

Le Bigot Hours (Use of Rome)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment

France, Tours or Le Mans, c. 1470s

12 miniatures (of which 7 in *camaïeu d'or*) by the Circle of Jean Fouquet

I + 107 + 6 + I ff., thin parchment of very good quality, lacking 6 folios, between ff. 12-13, 42-43, 51-52, 61-62, 63-64, 64-65, probably with miniatures (collation impracticable in order to preserve binding), copied in brown ink in a gothic bâtarde on 26 long lines, lightly ruled in red ink (justification 85 x 48 mm.), 1-line initials in liquid gold on blue and brown grounds, 2-line initials of the same type with tracery infill, line endings of a similar type, 12 miniatures, seven surrounded by borders of blue acanthus and overlaid with a fine trellis decoration in liquid gold. Bound in a sixteenth-century (c. 1580?) Parisian gold-tooled olive morocco fanfare binding, covers with central oval cartouche and compartments formed with strapwork, the compartments filled with hatched foliate tools, leafy oak sprays, fleurons, acorns and winged angel heads (see Hobson, 1970, tool named "Tête d'angelot"), remnants of silk ties, the names "Francois Le Bigot" inscribed in gilt in the central oval cartouche on the upper cover and "Perrette d'Amours" on the lower cover, remnants of yellow silk ties, gilt edges, binding affords comparisons with the fanfare bindings made for Jacques-Auguste de Thou [see Hobson, 1970, in particular pp. 76-80, with the presence of the characteristic tool of 'tête d'angelot'] (Binding very slightly rubbed, spine intact although upper joint slightly cracked). Dimensions 143 x 100 mm.

This exquisite small manuscript, a twin to a Book on Hours in the Comites Latentes Collection, includes 7 breathtaking *camaïeu d'or* miniatures. The miniatures have been attributed to Jean Fouquet himself (Tours, active c. 1420-1480), the celebrated French painter and illuminator who worked for Kings Charles VII and Louis XI, or his close circle. It was copied by the scribe Jean Dubrueil, along with seven other manuscripts by Jean Fouquet, Jean Bourdichon, and the Maître François. A French Renaissance "Fanfare" binding completes the delightful ensemble.

PROVENANCE

1. Probably made in the Loire Valley between 1465 and 1475 by an artist in the circle of Jean Fouquet, close to Fouquet himself. The core of the manuscript was likely copied by Jean Dubrueil, a scribe documented in Paris in 1450 and again in 1461 and who signed the Hours of Jacques de Langeac in 1466 (see Avril and Reynaud, 1993, pp. 45-46). The script of seven related Books of Hours made in the 1470s has been studied by T. Kren (2002). Including the present *Horae*, these Books of Hours share Jean Dubrueil as a common scribe, whose writing is characterized by very distinctive upper-case capitals. The calendar includes a number of local saints from Tours and Le Mans, including Saints Brice, bishop of Tours and Gacien, bishop of Tours; and for Le Mans, several archbishops, notably Alricius, Liborius, Pavacius and his translation, as well as Arsensius, abbot of Le Mans. At the end of

the manuscript appear a number of prayers for use in church: on entering the church (f. 99), on crossing the cemetery (f. 99), when making the sign of the cross (f. 99v), on using the Holy water (f. 99v), when looking at the priest while he makes the sign of the cross at the beginning of the reading of the Gospels (f. 100v) and so forth. Recently, Avril has suggested that the manuscripts from the circles of Jean Bourdichon and Fouquet that were copied by Dubreuil, including this one, were sent to the Loire Valley from Paris for illumination for clients attached to the court (2003, p. 345). Whether or not by the "hand" of Fouquet (see Illustration), the present manuscript is undeniably by an artist in his close circle working in the Loire Valley (Tours).

