

Karel ende Elegast

Edited with an introduction and notes
by Bart Besamusca and Hans van Dijk
Translated by Thea Summerfield

Karel ende Elegast, the story about Charlemagne who goes out stealing in the middle of night on God's orders and in the process discovers a conspiracy on his life, is known as the jewel in the crown of the Dutch Charlemagne tradition. The text owes this qualification not just to its literary qualities. The fact that this is a compact story, numbering only 1400 lines, has also contributed to the high esteem it enjoys (van Oostrom, 2006, pp. 234-41). In addition *Karel ende Elegast* is the only Middle Dutch Charlemagne romance that has survived in its entirety.

Details

Karel ende Elegast is extant in incomplete form in a number of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts. In each case it concerns single leaves or bifolia containing no more than several hundred lines of verse. A survey based on Besamusca (1983, pp. 37-44), Kienhorst (1988, 80-87), and Klein (1989 and 1995) provides the following information:

- a bifolium kept in Arras (siglum: M, after its discoverer F. Mone), c. 250 lines, written in a preponderantly Brabantine dialect (van den Berg, 1987) in the second half of the fourteenth century;
- 17 stubs kept in Gent (siglum: Ge), containing the remains of 618 lines, copied in the dialect of the southwest of Brabant in the second half of the fourteenth century;

- a bifolium kept in The Hague (siglum: H, after its discoverer J.W. Holtrop), c. 130 lines, copied in the dialect of the southeast of Limburg in the fourth quarter of the fourteenth century;
- two leaves kept in Namur (siglum: N), c. one hundred lines, copied in a Flemish dialect in the fourth quarter of the fourteenth century;
- two bifolia kept in Munich (siglum: G, after the discoverer G. Gött), c. 200 lines, copied in a Limburg dialect between c. 1375 and 1425;
- a bifolium kept in Brussels (siglum: Br), well over one hundred lines, copied in a dialect of the southeast of Limburg between c. 1375 and c. 1425;

In the *Karlmeinet*-compilation a complete Ripuarian version of *Karel ende Elegast* is found (siglum: K). Although the compilation was probably produced between 1320 and 1350, the copy dates from c. 1480 (Bastert, 2010, pp. 98-102).

We owe it to the printers that *Karel ende Elegast* has survived as a complete Middle Dutch text: in its versified form the text was printed several times (Besamusca, 1983, pp. 43-52; Duinhoven and van Thienen, 1990). Of the oldest surviving printed edition only a single page survives; it is kept in Cambridge (siglum: F). This book was printed by Gherardus Leempt in 's Hertogenbosch (Brabant) between 1484 and 1488. The oldest (virtually) complete extant printed copy was produced in Delft between 1486 and 1488 (siglum: A). It is not known whether this incunabulum was printed by Jacob Jacobsz. van der Meer or by Christiaen Snellaert, as the printing type used was utilised by both printers. The only surviving copy is kept in the Royal Library in The Hague.

Three other printed editions may be dated around 1500. In Antwerp Govaert Bac printed *Karel ende Elegast* at least twice: between 1493 and some time after 1500 (siglum: B) and between 1496 and 1499 (siglum: C). The only copy of printed edition B is kept in Berlin; the unique copy C in Washington. In St. Peterburg a copy is kept of a printed edition produced after 1493 and probably after C (siglum: L).

All other known printed editions date from the sixteenth century: printed edition D from Antwerp, printed around 1530 by Adriaen van Berghen, Jan van Doesborch, or Jan Berntsz (conserved in Brussels); and printed edition E, produced in Antwerp between c. 1550 and 1608 by Jan van Ghelen (also conserved in Brussels).

The tradition

Repeatedly the presence of fairy tale elements in the story has received comment. The figure of Elegast especially, who understands the language of the animals and knows how to put people to sleep by using magic, appears better suited to a fairy tale than to a *chanson de geste*. Moreover, stories about a king who, together with a magical helpmate, sets out in the night as a thief and discovers a conspiracy have been found in Finland, Greece, Russia, the Baltic states, Germany, and Bohemia. Such striking correspondences suggest that *Karel ende Elegast* originated in the world of the oral literature, and that it was the popularity of the *chansons de geste* that led to a new variant in which Charlemagne was the king and Elegast the thief (Varvaro, 1995, pp. 269-75). Unfortunately that original story has not survived.

Scholarly opinions as regards the origin of this new variant diverge. As an Old French original that may have served as an exemplar has not come down to us, it has been suggested that the poet of *Karel ende Elegast* composed an original work (Ramondt, 1917; Duinhoven, 1975-81). It is a likely supposition which has been accepted by a considerable number of scholars. However, caution needs to be exercised here as there are strong indications that at one time a French *chanson de geste* about

Charles as a thief did exist. References to this story are found in *Renaut de Montauban* (c. 1200), *Elie de Saint-Gilles* (late twelfth century) and *Restor du Paon* which dates from the early fourteenth century (Varvaro, 1995, pp. 262-65). The course of the narrative in the French text may be reconstructed by reference to a work from Old Norse literature. The *Karlamagnús saga*, a compilation of prose adaptations of Old French Charlemagne texts from the middle of the thirteenth century, begins with the story about the young Charles who, shortly after the death of his father Pippin, is told by an angel to go out stealing with a thief and subsequently discovers a conspiracy (Hieatt, 1975-80, vol. 1, pp. 54-102). In this story the thief is called Basin, a typical name for thieves that is also found elsewhere. It is Charles himself who discovers the conspiracy to kill him during his coronation. In the traitor Renfrei's bedroom he eavesdrops, together with Basin, on a conversation and catches the blood of Renfrei's protesting wife, who is hit on the nose by her husband.

The narrative in the *Karlamagnús saga* is strongly reminiscent of *Karel ende Elegast*. Does this mean that the Middle Dutch poet knew the now lost *Chanson de Basin*? In that case it is highly likely that he adapted the Old French text in a creative manner, for example by giving the thief a different role and a different name and by setting the scene not in Charles's youth but at a time when he is a mighty king and emperor (Janssens, 1988, pp. 1-88; de Ruiter, 2005).

There is no certainty as to the time of *Karel ende Elegast*'s date of composition. Although some scholars regard the work as a very early representative of the genre and assume that the text was written even before 1200, according to the *communis opinio* the Middle Dutch *Karel ende Elegast* is a thirteenth-century text (van Dijk and Finet-van der Schaaf, 1994, p. 1). On the basis of the versification used in *Karel ende Elegast*, the linguist Evert van den Berg dates the work somewhat more accurately. He has shown that the text consists of sentences which are on average quite short; more specifically, they extend over two lines of verse, while verse limits and syntactic limits usually coincide. This style

probably suggests that *Karel ende Elegast* originates from the first half of the thirteenth century (van den Berg, 1998, pp. 247-48).

On the basis of the dialect of the rhyme words it is usually assumed that the poet was a Fleming (van den Berg, 1985, p. 22). However, does this also imply that he worked in Flanders? As the career of the poet Jacob van Maerlant (c. 1230-1295) shows, this need by no means have been the case. After all, Jacob was a Fleming, but he lived for many years in Holland where he produced works for the aristocracy of the county of Holland (van Oostrom, 1996).

In the case of the *Karel ende Elegast* it has been suggested that the poet wrote his verse story for audiences and readers situated in Brabant. This hypothesis is based on a textual witness from Brabant. In his treatise *Der leken spiegel* (“*The Layman’s Mirror*”), written between 1325 and 1330, the Antwerp town clerk Jan van Boendale comments in the chapter “Hoe dichters dichten sullen ende wat si hantieren sullen” (“How poets should write and what they should be capable of”) that many nonsensical tales about Charlemagne are current. Boendale records that Charles (in Dutch: Karel) is sometimes said to have been named after the place where he was conceived by a servant girl: on a cart (de Vries, 1844-48, Book III, Chap. 15, ll. 136-39). And, Boendale writes, in yet another story one might read that Charles went out stealing, which is denied vehemently by Boendale (ll. 133-35). It may safely be assumed that Boendale was referring to *Karel ende Elegast* here. If this is correct, the story was known in Brabant.

Limburg has also been suggested as the area where the Middle Dutch version of Charles’s nocturnal thieving adventure originated (van Oostrom, 2006, p. 239). Three out of the six extant fragments show characteristics of the Limburg dialect. And should it not be remembered that the story is set somewhere in Limburg around Charles’s *palts* Ingelheim on the Rhine and Eggeric’s fortress Eggermonde (Aigremont near Liège on the Meuse)? And that in Latin chronicles, written in the vicinity of Limburg (Duinhoven, 1975-81, vol. 2, pp. 25-26), songs (*carmina*) are mentioned about Charlemagne who was told by an angel to

go stealing and, when doing so, discovered a conspiracy? And is it not the case that the great king and emperor was buried at Aachen, the very place where the story of Karel and Elegast was incorporated into the *Karlmeinet*-compilation?

In view of the uncertainty as regards the communities for whom the poet of *Karel ende Elegast* worked, regrettably little can be said with any certainty about the cultural context in which the work functioned. It has been suggested that the story served as propaganda for the dukes of Brabant to support the claim that they descended from Charlemagne (van Dijk, 1987, 1105). Evert van den Berg, on the other hand, assumes a Flemish environment for *Karel ende Elegast*. He thinks it likely that the patron for the work lived within the sphere of the Flemish comital court; he argues that the text, if regarded as a plea for the existing social order, would have suited the perception of the world held at that court (van den Berg, 1998, pp. 248-49).

In the absence of new data it does not seem possible to substantiate assumptions about provenance and targeted social circles for *Karel ende Elegast* by convincing arguments.

Artistic achievement

The literary qualities of *Karel ende Elegast* are self-evident. We have here a story, told in a strikingly straightforward way, the attractive and occasionally amusing content of which has been shrewdly structured. Among the distinctive properties of the text, the plot's build up of suspense should certainly also be mentioned (van Dijk, 1987, pp. 1100-01). When, at the beginning of the romance, the angel has delivered his message, the reader asks himself, as does Charles, what God, who ever desires what is good, may mean with this command to commit a sin, that is, to go out and steal something. As soon as this question has been answered by the discovery of the conspiracy (ll. 973-75), a new question presents itself: will Charles manage to escape the danger and how? The answer is given at the end of the story by the single combat between

Eggeric and Elegast. In addition to these two main questions, the poet increases the tension by means of a range of questions about details that are always answered within a short space of time. A fine example is offered by Charles's meeting with the unknown black knight in the forest. Charles's fear that it is the devil he has encountered (ll. 285-88) creates a tension that is relieved as soon as it becomes clear that the black knight is none other than Elegast (l. 475).

The composition of the work is governed by its spatial structure. The narrative is set in just three places, which may be imagined as the three points of a triangle (van Dijk, 1987, p. 1101). They are separated by descriptions of the journeys that the protagonists make from one place to another. At the beginning of the romance Ingelheim is the location (ll. 3-165). Next, after a short ride (ll. 166-94), Charles finds himself in the forest (ll. 195-675), which he subsequently leaves with Elegast to ride to Eggermonde (ll. 676-93). After the events at Eggermonde (ll. 694-1045), Charles returns to his castle (ll. 1046-54). The final episode is set at Ingelheim again (ll. 1055-1401).

Each of the locations is the domain of one of the three main protagonists (van Dijk, 1987, pp. 1101-02). Charles resides at Ingelheim and has enfeoffed Eggeric with Eggermonde; Elegast, being a banned vassal, necessarily lives in the forest. This constellation gives the reader a clue as to the deeper meaning of the narrative. Clearly it can be regarded as the description of the relationship between a liege lord and his two vassals, one seemingly loyal and the other seemingly disloyal. Whereas the treacherous Eggeric enjoys the esteem of his lord, loyal Elegast has been renounced by him. It is God, who, as the supreme overlord, makes Charles, his loyal servant, understand that he has acted unwisely. By means of supernatural interference order has been restored at the end of the story: the loyal vassal regains the position he merits, the treacherous vassal the punishment he deserves. If viewed in this way, the story propagates the message that the social order benefits from a wise overlord and a loyal vassal (Claassens, 2002, pp. 7-8). On a more general level *Karel ende Elegast* teaches that God will be with us if we, like the

mighty king and emperor Charles, allow ourselves to be guided by him full of faith (ll. 1402-05).

Edition, notes and translation

Like earlier editions of the text that were accompanied by a translation into French (van Dijk and Finet-van der Schaaf, 1994) or German (Bastert, Besamusca, and Dauven-van Knippenberg, 2005), this edition of *Karel ende Elegast* is based on Incunabulum A (see also below, Editorial Principles). Following the edition of the text and its translation, explanatory notes have been provided for a limited number of lines, notably information about historical and fictional persons, facts and customs of a historical and/or cultural nature, references to quotations from the Bible, and allusions to other medieval works. We also discuss important emendations of the text and elucidate, if necessary, problems connected with the translation. In a few cases, an interpretative comment is made on a particular passage.

The English translation was made in close cooperation with the editors. It aims to provide readers with a line-by-line, yet easily readable rendition of the Middle Dutch text in modern English. Only in a few cases was it necessary to transpose lines; in those cases it never concerns more than two or three lines of the Middle Dutch text (see, for example, ll. 1122-24, 1187-88). Repetitions of vocabulary in Middle Dutch, a characteristic stylistic feature of the text, have been retained as much as possible in the translation. As the referential use of personal and possessive pronouns in the Middle Dutch text may sometimes lead to confusion, pronouns have on occasion been replaced by the name of the person concerned. Doublets (as, for example, “seide ende vraghede” ‘said and asked’) have usually been translated by a single verb. Other, more specific problems are discussed in the Notes.

Editorial principles

As the base for our edition of *Karel ende Elegast* the text as found in Incunabulum A has been used. The only surviving copy of this printed edition is kept in the Royal Library in The Hague, siglum 169 G 63. This base text was chosen as Incunabulum A contains the oldest (practically) complete extant redaction of *Karel ende Elegast*. In the left-hand margin of the edited text line numbers have been added; the right-hand margin contains references to the sequential signatures in the printed text.

This is a critical edition of *Karel ende Elegast*. This means that some of the readings found in the base text have been emended. It concerns the following adaptations:

1. In Incunabulum A the text of *Karel ende Elegast* has been structured by means of capital letters of two lines deep. In our edition this segmentation is indicated by means of indentation.
2. The use of *u/v/w* and *i/j* has been adapted to conform to modern conventions. The same applies to the use of capital letters. The punctuation as found in the Incunabulum A text of *Karel ende Elegast* (double points or semi-elevated points, all at the end of the line) has been adapted to present usage.
3. Abbreviations have been expanded without notice. In the Incunabulum A text of *Karel ende Elegast* abbreviations are sparse. The overline has been used by the printer for a nasal (men, hem) as well as for *de* (ende). A comma above a letter represents *er* (verloren, souder).
4. Words printed as compounds or as separate words are presented in the same way as in the Incunabulum A text. Incomprehension as a result of the unusual form of the word is obviated by the translation in modern English.

5. It has not been our aim to reconstruct the original *Karel ende Elegast*. Only in those places where the text of Incunabulum A is incomprehensible or contradicts other story elements have we emended the edited text. All such emendations are printed in italics. They are listed below; in a few cases explication has been added. Wherever necessary, the sources of the emendation are given in brackets. These sources are indicated by the conventional sigla, listed in the introduction to the description of the textual transmission.

