

Kissing Images, Unfurling Rolls, Measuring Wounds, Sewing Badges and Carrying Talismans: Considering Some Harley Manuscripts through the Physical Rituals they Reveal*

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Christianity as practised in the late Middle Ages demanded physical rituals. These rituals encompassed great public displays, such as processions around town walls and through churches, led by clergy dressed in ceremonial garb; smaller public displays, such as priests' performances of Mass; and actions by the laity, including small private rituals involving a votary with his book and perhaps an image. While rituals can be difficult to reconstruct, some instructions that prescribe rituals have survived, which specify actions, utterances, and props. Occasionally signs of wear on ritual objects themselves reveal how they were used. Manuscripts in particular often hold signs of wear, including dirt, fingerprints, smudges, and needle holes, which index some of the physical rituals they have witnessed. This article considers some of the physical rituals performed by lay votaries in the context of their private devotion, as recuperated through instructions (including directive rubrics within prayer books) and through the physical evidence within certain well-worn manuscripts. Many of these rituals and patterns of use reveal that votaries treated their manuscripts as a proxy for the body of Christ, with which they were encouraged to cultivate a close physical relationship.

The Northern Netherlandish reformer Geert Grote from Deventer (1340-1384) issued instructions for believers' interactions with the body of Christ. He recommended that believers experience more physicality in their veneration of Jesus. He did this when he addressed the nature of the *pax* – which means *peace* in Latin but in this context refers to a liturgical object that disseminates the priest's kiss of peace – as a proxy for the body of Christ:

Take up the Pax reverently and devoutly because you are in contact with the body of the Lord through the mouth of the priest. Did Veronica not venerate it? Is not an image of Christ, even an unconsecrated host of Christ, also venerated? For all the faithful used to communicate in the early Church, and now the Pax is given in its place as a kind of communication with the body of Christ. The reason the body is not given commonly to all, I judge, is that they were better in the early Church, warmed still by the blood of Christ, and religion which has now grown decrepit was then in its vigor and at its peak. Christ therefore withdrew himself bodily, as he has spiritually. When the Pax comes, be prepared to receive it as the body of Christ, and then lift up your desire and prepare yourself so that even though you are not up to eating the sacrament carnally you may eat

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it spiritually. ¶ After communion your desire must remain fixed as it was in the Pax, and must persist inwardly for a long time. If you begin to become distracted, as often happens to you when your thoughts begin to wander, direct yourself to the passion of Christ.¹

With Geert Grote's exhortation, one is to understand that he imagined that early Christians regularly took the host, and that receiving the pax provided an ersatz for doing so. Like ingesting the host, the ritual continued to be oral, since the priest first kissed the pax before passing it to the congregants, who then kissed it to receive the kiss that had been spiritually deposited there. Some priests might have merely offered the pax visually by holding it up to the congregants, and others would pass it to the congregants so that they could kiss the pax in turn, thereby coming in direct contact with the body of Christ. Geert Grote recommended this second, more highly physical relationship with the pax. Grote thereby urges the laity to have more physical contact with Jesus through this object. In fulfilling this ritual, the congregants mirrored the actions of the priest.

In the mid-fifteenth century, the pipe clay industry based in Utrecht began making moulded paxes that would be much less expensive than the paxes made in precious and jewelled metals that often graced the altar. Only one such pipe clay pax survives (fig. 1). The priest and congregants would have deposited and distributed their kisses on an image of Christ displaying his wounds while bleeding into a chalice. Christ's act of display recalls the priest's act of display. His stance, with arms open wide, suggests that he is prepared for an embrace that will accompany the kiss, either a kiss on the lips or on the mouth-like wound that is releasing blood into a chalice.² Were such paxes made so that every church could afford several of them, and they could circulate among the congregants as per Geert Grote's exhortation? Such objects may reveal that the laity were practising such rituals in the church. The congregants might have broken most of the moulded paxes in the process of passing them around, and church treasuries may not have deemed them worthy of saving, since they are made of semi-disposable material. It is therefore difficult to assess how they were used. Whereas the pax does not appear particularly worn, signs of the physical use of a manuscript prayer book are often preserved on the vellum itself. These survive in greater numbers and reveal some of the physical rituals that the laity enacted with objects.

The rituals of the Christian liturgy required that priests interact with objects that were figured or painted to serve as referents to things outside themselves. Congregants imitated priests in their private devotional rituals, including but not limited to kissing the pax. Believers understood that priests tapped into the power of Christ by repeating his words at the Last Supper: they uttered words that effected a change, just as priests uttered 'hoc est corpus meum' in order to turn the bread of the host into the body of Christ. In this article, I aim to show how late medieval votaries physically interacted with devotional manuscripts to achieve similar supernatural effects. One form of interaction was kissing, or devotional osculation. Believers kissed not only the pax, as recommended by Geert Grote, but they also kissed images in their prayer books, just as the priest would have kissed the missal during Mass. Believers also kissed the divine words whose physical presence embodied divinity, which patrons could capture through touch. A second type of interaction relates to rolls, which by their very form demand physical interaction. The texts and images often inscribed on rolls anticipate specific actions, and the wear visibly demonstrates

¹ John Van Engen (intro. and trans.), *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings* (New York, 1988), p. 72. For an introduction to the spiritual reforms of Geert Grote in their devotional context, see John Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2008).

² On the sexuality of images of Christ's wound, see Martha Easton, 'The Wound of Christ, the Mouth of Hell: Appropriations and Inversions of Female Anatomy in the Later Middle Ages', in Susan L'Engel and Gerald B. Guest (eds.), *Tributes to Jonathan J. G. Alexander: The Making and Meaning of Illuminated Medieval & Renaissance Manuscripts, Art & Architecture* (London/Turnhout, 2006), pp. 395-414.



Fig. 1. Pax showing Christ displaying his wounds and bleeding into a chalice, moulded pipe clay, made in Utrecht 1450-70. Utrecht, Catharijneconvent, ABM bs 688.

readers' intense use. The article focuses on two Harley manuscripts – one roll and one codex – which reveal how their users or early owners put them to protective use as a response to feelings of physical or spiritual threat.³

The Trygg Hours (Harley MS. 2966)

Manuscripts made as private devotional prayer books often reveal that their owners handled and kissed them as part of rituals. These forces were at work in Harley 2966, a Book of Hours made in Bruges around 1410 for export to England (and therefore written in Latin for Sarum, i.e., English, use).⁴ One of its early English owners was a female member of the Trygg family, for the first folio bears her owner's inscription.⁵ It is clear that the manuscript had several owners who used it intensively. Some of these owners added prayers and notes of ownership to f. 8r, including a woman named Kateryne Bryde, who wrote an exhortation to future readers in green ink (fig. 2).

Of youre charite ye shalt praye for te sowle off Elizabeth Langham gentylwoman on
whos sowle Jhesu have mercy And ye shalt pray for the prosperite + welfare of
Kateryne Bryde Gentywoman whos prosperite Ihesu preserve. Amen.

Not only did the early owners write on the empty vellum pages of the manuscript, but they also treated the manuscript as an interactive object in other ways. In addition to adding notes and prayers, votaries would also use the manuscript as a repository for small devotional objects. The binding of the manuscript therefore functioned as the lid of a treasure chest, which held not only the fine manuscript imported from Bruges, but also held family members' birth and death dates, extra prayers deemed worthy of inclusion, a protective prayer for the family, and a plethora of small added images from disparate sources and materials. Most of these images were subsequently removed. I cautiously put forth a rule for certain kinds of devotional books: owners who treated their manuscript prayer books as objects of physical devotion often both *added* and *subtracted* material. They added small prints, curtains, pilgrims' badges, extra prayers, and notes about the family; they subtracted paint and ink in the course of using, kissing, and rubbing. The gesture toward protecting the image expressed with the curtains seems at odds with the wilful destruction of the inscribed and painted surface through repeated touching. However, these two forces together create a frisson on the page, whose inner workings reveal the highly physical and image-centred devotion of the book's early owner.

³ On kissing images, especially the priest kissing the missal, see John Lowden's Keynote address at the conference 'Treasures Known and Unknown', held at the British Library Conference Centre, 2-3 July 2007, published at <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/TourKnownA.asp>.

⁴ See Nicholas J. Rogers, 'Books of Hours Produced in the Low Countries for the English Market in the Fifteenth Century', Cambridge M. Litt. Thesis, 1982; and Nicholas J. Rogers, 'Patrons and Purchasers: Evidence for the Original Owners of Books of Hours Produced in the Low Countries for the English Market', in B. Cardon, J. Van der Stock, and D. Vanwijnsberghe (eds.), *'Als ich can'. Liber Amicorum in Memory of Professor Dr. Maurits Smeyers*, 2 vols (Leuven, 2002), vol. ii, pp. 1165-81. These studies are in large part superseded by Wilhelmina (Saskia) van Bergen, 'De Meesters van Otto van Moerdrecht : een onderzoek naar de stijl en iconografie van een groep miniaturisten, in relatie tot de productie van getijdenboeken in Brugge rond 1430', unpublished doctoral thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2007.

⁵ The inscription on f. 1r reads: 'Yf any body fynd Thys boke I pray them bryng yt to Mistres Trygg for yt by hers'. Nothing further is known of the Trygg family.

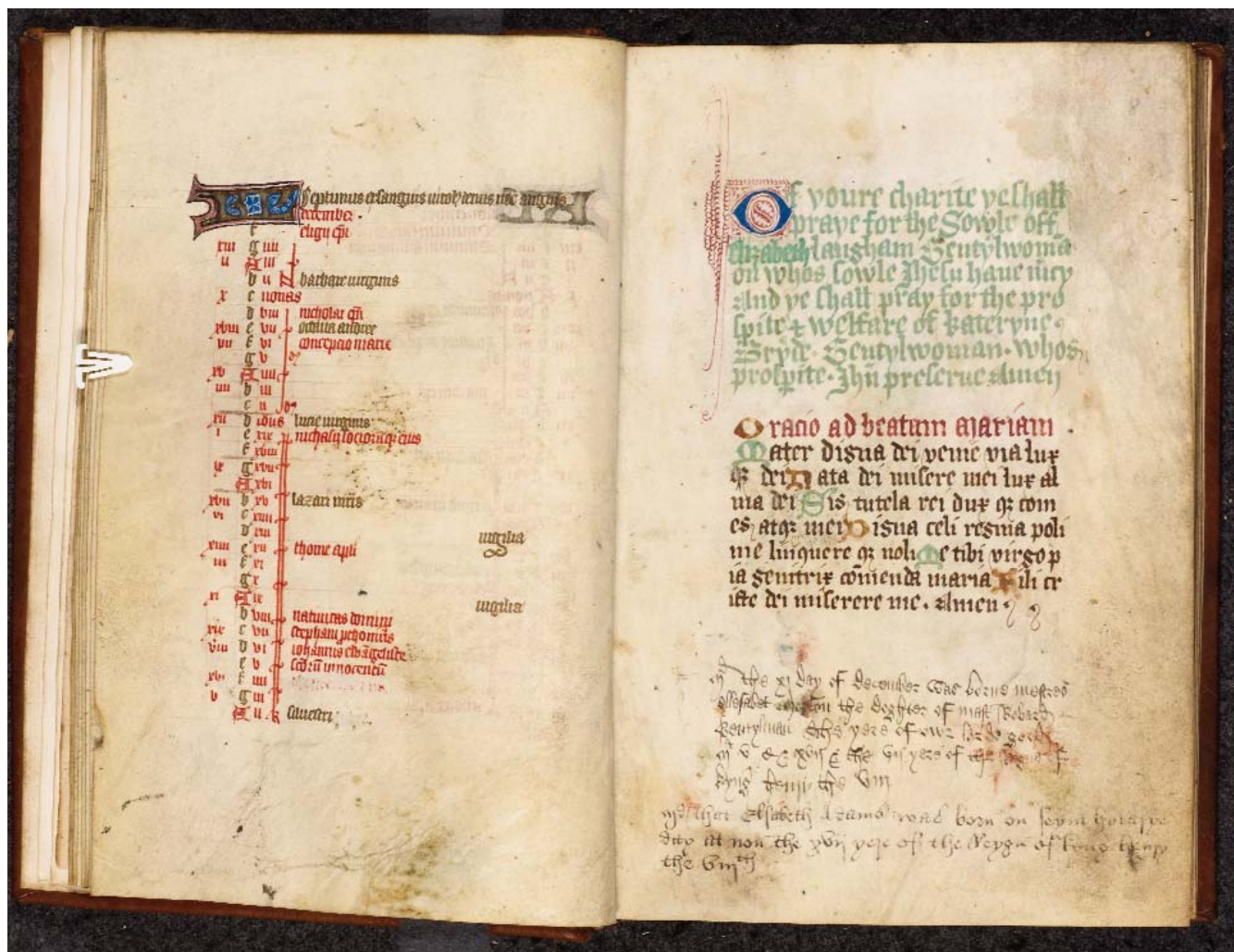


Fig. 2. Blank leaf at the end of the calendar, which has been filled with prayers in three different hands, including one by Kateryne Bryde. Harley 2966, ff. 7v-8r.

