

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide

a journal of nineteenth-century visual culture

Laura Morowitz

A Home is a Woman's Castle: Ladies' Journals and Do-It-Yourself Medievalism in Fin-de-Siècle France

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide 5, no. 2 (Autumn 2006)

Citation: Laura Morowitz, "A Home is a Woman's Castle: Ladies' Journals and Do-It-Yourself Medievalism in Fin-de-Siècle France," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 2006), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn06/a-home-is-a-womans-castle-ladies-journals-and-do-it-yourself-medievalism-in-fin-de-siecle-france>.

Published by: [Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art](#)

Notes:

This PDF is provided for reference purposes only and may not contain all the functionality or features of the original, online publication.

License:

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License Creative Commons License](#).

Abstract:

In late nineteenth-century France, the interest in medieval manuscripts had filtered down into the bourgeois home. Journals such as *L'Enlumineur* (1889-1900) and *Le Coloriste Enlumineur* (1893-1898) encouraged young women to decorate their homes with reproductions of medieval manuscripts, and to create their own "aristocratic" heirlooms for family consumption.

A Home is a Woman's Castle: Ladies' Journals and Do-It-Yourself Medievalism in Fin-de-Siècle France

by Laura Morowitz

Nineteenth-century France saw a powerful revival of interest in medieval manuscripts. This revival was part of a broader fascination with the Middle Ages, in France as well as other European nations, which had started in the late eighteenth century and continued throughout the nineteenth.^[1] This article shows how, by the turn of the century, the interest in medieval manuscripts had clearly filtered down into the bourgeois home. It also demonstrates that, in this process, it had become the domain of women. The two periodicals studied here, *L'Enlumineur* (1889-1900) and *Le Coloriste enlumineur* (1893-1898), encouraged female amateurs not only to decorate their homes with reproductions of medieval manuscripts, but to create their own and, thus, to revive an art form closely associated with aristocratic culture.

The causes leading to renewed fascination with medieval manuscripts were deep-seated and multivalent. Interest in manuscripts was part of a larger phenomenon in which medieval works of all sorts, from small-scale miniatures to stained-glass windows and even entire Gothic cathedrals, caught the attention of a broad French public. As signifiers of a lost age of faith and of pre-industrial community, the art of the Middle Ages came to embody an anti-thesis to the malaise of the Modern Age and, by the end of the nineteenth century, to the particular conflicts and failures of the Third Republic.^[2] Though often thought of as a politically conservative phenomenon, in France the appropriation of the medieval period—and its extant cultural productions—ran the entire political spectrum.^[3] Defenders of the Third Republic hailed the Middle Ages as the birth of bourgeois empowerment and championed the medieval artist as a national hero. In state-sponsored exhibits medieval works were celebrated as the starting point of a unique national heritage and proof of the superiority of French artistic genius.^[4] Paradoxically, the French medieval heritage was likewise appropriated by the fiercest enemies of the Third Republic, used to inspire right-wing nostalgia for Church and King.^[5] The Royalists glorified the medieval period as the Age of Faith; all cultural productions of the period were understood as the inspired creations of Christian artists. The unity, beauty, and "authenticity" of medieval objects were contrasted with the shoddy, mass-produced products of the Modern Age.

No objects better exemplified at once the inspired genius and the labor intensity of the Middle Ages than medieval manuscripts. Their explicitly religious nature—they were almost invariably used for private devotion or as part of the Christian liturgy—gave them a special place for many who opposed the staunch anti-clericalism of the Third Republic. Moreover, as examples of private consumption (in contrast to medieval sculptures, reliquaries, etc.) the medieval manuscript had the allure of aristocratic patronage. The various noblemen and women, most notably perhaps the Duc de Berry, became objects of fascination for collectors and connoisseurs in the final decades of the 19th century.^[6] It is no accident that Jean des Esseintes, the impossibly snobbish protagonist of J.K. Huysmans's *A Rebours* (1884), spent hours pouring over his collection of rare medieval books.^[7] Laborious, expensive and above all private, these works signaled a craft aesthetic and religious worldview that seemed for most to have been utterly lost in the modern world. In many ways, the medieval

manuscript seemed the example par excellence of Thorstein Veblen's 1889 definition of the leisure object, with its cultural cachet.[8]

As scholars have long argued, the bourgeoisie in nineteenth-century France borrowed liberally from aristocratic culture.[9] The palaces and chateaux of the *ancien régime* found their new counterparts in luxurious department stores and breath-taking theaters. The cultural treasures of the aristocratic class now became "democratized" in museums and public collections; the detail and refinement of traditional luxury objects were now repeated and imitated in machine-made *bibelots*.^[10] Like other cultural objects, medieval manuscripts became available to the bourgeois class through new photo-mechanical means of reproduction and, as we shall see below, through do-it-yourself manuals.^[11]

Like the department stores and *bibelots*, the medieval manuscript and its modern "reproduction" became the particular domain of women in this period. While the more scholarly and "populist" revivals of the Middle Ages were the property of men like Gaston Paris and Louis Courajod^[12], the "decorative" interest in the medieval period often became the purview of women, who were widely regarded as "queens of the interior".^[13] Advertisements targeted young married women. For example, as in an ad for Vitraux Glacier (fig. 1), in which two women and a young girl are seen transforming the harsh view of two factory stacks by pasting onto their windows panels resembling a stained glass window of St. George. Reviewers complained of women becoming "penitent chateau dwellers"^[14] due to their purchase of medieval-style furniture unsuited for modern life. The taste for medieval-style décor had so captured the fin-de-siècle consumer (often, if not always, women) that Huysmans bitterly grumbled, "Isn't it enough that anyone can copy the furniture of the Musée de Cluny by the gross! I understand that we are not obliged to buy [these pieces], but we cannot avoid seeing them because they fill entire boulevards and streets!"^[15] What Huysmans bemoans here is just the kind of democratizing of the medieval heritage that marks *L'Enlumineur* and *Le Coloriste enlumineur*.



