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# Family, feud, and fertility in late Medieval Artois and Flanders

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**SUMMARY:** 1.—Introduction. 2.—Fertility and literature. 3.—Connections to medical knowledge. 4.—Feuds and failing families. 5.—The families and the manuscript. 6.—Additions, innovation and change. 7.—Conclusions.

**ABSTRACT:** This case study considers the origins, content and ownership of the Fifteenth Century manuscript MS Kassel, Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt und Landesbibliothek 4.º med. 1. It examines the ways in which a number of vernacular texts in this manuscript were influenced by social and cultural forces in the area in which it was produced, an area which is now well known for its female patronage of religious charitable foundations and the number of illegitimate births. Considering the contents of the compilation with its interest in fertility, connections to other miscellanies and their circulation alongside an anonymous Romance prose text *Le Comte d'Artois et sa femme*, this study argues that the Kassel compilation was put together with the express purpose to address healthcare and fertility needs of the families and the community in which the owner/s lived. This miscellany is just one of the many late medieval manuscripts that help us to understand why vernacular texts on women's medicine and fertility were disseminated in the late medieval period and how their contents were circulating outside of scholarly circles. It demonstrates that by putting two sets of evidence together, textual analysis and genealogy, fruitful new areas can be uncovered.

**KEY WORDS:** vernacular medicine, Artois, Kassel, fertility, women, book-owners.

## 1. Introduction

The personal ownership of late medieval compilations such as Kassel Landesbibliothek 4º Med. 1 (Kassel), is rarely known. Kassel, however, is one of two notable exceptions, the other is a fifteenth-century manuscript, MS Lille, Bibliothèque municipale, 863 (Lille) in which the owner, Bauduin Cauwet,

recorded his name<sup>1</sup>. In 1446 (Jo.) of Herzelle *altarum sedium cappellany* [chaplain]<sup>2</sup> appears to have asserted his ownership in the compilation studied here. Both of these towns were important ecclesiastical centres, well endowed with canons and chaplains. Jean's status as a chaplain is used in this study to explain the motive for the manuscript's creation (Genealogy: Appendix 1). Kassel and Lille are both known for their copies of one of the discrete texts that formed the *Trotula* compendium, the *Livre de sinthomatibus mulierum* (*LSM: Book on the Conditions of Women*)<sup>3</sup>. However, the copy in Kassel, although connected to this iconic work on women's medicine by its contents, gives no immediate indication of its origins or provenance as the title is missing<sup>4</sup>. This lack of title, together with the augmentation of the clerical prologue, is perfectly in keeping with a chaplain's role of pastoral care. The prologue runs directly into the medical section which firmly focusses on fertility and creation (fol. 16v)<sup>5</sup>. Despite its religious didactic overtones the unusual prologue can also be read as a simple *physiognomy*, where man is viewed as part of the cosmos and, as such, affected by the movement of the planets and stars, an interest which is echoed in other texts which were then collated into this manuscript (n.° 24, 27 and 28). (Analysis: Appendix II). The texts date to between 1420 and 1440 and fall into three distinct sections which were made by three hands, of which two appear to have been a collaborative effort. When these discrete sections were bound into one volume, around

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1. Green, Monica. A handlist of Latin and Vernacular manuscripts of the so-called *Trotula*. Texts, Scriptorium. 1997; 51 (1): 80-103, p. 91 and 92. MS Lille 863, owned by a canon at Tournai, and chaplain of the Hospital at Hesdin is the subject of another case study which is in preparation.
  2. I am grateful to Brigitte Pfeil for confirming the transcription for me and for the reference. Given the context I suggest that *altarum sedium cappelany* is an indication that at some point Jean of Herzelles (and perhaps a companion) were a member of a chaplaincy and, in some way, connected to the Cathedrals of Tournai and later Lille. This phrase is also found in an inscription on a memorial in Tournai for two *Magistri* both of whom were *Fratres*. *Mémoires de la Société Historique et Littéraire de Tournai*; 1877, p. 133.
  3. Green, Monica, ed. and trans. The *Trotula*. A Medieval compendium of women's medicine. Philadelphia: Penn, University of Philadelphia; 2001.
  4. Another closely related copy that cleverly combines a popular *Régime* and the *Trotula* is recorded in MS London, British Library Lansdowne 380. See Tyers, Theresa. In the merry month of May: Instructions for ensuring fertility in MS British Library, Lansdowne 380. *Social History of Medicine*. 2016; 29 (2): 267-289.
  5. That Adam, and the rest of creation, was formed from the elements is an ancient and widespread idea. See d'Alvery, M. T. L'homme comme symbole. Le microcosme. In: Mor C. G. et al. *Simboli e simbologia nell' alto Medioevo*. Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di studio sull' alto Medioevo 23, Spoleto: Presso Sede del Centro; 1976, p. 123-183.

