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Werner Besch · Norbert Otto Eike · Eva Geulen · Thomas Klein ·

Norbert Oellers · Ursula Peters · Hartmut Steinecke · Helmut Tervooren

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dem 12. und 16. Jahrhundert

Herausgegeben von Bernd Baster, Helmut Tervooren und Frank Willaert

LATE-MEDIEVAL DEVOUT SONG: REPERTOIRE,  
MANUSCRIPTS, FUNCTION

von Dreuwe van der Poel, Utrecht

*Abstract*

This article begins with an overview of the genre of devout vernacular song in the *Nidere lande*. The contrafactum system is considered here as a predominantly oral system to transmit a melody. The songs could function as a tool for meditation and spiritual exercise, to be sung in the heart or aloud during work and recreation. In conclusion, a division of the miscellaneous codices of devout song into three groups is conceived: books that present the songs predominantly as a tool for meditation; books that start with Christmas (-/Easter)songs; books containing songs with Latin liturgical and vernacular repertoire, with a remarkable focus on the musical aspects. Dieser Beitrag beginnt mit einem Überblick über das Genre des volkssprachigen ‚devoten‘ Lieds in den *Nideren Landen*. Das System der Kontrafakturen wird dabei verstanden als ein vorwiegend mündliches System zur Übertragung von Melodien. Die Lieder konnten als Mittel zur Meditation und spiritueller Übung dienen, innerlich oder auch laut während der Arbeit und der Rekreation gesungen. Der Beitrag schließt mit einer Unterteilung der verschiedenen Typen von Sammelhandschriften mit ‚devoter‘ Lyrik in drei Gruppen: Bücher, die die Lieder in erster Linie als Mittel zur Meditation präsentieren; Bücher, die mit Weihnachs- (Oster-)Liedern einsetzen; Bücher, die Lieder mit lateinischem und volkssprachigem liturgischen Repertoire enthalten, wobei ein besonderer Fokus auf musikalischen Aspekten liegt.

“Die geistige Geschichte des Mittelalters wird falsch erfasst, wenn man sie ausschließlich nach nationalen Gesichtspunkten und Unterschieden betrachtet oder auf Spezialbeziehungen einzelner Nationen hin untersucht”. With these words, in 1952, Walter Salmen began his article on the song manuscript of Anna von Köln.<sup>1</sup> He was not the first – and will not be the last – to acknowledge that particularly in the case of late-medieval devout song, there is no distinction between the ‘German’ and ‘Dutch’ repertoire. The same songs feature in books originating from both sides of the current national border, and songs travelled between the houses and convents belonging to the *Devotio Moderna*. It was indeed this spiritual movement that spread rapidly from Deventer at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century through the ‘Nidere lande’, that offered the inspiration and the site for the development of this genre, especially in the Rhine-Meuse area, Westphalia, and Lower Saxony (in particular the Lüneburg Heath).<sup>2</sup> In the beginning, the Modern Devout lived together with

<sup>1</sup> Walter Salmen: Das Liedertuch von Anna von Köln und seine Beziehungen zu den Niederlanden, in: Kongressbericht Internationale Gesellschaft für Musikwissenschaft, Utrecht 1952, p. 340–351, quote at p. 340.

<sup>2</sup> For the expression *Nidere Lande*, see Werner Williams-Krapp: Literaturlandschaften im späten Mittelalter, in: Niederdeutsches Wort 26, 1986, p. 1–7.

out rules or vows, as Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life. From the fifteenth century onward, these communities were gradually converted into more official convents: many took on the rule of St. Augustine, or the Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis. The Chapter of Windesheim became the most important congregation. The 'Lineburger Frauenklöster' belonged to the Benedictine and Cistercian orders, but their spirituality was very much influenced by the *Devotio Moderna* due to the Reform led by Johannes Busch.<sup>3</sup>

This article will discuss three different yet related aspects of this genre. After a brief overview of the material and the connections between the Dutch and Low German repertoire, I will turn to three current foci of scholarship: the tradition of the melodies; the recent discussion about the function of these songs; the study of the manuscripts as miscellanies. Only for reasons of space will I restrict myself to the handwritten sources, leaving aside important contemporary printed books, such as the *Devout and Beneficial book* (*Devoot ende profitelijck Boeckken*), printed in Antwerp in 1539.<sup>4</sup>

#### The most important manuscripts

In his still fundamental book "Het geestelijk lied in de Nederlanden voor de kerkhervorming" (1906),<sup>5</sup> Jan Knuttel discussed the relevant manuscripts from the Netherlands.<sup>6</sup>

Berlin SBB-PK mgo 190, from the area of Utrecht, dated circa 1480, with more than 200 Latin and vernacular songs  
 Berlin SBB-PK mgo 185, originating from the Lammie van Dese house in Deventer, dated 1500, with 92 vernacular songs

<sup>3</sup> Koen Goudriaan. De derde orde als onderdeel van de Moderne Devotie, in: *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 74, 2000, p. 9–32; Madelon van Luijk. *Bruiden van Christus*. De tweede religieuze vrouwenbeweging in Leiden en Zwolle, 1380–1580. Zutphen 2004; Hilde van Engen. De derde orde van Sint-Franciscus in het middeleeuwse bisdom Utrecht. Een bijdrage tot de institutionele geschiedenis van de Moderne Devotie, Hilversum 2006; Ulrike Hascher-Bürger, Hermina Joldersma. Introduction. Music and the *Devotio Moderna*, in: *Church History and Religious Culture* 88, 2008, p. 313–327.

