

LES ENLUMINURES

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Officium Corporis Christi (Office of Corpus Christi), copied and decorated by Ferdinand Boitel

In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper with musical notation
Northern France (Laon), c. 1780-1782

ii + 92 + ii folios on paper, original pagination in red ink, 1-176 (including errors and unnumbered pages; some pages renumbered in pencil, also with errors), watermark with a crowned shield bearing a fleur-de-lis surmounting the number 4 and the letters A, V, O(?) and L, complete (collation i⁵ (2 bifolia and a half bifolium (titlepage) ii-iv⁴ v² vi⁶ vii-x⁴ xi-xiii² xiv⁴ xv-xvi⁸ xvii² xviii-xix⁶ xx⁴ (last leaf is a singleton)), no catchwords or signatures, no ruling of lines, text within a double frame ruled in red ink (inner frame 204 x 163 mm.), written in dark brown and red inks in a clear, handsome Italic script on 20 long lines and 6 four-line staves in red ink with square musical notation in black ink on each page, rastrum 11 mm., rubrics and capitals in red, running titles and headings in red capitals, 65 SMALL (1-LINE) ORNAMENTAL INITIALS, 45 LARGE (2-LINE) INITIALS DECORATED WITH LANDSCAPES, HAMLETS, FLOWERS, BIRDS, 19 CULS-DE-LAMPE ILLUSTRATIONS WITH FLOWERS, BIRDS, PUTTI, 14 HALF-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS WITH EUCHARISTIC MOTIFS, PUTTI, ANGELS, VASES, COLUMNS, 3 FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATED TITLE PAGES WITH CARTOUCHES in red ink, with highlights in green and blue inks and green, blue, pink and yellow wash, several leaves in the beginning loose from the top sewings, two small tears in the outer margin of the titlepage, small water stain in the upper margins, minor stains and signs of wear, in overall excellent condition. In its ORIGINAL BINDING of red morocco over wooden boards, both covers gold-tooled with a frame of triple fillets and pomegranates in the corners, flat spine gold-tooled with compartments enclosing 5 pomegranates, small roses and circles (one compartment left empty for the title), pastedowns and endpapers in sky-blue satin, gilt edges, leather slightly worn and stained, but in overall excellent condition. Dimensions 264 x 200 mm.

This luxurious music manuscript was most likely made for Thérèse-Lucy, Countess de Dillon, one of the closest friends of Marie-Antoinette, Queen of France. Adorned with over one hundred illustrations by the *maître écrivain*, Ferdinand Boitel, who worked for the most eminent aristocratic women in France, it survives in a remarkable gold-tooled binding that matches a binding made for Marie-Antoinette herself. Boitel's craftsmanship, coupled with the presumed royal patronage, extends the evolving story of the fascination with manuscript culture hundreds of years after Gutenberg.

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was written and decorated by Ferdinand Boitel (1715-1785), *maître écrivain* from Laon, who signed it on the titlepage. Although at first sight there appears very little evidence of the book's original owner, various clues suggest that it was made in 1780-1782 for Thérèse-Lucy de Rothe, Countess de Dillon (1751-1782), a close friend and lady-in-waiting to queen Marie-Antoinette of France.

First, the decoration is extremely accomplished, matching the decoration in books made for Boitel's most renowned patrons, the queens and dauphines of France. The decoration suggests that the manuscript was made for a lay person and the

topographical subjects within the decoration very likely represent local places important to the original owner. Secondly, the exquisite original binding of our manuscript is almost identical with the binding of a Book of Hours that Boitel made for Marie-Antoinette, sometime after she became queen in 1774 and before Boitel died in 1785 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS nouv. acq. fr. 1825). In correspondence with Pierre Lefèvre, Victor Leroquais describes the binding of Marie-Antoinette's book as follows: "reliure de maroquin rouge à dentelle dorée non signée, doublée de satin bleu azur (plats et garde), dos à cinq faux nerfs, fleurdelysé (5 fleurons) dans le deuxième compartiment, titre doré (Heures Royales) sur étiquette fauve, tranches dorées" (Lefèvre, 1985, p. 57; see also Leroquais, 1927, vol. 2, pp. 300-301). The binding of our manuscript is also gold-tooled red morocco with its flat spine decorated with five false bands in gold; the fore-edges are gilt, and the pastedowns and flyleaves are in sky blue satin, identical to those of the queen. Only the motif of the gold-tooling differs, a pomegranate in place of the royal emblem of the fleur-de-lis, and our volume lacks a title on the spine.