Line	Edition	Incunabulum A
2	hoorter (Ge, M, B, C, D, E)	hoort
42	ten (Ge, M, D, E)	den
47	Met	Het
59	sine (Ge, M, K)	si
67	Ic	c
84	harentare (Ge, M, Br)	hare tale
96	Met	et
134	sede (Ge, M, N, K, B, C, D, E)	seden
135	dede (Ge, M, N, K, B, C, D, E)	deden
156	Doen	oen
177	hadden si (N, K)	haddi
180	ende ... naer (Ge, N, K)	—
208	avontueren (K, B, C, D, E)	avontuer
217	verdreven	verdreeven
226	hi was (K, B, C)	was hi
254	veerde (K, B, C, D, E)	werde
272	Mit	it
286	hi (K, B, C, D, E)	—
	ende (K, D, E)	en

308	Doe (K, B, C, D, E)	–
368	Doen	oen
372	ict (K, B, C, D, E)	ic
391	haer (B, C, D)	gaer
411	was (Br, K, B, C, D, E)	–
	slaghen (Br, K, B, C, D, E)	sloeghen
423	nalic (Br, K)	manlic
436	gheval (Br, K, B, C, D, E)	ongheval
438	mi (Br, K, B, C, D, E)	nu
443	Doe hi sach (Br, K)	Die sach hi
475	ic hete (Br, K)	antwoerde

According to Charles's reaction in lines 486-89 it is here that Elegast gives his name rather than in line 501 as is stated in Incunabulum A.

483	fijn (H, B, C, D)	sin
484	duncken (H, K, B, C, D, E)	dencken
487	blider	blide
488	dant hadde (H, K)	al haddet
491	ghi hebt mi geseit (H, K)	nu segghet
492	nu segt mi (H, K)	ende
495	en	en en
501	antworde (H, K)	ic hiete
519	moeten (K, B, E)	moetent
525	geen (H, B, C, D, E)	en
534	verloren	verloreu
553	heefden (H)	heefter
572	cluysen	cluysn
593	Die	Di
598	Wille ... macht (H, K)	–
599	ende (H, K)	laet ons
601	onthier (H, K)	beyt hier
602	dat (H, K)	dan
630	Als	ls
641	hi (H, K, B, C, D, E)	–

649	En (H, K, B, C, D, E)	Men
	of gijt (H, K, B, C, D, E)	ghi
653	hi (H, K, B, C, D, E)	gi
671	hangen	hangeu
676	Si (H, K, B, C, D, E)	Hi
682	nam (K, B, C, D, E)	namt
690	volchde	volchdde
729	mueren (K)	—
738	ane (G, K, B, C, D, E)	aue
747	coninc	conic
754	dat (H, G, K, B, C, D, E)	daer
778	Elegast	legast
782	honden	houden
803	Elegast ... naer (K)	Mer hi en wiste niet hoe naer
816	voort (K)	—
823	wet (B, C, D)	weet
824	Doe	oe
832	een (B, C, D)	en
864	Dit	it
870-01	doe ... an (K)	—
881	nam tswaert (B, C, D)	namt swaert
883	comen	Eomen
889	dat si conste (K, B)	daer si consten
898	souden (K, B, D)	Soude
905	valsche	valschsche
906-07	Alse ... woerde (N, K)	—
908	ende (N, K)	si
917	Elegast (N, K, B, C, D)	Ic
The use of direct speech in Incunabulum A does not fit the story line.		
919	sinen (N, K, B, C, D)	minen
920	ontfinc hi dbloet (N, K, B, C, D)	ontfinct bloet
925-26	daer ... vrouwe (N, K)	Daer hi alle die ghene mede / Slapen dede ende die vrouwe

935	Om al (N, K)	Al om
944	Sone breect si (N, K)	Si en breect
957	bemaenden (N, K, B, C, D, E)	bemaende
978	Doe	oe
985	ten (B, C, D, E)	den
1030	sulken (B, C, D, E)	sulc en
1037	dan (K)	dam
1039	Nu ... sal (K, B, C, D, E)	Nu sal ic u
1048	dan (K)	dam
1054	gaen (G, K, B, C, D, E)	staen
1061	doe (G, K)	so
1062	ende (G, K, B, C, D, E)	—
1069	eeenen (G, K)	om eenen
1081	si	—

This is a necessary addition, although not based on any of the other redactions.

1082	Bayvier	Baynier
1085	u (G, K)	ons
1103	duchten (Ge, C, D)	duchhen
1106	voort (Ge)	—
1107	wouden (Ge, B, C, D, E)	woude
1128	men (D, E)	—
1133	Dies (Ge, D, E)	Dat
1142	dat ... op (Ge)	die mi op dorste
1144	Waer (K, B, E)	Voor
1148	dit (Ge, K, B, C, D, E)	—
1169	Dat (Ge, K)	—
1170-71	nadat ... bereiden (Ge, K)	—
1176	over (Ge)	ende
1186	ende (Ge, K)	—
1187	desen	desn
1188	ende (Ge, K, B, C, D, E)	en
1217	dat (Ge, K, C, D, E)	daer

1224	ic tbloet (Ge, K, B, C, D, E)	ict bloet
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1226	wilden (Ge, K, C, D)	wilde
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1230-48	tusschen ... sijt (Ge, K)	–
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Without this addition, based on Ge, the passage in Incunabulum A is incomprehensible.

1238	camp	campt (Ge)
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1249a	–	Die verdachvaert inden crijt
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This line, which seems to be an addition in Incunabulum A to repair a corrupt passage, is redundant as a result of the addition of lines 1230-48.

1251	dies	dis
------	------	-----

1257	ghinct (M, B, C, D)	ghinc
------	---------------------	-------

1260	ontween (Ge, B, C, D)	onttween
------	-----------------------	----------

1264	luttel (M, B, C)	luten
------	------------------	-------

1278	Men	en
------	-----	----

1305	scaecman	scat man
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This is a necessary addition, although not based on any of the other redactions.

1363	vespertijt	verpertijt
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1382-97bi ... mede	–
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Two-thirds of leaf D6 has been ripped off, resulting in loss of text on the recto side. For the addition D has been used (to avoid the triple rhyme in B and C).

1398	scat (M, K)	saec
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Dutch Edition

- 1 Fraeye historie ende al waer A2r
 mach ic u tellen, *hoorter* naer.
 Het was op enen avontstont
 dat Karel slapen begonde
 5 tEngelem op den Rijn.
 Dlant was alle gader sijn.
 Hi was keyser ende coninc mede.
 Hoort hier wonder ende waerhede!
 Wat den coninc daer ghevel,
 10 dat weten noch die menige wel.
 tEnghelem al daer hi lach
 ende waende op den anderen dach
 crone draghen ende houden hof
 om te meerderen sinen lof.
 15 Daer die coninc lach ende sliep,
 een heilich engel aen hem riep,
 so dat die coninc ontbrac
 biden woerden die dengel sprac
 ende seyde: “Staet op, edel man.
 20 Doet haestelic u cleeder an,
 wapent u ende vaert stelen,
 God die hiet mi u bevelen,
 die in hemelrike is here,
 of ghi verliest lijf ende eere.
 25 En steeldi in deser nacht niet,
 so is u evel gheschiet.
 Ghi sulter omme sterven
 ende uwes levens derven
 eer emmermeer scheid dit hof. A2v
 30 Nu verwacht u daer of,

vaert stelen of ghi wilt.
 Neemt uwen speere ende uwen schilt,
 wapent u, sit op u paert
 haestelic ende niet en spaert.”

- 35 Dit verhoorde die coninc.
 Het docht hem een vreemde dinc,
 want hi daer niemant en sach,
 wat dat roepen bedieden mach.
 Hi waendet slapende hebben gehoord
 40 ende hilt hem niet an dat woert.
 Dengel die van Gode quam,
 sprac *ten* coninc als die was gram:
 “Staet op, Karel, ende vaert stelen,
 God hiet my u bevelen
 45 ende ontbiedet u te voren,
 anders hebdi u lijf verloren.”

Met dien woerde sweech hi.
 Ende die coninc riep “Ay mi,”
 als die seere was vereent.

- 50 “Wat ist dat dit wonder meent?
 Ist alfs ghedroch dat mi quelt
 ende dit grote wonder telt?
 Ay, hemelsche drochtijn,
 wat node soude mij sijn
 55 te stelen? Ic ben so rike.

En is man in aertrijcke,
 weder coninc noch graven,
 die so rijk sijn van haven,
sine moeten mi sijn onderdaen
 60 ende te minen diensten staen.

Mijn lant is so groot,
 men vint nyewers sijns ghenoot.
 Dlant is algader mijn

A3r

- tot Colene opten Rijn
 65 ende tot Romen voort,
 alst den keyser toe behoort.
Ic ben here, mijn wijf is vrouwe,
 oest totter wilder Denouwe
 ende west totter wilder see.
 70 Nochtans heb ic goets veel meer:
 Galissien en Spandien lant,
 dat ic selve wan mitter hant,
 ende ic die heydene verdreef,
 dat mi tlant alleene bleef.
 75 Wat node soude mi sijn dan
 te stelen ellendich man?
 Waer om ontbiedet mi dit God?
 Node brekic sijn ghebot -
 wistic dat hijt mi ontbode.
 80 En mochs niet gheloven node
 dat mi God die lachter onste
 dat ic te stelen begonste.”
 Daer hi lach in dit ghepeyns,
harentare, weder ende gheyns,
 85 so vaecte hi een luttelkijn, A3v
 so datti looc die oghen sijn.
 Doe seide dingel van te voren:
 “Wildi Gods ghebot verhoren,
 heer coninc, so sidi ontdaen.
 90 Het sel u an u leven gaen.”
 Dengel vanden paradise
 sprac: “Coninc, doet als die wise,
 vaert stelen ende wert dief.
 Al hebdijs nu groot ongerief,
 95 het sal u namaels wesen lief.”
Met deser talen voer dengel dan

ende Karel hem tseyne began
 vanden wonder dat hi hoorde:
 “Gods ghebot, sine woerde,
 100 en wil ic niet laten achter.
 Ic sel dief wesen al ist lachter,
 al soudic hanghen bider kelen.
 Nochtan haddic liever vele
 dat mi God name ghemeene
 105 dat ic van hem houde te leene,
 beyde borch ende lant,
 sonder mijns ridders ghewant,
 ende ic mi moeste gheneeren
 mitten schilde ende metten speere,
 110 als een die niet en heeft
 ende op die aventure leeft.
 Dat ware mijn wille bet
 dan ic ghevanghen ben int net A4r
 ende ic nu moet stelen varen
 115 sonder eenich sparen.
 Varen stelen oft God verwercken,
 nu so moetti mi gestercken.
 Ic woude ic ware uuter sale
 sonder nieumare ende tale,
 120 ende mi waer ghecost opten Rijn
 seven borghen van steenen fijn.
 Wat sel ic segghen van oneeren
 den ridderen ende den heeren
 die hier liggen in die sale?
 125 Wat sal wesen mine tale
 dat ic in deser duyster nacht
 alleene, sonder yemants cracht,
 moet varen in een lant
 dat mi is vrende ende onbecant?”

- 130 Mit deser talen ghinc hem gereyden
 die coninc Karel ende cleyden
 mit sinen dieren gewaden,
 als die te stelen was beraden.
 Het was altoes sine *sede*
- 135 datmen sine wapene *dede*
 ten bedde daer hi lach.
 Het waren die beste die ye man sach.
 Als hi aldus ghewapent was,
 ghinc hi doer dat palas.
- 140 Daer en was slot noch dore so goet,
 noch poerte diene wederstoet; A4v
 sine waren tegen hem ontdaen.
 Daer hi wilde, mocht hi gaen.
 Daer en was niemant dien sach,
- 145 want dat volc algader lach
 in vasten slape, als God woude.
 Dat dedi al door des conincs houde.
 Sine hulpe was hem bereet.
 Als hi die borch brugghe leet,
- 150 ghinc die coninc mit liste
 totten stalle, al daer hi wiste
 sijn ors ende sijn ghesmiden.
 Sonder eenich langher beyden
 hi sadelet ende satter boven
- 155 opt ors, datmen mochte loven.
Doen hi ter poorten ghereden quam,
 sach hi daer ende vernam
 den wachter ende den poortiere,
 die luttel wisten dat hoer heere
- 160 so na hem was mitten schilde.
 Si sliepen vaste, alst God wilde.
 Die coninc beette ende ontdoet

- die poorte die besloten stoet
 ende leyde sijn ors uut
 165 sonder niemare ende gheluyt.
 Doen sat hij in sijn gheryde,
 die coninc Karel, ende seyde:
 “God, also ghewaerlijcke
 als ghi quaemt in aertrike A5r
 170 ende wort sone ende vader
 om ons te verlossen alle gader
 dat Adam hadde verloren
 ende dat na hem wert gheboren:
 ghi liet u aenden cruce slaen
 175 doen u die joden hadden ghevaen;
 si staken u met eenen speere;
 si sloegen u, dies *hadden si* geere.
 Dese bitterlike doot
 ontfincki, here, door onsen noot
 180 *ende braect die helle daer naer.*
 Also waerlic alst was waer
 ende ghi, here, Lasaruse
 daer hi lach in sine cluse
 verwecket, heere, vander doot
 185 ende vanden steenen maket broot
 ende vanden water wijn,
 so moeti in mijn gheleyde sijn
 in desen duemsteren nacht
 ende verbaert aen mij u cracht.
 190 Oetmoedich God ende vader,
 aen u keer ic mi alle gader.”
 Hi was in vele gedochten
 waer hi best henen varen mochte,
 daer hi stelens soude beghinnen.
 195 Doe quam hi in een wout binnen,

- Karel den edelen man,
 dat niet verre stont van daen.
 Doen hi quam gereden daer, A5v
 die mane scheen seer claer.
- 200 Die sterren lichten aenden trone.
 Dweder was claer ende scone.
 Dus peynsde die coninc:
 “Ic was ghewone voer alle dinck
 dieve te hatene daer icse wiste,
- 205 die den lieden mit liste
 hoer goet stelen ende roven.
 Nu mach ik hem wel gheloven,
 die leven bider *avontueren*.
 Si weten wel dat si verbueren
- 210 lijf ende goet, machmense vaen.
 Men doetse hangen ende thooft of slaen,
 of sterven arger doot.
 Horen anxte is dicke groot.
 Nemmermer en ghevalt mi dat,
- 215 dat ic man doer cleynen scat
 sterven doe in al mijn leven.
 Ic hebbe Elegast *verdreven*
 om cleyne sake uut minen lande,
 die dicke set sijn lijf te pande
- 220 om tgoet daer hi bi leeft.
 Ic wane hi dicke sorghe heeft.
 Hi en heeft lant noch leen,
 noch ander toeverlaet geen,
 dan hi mit stelen can bejaghen.
- 225 Daer op moet hi hem ontdraghen.
 Ic nam hem tlant des *hi was* heere, A6r
 dat mach hem nu wel rouwen seere,
 beide borch ende lant.