Fig. 1, Poster for the Vitraux "Glacier," n.d. Color lithograph. Paris, Musée de la Publicité. Inv. 999.75.1

[\[larger image\]](#)

The illuminated manuscript revival movement held special appeal for young married women, the fashionable *femmes-de-foyer*. The particular associations of the medieval

manuscript—aristocratic, Christian, intimate and small-scale—made it especially suited to the female consumer as well as producer. The miniature scale of the manuscript, and its even smaller illumination, which required a delicate hand, was both "appropriate" and practical for female amateur artists in fin-de-siècle France, in contrast to the architectural and sculptural arts which were thought to be beyond the "intellect" and physical capabilities of women.[16] Many of the traditional medieval arts were site-specific (such as stained glass windows and tapestries), and would have been difficult for women whose access to public spaces was severely limited.[17]

From a practical point of view, the reproductions of these manuscripts required relatively few and easily accessible tools and materials. (Indeed, the journals repeatedly provided lists of tools and assured readers of their ease in obtaining and using them). No burdensome trips outside the home were required, nor did women have to physically exert themselves, allowing them to preserve their energy for "motherly" and "wifely" tasks. Moreover, although the reproduction of medieval miniatures was rather new to the period, a tradition of female book production already existed. The skills involved in the production of domestic albums, a common pastime of nineteenth-century bourgeois women,[18] could easily be transferred to the creation of manuscript pages and medieval manuscripts.

In addition, the small-scale nature of these reproductions allowed for them to be done at home and in solitude. In working alone, the female producer was thought to be following closely in the footsteps of actual medieval creators. Although we now know a great deal about collaborative workshop practices in the medieval scriptoria,[19] in the nineteenth century it was believed that many of the finest medieval works were the product of solitary and inspired toil. In France both the medieval artist and the medieval patron were admired for their detachment from the rest of society, their fixed and determined concentration, and spiritual absorption. Throughout the nineteenth century, in literary and visual portrayals of the *ymagier*, or medieval creator, he is invariably alone, visited only by otherworldly figures. [20]

This notion of the solitary artist continues in the cover image of *L'Enlumineur* (fig. 2), where a young female painter, dressed in medieval garb, is accompanied only by her hound, which seems to have wandered from the pages of a medieval hunting scene. Filled with gothic revival furniture, exposed beams, and leather-bound volumes, her setting is a comfortable and updated variant of St. Jerome's study, as pictured in Albrecht Dürer's 1514 engraving and well known to nineteenth-century audiences as an exemplary setting for the dedicated and solitary creator.[21]



Fig. 2, J.E. van Driesten, cover of *L'Enlumineur* (15 Feb 1890). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Fol. Q 123. [\[larger image\]](#)

As the medieval manuscript was envisioned as the product of individual effort, so, too, were its reproductions which were privately consumed. The ideal audiences for these reproduced manuscripts were intimates, the family members at whom they were aimed. The largely domestic display of the works, (with the exception of the exhibits of the Société des Miniaturistes et Enlumineurs de France), nearly guaranteed the amateur status of their creators. In working without remuneration, the female artists were once again "following" the inspired, self-sacrificing monks of the scriptorium. Monetary reward could thus be seen as anathema to the production of quality manuscripts, and such disregard for economic value further elevated their status.

With their invariably religious focus, the medieval manuscripts also "belonged" in many ways to the realm of women. In nineteenth-century bourgeois homes in both Europe and America it was women who were largely responsible for the religious training of their children and who were often far more committed to religious ritual than their husbands, and were more avid church-goers.[22] It was, thus, logical that women would help to sanctify important occasions like communion and baptism with their productions; to celebrate them with material objects.

If it was bourgeois men whose economic success helped to ensure a comfortable lifestyle, it was women who were charged with turning their individual homes into "castles" through the acquisition of culture. With the help of journals and the do-it-yourself products which appeared in them, it was through women that medieval manuscripts filtered into the bourgeois home. Targeted to female consumers, these mass-produced journals and advertisements sold the allure of aristocratic life.

* * *

As Sandra Hindman, Michael Camille, Simon Watson and Nina Rowe have demonstrated in their *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age* (2001),[23] French interest in illuminated manuscripts began with the French Revolution. As monasteries and Catholic churches were

destroyed in violent purges, their contents, including medieval manuscripts, were often looted and sold to institutions or private collectors.[24] The holdings of the Bibliothèque Nationale alone increased by over 15,000 manuscripts following a November 14, 1789 decree of the Commission des Monuments Français, which required monasteries and chapter houses to deposit their holdings with the royal court. Between 1795 and 1796, nine thousand manuscripts from St. Germain-des-Prés and nineteen hundred from the Sorbonne entered the collections of the B.N.[25] While only a handful of dealers and collectors had specialized in illuminated books prior to the nineteenth century, a vigorous market for them had grown in France by mid-century. Like so much other medieval art, manuscripts were often robbed of their aesthetic and religious context as books were separated into individual pages, and large miniatures cut into sections to be sold separately.[26] Thus mutilated and cut off from their original environment, medieval manuscripts became thoroughly commodified.

