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New Lyrics for Obrecht's *Liedekens*

■
LOUIS PETER GRIJP

Most of Obrecht's *liedekens*—polyphonic chansons in Dutch (or rather Flemish)—have been handed down without full text. In most cases only the first line is given. This is so, for example, in sources probably produced outside the Low Countries, such as the Segovia Manuscript.¹ Remarkably enough, only a few of these text incipits can be found in textual sources elsewhere.

The Repertory of Dutch Songs Until 1600

I had hoped that some of the missing texts might come to light in the *Repertory of Dutch Songs Until 1600*, published in 2001.² The *Repertory* was compiled over eight years by a Dutch-Flemish team working at the Meertens Institute in Amsterdam and the University of Antwerp, and lists all known texts and melodies of Dutch and Flemish monophonic songs. It contains more than 7,600 different texts (with many textual variants) and more than 1,100 different melodies. But with respect to Obrecht's *liedekens*, we can only add two tiny details to the knowledge already brought together by Leon Kessels and Eric Jas in volume 17 of the New Obrecht Edition.³

The first detail is a new text source for *Meiskin es u cutkin ru* ('Girl, is your cunt raw?'), whose lyrics were previously known only in a very garbled and barely comprehensible version from an early-sixteenth-century Florentine chansonnier.⁴ The song now turns out to have been included in the table-play *Drie Eenlingen* (*Three Solitaries*), about a century after Obrecht composed or arranged it. The first four lines are printed in a 1597 edition.⁵ The newly found text confirms most of the New Obrecht Edition's reconstruction of the corrupt text:

¹ Segovia, Archivo Capitular de la Catedral Ms. s.s. [SegC s.s.]. For a discussion of theories concerning the provenance of this manuscript, see Jan Willem Bonda, *De meerstemmige Nederlandse liederen van de vijftiende en zestiende eeuw* (Hilversum, 1996), 50-51.

² Martine de Bruin et al., *Repertorium van het Nederlandse lied tot 1600 / Repertory of Dutch Songs Until 1600*, 2 vols. and CD-ROM (Ghent-Amsterdam, 2001). All information in this *Repertory* has been integrated into the Dutch Song Database (Nederlandse Liederenbank), hosted by the Meertens Institute <<http://www.liederenbank.nl>>. In 2010 this database contained metadata for over 140,000 Dutch songs, from the first medieval sources up to field recordings from the twentieth century. The database also offers an ever-increasing number of scans, full texts, and melodies.

³ Jacob Obrecht, *Secular Works and Textless Compositions*, ed. Leon Kessels and Eric Jas, New Obrecht Edition 17 (Utrecht, 1997).

⁴ Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, Ms. Magliabechi XIX. 121 [FlorBN Magl. 121] (c. 1500-10), fol. 1r. See also Bonnie J. Blackburn, 'Two "Carnival Songs" Unmasked: A Commentary on MS Florence Magl. XIX 121', in *Musica Disciplina* 35 (1981), 121-78.

⁵ De Bruin et al., *Repertorium*, T3062, found in *Drie eenlingen Seer vermaeckelijck over tafel in bruyloften ende vrolijcke maeltijden te spelen* (Delft, 1597), fol. A7v.

Corrupt text in FlorBN
Magl. 121

Reconstruction in NOE 17,
No. 10

Drie eenlingen (1597)

Meschine su chut chiru
uatebtighi mete done
Lazemitas tendat bideghu
Obien tot morchent moen
Jeso luaer
Jeso daschar
it asternaer
obie tot morghent moen

Meiskin es u cutkin ru?
Wat hebdi'er mee te doene?
Laetet mi tasten dat bid ic u.
O bid' tot morgen tnoene.
Jeso ruaer,
Jeso daschaer
Ist afternaer.
O bid' tot morghen tnoene.

Hol meysken, is dijn Cuersken ru?
Wat hebdi'jer me te doene?
Laetse my tasten dat bid ick u.
Onbeyt vry tot morghen noene.

Girl, is your cunt raw?
That's my own business.
Let me feel it, I beg you.
Oh, beg until tomorrow at noon.
The more (?) (raw?),
The more (?) (...?)
It is afterwards.
Oh, beg until tomorrow at noon.

Hey girl, is your bodice raw?
That's my own business.
Let me feel it, I beg you.
Wait until tomorrow at noon.

