Frits Pieter van Oostrom

An Outsider's View

Over a year ago, the Dutch beer giant Heineken pleasantly surprised the cinema and television audiences with a new commercial. Location: a typically Dutch pub, where we find a sympathetic company of which the people, while of course enjoying the right brand of beer, are sitting together in a mood for which the Dutch language - according to reports as the only one on earth - has the word 'gezellig' available. There is talk, there is laughter, and the atmosphere is splendid. Suddenly, a terrifying noise from outside threatens to spoil the fun, heralding the arrival of a creepy non-human creature: a dwarf from outer space. The party is seized by fear and terror when the gruesome alien approaches, grabs a microphone and starts to sing with a metallic voice. But the touching way in which he sings his song soon melts the hearts of the persons present; terror changes into sympathy, the dwarf is lifted on to the bar and is kissed by the most beautiful lady present. After this, everybody joins the little stranger in singing the refrain, of which the last line admirably conveys the general mood: 'What a wonderful world'.

Medievalists are all sufficiently acquainted with allegorical techniques to need no elaborate explanation as to why I, a five-feet seven Netherlandist, choose this manner of introducing my lecture at this large and merry art historians' meeting. Indeed, the disciplines of literary and art history have become two worlds so widely apart, that a specialist from either discipline entering the other's field almost seems like a visitor from outer space. The titles and themes of this congress, however important they may be for their own sake, do not seem to ask for interference by the history of Dutch literature; and if one year ago, you had seen the programme of our congress on Middle Dutch literature, you undoubtedly would have felt as much like an outsider as I do now.

But sometimes the medieval material refuses to conform to our separation. Thank goodness! As a researcher, one can briefly - to refer for the last time to my outer space metaphor - experience the sensation of having contact with life on another planet. Working on my book *Het woord van eer. Literatuur aan het Hollandse hof omstreeks 1400* (of which, by the way, an English translation is being prepared by the University of California Press at Berkeley), I frequently had the feeling that the pattern I thought to detect within the material relating to literary history corresponded wonderfully well to configurations in art history. In the last chapter of my book this forced me to write an almost surprised footnote, viz.: 'It is both striking (and encouraging) to note how often manuscripts are being grouped on art-historical grounds, of which the texts are related on the basis of literary-historical grounds' (p. 346, n. 3). For this shy declaration of love for another specialism, I referred to a few well-known publications of Rickert, Finke and Hindman. But it was not until the book was published and I had the honour of receiving an enthusiastic letter by professor Marrow, that I realized how fond the embrace actually might be.

In my study of the Dutch-Bavarian court culture, in which I concentrated on its literary dimension, the indications that the counts were also patrons of the visual arts fitted perfectly into the over-all pattern. In fact, the flowering of Middle Dutch literature around 1400 and the contemporary

blossoming of miniature painting in the same Dutch regions seemed to be shoots of the same branch and to originate from the patronage of the Dutch-Bavarian court.

In one particular case this has been known for quite a while: the *Tafel van den kersten ghelove.* In the years 1403-1404 this Middle Dutch 'summa' of scholastic theology was written by the highly educated Dominican Dirc van Delft. It was dedicated to the man, thanks to whose protection the author was allowed to finish his many studies, and who in 1399 had 'called' him as his court chaplain: Duke Albert of Bavaria. These were the last years of Albert's life. It seems likely that Dirc van Delft was still busy writing when Albert lay on his protracted deathbed. The words with which the *Tafel* is dedicated to the sovereign will have had a pregnant meaning to the author and his first reader. In his prologue Dirc, among other things, wishes Albert 'dat ghi alle hinder ende quaet uwer zielen moghet voorbicomen in dat anschijn der ewigher eren [=heaven], daer ghi salich ende heiligh an ziel ende an live mit alle uwe vrienden ewelic moet [=may] leven ende regeren'.

Fortunately, the dedication copy of the *Tafel van den kersten ghelove* has been preserved - and well preserved indeed. The Walters' Art Gallery in Baltimore cherishes the beautifully illustrated codex, of which the 35 miniatures perfectly represent the style of early Northern Dutch miniature. The right-hand bottom margin of the frontispiece shows the coat of arms of the Bavarian house, and in the left-hand bottom margin it displays a figure in monk's habit, not representing Dirc van Delft - as I assumed with my iconographical lack of expertise - but indeed Albert of Bavaria himself. Here Albert is represented in an ideal-typical pious position, and with a banderole on which we can see the highly appropriate prayer: 'Ghif mi, Here, ware ghelove' ('Give me, Lord, true faith'). The Baltimore manuscript contains only the first part of the voluminous *Tafel.* We have every reason to believe that this manuscript, together with the equally beautiful codex in New York (Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 691) which contains the continuation of the text, originally belonged to a dedication set. It is to be hoped that Duke Albert had a chance to see all this beauty before he died in December 1404.

