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Marian Devotions from a Printer's Perspective: The Rosary, the Seven Sorrows, and Gerard Leeu (d. 1492)

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On 9 March 1484 the first-ever printed book in Middle Dutch with an illustrated title page appeared in the town of Gouda.¹ The concise title above the woodcut only roughly describes the contents of the book: *Van Marien rosen cransken een suuerlic boexken* (a perfect small book on Mary's rose chaplet). The woodcut shows the wounds of Christ reduced to simple elements and set within (and in case of the heart, surrounded by) a rosary (Fig. 2.1). The verses below the image read: *Die mit marien / Ewelic wil verblien / Die spreek tot allen tyen / Veel aue marien* (one who wants to join Mary in eternal bliss shall always say many Hail Marys). Produced in the Gouda workshop of the printer Gerard Leeu (d. 1492), this edition is, however, not only interesting from a book historical point of view, but also marks an unparalleled event in the history of the Rosary devotion. The book provides the readers with a Middle Dutch translation of Michael Francisci ab Insulis's (1435–1502) *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii*. And it is the only known vernacular edition of this academic disputation in defence of the Rosary confraternity.² How did Leeu come to print this unique text, and how did this venture fit within his broader activities as a printer?

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- 1 Ursula Rautenberg, "Die Entstehung und Entwicklung des Buchtitelblatts in der Inkunabelzeit in Deutschland, den Niederlanden und Venedig—Quantitative und qualitative Studie," in *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 62, ed. Monika Estermann and Ursula Rautenberg (Munich: K.G. Saur, 2008), 58, 61–63. On pages 58 and 59 Rautenberg erroneously gives 1 Mar. 1484 as the publishing date.
- 2 First signaled by Bertilo de Boer, "De Souter van Alanus de Rupe," *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 31 (1957): 190. Michael Francisci ab Insulis, *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii* [Dutch] *Van Marien rosen cransken*. Add: Alanus de Rupe: *De psalterio B.M.v. exempla* [Dutch]. Johannes Herolt: *Promptuarium exemplorum* (abbreviated) [Dutch], Gouda: Gerard Leeu, 9 Mar. 1484, 8°. ISTC no. if00299050.



FIGURE 2.1 Gerard Leeu, *Van Marien rosen cransken een suerlic boerken*, title page (9 Mar. 1484). 8°. Leiden, University Library, 1370 G 35, fol. [a]1r
IMAGE: LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

An answer to these questions implies an exploration of Leeu's editions of works connected to the Rosary confraternity and devotion. In fact, Leeu's publications connected to the devotion of the Seven Sorrows of Mary also deserve our attention, since the two late fifteenth-century devotions were strongly related—the former directly inspired and influenced the latter. Furthermore, Leeu's printing business directly connects the two devotions and their advancement in the Low Countries. Both devotions and confraternities have received a fair amount of attention from scholars across a wide range of fields—from (art) historians and theologians to musicologists and literary historians.³ Still, the role of early printers in the development and advancement of these devotions has remained somewhat overlooked. Their work is often mentioned in general studies of these Marian devotions, and “the role of the printing press” in the propagation of the Seven Sorrows as a means of creating a politically oriented emotional community has been especially stressed by Susie Speakman Sutch and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene.⁴ Moreover, in his study of the history of the Cologne Rosary confraternity, Henri Dominique Saffrey identified two so-called “official printers” of the confraternity who also produced the first (printed) Rosary images.⁵ However, the perspective of the printer—and in particular of a single (Netherlandish) printer whose publications “unite” the Rosary and the Seven Sorrows—has yet to be considered.⁶

3 In her seminal work, Anne Winston-Allen already stressed the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach. *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 12.

4 Susie Speakman Sutch and Anne-Laure van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary: Devotional Communication and Politics in the Burgundian-Habsburg Low Countries, c. 1490–1520,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61, no. 2 (2010): 252–278, e.g., 257: “the mediation of the printing press.” See also Susie Speakman Sutch, “Politics and Print at the Time of Philip the Fair,” in *Books in Transition at the Time of Philip the Fair*, ed. Hanno Wijsman (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 245–254.

5 “Les deux imprimeurs ‘officiels’ de la Confrérie du Rosaire ont été, à Bâle, Bernhard Richel et, à Augsbourg, Johann Bämli. Peut-être même étaient-ils membres de la Confrérie! Ce sont eux aussi qui ont produit les premières images du Rosaire.” Henri Dominique Saffrey, “La fondation de la Confrérie du Rosaire à Cologne en 1475: Histoire et iconographie,” *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 76 (2001): 161.

6 Stefan Jäggi, for example, mentions the importance of the printing press with regard to the advancement of the Rosary confraternity, but he only mentions Germany and Italy: “Von grosser Bedeutung für die Verbreitung der Bruderschatsidee in Verbindung mit dem Rosenkranzgebet wurde der Buchdruck [...] Das gilt nicht nur für Deutschland, sondern gleichermassen für Italien [...]” “Rosenkranzbruderschaften: Vom Spätmittelalter bis zur Konfessionalisierung,” in *Der Rosenkranz: Andacht—Geschichte—Kunst*, ed. Urs-Beat Frei and Fredy Bühler (Bern: Benteli Verlag), 93. One of the few studies that deals with Rosary texts in the late-medieval Low Countries dates to the 1950s: De Boer, “De Souter van Alanus

This chapter does not intend to provide a complete overview of all printed Rosaries, meditations on the Seven Sorrows, and related texts by one or more printers. My aim is to focus on what Leeu's editions in relation to these cults can tell us about the historical contexts in which he worked, as well as about his intellectual, religious, and even artistic connections. Since little archival evidence of the activities of early Netherlandish printers exists, I take the editions themselves as the starting point to uncover Leeu's involvement in the development of these strongly interrelated devotions. Furthermore, I study the role of his books in shaping the devotions and the religious experiences of the devotees by concentrating on the function played by the pictorial images Leeu included in his books and on the ways in which his editions might have interacted with other religious objects (paintings in particular) that also served as tools for prayer and meditation. As such, I hope to balance the production (Leeu, authors, editors, woodcutters) and reception (devotees) sides, as well as to contribute to further mapping of these devotions in the pre-Reformation Low Countries, with special attention to the printers' role(s) in their development and advancement.

Adopting the printer's perspective, I argue that the printer's—in this case Leeu's—independent, proactive, and commercial approach to devotions was a factor in the devotions' development that should not be underestimated, and moreover, should not be too easily cast aside as simple text or book production at the request of the devotions' propagators. Through his trade Leeu made vital contributions to modelling and even initiating Marian devotions in the latter quarter of the fifteenth century. The printed book not only promoted the devotions, but it also likewise (co-)shaped the devotions and associated practices of meditation and prayer. Before discussing Leeu's role in shaping the Rosary devotion in the Low Countries, I first start with a brief introduction to the history of the Rosary and the Rosary confraternity.

1 The Rosary: Sequential Prayer to Prayer Community

The intricate history of the Rosary predates the start of Leeu's business in 1477 by centuries. But while the actual practice of praying series of Ave Marias and Pater Nosters in substitution for the hundred fifty Psalms and/or the canonical hours dates back to the thirteenth century, this form of prayer gained

de Rupe." This study is still commonly used. A more thorough and up-to-date study is a desideratum.

momentum in the fifteenth century within the context of the observant reforms.⁷ It is this episode that we have to examine more closely in order to garner insight into Leeu's activities connected to the devotion. The Carthusians, boasting about the fact that their lifestyle had never needed a reform, were the first to propagate a prayer cycle of Hail Marys paired with meditations on moments from Christ's life.⁸ In 1409, Dominic of Prussia (or Prutenus) (1382–1461) of the Charterhouse of Saint Alban in Trier composed a cycle of fifty Hail Marys supplemented with Passion meditations and five Pater Nosters to be prayed after every ten Hail Marys. He formulated the Passion meditations in relative clauses that expand on the Hail Mary and refer to events from the lives of Christ and Mary.⁹ Although Dominic claimed to be the first to come up with this kind of prayer exercise, linking a sequence of Hail Marys to biographical events, the discovery of older texts from Cistercian circles has shown that he worked within a trend of evolving rosary prayers.¹⁰ Dominic's narrative additions to the prayer cycle, however, helped devotees to maintain their concentration throughout a sequence of identical prayers, and his text became the first to be distributed on a large scale.¹¹ Allegedly, more than one thousand copies of the text were made and distributed to promote the devotion, especially in Carthusian and Benedictine circles.¹²

A few decades later, the Dominican Alanus de Rupe (d. 1475), originally from Brittany and buried in the town of Zwolle in the IJssel valley, deemed the

7 For the early Rosary history see Andreas Heinz, "Die Zisterzienser und die Anfänge des Rosenkranzes," *Analecta cisterciensia* 33 (1977): 262–309; Anne Winston, "Tracing the Origins of the Rosary: German Vernacular Texts," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 619–636; Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 13–22, see 73–80 for the connection to Observant reforms.

8 Winston, "Tracing the Origins," 627–628.

9 Winston, "Tracing the Origins," 627–629; Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 22–26. The controversial study by Karl Joseph Klinkhammer emphasized the dependence of Dominic's clauses on the prayers of the prior of the Trier Charterhouse, Adolf of Essen. *Adolf von Essen und seine Werke: Der Rosenkranz in der geschichtlichen Situation seiner Entstehung und in seinem bleidendem Anliegen; Eine Quellenforschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Josef Knecht, 1972), 198–225. See also Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 7, 26. Cf. Jeffrey Hamburger and Nigel F. Palmer, *The Prayer Book of Ursula Begerin, Art-Historical and Literary Introduction* (Dietikon-Zurich: Urs Graf Verlag, 2015), 1:453.

10 Winston, "Tracing the Origins," 622–627; Heinz, "Die Zisterzienser und die Anfänge des Rosenkranzes," 307–309.

11 Winston, "Tracing the Origins," 629, 632; Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 26.

12 Winston, "Tracing the Origins," 628; Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 22–23; Klinkhammer, *Adolf von Essen*, 110–112; Andreas Heinz, "Eine spätmittelalterliche Exempelsammlung zur Propagierung des Trierer Kartäuser-Rosenkranzes," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 92 (1983): 307–308.

Rosary to be too “light” and too reminiscent—because of its name—of worldly love poems and connected practices, such as lovers making wreaths as tokens of their love. Alanus championed a cycle of one hundred fifty Ave Marias interspersed with a Pater Noster after every ten Hail Marys, during which the faithful were to meditate on Christ’s Passion. This prayer cycle was to be known as the Psalter of Our Lady so as not to contaminate the devotion with any worldly references.¹³ Apart from “reforming” the actual prayer cycle, Alanus also composed exempla that showed the origin of the devotion and the effectiveness of the Psalter of Our Lady. According to Alanus it was Saint Dominic, the founder of the Dominican order, who had received the Psalter of Our Lady directly from Mary. She asked him to promote the devotion among the faithful. Only at the start of the twentieth century was Alanus’s story definitively uncovered as nothing more than an attractive tale.¹⁴ Apparently, Alanus also founded a confraternity in Douai sometime between 1464 and 1470, but the devotion needed the promotional insights of two Dominicans of the Cologne friary to really take off and become an actual European affair.¹⁵

Both Dominicans who stood at the cradle of the foundation of the Rosary confraternity at Cologne in 1475, Michael Francisci ab Insulis (d. 1502) and Jakob Sprenger (d. 1495), were pupils of Alanus de Rupe. Before coming to Cologne in 1468, Michael had attended Alanus’s lectures in Paris and their paths crossed often: in the years 1465–1468, Michael had been in Douai where Alanus was preaching the Psalter of Our Lady.¹⁶ Jakob Sprenger, prior of the Cologne friary and, for promotional reasons associated as co-author with the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*, was educated by Alanus in Cologne.¹⁷ The Cologne Rosary confraternity was founded on the day of Alanus’s demise in Zwolle, 8 September 1475. According to Michael’s *Quodlibet de veritate*

13 Anne Winston-Allen, “Goswijn van der Weyden, Geertgen tot Sint Jans, and Albrecht Dürer: Reading the Signs in Pictures and Texts of the Rosary Brotherhood,” *American Journal of Semiotics* 12 (1995): 79; Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 66–67, 72–73.

14 This is unpacked in a series of articles in the journal *The Month* by Herbert Thurston, “Our Popular Devotions: II. The Rosary,” *The Month* 96 (1900): 403–418, 513–527, 620–637; 97 (1901): 67–79, 172–188, 286–304. See also Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 6, 72; Klara H. Broekhuijsen, “The Institution of the Rosary: Establishing the context for a recently discovered copy after a lost panel by Geertgen tot Sint Jans in the Pommersfelden Book of Hours, Ms. 343,” *Oud Holland* 123 (2010): 224.

15 The foundation in Douai has been subject to discussion. Some scholars even reject the existence of such a foundation. See Jäggi, “Rosenkranzbruderschaften,” 92. See also Broekhuijsen, “The Institution,” 232n18 and the literature mentioned there.

