

Livros de Horas

O IMAGINÁRIO DA DEVOÇÃO PRIVADA

Manuscritos

Delmira Espada Custódio

Maria Adelaide Miranda



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Coordenação

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Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal
Lisboa 2015

Livros de Horas**O imaginário da devoção privada****Manuscritos****COORDENAÇÃO**

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DESIGN

TVM designers

CAPA

BNP IL 42 (Pormenor)

PRÉ-IMPRESSÃO

Área de Gestão Editorial BNP

BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE PORTUGAL - CATALOGAÇÃO NA PUBLICAÇÃO**LIVROS DE HORAS**

Livros de horas : o imaginário da devoção privada : manuscritos / coord. Delmira Espada Custódio, Maria Adelaide Miranda ; textos Roger S. Wieck... [et al.]. – Lisboa : Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, 2015. – 622 p. : il. – (Estudos)
ISBN 978-972-565-562-7 (ed.eletrónica)

CDU 09*15*(01)

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Reconstructing local styles in the Southern Low Countries. The Importance of Books of Hours¹

DOMINIQUE VANWIJNSBERGHE

Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA, Brussels)

I have, as you know, devoted some attention
to this, and written a little monograph
on the ashes of 140 different varieties
of pipe, cigar, and cigarette tobacco.
A. Conan Doyle – *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*

In memoriam Erik Drigsdahl, 1942-2015

Local styles

The first historians of Flemish illumination devoted little or no attention to the problem of local styles. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Flemish art was a well-established concept. «Flanders» (meaning the Southern Low Countries) seemed to be a homogeneous geographic area situated between France and the Northern Netherlands, a region from which great painters like Jan van Eyck or Roger van der Weyden revolutionized Western art. In this context, it seemed quite natural that next to «Flemish painting» there should be something called «Flemish *miniature* painting». Both Paul Durrieu in 1921 (DURRIEU 1921) and Friedrich Winkler, four years later (WINKLER 1925), adopted this label for their seminal studies, but geography was clearly not their main concern. A far more urgent task awaited them as they set out to classify the numerous hands at work in this huge body of manuscripts and to isolate stylistic groups. These groups would serve in turn as benchmarks for further attributions. Thus, in this early

1 A first version of this text was read at the international conference *Livros de horas: o imaginário da devoção privada* (Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, 13-14 February 2014). I would like to thank the organizers, Maria Adelaide Miranda and Delmira Custódio, for their kind invitation. I am also indebted to Patricia Stirnemann for polishing my English and offering useful observations on the text.

development of scholarship, the term «Flemish illumination» fulfilled its purpose, though it was already apparent that it covered a great variety of styles.

From a geographic point of view, an important milestone in the history of book painting in the Southern Low Countries was the 1959 exhibition *La miniature flamande* organized by Léon Delaissé in Brussels, Paris and Amsterdam (DELAISSÉ 1959). The title of the show may sound rather conventional but its approach was highly innovative. Instead of focusing on the style of the miniatures alone, Delaissé used other material and visual features – writing, ruling, layout, secondary decoration – to reorganize «Flemish» production



Fig. 1 Map of the Southern Low Countries

© Dimitri Belayew

around the cities of Mons, Valenciennes, Hesdin, Lille, Audenarde, Bruges, Brussels and Ghent (fig. 1 – map of the Southern Netherlands). According to Delaissé, workshops active in these towns shared specific codicological features. I will not dwell on the problems posed by this new approach – among others the disputed notion of «atelier» or workshop (GIL 2013: 109-127) –, to stress what really is at stake here. By taking new factors into account, Delaissé proposed the first detailed cartography of manuscripts and styles, paving the way to a study of local centres of production.

A second milestone was the exhibition mounted by François Avril and Nicole Reynaud in Paris in 1993: *Quand la peinture était dans les livres* (AVRIL; REYNAUD 1993). Following in the footsteps of Charles Sterling (1987-1990)² and John Plummer (1982), the authors demonstrated the value of a comparative study of artistic regions within a large geopolitical area corresponding to the borders of present-day France. An important section was devoted to manuscripts produced in Northern France («le Nord») and confirmed the important contribution of this region to the shaping of Flemish book painting. In the same year another important exhibition opened its doors in Louvain. *Vlaamse miniaturen voor Van Eyck* (1993) highlighted a large corpus of so-called «pre-Eyckian» manuscripts, most of them books of hours painted in Bruges at the beginning of the fifteenth century, for a vast array of patrons, ranging from the rich burgher to the merchant or prelate. These manuscripts were of diverse quality, some very modest, others clearly made for exigent bibliophiles. For the first time, a large group of locally produced books of hours was assembled and studied on criteria other than artistic merit.

