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Literary and Historical Contexts: Possible Tools for Dating *Joufroi de Poitiers*

Penny Simons
University of Sheffield

The anonymous and incomplete thirteenth-century romance *Joufroi de Poitiers*¹ has enjoyed a rather ambivalent critical reception over the years. From the truculent relief of Adolf Tobler that the unknown poet had written no more than this short romance,² to the attention and praise given to the text and its capricious, Don Juan-esque plot-line in the *Grundriß der romanischen Philologie*,³ late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars seem to have been unsure what to make of it. John Grigsby, co-editor of the romance in 1972, was one of the first recent critics to recognize the claims of this text upon the attention of modern scholarship. In an earlier article on *Joufroi*, Grigsby had identified the importance of the figure of the poet-narrator in the romance;⁴ like his predecessor, Leo Jordan,⁵ Grigsby observed parallels between *Joufroi*'s poet-narrator and a better-known antecedent, that found in the twelfth-century romance *Partonopeus de Blois*,⁶ and added to his analysis a third familiar authorial *persona* from Renaut de Bâgé's *Le Bel Inconnu*.⁷ Grigsby's work led to a number of stimulating discussions devoted to the poet-narrator as a central feature in these latter three romances, which have enjoyed something of a renaissance of interest in the last two decades.⁸ *Joufroi de Poitiers* itself, however, has generated rather fewer, albeit fruitful discussions.⁹ This apparent lack of interest may be attributable to the lack of intrinsic merit of *Joufroi* as a literary creation,¹⁰ but is certainly also due to the problems which the transmission of the

text presents to the critic. Firstly, it is visibly unfinished, ending abruptly after only 4613 lines with the hero married to a woman on grounds purely of political expediency and with a number of narrative and thematic threads left dangling. The romance is preserved as a single text in a unique MS witness,¹¹ in which it ends at the foot of the column upon the recto of folio 80. The verso is left blank. Moreover, the last line represents the first half of a couplet which is thus left incomplete and unrhymed. Despite suggestions from the catalogue that the MS may have contained 3 further folios, now missing,¹² both Grigsby and Karl Vollmöller believe that the blank verso strongly suggests that the text was never extended further in this MS.¹³ It thus appears to contain the romance as the scribe either knew or had access to it.

The next problem in dealing with *Joufroi de Poitiers* is that it has so far not been dated with any greater precision than belonging, probably, to the first half of the thirteenth century.¹⁴ Although the text contains many references to actual geographical locations and historical figures (see Fay and Grigsby's Introduction, pp. 16-25), these have so far not enabled scholars to establish any fixed points of reference for time or place of composition.¹⁵ This makes it difficult to compare *Joufroi* meaningfully with other romances or locate its place within the network of intertextual 'conversation' so characteristic of romance composition in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Finally, the text itself simply appears to disintegrate towards its end as courtly concerns and narrative meaning cease to be able to contain the excesses of either hero or narrator. Faced with what appear to be intractable problems of this kind, it is worth returning to safer critical grounds to see whether established links between *Joufroi* and other texts can help us to understand where this work fits into the development of Old French romance. From this position, it may be possible to move towards answers to the questions of the dating and significance of this puzzling text.

A short synopsis of the romance may help, since the text is relatively unknown. It opens in Poitiers where Count Richard and

his wife Alienor have a son, Joufroi, who is sent to England to be educated at the court of King Henry. During this stay, the Queen of England, Alis, is accused of adultery with a kitchen-boy by the wicked seneschal, whose own advances she has spurned. Joufroi challenges the seneschal to a judicial combat and is victorious. That evening word comes from Poitiers that Joufroi's father is dead so he returns to take control of his lands. As Count, Joufroi practises generosity and devotes his time to tourneying, in which he is extremely successful.

Back in Poitiers Joufroi interrogates his minstrel Gui de Niele as to who is the most beautiful woman in the land. 'Agnes of Tonnerre' comes the reply, together with the information that Agnes is kept imprisoned in a tower by her jealous old husband, overlooking a square in which a pear-tree flourishes; furthermore a tournament is to be held in Tonnerre at Pentecost. Joufroi disguises himself in red, calling himself Lord of Cocagne, and departs for Tonnerre, where he encamps under the pear tree. He performs superbly on the first day of the tournament, winning four horses; that evening he decorates the pear tree with candles and offers generous hospitality to all. The next day his exploits are even more successful, securing him five further horses. The next morning he departs, leaving his nine horses under the pear tree to thank it for its shelter. Joufroi's activities have been noticed by both the jealous Lord of Tonnerre, who takes the horses, and his wife, who sends a boy after Joufroi to find out his identity; the boy duly returns with the information that the knight is Count of Poitiers.

While Agnes laments in her tower, Joufroi plots a way to seduce her. He disguises himself as a hermit and, taking one companion, returns to Tonnerre. He persuades the Lord of Tonnerre to allow him to build a hermitage by the castle. The hermitage is constructed, consisting of a visible front portion of ascetic simplicity whilst concealed behind are a luxuriously comfortable bedroom and cooking facilities. Joufroi's outward appearance of piety attracts the Lord of Tonnerre who visits him.

The hermit berates him so successfully for keeping his lady imprisoned such that she cannot go out even to Church, Lord of Tonnerre repents and promptly returns to Agnes to beseech her to forgive him and leave the tower for her religious duty. Agnes replies she does not want to leave her tower, but eventually agrees to visit the hermit. The next day she does so, taking a retinue of her ladies with her. The hermit invites her to confession in the inner room, where, of course, he seduces her. After enjoying the fruits of his ruse for some time, Joufroi returns to Poitiers, promising loyalty to Agnes and offering to return whenever she wants him.

Back in Poitiers, an envoy arrives, bringing a rich gift for the Count from a lady who wishes to declare her love. Despite pursuing the envoy with his companion Robert, Joufroi cannot catch up with him to find out the name of his mistress. The failure provokes an argument between Joufroi and Robert, in which Robert claims Joufroi is only the superior because he is richer. Still at odds with his friend, Joufroi prepares to leave Poitiers, forcing Robert to join him by getting him out of bed naked at an ungodly hour and insisting on an identical provision of armour and equipment for each of them. They set off for England and arrive in Lincoln where King Henry is; they pay their respects to the King, incognito, and offer him their services. They assist him in repelling a raid by the invading Kings of Scotland and Ireland and then follow him to London. Here their rivalry continues as they vie to outdo each other in acts of generosity.