- Des was ic herde onbekant,
 230 want hi hadde in sine scaren
 die met hem onthouden waren,
 ridders, serianten een ghetal,
 die ic heb onterft al,
 beyde van lande ende van goede.
 235 Nu volghen si hem al doer armoede.
 Ic en laetse niewers gedueren.
 Diese onthilde, ic daden verbueren
 beyde borch ende leen.
 Hi en hevet toeverlaet gheen.
 240 Hi moet hem al onthouden
 in wildernissen ende in wouden
 ende moet alleene bejaghen
 daer si hem alle op ondraghen.
 Mer so vele isser an:
 245 hi en steelt gheenen armen man,
 die bi sijnre pinen leeft.
 Dat pelgrim ofte coepman heeft,
 laet hi hem gebruiken wel,
 mer hi en versekert nyemant el.
 250 Bisscoppen ende canoniken,
 abden ende moniken,
 dekenen ende papen,
 daer hise can betrapen,
 comen si in sijnre *veerde*, A6v
 255 hi neemt hem mulen ende peerde
 ende steectse uut haren ghereyde,
 dat si vallen op die heyde,
 ende neemt hem mit sijnre cracht
 al dat si daer hebben bracht:
 260 silver, cleeder, facelment.
 Dus bejaecht hi hem ontrent,

- daer hi die rike lieden weet.
 Hy neemt hem haren scat ghereet,
 beyde silver ende gout.
 265 Sinen list is menichfout.
 Nyemant en kannen ghevaen.
 Nochtan heefter om ghedaen
 menich man sine cracht.
 Ic woudic nu in deser nacht
 270 sijn gheselle mochte wesen.
 Ay, heere God, helpt mi tot desen!”
Mit deser talen voer hi voort,
 die coninc, ende heeft verhoort
 hoe een ridder quam ghevaren
 275 inder selver ghebaren
 als die riden wil verholen,
 met wapenen swart als colen.
 Swart was helm ende schilt,
 die hi aenden hals hilt.
 280 Sinen halsberch mochtmen loven.
 Swart was den wapenroc daer boven.
 Swart was dors daer hi op sat A7r
 ende quam enen sonderlingen pat
 dwers riden doer den woude.
 285 Alsen die coninc ghemoeten soude,
 segende *hi* hem *ende* was in vare
 ende waende dat die duvel ware,
 om dat hi was so swart al.
 Den riken God hi hem beval.
 290 Hi pensde in sinen moet:
 “Ghevalt mi quaet ofte goet,
 en vlie te nacht doer desen.
 Ic sel der avonturen genesen.
 Nochtan weet ic te voren wel:

- hilt hi stille ende dochte
wye die ander wesen mochte:
330 “Waer om dat hi aldus lijt
ende sijnre talen aldus vermijt
datti mi niet en groete
doen hi mi ghemoete
ende om gheen dinc en vraghet?
335 Ic wane dat hi quaet jaghet.
Waer ic seker van dien
dat hi quame om verspien,
datti mi ofte mine A8r
brenghen wilde in pine
340 teghen den coninc, die ic ontrade,
hi en lede te nacht sonder scade.
Wat node soude hi jaghen
achter bosschen ende haghen,
ofti mi niet en sochte?
345 Biden heere die mi ghewrochte,
hine ontrijt mi te nacht.
Ic sel proeven sine cracht.
Ic willen spreken ende kennen.
Hy mach sulc sijn, ic sel winnen
350 sijn ors ende dat hi hevet an
ende doen met lachter keeren dan.
Hi es hier comen als een domme.”
Met dien werp hi sijn ors omme
ende volchde den coninc naer.
355 Doen hien achterhaelde daer
riep hi lude: “Ridder, ontbeyt!
Waer na ist dat ghi rijt?
Ic wil weten wat ghi soect
ende jaecht ende roect,
360 eer ghi mi ontrijt van hier,

- al waerdi noch so fier
 ende so diere uwer tale.
 Berechtes mi, so doedi wale.
 Ic wil weten wie ghi sijt
 365 ende waer ghi vaert op dese tijt
 ende hoe dat u vader hiet. A8v
 En machs u verlaten niet.”
- Doen* antwoerde die coninc:
 “Ghi vraget mi so menich dinc,
 370 en wistu hoe berechten.
 Ic heb liever dat wi vechten
 dan *ict* u seide bi bedwanghe.
 So haddic gheleeft veel te langhen,
 dat mi een man dwinghen soude
 375 van dinghen die ic niet en woude
 berechten, ten ware mi lief.
 Coemter mi goet af of miskief,
 wy sullen desen strijt nu scheyden
 ende becorten tusschen ons beyden.”
- 380 Des conincs schilt was verdeckt.
 Hi en wildes niet voeren ontdeckt,
 om teyken datter aene stoet.
 Hi en wilde niet dat men waer vroet
 dat hi ware die coninck.
- 385 Si worpen omme met deser dinc
 haer orssen sterc ende snel.
 Si waren beyde ghewapent wel;
 hare speeren waren sterc.
 Si versaemden in een perc
 390 mit sulcken nide onder hem tween
 dat dorssen boghen over *haer* been.
 Manlic vingen si ten swaerde
 als die vechtens begaerde.

- Si vochten een langhe wile, B1r
 395 datmen gaen mochte een mile.
 Die swerte was sterc ende snel
 ende sine consten waren fel,
 so dat die coninc was in vare
 ende waende dat die duvel ware.
 400 Hi sloech den swarten opten schilt
 dien hi manlic voor hem hilt,
 dat hi in tween stucken vloech,
 oft ware een linden loof.
 Die swarte sloech den coninc weder.
 405 Die swerde ghingen op ende neder,
 opten helme, op die maelgien,
 datter menich moeste faelgien.
 Daer en was halsberch gheen soe goet,
 daer en dranc dore dat bloet
 410 doer die maelgien uuter huyt.
 Daer *was* van *slaghen* groot gheluyt.
 Die spaenderen vanden scilde daer vloghen.
 Die helmen op hoer hooft, die boghen
 ende ontfingen scarde ende vlegghen,
 415 so scaerp waren der swaerden eggen.
 Die coninc pensde in sinen moet:
 “Dese is te wapene goet.
 Sal ic liden mijns namen,
 ic souts mi eewelic scamen.
 420 Nemmermeer en gecreech ic eere.”
 Doe sloech hi eenen slach so seere
 opten swarten die voor hem hilt, B1v
 dat hien *nalic* hadde ghevelt
 ende vanden ors tumelen dede.
 425 Tusschen hem beyden en was gene vrede.
 Ende die swarte sloech opten heere

- ende sloech enen slach so seere
 opten helm dat hi booch
 ende tswaert in twee stucken vloech,
 430 so anxtelic was die slach.
 Als dat die swarte sach,
 datti sijn swaert hadde verloren:
 “Tfy dat ic ye was gheboren,”
 pensde hi in sinen moet.
 435 “Dat ick leve, waer toe ist goet?
 En hadde noyt *gheval*,
 noch nemmermeer en sal.
 Waer mede sal ic *mi* verweeren?
 En prise mijn lijf niet twee peeren,
 440 want ic ben ydelre hande.”
 Doe docht den coninc scande
 op eenen te slane die voor hem helt.
Doe hi sach liggen tswaert opt velt
 in twee stucken ghebroken,
 445 pensdi: “En is niet ghewroken
 die eenen wille slaen of deeren
 die hem niet en can gheweeren.”
 Dus hilden si stille int wout.
 Haer ghepeyns was menichvout,
 450 deen wie dander wesen mochte. B2r
 “Byden heere die mi ghewrochte,”
 sprac Karel, die coninc,
 “ghi en berecht mi een dinc,
 heer ridder, des ic u vraghe,
 455 ghi hebt gheleeft al u daghe:
 hoe ghi hiet of wie ghi sijt.
 Ende laet ons corten desen strijt.
 Mach ic met eeren liden,
 ic sal u henen laten riden,

- 460 als ic uwe name weet.”
 Die swarte sprac: “Ic ben bereet,
 in dien dat ghi mi maket vroet
 wat nootsaken dat u doet
 dat ghi hier quaemt te nacht
 465 ende wiens toren dat ghi wacht.”
 Doe seyde Karel, die edel man:
 “Segt mi tierst, ic segh u dan
 wat ic hier soecke ende jaghe.
 En derf niet riden bi daghe.
 470 Ten is sonder nootsake niet
 dat ghi mi dus ghewapent siet.
 Ic sel u seggen hoet coemt,
 als ghi mi uwen name noemt.”
 “Dies sijt seker ende vast,
 475 heere, *ic hete* Elegast.”
 Dat sprac die ridder herde saen:
 “Ten is mi ten besten niet vergaen.
 Ic heb goet ende lant verloren, B2v
 dat ic hadde hier te voren,
 480 bi ongevallye, als menich doet.
 Soudict u al maken vroet
 hoe mine saken comen sijn,
 eer ic u geseyde den *fijn*
 het soude u *duncken* veel te lanc.
 485 Mijn gheluc is so cranc.”
 Als dit die coninc verstoet,
 was hi *blider* in sinen moet
dant hadde al gheweest sijn
 tgoet dat vloyt opten Rijn.
 490 Hi seide: “Ridder, eyst u bequame,
ghi hebt mi geseit uwen name,
nu segt mi hoe ghi u gheneert.

- By al dat God hevet weert
 ende bi hem selven te voeren,
 495 van mi *en* hebdi gheen en toren.
 Ic sal u so vele berechten,
 vraechdijs mi sonder vechten
 ende sonder evelen moet,
 in dien dat ghi mi maket vroet.”
 500 “Nu sijts seker ende vast,
 heere,” *antworde* Elegast,
 “en wil u niet helen:
 daer ic bi leve, moet ic stelen.
 Mer so vele isser an,
 505 en steels geenen armen man,
 die bi sijnre pine leeft. B3r
 Dat pelgrim ofte coopman heeft,
 dies laet ic hem ghebruken wel,
 mer ic en verseker niemant el.
 510 Sint dat ic was gheboren
 ende ic mijn goet had verloren,
 daer ic bi soude leven,
 ende mi die coninc had verdreven,
 Karel, uut minen lande,
 515 ic salt segghen, al ist scande,
 so heb ic mi onthouden
 in wildernissen ende in wouden.
 Daer si twalef bi leven,
moeten rike luden gheven,
 520 bisscoppen ende canoniken,
 abden ende moniken,
 dekenen ende papen.
 Daer icse can betrapen,
 ic neme haer goet met liste.
 525 En weet so vast *geen* kiste,

- weet icker goet in,
 ic brenct in mijn gewin
 ende onder mine ghesellen.
 Wat soudicker meer of tellen?
 530 Minen list is menichvout.
 Mine gesellen sijn int wout
 ende ic voer uut om aventure
 ende heb vonden enen sueren,
 want ic heb mijn swaert *verloren*. B3v
 535 En coeser gheen have voren
 ende ict weder hadde gheheel.
 Der slaghen heb ic ooc een deel,
 meer dan ic ye ghewan
 op eenen nacht van eenen man.
 540 Nu segt mi, ridder, hoe ghi heet
 ende die ghene die u veet.
 Is hi van sulker machte
 dat ghi riden moet bi nachte?
 En condise niet ghematen,
 545 die ghene die u haten?
 Ghi sijt te wapene so goet.”
 Die coninc pensde in sinen moet:
 “God heeft mijn bede ghehoort.
 Nu moetti mi beraden voort.
 550 Dit is die man die ic begheerde
 boven alle die leven op daerde
 mede te varen op desen nacht.
 God *heefden* mi te poente bracht.
 Nu moet ic liegen door den noot.”
 555 “Biden heere die mi gheboot, “
 sprac die coninc tot Elegast,
 “aen mi hebdi gheleyde vast,
 ghestade vrient ende vrede.

- Ic sel u seggen mine sede.
 560 Wat helpt vrienden verholen?
 Ic heb so vele goets gestolen,
 waer ic mitter helft ghevaen, B4r
 men liet mi waerlic niet ontgaen
 om mijn ghewichte van goude root.
 565 Mar het dede mi den noot.
 Noot breket alle strijt.”
 “Nu segghet mi, ridder, wie ghi sijt.”
 “Ick sel u segghen minen name,
 ist u wille ende bequame.
 570 Ic ben ghehieten Adelbrecht.
 Ic pleghe te stelen over recht
 in kerken ende in *cluysen*
 ende in alle Gods husen.
 Ic stele alderhande saken,
 575 en late niemant met ghemaken.
 Den rijcken ende den armen,
 ic en achte niet op hoer carmen.
 En weet gheenen armen man
 daer ic mijn ghewin weet an,
 580 en naem hem liever sine have
 dan ic hem die mine gave.
 Aldus heb ic mi ontdraghen
 ende hebbe gheleyt nauwe lagen
 om eenen scat die ic weet.
 585 Mi souts wesen wel ghereet
 eer emmermeer morghen vroe,
 haddicker goede hulpe toe,
 also vele als ics rochte
 ende mijn peert dragen mochte.
 590 Die scat is qualic ghewonnen. B4v
 God en souts ons niet vergonnen

- al hadden wijs een deel.
Die scat leyt in een casteel
 daer mi die eyghenoot is cont.
- 595 Al haddens wijs vijf hondert pont,
 ten mochten niet deeren
 dat wi vanden sinen teeren.
Wille wir omme doen onse macht
ende gesellen zijn te nacht?
- 600 Dat wi connen bejaghen
onthier ende het sal daghen,
dat sel ic deylen ende ghi sult kiezen.
 Dies achter gaet, moet riesen.”
- Elegast seide: “Waer leit den scat,
 605 lieve gheselle, segt mi dat,
 ende in wat stede?
 Het mach daer sijn, ic vare mede.
 Ic wils wesen vroet,
 eer ic u volghe eenen voet.”
- 610 Doen seide Karel, die edel man:
 “Ic selt u berechten dan.
 Die coninc heeft so groot een scat,
 het mochten luttel deeren dat
 van sinen scatte, daer hi legghet.”
- 615 Als die coninc seghet
 datti hem selven stelen wille,
 Elegast en sweech niet stille.
 Hi seyde: “Dat moet mi God verbieden!
 Si en leven niet diet mi rieden B5r
- 620 dat ic den coninc dade scade!
 Al heeft hi mi bi quaden rade
 mijn goet ghenomen ende verdreven,
 ic sel hem al mijn leven
 goet vrient sijn na mijn macht.

- 625 In sijn scade en coem ic te nacht,
want hi is gerechtich heere.
Dade ic hem anders dan eere,
ic mochs mi scamen voor Gode.
Men mochs mi gheraden node.”
- 630 *Als* dit die coninc verstoet,
was hi blide in sinen moet
dat hem Elegast, die dief,
goet gonste ende hadde lief.
Hi pensde, mocht keeren
- 635 behouden sijnder eeren,
hi souden goets so vele geven,
hi souder mit eeren sijn daech op leven
sonder stelen ende roven.
Des mocht men hem geloven!
- 640 Na dien gepense daer hi in was,
vraechde *hi* Elegaste das,
oft hien yewers wilde leyden
daer si tgoet onder hem beyden
mochten bejaghen op dien nacht.
- 645 Hi deder toe sijn beste cracht
gheerne, ende sijn behindichede,
woude hi hem laten varen mede. B5v
Elegast sede: “Ja ic, gerne.
En weet niet *of gijt* segt in scerne.
- 650 tHeggericx van Eggermonde,
daer moghen wi stelen sonder sonde,
die des conincs suster heeft.
Het is scade dat *hi* leeft.
Hi heeft den menighen verraden
- 655 ende ghebrocht in groter scaden.
Ende ooc mede sinen heere
soudi nemen lijf ende eere,

- mocht na sinen wille gaen.
 Dat heb ic wel verstaen.
 660 Nochtan houti vanden coninc
 herde menich scone dinc,
 beyde borch ende leen.
 Al en haddi toeverlaet anders geen,
 het mochten luttel deeren
 665 dat wi vanden sinen teeren.
 Daer selen wi varen, ist u wille.”
 Die coninc peynsde ende sweech al stille,
 na dat daer ghescepen stoet,
 dat daer ware stelen goet.
 670 Al hadden sijn suster ghevangen,
 si souden node laten *hangen*.
 Dus droeghen si overeen
 daer te varen onder hem tween
 te stelen Eggerics scat.
 675 Die coninc hem niet en vergat. B6r
Si quamen ghereden op een velt
 op haer orssen wel ghestelt.
 Daer vonden si een ploech staen.
 Die coninc beette neder saen
 680 ende Elegast reet voren
 daer si den wech hadden vercoren.
 Die coninc *nam* tcouter in die hant,
 dat hi aen die ploech vant.
 Hi pensde in sinen moet:
 685 “Dit is den ambocht goet.
 Die graven wil in borghen,
 hi moeder toe besorghen
 sulcke dinc als hem bedorste.”
 Doe sat hi op al sonder vorste
 690 ende *volchde* Elegaste

- na met sporen vaste,
 die een luttel was voren.
 Verstaet, so moechdi horen!
 Doen si quamen voor die veste,
 695 die de schoonste was ende die beste
 die yewaert stoet opten Rijn,
 Elegast sprac: "Hier wil ic sijn.
 Nu siet," seyti, "Adelbrecht,
 wat dunct u ghedaen te recht?
 700 Ic wil wercken bi uwen rade.
 Mi ware leet, gheschiede u scade,
 datmen mochte seggen dan:
 'Het quam al bi desen man.'" B6v
 Die coninc antwoerde na dier talen:
 705 "En quam noyt binnen der salen,
 noch inden hove, daer ic weet.
 Het soude mi wesen ongereet
 soudicker nu binnen gaen.
 An u selven moet al staen."
 710 Elegast seide: "Tis mi lief.
 Sidi een behendich dief,
 dat sal ic cortelic verstaen.
 Laet ons een gat maken gaen
 inder muer ter goeder ure,
 715 daer wi moghen crupen dore."
 Dit loveden si beyde wel.
 Si bonden hoer orssen snel
 ende ghingen ten muere sonder gheluyt.
 Elegast trec een yser uut,
 720 daer hi den muer mit soude picken.
 Doe began die coninc te trecken
 tcouter voert vander ploech.
 Doe stont Elegast ende loech,

