

**Burin, Elizabeth: *Manuscript illumination in Lyons. 1473 - 1530 (= Ars nova)*,**

**Turnhout: Brepols Publishers 2001**

ISBN-10: 2-503-51232-1, IX, 469 S

Reviewed by: Kathryn M. Rudy

Lying along the corridor between France and Italy, the geographical position of Lyons contributed to the city's prosperity as a trade route. Moreover, some favorable tariff negotiations, a display of military might, and expanded definitions of nobility quickly created a noble nouveau riche eager to patronize culture. The innovators of Lyons, France's „second capital,“ were quick to install a printing press in the city, which they accomplished in 1473. The city became the premier center of printing in France in the late fifteenth century. In the scholarly literature, the city's famed printing industry has overshadowed the role of manuscript production, which flourished with ever-more lavish productions alongside the printing trade, and to some extent, as an extension of it. The year 1473 also marks the beginning of Elizabeth Burin's long-awaited chronicle of manuscript illumination in Lyons.

Nearly 17 years in the making, Burin's *Manuscript Illumination in Lyons 1473-1530* is a complete reworking of her dissertation. The result of careful methodical charting of much unknown territory, the study concentrates on the high-end production, made to satisfy the needs of the elite whom the mass production of the printing press could not satisfy. Burin looks primarily at manuscripts made for private (rather than for parish) use, which means that many were commissioned by a person or a family, in other words, high-end productions connected to one or more names.

Burin's rather expensive, exclusive, and highly illustrated book is about expensive, exclusive, and highly illustrated books. At the core of the book is not the essay treating Lyons illumination (which weighs in at only 41 pages), but rather an extensive catalogue detailing the 136 extant manuscripts (a hefty 222 pages' worth). Many of these manuscripts, as a useful handlist indicates, are housed in locations off the beaten track: in small or private collections. The author intercepted other manuscripts when they surfaced briefly at auction houses or dealers' abodes. The amount of material in this category speaks volumes about the author's sustained dedication to this subfield.

Burin's brief four-chapter essay presents a stylistic analysis of manuscript painting in Lyons during the city's rise to commercial centrality. As was true of Bruges a generation earlier, the prosperity forged conspicuous consumption; in terms of the book trade, this prosperity likewise stimulated the production of books of hours, which comprise approximately half of the manuscripts in the catalogue. The author describes the illuminators' interrelationships-analyzed through the lens of style and driven through a series of Wölfflinean comparisons-which allows Burin to group together anonymous masters. With all the description pushed to the margins and appendices, the text itself is sleek and streamlined and tells the hitherto untold story of Lyons illumination, and, to

the extent possible, of its patronage.

Burin's book is an admirable work of connoisseurship, as she assigns the Lyons miniaturists to camps and workshops based on a handful of documentary sources, which provide names of original patrons (e.g., The Master of Guillaume Lambert). Stylistic cues generate a number of eponymous titles (e.g., The Master of Getty 10, the Rosenberg Master, the Grey Faces Painter). Methodical research has uncovered the actual names of several illuminators, including Jean Perréal (d. 1530) and Guillaume Le Roy (d. 1527/8). Their deaths marked the end of the great period of manuscript illumination in Lyons.

Although hers is the first monograph on the topic, Burin's study is laid on the foundations of several exhibition catalogues showcasing French (but not exclusively Lyonnaise) manuscripts, including *The Last Flowering: French Painting in Manuscripts, 1420-1530, from American Collections*, by John Plummer and Gregory Clark (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, 1982); and *Les Manuscrits à peintures en France, 1440-1520*, by François Avril and Nicole Reynaud (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1993). Burin also draws upon the work by Myra Orth (+), whose recent passing leaves the field short of one strong voice.

Burin's study, which is dripping with dissertation topics, presents an invitation for other angles of analysis of these manuscripts. For example, iconographical considerations, which fell outside this book's purview, would benefit from further study. Some of the miniatures' subjects are fascinating and possibly unique. One full-page miniature, for example, depicts a fool clad in gold boots and parti-colored spandex with pseudo-Arabic script to preface Psalm 52 in a Breviary (Paris, Bib. Arsenal, ms 101, fol. 306v; plate XII). In another manuscript, a full-page tipped-in miniature depicts bishops, cardinals, a king, a queen, and a pope, all armed with the latest instruments of war, defending the Fortress of Faith, under siege by cannonball-wielding armies (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. fr. 5447, pasted onto fly-leaf; fig. 116). Elizabeth Burin has an excellent eye, and her attributions are compelling. I hope that her study is not the last word on Lyonnaise manuscript illumination, but that it paves the way for further narratives.

Recommended Citation:

Kathryn M. Rudy: [Review of:] Burin, Elizabeth: *Manuscript illumination in Lyons. 1473 - 1530 (= Ars nova)*, Turnhout 2001. In: ArtHist.net, Jan 2, 2004 (accessed Jul 1, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/reviews/38>>.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 International License. For the conditions under which you may distribute, copy and transmit the work, please go to <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>