<sup>4</sup> This is by far the largest songbook to appear on the European continent by that date. See: *Een devoot ende profitelijck boeckken* inhoudende veel gheestelike Liedkens ende Leysenen, diemen tot deser tijt toe heeft connen ghevinden in prente oft in ghescrefte Geestelijck liedboek met melodien van 1539, ed. by Daniel F. Scheurleer, s-Gravenhage 1889.

<sup>5</sup> Jan A. N. Knuttel. *Het geestelijk lied in de Nederlanden voor de kerkhervorming*, Rotterdam 1906.

<sup>6</sup> The songs of most of the manuscripts mentioned are part of the important edition *Das deutsche Kirchenlied. Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Melodien*. Abt. II. *Geistliche Gesänge des deutschen Mittelalters*. Melodien und Texte handschriftlicher Überlieferung bis um 1530, ed. by Max Lütolf, Köln 2003.

Vienna ÖNB SN 12875, dated late fifteenth century, with 47 songs in the vernacular and Latin chants. This manuscript is closely linked to two other manuscripts, one of them, Leiden UB Ltk 2058 is usually called 'Die Gheestelike melody', the other is The Hague, KB 75 H 42

Paris BN Ne 39, the songbook of Lisbet Choeyvaers, dated before 1500, with 46 songs in Dutch<sup>8</sup>

Brussels KB II 2631, dated before 1525, with about 50 Latin and 68 vernacular songs

Brussels KB II 270, dated 1500–1510, with 10 vernacular polyphonic songs and 5 songs for one voice, and 20 polyphonic songs, 10 Latin hymns and some other texts<sup>9</sup>

Leiden UB Ltk 218, the songbook of Marigen Remen, dated circa 1540, with 17 vernacular songs and other short texts<sup>10</sup>

In 1930 G. G. Wilbrink discussed the songs of the *Devotio moderna* as a "Spiegel niederländisch-deutscher Beziehungen",<sup>11</sup> showing the correlations between the Deventer manuscript (Berlin SBB-PK mgo 185), the songbooks of Catherine Tirs (current whereabouts unknown, 1588, originally Münster, women's monastery Marienthal (Niesing), with 66 songs in the vernacular and Latin chants),<sup>12</sup> Anna von Köln (Berlin SBB-PK mgo 280, ca. 1500, Emmerich, or around Cologne, with 67 songs in the vernacular and Latin chants)<sup>13</sup> and the

<sup>7</sup> These codices were not yet known to Knuttel [n. 5], see: Pieter F. J. Obbema. *Het einde van de Zuster van Gansorode*, in: (idem). *De middeleeuwen in handen*. Over de boekcultuur in de late middeleeuwen. Hilversum 1996, p. 166–175 (and the publications mentioned there). Vienna ÖNB SN 12875 was attributed to the Convent of Saint Margaret in Amsterdam, but Obbema showed that this was groundless. Unfortunately, it features in the title of the most recent edition: Eliseus Bruning, Marie Velthuyzen, Hélène Wagenaar-Nolhenius. *Het geestelijk lied van Noord-Nederland in de vijftiende eeuw*. De Nederlandse liederen van de handschriften Amsterdam (Wenen ÖNB 12875) en Utrecht (Berlijn MG 80190), Amsterdam 1963. See for an in-depth discussion: Thom Mertens. *Die Gheestelike Melody*. A program for the spiritual life in a Middle Dutch song cycle, in: Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, Liz H. McAvoy. *Women and experience in later Medieval writing*. Reading the book of life, New York 2009, p. 123–147.

<sup>8</sup> *Het liedboek van Lisbet Choeyvaers*, ed. by Andraas J.M. van Seggelen, Zwolle 1966.

<sup>9</sup> *Jeske van Dongen*. *Tien Middelnederlandse meestersingende liederen uit handschrift Brussel KB II 270*, Utrecht 2002.

<sup>10</sup> *Het liedboekje van Marigen Remen* (Hs. Leiden, UB, Ltk 218, F.62–F.78V), ed. by Werkgroep van Utrechtse neerlandici, Utrecht 1966.

<sup>11</sup> G. G. Wilbrink. *Das geistliche Lied der Devotio Moderna*. Ein Spiegel niederländisch-deutscher Beziehungen, Nijmegen 1930.

<sup>12</sup> *Niederdeutsche geistliche Lieder und Sprüche aus dem Münsterlande*, ed. by Bernhard Hölscher, Berlin 1854; see also: Albrecht Classen. *„Mein Seel fang an zu singen“*. Religiöse Frauenlieder der 15.–16. Jahrhunderts. Kritische Studien und Textedition, Leuven 2002.

