Media Literate Catholics: Seeing, Reading and Writing in Early Modern Participatory Culture

FEIKE DIETZ

Abstract: In this article I use the concept of 'media literacy' – generally discussed in the context of new media – to analyse media ability and conversance in seventeenth century Catholic culture. In particular, I focus on an untitled and anonymous Dutch composite volume which combines handwritten texts, printed texts and images. By reconstructing the relationship between the manuscript and its printed sources, I argue that the composite volume was the result of a meditative reading and writing process in which fragments from the popular religious emblem book *Pia Desideria* (1624) and other contiguous printed books were combined in a new multimedial product, which may serve as a means to share (media) skills and knowledge, and to facilitate the meditation processes of future consumers. I demonstrate that literacies now associated with new media – such as the ability to actively participate in media practices, and to consult hypertexts – were vital to early modern Catholics who constructed their identity by using and producing media.

Contributor: Feike Dietz is Assistant Professor in Early Modern Dutch Literature and Culture at Utrecht University. Her recent PhD-project focused on the interconfessional exchange of illustrated religious literature in the Dutch Republic. She has published on this topic in several articles, and her book *Literaire levensaders: Internationale uitwisseling van woord, beeld en religie in de Republiek* (*Literary Lifelines: The international exchange of Word, Image and Religion in the Dutch Republic*, Verloren 2012).

Traditionally, literacy studies are dedicated to the analysis of reading and writing skills and practices,[1] often discussed in the historical context of the rise of written culture and print in Western Europe.[2] But due to the advent of electronic and audiovisual mass media from the mid-twentieth century onwards, 'traditional' literacy skills have been augmented by new competencies of using, producing and understanding media. In present-day society, people are said to be constantly connected through smartphones, tablets, personal computers, digital music players, and other devices. In 2007, 90% of American children younger than two years old watched electronic media, such as TV and DVD.[3] In the Netherlands, the average age of starting to use smartphones, laptops and internet was around three in 2012. Nearly half of Dutch children under four years of age frequently use an iPad if one is available.[4] Thanks to this impressive explosion of new media, the concept of literacy has been extended, and thus literacy studies has broadened its scope.

There are plenty of terms in current use that refer to the new forms of literacy demanded by electronic and digital media, such as digital literacy, visual literacy, multimedia literacy, gaming literacy, network literacy, cyber literacy and virtual

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[1] See for example Barton 1993; Barton and Hamilton 1998. Barton's research is dedicated to the practice of literacies within educational environments.
[2] See for example Mostert 2005; Clanchy 1993.
[3] Zimmerman, Christakis and Meltzoff 2007.
[4] Pijpers 2012, p. 11, 14.

literacy.[5] Following several media specialists and policy makers, I will group those literacies under the umbrella term 'media literacy': 'the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts'.[6] Even though media literacy is usually defined as a conversance with and critical relationship to *all* kinds of media, the concept is generally discussed in the context of *new* electronic and digital media, and is often used in opposition to 'traditional' forms of literacy. In this article, by contrast, I will transfer the concept of 'media literacy' to an historical context, to analyse media ability and conversance in seventeenth century Catholic culture. In particular, I will focus on an untitled Dutch 'composite volume',[7] which is a mixture of manuscript and print, and textual and visual media. I consider this case to be a reflection of 1) the media literacy of its composer, and 2) the process of shaping a religious self by using and creating different media.[8]

By analysing the composite volume, this article aims to explore the significance and practice of media literacy in early modern Catholic culture. How did Catholics create, understand and evaluate media, and how did they practice their media skills to construct and strengthen their religious identity? I hope to demonstrate that literacies now associated with new media – such as the ability to actively participate in media practices, and to consult hypertexts – were vital to early modern Catholics who constructed their identity by using and producing media.

The analysis of media literacy in early modern Catholic culture primarily contributes to the field of media history,[9] but derives its relevance from the study of religious identities as well. Generally, religious identity is understood as the way religious groups define themselves and are defined by others.[10] It involves representations of the common 'self' which are shaped by media products. Current research has examined how early modern media products (images, written texts, songs) expressed religious identities by representing a contrasting ideology as the 'other', or constructed (new) identities by combining Catholic and Protestant practices.[11]

Instead of analysing the way religious groups defined themselves by media products, I will explore the active media practices of an individual Catholic manuscript composer. I analyse the way this composer weaved together media and spiritual practices, on the assumption that such a personal and creative interaction with media contributed to the transformation of the self, and thus to religious identity formation.

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[5] Carrington and Robinson 2009 (digital literacy); Elkins 2007 (visual literacy); Kress 2000 (multimedia literacy); Hall 2011 (gaming literacy); Burgess and Green 2009 (network literacy); Gurak 2001 (cyber literacy); Merchant et al. 2012 (virtual literacy).

[6] Livingstone 2003, p. 1.

[7] 'Composite volume' is defined here as a volume containing two or more 'units' (discrete numbers of quires). This definition is based on Gumbert's terminology: Gumbert 2004, p. 22-26.

[8] In pursuing this approach, I am inspired by current Spanish research on websites built by small groups of children in primary schools: Del-Castillo, Belén García-Varela and Lacasa 2003. Scholars gained some insight into both the children's media literacy and their collective identity construction by analyzing the websites. During the process of site building, 'the participants, with their multiple identities […] turn into a shared identity that, finally, is shown in the product'.

[9] See for an inspiring introduction to the field of media history: Briggs and Burke 2005.

[10] See for a description of the identity terminology Ammerman 2003.

[11] See for example Dekoninck 2007; Stronks 2010; Stronks 2011; Davis 2013.

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Consequently, I focus on the *process of identity formation* rather than on the *characteristics of a Catholic identity* itself. How did Catholics turn their active and creative media practices into spiritual processes that were vital to their religious life? This perspective will increase our understanding of the dynamic interplay between media and the shaping of a religious self.