The third and deciding piece of evidence concerns the later history of the manuscript. It belonged to the parish church of Saint-Martin in Montigny-Lengrain (Aisne) (see item 2 below). In 1764 the seigneurie of Montigny-Lengrain (and those of Hautefontaine, Banru, Tannières, Saint-Crépin, Courtieux, Jaulzy, Martimont, Clamecy, Croutoy, Mortefontaine, etc.) was sold to Charles-Edouard de Rothe (d. 1766), lieutenant general of the king's army (cf. Saincir 1931, p. 156). His only child, Thérèse-Lucy de Rothe would become one of Marie-Antoinette's favorite companions. In 1766, the year her father died, Thérèse-Lucy became the godmother (benefactor) of the great bell of the parish church in Montigny-Lengrain (cf. Saincir 1931, p. 156), confirming her intimate relationship with the parish, to which she (or perhaps her daughter Henriette-Lucy) would bequeath her personal book of devotion. Our manuscript probably dates from the period between 20 January 1780, when Marie-Antoinette named Thérèse-Lucy *dame du palais surnuméraire*, and 7 September 1782, when she died. It is even possible that Marie-Antoinette had the book made for her.

2. The manuscript belonged to the parish of Saint-Martin in Montigny-Lengrain (in Aisne, between Laon and Paris); see on the second front flyleaf, beneath the ex-libris of Ludovic Froissart (see below), the ink stamp that reads: "Paroisse St. Martin Montigny-Lengrain."
3. In the nineteenth or twentieth century, the manuscript belonged to M. Philipoteaux, the parish priest at Bichancourt, a small town some 30 km north of Montigny-Lengrain; a label with his name, cut out from a printed text, is pasted on the lower part of the titlepage: "M. Philipoteaux, curé à Bichancourt."
4. In the twentieth century the manuscript was in the Parisian collection of Ludovic Froissart; see his engraved ex-libris pasted on the second front flyleaf, and below it, the engraved ex-libris of T. Froissart; this collection was sold in January 1977 (see Online resources). Ludovic Froissart's library was especially rich in books adorned with armorial and decorated bindings.

5. Modern bookseller's note in pencil on the second front flyleaf: "7480/244."

TEXT

[unnumbered] titlepage, "Officium Corporis Christi. Scriptum a Ferdinando Boitel."; [verso blank];

pp. 1-175, *In festo Corporis Christi. Solemne-Majus. Psalmi de feria.*, incipit, "Deus, in adiutorium meum intende. Antiphona (music) Faciet Dominus omnibus populis in monte Sion... *Ad Completorium* (p. 11-) ... *Ad Officium Nocturnum* (p. 17-) ... *Ad Laudes* (p. 67-) ... *Ad Processionem* (p. 79-) ... *Ad Missam* (p. 81-) ... *Ad II. Vesperas* (p. 99-) ... *Ad Completorium* (p. 113-) ... *Ad Benedictionem* (p. 121-) ... *Sabbato intra Octavam. Corporis Christi. Ad I. Vesperas* (p. 123-) ... *Dominica intra Octavam Corporis Christi. Ad Officium Nocturnum Omnia ut in Die, exceptis quae sequuntur* (p. 125-) ... *Ad Laudes* (p. 135-) ... *Ad Missam* (p. 137-) ... *In Festo Sacerdotii Domini Jesu et Octavam Corporis Christi. Duplex majus. Ad I. Vesperas* (p. 145-) ... *Ad officium nocturnum* (p. 150-) ... *Ad Laudes* (p. 168-) ... *Ad Missam* (p. 168- (renumbered in pencil 172)) ... *Ad II. Vesperas* (p. 174- (renumbered in pencil 178)) ... *Ad Magnificat. Antiphona. Lex homines constituit sacerdotes infirmitatem habentes: sermo autem jurisjurandi Filium in aeternum perfectum alleluia*"; p. 176 (renumbered in pencil 180), Drawing of an angel holding a scroll with the text "Ad Completorium ut in festo."

ILLUSTRATION

Decorated throughout, as follows:

Three full-page titlepages, each decorated with a large cartouche on pp. (first unnumbered page), 125, 145;

Fourteen half-page illustrations with frames (enclosing or surmounting the headings) decorated with putti, angels, the Lamb of God, the host, monstrance, vases, flower pots, books, columns, birds, fruit and flowers on pp. 1, 11, 17, 67, 79, 81, 99, 113, 121, 137, 150, 168, 170, 174;

Nineteen culs-de-lampe illustrations with motifs as above;

110 initials with landscapes, hamlets, birds, flowers.

The decoration of this volume is quite remarkable. The three titlepages enclose the heading within a large cartouche drawn in red ink. The asymmetrical convex cartouches (initial unnumbered page, p. 145) are reminiscent of the cartouches designed by Louis Van Nerock, published by Pierre François Tardieu in *Nouveau livre de cartouches utile aux peintres, sculpteurs et autres* in Paris c. 1745-50 (cf. Smentek, 2014, p. 221, fig. 4). The scallops that are transformed into waves, waterfalls, leaves, branches, asymmetrical architectural forms, and so forth, represent the essence of rococo ornamentation in vogue at the time. The boundaries between natural and artificial, and between image and frame were deliberately blurred.