16 Saffrey, “La fondation,” 149; Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 67.

17 Sprenger left Basel in 1464 to study in Cologne. Saffrey, “La fondation,” 143. See Broekhuijsen, “The Institution,” 232n18 and the literature mentioned there.

fraternitatis Rosarii, the direct cause for the foundation of the confraternity was the end of the siege of Neuss by Charles the Bold.¹⁸ Four months later, the confraternity's membership register already boasted more than five thousand names, and little more than six months later, on 10 March 1476, the confraternity received confirmation and a forty-day indulgence for reciting the rosary during Marian feast days from the papal legate Alexander de Forlì.¹⁹ Together with the latter, Frederic III and his son Maximilian were among the confraternity's first patrons.²⁰ In that same year Pope Sixtus IV extended the indulgences to the souls in purgatory, and in 1478 and 1479, additional papal bulls were issued.²¹ The confraternity accepted virtually anyone as its member—men, women, even the deceased—and there was no registration fee. As for the form that the actual prayer should take, the confraternity was equally flexible: all that was required to share in the confraternity's merits was to recite three cycles of fifty Aves—or one complete Psalter—a week.²²

This rather noncommittal confraternity did raise questions as to its set-up, viability, and effectiveness. In 1476 Michael Francisci defended the newly established confraternity against its critics in an academic disputation (a quodlibet lecture) at the University of Cologne.²³ During the days before Christmas, university lecturers were allowed to treat any subject they wished. At the request of the public, Michael gave an elaborate explanation of the reasoning behind and the efficacy of the Rosary confraternity. The text of Michael's lecture was put to press in 1476 in Basel, probably by Bernhard Richel who, according to Saffrey, was one of the confraternity's official printers.²⁴ A few years later, in 1479, Michael revised his *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii* and took the

18 This is only the case in the revised edition; see below (note 25). See e.g. Saffrey, "La fondation," 146–150; Ton Brandenburg, *Heilig familieleven: Verspreiding en waardering van de Historie van Sint-Anna in de stedelijke cultuur in de Nederlanden en het Rijnland aan het begin van de moderne tijd (15de/16de eeuw)* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1990), 103–104. For a thorough analysis of Michael's *Quodlibet*, see Heribert Christian Scheeben, "Michael Francisci ab Insulis, O.P., 'Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii,'" *Archiv der deutschen Dominkaner* 4 (1951): 97–162.

19 Saffrey, "La fondation," 151–152. Cf. Brandenburg, *Heilig familieleven*, 103.

20 Brandenburg, *Heilig familieleven*, 104; Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 24–25; Saffrey, "La fondation," 151.

21 Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 122.

22 J.A.F. Kronenburg, *Maria's heerlijkheid in Nederland: Geschiedkundige schets van de derering der H. Maagd in ons vaderland, van de eerste tijden tot op onze dagen* (Amsterdam: F.H.J. Bekker, 1905), 341–343; Brandenburg, *Heilig familieleven*, 103.

23 De Boer, "De Souter van Alanus de Rupe," 31 (1957): 190–196; Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 67–68.

24 Saffrey, "La fondation," 151–152, 161.

opportunity to bring the text up to date by including newly granted approbations and recent miracles. Publication in print followed soon after.²⁵

2 Leeu and the *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii*

Gerard Leeu printed a Dutch translation of this quintessential Rosary text at Gouda in the early spring of 1484. Printing finished on 9 March.²⁶ Leeu also published a parallel edition of the Latin text “between 1483 and 11 June 1484.”²⁷ Publishing the same text both in Latin and in the vernacular was an important characteristic of Leeu’s publishing strategy: texts that were interesting for literati were apparently also of interest to non-Latinate readers.²⁸ Leeu knew, however, that a simple one-to-one copy would not be effective. This is clear from the fact that there are substantial differences between the two editions. While the Latin text appeared as a quarto, the Dutch edition, *Van Marien rosenransken*, was one of the first books Leeu published in small octavo format. Leeu’s innovation would set a trend. The majority of religious and devotional books from the 1490s onward were published as octavo booklets.²⁹

Furthermore, Leeu did not slavishly follow the previous editions (Basel and Cologne) that contained only Michael’s quodlibet lecture. He decided to publish a volume that also accommodated Alanus de Rupe’s *Compendium psalterii trinitatis* and his exempla collection, *De psalterio B.M.V. exempla*.³⁰ Later editions published in Lyon and Bologna follow Leeu’s composition.³¹ Similarly, the Dutch edition contains Alanus’s collection of exempla which, however, follows directly after the *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii* and which,

25 Saffrey, “La fondation,” 151–152; De Boer, “De Souter van Alanus de Rupe,” 31 (1957): 190; Broekhuijsen, “The Institution,” 225.

26 Michael Francisci ab Insulis, *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii* [Dutch] *Van Marien rosenransken*. Add: Alanus de Rupe: *De psalterio B.M.V. exempla* [Dutch]; Johannes Herolt: *Promptuarium exemplorum* (abbreviated) [Dutch], Gouda: Gerard Leeu, 9 Mar. 1484, 8°. ISTC no. if00299050 (hereafter cited as *Van Marien rosenransken*).

27 Michael Francisci ab Insulis, *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii*. Add: Alanus de Rupe: *Compendium psalterii Trinitatis. Epilogus psalterii. De Psalterio B.M.V. exempla*, [Gouda: Gerard Leeu, between 1483 and 11 June 1484], 4°. ISTC no. if00297500. On the dating see Rautenberg, “Die Entstehung,” 62.

28 Koen Goudriaan, “Een drukkeren zijn markt: Gheraert Leeu (Gouda 1477–Antwerp 1492/3),” *Madoc* 6 (1992): 203–204. On the ratio between Dutch and Latin in Leeu’s publisher’s list, see 200–203.

29 Rautenberg, “Die Entstehung,” 61.

30 De Boer, “De Souter van Alanus de Rupe,” 29 (1955): 359, 365, 369–377.

31 Lyon (Janon Carcain, 2 July 1488. ISTC no. if00298000); Bologna (Johannes Antonius de Benedictis, 10 July 1500. ISTC no. if00299000).

despite otherwise being a word-for-word translation of the Latin text, has an alternative ending.³² The Dutch book concludes with an expanded exemplum from an older Dominican exempla compilation: Johannes Herolt's (d. 1468) *Promptuarium exemplorum*, composed between 1435 and 1440.³³ I will return to this final exemplum about a Carthusian monk below.

Leeu's two Rosary miscellanies in Dutch and in Latin show how closely all fifteenth-century developments (the Carthusian articles or *clausulae*, Alanus de Rupe's work, and the Cologne foundation) were related not only historically or through direct personal connections, but also in the eyes of the late-fifteenth-century devotees. The Dutch edition gives a verbatim translation of Michael's academic lecture with its scholastic syllogisms and vocabulary in the Dutch vernacular. The first lines introduce the text as a quodlibet read in the Cologne "scoele vanden seven konsten" (faculty of liberal arts) by "broeder Michiel van Risel, doctoer inder godheyt vander prediker oerden uut dat cloester te Colen" (brother Michael of Lille, doctor in theology of the Dominican order from the Cologne convent).³⁴ In the prologue that he wrote for the revised text in 1479, Michael explains that, after the presentation of his quodlibet, his text did not reach many readers. Besides, the text that was printed in Basel in 1476 contained different interpretations and many mistakes, but was nevertheless sold under his name—all without Michael knowing or having the opportunity to correct his text. At the request of his prior, Jakob Sprenger, Michael revised the text.³⁵

While the above description of events can be found in both the Latin and Dutch editions, the vernacular edition contains an important addition about the translation into Dutch. Since these kinds of remarks are relatively rare in incunabula, it is worth quoting the text at length.

Ende om dattet seer verdientlijc is ander menschen tot doechden ende tot godliken dienste te porren ende te trecken, so is dit tegenwoerdighe boexken doen translateren ende oversetten uten Latyne in gueden

32 De Boer classified the translation as "literal" in his "De Souter van Alanus de Rupe," 31 (1957): 190.

33 *Van Marien rosenkransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fols. t7v–t10r. On the exemplum in relation to the history of the Rosary, cf. Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 144; Walter S. Gibson, "Prayers and Promises: The Interactive Indulgence Print in the Later Middle Ages," in *Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative, Emotional, Physical, and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, ed. Laura Gelfand and Sarah Blick (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 304.

34 *Van Marien rosenkransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. a1r.

35 *Van Marien rosenkransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fols. a1r–a2v. See also Saffrey, "La fondation," 151–152.

Duytsche op dat die leke luden die gheen Latijn en verstaen—die men veel vint—oec mogen geïnformeert ende volmatelic gheleert worden in die doechden ende sonderlinghe verdienste des rosen crans, ende alsoe gheleert sijnde tot devocien ende innicheyt des selven rosen crenskens ghetoghen worden. Welc rosen crenskens by sinte Dominicus tyden den heylighen vrient goods seer ghemeen was den rosen crans te lesen mit devocien, dat welck by versumelheyt ende by laeuheyte der devocien bi nae heel ende al vergheten was, ende nu bi die wille goods weder op ghestaen is inder formen hier nae bescreven. Ende om dattet te meer ghepubliceert ende onder den volke verbreet soude werden, ende niet lichtelic achter ghestelt of vergheten en soude worden, so ist bi versoec van enen devoten persoene doen printen int iaer .m cccc. ende lxxxiiiij. tot stichticheyt alre kersten menschen. Hier eyndet dat prologus.³⁶

And because it is very meritorious to bring others to virtues and to serving God, therefore this present small book has been translated [or: has been given to translate] and transferred from Latin into proper Dutch so that laypeople who do not understand Latin—of whom there are many—may also be informed and perfectly instructed in the virtues and exceptional merits of the Rosary, and due to this instruction [they will be] attracted to the devotion and fervour of that same Rosary. Which Rosary was very popular and read with devotion at the time of Saint Dominic, the holy friend of God, but which through negligence and indifference to the devotion was almost entirely forgotten and now through the will of God has been revived in the form that is described in what follows. And in order for it to become more publicly known and dispersed among the people, and to not be easily suppressed or forgotten, so has [this book] been printed at the request of a devout person in the year 1484, for the edification of all Christians. Here ends the prologue.

36 *Van Marien rosencrensken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fols. a2v–a3v. See also Rob Resoort, “De presentatie van drukwerk in de volkstaal in de Nederlanden tot 1501: waar zijn de auteurs, vertalers en opdrachtgevers? Een verkenning,” in *Geschreven en gedrukt: Boekproductie van handschrift naar druk in de overgang van Middeleeuwen naar Moderne Tijd*, ed. Herman Pleij and Joris Reynaert (Ghent: Academia Press, 2004), 188–189, 192, 203. On the latter page Resoort transcribes the prologue but leaves out the section about the translation that is presented here.

Who added this section to the prologue? Was it the person who had the work translated, the translator, or Leeu himself?³⁷ By pointing to the situation with regard to the translation—someone dedicated himself to translating the text into “proper Dutch,” and a “devout person” petitioned the distribution of the text in print—this intriguing passage explains why a Dutch translation exists: due to actors who were highly engaged with the Rosary confraternity and its propagation and who joined forces with Leeu. Four years after the revised Latin text was first published, they pled for a Dutch edition. Even though, according to Saffrey, Michael’s *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii* was the best way for the Cologne confraternity to gain academic and ecclesiastic recognition since it dealt with all theological aspects of the confraternity, the initiators of the Dutch translation wanted to open up this academic text to a different, non-Latinate audience.³⁸ Leeu accommodated their wish and used his expert knowledge to come up with a format that would better suit the new audience. The reasons brought forward for translating and publishing the text are in line with the ideals of the fifteenth-century Observance and of the Dominican Observance in particular: a vernacular printed book was an ideal opportunity to introduce an intensified religious practice outside the monastery and revive the prayer practice of a broad swath of the population.³⁹

The “devout person” mentioned at the end of the prologue may well have been a layperson living in the world or possibly a secular priest. It remains unclear whether he (or she?) only used his social capital (connections) to get Gerard Leeu to publish the text, or whether he also provided a financial incentive and covered (part of) the costs of the edition. With regard to the production of the Utrecht-based “Printer with the Monogram,” Lotte and Wytze Hellinga have suggested that an affluent city dweller sponsored a number of his editions of spiritual literature for pious reasons similar to the ones stated in the Dutch translation of the *Quodlibet*: because it was meritorious to boost people’s faith and to bring them to lead a virtuous and profoundly spiritual life.⁴⁰ The Hellingas, however, clearly distinguished the Utrecht editions from

37 According to Vermeulen and Rautenberg, it is probable that Leeu reworked the prologue. Rautenberg, “Die Entstehung,” 61; Yves G. Vermeulen, “*Tot profijt en genoegen*: *Motivering en voor de produktie van Nederlandstalige gedrukte teksten, 1477–1540* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff/Forsten, 1986), 84–85.