In the wake of these exhibitions, Ph. D. students set out to explore these new territories. Anne-Marie Legaré pursued her research on the county of Hainaut and its major cities of Mons and Valenciennes³; Pascale Charron (2004) and Pascal Schandel (1997) revisited Lille; Marc Gil (1999) went on to explore Picardy and Artois; Susie Nash (1999) focused on Amiens, Gregory Clark on Ghent and the Scheldt valley (2000), while I was studying Tournai and Namur (VANWIJNSBERGHE 2001a; 2001b; 2007). Bodo Brinkmann, Bernard Bousmanne and Saskia Van Bergen worked on Bruges (BRINKMANN 1997; BOUSMANNE 1997; BERGEN 2006), and most recently I have reconsidered the situation in Valenciennes (VANWIJNSBERGHE 2013). Other important regions and cities like Cambrai,

2 Among his many publications on regional centres of production in France, the most significant are his two volumes on Paris.

3 See, among other articles: A.-M. Legaré (1992: 209-222).

Ghent, the principality of Liège, the duchy of Brabant, with important cities like Brussels, Antwerp and Louvain, are still practically *terrae incognitae* and await a new generation of explorers.

What all these studies have demonstrated is that the notion of «Flemish» miniature painting is problematic, that it covers a huge variety of local styles that are far from homogeneous. Almost a hundred years after Durrieu and Winkler, our ability to make stylistic distinctions has increased considerably, so much so that it is now very often possible to distinguish between manuscripts illuminated in, say, the counties of Flanders, Hainaut, or Northern France. A detailed mapping of these regions has started (VANWIJNSBERGHE 2011), whereas the relevance of the concept of «Flemish illumination» has receded. But this term, problematic though it may be, nevertheless corresponds to a long historiographical tradition, and it will probably continue to be used for the sake of convenience⁴.

Books of hours

That books of hours can play a crucial role in the reconstruction of local centres of production is not a novel idea. One of its most devoted promoters was again Léon Delaissé, who explained why in an important paper delivered in Oxford in 1971 (DELAISSÉ 1974). Delaissé insisted on two assets of books of hours: first, the fact that they are preserved in large numbers and lend themselves to a statistical approach; secondly, that they can be dated and localized more easily than any other type of manuscript. Regarding the statistical approach, it is striking to note how few of the avenues of research outlined by Delaissé have actually been followed. In regions with a limited and charted production, like the Northern Netherlands, quantitative data are available, but this is not the case in more productive or larger geographical areas like the Southern Low Countries or France⁵.

4 I am not sure whether this shift in historiography should be given a political interpretation, as suggested by Gregory Clark who draws a parallel between the political evolution of Belgium and historiographical developments (see CLARK 2007a). The same historiographical movement occurred in France, a traditionally centralistic country. In my view, this new sensitivity reflects the constant progress of connoisseurship, rather than any political agenda.

5 For these regions there is nothing like the Byvanck database, a full description of some six hundred books of hours produced in the Northern Netherlands, a project conducted by Anne Korteweg in the years 1986-2001 (see KORTEWEG 1994).

As a result, most of the observations I will make here are partial and based, I am afraid, on my own experience rather than on a systematic census of manuscripts. They cannot be substantiated by figures and should therefore be considered as mere suggestions for future research.

A traditional set of criteria

As early as 1927, in his unsurpassed introduction to the catalogue of books of hours from the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, Victor Leroquais described a method of identifying the place of use of books of hours by establishing a set of criteria that would be exploited by all who followed (LEROQUAIS 1927)⁶. His starting point was the observation that at the end of the Middle Ages dioceses and religious institutions tended to have their own liturgical use, i. e. a unique sequence of texts and prayers making up specific offices. Through systematic recording of all these fixed variants, essential information could be gained on the localisation of manuscripts⁷. For books of hours Leroquais recognized the importance of two texts in particular: the hours of the Virgin and the office of the dead.

The little hours of the Virgin form the core of the book of hours. Its variants can be counted by the dozen in the Southern Low Countries, but many of them have not yet been linked to any religious institution⁸. In his list of identified uses, Erik Drigsdahl mentions sixteen locations⁹, but many more uses are still undetermined in what he calls

6 More recent studies on books of hours include R. S. Wieck *et al* (1988; 1997); König and G. Bartz (1998). An extremely useful catalogue is L. Randall (1997), which contains the full description of more than sixty books of hours from the Southern Netherlands. By its sheer critical mass, this representative sample may serve as a starting point for any statistical approach. Another essential resource on books of hours is available on-line: Erik Drigsdahl's Center for Håndskriftstudier i Danmark, which is not only an amazing provider of information on the text of books of hours but also proposes very useful tutorials. See <<http://www.chd.dk/index.html>> [accessed: 31 July 2014].

