

The Book Collector, Volume 53 No 3, Autumn 2004

Nicolas Barker: The Printed Book Of Hours

At first sight, there is something forbidding about a printed book of hours. It may be in its original binding, seldom in good condition or of high quality, but more likely rebound, surprisingly often in the seventeenth century, or in a later, perhaps nineteenth-century book-collector's binding. It may be printed on vellum, normally an exciting feature but too frequent with book of hours to stimulate great enthusiasm. It may be illuminated, the task of describing this complicated by the fact that that the paint may have been applied over printed blocks (consequently harder to identify) or added (but if so, original or added later?). The liturgical use for which it was intended has to be identified, and the date established, often only by resort to the calendar. How much more than the basic 'Horae B.V.M.' will it contain, what unusual saints are to be found in calendar or the prayers that follow the Office for the Dead, will the Penitential Psalms be enlivened by Bathsheba – all these questions have to be addressed. There is the ever-present risk that the book may not be complete, or supplemented from some other edition or manuscript.

The book in the hand itself is unlikely to answer all these questions, and any others that specific features, such as binding and provenance, may demand. The task will inevitably demand reference to Bohatta, Weale and Soleil, not easy reference books to use, and may lead to further involvement with Fairfax Murray, Leroquais, Brunet, Renouard, Pellechet, Graesse, Lacombe or Van Praet. More recent works, Brigitte Moreau's invaluable chronology of the Parisian press, Roger Wieck's exhibition catalogue, Myra Orth's explorations of the links between printed and manuscript production of books of hours in the early sixteenth century, may lighten the task, but it remains formidable. More than all these, there is the sense of being shut out, not quite so isolated as by the even more remote works of medieval schoolmen or canon lawyers, but still excluded by the passage of time and the disappearance, long ago, of the book of hours as a working tool. This is more frustrating than with what were, even then, books for specialists, because the book of hours was a thing that anyone could read and use, or even use if not able to read. In each book of hours is the personality of its first owner, a real human being from the past, if only we can find out and meet him or her.

All these tasks have been made immeasurably easier, as well as more hopeful and more vivid, by the publication of Heribert Tenschert's monumental catalogue of no less than 158 of these books, printed between 1490 and 1550, almost all in Paris. The catalogue is credited to himself and Ina Nettekoven, the most closely involved of the younger scholars (Caroline Zöhl, Mara Hofmann are the others), whose dissertations on related subjects are, by no coincidence, simultaneously published. It also owes much to the specialist works about individual printers, Macfarlane and Mary-Beth Winn on Vérard, Thierry Claerr on Thielman Kerver, Monceaux on Le Rouge, as well as, nearer home, to Eberhard König and Martin Cordes. But the credit for this gigantic enterprise belongs to Tenschert; in the generosity of its scope and treatment it leaves all other previous workers in the field behind far behind. But more important, by a combination of patiently recorded detail and copious illustration, it puts us in touch with the original owners. At last, we can have some idea of what, or rather whom, these books were for. They come to life as the tools of an all-pervasive individual devotion, a part of the everyday existence of laity and religious

alike. It may have long gone now, swept away for both by the Reformation and the Council of Trent, but it is recreated here.

By any standards, 158 is a large number of books of hours, all the more striking since the trade in printed books of hours was largely (but not exclusively) limited to one place, Paris. Even Ambroise Firmin-Didot, the greatest previous collector, only had 122; Count McCarthy-Reagh and the Bourbon-Parma collection, catalogued by Anatole Alès, less than 100, Hoe and Rahir about 60 each, Dyson Perrins 47 and Fairfax Murray 36. Of these 158, no less than 40 are the only known copies; a further 83 are known by less than five other copies, and there are not more than twenty of any of the rest. Look through the other end of the telescope, and the figures look different. Of these 158 editions, there are fewer than 1000 copies world-wide. The twenty-eight editions printed before 1501 here contrasts with forty-three in the British Library, which has about 160 more printed after 1501. Suppose that the same proportion of these are unique or only known by a handful of copies, and you have only added at most another 2000 copies. Add all the copies of all the editions not in either collection – another 3000, at most. Altogether, then, there are perhaps 6000 copies of something like 600 editions, ten on average of each. Yet these were the great bestsellers of their time: the editions must have never been less than 200, some measured in thousands. The loss has been spectacular: how many more editions remain unknown, because no copy now survives?

