

Translating Poetic Capital in 15th-Century Brussels

From Amé de Montgeseoie's "Pas de la Mort" to Colijn Caillieu's "Dal sonder Wederkeeren"

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Collaboration and competition pervade late medieval poetic culture in both French-speaking and Dutch-speaking regions. Francophone poets often engage closely in exchange and dialogue with others, writing continuations or responses to existing poems that used more sophisticated form and language. Many take part in formal contests, most notably the Puys, municipal competitions for devotional poetry.¹ Over the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, these processes generate a steady increase in formal and linguistic virtuosity. Poets acquire, develop, and pass on poetic techniques through interactions with their peers, and in so doing they produce a form of capital: not only 'cultural capital' in a Bourdieusian sense, the material or reputational rewards enjoyed by individual poets, but also capital as the collective total of poetic expertise, to which authors add through their collaborative or competitive interactions.² In Dutch-speaking areas, a broadly similar ethos is apparent in the *rederijkerskamers*, whose competitive activities promote collective at least as much as individual accomplishment.³ Hence the interactive generation of what we might call poetic capital is common to the literature of both major vernaculars in the Low Countries. Moreover, there is a significant traffic between cultural productions in those vernaculars. Evidence exists of municipal theatre competitions, hosted by both French- and Dutch-speaking cities, with prizes awarded for the best play in the other language.⁴ A number of manuscripts contain material in both languages.⁵ Dutch-speaking printers also published work in French, and sometimes produced simultaneous versions of the same text in each language.⁶ The

¹ See Armstrong 2012, Cayley 2006, Gros 1992, Gros 1996, Hüe 2002.

² The principle is formulated more fully in Armstrong 2012, xvii-xxi, 170.

³ See especially Coigneau 2003; Moser 2001, 11-16; Van Dixhoorn 2009, 129-192.

⁴ See Van Bruaene 2008, 44, 46-47, 64, 223; Lavéant 2011, 166-169.

⁵ See Bossuyt 1999, 88, 90-91.

⁶ See Thiry 1975, 32; Keesman 1993; Meeus 2014. On interactions between the literary cultures more generally, see also Oosterman 1999-2000, Small 2005.

latter practice depends of course upon translation, through which a number of substantial pieces by French-speaking authors found their way to Dutch-speaking audiences.⁷

In view of this context, the question inevitably arises: may the competitive display of poetic ingenuity involve interactions between poets who spoke different vernaculars? More specifically, may these interactions take place not through continuation or response, but through translation? In what follows I examine how Colijn Caillieu's translation of a French source is a vehicle for intertextual competition, in respect of both form and voice. The relationship between the poems is rich in implications, not only for the study of other verse and *prosimetrum* translations produced in the late medieval Burgundian Netherlands, but also for our understanding of the wider interplay between French- and Dutch-language literary cultures in the region and, more generally, of the 'language question' in the Low Countries in the late Middle Ages.⁸

Caillieu's source, *Le Pas de la Mort* [*The Tournament of Death*], is generally ascribed to one Amé de Montgesoie; it seems to have circulated solely in manuscript, and is very much a court production.⁹ Montgesoie is known to have been in the service of Isabella of Bourbon – the second wife of Charles of Charolais, son of Philip the Good of Burgundy – between 1457 and her death in 1465.¹⁰ His poem can be dated to within this period on the basis of its closing dedication to Isabella, which ends with the poet's punning signature *amé de moult je soye*:

A l'assovie et plus princesse
A qui jamais on face honneur,

⁷ Relevant studies include Brown, Sutch & Mareel 2012; Jongenelen 2003; Jongenelen 2008; Raue 1996, 79-122.

⁸ On the 'language question', see especially Armstrong 1965; Vale 2001, 282-294; Boone 2009.

⁹ The *Pas* is cited from Walton 1933, 3-21; line references are provided in the text. Six manuscripts are known: Lille, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 342 (*olim* 401), fols 43r-54r; Oxford, Bodleian, Douce 168, fols 66r-79r; Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 15216, fols 125r-141r; Paris, BnF, Rothschild 2797 (IV.1.14), fols 1r-15v; Phillipps MS 12294, fols 1r-16v (see Sotheby's 2010, lot 2); Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2654, fols 1r-14v, 16r. Walton's text is edited solely from the Lille and Paris manuscripts. Translations of all quotations from Middle French and Middle Dutch are my own unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁰ Walton 1930, 140-147, outlines Montgesoie's career. Archives record his presence in various parts of the Burgundian Netherlands, and by 1477 he was part of the retinue of Mary of Burgundy. There is no trace of his activity after 1478. Besides the *Pas de la Mort*, he is credited with a verse lament on the death of Isabella (edited in Walton 1933, 21-28).

