

An English Book of Music in the style of c. 1520

Inspired by the Mary Tudor Music Book (MS 1760)
And Anne Boleyn's French Motet Book (MS 1070)

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Summary

Why did I create this Book?

Books hold a special place in my life, as they do for many people. Although I currently prefer to read the heaviest of tomes on my iPad, as it is easier on my arthritic hands, I love the aesthetics of physical books: the smell and feel of the paper, the beauty of especially nice covers, the solidity of the weight, and the smell of a room with lots of books in it. I also love what the content promises: pulling me out of myself for a while, whether it is to be in a different place or time for a bit, with words and ideas, or to be immersed in music or visual art.

As with many objects and ideas, the books of Early Modern Europe have always seemed especially beautiful and interesting to me: newly-embraced ideas of humanism, inevitably presented in a lovely binding. The advent of the Gutenberg press spelled the end of the dominance of hand-bound books, but bibles, books of hours, and music books were still being created by hand, and I find myself drawn to those of the early sixteenth century, in particular. As the process of doing this project involved doing many, many things that I had never done before (almost everything!), I looked forward to learning a lot as I created this book of music.

Exemplars and Sources

The music book of Mary Tudor, Queen of France (MS 1760) contains both some beautiful pieces of music and some lovely illumination and calligraphy. It was likely commissioned for her as a wedding gift by Louis XII of France, and the decoration is generally attributed to Jean Bourdichon. It fairly elaborately decorated created on vellum, with vivid colors and gold shell on each page for both borders and majuscules. When it was created, its cover was cloth of gold over boards, and it reportedly contained a miniature of Henry VIII, which has since been cut out of the page. It is this music book that provided the visual model for my book.

Anne Boleyn's music book (MS 1070) was given to her as a gift when she lived in France, probably by Margaret d'Angoulême or her mother Louise of Savoy. She brought it with her to England when she returned in 1521, and this book and MS 1760 are among the few It has beautifully decorated majuscules, but is limited in decorative color to red and blue, and there is no gold shell or leafing. Printed on paper, its original binding is unknown, as it was re-bound in the nineteenth century

with leather over pasteboard. Both of these books were created for royal women to use in their private chambers, to sing with a small group of similarly noble courtiers.

The third source of music in my book is the Fayrfax Music Book (MS 5465). The curation of the contents of MS 5465 is attributed to composer Robert Fayrfax, likely because many of his pieces are featured in this book. He died in 1521, but the book was part of Henry VIII's library at the time.

Materials for Constructing the Book

For the construction of my music book, I have chosen to combine some physical attributes of MS 1760 and MS 1070, using paper for the textblock, as in MS 1070, but using primarily the decorating style found in MS 1760. For the basic cover I pasted linen over the boards. The textblock consists of four quires of four bifolia each, with endpapers of pergamenata to best replicate the vellum which would have been used in period for that purpose. My boards are three-ply lauan¹ of 4 mm, bound to the textblock with jute cord. The textblock was sewn in place using linen thread, and pergamenata was used again to line the spine. I used Ph neutral archival glue to glue the spine lining in place, as well as the linen cover, though animal glue or wheat paste would have been used in period. I chose to use pre-prepared glue, as I did not trust in my ability to successfully make glue that would do the job.

Materials for the Calligraphy and Illumination

I used oak gall ink for the staves, music notation, and words, and a rastrum to make the staves. The red ink used to number the pages and for the table of contents was a mix of Peat Brown, Scarlet and Vermilion inks from Winsor & Newton. The gouache was mixed from pigment powders of both natural and chemical sources, using either egg glair or gum Arabic (I used both for comparison) as a base, and whiting chalk to create opacity. For the gold on each page, I used first shell gold, and then, a combination of gold watercolor pigments with mica, mixed to match the gold shell as closely as possible.

¹ Lauan is, of course, unlikely to have been used in period as it is from Southeast Asia, but it was my best option, as I was unable to locate oak boards at my local lumber spots that were thin enough to use for book boards. I suspect that the COVID epidemic may have been a factor in this: not only did it interrupt many supply chains, but it seemed that home improvement was a very popular preoccupation early in quarantine.

Velvet Embroidered Cover

After I had chosen the contents for the book, I looked at the various covers of the time period, and strongly considered a leather-bound book with tooling and gilding. I would still like to do that, but I believe that I will save that for a lute book at some time in the future. What caught my eye instead were pictures of the velvet-bound books of Elizabeth I, with embroidered and appliquéd flowers. They made me think of the beautiful floral decorations in the Mary Tudor music book (MS 1760) that I had chosen as the model for the calligraphy and illumination for my book. These books were about seventy years later than the time I wished to do, so I looked for similar English or French book bindings from 1520 and earlier. I found several extant English examples from the 1540s, one from 1504, but, partially due to the more fragile nature of an embroidered book cover (as compared to a leather bookbinding), there were relatively few extant velvet bookbindings from around 1520. I realized that I would need to use other sources, such as leather cover decorations, and other needlework, to place my book cover design in the Early Tudor time.

It is difficult to tell whether I enjoyed the process of research or the process of creation more: there were so many areas of research for me to complete this project, and so much depth needed for me to produce this one item! I am looking forward to making more books in the future.

Research (In-Depth Explanation)

Musical Content of the Book

The first step in making this book was, for me, determining its content. I decided that I would like to create a book that could have belonged to a noble lady of the English court of Henry VIII, around 1520. Henry was known for desiring the ladies and gentlemen of his court to be well-versed in music, as he was², and so this lady would at least be able to sing, and probably play lute as well³. I was imagining this lady to have accompanied King Henry's sister Mary Tudor to France when she married Louis XII, and to have returned with her. The contents of this book, then, would be influenced by music and art from both side of the Channel – though France was considered far more fashionable.

The content was vital for not only the style of calligraphy and decoration that I wanted to do, but also for the size and shape of the book. I considered making a lute book, along the lines of Vincenzo Capirola's beautiful 1517 book of illuminated lute music – and I do have plans to make one in the future. Lute notation is in the form of tablature, and books of lute tablature are generally greater in width than height.



"Stavasi amore dormento" Bartolomeo Tromboncino, found in the Capirola Lute Book⁴

² David Skinner, "The musical life of King Henry VIII," *Classical Music by BBC Magazine*, June 27, 2016, accessed January 2021.

³ A lute book, however, has different proportions to each page; because of this, choral music and solo lute music were rarely combined.

⁴ Vincenzo Capirola, *Lute Book (Untitled)*, Single hand-written copy: Venice, 1517; IMSLP, accessed December 3, 2017.

I decided for this project, however, to create a book of vocal music, primarily because there are two music books in the Franco-Flemish style that can be reliably dated to England in 1520, and that style of decoration was what I wished to learn more about and to emulate.

