

New Light on Secular Polyphony at the Court of Holland in the Early Fifteenth Century: The Amsterdam Fragments

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AROUND 1400, the northern Netherlands were little more than a loose collection of quarrelling principalities, unified to some degree by their common language, Middle Dutch. Formally this unruly area was part of the Holy Roman Empire, but the German emperor's political weakness laid it wide open to the territorial ambitions of the Burgundian dukes. Under their rule, the Netherlands saw centralized regional government for the first time in their history. But it was not until the sixteenth century, when their Spanish Habsburg successors were increasingly regarded as foreign oppressors, that anything like a unified sovereign Dutch state came within sight.

The religious forces that helped cement the unity of the new Protestant state were the same that deprived it of its musical heritage. Deep-seated hatred of counter-reformatory oppression was a major factor in bringing the Dutch together. In the bitter 80-year struggle for religious and political independence, the destruction of choirbooks, ornaments and images could be seen as an act as patriotic as armed resistance of the Inquisition. Both were carried out with vigorous determination. Of the thousands of polyphonic sources that must have been copied before the middle of the sixteenth century, only a handful of fragments survives today.¹

Given that situation it seems surprising that several of these fragments, all dating from around 1400–10, should turn out to be closely related. Although they do not amount to what might be called a 'lost'

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¹ On Dutch and Belgian sources see Jacob Wijbrand Muller, 'Brokstukken van middeleeuwse meerstemmige liederen', *Tijdschrift voor nederlandse taal- en letterkunde*, 25 (1906), 1–60; Metha-Machteld van Delft, 'Een Gloria-fragment in de Universiteits-Bibliotheek te Utrecht', *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis*, 19 (1960), 85–6; Gilbert Reaney, 'New Sources of Ars Nova Music', *Musica disciplina*, 19 (1965), 53–67; Edward Stam, 'Het Utrechts fragment van een Zeeuws-Vlaamse marktroepen-motetus', *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis*, 21 (1968), 25–37; Helène Wagenaar-Nolthenius, 'De Leidse fragmenten: Nederlandse polifonie uit het einde der 14de eeuw', *Donum natalicium R. B. Lenaerts*, ed. Jozef Robijns (Leuven, 1969), 303–15; Frank Ll. Harrison, 'Two Liturgical Manuscripts of Dutch Origin in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and Music for the Ordinary of the Mass in the Late Medieval Netherlands', *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis*, 32 (1982), 76–95; Reinhard Strohm, 'The Ars Nova Fragments of Gent', *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis*, 34 (1984), 109–31; *Two Chansonniers from the Low Countries*, ed. Jan van Biezen and Johan Peter Gumbert, *Monumenta musica neerlandica*, 15 (Amsterdam, 1985).

choirbook or chansonnier, the palaeographical connections between them are strong enough to place them in one musical centre. What allows us to establish these links is the discovery of new fragments, whose palaeographical structure, possible origins and contents are the subject of this brief report.

THE AMSTERDAM FRAGMENTS

The University Library at Amsterdam houses two parchment bifolios from a lost manuscript with polyphony and music theory dating from around 1400–10. The leaves must have been removed from the binding of a volume in quarto, since traces of glue are visible along the inner edges. It is not known where, when or from what source the leaves were removed. All we know is that they were registered as a new acquisition in July 1956, under the shelf-mark ES 64. The acquisitions journal of the University Library states that they came from ‘an old [private] collection’.²

A typewritten note by the late Joseph Smits van Waesberghe, dated 8 February 1938, is kept with the manuscript. In it he identifies the fragmentary treatise in the last two folios as the *Musica speculativa* of Johannes de Muris and remarks that it contains ‘some interesting variants’.³ Presumably the former owner had approached him with a request to examine and identify the contents; evidently the leaves were separate by 1938, more than 50 years ago. Although Smits van Waesberghe must have known the source, he failed to mention it in his RISM catalogue of theoretical sources in Europe, published in 1961.⁴ And unfortunately he died a year and a half before I rediscovered the fragments in the spring of 1988. No mention of the leaves has been found among his surviving notes.⁵

The two Amsterdam bifolios are adjacent, but not at the centre of a gathering (see Figure 1). There is no foliation; hereafter the fragments will be foliated 1–4. Both leaves (especially the inner one) are cut and torn away at the top. The first four pages, ff. 1–2^v, contain four anonymous secular songs (see Figures 2–5). The musical notation is black full with red coloration. The style and notation of the polyphonic items suggest a date around 1400–10. The presence of a Middle Dutch song, as well as the Dutch provenance of the source, point to origin in the Low Countries. The last four pages, ff. 3–4^v, transmit the larger part of the second book of the *Musica speculativa* of Johannes de Muris, beginning with the last lines of the first chapter and breaking off just a few

² AmstU 64 was registered in this journal as acquisition no. 1392. In the lower left-hand corner of f. 1 the following pencilled inscriptions are to be found: ‘ES 64’ and, beneath that, ‘56/1392’ (see Figure 2). The latter inscription refers to the year of acquisition and the acquisition number.

³ The note runs: ‘De vier laatste folio-zijden van dit fragment bevatten de laatste hoofdstukken [van] het 2de deel der “Musica S[p]eculativa”, toegeschreven aan *Joannes de Muris* van Luik. Het werd afgedrukt door Gerbert in zijn *Scriptores Eccles. de Mus.* III, 274b–282b “et sic ultima” (hs. ultra). Het fragment bevat vele interessante varianten. [signed:] Jos. Smits v. Waesberghe, Amsterdam, 8 Februari, 1938 [or 1937].’

⁴ *The Theory of Music from the Carolingian Era up to 1400*, ed. Joseph Smits van Waesberghe, Répertoire international des sources musicales, BIII, i (Munich–Duisburg, 1961), 136–9.

⁵ I am grateful to Dr Eddie Vetter, who has searched for information on AmstU 64 and its former owner in the notes and correspondence of Smits van Waesberghe, who died in 1986.

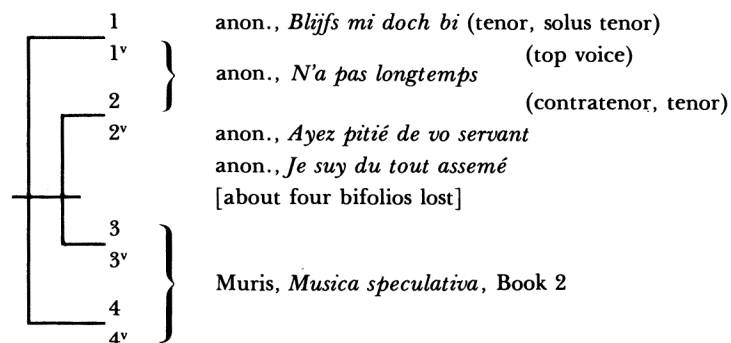


Figure 1. Palaeographical structure of Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS ES 64.