By mentioning the dedication diptych, we have not yet summed up all the fancy copies of the *Tafel.* For London, British Library, MS Add.22288 with its 69 miniatures also displays the style which in early fifteenth-century Holland seems to have been 'hoffähig'. Because this manuscript too can be dated very close to the year of completion of Dirc van Delft's *Tafel,* one gets the impression that this text at its creation was widely diffused, thanks to and through a network of book- makers and book owners closely related to the Dutch-Bavarian court. This hypothesis is (further) supported by another early codex of the *Tafel* in The Hague - illuminated in a simpler fashion, but also destined for the aristocracy -, according to a scutcheon which unfortunately has remained unidentified until now.

Thus, the earliest reception history of the *Tafel van den kersten ghelove* points towards an instant welcome in aristocratic circles. But so far we have only sketched the 'first life' of the *Tafel.* This compendium of Christian learning and ethics was written by a theologian with a doctor's degree, who was therefore exceptionally authoritative as a writer in the vernacular; it was, moreover, written under the patronage of the sovereign of Holland. Thus the *Tafel* had a significance relevant to other times and circles as well. That is why we find the text, from the middle of the fifteenth century onwards, in the libraries of convents where one knew so little Latin that a Middle Dutch 'summa' was more than welcome; and even in the late fifteenth century we see the *Tafel* being printed as pious reading for the citizens. Thus, although for these occasions the text has had some - and for the printing even major - adaptations, the words of Dirc van Delft could still serve a wide audience.

It is a quite different case with the images, to which the earliest copies of the *Tafel* owed so much lustre. In the manuscripts of the 'second life' in the convents, as well as in the printing for pious citizens, every illustration has been banished: the *Tafel* is just Dirc van Delft's text. Perhaps because people in the circles of the second and third reception did not attach as much value to illustrations;

for the convents it is obvious that decoration was distrusted as being worldly. But apart from attitude, the disappearance of the illustrations from the *Tafel* will above all have been a matter of means. In the Holland of around 1400, only the elite had the desire and opportunity to introduce luxury into their lives. And as unattainable as the embellishment of possessions was to most medieval men and women, such a matter of course it was to the high aristocracy, where the longing for a fine life and for respect demanded an object to be decorated in a princely fashion. In a pious handbook, such as the *Tafel van den kersten ghelove*, the word is a necessity and the image an accessory. That is why the manuscripts of this text that do carry miniatures are such a select group within the total body of these manuscripts which even without illustrations would probably have been quite valuable. Here the image clearly is even more exclusive than the word - and maybe this is one of the strongest indications that Northern Dutch illumination originated (partly) thanks to the patronage of the Dutch-Bavarian court.

Fortunately the luxury copies of the *Tafel* are not the only examples of illuminated manuscripts at this court. Thanks to recent research they have been joined by other texts and codices. One of the most remarkable examples is of course the sleeping beauty kissed to life by Prof. Marrow in the Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon: the Book of Hours belonging to Albert of Bavaria's second wife, Margaret of Cleves. The level and importance of this manuscript are evident by now; and therefore I prefer to discuss a case that in many ways is even closer to the *Tafel*, and possibly deserves a wider audience: the Copenhagen manuscript Thott 70 of the so-called *Nuttelijc Boec*. Within my field of study, this codex was until recently considered to be enigmatic: it contains an anonymous collection of sermons that circulated widely in the fifteenth century. This manuscript of around 1400 contains the earliest and most luxurious version of these sermons. Not in the last place because literary scholarship could not really reconcile the beginning of a sermon tradition with so much ostentation, and also because the anonymity of this text left room for speculation, it had been assumed that the Copenhagen codex was only the oldest preserved copy of a text written thirty years earlier. However, the date 1370 in the colophon, which seemed to substantiate this hypothesis, proved to be counterfeit, so that once again we seem to be thrown back upon the fact that the life of this text started in the very luxurious form of the Copenhagen manuscript, and the related codex in The Hague (Royal Library, MS 135 F 7).

