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Books of hours as text compilations in the Low Countries

Conference: Networks of Manuscripts, Networks of Texts (International Conference, Huygens ING, Amsterdam, 22-23 October 2020)

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Books of hours, as we all know, were copied in droves in the late Middle Ages and supported the devotion of the faithful. They usually contain a calendar and several liturgical offices such as the Hours of the Virgin and the Office of the dead, and additional texts in Latin or Vernacular.
Although they are known to all Medievalists, especially to art historians, books of hours are often overlooked or despised as a standard mass production. Yet, they are part in the cultural and even intellectual life of the Middle Ages. They circulate and transmit different sets of texts, and constitute precious sources on medieval devotion, liturgy, social representation, and text dissemination in Western medieval society. Paradoxically, if we go into the detail of textual analysis, they are an utmost diverse and complex corpus. In this paper, we will define them as codified compilations of compilations. In their turn, these compilations constitute a network of texts and manuscripts.
This paper proposes to analyse specifically the networks of manuscripts and texts in the Low countries to better understand how the interdependence of devotion, commercial imperatives, and mass production gave birth to hybrid texts.
In the first part, we will define Hours as multi-layered compilations and highlight how network analysis may be applied to them. In a second part, we will address the specifics of the book production in the Southern Low Countries. In the third and last part, we will show that these compilations could cross-contaminate in the local workshop production and give birth to hybrid manuscripts with original positions in the network.

1 Books of hours and offices as textual networks

1.1 BOH as compilations of offices

Let's start our first part with the definition of books of hours and offices as compilations and textual networks. Books of hours are, as already mentioned, volumes in which you would find several texts. Therefore, you can very easily imagine networks of manuscripts containing the same texts or the same texts in the same position.
This was done for example by Octave Julien, Frieda Van der Heiden, and Gustavo Fernandez Riva who produced bi-modal networks containing two sorts of entities, namely manuscripts and texts. This approach is efficient to support genre analysis and text classification, and to understand the reshuffling of short texts and poems[i]. All three authors suppress the notion of seriality, and that of granularity.

For books of hours, this approach can help highlighting when and where some texts were more popular or commonly added to the core of books of hours, or conversely when and where they were suppressed.

But this is too crude a method. Indeed, a standard book of hours contains calendar, the Hours of the Virgin, the Hours of the Holy Spirit, the Hours of the Cross, the Office of the dead, penitential psalms and litany, two prayers known by their incipits *Obsecro Te* and *O intemerata*, four or five Gospel lessons, and suffrages, and additional prayers in Latin or Vernacular. They are almost always present, as illustrated by a comparison of 10 randomly selected manuscripts.

Harvard251	Harvard253	Harvard32	Harvard1000	Harvard464	Poitiers1097	Poitiers43	Poitiers46
Calendar	Calendar	Calendar	Calendar	Suffrages	Gospel Lections	Calendar	Calendar
Gospel Lections	Gospel Lections	Gospel Lections	Virgin	Virgin	Prayers	Gospel Lections	Gospel Lections
Virgin	Obsecro Te	Obsecro Te	Litany of Mary	Cross	Virgin	Obsecro Te	Obsecro Te
Cross	Virgin	Virgin	Psalms Litany	Holy Spirit	Holy Spirit	Virgin	O Intemerata
Psalms Litany	Psalms Litany	O Intemerata	Dead	Psalms Litany	Mixed VCS	Cross	Virgin
Suffrages	Cross	Psalms Litany	Cross	Dead	Psalms Litany	Holy Spirit	Cross
Orationes	Holy Spirit	Cross	Holy Spirit	Gospel Lections	Dead	Psalms Litany	Holy Spirit
	Dead	Holy Spirit	Orationes	Obsecro Te	Suffrages	Dead	Psalms Litany
		Dead			Prayers	Suffrages	Dead
		Joys Virgin			Suffrages	7 req Lord	Verses
		7 req Lord			Gospels (Passio)	Suffrages Prayers	Suffrages

Figure 1 : Sequence of main sections in 10 books of hours

To go further, we need to take the liturgical use into account, that is the textual specificities of offices according to their liturgical destination, which may be different both from the place of origin and from the first place of use. For example, a book of hours may be produced in Flanders, for the use of Rome for a patron and commissioner in Paris. Moreover, all liturgical texts in one manuscript needn't be for the same use and one can find the Hours of the Virgin for the use of Paris before the Office of the dead for the use of Rome. For 700 manuscripts, we know both the use of the Virgin and the Dead, among which no less than sixty-one display more than one use. Among these hybrids, the use of Rome ranks first, with 22 Hours of the Virgin and 9 Offices of the dead, then Tournai, Amiens and Paris with each 6 occurrences. This constitutes a network in its own right. It shows links from French dioceses like Reims and Troyes to Paris, and links from Flemish and English ones, like Sarum and Tournai, to Rome. But major French dioceses like Rouen, Poitiers and Nantes also point to Rome. Amiens is in the middle while Cambrai and Ghent, in the Southern Low Countries and belonging to the Roman Empire, are linked to Paris.

