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# Knighthood and Society in the High Middle Ages

**David Crouch &  
Jeroen Deploige**  
(eds)

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

## KNIGHTHOOD AND SOCIETY IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES



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# KNIGHTHOOD AND SOCIETY IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

Edited by

David CROUCH and Jeroen DEPLOIGE

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Nicolas RUFFINI-RONZANI\*

**THE KNIGHT, THE LADY, AND THE POET:  
UNDERSTANDING HUON OF OISY'S  
TOURNOIEMENT DES DAMES (CA. 1185–1189)**

*The Tournoiement des dames is a fragmentary lyrical lay of 216 verses composed at the dawn of the 1180s by Hugh III, lord of Oisy, castellan of Cambrai and viscount of Meaux. The Tournoiement is a satirical and humorous work written shortly before Hugh's departure for the Third Crusade. It tells of an imagined tournament in which the competitors are not the prominent knights of northern France but their wives. This chapter reads the poem from a political perspective. The analysis of the origins of the ladies in the Tournoiement reveals that Hugh's intended audience was mainly the French elites that surrounded King Philip II Augustus, and not Hugh's traditional allies from Flanders and Lower Lotharingia. The article therefore puts forward the hypothesis that Hugh was using his poetry as a political tool to charm potential new allies belonging to the French upper aristocracy in the context of the continuing rise in power of Philip II Augustus.*

Between the end of the eleventh and the beginning of the thirteenth century, a new knightly culture gradually emerged in northern France and Lotharingia—a culture the values and behaviours of which were widely shared within their warring elites. Although our views on medieval knighthood have profoundly evolved since the beginning of the 1990s, the main features of this twelfth-century aristocratic culture have been well known for a long time, thanks to the works of some prominent English and French historians, such as Maurice Keen, Georges Duby, and Jean Flori.<sup>1</sup> For several decades, it has been generally acknowledged that from the end of the eleventh century the high aristocracy, followed by the second- and third-rank nobles and then

\* I am grateful to Harmony Dewez, Giovanni Palumbo, and Jean-François Nieuw, my colleagues in Namur, for their comments and advice on a first draft of this article. My thanks also go to Jeroen Deploige and David Crouch for their patience and their help.

1. Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); idem, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest. The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983); Jean Flori, *L'idéologie du glaive. Préhistoire de la chevalerie* (Geneva: Droz, 1983); Maurice Keen, *Chivalry*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990).

the elite warriors, gradually acquired coats of arms on their military equipment and seals which identified them, took part in the ritualised competitions of tournaments, sometimes developed a kind of cultural patronage around their courts and castles, and progressively defined a code of chivalry which was formally established during the first quarter of the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> These times were also, and more importantly, characterised by the emergence of a secular literature composed and performed in the vernacular by the lay elites.

Recently, historians have taken a renewed interest in the vernacular poetry written by the trouvères during the High Middle Ages. As Florian Mazel has shown in a brief but excellent overview of recent research in medieval poetical art,<sup>3</sup> French and Italian scholarship demonstrate a growing interest in studying the diffusion of songs and in reconstructing the authors' individual career paths, sometimes with the intention of building up a sociological background of the poets' world.<sup>4</sup> In such a context, their attention is mainly, but not exclusively, focused on the most important figures of twelfth- and early thirteenth-century literature, whose works are well preserved and whose talent has been celebrated since the Middle Ages. In this paper, I intend to investigate the literary path of Hugh III of Oisy, a twelfth-century trouvère whose poems are probably less widely known than the works of his more famous contemporaries such as Conon of Bethune, Gace Brulé, and

2. On these aspects, see David Crouch, *Tournament* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2005); idem, "When was Chivalry: Evolution of a Code" in the present volume; Dominique Barthélemy, "Les origines du tournoi chevaleresque," in *Agôn. La compétition, V<sup>e</sup>-XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. François Bougard, Régine Le Jan, and Thomas Lienhard, Haut Moyen Âge 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 111–29; Jean-François Nieuws, "Early Aristocratic Seals: An Anglo-Norman Success Story," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 28 (2016): 97–123; idem, "L'invention des armoiries en contexte. Haute aristocratie, identités familiales et culture chevaleresque entre France et Angleterre, 1100–1160," *Journal des savants* (2017): 93–155.

3. Florian Mazel, "De l'usage des troubadours en histoire médiévale," *Ménestrel* (13 November 2013), accessed 1 March 2018, <http://www.menestrel.fr/spip.php?rubrique2026>.

4. The American historian John F. Benton was among the first to develop such a prosopographical approach in "The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center," *Speculum* 36 (1961): 551–91. This approach has been since pursued by Martin Aurell, *La vieille et l'épée. Troubadours et politique en Provence au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Aubier, 1989), 101–29; idem, *Le chevalier lettré. Savoir et conduite de l'aristocratie aux XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 2011), 138–208; Saverio Guida and Gerardo Larghi, *Dizionario biografico dei trovatori* (Modena: Mucchi, 2014); Laurent Macé, *Les comtes de Toulouse et leur entourage, XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles. Rivalités, alliances et jeux de pouvoir* (Toulouse: Privat, 2000), 138–46; Silvère Menegaldo, *Le dernier ménestrel ? Jean de Le Mote, une poétique en transition (autour de 1340)* (Geneva: Droz, 2015).

Blondel of Nesle. Hugh was lord of Oisy, castellan of Cambrai, and viscount of Meaux. He is best known as *Huon* of Oisy by medieval philologists. His poetical oeuvre was once probably more extensive, but only two of his poems are preserved today: the *Tournoiement des dames*, composed between 1185 and 1189, and the concise *Maugré tous sainz*, written after Hugh's departure to the Latin East in 1189. Of these two works, the *Tournoiement* is probably the more interesting, because it is a unique source of information about Hugh's networks, the performance of poetry, and the competitive spirit of the twelfth-century aristocracy. The analysis of the *Tournoiement* will be at the centre of this article.

In order to investigate this fragmentary lyric *lai* of 216 verses, my argument proceeds along two lines of enquiry. By examining Hugh's little-known biography through charter evidence,<sup>5</sup> I will first demonstrate how he became a prominent figure in Flanders, Champagne, and the Latin East during the second half of the twelfth century. Then I will turn to the *Tournoiement* and explain its significance for the study of the high medieval courtly society the values of which are uniquely highlighted in the poem. By examining the origins of the ladies mentioned in the text, I will argue that Hugh used his poetical talents as a means of identifying with the French lay elites that surrounded King Philip II Augustus.

### Between Flanders and Champagne: Hugh's Political Horizons

Since so little has been written on the twelfth-century lords of Oisy, it is necessary first to establish the roots of their power and to provide an overview of their activities in the border-county of Cambrai and in Champagne.<sup>6</sup> Hugh's ancestors included the castellan Walter II of Cam-

5. On the notion of an "itinéraire biographique," cf. Isabelle Rosé, *Construire une société seigneuriale. Itinéraire et ecclésiologie de l'abbé Odon de Cluny (fin du IX<sup>e</sup>-milieu du X<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 22.

