

THE REFRAIN AND THE CHAMBERS OF RHETORIC IN THE EARLY MODERN LOW COUNTRIES

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Over the past twenty years or so, English-language scholarship has gained a new appreciation of the vibrant theatrical culture of the *rederijerskamers*. These 'chambers of rhetoric' — lay fraternities comprised chiefly of middle-class citizens who styled themselves *rederijers* or 'rhetoricians' — proliferated across the cities of the Low Countries in the later Middle Ages. The dramas they produced for civic and religious occasions, and for the contests known as *landjuwelen* in Brabant and *rhetorijksfeesten* in Holland and Flanders, have become increasingly familiar to critics working in English. A number of studies have outlined the history and structure of these organizations, from the pioneering work of Georg Kernodle in the 1940s, to a more recent set of essays edited by Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé.¹ The chambers' relationship to wider movements, such as Protestantism, humanism, and the *devotio moderna*, has also been closely documented.²

¹ Georg R. Kernodle, *From Art to Theatre: Form and Convention in the Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1944); James A. Parente, *Religious Drama and the Humanist Tradition: Christian Theater in Germany and the Netherlands* (Leiden: Brill, 1987); Peter Arnade, *Realms of Ritual: Burgundian Ceremony and Civic Life in Late Medieval Ghent* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 159–88; Heinrich F. Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004); *Urban Theatre in the Low Countries 1400–1625*, ed. by Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé, *Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe*, 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).

² Leonard Verduin, 'The Chambers of Rhetoric and Anabaptist Origins in the Low Countries', *Menonite Quarterly Review*, 34 (1960), 192–96; Gary K. Waite, *Reformers on Stage: Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515–1556* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 76–101; and Herman Pleij, 'The Rise of

Perhaps most importantly, a number of translations have enabled English readers to access *rederijker* drama directly.³

Such efforts have succeeded in bringing about a new awareness of the *rederijkers* among English critics. This can be witnessed in the tendency among some commentators to see English urban drama in the context of its Dutch counterpart: for example, Leonard Forster, Alexandra Johnson, and Claire Sponsler have each insisted that the two be seen as 'part of a shared culture'.⁴ The same knowledge is also evident in a new edition of *Everyman*, which directly tackles the persistent view that the play is 'thoroughly English in spirit', emphasizing its provenance in the Flemish chambers.⁵ In short, recent scholarship has done much to overturn the older view that 'Holland [. . .] had nothing significant' in terms of drama.⁶ In the

Urban Literature in the Low Countries', in *Medieval Dutch Literature in its European Context*, ed. by Erik Kooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 62–80.

³ See for instance 'Plaijerwater: A Sixteenth-Century Farce with an English Translation', trans. by Hans van Dijk, Jane Fenoulhet, Tanis Guest, Theo Hermans, Elsa Strietman, and Paul Vincent, *Dutch Crossing*, 24 (1984), 32–70; Jan Van den Berghe, 'The Voluptuous Man', trans. by Peter King, *Dutch Crossing*, 28 (1986), 53–108; *Een Esbattement van sMenschen Sin en Verganckelijcke Schoonheit: Man's Desire and Fleeting Beauty*, trans. and ed. by Elsa Strietman and Robert Potter (Leeds: Centre for Medieval Studies, 1994); *Mariken van Nieumeghen: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. and ed. by Therese Decker and Martin W. Walsh (Columbia: Camden House, 1994); *Medieval Dutch Drama: Four Secular Plays and Four Farces from the Van Hulthem Manuscript*, trans. and ed. by Johanna C. Prins, *Early European Drama in Translation*, 4 (Asheville: Pegasus, 2000); *For Pleasure and Profit: Six Dutch Rhetoricians Plays*, trans. and ed. by Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé, 2 vols (Lancaster: Medieval English Theatre, 2006), I: *Three Biblical Plays*, II: *Three Classical Plays*, volume one also published as *Medieval English Theatre*, 26 (2004). For a fuller list, see the 'bibliography of translations' given in *Medieval Dutch Literature*, ed. by Kooper, pp. 297–304.

⁴ Claire Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 96. See also Leonard Forster, 'Literary Relations between the Low Countries, England and Germany', *Dutch Crossing*, 24 (1984), 16–31; Alexandra F. Johnston, 'Traders and Playmakers: English Guildsmen and the Low Countries', in *England and the Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by Caroline M. Barron and Nigel Saul (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 99–114; Alexandra F. Johnston, 'The Continental Connection: A Reconsideration', in *The Stage as a Mirror: Civic Theatre in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by A. E. Knight (London: Brewer, 1997), pp. 7–24.

⁵ Joseph Quincy Adams, *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas: A Selection of Plays Illustrating the History of the English from its Origin down to Shakespeare* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), p. 288; *Everyman and its Dutch Original, Elckerlijc*, ed. by Clifford Davidson, Martin W. Walsh, and Ton J. Broos, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007).

⁶ Hardin Craig, *English Religious Drama in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 352.

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place of this attitude, a fuller understanding of the fertile milieu of the *rederijkers* has emerged among anglophone critics.

However, while this activity is in every respect commendable, it has tended to concentrate fairly narrowly on one aspect of the *rederijkers*' output. It has focussed almost exclusively on the *spelen*, or stage-plays, produced by the chambers. This has the inevitable but unfortunate effect of marginalizing other types of performance associated with the groups. One form that has been especially overshadowed is the refrain, a sort of rhyming declamation that attained special prominence during the sixteenth century.⁷ Only a handful of *refreinen* have been translated into English, and the form has received comparatively little attention from English-speaking critics.⁸ This is despite the fact that the refrain occupied a central place in the *rederijkers*' practices: the chambers often promoted it as a supreme demonstration of rhetorical elegance, and their festivals generally included at least one prize for 'reciting the best refrain'.⁹ In fact the refrain was so fundamental to the activities of the chambers that it often impinged on their drama. For instance, the form had a direct influence on one of the landmark plays of the *rederijkers*, *Mary of Nieumeghen* (c. 1515), in which the title character recites a full-blown refrain during the course of her adventures. A number of later plays also follow this course, incorporating refrains into their dialogue, such as the *Play of Saint Trudo* (c. 1550), and the *Morality Play Concerning Grain* (1565) by Loris Janz.¹⁰ It is the purpose

⁷ The modern Dutch spelling 'refrein' has been used throughout, despite the tendency of some English commentators to adopt the formation 'refrain'. 'Refrein' is preferred here to avoid the unhelpful connotations of 'refrain', since the repetition of a burden is only one feature of the refrain.

⁸ One notable exception is the work of the female *rederijker* Anna Bijns, which has received some coverage in anthologies of women's writing: see Anna Bijns, 'Refereynen XXVII: Het waer goet houwen, maer tsorgen es de plage (Marriage would be fine if it weren't plagued with worry)', in *Dutch and Flemish Feminist Poems From the Middle Ages to the Present: A Bilingual Anthology*, trans. and ed. by Maaike Meijer, Erica Eijssker, Ankie Peypers, and Yopie Prins (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1998), pp. 46–50; and the eight refrains included in Kristiaan P. G. Aercke, 'Germanic Sappho: Anna Bijns', in *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. by Katerina M. Wilson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), pp. 365–97.

⁹ Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "A wonderfull tryumfe, for the wynnyng of a pryse": Guilds, Ritual, Theater, and the Urban Network in the Southern Low Countries, ca. 1450–1650', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 59 (2006), 374–405 (p. 393).

¹⁰ *Het spel van Sint Trudo*, ed. by Rik Delport (Kortrijk: Vermaut, 1930); *Een spel van sinnen beroerende Het Cooren (1565) van Lauris Jansz*, ed. by W. M. H. Hummelen and G. W. R. Dibbets (Zutphen: Thieme, 1985).

of the present article to amend this oversight, by offering a brief introduction to the refrain and its conventions. A few examples of the form will also be appended, in a fresh translation.

