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French Literature in Mono- and Multilingual Social Contexts

The Production and Reception of French Literary Manuscripts in Thirteenth-Century Flanders

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Abstract

This article analyses the production and consumption of francophone manuscripts in thirteenth-century Flanders from a multilingual perspective. The polyglot linguistic reality of the County of Flanders, home to both Dutch- and French-speaking communities, is evident in documentary sources and manuscripts from around 1200. Using a database compiled for *The Multilingual Dynamics of the Literary Culture of Medieval Flanders* (*ca 1200–ca 1500*) project, the quantitative evidence for the apparent popularity of French literature will be scrutinized in the extant manuscripts produced and used in Flemish urban, monastic, and court environments during the thirteenth century. Furthermore, manuscript case studies related to the Flemish court illustrate how thirteenth-century francophone literary culture is shaped by social milieus and user contexts, including examples of the interregional francophone networks of noblewomen, cultural exchange between the court and urban elites, and a renewed interest in crusader history.

Keywords: Multilingualism; manuscripts; Flanders; thirteenth century; social networks; Flemish court

From the middle of the twelfth century onwards, the County of Flanders played a leading role in the production and consumption of French literary

texts.[1] None other than Chrétien de Troyes dedicated his last romance, *Perceval*, or the *Conte du Graal*, to the Flemish Count Philip of Alsace (d. 1191). Moreover, various thirteenth-century continuations of the story were composed by later Flemish court writers: both Wauchier de Denain and Manessier wrote at the courts of the sister-countesses Joan and Margaret of Constantinople.[2] Besides these romances, most examples of francophone history-writing originated also in Northern France. As Gabrielle Spiegel noted, vernacular histories in prose emerged in the Northern French networks that were turning against the centralising politics of the French King Philip II Augustus (1165-1223), in the political and feudal strife which culminated in the Battle of Bouvines in 1214.[3] In addition to the County of Champagne, with its annual interregional fairs and trading routes, Flanders and its wider sphere of influence – including thriving cities such as Arras and Béthune – was a prominent literary and cultural region in the thirteenth century. Moreover, this period is crucial for the linguistic history of Flanders, as vernacular languages gradually appeared alongside Latin as written languages in both administration and literature.[4] As a result, from around 1200 onwards, the linguistic reality of multilingual regions such as the County of Flanders, with both Dutch- and French-speaking communities, becomes apparent in extant documentary sources and manuscripts.

Historical multilingualism in Flanders has been analysed from various angles. The most common approach focuses on a 'spatial' division, or the more modern idea of a language border, which supposedly dates back to the Roman occupation.[5] For instance, in their edited volume on the use of French as a literary language outside France, Nicola Morato and Dirk Schoenaers make place and geography central to their analysis.[6] Indeed, the population of Walloon-Flanders (the castellanies of Lille and Douai) spoke

1 This article was written as part of the NWO-funded project *Multilingual Dynamics of the Literary Culture of Medieval Flanders* (*ca 1200–ca 1500*) at Utrecht University (for more information see the project website). I would very much like to thank project leader Bart Besamusca, and my fellow team members Jenneka Janzen, Jelmar Hugen, and David Murray, for their contributions to this article, as well as Leen Bervoets for sharing her expertise on thirteenth-century Flemish politics.

2 Collet 2009, 125-132.

3 Spiegel 1993.

4 Prevenier & De Hemptinne 2005.

5 Milis 1984, 641-642.

6 The volume made a division between a 'southern axis' (Mediterranean Europe and the Middle East) and a 'northern axis' (England, Flanders – which, with the exception of the eastern Lordship of Aalst, belonged feudally to the French realm – and the Empire). Morato & Schoenaers 2019, 1-28.

Picard French, whereas the northern part of Flanders had a Dutch-speaking community. In addition to place, there is a social aspect to language use. Christopher Kleinhenz and Keith Busby have shown the importance of cultural and social factors in the choice of language for specific types of text.[7] The Flemish court, for example, was predominantly francophone, and even in the northern part of the county, where trade centres and industries were developing in Ghent, Bruges and Ypres, French was the language of culture and economy for a significant proportion of the urban elite and nobility.[8]

Research on language use in medieval Flanders has often focused exclusively on either administrative or literary sources. Although it is not the aim of this article, it should be stressed that a more 'integrated' study combining both could lead to interesting new results. Socio-linguistic evolutions at the administrative level in thirteenth-century Flanders did not automatically resonate in literary culture and vice versa. Some preliminary, but important, work has been done on administrative and diplomatic sources; scholars have analysed the use and choice of language in comital and municipal charters, for instance, and paid attention to town accounts of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.[9] Research on the multilingual literary culture of the Low Countries has been particularly fruitful in recent decades.[10] Although many studies focus either on multilingual literature or on multilingual manuscripts, more and more researchers are increasingly combining both the textual and manuscript evidence of multilingual literature.[11]

In this article, instead of texts, I consider manuscripts the principal sources of multilingual literary culture in the thirteenth century. Starting with a quantitative overview of the dataset evidence for the popularity of French literature in the extant manuscripts produced and used in medieval Flanders, I use this evidence to analyse the reception of francophone literature in Flanders as demonstrated by the production, distribution and use of thirteenth-century manuscripts. Moreover, looking specifically at genre, how do the production and consumption of French-language texts compare

7 Kleinhenz & Busby 2011.

8 Prevenier 1994, 12.

9 Armstrong 1965, 389-409; Boone 1997, 9-33; Croenen 2003, 107-126; Prevenier & de Hemptinne 2005; Lusignan 2007, 1275-1295.

10 Beyers 2000; Mareel & Schoenaers 2015; Armstrong & Strietman 2017, 1-11; Oosterman 2017.

11 See the separate chapters on 'material evidence' and 'textual evidence' in the volume of essays edited by Morato & Schoenaers 2019. Likewise, Simon Gaunt has nuanced some of the statements made by Gabrielle Spiegel on prose history-writing by looking in more detail at the preserved manuscripts of the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César,* including some manufactured in Flanders: Gaunt 2015, 40-49.

to those in Latin and/or Middle Dutch? In order to fully understand the reception of francophone texts in thirteenth-century Flanders, however, it is even more important to identify social contexts. Some texts and manuscripts were clearly written under the patronage of the Flemish comital court, but are there examples of them reaching new audiences or switching reading contexts? Medieval texts and manuscripts could be multifunctional: texts which were first aimed at a courtly milieu could also reach additional audiences, just as manuscripts produced in monastic contexts could move into an urban environment.[12] Other scholars have referred to this phenomenon as 'transcultural', but I prefer 'multifunctional' as this concept foregrounds different user contexts, rather than entirely different cultures.[13] Similarly, 'multifunctional' gracefully bypasses the vexed question of how one might define a culture, be it by language, geography or socio-economic context.

For this reason, this article focuses on the urban, monastic, and courtly environments and social networks in which francophone manuscripts were produced and circulated from a multilingual perspective. Illustrated by the quantitative analysis of the dataset on manuscript provenance, the court appears to have been the primary audience for French manuscripts, especially at the close of the thirteenth century. Taking into account the changing political situation in the County of Flanders in this turbulent period, I examine the cases of a number of manuscripts from the reigns of the sister-countesses Joan and Margaret of Constantinople, and demonstrate how they bear witness to the francophone social and political networks of Countess Joan and prominent French noblewomen. The case of Countess Margaret also provides evidence of the appropriation of a particular song from a francophone urban context. Of course, urban and noble elites in Flanders shared Picard French as a common cultural language. Lastly, the French manuscripts associated with Count Guy of Dampierre in the final decades of the thirteenth century testify to a revival of francophone crusader histories, not only in the form of crusade epics, but also in vernacular prose chronicles dealing with the crusades and regional history.