6. The survey by Adolphe de Cardevacque, "Oisy et ses seigneurs depuis l'origine de ce bourg jusqu'à l'époque de sa réunion à l'Artois," *Mémoires de la Société d'émulation de Cambrai* 37 (1881): 53–212, is entirely outdated. Two recent works about the Oisys remain unpublished: Nicolas Charles, "Formation et déclin d'une seigneurie chatelaine en Cambrésis: les sires d'Oisy (973–1189)" (Mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Lille 3, 2003), and my own "Église et aristocratie en Cambrésis. Le pouvoir entre France et Empire au Moyen Âge central (fin IX<sup>e</sup>-mil. XII<sup>e</sup> siècle)" (PhD diss., Université de Namur, 2014). See also Stefan Meysman, "Degrading the Male Body: Manhood and Conflict in the High-medieval Low Countries," *Gender & History* 28 (2016): 367–86, at 374–75. Hugh's

brai, who gained some notoriety amongst historians for his quarrels with Bishop Gerard I of Arras-Cambrai, a prelate celebrated by Georges Duby in his *Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*.<sup>7</sup> Hugh himself was the second son of Simon of Oisy and Ada of Meaux (Fig. 10.1). His name appears in several charters from 1156 onwards. Towards 1165, he married Gertrude, the daughter of Thierry of Alsace, count of Flanders.<sup>8</sup> Twenty years later, that union was followed by a second marriage to Margaret, daughter of Count Theobald V of Blois.<sup>9</sup> Hugh married women from powerful families, as in their days had also his great-grandfather (who espoused a niece of Countess Richilde of Hainaut), his grandfather (who married a daughter of the lords of Mons), and his father (who wed the heir of Viscount Godfrey of Meaux).<sup>10</sup> Hugh was related to the lords of Béthune and to the lords of Saint-Aubert, two of the most important noble families in the borderland regions of Artois and Cambresis, by the marriage of his paternal aunts.<sup>11</sup> These marriages reveal a certain talent among the Oisys for matrimonial strategies.

activity as poet has been evoked by Andrea Pulega, *Ludi e spettacoli nel Medioevo: I Tornei di dame* (Milan: Istituto editoriale cisalpino and La Goliardica, 1970), and Guy Muraille and Françoise Fery-Hue, “Huon d’Oisy,” in *Dictionnaire des Lettres françaises. Le Moyen Âge*, ed. Geneviève Hasenohr and Michel Zink (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 708.

7. Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980). On the conflicts between Gerard I and his vassals, see, in particular, Steffen Patzold, “*Inter pagensium nostrorum gladios vivimus*. Zu den Spielregeln der Konfliktführung in Niederlothringen zur Zeit der Ottonen und frühen Salier,” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Germanistische Abteilung* 118 (2001): 66–82. On conflicts in the border county of Cambrai, see also Karen S. Nicholas, “When Feudal Ideals Failed: Conflicts between Lords and Vassals in the Low Countries, 1127–1196,” in *The Rusted Hauberk: Feudal Ideals of Order and Their Decline*, ed. Liam O. Purdon and Cindy L. Vitto (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 206–8.

8. Benoît-Michel Tock and Ludo Milis, ed., *Monumenta Arroaensia*, *Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis* 175 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 230.

9. Benoît-Michel Tock, ed., *Les chartes de l’abbaye cistercienne de Vaucelles au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 177–78. Gertrude took the veil at the Benedictine abbey of Messines in 1181.

10. On each of these marriages, see “*Gesta Lietberti episcopi*,” ed. Ludwig Bethmann, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores* (in Folio) 7 (Hanover: Hahn, 1846), 495–96; Jean-François Nieuw, “Sigard’s Belt: The Family of Chocques and the Borders of Knighthood (ca. 980–1100),” in the present volume; Michel Bur, *La formation du comté de Champagne, v. 950–v. 1150* (Nancy: Université de Nancy-II, 1977), 249. The marriage between Hugh III of Oisy and Agatha of Pierrefonds inferred by the chronicler Gilbert of Mons did not leave any trace in Hugh’s charters and seems doubtful to me (Gilbert of Mons, *La chronique de Gislebert de Mons*, ed. Léon Vanderkindere (Brussels: Kiessling, 1904), 136.

11. Ernst Warlop, *The Flemish Nobility before 1300*, 4 vols. (Kortrijk: Desmet-Huysman, 1976), 2: 659; Sébastien Ziegler, “Les origines de la ville de Bohain-en-Vermandois dans l’Aisne,” *Revue archéologique de Picardie* 3 (2006): 91–104, at 95.

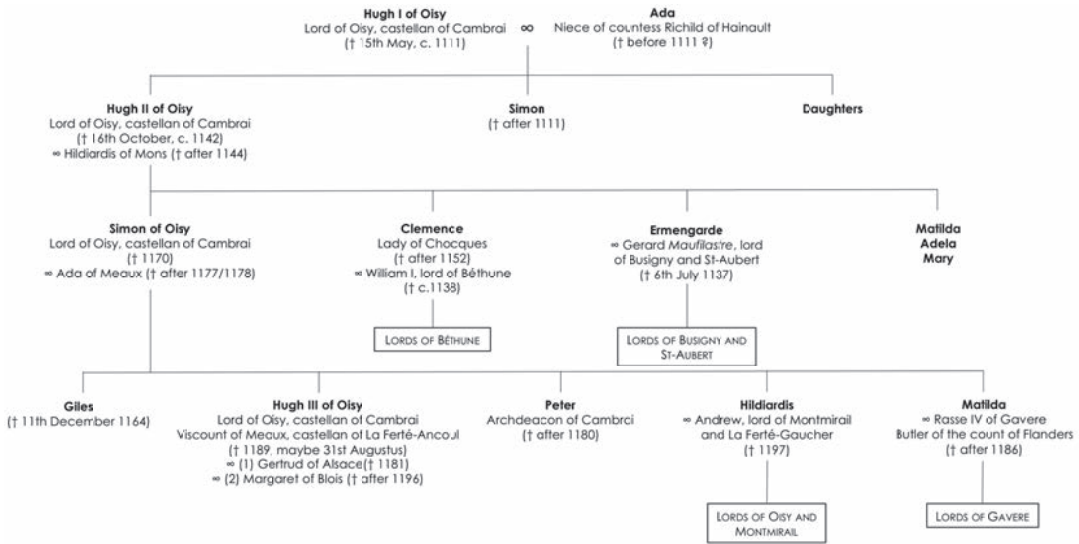


Fig. 10.1—The lords of Oisy, castellans of Cambrai (twelfth century).

Hugh was the only male heir to his father's lands in 1170 after the death of his elder brother Giles in a battle in 1164. His younger brother, Peter, was a canon of St Mary's cathedral church in Cambrai.<sup>12</sup> From the middle of the eleventh century, the Oisys' core estates were located in the tiny Lotharingian county of Cambrai, at the crossroads between the Kingdom of France, the German Empire, and the county of Flanders. Hugh held rights and estates in the north-western part of the principality, among which were his castles of Oisy and Inchy, and his castellanry in the episcopal city of Cambrai. There were other estates some fifteen kilometres to the south of the city, in the area in which his grandfather, Hugh II, had founded the Cistercian abbey of Vaucelles.<sup>13</sup> Hugh III was therefore, as his ancestors had been, one of the most prominent lay lords on the borders of France and the Empire. A large part of the nobility in Cambrésis seems to have been subor-

12. Lambert of Watrelos, "*Annales Cameracenses*," ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores* (in Folio) 16 (Hanover: Hahn, 1859), 536; Tock, *Vaucelles*, 137–38.

