Olifant

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The Middle Dutch fragment entitled “About Wisselau the Bear” represents a Charlemagne story, albeit an unusual one. When Charlemagne and his men arrive at the castle of the giant King Espriaen, Geernout speaks to his bear Wisselau:

“Dan merct wel wie hi si,
De meester coc, ende stant hem bi.
Nemen bi den hare
Ende scouten int sop openbare.
Alse dandere dat gesien
Sele si alle vort vlien.
Dan nem den ketel saen
Ende comer met tons gegaen
Ende doe dat ic di rade.
In sconinx kemenade
Set neder den ketel
Vore tsconinx setel.
Dan nem den coc [ute tsop],
Des sele wi mak[en] ons scop,
Ende eten dan al in dinen mont.”
Hoe wel de bere dit verstont
Karel enwiste des niet,
No dat reussce diet. (324-41)\(^1\)

\(^1\) All text from the Middle Dutch “Van den bere Wisselau” is cited from M. Gysseling’s diplomatic edition in *Corpus van Middelnederlandse teksten (tot en met het jaar 1300).* To this diplomatic edition I have added punctuation marks, etc. A critical edition of the text is to be found in G. Kalff, *Middelnederlandsche epische fragmenten.* See Works Cited.
[. . .]

Met[t]ien quamen gevlowen
Scinkers, drossaten,
Die hars selfs so vergaten
Dat[si] vloen in de zale.
Dies daric mi vermeten wale
Dat se so drongen ouer een,
Datter selc brac sin been,
Selc sin arm, selc sin hoeft.
Alle de coke, dijs geloef,
Vloen schiere op een palas
Ende riepen: “O wi, o las,
Here coninc Espriaen,
In de cokene es gegaen
Die duvel barlike!
Hi slint warlike
Al datter es gereet,
Rou, gesoden, God weet!
Wine moegen met hem niet gesijn
Gine wilt ons gehulpech sijn.
Dien liefsten coc Brugigal
Es nv verscout al
In den groten ketel!” (427-48)

[. . .]

Doe sprac Geernout:
“Stant op, kimpe stout!
Du heves geten, God weet,
Al dat hier was gereet.
Gesoden ende gebraden,
Al heestuut verraden!
En can niet geweten
Wat wi selen eten.”
Die coninc ende sine man
Lachen began.
Wisselau spranc op sine voete
Ende scudde onsoete.
Van siden rocke
Springen wel diere cnooppe.
Doe loech Karel ende sine man
Ende sprac ten bere vresam:
“War omme machtu dijn cleet sliten?
Dine darf men niet verbiten
Datti verwan dijn here!”
Het dochte den bere onnere
Datti clagede sin cleet
Ende van herten leet.
Doe vergramdem sin moet
Ende scorde sinen roc goet,
Datti hem dochte te lanc
[. . .] so danc
[. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ]
Springen alsem goet dochte.
Hi warpen in den viere,
Ende lach neder sciere,
Ende warmed sine side. (608-38)

“Take good notice of who the chef is and stand close to him. Take him by the hair and boil him in the soup. When the others see this, they will flee rightaway. Take the cooking pot then and come to us immediately, and do as I tell you. Put the cauldron in front of the king’s chair in the king’s chamber. Then take the cook out of the soup—we will have
great fun!—and eat him.” Although the bear understood this very well, king Charlemagne and the giant folk knew nothing about it.

[. . .]

Suddenly cupbearers and stewards came running into the hall. I dare tell you that they were pushing and shoving each other so severely, that one of them broke his arm, another his leg, and a third his head. All of the cooks fled into a room for sure and yelled: “Oh no! King Espriaen, the devil himself has come into the kitchen! He devours everything there is: raw and cooked, and God knows what else. We cannot be in there with him unless you help us. Your favourite cook Brugigal has been cooked completely in the big cauldron.”

[. . .]

Then Geernout said: “Get up, brave champion! You have eaten, God knows, everything that had been prepared here. The boiled and the roasted food, you have taken it all! I do not know what we will eat now.” The king and his men started to laugh. Wisselau rose quickly and shook himself forcefully. Expensive buttons flew off his coat. Then Charlemagne and his men laughed, and the king said to the terrifying bear: “Why do you tear your coat? No one ought to blame you because your master beat you in the fight.” The bear considered it a disgrace, took it out on his coat and was sad at heart. Then he became angry and tore up his costly coat, which he considered too long. [. . .] jump around as he would like to. He threw it into the fire, he lay down and warmed his sides.

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The awesome bear, dressed up in human clothes, who cooks the cook in this episode is the titular hero of a Middle Dutch text that has come down to us in only one fragment, some 720 lines, many of which are severely damaged. The damage to the outer edges of the double leaf has caused the loss of over a hundred lines of text, but it is still possible to follow the main line of the story and to reconstruct some of what is lost. In the text below, reconstructed passages are indicated by the use of brackets.

Outline

[Charlemagne and his men, amongst whom are Geernout and his bear Wisselau, have come to a hostile shore where the giant Eeric, the champion of King Espriaen, has challenged their champion to single combat. Wisselau has fought Eeric and is about to kill him.] Wisselau hits Eeric between the eyebrows and brings him down. The giant calls out to his lord Espriaen that he has been beaten by the devil. When the king, who has witnessed the fight from his nearby castle, hears Eeric’s last words, he calls for his men and goes to the beach. In the meantime, Geernout orders Wisselau to stop eating his victim and to hide in the ship. When Espriaen arrives, the bear is nowhere in sight. Yet the king is anxious to see the champion who killed his strongest man. [A conversation follows in which Charlemagne and his men obtain the dubious honour of being invited to Espriaen’s castle.] They promise to bring their champion but to leave behind his four hungry brothers—whom Geernout has quickly invented in order to impress Espriaen. The giants return to the castle, while the men prepare to go to this lion’s den.

Geernout dresses Wisselau in his special coat and in a secret language instructs him to go straight to the kitchens when they enter the castle. There

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2 It is not sure what exactly is meant by ll. 288-89: “Sine roc diere Van vier quarteneren” [“his precious coat of four quarters”]. The coat may be have been made of four different (or differently coloured) pieces of cloth. The text states that the precious garment was specially made when Wisselau
the bear is to find the chef, throw him into boiling water, and take the cauldron with cook and all into the king’s hall.

Espriaen’s guard at the gate flees when he sees Wisselau, but the king welcomes him and the others to his hall. [Wisselau disappears] while Espriaen talks about him with Geernout, who states that he himself could easily beat his champion.

At that moment, the servants and cooks come flying into the hall in a great panic, breaking arms and legs just to get away from the kitchen. They tell the king that his favourite cook Brugigal has been cooked by a devil. Geernout laughs when he sees Wisselau come in with the cooking pot. He puts it in front of the terrified Espriaen and starts eating the “soupe au chef.”

By this time, all the giants have climbed onto the rafters of the hall. Their lord has the presence of mind to recall Geernout’s boast that he could overcome the champion and now shrewdly invites him to do so, hoping the monster will kill Geernout.

Again Geernout instructs Wisselau in their secret language: he tells him to fake a defeat in their wrestling match. They fight for a long time, but in the end Wisselau lies down as if beaten. The giants say to one another: “How can it be that this little man is so strong? Our king is in big trouble!” (ll. 576-79). Then Geernout speaks to the bear the words quoted in the third passage above, and Wisselau sheds his clothing and lies down in front of the fire. Espriaen orders his staff to prepare more food and while the giants and their king still look anxiously at the bear from time to time, they eat. When it comes to the sleeping arrangements, Espriaen asks what they will do about their frightening champion.

The fragment breaks off, leaving the modern reader with no clue as to the further adventures of Geernout, Charlemagne, and Wisselau.

came to the court at Aachen with Charlemagne. The word “quarteneren” may also have a heraldic meaning.
Details

The fragment (London, British Museum, ms. Egerton 2323) consists of one double leaf, each folio having four columns of 45 lines to the page. The writing indicates that the manuscript dates from the end of the thirteenth century, but because of its versification, the rhymes, and other textual features, the text is considered to be from the twelfth century. The dialect points to the border between Flanders and Brabant. No source text (in French or German) is known. In its style and structure, the text shows the characteristics of a tale that is close to the oral stage of this kind of story. It is composed of rather short phrases and has few rhetorical flourishes. The information units seldom outrun the couplet, and enjambment is rare. The text furthermore tends to begin its paragraphs with a word like “Do,” which means “Then,” giving it a straightforward “and then…and then” narrative style. It also indicates very clearly when a person speaks, which makes the text easy to read aloud.

The layout of the manuscript is remarkable. Especially in the later Middle Ages, three or four columns on each side of the leaf are used when the verse text is long. There are three and four column manuscripts of Jacob van Maerlant’s Spiegel historiael, for instance, and a text like the Lancelot Compilation (over 77,000 lines) has three columns in manuscript The Hague, Royal Library, 129 A 10. This could be interpreted as an indication that the Wisselau fragment comes from a very long text (or from a considerable collection of texts in a single manuscript and format). Codicologist Hans Kienhorst, however, has pointed out (without further arguments) that the large number of verses on the bifolium does not necessarily indicate a long text (Kienhorst, Lering en stichting, I, p. 111, note 12).

In his attempt to assess the quantity of Charlemagne material that may have existed in the

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3 In van den Berg’s survey of the versification of Middle Dutch texts, Wisselau is shown to have the “older” style of versification (van den Berg, Middelnederlandse versbouw en syntaxis, 1983).

4 Compare also Voorwinden, “Das mittelniederländische Fragment,” p. 173.
Low Countries by extrapolating from the existing fragments and their correspondence with French original texts, Ben van der Have also assumes that Wisselau was a short text: about 2,500 lines (van der Have, “De Middelnederlandse Karelepiek,” p. 87). He argues that the related texts of the Spielmannsepik in general also are short narratives.