Finding himself in financial straits, Joufroi woos Blanchefleur, the daughter of his rich landlord, and despite opposition from Robert and the girl's family, marries her. Joufroi disposes of the dowry in further acts of generosity. One day a messenger arrives in London; he is the singer Marcabru who recognises Joufroi and chastises him for his behaviour whilst Poitiers is under attack from the Count of Anfos. Joufroi departs, having arranged for Blanchefleur to be suitably married off. In Beverley he encounters Queen Alis and discovers she is the sender of the mysterious gift.

He begs another gift, of her love, which she grants in principle; the practice, however, will prove a little more difficult as she is guarded at night by her spinster sister-in-law. Once she is asleep, however, Alis will join Joufroi in his bed. That night, as Joufroi waits, he cannot sleep for anticipation. He leaves his bed to see if the queen is approaching, at which point, Robert, who shares his chamber, slips into Joufroi's bed. Joufroi is forced into Robert's bed, fooled into thinking he has found the wrong one in the dark. At last, the Queen enters, and makes her way to the bed where Robert is waiting. But after his ruse, Robert cannot decide whether to pursue his advantage, or preserve his friendship with Joufroi. He chooses the latter, and reveals his true identity to the Queen. Although initially furious, she joins Joufroi in his bed where, for the next three days, he has his delight of her. He then departs, routs the invading Toulousain army, is married to the princess Amauberjon as a token of peace and apparently lives happily ever after.

Fay and Grisby take it as read that *Joufroi* postdates both *Partonopeus de Blois* and *Le Bel Inconnu*,¹⁶ but taking a closer look at the correspondences between these three works will enable us to establish their relative chronology with more precision. *Partonopeus de Blois* is certainly the earliest of the romances; it was probably written around 1170¹⁷ and was certainly in circulation by 1188, the *terminus ad quem* provided by Aimon de Varennes' *Florimont*. Secondly, it is clear that *Le Bel Inconnu* postdates *Partonopeus de Blois*; references by Renaut to the works of Chrétien give the text a *terminus a quo* of around 1191. It is also generally accepted that Renaut knew *Partonopeus*, borrowing from it a number of features including the poet-narrator, although a comprehensive analysis of the nature and extent of his debt remains to be undertaken.¹⁸ If we pursue this point of contrast, the way in which all three romances make use of an internalised and personified poet-narrator who represents a device through which the three poets express their own relationship with the text they have composed, we can look

for evidence of an engagement by the *Joufroi* poet of the ways in which Renaut, and the *Partonopeus* poet use the poet-narrator device as a means of revealing their compositional strategy.

Examination of the attitude of the poets to their task does indeed reveal a logical progression, as each romance takes up the theme used by its predecessor(s) and, specifically, equates narrative continuation by the poet-narrator with a favourable response from an externalised 'lady'. In the first romance, *Partonopeus de Blois*, 5 mss (BGLPV) reach the end of the main narrative with the promise of continuation if the lady wishes it:¹⁹

Et Parthonopeus a s'amie;

.....

A grant aise [et] a grant honor.

Et od cest aise le vos lais

Nient por ce que n'en sache mais,

Ains le fait cele que j'ain si

Qu'en si grant paine sui por li

Ne puis riens faire fors plorer

Et od lermes merci crïer;

Par li empris je cest labor

Que j'ai perdu al chef del tor.

Bien sai que je l'ai tant perdu

Quant onque de melz ne m'en fu

N'en dit n'en fait n'en bel semblant;

Tot ai perdu, mais neporquant

Tant la redot et tant la crien

Et tant a son lige me tien

A son servise sens orguel,

Que s'ele me gignot de l'uel

Que je die l'ystoire avant,

Faire m'estovra son commant. (10602,10606-24)

[And Partonopeus has his beloved with great pleasure and great honour. And with this pleasure I will leave

him with you, not because I do not know any more about him, rather it is because of her, the one whom I love so much that I suffer great pain and can do nothing but weep and beg with tears for mercy. For her sake I undertook this task that has ultimately been a waste of my time. I know well that I have wasted it since I have never received anything in return for it, be it a word, deed or a welcoming look. I have wasted all my effort, but still I hold her in such awe, and consider myself her liegeman, bound humbly to her service, so that if she were to wink at me to continue the story, I would have to obey her command.]²⁰

In five of the MSS (BGLP plus T), the romance is indeed continued to some extent, although the transmission of this part of the text is not particularly reliable.²¹ The continuator develops the motif of narration for a lady over the course of the continuation: a change in form from octosyllables to dodecasyllables is offered as a sign of his love for his lady (vv. 1463-74), the difficulty of the form being an appropriate measure of the love-service he owes her. At the end of the continuation, with the Sultan Margaris resigned to Melior's refusal to entertain him as a rival to her husband Partonopeus and peace made, the poet achieves the closure of his narrative by reference to his lady. This time, there is no explicit prospect of continuation; he says he wishes to spend his whole life in service to her, but so great are her merits, he cannot not do justice to them, and to do so would take another whole book (vv. 3917-36). A temporary closure is achieved through the conceit of the insufficiency of the poet's talent or the compass of this composition to describe his lady's virtues; hypothetically, however, another book could be commissioned. *Partonopeus* thus contains a clear promise to continue a text beyond its first part, predicated upon a favourable sign from some extra-diegetic authority, which promise is fulfilled.

In the *Bel Inconnu*, exactly the same promise is offered, but rather than leading to narrative closure, it leaves the reader in suspension, paralleling the indecision of the hero to choose between two ladies:

Ci faut li roumans et define.
 Bele vers cui mes cuers s'acline,
 Renals de Biauju molt vos prie
 por Diu que ne l'obliés mie;
 de cuer vos veut tos jors amer.
 Ce ne li poés vos veer.
 Quant vos plaira, dira avant
 u il se taira ore a tant.
 Mais por un biau sanblant mostrer
 vos feroit Guinglain retrouver
 s'amie que il a perdue,
 qu'entre ses bras le tenroit nue.
 Se de çou li faites delai,
 si ert Guinglains en tel esmai
 que ja mais n'avera s'amie;
 d'autre vengeance n'a il mie. (6247-62)

[Here ends the romance. / Fair lady, my heart's
 sovereign, / Renaut de Bâgé most humbly prays / you
 not to forget him, in God's name, / for he wishes to love
 you always and with his whole heart. / You cannot
 forbid him this. / And if you wish it, he will speak
 further, / or else be silent forever. / If you show him a
 gracious countenance, / then Guinglain will once more
 find / his lady, whom he has lost, / and hold her naked in
 his arms. / But if you delay in granting him this, /
 Guinglain must bear the sorrow / of never finding her
 again; / no other revenge will Renaut take. / But because
 his grief is so great, / This vengeance will fall on

Guinglain, / For until you look kindly on me, / I shall
nevermore speak of him.]

