



# Spotlight on Virtue Visualized in Fine Medieval Books



DR. JÖRN GÜNTHER · RARE BOOKS AG  
Manuskripte und seltene Bücher

[info@guenther-rarebooks.com](mailto:info@guenther-rarebooks.com)  
[www.guenther-rarebooks.com](http://www.guenther-rarebooks.com)



# Virtue Visualized in Fine Medieval Books

on view  
at

TEFAF Maastricht,  
10-18 March 2018  
Champs-Élysées, Stand 109







Virgin Saint being crowned at the  
moment of martyrdom.  
Historiated initial V on a leaf from  
a Sanctorale illuminated by the  
Master of the Montepulciano  
Gradual I.  
Italy, Florence, c. 1325-1335.

506 x 365 mm. Tempera and gold  
on vellum.

The innovative artist focused on  
the stoic young woman who is  
concentrated on the reward  
awaiting her – the crown of  
martyrdom in heaven.





Virgin saint focused on heaven. Italy Florence, c. 1325-1335.

The refined, calm scene is painted with austerity. The artist kept fear and pain away by painting the soldier's weapon outside the letter to the top left.





Giovanni Boccaccio, *Patient Griseldis*

Final text in a codex of five works:  
manuscript illuminated by the Master of the  
Berry Apocalypse. France, Paris, c. 1416.

303 x 236 mm, 210 leaves, vellum. With 1  
large and 77 column-wide miniatures, 80  
decorated initials over 5 texts, a.o.  
*Bible Historiale*.

When Griseldis, a poor but virtuous girl,  
marries a nobleman, he puts her to  
terrifying tests, saying:  
if these virtues of hers are indeed genuine,  
then even my most unreasonable actions  
will only strengthen them.  
Griselda passes all tests in an exemplary  
way, and is then rewarded appropriately.





The story derived originally from Boccaccio's *Decameron* (X, 10), and was translated into Latin by Petrarch (1373). In other translations Griselda became a role-model for a good wife.

Throughout all she endures, she continues to be calm and loyal with constancy and courage. This was educational reading for the young nobility.

Giovanni Boccaccio's *Patient Griselda*. Manuscript illuminated by the Master of the Berry Apocalypse. France, Paris, c. 1416.



Second text in a composite codex: Francesco  
Petrarca, *Historia Griseldis*, translated into  
German by Heinrich Steinhöwel.  
Strasbourg: Heinrich Knoblochtzter, 1478  
1<sup>st</sup> Strasbourg edition, 12 leaves





The young princess Radegund (518-87), consents "for the sake of France" to wed the despotic King Clothaire (d. 561) and became a role model for future kings and queens.

This *Life of St. Radegund*, including her *Office*, *Mass* and *Miracles*, and dedicatory poems, is a thrilling tribute to the young queen of France, likely written by Jean Bouchet of Poitiers, who also published later versions in print in 1517 and 1527

France, Poitiers, c. 1496-98.  
 260 x 180, vellum, 66 leaves, with 11 large miniatures surrounded by full borders





While the king feasts, the young queen devotes  
her life to the poor.

*Life of St. Radegund, including her Office, Mass  
and Miracles. France, Poitiers, c. 1496-98.  
260 x 180, vellum, 66 leaves, with 11 large  
miniatures surrounded by full borders*



Radegund endures years of the king's misconduct but continues to serve France. When the king kills her younger brother, the queen and her consorts find refuge with Médard, bishop of Noyon. Radegund then expresses the wish to retire to a convent.

The oldest manuscript of her life dates from the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Poitiers, BM, ms. 250). In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the iconography and text were adapted to that era.

She was a strong personality who is still admired today.







In Poitiers, the former queen and future saint, Radegund founded a religious community of women that soon rivalled the power of the Poitevin episcopate by virtue of its social functions and its prized relic of the Holy Cross. Her negotiations and political petitions reveal a forceful and intelligent historical personality beneath a humble and penitent guise.

Queen Radegund's virtuous life and death are surrounded by miracles. In sparkling, bright colours and with the royal symbols, the role of the saintly first lady is highlighted in this recently discovered manuscript.

France, Poitiers, c. 1496-98.  
260 x 180, vellum, 66 leaves, with 11 large miniatures.





Though she was in touch with kings and bishops, these interactions strengthened her own religious authority, and helped to integrate her abbey into existing networks of patronage and exchange.

Radegund utilized her royal and religious powers for the benefit of her community, her city, and of France (cf. July Chang 2012).

France, Poitiers, c. 1496-98.  
 260 x 180, vellum, 66 leaves, with 11  
 large miniatures





The famous historian Titus Livius selected his texts and sources with an eye to championing Rome's virtues.