The tradition

In the summary, the bear’s actions may seem cruel, but in the original text they are rather comical, not unlike the bear Balou’s masquerade when he tries to rescue Mowgli from King Louie and his apes in Walt Disney’s version of *The Jungle Book*. The fact that the audience is informed beforehand of the attack on the cook invites the listeners to take Wisselau’s side and perhaps makes them—like Geernout, Charlemagne, and the others—enjoy the moment this surprise is served to King Espriaen. The sympathy of the narrator and probably the audience is entirely for the humans and their bear, who by their awe-inspiring tricks manage to bluff their way through a dangerous situation. They have come, after all, to an unknown and probably hostile land inhabited by giants. Geernout’s clever actions provide safety for the group, since he makes their opponents fear not only the awesome bear but also the bear’s human companions.

The terrifying figure of the man-bear (and berserker) is well known in Germanic texts and it is in this context that the origin of the Wisselau text has been sought. In an article from 1922, Jan de Vries has indicated several related texts that show both the Geernout-like clever man leading the bear and the fighting bear (“Van bere Wisselauwe”). In the *Thidrekssaga*, the story of Vildiver describes how he was—in full armour—sown into a bear’s skin and then led on a chain to the castle of king Osanctrix in order to deliver his companion who had been captured by one of Osanctrix’s giants. As a bear, Vildiver is called “Vizleo,” which comes quite close to “Wisselau”!

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5For a reaction to de Vries’s article, see Voorwinden, “Das mittelniederländische Fragment.”
Performing before the king, the dancing bear kills a number of hounds and two giants and sets free his friend. Although de Vries’s suggestion that Geernout may have been a Spielmann (a jongleur-like artist performing at fairs and on other occasions, sometimes with a bear doing tricks or dancing) may have been off the mark, it is in the German Spielmansepen that Wisselau-like characters appear. In König Rother a giant, called Asprian (!), is one of Rother’s companions. He fights side by side with the giant Witold, who behaves like a bear and is so untamed that he usually has to be held in chains. A bear that causes a panic in the kitchen is found in the Nibelungenlied when Siegfried on a hunt captures a bear and then sets him free in the hunters’ camp.  

In his thesis on the role of the Brabantine dukes as sponsors of literature, Remco Sleiderink has discussed Wisselau as an early example of vernacular literature from Brabant (De stem van de meester, pp. 33-36). The connections of Brabant with Germany could be the explanation for the similarities to the Spielmansepen and Nibelungenlied, and there may have been vernacular texts made already at the court of duke Godfried III (who ruled from 1155 until 1190), but there is no firm evidence to link Wisselau to Brabant and its court.

The Wisselau poet may well have known some of the Germanic bear tales. The new element of his story, however, is the combination of this theme with Charlemagne. Because of the king’s presence, Wisselau is considered a Charlemagne epic in the Dutch tradition (resembling chansons de geste like Le pèlerinage de Charlemagne). The fragmentary nature of the text makes it hard to decide the exact relationship between Geernout and Charlemagne. Since Geernout is the person King Espriaen addresses all the time, he seems to be in charge. On the other hand, the group of humans, including Geernout, is called “Karel ende sine man” [“Charlemagne and his men”] several times, and it is the king who has given Wisselau his special coat of four quarters (ll. 288-93) when he came to his court in Aachen.

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6 Compare Voorwinden, “Wisselau.”
7 Compare l. 306, l. 616, and l. 622. L. 407 has “Karel ende sine geno-ete” [“Charles and his companions”].
Because so little of the text has come down to us, it is impossible to know whether this visit to Charles’s court was narrated earlier in the tale.

The *Wisselau* text that we do have shows a deft interplay of dramatic irony and the presentation of simultaneous events. The audience is informed of the plans Geernout discusses with his bear in the *gargoensche tale*, their secret slang, and thus suspect what Wisselau is doing in the kitchen while Geernout is talking with Espriaen, when even Geernout’s companions and Charlemagne do not know what is going on. The narrator informs the listeners of Espriaen’s devious ploy to let Wisselau kill his master and of Geernout’s clever countermove. This seems to have been planned from the start, since Geernout’s boasts invite Espriaen to ask for a demonstration of his ability to beat the bear. The awe that Wisselau inspires in the giants and their king stems for the greater part from their incertainty about his nature: some of the giants consider Wisselau a demon and Espriaen seems unable to tell whether the champion is human until the bear sheds his coat and lies down in front of the fire.

In his 2005 survey of the occupational hazards for cooks in medieval texts, Joris Reynaert has used Levi-Strauss’s anthropological theory about the raw and the cooked to explain this ambivalence (“De kok in het vuur,” pp. 121-23). In the kitchen, Wisselau eats both the raw and the cooked food, showing himself to belong to both “nature” and “culture.” He even cooks the person responsible for making cooked what was raw and thus makes the society of the giants lose its cohesion.

Comedy seems to have been the main ingredient for the episode of the visit to Espriaen’s castle. Even for us, the mental image of the giants climbing into the rafters when Wisselau brings in the cook and cauldron is funny. We share the laughter of Charlemagne and his men, which is described explicitly by the narrator in the soup scene and in the third episode where Geernouts playfully chastises Wisselau for having eaten everything and the bear reacts by being a real bear again, shedding his clothing and his almost

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8 Its humor has been described as “situational” in Harper’s “Beer of geen beer.”

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human behaviour. For Charlemagne and his companions, it is laughter combined with a feeling of relief, because Geernout’s cleverness and Wisselau’s displays of strength have turned a situation that could well have cost them their lives into a complete victory over the giants. Espriaen even anxiously asks if the bear will stay near the fire: he will have no appetite when he has to eat in the presence of Wisselau.

Even in its damaged form, *Wisselau* is a great story. A pity no more of it has been found (yet).
Works Cited


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Ogier van Denemarken

Hans van Dijk
University of Groningen (Emeritus)

Ic keerde te Lodine in die zale
Met minen baroenen, met minen lieden.
Godefroot dedic echt onbieden,
Dat hi te mi soude comen.
God die moetene verdomen:
Hi was in die stat, al wistics niet.
Doe men die maeltijt liet,
Satic up mijn ors van prise—
Het gaf mi Goudebuef, die Vriese.
Met spele voer ic uter poort.
God weet, eer ic voort
Ghereet ene alve mile,
Quam Godefroot gelijc enen pile
Ghereden up sijn destrier
Ende riep: “Coninc, ghi blivets hier!”
Biden goeden Sint-Denise,
Ic keerde tors van prise
Ende vlo met crachte
Wat dat tors gelopen machte.
Ende als dat sach die pautenier,
Dat ic hem soude ontvlien,
So scuddi sinen spiet.
Mijn ors dat zere liep,
Scoot hi onder mi doot.
Daer succoersde mi in de noot
Dorghelieuse Gautier
Ende Namels van Bayvier;
Si brochtem mi ghevaen.
Ic wildem ghelden dat hi adde mesdaen.
Doe knielde die verrader vor mi,
Met hem Namels, die rudder vri,
Beuveloen, sonder baraet, ende Gautier
Ende Gwideloen, de coninc fier.
Si baden over hem zere
Dor den loon van onsen Here,
Dat hi mijn scalc soude wesen.
Van sinen hoofde al mijn leven
Dat hi mi sjaers zoude bringen
Viere hare uut sinen baerde, sonder dingen,
Tote Sint-Denijs in die stede.
Dus gavic hem vrede.
Dies gaf mi die pautenier
In ostagen sijn kint Ogier.
Ic ontfinct, bi onsen Here,
In ene wieghe clene.
Die casteleine Grommemare
Hevet ghehouden XVII jare
Te Sint-Omaers int palas. (31-78)¹

I returned to the castle in Laon with my barons and soldiers. Then I sent for Godefroot. God may punish him for he had arrived in town even though I did not know it. After dinner I mounted my magnificent horse—bestowed upon me by Goudebuef, the Frisian—and went out riding by way of diversion. As God is my witness, before I had gone half a mile Godefroot came riding on his steed like

¹ Text from the Middle Dutch Ogier van Denemarken is quoted from van Dijk’s diplomatic edition (see Works Cited). Spelling and punctuation have been adapted to increase the readability of the text.
the wind and exclaimed: “King, this is where you will die.” By the good Saint Denijs, I turned my splendid horse and fled as swiftly as the horse allowed me. When the scoundrel realised that I was escaping him, he threw his spear at me. My horse was killed beneath me while at a full gallop. Then the proud Gautier and Namels of Beieren came to my rescue; they brought Godefroot before me as a prisoner. I wanted to get even with him because of what he had done to me. Then the traitor knelt before me, accompanied by the noble knight Namels, the honourable Beuveloen and Gautier and the proud King Gwideloen. They passionately defended him and said that God would reward me if I took him on as my servant. Every year he would come to Saint Denijs and without ado bring me four hairs from his beard as long as I lived. Thus, I made peace with him. For that reason the villain gave me his child Ogier as hostage. By God, it came to me in a cradle. Viscount Grommemare took care of it for seventeen years in the castle of Saint Omaers.²

It is Charlemagne himself who is speaking here. He has decided to hang the seventeen-year-old hostage Ogier, because Ogier’s father, Godefroot of Denmark, is opposing Charlemagne’s reign. However, he has to postpone the execution of his decision because the Franks are unexpectedly marching against the Saracens who have driven the pope from Rome and have occupied large parts of Italy. On the way, during a break on the Grand Saint Bernard, the king orders the preparation of the gallows, but many of his barons (among them Namels, the Duke of Bavaria, and his cousin Gautier) plead in favour of the innocent Ogier. Charlemagne subsequently explains to them the reasons for his dispute with his Danish vassal. In the passage quoted above, he tells them how he

² All translations from the Middle Dutch are the author’s.
kindly sought a reconciliation with the treacherous Godefroot and how Ogier came to be a hostage at the court on this occasion.

