The Ruusbroec Institute Library
Treasuring Spiritual Heritage of the Low Countries

A rich and living collection
of the Flemish Jesuits
at the University of Antwerp
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OF THE LOW COUNTRIES

A RICH
AND LIVING
COLLECTION
OF THE
FLEMISH JESUITS
AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF
ANTWERP
SOECKT, ENDE SVLT VINDEN.

1. Kiest een van de vier Evangelisten.
2. Draait van het rolleken, zonder engelsteken.
3. Siet, wat ghetal v. engelsteken heeft:
4. En wat v. Register op t.zelfde gheest.
5. Soerkt dan, daar t'spreekwoordt v. boorder wytst.
6. Kennenckt de figure; en datter wyt wyn.

Wie weet, wat Godt, midts Julck aenmercken,
Door tsien en lefen, int hert moght wercken.
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Johannes David, *Christeliicken waerseggher*, (Antwerp: Jan Moerentorf [Joannes Moretus i], 1603), p. 373
The Ruusbroec Institute (Ruusbroecgenootschap) is a research institute at the University of Antwerp focusing on the study of spiritual history and the mystical tradition in the Low Countries until the early twentieth century. The Institute was founded in 1925 by four Jesuit scholars and was integrated into the University of Antwerp in the 1970s. It is unique and its research output has been highly valued for over ninety years. Internationally renowned publications by members of the Institute include editions of and studies on the works of the mystics Jan van Ruusbroec and Hadewijch, and on Middle Dutch sermons.

The library was founded at the same time as the Ruusbroec Institute. Nowadays, it works closely together with the University Library, while its collections are still owned by the Jesuit congregation in Antwerp. The books have all been described in the university catalogue and both libraries join forces for exhibitions or acquisitions. The library of the Ruusbroec Institute is an up-to-date research and heritage library and is recognized as such by the Flemish Government. It has facilitated the Institute’s researchers for nearly a century, with acquisitions largely following trends in the Institute’s research. This has resulted in a coherent collection with an abundance of historic material that can be divided in three special collections: manuscripts, early printed books and devotional prints. Apart from these special collections the library owns a large number of primary sources from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (e.g. books on pilgrimages, Marian apparitions, etc.), and over 100,000 secondary sources (e.g. reference books, publications on devotional literature, publications on mysticism, etc.).

The manuscript collection at the Ruusbroec Institute Library counts 500 manuscripts – and over 100 medieval manuscript fragments – from the twelfth century to the twentieth century. The medieval manuscript collection is small, but there are several important manuscripts among the 35 codices, e.g. one with texts by Hadewijch. All other manuscripts are post-medieval, including an interesting group of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuscripts which shows that boundaries between hand written and printed books were not always as clear as we tend to think.

The core of the special collections at the Ruusbroec Institute Library consists of the 30,000 early printed books. This
collection can be divided in two sub-collections. (1) The incunabula and post-incunabula collection consists of ca. 270 items, most of them donated as permanent loans by the Jesuits from the Antwerp College of Our Lady (Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe-College) in 1998. Since this donation the Ruusbroec Institute Library houses the earliest known printed book from Flanders: a 1473 print by Thierry Martens from Alost. (2) The books printed before 1800 (in Dutch or Latin) are nearly all on Christian morality and private devotion, and often show marks of intensive use. Among them are books of prayer, books on miracles and Marian devotion, books on saints or on martyrs, books on mystics, on pilgrimages and on Jesuits, books with religious drama texts, etc. A large part of the works printed in Flanders in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been described in the Short Title Catalogue Vlaanderen (STCV).

The third special collection is the devotional prints collection. With an estimated 40,000 prints and drawings from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, it is unequalled in the Low Countries. Many of these prints were of Antwerp origin, Antwerp being an important Catholic stronghold in the Counter Reformation. There are a huge variety of prints in the collection. Some show scenes from the Gospels, others show saints; some have been decorated by adding pieces of cloth to ‘dress’ the saint on the print, while other prints have decorated
borders; some are printed, some are painted or drawn; all, however, intend to make the owner more pious.

For over ninety years the Ruusbroec Institute Library has facilitated the Institute’s researchers by collecting these materials, and over the years it has welcomed many international researchers with an interest in religious culture, mysticism and spirituality. We hope this brochure, highlighting some remarkable items from our collection, may serve as an invitation to welcome you too, one day, to our reading room..