<sup>13</sup> *Liederbuch der Anna von Köln* (um 1500), ed. by Walter Salmen, Johannes Koeppe, Düsseldorf 1954.

Werdener Liederbuch (the current whereabouts are unknown, second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> C., originally Helmstedt, Augustinian Canonesses, 23 songs in the vernacular and other texts).<sup>14</sup>

In 2006 Helmut Tervooren dedicated a paragraph in his book on the literature of the Rhine-Meuse area to “Die geistliche volkssprachlige Lyrik des Raumes”<sup>15</sup> in which he discussed not only Berlin 185, the Vienna codex, Anna von Köln and the Werdener Liederbuch, but also Brussels KB IV 421 (second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> C., Windesheimer convent Ter Nood Gods in Tongeren, 10 vernacular songs as well as other texts in Latin and the vernacular),<sup>16</sup> the Gaesdoncker Liedersammlung (Gaesdonck, Collegium Augustinum, ms 37, late 15<sup>th</sup> C., Augustinian Canons in Gaesdonck, with a small collection of 9 songs (3 vernacular, 4 in Latin, and 2 macaronic)),<sup>17</sup> and the Venloer-Geldrisches Hausbuch (Brussels KB II 144, second half 16<sup>th</sup> C., original owner unknown, with a dozen vernacular songs amidst all kinds of short texts).

Another productive region was the Lüneburg Heath, with its six women’s institutions.<sup>18</sup> A recent inventory of the more than 100 extant manuscripts of these houses gives about 50 incipits in Low German (out of a total of about 1700 songs).<sup>19</sup> Medingen (Cistercians) has the most important collection: 36 codices with some Low German songs among the Latin chants. A first comparison with the Dutch songs offers few similarities.<sup>20</sup> The music of these houses has been recently recorded.<sup>21</sup>

This brief overview shows some particularities of the sources: in comparison with secular song, the writing down of devout song begins late, from around

<sup>14</sup> Franz Joses: Eine Werdener Liederhandschrift aus der Zeit um 1500, in: Jahrbuch des Vereins für niederdeutsche Sprachforschung 14, 1888, p. 60–89.

<sup>15</sup> Helmut Tervooren: Van der Mase tot op den Rijn. Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der mittelalterlichen volkssprachlichen Literatur im Raum von Rhein und Maas, Berlin 2006, p. 154–175.

<sup>16</sup> Middeliederlandsce geestelike gedichten, liederen, rijmspreken en exempelien, ed. by Luc Indestege, Antwerpen 1951.

<sup>17</sup> Helmut Tervooren, Martina Klug: Ein neu entdeckter Adventszyklus aus dem nieder-rheinischen Kloster Gaesdonk. Beschreibung, Edition und Kommentar, in: Quaestio 9, 2002, p. 38–66.

<sup>18</sup> Ida-Christine Riggert: Die Lüneburger Frauenklöster, Hannover 1996.

<sup>19</sup> Ulrike Hascher-Burger: Verborgene Klänge. Inventar der handschriftlich überlieferten Musik aus den Lüneburger Frauenklöstern bis ca. 1550. Hildesheim 2008; and [idem], Mittelalterliche Handschriften mit Musik in den Lüneburger Frauenklöstern, in: Musikort Kloster. Kulturelles Handeln von Frauen in der Frühen Neuzeit, ed. by Susanne Rode-Brymann, Köln 2009, p. 139–158. Only some of these codices were already known to scholars, such as ms. Wienenhausen Klosterarchiv, hs. 9 (Das Wienenhäuser Liederbuch, ed. by Heinrich Sievers, Wolfenbüttel 1954).

<sup>20</sup> The Medingen manuscripts have been collected virtually by Henrike Lähmann at URL: [http://research.ncl.ac.uk/medingen/public\\_extern/](http://research.ncl.ac.uk/medingen/public_extern/).

<sup>21</sup> In a series of six CDs, entitled Musik der Heideklöster, by Schola and Ensemble devoto moderna, conducted by Ulrike Volkhardt (cantate).

1470 onward. As far as we know, most manuscripts come from women’s institutions, or were owned by religious and semi-religious women: Anna von Köln might have lived in a House of Sisters of the Common life, Liisbet Choeyvaers lived in a Cloister of Clarisses in Brussels, Etheken Bernus daughter (who owned “Die Gheestelike Melody”) possibly lived in a community,<sup>22</sup> Catharina Tirs lived in the House of Sisters Marienthal in Münster, about Marigen Remen we know nothing except her name. However, the manuscripts of Tongeren and Gaesdonck belonged to institutions for men. Most of these books can be held in the hand easily: the book of Anna von Köln (96 × 72 mm) is the smallest, most of them measure about 140 × 100 mm.

