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Imagining the Week in Hours

Reader Involvement in a Middle Dutch Printed Prayer Book of 1498 with a Cycle of Hours for the Weekdays

Books of Hours are widely recognized as late medieval bestsellers. These books are expected to follow a certain standard and to offer readers, as the bare minimum, a Calendar, the Hours of the Virgin, the Penitential Psalms and the Vigil or Office of the Dead.¹ They may include other textual elements, such as the Hours of the Holy Cross and the Hours of the Holy Spirit, Marian prayers and other ‘accessory texts.’ Roger Wieck has compared Books of Hours to cars: while certain texts were essential for the book to properly function, a large – and ever growing – range of prayers and spiritual exercises could have been added to extend the function of the book and add a personal touch.² But what happens when the Hours were taken out of their safe environment of the Book of Hours and used in a different context? What if some of the non-essential elements of the car, such as the Hours of the Holy Cross and the Hours of the Holy Spirit, are used to build a different vehicle that functions equally well, yet at the same time, entirely differently?

Even though we are used to equating Hours with the Book of Hours, instances in which the Hours were transmitted and used outside of this context also occur. A case in point is a printed prayer book from 1498 that offers to its readers a set of Hours in Middle Dutch, but none of the essential elements of a Book of Hours (hence, even though the full book consists of Hours only, more inclusive terminology, i.e., ‘prayer book’, is used to refer to the book). The book concerned, printed in the workshop of the Canons Regular of St Michael in Den Hem near Schoonhoven (or ‘*Canonici Regulares apud S. Michaellem in Den Hem*’), contains a cycle of several Hours distributed over the seven days of the week.³ Starting with the Long Hours of the Holy Spirit on Sunday, the book invites readers to, every week, engage with a fixed range of Hours that cover a wide spectrum of perspectives and devotions: from mystically tinted meditations on Eternal Wisdom to Mary’s co-suffering with Christ.

What can this ‘new’ or ‘alternative’ setting tell us about the – possible – function(s) of the Dutch-language Hours, the interpretative and imaginative skills they required of readers, and the opportunities for immersive reading and reader involvement they offered?⁴ Since the book contains two Hours that were part of ‘Geert Grotes Book of Hours’, the Hours of Eternal Wisdom and the Long Hours of the Holy Cross, and one that was likely also translated by Grote, the Long Hours of the Holy Spirit, the ‘Den Hem prayer book’, as I will refer to it from now on, offers an interesting entry point to

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¹ See Wieck’s survey of the Book of Hours: Roger S. Wieck, *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York: G. Braziller in association with the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 1988). The core parts were also established by Victor Leroquais, *Les livres d’heures manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1927-1943).

² Roger S. Wieck, ‘Prayer to the People: The Book of Hours’, in Roy Hammerling (ed.), *A History of Prayer. The First to the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 389-416, p. 409.

³ Horae [Dutch] Getijdenboek. Schoonhoven: [Canonici Regulares apud S. Michaellem in Den Hem], 28 Mar. 1498ISTC no. ih00431400 (*Incunabula Short Title Catalogue*, British Library; <https://data.cerl.org/istc/>); ILC no. 1241 (ILC=*Incunabula printed in the Low Countries: A Census*, ed. by Gerard van Thienen and John Goldfinch. Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1999). I will refer to the copy The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28.

⁴ On immersive reading see below, esp. n. 7.

study and understand the reception of Grote's Hours.⁵ The Book of Hours in the Middle Dutch translation ascribed to Grote, which he is believed to have made in the years 1383-1384, would prove immensely popular, as witnessed by the high numbers of surviving manuscripts – estimates range between c. 800 and 2000 manuscripts – and copies of printed editions. Based on the latter, at least forty-five editions were published in the Low Countries and Paris between 1480 and 1540.⁶

Looking beyond the Book of Hours may advance our understanding of the Hours – those in the translation ascribed to Grote as well as other Hours that do not belong to the set of texts he is believed to have translated – in at least two ways. Firstly, the Den Hem prayer book offers an opportunity to consider Grote's Hours in a new – textual and material – context: the edition demonstrates that the popularity of the individual Hours translations was not confined to Books of Hours. The Middle Dutch Hours were read in a variety of contexts. Hence, their influence on prayer (and textual) culture may have been even more profound than one would suspect when looking merely at the numbers of extant manuscripts of 'Grote's Book of Hours'.

Secondly, the Den Hem prayer book offers an opportunity to shed light on Hours that do not belong to 'Grote's Book of Hours,' but that were very much part of the diverse landscape of Middle Dutch prayer literature. Some of these Hours may have been conceived directly in the vernacular, and they mirror the Hours translated by Grote in their structure (see below), as well as in their textual conceptualization and the type of reading and interpretation they presuppose. In other words: these texts require the same interpretative skills as Grote's Hours, but, as we will see, the way devotees should read, understand, and interpret the texts is made more explicit in some of these texts. A case in point are the *Hours of Our Lady's Sorrow* and the *Hours of Our Lady's Solemnity*. As such, apart from being telling texts that deserve to be studied in their own right, the latter can also aid in gauging how Grote's Hours were to be approached, interpreted, and experienced by vernacular readers in their prayer practice.

Before discussing the Hours further, I will first introduce the edition central to my analysis to create a better sense of its contents, possible sources, and materiality. I will then turn to the Hours and the analysis of the reading skills these texts required and the ways in which they – in tandem with the woodcut images – created reader involvement, paying specific attention to (possible) textual strategies aimed at generating an immersive experience, or even a transition from objective reality to a virtual world.⁷ The latter manner of analysis of prayers as pre-formulated, written, literary texts that allow readers to immerse themselves in the text and the virtual reality evoked by the text, and of the readers' ability to do so on different levels (i.e., to assume different roles; as speaker, addressee, viewer, witness) was recently carried out by Germanist Björn Buschbeck for a (non-liturgical) passion prayer from the *Engelberger Gebetbuch*.⁸ Finally, viewing the late medieval book as a material object that affected the experience of the reader, I aim to place the analysis of reader involvement within the

⁵ The consensus is that Grote translated the Calendar (for the use of Utrecht), the Hours of the Virgin, the Hours of the Holy Spirit, the Short Hours of the Holy Cross, the Hours of Eternal Wisdom, the Long Hours of the Holy Cross, the seven Penitential Psalms, the Litany of All Saints, and the Vigil of the Dead. Recent discussion in Youri Desplenter, 'Het getijdengebed in het Nederlands', in *De Moderne Devotie. Spiritualiteit en cultuur vanaf de late Middeleeuwen*, ed. Anna Dlabáčová and Rijcklof Hofman (Zwolle: WBooks, 2018), 92-5. Also in Anne S. Korteweg, 'Books of Hours from the Northern Netherlands Reconsidered: The Uses of Utrecht and Windesheim and Geert Grote's Role as a Translator', in *Books of Hours Reconsidered*, ed. Sandra Hindman and James H. Marrow (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2013), pp. 235-61, there p. 237.

⁶ R.Th.M. van Dijk, 'Het getijdenboek van Geert Grote. Terugblik en vooruitzicht', *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, 64 (1990), pp. 156-194, there p. 161. The number of printed editions is based on a survey of the *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* (<https://data.cerl.org/istc>), last accessed 8 July 2024, the *Universal Short Title Catalogue*, University of St Andrews (<https://www.ustc.ac.uk>), last accessed 8 July 2024, and W. Nijhoff and M.E. Kronenberg, *Nederlandse bibliographie van 1500 tot 1540*, 2 vols. with supplements (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1923-1971).

⁷ Cf. Björn Klaus Buschbeck, 'Sprechen mit dem Heiligen und Eintauchen in den Text: Zur Wirkungsästhetik eines Passionsgebets aus dem 'Engelberger Gebetbuch'', in Mirko Breitenstein and Christian Schmidt (eds.), *Medialität und Praxis des Gebets. Sonderheft Das Mittelalter* 24 (2019) pp. 390-408, p. 401. Buschbeck cites from Janet H. Murray, *Hamlet on a Holodeck. The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), p. 99.

⁸ Buschbeck, 'Sprechen mit dem Heiligen und Eintauchen in den Text', esp. p. 407.

space of the physical book: of the individual copies of the Den Hem prayer book. Bringing together these strands of research, I hope to reach a better understanding of this specific book's place in the readers' devotional experience, while also pointing to the implications of the widespread popularity of vernacular Hours – or, more generally, liturgically arranged prayer – for religious reading in the late medieval Low Countries.