The most obvious difference in the new text is 'cuersken' ('bodice' or 'corset') instead of the obscene 'cutkin' ('little cunt'). 'Cuersken' can be interpreted as a metaphor for 'cutkin', and sounds almost the same. 'Cutkin' would simply have been unacceptable in a printed book, and 'cuersken' supplies an ambiguous alternative, fitting and funny. Less important is 'Onbeyt' ('wait', from *ontbeiden* or *ontbiden*), which makes more sense than the reconstructed 'O bid' ('O beg'). Unfortunately, the singer in the play stops after four lines, exactly where the real interpretation problems begin.

The second addition enabled by the *Repertory* concerns Obrecht's three-voice *Moet my lacen u vriendelic schijn* ('Must, alas, the lovely look in your eyes').⁶ The cantus firmus of this piece has been identified with the melody of *Souterliedeken* 143, *Doer liefde ben ick ter doot ghewont* ('Love wounded me to death'; printed in 1540).⁷ The characteristic stanza form of *Moet my lacen* corresponds with that of the *Souterliedeken* text (incipit: *Mijn Heere mijn God ghebenedijt*, 'My Lord, my blessed God'). With this in mind the *Souterliedeken* melody can be recognized as a remote variant of Obrecht's cantus firmus. The melody continued to be used until the end of the sixteenth century for various scriptural song texts such as *Rijst uut den slaep, nu niet en vaect* ('Wake up, don't sleep now').⁸

⁶ New Obrecht Edition 17, 11.

⁷ De Bruin et al, *Repertorium*, M1005. Facsimile in Jan van Biezen and Marie Veldhuyzen (eds.), *Souterliedekens 1540* (s.l., 1984), Psalmus 143. The melody can also be found on <<http://www.liederenbank.nl>>.

⁸ The characteristic stanza form of *Moet my lacen* corresponds with that of the *Souterliedeken* text (incipit: *Mijn Heere mijn God ghebenedijt*) in the second voice of Obrecht's setting. The text of Obrecht's piece, too, was still known, in the middle of the sixteenth century, as it appeared in the so-called Antwerp Songbook of 1544. See New Obrecht Edition 17, xl and Dieuwke van der Poel, Dirk Geirnaert, Hermina Joldersma, Johan Oosterman, and Louis Peter Grijp (eds.), *Het Antwerps liedboek*, 2 vols. (Tiel, 2004), No. 110.

New Lyrics for Obrecht's *Liedekens*

Even the exhaustive *Repertory of Dutch Songs Until 1600*, then, did not reveal new original texts for Obrecht's *liedekens*. They really seem to have been lost. One might even wonder if his *liedekens* were meant to be sung at all. However, as a working hypothesis I assumed that most of them were. Consequently, in 2005, the quincentenary of Obrecht's death, I attempted to reconstruct the rhyme schemes and accent patterns of the texts Obrecht must have used, and I wrote new lyrics fitting these strophic forms in modern Dutch. I then offered my artless dummy texts to the well-known Dutch poet Gerrit Komrij, who has always shown a special interest in the poetry of the *rederijkers*,⁹ and asked him to write new poems in exactly the same form. Obrecht's music, with Komrij's words, were then performed and recorded by Camerata Trajectina.¹⁰ Komrij's poems turned out not only to fit Obrecht's music perfectly with respect to prosody, but also matched the atmosphere of the music surprisingly well.

In what follows I offer a scholarly evaluation of some of these practical efforts, addressing such questions as: do Obrecht's notes contain evidence that the texts were really sung, or do they point towards instrumental performance? To what extent can a rhyme scheme be deduced from a tenor melody, or from a polyphonic fabric? To what extent can the accent pattern of the verses be known? Where in this project does scholarly knowledge end and artistic imagination start?

Reconstructing the Text Form of *Ic draghe de mutse clutse*

As a test case, we will consider Obrecht's *Ic draghe de mutse clutse* ('I'm wearing my cap askew').¹¹ This piece is known only from the Segovia Manuscript, where the text is limited to the first line, 'Ic draghe de mutse clutse', in all four voices. This first line perfectly fits the soprano and the tenor, and all four voices if we assume text repetition in the alto and bass (Example 1). For the next line I looked at the tenor (b. 5), which, as usual, is the most syllabic and song-like part, and thus the most appropriate voice for determining the prosodic structure of Obrecht's original text. Thanks to the two-fold repetition of the note g there is no doubt about the number of syllables: five, of which two have an accent. The rhythm is U-UU-. In general the number of accents is much more stable than the number of syllables in Dutch songs of this period; the lyrics were written in accentual verses. Therefore, when formally comparing song texts for identification purposes, we should count accents, not syllables.¹² In the special case of reconstructing the form of a lost polyphonic *liedeken* text, however, unaccented syllables must also be considered in order to come as close as possible to Obrecht's original.