My student Geert Warnar deserves the credit for the suggestion - which now of course could all too easily be called obvious - that the history of Dirc van Delft's *Tafel* seems to repeat itself here.[1] He also thought of connecting the text of the *Nuttelijc Boec* with both *Het woord van eer* and Professor Marrow's work in progress. Warnar's bold working-hypothesis that the text and codices might be connected to the Dutch-Bavarian court as well became more likely when it was established by means of text analysis that the sermons were specially written for a public of highly elite laymen. However, what clinched the matter was the information that the archives yielded: just peeping over the edge of the fifteenth century, the household accounts of the Dutch-Bavarian court mention the purchase of two luxurious copies of a devout text. It is highly probable that these are the Copenhagen and The Hague manuscripts of the *Nuttelijc Boec*. If this is correct, then we have also found the author of the - so far - anonymous collection: according to the account entries this should be William, the Dominican confessor of Albert and his wife, who, as an educated theologist and 'leesmeester' of the Haarlem Carmelite monastery, perfectly fits into the intellectual profile we could suspect behind these sermons. The Copenhagen manuscript Thott 70 would then be the book of which the account entry of January 1, 1396 reveals not only the exact date and price, but also the author and patron:

1. See Geert Warnar, 'Het *Nuttelijc Boec* en het Hollandse hof. Over het ontstaansmilieu van een laat-middeleeuwse prekenbundel', in: *Spektator*, 18 (1989), p. 290-304.

'Item bi mijnre vrouwe bevelen by broeder Willem, mijns heren biechtvader, gegeven tot mire vrouwen boec dat mijn vrouwe hem bevolen hadde te doen maken. 10 ny gulden'.

In this case, the pieces of the puzzle of literature, art history and the archivalia fit together so nicely, that the elegant simplicity of their combination can almost be considered true, or in any case: only by combining them in this way one can order data which otherwise remain unconnected and quite inexplicable, and fit them into a meaningful pattern. If this all holds true, another representative of early Dutch illumination is connected to the Dutch-Bavarian court. Once again it becomes interesting to take a closer look at the whole of this group, which has already been outlined in various art-historical publications, and see if there is a possible connection with this court: I for myself in any case find it more than attractive to imagine the London *Biblia pauperum* (what's in a name!) and the related *Saksenspiegel* in the Hague court environment, where both the texts and their illustrations seem to fit perfectly. And whoever might have difficulties in assuming the same thing for the Darmstadt cuttings of the *Graduale* (recently discussed by Sandra Hindman), should keep in mind that according to the accounts, the court chapel in The Hague regularly ordered books for the liturgy.

In general, I - though it is probably needless to do so -would like to draw the attention of the art historians to the household accounts of the Dutch-Bavarian counts, which so often, in my reconstruction of the literary life of the Binnenhof, proved to be a goldmine. These accounts also contain a lot of valuable information for art history that in my opinion has not yet been sufficiently and systematically mined: the article by Mrs Tóth-Ubbens in *Oud Holland* (1963) devoted to this subject makes one long for more. In the accounts it is possible to find clues as to the extent and nature of the art collection of the most important court of the then Northern Netherlands. This is a slight compensation for the sad fact that only a fraction of these art objects has been preserved. In this way the artistic profile of the then Binnenhof gets more substance than the always somewhat dim statement that to the Van Eijcks The Hague served as a stepping stone to the world of art with a capital A.

During my superficial acquaintance with the art-historical material in the accounts and speaking as an outsider, I noticed some things I would like to submit here. In the first place, one could imagine that the accounts might give an answer to the vexed question of the localization of the workshop where the above-mentioned group of manuscripts could have been produced. If it is correct that the Dutch-Bavarian court was the patron of a large part of the sumptuous output of this workshop, one should expect the court accounts to point the way to this outstanding scriptorium. A location in Utrecht, which is often assumed, could indeed be supported by some entries, such as the one of 24 May, 1398, in which lord Jan van Renesse pays money to: 'enen man van Utrecht die mire vrouwen een boec verluchten soude', and especially the one of 1 November, 1383: 'betaelt bi Jacob van Hoekelen voor een ghetijd boec dat tUtrecht was doen scriven. van verlichten, van virbinden in borders ende van de beelden in te doen maken ende te bewerpen; coste 4enhalf gulden'. Yet I wonder whether, as the proverb says: 'this one swallow makes a summer'.

There also happen to be entries implying that the court put out its illumination assignments to workshops in other cities, such as Haarlem according to a 1388 entry: 'Item op St. Lucasdach evangelist in Den Haghe betaelt een wijfkijn van Haerlem van 2 cleyn boexkijns van Onser Vrouwe ghetide, die seven salm ende ander ghebedekijns die besteet waren te scriven vor mijn vrouwe van Oestervant ende mire joncfrouwe van Henegouwen, welke boexkijns seer costelic ende wel vergult waren'. And even further away the Dutch-Bavarian court ordered illuminated manuscripts, according to an entry of 1385, in which Pieter van Arnemuiden is paid to have a Book of Hours for Albert of Bavaria's daughter illuminated in Bergen, Hainault! Apparently, and understandably, a beautiful book was worth some travelling.

