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Bilingual Devotion: The Prayer Books from the Lüneburg Convents

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The prayer books from Medingen and other Lüneburg convents offer a unique insight into the processes of religious and linguistic transformation which shaped devotion through writing in Northern Germany in the late Middle Ages.¹ In the copious manuscript output sparked by the reform movement in the second half of the fifteenth century, Latin and Low German religious traditions are merged and mixed: Latin liturgy, monastic culture and vernacular songs contribute to the rich texture that characterizes the Northern German bilingual prayer books. The Church calendar provides the timeframe and the liturgical pieces the musical ground for a polyphonic writing to which the nuns each add their own arrangements and improvisation by translating, amplifying and adapting Latin and Low German textual elements. None of the prayer books contain new mystical texts but all of them draw on bridal mysticism to enrich the texture of the prose composition, often to the point where it turns into assonating, rhythmical text blocks. When, for example, in the Easter Meditation and Poem (in the appendix), the *innige sele* [devout soul] is encouraged to dance with David, court Christ or meet with Mary, elements of the language of bridal mysticism are fused with formulations from Latin sequences and vernacular hymns. This particular fusion is the result of the development in the fifteenth century of devotional writing in the vernacular alongside the continuation of a strong Latin monastic tradition. Thus the prayer books are part of the same spiritual network that informs the bilingual letters from Lüne (→ Schlotheuber) and the ›Visitatio Sepulchri‹ plays from Wienhausen (→ Mattern).

I will show how these devotional text strategies work by analysing three groups of text set as reading matter in a number of prayer books for the time of Easter: an acclamation of Easter morning in the form of a mosaic meditation for the time after Matins; different versions of the Easter Proclamation ›Exultet‹; and a poem in praise of Easter. In all these examples, the Latin liturgy, renewed by the reform movement in the Northern German convents (→ Bärsch), is enriched by the orally transmitted vernacular song culture (→ Hascher-Burger); and the Latin literature shaped by monastic culture is rendered fruitful for the devotional practices emerging from the region of Low Germany and the Netherlands. This meeting of two linguistic worlds and two cultures is creatively furthered in the connection, adaptation and amplification of the transmitted texts in the same way as the *Revelationes* of Birgitta of Sweden are transformed by vernacular printing (→ Andersen).

The written Latin culture inside the convents, the performance of which could be experienced on a daily basis in the liturgy and the readings at mealtimes, is the determining idiom in the manuscripts written by the nuns for themselves, one that is actively used, for example, when a prayer originally for All Saints is adapted for the veneration of an Apostle as a personal patron saint. Thus, in the prayer books, the potential of established formulations and prayers to become a vehicle for individual devotion is highlighted; this applies even more to the cases where existing Latin texts are rewritten in the process of Low German text composition. The nuns employ the same textual strategies of adaptation and amplification in the vernacular. Two groups of addressees for this strategy can be identified, the first group being the lay sisters inside the community, whose

¹ For the Medingen manuscripts, a complete bibliography and a selection of open access secondary literature are available on the project page: <http://research.ncl.ac.uk/medingen>.

Consuetudines are composed in Low German,² for whom the sections concerning the ritual of admission into the convent community were translated³ and to whom certain parts of the library holdings were obviously available for their own private reading or for reading aloud. For example, the compendium volume SUB Göttingen: 8° Cod. Ms. theol. 204 (GT3), with an entry noting Medingen ownership, consists of a Low German printed edition of Johannes of Neumarkt's translation of the *Vita et transitus Sancti Hieronymi*, bound together with a Low German *Klosterspiegel* [*Mirror for Monasteries*], a Low German translation of the *Cordiale* and a brief Low German treatise on the *Twelve Signs of God's Grace*. All these texts combine devotional and didactic aspects: they demonstrate a shared interest in reaching a new and wider audience for topics and texts which had been circulating within monastic circles but had not been available in Low German.

This applies even more to the prayer books for feast days produced for laywomen bound to the convent through ties of kinship, the second group of female readers interested in devotional exercises in the vernacular. A vivid example is, for instance, the reshaping of Birgitta of Sweden's vision of Christ's birth in the Low German Christmas prayer books from Medingen: the Latin text of the *Revelationes* is translated, commented upon and expanded by the nuns so that the vision itself generates instructions on meditation which could be followed by readers such as Anna Elebeke, wife of the Lüneburg burgomaster Heinrich Töbing, for whom the manuscript Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Ms. Memb. II 84 (GO) was written. The Low German adaptation allowed her imaginatively to reconstruct the birth of Christ and to be actively involved in the Latin mass for Christmas: the description of the Birth unfolds along the lines of the liturgy and offers a view of the service as a divine spectacle.⁴ The vision afforded exclusively to Birgitta when standing in Bethlehem and recorded in the authorised Latin version of the *Revelationes* becomes an inclusive devotional exercise shaped by the translation, which not only changes the language but also the applicability. The Nativity is not only repeated for anybody attending the Christmas service but the prayer books also offer a chance to become involved when, for example, the lay user is instructed to offer herself as nursemaid to Mary. Liturgy, in all these prayer books, effectively gives the praying reader the opportunity to enter the scene and touch the divine, not just once but as part of their daily devotional exercises.

The interweaving of Latin and the vernacular is common to all the devotional books written by the nuns of Medingen, with the proportion of the Low German components ranging from the insertion of single phrases or verses from songs to the almost complete translation into German of the Latin elements. What follows is concerned with the categorization of the various linguistic components, but even more with the description of the forms in which one language refers to the other. As with the transmission of the Helfta texts (→ Hellgardt), in each case these forms of reference unlock a particular field of literary, spiritual and cultural allusions, a process of translation not just between languages but also between different forms of spiritual engagement.

The special nature of bilingualism in Northern Germany has repercussions beyond the linguistic processes involved: it demarcates a particular approach to devotional writing. Whilst in South Germany religious life soon opened itself to the vernacular and, to a great extent, the production of texts in German displaced older monastic training, especially in convents, in Northern Germany the continuity of education in Latin, particularly in women's foundations, is evident (→ Schlotheuber). The dual use of Latin for official monastic written documents and German for

² Low German ›Consuetudines‹ in the ›Liber Ordinarius‹ from Medingen in Oxford, Bodleian Library: Ms. lat. lit. e. 18 (O2), fol. 112r–114r, ed. in Homeyer, *Kloster Medingen 1788–1988* (1988), 30–38.

³ Ritual with Low German formulas for the lay sisters in Cambridge, University Library: Ms. Add. 8850 (CA2), fol. 29v–30v (CA2).

⁴ A parallel edition of the Latin ›Revelationes‹ and the Low German adaptation in the Gotha manuscript in Andersen, ›Das Kind sehen: Die Visualisierung der Geburt Christi in Mystik und Meditation‹ (2011), 304–310.

communication with laypeople extended to all areas of life in Medingen, even including work on tapestries such as the ›Wichmannsburg Antependium‹.⁵ The same applies to the painted panels hung in the abbess's house after the reform to document the history of the convent as a series of spiritual renewals. All the accompanying inscriptions were bilingual, the use of both languages indicating that the panels served both the convent's internal need for self-reassurance and its documentation vis-à-vis the outside world.⁶ The inclusion of vernacular phrases within a Latin context is, of course, nothing new. Low German phrases and particularly *Leisen* were integrated into Latin devotional texts as early as the thirteenth century in places such as the Benedictine convent of Lamspringe (near Hildesheim), which had an extensive scriptorium at its disposal in the thirteenth century;⁷ however, before the prayer book production of the late fifteenth century, we do not find any lengthy vernacular devotional texts.