⁹ The *rederijkers* were amateur poets who worked together in Chambers of Rhetoric. One or more such chambers were active in most towns in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Flanders, Brabant, Holland, and Zeeland.

¹⁰ Jacob Obrecht. *De wereldlijke werken / The secular works. Liedteksten / Lyrics Gerrit Komrij*, Camerata Trajectina, La Caccia, and Brisk (CD, Globe, GLO 6059, 2005). See <<http://www.camerata-trajectina.nl>>. Performances in the Utrecht Early Music Festival and Laus Polyphoniae, Antwerp, both in August 2005, and later elsewhere.

¹¹ New Obrecht Edition 17, 3.

¹² On this issue see Part 3 of Louis P. Grijp, *Het Nederlandse lied in de Gouden Eeuw. Het mechanisme van de contrafactuur* (Amsterdam, 1991), 233-316.

Example 1. Obrecht, *Ic draghe de mutse clutse*, bb. 1-14, with Louis Grijp's dummy text

The next step is to find words that fit the rhythmic pattern $\cup\text{---}\cup\text{---}$ determined from the tenor line. These words could be a description of the 'mutse' ('cap'): let us say, 'Wat scheefjes en schuin' ('A bit oblique and lopsided'). Thus begins my dummy text.

From the second beat of b. 6 the tenor exactly repeats the phrase beginning in b. 5. This repetition presents two possibilities: either repeat the text, or start a new line. If we choose the latter, then the new verse should rhyme with 'schuin'. This follows from the first of two 'rhyming rules' that I formulated for the monophonic song repertoire of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including *rederijker* songs: if a musical phrase is repeated immediately, then the words should rhyme.¹³ I chose to make a new verse: 'Bekroont hij mijn kruin' ('It crowns my pate'). I also tested these words with the other voices—an exercise that should constantly be carried out—and found that they fitted to them as well.

The next phrase (tenor, b. 8) has four notes and thus four syllables, assuming that the syllabic text underlay of the preceding lines is continued. The question arises here of whether the metrical pattern is iambic ($\cup\text{---}\cup\text{---}$) in accordance with the tenor and soprano, or trochaic ($\text{---}\cup\text{---}\cup\text{---}$) in accordance with the alto and bass.¹⁴ Since the alto and bass imitate the soprano and tenor at a semibreve's distance, the iambic interpretation seems more likely. Another argument in favour of this interpretation is that all other verses in this part of the song are iambic. In my dummy text, I thus wrote 'Half grijs, half bruin' ('Half grey, half brown'), using the same rhyme-sound as the preceding phrases. A new rhyme-sound would have been possible, theoretically, but then it would probably stand alone, as we will see.

The next phrase (from b. 9 on) is the end of the first musical section; hence we do not expect a new rhyme sound there. But which of the rhymes used so far should we choose, '-utse' or '-uin'? One might think that the 'clutse'-sound of the first verse is still awaiting an answer, but that is not true: it has already been preceded by 'mutse'. Such a *binnenrijm* or inner rhyme (a rhyme within one verse) may be self-sufficient, and thus does not need to be answered. The use of such inner rhyme can be investigated in the Meertens Institute's on-line *Dutch Song Database*.¹⁵ From the evidence in that database, it appears that in half of the songs starting with a verse of three accents with a feminine inner rhyme, as in *Ic draghe de mutse clutse*, the rhyme does not come back in the following verses.¹⁶ In other words, this does not help us in determining the rhyme sound in bb. 11-12. Another approach is to try to establish the rhyme gender: is it feminine (e.g., '...verprutsen') or masculine (e.g., '...tuin')? An argument for a feminine interpretation might be the ligature in the alto voice in b. 11. Assuming that this means a binding of the notes d' and e' , a feminine ending is more likely. Then the tenor may have the rhythm

¹³ Grijp, *Het Nederlandse lied*, 284 ff.