I. THE WEEK IN HOURS

On 28 March 1498 the Canons Regular of St Michael in Den Hem near Schoonhoven (Canonici Regulares apud S. Michaellem in Den Hem), not far from the city of Gouda, published what they called in the colophon a *suuerlic boexken van sonderlingen deuote ghetiden* ['beautiful booklet of particular devout hours'].⁹ The community that ran the printing shop was situated close to the banks of the Lek river in Den Hem and had begun in the early fifteenth century as a community of tertiaries that was part of the Chapter of Utrecht. Several years later, in 1418, the community took on the Rule of St Augustine and became a member of the Chapter of Holland or Sion, which it had actively helped to establish.¹⁰ This put the community – and its printing shop which the Canons Regular ran between 1495 and 1520 – at the heart of the Modern Devotion in the Holland region. The Canons Regular mainly used their press to produce liturgical books, as well as small devotional booklets for private use, likely also aimed at lay people.¹¹ An intriguing example of the latter type of production are the so-called *Devote materien* [Devout materials], a collection of various religious texts that appears to have been published to allow for various, flexible constellations in order to fit the preferences of readers: in gatherings that could be acquired and bound in the order desired by the buyer.¹² Exchange of woodcuts suggests that there were direct connections between the printing workshop in Den Hem and the press run by the Collaciebroeders (Brothers of Common Life) in Gouda, another press connected to a religious community closely associated with the Modern Devotion.¹³

Hitherto little has been written about the Den Hem prayer book. The only more elaborate reference can be found in the 1984 exhibition catalogue *Moderne Devotie: Figuren en facetten*. Here, the prayer book is presented as a printed Book of Hours, followed by a brief description of the book's content and outer appearance and a short introduction of the press of the Canons Regular.¹⁴ The authors do not acknowledge that in this book Grote's Hours are combined with various other Hours, although they do assert that toward the end of the fifteenth century there was a 'flowering of the late medieval Hours-literature'.¹⁵ Catalogues such as the Incunabula Short Title Catalogue also present this prayer book as a Book of Hours, or even as *Duytsche getijden*, a title first used by the prolific printer Gerard Leeu for his Book of Hours in Middle Dutch. This title, however, should, as I argue elsewhere, be reserved for Books of Hours with a specific cycle of texts that was first brought to the press by Leeu at Antwerp.¹⁶

⁹ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. 156v.

¹⁰ *Kloosterlijst/Monasteries*, H47 (<https://geoplaza.vu.nl/projects/kloosterlijst/>, last accessed 8 July 2024).

¹¹ G.J. Jaspers, 'Het klooster van de reguliere kanunniken buten Schoenhoven inden Hem en zijn drukpers', *Jaarboek van het Nederlands Genootschap van Bibliofielen* (Amsterdam: De Buitenkant, 1996), pp. 75-126. A.J. Geurts e.a., *Moderne Devotie: Figuren en facetten* (Nijmegen: Katholieke Universiteit, 1984), p. 120. Ina Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula Printed in the Low Countries*, vol. 1 (Houten: Hes & De Graaf, 2013), p. 595.

¹² K. Goudriaan, 'De drukpers van Den Hem: een bijdrage', in F.H.J. van Aesch et al. (eds.), *Het klooster Sint-Michiel in Den Hem buiten Schoonhoven, Historische Encyclopedie Krimpenerwaard*, 20 (1995), pp. 85-113.

¹³ On the exchange of woodcuts: Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, p. 595. On the printing press and the Modern Devotion: K. Goudriaan, 'The Devotio Moderna and the Printing Press (ca. 1475–1540)', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 93 (2013), pp. 578-606. Other presses connected to the Modern Devotion were situated in Brussels and Den Bosch.

¹⁴ Geurts e.a., *Moderne Devotie*, cat. no. 31, pp. 119-121.

¹⁵ Geurts e.a., *Moderne Devotie*, p. 120: 'Het hier getoonde drukje is een typisch voorbeeld van de bloei van de laatmiddeleeuwse getijdenlectuur.'

¹⁶ ISTC: Horae [Dutch] Getijdenboek. Idem in ILC, no. 1241). Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, p. 595, refers to the book as *Duytsche getijden*. Gerard Leeu first used this title in his Book of Hours of 1491 (ISTC no. ih00430300; ILC 1229). I am currently preparing an article on Leeu's edition: 'Shaping the future of the Dutch-language Book of Hours in print: Gerard Leeu's Duytsche Ghetiden (1491)', *De gulden passer*, forthcoming.

The Den Hem prayer book, published in a small, portable format (8°), presents the reader with a cycle of Hours for the seven days of the week and thus combines two of the most important principles for structuring prayer: the canonical hours that ensured a ‘continuous cycle of daily prayer, sacred reading, and meditation’ (matins, lauds, prime, terce, sext, none, vespers, and compline) and the weekdays.¹⁷ Week in, week out readers were to recite the Long Hours of the Holy Spirit on Sunday, the Hours of Eternal Wisdom on Monday, on Tuesday they were to read the Hours of St Anne, and on Wednesday the Hours of All Saints. For Thursdays the cycle offered readers the Hours of the Holy Sacrament, followed by the Long Hours of the Cross for Fridays. Saturday concluded the cycle with two Marian Hours, the Hours of Our Lady’s Sorrow and the Hours of Our Lady’s Solemnity (for a concise overview of the Den Hem prayer book’s contents, please see table 1 below).

Each of the Hours opens with an image that fits with the theme of the text and is positioned on the recto side of the first folium of the quire, meaning that the reader first encounters the image with only a limited amount of text or without any text at all.¹⁸ The images are either full-page woodcuts or imprints of slightly smaller woodblocks that cover approximately two thirds of the text space. The physical use of the book would have been different from a Book of Hours: while a Book of Hours was always read in a selective manner, the weekly structure meant that readers read – or at least were supposed to read when they followed the intended usage – the Den Hem prayer book cover to cover every week. Because of their strong connection to the themes of the subsequent Hours, the images did not only function as a structuring and navigational device; they assisted devotees in reaching the desired attitude before commencing the recitation of the Hours (see table 1 and section III below).

Prior to reciting the Hours, the devotee had to achieve the right state of mind. According to Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen (d. 1398), this was especially necessary before praying longer prayers such as the Hours, and particularly before Matins and Vespers.¹⁹ A correct disposition or desire of the heart could be achieved through meditation on a topic related to the prayer to be recited. Devotees, both lay and religious, could of course use props external to the book. Objects such as pipe clay figurines or medallions with religious imagery were widely available, also to lay readers.²⁰ The material book itself, however, offered a simple way of starting the recitation of each of the Hours with the desired disposition: as noted above, the presentation of the texts in the Den Hem prayer book ensured that readers were immediately confronted with an image at the start of each of the texts, or even independent of the text (in instances of a full-page woodcut with the text starting on the verso side) (Figs. 2 and 3). Several examples of how the images also functioned as meditative aids in relation to the texts are discussed in section II below.

The two opening texts, the Long Hours of the Holy Spirit (Sunday) and the Hours of Eternal Wisdom (Monday) were both likely translated by Geert Grote. The latter is a translation of the *Cursus Aeternae Sapientiae*, originally composed in Latin by Heinrich Seuse (d. 1365) out of sections of the *Horologium Sapientiae*, structured according to the seven canonical hours and added to this work as

¹⁷ On these principles: Stefan Matter, *Tagzeitentexte des Mittelalters: Untersuchungen und Texte zur deutschen Gebetbuchliteratur* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), p. 27. Quote from Lila Collamore, ‘Prelude. Charting the Divine Office’, in Margot E. Fassler and Renée A. Baltzer (eds.), *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 3-11, at 3.

¹⁸ This is different from manuscripts/books of hours where images as a rule appear on the verso of a folio and are viewed by the reader along with the text on the recto side of the next folio.

¹⁹ R.Th.M. van Dijk, *Geestelijke opklimmingen: Een gids voor de geestelijke weg uit de vroege Moderne Devotie* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), pp. 286-288. See also Florens Radewijns’ instructions for prayer in L.A.M. Goossens, *De meditatie in de eerste tijd van de Moderne Devotie* (Haarlem: Gottmer, 1952), 106-120.