2. In the sixteenth century, the manuscript was owned by the d'Amours family, who had it rebound in an elegant and important French Renaissance "fanfare" binding. This family, whose ancestral manor is in the Serrin region in the province of Anjou, in the village of Durtal, enjoyed centuries of close association with the court. Sir François d'Amours du Serrin was appointed on July 5, 1489, both as Councilor and as *maitre d'hôtel* in King Louis XII's household. He married Gillette Hennequin in Paris on August 10, 1496. Their grandson (son of Gabriel d'Amours and Madeleine Bidault, whose father was a royal secretary) was François d'Amours, who in 1537 married Perette LeBigot. Not only does it seem likely that this manuscript was rebound for this François and Perette (as a wedding gift?), but it is not impossible that it was originally made for a member of the d'Amours family, who resided in the very region where the manuscript was illuminated and had close affiliations with the members of the court that patronized Fouquet and his circle.
3. Unidentified initials "D.v.B" penned in ink on lower left-hand corner of upper pastedown, with a series of Roman numerals (MDCCCLXXXVII).
4. Private Collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-6v, Calendar written in brown ink, with special feasts in blue, including numerous local saints from Le Mans and Tours, in particular Saints Brice, bishop of Tours (Nov. 13) and Gacien, bishop of Tours (Dec. 17); and for Le Mans, several archbishops, notably Alricius (Jan. 6), Liborius (June 9); Pavacius (July 24) and his translation (July 9); and Arsensius, abbot of Le Mans (July 19). This model calendar was repeated in a number of manuscripts studied by T. Kren (2002), with the complete transcription of the Calendar for Le Mans/Angers contained in the Hours of René II of Lorraine (Lisbon, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, MS L.A. 147), illustrating the common features shared by the group of seven books of hours copied by the scribe Jean Dubreuil.

ff. 7-8v, blank and ruled;

f. 9, Prayers to the Virgin, "Ave Sancta Maria..." perhaps copied in a later sixteenth-century hand;

f. 9v, blank;

f. 10, Gospel Lessons, copied (most unusually in a microscopic script);

f. 10v, Prayers for the Virgin, *Obsecro te*, for masculine use (also copied in a microscopic script);

ff. 11-12v, blank and ruled;

ff. 13-41v, Hours of the Virgin, use of Rome, Matins, incomplete at the beginning, incipit "Ave Maria oratio plena..." followed by Lauds (f. 18v), Prime (f. 24v), Terce (f. 27), Sext (f. 29v), None (f. 32), Vespers (f. 34v), Compline (f. 38v);

ff. 42-42v, blank and ruled;

ff. 43-51v, Masses for the days of the week, beginning incompletely with the rubric "Isti tres psalmi que secuntur cum suis antiphonis dicuntur die martis et die veneris..." and ending incompletely;

ff. 52-61v, Seven Penitential Psalms and litanies, beginning incompletely with "...quorum tecta sunt peccata," and including on ff. 58-60 the litanies of Brice (Tours) and Honoratius (Le Mans);

ff. 62-63v, Short Hours of the Cross, beginning incompletely at Matins with "...filio. Sicut erat..." ;

f. 64, Short Hours of the Holy Spirit, beginning incompletely at the end of Prime with "...veni sancte spiritus..." and including the same verses and hymns as the Hours of the Holy Spirit in the Hours of Etienne Chevalier (e.g., for None, "Spiritus paraclitus," for Vespers "Dextri dei digitus," and for Compline, "Spiritus paraclitus");

ff. 65-90v, Office of the Dead, use of Rome, beginning incompletely with "...[...]gitte potentis acute cum carbonibus desolatoriis....";

ff. 91-91v, blank and ruled;

f. 92-107v, Miscellaneous prayers, including *De Trinitate devotissima* (f. 92), *Oratio ad patrem* (f. 94), *Oratio ad filium* (f. 94v), *Oratio ad spiritum sanctum* (f. 94v), *Oratio ad proprium angelum* (f. 95), *De trinitate* (f. 96), *Secuntur plures orationes dicende per ordinem. Quando ibis cubitum* (f. 96) [Prayers to recite upon going to bed], and a series of prayers to be recited on the way to church and during Mass (cf. Provenance), ending with the Seven Verses of Saint Bernard (f. 103v), the *Stabat Mater* (f. 104v), and the *Ave cuius conceptio* (f. 106).

ff. 108-113v, blank and ruled.