13. On the foundation of Vaucelles, see Stéphane Lebecq, "Autour de la fondation de l'abbaye de Vaucelles. La charte de confirmation de l'évêque Liétard de Cambrai (1133)," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 89 (2011): 439–53 and Fulk of Cambrai, *La fondation de l'abbaye de Vaucelles*, ed. and trans. Benoît-Michel Tock, *Les classiques de l'histoire de France au Moyen Âge* 56 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016).

minated to him, particularly in its western end. Charters reveal that he was surrounded by a group of knights who were drawn from the vicinity of Oisy. Furthermore, he had privileged relationships with several abbeys and secular chapters in Artois and in Cambrésis, like the Cistercians of Vaucelles, the Premonstratensians of Mont-Saint-Martin, the Benedictines of Anchin, and the regular canons of Cantimpré in Cambrai, an Augustinian abbey that he founded towards 1179.<sup>14</sup>

Because of his father's marriage with Viscountess Ada in 1147 at the latest, Hugh sometime towards 1180 inherited the viscounty of Meaux and the fortress of La Ferté-Ancoul (Fig. 10.4).<sup>15</sup> Thereafter, his estates were spread between the Cambrésis and Champagne. We can detect that the presence of the Oisy family in Champagne dates back to the middle of the twelfth century, as lord Simon of Oisy appears in the witness lists of Henry the Liberal's charters from 1152.<sup>16</sup> Hugh now became a comital fiefholder there.<sup>17</sup> Thanks to a few charters and the *Feoda Campanie* (1178), the count of Champagne's inventory of dependent landholders, we have an accurate view of the Oisys' properties in Champagne, which were mainly located near Meaux and La Ferté-Ancoul.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, these documents reveal that Hugh had to perform a full-time castle-guard (*annum custodie*) in Châtillon

14. Lille, Archives départementales du Nord, 37 H 1/1 and 37 H 131/114 and 116.

15. Ada's father, Viscount Godfrey of Meaux, died around 1152, but Hugh inherited the viscounty only after his mother's death, shortly before 1180 (Bur, *Formation*, 248). By the mid-1180s, Hugh's third seal matrix mentioned his title of viscount of Meaux on the counterseal (Nicolas Ruffini-Ronzani, "L'aristocratie cambrésienne et ses sceaux. Appropriation et diffusion de la pratique sigillaire entre France et Empire (mil. XII<sup>e</sup>-début XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)," in *Le sceau dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux, X<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles. Entre contrainte sociale et affirmation de soi*, ed. Marc Libert and Jean-François Nieuw (Brussels: Archives et bibliothèques de Belgique, 2017), 157–183. The mention of a counterseal referring to Hugh's title of viscount in 1173 by Jean-Pierre Gerzaguët, *Les chartes de l'abbaye d'Anchin (1079–1201)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 266, is an error). On medieval Meaux, see Mickaël Wilmart, *Meaux au Moyen Âge. Une ville et ses hommes du XII<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Montceaux-lès-Meaux: Éditions Fiacre, 2013).

16. John Benton and Michel Bur, ed., *Recueil des actes d'Henri le Libéral, comte de Champagne (1152–1181)*, 2 vols. (Paris: De Boccard, 2009–2013), 1: 31–32 and 260–61.

17. Theodore Evergates, *Henry the Liberal: Count of Champagne, 1127–1181* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 34–35.

18. Benton and Bur, ed., *Recueil*, 19–20, 154–55, 572–73; Auguste Longnon, ed., *Documents relatifs au comté de Champagne et de Brie, 1172–1361*, 3 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1901–14), 1: 45 and 92. For an analysis of the *Feoda Campaniae*, see Theodore Evergates, *The Aristocracy in the County of Champagne, 1100–1300* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 17–21.

and Fismes.<sup>19</sup> The Oisys promptly took advantage of their presence in Champagne to enlarge their networks. In such a context, they built up good relationships with some of the region's ecclesiastical institutions, like the priory of Collinances.<sup>20</sup> Hugh also arranged a marriage for his sister Hildiardis with the lords of Montmirail and La Ferté-Gaucher, one of the most powerful families in Champagne. She married Andrew of Montmirail sometime in the 1160s, and their son, John I, was eventually to be Hugh's sole heir after the Third Crusade.

Hugh appears as a more conciliatory and pacific lord in comparison with his ancestors. The Cambresian chronicles written in the second half of the twelfth century never present him as a warrior, but it must be admitted that these texts, mostly produced in the episcopal entourage, are less accurate and less critical than they were in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Hugh's apparent military apathy could be explained by the political context. From the end of the 1150s until 1189 the Cambresian borderland was totally under the counts of Flanders' control. The marriage between Gertrude of Alsace and Hugh III sealed an alliance between the rulers of Flanders and the Oisys, not to mention the union between Matilda, Hugh's sister, and Rasse IV of Gavere, cup-bearer to the count of Flanders. In 1167 and 1173, Thierry and Philip of Alsace were able to impose Peter, Thierry's youngest son, and Robert, provost of Aire and close adviser of Philip, on the episcopal see of Cambrai.<sup>21</sup> The counts of Flanders were in consequence the unquestionable masters of the Cambrésis during Hugh's lifetime. In such circumstances, the Flemish prince constituted a kind of model for the Oisys and, beyond them, all the Cambresian aristocracy. It appears, for instance, in the shared iconography of their seals from the mid-1180s.<sup>22</sup>

Owing to his relationship with Philip of Alsace, Hugh took part in the Third Crusade with the count in 1189, as well as so many Flemish and Artesian lords, such as Cono of Béthune, Baldwin II of Aire, and Hellin I of Wavrin.<sup>23</sup> As appears from a charter for the Benedictine abbey

19. Longnon, ed., *Documents*, 1: 22. It must be said, however, that Hugh's name does not appear in Henri I's charters.

20. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 5528, fol. 10r–v; Benton and Bur, *Recueil*, 19–20 and 572–73.

21. The influence of Robert of Aire upon Count Philip of Alsace has been underlined by Adriaan Verhulst, "Un exemple de la politique économique de Philippe d'Alsace: la fondation de Gravelines (1163)," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 10 (1967): 15–28, at 26–28.