²⁰ F. van der Pol and M. Smit, *De susteren van Sanct-Agnetenhuus. De geschiedenis, materiële cultuur en spiritualiteit van het Kamper Agnietenconvent* (Kampen: IJsselacademie, 1997), pp. 120-121, p. 124 (pipe clay figure of St John, crying). Lieke Smits, ‘Small Pipe-Clay Devotional Figures: Touch, Play and Animation’, *Getting the Sense(s) of Small Things*, eds. Karen Dempsey and Jitske Jasperse, *Das Mittelalter 25-2* (2020), pp. 397-423. See also Christiaan Schrickx, *Bethlehem in de Bangert: een historische en archeologische studie naar de ontwikkeling van een vrouwenklooster onder de Orde van het Heilig Kruis in het buitengebied van Hoorn (1475-1572)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2015), esp. pp. 278-298.

the final chapter.²¹ Grote translated the text into Middle Dutch and thus turned it into a more or less standard component unique to Middle Dutch Books of Hours.²² In the Den Hem prayer book the Hours of Eternal Wisdom are followed by several instructions for the ‘disciples of Eternal Wisdom’ (Seuse’s rules for his ‘brotherhood of Eternal Wisdom’) and a prayer to the Sweet Name of Jesus.²³ Contrary to what the prayer book’s structure suggests, these guidelines start by telling the reader to read the Hours of Eternal Wisdom daily.²⁴ The text that serves as the opening text of the Den Hem prayer book, the Long Hours of the Holy Spirit, was not included in van Wijk’s 1940 edition of *Geert Grote’s Book of Hours*, which over time has come to be regarded as the standard against which manuscripts containing Grote’s translation are typically checked. Nevertheless, the Long Hours of the Holy Spirit, which seems to occur less frequently than the ‘normal’ or ‘short’ Hours of the Holy Spirit, have likely also been translated by Grote.²⁵

The Hours of All Saints (Wednesday) occur relatively frequently in manuscripts but are still less common than the Hours translated by Grote.²⁶ The Hours of St Anne (Tuesday) focus on the Immaculate Conception and the textual elements that make up the Hours mostly relate to fertility and growth.²⁷ In 1498, the year in which the Canons Regular published the prayer book under discussion, these Hours devoted to Mary’s mother appear to have been a relatively recent text whose transmission was closely connected to the printing press. Initially, the Hours of St Anne were part of the tripartite work *Die historie, die ghetiden ende die exempelen vander heyligher vrouwen sint Annen* [‘The history, the hours and the exempla of the holy woman Saint Anne’] attributed to Jan van Denemarken

²¹ Pius Künzle, *Heinrich Seuses Horologium Sapientiae* (Freiburg/Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1997), pp. 279-280. The *Horologium*, in turn, is a translation and considerable reworking of Seuse’s vernacular *Büchlein der ewigen Weisheit* (composed c. 1328-1330). The claim made by Eberhard König, *Devotion from Dawn to Dusk: the Office of the Virgin in Books of Hours of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2012), p. 11, that Grote did not have to translate this text, is incorrect: ‘The text of this writing is in its way as abstract as the rest of the Book of Hours, but it was at least written in a language that did not have to be translated’.

²² The text is edited in N. van Wijk, *Het getijdenboek van Geert Grote; naar het Haagse handschrift 133 E 21* (Leiden: Brill, 1940), pp. 92-112. Jan Deschamps and Herman Mulder, *Inventaris van de Middelnederlandse handschriften van de Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België*, vol. 15 (Brussel: Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België KBR, 2013), G154. A more recent edition (based on a different ms.) and study in Anton G. Weiler, *Getijden van de Eeuwige Wijsheid naar de vertaling van Geert Grote* (Baarn: Ambo, 1984).

²³ At this stage of research, it is unclear how often these guidelines for the brotherhood of Eternal Wisdom are transmitted together with the Hours of Eternal Wisdom. See W. Moll, *Geert Groote’s Dietsche vertalingen* (Amsterdam: Müller, 1880), p. 27 and Weiler, *Getijden van de Eeuwige Wijsheid*, pp. 18-20, esp. p. 19. Weiler mentions that Grote did not adopt these rules (p. 19). See also Matter, *Tagzeitentexte des Mittelalters*, p. 81-82.

²⁴ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. 33v: ‘Item dese voerbescreuen getiden sal een ygelic deuoet discipel ende dienaer der ewiger wijsheit dagelix lesen...’. The text continues by giving alternative option for those who cannot achieve this, as well as other, simple instruction for one’s prayer practice. Those who have a special devotion to Eternal Wisdom should secretly carry Jesus’ name with them (f. 35r).

²⁵ Van Wijk, *Het getijdenboek van Geert Grote*. Van Dijk counted the Long Hours of the Holy Spirit as part of Grote’s translation: van Dijk, ‘Het getijdenboek van Geert Grote’, p. 166. Geurts e.a., *Moderne Devotie*, cat. no. 24 (pp. 100-3). L. Wierda, *De Sarijs-handschriften. Laat-middeleeuwse handschriften uit de IJsselstreek* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1995), p. 49 and p. 190 provides an overview of the structure of the text. As part of his edition of a Book of Hours, De Gheldere edited the Long Hours of the Holy Spirit. The text in the printed edition under discussion differs in several instances from his text (the hymn at the start of the text is missing, for example): K. De Gheldere, *Ghetiden Boec. Naar een handschrift der XV^e eeuw* (Gent: Siffer, 1893). Cf. Deschamps and Mulder, *Inventaris*, p. 114 (G152).

²⁶ R.Th.M. van Dijk, ‘Methodologische kanttekeningen bij het onderzoek van getijdenboeken’, in *Boeken voor de eeuwigheid. Middelnederlands geestelijk proza*, ed. Th. Mertens (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1993), pp. 210-229 and pp. 434-437, there p. 222 and 227. Deschamps and Mulder, *Inventaris*, G159, with references to several editions. Most recent edition in van der Pol and Smit, *De zusteren van Sanct-Agnetenhuus*, pp. 132-179.

²⁷ 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 (15^{de}/16^{de} eeuw)* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1990), p. 69.

and first published by Gerard Leeu at Antwerp in 1490-1491.²⁸ According to the prologue, the author started writing the text in 1486, a few years before Leeu published the work, and there appear to be no extant manuscripts with the text dated before 1500.²⁹ Ton Brandenburg has extensively studied the increased popularity of (lives of) St Anne in the Low Countries at the end of the fifteenth-century.³⁰ Perhaps the composition of the text and its inclusion in the Den Hem prayer book may also be associated with the ratification of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1476.³¹

Thursday was reserved for a meditation on the Eucharist by way of reciting the Hours of the Holy Sacrament. These Hours already appear in the earliest Books of Hours with Grote's translation, but little is known about their dissemination in Middle Dutch.³² Friday was again fittingly devoted to meditation on Christ's Passion – the Long Hours of the Cross were the appropriate text for that day. The Long Hours of the Cross are the third and final text in the Den Hem prayer book that was translated by Geert Grote.³³ The version of the Long Hours of the Cross in the Den Hem prayer book contains an additional prayer to Mary at the end of each hour from the hours of Lauds onward, thus incorporating Mary's perspective on Christ's suffering – and her co-suffering with Christ – into the Long Hours of the Cross.³⁴

For Saturday, the final day of the week, two Marian Hours are included, while all other days have been assigned a single text only. The first of the Marian Hours, the Hours of Our Lady's Sorrow,³⁵ further elaborate on Mary's co-suffering with her son, while the final text celebrates Mary's solemnity and is partly set in verse (this text is also known as the Golden Hours of the Virgin).³⁶ The book concludes with a popular prayer to be recited before the image of Mary in the Sun, *Ave sanctissima virgo Maria*, that was allegedly composed by the Franciscan Pope Sixtus IV and indulgenced with eleven thousand years every time the devotee read the prayer in front of an image of the Virgin in the

²⁸ *Historie, getijden en exempelen van S. Anna*. Antwerp: Gerard Leeu, [between 9 Feb. 1491 and 1492] and 17 December 1491. ISTC nos. ia00743000 and ia00743100; ILC nos. 247 and 248. I consulted a copy of the latter edition: Paris, BnF, RES-H-1950. Brandenburg, *Heilig familieleven*, pp. 43-45 and 69-71. At times the order of the texts in the Hours in the Den Hem prayer book differs slightly from the editions in which the Hours of St Anne are printed as part of the *Historie* etc.