Quantifying Multilingual Manuscripts of Medieval Flanders

The first step towards understanding the reception of francophone literature in thirteenth-century Flanders is to analyse the preserved manuscripts

12 Prevenier 1994, 23.

13 Armstrong & Strietman 2017, 1-11.

containing French from a multilingual perspective: that is, in relation to the other principal written languages in the County of Flanders, Dutch and Latin. In this way, a more substantiated view on the position of French as a literary language and its preservation in manuscripts in the thirteenth century can be obtained. Thus far, the ongoing *Multilingual Dynamics of the Literary Culture of Medieval Flanders* (*ca 1200–ca 1500*) project has collected data on over 2000 manuscripts known to have been produced in Flanders or written for a Flemish patron.[14] Considering the monolingual manuscripts in our dataset, Middle Dutch manuscripts currently make up only 7% of the entire corpus compared to 26% for French manuscripts and around 55% for Latin manuscripts. These data show unsurprisingly that Latin was the most common written language in medieval Flanders. Our thirteenth-century corpus consisting of approximately 430 manuscripts contains over 77% monolingual Latin books. This high percentage is obviously related to the dominance of large abbeys as prominent administrative and cultural centres. Geographically, this Latin corpus is dominated by manuscripts made in the wider Bruges region, with St Donatian's collegiate church within the city walls, Ter Doest in Lissewege and Ten Duinen in Koksijde, followed by those from the southern region, in particular St Bertin Abbey in Saint-Omer and nearby Clairmarais Abbey. Looking at Latin-specific genres, we can easily state that most Latin manuscripts contain theological treatises, followed by more practical devotional books such as psalters, Bibles and breviaries. To a lesser extent, we find law treatises, scientific texts and classical texts (see Table 1).

French also features quite prominently in the thirteenth-century manuscript corpus: almost 20% of the 430 manuscripts contain French (90 manuscripts, of which 13 also have Latin texts). As expected, French was almost restricted to (and was related to the popularity of) specific genres. As Table 1 illustrates, French is nearly omnipresent in manuscripts with literary texts (such as Arthurian and other narrative traditions). Furthermore, almost

14 As of February 2021, *The Multilingual Dynamics of the Literary Culture of Medieval Flanders* (*ca 1200–ca 1500*) project has established a database of more than 2000 Flemish manuscripts dating or datable to between c. 1200 and c. 1500, including metadata from the most important Flemish collections such as that of the Openbare Bibliotheek in Bruges, Ghent University Library, the Royal Library in Brussels (KBR), the Bibliothèque d'Agglomération of Saint-Omer, the Bibliothèque municipale (BM) of Douai, the Médiathèque Jean Lévy in Lille, the British Library in London, and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF) in Paris. We have included manuscripts produced and/or used in the County of Flanders and its wider region, including Artois, Tournai and some border towns and abbeys in Hainaut. I thank Godfried Croenen and the MMFC-project for their help with collecting metadata.

60% of French monolingual manuscripts contain secular literary texts. Here, Flanders follows a more general trend: the shift from Latin to the vernacular as the predominant written language of the Western European courts went hand-in-hand with a new emphasis on and interest in courtly literature.[15] These epic texts, primarily intended for courtly and noble milieus, found their way into cities in the fourteenth century.[16] While in the thirteenth century, monastic institutions mostly rejected these frivolous worldly stories, there is evidence of French romance manuscripts owned by a monastic institution close to Flanders in the middle of the fourteenth century. In 1351, the famous chronicler Gilles li Muisit, abbot of St Martin's Abbey in Tournai, a French enclave in Flanders, ordered a copy of the *Queste del Saint Graal* beautifully illustrated by Pierart dou Tielt (Ill. 1).[17] Nonetheless, Li Muisit's literary tastes appear to have been quite exceptional.[18]

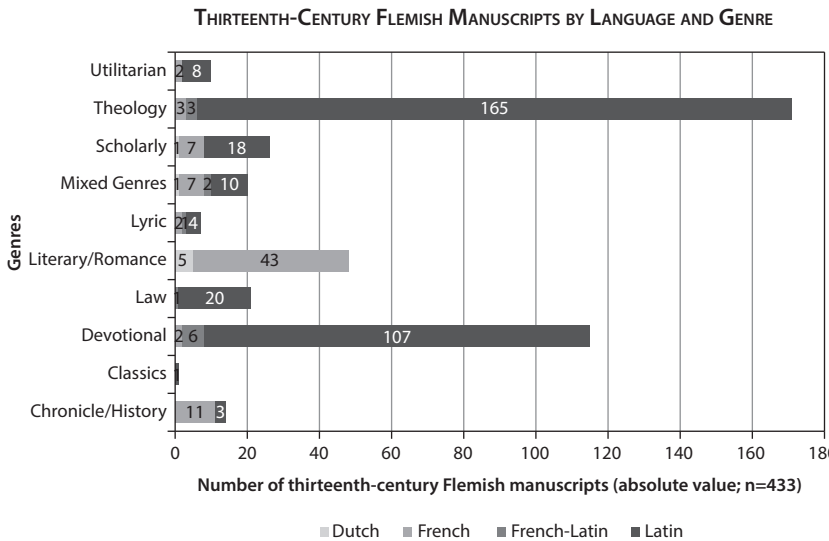


Table 1: Thirteenth-century manuscripts from Flanders structured by genre and language[19]

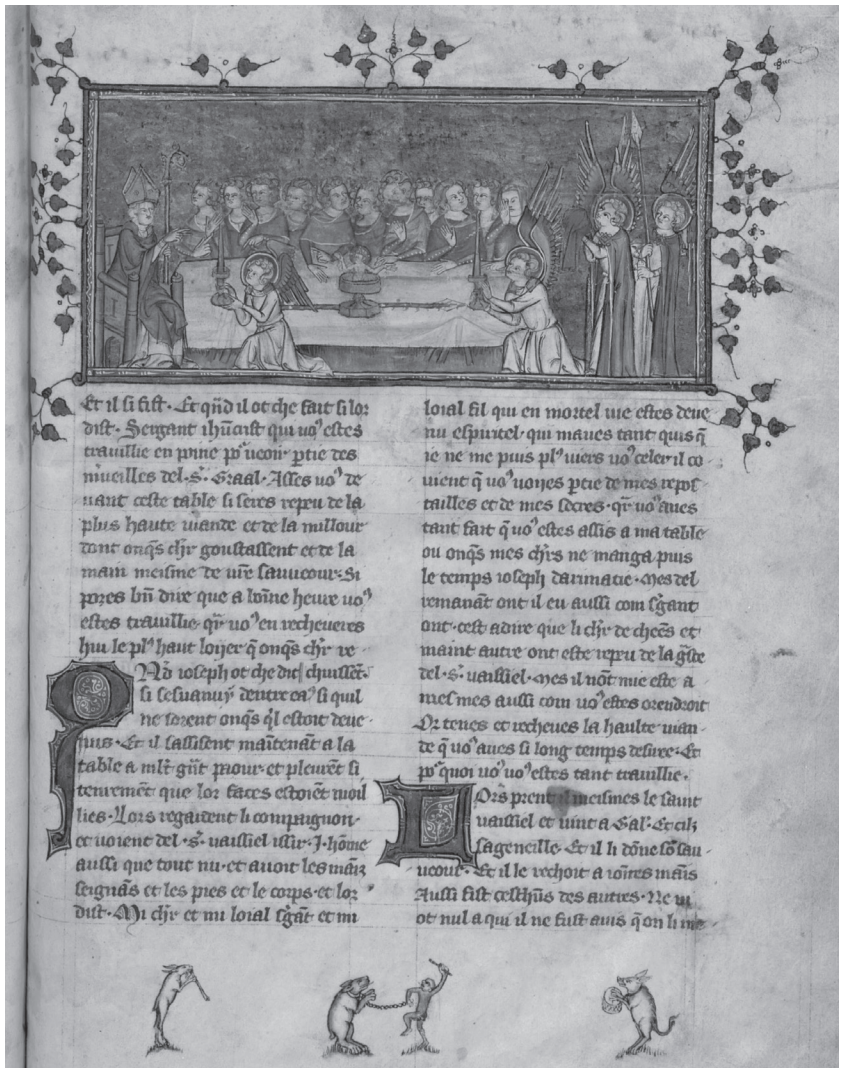
15 McCash 2008, 47.

16 Prevenier 1994, 23.

17 Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5218.