22. Ruffini-Ronzani, "L'aristocratie cambrésienne," 162–63 and 166.

23. Hans Van Werveke, "La contribution de la Flandre et du Hainaut à la troisième croisade," *Le Moyen Âge* 78 (1972): 55–90.

of Anchin, Hugh made careful preparations for his military campaign in the Latin East.<sup>24</sup> As it turned out the expedition was nothing but a disaster for the Oisys. During the crusade some obscure tensions arose between Hugh and his former pupil and relative Cono of Béthune. In a brief and satirical *serventois* known as the *Maugré tous sainz et maugré Diu ausi* (“Despite all the saints and despite God himself”)—written between 1189 and the departure of the king of France to the Latin East during the summer of 1190—Hugh appears particularly critical of Cono, whom he reproaches for his cowardice on the battlefield.<sup>25</sup> It is likely, nevertheless, that Cono and Hugh became reconciled before the latter’s death, since Cono made a donation in memory of Hugh to the chapter of St Gaugericus in Cambrai in 1203.<sup>26</sup> Any other details of Hugh’s military campaign are unfortunately lacking, but it is beyond any doubt that he died in the Orient towards 1190, and along with him his relative and companion Philip of Alsace (d. June 1191). As his two marriages were infertile, Hugh’s estates and dignities fell to his nephew John I of Montmirail, the son of his sister Hildiardis.<sup>27</sup>

### **The *Tournoiement des dames*: Staging the French Aristocracy**

Hugh’s governance of Oisy and his other lands was marked by a growing use of the written word. Charter production increased continuously under his administration, as he created a kind of “chancery” during his lifetime.<sup>28</sup> His seal matrices were also more frequently updated than they were under his predecessors’ regimes.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, as some of his northern-French contemporaries, such as Blondel of Nesle and

24. Gerzaguet, ed., *Chartes d’Anchin*, 346–47.

25. Joseph Bédier and Pierre Aubry, ed., *Les chansons de croisade* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1909), 51–64. On this satirical poem, see Philipp August Becker, “Die Kreuzzuglieder von Conon de Béthune und Huon d’Oisi,” *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, 64 (1942): 305–12, at 308–12.

26. Lille, Archives départementales du Nord, 7 G 70/983 and 983bis.

27. The most recent survey on John I of Montmirail, his sanctity, and his burial at Longpont is Anne E. Lester, “The Coffret of John of Montmirail. The Sacred Politics of Reuse in Thirteenth-Century Northern France,” *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 4 (2014): 50–86.

28. On the use of the written word by lay lords in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see Jean-François Nieus, “Des seigneurs sans chancellerie ? Pratiques de l’écrit documentaire chez les comtes et les barons du nord de la France aux XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles,” *Bulletin de la Commission royale d’histoire* 176 (2010): 285–311.

29. Ruffini-Ronzani, “L’aristocratie cambrésienne,” 162–63.

the anonymous *Chastelain de Couci*, Hugh was both a powerful lay lord and an acclaimed poet singing for courtly audiences. In his *Bien me deüsse targier de chançon faire* (“I really ought to give up making songs”), for instance, the notorious trouvère Cono of Béthune, a major figure in the twelfth-century poetic world, described Hugh, his relative, as his “master of Oisy who has taught me to sing since my childhood.”<sup>30</sup> As some of his estates were in Champagne, and maybe because of his good reputation as a poet, Hugh probably performed his works far from his native Cambrésis. Even if his presence at the court of Champagne is never attested in the sources, it is more than likely that Hugh sang some of his poems there. As a vassal of the counts of Champagne, he was probably in a good position to perform his works at their court, which was one of the most important literary centres in the twelfth century.<sup>31</sup> In such circumstances, Hugh’s presence in Meaux and La Ferté-Ancoul could explain why the northern French aristocracy plays a such an important role in his poetry, as we shall see.

The surviving works of the lord of Oisy—the *Tournoiement des dames* and the *Maugré tous sainz*—are to be found in two luxurious song-books in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The first manuscript is known as the *Manuscrit du Roi* and was probably produced in Picardy during the second half of the thirteenth century, whereas the *Chansonnier de Noailles*, the second song-book, originates in Artois and dates from the last quarter of the thirteenth century. It leaves no doubt, however, that the two manuscripts were copied from the same exemplar, as they have several errors in common.<sup>32</sup> Of the two poems

30. Cono of Béthune, “Bien me Deüsse Targier de Chançon Faire,” ed. Axel Wallensköld, in *Les chansons de Conon de Béthune* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1921), 9: “a mon mastre d’Oissi, qui m’at apris a chanter tres m’anfance.” English translations of some poems written by Cono of Béthune and Huon of Oisy are provided by Linda Patterson and Ruth Harvey, “Troubadours, Trouvères and the Crusades” (University of Warwick), accessed 1 March, 2018, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/research/french/crusades/>. I make use of their translations in the present publication. Cono was the son of Robert V of Béthune, and the grandson of William I of Béthune and Clemence of Oisy (Warlop, *Flemish Nobility*, 659–60).

31. Several famous authors such as Simon Aurea Capra, Gace Brulé, and probably Chrétien de Troyes were present in Champagne under the government of Henry and his wife Mary, as it has been shown by Benton, “Court of Champagne,” 561–63, 566–67, and 570. For a less enthusiastic view of the literary role of the court of Champagne, see Evergates, *Henry the Liberal*, 86–99, 119–23, and 145–47.

32. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 844, *Manuscrit du Roi*, fols. 50r–51r; *Ibid.*, fr. 12615, *Chansonnier de Noailles*, fols. 53r–54. On these manuscripts, see: Jean Beck and Louise Beck, *Le Manuscrit du Roi, fonds français 844 de la Bibliothèque nationale. Analyse et description raisonnée du manuscrit restauré*, 2 vols. (London: Milford,

written by Hugh, the *Tournoiement* is probably the more interesting as well as the more original, as it is the oldest text pertaining to the poetical genre of the *Tournoi aus Dames*.<sup>33</sup>

In the *Tournoiement des dames*, Hugh provides a detailed account of an imagined tournament that would have happened at Lagny-sur-Marne, some fifteen kilometres to the south-west of the viscounty of Meaux, at a crossroads between Champagne and the royal demesne.<sup>34</sup> In this satirical and humorous work, the competitors are not the prominent knights of northern France (the poet says that “in that year ... the knights were away”)<sup>35</sup>, but their wives. Each stanza of the *Tournoiement* narrates the brave deeds of these great ladies, who were largely drawn from the French aristocracy. By describing convincingly the tactics used by the “female knights,” by reproducing their war cries, and by identifying, in one case, their coats of arms, Hugh pictures the fictional meeting of Lagny in a vivid and realistic way, as has been underlined by David Crouch.<sup>36</sup> Hugh’s background could explain the realistic nature of the poem. In his accurate depictions of the practical aspects of the fight, the lord of Oisy is probably speaking from of his own experience as a tourneyer. It is likely that the *Tournoiement* echoes the realities which Hugh had experienced in his youth. Even if the twelfth-century sources never describe him in such a way, it seems

1938), 2: 37–38; Maria Carla Battelli, “Il codice Parigi, Bibl. nat. F. fr. 844: un canzoniere disordinato ?,” in *La filologia romanza e i codici. Atti del convegno, Messina, Università degli Studi, Facoltà di Lettere e filosofia, 19–22 dicembre 1991*, ed. Saverio Guida and Fortunata Latella, 2 vols. (Messina: Sicania, 1993), 1: 273–308; Daniel E. O’Sullivan, “Thibaut de Champagne and Lyric *Auctoritas* in Paris, BNF fr. 12615,” *Textual Cultures* 8 (2013): 31–49. Eduard Schwan, *Die Altfranzösischen Liederhandschriften, ihr Verhältniss, ihre Entstehung und ihre Bestimmung. Eine litterarhistorische Untersuchung* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1886), gives a dry and detailed analysis of the different families of French song-books. I am grateful to Giovanni Palumbo for his help in the analysis of the manuscript tradition of the *Tournoiement des dames*.