¹⁴ The bass has two extra notes before the motive itself is imitated, probably added for contrapuntal reasons.

¹⁵ For the *Dutch Song Database / Nederlandse Liederenbank* see note 2.

¹⁶ In 2010, when this analysis was carried out, the *Dutch Song Database* contained the strophic forms of about 40,000 early modern song texts. The number is ever-increasing. Following the system employed by the *Database* and the *Repertory*, the beginning of *Ic draghe de mutse clutse* can be encoded as 2a+1a: this signifies two accents in a section ending with a feminine rhyme ('mutse') followed by one accent in the next section ('clutse'). Unstressed syllables are not counted; the sign '+' indicates that no new line is started after the rhyme of 'mutse'. There turn out to be eighteen early modern songs starting with 2a+1a (online version consulted 24 June 2010). In nine of these songs the a-rhyme sound (i.e., the initial feminine rhyme sound) returns in later verses, e.g., in *Courante Lorreine* (.2a+1a.2a+2B 4B.4B 3C 3C 3C); in nine other songs the a-rhyme sound does not recur, e.g., in *Hoort ghy vrijers fray van geeste* (.2a+1a+1b.4C.4b.4C.4d.4d 4E 4E).

U-UU-UU-U-U. However, in the bass there are more ligatures, which suggests dropping one of the weak syllables. The rhythm thus becomes U-UU-U-U-U. The dummy line I made for this is: 'Ik kan daar niet veel meer aan verprutsen' ('I cannot mess up much of this').

To summarize thus far, we have tried to reconstruct the following formal parameters of the lost text of Obrecht's *liedeken*:

- Number of lines.
- Number of accents per line.
- Exact rhythm of each line, including the number of syllables and the distribution of the accents.
- Rhyme scheme, including the gender of the rhyme sounds (masculine or feminine).

The sum of these parameters constitutes what in song or ballad research is usually called the strophic form, or stanza form. In short, what we have reconstructed is the beginning of the strophic form of *Ic draghe de mutse clutse*.¹⁷ We can express the result in the formula .2a+1a.2B.2B.2B.4a, in which the masculine rhymes are represented in uppercase and the feminine rhymes in lowercase.¹⁸ The words of the dummy text are simply a way to make the form visible and audible.

So far *Ic draghe de mutse clutse* presents fewer ambiguous instances than I had feared when I started its reconstruction. The most arbitrary choice was whether or not to repeat 'Wat scheefjes en schuin.' For the final result, however, the presence or absence of such a repeat does not, in fact, make a big difference. The other main ambiguity concerned the final rhyme of the section. An alternative to our solution such as .2a+1a.2B.2B.2C.5C, is less attractive but not impossible if we ignore a ligature.

The next step was from dummy text to real poetry. For his version of *Ic draghe de mutse klutse* Gerrit Komrij exactly followed the form of the dummy: the same number of lines, rhyme scheme, number of accents and syllables, and rhythm:

Louis Grijp's dummy text:

Ic draghe de mutse clutse,
Wat scheefjes en schuin
Bekroont hij mijn kruin,
Half grijs half bruin,
Ik kan daar niet veel meer aan verprutsen.
etc.

I'm wearing a hat all crazy,
A bit crooked and lopsided
It crowns my pate
Half grey, half brown.
I cannot mess up much of this.
etc.

Gerrit Komrij's poem:

Ic draghe de mutse klutse,
Verkeerd op mijn kop,
Er dwars bovenop
En schuins in top.
Geen storm kan nog ooit zo'n muts verprutsen.
etc.

I'm wearing a hat all crazy,
Wrong on my head
Sideways on top
And lopsided.
No storm can ever mess up a hat like that.
etc.

¹⁷ In this kind of polyphonic *liedeken* there is usually just one stanza.

¹⁸ A dot indicates an upbeat. Subtle rhythmic patterns such as -UU cannot be expressed in these formulas as they usually vary per stanza.

