

Fragmentology

A Journal for the Study of Medieval Manuscript Fragments

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Reconstructing a Middle Dutch Alexander Compilation

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Abstract: This article provides a first description, edition and analysis of Antwerp, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Special Collections, MAG-P 64.19. This fragment is the sole known remnant of a Middle Dutch compilation of stories about Alexander the Great copied by the well-known *Ferguut* scribe (ca. 1350). Our research shows that this compilation comprised Dutch versions of the *Voeux du paon* and the twelfth-century *Fuerre de Gadres*, which was previously unknown to have been translated into Dutch. We advance the possibility that the Stuttgart and Brussels fragments of *Alexanders geesten* and *Roman van Cassamus*, which were also copied by the *Ferguut* scribe, belonged to a second copy of this compilation, providing a continuous narrative about the life of Alexander. In this respect, the Dutch compilation resembles contemporary manuscripts of the *Roman d'Alexandre* in which Alexandre de Paris' vulgate compilation was complemented with various amplifications. The combination of pre-existing Dutch stories into one (semi)coherent narrative is also similar to the famous *Lancelot* compilation, a collection of Arthurian narratives created in Brabant in approximately the same period. The fragment thus sharpens our understanding of the role of compilations in the dissemination of Middle Dutch chivalric romance.

Keywords: Alexander Romance, French and Middle Dutch, translations and compilations, medieval Brabant, *Ferguut* scribe

* The authors wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their generous and constructive comments.

The Middle Dutch Alexander fragment that is the focus of this contribution was acquired by Farley P. Katz in 2018 from an antiquarian bookseller in Paris. He contacted some researchers of Middle Dutch literature in early 2019. After it became clear that the fragment originated from an unknown Alexander compilation and that it was copied by the well-known *Ferguut* scribe — an anonymous scribe who owes his sobriquet to the only extant copy of the Middle Dutch version of Guillaume le Clerc's *Roman de Fergus* — Katz donated the fragment to the Special Collections of the University Library of the University of Antwerp. There it is now kept under the shelfmark MAG-P 64.19.¹

In this study, we first provide a material description of the Antwerp fragment, situating it within the work of the *Ferguut* scribe, whose hand has been previously recognized in seven other (largely fragmentary) codices and who must have been a professional copyist. We then edit the text on the recto and verso of the fragment, each side containing 40 lines. Between the recto and verso sides of the fragment, there is a serious textual lacuna due to missing columns. The edition of the Middle Dutch text is followed by a preliminary reconstruction of the content of both text passages, with an identification of the many names of characters and places. This forms the basis for an attempt to situate the text fragment within Middle Dutch and French Alexander literature of the Middle Ages. Our textual analysis suggests that the fragment comes from an otherwise unknown Middle Dutch Alexander compilation that differs at least in part from Alexandre de Paris' French vulgate *Roman d'Alexandre*. The lost compilation may have comprised Jacob van Maerlant's *Alexanders geesten* (a translation of Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis*) and very likely a creative adaptation of the anonymous *Roman van Cassamus* (a translation of Jacques de Longuyon's *Voeux du paon*), but must certainly have included a Dutch version of the *Fuerre de Gadres*, one of the French poems that were integrated by Alexandre de Paris into his vulgate compilation. Fragments in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek (Stuttgart) and the Royal Library (KBR) in Brussels show that *Alexanders geesten* and *Cassamus* were copied

1 Catalogue description of the fragment and images: <https://anet.be/record/opacuantwerpen/c:lvd:14970581/N>.

by the *Ferguut* scribe in at least one other codex. Until now, it was assumed that these fragments were remnants of a multiple-text manuscript in which integral copies of the individual texts followed one another, but the discovery of the Antwerp fragment opens up the possibility that in this manuscript too, the texts were part of a compilation, in which individual narratives were forged together by means of transitional splices. At the end of this contribution, we will compare our reconstruction of the Alexander compilation with the famous *Lancelot* compilation that was created in the same region and in approximately the same period (Brabant, ca. 1325).

Material aspects of the Antwerp fragment

The Antwerp fragment consists of a single strip of parchment that was cut vertically from its leaf. The fragment is 250–259 mm high and about 65 mm wide and has a remnant of one column on each side. The wide side margins indicate that it contains the first column of the recto side [Figure 1] and the final column of the verso side [Figure 2]. The inner margin (recto side) and outer margin (verso side) amount to approximately 24 mm at their widest point. The bottom margin was at least 40 mm. At the top, the strip has been cut off irregularly, resulting in text loss to the tops of both columns. The vertical cutting of the parchment has also caused some text loss on both sides.

The column on the recto side (r^oa) contains parts of thirty lines of verse, the remnants of an original forty lines of writing. The column on the verso side (v^o?) contains remnants of forty lines of writing (and as many verse lines), of which the first part (the majuscule letter column) has been lost due to the cut. In total, the fragment comprises the remnants of seventy verse lines, written in a *littera textualis*. The unit of ruling (or average line height) is 5.3 mm. Plummets (leadpoint) are present on the verso side. On the recto side, only the column reserved for the majuscule letters is vertically ruled. This majuscule letter column is stroked in a lighter shade of brown ink.

On the top half of the recto side is a richly decorated, parted initial ‘H’ measuring ten lines high (corpus: 53 mm). Next to the

initial, presumably two verse lines, which were spread over ten lines of writing, were lost due to the vertical cut. The body of the initial is executed in red and blue ink. Red and dark blue pen flourishes extend into the inner margin. The foliage of white ivy leaves with curved stems on a forest green background calls to mind the decoration of the decorated initial 'H' on the first folio of the *Rose miscellany* kept at the Royal Library in The Hague (Koninklijke Bibliotheek (=KB), MS KA xxiv). Apart from a Dutch translation of the *Roman de la rose*, that manuscript dated to ca. 1320–1325, also contains the *Roman van Cassamus* (see below) and *Die Frenesie* ('The Madness'), a biting satire on love and dubious practices in the Church.²

As mentioned, the fragment is written by a well-known fourteenth-century scribe who was active in the Brabant region and is known to scholarship as the *Ferguut* scribe.³ Besides the only (completely) preserved manuscript of the Middle Dutch chivalric romance *Ferguut* (Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Ltk. 191, ff. 1–32), his hand has also been identified in two codicological units containing mystical prose in the composite *Ruusbroec* Manuscript Vv (Brussels, KBR, 3067–73, ff. 2–14 and ff. 50–55) and in a relatively large series of fragments that are remnants of probably six other codices (see Table 1). However small the new Antwerp fragment may be, the characteristics of the *Ferguut* scribe's hand clearly stand out, such as the round 'd' with a stroke to the right at the shaft (resembling the Greek δ) (l. 2), the characteristic small 'D' (l. 24) and the apostrophe with an elegant hairline (l. 2).⁴

Since the text in the Antwerp fragment belongs to an unknown collection of stories about Alexander the Great, no direct comparison at the verse level is possible. This implies that some specifications, such as the number of folia and the *mise-en-page* of the original manuscript cannot be reconstructed. However, it is

2 The authors thank Ed van der Vlist and Jeroen Vandommele (The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek), who provided us with colour images of the initials in the *Rose miscellany*.

3 According to the latest research, the *Ferguut* scribe presumably worked in the vicinity of Brussels around the middle of the fourteenth century, see E. Kwakkel and H. Mulder, "Quidam sermones. Mystiek proza van de Ferguut-kopist.", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 117 (2001), 151–165.