38 Saffrey, “La fondation,” 152.

39 On the Rosary as an “observance tool” and the tension with its “arithmetic” character that was criticized during the Reformation, see Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 135–143.

40 Lotte Hellinga and Wytze Hellinga, *The Fifteenth-Century Printing Types of the Low Countries* (Amsterdam: Menno Hertzberger, 1966), 1:48; Ina Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula Printed in the Low Countries* (Houten: HES en De Graaf, 2013), 1:296.

books with a devotional character published by Leeu as these were markedly different due to their commercial motive.⁴¹ We are also aware of connections between Leeu and religious institutions, for example, the Antwerp friary of Observant Franciscans. Leeu printed a text authored by one of the friars within a week after the text was completed, apparently at his own expense.⁴² Whether the Dutch *Quodlibet* edition was more an act of devotion than a commercial venture is difficult to determine—either way, Leeu needed a return on his investment.

Whatever the case, it seems plausible that the “devout person” was a prominent (lay) member of a Dutch branch of the Rosary confraternity. Only a few years after the Rosary confraternity was founded at Cologne, the first confraternity of the northern Netherlands was established at Haarlem in Holland (1478). The prior of the Haarlem Dominican convent and initiator of the Haarlem confraternity Jacobus Weyts (d. 1498) was, like Michael Francisci ab Insulis, closely acquainted with Alanus de Rupe.⁴³ Both Alanus and Jacobus had worked as lecturers at the Dominican convent in Ghent in 1468, where one of the first Rosary confraternities of the Low Countries was established. Allegedly Weyts, who held a doctorate in theology from Louvain, assisted Alanus in his Rosary preaching campaigns in Ghent and the surrounding area since the former had no knowledge of the Dutch language.⁴⁴ Weyts, a reputed admirer of Alanus, was thus profoundly aware of the devotion’s advantages and of the necessity for vernacular material in order to advance the devotion. His experience with the Rosary led him to establish the Haarlem confraternity in the same year that he was appointed prior of the friary. It does not seem unlikely that Weyts instigated the Dutch translation and publication of Michael’s *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii*—especially since Leeu’s edition also contains his old colleague’s exempla collection.

41 Hellinga and Hellinga, *The Fifteenth-Century Printing Types*, 48. “Compared however with the publications of someone like Gheraert Leeu, which were partly texts of this nature, these editions [i.e., the editions presumably sponsored by an Utrecht patron] were obviously made with little thought to economy.”

42 Resoort, “De presentatie van drukwerk,” 187; Anna Dlabáčová and Daniëlle Prochowski, “Preken en publiceren: De franciscaanse observantie als producent en aanjager van religieuze literatuur in de Lage Landen, circa 1490–1560; Ter inleiding,” *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 85 (2015): 225.

43 Broekhuijsen, “The Institution,” 225n17.

44 Kronenburg, *Maria’s heerlijkheid*, 299; G.A. Meijer, *Het dominicaner klooster te Zwolle* (Nijmegen: Malmberg, 1901), 24; Broekhuijsen, “The Institution,” 233n27. The most extensive discussion on Weyts is Josephus Arts, *De predikheeren te Gent, 1228–1854* (Gent: W. Siffer, 1913), 135–146, esp. 135.

Moreover, the Haarlem friary's concern with Rosary texts predates the confraternity's foundation in 1478. In 1476, the year in which Michael delivered his *Quodlibet*, the recently established Congregatio Hollandiae (Congregation of Holland, 1464–1517), an assembly of Observant Dominican friaries, convened at the Haarlem convent. During this chapter meeting all priors were instructed to conduct a painstaking search for the writings of the late Master Alanus. Whatever was found—books and treatises, whether in autographs or in copies—was to be passed on as soon as possible to the congregation's vicar general, at that time Johannes Uyt den Hove (1457–1478).⁴⁵ The reason for the call was likely a desire to disseminate Alanus's writings, probably in print. Two years later, in 1478, Uyt den Hove was succeeded by Adriaan van der Meer, a friend and fellow student of Alanus's at Rostock in 1470. In that same year, the appeal for Alanus's writings was withdrawn at a chapter meeting in Rotterdam, possibly because adequate autographs had been found.⁴⁶ This could be the reason why Alanus's works were added to Michael Francisci's *Quodlibet* in Leeu's Latin and vernacular editions. In his study of Alanus's works in the Low Countries, Bertilo de Boer designated the Latin edition as “as good as certain [...] the official edition of the administration of the Congregatio Hollandiae of the Dominican Observance.”⁴⁷ Some involvement in the publication of both the Latin and the vernacular edition of Michael Francisci himself, who at the time of publication was freshly appointed as vicar general of the Congregatio Hollandiae at a chapter meeting in Haarlem in 1483, can also not be ruled out.⁴⁸ Since all three Observant Dominican friaries in Holland (Haarlem, The Hague, and Rotterdam) had a *studium theologiae* they could have easily supplied a translator who was well-versed in Latin and Dutch and had ample experience with scholastic texts.⁴⁹

45 Albert De Meyer, *La Congrégation de Hollande ou la Réforme Dominicaine en Territoire Bourguignon, 1465–1515* (Liège: Soledi, 1946), 77 (no. 12), 84 (no. 1); on Uyt den Hove see 321–322.

46 De Boer, “De Souter van Alanus de Rupe,” 29 (1955): 365, 368; Kronenburg, *Maria's heerlijkheid*, 302; Broekhuijsen, “The Institution,” 231m9.

47 “[...] is vrijwel zeker bedoeld als de officiële uitgave van het bestuur van de Hollandse Congregatie van de Dominicaanse observantie.” De Boer, “De Souter van Alanus de Rupe,” 29 (1955): 371. Cf. Resoort who, on the basis of the prologue, simply states that the text was published at the instigation of the Cologne Rosary Confraternity: “[...] de tekst [...] is gepubliceerd op instigatie van de Broederschap van Onze Vrouwen Hoet te Keulen.” “De presentatie van drukwerk,” 189.

48 On Michael Francisci as vicar general see De Meyer, *La Congrégation*, 326–327; Kronenburg, *Maria's heerlijkheid*, 318.

49 S.P. Wolfs, *Middeleeuwse dominicanenkloosters in Nederland: Bijdrage tot een monasticon* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 76; De Meyer, *La Congrégation*, 86–87. The Dutch translation

But why ask a Gouda printer to publish the text? In the latter half of 1483 Jacob Bellaert, who is thought to have been an apprentice of Gerard Leeu, had set up his business in the Haarlem Kruisstraat.⁵⁰ Haarlem's first resident printer, however, did not publish any books in Latin, which might have been one of the reasons for turning to Leeu, who had probably only just returned from Venice, together with new Venetian fonts for Latin texts.⁵¹ Moreover, Leeu's reputation as a reliable printer might have also influenced this choice. Rob Resoort discusses the case of Jasper Laet, who brought his almanac to Leeu in 1490 after a colleague in the printing trade had made changes to his text and ruined it. Leeu, on the other hand, apparently offered the possibility to correct proofs, which prompted Jasper to speak of him as "my friend the printer."⁵² Michael Francisci's negative experience with the first version of his *Quodlibet* (discussed above) probably led to extra awareness among the Rosary's promoters of the *Congregatio Hollandiae*—and possibly Francisci himself—when choosing a trustworthy printer in the Low Countries.

In view of later events, the choice for a Gouda printer is even less surprising. Circa one decade after the publication of *Van Marien rosenransken* (the Dutch *Quodlibet* edition), in 1494 or later, the Haarlem Dominicans appealed to another Gouda printing office, that of the *Collaciebroeders*, to publish their prayer and indulgence booklets.⁵³ One of these contains indulgences granted by popes Alexander VI and Sixtus IV to all members of the confraternities of Our Lady—this must be the Rosary confraternity—and the brotherhood of

of the *Quodlibet*, *Van Marien rosenransken*, is quite literal, but sometimes the translator explains scholastic jargon or provides a synonym more familiar to vernacular readers. "Probare" (to prove) is, for example, glossed as "te proberen, dat is te bewisen" or "wort in drie maniren probeert dat is geproeuet" (The Hague, Royal Library, fol. c4r). A minor premise is explained as "proposicie of voersettinghe of minoor" (fol. d7r). The fact that the Dutch text speaks of "our confraternity" while the Latin text mentions the Dominicans may indeed point to a Dominican translator: "Onse broederschap vanden rosen crans des maghets marien [...]" *Van Marien rosenransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. d7r; *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 B 36, fol. b1r–v.

50 Saskia Bogaart, *Geleerde kennis in de volkstaal: 'Van den proprieteyten der dinghe' (Haarlem 1485) in perspectief* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004), 47–48.

51 Goudriaan, "Een drukker," 201; Lotte Hellinga, "De betekenis van Gheraert Leeu," in *Een drukker zoekt publiek: Gheraert Leeu te Gouda, 1477–1484*, ed. Koen Goudriaan (Delft: Eburon, 1993), 22.

52 Resoort, "De presentatie van drukwerk," 181–182.

53 Koen Goudriaan, "Apostolate and Printing: The *Collaciebroeders* of Gouda and their Press," in *Between Lay Piety and Academic Theology: Studies Presented to Christoph Burger on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. A.A. den Hollander, Wim Janse, and Ulrike Hascher-Burger (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 442–443.

Saint Anne, both housed at the Haarlem Dominican friary.⁵⁴ Two editions of a Dutch translation of the *Mirabilia Romae* (*Figuren van die seven kercken van Rome*), which also appeared at the Gouda Collaciebroeders, benefitted the same confraternities.⁵⁵ Later still, the Haarlem Dominicans had similar books issued by printers at Amsterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht, all in 1526.⁵⁶ One of the Haarlem friars is known to have edited and written Latin works for publishers in Paris in the early sixteenth century.⁵⁷ The priors of the Dominicans in Zwolle also made use of a commercial printing press, which in their case was located in their town. In the 1480s they had letters printed by the local printer Peter van Os for the convent's brotherhood of Thomas Aquinas, the patron saint of the convent.⁵⁸

The city of Haarlem, as the seat of Holland's first Rosary confraternity, provides an attractive historical and cultural context for the unique Dutch-language *Quodlibet* edition published at Gouda. Apart from the Dominican convent, Haarlem was home to the painter Geertgen tot Sint Jans (ca. 1460/5–1490/5 or 1517), who probably lived in the same street where the printer Jacob Bellaert had his dwellings and who was a *provenier* at the Knights Hospitaller.⁵⁹ As such, he combined an intense religious lifestyle—praying, reading, meditating—with the execution of paintings for the Knights Hospitaller and external parties.⁶⁰ Two of Geertgen's paintings, or paintings believed to have originated in his

54 "Item alle dye gene dye nu sijn of noch sullen wesen in dye broederscap van onser vrouwen ghilt of van dye eerwaerdyge moeder sunte anna welcke ghilden syn tot die prekerbroeders binnen haerlem in hollant." *Indulgentia* [Dutch]: *Aflaten van de broederschap van de gilde van o.l.v. en van S. Anna te Haarlem*. Gouda: Collaciebroeders, [not before 12 Sept. 1494], 8°. ISTC no. ii00063400. Copy: The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 32, fol. [a]r. See also Kok, *Woodcuts*, 1:431–432. About the connection between the Rosary and the devotion to Saint Anne, see Brandenburg, *Heilig familieleven*, 106–109.

55 Koen Goudriaan, "The Church and the Market: Vernacular Religious Works and the Early Printing Press in the Low Countries, 1477–1540," in Koen Goudriaan, *Piety in Practice and Print: Essays on the Late Medieval Religious Landscape*, ed. Anna Dlabáčová and Ad Tervoort (Hilversum: Verloren, 2016), 254; Goudriaan, "Apostolate and Printing," 442.

56 See Stephanus G. Axters, *Geschiedenis van de vroomheid in de Nederlanden; III: De Moderne Devotie, 1380–1550* (Antwerp: De Sikkell, 1956), 309–310; Wouter Nijhoff and M.E. Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche bibliographie van 1500 tot 1540* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1923–1971), nos. 1281–1283.

57 Wolfs, *Middeleeuwse dominicanenkloosters*, 78.

58 The letters were used to admit both laity and religious people into the brotherhood. Jos M.M. Hermans, *Zwolse boeken voor een markt zonder grenzen 1477–1523* (Houten: HES en De Graaf Publishers, 2004), 137, cat. no. ZD 31, 140, cat. no. ZD 37; Goudriaan, "The Church and the Market," 254.

59 John R. Decker, *The Technology of Salvation and the Art of Geertgen tot Sint Jans* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 18, 20–21, 25.