In terms of its overall development, the most obvious source for the refrain is the French *ballade*. Many of the refrain's characteristics are clearly derived from this earlier form, either echoing or directly emulating French texts. This borrowing is perhaps most conspicuous in the rhyme schemes of refrains. The refrain shares the *ballade*'s fondness for structural complexity, employing highly repetitive and densely interlaced rhymes. Most surviving examples include only a handful of line-endings and weave them into intricate patterns of repetition. The influence of the *ballade* is also apparent in the refrain's use of a brief concluding stanza, in the vein of the French *envoi*. The final part of a refrain is usually shorter than the preceding sections and is invariably addressed to a 'prince'. Again like French form, this *Prince-strofe* could carry out a broad range of functions. The 'prince' it addressed might be an actual political leader, a particularly notable *rederijker*, or even a figure of religious significance: in Eduard de Dene's 'Decorated With Five Rose-Red Wounds' (1561), for instance, the final stanza is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, who is hailed as 'a princess deserving reverence'.¹¹ The prince-stanza could also refer to the chief administrator of a particular chamber, or in some cases its patron, who would often take the ceremonial title *prins* or *keiser*.¹² Finally, the refrain also inherited the *ballade*'s inclusion of a burden-line at the end of each stanza. These recurring phrases came to be known as *stockregels* or 'stock-lines'. As Timothy McTaggart notes, the *rederijkers* generally used the *stock* to fix the sense of the stanza, rather than to open up the phrase itself to new meanings. The device was usually employed 'to provide a sense of closure [. . .] more like codas than real structural repeats'.¹³

¹¹ 'Princesse ontfanct met Reuerentien': Eduard de Dene, 'Verchiert met vyfwondeghe Roosen Roodt', in *Testament rhetoricael*, ed. by W. Waterschoot and D. Coigneau, 3 vols, Jaarboek De Fonteyne, 26, 28, and 30 (Gent: Seminarie voor Nederlandse Literatuurstudie, 1976–80), II (1978), 269–70.

¹² On the hierarchy of the chambers, see Herman Pleij, *Het gevleugelde woord: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1400–1650* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2007), p. 299; Susie Speakman Sutch, 'Dichters van de stad: De Brusselse rederijkers en hun verhouding tot de Franstalige hof-literatuur en het geleerde humanisme (1475–1522)', in *Literatuur in Brussel van de 14de tot de 18de eeuw*, ed. by Jozef Janssens and Remco Sleiderink (Leuven: Uitgeverij Davidsfonds, 2003), pp. 141–59.

¹³ Tielman Susato, *Musyck boexken: Dutch Songs for Four Voices*, ed. by Timothy McTaggart, Recent Researches in the Music of the Renaissance, 108 (Madison: A-R Editions, 1997), p. xvi.

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Nevertheless, in spite of its French origins, by the end of the Middle Ages the refrain had developed into a poetic form in its own right. It systematically expanded on most of the features of the *ballade*. First, in place of the *ballade*'s three stanzas, the refrain generally employed around four or five *strofen*. Poets were free to increase this figure, however: the anonymous 'A False Tongue' (c. 1524) contains eight *strofen*, while Jan Van den Dale's 'In Praise of the Host' (c. 1520) runs to eleven.¹⁴ The *strofen* themselves were also extended. Most were at least twice the size of a *ballade* stanza, containing around fourteen or fifteen lines.¹⁵ Again, there were exceptions to this rule: the stanzas of 'It is forbidden by Christ' (1584), for instance, are twenty-one lines in length.¹⁶ The refrain broke further with its French model in the standard metre it followed. Rather than using the octosyllabics of Machaut, Deschamps, or Villon, refrains favoured a longer line. As is stated in the invitation *caerte* issued before the Delft *feest* of 1581, refrains of 'traditional Holland metre' should have between 'ten and [...] fourteen syllables'.¹⁷ Finally, these additions gave the *rederijkers* scope to create more elaborate and sustained rhyme-schemes than those of the *ballade*. In fact, the creation of complicated patterns of sound became 'an ever more prevalent and deliberate stage' in the composition of refrains during their development.¹⁸

Although these departures from the *ballade* may seem slight, for the *rederijkers* they were clearly more significant than the similarities. The refrain and *ballade* came to be regarded as entirely separate forms. The refrain seems to have emerged as a distinct type of poetry in the first half of the fifteenth century. The earliest surviving examples are those of the Bruges *rederijker* Anthonis de Roovere

¹⁴ 'Een valsche tonghe', in *Jan van Stijvoorts Refereinenbundel anno 1524*, ed. by Frederik Lyna and Willem van Eeghem, 2 vols (Antwerp: De Sikkkel, 1930), II, 136–39; Jan van den Dale, 'Lof Hostie', in *Gekende werken*, ed. by Gilbert Degroote (Antwerp: De Nederlandsche boekhandel, 1944), pp. 133–43.

¹⁵ See Dirk Coigneau, 'Rederijkersliteratuur', in *Historische letterkunde: facetten van vakbeoefening*, ed. by Marijke Spies (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1984), pp. 35–57 (pp. 36–37).

¹⁶ 'Het es Christus vermaen', in *Politieke balladen, refereinen, liederen en spoddichten der XVI eeuw*, ed. by Ph. Blommaert (Gent: Maetschappy der Vlaemsche Bibliophilen, 1847), pp. 295–98.

¹⁷ Werner Waterschoot, 'Marot or Ronsard? New French Poetics among Dutch Rhetoricians in the Second Half of the 16th Century', in *Rhetoric – Rhetoriques – Rederijkers*, ed. by Jelle Koopmans, Mark A. Meadow, Kees Meerhoff, and Marijke Spies (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1995), pp. 141–56 (p. 150).

¹⁸ Ethan Matt Kavaler, 'Renaissance Gothic in the Netherlands: The Uses of Ornament', *Art Bulletin*, 82 (2000), 226–51 (p. 236).

(c. 1430–82), whose *Rhetorical Works* contains twenty-eight texts specifically designated refrains, dating from the 1450s onwards.¹⁹ The conventions of the form seem to be fully developed by this point: this is further corroborated by the founding charter of the Gent chamber *De Fonteyne*, dating from 1448, which refers to the refrain as a specific variety of text.²⁰ Certainly by the sixteenth century the refrain and the *ballade* were regarded as wholly discrete. This is made clear in the handbook *On the Art of Rhetoric*, compiled by Matthijs de Castelein in c. 1548.²¹ While de Castelein, a prolific member of the Oudenaarde chamber *De Kersouwe* (The Daisy), acknowledges formal similarities between the *ballade* and refrain, he conceives the two as independent frameworks. His list of poetic forms treats them as separate items, citing 'rondels, refrains, *ballades*, lyrics and plays' as the genres available to a *dichter* or poet.²²

The refrain reached the peak of its popularity in the sixteenth century. Throughout this period it remained the dominant poetic form of the *rederijkers*: as Reinder Meijer writes, it became the 'favourite form' of the chambers, regarded as the consummate expression of their literary principles.²³ One measure of its importance is the chambers' refusal to modify the form. As Werner Waterschoot notes, even when the chambers came under the influence of the *Pléiade* in the 1530s and 1540s, they were reluctant to bring the refrain in line with the new aesthetics: 'rhetoricians, who in their introductory speeches proclaimed the fame of Marot and Ronsard, continued to ask for refrains in traditional Holland metre'.²⁴ In fact,

¹⁹ See for instance 'Refereyn constich gheestelijck' ('Skilful spiritual refrain') and 'Refereyn van berouwe' ('Refrain of repentance'): *De gedichten van Anthonis de Roovere*, ed. by J. J. Mak (Zwolle: Uitgeversmaatschappij Tjeenk Willink, 1955), pp. 218–19, 224–25. Although the *Rhetorical Works* was not published until 1562, some eighty years after its author's death, the titles do seem to be de Roovere's: see Dirk Coigneau, *Refreinen in het zotte bij de rederijkers*, 3 vols (Gent: Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde, 1980–83), III (1983), 568–75.

²⁰ J. B. Oosterman, 'Tussen twee wateren zwem ik: Anthonis de Roovere tussen rederijkers en rhétoriciens', *Jaarboek De Fonteyne*, 49–50 (1999–2000), 11–29.

²¹ See Bart Ramakers, 'Between Aea and Golgotha: The Education and Scholarship of Matthijs de Castelein', in *Education and Learning in the Netherlands, 1400–1600: Essays in Honour of Hilde de Ridder-Symoens*, ed. by Koen Goudriaan, Jaap van Moolenbroek, and Ad Tervoort (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 179–200.

²² Matthijs de Castelein, *De const van rhetoriken* (Oudenaarde: Theater Pax Vobis, 1986), pp. 52, 30.

²³ Reinder P. Meijer, *Literature of the Low Countries* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), p. 52.

²⁴ Waterschoot, 'Marot or Ronsard?', p. 154.

