



Medieval Collections Visit to East Coast of USA

Research Report for the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature

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8-9 May 2017

My research project looks at representations of blood in images of the crucifixion in the late middle ages. My corpus is very large, looking at text, manuscript miniatures, church murals and sculptural work, but it is limited to imagery that the medieval English audience had access to. This nevertheless means more than just locally-produced work, but also includes images imported as part of gift exchanges or commercial ties – this is the case of Netherlandish Sarum books of hours. A significant proportion of the identifiable Sarum books of hours in the 14-16C were produced in Ghent, Bruges and other urban centres in the Netherlands. The concentration of Dutch-produced Sarum hours at this point in time is a consequence of the exchanges enabled by the textile trade between England and the Continent. By surveying more than 150 Sarum books of Hours in the British Library and in other libraries on- and offline (Edinburgh University, Glasgow University, National Library of Scotland, The Hague, Walters Museum, Getty, The Huntington Museum) I have identified a specific motif, that of the five wounds pictured in isolation. This motif, composed of a cluster of 6 individual miniatures accompanied by prayers to the individual wounds, seems to appear exclusively in Dutch-produced manuscripts. This peculiar feature has not been systematically studied and, as far as I know, nobody observed the regionality of this Sarum iconography. As part of producing a working theory as to whether they are indeed a Dutch peculiarity, and whether they are a specific requirement for manuscript production for English patrons, I undertook a more systematic assessment of these books of hours.

The trip to the USA, occasioned by my attendance at the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo (11-14 May 2017), proved the perfect occasion for me to see some manuscripts located on the east coast, specifically in New York. The research trip consisted in a visit to the Special Collections department of the Morgan Museum and Library, and to the Cloisters, the New York Metropolitan Museum's medieval artefact collection. Due to the high influx of researching visitors during the summer, the library was only able to grant me access to the manuscripts for one day (8 May 2017). Nevertheless, I was able to consult a significant amount of their Sarum holdings, listed in the appendix below. Additionally, I had the opportunity to go through the library cards and cataloguers' notes for each of these manuscripts and others I have not had the occasion to see before. This research trip allowed me to confirm some theories about provenance of the motif – for example, that French-produced Sarum books do not feature the cluster of images. Due to the interesting holdings the Morgan Museum granted me access to, I was also able to test other theories that I have before never considered. Access to Sarum printed material was specifically illuminating in this respect, and more work needs to be done in this direction from the notes and pictures I took of the material.

I am grateful to the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literatures for enabling me to access these manuscripts by granting me the travel bursary for spring 2017.

Appendix: List of Manuscripts consulted in the Pierpont Morgan Library:

MS M228 – Sarum Book of Hours

England, ca. 1390.

56 leaves, illuminated vellum (limited border decoration); 150 x 110 mm

MS M172 - Part-Sarum, part-Rouen Book of Hours

Rouen, France, ca. 1470-1480;

118 leaves, illuminated vellum (8 large miniatures); 220 x 150 mm

MS G9 - Sarum Book of Hours

England, ca. 1440-1450.

176 leaves, illuminated vellum (15 miniatures); 220 x 142 mm

MS M117 – Sarum Book of Hours

Brittany, France, ca. 1440-1450; illuminated Paris, France, ca. 1500-1510.

234 leaves, illuminated vellum (29 large miniatures, 17 small miniatures, 24 calendar illustrations); 222 x 167 mm

MS M254 – Sarum Book of Hours

Belgium, ca. 1475.

213 + 2 leaves, illuminated vellum (25 full-page miniatures, 9 historiated initials)

MS M259 – Sarum Book of Hours

Belgium, 1400-1415.

112 leaves, illuminated vellum (12 full-page miniatures); 260 x 180 mm

E2 51 E - Sarum Primer

Accession number: PML 17020 (printed book)

Title: The Prymer in English and Latine, after Salisbury use, set out at length wyth many prayers and goodly pictures.

Imprinted at London : By the assynges of Jhon Wayland forbidding all other to printe this or any other Prymer, newelye Imprynted thys present yere 1558.

208 paper leaves illustrated by woodcuts and limited use of red ink; 14 cm.

E2 51 E - Sarum Book of Hours

Accession Number: PML 30004 (printed book)

Title: Hore beate marie virginis ad usu[m] Sar[um].

Printed: Rouen, Richard Goupil and William Candos, [ca. 1506?]

108 paper leaves, small woodcut illustrations