

**Book of Hours in the Geert Grote translation (use of Utrecht)
In Dutch, decorated manuscript on parchment
Northern Netherlands, North Holland (Haarlem?), c. 1460-1480**

i (modern paper) + 142 + i (modern paper) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, 1-142, lacking two quires at the beginning and two leaves at the end (collation i-xvii⁸ xviii⁸ [-7, -8, lacking two leaves after f. 142, with loss of text]), no catchwords or signatures, ruled in brown ink (justification 88 x 55 mm.), written in dark brown ink in a gothic bookhand (textualis) in a single column on 21 lines, rubrics in red, capitals touched in red, 1- to 2-line initials alternating in red and blue throughout, several 3-line initials in blue with red penwork flourishes highlighted with touches in green wash extending to one or two margins, six large (6- to 11-lines) duplex (puzzle) initials ornamented with fine pen-flourishing in red and blue with touches in green wash extending to two, three or four margins, a small tear in the lower margin of f. 16, several tears on f. 32 (but loss of only one word), lacking the bottom corner of f. 142 with loss of text, a few small stains and signs of wear, otherwise in very good condition. Bound in modern light brown calf, front cover gold-tooled with a simple frame and the title "Ghetidenboeck +- 1400" and spine with four stylized wreaths, in very good condition. Dimensions 115 x 90 mm.

It is only in the Northern Netherlands that a vernacular translation of the Book of Hours became more popular than the text in Latin, transforming the daily prayer of the laity and providing more direct and profound access to the divine. This Dutch Book of Hours, likely made for a nun, is distinguished by six large initials decorated with fine pen-flourishing localized to Haarlem; they represent well the late medieval art of the book in the Northern Netherlands.

PROVENANCE

1. Written and illuminated in North Holland, probably in Haarlem, c. 1460-1480, most likely for the use of a nun. The manuscript can be dated by the style of its script and penwork to around 1460-1480. The style of the penwork ornamentation allows localizing the making of the book in North Holland, probably in Haarlem, a major center for manuscript production (see below). North Holland was part of the County of Holland, belonging at the time to the Burgundian Netherlands. Haarlem was its cultural capital, before the rise of Amsterdam in the sixteenth century. The inclusion in the litanies of two Utrecht bishops, St. Willibrord and St. Odolph, suggests that the book was intended for use in the diocese of Utrecht. The medieval diocese of Utrecht included the County of Holland. The liturgical use of Utrecht of our manuscript is further confirmed by the position of St. Martin, the patron saint of the diocese of Utrecht, first among confessors.

St. Agnes typically heads the list of the virgins in litanies used within the diocese of Utrecht, but here this position occupied by St. Mary Magdalene suggests that the manuscript was made for use within a religious house; the Congregation of Windesheim is excluded because St. Augustine is not placed before St. Martin among the confessors (cf. Korteweg, 2013, pp. 240-241). The manuscript was very likely made for a nun, judging from the preferences given to female saints among the suffrages.

2. A nineteenth-century (?) inscription in the upper margin of f. 136, mainly cropped:
"Al...189...900...Sondag (?) avont ..."
3. Modern booksellers's notes on the front pastedown and flyleaf.

TEXT

(The calendar, as well as Matins, Lauds and the beginning of Prime in the Hours of the Virgin are lacking from the beginning of this manuscript.)

ff. 1-17, Hours of the Virgin, beginning imperfectly in Prime, incipit, "//om mine broderen en om mine naesten heb ic vrede van di ghesproken ...";

ff. 17v-37, Hours of the Eternal Wisdom, *Hier beghinnen die ewighe wijsheit ghetiden*, incipit, "Mine siele hevet di begeret ...";

Getijden van de Eeuwige Wijsheid is a translation, by Geert Grote, of the *Cursus Aeternae Sapientiae* by Henry Suso; this text represented an addition to the usual prayers found in Latin Books of Hours.

ff. 37v-57, Hours of the Holy Spirit (long version), *Hier beghinnen heilighe gheest ghetiden*, incipit, "Here du salste opdoen mine lippen ...";

ff. 57-77v, Hours of the Holy Cross (long version), *Die langhe cruus ghetide*, incipit, "Here du salste opdoen mine lippen ...";

ff. 77v-80, Suffrages of Saints John the Baptist, Joris (George), Mary Magdalene, Agnes and Elizabeth;

f. 80-80v, Gospel extract according to St. John the Evangelist;

ff. 81-88v, Seven Penitential Psalms, *Hier beghinnen die seven psalmen*, incipit, "Here indijnre verbol ghentheit ...";

ff. 88v-94v, Litanies, including St. Willibrord, bishop of Utrecht, St. Odulph, bishop of Utrecht, and St. Gertrude the Great, followed by prayers;

ff. 95-126v, Office of the Dead, *Hier beghint die langhe vigeli*, incipit, "Mi hebben om bevanghen die suchten des doots ...";

ff. 127-128v, Suffrage of St. John the Evangelist;

ff. 129-142v, Hours of All Saints, ending imperfectly, *Hier beghinnen alre heilighen getiden*, incipit, "Here du selste opdoen mijn lippen ... des goddienstighen leven//"

DECORATION

Fifteenth-century Dutch manuscripts are renowned for their penwork initials. Our manuscript includes six large red and blue puzzle initials, adorned with elaborate penwork in red and blue that extends from the initials, decorating the page in the outer, and at times top and bottom margins as well: f. 17v, initial 'M', 9 lines; f. 37v, initial 'H', 7 lines; f. 57, initial 'H', 6 lines; f. 81, initial 'H', 11 lines; f. 95, initial 'M', 8 lines; and f. 129, initial 'H', 9 lines.