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some *rederijkers* actively sought to defend the refrain against neoclassical innovation. For example, de Castelein compares the eighth eclogue of Virgil to 'the refrain that repeats the *regghels*' in a clear effort 'to shore up the status' of the refrain, legitimizing its status by supplying it with an ancient pedigree.²⁵ Nonetheless, despite these efforts, the refrain fell into decline at the turn of the seventeenth century. As the chambers themselves waned in both membership and influence, the refrain was increasingly seen as old-fashioned.²⁶ In G. A. Bredero's *The Spanish Brabanter* (c. 1617), for instance, the form is treated with particular scorn. Here the refrain comes to typify the 'extravagance' and 'verbosity' of the *rederijkers*' idiom: one of Bredero's characters remarks that 'even their smallest utterance took the form of a refrain'.²⁷

Like most of the *rederijkers*' compositions, refrains fell into three major categories. The first of these was the 'refrain of wisdom', variously known as the *refereyn int vroede* or *refereyn int wijs*. Most *rederijkers* understood 'wisdom' in fairly narrow terms, interpreting it as Christian moral knowledge: accordingly, such pieces are often overtly didactic in character. The bulk of refrains were composed under this heading. *Refereynen int vroede* were in fact so pervasive that even when the chambers began their decline in the seventeenth century, the form continued to be a viable method of discussing religious issues, as late examples by Dirk Philipsz serve to demonstrate.²⁸

The second classification of refrain was the *refereyn int amoureuze*, or 'refrain of love'. As might be expected, this form draws on several standard conceits from troubadour and *Minnesänger* poetry. In his monograph on the refrain, Antonin Van Elsander terms *refereynen int amoureuze* 'late heirs of the so-called courtly tradition in the medieval love-lyric', and notes that many *fin amour* conventions

²⁵ 'De refereinen dats tsregghels repetitie | Rijst ons ter monitie van Maro zo ic meene, | In zijn achste eglogue': de Castelein, *De const van rhetoriken*, p. 55; Marijke Spies, *Rhetoric, Rhetoricians and Poets: Studies in Renaissance Poetry and Poetics* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), p. 44.

²⁶ Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *1800: Blueprints for a National Community*, Dutch Culture in a European Perspective, 2 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 96.

²⁷ 'Dat waeren liens vol perfeccy, en van devine eloquency [...] datse sproocken dat was een reffiereyn, en dat so exstruvagant': Gerbrand Adriaensz Bredero, *Spaanschen Brabander*, ed. by C. F. P. Stutterheim (Culemborg: Tjeenk Willink-Noorduijn, 1974), p. 167.

²⁸ Pieter Visser, *Broeders in de geest: de doopsgezinde bijdragen van Dierick en Jan Philipsz. Schabaelje tot de Nederlandse stichtelijke literatuur in de zeventiende eeuw* (Deventer: Uitgeverij Sub Rosa, 1988), p. 147.

make their way into such pieces: for instance, the refrains often present love as a 'duty' or a 'humiliation', to which the narrator 'meekly submits', forcing him to praise his mistress lavishly for 'the smallest proof of affection, a soft word, a token'.²⁹ However, the *rederijkers* also modified the notions they inherited, blending them with a strong religious sensibility. Refrains of love were often given clear moral overtones. One such text is Jan van den Berghe's 'If I could speak with her, I would be appeased' (c. 1539). This is studded with biblical allusions throughout and ends on an emphatically pious note, as its prince-stanza makes a direct appeal to *God glorieus*.³⁰ Often these devotional sentiments directly opposed the form's romantic aspects. Rather than merging spiritual and sensual love in the manner of other European lyric traditions, the refrains tended to place them in conflict.³¹ For instance, the author of 'I carry love to the chambermaids of Venus' (c. 1524) permits his narrator to abandon the goddess of love altogether, as he turns to the Christian God at the conclusion of the poem.³²

A third category of refrain is *int zotte*, 'of foolery'. These encompass a broad variety of comic modes. Surviving examples range from the playful scatology of de Roovere's 'The place where they sow luck', to the harsh misogyny of 'God made women to talk, shout, and nag'.³³ Their potential for satire occasionally drew them into the religious controversies of the Reformation era.³⁴ In 1539 the chamber of *Sint Barbara* at Kortrijk produced a number of refrains which viciously attacked the Catholic church, while the refrains of Anna Bijns (1493–1575) satirized Luther and the Reformers, branding them 'the cause of all misery, social and

²⁹ 'Late erfgenamen van de zogenaamde hoofse traditie in de Middeleeuwse Minnelyriek [...]. De geringste blijk van genegenheid te zijnen opzichte — een "vriendelic" of "troostelic" woord, een blik': A. van Elslander, *Het refrain in de Nederlanden tot 1600* (Gent: Erasmus, 1953), pp. 121–26.

³⁰ Jan van den Berghe, 'Hantwaerpen int amorueze: Och, mocht ic se spreken, ic ware ghepaeyt', in *Dichten en spelen van Jan van den Berghe*, ed. by C. Kruyskamp (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950), pp. 52–54.

³¹ See R. T. Davies, *Medieval English Lyrics: A Critical Anthology* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp. 44–45.

³² 'Refereijn X: Ic draghe liefde op venus camerierkens', in *Jan van Stijvoorts Refereinenbundel*, ed. by Lyna and van Eeghem, I, 27–28.

³³ De Roovere, 'Refereyn int sotte: Staet betacht men saeydter gheluck', *De gedichten*, ed. by Mak, pp. 404–05; 'Refereijne XVII: Spreke screyen naye heeft god den vrouwen berayen', in *Jan van Stijvoorts Refereinenbundel*, ed. by Lyna and van Eeghem, I, 39–40.

³⁴ See H. A. Enno van Gelder, *Erasmus, schilders en rederijkers: de religieuze crisis der 16e eeuw* (Groningen: P. Noordhoff, 1959), p. 83.

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moral'.³⁵ In general, however, refrains of foolery were more playful than polemic, drawing on the fruitful tradition of fool-literature in the Netherlands.³⁶ It seems likely that *refereynen int zotte* would in fact be recited by a fool. Most chambers appear to have had a resident clown, since the *landjuwelen* and *rhetorijckfeesten* routinely offered prizes to the 'best fool'.³⁷ Several of these refrains were also composed for an avowedly 'foolish' speaker, such as 'I will drink until morning comes', which is narrated by a self-professed 'drunkard, with a straw-stuffed head'.³⁸ Furthermore, the texts often deliberately situate themselves in broader traditions of clowning. For instance, the example printed below contains a mock-tribute to 'Carebus' and 'Tiribus': according to Wim Hüskén, these are conventional names for 'a type of fool who is better off than many serious-minded men', which can be traced back to Dirc Potter's farce *The Ways of Love* (c. 1412).³⁹

It is important to stress that all three kinds of refrain were designed to be recited before an audience. Despite the fact that they often circulated in textual form, such as the anthologies printed by Jan van Doesborch in c. 1524 and Jasper

³⁵ 'De oudste twee bevatten aangrijpende klachten over [...] Luther en de zijnen, die de oorzaak zijn van alle ellende in maatschappelijk en zedelijk opzicht': *De Nederlandse en Vlaamse auteurs van middeleeuwen tot heden met inbegrip van de Friese auteurs*, ed. by G. J. van Bork and P. J. Verkruisje (The Hague: Weesp, 1985), p. 125; Benjamin Ern , 'Cortrijcke', in *De Gentse Spelen van 1539*, ed. by B. H. Ern  and L. M. van Dis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), p. 541. See also Anna Bijns, *Schoon ende suverlijc boecxken inhoudende veel constige refereinen (Refereinen 1528)*, ed. by Lode Roose (Leuven: Uitgeverij Acco, 1987), especially pp. 37–41, 103–45, and 150–66; A. C. Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (London: Hambledon, 1990), p. 37.

³⁶ See Wim H sk n, *Noyt meerder vreucht: compositie en structuur van het komisch toneel in de Nederlanden voor de Renaissance* (Deventer: Sub Rosa, 1987), pp. 100–05; *Veelderhande geneuchlijke dichten, tafelspelen ende refereynen*, ed. by E. J. Brill (Leiden: Brill, 1899); Herman Pleij, *Van schelmen en schavuiten* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1985); *Een nyeuwe clucht boeck*, ed. by Herman Pleij (Muiderburg: Dick Coutinho, 1983).