60 Decker, *The Technology of Salvation*, 25–26.

circle, contain elaborate references to the Rosary: the Rotterdam-Edinburgh diptych (ca. 1480?) and the Tree of Jesse (ca. 1500).⁶¹

The latter painting has recently been discussed by Bret Rothstein as a depiction of devotional accomplishment in which we may recognize spiritual competition between the nun kneeling in the lower left corner and the man on the right, usually identified as a rector of one of Haarlem's religious communities.⁶² The woman in white is commonly identified as a nun of the Haarlem convent of Mary Magdalene, also known as the Wittevrouwenklooster.⁶³ To build his argument for the "potential complexity and subtlety" of the rosary devotion,⁶⁴ Rothstein brings forward a number of works, including the texts contained in Leeu's edition of the Dutch *Quodlibet*; more precisely, the Dutch translation of Alanus's *De Psalterio B.M.V. exempla*. One story tells about a Spanish woman who learns to pray the psalter from her parents. Later in life she asks a doctor in theology to pass judgment on her exercise. She explains that she prays the psalter with "threefold thought and meditation" (*mit drierhande aendachte ende overdenkinghe*): one rosary (a cycle of fifty Ave Marias) to the limbs and body parts of Mary, the second to the crucified body of Christ, and the third to the angels, apostles, and saints. Especially for the latter she uses pictorial images to support her devotion: "the third [series] I read in front of particular altars and man-made images in churches or at home."⁶⁵

A second exemplum narrates the story of Katherina, an inhabitant of Rome at the time of Saint Dominic's alleged preaching campaigns for the Rosary. Katherina prays the three series of Ave Marias to, respectively, Christ's youth, Christ's Passion according to his humanity, and the Passion according to his Divinity. One day, a man in the streets of Rome approaches her and together

61 Broekhuijsen, "The Institution," 225; Jan Piet Filedt Kok, "Circle of Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *The Tree of Jesse*, c. 1500," in *Early Netherlandish Paintings*, ed. Jan Piet Filedt Kok, Rijksmuseum online collection catalog (Amsterdam: 2010), accessed 24 Sept. 2018, hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.4659.

62 Bret L. Rothstein, "Empathy as a Type of Early Netherlandish Visual Wit," in *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400–1700*, ed. Walter S. Melion, James Clifton, and Michel Weemans (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 191–192.

63 Based on an article by R. van Luttervelt, "De herkomst en lotgevallen van Mostaert's Boom van Jesse," *Historia* 13 (1948): 265–270. See e.g. Filedt Kok, "Circle of Geertgen tot Sint Jans."

64 Rothstein, "Empathy as a Type," 206.

65 "Den derden lese ic voer sonderlinghe outaren ende gemaecte beelden inder kercken of binnen huse." Rothstein, "Empathy as a Type," 194–195. Rothstein refers to De Boer, "De Souter van Alanus de Rupe," 30 (1956): 165, and consequently confuses the protagonists of the tales with the author (according to Rothstein, a "model devout"). The story is the third exemplum in the collection and can be found on fols. n1v–n5r, *Van Marien rosenocransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30.

they set out for her home. After dinner, in Katherina's bedroom, the man transforms into three forms that reflect Katherina's spiritual exercise. First, he turns into the Christ child with a crown of thorns on his head, a cross on his shoulders, the five *Arma Christi*, and wounds all over his body. He tells Katherina, "now you see the Passion of my youth for which you have read the first fifty [Ave Marias], because from the first hours of my conception until death I have constantly carried this suffering in my heart for you."⁶⁶ After taking on his appearance during the Passion, "he transformed himself into the sun's clarity with his glorified signs in which everything was present, without end, because everything was present in the other."⁶⁷

The closeness of Leeu's Rosary miscellanies to the Holland Congregation and to the Haarlem Dominicans in particular, makes it plausible that the Latin and Dutch editions were well known in these circles, and that both painter and patron were familiar with these texts. They would certainly have been part of the audience Leeu was aiming at. Leeu's edition and the painting can be viewed as contemporary and exemplary expressions of the multifaceted nature of the devotion in diverse media. While Leeu's Dutch edition disseminated a translation of Latin into "proper Dutch" so that laypeople would be "perfectly" instructed in the teachings surrounding the Rosary and the confraternity, the painting translated that same piety into a pictorial—in Rothstein's words—"exemplar of proper rosary devotion."⁶⁸

The link between the Rosary promoters and the Congregatio Hollandiae also opens up different perspectives on the identifications of the nun in the Tree of Jesse. Even though van Luttermelt firmly discarded the possibility that the woman was a Dominican nun—according to him the only order where women were dressed completely in white was the order of Mary Magdalene—his identification of the nun as a sister of Mary Magdalene remains tentative.⁶⁹

66 "Nu siet ghi die passie mijns ioncheys om welcke ghi hebbet ghelesen u eerste vijftich, want vander eerster uren mijns ontfanckenisse totter doot toe hebbe ic dese pine stadeliken ghedraghen in mijn herte voer u." *Van Marien rosenkransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fols. t1v–t2r. Rothstein, "Empathy as a Type," 195; "De Souter van Alanus de Rupe," 30 (1956): 170.

67 "[...] verwandelde hi hem inder sonnen claeerheyt mit sijn glorificeerde teykenen in welcken was alle dinc, ya sonder eynde, want elcke was aldaer in ander." *Van Marien rosenkransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. t2v.

68 Rothstein, "Empathy as a Type," 206.

69 Van Luttermelt, "De herkomst," 265. See Koen Goudriaan, "Medieval Monasteries in the Netherlands: A Census," <http://www2.fgw.vu.nl/oz/monasteries/index.php>. The convent dedicated to Mary Magdalen in Haarlem (H23) is a tertiary convent that housed repented prostitutes and is not mentioned in archival sources after 1474. Cf. *Medieval Memoria Online. Commemoration of the dead in the Netherlands until 1580*, eds. Truus van Bueren,

I believe that other possibilities should be left open. One of the few female Dominican monasteries in Holland, for example, was the monastery of Mary Magdalene and Elizabeth of Thuringia in Leiden, which was also known as the convent of “White Nuns.” The women had taken on the Observance soon after the Holland Congregation’s formation in October 1464.⁷⁰ All of their father confessors belonged to the Congregation, and at least one of their father confessors had been Alanus’s pupil.⁷¹ On 15 May 1487 Michael Francisci himself, at the time still vicar general, wrote an appeal (in Dutch) to the Leiden magistrate concerning the furnishment of the interior of the nuns’ chapel.⁷² During the period of iconoclasm, several statutes and paintings were destroyed at the convent—amongst them paintings by the local painter Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533).⁷³ Could it have been one of the fifteenth-century White Nuns who ordered the Tree of Jesse through a Haarlem connection, possibly a father confessor with connections to the Haarlem Dominican friary?⁷⁴

According to Bernhard Ridderbos the so-called Rotterdam-Edinburgh diptych would have functioned as a visual accompaniment to the Rosary prayer and meditation. Ridderbos has argued that, because of the complex theological dimension of the painting, the patron was likely a member of the Haarlem Dominican convent and not a layman.⁷⁵ Leeu’s Dutch *Quodlibet* edition, however, shows that especially in these regions laypeople had access to intellectually

Rolf de Weijert, a.o. (Utrecht: 2019). URL: <https://memodatabase.hum.uu.nl/memo-is/>, ID no. 713, accessed 25 Sept. 2018.

70 S.P. Wolfs, *Middeleeuwse dominicanessenkloosters in Nederland* (Assen-Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1988), 40–56.

71 Wolfs, *Middeleeuwse dominicanessenkloosters*, 48, no. 2.

72 De Meyer, *La Congrégation*, 409, gives a Latin translation: “de verbo ad verbum ex flandrīca in latinam linguam reddita.” See also Wolfs, *Middeleeuwse dominicanenkloosters*, 42.

73 Wolfs, *Middeleeuwse dominicanessenkloosters*, 44.

74 It has also been argued that Geertgen may have originated from Leiden and may have painted the Edinburgh-Rotterdam diptych for the Augustinian convent of Lopsen/Saint Hieronymusdal. See Decker, *The Technology of Salvation*, 43.

75 Bernhard Ridderbos, “The Rotterdam-Edinburgh Diptych: *Maria in Sole* and the Devotion of the Rosary,” in *The Art of Devotion in the late Middle Ages in Europe, 1300–1500*, ed. Henk van Os (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 155–156. The connection with the Haarlem confraternity was already established by James E. Snyder, “The Early Haarlem School of Painting, II: Geertgen tot Sint-Jans,” *The Art Bulletin* 42, no. 2 (1960): 131–132. See also Henry Luttikhuisen, “Still Walking: Spiritual Pilgrimage, Early Dutch Painting, and the Dynamics of Faith,” in Gelfand and Blick, eds. *Push Me, Pull You*, 199–225. According to Decker, “current consensus states that the diptych’s patron was a member of the Windesheim Chapter at Hieronymusdal, Leiden, based on the presence of St. Jerome in the Passion panel.” He postulates that the painting was “produced for the Knights of St. John as part of their pastoral duties concerning nearby religious houses.” *The Technology of Salvation*, 43. However, Decker does not provide any supporting arguments except for

sophisticated arguments about the Rosary in their own tongue. I will return to this painting below.

Geertgen also painted a now lost panel with a depiction of *The Institution of the Rosary* around 1480, probably for the confraternity chapel in the Haarlem Dominican convent.⁷⁶ Geertgen must have been well acquainted with the story of Queen Blanche of Castile, who received a child after Dominic advised her to recite and distribute the Rosary. The painting shows the episodes exactly as they were described by Alanus, the inventor of the story.⁷⁷ The story of Queen Blanche was, of course, also included in Leeu's Latin and Dutch editions that combined Michael's *Quodlibet* with Alanus's *exempla* collection.⁷⁸

3 Leeu's Rosary Images

The Haarlem Rosary confraternity seems to have created a climate in which creative production connected to the devotion could flourish. Patrons would have included the Haarlem Dominicans, but also members of other (female) religious communities and laypersons. The copy for the Dutch *Quodlibet* edition, *Van Marien rosen cransken*, was likely created within these circles. But while the texts in *Van Marien rosen cransken* are not accompanied by woodcuts—the only image is the one on the title page—images were highly important in meditative practices associated with the Rosary. Readers could, of course, use paintings such as the Rotterdam-Edinburgh diptych or other images external to the book (e.g., single leaf prints, statues). At the end of *Van Marien rosen cransken*, however, we find a different suggestion.

The closing exemplum taken from Herolt's *Promptuarium exemplorum* (“genomen wt dat promptuarium discipuli”) relates the heavenly visions of a Carthusian brother recorded by “one of the fathers” who passed away in 1431 in the Trier Charterhouse.⁷⁹ While practicing the Rosary as it was written by a “brother in the Carthusian order” (“broeder inder catuser oerde”), the spirit of

the diptych's size, which would have enabled the Knights to carry the diptych with them and use it for devotional and didactic purposes.

76 Snyder, “The Early Haarlem School of Painting, II: Geertgen tot Sint-Jans,” 131. Nowadays there are three sixteenth-century copies and a manuscript miniature that shows striking similarities with the panel painting. Broekhuijsen, “The Institution,” 220–224.

77 Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, 82–83.

78 *Van Marien rosen cransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fols. n5r–n6r; *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 B 36, fol. a4v.

79 *Van Marien rosen cransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fols. t7r–t10r, quotation on fol t7r.

the Trier brother was transported to the heavens where he saw how Mary and all angels and saints came forth and praised God through the “holy exercise.” They sang the Rosary together with its meditations on the Passion, starting each consideration with a most joyful singing or Alleluia.⁸⁰ Each time they mentioned Mary’s name, they bowed their heads devoutly, and the pronunciation of the name of Jesus was accompanied by a devout genuflection.⁸¹ The brother saw and heard these heavenly joys not once, but several times a day.⁸² The narrator identifies the visionary with the Trier author of the Rosary (probably Dominic of Prussia): “And even though he does not mention himself in his own writings, we do however not doubt that he is the same [person] who made the booklet of the Rosary.”⁸³ The exemplum concludes with an exhortation to exercise oneself fervently in this Rosary and to “teach it to other people, and to put it to all people, both learned and unlearned, in Latin, in French, and in Dutch.”⁸⁴

The vision related in the exemplum is reminiscent of one wing of Geertgen’s Rotterdam-Edinburgh diptych, the *Glorification of the Virgin*. Angels, who are singing and making music, surround Mary and the Christ Child, some kneeling in veneration. Two angels hold Rosary beads and others clutch one of the *Arma Christi*. The two kneeling angels closest to Mary’s face place a crown with red and white roses on her head (Fig. 2.2). The connection of the image with the celebration of the Mass pointed to by Snyder is valid, but the heavenly company in Geertgen’s painting can also be viewed as engaged in singing the Rosary with meditations on the Passion as described in the closing exemplum in *Van Marien rosen cransken*.⁸⁵

80 “Ende si aensettende een yghelike meditacie of slutinghe des levens ons heren Ihesu Christi alleluya mitter alder vrolicster sanghe.” *Van Marien rosen cransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. t8v.

81 “Also dicke ende menichwarue als si die naem des alder salichste maget marie noemen, soe neghen sie oetmoedeliken mitten hoofde. Ende tot die naem ihesu christi boghe een yghelike alder deuotelixste sijn knyen.” *Van Marien rosen cransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. t8v.