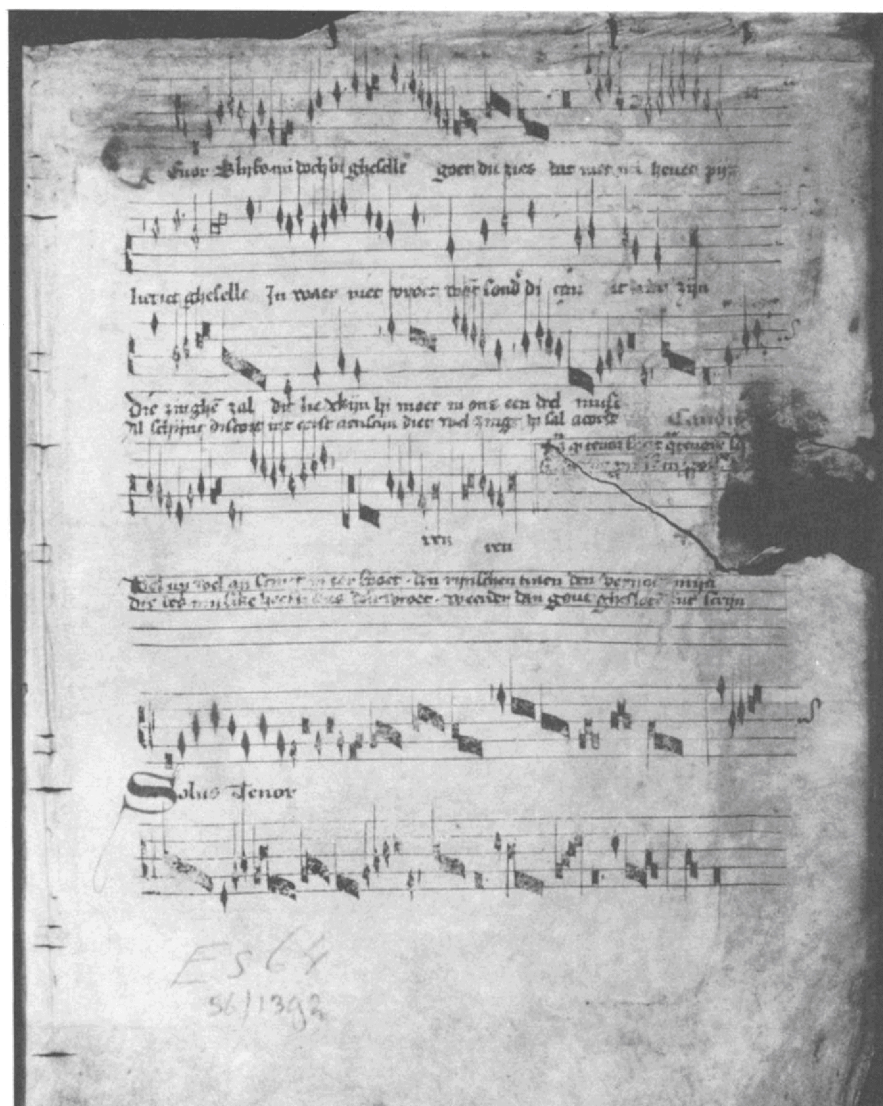


Figure 2. Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS ES 64, f. 1.

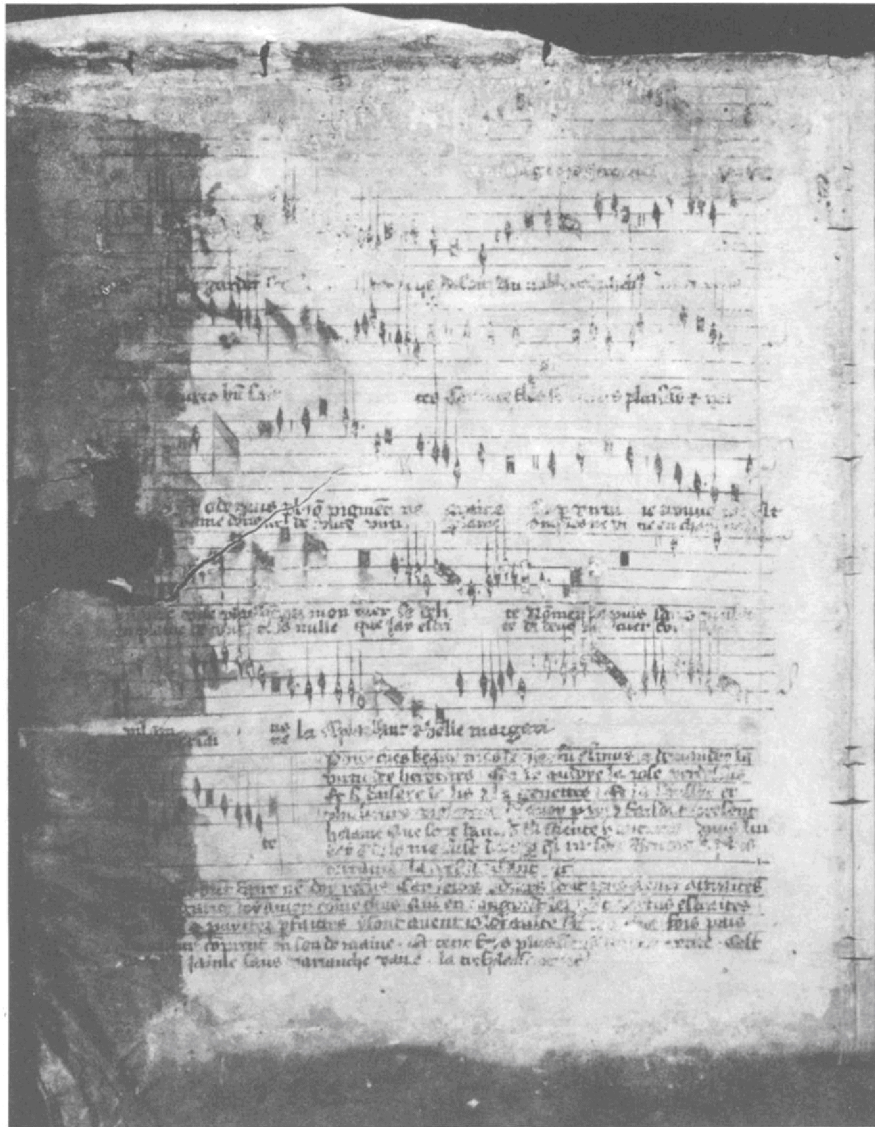


Figure 3. Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS ES 64, f. 1^v.

paragraphs before the end of the treatise.⁶ If the manuscript contained the whole of the treatise, there must have been at least four bifolios between ff. 2 and 3 to provide for its beginning (see Figure 1). It is likely that the outer pages of ff. 1 and 4 originally faced another bifolio, now lost, which contained the missing top voice of the first song and the last few paragraphs of *Musica speculativa*.

The Amsterdam fragments add another to the more than 50 sources for Muris's *Musica speculativa*, but it is the polyphonic items (three of

⁶ Edition in Martin Gerbert, *Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica sacra potissimum* (St Blasien, 1784), iii, 249–83.

