In Hans Memling’s late fifteenth-century painting, *Man of Sorrows* (Figure 14.1) the beholder is presented with a characteristic late medieval devotional motif: an image of the suffering Christ (*Christus patiens*) supported by his sorrowing mother and surrounded by the instruments of his torture. Cut and bleeding, he displays the wounds in his hands and side, and the blood that flows from them, in a literal interpretation of the opening lines of the *Salve plaga lateris*, a prayer to the Holy Side Wound: “Salve plaga lateris nostri redemptoris / ex te enim profuit fons rosei coloris” [Hail wound in our savior’s side / a fountain of rosy color flows forth from you]. With one pierced hand, Christ supports and draws attention to the gaping hole in his chest as he turns his other hand palm up to catch the river of blood flowing from the deep dark void. The Virgin weeps behind her son, and nails, whip, spear, sponge, and tormentors flank the central figures, engaging the beholder in a meditative Passion dialogue. Although the sorrowing Virgin and the instruments of torture depicted in this painting are integral components in the overall devotion to Christ’s Passion, emphasis on the side wound in particular, and multivalent audience response to it, emerged as a powerful new component of late medieval devotional practice that increasingly sought a more direct and emotional involvement for the believer. The wound was first and foremost the source of Christ’s redemptive

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Figure 14.1  Hans Memling. German/Flemish c.1430/40–1494. The Man of Sorrows in the arms of the Virgin 1475 or 1479, Oil and gold leaf on wood panel, 27.4 × 19.9 cm. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1924