

'The Medieval Dutch Arthurian Material'

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Introduction

Flemish proper names like Iwanus of Waldripont (1114) and Vualauuaynus of Melne (1118) - i.e. Walewein of Melle - appearing in charters from the beginning of the twelfth century indicate that Arthurian stories must have been popular in the Low Countries very early (Verbeke et al. 1987, 113-18). At least some of these orally circulating stories were in Dutch (Gerritsen 1984). In some form such stories were still in existence around the middle of the thirteenth century. After all, Penninc states in the prologue to his *Walewein* (c. 1250) that ‘Many stories about King Arthur have not yet been put into writing’ (‘Vanden coninc Arture / Es bleven menighe avonture / Die nemmer mee ne wert bescreven’, vv. 1-3). We would dearly like to know more about these tales, but Penninc remains silent with regard to their contents. The oral tradition of Dutch Arthurian stories is an elusive phenomenon.

Almost all Dutch Arthurian texts that have come down to us were written in the thirteenth century. Four traditions can be distinguished. First, the historiographical works are adaptations of Latin sources into Middle Dutch verse. Second, the Middle Dutch renditions of Old French prose romances include not only faithful translations but also very free reworkings of the Old French texts, virtually all of them rendered in verse form. Third, other Middle Dutch romances are based on Old French verse romances, and it appears that in most cases the authors of these texts have taken the liberty of changing their Old French source drastically. Fourth, from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards indigenous romances were being written; the poets of these verse romances were thoroughly familiar with the Old French and Middle Dutch Arthurian romances, to which they freely referred. The material in this chapter is presented according to these four traditions and a closing section will give a short account of the development of Dutch Arthurian literature after the Middle Ages.

It will become clear that most Middle Dutch authors were of Flemish origin. This need not surprise us. Indeed, interest in Arthurian literature was markedly greater in Flanders than in the other areas of the Low Countries (van den Berg

1987). This does not mean, however, that we know where and how these Flemish romances were received. With regard to Middle Dutch literature, literary patronage at the Flemish courts is problematical. The court of the Flemish count was clearly French-orientated, as appears for example from Chrétien's *Perceval*, Gautier d'Arras's *Eracle*, Manessier's *Perceval Continuation* and the work of Adenet le Roi. Did Middle Dutch literature, too, function at this court, or only at the smaller courts? Was the Flemish court bilingual? Further research will have to answer these questions. Then it may also become clear if there were any other centres of literary activity outside the court of the Flemish count. Perhaps we should search for patrons of Middle Dutch Arthurian literature in the milieu of the urbanized nobility and the bourgeois élite in towns like Bruges and Ghent (Janssens 1988, 169-73; Prevenier 1994; van den Berg 1998; Besamusca 1998).

The Middle Dutch Arthurian texts have come down to us in a few codices and a great many fragments. With the exception of *Perchevael*, *Wrake van Ragisel* and *Tristan* fragments, which date from the thirteenth century, the texts were copied in the fourteenth century (Besamusca 1985, Kienhorst 1988). If the manuscript transmission does not deceive us, enthusiasm for Arthurian literature in the Low Countries reached its peak in the first half of the fourteenth century (Klein, J.W. 1995, 19). The absence of fifteenth-century Middle Dutch manuscripts shows that the popularity of Dutch Arthurian romances was waning rapidly after the fourteenth century.

The Middle Dutch Arthurian texts were previously discussed by Hendricus Sparnaay in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Loomis 1959, 443-61). Unfortunately, his essay contains a number of factual inaccuracies and it is, moreover, very outdated. During the last thirty years the study of Arthurian literature in the Low Countries has developed enormously. J.D. Janssens's contributions on Middle Dutch Arthurian literature in *Arturus Rex* show more expert knowledge (Verbeke et al. 1987). In *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (Lacy 1991) Janssens and I have used the entries on Dutch Arthurian literature (medieval and modern) to provide ample factual information. In *Medieval Arthurian Literature: A Guide to Recent Research* I have discussed the state of Dutch scholarship on Arthurian romances (Lacy 1996, 211-37). As a follow-up to these publications, the present contribution tries to reflect the wealth of recent research.

The Historiographical Tradition

Jacob van Maerlant, *Spiegel historiael*

Around 1285 the Flemish poet Jacob van Maerlant, working between c. 1260 and 1290, adapted Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*. In the prologue to his *magnum opus*, commissioned by Count Floris V of Holland (1266-96),

Maerlant writes that his *Spiegel historiael* ('Mirror of History') should be preferred to the nonsense of the Grail, the lies about Perceval, the trifles of Lanval, and many other false stories (Part I, Book I, Prologue, vv. 55-60). Apparently, the aristocratic circles around Floris, who resided in The Hague, were familiar with these tales. (Incidentally no Middle Dutch version of the *Lai de Lanval* has come down to us.) As a contrast to these objectionable but popular stories, the Flemish poet offered his extensive world history, which provided not only entertainment but valuable and truthful information as well.

In the third part of the *Spiegel historiael*, which begins with the fall of the Roman empire and ends with Charlemagne's coronation as emperor in Rome, Maerlant deals with early British history (Gerritsen 1981, 379-80). His account is spread over three books. In Book I the poet devotes eight chapters to Brutus and British history (chapters 9-16). Fifteen chapters of Book V deal with the Saxon invasions, Vortiger, Merlin, Aurelius Ambrosius, Uther Pendragon, Arthur's accession to the throne, his conquests, his court and his war against the Romans (chapters 7-9, 13, 14, 19, 31, 32, 34, 48, 50-4). In chapters 29 and 30 of Book VI the war between Arthur and Mordred and the final battle on Salisbury Plain are described.

When Maerlant has reached the point where Arthur, then a fifteen-year-old youth, is crowned king, the poet interrupts his account with a comment on truth and fiction. He states that, although there exist many fabricated stories about Arthur, written by minstrels and buffoons who like to invent nonsensical stories, the truth about the king should not be disdained (Part III, Book V, chapter XLVIII, vv. 67-74). A little later Maerlant once more turns against the untruthful Arthurian romances, when he remarks that he will not write about Lancelot, Perceval and Agravain, because they are not historical figures; about Walewein (as Gawain/Gauvain is called in Dutch), Mordred and Keye (= Kay/Keu), however, he has found reliable information in Latin sources (Book V, chapter XLIX, vv. 18-24).

As Maerlant saw it, historical truth was to be found only in the Latin historiographical tradition. Of course, this tradition was in the first place represented by Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*. But in his account of Arthurian history, of all places, Vincent was rather sparing with his information: his treatment of early British history, based on an enlarged version of Sigebert of Gembloux's, *Chronographia*, is very concise. Unlike Vincent, however, Maerlant had a copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* at his disposal. He used this source to extend Vincent's short account to 1,500 lines. The chapters in Book V, for example, are based mainly on Geoffrey's text (Gerritsen 1981, 378-9).

Maerlant's description of Arthur's rule is exceedingly positive. The poet depicts him as an admirable monarch, who was wise, generous, brave and

forceful. Maerlant took this characterization from Geoffrey, but his exalted view of King Arthur probably also originated in his desire to provide his patron, Floris V, with a historically reliable model of princely excellence (Gerritsen 1981, 381-2; van Oostrom 1996, 316-18).

The *Spiegel historiael* has come down to us in nine manuscripts and around 250 fragments (Biemans 1998). Only one codex, however, is an illustrated copy of Maerlant's text. This manuscript, which is kept at the Royal Library in The Hague (MS K.A. XX) contains sixty-four illuminations of high quality. In all probability the codex was made in Ghent in the first decades of the fourteenth century. It has been suggested that the main illuminator had decorated French and Latin manuscripts as well, which would explain his great iconographical knowledge. Maerlant's story about Arthur is illustrated with four miniatures (Meuwese 1995; Meuwese 1996, 155-8; Janssens and Meuwese 1997). The first one (fol. 153v) depicts festivities at King Arthur's court. The miniature on fol. 154r shows the commander-in-chief of the Roman army, Lucius, sitting in his tent, and Walewein killing a Roman soldier. The third miniature (fol. 154v) depicts the battle between Arthur's army and the Romans. With the miniature on fol. 163v, we have arrived at the battle on Salisbury Plain. Two scenes are depicted: the fight between Arthur and Mordred, and Arthur's departure from the battlefield, lying on a cart and accompanied by the surviving knights. The importance of these four illuminations is clear if one realizes that in total there are no more than seven Arthurian illustrations in Middle Dutch manuscripts (Meuwese 1996).

Lodewijk van Velthem, *Spiegel historiael*

Maerlant ceased work on his *Spiegel historiael*, probably because of his declining health, when he had reached the year 1113. But the *Spiegel historiael* did not remain unfinished. Around 1300 the Flemish author Philip Utenbroeke translated the second part, which Maerlant had skipped. Later, in 1315, the Brabantine poet Lodewijk van Velthem finished the fourth part by describing the last period of Vincent's chronicle, which covered the years from 1113 to 1256. Velthem had been commissioned by Maria van Berlaer, a noblewoman from Antwerp. A year later Velthem even added a fifth part to Maerlant's *Spiegel historiael*. In this lengthy work (c. 30,000 lines) he described events between 1256 and 1316 (Lodewijk van Velthem, *Voortzetting van dien Spiegel historiael*). Velthem dedicated his text, which has come down to us more or less complete in a manuscript dating from around 1325 (Deschamps 1972, 98-100), to Gerard van Voorne, viscount of Zeeland.

In the fifth part of the *Spiegel historiael* Velthem describes, among other things, events which took place in England in the days of Edward I. Of

particular Arthurian interest is Velthem's report in Book II of a Round Table on the occasion of Edward's first marriage. The Brabantine poet tells us that Edward took on the identity of King Arthur, while members of his retinue became knights of the Round Table. During the meal, following the tournament, strange characters appeared, assigning tasks to Lancelot, Perceval and Walewein. All these tasks concerned the consolidation of royal power in distant parts of the country (Cornwall, Wales, Ireland). Accompanied by their king, the knights set out and fulfilled their tasks successfully.

Scholars have pointed out that Velthem's account of the events in England is historically inaccurate. Moreover, it has been assumed that Velthem's report of the Round Table is based on confusion with the Arthurian festivities which Edward is known to have organized on the occasion of his second marriage (Loomis 1953). Recently, however, the question of Velthem's historical reliability has been abandoned in favour of a narrative perspective (Summerfield 1998). Velthem appears to have linked the report of Edward's Round Table with the conflict between Edward and the nobleman Simon de Montfort who between 1263 and 1265 acted as the leader of a group of barons who strove for reforms during the reign of Edward's father King Henry III (1216-72).

In Book I Montfort betrays the young and inexperienced heir to the throne, Edward, and stirs up trouble in England. In Book II the emphasis is on the importance of co-operation. Edward is no longer a naive youth, but a powerful king, who settles his score with Montfort's followers in the guise of Arthur. The king is generous and hospitable, and he offers those knights who respect his authority the opportunity to prove themselves and to gain honour in battle. Thus it becomes clear that Velthem aimed at more than a faithful representation of historical events. In a narrative manner he presented his ideas on the ideal relationship between a sovereign and his knights. It is very likely that Velthem's views on kingship and the balance of power were of particular relevance to his audience. Around 1315 the Brabantine aristocracy saw themselves confronted with serious political problems, caused by the youthful age of Duke Jan III, who had succeeded his father at the age of twelve in 1312.

