

Chapter 27

THE BEDFORD PSALTER AND HOURS

MAKING AND UN-MAKING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE ACQUISITION OF AN “ENGLISH” MANUSCRIPT

DONGWON ESTHER KIM

IN THE SUMMER of 1929, the Bedford Psalter and Hours and the Luttrell Psalter (British Library, Add. MSS 42130 and 42131 respectively) were acquired within three days of each other from the Weld Estate of Lulworth Castle, Dorset. The history of their acquisition has been extensively treated by Janet Backhouse and by Michael Camille.¹ Backhouse’s essay brought to light the correspondence exchanged between the involved parties—which include the familiar names of Eric G. Millar, Belle da Costa Greene, Frederic Kenyon, and Frederic S. Ferguson, as well as many others—and revealed the complexities involved in acquiring these two manuscripts in the interwar years. Camille, on the other hand, was invested in the examination of the Luttrell Psalter and its interpretation as a “mirror in parchment,” reflective of the societies in which the manuscript was created and has been received throughout its long life.

While the Luttrell Psalter had been established in the scholarly and public consciousness as an English national treasure for nearly a century by the time of its sale, the Bedford Psalter and Hours was largely unknown. The goal of this essay is to examine the construction of the Bedford Psalter and Hours’s national value and the interpretation of its perceived Englishness throughout the acquisition process. Specifically, I am interested in the project of establishing the Englishness of the manuscript around its artist, known simply as “Herman” before 1935. As part of the current collection of essays centred around the trade of medieval books and the making of the Middle Ages, I aim to explore the instability in the process of evaluating medieval manuscripts for their potential to contribute to the desired history of the nation-state in the interwar period.

¹ Janet Backhouse, “The Sale of the Luttrell Psalter,” in *Antiquaries, Book Collectors, and the Circles of Learning*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: Oak Knoll Press, 1996), 113–28; Michael Camille, *Mirror in Parchment: The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

Dongwon Esther Kim is a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto’s Department of Art History. Her dissertation examines around one hundred Books of Hours for English use as a group of objects and the intersections of their usefulness and art. She is grateful for the help of her supervisor, Dr. Adam Cohen, who edited this publication as well as the longer chapter of her thesis from which this paper is drawn.