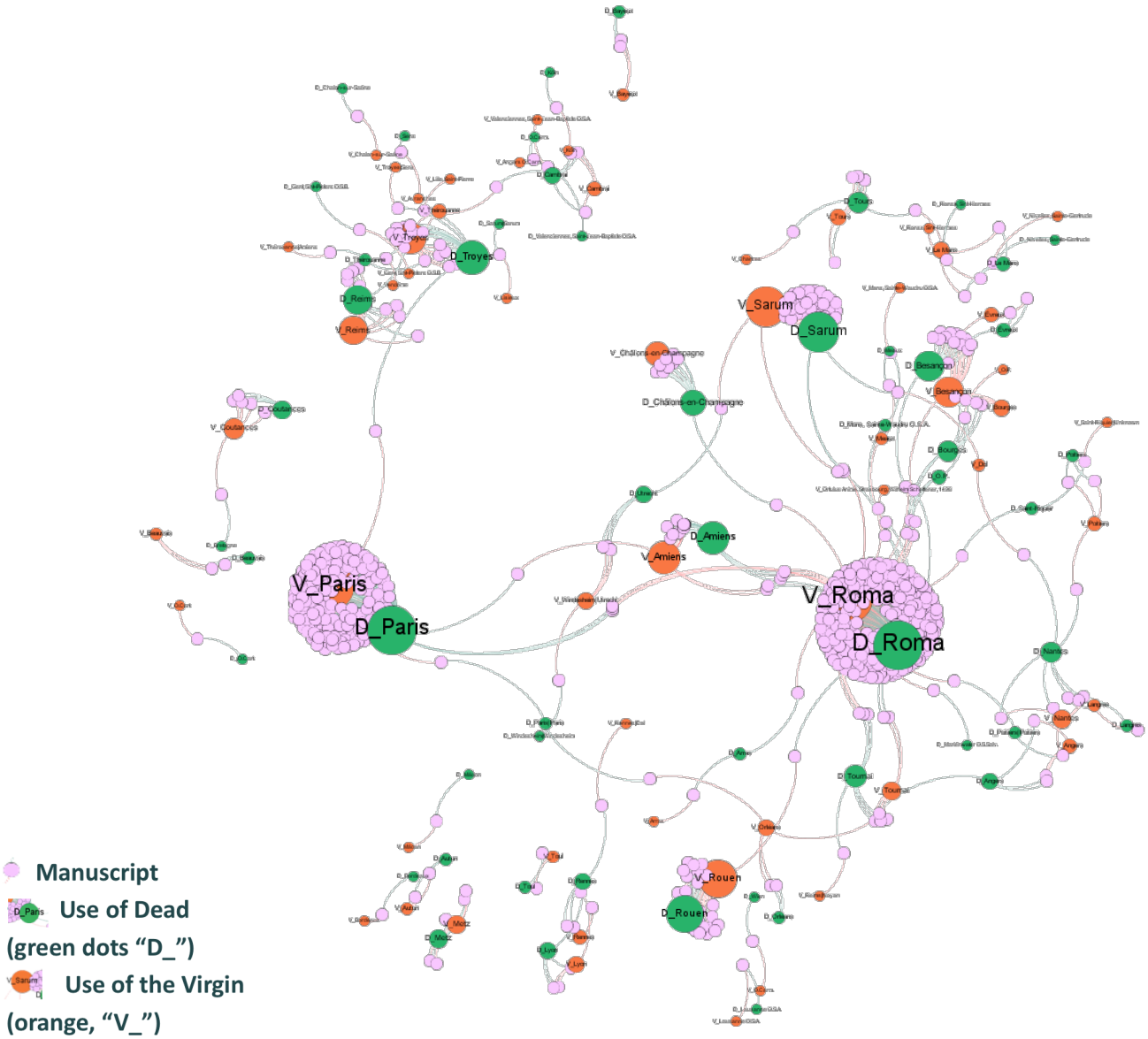

Figure 2 : Network of uses within books of hours

1.2 Offices as compilations: Reexamining Ottosen's findings with tools of network analysis

We could comment further, but now, let's see a further level of complexity. Each of the liturgical offices that compose a book of hours is a compilation in itself, built up from hundreds of different pieces, whose order is typical for specific liturgical uses. This was recognized by Madan, Leroquais and Beyssac and used to identify the liturgical use of the hours of the Virgin and the Dead. Core principle is that almost all dioceses and abbeys choose their texts in the same corpus, but do not use them at the same moment during the day.

Knut Ottosen analyzed one single type of pieces in the office of the Dead, namely the responsories of the nine or twelve lessons in the nocturns of matins. These chanted pieces function as interpretation and exegesis of the biblical readings. Ottosen established a comprehensive census of responsories in more than two thousand copies. With a list of seventy-five responsories (only 20 used more than 200 times), he demonstrated how minimal differences may distinguish two liturgical uses either in different institutions, or before and after a liturgical reform, like in Subiaco, Jerusalem, Bayeux, and Zwiefalten.

Location	Time	Index	R1	R2	R3	R5	R6	R7	R9	R10	R11
Subiaco	970-1000	SUB160	14	72	24	32	28	57	68	40	38
Bayeux	1200-1300	BAYEUX74D	14	72	24	32	57	12	68	40	38
Jerusalem	1131	BL1139	14	72	24	32	57	28	68	40	38
Zwiefalten	1100-1200	KRL60B	14	72	24	32	57	28	68	40	82
Zwiefalten	1380-1420	STUTT13B	14	72	24	32	57	68	82	28	38

Figure 3: : Similar responsories in the office of the Dead in several institutions (Subiaco, Bayeux, Jerusalem) or successive states of a liturgy for one institution (Zwiefalten)

A same set in a different order is characteristic to distinguish between Paris and Rome, which have their nine responsories in common, and again seven in common with, for example, Cambrai.

