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Recommended Citation

O'Connell, Ryan, "01, "Use of Rome" and the 1507 Kerver Book of Hours" (2018). *Kerver Book of Hours: 2018 Senior Capstone*. 17.

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Use of Rome and the PSU Printed Book of Hours
Ryan O'Connell

Portland State University Library's printed Book of Hours demonstrates how, by the early sixteenth century, a book of hours' use was no longer synonymous with where it was made or where it was intended to be used. While the PSU Book of Hours is designated "Use of Rome" by scholars, and by the colophon on sig. t8, it was printed in Paris and probably intended for use in the Catalonia region of northern Spain.

Before movable-type printing appeared on the European scene in 1450, all books of hours were hand-copied manuscripts. This artisanal style of manufacture made it easy enough to match a book's Use to the patron's home city, or to whatever Use the patron requested. But when booksellers like Thielman Kerver began printing large numbers of books of hours for sale to diverse international patrons, a standard Use became economically desirable. Such standardization would avoid the laborious—and therefore expensive—process of setting new pages of type for each Use. Use of Rome grew in popularity during the fifteenth century, which may have been largely due to printers seeking economies of scale. This is likely explains why the PSU Book of Hours largely follows Use of Rome.

Kerver did, however, offer some customization beyond the standard Use of Rome configuration. In the PSU example, Spanish saints are featured in the Calendar, and a Spanish prayer appears at sig. t3v.

These Spanish customizations affect only three of the book's twenty quires, which would have allowed the rest to be taken from what were likely large stocks of standard Use of Rome quires. Of the four criteria used by Plummer to identify a book's Use—Calendar, Hours of the Virgin, Litany, and Office of the Dead¹—only one in the PSU Book of Hours varied from the

¹ Plummer, 149.

standard Use of Rome formula. Therefore the PSU Book of Hours is still classified as Use of Rome.

Among the four sections listed above, the Hours of the Virgin is the largest in most books of hours. This is true for the PSU Book, with the section occupying sig. *g5-14*. Within this section are the individual Hours to be recited during seven prayer times throughout the day. This is the composition of the Hours of the Virgin, where Plummer and other scholars look to identify the Use of Rome:

- Matins, *g5*
- Lauds, *h2*
- Prime, *h7v*
- Terce, *i2*
- Sext, *i4v*
- None, *i6v*
- Vespers, *i8v*
- Compline, *k4*

Comparing one of these Hours to its counterpart in another Use, we can begin to see how Uses differ and what specific markers can be used to identify each one. Prime, which was the first prayer said after dawn, shows many of these differences. In the PSU Book of Hours, Prime begins with a versicle followed by a response, which together make up a call-and-response known as a *preces*. These are followed by a hymn. We can represent each of these lines with an abbreviation (e.g., “V” for “Versicle,” or “Hy” for “Hymn”), followed by the first few words (figs. 1 and 2):

V. Deus in adiutorium
R. Domine ad adiuvandum me festina
Hy. Memento salutis auctor

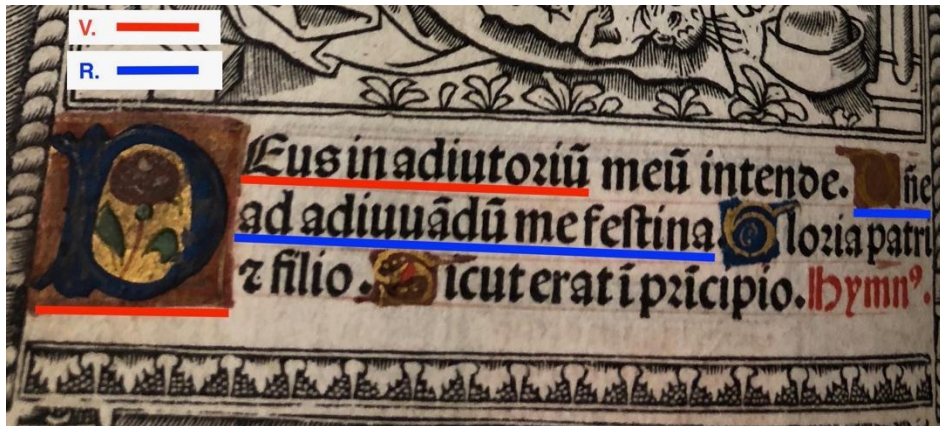


fig. 1 – Use of Rome – versicle and response, sig. h7v. (Photo by Ryan O’Connell)

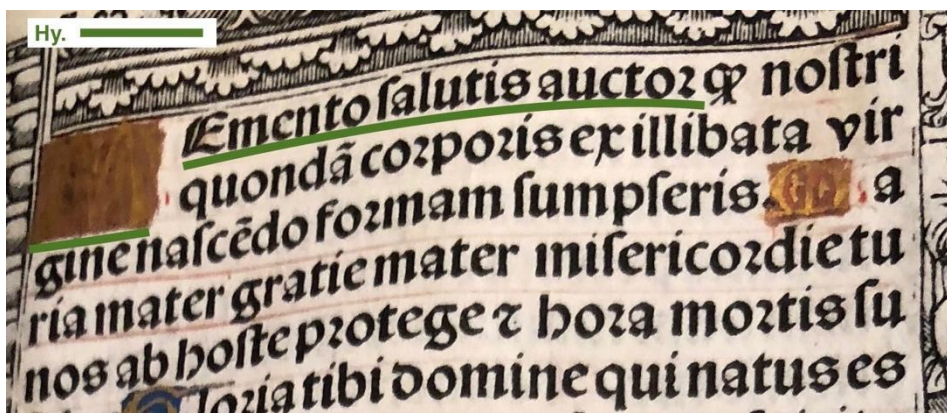


fig. 2 – Use of Rome – hymn, sig. h8. (Photo by Ryan O’Connell)