However, influenced by Ogier’s powerful friends at court, Charlemagne is again forced to abandon the hanging. Ogier performs his first heroic deeds in the struggle against the Saracens which is why Charlemagne knights him. The young hero also excels in duels with the bravest of the Saracens and acquires the sword Corteine and his loyal horse Broyfort. With the help of Gloriande, daughter of the heathen leader, Ogier conquers the obstacles on his path. Finally, the Saracens are defeated and return to their country. These are the broad contours of the history of the youth (Enfances) of our hero from Denmark. (ll. 1-4136)³

As an adult, Ogier becomes involved in a feud with Charlemagne, whose son Charloot kills Ogier’s son because the latter has twice defeated him at chess. Ogier does not bend and demands Charloot’s head. However, Charlemagne refuses and Ogier flees to Saxony. He persuades the kings of Saxony and Hungary to join him in his fight against the Franks. During this struggle Ogier avoids a fight with his relatives. The Christians win, but Ogier manages to escape to the castle Monfert, assisted by Willem van Oringen (Guillaume d’Orange) who is well disposed towards Ogier. For years he defends himself while the fortress is under siege by Charlemagne and Charloot. One day he manages to ward off the enemy by opening the sluices in a nearby watercourse, thereby flooding the battlefield. More than a thousand enemy soldiers drown as a result. Finally, however, he is taken prisoner by the bishop Tulpijn. (ll. 4137-13996)

The Saracens, led by King Brohier of Babylon, threaten to capture Paris. Charlemagne’s knights realise that only Ogier will be able to save them, and they persuade Charlemagne to release the captive hero. However, Ogier is only willing to help if he is allowed to take revenge on Charloot. Forced by circumstance, Charlemagne agrees. In order to save

³ This brief summary of the content is based on Ogier von Dänemark, ed. Weddige, pp. xviii-xxix.
his kingdom he sacrifices his son. However, God interferes just when Ogier is about to behead his archenemy. An angel tells Ogier that he has to content himself with slapping Charloot. From then on nothing stands in the hero’s way and he turns on the heathen. He defeats the giant Brohier in a duel. Ogier marries a daughter of the English king and becomes king of England. Their son Baudewijn is born a year later. (ll. 13997-20974)

Seven years later Ogier leaves for the Holy Land to do penance for his sins. After visiting the Holy Grave he moves on to Babylon (Cairo), where he is recognised and ends up in prison. He finally returns to Paris after many adventures. He becomes so old that his brows reach his chin. After his death God sends an angel to fetch his soul. (ll. 20975-23731)

Details

What has been preserved of the Dutch Ogier are 628 partly incomplete verses in seven fragments of three separate manuscripts. On palaeographic grounds it can be determined that all of these date from the fourteenth century. On the basis of their linguistic characteristics we assume that they are Flemish. It seems likely that the Dutch Ogier is of Flemish origin, since rhyming pairs show Flemish characteristics. This means that the Ogier belongs to the large group of Middle Dutch Charlemagne romances that entered the Dutch-speaking region from France through Flanders. France greatly influenced Flanders which explains the latter development. Flanders was the only Dutch-speaking region that

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belonged to the French kingdom. All the other ones were part of the German empire.

For the date of the Dutch adaptation we have to rely on Jacob van Maerlant who translated the *Speculum historiale* of Vincent de Beauvais into Middle Dutch in the 1280s. He added an interesting chapter on the historical sources for that period to his discussion of Charlemagne. Maerlant states strongly that he preferred the Latin prose of scholars such as Einhart and Vincent to the fantasized rhymes of the vernacular romances. In addition to the stories about Fierabras, Renout van Montalbaen, Wisselau, Willem van Oringen, and Roelant, he also mentions “van Denemaerken Ogier.” It is highly likely that Maerlant refers to written Middle Dutch Charlemagne romances and, thus, this nice fact about the reception is a *terminus ante quem* for the Middle Dutch *Ogier*. To date this text in the middle of the thirteenth century is certainly not too early.

We can determine the date and the place with a certain confidence, but it is far more difficult to recover the remaining information about the Middle Dutch *Ogier* within the context of literary history. In order to determine the social context in which this text functioned, we are relying on the laboriously acquired knowledge about the genre. In a finely balanced argument, Frits van Oostrom concludes on the basis of a variety of external evidence and facts drawn from the text itself that the Dutch Charlemagne epic functioned as literature for the elite, though not primarily for the mainly French-speaking court of the counts, but rather for the lesser nobles and rich burghers of Flanders (*Stemmen op schrift*, pp. 223-33).

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Because of the fragmentary state of the surviving text, we have to construct the content of the lost Middle Dutch poem. Four of the seven fragments belong to the history of the youth of the hero (his enfances). They describe parts of Charlemagne’s anger at the Danish king who refuses to fulfil his duties as a vassal (A and B) and the fight against the Saracens in Italy when Ogier performs his first heroic deeds (C and D). In the other three fragments (E, F, and G) the story is situated in the Orient where Ogier ends up according to later versions of his histoire poétique. There is an unmistakable connection with the fragments in the French tradition, but the similarities are so general that it is impossible to select any French Ogier version as a possible source to the Dutch poet.

This is the point at which research into the connection between French and Dutch texts often ends unsatisfactorily, but in the case of the Ogier fortune comes to our aid. A German translation of the Dutch text has been preserved in a manuscript (H) from 1479 written by a scribe who called himself Ludwicus Flügel. It belongs to a small group of codices with three Middle Dutch Charlemagne romances that were translated into German. Nowadays they are in the collection of the University Library in Heidelberg. Apart from the Ogier, Madelgijs and Renout van Montalbaen were also translated. This was probably done around 1460 in southwestern Germany. The exact location is uncertain, but the milieu in which the translation took place must have been that of the high nobility, perhaps in the household of the Elector of Heidelberg or of the countess palatine Mechthild who resided in Rottenburg. A comparison of the German and Dutch versions shows a considerable number of similarities between them. The German translator aims for such a faithful rendering

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6 For instance in Roman d’Ogier en décasyllabes, dated around 1310. Unfortunately, there is no edition of this text; for contents see Togeby, Ogier le Danois, pp. 136-47. See also below.
7 Heidelberg, University Library, Ms. CPG 363; see Ogier von Dänemark, ed. Weddige.
8 Duijvestijn, “Niederländische Dichtung” and Beckers, “Frühneuhochdeutsche Fassungen.”
of his original that he often adopts Dutch words and expressions (Mit festen, l. 561) or rhyming words even when this results in an impure rhyme (gefangen : missetan, ll. 577-78). In order to give an impression of this German translation, an extract will be quoted corresponding to lines 40-59 of the Middle Dutch text quoted at the beginning of this article:

Mit festen reit ich uß der port,
Mere ich kam so wijt,
Das ich gereit ein mijle.
Da kam glich als ein pfijle
Gotfrid geridden uf sinem destrier
Und rief: “fel kúnig, ir blivedes hier!”
Da ich das sahe, by Sant Dyonise,
Kerte ich min roß von prijse
Und satzte mich gereit zuer flüht,
Was das roß gelauffen moht.
So bald er sahe, das ich mich wold
Entfliehen, schoß er also bald
Sinen spieß und schoiß
Min roß under mir zutod.
Da enschutt mich Gautier
Und Dunamelß von Bavier.
Dise brachten mir ine gefangen.
Ich wolte ime gelten des das er hatt missetan. (561-78)⁹

We may assume that the German Ogier is a highly reliable representation of the Middle Dutch Charlemagne romance. Therefore, the summary of the content of the Dutch Ogier above is based on the text of the Heidelberg manuscript.

Even so, it is remarkable that the Middle Dutch fragments E, F, and G have no parallel in the German text. The plot of these 278 verses takes

⁹ German text of Ogier von Dänemark cited from Weddige’s edition.
place in the Orient. Ogier stays at the palace of the sultan Brohier in Babylon whom he later fights. In this fight the heathen sultan Moisant joins the Christians. The setting and a large number of the characters such as Ogier, Brohier, Baudewijn, Clarine (= Clarisse, daughter of the English king and who becomes Ogier’s wife and the mother of their son Baudewijn), and Moisant unmistakably refer to the literary world of Ogier, but the specific content of these fragments can be found neither in German nor elsewhere in the Ogier tradition. The most likely explanation is that the German translator abridged his exemplar. It is precisely the last part of the story about Ogier’s adventures in the East that is presented in a rushed and incomplete way in H. If this assumption is correct, H presents a faithful but incomplete rendering of the Dutch original (van Dijk and Kienhorst, eds., “Ogier”).

Manuscript H contains a remarkable division between folio 80 and 81. There are two unnumbered, blank pages at the end of the history of Ogier’s youth on folio 80 with a caption in red on folio 81 (“Hie vahet sich an die hystorie wie Ogier sines vatter künigrich Dennmarck emp-fing, etc.” [“This is the beginning of the story of Ogier’s inheritance of his father’s kingdom of Denmark, etc.”]) whereupon the text opens (l. 4137) with a red initial consisting of nine lines (Weddige, ed., Ogier, p. xiv, p. 118 and illus 2). Furthermore, this text opens with an extensive general prologue. Everything points to the beginning of a new romance and to the existence of not one but two Dutch-German Ogier romances. The text itself distinguishes between Ogier’s Kintheit and his Oltheit. The romance about Ogier’s Oltheit begins, moreover, with a part showing a general correspondence to the Old French Chevalerie Ogier (ll. 4137-20974) and a continuation about Ogier’s adventures in the Orient (ll. 20975-23731).

It is highly likely that the prologues of the two romances were originally Dutch and were consequently translated into German. Scholars are

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10 L. 4205 (“Die kinheit...von Ogier”) and l. 4232 (“Von Ogiern dem Olthede”) (Weddige, ed., Ogier von Dänemark).
fortunate to have them, because the Middle Dutch Charlemagne epics have not handed down prologues of any significance. Bart Besamusca has carefully analyzed the two prologues, deducing factual information about the history of their inception and the oral nature of the texts. He assumes that two different poets composed the texts. In addition, he shows that the prologues present two different types of narrators. Whereas the prologue of Ogier’s Kinheit states that the story is told by jongleurs, the other prologue describes a group of nobles amusing themselves with songs and stories (Besamusca, “Zingende minstrelen”).

