

## Ferial Psalter

In Latin (with some marginal rubrics in French), illuminated manuscript on parchment  
Northeastern France (Picardy), c. 1280-1300

ii (modern parchment) + 291 + ii (modern parchment), modern foliation in pencil, top outer corner, 1-291, and bottom outer corner, every ten folios, (collation: i-ii<sup>12</sup> iii<sup>12</sup> (1 and 2, ff. 25-26, and 11 and 12, ff. 35-36, single) iv<sup>12</sup> (1 and 2, ff. 37-38, and 11 and 12, ff. 47-48, single) v-xxiv<sup>12</sup> xv<sup>3</sup> (original structure uncertain)), a few quires signed with a modern Arabic numeral in pencil, probably by the binder, bottom outer corner, no catchwords, misbound, original order being: ff. 1-12v, 27-38v, 43-25v, 39-48v, 26, 49-291, written below the top line in an upright Gothic bookhand in fifteen long lines, ruled very lightly in lead with the top two lines full across, and single vertical bounding lines, (justification 58-55 x 40-39 mm.), red rubrics, one-line initials alternating red and blue, two-line gold initials infilled alternately with white-patterned pink or blue on grounds of the other color, which tend to follow the shape of the initials, some with cusps, edged in black; NINE ACCOMPLISHED HISTORIATED INITIALS, 5- to 6-line alternately blue or pink white-patterned initials on rectangular white-patterned grounds of the other color, with thin gold frames, infilled with scenes illustrating the Psalms on gold grounds; initials continue into the margins with vine tendrils which form spirals (some enclosing realistic leaves) on deeply cusped grounds, and frame the page on three sides, or extend along one or two sides, in pink, blue, gold, with touches of green and orange. In very good condition, except: f. 1, initial and border rubbed, brown stains, ff. 129-137, ff. 253-274 small stains, bottom, outer corner, and ff. 275 to end, folios darkened and stained, no loss of text. Bound in modern dark brown morocco by H. Godillot, spine with five raised bands lettered in gilt: "Psautier Manuscrit," and "XIV s."; yellow morocco doublure, gilt edges. Dimensions 85 x 62 mm.

Tiny Psalters were one of the achievements of the illuminators and book producers in Northern France and Flanders at the end of thirteenth and early fourteenth century, and Amiens was an important center of production. This manuscript is smaller than most examples. Although we do not know for whom it was made, its rubrics in French suggest that it was made for a lay person. Its small historiated initials are elegant and are further enlivened by restrained marginal drolleries.

## PROVENANCE

1. The script and style of illumination suggest that this Psalter was made in Northeastern France, perhaps in Amiens, c. 1280-1300 (we thank Dr. Patricia Stirnemann, and Professor Jeffrey Hamburger for their assistance). The rubrics in French may suggest that it was made for a lay person around the time when the Psalter was being transformed into the Book of Hours (or Psalter-Hours) and perhaps even in the milieu of the Beguines and Beghards.
2. Belonged in the eighteenth century to an unidentified religious house; ex-libris note, f. 1: "Ex libris conventus sanctae Reginae."

## TEXT

ff. 1-284, Ferial Psalter, with hymns (not noted), antiphons, collects and canticles, in biblical order, but interrupted with the psalms (usually cue only) and other texts for Lauds, and with rubrics and marginal notes indicating the liturgical office; some marginal rubrics in French: f. 217, *Vespres du dimanche* ... [Psalm 109]; f. 223, *Vespres du lundi* ... [Psalm 114]; f. 229v, *Ad prime pour tous les iours de la septime commensant*... [Psalm 118]; f. 236, *Tierce pour tous les iours* ... [Psalm 118:33]; f. 240v, [*Sexte?*] *pour tous les iours* ... [Psalm 118:81]; f. 245, *Nonne pour tous les iours* ... [Psalm 118:129]; f. 253, *Vespres du mercredi* ... [Psalm 126]; f. 256v, *Vespres du ieudi* ... [Psalm 131]; f. 263v, *Vespres pour le vendredi* ..., [Psalm 137]; f. 272, *Vespres du samedi* ... [Psalm 143]; the first four quires of the manuscript are now bound out of order; the original quire structure and order can be reconstructed as follows (all quires of twelve): quire one, ff. 1-12v, (Psalm 1-Psalm 9:23//); quire 2: ff. 27-38v, (Psalm 9:23-Psalm 17:19//); quire 3, ff. 13-24, (beginning with Psalm 17:19, and continuing into the next quire); quire 4, f. 25 (through Psalm 21:30//), ff. 39-48v (Psalm 21:30-Psalm 28:10), f. 26 (Psalm 28:10-29:10//). Quire 5 begins with f. 49, Psalm 29:10, and the remainder of the manuscript is bound properly.

ff. 284-289v, [Canticles] *Te deum laudamus* ..., *Benedicte omnia opera* ..., *Benedictus dominum deus* ..., and *Magnificate anima mea* ....

ff. 289v-291v, [prayers added in a contemporary hand] *Prosa de beata virgine*. *Inviolata intacta et casta* ...; *Prosa de sancto nicholao*. *Sospicati dedi egros olei perfusio* ...; [Prayer] *Deus qui beatam nicholaum pontificem* ...; *Benedictio episcopalis*. *Dominus omnipotens benedicat nos sicut ros* ....

