

**‘who gave the same to their daughter . . .’:  
Identifying Ownership of New College, Oxford’s Books of Hours**

New College Library houses a remarkable collection of no fewer than seven books of hours within its manuscript collections.<sup>1</sup> Among these, only one owner had been definitively identified until recently. MS 160 belonged to John Bryne, who had very kindly scribbled his name in many pen trials all over ff. i–4 and 127–130. In 1984, the library’s collection was enriched by the generous donation of two 15th-century manuscript books of hours from Sir John Nicholson, MS 369 and MS 371, and a late 13th-century book of hours and psalter, MS 372. The library received another 15th-century book of hours, MS 370, from Nicholson’s sister, Mrs E. M. Vale. These manuscripts arrived with minimal provenance information and have largely remained underexamined over the past four decades. However, revisiting these manuscripts has unearthed significant clues about their previous owners, including identifiable names. From the mid- to late-14th century, books of hours became prevalent in France, England, and the Netherlands, integrating monastic religious routines into the daily lives of devout laypeople. These precious volumes were meant to be handled, read, and treasured, often passed down as heirlooms. Typically, books of hours contained a calendar, the Office of the Virgin, Penitential Psalms and Litany, and the Office of the Dead, usually in this sequence, though variations were common. These texts vary slightly between dioceses or towns, and their liturgical content is known as their ‘use’ (such as the use of Rome, use of Utrecht, use of Rouen, etc.). By the 15th and 16th centuries, many books of hours were produced for wider distribution rather than individual commission, complicating the task of identifying specific owners. However, personalisation was not uncommon. Owners often annotated their books with marginal notes, added personal patron saints in the calendars, and included devotional prayers in the vernacular. Provenance clues in books of hours also reside in their script, decoration, calendars, and litanies. Miniatures or illustrations within the manuscript might depict the owner or their family. Studying the specific prayers or saints included, which might be unique to certain regions or personal devotions, can also indicate ownership. Additionally, popular prayers like *O Intemerata* and *Obsecro te* were frequently included. In *Obsecro te*, the masculine or feminine endings in phrases like ‘ego sum facturus/a, locuturus/a, aut cogitaturus/a’ might hint at the patron’s gender. Thanks to these personal touches and inscriptions from former owners, the age-old quest to uncover the identities of those who cherished these books becomes more feasible.

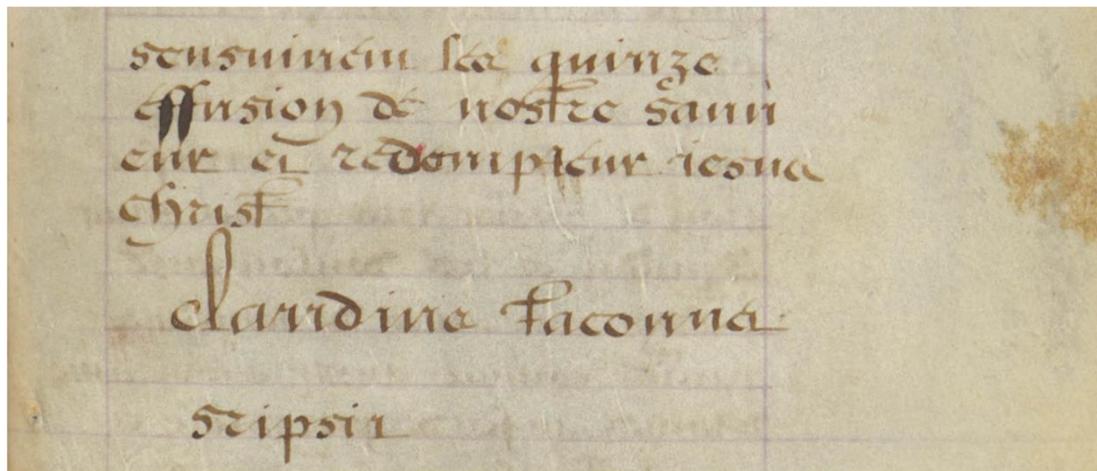
MS 369, a late 15th-century French book of hours, potentially Use of Amiens, is primarily written in Latin in a fine bâtarde script. However, the last eight folios, ff. 146r–154r, comprise prayers to the effusions of the blood of Christ in vernacular French. These pages, written in a different hand, bear the signature ‘Claudius Taconnet scripsit [sic]’ on the first page of the prayers.<sup>2</sup> There is a record of a Claude Taconnet being elected as juror of the linen worker profession in the Chatelet registers of masters of trades in Paris in 1586, but we cannot say with any certainty that he was this scribe.<sup>3</sup> Claude may have been writing these prayers for himself, to meditate on the wounds of Christ and on his Passion, and perhaps thought prayers in the vernacular might come in handy for the next owner in their private devotions. The prayers address the blood shed during pivotal moments of Christ’s suffering: the Circumcision, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Flagellation, the Crowning of Thorns, the Ascent to Calvary, and the piercing of Christ’s side by a lance. It is always remarkable to have these tangible signs of usage in a manuscript, particularly a name. It reminds us of the real person whose hands left their mark on these pages, whether out of devotion, as a family record, or both. A book’s decoration can also be one such clue as to how the book was used or intended to be used. MS 369 features one- and two-line initials adorned with