This manuscript in French is signed by a certain Arondelle with the motto *Tant que vive*, as used by the Trazegnies family of Hainault-Brabant. Possibly, the manuscript was in the hands of Jean II (1439-1517) and Jean III de Trazengies (c. 1470-1530), knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece and companion to Isabella of Portugal – her motto *Tant que je vive* was quite similar.

Titus Livius, *Première Décade*, French translation of Pierre Bersuire, Manuscript illuminated in French Flanders, Lille, c. 1460-1470.

376 x 266 mm. I+282 ff., paper, 13 drawings, in pen, ink, and wash.



sen font (et) d'ouinte a (tomme).  
 Comment seigneur filz du Roy tab  
 qum pumst par force l'ucresse/  
 pour faire sa volente. - ∞ - Elm



A Roman heroine: Livius describes the rape, dishonour, and death of Lucretia – here about to commit suicide with a dagger ( f. 40v, f. 41v).

She was known for her beauty and even more for her wifely virtue.

Titus Livius, *Première Décade*, in the French translation of Pierre Bersuire,  
 Manuscript illuminated in the circle of the Master of the *Champion des Dames* (?).  
 French Flanders, Lille, c. 1460-1470.



Throughout history, no lady who lost her honour has more often been the subject of the most beautiful painting than the virtuous heroine Lucretia.

Monogrammist IW, workshop Lucas Cranach, 1520-1540 (Nuremberg, Germanisches National Museum);  
Lucas Cranach the Elder, c. 1525 (Basel Kunstmuseum);  
Lucas Cranach, 1530 (Helsinki, Synebrychoff Art Museum)  
Rembrandt, (Mineapolis Institute of Art).







Titus Livius, *Première Décade*, in the French translation of Pierre Bersuire, Manuscript on paper, illuminated in the circle of the Master of the *Champion des Dames* (?). French Flanders, Lille, c. 1460-1470.



Virginia, daughter of the Roman consul Virginius, was a young maiden for whom Appius, *decemvir* and lecherous judge, conceived violent lust. He commissioned to claim the girl as his own while her father was away at the front. False testimony was then given in court, after Virginia sent a messenger asking her father for help.





Titus Livius, *Première Décade*, in the French translation of Pierre Bersuire, Manuscript illuminated in the circle of the Master of the *Champion des Dames* (?). French Flanders, Lille, c. 1460-1470.

Her father Virginius returns 'posthaste' from the front and pleads for his daughter. Appius ignores his pleas. Virginius thereupon stabs his daughter in the heart, asserting this is the only way to preserve her freedom and honour.

The heroine's chastity is emphasized.





