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Continuities and Discontinuities in the Production and Reception of Middle Dutch Narrative Literature

Abstracts: In this article, we argue that in the development of Middle Dutch narrative literature three stages can be distinguished. In the first phase, indicated in this contribution as ‘Middle Dutch narrative literature in manuscripts’, authors of romances stuck to verse instead of prose, and stopped writing these texts after the middle of the fourteenth century. Between c. 1400 and c. 1470, Middle Dutch romances were only read in the eastern part of the Low Countries, in aristocratic circles, and not in Flanders or Brabant, the central parts of the region. The second phase, indicated as ‘Holland’, witnessed the reintroduction of Middle Dutch narrative literature by means of the printing press around 1470. In small towns located in the northern parts of the Low Countries, early printers produced prose narratives that had a strong didactic bias. These texts were adaptations of both Latin sources and Middle Dutch verse texts available in manuscript copies. The output of these printers included, in addition, editions of well-known verse narratives. The third phase, indicated as ‘Antwerp’, started with the shift of the production of printed texts from Holland to the metropolis of Antwerp in the 1480s. Antwerp printers looked for appealing sources outside of the Low Countries and adapted their material in order to attract both readers who were interested in new texts and readers who preferred texts which belonged to an established literary tradition.

Dans cet article, nous tâchons de démontrer que la littérature narrative en moyen néerlandais s’est développée en trois étapes. Dans la première phase, que nous avons appelée ‘littérature narrative moyen néerlandaise transmise par manuscrits’, les auteurs rédigeaient leurs romans en vers et non en prose, et ils arrêtaient d’en produire vers le milieu du quatorzième siècle. Entre c. 1400 et c. 1470, les romans en moyen néerlandais n’étaient lus que dans des milieux aristocratiques situés dans les régions orientales des anciens Pays-Bas; par contre, dans le comté de Flandre et le duché du Brabant, ils paraissent être tombés dans l’oubli. La seconde étape, que nous appelons ‘La Hollande’, voit la réintroduction, à partir de 1470 environ, de textes narratifs en moyen néerlandais mais uniquement en tant que livres imprimés. Dans plusieurs petites villes situées dans le Nord des anciens Pays-Bas, des pionniers de l’imprimerie produisaient des textes narratifs en prose à forte tendance didactique. Ces textes étaient des adaptations de sources latines aussi bien que de textes néerlandais en vers, disponibles sous forme manuscrite. Ces imprimeurs produisaient, en

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outré, des éditions de textes narratifs en vers qui étaient restés bien connus. La troisième étape, intitulée ‘Anvers’, commence avec le transfert, dans les années 1480, de la production de textes imprimés de la Hollande vers la ville d’Anvers. Les imprimeurs anversois étaient constamment à l’affût de sources attrayantes en dehors des Pays-Bas, et adaptaient ces matériaux d’une telle façon qu’ils pouvaient intéresser aussi bien des lecteurs à la recherche de nouveaux textes que des lecteurs préférant des textes appartenant à une tradition littéraire bien établie.

In this article, we present some observations on the development of Middle Dutch narrative literature during the transitional period from manuscript to print. We will point out continuities and discontinuities, starting in the thirteenth century and ending around the middle of the sixteenth century. We have identified three successive stages: Middle Dutch narrative literature in manuscripts, printed Middle Dutch narrative literature in Holland and, lastly, printed Middle Dutch narrative literature in Antwerp. These stages will be discussed below in three sections. In each of these sections, we will take into account the interplay between Dutch and non-Dutch (German, French and, where appropriate, English) narrative literature.

1 Middle Dutch Narrative Literature in Manuscripts

Although we subscribe to a long and established scholarly tradition when using the term ‘Middle Dutch’ in this article, it should be noted that it may imperil an adequate understanding of the literary situation in the medieval Low Countries. Two problems stand out. Firstly, the term suggests a clear-cut boundary between Dutch and German, whereas in the Middle Ages the Germanic dialects written between the North Sea and the Alps were perceived as a linguistic continuum.¹ Secondly, the term makes us all too easily forget the regional diversity within the literary landscape that we identify today with the territories where Dutch is the main language.² In this context, we may note that an often forgotten border that really mattered for narrative literature in Middle Dutch is the river Scheldt, which, until the Treaty of Cambrai (the so-called ‘Ladies’ Peace’), in 1529, separated the greater part of the county of Flanders, still part of the kingdom of

¹ Luc de Grauwe, ‘Das historische Verhältnis deutsch-niederländisch “revisited”. Zur Nicht-Existenz von Einheitsarealen im Sprachbewußtsein des Mittelalters und der beginnenden Neuzeit’. In: *ABäG* 35 (1992), p. 191–205.

² Frank Willaert, *De ruimte van het boek. Literaire regio’s in de Lage Landen tijdens de middel-eeuwen*. Leiden 2010 (Negentiende Bert van Selm-lezing).

France, from the rest of the Low Countries, which belonged to the German Empire. Arthurian romances and narratives featuring Charlemagne and his vassals, either indigenous texts or translations from Old French sources, seem mainly to have been produced in the county of Flanders, during the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries.³ Apart from a few exceptions, most of the Dutch narratives composed in the duchy of Brabant do not belong to these two types of texts. Moreover, they mostly date from the first half of the fourteenth century and often deal with themes that were appropriated into Brabantine (legendary) history.⁴ This does not mean, however, that Arthurian and Charlemagne romances were unknown in Brabant: Flemish narratives seem to have been eagerly imported into the territories east of the river Scheldt.⁵ The opposite is not the case: Flanders seems to have ignored the Middle Dutch literary production from elsewhere almost entirely, including romances.⁶

³ See the survey in Bram Caers, 'Een *buchelin* inn flemische. Over ontstaan en verspreiding van de ridderepiek in de Nederlanden (ca. 1150–1450)'. In: *TNTL* 127 (2011), p. 223–251, here p. 225–226. The following titles, listed by Caers, are Arthurian romances that originated in Flanders: *Wrake van Ragisel*, *Fergaut*, *Perchevael*, *Lanceloet en het hert met de witte voet*, *Walewein*, *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*, *Queeste van den Grale*, *Arturs doet*, *Lanceloet*, *Moriaen*, *Riddere metter mouwen*. Caers also lists the following epics concerning Charlemagne and his Peers in Flanders: *Floovent*, *Renout van Montalbaen*, *Roelantslied*, *Vlaamse Aiol*, *Karel ende Elegast*, *Ogier van Denemarken I* and *II*, *Geraert van Viane*, *Madelgijs* and *Huge van Bordeeus*. For the classification of these narratives as Charlemagne epics, see Bart Besamusca, *Repertorium van de Middelnederlandse Karelepiek. Een beknopte beschrijving van de handschriftelijke en gedrukte overlevering*. Utrecht 1983. For the dates of origin of all these and other chivalric epics, see Bram Caers and Mike Kestemont, 'Over de datering van de Middelnederlandse ridderepiek'. In: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 121 (2011), p. 1–59.

⁴ This is clearly the case with the epics *Godevaert metten baerde* and the *Grimbergsche oorlog* (Remco Sleiderink, "'Une si belle histoire de nos propres seigneurs.'" La noblesse brabançonne et la littérature en néerlandais (première moitié du XIVe siècle)'. In: *Le Moyen Âge* 113 (2007), p. 549–567, esp. p. 555–557) and has also been argued with reference to the very successful *Heinric en Margriete van Limborch* (Remco Sleiderink, *De stem van de meester. De hertogen van Brabant en hun rol in het literaire leven (1106–1430)*. Amsterdam 2003 (Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen 25), p. 111–112). Other Brabantine narratives from the first half of the fourteenth century include a translation of the *Chastelaine de Vergi*, *Cassamus* (based on the *Vœux du paon*), *Florimont*, a prose translation of the *Lancelot propre* and Lodewijk van Velthem's translation of the *Suite-Vulgate du Merlin*.

⁵ Willaert (see note 2), p. 18–21; Caers (see note 3), p. 234–238 and 241–244.

⁶ Willaert (see note 2), p. 22–25; Caers (see note 3), p. 241.

As far as narrative texts are concerned, the northern parts of the Low Countries feature only works by Jacob van Maerlant. In the second half of the thirteenth century, members of the comital family of Holland-Zeeland and associated aristocrats commissioned this Flemish cleric to write a number of verse romances: *Alexanders geesten* (c. 1260), a translation of the *Alexandreis* by Walter of Châtillon, the *Historie vanden Grale/Merlijn* (c. 1261), an adaptation of French prose versions of the *Joseph d’Arimathie* and *Merlin* by Robert de Boron, the Arthurian romance of *Torec* (c. 1262), based on the now lost Old French *Torrez ou le chevalier du cercle d’or*, and the *Historie van Troyen* (c. 1264), based on the *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de St. Maure, followed by an adaptation of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. According to Frits van Oostrom, who published a groundbreaking monograph on Jacob van Maerlant, all these works, however diverse they might be, are the result of the wishes of the tutors of the future count Floris V – who had become fatherless when only two years old – to provide him with appropriate role models, combining chivalric and princely virtues (Alexander, Arthur, Torec, Eneas), and to inculcate a sense of his royal lineage into him – as his father William II had not only been count of Holland and Zeeland, but also king of the Romans.⁷ With the exception of *Torec*, the aforementioned works can only be considered romances in one particular sense, as Maerlant had clearly intended to write trustworthy historical accounts. Later in his career, when he discovered the existence of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae* and Vincent of Beauvais’ *Speculum historiale*, which he translated into Dutch, he felt cheated by the unreliable fantasies of these “scone Walsche valsche poeten, die meer rimen dan si weten”.⁸

Nearly all Middle Dutch romances were composed between 1200 and c. 1350.⁹ Many fourteenth-century narratives differ from the earlier ones in that they are generally quite long, feature many characters, have a complicated

7 Frits van Oostrom, *Maerlants wereld*. Amsterdam 1996, p. 324: “[Maerlants] vroege werk [...] staat voor een groot deel in het teken van het koningschap: alle verhalen handelen over jonge edellieden op weg naar majesteit.”

8 Jacob van Maerlant’s *Spiegel historiael, met de fragmenten der later toegevoegde gedeelten bewerkt door Philip Utenbroeke en Lodewijc van Velthem*. Ed. by M. de Vries and E. Verwijs. Vol. 3. Leiden 1863, p. 204 (IV, book I, cap. XXIX, 27–28). Translation: “these beguiling French poets, who versify beyond their competence”. See Van Oostrom (see note 7), p. 319 and 337.

9 Caers and Kestemont (see note 3), p. 16–38. The early exceptions are Veldeke’s *Eneas*, the Limburg *Aiol*, *Floyris ende Blantseflur* and *Henric ende Claredamie*, which all originated in the eastern part of the Low Countries, and possibly *Wisselau* and *Nevelingenlied*, that are mostly thought to have originated in the duchy of Brabant.

narrative structure, tend toward ‘realism’, do not eschew superlatives and exaggerations and make use of very diverse sources.¹⁰ Examples include *Heinric en Margriete van Limborch*, *Seghelijn van Jherusalem*, *Hughe van Bordeeus* (Huon de Bordeaux), Lodewijk van Velthem’s *Merlijn* Continuation, *Madelgijs* and *Ogier van Denemerken*. It is striking that many of these titles (but not necessarily the same texts) were to reappear in the age of print.

In contrast to what happened in France, the writing of Middle Dutch romances in the Low Countries seems to have come to a complete standstill by the middle of the fourteenth century. In this respect, the Dutch literary development is not unlike the German one where, after the first decades of the fourteenth century, even earlier than in Middle Dutch, no new romances were written for almost a century.¹¹ By the end of the

10 An Faems, ‘De Middelnederlandse late ridderepiek: “bleeke spookgestalten” krijgen kleur’. In: *Ene andre tale. Tendensen in de Middelnederlandse late ridderepiek*. Ed. by An Faems and Marjolein Hogenbirk. Hilversum 2012 (Middelleeuwse Studies en Bronnen 131), p. 11–36, especially p. 17–19.