So, 158 is a lot of copies, whether measured on the measurable scale of surviving copies, or on the more imponderable scale of these that once existed. Turn now from these dubious figures and consider more certain facts. Books of hours did not feature largely in the output of the early printers, no doubt because there was a well-established and efficient trade in manuscript books. (One reason for the volume of early editions of the classics, and consequent over-production, was because no such trade existed.) While it is possible that all copies of earlier editions have disappeared, it seems that it was not until about 1480 that printers, now an established feature of the book trade as a whole, were in a position to take on, but not to take over, the pre-existing market. How was it, then, that Paris became the new centre of the trade in books of hours? It is, at first side, surprising, since, although the book trade had long roots there, the manufacture of books of hours tended towards the bespoke rather than mass market. This was served by the close-knit guilds of Bruges and Ghent, with a network that extended over most of western Europe. But the defeat and death of Charles the Bold in 1477 had far-reaching consequences for the economy of Flanders, with corresponding benefit to the Parisian trade. A share of the market had become a virtual monopoly, at least of print.

The earliest books were printed by a variety of printers, first perhaps in 1488 Jean Dupré, whose Hours printed in four colours was one of the great achievements of the time, Antoine Caillaut, Denis Mellier and Pierre Le Rouge; even the first Parisian printers, Ulrich Gering and Bertold Rembolt, came to it, if only later in the 1490s. These early initiatives seem surprisingly casual, without a common sense of form, but the printers and their backers were still clearly feeling their way into a market largely dominated by a still lively manuscript industry. The two primary figures were not so much printers as entrepreneurs, Anthoine Vêrard, whose name appears in the first dated book of 1485, and Simon Vostre, whose first book appeared in 1490. Vêrard employed a number of printers, leasing out type, ornaments and blocks, and no doubt supplying paper and vellum. Simon Vostre regularly employed Philippe Pigouchet as printer at first, but his later books have

no printer's name until 1512 when Nicolas Higman's appears; he too clearly owned the material used in his books. Other competitors appeared, among them Thielman Kerver and the Hardouin brothers, who were clearly able to establish themselves in a market by now growing. Two salient facts emerge. First, the names that appear in the devices and colophons, Vêrard, Vostre or others, were intended as advertisements, an indication of where other copies could be had. Secondly, the entire trade was huddled close together between the parvis and pont de Notre Dame and the rue St Jacques that led from it to the south; printers and booksellers were never far from each other, and type, blocks, vellum and paper could easily be delivered (the last by water) or transferred from one to another.

This propinquity explains the ease and frequency with which material moved around, appearing in different combinations in different books. The origin and ownership of the illustrative material, however, is not so easy to establish, and here the work of Tenschert and his colleagues has made a considerable advance. The artist who made the designs for the first set of blocks to come into regular use is here called the 'Master of the Grandes Heures Royales', he was a miniaturist too, witness the 'Livre de Tournois' (BnF, fr. 2692) that he illuminated for Lodewijck van Gruuthuse, close to but distinct from another artist, the 'Master of Cardinal de Bourbon'. The 'Master of the Grandes Heures Royales' deserves his name from the extraordinary first book described here, the Hours made for Anne de Beaujeu, sister of Charles VIII, and regent of France from 1483, which bears Vêrard's name and the date 20 August 1490. There are many unusual features of this book: part of the text is in manuscript, not print, and in addition to the illuminated printed cuts there are independent miniatures, including a portrait of Anne. The painting is attributed to yet another artist, the 'Master of the Mettler Pèlerinage'. The whole production can be plausibly seen as a bid for royal patronage by Vêrard and the printer, possibly Pierre Le Rouge, appointed *imprimeur du roi* in 1488.