Taken together, these sources contain hundreds of songs. Knuttel counted 574 and divided them into genres, the most important being the repentance song (inkertied), with many hymns to Jesus and Mary, Christmas songs and songs thematising the four last things (death, judgment, hell, heaven). Many of the extant songs came down to us in only one codex or printed book, but some feature in many sources: some Christmas songs (such as “Het is heden een dach der vrolicheit” (a translation of the Latin hymn “Dies est laetitia/in ortu regali”), and the famous macaronic song “In dulci iubilo”,<sup>23</sup> the Marian hymn “Her viel eens hemels douwe” and the repentance song “Hoe luyde sanc die leeraer op der tunen”.<sup>24</sup> This enumeration already shows the origins of the repertoire: some texts are translations of Latin hymns, but more often new texts were written on the tunes of secular songs. Most songs are for one voice, some for two voices, seldom for three. Almost no names of authors are known, with the notable exceptions of Dirk van Hercken, Beta Jacobs (the Utrecht recluse Sister Bertken) and Johannes Brugman.

#### The tradition of the melodies and the contrafact technique

In essence, two systems were used to transmit the melodies: musical notation and melody references. Various types of musical notation were used, also within one and the same source. Firstly, chant notation (“Hufnagelschrift”) was applied in easy and well known pieces, that did not need an exact indication of the rhythm. For more complex chants, semimensural notation was used, usually

<sup>22</sup> Based on the inscription in which she utters the wish that the book shall be given to the community after her death (Obbema In. 71).

<sup>23</sup> Gisela Kornumpf: In dulci iubilo. Neue Aspekte der Überlieferungsgeschichte beider Fassungen des Weihnachtsliedes, in: Edition und Interpretation. Neue Forschungsparadigmen zur mittelhochdeutschen Lyrik. Festschrift für Helmut Tervooren, ed. by Johannes Spicker, Susanne Fritsch, Gaby Hercher e.a., Stuttgart 2000, p. 159–190; and Anne-Dore Harzer: In dulci iubilo. Fassungen und Rezeptionsgeschichte des Liedes vom 14. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart, Tübingen 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Max Schindorfer: „Jesus begleitet meine zeeke“. Das Liedschaffen der Devotio Moderna, ein (kulturstorisch) lukraives Feld, in: Spicker, Fritsch, Hercher e.a. [n. 23], p. 135–157, p. 156.

chant notation with some rhythmic indications such as stems ('Minimal'-Striche), often difficult to interpret even for trained musicologists. Lastly, there was proper mensural notation.<sup>25</sup>

However, more often the melody was indicated by a reference to a secular song such as "Die wise: Het voer een man te houten" ("The tune: a man went out to get wood"), accompanying the song "Heer Jhesus quam ter stelen" ("Jesus came to see to the soul") in Berlin 190. Some scholars argue that secular melodies were used with a specific purpose in mind. Max Schindorfer for example refers to a heading stating that the words are set to the tune of secular songs so that the original words might be forgotten, for these only convey vanity ("Om dat men die werlike worden sal moghen vergheten, want ons daer niet dan ydelheit in gheleghen en es").<sup>26</sup> Burghart Wachinger holds that the *contrafacta* reveal a way of thinking resulting from deliberate withdrawal from the world, a withdrawal which expresses itself by converting secular themes into religious ones.<sup>27</sup>

A desire to effect change at the textual level might be the impetus in some cases, but commonly there are very few textual similarities: at most theme, incipit or rhyme scheme are borrowed. The main reason for using an already existing melody is simply that for most people it is easier to write lyrics than to compose a new melody.<sup>28</sup> An additional reason can be that an existing melody is more appropriate when a song is created for the purpose of communal singing: in such a situation an unknown melody is an obvious detriment.<sup>29</sup> Codex Brus in such a situation offers interesting examples of the use of *contrafacta*, because it has often extensive melody references. Usually only one melody is given, but sometimes more, and in one instance as many as four different songs are given, possibly so that the singers would be granted some freedom to choose. Perhaps, as well, the multiple references are intended to be as helpful as possible: by mentioning several melodies, the chance increases that a singer would actually know at least one of them. However this may be, such instances do demonstrate that the connection between text and melody could be rather loose.

<sup>25</sup> Ike de Looze: Late medieval Dutch song. Sources, notations and *contrafacta*, in: Niederländisches und deutsches weltliches Lied zwischen 1480 und 1640, ed. by Boje E. Hans Schmhl, Ute Omonsky, Augsburg, Michaelstein 2007, p. 53–82. See also GGdM [n. 6], Abt II, Band 1, p. XII–XIV.

<sup>26</sup> Ms. Den Haag 75 H 42, Schindorfer 2000 [n. 24], p. 155, n. 46.

<sup>27</sup> Burghart Wachinger: Gattungsprobleme beim geistlichen Lied des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts, in: Forschungen zur deutschen Literatur des Spätmittelalters. Festschrift für Johannes Janota, ed. by Horst Brunner, Werner Williams-Krapp, Tübingen 2003, p. 93–107.

<sup>28</sup> Hence the *contrafact* principle of composition can be found in many different times and in many different places, see Louis Peter Grijp: Het Nederlandse lied in de Gouden Eeuw. Het mechanisme van de *contrafactuur*, Amsterdam 1991, esp. p. 75–77 and p. 145, <sup>29</sup> Grijp 1991, [n. 28], esp. p. 23–27.