Prints added to Harley 2966

In Harley 2966 two hand-painted prints on vellum are among the objects that the fifteenth-century user inserted. One of these shows the Annunciation (fig. 3), and the other St Sebastian (fig. 4). These prints are too small to have been designed specifically as miniatures within a prayer book. The painted blue skies, the orange borders painted around the frames, and indeed, the style of the prints themselves reflect their German origins. The English user managed to enhance her Netherlandish Book of Hours with German prints. Several folios from this manuscript discussed below also reveal that the owner stripped away paint in the course of completing physical venerations. The prints are heavily worn, revealing that they have been repeatedly handled.

It is unusual that the printer decided to produce these images on vellum, rather than the paper on which the great majority of single-leaf woodcuts were printed.⁶ One reason that images were occasionally printed on vellum was so that they could be hand-coloured and gilt. Vellum takes the gold and pigment much better than paper does.⁷ But that purpose does not apply to these images, as they were painted rather quickly and poorly and not gilt. Another reason might be that vellum is much tougher and harder than paper, and it is possible that the printer anticipated the objects' use for some kind of hand-held devotion that would be physically compromising to the image. Were these small, homely prints designed to be carried on one's person? The Annunciation was folded at some point before it was secured to the last page of the manuscript. Why would someone fold an object that was already so small? Was it used in some ritual?

The image of St Sebastian provides even more information about the owner and her habits when considered in the context of the entire opening (fig. 5). The small print was glued and sewn onto some blank vellum just before the calendar. The tiny image may have had a protective function: Sebastian was said to be efficacious against the bubonic plague and other serious illness, and invoking him visually may have had the same supernatural effect as invoking him through prayer. Originally, Sebastian was not alone on the page, but formerly had a companion, as a rectangle of clean vellum reveals. The images have clearly been placed here away from any textual context; however, the owner may have created a context for them if she considered them talismanic. Because St Sebastian was added at the beginning of the manuscript, and the Annunciation at the end, these two images were used to bookend the entire content of the manuscript. Did they protect the book from cover to cover?

'Talismanic images and texts' may have been the category that united the items added to the first verso. The text near the top of the page, which was not part of the original production but was added in the fifteenth century, may have also had a talismanic function. This text lists some of the names of the Virgin Mary: the Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, Port of Paradise, Rose without Thorns, and so forth. This prayer's structure resembles the Jewish invocation of the Hebrew names of Yahweh, whose format was retained in certain Christian prayers. It was thought that uttering the names of Mary and Jesus created a protective cloud around the utterer. While this particular copy of the prayer lacks an

⁶ On the physical properties of early prints, see David S. Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe, Visual Culture in Early Modernity* (Burlington, VT, 2010); see also Thomas Primeau, 'The Materials and Technology of Renaissance and Baroque Hand-Colored Prints', in Susan Dackerman (ed.), *Painted Prints: The Revelation of Color in Northern Renaissance & Baroque Engravings, Etchings & Woodcuts*, exhibition catalogue, The Baltimore Museum of Art (Philadelphia, 2003), pp. 49-78.

⁷ See, for example, the series of hand-painted and gilt prints on vellum at the British Museum with accession numbers 1856,1011.1-28, which can be viewed at http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx



Fig. 3. Hand-painted woodcut print with the Annunciation. Harley 2966, f. 95r, detail.



Fig. 4. Hand-painted woodcut print with St Sebastian. Harley 2966, f. 1v, detail.

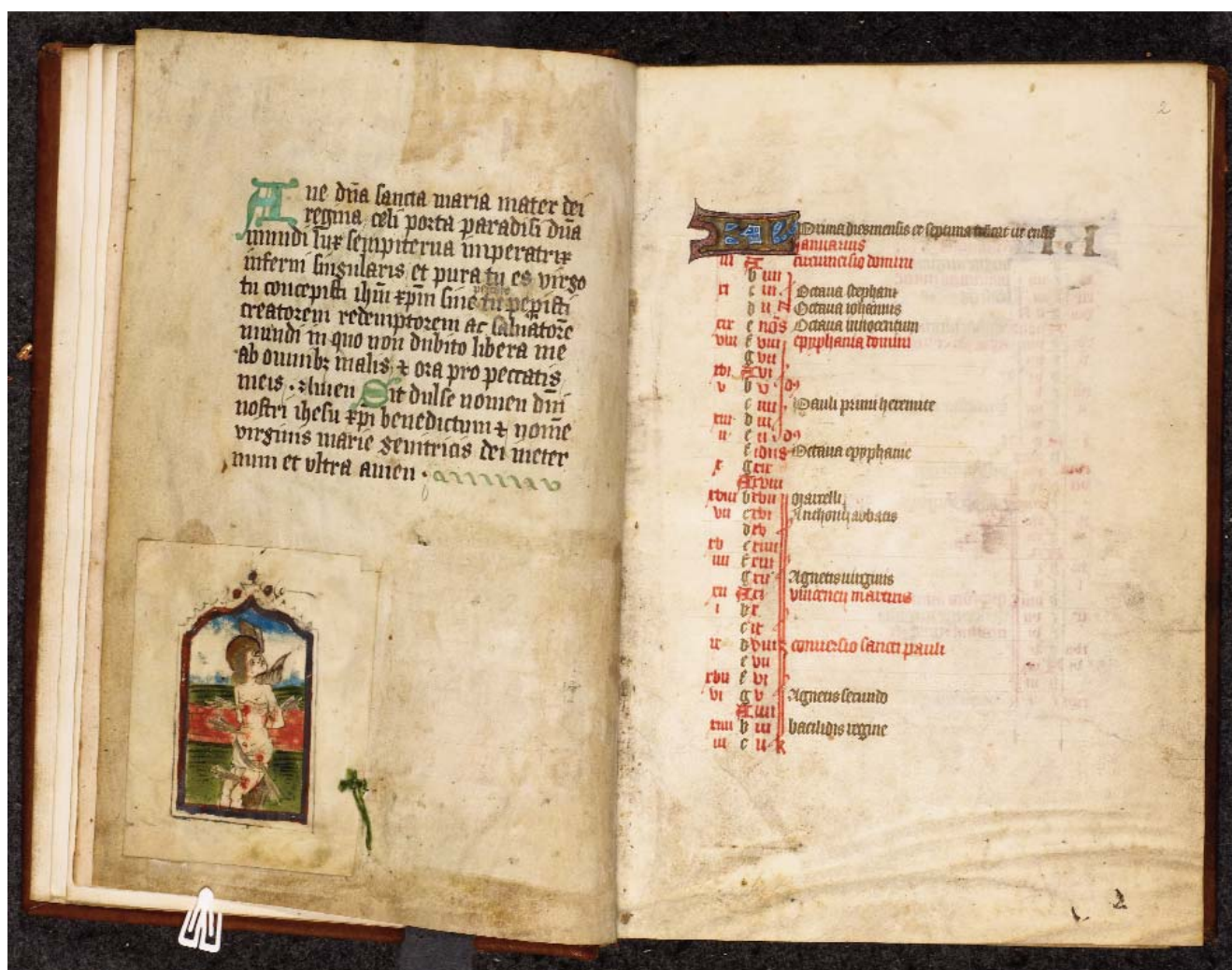


Fig. 5. Flyleaf with added images and texts facing the beginning of the calendar. Harley 2966, ff. 1v-2r.

explanation, many other copies do have a rubric, such as this one, which announces its apotropaic power:

*Rub: Item, anyone who speaks this prayer written below on an empty stomach every morning three times in front of the image of Our Dear Lady, along with one Ave Maria, will not die of the plague during the day. Inc: O, most precious creature, mother of God, sweetest Virgin Mary [...].*⁸

The prayer to Mary, the image of St Sebastian, and the image that is now missing might have joined forces to protect the book's owner from the plague. Furthermore, the dirt around both the Sebastian print and the print that is now missing testify to repeated physical use, for example, kissing or devotional rubbing.

The figure behind the curtain

Although an early user probably added the prints, the manuscript also contained a series of miniatures that were incorporated at the manuscript's inception. The miniatures include a Passion cycle, an Infancy cycle, and a series of column-wide images depicting saints. Some of these, including the miniatures depicting Sts Barbara and George, reveal signs of wear as if they had been touched repeatedly but, strangely, the votary has seemingly shown her devotion to the lower frame (figs 6 and 7). The series of holes above the miniatures explains the reason for this discoloration: the votary sewed curtains to the book, thereby creating a row of needle holes. These curtains, which have since been removed, must have covered only the images and stopped short of the rubricated text below the frame. They might have resembled the curtains that are still hanging on by a few threads to another prayer book made in the Low Countries shortly before 1500 (fig. 8).⁹ Having to lift a curtain before contemplating the image would have added a layer of physicality and ritual to the process of reading and looking, and it would have put the votary into a specific haptic relationship with the manuscript. The signs of wear at the bottoms of the miniatures in the Harley manuscript were caused by the votary's thumb scraping across the paint while repeatedly lifting the curtains to reveal the images below.

The manuscript opens with a series of suffrages (that is, prayers asking saints to intercede on behalf of the votary to God). All of the images of saints that accompany the suffrages were similarly draped and still bear needle marks from the curtains. Moreover, some of the illuminated folios also bear signs that other images were added to the blank interstices and rubbed with veneration, as the dirty forms around the ghostly blanks indicate. These marks appear for example on the folio with St Christopher, onto which rectangular objects had been glued early in the manuscript's life, before it was heavily handled (fig. 9). On this folio the curtain must have extended about three lines beyond the frame of the picture, where the reader has continually brushed a thumb. Perhaps the votary gazed upon the image of St Christopher daily, for doing so was supposed to prevent sudden death during the day.

⁸ *Rub: Item, so welic mensche die alle morgen noechtere spreket dese naebeschreven oracie drijwerf voer dat beelde onser liever vrouwen mit einen Ave Maria, die en sal inden dage aen die pestelencie niet sterven. Oracie. Inc: O, alre edelste creatur moeder gods, alre suetste ionfrouwe Ma[141v]ria, bid voer ons nu ende inder stonden ons doets. Amen.* (The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS. 135 C 12, ff. 141r-141v).

⁹ For a discussion of curtains sewn into manuscripts, see Christine Sciacca, 'Raising the Curtain on the Use of Textiles in Manuscripts', in Kathryn M. Rudy and Barbara Baert (eds.), *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing: Cultural Approaches to Textiles and their Religious Functions in the Middle Ages*, Medieval Church Studies, xii (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 161-90.



Fig. 6. St Barbara. Harley 2966, f. 12r.



Fig. 7. St George, Harley 2966, f. 13r.



Fig. 8. Opening of a Netherlandish Book of Hours, with a full-page miniature depicting a funeral mass, covered with a silk curtain.
The Hague, KB, 130 E 18, ff. 86v-87r.



Fig. 9. Folio with miniature depicting St Christopher, formerly with a curtain and rectangular objects sewn on.
Harley 2966, f. 9r.