Once I had determined that I was going to make a book of vocal music, I decided to take the contents from three sources: MS 1760, known as The Mary Tudor Songbook, MS 1070, known as the Anne Boleyn Songbook, and MS 5465, known as the Fayrfax Manuscript. To determine the length of my book, I gathered information about each of the three books. I have chosen five musical pieces from each of these three sources, and added three more, for a total of nine Latin texts, five English texts, and four French texts. MS 1760 and MS 1070 contain pieces entirely in Latin and French, though primarily in Latin, and MS 5465 contains pieces entirely in English. All three sources have a mix of sacred and secular pieces, many composed by favorite court composers of the respective Kings.

Here is a table of the contents of my music book that were taken from these three manuscripts:

From Pepys MS 1760 (Mary Tudor songbook)

<i>Folio</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Composer</i>
2v	Tabula Huius Codicis (Table of Contents)	
6	Dulcis amica Dei rosa vernans stella	Prioris, Johannes
9v–11	Suscipe verbum virgo Maria quod tibi	Bontemps
19v–20	Ave Maria gratia plena II: Tu mater regis	Mouton, Jean (ca. 1459– 1522)
38v–40	Benedicite Dominus	Mouton, Jean
75v–76	J'ay mis mon cuer	Gascogne, Mathieu

From MS 1070 (Anne Boleyn songbook)

<i>Folio</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Composer</i>
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22v	O salve genitrix virgo dulcissima	Anonymous
31v– 33r	Ave Maria ... virgo serena	Despres, Josquin
34v– 35r	Tota pulchra es amica mea et macula	Mouton, Jean
35v– 36r	Sub tuum praesidium confugimus	Brumel, Antoine
72v–73r	Gaude Barbara beata summe polens	Mouton, Jean

From GB-Lbl MS 5465 (Fayrfax MS)

<i>Folio</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Composer</i>
2v–3	The more I go, the farther I am behind	Newark, William
12v–13	That was my woe is now my most gladness	Fayrfax, Robert
17v–19	Alas it is I that wot not what to say	Turges, Edmund
30v–31	Alas for lack of her presence	Fayrfax, Robert
38v–40	O rote of trouthe princes to my paye	Henry VIII

Material for the Pages

The first decision I had to make was an easy one: I chose to use paper, rather than parchment⁵, primarily for budgetary reasons⁶. Paper was less common for hand-bound books of this period, but by no means rare. Prior to the advent of the printing press, paper was used much more rarely in heavily decorated books, and parchment was the most common material for the pages of the most elaborate books. I have on hand some pergamenata, as I have just started creating award scrolls, and it is lovely paper. However, for a book with ink and color on both sides, it was a little too translucent, and so I decided to use it for the endpapers and spine reinforcement, as parchment was often used for those purposes in early paper

⁵ To clarify my terms: both “parchment” and “vellum” are used in various sources to mean animal-skin surface that has been treated to receive writing and decoration. There are also rag papers that are referred to by these names, referring to the attempts to imitate the look and texture of animal skin, but they are not made of skin. I will refer to animal-skin surfaces as parchment, and rag-based surfaces as paper.

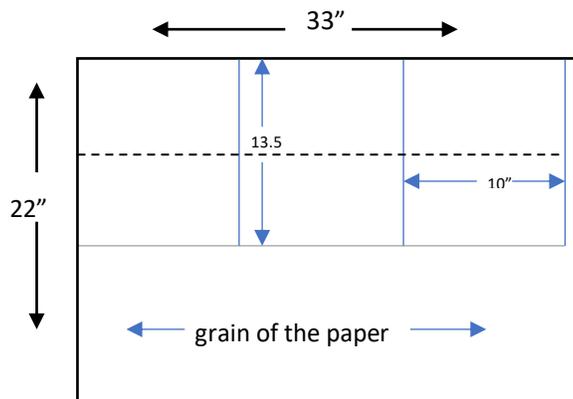
⁶ 10 sheets of the paper I would need to create my four quires cost me about \$40, whereas that is less than the price of two pages’ worth of calfskin vellum, which was too small, at any rate, to create the size bifolium I wanted for this book. I realize that one can purchase used vellum, and plan to for future projects, but did not feel adequate to that task for my first endeavor.

books.^{7 8} This is certainly a choice borne out by my exemplars: while the Mary Tudor book has parchment pages, the Anne Boleyn manuscript is paper.

Having decided on paper for my pages, I looked for paper that would be 100% rag, and also have a good surface for calligraphy and illumination. I decided to use a paper I found from John Neal Books called Arnhem 1618 Printmaking paper.

Choosing Page Size and Number of Pages

That paper was made in sheets that were 30 x 22 inches, and so I wanted to determine a folio (page) size that would use the sheets of paper most efficiently, while staying within the parameters of my three chosen sources. The folio sizes for each manuscript were MS 5465 - 11.7 x 8.46 inches, MS 1760 – 8.7 x 5.7 inches, and MS 1070 – 11 x 7.5 inches⁹. I decided to make the folio page size of my book roughly the mean of these, and decided that a 10 inch height both fit within the range of the three books, and, making the grain of the paper work, would fit three bifolia per sheet. If I used the ratio of height to width from both MS 1070 and MS 1760, this made the width of each folio 6.75, and the width, then, of each bifolium 13.5 inches.



Layout of bifolia on paper sheet

The sheets of my paper had a deckle edge, and my modern sense of aesthetics wanted very much to use it for my book. I left the edges on, and only after I had already cut them, calligraphed, and illuminated them, did I look, and find zero examples in period for a deckle edge in a book.

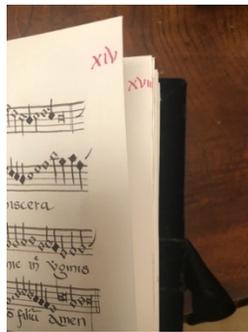
⁷ John A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, NY: Ashgate Publishing, 1999: 185, 190.

⁸ Ibid, 178. Szirmai rates the incidence of paper books among extant books at this time at 17.6%.

⁹ While most archival references to page numbers are in centimeters or millimeters, I am more comfortable with inches, and will be using them for measurements in this project.

In *Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft*, Hunter Dard asserts that “...during the early years of printing in Europe the deckle edges on paper were looked upon with disdain.” The deckle edge happens when the slurry slips into the deckle, or frame, that fits inside of the paper mould. Bookbinders at the time were fastidious about trimming the deckle edges off of the paper that they left very little margin.¹⁰

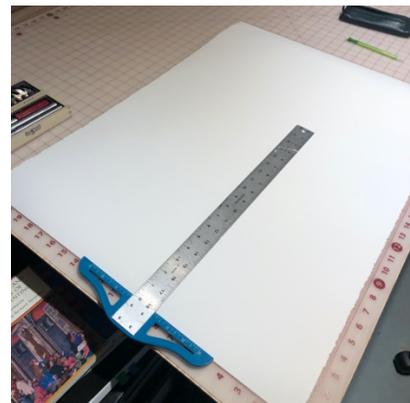
...in fact, my book went through a very similar process...



