

## *Madelgijs*

### **Bob Duijvestijn**

“Lieber meyster Malagiß,  
zeügt uns ychts von uwer konst.”  
Malagiß sprach: “Die günst  
von myner meysterschafft bin ich uch gereyt.  
Sagt was ir wolt, mir wer leyt,  
det ich gegen uwern wille.”  
Der konig sweig nit stille.  
Er sprach in schympff und sagt:  
“Dünt alle, die hie sint betagt,  
entkleiden und nackent stan  
und alle zumale danczen gan.”  
Malagiß sprach: “Herre konig, das thün ich,  
aber darümb zornit nit uber mich;  
uwer bete faß ich zu handen.”  
Der konig was zu erst uff gestanden  
und det alle sin cleider uß,  
die er an hett, und stont bloß  
und die konigynne met.  
Ein iglicher dasselbe auch det.  
Suß machten sie einen dancz  
und hoppelten da her als ein ganß.  
Malagiß det den konig singen zü voren  
und blasen in sin riethoren.  
Nieman konde sich gedecken zwar.  
Der konig sprach: “Ein unselig jare  
Muß er han, der mir dut diese schamm.”  
Malagiß sprach: “Herr konig, sind ir gramm  
uff mich glich eym sot?”

Ich det nit anders dann uwer gebot.”  
 [ . . . . . ]  
 Der konig sprach: “Bij allen den gesonden  
 und lebent sint, herre Malagiß,  
 ir enkomt nummer usser Pariß,  
 das ir das hant gethan.  
 Stand still, man sol uch fan.  
 Zu Montfacon solt ir hangen,  
 das wirt nummer under gangen.” (3056-84; 3099-105)<sup>1</sup>

“Dear master Madelgijs, [said the king,] show us your skills.” Madelgijs said, “I am willing to give you a taste of my high art. Tell me what you prefer; it would pain me to go against your wishes.” The king did not hesitate for a moment. He said jokingly, “Let all those present undress and dance around naked.” Madelgijs said, “I will, my Lord, but don’t be angry at me for doing so. I will carry out your request.” The king was the first to rise and undress and stand there naked. The queen did the same. Thereupon the others followed their example. Everybody danced and tottered about like geese. Madelgijs had the king sing at the top of his lungs and blow his reed. No one was really able to cover himself. The king said, “Cursed be the man who shames me in this way.” Madelgijs said, “It is foolish of you to be angry at me. All I have done is carrying out your order.” [ . . . ] The king spoke, “On the lives of those who are healthy, Sir Madelgijs, you will never be able to leave Paris for doing this to me. Do not

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, quotes from the German *Malagis* are cited from the Haase et al. edition. For the Middle Dutch *Madelgijs* fragments and the analogous passages in the German *Malagis*, see the Duijvestijn *Madelgijs* edition.

move, you will be imprisoned and hanged at Mont-facoen.”<sup>2</sup>

At the court of Duke Beuve van Egermont, the twins Madelgijs and Vivien are born at the precise moment when heathen forces invade the city. Vivien is kidnapped and taken to heathen Monbrant, where Beufloer, king Yvorin’s daughter, raises him. The other child is saved from the heathen by the lady of the court, Rose. When Rose is torn to pieces by wild animals in a wood, the child is unharmed thanks to a magic earring. Oriande van Rosefloer finds him and takes him to her residence, where he is baptized and receives the Christian name Madelgijs.

Oriande’s brother Baldarijs initiates Madelgijs into necromancy. The two sorcerers travel to the college in Paris where Madelgijs soon surpasses everybody in black art. His reputation has also come to the attention of King Charlemagne; he asks Madelgijs to show him his skills. The quote from the text heading this contribution shows that this event takes place at the expense of the king. The humiliations Madelgijs puts him through make Charlemagne so angry that he swears he will kill the sorcerer. Because he is unable to take action against Madelgijs, Charlemagne travels to Montpellier to lay siege to the residence of Madelgijs’s uncle. From this moment, one part of the story concentrates itself upon the struggle between King Charlemagne and Madelgijs’s family.