11 For courtly romance, see Thomas Cramer, ‘Aspekte des höfischen Romans im 14. Jahrhundert’. In: *Zur deutschen Literatur und Sprache des 14. Jahrhunderts. Dubliner Colloquium 1981*. Ed. by Walter Haug, Timothy R. Jackson and Johannes Janota. Heidelberg 1983 (Reihe Siegen 45), p. 208–220. Middle High German courtly romance comes to a provisional end with a series of narratives that all deal with dynastic issues and are aimed at an aristocratic readership: Ulrich von Etzenbach’s *Wilhelm von Wenden* (1287) (written for King Wenceslas II of Bohemia), the anonymous *Reinfried von Braunschweig* (after 1291), Johann von Würzburg’s *Wilhelm von Österreich* (1314) (possibly written for the Dukes Leopold and Frederick of Austria), Heinrich von Neustadt’s *Apollonius von Tyrant* (after 1291) and *Lohengrin* (1280–1290) for the house of Habsburg (see Mathias Herweg, ‘Herkommen und Herrschaft: Zur Signatur der Spätausläufer des deutschen Versromans um 1300’. In: *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 156 (2004), p. 241–287). Equally directed towards an aristocratic readership was Claus Wisse’s, Philipp Colin’s and Samson Pine’s *Rappoltsteiner Parzival* (1331/1336), a compilation of Wolfram’s *Parzival* and of predominantly literal translations of the French *Perceval* Continuations, supplemented by materials taken from various manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes’ *Perceval*, commissioned by Ulrich V or VI or VII of the Alsatian dynasty of Rappoltstein (Bernd Bastert, ‘Late Medieval Summations. Rappoltsteiner Parzival and Ulrich Füetrer’s *Buch der Abenteuer*’. In: *The Arthur of the Germans. The Arthurian Legend in Medieval German and Dutch Literature*. Ed. by W.H. Jackson and S. Ranawake. Cardiff 2000, p. 166–180, especially p. 167–172). Whether the anonymous *Friedrich von Schwaben* (after 1314) should be added to this group of romances is unclear, as this romance may only date from the beginning of the fifteenth century. This romance was almost certainly commissioned by a Swabian dynasty, possibly that of the Württemberger (see Beate Kellner, ‘Literarische Kontexte und pragmatische Bezugfelder im spätmittelalterlichen Roman *Friedrich von Schwaben*’. In: *Dialoge. Sprachliche Kommunikation in und zwischen Texten im deutschen Mittelalter*. Ed. by Nikolaus Henkel, Martin H. Jones and Nigel F. Palmer.

century, however, German romances seem to have got a second wind. Although some of them were written in verse, prose became the dominant form, as had already been the case in France for more than 150 years.¹² As

Hamburger Colloquium 1999. Tübingen 2003, p. 135–158, here p. 156–157, n. 70). In several respects, all these romances seem to bear resemblances to the Middle Dutch *Heinric en Margriete van Limborch* (Brabant, c. 1300) (cf. Herweg, (see above), p. 250, n. 27). As far as Carolingian epics are concerned, there is the Ripuarian *Karlmeinet* (c. 1320–1350), which compiles several shorter narratives and episodes taken from Latin and Dutch chronicles into a *vita poetica Caroli Magni* (Hartmut Beckers, ‘Die *Karlmeinet*-Kompilation: Eine deutsche *vita poetica Caroli Magni* aus dem frühen 14. Jahrhundert’. In: *Cyclification. The Development of Narrative Cycles in the Chansons de Geste and the Arthurian Romances*. Ed. by Bart Besamusca, Willem P. Gerritsen, Corry Hogetoorn and Orlanda S.H. Lie. Amsterdam et al. 1994, p. 113–117), possibly also the Middle Low German *Gerart van Rossiliun* which is however difficult to date (thirteenth or fourteenth century?) (see e.g. Danielle Buchinger, ‘Rezeption der chanson de geste in Spätmittelalter’. In: *Wolfram-Studien XI. Chansons de geste in Deutschland*. Ed. by Joachim Heinzle, L. Peter Johnson and Gisela Vollman-Profe. Schweinfurter Kolloquium 1988. Berlin 1989, p. 86–106, especially p. 87–94).

¹² On the rise of prose and the decline of verse romances in French literature, see e.g. Francis Gingras, *Le Bâtard conquérant. Essor et expansion du genre romanesque au Moyen Âge*. Paris 2011 (Nouvelle bibliothèque du moyen âge 106), p. 353–377. French prose romances up to 1500 are inventoried by Brian Woledge, *Bibliographie des romans et nouvelles en prose française antérieurs à 1500*. Genève 1975 [1954] (Société de publications romanes et françaises 42) and *Bibliographie des romans et nouvelles en prose française antérieurs à 1500. Supplément 1954–1975*. Genève 1975 (Publications romanes et françaises 130). On prosification in French literature, the essential monograph is still Georges Doutrepoint, *Les Mises en prose des épopées et des romans chevaleresques du XIV^e au XVI^e siècle*. Bruxelles 1939 (Académie royale de Belgique. Classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques. Mémoires, vol. 40). The inventory of French prosifications in this book (p. 19–314) is meanwhile superseded by Maria Colombo Timelli et al. (eds), *Nouveau Répertoire de mises en prose (XIV^e-XVI^e siècle)*. Paris 2014 (Textes littéraires du moyen âge 30). On French verse romances in the later Middle Ages, see Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, ‘Vers statt Prosa. Schreiben gegen den Strom im Frankreich des ausgehenden Mittelalters’. In: *Eulenspiegel trifft Melusine. Der frühneuhochochdeutsche Prosaroman im Licht neuer Forschungen und Methoden*. Ed. by Catherine Drittenbass and André Schnyder. Akten der Lausanner Tagung von 2. bis 4. Oktober 2008. Amsterdam 2010 (Chloe 42), p. 163–182. On the revival of High German verse romances in the second half of the fifteenth century, see Ute von Bloh, ‘Anders gefragt: Vers oder Prosa? “Reinolt von Montalban” und andere Übersetzungen aus dem Mittelniederländischen im Umkreis des Heidelberger Hofes’. In: *Wolfram-Studien XIV. Übersetzen im Mittelalter*. Ed. by Joachim Heinzle, L. Peter Johnson and Gisela Vollmann-Profe. Cambridge Kolloquium 1994. Berlin 1996, p. 265–293; on prose romances in German, see Christa Bertelsmeier-Kierst, ‘Erzählen in Prosa. Zur Entwicklung des deutschen Prosaromans bis 1500’. In: *Zfda* 143 (2014), p. 141–165. From 1393 up to 1500, Bertelsmeier-Kierst counts 10 romances in verse and 68 romances in prose, both in manuscript and in print.

in French literature, prose made these narratives more authoritative, pretending to present the reader with ‘true’ history.¹³ In the case of prosifications, retelling the old stories in a new form and modernizing their language was also a way of making them more readable and more enjoyable.¹⁴

In contrast with the German state of affairs, no new Dutch romances, neither in verse nor in prose, were produced between the middle of the fourteenth century and the last decades of the fifteenth century. Furthermore, prosifications of verse texts are strikingly absent, although prose flourished in Middle Dutch religious and didactic literature. As a matter of fact, with the exception of one, very poorly preserved, translation of the French Prose *Lancelot*, Dutch authors (and their audiences) seem to have considered prose unsuitable for narrative texts.¹⁵ One explanation for this phenomenon may be that the immense prestige of Jacob van Maerlant did not incite late medieval authors to re-tell old verse texts in prose, as his verse translations of the *Historia scholastica* and the *Speculum historiale* had shown that truth and rhyme could go together.¹⁶ A second, and in our view more fundamental, explanation is that in Flanders and in Brabant, interest in Middle Dutch narrative literature seems to have waned altogether. Although in the second half of the fourteenth century, manuscripts containing romances were still produced

13 Jan-Dirk Müller, ‘Volksbuch/Prosaroman im 15./16. Jahrhundert – Perspektiven der Forschung’. In: *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der Literatur: Sonderheft Forschungsreferate* 1 (1985), p. 1–128, here p. 15–25, where, however, other factors (e.g. aural reception, silent reading, the preferences of patrons, linguistic evolutions, distrust of *ornatus* in general etc.) also are taken in consideration. On the relationship between prose and ‘truth’ on the one and “romans, rimes et mensonges” on the other hand in French, see the fine-tuned discussion in Gingras (see note 12), p. 361–364.

14 On the necessity to modernize verse romances in Old French for fifteenth-century readers, see Doutrepoint, *Mises en prose* (note 12), p. 388–396; see also Gingras (see note 12), p. 373–377 on the pleasure taken in what in the *Romance of Perceforest* is called “beaux parlers d’armes et d’amours”.

15 See Bart Besamusca, ‘The Prevalence of Verse in Medieval Dutch and English Arthurian Fiction’. In: *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112 (2013), p. 461–474. The Prose *Lancelot* was translated at least three times into Middle Dutch (but see also below, p. 65). The only prose translation is preserved in three fragments, that all belonged to the same manuscript (Orlanda S.H. Lie, *The Middle Dutch Prose Lancelot. A Study of the Rotterdam Fragments and their Place in the French, German, and Dutch Lancelot en prose Tradition*. Amsterdam, Oxford, New York 1987 (Middelnederlandse Lancelotromans 3); Bart Minnen and Geert Claassens, ‘De Roman van Lancelot in Middelnederlands proza. Het fragment-Wezemaal’. In: *TNTL* 121 (2005), p. 169–183).

16 On Maerlant’s attitude towards the problematical relationship between verse and truth, see Van Oostrom, (see note 7), p. 410–411.

and still appeared in inventories, this is no longer the case beyond the turn of the fifteenth century.¹⁷ By then, even though we cannot rule out that older manuscripts were still read, narrative literature seems to have completely disappeared from the sphere of interest of the Dutch reading public in Flanders and in Brabant.¹⁸ Concerning the county of Holland and the prince-bishopric of Utrecht, we do not have any proof that there ever was, after Maerlant, a significant reception of romances before the introduction of the printing press.¹⁹

Why, then, did the production of narrative literature and of manuscripts containing romances come to a complete standstill in Flanders and Brabant in the later Middle Ages? In a recent article, Wim Blockmans has addressed this issue for Flanders in particular. He points out that from the beginning of the

17 See the important survey of epic manuscripts by Jan Willem Klein, "Het getal zijner jaren is onnaspeurlijk". Een herijking van de dateringen van de handschriften en fragmenten met Middelnederlandse ridderepiek'. In: *TNTL* 111 (1995), p. 1–23, here p. 16. Dutch chivalric literature also appears in some fourteenth-century inventories: *Een bouc van Oegiere* (Oger the Dane), *Seghelijn Ysenbaert* and possibly *een dic bouc van Alexanders parabelen* (Maerlant's *Alexanders geesten?*) in the 1389 inventory of the estate of the Ghent citizen John Wasselins (*Corpus catalogorum Belgii. The Medieval Booklists of the Southern Low Countries*. Ed. by Albert Derolez. Vol. 3: *Counts of Flanders. Provinces of East Flanders, Antwerp and Limburg*. Brussel 1999, p. 120). One late but very interesting testimony of interest taken in chivalric literature written in Dutch is that of the influential nobleman John VI of Gistel († 1417), the last of his kin, who, according to an inventory written between 11 February and 20 April 1417, possessed among others *I bouc van Perchevail*, *I bouc van Karle Marteel*, *I bouc van den grave van Sint Gillis* (a Dutch (?) adaptation of the *chanson de geste Élie de Saint-Gilles* (?) and *een dietsch bouc sprekende van ystorien van Ingeland ende van den ruddere metten leeuwe ende andren* (a book in Dutch about the history of England (Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Rerum Britanniae historiae* (?) and, without any doubt, a lost translation of Chrétien's *Yvain*). Of course, these manuscripts may have been quite old already by the time they were inventoried. On this booklist, see Hanno Wijsman, *Luxury Bound. Illustrated Manuscript Production and Noble and Princely Book Ownership in the Burgundian Netherlands (1400–1550)*. Turnhout 2010 (*Burgundica* 16), especially p. 351–353.

18 An exception would be *Reynaerts historie*, if we accept Amand Berteloot's view that this Flemish sequel of *Van den vos Reynaerde* was composed between 1430 and 1460. See his 'Zur Datierung von *Reynaerts historie*'. In: *Sprache in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Beiträge aus dem Institut für Germanistische Sprachwissenschaft der Philipps-Universität Marburg*. Ed. by Wolfgang Brandt. Marburg 1988, p. 26–31.

19 The animal epic forms an interesting exception though: one manuscript of *Van den vos Reynaerde*, the so-called Dyck MS (Münster, UL, N.R. 381), was written in Eastern Holland or in Utrecht between 1330–1360 (see below); of both manuscripts of *Reynaerts historie*, one was copied about 1470 in the western part of the Netherlands, possibly in Utrecht (Brussels, KBR, 14601), the other one, which is only preserved in fragments, in Holland in the year 1477 (The Hague, Royal Library, 75 B 7).

fourteenth century onwards, the growing divide between the counts and their cities and the emancipation of the latter brought about the rise of a specifically urban literary culture, with little interest in narrative texts.²⁰ It is conceivable that a comparable evolution took place in Brabant half a century later. Whereas in the first half of the century several narrative texts were created that glorified the unity of the citizenry of Brabant around its Duke John III (see above p. 51), the marriage, in 1351, of the only heiress, Joan of Brabant, with Wenceslaus of Luxemburg, while beneficial to French literature (Jean Froissart, for example, wrote his romance *Meliador*, so he states, “a la requeste et contemplacion de monseigneur Wincelaus”), did not encourage important literary projects in Dutch.²¹ As in Flanders, the Dutch literary space in Brabant seems to have been filled mainly with what we may call urban literature, with an emphasis either on religious, didactic, historical or instructional texts or on short literary ones, that were suitable for performances by professional reciters.²²

Consequently, in the course of the second half of the fourteenth century, the literary dividing line between Flanders and Brabant seems to vanish, or, to be more precise, to move eastward, at least as far as narrative literature is concerned. Although Middle Dutch narrative texts were no longer copied in the central regions of the Low Countries (i.e. Flanders and Brabant) in the fifteenth century, they were eagerly read, copied and sometimes adapted in territories further to the east, from Lower-Saxony and the Meuse-and-Rhine area to Heidelberg. We will illustrate this phenomenon by discussing the manuscript dissemination of some of the most important Middle Dutch narratives in the course of the fifteenth century.

At the end of the fifteenth century, an inhabitant of Borgloon in the Dutch speaking part of the prince-bishopric of Liège jotted down the *Roelantslied*, an early thirteenth-century Flemish adaptation of the famous *Chanson de Roland*,

20 Wim Blockmans, ‘Contingentie van literaire milieus.’ In: *Het Gruuthusehandschrift. Literatuur, muziek, devotie rond 1400*. Ed. by Frank Willaert, Jos Koldewey and Johan Oosterman. Internationaal congres Brugge, 25–27 april 2013. Gent 2015, p. 19–39, here p. 27–28.

21 This does not mean that Dutch was entirely absent from the ducal court, however. In 1371, the language of the ducal accounts changed from Latin to Dutch, not French. Alongside German and French, Dutch-speaking literary artists too, like Augustijnken, performed before the duke and his household. See Sleiderink, *De stem van de meester* (note 4), p. 123–126. On the growing importance of French literature at the ducal court during the reign of Wenceslaus and on the duke’s special relationship with Jean Froissart, see p. 126–133. On the special interest the ducal court took in Arthurian literature, see p. 131.