³⁷ *Spelen van Sinne vol schoone allegatien, drijderley refereynen: De Rotterdamse spelen van 1561*, ed. by Henk J. Hollaar (Delft: Eburon, 2006), p. 14; Arn de, *Realms of Ritual*, p. 181.

³⁸ 'Dronckaert, dul van hoye': 'Refreyn XLIV: By wylen drinck ick tot tsmorghens dat daecht', in E. Soens, 'Onuitgegeven Gedichten van Anna Bijns', *Leuvense Bijdragen*, 6 (1900), 354–55.

³⁹ 'De namen Tiribus en Corebus [...] dat van de zot die ondanks of misschien wel dank zij zijn malle streken beter terechtkomt dan menig serieus mens voor zichzelf zou kunnen wensen': W. N. M. H sk n, '1 augustus 1541: De klucht "Tielebuys" van Willem Vrancx wordt als welkomstspel gespeeld op het landjuweel van Diest. De kluchtentraditie in de Nederlanden', in *Een theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden: Tien eeuwen drama en theater in Nederland en Vlaanderen*, ed. by R. L. Erenstein (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 106–11 (p. 108).

Troyen in 1592, refrains were principally intended for performance.⁴⁰ As Herman Pleij states, recitation was always the 'final destination' of the poems: 'it was important for texts to be read or recited to show the clever interweaving of end rhymes and internal rhymes [...] refrains are the preeminent example of the art of declamation'.⁴¹ Accordingly, they became a staple entertainment of the chambers' gatherings.⁴² They were not only read during special occasions, such as the election of a new *prins*, but also during the chambers' regular meetings, which often featured a refrain competition between the members.⁴³

The most significant platform for the refrain, however, was the *refereinfest*. This was a contest between the chambers of a particular region which focussed exclusively on the form. Like the better-known dramatic *landjuwelen* and *rhetorijck-feesten*, the *refereinfest* required each competing chamber to submit and perform a stipulated number of refrains. Examples of such festivals include those hosted at Antwerp in 1509, Berchem in 1556, Delft in 1581, Rotterdam in 1598, Leiden in 1604, and Haarlem in 1613. These events closely resembled the *landjuwelen*. Like the *spelen* entered into such contests, the refrains were composed as responses to a set question or *vraag*, issued to the chambers before the meeting. For instance, in the Gent *refereinfest* of April 1539, the refrains of wisdom were required to answer the query 'What animal in the world can overcome the greatest strength?', while the refrains of foolery replied to 'What people in the world show most stupidity?'.⁴⁴ On these occasions, the *vraag* was often incorporated into the refrain itself as the

⁴⁰ See *De refreinenbundel van Jan van Doesborch*, ed. by C. Kruyskamp (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1940); C. G. N. De Vooys, 'De Dordtse bundel met *Christelijke en schriftuerlijke refereynen*', *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, n.s., 21 (1928), 273–96.

⁴¹ Herman Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, trans. by Diane Webb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 60.

⁴² See Reinhard Strom, 'Music in Current Feasts of Bruges', in *Actes du XIIIe Congrès de la Société Internationale de Musicologie, Strasbourg, 29 août – 3 septembre 1982: La musique et le rite sacré et profane*, ed. by Marc Honegger, Christian Meyer, and Paul Prévost, 2 vols (Strasbourg: Association des Publications près les Universités de Strasbourg, 1986), II, 424–33.

⁴³ A three-weekly *refreinritueel*, in which 'every member was expected to contribute', is best documented for the Gent chamber *De Fonteyne*: see Dirk Coigneau, 'Bedongen creativiteit: Over retorische productieregeling', in *Medioneerlandstiek: Een inleiding tot de Middelnederlandse letterkunde*, ed. by Ria Jansen-Sieben, Jozef Janssens, and Frank Willaert (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000), pp. 133–34.

⁴⁴ 'Wat dier ter waerelt meest fortse verwint? [...] Wat volc ter werelt meest sotheyt toocht?': A. Van Elslander, 'Het Refreinfest te Gent in 1539', *Jaarboek De Fonteyne*, 2 (1944), 38–56 (pp. 42–43).

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stockregel. Prizes were awarded to the best refrain in each category. During the Rotterdam *feest* of 1561, the best refrain of wisdom was awarded three wine jars, the best refrain of love received six tin jugs, and the best refrain of foolery earned an amphora.⁴⁵ These trophies, evidently intended for use during the chambers' own feasts, had symbolic rather than monetary value. At least this is the impression given by Richard Clough, an English visitor who witnessed the Antwerp *landjuweel* of 1561. Clough marvelled at the apparent meagreness of the prizes in comparison to the extravagance of the event itself: 'thys was the strangest matter that ever I sawe [...] they shall wyn no more with all but a skalle [drinking bowl] of sylver weying 6 ounsys'.⁴⁶

Refrains were also often performed during dramatic festivals. Sometimes a *refreinfeest* and *rhetorijkfeest* would be held as parallel but separate events. At Gent in 1539 the two events were hosted in the same city a month apart. In other cases, refrains were simply recited along with the plays, as at Brussels in 1562.⁴⁷ The presence of refrains at these festivals again underscores the importance of performance for these texts and their essentially dramatic nature.

How the refrains were performed is, however, something of an enigma. They do not appear to have been sung to musical accompaniment. According to Jan Bonda, the refrain's rise in popularity coincided with a general decline in music among the chambers.⁴⁸ Moreover, the *rhetorijkfeesten* clearly distinguished refrains from songs, usually holding separate contests for each.⁴⁹ There were also functional differences between the two forms. As van Elslander points out, refrains were held to inspire 'reasoned thought' and good conduct, whereas songs could only 'arouse, please, or stir' the emotions.⁵⁰ But despite these considerations, it is equally evident

⁴⁵ *Spelen van Sinne vol schoone allegatien*, ed. by Hollaar, p. 14.

⁴⁶ John William Burgon, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Gresham*, 2 vols (London: Robert Jennings, 1839), I, 388. Clough's 'skalle' is most likely an anglicized version of the Dutch *schaal*, 'bowl'.

⁴⁷ See E. G. A. Galama, 'Inleiding', in *Twee Zestiende-Eeuwse Spelen Van de Verlooren Zoone door Robert Lawet*, ed. by E. G. A. Galama (Utrecht: Dekker and Van de Vegt, 1941), pp. 6–14.

⁴⁸ 'Rond 1500 was het gesproken refrain de belangrijkste lyrische vorm van de rederijkers geworden. Het is wellicht het verdwijnen van de band met de muziek geweest': Jan Willem Bonda, *De Meerstemmige Nederlandse Liederen Van de Vijftiende En Zestiende Eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1996), p. 429.

⁴⁹ *Spelen van Sinne vol schoone allegatien*, ed. by Hollaar, p. 14.

⁵⁰ 'Het referein kon redeneeren, overtuigen; het lied kon slechts opwekken, ontroeren, aangrijpen': van Elslander, *Het refrain*, p. 9.

that the refrain was not completely distinct from the song. Various features that the refrain took from the *ballade*, such as the strong use of repetition and the presence of the *stockregel*, are at least reminiscent of song: hence Marijke Spies suggests that the refrain is best described as 'a semi-lyrical form'.⁵¹ Owing to this, it seems likely that refrains were delivered in a strongly accented, even rhythmic manner, perhaps as something like a chant.⁵²

It also appears that refrains were delivered by a single narrator. Evidence of this is provided by the miracle play *Mary of Nieuwmeghen*. When Mary performs a refrain for the patrons of a tavern, with the *stock* 'artlessness makes art grow forlorn', she clearly recites it alone, since no parts are allocated to any other speaker.⁵³ It would seem that other refrains were staged in a similar fashion, as rhyming declamations, performed by a single orator. However, it is also possible that the audience recited the *stockregel* along with the performer. Since this would be based on the prescribed *vraag*, the *stock* would be partly known to the spectators, which might enable their participation.

Another important detail is the fact that refrains were generally performed within the *rethorijckerscamer* itself, the hall in which each chamber held its meetings. This sets the refrain apart from other productions of the *rederijkers*, such as their plays and *tableaux vivants*. Such types of performance tended to be open and public in nature. As is clear from pictorial sources, they were usually performed on mounted scaffolds in market squares or other common spaces.⁵⁴ They were also written to be accessible to a wide audience: as Gary Waite comments, 'the plays were composed as services to their urban community, within which the rhetoricians lived and worked'.⁵⁵ In contrast, the refrains belonged to much more exclusive venues. The chamber halls were emphatically enclosed and private. In fact, each chamber possessed its own ceremonial *cnape* or 'doorman', whose chief

⁵¹ Spies, *Rhetoric, Rhetoricians and Poets*, p. 97.