4 Cf. Kwakkel and Mulder, "Quidam sermones", 153.

important to map out the possible *mise-en-pages*, as this allows us to estimate how many lines of writing (and approximately how many verse lines) have been lost between the text segments on the recto and verso sides of the fragment. Although the number of lines per column cannot be reconstructed precisely, there is little chance the fragment originates from a single-column manuscript: the number of lines was at least forty, which is rather high for a layout with one column per side. A four-column manuscript also seems rather unlikely, since manuscripts with Middle Dutch rhymed epics were rarely made in that format (at this moment, no four-column manuscripts are known from the *Ferguut* scribe; see Table 1).⁵ The two most plausible options are a two- or three-column manuscript.

Usually, two-column manuscripts contain fewer lines per column than three-column manuscripts. In his article “Conventies, standaarden en varianten” (conventions, standards and variants), the Dutch codicologist Jos Biemans states that the number of lines per column of two-column manuscripts with Middle Dutch rhymed epics usually varies between ca. 35 and 52 lines and for three-column manuscripts, between ca. 52 and 62 lines.⁶ These lower and upper limits can serve as benchmarks for estimating the gap between the recto and verso sides of the Antwerp fragment. Since the *Ferguut* scribe wrote three texts in a *mise-en-page* of 3/50 (see Table 1), we will set the lower limit of three-column manuscripts at 50. Thus, if the Antwerp fragment originates from a three-column manuscript, some 210 to 270 lines have been lost between the recto and verso sides or if it were a two-column manuscript, some 80 to 116 lines (assuming full columns).

With only the unit of ruling (5.3 mm) as a lead, it is difficult to determine which hypothesis is preferable. This unit of ruling occurs

5 See J. Biemans, “Conventies, standaarden en varianten. Verschillende mogelijkheden en keuzes bij de vormgeving van handschriften met berijmde Middelnederlandse ridderepiek”, in *Ene andre tale. Tendensen in de Middelnederlandse late ridderepiek*, eds. A. Faems and M. Hogenbirk, Hilversum 2012, 215–257, at 232 and 239. See also J.W. Klein, “(Middelnederlandse) handschriften: productieomstandigheden, soorten, functies”, *Queeste* 2(1995), 1–30, at 19–22.

6 Biemans “Conventies”, 228. Cf. Klein “(Middelnederlandse) handschriften”, 19–22.

in both types of manuscripts and does not allow firm conclusions to be drawn on the number of columns each manuscript page contained. However, this unit of ruling is rather on the high side. For instance, no manuscripts of the *Ferguut* scribe are known with a unit of ruling above 5 mm (see Table 1). In Hans Kienhorst's repository of manuscripts with Middle Dutch chivalric epics, the unit of ruling averages below 5 mm for both two- and three-column manuscripts.⁷ In both cases, a higher unit of ruling often goes together with a relatively lower number of lines per column, which may be explained by the pursuit of a proportional relationship between the height and width of the text area. As far as the Antwerp fragment is concerned, the number of lines per column should probably not be estimated too high. If the fragment originates from a three-column manuscript, it is likely that there were around 50 to 56 lines to each column. The fact that the other multiple-text manuscripts of the *Ferguut* scribe were written in a three-column layout (see Table 1, numbers 5 and 6), might suggest that the Antwerp fragment, with several stories about Alexander the Great, originates from a manuscript with a similar *mise-en-page*.

In this regard, attention should be drawn to the fact that the hand of the *Ferguut* scribe has also been identified in fragments of two other Middle Dutch Alexander texts: *Alexanders geesten* (Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Donaueschingen 173) and *Roman van Cassamus* (Brussels, KBR, 18.228). Due to palaeographic and codicological similarities, it is assumed that these fragments belonged to the same manuscript.⁸ Although the Antwerp fragment has similar and complementary content, it originates from a separate, hitherto unknown codex. First of all, the unit of ruling is significantly higher (see Table 1) and secondly, the manner of decoration slightly differs: in contrast to the Antwerp fragment, the fragments of *Alexanders geesten* and *Roman van Cassamus* do not contain colour stroking. The Antwerp fragment raises the count

7 H. Kienhorst, *De handschriften van de Middelnederlandse ridderepiek*, pt. 1, Deventer 1988.

8 H. Kienhorst and H. Mulder, "Copiïsten van Middelnederlandse literaire handschriften", in *Dokumentaal* 15(1986), 93–95; Biemans "Conventies", 233–237; Kwakkel and Mulder, "Quidam sermones", 153.

Manuscript	Mise-en-page	Measurements (mm)
1. Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek (=UB), Ltk. 191, ff. 1–32. (<i>Ferguut</i> , full ms.)	2 col., 44 ll.	Page: ca. 260 × 68 Text area: 215 × 142 Unit of ruling: 4.9
2. Brussel, KBR, 3067–73, ff. 2–14 and ff. 50–55. (unit I and IV in <i>Ruusbroec</i> -ms. Vv)	1 col., 16–23 ll.	Page: 130 × 99 Text area: 95 × 69
3. Antwerpen, Museum Plantin-Moretus, M 15.10 (<i>Roman van Limborch</i> , fragm.)	2 col., 50 ll.	Page: ca. 254–255 × 177–179 Text area: 218–219 × 132–134 Unit of ruling: 4.4
4. A. Leiden, UB, Ltk. 1205 B. Leiden, UB, BPL 3252/3 C. Gent, Universiteitsbibliotheek (=UB), 1639, 2 D. 's-Hertogenbosch, Rijksarchief, Archieven van de raad en rentmeester-generaal, inv.-nr. 289a (A–D: <i>Rijmbijbel</i> , fragm.)	2 col., 50–51 ll. (Based on A)	Page: 268 × 184 Text area: 205 × ca. 125 Unit of ruling: 4.0–4.1 (Based on A)
5. Gent, UB, 2749, 3–4 (<i>Spiegel historiael</i> and <i>Rijmbijbel</i> , fragm.)	3 col., 56 ll.	Page: [340–350] × [260] Text area: 235–245 × ca. 175–180 Unit of ruling: 4.3
6. A. Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Donaueschingen 173 (<i>Alexanders geesten</i> , fragm.) B. Brussel, KBR, 18.228 (<i>Roman van Cassamus</i> , fragm.)	(A) 3 col., 49–50 ll. (B) 3 col., [50] ll.	(A) Page: [290] × [200] Text area: 216–222 × 156–157 Unit of ruling: 4.4–4.5 (B) Page: [290] × [200] Text area: [230–235] × 154–154 Unit of ruling: 4.6
7. Leiden, UB, BPL 2387 D (<i>Historie van Troyen</i> , fragm.)	3 col., [50] ll.	Page: (?) Text area: [225] × [156] Unit of ruling: 4.5
8. Antwerpen, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MAG-P 64.19 (<i>Alexander</i> compilation)	2/3 col., (?) ll.	Page dimensions: (?) Text area: (?) Unit of ruling: 5.3

Table 1. Manuscripts of the *Ferguut* scribe

of known manuscripts by the *Ferguut* scribe to eight.⁹ Table 1 provides an overview of these (mainly fragmentary) codices.¹⁰

Edition of the Antwerp fragment

An edition is proposed on the next two pages. Square brackets [...] indicate material gaps in the Antwerp fragment. Reconstructions are only suggested for minimal gaps within words. Round brackets () indicate passages with difficult or uncertain readings, often because letters are damaged or cut off. Sometimes we make a proposal for a particular reading there. The spelling of *u* and *v*, and *i* and *j* has been adapted to phonetic value. *Italics* indicate the expansion of abbreviations. All visible lines of writing are numbered (not the verse lines).