²⁹ A search in the online BNM-I (*Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta & Impressa*; <https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/>, last accessed 10 July 2024) only yields one occurrence in a single manuscript: Budapest, OSK, Holl. 6, ff. 110v-123 (dated 1505). The standardized title in the BNM-I is 'Getijden van S. Anna, met daarin o.a. een vert. van Salve parens sancta matris Salvatoris'.

³⁰ Brandenburg, *Heilig familieleven*. See also Ton Brandenburg et al., *Heilige Anna, Grote Moeder. De cultus van de Heilige Moeder-Anna en haar familie* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1992).

³¹ Kathryn M. Rudy, *Rubrics, Images and Indulgences in Late Medieval Netherlandish Manuscripts* (Boston: Brill, 2017), p. 165.

³² van Wijk, *Het getijdenboek van Geert Grote*, p. 14 (Leipzig, UB: 1516, ff. 140r-243r; also contains a Mass of the H. Sacrament). Not in the list of prayers in Deschamps and Mulder, *Inventaris*. These Hours, in a significantly longer version, were also offered as an optional text (gatherings aa-ff) with the earliest printed editions of Grote's Hours (Delft 1480 and 1484, Jacob Jacobszoon van der Meer, ISTC nos. ih00429300 and ih00430000). See Anna Dlabáčová, 'Het Delftse getijdenboek (1480)', in Bram Caers et al., *Trouw aan de tekst. Historische letterkunde in de praktijk* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2024), pp. 105-114.

³³ The Long Hours of the Cross are edited by van Wijk, *Het getijdenboek van Geert Grote*, pp. 113-138. In the list of prayers compiled by Deschamps and Mulder, *Inventaris*, this is number G155.

³⁴ This version occurred more often and the same Marian prayers were also combined with the Short Hours of the Holy Cross, although no exact numbers can be given at the moment. The version also occurs, for example, in Brussels, KB, 11223, ff. 13r-43 and in the earliest printed editions of the Book of Hours in Middle Dutch from Delft (1480 and 1484). See also Deschamps and Mulder, *Inventaris*, G189C.

³⁵ Deschamps and Mulder, *Inventaris*, G189A. This text is a translation and recension of the pseudo-Bonaventurian *Officium de compassione beatae Mariae virginis*. See on this text also K.Chr.J. de Vries, *De Mariaklachten* (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1964), pp. 144-145 (group 'Vermenselijking en realisme') and, more recently, on the Latin text, Eliška Kubartová Poláčková, *Medieval Laments of the Virgin Mary. Text, Music, Performance, and Genre Liminality* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2023), pp. 98-99.

³⁶ Deschamps and Mulder, *Inventaris*, G271. Modern edition in Luc Indestege, *Een Diets gebedenboek uit het begin der zestiende eeuw* (Gent: Koninklijke Vlaamse Akademie voor Taal- en Letterkunde, 1961), pp. 183-188 (in the 1498 edition discussed here 'Tota pulchra es' has been added at the end).

Sun, which is included as a woodcut.³⁷ On the final page of the prayer book the reader could find an overview of the contents listing all days and Hours and concluding with a colophon: *Gedruct Inden Hem buten scoenhoven Int iaer ons heren M cccc ende xcviij. Opten xxviij dach In maercio* [‘Printed in Den Hem outside Schoonhoven in the year of Our Lord 1498 on the 28th day of March’].

Weekday	Folios	Title	Woodcut Illustration
Sunday	A1r-B8v	<i>Long Hours of the Holy Spirit</i> , likely translated by Geert Grote	A1r – Pentecost (smaller size woodcut set within text, Kok no. 300.21)
Monday	C1r-E1r	<i>Hours of Eternal Wisdom</i> , translated by Geert Grote	C1r – The Christ Child as Salvator Mundi (smaller size woodcut set within text, Kok no. 300.18)
Monday	E1v-E4v	Instructions for disciples of Eternal Wisdom (from the second chapter of the <i>Horologium Sapientiae</i>) & Prayer to the Sweet Name of Jesus	-
Tuesday	F1r-H4v	<i>Hours of St Anne</i>	F1r – Anna Selbdritt (smaller size woodcut set within text, Kok no. 300.17)
Wednesday	I1r-H4v ³⁸	<i>Hours of All Saints</i>	I1r – Christ and Mary enthroned in heaven among saints and angels (smaller size woodcut set within text, Kok no. 300.23)
Thursday	M1r-O8v	<i>Hours of the Holy Sacrament</i>	M1r – Last supper (smaller size woodcut set within text, Kok no. 300.19)
Friday	P1r-R8v	<i>Long Hours of the Cross</i> , translated by Geert Grote and interwoven with prayers on Mary’s compassion	P1r – Crucifixion with Mary and St John (full page woodcut, Kok no. 301.2)
Saturday	S1r-V4v	<i>Hours of Our Lady’s Sorrow</i>	S1r – Pièta, with St John and two other men (full page woodcut, Kok no. 300.10)
Saturday	X1r-Y3r	<i>Hours of Our Lady’s Solemnity/ Golden Hours of the Virgin</i>	X1r – Annunciation (full page woodcut, Kok no. 301.1)
	Y3v-Y4r	Prayer to be recited before an image of Our Lady in the Sun (<i>Ave, sanctissima virgo Maria</i>)	Y3v – Mary standing on the crescent, holding the Christ Child (full page woodcut, Kok no. 302.1)
	Y4v	Overview of Contents & Colophon	-

Underschrift:

Table 1: Overview of the contents of the Den Hem prayer book

Since the Den Hem prayer book contains none of the standard elements of a Book of Hours, we are dealing with a book with Hours rather than a Book of Hours.³⁹ Indeed, some manuscript Books of Hours in Latin incorporate so-called Weekday Hours, a cycle of short Hours for every day of the week, with themes traditionally associated with the weekdays: Sunday Holy Trinity, Dead Monday, Tuesday Holy Spirit, Wednesday All Saints, Thursday the Blessed Sacrament, Friday Compassion of God, and Saturday the Virgin. Some of these Weekday Hours are short versions of well-known Hours, for example the Hours of the Virgin.⁴⁰ The Weekday Hours also appeared in print in at least two

³⁷ Rudy, *Rubrics, Images and Indulgences*, pp. 163-168.

³⁸ Note that what should logically be quire L is signed ‘H’, meaning that there are two quires ‘H’.

³⁹ See n. 1 above.

⁴⁰ Wieck, ‘Prayer to the People’, p. 409, and Anne Margreet As-Vijvers in her analysis of the Quarre Hours, one of the few richly decorated Netherlandish manuscripts from approximately 1470-1500 that contain the Weekday Hours: Anne Margreet W. As-Vijvers, ‘The Missing Miniatures of the Hours of Louis Quarre’, *Journal of*

editions of Latin Books of Hours published by Gerard Leeu.⁴¹ The Den Hem prayer book, however, does not contain a translation of the Weekday Hours, but, as outlined above, marshals Hours that normally appear as separate texts in Books of Hours into a weekly exercise.

The catalogue entry in *Moderne Devotie: Figuren en facetten* attributes the popularity of structuring prayer according to the canonical hours to their suitability as a support for daily meditation.⁴² In the Hours, however, it is not just a case of structuring a prayer according to the canonical hours, which happened more often (e.g., when any prayer text or exercise was divided over the canonical hours), but of liturgically arranged prayer: each of the Hours is made up of short textual elements of diverse origin (psalms, hymns, readings, antiphons, prayers) that exist in relation to each other.⁴³ In the Den Hem prayer book, moreover, the eight individual Hours that represent several popular devotions are placed within the framework of a weekly exercise. Hence, not only the textual elements that make up the individual Hours relate to each other, but the eight individual Hours (Hours of Eternal Wisdom etc.) now also relate to – and depend on – each other, since they are part of one weekly cycle.