The adoption by Renaut of the motif of the *bel samblant*, used by the *Partonopeus* poet at verse 10617, is the link back to the earlier romance and its narrative strategy.²² However, in Renaut's text, we have no evidence of delivery of the promised further development of the narrative (though it remains a theoretical possibility).

The *Joufroi* poet also links his composition to his relationship with his lady, but his treatment of the *topos* represents a complete reversal of its use in the other two romances. The poet-narrator in *Joufroi* reaches a nadir of despair when the hero's ultimate bedroom success, his seduction of Queen Alis, reminds him of his own continued disappointment in love. He goes mad in a famous 32-verse *bestornoiement* and loses all desire to write; he is prepared only to finish his tale, and states firmly that there is no possibility of a further story:

Or retournerai a l'estoire,
Si vos en redirai avant;
Ja nel lairai por mautalent,
Que cest romanz voil a chief traire,
Si ne voil ja mais autre faire,
Que trop i ai travail et paine. (4394-99)

[Now I shall return to the story and will tell you more of it; I will not abandon it through ill will; I wish to finish this romance, but I never want to compose another one, for it brings me too much labour and grief.]

Unlike the earlier two, this romance promotes satisfaction in love and sexual conquest above the courtly, creative process of suffering. What follows this poet's experience of frustration is a

grudging and clumsy 'closure' of the narrative. Although he does carry on, he brings his story to a very hasty conclusion within a mere 200 verses, having his hero rapidly engage and defeat the invading Toulousain army, secure peace by marrying the Toulousain princess Amauberjon, and 'living happily ever after'. The *Joufroi* poet has deconstructed the compositional pose of his predecessors, a pose exemplifying the ethos of courtly love, found in the lyrics of the *troubadours* and *trouvères*: a poet's creative inspiration is derived from love directed upwards to his lady and refined in his experience of unrequited passion. This exemplification of the lyric, or 'troubadouresque' voice as Katalin Halász terms it,²³ which is first seen in *Partonopeus de Blois*, is problematised for a different narrative effect in *Le Bel Inconnu*. *Joufroi de Poitiers* takes a final step and explodes the narrative myth and its underlying courtly ethos.

That this is indeed *Joufroi* poet's compositional strategy becomes clearer when we take into account the fact that courtly philosophy is extensively elaborated in the prologue to the romance. Indeed, the prologue reads like a (rather trite) repetition of all the precepts of courtly love. The poet parades familiar *topoi* before his audience almost as a series of hackneyed phrases, preparatory to progressively subverting their philosophy in his narrative. But the prologue also, very importantly, contains references to the prologues of both *Partonopeus de Blois* and *Le Bel Inconnu*. The closing couplet of *Joufroi*'s Prologue: 'Et qui l'estoire velt entendre / Asez i puet de bien aprendre' (89-90; 'And whoever is willing to hear the story can learn plenty of good from it') is an obvious recasting of the closing couplet of *Partonopeus*' Prologue: 'Ce puet en cest escrit aprendre / Qui ot et set et wet entendre' (133-4; 'He who hears, and is able and willing to understand, can learn from this text'). The *Joufroi* poet-narrator claims to have composed his romance for Amors, who holds him in sway ('en sa bailie', v. 28):

Et ge por che si vos dirai
 Une istoire que bien sai,
 Que je ai mis por Amor en rime. (83-85)

[And for this reason I will tell you a story which I know
 well and which I have put into rhyme for Love's sake.]

This echoes the opening lines of the *Bel Inconnu*, in which Renaut
 addresses his romance, also referred to as an *istoire*, to his lady:

Cele qui m'a en sa baillie,
 cui ja d'amors sans trecherie
 m'a doné sens de cançon faire –
 por li veul un roumant estraire
 d'un molt biel conte d'aventure.
 Por celi c'aim outre mesure
 vos vel l'istoire comencier. (1-7)

[For my sovereign lady I have written and sung / of a
 love that knows no falsehood, / according to the
 direction she gave. / Now I wish to compose a romance
 for her / from a beautiful tale of adventure. / And for her
 whom I love beyond any power to measure / I shall now
 begin this story for you.]

Further echoes of the theme of deceit, referred to in v. 2, which
 Renaut develops in the romance, are found in *Joufroi's* Prologue.
 The poet-narrator laments the fact that ladies and knights are
 given to trickery (51-53); deceitful women betray their lovers who
 in turn blame Love (54-57); Tricherie, personified, steals
 followers from Love (59-60); the poet-narrator has himself
 suffered at the hands of liars and deceivers (72-3).

We have seen that the *Joufroi* poet's final demolition of the
 link between love and writing comes after the hero's successful
 seduction of Queen Alice, in the culmination of a complex and

humorous bedroom encounter. This episode provides further evidence of intertextual engagement with the earlier *Partonopeus* and *Le Bel Inconnu*. The (in)famous bedroom scene is a key episode in *Partonopeus de Blois*. The thirteen-year-old hero has found himself in a strange, but magnificent land where he cannot see the inhabitants. Having entered a palace and been served a sumptuous meal, he is led by invisible candle-bearers to a bedroom, where he undresses and gets into bed. In the darkness another person joins him in bed, a person he quickly discovers to be a young woman. The scene culminates in the seduction by the hero of this young woman, superbly described in detail that is both nearly pornographic and yet also leavened with brilliant humour. The young woman first protests horror at the hero's treatment of her, then explains that she has actually engineered the entire encounter in order to secure Partonopeus as her lover, then as her husband. The scene shocks its audience on a number of levels: firstly, for the youth of the hero,²⁴ then for its positioning of the couple's sexual involvement at the start of their relationship, displacing its role as the end of an emotional journey towards which they, as characters, will progress. The effect is that *Partonopeus de Blois* must have become, in the minds of its contemporary readers as much as its modern ones, 'that romance with the bedroom scene in it'.