Interpretation

Even though text loss at the beginning or end of each line hampers a full and unambiguous translation, the Antwerp fragment provides valuable information about the contents of the manuscript of which it is a remnant. More importantly, it brings into further focus the importance of compilation (maybe rather than multiple-text manuscripts) as a mode of dissemination for Middle Dutch Alexander narratives. This aligns the Dutch material with compilations in other languages, such as the *Roman d'Alexandre*, a compilation of

9 For a previous overview, see Kwakkel and Mulder, “Quidam sermones”, 153. Although it was previously assumed that the *Historie van Troyen* fragment of the *Ferguut* scribe (Leiden, University Library, BPL 2387 D) also belonged to the above-mentioned manuscript with at least *Alexanders geesten* and *Roman van Cassamus* (see Biemans, “Conventies, standaarden en varianten”, 235–237), there are convincing arguments to assume that the *Historie van Troyen* fragment is a remnant of a separate codex. The evidence for this will be presented in detail by Laurent Breeus-Loos and Remco Sleiderink in a forthcoming article.

10 The information on the manuscripts with chivalric romances is taken from Kienhorst, *De handschriften van de Middelnederlandse ridderepiek*; for the other manuscripts, we have turned to the online database *Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta & Impressa* (<https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/>).

- 1^o Van p[...]
 Maer dit latic bliven (s)a[...]
 Ic salre noch toe w[...]
 Ic wille u secgen e[...]
 5 Ene wile van andre[...]
 God late mi volbrin[...]
 H[...]
 [...]
 [...]
 10 [...]
 [...]
 [...]
 [...]
 [...]
 15 [...]
 [...]
 Ic vertelde hier te v[...]
 Van gadifiere den here [...]
 Van pheson den Ridder (c)[...]
 20 Hoe hi van emenido[...]
 Te josph verslegen [...]
 Daer menech Riddere rou[...]
 Ende alexander die coninc (m)[...]
 Doe alexander wan die st[...]
 25 Van gadres ende in wen[...]
 Ende hoe die hertoge be[...]
 Vanden grieken wert ver[...]
 Dit hebdi wel horen [...]
 Maer ghi en hebt niet g[...]
 30 Van wat geslachte [...]
 Gadifier was van l[...]
 Hier bi willic u ma[...]
 Wie hi was nu hoer[...]
 Gadifier alsic vers[...]
 35 Was ute arabia geb[...]
 Vanden heetsten verre [...]
 Van gadres die hertog[...]
 Betijs was siere m(o)[...]
 Enen broeder hadde[...]
 40 Die stout w[a]s ende vroe[...]

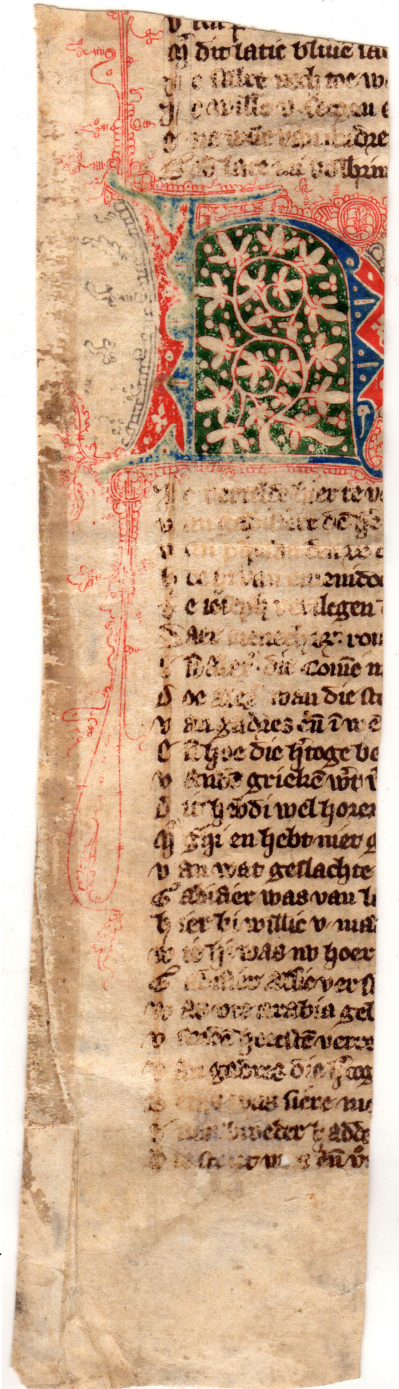


Figure 1: Antwerpen, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MAG-P 64:19, recto

v^o [...] r(l)oge
 [...] f betijs selve doet
 [...] dres ende sine genoet
 [...] vele verslagen mede
 45 [...] (t) die goede stede
 [...] dres alsic vore seide
 [...] alsonder beide
 [...] niemare die niet en spart
 [...] ltoes achter lande vaert
 50 [...] ert emmer henen
 [...] n desen toten genen
 [...] es makic u wijs
 [...] udaen claerwijs
 [...] rnomen openbare
 55 [...] difier verslegen ware
 [...] nre phesonien vader
 [...] e clageden algader
 [...] (van) die liede sijn
 [...] iij bruder sijn
 60 [...] r ende betijs
 [...] sonie die maget fetijs
 [...] vriende ende mage
 [...] us die oude sage
 [...] blide utermaten
 65 [...] (stem) hoe gelaten
 [...] (r) bi sinen goden al
 [...] e maget hebben sal
 [...] tsi lief ocht leet
 [...] (t) rinen godweet
 70 [...] ten ende (ge)bieden
 [...] le sinen lieden
 [...] (m)en ongespaert
 [...] (r)et ende bewart
 [...] orloge te vaerne
 75 [...] lle dade(n) gerne
 [...] rmaten willechlike
 [...] enech (prince) rike
 [...] mechtechste alsic (versta)
 [...] ren in al judea
 80 [...] (v)an baudrie die soudaen

Maget
 f betijs selve doet
 dres ende sine genoet
 vele verslagen mede
 in die goede stede
 dres alsic vore seide
 alsonder beide
 niemare die niet en spart
 ltoes achter lande vaert
 ert emmer henen
 n desen toten genen
 es makic u wijs
 udaen claerwijs
 rnomen openbare
 difier verslegen ware
 nre phesonien vader
 e clageden algader
 (van) die liede sijn
 iij bruder sijn
 r ende betijs
 sonie die maget fetijs
 vriende ende mage
 us die oude sage
 blide utermaten
 (stem) hoe gelaten
 (r) bi sinen goden al
 e maget hebben sal
 tsi lief ocht leet
 (t) rinen godweet
 ten ende (ge)bieden
 le sinen lieden
 (m)en ongespaert
 (r)et ende bewart
 orloge te vaerne
 lle dade(n) gerne
 rmaten willechlike
 enech (prince) rike
 mechtechste alsic (versta)
 ren in al judea
 (v)an baudrie die soudaen