While the high-end collecting of medieval manuscripts forms a fascinating chapter of fin-de-siècle medievalism, so too does their dissemination into the bourgeois market. As Michael Camille has shown, advances in mechanical reproduction by the second half of the nineteenth century brought medieval manuscripts within reach of collectors of limited means.[27] Glossy reproductions of individual pages, as well as entire facsimiles of treasured manuscripts, were made available through new photomechanical processes by such publishing houses as Firmin-Didot, while the publishing house of Henri Laurens provided books to be finished and colored by hand.[28] The widespread reproduction of medieval manuscripts meant that their appeal had reached beyond the scholar, erudite collector, or lettered medievalist. They became accessible to bourgeois audiences through journals such as *L'Enlumineur*.

The journal was the brain-child of Alphonse Labitte, an artist and medievalist, who served as its *rédacteur* (editor) and of Joseph Emmanuel van Driesten, who had the title of "*directeur*." The opening paragraph of the first issue of *L'Enlumineur, journal d'enseignement, et de propagation de l'art, de l'enluminure, de la miniature et de la calligraphie*, (The Illuminator: A Journal for the Teaching and Promotion of Art, Illumination, Miniatures and Calligraphy), published in February of 1889, set out its aims in clear language:

It is in our period, so enthusiastic in its research of the past, so intent on garnering even the weakest vestige of what art in its multiple incarnations was able to create in the way of beauty or originality or even of grace, it is in our own period, I say, that we must take up the task of revalorizing one of the oldest and at the same time most charming of the arts. I am speaking, of course, of Illumination.[29]

Van Driesten, an artist, who would become a member of the Académie in 1894, also designed the cover image which appealed to a young female audience by showing a woman artist on the cover, (as did popular journals like the *Gazette de Femmes*), wearing her medieval garb with the poise of a nineteenth-century fashion plate. The calligraphic script and decorated initial are printed over a scene set in a room drawn in a decidedly non-medieval single-point perspective.

Van Driesten started the journal as an accompaniment to a course he was teaching. By the late 1880s, he had a profitable career as a teacher of illumination to amateur, largely female,

students. He competed with several other teachers, such as Louise Rousseau, Lucien-Adolphe Foucher and Karl Robert, who also targeted this audience. Like Louise Rousseau, many of the teachers were female as well, such as Madame Marie Noblet, who attempted to open a school of illumination for women in Nancy.^[30] Sometime in 1888 or 1889 van Driesten began to offer "un cours de miniature et d'enluminure pour dames"^[31] in Paris on Tuesday and Thursday mornings for the price of 7.5 francs a month. Each monthly issue of *L'Enluminure* re-iterated that month's lessons and offered the students a chance to practice and hone their skills by reviewing van Driesten's lessons of the week and gave specific instructions on creating initials, mixing colors, applying details, etc. All of the media referenced in the full title of the journal—illumination, calligraphy, and miniatures—would be taught to the readers.

By the fall of 1890, however, *L'Enluminure* announced "the serious problems of our Director," and van Driesten left to forge his own journal. That left Labitte to run the show by himself, resulting in a slightly altered direction for *L'Enluminure*. The title was changed to *L'Enlumineur: l'art dans la famille. Journal d'art pratique et guide de l'amateur de la peinture et du dessin*); the art of illumination was now explicitly referred to as one used to serve the domestic sphere, put at the service of la famille.^[32] Under Labitte's sole directorship, there was a visual shift in the journal as well. Instead of showing the medieval/modern artiste in her studio, the cover of the journal now displayed a masthead and text, giving it a more scholarly look. The text between the covers, however, remained solidly practical, eschewing the glamorous panache that would later characterize the more upscale *Le Coloriste enlumineur*.

With the departure of van Driesten *L'Enlumineur* sought an expanded audience which would include women with professional aspirations, although it continued to remind its readers of their obligations to the family. This attempt to please both the amateur artist and her more ambitious counterpart must be seen against the growing agitation for the professionalization of the female artist in the 1890s, which included parliamentary debates on her entrance into the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the proliferation of professional women's artistic societies.^[33] It was likely, in part, to reach this audience that Labitte, in January of 1890, founded the Société des Miniaturistes et Enlumineurs de France. The Société organized exhibitions that combined original examples of medieval manuscripts together with contemporary creations, many by female artists who had gained their skills through van Driesten's course. It gave women a chance to display their works, but in a medium felt to be particularly appropriate and well suited to female interests. In 1894 the exhibition was held at the posh Galerie Georges Petit. The Société also dovetailed nicely with Labitte's other professional activities: the publication of high quality reproductions of medieval manuscripts, which had become a flourishing industry in the final decades of the century,^[34] and the publication of *Le Manuscrit: Revue spéciale de documents, manuscrits, livres, chartes, autographes, etc.* (1894), which he edited and which included articles by serious scholars in the field. Through these activities, Labitte promoted amateur interest and drove the market for the collection of authentic manuscripts.