This is an exceptional book, and its successors are different, octavo in format and more regular in form. It is clear that the work of the Master of the Grandes Heures was not the property of either of the great entrepreneurs, but both had access to it. It consisted of two series, one of large (half-page) pictures, the other of smaller (mostly pictures of saints). Distinct sets of both are found in books printed for or with the equipment of Vêrard and of Vostre. The books connected with Vêrard, but with other imprint names (Robin Challot, Etienne Jehannot, Jean Poitevin), also have a subordinate set, resembling but rather more distant from the work of the Master of the Grandes Heures. His work had a long life, but was quite early (about 1495) supplemented and later supplanted by another set of pictures, again with two series, one large, the other smaller. This was the work of another artist, again close to the same rather Flemish style of the Masters of the Grandes Heures and Cardinal de Bourbon. He is here associated with the 'Master of the Apocalypse Rose', an appellation derived from the West window of the Sainte Chapelle, and extending to the 'Très Petites Heures d'Anne de Bretagne' (BnF, n.a. lat. 3120). How far three such different works of art can literally be attributed to the same hand is wisely not pursued; for present purposes, likeness is enough. The Master of the Apocalypse Rose style, more vigorous and mobile, became more popular, and it is significant that when Thielman Kerver, '*diligens ac peritus chalcographus*', started printing in 1497, his illustrations, wood-blocks immediately, followed in 1499 with metal-cuts, were all derived from these originals. Kerver's work is always distinctive, distinguished both by the superior quality of his blocks as well as presswork.

How these drawings were converted into printing blocks is another problem. Ever since Henri Monceaux's monograph, *Les Le Rouge de Chablis* (1896), it has been customary to associate this process with Pierre Le Rouge, described as '*scribe et calligraphe, graveur et enlumineur*' when appointed *Imprimeur du roi* in 1488. Le Rouge printed the *Mer des histoires*, illustrated with woodcut blocks, in 1488-9. It is extremely hard to tell woodcut from metal-cut blocks, especially when based on the same artist's designs, and (perhaps) cut by the same hand. The only mechanical distinction can be seen in the treatment of shading. It is possible that an original set of wood-blocks for books of hours (now lost) was copied more than once by different subordinate hands. What metal they may have used is also uncertain. Engraving on a lead-based alloy is difficult and unrewarding work, and it is possible that some other metal was used. In Dupré's 1488 hours we read '*C'est le repertoire des histoires et figures de la bible tant du vielz testament que du nouveau contenues dedens les vignettes de ces presentes heures imprimees en cuyvre*'. It is possible that they were engraved in relief on copper, although words like 'chalcographus' for printer show that words meaning 'copper' or 'bronze' were used generically for metal of any sort. It may, however, be significant that no new designs attributable to the Master of the Grandes Heures appear after 1493, the year in which Pierre Le Rouge died.

The picture of the trade in books of hours in these early years that thus emerges, if short on precise details, suggests a close-knit group of specialist craftsmen and tradesmen, with overlapping skills. Drawing and painting were needed both for the making of manuscript books and for blocks for printed books, in whatever medium. Someone who made a drawing might find it reproduced in printed form, whose details he might himself obliterate by painting over them in opaque pigment. Those who drew might be also involved in the conversion of their work into other media, such as stained glass, and the possession of 'patrons' or drawings to be copied in this way was a vital part of the artist's equipment, jealously guarded. Printed images could be copied back into drawings to augment existing *patrons*. Blocks originally made for one purpose could be used for a quite different book. Besides blocks for pictures, a mass of smaller blocks or strips of ornaments were required, engraved or cast, to simulate the borders or line-fillers of illuminated manuscripts. These were combined and re-combined, sometimes as many as sixteen separate pieces needed to make up the decoration of a single decorated printed page. The whole scene is like a jigsaw puzzle, in which the personages, artists, printers and entrepreneurs, and the surviving books are all pieces. But we cannot see the scene clearly, let alone complete the jigsaw puzzle, because too many of the pieces are missing.