82 “Item dit en sach hi niet eens, mer menichwerf bi wilen op enen dach sach hy ende hoerde die hemelsche blijscappen.” *Van Marien rosen cransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. t9r.

83 “Ende al ist dat hi in sijn scriften hem seluen niet en noemet, wi en twiuelen nochtans niet, hi is die selfde die dat boeckxijn vanden rosen creuse ghemaect heft.” *Van Marien rosen cransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. t9r–v.

84 “Ieren ander menschen ende setten dat voerwaer voer alle menschen gheleert ende onghelleert, in Latijn, in Walsche ende in Duytsche.” *Van Marien rosen cransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. t10r.

85 Snyder, “The Early Haarlem School of Painting, II: Geertgen tot Sint-Jans,” 132.



FIGURE 2.2 Geertgen tot Sint-Jans, *Glorification of the Virgin* (1480–1490). Oil on panel, 27 × 21 cm (detail). Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.

IMAGE: WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

After the exemplum—clearly delineated from the main text and the colophon by blank space—follows an intriguing instruction on how to exercise oneself in the Rosary and how to incorporate images in the practice.

Item van die manier om dit rosencrensken te lesen mit die articulen vanden leven ende passien ons heren Ihesu Cristi als men inden hemel dat ghesonghen heeft ghelijc voercsreven is, so is gheprint een boexken, ende tot elke artikel is gheset een figuerken, ende dat om meerre devocie te verwecken inden ghenen diet lesen. Ende die niet lesen en kunnen, die sullen tot elcken figuerken een Ave Maria segghen, ende also overdencken dat leven ende die passie ons heren op dat hy ons nae dit verganlike leven wil gheven sijn ewich leven. Amen.⁸⁶

And about the manner of reading this Rosary with the articles on the Life and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ as it was sung in the heavens, as has been described above [i.e., in the exemplum], a booklet has been printed, and to each article has been put a small image, and this has been done in order to stir greater devotion in those who read it. And those who cannot read shall say a Hail Mary to each small image, and in this

86 *Van Marien rosencrensken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. t10r–v. Cf. Rautenberg, “Die Entstehung,” 61, who cites the latter half of this remark but does not connect it to another edition.

way contemplate on the Life and Passion of Our Lord so that after this transient life he may grant us eternal life. Amen.

This instruction can be read as an advertisement for one of Leeu's other publications and was likely added by Leeu himself, probably with the consent of the "devout person" responsible for bringing the Dutch *Quodlibet* to print. Leeu was not averse to innovative book marketing strategies. He also used flyers to attract buyers for new books, in which he similarly mentioned the use of fitting images as a selling point.⁸⁷

His commercial acumen with regard to the Rosary becomes particularly clear here. The advertorial reference in the back of *Van Marien rosen cransken* to the printed "boexken" in which every article of the Rosary is accompanied by a "figuerken" (a small image)—making the book equally suitable for illiterate users—doubtlessly refers to an edition of the *Rosarium Beatae Virginis Mariae*, one of Leeu's bestsellers. The *Rosarium* starts with the same vision chronicled by the Trier Carthusian who died in 1431.⁸⁸ Furthermore, before the start of the actual exercise the reader is instructed on how to read the book.

Modus legendi hoc rosarium

Quemadmodum in celesti curia hoc rosarium in presentia sanctissime trinitatis decantatur, ita quoque a nobis in hac mortali uita constitutis idem rosarium cum articulis de uita passione et resurrectione christi | deuote legatur. Habet autem quisque articulus suam propriam figuram ante oculos depictam, ut ipsa nouam semper atque nouam figuram uidenti et articulum legendi afferat deuotionem. Ante quamlibet figuram dicetur Ave maria usque ad finem, dehinc articulus de uita christi sequens deuote legatur, in letis concludendo cum Alleluia; in tristibus concludendo cum Amen.⁸⁹

87 Single sheet print with an advertorial for Leeu's 1491 edition of the *Melusine*, in G. J. Boekenooogen, "Een boekverkoopers-prospectus van Geeraert Leeu te Antwerpen (1491)," *Tijdschrift voor Boek- en Bibliotheekwezen* 3 (1905): 190–192.

88 I was unable to consult the only extant copy of the first known edition (*Rosarium Beatae Virginis Mariae*, Gouda: [Gerard Leeu, between 9 Mar. and 19 June 1484], 16°. ISTC no. i00318800), currently in the Dombibliothek in Trier. I consulted a copy of the 1487 edition printed in Antwerp: *Rosarium Beatae Virginis Mariae*, Antwerp: [Gerard Leeu], [before 25 July] 1487, 16°. ISTC no. i00318850. The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 9. The exemplum can be found on fols. a1v–a3v and is followed by a list of indulgences granted to the Rosary confraternity (fols. a4v–a5v).

89 *Rosarium Beatae Virginis Mariae*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 9, fols. a5v–a6r. I am grateful to Rijcklof Hofman (Titus Brandsma Instituut, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen) for his help with the translation.

How to read this Rosary

Just as this *Rosary* is sung in the presence of the Holy Trinity in the celestial court, so should this same *Rosary* with its articles on the life, passion and resurrection of Christ likewise be read devotedly by us in this mortal life. Each article has its own image, depicted in front of the eyes, in order that it arouses ever-new devotion in anyone looking at the image and reading the article. In response to each image shall a “Hail Mary” be said right up to the end, and after that the following clause on the life of Christ should be read devotedly, ending with “Alleluia” in case of happy ones, and ending with “Amen” in case of sad ones.

The instruction ascribes the same function to the woodcuts accompanying each article as the advertisement for the book in *Van Marien rosen cransken*, quoted above. Leeu published the *Rosarium* in the small sedecimo format that he introduced to Netherlandish printing in these years and printed the text at least four times between 1484 and 1489.⁹⁰ The “figuerkens” came from a new set of woodcuts which Leeu had commissioned especially for the *Rosarium* and for his editions of the *Meditationes de vita et passione Jesu Christi*, a weekly exercise ascribed to Jordan of Quedlinburg (ca. 1300–1370/80).⁹¹

The small-sized woodcuts with scenes from the life of Christ fit the size of the page beautifully and only left space beneath the image for the two-to-five-line-long articles, always preceded by a reference to the prayer (Ave Maria) to which they should be attached (Fig. 2.3). Some of the compositions are related to earlier woodcut series of the life of Christ made for Leeu.⁹² Others appear to be new or slightly tweaked to fit the text, which safeguarded the desired effect on the reader-viewer of arousing and deepening devout

90 The first edition Leeu printed in this format is thought to be *Horae ad usum Traiectensem* (Utrecht), [Gouda: Gerard Leeu, between 1483 and 11 June 1484], 16°. ISTC no. ih00426500. See Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, 1187–188; Claudine Lemaire, ed., *De vijfhonderdste verjaring van de boekdrukkunst in de Nederlanden* (Brussel: Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, 1973), 285, cat. no. 130.

91 The series is extensively discussed by Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, 1183–208 (series 76). On Leeu's *Meditationes*-editions, see Anna Dlabačová, “Volgens het boekje: Gerard Leeu's Nederlandstalige editie van de *Meditationes de vita et passione Christi*,” *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 91 (2021): 109–157.

92 E.g., Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula* 1, 166–181 (series 74). On one of Leeu's first Life of Christ series, see Anna Dlabačová, “Religious Practice and Experimental Book Production: Text and Image in an Alternative Layman's ‘Book of Hours’ in Print and Manuscript,” *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 9:2 (2017).



FIGURE 2.3 Gerard Leeu, *Rosarium Beatae Virginis Mariae*, opening with the Nativity and *Madonna lactans* ([before 25 July] 1487). The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 9, fols. a7v–a8r
IMAGE: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF THE NETHERLANDS

feelings time and again.⁹³ The Pater Noster prayers—to be read after every ten Ave Marias and articles that contain meditations on the life of Mary and Christ—are all accompanied by an image of a wounded heart surrounded by a crown of thorns and a Rosary with the five wounds of Christ depicted in flowers.⁹⁴ This is in keeping with the theory in Michael’s *Quodlibet*: to him it was self-evident that the five Pater Nosters should be prayed to Christ’s wounds.⁹⁵ Woodblocks with the same image were used for the title pages of the *Rosarium* and, as we have seen, for the title pages of both the Latin and the Dutch *Quodlibet* editions. Although this is a common image in printed Rosary texts,

93 Cf. Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, 1:188, who lists images that do not have a separate cut in other series on the life of Jesus. She also states: “it is clear that the 52 woodcuts, in particular the sixteen listed above, were purposely made for this edition.”

94 For technical reasons, Leeu had three woodblocks made of this image. All three are slightly different. Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula* 1, nos. 76.86–76.88 (images reproduced in vol. 3).

95 In the Dutch translation: “Van dat vierde als dattet ghetal van viven ons heren ghebden inden rosen crense [...] niet en is sonder bediet so en comet mi anders niet voer dan dat die vijf pater noster moghen werden ghetoghen totten vijf wonden cristi die hi ghedoghet heeft in sinen lichame dat hi aenghenomen heuet vander maghet maria [...]” *Van Marien rosencrensken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. k3v–k4r.

Leeu appears to be the first printer to introduce this image to Netherlandish incunabula in his *Rosarium* editions.⁹⁶

While all known editions of the *Rosarium* published by Leeu are in Latin, a strong case can be made for the existence of a now-lost Dutch edition (or even editions). The survival rate of copies of the editions of the *Rosarium* is very low, which makes the existence of a now-lost (Dutch) edition not at all impossible.⁹⁷ Moreover, a later Dutch edition, currently dated circa 1515 and ascribed to the Antwerp printer Willem Vorsterman, survives in a single copy.⁹⁸ This Dutch edition has the same verses on its title page as Leeu's *Van Marien rosen cransken* as well as a similar woodcut of the Rosary.⁹⁹ It is the advertisement in *Van Marien rosen cransken*, however, that makes it virtually certain that Gerard Leeu made the booklet available in Dutch as well as Latin (and perhaps even French), fulfilling the exhortation at the end of the exemplum about the Carthusian visionary to make the exercise accessible to all people, irrespective of their schooling, in Latin, French, and Dutch.¹⁰⁰ It would seem odd to advertise a Latin prayer booklet in a vernacular edition, especially in an edition of a text translated into Dutch and explicitly aimed at a non-Latinate audience.

Furthermore, the advertisement of the *Rosarium* at the end of *Van Marien rosen cransken* points to the existence of a Dutch edition at the time of the publication of *Van Marien rosen cransken* on 9 March, 1484—after all, the advertisement states that “so is gheprint een boexken” (a small book has been printed) and thus presumes that readers of the Dutch *Quodlibet* edition would have been able to buy a copy of the booklet.¹⁰¹ This is significant since the earliest Latin edition of the *Rosarium* is currently dated 9 March–19 June 1484,

96 Anne Margreet As-Vijvers, “Weaving Mary’s Chaplet: The Representation of the Rosary in Late Medieval Flemish Manuscript Illumination,” in *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing*, ed. Kathryn M. Rudy and Barbara Baert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 56–57. Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, 1186–187, 200. Later examples include a woodcut that depicts *Maria in Sole* with Saint Dominic and has the same verses that Leeu placed prominently on his title page. Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula* 1, 531–532 (no. 254, Govaert Bac).

97 Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, 1190.

98 *Maniere om te lesen Marienrosencrans* [Antwerp: Willem Vorsterman, about 1515], 16^o, ISTC no. im00198500. I have not yet been able to consult the copy held by the Cambridge University Library, but from the description in Nijhoff and Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche bibliographie*, no. 4369, it is clear that we are dealing with an edition of the same text. The quire composition is also identical to Leeu’s Latin *Rosarium* editions (a–e⁸, 40 leaves in total).

99 “Wie met marien / Eewelic wil verbliden / Die spreke tot allen tiden / Veel ave marien.” Nijhoff and Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche bibliographie*, no. 4369.

100 See note 88 above. It cannot be ruled out that Leeu also published a French version since he also produced books in French.

101 *Van Marien rosencransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. t10r.

taking the appearance of *Van Marien rosen cransken* as the *terminus post quem*.¹⁰² The existence of an earlier Dutch *Rosarium* edition that predates the Dutch *Quodlibet* edition unsettles the date on which the first-ever printed book in Middle Dutch with an illustrated title page appeared, since the Dutch *Rosarium* edition would likely have had a title page similar to the later Dutch edition, displaying a Rosary woodcut and the same verses that Leeu also used for the title page of *Van Marien rosen cransken*.¹⁰³ A vernacular *Rosarium* edition printed before the Dutch *Quodlibet* could also point to an earlier connection of Leeu to the Rosary confraternity. Such a connection would have made him an obvious candidate for publishing the Latin and Dutch *Quodlibet* editions. He had already successfully produced meditative booklets for which he had woodcuts made, and which he published in what was at the time a new and innovative format. The sedecimo format fit the purpose of the *Rosarium* booklet as one could easily carry it along and always have the images ready to stimulate one's devotion. From his perspective, Leeu would have expected the edition of the Dutch *Quodlibet* to stimulate the market for his *Rosarium* booklets, which is no doubt the reason why he included the advertisement at the back of the edition. A way to increase book sales thus went hand in hand with the advancement of the devotion.