It is interesting to see that some words and ideas from the dummy text shine through in Komrij's poem. He took over 'verprutsen', at the end of the first section, for which there is scarcely an alternative in the modern Dutch language. Also taken over is the idea of *schuin* ('lopsided'), and even the word itself, two lines after its appearance in the dummy text. Confronted with these observations, the poet was surprised, and also amused, by the influence of the formal model. But such influence regarding wording and content is perfectly in agreement with what we know of the mechanism of writing *contrafacta* (song texts made to a pre-existing melody). In *contrafacta*, poets often cite the first line—or even more—of their model, and they may take over the basic thematic idea of the poem, or respond to it. That is what Komrij did: he wrote *contrafacta* to my dummies. In contrast to the standard *contrafactum* process, however, he did not know the tunes or Obrecht's polyphony. Komrij heard the music for the first time when the CD recording was finished! He was as surprised as I was to hear how well the words fitted the music, not only technically but also emotionally. Apparently, the original first lines had been enough to point him in the right directions: whether *zot* (comical, such as *Ic draghe de mutse clutse*), amorous, complaining, or folksong-like.

We treated the rest of *Ic draghe de mutse clutse* in a similar way. In the following discussion, I will only mention those instances that throw more light on the reconstruction process. From now on I will refer to the poem by Komrij instead of the dummy text. Komrij's full text can be found in Appendix 1, with a translation. The text is laid under Obrecht's music in Appendix 2.

In the superius-tenor duo that begins in b. 12, the music looks melismatic, so it is difficult to establish the number of accents and syllables. But we may assume that in the following duo between alto and bass (b. 16) the text is repeated, as is so often done in this style. The bassus is the least melismatic of the four parts at this point. It can have seven syllables at most, with three accents: 'Gaat nu de wereld tollen?' ('Is the world starting to whirl?').¹⁹ The next duo, from b. 17 on, probably has new text, rhyming with 'tollen'. From the bass it is clear that the maximum number of syllables for this phrase is five, with two accents: 'Het vierkant rollen?' ('The square beginning to roll?').

In b. 20 a homophonic passage follows with a new melody, which suggests that also textually something new starts here. As a matter of fact, a repetition of the preceding two verses would not match the notes very well.²⁰ So I decided that new text would be most appropriate for this declamatory passage. In Komrij's words: 'Ik zie de torens vallen / Worden vonken ijskristallen?' ('I see towers falling, / Are sparks turning to snow?').

In the next section, the soprano-alto duo starting in b. 24 presents no problem ('Ik kijk naar de aarde scheefgemutst'). The alto is especially clear, sounding like a cantus firmus, a folk tune with a text consisting of two verses of four accents each.²¹ The tune is repeated in the next duo (starting at b. 26) in the bass, with a somewhat different counterpoint. But the original text cannot have been the same as in the first duo. The quavers on 'doodbidder' and 'pauwen' in b. 27 make that improbable. The cantus firmus

¹⁹ Two accents would also be possible; e.g., 'Gaan ballen tollen?' ('Are balls going to whirl?').

²⁰ Especially the second verse, 'Het vierkant rollen', fits less well to the musical phrase of bb. 21-22: it seems to start with an accented syllable rather than with the unaccented 'Het', and, moreover, there are too many notes to place the syllables on in a comfortable way.

²¹ The second line ('En zie: de zorgeloze is onthutst'; bb. 25-26) may have four or five accents, due to the rhythmic figure on 'zorgelo-', which allows either three syllables or just one with a short melisma.

comes back once more in the soprano (b. 32) and again the text must have been different. There the characteristic rhythm $\cup\text{---}\cup\text{---}$ ('Ik kijk naar de aar-', alto b. 24) has been replaced by $\cup\text{---}\cup\text{---}$ ('Het kind is rijk', soprano b. 32). In other words, three different texts must have been sung in succession to the same musical phrase, metrically equal, but different in the number and distribution of the weak syllables. In this kind of verse, there is usually one weak syllable between two stressed ones, but sometimes there are two weak ones. This fits perfectly with what we know about accentual verses in Dutch monophonic songs of the time.²²

These tiny rhythmic details may not seem very interesting to the reader, but in fact they are important for our project: they prove that the *liedeken* was written to be sung. In instrumental music this kind of rhythmic variation does not make sense. It is a welcome argument to add to J. W. Bonda's criteria for recognizing a vocal origin in a textless piece: 'A composition should be regarded as instrumental if it is not possible to place the text under one of the voices in a way that can be regarded as appropriate for songs. That is, the text placement should correspond with what is known about the song in question or with the general properties of song.'²³ These criteria require a parallel text from another source, which in our case is not available. Moreover, lengthy discussion is conceivable about which text placements are possible and which ones are not, and which ones are appropriate for songs and which ones are not. The advantage of our newly found criterion of the variation in unstressed quavers is that it is much easier to determine.