7 Leroquais' notebooks are kept in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. NAL 3162-3163.

8 On this problem, see J. H. Marrow (2007).

9 <<http://www.chd.dk/use/index.html>> [accessed: 31 July 2014].

the «Noyon-Tournai-Thérouanne complex of uses»¹⁰. The situation is especially critical in Picardy, Artois, Hainaut, Tournai and Flanders, even Brabant, which is to say in most of the Southern Low Countries. One example that illustrates this complexity concerns seven books of hours painted in Valenciennes by the illuminator Marc Caussin around the middle of the fifteenth century. One book follows the use of the diocese of Cambrai, to which Valenciennes partly belonged, another is for the general use of Rome, two follow the use of the neighbouring cities of Tournai and Maubeuge, and the last three are unidentified (VANWIJNSBERGHE 2013: note 18). Needless to say, this complexity is very promising in terms of research. By systematically recording all these variants, one can hope to form new clusters of manuscripts that may eventually be linked to particular places or institutions.

From the very specific, we move on to the practically universal, with the remarkable success of the use of Rome in Bruges, the main production centre of books of hours in the Low Countries. A major reason for this predilection is undoubtedly the fact that many of these manuscripts were made for the cosmopolitan population of the city and for export to various parts of the Western world. As a result, the text had to be as neutral as possible, so that it could be used for prayer in virtually any part of the Christian world. Liturgical reasons may also explain this preference, since the use of the Tournai diocese, to which Bruges belonged, was clearly not favoured in the Flemish city¹¹, whereas that of the local chapter of St Donatian has not been found so far in any book of hours produced in Bruges in the fifteenth century. Therefore the Roman use, combined with other clues, may indicate a Bruges or Flemish origin, whereas, at the same time, major cities in France tended to favour a local or Paris use.

Liturgical uses are obviously a key to localisation, provided we keep in mind the classic distinction between the «destination» of a book of hours and its actual place of production. The example of Marc Caussin shows that they may or may not coincide. These remarks also apply to the office of the dead, admirably studied by Knud Ottosen (1993), who charted out most of its variants. They can confirm, infirm or qualify the information provided by the little hours of the Virgin.

10 In a mail of 2 May 2010. This expression should replace the negatively connoted «black triangle» mentioned in his website: <<http://www.chd.dk/use/madantest.html>> [accessed: 31 July 2014].

11 This is obviously not the case in Ghent, where many books of hours destined for this city follow the Tournai use, also explicitly mentioned in fifteenth-century Ghent lists of books.

Beside these two offices, another classic source of information is the calendar, a particularly delicate text to handle, as Victor Leroquais had already noted. Flemish calendars tend to differ from their French counterparts, the so-called «composite calendars»¹², in that they generally do not have entries for every single day of the year. The system used to distinguish important feasts is also less elaborate: «red-letter days» are simply written in red or, more rarely, in gold letters. Leroquais attributes the lack of reliability of composite calendars to the necessity to fill in the gaps left by «empty» days with saints that can be found elsewhere in the calendar or even invented, sometimes facetiously. But the fact that, as a rule¹³, Flemish calendars stick to a limited number of feasts and are spared this *horror vacui*, is not in itself a guarantee of quality. Some of them are closely related to liturgical calendars found in missals or breviaries, which they simplify, typically limiting their complex grading to feasts rubricated in red. Others – the vast majority – have clearly lost contact with their liturgical source. They are copies of copies, may contain errors, and must be used very cautiously.

In any case, a careful analysis of the contents often makes it possible to distinguish approximately between calendars made for the three major dioceses of the Southern Low Countries: Tournai, Cambrai and Théroutanne. In some instances the presence of local festivals allows a much more precise localisation within the diocese¹⁴. Calendars made for the city of Tournai, for instance, can be distinguished by the combined presence in red of the dedication of the cathedral (9 May) and the feast of St Eleutherius (20 February) (VANWIJNSBERGHE 2007A: 361-363 note 16). Sometimes calendars may contain indications of extremely specific, even unique feasts. The «Pourcession» on 14 September, for example, refers to the Great Procession in Tournai, founded at the end of the eleventh century by bishop Radbod to free the city from an epidemic of bubonic plague. Similarly the mention of the «Tuindag» of «Omgang» on 8 August

12 On the Parisian composite calendar, see <<http://www.chd.dk/cals/pariscal.html>> [accessed: 31 July 2014].

13 It should be noted that composite calendars are occasionally found in the Southern Netherlands too.

14 The classic tool for identifying local feasts is H. Grotefend (1891-1898). To this we should add, for the Southern Netherlands, an extremely useful and often overlooked publication: E. I. Strubbe and L. Voet (1960). Its comprehensive indexes contain a remarkable wealth of information. See also the lists provided in Clark (2000: 289-330 note 15).

clearly points to Ypres and the procession founded in 1384 to celebrate the end of the siege of the city by English and Ghent troops¹⁵.