⁵² G. Kalff, *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Letterkunde in de 16de eeuw*, 7 vols (Leiden: J. B. Wolters, 1906–12), I (1906), 313.

⁵³ 'Doer donconstighe gaet die conste verloren': *Mariken van Nieuwmeghen*, ed. by Dirk Coigneau (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1996), pp. 96–97.

⁵⁴ See W. M. H. Hummelen, 'Types and Methods of the Dutch Rhetoricians' Theatre', trans. by H. S. Lake, in *The Third Globe: Symposium for the Reconstruction of the Globe Playhouse*, ed. by C. Walter Hodges, S. Schoenbaum, and Leonard Leone (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), pp. 164–89.

⁵⁵ Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, p. 29.

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generally performed member held its meeting: *rederijkers*, such as added to be open and usually performed on s.⁵⁴ They were also comments, 'the plays which the rhetoricians' were intended to much more sed and private. In rman', whose chief

duty was to restrict access to the hall from non-members.⁵⁶ The fact that halls were the proper forum for refrains suggests that they were deemed a specialist type of performance, which could only be fully appreciated by those within the circle of the rhetoricians. They were, as van Elsland states, 'for a more limited public with more refined literary tastes', not a form suitable for ordinary, untrained observers.⁵⁷ It is true that some refrains did eventually find a more popular audience: a 1565 municipal decree from Antwerp mentions 'heretical' refrains being 'carried in pockets, stockings or hats' by the 'citizenry'.⁵⁸ Yet despite this, refrains do seem to have been primarily written and performed for a select few alone. They were usually reserved for those fully inducted into 'the mysteries of rhetoric', taking place behind the closed doors of the *kamer* itself.⁵⁹

The Texts and Translation

The refrains presented here have not been selected because they possess any qualities which modern readers are likely to find remarkable, whether as works of art or as historical documents. On the contrary, they are intended to stand as typical specimens of their form. The texts are taken from a festival held at Rotterdam on 20 June 1561, each being the winning refrain in its particular category. This *feest*, which included plays and other contests as well as refrains, is one of the best documented of the mid-sixteenth century. The pieces performed, as well as the invitation *caerte* and a list of prizes awarded, have all survived in a printed edition, published in 1562 by the Antwerp printer Willem Silvius.⁶⁰ This in turn has been recently reissued in a modern edition produced by Henk Hollaar.⁶¹

⁵⁶ See Prudens van Duyse, *De rederijkkamers in Nederland, hun invloed op letterkundig, politiek en zedelijk gebied* (Gent: A. Siffer, 1900-02), I (1900), p. 42.

⁵⁷ 'Voor een beperkter publiek met meer uitgesproken literaire pretenties': van Elsland, *Het refrain*, p. 187.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Maria A. Schenkeveld, *Dutch Literature in the Age of Rembrandt* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1991), pp. 69-70. Similar edicts were made in Holland in 1587 and 1618: Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht: M. Nijhoff, 1987), p. 122.

⁵⁹ Donald Leeman Clarke, *Rhetoric and Poetry in the Renaissance* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p. 29.

⁶⁰ On Silvius, see Colin Clair, 'Willem Silvius', *The Library*, 14 (1959), 192-205.

⁶¹ *De Rotterdamse spelen van 1561*, ed. by Henk Hollaar (Delft: Eburon Uitgeverij, 2006).

The Rotterdam *retorijckfeest* drew together chambers from across the county of Holland.⁶² Those known to have taken part include companies from Amsterdam and Gouda in the north, and Rijnsburg, Schiedam, Noordwijk, Leiden, and Delft in the south. These were joined by the two chambers of Haarlem, *De Pelicaen* and *De Wyngaertrancken* (The Plants of the Vineyard), respectively designated the 'old and young chambers'. The festival was hosted by the chamber *De Blauwe Acoleyen*, or 'Blue Columbine'.⁶³ Throughout its two-hundred-year history, *De Blauwe Acoleyen* was one of the most energetic and productive chambers in Holland. The *Acoleyen* had existed since at least 1484, when the *burgo-meestren* of Leiden record sending wine to 'the rhetoricians of Rotterdam' for some unspecified service.⁶⁴ The chamber is also known to have taken part in numerous *feesten* throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including those held at Noordwijk in 1562, Heenvliet in 1580, Delft in 1581, and Kethel in 1615: it is last mentioned at the festival of Bleiswijk in 1684. The chamber also frequently hosted its own *feesten*, holding four such events between 1545 and 1598. Aside from these occasions, the *Acoleyen* was responsible for much of the civic pageantry staged at Rotterdam. In 1497 it took charge of the celebrations used to mark Phillip the Handsome's *blijde inkomst* or official entry into the city.⁶⁵ The chamber performed a similar function when Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I of England, visited Holland in 1642.⁶⁶

The Rotterdam *feest* exemplifies the range of contests staged during the *rederijkers'* festivals. Alongside the prizes for poetry and plays, other trophies were awarded for 'the best parade in the city', 'the best firework', and 'the best bonfire

⁶² In the same year, festivals at Antwerp and Brussels were held for the chambers of Brabant and Flanders respectively: see van Elslander, *Het refrein*, p. 216.

⁶³ On the significance of this name, and its relevance to the Virgin Mary, see Robert A. Koch, 'Flower Symbolism in the Portinari Altar', *Art Bulletin*, 46 (1964), 70–77, especially p. 74. The name was a popular one among the *rederijkers*, adopted by at least four other chambers: see P. J. Meertens, *Letterkundig leven in Zeeland in de zestiende en de eerste helft der zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1943), pp. 71–130.

⁶⁴ *Retoricaal Memoriaal: Bronnen Voor de Geschiedenis Van de Hollandse rederijkerskamers van de middeleeuwen tot het begin van de achttiende eeuw*, ed by F. C. van Boheemen and Th. C. J. van der Heijden (Delft: Eburon, 1999), p. 752.

⁶⁵ Herman Brinkman, *Dichten Uit Liefde: Literatuur in Leiden aan het Einde van de Middeleeuwen* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), p. 82.

⁶⁶ On Henrietta Maria's journey to Holland, see Keith L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), p. 381.

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in front of a tavern'.⁶⁷ The chambers also competed to see which could stage the 'best formal presentation' of their *blazoen*, the emblem by which the chamber was known.⁶⁸ A prize was even awarded to the chamber which had travelled furthest: in this case the 'victor' was *De Eglentier* (The Sweet Briar) of Amsterdam, which had covered a distance of some 55 kilometres. However, since this prize consisted of a monetary sum rather than the usual drinking vessel, it may have been intended as a sort of travel subsidy, rather than an honour in the strictest sense.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, despite these other rituals and competitions, the refrains seem to have been the main focus of the event. Participating chambers were required to compose three refrains each, and separate prizes were awarded to the best 'refrain of wisdom', 'refrain of love', and 'refrain of foolery'. By contrast, the chambers were asked to perform only one play apiece. The *feest*'s single dramatic contest focussed on *spelen van zinne* or 'morality plays'. No mention is made of other types of play being performed, such as the *esbattement* or 'farce', despite the popularity of this genre among the *rederijkers*.⁷⁰

A further point of interest is the *Acoleyen*'s express desire to avoid any religious irregularity or controversy during the event. Their invitation *caerte* stresses that participants must 'shun all heresy and mockery, in all of their forms', especially in the refrains.⁷¹ This is not mere over-sensitivity on the part of *De Blauwe Acoleyen*, since there were good grounds for taking these measures. In its recent past the *Acoleyen* had attracted the suspicion of the authorities, and even received direct censure. Following a 1529 decree by the court of Holland, which forbade treating religious topics in *spelen* and *dichten*, the chambers' work was routinely submitted for official inspection. This led to an edict of 1545, which strongly condemned 'all the rhetoricians of Rotterdam' for their opinions, and even named a few particular individuals.⁷² It would seem that the *Acoleyen* was keen to avoid further reprimands

⁶⁷ *Spelen van Sinne vol schoone allegatien*, ed. by Hollaar, p. 14.