The *Rosarium* was not Leeu's only publication connected to the Rosary devotion in which images in the form of woodcuts played an important role. The *Corona Mystica Beatae Mariae Virginis* contains an exercise that invites the reader to set Mary's crown with twelve precious stones, six flowers, and six celestial bodies.¹⁰⁴ After naming the specific ornament, the devotee compares its properties to Mary's qualities, praising the Virgin. In order to make the entire twenty-four elements more tangible and visual, Leeu had an intricate system of woodblocks designed.¹⁰⁵ At the start of every chapter a woodcut of a crown—turned the right way so that the devotee could see the side on which the element he or she was offering Mary was set—is combined with a woodblock of an altar with an altarpiece of *Maria in sole* and a woodblock of either a monk/friar or a woman dressed in a simple gown. These two latter blocks form a composite image of a devotee praying before an altar. With the help of a third, small woodblock, the actual element the reader was invited to offer to Mary was made present on the altar (Fig. 2.4). These composite woodcut

102 Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, 1188.

103 See note 1 above. The same goes for the dating of the first sedecimo edition in the Low Countries; cf. note 93 above.

104 *Corona Mystica B.M.V.*, Antwerp: Gerard Leeu, 6 Oct. 1492, 8°. ISTC no. ic00926000. Consulted copy: The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 22.

105 Analysed in Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, 1:289–293 (series no. 111).



FIGURE 2.4 Gerard Leeu, *Corona mystica* B.M.V., opening with first stone (topaz) (6 Oct. 1492). 8°. The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 22, fols. [a]7v–[a]8r
IMAGE: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF THE NETHERLANDS

images invited readers to emulate the figure's posture, imagining themselves kneeling before a Marian altar and offering the object to the Virgin while comparing her to the precious stone, flower, or celestial body lying on the altar before them. The image of the crown apparently served to keep in mind the final result that one was forging through the exercise. The reasons for alternating the image of a monk with an image of a laywoman in the first fourteen chapters remain unclear.¹⁰⁶

Leeu finished printing the only known illustrated Latin edition of the *Corona Mystica* on 6 October 1492, shortly before his demise. Little over a year later, on 24 November 1493, an edition in Dutch appeared from the press of the Antwerp printer Govaert Bac.¹⁰⁷ Bac had the woodcuts copied from Leeu's edition, but he did not go through the trouble of creating composite images—he simply had several woodcuts made of a praying male and female figure before

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, 1:292.

¹⁰⁷ *Corona Mystica* B.M.V. [Dutch] *Geestelijke croon van der maecht Marien*, Antwerp: Govaert Bac, 24 Nov. 1493, 8°. ISTC no. ic00927500. Consulted copy: The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 25.



FIGURE 2.5 Govaert Bac, *Corona mystica* B.M.V. [Dutch] *Geestelijke croon van der maecht Marien*, opening with ninth stone (agate) (24 Nov. 1493). 8°. The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 25, fols. g2v–g3r
 IMAGE: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF THE NETHERLANDS

a Marian altar (Fig. 2.5).¹⁰⁸ Readers had to place whatever they were offering onto the altar in their own minds—only one woodblock of a monk kneeling has a banderol with the text “O bloeme” (O flower) on the altar.¹⁰⁹

Although the *Corona Mystica* is not, strictly speaking, a Rosary text, the exercise is based on a similar line of thought—e.g., that of offering Mary an adorned crown through a sequence of meditative prayers.¹¹⁰ It also resonates with a number of exempla in Alanus’s *De Psalterio B.M.V. exempla*. A case in point is a bishop who received a vision as an encouragement to persevere in the Rosary prayer: when praying the Rosary in the church, he saw an angel who took the Rosary beads from his hands and hung them as a necklace on a statue of Mary. The beads immediately turned into precious stones that lit up

108 Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, 1:292–293, 1:520–521 (series no. 249).
 109 Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula* 1, no. 249.1.
 110 With regard to the rewards and privileges the devotee receives through this exercise, the text refers to Alanus de Rupe, *Corona Mystica B.M.V.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 22, fol. a4r: “[...] etiam cum plurimis veris exemplis tam in speculo exemplorum gloriose virginis quam in libro miraculorum in psalterii seu rosarij contentis necnon in compendio deuoti magistri Alani etc.”

the church as the brightest of stars.¹¹¹ Another exemplum attaches five colours to the Rosary beads that help laypeople to better remember the meditations.¹¹²

At the time that Leeu and Bac published the editions of the *Corona Mystica* at Antwerp, a new Marian devotion was becoming highly successful throughout the Low Countries: the devotion to the Seven Sorrows. While Leeu's editions with regard to the Rosary can only tentatively be connected to the Observant Dominicans of the Holland Congregation and the Rosary confraternity at their friary in Haarlem, his involvement in the propagation of the Seven Sorrows and his network with regard to this devotion take on sharper contours.

4 Courtly Incentive or Independent Creative Collaboration? Leeu and the Seven Sorrows

Although the Rosary confraternity directly inspired the confraternity of the Seven Sorrows, launched in 1492, the latter had a more overtly political character. According to Susie Speakman Sutch and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, the devotion to the Seven Sorrows was meant to have a consolidating and unifying effect in disconcerting times. It was used as a tool to create an emotional community in support of the Burgundian-Habsburg house.¹¹³ I contend, however, that such a goal was not clear from the beginning—even though in his 1519 description of the confraternity Jan van Coudenbergh (d. 1521), priest and secretary of Philip the Fair, paints a thought-out course of events.¹¹⁴ The devotion started as an independent initiative and creative collaboration between clerics

111 *Van Marien rosenransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. 04r. On the practice of decorating statues of Mary with Rosary beads, see As-Vijvers, "Weaving Mary's Chaplet," 76.

112 *Van Marien rosenransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fols. m1r–4v. "Mer dese verwe helpen die memorie der waerliker personen om te bet te onthouden." *Van Marien rosenransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. m4r–v. An interesting comparable meditative text, in which the devotee "forges" jewels for Mary, is edited in Joachim Moschall, *Marien voerspan of sapeel: Eine mittelniederländische Bearbeitung der "Goldenen Schmiede" des Konrad von Würzburg* (Erlangen: Verlag Palm und Enke, 1983).

113 The political dimensions of the Seven Sorrows confraternity are especially expounded by Sutch and Van Bruaene, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary."

114 Carol M. Schuler, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin: Popular Culture and Cultic Imagery in Pre-Reformation Europe," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 21, no. 1/2 (1992): 17–18.

and members of the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke, in which Gerard Leeu played a prominent part.¹¹⁵

On 14 July 1492 Leeu finished printing a sixteen-leaf booklet with texts and images that relate and show the seven most sorrowful moments in Mary's life.¹¹⁶ According to the title page, the two quires contain a "very devout, glorious, and profitable remembrance of the seven pains or sorrows of Our Lady."¹¹⁷ The function that the title page ascribes to the book's images is similar to that described by the reading instructions for the *Rosarium* in the booklet itself and in the advertisement for Dutch-language *Rosarium* booklets in the back of *Van Marien rosen cransken* (i.e., to arouse ever-new devotion). On the other hand, Leeu also introduces the age-old argument of images as laypeople's books, which seems to stress a more didactic than meditative function. Here, the word "laypeople" refers to people who could not read at all ("die leeke liden die niet lesen en kunnen"), rather than to the *illiterati*—readers not versed in Latin—as is the case in the prologue of the Dutch *Quodlibet* edition discussed above. Before the eyes of the illiterate, the woodcuts were to support, bring to life, and provide a visual and narrative counterpart to simple sequential prayer, which is similar to the function ascribed to woodcuts in the hands of non-readers in the back of the Dutch *Quodlibet*.

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- 115 On the guild see e.g., Walter S. Gibson, "Artists and Rederijkers in the Ages of Bruegel," *The Art Bulletin* 63 (1981): 426–446. On the role of printers in the guild see e.g. Jan Van der Stock, "De Antwerpse Sint-Lucasgilde en de drukkers-uitgevers: 'Middeleeuws' achterhoedegevecht of paradigma van cultureel-politieke machtsverschuivingen?," in *Boeken in de late middeleeuwen: Verslag van de Groningse Codicologendagen 1992*, ed. J.M.M. Hermans and K. van der Hoek (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1994), 155–165; Renaud Adam, "The Emergence of Antwerp as a Printing Centre: From the Earliest Days of Printing to the Reformation (1481–1520)," *De Gulden Passer: Journal for Book History* 92, no. 1 (2014): 11–29.
- 116 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, (Antwerp: Gerard Leeu, 14 July 1492, 8°), ISTC no. id00366410. Full transcription in Emily Snow, "The Lady of Sorrows: Music, Devotion, and Politics in the Burgundian-Habsburg Netherlands," PhD diss., Princeton University, 2010, 187–196. The text is transmitted in at least one manuscript from ca. 1500: Amsterdam, University Library Vrije Universiteit, xv.05502., fols. 44v–55v. The iconography is clearly influenced by Leeu's editions. Here, the Seven Sorrows are combined with Rosary texts. On the manuscript, see As-Vijvers, "Weaving Mary's Chaplet"; Anne Margreet As-Vijvers and Diane L. Webb, *Re-making the Margin: The Master of the David Scenes and Flemish Manuscript Painting around 1500* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 319–324 and 473–481. The illuminator, Cornelia van Wulfschkercke, was also involved in the production of another manuscript containing texts printed by Leeu, as discussed in Dlabáčová, "Religious Practice," §30.
- 117 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fol. air.

Ende tot elc van den seuen weeden so is ghestelt een figuer bi persona-
gen die materie daer af bewisende, op dat die deuocie te stercker ende
te meerder in den menschen verweect mach warden. Ende oec op dat die
leeke liden die niet lesen en kunnen, die personagien aensiende, hem
daer inne oec sullen mogen oefenen, want die beelden sijn der lecker
luden boecken.¹¹⁸

And to each of the seven pains is set a figure demonstrating the sub-
ject matter through characters, so that the devotion in people may
grow ever stronger and greater. And also so that laypeople who cannot
read—looking at the characters [in the images]—may also exercise
themselves therein, because images are the books of laypeople.

Leeu used his experience with the Rosary texts when producing the first Seven Sorrows booklet. Judging by the title page, it was not so much the text, but rather the seven images representing the seven most sorrowful moments in Mary's life that were the selling point of the book. In fact, Leeu's book was the first in which representations of the Seven Sorrows were brought together.¹¹⁹ This means that through the booklet the devotion was not only made available for private practice, but also that the exercise became more visual since each meditation was now started off by an image with characters performing the event.¹²⁰

The representations of the Seven Sorrows, however, were not the only images in Leeu's book. He also included reproductions of two icons of the Virgin painted by Saint Luke that had formed the actual basis of the devotion. On the verso side of the title page of Leeu's booklet, the reader is confronted with the first image. The accompanying explanatory text identifies the reproduction ("warachtige gelijkenisse van den beelde") as Mary at about fifteen years old presenting the Christ Child at the temple. The original, painted by Saint Luke, is kept in Rome in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore.¹²¹ The second image is a reproduction of the icon of the *Mater dolorosa* at the Ara Coeli friary of Observant Franciscans in Rome (Fig. 2.6).¹²²

118 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fol. a1r. Cf. *Van Marien rosenkransken*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 E 30, fol. t10r-v. For the quotation see note 88 above.

119 Cf. Schuler, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin," 19–20.

120 Cf. Snow, "The Lady of Sorrows," 8.

121 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fols. a1v–a2r; Schuler, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin," 19.

122 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fols. a2v–a3r.



FIGURE 2.6 Gerard Leeu, *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, opening with the icon of the Mater dolorosa (14 July 1492). 8°. The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fols. a2v–a3r
 IMAGE: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF THE NETHERLANDS

On the subsequent pages, the booklet explains that “devout meditation and exercise” will console daily practitioners. The source of the text is also mentioned: a letter written by the prominent and very devout Peter, confessor of the Windesheim convent of Thabor in Malines, and sent to the parish priest of Reimerswael and dean of the collegiate church in Abbenbroek, Jan van Coudenberghē.¹²³ The letter, which contained a meditative manual, was based on a poem of twelve verses “written or painted” (“ghescreven oft gheschildert”) in paintings of Our Lady in Abbenbroek and Reimerswael, commissioned by Van Coudenberghē and based on the two images by Saint Luke in Rome.¹²⁴

123 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fols. a3v–a4r.

