

УДК: 76.03/.09

ББК: 85.153 (3)

DOI: 10.18688/aa2111-06-53

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Interpretation of the Engravings in Early 16th-century Parisian Liturgy Books: From Alfred W. Pollard to Contemporary Conceptions of Visual Narrative

All significant Parisian publishers and typographers of the first half of the 16th century either commissioned or themselves printed liturgy books with a wide range of contents, including Missals, Lectionaries, Breviaries, and Books of Hours. Antoine Vérard, Philippe Pigouchet, Jean de Brie, Geoffroy Tory, and others created illustrated codices both for the nobility and for commoners.

Taking into account a large number of printed editions published for the needs of the church, in this article, we will only focus on small engravings placed in the margins of liturgy books of the first half of the 16th century¹. Based on the distinction between main texts and “paratexts” [14, p. 37], introduced by the structuralist Gérard Genette in 1987, we distinguish between images and “para-images”, including the images in the borders of the Books of Hours, Missals, and other publications. They are interesting not only because of their stylistic and iconographic features, but also for their captions in French and Latin, as well as the interrelation between the elements of the illustrative series and between the printed images and the text of the book. These peripheral images can be ornamental (floral and zoomorphic) or contain some subject matter. Vivid examples of the first variety are the Books of Hours published by the royal printer Geoffroy Tory². In the margins surrounding the texts of his liturgy books, we find an amazing diversity of insects, plant ornament, and zoomorphic images. Two main stylistic trends stand out among this abundance of motives. The first is the Dutch trend with its *trompe l'oeil* and naturalistic images of flowers, beetles, butterflies, and dragonflies (Ill. 142). Another is Italian, characterized by *mascarons* and other architectural details interwoven with flower garlands and playing putti (Ill. 143). These two patterns, as well as the French late Gothic style, are most characteristic for ornamental borders found in the liturgy books of the indicated period. However, the most interesting for us are borders with plots, which can be typologically divided into three groups: themes related to the texts of the Bible, engravings based on historical and didactic works, and those based on fictional plots. We will dwell upon the history of their study in more detail.

¹ Most part of the analysed exemplars of the liturgy books is kept in the collections of the Russian Academy of Sciences Library and the Russian National Library.

² Geoffroy Tory (1480–1533) — a Parisian intellectual, professor of several Parisian colleges, the royal printer since 1531, known mainly for his Book of Hours, as well as theoretical work on the printing art *Champfleury* (Blooming Meadow), created on the order of King Francis I.

Scholarly interest in the Catholic “books of office” arose in the 19th century, in the first catalogues and studies by J.-Ch. Brunet [8], F. Soleil [28], A. Alès [1], and P. Lacombe [18]. It was back then that the range of liturgy books of this kind was described and systematized, and the publishers of such books were identified. However, scholars took into account mostly large, full-page engravings, counting their number, identifying their iconography and their relation to the main textual sections of the liturgy books. An example of this approach is the table of engravings’ plots of the Parisian Book of Hours, compiled by Anatole Alès who studied the book collection of Charles-Louis de Bourbon [1, pp. 532–543]. Nevertheless, this list of 53 items contains only full-page images and does not represent small engravings. These illustrations in margins were rarely paid attention by scholars, but even more rare were attempts to systematize them by topic or on any other basis. F.-A. Didot’s research on the engravings was the first attempt (1863). In the section about French Books of Hours Didot systematized printed borders in prayer books according to techniques, the most common being woodcut and “*sur fond criblée*” (dotted print). Didot especially appreciated the skill of the engravers who cut the boards for the widespread plot of the Danse Macabre [13, col. 118–120].

