



THEORY AND CRITICISM OF LITERATURE & ARTS

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BIBLIOTHECA & DIGITAL RECONSTRUCTION

ELEVEN SCATTERED MANUSCRIPTS
DIGITALLY REASSEMBLED THROUGH THE
WAYBACK RECOVERY METHOD©





Cover

Selection of leaves from the Research Centre for European Philological Tradition manuscript collection

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THEORY AND CRITICISM
OF LITERATURE & ARTS

**BIBLIOCLASM &
DIGITAL RECONSTRUCTION**

ELEVEN SCATTERED MANUSCRIPTS DIGITALLY REASSEMBLED THROUGH THE
WAYBACK RECOVERY METHOD©



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Deus in laudibus.
in adiutorium meum
intende. Domine ad



This special issue is dedicated to
the memory of Prof. Erik Drigsdahl

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Breaking addition

The retrieval of four further miniatures from a Spanish Book of Hours illuminated by P. J. Ballester

Josefina Planas Badenas & Carla Rossi

Two recent studies appeared in *Il Bello, l'Idea e la forma. Studi in onore di Maria Concetta Di Natale* (Palermo, University Press 2022) and in the journal *Matèria. Revista internacional d'Art* (20, 2022, 85-100) published by the Department of Art History at the University of Barcelona, have analysed the connections between two scattered leaves from a Valencian BoH, preserved at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (Marlay cuttings Sp. 1^a-1b, Figg. 1 and 2), and the two leaves recently purchased by the Spanish National Library (RES/124/19 and 20). The parent manuscript seems to have been already dismembered in 1886 when, in the catalogue of the exhibition organised by the Burlington Fine Arts Club, the two Fitzwilliam fragments were erroneously included in the section "Dutch in French style". Almost a century later, Phyllis M. Giles and Francis Wormald recognised the Valencian origin of these *disiecta membra* and dated them to the mid-15th century. The chronology of these fragments was more precisely delimited in the study devoted to the manuscript collections in the Fitzwilliam Museum, edited by Nigel Morgan, Stela Panayotova and Suzanne Reynolds. For our part, in an article published in the *Rivista di Storia della Miniatura* (24, 2020, 95-108) we consolidate this opinion by establishing stylistic analogies with other Valencian miniated examples. The scenes represented in these fragments are the *Annunciation* (Marlay cuttings Sp. 1a) and the *Nativity* (Marlay cuttings Sp. 1b).



Fig. 1. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Marlay cuttings S. 1a.
Dimensions: 140 x 100 mm.



Fig. 2. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Marlay cuttings S. 1b.
Dimensions: 140 x 100 mm.

In 2018 the Biblioteca Nacional de España received a proposal for a compulsory purchase for two scattered leaves (RES/124/19, Fig. 3) and (RES/124/20, Fig. 4) which, due to their characteristics and dimensions, show a common origin with respect to those held in Cambridge.

The leaf catalogued as RES/124/19 depicts the *Circumcision of Jesus* and the RES/124/20 reproduces the episode of *Christ on the Road to Calvary*.

These miniatures, like the ones in Cambridge, lack text and were depicted on the *verso* of the leaf, in accordance with a workshop practice of Northern origin, applied in the context of Valencian illuminated books production.

This arrangement would create, in the original codex, a kind of visual diptych produced by the image on the *verso* of one leaf and the text copied on the *recto* of the following leaf.

The marginal decoration overflowing from the two open leaves would underline this optical effect.

The ornamentation of the preserved leaves, consisting of a rich vegetal decoration made up of acanthus leaves and different phytomorphic elements, to which are added insistent gilt circles, reveals the notable preciosist taste characteristic of Valencian medieval book illustration. Two iconic additions confer a singular aspect to the marginalia of these leaves. The first is the existence of a group of angels located on the bas-de-page of the fragment that reproduces the *Annunciation* (Marlay cuttings Sp. 1a).

Their presence confers three-dimensional and tactile properties to the representation, due to the velvety texture of the ostentatious attire worn by these beings with their backs to the viewer.

From an iconographic perspective, two groups of women leading their children by the hand in the scene of the *Road to Calvary* (Madrid, BNE, RES/124/20) are most notable.



Fig. 3. Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España /RES/124/19.
Dimensions: 134 x 98. Provenance: Spain, private collection.



Fig. 4. Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España /RES/124/20. Dimensions: 134 x 98. Provenance: Spain, private collection.