1. Debating media literacy

There is a widespread assumption that new digital media are causing fundamental changes in how people are engaging with media, culture and knowledge. The 'digital revolution' seems to imply a radical break with former media and media literacies. New literacy practices, as stated by Michele Lankshaer and Colin Knobel, involve 'different kinds of values, sensibilities, norms and procedures and so on from those that characterize conventional literacies'.[12] The greatest disjunction in old and new literacies is marked by the emergence of interactivity in a so-called 'participatory culture': 'users do not merely consume pre-fabricated media content passively, but themselves become interactive producers and distributors of media.'[13] The blurring boundary between production and consumption fostered the birth of the 'consumer-as-producer', who must acquire new media skills that include the ability to create messages and to gain control over the production of media content.[14] In order to highlight – or even to praise – the 'participation turn' in media culture,[15] the dichotomy between 'old' and 'new' literacies is often exaggerated. As Antonio López stated, participatory media practices are nonlinear and multisensory by nature, while traditional print literacy includes competencies which are 'largely based on left-brain functions that are rational, abstract, and linear'.[16]

The underlying assumption that media evolution implies cultural revolution is rooted in the McLuhanite idea of technology as the driving force behind cultural innovations and the shaping of new literacies.[17] McLuhan's technological approach to media and literacy studies has become widespread since the 1960s, and has fostered our belief in the power of media to construct and change our way of understanding the world and the self.[18]

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[12] Lankshear and Knobel 2007, p. 7.

[13] Müller 2009, p. 49. The participatory culture is also described by, among others, Burgess and Green 2009; Uricchio 2004; Giger 2006.

[14] Giger 2006 introduced the concept 'participation literacy' to refer to those new competencies.

[15] Uricchio 2004, p. 139.

[16] López 2008, p. 8.

[17] McLuhan 1962, 1964.

[18] See for example McLaren, Hammer and Sholle 1995, p. xiii: 'Radio, television, film, and other products of the cultural industries provide the materials out of which we forge our very identities [...]. Media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. Media stories provide the symbols and resources through which we constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves in this culture.'

Now that media literacy is generally perceived to be a vital life skill in twenty-first-century society, it is a key concern of educators and policy makers worldwide. In its 'i2010' strategic policy framework (2005-2010), the European Commission highlighted the importance of media literacy and promoted the positive contributions of media and new technologies to our society.[19] Since 2010, the strategy has been followed by the 'Digital Agenda for Europe', aiming to help European citizens to use digital media and contribute to technological innovations.[20] On a national level, the Dutch government established the Media-Wise Expertise Center to improve children's use of media by facilitating the training of children, teachers and parents, and by organizing the annual 'Media Wisdom Week' ('Week van de Mediawijsheid').[21] Outside Europe, the National Association for Media Literacy Education in the United States is one of the initiatives taken to improve media skills and media literacy education.[22]

Even though the media literacy debate is flourishing, the underlying assumptions have not remained undisputed. Scholars discuss the supposed novelty of literacy skills, and criticize a belief in media technology as the driving force behind both our literacies and our way of being. For example, Utrecht scholars in the 'Changing Literacies' program spoke against the determinist thinking 'that the arrival of a new technology is [...] a cause for a new literacy skill to develop':

> [T]echnology is viewed as being somehow autonomous, selfsufficient and independent from the social context in which it is developed and put into practice [...]. This kind of determinism combines readily with a kind of teleological thinking that conceptualizes history as progression through (among other things) technological innovation, and that is driven by the (modernist) belief that technological progress will ultimately lead to an increase in economic, political and cultural welfare. The development of literacy skills related to 'new' technologies then is pictured as 'progress', from a culture of the handwritten word to a print culture with an everincreasing dominance of written means of communication.[23]

As an alternative, the Utrecht scholars propose to approach media literacy as the result of the dynamic interplay between media technology, cultural practices and social

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[19] http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/index_en.htm. See European Commission 2007 for a broad view on the European initiatives in the field media literacy.

[20] http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/. This Digital Agenda for Europe is one of the seven flagship initiatives under 'Europe 2020', the EU's strategy to boost economic growth. See for Europe 2020: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/flagship-initiatives/index_en.htm.

[21] See for the Media-Wise Expertise Center and the Media Wisdom Week: Mediawijzer.net. In a report on 'media wisdom' ('mediawijsheid') the government formulated the objectives of a national media literacy program (2008): http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2008/06/05/kabinetsvisie-mediawijsheid-april-2008.html. This initiative was stimulated by a former report of the Council for Culture (2005): http://www.cultuur.nl/Upload/Docs/mediawijsheid.pdf.

[22] See for the National Association for Media Literacy Education: http://namle.net/about-namle/. This Association is introduced in Domine 2011.

[23] Roepke 2011, p. 3.

engagement. By going beyond pre-set dichotomies (new versus old, technological progress versus danger) they aim to rethink literacy transformations: 'How do literacy practices spread at a given time and allow for diversified forms of participation?'[24]

A comparable plea has been made by the social psychologist and media expert Sonia Livingstone. She proposes to use a media-neutral definition of literacy, in order to open a multidisciplinary media literacy debate on 'the hitherto separately studied questions of reading print, television audiences and the use of computers'.[25] Such a debate will invite us to analyse the survival and improvement of old skills in new media environments: 'the social uses of information technologies work to reproduce and reinforce traditional literacy skills rather than to transform or generate new literacy skills for a supposedly "new" information age'.[26] Livingstone emphasizes that many features that are now associated with new media are 'continuous with the literacies of past decades, even centuries': hypertextuality, multimediality, heterogeneity of sources, and questions of authority and ownership.[27]

Livingstone's approach to media literacy is underpinned by recent media historical research. In the past decades, media historians revealed the similarities between different media in European cultural history. In their *Social History of the Media*, Briggs and Burke state that '[s]ome phenomena in the media are older than is generally recognized'.[28] They analyse the way in which old and new media in past and present coexist, interact and complement each other: new media don't display older media, but are rather modeled on and in interaction with them. David McKitterick, in his *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450-1830*, particularly highlights the interweaving of manuscript and print long after the invention of movable type. He questions the opposition between 'instable' manuscripts and 'fixed' print: instead of radically breaking with the past, print products remained fundamentally instable throughout the early modern period, and shared some features of page and letter layout with 'traditional' manuscripts.[29] Such gradual developments in media history could be explained by the 'remediation theory': no medium arises, exists and works in isolation from other media. As a consequence, new media evolve out of and against older media – and 'new' literacies automatically stem from older skills and practices.[30]

Following recent developments in the media literacy debate, I use the concept 'media literacy' to describe how (new) media allowed for literacy skills at a given time. By analysing my case as a descriptive reflection of media literacy practiced within a cultural and social context, I aim to draw some conclusions about the way literacy skills in the early modern period were built on existing practices, and were used to model the religious self.