Translations and Adaptations of the French Prose Romances

Jacob van Maerlant, *Historie van den Grale* and *Boek van Merline*

The *Spiegel historiael* is not the only work by Jacob van Maerlant that was continued by Lodewijk van Velthem. This is also the case with two romances that Maerlant wrote around 1261: the *Historie van den Grale* and the *Boek van Merline*. These two texts were made for Albrecht van Voorne, viscount of Zeeland. In 1326 Velthem followed in Maerlant's footsteps with his *Merlijn*

Continuation, which was probably made for Albrecht's son Gerard van Voorne. Velthem's text was meant to complement Maerlant's romances.

The *Historie van den Grale* and the *Boek van Merline* are Middle Dutch verse renderings of the Old French prose versions of Robert de Boron's *Joseph d'Armathie* and *Merlin*. In the Prologue to these two romances, which form a unity (c. 10,100 lines), Maerlant remarks:

Jck wille dat gij des zeker zijt
 Dat ick de historie vele valsch
 Ge vonden hebbe in dat walsch
 Dar ze van gode onsen heren sprak
 Dat ene dat volck van rome wrack.

(Jacob van Maerlant, *Historie van den Grale und Boek van Merline* vv. 20-4)

(I want to assure you that I found the story in the French to be false in many respects where it says of God, our Lord, that the people of Rome avenged him.)

In this way the poet makes it clear already in his Prologue that his attitude towards his French source is a critical one. Indeed, in the first 600 lines of the *Historie van den Grale* the Flemish poet argues at length with Robert de Boron (te Winkel 1881; Gerritsen 1981, 369-74). Maerlant gives credence to 'Der waeren ewangelien woert' ('the true text of the gospel', v. 254), the *Gesta Pilati* and Flavius Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*. Whenever the French author departs from the content of the Latin texts, Maerlant intervenes, and tries to bring his romance into agreement with Sacred History.

Maerlant's criticism only refers to the first part of the prose *Joseph d'Armathie*, in which the story of the Grail is linked with Christ's passion and with Joseph of Arimathea. Maerlant follows his source closely from the moment that God advises Joseph to construct the Grail table, in imitation of the table that was used at the Last Supper. The second part of the *Historie van den Grale* (from v. 640 onwards) and the *Boek van Merline* are faithful translations of the Old French sources. The only exception is an interpolation of about 900 lines (vv. 1694-2581), the so-called *Processus Satanae* ('Satan's Lawsuit') or *Maskeroen* (Gerritsen 1981, 374-6). Maerlant's *Maskeroen* is based on a lost Latin source that has come down to us in the form of a late medieval printed text, the *Litigacio Mascaroon contra genus humanum* (van Oostrom 1996, 41-6).

At the beginning of the *Boek van Merline* the devils wonder how they can restore their hold on the souls of the dead after Christ's harrowing of hell. At this point Maerlant's interpolation follows. The devils decide to take legal action and plead their case before God. They send Maskeroen, who summons Man before God. On the appointed day, Good Friday, Man does not appear and is

therefore in danger of losing the case. Mary, however, speaks up for the accused. After a long debate she finally points to the fact that Man shall always be saved if he is baptized, has faith and has confessed his sins. When God confirms this, Maskeroen has lost the case. Here Maerlant's interpolation ends. The narrative continues with the devils' decision to engender a man who shall do their will (Merlin).

Why did Maerlant interpolate the *Maskeroen*? It is not unlikely that he wanted to stress the abundance of forgiveness that God offers the repentant sinner through Mary. And this is not the only lesson contained in the *Historie van den Grale* and the *Boek van Merline*. Maerlant emphasizes the need for timely confession, stresses the good influence that priests and clerics have on others, and provides examples of how young noblemen and kings should behave, how they should make the best use of advice, and which counsellors they should trust (Besamusca and Brandsma 1998). In short, Maerlant's romances may have had a didactic purpose. This is understandable if we assume that he wrote the *Historie van den Grale* and the *Book van Merline* for the education of a group of young noblemen, Albrecht van Voorne and Floris V among them (van Oostrom 1996, 127-36).

It is doubtful whether Maerlant still appreciated the didactic merit of his narrative about the Grail and Merlin when he was writing his *Spiegel historiael*. When in this world history he has reached the point where Uther Pendragon begets Arthur, he tells how French sources claim that Arthur had been nursed by Keye's mother, that Keye was wicked because he had had a wicked wet-nurse and that Arthur had pulled the sword from the stone. Because these particulars are lacking in the Latin, the poet dismisses them to the world of fantasy (Jacob van Maerlant, *Spiegel historiael*, Part III, Book V, chapter XXXII, vv. 77-90). At the same time, however, he must have realized that he himself had told such nonsensical tales (Gerritsen 1981, 380) for, twenty years earlier, in the *Boek van Merline*, he had written the same about Keye and Arthur, without showing a trace of doubt (vv. 9421-10079).

Lodewijk van Velthem, *Merlijn* Continuation

After Arthur had pulled the sword from the stone and been chosen as king, Maerlant concluded his *Book van Merline* by saying that for a long period of time Arthur ruled his country in peace, a statement which accords with his Old French source, the *Estoire de Merlin* (*The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, 2, 88). Some sixty years later Lodewijk van Velthem replaced 'vreden' with 'onvreden' ('strife', v. 10082) and added a lengthy narrative in which young King Arthur, assisted by Merlin, tries to subdue his rebellious noblemen. Velthem's *Merlijn* Continuation counts around 26,000 lines (Jacob van Maerlant, *Merlijn* vv. 10409-36218).

Velthem's romance is a faithful verse translation of the *Suite-Vulgate du Merlin*. This Old French text forms the link between the coronation of Arthur (in the *Estoire de Merlin*) and Lancelot's birth (in the prose *Lancelot*). This raises the question of whether Velthem's *Merlijn* Continuation was meant to fulfil the same function in Middle Dutch literature. If this is the case, Velthem may have wanted to link his work and Maerlant's (*Historie van den Grale* and *Boek van Merline*) to the *Lancelot* Compilation, which contains a Middle Dutch translation of the prose *Lancelot* (see below). The fact that Velthem owned the only manuscript in which the compilation has been transmitted to us is in favour of this suggestion. On the other hand, it is strange that Velthem's *Merlijn* Continuation does not end with a transition to the prose *Lancelot*, as is usual in the *Suite-Vulgate du Merlin* (*The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, 2, 465-6). Because of Merlin's fateful love for Viviane, Velthem ends his translation lamenting that women are capable of deceiving any man, however wise he may be (vv. 36192-207). He then writes that he finished his translation in 1326 (vv. 36208-18), without announcing a sequel (the *Lancelot* Compilation). Whether there is a connection between the three romances by Maerlant and Velthem on the one hand and the *Lancelot* Compilation on the other, is still an unsolved matter (Draak 1976, 6-10).

In Middle Dutch, Maerlant's *Historie van den Grale* and *Boek van Merline* and Velthem's *Merlijn* Continuation have been transmitted in fragmentary form only (Besamusca 1985, 34-9, 65-9; Kienhorst 1988, 66-7, 140-3; Klein, J.W. 1995, 9-10). In addition, an almost complete version of this trilogy has been preserved in a Middle Low German rendering from the Middle Dutch, in a codex from c. 1425 (Deschamps 1972, 33-5). This manuscript (Burgsteinfurt, Fürst zu Bentheimsche Schlossbibliothek, B 37) has always remained in the possession of the counts of Bentheim-Steinfurt.

A note at the end of the codex informs us that 'joncher Euerwyn van guterswick Greue to benthem' (referring to Everwin I of Bentheim (1397-1454) or his grandson Everwin II (1461-98)) owned more books containing Arthurian texts (Jacob van Maerlant, *Historie van den Grale und Boek van Merline*, 425). Besides 'dit boeck merlijn' ('this book Merlin'), 'twe nye boeke van lantslotte' ('two new books about Lancelot') and 'eyn olt boek van lantslotte' ('an old book about Lancelot') are mentioned. In addition, the count owned a book about 'perceuale' (Perceval). We do not know what texts are referred to in this book list. Are the new books about Lancelot perhaps prose romances, and does the old book contain a verse romance about Lancelot? And does the name Perceval perhaps refer to (a translation of) Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*? Neither do we know in which language these works were written. However that may be, the book list proves that the counts of Bentheim-Steinfurt were very interested in Arthurian literature.

Historie van Merlijn

The events narrated in Maerlant's *Boek van Merline* are also the subject of the only printed Arthurian romance from the Low Countries that has survived. This is the *Historie van Merlijn*, which was published between 1534 and 1544 by the Antwerp printer Symon Cock (Pesch 1985). Of this print only two quires have survived. In quire B Vortigher is crowned king. He marries King Angis of Denmark's daughter and decides to build a castle to protect himself against Uther and Pendragon. In quire D Merlin is born. When he is six months old, he convinces the judge that his mother should not be executed for adultery.

The *Historie van Merlijn* is not based on Maerlant's *Boek van Merline*. This can be shown by the many differences which Maerlant's romance and the Old French *Estoire de Merlin* together show when compared with the printed text (Pesch 1985). The *Historie van Merlijn* has far more similarities with an English text about Merlin, *Of Arthour and Merlin*. The Middle Dutch romance turns out to be a prose translation of one of the different versions of the English text, *A lytel treatyse of ye byrth and the prophecye of Marlyn*. This text had been published in London in 1510 by Wynkyn de Worde. The Middle Dutch translator usually followed his source rather faithfully. When he departed from the original, he intended to correct inconsistencies and describe the events more concisely.

In Old French literature the *Estoire de Merlin* and the *Suite-Vulgate du Merlin* are part of a cycle of prose romances known as the Vulgate Cycle (Frappier 1959). Together with the *Estoire del Saint Graal* they precede the texts which form the three-part core of the cycle: *Lancelot en prose*, *Queste del Saint Graal* and *Mort le roi Artu*. The first part of the trilogy is about Lancelot, who, inspired by his love for the queen, becomes the world's best knight. In the middle part the knights of the Round Table search for the Grail; the chosen Grail hero is Lancelot's son Galaad. In the final part the fall of Arthur's kingdom is described. This trilogy was very popular in the Low Countries. Between c. 1235 and c. 1350 the *Lancelot en prose* was rendered into Middle Dutch at least three times and it is by no means ruled out that the work existed in five different translations (Draak 1954). The extant translations were written independently (Lie 1987).

Lantsloot vander Haghedochte

Lantsloot vander Haghedochte ('Lancelot of the Cave') is presumed to be the oldest (c. 1260?) extant Middle Dutch translation of the *Lancelot en prose*. It is a very free adaptation in verse by a Flemish poet, which must have consisted of more than 100,000 lines in total. What has come down to us are fragments from

one codex of c. 1350, with almost 6,100 lines (Kienhorst 1988, 94-101). The existence of this romance was discovered in the mid-1930s by the German scholar Friedrich Meuser, who named the translation after its main hero. It is of course remarkable that Lancelot, in contrast to the Old French, does not bear the surname 'du Lac' ('of the Lake'), but 'vander Haghedochte' ('of the Cave'). In the Middle Dutch version the fairy who kidnaps Lancelot did not give her magical world the illusion of a lake. Consequently, she is not called the 'Dame du Lac', but the 'Joncfrouwe vander Haghedochte'; her domain has become a cave which cannot be found unless she wishes it. This is the place where Lancelot is raised. The adaptor probably opted for a different magical world because he considered the optical illusion of a non-existing lake too hard to imagine (van Oostrom 1981, 89-91).