These female figures are the mothers of the Holy Innocents, daughters of Jerusalem, and prefigures of the Passion of Christ who experienced the same pain suffered by the Virgin Mary at the imminent death of her son. This theme, which originated in the Italian republics, had repercussions in the Avignon context of the Western Schism, as demonstrated by the presence of a mother accompanied by two children, included in the second chorus of women surrounding the Virgin in the *Calvary* of the Missal of Bertrán de Casals (Madrid, BNE, RES/10) (1409), illuminated by Jean de Toulouse or by an artist reproducing his models. The similarities established between the two leaves held in the English institution and those acquired by the Biblioteca Nacional de España confirm the same provenance. The common denominator of these four miniatures is the enhancement of the visual qualities of the compositions, based on the tactile values emanating from the clothing of the figures, made from sumptuously embellished fabrics. The abundant use of gold, together with the narrative character achieved, among other things, by the multiplicity of beings and objects that make up the scenes, provide a dramatic final result. In addition to these factors, the marginal decoration is brimming with gilded ornamental elements that sparkle on the surface of the folio. However, a dispassionate analysis of the characters or any other details integrated into the illustrations reveals some technical deficiencies, masked by the glittering brilliance of the gold.

A highly attractive aspect of the reconstruction is to discern what the situation of these folios was in the original organisation of the Book of Hours. The *Annunciation*, the *Adoration of Jesus* and the *Circumcision* are themes assigned to the Hours of the Virgin, because the little Marian office usually contains a cycle of images consisting of episodes from Mary's life related to the life of Christ that are more or less impermeable to the text. 111

The *Annunciation* is one of the most important representations of this office and usually opens the cycle at Matins, in keeping with the greater length of that hour. The chronological order followed by the story of Christ's infancy places the *Nativity* or the *Adoration of Jesus* in Prime. Although on occasions and in accordance with the iconic variants detected in the Crown of Aragon, the *Nativity of Jesus* becomes the only illustration in the cycle, moving it to Matins. This theme inaugurates the Hours of the Virgin in a book of hours destined for a late 15th-century lady from Barcelona (Barcelona, Patrimoni artístic de la Fundació La Caixa, fol. 17v) and in the incomplete Marian cycle of a book of hours kept in the British Library (Add. ms. 18193, fol. 20v) supposedly destined for Violant Ferrer i Soler. In specific cases, the Adoration of Jesus can be moved to other prayers, as in a Valencian Book of Hours in the use of Rome (The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek 135 J 55), a copy that illustrates the Mass of the Virgin with this theme (fol. 84v). The *Circumcision*, a rare episode in books of hours, is usually placed at the hour of None, a clear reference to the blood shed by Christ on the Cross, a consequence of the human condition adopted by the Son to save humanity. The existence of iconic testimonies of this theme in the Crown of Aragon is unknown, although there is a testimony in a book of hours inscribed in the workshop of the Castilian miniaturist Juan de Carrión (London, BL, Add. ms. 50004, fol. 41v).

The *Road to Calvary* is an episode commonly included in prayers connected with the Passion of Christ: the Office of the Cross devoid of liturgical character and the Hours of the Passion. These prayers, considered accessory elements of the Books of Hours, were illuminated with cycles of images that recount the most important events of the Passion of Christ, according to religious approaches enhanced by Franciscan sensibilities.

In a previous study we demonstrated that the miniatures preserved in Cambridge (Fitwilliam Museum, Marlay cuttings Sp. 1a-1b) establish stylistic analogies with the only image that illustrates an *Oficier Dominical* of Valencia Cathedral (Valencia, Arxiu de la catedral, LF 46, fol. 24r) (c. 1474) ascribed to the artistic production of Pedro Juan Ballester, an artist documented in Valencia between 1468 and 1492. The figurative language used in both miniatures and in the cantoral is similar to the Calvary scene reproduced in a Toledo Missal promoted by the archbishop of Toledo, Alfonso Carrillo (Toledo, Archivo de la catedral, ms. Res. 1, fol. 149v). Ballester's intervention in the Toledo codex is justified by a hypothetical trip by the Valencian miniaturist to the primate church of Spain, an absence attested by the documentary gap existing between 1474 and 1479. The attribution of the *Oficier Dominical* (Valencia, Arxiu de la catedral, LF 46, fol. 24r) and the Calvario del misal de Toledo (Toledo, Archivo de la catedral, ms. Res. 1, fol. 149v) to Pedro Juan Ballester, facilitates the attribution to the same author of the two fragments of the book of hours kept in Madrid (Biblioteca Nacional de España, RES/124/19 and RES/124/20).

Josefina Planas Badenas

The Wayback Recovery Method applied to the search for sister leaves of the Valencian Book of Hours illuminated by Pere Joan Ballester

When Prof. Planas Badenas sent me her recently published article on the two miniatures now held at the BNE in Madrid, I could not help but put the Wayback Recovery Method to the test, and see if I could retrieve further miniatures from the same Valencian Book of Hours, and I so found four more, definitely from the same manuscript.