Badges and other objects in Harley 2966

In addition to sewing curtains over the image and rectangular objects to its margins, the book's owner or owners also sewed several round objects to the parchment, as their offsets attest. Under the image of Mary Magdalene are the remnants of such an object, which had been sewn to the lower margin (fig. 10).¹⁰ The round pattern of stitching reveals the shape of the object formerly attached there. Hundreds of similar offsets appear in Netherlandish manuscripts from the fifteenth century, as for example, in a Book of Hours probably made in Bruges with miniatures by the Masters of the Gold Scrolls (fig. 11).¹¹ The final and penultimate folios of the manuscript have offsets from no fewer than thirty-four round objects. Such objects have been called 'pilgrim's badges' in the literature. However, the object formerly sewn to the lower margin below the image of Mary Magdalene may have been a badge betokening the Eucharist rather than a pilgrim's badge. Indeed the image depicts the saint at her hermitage at Sainte-Baume, where she withdrew to live as a penitent. There she survived on heavenly sustenance, when angels transported her to heaven daily at each of the canonical hours to receive the host.¹² Whereas many or most pilgrims' badges in the Dutch example have left darker outlines as well as dark spots where the convex parts of the badges have gouged into the vellum, the round object formerly sewn into Harley 2966 was not thick and did not bite into the vellum.

It is therefore more likely that the object below the Mary Magdalene image was flat and round, such as the Lamb of God roundel painted on parchment sewn into a blank page in a Book of Hours from Haarlem (fig. 12).¹³ This is a small circle of vellum with the size, shape and iconography of a Eucharist wafer, which may have been given as a remembrance of having taken the Eucharist. The user has underscored the physicality of the object by sewing it into her Book of Hours (fig. 13). The four needle holes recall the four nail holes from the Crucifixion, as if the body of Christ in the form of a parchment roundel (which after all, was made of skin) had been crucified to the page.

A similar round object, possibly a vellum Eucharist wafer, was sewn below the Annunciation at the incipit of the Hours of the Virgin (fig. 14). Just as Mary Magdalene received the body of Christ when angels lifted her daily from her refuge in Sainte-Baume, the Virgin received the body of Christ in her own body at the Annunciation. The manuscript owner may have responded to these two different images of receiving the Eucharist by sewing parchment wafers to the respective pages. She apparently went a step further, by kissing and venerating the round object below the Annunciation, leaving a halo of grime and skin cells behind.

¹⁰ Hanneke van Asperen, 'Pelgrimstekens op perkament: Originele en nageschilderde bedevaartssouvenirs in religieuze boeken (ca 1450-ca 1530)', Ph.D. dissertation, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, 2009.

¹¹ Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent, BMH h 160. Manuscript on vellum, 79 folios. For a description, see www.mmdc.nl.

¹² Joachim Patinir depicts pilgrims making their way to the mountain where Mary Magdalene lived as a penitent in his *Landscape with Ecstasy of Mary Magdalen* (Zurich, Kunsthau). See Robert Koch, 'La Sainte-Baume in Flemish Landscape Painting of the Sixteenth Century', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, lxvi (1965), pp. 273-82. See also K. M. Rudy, 'A Pilgrim's Book of Hours: Stockholm Royal Library A233', *Studies in Iconography*, xxi (2000), pp. 237-77; 'Addendum', *Studies in Iconography*, xxii (2001), pp. 163-4.

¹³ Delft, Museum het Prinsenhof, no number. Manuscript on vellum, 117 ff., 163 x 114 (92 x 57) mm, 15 lines, littera textualis, in Middle Dutch. The manuscript contains painted decoration typical of Haarlem and was probably made in that city in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. The manuscript also contains one miniature (an Annunciation) made by the Masters of the Delft Grisailles. The manuscript is largely unpublished and has only been mentioned by R. Nieuwstraten, '“Floracy en illuminacy” in Haarlem. Een eerste verkenning rond de penwerkversiering en margedecoratie van handschriften met een Haarlemse herkomst', *Middeleeuwse handschriftenkunde* (1989), pp. 59-95, esp. p. 76, n. 40.



Fig. 10. Folio with miniature depicting Mary Magdalene as a penitent in Sainte-Baume, with the offset of a round object in the lower margin. Harley 2966, f. 11r.

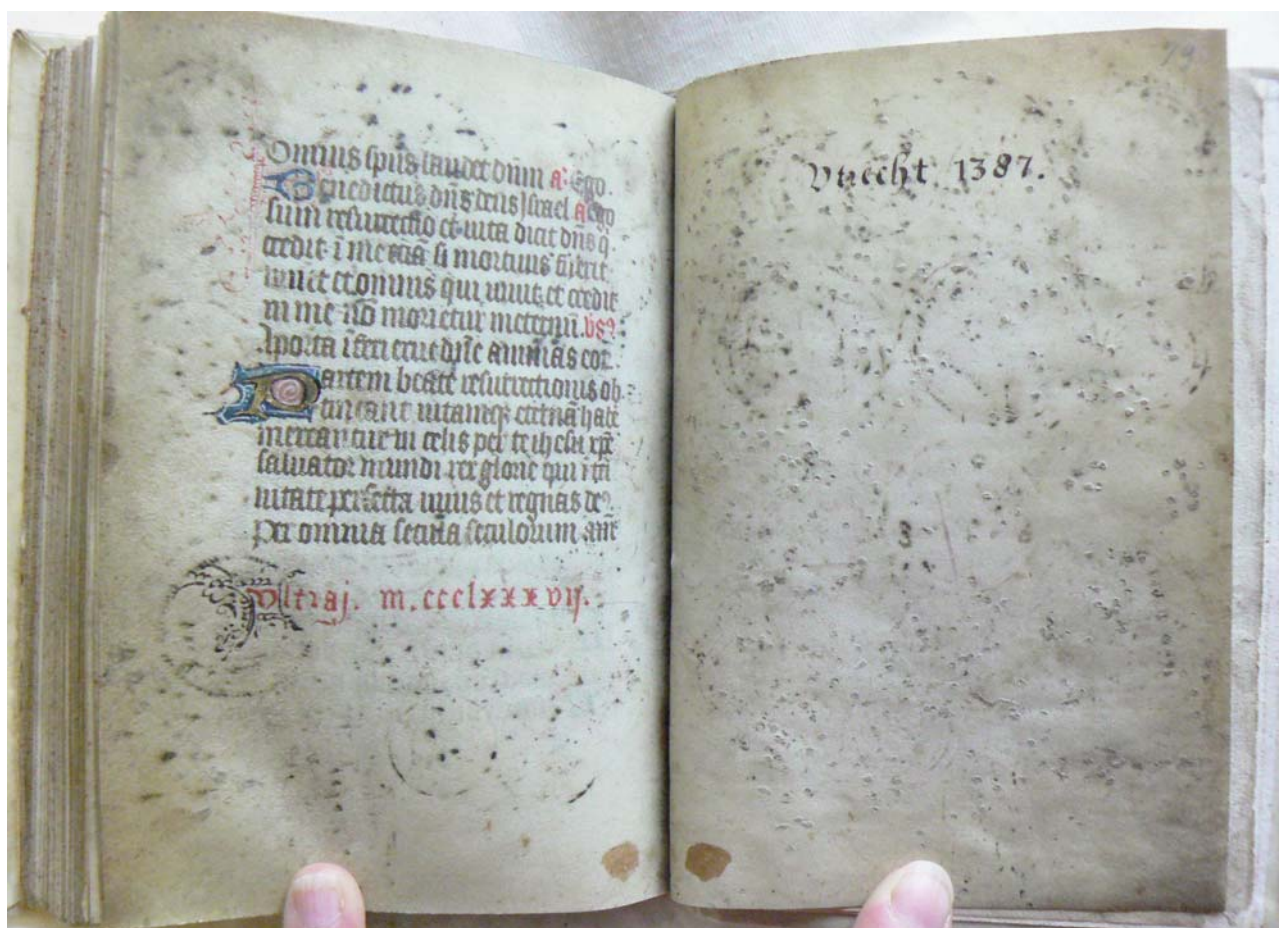


Fig. 11. Last two folios of a Book of Hours made in Bruges, with offsets of at least thirty-four round objects that had been sewn in. Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent, BMH h 160, ff. 78v-79r.



Fig. 12. Opening of the Short Hours of the Cross, in a Book of Hours made in Haarlem, with a parchment Lamb of God roundel sewn to the blank verso. Delft, Prinsenhof, n.s., ff. 52v-53r.

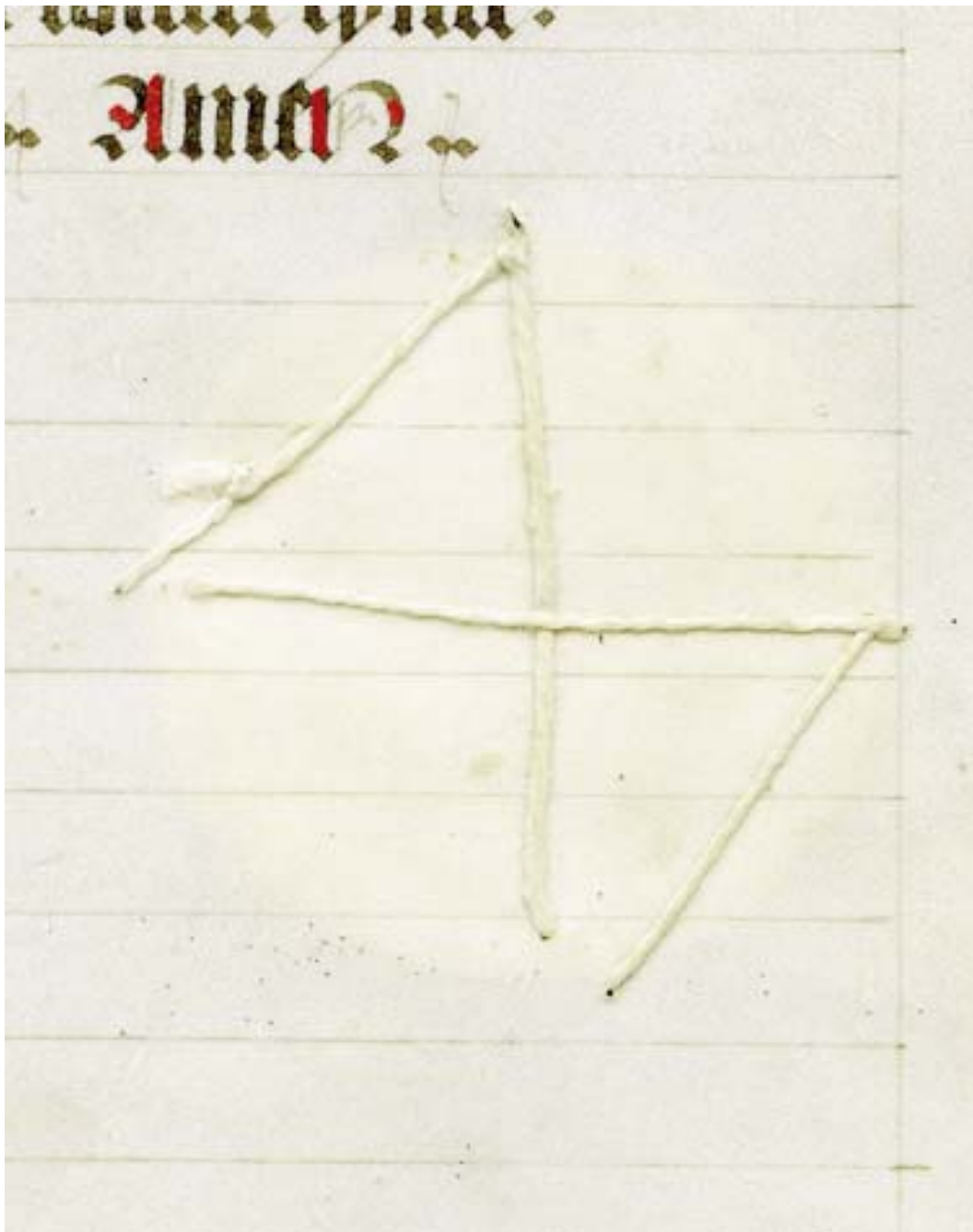


Fig. 13. Reverse of folio with Lamb of God wafer, detail. Delft, Prinsenhof, n.s., f. 52r.



Fig. 14. Annunciation, with offset of round object in lower margin. Harley 2966, f. 14v.