Using the rhythm of the music as a guide, we can reconstruct the form of the original text in even more detail. The rhythm of 'doodbidder' ('undertaker's man') in the tenor (b. 27) is different from that in the bass. In the tenor 'doodbidder' has the rhythm quaver-quaver-crotchet, which feels slightly uncomfortable; in the bass the same word is sung as crotchet-quaver-quaver, which better matches the pronunciation in normal speech. From the dummy text it becomes clear what may have happened. Instead of 'doodbidder juicht' I had 'eigengereid' ('headstrong') in my dummy. In both cases the rhythm can be notated as $\text{---}\cup\text{---}$, but there is still a difference. In the dummy text the unstressed syllables are both schwas. Thus one can sing 'eigengereid' to both rhythms (in tenor and bass) without problems. But Komrij used more powerful sounds; in the context of 'doodbidder juicht', the syllable '-bid-' is unstressed, to be sure, but it is stronger than the schwa-sound of '-der'. In other words, there is a hierarchy in metrically unstressed syllables. It is therefore a bit more difficult to sing 'doodbidder' to the rhythm quaver-quaver-crotchet. The conclusion must be that Obrecht's original text had two schwas at this spot, as in the dummy text, so that it did not matter which of the two rhythms was used, and that Obrecht used one in the tenor and the other in the bass. However, I did not ask Komrij to change his beautiful text here.

This little problem gives a sense of musicological archaeology: the project of bestowing new words on Obrecht's *liedekens* is not just about arbitrarily distributing fancy words over Obrecht's notes, but rather, it is about making the form of the lost text as real and as tangible as possible. It is even possible to distinguish between more or less unaccented syllables in the lost text. We can even dig below the level of unstressed syllables!

²² Grijp, *Het Nederlandse lied*, 239 ff.

²³ Bonda, *De meerstemmige Nederlandse liederen*, 75.

Conclusion

Following the working hypothesis that Obrecht wrote *Ic draghe de mutse clutse* as a vocal piece, I started with the tenor and wrote a dummy text for it. I tested the dummy against the other voices and made adjustments where necessary. This method worked quite well: it appeared always to be possible to find a good or at least acceptable text placement for all four voices, with no more problems than those found in fully texted contemporary *chansons* and *liedekens*. On the contrary: Obrecht seems to have set his texts in a very well-articulated way. During a performance the words can be clearly understood throughout most of the composition.

However, one might object that showing that it is possible to write fitting words for a piece does not prove that it was originally written to be sung. In general, it is very difficult to establish whether a textless piece was conceived for instrumental or vocal performance. In the case of *Ic draghe de mutse clutse*, however, I think I found a strong indication of vocal conception in the repetition of a song-like melody with small rhythmic alterations that are neither embellishments nor diminutions but just different ways of splitting up notes in different voices. These alterations only make sense if they are sung with a text in accentual verses with variable numbers of unstressed syllables between the accents.

It appeared impossible to make an exact reconstruction of the strophic form of *Ic draghe de mutse clutse*, at least with my knowledge of text-music relations in Dutch polyphonic *liedekens* or similar repertoire around 1500. A field of research lies open here. There were a number of decisions I had to make more or less intuitively. The rhyme scheme is the most difficult to be certain about. Moreover, one cannot always establish the rhyme gender. Another problem is that one is not always certain whether a text phrase is repeated or not.

On the other hand, in many other places it was not difficult to recognize the original text form, or at least some aspects of it. In particular, the number of accents and syllables could usually be reconstructed fairly precisely. Short phrases in simple note-values, repeated notes and—possibly—ligatures were very helpful in this respect. One can regard the result as an approximation of the original text form, with its certainties and ambiguities.

One can also regard the resulting text as a *contrafactum* to the music. Viewed this way, the reconstructed strophic form is one of a number of possibilities, as is not unusual with *contrafacta* to the same tune. A poet writing a song text to a pre-existing tune without text had to make his own choices about how to interpret the metre of the music for his new text, where to place the rhymes, etc. The next poet might copy the strophic form of his predecessor exactly, but he could also decide to make alterations. This so-called strophic variation is widespread in the practice of *contrafactum* writing in the Low Countries.²⁴ *Rederijkers*, in particular, were fond of adding inner rhymes, for instance. Thus, the quality of the created or recreated strophic form depends on the intuition, inspiration, experience, and taste of the poet or, in this particular case, the scholar.