The other part is devoted to the fight between the heathen and the Christians at Rosefloer and Egermont. In this struggle Madelgijs is faithfully assisted by the elf Spiet, Oriande’s swift messenger who is capable of practicing witchcraft. The Spanish king Anthenoer lays siege to Rosefloer to win Oriande as his bride. Vivien, who was raised a heathen, is a member of Anthenoer’s company. On the island Vulcanus near Rosefloer, Madelgijs tames the magical horse Beyaerd, who helps him to defeat king Anthenoer. The fight between Madelgijs and Vivien ends inconclusively.

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<sup>2</sup> All translations from the Middle Dutch are the author’s.

Madelgijs travels to Paris and uses his sorcery to release his father from prison. He subsequently goes to Montpellier to relieve this city besieged by Charlemagne. Madelgijs imprisons Charlemagne, but the latter first wants reconciliation with the count of Montpellier at the insistence of his barons. Madelgijs is excluded from this reconciliation. Meanwhile, Yvorin van Monbrant lays siege to Egermont. A duel between Madelgijs and Vivien ends inconclusively, after which the two brothers are reconciled. Together they liberate the city, whereupon the wedding feast of Vivien and Beufloer concludes the episode.

The heroes of the Bueve kinship form two groups and go to Mayorcken to rescue Ysane, the sister of Madelgijs's mother, from the hands of the heathen king. Madelgijs conquers the city and Ysane is liberated; on the high sea Vivien and Baladarijs, who do not play a part in the "mother epic" *Renaut de Montauban*, are ambushed by the enemy and killed. The fallen are buried at Egermont, where Beufloer dies of grief. In Dordone the marriage between Aijmijn and Charlemagne's sister Aye takes place. During the wedding feast Spiet is killed by Beyaerd, who kicks him.

In the longer Dutch version, represented by the Dutch prose romance and some verse fragments, Spiet's death is preceded by Oriande's search for Madelgijs, who has suddenly disappeared from the story. Spiet's death concludes the French version and the short Dutch version; the longer version narrates the subsequent adventures of Madelgijs. After having lived as a hermit for a number of years, he returns to Rosefloer, where he defeats the heathen permanently. Because Oriande has also died at that point—she does not play a part in any version of *Renaut de Montauban*—Madelgijs again withdraws into a hermitage, only to reappear from it when the *quatre fils Aymon* need his help in their fight against the king and the heathen.

## Details

Around 1300 an unknown poet-adaptor adapted the *Madelgijs* into Middle Dutch from a French example of the *chanson de geste Maugis d'Aigremont*. It is a very free adaptation in which the poet-adaptor followed the broad narrative outline of his French source but made his own choices as far as language use and verse technique were concerned. Not surprisingly, he did not use a written French source but transcribed the story after it had come to his attention by way of recitation or through an oral or written summary.

The Middle Dutch *Madelgijs* is part of a rich tradition. Of no other Middle Dutch Charlemagne romance have so many manuscripts survived. The fourteen fragments that were saved are part of ten different manuscripts.<sup>3</sup> In total approximately 3280 verses have been handed down. The prose romance exists in two versions, a shorter one and a longer one. The short one is represented by seven fourteenth-century manuscripts and by the German *Malagis* that was written at the palatine court in Heidelberg around 1460/1470. Two manuscripts of this German *Malagis* can be found in the university library at Heidelberg (Cpg 340 and Cpg 315). Judging from the type of mistakes and corrections, we may conclude that the manuscript Cpg 340 is an autograph or a first transcript of the concept (Duijvestijn, “Niederländische Dichtung”). In or shortly before 1480, when this manuscript was copied, the scribe made the orthography slightly more uniform and modern (Cpg 315). The verses at the beginning of this contribution originate from manuscript Cpg 340 of the German *Malagis* which contains a translation of the integral short version that is as literal as possible. In total the German *Malagis* contains 23003 lines. In the slightly awkward translation by an author

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<sup>3</sup> For the tradition, see Duijvestijn, *Madelgijs*, pp. 8-16; Besamusca, *Repertorium van de Middelnederlandse Karelepiek*, pp. 57-82; and Kienhorst, *De handschriften van de Middelnederlandse ridderepiek*, vol. 1, pp. 127-39.

who was fluent neither in Middle Dutch nor in the regional German (Rhine Frankish), the Dutch source shines through nearly all the verses, especially through the rhymes. That is why this translation can rightfully be considered a crown witness of the Dutch tradition of the material.