These efforts to cultivate a bourgeois readership, largely amateur but some with more serious aspiration, may explain the appearance in the *L'Enlumineur* of numerous articles which appealed precisely to women interested in new professional organizations. Some of

these articles even contradicted the philosophy of the journal, sending a somewhat mixed message to its readership. For example, an article published in October of 1897, "Le sentiment de l'art chez la femme" signed with an obvious pseudonym of "Francillon" made an explicit plea for women to serve on artistic juries and unapologetically argued for their acceptance in the professional art world:

Certainly among women as among men true talent is rare: but we will only be able to judge this with fairness when women have the same advantages as men, when, like them, they can dedicate their time to creating art without having recourse to a private fortune; finally (when all prejudice has been completely destroyed), when cities provide subsidies for women artists, as they do for men artists, to study in Paris.[35]

This more progressive slant and serious tone may also have been seized upon by Labitte as a way of differentiating his journal from *Le Coloriste enlumineur*, which van Driesten had begun to publish in 1893 (fig. 3).



Fig. 3, Cover, *Le Coloriste Enlumineur* (15 Mai 1894). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Fol. V 3336.

[\[larger image\]](#)

Indeed, no such resounding note of modernity characterized the newer journal. Funded by the Société de Saint Augustin, under the ultramontane Augustins of the Assumption, *Le Coloriste enlumineur* promoted a traditional view of gender and a taste for luxury that revealed its Monarchist ideology. While catering to deluxe taste, Van Driesten took great pains to assure his female readership that the journal would be engaging: "I promise you I won't be boring like an archaeologist and I will never lose sight of the fact that the eminent public is not fond of pedants and is hardly mad about scholars..."[36]

Aiming to paint his journal as the less pedantic alternative to Labitte's publication, van Driesten, addressing himself to "mes respectables lecteurs et mes chers lecteurs," not only provided them with skills, tools and methods, but also a constant reassurance of their practical success. Many issues contained question and answer columns, along with copious illustrations of the appropriate materials and tools. Moreover, he made the journal serve as a cultural guide for young women by including deluxe reproductions and models for copying, along with reviews of books and exhibitions. In particular, the artists who exhibited

with the Salons of the Rose+Croix often drew praise and attention. With their idealizing treatment, "Christian" subject matter and medievalizing flavor, artists such as Carlos Schwabe and Armand Point were felt to be appropriate exemplars for the readers.[37]

Le Coloriste enlumineur continually attempted to mold the taste of cultured young women while reminding them of their indispensable roles in the family and as caretakers of their homes: "The goal of our women is their intelligent participation in this domain." [38] Too, the reader was frequently warned against following the caprices of "modern" fashion:

Every woman, however, yields with a smiling face to the caprices of fashion, and God knows they are extravagant! The wisest ones have adopted, without too much difficulty, the ignoble *pouf* which has surfaced recently...Be on guard at all times; fashion is tyrannical and powerful, and the day when our readers sacrifice the principles of our art, its charm will evaporate.[39]

In contrast to the silly whim of fashion, stood the "loi du Beau" (Eternal Law of Beauty) of medieval manuscripts: "These recommendations are not for the taste of everyone: the women of the world who have the custom of elegance and the cult of the *bibelot* would be at pain to deprive themselves of these foolish little trifles." [40] Warning against the collecting of *bibelots*, because they attracted dust and "dust is our enemy," van Driesten clearly aimed to set his women apart from the mass of middle-class consumers and from the nouveaux riches, whose tastes fluctuated with passing fashion. Indeed, one of the underlying aims of the journal was to position the readers as the elite; to constantly draw attention to their rarity, distinction, and practice of a timeless tradition. "What have we today in place of those pious artists? Some rare amateurs, who have attempted to retrace their footsteps." [41] Thanks to his journal, van Driesten claimed, the notable branch of manuscript art was now "newly opened to a chosen group, to an elite, to which belong our readers." [42] While women had previously been kept from this branch of art, van Driesten claimed, [43] it was now in their hands to rejuvenate it and bring it into the future.

Van Driesten promised to transform these women, through the study and re-creation of medieval manuscripts, into a new nobility, reaching for a deep-seated longing for aristocratic status on the part of the fin-de-siècle consumer. "Mesdames, in cultivating these delicate and select arts, you are reviving the traditions of your ancestors." [44] The attraction which these women—members of the rising bourgeoisie in nineteenth-century France—felt for an aristocratic structure has been analyzed by Bonnie Smith as a function of their gendered roles: "The family depended on fixed patterns of authority, and to women an aristocratic government and hierarchic social order best reproduced their familial experience." [45] The journal cast the creation of manuscripts as the pastime of well-bred and aristocratic women in history by including, as much as possible, reproductions and commentary on art thought to be by noblewomen, such as a copy of a "Dutch" (Flemish?) fourteenth-century manuscript made by the sister-in-law of the Baronne Wynbergen Ter horst [sic], and of course the Bayeux tapestry supposedly woven by Queen Mathilda. [46] As we noted earlier, the aristocratic patronage of much medieval art was of course well-recognized in the nineteenth century. Perhaps the best example of this was the ownership of the Duc de Berry's *Très Riches Heures* by his heir, the Duc d'Aumale, who kept it locked in his château at Chantilly. [47] This practice was fostered by the newly aristocratic Rothschild family, many members of which acquired outstanding medieval manuscript collections. (In

fact the *Très Riches Heures* nearly came into the possession of Adolphe de Rothschild in 1855.) [48] As early as 1838 Jules Gallois, consciously mimicking the cultural practices of the Middle Ages, commissioned a Book of Hours for his wife, Adèle Lecamus, which took a total of fourteen years and employed over twenty-two artists.[49]