- ende vraechde waer hijt dede maken.
 725 “Constic tsmeesters huus gheraken,
 ic dede maken sulc een.
 Dus ghedaen en sach ic noyt gheen
 beseghen tot sulcken sticken,
 daermen *mueren* mey doer soude picken.”
 730 Die coninc sprac: “Het mach wel sijn.
 Ic quam ghevaren opten Rijn, C1r
 dies is leden die derde dach,
 dat ic voer om mijn bejach,
 daer moestic mijn yser laten.
 735 Het ontviel mi opter straten,
 daermen mi volchde achter.
 En dorste niet keeren door den lachter.
 Dus was ic mijns yser *ane*
 ende dit nam ic bider mane,
 740 daer ict vant aen een ploech.”
 Elegast sprac: “Het is goet genoegh,
 mogen wi daer te punte in geraken.
 Hier na doet een ander maken.”
 Si lieten die tale, si maecten tgat.
 745 Elegast voechdent bat
 dat hi daer toe dede sine leden
 dant den *coninc* Karel dede.
 Al was hi groot ende sterc,
 hi en conste niet sulc werc.
 750 Doen si tgat vander muere
 hadden bracht al duere
 ende si daer in souden gaen,
 Elegast sprac: “Ghi sult ontfaen
 hier buten, *dat* ic u sel brenghen.”
 755 Hi en woudes niet ghehenghen
 dat die coninc binnen quame;

- so sere ontsach hi hem der onvrmen.
 Hi en dochten geen behendich dief.
 Nochtan woudi, leet ende lief, C1v
 760 met hem deylen sijn ghewin.
 Die coninc bleef buten, Elegast ginc in.
 Elegast conste behendichede,
 die hi proefde ter menigher stede,
 die was minlic ende mate.
 765 Hi trac een cruyt uut eenen vate
 ende deet binnen sinen monde.
 Die sulc een hadde, hi verstonde
 wat hanen craeyen ende honden bilen.
 Doen verstont hi ter wilen
 770 an enen hane, an enen hont,
 ende seide dat die coninc stont
 buten den hove in haer Latijn.
 Elegast sprac: "Hoe mach dit sijn?
 Soude die coninc sijn hier voren?
 775 Ic duchte dat mi naket toren.
 Ic ben verraden na mijn ghedochte,
 oft mi verleyt alfs gedrochte."
Elegast ginc daer hi den coninc liet,
 ter stede daer hi van hem schiet,
 780 ende seide hem wat hi hadde verstaen,
 hem en bedrogge sijn waen,
 beyde aen hanen ende aen *honden*,
 diet in haer Latijn vonden
 dat die coninc ware daer.
 785 Mer hi en wiste niet hoe naer!
 Doen seyde Karel, die edel man:
 "Wie hevet u gheseit dan? C2r
 Wat soude die coninc hier doen?
 Soudi gheloven an een hoen,

- 790 oft dat een hont bast,
 so en is u ghelove niet vast.
 Mi denct dat ghi mi saghen telt.
 Waer toe ist goet dat ghi mi quelt?
 U ghelove en is niet vast.”
- 795 “Nu hoort,” sprac Elegast.
 Hi stac den coninc inden mont
 een cruyt dat daer voor hem stont
 ende seyde: “Nu suldi verstaen
 so ic te voren hebbe ghedaen.”
- 800 Echter craeyde die hane ende sede,
 also als hi te voren dede,
 dat die coninc ware daer.
Elegast seide: “Hoorter naer,
gheselle, wat die hane craeyt.
- 805 Ic wilde mijn kele winde waeyt,
 is die coninc niet hier bi.”
 Doe seide Karel: “Het fy,
 gheselle, sidi vervaert?
 Ic waende dat ghi coender waert.
- 810 Doet dat ghi seyt, laet ons gaen,
 al soudemen ons heden vaen.”
 Elegast sprac: “Ic sals beghinnen.
 Laet sien, wat seldi daer an winnen.”
 Elegast eyste sijn cruyt weder.
- 815 Die coninc sochte op ende neder, C2v
 weder ende *voort* in sinen monde,
 mer hi verlost ter stonde.
 Hi en mochs vinden niet.
 Die coninc sprac: “Wats mi gesciet?
- 820 Mi dunct, ic heb mijn cruut verloren
 dat ic had hier te voren
 beloken tusschen minen tanden.

- Bi mijnre *wet*, dat mach mi anden.”
Doe loech Elegast echt
825 ende seide: “Steeldi over recht?
Hoe coemt datmen u niet en vaet,
telken als ghi stelen gaet?
Dat ghi leeft, is wonder groot,
ghi en waert langhe wile doot.
830 Gheselle,” seit hi onverholen,
“ic heb u cruyt ghestolen.
Ghi en weet van stelen niet *een* hare.”
Die coninc peynsde: “Ghi segt ware.”
Mittien lieten si die tale.
835 Gode beval hi al te male
dat hien moeste borghen.
Een deel was hi in sorghen.
Nochtans consti beheyndichede,
daer hi alle die ghene mede
840 slapen dede vanden sale
ende ontsloot dan al te male
sloten diemen met slotelen sloot,
waren si cleyne ofte groot, C3r
ende ghinc ten scatte, daer hi lach,
845 eert yemant hoorde of sach
ende haelde ende brochte
also vele als hem goet dochte.
Doen wilde Karel van danen riden.
Elegast die hiet hem ontbeiden.
850 Hi soude om eenen sadel gaen,
die in die camer ware ghestaen
daer Eggeric ende sijn wijf in lach,
die soonste die noyt man sach.
Hi en leeft niet die u gheseyde
855 die verweentheit vanden gereyde.

- Ende ooc aen dat voerboech
 es te prisene ghenoech.
 Daer hangen an hondert scellen groot,
 die alle zijn van goude root
 860 ende clincken als Eggeric rijt.
 “Gheselle, doet wel ende ontbeyt.
 Ic sal hem sinen sadel stelen,
 al soudic hanghen bider kelen.”
Dit was den coninc onbequame.
 865 Hi hadde eer ontbeert der vrame
 vanden sadel ende tghewin,
 dan Elegast keerde weder in.
 Als Elegast quam ten gheryde
 daer ic heden eer of seide,
 870 *doe hijt waende dragen dan,*
die scellen die daer hingen an
 gaven sulc enen clanc
 datter Eggeric bi ontspranc C3v
 uut sinen slape ende seyde:
 875 “Wie is daer te minen gheryde?”
 Hi woude trecken zijn sweet,
 haddet die vrouwe niet gheweert,
 die hem seide ende vraghede
 wat ware dat hi jaghede;
 880 often alven wilden verleiden.
 Si *nam tswaert* al mitter scheyden
 ende seyde: “Daer en mach niemant in
comen zijn, meer noch min.
 Tis ander dinc dat u deert.”
 885 Si bemaenden ende beswert
 dat hi haer seide zijn ghedochte,
 waer bi dat hi niet en mochte
 slapen binnen drien nachten,

- 890 *dat si conste* ghewachten,
 noch eten binnen drien daghen.
 Dit began si hem te vraghen.
 Vrouwen list is menichvout,
 sijn si jonc, sijn si out.
 So langhe lach si hem an
 895 dat hi haer te segghen began
 dat hi des conincs doot hadde ghesworen.
 Ende die te doen waren vercoren,
souden cortelike comen.
 Hi ghincse haer bi namen nomen,
 900 hoe si hieten, wie si waren,
 die den coninc wilden daren. C4r
 Dit hoorde al Elegast
 ende hielt in therte vast.
 Hi pensde hi sout brengen voort,
 905 die ondaet ende die *valsche* moort.
Alse dit die vrouwe hoerde,
si antworde na den woerde
ende seide: “Mi waer liever vele
 datmen u hinge bider kele
 910 dan ic dat ghedoghen soude!”
 Ende Eggeric sloech soe houde
 die vrouwe voor nase ende mont
 dat haer tbloet ter stont
 ter nase ende te monde uut brac.
 915 Si rechte haer op ende stac
 haer aenschijn over tbedde boom.
Elegast wasser bi ende nams goem
 ende croper liselike toe.
 In *sinen* rechten hantscoe
 920 *ontfinc hi dbloet* vander vrouwen,
 om dat hijt wilde scouwen

- diet den coninc te voren brochte,
dat hider hem voor wachten mochte.
Doe seyde Elegast een ghebede,
925 *daer hi mede slapen dede*
Eggeric ende die vrouwe;
ende sprac sijn woert mit trouwe,
dat si beyde sliepen vast.
Doen ontstal hem Elegast
930 sinen sadel ende sijn swaert,
dat hi lief hadde ende weert, C4v
ende maecte hem sijnre vaerde
buten den hove tsinen paerde,
totten coninc, die seere verdochte.
935 *Om al* tgoet dat Elegast brochte,
hine hadder niet langher gestaen,
hadt na hem moghen gaen,
so seere was hi vererret.
Hi vraechde waer hi had gemerret.
940 Elegast seide: “En mochs niet,
bi al dat God leven liet.
Tis wonder dat mi thert niet en breect
vanden rouwe die daer in steect.
Sone breect si nemmermeer
945 door rouwe noch door seer,
dies ben ic seker te voren;
si heeft so groten toren.
Gheselle,” seiti, “dits tghereyde
daer ic u heden of seide.
950 Dit hout. Ic sal gaen
Eggeric sijn hooft of slaen
of doden met eenen knive,
daer hi leyt bi sinen wive.
Dat en lietic om al dat gout

- 955 dat die warelt inne hout.
 Ic sel weder keeren schiere.”
 Doen *bemaenden* die coninc diere
 dat hi hem seide door wat sake
 hi ware so seere tongemake. C5r
- 960 “En sidi niet al gesont
 ende hebt wel X hondert pont
 ende tgereyde daer ghi om ghinct?”
 “Ay heer, het is al ander dinc
 dat mijnre herten deert
- 965 ende minen droeven sin verteert.
 Ic heb minen heer verloren.
 Ic hadde toeverlaet te voren
 te comene te minen goede
 ende te verwinnen mijn armoede.
- 970 Mijn heer sel sterven morgen vroe.
 Ic mach u seggen hoe:
 Eggeric heeft sinen doot gesworen.”
 Doen wiste Karel wel te voren
 dat hem God te stelen ontboot
- 975 om te bescudden vander doot.
 Hi danckes oetmoedelike
 Gode van hemelrike.
Doe antwoerde die coninc saen:
 “Hoe so waendi dan tontgaen,
- 980 of ghien staect mit eenen knive,
 daer hi leit bi sinen wive?
 Thof selde verstormen al.
 Ghi en had meer dan gheval,
 ghi sout saen hebben vercoft
- 985 ende u lijf *ten* eynde brocht.
 Soudi u worpen inden noot?
 Sterft die coninc, so is hi doot. C5v

- Wat talen souder of wesen?
Ghi sout des rouwen ghenesen.”
- 990 Dit seidi doer behendichede,
om Elegast te proeven mede.
Nochtan wasser een ander an,
hi hadde gherne gheweest van dan.
Dlanghe letten was hem leet.
- 995 Elegast antwoerde ghereet:
“Bi al dat God leven liet,
waerdi mijn gheselle niet,
ten bleve te nacht onghewroken
dat ghi hebt so na ghesproken
- 1000 den coninc Karel, minen heere,
die waerdich is alder eere.
Biden heere die mi ghewrochte,
ic sel vorderen mijn gedochte
ende wreken minen toren
- 1005 -- tconincs doot is ghesworen --
eer ic vander buerch scheide,
gaet mi te lieve of te leyde.”
Die coninc peynsde: “Dits mijn vrient,
al heb ics qualic op hem verdient.
- 1010 Ic salt beteren, mach ic leven.
Hi sal verwinnen al sijn sneven.”
“Gheselle, ic sel u wisen bet
hoe ghien brenghen selt int net,
Eggericke van Eggermonde.
- 1015 Rijt inder morghenstonde C6r
totten coninc daer ghien vint.
Vertelt hem ende ontbint
die ondaet ende die moort.
Als hi sal horen u woert,
- 1020 ghi selter bi versoenen al.

- U loon en sel niet wesen smal.
 Ghi moghet riden bi sijnre siden
 alle u daghe ende u tiden,
 of ghi sijn broeder waert,
 1025 so langhe als u God ghespaert.”
 Elegast seyde: “Wats mijns gheschiet,
 en come voor den coninc niet.
 Die coninc is te mi so gram,
 om dat ic hem eens nam
 1030 van sinen scatten *sulken* scaerden
 dat cume gedroeck twee paerden.
 Ic en come niet daer hi mi saghe,
 noch bi nachte noch bi daghe.
 Dats pine teghen spoet.”
 1035 “Wil ic u segghen wat ghi doet?”
 sprac Karel, die edel man.
 “Rijt wech in uwen *dan*,
 daer ghi liet u ghesellen.
Nu hoort wat ic u sal vertellen:
 1040 Voert voor u ons bejach
 tot morghen opten dach.
 Dan deylen wi mit ghemake.
 Ic sal bode sijn vander sake C6v
 totten coninc, daer icken weet.
 1045 Sloech men doot, het waer mi leet.”
 Mit deser talen dat si schieden.
 Elegast voer tot sinen lieden,
 daer hise liet inden *dan*.
 Ende Karel, die edel man,
 1050 voer tYnghelem in sijn casteel.
 Sijn herte was sonder riveel,
 datten die gheen wilde verraden
 die hem soude staen in staden,

- soude recht na rechte *gaen*.
- 1055 Noch stont die poorte ontdaen
ende sine lieden sliepen alle.
Hi bant dors opten stalle
ende ginc ter cameren daer hi lach,
eert yemant hoorde ofte sach.
- 1060 Hi hadde sijn wapen af ghedaen,
doe was die wachter gestaen
ter hoger tinnen *ende* blies den dach,
diemen scone verbaren sach.
Doen wert in wake menich man,
- 1065 dien God den slaep seynde an
doe die coninc stelen voer.
Dat was hem een scone boer!
Doe seynde Karel die coninc
eenen sinen camerlinc
- 1070 om sinen verholen raet
ende seide hoet met hem staet: D1r
dat hi wiste wel te voren
dat sinen doot ware ghesworen
van Eggheric van Eggermonde,
- 1075 die comen sal in corter stonde
met alder macht vanden lande
om hem te doene scande,
als te nemen sijn leven;
dat si hem goeden raet geven,
- 1080 dat hi behoude sijn eere
ende *si* daer toe haren gherechten heere.
Doe seide die hertoge van *Bayvier*:
“Laetse comen, si vinden ons hier.
Het sel den menighen kosten tleven.
- 1085 Ic sal *u* goeden raet gheven.
Hier is menich sterc Fransoys

- uut Vrancrijc ende Balloys,
 menich ridder, menich seriant,
 die mit u quamen hier int lant.
 1090 Si selen hem wapenen alte male
 ende trecken in die hoghe sale.
 Ende ghi selve, heer coninc,
 sult ghewapent staen inden rinc.
 Die u daer slaen wil of deeren,
 1095 wi sellen wel weeren.
 Dbloet sel hem lopen ter sporen
 ende Eggheric als te voren.”
 Desen raet dochten wesen goet.
 Si wapenden hem metter spoet, D1v
 1100 alle die daertoe dochten
 ende wapenen dragen mochten,
 beyde cleyn ende groot.
 Si *duchten* swaren wederstoot.
 Eggeric was van groter macht
 1105 ende alle die hadden cracht
 weder ende *voort* opten Rijn
wouden in sijnre hulpen sijn.
 Men dede ter poorten LX man,
 gewapent ende halsberch an.
 1110 Doen Eggerics lieden quamen gevaren
 in tconincs hove met scaren,
 ontdede men die poorte wide
 ende lietse alle door liden.
 Doen si quamen int hof,
 1115 dedemen hoer cleeder of.
 Men vant naest haren live
 witte halsberghe, scarpe knive.
 Die ondaet was openbaer.
 Men leydse gevangen daer,