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[24] Roepke 2011. Also Moser 2012; Müller 2009; Kessler 2002, among others, argue in favour of such an approach to media literacy.
[25] Livingstone 2003, p. 5.
[26] Livingstone 2003, p. 19-20.
[27] Livingstone 2003, p. 19, 17.
[28] Briggs and Burke 2005, p. 2.
[29] McKitterick 2003, p. 3.
[30] Peirce 2011; Bolter and Grusin 2000.

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2. Media literacy and Catholic identity (ca. 1400-1650)

Even in the Middle Ages, Catholics were aware of the power of media to construct a religious self. Textual and visual media became integral to the spirituality of the *Devotio Moderna* or Modern Devotion, one of the most influential religious movements prior to the Reformation.[31] As has been well established , literacy practices in the Modern Devotion supported the development of a rich individual religious life.[32] In order to internalise spiritual messages and to commit them to memory, believers recorded important passages in their personal *rapiaria*: collective notebooks containing numerous quotations and fragments with special appeal to the individual, internal spiritual life.[33] The medievalist Thom Mertens has termed this intensive manner of working with texts 'reading with the pen'.[34] As maintained by Van Engen, 'the Devout strived by way of reading, meditation, and writing to remake their human interiors'.[35]

Devotional images also stimulated the development of spirituality in the Modern Devotion: 'The *Devotio Moderna*'s emphasis on intimate and inward-oriented spirituality manifested itself in a particular theology of vision'.[36] By means of devotional images – of (the suffering) Christ, Mary or the saints – a believer vividly called to mind a situation and entered an inward and imaginative state of mind, in which the invisible world turned into a spiritual vision. So the devotional image was not merely perceived passively by the believer, but it shaped his religious identity and modelled his spiritual soul as well.[37]

Catholics who adhere to the practices of the Modern Devotion, we may conclude, developed into active media literates, by creating their own – eclectic and fragmented – texts during the reading of religious literature, and by combining textual and visual practices to serve a meditative purpose. Instead of merely consuming media passively, they mediate between the visible world and their inward spiritual life by using and producing different media products. Media and spirituality are deeply interconnected: media practices turned into spiritual processes, while inward spiritual passions led into new media practices.

At the end of the fifteenth century, media mixtures were stimulated by the advent of print. The printing press made it possible to circulate – quite cheaply – illustrated devotional texts on a large scale.[38] A widespread tradition of meditation

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[31] See for an introduction to the Modern Devotion for example Van Engen 2008.
[32] See Scheepsma 2004, esp. chapter 4; Staubach 2010; Staubach 1994.
[33] On *rapiaria*: Scheepsma 2004, p. 90; Staubach, p. 185.
[34] Mertens 1989;
[35] Van Engen 2008, p. 6.
[36] Romaine 2012, s.p.
[37] See for this visual meditation process: Kamerick 2002; Morgan 1998, p. 60-78. See for an introduction to (the function and position of) art in the Modern Devotion: Veelenturf 2000.
[38] For example, Thomas à Kempis's *De Imitatione Christi* (Imitation of Christ), on which the spiritual program of the Modern Devotion was based, underwent a transformation after the advent of print: 'The author's own handwritten copy of this text contained no illustrations, but soon after handwritten copies

enhanced by illustrated printed texts was stimulated by the *Exercitia spiritualia* (*Spiritual Exercises*, ca. 1522) by Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order. In his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius assumed that a believer first imagines himself being part of a situation (*memoria* or mind): in order to meditate on Christ's Passion we must observe His suffering as if we were ourselves present. After that, the worshipper subjects this situation to careful study (*intellectus*) and thus arrives at feelings of godliness (*voluntas* or will).[39] For more than a century, Ignatius's readers had to visualize without the aid of images: the *Spiritual Exercises* was first printed in 1548, but not illustrated until 1657.[40] But from the end of the sixteenth century, Catholics tried to translate Ignatius's meditative programme into words and images: emblems. A renowned specimen of this phenomenon was *Evangelicae historiae imagines* (*Pictures of the Gospel Stories*, 1593) by Jerome Nadal, Loyola's close collaborator.[41] Because of the strong connection and interaction between visual and textual elements, emblem books like Nadal's *Evangelicae historiae imagines* are profoundly intermedial. Religious emblems owed their meditative power to this mixture of media: the emblematic 'Deutungsspiel zwischen *pictura*, *inscriptio* und *subscriptio*'.[42]

As shown by the development of religious emblematics, Catholics felt comfortable with textual and visual media, and understood those media's vital role in stimulating meditation processes. As well, they were aware of the different functions of visual and textual tools in (Ignatian) meditation processes. Pictures functioned as the 'composition of place' or 'the mental image of the place' (*memoria*): 'One sees with the mind's eye the physical place where the object to be contemplated is present.'[43] *Subscriptiones* (epigrams), on the other hand, helped the worshippers to examine the situation intellectually (*intellectus*) and to arrive at devout feelings (*voluntas*).[44]

In spite of – or rather because of – the strong belief in the efficacy of media, religious people had a critical approach to media too. We all know that visual media were disputed seriously during the Reformation, and that strong objections led into an iconoclastic destruction of images in several parts of Western Europe.[45] But warnings against visual practises had been voiced long before the Reformation, and had been expressed in Catholic circles as well. Augustine had already been aware of the dangers of using visual media. He emphasised that a viewer needs concentration, effort and selectivity to transform the visible into the invisible: 'If the eye was not properly trained, it would linger on the physical object and no beneficial religious effects could be expected.'[46] Hendrik Mande, one of the leading figures of the Modern Devotion,

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started circulating in larger numbers, the manuscripts were enriched with illuminations.' See Stronks 2011, p. 35.

[39] See, for example, Verheggen 2006, p. 27-29.

[40] Mochizuki 2009.

[41] Verheggen 2006, p. 29; Melion 2007; Dekoninck 2004.

[42] Rödter 1992, p. 194. My translation: 'interpretive play between *pictura*, *inscriptio*, and *subscriptio*'.

[43] Dimler 2003, p. 363.