This brings me to another lesson taught by the accounts and which I would like to describe as the great radius of action of the court. The, according to our standards, defective infrastructure and means of transport clearly did not keep these lords and masters from communicating from The Hague across long distances. This applies especially to luxury goods, which are not exactly bought at the first shop round the corner. Thus, Albert of Bavaria obtained velvet and gold ribbon from Paris and damask from Florence for the tournament of 1395; in 1405 his son William VI ordered jewels from Catalonia; in 1372, three diamonds, which first had been sent to The Hague for approval, were sent back to Bruges. Clearly, a lot more could be derived from the accounts, especially in the fields of art and applied art. To me it seems more than worth the trouble to collect the relevant material: even if this would only reveal that in fact the Hague court art could have been produced anywhere, and accordingly, that there is no fixed pattern, it would still be a useful lesson.

Where the accounts do seem to reveal a pattern is in another, equally interesting field. It is very striking how often the expenditure for the arts involves the *female* members of the court. This does not only concern, for example, jewels, but also forms of art and applied art that in principle seem to be designed for women as well as for men. And yet it is especially the ladies of the Dutch-Bavarian court who keep in touch with painters and sculptors. In 1403 for example, the wife of Albert buys, according to account entries, 'alrehande tafelen ende beelden', and later that year again 'drie gemaelden tafelkijns'; and also the next countess of Holland, wife of William VI, occupies herself with the visual arts, according to an entry of 1407, in which she buys 'drie beeldekijns', and one of 1409, reporting the visit of 'Dirc de schilder' to the first lady of the court. Compared to such signs of personal involvement with the arts from the side of the ladies, little to nothing has been documented on this subject concerning the male members of the count's family; in this light it hardly seems a coincidence that in 1409 it is again the *Vrouwe van Hollant* who receives *pictoren* at the court.

At the Dutch-Bavarian court the visual arts especially seem to be the domain of women; and to a lesser extent the same thing could be said about the courtly literature. To a lesser extent, because the emphasis with which for example Heraut (i.e. herald) Beieren dedicates his *Hollandse kroniek* to his lord, as Dirc van Delft does with the *Tafel*, is accompanied by the express wish that it indeed might be the lord who reads the book. But also concerning the written word it is striking how often the accounts report a lady as being the patron or addressee of a book. Already in 1361 it is the countess to whom a 'Duyts boec' is delivered, and even in 1408 the 'nye ghedichte boecken' brought by 'een man uut Vrancric' are meant for 'mijnre liever vrouwen', the wife of count William VI. It is also striking that it holds for Dirc van Delft as well as for William the Confessor that they have close ties with Albert of Bavaria, but that both - according to the account entries - nevertheless wrote a book under the patronage of the count's wife.

Of course this is not new: it is well-known that many of the beautifully illuminated prayer books and Books of Hours served the private devotion of women. This also holds for the lost forerunners of the Books of Hours of Margaret and Catherine of Cleves at the Dutch-Bavarian court: according to the accounts the majority of these were ordered especially for the female members of the count's family. In short, it seems very likely that the cultural life at court was to a great extent dominated by women; and it seems to me that this fact has not been sufficiently included in our interpretations, maybe out of fear for banalities or anachronisms. However, it seems to hold good that literary and art history have mainly attracted the attention of women, not only in the present - considering the student population - but ever since the Middle Ages.

Up to this point I have mainly dwelt upon the objects art history and literary history have in common, and thus what binds them methodically; but I would also like to give some attention to the

aspects that separate these fields. I particularly feel myself to be an outsider whenever I read art-historical opinions on style - not only because I lack the expert knowledge, training and probably also the talent to make the appropriate observations in this context, but also because I cannot get over a feeling of alienation when I compare the two professions in that sense. Time and again I am struck by the confidence with which art historians can make statements on the attribution of, for example, miniatures to a certain master, school or workshop, and on the relative position a certain manuscript holds in the development of a certain style. I know that there can be disagreements among specialists on the details, and that the certainty with which an individual dates and localizes illustrations is not always shared by everybody. But to an outsider the art history profession in this respect makes a remarkably homogeneous impression: to a large extent there seems to be practically a consensus on this type of problems.