22 For this characterisation of the Dutch literary scene in Flanders, see Blockmans, (see note 20), p. 31.

in a multi-text codex (now Amsterdam, UB, MS I A 24¹), that he had started to compile for his personal use.²³ While all other (Flemish and Brabantine) copies of this text came into being in the fourteenth century, the detail that more than a century later a reader still took an interest in this text may possibly be explained by the fact that he resided no more than fifty kilometers west from Aachen. In this region the prevailing image of Charlemagne was that of God's instrument on earth, a restorer of God's justice and a foe of the heathens.²⁴ This portrayal may also explain why, a century earlier, the Ripuarian compiler of the *Karlmeinet* Compilation decided to include the short narrative *Karel ende Elegast* in his *vita poetica* of the Emperor. After all, this short tale illustrates to perfection the special protection that Charlemagne enjoyed on the part of God.²⁵ A comparable explanation may be given for the Middle German

23 Jos Biemans, Hans Kienhorst, Willem Kuiper and Rob Resoort (eds), *Het handschrift-Borgloon*. Hs. Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek (UvA), I A 24 l, m, n. Hilversum 2000 (Middeleeuwse verzamelhandschriften uit de Nederlanden 5), p. 87–139. According to the editors (p. 15–20), the Borgloon manuscript was a heterogeneous collection for personal use, realized at different moments during the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The same manuscript also contained the narrative *Jonathas ende Rosafiere*, which some scholars consider as a (religious) chivalric romance, others as a Marian legend, or something in between. On this issue, see An Faems, 'Jonathas ende Rosafiere: (religieuze) ridderroman of Mariamirakel?'. In: *Queeste* 7 (2000), p. 97–112, who advances sound arguments in favour of the second option (a miracle of Mary).

24 See Bernd Bastert, 'Verus apostolus sicut Saxonia et Fresonia atque Westphalia. Karl der Große in der Literatur der Nideren Lande'. In: *ZfdPh* 122 (2003), Sonderheft: *Regionale Literaturgeschichtsschreibung. Aufgaben, Analysen und Perspektiven*. Ed. by Helmut Tervooren and Jens Haustein, p. 74–80. See also Bernd Bastert, *Helden als Heilige. Chanson de geste-Rezeption im deutschsprachigen Raum*. Tübingen, Basel 2010 (Bibliotheca Germanica 54), p. 336–356. On the Middle Dutch *Roelantslied*, see H. van Dijk, *Het Roelantslied. Studie over de Middelnederlandse vertaling van het Chanson de Roland, gevolgd door een diplomatische uitgave van de overgeleverde teksten*. 2 vols. Utrecht 1981.

25 Bernd Bastert, 'Heiliger, Hochzeiter, Heidenschlächter. Die Karlmeinet-Kompilation zwischen Oberdeutschland und den Nideren Landen'. In: *Schnittpunkte. Deutsch-Niederländische Literaturbeziehungen im späten Mittelalter*. Ed. by Angelika Lehmann-Benz, Ulrike Zellmann and Urban Küsters. New York etc. 2003 (Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur Nordwesteuropas 5), p. 125–143, especially p. 140, where *Karel ende Elegast* and the *Roelandslied* are both mentioned in one and the same breath. It is tempting to connect this interpretation with the fact that the only manuscript of the *Karlmeinet* was kept in the convent of the discalced Carmelites in Cologne. However, as this convent was only founded in 1613, we do not know anything about the commissioner or the first owner of the Cologne manuscript (see Frank Fürbeth, 'Der "Karlmeinet": Vita poetica oder Vita historica Caroli Magni? Zur Differenz von textimmanenter und textexterner Kohärenz'. In: *Texttyp und Textproduktion in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*. Ed. by Elisabeth Andersen, Manfred Eikelmann and Anne Simon. Berlin, New York 2005 (Trends in Medieval Philology 7), p. 217–234, here p. 219.

adaptation of *Karel ende Elegast*, probably dating from the first half of the fifteenth century.²⁶

Various other Middle Dutch narratives made their way eastward during the course of the fifteenth century. Somewhere in the Lower Rhine area, about 1415, a scribe copied the mid-fourteenth century Flemish crusade romance *Seghelijn van Jherusalem*; around 1430, this copy was included in a multi-text codex mainly devoted to “courtly love and courtly virtue” (Berlin, SB, mgf 922). It is striking, but not unusual in this area without linguistic boundaries, that the scribe or his patron did not deem it necessary to adapt the Flemish language of his exemplar to the local dialect.²⁷ We know nothing about the users of this manuscript, but an aristocratic readership seems probable.

We are better informed about manuscript Burgsteinfurt, Fürst zu Bentheimsche Schloßbibliothek, 28, produced around 1422, that preserves Jacob van Maerlant’s *Historie van den Grale* and *Merlijns boec*, followed by the *Merlijn* Continuation by Lodewijk van Velthem. At the end of Velthem’s text (fol. 229ra), the second of the two scribes mentions the name of the manuscript’s first owner: Count Everwin I of Bentheim († 1454). This is followed by a list of other books belonging to the count, among which “twe nye boke van lantslotte vnde eyn olt boek van lantslotte, ... Jtem van allexander... jtem de markgreue willem jtem perceuale”.²⁸ Whether these books were also adaptations of Middle Dutch works, we do not know. It is of course tempting to connect them with works like the three (very probably even five, see below p. 65) translations of the Prose *Lancelot*, Maerlant’s *Alexanders geesten*, one of the Charlemagne romances about *Willem van Oringen* (an adaptation of the *Moniage Guillaume*), or the romance of *Perchevael* (a translation of Chrétien’s

²⁶ *Karel ende Elegast und Karl und Ellegast*. Ed. and transl. by Bernd Bastert, Bart Besamusca and Carla Dauven-van Knippenberg. Münster 2005 (Bibliothek mittelniederländischer Literatur 1), p. 195–197 and 208.

²⁷ The miscellany Berlin mgf 922 contains texts in dialects, which in secondary literature are defined as Flemish, Brabantian, Low Rhenish, Central West German, Middle Rhenish, Moselle and Rhine Franconian, Bavarian etc.

²⁸ *Jacob van Maerlants Historie van den Grale und Boek van Merline*. Nach der Steinfurter Handschrift herausgegeben von Timothy Sodmann. Köln, Wien 1980 (Niederdeutsche Studien 26), p. 425. On the date of this list, see p. 32.

Conte du Graal), but identifications with other (Middle High German) works are equally possible.²⁹

Maerlant was much appreciated in what is nowadays the Dutch-German border region. Around 1400, his *Alexanders geesten*, which, as we have just noted, may have figured in the Bentheim library, was copied in the Lower Rhine area and (slightly) adapted to the local dialect. In 1664, this manuscript (now Munich, BSB, Cod. germ. 41) was in the possession of the Duke of Berg in Düsseldorf.³⁰ About three quarters of a century later, a Lower Rhenish adaptation of Maerlant's *Historie van Troyen* was copied at the initiative of the nobleman Wessel IV van den Loe (1443–1509), who inhabited Schloß Wissen near Kevelaer. The manuscript, written in the local dialect, was kept there for centuries until it was sold to the Royal Library in Brussels in 1973 (MS IV 927).³¹ It is worth pointing out that the three Maerlant manuscripts mentioned here are the only ones that have transmitted *Alexanders geesten*, *Historie vanden Grale / Merlijns boec* and *Historie van Troyen* to us in their entirety. Without the interest of 'German' noblemen, these works by Flanders' most prolific medieval author would have come down to us in the form of fragments only.³²

29 In *Le Moniage Guillaume*, William of Orange is mostly called "Guillaumes le marcis" (G. Kalff, *Middelnederlandsche epische fragmenten met aanteekeningen*. Groningen 1885 (Bibliotheek van Nederlandsche letterkunde 38), p. 102). On the cycle of Guillaume d'Orange in Middle Dutch, see Hans Kienhorst, 'Fragment van een onbekende Middel nederlandse roman over Willem van Oringen'. In: *TNTL* 114 (1998), p. 125–137. As, however, "markgreue willem" is followed by "perceuale", it seems more probable that Wolfram's *Willehalm* and *Parzival* are meant here. In the booklist of Count Otto VII (1434–1494) and Count Frederick II (1434–1503) of Hoya-Bruchhausen (Lower Saxony), both titles, followed by (pseudo-)Wolfram's (*Jüngerer*) *Titarel*, are mentioned in exactly the same order. See Hartmut Beckers, 'Desse boke de horn den greve van der hoiën vnde sint altomale dudesk. Ein Versuch zur literarhistorischen Identifizierung des Handschriftenbestandes einer niedersächsischen Adelsbibliothek des späten 15. Jahrhunderts'. In: *Niederdeutsches Wort* 16 (1976), p. 126–143, here p. 137–138, who arrives at the same conclusion.

30 J. Deschamps, *Middel nederlandse handschriften uit Europese en Amerikaanse bibliotheken. Tentoonstelling ter gelegenheid van het honderdjarig bestaan van de Koninklijke Zuid nederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis. Catalogus*. Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, 24 okt.–24 dec. 1970, 2nd ed. Leiden 1972, p. 31–32.

31 J. Deschamps and H. Mulder, *Inventaris van de Middel nederlandse handschriften van de Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België*. Vol. 1. Brussel 1998, p. 55–56.

32 The fragments are described in Hans Kienhorst, *De handschriften van de Middel nederlandse ridderepiek. Een codicologische beschrijving*. Vol. 1. Deventer 1988, p. 8–13 (*Alexanders geesten*), p. 140–143 (only fragments of Velthem's *Merlijn* Continuation are known so far) and p. 196–210 (*Historie van Troyen*).

Maerlant had conceived his texts as trustworthy historical accounts. Nevertheless, the texts that he himself had – or would have – dismissed as mendacious trifles, also seem to have found an eager reception in the Meuse-Rhine-area. One of the two complete manuscripts of the famous thirteenth-century beast epic *Vanden vos Reynaerde*, though copied in the eastern part of Holland or in Utrecht between 1330–1360, came into the possession of Count William I of Limburg-Broich in 1430 at the latest and was kept in his Schloß Dyck, until it was bought by the University of Münster in 1991 (UB, N.R. 381).³³ We do not know the late fifteenth-century (Cologne?) commissioner of a fragmentarily preserved Ripuarian manuscript (Cologne, Historisches Archiv, Best. 7010 W 322 and Berlin, SB, Hdschr. 398) of the (Flemish) *Parthonopeus van Blois* and this also holds true for his or her fellow country(wo)man from (the neighbourhood of) Aix-la-Chapelle, who several decades earlier, around 1420–1430, had a copy (Brussels, KBR, 18231) made of the early fourteenth century Brabantine *Heinric en Margriete van Limborch*.³⁴ An early owner of this codex, however, must have been Wirich VI, count of Daun zu Oberstein (1415/1420–1501), who lived in the southern part of the Eifel and whose

33 Everardus A. Overgaaauw, ‘Die Dycksche Handschrift. Ihre Entdeckung, Herkunft, Datierung und früheren Besitzer’. In: *Die Dycksche Handschrift*. Ed. by Bertram Haller and Hans Mühl. Berlin, Münster 1992, p. 40–58; Eef Overgaaauw, *Die mittelalterlichen Handschriften der Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster*. Wiesbaden 1996, p. 152–154.

34 *Parthonopeus*: Helmut Tervooren, ‘Zur Rezeption mittelniederländischer Literatur in Köln: ein neues Bruchstück des “Parthonopeus”’. In: *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 49 (1985), p. 92–116; and “Parthonopeus von Blois” (ripuar. Fragment). In: *VL* 7 (1989), cols 315–316; *Margriete van Limborch: Roman van Heinric en Margriete van Limborch*, uitgegeven volgens het Brusselse handschrift. Ed. by Rob Meesters. Amsterdam, Antwerpen 1951. On the place of origin of this manuscript, see Hartmut Beckers, ‘Der püecher haubet, die von der tafelrunde wunder sagen. Wirich von Stein und die Verbreitung des “Prosa-Lancelot” im 15. Jh.’. In: *Wolfram-Studien IX. Schweinfurter ‘Lancelot’-Kolloquium 1984*. Ed. by Werner Schröder. Berlin 1986, p. 17–44, here p. 29; and Thomas Klein, ‘Die Rezeption mittelniederländischer Versdichtungen im Rheinland und Augustijns “Herzog von Braunschweig”’. In: *Die spätmittelalterliche Rezeption niederländischer Literatur im deutschen Sprachgebiet (ABäG 47 1997)*. Ed. by Rita Schlusemann and Paul Wackers, p. 78–107, here p. 90–91; Rita Schlusemann, *Schöne Historien. Niederländische Romane im deutschen Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*. Berlin, Boston 2016 (Frühe Neuzeit, 203), p. 259–260 mentions a number of hypothetical commissioners of this Ripuarian manuscript.

first name is mentioned on fol. 147rb, under the last column of the text.³⁵ Through friendly and marital relationships, the manuscript must have landed in the important library of the counts of Manderscheid-Blankenheim.³⁶ On fol. 147v, an owner's mark informs us that the manuscript was in the possession of Cuno (1444–1489), junior count (*jonggrave*) of Manderscheid and count of Blankenheim in 1474.³⁷ This transfer does not surprise us, as the lords of Daun maintained close relations with the counts of Manderscheid-Blankenheim so that three other manuscripts once possessed by Wirich also found their way into their library.³⁸

35 For a reproduction: see Meesters (see note 34), p. LII. Meesters' suggestion that the statement "Que remede" above Wirich's name indicates that Wirich would have corrected his copy, is wrong: "Que remede" is Wirich's French motto "That it may help". On Wirich VI as book-lover, see Beckers, *Der püecher haubet* (note 34), p. 26–36 and Hartmut Beckers, 'Literarische Interessenbildung bei einem rheinischen Grafengeschlecht um 1470/80: Die Blankenheimer Schloßbibliothek'. In: *Literarische Interessenbildung im Mittelalter. DFG-Symposion 1991*. Ed. by Joachim Heinzle. Stuttgart, Weimar 1993 (Germanistische Symposien. Berichtsbände 14), p. 5–20, here p. 13 and 16.