33. Pulega, *Ludi e spettacoli*, ix–xi. A brief and incomplete *Tournoiement* written by Richard of Semilly is probably contemporary with Hugh’s poem (Guy Muraille and Françoise Fery-Hue, “*Tournoiement des dames*,” in *Dictionnaire des Lettres françaises*, 1443–44).

34. Alfred Jeanroy, ed., “Note sur le *Tournoiement des dames*,” *Romania* 28 (1899): 240–44 (the French edition to which I refer in this paper); Pulega, *Ludi e spettacoli*, 3–9. For an English translation, see Crouch, *Tournament*, 167–71.

35. Jeanroy, ed., “Note,” 240, lines 1–6: “En l’an que chevalier sont adaubi, ke d’armes noient ne font li hardi, lez dames tournoier vont a Laigni.” Translation in Crouch, *Tournament*, 167. The poem specifies further down that the ladies “mustered in front of Torcy.” Lagny and Torcy are neighboring localities.

36. Crouch, *Tournament*, 92 and 158.

beyond reasonable doubt that he took his pleasure at tournaments during his lifetime, as did so many other knights living in the *Cambresis*.<sup>37</sup>

The *Tournoiement des dames* is above all a poem that represents the flourishing twelfth-century courtly society and its values, in the context of what Dominique Barthélemy provocatively calls a “*mutation ludique*.”<sup>38</sup> It is striking, indeed, that the *Tournoiement* does not present any features which may be regarded as religious, other than the references to God and St Denis in the war cries “*Dex Aïe*” and “*Saint Denise*” shouted by two of the ladies.<sup>39</sup> Rather, it celebrates secular values by praising the merits of some of the most honourable French ladies. Just like the “real” knights on the tournament field, the “fictional” noble ladies demonstrate a competitive spirit, which is not surprising, as this was a key concern in knightly identity. Hugh clearly puts emphasis on the pursuit of prowess. Women are not held up to ridicule in the *Tournoiement*, in which they appear as skilful as their husbands. Despite the brevity of the poem, the passages highlighting the bravery of the “women knights” are numerous. For instance, the text describes Emily of L’Isle-Adam as “hardy,” Mary of Champagne as a woman who “rides directly into the fight,” and countess Isabel of Saint-Pol as a tourneyer who “attacks like a mad thing, crying over and over her war cry, ‘Let’s get them, Châtillon!’”<sup>40</sup> Using a humor-

37. Hugh’s interest in tournaments was widely shared within the Cambresian nobility since the beginning of the twelfth century. Towards 1138, the anonymous author of the *Gesta Nicholai episcopi* evoked the death of Giles of Chin at a tournament. See “*Gesta Nicholai episcopi*,” ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores* (in Folio) 14 (Hanover: Hahn, 1883), 236–37. Thirty years later, Walter of Honnecourt died also in a tournament in Maastricht, according to Gilbert of Mons, *Chronique*, 95. The case of Matthew of Walincourt is probably more famous and more interesting, as his name appears in the *History of William Marshal*, in which he is humiliated by the Marshal. See *History of William Marshal*, ed. Anthony J. Holden and David Crouch, trans. Stewart Gregory, 3 vols. (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2002–6), 1: 164 and 170. Hugh of Hamelincourt is described as a companion of William Marshal in the same narrative. See *Ibid.*, 2: 233, 339, 347, and 367. John I of Montmirail, Hugh’s successor, is also described as a noble man who spent large amounts of money in tournaments before his monastic conversion. See *Vita Johannis de Monte Mirabili*, ed. Constantin Suysken, in *Acta Sanctorum*, Sept. VIII (Antwerp: Vander Plassche, 1762), 219.

38. Dominique Barthélemy, *La chevalerie. De la Germanie antique à la France du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 329. For a more balanced opinion, see François Bougard, “Des jeux du cirque aux tournois: que reste-t-il de la compétition antique au haut Moyen Âge ?,” in *Agôn*, ed. idem et al., 40–41.

39. Jeanroy, ed., “Note,” 243, lines 135 and 162.

40. *Ibid.*, 241–42, lines 26 (“Amisse au corz hardi”), 88 (“Touz lez encontre et atent”), 106–8 (“Ez lour fiert a bandon / Sovent crie s’ensaigne : ‘Alom lour, Chastillon’”); Crouch, *Tournament*, 167–69.



Fig. 10.2—Counterseal of Gerard II of Saint-Aubert. Lille, Archives Départementales du Nord, 28 H 46/1204 (1194).



Fig. 10.3—Seal of Cono of Béthune. Lille, Archives Départementales du Nord, 7 G 70/983 (1203).

ous distorting prism in order to amuse his audience, Hugh depicts the so-called “weaker sex” in a transgressive position. In a similar way as the thirteenth-century *Frauenturnier* analysed by Albrecht Classen, the *Tournoiemment* suggests “that men do not have a guaranteed position of dominance in society.”<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, by describing this fantastic and eccentric tournament, Hugh emphasises the role of women in courtly milieus, in which the relationships between the sexes were an important topic. Moreover, he demonstrates that the martial meetings were not an entirely male affair.<sup>42</sup> Some women probably had a real passion for tournaments, which they attended with their husbands and friends. Flirtation played a major role in such events, as appears in the very first lines of the *Tournoiemment*, where it is said that the fictional ladies “wanted to experience the sort of strokes that their lovers gave out for their

41. Albrecht Classen, “Masculine Women and Female Men: The Gender Debate in Medieval Courtly Literature. With an Emphasis on the Middle High German Verse Narrative *Frauenturnier*,” *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 43 (2008): 205–22, at 222. For a feminist analysis of the *Tournoiemment*, see Helen Solterer, “Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France,” *Signs* 16 (1990): 522–49. On the German *Frauenturnier*, see also Ute Von Bloh, “Heimliche Kämpfe. Frauenturniere in mittelalterlichen Märe,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 121 (1999): 214–38.

42. Crouch, *Tournament*, 156–59.

sake.”<sup>43</sup> There is no doubt that Hugh’s values and ideals were widely shared by the aristocracy at the borders of France and the Empire, as appears, for instance, through the seals of Cono of Béthune and Gerard of Saint-Aubert, on which these two of Hugh’s relatives chose to be depicted as noble poets trying to seduce a lady (Figs. 10.2 and 10.3).

The *Tournoiement* is undated, but it is likely that the lord of Oisy wrote it after his marriage with Margaret of Blois (ca. 1185), and before the disastrous expedition to the Latin East in 1189, perhaps during the wars between Philip II of France and Henry II Plantagenet in 1187–89, as suggested by David Crouch.<sup>44</sup> More specifically, we can reasonably hypothesise that the text was composed only shortly before Hugh’s departure for the Third Crusade, or even on his way to Palestine,<sup>45</sup> as the presence of Ida of Boulogne in the poem could be explained by her marriage with Renaud of Dammartin towards 1188.<sup>46</sup> The table below demonstrates that the thirty-four ladies mentioned in the *Tournoiement* were all real women belonging to the French aristocracy during the last years of Hugh’s lifetime (Table 10.1).<sup>47</sup> The map

43. Jeanroy, ed., “Note,” 241, lines 10–13: “Dient que savoir voudront quel li colp sont que pour eles font lour ami.” Crouch, *Tournament*, 167.