The sale of the four miniatures that I am about to present for the first time to the scientific community was handled by one of the most sensitive, refined and accurate antiquarians dealing in medieval manuscripts, Dr. Jörn Günther, of Basel.

The four recovered miniatures all come from the Hours of the Cross cycle. I will start describing the one opening the cycle, at Matins, and depicting the *Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane* (Fig. 5). The dimensions of the leaf are similar to those of the four just discussed by Prof. Planas Badenas, i. e. 133 x 98 mm. The leaf is blank on *recto*. The following is the description from the catalogue sent by Dr. J. Günther Rare Books, that we would like to thank here publicly for kindly sending us the documentation on the four miniatures they sold:

«Christ, wearing a light blue robe, the famous seamless tunic that his mother Mary wove for him, is the focus of this engaging composition, although he is shifted to the right. He wears the brightest colour in the miniature and consequently stands out more than his companions.

He kneels in prayer, his face drenched in sweat and blood. His expression is drawn with fatigue and fear, mixed with a glimmer of hope that the cup might pass from him. But the angel approaches him with the cross and chalice in hand - the die is cast and Christ has to face the inevitability that he must die. His disciples have fallen asleep in spite of their master's despair. They are dispersed into two groups in the Garden of Gethsemane: three men in front, strongly truncated by the left margin, and a larger group of eight people in the background just before the rear fence, from which the pursuers will soon enter».

The iconographic relationship with Italian Books of Hours here is evident and fully justified from a historical point of view: the representation of two distinct groups of sleeping disciples is taken from Italian references, whereas elsewhere Christ is mostly depicted with a group of three companions.



Fig. 5. Private collection, courtesy Dr. Günther Rare Books, Basel (Switzerland). Dimensions: 133 x 98 mm. Leaf blank on *recto*. Provenance: Switzerland, private collection.

The second miniature depicts the *Betrayal and Arrest of Christ* (Fig. 6), opening the Lauds section. This is the description of the miniature from the catalogue sent to us privately by the Swiss antiquarian:

«The Saviour is clearly in the centre of attention. He is the only figure wearing a light blue robe, the famous seamless tunic that his mother Mary wove for him. Judas approaches him from behind, touching his shoulder and giving him the treacherous kiss. Soldiers close in on Christ, seizing him and preparing to place him in his bonds. On the left side of the composition, Peter grasps Malchus, the high priest's servant, by the hair and is about to cut off his ear. Malchus, already on his knees, raises his hand to ward off his attacker. Christ, with an appeasing gesture of his right hand, tries to prevent his disciple Peter from engaging in the violent act. Very surprisingly, Judas' head is surrounded by a (blackened) halo, even though at this point he has certainly lost his status as a saint. Probably the illuminator wanted to single him out from the surrounding crowd of soldiers and bystanders. This detail may be based on a misinterpretation. We observe in the Book of Hours for Charles the Bold (Getty, ms. 37, at left), for instance, a similar phenomenon: a circle of light caused by the soldier's lanterns is framing the traitor's head [...]

Our leaf shows, moreover, how Flemish and Italian stimuli could be combined.

While the swarming crowd and the excited interactions of the protagonists recall the realistic, often dramatic features by the Flemish Master of the Dresden Prayer Book or Lievin van Lathem, the border displays a delightful amalgam of Flemish and Italian elements: lush acanthus leaves set against a delicate web of sophisticated ink tendrils, interspersed with tiny golden dots and leaves. Blue birds (kingfishers?) imitate the acanthus' elegant curves and swings. A three-sided bar of burnished gold holds a green tendril with blue acanthus and pink flowers».

Both miniatures just described came from a private Swiss collection.



Fig. 6. Private collection, courtesy Dr. Günther Rare Books, Basel (Switzerland), Dimensions: 134 x 98 mm. Leaf blank on *recto*. Provenance: Switzerland, private collection.

I personally consider the seventh miniature in the series - consisting of those at the Fitzwilliam Museum and at the Biblioteca Nacional - to be the most interesting, in several respects. It depicts the *Mocking of Christ*, and opened the Office of Terce (Fig. 7).