In the 1890s, an outstanding English scholar Alfred William Pollard published “Early Illustrated Books: A History of the Decoration and Illustration of Books in the 15th and 16th centuries”. In Chapters 7–8 A. W. Pollard gave a short analysis of illustrations and decorations of early printed French books, and Books of Hours in particular. From this study on, the Parisian liturgy books were treated as works of art, where both the main illustrations and peripheral small images and ornamentation are considered noteworthy. A. W. Pollard also suggested a model of Book of Hours’ typical structure [23, p. 179], though nowadays it is open to criticism because of its generalized approach. Before the Council of Trent and the reform of the liturgy books, the content of the Missals, the Books of Hours, and the Breviaries was very diverse and depended on geography (diocese³), a monastic order, local traditions of veneration of saints, and other factors. Victor Leroquais’s approach can be considered more accurate; he proposed the classification of the texts of the Books of Hours on the basis of their significance within the prayer books [19, p. 29]. Nevertheless, it was A. W. Pollard who started to analyze the plots in the borders of Parisian editions and divided them into ornamental and figurative. Considering the borders in the Book of Hours of Jean du Pré 1488, Pollard formulated the main idea of these “para-images” as Old Testament prefigurations of the New Testament events [23, p. 181]. It is necessary to note that this artistic approach was not completely new; on the contrary, it dates back to the first centuries of Christianity and the formation of the basic principles of the exegesis (interpretation) of the Bible. At the end of the 15th —beginning of the 16th centuries this approach was used in illustrations for different types of didactic books (*Mirror of Human Salvation* (*Speculum Humanae Salvationis*) or the *Paupers’ Bible* (*Biblia Pauperum*)). For example, it was applied in the editions of Parisian typographer Thielman Kerver⁴. Drawing parallels between Old Testament and New Testament events is one of the important functions of

³ In the 16th century, the territory of the French Kingdom was divided into 114 dioceses, where church services had peculiar features, which was reflected in the liturgical calendar, in the Suffragia section of the Breviaries and Books of Hours, printed for a particular region.

⁴ E.g. The Book of Hours by Thielman Kerver, Mazarini Library, Paris: Les presentes heures a l’usage de Romme. Parisiis, Thielman Kerver, 1500 (GW 13110).

borders, but not the only one. A. W. Pollard has shown that the small engravings were the most popular images that reappeared in editions of Books of Hours with large illustrated calendars. [23, p. 182–183]. Their themes were directly related to particular months, as the engravings represented the signs of the zodiac, seasonal works, or leisure, sometimes images of saints whose days had a fixed place in the liturgical calendar. Thus, there was a direct link between the texts and the peripheral illustrations.

Among other researchers of late 19th — early 20th century, one should also mention Count de Rivoli; in his article on Books of Hours [26, p. 5] he pointed out the stylistic peculiarities of small engravings, distinguishing between their Italian and German styles in Parisian liturgy books. The works by Franz Calot [9] and Robert Brun [7] are also noteworthy. A chapter in Brun's "*French Renaissance illustrated books*" is devoted to Parisian Books of Hours and liturgy books of the 16th century. Brun mentions the set of 24 small engravings from *The Triumph of Caesar* in the borders of the book published by Simon Vostre, but he only briefly dwells on its plots and style [7, p. 14–15]. The analysis of small printed images in liturgy books at the dawn of their scientific study was focused on the issues of general classification, attribution, and stylistics. Nevertheless, some ideas were developed by scholars of the next generations later.

In the late 1990s and especially during the first decades of the 21st century, the European and American scientific communities took interest in illustrations and decoration of early-printed liturgy books. In the 2000s, articles, catalogues and dissertations by Mary-Beth Winn [31; 32; 33], Isabelle Delaunay [11; 12], Mira Orth [20; 21], Louis-Gabriel Bonicoli [4; 5; 6] saw the light, discussing the problems of the illustrated borders. These works deal with the problem of characteristic features of the visual narrative of liturgy books, which is also central for the present article. As this topic is extensive, we turn to only its two key aspects: the repetition of engravings within one edition and the coherence of the visual narrative.