Figure 2: MAG-P 64:19, verso

four pre-existing narratives about Alexander, achieved by Alexandre de Paris (otherwise known as ‘de Bernay’) around 1185–1190. The romances gathered in that vulgate compilation in turn inspired various amplifications.¹¹ In several manuscripts with the vulgate *Roman d’Alexandre*, complementary episodes detailing the avenging of Alexander’s death, the siege of the city Defur and Alexander’s voyage to the gates of Earthly Paradise, as well as instalments of the fourteenth-century Peacock cycle (*Voeux du paon* and/or *Restor du paon*) have been grafted onto the twelfth-century compilation.¹²

The aforementioned fragments of Alexander texts copied by the *Ferguut* scribe kept at Stuttgart and Brussels already suggested that *Alexanders geesten* (ca. 1258), a Dutch adaptation of the twelfth-century *Alexandreis* in which Jacob van Maerlant complemented Walter of Châtillon’s narrative with material from additional sources, was copied together with the *Roman van Cassamus* (ca. 1315–1325), a Dutch translation of Jacques de Longuyon’s *Voeux du paon*.¹³ While it is possible that the Stuttgart and Brussels fragments originate from a multiple-text manuscript in which one text was copied integrally after the other without major modifications, the Antwerp fragment provides evidence for the existence of a compilation in which several stories about Alexander were adapted and forged together to form a more or less coherent and continuous narrative.¹⁴

11 *The Medieval French ‘Roman d’Alexandre’*, eds. E.C. Armstrong et al., 7 vols, Princeton 1937–1955; M. Gosman, *La Légende d’Alexandre le Grand dans la littérature française du 12e siècle*, Amsterdam 1997; M. Pérez-Simon, “Le Roman d’Alexandre en vers à l’épreuve de la compilation”, in *L’Anthologie. Histoire et enjeux d’une forme éditoriale du Moyen Âge au XXIe siècle*, ed. C. Bohnert, Reims 2014, 45–68; D.J.A. Ross, *Illustrated Medieval Alexander Books in French Verse*, eds. M. Pérez-Simon and A. Stones assisted by M. Meuwese, Turnhout 2019, 13–30. For a general overview of the genesis and manuscript transmission of the *Roman d’Alexandre*, see also the introduction by D. Schoenaers at <https://medievalfrancophone.ac.uk/textual-traditions-and-segments/alexandre/>.

12 Tables of manuscripts and fragments containing all or part of the vulgate *Roman d’Alexandre* in: Ross, *Illustrated Medieval Alexander Books*, 191–200.

13 Jacob van Maerlant, *Alexanders geesten*, ed. J. Franck, Groningen 1882. A description of Maerlant’s translation and compilation strategies in *Alexanders geesten* in: P. Berendrecht, *Proeven van bekwaamheid: Jacob van Maerlant en de omgang met zijn Latijnse bronnen*, Amsterdam 1996, 13–85; 233–237; 253–277.

14 The sole surviving fragment of a Dutch translation of the French *Roman de Florimont* undoubtedly is also a remnant of a multiple-text manuscript.

The recto side of the fragment: Referring back to the *Fuerre de Gadres*

An analysis of the fragmentary text shows that this compilation comprised, amongst other narratives, a hitherto unknown translation or retelling of the *Fuerre de Gadres* (as is demonstrated by the text on the recto side of the fragment), as well as a Dutch adaptation of the *Voeux du paon*, forty lines of which have survived on the verso side of the fragment. That several storylines were woven together, becomes apparent from the very first lines of the fragment. In ll. 1–6, a heterodiegetic first-person narrator switches from one narrative thread to another. He temporarily suspends the current story and promises to return to it at some later time ('dit latic bliven' / 'ic salre noch toe [weder keren]). The lines following the large initial letter 'H' at the opening of the new chapter (ll. 17–28) alert the audience to the fact that what follows is the continuation of a narrative that had been previously put on hold. This story revolved around Alexander's triumph at Gadres (ll. 24–25). The narrator has already revealed ('Ic vertelde hier te v[oren]', l. 17) that 'Gadifiere', a knight from Pheson,

This romance, completed by Aimon de Varennes in 1186, discusses the trials and tribulations of Philip 'Macemus' of Greece and Florimont, Alexander's grandfather, and provided information about the parentage of Alexander's mother, Olympias. The Dutch translation was probably achieved in 1318. A single page of a luxuriously executed manuscript dated to the middle of the fourteenth century survives. In this codex, the text was copied in a three-column layout with sixty lines to each column. The length of the French *Florimont* amounts to about 13,000 lines. At 360 lines per folium, a Dutch translation of comparable length filled around thirty-six folia. Even though there is no certainty about the further contents of the lost manuscript, it is plausible that *Florimont* preceded other narratives related to Alexander, as is also the case in the thirteenth-century French manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français 792 (for this French manuscript see: Ross, *Illustrated Medieval Alexander-Books*, 147–149). About the French *Roman de Florimont*: L. Harf-Lancner, "Le Florimont d'Aimon de Varennes: un prologue du Roman d'Alexandre", *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 37(1994), 37–147. About the Dutch translation: R. Lievens, "Een Middelnederlandse roman van Florimont", *Spiegel der letteren* 2(1958), 1–33; F. Brandsma, "Florimont 2.0 (editie, vertaling, context)", in *Ene andre tale: tendensen in de Middelnederlandse late ridderepiek*, 103–121; A. Reynders, "'Ghi heren, ic houde in ware wort dat ghi van Alexandre gehort hebt': de Middelnederlandse vertalingen van de Oudfranse *Florimont* en *Voeux du paon*", *ibid.*, 83–101.

was slain by ‘Emenidon’ at ‘Joseph’ (the valley of Josaphat, ll. 18–21), but he also states that he has not yet been sufficiently clear about Gadifier’s origins (‘van wat geslachte [...] Gadifier was’, ll. 29–30). He continues to explain that Gadifier was born in the hottest regions of Arabia, (ll. 32–36), that he was in some way connected to Duke Betijs of Gadres (Gaza, ll. 37–38) and that Gadifer had a brother, who was courageous and wise (ll. 39–40).

In Dutch, some of this information can be found in the *Roman van Cassamus*. Nonetheless, the allusions to Gadifer and his death at Gadres cannot be explained as deriving from that narrative. As will become clear, the misfortunes of Gadifer’s offspring that are related in the *Voeux* and *Cassamus*, are in fact the subject of the story that is about to follow. Other Dutch narratives about Alexander do not lead to an answer. While Jacob van Maerlant briefly touched upon the subjection of Gaza (ll. 24–25, ‘Doe alexander wan die st[ede] van gadres’) in *Alexanders geesten* (III, vv. 1025–1029), he called the city ‘Gazen’ (III, v. 848; 898) or ‘Gasa’ (III, v. 1027), as did the *Alexandreis*, his Latin source. Both Emenidus and Betis are featured in Maerlant’s biography: there, Emenidus is mentioned as one of Alexander’s commanders and successors; Betis — whom Maerlant referred to as ‘Becus’ — unsuccessfully attempts to kill Alexander during the battle of Gaza (III, vv. 865–891). By contrast, Gadifer and the fateful battle with Emenidus are left unmentioned.¹⁵

Gadifer first appears in the *Fuerre de Gadres*, a now lost French *chanson de geste* dated to around 1160. In this original poem, a certain Eustache related how under the command of Alexander’s lieutenant Emenidus a Macedonian foraging expedition to Gaza spiralled into bloody combat. In spite of grievous losses on both sides, Alexander and the Macedonians prevailed. Alexandre de Paris inserted a heavily adapted and expanded version of Eustache’s poem in his vulgate *Roman d’Alexandre*, where it bridged the narratives about Alexander’s rise to power (Branch I, *Enfances*) and the Macedonian campaigns in the East (Branch III, *Alexandre en Orient*). The

