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Stenciled Gradual

In Latin, decorated book on paper with musical notation

Southern Netherlands (Bruges), the "English Convent," dated 1733

i (contemporary paper) + 242 + *ii* (contemporary paper) folios on paper, four watermarks: name of a paper maker: "I Honig" (see below), names of papermakers "DL&C" on the same paper with two interlaced "C"s, a fleur de lis, and initials "IV", original stenciled pagination in black ink in two sequences, (titlepage unpaginated), 1-269 (skipping by error 171), (followed by 4 unpaginated leaves), 1-181 (skipping by error 148), followed by pagination written in black ink in a section added after 1867, 182-186, (followed by 10 unpaginated leaves), complete (collation *i-xxxix⁸ xxx¹⁰*), catchwords on every page, ruled in lead point (justification 338 x 190 mm.), stenciled in black and red inks on 7 lines of text and 7 staves of music per page, music stenciled in square notes in black on four-line staves in black, rastrum 21 mm., capitals, rubrics and headings in red, twelve openings with stenciled decorative elements around the headings in red and black inks, including angels, stars, flowers, crowns, flaming hearts, fleurs de lis, cornucopia, "IHS" monogram, and skulls (p. 68), two sheets of music inserted within the volume written in brown ink by two different scribes in cursive handwriting after 1839 and 1849 (see below), bottom margins of the first and last leaves and of the bottom corner of the second leaf reinforced, some small holes on initial and final leaves, minor stains and signs of use, in overall very good condition. CONTEMPORARY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BINDING of brown calf over wooden boards with beveled edges, both covers blind-tooled with an outer frame of interlacing foliage and circles and an inner smaller frame with a geometric interlacing pattern including small leaves and flowers, embossed with five brass bosses in the center of both covers and with brass bands along the bottom edges, spine protected with suede leather fixed to covers with brass bands, text block edges painted blue, several place-markers in red cloth, leather somewhat worn, metal corner pieces and two pairs of clasps missing, otherwise in good condition. Dimensions 373 x 233 mm.

Text, music, decoration, and even page numbers of this impressive large Choir Book were all produced with stencils, a curious technology in the history of the book from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Made by and for women, the nuns of the so-called English Convent in Bruges, this dated example survives in its original binding and is adorned with particularly delightful stenciled decoration.

PROVENANCE

1. This volume was made in 1733 for the English Augustinian nuns in the convent of Our Lady of Nazareth in Bruges, as is indicated by the titlepage: "Graduale Romanum ad usum canonicarum Anglarum Ordinis S.P.N. Augustini in monasterio Brugensi Beatae Mariae de Nazareth dedicato." Today the convent is simply known as the English Convent (see below). The line on the titlepage, "Typis Earundem Canonicarum Regularium MDCCXXXIII," indicates that the nuns made the book using their own typographic stencils.

Founded in 1629, a new church for the English Convent was built in 1739. Our Gradual was undoubtedly planned for use in the magnificent church that replaced the original small chapel.

Includes paper with a watermark "I Honig"; the Honig family was famous for their high-quality papers made in Zaandijk in northern Holland from 1675 to 1902, with the first papermill, De Vergoldene Bykorf mill, bought by the brothers Jan and Cornelis van Honig in 1675, and the Herderskind mill by Jacob and Cornelis Honig in 1683 (Churchill, 1935, p. 15). The watermark "IV" is comparable to another known watermark of this mill, "IVH," the initials of Jan (or Jacob) van Honig.

2. Two leaves written in the nineteenth century, inserted loosely between pp. 239-240, demonstrate the continued use of the manuscript.

TEXT

pp. 1-6, Asperision of the Holy Water, *In Dominicis per annum. Ad aspersi aquae. Antiphona*, incipit, "Asperges me Domine ...";

pp. 6-201, Temporal, from the first Sunday in Advent, with Trinity Sunday (p. 153), Corpus Christi (p. 155), and the following Sundays; concluding with (p. 199) St. Aloysius Gonzaga (canonized 1726) and (p. 201) St. Joachim.

pp. 202-269, Sanctoral, from the feast of St. Andrew (30 Nov) to the feast of the Expectation of the Virgin Mary (18 Dec);