**Further reading**

Dionysius Carthusienses (Speculum conversionis peccatorum)  
Alost, [Johannes de Westfalia and Thierry Martens], 1473, in–4°, [28] ff. RG–OLV 88 E 18

**Pierre Delsaerdt** is Professor at the Department of History of the University of Antwerp and part-time Professor at the research unit for History of the KU Leuven. He was President of Flanders Heritage Library from 2008 to 2016.

Many extant ascetic writings can be ascribed to the Limburg Carthusian Dionysius Carthusiensis (‘Dionysius van Rijkel’, 1402/03–1471). The Ruusbroec Institute has a fair share. His Speculum conversionis peccatorum [‘mirror of the conversion of sinners’] exhorts the reader to reflection and repentance.

This printed edition occupies a special place in the cultural history of the Southern Netherlands: it is the first dated book that was published there with the help of a printing press. Though the colophon only mentions that it was published ‘in Alost, in Flanders, in the year 1473’, it can be ascribed with certainty to the temporary cooperation between the German printer Johannes de Westfalia and the local Thierry (‘Dirk’) Martens.

The Ruusbroec Institute copy is the only complete one in a Belgian collection. It entered the library in 1998 when the Antwerp College of Our Lady divested itself of its collection of incunables. It is a modest publication of 28 folios forming part of a very special ‘sammelband’ (a binding containing several separate publications) with four titles issued by the Alost workshop in 1473 and 1474, and one Cologne impression from 1470. The sammelband has been numbered throughout by hand; a hand-written table of contents has been added at the beginning. It proves that the five texts were bound together early on. An inscription shows the volume once belonged to the priory Rooklooster, in Oudergem near Brussels.

When it arrived at the Ruusbroec Institute, the volume was bound in a nineteenth-century half leather binding; the materials used threatened the integrity of the body of the book. With the help of a private foundation it was possible to call upon the services of a conservation expert. She dismembered the binding, cleaned and repaired the bifolia and then rebound the separate parts together into a half parchment conservation binding with wooden boards. The nineteenth-century binding was kept as part of the historical documentation of the exemplar.

In the course of conservation, the University of Antwerp Library ensured that the complete book was digitised to a high quality. Its five components can now be leafed through virtually on Flandrica.be, portal site for digitised material from Flemish heritage libraries.
Speculum conversionis peccatorum magistri Dionysii
de Iuvatis altus fistet ordinis Cartusienis.

Onuertere ad dominum tuum qui quo
niam corruxisti in iniquitate tua. Osee x.
Cui peccasti sit auresio ac recessus metis
create a summo imenso t icoutabili
bono atque conversione quedam inordinata ad bonum
creatum caducent unam. Constat quomodo peccatum sit
maxima profundissima cum ruina. Utpote lapsus a
summo ad infimum: ab optio ad pessimum: a dignum
summo ad ulimum. Ideo peccator merito sub tristis
sois repellent meret ab alto altissimo ac scipitani i
profundissimum isserox: ut culpe correpodieat penae.
Cui
q. h. iot sit admoeneo te peccator ut relitto ipietatis
tue errore te ad inferos pertrabete ad tuum redeas
creatore ad tua salutis fontem. in q. sola tua constite
saly. Obsequo per abrupta abulas vicio est. Cur iti
nec quis tenebrosa ad terras moxitis caligie cooper
ta vocetia: aperi oculos cordis qui perpetas quo ten
das. Peccator. Quis tu qui me in reprehare vocere in
dicare presumis: Quis scripti sit. Quotid inter indicar
non indicabumini. iterum tu quis es qui indicas
Putas ne intelligis que allegas? Nonne sicut de o
cultis et ignorantibus indicare neetamur: sic de manifestis
indicarea liseniamur? Immo: sepe iubemur: quae ad
modum per Hopesz locutiz est vey. Juste indicavit proxim
mo tuo: cur ireparatione graniter accipis? Eunurus
per Hopesz locutiz est dominus: publice argue fra
trem tu. i. proximis tu peccantem ne habeas super
illo peccati. Cur no attedis quid Salom dixit? Viro
qui cognovit tem dura service contemnit repentinus

Tabula articulorum pridicit Speculum conversionis prid.

Prologus in quo iustus tere peccatum remitentem Captatio benivolietie senti.