15 *Repertorium van Eigennamen in Middelnederlandse Literaire Teksten*, ed. W. Kuiper and S. Koetsier, Amsterdam 1993–2020 (<https://ctb.kantl.be/publicaties/repertorium-van-eigennamen-in-middelnederlandse-literaire-teksten-remlt>).

battle between Gadifer and Emenidus referred to in the Antwerp fragment is described in this second branch in §§59–62.¹⁶

No Dutch translation of the *Fuerre* or any of the other branches of the vulgate *Roman d'Alexandre* is known to survive. Nonetheless, the manuscript evidence attests to the French romance's popularity in the Low Countries.¹⁷ That the French stories about Alexander's death were also known among speakers of Middle Dutch becomes clear from the first part (Eerste partie) of the *Spiegel historiael*, Maerlant's Dutch adaptation of the *Speculum historiale* in which the Flemish poet overtly criticized the popular French romances about Alexander, calling them 'false' and 'fanciful tales' ('boerden', I, Book III, §56, vv. 47–55). It is more than likely that Maerlant was thinking of the fourth branch of the *Roman d'Alexandre* when he reproached the Babylonians with hypocrisy for mourning Alexander's death, 'daer dat Rommans of spreket scone' (of which a beautiful description exists in French, *Spiegel historiael*, I, Book IV, §46, vv. 1–7). Finally, the French stories about the avenging of Alexander's death — most probably the vengeance narratives by Jean le Nevelon and Gui de Cambrai—were dismissed as fabrications ('geveinsde saghe', I, Book V, §15, vv. 17–20).¹⁸

The Antwerp fragment provides the first evidence of a Middle Dutch version of the *Fuerre* episode. It is, however, unlikely that the Dutch version referred to in the fragment was a complete translation that closely imitated the French model in the *Roman d'Alexandre* without significant abridgments or other innovations. If this were the case, the narrator's audience would have already known about Gadifer's origins (II, §53 'El roiaume d'Egypte n'ot mellor chevalier'

16 Gadifer's death is also repeatedly mentioned in conversations between Casamus, Alexander and Emenidus in the first few hundred lines of the *Voeux du paon* (vv. 51–59; 120–124; 151–153; 195–203; 216–217). Additionally, the plotlines of the *Fuerre* and *Voeux* are recapitulated in the prologue of Brisebarre's *Restor du paon*.

17 For an overview of the manuscript evidence, see the tables in Ross, *Illustrated Medieval Alexander Books*, 191–200. Out of the thirty-four manuscripts and fragments listed there, at least fifteen were manufactured in Flanders or Northern France.

18 Jacob van Maerlant, *Spiegel historiael. Deel 1. Partie I*, eds. M. de Vries and E. Verwijs, Leiden 1863.

and §62 ‘Gadifer fu molt preus, d’un arrabi lignage’) and his connection to Duke Betis, who, according to the *Fuerre*, was Gadifer’s sovereign (II, §53 ‘Por son lige segnor [*id est* Betis] est entrés en grant pain’). This can be explained in two ways. The information about Gadifer’s Egyptian roots does not appear in the fourteenth-century Latin translation of Eustache’s *Fuerre de Gadres* and should therefore be considered as an addition by Alexandre de Paris.¹⁹ This leaves open the possibility that the Dutch version was based on the original poem, and not on the more widely disseminated *Roman d’Alexandre*. If this is indeed the case, the compiler also had access to a manuscript of the vulgate romance from which he sourced the references to Gadifer’s lineage. Alternatively, the lost Dutch version of the foraging episode may have been an abridgment of the vulgate narrative. If so, it is likely that the information about Gadifer’s origins was initially skipped and later repurposed by the compiler, when he referred to the events at Gadres that had come up earlier in his story.

The verso side of the fragment: Retelling the *Voeux du paon*

With the reference to Gadifer’s wise and courageous brother (II. 39–40), the narrator eased his audience into the events described in the *Voeux du paon*. In this fourteenth-century amplification, a key role was reserved for Gadifer’s sibling Cassamus, who does not appear in the *Fuerre*.²⁰ On closer inspection, there are other elements in the first segment of the fragment that point forward to the Peacock romance. Gadifer is identified as a courageous knight from Epheson (‘van Pheson den ridder c[oene]’, l. 19). This city is not mentioned in the *Fuerre*, but in the *Voeux* it becomes clear that

19 D.J.A. Ross, “A New Manuscript of the Latin *Fuerre de Gadres* and the Text of *Roman d’Alexandre* Branch II”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 22 (1959), 211–253, at 230, 234, 248–249.

20 On the *Voeux du paon*: H. Bellon-Méguelle, *Du Temple de Mars à la Chambre de Vénus: le beau jeu courtois dans les ‘Vœux du paon’*, Paris 2008; *Les voeux du paon de Jacques de Longuyon: originalité et rayonnement*, ed. C. Gaulhier-Bougassas, Paris 2010; D. Leo, *Images, Texts, and Marginalia in a ‘Vows of the Peacock’ Manuscript* (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS G24), Leiden 2013.

Gadifer was indeed the lord of this Epheson, which his children inherited from their mother, who is identified as a sister of Duke Betis of Gadres (§7, vv. 160–164).²¹ After a chance meeting between Alexander and Cassamus on the road to Tarsus, the action moves to Epheson, where the Macedonians come to the rescue of Gadifer's children.

The narrative of the *Voeux* was grafted onto the *Prise de Defur*, an episode that had been inserted into the vulgate compilation ca. 1250. In several copies of the *Roman d'Alexandre*, the *Voeux* was integrated into the *Prise* and the conquest of Defur was immediately followed by Alexander's encounter with Cassamus. In other manuscripts, the *Voeux* was copied as an appendix after the events following Alexander's demise.²² More often, however, the text was transmitted separately or with its own amplifications, the *Restor du paon* (Restoration of the Peacock, ca. 1338) and the *Parfait du paon* (*Perfection of the Peacock*, 1340).

The first part of the Peacock cycle was soon translated into Dutch. This translation is known from two fragments at the KBR in Brussels and the University Library at Leiden (both ca. 1350). Like the Antwerp fragment, the Brussels *Cassamus* fragment is a remnant of a manuscript that was copied by the *Ferguut* scribe. While the translation in the Brussels fragment for the most part remains close to the *Voeux*, the version in the Leiden fragment is primarily characterized by its many additions to the French text and introduces some alterations, for instance in the setting. A third version is preserved in the aforementioned miscellany kept at the Royal Library in The Hague, which in addition to the *Cassamus* contains the Brabant *Rose*-translation and *Die Frenesie* and which is dated to circa 1320–1325. This *Rose-Cassamus* is best described

21 References to the French *Voeux du paon* from: *Les 'Voeux du Paon' by Jacques de Longuyon: An Edition of the Manuscripts of the P Redaction*, ed. C. Casey, New York 1956.