Later in the nineteenth century, companies such as Mame et Cie and Martial Ardent Frères catered to the bourgeoisie's desire to ape the patronage patterns of medieval nobility by producing facsimiles of luxury manuscripts.[50] The less wealthy readership of *Le Coloriste enlumineur* could partake in this cultural practice by ordering reproductions of individual manuscript pages or by recreating their own manuscripts for use within the family. By June of 1893, for 50 centimes subscribers could order reproductions for framing of any of the color plates in the journal. Menus and invitations, could be copied and hand painted by the *femme-de-foyer*, to further the illusion of her home as a château (fig. 4). Important family events, too, could be commemorated in this way. A "souvenir de première communion" containing drawn outlines and text was available to be hand-colored and personalized by the reader who could thus create a document that looked similar to that of a medieval prince (fig. 5). What the truly rich could buy, the less affluent could nevertheless create.

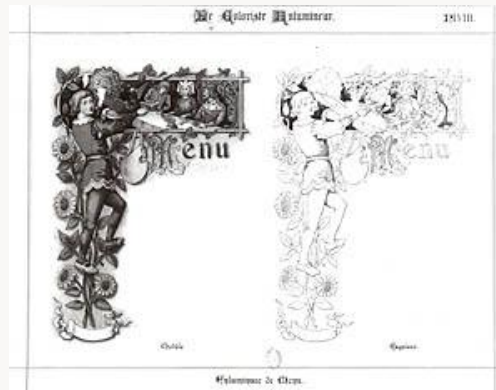


Fig. 4, "Menu." Plate VIII. *Le Coloriste Enlumineur* (15 Avril 1894). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Fol. V3336 [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 5, "Souvenir de première communion." Plate XX *Le Coloriste Enlumineur*. (15 Mars 1895). Paris, Bibliothèque de France. Fol. 3336. [\[larger image\]](#)

Encouraged to develop a distinguished taste, the solidly bourgeois readership of *Le Coloriste enlumineur* was welcomed into a new aristocracy resting on cultural finesse. The journal played into the class aspirations of its bourgeois clientele, offering them such luxurious items as the *Livre de Famille*, published by the journal's publishing house, the Maison Desclée, and repeatedly advertised and discussed in the journal (fig. 6).^[51] Noting that writers had "illuminated the advantages that the stability of the family as well as the conservation of domestic traditions had procured for society, under the *ancien régime*,"^[52] the acquisition of this book was certain, the journal claimed, to "assure the happiness, peace and moral and material prosperity of the family."^[53] Each book was divided into five luxurious booklets, each copiously illustrated and with an illuminated and gilded frontispiece. The first book would contain the personal events and celebrations of the family, the second important religious events including baptisms, marriages, communions, etc. The third and fourth books highlighted breeding and genealogy as they included family trees as well as memorials to long-deceased family members. The final book, the "Livre de Raison," contained family history and "everything pertaining to the patrimony of the family." Buyers could choose between a 30 franc edition, and the 50 franc edition on

Japanese paper (*Japon*). If the haut-bourgeois readers of the journal lacked a polished aristocratic lineage, they could at least *create* the trappings of one through the validating luxury of the Livre de Famille. As Pierre Bourdieu notes:



Fig. 6, "Livre de Raison." Plate I (15 Mai 1894). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Fol. 3336.
[\[larger image\]](#)

Every material inheritance is, strictly speaking, also a cultural inheritance. Family heirlooms not only bear witness to the age and continuity of the lineage and so consecrate its social identity, which is inseparable from permanence over time; they also contribute in a practical way to its spiritual reproduction, that is to transmitting the values, virtues and competencies which are the basis of legitimate memberships in bourgeois dynasties.[54]

The Livre de Famille, like the journals themselves targeted to women, offers a good example of the "democratization" of aristocracy in late nineteenth-century France.

By 1897 it was evident that *Le Coloriste enlumineur* could not completely protect itself from material concerns of the modern age, despite its nostalgic tone. Advertisements began to proliferate for such "middle-class" products as "art du chocolat," "cascara liquid for constipation" and "eau astrale." The journal folded in 1898, likely due to the high cost of the full-color reproductions on which van Driesten so prided himself and the lack of an expanding audience to overcome these costs.

Conclusion

If the journals did not continue into the twentieth century, it was because they were, at heart, essentially anti-modern. Privileging a medieval aesthetic and pre-industrial system of production, they catered to a yearning for a defunct social hierarchy, an anti-modern vision that was directly woven in the journals with issues of class and of gender. By calling for a new caste of amateur female artists, whose creativity was largely restricted to the home, these journals addressed fears about women's changing social roles. Women's professionalization as artists was one reflection of these profound changes. The tension between the modern bourgeois *femme au foyer* and the new medievalizing ideal was captured by an anonymous writer discussing the new craze for medieval decor in *La Revue Illustrée*:

Our interiors, where we need light in order to work, are obscured by the immoderate use of colored stained glass...our small hearths are cluttered by great andirons in forged metal, made for the vast mantels of feudal fireplaces; the contours of our seats, rather than accommodating the supple graces of our contemporary women with their lightly pleated garments, take on the rigid form of the the high cathedrals of the Middle Ages and transform the fin-de-siècle Parisienne into a Blanche of Castille in spite of herself, making her into a penitent chateau dweller.[55]

If the subject matter and the style of the works proclaimed in *L'Enlumineur* and *Le Coloriste enlumineur* were decidedly medieval, their manner of dissemination was not. It is somewhat ironic that both *L'Enlumineur* and *Le Coloriste enlumineur* contrasted the glorious art of the manuscript with what they claimed were the vulgar and worthless creations of the printing press. "The printing press, having made some use of illumination, cut it down and caused its death"[56] wrote one contributor. In 1895 a different author echoed this theme: "It was thus that, decked out in all its glory, shining with a splendor unknown until then, the noble and aristocratic illumination was attacked at its height by the dreary and democratic printing press which powered the sentiment of revolt." [57] The printing press serves in these pages as a metonymic symbol of all that is crass and uncultivated in the modern age, a symbol of the very bourgeois culture on which these journals depended. It is no less ironic, of course, that this discourse is found in printed journals available for 20 centimes a piece. No amount of hand-colored detail could obscure the mass-produced nature of these clip-out manuscripts. Nor could any amount of medieval finery finally persuade the modern princess to stay locked in her tower.

Laura Morowitz is Associate Professor of Art History at Wagner College New York. She is the author of numerous articles on nineteenth-century art as well as co-author, with Elizabeth Emery, of *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Ashgate 2003). She is currently at work on a manuscript and several articles dealing with late nineteenth-century American medievalism.

Email the author Lamnabi2[at]comcast.net

Notes

All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are those of the author. I would like to thank the helpful staff of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. I am grateful to Françoise Lucbert and Elizabeth Emery for their discussions on the above issues. My thanks go also to Françoise for her careful editorial suggestions, to Robert Alvin Adler for his thorough copyediting and to Petra ten-Doesschate Chu for her guidance and criticisms

[1] There is an enormous body of literature on this phenomenon. For an excellent introduction to these issues see the collected volumes of *Studies in Medievalism*; Claire A. Simmons, "Introduction," *Medievalism and the Quest for the "Real" Middle Ages* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 1–28; Michael Glencross, *Reconstructing Camelot: French Romantic Medievalism and the Arthurian Tradition* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995); Kevin L. Morris, *The Image of the Middle Ages in Romantic and Victorian Literature* (Dover: Croom Helm, 1984).

[2] For this broader context see Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin de Siècle France* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

[3] See Emery and Morowitz, *Consuming the Past*; Janine Dakyns, *The Middle Ages in French Literature 1851-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); Patricia Ward, *The Medievalism of Victor Hugo* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975). For a full biography on this subject, see Emery and Morowitz.

[4] The medieval exhibits at both the 1889 and 1900 Expositions Universelles were so designed. The most notable example was the *L'Exposition des primitifs français* held in 1904 at the Musée du Louvre and the Bibliothèque Nationale. The exhibition was recently "recreated" at the Louvre. See Dominique Thiébault, et. al., *Primitifs français: Découvertes et redécouvertes*, Exh. cat. (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2004). For a discussion of the political impetus of the exhibition see Laura Morowitz, "Medievalism, Classicism and Nationalism: The Appropriation of the French *Primitifs* in Turn-of-the-Century France," in June Hargrove and Neil McWilliam, eds., *Nationalism and French Visual Culture: 1870-1914* (New Haven and Washington D.C: Yale University Press/National Gallery of Art, 2005).

[5] See the essays in Elizabeth Emery and Laurie Postlewaite, eds., *Medieval Saints in Late Nineteenth Century-French Culture* (Jefferson, N.C./London: McFarland, 2004); Fin-de-siècle art critics espousing these views include Alphonse Germain and Joséphin "Sâr" Péladan. See also the copious writings in the period on Jeanne d'Arc, such as Pierre Lanéry d'Arc, *Le Livre d'or de Jeanne d'Arc* (Paris: Librairie Techener, 1894).

[6] Michel Camille, "Les Très Riches Heures de Duc de Berry: An Illuminated Manuscript in the Age of Reproduction," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1990): 72–107. Publications on medieval collectors abound in this period. See for example Bernard Prost, "Les arts à la cour du duc de Berry d'après les récentes publications de MM. Jules Guiffrey, Alfred de Champeux et Paul Gauchéry" *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (1 September 1895), 254.

[7] For Huysman's interest in the Middle Ages see Elizabeth Emery, "J.K. Huysmans: Medievalist," *Modern Language Studies* 30, no. 2 (Autumn 2000): 119–31.

[8] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (London: Macmillan, 1899; reprint, New York: August M. Kelly, 1965), 159.

[9] Jonathan Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture in France 1570-1715* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in Seventeenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). Carl Schorske makes a similar case for the nineteenth-century Viennese bourgeoisie in his writings on the Ringstrasse in *Vienna, Fin de Siècle: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980).

[10] Rémy Saisselin, *The Bourgeois and the Bibelot* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984).

[11] Camille, "Les Très Riches Heures," 72–107; Emery and Morowitz, *Consuming the Past*, 77–84.