36 On the close ties between Wirich of Daun and the counts, especially Cuno, of Manderscheid-Blankenheim, see Beckers, *Der püecher haubet* (note 34), p. 29–30; Hartmut Beckers, 'Handschriften mittelalterlicher deutscher Literatur aus der ehemaligen Schloßbibliothek Blankenheim'. In: *Die Manderscheider. Eine Eifeler Adelsfamilie. Herrschaft – Wirtschaft – Kultur*. Katalog zur Ausstellung. Blankenheim, Gildehaus 4. Mai– 29. Juli 1990, Manderscheid, Kurhaus 16. August – 11. November 1990. Köln 1990, p. 57–82, here p. 64; Hartmut Beckers, 'Literarische Interessenbildung' (note 35), p. 15–17; Rita Schlusemann, 'Literarische Beziehungen als Quelle für buchhistorische Fragen. Die fränkischen Rheinlande in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts'. In: *Sources for the History of Medieval Books and Libraries*. Ed. by Rita Schlusemann, Jos M.M. Hermans and Margriet Hoogvliet. Groningen 2000, p. 95–107, here p. 101; and Schlusemann, *Schöne Historien* (note 34), p. 260–262. On the library of Blankenheim, see Beckers' article 'Literarische Interessenbildung' (note 35) as well as his contribution to the exhibition catalogue mentioned earlier in this footnote.

37 For a reproduction, see Meesters (see note 34), p. LIV. Cuno of Manderscheid-Blankenheim probably lay at the origin of the Blankenheim library, the development of which does not seem to have started before 1471 (Beckers, *Literarische Interessenbildung* (note 35), p. 12).

38 This relates to the Moselle-Franconian *Willehalm*-codex K (Cologne, Hist. Archiv der Stadt, Bestand 7010 (W) 357), to the Moselle-Franconian compilation based on the *Tafel vanden kersten ghelove* (1404) by the Holland Dominican Dirc van Delf (Darmstadt, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, 2667) and possibly also to the richly illustrated codex Z, dated 28 August 1286, of the Old French *Lancelot en prose* (Bonn, UB, S 526) (Beckers, *Der püecher haubet* (note 34), p. 27–33). As the latter manuscript probably did not come in Wirich's hands until 1495, it may only have entered the Blankenheim library after his death in 1501 (see Irmgard Fischer, 'Beschreibung der Handschrift S 526 der Universitätsbibliothek Bonn'. In: *Lancelot en prose. Farbmikrofische-Edition der Handschrift Bonn, Universitätsbibliothek, Handschrift S 526*. München 1992, p. 26–30, here p. 29).

Wirich also played an important role in the literary life at the palatine court in Heidelberg under Frederick I the Victorious (reigned 1449–1476) and his successor Philip the Upright (reigned 1476–1508) as well as at the court of Frederick's sister, Archduchess Mechthild of Austria (1419–1482), in Rottenburg.³⁹ This certainly involved the Rhenish-Franconian rendition ('Umschreibung') of the Middle Dutch Charlemagne romance *Malagis* and possibly also Johann of Soest's *Kinder von Limburg* (1479), an adaptation of *Heinric en Margriete van Limborch* made at the request of Philip the Upright, Mechthild's nephew.⁴⁰ In both cases it is conceivable that these Heidelberg works were based on texts that (had) belonged to Wirich's library; Johann of Soest's adaptation was at any rate based on a manuscript that is very close to (but not identical with) the Brussels manuscript.⁴¹ Whether two

39 On literary life at the Heidelberg and Rottenburg courts under Frederick, Philipp and Mechthild, see Martina Backes, *Das literarische Leben am kurpfälzischen Hof zu Heidelberg im 15. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur Gönnerforschung des Spätmittelalters*. Tübingen 1992 (Hermaea 68), especially p. 114–171 and 185–190.

40 The Rhenish Franconian language of the Charlemagne romances discussed here and in the next paragraphs is in fact little more than a superficial veneer on the original Middle Dutch, which remains clearly discernable. On this question, see e.g. Martin J. Schubert, 'Nederlands-Duitse betrekkingen op het gebied van taal en literatuur in de late Middeleeuwen. Over de manier waarop *Malagis*, *Ogier en Reinolt* vertaald zijn'. In: *Van Madelgijs tot Malagis. Een bundel opstellen verzameld n.a.v. de tachtigste verjaardag van Gilbert de Smet*. Ed. by Georges de Schutter and Jan Goossens. Gent 2002, p. 53–64. In the case of *Ogier von Dänemark*, it seems even more appropriate to speak of an (almost unreadable) German copy of a Middle Dutch text: see Amand Berteloot, 'Gewollt oder nicht gekonnt? Oder erst gar nicht gewollt? Der Heidelberger "Ogier von Dänemark"'. In: *ZfdPh* 130 (2011), Sonderheft: *Dialog mit den Nachbarn. Mittelniederländische Literatur zwischen dem 12. und dem 16. Jahrhundert*. Ed. by Helmut Tervooren, Bernd Bastert and Frank Willaert, p. 193–201.

41 Schlusemann, 'Literarische Beziehungen' (note 36), p. 102–103. In the famous *Ehrenbrief*, which Jakob Püterich von Reichertshausen sent to the archduchess in 1462, he mentions the presence, in her library, of *Malagis*, *Rainhart* (= *Reinolt*) and *Margareth von Lünburg* (*Der Ehrenbrief des Pütrich von Reichertshausen*. Ed. by Fritz Behrend and Rudolf Wolkan. Weimar 1920, stanza 98–99). The latter title may refer to the Middle Dutch or Ripuarian manuscript which Johann von Soest would use later for his adaptation. Although Schlusemann (p. 105, n. 37) is of the opinion that Püterich's mention of *Malagis* and *Reinout* cannot relate to Heidelberg, UB, Cpg 340, but should concern the Dutch (or Ripuarian) exemplar, we would not consider this impossible, as a dating of this manuscript, based on the watermarks, to the early sixties is conceivable and even plausible (cf. *Der deutsche Malagis. Nach den Heidelberger Handschriften Cpg 340 und Cpg 315*. Ed. by Annegret Haase, Bob W.Th. Duijvestijn, Gilbert A.R. de Smet and Rudolf Bentzinger. Berlin 2000 (Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters 82), p. XV; see also Bob Duijvestijn, 'Madelgijs, zwerftocht van een epische stof'. In: *Van Madelgijs tot Malagis. Een bundel opstellen n.a.v. de tachtigste verjaardag van Gilbert de Smet*. Ed. by Georges de Schutter and Jan Goossens. Gent 2002, p. 23–34, here p. 31, who qualifies his previous position on this issue (Bob Duijvestijn, 'Niederländische Dichtung in

other renditions of Middle Dutch Charlemagne romances, *Reinolt von Montelban* and *Ogier von Dänemark*, were equally based on manuscripts that were procured by Wirich VI of Daun, we do not know, but we should not exclude this possibility.

Malagis was considered a prequel to *Reinolt von Montelban* and the two texts were accordingly copied together, and in that order, probably at the request of Archduchess Mechthild (Heidelberg, UB, Cpg 340), about 1465.⁴² However, as she seems to have presented her son Eberhard V the Bearded, Count of Württemberg (reigned 1459–1496), with this manuscript, she had new copies made of both works, but now in individual manuscripts (Cpg 315 and Cpg 399 respectively) around 1480.⁴³

In his famous ‘Ehrenbrief’ of 1462 to the Archduchess, Jakob Püterich von Reichertshausen calls Wirich vom Stein “der püecher haubet (...), die von der tafelrunde wunder sagen”.⁴⁴ It has been suggested that Wirich may very well have been the purveyor of the exemplar of the – at that time still lacking – second part

der Privatbücherei der Pfalzgräfin Mechthild (1418/19–1482)’. In: *Miscellanea neerlandica. Opstellen voor dr. Jan Deschamps ter gelegenheid van zijn zeventigste verjaardag*. Ed. by Elly Cockx-Indestege and Frans Hendrickx. Vol. 2. Leuven 1987, p. 251–261, here p. 254–256).

42 Hartmut Beckers, ‘Frühneuhochdeutsche Fassungen niederländischer Erzählliteratur im Umkreis des pfalzgräflichen Hofes zu Heidelberg um 1450/80’. In: Cockx-Indestege and Hendrickx (note 41), p. 237–249, here, p. 239. According to Bob Duijvestijn, ‘Niederländische Dichtung’ (note 41), p. 255), Heidelberg, UB, Cpg 340 should be considered either as an autograph or as a first copy of the rough version of the rendition.

43 On the library of Eberhard V the Bearded, see R. Cermann, ‘Die Bibliothek Herzog Eberhards im Bart von Württemberg (1445–1496)’. In: *Scriptorium* 51 (1997), p. 30–50 (on Cpg 340, p. 39–40). Several scholars (e.g. Beckers, ‘Frühneuhochdeutsche Fassungen’ (note 42), p. 239; Duijvestijn, ‘Niederländische Dichtung’ (note 41), p. 255) are of the opinion that Mechthild gave this manuscript to her son as a wedding present, as it bears his motto (*Attempto*) and the year of his marriage with Barbara Gonzaga of Mantua (1474). We should bear in mind, however, that almost all books that were in Eberhard’s possession at that moment, bear his motto and the year 1474 (Cermann, p. 39).

44 Behrend and Wolkan (see note 41), stanza 76. Transl.: “the ‘head’ of the books that tell about the marvels of the Round Table”. The translation of this verse is not without problems. According to Beckers (*Der püecher haubet*’ (note 34), p. 42–45), the line may be corrupt and should accordingly be translated as: “to him belongs [*im ... ist* instead of *er ... ist*] the best of all the books that tell of the marvels of the round table”. Or Püterich may erroneously have considered Wirich to be the author of the *Prosa Lancelot* and may have meant: “he is the maker of the most prominent book on the marvels of the round table”.

of the three-partite *Prosa-Lancelot*.⁴⁵ According to a hypothesis by Harmut Beckers, this part was translated, around 1470, from an unknown Dutch exemplar, in order to realize the famous, lavishly illuminated manuscript of the *Prosa-Lancelot* (Heidelberg, UB, Cpg 147).⁴⁶ As this translation, and consequently its Middle Dutch exemplar, did not completely link up with the older part 1, however, a second attempt was made, the so-called *Karrensuite*, after the completion of Cpg 147 and before 1476, on the basis of a booklet that the Heidelberg translator claims to have found *inn flemische*.⁴⁷ The only manuscript of the *Karrensuite* (Cologne, Hist. Archiv der Stadt, Best. 7020 (W*) 46) was soon to end up in the library of the counts of Blankenheim-Manderscheid. If Beckers' proposal is correct, this would once more underscore the close relationships that existed between Wirich VI of Daun, the counts of Manderscheid-Blankenheim and the

45 The first part of the German *Prosa-Lancelot* is commonly dated in the thirteenth century: it comprises the *Lancelot propre* but breaks off in the middle of the *Suite de la Charrette*; the third part was translated in the fourteenth century and corresponds with the *Queste del Saint Graal* and the *Mort le Roi Artu*; the second part, finally, was probably translated in Heidelberg about 1470 and starts with the *Agravain*, so that there remained a lacuna with regard to the *Suite de la Charrette*. For two fairly recent states of the art, see Fritz Peter Knapp, '10.4. Der deutsche "Prosa-Lancelot"'. In: *Höfischer Roman in Vers und Prosa*. Ed. by René Pérennec and Elisabeth Schmid. Berlin, New York 2010 (Germania Litteraria Mediaevalis Francigena 5), p. 415–424, here p. 415–416, and Katja Rothstein, *Der mittelhochdeutsche Prosa-Lancelot. Eine entstehungs- und überlieferungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Handschrift Ms. allem. 8017–8020*. Frankfurt am Main etc. 2007 (Kultur, Wissenschaft, Literatur. Beiträge zur Mittelalterforschung 15), p. 12–15.

46 Beckers, 'Der *püecher haubet*' (note 34), p. 36–39; H.B., 'Frühneuhochdeutsche Fassungen' (note 42), p. 245–246; Schlusemann, *Schöne historien* (note 34), p. 273. The hypothesis that the second part of the *Prosa-Lancelot* is based on a Dutch exemplar is, however, not beyond all doubt: see the literature mentioned in Rita Schlusemann, 'The Late-Medieval German Reception of Dutch Arthurian Literature in Heidelberg and Blankenheim'. In: *King Arthur in the Medieval Low Countries*. Ed. by Geert H.M. Claassens and David F. Johnson. Leuven 2000, p. 97–111 (*Mediaevalia Lovaniensia* 1, 28), here p. 102–103 and the discussion of this question in Rothstein (see note 45), p. 24–26 and 156–159.