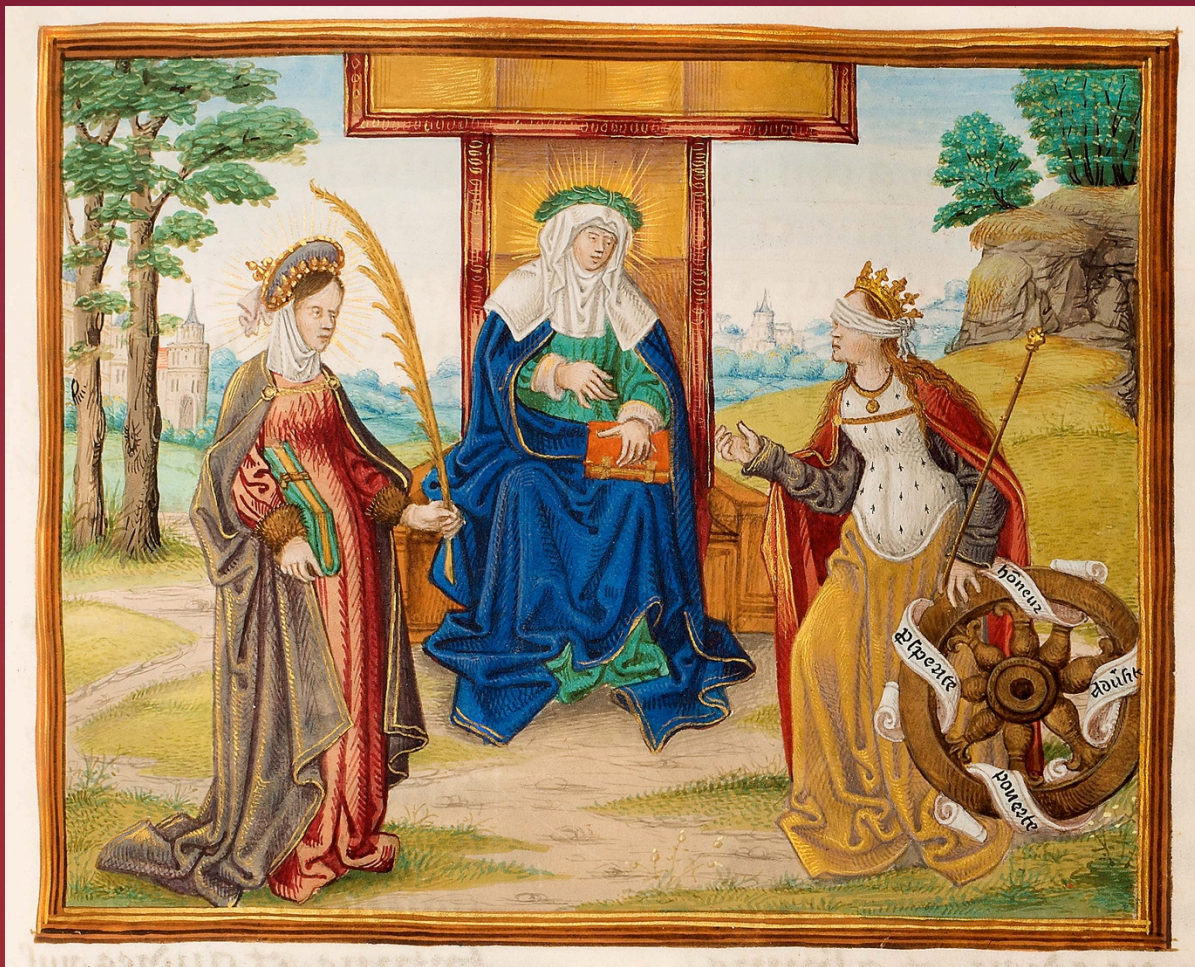
Titus Livius, *Première Décade*, in the French translation of Pierre Bersuire, Manuscript on paper, illuminated in the circle of the Master of the *Champion des Dames* (?).  
French Flanders, Lille, c. 1460-1470.

376 x 266 mm. I+282 ff., paper, drawings.

Virginus returns to his army to tell all.  
Appius is arrested and ends his life in prison, while the government of *Decemviri* was overthrown and the Republic restored.

In Livius' *History* both stories of wrongdoing and misbehaviour of officials have serious political consequences. Virginia's story is compared with that of the rape of Lucretia and the overthrow of the monarchy in 509 BC.





The 'Lalaing' Martin Le Franc,  
*Livre de L'estrif de Fortune et de  
 Vertu*, in French.  
 Southern Netherlands,  
 Valenciennes/ Cambrai?,  
 1482 and c. 1510s.

336 x 230 mm, 193 leaves, vellum.  
 With 3 large miniatures.

The text relates a verbal joust (*l'Estrif*) between Lady Fortune and Lady Virtue arguing over 'the government of this world', while their referee is Lady Reason. Originally addressing the Duke of Burgundy, the 'Grand Duc d'Occident' and, through him, other nobles of his time, Martin le Franc shows his readers the dangers of greed and luxuriousness - taking it upon himself to convince them to submit to the realm of Lady Virtue in lessons that have both political and moral implications.





The 'Lalaing' Martin Le Franc,  
*Livre de L'estrif de Fortune et de  
Vertu*, in French.  
Southern Netherlands,  
Valenciennes/ Cambrai?,  
1482 and c. 1510s.

336 x 230 mm, 193 leaves, vellum.  
With 3 large miniatures.

This text is written in the form of a contradictory debate between Lady Fortune and her rival Lady Virtue before Lady Reason as referee. The discussions have as a main theme the whims of Fortune and soon turn to the advantage of Virtue.

Le Franc is also known to defend the virtues of women from mythology, antiquity, and history.





The 'Lalaing' Martin Le Franc,  
*Livre de L'estrif de Fortune et de  
Vertu*, in French.  
Southern Netherlands,  
Valenciennes/ Cambrai?,  
1482 and c. 1510s.

336 x 230 mm, 193 leaves, vellum.  
With 3 large miniatures.

Of course, such a text was destined for the education of noble men.





# Spotlight Virtue Visualized

Visit us at TEFAF Maastricht  
until 18 March

DR. JÖRN GÜNTHER · RARE BOOKS AG  
Manuskripte und seltene Bücher

[info@guenther-rarebooks.com](mailto:info@guenther-rarebooks.com)  
[www.guenther-rarebooks.com](http://www.guenther-rarebooks.com)