Compare this to a Use of Sarum example published around 1455 for use in England. Primes

starts with the same preces, but uses a different hymn (fig. 3):

V. *Deus in adiutorium*
 R. *Domine ad adiuuandum me festina*
 Hy. *Veni creator*

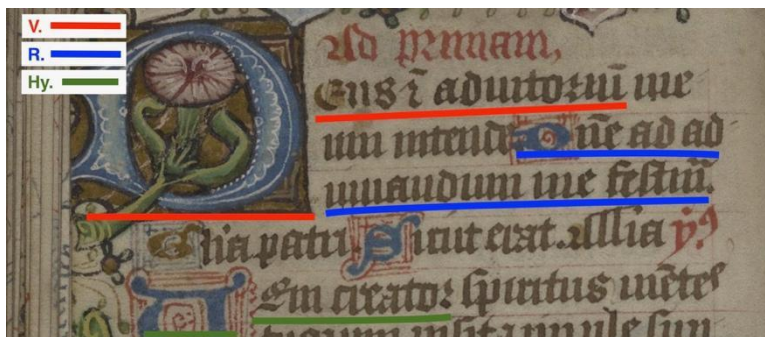


fig. 3 – Use of Sarum – versicle, response, and hymn, sig. 23v.

PSU’s Book of Hours continues in Use of Rome with Psalms 53, 84, and 116 (figs. 4, 5, and 6):

Ps. *Deus in nomine*

Ps. *Bene dixisti domine terram*
Ps. *Laudate dominum*

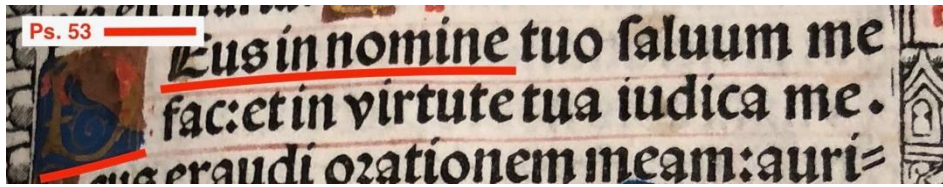


fig. 4 – Use of Rome – Psalm 53, sig. h8. (Photo by Ryan O’Connell)



fig. 5 – Use of Rome – Psalm 84, sig. h8v. (Photo by Ryan O’Connell)

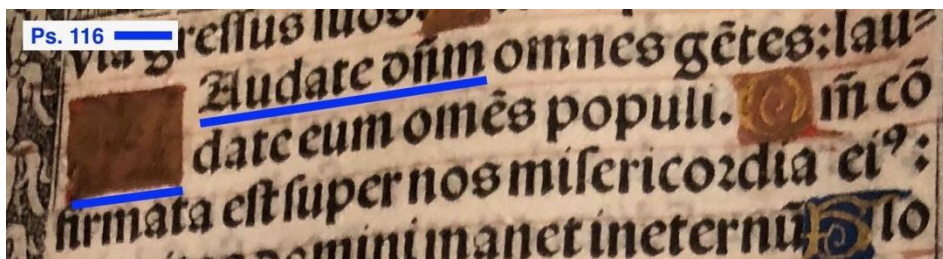


fig. 6 – Use of Rome – Psalm 116, sig. i1. (Photo by Ryan O’Connell)

The Use of Sarum, for example, which was only one of many other Uses, gives Psalms 53, 116, and 117 (figs. 7, 8 and 9):

Ps. *Deus in nomine*
Ps. *Laudate dominum*
Ps. *Confitemini domino*

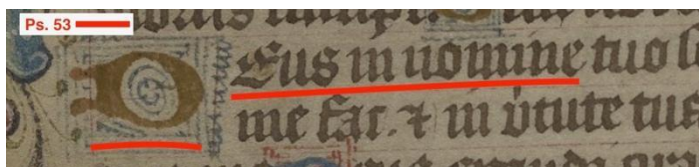
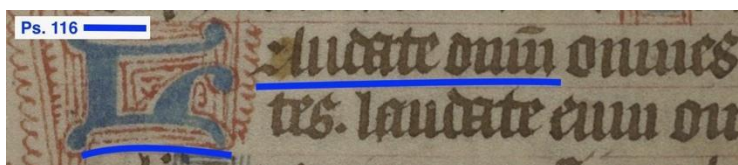


fig. 7 – Use of Sarum – Psalm 53, sig. 23v.²



² Catholic Church, 23v.

fig. 8 – Use of Sarum – Psalm 116, sig. 24r.³

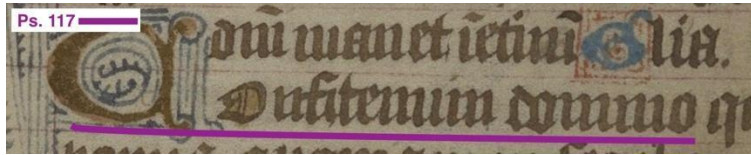


fig. 9 – Use of Sarum – Psalm 117, sig. 24r.⁴

Prime continues with at least three additional differences between Use of Rome and Use of Sarum. Such differences can also be found in the other Hours of the Virgin, as well as in the Calendar, Litany, and Office of the Dead, as noted by Plummer.⁵ Scholars including Plummer, Leroquais, and Cavet have catalogued the identifying details of Use of Rome with varying results.

Of course, the only certain indication of a book's Use is an explicit statement by the publisher. If Kerver and others had not specified Use of Rome in the colophons of many Books of Hours, including the PSU example, scholars would have lacked any "Rosetta Stone" against which to verify their conclusions regarding Uses.

³ Catholic Church, 24v.

⁴ Catholic Church, 24v.

⁵ Plummer, 149.

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