22 E.g., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français 791, français 1375, français 1590, and français 24365. On the combination of the *Voeux du paon* and the verse *Roman d'Alexandre*: J. Gilbert, S. Gaunt, and W. Burgwinkle, *Medieval French Literary Culture Abroad*, Oxford 2021, 212–242; J. van der Meulen, "Vrouwen van Avesnes. Een nieuwe Alexander in de Lage Landen", in *Ene andre tale. Tendensen in de Middelnederlandse late ridderepiek*, 55–82.

as a partial and abridged version of the French narrative. Each of these witnesses appears to represent its own version of a now lost translation that in most respects closely imitated its French model.²³

The text on the verso side of the fragment starts with another cross-reference to the battle of Gadres (ll. 41–45), where Duke Betis and many of his brothers-in-arms were killed ('ende sine genoet', l. 43). This reference corresponds to the description of Betis' death in §108 of the *Fuerre de Gadres*. Again, it is explicitly stated that these events had been mentioned before ('alsic vore seide', l. 46). Text loss makes it hard to interpret the next few lines (ll. 47–51), but potentially this passage refers to the spreading of the news ('niemare', l. 48) about the massacre. Sultan Clarus ('[so]udaen Claerwijs', l. 53) rejoices ('blide utermaten', l. 64) at hearing the reports of Gadifer's death, who is identified as the father of the beautiful Phesonie ('[scoe]nre Phesonien vader', l. 56). In contrast to Clarus, Gadifer's subjects are in mourning ('clageden algader [...] die liede sijn'; l. 57–58). The speaker lists the names of Gadifer's children: '[Gadife]r' and 'Betijs' (l. 60), and the beautiful maiden Phesonie ('[Phe]sonie die maget fetijs', l. 61). The reference to 'three fine brothers' ('bruder fijn', l. 59) instead of three children or siblings appears to be an error. Clarus' wicked plans are then exposed in ll. 63–68/69: the 'old coward' ('oude sage', l. 63) vowed to make the maiden ('maget', l. 67) his own, whether she liked it or not ('lief ocht leet', l. 68). He summoned his men to war ('orloge te vaerne', l. 74) and they readily complied ('[a]lle daden gerne' [...uter]maten willechlike', ll. 75–76). The exact content of the final lines of the fragment (77–79) is again unclear, but it seems that the speaker states that he has learned ('alsic versta',

23 The fragments are: Brussels, KBR, 18.228 and Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Ltk. 1195. The manuscript with the *Rose*, *Cassamus* and *Frenesie*: Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KA xxiv. For an edition of the Dutch *Rose-Cassamus* and the Leiden fragment: *Roman van Cassamus*, ed. E. Verwijs, Groningen 1869. About the *Roman van Cassamus*, see: A. Reynders, "De Oudfranse Voeux du Paon en de fragmenten van de Middelnederlandse roman van Cassamus", *Queeste* 11(2004), 56–81; A. Reynders, "La traduction en moyen-néerlandais des Voeux du Paon et ses réécritures", in *Les 'Voeux du Paon' de Jacques de Longuyon: originalité et rayonnement*, 209–220; A. Reynders, "De Rose-Cassamus: de versie van de Roman van Cassamus in Den Haag, KB, xxiv", *Queeste* 19(2012), 112–139; A. Reynders, "Ghi heren", *passim*.

l. 78) that the mightiest princes (ll. 77–78) had heeded Clarus' call. One of them is the sultan of Baudres (van baudrie die soudaen, l. 80). This is Cassiël, one of Clarus' vassals, who in the *Voeux* and *Cassamus* is not mentioned until much later in the narrative.²⁴

The lacuna of two or four columns between the recto and verso part of the text is important for the interpretation of this second segment. It is, for instance, by no means evident that the first-person speaker ('ic') in this part of the fragment ('alsic vore seide', l. 46; 'makic u wijs', l. 52; 'alsic (versta)', l. 78) is the same as the heterodiegetic personal narrator who addresses the audience in the transitional passage on the recto side. The information conveyed in the text on the verso side seems to be informed by a conversation between Cassamus and Alexander in §7 (vv. 149–173) of the *Voeux du paon*. In the French text Cassamus confirms that he is the brother of Gadifer, who was killed at Gadres by the Macedonian foragers and left behind two heirs and a beautiful daughter, whose name is not yet disclosed. He tells Alexander that Clarus has become obsessed with the girl and wants to make her his wife, but she would rather be dismembered than to marry him; not only is Clarus too old, he is also evil-hearted. Cassamus then reveals the names of Gadifer's sons: the firstborn is called Gadifer of Epheson. This prosperous city was the inheritance of the children's mother, the sister of Duke Betis of Gadres. The bravery of Betis, the younger son, equals his father's. These young men are the legitimate lords of Epheson, but Clarus, the Indian, brother of Porrus who was defeated by Alexander, plots to disinherit them. Finally, Cassamus implores Alexander to come to the children's aid. Soon after this conversation, Alexander repeats Cassamus' words with some minor alterations to Emenidus (§8, vv. 215–229).

It is clear that the text in the Antwerp fragment is not a literal translation of the dialogues in the *Voeux du paon*. Compared to Cassamus' plea in the French text and Alexander's rephrasing thereof, components have been rearranged (the naming of the children) or added (the references to the battle of Gadres; Clarus's call to arms and the reference to Cassiël); other elements, such as the details about the rich city of Epheson, have been left out altogether. Additionally,

24 *Voeux du paon*, §33, v. 1053; *Rose-Cassamus*, v. 999.

in the French dialogues the name of Gadifer's daughter is not revealed. Unlike the text in the Antwerp fragment, the dialogues in the Dutch *Rose-Cassamus* (vv. 165–200; vv. 227–250) closely follow their French counterparts with only a few small differences: in the Dutch text, Gadifer has inherited Epheson from his father (v. 188) and not from his mother. Additionally, it is not explicitly stated that Clarus is Porrus' brother and, unlike in the *Voeux*, the attack on Epheson has already begun, Clarus having sworn to destroy the city (vv. 193–195). In the French text, the siege is first mentioned in Alexander's conversation with Emenidus (v. 227).

In the event that the first-person speaker in this second segment is the heterodiegetic narrator, the text on the verso side is not a translation in the narrow sense of the word, but a narrative summary that assimilates information from one or both dialogues from the *Voeux du paon* or its Dutch translation. The cross-reference in l. 46, would then refer to the *Fuerre*-narrative that precedes the current episode. An alternative interpretation would suggest that, in this part of the fragment, we are presented with the words of Alexander or Cassamus. Given the number of lines that are missing between the transitory passage on the recto side and the text on the verso side of the fragment (ca. 80–116 or 210–270) and the position of the corresponding segments of direct speech in the *Voeux* (§7, vv. 146–182; §8, vv. 215–229) and the *Rose-Cassamus* (vv. 165–200; vv. 227–250), it would seem possible that this part of the fragment is a creative adaptation of one of the aforementioned dialogues. In the context of the *Voeux du paon* (or the Dutch *Roman van Cassamus*), it makes little sense for Alexander to remind Emenidus of an earlier conversation about the massacre at Gadres. Therefore, the first-person speaker should be identified as Cassamus, who had repeatedly reminded Alexander of the valiant men that had fallen on the battlefield (*Voeux*, §4, vv. 51–58 and §5, 64–65; *Rose-Cassamus*, vv. 46–53 and 55–57). If this is the case, the reference to Betis' death (ll. 40–46) should be interpreted as an amplification added by the *remanieur* who composed the text in the Antwerp fragment and kept a detailed overview of the contents of the *Voeux du paon* and the *Fuerre de Gadres*, as is also evidenced by the early reference to the sultan of Baudres.