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<sup>1</sup> These books of hours are New College Library, Oxford, MSS 160, 310, 323, 369, 370, 371, and 372.

<sup>2</sup> I had originally thought the name was Claudine, but a further inspection of the horned ‘s’ in ‘les’ and ‘jesus’ suggested otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, National Archives, Y 9306 A, 21 April 1585, f. 33r.



New College Library, Oxford, MS 369, ff. 146r, 9r, and 128r

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burnished gold on divided pink and blue backgrounds patterned with white. It has six large miniatures with arched tops, seven historiated initials, and full-page borders embellished with sprays of flowers and fruit in gold, blue, green, red, and pink interspersed with gold disks and leaves. The face of St John at the beginning of the book (f. 9r) is worn away. This is likely from devotional touching or kissing, affirming the manuscript's active use in personal affective piety. One particularly beautiful illumination above the 'memoire de sainte Anne' depicts St Anne reading to her young daughter Mary (f. 128r), with another young girl, without a halo, praying behind her. This image could possibly represent a young patron, potentially a member of Claude's family or the individual for whom the book was originally commissioned.<sup>4</sup> The vernacular rubrics

<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to attendees of New College's books of hours workshop on 19 February 2024 with the Medieval Women's Writing Research Group at Oxford, who pointed this out to me.

in the text and calendar hint that the patron may not have been proficient in Latin, necessitating vernacular headings to locate the required prayers. This could explain why Claude deemed it important to include prayers to the blood and wounds of Christ in the vernacular.