In other passages, too, the adaptor tries to tell a story in which the events have a plausible explanation. As a result of this tendency towards rationalization, the Middle Dutch poet eliminates badly motivated elements and gives new and acceptable motivations for the behaviour of his characters (van Oostrom 1981, 69-95). When Hector, for example, comes to a plank leading across the water, he descends from his horse (*Lancelot*, 2, 350). In *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* we are told why he acts like this: he sees a beautiful castle on the other side and wants to know who lives there (vv. 5820-3). Another example concerns Galehot. Searching for Lancelot, he sees a company of people paying homage to his friend's shield, which has been hung in a tree. After he has been politely informed about this show of honour, he tries to seize the shield, which leads to a fight (*Lancelot*, 3, 229-33). In *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* the course of events has been made more natural. As soon as Galehot sees the shield, he tries to take it. The talking is left until after the fighting (vv. 3443-563).

The second major tendency in the poet's adaptation technique may be labelled blurring (van Oostrom 1981, 97-125). In the *Lancelot en prose* the knights act within a well-defined geographical and chronological framework. The Middle Dutch adaptor, however, blurs the exact references to place and time. When Sagremor, for example, rides on a narrow path, the Old French remarks that both horse and rider suffer from the thorns. After a long while the path broadens and the knight beholds a beautiful pavilion (*Lancelot*, 2, 281). In *Lantsloot vander Hagedochte* we read that Sagremor strayed completely from the right course and came upon a pavilion that had been erected (vv. 5089-92). The poet's description of roads and places is vague, too, and frequently names of places are omitted. With regard to the treatment of time, the subtle and exact chronological structure of the Old French work is completely lacking in *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*.

In the *Lancelot en prose* we are told that we owe our knowledge of the exploits of Arthur's knights to the four clerks who recorded the accounts of knightly

adventures. The suggestion that the romance is directly based on the stories of eye-witnesses is strengthened by the precise chronology and geography, and by the absence of an omnipresent first-person narrator who might endanger the text's reliability. In the *Lancelot en prose* the narrator hides behind 'li contes' ('the story'). This is clearly demonstrated by the formal switches, the formulaic transitions which serve to interweave the different strands of adventures, with phrases such as 'Or dist li contes' ('Now the tale tells') and 'Or se taist li contes' ('Now the tale is silent'). In *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*, however, 'li contes' is replaced by the first-person narrator. The story is told by an omniscient 'I', who speaks directly to his audience (Gerritsen and van Oostrom 1980, 107f.; van Oostrom 1981, 119-23; Besamusca and Brandsma 1994, 18-20).

The most prominent tendency in the poet's adaptation technique is idealization (van Oostrom 1981, 127-59). The Middle Dutch author strove to make the manners, speech, valour and self-control of his characters meet the standards of perfect courtly behaviour. A characteristic example can be found in a meeting between Lancelot and a damsel. In the Old French romance the damsel addresses Lancelot as soon as she recognizes him (*Lancelot*, 2, 310). The corresponding passage in *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* reads as follows:

Doe si hem quam bet ghehende,
Lantslote, ende siene kende
Groete hi se eer si hem dede;
Het was altoos sine zede
Dat hi joncfrouwen groete
Teersten dat hi se ghemoete.
Ende si seide ...

(*Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* vv. 5433-39)

(*When she came closer and recognized him, Lancelot, he greeted her before she did; it was his wont to greet damsels as soon as he met them. And she said ...*)

The Middle Dutch adaptor makes the lesson more explicit by emphasizing the greeting that precedes the conversation, and through the person of Lancelot he demonstrates how one can behave in a perfect courtly manner. This tendency towards idealization may reveal what the adaptor intended with his work: *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* was perhaps meant as a mirror of courtly behaviour for a court that was not yet familiar with courtly ideals (van Oostrom 1981, 221-30).

Lanceloet

Like *Lantsloot vander Hagedochte*, the second rhymed translation of the *Lancelot en prose* was produced (probably around 1280) by a Flemish poet. Its author, however, accepted most of the innovations of his Old French original and gave a more faithful translation. *Lanceloet*, as the romance is called, is an extensive yet incompletely preserved text of almost 37,000 verse lines (*Roman van Lancelot*, Book II, vv. 1-36947; *Lanceloet*, parts 1-4). The Middle Dutch translation corresponds with the last section of the *Lancelot en prose*, the ‘Préparation à la Queste’. Together with Flemish verse translations of the *Queste del Saint Graal* (c. 11,000 lines) and the *Mort le roi Artu* (c. 13,000 lines), *Lanceloet* forms the core of the *Lancelot* Compilation. These three translations originated from one and the same author.

Lanceloet is the work of a virtuoso Flemish poet, who rendered his source as literally as possible into Middle Dutch, while at the same time observing the demands of rhyme and metre (*Lanceloet*, part 2, 35-73). For example, he changes the word order of the original in order to place a suitable word in rhyming position. Other stylistic devices include translating an Old French word with a Middle Dutch tautology, replacing an Old French word with a paraphrase, expanding one or two French words into a whole verse, and adapting the usage of direct and indirect speech to meet the requirements of versification. These translating procedures were mainly used to produce rhyme-words. It is evidence of craftsmanship that almost a quarter of the rhyming couplets are formed by a literal translation of two French words. Moreover, more than half of the rhyme pairs in the work consist of one translated French word and one Middle Dutch rhyme complement.

As to the poet's narrative technique, it is clear that he generally intended to follow his source in its depersonalization of the narrative voice. In *Lanceloet*, ‘li contes’ becomes ‘daventure’ (‘the adventure’, i.e. ‘the story’), a word that resembles the French terminology in its ability to refer both to the source of the story and to the narrative itself. But the first-person narrator in *Lanceloet* does not completely hide behind ‘daventure’ (*Lanceloet*, part 3, 55-7; Besamusca and Brandsma 1994). When he uses line-filling rhyming formulas the Middle Dutch translator has a tendency to use phrases in which the first-person narrator shows up: ‘dat seggic u’ (‘I tell you this’) and ‘als ict las’ (‘as I read it’). The narrator appears, moreover, in the transitions from one narrative thread to another. In about half of the formal switches ‘daventure’ leads the audience across the transition; in the other half ‘daventure’ and the first-person narrator both pull the strings. For example, when Hestor and Walewein, who are searching for Lancelot, part company, the formal switch reads as follows:

Nu sal ic van Waleweine bedieden
 Wat avonturen hem gescieden.
 Nu gewaget davonture das:
 Also Walewein gescieden was
 Van Hestore, hi maecte sine vart
 Recht ten foreeste wart.
 (*Lanceloet* vv. 3537-42)

(Now I shall tell [you] about Walewein, what adventures befell him. Now the story tells that Walewein rode to the forest when he had taken leave of Hestor.)

In formal switches like this, the first-person narrator speaks to his audience, and then moves to the background in favour of ‘daventure’.

Queeste vanden Grale

Whereas *Lanceloet* is a faithful translation of the *Lancelot en prose*, the *Queeste vanden Grale* differs in many places from the Old French source. Although the Middle Dutch romance (*Roman van Lanceloet*, Book III, vv. 1-11160) contains many examples of very close translations, the Flemish poet generally tries to shorten the story, for example by eliminating repetitions. In particular, he leaves out large parts of the theological discussions between the ubiquitous hermits and the knights. Moreover, he omits expressions of devotion and religious sentiments on the part of the knights, and descriptions of daily life and scenery (Prins-s'Jacob 1980).

In an interesting passage which has been added to the Middle Dutch, the narrator informs his audience about his narrative technique (vv. 1181-206). What is the best way to tell the adventures of the individual knights? In the opinion of the first-person narrator it is not wise to unwind the separate threads in the story quickly, for ‘Quade haeste es dicke onspoet’ (‘More haste, less speed’, v. 1191). But on the other hand, ‘daert glat es moet men gliden’ (‘where it is slippery, one has to slide’, v. 1194). The narrator takes up a modest position and apologizes for his mistakes in advance.

Outside the *Lancelot* Compilation, the translation of the *Queste del Saint Graal* has only been preserved in a fourteenth-century fragment (Besamusca 1985, 57-8; Kienhorst 1988, 169-70).

Arturs doet

In the *Lancelot* Compilation, *Arturs doet* (‘Arthur's death’) is the romance which concludes the cycle (*Roman van Lancelot*, Book IV, vv. 1-13054). This Flemish translation of the *Mort le roi Artu* has not only been transmitted in the compilation. A fourteenth-century small fragment of the text was discovered a few years ago (Croenen and Janssens 1994, Biemans 1995).

The poet of *Arturs doet* used an Old French text which differed strongly from the common version of the *Mort Artu*. One of the French manuscripts containing a condensed version of the story was on his desk. Consequently, the Middle Dutch romance lacks, for example, one of the best-known scenes in Arthurian literature (Groninger neerlandici 1983, 201). The common version of the *Mort Artu* contains a passage in which a beautiful boat arrives at Arthur's court with the body of the damsel of Escalot. From the letter which she carries upon her person, it appears that she died because Lancelot did not return her love. This episode appears neither in the condensed version of the *Mort Artu* nor in *Arturs doet*.

The translation of the *Mort Artu* is preceded by a remarkable religious argument of almost 300 lines (vv. 1-296), based on the first chapter of *De modo orandi*, a Latin treatise by Hugh of Saint-Victor (Vekeman and Schröder 1997). The poet, in all probability the same person as the one who translated the *Mort le roi Artu*, deals with the question of how people should pray to God in order to be heard. The treatise forms a clue for the interpretation of *Arturs doet*. The idea that prayer is of crucial importance for the eternal salvation of man is confirmed by the following story. All worldly matters turn out to be fleeting, all courtly ideals fall short of expectations in the end, and only God's mercy is boundless and endless. At the end of the romance, Lancelot, the paragon of worldly knighthood, cuts himself off from the world. The four years which he spends praying and fasting save his soul. In the end, prayers are more valuable than chivalrous deeds (Besamusca and Lie 1994).

***Lancelot* Compilation**

The three thirteenth-century Flemish romances *Lanceloet*, *Queeste vanden Grale* and *Arturs doet* were used as the framework for the *Lancelot* Compilation. This is a Brabantine narrative cycle of ten Arthurian romances, which was compiled around 1320 (Deschamps 1972, 47-50; Klein, J.W. 1995, 6-10). As far as we know, the creator of this cycle did not write the individual romances himself; he made use of already existing Middle Dutch works. Between *Lanceloet* and *Queeste* two texts have been inserted: *Perchevael* and *Moriaen*; between *Queeste* and *Arturs doet* five romances have been placed: *Wrake van Ragisel*, *Ridder metter mouwen*, *Walewein ende Keye*, *Lanceloet en het hert met de witte voet* and *Torec*. These seven romances will be discussed separately; here the *Lancelot* Compilation as a whole is dealt with.

The compiler has divided the cycle into four books. *Lanceloet*, *Perchevael* and *Moriaen* together make up the second book. The third book consists of *Queeste vanden Grale* and the following five inserted romances. The fourth book consists of only one work, *Arturs doet*. With about 87,300 lines the cycle is a lengthy

work (*Roman van Lancelot*), yet it is incompletely preserved. The *Lancelot* Compilation was originally divided over two volumes. The first volume, containing two-thirds of *Lanceloet*, was lost.

The *Lancelot* Compilation is a fine example of a narrative cycle (Besamusca 1994 and Besamusca 1996). For one thing, the order of the texts has been determined with care. The romances in which Perceval plays an important part, viz. *Perchevale* and *Moriaen*, have been placed before *Queeste vanden Grale*, because he dies in the latter romance. Moreover, and this is more important, the ten romances have been linked by transitional passages. The transition that precedes *Moriaen* is a typical example. *Perchevale* ends with a feast. The narrator then says:

Ende nu oec in dese feeste
 Suldi horen vele oreeste,
 Die een riddere maecte omtrent,
 Die Perchevale te hove nu sent,
 Ende van hem sal vort sijn die tale
 Ende oec mede van Perchevale:
 Van dat sine soeken varen
 Sal ic u hier al oppenbaren.