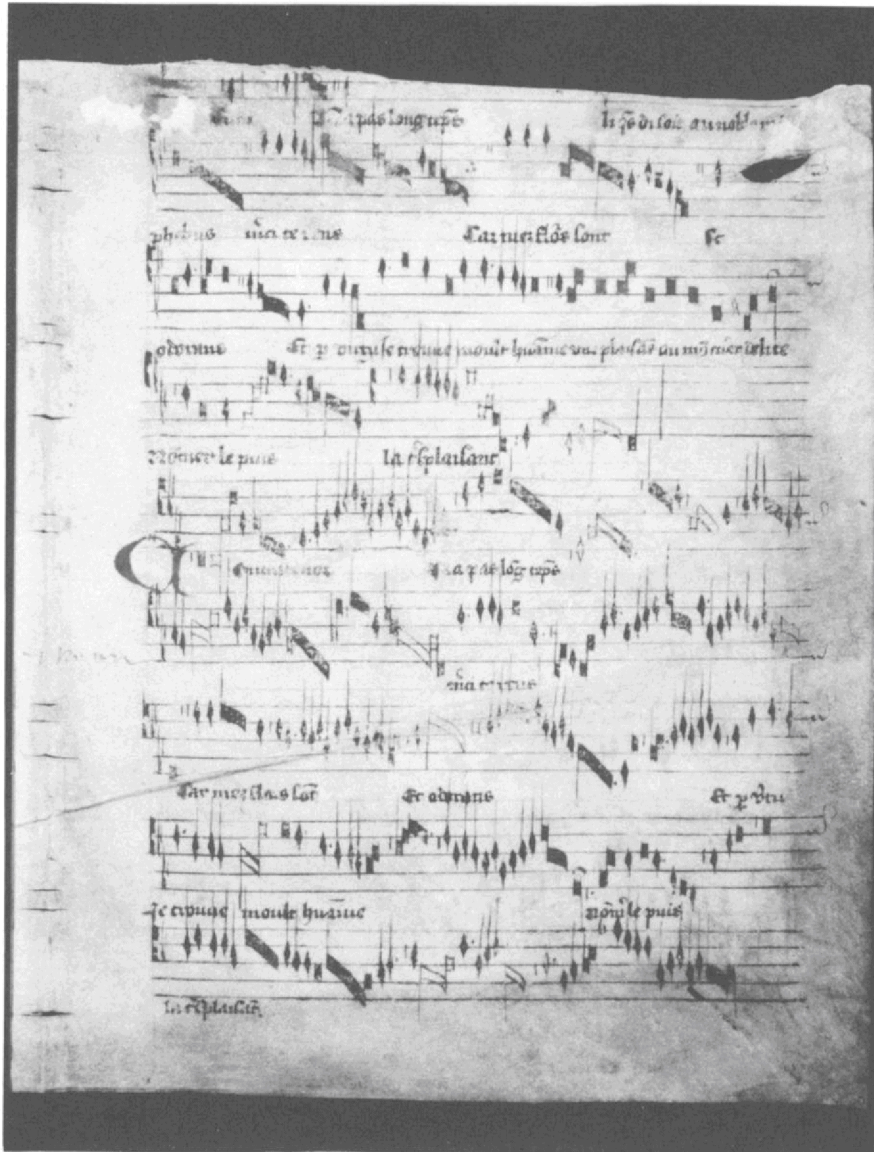


Figure 4. Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS ES 64, f. 2.

which are unique to this source) which are of greatest interest. The songs are given in transcription in Appendices 1–4; I shall briefly discuss each in turn. Folio 1 contains the tenor (with verbal canon) and solus tenor of an anonymous Middle Dutch song, *Blijfs mi doch bi, gheselle goet*. The canon is partly illegible, but the few words that can be read (‘ . . . tenor licet contratenorem . . . in proportione . . . ’) suggest that the canonic procedure involves proportional changes and that it results in a tenor–contratenor duo of which the solus tenor is apparently a reduction. This does indeed turn out to be the case (see Appendix 1). With the help of the solus tenor it can be established that the voice designated ‘tenor’ is

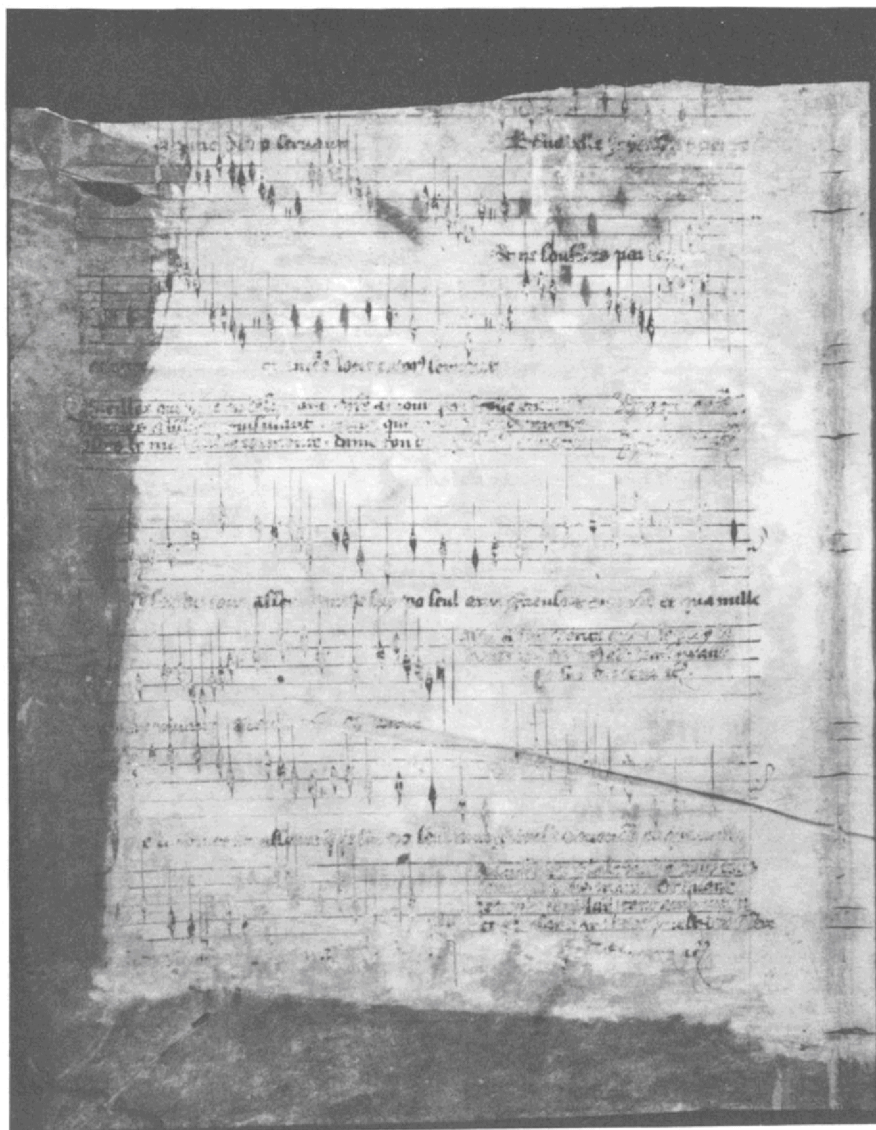


Figure 5. Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS ES 64, f. 2^v.