So we come back to this sizable part of the whole, Tenschert's 158 books. He has had the extraordinary advantage of being able to compare them all, the different books and the pages in them, observing changes and differences that would have escaped anyone forced to work from reproductions. So many of the shortcomings of earlier work have arisen from the absence of comparison, and this gives the arrangement of the material here a special significance. It is divided into fourteen groups, partly on historic and partly on stylistic criteria. They cover the earlier books of Vérard and Vostre, 1490-5, in which the Grandes Heures blocks predominate (1-11), and the continuation, 1494-1504, with an increasing number drawn from the Apocalypse Rose design (12-25). Third comes the Thielman Kerver series, covering 1497-1503 (26-39), including two Hardouin books that properly belong later. For at this point there was a radical change in the decorative mise-en-page, and a new decorative element was added to the repertoire of designs, associated

with the workshop of Jean Pichore, but drawing on diverse sources, of which more later. The new style was adopted simultaneously by Simon Vostre, 1505-24 (40-52), Thielman Kerver, 1505-17 (53-64) and by the Hardouin brothers, also 1505-17 (65-82), the last including some bearing the names of V  rard, Thomas Kees and Guillaume Godard. The seventh group, 1507-34 (83-91), consists of the books of diverse printers, Eustace, Barbier, Guillaume Le Rouge, Vivien, Bignon, Hardouin and Jean de Brie, linked by common dependence on copies of extant blocks with others derived from external sources.

All these have been small books, in octavo format. In the eighth group, 1503-25 (92-113), are listed the 'Grandes Heures', books in quarto, beginning with the source of the revolution noted above, the book dated 5 April 1503 (1504) with the imprint of Jean Pichore and Remy de Laistre. Here appear for the first time the new large illustrations attributed above to Pichore, as well as his new borders for the extant 'Apocalypse Rose' blocks. The new large format was immediately adopted by Pigouchet/Vostre and Anabat/Hardouin, who used it extensively, and later by V  rard (c 1508, Use of Rouen) and by Nicolas Higman for De Brie and Godard. There is a special section for the vernacular version of Pierre Gringore, c 1528-30 (114-16), which had its own woodcut illustrations by Gabriel Salmon. The Kerver series continues up to Kerver's death and sporadically thereafter under his widow, Yolande Bonhomme, to 1542 (117-22), and the Hardouin family's continuation, 1521-41 (123-30) makes up the next group. The impact of Geoffroy Tory was immediate in 1525, and his own and his successors' radically different approach to the layout of the book of hours, including the handsomest of all, the 1543 book of Simon de Colines (reprinted by Regnault Chaudi  re in 1549), continued up to 1556 (131-42). There is a separate section for the small and agenda-format editions, a speciality of Hardouin and De Brie, 1509-34 (143-9), where the mortality rate must have been especially severe. The last section is a reminder that the market was not exclusively Parisian, with four Lyonnese books from 1500 (Bonino de' Boninis) to 1551, with the Holbein and Eskrich illustrations printed by Bonhomme for Rouill   (150-3). The last section contains books illustrated with cuts from books of hours, the fine late (1575) Plantin edition, illuminated, and, last but not least, the famous 1501 Venetian Giunta hours with the Benedetto Bordon cuts, which seem to have had a direct, if partial, influence on the Parisian 'revolution' of 1504-5 (154-8).

