



Book of Hours (Use of Troyes)

In Latin and French, illuminated manuscript on parchment

France (Troyes), 1460-1470

6 large arch-topped miniatures by an artist from the circle of the Master of the Troyes Missal

Resplendent with gold and glowing color, this beautiful Book of Hours from the collection of the duc de La Vallière, nobleman and one of the greatest bibliophiles of all time, betrays the influence of the Master of the Troyes Missal, an accomplished illuminator active in or near Troyes between 1460 and 1480, and was undoubtedly the work of a member of his circle. Probably trained in Paris, members of this workshop executed many Books of Hours for owners in Champagne and eastern France.

DESCRIPTION

iv + 144 + iii folios on parchment, modern foliation, 1-145, lacking ff. 75 and 88, as well as an unfoliated leaf preceding f. 1 (collation i⁶ [-1, with loss of text] ii⁶ iii-ix⁸ x⁸ [-8, with loss of a miniature] xi⁸ xii⁴ xiii⁸ [-1, with loss of a miniature] xiv-xix⁸ xx⁸ [-4 to 8, with no loss of text]), ruled in red crayon with full-length horizontal and vertical bounding lines (justification 90 x 70 mm.), written in dark brown ink in a bâtarde hand on sixteen lines, script in two sizes, capitals touched in yellow, red rubrics, line-fillers in pink and blue with white tracery and burnished gold rounds, one- to two-line illuminated initials in burnished gold on pink and blue grounds with white tracery, three- to four-line illuminated initials on burnished gold grounds, in blue or pink with white tracery and infill of blue and pink ivy leaves, some with three-quarter borders of foliate and floral sprays, others accompanying six arch-topped miniatures, framed with baguettes of burnished gold filled with flowers, leaves, berries, and other shapes in blue and pink with white tracery and with full borders of colored acanthus leaves, burnished gold bezants and ivy leaves, flowers, berries, gold-painted animals, and birds (including peacocks), all on reserved grounds, repairs to gutters, otherwise in excellent condition. Bound in nineteenth-century red morocco, gilt-stamped, on four raised binds, spine scuffed. Dimensions 163 x 120 mm.

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PROVENANCE

1. A number of elements point to this book's origins in Troyes, a major center of manuscript production, particularly of Books of Hours, in the fifteenth century. The calendar includes Saint Aventine and Saint Lupus of Troyes, both saints specially venerated there. The liturgical use of the manuscript is quite close to that of Troyes, and the manuscript's miniatures are the work of an illuminator from the circle of an artist working in Troyes, the Master of the Troyes Hours.
2. Belonged to the French Royal Library at Versailles, according to a nineteenth-century inscription on the front flyleaf (see below).
3. Belonged to an abbot of Saint-Denis, according to the same inscription (see below).
4. Belonged to Louis César de La Baume La Blanc, duc de La Vallière (1708-1780), of Château de Champs, at Champs-sur-Marne, a French nobleman and bibliophile who amassed one of the great libraries of his time; no. 292 in *Catalogue des livres de la bibliothèque de feu M. de le duc de La Valliere*, Paris, 1783.

The duc de La Vallière is the latest owner identified in the same nineteenth-century inscription on the front flyleaf: "Ce Manuscrit a appartenu au Duc de la Vallière qui l'avait de l'Eveque de St Denis, il proviend[...?] de la Bibliotheque Royale de Versailles. Il est du 15e Siècle. [This manuscript belonged to the Duc de La Vallière who had it from the abbot of Saint-Denis, it would come from[?] the Royal Library of Versailles. It is of the fifteenth century.]"

TEXT

ff. 1-11, Calendar, in French, with entries including Saint Aventine (4 February) and Saint Lupus of Troyes (29 July), in red (lacking the first leaf with January);

ff. 12-17, Gospel extracts;

ff. 17v-21v, Short Office of the Cross;

ff. 22-25v, Office of the Holy Spirit;

ff. 26-71v, Hours of the Virgin, close to the use of Troyes;

ff. 71v- 74v, *Obsecro te*, using masculine forms;

ff. 76-86v, Joys of the Virgin, in French (lacking opening leaf with miniature);

ff. 86v-87, Prayer to Saint Sebastian;

ff. 89-98, Penitential Psalms (lacking opening leaf with miniature);

ff. 98v-103v, Litany;

f. 104, Lord's Prayer;

ff. 105-145v, Office of the Dead.

ILLUSTRATION

The subjects of the six miniatures are:

f. 12, Saint John on Patmos;

f. 17v, Crucifixion;

f. 22, Pentecost;

f. 26, Annunciation;

f. 36v, Nativity;

f. 105, Funeral Mass.

The illuminations in this beautiful Book of Hours show it to be the work of an artist from the circle of the Master of the Troyes Missal, named after a manuscript in Paris (Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 865A) written by the scribe Jean Coquet around 1460 (Avril and Reynaud, 1993,

no. 97, pp. 182-183). The elegant, straight-backed figures with pale, smooth, oval faces and high arching brows achieve the quality of those painted by the Master himself, and the artist draws on the Master's fantastical, nighttime landscapes as he enriches his own with distant castles and spires. The peacocks and other birds that populate the borders also derive from the Master's work and are characteristic of Troyes. For the Master of the Troyes Missal and his work, see Avril and Reynaud (1993, pp. 180-184) and Avril, Hermant, and Bibolet (2007, pp. 126-137).

In addition to the Missal discussed above, there is a small corpus of manuscripts painted by the Master of the Troyes Missal, as follows: the Missal of Saint-Jean-au-Marché (Troyes, Médiathèque, MS 117), *Postillae* of Nicholas of Lyra (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 11972-11974), the "Guyenet-Lardanchet" Hours (Les Enluminures, BOH 114), and a Book of Hours, use of Troyes, acquired in 2003 by the Médiathèque de Troyes (Troyes, Médiathèque, MS 3897; see Online Resources). A longer list is also found in Avril and Reynaud (1993, pp. 181-184) and Avril, Hermant, and Bibolet (2007, p. 78 and pp. 126-134).

Francois Avril and, later, Maxence Hermant have identified a number of distinct and original artists who worked in Troyes during its fifteenth-century flourishing as a center of manuscript production. Along with the Master of the Troyes Hours, these include the Master of the Glazier Hours (after a Book of Hours now in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library) and the Master of the Pierre Michault of Guyot Le Peley, who worked for important local families (Boucherat, Molé, Hennequin). The 2007 catalogue and exhibition held in Troyes contribute to our better appreciation of Troyes illumination (Avril, Hermant, Bibolet, 2007).

LITERATURE

Avril, François, Maxence Hermant, and Françoise Bibolet. *Très riches heures de Champagne. L'enluminure en Champagne à la fin du Moyen Age*, Paris, Hazan, 2007.

Avril, François and Nicole Reynaud. *Les manuscrits à peintures en France 1440-1520*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1993.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Digitization of Troyes, Médiathèque, MS 3897

http://www.mediathèque.grand-troyes.fr/webmat2/archives/_/feuilletoir/

BOH 131