Location	Time	Index	R1	R2	R3	R5	R6	R7	R9	R10	R11
Cambrai	1562	CAMBR6	14	32	72	24	68	40	89	46	38
Roman	1350-1550	S.1938-10	14	72	24	46	32	57	68	28	38
Paris	1100-1200	GEN93	72	14	32	57	24	68	28	46	38

Figure 4: Similar responsories in the office of the Dead ordered in different sequences (Cambrai, Rome, Paris)

Building a network of responsories without taking the position into account would not render the liturgical process. Based on Ottosen's census, we build a network of manuscripts defined as follows:

- a link between two manuscripts if they share at least four common responsories at the same positions,
- and the edges are weighted from four to nine, according to the common readings

Here a visualisation with the YiFan Hu algorithm, allowing to evaluate how close the manuscripts and the uses they instantiate are from one another. Many clusters represent liturgical affinities, as the one grouping Paris, Beauvais, Thérouanne, Saint-Pol de Léon, the one grouping dioceses in Southern Germany, and the one grouping Troyes and Bourges.

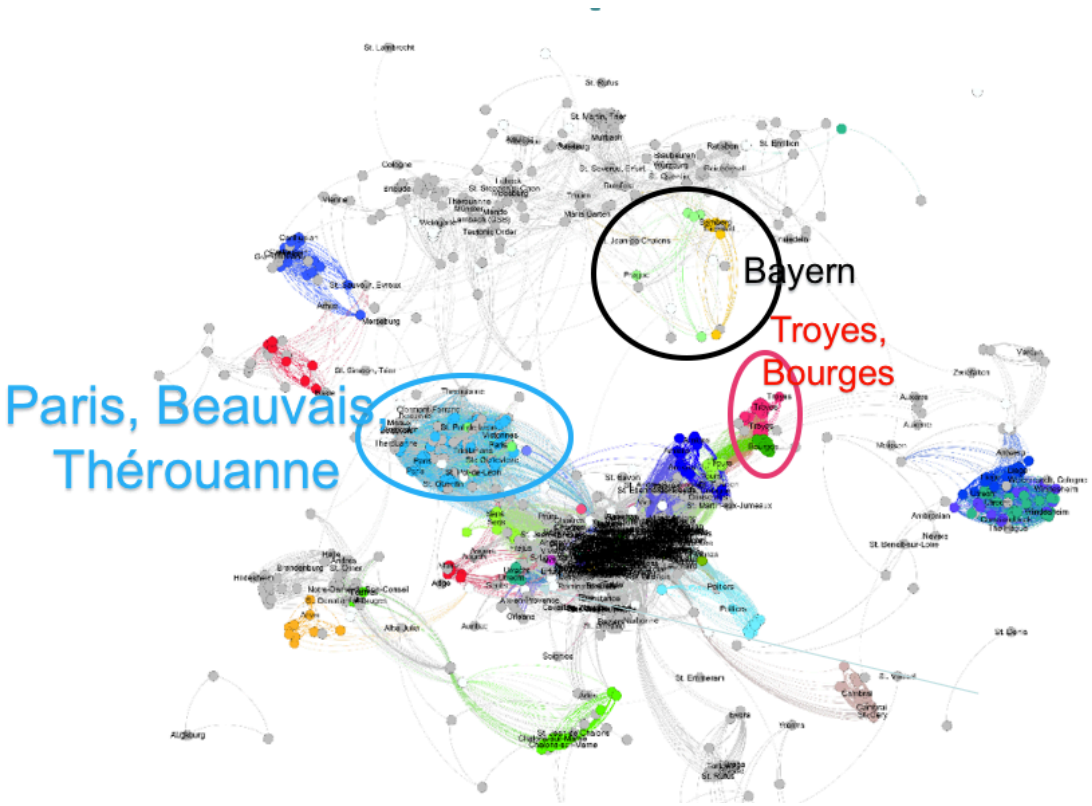

Figure 5: Office of the Dead: network of liturgical uses (responsories)

1.3 Hours of the Virgin

So far, we have only a new vision on previous scholarship. Now, we want to introduce you to new levels of examination with a study on the Hours of the Virgin.

1.3.1 A large compilation

This office is composed of 400 to 500 different pieces, distributed in eight hours, each divided in five sections. Pieces pertain to specific categories, like antiphons, responsories, psalms, lessons, versicles, hymns, chapters, canticle and benediction. They are not distributed randomly, the position of each text category being almost always identical. Yet, as for the responsories of the office of the dead, the possible variations are immense. Important here are variations including the absence of specific pieces at specific moments of the liturgy.