18 See also: Walters 2005, 889-895.

19 Genres in Table 1 include utilitarian or practical documents (such as rites, statutes and necrologies), theological treatises, scholarly books (mainly non-theological philosophical and scientific texts), mixed-genre miscellanies, lyric manuscripts and songbooks, literary narratives



Ill. 1: Paris, Bibliothèque l'Arsenal, MS 5218, f. 88r. *Queste del saint graal*. Manuscript illustrated by Pierart dou Tielt for Gilles li Muisit. Source gallica.bnf.fr / BNF.

The graph above also gives grounds for three more striking observations related to francophone manuscripts. First, French is present in thirteenth-century devotional manuscripts, but mostly in a multilingual combination with Latin. The evidence for 'monolingual' Dutch devotional manuscripts

and romances, canon or civil law texts, devotional books (such as psalters or vitae), classical texts, and chronicles.

gives a somewhat distorted picture: unlike the few French devotional cases, these Dutch examples are not complete manuscripts, but fragments containing texts such as *Vanden levene Ons Heren* and a Middle Dutch *vita* of St Alexis.[20] This is a familiar obstacle in research on thirteenth-century Dutch literary manuscripts, as many texts are solely preserved in fragments whose exact provenance and date are difficult to establish. The preservation of thirteenth-century Middle Dutch manuscripts is problematic in comparison with that of Latin or French manuscripts: Latin manuscripts were relatively well preserved by monastic institutions, and French manuscripts benefited from the gradual institutionalisation of the library collections of the fourteenth and fifteenth-century Flemish and Burgundian courts. By contrast, Middle Dutch manuscripts were often produced for individual private owners, and as such were at greater risk of being discarded over time, or remaining hidden in private collections today.

The second and perhaps most important observation is that over 15% of the francophone manuscripts in this corpus contain chronicles and historiographical works. Even more strikingly, more French than Latin chronicle manuscripts have been preserved from the thirteenth century. This is noteworthy because in the twelfth century Latin was still the dominant historiographical language, as monks from various abbeys wrote and rewrote Flemish history or the history of their own abbey.[21] As noted above, Gabrielle Spiegel argued that vernacular chronicle-writing emerged in the thirteenth century in the wider Flemish region and Northern France.[22] This seems to apply not only to the textual evidence, but to the material witnesses, the manuscripts, as well. It appears that chronicles were predominantly produced and consumed in French in the thirteenth century. However, and this is perhaps not sufficiently emphasized in Spiegel's study, this is also related to the specific genre and content of the thirteenth-century chronicles: most of these chronicle manuscripts contain crusader histories (Geoffrey of Villehardouin and Henry of Valenciennes) or romance-chronicles related to the crusader narrative (Pseudo-Turpin and the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*). Regional historiographies in French are quite rare, with the exception of Philippe Mousket, the works of the Anonymous of Béthune and the French translation of the *Flandria Generosa B* which only survive in a few manuscripts. The popularity of French crusader chronicles was very

20 Brussels, KBR, MS 19572 and Brussels, KBR, MS IV 775.

21 McCash 2008, 47.

22 Spiegel 1993.

much limited to the thirteenth century, as Latin, and regional chronicle writing, would retake its dominant position in fourteenth-century Flanders.

Lastly, not a single multilingual manuscript could be found containing both Dutch and French texts in our thirteenth-century corpus. In fact, Dutch-French multilingual manuscripts were overall rare in medieval Flanders: most exceptions are administrative codices and memory books containing copies of charters and legal documents in their original language, which only survive from the late fifteenth century onwards. It seems that, as a rule, French and Dutch literary texts were not combined in manuscript form. However, these findings also illustrate the limits of our dataset focusing exclusively on material evidence. First, we limit our focus here to the extant manuscripts, but many Flemish texts dating from the thirteenth-century, such as the *Spieghel historiael* by Jacob van Maerlant, were preserved in fourteenth, fifteenth-century or more recent manuscripts. Second, this lack of multilingual manuscripts in our dataset does not indicate that medieval Flemish readers did not own both monolingual French and monolingual Dutch manuscripts concurrently but bound separately. Monolingual vernacular manuscripts were in most cases, if not always, part of a multilingual collection, often with Latin manuscripts.[23] Furthermore, there are other shortcomings in only focussing on the language of the texts in these manuscripts. Multilingual ownership or *ex dono* inscriptions, scribal *probationes pennae* or other marginal annotations in different languages can be easily overlooked. For example, manuscript Cambridge Trinity College B.11.22, a famous multilingual Book of Hours written in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, holds Latin and French texts, but several Middle Dutch notes and rhymes are hidden in the miniatures.[24]

Production and Consumption: Urban and Monastic French Reading in the Thirteenth Century

The production of French manuscripts in the thirteenth-century County of Flanders was mainly concentrated in the south: this was the traditionally francophone region, and also the County's administrative centre where the thirteenth-century countesses primarily resided. The leading cities for the production and ownership of French manuscripts in the thirteenth century were Douai and Arras – the latter in the sphere of influence of the County

23 See also the introduction to this volume.

24 Meuwese 2016, 179-195.

of Flanders, but feudally detached from Flanders in 1191 and belonging to the independent lordship of Artois after 1237 – followed by Saint-Omer and Lille.[25] Remarkably, Bruges and Ghent are completely absent from this list. This is particularly noteworthy as by the late fifteenth century Bruges would become the leading supplier of French literary manuscripts: almost 50% of the corpus' fifteenth-century francophone manuscripts are known to have been produced in Bruges. In comparison, only 5% can be localised in Douai, and only 2% in Arras or the County of Artois. Obviously, the production of French manuscripts in the Artois region did not stop, but they were clearly no longer destined for the Flemish market.[26] The geography of the production of francophone manuscripts follows the general economic and political shift of power from the south to the north.[27] After the Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge in 1305, and even more definitively after the Treaty of Pontoise in 1312, Walloon Flanders was handed over to the French King Philip the Fair, only to be returned to Flemish hands in 1369 with the marriage of Margaret of Flanders and Philip the Bold. Consequently, the Flemish Count Robert of Béthune, son of Guy of Dampierre, and the subsequent Counts of Flanders moved their political centre to the north. Flemish industries followed suit: Ypres and subsequently Ghent and Bruges became economic hotspots. Furthermore, Bruges became the County's main trading centre, specialising in luxury goods such as manuscripts.[28]

Defining and localising contexts for the reception of thirteenth-century francophone manuscripts in Flanders is difficult. Around 50% of thirteenth-century French manuscripts cannot be attributed to a specific user context because primary (or even subsequent) owners are unknown. Most of these unattributed manuscripts probably circulated in either urban or noble milieus. The predominant ownership of francophone manuscripts by the nobility is evident: 44% can be attributed to a courtly or noble milieu.[29] By contrast, manuscripts owned by abbeys, convents, and ecclesiastical institutions can be identified quite accurately, as manuscripts often remained in place for centuries. Thirteen manuscripts are multilingual French-Latin, and most of them belonged to monastic institutions situated either in the south of the County of Flanders, such as St Bertin's Abbey in Saint-Omer, or

25 Lalou 2012, 23-32.

26 Collet 2016, 66.

27 Boone 2017, 59-88.

28 In the fifteenth century, besides London and Paris, Bruges was one of the few cities with a stationer's guild: De Witte 1996, 334-40.

29 These milieus are of course not exclusively Flemish. The used dataset includes all manuscripts produced in Flanders, and not only those manuscripts commissioned by Flemish patrons.

near the border with the County of Hainaut, such as the abbeys of Anchin and Marchiennes.[30] French-Latin manuscripts are the only multilingual manuscripts preserved for the thirteenth century, and in most cases the French notes are not contemporary with the main text, but were added in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.