Musical notation and melody references can be seen as merely two different but equally satisfactory systems of transmitting a melody. The system of melody references can be looked upon as the more oral one, particularly apt for strophic songs: everyone who already knows the tune referred to, is able to sing the new song. Musical notation presupposes a higher level of literacy and specific schooling, of scribes and readers alike.

In the early 1990s, musicologist Louis Peter Grijp devised a system to trace melodies in this *contrafactum* system and over the course of time expanded it into an important database, the Nederlandse Liederenbank ([www.liederenbank.nl](http://www.liederenbank.nl)), in which songs with similar strophic schemes can be searched. If the user is fortunate, the database will supply not only the model that is referred to, but an edition with musical notation as well.<sup>30</sup> Even when this is not the case, it does supply the means to find the authentic melodies.<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that this system encompasses secular as well as religious song.<sup>32</sup>

#### The function of devout song

The research on devout song received a new impetus in 1992, with Fons van Buuren's fundamental article "Soe wie dit liedkyn sinct of leest? De functie van de Laamiddeliederlandse geestelijke lyriek", published in "Een zoet akkoord". The book, the outcome of an important interdisciplinary cooperation, was itself a significant contribution to the field. Van Buuren raised the question as to whether this song repertoire was actually sung, or rather used as vehicle for meditation.<sup>33</sup> The manuscript "Die Gheestelike Melody" served as his point of departure: a remarkable codex, in which each of the songs is accompanied by a short introduction in prose, while the collection is arranged as a cycle, and divided into two volumes, again each with a short introduction in prose.<sup>34</sup> As a result the songs are connected to the days of the week and the user of the manuscript is incited to meditate upon the songs: each day the given song (and two

<sup>30</sup> However, one strophic form may serve several melodies, therefore additional evidence should be searched in order to proof that a particular melody was indeed used for a particular song.

<sup>31</sup> This is not the occasion to pursue this question further, see Grijp 1991 [n. 28], and Louis Peter Grijp: De zingende Hadevijsch. Op zoek naar de melodien van haar Strofische Gedichten, in: Een zoet akkoord. Middelieuwse lyriek in de Lage Landen, ed. by Frank Willaert, Amsterdam 1992, p. 72–92, 340–343 (also on the DBNL: URL: [http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/grij001zing01\\_01/index.htm](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/grij001zing01_01/index.htm)).

<sup>32</sup> Now running is a follow-up project entitled Dutch songs on Line, funded by The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). The Liederenbank and the DBNL (Digital Library for Dutch Literature) will be combined and significantly expanded into a comprehensive new database by adding full transcriptions of lyrics, links to scans of the sources and contextual information.

<sup>33</sup> Alphonse M. J. van Buuren, in: Willaert [n. 31], p. 234–254 and p. 399–404.

<sup>34</sup> See Obbens [n. 7].

songs on Sunday) should be memorized. The general prologue mentions the ‘reading’ (ghelesen) and ‘considering’ (ghedacht) of the hymns. Van Buuren raised questions about the use of these songs: were they actually meditated upon in private, or sung aloud, and if so, in a group (for example during manual labour) or rather alone? To answer these questions he explored various sources: the writings of important leaders of the *Devotio Moderna* such as Zerbole van Zuphen and Johannes Busch, documented instances of actual singing, for example in the Sister book of Diepenveen, and other devout songbooks. An important issue in all this is the Rule of Silence: the sisters (and to a lesser degree the brothers) were required to keep silent the majority of the time. This would seem to be an insurmountable obstruction to singing aloud. The important questions raised by Van Buuren inspired a fascinating discussion in the next years.

Hermia Joldersma and Diewwke van der Poel pointed to some of the more unusual features of “Die Gheestelike Melody”, showing that these texts are not presented as songs: there is neither musical notation nor melody references, and refrains – a tool enabling communal song – are also lacking. That the texts are indeed intended for meditation is obvious not only from the prose prologues discussed by Van Buuren, but also from the miniatures that depict one or more nuns showing the behaviour and emotions brought about by the text and thus an exemplary attitude towards the material.<sup>35</sup>

Musicologist Ulrike Hascher-Burger strongly argued in favour of meditation, but opposed to the idea that this kind of meditation did not include singing, mentioning indications for singing aloud, such as the musical notation in some sources. The music actually served to reinforce the texts emotionally. According to her the Rule of Silence did not apply to singing.<sup>36</sup> In addition, Joldersma brought together significant new material, for example from the Book of Sisters from the St. Agnes convent in Emmenich, a book which offers relatively rich unique detail and mentions song more often than other Books of Sisters. The material suggests that vernacular song was seen as a possible spiritual exercise and provides concrete examples of situations in which song could occur, for example during work, in the dormitory, on special occasions and during recreation.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, some very long songs with a loose structure could be the result of a use as a tool for meditation or reflection, as Tervooren pointed out for the

<sup>35</sup> Si singhen met soeter stemmen. Het liederhandschrift Brussel KB II 2631, in: *Nederlandse letterkunde* 5, 2000, p. 113–137.