Obliteration through kissing and handling

Perhaps the votary treated the round object below the Annunciation as an osculatory tablet, similar to tablets at the foot of a canon page in a missal, a painted area whose purpose was to accept the priest's liturgical kiss during the canon of the Mass (fig. 15). In the Missal of the Church of St Servatius in Maastricht, a manuscript now in The Hague (KB 78 D 44, f. 133v), the priest has left his repeated mark on the full-page image showing Christ on the cross. Illuminators realized that priests would wear down the image with repeated use, so they painted small crosses at the bottom of the page to denote the place where the priest should aim his lips. In this example, the priest has indeed kissed the osculatory tablet, but has also slipped his lips upward and kissed the body on the cross, as well as the foot of the cross, depositing grease from his nose.

Similarly, an owner of Harley 2966 expressed her physical relationship with the book by kissing images of Christ, although she did so quite selectively. At prime, for example, she left the image of Christ before Pilate untouched (fig. 16). In this image, Christ is fully clothed in a purple robe with his sleeves hanging far beyond the ends of his hands. The image is in pristine condition. However, the image prefacing terce reveals the owner's fiery enthusiasm for the body of Christ, as he (or she) touched the image repeatedly with her hands and possibly her lips (fig. 17). She has rubbed the nearly naked body of Christ right off the page, leaving his smeared silhouette against the gold-tooled background. Furthermore, she has combined the iconophilia for Christ's naked body with iconophobia for the torturer at the right, resulting in a second set of spectral smears against the gold background. It is not clear, however, why she attacked only one of the torturers.

Other manuscripts reveal how selective readers were in kissing and rubbing the images in their books. They heaped attention not only on particular images, but on particular elements within those images. For example, a manuscript prayer book with prayers designed around the Rosary, made in the Southern Netherlands shortly after 1460 (Brussels KB, MS. IV 414), had an owner who kissed several of its miniatures or rubbed them away in the course of venerating them.¹⁴ The objects of iconophilia include numerous large miniatures and historiated initials. They have been attacked, ardently and selectively, throughout the manuscript. One severely rubbed image accompanies a prayer to the Holy Face, a Middle Dutch translation of the *Salve Sancta Facies* (fig. 18):

*Rub: This is a fine prayer about Our Dear Lord's blessed face, the Veronica [severely rubbed]. Inc: Hail, Holy Face of Christ.*¹⁵

The initial *G*, showing the Holy Face of Christ, is severely abraded. The votary attended not only to the image, but specifically to the representation of the face within the image. The prayer was one that often demanded to be read in the presence of the Holy Face of Christ, or the sudarium, which was both an image and a relic of Jesus. One wonders whether the votary considered the copy of the Holy Face to have conveyed the properties of the original relic, which might in turn rub off on the votary.

This overzealous interaction with the images occurred elsewhere in this manuscript, where the owner has applied her attentions selectively. On another leaf, the patron rubbed an image

¹⁴ Brussels KB, MS. IV 414. Manuscript prayer book on vellum, 59 ff., 140 x 95 (105 x 65) mm.; 1 col., 16 lines, littera textualis, in Middle Dutch and Latin. The manuscript was copied in Bruges, 1465–80, by Guillaume van Schonehove. See Johannes Bernardus Oosterman, *De gratie van het gebed. Middel nederlandse gebeden: overlevering en functie met bijzondere aandacht voor produktie en receptie in Brugge (1380–1450)*, Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen, xii, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1995), no. 46, with further references.

¹⁵ *Rub: Dit es een suuerlijck ghebet van onsen lieven heeren ghebenedide aenschijn den vironic [severely rubbed]. Inc: God groet u helige aenschyn xpi in welken blecken de die ghedaente des godliken lichts [...]* (Brussels KB, MS. IV 414, f. 13r–14r).



Fig. 15. Canon page in a missal which has been severely abraded through osculation. The Hague, KB 78 D 44, f. 133v.



Fig. 16. Christ before Pilate, image prefacing prime. Harley 2966, f. 27v.



Fig. 17. Flagellation of Christ, image prefacing terce. Harley 2966, f. 30v.



Fig. 18. Historiated initial with the Face of Christ, severely abraded, prefacing a prayer to the Face of Christ. Brussels, KB, MS. IV 414, f. 13r.

depicting St John the Baptist, and specifically targeted the saint's attribute, the Lamb of God (fig. 19). One of the images that has been worshipped to oblivion appears as a grey smudge in a gilt letter U (fig. 20). The identity of the image can only be deduced through the words in the rubric and the accompanying prayer, which refer to St George, a figure strongly associated with talismanic images.

The owner also rubbed an image depicting a man kneeling before a priest at confession (fig. 21). The initial marks the beginning of a prayer to the Virgin and accompanies a rubric that illuminates its purported workings:

*Rub: Whoever either reads the following six verses, or carries them on his person, will not die unconfessed before he is able to make a full confession, even if he had his head chopped off. Inc: O, dear mother of God, a grace and a light of the father [...].*¹⁶

The startling and gruesome promise, which reads as a testimonial, contrasts with the accompanying image. The initial depicts a penitent man in a blue robe, accompanied by an angel; the man kneels before an enthroned person in a grey gown, to whom he apparently is giving his confession, seemingly in a relaxed and unhurried manner. The image does not depict the book's owner, who was a woman pictured elsewhere in the manuscript, but may rather depict Everyman offering his sudden and final confession. It is as if the image depicted time coming to a halt, even in the most dire and sudden mortal situations, in order to provide the patron the opportunity to confess his sins, and therefore not to have to face judgment with any damning baggage. According to the promises of the rubric, the prayer provides insurance against sudden death or murder when the votary would not normally be able to squeeze in a final confession.

Apparently cognizant of the prayer's utility, the scribe, Guillaume van Schonehove, copied the identical prayer again into the same manuscript (Brussels KB, MS. IV 414), but with a slight variation in the rubric:

*Rub: Whoever reads the following six verses and carries them on his person will not die unconfessed, because with these six verses Our Lady saved a cleric who did not want to die before he had made a full confession, even though he had his head chopped off. Inc: O dear mother of God, a grace and a light of the father [...].*¹⁷

In the second rendition of this prayer, the rubric further elucidates the reason for the prayer, and provides its origin myth, relating to the Virgin's intervention at the death of a cleric, whom she 'saved' not by sparing his life but by giving him final confession in the split second prior to his decapitation. The prayer's duplication within a single manuscript can only double its effect.

In both versions of the rubric in this manuscript, the votary is given a choice between reading the six verses every day, or merely carrying them on his person, apparently without having even to read them. In the first case, the prayer would have a normal, albeit extra powerful effect. In the latter case, the text becomes a talisman, that is, an object bearing written words that achieve effectiveness by means of proximity. Many other prayers, promising similar effects, were copied into Middle Dutch prayer books of the fifteenth century, transforming these codices into talismans. The purpose of the prayers' promising slow or planned – rather than sudden – death contributes to the overall goal of salvation, the larger aim of the prayer book.

¹⁶ *Rub: So wie dese VI vaersen allen daghe leest of over hem draget, die en sal niet sterven onghebiecht voor dat hy hem al volmaectelick ghebiecht hadde, nochtans was hem thooff of gheslagen. Inc: O, werdighe moeder gods, een ghenade ende een licht des vaders [...]* (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, MS. IV 414, ff. 17v–18r).

¹⁷ *Rub: So wie dese VI versen alle daghen leest ende over hem draecht, die ne sal niet sterven onghebiecht, want bij dese VI versen verlost onse vrouwe eenen cleerc die niet sterven mochte voor dat hij hem vulmaechtelic ghebiecht hadde, nochtans was hem thooff of ghesleghe. Inc: O, werdighe moeder gods, eene ghenade ende een licht des vaders [...]* (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, MS. IV 414, f. 55v).



Fig. 19. Historiated initial with John the Baptist, with Lamb of God rubbed away. Brussels, KB, MS. IV 414, f. 29v.



Fig. 20. Historiated initial with St George, rubbed to oblivion. Brussels, KB, MS. IV 414, f. 14r.



Fig. 21. Manuscript's male patron with his guardian angel (rubbed) and a confessor. Brussels, KB, MS. IV 414, f. 17v.

As did the owner(s) of Harley 2966, the owners of Brussels KB, MS. IV 414 treated the images in the manuscript selectively. The book might have belonged to a couple, the man pictured with his guardian angel (as pictured above), and the woman appearing in an image kneeling at a prie-dieu and accompanied by her guardian angel (fig. 22). Neither of them kissed or touched the image of St Wilgefortis, who is shown crucified in a floor-length gown with an ermine stole and a full beard (fig. 23). Believers, especially women who found themselves in unhappy marriages, venerated St Wilgefortis. Thus, we might cautiously surmise that the couple who owned this particular manuscript had various anxieties and problems, but that a bad marriage did not top the list. The images that are uncharacteristically undamaged can be as telling as those that are heavily rubbed.

In Harley 2966, the image that is more damaged than any other depicts St Catherine (fig. 24). Like the other images of saints in the section of suffrages, this one had a curtain sewn at the upper margin, which the user would lift in order to venerate the image. The viewer did more than just lift the curtain, however. One of the owners of the manuscript, possibly Kateryne Bryde who had written an exhortation on f. 8r, severely abraded the surface of the miniature, particularly the body of the saint as well as the Emperor Maxentius whom she tramples victoriously. The devotee may have rubbed the image of her name saint with oil or some other lipid such as molten wax, which has disfigured the vellum support and transported some of the pigment beyond the frame. Is it possible that the owner treated the image of St Catherine as if the image were a relic, to be oiled as the pilgrims oiled the bones of St Catherine of Sinai? At any rate, the particularly physical form of veneration has severely maimed the image.

The images in both manuscripts (Brussels KB, MS. IV 414 and Harley 2966) demonstrate a user's volitional destruction of selected images caused by repeated ardent handling. Patterns of use in the manuscripts suggest that the user rubbed or kissed the images intentionally, that she chose to venerate some and ignore others, and that the ones she venerated most ardently included iconic images of the body of Christ, as well as images of saints whose very images might have been considered apotropaic. In general, the patron has kissed the iconic images but has either left the narrative images alone, or else has carefully kissed just the images of Christ's body when they appear within a narrative image.

Cutting out parts of the book

Yet a different form of interaction with the book took place with the image with the Lamentation in Harley 2966 (fig. 25). It is possible that one of the manuscript's original owners cut out the body of Christ in its sepulchre and used it for some apotropaic ritual, leaving Mary and John (and subsequent viewers) to lament not death, but mutilation. While mutilation of this sort is nearly impossible to date, we might cautiously ask: Did the book owner possibly use it in an Easter ritual to imagine her own private way to re-enact the *depositio*, *elevatio*, and *visitatio*?²² Or did she use the close-cropped image of Christ in his sepulchre as a talisman to ward off death? A similar force may have been at play in a Southern Netherlandish prayer book, in which an early owner cut the Five Wounds of Christ right out of their frame, possibly to carry as a talisman (fig. 26). A later owner fashioned a garish makeshift repair on paper and mounted it into the open hole. The wounds of Christ, like many of the other words and images discussed in this paper, offered putative protection against disease and sudden death. Perhaps rather than carrying the entire book for protection, the owner merely cut out the effective image.

²² Pamela Sheingorn, *The Easter Sepulchre in England*, Early Drama, Art and Music Reference Series, v (Kalamazoo, 1987), discusses how images, namely sculptures, were employed in the Easter drama.