functionally the contratenor, and that the canonic voice starts at the same pitch, moving in doubled note-values, and assuming the role of the tenor at major cadences.⁷

Blijfs mi doch bi consists of two separate sections of equal length, divided in the manuscript by a vertical line through the stave. The

⁷ *Blijfs mi doch bi, gheselle goet* is thus a canon of the type 'tenor faciens contratenorem', which originated in the Burgundian-French area around 1400 (see Laurence K. J. Feininger, *Die Frühgeschichte des Kanons bis Josquin des Prez (um 1500)*, Emsdetten, 1937, 18–25). In such canons, the top voice (or top two voices) were usually freely composed. Early fifteenth-century compositions in which a canonic voice is to start simultaneously with another voice while moving in doubled note-values are rare; one example is Dufay's(?) *Bien veignés vous*, but here the canon is at the octave, and the canonic part is to be derived from the top voice rather than the tenor.

canonic procedure is applied independently in the two sections, so that a new canon starts in the *secunda pars*. It is possible that the missing top voice must also be derived from the single notated voice: the voice written on f. 1 is underlaid with a complete stanza with refrain, and an additional stanza is provided in the space between the tenor and *solus tenor*. Since full texts of polyphonic songs were usually given in the top voice rather than the tenor, this suggests two possibilities: either the top voice had a text of its own, or the voice on f. 1 contains the entire text and music of the three-part song. Moreover, the song text itself describes and alludes to the canonic procedure in terms which make it difficult to believe that the only riddle to be solved is the 2:1 proportion between tenor and canonic voice. The text is structured as a dialogue, apparently between the two surviving voices. The first two lines appear to be addressed by the tenor to the canonic voice: 'Stay with me, good companion; it is you who suffer pain with me.'⁸ The expression '*blijfs mi doch bi*' ('stay with me' or 'keep up with me') could be seen as a comment on the slower speed at which the canonic voice moves. The latter replies that it would be unwise to desert his companion: 'If I failed, companion, that would not be wise, for without you I cannot be.' The two 'companions' then join in the refrain and second stanza:

Those who wish to sing this little song must reflect on us a bit. Although at first sight there seems to be discord, he who sings it well shall harmonize. Come on! Pour out, without ado, the Rhenish drop, this wine of mine. He who has rooted through this music [shall find] more valuable [things] than gold enclosed in the shrine.

Several lines here refer to the difficulties musicians have to overcome to perform the song. One must 'reflect' on the two voices and 'root through' the music; the apparent reward, which is 'enclosed in the shrine', is 'more valuable than gold'. In spite of these encouraging instructions, I have not been able to derive the missing top voice from the music written on f. 1.

Folios 1^v and 2 contain the top voice, tenor and contratenor of the anonymous song *N'a pas longtemps*, which hitherto has been known only in a two-part version in Bodleian Library, Canonici MS 213 (see Appendix 2).⁹ Besides the extra contratenor, Amsterdam also adds two stanzas plus envoi to the single stanza given in the Oxford manuscript. The newly found stanzas confirm David Fallows's suspicion, expressed in a German radio broadcast in 1987, that *N'a pas longtemps* is in fact a ballade: the final dedicatory statement '*La tresplaisant et belle margarite*' functions as a refrain to the three stanzas and envoi.¹⁰

⁸ This is also the case in another early fifteenth-century canonic song, *O dolce compagno* by Dominicus de Feraria (OxfB 213, f. 135). The canonic voice is addressed here as follows: 'O sweet companion, if you would sing, take the diapason without delay' (quoted after Virginia Newes, 'Writing, Reading and Memorizing: The Transmission and Resolution of Retrograde Canons from the 14th and Early 15th Centuries', *Early Music*, 18 (1990), 218–34 (p. 227)). However, in contrast to this song, *Blijfs mi doch bi, gheselle goet* gives no clue to the canonic procedure in its text.

⁹ Edition in Gilbert Reaney, *Early Fifteenth-Century Music*, Corpus mensurabilis musicae, 11 (American Institute of Musicology, 1969), iv, 68–9. This two-part, one-stanza version has been recorded by Gothic Voices ('The Garden of Zephyrus', Hyperion A66144).

¹⁰ 'N'a pas longtemps', paper prepared for a radio broadcast by Westdeutscher Rundfunk (1987; I am grateful to Dr Fallows for allowing me to consult his paper). Fallows based his suggestion on the

A comparison of the musical texts of Amsterdam and Oxford shows that apart from the extra third voice in the Amsterdam source, the two versions match one another very closely – even with respect to details such as the disposition of ligatures, the occasional introduction of sharps and (particularly) text placement. There is one difference, though: in bar 17 the Amsterdam source has an extra breve in all voices, evidently to allow the contratenor (which is missing in Oxford) to start a point of imitation on ‘merci te rens’. Parts of the top voice and tenor are missing in Amsterdam because the top edges of the folios have been cut and damaged. Fortunately, however, the voice which is unique to this source, the contratenor, survives completely, so that full performance of the song is possible. The contratenor turns out to be involved in each point of imitation (on the words ‘N’a pas longtemps’, ‘liquel disoit’, ‘merci te rens’, ‘car mez flors’, ‘et odorans’, ‘moult humaine’, ‘la tresplaisant’). Five of these seven imitations are even started in the contratenor. The extensive use of two- and three-part imitations involving this voice suggests that *N’a pas longtemps* was originally conceived as a three-voice piece, and that the contratenor was omitted later in the Bodleian manuscript.

The last music page of Amsterdam, f. 2^v, contains two French two-part songs, both in major prolation. The first, the rondeau *Ayez pitié de vo servant*,¹¹ is a canon at the unison in which the second voice is to enter after five 6/4 bars (see Appendix 3). The song is thus technically a *chace*. But the immediate context for *Ayez pitié* is provided by the early fifteenth-century tradition of rondeaux for two equal canonic voices, to which David Fallows has recently drawn attention in an article in *Early Music History*.¹² The song is a brief, unpretentious setting in simple two-part counterpoint, and contrasts markedly with the refined and extended ballade on the preceding pages of the manuscript. This is true also of the second song, the rondeau *Je suy du tout assemé*, which with its length of only 11 6/4 bars and its uncomplicated rhythmic character aspires to aesthetic goals quite different from those of *N’a pas longtemps* (see Appendix 4). Its text is hardly legible, even under ultra-violet light.

A DUTCH SOURCE COMPLEX

There are close palaeographical connections between the Amsterdam fragments and two other Dutch sources from around 1400. These are the chansonnier fragments in the University Libraries of Utrecht and Leiden, recently edited in the series *Monumenta musica neerlandica*.¹³ Although the three sets of fragments have all been trimmed, a comparison of their

form of the poem, the references to classical myths, the long-limbed and florid vocal lines, and the recognition that the first stanza ends with a dedicatory statement typical of the ballade. *N’a pas longtemps* has however no musical repeats, and is hence not in musical ballade form. This is rare but occurs also in other ballades, e.g. Dufay’s *Se la face ay pale*.