Only two manuscripts containing French can with certainty be related to urban user contexts, in Arras and Douai. These manuscripts date from the late thirteenth century, in particular from the 1270s to the 1290s. A fascinating case is manuscript Paris, BNF, MS fr. 2168. This miscellany contains lyric texts with musical notation, a collection of *fabliaux* by Jean Bodel and several anonymous authors, *lais* by Marie de France, and a Picard version of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, originally written for Guillaume de Cayeux, Lord of Ponthieu, who fought on the Flemish side at the Battle of Bouvines.[31] The sequence of the multifunctional courtly and urban texts in the manuscript was altered over time.[32] This manuscript, written in Gothic cursive by two principal hands, was probably used performatively in an urban context, perhaps of the *puys* of Arras.[33] A later hand added a Latin life of St Bernard. Another interesting case is a series of manuscripts containing Brunetto Latini's encyclopaedic *Livre du trésor,* all copied in a brief period of time around 1274.[34] Latini worked as a notary in France, in Montpellier, Arras and Paris during his exile from Florence between 1261 and 1268.[35] One of these manuscripts was later owned by the Milanese Lord Galeazzo I Visconti (1277–1328). These manuscripts were written in the so-called Workshop of 1274, a prolific group of bookmakers and stationers in late thirteenth-century Arras and Douai.[36] Among the Workshop's clientele were members of a wide range of social groups, including the Abbey of St Vaast in Arras, and several urban or noble laywomen in Douai for whom they produced both Latin and French manuscripts.[37] The Workshop also

30 Some examples include Douai, BM, MS 142, a thirteenth-century Latin breviary from Marchiennes Abbey with a single prayer in French dating from the early fourteenth century; and Douai, BM, MS 449, a Latin miscellany of theological texts owned by Anchin Abbey. Several added notes were written in French.

31 Spiegel 1993, 71-72.

32 Lunardi 2012, 70-72.

33 Busby 2010, 47-61; Lunardi 2012, 81-82.

34 Smeyers 1998, 125-127; Arras, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 182 (1060); Paris, BNF, MS fr. 1110; Brussels, KBR, MS 10228.

35 Roux 2009, 340-1

36 Bräm 1993, 77-104.

37 Valenciennes, Bibliothèque-médiatheque, MS 838 is an obituarium-martyrologium written for Marie de Muerchin of Douai. She donated the codex to the Cistercian nuns of Notre-Dame-de-Prés

copied a French miscellany of crusader histories and saints' lives for a courtly milieu: it was later owned by Charles V of France (1337–1380) and became part of the Burgundian library of Philip the Good in the fifteenth century.[38]

The Dominance of French in Courtly Literature: The Courtly Networks of Countesses Joan and Margaret of Constantinople

As previously stated – and as was to be expected – the Flemish court and nobility were the dominant patrons and users of French monolingual manuscripts in the thirteenth century. Both Countess Joan of Constantinople and her younger sister Margaret have been associated with a multilingual literary culture at their courts. According to Baukje Finet-Van der Schaaf, the so-called Flemish version of the *Chanson d'Aiol* in Middle Dutch was written between 1238 and 1244 for Joan.[39] This assumption is mainly based on the passage in the Flemish romance stating that Aiol's beloved Mirabel was called 'Johane' after she was baptized.[40] Walter Prevenier posits that Joan ordered both a French and a Middle Dutch version of the *Aiol*.[41] Each version has been preserved in single manuscript witness. Interestingly, while the surviving manuscript containing the Flemish version cannot itself be linked to Flanders,[42] the francophone manuscript (Paris, BNF, MS fr. 25516), datable to c. 1280, became part of the library of the Flemish Countess Margaret of Male (1350–1405).[43] The manuscript was listed in the library inventory made after her death in 1405, and was passed on to her son, the Burgundian Duke John the Fearless. However, a large part of her rich manuscript collection once belonged to the former libraries of the Flemish counts. This manuscript serves as an excellent reflection of the literary environment of the comital court in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, as will be further demonstrated.

Unfortunately, direct manuscript evidence of French-Dutch multilingual literary patronage by Countess Joan, which has been suggested by previous researchers, is non-existent. Only two preserved manuscripts can be attributed

in Douai. Brussels, KBR, MS 939 is a psalter also written for an unknown Douai laywoman.

38 Saint Petersburg, Biblioteka Akademii Nauk, FN 403.

39 There is an older Limburg *Aiol*, but it is not clear if the Flemish writer used the Limburg version or translated directly from French. Finet-van der Schaaf 1987 and 2006, 503-507.

40 Besamusca 2011, 172.

41 Prevenier & De Hemptinne 2013; Finet-van der Schaaf 2006, 503-508.

42 Breda, Archief Begijnhof, afd. III-21, MS 708.

43 De Winter 1985, 235

to Joan's library.[44] The first is a beautifully illuminated psalter preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (lat. 238), made around 1210 and probably presented by the French Queen Blanche of Castile to Joan when she married Ferrand of Portugal.[45] Blanche and Joan befriended each other during Joan's upbringing at the French court (1208–1212) following the disappearance, and presumed death, in 1205 of her father Baldwin IX of Flanders. The multilingual manuscript begins with a Latin calendar including important Flemish saints, followed by a series of psalms, litanies, saints' lives, and fragments of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John. The calendar was illustrated with zodiac signs and labours of the month, as was customary, and the psalter contains multiple full-page miniatures. The psalter also features a single French text, the *Épîtres farcies de Saint-Étienne,* copied with musical notation (Ill. 2).[46]

The second manuscript, datable to around 1220, is a copy of the *Conte du Graal* now kept at the British Library (MS Add. 36614).[47] As noted in the introduction, Count Philip of Alsace, Joan's great-uncle, patronized Chrétien de Troyes at the Flemish court. His widow, Mathilde of Portugal, continued to play an important role in Flemish politics as well as in Joan's later life. After her second marriage was annulled, Mathilde returned to Flanders, where she arranged the marriage of her nephew Ferrand of Portugal to the young Joan.[48] This Grail manuscript was written shortly after Mathilde died in the Flemish town of Veurne in 1218, and contains not only Chrétien's *Perceval*, but also the continuations and the *vita* of St Mary of Egypt by Wauchier de Denain, the court writer of Joan and her sister Margaret.[49] Various marginal notations refer to the deeds of Philip of Alsace: *Philippe d'Alsace comte de Flandre mourut devant Saint Jean d'Acre en 1191, fils de Thierry, il dominait depuis 1168* was inscribed by a later hand on the front flyleaf next to a short rhyme or phrase in honour of 'Felipis de Flandres'. Moreover, an ink drawing of the Flemish coat of arms with the motto 'Flanders au Lion' can be found on folia 110r and 271r. The book was not made in Flanders but in Champagne, and was probably gifted by Blanche of Navarre, widow of the deceased Count Theobald III of Champagne, the countesses' maternal uncle.[50] The manuscript was probably offered to Joan on the occasion of her sister Margaret's second marriage,

44 Collet 2009, 125-132; Stones 2009, 177-189.

45 The psalter stylistically resembles the *Bible moralisée* executed for Blanche of Castile and her son Louis between 1227 and 1234 (New York, Morgan Library, MS M.240).

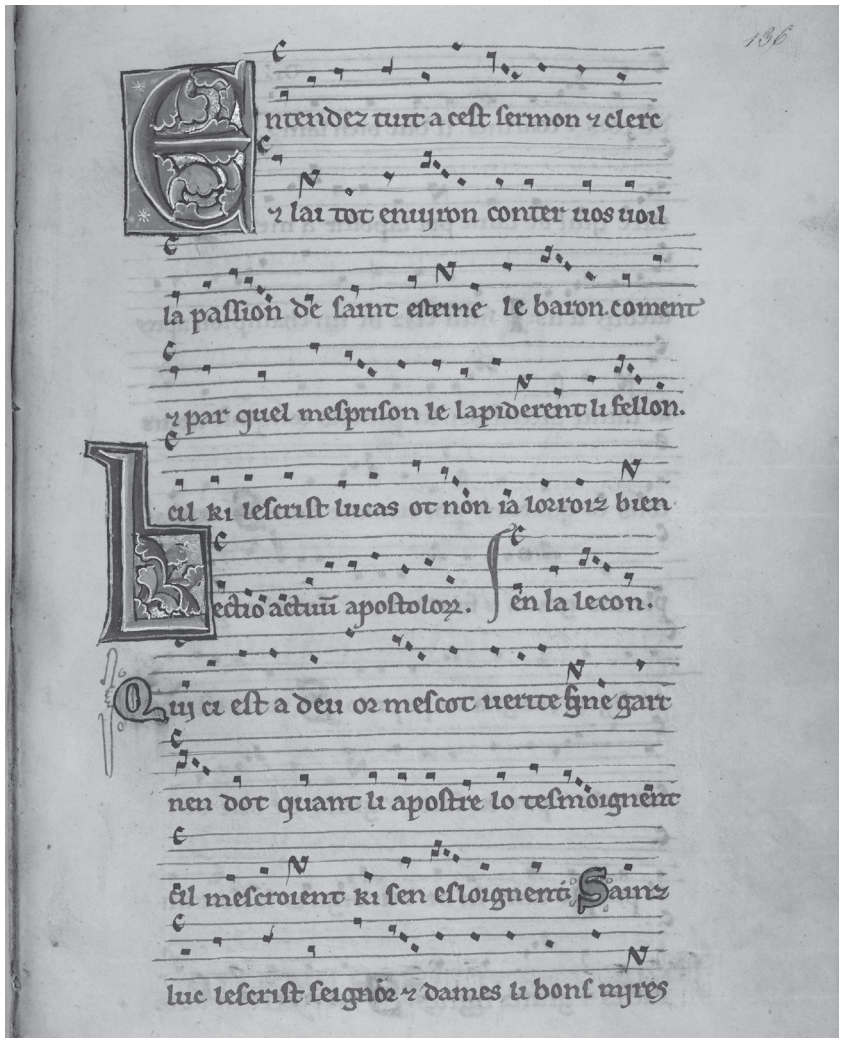
46 Le Vot 1987, 61-68.

