the recto with a miniature on the verso;

ff. 57-63, Penitential psalms;

ff. 63-66, Litanies, with Mary, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, Andrew, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Mathew, Simon, Matthias, John, Luke; Stephen, Linus, Anacletus (Cletus), Clement, Sixtus, Corneille, Cyprian, Lawrence, Vincent, George, Dominic, Hippolytus, Sylvester, Nicholas, Germanus, Julian, Benedict, Blaise; Mary Magdalene, Mary Egyptian, Felicitas, Perpetua, Agatha, Agnes, Cecilia, Anne, Fides, Spes, Caritas; followed by the prayer, incipit, "Deus cui proprium est misereri semper et parcere...";

ff. 66-69v, The Fifteen Joys of the Virgin, in French, incipit, "Douche dame de misericorde, mere de pite..." [Sonet, 1956, no. 458];

ff. 69v-71v, *Qui conques voelt estre bien conseillies de la cose dont il a grant mestier se die cascune jour acoustumerement ces orison que trouves chi après escriptis. Et sachiez que cis qui les dira ja desconfortes ne sera ne vilainement ne trespasera li jour qui de bon coeur les dire et acesquie fois des orisons direz une pater noster*, incipit, "Doulx dieux doulx peres sainte trinite uns dieux...";

The French prayer, the Seven Requests to our Lord (*Les sept requêtes à nostre seigneur*), Sonet, 1956, no. 504, preceded by a long rubric (in brown ink) beginning with an initial on gold ground (Whoever would like to be informed of the thing he needs most, he should say every day regularly the prayer that is written hereafter. And know that he who says it, will experience no discomfort, no villainy, no sudden death on the day that he says it with a pure heart, and each time he says the prayer, he should say a Pater Noster);

ff. 72-89v, Office of the Dead, use of Arras; ends imperfectly, lacking the ninth lesson (final leaf of quire thirteen). The liturgical use matches perfectly that of Arras, except for the Response to the eighth lesson, which in the manuscript is "Ne perdas me" (in the sources recorded by Ottosen for Arras this response is "Ne perdideris me"; see Ottosen, Online Resources).

ILLUSTRATION

The original miniatures have been removed and replaced later by four full-page miniatures and a full-page coat of arms, all with borders of foliage and flowers. The placement of many of these miniatures is so unusual that we can safely conclude it does not reflect the original manuscript. The Annunciation, now before the Hours of the Cross, must have once introduced Matins in the Hours of the Virgin, and the Crucifixion, now before None in the Hours of the Virgin, is most often found before the Hours of the Cross.

Subjects as follows:

f. 13v, Annunciation to the Virgin, now (incorrectly) preceding the Hours of the Cross;

f. 46v, Nativity, now following Lauds and before the end of Terce [once before Prime, which is now missing];

f. 49v, Crucifixion, now (almost certainly incorrectly) before None;

f. 56v, Entombment of Christ, now before the Penitential Psalms (an unusual choice).

f. i (first back flyleaf), the full-page arms of Pope Urban VII (Maffeo Barberini, 1568-1644). The pope's arms were painted at the end of the book with a decorated floral border in the same style and colors as the miniatures.

The composition of the Annunciation, including its details of the inscription decorating the architectural frieze and Mary's dress flowing under the small prie-dieu, derive from models circulating in books of hours made in Paris and the Loire Valley around 1500. Likewise, the Crucifixion flanked by the Virgin and the centurion derives from sources of c. 1500. However, the compositions of the Nativity and Entombment are not medieval but were copied from seventeenth-century sources.

Books of Hours survive in greater numbers than any other type of manuscript from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Prayer Books for private prayer, by the fifteenth century they were copied for a very wide audience indeed, and surviving examples range from some of the most luxurious and famous illuminated manuscripts like the *Très Riches Heures* belonging to Jean, the Duc de Berry, to more utilitarian examples made for the use of simple merchants. If a family in fifteenth-century owned a book at all, there is a very good chance that the book they owned was a Book of Hours.

This manuscript is an excellent example of the longevity of the manuscript Book of Hours, offering us tantalizing bits of evidence about its history and use. The text, including saints in the calendar and litany, and the probable use of the Hours of the Virgin (now too fragmentary for certainty), and the definite use of the Office of the Dead all point to an origin in Arras in Northeastern France. In the fifteenth or sixteenth century, it was owned by Nicolas Lancel, who offered a reward (a drink) for its return (does this suggest that people carried their Books of Hours about with them, perhaps to Mass?). Perhaps as early as the seventeenth-century miniatures on single leaves and the papal coat of arms were added, either to update the volume, or to replace damaged or missing leaves. Finally, as late of the nineteenth century, the first two folios of the calendar were rewritten. At this time, other restorations may have been undertaken, resulting in the misplaced miniatures. The order of the texts in Books of Hours

varies to such an extent that it is difficult to be sure if the order here reflects the original order of the book. However, this order would be quite unusual, and it is therefore quite possible that the texts as well as the miniatures no longer reflect the original order.

LITERATURE

Leroquais, V. *Les livres d'heures manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale*, 2 vols, Paris, 1927.

Nash, S. *Between France and Flanders: Manuscript Illumination in Amiens in the Fifteenth Century*, London and Toronto, 1999.

Ottosen, Knud. *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead*, Aarhus, Denmark, 1993.

Sonet, J. *Répertoire d'incipit de prières en ancien français*, Genève, 1956.

Wieck, R. *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life*, London, 1988.

Wieck, R. *Painted Prayers: The Book of Hours in Medieval and Renaissance Art*, New York, 1997.

ONLINE RESOURCES

E. Drigsdahl's "Tutorial on Books of Hours":

<http://manuscripts.org.uk/manuscripts/chd.dk/tutor/index.html>

K. Ottosen's "Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead":

[http://www-app.uni-](http://www-app.uni-regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/PKGG/Musikwissenschaft/Cantus/Ottosen/search.html)

[regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/PKGG/Musikwissenschaft/Cantus/Ottosen/search.html](http://www-app.uni-regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/PKGG/Musikwissenschaft/Cantus/Ottosen/search.html)

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