The tradition

What is the exact relation between the Dutch-German and the international branch of Ogier’s literary history? As is often the case when we try to answer questions like these, no version of the story corresponds completely to the Dutch-German texts. At the same time it is also evident that a strong relationship exists. The characters and their mutual relations and the general outline of the story correspond to the most important Ogier versions. Ogier already appears in the early Nota Emilianense (around 1070) and the Oxford version of the Chanson de Roland (around 1100). However, the oldest preserved text that is completely devoted to the Danish hero is La chevalerie d’Ogier de Danemarche, dated around 1200.12 Weddige carefully compared its content with H (Ogier von Dänemark, pp. XXXVI-XLIX). He concludes that while the similarities between the plots are great, there are also considerable differences. There are, for instance, no verbal correspondences between the texts, and Gautier and Willem van Oringen do not appear as characters in the Chevalerie. Ogier’s flight to Saxony and the subsequent war against Charlemagne, take place in the French version in North Italy with King Desiderius of the Lombards. The greatest difference can be found at the

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11 See “Chevalerie Ogier” in the Dictionnaire des lettres françaises.
12 See La chevalerie d’Ogier de Danemarche, ed. Mario Eusebi.
end. The Chevalerie ends with the marriage of Ogier and the daughter of the English king. At this point H continues with a long episode of three thousand lines about Ogier’s journey to the Orient and his death. We find a comparable Orient continuation of the story in the Roman d’Ogier, a fourteenth-century text which exists in two forms: a 10-syllable line version dated 1310 and a 12-syllable line version of twenty-five years later. Both are unedited, but Knud Togeby’s overview gives us an impression of the content of these texts (Ogier le Danois, pp. 134-55). Again the similarities are evident, even though the differences are also quite significant. It is remarkable that the Middle Dutch fragments E, F, and G, which do not have a parallel in H, seem to have a counterpart in the extended story of the Roman d’Ogier. The character of Moisant, the sultan of Mecca, is a strong indication for this. In both the Dutch and the French continuation of the story he is fighting against the Saracens alongside the Christians. This supports the idea that the last part of H was shortened in comparison to its Dutch source text.

There are unmistakable similarities between plots, characters and their mutual relations, and setting, but verbal correspondences or literal translations are nowhere to be found. On the contrary, there are many often considerable differences between the French and the Dutch-German versions. This type of textual relationship corresponds strongly to the relationship between Renout van Montalbaen and Madelgijs and their French counterparts. Past explanations of this phenomenon assumed that the Dutch adaptors had translated a French example that we no longer have. However, Irene Spijker offered another explanation in her 1990 dissertation on the Renout. According to Spijker, the Dutch texts were only written down after the story had been transmitted orally from a French to a Dutch jongleur (Aymijn Kinderen, pp. 193-254). It is very plausible that the transmission of Ogier had an oral middle stage as well.

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13 Gerritsen first suggested the oral transmission from the French to the Dutch, also in the case of the Ogier (“Les relations littéraires”).

24.1
I would like to suggest that the history of the inception of the Dutch and German versions of Ogier can be summarized as follows. In the thirteenth century (before 1285) two Dutch poets independently composed romances about Ogier’s youth (Kinheit) and life (Oltheit) on the basis of their knowledge of orally transmitted narrative material. Fragments A-B and C-D belong to the two separate manuscripts narrating the story of his youth. Fragments E, F, and G belong to a manuscript containing the story of Ogier’s life. Both texts were translated into German in the fifteenth century. Judging from the strong verbal similarities this must have been a transmission from written Dutch to written German. In 1479 the scribe Ludwicus Flügel copied both texts in one and the same manuscript.
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24.1

The Five Dreams of *Girart de Roussillon*

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The Middle Ages inherited the tradition of oneiromancy from the authors of Antiquity and with it systems of classification to differentiate between varieties of dream and their significance. At the simplest and yet most perplexing level, the classification was bipartite: dreams could be true or false, from an internal or an external source, transcendent or mundane. The bisection of dreams along these lines leads to tensions which haunt medieval dream theory, popular dreambooks, literary dreams, and canon law.\(^1\) Complicating the basic bipartite division of dreams, Macrobius’s *In Somnium Scipionis* describes a range of dreams which bridge the gap opened by the dualistic framework.\(^2\)

Macrobius proposes a schema which is essentially the same as that of Artemidorus of Ephesa, a second-century oneirocritic (Braet, *Le songe dans la chanson de geste*, p. 17).\(^3\) He classifies five different forms of dreams in an order which reflects increasing significance (Braet, *Le

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1 See Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, pp. 1-20, for a discussion of the tensions created by the “doubleness” of dreams and of the ambivalence of attitude to dream experience in Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

2 Here I discuss only Macrobius’s classification of dreams. However, Calcidius, in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, classifies dreams according to a similar scheme. See Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, pp. 24-32.

3 It appears that Artemidorus and Macrobius shared a source (Kruger, *Dreaming*, p. 20).
songe, p. 19). The least significant dream is the *insomnium* which results from physical or psychic causes, such as eating and drinking, or a stressful day. The *visum* is a sort of nightmare in which fantastic figures appear to the dreamer. While Macrobius views the *insomnium* and the *visum* as insignificant, he understands the last three categories of dream to be charged with meaning. The first of these is the *oraculum* through which the dreamer receives an order or a prediction from an important person or from God himself. The *visio* reveals future events as they are to occur. The *somnium*, the last dream type in Macrobius’s classification, is regarded as the most significant. It is a symbolic representation of the future which always requires interpretation. Macrobius defines the *somnium* in the following terms:

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4 For an overview of Macrobius’s classification, see also Kruger, *Dreaming*, pp. 21-23. Kruger gives a diagram of Macrobius’s dream categories which lists in order of descending value on a scale measuring higher/lower: *oraculum*, *visio*, *somnium*, *visum*, *insomnium*. Clearly, this diagram reflects the median position of the *somnium* between the categories of true and false dreams (since the *somnium* reveals a truth in fictive forms), but it can be misleading in terms of the relative importance of the *somnium* in Macrobius’s classification. In his exposition of these dream types, Macrobius lists the types of dream in the order given in my text above and privileges the *somnium* (*In Somnium Scipionis*, I.3). Kruger himself recognizes that “As dream interpreter, Macrobius concerned himself largely with elucidating the unclear truths of the *somnium*, examining how hidden meaning and the fiction in which it is dressed interact” (*Dreaming*, p. 35; Kruger’s emphasis).

5 In order to differentiate between the different kinds of dreams described by Macrobius, I retain his Latin terms, which are more suggestive than awkward paraphrases in English.

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somnium proprium uocatur quod tegit figuris et velat ambagibus non nisi interpretatione intellegendam significatam rei quae demonstratur. (I.3.10)

*A somnium* is properly so called because it covers with images and hides with enigmas the true meaning of the matter which is only to be understood by interpretation.7

This typology of dreams is reflected in the twelfth-century Occitan epic *Girart de Roussillon*. The five dreams of the poem appear in the order of Macrobius’s hierarchical system of classification. The first dream, which is attributed to an agency other than God (Elissent), falls into the category of false dreams represented by the *insomnium* and the *visum*. The second and third dreams, which function as a pair, belong to the category of *visio* since they show events as they will occur. The last two dreams of the poem are *somnia*, since they are obscure and require interpretation. It is significant that the *somnium* considered by Macrobius to be the most significant of all dream forms marks the climactic moment in the hagiographical section of the poem. These five dreams have different functions within the poem, and each demands a different level of interpretation on the part of the characters and of the reader.8

The first dream (laisse 544) can be differentiated from the others in that it is almost certainly the invention of Elissent. The Queen asks Charles to listen to her dream about Girart in which she thought she saw

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6 The Latin text for Macrobius is taken from the Willis edition of *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*. See Works Cited.

7 My translation.

8 Micheline de Combarieu du Grès’s inventory of epic dreams in *L’Idéal humain et l’expérience morale chez les héros des chansons de geste des origines à 1250* does not give an accurate account of the dreams in *Girart de Roussillon*: she lists only the last two dreams of the poem (p. 513).
Girart entering the king’s palace and swearing on the saints that as long as he lived he would not harm his king. In the dream, the king’s hall was hung with new silks and Girart was the powerful seneschal of the court.

The second and third dreams are related to each other, as are the fourth and the fifth. The second is received by one of Girart’s servants who dreams about great riches (l. 9026). Girart refuses to believe his servant until he himself has the same dream, whereupon he takes action and discovers a Roman treasure trove near Autun. The fourth and fifth dreams, which occur in the hagiographical section of the poem, are the most obscure. Before the miracle of Vézelay, Berthe dreams of a devil in the guise of a snake who tries to make her drink his venom as if it were a spicy drink. She is protected against the snake’s advances by the timely intervention of a divine power (ll. 9543-47). The counterpart of this dream is received by Girart as he is traveling to Vézelay to investigate rumors that his wife has committed adultery with a pilgrim. Berthe is, in fact, innocent of these charges brought against her by Ataïn after Berthe has refused his own sexual advances. Following the accusations, Girart dreams of Berthe under a pine tree wearing clothes as white as parchment and covered in more flowers than a hawthorn. She is holding a golden chalice from which she makes Girart drink of the holy wine which God created at the wedding of Cana (ll. 9710-16).

Before returning to a discussion of the five dreams of Girart de Roussillon and their position within a Macrobian classification, it is necessary to consider the reception and development in the Middle Ages of classical dream theory tempered by the patristic tradition. The classical bipartite classification of dreams into categories of true and false, represented in the Odyssey and the Aeneid by the metaphor of the twin doors of ivory and horn, is retained by Gregory the Great in the fourth book of his Dialogues (Braet, Le songe, pp. 21-22).

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9 “Sunt geminae Somni portae; quarum altera fertur / cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris, / altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto, / sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes” [“Two gates of Sleep there

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Christian tradition by attributing false dreams to the work of the Devil and true dreams to the agency of God.

