



Ricketts 135 (20r)

11. Book of Hours (incomplete)

Northern France (use of Troyes), late 15th century
Ricketts 135

78 leaves; 20.4x14cm. (10x6.5cm.); vellum

Littera bastarda; in Latin and French; miniatures; decorated initials

Unbound

The production of Books of Hours flourished during the later Middle Ages. They were intended for private lay devotion and composed to suit the liturgical requirements of the owner's diocese and his or her individual prayer needs. This type of manuscript usually includes a calendar listing important feast days; the Hours of the Virgin; the Hours of the Cross; the Penitential Psalms with a Litany of Saints; the Office of the Dead; and, frequently, the Suffrages of the Saints (see Leroquais, 1927, I, vi; Delaissé, 203-207). The decoration of Books of Hours varies widely and many were elaborately decorated and illuminated by the leading artists of the day. Because of their beauty, Books of Hours have always been highly prized by collectors and many have survived.

Ricketts 135 is incomplete with 78 unbound leaves. When the manuscript was purchased from Maggs Brothers of London in 1922, part of the book remained with the firm, but its location today is unknown (Ricci, 637). The Lilly text includes fragments from the Hours of the Cross and the Hours of the Virgin (1r-12r); selections from the Suffrages of the Saints (13v-20r); and personal prayers of devotion to the Holy Face (39v), the Archangel Michael (42v), and Saint Katherine (69r-72r).

Pages are laid out with a single column of 22 lines, each line approximately one-half centimeter in height. The *littera bastarda* script slants gently to the right; and the smoothly prepared vellum allows for regularity of script. Ascenders and descenders are usually short, extending only one millimeter or less from the base line. Certain words are abbreviated consistently, however, most are completely written out. Headings and certain prayers are signaled by blue ink and are frequently written in French.

The endings of prayers and psalms are frequently marked by line fillers which are one line high and include: rectangular bands in red or blue with linear gold patterns; brown and gold stylized

logs with protruding stumps of branches; and Greek crosses painted in gold against a square field of red, blue, or brown.

Several types of decorated initials are found in Ricketts 135. The largest capital is four lines high with a three-dimensional letter set upon a rectangle of contrasting color. The bowls of these large initials are usually filled with flowers or birds set on painted gold grounds.

Many of the folios containing miniatures were mounted at one time, and darkened bits of tape remain at the tops of those pages. The miniatures (about 3x3cm.) are placed at the left of the text column within the writing frame. Borders frame all four sides of pages with miniatures, enclosing both miniature and script.

Pages without miniatures contain a vertical, rectangular panel placed on the outer edge of each recto and verso side. These decorated panel borders consistently measure 10x3.5cm., and typically comprise a vine scroll of acanthus leaves set against a ground of contrasting color (red, blue, brown, black, or green) or floral motifs placed against a gold ground. Frequently each rectangular field is sub-divided into regular geometric shapes; and meticulously-painted birds, frogs, fabulous beasts, and hybrids are placed against these border decorations. Two different coats of arms appear three times in Ricketts 135, and initials intertwined with knotted cords are found in both border types.

The twenty extant miniatures of Ricketts 135 are primarily illustrations for the Suffrages of the Saints. Several of these miniatures and accompanying prayers indicate that the volume was made for the use of the northern French diocese of Troyes, since saints such as Mastidia and Syre (20r and 20v) are particularly important to the Troyes region (Leroquais, 1934, I, 39; Roserot de Melin, 408-417). Both are shown clutching their palms of martyrdom. Little is known about the life of Mastidia, a virgin who may have lived in the seventh or eighth century. Her relics have been preserved in Troyes Cathedral since the ninth century (Roserot de Melin, 412; Réau, 3:2, 923). St. Syre, a virgin or widow living in the fourth or fifth century, lost her sight in order to avoid an unwanted marriage. Her sight was miraculously recovered on pilgrimage to the tomb of Savinien, another local Troyes saint (Roserot de Melin, 414; Réau, 3:3, 1244). Prayers to St. Helen of Athyra, also venerated in Troyes, immediately precede those to St. Mastidia in the Lilly Hours (20r), although the miniature of Helen is missing. This saint, whose or-

igins are also obscure, was extremely popular in the region from the twelfth century until the end of the eighteenth century. In 1262, Pope Urban IV, a native of Troyes, issued a bull in her honor, and, in 1457, her remains were displayed throughout the Diocese in order to raise money to complete the nave of the Cathedral. Along with Mastidia, she was a patroness of the Cathedral (Geary, 149-166; Constable, 1035-1036; Holweck, 1969, 466).