The second manuscript under consideration is a book of hours written completely in the Middle Dutch vernacular, MS 371. The script and penwork style date the book to around 1460–1480, and, along with the calendar, hint at a Dutch or northern German origin. It was likely made in a monastery, as, in the northern Netherlands, urban convents, mostly housing women, produced the majority of the surviving books of hours.<sup>5</sup> The red-letter feast days include Willibrord, the first Bishop of Utrecht (7 November), Boniface (5 June), and Odulf (12 June), all early medieval English missionaries involved in the conversion of Frisia. The Use of Utrecht is further confirmed by the positioning of St Martin first among the confessors. All these red-letter feasts are characteristic of the diocese of Utrecht, but the calendar also has features of the diocese of Münster, including Blasius (3 February), the Resurrection of Christ (27 March), George (23 April), Margaret (13 July), and the 11,000 Virgins (21 October), all marked in red. These Münster saints are typical of books of hours from the Benedictine double monastery of Selwerd in Groningen, according to Jan Deschamps and Herman Mulder.<sup>6</sup> There is also special attention to St Walburga (both on 25 February and 4 August red), another early medieval English missionary, which is seen in the Selwerd books of hours MS. II 3637 in Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België.<sup>7</sup> However, further linguistic analysis and work on the decoration and style is required to determine exactly where this book was produced. The manuscript was penned in a Gothic bookhand with versal initials in alternating red and blue, red rubrics, and larger multiple line initials in red, blue, and gold accompanied by bar-borders and sprays of disks in burnished gold. Other multiple line initials are blue with red flourishing penwork, again indicative of a northern Netherlandish workshop. Large decorative initials mark the main text divisions on f. 84r and f. 119r with borders of fruits, leaves, and disks, though there are stubs indicating where others have been cut out and text is missing. After the calendar, the text begins halfway through Prime in the Hours of Eternal Wisdom (*uloen lere my doen dynen willen want du myn god bist*, ff. 14r–23r). Additional sections include the Hours of the Holy Spirit (also incomplete, ff. 23v–38v), the long Hours of the Holy Cross (incomplete, ff. 39r–59v), the short Hours of the Holy Cross (incomplete, ff. 60r–64r), the Seven Penitential Psalms with litany (ff. 65r–82v), and the Office of the Dead (ff. 84r–118v). These hours are in the 14th-century translation of the Hours of the Virgin into Dutch by Geert Groote (1340–1384), the most common vernacular translation of the Hours of the period. They are followed by communion prayers and indulgences (*Dit ghebet soele ghi lesen als ghi toe den hillighen sacramente willen gaen*, ff. 119r–124v), prayers to Mary including The Fifteen Joys and The Five Sorrows of the Virgin (*Hijr beghint een seer suuerlick gebet van onser lieuer vrouwen*, ff. 124v–127r), a prayer to the Holy Guardian Angel (*Wes ghegruet mijn lieue hillige engel den iek beuolen bin*, ff. 127r–127v), prayer to the Holy Apostles (*Wes ghegruet myn leue wtuercoren apostel*, ff. 127v–128r), a prayer to be read on Sundays, (*Dit ghebet soele ghi des zoendaghes lesen*, ff. 128r–129r), then prayers to saints Anthony, Sebastian, the Ten Thousand Martyrs, Anna, Katherina, Barbara, Dorothy, and the Eleven Thousand Virgins (ff. 129r–134v), then the beginning of the Gospel of St John 1, 1–14 (*Hijr beghint Sunte Iohannes euangelium ende soe we dattet alle daghe lest of by hem dracht den en mach gheen quaet toecomen*, ff. 134v–135v). The section given to virgins and widows in the Litany is headed by St Anne, above St Agnes, and also appears in the

<sup>5</sup> Kathryn M. Rudy, *Piety in Pieces: How Medieval Readers Customized their Manuscripts* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2016), p. 48.

<sup>6</sup> This comes from a comparison of the contents of MS 371 and Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België MSS II 3637 and IV 454, though I have not had a chance to compare the decoration myself. For a description of MS IV 454, see J. Deschamps and H. Mulder, *Inventaris van de Middelnederlandse handschriften van de Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België* (voorlopige uitgave) (Brussels: Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, 1998–2009), I, 38–40.

<sup>7</sup> For a description of KBR MS II 3637, see Deschamps and Herman, VII, 36–39. The script and penwork bear similarity with yet another Selwerd book of hours, University Library Vrije Universiteit XV.05560. See Willem Heijting, *Catalogus van de handschriften in de Universiteitsbibliotheek Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* (Amstelveen: Eon Pers, 2007), pp. 40–41.

suffrages, which would be appropriate for a book intended for wife and mother, or perhaps a widow. After this, in a different hand, there are a number of personal prayers or perhaps proverbs, beginning with ‘Denckt goet spreckt goet doch goet soe bystu moet’ and ending with ‘Boewen alle dyne sulti gode mynnen daer nae dyn seluen altyt dein kennen’ (ff. 135v–136r). In the same new hand, the Ten Commandments were added in (*Mynt ghelouet eenen gode, swert niet by hem in spot*, f. 136r). From the 13th to the 15th centuries in the Netherlands, books of hours, like MS 371, were frequently produced in smaller segments that could be assembled during binding, rather than producing each book as a whole. This ‘modular method’, as Kathryn Rudy has termed it, developed in response to climbing literacy rates and a demand for more affordable books among the urban classes.<sup>8</sup> In MS 371, therefore, each new text begins on a fresh quire, with blank, ruled parchment marking the end of each module.