Dutch manuscripts can often be localized by the penwork flourishes decorating these initials, because each large town or region came to have its own style. The penwork in our manuscript has several elements of the Haarlem style, such as the pearled rims with small thorns, found outlining the initials in blue ink: the ascender of the letter 'H' (ff. 37v, 57, 81, 129) and the frames of 'M' (ff. 17v, 95), and along the extending hairlines in red ink (f. 37v) ("parelrand met doortjes" in Hülsmann and Nieuwstraten, 1992, p. 88). Other characteristics of the Haarlem style are the tendrils extending into the margin and making a reverse curve, found on all decorated pages ("U-bochten" in Hülsmann and Nieuwstraten, 1992, p. 91), and the terminals in fountain-like sprays, as on ff. 17v, 81, 95 and 129 ("fonteynen" in Hülsmann and Nieuwstraten 1992, p. 90). These, and the hatching on the leaf in the lower margin of f. 17v, and the small circles and the motif resembling an ampersand, drawn above short parallel strokes, both found throughout the decorated margins, are comparable to the decoration of a Psalter for the liturgical use of Utrecht made probably in Haarlem around 1470, Haarlem, SB, 184 C 6 (see Online Resources).

The Latin Book of Hours was translated into Middle Dutch in 1383-1384 by Geert Grote (1340-1384) (see Van Wijk, 1940). Grote also added a new important text to the standard contents, the Hours of Eternal Wisdom, the *Getijden van de Eeuwige Wijsheid*, a translation of the *Cursus Aeternae Sapientiae* by Henry Suso, found on ff. 17v-37 in our manuscript. The Northern Netherlands was not the only country in the medieval Latin world to translate the Book of Hours into vernacular (e.g. in France the Hours of the Virgin and of the Holy Cross were translated into French verse), but it was only in Northern Netherlands that the vernacular text became more popular than the original Latin one. This had enormous consequences for the development of lay spirituality, as it transformed the everyday prayer from the hieratic, abstract formulae written in the Latin of the clergy to a language that laymen could easily understand, thus providing them more direct and profound access to the divine (cf. König, 2012, pp. 10-11). It is interesting to note in our manuscript the less fixed state of the vernacular orthography. For instance, the verse Ps. 50:17, which begins Matins in the liturgy of the Hours, "Here du salste opdoen mijn lippen" (in Latin, "Domine, labia mea aperies," which can be translated into English, "Oh Lord, open thou my lips"), is at times written with the variants "selste" and "mine" (cf. ff. 37v, 57, 129).

Most Northern Netherlandish manuscripts copied in Dutch were not illuminated with miniatures, but included only decorated initials, as in our manuscript. Eberhard König suggests that this is because, once the text was understandable to Dutch readers, they no longer felt the need for the images, and they realized that the conventional narrative cycles in Books of Hours were far removed from the text itself; the *getijdenboeken* "were made truly to be read" (König, 2012, pp. 12-13, 16). Manuscripts without miniatures were also more accessible to audiences with more modest means, but they were, nevertheless, expensive purchases. This manuscript would provide an excellent support for teaching the history of prayer and late medieval lay spirituality.

LITERATURE

Hülsmann, M. and R. Nieuwstraten, "Haarlem en Noord-Holland," *Kriezels, aubergines en takkenbossen*, ed. by A. Korteweg, Zutphen, 1992, pp. 84-115.

Korteweg, A. "Books of Hours from Northern Netherlands Reconsidered: The Use of Utrecht and Windersheim and Geert Grote's Role as a Translator," *Books of Hours Reconsidered*, ed. by S. Hindman and J. Marrow, London, 2013, pp. 235-277.

König, E. *Devotion from Dawn to Dusk: The Office of the Virgin in Books of Hours of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague*, Leiden, 2012.

Marrow, J. et al. *The Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*, New York, 1990.

Van Wijk, N. *Het getijdenboek van Geert Grote, naar het Haagse handschrift 133 E 21 uitgegeven*, Leiden, 1940.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Haarlem, Stadsbibliotheek (SB), 184 C 6 in Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections:
http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=urn:PTP:Haarlem:SB:184C6_008r

Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections:
<http://www.mmdc.nl/static/site/index.html>

TM 1126