The language used and the spelling must also be taken into account. In Flemish calendars, Latin names are frequently misspelt (*Ghertrudis, Servaetius, Lauwerentii...*), whereas rubrics in French usually adopt a Picard *scripta*, with its typical hissing sounds (*Vinchant, Franchois*). These minute details, that betray the linguistic identity of the scribe, should not be neglected.

When dealing with calendars, one can roughly distinguish two main approaches. The first one is quantitative and relies on statistical tools. As John Plummer points out (PLUMMER 1988: 149-156 note 23), a systematic comparison of calendars yields a ratio of matching to non-matching entries (expressed in a percentage) and allows the grouping of those that show a high level of agreement. Yet it occurs to me that these figures must be interpreted with caution. In the group of manuscripts used by Plummer to reconstruct a Bruges composite calendar, for instance, we find a book of hours for a member of the Hainaut family Montignies dit de Sivry, illuminated in Hainaut by an assistant of the Master of Antoine Rolin¹⁶. Its calendar agrees in 79.2 percent of its entries with a Bruges Hours painted by a member of the Gold Scrolls group¹⁷. What this percentage actually means is unclear and in this case it is even misleading¹⁸. Therefore, such results should always be double-checked, using a second, qualitative approach, based on a collation of feasts with liturgical calendars, noting which are omitted or added. Although time consuming, this method may yield very specific localisations – cities, churches or religious institutions. Herman Mulder is currently applying these principles for a pioneering study of Flemish calendars¹⁹.

15 For example in Brussels, KBR, MS. 4665, a book of hours that contains texts both in Latin and Middle Dutch (see DESCHAMPS; MULDER 2002: 6-7). With thanks to Herman Mulder for bringing this manuscript to my attention.

16 New York, Morgan Museum and Library, MS M 285 (see LEGARÉ 1996: 213).

17 Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W 220 (cf. PLUMMER 1988: 150 note 36).

18 The very notion of «high agreement» is unclear. From which percentage can we consider that a high level has been reached and that it is significant?

19 For an overview of this method, applied to the Windesheim calendar (see MULDER 2011).

The local specificities of calendars may be reflected in two other components of the book of hours: the litany and suffrages. Like the calendars, the value of the litany, recited after the penitential psalms, can vary tremendously. When it is directly inspired by a liturgical source, it is of great interest. This is the case of a book of hours in private hands, whose litany is extremely close to a sequence found in a Maubeuge breviary from the middle of the fourteenth century²⁰. This and other clues²¹ allow us to identify the unrecorded liturgical use of the hours of the Virgin as that of Maubeuge. Specific saints can also be found in the suffrages or short prayers to saints. Next to apostles, confessors, martyrs, and virgins universally venerated in the Christian world – sometimes for their alleged efficiency in solving down-to-the-earth problems like toothaches or haemorrhoids – local heroes may show up. In a book of hours recently attributed to the young Jean Le Tavernier, the combined presence of St Hermes of Ronse (Renaix), Cornelius and Cyprian also venerated in Ronse, and St Wilgefortis (Deliberata or Ontcommere) points to a patron living in the southern part of the Land of Alost (west of Brussels) (VANWIJNSBERGHE; VERROKEN 2013). In the same manuscript, the rare suffrage to Beatrix, may bear no local relevance but rather correspond to the specific request of a recipient possibly named Beatrijs or Béatrice. Clearly, book of hours could be tailored to fit such personal requirements.

Books of hours contain many other prayers that are addressed to God, Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Holy Trinity or meant to be read on different occasions. Their selection may vary from region to region. I am not sure, for example, that the Fifteen joys of Our Lady were as successful in the Low Countries as they were in France. As a matter of fact, much work remains to be done on the fortune and dissemination of this huge body of texts.

New leads

The study of textual variants should by no means be limited to the traditional set of criteria defined by Leroquais – essentially the little hours of the Virgin, the office of the dead and the calendar. Since the 1980s, scholars have started in-depth studies of other important texts. John Plummer and Gregory Clark, for instance, are currently exploring

20 Cambrai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS. 133. (see VANWIJNSBERGHE 2013: 466 note 18).

21 The calendar and the office of the dead are for the use of Maubeuge.

the many possibilities offered by prayer texts such as the *Obsecro te* and *O intemerata*²². They are also systematically analysing the litanies, not only the lists of apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins, and the order in which they appear, but even more interestingly the various «petitions» that follow them and may contain original pleads for protection, for help or requests that good things come to pass and unpleasantness be avoided²³. All these results will soon be available on a website called *Beyond use*, which promises major breakthroughs²⁴.