De Charrolois dame et comtesse,
 Choix oultre choix plain de valeur,
 Je, son indigne serviteur,
 Presentay lors a sa haulteur
 Ce livre en mon afflict remord,
 Appellé: *le Pas de la Mort*.

Sy requiers Dieu qui doint espace
 Aux chrestiens d'eulx sy bien armer,
 Que chascun a son salut passe
 Sans sa conscience entamer,
 Ce pas, pour ung mors tant amer,
 Et que je me puisse sommer
 Des bons, et pour combler ma joie
 Sans fin *amé de moult je soye* (641-648).

[To the most completely accomplished princess to whom respects could ever be paid – the lady and countess of Charolais, the best of the best, of supreme worth – I, her unworthy servant, then presented to her loftiness this book, in my unhappy anxiety, entitled *The Tournament of Death*. And I pray that God grant Christians the time to arm themselves well enough that all can be saved and, without compromising their conscience, pass through that passage after being bitten so severely; and that I may count myself among the good; and, to fill me with joy, that I may eternally be loved by many.]

Montgesoie's poem is a sustained reflection on death, of a kind that was quite popular with Francophone audiences in the fifteenth century; its governing metaphor, however, is rather more culturally specific.¹¹ In Middle French a *pas*, or *pas d'armes*, was a form of tournament combat; the expression does not lend itself to easy English translation, not least because Montgesoie uses it to pun on the established expression *passer le pas*, 'to pass through the passage', a standard euphemism for dying. By the mid-fifteenth century a *pas* typically involved single combat on

¹¹ On the theme of death in Francophone literature of the period, see especially Martineau-Génieys 1978.

horseback to defend a passage, and had a particular association with the Burgundian court.¹² In Montgesoie's allegorical version, the *pas* stands for the inevitable human struggle with mortality. It is hosted by the personified Mort [Death], assisted by her herald Excès [Excess]. All visitors must challenge one or other of Mort's two champions, Antique (i.e. death through old age) and Accident (i.e. untimely death of one sort or another). The *pas* is discovered by a first-person narrator, or *acteur* as these figures are typically called in French poetry of the period; once again, the term does not translate well, as it characteristically blurs the distinction between the historical author and the protagonist within the fiction.¹³ Montgesoie's *acteur* is a young man who has previously enjoyed good fortune, and has decided to go on a journey out of boredom and presumption. He eventually comes across the desolate Val sans Retour [Valley of No Return], where Mort and her cohorts are ensconced next to the Fontaine de Plours [Fountain of Tears] – a detail with a particular Burgundian resonance, for a *Pas de la Fontaine des Pleurs* had taken place at Chalon-sur-Saône in 1449, when Philip the Good had sponsored Burgundy's star tournament performer, Jacques de Lalaing, to take on all comers for a year.¹⁴ As the *acteur* watches, Antique delivers a long speech to Mort (89-344). He acknowledges the power that she, Accident, and himself wield over the human race; laments the depravity and corruption into which the world has fallen; points out that humans can help themselves to avoid sin by thinking about the prospect of death; and notes the transience of earthly life, where death constantly removes the old so that nature can replace it with the new. This is why death deserves to be honoured, and for that reason Accident and Antique have decided to hold a *pas*. Mort approves this initiative, and her herald announces the rules of the tournament, before leaving to proclaim the *pas* worldwide. The *acteur* then leaves the scene; his wanderlust has vanished, and he no longer sets any store by worldly pleasures. He returns home, to attend to his conscience and to write down what he has seen for the edification of others:

Et pour ce qu'Excès n'estoit pas

¹² On the *pas d'armes* in general terms, see De Keyser 1936, 41-44; Vale 1981, 67-76; Keen 1984, 200-218; Van den Neste 1996, esp. 53-54; Moffat 2010, 51-53. On *passer le pas*, see Walton 1930, 150; DMF 2010, *pas*2, II.A.4.b).

¹³ On the ambivalence of *acteur*, see Armstrong & Kay 2011, 29.

¹⁴ De Keyser 1936, 43-44, notes the relevance of this *pas* to Montgesoie's composition. See also Planche 1975. Montgesoie's poem may indeed have been prompted by the death of Jacques de Lalaing in July 1453 – a traumatic event for Burgundian chivalry, of which Montgesoie's audience is certain to have been aware (see Smith and DeVries 2005, 131).