Though the exact provenance of this book of hours remains somewhat murky, the endleaves provide glimpses into the identities and lives of its owners and how they used the book. We can say with some certainty that the manuscript was written and illuminated in the northern Netherlands in the late 15th century, likely for the van Selbach or van Münster family, based around Kleve, Coevorden, and Groningen. In 1517, Johan van Selbach (before 1482–1563) entered the service of Duke Charles of Guelders, who had claimed the Duchy of Guelders in opposition to the House of Habsburg. There, he commanded the *Zwarte Hoop*, a small army of peasant rebels that terrorized Friesland and Holland to undermine Burgundian power in the region. Johan’s first wife, Jutta Schmulling or Smullynck, was the daughter of the Drost of Zevenaar, located 15 km west of Terborg in the Duchy of Cleves. Her grandmother was Jutta van Appeltern, and her grandfather was Johan van Blankenburg, an illegitimate son of Duke Adolf I of Cleves. It was this Duke Adolf, the great-great-grandfather of Anne of Cleves, who gave the Klarenbeck estate to Jutta’s family.<sup>9</sup> Maria van Selbach (c. 1510–1578), daughter of Johan and Jutta, was born during the early years of her father’s service at Terborg in the county of Zutphen. Maria grew up in Terborg, but in 1522, Johan conquered the fortress of Coevorden in the Northeastern Netherlands under the commission of Duke Charles. This victory led to Johan’s appointment as the Drost of Drenthe and the Castellan of Coevorden, which became a pivotal centre of Duke Charles’s power.<sup>10</sup> Maria, her mother, and her siblings moved there with their father shortly after 1522. Maria then married Roelof van Münster of Herzford Castle. On folio 137v and the inside backboard of our MS 371, the couple recorded the births of their children from 1530 to 1538:

Item, in the year 1530, on Sunday after Candlemas, on St D.’s day, my daughter Katharina was born, whose godparents were John of Selbach, Marshal, my mother, and the wife of [...].

Item, in the aforementioned year ’31 on the Tuesday after Corpus Christi is my son Rolef born whose godparents were Kuntz von Selbach and the wife of Droste Bernt van Hackfort, my brother Jürgen van Münster.

Item, in the aforementioned year ’33 on the Tuesday after St Peter-in-chains is born my son John whose godparents were Henry van Münster, Bernt van Hackfort and the young lady van Eill to Klarenbeck, called Blankenstein.

Item, in the year [15]34, on the 8th day after the birth of the BMV, on a Tuesday morning, my son Dirk was born whose godparents were my mother and Dirk van Baer.

Item, in the year [15]36 on the Eve of Corpus Christi my daughter Agnes was born, whose godparents were her brother Roleff and Jutta Smullynck.

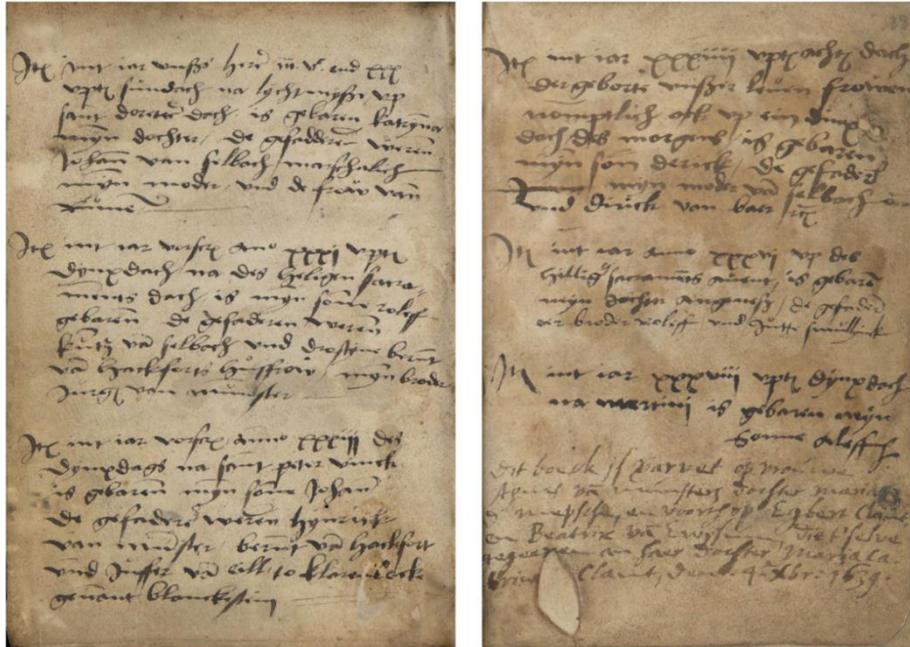
Item, in the year [15]38 on a Tuesday after St Martin, my son David was born.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Rudy, *Piety in Pieces*, pp. 15–19.