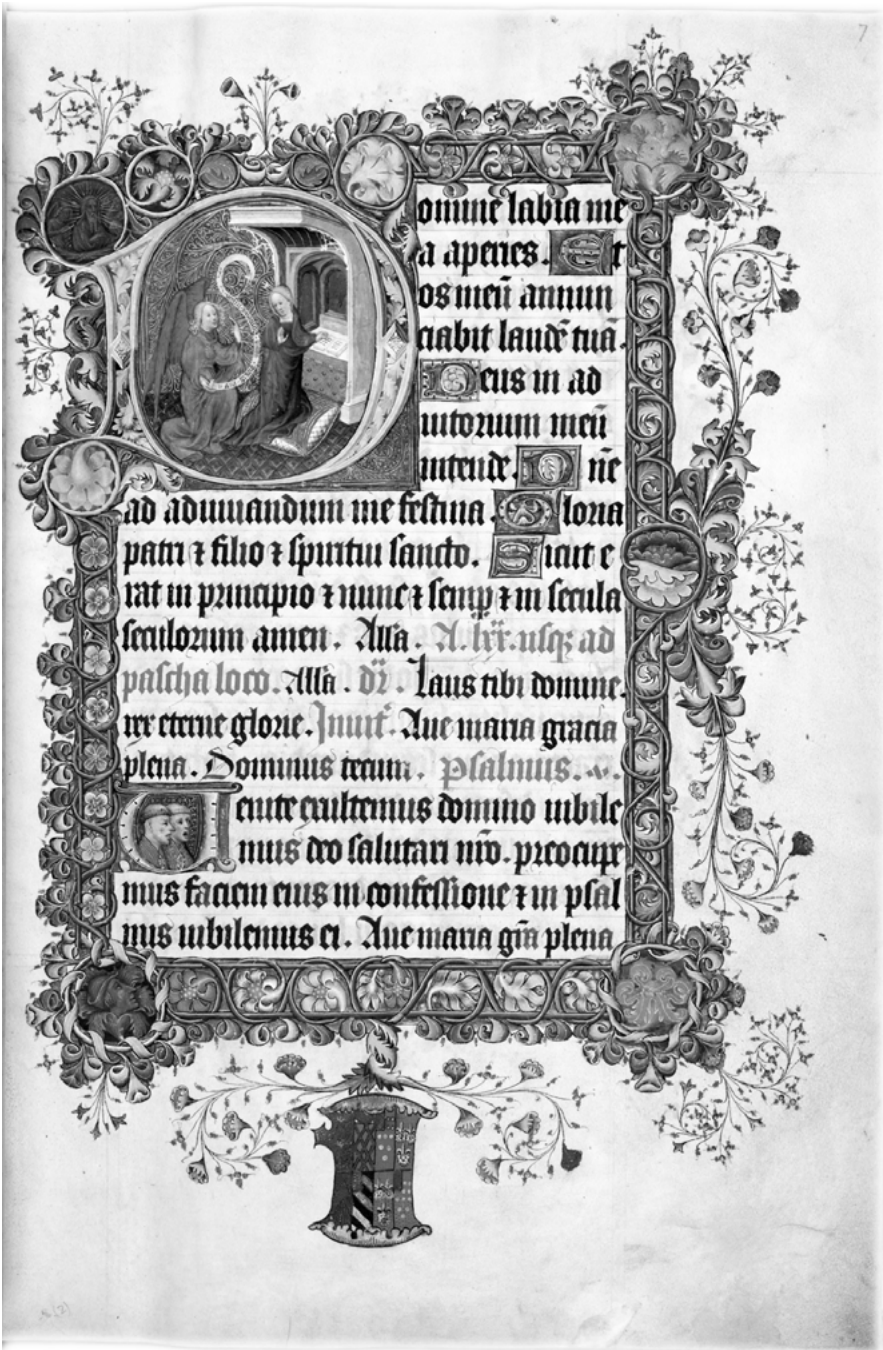


Figure 27.1. Incipit of the Little Hours of the Virgin Mary. The Bedford Psalter and Hours. London, British Library, Add. MS 42131, fol. 7r. With permission of the British Library.



Figure 27.2. Incipit of the Psalter. The Bedford Psalter and Hours. London, British Library, Add. MS 42131, fol. 73r. With permission of the British Library.

When Herbert Weld, the then-executor of the Lulworth Estate, began showing interest in selling the two manuscripts in 1928, the staff of the British Museum were sent into frenzy over the Luttrell Psalter, which had been on permanent loan to the Museum since 1896. In contrast, little was known about the Bedford Psalter and Hours. Once Weld brought the book to London to be shown at the Society of Antiquities meeting on November 1, 1928, however, the Museum quickly became interested and began working toward its possible acquisition alongside the Luttrell Psalter. By November 6, it was known that John, Duke of Bedford (1389–1435), was the patron of the manuscript, and Weld called it “the Bedford Hours” in his letter to Julius Parnell Gilson on this date.² The duke’s name appears in gold in a line-filler on folio 21r (“I cominde me vn to 30w. I pray god saue þe duke of Bedford”), and his arms and crests are seen on the incipits of the Psalter and the Hours (fols. 7r and 73r, Figures 27.1–2).

As part of his efforts to dissuade interested buyers, Eric Millar, then Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, wrote to Belle da Costa Greene in New York, whom he had befriended earlier in the year:

The Louterelle Psalter, which, as you know, has been on deposit here for upwards of twenty years, and a fine English fifteenth century Psalter and Hours belonging to the same owner, are I am afraid coming into the market, and we are making a desperate effort to save them both for the nation...You know the importance of the Loutrelle Psalter as a national monument...it has been in constant use in the Students’ Room, and it is almost as bad as if one of our best known books, such as Queen Mary’s Psalter, were to come up for sale.³