¹¹ This song is not identical with the *Ayez pite de vostre* which is found in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14274, f. 99.

¹² David Fallows, ‘Two Equal Voices: A French Song Repertory with Music for Two More Works of Oswald von Wolkenstein’, *Early Music History*, 7 (1987), 227–41.

¹³ Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 6 E 37 II and Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS B. P. L. 2720; edited in Van Biezen and Gumbert, *Two Chansonniers*.

dimensions, written areas and stave heights shows that they must have been nearly identical in format (see Table 1). Moreover, the location of the pairs of stitch-holes along the folds is nearly identical in the three sources. Table 2 illustrates these correspondences: it indicates the distances of the various holes from the central pair, labelled here D_{1-2} . In each fragment the pairs are grouped roughly symmetrically around that central pair. The notches of each pair are 2.5–4.5 mm. apart; corresponding pairs tend to have the same internal widths in every fragment (B_{1-2} 4 mm.; C_{1-2} 3–3.5 mm.; D_{1-2} 3 mm.; E_{1-2} 3–3.5 mm.; F_{1-2} 3.5–4.5 mm.). The pairs of notches are generally about 32.5–34 mm. apart; the distance A_2 – B_1 however is smaller (20–22 mm.).

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF FORMATS OF THE UTRECHT, LEIDEN AND AMSTERDAM
FRAGMENTS

Note: Measurements are given in millimetres.

Source	present dimensions	original dimensions (hypothetical)	written space	height of staves	number of staves per page
UtreR 37 II	285 × 215	330 × 220 ^a	186 × 130	12–13	9
LeidU 2720	300 × 220	322 × 222 ^b	188 × 128	12–13	9
AmstU 64	318 × 220	318 × 230	185 × 128	13	7–9

^aEstimates given in *Two Chansonniers from the Low Countries*, ed. Jan van Biezen and Johan Peter Gumbert, *Monumenta musica neerlandica*, 15 (Amsterdam, 1985), 14.

^b*Ibid.*, 12.

These similarities could hardly be coincidental; they indicate that the three sources were originally bound by the same bookbinder, who used a ruler with fixed markings for sawing the pairs of stitch-holes. The connections suggest that we are dealing here with a complex of sources in octavo originating from one and the same workshop.

The possibility that the fragments belonged to the same manuscript seems unlikely, for three reasons. First, in addition to the pairs of stitch-holes, each fragment has irregularly placed holes not found in the other sources. Second, the arrangement of the stitch-holes in the Amsterdam manuscript is upside down in relation to those in Utrecht and Leiden. Third, the three fragments are written in different hands. Although the rather cursive handwritings in the Utrecht and Leiden fragments closely resemble one another,¹⁴ the neat and refined script of AmstU 64 stands apart. Even so, the close palaeographical connections allow us to postulate the existence of a centre of scribal activity in the northern Netherlands around the turn of the fourteenth century.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

TABLE 2

LOCATION OF PAIRS OF STITCH-HOLES IN THE AMSTERDAM, LEIDEN AND UTRECHT FRAGMENTS

Note: In order to show the symmetrical arrangement in each source, the locations are indicated by distances from stitch-hole D_1 (in top half of table) and D_2 (bottom half). Distances are given in millimetres.

Pairs of stitch-holes A–F	AmstU 64 (f. 4 ^v)	LeidU 2720 (f. 5)	UtreR 37 II (f. 27 ^v)
top/bottom of page	110 (bottom)	105 (top)	107 (top)
A_1	—	96.5	—
A_2	94.5	94	94.5
B_1	74	74	72.5
B_2	70	70	68.5
C_1	36	37	36
C_2	33	33.5	32.5
D_1	----- } 3 ----- } 3 ----- } 3 -----		
D_2			
E_1	33.5	34	33
E_2	37	37.5	36
F_1	70.5	71	69.5
F_2	75	75.5	73
top/bottom of page	97 (top)	113 (bottom)	98 (bottom)

The three related sets of fragments present a collection of nearly 50 French and Dutch songs, ranging from the boisterous to the refined, from the simple to the sophisticated, including one piece by Machaut, several well-known *ars subtilior* songs and an even greater number of *unica*. Obviously it would be helpful if we could locate the centre where this substantial repertory was compiled. This must remain a matter of conjecture, but there is strong circumstantial evidence pointing to the most resplendent court in the region around 1400, that of the counts of Holland at The Hague. Reinhard Strohm was the first to raise this possibility in 1984, with reference to the Leiden and Utrecht fragments.¹⁵ And Antheunis Janse has recently published documentary evidence from the court of Holland to confirm Strohm's suspicion.¹⁶ The palaeographical connections brought to light by the Amsterdam manuscript now add to a case that already seems persuasive.

The prominence of themes of courtly love in the combined repertory of Amsterdam, Utrecht and Leiden, and the abundance of references to classical myths (Athis, Cardionas, Prophlias, Jason, Helen, Venus,

¹⁵ Strohm, 'The Ars Nova Fragments', 120.

¹⁶ Antheunis Janse, 'Het muziekleven aan het hof van Albrecht van Beieren (1358–1404) in Den Haag', *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis*, 36 (1986), 136–57.

Orpheus, Zephirus, Phebus), point to a noble court emulating the refined tastes and splendour of the courts of France and Burgundy. This alone makes the court of Holland the most likely candidate: not only was it the wealthiest in the northern Netherlands, but it was also a centre of literary culture outshining all other courts in the region. Frits Pieter van Oostrom has amply demonstrated this point in his recent study of literary culture under Count Albert of Bavaria and his successors Guillaume VI and Jacqueline of Bavaria.¹⁷

Vocal polyphony is documented at the court by 1395, when three singers were appointed by Count Albert (one of whom, as we shall see, happens to be the best-represented composer in the source complex).¹⁸ The date 1395 makes Holland the earliest court in the northern Netherlands where polyphony is documented; the court of Guelders follows ten years later with the appointment of a singer called Willem vander Brucgen.¹⁹

At the court in The Hague, more than anywhere else in the northern Netherlands, New Year's songs such as *Sans jamais faire* and *Aux estrinés*, or May songs such as *Renouveler me feist*, would have served their proper function, as gifts on festivals. In 1400, for instance, Count Albert wrote his own May song, which he subsequently had performed by his pipers.²⁰ And in 1417 Countess Jacqueline of Bavaria and her husband John of Touraine bought gold, pearls, diamonds and rubies from a Parisian jeweller, 'pour le fait du premier jour de l'an'.²¹

The desire to keep up with the latest literary developments in France is evinced by a payment in 1408 for 'new anthologies of poems', which had been brought specially for Countess Margaret of Burgundy by 'a man from France'.²² This provides a convincing context for the transmission of songs by Machaut and several *ars subtilior* composers in the Amsterdam–Utrecht–Leiden source complex.