Articulus

Capitulos inimici et usque ad tempus egritudinem Articulus

Declaratio per scriptura paulissimi uere in fine penuixerunt Articulus

Commemoratio horae quod delectionationum detestatione Articulus

Egregre crimen sit ad ligendum et aliqui sancti in nature leguntur concubina Articulus

De multis remediis cont Articulus

Exhortatio ad cupiditatem Articulus
Further reading


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*Above:* Speculum conversionis peccatorum, (Alost: [Johannes de Westfalia and Thierry Martens], 1473), colophon, f. 126r

*Below:* A conservation expert rebound the ‘Sammelband’ into a half parchment conservation binding with wooden boards © Boekrestauratie De Valk
When Jan Moerentorf published his magnificent Dutch language Bible in 1599, it was already 33 years since his father-in-law Christophe Plantin brought out the last Catholic Bible in Antwerp (1566). Admittedly there had been some separate editions of the New Testament but even that series had been concluded by his father-in-law in 1577. These were not good times for Catholic readers of the Bible: the iconoclastic movement and the arrival of the Duke of Alba, the setting up of Calvinistic republics in Antwerp and elsewhere and the reconquest by the Duke of Parma had led to confessional polarisation and economic decline. Not that Catholics were prohibited from reading the Bible, but the so-called fourth rule of the Index of the Council of Trent (1564) also introduced in the Netherlands, made the reading of it dependent on the prior authorisation of the Bishop. Caution...
was now required because freedom in reading – and interpretation – of the Bible had been partially responsible for the birth of Protestantism. That is the main reason why the Bible was no longer at the top of Catholics’ reading lists.

Moerentorf made a clear allusion to this long hiatus in Bible production in the prologue to his Dutch language Bible, which was marketed in two editions: one in his own name and the other in collaboration with Jan van Keerberghen (the image here shows a copy of the latter). In essence this Bible aims to offer a Dutch translation of the Sixto-Clementine Vulgate, which had been published in Rome in 1592 and which Moerentorf had been allowed to print in 1599 thanks to an exceptional privilege from the Vatican, an edition which is little-known. The theologians from the University of Louvain whom he consulted supported the translation project and supplied the publisher with the revision of the ‘Louvain Bible’ (1548), the official text of the Catholic Bible as edited by the Augustinian canon regular Nicolaus van Winghe from the monastery of Sint-Maartensdal in Louvain, which had now been adapted to the latest Roman Vulgate version.

As was required for Catholic Bibles, para-textual material was sober and kept to the minimal chapter summaries and cross-references to other Bible passages in the margins. This edition did contain some beautiful illustrations: those of the Old Testament were based on the Histories and Prophecies of Hans Sebald Beham and those of the New Testament were after the work of Bernard Salomon. Moerentorf’s Bible was to become the standard Bible for Catholics for the coming decades (and even centuries).

The example in the library of the Ruusbroec Institute was well used in any case, as can be seen from the wear and tear.

Further reading
Following the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church began a counter-offensive to win back lost souls. Jesuits especially thought of new ways to bind the faithful to the Church. In the first place they wanted to fire up the enthusiasm of the young. Johannes David, a Jesuit from Courtrai, packaged his catechism lessons in an attractive new way: a book with the title *Christian Soothsayer*. This title not only referred to a book telling the truth, but made young people think of fun, worldly books containing games, such as a spinning disc with which one could foretell the future.

David did not limit himself to an attractive title but went a step further. He wanted to exploit genres popular at the time such as emblem books. That is why he commissioned the Antwerp engraver Theodore Galle to make one hundred copper engravings to illustrate his lessons. Inspired by the example of the Jesuit Hieronymus Natalis, Galle illustrated several scenes in a story on one engraving and each time referred with a capital letter to the relevant passage in the commentary. In order to formulate the engraving’s message in a pithy way David placed a couplet in Dutch, French and Latin underneath as a motto. In this way it resembled an emblem book. Many of his colleagues followed his example so that Jesuit emblematics became a genre in its own right in the seventeenth century, one which became very popular. To make his book even more attractive, David organised it as a board game. Thus the reader could first spin the disc which referred to a verse from the Bible as well as to the engraving illustrating it.