<sup>36</sup> Ulrike Hascher-Burger: *Zwischen Apokalypse und Hohelied. Brautmusik in Gesängen aus der Devotio Moderna*, in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 72, 1998, p. 246–261 (mostly Latin repertoire); more extensively on Latin chant (idem): *Gesungene Innigkeit. Studien zu einer Musikhandschrift der Devotio moderna* (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, ms. 16 H 34, olim B113), Leiden, Boston 2002.

<sup>37</sup> Hermia Joldersma: “Alternative Spiritual Exercises for ‘Weaker Minds’? Vernacular Religious Song in the Lives of Women of the Devotio Moderna”, in: *Church History and Religious Culture* 88, 2008, p. 371–393.

song “Nunc omnes nu laet ons gode loven” which has 19 stanzas in Berlin 190, 22 stanzas in ms. Tongeren, and no less than 32 stanzas in ms. Gaesdonck. The added stanzas change the story of Christ’s birth into a complete account of Jesus’ life, passion and assumption.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, the song “On wort een lieflick mey ondaen” (98 stanzas!) has, in the wording of Schiendorfer, a “Gebetismühlencharakter”.<sup>39</sup>

In short, devout song was probably used in meditation or as a spiritual exercise; in establishing this, “Die Gheestelike Melody” played an important role. But precisely the significance of this manuscript raises the next question: do the many other manuscripts with devout songs point in the same direction, do they seem to be designed for meditation as well, or can different intentions be found?

#### Analysis of the manuscripts

The study of texts in the context of the manuscripts in which they are delivered, partly inspired by the so called New Philology, has been a fruitful area of research from the nineties on.<sup>40</sup> Song manuscripts are always miscellanies, and therefore it is interesting to look at the way the collections are arranged: are the songs simply included arbitrarily or is the collection deliberately planned, and does it furnish indications about its intended use? When we look at the corpus of codices as a whole, it becomes obvious that “Die Gheestelike Melody” has a rather particular constellation: the extensive prose introductions are to be found only in this manuscript and in the two others that are closely linked to it (Vienna and The Hague).<sup>41</sup> Also, it is the only manuscript of this kind with miniatures.

Although much research is still to be done, there does seem to be a type of collection which could be seen as the ‘common devout song manuscript’.<sup>42</sup> More

<sup>38</sup> See: Tervooren, Klug 2002 [n. 17], p. 58–62, Tervooren [n. 15], p. 158.

<sup>39</sup> Schiendorfer [n. 24], p. 154, n. 43. Another example might be the version of “Die werelt hielt my in haer gewout” in ms. Berlin SBB-PK mgo 190 (25 stanzas), see Alphonsus M. J. van Bauren: *Ja zuster, nee zuster, de overleving van “Die werelt hielt my in haer gewout”*, in: *Hoort wonder! Opstellen voor Willem P. Gerritsen bij zijn emeritaat*, ed. by Bart Besamusca, Frank Brandsma, Diewwke E. van der Poel, Hilversum 2000, p. 43–50.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen G. Nichols (ed.), in: *New Philology*, in: *Speculum* 65, 1990, p. 1–108. See also the Series *Middleleuwe Verzamelhandschriften uit de Nederlanden*. URL: <http://www.huylgensinstituut.knaw.nl/mvyn>.

<sup>41</sup> In addition, Herman Mulder discusses a prayerbook of a nun, in which excerpts of these songs are included in rhymed texts, meant for meditation: *Een nog onbekend gebedboek uit het Amerstfoortse Sint-Agnesconvent met excerpten uit geestelijke liederen*, in: *Queste* 8, 2001, p. 169–174.

<sup>42</sup> For this overview, I used the CD-ROM of *Repertorium van het Nederlandse lied tot 1600*, ed. by Martine de Bruin, Johan Oosterman, Clara Strijbosch et al., Amsterdam, Gent 2001; and the introductions in the various editions. More specific research needs to be done.

often than not the songs are arranged according to the liturgical year. The clearest example is manuscript Berlin SBB-PK mgo 185; its division into two parts, following the liturgical year, is made explicit in a heading at the beginning: "This is the songbook, the summer's part", and after song 54: "This is the songbook of the feast of the birth of Christ" ("Dit is dat sangeboec, dat somerstuic", "Dit is dat sangeboec vander hoechdijf der gebuerten Christ").<sup>43</sup> A similar compilation can be found in the manuscript of Catherine Tirs: of the 55 songs she entered, the first 22 are arranged from Christmas to Easter (thereafter the songs reveal no evident arrangement). In addition, the headings in the first part of the manuscript show the deliberate intention to put the Christmas songs together: above # 3: "Hir begynnen suverlike ledelkens van der geborten unse heren Jhesu Christ", and above # 8 "Noch suverlike ledelkens van der geborten etc."<sup>44</sup> The Werden manuscript shows a similar focus on Christmas in the first 13 songs (out of 23).<sup>45</sup> The codices from Medingen are often centered around Christmas or Easter.<sup>46</sup> Other manuscripts focus on Christmas, such as the much smaller collection in the Gaeßdonck-manuscript: it opens with three songs on the withdrawal from the world and continues with four Christmas songs. As a result this book is very apt for Advent, the time for atonement and the expectation of the Second coming of Christ (Parousia).<sup>47</sup> Likewise, the songbook of Lisbet Hoeyvaets shows two hands working together with the same plan in mind: collecting songs for Christmas, and celebrating Mary and the specific saints of the cloister (Francis, Clara and Barbara).