44. *Ibid.*, 167.

45. It is interesting to note that, towards 1200, a tournament was organized “somewhere between Bray and Encre” just before the departure for the Latin East of the tourneyers. Count Baldwin IX of Flanders, the Flemish nobility, and some French barons such as the count of Blois took part in that competition, according to the *Chronique d’Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier*, ed. Louis de Mas Latrie (Paris: Société de l’histoire de France, 1871), 337. Therefore, crusade and tournament may have been closely linked at the end of the twelfth century. I am grateful to Jean-François Nieuws for his remarks on the chronicle of Ernoul and Bernard the Treasurer.

46. The marriage between Ida of Boulogne and Renaud of Dammartin is undated by Lambert of Ardres, *Historia comitum Ghisnensium*, ed. Johannes Heller, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum (in Folio) 24 (Hanover: Hahn, 1879), 605, but Georges Poull situated it towards 1188–89 in *La Maison souveraine et ducale de Bar* (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1994), 132. Renaud was a close ally to King Philip II Augustus at the end of the 1180s. See Nicolas Civel, *La fleur de France. Les seigneurs d’Île-de-France au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 126. My thanks to Jean-François Nieuws for his remarks on Lambert of Ardres and Ida’s marriage.

47. The case of Countess Isabel / Elisabeth of Saint-Pol, who is described as Isabel of Châtillon in the poem, is nevertheless problematical, as her marriage with Walcher of Châtillon happened towards 1196, that is to say seven years after Hugh’s death (Jeanroy, ed., “Note,” 242, lines 104–8). In 1189, Isabel was only ten years at the most; see Jean-François Nieuws, “Élisabeth Candavène, comtesse de Saint-Pol († 1240/47): une héritière face à la Couronne,” in *Femmes de pouvoir, femmes politiques durant les derniers siècles du Moyen Âge et au cours de la première Renaissance*, ed. Éric Bousmar et al. (Brussels: De Boeck, 2012), 187–88. In such circumstances, how could we explain her presence in the poem? Neither André Duchesne nor Theodore Evergates make mention of another “Isabel” in the Châtillon family at the end of twelfth century. See André Duchesne, *His-*

below—on which the dots represent the geographical origins of the ladies’ husbands, when they are known, or, otherwise, their own birthplaces—reveals that most of the “dames” evoked by Hugh came from Île-de-France and southern Picardy, that is to say from Philip Augustus’s royal demesne. Another group among the lady tourneyers came from Champagne or the northern borders of the county of Blois, from where Hugh’s wife originated. It is as if Hugh’s aim was to enhance the image of the Capetian French upper aristocracy, a group that probably constituted the audience for whom Hugh wrote his song.

The question of the audience of the *Tournoiement* is necessarily linked to the problem of its performance. There has been speculation about the way Hugh’s lyrical poem was sung in the twelfth century. In 1970, the Italian philologist Andrea Pulega developed the idea that the text was performed as a play by the greatest ladies mentioned in the text.<sup>48</sup> I do not share Pulega’s opinion. In my view, it is more likely that the *Tournoiement* was sung in public by its author, maybe when there was a banquet after a “real” tournament—possibly in Lagny. The reference to Lagny in the *Tournament* is probably not coincidental, as a great tournament was held there in 1179.<sup>49</sup> As David Crouch has suggested, Hugh’s work “may even be such a song composed for the evening after the tournament, written to amuse both the male participants and the female onlookers with a topsy-turvy mirror version of what they had just been experiencing in the field.”<sup>50</sup> It is tempting, therefore, to conjecture that Hugh may have performed his song at the court of Champagne, or elsewhere in the French realm, in the presence of the “real” ladies of the poem, and also in front of their husbands.<sup>51</sup>

*toire de la Maison de Chastillon sur Marne* (Paris: Cramoisy, 1621), 23–44; Evergates, *Aristocracy*, 254. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the thirteenth-century manuscript copies of the *Tournoiement* have been interpolated or changed, given the extremely complex metrical structure of the poem (Jeanroy, ed., “Note,” 238–40). In such a context, I think that Isabel’s presence in the poem could be explained by a possible betrothal between her and Walcher of Châtillon before 1189. My hypothesis is that the union between the powerful families of St-Pol and Châtillon had been prepared since Isabel’s childhood. As a *custos* at the Châtillon castle in the 1180s, Hugh might have been well informed of the situation. See Longnon, *Documents*, 1: 22.

48. Pulega, *Ludi e spettacoli*, xxiv–xxviii.

49. See, for instance, Matthew Strickland, *Henry the Young King, 1155–1183* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 242–44 and William Marshal, ed. Holden, 3: 84–85.

50. Crouch, *Tournament*, 109 and 158.

51. In northern France, as in southern, twelfth-century poets wrote for the aristocracy, see Aurell, *Chevalier lettré*, 116–38.

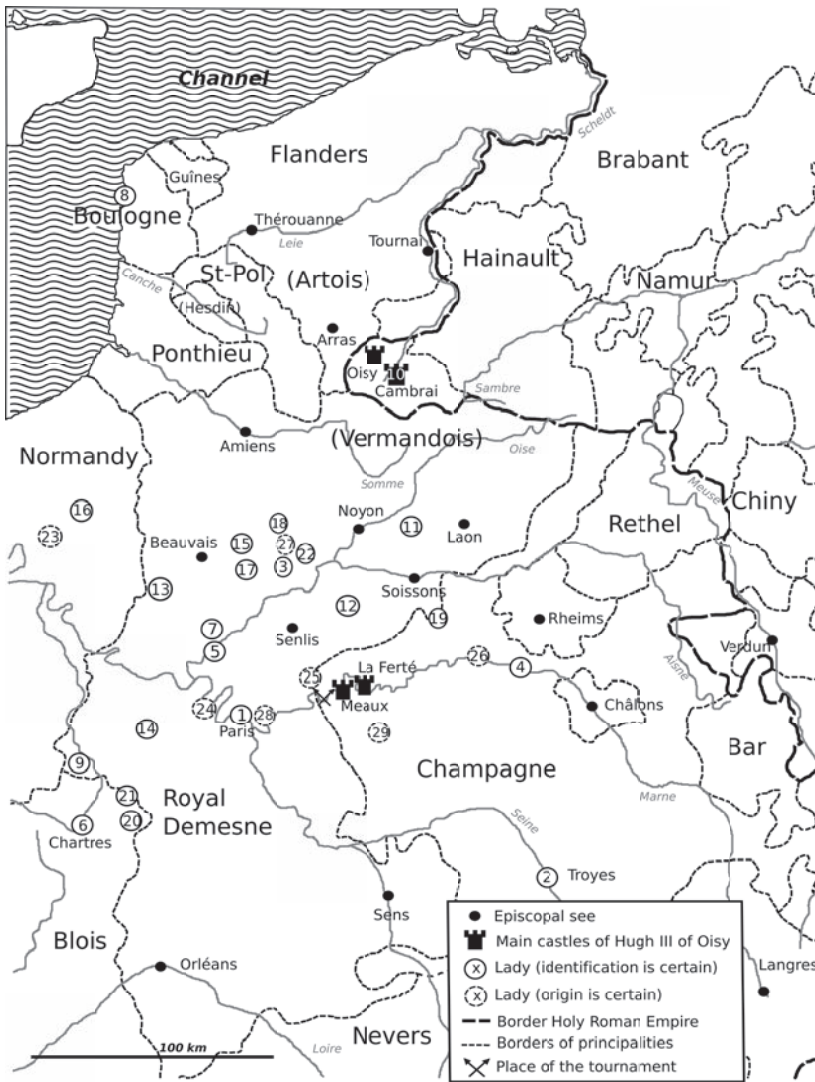


Fig. 10.4—The ladies in Hugh of Oisy’s *Tournoiement des dames* (1185–89).