Stylistically, the borders, decorated panels, miniatures, and script of Ricketts 135 also point to a northern French origin for the manuscript and indicate a date of the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Two of the floral panels (7v and 21r) differ noticeably from the others and contain abstract vegetal forms, quite unlike the easily identified types found elsewhere in the manuscript. This may indicate two artists at work. Good comparisons of both Lilly panel types can also be found in a Book of Hours dating about 1495-1498 in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (Pierpont Morgan Library M 934; cf. Plummer, 1982, 69-70), as well as in a Book of Hours in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore (Walters Art Gallery W 286). The Walters comparison is particularly important since it has been securely dated to 1489 and was written by the scribe, William Joret, in the Charterhouse of Mont Dieu in the Diocese of Reims, just north of Troyes. William was probably also responsible for the Walters panels and initials (Spencer, 227-240, figs. 1 and 2), which compare well with those in Ricketts 135 in their realistic treatment of flowers, animals, and types of hybrids. A second shared characteristic is the manner in which some of the panels are divided into geometric patterns. Acanthus leaves on a colored ground and realistic flowers against a gold ground are alternately placed in these geometric spaces, creating a lively abstract effect. Both the Lilly and Walters manuscripts have similar panels consisting of interwoven acanthus leaves and flowers placed against a painted gold ground. Similar decoration can also be found in a recently published Book of Hours made in Paris or Rouen (ca. 1470-1480) in a private European collection (Plotzek, 130-1, no.31).

Attribution of the Ricketts 135 miniatures is problematic, although all appear to be the work of one artist.

The original owners remain unknown. The sixteenth-century owners, however, may tentatively be identified by the initials "A d M" and "M d M" frequently incorporated into the knotted cords, and by the coats of arms which appear in three borders (13v, 14v,

and 15v). One set of arms (14v), is that of the Vaudrey family, originally of Franche-Comté, but residing in the Diocese of Troyes from the fifteenth century. The Vaudrey arms, an escutcheon with a red and white geometric pattern ("gules émanché of 2 pieces argent," Ricci, 637), has been painted over the arms of previous owners. (Three crescents are clearly visible beneath the overpainting.) The Vaudrey family lived in St. Phal, a village twenty kilometers south of Troyes. The lord of St. Phal, a bailiff of Troyes, and a gentleman of the King's chamber, Anne de Vaudrey (d.1579), was married to one Anne de Montgommery. This noble couple may have been the sixteenth-century owners of the Lilly manuscript (Ricci, 637; cf. Roserot, 1408-1409; Rolland, vol.5, pl. LXXXII). The second set of arms (13v and 15v), also a later addition, displays instruments of the Passion of Christ (a cross, crown of thorns, ladder, spear, lantern, dice, and cock) with a crosier. This coat of arms remains unidentified. According to Ricci (p.637), a third coat of arms appeared in the section of the manuscript remaining in London. He describes the arms as "azure three portals or." These are also unidentified.

The type of knotted cords intertwined with initials found in Ricketts 135 are often interpreted as marriage knots or *lac d'amour* and suggest that the Lilly Hours was originally made to commemorate a marriage. The initials "A d M" and "M d M" are clearly later additions, replacing the letters "R(K?) C." The sixteenth-century initials appear not to use just the first initials of the newly wedded couple, as was the custom. Such *lac d'amour* are seen also in the contemporary Unicorn Tapestries now at The Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, where the knots symbolize the fidelity and loyalty of the marriage partners (Freeman, 167).

If Ricketts 135 is indeed a wedding remembrance, the choice of flora and fauna depicted in most of the borders is particularly appropriate. Many plant types and animals can be identified and most have dual meanings. For example, butterflies represent love and fertility, and may also symbolize the resurrection of Christ. Carnations were popular fifteenth-century emblems of betrothal and marriage. Since these flowers were believed to smell like cloves, they have inherited much of the symbolism of that spice which, because of its shape, represents the nails used for the Crucifixion. They were also associated with the Virgin and her virtues, as was the wild strawberry—a fruit which also evoked the pleasures of

Paradise. The tri-colored violet or wild pansy was known in the Middle Ages as the "herba trinitas," a symbol of the Trinity as well as a sensually powerful love charm (Freeman, 89-153).

PROVENANCE

Acquired by C.L. Ricketts from Maggs Brothers, London, 1922; Lilly Library, 1961

K.H.B.