Renaut clearly read *Partonopeus* in this way, and engages in a complex response to the bedroom scene, incorporating it into his reading of other elements of the romance. As well as developing the notion of an inscribed audience and their relationship with the poet-narrator, which we have already discussed, he takes the dual personality of *Partonopeus*' heroine Melior and separates it into two heroine figures.²⁵ The Pucele as Blancs Mains corresponds to the magical, fairy-mistress-like early portrayal of Melior, whereas Blonde Esmeree represents a more conventional romance heroine who must be won by a hero's feats of arms. Renaut then goes on to allow both heroines to feature in bedroom scenes:²⁶ the hero is visited by the scantily-clad Pucele on his first visit to her Ille d'Or,

setting up expectation of a replay of *Partonopeus*, which is frustrated as the hero's attempt at seduction is firmly rebuffed on this occasion. After his successful completion of the Fier Baisier ordeal, Guinglain is visited in his bedroom, where he is recovering, by Blonde Esmeree, who claims him as her intended husband. Finally, upon his return, he gains access to the Pucele's bedroom, although not until she has punished him for his earlier desertion of her by subjecting him to terrifying hallucinations. This time, unlike the very graphic description in *Partonopeus de Blois*, where the hero's inability to see his mistress in the dark is counterbalanced by the audience's 'sight' of every detail of the seduction, Renaut refuses to tell his audience any intimate details of the encounter: 'Je ne sai s'il le fist s'amie/car n'i fui pas ne n'en vi mie.' (4815-6; 'I do not know if he made her his true love, as I was not there and I saw nothing of it'). The lovers, however, can see each other, for the room is well lit (4741). Renaut's treatment of the bedroom scene shows his reading of *Partonopeus*' sexual encounter with Melior as a feature belonging to the narrative conventions of the *lai*, which are juxtaposed with those of romance in his source.²⁷ Renaut rewrites the bedroom encounter so that it is the fairy mistress who offers sexual love, whereas the romance heroine visits the hero's bedroom to offer land and dynastic advancement. Renaut also involves the audience in the evolution of the bedroom scene, in line with his drawing attention to the process of textual composition,²⁸ by mischievously 'shutting the bedroom door' just as the scene becomes intimate.

When we look at the scene in *Joufroi de Poitiers*, where the hero successfully seduces the Queen of England, there is clear evidence of engagement with the cognate scenes in both *Partonopeus de Blois* and *Le Bel Inconnu*. As in *Partonopeus*, this encounter involves a younger man and an older, socially superior royal woman. It also takes place in the dark, a fact which the poet uses to hilarious effect as the various players blunder around unable to see where they are going. But, unlike *Partonopeus*, who despite his very young age, knew exactly what to do when

confronted by the naked form of a woman in his bed, Robert is assaulted by doubts as to what the correct course of action should be when finding the Queen of England naked in his bed. The presence of the companion, bearing the name of Robert, links this episode equally clearly with *Le Bel Inconnu* and Guinglain's squire Robert. The *Joufroi* poet also plays with Renaut's address to his audience, claiming not to know what actually happened in the scene. His narrator makes a very similar comment at the end of his scene:

... Ne pas ne sai,
 Ne rien de ce ne vos dirai,
 Si li cuens a s'amie o fit,
 Que n'estoie pas soz lo lit
 Ne delez, si n'en oï rien. (4333-7)

[...and I do not know and will say nothing to you about whether the Count made love with his beloved, because I was not under the bed, or beside it, so I heard nothing.]

In this instance, however, he changes the fact of not seeing to not hearing anything, in recognition of the fact that this whole episode has taken place in the dark, and even makes himself a third 'occupant' of the bed by suggesting the possibility of hiding underneath it. This is part of an even more subversive reference by the *Joufroi* to the notion of the audience's reception of the text; as Robert hesitates to proceed with his own seduction of Alis, he addresses the audience, asking them to tell, in explicit detail, what they would do in the same situation, and promises to give his own response as well:

E vos, qu'en fëissoiz, seignor?
 A toz vos pri par grant amor
 Que chascuns son penser en die,

Qu'il en feïst a la fenie,
S'il fust en leu o cil estoit
Qui la reine Alis tenoit.
Puis redira[i] ge mon corage
Après vos tuit, qui estes sage. (4211-18)

[And you, what would you do, my lords? I ask all of you very kindly to tell me, each and every one, what you think you would have done in the end if you had been where he was, holding Queen Alis. Then I will tell you what I would have done, after all of you wise ones.]

And what he promises to do is exactly what Robert cannot bring himself to do: even if he had a thousand lords, he would care nothing for their anger, he would risk being tied up as a captive, for the sake of having the queen (4222-30).

It is clear that *Partonopeus de Blois* and Renaut's *Bel Inconnu* provided the *Joufroi* poet with fuel for his compositional creativity. The idea of figuring the process of composition and the ways in which audience expectations are raised and managed within a particular narrative form is suggested by the *Partonopeus*' poet's appeal to his lady as authority for continuing his text, and is then more fully developed in Renaut's suspended non-closure at the end of *Le Bel Inconnu*. The *Joufroi* poet develops the non-closure into a subversive impossibility of closure: his poet-narrator finds himself so much at variance with the hero and his success in exploits which are increasingly far from courtly, that to continue becomes meaningless. The 'narrativising' of the compositional process is matched by a similar treatment of the process of reading. As Norris Lacy has pointed out, the *Joufroi* 'narrator systematically fixes our attention on his authorial activity and on the artifice of his text';²⁹ he 'progressively and systematically redefines his contract with the reader, frustrating our expectations and establishing new ones' (p. 266). The romance becomes less a narrative than a commentary

upon the process of narrative/reading.³⁰ Part of this commentary is a subversive play with the intertexts the poet has at his disposal, but another significant aspect is the role accorded to poets within the narrative. When Jofroi wishes to find an appropriate lady to pursue in the role of courtly lover, it is his minstrel Gui de Niele who suggests lady Agnes of Tonnerre; Gui's information about her beauty and inaccessibility represents an important link in the development of the hero's libidinous progress. Later in the romance, the troubadour Marcabru appears in London where Jofroi is in disguise as the mercenary Girart de Berri. Marcabru has no difficulty in seeing through the hero's concealment; as a creator of literary texts or artefacts himself, Marcabru penetrates Jofroi's artifice easily.