How different it is in my profession! The starting point does not seem essentially different: we also have to deal with a mainly anonymous corpus of which the attribution, dating and localization usually is dependent on the ingenuity of the researchers. And yet, in my discipline there is no consensus at all on the attribution of certain anonymous Middle Dutch texts to certain authors, or on their dating in certain decades; or even just on their localization in certain areas. Even the historical dialect geography, which to an outsider seems so exact, does not give us any certainty, so that in my profession it can almost be considered a rule of thumb that the more precise a localization is, the more doubtful it will be. We are still arguing ferociously whether the *Vanden vos reynaerde* dates from the late twelfth or the second half of the thirteenth century; or, whether Jan van Boendale, the author of the *Lekenspiegel* and the *Jans Teesteye*, also wrote *Het boec vander Wraken*; or, whether *Reinaerts historie* originates from Holland or Flanders. Of course, in this respect, literary history is at a disadvantage compared to art history insofar that in the miniatures one comes face to face with the original work of the artists, whereas our manuscripts usually are copies of copies. But anyone who has any experience with Middle Dutch text history will agree with my statement that the evident changes in the majority of cases are not so spectacular that one cannot make any deductions from, say, a fourteenth-century manuscript concerning the contents and style of an originally thirteenth-century text. Over and above this, I have a strong feeling that the realization of miniatures is usually bound by stricter rules of tradition and function than that of literary texts - all the more reason to expect that the individuality of literary artists should be easier to determine than that of miniaturists.

And yet, in my profession we have not the faintest idea of the 'individual style' of even the most prominent and productive authors like Jacob van Maerlant or the poet of the *Reinaert*. The only Netherlandist who in these last years dared to be somewhat venturesome in this area was the inspired professor-poet Heeroma from Groningen. He advanced the thesis that one and the same poet was behind the anonymous Middle Dutch romances *Karel ende Elegast*, the *Moriaen* and *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte*, for which he appealed to his 'poetic hearing' and pointed at some significant parallelisms in style. Until further notice, this theory is considered to be a wild fantasy, unverifiable and hardly worth serious consideration.

In short, there seems to be an unbridgeable gap between the two professions when it comes to stylistic analysis: on the one hand the art historians seem to be able to reach a great measure of accuracy, while, on the other hand, the literary historians seem to meander their way through a cloud of unknowing. In my opinion, this immense discrepancy cannot be satisfactorily explained as a fact inherent in the nature of the fields involved. It probably has to do with a different level of development in both disciplines. It could be - as I would tentatively like to suggest with a modesty suitable to an outsider - that the art historian in general is somewhat too light-hearted about methodical weaknesses in certain stylistic groupings. But it is by no means my intention to suggest

that the stylistic analyses lack a scholarly foundation; I rather believe that in this respect it is my profession that lags behind. It is indeed more than strange - in fact it cannot be justified - that the study of Middle Dutch literature cannot make any statements in order to bring a stylistic segmentation in the massive tradition of its object. The fact that this has not been done very often up till now, definitely has several causes: in the first place there is our alienation from the linguists, who in these past years sneered at description and who sought their salvation in theory-building. And, in the second place, within our own discipline there is a growing bias towards the ideological dimension of the texts as functioning within a certain context with a specific meaning. Thus, our discipline is biased towards contents, which has pushed 'form', insofar as it is obviously ideologically undetermined, slightly out of the picture. This explains, but does not yet account for, the fact that in this sense we are so much behind the 'form' profession of art history.

The fact that in my opinion my profession could take example from yours will be clear to all of you. But may not the reverse be true as well? What does literary history have to say to you ? Presently I will proceed to pointing out some fields in which we have a lot to say to each other, and in which we can only make progress by cooperating. But before that, I would like to pose the question whether in my profession there is not something from which you could successfully take example.

To illustrate this I return to the culture of the Dutch-Bavarian court, and to my book *Het woord van eer*. It has been noted that the disposition of the literary-historical material harmonized well with a disposition within art history: the group of the early illuminated Northern Dutch manuscripts. However satisfying this may be, it is no secret that both dispositions are partly based on a different principle. *Het woord van eer* primarily classifies according to public: the authors and texts that are considered, have in common that they are closely related to the environment of the Dutch-Bavarian court. The demarcation of the Northern Dutch miniatures, however, is primarily based on artists: the common characteristic of the above-mentioned 'early' group is style, which makes a reasonable case for the fact that these manuscripts were produced by the same artist (s) and/or in the same workshop. While the literary-historical approach attaches much importance to the consumers of the work of art, the art historian proceeds from the producers. Northern Dutch manuscripts are books (supposedly) made in the Northern Netherlands. For whom the manuscripts were meant is an important question, but still question number two; and the question whether the patrons addressed perhaps also had books from outside the Northern Netherlands, is at the best of times question number three.