Ecclesiastical authorities were torn between a desire to condemn dream interpretation as the vain, suspicious activity of pagan ancestors and the necessity of recognizing the importance of dreams as a means of communication between God and his favored ones in the Old Testament. John of Salisbury and Peter of Blois represent the tradition which condemned belief in any form of dream: “in visionibus sperare superstitiosum est et saluti contrarium” [“to place one’s hopes in dreams is full of superstition and contrary to salvation”] (Peter of Blois, “Epistula LXV,” col. 194A; my translation).

In addition to the classical and the patristic traditions of beliefs about dreams, there was a third tradition, represented by popular opinion. During the Middle Ages there was a particular sensitivity to manifestations of the supernatural and a proclivity to attributing divine origins to them (Braet, Le songe, p. 36). Dreams were no exception to this interpretative activity, as Steven Kruger explains:

The confinement of dreaming to a psychological or physiological realm is, of course, relatively recent. For most of its long history, the dream has been treated not merely as an internally-motivated phenomenon […], but as an experience strongly linked to the realm of divinity: dreams were often thought to foretell the future because they allowed the human soul access to a transcendent, spiritual reality (Dreaming, p. 2).

are, whereof the one, they say, is horn and offers a ready exit to true shades, the other shining with sheen of polished ivory, but delusive dreams issue upward through it from the world below”] (Virgil, Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI, trans. Fairclough, vol. 1, p. 597). See Goold’s note 57 on p. 597 of this edition regarding the gates of Sleep in Homer (Odyssey 19. 562-67).
The influence of monastic institutions on the faithful was instrumental in maintaining a predilection for interpreting the supernatural or inexplicable within a religious context. Marc Bloch draws attention to the fact that monks had become involved in dream interpretation: “Nul psychanalyste n’a jamais scruté les songes avec plus d’ardeur que les moines du Xe ou du XIe siècle” (La société féodale, vol. 1, p. 118). The dreams to which most importance was attached were those which required interpretation. The symbolism and obscurity of the imagery of the somnium attracted the attention of clerics schooled in interpretative skills. The exegete turned his critical faculties to dream scenarios and appropriated the role of oneirocritic.

Medieval dream theory was absorbed by the literature of the time. The poets of the chansons de geste are manifestly less skeptical about dreams than the Church Fathers. Braet draws attention to the fact that, although the poets of the chansons de geste were conversant with the anti-oneiromancy lobby, they were jealously protective of the credibility and status of dreams:

Certains poètes étaient avertis des artifices du Malin. D’autres ont pu tirer parti d’une ancienne théorie selon laquelle les chimères se produisent au début de la nuit et les songes vrais après minuit. Mais c’est seulement lorsque ces connaissances peuvent servir leur propos, qu’ils y font allusion. Si l’indication de temps renforce parfois la véridicité de certains présages, les poètes ne l’utilisent jamais dans le but opposé (Le songe, p. 198; my emphasis).

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10 On Arthurian literature see Jo Goyne, “Arthurian Dreams and Medieval Dream Theory.”
To the poets of the *chansons de geste*, dreams were a narrative device, used most frequently to anticipate action to be narrated later. The dream may contain information or commands. It may alert the dreamer to a danger which is threatening him or his close friends and family. Dreams may also indicate that divine favor rests with the dreamer who has privileged access to knowledge of the future. Charlemagne is the recipient of dreams of divine origins in the *Chanson de Roland*. He dreams that a boar bites his right arm and that a leopard comes towards him and fights the boar, biting off its right ear.\(^{11}\) This dream is preceded by one in which Charlemagne sees Ganelon seizing his spear from him and shattering it. Charlemagne’s actions are not influenced by his dreams. In spite of the danger of which the dreams appear to warn him, he allows Ganelon to nominate Roland to the rearguard. The dreamer may act on the information which he receives in his sleep or not. Through the agency of the dream, the poet marks out not only characters who are especially important but also events. An event which occurs after it has been forecast in a dream acquires particular resonance.

Through the agency of dreams, characters and events, separated by narrative space and/or geographical space, may be juxtaposed. Ultimately, the dream imposes a certain unity on the narrative. The dream forecasts the event which occurs and thus self-referentially confirms its own veracity. This narrative pattern may be augmented by dream interpretations which precede and/or follow the occurrence of the event.

\(^{11}\) See the *Chanson de Roland*, laisses LVI-LVII. On dreams in the *Chanson de Roland* see Wolfgang G. van Emden, “Another Look at Charlemagne’s Dreams in the Chanson de Roland”; D.D.R. Owen, “Charlemagne’s Dreams, Baligant and Turoldus”; and Alexander Haggerty Krappe, “The Dreams of Charlemagne in the Chanson de Roland.” For dreams in the *chansons de geste* in general, in addition to Braet, see Lola Sharon Davidson, “Dreams, History and the Hero in the *Chansons de Geste*.”
Combarieu du Grès remarks that dreams are rarely found in epics which recount purely human conflicts but that they are abundantly evident in the Cycles of the King and Garin de Montglane (*L’idéal humain*, p. 519). These cycles deal with Christian/Saracen conflicts in which God might be expected to intervene in his own cause. In *Girart de Roussillon* the conflict dramatized by the poem is not between Christians and Saracens, and yet, as we have seen, it contains five dreams.

Two of the five dreams in *Girart de Roussillon* influence the action of the poem. The first dream is, in fact, intended to manipulate events. Elissent recounts the dream which she has had, or which she pretends to have had, to the king in order to provide motivation for her request that she be allowed to send out messengers to discover whether Girart is still alive. After she has told Charles about her dream, she informs him that she has heard rumors that Girart is living in the kingdom of Oton. It is obvious that Charles does not place any faith in Elissent’s dream. The poet’s comment at the end of the laisse makes it clear that Charles accords Elissent her wish because he believes that Girart is dead:

\[
\text{Per aitant l’en a fait l’ostreieson} \\
\text{Qu’el cuidoit qu’il fust morz soz Rossillon,} \\
\text{O fu nafraz el peiz soz lo menton [...]}. \quad (7932-34^{12})
\]

He granted her wish to her for this reason
That he thought that he had been killed beneath Roussillon,
Where he was injured in the chest under the chin.\(^{13}\)

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\(^{12}\) All text from *Girart de Roussillon* is cited from the Hackett edition. See Works Cited.

\(^{13}\) All translations from the Occitan are my own.
Elissent’s dream is a fiction of her creation. She introduces the account of the dream by assuring Charles that the events which it predicts will not be fulfilled:

«Seiner, aujaz un songe qui toz ert faus […]» (7905)

“Lord, listen to a dream which was totally false.”

Elissent knows that Charles will not send out a search party for Girart if he suspects that he might be alive. By placing the hearsay of lines 7921-22 in a dream context, she contrives to make Charles believe that all is a figment of her imagination so that he might comply with her wishes, believing that Girart is dead. Elissent is playing a very sophisticated game with her husband. She reverses the process of interpretation according to which dreams usually operate. In this case Elissent does not acquire privileged knowledge of events which are to occur through a dream. On the contrary, she already has privileged knowledge of what is about to occur. She knows that Girart is alive and that he will return to Charles’s court because she has spent the previous evening planning this return with Girart and her sister. From this privileged knowledge she constructs a dream which she uses for her own ends. While it is clear that from the reader’s perspective Elissent’s dream falls into the category of false dreams, as mentioned above, she cunningly presents her dream as a visio or as a dream which will be fulfilled. The artifice of this disguise is underlined by the correspondence between the situation in which she creates the dream and the example Macrobius gives to illustrate the visio:

amicum peregre commorantem quem non cogitabat visus sibi est reversum videre, et procedenti obvius quem vid-erat venit in amplexus. (I.3.9)

For example, a man dreams of the return of a friend who has been staying in a foreign land, thoughts of whom
never enter his mind. He goes out and presently meets his friend and embraces him (Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. Stahl, p. 90).

Girart, like the friend of Macrobius’s example, has just returned to France after twenty-two years of exile.

The second dream of the poem which influences events is Girart’s dream about the hidden treasure. Girart acts upon his dream and discovers a treasure trove. Girart’s dream demands a minimum of interpretation. In Macrobean terminology it is a visio; the images it proposes are realized in the future. The process of interpretation which Girart follows is a very simple one. He applies dream to reality and discovers that reality corresponds to the dream. His interpretation of his dream is literal. Girart’s servant has had the same dream before Girart and yet Girart does not act upon the servant’s dream. It is highly unusual to find an example of a servant having a dream the events of which are ultimately sanctioned by reality since dreams in the literature of the Middle Ages are usually ascribed to high-ranking, divinely favored individuals (Braet, Le songe, pp. 72-73).

The two dreams which provoke the discovery of the Roman treasure are quite obviously a pair, bound by a relationship of corroboration. Since the dreams share the same content, the servant’s dream is authorized by Girart’s dream and Girart’s dream gains in credibility by being preceded by a similar dream.

The relationship between the dreams of Berthe and Girart which precede the narration of the miracle of Vézelay is more complex than that which exists between the dreams of Girart and his servant. Surrounded by an atmosphere of mystical obscurity, these dreams require interpretation. The second dream is not simply a repetition of the first, as in the case of the treasure dreams which could only be distinguished from each other in terms of the dreamer receiving the dream. Berthe and Girart’s dreams have in common the theme of offering a drink, which is presented in each from a different perspective. A comparison of the two dreams

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highlights a theme of transformation which operates across the dreams. The person offering the drink is transformed so that the snake becomes Berthe and the venom undergoes a transubstantiation through which it becomes the holy wine from the marriage feast at Cana, itself the subject of a transformation which changed water into wine. Meaningless in isolation, each dream of this pair is enriched by association with the other.

Both Girart and Berthe seek help in interpreting their dreams. Berthe relates her dream to the monk Garcen who gives her the following interpretation:

«Donne, quar lamanest iste sainte ovre
E lo grant ben que fas a ca gent povre.» (9555-56)

“Lady, it was because you brought him this holy work
And because of the great good you do to these poor people.”

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14 Sarah Kay recognizes a relationship of exchange between the dreams of Girart and Berthe in “Kings, Vassals, and Queens: Problems of Hierarchy in the Old French and Occitan Chansons de Geste” (p. 46).

