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Impressions of Two Unstudied Badges in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 540

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In the margin of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 540, fol. 210r, there is a dirty ring, containing faint radiating lines (**Fig. 1**). MS 540 is a late 14th-century Book of Hours, made in Avignon.¹ On the opposite folio, a tiny pinprick shows where a badge was once affixed to the blank, facing page (MS 540, fol. 209v) (**Fig. 2**). The parchment beneath where the badge used to lie is slightly cleaner-looking than the surrounding sheet, like a wall in a gallery which has long been displaying an artwork, which still keeps a bright shadow of the frame when the painting is taken down. From the 15th century onwards, stamped or embossed badges were often inserted into Books of Hours, kept intimately between the pages. As in MS 540, these badges were commonly pinned to blank leaves. Recent studies by Hanneke van Asperen, Megan Foster-Campbell, and Kathryn Rudy have drawn attention to the varied uses of these objects as bookmarks, pilgrim souvenirs and tools of private lay devotion.² In most cases, records of badges in books survive through the

¹ For the social and artistic contexts of the Book of Hours, see Roger Wieck, *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval art and life* (New York: George Braziller, 2001).

² Hanneke van Asperen, *Silver Saints: Prayers and Badges in Late Medieval Books*. *Nijmegen Art Historical Studies*; 26 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021); Megan Foster-Campbell, "Pilgrimage through the Pages: Pilgrims'