None of the lines in the abridged *Rose-Cassamus* have an identical counterpart in the Antwerp fragment. In this respect the Antwerp text seemingly differs from the other *Cassamus* fragments. Even the creative adaptation in the Leiden fragment shares some lines with the abridged version of the *Rose* manuscript. It is, however, possible that this impression is skewed due to the limited amount of material that has been preserved of the Antwerp text. This notwithstanding, there is some circumstantial evidence to suggest that (a version of) the Dutch *Roman van Cassamus* rather than the French *Voeux du paon* served as a model for the text in the fragment.

Some elements in the text call to mind the Dutch *Cassamus* rather than the French *Voeux du paon*. In the French version of *Cassamus*' conversation with Alexander, *Cassamus* states that his brother left behind 'doi courtois hiretier' (v. 154, 'two courteous heirs'). In the *Rose-Cassamus*, this information is rendered as 'Het esser drie, die twee sijn sonen. Terde dats die scoenste maget' (vv. 170–171, 'There are three [children], two of them are sons, the third is the most beautiful maiden'). The Antwerp fragment refers to 'three fine brothers' (l. 59) and then lists the names of 'Gadifier' and 'Betij's', followed by 'Phesonie, die maget fetijs' ('Phesonie, the comely maiden', ll. 60–61). Although text loss obscures the exact phrasing of the fragment text, the faulty reference to 'three brothers' (instead of three children or siblings) may be understood as a careless adaptation of the wording in the Dutch *Cassamus*. If the text on the verso side of the Antwerp fragment is indeed a creative adaptation of *Cassamus*' plea to Alexander, the reference to the siege of Pheson in the *Rose-Cassamus* (vv. 193–194), which is left unmentioned in the exchange between *Cassamus* and Alexander in the French source, may have inspired the description of Claerwijs' call to arms in the Antwerp fragment.

Additionally, the names used for the protagonists in the fragment may offer supplementary evidence for the close relation between the Antwerp text and the Middle Dutch versions of the *Voeux du paon*. Unlike in the *Cassamus* texts, in French manuscripts 'Gadifier' and 'Phesonie' are more commonly referred to as 'Gadifer' and 'Fezona(i)(s)' or 'Phesonas'. It should, however, be noted that the names found in the Dutch versions also appear as variants in

some French manuscripts and may have been known independently of the Dutch text.²⁵ The names ‘Claerwijs’ (l. 53) and [Claer]us (l. 63) in the Antwerp fragment clearly correspond to the various names that are used for the Indian king in the Middle Dutch *Rose-Cassamus* (Claerwijs, Claerwise, Clarewijs, Clarewise, Clerwise, but also Claerus, Claeruse). The connection between ‘Claerwijs’ and the French name ‘Clarus’ and its many variations (Clarvus, Clarvis, Clarvos, Clarvoi, Clavorin or Claron) is less obvious. In the Antwerp fragment, Clarus is referred to as an ‘old coward’ (‘oude sage’, l. 63) and given the title ‘sultan’ ([so]udaen, l. 53). In the French *Voeux*, Clarus’ name regularly appears with the epithets ‘li Yndois’ (the Indian) and ‘viellart’ (old man), less frequently with his title ‘roi’ (king). The reference to Clarus as a ‘sultan’ seems to be particular to the Dutch tradition (cf. *Rose-Cassamus*, v. 1457: ‘Claerruse den souttaen’).

Finally, the fact that the Antwerp fragment was copied by the *Ferguut* scribe, who also copied the Brussels version of the *Roman van Cassamus*, adds further weight to the possibility that the Dutch *Roman van Cassamus*, rather than the French *Voeux du paon*, was the immediate model for the adaptation in the Antwerp fragment. Notwithstanding that the Brussels version more closely imitates the French *Voeux* than does the text in the Antwerp fragment, it cannot be ruled out that both are remnants of the same ‘compilation version’ of *Cassamus*. Not all medieval translators consistently applied conservative or innovative strategies throughout their work. Middle Dutch epics like the Flemish *Aiol* suggest that the degree of literalism could differ greatly between passages in a single text.²⁶ Moreover,

25 In the *Rose-Cassamus*, the variant ‘Phesonas’ appears only twice and exclusively in rhyme position (v. 1261; v. 1403).

26 On different strategies in vernacular translation, see for instance: W.P. Gerritsen, “Les relations littéraires entre la France et les Pays Bas au Moyen Âge: quelques observations sur la technique des traducteurs”, in *Actes du septième congrès national de la Société française de littérature comparée. Poitiers, 27–29 mai 1965: Moyen Âge et littérature comparée*, Paris 1976, 28–46; J. Beer, “Introduction”, in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. J. Beer, Leeds 2019, 3–4; D. Schoenaers, “Advocaten van de volkstaal”, in *Vertalen in de Nederlanden. Een cultuurgeschiedenis*, eds. D. Schoenaers et al., Amsterdam 2021, 26–183, references: 563–568, especially: 35–36 and 73–75. On translation and invention,

even if the *Cassamus* was a consistently conservative translation prior to its integration into the Alexander compilation, it is probable that the compiler would have copied some passages literally, while heavily editing others. Such an approach can also be found, for instance, in Lodewijk van Velthem's rendering of an older narrative about the battle of Wörringen in the fifth part (*Vifte partie*) of the *Spiegel historiael*.²⁷ If the texts of the slightly 'conservative' Brussels fragment and the wildly creative adaptation in the Antwerp text indeed belong to one and the same compilation version of *Cassamus* that oscillated between different degrees of literalism, it would seem that both were based on a Dutch model. Indeed, the text in the Brussels fragment shares some lines with the abridged *Rose-Cassamus*, which suggests that both these adaptations were derived from the same Dutch translation.

We should not hesitate to consider the possibility that the Brussels *Cassamus* fragment and the fragment of *Alexanders geesten* in Stuttgart are in fact remnants of a second copy of the Antwerp Alexander compilation and the *Ferguut* scribe produced two copies of the Dutch Alexander cycle. It is entirely plausible that Jacob van Maerlant's Alexander biography provided the backbone of a compilation that also included a Dutch retelling of the *Fuerre* and the *Cassamus*, much like the vulgate *Roman d'Alexandre* did in French. While manuscripts of the French vulgate cycle about Alexander may have inspired a project in which Dutch narratives about Alexander were grouped in one continuous and (semi)coherent narrative, it is clear that the Dutch compilation was not an exact imitation of such a French collection, but rather a creative reimagining, in which some

see: S. Menegaldo "De la traduction à l'invention. La naissance du genre romanesque au XIIe siècle", in *Translations médiévales. Cinq siècles de traductions en français au Moyen Âge (XIe-XVe siècles)*. Volume 1. *Étude et répertoire*, ed. C. Galderisi, Turnhout 2011, 295–323. The Flemish *Aiol*: J.H. Winkelman, *De Vlaamse 'Aiol'. Fragmenten van een middeleeuws riddergedicht uit het beghijnhofarchief van Breda*, Breda 2020.