It is important to establish the context in which Low German was used so as to classify the linguistic peculiarities of the devotional texts more accurately. The most significant feature of the prayer books from the Lüneburg convents is their personal nature: each of them is tailored to the needs and interests of a particular addressee. This reader-orientation determines the informal style of the language used and its closeness to oral forms of Low German, using elements of spoken language such as the frequent assimilations (*wamme* for *wan me* etc.) and contractions.⁸ The nuns translated and drafted texts without needing to express themselves in ways that could be understood beyond their region. The register of the Low German texts in the Medingen manuscripts can in fact be defined as the »language of intimacy«.⁹ The more pronounced phonetic spelling of dialect features merges with the adoption of formulaic expressions to form language that appears more archaic. Hence it is not surprising that the vernacular differs from that used in, for example, the official documents of the Hanseatic League, which had to be understood by a wide range of recipients and was therefore standardized. The non-standardized language ties in with the concept of manuscript writing as a private act of devotion. This is decidedly different from translation and editing work meant for commercial circulation; this type of prayer book is meant as an answer to the monastic injunction of »work and pray«.

The bilingual character of the prayer book therefore indicates several levels of intertextuality. On the first level, it points to different source texts, such as the Latin liturgy or the Low German *Leisen*. On a second level, the changing proportion of the two languages shows a reader-oriented approach to codifying devotion, in much the same way as the letters from Lüne adjust their linguistic mix and rhetorical style according to the addressee (→ Schlotheuber). What has traditionally and often dismissively been termed ›macaronic‹ or ›Kauderwelsch‹ is, in fact, a very productive form of communication within a religious network that uses Latin and vernacular codes to best effect. I will discuss this kind of effective language use by looking at three groups of texts that show different facets of linguistic integration, all centred on the celebration of Easter.

⁵ Lähnemann, »An dessen bom wil ik stighen.« Die Ikonographie des Wichmannsbürger Antependiums im Kontext der Medinger Handschriften« (2005).

⁶ Wehking, *Die Inschriften der Lüneburger Klöster. Ebstorf, Isenhagen, Lüne, Medingen, Walsrode, Wienhausen* (2009), nr. 58, 125–137. Literature on bilingualism in *Mehrsprachigkeit im Mittelalter. Kulturelle, literarische, sprachliche und didaktische Konstellationen in europäischer Perspektive*, ed. Putzo / Baldzuhn (2011).

⁷ On Lamspringe cf. the catalogue *Geschrieben und gemalt. Gelehrte Bücher aus Frauenhand* (2006), ed. by Helmar Härtel; more on these early manuscripts in *Rosenkränze und Seelengärten. Bildung und Frömmigkeit in niedersächsischen Frauenklöstern* (2013).

⁸ Ball, *A Linguistic Description of the Manuscript Trier Bistumsarchiv No. 528* (2010). The Atlas of the Middle Low written dialects is nearing completion at Münster; until its publication the best survey of distinctive dialect features can be found in Peters, *Katalog sprachlicher Merkmale zur variablenlinguistischen Erforschung des Mittelniederdeutschen* (1987 / 1988 / 1990).

⁹ Following Koch / Oesterreicher, »Schriftlichkeit und kommunikative Distanz« (2007).

The high proportion of prayer books for Easter among the surviving manuscripts from the Lüneburg convents shows a preoccupation with celebration rather than with suffering as themes dominating the textual and artistic production of the convents – which again marks a point of departure from Southern Germany, where Passion piety seems to have been more prominent than Easter celebration, although both are, of course, indivisible. However, the significance of Easter for vernacular writing goes even further; the emergence of the vernacular in devotional texts on Easter is more than a combination of chance survival and a certain preference for one feast of the liturgical year over another. In the manual for the Provost of Medingen (Oxford, Bodleian Library: Ms. lat. lit. e. 18), the Easter mass is the point at which a theological digression is inserted, giving the higher reason for praising God in the vernacular. It states that through the Low German refrain »Christ is Risen« the lay congregation join in the singing of the sequence because the whole of nature is said to rejoice: *layci canant laudem quia omnis in hac die rerum natura iubilat* (»The laypeople sing praises because the whole of nature is jubilant on this day«, fol. 49r). It is a recurrent theme in the prayer books that the participation of all estates and all people in the praise of God is necessary; and that for this reason the vernacular, too, has its place in the liturgy as well as in private devotion.

The *locus classicus* supporting this is a quotation from Gregory the Great which also appears repeatedly as a banderol alongside the figure of Gregory in marginal illustrations in the prayer books: it »would not be right if any mortal tongue were silent at the Resurrection of God Incarnate.«¹⁰ Vernacular songs and jubilation thus have their rightful place alongside Latin sequences and hymns. The argument is taken even further in a theologically bold move by quoting an Easter sermon by Gregory the Great within the prayer book: the insertion of vernacular refrains sung by the congregation into the sequence (*in sequentia populorum laudibus alternatur*) mirrors the union in the Resurrection where human and divine meet. In the multilingual praise of God that includes all sexes, generations and estates Christ's dual nature finds its adequate response.

The textual realization of this fundamental statement results in a wide spectrum of bilingual writing found in the prayer books compiled. For the Easter period, the nuns seem to have been able to draw on a broad range of already existing German songs of jubilation and rhymed reflections on the resurrection. This makes a marked difference to the group of prayer books for saints' days, which were usually only able to include the odd *Leise* or short acclamation to the patron saint in the vernacular. The lengthy Low German insertions and mixed-language sections in the Easter prayer books demonstrate a considerable range of rhythmic and assonant poetic forms, which can be seen in the following three examples.

Type 1: Multilingual Textual Collages. The Meditation after Easter Matins

The first example compares the meditational texts for the period after Easter Matins in two manuscripts now in Hildesheim. The surviving manuscripts from Medingen were scattered at different periods: those written for laywomen, such as the prayer book now at Gotha (GO), were meant for outreach from the start and were then sold by their respective owners; most of the prayer books written by the nuns for their own use were sold in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, either *en bloc* – such as the group of prayer books now at Hamburg and Trier – or as collectors' items, such as the illuminated prayer books now in various English libraries. A number of the liturgical and devotional books were taken to the Bishop of Hildesheim for safe keeping by the Medingen abbess after the Lutheran Reformation. The more richly illuminated copies were kept in the Cathedral Library; the others went to the Municipal Archive.¹¹ Of the two Hildesheim prayer books

¹⁰ Homilia XXI for Easter Sunday (PL, vol. 76, col. 1170). Lähnemann, »Also do du ok. Andachtsanweisungen in den Medinger prayer books« (2012), 445–47.

¹¹ On the fate of the prayer books and other Medingen manuscripts after the Lutheran Reformation Lähnemann, »Der Medinger »Nonnenkrieg« aus der Perspektive der Klosterreform. Geistliche Selbstbehaftung 1479–1554« (2013).

discussed in the first example the first one is from the Cathedral Library (Dombibliothek Hildesheim: Ms. J 29 = HI1). It was written by a nun, Winheyde, in 1478 while the actual reform process was still taking place and is resplendent with marginal illustrations. The second, now in the Municipal Archive (Stadtarchiv Hildesheim: Best. 52 Nr. 379 = HI3), was also written by a nun, Mechthild, on paper which shows the same watermarks as parts of the ›Wienhausen Songbook‹.¹² Both nuns clearly had access to the same corpus of texts but show an astonishing degree of independent compositional skill in shaping their individual Easter celebration.¹³ The Latin components of the textual collage originate from the liturgy, primarily the sequences and antiphons of Easter morning, from which individual verses are borrowed, in part with their musical notation. The text is enriched by German elements which are treated analogously to the Latin quotations: German sentence components are carved out as phrases and merged with Latin sentence components; musical notation above the lines suggests that the passages were imported from songs.