This clear development of the relationship between poet, text and audience has implications for the dating of *Joufroi de Poitiers*, which must logically postdate the other two romances. Dating for *Le Bel Inconnu* is unfortunately uncertain. Given its clear references to Chrétien's work, a *terminus a quo* of 1191 is generally accepted, with a likely *terminus ad quem* of around 1230, based on the possible identification of Renaut with one Renaut, seigneur of Saint Trivier (fl. 1165-1230).³¹ Plausible dates along the 1191-1230 span have been suggested. Given the picture that emerges from the above analysis, a dating in the earlier part of the range, which would place *Le Bel Inconnu* chronologically near to the texts with which it engages would be preferable, and would also enable us to suggest that *Joufroi de Poitiers* is relatively close to both its predecessors. However, we need to find other possible sources of evidence upon which to draw in order to locate *Joufroi de Poitiers* any more certainly in the chronology of Old French romance.

To this end, it is worth revisiting a feature we have already noted, the fact that the romance is littered with references to names in the noble houses of Western Europe of the latter part of the twelfth century.³² However, these references are so much what Grigsby terms a 'galimatias généalogique' (p. 20) that it has not

been possible to use them to pin down a plausible date span within which the romance might have been composed. Many of the historical references can be taken to apply to the house of Plantagenet or others associated with them, as Grigsby has shown: e.g. Henry of England (Henry I or II); Duke Richard (Richard Lion Heart); the Duke's wife Alienor (Eleanor of Aquitaine); Joufroi's *alias*, Girart de Berri (Gerald of Wales, known also as Gerald de Barry; although it may also be possible to accept the spelling 'Berri' as a reference to the Berrichon, part of Henry II's continental lands); Joufroi himself (Geoffrey, duke of Brittany, or Count Gui-Geoffrey of Poitiers, father of the famous troubadour, Guillaume IX of Aquitaine);³³ Alice (Alice, wife of Henry I or Alice countess of Poitou, mistress of Henry II); Agnes (multiple candidates, including two countesses of Tonnerre and the Agnes who married Philippe Auguste in 1196). Grigsby comments that 'aucun de ces personnages n'offre un modèle vivant à l'auteur'; ils servent plutôt à soutenir plaisamment la réalité de son conte, car personne ne pouvait nier leur existence.' (p.17).

It is this notion of 'plaisance' that links the references to Plantagenet interests to the ludic stance we have already described in relation to the poet-narrator, for we see the *Joufroi* poet borrowing names from the Plantagenet dynasty, but attributing them to inappropriate characters in his romance, and/or making his references ambiguous or confusing. Thus Duke Richard is Count of Poitiers, but is no blood relation to 'King Henry'. The historical Richard Lion Heart was made Duke of Poitiers in 1172, although his mother Eleanor still retained control of Aquitaine until her death, which the *Joufroi* poet rewrites in the naming of Richard's wife, Alienor. Girart de Berri becomes a knight and warrior, rather than a historian, and engages in a battle against the united Scots and Irish, a transposition of the historical Gerald of Wales' history of the Irish. The name of the hero Joufroi shows both inappropriate attribution and ambiguity. Whether the name should be read as a reference to Geoffrey of Brittany, or to Gui-Geoffroy, grandfather of Eleanor, Geoffrey is not a son to Richard

(though Geoffrey of Brittany was one of Eleanor's sons).³⁴ Further ambiguity is produced by the choice of candidates for King Henry of England, and the possible reading of Queen Alice of England as one of Henry II's mistresses as well as the legitimate Queen of Henry I. Finally, the battle at Lincoln could refer to the capture of Stephen at Lincoln in 1141, in the period of instability following the death of Henry I, or the 1217 siege following King John's death leaving a minor heir and consequent question of the succession; if the former, then a possible candidate for Robert the companion is Robert of Gloucester, bastard son of Henry I and tutor to young Henry II who fought in the earlier battle at Lincoln.³⁵

Such a concatenation of frustrating and unhelpful references must be considered more than mere coincidence; it must be a deliberate strategy on the part of the poet. If he had wanted to lend a gloss of historical veracity or realism to his text, as Grigsby suggests, why did the poet choose so many resonances with the house of Plantagenet? Here again, comparison with *Partonopeus de Blois* gives us valuable insights. The *Partonopeus* poet also makes use of references to the Plantagenet dynasty of Henry II, in a ploy to subvert the literary and dynastic posturing of the English monarch who had commissioned Benoît de Ste-Maure's *Roman de Troie* and whose interests ran counter to those of the French Capetian monarchs and their relatives in Blois-Champagne.³⁶ The ultimately spurious references in *Joufroi de Poitiers* to Plantagenet history suggest a deliberate ploy by the poet to locate his romance vis-à-vis *Partonopeus de Blois* and its network of subversive allusions to Henry II; but they also make it in fact impossible to apply a similar 'reading' of historical 'keys' to arrive at an understanding of the context of the romance.

Having seen that the *Joufroi* poet suggests a Plantagenet reading of his romance, only to confuse his audience, there is one very curious feature about these references which makes it necessary to go back and explore this subtext in more detail. The striking feature of the references to the Plantagenets is the lack of

any mention at all of John, the last of Henry II's sons and his father's supposed favourite; yet the other key members of the family – Henry, Eleanor, Geoffrey, Richard – are all there. But the name John, unlike the other Plantagenet names which may have multiple referents in the twelfth century, defines a particular individual with some precision. There are no significant Plantagenet family members with that name in John's generation, or in earlier generations. It would therefore not fit with the *Joufroi* poet's strategy of appearing to make reference to cues for interpreting his text which turn out instead to be means of spreading confusion as they slip from the reader's mental grasp. But, given that in this romance, there is as much significance in the gaps between appearance and reality as in narrative 'reality' itself, we should explore the possibility that this referential lacuna is in fact more meaningful than the facetious allusions that delineate it. What, in other words, of the possibility that the *Joufroi* poet is engaged in a referential double-bluff, that there may actually be references to John, the one member of the Plantagenet family who appears *not* to be referred to at all?