47 See also: Busby et al. 1993, vol. 1, 208-209, 211, 213, 223.

48 De Hemptinne 1987, col. 504-14.

49 Douchet 2009, 135-143.

50 Stones 2009, 177.



Ill. 2: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 238, f. 136r. Psalter of Countess Jeanne. *Épîtres farcies de Saint-Étienne*. Source gallica.bnf.fr / BNF.

to William of Dampierre, in 1223; William was a nobleman and courtier of Count Theobald IV of Champagne ('le Chansonnier'). The marriage renewed relations between the already firmly entangled noble courts of Flanders and Champagne. Like many other courtly manuscripts, this manuscript remained in the comital family for decades and was later owned by Robert de Cassel (1275-1331), the second, rebellious son of the Flemish Count Robert of Béthune and Yolande of Bourgogne. Both manuscripts illustrate Countess Joan's relations with the most influential aristocratic and royal women of

the early thirteenth century, many of whom played a significant role in the emergence of the vernacular in literature and historiography.[51] In the case of Countess Joan, these francophone monolingual and multilingual manuscripts illuminate a francophone network of closely-related and befriended noblewomen. The French literary miscellany highlights the rule and patronage of Philip of Alsace and thus relates these long-standing interregional cultural networks to Joan's authority as a female prince and rightful heir of a dynasty with a prominent cultural heritage.

In 1244, after a reign of more than forty years and two childless marriages, Joan died. Her sister Margaret inherited the Counties of Flanders and Hainaut. She ruled Flanders until 1278 when she abdicated in favour of Guy of Dampierre, the eldest surviving son from her second marriage, but continued to rule over Hainaut until she died at the age of 78, in 1280. Although we know from her court records that Countess Margaret invested heavily in luxurious manuscripts,[52] and hosted many poets and writers at her courts both in Flanders and Hainaut, there are only a few manuscripts that can be linked to her patronage. In July 2010 a psalter very likely commissioned by Countess Margaret was auctioned at Christie's.[53] Elizabeth Moore Hunt observed that Margaret's name-saint is the only female saint depicted in the volume, and several stylistic features of the decoration resemble the psalter of her son Guy more closely than that of her sister Joan.[54] As in Guy's psalter, heraldry plays an important role in Margaret's manuscript: the Flemish coats of arms and the old arms of Hainaut feature prominently in the border decorations (of course, the Hainaut arms are absent from Guy's psalter). Shortly after Countess Margaret ascended the throne in Flanders and Hainaut, John and Baldwin, her sons from her first marriage to Burchard of Avesnes, claimed their position as rightful heirs to Flanders and Hainaut.[55] Moreover, after Margaret's death, her grandson John I of Avesnes succeeded her as Count of Hainaut and introduced a new coat of arms: a lion *sable*, identical to that of the County of Flanders.

Two other French or multilingual French-Latin manuscripts may reflect Margaret's court environment. The first is Brussels, KBR, MS 9411-26, written between 1270 and 1290. Amongst the work of other famous artists, the manuscript contains the almost complete oeuvre of Hainauter poet and composer

51 McCash 2008, 55-56.

52 In 1276 Margaret ordered a missal, and in February 1279 she ordered parchment and paid her clerk Baldwin for copying a breviary. Dehaisnes 1886, 70-72. See further Stones 2009, 178.

53 London, Christie's, Sale 7911, Lot. 29.

54 Moore Hunt 2014, 87-127. Guy's psalter: Brussels, KBR, MS 10607.

55 For more on the conflict see: Duvivier 1894.

Baudouin de Condé who dedicated his *Conte de l'Elephant* to Margaret.[56] Although there is no direct evidence for a thirteenth-century patron, this manuscript is mentioned in the library inventories of the fifteenth-century Burgundian dukes. A second and more convincing example is a multilingual Latin-French songbook datable to around 1260.[57] The songbook contains various polyphonic compositions such as liturgical *organa*, occasional compositions for religious processions (*conductus*), and both Latin religious and moralising motets as well as more profane songs in French. All songs in the manuscript were intended to be performed by professional singers, most probably in a court environment. Notably, the songbook holds the famous motet about Ghent's urban elite: *Mout sont vallant cil de Gand.* According to Daniel Lievois and Mary Wolinski, 'cil de Gand' refers to the *viri hereditarii* or 'erfachtige lieden' who controlled the positions of the XXXIX aldermen who governed the city.[58] Therefore, this song seems to be an example of a multifunctional text originally intended for a francophone elite urban environment, but adopted by the Flemish court.

Mout sont vallant cil de Gand reflects the growing interrelation of the urban and court elite milieus in the course of the thirteenth century. To fund the Flemish court's increasing expenses (driven by new crusade expeditions and the continuing war with Holland allied with the Avesnes sons of Margaret's first marriage), Countess Margaret relied heavily on the taxation and 'beden' of the commercially flourishing Flemish towns.[59] In return for these funds, in 1251 the people of Ghent were permitted to dig a 47-kilometre long channel from Ghent to Damme – the Lieve, completed in 1269 – to connect Ghent with the important Zwin estuary and in turn to international trading routes, much to the disapproval of Bruges. In 1253, Margaret received 1000 Flemish pounds from Ghent to pay ransom to Floris de Voogd, the guardian of Floris V of Holland, to release her son Guy after his defeat in Walcheren by John of Avesnes.[60] In addition to their economic and financial significance, the *viri hereditarii* of Ghent were increasingly gaining in regional political power, calling themselves *scabini Flandriae*.[61] The song *Mout sont vallant cil de Gand* describes the golden age of this Ghent patrician elite, *plein de cortoisie, large et cortois, despendant et de riche vie* ('very courteous, generous and courtly, free-spending and luxurious in their

56 Walters 1994, 25.
57 Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 10999 HelmSt.
58 Lievois & Wolinski 2002, 35.
59 Boone 2002, 26-77.
60 Kruisheer 1992, vol. III, 174-75.
61 Boone 2002, 28.

living'), who preferred Rhine wine over that from Paris and Auxerre (*j'ai esprove qe vin rinois passent francois et touz vins aucourrois*).[62]

In conclusion, most of the modest number of multilingual manuscript cases discussed here are Latin-French examples. There is insufficient manuscript evidence to demonstrate any Dutch-French multilingual interest by the countesses, although we know that the court environment was multilingual, including Dutch-speaking administrative functionaries like Diederik of Assenede (c. 1230–1293) who translated and adapted *Floire et Blanchefleur* from French to Middle Dutch.[63] Still, the bilingual countesses apparently preferred reading devotional texts in Latin and literary narrative texts in French. Although many French chronicle manuscripts circulated in thirteenth-century Flanders, not a single French chronicle or historiographical manuscript (or Latin, for that matter) can be attributed to the collections of these sister-countesses. This is striking as some scholars have underscored the role of noblewomen in commissioning and promoting vernacular historiographical literature.[64]

