

Fabienne Henryot, De l'oratoire privé à la bibliothèque publique. L'autre histoire des livres d'heures, Turnhout (Brepols) 2022, 482 p., 29 b/w, 31 col. fig. (From Text to Written Heritage, 1), ISBN 978-2-503-59377-7, EUR 85,00.

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The Book of Hours has been called the bestseller of the late Middle Ages, popular from the mid-thirteenth to the mid-sixteenth century. Its death knell was supposedly rung by Pope Pius V in 1568 when he removed the clergy's obligation to pray the *Office of the Virgin*, and again in 1571 when the same pope prohibited the use of existing copies of the *Office*, requiring those who wished to pray it to acquire newly approved editions. Fabienne Henryot begs to disagree. In this thoughtful and strongly documented study, she contends that even after Books of Hours ceased to be used for their intended purpose of private prayer (after leaving the »oratoire privé« of her title), they never left public consciousness – especially in France – where now, in the twentieth and twenty-first century, they have taken up residence in public libraries and museums. Instructively, in the first part of her book, Henryot carefully documents the history of the continued printing and popularity of Books of Hours between 1571 (date of Pius V's *Motu proprio*) and 1730 – era of the Catholic Reformation. After that, from 1730 to 1900, she argues, the genre transformed itself into the »Heures au Paroissien« with much modified contents (and the *Office of the Virgin* sometimes completely absent). This eye-opening chapter is one of the book's strengths.

The second part of the book explores the interplay of the Book of Hours with the concept of national heritage (*patrimoine*). Henryot discusses the emergence in the eighteenth century of the collector and, in the nineteenth century, the scholar. This part of the book includes an enlightening discussion of the starring role Books of Hours played in the twentieth century, and continue to play today, in regional libraries' acquisition policies.

In the third part of the book, the author examines, almost in a meditative way, the position Books of Hours in the (mostly French) public's consciousness via their appearance in school books and in exhibitions at libraries and museums. This part concludes with an excoriating discussion of the role played by digitization of Books of Hours, a discussion that recognizes no benefit to the phenomenon.

This book tells a new story and breaks much new ground. At 482 pages, however, it is far too long. The prose is also verbose and repetitious; the book needed an editor. (It is the first title of a new series at Brepols, called *From Text to Written Heritage*:



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Interdisciplinary Perspectives, of which Henryot is the sole general editor).

The bibliography, at sixty-four pages, is huge but difficult to use. It is divided into »Sources« and »Bibliographie«. The »Sources« are themselves divided into six subsections. The third subsection, »Sources imprimées,« is then itself further subdivided into eight parts. The fourth part, »Catalogues de bibliothèques et libraires ...« is unhelpfully arranged not by title but by date. The fifth part, »Études sur le livre d'heures«, excludes exhibition catalogues, which are relegated to a separate, following part. There, illogically, they are not arranged according to city and institution but by author, which means that the exhibition catalogues could have been more usefully placed into the previous part, »Études« (which is where, for example, two exhibition catalogues that I wrote appear). There are other inconsistencies. Leroquais' important 1927 study of Books of Hours in the Bibliothèque nationale is cited in the first part of »Sources imprimées« called »Répertoires et bibliographies« (although the three-volume work is erroneously described as being in two volumes). Leroquais' one-volume 1943 *Supplément* to his study, however, appears thirty pages later, in »Études«. Divided into eighteen sections or subsections, the bibliography is unwieldy and the reader must search in multiple places to find a source.

Another disappointment is the »Index des livres d'heures manuscrits cités«. The manuscripts are arranged not by the customary city/institution/shelf number sequence, but by their popular titles (most of which, of course, begin with the word »Heures«). And the index is not complete. I pay particular attention to citations of Books of Hour owned by the Morgan Library (since I work there). Three appear in the index, but six others do not. The omissions include the Farnese Hours (MS M.69), discussed on pages 185 and 187, where Henri d'Orléans, duc d'Aumale and owner of the *Très riches heures*, calls it the most beautiful manuscript that he has ever seen; and the famed Hours of Catherine of Cleves (MSS M.917/945), on pages 186, 192, and 340. These oversights make one wonder how many other manuscripts discussed in the text failed to make it into the index.

I point out two errors, not to nitpick, but because they made me wonder about the author's grasp of the fundamentals of any Book of Hours. In discussing on page 400 Auguste de Châtillon's portrait of Victor Hugo's daughter, Léopoldine, the author confuses the text below a miniature in a Book of Hours that the sitter has before her. Henryot mistakes the *Office of the Dead* for *Compline* of the *Hours of the Virgin* (while, at the same time, citing a 2009 article by Jeffrey Hamburger that correctly identifies the text). On page 372 the author mentions that every Book of Hours contains »un calendrier des fêtes des saints et des fêtes mobiles«, when these medieval calendars, being perpetual calendars, never contain any of the Church's moveable feasts.



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Finally, Henryot mentions only in passing the modern phenomenon of the expensively priced modern facsimiles marketed to the middle-class collector and libraries. Very much a part of the present-day consciousness of Books of Hours, these facsimiles, produced in large numbers and by an array of publishers spread across all of Europe, need to be included in any discussion that proposes to tell the complete story of Books of Hours.

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