There are, in fact, a series of parallels between the hero, Joufroi, and the historical John that do suggest allusions to the king and his reign. Firstly, the hero Joufroi is linked to Poitiers, capital of the Poitou, centre of the Aquitaine, of which his father is duke. Aquitaine was the subject of bitter Plantagenet family wrangling in the latter years of Henry II's reign. Eleanor wished to have Richard succeed her to these lands, but Henry felt that, upon the death of his eldest son, Henry, Richard should cede the lands to his youngest brother, John. John did indeed acquire the Aquitaine upon Richard's death in 1199, but he has gone down in history as the monarch who had managed, by 1214, to lose the Angevin territories in France to the French Capetian Philippe-Auguste. John tried between 1204-1214 to retake his continental lands without success. It is curious to note that, in one campaign of 1205, John appointed one of his sons, Geoffrey, to command part of the force attempting to recover the lost Angevin lands.

Geoffrey was sent to Poitou, which at this stage was still under John's control, to march via land on Normandy where he would join a sea force from England led by John himself. The campaign was unsuccessful and Geoffrey appears to have died in Poitiers in around 1205. These events are subversively rewritten in the *Joufroi* narrative, which has Richard (the hero's father) as duke of Poitiers, his son, Joufroi / Geoffrey who forges a close alliance with the King of England, and a potential threat to Poitiers from Toulouse in the South while the hero, in disguise, is assisting the King of England and pursuing his own rivalry with his companion, Robert.

Secondly, John is perhaps best known as the monarch who so alienated his barons that they rebelled against him and finally forced him to sign the Magna Carta of 1215. One of the most odious ways in which John behaved, in the eyes of his barons, was to decline to trust his English barons, preferring instead the counsel of lesser men and non-nobles, particularly French men from his continental territories, such as Fawkes de Breauté and Gerard d'Athée.³⁷ Again, this trait is reflected in the behaviour of the hero who disguises himself as the mercenary Girart de Berri when assisting his ally King Henry on the rather dubious grounds that he has had a childish quarrel with Robert and wants to prove himself without reference to his own name or position. Unlike other chivalric heroes who act as mercenaries to gain the land or status they lack, such the eponymous heroes of *Guigemar* or *Ille et Galeron*, or who take on an alias as they fear attack from evil men, Joufroi has no need to assume an *alter ego*, and is ultimately chastised for it by Marcabru.

John was well also known as a womaniser, earning him criticism from monastic chroniclers of the time, which contributed to the portrait of 'Bad King John' spread by Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris.³⁸ John had at least three known mistresses and five bastard children.³⁹ Whilst this might have been nothing unusual at the time (his great-grandfather had at least twenty-one bastards, and his father three), John's conduct earned him

particular censure as he had a tendency to prefer the seduction of noble women.⁴⁰ One specific anecdote is of interest here: the story circulated widely in John's lifetime that he was attracted to Margaret, wife of Eustace de Vesci, one of John's rebellious northern barons. John apparently tried to seduce her, but her honour was protected when a common woman was substituted in John's bed.⁴¹ The anecdote is recorded in the continuation of William of Newburgh's chronicle *Historia rerum anglicarum*, where it is used to explain the antipathy felt by the barons towards their king. The chronicle relates that in September 1215 John was marching to Scotland after taking Rochester castle, and was devastating lands belonging to the rebel barons

... sed præcipue terras Eustachii filii Johannis, qui ipse Eustachius posuit in lecto regis quondam communem mulierem, in loco uxoris suæ, cujus digitum rex confregit, putans illam fuisse uxorem Eustachii.⁴²

[... but particularly the lands of Eustace, son of John; this Eustace once put a common woman into the king's bed, in place of his wife, and the king broke her finger, thinking she was Eustace's wife.]

Joufroi is portrayed in *Joufroi de Poitiers* as the ultimate womaniser, scheming for gratification with Agnes and Queen Alis. This particular story is remarkably similar to the bedroom scene, rewritten with the poet's hallmark twists and variations. In the romance, the doubling of royal and common woman is replaced by the doubling of noble and common man and the deception by substitution is attempted but is ultimately unsuccessful.

Perhaps the most obvious allusion to the events of John's reign and its immediate aftermath, however, is the battle at Lincoln in which the disguised hero assists the King of England to repel a

besieging army of the Scots and Irish (vv. 2956-3320). This is a substantial and structurally important episode, featuring the hero's disguise as Girart de Berri, his prowess in battle, and the pursuit of the hero's pointless rivalry with his friend Robert. There is a very clear historical parallel in the siege of Lincoln in 1217 in which the English finally managed to repel an invading French force which was asserting the right to the English succession of Louis, eldest son of King Philippe-Auguste of France, following the death of John whose son Henry (the eventual Henry III) was still a minor. Again the ludic recombining of historical references can be seen in the *Joufroi* poet's treatment of the material: the English and French appear as allies, not enemies; the new enemies are the Scots and Irish, which latter reminds us of Joufroi's alias, Girart de Berri/Gerald of Wales, historian not of this battle, but of much else earlier in Plantagenet history.

There appears a plausible weight of evidence, therefore, that links the narrative of *Joufroi de Poitiers* with events in Plantagenet history of the early thirteenth century. Following the example of his intertext, *Partonopeus de Blois*, the Joufroi poet makes playful reference to the royal house of England: firstly by encoding deliberately and obviously 'wrong' and misleading references to Henry II's generation into his text; but secondly by including also much more subtle and allusive hints to the next generation and Henry's son John. This must have consequences for our understanding of the dating of *Joufroi de Poitiers*. Firstly, the inclusion of the battle of Lincoln means that the romance would have to be post 1217. The question of how long after 1217 remains vexed, but the engagement by the *Joufroi* poet with both *Partonopeus de Blois* and with Plantagenet history of the generation prior to John means that those events and that romance must be located in the sufficiently recent past for the *Joufroi* poet's audience to grasp the references he is making and for his play with history and intertext to be meaningful to them. A date shortly after 1217 and at the later end of the possible span of dates for *Le Bel Inconnu*, i.e. of around 1220 is the most plausible.

If dated to circa 1220, *Joufroi de Poitiers* then becomes comprehensible as a text showing both that growing concern with realism which is so frequently asserted as typical of the first part of the thirteenth century, and most clearly exemplified in the romances of Jean Renart,⁴³ and part of a tradition of ludic or subversive engagement with the conceits and conventions of courtly love. This tradition extends from Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon* shortly after 1180⁴⁴ via *Le Bel Inconnu* and *Joufroi de Poitiers* to reach perhaps its highest point and logical conclusion in Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*. *Joufroi de Poitiers* challenges notions of courtly writing and reading at every turn, it is a puzzling and frustrating text to read, but if we take account of its intertextual resonances and its play with historical references, we can appreciate the skill of the unknown poet who composed it.