II. CONTEXTUAL READING AND READER INVOLVEMENT

As briefly mentioned above, the diverse textual elements of which the individual Hours are composed relate to each other *and* derive meaning from each other. The Hours are primarily composed of psalms, basic prayers, lessons and songs (hymns and canticles) that are carefully matched and that refer to each other. In turn, these texts are accompanied by formulaic antiphons, responsories and versicles that introduce and frame the psalms and lessons and place them in a specific perspective. These short framing texts aid the person reciting the Hours in understanding the textual component in the specific context of the office.⁴⁴ In the Hours of the Virgin, for example, '[t]hrough the antiphons that begin and end, as a kind of frame, each Psalm, its themes are applied to the Mother of God'.⁴⁵ This means that the psalms are given meaning according to the context in which they appear. This technique or method may be regarded as the most distinct characteristic of the Hours (and of liturgically arranged prayer in general). Indeed, according to Roger S. Wieck, '[o]ne of the great beauties of the Hours [of the Virgin] is how the Psalms are throughout given a second level of reading, a mystical interpretation.'⁴⁶

Associating different levels of meaning with a single text is of course a common practice in the medieval period; think of the typological interpretation of the Bible which was only one of the four levels on which Scripture could be interpreted. Personal experience could also affect the interpretation. The Psalms in particular could be read as personal prayers, 'uttered amid the deepest compunction of heart.'⁴⁷ In her discussion of Jan Mombaer's *chyropsalterium* (hand-psalter) – an aid or prop that provides a technique of attending to the psalms that allows the person praying 'to inhabit them, to make them their own' – Fulton Brown demonstrates how psalms were viewed to have many different dispositions and voices that, if interpreted in context and from personal experience, can spark devotion

Historians of Netherlandish Art 10:1 (Winter 2018) DOI: 10.5092/jhna.2018.10.1.2. I wish to thank dr. As-Vijvers for pointing me to this article.

⁴¹ Bonaventura Kruitwagen, 'Het Horarium van Gerard Leeu, Antwerpen 1489, 27 juli', *Het Boek*, 2 (1913), pp. 1–19, 209–218, 246–254, esp. 213–214 and 250. Tatjana Dolgodrova and Alexander Kusnetzov, 'Das unbekannte Antwerpener Stundenbuch,' *Gutenberg Jahrbuch*, 74 (1999), pp. 113–121.

⁴² Geurts e.a., *Moderne Devotie*, p. 119.

⁴³ On this difference, see Matter, *Tagzeitentexte des Mittelalters*, p. 33. Seuse's *Hundred Articles* were for example often distributed over the canonical hours, but they do not have a liturgical structure (p. 53).

⁴⁴ Matter, *Tagzeitentexte des Mittelalters*, pp. 33–34.

⁴⁵ Wieck, 'Prayer to the People', p. 402.

⁴⁶ Wieck, 'Prayer to the People', p. 402.

⁴⁷ Abba Isaac (7th c.), quoted in Rachel Fulton Brown, 'My Psalter, My Self; or How to Get a Grip on the Office According to Jan Mombaer: An Exercise in Training the Attention for Prayer', *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, 12-1 (2012), pp. 75–105, there p. 80.

and lead to different affects in the person praying.⁴⁸ Moreover, as Niklaus Largier has shown, (Biblical) texts, words, and images can arouse a range of affects and sensations in the act of prayer; the medieval practice of prayer ‘makes the external into the medium for the evocation and production of the internal’.⁴⁹ However, the skill of coloring the meaning of texts – of drawing out layers of spiritual meaning and forms of inner experience – by relating different textual components to each other, seems to be rather distinct for liturgically arranged prayer texts. At the same time, readers were not only to draw devotion from the psalms and other textual elements that fitted in the specific context of the Hours; they could also derive a moral meaning from the texts that pertained to their own individual lives, which corresponds to the tropological level of scriptural exegesis.⁵⁰

This kind of ‘contextual reading’ – within the context of the text and within the personal context – required active reader involvement: the person reciting the Hours had to actively connect and interpret the textual components if they were to reach an interiorized form of prayer, here to be understood as a form of prayer in which the devotee appropriates the text(s) to the textual and personal context. In the Den Hem prayer book, most of the Hours commence with Psalm 94(95), *Venite exultemus* after the opening verses, but each time the text was to be recited with a different disposition and affect. In the opening verse the person praying addresses the Lord directly and asks Him to open their lips so that their mouth may proclaim his praise – *Here, du selte opdoen mijn lippen. Ende mijn mont sal voertkundighen dijn loff* [‘Lord, open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise’] (Ps. 50(51): 17).⁵¹ As Virginia Reinburg has noted, this verse creates a setting of near physical intimacy with God and offers the reader the possibility to immerse themselves in the text.⁵² By proclaiming the verse the reader takes on the role of the Psalmist (the Psalmic ‘I’), as well as the role of the speaker of the prayers s/he was about to recite.⁵³

The invitatory that follows largely determined the disposition with which the reader was to recite the opening Psalm of praise (Psalm 94(95)). The invitatory not only frames but is interwoven with the text of the psalm. By repeating the invitatory after each verse, the reader not only colored the verses of the opening psalm but also set the appropriate disposition for the entire Hours. In the Hours of All Saints, for instance, the invitatory, *Coemt laet ons aenbeden den heer den coninc der coningen. Want hi is die croen van allen heilighen* [‘Come let us praise the Lord, the king of kings. For he is the crown of all saints’] created a setting in which the verse *coemt ende laet ons hem aenbeden, laet ons voer gode neder vallen* [‘come let us praise him, let us fall down before God’] (Psalm 94(95):6) let the reader imagine a situation in which s/he was to genuflect before the Lord as the king of the heavens and the ‘crown of all saints’.⁵⁴ This is exactly how the Lord was portrayed in the woodcut on the preceding page (Fig. 1). Likewise, the image preceding the Long Hours of the Cross, a crucifixion scene, provided a pictorial representation of the entirely different setting into which the reader was guided by the invitatory, *Coemt laet ons Christum geuangen, ghegeesselt, bespot ende gecruyst aanbeden* [‘Come let us praise Christ captured, scourged, ridiculed, and crucified’].⁵⁵ This context

⁴⁸ Fulton Brown, ‘My Psalter, My Self’, quote on p. 75. See also my own ‘*Vele schoone beelden die noyt ghesien en waren: New Pictorial and Meditative Layers in Thielman Kerver’s 1522 Dutch-language Book of Hours*’, in Walter S. Melion et al., *Reading Images from the Past: in Honour of Karl A.E. Enenkel* (Leiden: Brill, 2025), pp. 35-62, for an analysis of how different a new pictorial frame may affect the reading of the Penitential Psalms in a sixteenth-century printed Book of Hours.

⁴⁹ Niklaus Largier, ‘The Art of Prayer. Conversions of Interiority and Exteriority in Medieval Contemplative Practice’, in *Rethinking Emotion. Interiority and Exteriority in Premodern, Modern, and Contemporary Thought*, ed. Rüdiger Campe and Julia Weber (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), pp. 58-71, quote on p. 69.

⁵⁰ On the tropological meaning of Scripture in relation to prayer see for example Jeffrey F. Hamburger & Nigel F. Palmer, *The Prayer Book of Ursula Begerin. Art-Historical and Literary Introduction* (Dietikon-Zurich: Urs Graf Verlag, [2015]), p. 399.

⁵¹ Cited from the copy The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. 1r. I have retained the original spelling. Interpunction has been added and names have been capitalized according to modern use. For more information on the individual copies, see section III below.

⁵² Virginia Reinburg on the Hours of the Virgin in Wieck, *Time Sanctified*, pp. 60-72, p. 41.

⁵³ Cf. Buschbeck, ‘Sprechen mit dem Heiligen und Eintauchen in den Text’, p. 399.

⁵⁴ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, ff. 57r-v.

⁵⁵ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. 101v.

would have led to a distinctive reading of the very same Psalm verse (Psalm 94(95):6): instead of genuflecting before the King of Heavens the reader was to fall at the feet of the crucified Christ (Fig. 5 & 7). In interplay with the text, the pictorial images helped the reader-viewer to attain the correct disposition for praying, and to immerse him/herself in a virtual world.⁵⁶

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Fig. 1. The beginning of the Hours of All Saints in The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. 11r

A similar close fit between text and image may also be observed for the Hours of St Anne (Tuesday). The image of Anna Selbdritt, with Anne reading Scripture and holding a fruit (a pear), and Mary and Christ reclining on her lap (Fig. 2), forms a pictorial representation of the words of the invitatory: *Laet ons volhertelike bliscap hebben inder ghehuechnisse des alre salichster moeder Anna. Die ons wairdelic voirt gebrocht heeft mariam die moeder ons verlossers* ['Let us rejoice full heartedly in remembrance of the most blessed mother Anna who has brought forth with dignity Mary the mother of Our Saviour'].⁵⁷

In the Hours of All Saints, the virtual transition to the heavenly Jerusalem was again taken up at the start of the Lauds. By reciting the verses as if the words of the Psalmist were his/her own, the reader appropriated the text of the opening Psalm (83(84)) for the hour of Lauds:

Salich sijne die daer wonen in dinen huse heer, van ewen tot ewen sellen si di louen. Salich is die man wies hulpe van di is. Hi settede opgangen in sijne herten inden dale der tranen in die stede die hi settede [...] Here, god der duechden, hoer mijn ghebet, iacobs god, vernem mit dinen oren mijn gebet.⁵⁸

('Blessed are those who dwell in your house, Lord, for from century to century they will praise you. Blessed is the man whose help comes from you. In the valley of tears, he will lift up his heart to the city [...] Lord, God of virtues, hear my prayer. God of Jacob, hear my prayer with your ears')

After asking the Lord to listen to his prayer – the prayer of the Psalmist had become the reader's prayer –, the Antiphon that follows colored the image (and the soundscape) of the city to which man lifts his heart in the valley of tears, helping the reader to interpret the preceding Psalm and to imagine the city as the heavenly Jerusalem:

Antifoon. Iherusalem, dijn straten sellen bestroyet worden mit reynen goude, ende in di sel gesongen worden een sang der bliscappen ende in allen dinen stegen sel geseit worden van allen den wtvercoren alleluia.⁵⁹

('Antiphon. Jerusalem, your streets will be paved with pure gold and in you a song of joy will be sung and in all your alleys will be said by all those who have been chosen Alleluia.')

As briefly announced above, some of the 'newer' texts in the Den Hem prayer book that do not belong to Grote's translation, the Hours of St Anne, the Hours of Our Lady's Sorrow and the Hours of Our Lady's Solemnity, make the prompted reading strategy more explicit.⁶⁰ At the start of the Hours of Our Lady's Sorrow, for example, the Psalm *Venite exultemus* is not only interlaced with an invitatory that would already have applied the text of the Psalm to Mary's co-suffering with Christ: *Laet ons wenen vuerichlic mitter maget Marien. Laet ons aenbeden waerdelic den coninc die inden graue leyt* ['Let us weep fervently with the Virgin Mary. Let us worthily worship the king who lies in the grave'].⁶¹ The Psalm, however, has been rewritten to fully fit the context of the Hours and to evoke Mary's emotion rather than the joyous praising of the Lord for which the Psalmist calls originally. For

⁵⁶ Cf. Buschbeck, 'Sprechen mit dem Heiligen und Eintauchen in den Text', p. 401.

⁵⁷ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. 37v.

⁵⁸ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, ff. 62v-63r. Van der Pol, *De susteren van Sanct-Agnetenhuus*, p. 147.

⁵⁹ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. 63r. Van der Pol, *De susteren van Sanct-Agnetenhuus*, p. 147.

⁶⁰ On the Hours of St Anne, see Brandenburg, *Heilig familieleven*, p. 69.

⁶¹ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. 125v.

clarity's sake, below I have placed the rewritten text next to the text of the Psalm as it appears at the beginning of the Long Hours of the Cross in the Den Hem prayer book. The original text from the Long Hours of the Cross appears on the left, the rewritten text from the Hours of Our Lady's Sorrow is placed on the right:

Venite. Coemt laet ons seer veruruechden ten heer, laet ons iubileren gode onsen salichmaker, sijn aenschijn laet ons te voren begripen mit belyen, ende laet ons mit loueliken sange tot hem volhertelike blijscap hebben. [Invitatorium] Coemt laet ons Christum geuangen, gegeesselt [...]⁶²

(‘Come, let us rejoice greatly in the Lord, let us rejoice in God, our Savior, let us come before his face with acknowledgment, and let us have full-hearted joy in him with laudatory psalms ...’)

Psalm. Venite. Coemt gi mannen ende vrouwen, laet ons wenen mitter maget marien, laet ons hebben een inwendich beclagen ende nat maken onse aensichten mit tranen. [Invitatorium] Laet ons wenen vuerichlic [...]⁶³

(‘Come you men and women, let us weep with the Virgin Mary, let us have an internal mourning and make our face wet with tears...’)

Perhaps particularly in the case of the Pièta (Fig. 3 & 6), placed before the start of the of the Hours of Our Lady's Sorrow, the woodcut may have offered readers the prospect to enter the scene virtually and wet their face with tears as the opening verse, rephrased from Psalm 50(51):17, encourages ‘men and women’ to do ‘internally’, i.e., in their meditation : *laet ons wenen mitter maget marien, laet ons hebben een inwendich beclagen ende nat maken onse aensichten met tranen* [‘let us weep with the Virgin Mary, let us have an internal mourning and make our face wet with tears’].⁶⁴ The woodcut shows Mary weeping and John appears to wipe tears off his face in imitation of the Virgin, providing an exemplar of devotion for readers.

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Fig. 2 & 3. The beginning of the Hours of St Anne and the beginning of the Hours of Our Lady's Sorrow (the text begins on the verso). The Hague, RL 150 G 10, f. F1r and S1r.

⁶² The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, ff. 101v-102r.

⁶³ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, ff. 125v-126r.

⁶⁴ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, ff. 125v-126r.



The tendency to rephrase the psalms appears even stronger in the final text in the Den Hem prayer book, the Hours of Our Lady's Solemnity. The psalms included in these Hours are Marian psalms, i.e. psalms that address Mary instead of the Lord, and in which the (formulaic) phrases seem to have been gathered from various psalms.⁶⁵ The psalm for Matins is a case in point:

Psalmus

O Maria hoe wonderlick is dijn ontfermherticheyt, die behoudes alle den genen die in dy hopen. O Maria behoeude mi als een appel vanden oge voer den genen die wederstaen dijn rechterhant. O Maria ouersie mine vianden, want si menichuoudich ende veel sijn, ende si mi mit bosen nide gehaet hebben. Inden name Marie sel ic verlost worden van der becoringe, ende in Marien naem sal ic verwinnen al dat mi wederstaet. O Maria keer dijn aensicht van mine sonden ende nem of alle mine boesheit⁶⁶

('Psalm

O Mary, how wondrous is your compassion, who guards all those who trust in you. O Mary guard me as the apple of the eye from those who oppose your right hand. O Mary, see through my enemies, for they are multiple and many, and they have hated me with evil envy. In the name of Mary, I shall be delivered from temptations, and in Mary's name I shall conquer all that hinders me. O Mary hide thy face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity' (cf. Ps. 51:9))

The opening verse has also been rephrased and the reader now asks Mary instead of the Lord to open their lips (cf. Ps. 50(51): 17): 'Vrouwe, du selste opdoen mijn lippen. Ende mijn mont sel voertkundigen dijn lof' [Lady, you shall open my lips. And my mouth will proclaim your praise]. Through the rephrased words of the psalm the reader addresses Mary directly, explicitly appropriating the voice of the Psalmist to fit the context of the Hours instead of coloring the psalms through framing texts. In the collect at the end of each hour, however, the role of the person praying shifts in some instances. Even though there are also collects that address Mary, which goes against what is generally particular to the genre of collect, their voice in for example the concluding prayer for the hour of Terce no longer addresses Mary but Christ and approaches the Virgin from His perspective. This collect takes the reader into the intimacy of Mary's bedroom at the moment of the Incarnation:

⁶⁵ The source of these psalms is uncertain. They do not appear to have been derived from Bernardus Claravallensis: *Psalterium B. Mariae Virginis* [Dutch]. Add: Anselmus, S.: *Vermaningen van den vijf droefheden Mariae*. Antwerp: Gerard Leeu, 8 Oct. 1491. 8°. ISTC no. ib00425500.

⁶⁶ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. 146v.

Suete ihesu die ter slaep camer des maechdelijke lichaems, dat mit fyoletten der oetmoedicheit, ende mit lelien der reynicheyt, ende mit rosen der caritaten was gheciert, v ontfermelic hebt geneyghet, om tcleet des vleysches te ontfangen. Gheue ons o coninc der maechden die minne der suuerheit, dat wi mit v ewelick verenicht moeten worden. Die leues ende regniers god ewelic sonder eynde Amen.⁶⁷

(‘Sweet Jesus who has reclined to receive the garment of flesh to the bedroom of the virginal body that was adorned with violins of humility, lilies of purity and roses of charity. Give us o king of virgins the love of purity so that we may become eternally united with you. God who lives and governs eternally without end Amen.’)

The three flowers that symbolize the Virgin’s different virtues may have served as prompts for further meditation, possibly relating these virtues to the devotee’s own experiences and personal situation.