The longer version is found in three other fragmentary manuscripts and in the Dutch prose romance known to exist in fifteen editions. The eldest one was printed by Jan van Ghelen (Antwerp 1556).<sup>4</sup>

### **The relation between the longer and shorter Dutch versions**

“Longer” and “shorter” are relative concepts and, as such, related to each other. Judging from the manuscript tradition and the rhymes, we are able to determine that the Dutch adaptor of the longer version quite simply copied the shorter version and added new episodes (Duijvestijn, *Madelgijs*, pp. 35-37). For instance, the Leiden manuscript (Ltk. 202 and 203) contains passages that coincide nearly completely with the German translation but also a passage that is absent from the German text and, in all probability, belongs to the longer version.

The investigation of the rhymes also shows that there are dialectical differences between the two Middle Dutch versions. The shorter version has clear (West) Flemish origins, while the longer version was adapted by one or more poets who can be localized more to the east, in East Flanders or, more specifically, in Southeast Flanders (Berg, rev. of Duijvestijn, *Madelgijs*).

The episodes that were added to the longer version largely fall outside the scope of the world of the heroic epic; they describe events that have an outspoken legendary character, for instance, the story of the conversion of Pruscen, the meeting between Oriande and the Bishop of Canterbury on the high seas, or her visit to the grave of *Sinte Patrix*.

The shorter version, moreover, contains a number of striking stanzas. Without further introduction the adaptor narrates how, during the wed-

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<sup>4</sup> This version has been edited by E.T. Kuiper (see Works Cited).

ding feast of Spiet and Ysane, Oriande undertakes a journey around the world to look for Madelgijs, who is, of course, among the wedding guests. The (second) siege of Rosefloer at the end of the story also lacks coherence.

### **The relation between the French and Dutch traditions**

The French *Maugis d'Aigremont* has come down to us in three miscellanies. If we compare the Dutch version as represented by the German *Malagis* with the French *Maugis d'Aigremont* text of Vernay's edition, we find that the Dutch version only roughly corresponds to the French tradition. In any case, the connection between the French and the short Dutch version seems rather complex and unclear. It is certain, though, that the Dutch version contains a free adaptation of the material that we know from the verse redactions of the *Maugis d'Aigremont*. The adaptation has the following main characteristics:

1. It breaks with the unity of composition because the reunion of Madelgijs and Vivien takes place approximately halfway through the story, that is, when Egermont is liberated. In the French version, on the other hand, the reunion constitutes the climax and hence (practically) the end of the story.
2. It expands the original material with new adventures, especially those in which Madelgijs and Vivien jointly continue the struggle against the heathen and the unjust king. Consequently, the expansion of the (short) Dutch version is one hundred percent when compared to the French version. The *Maugis d'Aigremont* of the Vernay edition contains 9078 verses; the German *Malagis* contains 23003 verses. It should be noted here that, in the *Malagis*, a German verse with on average eight syllables is, of course, substantially shorter than a verse with twelve syllables in the *Maugis d'Aigremont*.

3. It shifts the emphasis. The magical aspect that occupies an increasingly important part in the later verse redactions of the *Renaut de Montauban* and the *Maugis d'Aigremont* (Verelst, “L’enchanteur d’épopée” and “Le personnage de Maugis”) becomes an independent and more comic and grotesque element, as it were. Finally, the role of women and of eroticism is considerably more important in the Dutch tradition than in the French tradition.

What is the precise relation between the French *chanson de geste* *Maugis d'Aigremont* and the Middle Dutch *Madelgijs* (short version)? It is highly improbable that the Middle Dutch *Madelgijs* is based directly on a French version that has been lost. As we stated earlier, all French manuscripts containing this material represent the same version that corresponds only roughly to the Dutch tradition (Suard, “La prose manuscrite”). The literal correspondences between the Middle Dutch *Madelgijs* and the *Maugis d'Aigremont* are extremely scarce.