In both manuscripts the rubric is used to classify the section as belonging to the order of worship after Matins on Easter Sunday. The Hildesheim Cathedral manuscript (HI1) then elucidates in text and image why this is a special occasion: Matins organ and bells sound for the first time after the silence of Lent. Befitting this, in the margin at the bottom of page two nuns are depicted sitting at an organ; banderols quote the feast-day liturgy of Easter morning, the beginning of the *Te deum* and the *Ergo die ista exultemus*, the concluding phrases from Notker's Easter sequence *Laudes Salvatori*, sung in the mass during Matins on Easter Day. The text itself begins with the verse *Illuxit dies quam fecit dominus* from the same sequence.

HI1, fol. 44r/44v: Post matutinas per organa

»Illuxit dies, quam fecit dominus!« *Ik entfa dik, clare osterdach, mit alle miner sinne macht.*

»Advenisti desiderabilis!« *Du bist de erste vrouden schal des koninghes sone van enghelant. Du bist alle godelik, darumme bistu so minnichlik unde ghifst us dat ewighe licht.* »Salve, o dies desiderabilis«.

After Matins on the organ (Rubric): »The day has lit up which the Lord made!« *I receive you, o splendid Easter Day, with all my senses.* »You, the desired one, have come!« *You are the first sound of joy of the King's Son from the country of angels. You are wholly divine, therefore you are so sweetly lovely and bestow on us the light that is eternal.* »Hail, o wished-for day.«

The most popular musical elements from the Easter liturgy are cited as examples here. Whilst Notker's complete sequence is only documented once in a prayer book (Stadtarchiv Hildesheim: Best 52 Nr. 383 = HI5, fol. 53r–v, i.e. the manuscript which also contains the bilingual poems discussed as the third example and printed in the appendix), we encounter the separate phrase *Ergo die ista exultemus* 29 times in 11 Medingen prayer books, always highlighted by musical notation as intended for musical performance, whether inwardly or outwardly. In HI3, fol. 56v, this is accompanied by an extensive explanation of the importance of universal jubilation.¹⁴

The *Illuxit dies*-phrase belongs to a whole group of single verses from antiphons and sequences that develop a life of their own in devotional books: it is cited ten times in five Latin devotional books and one German one. It is also put to creative use for other feasts for which less material was extant: for example, the text composed by the nuns for the feast of their patron saint, Saint Maurice, reads in one of the Hamburg prayer books (SUB Hamburg: Ms. in scrin. 210 = HH7, fol. 24r): *Hodie illuxit Dies celeberrima, Dies gaudiosa in qua refulserunt sollempnia Thebeorum martirum* (»To-

¹² The ›Wienhausen Songbook‹ is written on a wide variety of partly recycled material, cf. Roolfs, »Das Wienhäuser Liederbuch – eine kodikologische Annäherung« (2010). The main body of the text was written down after 1500 but part of the paper dates back to the fifteenth century.

¹³ A full comparison with two further manuscripts in Lähnemann, »Per organa: Musikalische Unterweisung in Handschriften der Lüneburger Klöster« (2009), 406–409.

¹⁴ Hascher-Burger, *Verborgene Klänge. Inventar der handschriftlich überlieferten Musik aus den Lüneburger Frauenklöstern bis ca. 1550* (2008), 20.

day the most famous day has lit up, the joyous day on which the festivities for the Theban Martyrs shone their light onto the world«). For its part, the sequence verse is a variant on the psalm verse *Haec est dies quam fecit dominus* (Psalm 117, 24). The psalm verse was sung in Medingen as an antiphon for the Sunday of the Feast of the Annunciation and the significance of this »sweet song« (*dulce carmen*) is discussed extensively in the second of the Hildesheim prayer books (HI3, fol. 56r).

The »luminescence« of Easter Day is marked visually in both Hildesheim manuscripts: in HI1 by a small gilded initial; in HI3, fol. 49r, by red bubbles sprouting from the initial of the »Illuxit«. However, whilst aspects of the content are highlighted by the use of colour in this way, the alternation between languages is not marked. Rather, the Low German rhyming verse that follows seamlessly connects the quotation from the sequence with the next antiphon, *Advenisti desiderabilis*.¹⁵ This results in a mosaic-like text that can be read continuously; in which the German verse explains the Latin one; and in which the short phrase from the Easter liturgy turns everything into a personal salutation: an »I« speaks to a »you«, the personification of Easter Day. On the level of the manuscript, the salutation *Advenisti desiderabilis* with which »our forefathers in Hell« celebrate Christ's arrival (Appendix 13b, l. 34: *sine holden* = »His beloved ones«) is rendered more topical through the occasion of the liturgy and more relevant to the actual Easter Day of the female reader. Time and again in the texts from the Medingen manuscripts, both languages are embraced at the point when the recollection of the liturgy flips over into personal devotion and prayer; in another Medingen prayer book it is the *leuen selen* (»dear souls«) which call their *Advenisti* (»You have come!«) into the Low German text.¹⁶ The cry of *Advenisti fulfils* a function similar to that of the *Illuxit dies*, namely, of signalling the change.

Thus rubric, liturgical and Low German verse are constantly interwoven and related to additional, non-textual levels: marginal illustrations and musical notation; visual and musical elements form an integral, linked component of the page layout. The notes which, on the first lines of the quoted example (HI1, fol. 44v), are written above the end of the Low German rhyming verse and the quotation from the antiphon bind silent prayer and devotion back into the audible liturgy. The twin fields of music and language are tightly tied to the interaction of Latin and German. In this way, the jubilation of Easter morning is conjured up synaesthetically and situates the Latin-German verses within the liturgical space.

In Medingen all the Latin elements named thus far – the *Te Deum* and the two sequences – were sung by the nuns themselves during the Easter liturgy; the lay congregation responded with the song »Christ ist erstanden« [*Christ is Risen*], which is integrated into the sequence as a chorus for the congregation. In the processional, which was intended as a manual for the provost, the sections in which the nuns and / or the lay congregation joined in were highlighted. Medingen was never fully incorporated into the Cistercian Order but the nuns had permission to follow the use of that order. This seems to have influenced the practice of including German elements: the Cistercian liturgy already allowed room for vernacular responses by the congregation;¹⁷ however, Medingen represents an exceptional case in the consistency with which the oral material is integrated into the structure of the liturgy on an equal footing. Thus Notker's Easter sequence provides a liturgical model for the mixing of languages and textual components which is then put into practice in the prayer books. Notker's antiphon is also translated in its entirety in the German Easter prayer books.¹⁸

¹⁵ Carmen triumphale *Cum rex gloriae*: cf. *Repertorium hymnologicum*, No. 4103; PL 138,1081B.

¹⁶ Bistumsarchiv Trier: Ms. I 528 (= T1), fol. 81v. This is the only Medingen prayer book which has been edited: Mante, *Ein niederdeutsches Gebetbuch aus der 2. Hälfte des XIV. [!] Jahrhunderts* (Bistumsarchiv Trier, Nr. 528) (1960), 106.

¹⁷ Janota, *Studien zu Funktion und Typus des deutschen geistlichen Liedes im Mittelalter* (1968), 189–194.

¹⁸ Mante, *Ein niederdeutsches Gebetbuch*, 86–88.