⁶⁸ See Gerardus J. Steenbergen, *Het landjuweel van de rederijkers* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1951), p. 222.

⁶⁹ *Retoricaal Memoriaal*, ed. by van Boheemen and van der Heijden, p. 48.

⁷⁰ See *Vier excellente cluchten*, ed. by J. J. Mak, *Klassieke Galerij*, 46 (Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1950); Herman Pleij, *De eeuw van de zotheid: over de nar als maatschappelijk houvast in de vroegmoderne tijd* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2007).

⁷¹ 'Schout heresie, schimp, met alder maniere': quoted in K. ter Laan, *Letterkundig woordenboek voor Noord en Zuid* (The Hague: G. B. van Goor Zonen's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1952), p. 291.

⁷² 'Alle rethoresynen tot Rotterdam': *Retoricaal Memoriaal*, ed. by van Boheemen and van der Heijden, p. 753.

in the 1561 festival: hence it instructed its guests not to use the occasion 'to provide an outlet for criticism of orthodox religion'.⁷³

Regarding the three winning refrains themselves, it is difficult to establish exactly why each took first prize in its particular category. Silvius's volume gives no indication of the criteria used in judging the pieces and does not single out any of their features as especially praiseworthy. Moreover, it is impossible as a modern reader to detect any great difference in quality between, say, the winning *refereyn int vroe* by the Leiden chamber *De Witte Ackoleyn* (The White Columbine) and the second-place refrain by the *Wyngaertrancken* of Haarlem. Nonetheless, a few clues are provided by the winning *spelen van zinne*. In this case the first prize was presented to the Schiedam chamber *De Roo Roosen* (The Red Rose). When compared to the plays staged by the other chambers, the Schiedam piece does stand apart in one key respect: it is notable for the ingenuity with which it responds to the prescribed *vraag*. The plays were composed in answer to the question 'What brings most comfort to those who seem lost?'.⁷⁴ Most contributors used this to produce a meditation on salvation: for example, the Rijnsburgh entry stresses the importance of adhering to traditional doctrine, and features such figures as De Stemme des Vaders (The Voice of the Fathers) and Gods Ordinatie (God's Commands).⁷⁵ The Schiedam play, on the other hand, takes its lead from Erasmus's *Adagium Sileni Alcibiadis* (1515). Noting the *vraag*'s emphasis on 'seeming' rather than being, its narrative explores the difference between inner and outer reality.⁷⁶ Since the play is unique in its treatment of the theme, this inventiveness may have earned it first place: no doubt its Erasmian allusion also found favour, considering Rotterdam's close links with the scholar. Owing to this, it seems at least possible that the winning refrains were singled out for their novel engagement with the *vraag*. In every other respect they seem unexceptional, following the conventions of the refrain closely and without particular innovation.

The following translation of the three refereins — which is, to our knowledge, the first in English — is based on the 2006 edition of Henk Hollaar. The original Dutch text has been reproduced by kind permission of the editor. Our translation

⁷³ Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, p. 94.

⁷⁴ 'Wie den meesten troost oyt quam te baten?': Henk Hollaar, *De Rotterdamse spelen van 1561: Een Hollandse toneelcompetitie met politieke lading* (Delft: Eburon, 2006), pp. 49–50.

⁷⁵ See W. M. H. Hummelen, *Repertorium van het Rederijkersdrama, 1500–ca.1620* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968), under entries 3D 1–9.

⁷⁶ See Bart Ramakers, 'Tonen en betogen: De dramaturgie van de Rotterdamse Spelen van 1561', *Spiegel der Letteren*, 43 (2001), 176–204.

has endeavoured to remain as faithful as possible to the literal meaning of the original poems. Owing to this, some formal aspects of the texts may not be clear from our rendering. For example, a central feature in each of the texts is its elaborate and highly repetitive rhyme scheme, which is, as mentioned above, a hallmark of *rederijker* verse. Likewise, the refrains do sometimes introduce lines which break with their regular metre, to call attention to a particular detail or underscore a key idea. Since our priority has been to re-create the sense of these pieces as closely and readably as we can, it has not been possible to preserve these features. Hopefully the inclusion of the original Dutch text will enable the reader to identify these characteristics for themselves.

Refereyn van Leyden

(*De Rotterdamse spelen*, pp. 293–94)

- Godt heeft de aerde in den beginne ghescheppen
 en maeckte den mensch na sijn welbehaghen,
 met alle ghedierde dat daer is inne begrepen,
 die groene cruiden — hoort mijn ghewaghen.
- 5 Lichten veur den nacht ende oock veur de daghen.
 Alle ghedierde ghaf Hij den menschen in sijn ghewelt
 om daerover te heerschappijen. Sonder versaghen
 heeft Hij den mensch in den paradijs ghestelt
 en ghaf hem een ghebodt, soo die Schriftuer vermeldt:
- 10 van alle vruchten des hoofts te eten
 behalven van den boom des levens — 't wort u vertelt —:
 den boom der kennissen 'goet en quaet' gheheten.
 Maar de mensch heeft 's Heeren ghebodt haest vergeten,
 deur 's vijandts ingheven die de waerheijt is teghen,
- 15 en heeft deur 's vleijchs lust in den appel ghebeten,
 waerdeur hij worde uutten paradijs ghesmeten.
 's Vleijchs lust meest gheacht is en 't loon schadelijcxst vercreghen.
- 's Vleijchs lust, dat is noch voort ghebleken
 doen die kinderen der werelt begonnen te vermeren,
- 20 waerdeur sij worden van Godt versteken,
 omdat sij hittich ghinghen boeleren
 met 's menschen dochteren, na haer selfs begheren.
 Daerom 't Godt beroude dat Hij se oijt had ghemaectt,
 en liet over haer comen drucx verseren:
- 25 deur 't waters turbacie hebben zij de doot ghesmaectt.
 Sodoma is vergaen — Gods straf heeft haer gheraectt —

deur 's vleijchs lust en onnomelijcke oncuysheijt.
 's Vleijch lust heeft Israël seer na ghehaeckt
 in de woestenije, soo die Schriftuer verbreyt,
 30 waerom over haer vergramde 's Heeren majesteijt,
 en straffe se seer tot haerder onseghen.
 Deur haer eijghen lust waren sij verleijt.
 Dus verhael ick noch, soo ick hebbe gheseijt:
 's vleijchs lust meest gheacht is en 't loon schadelijcxst vercreghen.

35 Dese lust is noch in de werelt ghebleven
 soo men daghelijcx wel mach sien veur oghen.
 Meest elck heeft hem tot boosheijt gegeven
 in alderleij quaet dat men versieren soude moghen:
 in overspel, in oncuyscheijt, 't is ongheloghen.
 40 Haet ende nijdt en blijft oock niet absent.
 Hoverdije, ghiericheijt, wilt hierna poghen,
 en quade begheerte, 'twelck afgoderije is verblent.
 Toornicheijt, vijantschap is nu wel bekend,
 dronckeschap en overtallighe brasserijen,
 45 tweedracht, eijghenwijsheijt, seckten, broeders jent:
 'twelck al uut 's vleijchs lust comt sonder vermijen.
 En seer weijnich siet me' 'rteghen strijen
 die 't vleijch wederstaet en met berou is beweghen,
 omdat hierna volcht 't eeuwich vermaledijen.
 50 Dit doet mij segghen tot deser tijen:
 's vleijchs lust meest gheacht is en 't loon schadelijcxst vercreghen.

PRINCE 't Loon is schadelijcxst en 't eeuwich bederven.
 De Schriftuer ghetuijcht — smaeckt wel den keest —:
 die na 's vleij lust leeft, dat die moet sterven
 55 omdat het vleijch ghelust contrarie den gheest,
 en den gheest contrarie 't vleij onbevrees.
 Want die vleijchelijck sijn moghen Godt behaghen niet
 omdat zij niet ghehoorsaem en sijn 't minst noch t' meest
 van Gods wetten en cueren — vaet mijn bediet —,
 60 en die Gods gheest niet en heeft, comt in 't verdriet.
 Die en hoort Godt niet toe. Dit is warachtich.
 Maer wandelt ghij in den gheest, naer Paulus onthiet,
 soo en suldi 's vleij lusten niet sijn ghedachtich
 noch 't loon daervan niet sijnde verwachtich.
 65 Want het vleijch altijt tot sonde is gheneghen
 en de sonde die baert die doot onsachtich.
 Dus concludeer ick, broeders eendrachtich:
 's vleijchs lust meest gheacht is en 't loon schadelijcxst vercreghen.