[44] Rödter 1992, p. 86; Dimler 2003, p. 363. For a detailed reconstruction of the discussion about the meditative function of different emblem parts, see Dietz 2010a.

[45] For a case study of the diffusion of iconoclasm, see Wandel 1995.

[46] Stronks 2011, p. 36; Miles 1983, p. 127.

recognized the dangers inherent in visual allegories. When the viewer lacks the competence to transform the allegory into its godly meaning, he runs the risk of focussing merely on the visual allegory itself instead of the invisible world 'behind' it.[47] As shown by such reflections, Catholics understood that visual media presupposed a trained, literate eye.

3. Case analysis: traces of multimediality, hypertextuality and heterogeneity

The seventeenth-century composite volume I will examine in more detail should be viewed in the context described above. This untitled and anonymous Dutch composite volume now conserved by the Radboud University in Nijmegen wraps itself in mysteries.[48] The book binding seems to be a seventeenth-century product,[49] but other details about the date, origin and functioning of this volume are extremely uncertain. Thanks to a handwritten dedication, we know that the volume was given by Sister Catharina Simons to Sister Maria van Heel in 1666, in honour of Maria's entry into a convent during the summer of that year.[50] It is likely that the composite volume, which apparently circulated within a Catholic women's community, was composed by a Catholic woman herself. Was Catharina the devout sister who collected the texts and images, perhaps in order to commemorate Sister Maria's joining the order? This question cannot be answered, since Sister Catharina may have been merely a temporary owner of the volume.

Even the place of origin of the manuscript is unknown. Before the volume went to the Nijmegen university library in the 1970s, it was conserved by the monastery library of Wittem in Limburg, where Redemptorists have lived since 1836.[51] The father of a Redemptorist from Amsterdam donated an impressive manuscript collection to the library at Wittem when his son joined the order at the end of the nineteenth century.[52] The composite volume could have been functioned as a part of that larger gift. In this case, the volume possibly has a history in Amsterdam.

However, it is nearly impossible that the volume circulated in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century, when it was donated to Sister Maria. Since 1580, it had been

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[47] Stronks 2011, p. 41; Bakker 2003, p. 35.

[48] Composite volume 325, Radboud University in Nijmegen.

[49] I am grateful to Robert Arpots, curator of the University Library in Nijmegen.

[50] The dedication reads: 'Desen Boeck heeft suster Catharina Simons gegeven aan suster Maria van Heel voor een memorie. Die desen boeck naer ons kright die sal om de liefde Godts voor ons twee bidden. Ben ik, Sr. Mari van Heel, int clooster gegaen int Jaer 1666 den 29 Augusti ende geprofeset den 30 augusti.' See composite volume 325, no folio number. My translation: 'This book has been given as a reminder by sister Catharina Simons to sister Maria van Heel. May the next owner of this book pray for God's love for us both. I, sister Maria van Heel, entered the convent in the year 1666, at August 29, and I took the monastic vows on August 30.'

[51] I am grateful to Father Jozef Konings, curator of the monastery library at Wittem for this information.

[52] Huisman 1997, p. XIII.

forbidden to enter a monastery or convent in the Northern Netherlands.[53] Perhaps the convent Maria entered was situated in the border regions between the Northern and Southern provinces, where convent life was not always made impossible.[54] Maria could have entered the convent for regulars in Emmerik. At 4 April 1684, apostolic vicar Van Neercassel wrote a letter to Paulus Roskam, the rector of Emmerik's convent. In the ecclesiastical administration, the letter was mentioned in conjunction with a letter to – among others – 'Soror van Heel'.[55] Did this 'Soror' (Sister) and Roskam live together in Emmerik – and was the first name of this 'Soror' Maria?[56] A lot of questions have to remain unanswered.

Within the scope of this article, the composite volume is notable for its multimedial character. The volume combines handwritten texts, printed texts and images, in order to serve a devotional purpose. More specifically, it consists of Theodorus Galle's series of printed images entitled *Vita Sint Ioseph* (*The Life of Saint Joseph*), the printed text *Het Heylich leven van Sint Ioseph Bruydegom der Moeder Godts Maria* (*The Holy Life of Saint Joseph, bridegroom of Mary, Mother of God*), and an handwritten adaptation of the emblem book *Pia Desideria* (*Pious Wishes*).[57] Considering the media literacy debate, the last mentioned is most interesting: it reflects the active and creative practices surrounding diverse media (word, image, print, manuscript) in a Catholic devotional context.

The manuscript includes 45 emblems, all based on the *Pia Desideria*. This emblem book was written by the Jesuit priest Herman Hugo and published in Counter-Reformation Antwerp in 1624.[58] Hugo's work consists of pictures by Boëtius a Bolswert, which allegorically and expressively depict the relationship between God and the believer, in order to enhance the communication between them.[59] The images are followed by several texts: a biblical phrase as a *motto*, a lyrical Latin poem which is called the *subscriptio*, and an anthology of prose fragments from biblical texts and texts by the Church Fathers. Together, the visual and textual elements try to translate Ignatius's meditative programme into words and images. Pictures functioned as the 'composition of place' (the physical place where the object of meditation is present): readers need to identify with the little girl as the human soul, while the winged *amor*

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[53] Since the Dutch parliament had officially forbidden Catholic worship in 1580, it was impossible to enter a convent or missionary community. See, for example, Monteiro 1996, p. 16. However, other religious communities, such as beguinages, were also sometimes called convents. Whether Sister Maria and Sister Catharina lived together in such a community in the Dutch Republic is a possibility I can not rule out.

[54] The Norbertine Sint-Catharinedal priory in Breda and Oosterhout, for example, still existed in the seventeenth century. However, convent life was not unproblematic; the continued existence of the Norbertine Sint-Catharinedal priory was seriously threatened at the beginning of the seventeenth century. See Sponselee-De Meester 2004.

[55] Bruggeman 1982, p. 1319. On Roskam as the rector of the Regulars' Convent in Emmerik: Rogier, *Geschiedenis van het katholicisme* 398.

[56] Emmerik was part of the *missio Hollandica*. However, not all border regions were. See also Rogier 1946, p. 349-356.