Another aspect that has received too little attention until now is the order in which the various prayers and offices follow each other, in other words, the sequence of texts. A systematic study of these variants could yield some interesting results. For the Southern Low Countries, the only serious attempt in this direction, so far as I know, was made by Céline Van Hoorebeeck, in a master's thesis devoted to twenty Flemish books of hours from the Royal Library in Brussels, most of them made in Bruges (VAN HOOREBEECK 1997). From this limited corpus Van Hoorebeeck was able to extract the following typical sequence, which is valid in 85 percent of the cases:

Calendar | *Hours Cross* | *Hours Spirit* | Hours Virgin | Penitential Psalms + Litany | Office Dead | [Obsecro te].

By expanding her corpus, she found 94 books of hours following the same pattern, 82 of which hailed from or were made for use in Flanders. She applied the same method to books of hours for Paris use and determined two distinctive variants:

Calendar|Pericopes|[Obsecrote-OInt.]|HoursVirgin|*HoursCross*|*HoursSpirit*| Penitential Psalms + Litany | Office Dead.

Calendar | Pericopes | [Obsecro te-O Int.] | Hours Virgin | Penitential Psalms + Litany | *Hours Cross* | *Hours Spirit* | Office Dead.

22 For a first account of Plummer's method published back in 1988 (see PLUMMER 1988: 149-156 note 36). The value of the *Obsecro te* and *O intemerata* for localizing books of hours is demonstrated in: G. Clark (2005: 391-398; 2007b: 255-264).

23 On the value of the litanies (see CLARK. 2013: 213-233).

24 I am grateful to Gregory Clark for granting me access to his website when it was still «under construction». It gave me the opportunity to test and preview its great potential for research. By the many links it allows, it will no doubt contribute to form new clusters of manuscripts.

The movable part here is clearly the group «Hours of the Cross | Hours of the Holy Spirit» which appears just after the calendar in Flemish books of hours, whereas it is placed after the little hours of the Virgin in Parisian manuscripts. These peculiarities should be studied more systematically. They may bring to light typical variants that could serve as clues for localisation.

In the same «sequential» line of thought, I devoted my master's thesis to the iconographic cycles of the little hours of the Virgin²⁵. This office is made up of eight canonical hours often introduced by a cycle of illustrations centred on the Infancy of Christ, his Passion, or a combination of both. Whereas the Passion cycle is fixed, the Infancy cycle is less stable and shows significant variations that can betray local or regional habits. The most evident is the difference between the typical French and Flemish cycles: in France the hour of compline is usually illustrated by the Coronation of the Virgin; in Flemish hours, by the Flight into Egypt. But within the Flemish cycle, further variants can be observed. Some of them seem to correspond to local uses. One of the most striking is the inversion at the hours of vespers and compline of the Flight into Egypt and the Massacre of the Innocents. This sequence was especially favoured in Hainaut (VANWIJNSBERGHE [2007b] (with a list of manuscripts)). Another variant can be linked with books of hours illuminated by Jean Le Tavernier, active in Audenarde and one of the preferred miniaturists of Philip the Good. Here, not only vespers and compline can be inverted, but also sext and none, and even prime and terce. It is not clear though whether these original sequences are linked to the person of Le Tavernier or – more plausibly – to his place of activity (VANWIJNSBERGHE; VERROKEN 2013: 9).

Another important aspect for the localisation of books of hours is their decoration. Unfortunately, comprehensive studies on ornament in Flemish manuscripts are wanting. We have nothing that compares to the remarkable *Kriezels, aubergines en takkenbossen*, an in-depth analysis of secondary decoration in manuscripts from the Northern Low Countries (KORTEWEG 1992) or, for earlier periods, Patricia Stirnemann's pioneering study on penwork initials in Paris (STIRNEMANN 1990). The distinctive nature of manuscripts from the Northern Netherlands may partly explain this lack of interest in the South. Lavish penwork initials and border decorations are a striking feature of Dutch illumination, whereas this type of ornamentation is less popular in Flanders. It nevertheless occurs, especially in Brabant, for example, in books made for the Augustinian convent of Our Lady of Jericho in Brussels (LEBIGUE; VANWIJNSBERGHE 2008: 117-121) or for the nunnery of

25 Some results were published in D. Vanwijnsberghe (1995: 285-296; 2007c: 355-365 note 25).

Bethany in Malines, affiliated to the Windesheim congregation²⁶. Also lacking are studies on marginal decoration before the much discussed Ghent-Bruges style (the famous trompe-l'oeil borders that appear in Flemish manuscripts from 1475 on). To the best of my knowledge, the only author who has looked at this problem seriously is Dominique Deneffe in her comparative study of Bruges and Mons borders in the middle of the fifteenth century (DENEFFE 1984). Her research, a master's thesis, was never published, but she described her method in several remarkable case studies²⁷.