Encorres venu(s) anonser
 L'effect de ce dolereux pas
 Qui tant est penible a passer,
 Je m'entremis, lors, sans cesser,
 De le descripre et compasser
 Pour faire scavoit l'aventure
 A toute humaine creature (625-632).

[And because Excess hadn't yet arrived to announce the realization of this painful tournament/passage that is so arduous to pass through, I then set to work, without stopping, describing and delineating it to communicate this unhappy occurrence to the entire human race.]

The Dutch translation is over a hundred lines longer than the *Pas de la Mort*. Though each stanza of the French poem is translated by a single corresponding stanza, the stanzas of the *Dal sonder Wederkeeren* have nine lines rather than eight; moreover, a number of further stanzas are added. In the surviving witness, a single copy of an edition printed in Antwerp, the poet is not explicitly identified.¹⁵ However, its authorship is ascribed in Johannes Pertcheval's *Den camp vander doot* [The Joust of Death], a translation of Olivier de La Marche's allegorical quest narrative *Le Chevalier délibéré* [The Resolute Knight]. While La Marche explicitly mentions Montgesoie and the *Pas de la Mort*, Pertcheval's translation refers to the *Dal sonder Wederkeeren* at the corresponding point, and identifies its author as the Brussels-based poet Colijn Caillieu:

Dois tu oublier ou que soye
 Ce traictié qui tant point et mort
 Que fist Amé de Montjesoye,
 Plus riche que d'or ne de soye,
 Du merveilleux *Pas de la Mort*?

[How can you possibly forget
 That pricking, mordant treatise
 That Amé de Montgesoie wrote
 (More precious than gold or silk)]

¹⁵ Caillieu 1528.

About the monstrous Tourney of Death?]¹⁶

Soudi dan vergeten hoe gij zijt gestaect
 Den voerscreven tractaet zo eyselic inder noot,
 De welc Colijn Caellui heeft gemaect,
 Te Brusel wonachtich, die zo bijt en raect,
 Genaempt zijnde *Den pas vander Doot?*

[Must you then forget how, in times of distress, you rely heavily on that treatise, that frightening work that sinks its teeth into you and puts you on the rack, written by Colijn Caillieu, residing in Brussels, called *The Tournament of Death?*]¹⁷

Caillieu – who was also known as Colijn Keyaert, and who is possibly identical with Colijn van Rijssle – is credited with verse plays praising Charles the Bold (1465) and the birth of Margaret of Austria (1480); other compositions have also been ascribed to him.¹⁸ He was highly regarded in his city; highly enough, indeed, to have been appointed as its first official poet in 1474, with a regular if not especially high salary.¹⁹ Caillieu was succeeded in this role, after his death in 1484-1485, by Jan Smeken.²⁰ It is conceivable that the *Dal sonder Wederkeeren* was translated as an indirect response to the death of Mary of Burgundy after a riding accident in March 1482. Unexpected and constitutionally disruptive, Mary's demise was an event of great public

¹⁶ Text and translation from Carroll & Wilson 1999, 56-59 (5.1-5).

¹⁷ Text from Degroote 1948, 6 (33-37). Degroote's text is a facsimile of Otgier Nachtegael's edition (Schiedam, 1503); I normalize its orthography and punctuation in accordance with standard editorial practice.

¹⁸ On Caillieu's career, see especially Van Eeghem 1963, 141-172. On the identification of the three Colijns, see Gijsen 1989, 13-21.

¹⁹ Mareel 2010, 95-96, observes that Caillieu apparently solicited the appointment himself. The poet argued that various other cities, such as Antwerp, Bruges and Oudenaarde, already had municipal poets of this kind; his claim attests to the cultural competition between communities in the region. Van Eeghem 1963, 144-147, discusses the document recording Caillieu's appointment.

²⁰ On the culture and literature of Brussels in the late Middle Ages, see especially Pleij 1998, Sutch 2003.

resonance that was widely mourned by contemporary authors; moreover, Mary was the only daughter of Isabelle de Bourbon, the original dedicatee of Montgesoie's *Pas de la Mort*.²¹

Jan van Doesborch's edition of Caillieu's poem, a quarto volume of sixteen leaves, bears two titles: *Tdal sonder wederkeeren oft t'pas der doot* [*The Valley of No Return, or the Tournament of Death*]. Hence a literal rendering of the French title is subordinated to another part of Montgesoie's allegorical landscape, the Val sans Retour. The subordination is a matter not only of ordering, but also of visual presentation: the first title is a large framed woodcut printed in red ink, while the second consists of small typographic characters.²² Indeed, we may wonder why Van Doesborch retained the second title at all. It is tempting to suppose that the Dutch poem had been transmitted in manuscript form under both titles, so that their coexistence on the title-page would strike a chord with as many potential buyers as possible. In any case, the greater prominence of the first title is easy to explain: over forty years after Caillieu's death, the Valley of No Return was doubtless more readily accessible for an urban public that may not have clearly understood what a *pas d'armes* was.