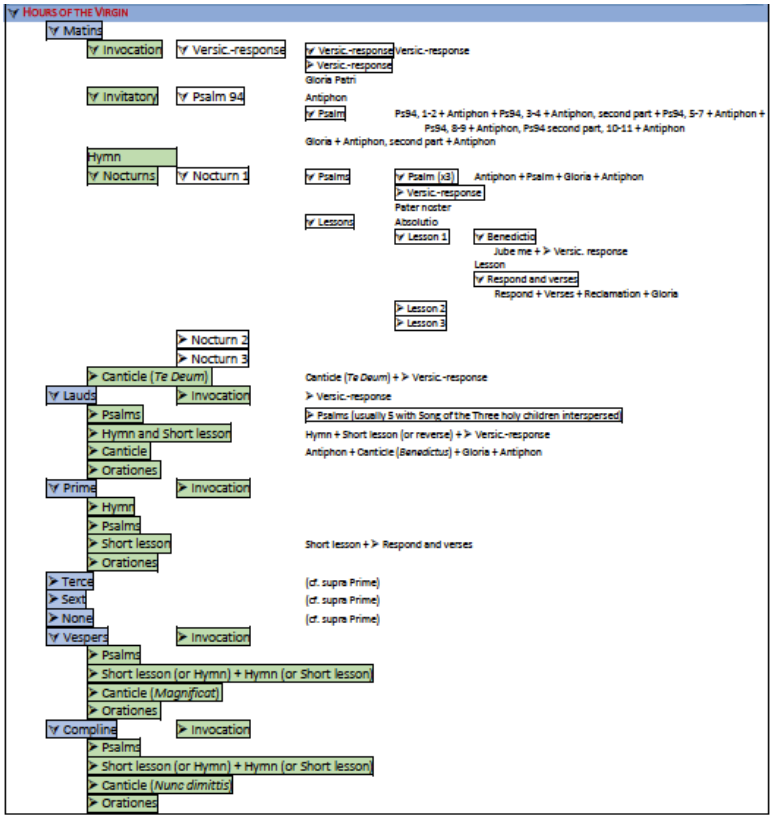

Figure 6: Composition of the Hours of the Virgin (published in Hazem et al., "Transcription automatique et segmentation thématique de livres d'heures manuscrits", Traitement Automatique des Langues, *ATALA, 2019, TAL et humanités numériques, 60 (3), p. 18)*

Scholars used the variants to identify liturgical uses. For instance, Falconer Madan used four pieces among the 400, the Antiphons and Chapters of Prime and None. V. Leroquais (left) used a much larger set of texts in his unpublished notes, but not all, and Drigsdahl (here on the right) does a similar selection of nearly thirty texts.

1.3.2 Leroquais' data as network

We decided to build upon Leroquais' and Drigsdahl's data to nourish a liturgical or historical analysis of the hours of the Virgin. First, we had to disambiguate similar incipits and to check if absent texts were missing in the recordings or in the manuscripts, and expand the data under review, as we have as many as hundred fifty recorded texts for some manuscripts. With the same methods as for the responsories in the office of the Dead, we draw a network of liturgical uses. Here, it is a one-mode network. Each point represents one use, for which we may have several sources.

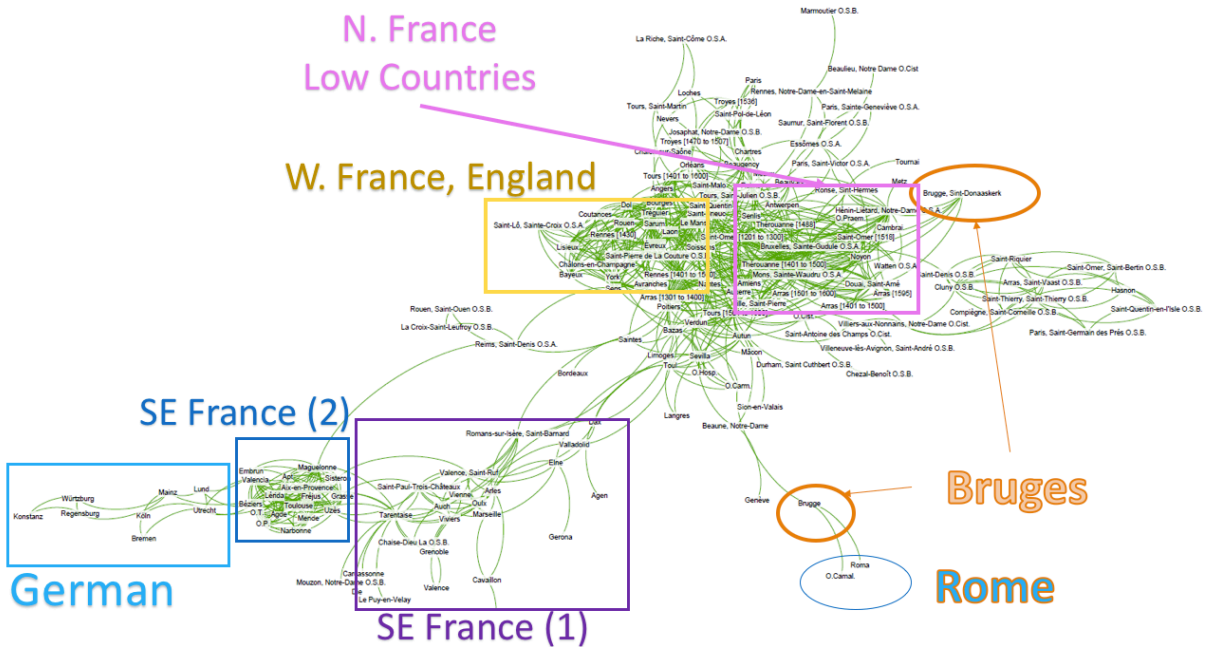

Figure 7 : Hours of the Virgin: network of liturgical uses

Some hitherto unrecognized, but not surprising geographical groupings appear: two groups in Southern France, one group in Western France and England, one in Northern France and Flanders. More of a surprise is the position of German dioceses beyond the second Southern French group, highlighting how their votive liturgy was almost entirely imitated from Dominican and Teutonic offices.