The other prayer book from Hildesheim (HI3) shows that the same liturgical occasion could be developed into a bilingual meditation in a different way: (illustration 1)

HI3, fol. 48v–49r Post matutinas, dum exis de choro, canta in cordis jubilo: »Illuxit dies quam fecit dominus etc. Advenisti desiderabilis. *Ik entfa dy clare OsterDach, mit alle miner sinne macht.*« Tunc dic gloriando: »Also heylich is desse Dach etc.« Tunc orna te in vera devocione ornatu tuo optimo, ut attende quia ille quem tu susceptura es centies millesies milies pulchrior est. Et dum te ornas lege vij »Veni sancte spiritus« sive vij psalmos penitentiales.

After the hour of Matins, when you leave the nuns' choir, sing in the jubilation of your heart: »The day has lit up which the Lord made etc. You, the desired, have come. *I receive you, o splendid Easter Day, with all my senses.*« Then say triumphantly: »This day is so holy etc.« Then adorn yourself in true devotion with your best dress since He whom you are going to receive is a hundred thousand thousand times more beautiful. And while you adorn yourself, read seven »Come Holy Spirit« or the Seven Penitential Psalms.

The text for the period after Matins begins again with the quotation *Illuxit dies* from the sequence, followed by the quotation from the antiphon without a Low German verse to bridge the transition. Both quotations from the liturgy are provided with musical notation, as are the following two lines from the Low German *Leise Also heylich is desse dach*.¹⁹ The *Leise* is quoted twenty times in eleven Medingen prayer books with musical notation and in many more as text only; just as the quotations from the sequences, the lines from the *Leisen* could be seamlessly absorbed into the devotional text.

This newly composed, mixed Latin–German text is presented as a performance piece: on leaving the nuns' choir (*dum exis de choro*) it should be sung with rejoicing in one's heart (*canta in cordis jubilo*). The musical recollection of text and song provides an auditory counterpart to the »visualization«. Both languages supply familiar set-pieces which function as triggers to meditation. These can be fused through association into new textual constructs and indeed into bilingual poems as a dialogue between the languages. This concept of multilingual textual collages as sung dialogue becomes even clearer in the two other examples.

Type 2: Amplificatory Translation. The »Exultet« as the Foundation for Texts

The second case traces the path of the liturgy into vernacular meditation even further. The »Praeconium Paschale« *Exultet iam angelica turba celorum* (»Rejoice now, all you heavenly choirs of angels«) occupies a central place in the Easter liturgy and is emphasized in all prayer books through its initials and illustrations. The host of angels suggested itself as an iconographic motif that allowed the foregrounding of the all-encompassing jubilation at Easter. In accordance with this, the entire text is preserved in all prayer books for Easter, adapted and commented upon in many different ways. The comments range from short rubrics stressing the special nature of the singing to varied explanations of its contents in Latin and German.

The »Exultet« is not just translated but expanded by means of paraphrase and commentary to create aids to understanding, instruction on prayer and meditations in Low German. The fundamental phenomenon is that of amplificatory paraphrase as a mode of rendering a Latin text into German. The form in which the nuns would have witnessed the liturgical piece during the Easter service is evident from the Manual for the provost (O2, fol. 32r). As a particularly important liturgical text it has also found its way into prayer books with choral notation, prominently as the opening to the Hildesheim Easter prayer book HI5, fol. 3r–4v (ill. 3).²⁰ Here the full liturgical form has been re-

¹⁹ Hascher–Burger, *Verborgene Klänge*, 197. The different forms of the *Leise* detailed in *Geistliche Gesänge des deutschen Mittelalters. Melodien und Texte handschriftlicher Überlieferung bis um 1530*, vol. 2 (2003) = GGdM, Nr. 24–27; O1 nr. 25e and 26c.

²⁰ Stahl: *Mittelalterliche Handschriften im Stadtarchiv Hildesheim* (2001), 98f.

tained, including the initial that shows the performance of the liturgy in the service of worship. The celebrant has raised his hands in order to bless the candle, prominently displayed in the form of a torch in front of the altar on which chalice and host present Christ. The simultaneous presence of the angels is shown by two figures whose heads and shoulders fly into the gold ground of the initial from the right-hand side; the top one is haloed and holding a scroll with the words *Exultet iam*, thereby involving the angels, by means of a vision, in the liturgical present of the consecration of the candles by the deacon.

In the Oxford prayer book (Bodleian Library Oxford: Ms. lat. lit. f. 4 = O1, fol. 20r) the standard representation of angels with musical instruments surrounds a considerably expanded ›Exultet‹ text in which each verse continues with a prayer. There is a seamless transition from the established to the newly written Latin text. The same combined text, but all in Low German, is found at the parallel point in the first Trier manuscript (Bistumsarchiv Trier: Ms. I 528 = T1, fol. 12v); whilst the second limits itself to a complete translation (Bistumsarchiv Trier: Ms. I 529 = T2, fol. 86v). In both manuscripts the same iconography with the choir of angels is found, with the result that manuscript illustrations can be compared in order to ascertain the degree to which the artistic rendition of the same source can be modified. In the two Low German Easter prayer books in Berlin (Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin: Ms. germ. oct. 48 = BE2, fol. 11v; and Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin: Ms. germ. oct. 265 = BE3, fol. 51r) we also find the heavenly host, the *angelica turba*, grouped round the E of the Exultet; however, only the Incipit is given, followed in BE3 by: *Nu vrouwet sick de enghelsche schare der hemmele, sich vrouwet de gotlike vorbornicheit dat is de gotlike sele* (›Now the angelic host of heavens rejoices; the divine secrecy rejoices, that is, the divine soul‹). As far as *vorbornicheit*, this is a more or less direct translation of the first two verses, but the explanation, introduced by *dat is*, constitutes an amplifying addition; and, following this pattern, the entire text is extended. By this means a typical form of commentary is carried over into devotional texts, a form that is also, and above all, practised in Latin and consists of explanations, signalled by *id est*, inserted into continuous text.

The paraphrase of the Exultet in BE2 also begins with partly identical linking through *dat is*; but as in the Oxford version O1 further prayers are inserted, albeit with different texts. Even such lengthy explanations seem not to have been conceptualized in Low German but generated in the process of translation by translating from Latin that had already been fleshed out. The additions and amplifications, the elucidation introduced by *dat is*, were already present in the Latin, as is also shown by rubrics such as those in HI2 and HV1, which invite further explanation by stating that the Exultet *typum gerit glorificate humanitatis Christi* (›is to be read typologically as the glorification of Christ‹). On the whole, much seems to support the assumption that in Medingen the process of literary adaptation always originated from the Latin text and that the reworking never started from an existing vernacular meditation or amplification. If there are Low German meditations, they are either translated directly from a Latin meditation or developed ad hoc, amplifying shorter translations from Latin. As yet, no evidence exists for any vernacular-to-vernacular adaptation or amplification, the notable exception being the Leisen and other Low German songs which seem to have been granted the same status as Latin set pieces. Even in texts for which, by the end of the fifteenth century, Low German standard versions had been established – as is the case for Birgitta's Revelaciones – the literary process for the nuns was linked to working from established canonical Latin texts.