Two further aspects of the edition deserve brief comment. First, it is distinctly shoddy as a technical achievement. Jan van Doesborch had been active since around 1502, producing mainly literary texts in both Dutch and English, but his output as a whole has a rather low standard of typographical correctness.²³ The *Dal sonder wederkeeren* is no exception: misprints are numerous; various lines of verse are laid out as prose; two lines have been omitted; and the sequence of the French stanzas reveals not only that the Dutch equivalents are wrongly ordered at one point, but also that an entire stanza of the translation is missing.²⁴ Nevertheless, Van Doesborch's text is coherent and complete enough for firm conclusions to be drawn as to how Caillieu treated his source. Second, the edition is quite heavily illustrated. Though most images are apparently from

²¹ On literary reactions to Mary's death, see especially Oosterman 2005.

²² De Keyser 1936, 22, describes the title-page of Van Doesborch's edition. Xylographic elements often figured on Van Doesborch's title-pages: Franssen 1990, 94.

²³ Franssen 1990; see especially 112 on the editions' textual quality.

²⁴ Van Eeghem 1963, 170-171, notes the more substantive errors. De Keyser 1936, 111, translates the missing stanza himself, rendering Montgesoie's lines into an artificial Middle Dutch (487-495); he does the same for one of the individual missing lines (701), though not for the other (196). While indefensible – not to mention hilarious – to modern scholars, his interventionism is a salutary reminder that editorial practices are historically contingent, and that philological research is underpinned by a hermeneutic drive as strong as that in other intellectual fields.

existing stock, two have been specially designed.²⁵ One of these dominates the title-page; it depicts Death and her two champions, named Antike and Accident in the Dutch text. The other shows Exces, whose name is identical in the Dutch and French poems.²⁶ The image on the title-page is a composite: the upper part is made up of two separate blocks, one showing Accident riding a monster, and the other showing Antike with his companion, to whom Caillieu refers as Siecheyt [Illness] (103).²⁷ These blocks are used individually within the poem at appropriate points.

On a semantic level, Caillieu translates Montgesoie quite thoroughly, insofar as almost all the content of the *Pas de la Mort* finds its way into the corresponding stanzas of the *Dal sonder wederkeeren*. At the same time – even disregarding the lines and stanzas that Caillieu adds to his version – various elements in the Dutch text have no precedent in the French. These elements' presence is bound up with the metre of the translation. Caillieu uses the four-stress line typical of *rederijker* poetry, in which the stresses could be freely distributed, with a variable number of unstressed syllables between them.²⁸ This metre is highly convenient for translators, as it permits considerable flexibility. Renderings can easily be expanded for the sake of sense without doing violence to metre or syntax; conversely, it is also a relatively simple matter to pad out a line with additional words to maintain a rhyme scheme. The following stanza, in which Antike addresses Death, exemplifies the way in which Caillieu handles Montgesoie's octaves:

Ta propriété renommee
 Ne pouroit estre bien descripte;
 Tu es la dame mains amee
 En qui plus grand valeur habite;

²⁵ De Keyser 1936, 23-24, briefly describes the woodcuts and notes their position. Various images are reproduced elsewhere in the edition. On Van Doesborch's use of stock images, see Franssen 1990, 108.

²⁶ Caillieu 1528, fols A1r, C1v; the images are reproduced in De Keyser 1936, 57, 135. The woodcut of Exces can be viewed online, in Cruyskamp 1940, *1: http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/does003refr01_01/does003refr01_01_0002.php. Cruyskamp notes (1940: xv) that this image was subsequently modified for use in another of Van Doesborch's editions.

²⁷ The figure is named Maladie in Montgesoie's poem (84).

²⁸ On this metre, see Coigneau 2003, 490; Kossmann 1922, 5-6. De Keyser 1936, 53, briefly describes the metre of Caillieu's poem.

Car se n'estoit ta force eslite,
 Nul ne seroit de pechié quitte,
 Ne Dieu, qui veult que chascun meure,
 On ne priseroit une meure (241-248).

[Your famous property could not be fully described; you are the lady least loved in whom the greatest worth inheres; for, were it not for your supreme power, nobody would be absolved of sin; and God, who wishes for all to die, would not be valued as highly as a berry.]