Consequently, we can suggest further that Hugh was using his poetry as a political tool to charm potential new allies belonging to the French upper aristocracy as much as to establish his own reputation as a poet and arbiter of culture.

Table 10.1—The ladies in Hugh of Oisy's *Tournoiement des dames* (1185–89).

Ladies whose identification is certain		
1. <i>Ysabel, ki ferir</i> [...] <i>La roïne sour Ferrant</i> (l. 51 and 64) Isabel of Hainaut, wife of Philip II Augustus, king of France	2. <i>La contesse de Campaigne</i> (l. 82) Mary of France, wife of Henri I the Liberal, count of Champagne	3. <i>La contesse de Clermont</i> (l. 117) Adele of Breteuil, wife of Raoul I, count of Clermont
4. <i>Ysabiaux, che savon</i> [...] <i>sovent crie s'ensaigne</i> " <i>Alom lour, Chastillon</i> " (l. 104 and 107–8) Isabel of St-Pol, wife of Walcher, lord of Châtillon	5. <i>La contesse de Crespi</i> (l. 8) Elanor of Vermandois, wife of Matthew III, lord of Beaumont	6. <i>Katherine au viz cler</i> [...] <i>Et "Passe avant" a crier</i> (l. 34–35) Katherine of Clermont, wife of Louis, count of Blois and Chartres
7. <i>Ade de Parcais les voit, "Biaumont" crioit</i> (l. 180–81) Ada, wife of Hugh II, lord of Persan, viscount of Beaumont	8. <i>Quant "Bouloigne" escria Yde au cors honoré</i> (l. 130–31) Ida of Boulogne, widow of Berthold V of Zähringen, and wife of Renaud, count of Dammartin	9. <i>De le prohece Yolent vous diré</i> (l. 194–95) Yolanda of Coucy, wife of Robert II, count of Dreux
10. <i>Margerite d'Oysi</i> (l. 24) Margaret of Blois, wife of Hugh III, lord of Oisy, castellan of Cambrai	11. <i>Et ma dame de Couci</i> (l. 9) Alice of Dreux, wife of Raoul I, lord of Coucy	12. <i>Adeline ki "Nantuel" vait criant</i> (l. 57–58) Adeline of Nanteuil, wife of Philip I, lord of Crépy
13. <i>Aeliz en vait devant de Trie, "Aguillon" criant</i> (l. 61–62) Alice of Dammartin, wife of John I, lord of Trie	14. <i>Aeliz "Monfort" criant</i> (l. 95) Alice of Montmorency, wife of Simon V, lord of Montfort	15. <i>Amice</i> [...] " <i>Lille</i> " <i>crie</i> (l. 110–15) Amilie of Milly, wife of Manasses of l'Isle-Adam and Rémérangles
16. <i>Climense</i> [...] " <i>Biausart</i> " <i>cria</i> (l. 122–25) Clemence of Breteuil, wife of Simon, lord of Beausault	17. <i>Gertrus qui "Merlou" cria</i> (l. 143) Gertrude of Nesle, wife of Renaud, lord of Mello	18. <i>Agnes de Triecoc</i> (l. 145) Agnès, wife of Peter II, lord of Tricot
19. <i>Et Joie point d'Arsi</i> (l. 157) Joie of Arcy, wife of Guy, knight of Arcy-Sainte-Res-titue	20. <i>Et fier Ysabel d'Ausnai</i> (l. 171) Isabel of Auneau, wife of Guy, lord of Aunay-sous-Auneau	21. <i>Belle Aelis qui "Garlandon" escrioit</i> (l. 175–76) Alice of Châteaudun, wife of Hervé III, lord of Gallardon
22. <i>Agnes i vi venir tost de Cressonessart</i> (l. 184–85) Agnes of Cressonsacq, wife of Dreux II, lord of Cressonsacq		

<i>Ladies whose origins are certain</i>		
23. <i>Yolenz de Cailli</i> (l. 22) Cailly: reg. Normandy, dep. Seine-Maritime	24. <i>Beatris « Poissi » cria</i> (l. 153) Poissy: reg. Île-de-France, dep. Yvelines	25. <i>Mariien de Juilli</i> (l. 159) Juilly: reg. Île-de-France, dep. Seine-et-Marne
26. <i>Aelis de Rolleiz</i> (l. 165) Reuilly-Sauvigny: reg. Hauts-de-France, dep. Aisne	27. <i>Sezile vint tout a droit de Conpeigne</i> (l. 169–70) Compiègne: reg. Hauts-de-France, dep. Oise	28. <i>Agnes venoit criant « Paris »</i> (l. 178–79) Paris: reg. Île-de-France
29. <i>Ysabiauz point aussi qui 'st de Villegaignart</i> (l. 186–87) Villegagnon: reg. Île-de-France, dep. Seine-et-Marne		
<i>Unidentified ladies</i>		
<i>Jehane la gaaignant</i> (l. 72)	<i>Aeliz [...] de Monciauz</i> (l. 76–77)	<i>Ysabiaus point de Marli</i> (l. 138)
<i>Climence [...] de Bruai</i> (l. 168)		

**Bibliography:** mainly Holger Petersen Dyggve, “Les dames du *Tournoiement d’Hyon d’Oisi*,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 36 (1935): 65–84, and Pulega, *Ludi e spettacoli*, 90–97, whose works should be complemented with Dominique Barthélemy, *Les deux âges de la seigneurie banale. Pouvoir et société dans la terre des sires de Coucy (milieu XI<sup>e</sup> – milieu XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1984), 56–57 and 111 (Coucy, Dreux); Civel, *Fleur de France*, 424–25, 430–31, 439, and 450–51 (Auneau, Beaumont, Dammartin, L’Isle-Adam, Monfort); Penny Eley, *Partonopeus de Blois: Romance in the Making* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), 192, n. 23 (Blois); Evergates, *Aristocracy*, 248 and 254 (Champagne, Châtillon); Lambert of Ardres, “*Historia*,” 605 (Boulogne); William Mendel Newman, *Les seigneurs de Nesle en Picardie (XII<sup>e</sup> – XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle). Leurs chartes et leur histoire* (Paris: Picard, 1971), 81–88, 178–79, and 273–74 (Mello, Arcy, L’Isle-Adam); Nieus, “Élisabeth Candavène,” 187–88 (Châtillon); Holger Petersen Dyggve, “L’Yolent à l’écu déchiqueté du *Tournoiement de Hyon d’Oisi*,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 37 (1936): 257–61 (Dreux); idem, “Deux dames du *Tournoiement d’Hyon d’Oisi*,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 41 (1940): 157–80 (Tricot, Beausart); Poul, *Maison souveraine et ducal*, 132 (Boulogne, Dammartin); Detlev Schwennicke, ed., *Das feudale Frankreich und sein Einfluss auf die Welt des Mittelalters. Stammtafeln zur Geschichte der Europäischen Staaten*, vol. 3/4 of *Europäische Stammtafeln* (Marburg: Stargrad, 1989), table 690 (Gallardon).

