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## Book of Hours (Use of Geert Groote)

In Dutch, manuscript on paper

The Netherlands, c. 1450-1500

49 folios on paper, unidentified watermark of unicorn rampant with dashes to the horn, similar to Piccard Online no. 124565, Flemish, c. 1460, modern foliation in pencil, 1-49, missing several quires following quire 5, f. 35v (collation i<sup>2</sup> ii<sup>8+1</sup> [one leaf, f. 3, added at the beginning] iii-vi<sup>8</sup> vii<sup>6</sup>), no catchwords or signatures, frame ruled in crayon (justification 95 x 76 mm.), written in brown ink in an informal quick hybrida script with 24 to 22 lines per page, red rubrics and 2-line capitals in red, a selection of prayers and rubrics in brown ink underlined in red, minor crinkling and thumbing to pages, edges worn with occasional chipping. Bound in 19<sup>th</sup>-century marbled paper, 19<sup>th</sup>-century handwriting "Een ghetide van der heyligher magheden" with a printed number "87" on spine, binding loose and cover splitting along front edge of spine. Dimensions: 146 x 108 mm.

Made for an owner of modest means, utilitarian Books of Hours such as this, copied on paper in informal scripts and without decoration, are rare survivors that provide a broader perspective on book ownership and religious culture in the late-medieval Netherlands. Written entirely in Dutch, the text of the present Book of Hours follows the translation of Geert Groote (1340-1384), founder of the pietistic religious movement known as the Modern Devotion. Although once part of a longer volume, this is certainly of interest to modern historians of the book.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written in the Northern Netherlands, perhaps in the province of Holland, in the second half of the fifteenth century.
2. Ex libris "Arm. Dejong du Journal 'La Métropole' Anvers" on interior of front cover. Armond Dejong (1882-1943) was a Jewish editor for the French-language journal *La Métropole* based in Antwerp, later deported to Auschwitz during the Nazi occupation where he died in 1943 (see Online Resources).

## TEXTS

f. 1-19v, Hours of the Virgin (Geert Groote), *Een ghetide van der heyligher magheden*, incipit, "Here du salste op doen mijn lippen ende mijn mont sal uoertkundighen dijn lof . . ."; with Matins, ff. 1-5; Lauds, ff. 5-7v; Prime, ff. 7v-9v; Terce, ff. 9v-11; Sext, ff. 11-12; Nones, ff. 12-13; Vespers, ff. 13-15v; Compline ff. 15v-19v);

ff. 20-35v, Hours of the Cross (Prime, ff. 20-22v; Terce, ff. 22v-24v; Sext, ff. 24v-26v; None, ff. 26v-31; Compline, ff. 31v-35v);

f. 35v, Office of the Dead (incomplete) ending abruptly following rubric for *De profundis* from Vespers;

ff. 36-39, [prayer to the virgin], incipit, "O maria onbeulechte maghet ende moeder deo heren tot dijnre waerdicheit ende om dat stu Mij ghenadelit...";

f. 39, [another prayer to the Virgin], incipit, "Ave maria mit ynnighe herten...";

f. 39, [prayer to the 72 Names of the Virgin] incipit, "Ende desen namen gaf Maria een van haren sonderlinghe die naren als die biscop..." [see Rudy 2016, p. 293];

ff. 39v-42, [Prayers to the Virgin without rubrics], incipit, "Van onser vrouwe boetscap...";

ff. 42-49, [Saint Bernard's Lamentation], incipit, "Ghegruet sijstu mijn salicheit o du lieve here Ihesu Christi dear vele oflaets toe is..." [similar to Lamentation from a Prayer Book produced near Utrecht, c. 1460-1480, formerly Les Enluminures, TM 876).

This unique little Book of Hours composed in Middle Dutch contains an interesting collection of prayers. Its opening sequences of the Hours of the Virgin, the Cross, and Office for the Dead (incomplete) are based on Geert Grote's fourteenth-century translations with moderate variations. These are followed by a collection of rarer prayers and indulgences (some seemingly uncatalogued) highlighted by a sequence of prayers directed toward the wounds of Christ attributed to Saint Bernard. A related group of prayers can be found in a Prayer Book produced around Delft in the 1470s now in the Royal Library of Copenhagen (MS Thott 129; See Rudy, 2016, pp. 146-147). One especially unusual feature is the recurrence of a prayer for the Resurrection ("weest ghegruet feest dach die teeren biste in alle der ewicheit in welken daghe god verwomen heft die helle en[de] besit die sterren") underlined in red ink and placed intertextually between divisions in the Hours of the Cross. A similar invocation begins a sequence of prayers for the Resurrection in a Dutch Prayer Book in the British Library (Add. MS 28686, f. 47). The prayer occurs on four different occasions and must have had special meaning to its owner.

The short length of this volume (49 folios) and incomplete Office for the Dead show that it was once part of a larger volume. Rubrics are sparsely placed throughout the manuscript and in many places lacking altogether, meaning that its owner must have possessed intimate knowledge of its contents. Written in a practical hybrida script on well-thumbed paper without decoration, the manuscript gives the impression of working Prayer Book, carried and utilized daily by its owner.

The fourteenth-century translation of the Hours of the Virgin into Dutch by Geert Groote (1340-1384) is the most common vernacular translation of the Hours in the Middle Ages (there are French translations but they are very rare) and helped inspire the spiritual movement in the Low Countries known as the *Devotio moderna* (Modern or New Devotion). In the fifteenth century, the movement increased in followers who were largely lay and literate and was further disseminated in texts such as *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis. Groote's translation of the Hours was immensely popular and anchored the movement's emphasis on personal devotion practiced through reading and meditation on devotional texts and images. While the original owner of this Prayer Book remains unknown, the manuscript continues to offer a fascinating profile of their piety and devotion.

## LITERATURE

Karłowska-Kamzowa, Alicja. "The Genesis and Description of a Miniature Dutch Prayer Book from the National Library in Warsaw," *Polish Libraries Today* 6 (2005), pp. 5-10.

Rudy, Katherine. *Rubrics, Images, and Indulgences in Late Medieval Netherlandish Manuscripts*, Leiden, 2017.

Rudy, Katherine. *Piety in Pieces: How Medieval Readers Customized their Manuscripts*, Cambridge, 2016.

Van Wijk, N. *Het Getijdenboek van Geert Grote*, Leiden, 1940.

## OLINE RESOURCES

Edited volume of Geert Grote's Book of Hours

[https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/grot001geti01\\_01/grot001geti01\\_01\\_0008.php](https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/grot001geti01_01/grot001geti01_01_0008.php)

Armond De Jong

<https://www.joodsmonument.nl/en/page/203971/armand-de-jong>

TM 1069