U eygentheyt, Vrouwe, die vermaert / bekent is
 En soudemen na weerden niet connen volscriven.
 Ghi sijt die vrouwe die minst ghemint is
 En die hoochste in haer valeur moet blijven,
 En daden dijn crachtelijcke bedrijven
 Niemant en soude hem van sonden wachten
 Noch God / die elcken door u doet ontlijven
 En soudemen niet weerdich een besie achten.
 Uut quay herten / comen gheen goey ghedachten (352-360).

[Your property, my lady, that is famous and well-known, could not be fully depicted according to its value. You are the lady who is least loved, and who must be the most exalted in her worth. Were it not for your powerful action, nobody would refrain from sin; and God, who causes everyone to die through you, would not be valued as highly as a berry. No good intentions come out of evil hearts.]

Here as elsewhere, the Dutch text evinces a close equivalence to the French in most respects, though it tends to expand formulations, often by using relative clauses rather than attributive adjectives. There are occasional minor distortions, as when *en qui* (244) is rendered as if it read *qui en*, perhaps reflecting a faulty reading in a French manuscript source. When rendering the penultimate line in the French octave above, Caillieu departs from Montgesoie's phrasing, but the point remains very much the same: death has its allocated role in a divinely ordered cosmos.²⁹

Outright mistranslations in Caillieu's poem are few in number, though two deserve brief mention, as they are relevant to the two specially designed woodcuts. The first occurs in the

²⁹ Michels 1954 discusses various other elements of Caillieu's translation.

description of the monster ridden by Accident, which has various weapons for body parts. According to Montgesoie the monster's tail was *de serpentine preste* (77) [made of a cannon ready to fire]. Caillieu, however, has not understood the military term *serpentine*, a type of cannon with a long barrel: in his account, the monster *hadde den stert als serpente die vloeghen* (95) [had a tail of flying snakes]. In the woodcut, the monster's tail is indeed made of snakes.³⁰ The second error appears in the narrator's description of Exces, who in the *Pas de la Mort* is *plus noir que nulle meure* (585) [blacker than any blackberry]. Either Caillieu or the scribe of his French source seems to have read *meure* as *maure*, the standard Middle French designation for African or Arab ethnicity. The Dutch text reads *zwarter dan eenich moriaen* (739) [blacker than any Moor], and the woodcut of Exces depicts a dark-skinned figure. While the illustrator may simply have taken his cue from *zwart[er]* rather than *moriaen*, the image of Exces has clearly been directly informed by the line in question.³¹

But semantic minutiae are much less important for an understanding of Caillieu's approach to his source than the changes he makes to the poem's form and structure. He adds a ninth line to each stanza of the *Pas*; he removes Montgesoie's final two stanzas, with their dedication to Isabella of Bourbon; and he adds thirteen stanzas of his own, following the same pattern of versification as the others. These additional stanzas require attention before Caillieu's conversion of octaves into nonads, and the content of those extra lines, can be considered. Eight of the stanzas appear within the speech delivered by Antike, though they are not all ascribed to that figure. The first two (118-135) are inserted just after Antike has begun addressing Death; and although Antike names himself in the second of these (134), the first is an invective *against* Death that hardly befits one of her champions:

O wrede vrouwe / onghenadighe Doot
Afgrijselijc / fel / wreet / moordadig dier (118-119).

[O cruel lady, merciless Death; hideous, vicious, cruel, murderous beast.]

³⁰ On *serpentine*, see [DMF 2010, *pas*2, II.A.4.b.]. Walton 1933, 28, notes the error in the woodcut, albeit not in the Dutch text.

³¹ By contrast, Excès is represented in Phillipps MS 12294 (fol. 8r) as 'a large man with a bulging stomach': Sotheby's 2010, lot 2.

The first stanza may be a kind of aside on the part of the narrator, who interrupts Antike's monologue with an emotive reaction.³² This is certainly the case with the third stanza inserted into Antike's speech, an invective against Accident, which is attributed to the narrator in a heading (145-154). The fourth (172-180) is also devoted to Accident, but this time is indubitably in Antike's voice, as it fits seamlessly into his account of the power of Accident:

Soudicse al met namen verhalen
 Die met accidente sijn ghestorven,
 Tijt / stont / cracht / sou mi eer fallen (172-174).

[If I were to recount separately all those who have died as a result of Accident, I would run out of time, opportunity, and strength before I finished.]