In the Hours of Our Lady’s Sorrow and the Hours of Mary’s Solemnity, the psalms were rephrased or entirely rewritten and hence explicitly interpreted within the context of said Hours. In this sense, they make the interpretative skill required by liturgically arranged prayer texts, like Hours, explicit: the contextual reading mode that the Hours stimulated – readers had to actively connect short texts to each other and interpret them within their textual context – was, so to say, already applied to the text through rephrasing the text. Consequently, one could argue, the reading strategy these texts prompted was made visible. What remains open for further discussion are the reasons for – and effects of – bringing this specific set of Hours – and the additional texts and prayers that we find at the end of some of Hours – together in a single booklet, as well as the intended audience of this publication.

Taken at face value, the arrangement of the book guides the reader from more abstract notions of the Holy Spirit and Eternal Wisdom, via the role of St Anne and the angels to a reflection on the transubstantiation in the Hours of the Holy Sacrament, which is then directly mirrored in the Hours of the Holy Cross, focusing on the actual event represented during the rite of the Eucharist. The central event in salvation history, Christ’s death on the cross, is further considered in the first Hours for Saturday, focusing on Our Lady’s Sorrows. The fact that the Hours of the Holy Cross are followed by the Hours of Our Lady’s Sorrow may also explain the choice for the version of the Long Hours of the Holy Cross with interwoven Marian prayers that already consider Mary’s compassion and hence give readers a taste of what was to come on Saturday.

The Hours of Our Lady’s Solemnity focus on more joyous moments, like the conception of Christ – the contrast between the texts seems rather stark since the reader moves from the mourning Mary to Mary being visited by Gabriel in a single day, and even in a single Hour. Moreover, the two Hours for Saturday are not presented as ‘mixed Hours’ (i.e., Hours in which one or more Hours are integrated, and the matins etc. of for two different Hours are found right after each other).⁶⁸ If a reader was to pray these two Hours on a single day s/he would have to leaf back and forth within the two Hours. Such a reading practice also means that, for a correct interpretation of contextual reading of the two texts, these Hours would have to be considered as ‘interwoven’: the Matins of the Hours of Our Lady’s Solemnity following directly after the Matins of the Hours of Our Lady’s Sorrow et cetera. After reading the collect for Terce in the Hours of Our Lady’s Sorrow, in which the reader prays to Mary and John the Evangelist ‘through the grief you experienced in the death of Christ’ (*doer den rouwe dien gi hadt inder doot ons heren ihesu cristi*) the reader leaps to the joyous moment of Mary being greeted by the angel Gabriel: *Te tercie hoe si ontfinc die gruete vanden enghel wel suete* (‘At Terce how sweetly she received the greeting of the angel’).⁶⁹

.III. READER INVOLVEMENT AND THE MATERIAL BOOK

As becomes explicit in the instructions for the disciples of Eternal Wisdom, which instructs readers to pray the Hours of Eternal Wisdom every day while the book’s structure suggests readers read the text on Monday only, there is a certain tension within the book between intention and reading habits and between the fundamental structure of one set of Hours (in the case of Saturday two sets) and daily

⁶⁷ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, ff. 149r-v.

⁶⁸ For the term ‘mixed Hours’, see Wieck, ‘Prayer to the People’, p. 405.

⁶⁹ The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. 134v and f. 148v

practice. The extant copies of the Den Hem prayer book inform us further about the way(s) readers interacted with the book, concerning both the images and the textual structure of the book. At least one copy suggests that the weekly exercise was incorporated into a traditional Book of Hours and that the second Hours for Saturday were omitted.

While most copies appear to have functioned independently, as stand-alone books, the copy at the Royal Library in The Hague was inserted into a copy of a Book of Hours published by the Canons Regular at Den Hem a few years earlier, in 1496.⁷⁰ This edition was a traditional Book of Hours, and contained a Calendar, the Short Hours of the Holy Cross, the Hours of the Virgin, the Penitential Psalms and the Litany (in this copy added on handwritten quires), the Vigil and a cycle of prayers, starting with the Verses of St Gregory. The Den Hem prayer book has been inserted between the Vigil and the section with prayers.⁷¹ The joyous Hours of Our Lady's Solemnity, the second text to be recited on Saturdays, as well as the final prayer and table of contents, have been left out, meaning that that the cluster of prayers from the 1496 edition begins directly after the Hours of Our Lady's Sorrow. Although the two copies were likely not mixed and used together from the very beginning since the copy of the 1496 edition of a Book of Hours contains penwork initials distinctly different from the copy of the 1498 weekly exercise (see Fig. 4 for an example), the two copies were possibly merged not long after they were produced. An indication may be the frame that surrounded a pasted-in image at the start of the Hours of the Virgin (Fig. 4). The image has been lost, but the style of the frame seems similar in its penwork details to the penwork that surrounds the woodcuts in the part from the weekly cycle of Hours (see, for example, Fig. 7).⁷² The book thus appears to have been customized in several stages.

The two editions from the same printing shop published within a span of circa two years complemented each other effectively since there was no textual overlap, and the combination widened the possibilities for use. The function of the weekly cycle in combination with a traditional Book of Hours seems not unlike the function of the Weekday Hours included in traditional Books of Hours and briefly discussed above.⁷³ Readers of the composite volume could choose between, for example, praying the Hours of the Virgin or the Short Hours of the Holy Cross daily, or complying with the weekly cycle proposed in the 1498 edition, or, indeed, they could combine the two. Such a prayer practice of combining the daily recitation of the Hours of the Virgin with different Hours depending on the day of the week is, for example, known to have existed in a community of tertiaries.⁷⁴ A user could also choose to 'loosen up' the individual Hours from the weekly structure and recite them on occasions traditionally associated with the individual Hours: for instance the Hours of the Holy Spirit before and after Pentecost and on days when one had to make important decisions or receive ordinations.⁷⁵

Hier ergens afbeelding OGE2024_1-2_07_afb04 plaatsen (bestaat uit twee foto's) (zie voorbeeld).

Onderschrift:

Fig. 4. Opening with the beginning of the Hours of the Virgin in The Hague, RL, 150 G 10 [1]. Horae [Dutch] Getijdenboek, Schoonhoven: [Canonici Regulares apud S. Michaellem in Den Hem], 5 Oct. 1496. 8°. The frame originally contained a pasted-in image, possibly printed (?)

⁷⁰ The Hague, RL, 150 G 10 [1]. Horae [Dutch] Getijdenboek, Schoonhoven: [Canonici Regulares apud S. Michaellem in Den Hem], 5 Oct. 1496. 8°. ISTC no. ih00431200; ILC no. 1236. The copy at The Hague, mixed with the 1498 edition of the *Suerlic boexken van sonderlingen deuote ghetiden*, is the only known surviving copy. On this copy, see also Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula*, p. 595.

⁷¹ After the Vigil, right before the start of the Hours of the Holy Spirit (Monday), a second handwritten text has been inserted: 'Hier beghinnen die 9 corte lessen'.

⁷² The Hague, RL, 150 G 10 [1], f. [C]1v-[C]2r. The binding is 19th-century red morocco leather.

⁷³ See Wieck, 'Prayer to the People', p. 409.

⁷⁴ Youri Desplenter, *Al aertrijc segt lofsanc. Middelnederlandse vertalingen van Latijnse hymnen en sequensen*. 2 vols. (Gent: Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde, 2008), vol. 1, p. 183.

⁷⁵ van Dijk, 'Methodologische kanttekeningen bij het onderzoek van getijdenboeken', p. 216.



In individual copies the expressiveness of the images and hence their meditative function was sometimes enhanced through the use of color.⁷⁶ The importance of studying hand-added coloring for the interpretation and function of printed images was pioneered by David Areford and is now commonly acknowledged.⁷⁷ Two of the three copies of the Den Hem prayer book that I have consulted contain some form of coloring in highly varying degrees, which already points to various receptions of the image and the prayer book as such. In the copy held at the Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum (Huis van het boek) in The Hague, only small details of the images (often halos) have been touched up with a light-yellow hue, and Christ's redemptious blood has been added to the Crucifixion and the Piëta (Figs. 5 and 6). The coloring in the copy kept at the Royal Library in The Hague is much more extensive – the palette combines red, brown, blue, green, and yellow – and the margins of the folios that contain an image are filled with pen flourishes, creating decorative frames that draw the eye to – and into – the images (see Figs. 2 and 3). The coloring added a layer of depth and focus to the woodcut image, and hence to the reader's involvement in the image and their meditation; for instance on the suffering Christ, who readers were to praise as 'captured, scourged, ridiculed, and crucified' according to the invitatory of the Long Hours of the Cross.