When David offered his book to Jan Moretus the latter did not see the point of bringing out a Dutch language version. David subsequently translated his book into Latin in a few months and it appeared with the title *Veridicus christianus* in 1601. Such was its success that Moretus was willing to bring out the Dutch version the very next year.
Further reading

The Catholic Counter Reformation in the Southern Netherlands went hand-in-hand with the re-birth of traditional devotions to the saints. Humanists and reformers had dislocated the foundations of late medieval devotional culture, and the quasi permanent state of war following the confrontation between the Calvinist Northern Netherlands and the Spanish empire in 1568 had structurally disrupted the pilgrimage infrastructure of the Southern Netherlands. The institutional reforms of Archbishop Mathias Hovius (1596–1620), the relative peace during the Twaalfjarig Bestand (1609–1621) (Twelve Year Truce), and the religious zeal of archdukes Albert and Isabella (1598–1621) constituted fertile soil for the revitalisation of neglected traditions and the institution of new, mostly Marian devotions. Miracles, which were ascribed to figures or relics of saints by pilgrims, were noted down by local secular or regular clergy, then collected and published after episcopal approval in order to promote the cults. Some of these publications gave life to the belief that this growing stream of miracles could make profaned places sacred once again and heal recent war wounds.

An important stimulus to the publishing of miracle books in the seventeenth century was the success of Our Dear Lady of Scherpenheuvel. The Brussels city clerk Philips Numan (1550–1617) published four different miracle books between 1604 and 1617.
Their conservation in numerous reprints and translations into Latin, French, Spanish and English reflects the belief in the possibilities of the miraculous for the promotion of cultic propaganda and devotional guidelines. Inspired by the example of Scherpenheuvel, many miracle books were printed in order to promote larger and smaller places of Marian devotion such as Aarle, Kortenbos, Duffel, Jezus-Eik or Alsemberg. The Jesuits were the most active of all the orders in the publishing of miracle books. This was especially true in their promotion of the celebration of Ignatius of Loyola and Franciscus Xaverius, canonised in 1622.

Miracle books are the ultimate source material for a history of the religious culture of the Southern Netherlands. Their role was not confined to propagandistic pamphlets designed to draw as many visitors as possible to the altars of the saints. They were also devotional objects sold by hawkers in places of pilgrimage and used in sermons by local priests. In this way during the Catholic Counter Reformation in the Southern Netherlands they functioned as an important means for strengthening faith and for instructing lay people in their dealings with the supernatural. At the same time, especially in the first half of the century, they had an outspoken polemical and counter-reformational character and played an important part in confessional debates. Miracle books force us to question established religious and intellectual dividing lines (between religious ‘popular’ and ‘elite’ culture, and between ‘religion’ and ‘science’). Thus, the celebrated humanist Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) wrote no fewer than three Marian miracle books at the end of his life (to the consternation of his Calvinistic intellectual peers) and the internationally renowned anatomist Philippus Verheyen (1648–1710) published a miracle book on the miraculous healing of the Courtrai Jesuit Joannes Baptista Onraet (1678–1743) in 1708.
In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries millions of pious images were printed on the Antwerp printing presses. Most of them were exported to the four corners of the Catholic world. For home consumption, the Antwerp printers also published specific images, focused on local devotion in the city’s churches. Richly decorated churches form an important part of civic pride. Here the Antwerp elite was able to show its power and status. The Catholic Church ruled the daily life of people in a way that we can no longer imagine. The ordinary believer had a hard life. Illness and death were the order of the day and poverty was a given. This is why he/she sought solace and certainty in these churches. Here they could experience heaven on earth, a resplendent sanctuary where all their questions could be answered, where they could have the ear of the mother of God, and the support of numerous saints each of whom had a speciality that could improve their quality of life.

The church of St James in Antwerp is a rare example of church building that has retained its baroque interior almost intact. Already in the fourteenth century there was a chapel devoted to St James the Greater. This was re-
Illness, poverty, fire and even life after death became palpable in the church of St James. Devotional pictures testify to this. Over time most of them, torn and fingered, disappeared into the bin. Most collectors hardly looked after them. They are, after all, unremarkable, often crude and too sentimental. Luckily their importance has now been recognised. The Ruusbroec Institute is currently the proud owner of a valuable collection of devotional pictures which are of inestimable value in understanding the spiritual life in Antwerp during the Baroque.