15 The ambiguity of the word “lamanest” has given rise to a variety of translations and interpretations of these two lines. Paul Meyer, in Girart de Roussillon: Chanson de geste, traduite pour la première fois, translates line 9555 as follows: “Dame, c’est qu’il est affligé de l’oeuvre sainte que tu as enterprise” (p. 303). He attributes to “lamanest” the sense of the modern French “lament.” As far as I have been able to discern, “lament” is not attested in medieval Occitan with the sense of the modern French verb “lament.” “Lamanest” in this verse is a second-, not a third-person form of the verb. Combarieu du Grès, in La Chanson de Girart de Roussillon, translates line 9555 as follows: “Dame, la manne, c’est cette oeuvre sainte que tu as enterprise ici, et tout le bien que tu fais aux pauvres.” She understands “lamanest” as “la man est.” Her translation is based on the occurrence of “manne” in line 9553. In the Oxford
Garcen’s minimalist interpretation is unsatisfactory to the reader whose interest lies in discovering what the dream means for Berthe. He does not engage with the imagery of the dream in such a way as to relate it to Berthe’s destiny, and his interpretation is not specific to Berthe’s dream. He extracts a theme from the dream and gives the standard theological interpretation of temptation. The snake offering his venom to Berthe as if it were a spicy drink inevitably recalls the serpent of the Garden of Eden who tempts Eve to taste the fruit of the forbidden tree. This Old Testament story has as its New Testament counterpart the story of Christ who is fasting in the wilderness and whom Satan tempts to convert blocks of stone into loaves of bread (Matt. 4.1-11). The standard theological interpretation of the theme of temptation is that the Devil’s intention in his works is not so much to perpetrate evil deeds as to thwart any attempts which are made to do good. The evil will works to bring about the destruction of the good (Hemmerle, “Evil,” pp. 470-74). It is a commonplace of biblical and hagiographical narratives that men and women who have attained a certain degree of holiness are more prone to attacks from the Devil than others. In the Book of Job, to which Berthe refers at an earlier point in the hagiographical section of this poem, it is Job’s goodness which attracts the assaults of the Devil (1. 7668). Garcen’s interpretation fails to contextualize Berthe’s dream. It does not explain why she should have this particular dream at this particular juncture, nor does it suggest how she should react to the dream.

Girart gives an account of his dream to his companions Andicas and Bedelon. The poet does not specify which of the two companions interprets his dreams in the following terms:

manuscript there is no indication that any word breaks should be inserted between the syllables of “lamanest.” I prefer to conjecture one word break and to read “lamanest” as “l’amane’est.” In her edition Hackett does not mark a word break with an apostrophe, but she suggests in the glossary that “amanest” is from “amenar.”

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«Segner, aico est biens, co te devin;  
Grant joi te naist de li; Deus tu destin.» (9717-18)

“Lord, this is good, I interpret this for you;  
Great joy will come to you through her; this is God’s destiny for you.”

This interpretation is hardly more satisfactory than Garcen’s interpretation of Berthe’s dream. The interpretation does not extend much beyond the surface imagery of the dream. The phrase “aico est biens” (l. 9717) does little more than affirm that the action in the dream is not threatening to Girart. Line 9718, which introduces God into the interpretation and which would appear to anticipate Girart’s spiritual salvation through Berthe’s intervention, is a straightforward transmutation into everyday language of the iconographic representation of the dream in which Berthe makes Girart drink of the holy wine of Cana.

After Berthe has participated in the miracle of Vézelay and Girart has witnessed it, Andicas, Bedelon, and Garcen reformulate their interpretation of the dreams retrospectively.16 When Girart witnesses his wife’s participation in the construction of the church with the pilgrim, he calls Andicas and Bedelon to him. Girart regrets that he ever believed that his wife might be guilty of the accusation of adultery made against

16 The miracle of Vézelay is as follows: Girart, suspicious of Berthe’s nightly peregrinations, follows Berthe and the pilgrim to the site where they are constructing a church. As he watches the scene is flooded by a divine light (“Une clartaz descent, si cun Deu plac” [l. 9755]), and he watches as the pilgrim and Berthe transport sand in a bag suspended from a pole. Berthe stumbles and drops her end of the pole, which remains miraculously perfectly horizontal. Girart rushes forward to help, and together as husband and wife they continue the work.
her. His companions refer back to Girart’s dream which they understand to have been fulfilled:

«Cons, or poz bien veer t’avision.» (9748)

“Count, now you can see your vision clearly.”

This statement functions in such a way as to give the impression that Girart’s dream, the interpretation of this dream, and the events which have occurred since the dream was received are intertwined in a meaningful way and that each is a corroboration of the other two. Girart’s companions who have translated his dream into the most general terms cannot fail to recognize the general structure of their broad interpretation in the events of the miracle.

When Girart explains to Berthe that he came to Vézélay to discover whether the accusations of adultery made against her were well founded, Garcen reinterprets Berthe’s dream in the light of this new information:

«Donzele, or pues veer de vostre songe.
Anc non veïstez nul qui melz s’esponge:
Li satan(a)s est li garz e sa mencoinge,
Qui vol mescal au duc e far vergoinge,
E co qu’il se movave qu’il nos esloinge.» (9825-29)

“Lady, now you can see about your dream.
Never have you seen any which expounds itself better:
The devil is the lout and his lie,
Who wished harm on the duke and wanted to bring him shame,
And the fact that he took to his heels means that he is leaving us.”
Garçen reformulates his interpretation by aligning the events of the dream with the sequence of events which have just occurred. The spirit of Garçen’s reinterpretation contradicts the spirit of his initial interpretation. In the first interpretation, Berthe finds herself under the assault of Satan because of her goodness. She is the injured, attacked party. Line 9828 of Garçen’s second interpretation makes it clear that he understands Girart to be the victim of attack. The factor which motivates this attack is not the intrinsic goodness of the attacked as in the first interpretation but the wickedness of the attacker who is designated by the derogatory “garz” (l. 9827). This reinterpretation of the dream is no more than a reiteration of the narrative which recounts the story of Ataïn. It fails to wrest from the events their true significance.

The interpretations of Girart’s and Berthe’s dreams which are given by the characters of the poem are not wholly satisfactory. There is a minimum level of correspondence between the dreams and the interpretations.

When dreams are used in narrative poetry there are three factors which enter into the play of the poem. The first of these is the dream imagery itself, the second is the narrative action which follows the dream, and the third is the interpretation of the dream offered by the characters of the poem. The expectation of the audience is that there will be a certain degree of correspondence between these three components of the narrative. In the case of the dreams about the Roman treasure these three components of the narrative stand in a direct relationship to each other and each is corroborated by the other two. The sense of obscurity and mystery which surrounds Girart’s and Berthe’s dreams results from a lack of correspondence between the dream imagery, the events of the context in which the dreams occur, and the diegetic interpretations which are given of the dreams.

Girart’s and Berthe’s dreams are not directly related to the action of the narrative. The dream which Girart receives does not influence his decision to seek out Berthe. He receives his dream as he is journeying towards Berthe, a journey which is provoked by the accusation which is
made against his wife. Berthe’s dream does not have any effect on her conduct. She continues the work which she has undertaken and her dream does not appear to have any profound effect on her actions or the spirit in which she accomplishes them. If the poet in dealing with this second pair of dreams had followed the pattern he established in the laisses which recount the dream and the discovery of treasure in which dream and narrative action are intimately related, then one might have expected to see Girart receiving a dream which would have warned him of Ataïn’s sexual attack on Berthe and of the wrongful accusation which he makes subsequently. If this schema of dreams anticipating narrative action had been applied to the second pair of dreams one might also have expected Berthe to receive a dream which anticipated her involvement in Girart’s spiritual salvation. Berthe’s dream, however, is interpreted only retrospectively by Garcen as an anticipation of Ataïn’s treacherous accusation against Berthe.

It would appear that Girart and Berthe have received the wrong dreams. Berthe’s dream appertains to Girart’s situation, while Girart’s dream outlines the destiny which is marked out for Berthe. If Girart had received Berthe’s dream, he would perhaps have been alerted to the threat which Ataïn posed to Berthe. Berthe’s dream contains the imagery of temptation which anticipates Ataïn’s attack on Berthe and his subsequent revenge which consists in accusing Berthe of committing adultery. If Berthe had received Girart’s dream, she would have been aware of the task of saving Girart’s soul, which she fulfills. The dreams of the married couple have more relevance for the situation of the opposite partner than for the partner who receives them.

Macrobius nuances his description of the *somnium* with five subdivisions which take into account the dreamer and the person with whom the dream is concerned:

huius quinque sunt species. aut enim proprium aut alienum aut commune aut publicum aut generale est. proprium est cum se quis facientem patientemve aliquid

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somniat, alienum cum alium, commune cum se unum alio, publicum est cum civitati forove vel theatro seu quibuslibet publicis moenibus actibusve triste vel laetum quid aestimat accidisse, generale est cum circa solis orbem lunaremve globum seu alia sidera vel caelum omnesve terras aliquid somniat innovatum. (I.3.10-11)

There are five varieties of it [somnium]: personal, alien, social, public and universal. It is called personal when one dreams that he himself is doing or experiencing something; alien, when he dreams this about someone else; social, when his dream involves others and himself; public, when he dreams that some misfortune or benefit has befallen the city, forum, theater, public walls, or other public enterprise; universal, when he dreams that some change has taken place in the sun, moon, planets, sky, or regions of the earth. (Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. Stahl, p. 90)

The somnium alienum identifies a dream situation in which the dreamer is only indirectly involved in the dream and in which he/she dreams for another. Thus a wife may dream for her husband, a husband for his wife, or a young girl for her fiancé (Braet, Le songe, pp. 71-72).\(^{17}\) The dreams of Girart and Berthe belong to this category of the somnium alienum. Berthe dreams for Girart, while Girart dreams for Berthe. This explains the fact that the dreams become more meaningful when they are

\(^{17}\) In a footnote on p. 71 to his explanation of the somnium alienum, Braet gives references to nine chansons de geste in which a spouse or lover dreams for his or her partner. He lists “GirR 9705-9718 (Girart et Berthe)” which is a reference to Girart’s dream about Berthe, but other than this reference he offers no commentary and does not make reference to Berthe’s dream.
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considered as a pair than if they are considered individually. Girart and Berthe are reunited after the miracle of Vézelay in an atmosphere of revelation which is both spiritual and secular. The meaning of the dreams which emerges when they are considered as a pair underlines the nature of the working partnership between husband and wife which secures the hope of salvation for both of them.