In this landscape, we have two representants for Bruges: one from Saint-Donatian, close to other regional uses, and a second one for an unspecific Bruges, the single closest use to the otherwise very isolated Roman use. This leads us to our second part, in which we will address the production of Hours in the Southern Low Countries.

2 BOH produced in the Southern Low countries

The Low Countries was one of the most important centers for the production of books of hours in the Middle Ages. In our HORAE research project database, we know 520 books of hours originating from this region. Bruges seems to be the leading site in the Low Countries of a production that developed in workshops from the end of the 14th century onwards.

Part of the production was destined for a local market. A clue of the origin is the mention of saints Adrian, Donatian, Walpurga, Gertrude, Aldegonde or Bavo of Ghent in the calendar, suffrages and litanies. A new observation is that, more often than in the rest of Europe, Hours produced in the Low Countries omit the office of the dead.

2.1 In the network: Office of the Dead

The Low Countries are largely a coherent liturgical region. As for the office of the Dead, K. Ottosen identified two groups named “83-25” and “25” used in the Low Countries and Upper Rhine region. The latter group is subdivided in 25-44 and 25-72. The three groups here display

8 different series with only 17 different responsories, mainly 9 reshuffled and characteristic for the region.
Group 25 links the uses of Antwerp, Utrecht, Liège or Brussels to the uses of Verdun and Cologne[1]. Group 83-25, which is not very large geographically, does not extend beyond the borders of Flanders, except for an excursion to Scandinavia, and concerns the uses of Arras, Lille, Saint-Donatien of Bruges, Saint-Omer or Watten: the liturgy of Saint-Vedast of Arras could form the matrix[2].

Location	Time	Index	R1	R2	R3	R5	R6	R7	R9	R10	R11
Utrecht, Windesheim, Corssendonck	1500	HAAG35A	25	44	47	13	93	83	40	79	18
Verdun	1400-1500	BN13291	25	72	18	13	58	83	93	82	38
Antwerp	1502	BL16	25	72	38	32	57	13	68	58	18
Brussels	1350-1550	BRU10528	25	72	38	13	40	83	93	58	18
Liege	1100-1200	S.1925	25	72	38	13	93	83	82	58	18
St. Donatian of Bruges	1520	BL1018A	83	25	13	58	29	93	72	82	38
Lille	1200-1300	DOUAI173	83	25	13	58	29	93	82	72	38
St. Omer	1270-1290	DARM4161	83	25	13	58	93	29	72	82	38

Figure 8 : Office of the Dead: uses of the Low Countries (responsories)

Here, we can re-read our network, since groups 83-25 and 25 are separated, which do not fully render their textual connection. A single town may use two completely disconnected uses, such as Utrecht, belonging to group 25 and also using the set of the Windesheim Congregation, closer to the large continent of uses related to Rome.

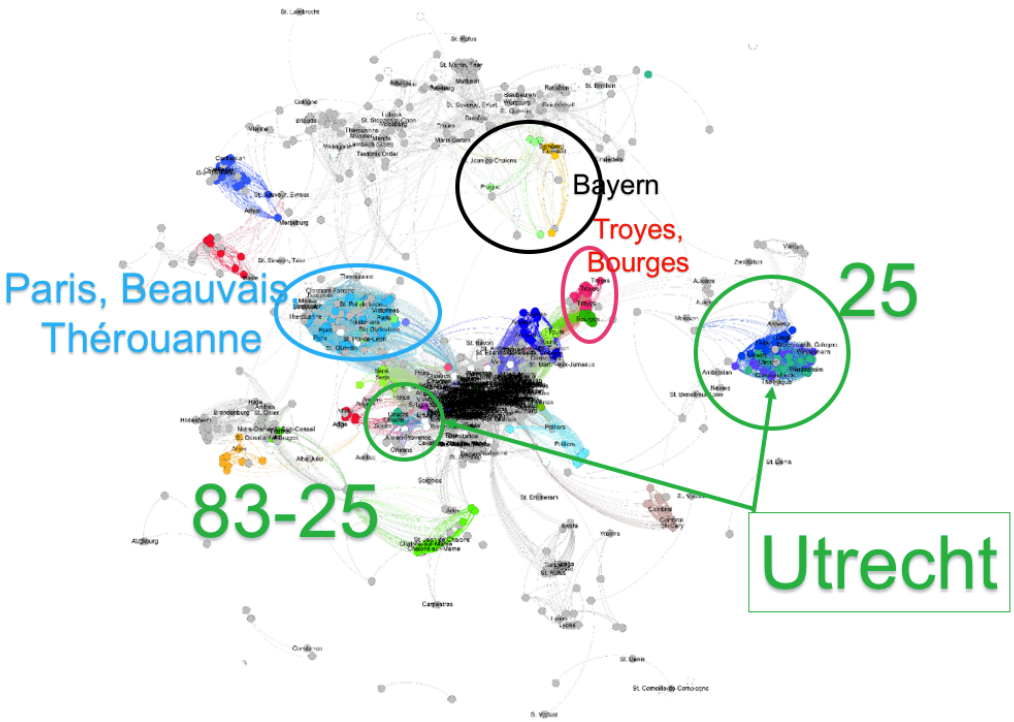

Figure 9 : Office of the Dead: network of liturgical uses. Groups 83-25 and 25 (responsories)

[1] Ibid., p. 343-346.
[2] K. Ottosen, The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead, Aarhus, 1993, p. 336-343.