(*Roman van Lancelot*, Book II, vv. 42539-46)

(*And now you shall hear about the commotion which a knight, sent to the court by Perceval, caused during the feast. And about him and Perceval the story will continue. I shall tell you how they were going to search for him [=Perceval].*)

After this linking passage, *Moriaen* starts with a court festival, at which a robber knight arrives, who has been defeated by Perceval. When the king laments Perceval's absence, Lancelot and Walewein decide to go and search for him, and this starts off the *Moriaen* story.

In addition a system of cross-references is used to present the individual romances in the *Lancelot* Compilation as one coherent unity. In *Queeste vanden Grale*, for example, Walewein meets a hermit who urges him to confess his sins. In both the Middle Dutch text and the Old French source (*La Queste del Saint Graal*, 55) Arthur's nephew refuses to follow this advice. Contrary to the Old French, the Middle Dutch hermit then predicts that Walewein will get into trouble because of his stubborn behaviour. A damsel will fall in love with him and imprison his brother (*Roman van Lancelot*, Book III, vv. 2578-95). Thereupon the narrator remarks that this adventure will be recounted later. The narrator's words announce the first episode of *Wrake van Ragisel*, in which the Lady of Galestroet keeps Gaheriet prisoner in order to lure his brother Walewein to her castle.

It is still unclear for what purpose the *Lancelot* Compilation was assembled. Why did the compiler insert the romances? One possibility is that he aimed at an alternation between the adventures of Lancelot and those of Walewein (Gerritsen 1963, 252). It is also conceivable that he inserted romances in which Walewein had the principal part in order to pay ample attention to Arthur's nephew as a positive hero. In this way he may have wanted to correct the negative image of Walewein in the core of the *Lancelot* Compilation (Zemel 1992, 95-7). As an explanation for the romances inserted between *Queeste vanden Grale* and *Arturs doet*, it has been suggested that the compiler thought that Wace's twelve-year period of peace - during which the adventures of the individual knights took place - lay between the two romances (Koekman 1991). This, however, is improbable, as *Queeste vanden Grale* stresses the Grail quest as the most important and final adventure (*Lanceloet*, part 3, 202; Besamusca 1994, 90). In order to explain why romances were inserted between the three main parts of the *Lancelot* compilation, further study is necessary.

Opinions also vary as to the identity of the compiler. Two persons qualify as candidates: the aforementioned poet Lodewijk van Velthem and the most important copyist of the codex (the writing was executed by five scribes), known as B (*Lanceloet*, part 1, 16-19). Velthem's candidacy is supported by his being a poet and by the fact that he owned the *Lancelot* Compilation at one time: on the last page of the codex, B has noted: 'Hier indet boec van Lancelote, dat heren Lodewijcs en van Velthem' ('Here ends the Book of Lancelot, which belongs to Sir Lodewijc of Velthem'). Scribe B produced the largest part of the codex and supervised the work of the other scribes. He also wrote the transitional passages, corrected a narrative error in *Wrake van Ragisel*, and rewrote (on an erasure) part of *Perchevael*. All this points to the possibility that he was the compiler. Recently it has been suggested that Velthem and scribe B were one and the same person (Klein, J.W. 1998).

Velthem's name is also connected with an aspect of the *Lancelot* Compilation that is unique in the medieval manuscript tradition. Substantial parts of the text have been revised by a person known as the corrector (Gerritsen 1976; *Lanceloet*, part 1, 19-22). It has been argued convincingly that he took an active part in the original production of the manuscript (Klein, J.W. 1990; *Lanceloet*, part 1, 105). This corrector may have been Velthem himself. Be that as it may, the corrector not only corrected scribal errors, he also smoothed away Flemish dialectical features and added marginal signs (dots, for instance) and short words. These words are vocatives like 'here' ('Sir') and 'vrouwe' ('Lady'), interjections like 'ay' ('ah'), and, above all, conjunctions like 'ende' ('and'), 'mer' ('but') and 'want' ('because'). In all probability these marginal signs and words were added by the corrector to facilitate the text's oral delivery.

The Middle Dutch Prose *Lancelot*

Unlike *Lantsloot vander Hagedochte* and *Lanceloet*, the third extant Middle Dutch translation of the *Lancelot en prose* is a prose text; when and where the author worked is not known. A very small part of the text has been preserved in the so-called Rotterdam Fragments (Besamusca 1985, 28-30; Kienhorst 1988, 90-1). The prose translator favoured a word-for-word translation, although occasionally he replaced a French phrase by a more condensed paraphrase (Lie 1987).

The Middle Dutch *Lancelot en prose* tradition included more than the three extant translations of the Old French text (Draak 1954). A lost translation probably underlies the German *Lancelot* romance in the so-called Blankenheim codex of the Stadtarchiv in Cologne (Lie 1991). From the colophon it appears that the text is based on a Flemish original:

Diss buchelin zu einer stonden
 Hain ich inn flemische geschrieben fonden,
 Von eyne kostigen [konstigen?] meister verricht,
 Der es uss franzose darczu hait gedicht.
 Dwile das alle dutschen nit konden verstan,
 Habe ich unnutzelige zcijt darczu versliessen und gethan,
 Biss das ich es herczu bracht hain.
 (*Lancelot* II, 115)

(This book is based on a book that I found a while ago, which was written in Flemish by a skilful (?) master, who translated it from the French. Because the German people cannot understand it, I have devoted much time and effort to bringing this book to this state of completion.)

This is the only explicit reference to Middle Dutch intermediation in the German prose *Lancelot* tradition (see also Tilvis 1957).

Probably a second Middle Dutch translation was lost. This text was the source for the German *Lancelot* fragment housed in Munich. As this fragment dates from about 1250, the Middle Dutch translation must have been made in the first half of the thirteenth century. The remarkable implication of this is that the Old French *Lancelot en prose* was rendered into Middle Dutch almost immediately after its creation (Klein, Th. 1994, 228-9).

Translations and Adaptations of the French Verse Romances

Tristan

Judging by the manuscript tradition *Lancelot* enjoyed a much greater popularity in the Low Countries than *Tristan*. Of the latter only one text, and a

fragmentary one at that, has been preserved. It consists of no more than 158 partly damaged lines from a manuscript that was written in the eastern part of the Low Countries around the middle of the thirteenth century (Besamusca 1985, 63-4; Kienhorst 1988, 192-3). The fragment contains a passage from the end of the Tristan story. The hero meets a namesake who is on his way to Arthur's court to find help against a knight who has abducted his wife. Tristan is severely wounded in his efforts to assist (Gysseling, *Corpus*, 337-42; Winkelman, 'Zu den Wiener *Tristant*-Fragmenten', 822-7).

The Middle Dutch episode shows close similarities with the version which Thomas d'Angleterre wrote around 1175. In Thomas's romance Tristan and Kaherdin meet Tristan the Dwarf, who is searching for Tristan to ask him for help because of the abduction of his wife. However, the Middle Dutch differs from the French text on salient points. In the Middle Dutch *Tristant* the man whose wife has been abducted is not a dwarf, and rumour has it that Tristan is dead. The most important difference between Thomas and the Middle Dutch version is that Tristan and Arthur are contemporaries in the Middle Dutch text, as in the versions of Béroul and Eilhart. Because of this it has been suggested that the Middle Dutch poet was acquainted with an oral version of the Tristan story (Gerritsen 1994, 159-61; see also Winkelman 1998).

Although only one Middle Dutch text about Tristan has come down to us. Middle Dutch literature often refers to the story of Tristan and Isolde. References are found not only in some Arthurian romances (*Perchevael*, *Ridder metter mouwen*, *Walewein*), but also outside the domain of Arthurian literature. A fine example can be found in a text by Dirc Potter (c. 1370-1428), who was employed as a civil servant and diplomat by the Count of Holland (van Buuren 1994). In his treatise on love, *Der minnen loep* ('The Course of Love'), written in 1411-12, Potter exemplifies his discussion of the characteristics of good love with, among other stories, that of Tristan's and Iseut's rendezvous under the tree in which King Mark is hiding to entrap them. Iseut sees the reflection of her husband's head in the well, and draws attention to this by pointing to the fish in the water. After this the only thing the lovers do is praise the king. In Potter's view, cunning is permitted to preserve a woman's honour (Winkelman 1986, 166-8, 187-8). This Tristan scene is depicted in the Leiden manuscript of *Der minnen loep* (Meuwese 1996, 158-60).

The tryst-beneath-the-tree scene is also depicted on leather slippers from the second half of the fourteenth century. One of these slippers, moreover, has an inscription which reads 'Triestram siedi niet dat viselkiin' ('Tristan, don't you see the little fish'). The motif of the fish matches Potter's version of the scene. It is thought that Potter did not invent this reference to the fish himself, but was influenced by an iconographical source (Winkelman 1995, 250, 256; Meuwese 1996, 159-60).

Perchevael

Tristan also plays a role in the Middle Dutch *Perchevael*, which is part of the *Lancelot* Compilation. This text consists of a translation of the Gauvain part of Chrétien's *Perceval*, followed by several Gauvain adventures from the First *Perceval* Continuation. In addition, the compiler has added episodes of his own invention. In one of these inserted episodes Tristan is challenged to a duel by Lancelot.

The Middle Dutch *Perchevael* numbers about 5,600 lines of the *Lancelot* Compilation (*Roman van Lancelot*, Book II, vv. 36951-42546). The romance begins with the arrival of the Loathly Lady at Arthur's court, announcing several adventures. At the same time, Walewein is challenged to a duel by Giganbrisiel at the court of the king of Escavalon. While Walewein is riding to Escavalon, the other knights, such as Keu and Agravain, try to accomplish the adventures. They succeed, owing especially to the brave deeds of Perceval. At Escavalon the duel between Walewein and Giganbrisiel is postponed for a year. Walewein must find the Bleeding Lance. At Montesclare, where a damsel is being besieged, he saves the lives of Mordret and Griflet. When the damsel has been freed with the assistance of other knights of King Arthur, Walewein continues his search. He reaches a castle which is inhabited by Arthur's mother and her daughter Clariane, and fights against Griromelant. When Arthur arranges a marriage between Griromelant and Clariane, Walewein leaves indignantly. A search for him is organized. During this quest an unknown knight, who will afterwards turn out to be Lancelot, challenges a number of knights, among them Tristan, to a duel. Walewein visits the Grail castle. Afterwards he fights with Dyandras; eventually they decide to postpone their duel. While those participating in the search for Walewein return to Arthur's court, Arthur's nephew reaches Escavalon, where, in the presence of Arthur, he takes on two opponents simultaneously: Giganbrisiel and Dyandras. After his victory Walewein returns to Carlioen with the king.

In the first half of the thirteenth century Chrétien's *Perceval* was translated by a Brabantine poet (van den Berg 1983, 208-9; van den Berg 1987, 5-6). His text has been preserved as a fragment (Besamusca 1985, 50-5; Kienhorst 1988, 164-8). The Middle Dutch poet seems to have made a rather faithful translation of Chrétien's text (Hogenhout-Mulder 1984, 167-290). It was this translation that was incorporated within the *Lancelot* Compilation, drastically abridged and with radical changes (*Lanceloet*, part 1, 15).

The compiler had to modify the *Perceval* translation radically in order to adjust it to the *Lancelot* Compilation. In accordance with Chrétien's *Perceval*, the Middle Dutch translation described how Perceval as a young man travelled to Arthur's court to become a knight. He killed the Red Knight and met

Blancheflor, who appeared at his bedside during the night. At the Grail castle he failed to ask questions about the Grail and the Bleeding Lance. All these events have been omitted from the compiler's version of *Perchevael*, because they were incompatible with the story of Perceval in the core of the *Lancelot* Compilation. It is for narrative reasons that the compiler's *Perchevael* begins with the arrival of the hideous damsel at Arthur's court.