If the new edition of Pichore and De Laistre is the single most visible feature of this revolution, it reflected other and more pervasive tendencies. The Pichore/De Laistre blocks draw on a much larger, indeed international, source of imagery, and with it a new realism. The range of pictures is enlarged, including new pictures of David and Uriah, Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl and Job on the dunghill. D  rer's Apocalypse, Schongauer and Jean Poyer (on the evidence of the Hours of Anne de Bretagne and Mary of England, the Bri  onnet Hours and the so-called 'Hours of Henry VIII') were put under contribution, and some of the blocks are signed ('IVI' and 'PVB' appear on some of the later blocks). D  rer's 'Kleine Passion' and *Vita Mariae*, and the Holbein *Hortulus animae* were added later. The list could be enlarged, for there is an unusual edition printed by Jean Barbier for Guillaume le Rouge in 1509 (85), whose cuts after Pichore are based on a different iconography. New series of borders, including an Apocalypse, *Miracles de Notre Dame*, 'Triumphs of Caesar' and *Accidents de l'Homme*, were introduced. Most strikingly, the older gothic frames disappear, and classical frames with pillars take their

place. Altogether, there was a freer, more varied attitude to the subject matter and style of illustration and decoration.

These changes were reflected in others. Before, illumination, light or heavy, had been applied within the framework of the engraved elements. It varies in quality, and the individual entries contain some interesting speculation on the hands involved, concluding reasonably enough that in all probability it was generated under the control of the publishers; uniformity of colour suggests a common exemplar of some sort. Some, however, show distinctive hands (notably 10, 20, 25, 28 and 31). The many Hardouin editions show a different attitude to this. Most of them are coloured, and a new, more impressionistic (quicker and therefore probably cheaper), style was developed. The colour is more transparent, but the pictures are given greater prominence by reducing the weight of the borders; sometimes this was done by rubbing down the vellum so that only fragments of print remain; in others, the whole border was stopped out, presumably by cutting the frisket closer. Without the border (generally old-style), the new classical style could be introduced, pillars and pediment sketched in with red pen-strokes on a golden yellow background. The contrast between these and fully illuminated copies is very striking. Some of the latter were produced by the Hardouin workshop, including one printed by Jean Bignon for De Brie in 1516 (89), and another, for the unusual Use of Besançon, c 1515, with the larger miniatures from the quarto series (110a). The most striking of all, Hardouin, 1526 (90), later bound for the Baron de Longpierre, is by two hands, one Hardouin and the other an artist close to the 'Master of François de Rohan', who also illuminated another book (91, Hardouin, 1534). A number are attributed to the 'Gotha Master' (68, 83, 106), and individual books to the 'Master of François I' (74, Hardouin, c 1513), and apparently to Jean Pichore himself (96, Vostre, c. 1508, in his distinctive style).

Yet another stylistic change of gear is represented by the very few illuminated by artists outside the Parisian or even French milieu. One of the most striking is the copy of an edition printed by Kerver for Gilles Remacle in 1504, coloured for a contemporary Graf von Schöornborn-Buchheim by a South German artist. It is plausibly suggested that this may have been a member of the Mack family of Nürnberg, active from the end of the fifteenth to the early seventeenth century, when Georg Mack the younger undertook the colouring of copies of the *Hortus Eystettensis* commissioned by its entrepreneur, Basilius Besler. The warm palette and the treatment of the Adoration of the Shepherds and the Assumption resemble the later treatment of the emblematic frontispiece of Besler's masterpiece. One of the earliest books, by Pigouchet, c 1492-3 (8), has an unmistakably Italian arms-in-wreath and colouring on the Annunciation page. Even more striking is the very fine copy of the Vostre edition for the Use of Le Mans, c 1515 (51), coloured throughout in an even more Italianate style, which, as the catalogue very fairly remarks, although coloured at the time of printing in Paris (the binding, if later, is French), looks as if it emanated from the workshop of Liberale da Verona in the 1480s.

But the most splendid, most desirable, of all the illuminated books is a copy of the Tory Hours of 1531 (134) that belonged to his contemporary and fellow-publisher, Gilles Corrozet, Scholar, author of the *Chroniques de Paris*, poet and bookseller. It is normal to view coloured and illuminated books with mixed feelings: the colour adds to the splendour of the page, but often obscures the work of the engraver, with its own way of rendering light and dark, suggesting even if not rendering colour. Here, however, there are

no doubts: the colours, mainly bright primary red, blue and yellow, are applied with grace and restraint, filling out but not suppressing the engraved lines. There was a similar copy in the Schäfer collection, another in the Pierpont Morgan Library described in Roger Wieck's *Painted Prayers* (no. 40); it is impossible not to imagine Tory's part in their creation. The Corrozet copy has an additional attraction, a contemporary calf gilt binding, with holes for four pairs of ties, ascribed with disarming imprecision to 'Etienne Roffet or Jean Picard'. It is in fact by the 'Salel Binder', named by Laffitte and Le Bars for the work that he did on presentation copies for Hugues de Salel; the capital 'C' in all the spine compartments is a characteristic touch.