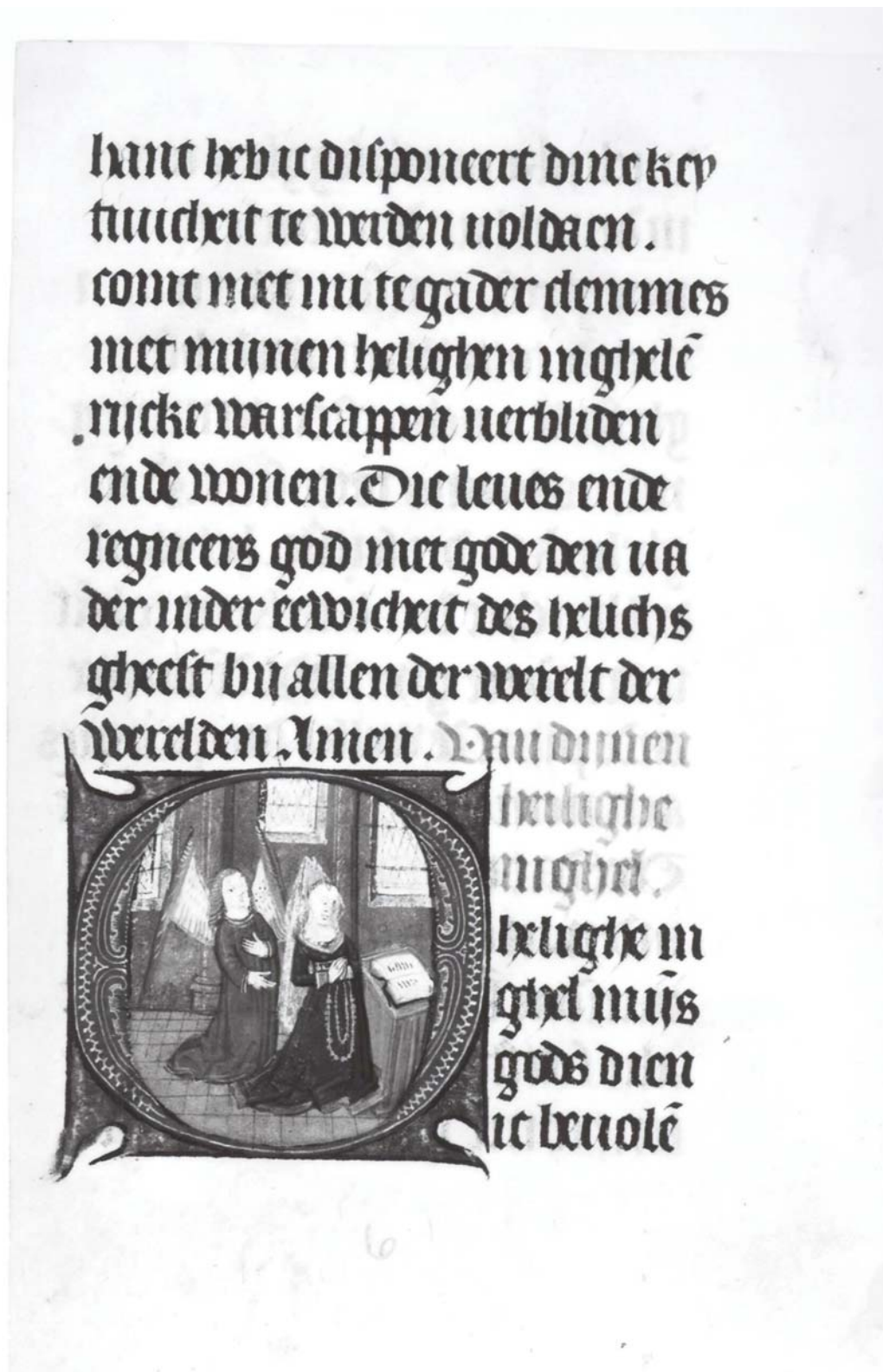


Fig. 22. Manuscript's female patron kneeling at a prie-dieu accompanied by her guardian angel. Brussels, KB, MS. IV 414, f. 27v.



Fig. 23. Historiated initial with St Wilgefortis. Brussels KB, MS. IV 414, f. 51r, detail.

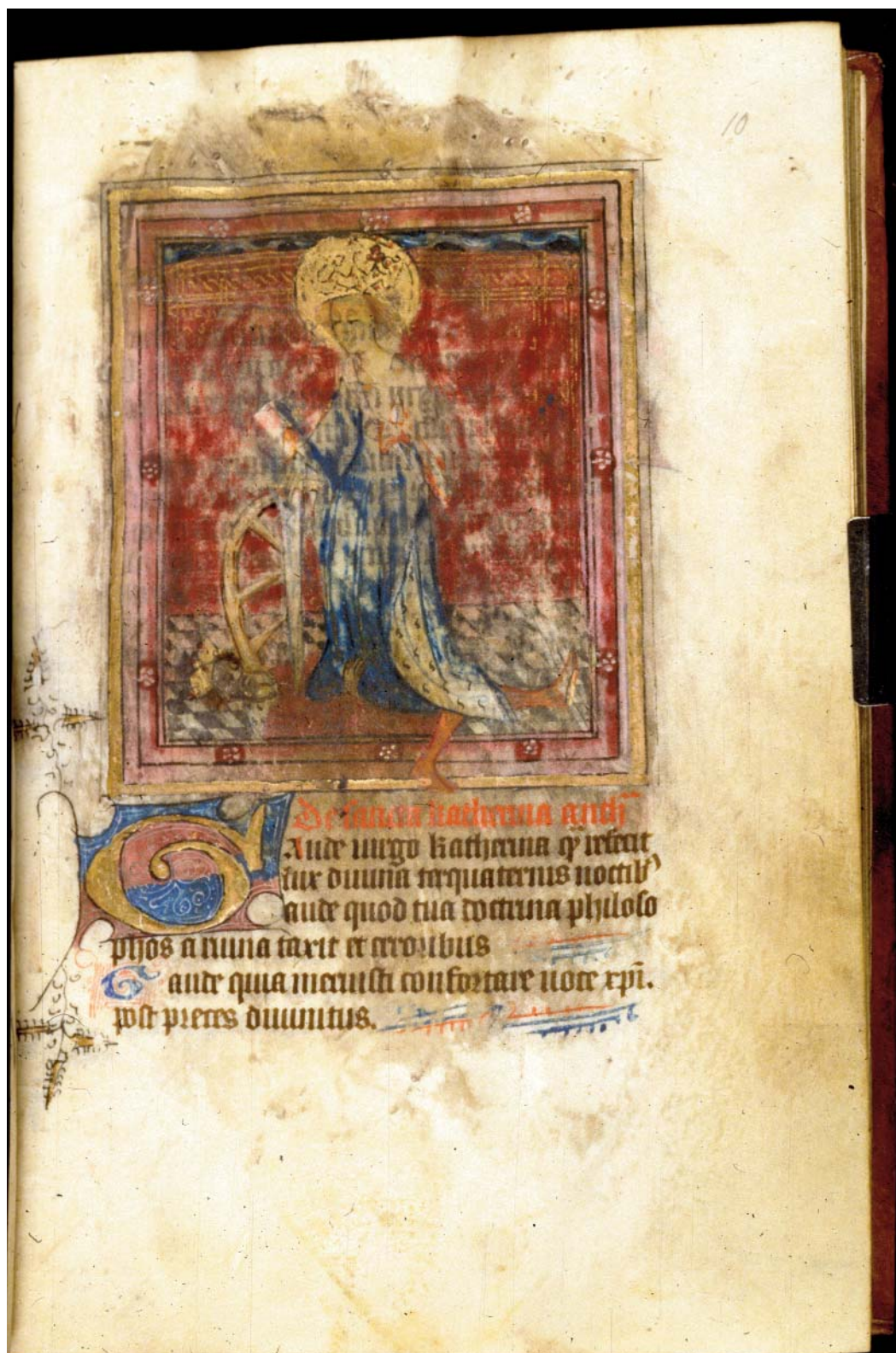


Fig. 24. Folio with miniature depicting St Catherine, which has been nearly destroyed by a reader. Harley 2966, f. 10r.



Fig. 25. Lamentation of Christ in the Tomb (mutilated), Harley 2966, ff. 39v-40r.



Fig. 26. Rhyming prayer to the Five Wounds of Christ (with 19th-century? replacement over an area cut out of the page). Brussels, KB, MS. IV 1263, f. 3r.

Warding off enemies

While several of the abraded images and added texts in Harley 2966 reveal the desire of the readers to petition particular saints or protect certain aspects of their spiritual health, one final added prayer amounts to a blanket protection for the reader/owner. One of the owners has added a prayer to the end of the book, just at the end of the original text, which provides a final layer of protection to its bearer (f. 93v; fig. 27). The rubric is written in fifteenth-century English and reads:

Rub: Ho so ever sety thes versys here after ffolowyng in tymes ther shalt no theffe nor enmey have power to hurt hym nor rob hym by the grace of god. (Harley MS. 2966, f. 93v)

The prayer text that accompanies this bold rubric promising apotropaic benefits reads, 'Jhesus autem transiens per medium illorum ibat [...]'. This text comes from scripture and was thought to harness apotropaic powers, as the prefatory rubric indicates. Its function is better explained in regard to another manuscript in the Harley collection.

Another Harley manuscript that contains the *Jhesus autem transiens* text in another context helps to explain its medieval connotation. The words appear in a copy of John Mandeville's fictional pilgrim's account, written in English in the second quarter of the fifteenth century (Harley 3954, f. 21v; fig. 28). The narrator travels from place to place, describing the people, customs, and historical events that took place at each location. For Nazareth (fig. 29) he tells the story of how Jesus used the *Jhesus autem transiens* verse to repel his enemies. Mandeville writes, 'And half a mile from Nazareth is the leap that our Lord leaped from the Jews, when they led him upon a high rock to cast him down and slay him. But he passed through them and leaped to another rock, where his steps are yet to be seen. And therefore, some men say when they have dread of thieves, the verse that is written here: *Jhesus autem transiens per medium illorum ibat*' (English modernized). The scribe wrote the apotropaic words in red. The text comes from Luke 4:30 and constitutes an unusual use of scripture. As if to instruct the reading audience how to use the *Jhesus autem transiens* text properly, the manuscript provides, as an aside, a second powerful text that is to be repeated three times for guaranteed delivery from peril. The text instructs 'And also þei seyn þis vers of þe souter', and also provides that biblical text in red. The supernatural words are therefore embedded into a pilgrimage narrative and have both a descriptive and prescriptive function.

Sometimes this verse was considered so powerful that it should not be spoken, only written and worn on the body, for example on a ring. Very often the words are woven into longer supernatural formulas including one in a Southern Netherlandish prayer book in which the *Jhesus autem transiens* is copied, beginning in line 11, and interspersed with Maltese crosses alternating in gold and blue (fig. 30). Embedded in this page design, the words function as much for their meaning as for the power they inherently hold. This power is held in a suspension of crosses, which indicate to the reader that he should cross himself between uttering each word. The words and crosses on the page indicate a physical ritual.

In Harley 2966 the *Jhesus autem transiens* formula is copied into available space on some lined vellum. This particular prayer was regularly added to manuscripts made in the Low Countries and England. In a prayer book made in South Holland, for example, a scribe has squeezed the *Jhesus autem transiens* into a bit of available vellum, between a prayer to Jesus, Mary and Anne and another prayer to Mary (fig. 31).