[four unpaginated leaves], Staves, but otherwise blank;

pp. 1-65, Common of Saints;

pp. 66-67, Staves, otherwise blank;

pp. 68-84, [Funeral Mass, Commemoration of All Souls], *Missa in Commemoratione omnium fidelium defunctorum*, ...;

p. 85, Staves, otherwise blank;

pp. 86-181, *Sicut erat*, *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Symbolum*, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei* for different tones;

pp. 182-186, [added in manuscript], Mass for St. Paul of the Cross (28 April), canonized in 1867, *Sancti Pauli a Cruce*, ...;

[5 unpaginated leaves], Staves, otherwise blank;

[5 unpaginated leaves, contemporary index, stenciled, organized as a calendar from January to December], *Index. Omnium festorum quae non inveniuntur in proprio Sanctorum*, ...;

[Two leaves written in the nineteenth century, inserted loosely between pp. 239-240; with the Feast of St. Alphonsus Liguori (2 Aug), canonized in 1839], incipit, "Spiritus Domini super me: propter quod unxit me..." (Luke 4:18); [leaf 2, the feast of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus

Christ (30 June), included in the Roman Calendar in 1849], incipit, "Alleluia: Si testimonium hominum accipimus testimonium dei majus est ...".

The Gradual is the book that compiles all musical items sung during the Mass throughout the liturgical year. During the Mass, the priest used the Missal, whereas the cantors and the choir used the Gradual. The large size of this volume continues the tradition of medieval Choir Books, which were large enough that the entire choir could read the text and music from one volume during services. Our volume, however, is not a manuscript. Instead, the text and decoration were produced with stencils, a technique that blended aspects of manuscript and print. They are unique items, like handwritten manuscripts, but were produced with a mechanical aid, and in that sense are more like printed books. Hundreds of stenciled books from the mid-seventeenth to the late nineteenth century are known; most of them were made in France and nearly all of them are religious and devotional texts, mainly large Choir Books (Constantinou, 2021, pp. 171, 180, 181; see also Kindel, 2003, 2013; François, 2010; O'Meara, 1933). Consuelo Dutschke has argued that stenciling facilitated the continued production of large Choir Books in the face of declining scribal skills due to the invention of printing (Constantinou, 2021, p. 194). Stenciling offered an efficient way to emulate the letter forms of the printed Choir Books of the day.

English Catholic monasteries and convents abroad played an important role in the lives of recusant families in England, where such religious establishments were illegal. The first English continental cloister was founded in Brussels in 1580, and twenty-two additional houses were established in the seventeenth century, including the convent of Our Lady of Nazareth in Bruges, or the English Convent, founded by five English nuns in 1629 in a house called Nazareth on Carmersstraat. These English exiles were Augustinian canonesses following the order of Windesheim. Over the course of its history, the English Convent provided refuge for numerous English Catholics, and educated many young women from recusant families.

Mary Augustina More, a direct descendant of Sir Thomas More, was elected Prioress of the convent in 1766; she bequeathed to the convent her copy of Hans Holbein's portrait of the famous humanist and Chancellor of England.

LITERATURE

Churchill, W. A. *Watermarks in Paper in Holland, England, France, etc., in the XVII and XVIII Centuries and their Interconnection*, Amsterdam, 1935.

Constantinou, M. "A Secular Stenciled book: the Library Catalogue of Charles-Antoine de Billy, 1742–ca 1760," *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* third series 2 (2021), pp. 170-201.

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Palazzo, É. *Histoire des livres liturgiques: Le Moyen Age, des origines au XIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1993.

Plummer, J. *Liturgical Manuscripts for the Mass and Divine Office*, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, 1964.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The English Convent, Bruges

<https://www.the-english-convent.be/en>

"Sacred Books, Secret Libraries" project at the English Convent

<https://www.sacredbooksbruges.be/convents>

Edition of the Gradual in the liturgical use of Rome, *Graduale Romanum* (1961)

<https://media.musicasacra.com/pdf/graduale1961.pdf>

Summary of contents of the Gradual in the liturgical use of Rome (edition 1974)

<https://media.musicasacra.com/pdf/propers1974.pdf>

Francis Young, "The English Convent, Bruges"

<https://drfrancisyoung.com/2015/08/22/the-english-convent-bruges/>

Eric Kindel, Reading University, numerous publications related to stenciled books

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/typography/staff/professor-eric-kindel>

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