Greene responded three weeks later, apologizing for the delay and describing her life as “more hectic than a cork in Niagara Falls.” She had nonetheless been able to convince A. W. Rosenbach and Lathrop Harper to “stay off” the Luttrell Psalter.⁴ By April, a plan in which her employer, John Pierpont Morgan, Jr., would anonymously underwrite the cost of both manuscripts as an interest-free loan to the Museum for one year was in place.⁵

Millar’s letter highlights the firm place of the Luttrell Psalter as the Museum’s priority object to be acquired “for the nation.” Nationalist rhetoric was characteristic of this time period: in her historiography of English gothic illumination scholarship, Kathryn Smith observes a broad and underlying “nationalistic ring” driven by a “desire to identify and highlight those genres, forms, and characteristics of the material that ‘may be regarded as specially English.’”⁶ In addition to being influenced by contemporary

2 Letter from Herbert Weld to Julius Parnell Gilson, November 6, 1928, BL, Add. MS 74095, p. 8. All letters cited below, unless otherwise noted, are from this file.

3 Letter from Eric G. Millar to Belle da Costa Greene, January 8, 1929, pp. 14–15.

4 Letter from Millar to Greene, January 30, 1929, p. 19.

5 Letter from Millar to Greene, April 2, 1929, p. 25.

6 Kathryn A. Smith, “‘Specially English’: Gothic Manuscript Illumination, c. 1190–Early Fourteenth Century,” in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph, 2nd edn. (Malden: Blackwell, 2019), 569–600 at 570, 587. The quotation in Smith comes

politics, many manuscript historians, including Millar, had inherited the medievalism of John Ruskin, William Morris, and others that sought to articulate a distinct Englishness among other continental or even British styles.⁷ English-illuminated psalters from ca. 1250–1350 earned special admiration from Morris for their “fertility of invention, splendour of execution, and beauty of colour.”⁸ Thirty years later, Millar echoed these words when he praised the emergence of “‘vigour and forcefulness,’ ‘fertility of invention,’ and ‘splendid sense of design and colour’ which ‘gradually overcame’ French ‘influence,’” and proclaimed their “boldness and virility” as the defining character of national book art in contrast to French “delicacy and refinement.”⁹ The Luttrell Psalter’s strange, quaint, and merry marginalia—and their rough but bold style—provided much fodder that could be considered “specially English.”

Despite being a little-known discovery, the “fine 15th-century [Bedford] psalter and hours” was also being positioned in Millar’s letter as an object to be “saved for the nation.” Weld, even as he was actively pursuing the sale of the manuscripts, also engaged with the nationalist rhetoric, assuring Gilson that “I shall do my best to keep the M.S.S. in England. Nothing short of confiscation...would make me part with them.”¹⁰ This desire to retain the book in England was, no doubt, partly due to its association with the Luttrell Psalter, a record “so valuable for the illustrations it affords of English manners and customs during the first part of the fourteenth century” as it was described in 1839.¹¹ While the Luttrell Psalter remained the Museum’s priority, Gilson’s identification of the name of the artist in two separate colophons in English on folios 124r and 232v (“Herman 3our meke seruant” and “I am herman 3our owne seruant,” Figures 27.3–4) further added to the Bedford book’s national importance.¹² In early July, Ferguson, managing

from Sydney C. Cockerell, *The Gorleston Psalter: A Manuscript of the Beginning of the Fourteenth Century in the Library of C. W. Dyson Perrins* (London: Chiswick Press, 1907), 1.

7 For an introduction to the issue of “influence” in English gothic art, see Smith, “Specially English;” and Lucy Freeman Sandler, “Illuminated in the British Isles: French Influence and/or the Englishness of English Art, 1285–1345,” *Gesta* 45 (2006): 177–88.

8 William Morris, “Some Notes on the Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages (1894),” in *The Ideal Book: Essays and Lectures on the Arts of the Book*, ed. William S. Peterson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 7–14 at 11, 13.

9 Smith, “Specially English,” 582; and Sandler, “Illuminated in the British Isles,” 177, citing Eric G. Millar, *English Illuminated Manuscripts of the Xth to XIIIth Centuries* (Paris: van Oest, 1926), 44, and *English Illuminated Manuscripts of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (Paris: van Oest, 1928), ix. See also Jaś Elsner, “Style,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 2nd edn. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 98–109 at 104.