Some of the non-courtly Dutch pieces, such as the boisterous Shrove Tuesday song *Des vasten avonts*, would also have been appropriate at the court of Holland.²³ Count Albert organized grand Shrove Tuesday feasts in 1387 and 1389, the latter lasting five days. The Shrove Tuesday Feast of 1395 was combined with a festive tournament, for which knights from

¹⁷ Frits Pieter van Oostrom, *Het woord van eer: Literatuur aan het Hollandse hof omstreeks 1400* (Amsterdam, 1987). This brilliant and lively book is indispensable to any study of musical life at the court of Holland around 1400.

¹⁸ Janse, 'Het muziekleven', 142–3.

¹⁹ Private communication from Dr Gerard Nijsten (Catholic University of Nijmegen), 25 June 1990. Vander Brucgen is documented at the court of Guelders from 1405 to 1423.

²⁰ Van Oostrom, *Het woord van eer*, 31. It would of course be speculative to suggest that *Renouveler me feist* (LeidU 2720, f. 4) could be the May song by Albert of Bavaria. However, the rondeau seems like the work of an amateur: note the parallel octaves in bars 8–9, 13–4 and 21–2, and the parallel fifths in bar 17 (Van Biezen and Gumbert, *Two Chansonniers*, 44). Two further May songs are in the Utrecht quarto fragments (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 6 E 37 I): [*Ich beghe*]nne mijn liedekijn (f. IV) and *Och lief gesel, ic heb vernomen* (f. II B^v); the song is addressed to a girl named Lijsbette/Bet, and asks Iaioette, Iannette, Iaquette, Corijn, Iosijn, Iacomijn and Pirette to join a dance to the music of 'pipen, tamburen mit trompetten'). See Muller, 'Brokstukken', 24–8.

²¹ Van Oostrom, *Het woord van eer*, 30.

²² *Ibid.*, 34.

²³ Frits Pieter van Oostrom has provided a convincing literary context at the court of Holland for the Middle Dutch songs in the Leiden fragments (*Het woord van eer*, 86–93).

all over the Holy Roman Empire were invited. Expensive decorations for the feast were bought in Hainaut, Paris and Florence.²⁴ It is not difficult to imagine that on one of these merry occasions the ballade *Ane a ffagos* (UtreR 37 II, f. 30) could have been performed by three singers dressed as donkeys. In the song, the donkey laments his life, full of hard work and beatings.²⁵

Some song themes may point more directly to the court of Holland. The ballade *En un gardin*, for instance, deals with a 'gardin noble et de treshault pris', where an eagle with 'authoritative bearing', giving 'counsel full of wisdom', seeks honour by restoring a king for the salvation of a consort of birds gathered in the garden. This may be a reference to Count Guillaume VI's Order of the Garden and its plans to restore Christian faith in the East by means of crusades.²⁶ Anthéunis Janse has raised the possibility that Egidius Augustinus's ballade *Roses et lis* (LeidU 2720, f. 12) was written for the wedding of Margaret of Burgundy and Guillaume of Bavaria (who was to become Count Guillaume VI of Holland) in Cambrai in 1485: the composer, who was connected with the papal court, happens to have been sent by the pope to an 'assemblée' in Cambrai in 1485.²⁷

The hypothesis that the three fragments originated at the court of Holland is compatible with the conclusion of Middle Dutch scholars that the dialects in the Dutch songs suggest origin in the Holland/Utrecht region.²⁸ Likewise suggestive are the references to seafood – cooked mussels in *Tsinghen van der nachtegale* (LeidU 2720, f. 7^v) and freshly caught mussels from Duiveland as well as herring, sturgeon and salmon in *Des vasten avonts* (LeidU 2720, f. 8). The somewhat coarse humour in these songs would have been a faithful reflection of everyday life in a market town close to the sea – as The Hague was: it lies three kilometres from the North Sea coast, and 50 kilometres north of Duiveland.

Yet the most compelling piece of evidence is Anthéunis Janse's recent discovery that Martinus Fabri – who with four pieces is the best-represented composer in the source complex – was appointed singer at the court of Holland in 1395,²⁹ where he stayed until his death five years

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 130 and 171. Many payments for musicians and entertainers at Shrove Tuesday celebrations are to be found in the transcriptions of C. Lingbeek-Schalekamp, *Overheid en muziek in Holland tot 1672* (Poortugaal, 1984), 156 (1347), 171 (1388), 173 (1389), 180 (1394), 185 (1399), 186 (1401), 187 (1402), 189 (1405), 192 (1415).

²⁵ During the festivities of Charles the Bold's marriage to Margaret of York, in Bruges in 1468, the song *Faictes vous l'asne, ma maistresse?* was sung by four musicians dressed as donkeys (Reinhard Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges*, Oxford, 1985, 99). In Bruges, Shrove Tuesday celebrations were normally *mommeries*, i.e. masked balls (*ibid.*, 85).

²⁶ See Willem Adriaan Beelaerts van Blokland, 'De hollandse tuin en de Orde van St. Anthonis', *Maandblad van het genealogisch-heraldisch genootschap 'De nederlandse leeuw'*, 47 (1929), cols. 363–6, and Van Oostrom, *Het woord van eer*, 173 and 176. The song is in UtreR 37 II, ff. 21^v–22.

²⁷ Janse, 'Het muziekleven', 155, note 57.

²⁸ Wagenaar-Nolthenius, 'De Leidse fragmenten', 305, and Van Biezen and Gumbert, *Two Chansonniers*, 13.

²⁹ Janse, 'Het muziekleven', 142–3. Fabri (the surname was probably a Latinization of 'Smeets' or perhaps 'Le Fèvre') worked at the court of Holland until his death in 1400. Three payments to a 'meester Martijn' are transcribed in Lingbeek-Schalekamp, *Overheid en muziek*, 184 and 190: partial reimbursement for rent (1396); payment of salary (1397); payment for playing the portative organ for Count Guillaume VI in 1408. (The last reference must relate to a different 'meester Martijn'.) Fabri is also mentioned in records of St Donatian's at Bruges, but there are no dates

later.³⁰ No songs by Fabri survive elsewhere – with the exception of a contrafact version of *N'ay je cause* by Oswald von Wolkenstein.³¹ The Dutch group of fragments is thus central to his work.