47 Beckers, 'Der *püecher haubet*' (note 34), p. 39–40 and 'Frühneuhochdeutsche Fassungen' (note 42), p. 246–247; Schlusemann, 'Literarische Beziehungen' (note 36), p. 97–100 and 'The Late-Medieval German Reception' (note 46), p. 103–106. The 'Flemish' exemplar was at any rate not one of the three extant Middle Dutch translations of the *Lancelot propre*: see Orlanda S.H. Lie, 'The Flemish Exemplar of Ms.W. f°46* Blankenheim, a Fifteenth-Century German Translation of the *Suite de la Charrette*'. In: *Arturus Rex. Vol. 2 Actus Conventus Lovaniensis 1987*. Ed. by Willy van Hoecke, Gilbert Tournoy, and Werner Verbeke. Leuven 1991 (*Mediaevalia Lovaniensia* 1/17), p. 404–418.

Palatine princes in and around Heidelberg in the second half of the fifteenth century.⁴⁸

Assuming that the manuscript tradition of Middle Dutch romances offers a reliable picture of their reception in the course of the fifteenth century, we can safely conclude that at that time Dutch narratives were exclusively read east of Flanders and Brabant: from the region of Münster along the Meuse, Moselle and Rhine-area to Heidelberg. The majority of the commissioners and owners of these manuscripts were members of the aristocracy. The Dutch literary scene in Brabant and Flanders, on the contrary, seems to have been dominated, as far as secular literature was concerned, by commoners who only had a limited interest in these long narratives. Chivalric literature did exist in the Low Countries, but it was exclusively Francophone. With the rise of the Burgundian dynasty, not only the dukes themselves (among whom chiefly Philip the Good), but also the high nobility and a limited number of officers (mostly laymen without an academic title, ennobled or belonging to the middle nobility) took to an abundant production of narrative literature in French, consisting of new romances such as *L'Histoire des Sires de Gavre* or *Olivier de Castille* and prosifications of older narratives about heroes such as Alexander, Jason, Hercules, Charlemagne, Girart de Roussillon and Geoffrey of Bouillon.⁴⁹ When, for example, Philip the Good died in 1467, no less than one third of his library consisted of chivalric romances, Charlemagne epics and courtly poetry, genres which also found a place in the book collections of the higher nobility

48 Beckers, *Der pücher haubet* (note 34), p. 41, 'Frühneuhochdeutsche Fassungen' (note 42), p. 247 and 'Literarische Interessenbildung' (note 35), p. 15; Schlusemann, 'Literarische Beziehungen' (note 36), 'The Late-Medieval German Reception' (note 46), p. 105 and *Schöne Historien* (note 34), p. 262–265. See however Rothstein (see note 45), p. 60, 123–127, 131–132, 147–148 and 165–166, who doubts Beckers' hypothesis that the *Karrensuite* originated in Heidelberg and was meant to (partially) fill the gap between the first and second part of the *Prosa-Lancelot*.

49 Georges Doutrepoint, *La littérature française à la cour des ducs de Bourgogne. Philippe le Hardi – Jean sans Peur – Philippe le Bon – Charles le Téméraire*. Paris 1909, in part. p. 1–186 and p. 482–485; Georges Doutrepoint, *Les Mises en prose* (note 12), p. 414–441; Wijsman (see note 17), p. 505–507; Céline van Hoorebeeck, *Livres et lectures de fonctionnaires des ducs de Bourgogne (ca 1420–1520)*. Turnhout 2014 (Texte, Codex et Contexte 16), p. 318; Céline van Hoorebeeck, 'Les lectures "romanesques" des officiers des ducs de Bourgogne (ca 1420–1520)'. In: *Le romanesque aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles*. Ed. by Danièle Bohler. Bordeaux 2009, p. 257–268. On the political dimensions of several of these Burgundian narratives, see Yvon Lacaze, 'Le rôle des traditions dans la genèse d'un sentiment national au 15^e siècle. La Bourgogne de Philippe le Bon'. In: *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 129 (1971), p. 303–385.

and, – albeit to a far lesser extent – of a number of ducal officers in the Low Countries.⁵⁰ In this way, narrative literature contributed to the efforts to integrate and unite the political and bureaucratic elites surrounding the Burgundian dynasty. The (Dutch-speaking) Flemish and Brabantine citizens, however, do not seem to have participated in a meaningful way in that aspect of the ‘Burgundianisation’ of cultural life.⁵¹ The outdated Middle Dutch narrative literature, once so blooming, seems to have fallen into oblivion in these territories for many decades when, in the seventies of the fifteenth century, the first printers started publishing literary texts in the vernacular.

To summarize, four features that seem characteristic for the literary tradition in the Low Countries should be listed:

1. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there was a deep rift between the Flemish and Brabantine production of romances in Middle Dutch. Flemish narratives were successful east of the river Scheldt, but the reverse was not the case: literature produced east of the river Scheldt did not penetrate the county of Flanders.
2. In Flemish narratives, Arthurian and Charlemagne traditions dominate. This phenomenon may be related to literary production in French, as several Arthurian, especially Grail romances (e.g. *Perceval* and at least two *Continuations*) and some Charlemagne epics (especially some “epics of revolt”) seem to have originated in Flanders. The Brabantine literary production seems to have focused on local themes, characters and materials. As far as the production (but not the reception) of Arthurian literature is concerned, Brabant and the other regions near the river Rhine seem to have been “une terre anti-Arthurienne”, both for Dutch and for French-speaking authors.⁵²
3. From the middle of the fourteenth century onwards, the production of lengthy romances came to a standstill, both in Flanders and in Brabant. In

50 Van Hoorebeeck, *Livres et lectures* (see note 49), p. 117; and ‘Les lectures “romanesques”’ (see note 49), p. 259.

51 One could apply with still more justice to the Flemish and Brabantine citizenry Céline Van Hoorebeeck’s remark about the all in all limited success of Burgundian literature among the ducal officers: “En grossissant le trait, on pourrait dire que la diffusion de la littérature bourguignonne qu’on retrouve à foison dans les collections de la haute noblesse ne s’est pas faite en circuit fermé mais presque. On touche là aux limites d’un mouvement d’intégration par la culture” (Van Hoorebeeck, *Livres et lectures* (note 49), p. 319).

52 Cf. Philippe Walter, ‘Tout commence par des chansons... (Intertextualités lotharingiennes)’. In: *Styles et valeurs. Pour une histoire de l’art littéraire au moyen âge*. Ed. by D. Poirion. Paris 1990, p. 187–209, here p. 197; Willaert, *De ruimte* (note 2), p. 18.

contrast to developments in French and German literature, the prose form remained very marginal and older narratives were not prosified.

4. From 1400 onwards, narrative literature was no longer read in the central territories of the Low Countries. The Northern Low Countries, with the important exception of Zeeland during Maerlant's stay there, did not participate at all in the production and the reception of narrative literature. At the dawn of vernacular printing in the Low Countries, a complete void reigned in what are now the Dutch-speaking territories for at least three quarters of a century. A fifteenth century amateur of Middle Dutch narrative literature would have been better advised to look for a kindred spirit in some castle in Westphalia, Cologne or Heidelberg, than trying to find one in the Low Countries.

2 Holland

A striking discontinuity can be observed in the county of Holland in the last decades of the fifteenth century. There and then, Middle Dutch romances appear on stage in spite of their almost complete absence, both in terms of production and reception, in that region in the past. This phenomenon is accompanied by two crucial changes in the production of narrative texts. Middle Dutch romances are now mainly written in prose, in contrast to the preceding verse texts, and are printed instead of copied by hand.

The first printers of vernacular texts were mainly active in the northern cities of the Low Countries, like Gouda, Delft, Haarlem, Utrecht and Zwolle.⁵³ These places seem to have provided enterprising printers with opportunities for making a living, in contrast to the financially and culturally more developed Flemish and Brabantine towns. In these latter, the Chambers of Rhetoric dominated the literary scene and an infrastructure of professional scribes was able to provide the audience with the texts that interested them.⁵⁴

As far as Middle Dutch romances were concerned, printers in the Holland towns Gouda, Delft and Haarlem seem to have been well aware of texts that

⁵³ For overviews, see *De vijfhonderdste verjaring van de boekdrukkunst in de Nederlanden. Catalogus*. Brussel 1973; Peter M.H. Cuijpers, *Teksten als koopwaar: vroege drukkers verkennen de markt. Een kwantitatieve analyse van de productie van Nederlandstalige boeken (tot circa 1550) en de 'lezershulp' in de seculiere prozateksten*. Nieuwkoop 1998, p. 71–79.

⁵⁴ See Herman Pleij, 'De betekenis van de beginnende drukpers voor de ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse literatuur in Noord en Zuid'. In: *Spektator* 21 (1992), p. 227–263.

would sell well.⁵⁵ As a matter of fact, quite a number of their editions correspond with romances that were printed elsewhere in Europe in the same period. Examples include the Dutch *Appollonius van Thyro*, which was published in Delft, supposedly by Christiaen Snellaert, in 1493 (ISTC ia00924600; GW 2285), and the *Vier Heemskinderen*, which appeared in Gouda, maybe produced by the so-called ‘Printer of the *Chevalier délibéré*’ (ISTC ia01433700; GW 12486), after 1489. The French romance about Appollonius was printed by Louis Cruse in Geneva around 1482 as *Romant de Appollin roy de thir* (ISTC ia00924800 GW 2279) and *Les quatre fils Aymon* may have been published by Guillaume le Roy in Lyon about 1482–1485 (ISTC ia01432800; GW 3133).⁵⁶ The same titles show up in German literature in the early period of print. In Augsburg, Günther Zainer published Heinrich Steinhöwel’s *Die histori des königes Appolonii regis Tyri* in 1471 (ISTC ia00925000; GW 2273). Using a Dutch printed prose text, Johann Koelhoff the Younger published the story about the four ‘Heimschen kynderen’ in Cologne in 1493 (ISTC ia01434000; GW 3140).⁵⁷ In England, William Caxton printed a translation of the French Lyon print of *Les quatre fils Aymon* in 1490–1491 under the title *The foure sonnes of Aimon* (ISTC ia01434500; GW3141).⁵⁸

The early printers in Holland rarely translated their romances from another vernacular text, instead preferring to adapt existing Latin or Middle Dutch texts they could easily lay their hands on. Gerard Leeu’s production of romances during his activities in Holland may serve as an example.⁵⁹ His *Historie van Alexander* (ISTC ia00400900; GW 891), published in Gouda in 1477, is the oldest text in the corpus of printed Middle Dutch romances. Its source was the Alexander part of a Brabantine Bible translation, the so-called *Bible translation*

55 Early printers in Utrecht and Zwolle were particularly interested in religious texts, doubtless under the influence of the spiritual reform movement *Devotio Moderna*.

56 According to Sarah Baudelle-Michels, *Les quatre fils Aymon* was published in Lyon by the Imprimeur de l’*Abuzé en Court* between 1483 and 1485. See her ‘*Renaut de Montauban ou Les Quatre Fils Aymon* (prose vulgate)’. In: *Nouveau Répertoire de mises en prose (XIV^e-XVI^e siècle)* Ed. by Maria Colombo Timelli et al. Paris 2014, p. 699–716, here p. 710.

57 On Johann Koelhoff the Younger’s edition and the Dutch source, see Beate Weifenbach, ‘Johann Koelhoff der Jüngere: Die *Vier Heimschen Kynderen*. Die Bedeutung der Kölner Inkunabel aus dem Jahre 1493 für die Drucktradition von Haimonskindertexten in Deutschland’. In: *ABäG* 51 (1999), p. 169–193, here p. 174, 180–181.

58 See Baudelle-Michels (see note 56), p. 713. See also Janet M. Cowen, ‘Die mittelenglischen Romane um Karl den Großen’. In: *Karl der Große in den europäischen Literaturen des Mittelalters. Konstruktion eines Mythos*. Ed. by Bernd Bastert. Tübingen 2004, p. 163–182, here p. 179–181.

59 See Koen Goudriaan et al. (eds), *Een drukker zoekt publiek. Gheraert Leeu te Gouda 1477–1484*. Delft 1993.

of 1360. This portion of the text concerning Alexander was based on two texts by the above-mentioned Flemish author Jacob van Maerlant, the *Spiegel historiel* and *Alexanders geesten*, and Petrus Comestor's *Historia scholastica*.⁶⁰ Leeu's *Historie van Alexander* met with much success, as it was printed four times between 1477 and 1491: one time by Leeu himself in Gouda and three times in Delft, by Jacob Jacobszoon van der Meer and Mauricius Yemantszoon (1479) and Chistiaen Snellaert (1488 and 1491).⁶¹

In 1479, Leeu printed the *Historie van Troyen* (ISTC ic00775500; GW 7243), which is a translation in Dutch of the *Historia destructionis Troiae* by Guido de Columnis. The Dutch text was completed by the addition of a prosification of Jacob van Maerlant's verse adaptation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, that originally served as the final part of Maerlant's widely read *Historie van Troyen*.⁶² Work by Maerlant was also used for Leeu's *Destructie van Jherusalem*, printed in 1482 (ISTC ij00488500; GW M08652). This text is a prosification of Maerlant's verse translation of Flavius Josephus' *De Bello Judaico*.⁶³ The Flemish poet had composed this text, called the 'Wrake van Jerusalem' (Revenge on Jerusalem) in secondary literature, to complete his renowned *Rijmbijbel*, which is a verse translation of Petrus Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*.⁶⁴

In that same year, 1479, Leeu produced two other narrative texts based on Latin or Middle Dutch sources. His *Seven wisen van Rome* (ISTC is00450100; GW 12876) was translated from the *Historia septem sapientum Rome*, a Latin prose adaptation of a French source.⁶⁵ Leeu's Latin source was probably printed in Cologne by the printer of Augustine's *De fide* before 1473 (ISTC

60 See S.S. Hoogstra, *Proza-bewerkingen van het Leven van Alexander den Grooten in het Middelnederlandsch*. 's-Gravenhage 1898, p. CXII–CXV.