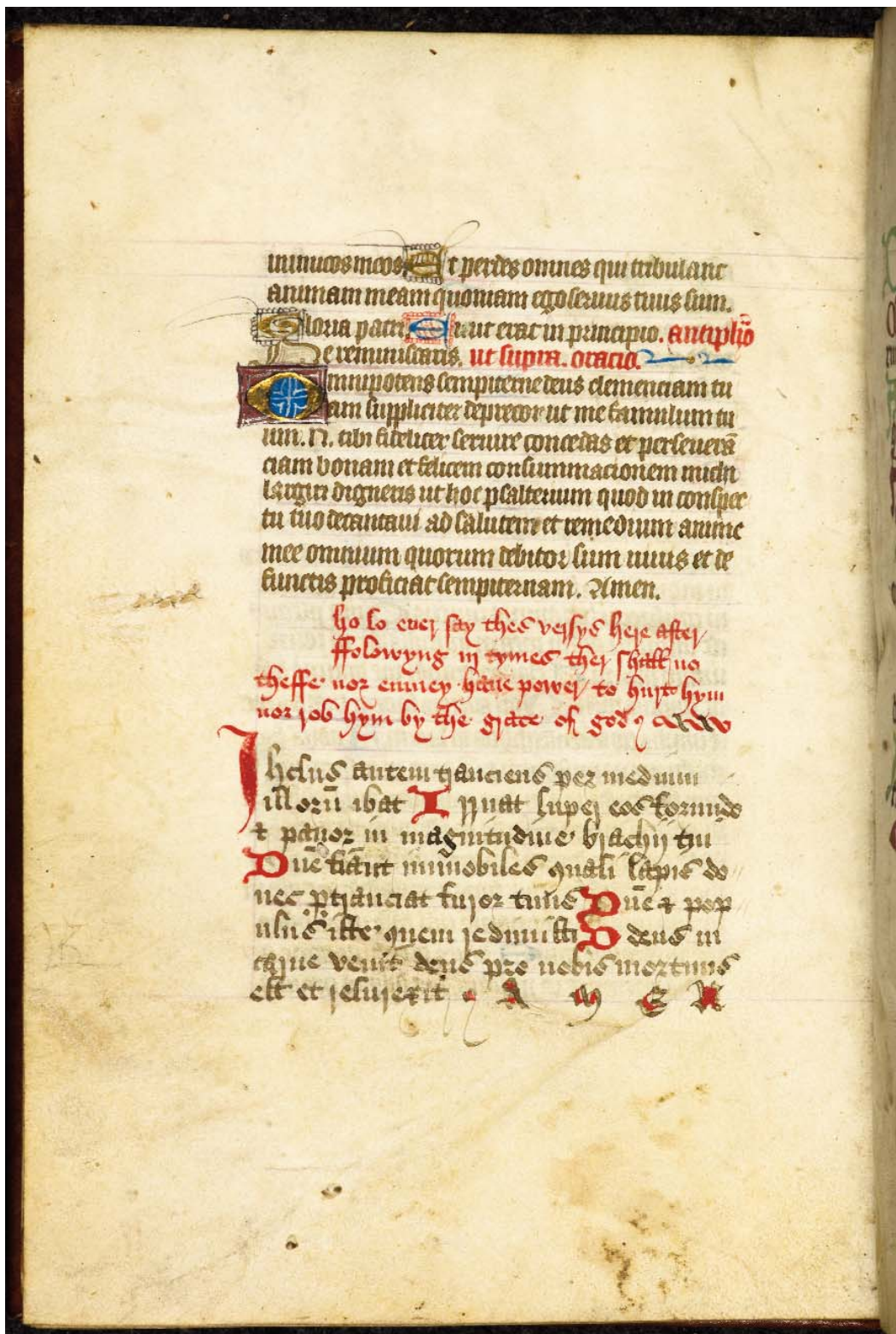


Fig. 27. Formula beginning *Ihesus autem transiens* added in at the lower margin in a 15th-century hand. Harley 2966, f. 93v.

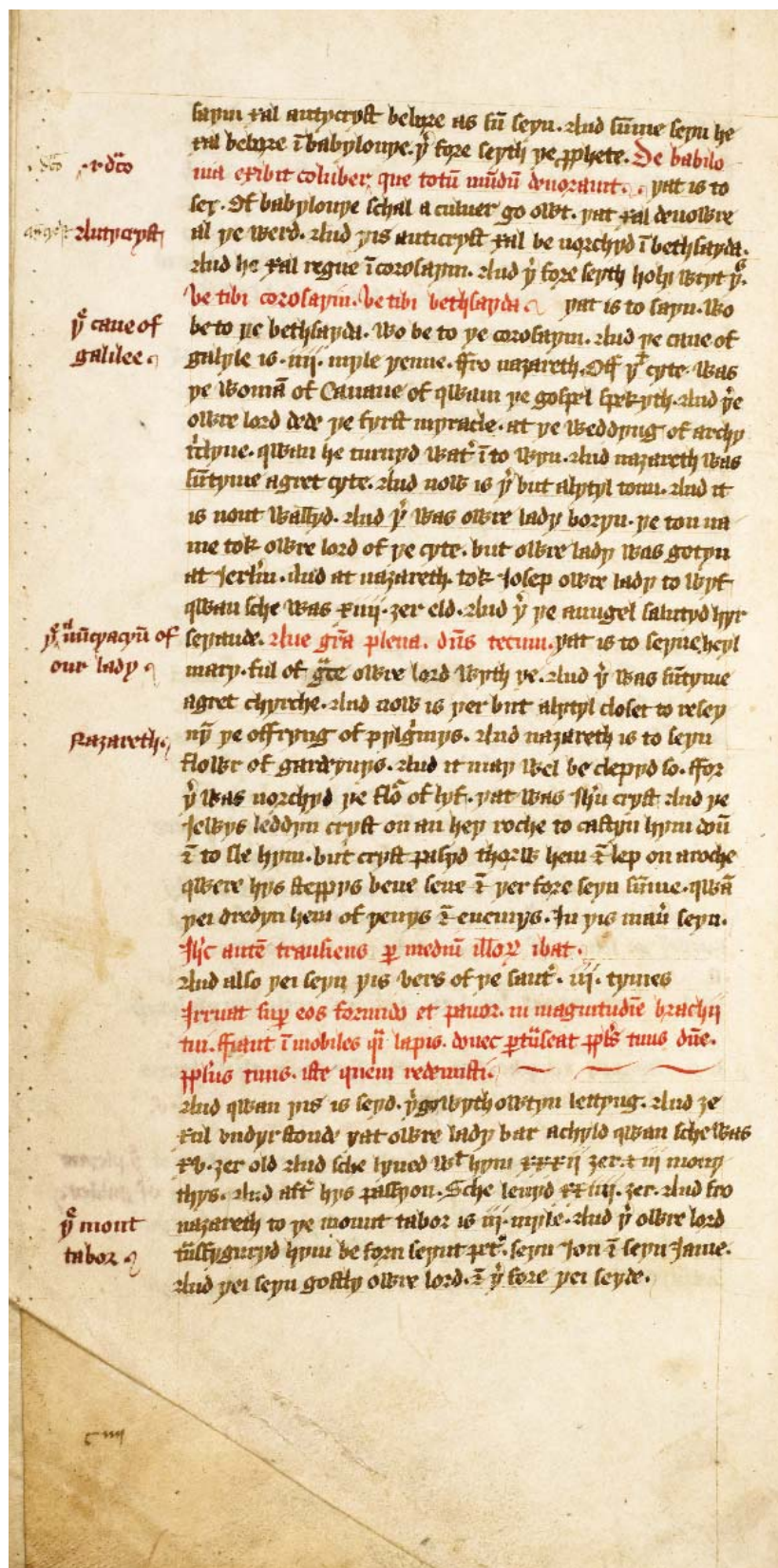


Fig. 28. Formula beginning *Ihesus autem transiens* in red, incorporated in Sir John Mandeville, *Travels*. London BL, Harley 3954, f. 21v.

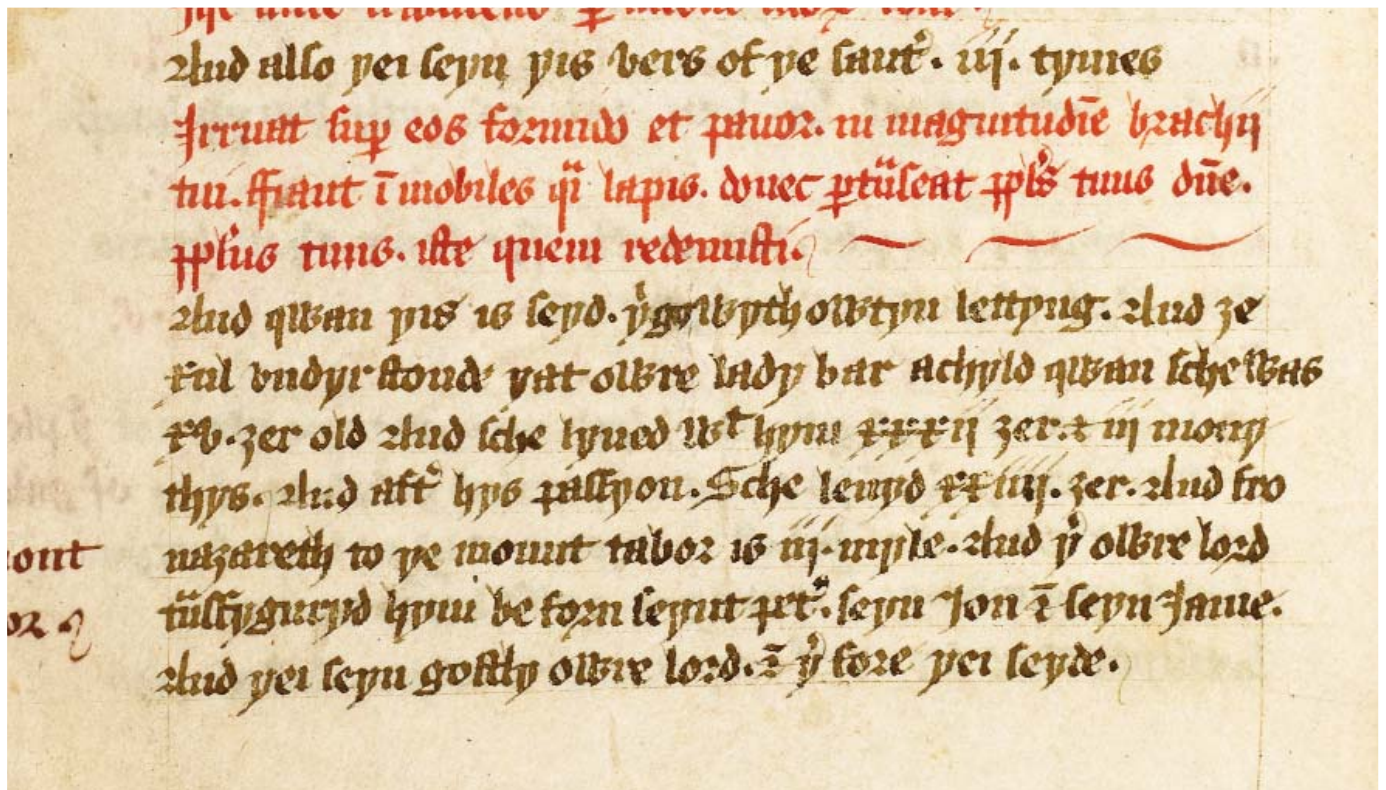


Fig. 29. London BL, Harley 3954, f. 21v, detail.

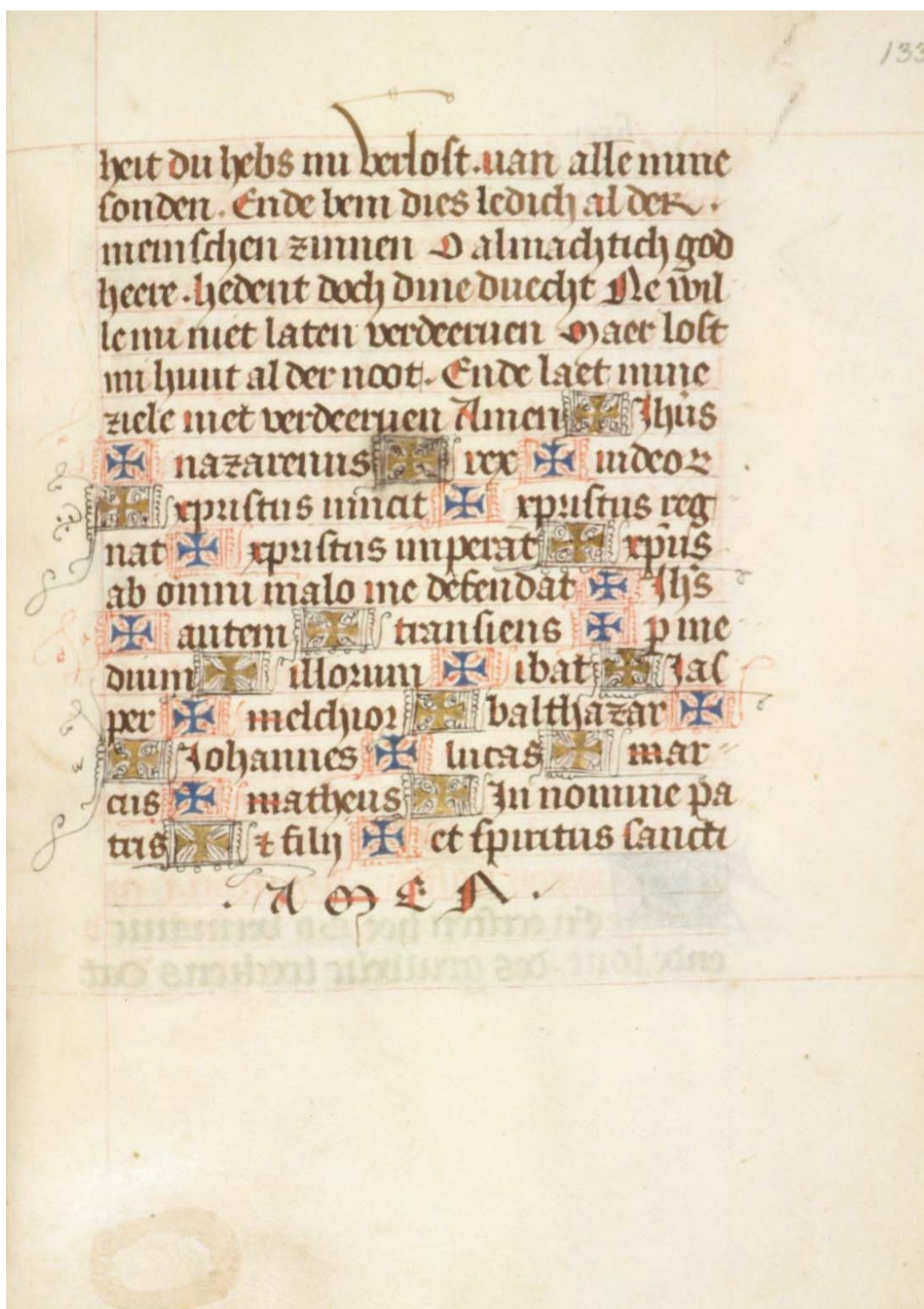


Fig. 30. Formula that incorporates *Ihesus autem transiens*. Add. MS. 39638, f.133r.