<sup>9</sup> Landesarchiv NRW Abteilung Rheinland, Handschriften AA 0640, No. A III 16, 10.11.1438.

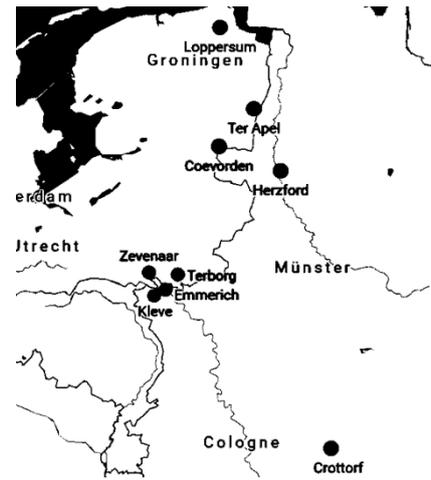
<sup>10</sup> J. J. van Weringh, ‘De Selbachs’, *Gruoninga: Tijdschrift voor genealogie en wapenkunde*, 25e–26e (1981), 1–30, at p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> My sincerest thanks to Professor Henrike Lähnemann and Dr Friedel Roelfs for this translation and transcription, and the identification of names around Klarenbeck.



New College Library, Oxford, MS 371, ff. 137v–back board interior

All the names are clustered around the castle Klarenbeck in Kleve and the now destroyed Duirsum Castle in Loppersum, in the border area between the Netherlands and Germany. Klaas S. de Boer notes the date of Maria and Roelof’s wedding as being in 1535, but it was likely earlier judging by the dates of their children’s births.<sup>12</sup> Roelof van Münster, along with his brother Jürgen, served in the military for Gelderland, which likely facilitated the family’s connection with Johan van Selbach.<sup>13</sup> Roelof’s father, also named Roelof, had also been Castellan of Coevorden and Drost of Drente, notorious for his manipulative and extortive practices. Around 1540, Maria and Roelof moved to Duirsum Castle near Loppersum, also known as Den Ham, which Roelof had inherited from his wealthy mother, Bauwe Heemstra.<sup>14</sup>



Maria’s brother Henrick inherited Klarenbeck, and her half-sister Catherina inherited Crottorf. In 1536, Johan von Selbach left his position as Drost in Coevorden and returned to his ancestral Crottorf Castle in the County of Nassau, where his wife Jutta Smullynck died in 1542. Jutta had been a woman of considerable standing and independence in her own right. In 1527, she purchased a mill near Gees as Drostinne, and in 1535, she inherited the Klarenbeck estate from Margryt, sister of Jutta’s mother, Maria Mumm zu Blankenstein.<sup>15</sup> Roelof van Münster died in 1558 and



Duirsum in 1678, detail of *Groningae et Omlandiae Tabula*, Wilhelm and Frederik Coenders van Helpen

<sup>12</sup> Klaas S. de Boer, ‘Johan von Selbach (Crottorf, ~1480–1563)—Ritter, Drost, Amtmann, Marschalck, Schlosserbauer’, *Siegerland: Blätter des Siegerländer Heimat- und Geschichtsvereins* 97 (2020), 4–18, at p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Van Weringh, ‘De Selbachs’, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> *Emsländische und Bentheim Familienforschung* 18 (1992), at p. 628.