More often than not the vernacular devout song manuscripts show a tendency towards putting together Christmas songs, in some cases followed by Easter songs and usually complemented by a varying compilation of all kinds of other devout songs. Usually there are some very popular ones among the Christmas repertoire, and the songs of other genres are unica. In other words, Christmas songs seem to be the backbone of so many different codices, put in a loosely liturgical order, which leads once again to the question of where and how these songs were used. Already in 1883, Wilhelm Bäumker pointed out that during important feasts, such as Christmas and Easter, vernacular songs were sung in the Church, also during extra liturgical celebrations such as Cradle-rocking

('Kindelwiegen') at Christmas or the Elevatio Crucis at Easter.<sup>48</sup> Whether or not these songs can be regarded as an integral part of liturgy has been hotly debated ever since. In his impressive study of German religious song in the Middle Ages, Johannes Janota argued that this kind of congregational singing was not regarded as a part of liturgy; still, he relied on a rather narrow definition of liturgy.<sup>49</sup> Other scholars have challenged this view.<sup>50</sup> For example Walter Lipphardt discussed 23 'Orationarien' from Medingen and Wiesenhausen, manuscripts containing extensive rubrics indicating when the Latin and Low German songs should be sung as a part of the daily Office and Mass, especially at Christmas and Easter. Here, vernacular song was part of the liturgy and not mere parallelism. However, this seems to be rather particular for the situation in these two houses, and caused by specific circumstances, such as the influence of the spirituality of the Cistercian cloister of Helfta and the close connection with the patricians of Lüneburg.<sup>51</sup>

Beside these two groups of sources (the codices of "Die Gheestelike Melody"-group, and common manuscripts with Christmas/Easter songs as core repertoire), there are two more manuscripts I would like to discuss together: Berlin

<sup>48</sup> According to him vernacular song could be integrated into liturgy as well, for example in sequentias or linked to the lecture. However, Johannes Janota does not consider sequentia and lectures as a proper part of the liturgy (Johannes Janota: *Studien zu Funktion und Typus des deutschen geistlichen Liedes im Mittelalter*, München 1968, p. 77–84 and p. 265–273. Wilhelm Bäumker: *Das katholische deutsche Kirchenlied in seinen Singweisen*. Von den frühesten Zeiten bis gegen Ende des sebzehnten Jahrhunderts, vol. 2, Freiburg/Breisgau 1883, p. 8–20.

<sup>49</sup> For him a song is only part of the liturgy when it appears in an official service book and when it corresponds with the rules laid down by the local bishopric (see p. 31–32 in: Janota (n. 48)).

<sup>50</sup> Ike de Loos explored the fringes of liturgy in several publications and pointed to two liturgical manuscripts from Amsterdam (1571) and Groningen (1600) with vernacular songs that must have had a liturgical function: Ike de Loos: *De interactie tussen liturgische zang en niet-liturgische liederen*, in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 76, 2002, p. 155–176; see also [idem]: *Van kaarsen en kerken. Liturgie, parallelisme of géén liturgie?*, in: *Meer dan muziek alleen*. In memoriam Kees Vellekoop, ed. by René E. V. Stulp. Hilversum 2004, p. 221–238.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Lipphardt: *Die liturgische Funktion deutscher Kirchenlieder in den Klöstern niedersächsischer Zisterzienserinnen des Mittelalters*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 94, 1972, p. 158–198; see also: Wilhelm Thoma: *Mittelniederdeutsche Weihnachtslieder aus vorreformatorischer Zeit*, in: *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie* 8, 1963, p. 118–122 and [idem]: *Mittelniederdeutsche Osterlieder aus vorreformatorischer Zeit*, in: *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie* 9, 1964, p. 121–127. Linda Koldan, basing herself for a large part on Lipphardt, proposed to soften the distinction between 'liturgy' and 'parallelism': "[V]ielmehr ist (...) davon auszugehen, dass sich Liturgie und Alltagsliturgische und nicht-liturgische, zuweilen sogar geistliche und ursprünglich weltliche Texte im Leben und in der Spiritualität der Ordensfrauen gegenseitig durchdrangen", Linda M. Koldan, *Frauen – Musik – Kultur. Ein Handbuch zum deutschen Sprachgebiet der Frühen Neuzeit*, Köln 2005, p. 718–719.

<sup>43</sup> Knutzel [n. 5], p. 54; the liturgical year was divided into winter (from Advent to Sunday Septuagesima [nine weeks before Easter]) and summer (Sunday Septuagesima until Trinity Sunday [the Sunday after Pentecost]).

<sup>44</sup> Hölscher [n. 12].

<sup>45</sup> The manuscript is not complete, see Jostes [n. 14]. The codex of Anna von Köln needs further codicological research. It was written by seven hands, and the present sequence of the songs is not the original one (Salmen, Koepf [n. 13] p. 4), however it opens with Christmas songs (# 3–19).