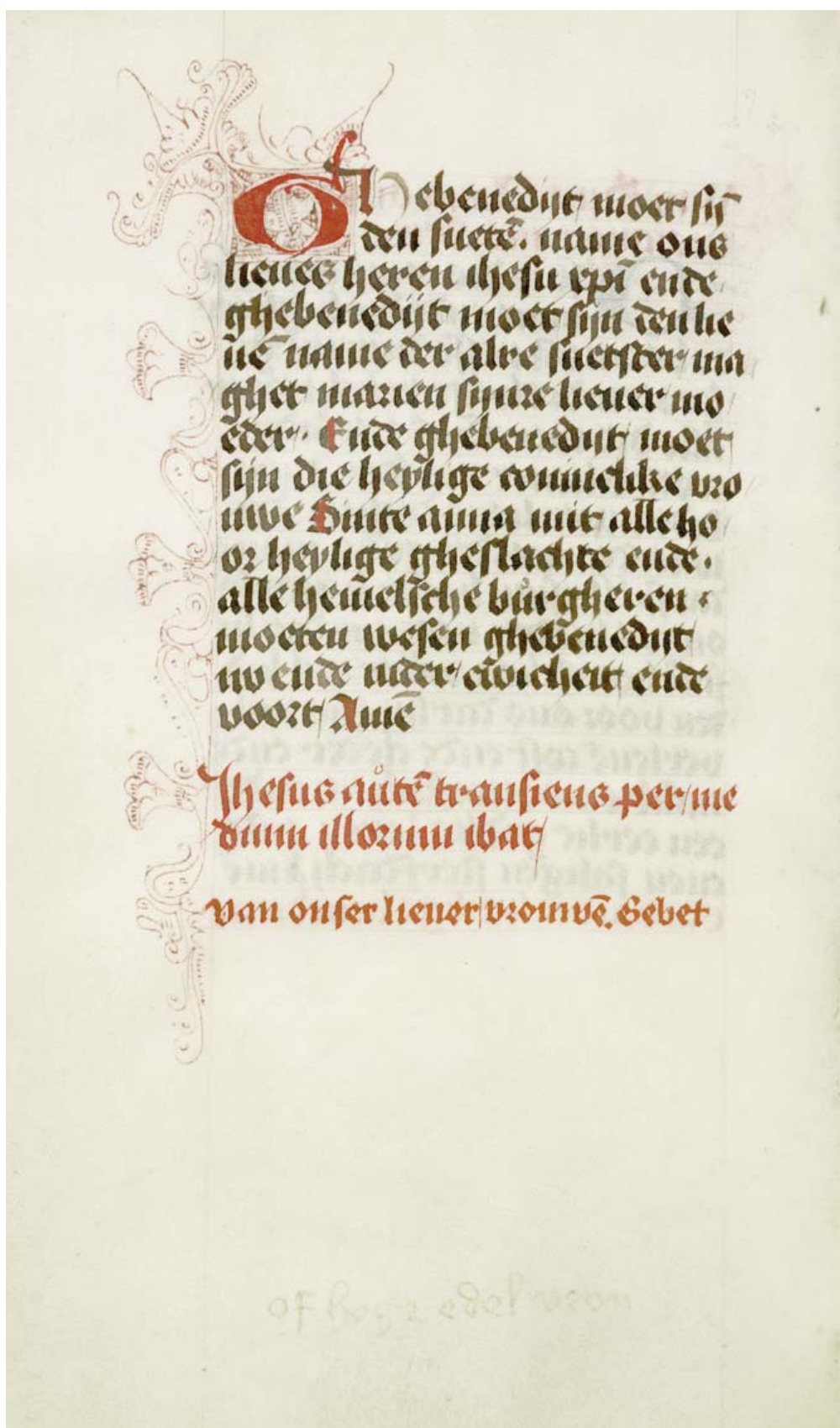


Fig. 31. Netherlandish prayer book with an added prayer, *Ihesus autem transiens*. The Hague, KB, 132 G 38, f. 129v.

The text also appears regularly on rolls, a subject that deserves some focused attention in this study of handling objects.

Rolls and supernatural force

In a deathbed scene painted by the Master of Catherine of Cleves, a pale and gaunt man who is propped up on two pillows has just died amidst various activities (fig. 32). A beguine gently closes the man's eyes, a woman holds a candle in his hand, and a doctor checks his urine. But the activity surrounding sickness and death that the Master foregrounds is reading. The hooded cleric and another beguine are reading codices, while another book – a roll – unfurls off the table. The efficacy of the roll with its formulae is as great as the doctor's with his urinalysis. Words and images were summoned to protect medieval Christians' spiritual, as well as their physical, health. Such talismanic words and images were often copied into codices and rolls. Rolls, however, survive in low quantities because the storage methods of post-medieval libraries favoured the codex.

Prayer rolls could be homemade or professionally made, but one of their functions was that they could wrap around the body like a spiritual bandage. To that effect, we read in a rubric from a Southern Netherlandish Book of Hours:

rub: Write these names onto a piece of abortive parchment that is long enough to go around the sick person's neck, sewn into the sick person's linens. This is tried and true. The angel from heaven brought it to Rome during a great plague and gave it to the pope at his pressing request and his serious appeal. These are the words: [...].¹⁹

Although this sounds suspiciously like the instructions for a neck restraint, this rubric underscores an aspect of medieval sympathetic logic: a physical ritual yields physical results. The proximity of the parchment roll plays a crucial role in its efficacy. Secondly, the rubric indicates that rolls could bypass ecclesiastic or professional authority and simply be handmade. And thirdly, it points to the power of names in supernatural formulas. This homemade roll is to contain the words 'Adonai', and other Hebrew circumlocutions for God, as well as the nonsense syllables 'fla fla gra gra', which would have certainly added to the ritual's mystery.

Harley Roll T 11

Measuring more than a metre long, Harley Roll T 11 wants to snap back to its rolled-up form as soon as the reader opens it, but perhaps that inconvenience did not bother its original owner much, since several of the diagrams were thought to have a salutary effect merely when held or carried: they did not have to be read in order to transmit their benefits (fig. 33).²⁰ The roll, made

¹⁹ *rub:* Ende dan scryft dese namen in een lanc perkeement apertyf, also lanc dat omme sinen hals ghaen mach, ghenaeit in lijnwade van den zieken. Dit es gheprouft ende waer [15v] vonden, dinghel van hemelrikee brochtse te Roome in eene grote steerfte, ende ghafse den paeus te sinen groten versoucke ende narenstiger bede. (BL, Add. MS. 39638, f. 15rv).

²⁰ Curt F. Bühler treats this roll in 'Prayers and Charms in Certain Middle English Scrolls', *Speculum*, xxxix (1964), pp. 270-78, esp. 274-277. He relates Harley T 11 to three other Middle English rolls: Harley Roll 43 A 14; London, Wellcome Collection, MS. 632; and Glazier MS. 39. At the time Bühler was writing, the Glazier manuscript was in a private collection in New York, and it has since entered the collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum. Most of the Glazier roll was transcribed in W. Heneage Legge, 'A Decorated Mediaeval Roll of Prayers', *The Reliquary and Illustrated Archaeologist*, x (1904), pp. 637-8. The roll in the Wellcome Collection, like Harley T 11, contains a charm based on the length of Christ which has been rubbed to illegibility. Those texts that are legible have been transcribed in S. A. J. Moorat, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts on Medicine and Science in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library* (London, 1962), pp. 491-3.



Fig. 32. Master of Catherine of Cleves, Man dying, with various activities around his deathbed. New York, PPM, MS. M. 917, p. 180.



Fig. 33. Harley Roll T 11 (122.2 x 8.5 cm).

in England in the fifteenth century, contains a variety of textual as well as image-based talismans, including schematic iconography from the Passion. The two most striking images painted on the roll are the measured wound of Christ (fig. 34) and the measured representations of the nails of the Passion (fig. 35).²¹ Both the wound and the nails belong to a class of imagery known as metric relics, images that in their very dimensions correspond to a prototype and thereby summon the power of their referents.²²

The contents of the roll are varied and fall into three categories. There are the metric relics of the Passion, as mentioned above. There are prayers based on the thirty-nine names of Christ, which recall the power of the circumlocutions of Yahweh.²³ And there are red and green diagrams, all based on circles, which are related to diagrams found in collections of incantations such as those of the *Book of Honorius*.²⁴ Within the circles are figures that comprise variations on the cross and resemble amulets carved in stone; such amulets protect against storms, drowning, and ‘dangerous manufactured goods’. The scribe used rubrics and decorated initials to mark the beginnings of the seventeen separate sections, as well as rows of red and green Xs. As Don Skemer has suggested, the red and green space fillers and textual dividers help to create a dense block of text, which may have served as a hermetic net for evil and disease.²⁵

The measured wound of Christ – which looks undeniably vaginal – recalls an image painted onto a folding letter made in France, now in Princeton (fig. 36).²⁶ The letter contains incantations and instructions: the user was to fold the letter, then hold it to a woman’s abdomen to ease her labour pains. Images of this type were therefore used in physical rituals that harnessed aspects of doctrinal Christianity for purposes that some considered unorthodox, namely alleviation of pain and earthly suffering.

The roll also contains an image of the measured nails of Christ, which similarly had an apotropaic function. The three nails sometimes comprise a stand-alone image, as in a miniature painted on a large vellum leaf that is wrapped around a paper table of contents in a Dutch manuscript (fig. 37).²⁷ They are driven into a landscape with a shiny blood red sky. Did the materials – enamel and iron – invoke the strength of their referent? The owner of the nail landscape inserted it into a rather large manuscript that has nothing to do with the Passion but which happens to be large enough – at 210 mm high – to protect it. Was the image protecting the book, or the book protecting the image?

Another isolated image of the nail appears as half of a bifolium that someone stuck into an early sixteenth-century prayer book from Brabant (fig. 38). The left half of the design consists of a giant nail inside a rectangular box, filled with red and blue letters, which read: ‘Pilate wrote this title above the cross of our lord. It is very good to carry it on your person’. In other words, the titulus (the board nailed to the top of the cross with ‘Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews’ written in three languages), forms a protective amulet, part of a talisman whose power is sealed by the

²¹ See David S. Areford, ‘The Passion Measured: A Late-Medieval Diagram of the Body of Christ’, in A. A. MacDonald, H. N. B. Ridderbos and R. M. Schlusemann (eds.), *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture* (Groningen, 1998), pp. 211–38.