10 Letter from Herbert Weld to Julius Parnell Gilson, January 11, 1929, p. 17.

11 John Gage Rokewode, “Remarks on the Louterell Psalter: An Illuminated Manuscript of the First Part of the Fourteenth Century,” in *Vetusta Monumenta*, 7 vols. (London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 1747–1906), vol. 6. See Backhouse, “Sale of the Luttrell Psalter,” 114, and Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, 33–34, for more on the public reception of the Luttrell Psalter.

12 Eric G. Millar, “The Luttrell Psalter and the Bedford Book of Hours,” *BMQ* 4.3 (1929): 63–66 at 64–65 mentions that the discovery of the artist was “one of the last works” of Gilson before his death in June 1929.



Figure 27.3. "Herman 3our meke seruaut." The Bedford Psalter and Hours. London, British Library, Add. MS 42131, fol. 124r (detail). With permission of the British Library.



Figure 27.4. "I am herman 3our owne seruaut." The Bedford Psalter and Hours. London, British Library, Add. MS 42131, fol. 232r (detail). With permission of the British Library.

director of Quaritch, wrote to Greene praising the artistic quality of the Bedford Psalter-Hours among English manuscripts, describing it as "a really superb book in wonderful condition. I doubt whether you have so fine an English manuscript of the period even in the Morgan library."¹³ This positive assessment of the English artist's skill helped reaffirm the Museum's desire to acquire both Weld manuscripts that were up for sale.

Just three days before the scheduled auction on July 29, an overlooked clause of English inheritance law transferred the Lulworth Estate heirlooms from Weld to Angela Mary Noyes, widow of Weld's nephew, Richard Weld-Blundell, who had died in action in 1916.¹⁴ While Herbert had insisted on selling by auction, Noyes promptly agreed to a private sale of the Luttrell Psalter to the Museum for 30,000 guineas (£31,500). Only the Bedford manuscript went to the saleroom, where it fetched £33,000, beating the previous record for a medieval manuscript, which had been a comparatively measly £11,800.¹⁵ In the weeks before the auction, Ferguson had quoted to other interested buyers of the Bedford Psalter and Hours an estimated hammer price in the range of £12,000 to £15,000.¹⁶ The final price, then, was a surprise to all involved.

13 Letter from F. S. Ferguson to Greene, July 2, 1929, p. 28.

14 Born Angela Mayne, Angela Noyes was a distant cousin of the Weld family. By the time of the auction, Angela had married the poet Alfred Noyes. The transfer of the heirlooms from Weld to Noyes is told in detail in Backhouse, "Sale of the Luttrell Psalter," and Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*.

15 This record was held by the Hours of Jeanne de Navarre (now BnF, NAL 3145), sold from the collection of Henry Yates Thompson in 1919.

16 Letter from Ferguson to Cortland Bishop, July 1, 1929; and letter from Ferguson to Calouste Gulbenkian, July 2, 1929, London, Bernard Quaritch Ltd. Archives. These letters were sent before the deal was made with Noyes, and Ferguson asks that the interested inquirers refrain from bidding on the Luttrell Psalter to give the Museum the best chance to acquire the manuscript. Many thanks to Alfred Pasternack of Bernard Quaritch Ltd. for accommodating my visit to the company archives at very short notice.

As would be revealed in 1931, the price for the Bedford Hours was bid up by one Lilian Westby, whom Noyes had recruited to pose as a potential buyer. This scam was exposed when Westby sued Noyes for the payment of her promised commission from the auction.¹⁷ This scandal deserves a fuller discussion for what it might reveal about the monetary value of medieval manuscripts among other topics, but my interest in this essay lies in the British Museum's willingness to pay £33,000—more than double Ferguson's high-end estimate—and the apparent evaluation of the significance of the Bedford Psalter and Hours to national interests at this moment in time. "Both MSS. secured for joint total £64,000 white-hot greetings and gratitude," read Millar's succinct and ecstatic cable to Greene sent moments after the auction.¹⁸ Morgan paid this sum in full, as planned; the day after the sale, the *Daily Telegraph* detailed the role of an "anonymous friend" in the Museum's acquisition of the manuscripts.¹⁹

