

[Anonymous]. *La voie d'enfer et de paradis* [*Songe de la voie d'enfer et de la voie de paradis*]  
In French, decorated manuscript on paper  
France, Bourges, c. 1460

139 ff., preceded by three and followed by four paperleaves, a reused medieval parchment leaf used as last flyleaf (originally lower pastedown, now unglued), missing some leaves at the beginning and end [collation: is (likely of 12, missing i-iv), ii-x12, xi10 (of 12, missing xi-xii)], manuscript wanting leaves at an early date since Jacques Thiboust (owner, first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> c.; see Provenance, below) placed his armorial ex-libris stamp on the first available leaf, manuscript copied on paper, with watermark close to Briquet "ancré," no. 416: Bourges, 1464 and 1455, text copied in a single column, written in a bâtarde script with elements of cursive, paper ruled in leadpoint, text on up to 24 lines (justification: 144 x 98 mm), painted initials in alternating red or blue. Bound in a 16<sup>th</sup> c. binding of reused parchment over pasteboards composed of binder's waste (documents emanating from the "Officialité de Bourges") glued together, verso of parchment covered in writing, pastedowns (only one portion uncovered) from a 13<sup>th</sup> c. manuscript [Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book VII]), smooth spine with inscription: "Roman de l'Esperance." Manuscript placed in a fitted articulated box of black chagrin, smooth spine, titre gilt in French: "Songe de la voie d'Enfer et de Paradis / Manuscrit du quinzième siècle." (Articulated box presents a few scratches; manuscript in sound condition, first leaves a bit frayed but no text lacking; some stains to paper). Dimensions 212 x 150 mm.

This manuscript is one of only three copies of this versified work, composed by an anonymous author at the end of the fourteenth century and still unpublished. It appears to be an adaptation of the fourteenth-century allegorical work *Voie d'infer et de paradis* by Pierre de l'Hopital. It belonged in the first half of the sixteenth century to the poet and patron of the arts Jacques Thiboust, established in the Berry and contains his heraldic bookstamp, the first of its kind. It is listed among Thiboust's books in his *Liber amicorum* (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 1667).

## PROVENANCE

1. Manuscript copied most likely in Bourges, as suggested by the watermark in the paper, although referenced by Briquet as found in paper datable circa 1455-1464 (Briquet, no. 416). Production in the Berry seems at least possible for this manuscript, and it must have been copied a generation before it entered Thiboust's collection.
2. Jacques Thiboust (1492-1555), seigneur de Quantilly (near Bourges), who was "notaire and secrétaire du roi" first at the service of Marguerite then King Francis I. Thiboust was also a celebrated Bourges poet, book collector and patron of the arts.

His ownership is indicated by an inscription on the front cover that reads: "C'est au seigneur de Quantilly Me [Maitre] Jacques Thiboust, notaire et secretaire du Roy et esleu ord[inaire] en Berry"; another closely related inscription is found on the first leaf: "C'est au seigneur de Quantilly Me Jacques Thiboust notaire et secretaire du Roy," with the added note: "Pour apprendre a lire" [To learn how to read]. These inscriptions are in the hand of Jacques Thiboust himself (for an autograph signature of Thiboust, see the reproduction in Le-Clech-Charton, 1989, p. 22).

In addition one finds two sixteenth-century armorial ex-libris stamps (reproduced in

Boyer, 1859, pl. 2). Jacques Thiboust's arms are described as follows: "écartelé au 1 et 4 d'argent à la face de sable, chargé de trois glands d'or accompagné de trois feuilles de chêne de sinople, deux en chef, une en pointe; au 2e d'argent à une anille de moulin de sable (Dumoulin) ; au 3e d'or à deux perroquets adossés de sinople (Rusticat); et sur le tout d'azur à une étoile-comète d'or (Villemer)." Also found in the stamps are Thiboust's mottoes: "Ley et Regis" and "Qui voyt s'esbat." The same armorial stamps are found in other books having belonged to Thiboust, such as Bourges, BM, MS. 373, "Collection de pièces relatives à la fondation du collège de Sainte-Marie de Bourges et à la duchesse Jeanne de France, sa fondatrice" (1555) (f. 3). This armorial book stamp appears to be the earliest example of a French armorial book stamp. The stamps used by Thiboust are discussed by Arthur Rau, "The Earliest Extant French Armorial Ex-libris" in *The Book Collector*, Autumn 1961, pp. 331-332: the author provides another example of the ex-libris found in Jacques Thiboust's copy of *Le couronnement du roi Francois* [Paris, 1520] (Yale University Library).

This exact manuscript is discussed by Le Clech-Charton (1989) in his discussion of the list of books that made up Thiboust's library: "Le dernier de ces ouvrage est un manuscrit du XVe siècle, intitulé en réalité 'Songe de la voie d'Enfer et de Paradis,' qui porte l'ex-libris armorié de Thiboust l'un des premiers à avoir utilisé ce procédé. Il appartient aujourd'hui à une collection privée" [The last of his books is a fifteenth-century manuscript entitled "Songe de la voie d'Enfer et de Paradis," that bears Thiboust's armorial ex-libris which he was one of the first to adopt] (Le Clech-Charton, 1989, p. 25).

