

A Word about the Manuscript Book of Hours
at The University of Kansas (Pryce MS C1)

Four illustrations in this special issue of Chimères are selected from the fifteenth-century manuscript Book of Hours held in the Department of Special Collections of the Kenneth Spencer Research Library at The University of Kansas (Pryce MS C1).

Books of Hours, collections of prayers suitable for a layperson, were in fashion throughout Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Based on the Divine Office, the daily cycle of prayers in use in monasteries, they usually contained a calendar of saints' feasts, the shorter office referred to as the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and useful miscellanea, such as litanies and the Office for the Dead. Most were, as this Book of Hours at The University is, in Latin with a few French prayers. The Books of Hours range from unassuming, unornamented pocket-sized devotional handbooks to lavishly decorated works glittering with gold-leaf and containing miniature paintings by the finest artists of the late Middle Ages.

The Pryce manuscript has competent and interesting miniatures; they were probably painted in provincial France in the early and mid-fifteenth century. The workshop responsible for this Book of Hours and its exact date are still unknown.

The illustrations shown in the Festschrift issue of Chimères are a page from the Litany of the Saints (where among the first saints listed are Saint Genevieve, patroness of Paris, and Saint Barbara), p. 26; a miniature of the Annunciation (from the beginning of the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary), p. 35; a miniature of King David, penitent (from the beginning of the Seven Penitential Psalms), p. 38; and a page, in French, from the Prayer of the Seven Requests, p. 49.

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