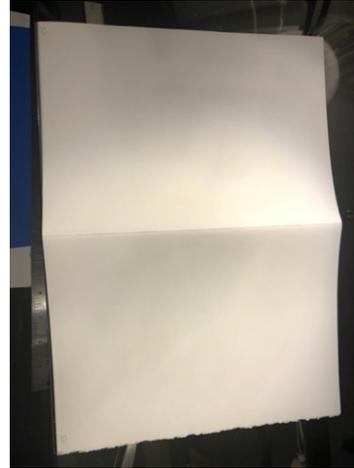
Trimming the deckle edges left the page numbers a bit close to the edge

Cutting the Bifolia

Long before thinking about trimming edges, of course, I had to start with the paper in the first place. The paper I ordered was shipped in a tube, and so I rolled it out flat and allowed it to sit with books on top of it, to straighten it out. After a couple of days, all of the roll had left the paper, and I was ready to begin cutting out my bifolia.



¹⁰ Dard Hunter, *Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft*, NY: Dover, 1978: 227-8.



Each bifolium would have four folios, and each quire would have four bifolia. With a total of four quires, and after four folios were taken out of the total for endpaper anchors, this left sixty pages for my textblock. This is considerably fewer than my three exemplars¹¹, but seemed like a lot of pages for me to fill on my first time out making a book.¹²

Illumination First, or Binding?

It seemed clear that the calligraphy, at least, was done prior to binding. I was unsure, however, about whether the illumination was done before or after the binding process. As I planned to use gouache and gold shell, and not just ink, I was not sure that the decoration could withstand the inevitable pressure of the binding process. After some consultation with experts, I was assured that in period, the decoration for hand-bound books was done prior to binding.¹³

As every piece of music chosen for this book required multiple pages, I planned carefully to make sure that the pagination was correct for each bifolium and quire, and proceeded to inscribe each page. I left eight pages with only staves, both for the possibility of needing more room than planned for any piece, and because I would like to write an original chanson at some point in the future, and add it to the end of the book. I ended up with forty-eight pages of music, and two pages for the Table of Contents.

¹¹ MS 1070 has 281 pages, MS 1760 has 191, and MS 5465 has 253.

¹² I have been doing calligraphy for a number of years, but primarily of the card-making and diploma-filling type.

¹³ This came as a relief: I had read that in Gutenberg bibles, the decoration was done after pressing and binding, and was concerned about being able to do neat work in a bound book. After thinking about it, this seemed to make more sense of the rather small ration – 1.14 – of height to width of Gutenberg bibles: this was probably to make the pages more accessible to the illuminators.



A stack of bifolia



Bifolia after having been rigorously creased



Quires ready for the music

Pagination of the Musical Pieces

I printed out each of my selected pieces of music, as well as the vocal parts from the Susato books of 1540 for “Mille Regretz”¹⁴ and proceeded to work out a table of contents that would create a mix of the pieces from the different books.

Vocal music was not written in score form at this time, with all parts lined up, but, instead, each part was written separately. For “Mille Regretz,” the parts were taken from four separate books, one for each voice of Soprano (Superius), Alto, Tenor and Bass (Bassus). As I was copying the parts into one book, I had to make sure that if one part took more than half of a page, that I stopped all of the other parts at the same place. Luckily, that song fit on two facing pages, making it singable by four people at once – assuming that they liked each other well enough to stand that close to each other. For the other pieces, I followed the pagination set by the original sources when possible, and worked pagination carefully when it wasn’t. Both MS 1070 and MS 5465 had larger pages than my book, and keeping to the pagination was tricky, and sometimes not possible. However, most of the songs were able to be fit onto my pages with only a small amount of wrangling.

Converting Two Notation Styles into One

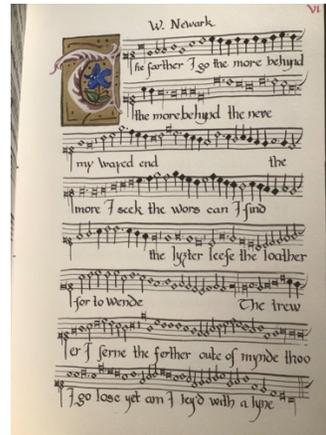
More challenging to me was the minor variation of rhythmic notation from the slightly older MS 5465 to the two other manuscripts. MS 5465 uses black full

¹⁴ The chanson dates from earlier than 1540, but all earlier copies are lost.

mensural notation, in which all note heads are filled in, while MS 1760 and MS 1070 use black void mensural notation, which is very similar to modern notation in look. As the style I was using was based on MS 1760, I transcribed the notation of the pieces from MS 5465 into black void mensural notation for consistency. In addition, MS 5465 includes coloration in red of some notes, which could be interpreted by performers of the time either as melismatic passages, or instrumental interludes. I chose to notate them as melismatic passages, to match the a cappella arrangements found in the more modern manuscripts.



The Farther I go, MS 5465



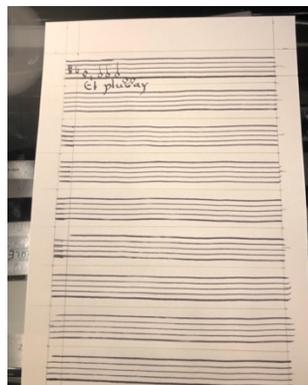
The Farther I go, my book

Spacing of Staves

Once I had worked through some of the notational issues, and had a fairly good idea of the pages, I needed to determine the spacing of staves. This was dictated by the size of the *rastrum*¹⁵ that I was able to find, and I tried several different spacing measurements before I found the one that allowed adequate room for text below the staves.



Rastrum and holder used for staves

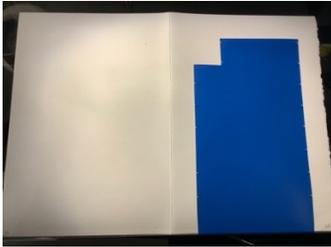


Trying out different spacing



¹⁵ A rastrum is a nib that has five points, and is used specifically for drawing staves. This is quite possibly the coolest things ever invented, and was used in period for creating staves.

All of the pages in my exemplars had the same spacing except for the table of contents and page 1, so I made a template and drew lines for all sixty pages.



Template to create consistent spacing from page to page



Using the template marks to create guide lines for staves

Materials used for Calligraphing the Music

For the staves, music notation, and text, I used Oak-Gall, or Iron-Gall ink, prepared by Baron Alric of Ashfield, and purchased from him in about 2012. While I am interested in the processes of materials for making art, I am grateful for the lovely ink made by His Excellency, and that I did not have to learn how to make this ink for this project. This kind of ink was used for a large amount of the writing of the early sixteenth century, and was the most common type used in SCA period, followed in popularity by lamp-black or carbon-based inks.