²⁴ Grijp, *Het Nederlandse lied*, 257-78.

During the project I found that in most of Obrecht's *liedekens* one can reconstruct the text form in a way similar to the one I have demonstrated here for *Ic draghe de mutse clutse*. There are easier pieces, for example the tenor settings of folk-like songs such as *Ic ret my uut spacieren* ('I went out walking') and *Meiskin es u cutkin ru*, but in most *liedekens* one has to accept some degree of uncertainty, such as in *Ic draghe de mutse clutse*. Accepting this uncertainty one can text all four voices, even in pieces with many melismas, such as *Wat willen wij metten budel spelen* ('Wouldn't we like to play with the purse?'). An exception might be *Tandernaken* ('In Andernach'), which seems to belong to a class of compositions different from that of the *liedekens*. It is hard to conceive a text underlay for this piece with its tenor in very long notes, surrounded by virtuoso counterpoint. Perhaps here we have a truly instrumental composition.²⁵

When sung, Obrecht's *liedekens* are much more convincing than in instrumental performance, at least to my ears. Musical motives, structures, duos, homophonic passages, and other musical elements gain a meaning when sung, while in an instrumental performance it is difficult to understand the reason for them. With Komrij's new texts, Obrecht's 'songs without words' have become real *liedekens* again: vocal music that does full justice to his genius.

²⁵ However, the case for a vocal interpretation of Obrecht's *Tandernaken*, is made by Bonda, *De meerstemmige Nederlandse liederen*, 91. See also idem, 'Tandernaken, Between Bruges and Ferrara', in *From Ciconia to Sweelinck: Donum natalicum Willem Elders*, ed. Albert Clement and Eric Jas (Amsterdam etc., 1994), 49-74.

Appendix 1. The text of *Ic draghe de mutse clutse*, completed by Gerrit Komrij (2005)^a

<i>Ic draghe de mutse klutse,</i> Verkeerd op mijn kop, Er dwars bovenop En schuins in top. Geen storm kan nog ooit zo'n muts verprutsen.	I'm wearing a hat all crazy, Wrong on my head, Sideways on top And lopsided. No storm can ever mess up a hat like that.
Gaat nu de wereld tollen? Het vierkant rollen? Ik zie de torens vallen, Worden vonken ijskristallen?	Is the world starting to whirl? The square beginning to roll? I see towers falling, Are sparks turning to snow?
Ik kijk naar de aarde, scheefgemutst, En zie: de zorgeloze is onthutst, Terwijl de verstokte doodbidder juicht. Pauwenveren worden stram, het ijzer buigt. Tirannen verspreiden vrolijk licht, Verbannen zijn pijn en schrikgezicht, Het kind is rijk, de koning blut, De dief en moordenaar zijn uitgeput. De sterren zijn zwart, de melk is wijn En levenslang zal er vrede zijn. De leugen zetelt hemelhoog, Dit alles ziet mijn mutsenoog, Dit ziet mijn scheve mutsenoog.	I look at the world cock-eyed, And look: young devil-may-care is despondent, While the hardened undertaker's man is gleeful. Peacock feathers go stiff, iron bends. Tyrants spread joyful light, Pain and fear are banished, The child is rich, the king destitute, The thief and murderer are worn out. The stars are black, milk is wine And there will be lifelong peace. The lies are seated high as heaven, All this my cap's eye sees, That's what my crooked cap's eye sees.

translation: Ruth van Baak Griffioen

Strophic form: .2a+1a.2B.2B.2B.4a.3c.2c.3d 4d.4E.5E.4F 6F.4G.4G.4H.5H.4I.4J]=.4J

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Appendix 2. Gerrit Komrij's new text for *Ic draghe de mutse clutse laid under Jacob Obrecht's music*

Ic dra - ghe de mut - se klut - se, Ver - keerd op mijn
 Ic dra - ghe de mut - se klut - se, de mut - se klut - se, Ver -
 Ic dra - ghe de mut - se klut - se,
 Ic dra - ghe de mut - se klut - se, de mut - se klut - se, Ver -

kop, Er dwars bo - ven - op En schuins in top.
 - keerd op mijn kop, Er dwars bo - ven - op En schuins in top.
 Ver - keerd op mijn kop, Er dwars bo - ven - op En schuins in
 - keerd op mijn kop, Er dwars bo - ven - op En, en schuins