Before moving on to these issues, preliminary clarifications should be made. While in history and especially in philology, the theory of narration and narratology were among the leading areas of research for decades, the art criticism has so far failed to develop a narratological theoretical basis for a researcher to rely on [15, p. 51]. While contemporary definitions of "visual narrative" and "pictorial narrative" [17, pp. 62–74; 34, pp. 431–435; 2, pp. 629–633] are numerous, there is no common conceptual ground. A plethora of concepts operative in this field make it difficult for a researcher to navigate. The various ways of organizing narrative images can be found in the chart of the article by G. Horváth [15, pp. 149–151], allowing us to see the whole picture, but it does not provide us with a systematic approach. It is clear that the choice of a research strategy is quite a complicated problem, especially due to the peculiarities of our visual material — book graphics of the 16th century. It is impossible to give a coherent and comprehensive explanation of the role of engraved borders in the total visual narrative of Parisian liturgy books in this short article. That is why we will focus only on the two aspects indicated above.

The first one is the presence and purpose of repeated engravings within the same edition. The repeated use of woodcuts was first noticed in the early French incunables. The famous bookseller and publisher Antoine Vérard used the same images of battles for his editions of the "Jewish War" by Josephus Flavius, "French Chronicles" (1493), "Aeneid" by Virgil (1509/1510),

and “A Poet’s Bible” (1507) [22, p. 188]. In liturgical Parisian publications, this practice was also widespread, including borders with plots.

In sum, there are two main approaches to this problem. A. Charon-Parent [10], D. Sansy [27], and others emphasize the discrepancy between texts and images and assert that images were used not to illustrate the content of the text, but to create visual markers, which are important for the overall composition of the book [4, pp. 2–3]. Thus, the appearance of a richly illustrated publication was achieved, which also increased its cost. Accordingly, the reuse of engravings is a trick employed by European printers, which is rather associated with the financial side of book production: saving on engraving boards helped to increase the income while reducing costs. These researchers do not think that it is possible to postulate any semantic or narrative interrelations referring to these repetitions. M. Ricci [25], L.-G. Bonicoli [5; 6] are of different opinion. They believe that the repeated use of engravings was done on purpose and had certain semantics. Bearing in mind the structuralist approach, we refer to Barthe’s *The Structuralist Activity*: “it is by the regular return of the units and of the associations of units that the work appears constructed, i.e. endowed with meaning” [3, p. 217].

Notwithstanding the above concepts, we have to admit that we cannot join either group of researchers, since the borders of liturgy books are still poorly studied and the circle of thoroughly analyzed copies is limited. However, we assume that, in the 16th century, there were both commercial reasons for the use of printing plates for mass circulation and reuse of images on purpose. This can be exemplified by a cycle of engravings *The Siege of Jerusalem* created for the Book of Hours⁵ by Guillaume Godard⁶ and based on the work of Josephus Flavius. Historical events were also supplemented by the apocryphal text *The Story of Pilate*, known from the *Golden Legend (Legenda Aurea)* by Jacobus de Voragine. M.-B. Winn [31; 32] in her two articles analyzes the printed products of Gillet Harduin and Guillaume Godard in regard of this set of woodcuts. But she was not aware of a copy from the St. Petersburg collection [30]. There are 21 borders with plots in the prayer book from the Library of Russian Academy of Sciences: 13 of them are not repeated, while 8 subjects are reproduced 2 to 3 times. Some subjects represent generalized images: a ruler on a throne, a battle, or archers at the city walls (Ill. 144). The repetition of engravings in different parts of the book is determined by typicality and lack of specific characteristics relating to different events of the narrative. As a result, the character on the throne can be thought of as Tiberius, Vespasian, or Pilate, and the image of the battlefield illustrates the opposition at the walls of Jerusalem or the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. But some prints are very specific, so they are used by the publisher only once. The story of Mary, the daughter of Eleazar, who fried and ate her own child, described by Josephus in chapter 3 of book 6, is depicted in two engravings and reproduced only once in the border of the Book of Hours, as well as the scene of a sinister omen with a chariot in the sky over Jerusalem. Thus, the pictorial range balances between the specific and the typical. Everything with characteristic and definite fea-

⁵ Les presentes heures a l’usage de Rome toutes au long sans riens requerir ont este nouvellement imprimees a Paris pour Guillaume Godard. Paris, pour Guillaume Godard, (1520–1530). Russian Academy of Sciences Library, St. Petersburg.