According to Gabrielle Spiegel, between 1200 and 1230, spanning most of the rule of Countess Joan, no fewer than six independent French translations were made of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, an original Latin narrative of the fictitious campaigns of Charlemagne against the Saracens in the Iberian peninsula. While none of these can be tied to the countesses themselves, they were created for and circulated in the upper echelons of Flemish society. Most of the *Pseudo-Turpin* renditions have been situated in Northern France, and, more specifically, the regions of Boulogne, Arras and Flanders.[65] These seem to have been instigated by Yolande of Saint-Pol, sister of Joan's grandfather Count Baldwin V of Hainaut. Afterwards, a certain *magister* Johannes wrote a new version of the text and presented it to Renaud Dammartin, Count-consort of Boulogne (who had been imprisoned with Joan's husband Ferrand of Portugal after the Battle of Bouvines).[66] Pierre de Beauvais, who also composed a vernacular bestiary,[67] made a Picard French version of the chronicle under the patronage of William of Ponthieu, Renaud's father-in-law. However, even though Joan and Margaret's father Count Baldwin IX was the first Latin Emperor of Constantinople, succeeded by his brother Henry, there is no manuscript evidence of the Flemish court's interest in chronicles

62 Lievois & Wolinski 2002, 39-40.
63 Stockman 1972, 213-214.
64 McCash 2008, 46-48.
65 Spiegel 1993, 55-98. There is also one Anglo-Norman translation.
66 Sleiderink 2003, 40-42.
67 Baker 2010.

or crusader historiography. This attitude would nevertheless change in the second half of the thirteenth century.[68]

Between History and Romance: The Béthune-Dampierre Family and the Patronage of French Miscellanies in the Late Thirteenth Century

The thirteenth-century countesses and counts of Flanders, including Guy of Dampierre, patronized Arthurian or chivalric romances, epic poetry, and satirical literature, amongst them poems in the tradition of the *Roman de Renart*.[69] Like his mother Margaret, Guy of Dampierre is particularly known for his patronage of various poets and minstrels, including Adenet le Roi, who was born in Brabant and had previously resided at the Brabantine court of Henry III. On 8 November 1297, during a banquet in honour and presence of King Edward I of England in Ghent, Guy offered Adenet le Roi a golden buckle as a gift.[70] This chivalric tradition was continued by Guy's heirs, among others by William of Dendermonde, Guy's second son, who may have commissioned a beautifully illuminated set of Lancelot-Grail manuscripts and a version of the *Roman de Judas Machabee* (Ill. 3).[71] It seems, however, rather strange that a thirteenth-century comital house with such strong connections to the Latin Empire showed no interest in the multiple crusader histories written in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade that honoured Emperor Baldwin I of Constantinople, father of Joan and Margaret. As mentioned previously, French prose histories circulated in networks in the proximity of the Flemish comital house. Furthermore, it appears that more French than Latin chronicle manuscripts were produced in thirteenth-century Flanders. For instance, the so-called 'Hainaut'-version of the *Pseudo-Turpin*, written c. 1220–1230,[72] is preserved in Picard French manuscripts probably copied in Southern Flanders or Arras.[73]

68 Collet 2000, 88-97.

69 The ownership of Paris, BNF, MS fr. 1446, including texts by Baudouin de Condé and Marie de France, but also the *Couronnement de Renart,* has been attributed to Guy of Dampierre.

70 Boone 2002, 26-77.

71 New Haven, Yale, Beinecke Library, MS 229 and Paris, BNF, MS fr. 95 (Lancelot-Grail); Paris, BNF, MS fr. 15104 (*Roman de Judas Machabee*). The attribution of these manuscripts still inspires much discussion, although Alison Stones' attribution to William of Dendermonde is very convincing. See: Stones 1976, 83-102 and 1996, 202-203.

72 Spiegel 1993, 72.

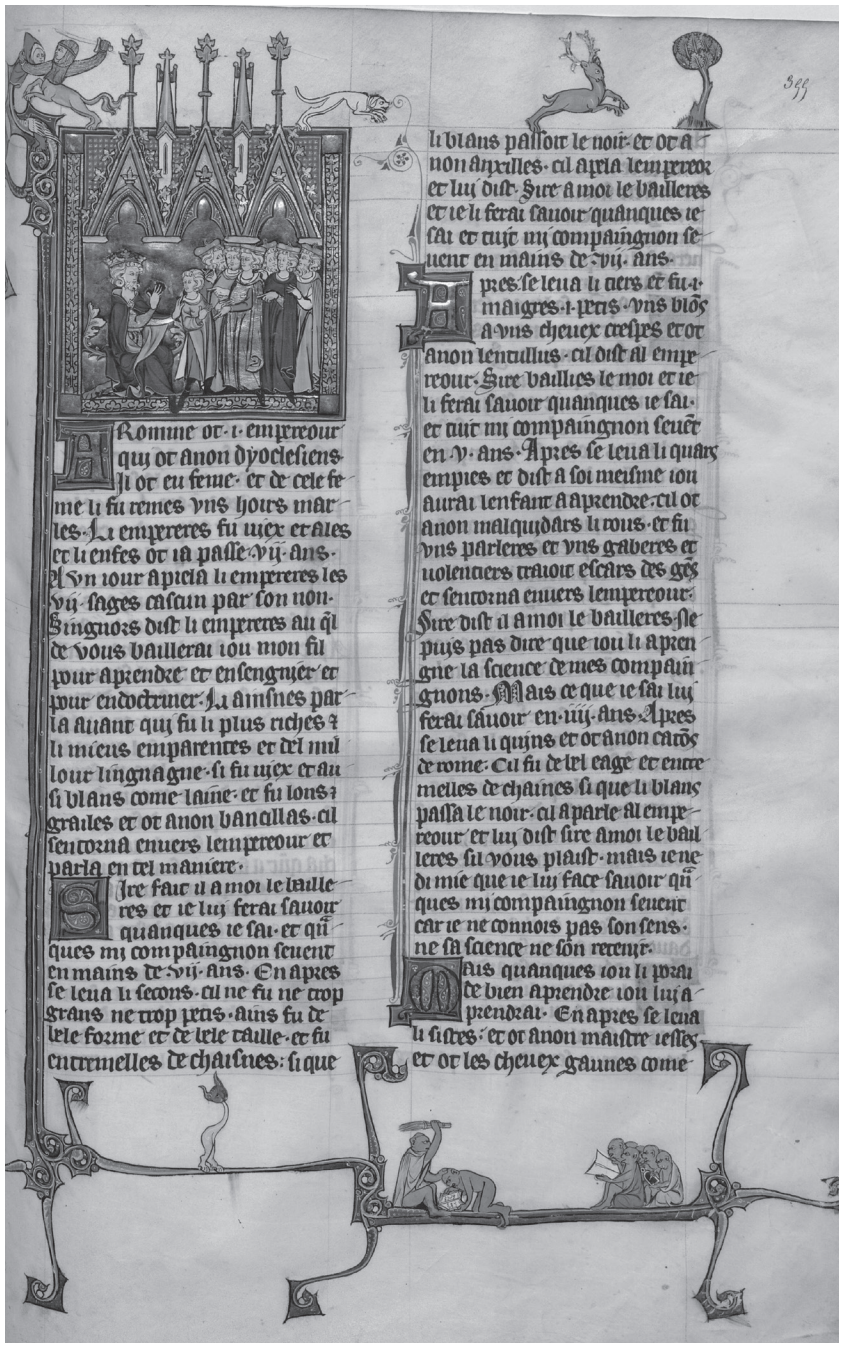
73 Paris, BNF, MS fr. 2137 and Paris, BNF, MS fr. 17203.

Around 1218, the so-called Anonymous of Béthune, an unidentified Picard poet from the region of Béthune-Arras, wrote a version of the French *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* under the patronage of Lord Robert VII of Béthune. This *Anonyme* composed two additional, and important, early histories in Old French prose: a *Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre* and a companion *Chronique des rois de France*. The latter chronicle, completed before 1223, inserts the account of Pseudo-Turpin for the first time into the Carolingian history of the French monarchy. The city of Béthune, originally part of the County of Flanders, feudally returned to the direct authority of the French king in the Treaty of Péronne of 1198. However, Robert VII of Béthune remained loyal to the Flemish counts, and Flemish influence over the city was important, especially after the marriage of Mathilde of Béthune, Robert's sole heir, to Guy of Dampierre in 1245. Moreover, the Lords of Béthune were *avoué* of St Vaast Abbey in Arras, and after Robert's death in 1248, Guy wielded this power and governed the fiefs Béthune, Richebourg and Dendermonde in his wife's name. Possibly, these texts, originally commissioned by the lords of Béthune, had found their way to the Flemish comital family.