<sup>46</sup> Hascher-Burger [n. 19], p. 63–101.

<sup>47</sup> Tervooren [n. 15], p. 165.

SBB-PK mgo 190 and Brussels KB II 2631. They have some interesting features in common: both combine Latin liturgical chant and vernacular song, and both play explicit attention to the transmission of the melodies.

The extensive codex Berlin 190 has a complicated history; the core manuscript, however, consisted of Christmas and Marian songs, combined with songs for saints of the winter period, in Latin and Dutch.<sup>52</sup> In this respect, the codex very much resembles the common manuscripts just discussed. However, the connection to liturgy is much stronger. Some of the Latin chants in the manuscript definitely have had a liturgical function, such as the hymn “Iste confessor”, some troped chants for the Mass and Benedictamus tropes and verses.<sup>53</sup> The most important scribe did not enter only the Latin chants, but also 63 songs in Dutch. The way this was done shows a particular attention to the transmission of the music. One quire of the codex gives only the first stanzas of these vernacular songs, each with musical notation. The complete texts follow in the next quires, in a different arrangement, and with melody references. Research has shown that the complete texts were copied earlier than the musical notation. If that was the case, then there was, strictly speaking, no necessity to add musical notation: the melodies were already transmitted through the references. The scribe obviously wanted to provide the melody in written notes, in other words, to add a written referential system to the more oral one already used.

Manuscript Brussels KB II 2631 shares important features with Berlin 190: for most of the Latin chants a liturgical function is the only one possible, and again the text pays explicit attention to the way the songs should be sung.<sup>54</sup> Indeed the most Latin chants must have had a liturgical function as is indicated by their type (Christmas lessons, Benedictamus-melodies, processional chants) and organization.

The vernacular songs stand out for their particular melody references (some of them were already discussed above). They often give instructions about how to sing, for example: “This song is to the tune of ‘I know a female miller, with a fine heart’, but the other two lines shall go up just like the first two, but the

fifth line must go down”.<sup>55</sup> So this song was to be sung on the tune of a secular song, albeit with slight alterations: the melody of line 1–2 was to be repeated, and in line 5 the melody was to go down. Additionally, one heading mentions that the song is frequently sung ‘in discant’, in two voices, which implies singing together aloud. The actual texts show some features peculiar to song as well, such as refrains and repetitions of lines (encores) or of parts of a line (e.g. “His dedicated servant I want to be, o be” [“Sijn eyghen dienster wil ic sijn, ho sijn”]). All in all, there is no doubt that these texts were meant to be sung, maybe during manual labour (like their secular counterparts). Like song is used everywhere in pre-industrial societies. This does not exclude consideration of the words, but that does not seem to be the main focus here.<sup>56</sup>

Both Berlin 190 and Brussels KB II 2631 were compiled and used in a community where the Latin liturgy was celebrated. However, these are by no means liturgical books: there is no single complete liturgy, nor a complete celebration. The Latin repertoire seems to be a supplement to other liturgical books owned by the convents. Both books could have been compiled by a cantrix who was responsible for the liturgy, but cherished (and encouraged?) vernacular song as well.

In the second part of this article I presented a division of the codices of devout song into three groups: books that present the songs predominantly as a tool for meditation; books that start with Christmas (-Easter) songs; books containing songs with Latin liturgical repertoire and a remarkable focus on the musical aspects. I do not consider this a definitive classification, but rather a line of reasoning that summarizes recent results and might further research in this interesting interdisciplinary field. The overview shows that the genre was used in various ways: as a tool for meditation and spiritual exercise, to be sung in the heart or aloud during work and recreation. How tight or loose the connection with liturgy might be is one of the questions still to be answered.

<sup>52</sup> A new edition entitled: *Het Liederenhandschrift Berlin 190* (by Gisela Gerritsen-Geywitz, Koen Goudtraan, Ike de Loois, Thom Mertens, Johan Oosterman and Dienwke van der Poel) is to be published in 2012 in the series *Middleleeuwse Verzamelhandschriften uit de Nederlanden*.

<sup>53</sup> See the introduction of the forthcoming edition [n. 52]. See also Ike de Loois: *Liturgy and Chant in the Northern Low Countries*, in: *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 53, 2003, p. 9–48.

<sup>54</sup> Ike de Loois, *Dienwke van der Poel: Het liederhandschrift Brussel KB II 2631. Samenstelling en repertoire*, in: *Queeste* 8, 2001, p. 97–119. The codex has a small cluster of four Christmas songs at an unusual position: at the end of the book (F. 86r–92v).

<sup>55</sup> *Dit lydedekijn gaet op die wijse: “Ic weet een molenaerinc van herren also fijn”, maer die ander twee sijnen of regulen sellen opgaen als die twee eersten, maer die vijften sijn of reghel sal neder gaen* (f. 23v).

<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, singing is the theme in quite a few of these songs as well, and often in the same context. Singing is connected with the songs of the angels and heavenly bliss: it is regarded as a foretaste of heaven.