[57] Although Verheggen 2006, p. 82 holds that the maker of the manuscript composed the meditative texts next to the *Pia Desideria picturae* by themselves, the texts are in fact Dutch translations of *mottoes* and prose fragments from the *Pia Desideria*.

[58] Hugo 1624.

[59] On the expressive and emotional power of the *Pia Desideria* images see Porteman 2006, p. 161.

divinus represents God's love. The accompanying texts facilitate the meditation process by stimulating the reader's intellect and increasing her or his desire towards God. The meditation model set by the *Pia Desideria* met with great success. *Pia Desideria* is mainly known for its extensive afterlife, consisting of around 150 editions and translations by users from almost all European countries and of various religious backgrounds.[60]

One exponent of the *Pia Desideria* reception history is *Goddelycke wenschen* (1645), published by the Amsterdam Catholic printer Pieter Paets (1587-1657). In this edition, texts from the Dutch *Pia Desideria* translation made by Justus de Harduwijn were combined with woodcuts closely based on Bolswert's *Pia Desideria* engravings, produced by the famous woodcutter Christoffel van Sichem II (1581-1658).[61] Paets's edition is a remarkable exponent of the *Pia Desideria* reception history, because it transformed the *Pia Desideria* meditation model by reusing all pictures and prose fragments from the *Pia Desideria*, but removing the lyrical *subscriptiones*. The adaptation therefore took shape as an illustrated anthology of prose fragments from biblical books and texts by the Church Fathers.[62]
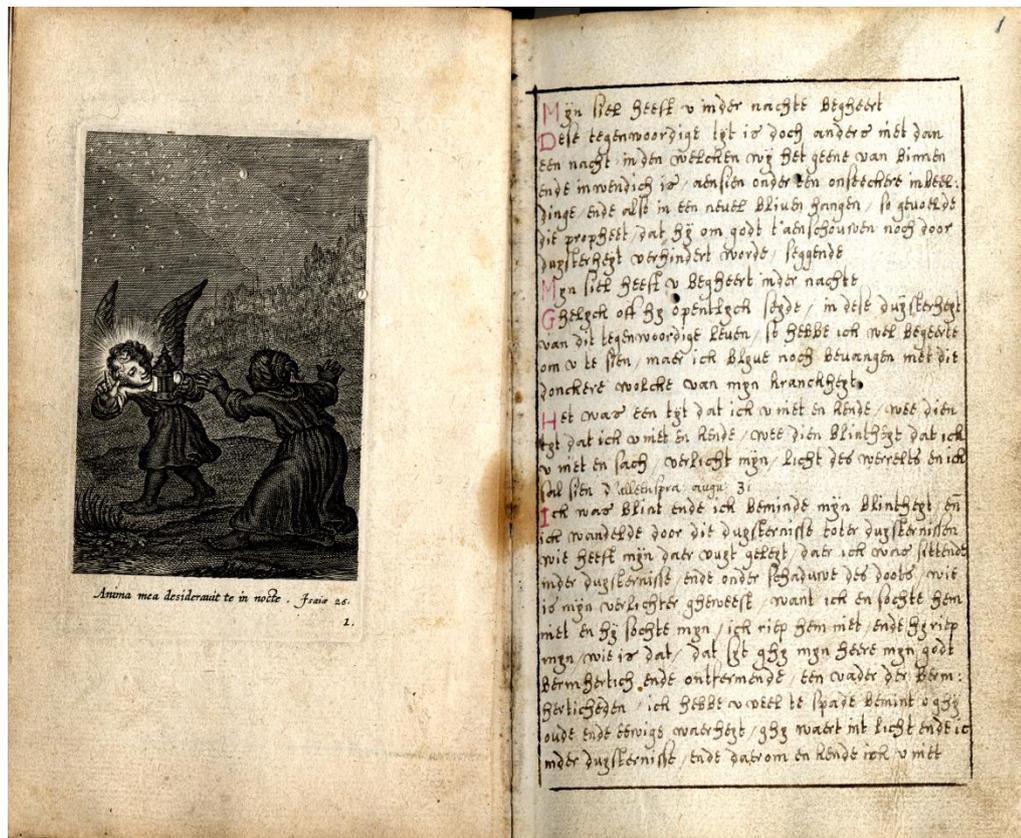
Fig. 1: Composite volume 325, emblem 1. Radboud University Nijmegen.

[60] Daly and Dimler 1997, dl 3, p. 112-255, nummers J628-J770. On the Dutch *Pia Desideria* reception history in its European context see Dietz 2012.

[61] The original *Pia Desideria* edition by De Harduwijn: De Harduwijn 1629. Paets's edition: De Harduwijn 1645. On De Harduwijn: Dambre 1924; Dambre 1926.

[62] Verheggen is right to argue that Paets reprinted *Goddelycke wenschen* in a shorter version: Verheggen 2006, p. 79. The method of reduction remained unnoticed by Verheggen, but had been explored by Dambre: Dambre 1924, p. 194; Dambre 1926, p. 154. However, the *subscriptio* of the opening emblem, the only emblem without any prose quotations, was not omitted.