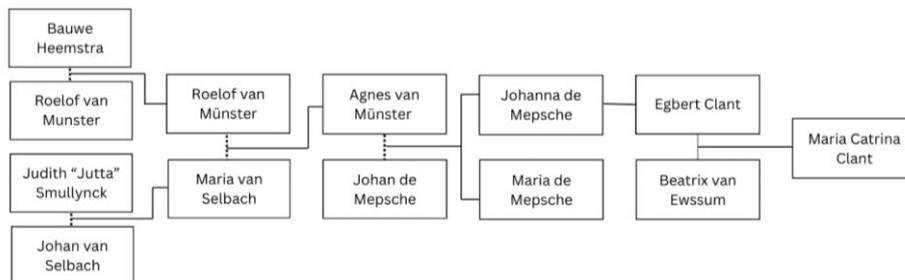
<sup>15</sup> Drents Archeif, 0613 *Huis De Klencke in Oosterbesselen*, Reg. 3.4, inv. no. 234, 28.05.1527.

Nationaal Archief, 1.10.14 *Inventaris van het archief van de familie Van Bylandt*, Reg. 104, inv. no. 218, 15.05.1735.

was buried in Loppersum, and Maria remained in the home as a widow. Their firstborn son, Roelof, as mentioned in the manuscript, married Ida Onsta around 1560 and had ten children. Johan, another son, became part of the cathedral chapter of the Archdiocese of Riga, likely with the help of his uncle Jasper van Münster.<sup>16</sup>

Agnes van Münster, Maria and Roelof's daughter, married the feared Groninger heretic hunter, Johan de Mepsche, around 1561. Before and during the Dutch Revolt, de Mepsche was a prominent Catholic authority and staunch supporter of the Spanish monarchy. As Provost of Loppersum, he had had pastors and churchgoers kept under surveillance, citizens banished from Groningen, and distributed the belongings of exiled heretics to his Catholic faithful (and himself).<sup>17</sup> In 1574, as son-in-law to Maria van Selbach, de Mepsche conducted a lawsuit on behalf of Maria and her heirs before the German Reichskammergericht against her half-sister Catharina regarding their father's inheritance.<sup>18</sup> He died of the plague in his home, Den Ham, in 1585, and was buried in the church at Loppersum, of which he was a patron. After de Mepsche's death, Agnes attempted to maintain authority and continue his legacy in Groningen with the support of the new governor, Verdugo.<sup>19</sup> Abel Eppens, a contemporary anti-Catholic chronicler, writes scathingly of the pair for taking it upon themselves to appoint churchwardens without the knowledge of the community or patrons, an arrangement Agnes continued after Johan had died.<sup>20</sup> After Agnes's death, or perhaps after Johan de Mepsche's death, Duirsum passed to their son Roelof de Mepsche. Their daughter, Mary de Mepsche (born after 1560), married Johan Kyff van Frens and inherited this precious book. Beneath the record of births, in another hand, is a record of the book's journey between the women in the family:

This book is left as inheritance to Lady Agnes van Münster's daughter Mary de Mepsche, and further to Egbert Clant and Beatrix van Ewssum who gave the same to their daughter Mary Catherine Clant, 4 April 1639.



As this book has a tradition of being passed down between the women of the family, it is possible that Jutta, as Maria van Selbach's mother, could have been a previous owner. Another possibility is that Roelof's mother, Bauwe Heemstra, acquired it from a monastery in Groningen, near Duirsum, and left it to her son as inheritance along with Den Ham. Books of hours are known to have been particularly attractive to women as vernacular and lay devotional texts, and acted as a 'special kind of legacy from a woman to her female heirs', as Virginia Reinburg has pointed out.<sup>21</sup> MS 371 is the first book of hours at New College that we know, by name, to have been owned by women, but it is likely not the only one. Maria de Mepsche did have a daughter, Johanna, in 1600. But this book passed instead to her sister Johanna's son Egbert Clant and his wife, the

<sup>16</sup> Johannes A. Mol, 'Traitor to Livonia? The Teutonic Orders' Land Marshal Jasper van Munster and his Actions at the Outset of the Livonian Crisis, 1554–1556', *Ordines Militares* 19 (2014), 205–240, at p. 214.

<sup>17</sup> G. M. Reyntjes, *Groningen en Ommelanden van 1580 tot 1594* (Groningen: H. N. Werkman, 1914), pp. 140–41.

<sup>18</sup> Landesarchiv NRW Abteilung Rheinland, Reichskammergericht F 001, No. M 730, 1574.

