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Kathryn M. Rudy, *Rubrics, Images and Indulgences in Late Medieval Netherlandish Manuscripts*. Leiden: Brill, 2017. 316pp., ill. ISBN 978-90-04-32695-8. € 150,00.

Kathryn M. Rudy, *Piety in Pieces. How Medieval Readers Customized their Manuscripts*. OpenBook Publishers, 2016. 392 pp., ill. ISBN (paperback) 978-1-78374-233-2. € 35,00; ISBN (hardback) 978-1-78374-234-9. € 50,00; ISBN (pdf) 978-1-78374-235-6. € 0,00 (via www.openbookpublishers.com).

In 2015, 2016, and 2017, Kate Rudy published three heavily illustrated books, the fruits of her innumerable visits to libraries in Europe and the United States to collect data about illuminated books of hours and prayer books. *Postcards on Parchment* deals with the functions of parchment paintings (the medieval version of a postcard) before they ended up in manuscripts; *Piety in Pieces*, a free, digital publication, which can also be ordered as a printed book, is about the changes medieval readers made to their manuscripts and modular manuscript production; and *Rubrics, Images and Indulgences*, published by Brill and priced at 150 Euros, focuses on the relations between the explanatory (mostly) rubricated texts before prayers, the accompanying images and the indulgences they promise the reader. and This book review will discuss the latter two of these publications. Both books are centred around topics that have not really been touched upon until now.

Similar to her conference presentations, these books are showcases of her enthusiasm for medieval illuminated manuscripts. They are filled with many pictures of all types of books with prayers, some taking up full pages, enabling the reader to view small details in the illuminations, and many others showing the complete spread, allowing the reader to experience what the reader of the manuscript saw (and still sees) while leafing through the manuscript. Rudy writes as enthusiastically as she speaks, and does not hold back at giving a smart twist to the explanations, only when it is appropriate. A corrupted rubric instructing the reader to pray to Jesus' wounds, for instance, misses the last and most important wound, the side wound, making the votary say the last prayer to a wound in the right hand, instead of the wound closest to his heart, leaving her 'at arm's length from Jesus' full compassion' (p. 94.1).

Rubrics is a large, hard cover book, written in two columns. It is divided into four parts followed by a large appendix. The first part (chapters 1 and 2) is an introduction and offers the reader the background information needed for the following three parts. In chapter 1 Rudy explains what she calls 'rubrics': the instructions that precede or are interwoven with prayers, often in red ink, but sometimes in black or even gold (pp. 5.1 and 13.1). Rudy discerns six different functions for these rubrics: they announce benefits of prayer (often indulgences), they authenticate prayers and they provide testimonials. They also mark important parts of the prayer (for instance, the beginning), they give the votary instructions about how to use his or her body during prayer, and they connote blood, the parchment being the skin and the red ink being the blood. The next section discusses the places where the prayers are to be performed. Many rubrics refer to images or statues that are not in the manuscript, indicating that these codices were probably taken to church, and that they were possibly not the private devotional books we always thought them to be. Chapter 2 zooms in on indulgences: by praying, one could earn reductions of time that had to be spent in Purgatory. As Rudy shows, the number of years of reduction one could obtain was rising steeply in the final decades of the fifteenth century, and the arithmetic of indulgences was complicated. It sometimes even revealed a glimpse of the emerging credit-debit banking systems. To complicate matters, even for contemporaries, some rubrics also offered 'carenen' a remission of penitential time on earth.

The second part of *Rubrics* (chapters 3, 4 and 5) focuses on Christological images and prayers. Chapter 3 deals with the Arma Christi, ‘the visual stand-ins for the tangible remains of Christ’, such as pieces of the Cross, the instruments of the Passion and Veronica’s towel. Heavily indulgenced reproductions of these visuals occurred in abstracted form in many images in manuscripts, while rubrics choreographed votaries to pray with their bodies shaped as a Cross. Chapter 4 discusses the body of Christ and the five wounds he received on the Cross. In manuscripts these wounds were often separated from Christ’s body and represented in a quincunx, the side wound in the centre, the other four wounds around it, each on a corner of the rectangle. In this chapter, sections are devoted to popular prayers like the *Colnish Pater Noster*, in which the segments of the prayer have to be directed into the wounds of Christ, and a similar prayer attributed to St. Bernard, who was embraced by the crucified Christ after his forceful prayers. Only one other prayer was more influential, however: the *Verses of St. Gregory*, the most popular and most heavily indulgenced prayer, often accompanied by images of the so called Mass of St. Gregory, which were, as Rudy notices, influenced by the representations of St. Bridget’s vision (p. 104.1). In chapter 5, Rudy shows how the legend from Jacobus de Voragine’s *Golden Legend*, in which pope Gregory saw a host turn into a finger of Christ, evolved to images of Christ as the man of sorrows, with the Arma Christi added to the backgrounds in the images, and the images inhabited by ever more human figures. The mass of St Gregory became the most ideal mass and permitted the reader a glimpse of what happened during the mass in church, something he was not able to see from his or her point of view in church in those days.