Fabri is an interesting figure, incidentally, whose possible involvement in the compilation of this repertory deserves further investigation. Of the three singers active at the court after 1395, he was the only one to have had a university degree – and thus presumably to have been able to understand Muris's *Musica speculativa*. Interestingly, the handwriting of this treatise in Amsterdam closely resembles that of the main scribe of Leiden, who entered one of Fabri's songs. In this connection it is worth pointing out that Fabri privately possessed several polyphonic manuscripts, which were bought after his death by the count of Holland for use in the court chapel.³²

Some of Fabri's compositions, particularly the ballades, seem to have been written for specific circumstances or occasions. One of these, the homophonic ballade *Eer ende lof*, refers to the composer's vocation as a

(Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges*, 169, note 27). More tentative is the identification of the monk Hugo Boy (whose song *Genade Venus* immediately follows Fabri's *Een cleyn parabel* in the Leiden source) with the priest Hughe, who was appointed singer at the court in the same year ('Het muziekleven', 142–4). Yet, as Janse points out, Hugo Boy's song uses a mixed German-Dutch language (see also below), and this is compatible with Hughe's German origins (he came from the court of the duke of Berg, near Cologne). Moreover, the textual and musical parallels between *Genade Venus* and *Een cleyn parabel* (in both, for instance, the crucial words 'Een vriendelic aensien' (= 'Doulx regart') are rubricated in the source) suggest direct contact between the two composers (see Van Biezen and Gumbert, *Two Chansonniers*, 119–20).

³⁰ Since the publication of his article 'Het muziekleven', Antheunis Janse has discovered more documentation on Martinus Fabri, which he has generously allowed me to publish (private communication, 16 September 1989). Fabri died in early May 1400. He left books of polyphonic music (altogether worth 2 English nobles) which were bought by the count of Holland for use in the court chapel. The books had been lent to a *meester* Jan van Heukelem in Dordrecht, who was asked by letter to send them back (The Hague, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Archief van de Graven van Holland, 1254 (treasurer's accounts), ff. 75 and 92^v). 9 May 1400: 'Paid to *meester* Martin's heirs for books of polyphony which he had left, which the provost bought for the use of my lord's chapel, cost 2 nobles, makes 15 scellingen' ('meyster Martijns ernamen betailt voir sulke boeken van discant als hi after lyet ende die profst cofte tot mijns heren capellen behoef, costen ii noblen facit xv s.'). 16 May 1400: 'Sent to Dordrecht to *meester* Jan van Heukelem with a letter from my lord, telling him to return the books of polyphony which my lord had bought from *meester* Martin's heirs for the use of the chapel, and which *meester* Martin had lent to [Heukelem]' ('gesent Tordrecht an meister Jan van Huekelem mit mijns heren brieve roerende dat hi senden soude sulke boeken van discant als mijn here tgegen meister Martijns ernamen gecoft had ter capellen behoef ende hem meister Martijn gelient had').

³¹ Ivana Pelnar, *Die mehrstimmigen Lieder Oswalds von Wolkenstein* (Tutzing, 1982), i, 104, and ii, 138.

³² See note 30 above. Four surviving inventories of items kept in the court chapel, made up in 1443, 1491, 1519 and c.1565, mention books of polyphony. See the edition in J. Smit, 'De kerkinventaris van de voormalige hofkapel in Den Haag', *Bijdragen voor de geschiedenis van het bisdom van Haarlem*, 41 (1923), 1–57. The inventory of 1443 mentions only one 'discantboek' (p. 19), which could be one of the books bought from Fabri's heirs. In 1490 four large manuscripts of polyphony are mentioned, of which three consisted altogether of 516 folios (p. 35). One of these is described as 'an old paper song-book . . . consisting of ten sexterns, filled entirely with polyphony'; it does not reappear in the 1519 inventory. Interestingly, another manuscript, consisting of 180 parchment folios with decorated initials, is mentioned as 'containing mostly English music' (one of the latest instances of continental transmission of English fifteenth-century polyphony); this same book is mentioned in 1519, but seems to have been destroyed thereafter. Various payments for the copying or purchase of polyphony at the court chapel are transcribed in Lingbeek-Schalekamp, *Overheid en muziek*, 209–16. These include payments in 1447–8 ('a book of polyphony for the organist to play from on the organ'), 1506 (a book of chant and polyphony, including a 'sequence' on the death of Philip the Fair, composed by the choirmaster), 1560 (purchase of a large parchment *discantbouck* 'from which the singers sing their lessons'), 1562 (12 paper sheets 'in which the choirmaster has copied the Passion'). Further documentation on music at the court chapel in The Hague is given in

musician. In his capacity of 'loyal follower of Orpheus' he passes the latter's salutations to 'a merry child, whom [Orpheus] loves with a good heart' and who is also the composer's lady. It is difficult to resist the speculation that the song was intended as a present for a noble music pupil at the court, possibly one of the daughters of Count Albert. Fabri's incomplete ballade *Een cleyen parabel* (LeidU 2720, f. 10^v) seems similarly personal in tone. The poet is in a rather uncourtly dilemma: he loves his lady, and would like to pursue his desire (that is, to marry her), yet has difficulty accepting her recently born child. The refrain seems to express resignation, while emphasizing the difficulty of the decision: 'If I pursued my desire, I would have to honour the child for the mother's sake.' Martinus Fabri had a son baptized in April 1396; the godmother was Margaret of Cleves, countess of Holland.³³

Returning now to the central issue, although the case for the court of Holland as the place of origin for the Utrecht, Leiden and Amsterdam fragments remains hypothetical, there is no other centre in the northern Netherlands which meets the requirements so well. There is a series of clues pointing to courtly circles (the predominance of courtly love songs and songs for Shrove Tuesday, New Year's Day and May Day), a professional workshop (the formality of the script and the number of surviving sources), a local tradition of songs in northern Netherlandish dialects (the seven Middle Dutch songs) and strong links with French musical and literary traditions (the transmission of works by Machaut and *ars subtilior* composers), as well as with the court of Holland directly (the unique survival of the works of Martinus Fabri). Each of these clues is admittedly circumstantial, but together they amount to a persuasive case, which is strengthened by the court's leading role in the patronage of other arts.

CONCLUSION

The discovery of the Amsterdam fragments raises hopes that more remnants of the Dutch source complex may emerge from the bindings of manuscripts and prints. And the rich archives of the court of Holland at The Hague are likely to yield further information that could perhaps clarify the context in which the sources were produced. All this could help us to sketch a more detailed and balanced picture of early music in the Low Countries. Recent research increasingly suggests a distinction between the musical cultures of the northern and southern Netherlands: in Flanders and Brabant polyphonic music began to flourish by the mid-fourteenth century, while northern areas started to cultivate it much later, around the turn of the century. Documentary evidence confirms that

Bouwstenen voor een geschiedenis der toonkunst in de Nederlanden, ed. Christiaan C. Vlam and Maarten Albert Vente (Utrecht, 1965), i, 78-81.

³³ Janse, 'Het muziekleven', 155, note 54. The full text of the song runs: 'Long ago I heard a little parable, which is true: "Where there is love, the eyes will follow; where there is pain, the hand must reach. Where pain, there grief; where love, there danger." I have now become aware of this game through the sweetest little lady on earth, who bore a lovely child on which she looked so kindly that it gladdened my heart. For her sake I have suffered much distress; that was done by *Doulx regart*. And thus I fear, were this to happen to me: if I pursued my desire, I would have to honour the child for the mother's sake.'

throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries cities north of the river Rhine were slower to establish polyphony than those in the more wealthy south. But if the north played perhaps a more modest role than it has traditionally been accorded, it still deserves our continued attention. Although present-day Holland cannot boast that it was the birthplace of any of the famous 'Netherlands' composers, it was one of the first areas receptive to their achievements.