When the Loathly Lady turns up at Arthur's court, we read in Chrétien's *Perceval* and in the Middle Dutch translation that she greets all those present with the exception of Perceval. She reproves him for having remained silent at the castle of the Fisher King. As a consequence, a great disaster will befall the world. Since Perceval's visit to the Grail Castle has been left out by the compiler, the damsel cannot but greet all those present in the compilation version of *Perchevael*, with the exception of no one. Her reproaches to Perceval have also been omitted by the compiler.

When the Loathly Lady has left Arthur's court, Perceval vows in Chrétien's romance that he will solve the secret of the Grail and the Bleeding Lance. In the compiler's *Perchevael* he declares that he will search for knightly adventures (*Roman van Lancelot*, Book II, vv. 37017-24). At this point in the *Lancelot* Compilation Perceval has not yet embarked on his quest for the Grail.

One of the best-known passages in the Perceval story is the so-called Good Friday episode. After having travelled around for years it happens one Good Friday that the hero meets his uncle, who is a hermit. The latter enlightens him as to the mystery of the Grail and presents to him a form of knighthood that is based on the love of God. Perceval repents and does penance for his sins. Perceval's stay with his uncle does not fit within the context of the compilation and therefore this episode is omitted from the compiler's *Perchevael*.

Not only does the compiler change Perceval's role to a great extent, he also adds adventures of other knights. He uses the narrative technique of *entrelacement*, the interweaving of narrative threads, to insert new episodes into the Middle Dutch translation (Brandsma 1995, 37). When Walewein is on his way to Escavalon, knights such as Agravain and Keye have several adventures, which are told in alternation. Later on in the story a group of knights from Arthur's court set out to search for Walewein, who has disappeared. Then we are told, among other things, how Dodineel, Keye and Tristan are defeated by Lancelot, who fights incognito. Acglaval kills Gregorias, who stole Walewein's horse earlier on in the story. Thus a narrative thread from the Middle Dutch translation of Chrétien's *Perceval* is tied up (Oppenhuis de Jong 1996).

It will be clear that *Perchevael* is actually an incorrect title for the compiler's version. The romance's main character is not Perceval, but Walewein. While Perceval plays a modest role and is not associated with the Grail, Walewein is the undisputed hero of the work, which fits the context of the *Lancelot* Compilation.

Wrake van Ragisel

Walewein is also the main character in the *Wrake van Ragisel* ('The Avenging of Ragisel'), the Middle Dutch translation of *Vengeance Raguidel*. The Old French romance was rendered into Middle Dutch in the first decades of the thirteenth century on the border between Brabant and Flanders (Gysseling, *Corpus*, 352; van den Berg 1983, 207-8). About 1,000 lines of this work have been preserved (Besamusca 1985, 71-4; Kienhorst 1988, 224-7). If one compares the remains of this translation with the Old French original, the Middle Dutch poet appears to have been a creative adaptor (Gerritsen 1963, 85-151). For example, he increases the tension of certain situations by arranging events differently. Furthermore, he amplifies descriptions of duels, festive meals, and other topoi of Arthurian romance. The *Vengeance Raguidel*'s love scenes are rewritten in such a way that Walewein is a much more courtly lover than Gauvain in the Old French romance.

A radically abridged version of the Middle Dutch translation of the *Vengeance Raguidel* is part of the *Lancelot* Compilation. Here the text numbers 3,400 lines (Gerritsen 1963). The romance begins at Arthur's court, with the arrival of a ship richly fitted out and bearing Ragisel's corpse. Walewein is able to draw the broken lance point from the dead knight's chest, which means that he is the chosen knight to avenge Ragisel's death with the remainder of the weapon. He must be assisted by Ydier, the knight who drew the five golden rings from the dead man's hand. But when Walewein leaves the court, he forgets to take the lance point. On his way he defeats the Black Knight who harboured a deep hatred against him, and liberates his brother Gariet from the hands of the Damsel of Galestroet. Because Walewein had scorned her, she had planned to decapitate him with a sort of guillotine in a window. Against his brother's wishes Walewein next frees a damsel, Ydeine, with whom he immediately falls in love. The three of them travel to Arthur's court, where an ill-fitting magic cloak has revealed the infidelity of the queen and of Keye's beloved. Ydeine is not faithful to Walewein either. Disappointed, he gives her to Druidein, the knight who had claimed her as his beloved. While the Black Knight marries the Damsel of Galestroet, Walewein meets Ragisel's lady friend in Scotland. This time he has not forgotten to take the lance point. Assisted by Ydier, Walewein defeats Ragisel's murderer, Gygantioen. Ydier marries Gygantioen's daughter. When Ydier has become a knight of the Round Table and is on his way home, Lancelot forces him to a duel. Bohort manages to reconcile the two knights. A short while after, Lancelot and Bohort help Dodineel to save a damsel whose hair had been woven into the branches of a tree.

In the *Lancelot* Compilation, the *Wrake van Ragisel* is placed immediately after the *Queeste vanden Grale*. The two romances are linked by means of a

reference ahead in the *Queeste vanden Grale* and by means of a passage in which the Damsel of Galestroet's love for Walewein is explained. She is said to have fallen in love with Arthur's nephew already in *Queeste vanden Grale* and to have captured Gariet to lure the object of her love to her castle (Gerritsen 1963, vv. 1-74). This passage is one of the compiler's many interpolations in the abridged Middle Dutch translation of *Vengeance Raguidel*. He inserted two chapters in his abridged part, and added two more (Gerritsen 1963, 193-261).

In the first inserted episode Walewein wants to know the thoughts of women (vv. 1475-894). His wish arises from his uncertainty concerning Ydeine's chastity. In a forest he meets a dwarf king who is able to transform people. The king's wife is forced to take her meals in a separate room as a punishment for her adultery with a servant. When Walewein wants to know more about the thoughts of women, he and the king go to Arthur's court together. In the guise of a dwarf Walewein effortlessly seduces Ydeine. In this way it becomes clear that women are essentially promiscuous. This anti-feminist episode is probably intended to disguise Walewein's shortcomings in the story. His impulsive and naive behaviour in love, one of Gauvain's traditional flaws in the Old French romances, is pardoned as it were because women are deprived creatures anyway.

The second chapter which was inserted in the Middle Dutch translation of *Vengeance Raguidel* is about the Black Knight and Gariet (vv. 2025-426). When the Damsel of Galestroet wants to burn her maid at the stake because of her assistance in the escape of Walewein and Gariet, the girl is saved by the Black Knight. Together with Gariet and Arthur's army, he besieges the Damsel of Galestroet's castle. In a duel the Black Knight defeats the damsel's champion, who turns out to be Keye. The Black Knight marries the damsel. The interpolation is clearly meant to provide a conclusion to the adventures of the Black Knight, Gariet, the Damsel of Galestroet and her maid.

The compiler added two episodes after the translation of *Vengeance Raguidel* (vv. 2977-3414). In these passages Lancelot again appears on the stage. He reacts to the test with the cloak (Besamusca 1996, 115-16). His beloved's loss of honour has infuriated him. When he meets Ydier with Ragisel's lady friend, he loses his self-control as soon as he sees her cloak. The knights engage in a fight, which is interrupted by Bohort, who reconciles the two parties. In reply to Lancelot's inquiry as to how the queen reacted to the test with the cloak, Bohort comments that there was far more commotion over Keye's friend, also that the arrival of Walewein and his brother Gariet (the latter had long been imprisoned) brought such joy that the cloak was not mentioned again (Gerritsen 1963, vv. 3159-70). Bohort's report eases Lancelot's mind, since the queen's shame was evidently hardly noticed. This concludes the compiler's account of the magic cloak.

Lanceloet en het hert met de witte voet

The shortest text in the *Lancelot* Compilation numbers about 850 lines. It is *Lanceloet en het hert met de witte voet* ('Lancelot and the Stag with the White Foot'), which begins with a powerful queen's announcement at Arthur's court that she will marry the knight who is able to bring her the white foot of a certain stag that is guarded by lions. With a small white dog for a guide, Keye is the first to set out, but he fails. Lancelot succeeds in his attempt. He kills the lions, but is cheated by a knight who leaves him behind severely wounded and who then claims the damsel with the aid of the white foot. Walewein sets out in search of Lancelot. He finds him and arrives just in time to prevent the impostor's marriage to the damsel. When Lancelot has recovered, he goes to the damsel's court together with Walewein, where Arthur's nephew announces Lancelot's wish to postpone the marriage until his family will be able to attend. When the damsel has consented to this, the two knights return to Arthur's court.

Lanceloet en het hert met de witte voet has been transmitted exclusively in the *Lancelot* Compilation. In all probability the compiler made use of a Middle Dutch text dating from the second half of the thirteenth century. This work is somehow related to the Old French *Lai de Tyolet*. It is possible that both texts go back to a common source, a tale reminiscent of the dragon tongue episode in the Tristan tradition. It is also conceivable that *Lanceloet en het hert met de witte voet* is a reworking of the second part of *Lai de Tyolet* (Zemel 1992).

If one compares the Old French text with the Middle Dutch work, the role of Keye is the first thing to attract attention. In *Lai de Tyolet* it is Lodoër who makes the first attempt. When he does not succeed in crossing the dangerous river, he returns to Arthur's court without lamenting his failure. In the Middle Dutch text Keye is portrayed as the traditional failure with a bad character. He does not dare to cross the river either. But, contrary to Lodoër, he worries about his reputation. He tries to kill the little dog in order to solve his problems. When he fails, he can only think of a silly excuse: he had suddenly fallen ill.

Whereas it is Tyolet who is successful in *Lai de Tyolet*, it is Lancelot who acquires the white foot in the Middle Dutch text. Unlike Tyolet, however, Lancelot is not a free man. In the context of the *Lancelot* Compilation he is the devoted lover of Arthur's wife. This has consequences for the end of the story. Whereas Tyolet marries the damsel, Lancelot's marriage is postponed, and the narrator comments that Lancelot is well pleased at this, since his love for the queen is the most important thing in the world for him, and because of this love he would not have taken the damsel to wife (*Lanceloet en het hert met de witte voet* vv. 823-31). So Lancelot had undertaken a quest that was not his. Because of his love for the queen, his pursuit of the stag is a foolish venture. The poet may have wished to ironize Lancelot by this, with the intention of creating a

contrast with Walewein, who is the positive and successful hero of the text (Zemel 1992).

Torec

Like *Lanceloet en het hert met de witte voet*, *Torec* has been transmitted only in the *Lancelot* Compilation. This story of about 4,000 lines deals with Torec's quest for a precious diadem stolen from his grandmother. The object has by then passed into the hands of Miraude, who wants to marry only the knight who succeeds in defeating all the knights of the Round Table. During his search for Miraude Torec has several adventures. A magical ship, for example, takes him to a castle where he spends three days in the Chamber of Wisdom listening to conversations about virtues and love. Torec's narrative thread is interlaced with that of Melions, a knight who saves an abducted princess from the hands of a giant and is therefore granted the reward of her hand in marriage. At the castle of Miraude Torec defeats forty of King Arthur's knights. At Walewein's suggestion half of them fight with cut saddle girths to make it easier for Torec. At Arthur's court the same trick is used, so that Torec unseats all his opponents. Finally, he is himself defeated by Arthur, who surpasses everyone in strength. When Torec's mother, Tristoise, sees Miraude with the diadem, she smiles for the third time since her son's birth. Torec and Miraude are married.