<sup>19</sup> Van Weringh, 'De Selbachs', p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> *De kroniek van Abel Eppens tho Equart*, ed. J. A. Feith and H. Brugmans (Amsterdam: J. Müller, 1911), pp. 159–160.

<sup>21</sup> Virginia Reinburg, "'For the Use of Women': Women and Books of Hours", *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4 (2009), pp. 235–40, at p. 238.

aforementioned Beatrix.<sup>22</sup> Their daughter, Maria Catrina Clant married Everhard Solckema around 1650. Baptism records show the couple having two children in Groningen, Abraham in 1652 and Beateris in 1654.<sup>23</sup> But from here our book's story fades into history until its donation to New College Library in 1984. Further marks in the book from its owners, including the addition of the Ten Commandments in the vernacular (ff. 135v–136r), a note on the 'watery' zodiac signs (f. 137r), rubbed away initials on prayers to the apostles and an image of Christ (ff. 65r and 127v), show deep personal devotion from members of a family spanning at least four generations. The family's devotion is also evident in their histories, with connections to several monasteries, including Marienstatt, where Johan van Selbach was buried, and Keppel, where his half-sister was admitted in 1504. Johan van Selbach remained a Catholic until his death, despite the House of Nassau's conversion to Protestantism in the mid-16th century. This could be why he chose to be buried in Marienstatt, a Catholic monastery, rather than the newly Lutheran Friesenhagen church.<sup>24</sup> Johan donated a panel painting of the Holy Trinity set with precious stones and 260 thalers to Marienstatt in 1542 after the death of his wife, thus becoming a *Ritterbruder*, brother-knight, of the monastery.<sup>25</sup> The coat of arms of Agnes and Johan de Mepsche can be found in the stained glass of the Ter Apel monastery in Drenthe, donated by the couple. The Ten Commandments, added after the main text on folios 135v–136r of the manuscript, also appear on the window. The surviving historiated initial of Christ, rubbed away by devotional touches, much like the well-worn image of St John in the French book of hours, is proof of the intense personal devotion of one or perhaps more members of the family.



De Mepsche stained glass in Ter Apel Monastery  
CC BY 2.0, FaceMePLS, via Flickr



New College Library, Oxford, MS 371 f. 65r

<sup>22</sup> Another Egbert Clant, perhaps an ancestor, is mentioned in another book of hours, KBR MS 11172, belonging to Truyten Katers, a nun in the Vrouwe Sywen Convent in Groningen.

<sup>23</sup> Kerkelijke gemeente Groningen, *Algemeen doopboek 1640–1657*, archive 124, inv. No. 146, 8.1.1654.

<sup>24</sup> Van Weringh, 'De Selbachs', pp. 8–9.

<sup>25</sup> Vereinigte Adelsarchive im Rheinland e.V., Schönstein Urkunden, Fürstliches Hatzfeldt-Wildenburg'sches Archiv auf Schloss Schönstein (Sieg), Reg. 1116, No. 1060, 18.06.1542.

There is much work still to be done on MSS 371 and 369, and the other books of hours in New College's collections. MS 323, a beautifully decorated 16th-century manuscript, includes an inscription on f. 246v that begins: 'Estas horas van Lohesi(?)'. This name is possibly the Flemish name 'Lodewijk', as we know the book itself to be from Flanders. The text beneath, 'das [. . .] dan bolnez(?)', looks to be signed 'Señor Carpio'—possibly the Spanish title, Marquess of Carpio.<sup>26</sup>



New College Library, Oxford, MS 323, detail of the Coronation of the Virgin on f. 118v and inscription on f. 246v

This book was donated to the library in 1693 by Henry Howell, a London merchant and the son of Thomas Howell, Bishop of Bristol. However, it was owned 70 years previously by yet another family, who added two records in English, now faded and barely visible to the naked eye, detailing the births of Jane Watson and William Watson (ff. 247v–248r):

My daughter Jane Watson came  
into this worlde on Saturday  
beinge the 20 of August 1614  
the day beinge [S] Bernard  
the Abbot daye the signe then  
in cancer the houer of hir  
birth towne in the Morning