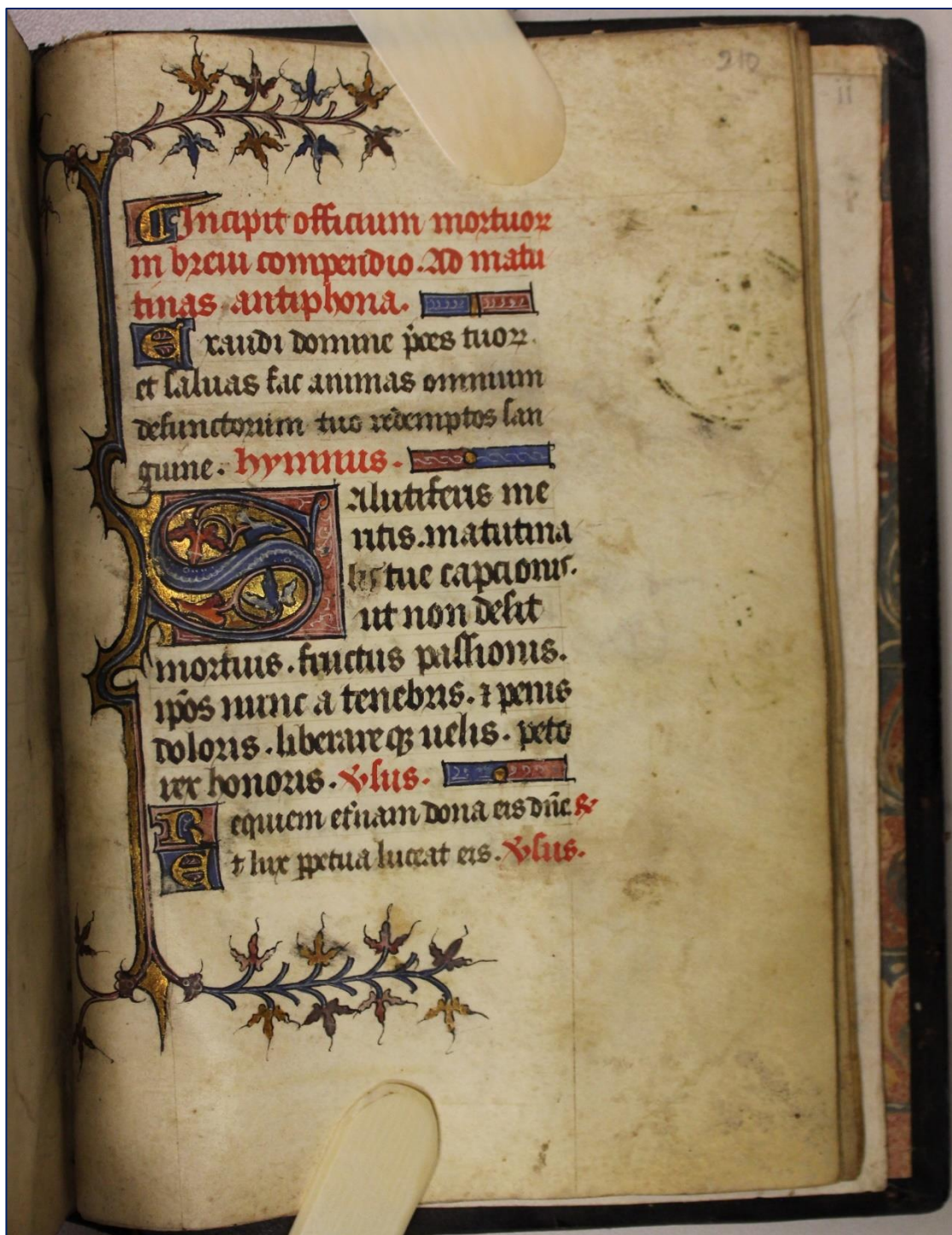


Figure 1 MS 540, fol. 210r, under natural light. Photograph by Flavio Marzo, with assistance by Mito Matsumaru. Reproduced with kind permission by the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Badges in Late Medieval Devotional Manuscripts,” in *Push Me, Pull You. Imaginative, Emotional, Physical, and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, ed. by S. Blick, L.D. Gelfand (Leiden: 2011): 227–274; Kathryn Rudy, “Sewing the Body of Christ: Eucharistic Wafer Souvenirs Stitched to Fifteenth-Century Manuscripts Primarily in the Netherlands,” *Journal of the Historians of Netherlandish Art* 8, 1 (2016): 1–47.