The compiler almost certainly used an older version of the Torec story. His source was probably a romance written by Jacob van Maerlant around 1262. Maerlant's text has not come down to us, but in the prologue to his *Historie van Troyen*, written around 1264, he mentions that he has written a *Toerecke*. This text may have been intended as a mirror for princes. Together with some of Maerlant's other works, such as the *Historie van den Grale* and the *Boek van Merline*, *Torec* would have been meant to prepare a group of aristocratic youngsters on the island of Voorne, among them the later count, Floris V, for their future tasks. The romance would have functioned for this audience both as wish fulfilment and as a source of inspiration (Koekman 1988; van Oostrom 1996, 130-2).

In Old French literature a romance about Torec existed which is now lost: *Torrez, le Chevalier au cercle d'or*. The title unmistakably points to the same story that Maerlant tells, which makes it very likely that the Flemish poet reworked an Old French Arthurian romance. It is impossible to establish what Maerlant's source was like, what he did with it and how, in his turn, the compiler went about his work (van Oostrom 1979).

In the Chamber of Wisdom Torec listens to conversations on virtues, desirable behaviour and love. It has been suggested that this episode in *Torec* is of Maerlant's own invention, because the argument about the decline of the world, which is caused in particular by greed, matches Maerlant's tone (van

Oostrom 1996, 238-41). The Flemish poet may also be responsible for the striking portrait of Arthur as an invincible knight. Because Arthur surpasses everyone, he does not participate in tournaments, for he would always win. Moreover, he sets out incognito to fight against injustice in his realm. This characterization of the king accords so well with Maerlant's ideas about the ideal sovereign that it has been suggested that we owe this royal portrait in *Torec* to him (van Oostrom 1996, 249-50).

A remarkable aspect of *Torec* is the link with Chrétien's *Perceval*. When Torec has liberated the Damsel of Montesclaire, she tells him that she had provoked the siege of her castle by refusing to accept any knight as her lover. The siege formed part of her plan to find the ideal husband. She expected to get one of the best knights of the Round Table to protect her castle and to take him as her husband thereafter (*Torec* vv. 1270-80). This explanation leads to a reinterpretation of the events in *Perceval*. In the Old French romance the Loathly Lady announced that the knight who raised the siege of Montesclaire would receive the sword of the strange rings. According to the *Torec*, however, she appeared at Arthur's court to lure a suitable husband to Montesclaire. It is likely that this connection with Chrétien's *Perceval* was already present in the Old French *Torrez*, because in the compiler's *Perchevael* the damsel had previously been liberated by a group of Arthur's knights.

Ferguut

Unlike most Arthurian romances treated in this section, *Ferguut* has not come down to us in the *Lancelot* Compilation. The only extant manuscript is in Leiden University Library: MS Ltk. 191 (Deschamps 1972, 42-47; *Ferguut: A facsimile*). The codex was made between 1325 and 1350 in western Brabant (Kuiper 1989, 25-60; Klein, J.W. 1995, 10-11). The first folio of the manuscript contains a damaged historiated initial, depicting a knight standing upright and carrying a sword and a shield. This knight could be the patron of the manuscript or he could represent the protagonist of the romance (Meuwese 1996, 154).

A different, but contemporary hand made almost 250 corrections in the manuscript. This unknown corrector justifies his work in the colophon:

Here, hier hebdi van Ferragute
 Van beghinne ten inde al ute
 Ghecorrigeert van miere hant
 Over al soe waer ict vant
 In rijm, in vers, in ward messcreven.
 (*Ferguut* vv. 5597-601)

(*Lord, here you have the story about Ferguut, from beginning to end corrected by me wherever I found wrongly written rhymes, line and words.*)

The corrector did not have another *Ferguut* manuscript at his disposal. For his interventions he based himself on the immediate context or he repeated the original text in other words. In this, he paid special attention to the formal aspect of the text, such as impure rhymes (Kuiper 1989, 71-215).

In the opening episode of *Ferguut* Perceval wins the golden cup which Arthur had promised to the knight who succeeded in killing the white stag. Ferguut meets Arthur's retinue and wants to become a knight as well. At the court he is mocked by Keye, who challenges him to defeat the Black Knight. On his way to the black rock Ferguut spends the night at the castle of Ydel, where Galiene, niece to the lord of the castle, declares her love for him. But Ferguut does not have time for love, he is under the spell of knighthood. When he has defeated the Black Knight on the next day and returns to Ydel, Galiene has disappeared. Ferguut realizes that he has behaved shamefully towards her. He decides to go and look for the damsel, with whom he has all of a sudden fallen in love. The knights whom he defeats during his search are sent to Arthur's court. A dwarf tells him he has to win the White Shield to be able to find Galiene. After searching far and wide he is able to secure the shield by defeating two giants. When he hears that Galiene's castle is under siege, he goes to her rescue without disclosing his identity. Galiene realizes that she cannot rule her territory on her own and therefore she asks Arthur to find her a husband. The king will organize a tournament, the prize being Galiene's hand in marriage. In this tournament Ferguut revenges himself on Keye by unseating him. Ferguut defeats all the knights of the Round Table, with the exception of Gawein. When he has been recognized and been declared the winner of the tournament, he marries Galiene.

Ferguut is based on Guillaume le Clerc's *Fergus*, which has come down to us in two manuscripts. The Middle Dutch romance, written in the first half of the thirteenth century, is closely related to the so-called A-redaction (MS Chantilly 472) of *Fergus*. There are places, however, where *Ferguut* is in agreement with the text of the P-redaction. This proves that the Middle Dutch poet did not use the Chantilly manuscript (Kuiper 1989, 60-3; Zemel 1991, 188-95).

In *Ferguut*, which runs to 5,604 lines, two parts can be distinguished. Up to v. 2592 the Middle Dutch romance is a translation of the Old French text. In the part that follows, the Middle Dutch poet shows greater independence. This difference has raised the question of how many authors have been at work here. *Ferguut* may have been composed by two authors: a translator who stopped at v. 2592, and a gifted poet, who, knowing Guillaume's text by heart, continued the work as a free adaptation of *Fergus* (Kuiper 1989, 217-301). It is also conceivable that a single poet set out to translate the Old French text, but had to rely on his memory at a later stage because a manuscript of *Fergus* was no longer available (Zemel 1991, 8-9).

The translated part of *Ferguut* is an abridged version in comparison to Guillaume's *Fergus*. Not only did the Flemish poet leave individual Old French lines untranslated or render them in a condensed fashion, but he also skipped lengthier passages. This has resulted in a different type of romance. *Ferguut* shows a much stronger emphasis on the narrative course of events than the Old French. In comparison to Guillaume's sophisticated romance, *Ferguut* is an obvious simplification (Zemel 1991, 203-340).

This simplification is also related to the literary game that Guillaume played with Chrétien's *Perceval*. *Fergus* is an answer to Chrétien's text, which introduced a knighthood inspired by religion. Guillaume corrected this new direction with a renewed treatment of the profane-love-and-chivalry model. His *Fergus* is presented as the new *Perceval*, transcending Chrétien's hero (Zemel 1994). This intertextual dimension of Guillaume's text was adopted in the Middle Dutch romance only in a reduced form. Because of the abridgements and changes, many of the parallels with Chrétien's text have disappeared. In contrast to *Fergus*, *Ferguut* was not designed as a literary criticism of Chrétien's *Perceval* (Zemel 1991, 115-22).

Another remarkable aspect of *Fergus* is its unique Scottish setting. *Fergus* does not travel through the vague landscape typical of Arthurian romance, but through southern Scotland. This realistic geographical setting is absent in *Ferguut*. The topography of the Middle Dutch romance is almost completely arbitrary, virtually all Scottish place names have disappeared. As to the setting, *Ferguut* does not differ from the average Arthurian romance (Zemel 1991, 169-77).

Yet *Ferguut* is more than a simplification, and this is especially apparent in the altered conclusion to the Middle Dutch romance. In the final episode of Guillaume's text both Arthur and Galiene are looking for *Fergus*. This is not the case in *Ferguut*. Arthur organizes a tournament to find Galiene another husband instead of *Ferguut*, who has disappeared. This situation reflects ironically on *Ferguut*, because he neglected to visit Galiene when the siege of her castle had been raised. If he had visited her, Galiene would then not have had to find a husband and Arthur would not have had to organize a tournament. That this error does not have fatal consequences for *Ferguut*, he owes to a dwarf who happens to tell him about Arthur's tournament. When *Ferguut* wins the tournament, Galiene unexpectedly gets the knight whom she had wanted for her lover earlier on in the story. With this humorous conclusion *Ferguut* ends (Zemel 1991, 65-7).

The name *Walewein* is a special problem in *Ferguut*. In Middle Dutch literature, Arthur's nephew *Gauvain* is called *Walewein*. However, contrary to this, he is called *Gawein* in *Ferguut*. Moreover, in a list of the knights of the Round Table we hear the names of *Gawein*, *Ywein*, *Bohort* and others, but also

of 'Walewein, een ridder van prise' (v. 4325, 'Walewein, a noble knight'). Apparently the author of this passage did not know that Walewein is the name for Gauvain's Dutch counterpart. No acceptable explanation for his ignorance has yet been given (Kuiper 1989, 59-60).

Indigenous Romances

Penninc and Pieter Vostaert, *Walewein*

We do not know for whom *Walewein* was composed, although it has been suggested that the romance, like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, first circulated in an urban-noble culture (Riddy 1996). The Flemish authors, Penninc and Pieter Vostaert, remain silent on this subject. The prologue makes it clear that *Walewein* is not a translation, but an indigenous romance. Penninc would have translated the story if it had existed in French (vv. 4-7). Penninc and Vostaert's text, written around the middle of the thirteenth century (Besamusca 1993, 33-8; Janssens 1994, 125), was probably the first example of such an indigenous work. In the epilogue Vostaert states that he completed Penninc's unfinished romance by composing about 3,300 lines (vv. 11186f.). In all probability he continued Penninc's story from v. 7844 onwards (Draak 1975, 204-6). The romance numbers 11,198 lines.

Walewein is constructed around a threefold quest. Arthur's nephew Walewein leaves the court after having promised the king to bring him the chess set that had come floating into the castle only to disappear again shortly after. He finds the Floating Chess Set at the castle of King Wonder, who is willing to give it to Walewein in exchange for the remarkable Sword with the Two Rings, which is in the possession of King Amoraen. Amoraen is willing to part with the sword, on the condition that Walewein brings him King Assentijn's beautiful daughter Ysabele, who lives in India. Assisted by the fox Roges, an enchanted young man, the hero succeeds in abducting the damsel but, being in love with her, he is not willing to hand her over to Amoraen. Fortunately, however, the latter has died in the meantime, so that Walewein can return to King Wonder with the sword and Ysabele. There the fox is restored to his human shape. After exchanging the sword for the chess set, Walewein returns to Arthur. He gives an account of his adventures and presents the king with the object of the quest.

The underlying structure of *Walewein* is derived from a fairy tale, which, just like Grimm's *Der goldene Vogel*, must have been a variant of Aarne-Thompson 550 (Draak 1975). This tale was turned into a romance by providing it with a knightly and courtly setting. Whereas in the tale the hero achieves his goal after a series of failures, Walewein remains blameless throughout his adventures. The Middle Dutch authors seem to have balanced this loss of drama by the addition of chivalric episodes taken from the Arthurian tradition (Haug 1995).

In the inserted episodes Walewein has to face threatening adventures. Entrapped in a dark mountain, he fights dragons. In a robber's castle he kills everybody, thus abolishing the custom of brutal toll. He defends a damsel against an evil knight, whom he wounds mortally and whose body he protects all night against devils. Together with Ysabele, he is imprisoned by a duke when it turns out that he has killed the duke's son, who had claimed Ysabele. He defeats an extremely strong knight, Lancelot's brother Estor, who had abducted Ysabele. In these inserted episodes Walewein appears as the ideal courtly knight, who is strong, courageous, generous, merciful, loyal etc. It has been suggested that in the course of these adventures he develops from a courtly knight into a courtly lover (Verhage-van den Berg 1983).