124 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fol. a4r. According to his 1519 history, in 1492 Van Coudenberghē commissioned copies of two icons of the Virgin painted by Saint Luke, which were subsequently placed in three collegiate churches (Abbenbroek, Reimerswael, Bruges). Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 255; Dagmar Eichberger, “Visualizing the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin: Early Woodcuts and Engravings in the context of Netherlandish Confraternities,” in *The Seven Sorrows Confraternity of Brussels: Drama, Ceremony, and Art Patronage (16th–17th Centuries)*, ed. Emily S. Thelen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 117. Leeu’s

This Latin poem is also reproduced in Leeu's book and printed in a smaller font (*Exhortatio ad contemplandum septem dolores Beatae Marie Virginis*).¹²⁵ One last prefatory text reflects on the poem and states that it demonstrates that we should consider the sorrows with ardent hearts and compassion, because prayer without fervour is lost labour.¹²⁶ Therefore, everyone should apply themselves to these Seven Sorrows with a fervent heart and make him- or herself identical to Mary ("hem met Marien medeformich maken") in the way described hereafter.¹²⁷

What follows are seven full-page images, each captioned by a brief rubric indicating the relevant passage in Scripture and accompanied by a meditative text that consists of two sections.¹²⁸ A narration of the respective event is followed by a direct address to the devotee that expounds on Mary's emotions and invites the reader to emulate them and to make a request befitting that specific sorrow. When meditating on the Finding in the Temple, for example, the reader is invited to ask to receive grace for a patient and ceaseless search for God.¹²⁹ Each meditation concludes with a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria. The book closes with an additional prayer for those who have more devotion and time. The phrasing in Leeu's colophon—"Dit is alder ierst gheprint Tantwerpen bi my Gheraerdt Leeu"—is notable: he seemingly wanted to underline that he published the very first edition, as if expecting the devotion to become a success.¹³⁰

By 1492 Leeu was a highly experienced printer, and later editions and single sheet prints related to the Seven Sorrows would prove his hunch right. But before turning to later events, I would like to briefly dwell upon the course of events surrounding the first edition. Petrus de Manso (or: Peter Verhoeven, d. 1523), confessor of Thabor near Malines, visited the churches in Abbenbroek and Reimerswaal and, in January 1492, wrote in Latin to Van Coudenberghe

booklet, however, was published before the chapter of the Seven Sorrows was established at Bruges.

125 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden O.L.V.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fol. a4v; Schuler, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin," 19n54.

126 "Waer af datmen in vele boecken der heylicher scirften vint bescreven want tgebet sonder innicheyt is al verloren arbeyt." *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden O.L.V.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fol. a5r.

127 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden O.L.V.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fol. a5r.

128 The first rubric: "Dit is die ierste wee onser lieuer vrouwen, ende dair af scrijft lucas in sijn tweede capittel." *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden O.L.V.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fol. a5v.

129 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden O.L.V.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fol. b1r–b1v.

130 "Dit is alder ierst gheprint Tantwerpen bi my Gheraerdt Leeu." *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden O.L.V.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fol. b8v.

proposing a more thorough yet simply worded explanation of the Seven Sorrows.¹³¹ Six months later, in July 1492, Leeu had the booklet ready for sale. In the meantime, the text had been translated and edited—according to the text in Leeu's booklet it was “extracted from” (“ghetrocken uut”) Verhoeven's letter. Additional texts had been written (e.g., to accompany the paintings' reproductions), woodcuts designed, and woodblocks cut. The entire process points to a close association between the printer and the devotion's initiators, Peter Verhoeven and Jan van Coudenberghe. The question remains: who translated and edited the text? This was likely done within the circles of the letter's author and recipient.¹³² The images were ordered by Leeu—he had worked with the same woodcutter before—but perhaps also in dialogue with the devotion's initiators.¹³³ Verhoeven and/or Van Coudenberghe might have approved especially the reproductions of the two paintings by Saint Luke in the churches of Abbenbroek and Reimerswael. As we have seen, Leeu also put to use his experience with the production of the Rosary booklets in the composition of the edition and especially in the extensive use of woodcuts.

It is also important to note that Leeu's first edition does not mention a confraternity.¹³⁴ Therefore, it does not seem entirely accurate to claim that the book printed in July 1492 was “issued by the representatives of the confraternity.”¹³⁵ The first edition, nevertheless, must have brought the devotion under the attention of various devotees, possibly including Philip the Fair. After consulting his advisors and his father confessor, the Dominican and Rosary promoter Michael Francisci ab Insulis, Philip the Fair offered to be the confraternity's patron.¹³⁶ It is not unthinkable that Michael Francisci was involved in bringing the new devotion to Philip's attention. The next edition, again published by Leeu, appeared only a few months after the first edition, likely in the second half of 1492.¹³⁷ The edition is not dated, but must have appeared before Leeu passed away in December 1492 from a lethal wound he suffered during a fight with his letter cutter.

131 Sutch, “Politics and Print,” 247 and the literature mentioned there.

132 Sutch seems to suggest that the text was prepared for the press by Leeu himself, writing “[...] Leeu includes the instruction [...].” Sutch, “Politics and Print,” 248.

133 Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, 1:651–2, series no. 105.

134 Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 259n21.

135 Eichberger, “Visualizing the Seven Sorrows,” 117.

136 Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 259.

137 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.* (Antwerp: [Gerard Leeu, between 30 Apr. 1491 and 1492], 8°). ISTC no. id00366400. On the edition cf. Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 257; Susie Speakman Sutch, “Politics and Print at the Time of Philip the Fair,” in *Books in Transition at the Time of Philip the Fair*, ed. Hanno Wijsman (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 247–248; Snow, “The Lady of Sorrows,” 8.

This second edition is no longer “just” a meditative manual on the Seven Sorrows, but a true confraternity handbook. The text now unmistakably bears traces of Michael Francisci’s—and, in a broader sense, the Rosary confraternity’s—influence on the development of the Seven Sorrows devotion. The statements about the role of images in the emulation of Mary’s sorrows on the title page are now replaced by new facts about the confraternity. The new title page states that the booklet contains not only the meditations on the Seven Sorrows, but also the statutes of the “glorious confraternity thereof,” started by Philip the Fair.¹³⁸

Furthermore, the reader is acquainted with the fact that the confraternity was established at four churches (while, in fact, five churches are mentioned) namely Antwerp, Abbenbroek, Reimerswael, Leiden, and Thabor close to Malines.¹³⁹ This list does not correspond with the three churches in Holland (Abbenbroek), Zeeland (Reimerswaal), and Bruges (Saint Saviour) that are mentioned in the early sixteenth-century history of the confraternity composed by Jan van Coudenberghe in 1519, and which are nowadays traditionally declared as the three churches where the devotion started.¹⁴⁰ In fact, the Bruges confraternity was established only in 1493, and it is therefore not surprising that it is missing on Leeu’s title page.¹⁴¹ The chapter at Thabor was obviously initiated by the meditations’ author, Peter Verhoeven, and the inclusion of Leiden (i.e., the church of Saint Peter) suggests the devotion’s fast and prolific dissemination.¹⁴² The Antwerp foundation, mentioned first, must have had special significance for Gerard Leeu, especially since its seat was the chapel of the Antwerp artist’s guild of Saint Luke—the guild to which he himself belonged—in the church of Our Lady.¹⁴³ I will return to the role of the guild shortly.

138 “[...] Metten artikelen van der saligher broderscap daer af begonnen by den seer hooghen ende doerluchtighen prince heere Philips Eertshertoghe van Oistenrijke, hertoge van Bourgondien, van Brabant, etc.” *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o. l. v.*, Liège, University Library, xv.Ci85, fol. a1r. See also Sutch, “Politics and Print,” 248–249.

139 Sutch, “Politics and Print,” 248–249; Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 264.

140 See e.g., Schuler, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin,” 19; Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 255; Emily S. Thelen, preface and chronology to Thelen, ed., *The Seven Sorrows Confraternity of Brussels*, x.

141 Cf. Sutch, “Politics and Print,” 251n98.

142 Cf. Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 264. On Leiden, see Herman Brinkman, *Dichten uit liefde: Literatuur in Leiden aan het einde van de Middeleeuwen* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), 84–87.

143 Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 273.

The text in the new edition is partially reshuffled and partially new, while the images remain the same. The edition starts with the new text on the confraternity's statutes, which first introduces Mary as the mediator between Man and God. Since nothing is more profitable than to meditate upon Christ's suffering,

soe is in desen droeffeliken tyden tot troeste ende salicheyt der menschen gheordineert een devote ende salige oefeninghe ende ghedencknisse van seven sonderlinghen ween ende droefheden onser sueter vrouwen, dair bi dat dat liden ons liefs heren, ende dat medelyden synre liever moeder overdacht wort metgaders een minlike ende gemeyne broederschap daer op inghestelt inden voerseiden vijf kercken ter ghelikenissen vander broederscap van onser liever vrouwen rosenhoede inder formen ende manieren hier na volghende.¹⁴⁴

so in these troubled times a devout and blessed exercise and remembrance of seven specific pains and sorrows of Our sweet Lady has been arranged for the comfort and salvation of people, wherein the suffering of Our dear Lord and the co-suffering of his dear mother is contemplated together [in] an amicable and public confraternity [or: brotherhood], founded thereof in the five aforementioned churches analogous to the confraternity of Our dear Lady's Rosary in the practises and ways that follow hereafter.

This is the first time that "troubled times" are mentioned which, according to Van Coudenberghe's later account, were the reason to establish the confraternity.¹⁴⁵ The regulations that follow are indeed very similar to the ones that pertained to the Rosary confraternity and were explained and defended by Michael in his *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii*. Members should read the exercise at least twice a week at a time that fits their schedule (or they can have someone else read it aloud to them). They can follow the meditations described in the book or consider the Seven Sorrows as they are able, or simply recite seven Ave Marias and Pater Nosters. Prospective members do not have to pay to join the confraternity, inscription is advisable but not necessary, and

144 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, Liège, University Library, xv.C185, fols. a2r-v.

145 Sutch and Van Bruaene, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary," 257n13. The statement in Leeu's book, however, does not seem to necessarily refer to the political situation at the time. It may simply be a topos.

admission is also open to the deceased.¹⁴⁶ In 1494, Michael composed a scholastic justification for the Seven Sorrows confraternity to negate doubts about its validity (*Quodlibetica decisio de septem doloribus B. Mariae virginis*). The text is similar to his earlier apologia of the Rosary confraternity but was delivered at the University of Louvain instead of Cologne.¹⁴⁷ The text was published by Thierry Martens in Antwerp with, on its title page, a woodcut based on one of the painting reproductions made for Leeu (fig. 2.7).¹⁴⁸

The relatively short statutes are followed by a “prologue on contemplating the Seven Sorrows” (*Prologus vanden vij ween te overdencken*), which is a reworking of three sections already published in the first edition: the narrative that explains the origins of the text (i.e., Verhoeven’s letter), the text on the importance of a fervent attitude in the exercise, and finally the text on the role of images, first published on the book’s title page.¹⁴⁹ An opening that presents the reproductions of the two Marian icons follows this text, now accompanied by short captions only instead of explanatory texts.¹⁵⁰ The images are followed by the Latin verses and the seven meditations accompanied by seven images.¹⁵¹ The book concludes with the same additional prayer for those who have more devotion or who have more time on their hands, but interestingly, it is now also introduced as an alternative for those who do not have the time to perform the seven meditations.¹⁵² In the second edition, therefore, the devotion is not only connected to the by-then-established confraternity, but an effort has also been made to make the exercise accessible to virtually everyone in order to further increase its support.¹⁵³

146 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, Liège, University Library, xv.C185, fols. a2v–a3v. In the first edition, a daily practice of the exercise was prescribed. *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fol. a3v.

147 Schuler, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin,” 17–18; Sutch, “Politics and Print,” 252; Goudriaan, “Apostolate and Printing,” 447.

148 Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, 1:651–652, series no. 239.

149 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, Liège, University Library, xv.C185, fols. a4r–a5v.

150 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, Liège, University Library, xv.C185, fols. a6v–a7r. Cf. *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, The Hague, Royal Library, 150 F 21, fols. a1v–a3r.

151 *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, Liège, University Library, xv.C185, fols. a8r–c1v.

152 “Of als men niet tijts genoeg en heeft dese voergande oefeninge te houden, so salmen lesen dit navolgende ghebet besonder.” *Van de seven droefheden ofte weeden o.l.v.*, Liège, University Library, xv.C185, fol. civ.

153 On the date of the establishment of the confraternity, see Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 259n21, who note that “it is most probable that the establishment of the confraternity and the publication of the statutes more or less coincided [...]”



FIGURE 2.7 Thierry Martens, *Quodlibetica decisio de septem doloribus B. Mariae virginis*, title page ([1496–1497]). 4°. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Ink F-236, fol. 1r

IMAGE: BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK, MÜNCHENER DIGITALISIERUNGSZENTRUM

Within a timeframe of less than six months, Leeu thus published two editions of what might seem to be the same text, but which in fact contain significant differences. The editions not only reflect the developments within the devotion and confraternity. They equally contributed to the shaping of the devotion, for example through the dissemination of images of the Seven Sorrows and the reproductions of the two icons. Speakman Sutch and Van Bruaene argue that “the fact that Leeu’s editions followed so quickly upon the initiatives taken by the devotion’s promoters suggests that there must have been at least an incentive from the court to print them.”¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, there is no real reason to assume any involvement of the court in the publication of the first edition.