- 1120 altemet dat si quamen,
tot datmense had benamen.
Eggeric quam gevaren
al mitter lester scaren,
daer alle die moort aene stoet.
- 1125 Doe hi gebeet was te voet
ende waende gaen in die sale,
slootmen die poorten te male. D2r
Men vincken als *men* dander dede.
Men vant gewapent sine leden
- 1130 bat dan yemant die daer was.
Men leyde hem in dat pallas
voor den coninc sinen heere.
Dies mohti hem wel scamen seere.
Die coninc leide hem vele te voren.
- 1135 Hi en woudes een niet horen.
Hi lochende der ondaet
ende seide: “Heer coninc, hebt beteren raet.
Dadi mi lachter onverdiend,
ghi hadt verloren menigen vrient.
- 1140 Ghi en waret ooc niet so coene,
noch geen uwer baroene,
dat ghijt mi dorste op staden
dat ic u hadde verraden.
Waer yemant dies begaerde,
- 1145 ic daet hem lochenen mitten swaerde
of mitten oerde van minen spere.
Nu come voort dies begheere.”
Als *dit* die coninc verstoet,
was hi blide in sinen moet
- 1150 ende seynde om Elegaste
boden na boden vaste,
daer hi was inden woude,

- ende ontboot hem herde houde
 ende vergaf hem alle misdaet.
- 1155 In dien dat hi den camp bestaet D2v
 tegen Eggericke,
 hi souden maken rike.
 Die boden en lieten niet,
 si deden dat hem die coninc hiet.
- 1160 Si voeren tot dien stonden
 daer si Elegast vonden.
 Dat hem die coninc beval,
 seiden si Elegast al,
 die seere verblide vanden woerde,
- 1165 als hi die nieuwmare hoorde.
 Hi liet leggen sijn gheryde
 sonder eenich langher beyden,
 dat hi Eggericke stal.
Dat hiet hi ende beval:
- 1170 *nadat hem die coninc woude geleiden,*
soudi Eggeric lachter bereiden.
 Hi swoer bi sijnre kerstenhede,
 waer hem God sculdich een bede,
 hi en begeerde ander goet
- 1175 dan hi den camp vechten moet
over sinen gherechten heere
 om te behouden sijn eere.
 Si voeren wech metter spoet.
 Doen Elegast, die ridder goet,
- 1180 quam in des conincs sale,
 -- nu moechdi horen sine tale --
 hi seide: "God hoede dit ghesinde,
 den coninc ende dat ic hier vinde.
 Mer Eggeric en groetic niet.
- 1185 God, die hem crucen liet D3r

- om onsen wille *ende* vele vermach,
 die late mi sien op *desen* dach,
ende Maria, die maghet soete,
 datmen te winde hanghen moete
- 1190 Eggheric van Eggermonde.
 Mochte God doen sonde,
 so heeft hi sonde ghedaen,
 dat hi der galgen is ontgaen,
 om dat hi swoer mijns heeren doot
- 1195 sonder bedwanc oft noot.”
 Als dit Elegast hadde gesproken,
 Eggeric hadt gerne ghewroken,
 mer hi en hads die macht niet.
 Daer was menich die hem liet.
- 1200 Die coninc antwoerde daer of:
 “Sijt willecomme in mijn hof.
 Nu vermaen ic u bi alle dien
 dies God van sonden plien,
 dat ghi segt ende brenct voort
- 1205 die ondaet ende die moort
 van Eggeric die ghi hier siet.
 Dat en laet door niemant niet,
 ghi en segt waer ende niet el
 hoe die aventuer gevel.”
- 1210 Elegast seide: “Gerne,
 mi en staets niet tontbeerne.
 Ic ben seker wel te voren
 dat Eggeric heeft u doot gesworen. D3v
 Ic hoordet hem seggen daer hi lach
- 1215 ende gaf sinen wive enen slach,
 dat sijt dorste anden,
dat haer bloet ten tanden,
 ter nase ende ter mont uut brac.

- Si rechte haer op ende stac
1220 haer aenschijn over tbedde boom.
Ic was daer ende nams goom
ende croper liseliken toe.
In minen rechteren hanscoe
ontfinc *ic tbloet* vander vrouwen.”
- 1225 Doen liet hi den coninc scouwen
ende hem allen diet *wilden* sien.
“Dorste Eggeric lochenen van dien,
ic dade hem lien der ondaet
eer die sonne onder gaet
- 1230 *tusschen ons II in enen campe,*
ten scinde nod ende rampe.”
Eggeric antworde mettien:
“*Dien lachter en moete niet gescien*
in minen live, no dat meskief,
- 1235 *dat ic jegen enen verbannen dief*
minen hals soude aventuren.
Het en soude oec niet geburen
camp te vechten jegen mi.”
Ende Elegast anwoerde: “Twi,
- 1240 *al en benic hertoghe als ghi sijt*
ende wasic ballinc enen tijt,
dat mi die coninc mijn goet nam
omdat hi was te miwaert gram,
in was noit mordenare.
- 1245 *Ende hebbic ghenomen harentaere*
den riken lieden van haren goede,
dat dede mi noyt ende ermoede.
Maer ghi een mordenare sijt,
en moget ontseggen camp noch strijt
- 1250 ter warelt gheen en man
diet u wille staden an.”

- Die coninc antwoerde daer na:
 “Bi mine wet, ghi seght waer.
 Soudicken voeren na recht,
 1255 ic deden slepen eenen knecht
 ende hangen bider kelen.”
 Doen *ghinct* met Eggeric uutten spele
 ende peynsde in sinen moet,
 na dat ghescepen stoet: D4r
- 1260 “Beter is camp dan hals *ontween*.”
 Int hof en was man gheen
 diet spreken dorste siere vromen.
 Dus wert den camp an ghenomen
 een *luttel* nader noenen.
- 1265 Die coninc ontboot sijn beroene
 dat si ghewapent te velde waren.
 Hi en wildes camps niet ontbaren.
 Hi hiet den camp ghereyden
 ende bad God dat hi moest scheiden
- 1270 den camp ende tghevechte
 na reden ende na rechte.
 Die coninc trooste Elegast wel
 ende seide, verghinge wel sijn spel
 ende behilti sijn leven,
- 1275 hi souden sijnder suster geven,
 die Eggeric hadde te voren,
 die sijn doot had ghesworen.
Men sloech coerden opt velt,
 daer menich man ghewapent helt,
- 1280 een luttel voor vespertijt.
 Elegast quam eerst int crijt,
 om datti aen legger was.
 Hi beette neder int gras
 ende viel in knien ghebede

- 1285 ende seide: “God, doer u goedertierenhede,
ic come u heden te ghenaden
van allen minen misdaden D4v
die mi ye ghevel.
Ic kenne mine misdaet wel.
- 1290 Oetmoedich God, diet vermach,
en wreect niet op desen dach
an mi mine sonden.
Doer u heylighe vijf wonden,
die ghi ontfinct doer ons misdaet,
- 1295 hebt heden mijns raet,
so dat ic niet en sterve,
noch inden camp en bederve.
Ist dat mi die sonden niet en slaen,
so waen ic wel van hier ontgaen.
- 1300 Volmaect God, door u doghet,
ic biddu dat ghi mi verhoghet.
Ende Maria, soete vrouwe,
ic wil u dienen mit rechter trouwe.
Ende nemmermeer voort an
- 1305 en werdic rover, noch *scaecman*
in wildernissen ende in wouden,
mach ic hier mijn lijf behouden.”
Doen hi eynde sijn ghebede,
seghende hi alle sine lede.
- 1310 Scone mit sijnder rechter hant
seghende hi sijn ridders ghewant
ende seghende dors dat voor hem stoet
ende bat Gode dor oetmoet
dat hem draghen moest met eeren
- 1315 ende uuten campe laten keeren. D5r
Met dat hi die tale seyde,
sat hi op in sijn ghereyde

- ende hinc den schilt ter luchter side.
Nu naket eenen groten stride.
1320 Hi nam in die hant dat speere.
Ende Eggeric quam met grooter geere
ten crite wert ghewapent wel,
die seere was int herte fel.
Hi en seide noch en dede
1325 te Gode waert gheene bede.
Hi sloech met sporen vaste
ende reet op Elegaste
ende Elegast op hem weder,
die Eggeric stac doer tleder
1330 vander curien mit geweld,
datti neder viel opt velt
vanden orsse op daerde.
Eggheric vinc ten swaerde,
dat hi trac uuter scheyde,
1335 ende seide: “Nu sal ic u doden beyde,
Elegast, u ende u paert,
ten si dat ghi ter vaert
neder beet op die moude.
So mach u ors dlijf behouden.
1340 Hets so sterc ende so groot,
het waer scade, sloech ict doot.
Die menighe soudt beclaghen.
Moechdi u lijf ontdragen, D5v
so behoudi u paert.”
1345 Elegast sprac ter vaert:
“En ware dat ghi te voet sijt,
ic soude corten desen strijt.
En wil u niet te voete slaen.
Ic wil prijs an u begaen,
1350 al souts mi sijn te wors.

- Nu sit weder op u ors.
 Laet ons vechten ridder wise.
 Ic heb liever datmen mi prise
 dan ic u sloeghe bi rampe,
 1355 al soudic bliven inden campe.”
 Dit was den coninc Karel leet,
 dat Elegast so lange meert
 ende Eggericke spaert.
 Eggeric vinc sijn ors ter vaert.
 1360 Doe Elegast die tale seide,
 sat hi op in sijn ghereyde.
 Doen verhief daer een strijt
 tot langhe na *vespertijt*.
 En quam niemant daer, hi sach
 1365 noyt op eenen dach
 so fellen strijt tusschen hem tween
 als si hadden al in een.
 Dats loghene ne geen!
 Doe seide die coninc van Vrancrike:
 1370 “God, also gewaerlike
 als ghi hier moghende sijt, D6r
 so moetti corten desen strijt
 ende dit lange ghevechte
 na redene ende na rechte.”
 1375 Elegast hadde een swaert,
 het was sijns gewichte waert
 van ghemale goude root
 elcke man te sijnre noot.
 Die coninc hadt hem gegeven.
 1380 Elegast die hevet verheven
 ende sloech eenen slach so seere
bi der hulpen van onsen heere
ende doer coninck Karels bede

- die hi over Elegast dede,
1385 alsoe dat hi hem beroofde
dat meeste deel van sinen hoofde
ende viel doot uutten ghereyde.
Dit aensach die coninck ende seyde:
“Ghewarich God, ghi sijt hier boven.
1390 Met allen rechte moet ick u wel loven,
die mi also menighe eere doet.
Wie dat u dient, hi is wijs ende vroet.
Ghi mocht wel helpen ende beraden
die aen di soecken ghenaden.”
1395 Nu wil ick corten dese dinck.
Men sleypte Eggherick ende hinck
hem ende alle die verraders mede.
Daer en halp *scat* noch bede. D6v
Elegast bleef inder eere.
1400 Dies dancti onsen heere.
Die coninc gaf hem Eggerics wijf.
Si waren tsamen al haer lijf.
Dus moet God al onse saken
voor onse doot te goede maken.
1405 Des gonne ons die hemelsche vader.
Nu segghet “Amen” alle gader.*

Translation

- 1 A true and truthful history
 I can tell you, listen to it.
 It happened one evening
 as Charles was dropping off to sleep
 5 at Ingelheim on the Rhine.
 The land was his entirely.
 He was both emperor and king.
 Hear now of wonder and truth!
 What happened to the king there,
 10 many still remember it well.
 It was at Ingelheim where he resided
 and planned to wear his crown
 the following day and to hold court
 to increase his renown.
 15 As the king lay there and slept,
 a holy angel called out to him,
 so that the king woke up
 at the sound of the words that the angel spoke.
 He said: "Rise, noble man.
 20 Quickly put on your clothes,
 arm yourself and go out stealing
 —I was told to charge you with this by God
 who is Lord in heaven—
 or else you will lose your life and honour.
 25 If you do not go out stealing tonight,
 evil shall befall you.
 You shall die as a result
 and lose your life
 even before this court disperses.
 30 Now take heed of this,

go out stealing if you please.
Take your lance and your shield,
arm yourself, mount your horse
without delay and do not tarry.”

- 35 The king heard this.
It struck him as very strange
—as he did not see anyone—
and he wondered what the voice might signify.
He assumed he had heard it in his sleep
40 and took no notice of the words.
The angel who came from God,
said angrily to the king:
“Rise, Charles, and go out stealing
—I was told to charge you with this by God
45 who insists that you set out—
or else you will lose your life.”

- Having said this, he was silent.
And the king cried: “Woe me”,
as he was very upset.
50 “What is the meaning of this wonder?
Is it a delusion that plagues me
and tells me of this great wonder?
Ah, Lord in heaven,
what need would I have
55 to go out stealing? I am so rich.
There is no man on earth,
neither king nor count,
who possesses so much wealth
or he is subject to me
60 and obliged to be in my service.
My land is so extensive,
nowhere can its equal be found.
The land is mine altogether

from Cologne on the Rhine
 65 to as far as Rome
 that belongs to the emperor.
 I am lord, my wife lady,
 in the east to the wild Danube,
 in the west to the wild sea.
 70 Yet I have even more possessions:
 Galicia and the land of Spain,
 that I conquered myself by force of arms,
 when I chased the heathen from it,
 so that the whole land is now mine.
 75 What need would I have then
 to steal like a wretched man?
 Why does God order me to do this?
 I am loath to break his command,
 if only I felt sure that he really ordered me to do this.
 80 I can hardly believe
 that God would cause me the disgrace
 of having to start stealing.”
 As he lay turning this over in his mind,
 here and there, back and forth,
 85 he dozed off for a little while,
 so that his eyes fell shut.
 Then the same angel said as before:
 “If you intend to disregard God’s command,
 lord king, you are lost.
 90 It will cost you your life.”
 The angel from paradise
 said: “King, be sensible,
 go out stealing and become a thief.
 Although it now causes you great misery,
 95 later you will be glad of it.”

After these words the angel disappeared

- and Charles made the sign of the cross
because of the wonder he had heard.
“God’s command, his words,
100 I do not wish to disobey.
I’ll be a thief, even though it is shameful,
even if I’d end up hanging by the neck.
Nevertheless I would much rather
that God took from me all
105 that I hold in fief from him,
both castle and land,
except for my armour,
and that I should have to fend for myself
with my shield and lance,
110 like someone who owns nothing
and lives from hand to mouth.
I would prefer that
to finding myself caught in the net
of having to go stealing
115 without any delay.
Go out stealing or brave God’s ire,
well, let’s hope He’ll give me strength.
I wish I could get through the hall
without attracting notice,
120 even if it would cost me seven castles
along the Rhine of high quality stone.
What am I to say about the dishonour
to the knights and lords
who sleep here in the hall?
125 How am I to explain
that I, in this dark night,
all alone, without help from anyone,
have to venture into a region
that is unfamiliar and unknown to me?”