Part 3 of *Rubrics* turns from Jesus to Mary. Chapter 6 and 7 show the reader that Mary had many different manifestations, while Jesus always remained Jesus, and that prayers directed to her could be rewarded in several ways. Prayers to the Virgin *in sole* (which became bound up with rosaries) granted indulgences, while other prayers promised a vision of the Virgin, often on the deathbed. In general, prayers directed to Mary often lead to direct saviour, since Mary ‘could not turn down anyone who uttered the *Salve regina* with heartfelt need’ (p. 159). The last part of the book, part 4 (chapter 8), deals with other types of images, for instance, other objects of veneration *in sole* and images of mouths of hell and purgatorial release. Rudy also devotes a section to the advertisement of indulgences on church walls, pointing at framed texts on walls in images. After a short epilogue, in which Rudy recaptures what she has been arguing in the previous chapters and draws some conclusions, the appendix to this book offers Rudy’s transcriptions of the Middle Dutch texts she discusses, ordered by the manuscripts they occur in.

The second book, *Piety*, is an online publication. In theory the contents of the printed version (hard or soft cover) are similar to those in the digital version, but there is one major difference: not all images referred to in the text can be seen in the printed version. To reduce (exuberant) costs for publishing images charged by some libraries, Rudy has decided to make these images available through links to the websites of these libraries. The reader of the printed version will have to download the free digital version anyway to use these links (or else type each URL by hand in the address bar of the web browser). Coincidentally, this online experiment marks a change in publishing books in the early twenty-first century, while the book itself discusses important changes in manuscript production in the fifteenth century.

In five parts, *Piety* discusses how and why fifteenth-century book owners changed the contents of their manuscripts (books of hours and prayer books). The first part introduces the ‘modular method’ (see next paragraph) and deals with terminology and methodology. The second part discusses changes to manuscripts that did not require rebinding, like adding text or decoration. The changes under discussion in the third part did require rebinding: adding leaves with text or images, or adding quires. The fourth part is dedicated to even more complicated interventions in the structures of manuscripts and complete overhauls. The fifth

part concludes with the patterns of desire that can be discerned from these changes to manuscripts (for instance, a desire to personalize a book, or the desire to reflect wealth).

To some extent, manuscripts have always been adapted by later users to fulfil their own needs. They could just add a word, or they could unbind the codex and rebind it in a different order, mixed with parts of other manuscripts from another date. In *Piety*, Rudy describes that these adaptations became less haphazard in the late fifteenth century (in the case of books of hours and prayer books, at least). Specialized workshops that produced modules containing just one text, or separate parts of books of hours, emerged, as did workshops producing illuminated leaves. In this way, books with prayers could be personalized: the modules could be arranged in any order the buyer wanted, and the single leaf illuminations could, theoretically, be inserted anywhere. In the last chapters, Rudy even shows that several convents specialized in upgrading old manuscripts by taking them apart and by adding the latest popular prayers, like the Mass of St. Gregory or the prayers to St. Anne.

This book shows that the fifteenth-century book market was in transition. Not only was the printing press introduced, but also in manuscript production new inventions still occurred. *Piety*, however, is heavy with examples, which distract the reader from the importance of the conclusions, and it takes many pages before Rudy comes to the most interesting point (after discussing mainly minor changes that occur in nearly all manuscripts in the first third of the book). In my opinion, a much slimmer version of this text with a few well chosen examples would have made a very fine article in an important journal, generating greater impact.

Nevertheless, both books demonstrate Rudy's knowledge of Middle Dutch books of hours and prayer books. She makes her readers look at manuscripts from unexpected angles, while building her arguments using numerous examples, visualized by images. However, I would like to draw some attention to four issues one encounters while reading the books.

To begin with, the great number of examples raises questions because it is remarkable how few actual numbers Rudy mentions in either book. The most important question that comes to mind, naturally, is: how big is Rudy's corpus? One of the few examples mentioned makes it clear how relevant this information is. On p. 209.1, we are told that there are seventy-five images of the Mass of St. Gregory preserved in manuscripts made after 1460. In chapter 5, the Mass of St. Gregory and the images, the rubrics, and the ever-higher numbers of indulgences accompanying it are discussed at length. Its popularity is undeniable, but some indication of how popular it was could have been derived from comparing the number of images with the total number of late fifteenth-century manuscripts in the corpus. Moreover, *Piety* tells us (part III.B.2, pp. 139-47) that it was especially this text that was added to prayer books in the late fifteenth century by inserting a new, separate module to an older book after unbinding it. How many of these added Masses have survived the ages, and, more interestingly, how many of the surviving Masses were not added to old manuscripts but were original parts of new manuscripts? Numbers, however careful we have to be when interpreting them, would help to visualize the trends discussed in both *Rubrics* and *Piety*, they would facilitate the reader with a tool to check the representativeness of examples, and could give additional arguments to statements.