Books of hours can also be grouped according to the most conspicuous part of the painted page: the illustrations themselves and their style, a capital feature and a broad area that has occupied art historians for generations. Deliberately eluding the stylistic issue, I will simply point out that when the artist, anonymous or not, is what Avril and Reynaud call «un enlumineur de pratique» (AVRIL; REYNAUD 1993: 12 note 6), a humble craftsman working on a local basis, the information gathered by a close analysis of the text will usually coincide with what we know about his place of activity. If, on the contrary, he is one of the gifted «free-lance artists» who travelled widely in search of prestigious patrons, the written page of velum is only a support for the illumination and the texts will show an unpredictable diversity. Sometimes it may even be possible to trace the alleged journeys of the artist by following the chronology of his style. A good case in point is the Master of the Dresden Prayerbook, a Bruges artist who seems to have migrated to Amiens around 1489, only to return to his hometown around 1495. En route to Northern France he may have stopped in Tournai, where he illuminated the frontispiece of a cartulary for the local Hôpital Saint-Jacques. Four books of hours for the use of Amiens document his stay in the French city²⁸.

Let us return briefly to Delaissé's insistence on the importance of codicological criteria for the creation of groups of manuscripts. In his view, specific methods of production can also have local traits. This is the central idea of his 1959 catalogue, but I am not sure it is entirely convincing. So far, I have not noticed any significant codicological similarities in the groups I have studied myself. In all of them, it appears that illuminators were involved

26 See, for example, Brussels, KBR, MS. 12.133 (DESCHAMPS 1972: 182-183 n.° 62, pl. 58), or the text page introducing the hours of the Virgin (f. 8) in a book of hours for the use of Windesheim sold at Sotheby's (*Catalogue of Western Manuscripts and Miniatures, Tuesday, 3rd July, 1984*, lot 89, p. 145-153). On manuscripts produced in Bethany (see VERHEYDEN [1947?]: 487-489).

27 See, for example, D. Deneffe (2002).

28 On this artist, see Brinkmann (1997: note 17).

as subcontractors to illustrate pages already designed by scribes. As a result, the layout and the very structure of the quires can display a great diversity. Even in manuscripts that were mass-produced for the market, especially in Bruges, clear patterns do not seem to emerge (see BERGEN 2006: 94-107 note 17). One codicological feature though, may help distinguish Flemish and French hours. In cities like Bruges, the division of labour between scribes and illuminators, as well as the need to rationalize the working method to speed up the rhythm of production, led to the use of full-page miniatures painted on isolated folios that were inserted among the text pages before the book was bound²⁹. In Paris and France, on the contrary, half-page illuminations painted in the text were preferred, a layout that is not specific to French manuscripts, but also found occasionally in Flanders.

This short overview clearly shows that localizing books of hours is a delicate matter, based on a converging body of clues that have little value in themselves. Efforts are not necessarily rewarded and may lead to vague or uncertain results. But what is crucial here is that no stone should be left unturned in an attempt to reconstruct groups, clusters of manuscripts, using what Gregory Clark called a «holistic approach» (CLARK 2000: 10 note 15) combining all possible hints that can be derived from manuscripts or their context of use, in the hope that they will coincide with specific styles that can, in turn, be linked to particular regions, cities, or even better, to named artists.

A casebook

Now that a general framework has been sketched, I would like to turn to the actual practice of the *métier* and touch on four specific cases I have been studying in the last few years. In the reconstruction of the oeuvre of these illuminators (three of whom are documented artists), the contribution of books of hours can be very distinctive.

I have already mentioned the first of these miniaturists, Marc Caussin (see *supra*, p. 128). Nothing in the text and contents of the books of hours he illustrated clearly indicates Valenciennes, the town where he is documented from the 1430's to 1479. The liturgical uses of his books point in different directions: Rome, Tournai, Cambrai, Maubeuge, and three undetermined uses, one of them most certainly from Hainaut. The litanies are not very helpful either, even if they tend to point to the Cambrai diocese.

29 Already at the end of the fourteenth-century, in the so-called «pre-Byckian» manuscripts (see SMEYERS 1998: 195-196).

Moreover, if Caussin's life and work were not documented, his unique style could not have been linked to a specific city³⁰. At best, one could have surmised that he possibly worked in the French speaking part of the Cambrai diocese, but this would have been no more than an educated guess. In this particular instance archival research coupled with stylistic analysis played a crucial role.