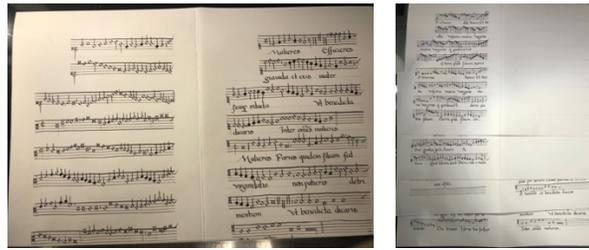


Having poured my ink into the inkwell, I proceeded to draw my staves.¹⁶



¹⁶ It was a lot of staves.

Once the staves were in place, I began the process of notating the music, as shown below.



The Nibs, The Notation, and the Text

I experimented with a few different sizes of nib for both the music and the text. In the manuscripts I was imitating, it seemed that the nib for the music was the same size as that used for the text. As I was working with a smaller page size than two of my exemplars, I chose a Speedball C-5 nib for both, in hopes of fitting the music on each page in a similar way as the originals. After I had notated the music, I began to add the text. With the benefit of hindsight, I wish that I had used a C-4, or even C-3, and worried less about fitting all of the music in, as the height/width proportions of both my letters and music notation are not quite correct compared with the originals, though MS 1760 does seem to use a slightly narrower nib than the other two. I practiced writing some of the text imitating the hand in MS 1760 – which may actually be a few hands¹⁷ – and began the process of adding the text to the music. I noticed after completing the text of several pieces that my lower case letters were larger in proportion to the upper case ones, but elected to make all of the text in my book as consistent as possible, and continued with the proportion. I made my best judgement call on when to use the varying “s” and “r” choices when writing text from MS 5465 and MS 1070.



When I had completed the music notation and the text below it, I wrote the page numbers in red, as found in MS 1760.

¹⁷ DIAMM, general description of MS 1760.



folio 10 of MS 1760



page 40 of my book

Materials for Illumination

To create the gouache paints, I purchased pigments in all of the colors that were prevalent in MS 1760, and mixed them with whiting chalk for opacity¹⁸. I then made some egg glair¹⁹, and worked on mixing up the colors that I needed for my book, using, alternatiely, gum arabic - liquid and powder - as well.



Mixing pigment with whiting chalk, on a marble slab with a glass muller

¹⁸ Bjo Trimble, "Making Watercolors and Gouache Paints," *Ancient Earth Pigments*, November 16, 2015.

¹⁹ Daniel Thompson states that "The basic, standard medium for illumination was glair." Daniel V. Thompson, *The Materials and Techniques of Medieval Painting*, New York: Dover, 1956: 50.



Egg whites, beaten to create glair



Paints mixed with pigment, glair, and clove oil



Pigments box

On a scrap of leftover Arnhem paper, I tested out my paints.



The natural pigments²⁰ I used are: cerulean, malachite, verona green earth or terre verde, viridian, yellow ochre, titanium white, red ochre, iron oxide, burnt sienna, caput mortem, and lampblack.²¹ The synthetically created pigments I used are: thyme green, ultramarine blue²², crystal yellow, mineral violet, and crystal red.

Each page of MS 1760 has gold on it, and I originally wished to use gold shell. I purchased one tablet, and was able to complete page 1, 2, 14, 15, and 16. Again, budget required that I create a color that matched it as best as I could. I found that if I mixed several different shades of gold watercolor, I could come close to the tone, but the shell had a matte texture that was incredibly difficult to match. I tried some chalk white, and various proportions of the different golds that I had, but most remained too shiny, until they were too dull. I tried mixing caput mortem in, and had some mild success with that, and settled on Arabic gold mixed with moon gold and a touch of the caput mortem.

²⁰ I differentiate between natural and synthetic, but Thompson states that medieval artists differentiated between natural and artificial. Thompson claims that medieval artists categorized as artificial any pigment that was created using a chemical reaction, such as verdigris from treating copper with salts to produce green. Thompson, 78.

²¹ Although cerulean and viridian are natural pigments, their use did not occur until the late eighteenth (viridian) and nineteenth (cerulean) centuries.

²² Ultramarine blue is a color made from the ash after pigment has been extracted from lapis lazuli. It also occurs naturally, but is



The many attempts to match the shell gold



Shell gold – the real thing



The closest I could mix to match the shell

Illumination Exemplars

To create the majuscules and flowers, I created a “palette” of examples from MS 1760, and chose from this palette for the pieces that were not from that manuscript. Following the style of decoration, all second pages of a piece were designated as such by a flower instead of a majuscule. Again, with the issue of space in mind, I used smaller majuscules and flowers for the second part of each page.



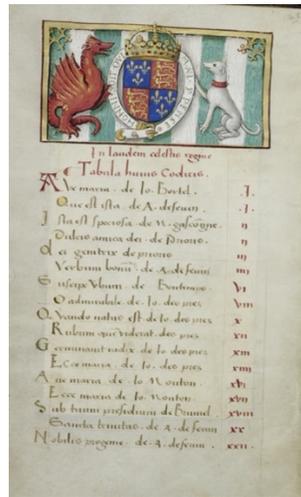
folios 7v and 9 of MS 1760



pages 3 and 4 of my book

After working through a few pages of the main content of the book, I wanted to tackle the two most complex pages, which corresponded with folios 3 and 6 of MS 1760. I wanted to do something tailored for my Table of Contents, which was folio 3 of MS 1760. MS 1760 contains the dedication *In laudem celestis regine*, in praise of the Heavenly Queen. I decided to dedicate (without, I hope, too much hubris...) my book to the glory of Atlantia, *In gloriam Regnum Atlantia*. As the original manuscript includes “major items in the English coat of arms above the *tabula* – the Cadwallader

dragon, the Nevill hound, the Garter and the royal crown,²³ I decided to include Spike, and the Stierbach bull, centered around a lute.



folio 3 MS 1760



Tabula huius Codicis

Dulcis amica Dei rosa Vernans 1
 Suscipe verbum virgo Maria 11
 The more I go, the farther I am 16
 Tota pulchra es amica mea 19
 Benedicite Dominus 21
 Jay mis mon cuer 25
 That was my woe is now 29
 Ave Marie virgo serena 33
 Mille Regrete 37
 O salve genetrix virgo 41

Table of Contents, my book

For the beautiful page that includes a full border, I included a full page of music to replace the section that was cut out of MS 1760.²⁴ The decoration in this book is sometimes attributed to Jean Bourdichon, and is, at least, modeled closely after the style of his life-like and botanical illustrations found in his *Grandes Heures de Anne de Bretagne*. The roses and lilies are representative of the relationship between England (roses) and France (lilies), and is an argument for this book having been created as a wedding gift for Mary Tudor, Henry Tudor's younger sister, upon her marriage to Louis XII of France.



folio 6 of MS 1760

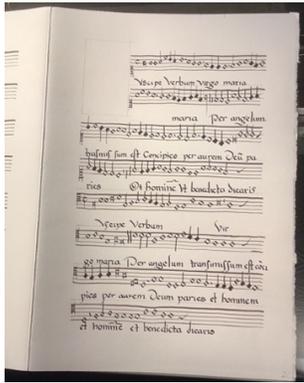


page 1 of my book

²³ Brobeck, 60.