Refrein of Wisdom

Submitted by the chamber *De Witte Ackoleyen* (The White Columbine) of Leiden, the refrain was composed in answer to the question, 'What is most valued, but brings most ruin?' (*Wat meest gheacht, en schadelijcst vercreghen is*).

- God in the beginning gave shape to the earth,
And then made man as it best pleased Him,
With all the creatures there are to be known,
And the green plants — listen to my speech.
5 Lights for the night and also for the day.
All creatures He gave to man in His scheme
To have lordship over. Without pause
He then installed man in paradise
And gave him a command, as Scripture reports:
10 From all these fruits you are free to eat
Except the tree of life — that is denied to you —
The tree of knowledge called 'good and evil'.
But man soon forgot all the Lord commanded,
At the advice of the foe who is opposed to truth,
15 And for lust of the flesh he bit the apple,
For which he was cast out of paradise.
Lust of the flesh is most valued, but the reward gained is ruinous.

- The lust of the flesh, that can be seen everywhere
Brought more and more children into the world,
20 And they the word of God forsook,
For they were engaged in fervid liaisons
With daughters of men, spawning more like themselves.
Then God regretted he had made them,
And let harsh pains overcome them:
25 Turbulent waters made them taste death.
Sodom was destroyed — God's punishment struck it —
For lust of the flesh and unbridled lewdness.
The lust of the flesh had great sway over Israel
In the wilderness, as the Scripture states,
30 Hence the Lordly majesty grew enraged,
And he punished them with onerous curses.
By their own lust were they seduced.
Thus what I said before, I still now maintain:
Lust of the flesh is most valued, but the reward gained is ruinous.
35 This lust now in the world still remains,
As you can see with your own two eyes.
More than any other thing it stirs up fury

- And all the other evils that men can perform:
 In adultery, in immodesty, this is undeniable,
 40 In hate and in jealousy it is always present.
 Hubris, avarice, as you hear it from me,
 And filthy desire, which leads to idolatry.
 Wrath, conflict, as we well know,
 Drunkenness and useless dissipation,
 45 Rivalry, stubbornness, schism, betraying a brother:
 All come out of the lust of the flesh with no hesitation.
 And very rarely do I see people resist
 Withstanding the flesh and remaining penitent,
 Eternal weeping follows after this lust.
 50 This do I say of the present age:
 Lust of the flesh is most valued, but the reward gained is ruinous.

- PRINCE The reward is ruinous as you rot forever.
 The Scripture states — be sure to remember:
 He that lives in lust of the flesh, he must die,
 55 For the lustful flesh is contrary to the spirit,
 And the fearless spirit is contrary to the flesh.
 They that are fleshly cannot please the Lord
 For they do not obey and do not follow in the least
 God's orders and edicts — hear my testimony —
 60 He that lacks God's spirit will come to grief.
 He does not belong with God. This is true.
 When you walk in the spirit, as Paul proved,
 Then you will not have the flesh's lust in mind
 And no reward will you deserve in the future.
 65 Since the flesh will always veer towards sin,
 And sin gives birth to arduous death.
 Thus I conclude, assembled brothers:
 Lust of the flesh is most valued, but the reward gained is ruinous.

Refereyn van Amstelredam

(*De Rotterdamse spelen*, pp. 300–01)

- Menich amoreus herte schept troost en vreucht
 als 't wesen mach in zijns liefs presentie,
 daerdeur sijnde van binnen in den gheest verheucht,
 maeckende van gheen swaricheijt mentie.
 5 In troostlijcke woordkens vol eloquentie
 schept menich amoreus hert troost, t' zijne verblijen,
 luyjsterende neerstich met diligentie

- na haer woordekens die alle druck afsnijen.
 Een vriendelijck ghesicht tot diversche tijen
 10 vervreucht menich amoreus herte triumphant.
 Nochtans al desen — moet ick belijen —
 gheven gheen volmaeckten troost, na mijn verstant.
 Maer een amoreus hert schept den meesten troost playsant
 (soo 't ghebleken is aen menich man ende vrouwe)
 15 in 't ghebruijck zijns liefs, hem ghejont op trouwe.

- Dit bleeck aen Jacob, die een amoreus hert droech
 tot Rachel, die men hem seer sach beminnen.
 Schoone woorden, 't ghesicht, bijwesen: 't was niet genoegh,
 't ghaf gheen volmaeckten troost zijn amoreuse sinnen.
 20 Veerthien jaer diende hij om te ghewinnen
 desen troost, en heeft groot verdriet gheleden:
 's nachts bitter coude, 's daechs sware hitte van binnen.
 Al werdt hem Lea ghegheven, soet van seden,
 noch was sijn herte in hem niet tevreden
 25 veurdatt hij 't ghebruijck vercreech van sijn lief excellent,
 hem op trouwe ghejont tot allen steden.
 Doen quam hem eerst volmaeckten troost ontrent.
 Hieruut blijkt dat een amoreus herte verblent
 zijnen meesten troost schept, na dat ick ontvouwe,
 30 in 't ghebruijck zijns liefs, hem ghejont op trouwe.

- Alle vreucht die op aerden veur werdt ghenomen
 van amoreusen, 't zij dansen, spelen oft singhen,
 't is al om tot dit ghebruijck te comen,
 dit werdt ghe-estimeert boven alle dinghen.
 35 Zij haecken wel met seer vierich verlinghen
 na een vriendelijck ghesicht van 's liefs bruijn oghen,
 maer 't en can gheenen perfecten troost bijbringhen:
 zij sorghen al om te werden bedroghen.
 's Liefs presentie heeft oock dicwils deurvloghen
 40 menich amoreus herte, waerin hij alleen
 grooten troost schiep, maer wert hem noch onttoghen
 van een ander, dies hij bleef in swaer gheween.
 Dus schept een amoreus herte in 't ghemeen
 zijn meesten troost (soet als een hemelschen douwe)
 45 in 't ghebruijck zijns liefs, hem ghejont op trouwe.

- PRINCE Al werdt ghejont menich amoreus herte
 't ghebruijck zijns liefs, als 't niet en gheschiet ter eren,
 't en sal niet verdrijven sijn inwendighe smerte,
 maer noch blijft sijnen gheest altijt in 't verseren,
 50 sorghende dat sij sulcx mee sal consenteren

- een ander. Dus schept hij daerin den meesten troost niet.
 Maer siele en lichaem sal verjubileren
 als 't ghebruijck in deuchden en in eeren gheschiet.
 't Ander baerdt noch al een heijmelijck verdriet,
 55 als jalosije somtijts aen comt ghestreken.
 Maer een amoreus herte, alsoo men siet,
 dat deur Cupido's strael vierich is ontsteken,
 schept sijn meesten troost ('t is dickwils ghebleken)
 aen dien, die daerdeur ghecomen zijn uut rouwe
 60 in 't ghebruijck zijns liefs, hem ghejont op trouwe.

Refrein of Love

Submitted by the chamber *De Eglentier* (The Sweet Briar) of Amsterdam, the refrain was composed in answer to the question, 'Where does an amorous heart find the most comfort?' (*Waer een amoreus hert den meesten troost in schept*).

- Many an amorous heart finds comfort and joy
 When it occurs that its love is present,
 Because of that delight within the mind
 No mention can be made of heaviness.
 5 In comforting words full of eloquence,
 Many an amorous heart finds comfort, cheering itself,
 Listening carefully with diligence
 To the words that cut away all dread.
 An affectionate glance every time
 10 Will cheer an amorous heart triumphant.
 Nonetheless all these things — I must admit —
 Do not give complete comfort, to my knowledge.
 But an amorous heart finds the most pleasant comfort
 (As is upheld by many men and women)
 15 In enjoying its love, when it is sworn to be faithful.
 This happened to Jacob, he bore an amorous heart
 For Rachel, who loved him a great deal.
 Sweet words, glances, her company: that was not enough,
 It did not bring complete comfort to his amorous senses.
 20 For fourteen years he strove to win
 This comfort, and was led to great sorrow:
 By night bitter cold, by day cruel heat from within.
 Even when he was given Lea, sweet of habits,
 Still his heart within him was not satisfied
 25 Until he could freely enjoy his exquisite love,
 Which was sworn to be faithful in every town.