A second case in point is Jean Semont, an illuminator whose activity could be located in Tournai, thanks again to a documented manuscript³¹. The books of hours he illustrated also point in various directions. Their liturgical use is Rome in two cases, Tournai in two others, and for another Arras. But the calendars are very specific, and the dedication of the cathedral of Tournai on 9 May and saint Eleutherius on 20 February are among the rubricated feasts. The patron saint of the city is often mentioned as *Lehyre*, the typical form of his name in Picard. These feasts appear together in at least four books of hours. Evidently, even if the illuminator had remained anonymous, he could very plausibly have been linked to Tournai thanks to the calendars.

The third case is trickier: of the nine books of hours attributed to the book painter Jean Markant on the basis of a signed manuscript, five follow the use of Rome, two the use of Tournai³². The calendars are mostly for Tournai, even though only two of them contain the rubricated feasts of the dedication of the cathedral and Eleutherius; in the other manuscripts, these feasts are either not rubricated, or absent. This peculiarity seems to point to a city in the diocese of Tournai that is not Tournai itself, although texts in Picard indicate the French-speaking part of the diocese. Fortunately, marks of provenance designate Lille as the probable place of production. This assumption is confirmed by a prayerbook in the Pierpont Morgan Library that contains an office of the dead for the use of Lille and a special office for the «*Jour de la procession de Lille*»³³. The case of Jean Markant reveals a certain liturgical ambiguity between the neighbouring cities of Tournai and Lille, both situated in the Francophone part of the Tournai diocese. As it happens,

30 To cite just one example: in 1985, when the name of Caussin was still unknown, Patrick de Winter cautiously proposed to attribute some of his miniatures to the school of Utrecht (cf. WINTER 1985: 190).

31 On Jean Semont, see Vanwijnsberghe (2007a: note 16).

32 On Jean Markant, see D. Vanwijnsberghe (2006: 135-148).

33 New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS M 171, f. 138.

Markant's professional cursus reflects this apparently perplexing situation, since he was trained in Tournai before settling in Lille.

The same ambiguity is even more evident in the case of an anonymous artist, whom I proposed to call the Master of the Claremont Hours, after a book of hours preserved in the Claremont School of Theology in California³⁴. In this group, liturgical clues point massively to Tournai. No less than ten books of hours follow the Tournai use. Yet again, the calendars are not specifically made for the city but rather for the diocese of Tournai. Moreover nine of the books have kept their original binding. They are all signed by Robiers Flourins, a bookbinder documented in Lille. Three of these manuscripts were probably destined for the Hospice Comtesse, the main hospital in Lille, and one of them contains a sixteenth-century mark of provenance mentioning a certain Louise Baillet, «demourant au marchié de poisson a Lille»³⁵, followed by genealogical notes on her family. A group that could erroneously have been linked to Tournai turns out to be Lillois.

These four examples show that the importance of books of hours in the reconstruction of local styles can be very relative indeed. These devotional works are extremely useful because they often combine lavish illustration with a text adapted to a local use and occasional marks of provenance. Besides, by their sheer number, they can be grouped easily, which allows for a quantitative approach. But their significance should not be overestimated and expectations should be kept at reasonable levels. Books of hours are not the panacea, the universal solution to problems of localisation. Isolated clues are rarely decisive: a calendar can be added, books of hours made up of fragments of different origins, a liturgical text can easily be copied for use in another city, artists and books travel... All these elements, sometimes contradictory, must be carefully weighed in the balance and in most cases they will only lead to a plausible hypothesis. Debatable though it may be, this method seems the only way to progress, and it is clear to me that significant progress has been made in the last fifty years.

Most urgently, the huge number of Flemish books of hours should now be described systematically, and, whenever possible submitted to a statistical analysis. Once groups of manuscripts with a strong correlation between text and illustration have been formed, the next and ultimate step would be to identify the artist and to document his oeuvre.

34 MS.1 (see VANWIJNSBERGHE 2007: 366-381).

35 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS. 189, f. IV°.

This is of course an ideal situation, one that can very rarely be reached, obliging scholars to cope with sparse data and circumstantial evidence. Reconstructing local styles can be somehow compared to solving a Sudoku puzzle at an advanced level. The first cells can be filled in easily: they correspond to manuscripts and styles that are fairly well known, dated and localized. The second step requires method, the combined use of all the clues we have reviewed and of others, yet to be traced. At this stage, logic, intuition and experience are needed in order to move forward. This is where books of hours, with their wealth of indications, come in useful. The last cells are the most difficult to fill. At this third and last level, there is no other solution but to resort to conjecture, to put forward hypotheses and verify their soundness with a pencil and an eraser in hand. This «trial-and-error» approach should not act as a deterrent: if it doesn't add up, a more convincing hypothesis will eventually replace the incorrect assumption. After all, scholarship is often nothing more than the rise and fall of more or less fruitful theories. What matters is that their provisional character should be acknowledged.