What I am carefully suggesting, is that the second and third question might merit some more attention. The fact that this has not occurred more frequently until now, can be easily explained: art history primarily used to be the study of the history of artists. This was no different for literary history, but in these past years, especially concerning the medieval period, the public for whom the literature was meant, is inceasingly being taken into account. The fact that literary artists were bound to their patrons is considered to be so fundamental, that it is impossible to describe the work of the former without taking the latter into account. This does not imply that the poet-under-patronage is degraded to being a simple mouthpiece of his master's voice. A historically sound approach to medieval literature - and indeed an approach that aims to place literature in its historical context - should, however, do justice to the patronage as *primum mobile*. That is why nowadays so many studies on the literary life of the Middle Ages are being written from the perspective of the patrons of literary works.

Indeed, this trend in literary scholarship has greatly benefitted for the reputation of the medieval Northern Netherlands, and in particular for medieval Holland. In the author-oriented literary history, Holland was until recently considered to be a culturally underdeveloped area. It did not work its way up from the swampland, in which it seemed to be geologically and culturally rooted, until the

late fourteenth century with its first poet Willem van Hildegaersberch. When the literary life was approached from the perspective of the public, it appeared however, that there had been a literary culture in Holland long before Hildegaersberch. In the first half of the fourteenth century, during the reign of the house of Hainault, the Brabantine author Lodewijk van Velthem wrote for the lords of Voorne; and half a century before that, in the late thirteenth century, we encounter the great Flemish poet Jacob van Maerlant, who wrote his works for a circle of patrons centred around the count of Holland, Floris V. Thus, long before there were any important Dutch poets, there were important Dutch patrons of literary works, who ordered Southern Dutch authors to write for the satisfaction of their literary interest. And maybe we should even causally connect this initial period of literary life in Holland with the later period: the flourishing of a 'native' medieval Dutch literature may only have been possible on the basis of importation. Actually, is it not simple logic that cultural development starts with using sources elsewhere, so that after that the own potential can be cultivated? In any case, Jacob van Maerlant has been a source of inspiration to every Dutch-Bavarian court author; and in this respect there has been, if not a causality, then indeed a continuity, between the first 'period of importation' of Dutch literature and the later flourishing under the Bavarian house, when authors of unimpeachable Northern Dutch origin wield the pen at the Hague court.

I sincerely hope that this example from my own profession may prove to be of value to art history methods. In the perspective I sketched just now, it appears that the literary tradition of the Netherlands goes back a long way - how about the illumination tradition, when we look at it in a similar way? I hesitate to make the first move, because this is no more than the interference of a well-meaning amateur. Besides, the time is not ripe to start looking for even earlier roots now, as it probably has not been quite long enough since Prof. Marrow advanced the heyday of the Northern Dutch art of book illumination by no less than a few decades with Margaret of Cleves' Book of Hours. But, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that this Book of Hours - dated in the earliest years of the fifteenth century - shows an extreme maturity, and that therefore everything seems to indicate that we should not only seriously include the early fifteenth, but also the fourteenth century in our consideration of the Northern Dutch art of illumination.

And even if we do not accept the extant books as enough proof for this hypothesis, there is also the eloquent testimony of the accounts: the illuminated books of hours of the Dutch court, which were - according to the entries I cited earlier - already ordered in 1398, 1389, 1387 and 1385. In this connection it is especially striking that the Book of Hours of 1385 was ordered in Bergen, Hainault, and therefore in the Southern Netherlands. This completely fits into the pattern I sketched earlier, in which the further development of Holland starts with grafting itself onto the Southern Netherlands. This goes for literature, as has been said (Maerlant, Velthem), as well as for the political and religious organization of the county: Egmond abbey developed under the patronage of Ghent, and the Dutch administration took its inspiration from Brabant. Could it not be possible that development of the art of illumination went pretty much along parallel lines?

Maybe this will also partly explain why the very earliest phase of the art of illumination in the Northern Netherlands is of such a mixed nature. Remarkably enough, in this case the manuscripts are primarily registered as being Northern Dutch on the basis of their owners (Marienweerd, the IJsselstein family, Renesse van der Aa), while their style seems rather more Southern Dutch and is considered to be strongly influenced by the French. If I am right, this would perfectly fit into the hypothesis that also in the field of the art of illumination Holland's great leap forward started with ambitions that were indeed Northern Dutch, but for the realization of which one appealed to Southern expertise.