27 The adaptation of Heelu's chronicle in Velthem's *Vifte partie*: E. Mantingh, "'Deen voren ende dander na'. De compositie van de *Vijfde Partie* en Velthems bewerking van Heelu's *Slag bij Woeringen*", in *De boeken van Velthem. Auteur, oeuvre en overlevering*, eds. B. Besamusca, R. Sleiderink, and G. Warnar, Hilversum 2009, 206–230.

narratives were, at least in part, heavily edited and the overarching narrative framework was modified. The way in which the *Voeux du paon* was inserted into the *Prise de Defur* did not call for the intervention of a narrator who suspended one storyline in order to pick up another: the opening lines of the *Voeux*, 'Après che qu'Alixandres ot Dedefur conquis / Et a force d'espee occis le duc Melchis' (§1, v. 1–2), logically follow Alexander's conquest of Defur. This strategy, in which a heterodiegetic 'I' ('ic') clearly signals switches between different narratives is also found elsewhere in Dutch compilations, for instance in the *Spiegel historiael*, the famous *Lancelot* compilation and Velthem's adaptation of the *Suite-Vulgate du Merlin*.

In spite of the references to a now lost Dutch version of the *Fuerre de Gadres*, it would be rash to assume that the *Roman d'Alexandre* was translated into Dutch in its entirety: the *Fuerre* (also the version by Alexandre de Paris) and the *Voeux du paon* also circulated independently from the other branches of the vulgate compilation. Nonetheless, it is possible (maybe even likely) that now lost or unidentified Dutch translations of other parts of the French cycle (for instance the vengeance sequels) were part of the Dutch compilation. Apart from *Alexanders geesten*, an adaptation of the *Roman van Cassamus*, the Dutch version of the *Fuerre de Gadres* and other (hypothetical) lost translations of French or Latin texts about Alexander, the compilation may have included excerpts from the Alexander biography in Maerlant's *Spiegel historiael* or (a retelling of) the fortunes of Alexander's forebears described in the Dutch translation of the *Roman de Florimont*. Other potential components may have included (excerpts from) *Van den neghen besten*, a Dutch poem on the Nine Worthies or Maerlant's adaptation of the *Secretum secretorum*, a mirror of princes in the guise of a letter from Aristotle to his pupil. The same framework is used in *Van smeinschen lede* (ca. 1265?/ before ca. 1350?), a short guide on anatomy, obstetrics, and hygiene.²⁸

28 Wim van Anrooij has argued that the Dutch poem on the Nine Worthies was composed by Jacob van Maerlant and predates the *Voeux du paon*. See: W. van Anrooij, *Helden van weleer: de Negen Besten in de Nederlanden (1300–1700)*, Amsterdam 1997, 67–73. For a refutation of this hypothesis and the suggestion that the Dutch poem was in fact an amplification of the passage on the

Conclusion and the identity of the compiler

Our analysis of the Antwerp fragment has made it clear that a compilation of Alexander texts must have existed in Middle Dutch. The Antwerp fragment is the remnant of a manuscript of this compilation copied by the *Ferguut* scribe around the middle of the fourteenth century. Two other fragments written by this scribe, now preserved in Stuttgart and Brussels, are remnants of another manuscript containing at least *Alexanders geesten* and the *Roman van Cassamus*, but it seems plausible that these texts were also included in the Antwerp compilation. In that case the *Ferguut* scribe probably copied the same compilation twice, which would not be surprising as he has also made two copies of Jacob van Maerlant's *Rijmbijbel*.

Is it possible to say something about the person who compiled these texts about Alexander the Great? Given that the Dutch narratives included in the compilation were composed and/or circulated in Brabant, and also given the localization of the *Ferguut* scribe (Brabant, maybe Brussels), it seems likely that the compiler was from Brabant. Additionally, the dating of the *Ferguut* scribe's activities gives us a *terminus ante quem* for the compilation, which must have been finished by about 1350. This brings us close in time and space to the emergence of another Middle Dutch compilation project that focused on another one of the Nine Worthies: King Arthur.

Our reconstruction of the Middle Dutch Alexander compilation is remarkably similar to the genesis of the famous *Lancelot* compilation (the final part of which is transmitted in manuscript The Hague, KB, 129 A 10). There, a thirteenth-century Flemish

Worthies in the *Voeux du paon* or, perhaps more likely, the Dutch translation thereof, see: J. van der Meulen, "Jaques ou Jacob. Le Nord et l'invention des Neuf Preux", in *La moisson des lettres. L'invention littéraire autour de 1300*, eds. H. Bellon-Méguelle, O. Collet, and Y. Foehr-Janssens, Turnhout 2011, 105–130. On Maerlant's adaptation of *Secretum secretorum*: J. Brams, "Jacob van Maerlants bewerking van het *Secretum secretorum*", in *Van vader- naar moedertaal: Latijn, Frans en Nederlands in de dertiende-eeuwse Nederlanden*, ed. R. Beyers = *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Zuid-Nederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal-en Letterkunde*, 53(1999), 181–194; *Van smeinscen lede. Een middel-nederlands geneeskundig geschrift. Zijn betekenis in het raam van de medische literatuur der dertiende eeuw*, ed. L. Elaut, Sint-Niklaas 1956.

translation of the French *Lancelot en prose* was enriched with (at least) seven interpolated Middle Dutch romances that must have circulated separately before. To this extended *Lancelot* cycle was added, moreover, an extensive prequel: the *Merlin* cycle. The main components of that cycle were Jacob van Maerlant's *Graal-Merlijn* (a verse translation of Robert de Boron's *Joseph and Merlin*) and a translation of the *Suite-Vulgate du Merlin* made by Lodewijk van Velthem around 1326.²⁹

A consensus has emerged that these stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table were brought together by the Brabant priest Lodewijk van Velthem who, around 1325, wove them into a coherent compilation (his name is also mentioned at the end of the The Hague manuscript of the *Lancelot* compilation). As his continuation of Jacob van Maerlant's *Spiegel historiael* shows, Velthem was highly interested in history, and with the combination of the *Merlin* cycle and the *Lancelot* cycle he brought together just about all the existing stories about King Arthur (including a part that was copied from the *Spiegel historiael*).³⁰

In our view, Lodewijk van Velthem fits remarkably well the profile of the compiler of the Alexander stories. In the Antwerp fragment, at least on the recto side, a heterodiegetic narrator looks back on previous events and anticipates what is going to follow. Since this narrator is not copied from the French, we assume that the compiler himself is speaking here. If, moreover, at least *Alexanders geesten*, a retelling of the *Fuerre de Gadres*, and the *Roman van Cassamus* were part of the compilation, it seems that here too an attempt was

29 On the *Merlin* and *Lancelot* cycles: F. Brandsma, "Translations and Adaptations of French Prose Romances, Including the Lancelot Compilation", in *The Arthur of the Low Countries. The Arthurian Legend in Dutch and Flemish Literature*, eds. B. Besamusca and F. Brandsma, Cardiff 2021, 147–193, and B. Besamusca and F. Brandsma, "What Makes a Narrative Cycle Work? The example of the Burgsteinfurt manuscript", in *Rewriting Medieval French Literature. Studies in Honour of Jane H. M. Taylor*, eds. L. Tether and K. Busby, Berlin/Boston 2021, 157–179.

30 On the identification of the *Lancelot* compiler: Brandsma, "Translations and Adaptations", 178–180. On Lodewijk van Velthem: *De boeken van Velthem*, eds. B. Besamusca, R. Sleiderink, and G. Warnar (especially "Ter inleiding", 7–30).

made to present the story of Alexander the Great as completely as possible in Middle Dutch and that in this compilation too the work of Jacob van Maerlant was given a prominent place. In any event, the Antwerp fragment gives an important indication that, in the first half of the fourteenth century in Brabant, several Middle Dutch texts about Alexander the Great were forged together into a monumental compilation and furthers our understanding of the role of compilations in the dissemination of Middle Dutch epic literature.