⁶ Guillaume Godard was a bookseller who worked in Paris from 1510 to 1539. There is little information about him. Ph. Renoir just notes that “Godard’s shop was located at the Pont au Change under the signboard of a savage, and that “we know his name only due to Books of Hours and almanacs” [23, p. 174].

tures has a single representation in woodcuts and is not repeated. Another group of engravings depicts the general and the typical, and can therefore be used repeatedly in the same publication.

The problem of the coherence of visual narrative is the second issue we focus on. We shall bear in mind the structuralist triad [17, p. 70], which includes narration (or narrative), a narrator and an audience (a reader or a viewer, and in the case of an illustrated book, both a reader and a viewer). A number of difficulties arise when, as in our case, we deal with a complex structure of both the text itself (including the main text and paratexts, functional and marginal marks), and figurative rows, consisting of large, medium and small engravings, ornamented initials, borders, etc. It is quite possible to imagine that all these parts correspond to some single coherent narrative, but such an assertion is difficult to substantiate. Therefore, when speaking of mass publications, one should be cautious in asserting the narrative unity of individual sections or parts of liturgy books. We have already mentioned A. W. Pollard's idea that calendars in prayer books for laypeople followed a stable pattern. Such calendars are present in almost all Parisian Books of Hours and some Breviaries, and their illustrative material is concentrated in special sections of the books.

Speaking of the second component of the triad, in our case the narrator is the artist, who has two functions, being both an interpreter of the text, and at the same time an "intermediary" who transforms words into images and makes a "translation" from verbal language to visual one. But at the same time, as Wolfgang Kemp notes: "we see the narrative as if no intermediary existed" [17, p. 73]. When a master is starting to create illustrations for a text, he is faced with the problem of selecting episodes that will become key elements for the graphic series and will bring the heterogeneous material together into a whole. This choice is essential for the figurative interpretation of the master's work and important for the analysis of the narrative. However, it is one case when a literary work has a coherent narration, and it is different in the case of liturgy books, which consist of various texts, some of which, such as the Psalter, have centuries-old tradition of pictorial illustration. There were also many albums with samples that widely circulated throughout Europe. Thus, the master's choice could be determined by many factors, such as the demands of the publisher and the customer, iconographic tradition, technical and financial constraints. All these circumstances must be taken into account.

We can also try to trace a general logic of the narrative based on the position of the reader, that is, the person who uses the liturgy book in his or her daily prayer practices or for the daily "office" in the case of the Breviaries. The reading of the main liturgical part of the Book of Hours could occur in at least two ways: sequentially, when services were recited in the consecutive order (from Matins to Compline), or leafing through the prayer book in search of the necessary fragment (this is why bookmarks were widely used). The latter way of reading presumes that the images were perceived not in succession, but in accordance with the arrangement of the parts to be read, for example, at 1, 3 or 6 hours to the Virgin Mary, etc. Equally important were the reader's level of education and his/her ability to read in the language of the Catholic liturgy. Either he/she perceived the Hours of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Trinity in Latin, or if not so literate, the reader could only read the captions in Middle French under the engravings in the borders. All these factors are significant for understanding the special relations in the interaction between the reader-viewer and the prayer book, which included not only reading texts, but also perceiving illustrative series on different semantic "scales".