In connection with the above: for a literary historian there is another striking aspect to the

collection of books, which is usually and quite suggestively grouped together as the prelude to the Northern Dutch art of illumination: the fact that these are practically always codices with work of, again, Jacob van Maerlant. I wonder whether this is not more than just a coincidence, and whether this is not something worth further elaboration, apart from following the traces of the Books of Hours and prayerbooks. There is a profusion of evidence documenting Maerlant's work as being highly influential in the literary field. To force a very open door, this influence naturally came about because Maerlant's work was read in manuscript. Suppose these manuscripts once carried illustrations, then is it such a far-fetched thought that these too could have contributed to the tradition, and that the Maerlant books could have been influential through the image as well as through the word? Considering the portrayed material this could especially have applied to the *Rijmbijbel*, about which Maerlant himself said it 'es ghespreet verre ende na', thus widely spread, and of which still a relatively large number of manuscripts with miniatures is preserved. The same thing, if to a lesser extent, could have held for Maerlant's *Spiegel historiael*.

Maybe it is too much to expect the semi-profane fourteenth-century art of illumination to have had a fruitful influence on the spiritual art of illumination in the fifteenth century, and that the miniatures of vernacular manuscripts could have served as a source of inspiration for the workshops that produced codices such as the Brussels Vulgate. But would it be very outrageous if, for example, the famous Alexander miniature in this last manuscript should fit into such a tradition? Also, it may be significant that within the now famous courtly group - whether from Utrecht or not -, it is indeed the *Rijmbijbel* manuscript in the Royal Library in The Hague that is registered as being one of the earliest representatives. It could even be that such a tradition of illumination-through-Maerlant-codices reaches back to the late thirteenth-century dedication copies of his work; books offered to those Northern Dutch patrons by their Flemish guest-author - and, as far as I am concerned, containing Flemish, French-style miniature.

Indeed, in this respect it is quite striking that the preserved copies of illustrated Maerlant codices always concern works dating from his so-called 'Flemish' period, thus when he had, after a period on Voorne, returned to his native area around Bruges. When he was on Voorne, did Maerlant lack the necessary 'infrastructure' to have the dedication copies of his works on Alexander, Arthur and the Trojan war princely decorated, and was he unable to provide his work with miniatures until he was back in Bruges? I know it is bold to suggest that the tradition of illumination in the Northern Netherlands, seen from the perspective of the patrons, could reach back even further, but, possibly, the idea is worth consideration. In this I feel supported by none other than Byvanck, who already pointed out that between the Crusade Chronicle of 1158 from Utrecht's St. Paul's abbey on the one hand, and Michiel van der Borch's *Rijmbijbel* of 1332 on the other, there is, and I quote, 'a gap of one century and three quarters, which gives one quite a lot to think about'.[2]

At a more fundamental level I would like to stress once again how desirable it is that art history does not link localization too one-sidedly to the location of the workshop, but that it pointedly takes the dimension of the patron into consideration when determining the historical context of a manuscript. Suppose the Book of Hours Albert of Bavaria ordered according to the accounts in Bergen, Hainault in 1385, had been passed down to us - *quod non* -, and this without an identification of the owner, then this manuscript would definitely be classified as Southern Dutch, based on its style of illumination; and people would not even dream of connecting it to Margaret of Cleves' Book of Hours. But in historical reality, these books were probably much closer to each other than Bergen and Utrecht, and together they might have influenced other book illuminations in or for the North.

2. Byvanck-Hoogewerff, p. xiv.

Secondly, and also in connection to this, I would like to stress the relativeness of the distinction between Northern and Southern Dutch. To us, twentieth-century researchers, such a distinction is useful: after all, one cannot study everything, therefore one has to draw a line - so why not draw it following the borders? However, as these borders had not been formed until the nineteenth century, we are in fact projecting an anachronistic model of organization on to the medieval material. All the signs point to the fact that to medieval men and women this demarcation was far less fundamental: in any case, certainly not more substantial than, for example, the East-West border between Holland and Gelre. And probably neither the one nor the other border was really considered to be a boundary for art and artists. Their patrons were used to being internationally oriented, and they themselves easily migrated, which in itself was much simpler in a world in which differences in language were much less important than nowadays, also because of the supranational position of French and Latin.

Maerlant's case history teaches us that it was possible for someone from the Southern Netherlands to play a culturally leading part in the Northern Netherlands; and because of this there would not be much approval in my profession of the idea to organize our Middle Dutch literary history on the basis of authors according to their being either Northern or Southern Dutch. And with all due respect for the art historical tradition that has indeed been developed in this field, and without wishing to strike at its very roots, I wonder whether in the Middle Ages the migration of Southern Dutch artists to the Northern parts was not so much the order of the day that an organization according to a Northern Dutch versus a Southern Dutch style is not suitable *tout court.* Some fourteenth-century examples: the Bloys lords had their court chapel in Schoonhoven painted by the Hainault artist Jan van Omaars; count Reinoud van Gelre employed a Flemish book illuminator; the tomb of Albert's first wife, Margaretha van Brieg, was made at the Binnenhof by artists from Brussels.[3] The idea of such an art production in the North, but with a Southern style, may complicate things for us, but probably also does justice to a historically quite complicated reality.