Then came financial pressure. On August 5, a *Times* article revealed Morgan to be the anonymous benefactor and made clear his conditions: should the Museum fail to make the repayment within one year, the books would become Morgan's property.²⁰ A public subscription scheme was launched to prevent this. No one questioned that the Luttrell Psalter, already revered as "a national monument of the first importance" for its "remarkable series of marginal drawings, illustrating English mediaeval life," deserved its place in the national museum.²¹ This was not true of the Bedford Psalter and Hours, still a recent discovery that barely existed in public knowledge. Tasked with raising an enormous sum of money in a short period of time, Millar and his colleagues set out urgently to establish the national value of the Bedford book.

The fear of the dispersal of historic objects was palpable across the British Isles. Post-war peace in Europe was fragile, and American "robber barons" like William Randolph Hearst, Henry Walters of Baltimore, and the Morgan family were eagerly purchasing from estate sales of the declining British aristocracy; anxiety in England about the loss of tangible pieces of national history to the New World was widely reported.²² When, for example, the Carrow Psalter, made for the nuns of Carrow Abbey in East Anglia (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.34), was tabled for auction during the 1920 sale of Henry Yates Thompson's illuminated manuscripts, the people of Norwich mounted a city-wide campaign to retain the book, but to no avail.²³ In the end, the manuscript

17 Backhouse, "Sale of the Luttrell Psalter," 126.

18 Cable from Millar to Greene, July 30, 1929, p. 63.

19 A. C. R. Carter, "Two Generous Acts. Offer of £33,000 'Horae,'" *The Daily Telegraph*, July 30, 1929, 13. This article is clipped and saved in Ferguson's annotated copy of the *Catalogue of the Luttrell Psalter and the Bedford Horae...Which will be Sold at Auction...29th of July, 1929* (London: Sotheby & Co., 1929), at London, Bernard Quaritch Ltd. Archives.

20 "The Luttrell Psalter: Mr. Morgan's Offer," *The Times*, August 5, 1929, 13.

21 The direct quotations are from Millar, "Luttrell Psalter," (1929): 63.

22 Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22.2 (2004): 117–39 at 120, 126; Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, 21–22. Camille frequently uses metaphors of piracy ("robber barons," "booty," "plundering") as part of his rhetoric.

23 For the sale of the Carrow Psalter, see Lynley Anne Herbert, "Ownership, Censorship, and Digital

sold to Walters for £4,200. It was likely no accident that *The Times's* article included a report of Morgan's visit to London to see the new acquisitions, during which he agreed that the Luttrell Psalter must be kept in England, but remarked that he "would like the other book himself."²⁴ The article did further work of establishing the Englishness of "the other book" by describing it as "English work," and pointed out some of the most recognizable figures among the program of portrait heads decorating 290 of the book's 300 minor text divisions: "There are also numerous portraits, one being almost certainly of Henry IV...while yet another is probably of Henry V, and a third, if more conjectural, is not unlikely to be of the Duke of Bedford himself."²⁵

That these portraits—many of them of the duke's contemporaries—were executed so skilfully by an English artist, as seen in Ferguson's evaluation, was an asset to the Museum's efforts, and would become a key part of the argument for the book's national significance. Millar concluded (and art historians generally agree to this day) that the artist was the same Herman who wrote "si quis amat non laborat quod herman" in the background of a miniature of Archbishop Chichele in the Chichele Breviary (London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 69, fol. 1r). The quality of the illuminations was proclaimed as one of the Bedford Psalter and Hours's main virtues: unlike the Luttrell Psalter which was "artistically inferior" in comparison to the finest fourteenth-century examples like the Gorleston Psalter (British Library, Add. MS 49622),²⁶ the Bedford book was a work of "the first quality," and was:

of importance in showing that the Duke, who has hitherto been regarded as a patron of foreign artists only, was not above employing artists on this side of the Channel when he could find them.²⁷

Frederic Kenyon's request for financial assistance to the Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald also made mention of this patronage: he described the manuscript as "the work of a named English artist, executed for the brother of Henry V," in its own right an important relic of the nation's past, though "of the two...the Luttrell book is the

Repatriation," in *The Long Lives of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Nicola Maria Camerlenghi, Jennifer M. Feltman, and Sarah Thompson (New York: Routledge, 2019), 165–85.