Two pairs of inserted stanzas follow. In one of these (190-207) Antike enumerates the various ways in which Accident carries out his work – weapons, natural catastrophes, wild animals, and so forth – while in the other (226-243) he proclaims his own effectiveness and lists some of the Old Testament figures whom he has despatched. In compositional terms, these insertions add three main features to Antike's monologue. First, they complicate its structure, by interpolating into it the reactions of the narrator. Second, those reactions are marked by apostrophe, an important figure of speech in the poetic culture of the period, and widely used by authors who invested heavily in formal elaboration.³³ Finally, some of Antike's stanzas are dominated by enumeration (190-207, 226-234): *Met donder / blixem / storm / vloysel / ende went* (192) [With thunder, lightning, storm, flood, and wind]; *Isaac, Ismael en Mathathias* (229) [Isaac, Ishmael, and Mathias]. This was another favoured technique of both French- and Dutch-speaking poets, presumably because, among other things, it enabled them to display ingenuity and erudition in adducing the various items to be listed.³⁴ In conjunction, these features indicate that Caillieu has not simply extended Antike's speech; he has thickened it, so to speak, in its rhetorical sophistication and organizational complexity.

³² De Keyser 1936, 45, erroneously ascribes both stanzas to the narrator.

³³ In his *Grand et vrai art de pleine rhétorique*, Pierre Fabri notes apostrophe among the techniques of prose rhetoric, which may equally be applied in verse: Héron 1889-1890, II, 192.

³⁴ On such techniques in French literature of the period, see especially Paschoud & Mühlethaler 2009.

Most of Caillieu's other additional stanzas appear at the end of the poem, where he replaces Montgesoie's final two stanzas with four of his own (793-828). These are largely devoted to moral exhortation, including a prayer for divine assistance in facing the prospect of death, and apostrophes to a general public rather than a specific patron. The tone is set by the line that begins these stanzas: *Hoort, lustige juechden / int nacomen ontsiet u* (793) [Listen, joyful young people; be afraid of the hereafter]. Caillieu thereby draws out the moral of the allegorical vision in a much more sustained and explicit way than Montgesoie. The implications of his approach at this point can be clarified through the perspectives on knowledge offered by Jean-François Lyotard in his best-known book, *The Postmodern Condition*. Here Lyotard sets out various ways in which knowledge has traditionally been legitimated for those to whom it is communicated – in other words, ways in which an audience can be made to know that they know something.³⁵ A classic legitimating strategy is to explain the moral of a story, hence appealing explicitly to the audience to understand the significance of what they have been told. In recent work on knowledge in late medieval French poetry, this kind of legitimation is described as 'exhortative'; a term that neatly describes what Caillieu is doing at the end of the *Dal sonder wederkeeren*.³⁶ In comparison with Montgesoie's *Pas de la Mort*, exhortative legitimation plays a much greater part in his text. This means, in turn, that the implied author has a more overt role in the Dutch poem, in processing and presenting the lessons of the narrator's experience. Although the historical author is not named in Van Doesborch's edition, the text of the *Dal sonder wederkeeren* nevertheless insists on the activity of shaping and interpreting that has produced the poem. Indeed, the penultimate added stanza gives a particularly clear sense of this activity. In Montgesoie's piece, the lines in which the *acteur* refers to writing down his vision (625-632, quoted above) are accompanied by a rather desultory use of *annominatio*, the play on cognates that late medieval French poets very often used to intensify sound patterning and draw attention to thematically important motifs: the repetition and wordplay in this instance involve *pas*, *passer*, and *compasser*. Caillieu makes no attempt to reproduce that technique in the corresponding stanza of his translation (784-792), but he more than compensates for this in the third of his four closing stanzas:

Donbegripelijck compas dat rechte compaste
 Met juyste compasse des werelts rinck,
 Ende om den onpasten mensche van passe ontlaste

³⁵ Lyotard 1978, 17-20, 49-62.

³⁶ Armstrong & Kay 2011, 19-20, 202-203, discuss this and other forms of legitimation that can be identified in medieval didactic poetry.

Met swaer bitter passen die hi hier ginck
 Tot des doots pas / o compasselijc dinck!
 Dat met passe donpasse te passe heeft gemaect
 Als donpasselic compasselijc aen tcruce hinck,
 Waer door des doots pas wert geslaect
 Ende die helle ontschaect (811-819).

[The compass that passes understanding, that precisely described the circle of the world with accurate proportions and, for the sake of irregular humankind, freed it from a poor pass with painful and bitter steps that it took here on earth to reach the *pas* of death (what a lamentable affair!), that with exactitude made an unhealthy state healthy, as the unjustly treated one hung lamentably on the cross, through which the *pas* of death was laid low and hell was dismantled.]