Further reading
Between the years 1999 to 2008 a team at the Ruusbroec Institute worked together with the Free University of Amsterdam on a repertory of Middle Dutch sermons. In 2006, one of the collaborators on this project, Daniël Ermens, received a microfilm from an office colleague, Marleen Cré, which she in turn had received from a researcher friend in England. The manuscript on this microfilm turned out to contain the complete cycle of 72 sermons *Jhesus collacien*, as well as other texts, mostly prayers, meditations and exercises, including an unknown sermon by a Franciscan from Malines Josse van de Borght (Judocus a Castro, † 1634). Thanks to the persistent detective work of Daniël Ermens, the actual manuscript was traced. It was privately owned and after the death of the descendants it was offered for sale. The University of Antwerp bought it in 2013 for its library and loaned it to the Ruusbroec Institute for further research. The University of Antwerp Library and the library of the Ruusbroec Institute work together in various ways and indeed they received the label ‘Heritage Library’ jointly.

The most comprehensive text in the manuscript is the series of 72 fictional sermons known by the titles *Jhesus collacien* and *Lelienstock* (‘Branch of lilies’). These sermons are addressed by Jesus and the Holy Spirit in as many apparitions to a sister from a convent of Franciscan tertiaries during Lent. The manuscript, now in Antwerp, seems to date from the first decades of the seventeenth century and is therefore later than other versions of this text which seems to have its origin in the second half of the fifteenth century. However, this version contains an uncorrupted text which is important for the study of its transmission and reconstruction.

The other texts contained in the manuscript point in the direction of a convent of tertiary sisters, either Franciscan or Carmelite, and late descendants therefore of the circle for whom *Jhesus collacien* was originally written.

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*Thom Mertens* is Professor at the Ruusbroec Institute, Faculty of Arts of the University of Antwerp. He is also editor-in-chief of *Ons Geestelijk Erf* and the former Director of the Ruusbroec Institute.
Further reading


This duodecimo manuscript prayer-book consists of prayers and spiritual exercises written to accompany a sequence of twenty-two small engravings mainly focusing on the life of the Virgin, of which four are missing. The engravings were cut down (generally to the plate mark), pasted in, and edged with scribal ornaments inked in red. The majority derives from a print series finely executed by an anonymous master, who based his set on the Beatae intactae semper Virginis Mariae vita, engraved by Jan Collaert after designs by Jan van der Straet and published by Adriaen Collaert in 1585–1595. Other plates in the prayerbook are variants of devotional prints issued by Hieronymus Wierix before 1619.

One of the prints, The Infant Jesus Carrying the Cross [f. 130r], has been illuminated: transparent carmine calls attention to the tender flesh of Christ; gold gilt underscores the importance of the cross, crown of thorns, via crucis, and temple of Jerusalem. Written freely and expertly in black ink, with numerous rubrics, the bulk of the manuscript, comprised by folios 1r to 153r, was the work of one scribe. The likely date of production was the first quarter of the seventeenth century. As is evident from the book’s opening invocation
of Saints Catherine and Barbara, its emphasis on the Marian privilege of bearing and rearing Christ, as well as its frequent references to *sonderse* [female sinner], Hs 452 must have been made for a votaress, probably a nun or beguine.

Between 1590 and 1630, Antwerp was the center of production for manuscript prayerbooks of this type, organized around an apparatus of small devotional prints engraved in the miniaturist style perfected by the Wierix and Collaert workshops. Designed for the use of priests, monks, nuns, and beguines, they functioned as meditative complements to the breviary and missal. The prayers are highly personalized, often spoken in the voice of the original owner, and they closely align with the pictorial images around which the various orationes are structured.

To take one example from Hs 452, *The Infant Christ Carrying the Cross* anchors a sequence of Eucharistic prayers that urge the votaress to visualize the arduous labors (‘arbeijden’) borne by Jesus from infancy to adulthood, for the benefit of humankind [f. 129v]. His laborious and effortful life is contrasted with his tender humanity (‘hoe schoen, hoe soet, hoe liefelijck sijt ghij’), in analogy to the adjacent print, which jarringly conjoins imagery of the Infancy and the Passion [f. 130v]. The point of this exercise is to ‘soften’ the votaress’ ‘wicked, iron-hard heart’ (‘boose ijseren hert’) [f. 131v], opening it to the loving presence of Christ in the Eucharist (‘ende geopent werden ende u ontfaen metter alder vierichste begeerte’) [f. 133v], so that she shall choose henceforth to labor indefatigably in word and deed on his behalf (‘van mij het wereck mynder handen die woerden mijns monts’) [f. 129v]. Here and elsewhere in Hs 452, the emphasis falls on enlivening the votaress’ eyes, her faculties of corporeal and spiritual vision, thereby to facilitate her affective engagement with Christ: ‘And let me not with listless eyes meditate your innocent death, but instead grant me, poor worm that I am, always to consider with a mournful, constant heart the bitterness of your Passion’ (‘Maer gheeft mij eermen arwor een rouwich hert ghedarich in u bietter passie altijt ghedencken’) [f. 147v].
Some important sources for research into the religious history and culture of Flanders are archivilia and Catholica: pious books and manuscripts. Less well-known sources for research in this area are devotional prints or ‘prayer pictures’. These little pictures were disseminated from Antwerp throughout Europe and beyond at the time of the Catholic Counter Reformation. They served, in addition to the imagination of belief, as an important aid to prayer.