24 "Luttrell Psalter. Mr. Morgan's Offer," 13.

25 See Sylvia Wright, "The Author Portraits in the Bedford Psalter-Hours: Gower, Chaucer and Hoccleve," *The British Library Journal* 18 (1992): 190–201 at 190.

26 At the time, the Gorleston Psalter was in the collection of Charles William Dyson Perrins, who bequeathed it to the British Museum in 1958.

27 Millar, "Luttrell Psalter," (1929), 64, 65. John's taste for French illumination has been described as the "Bedford Trend" in Millard Meiss and Elizabeth Home Beatson, *The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 363–64. See also Elizabeth Salter, *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art and Patronage of Medieval England*, ed. Derek Pearsall and Nicolette Zeeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 269–70; Sylvia Wright, "Bruges Artists in London: The Patronage of the House of Lancaster," in *Flanders in a European Perspective: Manuscript Illumination around 1400 in Flanders and Abroad: Proceedings of the International Colloquium, Leuven, 7–10 September 1993*, ed. Maurits Smeyers and Bert Cardon (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 93–109.

most important."²⁸ Macdonald responded favourably, committing £7,500 to match the National Art-Collection Fund's contribution.²⁹

The funds raised went first to securing the Luttrell Psalter. Donation letters archived in the British Library make clear that, by March 1930, the Museum was making a targeted effort "towards the purchase of the Bedford Book of Hours."³⁰ In June, an impassioned M. R. James wrote to *The Times*:

May I add yet another, and urgent, appeal to those who have the means, that they will help to secure a home in England for the Bedford Psalter?...It is but a matter of weeks, and then...we shall lose for ever one of the very few first-class monuments of English art which are not yet permanently housed...It is a very great opportunity for a lover of England that now awaits to be taken...Will not someone respond?³¹

The wording makes clear that James saw the retention of the Bedford book as a national matter.

The Museum certainly cut it close: Harold Idris Bell's letter to Gilbert Wills, first Baron Dulverton, sent just days before Morgan's deadline reports frankly that the "last attempt to save the Bedford Psalter and Hours for the nation...if the MS. is not to go permanently to America stands at the moment of writing at £19,100."³² In the end, the fundraiser generated over 1,200 unique donations, and totalled £64,850 when added to the joint contribution of £15,000 from His Majesty's Government and the National Art-Collections Fund, and a withdrawal from the Museum's emergency reserves. Most donations, coming from individuals, churches, guilds, schools, and other groups were small; some were just a shilling. The large donations of over £1,000 came almost exclusively from British bibliophiles whose private collections had been, or would be, sold and dispersed: Yates Thompson (in memoriam), Charles Dyson Perrins, and Alfred Chester Beatty with Calouste Gulbenkian. Morgan himself donated £500, and Sotheby's £105.³³

With the successful repayment of Morgan's loan, two forthcoming publications were announced: first, a catalogue and reproduction of all miniatures in the Luttrell Psalter, to be followed by a catalogue of "at least the 'portrait gallery'" in the Bedford Psalter-Hours, to be "of great value...as evidence of the national physiognomy of the early fif-

28 Letter from Frederic Kenyon to Ramsay Macdonald, August 1, 1929, London, The National Archives, ART.Museums T 162/287/1.

29 Letter from Macdonald to Philip Snowden, October 1, 1929, The National Archives, ART.Museums T 162/287/1.

30 Letter from T. G. Blakeney to anonymous recipient, March 1930, p. 90.

31 M. R. James, "The Bedford Psalter," *The Times*, June 16, 1930, 15.

32 Letter from H. I. Bell to Lord Dulverton, July 1930, p. 120. The letter is not precisely dated, but Bell points out the July 30 deadline as the coming Tuesday.