²⁴ There is conjecture that this was originally a portrait of either Anne de Bretagne or Mary Tudor, Queen of France, and was painted over with a portrait of Henry VIII later.

After these two pages were completed, I proceeded to finish the other forty-eight planned pages of music, adding the majuscules and flowers. Due to the differences in size and proportion, I did not follow the decoration precisely, but did my best to imitate the style.



Before majuscules added



With majuscules



folio 10 of MS 1760



folio 10v of MS 1760



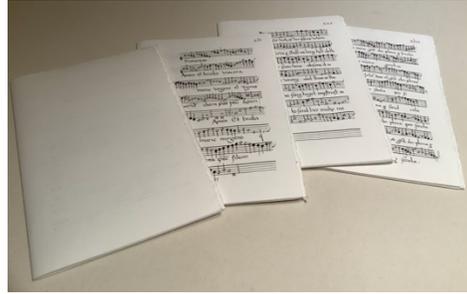
folio 14v of MS 1760



folio 20 of MS 1760



folio 21v of MS 1760



The four quires of my book, ready for binding

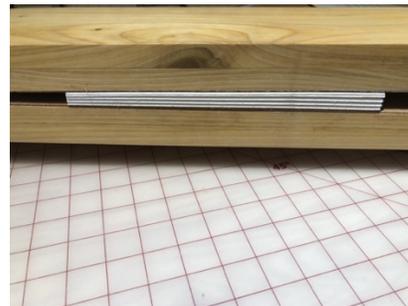
Binding the Book

Planning and Sewing the Bands

In his detailed book *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, John Szirmai gives two pieces of information that were vital to me at this stage of making the book: one is that the number of bands in Renaissance bindings tends to be in proportion to the height of the spine, and that the width of the boards does, as well. As my book was going to be sixty pages – relatively thin compared to most books in period – I chose to have four bands. I went with a spacing example that has a slightly wider space in the center of the five spaces created by the four bands.²⁵ The Moxon Vise is a tool that is named after a printer, who in 1703 published a book called “Mechanick Exercises.” He is likely to have not even used this device, and definitely did not invent it, but his description of a “double screw” vise led to that tool being called after him. It is not a tool exclusively – or even primarily – used for book-making, but it has been very handy in my project, and is extremely likely to have existed in SCA period.



*Woodcut of printing process, 16th Century²⁶
(the large machine on the left is the book press)*



Quires in the Moxon vise which I used as a book press

²⁵ Szirmai, 180-181.

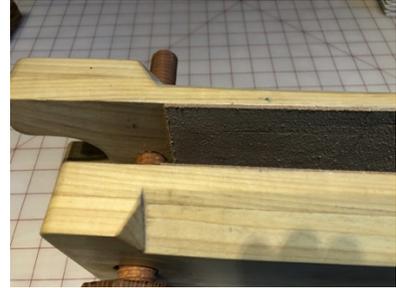
²⁶ “Printing Press” from *The Book of Trades* by Jost Amman, 1568.



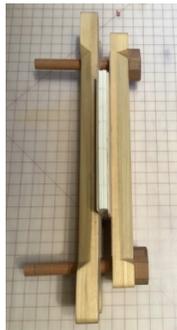
Center fold of a quire with holes sawed



Moxon vise, used to hold quires steady while (gulp) sawing the edges



Books from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, showing bands.²⁷



Quires held steady in the Moxon vise



I used a hack saw to cut the initial binding holes



I created a larger notch using an craft knife

²⁷ Erik Kwakkel, "Dirty Old Books," *Medieval Books*, February 26, 2016, accessed January 2021.

After adding the holes for the headbands to the textblock, the next step was to use another tool that my husband made for me: a sewing frame²⁸. I threaded the frame with jute cord²⁹, and twisted the double strands to strengthen them. Then I lined up the quires and sewed the bands to the textblock, using example (f) on page 189 of *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*.



Quires, ready for the sewing frame



Book sewing frame in woodcut, 1568³⁰



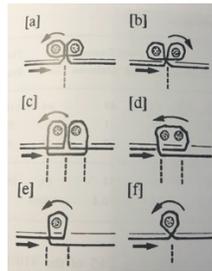
Sewing frame in process of being strung



Bottom of sewing frame, showing twisting method



Three of the four bands twisted



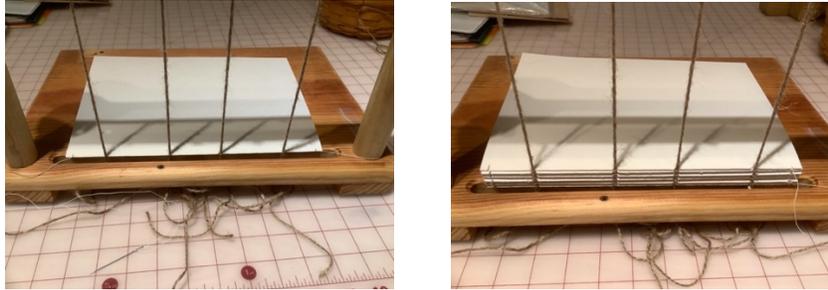
Some methods used for sewing the textblock to the bands³¹

²⁸ The first was the Moxon vise that I used to press my pages together to prepare for binding. I admit a little bias, but I am pretty sure that I have the best husband ever.

²⁹ Szirmai, 183. Vegetable cord, leather, and parchment were all used for bands.

³⁰ "Buchbinder" from *The Book of Trades* by Jost Amman, 1568.

³¹ Szirmai, 189.



The process of sewing the text block to the bands

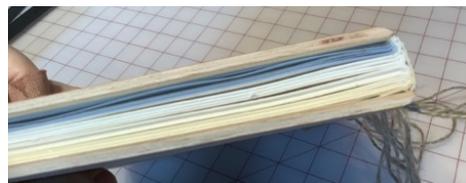
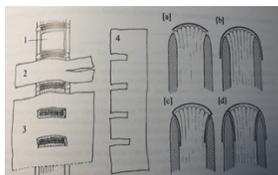
Adding The Endbands, Boards and Linen Cover

Before taking the bound textblock off of the frame, the boards were cut to 10.25 x 6.75 inches, to be .25 inches large than the textblock all around. Then I realized that my embroidered cover was going to be a little large, and they got re-cut to be 10.5 x 7 inches.³²



Top board, before sanding edges Edges sanded to fit spine

I sanded the second pair of boards to a shape that would curve smoothly into the spine, and then marked the placement of the bands. Then I removed the textblock from the sewing frame, placed it in the Moxon vice, and took a hammer to it to slightly round the spine. As my textblock is relatively thin, not a lot of rounding was necessary. I used type 1 of spine lining, and type [a] of spine supports, within the embroidered cover.



³² To be very clear: my husband cut the boards, using a table saw, as I was neither brave enough to use that particular (new) power tool, nor strong enough to use a hand saw. He didn't even raise an eyebrow when I explained that I had messed up on the measurements of the boards that he had cut earlier....