Geen storm kan nog ooit zo'n muts ver - prut - sen. Gaat
 Geen storm kan nog ooit zo'n muts ver - prut - sen.
 top. Geen storm kan nog ooit zo'n muts ver - prut - sen.
 in top. Geen storm kan nog ooit zo'n muts ver - prut - sen.

nu de we - reld tol - len?
 Gaat nu de we - reld
 Gaat nu de we - reld tol - len?
 Gaat nu de

* Notes in superius missing in original, reconstructed in New Obrecht Edition

Het vier - kant rol - len? Ik zie de to-rens
 tol - len? Ik zie de to-rens
 Het vier - kant rol - len? Ik zie de to-rens
 we - reld tol - len? Het vier - kant rol - len? Ik zie de to-rens

val - len, Wor - den von - ken ijs - kris - tal - len?
 val - len, Wor - den von - ken ijs - kris - tal - len?
 val - len, Wor - den von - ken ijs - kris - tal - len?
 val - len, Wor - den von - ken ijs - kris - tal - len?

24

Ik kijk naar de aar - de, scheef - ge - mutst, En zie: de zor - ge - lo - ze is ont - hutst,
- len? Ik kijk naar de aar - de, scheef - ge - mutst, En zie: de zor - ge - lo - ze is ont - hutst,
Ter - wijl de ver -

27

Ti - ran - nen ver - sprei - den vro - lijk
Ti - ran - nen ver - sprei - den vro - lijk
- stok - te dood - bid - der juicht. Pau - wen - ve - ren wor - den stram, het ij - zer buigt. Ti - ran - nen ver - sprei - den vro - lijk
- wijl de ver - stok - te dood - bid - der juicht. Pau - wen - ve - ren wor - den stram, het ij - zer buigt. Ti - ran - nen ver - sprei - den vro - lijk

30

licht, Ver - ban - nen zijn pijn en schrik - ge - zicht, Het kind is rijk, de ko - ning blut, De
licht, Ver - ban - nen zijn pijn en schrik - ge - zicht, Het kind is rijk, de ko - ning blut, De dief en moor - de -
licht, Ver - ban - nen zijn pijn en schrik - ge - zicht,
licht, Ver - ban - nen zijn pijn en schrik - ge - zicht,

33

dief en moor - de - naar zijn uit - ge - put. De ster - ren zijn zwart, de melk is wijn En le - vens - lang zal er vre - de
- naar zijn uit - ge - put. De ster - ren zijn zwart, de melk is wijn En le - vens - lang zal er vre - de
De ster - ren zijn zwart, de melk is wijn En le - vens - lang zal er vre - de
De ster - ren zijn zwart, de melk is wijn En le - vens - lang zal er vre - de

36

zijn. De leu - gen ze - telt he - mel - hoog, Dit
zijn. De leu - gen ze - telt he - mel - hoog, Dit al - les
zijn. De leu - gen ze - telt he - mel - hoog, Dit al - les
zijn. De leu - gen ze - telt he - mel - hoog, Dit al - les

39

al - les ziet mijn mut - sen - oog, Dit ziet mijn sche - ve mut - sen - oog.
ziet mijn mut - sen - oog, Dit ziet mijn sche - ve mut - sen - oog.
ziet mijn mut - sen - oog, Dit ziet mijn sche - ve mut - sen - oog.
ziet mijn mut - sen - oog, Dit ziet mijn sche - ve mut - sen - oog.

Abstract

Most of Obrecht's *liedekens* have been handed down without full text. In many cases, only the first line is given. Were these compositions meant as instrumental or vocal pieces? Assuming the latter possibility as a working hypothesis, a project undertaken with Camerata Trajectina in 2005 is discussed, in which Obrecht's *liedekens* were supplied with new texts by the Dutch poet Gerrit Komrij. *Ik draghe de mutse clutse* offers an example through which to reach a scholarly evaluation of this practical undertaking. As a first step, a reconstruction was made of the textual form, following the scheme of rhymes and accents. The abstract scheme was then made visible and audible by means of a dummy text. Finally, Komrij was asked to write new texts, using the dummy as a model. This process revealed rhythmic details in the music that offer suggestive evidence in favour of a vocal original for Obrecht's *liedekens*. Furthermore, Obrecht's notes became more meaningful when performed vocally—even with words Obrecht never knew.