[12] In 1893, the medievalist Louis Courajod inaugurated a new wing in the Musée du Louvre dedicated to sculptures and *objets d'art* of the medieval and Renaissance period. On Courajod see Laura Morowitz, "'Une Guerre Sainte Contre l'Académisme': Louis Courajod, The Louvre, and the Barbaric Middle Ages" in *The Year's Work in Medievalism*, ed. Jesse G. Swan and Richard Utz, vol. 27 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 56–63.

[13] For the link between women and the arts of the home in this period see Deborah S. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[14] See the quote in endnote 55, below.

[15] "Ce n'est donc pas assez que le premier venu puisse copier à la grosse les meubles du Musée de Cluny! Je sais bien que l'on n'est pas obligé de les acheter, mais il faut bien les voir puisqu'ils emplissent des boulevards entiers et des rues!" J.K. Huysmans, "Le Musée des arts décoratifs et l'architecture cuite," *L'Art Moderne/Certains*, trans. E. Emery (Paris: Union générale des éditions, 1975), 338.

[16] For how the female artist was viewed in France in this period see Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Nineteenth Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Whitney Chadwick, "Separate but Unequal: Women's Sphere and the New Art" in *Woman, Art and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 210–35; Silverman., *Art Nouveau in Fin de Siècle France*, 186–207

[17] On women's access see Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity" in *Expanding the Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

[18] On the tradition of these domestic albums, see Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

- [19] Jonathan J.G. Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and their Method of Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
- [20] See Emery and Morowitz, *Consuming the Past*, 43–47
- [21] I am grateful to Dr. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu for bringing the Dürer reference to my attention.
- [22] On women's religiosity in the nineteenth century see Ralph Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism 1798-1914* (London: Routledge, 1989); Gérard Cholvy and Yves Marie Hilaire, *Histoire Religieuse de la France Contemporaine 1880-1930* (Toulouse: Bibliothèque Historique Privat, 1986). For a good recent discussion of this issue in relation to nineteenth-century art see Richard Thomson, "The Religious Debate: Representing Faith, Defining Modernity," in *The Troubled Republic: Visual Culture and Social Debate in France 1889-1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).
- [23] Sandra Hindman and others, *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age: Recovery and Reconstruction*, Exh. cat., (Evanston, IL: Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, 2001).
- [24] See the writings of Dominique Poulot, *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine 1789-1815* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997) as well as her "Surveiller et s'instruire: Révolution française et l'intelligence de l'héritage historique," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 344 (1996): 31–143.
- [25] Hindman and others, *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age*, 50.
- [26] The practice of selling individual leaves can be traced back to the sale of Abbate Celotti on May 3, 1826 at Christie's. Viewers in late nineteenth-century France could have seen individual leaves on display in public as well, such as at the Musée des Arts Industriels, which opened in 1878. *Ibid.*, 52, 72.
- [27] Camille, "Les Très Riches Heures", 72–107.
- [28] Hindman and others, *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age*, 149.
- [29] "C'est à notre époque si avide de recherches dans le passé, si désireuse de recueillir jusqu'aux plus faibles vestiges de ce que l'art dans ses multiples incarnations a pu produire de beau, d'original, ou seulement de gracieux, c'est à notre époque, dis-je, qu'il devrait être donné de remettre en lumière un des arts, les plus anciens en même temps que les plus charmants, je veux parler d'Enluminure." *L'Enlumineur* February 1889, 1.
- [30] These figures are mentioned in Hindman and others, *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age*, 149. They erroneously refer to Labitte as "Albert".
- [31] *L'Enlumineur*, February 1889, 11.
- [32] See for example the cover of the popular women's journal *La Famille*, 11 January 1891
- [33] Garb, *Sisters of the Brush*.
- [34] For example, Alphonse Labitte, *L'Art de l'enluminure: métier, histoire, pratique* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1893). Alphonse seems to have been preceded in this field by an older relative, Adolphe, likely his father, who published several books on medieval manuscripts in the 1870s.
- [35] "Certainement parmi les femmes comme parmi les hommes, le grand talent est rare: mais on ne pourra juger avec équité que lorsque les femmes auront les mêmes avantages que les hommes, lorsqu'elles pourront comme eux consacrer leur temps à faire de l'art sans avoir besoin d'une fortune particulière; enfin (le préjugé était complètement détruit), lorsque les villes enverront étudier à Paris avec leur subvention, aussi bien un artiste femme qu'un artiste homme." Francillon, "Les Sentiments de l'art chez la femme," *L'Enlumineur*, October 1897, 1.
- [36] "Je vous promets de n'être pas ennuyeux comme un archéologue et je ne perdrai jamais de vue que le public distingué...je le sais, n'aime pas les pédants et ne raffole pas des érudits..." van Driesten, *Le Coloriste enlumineur*, May 1893, 3.
- [37] Founded by Joséphin "Sâr" Péladan, the Salons of the Rose+Croix exhibited from 1892–1897 and made a point of excluding all but practicing Catholics. Robert Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France: Joséphin Péladan and the Salons of the Rose+Croix* (New York: Garland Press, 1968); Jean da Silva, *Le Salon de la Rose+Croix (1892-1897)* (Paris: Syros Alternatives, 1991).
- [38] "...c'est l'intervention intelligente de la femme dans ce domaine." Anonymous, "Le bout de nos dames," *Le Coloriste enlumineur*, May 1898, 5.
- [39] "Toutes, cependant se plient sans rechigner aux caprices de la mode et Dieu sait ce qu'ils sont extravagants! Les plus sages ont adopté, sans trop de difficultés, le pouf ignoble qui a sévi naguère... Prenez-y garde toutefois; la mode est tyrannique et puissante, et le jour où nos lectrices y auront sacrifié les principes de notre art, son charme sera évanoui." *Ibid.*