Type 3: Low German Variations on a Latin Theme: ›De dulcissima die Pasche‹

The third example demonstrates yet another method of dealing with the pre-existing Latin material. Here the focus shifts from the liturgical structure and phrases to the Low German poems developed from them which have their own inherent poetic structure. The example (Appendix 13a-c)

is taken from another prayer book now held in Hildesheim (Stadtarchiv Hildesheim: Best. 52 Nr. 383 = HI5), which has an especially rich array of different literary and musical forms for the celebration of Easter. There is no direct proof of its origin and date, but the Low German dialect is that of the Medingen prayer books and the contemporary cover was done in the same workshop as other manuscripts from the Lüneburg convents. More importantly, the way in which the bilingual texts are compiled, edited and incorporated into the liturgical structure of Easter ties the prayer book closely into the ›monastic landscape‹ (→ Schlotheuber). The Hildesheim manuscript HI5 begins with a hymnal that also contains the full ›Exultet‹ with its complete musical notation (initial on fol. 3r; Ill. 13a); the manuscript further includes a Latin ›Visitatio Sepulchri‹ (→ Mattern). For the (female) scribe of this devotional book the events of Easter obviously demand a hymnic, musical response in all spoken and written forms. Throughout the prayer book, the Low German acclamation of the *oster-* or *paschedach* (Easter Day) is woven into the Latin hymns of praise and meditations. More important for our purposes, however, are three long, Low German Easter poems (fol. 33v-35v, 36r-38v and 144v-146v) which are interlaced with quotations from the Latin liturgy. The first two are grouped together in the manuscript under the rubric *De dulcissima die Pasche*. Whilst the second text has become known as a poem in its own right under the title *Mittelniederdeutsches Ostergedicht* (*Middle Low German Easter Poem*), the first has never been discussed and the short Latin explanation linking the two has not been edited. There is, however, no clear demarcation of the three elements as separate units: the same hand writes all three as continuous text without line breaks; the »poems« also incorporate explanatory prose elements; and the keywords remain the same throughout. For my argument about the development of Middle Low German devotional texts working from a Latin liturgical basis, it is crucial to see the three parts as one unit since only then does the purpose of their inclusion in a private prayer book become apparent. Both poems are inspired by the form of hymnic praise created by David and contained in the Psalms; and this is explained in the linking prose text (Appendix 13b).

The first poem (Appendix 13a) is, in fact, a hymn to David, who is shown to be an important witness to the Resurrection: firstly, through his foretelling of this event in his Psalms; secondly, through his leading with his harp of the forefathers' procession out of Limbo, engaging in a duet with the Risen Christ, his own descendant. David starts the dialogue with a verse from the Psalms which, as became apparent in the first example, had become the hallmark of Easter: *Haec est dies quam fecit dominus, exultemus et letemur in ea* (Ps 117:24 = l. 42-43). Christ starts dancing to that tune and sings the Eucharistic offering from the Easter liturgy *Epulemur* (Appendix 13a, l. 46; marked in the manuscript with musical notation above the line). David's harp answers with part of the verse as rhyming response: *Exultemus et letemur* (l. 48). In this way the poem tells the whole story of the Harrowing of Hell through quotations from the Psalms and Easter hymns, with occasional blocks of text seemingly taken from secular love poems, such as the singer's being freed from pain through the secret presence of the beloved (David in this case) in her heart (ll. 70-73). All the features which made David an important figure for the nuns are collected here in one poem: king and ancestor of Christ, dancer and, above all, prototypical singer in the praise of God.

Thus, David is invoked as a multifaceted role model in the Latin passage (Appendix 13b) which links the two poems: he himself stands before the altar during the solemn, festive Easter mass and celebrates the liturgy together with everyone else who is celebrating and »playing on the Zither of Joy« (l. 5): »He stood there with those who stood...; with those chanting the Psalms, he chants *Illuxit dies*; with those praying, he prays«. Thus David, as the *praecantor*, is the one who sets the tone on Easter Sunday, the entire following Middle Low German Easter Poem being presented as a new psalm of his creation. Understanding the second poem as a psalm also offers an important clue to the form, which seems to oscillate between rhymed song and prose description. The wide range of assonating, alliterating and rhythmic elements scattered throughout the Low German text, interlocking with the Latin phrases but without a clear rhyme structure or strophic form, could be described as a vernacular equivalent to the heightened prose of the Latin translation of the Psalms

which expresses the concept of »song« and hymnic praise. Similar forms of rhetorically charged rhyming prose within a devotional context are prevalent in other texts close to mystical thought, such as the *St. Trudperter Hohelied* or Mechthild of Magdeburg's *Flowing Light*, in which the vivifying presence of Christ turns into rhyme; in the text pouring wounds and flowing breasts rhyme as does the wine and the healing of the soul and the red mouth (*die wunden gussen,/ die brüste vlussen,/ also das lebendig wart die sele und gar gesunt,/ do er den blanken roten win gos in iren roten munt*, cf. Appendix 4a). Thus we see here another instance of an infusion of mystical expression within devotional writing, building on a much older tradition of hymnic text composition before the fifteenth century.

This second poem was not composed for this manuscript, as indicated by several scribal errors which become apparent when it is compared to the other manuscript transmitting the text. We are dealing here with an older poem in praise of Easter Day, held together by the use of clusters of assonance, strings of anaphora and repetitions and constructed on the basis of variations on formulaic phrases taken from the Easter liturgy. It starts with an exclamation about the speaker's happiness on seeing Easter Day dawning. The implied speaker was probably meant to resemble the one in the preceding poem: one who observes the spectacle of the Resurrection in a spiritual way while experiencing the events of the Easter liturgy which see »the most beautiful man who ever graced the world« rise with the sun at daybreak. Through the preceding praise of David, however, and the Latin passage which ends with his words, in this manuscript the speaker can be read as David himself witnessing the actual Resurrection, not merely its liturgical re-enactment. This does not diminish for the readers the possibility of joining in the joy of Easter: rather, it enhances the opportunity of participation since the song is led by the person most qualified to do so.

The sense that we are reading David's own song is reinforced by a recurrent variation of his key quotation, the *Haec est dies* (Ps 117:24), in the German opening of the stanzas. After the first two three-verse introductory stanzas, each of the remaining stanzas, which vary in length between two and 26 lines, starts uniformly with *Dit is de x osterdach*, with x being different adjectives that characterize Easter Day as unique. Thus every stanza reinforces the notion that Easter Day is, in fact, the »day that the Lord made« and about which David sang: it is the most wished for (l. 11), most powerful (l. 16), most enjoyable (l. 25), most joyful (l. 31), blessed (l. 36), lovely (l. 43), happy (l. 59), mighty (l. 85), delightful (l. 88) and, finally, most wonderful (l. 100) of all days. The third text in the manuscript to have extensive Low German elements comes at the end of the day and constitutes praise of the »most joyful night« following Easter Day, starting each stanza with a Latin acclamation (fol. 144v): *Salve nox florida* (blossoming night, l. 1), then *florigera* (l. 9), *iocundissima* (l. 17), *illustrissima* (l. 25) and so forth. This might originally have been the model for the Low German acclamations in the other Easter poem (Appendix 13a).

The other form of structuring is also shared by both these poems and runs right the way through them: a refrain. For the text for Easter night this is the full text of the short Psalm 116 (*Laudate Dominum omnes gentes*); for the Easter Day poem it is a Low German rhyming triplet which is used like a refrain, is based on the musical interpretation of the »Exultet« and demonstrates points of contact with the Low German interpretations of the prayer books: *Dar moten de seyden clingen, de orghelen soze singhen, unde alle herze van vrowden springen* (»The strings should sound, the organs sweetly sing and all hearts happily spring« (ll. 4–6). This refrain is to be repeated seven times, though only the *incipit* is given on each occurrence, as is also the practice for repeat texts in the contemporary liturgical books, shortening to *Des moten de seyden* (l. 10) or, even more briefly, *Des mo* (l. 24). The poem thus lends itself to performance strategies familiar to laypeople from their experience of singing *Leise* and other recurring responses.