- 130 Having spoken these words, King Charles
 began to make preparations and dressed
 in his costly garments,
 like someone intending to go stealing.
 It was always his custom
 135 to have his weapons laid
 by the bed in which he slept.
 They were the best anyone had ever seen.
 When he had armed himself in this way,
 he walked through the palace.
- 140 There was neither lock nor door, however solid,
 nor even a gate to bar his way,
 he found them all open before him.
 Where he wanted to go, he might.
 There was no one who saw him,
 145 for all the people lay
 in a deep sleep, as God intended.
 This He did entirely because of the king's loyalty.
 Charles was assured of His assistance.
 When he had crossed the castle's bridge,
 150 the king went cautiously
 to the stables, where he knew he would find
 his horse and his tack.
 Without waiting any longer
 he saddled and mounted
 155 his horse that might well be admired.
- When he came riding up to the gate,
 he spotted there
 the guard and the gate-keeper,
 who had little notion that their lord,
 160 carrying his shield, was so close upon them.
 They were fast asleep, as God intended.
 The king dismounted and undid

the gate that was locked
and led his horse out
165 without any noise or sound.
Then he mounted his horse,
King Charles, and said:
“God, as truly
as you came on earth
170 and became son and father
to redeem us all
who had become tainted by Adam’s sin
and who were born after him:
you allowed yourself to be nailed to the cross
175 when the Jews had captured you;
they pierced your side with a spear;
they struck you, which they enjoyed doing.
This bitter death
was yours, lord, because of our sorrow
180 and then you opened the gates of Hell.
This is as true as it is true
that you, Lord, raised Lazarus
from the dead where he lay
in his tomb,
185 and from stones made bread
and from water wine
and therefore now be my guide
in this dark night
and reveal to me your power.
190 Merciful God and father,
to you I surrender myself entirely.”
He was at a loss
where he might best go
to start his stealing.
195 Then he entered a wood,

Charles the noble man,
 that was not far away.
 When he came riding there,
 the moon was shining very brightly.
 200 The stars twinkled in the sky.
 The weather was clear and fine.
 The king thought as follows:
 “I was accustomed more than anything else
 to hate thieves wherever I came across them,
 205 who, with their tricks,
 steal people’s goods and rob them.
 Now I feel I understand them,
 the people who lead precarious lives.
 They know very well that they’ll forfeit
 210 life and property, if they are caught.
 They are made to hang and have their heads cut off,
 or die even worse deaths.
 They often live in great fear.
 Never in my life shall it happen again
 215 that I, for a minor offence,
 will cause someone to lose his life.
 I have exiled Elegast
 for a minor matter from my land,
 who often risks his life
 220 to scrape together a livelihood.
 I imagine that he is often beset by cares.
 He neither owns nor holds any land,
 nor has he any means of subsistence
 other than what he can make by stealing.
 225 That is how he has to make a living.
 I took from him the land of which he was lord
 —that must rue him sorely now—
 both castle and land.

- That was most unwise of me,
230 because he had among his followers,
who depended on him,
knights and squires in great numbers,
all of whom I have deprived
both of land and of property.
235 Now they all follow him from sheer poverty.
I never give them any rest anywhere.
Whoever sheltered them, I caused him to lose
both castle and fief.
There is nowhere that he can go.
240 He has to keep entirely
to the wilderness and the woods
and all by himself has to find the means
of keeping them all going.
But so much is true:
245 he never steals from a poor man
who lives by his labour.
What the pilgrim or merchant possesses
he allows them to keep for their use,
but he does not spare anyone else.
250 Bishops and canons,
abbots and monks,
deacons and priests,
wherever he can waylay them
when they cross his path,
255 he robs them of mules and horses
and pushes them out of their saddles,
so that they fall to the ground,
and he robs them with force
of all they have with them:
260 silver, clothes, costly vessels.
In this way he meets his needs

- wherever he knows of rich people.
 He does not hesitate to rob them of their treasures,
 both silver and gold.
- 265 His tricks are many and various.
 No one can catch him.
 Nevertheless efforts have been made
 by many with all their power.
 I now wish that tonight
- 270 I might be his companion.
 Ah God, help me with this.”
- After these words he rode on,
 the king, and he heard
 that a knight approached
- 275 who acted like someone
 who wished to ride in secret,
 with armour as black as coal.
 Black were his helmet and his shield
 that he had hanging round his neck.
- 280 His coat of mail deserved to be praised.
 Black was his surcoat over it.
 Black was the horse he sat on
 and he followed an untrodden path,
 cutting straight across the wood.
- 285 As the king was about to meet him,
 he crossed himself and was afraid
 and thought it must be the devil,
 as everything about him was so black.
 He prayed the Almighty God for help.
- 290 He turned this over in his mind:
 “Whether evil befalls me or good,
 tonight I shall not flee for this man.
 I’ll face this danger.
 Nevertheless I know full well:

- 295 it is the devil and no one else.
 If he were on God's side,
 he would not be so black.
 Everything is black, horse and man,
 whichever way I look.
- 300 I pray God that he may protect me
 —I fear that great distress awaits me—
 so that this man does me no harm.”
 And when he rode up closer,
 he crossed himself and was afraid
- 305 and thought it must be the devil.
 And the black knight spotted
 the king coming towards him.
 Then he thought to himself:
 “This man is wandering around here
- 310 and has lost his way.
 His appearance makes that clear to me.
 He will lose his weapons here
 that appear to be the best
 that I saw in seven years.
- 315 They shine as brightly as the day
 with precious stones and gold.
 Where is he from, to end up in this wood?
 There never was a poor man
 carrying such weapons
- 320 and riding such a horse,
 so strong and so well built.”
 When they met each other,
 they passed by without any greeting.
 The one man watched the other carefully,
- 325 but they did not speak a single word.
 When he had passed the king,
 the man riding the black horse

reigned it in and he wondered
 who the other man might be:
 330 “Why does he ride on like this,
 without speaking a single word
 and why did he not greet me
 when he met me
 and why did he not ask any questions?
 335 I reckon that he has evil intentions.
 If I knew for certain
 that he had come as a spy,
 and that making trouble for me and mine
 with the king, whom I fear,
 340 is what he intends,
 he would not pass the night without injury.
 What else would he seek
 behind bushes and hedges,
 unless he is looking for me?
 345 By the Lord who created me,
 he will not escape me tonight.
 I shall test his prowess.
 I shall speak to him and learn his name.
 Whoever he is, I shall win
 350 his horse and all he is wearing
 and make him turn round, humiliated.
 He is a fool to come here.”
 Then he turned his horse
 and followed after the king.
 355 When he had caught up with him
 he shouted: “Knight, wait!
 Where are you heading?
 I wish to know what you seek
 and what you’re after
 360 before you ride on from here,

however proud you are
and sparing with your words.
Tell me, you would do right.

I wish to know who you are
365 and where at this hour you are going
and what your father is called.
You are obliged to tell me.”

Then the king answered:

“You ask so many questions,
370 I do not know how to answer you.
I would prefer fighting
to telling you this under duress.
I have lived far too long
to allow anyone to force me
375 to talk about things
I do not wish to explain, unless I feel like it.
Whatever befalls me, whether good or bad,
we shall now end this argument
and decide it between ourselves.”

380 The king’s shield was covered.
He did not wish to carry it uncovered,
because of the coat of arms painted on it.
He did not want people to be aware
that he was the king.

385 After this they turned
their horses strong and fast.
They were both well armed;
their lances were strong.
They ran against each other in an open space
390 with such fury between them
that the horses’ legs buckled.
They both drew their swords
like men spoiling for a fight.

They fought for as long
 395 as it would take to walk a mile.
 The black knight was strong and swift
 and his skills were terrifying
 so that the king was afraid
 and thought he might be the devil.
 400 He hit the black knight on the shield
 that he bravely held before him,
 so that it broke into two pieces,
 as if it were a leaf from a linden tree.
 The black knight returned the king's blow.
 405 The swords went up and down,
 on the helmets, on the chainmail,
 which caused many rings to break.
 There was not a coat of mail so strong
 or blood from the skin seeped
 410 out through the chainmail.
 There was a great clamour from the blows.
 The chips flew off the shields.
 The helmets on their heads slipped
 and were soon full of dents and cuts;
 415 that is how sharp the edges of the swords were.
 The king thought to himself:
 "This is an accomplished swordsman.
 If I have to reveal my name,
 I would be ashamed forever.
 420 Never again would I be honoured."
 Then he delivered such a heavy blow
 upon the black knight in front of him,
 that he nearly felled him
 and made him tumble off his horse.
 425 They did not spare each other.
 And the black knight hit the lord

and delivered such a terrible blow
on the helmet that it slid forwards
and the sword flew away in two pieces;
430 that is how terrifying that blow was.
When the black knight saw
that he had lost his sword:
“Woe me that I ever was born,”
he thought to himself.
435 “That I live, what’s the point?
I never had any luck,
and never shall have.
What shall I defend myself with?
I consider my life worth less than two pears,
440 for I stand here empty-handed.”
Then the king thought it a disgrace
to hit a man standing before him.
When he saw the sword lying on the ground,
broken into two pieces,
445 he thought: “Nothing is won
by him who wants to hit or harm
someone who cannot defend himself.”
And so they stopped fighting in the wood.
They racked their brains
450 about who the other might be.
“By the Lord who created me,”
said Charles the king,
“If you do not tell me the one thing,
sir knight, that I ask you,
455 your days are numbered:
what you are called and who you are.
And let us end this fight.
If I may proceed with honour,
I shall let you ride on

- 460 when I know your name.”
 The black knight said: “I am willing,
 provided that you explain to me
 what made it necessary for you
 to come here tonight,
 465 and whose anger you fear.”
 Then said Charles, the noble man:
 “You tell me first, then I will tell you
 what I seek here and hope to find.
 I dare not ride by day.
 470 It is not without need
 that you see me fully armed like this.
 I shall tell you what brought it about,
 if you tell me your name.”
 “Be assured and without doubt about this,
 475 lord, my name is Elegast.”
 Then the knight continued at once:
 “It did not go well with me.
 I have lost the property and land
 that I had in the past,
 480 due to misfortune, as happens to many.
 If I were to explain to you
 what happened to my affairs,
 before I might have told you the details,
 you would think that it was taking far too long.
 485 Mine is a very miserable lot.”
 When the king heard this
 he was happier in his heart
 than if all the goods had been his
 that are transported on the Rhine.
 490 He said: “Knight, when it pleases you,
 you have told me your name,
 now tell me how you make a living.

By all that God loves
and above all by God himself,
495 you need not fear my anger.
I shall tell you everything
if you ask me without fighting
and without evil intentions,
if you inform me of this.”
500 “Now be assured,
lord,” Elegast answered,
“I do not want to hide it from you:
what I live from, I must steal.
But this is certain,
505 I do not steal from a poor man,
who lives by his hard labour.
What the pilgrim or merchant possesses
I allow him to keep for his use,
but I do not spare anyone else.
510 Since that I was born
and had lost my property
from which I was meant to live,
and since the king banished me,
Charles, from my land,
515 —I will say it, even if it is shameful—,
since then I have kept myself
in wildernesses and in woods.
What twelve people have to live from
has to be provided by rich people,
520 bishops and canons,
abbots and monks,
deacons and priests.
Wherever I can waylay them,
I use tricks to take their goods.
525 However solid the chest,

- if I know there are valuables in it,
 I can get hold of it
 for myself and my friends.
 What else shall I say about it?
- 530 My tricks are many and various.
 My companions are in the wood
 and I went out to try my luck
 and I found nothing but misfortune,
 for I have lost my sword.
- 535 Nothing would please me better
 than having it in one piece again.
 I have also had a fair share of blows,
 more than I ever received before
 in one night from one man.
- 540 Now tell me, knight, what is your name
 and what is the name of your enemy.
 Is he so powerful
 that you must ride by night?
 Are you no match for them
- 545 who hate you so?
 You wield your weapons so well.”
 The king thought to himself:
 “God has granted my prayer.
 Now he has to give me further counsel.
- 550 This is the man whom I wished
 above anyone living on earth
 to ride with me this very night.
 God has sent him to me at the right moment.
 Now I need to think up a lie.”
- 555 “By the lord who created me,”
 said the king to Elegast,
 “In me you find reliable protection,
 a trusted friend and peace.

- I shall tell you how I live.
560 What good is it to hide it from friends?
I have stolen so much property
that, if I had been caught with half of it,
they truly would not have let me go
for my weight in red gold.
565 But I did it from dire need.
Necessity breaks all rules.”
“Now tell me, knight, who you are.”
“I shall tell you my name,
if you like and it pleases you.
570 I am called Adelbrecht.
In truth, it is my habit to steal
in churches and in monasteries
and in all church buildings.
I steal all kinds of things,
575 and leave no one in peace.
The rich as well as the poor—
I take no heed of their laments.
If I know how I can profit
by some poor man,
580 I much prefer taking his property
to giving him mine.
This is how I have kept myself alive
and I have been lying in wait
because of a treasure I know of.
585 I could certainly
before early tomorrow morning,
—provided I had the right kind of help—
take as much of it as I wished
and as my horse could carry.
590 The treasure has been acquired unlawfully.
God would not hold it against us

- 625 I shall not do him any harm tonight,
for he is lord by law.
If I fell short of honouring him,
I should be ashamed of myself before God.
It would be very hard to persuade me.”
- 630 When the king heard this,
he was pleased in his heart
that Elegast, the thief,
wished him well and loved him.
He thought to himself that, if he should
635 return with his honour in tact,
he would give him so much property that
he would all his life be able to live from it honourably
without stealing or robbing.
Of this one might be assured.
- 640 Following the thoughts that had occupied him,
he asked Elegast
if he could direct him to a place
where the two of them might
find some booty that same night.
- 645 He would be pleased to give it
his best powers as well as his skill,
if Elegast would let him come along.
- Elegast said: “Certainly, with pleasure.
I don’t know if you are speaking in jest.
- 650 At the place of Eggeric of Eggermonde,
there we can steal without sinning;
he has married the king’s sister.
It is a pity that he is alive.
He has betrayed many people
655 and has brought great misery upon them.
And also his own lord
he would deprive of life and honour,

if he had his way.
 That I have certainly heard.
 660 All the same he holds of the king
 many very fine things,
 both castles and fiefs.
 Even if he had no other sources of revenue,
 it would do him little harm
 665 if we took some of his property.
 That's where we'll go, if it pleases you."
 The king thought silently to himself
 that, if this was the case,
 stealing there would be all right.
 670 Even if his sister caught him in the act,
 she would hardly have him hanged.
 And so they agreed
 to ride there together
 in order to steal Eggeric's treasure.
 675 The king did not betray himself.
 They arrived at a field
 on their fine horses.
 They saw a plough standing there.
 The king quickly dismounted
 680 and Elegast rode on
 in the direction they had chosen.
 The king took the ploughshare in his hand,
 that he found attached to the plough.
 He thought to himself:
 685 "This is a good tool.
 Anyone wishing to dig his way into castles
 must take care to obtain
 all that he needs for the job."
 Then he quickly mounted again
 690 and followed Elegast

at full speed,
who was riding a little in front.
Listen and hear what happened!
When they arrived before the fortress,
695 which was the fairest and the best
found anywhere along the Rhine,
Elegast said: "This is where I want to be.
Now look," he said, "Adelbrecht,
what do you think can best be done?
700 I shall act on your advice.
I would be sorry if you were harmed,
and that people would then say:
'It was all this man's fault.'"
The king answered after these words:
705 "I have never been in the hall,
nor in the courtyard, as far as I know.
It would lead to difficulties for me
if I were to enter it now.
It must be entirely your doing."
710 Elegast said: "It makes no difference to me.
Whether you are a skilful thief
I shall find out before long.
Let us start making a hole
in the wall without delay,
715 that we may crawl through it."
To this the two men agreed.
They quickly tethered their horses
and went to the wall without making any noise.
Elegast produced a crowbar
720 with which he could hack at the wall.
Then the king started to produce
the ploughshare from the plough.
Then Elegast burst out laughing