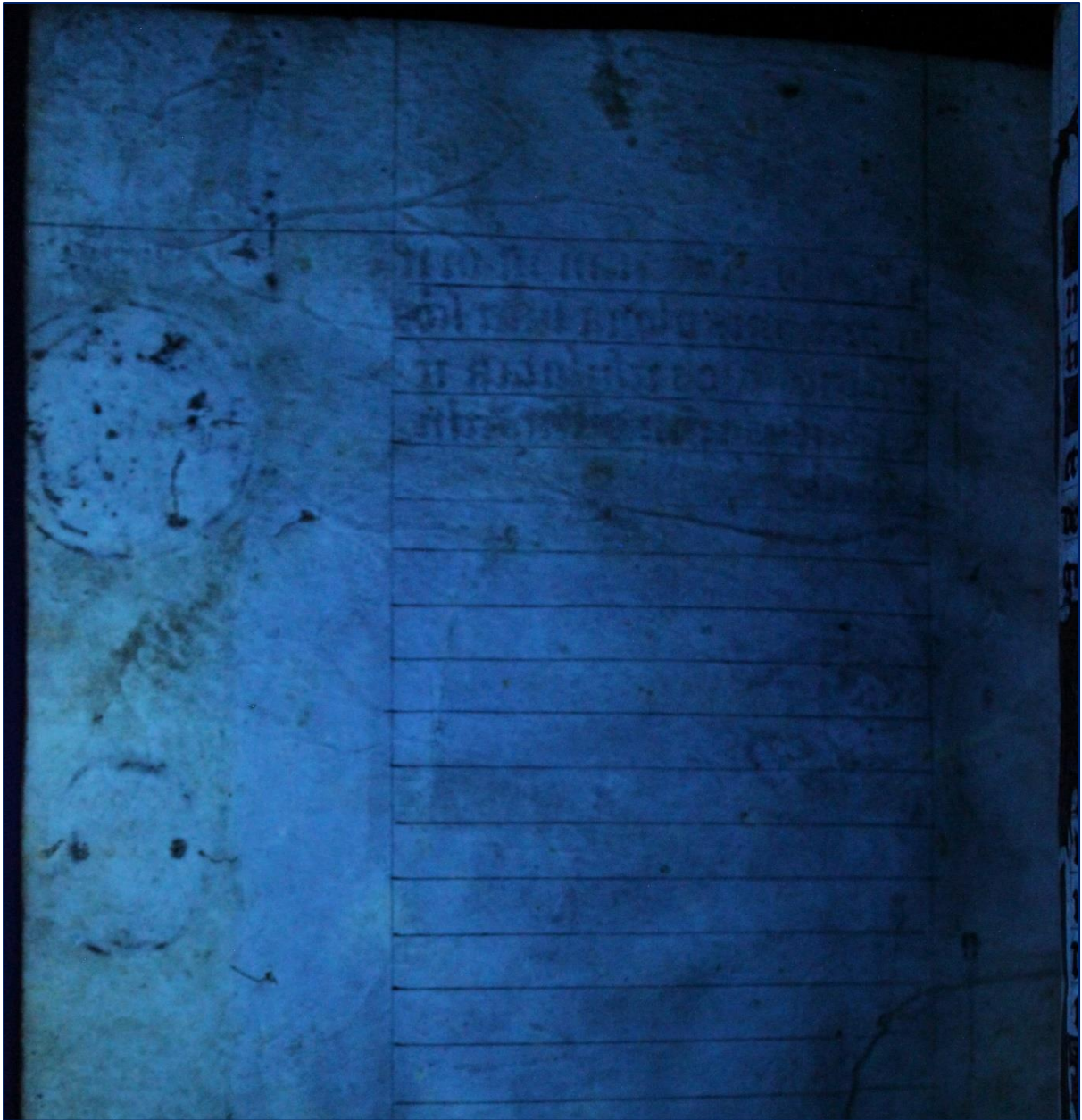


Figure 2 MS 540, fol. 209v, under UV light. Photograph by Flavio Marzo, with assistance by Mito Matsumaru. Reproduced with kind permission by the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

impressionistic marks of their former presence: the objects themselves have mostly been lost.

In this article, I show how UV light can provide insight into the material history of MS 540, suggesting how UV could be integrated into the study of similar manuscripts, to provide a more detailed picture of absent badges. This is not a new

methodology: UV radiation has been used in manuscript study since 1914, following the work of Father Raphael Kögel, who showed that the fluorescence in parchment could be excited by the rays (that is, vellum absorbs the rays from the UV lamp and emits radiation). Understanding of UV has developed since the early days of experimentation (in the 1930s, a number of manuscripts were damaged by over exposure – or by the techniques adopted to “protect” the vellum, which included smearing the sheets with Vaseline). Scientific developments in optics have advanced methods for the curating and study of cultural collections.³ In order to take advantage of these technologies, humanities researchers will usually need to take a collaborative approach: for this article, I worked with conservationists Flavio Marzo and Mito Matsumaru, who provided both the technology and the expertise to capture these images.

When we placed MS 540 under a UV torch, the details within the ring became visible, and marks of another badge, even fainter than the first, were exposed to view (**Fig. 3**). The traces left by the embossed badges do not fluoresce, and so become visible against their newly bright backdrop. The signs suggest that both badges contained scenes of Marian devotion. The radiating lines in the larger badge surround what appears to be a figure of the Virgin, holding Christ. The smaller, oval badge beneath it contains a similar arrangement. Through use of raking light, the

³ See A. Van der Perre, H. Hameeuw, V. Boschloos, L. Delvaux, M. Proesmans, B. Vandermeulen, L. Van Gool, L. Watteeuw, L., “Towards a combined use of IR, UV and 3D-Imaging for the study of small inscribed and illuminated artefacts,” in *Lights On ... Cultural Heritage and Museums!* (Porto: FLUP, University of Porto, 2016), 163-192.