Some of the decorated initials in our manuscript include hamlets, farmhouses, churches, a tempietto, estates and landscapes that were undoubtedly all recognizable sites, probably in Montigny-Lengrain (see initials on pp. 18, 29, 87, 96, 121, 137, 169, 171, 175). For instance, the landscape depicted in the initial 'V' on p. 18 appears to depict the picturesque site that is the Fontaine Saint-Martin in Montigny-Lengrain. This place of natural beauty has attracted

visitors for centuries, who admire a waterfall that flows over a prominent rock into a semi-circular pond that surrounds it.

Ferdinand Boitel (or Boitelle) (1715-1785) was a lay cleric in the parish of Saint-Cyr in Laon, who obtained the prestigious title of *maître écrivain juré expert* in 1741 (cf. Lefèvre, 1985, p. 56). The title of "writing master" designated an expert calligrapher, who could be called on to create luxury handwritten works. These professionals often taught the art of handwriting. In France the *maître écrivains* organized themselves into corporations, which were professional bodies that granted the official title of *maître*. Later in 1741, the same year that Boitel became *maître écrivain*, he married Marie-Claude Richard. As a wedding present, he made her a Book of Hours entitled *Heures appartenantes à M^e Claude Richard F^e Boitelle, par Ferdinand Boitelle, à Laon*, now MS 547 in the Bibliothèque municipale de Laon. The 395 leaves in this manuscript are written with careful calligraphy and decorated with fine flowers, birds and landscapes; for a reproduction of the titlepage, see Lefèvre, 1985, p. 60. Later in his career Boitel made Books of Hours for the most notable women of France: Queen Marie Leszczyńska, wife of Louis XV (current localization unknown; datable before 1768), Maria Josepha of Saxony, Dauphine of France and mother of Louis XVI (current localization unknown; datable before 1767), and Queen Marie-Antoinette, wife of Louis XVI (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Nouv. Acq. Fr. 1825, entitled *Heures présentées à la Reine par Ferdinand Boitel, maître d'écriture à Laon*). Another of his magnificent Books of Hours was made for Madame Le Pelletier of Soissons, and bears the title *Heures présentées à Madame Le Pelletier, intendante de la Généralité de Soissons* (New York Public Library, Spencer Collection, MS 89; for digitized pages, see Online Resources), mentioning Marie-Antoinette as Dauphine on pp. 130-140 and thus datable to 1770-1774.

Thérèse-Lucy de Rothe, for whom our manuscript was made, married her cousin, Count Arthur Dillon in 1769. They had a daughter in 1770, Henriette-Lucy, who would be known as Marquise de La Tour du Pin. Thérèse-Lucy is described as a great beauty and very fashionable. Her daughter describes in her autobiography how, when she was seven or eight years old, her mother charmed the queen with her beauty and elegance and was made *dame du palais* (see Online resources). She would quickly become one of the queen's favorites and in 1780, in order to keep her constantly at her side, the queen made her *dame du palais surnuméraire*, creating great jealousy at the court in Versailles. She was one of the queen's closest confidants. Two years later Thérèse-Lucy caught tuberculosis at the age of thirty-one and died on September 7, 1782. Marie-Antoinette visited her during the illness, sent a page for news every day, and was apparently devastated by her death. Nevertheless, she decided to go to the theatre the day after Thérèse-Lucy's death and was famously criticized for having recovered from her grief for her dear friend so quickly.

Countess de Dillon's beautifully illustrated music manuscript is devoted entirely to the Feast of Corpus Christi (Body of Christ). This feast, focusing solely on the Holy Eucharist, was established in the thirteenth century, and the liturgy for the office was composed in part by St. Thomas Aquinas. The feast of Corpus Christi is celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday and sixty days after Easter. At the end of the Mass, there is often a procession of the Blessed Sacrament (see p. 79), generally displayed in a monstrance. The procession is followed by the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (see p. 121). It is possible that Thérèse-Lucy's devotion to this feast was in part due to the influence of her uncle, Arthur Richard Dillon, Archbishop of Narbonne, on whom she depended financially.

Manuscript production after the invention of the printing press is a field of increasing scholarly interest. Richard and Mary Rouse have broken fresh ground following its history into the early eighteenth century from 1500 to 1715 (Rouse and Rouse, 2019). The artistic work of the *maître écrivain* Ferdinand Boitel, born in the very year the Rouses book concludes, extends the story the Rouses tell, and the patronage of highly placed nobility and royalty testifies to a continuing fascination with manuscript culture many centuries after Gutenberg.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Ferdinand Boitel (Wikipedia)

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand_Boitelle

Thérèse-Lucy de Rothe (Wikipedia)

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Th%C3%A9r%C3%A8se-Lucy_de_Rothe

Heures présentées à Madame Le Pelletier, intendante de la Généralité de Soissons, New York Public Library, Spencer Collection, MS 89

<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-e95a-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

Ex-libris of Ludovic Froissart (Bibale, IRHT, CNRS)

<https://bibale.irht.cnrs.fr/59073>

Marquise de La Tour du Pin, *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans* (Gallica)

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k467930/f2.image>

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