All one hundred and fifty Psalms were recited each week during the Divine Office. Psalters that also include antiphons, responses and other prayers, together with rubrics indicating the offices, are known as Ferial Psalters. As was traditional in many Psalters, the historiated initials in this manuscript mark the Psalms recited at Matins for each day of the week (Psalm 1, Sunday at Matins, Psalm 26, Monday, Psalm 38, Tuesday, Psalm 52, Wednesday, Psalm 68, Thursday, Psalm 80, Friday, and Psalm 97, Saturday), and Sunday at Vespers (Psalm 109). The presence of a ninth historiated initial at Psalm 51, is less common, and reflects the older tradition of dividing the Psalter into three parts. Most Ferial Psalters include calendars, litanies, and other prayers in addition to the Psalms and Canticles found in this manuscript. Although the manuscript is now in a modern binding, there is no evidence to suggest it ever included these additional texts.

The weekly recitation of the one hundred and fifty Psalms was the heart of the Divine Office said by members of religious orders and the secular clergy, but Psalters were also the primary devotional book for the laity until the fifteenth century when they were largely replaced by Books of Hours. The rubrics in French and the tiny size of this manuscript suggest it was made for lay devotion.

## ILLUSTRATION

The elegant figures in the initials are drawn with careful details, with long fingers and feet, gesturing gracefully, and with full draperies; the colors are quiet, with blue and pink predominating, with touches of orange and lime green, on gold grounds. The faces are left white, with delicate features, usually with pleasant expressions. The style in general fits with other manuscripts illuminated in Picardy at the end of the thirteenth-century. Paris, BnF, MS fr. 95, a manuscript of Authurian

Legends, has generally been assigned to Amiens. There are definite similarities between this manuscript and our Psalter; cf. especially the facial features and the style of the foliate borders (see Karen Gould, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, *Speculum Anniversary Monographs 4* [Cambridge, Massachusetts, Medieval Academy of America, 1978], 55 and Pls. 58-59 and Robert McGrath, "A Newly Discovered Illustrated Manuscript of Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain and Lancelot in the Princeton University Library," *Speculum* 38 (1963), 590-592).

A number of features set this Psalter apart from other manuscripts. First, it is very small. Other small Psalters are not quite this reduced in size. Secondly, in addition to the fact that Psalm 51 begins with an historiated initial (so there are nine rather than the more usual eight divisions), the iconography of the initial is equally uncommon (David and Goliath, Doeg, or a suicide, being more usual; cf. Günther Haseloff, *Die Psalterillustration im 13. Jahrhundert* [Kiel, 1938], Table 10, pp. 112-113). The initial in this Psalter seems to depict Christ preaching to a person of humble origin.

Subjects of the Initials:

f. 1, (Psalm 1, "Beatus vir") two-compartment initial with David playing the harp above, and David and Goliath below; three quarter border with a hunting scene in the bottom margin, with a couple on horseback, a man on foot, two dogs and a stag;

f. 44v, (Psalm 26, "Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea") David, seated on a throne, pointing to his eye; three quarter border with a Hare;

f. 70, (Psalm 38, "Dixi custodiam vias meas") David, seated on a throne, pointing to his mouth; L-shaped border with a hen and chicks;

f. 92v, (Psalm 51, "Quid gloriaris in malitia") Christ (?), holding a book, preaching to a seated figure, dressed very simply;

f. 95v, (Psalm 52, "Dixit insipiens") the fool, eating a round loaf, and holding an orange staff; three-quarter border with a bear;

f. 121, (Psalm 68, "Salvum me fac") two-compartment initial, with God above, blessing David, below, who is waist deep in water; three-quarter border with an owl;

f. 151v, (Psalm 80, "Exultate deo") David, seated on a throne, playing an instrument, that he holds on his lap; three-quarter border with cocks fighting;

f. 182, (Psalm 97, "Cantate domino") David, seated on a throne, playing a stringed instrument with a bow; three-quarter border with a mermaid playing a stringed instrument;

f. 217, (Psalm 109, "Dixit dominus domino meo") the Trinity; three-quarter border with a figure in a brown robe praying.

## LITERATURE

van Dijk, S.J.P, "The Bible in Liturgical Use," *The Cambridge History of the Bible. Volume 2, The West from the Fathers to the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 244-248.

Leroquais, V., *Les Psautiers manuscrits latins des bibliothèques publiques de France* (Maçon, 1940-1).

Van Deusen, Nancy, ed. *The Place of the Psalms in the Intellectual Culture of the Middle Ages*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999.

Plummer, John, *Liturgical Manuscripts for the Mass and Divine Office*, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, 1964, pp. 38-40.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

Introduction to liturgical manuscripts:

"Celebrating the Liturgy's Books":

<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/manuscripts/>

"Psalms," New Catholic Encyclopedia:

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12533a.htm>

TM 575