The relation between *Madelgijs* and *Maugis d'Aigremont* is so loose that we may categorically argue that the Dutch author did not adapt his material from a written source. After all, in their plot description, the French and the Dutch traditions vary considerably, but the French and Dutch authors also treat their material differently on a more detailed level. For example, both versions follow the same general plot line in the episode that describes Spiet’s death. The French version requires 34 lines (duodecasyllables) for this episode; the Dutch poet uses 99 lines with, on average, eight syllables. This difference is largely determined by the fact that the French poet is rather down to earth in his narration, while the Dutch poet is more susceptible to what could be described as the psychological background to the events. When Spiet is accidentally killed by the horse Beyaerd in a race, *Madelgijs*’s grief is disposed of in two lines in the French version:



Qui dont vëist Maugis dolent et abosmé  
qui por l'amor la fee l'avoit issi amé. (9047-48)<sup>5</sup>

Look at Maugis filled with sadness, out of love for the  
fairy [Oriande] who loved him so.

The Dutch poet needs considerably more lines for a description of  
Madelgijs's reaction to Spiet's death:

Aber Malagisen wart ubel zu müt,  
Der darumb was nach verwut,  
Das er Spiet sach erslagen:  
“Eya, Spiet, dich enkan ich nummerme volklagen,  
nu han ich verdient die hell.  
Erdot han ich den besten frünt und gesell,  
den ich ye mit augen gesach.  
Eya, Beyart, diesen slag  
soltu engelten sonder lenger blib,  
es müß dich ymmers kosten den lip,  
das du diesen mort hast gethan.” (22864-74)

Malagis felt the anger rising within him when he saw how  
Spiet had died: “O Spiet, I can never pity you enough.  
That is why I deserve to be in hell. I am responsible for  
the death of my best friend and companion. O Beyaerd,  
you will have to suffer for this disaster. You will have to  
pay for it with your life, because you have caused this  
death.”

The Dutch and the French versions are also different as far as the mi-  
crostructure of the language is concerned. The literal correspondences are

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<sup>5</sup> French text is cited from the Vernay edition of *Maugis d'Aigremont*.

so few in number that one has to assume that the Dutch adaptor drew exclusively or mainly on the oral tradition. He knew the broad outline either from an oral recitation or from an intermediary, for instance somebody who summarized the French *chanson* for him.<sup>6</sup>

### The sorcerer Madelgijs

In this overview I would like to pay further attention to two notable differences between the Dutch *Madelgijs* and the French *chanson de geste Maugis d'Aigremont*. They concern Madelgijs's role as a sorcerer and the role of women in the feudal masculine world.

In the French *chanson de geste*, the sorcerer Madelgijs appears for the first time in *Renaut de Montauban* as a member of the family and brother-in-arms of the *quatre fils Aymon*. In the French *chanson*, Madelgijs goes through two remarkable changes (Verelst, "Le personnage de Maugis"). First of all, in the course of the story he develops from a secondary character into a key player in the conflict between Renaut and Charlemagne. Secondly, in the literary tradition the part of Madelgijs also changes: later manuscripts increasingly emphasize Madelgijs's sorcery; moreover, the latter is increasingly presented in a more comical light. In the Dutch *Renout van Montalbaen* the magic has an autonomous role; Madelgijs no longer uses it exclusively to rescue Renout and his brothers from their perilous position but also to entertain the audience with jokes and tricks (Duijvestijn, "Le personnage de Maugis").

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<sup>6</sup> This kind of procedure is often used by Middle Dutch adaptors of French epics. See Gerritsen, "Les relations entre la France et les Pays-Bas au Moyen Age" and "Vertalingen van Oudfranse litteraire werken." Irene Spijker has shown convincingly that in the case of the *Renaut de Montauban* the profound differences between the French and the Dutch versions of the material ought to be largely attributed to the oral tradition (Spijker, *Aymijns kinderen hoog te paard*).

In the *Madelgijs* the magical element is emphasized even more strongly than in the *Renout van Montalbaen* (Duijvestijn, “Le personnage de Maugis”). In fact, on the level of the epic plot there is no or hardly any difference between the French *chanson Maugis d’Aigremont* and its Dutch adaptation. In both epics the conflict between Charlemagne and the Beuve clan concentrates itself on the siege of Montpellier by Charlemagne. There is only a difference in the way in which the motivation of this conflict is explained. The poet of the French *chanson* states matter-of-factly that Charlemagne lays siege to Montpellier; after all, the count of Montpellier is Madelgijs’s uncle. The Middle Dutch adaptor is dissatisfied with this unmotivated statement. He blames the enmity between Charlemagne and the Beuve clan squarely on Madelgijs’s magic.