2.2 In the network: Virgin

The same applies to the Hours of the Virgin. In our network, the Low Countries form a coherent subnetwork with Arras, Saint-Donatian of Bruges, Cambrai, Lille, Saint-Omer, Thérouanne, Saint-Amé of Douai and Renaix: this group is clearly directed towards north and the east of France, because of the links with the uses of Amiens, Metz and Noyon. Again, geographical proximity doesn't explain all, and a second cluster groups Utrecht with German uses (Bremen and Cologne).

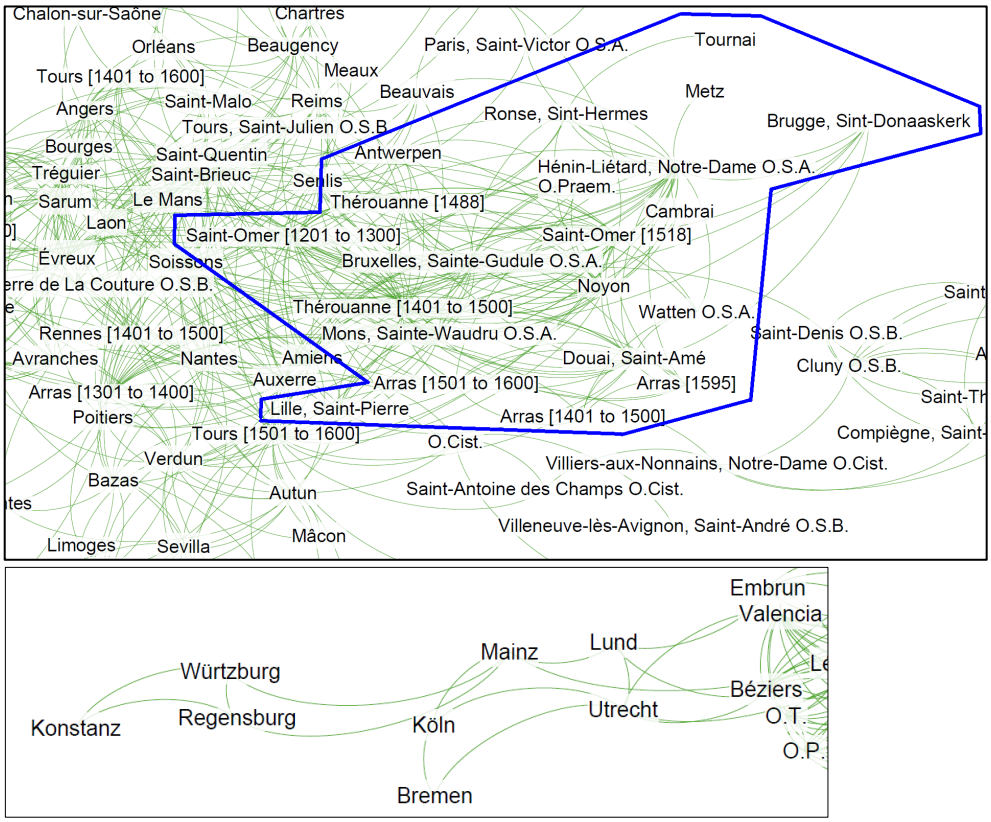

Figure 10 : Network of liturgical uses for the Hours of the Virgin (cf. Figure 7): focus on the uses of the Low Countries

2.3 Export

A large part of this production was destined for export. Their texts calendars, hours or litanies do not depend on the liturgical uses of the Low Countries, but on the target market, especially English uses, or the widespread use of Rome. 54% of the manuscripts produced in the cities of the Low Countries in our database show hours of the Virgin for the use of Rome; 5% of Sarum. The manuscripts sent to the English market most often have a calendar for Sarum or York and: specific texts like Recommendation of Souls prayer, Prayers to the Five Wounds of Christ, Psalter of the Passion, Psalter of Saint Jerome[3].

[3] A. Bergeron-Foote et G. Samson, « Horae à l'usage de Sarum : Montréal, McGill, LRCS, ms 98 », *Catalogue raisonné des livres d'heures conservés au Québec*, B. Dunn-Lardeau (éd.), Québec, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2018, p. 279.

Here, let's introduce the manuscripts Rouen 3024. It was produced in Bruges around 1410, and its calendar contains several saints from the Low Countries, including the very informative Saint Donatian, and it lacks the office of the Dead, as almost only Flemish manuscripts. On folio 12v a miniature shows a man with Saint George and helmet with a coat of arms - a red cross on silver. Both point to Saint George, England and the oversea market. But the use is untypical, close to that of Rome.

Figure 11: MS Rouen, Bibl. mun. 3024

So let's move to our third part on network and hybridization

3 Network and hybridization

Hybridity is the mixing of elements borrowed from different uses. Hybridity posits that we can identify two or more liturgical uses as reference, that are well-formed and described, stable, and predates the mixed forms. Hybrid forms may (1) complement missing parts; (2) replace and switch sections; (3) cross several elements.

3.1 Insertion

Our first example is MS Fécamp Museum, A.10.013. The calendar in the manuscript presents several saints from the Southern Netherlands, including Aldegonde, Gertrude and Donatien.

It provides a text that is fully compliant with the Roman use according to the key elements of Madan, Leroquais, Beyssac and Drigsdahl. However, we are able to spot hybridity thanks to a verse from Matins, the reader's blessing formula.
The pure use of Rome lacks a second blessing during the readings of matins. Here, blessings 1 and 3 are Roman. But blessing 2 is "*Precibus sue matris benedicat nos filius Dei patris*". According to our analysis, it is only found in local uses (Saint-Pierre of Lille and Saint-Sépulcre of Cambrai, probably Bruges, and with textual variants in Tournai, Liège and Nivelles).