33 The full list of donors was published in "The Luttrell Psalter and the Bedford Book of Hours," *BMQ* 5.4 (1931): 129–45. The withdrawal from the Museum reserves is mentioned in "Luttrell Psalter" (1930), 45.

teenth century.³⁴ The Luttrell Psalter catalogue, comprising a long introduction by Millar and 185 plates, was published in 1932.³⁵ The Bedford volume, however, never appeared; instead came a revelation about the Englishness of the book and its artist.

A few decades before the acquisition, there had been some doubt about the origin of “Herman,” the artist of the Bedford Psalter and Hours and, among others, the Chichele Breviary, described in 1873 as being “adorned with numerous very delicate small miniatures, capital letters, and elegant borders, by an English artist early in the fifteenth century.”³⁶ Sydney Cockerell, however, had remarked in 1908 that the name “Herman” may point to the German origin of the artist, and linked the Chichele Breviary to a Bible in the British Museum (British Library, Royal MS 1 E IX) which also contains the known motto “si quis amat non laborat” along with inscriptions in German in two of its initials.³⁷ The discovery of Herman’s name in the Bedford book brought Cockerell’s comment back to life and, in 1934, William A. Shaw wrote a defence of Herman’s Englishness.

To Shaw, the name was “not foreign at all. Herdman or Herman and Hardman or Harman are all philologically identical. It is a good, ordinary, English family name.” He continued: it was “plain that the border illuminations in these Herman MSS. are derived from, or are an elaboration and refinement of, the marginal illuminations of the Gorleston Psalter,” painted in fourteenth-century Norwich, “that marvellous fountainhead of native English art,” echoing Morris and Millar. Having found the surname “Herman” in East Anglian records from as early as 1244, Shaw mused if our Herman himself might be from Norwich.³⁸ This link between Herman and Norwich was the desired conclusion in the narrative of English art, but Shaw stopped short of definitively claiming Herman’s place of origin. Regardless, he thought it impossible that the illuminator was “of foreign extraction. He was decidedly English.”³⁹

Shaw’s theory fell apart the following year when Margaret Rickert, an American art historian at the University of Chicago, spotted a previously unnoticed inscription in a book of devotions of Sarum use that had been in the British Museum since 1847 (British Library, Add. MS 16998, fol. 37r; Figure 27.5): “hermannus scheerre me fecit.”⁴⁰ This sen-

34 Millar, “Luttrell Psalter” (1930), 46. The contemporary interest in a “national” “physiognomy” is symptomatic of the tendencies to conflate nationality and ethnicity with biological properties, which continues to affect scholarship across all disciplines today.

35 Published as *The Luttrell Psalter: Two Plates in Colour and One Hundred and Eighty-Three in Monochrome from the Additional Manuscript 42130 in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1932).

36 Samuel Wayland Kershaw, *Art Treasures of the Lambeth Library: A Description of the Illuminated Manuscripts, Etc., Including Notes on the Library* (London: Pickering, 1873), 5.

37 [Sydney Cockerell], *Burlington Fine Arts Club: Exhibition of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1908), 72, no. 148.

38 William A. Shaw, “The Early English School of Portraiture,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 65.379 (1934): 171–84 at 176.

39 Shaw, “Early English School of Portraiture,” 181.

40 Margaret Rickert, “Herman the Illuminator,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 66.382 (1935): 39–40. For a brief history of the manuscript in the British Museum, see Eric G. Millar, “Fresh

that his association with other Cologne natives living in London, as well as “the German character of his name,” was a compelling counterargument to Shaw’s claims.⁴²

It is unlikely that Rickert’s findings solely caused the planned work on the most expensive medieval manuscript in England to cease; it is clear, however, that the new information about Herman Scheerre undermined much of the foundation on which the value of the Bedford manuscript had been built. While the manuscript’s patron and its display of the so-called “national physiognomy” certainly contributed to its perceived Englishness, much had been riding on the belief that the book’s paintings were the work of a renowned English artist.⁴³ That Herman settled and worked in London, collaborated with other local artists,⁴⁴ wrote in English, and worked for some of the most prolific English patrons of his time, like Chichele and the Duke of Bedford, was little consolation to Millar, Shaw, and others. The nationality of the Bedford Psalter and Hours was constructed, in the first place, to meet a need, and it dissipated quickly when the Englishness of Herman, its artist, was found to be imperfect.