Recently, the discovery of the accounts of the Seven Sorrows confraternity in Brussels revealed that there is no evidence that the court commissioned the Brussels plays of the Seven Sorrows nor that it had approved their content, as was previously assumed.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, with regard to printed books, the role of the court should not be overestimated, and the proactive role of the printer, in this case Leeu, should not be downplayed. Even though Philip the Fair and his successors adopted the Seven Sorrows “as a kind of family devotion,” as Larry Silver has put it, and recent art historical research by Dagmar Eichberger confirms that courtly elites played a role in the dissemination of the devotion, the very first trace of the devotion—Leeu’s booklet—was remarkably simple and unassuming.¹⁵⁶ As with the *Rosarium* booklets and their vernacular equivalents, Leeu would have aimed at as large an audience as possible, including the *many a poure man* for whom Leeu’s untimely death was considered to be a *grete harme* in the “In Memoriam” in Leeu’s last edition, published posthumously by his employees.¹⁵⁷

The quick succession of reworked editions is not a sign of courtly involvement in itself. Leeu often printed different—or better: notably updated—editions of the same work within a short time period. Cases in point are the *Passionael*, a Dutch translation of the *Legenda aurea*, and *Tboeck vanden leven Jhesu Christ*, a

154 Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 259. Cf. Goudriaan, “Een drukker,” 204, who mentions two political pamphlets possibly commissioned by the Burgundian-Habsburg house. Cf. Sutch, “Politics and Print,” 232.

155 Sleiderink, “The Brussels Plays of the Seven Sorrows,” 54.

156 Larry Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys, with Catalogue Raisonné* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1984), 56; Dagmar Eichberger, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin: Spreading a Cult via Dynastic Networks,” in *The Nomadic Object: The Challenge of World for Early-Modern Religious Art*, ed. Christine Göttler and Mia M. Mochizuki (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 483–512.

157 Goudriaan, “Een drukker,” 194, 203.

dialogic text based on Ludolf of Saxony's *Vita Christi*.¹⁵⁸ These were the results of close collaborations with translators, editors, and in the latter case, woodcutters as well, always taking into account the (constantly developing) needs and wishes of the readership. If we want to better understand the context in which Leeu's editions of the Seven Sorrows originated, we need to take a closer look at the professional organization that Leeu joined upon his settlement in Antwerp: the local artists' guild of Saint Luke. In 1485, approximately one year after his move to the city, Leeu joined the guild. He was the first ever printer to do so.¹⁵⁹ The specific reasons for his registration are unknown, but the connection to the city's creative networks would have certainly been an important incentive.¹⁶⁰ From 1480 onward Antwerp's principal chamber of rhetoric, the Gillyflowers, was also closely associated with the guild.¹⁶¹ Leeu's strategic membership thus put him in touch with a broad network of artistic and cultural professionals, which opened up possibilities for professional collaboration.

Similar to the situation surrounding the Rosary (especially in Haarlem), the nascent devotion to the Seven Sorrows sparked an array of artistic productions. Peter Verhoeven, the author of the meditative texts, had strong connections to the guild of Saint Luke through a priest named Jan van Parijs, at the time the "prince" of the Gillyflowers.¹⁶² Leeu's guild membership and his reputation as a printer of richly illustrated devotional (Rosary) booklets would have brought creative forces together.¹⁶³ The fact that the Antwerp branch of the Seven Sorrows confraternity was based at the guild's chapel—and its special connection to Saint Luke—made such collaborations even more obvious.

158 On the *Passionael*, see Koen Goudriaan, "Het Passionael op de drukpers," in *Gouden legenden: Heiligenlevens en heiligenverering in de Nederlanden*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker and Marijke Carasso-Kok (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), 73–88. On *Tboeck van den leven Jhesu Christi*, see Anna Dlabáčová, "Drukken en publieksgroepen: Productie en receptie van gedrukte Middelnederlandse meditatieve Levens van Jezus (ca. 1479–1540)," *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 79 (2008): 321–368.

159 Van der Stock, "De Antwerpse Sint-Lucasgilde," 158; Van der Stock, *Printing Images in Antwerp: The Introduction of Printmaking in a City; Fifteenth Century to 1585* (Rotterdam: Sound and Vision Interactive Rotterdam, 1998), 28–30.

160 Van der Stock, *Printing Images*, 28–30.

161 Gibson, "Artists and Rederijkers," 431.

162 Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys*, 56.

163 It has also been suggested that Peter Verhoeven and Michael Francisci were friends. See Sutch and Van Bruaene, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary," 257n12, and the literature mentioned there. If that was the case—and taking into account their prominent positions within the Dominican order it is not at all unlikely that they at least knew each other—Michael might have even advised Peter to choose Leeu as publisher for the texts of the new devotion.

Leeu's booklets might even have been distributed at the guild's chapel.¹⁶⁴ It is hard to imagine a more "close-to-home" market for a printer's products.

That Leeu was indeed in close touch with Verhoeven is demonstrated by a letter he sent to Philip the Fair. The letter was published by Govaert Bac (ca. 1493–1494) in a Latin compendium on the Seven Sorrows confraternity.¹⁶⁵ From 1493 Govaert Bac was also a prominent member of the Saint Luke guild; by circa 1515 he would become one of its deans.¹⁶⁶ The undated letter functions as a prefatory treatise to the liturgical texts written by Verhoeven.¹⁶⁷ Leeu apparently writes on behalf of the author and requests permission to print the liturgy for a Seven Sorrows Office and Mass. He suggests that Philip and his closest counsellors first approve the texts and after correction return them to him (i.e., Leeu) for publication. Leeu asks for Philip's permission and assistance in setting the texts to music in order to further promote the devotion.¹⁶⁸

The letter may originally have functioned as a cover letter for Verhoeven's liturgy, which was selected from many liturgies by Michael Francisci and Philip's preceptor and counsellor, Frans van Busleiden, to be set to music.¹⁶⁹ Alternatively, the epistle may have actually given Philip the idea to create a Seven Sorrows liturgy.¹⁷⁰ Whatever the case, aside from (and possibly more important than) proving a connection to Philip and the court, the letter provides solid evidence for a close association between Peter Verhoeven and Gerard Leeu. It is likely that Verhoeven strategically involved Leeu's expert knowledge

164 The Brussels chapter, founded in 1499, purchased printed images and booklets to be resold in their chapel according to Remco Sleiderink, "The Brussels Plays of the Seven Sorrows," in Thelen, ed., *The Seven Sorrows Confraternity of Brussels*, 54.

165 Snow, "The Lady of Sorrows," 65, esp. 74–77; Sutch and Van Bruaene, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary," 259–260. See also, especially for the dating, Renaud Adam, "Confraternitas dolorum B.V.M. Officium de doloribus B.V.M., [Anvers: Govaert Bac, 1493–1494], 4° (Liège, Bibliothèque Alpha, xv C 149)," in Arm@rium *Universitatis Leodiensis: La bibliothèque virtuelle du Moyen Âge et de la première Modernité de l'Université de Liège*, University of Liège, Aug. 2017, <http://hdl.handle.net/2268.1/2675>.

166 Herman Brinkman, "De const ter perse: Publiceren bij de rederijkers voor de Reformatie," in Pleij and Reynaert, ed. *Gescreven en gedrukt*, 164; Renaud Adam, "Living and Printing in Antwerp in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries: A Social Enquiry," in *Netherlandish Culture of the Sixteenth Century: Urban Perspectives*, ed. Ethan Matt Kavalier and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 94–96; Sutch and Van Bruaene, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary," 274.

167 On the attribution to Verhoeven, see Snow, "The Lady of Sorrows," 72–74.

168 "[...] it should be illustrated with your help with the sweetness of my music." Snow, "The Lady of Sorrows," 74–76.

169 Cf. Snow, "The Lady of Sorrows," 76–77; Sutch and Van Bruaene, "The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary," 266.

170 Snow, "The Lady of Sorrows," 77.

and experience in the propagation of the cult and that together—within the broader context of the Antwerp guild of Saint Luke—they shaped the devotion and its practices. Verhoeven might even be indicative of the profile of the “devout person” mentioned in the prologue of the Dutch translation of Michael Francisci’s *Quodlibet, Van Marien rosenkransken*. It does not seem out of line that Verhoeven and Leeu, having created a successful meditational booklet together that undoubtedly contributed to the establishment of the confraternity, would also embark together on the creation and publication of a liturgy for the increasingly popular devotion. Leeu’s untimely demise threw a monkey wrench in the works, but Govaert Bac, a close colleague, was apparently found ready to continue some of the work. Right before his death, Gerard Leeu thus stood at the cradle of one of the most successful devotions of the late-medieval Low Countries.

After Leeu’s demise, the devotion continued to blossom. Many (Antwerp) printers, including Govaert Bac, Henrick de Lettersnider, Michiel Hillen van Hoochstraten, and Henrick Eckert van Homberch, produced books dedicated to the cult.¹⁷¹ Through the icons by Saint Luke that were at the very basis of the cult, the devotion must have had a special appeal to the Saint Luke guild members. In 1493 at a meeting in Malines, the guild’s rhetoricians presented a wooden citadel of Antwerp on which Saint Luke painting the Virgin was seated. Sutch and Van Bruaene stress that the Gillyflowers “must have been more deeply involved in the spreading of the devotion of the Seven Sorrows than the scarce sources reveal [...]”.¹⁷² Simultaneously, the Seven Sorrows became highly popular amongst the painters of the guild. Quentin Massys painted a large polyptych with the seven scenes of Mary’s grief and in 1506 the guild commissioned a sculpted retable with seven tabernacles for each of the Seven Sorrows.¹⁷³ Leeu’s meditative booklets were reprinted at least four times in Delft, Gouda, and Antwerp in different constellations and sometimes with additional texts, using Leeu’s woodblocks and copies thereof.¹⁷⁴ We can only speculate about what more Leeu himself would have contributed to the advancement of the Seven Sorrows devotion had he been allowed to live for at least a few years longer.

171 Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 254–261.

172 Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 274.

173 Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys*, 55–57.

174 Delft: [Christiaen Snellaert], 17 July 1494, ISTC no. id00366420; Gouda: Collaciebroeders, 12 Sept. 1494, ISTC no. id00366430; Delft: [Christiaen Snellaert or Hendrik Eckert, van Homberch], 16 Mar. 1497, ISTC no. id00366440; Antwerp: Henrick Eckert van Homberch, [1501], USTC no. 438188; Sutch and Van Bruaene, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary,” 260–261.

5 Conclusions

Adopting the perspective of a printer with regard to the interconnected devotions of the Rosary and the Seven Sorrows allows for a more thorough appreciation of the role of the printer—in this case Gerard Leeu—within more than simply the dissemination and promotion of these devotions. What becomes particularly clear is that the commercially produced books and booklets shaped the ways in which these cults were experienced by devotees—both literate and illiterate—to a large extent. Leeu's products offered them tools to shape their religious experience: texts and images along with guidelines for the use of both. These textual and visual concretizations of the devotions would have interacted with other religious objects and texts produced by Leeu's colleagues in the book trade and the wider creative sector. In turn, Leeu used the needs of the devotion's adherents to innovate and further advance the prospects of the printed book as a medium. It is significant that among his publications related to the Rosary devotion we find one of the first illustrated title pages and the first books printed in the small octavo and sedecimo formats. Leeu's work was certainly influential with regard to both the religious practices and the iconography connected to the Rosary and the Seven Sorrows. As to the latter, Leeu seems to be so closely involved in the beginnings of the devotion that he could even be considered one of its first "creative directors."

To achieve this, Leeu had to connect and collaborate with the initiators of these cults and their entourage. The editions not only provide information about the devotions' developments and practices, but they are also an interesting lens through which we can tentatively answer questions concerning Leeu's intellectual, religious, and even artistic connections. Although we only have circumstantial evidence, Leeu's editions seem to point to a strong involvement in international (e.g., the Dominican *Congregatio Hollandiae*) and local networks of religious intellectuals, poets, and painters (the Rosary confraternity at Haarlem as well as his professional association in Antwerp, the guild of Saint Luke). The (vernacular) books he published were not the results of a publishing strategy set out by the Church, but rather collaborative efforts co-initiated by Leeu.¹⁷⁵ Most of the editions appear to be commercial ventures resulting from collaborations with clerics. Leeu did not need a courtly commission or

¹⁷⁵ This is in line with the following claim made by Koen Goudriaan that "in general [...] ecclesiastical strategies for applying the printing press to direct the life of the laity—apart from the commercial methods used by the printers—were small in scale and only applicable to specific sectors of religious life. The authorities lacked an overall strategy." "The Church and the Market," 256.

incentive when producing his Rosary booklets, nor did he in the case of the Seven Sorrows in the early 1490s. In all, Leeu's editions are to be viewed as major milestones within both devotions in the Low Countries.

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