	ROME	Fécamp A.10.13	S. Peter LILLE
Ad Matutinum			
Jube Domne benedicere			
Benedictio i.	*Nos cum prole pia*	*Nos cum prole pia*	*Alma virgo virginum*
Lectio i.	In omnibus requiem	In omnibus requiem	Sancta Maria virgo
R. i.	Sancta et immaculata	Sancta et immaculata	Sancta et immaculata
Jube Domne benedicere			
Benedictio ii.	(NO BLESSING)	*Precibus sue matris*	*Precibus sue matris*
Lectio ii.	Et sic in Syon	Et sic in Syon	Sancta Maria piarum
R. ii.	Beata es Maria	Beata es Maria	Beata es Maria
Jube Domne benedicere			
Benedictio iii.	*Per virginem matrem*	*Per virginem matrem*	*Sancta Dei genitrix*
Lectio iii.	Quasi credus	Quasi credus	Sancta Dei genitrix
R. iii.	Felix namque	Felix namque	Felix namque
Canticle : Te Deum laudamus			

Figure 12: Lessons and blessings in the Hours of the Virgin: MS Fécamp A.10.13 inserts a local text to supplement the (normally) missing blessing 2 of the Roman office

Here hybridity is very subtle in this manuscript. Such a level of hybridity encourages us to define the use of Hours not only on the basis of the identification keys proposed by Leroquais, but also through the study of the diffusion of other texts, including blessings and series of blessings.

3.2 Switching Leroquais' use of Bruges

A second example is MS Rouen 3024. As said, the manuscript was produced in Bruges, probably for export. It was examined by Leroquais[4], who called its use "Bruges" without further precision, but different from the collegiate church of St. Donatian of Bruges[5]. Does it show a liturgical use for an unidentified institution? We don't think so.
Indeed, the hours of the Virgin are largely of the use of Rome, including its most unusual pieces. There is a major exception: the readings of the Matins are replaced by other ones, shared by a great many uses in Europe, like in Saint Donatian of Bruges, Saint Peter of Lille, but also the Dominican use and others, as the English use of Sarum and the Norman use of Rouen.
An additional level of hybridity appears in the blessings. According to our research, blessings 1 and 3 of Rouen 3024 only occur in these positions in the Dominican, Teutonic and Carmelite uses, as well as the Sarum and Rouen. They may indicate either a special devotion. The second blessing of Rouen 3024, however, "*Precibus sue matris benedicat nos filius Dei patris*", is the same local blessing as in Fécamp A.10.13.

[4] Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 3152, fol. 112r.
[5] *Ibid*., fol. 183r.

	ROME	O. Praed.	ROUEN 3024	S. Peter LILLE	ROUEN / SARUM
Ad Matutinum					
Jube Domne benedicere					
Benedictio i.	*Nos cum prole pia*	*Alma virgo virginum*	*Alma virgo virginum*	*Alma virgo virginum*	*Alma virgo virginum*
Lectio i.	In omnibus requiem	Sancta Maria virgo	Sancta Maria virgo	Sancta Maria virgo	Sancta Maria virgo
R. i.	Sancta et immaculata	Sancta et immaculata	Sancta et immaculata	Sancta et immaculata	Sancta et immaculata
Jube Domne benedicere					
Benedictio ii.	(NO BLESSING)	*Sancta Dei genitrix*	*Precibus sue matris*	*Precibus sue matris*	*Oret voce/prece pia*
Lectio ii.	Et sic in Syon	Sancta Maria piarum	Sancta Maria piarum	Sancta Maria piarum	Sancta Maria piarum
R. ii.	Beata es Maria	Beata es Maria	Beata es Maria	Beata es Maria	Beata es Maria
Jube Domne benedicere					
Benedictio iii.	*Per virginem matrem*	*Nos cum prole pia*	*Nos cum prole pia*	*Sancta Dei genitrix*	*Sancta Dei genitrix*
Lectio iii.	Quasi credus	Sancta Dei genitrix	Sancta Dei genitrix	Sancta Dei genitrix	Sancta Dei genitrix
R. iii.	Felix namque	Felix namque	Felix namque	Felix namque	Felix namque
Canticle : Te Deum laudamus					

Figure 13: Hours of the Virgin: hybridity in blessings (MS Rouen 3024: mixes Dominican and local texts)

3.3 Baltimore's 'combination of use of Bruges and Arras elements'

Let us now examine two books preserved in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore: MS W 166, known as the Hours of Daniel Rym, and MS W 169, known as the Hours of Pastor Denys, were copied around 1420, in Flanders. The office of the dead is absent from both books. Their litanies, suffrages, calendar link to the Low Countries. They show an almost identical cursus of the Hours of the Virgin. Their cursus doesn't correspond to any use, which would have been described by Leroquais or Drigsdhal: their use is hybrid. The Walters Art Museum catalogue indicates a composite use, combining the uses of Bruges, Arras and Cambrai. Our analysis show the following connections: St. Donatian of Bruges (85%), Thérouanne (84%), Noyon (83%) and Saint-Omer (82%). Both books present the blessing from the Low Countries: "*Precibus sue matris*...", in first position. In second position they present the blessing: "*Alma virgo virginum intercedat pro nobis ad Dominum*". This verse is common in first position but very rare in second position: it appears in this position only in Arras and Nivelles, uses of the Low Countries. This analysis of the blessings reminds us that, in the study of the hours of the Virgin, not only do some texts have only a regional diffusion, such as the blessing "*Precibus sue matris*", but also that other texts are characteristic of the uses of a region because of their position in the cursus, even if they appear in a different position in other regions.