Summing up, it should be noted that the engravings with captions in the borders of Parisian liturgy books are not just marginal images and texts, but a separate “para-narrative”, commenting on, supplementing, and enriching the main text and illustrative series of liturgy books. Thus, based on the works of the scholars of the late 19th — early 20th centuries, modern researchers of post-incunabula use more sophisticated research methods, most of which are based on interdisciplinarity. Today researchers can make larger-scale comparisons and identify consistent patterns in the structure of visual series using vast materials from the Internet and digital copies from different libraries and museums.

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Title. Interpretation of the Engravings in Early 16th-century Parisian Liturgy Books: From Alfred W. Pollard to Contemporary Conceptions of Visual Narrative

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Abstract. All major Parisian publishers and printers of the first half of the 16th century either ordered or printed a vast range of liturgy books. It was in the 19th century when scientific interest in the study of such literature arose and the first catalogs and researches appeared. During this period, classification and general description of these books was made, and the main list of publishers had been formed. In the 1890s, the English researcher A. W. Pollard published "Early Illustrated Books". This study caused the interest in the French liturgy book as an object of art noteworthy both at the level of the main illustrative set and the peripheral small images and ornamentation. This approach was further developed by authors of the next generation in the first decades of the 21st century, when in the articles and dissertations the following issues are considered: images in the margins, the structure and specific features of the visual narrative of liturgy books. The paper is about small woodcuts in the margins of liturgy books of the first half of the 16th century from the collections of the Russian Academy of Sciences Library and the Russian National Library. We will distinguish between images and "para-images" according to the structuralist division of the main texts and "paratexts", which include engravings in the margins of the Book of Hours and Missals. Based on recent studies of visual narrative (W. Kemp, G. Horváth), the author will analyse two important problems for the theme: reuse the same engravings and visual narrative's coherence.

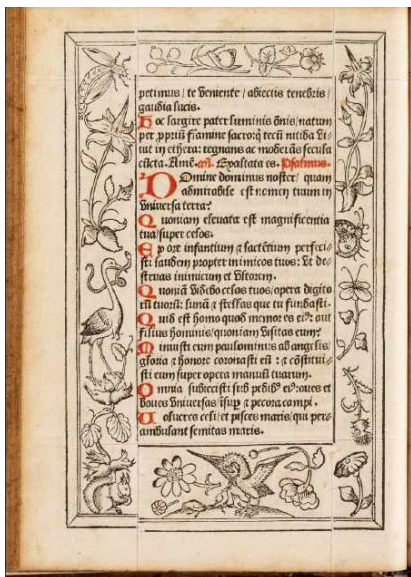
Keywords: printed liturgy book, visual narrative, engravings in the margins, Book of Hours, text and image

Название статьи. Интерпретация гравюр парижских богослужебных книг первой половины XVI века: от Альфреда В. Полларда к современным концепциям визуального нарратива