Indeed, a possible reference to Paris, BNF, MS fr. 12203 can be found in the early fifteenth-century inventory of Countess Margaret of Male's library.[74] This manuscript, produced c. 1280-1290, is a monolingual French miscellany with various crusader histories and regional chronicles, including the *Estoire d'Outremer et de la naissance Salehadin* interpolated with the story of the Daughter of the Count of Ponthieu,[75] followed by the so-called *Ancienne Chronique des comtes de Flandre,*[76] the *Conquête de Constantinople* by Geoffrey of Villehardouin,[77] the *Histoire de l'empereur Henri de Constantinople* by Henry of Valenciennes,[78] and finally, the *Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre* by the aforementioned *Anonyme de Béthune*,[79] including the *Pseudo-Turpin* story. The inclusion of the *Ancienne Chronique* is particularly noteworthy: this is the first French prose translation of the *Flandria Generosa* chronicle tradition first written in 1164 in St Bertin Abbey, probably in honour of Count Thierry of Alsace.

Clearly, the historiographical texts should be read in relation to one another, as a combination of Flemish and crusader history, following a more

74 De Winter 1982, 172. See also Rider 2013, 68; Guyot-Bachy 2017, 123; Plante 2019, 9.
75 Jubb 1990 ; Brunel 1923.
76 De Smet 1841.
77 Dufournet 2004.
78 Longnon 1948.
79 Sarrazin & Michel 1840. Recent English translation by Shirley & Webster 2021.



Ill. 3: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 95, f. 355r. Owned by William of Dendermonde (?). Beginning of the *Sept sages de Rome*. Source gallica.bnf.fr / BNF.

or less chronological sequence. The *Estoire d'Outremer* is a historical compilation from the beginning of the crusades to 1185. The *Ancienne Chronique* narrates Flemish history from 792 to 1165, ending with the death of Count Thierry of Alsace, husband of Sybil of Anjou, the daughter of King Fulco I of Jerusalem. Subsequently, Geoffrey of Villehardouin elaborates on the Fourth Crusade (1202-1204) that saw Baldwin IX of Flanders become the Latin Emperor of Constantinople. After his disappearance in 1205, Baldwin was succeeded by his younger brother Henry, whose life was narrated by Henry de Valenciennes. Lastly, the *Histoire* of the *Anonyme* may have been included for its elaborate description of the Battle of Bouvines. The *Histoire* also depicts both Kings John of England and Philip Augustus of France negatively.[80] This could explain the popular reception of the text in Flanders, particularly in the political context of 1270-1290 – the period in which this manuscript was written – with growing tensions between Flanders and England on the one hand, and Flanders and France on the other. Aside from this, it is clear that the compilation should be seen in the light of the renewed crusading interests of the Flemish counts as from the mid-thirteenth century. In 1249, William III of Dampierre, Countess Margaret's eldest son from her second marriage, joined King Louis IX of France and Robert VII of Béthune on the Seventh Crusade to Egypt, and in 1270, Guy, William's younger brother and new heir to the Flemish throne, joined Louis on the fatal Eighth Crusade in Tunis, together with his sons William and Baldwin.[81]

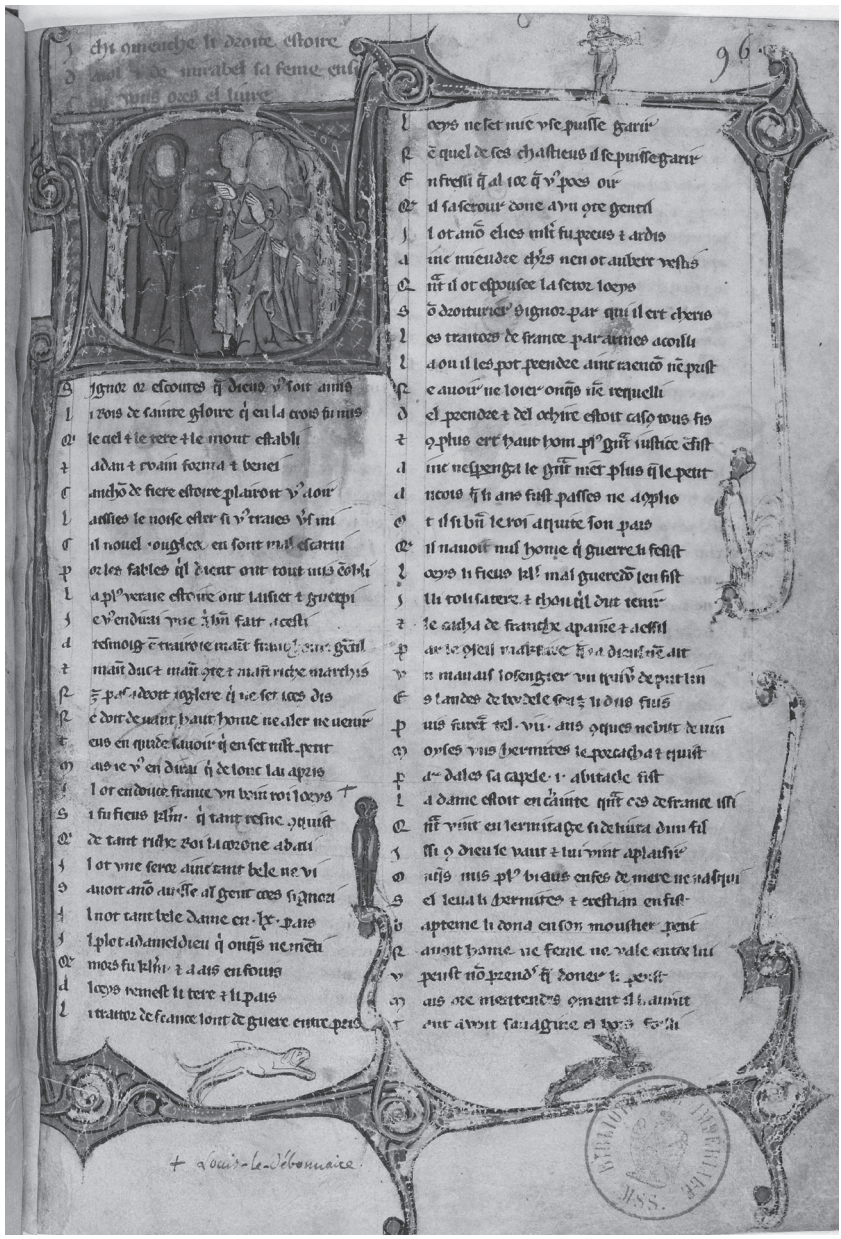
The combination of several Picard French texts in another thirteenth-century manuscript later held in the collection of Countess Margaret of Male and kept today in the BNF (MS fr. 25516), is also revealing in relation to the literary interests of the Flemish court in the late thirteenth century. The manuscript, also datable to around 1280, is a miscellany containing various chivalrous texts in verse: *Bueve de Hanstone,*[82] *Elie de Saint-Gilles*,[83] the French *Aiol*,[84] and *Robert le Diable*.[85] Both *Elie de Saint-Gilles* and the French *Aiol*, which was possibly written under the patronage of Countess Joan, are preserved uniquely in this manuscript (Ill. 4).[86] Furthermore, this is the oldest manuscript witness of the French continental versions of *Bueve de Hanstone* and *Robert le Diable*. The manuscript was written by

80 Fedorenko 2012, 202-230.
81 Gaillard 1853.
82 Stimming 1911.
83 Guidot 2013.
84 Ardouin 2019.
85 Gaucher 2006.
86 De Winter 1982, 235.