Sweet Jesus  
dere king be  
mercyfull to her

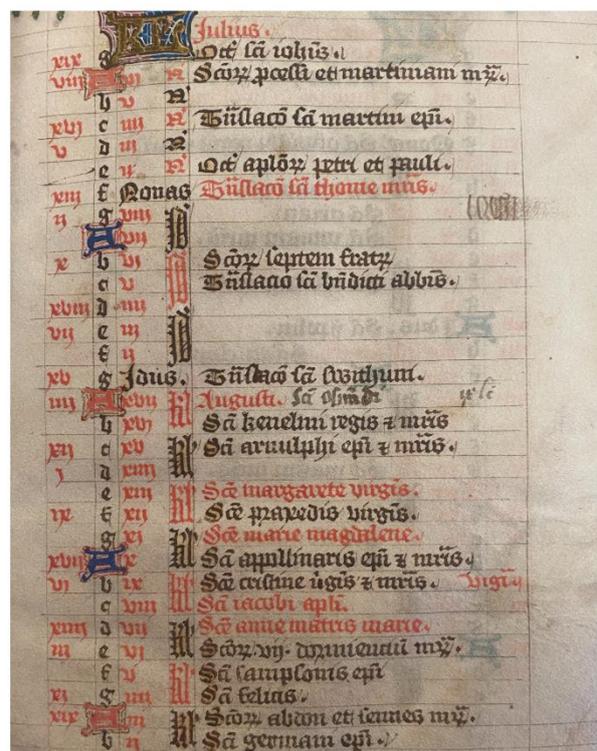
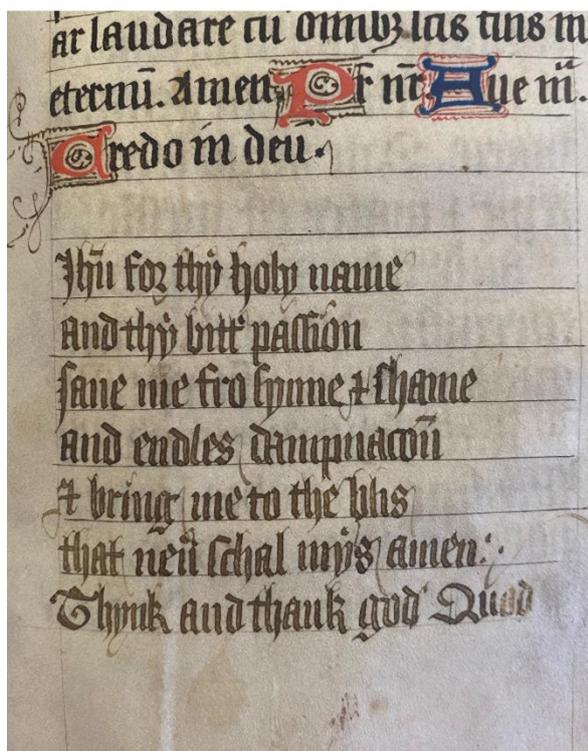
My Sonne William Watson Came into  
this Worlde one Tuesday beinge  
the 19 of March 1615 the day  
being S Joseph his daye the signe  
then in aries the houre of  
his birth foure in the after  
nounge

Sweet Jesus  
Dere king  
be Merci  
Full to him

MS 310, an early 15th-century Latin book of hours, has a number of additions to the margins and calendar, both in Latin and in English, one being a signature of a certain 'fouyny(?) bouy', Henry Knyght. On f. 115r of MS 310, there is a short verse prayer in the vernacular. It is one of the more popular Middle English religious lyrics, and appears in 20 other manuscripts apart from this one:

<sup>26</sup> Thank you to Rakoen Maertens and Michael Stansfield for their help in transcribing the MS 323 inscriptions.

Jhesu for thy holy name  
 And thy bitter passion,  
 Save me fro synne and shame  
 And endles dampnacion  
 And bring me to the blis  
 That neuer shal mys; Amen.



New College Library, Oxford, MS 310, ff. 80r, 115r, 4r

These books of hours serve not only as religious texts, but also as windows into the personal devotions and family histories of their time, and thus deserve further scholarly attention. The large number of personal touches, both intentionally written and worn away through use, allow us an opportunity to feel backwards and think about how these individuals, named or anonymous, used and appreciated these books as treasured objects, family records, connections to the divine, and, sometimes, as scrap paper.

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