Spine lining and text block rounding³³

My book, being somewhat thin, does not need as much rounding



Broken spine cover showing used parchment repurposed for lining the spine, as well as double bands³⁴

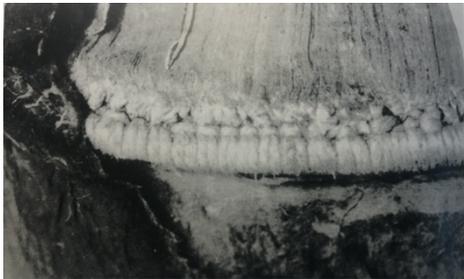


Adding the pergamenata to line the spine



Spine, lined with pergamenata and glued in place

After the spine lining was dried, it was time to add the endbands, and put the boards in place.



Endbands of a book from 1504³⁵



Endbands of a book from 1560³⁶

³³ Szirmai, 195.

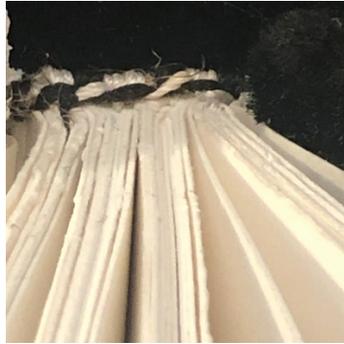
³⁴ Jason Daley, "X-Rays reveal 'Hidden Library' on the Spines of Early Books," Smithsonianmag.com, July 2016.

³⁵ Szirmai, 204.

³⁶ Federico Grisone, *Des edlen hochberumbten rittermässigen Manns Friderici Grisoni Neapoltanius beschreibung rütterlichen tugennt der Reutterey wahre gerechte ordnungen vnd lehren die Pferd gerecht inn alle geradigkeit zum Ernst vnnd Kurtzweill geschickt vnnd volkhomben zumachen durch Josephen Höchstettern uffs ainfelttigest verteutschet*, 1560, Collections, Michigan State University.



Silk thread used for the endbands



Headband of my book



Footband of my book

After the endbands were sewn, following the pattern shown on the YouTube video “Making a Medieval Book, which demonstrates the technique on page 207 in *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*,³⁷ the holes were drilled and sanded in the boards. A hand-drill would have been used in period, but, lacking one of those (and the skill to use one!) I used my Ryobi power drill.



Top and bottom covers, before drilling



Top and bottom boards, drilled and sanded to take the bands

I then threaded the loose ends of the bands into the boards, untwisted the cords, and glued them into place, leaving them to dry for 24 hours. When they had dried, I placed the book on a piece of linen, and cut the linen to fit. After slathering the entire book with glue, I smoothed the linen in to place.



Outer upper board, linen in place to be glued



Linen glued to spine



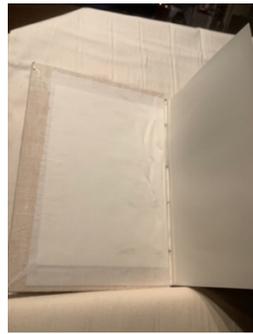
Inner lower board of MS 1760

³⁷ It only took three attempts per endband!

The last step was gluing the pergaminata endpapers down. I am fairly certain that the glue that I used was not correct, as it did not matter how many times I smoothed it with a bone folder, it wrinkled horribly. However, it *did* stay in place, and I knew that I would be adding the paper from the textblock over it after putting the velvet cover in place, and I hoped that it would be less wrinkled.³⁸

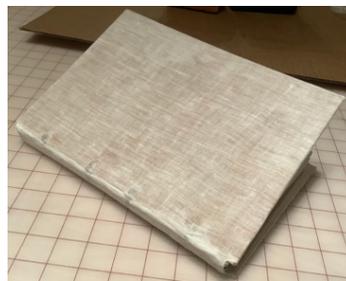


Inner upper board



Inner lower board

Once the glue had dried on the linen cover, I noticed that it had a tendency to remain open, so I placed it into the Moxon vise for a few days, and it stayed closed after that. I had completed the book part! Now it was time to attach the velvet cover.



Completed book, before subjecting it to the Moxon vise



The book, closed completely after pressing



The outer upper board of MS 1760 as it is today, with leather spine and remnants of the cloth of gold cover

³⁸ More things to research for next time: better glue, better endpapers.



The spine, showing four bands

Open book, with finished headband

Pages 1 and 2 of the book

Velvet Book Cover

Even with the advent of the Gutenberg press, which made books more accessible, books were still relatively rare and precious, and both printed and hand-bound books were decorated with care. Hand-bound books, especially, had decorated covers as well as pages, and Elizabeth I had many velvet-bound book in her personal collection. The use on the velvet-bound bibles, prayer books and music books gives evidence that they were often used for more than just decoration, and Anne Boleyn’s music book (though not, as far as we know, covered in velvet in its original form) shows enough specific wear to suppose that it was used frequently. A lady or group of courtiers may have performed occasionally at court, but the primary use for a music book would have been in a lady’s chambers, with her personal courtiers.

Designing the Cover

To make this cover, I first had to determine the size of my music book. This was done by looking at my three sources of content, and going with the rough mean of the folio size, which was 10 x 6.75 inches. I added a quarter inch all around for the boards, and came up with 10.25 x 7 inches for the cover. After I determined the size, I designed the pattern to be embroidered, and combined a cover from shortly after 1500 (MS w. 431) with the roses and lilies border decoration on folio 5v. from MS 1760. The use of the roses and lilies was important, to represent both England and France.

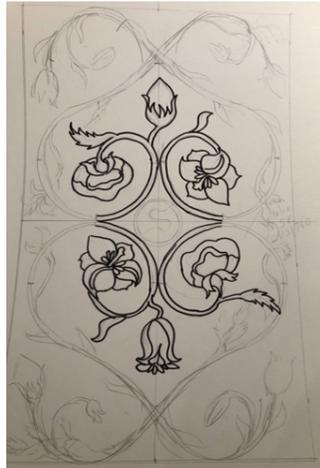
After coming across some reading about the ties between embroidery and illumination³⁹, and seeing the heraldic motifs in Henry VII’s indenture manuscript on

³⁹ Grub, Valentina, “A Needle’s Breadth Apart: The Unexplored Relationship Between Medieval Manuscript Illumination and Embroidery,” *Medievalists.net*, accessed June 2020.