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The manuscript in the composite volume is part of this flourishing *Pia Desideria* reception history.[63] The manuscript is composed of a loose-leaf series of *Pia Desideria* prints and blank sheets to write on. After the printed and blank sheets were stitched and folded, the white sheets were closely covered by texts, written by a legible hand (Fig. 1). Those handwritten texts were based on Paets's edition of *Goddelycke wenschen*. Following Paets's example, mottoes and prose fragments were included and all *subscriptiones* were entirely omitted. In addition, the manuscript's title page resembles Paets's typographical title page (Fig. 2+3). Because I have not found any other *Pia Desideria* edition with such an ornamental frame on the title page, I assume that the manuscript author was inspired by Paets's *Pia Desideria* prose edition.
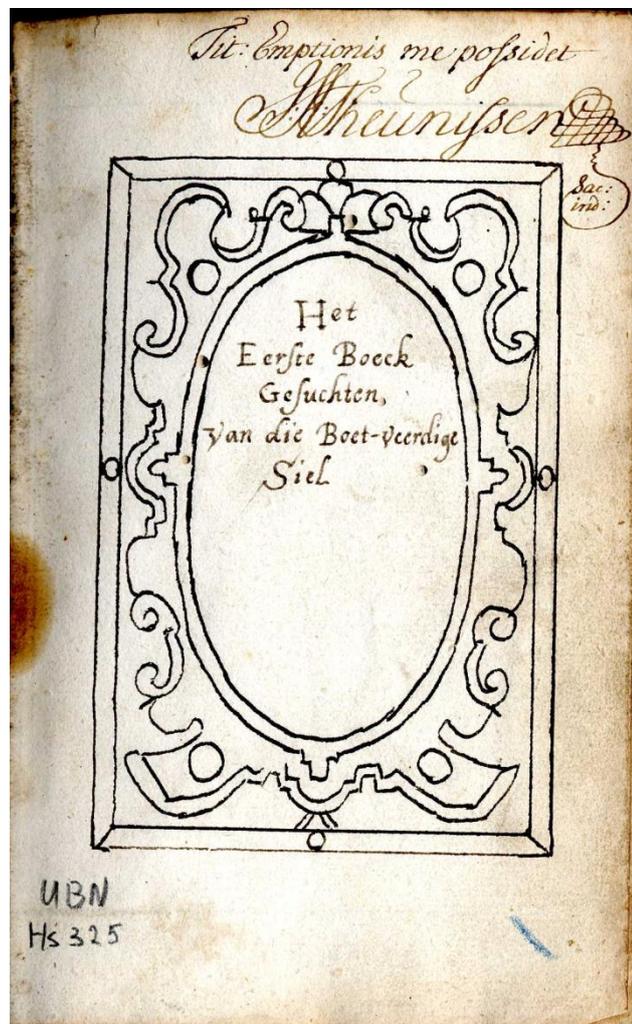

Fig. 2: Composite volume 325, title page section 1. Radboud University Nijmegen.

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[63] This manuscript is not the only handwritten exponent of the *Pia Desideria*'s reception history. Other exponents of the international handwritten *Pia Desideria* reception are explored in Manning 1992 (England); Dietz, Stronks and Zawadska 2009 (Poland); Verheggen 2006, chapter 2 (the Dutch Republic). The handwritten *Pia Desideria*'s reception is discussed in Dietz 2010b, p. 156-160.
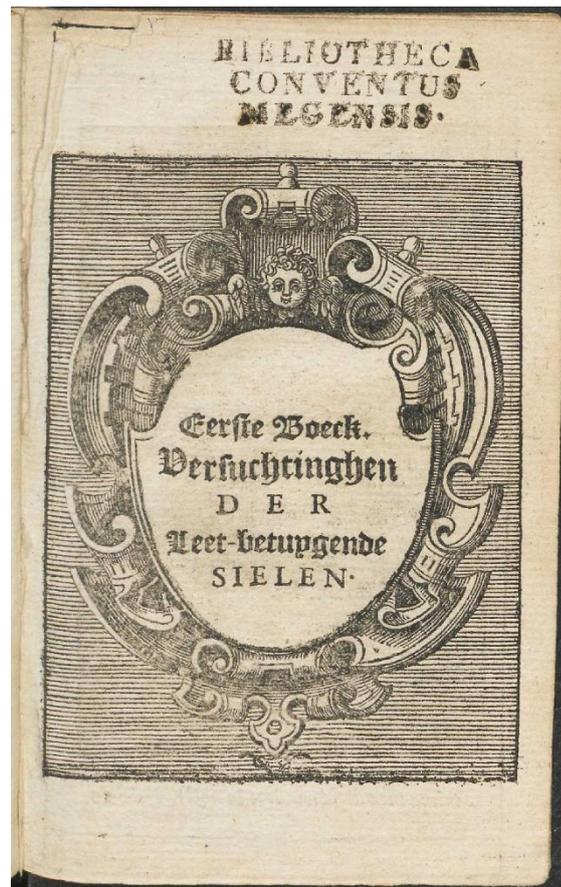
Fig. 3: Justus de Harduwijn, *Goddelycke wenschen*. Amsterdam, Pieter Jacobsz. Paets, 1645, title page section 1. Special Collections Utrecht University, THO: WRT 57-376.

As we may conclude, the anonymous composer of the volume – as well as his or her possible allies – practiced several media skills to produce this *Pia Desideria* adaptation: mixing visual and textual elements, writing, stitching and folding by hand, collecting several printed products, and using printed products both as an integral part (a series of *Pia Desideria* copperplates) and as a model of a new composition (Paets's *Goddelycke wenschen*). The composer practiced those literacies as a way to model a spiritual experience and thus to shape the religious self. I will examine the 'mediated meditation process' in some more detail, to demonstrate that the manuscript author collected and copied quotations from several devotional texts, and that this strong engagement with texts and images was integral to a spiritual engagement.

As mentioned above, the anonymous composer wrote Dutch translations of *Pia Desideria* prose, consisting of fragments from Latin biblical texts and texts by the Church Fathers. Against all expectations, the handwritten quotations were not directly copied from the *Goddelycke Wenschen*, although this model did offer Dutch translations of all *Pia Desideria* prose fragments. Instead, the manuscript composer used the prose fragments in *Goddelycke Wenschen* as an invitation to consult 'original' Dutch printed translations of biblical books and devotional texts by the Church Fathers. The references, which were prominently placed above each prose fragment in *Goddelycke*

Wenschen, thus functioned as 'hyperlinks': references to other devotional texts, which were read and copied by the manuscript composer as well.[64]

An example may illustrate this procedure. A fragment from *Soliloquia* (Soliloquy) was quoted in the first emblem of *Goddelycke wenschen*. The tract *Soliloquia* was attributed to Augustine, but was actually a compilation of highly devotional fragments written by several medieval theologians.[65]

> Ick was blint, ende ick beminde de blintheydt, ende wandelde by nachte in 't midden der duysternissen. Maer wie heeft my uytgetrocken? daer ick blint mensche was sittende in duysterheyt, ende in de schadue des doots?[66]

Instead of copying this fragment from *Goddelycke wenschen*, the manuscript author used Anthonius van Hemert's translation of the tract: *De Alleenspraecken der Zielen tot Godt* (The Soul's Soliloquy to God).[67] Van Hemert's translation, first published in 1547, was often reprinted in the Northern and Southern Netherlands:[68]

> *Alleenspraecken*, chapter 33:
> Ick was blindt ende ick beminde mijn blindtheyt, ende ick wandelde door de duysternissen totter duysternissen. Wie heeft my daer uyt-gheleydt daer ick was sittende inde duysternissen ende inde schaduwe des doots?[69]

Manuscript 325, emblem 1 (Fig. 1):

> Ick was blint ende ick beminde myn blintheyt ende ick wandelde door die duysternisse toter duysternissen wie heeft myn daer vuyt[70] geleyt, daer ick was sittende inder duysternisse, endt onder schaduwe des doots [...].[71]

'Hypertexts' such as Van Hemert's *Alleenspraecken* grew to become new sources of inspiration for the manuscript author. When the author consulted the *Boecken der Belijdenissen van S. Augustijn* (Books of the Confessions of Saint Augustine, 1603) while

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[64] On hypertext: Burbules 1998.