Hybrid uses leads us to consider a complex process of circulation of liturgical texts. "Pure" uses are adapted and incorporated into local text collections, depending on the place of production and the target market. This process raises the question of the value of the text inscribed in a regional or continental network. The blessing "*Precibus sue matris*…" is known in other regions or abbeys like Saint-Germain in Paris or Geneva, but it is almost exclusively used in the Low Countries. In regional hybrid uses, it has been inserted into the Roman series which is otherwise attested in its "pure" form without blessing 2 in the Low Countries, and it may function as an identity token.

Likewise, we should address the value and normativity of liturgical uses in book of hours. In theory, they copy the prescriptions of a diocese or an order in their integrity. They aren't, however, invested with the same authority as the *ordo* of a diocese. What are the reasons for modifications? Special devotions, practices of workshops, or liturgical modes? We can describe groups of manuscripts as well as groups of uses. We would like to understand better the actors involved, the workshops, scribes, purchasers, and the intention behind the choice of adding or removing texts from a pre-existing liturgical form.

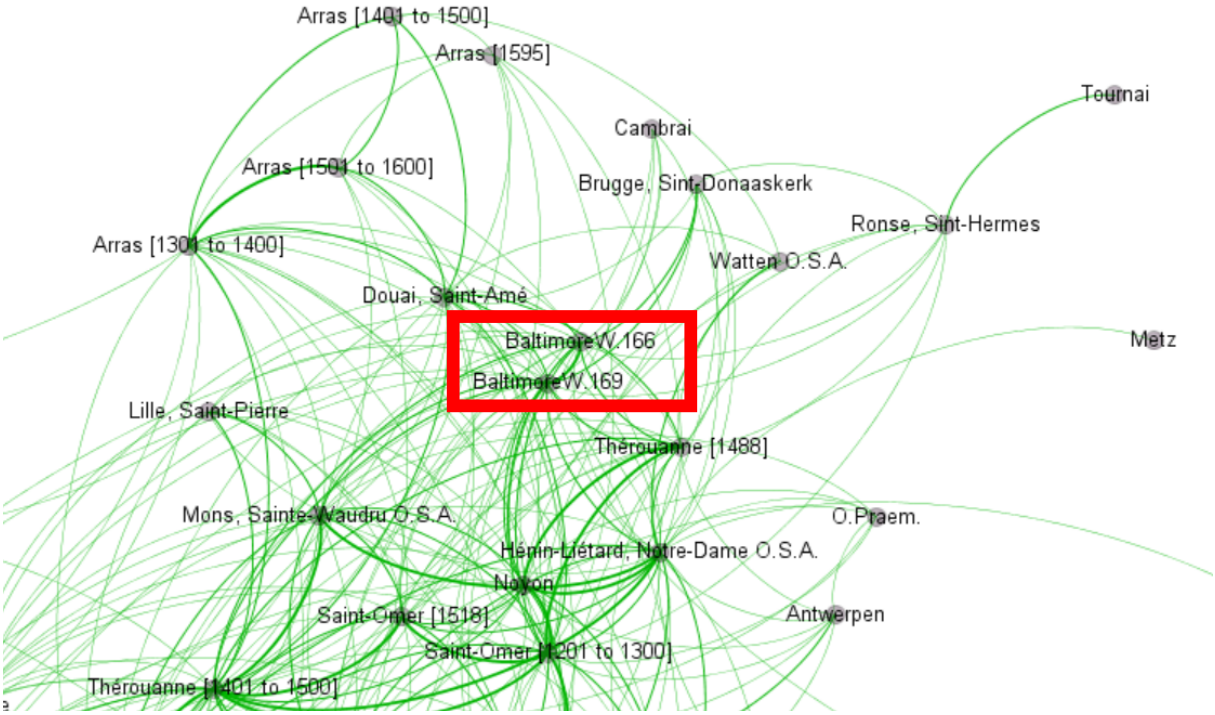

Figure 14: Hours of the Virgin: two Hybrid MSS in the middle of the Flemish network (Baltimore W166 and W169)

4 Conclusion

Let me wrap up before we conclude. Liturgical texts are part of the cultural life and trace to local, regional and over regional influence, with the diffusion of practices and applied exegesis. We can study books of hours as networks of texts and of manuscripts, both through the compilation process at the level of the codices, and through the compilation process within each office. It is a network of manuscripts, of texts, and of norms.

From a methodological point of view, we have added the notion of seriality to the core of usual text networks in manuscripts. The correct thresholding to define what should be considered as a link is, as always, a sensitive issue, as is here the correct weighting of presence and position.

What is still beyond our reach is the following. We have recognized hybrid texts and developed tools to analyze them. Now, the process and intentions are to enquire. Does orality and memory of performed liturgy play a part, with an unconscious reminiscence or quotation practice through embodied liturgical knowledge? Are the actors aware that their text set is regional and do the quotations disclose a regional identity? Are the actors aware of liturgical norms, do they wish to produce mentally coherent hybrids, or how much room is there for ignorance and mistakes? Last but not least, could the readers know and perceive these quotations and hybridity?