«This miniature deviates from the others in various details, such as the decorative elements in the borders, the rounded arch, the decorated space above the arch, no space between the frame of the miniature and the three-sided bar, as well as in facial types. A workshop collaborator may have painted it. The palette consists of similar blue, green, yellow, and some orange-red hues, as in the other leaves (except for the brown). Whereas figures in the other miniatures of the series share the same rich brocaded garments, the rogues of this scene are poorly dressed, while some have bare legs and feet. Folds of Christ's robe are finely drawn with golden rims, but his halo, outlined in black as elsewhere, has a cross-nimbus as a new element. Notwithstanding the deviations, the provenance history this leaf shares with the miniatures cited above confirms it originally belonged to the same series».

Actually, the leaf was kept in a private collection in Spain, together with the last miniature I am about to discuss (depicting the *Deposition*) and the two that the Biblioteca Nacional recently acquired, but it once belonged to the same collection as those just described.

What I would like to emphasise here is the fact that the Swiss antiquarian, as early as 2018, attributed these four miniatures exactly to the Valencian illuminator Pedro Juan (Pere Joan) Ballester (active c. 1470-1492), who likely belonged to a family of artists, related to Simon Ballester, painter and illuminator documented in Valencia.

For this deluxe Book of Hours Pere Joan probably worked together with some collaborators.



Fig. 7. Courtesy Dr. Günther Rare Books, Basel (Switzerland), Provenance: Spain, private collection. This miniature is painted on the *recto* and consequently has a larger outer margin to the right. Dimensions: 134 x 103 mm.

The eighth miniature illustrated Vespers of the cycle of the Hours of the Cross. I think the Swiss antiquarian is wrong in this case in affirming that it illustrated the Hours of the Virgin which, instead, at Vespers usually had *The Flight into Egypt*, or the *Massacre of the Innocents*). It depicts the *Deposition* (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Courtesy Dr. Günther Rare Books, Basel (Switzerland), Provenance: Spain, private collection. Dimensions: 135 x 104 mm

The authors of the Cambridge catalogue pointed out that two leaves from the Marlay's collection are stylistically related to a late 15th-century BoH produced in Valencia for the Marqués de Dos Aguas, a manuscript that may have been the result of a commission on the occasion of the marriage between the 1st Baron of Dos Aguas and Isabel Vives de Boil, hence the combined coat of arms of the two lineages (Fig. 9 and 10) [1].

A commission for a marriage could also be assumed in the case of the parent manuscript of our eight miniatures.



Fig. 9. *Libro de Horas de los Marqueses de Dos Aguas*, c. 1495. Manuscrito 103-V1-3 de la Biblioteca Bartolomé March de Mallorca.

[1] See S. Santiago (1993). *El Marquesado de Dos Aguas y su entorno histórico artístico*, in: Gimeno Blay, Francisco M. et al. *Un libro de Horas de la Casa de Dos Aguas*. Valencia: ed. Grupo de Arte y Bibliografía, pp. 65-76.

The graphic organisation of the *Libro de Horas de los Marqueses de Dos Aguas* can help us in our search for text sister leaves from our parent manuscript.

Additionally, if we consider that the intact Book of Hours illuminated by Ballester and his circle must have measured 140 x 105 mm, the writing space of each leaf corresponded on average to that of the miniatures, i.e. 130 x 93 mm, containing approximately 12 (max 14) text lines, with large decorated initials on the recto of the leaf juxtaposed to the main miniature. There must also have been a rich profusion of gold in the text.

Other text leaves had to be simpler (Fig. 10), but still quite recognisable today. The question is: do these text leaves still exist?



Fig. 10. *Libro de Horas de los Marqueses de Dos Aguas*, c. 1495. Manuscrito 103-V1-3 de la Biblioteca Bartolomé March de Mallorca.

In the mid-19th century, text leaves left over from biblioclasm were possibly discarded but more likely entered an antiquarian market as affordable specimens of pre-modern book arts.

We know for a fact that in 1886 the parent manuscript was already dismembered, and it is highly probable that Charles Brinsley Marlay, who bequeathed his two extraordinary miniatures to the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1912, had no idea of the provenance of the leaves he had acquired. However, we would like to hope that, as richly decorated leaves, albeit subject to an act of vandalism, those from this lavishly illuminated Book of Hours have survived and can be identified through further investigation.

For our part, as a research centre, we are also engaged in this digital reconstruction, the first results of which can be browsed, with a virtual page-turning, at the following link:

<https://www.receptioacademic.press/ballesterbookofhours>.

We would like to conclude this article by quoting once again Dr. Jörn Günther's catalogue, with a statement that gives us some hope and encourages us to continue our work:

«Now that these eight leaves have been identified, it is not impossible that more miniatures from this once beautiful and lavishly illustrated prayer book will be discovered. It is quite wonderful that eight miniatures of the series have resurfaced and survived the ages relatively unharmed, a sure sign that they have been cherished and appreciated».

Carla Rossi



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