[65] For the sources of the tract *Soliloquia*, see, for example, Frandsen 2006, p. 119.

[66] De Harduwijn 1645, p. 1. My translation: 'I was blind and I loved the blindness, and I walked by night in the middle of the dark. But who led me out of there, while I was a blind human, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death?' For the sources of the tract see, for example, Frandsen 2006, p. 119.

[67] The translation used by the manuscript author and Paets was done by Van Hemert. See on his oeuvre: Verschueren 1933; Verschueren 1935; Verschueren 1937; Axters 1960, p. 207, 216.

[68] Many editions were circulating in the seventeenth century. See Verschueren 1933, p. 409-416.

[69] Augustine 1631, chapter 33, p. 153-154.

[70] We are probably supposed to read 'uuyt', or 'uit', which means 'out'.

[71] My translation : 'I was blind and I loved my blindness, and I walked from darkness to darkness. Who led me out of there, while I was sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death?'Composite volume 325, emblem 1.

composing emblem 3, he or she not only read the fragment quoted in *Goddelycke wenschen*, but copied other fragments of the tract as well.[72]

By facilitating a creative processes of reading, hyperlinking and copying, the manuscript functioned as a kind of *rapiarium*: a collection of spiritual quotations from different sources, serving as a means to internalise devotional messages and to strengthen the religious self. But in comparison to late-medieval *rapiaria*, this manuscript is a remarkably carefully composed product. Inspired by the *Pia Desideria* tradition, it took shape as a printed emblem book, consisting of a title page, a clear composition with three sections, and well-structured emblems.

The careful selection of prose fragments contributed to this manuscript's coherence. In emblem 3, for instance, not all thirty two prose fragments from the *Goddelycke Wenschen* were copied (Fig. 4). The manuscript composer, who picked seven fragments and added a new quotation as well, restricted him- or herself to quotations directly addressing God, in order to create some uniformity in the emblem as a whole. As well, the composer enhanced the narrative or logic structure by dropping parts of the fragments. In the original third emblem, the content of the motto was repeated in the first fragment. In consequence, *anima* – who lies ill because of the sins she committed – begged for God's help twice: 'I am ill, please heal me, I am ill, please heal me.'[73] By partly removing the quotation , the manuscript author created a logical argument without any repetition: 'I am ill, please heal me, because you are my savior.'[74]

The textual and visual meditation process of this manuscript composer thus resulted in a product which grew out of the structure of a fixed text, but nonetheless kept – or even strengthened – its composition as a coherent meditative emblem book. As confirmed by the handwritten dedication, the composite volume probably circulated within Catholic women's communities during the early modern period. Catholic women such as Sister Maria van Heel were able to refine their media skills while using this multimedial product in their own meditation processes. If these Catholic women integrated their engagement with texts and images in their spiritual transformation, their media practices in turn have contributed to the formation of a religious identity of their own. In other words, the product invited (young) spiritual women to acquire media literacies, in order to shape a religious self.

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[72] Augustine 1603; composite volume 325, emblem 3.

[73] 'Heere weest my bermhertich, want ick ben kranck: Heere gheneest my, want mijn ghebeenten zijn beroert. […] Ick ben sieck, ick roepe naer den Medicijn: ick ben blindt, ick haeste my tot het licht: ick ben doodt, ende ick versuchte naer het leven.' De Harduwijn 1645, emblem 3, p. 17.

[74] 'Ontfermt u mynder heere, want ick ben cranch gheneest my heere / want alle myn beenderen syn heel ontstelt. Ghy syt die medecyn meester, ghy syt dat licht ghy syt dat leven o iesu van nasarenen'. Composite volume 325, emblem 3.
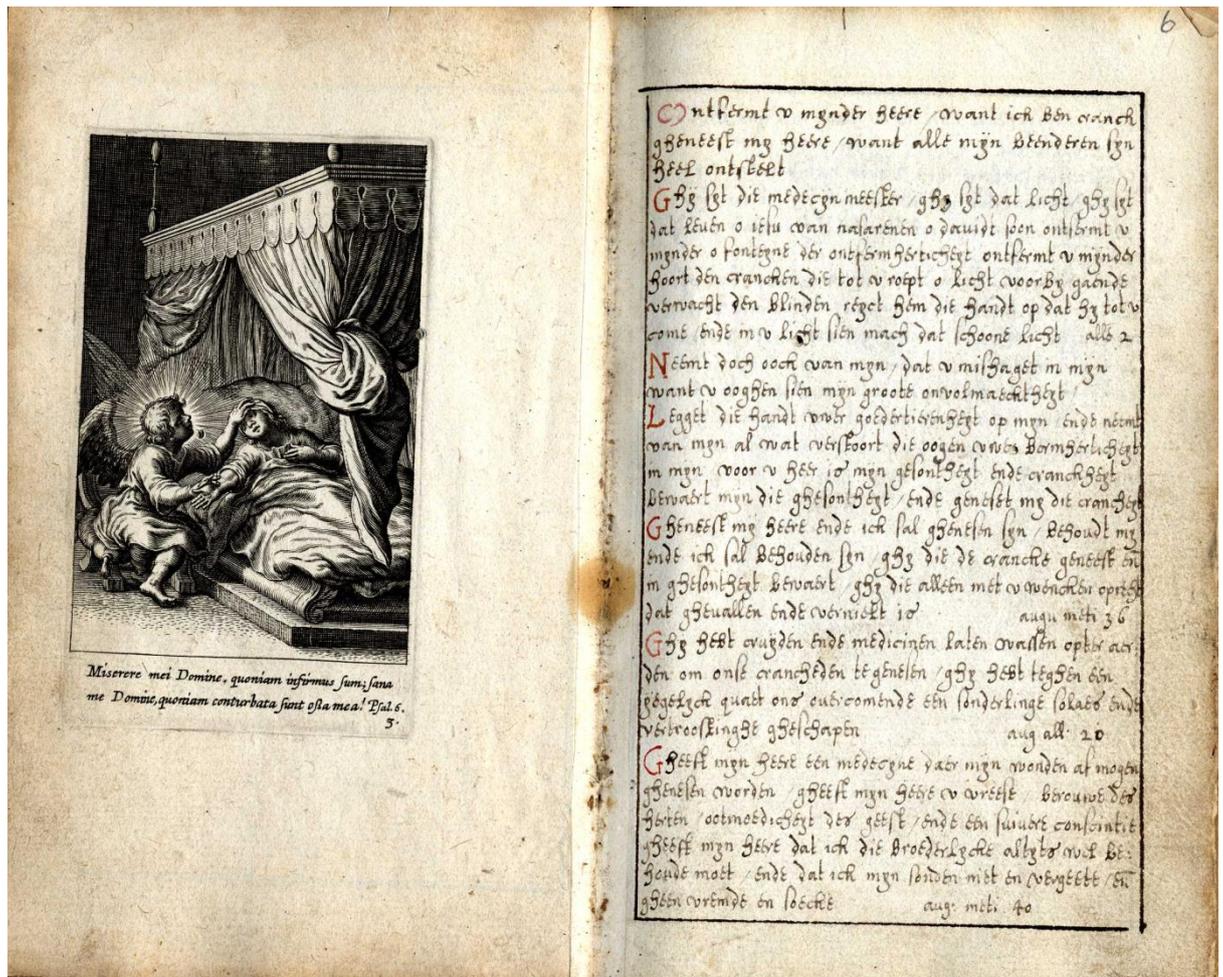
Fig. 4: Composite volume 325, emblem 3. Radboud University Nijmegen.