- and asked where he had it made.
- 725 “If I could go to the master smith’s house,
 I would have him make me one just like that.
 I have never seen the like
 used for such a purpose
 as hacking through walls with it.”
- 730 The king said: “That may be so.
 I was riding along the Rhine
 —this is three days ago,
 when I was on the lookout for booty—
 when I had to leave my crowbar behind.
- 735 I dropped it in the road,
 while they were chasing me.
 Fearing dishonour, I did not dare turn back.
 That is how I lost my crowbar
 and I picked up this in the moonlight,
- 740 where I found it on a plough.”
 Elegast said: “It is good enough,
 it will serve to get us in there in good time.
 Have another made afterwards.”
 They stopped talking, they made the hole.
- 745 Elegast was more accustomed to using
 his limbs when applying himself to the work
 than King Charles.
 Even though the king was big and strong,
 he was not used to this kind of work.
- 750 When they had made
 the hole right through the wall
 and were about to crawl in through it,
 Elegast said: “You are to receive
 out here all that I shall bring to you.”
- 755 He was unwilling to allow
 the king to come inside;

- that was how much he feared a disaster.
He did not think him a skilful thief.
All the same he meant, in good times and bad,
760 to share his winnings with him.
The king stayed outside, Elegast went in.
Elegast knew a magic trick,
that he had already used in many places;
it was harmless and simple.
765 He pulled a herb from a bag
and put it into his mouth.
Whoever had one of these, understood
what cocks crow and dogs bark.
Then he heard at once
770 a cock and a dog,
that said in their Latin
that the king was standing outside the courtyard.
Elegast said: "How can this be?
Could the king be near here?
775 I fear that great trouble is in store for me.
I have been betrayed, it seems to me,
or I am led astray by a delusion."
Elegast went to where he had left the king,
back to the place where he had parted from him,
780 and told him what he had heard
—if his senses had not betrayed him—
both from cocks and dogs
that in their Latin had stated
that the king was to be found near there.
785 But he did not know how near!
Then said Charles, that noble man:
"Who has told you this then?
What would the king be doing here?
If you believe a chicken,

- 790 or what a dog barks,
 you cannot be very confident.
 I think you are telling me a tall story.
 What is the good of distressing me?
 You cannot be very confident.”
- 795 “Now listen,” said Elegast.
 He put into the king’s mouth
 a herb that grew before him
 and said: “Now you will hear
 what I heard earlier.”
- 800 Then the cock crowed again and said,
 just as he had done earlier,
 that the king was there.
 Elegast said: “Listen,
 friend, what the cock crows.
- 805 They may string me up
 if the king is not around somewhere here.”
 Then Charles said: “Fie,
 friend, are you afraid?
 I would have thought you braver than that.
- 810 Do what you said, let us go in,
 even if they catch us today.”
 Elegast said: “I will do that.
 Let’s see what you may win there.”
 Elegast asked for his herb back.
- 815 The king searched for it up and down,
 and from one side to the other in his mouth,
 but that very moment he lost it.
 He could not find it.
 The king said: “What has happened to me?
- 820 I fear that I have lost my herb
 that I had earlier here
 tight between my teeth.

By my faith, that annoys me.”

Then Elegast laughed again

825 and said: “Are you really a thief?

How come you are not caught

every time you go out stealing?

It is a major miracle that you’re alive

and have not been dead a long while.

830 Friend,” he said openly,

“I have stolen your herb.

You don’t know the first thing about stealing.”

The king thought: “You speak the truth.”

Then they stopped talking.

835 Elegast prayed to God ardently

that He might protect him.

He was rather worried.

However, he knew a trick

by means of which he put to sleep

840 everyone in the hall

and unlocked all the locks

that were locked with keys,

whether they were small or large,

and he went to where the treasure was kept

845 before anyone heard or saw it,

and brought out

as much of it as he deemed right.

Then Charles wished to ride away from there.

Elegast told him to wait.

850 He wanted to fetch a saddle

that was standing in the chamber

where Eggeric and his wife lay,

the finest ever seen by man.

There is no one alive who can describe to you

855 the splendour of that saddle.

- And also of the breast strap
there is enough to say in its praise.
A hundred large bells hang on it,
all of which are of red gold
860 and jingle when Eggeric rides.
“Friend, be so kind and wait.
I intend to steal his saddle from him,
even if I have to hang for it.”
- This made the king uncomfortable.
865 He would sooner have dispensed with the acquisition
of the saddle and the booty
than have Elegast go back inside.
When Elegast reached the breast strap
that I mentioned just now,
870 and was going to carry it away,
the bells that hung on it
rang so loudly
that as a result Eggeric woke with a start
from his sleep and said:
875 “Who is there touching my tack?”
He would have drawn his sword,
if his wife had not stopped him,
who asked him
what it was that he was after;
880 whether evil spirits were bothering him.
She took the sword with the scabbard
and said: “No one can have
come in here, not in any way.
It is something else that troubles you.”
885 She begged and coaxed him
to tell her what was on his mind,
why he had not been able
to sleep for the last three nights,

as she had noticed,
890 nor had eaten in three days.
That she began to ask him.
Women's tricks are many and various,
whether they be young or old.
So long did she press him
895 that he began to tell her
that he had sworn the king's death.
And those who had been chosen to do this
would shortly get together.
He began to list them by name,
900 what they were called, who they were,
who meant to harm the king.
All this Elegast heard
and he kept it in his heart.
He intended to bring to light
905 the evil deed and the treacherous murder.
When the wife heard this,
she responded to these words
and said: "I would much rather
have them hang you
910 than allow such a deed!"
And Eggeric hit the woman straightaway
on her nose and mouth,
causing the blood to burst forth
at once from her nose and mouth.
915 She sat up and bent
her face over the edge of the bed.
Elegast was there and saw it
and softly crept nearer.
In his right glove
920 he caught the woman's blood,
as he wanted to show it

- to the person who would tell the king
 so that he might be on his guard.
 Then Elegast pronounced a magic formula
 925 by means of which he caused
 Eggeric and his wife to fall asleep
 and he said his words carefully
 so that both of them fell into a deep sleep.
 Then Elegast stole from him
 930 his saddle and his sword,
 which Eggeric loved and valued so much
 and made his way
 out of the courtyard to his horse
 and to the king, who was much annoyed.
 935 Not for all the spoils that Elegast brought
 would he have stood there any longer,
 if it had been up to him,
 that is how cross he was.
 He asked where he had been so long.
 940 Elegast said: "I could not help it,
 by all that God has created.
 It is a miracle that my heart does not break
 from the distress that it contains.
 If it does not break now,
 945 from sorrow and distress,
 it never will, I am sure of that;
 it is so greatly troubled.
 Friend," he said, "this is the tack
 I told you of today.
 950 Take it. I shall go
 and strike off Eggeric's head
 or kill him with a knife,
 where he lies next to his wife.
 I will not be stopped for all the gold

- 955 that is found in the world.
 I will soon be back.”
 Then the king implored him
 to tell him what the reason was
 that he was so very troubled.
- 960 “Are you not quite unharmed
 and haven’t you at least a thousand pounds
 as well as the tack that you went for?”
 “Ah lord, it is something quite different
 that oppresses my heart
965 and preys on my miserable mind.
 I have lost my lord.
 Earlier I was confident
 that I might regain my property
 and overcome my poverty.
- 970 My lord will die tomorrow morning.
 I can tell you how:
 Eggeric has sworn to kill him.”
 Then Charles realized
 that God had ordered him to steal
975 to protect him from death.
 He humbly thanked
 God in heaven.
- Then the king answered at once:
 “How do you propose to escape
980 if you stab him with a knife
 where he lies next to his wife?
 The entire court will be in an uproar.
 Unless you had more than good luck,
 you would soon pay dearly for it
985 and would have brought an end to your life.
 Do you want to expose yourself to such danger?
 If the king dies, he is dead.

- What more is there to say about it?
 You would get over your distress.”
- 990 He said this by way of a ruse,
 to test Elegast with it.
 However, there was something else:
 he was keen to be away from there.
 He found the long wait annoying.
- 995 Elegast answered at once:
 “By all that God gave life,
 if you weren’t my friend,
 it would not remain unavenged tonight
 that you have spoken so ill
- 1000 of King Charles, my lord,
 who is worthy of all respect.
 By the Lord who created me,
 I shall carry out my intention
 and avenge my anger
- 1005 —the king’s death has been sworn—
 before I leave this castle,
 whatever may befall me, good or ill.”
 The king thought: “This is my friend,
 although I have hardly deserved it from him.
- 1010 I will make amends, if I stay alive.
 He will overcome all his misery.
 “Friend, I shall recommend to you a better way
 of how you may catch him in your net,
 Eggerick of Eggermonde.
- 1015 Ride tomorrow at dawn
 to where you will find the king.
 Tell him all and reveal
 the wicked plan and the murder.
 When he hears your story,
- 1020 you will be reconciled as a result.

- Your reward will not be small.
You will be allowed to ride by his side
all the days of your life,
as if you were his brother,
1025 as long as God spares you.”
Elegast said: “Whatever happens to me,
I will not appear before the king.
The king is very angry with me,
because I once took from him
1030 so much of his treasure
that two horses could hardly carry it.
I will not go where he can see me,
whether by night or by day.
It would be a waste of effort.”
1035 “Shall I tell you what to do?”
said Charles, the noble man.
“Ride off to your hideaway,
where you left your companions behind.
Now listen to what I shall tell you:
1040 Take our booty with you
until tomorrow.
Then we will share it at our leisure.
I shall be the messenger in this case
to where I know the king to be.
1045 If they should kill him, I would be sorry.”
With these words they parted.
Elegast rode to his men,
where he had left them in their hideaway.
And Charles, the noble man,
1050 rode to his castle at Ingelheim.
There was little joy in his heart
as the very person who intended to betray him
should stand by him,

- if all was as it should be by rights.
 1055 Still the gate was open
 and all the people slept.
 He tethered his horse in the stables
 and went back to his bedchamber,
 before anyone heard or saw him.
 1060 He had taken off his armour,
 when the guard mounted the high rampart
 and sounded the new day
 which could be seen breaking.
 Then were awakened many of the men
 1065 whom God had sent to sleep
 when the king went out stealing.
 That suited the king well!
 Then Charles the king sent
 one of his chamberlains
 1070 to convene his secret council
 and announced what his situation was:
 that he knew for a fact
 that his death had been sworn
 by Eggeric of Eggermonde,
 1075 who would arrive before long
 with all the lords of the land
 to cause him outrage
 and to take his life;
 they should counsel him wisely
 1080 so that he might keep his honour
 as they would their rightful lord.
 Then said the duke of Bavaria:
 “Let them come, they’ll find us here.
 It will cost many of them their lives.
 1085 I will give you sound advice.
 There are many strong Frenchmen here

- from France and Blois,
many knights, many squires,
who came with you into this country.
- 1090 They will all arm themselves
and assemble in the main hall.
And you yourself, lord king,
will stand, in your armour, in the middle.
Whoever intends to kill or harm you there,
- 1095 we shall fend off vigorously.
Their blood will run down to their spurs,
and Eggeric's will run first."
This advice he considered to be right.
They armed themselves with all speed,
- 1100 all those who were able
and were allowed to carry arms,
whether big men or small.
They feared heavy opposition.
Eggeric was very powerful
- 1105 and all who wielded power
up and down the Rhine
would come to his aid.
Sixty men were stationed at the gate,
armed and dressed in hauberks.
- 1110 When Eggeric's men arrived
at the king's court in groups,
they opened the gate wide
and let them all pass through.
When they entered the courtyard,
- 1115 they stripped them of their clothes.
On their bodies they found
shining hauberks, sharp knives.
The crime had been revealed.
Each group was taken captive there,

- 1120 one by one as they came in,
until all had been taken.
With the last group
Eggeric made his appearance
who was the instigator of the murder.
- 1125 When he had dismounted
and thought to go into the hall,
the gates were closed at once.
They fettered him, as they had the others.
They found him better armed
- 1130 than any one present there.
They led him to the hall
before the king his lord.
He had every reason to be ashamed of it.
The king accused him of a great deal.
- 1135 He would have nothing of it.
He denied the crime
and said: "Lord king, take better counsel.
If you were to disgrace me undeservedly,
you would lose many friends.
- 1140 You surely would not be so rash,
nor any of your barons,
that you would dare maintain to me
that I have betrayed you.
If anybody were to assert this,
- 1145 I would make him retract it with my sword
or with the point of my lance.
Now step forward, whoever wishes to assert this."
When the king heard this,
he was pleased in his mind
- 1150 and sent for Elegast
one swift messenger after another,
to where he was in the wood,

- and summoned him to come with all speed
and forgave him all he had done wrong.
1155 If he dared take upon himself the fight
with Eggeric,
he would make him rich.
The messengers did not delay,
they did as the king had ordered.
1160 They rode until the time
that they found Elegast.
What the king had told them,
they said it all to Elegast,
who was overjoyed at these words,
1165 when he heard the news.
Without a moment's hesitation he gave orders
to prepare his horse with the riding gear
that he had stolen from Eggeric.
This he declared solemnly:
1170 if the king would grant him a safe conduct,
he would ensure Eggeric's disgrace.
He swore on his Christian faith,
that if God were to grant him one prayer,
he desired nothing else
1175 than that he might engage in single combat
for his rightful lord
in order to safeguard the king's honour.
They rode away at great speed.
When Elegast, the noble knight,
1180 entered the king's hall,
—now you will hear his words—
he said: "May God keep safe this court,
the king and all I find here.
But Eggeric I do not greet.
1185 God, who had himself crucified

- for our sake and has great power,
and also Mary, that maiden sweet,
let me see on this day
that Eggeric of Eggermonde
1190 will be made to sway in the wind.
If God could sin,
He has sinned
in that Eggeric has escaped the gallows,
because he has sworn my lord's death
1195 without pressure or necessity."
When Elegast had said this,
Eggeric would gladly have punished him for it,
but he did not have the power.
There were many there who deserted him.
1200 The king replied to this:
"Be welcome at my court.
Now I urge you, by all
who turn to God for their sins,
that you will tell and reveal
1205 the crime and the conspiracy
by Eggeric, whom you see here.
Do not be prevented by anyone,
but you must tell nothing but the truth
of how all this came about."
1210 Elegast said: "With pleasure,
I cannot shirk this duty.
I am absolutely certain
that Eggeric has sworn your death.
I heard him say it when he lay in bed
1215 and hit his wife
because she dared to express her disapproval,
causing the blood to burst forth
from her teeth, her nose and her mouth.

- She sat up and bent
1220 her face over the edge of the bed.
I was there and saw it
and softly crept up towards her.
In my right glove
I caught the woman's blood."
1225 Then he showed it to the king
and to all who wanted to see it.
"If Eggeric should dare to deny it,
I will force him to admit the crime
before the sun goes down
1230 through a single combat between us both,
unless prevented by adverse circumstances."
Eggeric answered at once:
"That disgrace will not take place
in my lifetime, nor the wretchedness
1235 of having to risk my neck
against a banished thief.
It is also not fitting for you
to engage me in single combat."
And Elegast answered: "Why,
1240 even though I am not a duke like you,
and was banished for a time,
during which the king confiscated my property
because he was angry with me,
I have never been a murderer.
1245 And even though I have now and then
robbed the rich of their goods,
I only did it from dire need.
But you are a murderer
and you cannot refuse a challenge to fight
1250 from whoever it is in all the world
who accuses you of this."