²² The best introduction to magical rolls is Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2006). See also Adolf D. Jacobi, ‘Heilige Längenmasse: Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte der Amulette’, *Schweizer Archiv für Volkskunde*, xxix (1929), p. 187 and passim.

²³ Valentina Izmirlieva, *All the Names of the Lord: Lists, Mysticism, and Magic* (Chicago and London, 2008), esp. pp. 117–31.

²⁴ See, for example, Don Karr, ‘Sloane 3826 57r–88v’, which is published online at <http://www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/karr/Solomon/57-83.pdf> (but is not peer-reviewed and is riddled with transcription errors). Like Sloane 3826, Harley Roll T 11 is written in Latin and English.

²⁵ Skemer, *Binding Words*.

²⁶ This French amulet was recently purchased by Princeton University Library. For a full description, see Skemer, *op. cit.*

²⁷ Deventer, Stads- of Atheneumbibliotheek, Cat. I, 37. Alternative shelfmark: 101 D 18 Kl. Manuscript on paper, 319 ff., 212 x 142 (c. 160 x c. 100) mm.; 2 col., 32 or 33 lines. For a description, see www.mmdc.nl.



Fig. 34. Harley Roll T 11, detail: the Measured Wound of Christ.



Fig. 35. Harley Roll T 11, detail: the Three Nails of Christ.



Fig. 36. Birthing amulet with the wound of Christ. Princeton University Library (formerly Paris, Les Enluminures).



Fig. 37. Nails of the Passion in a landscape. Deventer, Stads- of Atheneumbibliotheek, MS. I,37, unfoliated leaf.

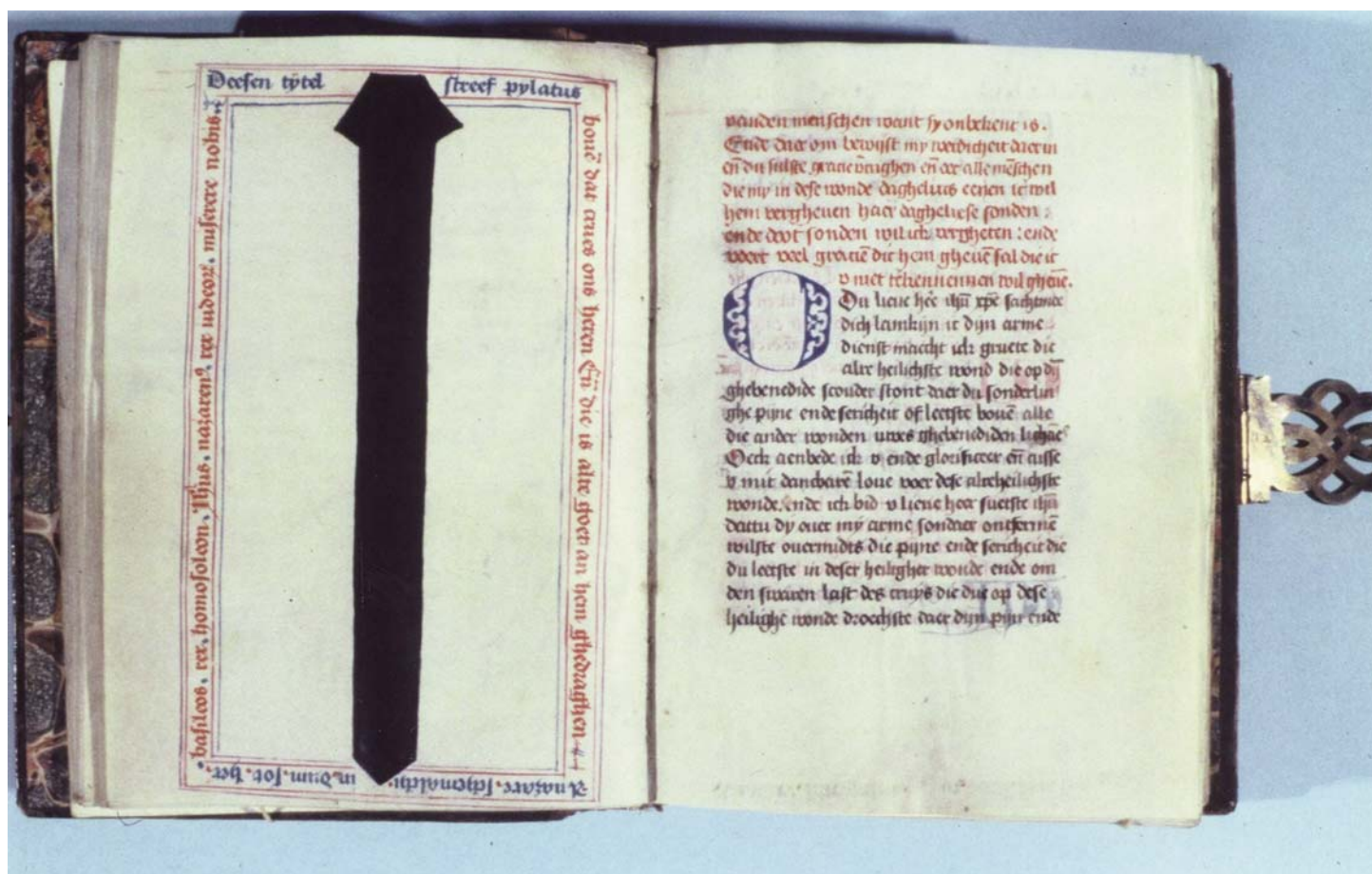


Fig. 38. Nail of the Passion, inside the INRI titulus. Rotterdam GB 96 E 12, ff. 31v-32r.

measured wound and nail. Two of the features of amuletic imagery are that they put Passion imagery to protective functions, and that they often combine two or more kinds of apotropaic words and images into a single design.

Textual and design features of the Harley roll reappear in other surviving rolls, including a luxuriously produced roll made and illuminated in Rouen by the Master of Sir John Fastolf around 1440 for Henry Beauchamp, Duke of Warwick, whose portrait appears in the historiated initial as he prays to the crucifixion (fig. 39). As in the example above (BL, Add. MS. 36398, f. 131r), the texts in the centre section of the Duke of Warwick's roll are formulas littered with crosses, indicating that the reader was to cross himself repeatedly while reading them, and thus turn the act of reading into a physical ritual. These ritualized texts include the phrase *Ihesus autem transiens per medium illorum ibat*, as well as the words from the titulus, *Ihesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum* (figs 40, 41). The roll therefore brings together several types of formulas understood to have apotropaic powers.

One of the texts near the end of the Harley roll includes a rubric explaining that it need only be carried on one's person, and not necessarily read, to protect the body. Of course the irony is that the roll's user must read the instructions to learn that the act of reading is not required. The fact that several of the texts on the roll are too abraded to read indicates that, despite such provisions, the roll has been heavily handled and read. This includes the section at the top of the roll, which includes an image of the cross represented as a fraction of the original (fig. 42). The green cruciform shape is 125 mm long. Its proportional relationship to its referent implies a physical response from the viewer, who would have to duplicate the length a fixed number of times (the exact multiplier is probably contained within the text that is rubbed beyond legibility) in order to generate a metrical equivalent of the cross. The length of the cross, or the length of Christ's body nailed to the cross, could function as a powerful amulet, as a rubric in a prayer book written in Maastricht makes explicit:

Inc: Anyone who, reverently kneeling with devotion, reads a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria in front of the length of Our Dear Lord Jesus Christ, and kisses it with devotion, is certain not to die a sudden death from that day on. If he is tempted with any devilish temptation, the Truth of our dear Lord's length will save him. Furthermore, no one may bear false witness against him. As often as he kisses it [the length] with reverence and devotion, he will receive from our Lord whatever he desires in order to achieve his own salvation. *Item*, anyone who really prays and devotedly thinks about God and his length will be protected in body and in soul from all dangers and will be on good terms with his fellow man. *Item*, Pope Pius and Pope Innocent have awarded anyone who is truly confessed, who kisses the length of Jesus with devotion and looks at it, and reads one Pater Noster: that person will earn seven years' indulgence and seven *quadrages* each time they do it. (Brussels, KB, MS. 11231-36, f. 337v)²⁸

²⁸ Brussels, KB, MS. 11231-36, prayer book in Middle Dutch and (limited) Latin, without calendar, 399 ff. on paper (with watermark, Briquet no. 8159, c. 1520-25), 137 x 95 (95-105 x 65-75) mm; 18-22 lines, written by several hands, probably in Maastricht at the convent of tertiaries of Maagdendriesch, dedicated to Sts Andreas and Barbara; f. 337v: Prayer for the Length of Jesus, inc: Soe wie mit oetmoedicheit knyelende mit devocien leest een Pater Noster ende Ave Maria voer die lengde ons liefs heren Jhesu Christi ende cust die mit devocien, hi is seker dat hi van dieen dage gheen onversienige doot sterven en sal. Ende is hi getempteert mit eniger duvelscher tempacien, doer die werdicheit van ons heren lengde sal hi verloest worden. Ende gheen valsche getuygen en mach over hem niet comen. Ende also dick als men die met werdicheit ende mit devocien cust, soe vercricht hi van onsen heer dat hi tot sijnder salicheit begeert. *Item*, wie werdelick aenbedet ende devotelic denct op god en op sijn lengde, die wort bescermt in siel ende in lijf van allen periculen ende wort minsaem mit sijn even mensche. *Item*, die paus Pius ende die paus Innocencius hebben verleent alle die geen die mit berou gebiecht sijnde ende cussen mit devocien en aensien die lengde Jhesu ende lesen I pater noster verdienen telken VII jaer perdoen ende VII carenen.

²⁹ See Robert N. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007).



Fig. 39. Prayer Roll of Henry Beauchamp, Duke of Warwick, c. 1440. Utrecht, Catharijneconvent, MS. ABM 4ha.





Fig. 41. Prayer Roll of Henry Beauchamp, Duke of Warwick, c. 1440. Utrecht, Catharijneconvent, MS. ABM 4ha, detail of formula.



Fig. 42. Harley Roll T 11, detail: the Measured Crucifix.

A particular measurement, in other words, has the ability to save and protect. The Latin word *quadragene*, meaning forty days, referred to the duration of Lent, a forty-day parcel of time during which priests and confessors often demanded temporal punishments. In the late medieval economy of indulgences, the term often appears in the context of exculpating sin.²⁹ The rubric mediates between the votary and the Christ, between the votary and the popes, between the earthly and the eternal life, and between his body and Christ's, which is given as a particular, human length. All of this must be performed in a ritual that requires the votary to kneel, kiss the image, and recite prayers.

* * *

Rubrics inscribed in late medieval prayer books offer a glimpse into votaries' behaviours in the presence of images. If they were following the instructions in their books, votaries would perform a series of private rituals involving the mind, body, and voice that would structure their relationships with images both inside the books and outside them. Geert Groote's instruction, which was not given as a rubric in a prayer book but as a general call to the faithful to adjust their behaviour, establishes a relationship with the pax, whose function was to capture and disseminate the kiss. One can see from Groote's instruction that an ideal of devotion was to earn and enjoy a physical intimacy with Christ.

That votaries practised these acts of physical intimacy is clear from the patterns of wear they left in their manuscript prayer books. Many of these signs of wear reveal that votaries often elided an image with its referent, thereby animating the image. Although signs of wear are difficult to categorize and date, they can reveal some of the medieval owners' rituals and habits, if not their hopes and fears.

The examples analysed above demonstrate that votaries expected physical benefits from images and texts. They therefore engaged in physical practices with their manuscripts in order to activate them, sometimes putting miniatures to unorthodox or semi-legitimate uses. Votaries imitated priests when they kissed miniatures depicting Christ crucified. They carried rolls, whose form was well suited to portability, in order to protect their bodies with supernatural forces. They wrapped the rolls around their bodies and multiplied out the lengths of certain images to achieve commensurate lengths of relics. They sewed and pasted images and curtains into manuscripts that were already complete in order to increase the tangible ceremony around their devotions. They touched images out of veneration and added prescriptive rubrics so that the ritual could follow an exact and proven script. They punctured the fleshy vellum with needles in order to affix images in place, and they concealed them behind curtains in order to reveal them once again with a flourish, all in the service of averting pain, death, and eternal damnation.

²⁹ See Robert N. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2007).