NOTES

¹ Percival B. Fay and John L. Grigsby (eds), *Joufroi de Poitiers, Roman d'aventures du xiii^e siècle* (Geneva, Droz, 1972).

² Adolf Tobler, review of Konrad Hofman and Franz Muncker's edition, *Joufrois, altfranzösisches Rittergedicht zum ersten Mal herausgegeben* (Halle, Niemeyer, 1880), *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 2 (1881): 125-7.

³ Gustav Gröber, *Grundriß der romanischen Philologie*, Vol 2, part 1 (Strasbourg, Trübner, 1902), pp. 776-778.

⁴ John Grigsby, 'The Narrator in *Partonopeu de Blois*, *Le Bel Inconnu*, and *Joufroi de Poitiers*', *Romance Philology* 21 (1968): 536-543. See also similar comment by Norris Lacy, 'The Margins of Romance: Art and Artifice in *Joufroi de Poitiers*', *Symposium* 44 (1991): 264-271 (p. 264).

⁵ Leo Jordan, 'Zum altfranzösischen Joufrois', *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 40 (1919-20): 191-205.

⁶ All references are to the edition by J. Gildea, 2 vols. (Villanova, Villanova University Press, 1967-70). There is now also available a very recent new edition and accompanying modern French translation of *Partonopeu de Blois* by Olivier Collet and Pierre-Marie Joris (Paris, Lettres Gothiques, 2006).

⁷ All references are to Renaut de Bâgé, *Le Bel Inconnu*, ed. Karen Fresco, trans. Colleen P. Donagher (New York & London, Garland, 1992). Translations of quotations are taken from this edition.

⁸ See, for example, Peter Haidu, 'Realism, Convention, Fictionality and the Theory of Genres in *Le Bel Inconnu*', *L'Esprit Créateur* 12 (1972): 37-60; Laurence de Looze, 'Generic Clash, Reader Response and the Poetics of the Non-Ending in *Le Bel Inconnu*' in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context*, ed. Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, Rodopi, 1990), pp. 113-123; Jeri S. Guthrie, 'The 'Je(u)' in 'Le Bel Inconnu': Auto-Referentiality and Pseudo-Autobiography', *Romanic Review* 75 (1984): 147-161; Penny Simons, 'The *Bel Sanblant*: Reading *Le Bel Inconnu*', *French Studies* 50 (1996): 257-274; Roberta L. Krueger, 'The Author's Voice: Narrators, Audiences and the Problems of Interpretation' in *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly and Keith Busby, 2 vols (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1987), pp. 115-40; Roberta L. Krueger, 'Textuality and Performance in *Partonopeu de Blois*' in *Assays: Critical Approaches to Medieval and Renaissance Texts*, ed. Peggy Knapp (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), pp. 57-72; Lori Walters, 'The Poet-Narrator's Address to his Lady as Structural Device in *Partonopeus de Blois*', *Medium Aevum* 61 (1992): 229-241; Donald Maddox, 'Epreuves et ambiguïté dans *Le Bel Inconnu*' in *Conjointure arthurienne* ed. Juliette Dor (Louvain, Institut médiéval, 2000), pp. 67-82; Marie-Noelle Toury, 'Le Bel Inconnu, un roman de l'ironie', in *Miscellanea mediaevalia: Mélanges offerts à Philippe Ménard*, ed. J.-Claude Faucon, Alain Labbé, and Danielle Quérueil (Paris, Champion, 1998), pp. 1399-407; Charles Brucker, 'Aventure, discours et structure dans le roman medieval aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles, in *Miscellanea mediaevalia: Mélanges offerts à Philippe Ménard*, ed. J.-Claude Faucon, Alain Labbé, and Danielle Quérueil (Paris, Champion, 1998), pp. 227-47; Jean-Guy Gouttebroze, 'J'ai deux amours...: Guinglain entre épouse et maîtresse', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 41 (1998): 55-63; Anne Paupert, 'Le Fier Baiser dans *Le Bel Inconnu*: Structures symboliques et réécriture romanesque', *Op. Cit.: Revue de littératures française et comparée* 7 (1996): 29-35; Laurence Harf-Lancner, 'Entre la princesse et la fée: La Dame sans merci: *Le Bel Inconnu* de Renaut de Beaujeu' *Op. Cit.: Revue de littératures française et comparée* 7 (1996): 21-28; Donald Maddox, 'Inventing the Unknown: Rewriting in *Le Bel Inconnu*', in

The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting, and Transmission in the French Tradition, ed. Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1996), pp. 101-23.

⁹ See Roger Dragonetti, 'Joufroi, Count of Poitiers and Lord of Cognaie', trans. Karen McPherson, *Yale French Studies*, 67 (1984): 95-119; Norris J. Lacy, 'The Margins of Romance: Art and Artifice in *Joufroi de Poitiers*', *Symposium* 44 (1991): 264-271; Richard Trachsler, 'Parler d'amour: les stratégies de séduction dans *Joufroi de Poitiers*', *Romania* 113 (1992-5): 118-139 and also the unpublished dissertation of Helen Maillie Choate, *A Literary Analysis of 'Joufroi de Poitiers'*, *Dissertation Abstracts International* 40 (1980): 5436.

¹⁰ Paul Zumthor judged the romance 'peu original'; see *Histoire de la France médiévale (VIe-XIVe siècles)* (Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1954), paragraph 508. Fay and Grigsby comment on the 'banalité du style' of the unknown poet (Introduction to *Joufroi de Poitiers*, p.10).

¹¹ Royal Library Copenhagen Gl. Kgl. Saml. 3555, 8o.

¹² The catalogue of the Old Royal Collection, written in 1784, records the acquisition of the manuscript from the sale of the Bibliotheca Daneschioldiana, stating that it comprised 83ff. Fay and Grigsby note the discrepancy which they view as an error, possibly due to the endpapers being included in the catalogue's folio count (Introduction to *Joufroi de Poitiers*, p. 28)

¹³ See Introduction to Fay & Grigsby's edition, p. 28 and Karl Vollmöller, 'Zum *Joufrois*', *Romanische Forschungen* 1 (1883): 138-141.

¹⁴ Fay and Grigsby seem to agree it belongs in the thirteenth century, but a later or earlier position has not been determined; they suggest a dating shortly after 1250 although the grounds for this are somewhat arbitrary. See Introduction to *Joufroi de Poitiers*, p. 14.