During the Early Modern period many people experienced the calling to follow Christ. Thousands of women united themselves via a mystical wedding with their heavenly groom and in the process made the vow of chastity. Most of these spiritual virgins or spiritual daughters (filiae devotae), however, in contrast to nuns, remained ‘in the world’ and were active in education and handiwork (e.g. embroidery and lacemaking). (Semi) religious women were a definite majority in relation to their male counterparts. In the northern Netherlands such spiritual virgins or daughters were popularly called ‘klopjes’ whereas in Flanders they were called ‘kwezels’. The ‘quesel’ depicted on page 8 stems from a series of representations of religious dress in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In their daily lives the virgins made full use of devotional prints. In Antwerp millions of these pictures were printed to inspire a virtuous life following Christ, His mother Mary and the saints. On one of these prints two Spiritual Virgins are pictured together with their main exemplar Mary. They are in the process of receiving a meditation lesson from her while doing their handiwork.
A particularly rare combination of word and image is constituted by a detailed prayer picture _Seer heylige en profytelycke dagelycx morgens opdracht_, made by the Antwerp printer and bookseller Hendrik Thieullier from 1710. In the middle a virgin is meditating on the four last things: death, the last judgement, heaven and hell. Around it are printed some texts: a pious prayer to the Father and how one can follow Christ throughout the entire week in His suffering. This print was kept in a book, but was meant to hang on the wall as a reminder. Although probably printed in large numbers, this is the only surviving example, a fate that befell many of them.

These three unique sources of the spirituality of the Spiritual Virgins come from the rich legacy of professor Alfon K.L. Thijs. Together with his friend Filip Lemmens he has contributed much to our knowledge of devotional representation. Following his death in 2014, the pictures were bought by the University of Antwerp Library and loaned to the large existing collection of pious pictures of the Ruusbroec Institute Library to aid research into the history of devotion during the Early Modern period.

**Further reading**


During the winter of 1932–1933, a number of Marian apparitions were reported in the Walloon towns of Beauraing and Banneux. The events in the first locality received a great deal of news coverage and Beauraing was overwhelmed by visitors, whereas the apparitions in Banneux did not seem to interest many people. Nevertheless, there too, a promotional campaign started and already in April 1933 (a month after the events) Leo Olivers, a Dutch visitor, was able to purchase a little booklet on the apparitions. It was a richly illustrated work of 62 pages and was written at the request of Rex, publishers of the Catholic Action. Léon Degrelle, who was in charge of the publishing house, saw the commercial potential of such a publication. Similar publications on Beauraing had quickly brought financial health to the ailing company. To promote Banneux, Degrelle contacted Amand Géradin, a lawyer by training (and poet by calling), who had written for Rex before. It did not take long before a translation of his *Des apparitions à Banneux* appeared to stimulate the interest of Flemish readers in the Banneux apparition.
The Ruusbroec Institute Library does not only own these two booklets, the French and Dutch versions, but also a whole series of other brochures, cobbled together, sometimes in great haste, for the interested reader. They are testimony, not only to the commercial nous of many publishers, but also to the ambitions and convictions of the promoters of such places of miraculous apparitions. By bringing such works into circulation they drew attention to these miraculous phenomena and kept interest in them alive until they were recognized by the Church and these localities developed into nationally recognised holy places. Other booklets, however, testify to the failed ambitions of, and fading interest in, non-recognised localities. Géradin’s works did not miss the target and that one Dutch visitor who in April 1933 still returned critically-minded from Banneux later testified that it was the small booklet that finally convinced him and turned him into one of the most powerful promoters of the affair in the Netherlands.
A start was made on the latter at the end of the 1960s, again under the direction of the Ruusbroec Institute. The first two volumes appeared in 1981 with the title Jan van Ruusbroec, Opera Omnia (Tielt, Leiden, Brill, 1981–2006); and the project was completed in 2006 (volumes 1–10, Turnhout, 1988–2006). The first complete edition of the works of Ruusbroec in the original language was by Jan Baptist David (1801–1866), Werken van Jan van Ruusbroec. Ghent, C. Annoot-Braeckman, 1858–1868. As professor of National Language and Literature at the Catholic University of Louvain, the development of a Flemish written language was close to his heart. His interest in Ruusbroec was therefore linguistically inspired although canon David also appreciated Ruusbroec’s mystical-literary qualities.

