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H-France Review Vol. 23 (January 2023), No. 15

Anne D. Hedeman, *Visual Translation. Illuminated Manuscripts and the First French Humanists*. Conway Lectures in Medieval Studies. Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Press, 2022. xxiv + 370 pp. 183 color illustrations, 1 table, 5 appendices, notes, bibliography, and index. \$80.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 9-78-0268202279; \$63.99 U.S. (eb). ISBN 9-78-0268202262; \$63.99 U.S. (Web PDF). ISBN 9-78-0268202293.

Review by Camille Serchuk, Southern Connecticut State University.

In numerous books and articles, Anne D. Hedeman has examined the ways that secular, political, and historical ideas were expressed in visual form in fifteenth-century France; her latest book continues this project, focusing on the creation and reception of illuminated manuscripts of Latin and Italian texts produced in a French humanist context between 1404 and 1430. In *Visual Translation. Illuminated Manuscripts and the First French Humanists*, Hedeman argues that illumination played an essential and necessary role in the translation and transmission of such texts for a French audience, even when the texts in question were translated into French. Her particular interest is in the manuscripts that were produced under the close supervision of the French humanists Laurent de Premierfait and Jean Lebègue, and she contrasts the production contexts they stewarded with the ways their work was transformed when it moved beyond humanist control to reach broader audiences. The book enhances our understanding of French humanism and its texts and images, and it sheds considerable light on the ways that new programs of illumination were developed, notably demonstrating how artists collaborated with scholars to forge new iconography. It is a beautiful, carefully researched, and deeply imagined book, the product of meticulous examination of images and long reflection on them. Scholars from a wide variety of disciplines will value its argument, evidence, and conclusions.

Although it is often assumed that Latin was the *lingua franca* of all medieval courts, Latin competency at the Valois courts varied widely, and thus translation was valued as a means to access ancient texts, to connect the past to the French present, and also as an important means of expressing pride in the vernacular, and in French identity more broadly. Hedeman shows that when manuscripts were produced in Latin, and even when they were translated into French, considerable efforts were made to render the text accessible to its readers, by means of ample and original illustrations and textual interventions. She develops an idea first put forth by Claire Richter Sherman, that in the French context, images performed a critical role in the transmission of classical culture, clarifying and amplifying ideas expressed in textual form.<sup>[1]</sup> Illuminations helped to explicate ideas and events that might be culturally unfamiliar; they added details and nuance that were not present in the text; they complemented and developed material in the text in order to enhance the engagement of the French viewer. In addition to Laurent and Lebègue,

such humanists as Martin Gouge, Nicolas de Clamanges, and Gontier Col, working for patrons who included Jean de Berry, Louis d'Orléans, and Jean the Fearless, fostered the production of manuscripts of Latin texts and their translations.

The book includes five chapters that are arranged in three parts, with the first chapter serving as an introduction to the whole. In the first chapter, "Noble Leisure and French Humanism," Hedeman lays the foundations for her study. She introduces humanism and particularly its French expression, the humanists themselves, and the reception of classical culture in France. Hedeman expands the scope of some of her earlier work on humanist manuscripts in this book by examining together Latin texts, their translations, the images adapted or made expressly for them, and textual and extra-textual efforts to render the past accessible to the present; by considering Laurent and Lebègue together. Hedeman demonstrates that their contributions were evidence of a larger and more deliberate effort determined to bring humanism to a French audience.

The first part of the book, "Illustrating the Past in Latin Texts," includes two dense chapters, in which Hedeman demonstrates the different approaches of the two French humanists who were most closely involved with the production of Latin texts and their illustrations. The first chapter in this section, "Laurent de Premierfait's Involvement with Statius's *Thebiad* and *Achilleid* and Terence's Comedies," considers the importance of visual translation in the context of manuscripts of untranslated Latin texts. Hedeman argues that Laurent intervened in a variety of ways, with texts, with images, and even in the design of the volume, to make the text more accessible to viewers. He added paratexts that were distinct from the texts themselves, on separate quires, and helped to create a program of illuminations that amplified and summarized the text, often bringing ancient events into the present day so that they could be better understood by readers without strong Latin.

The second chapter in part one, "Jean Lebègue and Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline* and *Jugurthine War*," considers visual translation in the context of the humanist's role in the production of several illuminated manuscripts of texts of Sallust. These historical works recounted tales of ancient Roman intrigue in which good ultimately triumphed over treachery, and they exemplified the kinds of moralized humanist texts that played a role in princely education in the early fifteenth century. Lebègue was explicitly interested in the visual translation of these texts; he wrote an extensive guide to illustrating Sallust, *Les histoires sur les deux livres de Salluste*, which survives in a later copy today in the Bodleian, and the direct impact of which can be seen in two surviving manuscripts, one in Geneva and the other in a private collection. Although much of this material has been studied before by other scholars, Hedeman's careful examination of the texts and images enables a persuasive reassessment of the relationship of the guide to the manuscripts.