This is by no means the only important and interesting binding in the collection. These books have survived because treasured, either for content or beauty, at all times over the last five hundred years. Almost fifty are in original bindings, some quite homely, but thirty-five were rebound, often finely, in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries; the greater number of more modern bindings are often as distinguished. One of the earliest, the 1495 Vérard hours, was bound by the 'Atelier de la palmette' about 1600. Another, c 1500, was bound in the all-over-gilt style (like those for Fioravanti and Wotton) for 'Jehanne Courant'; another, finer, belonged to the Bussy-Rabutin family. One is by the Pecking Crow Binder, another by Wotton's 'Aesop Binder', as is Fioravanti's 1524 book; one of the Gringore vernacular books is in an exceptionally graceful 'proto-fanfare' binding. A 1509 Kerver book is in Derome's best light green goatskin, a Boyet one in red. A 1505 Hardouin book is in remarkable restrained eighteenth-century French tawny goatskin. Another, 1517, is by the Mendoza binder, who also bound one for Andrea di Lorenzo. The Longepierre book is in his familiar fleece-decorated black goatskin. The 1543 De Colines Hours is in another example of the group discussed in *For the Love of the Binding*. Among the nineteenth-century bindings, one in dark blue-green goatskin by Trautz-Bauzonnet on a Vostre Rouen hours is outstanding.

Needless to say, the records of provenance are hardly less impressive. The usual suspects, Ashburnham, Bourbon-Parma, Destailleur, Dyson Perrins, Fairfax Murray, Ambroise Firmin-Didot, Essling, Yves Guermont, Gosford, André Hachette, Huth, La Roche Lacarelle, Maus, Michault, Natalis de Wailly, Rahir, Santander, Turner and Yemeniz, were all represented, with Otto Schäfer predictably leading the list. But hard behind came the names of Louis-Antoine Barbet, whose sale in 1932, if no commercial success, fed a number of great post-war collections, and Sylvain Brunschwig, some of whose books were sold by Rauch in 1955, another contributor to more recent collections. Thomas Jefferson Coolidge was another collector of discrimination, as was Cécile Eluard, one of whose books had previously belonged to Sir Edward Harley, father of Robert. Jehanne Courant's book found its way later to Wrest Park. In between come a host of names, some known, many unknown, all of whom have had their share in the presentation of these books, to whom therefore a debt is owed.

Clearly, a record of this size and substance is going to remain a work of reference for a long time. What caveat should be extended, beyond recommendation, to the intending user? First of all, it is unwieldy. Over 1300 pages spread across three heavy volumes would itself be a problem, but these books are in landscape format – spread out, they measure over two feet, and it is hard to take in what appears on a verso with its facing recto. There is a reason for this, to accommodate illustrations that are themselves open pairs of pages. If you are trying to compare texts or images in all three volumes together,