The love theme in *Walewein* is given form with the aid of two borrowings from the Old French *Perceval* Continuation by Gerbert. In Gerbert's text, Gauvain meets a beautiful damsel called Bloiesine. At her father's castle, the body of her dead brother starts to bleed in the presence of Gauvain, pointing to Arthur's nephew as the murderer. Bloiesine tells her father that she intends to torture the imprisoned Gauvain during the night, but instead they spend an enjoyable time together (Gerbert de Montreuil, *Perceval* vv. 12383-14073). In *Walewein* this adventure is used twice. In Penninc's part of the text, Ysabele uses Bloiesine's ruse to get Walewein into her room (vv. 7395-403); Vostaert borrowed the violation of hospitality and the motif of the bleeding corpse in his description of Walewein's imprisonment at the duke's castle (vv. 8531-9134). In both episodes the motifs borrowed from Gerbert's romance lead to a dungeon scene. This recurring imprisonment of Walewein and Ysabele is intended chiefly to demonstrate just how true their love is (Besamusca 1992; Janssens 1994, 119).

In two scenes Walewein is compared to Tristan in his role of lover. When Walewein and Ysabele are enjoying the pleasures of love in her room, they are betrayed and Assentijn surprises them. Walewein refuses to flee through a secret corridor (vv. 7965-8272). In the Tristan story, however, Tristan does flee when he and Isolde are caught in the orchard by King Mark. The comparison suggests that Walewein surpasses Tristan, which is confirmed in another episode. Walewein decides not to give up his beloved Ysabele to Amoraen, although this implies that he is going to fail in his quest, because then he will not obtain the Sword with the Two Rings (vv. 9399-468). This, too, reminds us of Tristan, who likewise set out to bring a princess from afar for a third person, but contrary to Walewein he is willing to give up his beloved Isolde to the king. Thus Walewein is portrayed not only as the perfect knight but also as the perfect lover (Haug 1995, 201-3).

The remarkably positive picture that Penninc and Vostaert paint of Walewein differs strongly from the portrayal of Gauvain in French literature. In contrast to his flawed French counterpart, Walewein is a character of chivalric and moral

excellence (Lacy 1995, 310f.). This positive image of Walewein is supported by motifs drawn from the Grail quest. At the beginning of the romance a magic chess set floats into Arthur's court, just as the Grail does in the *Prose Lancelot*. At King Wonder's castle, Walewein takes a protecting seat, where neither lightning nor thunder can harm him; in the *Queste del Saint Graal*, Galahad sits down in the Perilous Seat of the Round Table. Whereas Galahad is predestined to receive the Sword of the Strange Rings, Walewein is the chosen bearer of the Sword with the Two Rings. The Middle Dutch audience is thus invited to compare three religious objects with their worldly counterparts and to compare Walewein with Galahad, the figurehead of celestial chivalry. In the *Queste del Saint Graal* celestial chivalry undermines the courtly ideal of chivalry inspired by profane love, which results in the decline of Gauvain. In *Walewein*, the destructive influence of religious chivalry on the Arthurian world is resented. Secular chivalry, personified by Walewein, is restored to its old glory in the Middle Dutch romance (Besamusca 1995; Lacy 1995, 316f.).

Walewein has come down to us in fragments dating from the second half of the fourteenth century and in one complete manuscript, kept at Leiden University Library: MS Ltk. 195 (Deschamps 1972, 39-42; Besamusca 1985, 45-9; Kienhorst 1988, 217f.). At the end of the codex, the scribe gives 1350 as the year in which he completed his work. This *Walewein* manuscript contains the best-known Middle Dutch Arthurian illustration, the full-page opening miniature of the romance which depicts Walewein on horseback pursuing the floating chess set. His arms (argent, a lion's head gules) are shown seven times on the armour. The chess set is depicted without the chess pieces and, erroneously, with seven horizontal rows on the board instead of eight. Although inserted on a single leaf of parchment, the miniature was intended for the present manuscript from the beginning (Meuwese 1996, 151-4).

Moriaen

At the beginning of *Moriaen*, a wounded robber knight, who has been defeated by Perceval, arrives at Arthur's court. When Arthur laments Perceval's absence, Walewein and Lancelot set out to find the famous knight. On their way they meet a Moorish knight, Moriaen, who is in search of his father, Perceval's brother Acglaval. At a crossroads the knights decide that each of them will follow one of the three possible directions. Walewein delivers a damsel and kills her ravisher, who later turns out to be the son of his host. Walewein is taken prisoner. At the same time nobody is willing to ferry Moriaen to Ireland out of fear for his black skin. He returns to the crossroads, arriving just in time to rescue Walewein, whose enemies had decided to kill him. Then Gariet brings bad news: Arthur has been kidnapped by the Saxons and the Irish, who have invaded the country. While

Walewein goes in search of Lancelot, Moriaen and Gariet will have to find Perceval and Acglaval. When the latter two are found with their uncle, a hermit, Perceval goes back to save Arthur's kingdom; the wounded Acglaval stays behind to recover.

Walewein finds Lancelot, who had slain a dragon but was then betrayed by an evil knight who had taken advantage of the hero's injuries to obtain the monster's foot (for this course of events see also *Lanceloet en het hert met de witte voet*). Together the most important knights of the Round Table expel the invaders and rescue Arthur. Afterwards the knights travel with Acglaval, now recovered, to Moriaen's country, where Acglaval marries Moriaen's mother.

Outside the *Lancelot* Compilation, *Moriaen* has come down to us only in a fourteenth-century fragment (Besamusca 1985, 43f.; Kienhorst 1988, 144f.). In the compilation the romance runs to about 4,700 lines. The work is preceded by a prologue which is important for our knowledge of the textual history, because its author, the compiler of the *Lancelot* Compilation, provides us with valuable information about his source (vv. 1-22). In that text Perceval was Moriaen's father. As this did not fit in with the core of the compilation, in which both Perceval and Galaad are virgins, the compiler allotted Moriaen's paternity to Perceval's brother Acglaval. Moreover, he presents his rendering of *Moriaen* as a sequel to *Lanceloet*, in which Acglaval had been searching for Lancelot who was wandering around insane at that time. That the compiler did, indeed, replace Perceval by Acglaval appears from a number of inconsistencies in his reworking. For example, Walewein and Lancelot set out to search for Perceval, but they tell Moriaen that they want to find Perceval and Acglaval (Besamusca 1993, 87-93).

It is regrettable that the compiler blocks our view of the original *Moriaen*, for everything shows that the Flemish author of this romance created a highly individual work. Writing in the second half of the thirteenth century, he borrowed, for example, two episodes from *Walewein* by Penninc and Pieter Vostaert. The passages about the maltreated damsel (vv. 3676-4352) and the violation of hospitality (vv. 8713-9176) were reworked into one episode (vv. 1213-2340). The *Moriaen* poet deviates systematically and consistently from *Walewein*. In his adaptation he stresses the abuse of feudal power and the contrast between appearances and reality (Besamusca 1993, 100-10).

The link between *Moriaen* and Chrétien's *Perceval* is particularly interesting. In the Flemish romance Arthur declares that Perceval set out to search for the Grail and the Bleeding Lance and that he has since sent many defeated knights to the court (vv. 231-8). This reminds us of Chrétien's *Perceval*: during the five-year search which precedes the meeting with his uncle the hermit, Perceval sends more than sixty knights to Arthur's court. Later on in *Moriaen* Gariet tells his brother Walewein that Perceval has retreated to his uncle's hermitage because of his sins. Perceval realized that he would never be able to find the Lance and the Grail because he had left his mother behind in the woods and she then died of

sorrow (vv. 3057-82). Because of this reference to Chrétien's romance the narrative events in *Moriaen* and *Perceval* take place simultaneously. Perceval's quest for the Grail and the Bleeding Lance is presented as a sub-plot in *Moriaen*, and Perceval's visit to his uncle functions as a point of synchronization.

A crucial difference between both romances concerns Perceval. In Chrétien's text it is suggested that the hero will continue his quest after the visit to his uncle and that he will then succeed. In *Moriaen*, however, Perceval realizes that he has failed, for he will never find the Grail and the Lance. He abandons his quest and retires from the world to live as a hermit. His role as the hero is taken over by his son *Moriaen*, who, in contrast, is successful, but in another field, i.e. as a courtly knight. This indicates that *Moriaen* was meant to be a literary reaction to Chrétien's romance. The negative view of secular knighthood and the religious orientation of the Old French romance were corrected by the poet of *Moriaen*. The successful son of the unsuccessful Grail seeker demonstrates that the ideals of secular knighthood are not outmoded after all (Zemel 1996).

Ridder metter mouwen

Like *Moriaen*, the *Ridder metter mouwen* ('The Knight with the Sleeve') has been preserved in the *Lancelot* Compilation. In this romance a nameless young man arrives at Arthur's court to become a knight. In the absence of the king and virtually all his knights - only Keye has remained behind because of an illness the young man, by request of the queen, fights a knight who has maltreated a damsel. Walewein's niece Clarette gives him a white sleeve, which provides him with his nickname, and some good advice. When he has defeated the damsel's tormentor, he has it proclaimed at the court that he will revenge himself on Keye, who insulted him, and that he loves Clarette. Then he has a number of adventures. In the Forest without Mercy he puts an end to the terrors that rule there. He defeats Keye and wins a three-day tournament with Clarette's hand in marriage as the prize. Then his mother appears, who tells him his name: Miraudijs. After his marriage Keye's nephew Galyas accuses him of having maltreated his uncle and calls him a bastard. The Knight with the Sleeve sets out to find his father, who turns out to be in prison. The hero frees his father and rescues Arthur's realm by defeating the king of Ireland, who had invaded the country. Miraudijs wins the postponed duel against Galyas. When Arthur's knights have been ambushed and captured by the king of Ireland, Ywein frees them. When returning to Arthur's court they come past the castle of Miraudijs's mother who is being besieged. After Miraudijs's parents have married, the father defeats the besieger in a duel. Then all travel to Arthur's court.

The *Ridder metter mouwen* has been transmitted to us in two ways. An abridged but complete version of about 4,000 lines has been preserved as part of

the *Lancelot* Compilation (*Die Riddere metter mouwen*). In addition, a fragment dating from c. 1360-70 contains 320 lines of the original, far more elaborate, version (Besamusca 1985, 59-61; Kienhorst 1988, 178f.). This Flemish romance, written in the second half of the thirteenth century, was abridged to a third of its length for the *Lancelot* Compilation. It is not clear whether the compiler altered the structure of the romance. It has been argued that in the original romance Miraudijs's search for his father preceded his marriage to Clarette, and that the compiler changed this order into a diptych, in which Miraudijs gets married halfway through the romance and effects his parents' marriage at the end of the text (Smith 1989). However, it is not clear what reasons the compiler may have had for this peculiar adaptation.

The *Ridder metter mouwen* shows strong similarities with the Old French romance *Richars, li biaux*. In both texts, for example, the hero receives a white sleeve and giants besiege castles. In both romances a three-day tournament takes place and the hero is called a bastard. These parallels indicate that the Flemish poet made use of the Old French romance. But the *Ridder metter mouwen* is not a reworking of *Richars li biaux*. The Old French romance was one of the materials which the Flemish author used to create an indigenous romance (Smith 1988).