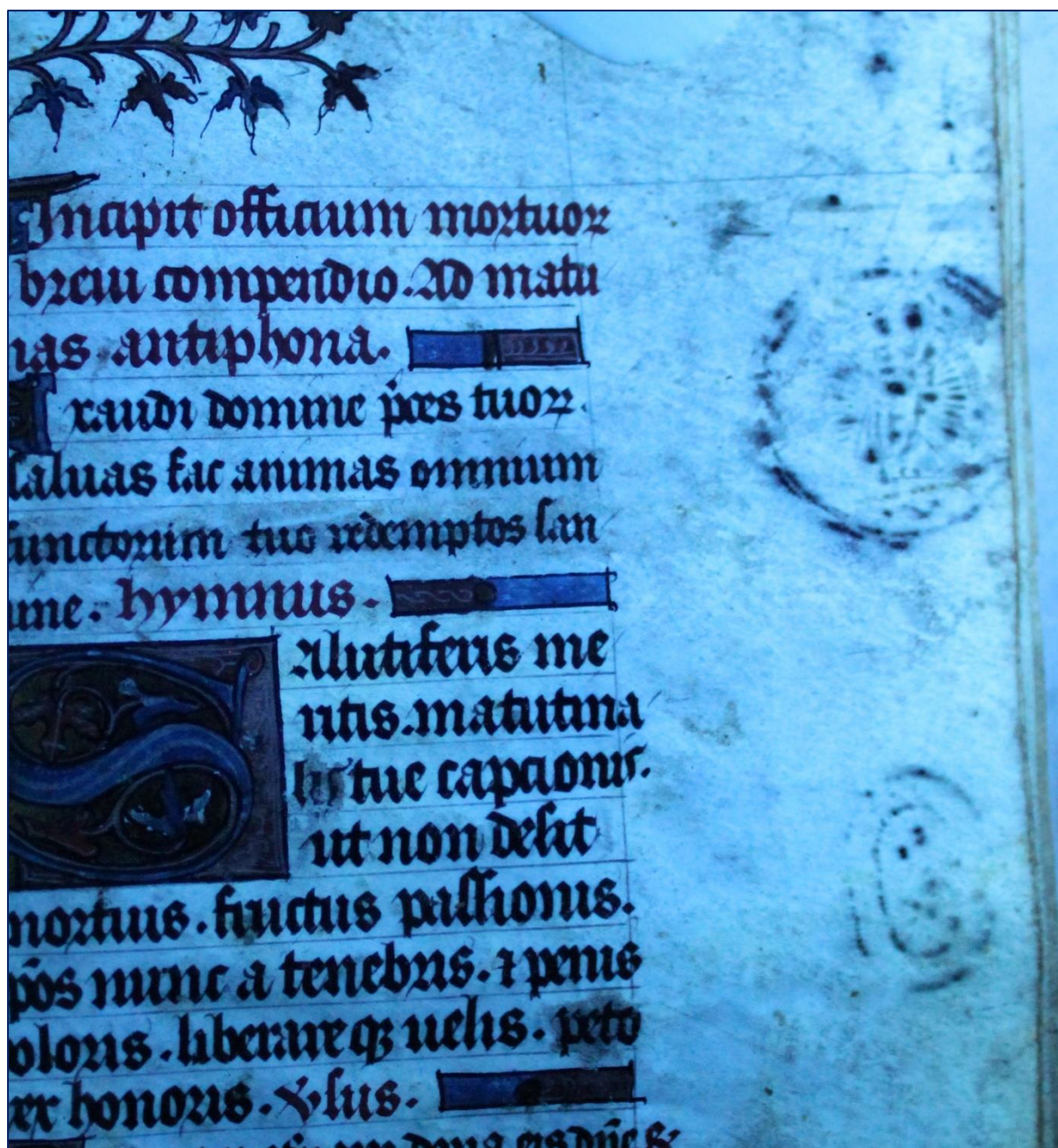


Figure 3 MS 540, fol. 210r, under UV light. Photograph by Flavio Marzo, with assistance by Mito Matsumaru. Reproduced with kind permission by the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

indentations in the parchment are brought into relief, bringing out the line of the Virgin's arm, and a flat line delimiting the space in which the pair are seated (**Fig. 4**).