This produces an effect in the manuscript that functions analogously to the performance of the sequences during the liturgy: the text retains a stanzaic structure with versicles of differing lengths concluded by the refrain. This framework unites quite diverse material, some of which overlaps with the two previous examples: the *advenisti desiderabilis* occurs in l. 21 (in the first poem it is at-

tributed to John the Baptist singing it in Limbo (Appendix 13a, l. 34); the *Christ is Risen* is sung this time not by the lay congregation but by all Creation: *de voege unde alle creaturen sunge ereme heren to groten eren: ›Crist is upstanden!‹* (»The birds and all creatures sang to the Lord in His honour: ›Christ is risen!‹« (Appendix 13c, ll. 55–58). The explanations demonstrate a number of word-for-word correspondences to Low German comments on the ›Exultet‹, such as *Stant vp, min lef, min spel* (l. 39) and the praise of the Trinity as a musical trio in which the Father equals the harp, the Son the organ and the Holy Ghost plays trombone (ll. 50–52).

A particularly intense intertextually charged section is the longest stanza (ll. 59–85), which constitutes a full ›Visitatio Sepulchri‹ in its own right (→ Mattern). The description of the visit to the Tomb ends with the Three Marys singing the *Leise Nun gnade uns das heilige Grab* (»Now may the Holy Sepulchre help us«, ll. 82–84), which occurs in most of the Easter prayer books from Medingen as part of the Easter celebrations. The mini-drama of the encounter starts with a dazzling picture of the three armed archangels at the Holy Sepulchre. Just as Christ as the ›jolly panther‹ (l. 49) jumps from the grave, the gleaming weapons (including a cross-bow) of Michael and Raphael strike down the guards through their sheer brightness. This was the iconography of the monumental sculpture of the Risen Christ containing the Holy Blood relic at Wienhausen, which was situated on the nuns' choir, where two angels could be placed on the Tomb. This iconography of the guardian angels and Christ jumping out of His grave became a defining feature of Wienhausen and circulated in small-scale copies and devotional images such as the one found under the floorboards there (→ Mattern).²¹ The three angels watch the women approaching before Gabriel, as the messenger, first informs his *kumpane* (fellow-champions, l. 69) of the arrival of the three »noble ladies« and then courteously welcomes them.

Every thought and every formulation in the loosely linked assonating verses displays points of contact to the textual network of the Latin and Low German prayer books. This close linguistic contact of prefabricated textual elements from two languages is not a chance encounter (or even linguistic laxness) but rather a theological programme. Bilingualism becomes part of the polyphony of devotion that envelops all nature. In working creatively with textual elements from Latin and Low German in their own devotional text production, the prayer books from the Lüneburg convents and the nuns composing them go far beyond a dogmatic exercise in allowing laypeople a token form of participation in the Easter service. By using the hymnic elements of both languages to interweave and spark off each other's metaphorical language to the point where a new bilingual textual unity is forged, they develop a mystical culture of their own, steeped in multilingual and multicultural traditions.

The three examples above demonstrate how bilingual text compositions emerge as an innovative form of devotional writing in Northern Germany. The amplificatory translation, as well as the Latin and vernacular writing on the basis of the liturgical subtext, equally allow the integration and combination of different strands of religious language and writing, ranging from the theological treatise via bridal mysticism to the vernacular song. Out of this encounter arises a new language of intimacy which crosses linguistic boundaries. In the Northern German production of bilingual devotional texts, monastic and mystical traditions are forged into an inter- and intra-textual network of considerable complexity.

²¹ Cf. Lähnemann, »Mittelniederdeutsch im Engelsgewand« (2013); a small scale copy from Rostock in *Krone und Schleier*, 453, Nr. 378.

Textual Appendix

The Latin–Low German Easter Meditation from the devotional book Hildesheim Stadtbibliothek, Best. 52, Ms. mus. 383, f. 33v–39r, has been selected to illustrate, first, the relationship between Latin and Low German in the devotional manuscripts from the Lüneburg convents; and, second, the key role played by the liturgy in vernacular text production. Some of the performance aspect of the liturgy was even retained in the poem since the Incipit *Epulemur* (13a, l. 45) is provided with staffless musical notation. Under the rubric *De dulcissima die Pasche*, two Low German Easter poems are linked by means of a Latin explanation. The second poem is also extant in another manuscript (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibl., Cod. 1082 Helmst., f. 39r–40v; cf. <http://www.mr1314.de/2714>).

The edition of both poems, including the division into short lines that follows, where possible, the rhyme structure, is based on Lipphardt, *Reimgebete*, pp. 71–73, consulting the edition of poem 2 by Holmberg, *Ostergedicht*, pp. 162–166. The text was checked against the manuscript; further normalisation (u/v/w; capitalisation; punctuation; hyphenation; restitution of missing nasal markers; correction of clear mistakes) and the linking Latin passage were added. Latin is marked by *italics*. The Latin text quotations are identified in the translation; most of them are from the Liturgy of Easter Day, specifically the ›Carmen Triumphale‹ (CT) *Cum rex glorie* about the rescue of the forefathers from Limbo, which forms the main basis for the narrative. Translation: editors.

13a) *De dulcissimo die Pasche*. A Poem in praise of King David

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p> Wo wart gi en vorste so lovelich
 also de hilge prophete konig David?
 Got hat selde an en ghelecht,
 sin harpe de clingt,
 5 rechte alse he spreke:
 »David is loves ghewert.«
 Van Adame is de werlt missenlunghen,
 van Davide sint mir selde untsprunghen.
 Van Adam was de werlt verloren,
 10 van konig Davide is uns en vorstenkint gheboren,
 dat zit an sineme trone
 unde dreget aller keyser cronen.
 An himele is it en herre,
 sin herberghe sochte he an der erde.
 15 Sin spel, sin lust unde al sin raste,
 dat is des minschen herte. </p> <p> Do dit vorsten kint gheboren wart,
 et was so minnichlik,
 it vorluchtet al dat himmelricke,
 20 It sende en groten schin vor de helle.
 Des vrowede sich vader koning David,
 unde alle sine selle;
 dat schin was en vorbode,
 dat de koning der ere dar striden wolde vore.
 25 Welik en koning dat was,
 <i>qui sternit portas ereas!</i>
 Adam rep to voren ut: </p> | <p> Where did there ever live a sovereign as
 praiseworthy as the holy prophet, King
 David? God has showered blessings
 upon him; his harp rings forth, just as
 if he were saying: »David is worthy of
 praise«. </p> <p> Through Adam, the world had lost its
 course; through David, for me bless-
 ings have blossomed forth. Through
 Adam, the world was lost; through
 King David, a royal child has been
 born unto us who sits on His throne
 and wears the imperial crown. In
 Heaven, He reigns as Lord, but He
 came down to dwell on earth. His play,
 His pleasure and His rest are the heart
 of man. </p> <p> When this royal child was born, it was
 so delightful that the whole Kingdom
 of Heaven was illuminated and a bright
 light was shone onto Hell. </p> <p> This delighted the father, King David,
 and all his companions; the light fore-
 told that the King of Glory there in-
 tended to fight. </p> <p> What a king this was <i>who smote brazen
 doors!</i> (Ps 106:16) Adam was the first
 to exclaim: »Behold the hands which </p> |
|---|--|

- »*Ecce manus qui me p[er]lasmaverunt*];
we sin ghelost!
- 30 De helle porte is tobroken,
De paradys es upghesloten.«
Dar hof de hohe Baptiste
dat hoghe edele
»*Advenisti desiderabilis!*«
- 35 Welich rutent, welich dringent,
welich ertbevinghe dar wart,
welich cloken grindent,
dar de leven sele »*Te nostra vocabant*« sunghen.
»*Tu factus es.*«
- 40 Dat was en sprung uter helle in den paradys.
Dar clang konig Davides harpe to voren ut:
»*Hec est dies quam fecit dominus,
exultemus et letemur in ea.*«
Dar trat des koninghes sone
- 45 silven den reyen to voren.
He sang dat sote »*Epulemur*«.
Dar weder clang de harpe:
»*Exultemus et letemur*«.