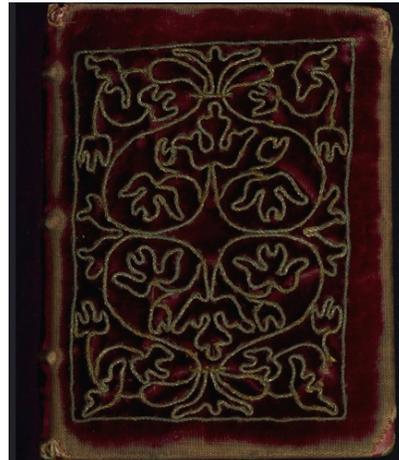
both the cover and the first page, I decided to create my embroidered cover design using elements from folio 5v of MS 1760 (the Mary Tudor songbook.) The decorations on folio 5v used the English rose and the French lily, symbolizing the marriage between Mary Tudor (sister of Henry VIII, and sometimes called Mary Rose Tudor) and Louis XII of France.



folio 5v, MS 1760, 1515⁴⁰

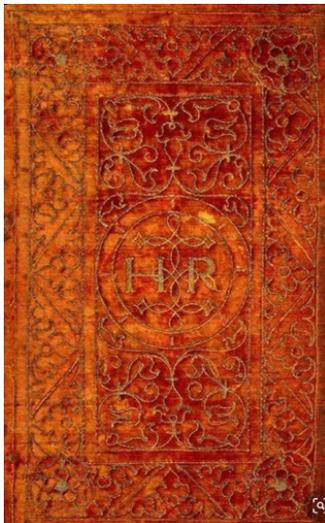


Sketch of my design

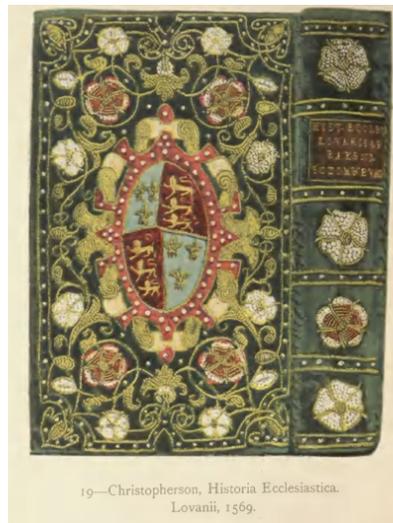


Book of Hours, 1500⁴¹ - couched with gold cord

Other Examples of Sixteenth-Century Embroidered Book Covers



Bible, 1543
Library of Henry VIII⁴²



19—Christopherson, *Historia Ecclesiastica*.
Lovanii, 1569.

History of Jerusalem, 1569
Library of Elizabeth 1⁴³



Anti-Catholic treatise, 1568
Library of Elizabeth 1⁴⁴

⁴⁰ "Manuscript of Polyphony, Magdalene College, Cambridge, United Kingdom Early 16th century (MS 1760)." DIAMM (the Digital Archive of Medieval Music).

⁴¹ "Book of Hours, use of Rome (w. 431)," Flanders (?), 1490-1500 C.E. The Digital Walters.

⁴² "Biblia Sacrosancta Testamenti Veteris & Noui, 1543 (c23e11)." British Library.

⁴³ Davenport: frontispiece.

⁴⁴ "16th-century Elizabeth embroidered binding (Aa.6.52)." St John's College, University of Cambridge.



Book by Petrarch, 1544
Library of Katherine Parr⁴⁶



The Lord's Prayer, 1583⁴⁵

The Materials for the Cover

Deciding the materials to be used was my next step, and I chose silk velvet as the base fabric, to be couched with metallic gold cord as seen in the Book of Hours above, and embroidered with silk thread on linen, to be appliquéd on to the velvet. I also decided to accent the design with pearls, as that was done on most of the velvet-bound books of the sixteenth century, both within the floral design and to make an S in the center. Red (crimson) was the color of most of the velvet covers, and so I ordered a yard of red silk velvet. However, when I received it, I realized that the red was almost exactly the color of the roses that I was planning to embroider, and I did not want them to disappear into the background. I decided to save the red for another book project, and went instead with black – a favorite color of the early Tudor court for clothes. As I was embroidering, I chose not to use a metal clasp or edges, and instead attached silk ties, as were used in period on many books⁴⁷.

Tufted fabric has been documented back to 2,000 B.C.E., but silk velvet as was known in Europe during the Renaissance was made in China starting likely around the thirteenth century⁴⁸. Velvet cut with different levels of pile to create designs was very popular for items of clothing, and even furnishings, but velvet cut to a single length was also valued for its sumptuous texture – and, one could possibly assume,

⁴⁵ "Lord's Prayer, 16th c (C24a34)." Geneva, 1583, British Library.

⁴⁶ Petrarch, *all Petrarca con l'espositione d A. Vellutello*, Venice, 1544, shelfmark C27e19, British Library, London.

⁴⁷ Cyril Davenport, *English Embroidered Bookbindings*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company, Ltd, 1899: 140.

⁴⁸ Melinda Watt, "Renaissance Velvet Textiles," *The Met: Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, August 2011.

its warmth. Its pleasing texture made it a natural covering for books, as well as a beautiful one.

Velvet was used to cover books in England in England and France dating back to at least the fourteenth century, but velvet was most popular after 1500.⁴⁹ One of the earliest extant examples is the cover for an indenture, or agreement, between Henry VII and the Church.⁵⁰ The rippled edges were to prevent the document being easily forged, and “the Beaufort portcullises decorates both the lower and upper corners and the Tudor rose features in its centre. Also attached (see image right) are three seals: the king’s great seal; the seal of the mayor and commonalty of London and the seal of Westminster Abbey.⁵¹” Note that the decoration on the cover is echoed in the decoration on the first page. This is what inspired me to use elements of the illuminated border of roses and lilies in the embroidery design of my cover.



Indenture of Henry VII, 1504



First page of Indenture, 1504

Velvet was used in the Tudor era to cover many types of valuable or important books, such as Bibles, books of prayer and other religious content, and books of history. Many, as seen in the indentures pictured above, had metal decorations, but many also had embroidered decoration.

⁴⁹ Davenport, 156.

⁵⁰ ...at the time, of course, this was the Catholic Church, as his son Henry was not yet in need of a divorce and had not yet established the Church of England.

⁵¹ Daniella Gonzalez, “Illustrating Authority: Henry VII’s Quadripartite Indenture,” *Canterburycathedral.org*, September 1, 2018.

Having received the silk velvet, I then looked for thread to make the flowers. I ordered silk thread from China, and it arrived in skeins. I then wound onto wooden spools.⁵²



I decided to use a style of satin stitch embroidery called silk shading, which dates in England from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, when England was famed for its embroidery using this stitch. *Opus Anglicanum*, as it was called “was first worked by nuns, and the technique was later taken up by professional men and women who had completed a seven-year apprenticeship in the technique.”⁵³ Although it is thought that the Black Death took many embroiderers with it, the desire for embroidered items meant that new embroiderers developed a faster stitch of silk shading to meet the demand. Although *Opus Anglicanum* was not as prevalent by the sixteenth century, English embroiderers were still known for their skill with silk painting.⁵⁴

The gold metallic cording is neither actual gold nor actually metallic, but it did fall neatly into my budget. I chose a width of 1/8” as I felt that this would be thick enough to be seen, but not so thick that it would be difficult to manipulate into botanical shapes. It turns out that the cording I have is extremely prone to fraying, and I wonder if that would be as true of cording with metallic content. I used gum Arabic to hold the ends together, with a fair amount of success, and it is attached to the velvet with Sulky gold thread.