a single scribe and beautifully illustrated by the so-called Master of the *Graal*. Not only has the French *Aiol* been related to the court of Joan of Constantinople, but other texts in this manuscript also specifically point towards the thirteenth-century Flemish court milieu. First, there is the story of Bueve de Hanstone (or Bevis of Hampton), originally written at the Anglo-Norman court of England in the first half of the thirteenth century. Shortly thereafter, the text found its way into manuscripts that circulated in continental French literary milieus, of which this copy is the oldest surviving witness. The adventures and troubled life of Beuve – son of Guy, Lord of Hampton, and his young wife Beatrice, daughter of the King of Scotland – could have easily charmed the Flemish court, simply because the protagonist's father was Guy of Dampierre's namesake. Moreover, and only in this particular manuscript version, the narrative is entitled 'the true history of Guy, Duke of Hanstone and Beuve his son' (*Li vraie estoire de Guion duc de Hanstone et de Bevon son fil*).[87] This is all the more remarkable, given that Beuve's father plays only a minor role in the story, with a conspiracy in the first episode between Beatrice, the Duke's wife, and her lover, the German emperor, resulting in Guy's demise. The legend of Robert le Diable – the violent child of the duchess of Normandy and the Devil – is also of Anglo-Norman origin, and probably dates to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, and was incorporated as an *exemplum* in the Latin prose *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus* by the Dominican Stephen of Bourbon sometime between 1250 and 1261.[88] Around 1350 the text became the founding origin myth of the *Grande Chronique de Normandie*.[89]

It is perhaps not too far-fetched to presume that both Anglo-Norman texts quickly found their way to Flemish audiences with close political ties to the English court as well as economic connections across the Channel, for example, through the Flemish Hansa of London.[90] The thirteenth century was an unquestionably turbulent political period in Anglo-Flemish relations. Particularly around 1270, the former allies of the Battle of Bouvines were in the midst of a war with severe economic consequences for Flanders (known as the Anglo-Flemish trade war of 1270–1274). This was probably the first time that economic measures were openly used as a weapon in a feudal conflict with a rather unfavourable outcome. Countess Margaret of Constantinople demanded reimbursements for supporting the English king during the

87 Paris, BNF, MS fr. 25516, fol. 1r.
88 Gaucher 1999, 285-294.
89 Molinier 1882.
90 Perroy 1979, 477-492



Ill. 4: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 25516, f. 96r. Owned by Guy of Dampierre (?). Beginning of the *Aiol*. Source gallica.bnf.fr / BNF.

revolt of Simon de Montfort (The Second Barons' War, 1264-1267). King Henry III claimed that because he had recruited mercenary soldiers, there were no reasons to make payments. In retaliation, Margaret confiscated the possessions of English merchants in Flanders. In turn, Henry, and later also his heir Edward I, confiscated those of Flemish merchants in England and ended the export of English wool to Flanders. Flemish townspeople who depended on the textile trade pressed the Countess and her son Guy to initiate negotiations with the English royal house, resulting in the Treaty of Montreuil in 1274.[91] Furthermore, the rising tensions in 1290 between Guy of Dampierre and the new French King Philip IV encouraged Guy to mend ties with King Edward I of England through multiple cultural exchanges, as is illustrated by the aforementioned banquet of 1297. The cultural and literary interplay demonstrated by the miscellany holding various Anglo-Norman texts could be seen in the light of these political circumstances.

A third remarkable aspect of BNF MS fr. 25516 is the obviously crusade-related content of all texts in this miscellany. As such, this manuscript can be related to the previously discussed BNF MS fr. 12203. After returning from his failed crusade campaign in 1270,[92] Guy of Dampierre clearly developed an interest in crusader histories, both in 'romanced' and 'historical' versions as these two manuscripts illustrate. It is noticeable that the 'truthful' historiographical works and the romanced and idealised crusader epics were gathered in two different manuscripts. Nevertheless, despite being works of fiction, the texts of MS fr. 25516 reflect certain realities: in particular, the recurrence of family conflicts in all texts which might reflect the fraternal struggle for power between the Avesnes and Dampierre sons of Countess Margaret. The protagonists in these romance texts survive many obstacles and challenges despite the opposition and vengeance of their family, often with an excessively negative role for the mother.[93]

Conclusion

In thirteenth-century Flanders, French quickly established itself as a written language operating alongside Latin: over 20% of the 430 thirteenth-century

91 Berben 1937, 1-17. Wyffels 1980, 54-56.

92 Many details about the campaign of Guy of Dampierre to Tunis are known because of the accounts of his clerk, Jehan Makiel, and his eponymous *Memorial of Jehan Makiel*. This is the oldest preserved paper manuscript in Flanders, written in Picard French, and mentions a range of the Count's expenses associated with financing his crusade adventure. See: Buntinx 1944.

93 Gaucher 1999, 286.

Flemish manuscripts collected in the *Multilingual Dynamics* corpus contain French texts. Apart from a small proportion of French-Latin manuscripts, multilingual manuscripts are exceedingly rare in the thirteenth century. Most examples are found in monastic institutions in the south of the County. Some other multilingual manuscripts were owned by Countesses Joan and Margaret of Constantinople, although these multilingual witnesses are limited to the inclusion of a French devotional song in an otherwise Latin psalter, and a French motet about the Ghent urban elite and their courteous habits in a multilingual songbook. The position of French as a literary language in Flanders seems to go hand-in-hand with the growing popularity of literary genres such as epic romances and narrative chronicles. However, as these texts were almost solely commissioned in courtly or noble milieus, the choice of French (as opposed to Latin) is again unsurprising. As a result, it is not easy to say definitively whether genre or the intended audience's social milieu is the dominant factor behind the new popularity of francophone manuscripts in Flanders.

Considering the geographical spread of French manuscript production in Flanders, the southern 'francophone' region leads with Douai and Arras as the main production centers of French monolingual manuscripts. This changed in the course of the Middle Ages: by the fifteenth century, Bruges overtook the position of the southern towns as the primary supplier of francophone manuscripts. Of course, this development is related to socio-economic and political factors: from the fourteenth century onwards, the northern towns (in particular Ghent and Bruges) overtook the south as the political and economic heart of the County.

With relation to the social contexts of French, the court was the dominant consumer of written French although there were limited urban and monastic audiences for manuscripts with francophone texts, as is illustrated by some cases from Arras and Douai. Earlier research on literary patronage suggested the thirteenth-century Flemish court may have been a hub of French-Dutch bilingualism. Nevertheless, the manuscript evidence for multilingual literary patronage by the Flemish countesses and counts is almost non-existent. Moreover, there are few examples of multifunctionality: an exception might be the Ghent song 'Mout sont vallant cil de Gant' in a multilingual songbook that is thought to have circulated at the court of Countess Margaret of Constantinople. While the indications for a flourishing multilingual literary culture at the thirteenth-century court of Flanders are few, the manuscript evidence convincingly demonstrates that francophone literary interests of the Flemish court changed throughout the century. The multilingual and monolingual manuscripts owned by Countess Joan reflect her connections

with two of the most influential noblewomen of the early thirteenth-century French realm: Blanche of Navarre and Blanche of Castile. These manuscripts were gifts: there is only scant material evidence of manuscripts commissioned by the countess herself. Although noblewomen have elsewhere been related to the emergence of vernacular historiography, and many francophone chronicle manuscripts were written in thirteenth-century Flanders, there is, quite strikingly, no evidence of vernacular (or Latin) chronicle patronage by the Flemish sister-countesses.

Manuscript evidence shows that the noble House of Champagne was still an important ally to Countess Joan. The revival of historiographical interest at the Flemish court of Guy of Dampierre, however, could be associated with the Count's marital alliance with the Lords of Béthune. His first wife Mathilde of Béthune was the sole heir of Robert VII of Béthune, patron of the Anonymous of Béthune. By contextualizing the contents of two miscellanies probably owned by Guy of Dampierre – one including the *Anonyme*'s *Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre* – I have shown how his participation in contemporary crusades, as well as increasing political tensions and conflicts with England and France, are reflected in historiographical texts and epic romances. To conclude, as evidenced by a growing francophone corpus of manuscripts produced and used in the medieval County of Flanders, the majority of manuscripts containing French from thirteenth-century Flanders were generally found in a courtly or noble milieu. The manuscript case studies discussed above illustrate the important influence of the Flemish court on literary culture, as well as how changing political contexts and shifting alliances lay bare francophone feudal networks and the personal aspirations of the counts and countesses.

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