In confronting this short section of the poem of *Girart de Roussillon* which recounts the events preceding and following the miracle of Vézelay, the reader is as much engaged in the processes of interpretation as are the characters. The poet inserts two dreams into the narrative. He subsequently relates the first dream to the second in an atmosphere of revelation. The poet is clearly encouraging his audience to view the dreams as a pair. In this section of the poem the three factors of dream imagery, interpretation, and narrative events, usually synchronized in poetry which includes oneiric references, are expelled from normative narrative patterns and set at variance with each other. When the poet encourages his audience to see the dreams of Girart and Berthe as a pair, the reader is enrolled in a program of interpretation. The processes of interpretation through which the reader is guided are such that a second iconography emerges from the narrative. This second iconography is programmatic rather than oneiric. In the account of the second dream the author makes reference to the marriage of Cana when he evokes an image of Berthe offering to Girart wine which is allegedly wine from this marriage feast. The most remarkable point about the wedding at Cana is that water was transformed into wine. By encouraging his audience to compare the two dreams, the poet causes the reader to think about the differences between the two dreams and thus to register the transformation in imagery which occurs between them.

When Girart and Berthe receive each other’s dreams, they become representatives of each other. The state of matrimonial unity which they achieve through their spiritual pursuits is such that it would appear that each is a transformation of the other. Berthe and Girart need each other’s dream in order to make sense of the situations in which they find them-
The separate dreams can only fulfill their signifying functions when they are interpreted as a pair. By allocating dreams to Girart and Berthe which are more relevant to the other than to the dreamer, the poet sets up a process of exchange in which the audience becomes involved. The new iconography which emerges from the supra-narrative interpretation is one in which processes of exchange and transformation are privileged. It is an iconography which is endlessly self-referential and in which interpretation is an eternal occupation.

Macrobius’s classification of dreams distinguishes between false and true dreams, while complicating this duality with a hierarchical structure in which the somnium is the most significant dream.\(^{18}\) The reflection of the Macrobian classification in *Girart de Roussillon* follows the order of Macrobius’s hierarchy but downplays the bipartite division of dreams into true and false, even to the point of confusing it (is Elissent’s dream really false?). This is concordant with the general ethos of the climactic hagiographical section of the poem in which the principal occupation is with gradational patterns rather than with contrast and opposition, as in the earlier part of the poem, which recounts the hostilities between Girart and Charles. Girart is moving towards the values Berthe represents rather than opposing them with a different set of values. The characters in the hagiographical section are part of a whole, rather than members of opposing factions, and their difference is measured in terms of comparison rather than contrast. Sanctity is valorized by its position at the top end of a scale of virtues rather than being set in contrast to evil.

\(^{18}\) This structure is characteristically Neoplatonic (Kruger, *Dreaming*, p. 32).
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Other:


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Book Review


For those not familiar with the Italian tradition, *cantari* are a literary form that appears in Italy from the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. *Cantari* are of varying length; *cantare* in the singular (*cantari* in the plural) refers both to the poem and its secondary divisions (similar to chapters). Each *cantare* consists of multiple strophes of eight rhymed hendecasyllables. Sources range from French tradition to Classical and religious sources, these too possibly through the French. The *cantari* subject matter links the *chanson de geste* to prose and to the romance epics of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Pulci. In this edition, the *Danese* contains seventeen *cantari*, each of which is formed by 26 to 74 *ottave*. Related to oral presentation from the start (sung or recited), the nature of *cantari* as popular literature has long made them the center of debates around “traditional” literature in Italy, as their content makes them the object of studies of literary reception in the Italian peninsula.

S. Furlati’s *Cantari del Danese* offers a long-needed edition of a popular text. It is divided traditionally. The introduction includes an explanation of the interest of the text, classification of manuscripts, a linguistic analysis of the best manuscript, criteria of edition and notes on the handwriting, and concludes with a summary of the plot and an author-ordered bibliography. The edition includes three levels of notes: two sets of footnotes for graphical particularities of the text, additions, and emendations, together with endnotes after each *cantare* (primarily of textual information—references to other texts and further explanations). An edition of the P fragment (only two *cantari*, the second incomplete) follows in an appendix. The volume concludes with an index of names.
and a glossary.

S. Furlati describes the three manuscripts and incunabulum in which this poem appears. She carefully follows current textual criticism; she cites Finnegan on the possibility of a text contaminated with oral and written precedents.¹ She points out that in such a contaminated tradition no stemma is possible and offers her edition to “conservare e valorizzare queste diverse redazioni nella loro individualità” [“to preserve and valorize these different versions in their individuality”] (p. 23) since all cantari together reflect the public’s mentality. Furlati selects fifteenth-century Florentine M (II.II.31, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, olim Magliabechiano Cl. VII, n. 1048) as reference text (p. 19), because it is the earliest version and is an almost complete text.

Furlati wishes to produce a readable edition, so she keeps only spellings in “le grafie antiche” [“antiquated spellings”] that have “un reale valore fonetico; ho invece uniformato all’uso moderno tutte le altre” [“a real phonetic value; I have instead standardized all the others to modern usage (spelling)”] (p. 58). Among the standardized are geminates (p. 40), together with c/g (/k/, /g/ contrasting to /č/ and /ğ/), and varying representations of nasals and laterals, which she lists (pp. 41-42). Her edition of P in the appendix, on the other hand, is much more conservative, as she documents (pp. 429-30).

Furlati’s linguistic analysis begins by examining stressed and unstressed vowels according to position and will be of interest to all those working in nonstandard linguistic transmission in Northern and Central Italy. Her bibliography and references include not only the classic reference tools but also recent linguistic research, and her exemplification will provide materials for lexicographical analysis as well as etymological investigations. The morphosyntactic section, organized by traditional parts of speech, again offers rich lists of examples together with short

analyses of items of interest such as agreement of number in personal pronouns with subject and syncope of verbal forms. Though the volume does not offer linguistic study as its main goal, the editor has spent much time preparing the text in comparison with others, and this introduction provides a wealth of information as a starting point for those wishing to work with the language of the text.

The next section, the bibliography, unfortunately suffers from a few incorrect entries. A question mark in parentheses in a bibliographical reference to Le Gentil calls our attention to a question that seems to have been missed; the entry should read (following the format of the book) “LE GENTIL, Pierre Ogier le danois, héros épique, in «Romania», XXVIII, 1957, pp. 199-233.” Another bibliographical item, Bender’s “Métamorphoses de la royauté de Charlemagne,” is in fact in Cultura Neolatina 21 (1961): 164-74. Some misspellings of foreign names (Karl Magnus Krønike missing a final -s, Eusebi’s Ogier de Danemarche printed as Denemarche) are errors that appear throughout the Bibliografia but which should be easily correctable in a second edition since they are consistent throughout the volume (in the Introduction as well). Many entries are fine; these comments refer to items immediately evident to this reviewer and a spot check of a few others.

The edition itself follows. “The Dane” (Ogier in French, Uggieri in Italian) has been a popular epic figure in western Europe from his appearance in the twelfth century through modern times. The explanation for his name, his actual origin, and his exploits have varied. From a chanson de geste figure in the Italian peninsula he becomes a hero of cantari. The Danese is a fascinating text, one that should draw readers to this easy-to-consult edition. It is the story of the baron (sent to bring tribute from a rebel city to Charlemagne) partially as told in Old French and Franco-Italian versions and will recall later Italian tradition to those familiar with it.

It is not necessary to summarize all seventeen cantari in Uggieri il Danese; for those who know other versions, the plot is that of the Chevalerie; it does not include the Dane’s childhood. The text is related
to the prose *Rinaldo*, books three and five, attributed to Andrea da Barberino.\(^2\) One can divide the plot into two parts, the *Chevalerie* (*cantari* I-IX) and the Arab rescue (*cantari* IX-XVII). It is wonderful to have this version now available in print since various details in it, unknown to critics, escaped surveys in the past.\(^3\) The reasons for Charlemagne’s son killing the Dane’s son differ in the Italian tradition from the French, as do the results. There is no flight to Italy, and it is Orlando who arranges for the Dane’s imprisonment. Other elements of interest in the Italian versions include the presence of the *merveilleux chrétien*, the characterization of Orlando and Rinaldo, and the role of Astolfo.

The Dane saves a *fata*, a fairy, outside the walls of Verona during his mission there, and she subsequently assists him by telling him how to avoid being taken by the devil Bravieri who threatens Paris. When the Dane confronts Massimione, the ruler of Verona, St. George descends in person to give the Dane force to cut into the tyrant’s head through three layers of armor; he also later comes to the Dane in a dream to urge him to fight Bravieri. There is no sorcery involved, except on the part of Malagigi (*cantari* 7-8); Orlando is not overly wise and is taken by Bravieri, unlike, for example, in the Franco-Italian version.\(^4\) Bravieri, the pagan, is


\(^3\) Knud Tøgeby (*Ogier le danois dans les littératures européennes*, Det danske Sprog-og Litteraturselskab [Munksgaard: Bianco Lunos Bogtrykkeri A/S København, 1969], p. 212) comments on Machiavelli’s *Mandragnola*, where Nicia (Scene 7, act 3) says, “...m’impeciassi gli orecchi comme el Danese...,” and wonders where it comes from.

a sort of devil, born of heresy, who disappears with a bad smell when killed. The poem ends with a comparative test of the Christian and pagan religions: whose symbol will survive fire? Of course, the crucifix does (Orlando, initially reluctant to test a relic, permits it after an angel appears to him in a dream), pagans are converted, and the Christians, together with a converted pagan bride for Ulivieri, return victorious to Paris.