In concluding, I do hope the outsider's view I have presented has not been clouded too much by ignorance of the metier of the art historian, and that my interest in the ins and outs of another discipline will not be considered an undesirable interference or meddlesomeness. It should be considered a well-meant attempt at courtship, an invitation to an exchange of ideas and preferably actual cooperation between art history and literary history. For, however flourishing both these disciplines may be today, I am not familiar with even one case of true cooperation between literary and art history concerning Middle Dutch illuminated manuscripts. Time and again all those researchers adhere to one of either disciplines, practice the trade of the one, and hardly ever look at the other. This is not totally incomprehensible: both professions have become top-heavy super-specialisms, with which the researchers have their hands too full to have time and energy left to rack their brains over the problems of another profession. But to put this somewhat pathetically: in the meanwhile, medieval book culture is often the loser. The two disciplines have grown so much apart, that a philologist has a tendency to copy only the text of a manuscript, whereas the art historian orders pictures of the miniatures: after this both set to work, back to back.

And that is how it came to pass that one and the same *Rijmbijbel* manuscript in the Royal Library in Brussels has in art-historical literature been registered as originating from Limburg, whereas in my

3. See respectively *Middeleeuwse kunst der noordelijke Nederlanden* (Exhibition catalogue, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, (Amsterdam 1958), p. 17; W. Janssen, 'Ein niederrheinischer Fürstenhof um die Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts', in: *Rheinische Vierteljahresblätter*, 34 (1970), p. 242 n. 81; ''s-Gravenhage onder de regering der graven uit de huizen van Holland, Henegouwen en Beijeren', in: *Mededeelingen van de Vereeniging ter beoefening der geschiedenis van 's-Gravenhage*, 1 (1863), p. 299.

field it is considered to be West Flemish.[4] And this could go on for years, without anybody at either side making objections to the localization. For the moment I am not concerned with which localization is right, let alone forcing a compromise in the sense of a migrated artist from Maastricht in the Bruges area, or something to that effect. I am concerned with the exemplary side of the case: as superspecialists we not only cut up the field of study, but also encapsulate our objects in a private closed circuit. The communication breakdown concerning the Brussels *Rijmbijbel* should be a warning that our systems have to be made more compatible, preferably through purposive cooperation.

This cooperation could contain much more than just clearing away insidiously spread contradictions; it could initiate research on highly important questions on the borderline of both professions. Maybe a start should be made by listing the relevant material, thus following the example of the *Katalog der deutschsprachigen illustrierten Handschriften des Mittelalters.* But a start could be made straightaway with true interdisciplinary research on the relations between word and image in, for example, manuscripts of Dirc van Delft's *Tafel*; the levels of text and illustration seem to be well-matched. And what about the choice of themes for the miniatures in Maerlant manuscripts: am I mistaken, or does this indeed show a preference for the 'battle' dimension, and can this be connected to the 'crusade mentality' that can also be conveyed in the text of the *Rijmbijbel* and the *Spiegel historiael*? And how about the balance between text and illustration in Middle Dutch manuscripts: do the pictures have a clarifying, an amusing or even a relativizing function ? To answer all these questions, and a lot more, practically everything yet needs to be done concerning the Middle Dutch material.[5] I hope an agreement will be reached that here lies a fulfilling task for a true enrichment of both scholarly worlds. They have a lot more to teach and to say to each other than has been done so far - and without inviting you to any community singing, I still hope, that you, thinking about those possibilities, will join me in the refrain of my story: 'What a wonderful world'.

4. See respectively C. Gaspar and F. Lyna, *Les principaux manuscrits à peintures de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique* (repr. Bruxelles, 1984), vol. 1, p. 168 and *Corpus van Middelnederlandse teksten (tot en met het jaar 1300).* Publ. by M. Gysseling. Reeks II, vol. 3 (Leiden 1983), p. xiii. Only until the book had to be described in view of an exhibition, did the discrepancy become apparent: cf. J. Deschamps, *Middelnederlandse handschriften uit europese en amerikaanse bibliotheken.* 2nd ed. (Leiden 1972), p. 87-8.
5. Since the Utrecht Congress, an encouraging first step in this direction has been set: at the University of Leiden, Ms Martine Meuwese is preparing a study on the illumination in Maerlant codices.
See also the recent article by A. Berteloot, 'Waar hebben wij historische taalgeografie voor nodig ?', in *Neerlandica Wratislaviensia,* 5 (1991), pp. 376-96, which seems to offer further evidence for some of the hypotheses developed in contribution.