Two episodes indicate that the poet used Penninc and Vostaert's *Walewein* (Besamusca 1993, 151-5). In Miraudijs's first adventure, he defends a damsel against a knight who has maltreated her (*Roman van den Riddere metter Mouwen* vv. 123-445). This episode is borrowed from the passage about the maltreated damsel in *Walewein* (vv. 3676-4103), which was also used by the *Moriaen* poet. Later in *Ridder metter mouwen* Miraudijs finds a severely wounded knight in the forest. He takes the knight's confession and offers him Communion in the form of soil. That night he kills three robber knights, whom he sees riding on devils afterwards (vv. 2534-638, 3020-59). This adventure, too, is based on *Walewein* (vv. 4097-353, 4784-883).

Moriaen is the second Middle Dutch Arthurian romance which the poet of *Ridder metter mouwen* used (Besamusca 1993, 155-8). In the war against the Irish Arthur's kingdom is threatened with destruction. But Miraudijs prevents the king's defeat (vv. 2838-966, 3069-191). The poet took the episodes in question from *Moriaen*, in which Arthur has to fight against the Irish who invade his realm and the Saxons who abduct him (vv. 2851-3033, 4152-533). Contrary to the course of events in *Moriaen* the rescue of Arthur's kingdom in *Ridder metter mouwen* is the work of one knight, Miraudijs.

As well as drawing on *Walewein* and *Moriaen* to paint a positive picture of his hero, the poet of the *Ridder metter mouwen* also underlines Miraudijs's chivalric qualities by comparing him intertextually with other heroes from the (Old French) Arthurian romances. Like Perceval in Chrétien's *Conte du Graal* the

Knight with the Sleeve settles his score with Keye who had ridiculed him; like Lancelot, Miraudijs is so wrapped up in thoughts of love that he does not react to a knight who attacks him; and in the Forest without Mercy Miraudijs's actions remind us of Chrétien's Yvain (Smith 1991; Smith 1992; Besamusca 1993, 141-51).

As in Chrétien's romances, knighthood in the *Ridder metter mouwen* is closely connected with love. And just like Chrétien, the Flemish poet considers knighthood and marital love compatible. In the *Ridder metter mouwen* love gives Miraudijs the power to be a superior knight and his warm feelings towards Clarette lead to marriage. This conception of love is emphasized at the romance's opening. Arthur and his knights are absent, because they will be attending the funeral of Tristan and Isolde. This reference to the Tristan tradition is meant to stress the theme of love in the romance. In contrast to the adulterous love relationship between Tristan and Isolde, ending in death, the *Ridder metter mouwen* tells of a love that is crowned by marriage (Besamusca 1993, 136-41; Smith 1995, 45f.).

Walewein ende Keye

The last indigenous romance to be discussed has also been preserved in the *Lancelot* Compilation. The text comes after the *Ridder metter mouwen*. At the beginning of *Walewein ende Keye* Arthur appoints Walewein his deputy. Out of jealousy Keye falsely accuses Walewein of boasting that he could undertake more adventures in one year than all the other knights of the Round Table together. Walewein leaves the court. On his way he rescues a damsel from a well, defeats the lord of a castle and kills a dragon. In the meantime Keye and his companions have secretly left the court. Their adventure fails miserably. Walewein defeats an arrogant duke and also a knight who deemed himself invincible owing to a well with healing powers. Next, Walewein arrives in a country that is being destroyed by two giants. He defeats his two opponents and thereby liberates the 300 damsels they kept imprisoned. A short while later he participates in a tournament between the kings of Aragon and Portugal, and succeeds in reconciling them. On the appointed day all Walewein's defeated opponents appear before Arthur's castle. When Walewein arrives, he is welcomed with honour, and Keye and his companions are defeated by Walewein's opponents. While Keye flees to a hermit, his companions admit their lie. Arthur curses his seneschal.

Walewein ende Keye has been preserved exclusively in the *Lancelot* Compilation. It is a text of almost 3,700 lines (*Roman van Lancelot*, Book III, vv. 18603-22265). In all probability the compiler reworked an existing romance from the second half of the thirteenth century. The nature and extent of his

adaptation, however, are largely hidden from our view. For example, it is still unclear whether he abridged his source, as happened in the case of other romances (Hogenbirk 1996a, 93).

The romance is built on the contrast between two Arthurian figures who invariably belong to the entourage of Arthur's court. Keye functions as a negative character. In *Walewein ende Keye* the seneschal is explicitly malicious and treacherous. Opposed to Keye is the exemplary character of Walewein. He is the ideal courtly knight, the personification of virtues such as courage, wisdom and helpfulness. The hero's modesty is stressed in particular in *Walewein ende Keye*. Not only does Walewein behave modestly; he also deals with arrogant opponents. The romance teaches us that one should imitate the modest knight, Walewein; Keye with his arrogance is a deterring example (Hogenbirk 1996a).

In order to paint as positive a picture of Walewein as possible, the poet of *Walewein ende Keye* makes abundant use of other Arthurian romances. Walewein's adventure with the two giants (vv. 21068-303) is reminiscent of the Peme Aventure episode in Chrétien's *Yvain*. Just as Yvain fights two enormous devil's children, so Walewein takes up the fight against two giants. Through their respective victories both heroes liberate three hundred damsels from their wretched imprisonment (Hogenbirk 1994, 72-4).

The *Vengeance Raguidel* or its Middle Dutch translation is brought to mind in the episode in which Walewein defeats the lord of a castle (vv. 19107-369). This knight had promised to obtain Walewein's head for his lady. She refused to make love with the knight until Walewein's head had been put in a shrine that had been made for it. When the conquered knight informs Walewein of the situation, Arthur's nephew fulfils the promise by simply putting his head in the shrine. This is a humorous correction of Gauvain's adventure with Maduc and the Dame de Gautdestroit in the *Vengeance Raguidel*. In the Old French romance Maduc sees Gauvain as his rival, whom he must defeat in order to gain the love of the Dame de Gautdestroit. This lady is in love with Gauvain and wants to decapitate him, so that they can be buried together. In contrast to Walewein in *Walewein ende Keye*, Gauvain in the *Vengeance Raguidel* does not succeed in reconciling the couple (Hogenbirk 1996b, 265-8).

Walewein ende Keye also contains a variant of the story of the dragon-killer (vv. 19410-683). A country is being devastated by a dragon. He who kills the monster will receive the hand of the king's daughter in marriage. Walewein kills the dragon, but is severely wounded. Then the seneschal enters the scene. In accordance with, for instance, the story of Tristan, one expects him to deceive Walewein and to pretend at the court that he killed the dragon himself. However, he takes care of Arthur's nephew and honours him at the court as the best knight in the world. This variant of the story about the dragon-killer underlines Walewein's outstanding qualities (Hogenbirk 1994, 74f.).

In two places in *Walewein ende Keye* Walewein is called ‘der aventuren vader’ (‘father of adventures’, vv. 19229 and 21948). This epithet is also found in other Middle Dutch Arthurian romances, such as *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*, *Arturs doet*, Velthem's *Merlijn* Continuation, *Wrake van Ragisel*, and the indigenous romances *Walewein* and *Moriaen* (Janssens 1982, 299-303). This laudatory description of Arthur's nephew does not occur, however, in the Arthurian romances outside the Low Countries. The epithet confirms the extremely favourable picture that Middle Dutch authors have of Walewein. In their eyes he was the prototype of ideal knighthood *Walewein ende Keye* is the most pronounced representation of this tradition.

The Legacy

After the Middle Ages interest in Arthurian material in the Low Countries disappeared for centuries. It was not until the nineteenth century that people began to be interested again in the stories about King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table (Verbeke et al. 1987, 303-6; Lacy 1991, 123-4). Forerunners were the eighteenth-century linguists Balthazar Huydecoper (1695-1778) and Zacharias H. Alewijn (1742-88) Huydecoper was the owner of manuscripts of *Ferguut*, *Walewein* and *Wigalois*. At the auction of Huydecoper's library in 1779 the codices were bought by Alewijn, who bequeathed them in 1788 to the Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde (Society of Dutch Literature) in Leiden, founded in 1766. The manuscripts are now at Leiden University Library, bearing the signatures Ltk. 191, Ltk. 195 and Ltk. 537.

In the nineteenth century W.J.A. Jonckbloet (1817-85) initiated research into the Middle Dutch Arthurian romances. In his two literary histories, *Geschiedenis der Middennederlandsche Dichtkunst* (‘History of Middle Dutch Poetry’, 1851-5) and *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Letterkunde* (‘History of Dutch Literature’, 1868-72) he discussed the texts. Some years before, in 1846, he had published the first part of his *Walewein* edition (the second part appeared in 1848) and the first part of his edition of the *Lancelot* Compilation (the second part was published in 1849). He may justly be called the first Dutch Arthurian scholar.

Penninc and Pieter Vostaert's *Walewein* was reworked in modern Dutch in 1890 by M.C.H. Betz. The result was a text of 4,073 lines, written under the influence of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. If one compares the two texts, profound differences come to light. In Betz's *Walewein*, for instance, the hero does not find the flying chess set at King Wonder's castle, but at the castle of King Amoraen. Ysabele, whom Amoraen wants to have in exchange for the chess set, is in Betz's text the daughter of Tarquyn van den Foreeste (Tarquyn of the Forest), a name

that has been borrowed, through Malory, from the prose *Lancelot*. While Walewein is travelling to Tarquyn's castle, a damsel called Joyeuse Garde falls in love with him. This passage does not occur in the Middle Dutch *Walewein*. These differences show that Betz's *Walewein* is an idiosyncratic adaptation of Penninc and Pieter Vostaert's romance (Verbeke et al. 1987, 307f.).

A few decades later, their work was adapted once more. From October 1917 until June 1918 *Het zwevende schaakbord* ('The Floating Chess Board') by Louis Couperus appeared in weekly instalments in *De Haagsche Post*. The text was published in book form in 1922. Couperus presents his novel as a sequel to the text by Penninc and Vostaert. The events take place ten years later, and in all those years nothing has happened at Arthur's court. People are bored. Merlin then provides another chess board, a technical masterpiece, as the magician is well versed in the new magic of electricity, the telephone and the aeroplane. Gawein (Couperus considered this a tougher name than Walewein, which is too weak in his opinion) then undertakes a new adventure, which is a repetition of his experiences in the Middle Dutch romance - but with differences, such as the female squire Amadijs, who falls in love with Gawein. Couperus's version of *Walewein* is ironic and melancholic in character (Verbeke et al. 1987, 308-9).

Dutch authors writing after Couperus have shown only slight interest in the Arthurian material (Verbeke et al. 1987, 308-10; Lacy et al. 1991, 124f., 219, 268). In his *Tristan en Isolde* (1920) Arthur van Schendel reworked the Tristan story by Gottfried von Strassburg. In the same year, Marie Koenen adapted the Perceval story in her *Parzival*. P.C. Boutens wrote *Liederen van Isoude* ('Songs of Isold', 1921) and Stijn Streuvels based his *Tristan en Isolde* (1924) on the German *Tristrant und Isalde* (1484). In later years, Hubert Lampo showed himself to have been inspired by the Grail theme in novels such as *De heks en de archeoloog* ('The Witch and the Archaeologist', 1967) and *Wijlen Sarah Silbermann* ('The Late Sarah Silbermann', 1980). Leon de Winter's *Zoeken naar Eileen W.* (1981) shows the influence of the Tristan matter. Finally, juvenile Arthurian fiction written by D.L. Daalder, H. de Bruijn, Jaap ter Haar and Frank Herzen (Verbeke et al. 1987, 308-10; Lacy et al. 1991, 124f.) shows that the world of Arthur which was first conveyed to audiences in the Middle Ages lives on in a modified form for young Dutch readers today.

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