A second issue I would like to address is the slight tendency Rudy has to mislead the reader. Her enthusiastic way of writing, in certain instances, leads to an image of the users of medieval books that may not be quite correct, or at least not to be known to us. We, researchers, have the duty to make people understand history correctly; therefore, we have to be aware of the consequences of the words we use. In *Piety*, for instance, we read about people with a 'strong (...) desire' to add images to indulgences in manuscripts (p. 143), while empty pages were 'a powerful vacuum that the owner had to fill' (p. 143). There are even female scribes in Delft that 'delighted in filling up the [blank] ends of quires with short texts' (p. 257). Deriving the feelings of medieval people from additions to manuscripts not

expressing those feelings is close to impossible. However, this is the kind of information many people will remember: it is straightforward and easy to reproduce, but it creates a false impression of late medieval times. The blank spaces, too, get much attention in *Piety*, because they are the places where a scribe can add texts; but the hyperbolic descriptions of them ('enormous amounts of blank parchment' (p. 49) or 'extreme cases of wasted parchment' (p. 83)) create an image of medieval book production that is simply incorrect. The formulations in *Rubrics* are more balanced, but also in this book Rudy sometimes creates an image that is not supported by evidence. On p. 63.1 she discusses the popular prose prayer *Salve sancta facies*. Because of its popularity, the prayer was also translated into a rhyming version, says Rudy: 'the public demanded it in new forms'. But how can we know that the prayer was versified on public demand? It may have been a monk that made this translation for the benefit of his own soul, accidentally starting the dissemination of the rhyming version.

The third issue is the use of anachronistic localizations of manuscripts, convents and monasteries. The manuscripts are often said to be made in 'North Holland' or 'South Holland' or even 'North Brabant', the present day provinces, which did not exist in the Middle Ages. An international audience that is not familiar with the geography of the Medieval Low Countries may get a handy first impression in this way, but adding a map of the medieval situation would have been more user friendly and correct.

Finally, and this is my most serious complaint, both books would have benefitted much from a thorough last reading by the author or an editor because they both contain too many small mistakes. In the case of *Rubrics*, these numerous small mistakes are particularly painful considering the price one has to pay to purchase the book. According to p. 30.1 there was a pope residing in 'Roman' (in north-eastern present day Romania?); on pp. 166.1 and 168.1, Rudy indulges herself to augment some indulgences herself (11,0000 instead of 11,000); and the transcription of the rubric from ms. Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, II 1332 (pp. 258-59) shows a serious case of u/n-minim confusion in the fixed abbreviation 'ghebñdide': where the words 'gebenediden' and 'gebenedijt' (meaning 'blessed') are expected we read (several times) the words 'gebundiden' and 'gebundijt'. Moreover, in the appendix of *Rubrics* no attention has been paid to the hyphenation rules for (Middle) Dutch words, and in the transcription of a six-line rubricated prayer from ms. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 133 D 10 (f. 172r) the fourth line has not been transcribed and the transcription of the second line contains a remarkable mistake. The manuscript reads 'O mynschelicheit alre bloetste' (p. 18.1, fig. 11), which has been transcribed as 'O myn schelicheit alre bloetste' (p. 280), which in turn became 'O, my most bloody squinted eyes' in translation (p. 17.2), a far stretch from 'O, most pure human' (Jesus). The location of a manuscript discussed on pp. 56-57 is uncertain. Rudy writes: 'the Cistercian monastery of Villers also called Vrouwenpark', but Vrouwenpark is situated in Rotselaar, just outside Leuven, while Villers is halfway between Leuven and Charlerloi. According to Google, the Cistercians of Villers supervised Vrouwenpark, but the riddle why this manuscript is located in Sint-Truiden on p. 56.2 below fig. 29 and on p. 57.1 below fig. 30 even the internet could not solve. On p. 120.2, the reader is sent down a dead-end street: 'as with the images in Park Abbey, discussed later'. But there is no discussion of this manuscript from this abbey in Heverlee (near Leuven) to be found in the following pages, not even in the indexes. It was, however, discussed on pp. 97-98, relating to another topic. In *Piety* we find too many spelling mistakes, and an image of the Virgin *in sole* is said to have been 'pasted' in ms. Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 2750 (p. 110), while the text below the image reads 'sewn' (fig. 89). A quire from ms. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Néerl. 111 is said to contain 'ten bifolia, which is two more than the usual eight', when 'folia' is meant (p. 133), and a spread from ms. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, BPH 148 has been printed twice on p. 291.

When we turn a blind eye to these imperfections, both *Rubrics* and *Piety* are a joy to read. They instruct the reader to look with more attention to manuscripts: codices are not a mere bunch of texts or images; they are objects that tell a story about the way people in the Middle Ages lived with books, how they used them, and personalized them. Over the last decade, Kate Rudy has surprised us several times with unexpected views on manuscripts, which enabled us to understand these ‘stories of manuscripts’ and ‘the story of the manuscripts’ better. I do hope she still has a few more of these new views up her sleeve.

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