4. Conclusion

The anonymous composer of the composite volume proved to be a 'media literate Catholic'. He or she crossed the boundaries between media consumption and production, was a skilled writer and stitcher, practiced both visual and textual literacies, combined different media (text, image, print, manuscript), and consulted numerous printed sources in Dutch. Since the compiler's media and meditation processes are deeply interconnected, media literacies seem to have been vital to the modeling of a religious self, which was shaped and strengthened by a strong engagement with texts and images that mediate between the visible and invisible world. Interrelated media and spiritual practices resulted in new multimedial products, which served as a means to share (media) skills and knowledge, and to facilitate the meditation processes of future consumers, who may have turned into media producers as well.

Without considering this single volume to be a representative test case for historical media literacy in general, I assume that the composite volume reflects media literacy practices widespread in early modern religious culture. We know that the

practice of mixing manuscript and print found general acceptance in religious circles,[75] and that the production of handwritten anthologies flourished in the early modern period.[76]

I would like to highlight two hypotheses which need further exploration. The first hypothesis is that 'modern' print practices influenced the structure and layout of 'traditional' manuscripts. Shaped as an anthology of prose quotations, the *Pia Desideria* manuscript was rooted in a long Catholic tradition of 'reading with the pen': it facilitated the meditation process by collecting devotional sentences from different sources. But regarding its coherence and structure, this *Pia Desideria* manuscript shows more similarities to seventeenth century printed emblem books than to the fluid and unstable late-medieval *rapiaria*. The productivity and creativity of reading and writing now resulted in a well-composed product, directly inspired by circulating printed books. Is the manuscript part of a much larger remediation process, stimulated by the advent of print? Was the manuscript composer, as a participant in print culture, able to improve his or her literacy skills, and thus to refashion 'old' media?

The second hypothesis is that Catholic media culture, with its particular visual and textual practices of meditation, was a 'participatory culture', comparable to today's interactive media culture. Many literacies associated with 'new' media were already practiced in seventeenth-century Catholic culture: Catholics were interactive and creative 'consumer-as-producers', easily dealing with hyperlinks, mixed media, the heterogeneity of sources, and the fluid boundaries between different media and media content.[77] Seventeenth-century media literacies resemble present literacies, or – the other way round – our 'new' literacies are continuous with literacies of past centuries. Such a diachronic and media-neutral approach to media literacy enables us to understand the shaping, improvement and spread of literacies in a longitudinal perspective.

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[75] McKitterick 2003, chapter 3, esp. p. 60-61.

[76] Blair 2010, p. 62-116; Allan 2010; Moser 2012.

[77] In this article, I have specifically focused on *Catholic* media practices. But is this form of media participation a unique characteristic of Catholic culture? On the basis of this case study, I can't draw any conclusions about Protestant media culture. It is known that visual meditation practices were controversial among Protestants, especially in the Dutch Republic, but the idea of providing religious edification through a combination of (visual and textual) media had its appeal to Dutch Protestants as well, and attempts to use images on acceptable terms were made by Dutch Protestants throughout the seventeenth century (see Stronks 2011; Dutch visual practices differed from practices in other Northern European countries, where Protestant religious literary practices started while iconoclastic acts were still being staged – see for example Davis 2012). But we don't know whether these multimedia products invited Protestants to participation and hyperlinking practices, and whether creative Protestant media practices stimulated the modeling of a religious self. An eighteenth-century handwritten reworking of Jan Luyken's *Jezus en de ziel* (1678) – *Verborge leven der ziele met Christus* (see Stronks 2009) – seems to be an inspiring exponent of a Protestant multimedia participatory culture, but there is no indication that the composer of this manuscript creatively used and combined *several* textual and visual sources to internalise devotional messages and to strengthen the religious self.

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Illustrations

Fig. 1: Composite volume 325, emblem 1. Radboud University Nijmegen.

Fig. 2: Composite volume 325, title page section 1. Radboud University Nijmegen.

Fig. 3: Justus de Harduwijn, *Goddelycke wenschen*. Amsterdam, Pieter Jacobsz. Paets, 1645, title page section 1. Special Collections Utrecht University, THO: WRT 57-376.

Fig. 4: Composite volume 325, emblem 3. Radboud University Nijmegen.