the task becomes almost insuperable, even if you have a very large table. Secondly, the endless superlatives, ‘rarum’, ‘rarissimum’, ‘unicum’, become wearisome. All these books are rare; the record of copies elsewhere speaks for itself, especially when, as often, no other copy is known. It would have been useful, too, to be able to compare different cuts drawn from the same original more directly, but this is a catalogue of books for sale, and the illustrations are needed where they are to seduce the potential buyer’s eye. Lastly, there is oddly little about the typography of these books. This is strange, because their arrangement, an often complex mixture of types of different sizes, cast, metal-cut and woodcut ornaments and pictures (some perhaps metal plates mounted on wood), was one of the most striking achievements of their printers. The regular use of red and black printing for some contrasts with others in black only. Most important, the choice of type is an interesting and unresolved problem. The early books seem divided between round gothic (‘littera moderna’) and the more vernacular ‘lettre bâtarde’, the latter predominant. But as the text is invariably in Latin, why were both used, and bâtarde preferred, except (surprisingly) in the small-format books? The use of roman type starts surprisingly early, with Thielman Kerver in 1505, and it may be that it supplanted what might have been more use of gothic. There is only one book in italic here, a particularly charming little book printed by Guillaume le Rouge (86; ex-Ashburnham and Dyson Perrins).

Perhaps the most important feature of this book is, after all, its size. Never again will so much information about text and pictures, so many illustrations of critically important pages, be laid before those interested in these books. It will, indeed, be a long time before all the facts that Tenschert and his contributors have collected can be digested. They provide the means of making a detailed analysis both of the texts and of their pictorial and ornamental accompaniment. Taking to pieces and reassembling, so to speak, these immensely complex books is the only way to understand both market and audience. The market was provided by a complex association of artists, engravers, printers, booksellers and binders. It must have needed a firm controlling hand, provided, no doubt, by the early entrepreneurs. Quite what niche Thielman Kerver, who deserves to be recognised as an artist in his own right, saw and seized in 1497 is hard to discern, but his success in doing so is evident. The Hardouin family’s contribution can be identified more clearly as a mass-market approach; any reduction in quality was clearly made up by cutting the price (actual records of prices are hard to come by). Tory’s extension of the new ‘Italian’ taste to this most traditional market is surprising, but no less evident.

What, then, of the audience, and how did it compare with that for manuscript books? Here the answer is easier. The first century after printing was one of rapidly rising demand. Even if we exclude, as is surely right, the luxury books at the top end of the market, there was still a long-established and now growing demand for a book whose liturgical function depended on familiarity. Like the *Book of Common Prayer*, which we discussed in our last number, its use demanded a common and predictable arrangement. That use, too, depended on linking text and pictures; image and words coalesced in the mind of the reader, and because of the instinctive nature of this process, it has to be served by a combination of scribe and artists (both pictorial and ornamental), organised by established book-trade machinery. It was thus vital that this sense of combination should not be lost. The artists, draughtsmen perhaps only of models for others to copy (whether with brush or graver), must have been specialists in this field. Many others, scribes, parchminers, painters of initials and cadels, even those who red-ruled pages, were involved, and their

involvement did not cease when the demand grew till it could only be satisfied by the new trade of printing. It may have been the complexity of this task (as well as the established position of the older means of production) that prevented it from taking over before c 1488-90. The success of the new experiment is striking. The sheer number of editions that followed over the next forty years is proof of it, and paradoxically the low survival rate is but further proof.

Of all this the evidence is here, spread out across the generous pages of this enormous catalogue. No doubt there will be more to be found out, and more books to find – the collection has already grown since the catalogue was printed. The importance lies most of all in the size of the collection. The chance to set out and compare so many different copies of so many different editions represents an opportunity never likely to be repeated. There may be – are – more editions, and more copies, but what we have here (its eventual home is as yet unknown) is more than a window on an exceptionally interesting branch of the book-trade at an equally interesting point in time. It is the best way of exploring a system of piety, the personal ritual that linked prince and peasant, in its last flowering. If properly read and understood (no right task now, when appreciation of texts and imagery has changed in ways unimaginable then), it can provide a singularly vivid picture of those for whom these books were made.

HORAE B.M.V.: 158 Stundenbuchdrucke der Sammlung Bibernühle, 1490-1550. Edited by H. Tenschert and I. Nettekoven (H. Tenschert, cat. 50, 2003), 3 vols, pp. xii+ 1335, copiously illustrated throughout.

STOP-PRESS. The Bibernühle collection has now grown to 184 copies, and shows no sign of stopping there. Perhaps a supplementary volume, or even two, will be needed.