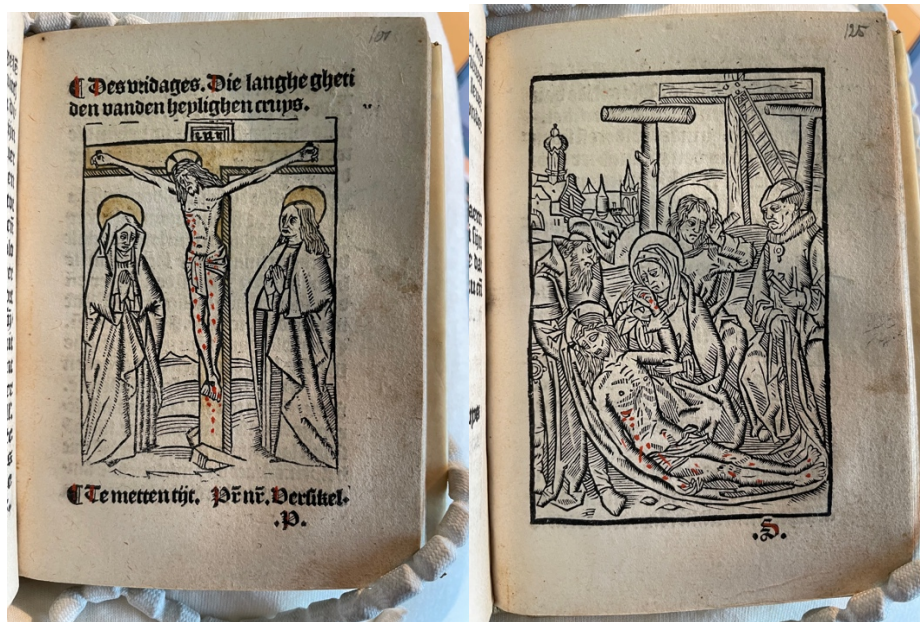
Hier ergens afbeelding OGE2024_1-2_07_afb05 en 06 plaatsen (zie voorbeeld)

Onderschrift:

Fig. 6 & 7. The beginning of the Long Hours of the Cross and the beginning of the Hours of Our Lady's Sorrow (the text begins on the verso) in The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. P1r and S1r.

⁷⁶ Presently, four copies are known to survive: Cambridge, UL, Inc.6.E.13.1[3133]; The Hague, KB, 150 G 10 [2]; The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28 and Utrecht, MCC, BMH Warm i1263E6. So far, I have consulted the latter three copies. The copy in Cambridge University Library is described in the MEI (Material Evidence in Incunabula, <https://data.cerl.org/mei/00560462>, last accessed 5 January 2024) database and also had coloring added to the woodcut images: "Decoration: Illustrations hand coloured. Principal initials supplied in blue with pen flourishes in red; others supplied in alternating red and blue; headings underlined and capitals picked out in red."

⁷⁷ David S. Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Farnham [etc]: Ashgate, 2010). For coloring in incunabula, see also Anna Dlabáčová, 'Illustrated Incunabula as Material Objects: The Case of the Devout Hours on the Life and Passion of Jesus Christ', in Rijklof Hofman et al. (ed.), *Inwardness, Individualization, and Religious Agency in the Late Medieval Low Countries: Studies in The 'Devotio Moderna' and its Contexts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 181-221.



Hier ergens afbeelding OGE2024_1-2_07_afb07 plaatsen
Onderschrift:

Figure 7. Crucifixion with Mary and St John at the start of the Long Hours of the Cross in the copy The Hague, RL 150 G 10, f. P1r



The coloring of the Crucifixion in the copy held at The Hague is rather distinct (Fig. 7) and did not only connect to the invitory of the Long Hours of the Holy Cross but may have had a twofold meaning for (the) reader(s) of this copy. The way the red ink is applied, in round dots distributed evenly over Christ's full body was likely read as a reference to the prophecy from Isaiah (53:4-6) that was to be recited during the first hour (Matins), and that, especially in the context of the Hours of the

Cross, was to be applied literally to Christ and his atonement. Readers likely related verse 53:4, which in Grote's Middle Dutch translation contains the phrase *wi rekende[sic] hem te wesen als een malaetsch mensche van god geslagen ende vernedert* (we considered him as a leprous man, smitten by God and afflicted),⁷⁸ to the image they had viewed right before reciting the Long Hours of the Holy Cross. The coloring added by hand portrayed Christ in a fashion similar to the way persons with leprosy were depicted, their skin covered with red patches – as a *malaetsch mensche*.⁷⁹ Conversely, before reading the Hours the devotee could see the image from Isaiah's prophecy *and* its fulfillment at the same time.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the Den Hem prayer book incorporates several already existing Hours, including three Hours of which the translation from Latin can be ascribed to Geert Grote, into a weekly cycle of Hours. To recite the Hours with devotion, i.e., to internalize the texts of the Hours (psalms, hymns, prayers etc.) from the various perspectives advanced by each of the Hours, readers had to be skilled in contextual reading, in imagining the content, voices and meaning of the psalms and other textual components in different contexts. This skill, which is also an imaginative skill, was likely primarily advanced in the Low Countries by the Hours translated by Geert Grote that became highly popular, but also by other liturgically arranged prayer texts such as the Hours of All Saints. In the Den Hem prayer book – that, as a matter of fact, could only exist because of the immense influence Grote's Hours had had on the prayer and cultural landscape – Grote's Hours existed in relation to other Hours; they had become part of a sequence to be repeated week in, week out. Each of the Hours advanced a different perspective and was to be read with a different disposition.

The collection of Hours – old and recent texts – forms an excellent sample of devotions popular at the end of the fifteenth century (the devotion to St Anne, Mary's Sorrows, and the continued popularity of Passion devotions and mystically tinted texts). Together the texts covered a large part of Salvation History and by placing them in a well-thought out sequence the texts also connect beautifully to each other. On Friday, through the Long Hours of the Holy Cross, the reader meditates Christ's suffering primarily from Christ's perspective, but the prayers to Mary included at the end of each hour punctuate the reader's meditation with the perspective of Christ's mother. Mary's perspective is then fully developed in the subsequent text, the Hours of Lady's Sorrow, in which Mary becomes not only the vocal point but the figure to whom devotees address their prayers. Mary is now the addressee instead of Christ. When readers recited the cycle of texts week in, week out, their weekdays became associated with the voices and affects of the Hours to be read on that day. Imagined through the Hours that brought together a wide spectrum of perspectives and devotions, the week became part of a different, liturgical temporality connected to Salvation History.

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⁷⁸ Full verse: 'Mer wairlike hi heuet onse siecte ende onse crancheit opghebuert ende onse droefheit heeft hi gedragen, ende wi rekende[sic] hem te wesen als een malaetsch mensche van god geslagen ende vernedert', cited from The Hague, MMW, 001 F 28, f. 104v (van Wijk, *Het getijdenboek van Geert Grote*, p. 116-117).

⁷⁹ The direct application of prophetic imagery from the Old Testament to Jesus Christ has been analysed by James H. Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. A Study of the Transformation of Sacred Metaphor into Descriptive Narrative* (Kortrijk: Van Ghemmert, 1979), esp. pp. 52-54 on Isaiah 53:4, *Quasi leprosus* and Middle Dutch texts that elaborate on this simile. The simile of Christ as a leper, however, was likely best known through the Long Hours of the Holy Cross in Grote's translation.

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ABSTRACT

In 1498 the Canons Regular near Schoonhoven, not far from Gouda, published a collection of Hours in which the texts are distributed over the seven days of the week. Starting with the Hours of the Holy Spirit on Sunday, the book invites the reader to read and engage with a range of Hours that cover a relatively wide spectrum of perspectives and devotions every week. Some of the Hours appear in the translation ascribed to Geert Grote (1383-1384) – the Long Hours of the Holy Spirit (Sunday), the more mystically tinted Hours of Eternal Wisdom (Monday), and the Long Hours of the Cross (Friday) – but the book also contains the relatively recently composed (c. 1486) Hours of St Anne (Tuesday). This contribution explores the reading skills these liturgically arranged prayer texts required and the ways in which the book, through an interplay between text and image, achieved reader involvement and even immersive forms of reading.

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