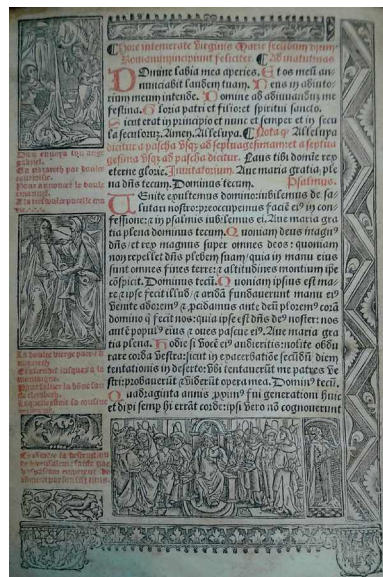
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Аннотация. Все крупные парижские издатели и типографы первой половины XVI в. заказывали или сами печатали богослужебные книги, репертуар которых был весьма широк. Научный интерес к изучению подобной литературы возник в XIX в., именно тогда появились первые каталоги и исследования (J.-Ch. Brunet, F. Soleil, A. Alès). В этот период была осуществлена классификация и общее описание этих книжных памятников, определен основной список издателей. В 90-х гг. XIX в. английский исследователь А. В. Поллард опубликовал «Ранние иллюстрированные книги. История декора и иллюстраций книг XV–XVI вв.». Именно с этого исследования начался интерес к французской богослужебной книге как к предмету искусства, заслуживающему внимания, как уровне основного иллюстративного ряда, так и периферийных небольших изображений и орнаментики. В дальнейшем этот подход будет развит учёными уже другого поколения, в первые десятилетия XXI в., когда в европейской и американской научной среде интерес к иллюстрациям и декору первопечатных богослужебных книг начал расти. В 2000-х гг. появляются диссертации, статьи (M. B. Winn, I. Delaunay, L.-G. Bonicoli, M. Orth), в которых поднимаются проблемы, связанные с изображениями в бордюрах, а также затрагиваются вопросы структуры и характерных особенностей визуального нарратива богослужебных книг. В статье мы обратимся к небольшим ксилографиям на полях в экземплярах богослужебных книг первой половины XVI в. из собраний Библиотеки Российской академии наук и Российской национальной библиотеки. Основываясь на введенном структуралистом Ж. Женеттом в 1987 г. разграничении основных текстов и «паратекстов», мы будем различать образы и «параобразы», к которым причисляем и гравюры в бордюрах Часословов, Миссалов и других подобных изданий. Опираясь на исследования визуального нарратива (W. Kemp, G. Horváth), автором будут проанализированы две значимых для данной темы проблемы: повтор гравюр и связность визуального повествования.

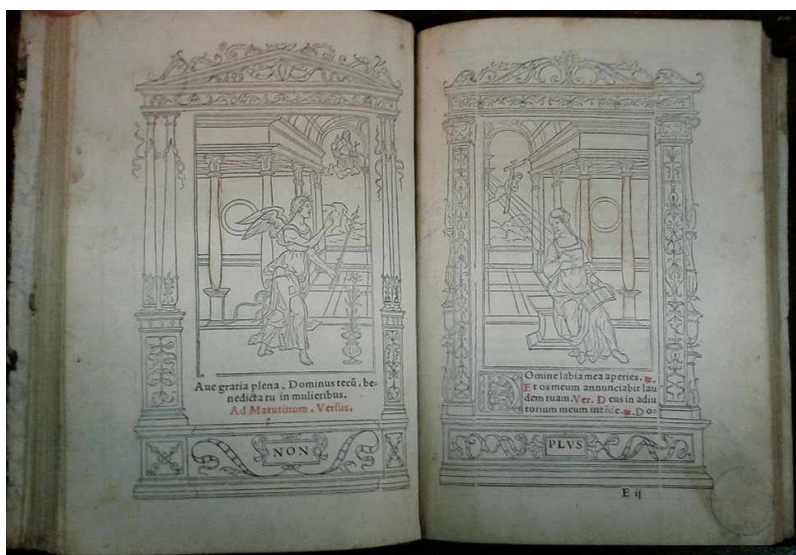
Ключевые слова: богослужебные печатные книги, визуальный нарратив, гравюры в бордюрах, Часослов, текст и образ



Ill. 142. Hore in laudem beatissime virginis Marie secundum consuetudinem Ecclesie parisiensis. Parisiis, Geoffroy Tory, 1527. BNF, Paris. Available at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8608306j/f71.item>



Ill. 144. Les presentes heures a l'usage de Romme toutes au long sans riens requierir ont este nouvellement imprimees a Paris pour Guillaume Godard. Paris, pour Guillaume Godard, [1520–1530]. Russian Academy of Sciences Library, St. Petersburg



Ill. 143. Horae in laudem beatiss. semper virginis Mariae secundum consuetudinem curiae Romanae. Parisiis, Simon de Coline, [Geoffroy Tory], 1524–1525. BNF, Paris. Available at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86261506/f310.item>