3. Nicolas Xavier Fouvet, with an inscription found on the top of the first opening leaf: "Nicolai Xaverii Fouvet, 3io [tertio] idus maias 1718." In another hand, preceding the ex-libris, one reads "Roman de l'Esperance."
4. Comte de Rohan-Chabot-La Motte-Tilly, his armorial bookplate pasted on the upper pastedown (18th century).
5. Unidentified monogram "AK" pasted on the inside of the articulated box.
6. Manuscript sold in Paris, Hôtel de Drouot, 21 November 1969: "Choix de livres anciens, d'éditions originales romantiques et de grands illustrés modernes en reliures mosaiquées..." , Reims, commissaire-priseur, expert Mme J. Vidal-Mégret, no. 10.

## TEXT

ff. 1-139v, Anonymous. *La voie d'enfer et de paradis* (*Songe de la voie d'enfer et de la voie de paradis*) (wanting beginning), incipit, "[...] Et haulx palais ademesure / Coulourez de fine peinture / Et de fin or cler reluisant [corrected: "et luisant"] / Ayeulx qui les regardent nuyant / Pres du palais estoit la tour / Fondée estoit par grant maistrise / Ung aigle d'or dessus assise..." ; explicit, "[...] [Esperance]. Esperance dist chose est voire / Tout preudon qui vit le doit croire / Vergongne est du chastel la portiere..." (wanting ending) [missing at the beginning verses 1-146 and an undetermined number of verses at the end when confronted and compared with the text found in Paris, BnF, fr. 1051].

This manuscript contains one of only three manuscripts of a late (?) fourteenth-century work entitled either *La voie d'enfer et de paradis* or *Songe de la voie d'enfer et de la voie de paradis*, depending on the manuscripts. The other two extant codices are respectively Paris, BnF, MS fr. 1051

(complete in 8130 octosyllabic verses; illuminated and illustrated with miniatures) and Ghent, University Library, 352 (a fragment with only 1295 verses). This work appears to be an anonymous verse adaptation of the *Voie d'enfer et de paradis* by Pierre de l'Hopital, a fourteenth-century cleric from Artois or Picardie (on Pierre de l'Hopital, see Hasenohr and Zink, *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, 1992, pp. 1177-1178). It is christened "forme remaniée" by Thomas in the *Histoire littéraire de France* (HLF), t. 36, "Anonyme, Auteur de la voie d'enfer et de paradis", p. 88: the work seems to have been composed in the later fourteenth century and hence our Thiboust manuscript is a later fifteenth century copy of the work. The original version of the poem (Pierre de l'Hopital) is known in the following four codices, respectively Paris, BnF, MS fr. 1543 (dated 1402), 7448 verses; Cambrai, BM, MS 176, 7394 verses; Paris, BnF, MS fr. 24313 (only 4320 verses) and St-Omer, BM, MS 752 (this manuscript provides the identity of the author Pierre de l'Hopital, but was unknown to Thomas, HLF, t. 36). Both the original version and the present adaptation (forme remaniée) are unpublished. There is also a theatrical version ("forme dramatisée") found in Paris, BnF, MS fr. 1534, entitled "Speculum mondiale." In the original poem by Pierre de l'Hopital, internal historical references point towards a date of composition after 1315 (reference to the martyrdom of Enguerrand de Marigny): these historical references are also found in the adapted version, but cannot be used to date the adaptation, since it is obviously a later early fifteenth century work. In addition, the adapted version no longer contains the "picardismes" found in the original poem. The adapted version seems instead to be redacted in Central France (A. Thomas suggests "Orléanais" in *Histoire littéraire de la France*, t. 36, p. 97).

The title found in the Ghent manuscript sums up the subject of the work: "Du clerc qui vouloir aller en Enfer et puis aprez se repenti." [Of the cleric who wanted to go to Hell and after repented]. It is an example of works which often bore similar titles and belong to the rich vein of allegorical and visionary literature of the fourteenth century (see Owen, *The Vision of Hell. Infernal Journeys in Medieval French Literature* (1970)). It is within the frame of a dialogue and dream that the anonymous author traces the way (voie) which leads to Hell and to the corporal punishment which awaits the sinner there, as well as the road which leads to Paradise with its delights and happiness. In a dream, the cleric is guided by Desesperance and visits the Seven Deadly Sins. The cleric is saved from the flames of Hell by Hope and is brought to the Eternal Father after having encountered the virtues. Nonetheless the cleric is condemned to a life of penitence.