1470, a number of the folios were misplaced<sup>6</sup>. At the outset, the compiler of the index for the oldest section, explains his aim in bringing these texts together, stating that they were collated: «avoir congnoissance des conditions des personnes et de plusieurs remedes pour conforter les personnes» (To learn about peoples' nature and of many remedies to aid and comfort them). As with other copies of the *LSM* the compiler has included another thirteenth-century popular vernacular work, often referred to as Aldobrandino de Siena's *Livre de physicke* (in later copies *Régime du corps*). Again there are signs of adaptation and change taking place in the transmission of this text as with the other items in this compilation (n.° 8, 8a, and 8b)<sup>7</sup>. The changes that have taken place in Kassel, along with the named owner, offers the opportunity to shed further light on how vernacular texts on medicine enabled families to look after their own health, how this knowledge was curated and how practical texts such as these were disseminated<sup>8</sup>. Despite some Latin the overriding language used is the vernacular of the area in which it was composed<sup>9</sup>. It is with emphasise on the vernacular texts and the people in this part of late medieval France who, I argue, were connected to the manuscript, that this article examines the range of texts chosen by the compiler(s) to reveal its internal logic and show how the miscellany was used to foster fertility.

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6. For a complete description of the contents, including watermarks and misplaced folios (in German) see: Broszinski, Hartmut. *Die Handschriften Murhardschen Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel und Landesbibliothek, Band 3.1, Manuscripta Medica*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz; 1976, p. b19-23 [cited 1 June 2016]. Available from: [http://bilder.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de/hs/katalogseiten/HSK0036\\_b019.jpg.htm](http://bilder.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de/hs/katalogseiten/HSK0036_b019.jpg.htm).
  7. Féry-Hue, Françoise. *Le Régime du corps d'Aldebrandin de Siena. Complement a la tradition manuscrite*. Romania. 1999; 117: 51-77; Nicoud, M. *Naissance et diffusion d'une écriture médicale en Italie et en France (XIIIe- XVe siècle)*, Rome: Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome; 2007, p. 416-438.
  8. See Nichols, Stephen G.; Wenzel, Siegfried, eds. *The whole book: Cultural perspectives on the Medieval miscellany. Recentiores later Latin texts and contexts*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996. Cabré, Montserrat. *From a master to a laywoman: A feminine manual of self-help*. *Dynamis*. 2000; 20: 371-393.
  9. A number are listed in listed in: *A digital resource based on Lynn Thorndike and Pearl Kibre. A Catalogue of incipits of Mediaeval scientific writings in Latin*. Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy, 1963; with supplements in 1965 and 1968; online at <https://medievalacademy.sit-ym.com/?page=Books#etk>.

## 2. Fertility and literature

Like many early vernacular collections of household recipes and remedies Kassel is written in Picard, the vernacular of north-eastern France bordering Flanders, an area which was regularly contested: attacked by the King's supporters and defended by factions loyal to the Anglo-Burgundy alliance whose members included a number of the families focussed on in this study<sup>10</sup>. A number of the old families of Artois: Roubaix, Herzelles, Lannoy, Ghisteltes, and Wavrin were closely connected through their lands and marriage alliances which had been forged over generations. The Burgundian court was a centre of learning and also patronage for literature and the arts and it was peopled with well-connected and powerful families and as I will argue, questions of dynasty, and therefore fertility, were always of concern.