Dar sprunghen de *electi dei*
- 50 de sunghen alle: »*Laudem demus ei.*«
Dar worden de leven *testes glorie*
ghecronet mit niger ere.
- Wat wolde de leven konig David
do he silven sang:
- 55 »*Dextera domini exaltavit me?*«
He wart ghehoget an deme himeltrone.
Also saghet sin sone:
»*Et throno in conspectu meo.*«
- We is de dar steyt
- 60 vor deme speyghede der hilgen drevoldicheyt?
Dat is koning David de dar de harpen sleyt.
De harpe de clingt also:
»Din anghesichte an durent iaren
dunket mich en dach.«
- 65 He singhet och:
»Salich sint de uterwede,
de vor goddes oghen ghesamnet sint.«
Konig Davides gode dwinget mich,
dat ic sin lof bredden mot.
- 70 Sin gode het mic so lange drunghen,
dat draghe ich stille an mineme herten.
De untbint mic van manigher sorge,
beyde avent unde morghen.
Truwe vindich an eme an miner not.
- 75 War he ho an himmelrike

formed me (Prayer). We are saved! The door of Hell is shattered broken, Paradise is unlocked and open«. Then the lofty John the Baptist struck up the great and noble antiphon, »*You, the desired, have come!*« (CT) What a commotion, what turmoil, what an earthquake erupted there! How the bells rang when the dear souls sang »*Our (forefathers) called you*« (CT). »*You were made.*« Straight from Hell to Paradise this leap mankind conveyed.

There King David's harp rang out first: »*This is the day that the Lord made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.*« (Ps 117:24) There the King's Son Himself led the dance. He sang the sweet »*Let us eat*«. (Easter Liturgy) Then the harp rang out again: »*Let us rejoice and be glad.*« (Ps 117:24)

There *God's chosen* (Col 3:12) dancing sprang; there everyone together sang: »*Let us give Him praise*«. (Hymn) There the dear *witnesses of glory* (Hymn) were crowned with new honour.

What did dear King David wish when he himself sang: »*The right hand of God has exalted me?*« (Ps 117:16) He was exulted to Heaven's throne. Therefore his Son says: »*And on the throne in my face.*« (Ps 88:37)

Who is this who stands before the mirror of the Holy Trinity? This is King David who is playing the harp. The harp's song sounds thus: »The sight of Thy face for a thousand years seems but a mere day to me«. (Ps 89:4) He also sings: »Blessed are those elect who are gathered before the eyes of God«. (Sir 34:15)

King David's goodness urges me irresistibly to spread his praise. His goodness has so deeply impressed me that I carry it quietly against my heart. This releases me from many a care, at both the eve and the dawn of the day.

In my need I put my trust in him. Even if he were high above me in the

dar welde ich loven koning Davide.
 War ich och an der enghele scare,
 koning Davide neme ich dar ware.
 Ich wil de rede lenden,
 80 Davides lob steyt an ende.

Kingdom of Heaven, I would praise
 King David. Even if I were one of the
 angelic hosts, I would honour King
 David. I shall desist from speech; but
 David's praise knows no end.

13b) *De dulcissimo die Pasche*. David as Cantor

Emendations: 2 *inponitur* 8 *īdias*

*In sacratissimo die pasche,
 dum inponit summam missam
 affuit spallentibus David rex gloriosus,
 qui stetit coram altare,
 5 spallebat et cithara leticie:
 »Kyrie, fons...«.
 Cum stancibus stabat ad debellandum manu forti
 omnes invidias inimici.
 Cum spallentibus spallebat:
 10 »Illuxit dies«.
 Cum orantibus orabat dicens:
 »Benedic et sanctifica domum«.*

*On the most sacred day of Easter, while
 he sings High Mass, glorious King David
 was present among those who sang
 Psalms; he stood near the altar and also
 sang Psalms on the Zither of Joy: »Lord,
 fountain...«.* (Easter Liturgy)
*With those standing there, he stood fast to
 repel, with a mighty hand, all the enemy's
 invidious schemes. With those singing
 Psalms he sang the Psalm: »The day has
 shed its radiance«. (Sequence) With those
 praying, he prayed, saying: »Bless and
 sanctify the house«. (Liturgy)*

13c) *De dulcissimo die Pasche*. The Middle Low German Easter Poem

The text in the parallel manuscript W has been used to emend those points which were clearly misunderstandings. The original readings are as follows in HI: 44 *des vorsten* missing; 45 *de dar lach, de dar dot lach* 58 *Christus upstande* 59 *vroliken* 62 *Gabriel* 82 *se stunden dar mit truwen se sochten eren herren mit truwen*

Wol mi nu unde iummer mer,
 dat ik den lechten osterdach sach upghan.
 Dar moten de orgelen sote singhen
 de seyden sote clinghen
 5 unde alle herte van vrowenden untspringen!
 Ich sach in des morgenes rot upgan
 den allersconesten uterwelden man,
 den desse werlt gu gewan.
 Des moten de seyden sote clinghen,
 10 de orgelen sote singhen
 unde alle herte van vroweden untspringen!
 Dit is de wunschede osterdach,
 des me an der helle
 menich dusent iar gebeydet hat,
 van deme de propheten repen:
 15 »*Modo veniet!*«
 Des moten de seyden [...]
 Dit is de allerwoldigheste hosterdach,
 an deme got an siner sterke de helle tobrach,
 dar he van alle sinen holden

Blessed am I now and evermore, to see
 the bright Easter morning dawning.
 There let the organs sweetly sing;
 the strings sweetly ring and for joy
 all hearts leap and spring!
 In the dawning of the morning I saw
 rising the most beautiful chosen man
 that to grace it this world ever won.
 There let the strings sweetly ring;
 the organs sweetly sing and for joy
 all hearts leap and spring!
 This is the Easter Day so desired,
 awaited by those held in Hell for many
 millennia, of which the prophets cried
 out: »*Come soon!*« (Advent Chant)
 There let the strings ring etc.
 This is Easter Day most mighty, when
 God in His strength shattered Hell,
 where all those beloved of Him greeted

vroliken untfangen wart
 20 mit nigheme sangen,
 mit hogheme clanghe:
 »*Advenisti desiderabilis!*«
 Dar vorde he de vanen vore mit siner hant,
 he brachte dat verloren schaph
 25 woldichliken an sines vader lant.
 Des moten de sey[...]
 Dit is de lustelikeste osterdach,
 den de paradys van overlust
 nicht behalden mach,
 hene springhe van vroweden
 unde van gnaden
 30 unde vletet over alle de werlt.
 Des moten [...]
 Dit is de vroywdenrike dach,
 den got silven maket hat,
 en dach goltvar,
 35 boven alle sunnen clar.
 Des scolen de seyden [...]
 Dit is de benedigede hosterdach
 an deme de sone van sinem vader ghecronet wart,
 do he sprach:
 »*Exurge gloria mea, exurge!*«
 40 Ich wil mich silven di gheliken,
 nu tret hir vroliken an min rike.»
 Des scolen de seyden [...]
 Dit is de wunichlike osterdach,
 an deme dat hilge graf
 des vorsten berovet wart
 45 de dar dot lach,
 went an den dridden dach.
 Eya welich reyen dar wart
 van den enghelen unde wele sang
 do dat vil notlike panteriken
 50 ut deme grave sprang.
 Sin vader was de harpen clang,
 de sone de orghelen sang,
 de hilge geyst bles de basunen,
 dat himmel unde erde beveden van vrouwden.
 55 Gronenden unde blomeden de bome,
 de voghele unde alle creaturen
 sunghen ereme heren to groten eren:
 »Crist is upstanden!«
 Dit is de vrolike osterdach,
 60 an deme dat hilge graf
 an groter hode wol gheziret stat.
 Michahel unde Raphahel hebbet dar ghetogen