⁵² This was not done, I am afraid to say, without any cursing: silk thread tangles if it gets breathed on wrong, and it also caught on the edges of the wooden spools until I sanded them.

⁵³ Sarah Homfray, “Silk Shading,” In *The Royal School of Needlework Embroidery: A Guide to Essential Stitches, Techniques and Projects*, Kent, UK: Search Press Limited, 2018: 165.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Embroidering the Flowers

Here is my first attempt at silk painting, on 5.3 oz linen, to recreate with silk the rose in the upper left-hand corner of folio 5v of MS 1760, using only long and short stitches. I discovered that embroidering with very fine silk is quite different than embroidering with the DMC cotton floss that I have used in my few previous forays into embroidery. While I love the texture of the silk, it required a lot of tearing out – or completely re-doing – on my part as I learned its personality. These were embroidered using standard modern wooden embroidery hoops.



I was not satisfied with the result shown in this photo, and decided to try a method of padding on page 177 of the *The Royal School of Needlework Embroidery*. I like the flowers much better with a bit of dimension to them, and they more closely resemble the flowers on my exemplar covers.

Here are some in-progress pictures of the flowers:





On the whole, I prefer the way that they look on the linen: the crisp edges are lost both in transferring the flowers to the velvet and by adding the couching to the edges, but I do not currently possess the knowledge or skills to transfer fully.⁵⁵

Here are the four flowers, embroidered in linen with silk, paired with the exemplar flower from MS 1760:



⁵⁵ For future projects such as this, I will seek further expert help!

Appliquing the Flowers to the Velvet

Having spent what felt like an inordinate amount of time on the flowers, it was time to appliqué them to the silk velvet. To facilitate this, my husband made me a slate frame of oak that was large enough to fit the cover.⁵⁶ I used cotton canvas as a base, and sewed twill tape to the edges, then sewed all of these to the frame using waxed linen thread.

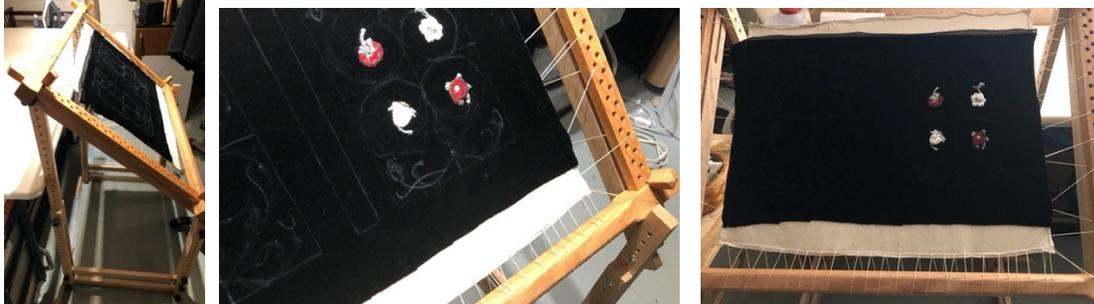


Woodcut of an embroiderer using a slate frame, 1568⁵⁷

I was advised to use canvas as a base for embroidering on velvet, to provide stability necessary to successfully embroider on velvet without crushing the pile. The slate frame setup was modeled after the one described on page 22 of *The Royal School of Needlework Embroidery*, and I must say that after using embroidery hoops for past projects, I am now a huge fan of the slate frame. I drew the pattern for couching on the velvet, and cut the flowers out of the linen and appliquéd them into place.

⁵⁶ He also made a stand for the frame. Have I mentioned how wonderful my husband is? No? Well, he is wonderful!

⁵⁷ "Seydensticker" from *The Book of Trades* by Jost Amman, 1568.



Couching the design

I decided to use couching for the gold cord, having seen that most embroidered velvet book covers of the sixteenth century included couched embroidery.⁵⁸ I initially used scotch tape to keep the ends of the cord from fraying, and then realized that I had gum Arabic, and used that, instead. After couching the cord, following the design I had made, I sewed decorative pearls in place, and used seed pearls to create the **S** in the center of the circle. Pearls were present on most velvet book covers of the sixteenth century, but some have either fallen off or been removed over the years.⁵⁹ I chose an **S** for both Silver Lakes and Stonehill, as my husband and I are both musicians, and will likely use this book of music together.



Couching in progress, with the cording relatively straight and tight

⁵⁸ Davenport: 40-42.

⁵⁹ Davenport: 45, 53, 54, 64.

It was, of course, after I had couched the cording for the cover that I realized that the edges of my design were **exactly** the same size as my boards...and so they were re-cut.⁶⁰

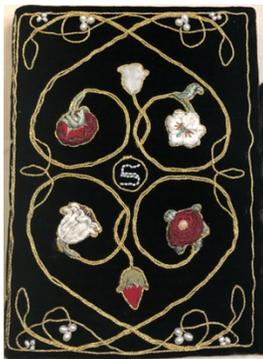
Many of the descriptions of the velvet books that I used for inspiration in this project mention silk ties, so I used some silk to make a pair of ties. I cut the cover off of the frame, and glued it to the linen cover of my book.⁶¹



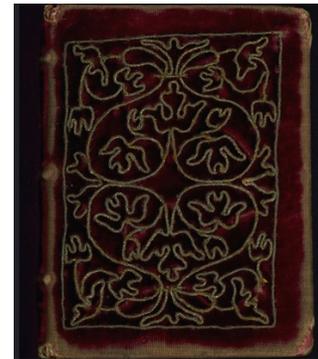
The process of gluing the silk ties in place under the velvet book cover



folio 5v, MS 1760⁶²



Finished upper and lower boards with primary exemplars



Book of Hours⁶³

⁶⁰ Later, I discovered that, despite washing in hot water and drying before using it, the cotton canvas shrank when it was glued to the book cover. I could have, in retrospect, probably saved myself some time and some wood had I known that would happen. Thing no. 185 that I earned in this project!

⁶¹ It was at this point that I saw that the canvas shrank just slightly, and created some ripples in the velvet, and some “wobbles” in my couching. I cannot say that I did not cry...I have not yet discovered how to prevent this for future projects, but I will definitely attempt to solve this prior to doing this kind of cover again.

⁶² “Manuscript of Polyphony, Magdalene College, Cambridge, United Kingdom Early 16th century (MS 1760).” DIAMM (the Digital Archive of Medieval Music).

⁶³ “Book of Hours, use of Rome (w. 431),” Flanders (?), 1490-1500 C.E. The Digital Walters.

Pictures of the Finished Book





There is so much that I learned in doing this project, including new music, a style of illumination that I had never seen before (Franco-Flemish/Jean Bourdichon), which has now become my favorite, the *entire* process of creating a book, embroidery with very, very fine thread, mixing pigments – not to mention all of the wonderful reading that I got to do while finding out how to do all of these things! While I definitely have *many* things that I will do differently in the future, on the whole I am rather please with my music book.

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