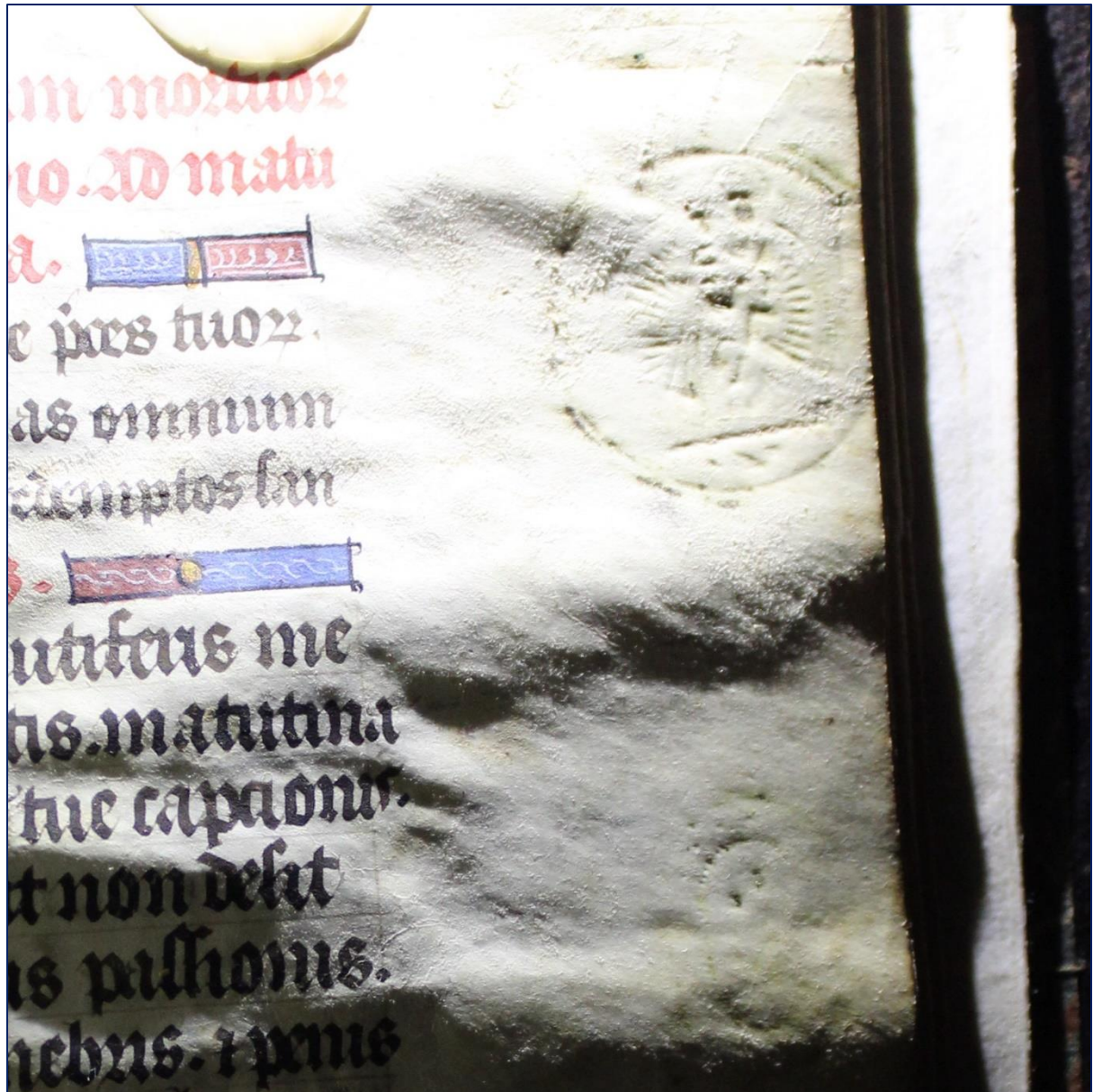


Figure 4 MS 540, fol. 210, with raking light. Photograph by Flavio Marzo, with assistance by Mito Matsumaru. Reproduced with kind permission by the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

The use of raking light is another technique which has long been used in the study of manuscripts, which continues to be relevant for contemporary researchers.⁴

⁴ C.A. Mitchell, *Documents and their scientific examination* (London: C. Griffin & Co., 1922), 179; R.B. Haselden, *Scientific aids to the study of manuscripts* (London: Transactions of the Bibliographical Society, 1935), 61–68.

The badges of MS 540 appear in the margin of a blank page facing the Office of the Dead. Turning our attention to the spaces around the writing, the apparently empty areas in the manuscript are revealed as spaces of intentional readerly curation.⁵ These spaces were once filled with pins and symbols.⁶ In addition to the two badges, UV light reveals that a large rectangular picture was also once attached to the lower part of the page. Like the badges, the picture has left the parchment underneath cleaner than the rest of the page – it may have been attached with needle and thread, the thread also unravelled and disappeared. Unlike the badges, the lost picture has left no relief impression behind. In their original arrangement, the badges surrounded this image. A visual analysis of the relationship between the vanished image and the imprinted badges is no longer possible. There are more unknowns than knowns of this disappeared collection. However, MS 540 does contain evidence of a devotional context with which these badges – and, it can reasonably be assumed, the lost picture – were in keeping.