Him jubilantly singing a new song,
 uplifting hearts with its sound: »You,
 the Desired, have come!« (Easter
 Chant) There He led the way ahead,
 banner in His hand; mightily He
 brought the lost sheep back to His
 Father's land.

There let the etc.

This is the most delightful Easter Day,
 which Paradise, overjoyed, cannot stay
 from bursting forth, if it fails to over-
 flow, out of joy and out of grace, the
 world in its flow to embrace.

There let the etc.

This is the joyful Easter Day, forged by
 God Himself, a golden day, glowing
 brighter than any sun.

There let the strings etc.

This is the blessed Easter Day, when
 the Son was crowned by the Father and
 when He said: »*Arise my glory, arise!*«
 Just like you I wish to be, my kingdom
 now approach gladly.»

There let the strings etc.

This is the rapturous Easter Day, rob-
 bing the Holy Sepulchre of its sover-
 eign, He who had lain there dead,
 until the third day.

O what a dance the angels danced and
 what a song the angels sang when the
 little panther most merry sprang from
 the grave. His father was the ringing of
 the harp, the Son the singing of the
 organ, the Holy Ghost trumpeted on
 the trombone, so that Heaven and
 earth trembled with joy. The trees
 bloomed and blossomed, the birds and
 all creatures sang unto the Lord in His
 high honour: »Christ is risen!«

This is the joyful Easter Day, when the
 Holy Sepulchre is graced with a
 glorious guard of honour. There
 Michael and Raphael have drawn their

ere armborste unde eren boghen,
 65 ere schilde blenkeden dar vil scone,
 dat de ioden dar neder slaghen waren.
 Gabriel sat vil sachte dar
 unde nam der schonen vrowen war.
 He sprac: »Set gi umme, kumpane,
 70 hir comet edele vrowen dre gande!«
 »Willekome, gi vrowen,
 wene soke gi hir aldus vro morghen?«
 ›Eia, vil leve herre,
 we soket hir usen herren.›
 75 »He is hir nicht, he is upstan
 unde is to Galilea gegan.
 Lopet vil drade dar,
 he is to Galilea gan,
 gi vindet en al dar.«
 80 De vrowen stunden bi dem grave,
 se goten dar sote trane;
 se stunden dar mit truwen.
 Do se ene dar nicht vunden,
 se spreken mit herten unde mit munde:
 85 »Nu made uns dat heylige graf.«
 Dit is de keyserlike osterdach,
 den »al de werlt nicht vullen loven enmach.«
 Sin lof is so wit unde so breyt, vor alle daghe,
 de hymmel unde de erde besloten hat.
 90 Dit is de minnichlike osterdach,
 an deme des koniges sone van engelant
 siner leven brut toghevoget wart,
 de he solanghe vryet hat.
 He cledede sic ere to eren
 95 mit nyen rosittes clederen;
 he ghaf ere to ener morghengave
 den speyghel der hilleghen drevaldecheyt
 to bescowende an der tit der ewicheyt,
 an deme ere sele scal rasten unde suaven
 100 an der lust der ewigen salicheit.
 Dar scolen [...]

Dit is de allerherlikeste osterdach,
 an deme de brudegham al sinen luden
 grote werscap ghemaket het.
 105 He toch an sine vorstlike ere,
 he scorte umme sine siden
 eyn ghordel siner gotliken sterke.
 He was dar silven denestman,
 he nam dat benedide osterlam,
 110 dar ghing he umme ring
 alse en wunschet iungeling.
 He druckede alle den an ere herte unde an ere sele

cross-bows and their bows, their
 shields sparkling splendidly, so that the
 Jews were felled, falling. Gabriel very
 gently sat and observed the beautiful
 women. He said: »Look around,
 companions, three noble ladies are
 approaching!« »Welcome, my ladies,
 whom do you seek thus early in the
 morning?« ›Alas, my dear lord, we seek
 here our Lord.› »Not here is He, He is
 risen and is gone to Galilee. Swiftly
 run along, He is gone to Galilee. You
 will find Him there.« The women
 stood by the grave shedding sweet
 tears; they stood there loyally. When
 they did not find Him there, they said
 with heart and mouth: ›Now may the
 Holy Sepulchre graciously aid us.‹
 (Leise)

This is the imperial Easter Day, which
 »all the world cannot perfectly praise«
 (Leise). Its praise is so wide and so
 broad, above all days within the realm
 of Heaven and earth.

This is the lovely Easter Day, when the
 King's Son, sprung from land of the
 angels, was led to His dear bride,
 whom He had courted for so long. He
 robed Himself in her honour with new
 rose-hued garments; for her dowry He
 gave her the Mirror of the Holy
 Trinity to gaze into for everlasting
 eternity, when her soul shall rest and
 soar in the delight of eternal bliss.

There let etc.

This is the most magnificent Easter
 Day, when the bridegroom has
 prepared great entertainment for all His
 people. He donned His royal honour;
 He girded His loins with the band of
 His godly strength. He Himself was
 there the servant; He took up the
 blessed Easter lamb; there He went
 from man to man, a youth adorable as
 a dream. He pressed to His heart and
 His soul all those invited to eat at His

de to sineme dische gheladet weren.
 He sprak: »Etet alle dit paschelam,
 115dit is min vlesch unde min blot,
 des ewigen dodes sint ghy ghelost.
 Etet alle, et mit vroweden dit osterlam,
 de himmelporte is iu upghedan.«
 Varet nu alle mit vrowden hen
 120an de vryen stat to Jerusalem,
 dar is vroude manichvalt,
 unde saghet deme levendeghen undotliken lamme
 lof unde dank. Amen

table. He said: »Eat all of you this
 Easter lamb, this is my flesh and my
 blood, you are redeemed from eternal
 death. Eat all of you, eat this Easter
 lamb, and rejoice: Heaven's door is
 open to you«. Now travel, rejoicing, to
 Jerusalem, safe haven and home to
 manifold joy; and offer up to the living
 immortal Lamb praise and honour and
 thanks. Amen

Illustrations

Fig. 1: HI3 = Stadtarchiv Hildesheim, Best. 52 Nr. 379, f. 48v-49r (Rubric for Easter morning)

Fig. 2: HI5 = Stadtarchiv Hildesheim, Best. 52, Ms. 383, f. 3r (Beginning of the ›Exultet‹)

Fig. 3: HI5 = Stadtarchiv Hildesheim, Best. 52, Ms. 383, f. 35v-36r (The Latin praise of David linking the two Low German poems in the section ›De dulcissimo die Pasche‹)