Then for the first time he knew complete comfort.
It is clear that an amorous blinded heart
Finds its greatest comfort, as I have told you,
30 In enjoying its love, when it is sworn to be faithful.

All the joy that may on earth be known
By the amorous, whether they dance, play, or sing,
It is all done to reach this enjoyment,
Which is esteemed above all other things.
35 They strongly wish for and with fiery pain desire
An affectionate glance from their love's brown eyes,
But even this will not bring complete comfort:
They dread that they will be deceived.
His love's presence has also passed though
40 Many amorous hearts, in it he alone
Took great comfort, but he is robbed
By another, and so left to weep heavily.
Thus in general an amorous heart finds
Its greatest comfort (sweet as heavenly dew)
45 In enjoying its love, when it is sworn to be faithful.

PRINCE Although many an amorous heart is delighted
By enjoyment of its love, if it is not done with honour,
It shall not drive away his inward pain,
But in his mind there will always be stirring,
50 He thinks about that which he cannot defeat:
Another. He will not find greatest comfort there.
But soul and body will celebrate
When enjoyment is had in virtue and honour.
The other carries always a secret sorrow,
55 As jealousy certainly strikes at the heart.
But an amorous heart, as can be seen,
That Cupid's fiery dart has pierced,
Finds its greatest comfort (it is frequently proven)
To those who are led out of sorrow by this,
60 In enjoying its love, when it is sworn to be faithful.

Refereyn van Leyden

(*De Rotterdamse spelen*, pp. 319–20)

Haest u, ghij sotten, wilt u niet verbloeden.
Maeckt u al ghereet, 't is nu van nooden.
Ghij moet nu verschijnen om te verwachten u lot.
Tot Rotterdam daer zijt ontbooden.

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schept).

- 5 Ghij en dorft niet sorghen; men sal der u niet dooden,
maer elck moet daer verthoonen sijn gheesten in 't sot.
Vergheet niet u vespercleet, brengt mede u marot,
want sonder datselve men soud 'er u niet kennen.
Comt op u stadichste, obediert dit ghebot
10 en helpt daer tesamen Carebus' waghen mennem.
Tirebus' paerden sullen veur den waghen rennen
om die te helpen schutten. Wilt niet achterblijven.
Comt, sotten, helpt haestelijck sotheijt bedrijven.

- Om tot Rotterdam te comen wilt u rassen,
15 want men sal daer nu op veel sotten passen
die daer in seshien jaren niet en hebben gheweest.
Beij *met minnen versaemt* suldij lekker brassen.
Daer suldij die blaeuwe Acoleye sien wassen
die u sullen verheughen minst ende meest.
20 Comt daer op u sotste en vermeert haer feest.
Om sotheijt te bedrijven treck elck sijn lijne.
Verdrijft daerdeur den swaermoedighen gheest.
Daer thoone elck sot sottelijck 't sijne.
Ghij sijt daerom ontboden, gheseijt ten fijne.
25 Dus thoont elck sotheijt om in vreucht te beclijven.
Comt, sotten, helpt sottelijck sotheijt bedrijven.

- Tot Rotterdam comende wilt sotheijt hanteeren,
want zij daer van u sotten sotheijt begheeren
bedreven te hebben in 't openbaer.
30 Dus wilt u daer sottelijck met sotheijt verweeren
ende deur u sotheijt alle vreucht vermeeren,
verdrijvende duer dien melancolije swaer.
Om u sotheijt te baren ontbieden zij u daer.
Dus en wilt niet dan sottelijck sotheijt beghinnen
35 daer ghij alleen sijt of bij malcander tegaer,
dat men elcx u sotheijt mach bekinnen.
Daerdeur suldij alle druck doen drijven,
daer ghij ontboden sijt tot vreuchts verstijven.
Comt, sotten, helpt sottelijck sotheijt bedrijven.

- PRINCE 40 Ghij princelijcke sotten, wilt u niet verschoonen,
maer wilt u elck sottelijck als sotten verthonen,
sulcx een ijghelijck gheest daertoe is ghestelt.
Elck voech hem als die sotste van Malburchs sonen
hier in dese feeste. Men sal elck lonen
45 met die prijzen die veur u sotten sijn opghestelt.
Dus om prijs te winnen comt elck sottelijck in 't velt.
Reijnst, onbeveijnst, thoont u sotheijt sulcks dat betaemt.
Elck in haer feeste, sulxs de caerte vermelt

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- u ghesonden bij ons broeders *met minnen versaemt*.
 50 Om sotheijt van u te sien, hoe ghij sijt ghenaemt,
 zij rhetorijckelijck aen u allen schrijven:
 Comt, sotten, helpt sottelijck sotheijt bedrijven.

Refrein of Foolery

Also entered by *De Witte Ackoleyen*. The *caerte* did not issue a formal question for the *refereyn int zotte*, only instructing 'everyone to make the best possible lines' (*Int sot elck na den besten Reghele stelt*).

- Make haste, you fools, you must not shirk.
 Make yourselves ready, for you are now needed.
 You must now come here to accept your lot.
 To Rotterdam you have been summoned.
 5 But you need not worry; the men there won't kill you,
 For everyone there must in his thoughts show folly.
 Do not forget your costume, bring your *marot*,⁷⁷
 For without those things men will not know you.
 Come all you faithful, obey this command
 10 And help the others to man Carebus's wagon.
 Tirebus's horses shall before that wagon run⁷⁸
 To help it on its way. You must not despair.
 Come, fools, and hastily help folly thrive.⁷⁹
 When to Rotterdam you come you must rush,
 15 Since the men there shall host many fools
 Who have not been there for over sixteen years.⁸⁰
 At *gathered with love* you will dine well.⁸¹

⁷⁷ The 'bauble' or carved wooden stick traditionally carried by fools.

⁷⁸ For Carebus and Tiribus, see note 39 above.

⁷⁹ Hollaar suggests that 'hastily' (*haestelijck*) should in fact read 'foolishly' (*sottelijck*), as in the later *stockregelen*. It is certainly unusual to vary the *stock* in a refrain, although not completely without precedent: see for instance de Roovere's 'Daer lief daer ooghe | daer handt daer seer' (Where the lover there an eye, where a hand there the pain), in *De gedichten*, p. 395.

⁸⁰ Rotterdam had indeed last hosted a *rederijkerfeest* in 1545: see *Retoricaal Memoriaal*, ed. by van Boheemen and van der Heijden, p. 753.

⁸¹ The motto of the *Blauwe Acoleyen*, here used to designate the chamber hall itself. On the significance of this and similar mottoes, see Nelleke Moser, *De strijd voor rhetorica: poëtica en positie van rederijkers in Vlaanderen, Brabant, Zeeland en Holland tussen 1450 en 1620* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001), pp. 78–85.

- There you will see the Blue Columbine grow
 From the least to the most they will make you cheer.
 20 Go there most foolishly and make the feast spread.
 To make folly thrive all must do their best.
 Drive away the heavy moods of the spirit.
 In his own way each fool shows foolishness.
 They summoned you for this, to speak plainly.
 25 Thus all must show folly so joy may continue.
 Come, fools, and foolishly help folly thrive.

- Once you arrive at Rotterdam use your folly,
 There they demand foolishness from you fools
 That must be carried out in the open air.
 30 Thus go there and foolishly bring forth folly
 And let your foolery spread joy to all,
 Banishing through you heavy melancholy.
 To bring forth folly they have summoned you.
 Thus you must do nothing but start foolish folly
 35 Whether you are alone or grouped all together,
 So that men may your foolishness witness.
 Therefore you should work to drive out anguish,
 You are summoned there to preserve joyfulness.
 Come, fools, and foolishly help folly thrive.

- PRINCE 40 You princely fools, you must not retreat,
 But must be shown to be as foolish as fools,
 Just as each of you is accustomed to be.
 Each must be foolish as a son of Wrongton⁸²
 Here in this feast. Each man will be rewarded
 45 With prizes which are set aside for you fools.
 To win a prize the foolish must enter the field.
 Come forth, unafraid, show your usual folly.
 All shall feast here, as the charter states
 Sent to you by our brothers, *gathered with love*.
 50 To show foolishness, and show your name,
 In a rhetorical style they wrote to you all:
 Come, fools, and foolishly help folly thrive.

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⁸² *Malburchs zonen* seems to have been a proverbial expression, perhaps suggested by Malbork in modern-day Poland. See Kalff, *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*, III (1907), 174–75.

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