Dieuwke van der Poel, Louis Peter Grijp, and Wim van Anrooij, eds.

Identity, Intertextuality, and Performance in Early Modern Song Culture. Leiden: Brill, 2016. Pp. xx + 378. Hb, \$181.

This book, which consists of an introduction and thirteen chapters, derives from papers read at a conference held in Amsterdam in 2012 under the auspices of the project Dutch Songs On Line / Dutch Song Database (<http://www.liederenbank.nl/index.php?lan=en>). As the editors state in the introduction, the main aim of the book is to inaugurate and foster a new, comparative approach in early modern song scholarship. Song is understood here as “what ordinary people sing” (1) without the need of any special skill or education in music, including such different genres as religious hymns performed by congregations, drinking songs intoned in taverns, love songs, lullabies, political songs, and broadside ballads. The repertory of art song is thus basically excluded although a certain degree of permeability between these domains must be taken into account.

Scholarship on this immense and heterogeneous corpus is still sparse (with the exception of certain geographical areas) and fragmented (both chronologically and geographically) for various reasons. On the one hand, only in the last decades have we come to contemplate the early modern era in its *longue-durée* dynamics. On the other hand, until very recently, “everyday” songs have interested historians and literary scholars more often than musicologists. Therefore, local traditions and linguistically homogeneous corpora have attracted more attention than transnational and trans-linguistic phenomena. This state of affairs is still evident in the composition of the team of contributors to the present book: most are professors of Dutch, English, and German literature or historians (at times cultural historians with a focus on music), whereas only one is an ethnomusicologist and there is not a single historical musicologist in the group.

As noted, the concept of the book is to gather together a series of studies regarding various song traditions in different regions and periods (from late medieval Germany to Romantic-era Wales), aiming to show how a comparison between these cases may help us recognize and define a pan-European song culture in the early modern era. The proposed areas studied are those spotlighted in the book’s title: issues of identity, intertextuality, and performance.

Song was (and still is) an eminently versatile medium. As we learn in reading the chapters, songs travel and are disseminated in many different ways, including written medias and oral transmission. Song texts are altered or repurposed, song tunes are re-used, and all sort of contrafacta can derive from

different operations over time. Songs are performed in a wide variety of occasions but also presented as gifts and collected. They may have different intended publics and convey cultural, social, religious, and political meanings. Ordinary people use and experience songs in their private or social spheres, but special brokers of songs also enter into play: from schoolmasters to missionaries and priests, and from political figures to Romantic “reinventors of traditions” (274).

A fresh theme that emerges from the book is the role that songs had in early modern social networking as important elements in the self-fashioning and self-representation of individual and collective identities. As demonstrated in the investigation of *alba amicorum* (handwritten notebooks “used to share poems, lyrics, pictures, emblems, paintings and other types of inscriptions” [160]), songs were particularly important in early modern youth culture and women’s culture, notably in building and displaying identity and negotiating social relationships in the years before marriage.

Early modern Jesuits were active brokers of songs in many European countries (from Italy to France, Germany, and Bohemia) as well as in the overseas missions. They used songs to teach the catechism, to disseminate their religious message, and to help the faithful pray and express their interior life. Even though the repertory of Jesuit songs is not specifically discussed in this book, the essays gathered here nevertheless provide useful context and food for thought to those interested in this subject. Various chapters show how songs were ubiquitously used as vehicles of religious content, be it for Pietism in rural Holland, Lutheranism in Sweden, or Catholicism in Flanders. The study of hymn singing by Ingrid Åkesson demonstrates how this activity reflected the complex and sometimes conflicting interaction between individual, local, and religious identities. Guilielmus Bolognino (1590–1669) was a diocesan priest and catechist in Antwerp; as we learn from the chapter by Hubert Meeus and Tine de Koninck, he used dialogic songs embedded in didactic plays as catechetical tools. His way of proceeding with songs is therefore intriguingly similar to that of contemporary Jesuits in neighboring French and Belgian provinces.

Among the ingredients of songs (including literary text, melody, and aspects related to performance), melody is certainly, and somewhat paradoxically, the most neglected in this book. This is partially explained by the loss of many early modern melodies, but is surely also the result of the predominantly historical-literary approach of the contributors, as discussed above. An outstanding exception is the chapter by Christopher Marsh, who provides a monographic treatment of an individual tune. *Fortune my Foe* was probably “the best-known secular melody in early modern England”: in detailing how the tune “moved around, connecting all sorts of people and all sorts of lyrics”

(308), Marsh offers thought-provoking considerations on the “mediating role of melody” (309).

Identity, Intertextuality, and Performance in Early Modern Song Culture is a welcome addition to our knowledge of the arena of communication in early modern Europe. The book is a groundbreaking foray into a very promising field: a field which will surely benefit, on the one hand, from the powerful scholarly infrastructures currently under construction (from the Dutch Song Database to the English Broadside Ballad Archive, <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/>), and on the other from a progressively more intensive interchange between musicologists and other scholars of the early modern era.

Daniele V. Filippi

University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Northwestern Switzerland, Academy
of Music, Schola Cantorum Basiliensis

dyfilippi@runbox.com

DOI 10.1163/22141332-00403007-08