The *Tournoiement des dames* is, in my view, more than just the humorous description of an imagined competition for love and fame. In Hugh’s work politics and poetry were closely linked. According to Florian Mazel, twelfth-century princes were keen on increasing the cultural influence of their court, and therefore their own author-

ity, by attracting the most famous poets of their times.<sup>52</sup> The text can be regarded as a means Hugh used to win renown in the competitive courtly society of his day. It seems unlikely that Hugh was in search of a patron, as he was one of the most prominent lords at the borders of France and Empire. But we can assume that, by writing his lyric poem for a noble French audience, the objective of the lord of Oisy was to enlarge, or to reinforce, his networks in an area in which his family had not been established for all that long.

Given the geographical origins of the ladies in the *Tournoiement* (Fig. 10.4 and Table 10.1), it appears that Hugh's intended audience was mainly the French elites that surrounded the young Philip II Augustus in the second half of the 1180s, and not Hugh's traditional allies from Flanders and Lower Lotharingia. Lyric poetry, and humour, may have been used here as a mechanism for integrating himself into a lay aristocracy with which Hugh had only a few ties. Even if his efforts ultimately came to nothing because of his untimely death in the Orient, we cannot exclude the possibility that Hugh made use of his poetical talents in the hope of integrating into the entourage of the French king, whose authority was inexorably growing at the end of the twelfth century. Thanks to the works of Michel Bur, we know that Philip Augustus was developing a policy of friendship with the Champagne during the second half of the 1180s, in the political context of the wars against his Plantagenet rivals.<sup>53</sup> His relationship with the count of Flanders was more complicated. With the Peace of Boves (July 1185), a few years after the death of the Flemish Countess Elisabeth of Vermandois, the king humiliated his rival Philip of Alsace by depriving him of all his influence within the greater part of the Vermandois.<sup>54</sup> In such a context, it is therefore all but impossible that Hugh—who probably had a clear view of the situation, as his patri-

52. Florian Mazel, "La compétition chevaleresque dans la poésie de langue d'oc (XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)," in *Agôn*, ed. Bougard et al., 177–78.

53. It seems, indeed, that Mary of Champagne and her relatives remained faithful to the king during the war against the Plantagenets and after Philip's departure for the Latin East in 1190. According to Michel Bur, Champagne fell into Philip's power only after the death of Theobald III in 1201: Michel Bur, "Rôle et place de la Champagne dans le royaume de France au temps de Philippe Auguste," in *La France de Philippe Auguste: le temps des mutations. Actes du colloque international organisé par le CNRS (Paris, 19 septembre–4 octobre 1980)*, ed. Robert-Henri Bautier (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1982), 248–51.

54. Thérèse de Hemptinne, "Aspects des relations de Philippe Auguste avec la Flandre au temps de Philippe d'Alsace," in *ibid.*, 258–61; John W. Baldwin, *Philippe Auguste et son gouvernement. Les fondations du pouvoir royal en France au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Fayard, 1991), 50.

mony was shared between Champagne, Artois, and Cambrésis—could not have felt that a change was coming in France during the rule of Philip Augustus. As a talented political animal, Hugh must have been ambitious to insinuate himself into the Capetian court. Poetry would have helped him to achieve his goals.<sup>55</sup> According to his somewhat laudatory *Vita*, John I of Montmirail, Hugh's heir apparent in 1189, was also close to Philip Augustus towards the end of the 1180s and the beginning of the 1190s.<sup>56</sup> However, soon after his departure for the Latin East he suffered a setback in this regard. In 1189, Hugh's last poem reveals that he felt some bitterness towards Philip, whom he accused of being a "failed king" who must be "counted among the cowards" because he did not take part in the Third Crusade.<sup>57</sup>

## Conclusion

Written by a castellan of Cambrai at the beginning of the 1180s, the *Tournoiement des dames* is an example of the blossoming of lay and vernacular culture in the second half of the twelfth century. More-

55. My interpretation of Hugh's main work differs from the explanations of Sophie Cassagne-Brouquet, *Chevalereses: une chevalerie au féminin* (Paris: Perrin, 2013), who reads the poem as a plea for tournaments at a time when their *raison d'être* would have been questioned.

56. *Vita Johannis*, 224–25: "Est etiam memoriae commendandum, quod Johannes, cum sub glorioso Francorum rege Philippo militaret, a quo non sicut a caeteris de Montemirabili sed Johannes "Probitas" vocabatur, justissimarum ratione causarum ab ipso rege plurimum diligebatur. Nec immerito, quippe qui toties ei utilis et necessarius erat. Fuit autem in praelio Normanniae, quod commisit rex Francorum adversus regem Angliae apud casttrum cui nomen est Gisortium..." ("We shall also commit to memory that John, while he was waging war under Philip, the glorious king of the French – by whom he was called John 'Probitas', and not John of Montmirail like he was called by the others –, was highly esteemed by this king for very good reasons. This was deserved, because John was serviceable and indispensable to him so many times. He was present during a battle in Normandy which the king of the French led against the king of England near a castle which name is Gisors..."). These statements seem doubtful to me, but they are accepted by Civel, *Fleur de France*, 400–1.

57. Bédier and Aubry, ed., *Chansons de croisade*, 62–63: "Ne chantez mais, Quenes, je vouz en pri, / Car voz chançons ne sont mès avenanz. / Or menrez vous honteuse vie ci; / Ne vousistez por Diu morir joianz. / Or vous conte on avoec les recreanz, / Si remaindroiz avoec vo roi failli. / Ja Damedieix, qui seur touz est puissanz, / Du roi avant et de vouz n'ait merci!" (trans. Patterson and Harvey, "Troubadours": "Sing no more, Cono, I pray you, for your songs are no more pleasing. Now you will live a shameful life here; you did not choose to die joyfully for God, and now you are counted among the cowards, so you will stay here with your failed king. May Our Lord, who has power over all people, have no pity, first on the king and [then] on you!") However, this sarcastic poem could be no more than the part of a literary game between Hugh and his relative.

over, it offers us new light on the biographical itinerary of Hugh III of Oisy. Contrary to charter evidence, poetry does not picture him as a pious and powerful lord exerting authority between Flanders and Lower Lotharingia, giving to the religious communities, and moving in Flemish circles. On the contrary, the analysis of his works indicates that at the end of the 1180s, only a few months before his final departure for the Latin East, Hugh was keen to integrate into the Capetian upper aristocracy, in the context of the continuing rise in power of King Philip II Augustus. By celebrating bravery and physical strength in a humorous way, the lord of Oisy may have been trying to charm and curry favour with potential new allies, at a time when his traditional ally and relative, Count Philip of Alsace, was facing some difficulties in Flanders. The *Tournoiement* illustrates therefore how the knightly identity was growing more and more complex at the end of the twelfth century, to such an extent that poetical art and politics became closely linked.