61 See Bart Besamusca, 'De geschiedenis van Alexander de Grote in vier vroege drukken'. In: *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 22 (2015), p. 123–140.

62 See W.P. Gerritsen, 'Een onbekende prozaversie van Maerlants *Aeneis*-bewerking'. In: *Miscellanea Neerlandica. Opstellen voor dr. Jan Deschamps ter gelegenheid van zijn zeventigste verjaardag*. Ed. by Elly Cockx-Indestege and Frans Hendrickx. Vol. 2. Leuven 1987, p. 163–174.

63 See Willem Kuiper, 'Die *Destructie van Jherusalem* in handschrift en druk'. In: *Voortgang, jaarboek voor de neerlandistiek* 25 (2007), p. 67–88, here p. 83–84.

64 For Maerlant's translation of the *De Bello Judaico*, see Petra Berendrecht, *Proeven van bewaamheid. Jacob van Maerlant en de omgang met zijn Latijnse bronnen*. Amsterdam 1996 (Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de Middeleeuwen 14), p. 117–137. For the *Rijmbijbel*, see Jaap van Moolenbroek and Maaïke Mulder (eds), *Scholastica willic ontbinden. Over de Rijmbijbel van Jacob van Maerlant*. Hilversum 1991.

65 Before 1500, Leeu's edition was reprinted at least three times: Delft, J.J. Van der Meer, 1483 (ISTC is00450150; GW 12877); Gouda, printer of *Teghen die strael der minnen*, 1484 or later (ISTC is00450200; GW 12878); Delft, J.J. Van der Meer or Ch. Snellaert, 1488–1491 (ISTC is00450300; GW 12879).

is00446000; GW 12847).⁶⁶ A Middle Dutch text was used to produce the *Hystorie van Reynaert die vos* (ISTC ir00135800; GW 12725). Probably a reprint of an edition that was published before 1479, also by Leeu, this text is a prosification of the verse text *Reynaerts historie*. It is likely that Leeu had this work close at hand, since the two manuscripts in which this text has come down to us were copied in Utrecht and Holland in the 1470s.⁶⁷ It is significant that Leeu wanted to avoid the impression that this tale was too frivolous and departed too far from the truth. In his prologue, he stressed the text's didactic character, calling Reynaert's adventures "parabolen" (parables), that contain "veel schoen leren ende merckelike punten" (many good lessons and noteworthy points).⁶⁸

We know of only two verse romances that appeared in print in Holland in this early period: the long fourteenth-century romance *Seghelijn van Jherusalem*, printed in Delft between 1483 and 1485 by Jacob Jacobsz. van der Meer (ISTC is00366400; GW 12790), and the short romance *Karel ende Elegast*, printed for the first time by Gherardus De Leempt in the city of Den Bosch between 1484 and 1488 (ISTC ic00204650; GW 12600). Both romances were quite

66 For an overview, see Fred de Bree, 'Gheraert Leeu als drukker van Nederlands verhalend proza'. In: *Een drukker zoekt publiek. Gheraert Leeu te Gouda 1477–1484*. Ed. by Koen Goudriaan et al. Delft 1993, p. 61–80, here p. 63–69.

67 See *Reynaerts historie*. Ed. and transl. by Rita Schlusemann and Paul Wackers. Münster 2005 (Bibliothek mittelniederländischer Literatur 2), p. 416–418.

68 Hans Rijns (ed.), *De gedrukte Nederlandse Reynaerttraditie. Een diplomatische en synoptische uitgave naar de bronnen vanaf 1479 tot 1700*. Hilversum 2007 (Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen 100), p. 12. The word 'punten', points, is often used in didactic and edifying texts: see Wim van Anrooij, 'Poenten' in de Middelnederlandse letterkunde. Een geleidingssysteem in het zakelijke en discursieve verhoog'. In: Wim van Anrooij et al., *Al t'Antwerpen in die stad. Jan van Boendale en de literaire cultuur van zijn tijd*. Amsterdam 2002, p. 65–80 and 166–168. For Leeu's prologue, see Herman Pleij, 'Over betekenis en belang van de leesinstructie in de gedrukte proza-Reynaert van 1479'. In: Herman Pleij, Joris Reynaert et al., *Geschreven en gedrukt. Boekproductie van handschrift naar druk in de overgang van Middeleeuwen naar Moderne tijd*. Gent 2004, p. 207–232. Pleij (p. 225) rejects Janet Coleman's claim that (Caxton's translation of) Leeu's prologue should be taken in a satirical vein; see her *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*. Cambridge 1996, p. 217–218. Caxton used the Dutch prosification of *Reynaerts historie* to produce his *History of reynard the fox* (ISTC ir00137000; GW 12728) in 1481. For a study of Caxton's translation, see Rita Schlusemann, *Die hystorie van reynaert die vos und The history of reynaerd the fox. Die spätmittelalterlichen Prosabearbeitungen des Reynaert-Stoffes*. Frankfurt am Main 1991. For the printed Dutch tradition, see Paul Wackers, 'The Printed Dutch Reynaert Tradition: From the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century'. In: *Reynard the Fox. Social Engagement and Cultural Metamorphoses in the Beast Epic from the Middle Ages to the Present*. Ed. by Kenneth Varty. New York, Oxford 2000, p. 73–103.

successful, as they were reprinted several times until far into the sixteenth century.⁶⁹ It is difficult to tell why they were not prosified. According to Herman Pleij, De Leempt's *Karel ende Elegast* was meant as a schoolbook.⁷⁰ While De Leempt's printing list indeed featured several schoolbooks in Latin and two Latin-Dutch dictionaries, there is no firm evidence that *Karel ende Elegast* was really meant for schooling. The fact that later editions of *Karel ende Elegast* feature a short epilogue dealing with the life and virtues of Charlemagne may indicate that this short tale was thought fit for use in the classroom. As far as *Seghelijn van Jherusalem* is concerned, however, its sheer length (more than 12.000 lines) makes this hypothesis highly improbable.

The two verse romances share a strong religious bias. In both texts, the main character is subjected to God's mysterious ways. *Seghelijn* has even been characterized as a *miles christianus* and his story has a hagiographic slant to it.⁷¹ It is conceivable that the strong Christian features of *Karel ende Elegast* and *Seghelijn van Jherusalem* made them attractive for printers whose production was geared towards moralizing and religious texts.⁷²

Whereas most of the printers in Holland who produced romances made use of source texts in Dutch and Latin, the Haarlem printer Jacob Bellaert was the exception. Like most of his colleagues, he printed devotional texts, but he also ventured to produce Dutch translations from French, more precisely Burgundian texts.⁷³ These books share some characteristics with the Burgundian editions printed by his Bruges colleague Colard Mansion: luxurious lay-out and high liter-

69 For *Karel ende Elegast*, see Bart Besamusca, Hans van Dijk (eds), Thea Summerfield (transl.), 'Karel ende Elegast'. In: *Olifant* 26 (2011), p. 51–165, here p. 52–53. On the *Seghelijn* editions, see Jef Schaeps' contribution in the present volume, p. 297–324.

70 Herman Pleij, *Het gevleugelde woord. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1400–1560*. Amsterdam 2007, p. 466.

71 See Geert H.M. Claassens, "'Doe leefde hi soe heilichlike". *Seghelijn van Jherusalem* tussen ridderepiek en hagiografie,' In: *Ene andre tale. Tendensen in de Middelnederlandse late ridder-epiek*. Ed. by An Faems and Marjolein Hogenbirk. Hilversum 2012 (Middel-eeuwse Studies en Bronnen 131), p. 195–212.

72 See Rob Resoort, 'Het raadsel van de rijm- en droomdrukker'. In: *Nederlandse Letterkunde* 3 (1998), p. 309–326, here p. 339.

73 For overviews, see *De vijfhonderdste verjaring* (see note 53), p. 286–287; Wilma Keesman, 'Jacob Bellaert en Haarlem'. In: *Haarlems Helicon. Literatuur en toneel te Haarlem vóór 1800*. Ed. by E. K. Grootes. Hilversum 1993, p. 27–48; Saskia Bogaart, *Geleerde kennis in de volkstaal. Van den proprieteyten der dinghen (Haarlem 1485) in perspectief*. Hilversum 2004, p. 47–56.

ary quality.⁷⁴ Aristocratic purchasers of his books could fit their coat of arms in an empty escutcheon that was part of Bellaert's printer's mark.⁷⁵ Between 10 December 1483 and 5 May 1485, Bellaert published the *Historie van Jason* (ISTC il00111000; GW M17467), a Dutch translation of Raoul Lefèvre's *Histoire de Jason*, and on 5 May 1485, he printed the *Vergaderinge der historien van Troyen* (ISTC il00116000; GW M17453), a translation of the *Recueil des histoires de Troies* by the same French author.⁷⁶ Both editions feature a woodcut with a representation of the author offering his book to his patron Philip the Good: the coat of arms hanging on a tree behind the duke probably points to Claes van Ruyven (c. 1446–1492), who held a number of important positions in the city of Haarlem and the surrounding region (Kennemerland) between 1471 until his violent death in 1492 and was as such an important representative of the Burgundian dynasty in Holland.⁷⁷ If Van Ruyven supported Bellaert, it is improbable that his sponsorship was sufficient to keep Bellaert's business afloat.⁷⁸ The number of potential buyers of his luxurious and capital-intensive products must

74 See *De vijfhonderdste verjaring* (see note 53), p. 212–239; Ludo Vandamme, 'Colard Mansion et le monde du livre à Bruges'. In: *Le berceau du livre imprimé, autour des incunables*. Ed. by Pierre Aquilon and Thierry Claer. Turnhout 2010, p. 177–186; Renaud Adam, 'Colard Mansion, passeur de textes?'. In: *Le Roman français dans les premiers imprimés*. Ed. by Anne Schoysman and Maria Colombo Timelli. Paris 2016 (Rencontres 147), p. 11–24; Evelien Hauwaerts, Evelien de Wilde and Ludo Vandamme (eds), *Colard Mansion. Incunabula, Prints and Manuscripts in Medieval Bruges*. S. l. 2018.

75 Keesman, 'Jacob Bellaert en Haarlem' (note 73), p. 35–36.

76 See Wilma Keesman, *De eindeloze stad. Troje en Trojaanse oorsprongsmythen in de (laat) middeleeuwse en vroegmoderne Nederlanden*. Hilversum 2017 (Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen 159), p. 51–57. Some time later, between 24 December 1485 and 12 August 1486, Bellaert also printed the French sources of both editions (ISTC il00110950, GW M17455 and ISTC il00113500, GW M17434). These editions are the only French titles that Bellaert produced. For these editions, he made use of French editions printed by William Caxton in Bruges or Ghent c. 1476–1477 (*Histoire de Jason*) and c. 1474–1475 (*Recueil*). See Lotte Hellinga, *Texts in Transit: Manuscript to Proof and Print in the Fifteenth Century*. Leiden 2014, p. 312–313, 326, 347–360, and Lotte Hellinga, 'William Caxton and Colard Mansion'. In: *Colard Mansion. Incunabula, Prints and Manuscripts in Medieval Bruges* (note 74), p. 63–71, here p. 65 and 69.

77 Keesman, 'Jacob Bellaert en Haarlem' (note 73), p. 41–43 and Keesman, *De eindeloze stad* (note 76), p. 54–56.

78 For local patronage of regional presses in France, see Malcolm Walsby, 'The Vanishing Press: Printing in Provincial France in the Early Sixteenth Century'. In: *The Book Triumphant: Print in Transition in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Ed. by Malcolm Walsby and Graeme Kemp. Leiden, Boston 2011, p. 97–111, here p. 106–111. For a comparable case of aristocratic patronage of a printed edition of a Burgundian literary text in Holland, see Susie Speakman Sutch, 'De Gouda-editie van *Le Chevalier délibéré*. Een boek uitgegeven in eigen beheer'. In: Herman Pleij, Joris Reynaert et al., *Geschreven en gedrukt. Boekproductie van*

have been far too small.⁷⁹ Bellaert's last edition, the Dutch translation of Guillaume de Digulleville's *Le Pèlerinage de la vie humaine* (ISTC ig00638000; GW 11851), appeared on 20 August 1486 and then we lose track of him. It is generally assumed that he had to stop his activities due to bankruptcy.

It is evident that by the end of the 1480s, the small towns in Holland did not offer enough opportunities for printers to keep their businesses alive. One printer, Gerard Leeu, knew this all too well. In 1484, he had already decided to leave Gouda and after trying his luck in Bruges for a short time, opted for the rapidly expanding city of Antwerp.⁸⁰

Many printers in Holland printed titles that we also find in neighbouring literatures at the same time. In order to have a better idea of the specific profile of the production in Holland, we list here the French production of romances (first editions only) until 1490, based on the overview by Giovanni Matteo Roccati.⁸¹ In bold we indicate the French titles that have approximately the same content as editions printed in Holland. None of these Dutch editions, however, are translations from the French, except the texts that have *L'histoire de Jason* and *Le Recueil des histoires de Troie* as their source.

Strikingly, but not surprisingly, almost all the French, and in particular the chivalric romances, are absent from the Holland production. The only possible exception seems to be *Les quatre fils Aymon*: the Dutch edition, printed in Gouda in 1489 or later (ISTC ia01433700; GW 12486), is, however, not based on a French source, but on a very popular Middle Dutch verse adaptation from the thirteenth century. With the exception of the two Bellaert titles, all the other Dutch titles are adaptations of Latin or Middle Dutch texts. They have a strong didactic bias, teaching history, morals or both.

handschrift naar druk in de overgang van Middeleeuwen naar Moderne tijd. Gent 2004, p. 137–155.