The dedicatory plate on the front pastedown of the Bedford Psalter and Hours records that the manuscript was “saved in 1929 for Britain by one American.”⁴⁵ In 1930, the same book was saved from the hands of that same American by a rallying nation; just a few years later, another American had come along to take it away, at least metaphorically. One of Millar’s last mentions of the Bedford Psalter and Hours occurred in 1954, in the conclusion of a short essay dedicated to Belle da Costa Greene, his great friend who had mediated between Morgan and the British Museum:

42 Rickert, “Herman the Illuminator,” 40. The exact origins of Herman are still debated. See Charles L. Kuhn, “Herman Scheerre and English Illumination of the Early Fifteenth Century,” *The Art Bulletin* 22.3 (1940): 138–56; and Susie Vertongen, “Herman Scheerre, the Beaufort Master and the Flemish Miniature Painting: A Reopened Debate,” in *Flanders in a European Perspective*, ed. Smeyers and Cardon, 251–65.

43 While the patron’s role in the production and creation of medieval art alongside that of the maker is now widely recognized, this was not necessarily the case in the twentieth century. See, for example, Jill Caskey, “Whodunnit? Patronage, the Canon, and the Problematics of Agency in Romanesque and Gothic Art,” in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. Rudolph, 287–307.

44 For evidence of Herman’s collaborative work practices with other artists in the London area, see J. J. G. Alexander, “Foreign Illuminators and Illuminated Manuscripts,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. III, 1400–1557*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 45–64, at 47–52; Margaret Rickert, *Painting in Britain: The Middle Ages* (London: Penguin, 2nd edn. 1965), 166–68.

45 On the conflation of Britain and England in the dedicatory plates of the Luttrell Psalter and the Bedford Psalter and Hours, see Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, 20. The situational use of “England” and “Britain” as synonyms and their distinction and conflation in different contexts are, in their own right, complicated consequences of racialization within the British Isles that requires more space than I am able to give here. See Michelle R. Warren, “Making Contact: Postcolonial Perspectives through Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britannie*,” *Arthuriana* 8.4 (1998): 115–34; Linda Colley, “Britishness and Otherness: An Argument,” *The Journal of British Studies* 31 (October 1992): 309–29.

It remained for an American scholar, Miss Margaret Rickert, to give us what is at present the last word on the subject of Herman, and this from a manuscript which had been at the British Museum since 1847, but had escaped the notice of all English students.⁴⁶

That Millar remained attached to the possibility of Herman's English origin shows when he hastens to add that Rickert "inclined on good grounds to the belief that Herman was of German origin, although she was careful to point out that more positive evidence was needed before this could be proved."⁴⁷

As part of an exhibition of British medieval art that he helped to organize in 1939, Millar displayed a Book of Hours painted by Herman Scheerre that he had bought for himself in 1934; the catalogue description of the manuscript makes no mention of Herman's last name, an omission that resonates with the exhibition's goal of exhibiting "British art" but also the political tensions in Europe on the brink of war.⁴⁸ The story of the Bedford Psalter and Hours—including this postscript about the concealment of known information about the artist—is a demonstration of the inherent instability in the work of assigning a nationality to medieval artefacts. The contemporary nationalist view of style and the figure of the artist inevitably led to the subsequent interpretation of the genius of the artist in the service of unstable nation-states. What was known about the manuscript between 1929 and 1935 had much potential to contribute to the desired narrative of English medieval book illumination. The work of "Herman," the named English artist of the late Middle Ages whose skill was comparable to that of the continental artists, was worth the price of £33,000; the work of Herman Scheerre, however, could not have been worth the same, though the discovery of his last name had changed nothing about the material itself.

46 Millar, "Fresh Materials," 294. Rickert earned her PhD in art history at the University of Chicago in 1938.

47 Millar, "Fresh Materials," 294.

48 J. G. Mann, ed., *Catalogue of an Exhibition of British Medieval Art* (London: Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1939), 19, no. 14. Millar is listed as a subcommittee member of the exhibition organized for the occasion of the International Congress of Art History which met in London in 1939 with few participants from Italy and Germany.