In the second part of the cantare, where Rinaldo, Ulivieri, Orlando and the Danese seek Astolfo and Riccardo d’Ormandia, Rinaldo reminds the reader of Morgante and his undying appetite. The four wander through desert and forest with Rinaldo constantly seeking food. This second portion of the Danese is largely a vehicle for Rinaldo, a popular figure in the Italian tradition. Expressions as well as plot recall Pulci, both because of the words themselves and their position in the text. For example, “non curava d’essere messo tra’ ghiottoni” (15, 15:6) brings to mind the numerous appearances of the term ghiottone/i in the Morgante and Margutte segment and the famous, “co’ santi in chiesa e co’ ghiotti in taverna” (18, 144: 8). Orlando, on the other hand, is the wise man in the Danese, trying to reconcile differences and attempting to hold Rinaldo back from foolishness because Rinaldo likes to pick fights and constantly asks for trouble. Finally, Astolfo, while neither the wise-cracking sidekick of the Entrée d’Espagne nor the wise fool of Orlando Furioso, makes the pagan princess laugh when he identifies Orlando, Rinaldo, Ulivieri, and the Danese as his scudieri [squires] (15, 65: 1-2).

Reading this text initially reserves a few surprises: final vowels written that impede syllable count are included in italics. The format used for the edition, a little different from that used for chanson de geste edi-

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Luigi Pulci’s Morgante dates to 1478-1483 and Pulci was Florentine. A relationship between the two texts has not been critically examined.
tions, takes a little getting used to. Suggested emendations appear sometimes within the line, sometimes following it, surrounded by asterisks. Thus, “*al tutto*” within the line (7, 21:1) and “*li mettiamo l’usbergo con amore;*” after it (7, 43:2), and so on. This is a helpful device to see side-by-side the original erroneous (or nonfunctional) reading with the proposed correction. Where the syllable count is off, it is noted in parentheses after the line; thus, for example (+1) or (-1).

After the edition itself, the appendix contains Fragment P, a version of cantare 1 and the beginning of 2. The following index of proper names is very helpful, giving some background information for characters. It is grouped with the primary name first, followed by a list of other equivalents. This works well, and each character this reader sought was there. The one entry that could have used a cross-reference was pastore, a synonym for pope. Apostolico is common, but a simple pastore was not immediately obvious, and since these appellatives are not capitalized, glancing in back one finds nothing, though it is found under the main entry, papa. Missing too is a reference to Charlemagne’s childhood meeting and marrying of Galerana, sister of Marsilio, Falserone, and Balugante; it might have been helpful to mention this, since there are oblique references to it (for example, in 6, 40: 7-8, where Charlemagne blames the troubles of the French on her family [p. 198]). The proper name index mentions her brothers but does not outline the origin of the situation.

The glossary includes “[...] words unknown, rare or used in unusual ways, as well as unusual constructions” (p. 461, my translation). Rhyme words are followed by (:), a useful convention, since rhyme word forms can be unusual. References to notes are included in glossary entries, a helpful touch. Again, all terms this reviewer sought are present, though it would have been useful to have included references to the introductory linguistic material where examples appeared. The word anona, for instance, for an expected avena (French avoine), seems at first glance a scribal problem, and it would have been useful to know where it falls among the cited phenomena.

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The volume itself is paperback, a logical choice for lesser expense and ease of use. A running head on each page with the number of the cantare and beginning and concluding ottava of that page facilitate use. Computer composition no doubt caused the few single open quotes instead of apostrophes (e.g., ‘nipotente 7, 8:1; ‘mpronte, 7, 47:4), but these are minor blemishes. This edition will be useful to many literary and comparatist scholars and belongs on the shelf of research libraries. It will help familiarize those outside of Italy with another branch of the Ogier le Danois tradition and later versions of it. It is truly a pleasure to see this important witness of later epic tradition receiving an accessible, modern edition.

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This first English translation of *Aymeri de Narbonne*, attributed to Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube, author of *Girart de Vienne*, is based on the only edition of the poem, edited by Louis Demaison and published in 1887 by the Société des Anciens Textes Français. Demaison’s two-volume edition was reprinted in 1968 by the Johnson Reprint Corporation. This is a welcome translation which will bring a wider readership to the epic.

Defining his intended audience, Newth states that his translation is for “general readers, for scholars and students of history or of comparative literature, and for readers of modern French who may not often venture beyond the formidable frontiers of the Renaissance writers” (p. xxxvi).

The translation is preceded by an introduction which consists of the following sections: Genre; Authorship; Artistic Achievement; Sources and Influences; Editorial Policy; and a map of “The Geography of *Aymeri de Narbonne*.” Following the translation are a glossary, appendices (which contain extracts from the original poem in Old French), and a genealogy of the house of Narbonne. Finally, there is a select bibliography.

The introduction provides a concise overview defining the *chanson de geste* and introducing the *Aymeri de Narbonne* poem to nonspecialist readers. Although there are some endnotes to the introduction, there are points at which the lack of reference is frustrating (as, for example, on p. vii when the author writes, “Received enthusiastically by the Frankish barons, whose delight in combat they reflected, these early chants were also welcomed, accommodated and nourished by the Church, which fostered their development along the pilgrimage routes to important
shrines, such as that of St. James at Compostela in northwestern Spain”). The section on genre is the least acceptable part of the introduction to specialists. The inaccuracies and omissions range from the underestimation of the chanson de geste corpus (“some ninety examples still exist,” p. vii) which is habitually reckoned at “about one hundred,” to the lack of acknowledgement of the debates in scholarship surrounding the genre’s history, to sentences such as the following which reveal an outdated perspective: “Episodes of romance were included in response to the growing popularity of the tales of courtly love, of Breton lay and Arthurian legend, which the more literate and literary aristocracy wished increasingly to read privately, not hear publicly” (p. x).

Possibly the greatest concern about Newth’s translation is his base text. He states that his translation is “based thoroughly upon the Demaison edition” which follows two of three manuscripts in the British Library, but then he adds that he has occasionally translated variants from a third London manuscript and two manuscripts of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris “when they seemed to me to make more direct narrative sense” (p. xxxiv). However, Newth does not indicate in his translation at which points he deviates from the Demaison edition. This is the biggest obstacle to the translation’s use by specialists.

He has divided the poem into four “Gestes,” each of which is further divided into “Chants,” which he claims are “discernible but not distinguished thus in the original work” (p. xxxvi). The first chant is preceded by a “Prologue” and the last by an “Epilogue.” He does not discuss how he arrived at the divisions of the text, and while this is disappointing to scholars in the light of scholarly debate about epic séances and about divisions in the poems marked by manuscript illumination, these are nonetheless useful for general readers or for students encountering the chanson de geste for the first time. Both the Geste and Chant divisions are further distinguished by short, one- or two-line summaries of the action narrated therein.

In his notes on editorial policy, Newth forestalls some of the traditional kinds of criticism leveled at translations concerning accuracy by
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emphasizing that his concern is to render the “performance-driven qualities” of the poems. He writes: “such an approach to translation is taken at the sacrifice of some literal accuracy, but I would ask those scholars who find this version of *Aymeri de Narbonne* too free, to consider whether a prose translation of any piece of verse is, in essence, a stricter translation at all” (pp. xxxiv-xxxv). He has chosen to gloss over the changing tenses of the original by adopting “a uniform past tense in narration” (p. xxxv).

Newth’s approach inevitably results in some loose translations: for example, “Mainte miracle li fist Dex en sa vie” (Demaison, l.101) is rendered as “God showed his strength for Charlemagne in kind” (p. 5); and “Maint Sarrazin et maint paien felon / Fist il livrer a grant destruction” (Demaison, ll. 80-81) as “How many Moors and wicked-working heathens / He brought to heel and wrought a fierce defeat on!” (p. 3). However, for anyone wishing to compare the original text with the translation, Newth provides verse numbers which correspond to those in Demaison’s edition. Newth’s approach to translating the epic does result in a very enjoyable reading experience which comes close to reproducing the general atmosphere of the *chanson de geste*, and his language is poetic in its own right. Describing the dress of the Germans encountered by Aymeri’s messengers, he translates “But all were dressed like folk bereft of brains!” (p. 53) [“Vestu estoient comme gent mal senée” (Demaison, l. 1622)]. Another example of Newth’s poetry is his translation of the *reverdie* motif, “The month was May, when roses flower sweetly /And woodland-leaves and meadow-grass grow greener” (p. 56) [“Ce fu en mai que la rose est florie / Que bois foillist et herbe reverdie” (Demaison, ll. 1720-21)]. On occasion, Newth’s enthusiasm translates into an exaggeration of the epic style. For example, his conflation of “*bu*” and “*trebuchié*” in line 4176 results in a translation of Demaison’s lines 4175-6 (“Tant braz tranchié, tant pong, tant pié, tant bu / Et tant paien trebuchié et cheu!”) which inflates the portrayal of an already gruesomely violent scene [“How many arms and hands and legs and feet there / Our Frenchmen hacked from trunks of helpless heathens!”]
Further illustration of this more epic than epic style is his highlighting of repetition through flattening some of the variations in the repetition: for instance, “How very hard the fighting was that day!” (p. 60) and “How very hard the fighting was and wild!” (p. 61) translate the lines “La bataille est molt fort et adurée” (Demaison, l. 1843) and “Fort fu l’estor et la bataille grant” (Demaison, l. 1890); and his insertion of the exclamation “imagine!” at the end of line 2160, “Et la perdrix vendoit on .i. mengon / Et la geline .x. solz, o le chapon” (Demaison, ll. 2159-60) translated as “Their partridges they sold for one whole mangon / Their hens and cocks for ten whole sous—imagine!” (p. 69).

In addition to offering general readers the experience of reading the chanson de geste, this first English translation of Aymeri de Narbonne will be a very useful tool for teachers and students of literature, language, and translation.

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