79 An additional explanation for the disappearance of Bellaert's printing press may be that the potential buyers of his books had easy access to editions printed elsewhere because of the presence of local booksellers. For these booksellers in provincial France, see Walsby (see note 78), p. 102–106. For printed German romances, a large aristocratic audience seems to have existed. See the article by Bertelsmeier-Kierst in the present volume, p. 17–47.

80 For Leeu in Bruges and Antwerp, see Goudriaan et al. (see note 59) and Anne Rouzet, *Dictionnaire des imprimeurs, libraires et éditeurs des XV^e et XVI^e siècles dans les limites géographiques de la Belgique actuelle*. Nieuwkoop 1975, p. 121–123.

81 Giovanni Matteo Roccati, 'Le roman dans les incunables. L'impact des stratégies éditoriales dans le choix des titres imprimés.' In: *Le Roman français dans les premiers imprimés*. Ed. by Anne Schoysman and Maria Colombo Timelli. Paris 2016 (Rencontres 147), p. 95–126, here p. 122–123.

| | | | |
|------|---------------|-------------------|---|
| 1474 | Bruges/Ghent? | Caxton | <i>L'histoire de Jason</i> |
| 1474 | Bruges/Ghent? | Caxton | <i>Le recueil des histoires de Troyes</i> |
| 1477 | Lyon | Le Roy | <i>Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelonne I</i> |
| 1477 | Lyon | Philippi-Reinhart | La Destruction de Troye |
| 1478 | Genève | Steinschaber | <i>Fierabras</i> |
| 1478 | Genève | Steinschaber | <i>Histoire de la belle Mélusine</i> |
| 1478 | Lyon | Le Roy | <i>Baudoin</i> |
| 1478 | Bruges | Mansion | <i>L'Abusé en Court</i> |
| 1479 | Genève | Dujardin | <i>Ponthus et la belle Sidoine</i> |
| 1479 | Genève | Steinschaber | <i>Destruction de Jérusalem (Vengeance de nostre seigneur)</i> |
| 1479 | Lyon | Huss | <i>Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelonne II</i> |
| 1479 | Lyon | Le Roy | <i>Clamadès</i> |
| 1480 | Lyon | Le Roy | <i>Paris et Vienne</i> |
| 1482 | Lyon | Cruse | <i>Le Roman de Apollin roy de Thir</i> |
| 1482 | Genève | Cruse | <i>La patience de Griseldis</i> |
| 1482 | Genève | Cruse | <i>Olivier de Castille et Artus d'Algarbe</i> |
| 1482 | Lyon | Le Roy | <i>Les quatre fils Aymon</i> |
| 1483 | Lyon | Le Roy | <i>Eneydes</i> |
| 1487 | Abbeville | Gérard | <i>Le triumphe des neuf preux</i> |
| 1487 | Lyon | Le Roy | <i>Le livre des faits d'armes de Bertrand du Guesclin</i> |
| 1488 | Paris | du Pré | <i>Lancelot du Lac 2</i> |
| 1488 | Rouen | Le Bourgeois | <i>Lancelot du Lac 1</i> |
| 1489 | Lyon | Maillet | <i>Valentin et Orson</i> |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-----------------|--|
| 1489 | Paris | Le Rouge | <i>Les Sept sages romains</i> |
| 1489 | Rouen | Le Bourgeois | <i>Le roman du noble et vaillant Chevalier Tristan</i> |
| 1490 | Lyon | | <i>Euriale et Lucesse</i> |

Listing the production of Dutch romances in the northern Low Countries until c. 1490 results in the following overview (< means “or later”):

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|--|---|
| 1477 | Gouda | Leeu | <i>Alexander</i> |
| 1479 | Gouda | Leeu | <i>Reynaert-prose</i> |
| 1479 | Gouda | Leeu | <i>Seven wise mannen van Rome</i> |
| 1479 | Gouda | Leeu | <i>Historien van Troyen (G.de Col.)</i> |
| 1482 | Gouda | Leeu | <i>Destructie van Jherusalem</i> |
| 1483< | Haarlem | Bellaert | <i>Jason (Lefèvre)</i> |
| 1483< | Delft | Van der Meer | <i>Seghelijn van Jherusalem</i> |
| 1484< | 's-Hertogenbosch | De Leempt | <i>Karel ende Elegast</i> |
| 1484< | Gouda | Printer <i>Strael der minnen</i> | <i>Strael der minnen</i> (pseudo-Petrarca) |
| 1485 | Haarlem | Bellaert | <i>Vergaderinge van Troyen (Lefèvre)</i> |
| 1486 | Gouda | Printer <i>Godevaert</i> | <i>Godevaert van Boloen</i> |
| 1486< | Gouda | van Ghemen | <i>Julius Caesar</i> |
| 1489< | Gouda | Printer <i>Chevalier délibéré</i> | <i>Heemskinderen</i> |
| 1493 | Delft | Snellaert | <i>Apollonius van Tyro</i> |

It is interesting to note which titles do not occur, or do so much later, in the French corpus. The Dutch production in the northern part of the Low Countries has a strong tendency towards history, in particular history concerning heroes from the past, such as Alexander, Charlemagne, Godefroi de Bouillon and Julius Caesar. In most cases, these texts are based on sources that were considered

highly reliable, such as Latin chronicles (*Godevaert, Caesar*) and the History Bible (*Alexander*). The short text on Charlemagne (*Karel ende Elegast*) may be an exception, but has a strong moralizing bias and would be explicitly linked with the life and virtues of Charlemagne in later Antwerp editions. This bias is also present in three quite luxurious Gouda editions, *Godevaert van Boloen* (1486; ISTC ig00317000; GW 12573), *Julius Caesar* (1486; ISTC ic00029500; GW 5879) and *De vier Heemskinderen* (1490; ISTC ia01433700; GW 12486), which may have been commissioned by a wealthy patron.⁸² Furthermore, the Prose *Reynaert* was presented by Leeu as a didactic text, as a parable that informed its readers about human morality. Love does not hold a prominent place, except in the pseudo-Petrarch novella *Strael der minnen* (after 1484; ISTC ip00399700; GW M31678), which does, however, promote fidelity in marriage and consequently has a strong moralizing tendency.

3 Antwerp

It is well documented that the initial flourishing of the printing press in the northern parts of the Low Countries was followed by a period in which Antwerp was the centre of book production. This transition took place in the 1480s. In the decade between 1470 and 1480, there was no production of printed books in Antwerp.⁸³ Then, the state of affairs changed rapidly. Four cities, Antwerp, Leuven, Deventer and Zwolle, produced almost ninety percent of the Latin titles up to 1550. About 42 percent of these editions came from the Antwerp printing presses. The city was also dominant in the market of printed books in Dutch. In the period up to the middle of the sixteenth century, 55 percent of these titles appeared in Antwerp. Minor rivals were Delft and Leiden. The generally accepted explanation for this transition from Holland to Antwerp is that due to its

⁸² Speakman Sutch (see note 78) p. 141–152 suggests that the patron of at least two of these works, *Godevaert van Boloen* and *De vier Heemskinderen*, as well as of a French edition of *Le Chevalier délibéré* by Olivier de la Marche (after 31 October 1489; ICTS il00029010, GW M16748) may be identified with Jan van Cats, bailiff in Gouda for Mary of Burgundy and brother-in-law of Claes van Ruyven, whom we have already met as a patron of the Haarlem printer Jacob Bellaert. Sutch's hypothesis is, however, a risky one, as Jan van Cats must have died in 1488–1489, while *Le Chevalier délibéré* and *De vier Heemskinderen* were printed after 31 October 1489 and in 1490, respectively. On the printers' patrons in Gouda, see also Jan Willem Klein, 'Ghescreven ofte gheprent. Aspecten van de (Goudse) middeleeuwse boekproductie'. In: Herman Pleij, Joris Reynaert et al., *Geschreven en gedrukt. Boekproductie van handschrift naar druk in de overgang van Middeleeuwen naar Moderne tijd*. Gent 2004, p. 67–83, here p. 72–76.

⁸³ For an overview, see Cuijpers (see note 53), p. 71–72.

strategic position at the Scheldt estuary and its extensive infrastructure of bankers, merchants, authors, typesetters and potential readers, this Brabantine city provided the near-ideal circumstances for commercial book production.⁸⁴ For our purposes, it is interesting that the shift from north to south had an impact on the production of Middle Dutch romances.

Clearly aware of economic developments and opportunities, Gheraert Leeu moved his print shop from Gouda, where he had been active since 1477, to Antwerp in the summer of 1484. Starting with the Latin-Dutch dictionary *Gemmula vocabulorum* (ISTC iv00332500; GW M51159), he produced here at least 159 editions until his untimely death in December 1492.⁸⁵ In 1487, his first Antwerp romances appeared. On May 15 of that year, the printing of the *Histoire du chevalier Paris et de la belle Vienne* (ISTC ip00112800; GW 12686) was completed, followed by the publication of its Dutch translation, the *Historie van Parijs ende Vienna* (ISTC ip00113800; GW 12700). This adventurous love story enjoyed great popularity, as is attested by five French editions after the *editio princeps* of 1480 by Guillaume Le Roy (Huss 1485, Leeu 1487, Meslier 1491, Trepperel 1498 and 1499⁸⁶), a Low German version, published by Leeu in 1488 (ISTC ip00115200; GW 12699), an English version produced by Leeu in 1492 (ISTC ip00113600; GW 12692) and three reprints of the Dutch text, published in Antwerp by Leeu about 1492 (ISTC ip00114500; GW 12701), by Govaert Bac about 1495 (ISTC ip00115000; GW 12702) and by Henrick Eckert van Homberch in 1510 (NK 1090).⁸⁷

In producing the *Historie van Parijs ende Vienna*, Leeu continued a practice of Jacob Bellaert, because he printed a Middle Dutch translation of a contemporary French source. Whereas the Haarlem printer was exceptional in this respect, as we noted earlier, Leeu seems to have paved the way for the

84 See Francine de Nave, 'Een typografische hoofdstad in opkomst, bloei en verval'. In: *Antwerpen, verhaal van een metropool*. Ed. by J. Van der Stock. Gent, 1993, p. 87–95. See also Rita Schlusemann, 'Buchmarkt in Antwerpen am Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts'. In: *Laienlektüre und Buchmarkt im späten Mittelalter*. Ed. by Thomas Kock and Rita Schlusemann. Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 33–59.

85 See *Inventaris van incunabelen gedrukt te Antwerpen 1481–1500*. Antwerpen 1982 (Publikaties van de stadsbibliotheek en het archief en museum voor het Vlaamse cultuurleven 1), p. 45–67.

86 See Roccati (see note 81), p. 119.

87 For a comparative study of the international *Paris et de la belle Vienne* tradition, see Baukje Finet-van der Schaaf, 'Les incunables français, néerlandais, allemand et anglais de *L'histoire du très vaillant chevalier Paris et de la belle Vienne, fille du dauphin* et leur rapport à la tradition française manuscrite du récit'. In: *L'épopée romane. Actes du XV^e congrès international Rencesvals. Poitiers, 21–27 août 2000*. 2 vols. Ed. by Gabriel Bianciotto and Claudio Galderisi. Poitiers 2002, p. 825–836.

production in Antwerp of Dutch romances based on contemporary French sources. In the period up to about 1500 a number of editions testify to this trend. While Leeu himself published *Meluzine* in 1491 (ISTC ij00218420; GW 12665),⁸⁸ Jan van Doesborch produced *Buevijn van Austoen* in 1504 (NK 1085).⁸⁹

A slightly more complicated example is provided by the Antwerp printer Roland van den Dorpe, who published the *Destructie van Troyen* between 1497 and 1500 (ISTC ih00281000; GW 12522). This text is based on both Dutch and French sources. Van den Dorpe mixed two texts that were printed in Holland and have been mentioned before: Leeu's *Historie van Troyen* and Bellaert's *Vergaderinge der historien van Troyen*. In addition, he renewed the text tradition by adding a translation of Louis de Beauvau's French rendition of Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* and presenting the amorous dialogues between Troilus and Briseida in the form of verse passages.⁹⁰ These lyrical insertions developed into a literary fashion, mainly under the influence of Jan van Doesborch, who took over the printing house of the widow of Roland van den Dorpe in 1501.⁹¹

A particularly instructive example in this context is the *Destructie van Jherusalem*, which was probably printed by Willem Vorsterman about 1505 (NK 4430). The source text for this production could have been the *Destructie van Jherusalem* (ISTC ij00488500; GW M08652) which Leeu published in Gouda in 1482 (supra). However, Vorsterman seems to have ignored Leeu's edition in favour of a translation of a French source, the highly popular *Destruction de Jérusalem*, also called *La Vengeance de nostre seigneur*.⁹² There was, apparently, a growing awareness among printers that there was a market, in particular in the economically and culturally more emancipated southern regions of the Low

88 For *Meluzine*, see Johan H. Winkelman, *De staart van Meluzine*. Amsterdam 2000; Lydia Zeldenrust, 'Serpent or Half-Serpent? Bernhard Richel's *Melusine* and the Making of a Western European Icon'. In: *Neophilologus* 100 (2016), p. 19–41; Lydia Zeldenrust, 'The Lady with the Serpent's Tail: Hybridity and the Dutch *Meluzine*'. In: *Melusine's Footprint: Tracing the Legacy of a Medieval Myth*. Ed. by Misty Urban, Deva F. Kemmis and Melissa Ridley Elmes. Leiden 2017 (Explorations in Medieval Culture 4), p. 132–145. For the French source, see Luc. Debaene, *De Nederlandse volksboeken. Ontstaan en geschiedenis van de Nederlandse prozaro-mans, gedrukt tussen 1475 en 1540*. 2nd ed. Hulst 1977, p. 119–120.

