Knighthood and Society in the High Middle Ages

David Crouch & Jeroen Deploige (eds)

Leuven University Press
In memory of Pieter De Leemans (1973–2019)
our colleague and friend,
and for many years a most dedicated editor and inspirer of this series.

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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.¹ 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 Nieus, 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.

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. 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, 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. 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 Cono of Bethune, Gace Brulé, and


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, 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. Hugh’s ancestors included the castellan Walter II of Cam-

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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*.7 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.8 Twenty years later, that union was followed by a second marriage to Margaret, daughter of Count Theobald V of Blois.9 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).10 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 Cambrésis, by the marriage of his paternal aunts.11 These marriages reveal a certain talent among the Oisys for matrimonial strategies.


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.12 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.13 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-

inated 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 1179.14

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).15 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 1152.16 Hugh now became a comital fiefholder there.17 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.18 Moreover, these documents reveal that Hugh had to perform a full-time castle-guard (*annum custodie*) in Châtillon

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).


and Fismes. 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. 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. 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.

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. 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.
of Anchin, Hugh made careful preparations for his military campaign in the Latin East. As it turned out the expedition was nothing but a disaster for the Oisy. 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 Maigré tous sainz et maigré 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. 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. 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.

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. His seal matrices were also more frequently updated than they were under his predecessors’ regimes. Moreover, as some of his northern-French contemporaries, such as Blondel of Nesle and

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

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. 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. Of the two poems


31. Several famous authors such as Simon Aurea Capra, Gace Brulé, and probably Chrétien of 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.

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*.33

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.34 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”)35, 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.36 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...
beyond reasonable doubt that he took his pleasure at tournaments during his lifetime, as did so many other knights living in the Cambrésis.37

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.”38 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.39 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!’”40 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.


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 Tournoiement suggests “that men do not have a guaranteed position of dominance in society.”

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. 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 Tournoiement, where it is said that the fictional ladies “wanted to experience the sort of strokes that their lovers gave out for their


42. Crouch, Tournament, 156–59.
sake.” 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. 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, as the presence of Ida of Boulogne in the poem could be explained by her marriage with Renaud of Dammartin towards 1188.

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).


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 Nieus for his remarks on the chronicle of Ernoul and Bernard the Treasurer.


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 Nieus, “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.48 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 1179.49 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.”50 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.51

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ladies whose identification is certain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <em>Ysabel, ki ferir […] La roîne sour Ferrant</em> (l. 51 and 64) Isabel of Hainaut, wife of Philip II Augustus, king of France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>La contesse de Campagne</em> (l. 82) Mary of France, wife of Henri I the Liberal, count of Champagne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>La contesse de Clermont</em> (l. 117) Adele of Breteuil, wife of Raoul I, count of Clermont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>Ysabiauz, che savon […] sovent crie s’ensaigne “Alom lour, Chastillon”</em> (l. 104 and 107–8) Isabel of St-Pol, wife of Walcher, lord of Châtillon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>La contesse de Crespi</em> (l. 8) Elanor of Vermandois, wife of Matthew III, lord of Beaumont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <em>Katherine au viz cler […] Et “Passe avant” a crier</em> (l. 34–35) Katherine of Clermont, wife of Louis, count of Blois and Chartres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. <em>Quant “Bouloigne” escria Yde au cors honoré</em> (l. 130–31) Ida of Boulogne, widow of Berthold V of Zähringen, and wife of Renaud, count of Dammartin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <em>De le prochece Yolent vous diré</em> (l. 194–95) Yolanda of Coucy, wife of Robert II, count of Dreux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. <em>Marguerite d’Oysi</em> (l. 24) Margaret of Blois, wife of Hugh III, lord of Oisy, castellan of Cambrai</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. <em>Et ma dame de Couci</em> (l. 9) Alice of Dreux, wife of Raoul I, lord of Coucy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. <em>Adeline ki “Nantuel” vait criant</em> (l. 57–58) Adeline of Nanteuil, wife of Philip I, lord of Crépy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. <em>Aeliz “Monfort” criant</em> (l. 95) Alice of Montmorency, wife of Simon V, lord of Montfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. <em>Gertrus qui “Merlou” cria</em> (l. 143) Gertrude of Nesle, wife of Renaud, lord of Mello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. <em>Agnes de Tricoc</em> (l. 145) Agnès, wife of Peter II, lord of Tricot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. <em>Belle Aelis qui “Garlandon” escrioit</em> (l. 175–76) Alice of Châteaudun, wife of Hervé III, lord of Gallardon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. <em>Agnes i vi venir tost de Cressonsaert</em> (l. 184–85) Agnes of Cressonsacq, wife of Dreux II, lord of Cressonsacq</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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-

<table>
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<th>Ladies whose origins are certain</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. Yolenz de Cailli (l. 22)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seine-Maritime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Beatris « Poissi » cria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poissy: reg. Île-de-France,</td>
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<tr>
<td>dep. Yvelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Marien de Juilli (l. 159)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juilly: reg. Île-de-France,</td>
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<tr>
<td>dep. Seine-et-Marne</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Aelis de Rolleiz (l. 165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reuilly-Sauvigny: reg. Hauts-de-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France, dep. Aisne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Sezile vint tout a droit</td>
</tr>
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<td>de Conpeigne (l. 169–70)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compiègne: reg. Hauts-de-</td>
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<tr>
<td>France, dep. Oise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Agnes venoit criant « Paris »</td>
</tr>
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<td>(l. 178–79)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paris: reg. Île-de-France</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Ysabiauz point aussi qui 'st</td>
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<tr>
<td>de Villegaignart (l. 186–87)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Villegagnon: reg. Île-de-</td>
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<tr>
<td>France, dep. Seine-et-Marne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unidentified ladies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jehane la gaaignant (l. 72)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aeliz […] de Monciauz (l. 76–77)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ysabiaus point de Marli (l. 138)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climence […] de Bruai (l. 168)</td>
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ity, by attracting the most famous poets of their times. 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. 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. In such a context, it is therefore all but impossible that Hugh—who probably had a clear view of the situation, as his patri-

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.\textsuperscript{55} According to his somewhat laudatory \textit{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.\textsuperscript{56} 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.\textsuperscript{57}

\section*{Conclusion}

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

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

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Vita Johannis}, 224–25: “Est etiam memoriae commendandum, quod Johannes, cum sub gloriose 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 immittero, quique qui toties ei utilis et necessarius erat. Fuit autem in praelio Normanniae, quod commisit rex Francorum adversus regem Angliae apud castrum 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 ‘Probity’, 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, \textit{Fleur de France}, 400–1.

\textsuperscript{57} Bédier and Aubry, ed., \textit{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 Damediex, 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.