Flemish books of hours?

A last issue I want to address briefly is how legitimate it is to speak of «Flemish» books of hours, now that we can go much further in the distinction of regional or local productions. It is a difficult question, and one that can hardly be answered satisfactorily because the term «Flemish» is problematic in itself, as it is used *stricto sensu* for the county of Flanders, and *pars pro toto* for the whole of the Southern Low Countries³⁶. Not to mention its current meaning in the new federal structure of the Belgian State³⁷. When trying to define Flemish miniature painting we are thus confronted with the problem of having to fill a container of indefinite and evolving capacity. A simple and convenient way to do so would be to define Flemish books of hours as those produced in the Southern Low Countries. This is the solution adopted by Maurits Smeyers (1998:

36 Hanno Wijsman struggles with the same kind of conceptual problem when he tries to define the so-called «Burgundian» miniature painting (see WIJSMAN 2013: 361-376). Faced with the impossibility of finding common criteria to define this group of manuscripts, he concludes: «[...] parler d'un style bourguignon pour les manuscrits du xv^e siècle semble aussi déplacé que de parler des manuscrits flamands ou français au xv^e siècle».

37 On this issue, see most recently M. Verweij (2011: 14-18 note 19).

19 note 60). We could also describe them negatively, as books of hours that are neither Dutch nor French, but even this would be problematic simply because defining French books of hours would prove as challenging as defining Flemish ones and because many borderline cases would show up.

The situation is different for the Northern Netherlands. Most recently, Anne Korteweg proposed a clear definition of Dutch books of hours (KORTEWEG 2013: 235-261 note 45). She characterized them by the use of the vernacular language and the Dutch translation of Geert Groote, a specific calendar and litany, the prevalence of the liturgical uses of Utrecht and the Windesheim congregation, as well as distinctive styles of decoration. I am afraid nothing of the kind is possible for the Southern Low Countries, a part of the world where diversity is the rule. Therefore, drawing up a «composite, ideal portrait» of Flemish books of hours would inevitably result in a gross generalisation, but one that may account for the fact that scholars and connoisseurs, when confronted with manuscripts, will spontaneously react by saying that the one is Flemish and the other French; or negatively that another is «certainly not Flemish» or «obviously not French».

I think that when we venture to speak of «Flemish books of hours», we do so by reference to an ideal manuscript, an archetypal Bruges book of hours. This archetype would have full page miniatures on separate folios inserted in front of text pages; its calendar would be sparsely filled with entries in black and red; the little hours of the Virgin and the office of the dead would follow the use of Rome and the Infancy cycle would end with the Flight into Egypt. As to the sequence of texts, the hours of the Cross and of the Holy Spirit would be placed in between the calendar and the little hours of the Virgin. Needless to say, this manuscript is a pure abstraction. For none of these criteria is exclusively Flemish and many hybrids exist. A good example is the book of hours for the use of Maubeuge I mentioned earlier (see *supra*, notes 20-21). Though illuminated in Valenciennes – in the Southern Low Countries – its calendar is composite, the miniatures are half-page and the sequence of offices is French. Could the proximity of France account for this patent influence? I can only say that other books of hours painted in Valenciennes follow the «Flemish» standards as I have – very cautiously – tried to describe them.

On balance, I don't think that statistics and textual criteria can replace the empirical knowledge, the flair of the scholar who is regularly confronted with books of hours. Every manuscript is a specific item and should be treated as such. To this end, Carlo Ginzburg's «evidential paradigm», based on a close interpretation of clues, seems the best possible method to obtain insight into the huge potential offered by books of hours (GINZBURG 1989: 96-125, 200-214).

We should always be aware of the limits of broad traditional concepts like «Flemish» or «French», determine how they were shaped historically, and use them with caution. The relevance of a more focused approach, limited to smaller geographic units like regions and cities, is backed by the apparent impossibility of adequately defining larger areas like Flanders or France. Their specificity probably results from the interactions between local centres of production, which lead to what Nicole Reynaud called «un caractère de famille» (a family resemblance) (AVRIL; REYNAUD 1993: 1 note 6).

By tracing the pathways along which artistic practices and ideas moved from one city to another, one may hope to recapture the living network of exchanges that gave these vast territories their specific, if elusive, flavour.

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