This particular text, unpublished, is an example of the genre coined as "Voies du paradis," a title common to a number of distinct works, not always well-distinguished. Hasenohr and Zink (1992) have listed the known and different works that bear very similar titles and share common features or content. To quote only a few, there is a work long attributed (erroneously?) to Raoul de Houdenc, the first writer to have allegorized a journey through life and death; Rutebeuf, who composed circa 1265 a *Voie de Paradis*; Baudoin de Condé (13<sup>th</sup> c.), *La Voie de Paradis*; Jehan de la Mote, *La Voie d'enfer et de paradis* [c. 1340] (see Pety, 1940); of course also, one should quote Guillaume de Deguileville and his *Pèlerinage de l'âme* which tells of the soul's visit to the different regions of the Otherworld. Our particular version is described as Anonymous (see Hasenohr and Zink, "Voies du paradis", no. 4, 1992, pp. 1490-1491). The most complete manuscript (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 1051) was accounted for by A. Thomas, "Anonyme auteur d'une *Voie de Paradis* en prose française" (*Histoire littéraire de la France*, t. 36 (1927), pp. 86-100).

During the Middle Ages, preoccupation with death and the world beyond the grave was a subject of great concern. There came into existence a literature of these invisible worlds, Hell and Heaven, filled with visions and dreams (Pety (1940) puts forth the term "literature of the invisible"). This florescence of visionary literature coincides with the development of allegorical

poetry, such as the present text. The moral conflict between virtues and the choices one made was portrayed either as a battle (of the *Psychomachia* type) or as a journey upon which the traveller may be subject to temptations and vices, but during which the traveller could also triumph and encounter virtues that fortified him.

In addition to its textual interest, the present manuscript boasts illustrious early provenance, as it was owned and cherished by Jacques Thiboust, the celebrated Bourges poet and patron of the arts. Jacques Thiboust was born in Bourges in 1492 and trained as a jurist, later at the service of first Francis I, King of France, and his sister, Marguerite de Valois, duchesse d'Alençon et de Berry, future Queen of Navarre. Although he bore the title "notaire et secrétaire du roi," he is rather remembered for the literary circle he founded and headed in Bourges. He married Jeanne de La Font in 1521, a woman of great beauty, character and wealth: she was both celebrated as a muse and woman of learning by her contemporaries. She died in 1532 and was buried in the Church of Quantilly, where Jacques Thiboust would also join her in 1555.

The literary circle animated by Thiboust gathered members of the "chancellerie" (Chancery), students of the prolific university of Bourges, but also people of commerce, doctors and local clerics. Amongst the people who frequented Thiboust's literary circle, there were Guillaume Bochetel, Jacques Le Roy, and the poets François Habert and Clément Marot. As a unique and original figure – both patron and poet – Jacques Thiboust was first studied by H. Boyer (1859). There is portrait of him as a young man of 24 years of age by Clouet (see Le Clech-Charton, 1989, p. 18). We know of his existence through a number of manuscripts that are administrative (land records or "terriers") relative to his Chateau de Quantilly, near Bourges (Bourges, AD du Cher, G 61 and E 108; Paris, BnF, MS fr. 32954). The friendship and intellectual emulation between members of this circle of "berrichon erudites" is well exemplified by the exchange and gift-giving of books between members. For instance, there is a manuscript of the *Antiquités judaïques* by Flavius Josèphe that once belonged to Thiboust's library that was given to Guillaume Bochetel (secrétaire des finances du roi) in 1543 (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 15427). There is an interesting *Liber amicorum* that belonged to Thiboust (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 1667), in which one finds the list of his library, in which the present manuscript figures well recorded (see Provenance, above).

Finally, it appears that Thiboust fostered an interest in otherworldly themes and *ars moriendi* as his library contained works such as "Supplication aux vivans, de la partie des trespasés dont les ames sont en Purgatoire"; "Triollet exortatif pour esmouvoir les vivans a prier Dieu pour les trespasés" (Le Clech-Charton, 1989, p. 25). He also harboured an interest in theatrical works. He copied a work entitled "Relation de l'ordre de la triomphante et magnifique monstre du mystère des SS. Actes des Apostres...ouvrage inédit de Jacques Thiboust, seigneur de Quantilly" (Bourges, 1836). We mention this work here because the present *Voie d'enfer et de paradis* (*Songe de la voie d'enfer et de la voie de paradis*) is in a dialogued format that owes a lot to mysteries and theatrical works that interested Thiboust. There are spaces left between dialogued sections of the text of the *Voie d'enfer et de paradis* (*Songe de la voie d'enfer et de la voie de paradis*), that were likely meant to be filled by rubrics, never executed. Instead a later hand (Thiboust?) noted in the margin guide-words identifying the different personae: "L'acteur"; "Paresse"; "Desperance"; "Cruauté". Might this manuscript have been used in a context of theatrical representation of some sort, a genre Thiboust equally affectioned?

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Arlima, *Songe de la voie d'enfer et de la voie de paradis*

[http://www.arlima.net/qt/songe\\_de\\_la\\_voie\\_denfer\\_et\\_de\\_paradis.html](http://www.arlima.net/qt/songe_de_la_voie_denfer_et_de_paradis.html)

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<http://www.bvh.univ-tours.fr/Consult/index.asp?numfiche=958>

Archives départementales du Cher, Terrier de Quantilly, G 61

<http://www.archives18.fr/article.php?laref=276&titre=le-terrier-de-quantilly-est-en-ligne>  
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