In the context of the 550th anniversary of Ruusbroec’s death in 1931 the demand for a new edition of his works arose. David’s small print-run was long exhausted and given the philological shortcomings a reprint was not desirable. That is why the newly founded Ruusbroec Institute of 1925 gave itself the task of providing a new edition: Jan van Ruusbroec, Werken. Malines/Amsterdam, Het Kompas/De Spieghel, 1932–1934. A revised edition appeared in 1944–1948 at Tielt with Lannoo. This publication was perfectly suited to the spirit driving the Institute at that time: religious zeal, social awareness and the promotion of Flemish culture. But this jubilee publication only gave the editors limited time for their work and already in the introduction the wish for a ‘definitive critical edition’ was expressed.

A start was made on the latter at the end of the 1960s, again under the direction of the Ruusbroec Institute. The first two volumes appeared in 1981 with the title Jan van Ruusbroec, Opera Omnia, and the project was completed in 2006 (volumes 1–2, Tielt/Leiden, Lannoo/Brill, 1981 and 1–10, Turnhout/Tielt, Brepols/Lannoo, 1988–2006). The edition of the Middle Dutch text rests on a critical examination of as many textual sources as possible. It is accompanied by an English translation and the Latin translation of Surius (1552), which for many centuries was the entry point to the works of the master for the European intelligentsia as well as forming the basis for translations into modern vernaculars up to the end of the nineteenth century.
Given the scope and price of this edition there was now a demand for a more compact one. This has been published as *The Complete Ruusbroec. English Translation with the Original Middle Dutch Text*. Brepols, Turnhout, 2014, once more through the good offices of members of the Ruusbroec Institute.

**Further reading**

Hadewijch (ca. 1240) left a many-faceted mystical legacy. In the fourteenth century her Visions, Letters, Stanzaic Poems (also: Songs) and Mixed Poems (also: Rhyming Letters) were gathered into one volume manuscripts, a privilege usually reserved only for important religious authors. Yet her work, in contrast to Ruusbroec’s, was not disseminated widely nor continuously. One of the last traces of its reception in the Middle Ages is a partial manuscript dated circa 1500, kept by the Ruusbroec Institute (Hs. Neerl. 385 ii). Shortly after, Hadewijch was forgotten.

In 1838 two manuscripts with her collected works were rediscovered in the Belgian National Library (KBR) in Brussels (ms. A en B) and a third collection was later found in the University Library at Ghent (ms. C). The Ghent manuscript was the base manuscript of the first critical edition in three volumes of Hadewijch’s works in prose and poetry by Jozef van Mierlo sj (1908–1912).

Between 1908–1912 and 1952 Van Mierlo, a co-founder of the Ruusbroec Institute in 1925, published Hadewijch’s works a second time in the series Leuvense Studiën en Tekstuitgaven. These editions formed the basis of a steadily-growing national and international study of Hadewijch, of which the findings are currently being incorporated into a new edition of the collected works, edited by Veerle Fraeters (Ruusbroec Institute) and Frank Willaert (ISLN, Institute for the Study of Literature in the Low Countries).

Part one, Liederen [Songs], was published in 2009 by Historische Uitgeverij Groningen. It provides the original Middle Dutch text based on the oldest manuscript (ms. A), a modern translation, a thorough introduction and a detailed commentary for each song. The musicologist L.P. Grijp reconstructed the melodies to which Hadewijch presumably wrote her poems. The songs are vocalized on four enclosed CDs. Hadewijch, Liederen was rewarded the Kruyskamp-prize of the Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde [Society of Dutch Literature, Leiden] for best edition of the last six years. The book has been translated into German (De Gruyter, 2016), Hungarian (L’Harmattan, 2016) and French (Albin Michel, 2017).

Veerle Fraeters is Professor and currently Director at the Ruusbroec Institute, Faculty of Arts of the University of Antwerp. She is also on the editorial board of Ons Geestelijk Erf.
Colophon

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