The early owner of MS 540 was based in Cordes-sur-Ciel, near Albi, as revealed by a note in the calendar in the manuscript recording the anniversary of the building of Cordes-sur-Ciel castle, a detail of interest to a person based in the region (MS 540, fol. 14r).⁷ Cordes-sur-Ciel was a lively trading area with connections across France and Europe. Pilgrims are known to have brought Books of Hours with them,

⁵ For further readings, see: *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, ed. by Michael Johnston and Michael van Dussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁶ For theoretical readings of medieval margins, see *Signs on the Edge: Space, Text and Margin in Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. by Sarah Larratt Keefer and Rolf H. Bremmer Jr. (Paris: Peeters, 2007).

⁷ Parker on the Web <<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/jd913tp1831>> [accessed 25 October 2022].

taken to holy sites as guides to devotional practice.⁸ These badges therefore could have been souvenirs, traveling back home alongside the book and its pilgrim owner, from the site of a shrine. The badges in MS 540 are reminiscent of badges of Mary with child from sites such as Aachen and Liesse-Notre-Dame.⁹ Yet not all such badges were pilgrim tokens. In the absence of more conclusive evidence of their origins, these marks can be more readily interpreted as signs of readerly contemplation, than as records of sacred travel.

Marian texts in MS 540 include: invocations in honor of the Virgin Mary, to be said daily (fol. 21v), psalms and antiphons of the Virgin (fols. 70r-77v), the Hours of the Virgin Mary (fols. 77v-84r), the Mass of the Virgin Mary (fols. 84v-86r), and The Revelation of the Virgin to St Thomas of Canterbury (fols. 86v-89r). MS 540 is illuminated, with numerous decorated ornamental borders and initials, in addition to eight half-page miniatures, including several images of the Virgin.¹⁰ For example, on fol. 51v, a scene of the adoration of the Magi focuses on the Virgin, holding the Christ-child on her lap (**Fig. 5**). The miniature shows the Virgin's hand intimately placed around Christ's leg, while he extends his hand towards the gift of a kneeling Magi, a gold cup. The badges and this miniature are not proximate. Nonetheless, bearing this image in mind while studying their impressions can go some way towards recreating

⁸ Kathryn Rudy, "A Pilgrim's Book of Hours: Stockholm Royal Library A233," *Studies in Iconography*, vol. 21 (2000): 237-279.

⁹ Foster-Campbell, 250 n.58.

¹⁰ In its 1923 Sotheby's sale lot, the manuscript was advertised with an erroneous ascription of the illuminator as the artist of the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, Queen of France. The artist Jean de Toulouse has more convincingly been associated with the production of these images – documented as working in Avignon between 1378-1394. See Parker on the Web: <<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/jd913tp1831>> [accessed 25 October 2022].

Figure 5 MS 540, fol. 51v: the Adoration of the Magi (image via Parker on the Web). Reproduced with kind permission by the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.



the original viewing experience. The lost rectangle may have contained an image of the Virgin.

As Foster-Campbell has commented, there is evidence that medieval readers arranged their badges so that they could interact with relevant illuminations. For example, the *Prayer Book of Philip the Bold* once contained a collection of Marian badges, placed around an illumination of the Virgin and Child in the Crescent Moon, and facing a prayer to the Virgin (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royal MS 11035-37, fols. 6v-r).¹¹ In addition, Foster-Campbell cites the evidence of Oxford MS Douce 51, a late 15th-century Book of Hours which contains both badges and illuminations.¹² Originally

¹¹ Foster-Campbell, 247-248 n. 54.