The quote at the beginning of this contribution shows when and why this enmity came into being: at the college in Paris where Madelgijs undergoes further training in black art and performs his tricks in the most ingenious way. These and a number of other scenes in which Madelgijs’s sorcery occupies centre stage are absent from the French tradition. In the Dutch tradition, Charlemagne’s anger against this sorcerer and his family grows strongly following Madelgijs’s first performance in Paris; as a victim of ever new tricks, Charlemagne has an implacable hatred for Madelgijs.

At the end of the French *chanson de geste*, reconciliation takes place between Charlemagne and the entire Beuve family; in the Middle Dutch version, Madelgijs is explicitly excluded from this reconciliation. This may be attributed to the fact that Madelgijs does not use his sorcery only to liberate himself or the members of his family from a perilous position but also and especially to ridicule the king.

## Women’s roles

Three women play dominant roles in the *Madelgijs*: Oriande, Madelgijs’s foster mother and future lover; Beufloer, Vivien’s lover; and Ysane, lover of the elf Spiet. In these love relations the initiative is taken

by the women. When Madelgijs discovers that he is a foundling, he immediately wants to look for his parents. Since Oriande loves him passionately, she tries to stop him from this endeavour with a trick. She declares her love candidly:

“durch uch lide ich unstußes leben  
wann ich uch mynne vor alle man.” (2080-81)

“because of you I suffer greatly, because I love you above  
all others.”

When Oriande kisses Madelgijs in public and her brother Baldarijs reproaches her for this act, she defends her behaviour by giving a speech about love in its purest form, the “edele minne metter keeste” [“true, sincere love”] that needs no concealment (V, 28).<sup>7</sup> This love is more sincere than the casual, purely sexual affairs her brother has:

“Hi es curliaen ende ruut.  
Heefti snachs een bruut,  
daer hi smorgens af es quite.  
Dats altoes sine vite:  
dats minne gelijc eenre beeste.” (V, 23-27)

“He is rude and uncivilized. When he has had a woman at night he dismisses her in the morning. That is ever his behaviour: it’s the kind of love made by animals.”

Oriande says about these kinds of lovers:

“Sonder als die vede staet,

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<sup>7</sup> This quote and the following ones are from fragment V (Paris, BN, ms. Néerlandais 19) in Duijvestijn’s edition of the *Madelgijs*.

dan driven si haer feeste  
 met genoechte als een beeste:  
 beestich heetic dese minne.” (V, 46-49)

“But when they have an erection they are horny and rut-  
 ting like an animal; to me this kind of love is beastly.”

According to Oriande, the most important characteristics of true love are reciprocity and the faith with which love is practiced. When Oriande sees Madelgijs again after fifteen years at the wedding of Spiet and Ysane, she laments the disloyalty of her lover who had forgotten all about her. She does so in a love dialogue with Madelgijs (ll. 22232-91) whose rhyme (alternating rhyme) also *deviates* from the traditional epic verse with rhyming couplets.

It is not only the behaviour of the sorcerer-knight Madelgijs that is responsible for the fact that the epic world of the *Madelgijs* (and to a lesser extent of *Renout van Montalbaen*) exists partly outside the feudal order (Duijvestijn, “Elegast, Madelgijs en Obroen”).<sup>8</sup> A poetic program that emphasizes love as mutual and erotic also takes place outside the feudal relations between men and women. In this new concept of love, women play an essential part. The Dutch poet of the *Madelgijs* no longer reduces a woman to her traditional role as model wife, a role that mainly manifests itself as a talent for subjugation to masculine supremacy. Oriande, Beufloor, and Ysane, the three female characters in the *Madelgijs*, show clearly that a woman in the later Middle Dutch heroic epic is entitled to her own position in life and love, that is, together with her beloved.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See also Berg, “Vorm en inhoud.”

<sup>9</sup> The Dutch version of this article was translated into English by Christien Franken.

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