89 For the French source of *Buevijn van Austoen*, see P.J.A. Franssen, *Tussen tekst en publiek. Jan van Doesborch, drukker-uitgever en literator te Antwerpen en Utrecht in de eerste helft van de zestiende eeuw*. Amsterdam 1990, p. 52.

90 See Keesman, *De eindeloze stad* (note 76), p. 57–61.

91 See Elisabeth de Bruijn, 'Das Spiel der Stimmen. Performative Verspassagen in einigen niederländischen Prozaromanen (ca. 1500–1540)'. In: *Stimme und Performanz in der mittelalterlichen Literatur*. Ed. by Monica Unzeitig, Nine Miedema and Angela Schrott. Berlin 2017, p. 133–154.

92 See Roccati (see note 81), p. 116–117.

Countries, that included buyers who wanted to be acquainted with fashionable French romances, such as *Paris et Vienne* and *Mélusine*, but were unable to read them, or preferred to read them in their own language. Bellaert had been searching in vain for this type of consumer of romances some years earlier.

The printing of translations of contemporary French romances continued in the first half of the sixteenth century. Examples of this trend include *Olyvier van Castillen* (NK 3170), printed by Van Homberch about 1510,⁹³ *Robrecht de Duyvel*, published by Michiel Hillen van Hoochstraten in 1516,⁹⁴ and *Peeter van Provençen* (NK 3171), produced by Willem Vorsterman about 1517. Their French counterparts circulated since 1477 (*Pierre et Maguelonne*), 1482 (*Olivier de Castille*) and 1496 (*Robert le Diable*).⁹⁵ The recently discovered edition of *Galien Rethore*, published by Willem Vorsterman somewhere between c. 1504 and c. 1543, fits this category: the Dutch text is based on a French source, published by Anthoine Vêrard in 1500 (or a later edition).⁹⁶

This appreciation of non-Dutch popular romances extended to vernaculars other than French. This development is attested, for example, by two Antwerp texts in the corpus of Middle Dutch printed romances which are based on English sources. These English texts were both printed by Wynkyn de Worde.⁹⁷ In 1528, Michiel van Hoochstraaten published *Van den jongen geheeten Jacke* (NK 1087), a translation of *The Frere and the Boye* (c. 1510). Around 1540, Symon Cock produced the *Historie van Merlijn* (NK 3169), which is a translation of De Worde's *A lytel treatyse of ye byrth and prophecy of Marlyn* (first edition c. 1499).⁹⁸ However, publishers did not only draw on English source texts. In or

93 According to Luc. Debaene, the Dutch *Olyvier van Castillen* is based on both the French and the Castilian prose romance, see his 'Nederlandse prozaromans en Spaanse "Libros de caballerias"'. In: *Liber alumnorum Prof. Dr. E. Rombauts, aangeboden ter gelegenheid van zijn vijfenzestigste verjaardag en zijn dertigjarig hoogleraarschap*. Leuven 1968, p. 129–144, here p. 133–139. However, Elisabeth de Bruijn convincingly demonstrates that the Dutch translation had a French romance as its model. See *Queeste* 25 (2018), p. 67–86.

94 See Cuijpers (see note 53), p. 290. See also *Robrecht de duyvel*. Ed. by Rob Resoort. Muiderberg 1980.

95 See Roccati (see note 81), p. 108, 112.

96 See Elisabeth de Bruijn, 'Galien Rethore herontdekt'. In: *Madoc* 31 (2017), p. 75–82.

97 For Wynkyn de Worde, see the articles by Boffey, p. 125–141, and Sánchez-Martí, p. 143–166, in the present volume.

98 On *Jacke*, *Merlijn* and their English translations, see Elisabeth de Bruijn, 'To Content the Continent. The Dutch Narratives *Merlijn* and *Jacke* Compared to Their English Counterparts'. In: *TNTL* 133 (2017), p. 83–108. A third example could be *Helias* (NK 3172), published by Jan van Doesborch around 1520–1530. However, it is uncertain whether this romance is based on the French *Genealogie avecques les Gestes* (1499) by Pierre Desrey (first edition: Le Noir 1504) or on the English *Helyas, Knight of the Swanne* (first edition: De Worde, 1512). See Elisabeth de

before 1518, Jan van Doesborch must have printed a rendition of the Low German *Historie van tween kopluden* (c. 1495), which is only preserved in a 1531 edition by Willem Vorsterman (*Frederick van Jenuen*, NK 1086).⁹⁹ The latter also used a Spanish edition for his *Sibilla* (NK 3173), published around 1538.¹⁰⁰ It is safe to conclude that Antwerp printers were internationally orientated in their search for romance material in the vernacular.

The printers' keen eyes for romances which were appreciated by audiences outside of the Low Countries did not prevent them from publishing local material that had proven its attractiveness in the past. Regularly, they produced Middle Dutch romances which were transmitted in manuscripts and/or printed editions earlier on. Around 1517, for example, Jan van Doesborch printed *Floris ende Blancefloer* (NK 3160), based on the thirteenth-century verse text by the Flemish poet Diederic van Assenede. Some years later, in 1521, Van Doesborch published two romances, *Jason* and *Hercules* (NK 3164), which could be bought as a set and separately.¹⁰¹ These texts are adaptations of Bellaert's texts about these classical heroes, printed in 1484–1485.¹⁰² A prominent example of this continuity is provided by *Margariete van Limborch* (NK 3168), which Willem Vorsterman produced in 1516. It is a long prose text, based on the lengthy verse romance *Heinric en Margriete van Limborch* which we mentioned earlier.¹⁰³ Vorsterman's willingness to publish this voluminous folio edition indicates that homegrown romances still attracted readers in the first half of the sixteenth century.

Bruijn, 'Reculer pour mieux sauter: de bronnenproblematiek en de literaire eigenheid van de Middelnederlandse *Helias*'. In: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 126 (2016), p. 227–263.

99 Debaene, *De Nederlandse volksboeken* (see n. 88), p. 87; Franssen (see n. 87), p. 67 en 105; Rita Schlusemann, 'Wechselseitige niederdeutsch/niederländische Literaturbeziehungen in der frühen gedruckten Erzähldichtung. Mit einer Edition des Magdeburger Drucks der *Historie van twee kopluden* (um 1495)'. In: *Jahrbuch des Vereins für niederdeutsche Sprachforschung* 125 (2002), p. 97–130, here p. 112, n. 46.

100 See Bart Besamusca, 'Willem Vorsterman's *Sibilla*: the Dutch Story of Charlemagne's Repudiated Wife'. In: *L'imaginaire courtois et son double*. Ed. by Giovanna Angeli and Luciano Formisano. Napoli 1992, p. 245–254; and Baukje Finet-van der Schaaf, 'Le roman en prose néerlandais de la reine Sibille et son modèle espagnol: *La Hystoria de la Reyna Sebilla*'. In: *Charlemagne in the North: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference of the Société Rencesvals*. Ed. by Philip E. Bennett, Anne Elisabeth Cobby and Graham A. Runnalls. Edinburgh 1993, p. 31–43.

101 See Bart Besamusca, 'Raoul Lefèvre in Dutch: Two 1521 Editions of the Antwerp Printer Jan van Doesborch'. In: *Journal of the Early Book Society* 20 (2017), p. 219–232.

102 See Bart Besamusca, 'Tekst en beeld in twee drukken van Jan van Doesborch: *Van Jason ende Hercules* en *Die historie van den stercken Hercules*'. In: *SpdL* 59 (2017), p. 1–34.

103 For a recent study, see Schlusemann, *Schöne Historien* (note 34).

Striking is the endurance of verse texts in the Antwerp production of local Middle Dutch romances. The corpus of Middle Dutch printed romances includes five texts which were reprinted in verse, despite the strong tendency to apply the prose form to printed romances. The short verse text *Karel ende Elegast*, which was published in Holland twice in the period 1484–1488, was reprinted in Antwerp four times before 1540.¹⁰⁴ The other printed verse texts are the verse *Reynaert* published by Leeu in Antwerp around 1487 (ISTC ir00136300; GW 12727),¹⁰⁵ *Jonathas ende Rosafiere*, which dates from around 1505 (NK 3165),¹⁰⁶ the *Strijt van Roncevale*, which incorporates lines from the *Roelantslied*, the Middle Dutch *Chanson de Roland*, and was published by Vorsterman about 1520 (NK 3907),¹⁰⁷ and finally *Seghelijn van Jherusalem*. This verse romance of no less than twelve thousand lines was reprinted in Antwerp at least four times.¹⁰⁸

Parijs ende Vienna and *Seghelijn van Jherusalem* nicely illustrate the Antwerp reception of Middle Dutch romances. The printers who were active in this city in the period between c. 1480 and c. 1540 reckoned with varying literary tastes. There were readers who appreciated the printers' invitation to get acquainted with romances that were *en vogue* in the surrounding linguistic areas. Other readers, or the same ones at different moments, preferred the good old stories which had come down to them in earlier printed editions.

4 Conclusion

In this article, we have distinguished three stages in the development of Middle Dutch narrative literature. We have argued that each of these phases has its own defining characteristics. In the first phase, the manuscript period up to around

104 These editions are 's-Hertogenbosch: De Leempt, 1484–1488 (ISTC ic00204650; GW 12600); Delft: Van der Meer or Snellaert, 1487–1488 (ISTC ic00204700; GW 12601); Antwerp: Bac, 1493–1498 (ISTC ic00204750; GW 12602); Antwerp: Bac, 1496–1498 (ISTC ic00204760; GW 12604); Antwerp: Lettersnider, 1498 (ISTC ic00204770; GW 12603); Antwerp: Van Berghen or Van Doesborch, c. 1530 (NK 3166). The place of production of the *Karel ende Elegast* edition kept in Saint-Petersburg is unknown, see A.M. Duinhoven and G.A. van Thienen, 'Een onbekende druk van de *Karel ende Elegast* in Leningrad'. In: *TNLT* 106 (1990), p. 1–14.

105 Note that, as mentioned earlier, Leeu printed the *prose* version in Gouda nearly a decade earlier.

106 On this romance, see note 23. The text was reprinted twice between 1510 and 1515. See Faems (see note 23), p. 97–98, n. 6.

107 See Van Dijk (see note 24), p. 44–155.

108 See the article by Schaeps in the present volume, p. 297–324. For the printing of English verse romances, see the contributions by Boffey, p. 125–141, and Sánchez-Martí, p. 143–166.

1470, it is striking that, in contrast to French, English and German literature, the writing of romances seems to have stopped after the middle of the fourteenth century. Moreover, the prose form, so enthusiastically adopted by French authors, was almost completely ignored by Middle Dutch writers, as is shown by the absence of prosifications of verse romances in this period. Furthermore, a reception gap of almost three quarters of a century is clearly identifiable after around 1400. Middle Dutch romances were no longer read in Flanders and Brabant, the central parts of the Low Countries. They remained popular, however, in aristocratic milieus located in the eastern parts of the Low Countries and further eastwards.

The second stage in the development of Middle Dutch narrative literature is characterized by the introduction of printed texts. The early printers not only reintroduced Middle Dutch romances, they also adopted the prose form for these texts. Located in small towns in the northern parts of the Low Countries, they produced texts which were mainly Middle Dutch adaptations of Latin sources and Middle Dutch verse texts that circulated in manuscript copies. In contrast to their colleagues who printed French texts, the early printers of Middle Dutch texts preferred romances that had a strong didactic bias. Noteworthy is the continued production of verse texts, such as *Karel ende Elegast* and *Seghelijn van Jherusalem*, in this period.

Driven by commercial motives, the printing of Middle Dutch romances shifted from Holland to the metropolis of Antwerp in the 1480s. This is, in our view, the start of the third stage in the development of Middle Dutch narrative literature. This shift is surely not a unique case. A comparable transition took place in France. The production of French narrative literature began in cities such as Bruges, Genève and Lyons, before definitively moving to Paris around 1490.¹⁰⁹ The printers of English romances were right from the start located in London / Westminster.¹¹⁰ The production of German romances seems to deviate from this pattern, because they were produced in a number of equally important printing centres, such as Augsburg, Basel, Cologne, Nürnberg and Straßburg.

It is noteworthy, furthermore, that in this third stage, the printers who produced Middle Dutch romances were more internationally orientated towards other vernaculars in their search for appealing sources. This international, in

109 See Roccati (see note 81), p. 108–113. On the concentration of printing in a small number of major cities in France, England and the Low Countries, see Andrew Pettegree, ‘Centre and Periphery in the European Book World’. In: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series, 18 (2008), p. 101–128.

110 See Jordi Sánchez-Martí, ‘The Printed History of the Middle English Verse Romances’. In: *Modern Philology* 107 (2009), p. 1–31, especially p. 11. See also his article in the present volume, p. 143–166.

particular French, orientation of the Antwerp printers is shared by their English and German colleagues.¹¹¹ Finally, printers in Antwerp adapted their material for a market which included readers who were attracted by new romances and readers who favoured texts that were part of an established literary tradition. We see the same happening in France and Germany.¹¹² English readers seem to have preferred prose and verse romances which had English antecedents.¹¹³

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111 See the contributions by Boffey (p. 134) and Bertelsmeier-Kierst (p. 22–28) in the present volume. For William Caxton's preference for French source material, see Jordi Sánchez-Martí, 'The Printed Transmission of Medieval Romance from William Caxton to Wynkyn de Worde, 1473–1533'. In: *The Transmission of Medieval Romance: Metres, Manuscripts and Early Prints*. Ed. by Ad Putter and Judith A. Jefferson. Cambridge 2018, p. 170–190.

112 See Roccati (see note 81) and the article by Bertelsmeier-Kierst in the present volume, p. 17–47.

113 See Jordi Sánchez-Martí, 'The Printed History' (note 110) and 'The Printed Transmission' (note 111) and his article in the present volume, p. 143–166.

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