ILLUSTRATION

The subjects of the twelve miniatures are:

f. 10, Portraits of the Evangelists (4), John, Luke, Matthew, and Mark, represented with their symbols, and painted in full color;

f. 10v, Virgin and Child (slightly rubbed), in full color;

f. 18v, Visitation, *camaïeu d'or*, on a blue ground;

f. 24v, Nativity, *camaïeu d'or*, on a purple ground;

f. 27, Annunciation to the Shepherds, *camaïeu d'or*, on a black ground (compare the identical figure of the shepherd asleep in the foreground, his arms crossed, in the Comites Latentes Book of Hours, MS 38 (illustrated in Lacaze, pp. 24-26);

f. 29v, Adoration of the Magi, *camaïeu d'or*, on a purple ground;

f. 32, Presentation in the Temple, *camaïeu d'or*, on a black ground;

f. 34v, Flight into Egypt, *camaïeu d'or*, on a black ground;

f. 38v, Assumption of the Virgin, *camaïeu d'or*, on a blue ground;

The five miniatures in full color and the seven in *camaïeu d'or* are the work of two artists. Those in *camaïeu d'or* are attributed to an artist from the close circle of Jean Fouquet (and sometimes to Jean Fouquet himself; see Lacaze, 1981). No trace remains of full page miniatures, but miniatures are missing at the beginning of the Hours of the Virgin, the Masses for the days of the week, the Short Hours of the Cross and the Holy Spirit, the Seven Penitential Psalms, and the Office of the Dead.

Jean Fouquet was born in Tours c. 1415-20. He traveled to Rome between 1444 and 1446, where he made the Portrait of Pope Eugene IV. He returned to Tours in 1448. He worked in the service of the king Charles VII, as well as for various royal officials, including Etienne Chevalier and Simon of Varie. He is documented until 1481, when he probably died, leaving behind two sons, Louis and Francois, both of whom were also illuminators. One single work is documented as being by Fouquet, a manuscript of the *Antiquités judaïques* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 247), which bears an inscription mentioning his name at the end: "Jehan Fouquet natif de Tours." The rest of his work is reconstructed thanks to stylistic comparisons and certain indirect indices. His most celebrated works are grouped in techniques quite varied: the Melen Diptych (Berlin-Dahlem), a Self-Portrait in enamel on copper (Paris, Louvre), the Hours of Étienne Chevalier (for the most part in Chantilly, Musée Condé), the Hours of Charles of France (Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 473), and the *Grandes Chroniques de France* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr., 6465).

The seven miniatures in *camaïeu d'or* are attributed to the same artist, who was also responsible for the miniatures in a Book of Hours in the Comites Latentes Collection, MS 38. Although this artist is not clearly identified, specialists are unanimous in associating him with Jean Fouquet. Formerly in the Chester Beatty Collection (Western MS 83), the Comites Latentes manuscript was attributed to Fouquet by Cockerell. Klaus Perl (1940) also attributed two of its miniatures to Fouquet. In her description of the the manuscript in the Comites Latentes Collection, Lacaze (1981) attributed the manuscript to Jean Fouquet himself. In 1971, Claude Schaefer associated the manuscript with the production of the Workshop of Fouquet (*Recherches*, 1971, II, p. 268). In more

recent literature, there has been a refinement of the characteristics of the "Fouquet style." Avril and Reynaud (1992), followed by Reynaud (1998), Kren (2002), and Avril (2003) share the opinion that the present manuscript is close to Fouquet himself. The hand is now variously identified as "the Fouquet style" or the "circle of Fouquet." A small group of manuscripts relating to this artist has emerged, and their further study is still a work in progress. Included in this group and by the same scribe as the present manuscript are the Bourbon-Vendôme Hours (Paris, Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS 417), also in grisaille.

The use of *camaïeu d'or* in the miniatures of the two manuscripts points clearly towards Fouquet's direct influence, since it is he who perfected, and perhaps originated, this technique. He used it for his Self-Portrait, as well as in a number of manuscripts attributed to him. Reynaud even speculates that Fouquet created this genre, which he often used for works of small format, such as historiated initials (1981, p. 26). She notes further, that with the exception of the *Romuléon* dated 1461, most of these works are dated c. 1470-1480, a dating that is significant for that of the present manuscript. Miniatures which anticipate the technique of *camaïeu d'or* appear already in the Hours of Étienne Chevalier, notably in the historiated initials or sometimes in the bas de page (for example in the initial illustrating the Agony in the Garden, which accompanies the Arrest of Christ, and the initial of the Flagellation, which accompanies Christ before Pilate).

The borders on the pages of the miniatures (ff. 18v, 24v, 27, 29v, 32, 34v, 38v) are composed of blue acanthus leaves and they recall those in Fouquet's *Grandes Chroniques de France*, with one important difference: each of these borders is covered with a netting (*treillis*, in French) painted in liquid gold as well as various motifs added in liquid gold.

LITERATURE

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