¹² Foster-Campbell, 254.

containing at least six metal badges, MS Douce 51 is one of the few medieval books with its badges still in place. On MS Douce 51 fol. 58v, an intact, heart-shaped badge is sewn to the top left-hand corner of a blank folio. The faces and forms of the two figures within the badge are undefined: only the suggestion of features and two halos remain. As in the badges of MS 540, these details are sufficient to recall the Virgin and Christ. On MS Douce 51 fol. 59r – the page facing this badge – an illuminated miniature of the Pietà depicts the Virgin with a wimple and halo holding the bleeding Christ. In this image, the bearded Christ's body is diminutive, so that he can be cradled in Mary's arms like an infant. The miniature appears inside the initial "O," which forms a circular frame, slightly extending above an illuminated rectangular border. Two additional intact badges are sewn into the margin of fol. 59r: a cathedral, and the crucifixion. The illuminated initial is larger than any of the three badges. Both MS Douce 51 and MS 540 are examples of manuscripts which were already richly decorated, prior to the insertion of badges. On MS Douce 51 fol. 59r, the vivid miniature is supplemented through the inclusion of embossed badges, which, while being simpler in design, stand out from the page in relief. The effect is multimedia: tactile, shining, monochrome metal beside a flat, polychrome illumination. Looking at the image again, the initial "O" begins to look a little like the rounded edge of a badge.

The fuller evidence of MS Douce 51 can inform our sense of the lost contents of MS 540. The Office of the Dead appears later in MS Douce 51, beginning on fol. 176r. There are no badges here, but the text is preceded by a full-page miniature representing the raising of Lazarus (on fol. 175v). If it did not contain an image of the

Virgin, it is possible that the picture sewn onto MS 540, fol. 209v was of the raising of Lazarus, or another scene relevant to the Office of the Dead, such as the Last Judgement. Whatever the page once held, the sewn-in badges and image were surely designed to be viewed together, with neither badge nor illumination taking automatic priority. Blick writes that the simplicity of badges “called on mnemonic devices, just as most exalted and expensive works did.”¹³ The readers of MS Douce 51 and MS 540 did not insert badges because their books lacked imagery. Instead, these simple, tokens brought tactile, material variety to the books, bringing together multiple devotional forms on one page.¹⁴

The marginal position of the badges in MS 540 suggests that one of their functions was as bookmark: allowing the owner of the manuscript to turn to the Office of the Dead quickly.¹⁵ This position shows how often the prayer was required. Unlike the other texts in Books of Hours, which were typically abbreviated versions of the breviary, the lay person reciting the Office of the Dead was reading the same blessings as a priest.¹⁶ The Office of the Dead was said for souls in Purgatory. Foster-Campbell has suggested that inserted badges may have been understood to provide additional salvation to the deceased person.¹⁷ Mary held a significant role as an intermediary

¹³ Sarah Blick, “Exceptions to Krautheimer's Theory of Copying,” *Visual Resources*, 20:2-3 (2004): 123-142 (134).

¹⁴ See Martina Bagnoli *et al.*, eds., *Treasures of Heaven: saints, relics and devotion in medieval Europe* (London: British Museum Press, 2011).

¹⁵ Hanneke van Asperen, “The Book as Shrine, the Badge as Bookmark: Religious Badges and Pilgrims’ Souvenirs in Devotional Manuscripts,” in *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World*, ed. by Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 303-308.

¹⁶ Wieck, 124.

¹⁷ Foster-Campbell, 234.

between God and the Dead: these badges make her present, so that she may be invited to speak on behalf of the dead who are being blessed. As such, these badges can be seen as enhancing the salvific agency of lay devotion. Even in their practical function, these objects retain their imagery and origin, pressing reminders of sacred forms.

At some point, the badges of MS 540 were lost: stolen, removed to form part of a collection, or simply fell out of the text. Looking at manuscripts from the perspective of their badges, the medieval book-owner is revealed as a collector, the book as a sacred storage-unit, its contents designed to be activated through devotional practice. Many more overlooked imprints could emerge through further investigative practices. Since its first use, UV light has received attention for its role in the rediscovery of illegible and erased texts, from palimpsests to scraps in book bindings. In addition to its use in making the unreadable readable, UV light – or, when available, multispectral imaging technology – can restore unseeable marks to view. These are the traces of lost objects, which themselves provide clues of the ways in which books were used, read, and handled. The marks in MS 540 record the actions of its 15th-century owner, who collected, arranged, and prayed with these Marian tokens. With focused attention and the assistance of UV and photographic technology, these traces can be restored, and these badges repositioned where they once lived, at the well-thumbed margins of medieval devotion. 🐼

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