Part two, "Illuminations in French Translations," comprises a single chapter, "Illumination in French Translations by Laurent de Premierfait," which examines a bilingual edition of Cicero's *De Senectute*, and translations of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* and the *Decameron*. The work of the illumination in these translated works is somewhat different, albeit not less, from that of images in the Latin texts, since the visual and verbal translations must work together to enhance the engagement of the reader or viewer. Here, Hedeman builds on her 2008 book, *Translating the Past. Laurent de Premierfait and Boccaccio's De Casibus*, which focused on a single manuscript of the text at the Getty.<sup>[2]</sup> In *Visual Translation*, she expands her examination of

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Laurent's interventions in the manuscripts of texts he translated, which included devising and sometimes correcting iconography produced by the artists who illuminated the books. Hedeman is here also particularly interested in the ways that authorship is figured in Laurent's manuscripts in both text and image.

Part three, "The Cycles Escape," also comprises a single chapter, entitled "Normalization," in which Hedeman examines what happens to these carefully crafted programs of illumination when they shift to production contexts beyond the auspices of the translator, notably that of the Parisian *libraires*. She calls this a process of "escape," implying, it would seem, a certain amount of agency on the part of the programs as they developed beyond the translators' control. In this new setting, the programs were subject to a production process less interactive, directive, and corrective than the ones to which the first versions of the illuminated texts had been subject; Hedeman identifies the ways that the humanist texts in the hands of the *libraires* lose some of their original iconography and instead are illuminated with more of an emphasis on narrative or are customized for their patrons.

Each of these chapter summaries by necessity shortchanges the subtleties of Hedeman's argument and the immense range of resources on which she draws to make it. She consistently grounds her argument in meticulous examination of the manuscripts, and she draws on scholarship from a wide variety of disciplines. Long textual citations and appendices that compare texts and codicology of different manuscripts make this book a resource for scholars of literature as well as art. But the book retains the structure and focus of the lectures on which it is based: it concentrates on exposition and development, rather than on a rhetorical arc that might have placed greater emphasis on larger contextual conclusions. The exhaustive examination and attention to granular detail is a model of careful visual analysis of manuscript illumination that infers a significant role for painters in the development of new pictorial cycles. Identifying the painters, however, is not essential to her argument; instead, her interest is on the factors that might have influenced pictorial invention and adaptation. Thus, at the heart of this book are some important questions about how medieval books were made and how texts reached new audiences. Hedeman strives to show that every step in this process was deliberate and purposeful; each adjustment is expressive of the intellectual thrust of the humanist or his text, rather than of artistic autonomy. As much as she finds evidence for this position in the way iconography is corrected when it strays from the humanist's intention, this raises provocative questions about how we might understand this strict editorial control at a time when other artists, as for example, the Limbourg Brothers, were sometimes granted more, rather than less, creative independence.

One might further quibble with the singlemindedness of Hedeman's nonetheless capacious project. She avoids tangents that would detract and distract from the coherence of her approach, but she must therefore leave some questions unanswered. In the context of such carefully crafted programs, for example, how might some aesthetic choices, like, for example, the choice of a palette, signify? How do the efforts to encourage active reading in these humanist manuscripts differ from those produced for the purposes of devotion? And how might we think about some of the contemporaneity of garments and settings in the miniatures of the translations in relation to other deliberate practices of anachronism in other types of manuscripts? While she does discuss, albeit briefly, the political and social background that nourished the translations, a bit more attention to context overall might have fleshed out the contemporary impact and importance of the specific texts more richly. And more contextualization would certainly have been valuable in the discussion of antisemitic iconography in the *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* miniatures.

Yet there is consistency and coherence to Hedeman's focused approach, and her argument is resourceful and persuasive. Like the books that are its subject, its rigorous and dense intellectual project is complemented, illuminated, and made more accessible by abundant illustrations. The nearly 200 color illustrations in *Visual Translation* ensure that Hedeman's argument is fully sustained visually as well as verbally. As we engage more and more with digital formats, the materiality of this book was a valuable lesson in the enduring impact of the physical beauty and power of the book as an object as well as an intellectual endeavor.

#### NOTES

[1] Claire Richter Sherman, *Imaging Aristotle. Verbal and Visual Representation in Fourteenth-Century France* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1995).

[2] Anne D. Hedeman, *Translating the Past. Laurent de Premierfait and Boccaccio's De Casibus* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008).

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ISSN 1553-9172