- Then the king answered:
 “By my faith, you are right.
 If I were to treat him according to the law,
 1255 I would have him dragged away
 by a menial and hanged.”
 Then the game was up for Eggeric
 and he turned over in his mind
 how matters stood.
 1260 “A fight is better than a broken neck.”
 At court there was no one
 who dared speak up in his favour.
 So it was decided to hold the combat
 a little after three o’clock.
 1265 The king ordered his barons
 to be present fully armed in the field.
 He did not wish to miss any of the fight.
 He had the lists prepared
 and prayed God to decide
 1270 the outcome of the fight
 as is just and reasonable.
 The king wished Elegast courage
 and said that, if the fight went well
 and he stayed alive,
 1275 he would give him his sister,
 who earlier had been Eggeric’s,
 who now had sworn his death.
 The field, where many fully armed men
 were standing, was roped off
 1280 a little before the time for vespers.
 Elegast was the first to enter the lists
 as he was the challenger.
 He dismounted onto the grass
 and kneeled down to pray

- 1285 and said: “God, through your benevolence
 I pray today to you for mercy
 for all the trespasses
 I have committed.
 I know well how sinful I am.
- 1290 Merciful God, although you have the might,
 do not punish me today
 for my sins.
 By your five holy wounds
 inflicted upon you for our sins,
- 1295 stand by me today,
 so that I do not die
 or perish in the combat.
 If my sins do not defeat me,
 I expect to leave here unhurt.
- 1300 Almighty God, through your benevolence
 I pray that you may grant me joy.
 And Mary, sweet lady,
 I wish to serve you with true loyalty.
 And in the future I shall never again
- 1305 be a thief or a robber
 in wildernesses and in woods,
 if I may here stay alive.”
 When he had ended his prayer,
 he made the sign of the cross above all his limbs.
- 1310 As is proper, with his right hand
 he made the sign of the cross over his coat of mail
 and over the horse that stood before him
 and humbly begged God
 that it might carry him with honour
- 1315 and let him return from the fight.
 With these words
 he mounted into his saddle

- and hung the shield on his left side.
 Now a great fight is about to start.
- 1320 He took the lance in his hand.
 And spoiling for the fight, Eggeric entered
 the lists, well armed;
 he was in a very violent mood.
 He offered up
- 1325 no prayer to God.
 He sharply dug in his spurs
 and rode towards Elegast
 and Elegast towards him,
 who hit Eggeric through the leather
- 1330 of the cuirass with great force,
 so that he fell down
 off his horse onto the earth.
 Eggeric drew his sword
 which he pulled from the scabbard,
- 1335 and said: "Now I shall kill both of you,
 Elegast, you and your horse,
 unless you dismount
 at once onto the earth.
 Only then will your horse survive.
- 1340 It is so strong and so big,
 it would be a shame to kill it.
 Many would regret it.
 If you should get away alive,
 you may keep your horse."
- 1345 Elegast said at once:
 "If you were not on foot
 I would make an end of this fight.
 I do not wish to kill you on foot,
 I wish to gain renown through you,
- 1350 even if it were to turn out badly for me.

- Now get back upon your horse.
Let us fight like proper knights.
I had rather be praised
than defeat you in a shameful manner,
1355 even if I should lose my life in the fight.”
King Charles regretted it
that Elegast hesitated so long
and spared Eggeric.
Eggeric at once caught his horse.
1360 While Elegast spoke like this,
he mounted into his saddle.
Then a fight arose there
until long past the time for vespers.
There was nobody there who had ever seen
1365 on any day
such a fierce fight
as these two had.
That is no lie!
Then the king of France said:
1370 “God, as truly
as you have the power here,
so must you end this fight
and this long combat
as is right and just.”
1375 Elegast had a sword,
it was worth its weight
in red golddust
to any man in need.
The king had given it him.
1380 Elegast raised it
and delivered a blow with such force
with the help of our Lord
and because of King Charles’s prayer

- that he had said on Elegast's behalf,
 1385 that he robbed Eggeric
 of the larger part of his head,
 so that he fell dead out of the saddle.
 This the king saw and he said:
 "Righteous God, you are in heaven.
 1390 It is appropriate that I should praise you
 who grants me so much honour.
 Whoever serves you, is sensible and wise.
 You may be relied on for help and advice
 for those who turn to you for mercy."
 1395 Now I wish to end this story.
 They dragged Eggeric away and hanged
 him and all the other traitors too.
 Treasure nor supplication was any help.
 Elegast retained his honourable position.
 1400 For this he thanked our Lord.
 The king gave him Eggeric's wife.
 They were together all their life.
 So may God put right all our affairs
 before our death.
 1405 May the heavenly father grant us that.
 Now say "Amen" all together.

NOTES

- 1-2 The very short prologue suggests that a group of listeners is going to hear a story that really happened. With this prologue the text aligns itself with the genre of the *chanson de geste* that had historiographic pretensions. Originally such *chansons* were intended for performance before audiences.
- 5 At Ingelheim, between Mainz and Bingen on the Rhine, there was an imperial *palts* or “palace.” Charlemagne did not have a permanent residence at his disposal; instead he travelled ceaselessly from *palts* to *palts* to govern his empire. The reason why the name “Ingelheim” was chosen may very likely be connected with the appearance of the angel in line 16.
- 7 Charles was king of the Franks from 768. On 25 December 800 he was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III in Rome. This meant that for the first time since the fall of the Western Roman empire in 476, western Europe had an emperor again. Charles’s realm extended from northern Spain to far into Germany and from Italy to Frisia. In 843 this enormous area was distributed among his grandsons, which ultimately led to the rise of France with a king and Germany with an emperor. It is an attractive idea to interpret line 7 as a reference to the thirteenth-century situation: Charles united in his person the power wielded by the German emperor and the French king.
- 8 After the short prologue in line 8, the narrator once again addresses his audience directly. Here, at the beginning of the story, the import of his words may still be interpreted in various ways: “wonderful matters and historical truth,” “wonders that really happened,” or “a curious, wonderful and historical tale.” Having heard or read the entire story, one may conclude that

Karel ende Elegast is a story about God's wonderful ways that is presented as truth (Winkelman, 1990).

- 13 To hold court or a court day meant that a group of noblemen and lords assembled, led by the (itinerant) sovereign. It was convened for official meetings and the administration of justice. Romances often begin during a court day.
- 15-16 Messengers from God to Charles repeatedly make their appearance in the *chansons de geste*. It is remarkable that in this case Charles is told to do wrong, i.e. to go out stealing. This paradox is given extra force by the fact that the reader is well aware from the start (l. 16) that it is God's angel who is speaking to the emperor. Charles himself wonders who (l. 51) is telling him to go stealing and why (ll. 54-55). As a result of the reader's prior knowledge, attention is focused on Charles's reaction.
- 61-69 The limits of Charles's empire mentioned here—Cologne, Rome, the Danube, and the Atlantic Ocean—largely correspond with historical reality. Although after his victory over the Saxons Charles ruled over a large area in northern Germany, at that time Cologne was still the largest town in the North.
- 71 In reality Charles's power in Spain was limited to the Spanish marches, a narrow strip of land along the southern edge of the Pyrenees. Galicia, in the northwest of Spain, never belonged to the Frankish realm. The notion that Charles had conquered all of Spain (especially including Galicia with Santiago de Compostela, a major place of pilgrimage) rests primarily on the presentation of the empire in the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* (c. 1140).

- 96-103 Charles's sudden obedience, after having given reasons twice for refusing to act on what he had been ordered to do, may be explained with reference to the (divine) symbolism of the number three.
- 132-33 It may seem odd that Charles should get dressed in his expensive clothes to go stealing. However, the information serves to emphasize that in actual fact Charles is a sovereign, not a thief. These lines also point forward to lines 308-21, in which Elegast wonders where, in the middle of the night and the forest, such a richly clad knight has sprung from.
- 149 A bridge gives access to the central section of the *palts* where the *palas* ("palace," ll. 139, 1131) with the representative *sale* ("hall," ll. 118, 124, 1091, 1126) is situated. The entire building is encircled by a moat. Having crossed the bridge, Charles arrives in the walled *hof* ("courtyard," l. 1114) where the *stalle* ("stables," ll. 151, 1057) and the guard house (ll. 156, 1055, 1108, 1112) are found. (Classen, 1964; Grewe, 1999).
- 168-91 The prayer is directed at God, who, according to the doctrine of the Trinity, is at the same time father, son and holy spirit (l. 170). Charles refers emphatically to the life of Christ, the son who became man (Luke 2:1-21) and to the miracles wrought by him. By his death on the cross (l. 174; Matt. 27:50) Christ redeemed mankind who had lived in sin since the fall of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Paradise (l. 172, Genesis 3). Prior to the crucifixion, Christ had been taken prisoner in the garden of Gethsemane by the traitor Judas accompanied by a great multitude, sent by the chief priests and the elders of the people (l. 175; Matt. 26:47). After the interrogation by the high priest, these people spat in Christ's face, punched and struck him (l. 177; Matt. 26:67). According to John 19:34, a Roman

soldier pierced Christ's side with a lance to ensure that he had really died. In the legendary tradition of the Middle Ages, this soldier is transformed into a Jew named Longinus (l.176). Line 180 contains a reference to the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus, in particular to the story of Christ's descent into hell after his death on the cross. This was done to free from the devil's power the righteous who had died between Adam's fall and Christ's redemption. In lines 181-84 Charles refers in his prayer to the story of Lazarus who is raised from the dead by Christ (John 11:1-44). The assertion that Christ made bread from stones, as is said in line 185, is not correct. Although the devil challenged him to do this, Christ refused (Matt. 4:3-4). The same incorrect version of these verses is also found in other medieval texts (*Walewein*, l. 15; *Cantar de Mio Cid*, l. 345). Finally Charles refers to the marriage at Cana where, according to John 2:1-12, Christ changed water into wine (l.186) (Winkelman, 1990).

- 169 The word *ghereyde* is used in the text to denote both all the equipment needed to ride a horse, i.e. "tack," but also specific parts, like the saddle. Here, and in all other occurrences of *ghereyde*, the translation depends on the context.
- 188 It seems as if Charles primarily wants to give an indication of his mood by referring to the dark night. In line 126 he had already mentioned that the night was "dark" (*duyster*), but in lines 199-201 the narrator remarks that it is, in fact, very clear weather.
- 244-65 Elegast's activities as a robber, and particularly his choice of victim, are entirely in accordance with the *topos* of the "noble robber." Found in medieval to twentieth-century narratives, and ranging from Robin Hood to Billy the Kid and Jesse James,

such stories portray the outlaw hero as stealing from those in power (the clergy; bankers) and sparing the working classes. (Hobsbawm, 1969, pp.46-62). See also lines 504-30 and Charlemagne's efforts at outdoing Elegast as a robber by his supposedly ruthless behaviour in lines 571-81.

308-21 See the note to lines 132-33.

380-84 In the second half of the twelfth century it became customary to depict heraldic signs on the shield, which made it possible to identify heavily armed knights (Bumke, 1986, p. 219).

474-75 In Incunabulum A, the base text of this edition, Elegast does not name himself until the very similar lines 500-501. However, we here follow sources BR, H and K, as we consider them to contain a more logical structure of the conversation.

504-30 Elegast's words strongly resemble Charles's thoughts in lines 244-65. Repetitions of this kind are a well known stylistic feature of medieval narratives. In this case the repetition enhances the positive picture of Elegast that is painted here. Elegast's exaggerated comment in line 510 should not be taken literally. He means to suggest that he has been providing for himself in this way for a long time.

570 Charles is lying, as he had announced in line 554, but he also speaks the truth, as *Adelbrecht* means "bright by noble birth."

602 In the case of a division of goods between two partners, ancient custom ruled that one party made the division into two portions, while the other had first choice. In this way cheating was prevented.

- 650 The name *Eggermonde* is probably based on Aigremont near Liège. It is odd in this connection that line 696 states that Eggeric's castle is situated on the Rhine (*opten Rijn*).
- 723-29 Ploughshares were regularly used in burglaries into ordinary (wattle and daub) houses. However, they were not suitable for making holes in the stone walls of a castle. This explains the ironic remarks by Elegast, the experienced thief (Janssens, 1987).
- 764 This line stresses that Elegast's magic has nothing to do with evil black magic, but was quite harmless white magic.
- 797 It is remarkable that Elegast picks the herb that grows in the earth in front of him, whereas he took it from a bag in line 765. The variant in K reads that Elegast put the herb in the king's mouth as he stood before him ("da hey vur eme stoent"). Although the reading of Incunabulum A is correct in itself, it would seem that the text has been incorrectly transmitted here.
- 911-21 This passage by the narrator bears a strong resemblance to Elegast's own account of what happened in lines 1214-25. It is remarkable that in the redaction of Incunabulum A in line 917 (*Ic*) and in line 919 (*minen*) the first person is used erroneously. There seems to be a connection between these lines and lines 1221 and 1223, but the exact relation is obscure.
- 966 Elegast acts as if the murder has already been committed. This shows how badly he has been shocked by what he has heard and how loyal he is to Charles. See also lines 615-29, where Elegast indignantly refuses to go and steal from the king.

- 1028-31 Here Elegast reveals why he has fallen from grace: he stole so much from Charles that two horses could barely carry it. Compare Charles's opinion that he exiled Elegast because of some small affair (*om cleyne sake*, l. 218) with this statement. It would seem that the king considers the theft of a treasure that two horses can scarcely carry of but little importance. However, see also lines 621-22, where Elegast states that Charles banned him from his lands as a result of false counsel. Evil counsellors are often used in the *chansons de geste* to excuse Charles's wrong decisions.
- 1049-63 The description of Charles's return to Ingelheim contains virtually the same elements as the story of his departure in lines 130-271: we are told about his thoughts, the open castle gate, the sleeping servants, the horse and the stable, the fact that no one sees him walk through his palace, his coat of mail, the guard. The two descriptions of the king's passage through his *palts* mark the beginning and the end of Charles's nocturnal adventure.
- 1070 The phrase *verholen raet* refers to the *colloquium secretum*. This was a closed meeting during which decisions were prepared that were later taken in public gatherings (Althoff, 1997, p. 157-84).
- 1082 Naimes, the duke of Bavaria, often has the role of wise counsellor in Charlemagne epics. His advice in the *Chanson de Roland* (ll. 230-43) to start negotiations with the Saracens is particularly well known.
- 1087 Clearly *Vrancrijc* does not refer here to the whole of the Frankish realm (as in l. 1369) but to the heart of the area governed by (later) French kings, the *Ile de France* (Paris and

environs) (Schneidmüller, 1987). The county of Blois was south of this area. The text suggests a contrast between Charles's "French" supporters and Eggeric's followers from the Rhineland (ll. 1076, 1104-07).

1144-47 The organisation of the single combat between Elegast and Eggeric is in accordance with the procedures of criminal law in Flanders prior to the twelfth century, even in minor details. When in the legal debate between plaintiff and accused a solution could not be found, a trial by ordeal could be the next step. If the dispute concerned two knights, the trial by ordeal took the form of a single combat. It was firmly believed that God would show which of the two contestants was guilty by making him lose the fight. (van Caenegem, 1956, pp.139-47). In other words, Eggeric takes a great risk here. He probably assumes that no one will dare to charge him.

1155-57 The condition to accept the single combat is coupled with Charles's promise of riches to Elegast. The condition may also be connected with the forgiveness of crimes (l. 1154). In that case line 1157 is an independent sentence.

1191 As God is incapable of committing a sin, He cannot possibly want Eggeric, who is plotting a murder, to live. By means of this statement Elegast emphasises the criminal nature of Eggeric's plan.

1229 In a judicial single combat it is the rule that the accused has proven his innocence if he has not been beaten by sunset (van Caenegem, 1956, p.140).

1255-56 Death by hanging was considered extremely ignominious. It was the usual punishment for thieves and traitors. Often the

condemned person was dragged to the gallows by horses (van Caenegem, 1954, pp.161-63).

- 1264 *Noen*, English nones, is an indication of time, derived from the sixth of the fixed times for prayer in which the Christian day was divided, i.e. around three in the afternoon.
- 1280 *Vesper*, like *noen* (l. 1264), is one of the fixed times of prayer of the Divine Office in which the Christian day was divided, i.e. around six in the afternoon. This late starting time means that Elegast has only little time to defeat Eggeric before sunset (see note to l. 1229).
- 1293 Christ suffered five wounds during the crucifixion, four in his hands and feet and one in his side (see note to ll. 168-91).
- 1396-97 After Eggeric has been killed as a knight in single combat (l. 1387), he is humiliated even further by being dragged to the gallows and hanged (see note to ll. 1255-56).
- 1406 The story is concluded by the narrator's request to say a communal *Amen*. This is reminiscent of the oral tradition of the Charlemagne epics. Fragment M has the word *Amen* written after this line. Exactly the same situation is found at the original ending of the fourteenth-century drama *Esmoreit* (line 1006).

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[Note to the reader: Because the author/date system has been used for citations in the present article, multiple works by the same author(s) are listed chronologically in ascending order.]

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