Syntax and sense are under extreme pressure, but it is abundantly clear that Caillieu has demonstrated the ability to outdo his source material in respect of formal elaboration.

This achievement is also clear from the one additional stanza not yet discussed, which appears at the very beginning of the Dutch poem:

Die veranderinge des werelts lijen
 En dongestadicheyt der smenschen sinnen
 Baren in gedachte menige fantasien,
 Bi dagen / bi nachte / buten / en binnen;
 Elc mach dit in hemselven kinnen,
 Dien zijn selfs herte is niet onbekent;
 Mer wat mi eens dochte uut excès van [s]innen,
 Dat sal ic nu uuten voor elcken present:
 Het sal hem salich sijn diet wel int herte prent (1-9).

[The mutability of the way of the world and the changeability of people's minds bring forth many inner visions, by day and night, inside and out. Everyone whose own heart is not unknown to him can recognize that in himself. But I'll now tell everyone here about what came into my mind once upon a time, through a hallucination. It will be salutary for him who imprints it deeply into his heart.]

Exhortative legitimation is again in evidence (9), but the poem's narrative levels are also complicated in interesting fashion. The expression *exces van sinnen* (7) is the standard Middle Dutch formulation to signal an imaginative vision or hallucination.³⁷ Hence the narrator is framing the story that follows as the product of either a dream or a waking vision. There is no precedent for this in Montgesoie's poem, where the narrator witnesses the various allegorical figures after spending some time travelling (25-40). The spatial disjunction between the *acteur's* everyday world and the Val sans Retour indicates that there are two narrative levels at work: the story in which the *acteur* is a character, who undertakes a journey from which he eventually returns; and the story that he witnesses and writes about, involving Mort and the other personifications.³⁸ As is typical in French allegorical narrative of the late Middle Ages, those narrative levels map onto two ontological levels: the recognizably human, albeit fictive, world of the *acteur*; and the world of personified abstractions, which in medieval philosophical terms has more to do with universals than with particulars.³⁹ The additional opening stanza in the *Dal sonder wederkeeren* introduces a third level: the narrator's journey is itself part of a dream or vision.⁴⁰ Once again, this time on the level of narrative organization, Caillieu is finding ways of producing a more sophisticated composition than Montgesoie.

On the level of stanza form, Caillieu's addition of a ninth line to Montgesoie's octaves can be seen in the same terms. The French stanzas are themselves distinctive, thanks to their unusual rhyme scheme of *ababbbcc*. Otherwise attested very rarely in Middle French, the form seems to invert the rhymes for the sixth and seventh lines of the most commonly used octosyllabic octave

³⁷ Noted in De Keyser 1936, 59.

³⁸ The correspondence between different physical spaces and different narrative levels is common in French allegorical narratives of the period. Armstrong 2007 notes various examples.

³⁹ On universals and allegory, see especially Lynch 1988.

⁴⁰ The vision (*exces van sinnen*) mentioned in the opening stanza, and what the narrator sees on his travels, cannot be one and the same thing. In the fourth stanza of the Dutch text, the narrator refers to *Mijnder sinnen joncheyts berueren* (29) [the youthful passion of my mind], in language similar to Caillieu's first stanza; the use of *sinnen* is particularly telling. These terms have no precedent in the French original, which refers simply to *ma non pareille aventure* (18) [my unique enterprise]. As they appear when the narrator is just about to leave home on his expedition, they strongly suggest, in conjunction with the first stanza, that the narrator's journey as a whole – not only the allegorical scene that he encounters in the course of that journey – is framed as a vision.

of the period, which follows the pattern *ababbcbc*.⁴¹ Caillieu continues this self-assertive, competitive approach to versification. On a general level, by producing longer stanzas but without increasing the number of rhymes, he sets himself a stiffer formal challenge. More specifically, the point at which he adds a line – inserting an initial c-rhyme before the final b-rhyme – is particularly significant. The resulting form, *ababbcbcc* (see p. \$\$ above), resembles the typical French octave (*ababbcbc*) with an additional final c-rhyme at the end. Caillieu thereby manages to trump two French stanza forms: not only that of his source, but that of a large body of Middle French stanzaic poetry, a form particularly associated with the prestigious and influential author Alain Chartier.⁴²