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APPENDIX I

ANON., *BLIJFS MI DOCH BI, GHESELLE GOET*

Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS ES 64, f. 1

Tenor

[C] 'Blijfs mi doch bi, gheselle

Solus Tenor

8

goet, Du zies

16

dat met mi hevet pijn.' 'Lietict gheselle,

22

in waer niet vroet, Want sonder di can ic niet zijn.'

30

'Die zinghen zal dit liedekijn hi moet in
Al schijnt discort int eerst aenscijn, diet wel

36

ons een deel muse-
zingt hi sal acorde-

44

53

1. 2.
ren. ren.

‘Blijfs mi doch bi, gheselle goet,
 Du zies dat met mi hevet pijn.’
 ‘Lietict gheselle, in waer niet vroet,
 Want sonder di can ic niet zijn.’

‘Die zinghen zal dit liedekijn,
 Hi moet in ons een deel museren.

Al schijnt discort int eerst aenscijn,
 Diet wel zingt hi sal acorderen.’

‘Wel up, wel an! Scinct in ter spoet
 Den rijnschen traen, den veyna . . . mijn!
 Die des musike heeft ons doirwroet,
 Weerder dan gout ghesloten int scrijn.’

[‘Blijfs mi doch bi, gheselle goet,
 Du zies dat met mi hevet pijn.’
 ‘Lietict gheselle, in waer niet vroet,
 Want sonder di can ic niet zijn.’]

(English translation in main text.)

APPENDIX 2

ANON., *N'A PAS LONGTEMPS*(a) Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS ES 64, ff. 1^v-2

(b) Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canonici MS 213, f. 91

AmstU 64

N'

Contratenor

Tenor

OxfBC 213, f. 91

N'

Tenor

4

a pas

N'a pas longtems . . .

a

N'a pas

7

long tems que trouway Zephirus

N'a pas longtems

pas long tems que trouway Cephirus

long tems . . .

10

En son jar- dijn regardant ses

En son gardin regardant ses flourettes,

13

floret - tes, Lique l disoit au noble roy Phe-

Li quis [?] disoit au noble roi Phebus:

Lequel disoit au noble Roy

17

-bus: 'Merci te rens de tes ceures

'Merci te rens . . .

'Merci te rens . . .

Phebus: 'Merci te rens de tes

'Merci . . .

20

bien fait - tes, Car

Car mez flors

cures bien fait - tes, Car

Car mez flours

24

mez flors sont belles, plaisans et net -

Car mez flors sont . . .

sont . . .

mes flours sont belle, plaisans et nettes,

sont . . .

27

tes, Et odorans plus que pigment ne

Et odorans . . .

Et odorans . . .

Et oudourans plus que piement ne graine,

31

graine, Et par vertu ie trouve moult humaine

Et per vertu je trouve moult humaine . . .

Et par vertu je treuve moult humayne

. . . humayne . . .

35

Une plaisant ou mon cuer se

Une plaisans ou mon cuer

Une playsant ou mon cuer se delit-

delit-

39

te. Nommer le puis sans

Nommer le puis . . .

delite. No.nmer le puis . . .

te. Nom-mer la puis sans

43

pensee vilain- ne La tresplaisant

La tres plaisant ...

pensee vilay- ne La tresplaysant

46

et belle margari -

La tresplaisant ...

et belle margaritte.

La tres playsant ...

49

te.

La tres playsant ...

I

N'a pas longtemps que trouvoy Zephirus
 En son jardijn regardant ses florettes,
 Liqueles disoit au noble roy Phebus:
 'Merci te rens de tes ceures bien faittes,
 Car mez flors sont belles, plaisans et nettes,
 Et odorans plus que pigment ne graine,
 Et par vertu je treuve moult humaine
 Une plaisant ou mon cuer se delite.
 Nommer le puis sans pensee vilainne
 La tresplaisant et belle margarite.'

II

Pour ches beaux mos de parler fu esmus,
 Et demanday la vertu des herbettes,
 Car ie cuidoye la rose perdessus,
 Et si faisoye le lis et la genettes
 Et la saussye et pluisieurs violettes,
 De quoy Parijs faisoyt present Helaine,
 Que sont dames [de] la science hautaine.
 Puis lui vaÿ que de ly me fust dite
 Par quel raison tenait a plus certaine
 La tresplaisant etc.

III

Mais me dist [il]: 'Faire n'en doy refus,
 Car leurs odours sont tous a moy attraites.
 La margarite doy amer comme chus,
 Qui en congoist lez grant virtus estraites.
 Humilitez et puretez parfaictes
 Y sont aventus loyaulté souveraine.
 Fois pais douchour comprennent en son demaine,
 Et cent foyz plus que mon di[s] t[e] recite,
 C'est droit que j'aime sans varianche vaine
 La tresplaisant etc.'

[ENVOI]

Dame d'onnour de toute vertu plaine,
 Onques ne vis ne en chay ne en plaine,
 De toute flors nulle que j'ay escrite,
 Dedens mon cuer toy p . . . douche et saine
 La tresplaisant

APPENDIX 3

ANON., *AYEZ PITIÉ DE VO SERVANT*Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS ES 64, f. 2^v

[C]

Ayez pitié de vo servant, Bonne,

belle, joyeuse et gente,

Ayez pitié de vo servant, Bonne,

belle, joyeuse et gente,

Et ne souffrés par longue attente

Qu'amours lotie[?] en vous servant.

Et ne souffrés par longue attente

Qu'amours lotie[?] en vous servant.

Ayez pitié de vo servant,
Bonne, belle, joyeuse et gente,
Et ne souffrés par longue attente
Qu'amours lotie[?] en vous servant.

Vueiller qui vive en desirant[?]
Vostre amour par belle entente.

Ayez pitié, etc.

Donnés a l'umble poursuiant
Merci, qui amans[?] se teuermente.
Ostés le mal qui le tormentte,
Dame ton dis quel est vivant.

Ayez pitié, etc.

APPENDIX 4

ANON., *JE SUY DU TOUT ASSEMÉ*Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS ES 64, f. 2^v

Je suy du tout assemé Que je suy vo
 Je suy du tout assemé Que je suy vo
 suel [?amé]. Gracieulx et avenant, Et qu'a nulle aultre vivant
 seul [?amé], Gracieulx et avenant, Et qu'a nulle aultre
 N'avez vostre ♥ donné.
 vivant N'avez vostre ♥ donné.

Je suy du tout assemé
 Que je suy vo seul arie [?amé],
 Gracieulx et avenant,
 Et qu'a nulle aultre vivant
 N'avez vostre ♥ donné.

[Je vous dis en] verité,
 Quant le [?je] parcoy la [bonté]
 Qui en vous est demourant,

Je sui du tout [etc.]

Le v[oic]y la loyauté
 [Qui tout est] en vous trouvé.
 Et quant je voy le sauillant[?]
 Tant amoureux et si [?charmant]
 Que le vous m'est
 [Je sui etc.]

(I am indebted to David Fallows for his advice on the text editions.)