- [40] "Ces recommandations peuvent ne pas être du goût de tous: les femmes du monde qui ont l'habitude de l'élégance et le culte du bibelot auront quelque peine à se priver de ces petits riens inutiles." Untitled editorial, *Le Coloriste enlumineur*, May 1893, 2.
- [41] "Qu'avons-nous aujourd'hui à la place de ces pieux artistes? Quelques rares amateurs essayant de marcher sur leurs traces." "La miniature dans le présent et dans le passé" *Le Coloriste enlumineur*, July 1893, 23.
- [42] "...ouverte de nouveau à une portion choisie, à une élite à laquelle appartient nos lectrices." *Ibid.*, 21.
- [43] Van Driesten's assumptions were of course false, as proven by numerous studies on the work of female artisans and the manuscripts of mystics such as Hildegard von Bingen. For an introduction to these issues see "The Middle Ages" in Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, 37–58.
- [44] "...Mesdames, en vous adonnant à certains arts délicats et choisis, vous reprenez les traditions de vos aïeules." Untitled editorial, *Le Coloriste enlumineur*, August 1893, 27.
- [45] Bonnie G. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: The Bourgeoisie of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).
- [46] The manuscript is reproduced as plate IV in *Le Coloriste enlumineur*, May 1893.
- [47] Camille, "Les Très Riches Heures."
- [48] For a full inventory of the Rothschild manuscript holdings see Christopher de Hamel, *The Rothschilds and their Collections of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: The British Library, 2005).
- [49] Hindman and others, *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age*, 146.
- [50] *Ibid.*, 148.
- [51] The ad appears in numerous issues of the journal. "Le livre de famille ou mémorial domestique" *Le Coloriste enlumineur*, May 1894, 1.
- [52] "...ont mis en lumière des avantages qu'a procuré à la société, sous l'ancien régime, la stabilité des familles ainsi que la conservation des traditions du foyer." *Ibid.*
- [53] "...elle peut assurer le bonheur, la paix et la prospérité morale et matérielle des familles." *Ibid.*
- [54] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 76.
- [55] "Nos intérieurs, où la lumière est nécessaire à cause du travail, sont obscurcies par l'abus des vitraux colorés...nos petits foyers s'encombrent de grand landiers en fer forge, faits pour le vaste manteau descheminées féodales;...nos sièges, au lieu de s'accommoder par leurs courbes aux grâces souples de la femme contemporaine, à ses vêtements aux plis légers, affectent les formes rigides des hautes cathédrales du Moyen Age, et font d'une Parisienne de cette fin de siècle une Blanche de Castile malgré elle, une châtelaine en pénitence." "La Maison Moderne — Études de décoration et d'ameublement" *La Revue illustrée* 1, no. 8, April 1886, 283.
- [56] "L'imprimerie après s'être quelque peu servie de l'enluminure l'a réduite et a causé sa mort." Untitled editorial, *L'Enlumineur*, June 1890, 1.
- [57] "C'est alors que parée de toute sa gloire, rayonnant d'une splendeur jusque-là inconnue, la noble et aristocratique enluminure fut attaquée en pleine prospérité par la maussade et démocratique imprimerie que poussait un instinct de révolte," "L'Enluminure," *Le Coloriste enlumineur*, May 1895, 2.

Illustrations



Fig. 1, Poster for the Vitraux "Glacier," n.d. Color lithograph. Paris, Musée de la Publicité. Inv. 999.75.1
[\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, J.E. van Driesten, cover of *L'Enlumineur* (15 Feb 1890). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.
Fol. Q 123. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Cover, *Le Coloriste Enlumineur* (15 Mai 1894). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Fol. V 3336. [\[return to text\]](#)

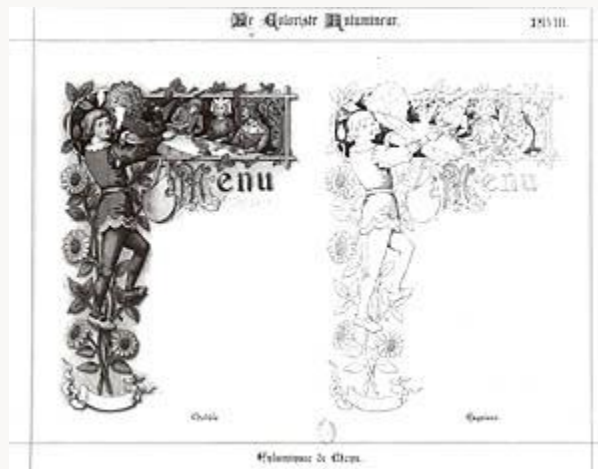


Fig. 4, "Menu." Plate VIII. *Le Coloriste Enlumineur* (15 Avril 1894). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Fol. V3336 [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 5, "Souvenir de première communion." Plate XX *Le Coloriste Enlumineur*. (15 Mars 1895). Paris, Bibliothèque de France. Fol. 3336. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 6, "Livre de Raison." Plate I (15 Mai 1894). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Fol. 3336. [\[return to text\]](#)