The additional content in Caillieu's stanzas does not coincide with the additional line in the rhyme scheme, the initial c-rhyme. Rather, the content of Montgesoie's octaves corresponds to the first eight lines of the Dutch; it is the final line in each stanza that provides something new, typically in the form of a sententious statement. Statements of this kind also tend to close the stanzas that Caillieu has added himself; hence most commentators on the *Dal sonder wederkeeren* have claimed that Caillieu's stanzas end with a proverb, or with a line that summarizes and clarifies the preceding stanza.⁴³ These descriptions are not entirely satisfactory, as some of the lines quoted above indicate. The final line of Caillieu's penultimate stanza, *Ende die belle ontschaect* (819), is formally distinct from those that precede it – not only is it much shorter, but it is not implicated in the *annominatio* that phonically binds together the rest of the stanza – but is syntactically integrated to the previous line. It marks the culmination of Caillieu's tortuous metaphor of redemption, rather than standing alone as a gnomic utterance. Equally, the opening stanza ends with a line that signals the importance of what the narrator has to say, but that could hardly be called proverbial: *Het sal hem salich sijn diet wel int herte prent* (9). Most of the final lines resemble proverbs more closely than these, but their relationship to the rest of the stanza is variable. In some cases they clearly gloss the preceding lines (e.g. 45, 81, 90); in others their relevance is not immediately obvious, and readers must make an interpretative effort to posit a connection (e.g. 99, 360). Whether they have a proverbial form or not, what these lines have in common – with only a few exceptions – is that they invite readers, openly or cryptically, to acknowledge or reflect on the significance of what has gone before. They are, in other words, a

⁴¹ Chatelain 1907, 102-103, notes instances of the form *ababbcbc*.

⁴² The first use of this form in non-lyric contexts is now ascribed to Oton de Grandson, but it was most commonly credited to Chartier in the late Middle Ages. See Chatelain 1907, 90-94; Johnson 1990, 124.

⁴³ See, for example, De Keyser 1936, 49; Van Eeghem 1963, 171.

further example of exhortative legitimation; a further means by which the poet exerts mastery over his source material, and constructs an authoritative voice. At the same time, Caillieu's technique is practically identical with a device that had become common French poetry: *epiphonema*, the systematic use of proverbs at the end of stanzas, first developed by the Burgundian poet Michault Taillevent a generation before Montgesoie, and regarded as a formal embellishment.⁴⁴ Significantly, the practice seems to be specifically Francophone during Caillieu's lifetime; his adoption of *epiphonema* constitutes something of a cultural import, which Matthijs de Castelein would later adopt somewhat more sporadically in his *Const van Rhetoriken*.⁴⁵

Clearly, Caillieu's adaptation of his source involves diverse innovations: the development of apostrophe and enumeration as rhetorical techniques, multiplication of narrative voices and levels, more ambitious versification, the introduction of *epiphonema*, processes of exhortative legitimation that accentuate the implied author's prominence and authority. In conjunction, they provide strong evidence that in the late medieval Burgundian Netherlands, intertextual competition and the generation of poetic capital can take place between linguistic groups via translation, as well as within those groups via continuation and response. The extent of Caillieu's assertiveness is striking, albeit perhaps unsurprising for a poet who may successfully have persuaded his city into creating a salaried position for him; translation in this instance is not servile and source-oriented, but rather a knowing process of appropriation oriented towards the target culture. That process suggests that the literary cultures of the region were distinctly permeable; not only to texts, but also to techniques.

Summary

Both French- and Dutch-language poetry of the late Middle Ages are deeply informed by processes of collaboration and competition, which generate a cumulative expertise or poetic capital. In his *Dal sonder Wederkeeren* the Brussels-based poet Colijn Caillieu translates *Le Pas de la Mort*, by the Burgundian courtier Amé de Montgesoie, in ways that are consonant with these processes. He produces a more complex and rhetorically elaborate composition by developing apostrophe and enumeration as rhetorical techniques, multiplying narrative voices and levels, adopting a more ambitious scheme of versification, and introducing the technique of *epiphonema*. At the same time, his poem legitimates the knowledge it conveys in more explicitly 'exhortative' ways than its source, thereby accentuating the implied author's prominence and authority. These highly assertive techniques indicate that in the late medieval Burgundian Netherlands,

⁴⁴ See Armstrong 2012, 57-58; Zumthor 1976.

⁴⁵ See Iansen 1971, 124-125.

intertextual competition can take place between linguistic groups via translation, as well as within those groups via continuation and response.⁴⁶

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⁴⁶ This study derives from research undertaken for the project 'Transcultural Critical Editing: Vernacular Poetry in the Burgundian Netherlands, 1450-1530', supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) [grant number AH/J001481/1].

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