¹⁵ Fay and Grigsby, Introduction to *Joufroi*, pp. 16-26.

¹⁶ John L. Grigsby, 'The Historicity of *Joufroi de Poitiers*, a Thirteenth-Century Adventure Romance', *Yearbook of the American Philosophical Society* (1967): 537-9, p. 538 refers to *PB* and *BI* as 'immediate predecessors' of *Joufroi*.

¹⁷ On the dating of *Partonopeu de Blois*, see articles by Penny Eley and Penny Simons: 'The Prologue to *Partonopeus de Blois*: Text, Context and Subtext' *French Studies* 49 (1995): 1-16 and 'Partonopeus de Blois and Chrétien de Troyes: a reassessment' *Romania* 117 (1999): 316-341.

¹⁸ These are suggested, for example, in Robert W. Hanning, *The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1977), especially pp. 195, 222. See also the brief summary of parallels in Anthime Fourrier, *Le courant réaliste dans le roman courtois en France au moyen-âge* (Paris, Nizet, 1960), pp. 448-9.

¹⁹ MS T appears to follow the other 5 at this point, but a missing folio means that we only have the end of this sequence in this particular MS witness. For a comparison of manuscript variants, consult the online edition by Penny Eley *et al*: *Partonopeus de Blois: An Electronic Edition*, HriOnline, 2005 <http://www.hrionline.shef.ac.uk/partonopeus>. See in particular metaline 11165, and the Manuscript Information for MS T.

²⁰ Translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

²¹ The Continuation is preserved in 5 MSS – BGLPT. B and L end after the Anselot episode, P and G start the next section relating the war with the Sultan, but only T gives a full text of this episode. LPT all omit portions of the story they tell, to the point of unintelligibility. See Gildea's edition, vol 2, part 2, p. 2 and the *Electronic Edition*, episodes 9 and 10. The author of *Partonopeus* is unknown, but critics generally agree that the Continuation is not by the same poet as the main text; whether the original poet, or the continuator, included the initial promise to continue the text is not an issue, as the continued text was probably in circulation by the late 1170s.

²² Renaut uses the *bel samblant* as a structuring device in the composition of *Le Bel Inconnu*. See my article 'The *Bel Sanblant*: Reading *Le Bel Inconnu*', *French Studies*, 50 (1996): 257-274.

²³ Halász, Katalin, *Images d'auteur dans le roman médiéval (XI^e-XII^e siècles)* (Debrecen, Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1992), pp. 70-1.

²⁴ This extreme youth (*Partonopeus* is just thirteen years old) is toned down in later versions in other vernaculars: The Catalan version makes him 'less than fifteen', the Middle English version raises the age to a much less shocking eighteen years and the Icelandic *Partalopa Saga* takes the age of fifteen, but justifies it by introducing a variant on the *puer senex* topos which makes the hero's youth more acceptable.

²⁵ See comments by Matilda Bruckner in her chapter on *Partonopeus de Blois* in *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 110-156, especially p.110; similar comments have been made by Catherine

Hilton in *Convention and Innovation in 'Partonopeu de Blois'*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Massachusetts, 1984.

²⁶ This competitive element in the bedroom encounters shows a similar strategy to the 'portrait competition' between the rival heroines described by Alice M. Colby-Hall, 'Frustration and Fulfillment: the Double Ending of the *Bel Inconnu*', *Yale French Studies* 67 (1984): 120-134. See also Alice Colby, *The Portrait in Twelfth-Century French Literature: and Example of the Stylistic Originality of Chrétien de Troyes* (Geneva, Droz, 1965).

²⁷ See Matilda Brucker, *Shaping Romance*.

²⁸ See the discussions by Jeri Guthrie and Laurence de Looze (see above, note 8).

²⁹ *Art and Artifice* p. 265.

³⁰ See my analysis of the narrative subversion, 'Love, Marriage and Transgression in *Joufroi de Poitiers*: a Case of Literary Anarchism?' in *Discourses on Love, Marriage and Transgression in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Tempe, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004), pp. 225-241.

³¹ On the identification of Renaut, see Alain Guerreau, 'Renaut de Bâgé: le *Bel Inconnu*. Structure symbolique et signification sociale', *Romania* 102 (1982): 28-82.

³² See Fay and Grigsby, Introduction pp 16-17.

³³ This possible attribution was first suggested by C. Chabaneau in his review of Konrad Hofman and Franz Muncker's edition, *Joufrois, altfranzösisches Rittergedicht zum ersten Mal herausgegeben* (Halle, Niemeyer, 1880), *Revue des langues romanes* 19 (1881): 88-91.

³⁴ Chroniclers, including Gerald of Wales and Roger of Howden, describe Geoffrey as deceitful and a trickster. See the references quoted by W L Warren, *King John*, 2nd edition (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1978), pp. 31-32.

³⁵ On the implications of the possible associations of another Robert, Robert d'Arbrissel, see Fay and Grigsby p. 17, note 10.

³⁶ See Penny Eley and Penny Simons, 'Text and Context'.

³⁷ Warren, *King John*, p. 188. Turner also comments on John's preference for his French advisors and mercenaries, *King John*, p. 18.

³⁸ Roger of Wendover's chronicle, *The Flowers of History*, completed by Matthew Paris, is one of the most influential, negative, sources on King John. See the comments by Warren, *King John*, pp. 11-14.

³⁹ Warren *King John*, p. 189.

⁴⁰ The author of the *Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre* describes John as 'de bieles femes ... trop couvoiteus'. See the edition by Michel, quoted by Ralph V Turner, *King John* (Longman, London & New York, 1994), p. 216, note 52.

⁴¹ Turner, *King John*, p. 216. Also mentioned in Warren *King John*, p. 189.

⁴² A Continuation of the 'Historia Rerum Anglicarum' ed. Richard Howlett in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I* volume 2 (Rolls series, 1885), p. 521.

⁴³ See, for example, John Baldwin's *Artistocratic Life in Medieval France: the Romances of Jean Renart and Gerbert de Montreuil* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) for an extensive discussion on the ways in which a 'realistic' trend is visible in Jean Renart's work.

⁴⁴ This is the date suggested by the most recent editor. See Hue de Rotelande, *Ipomedon*, ed. A. J. Holden (Paris, Klincksieck, 1979), p. 11.