A comparative analysis of fifteenth-century *mise en prose* of a number of earlier vernacular romances reveals a change that was taking place in this society and as Rosalind Brown-Grant points out: «a heightened preoccupation with marital roles in texts of the later period becomes apparent»<sup>11</sup>. A sign of this preoccupation is evident in a romance work, owned by a figure who moved in the same orbit as the owners of Kassel, Jean *le bâtard* du Wavrin. This anonymous work, the *Comte d'Artois et sa femme*, effectively highlights the changes taking place to such an extent that the romance of the *Comte d'Artois* stands out as a particularly enlightening study of how pastoral attempts, such as those of chaplains, to teach the correct mode of husbandly behaviour resulted in works that: «were permeated by elements of gender ideology, from fields as diverse as medicine, canon law and marriage»<sup>12</sup>. This text speaks of a couple's sterility and a woman's actions to cure her husband's melancholia a condition mentioned in the medical texts in Kassel. The story explains how this condition was brought on by the Count's inability to become a father and, as such, considered unable to take his rightful place in society. This motif of infertility, within a legitimate marriage, read alongside a wife's successful, if somewhat cunning attempts to cure the problems, draws attention to the cultural setting in which it was

10. For a background to political unrest in this period see Dumolyn, Jan. The terrible Wednesday of Pentecoste. *History*. 2007; 92 (305): 3-20.

11. Brown-Grant, Rosalind. Learning to be a good husband: competing masculine identities in the Roman du Comte d'Artois. *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales*. 2002; 9: 1-17.

12. Brown-Grant, n. 11, p. 3.

written, and I suggest that, this setting is one that is reflected in lives of the families who were inextricably linked, and is seen through the story of their landed estates<sup>13</sup>. The Kassel compilation, therefore, points to an owner, or commissioner, who were keen to have health knowledge to hand with which to further their dynastic aims. In compiling the work Jean of Herzelles, chaplain, was drawing on the medical knowledge of the well-known physician from Tournai, Jacques Despars (c. 1380?-1458).

### 3. Connections to medical knowledge

The Kassel compilation contains two short texts attributed to Master Jacques Despars: a short remedy to aid digestion («comforter l'estomac» fol. 153v), and a plague regimen (n.º 10). This regimen follows directly on from the *Vivendier* and given the expanded title now including the attribution to Despars: *Pour se garder contre pestilence du conseil Maistre Jacques Despars* (n.º 10). This well-known physician, studied in Paris and Montpellier, before returning to his native town and Cambrai<sup>14</sup>. During the period 1411-1419, he was a Regent at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris and he also held a number of key roles in Burgundian society. When Canon and Treasurer of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame of Tournai, he was called upon to attend the Duke of Burgundy. As with other physicians in the Duke's employ, Despars also acted as an advisor or ambassador on numerous occasions<sup>15</sup>. His political activities brought him into contact with Jean V of Roubaix and Herzelles, the Lannoy brothers<sup>16</sup>, and the Ghistelles. Compelling evidence that Jacques Despars was in contact with at least one woman of the Ghistelles' clan is revealed in his commentary on the Canon of ibn Sīnā (Avicenna in the West) where he

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13. A number of early twelfth- and thirteenth-century Charters shows the relationship between the families. Luridan, Théodore. *Sources de l'Histoire de Roubaix*, Roubaix: E. Dardenne; 1882.
  14. Jacquart, Danielle. *Le regard d'un médecin sur son temps: Jacques Despars 1380?-1458*. Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes. Tome 138. Paris, Genève: Librairie Droz; 1980, p. 35-86.
  15. For evidence of Despars' practical experience and his thoughts on medical practice see Jacquart, Danielle. *Everyday practice, and three fifteenth-century physicians*. *Osiris* 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 6 (Renaissance medical learning: evolution of a tradition). 1990; 140-160.
  16. With two nobles of Flemish and Dutch origins, who also spoke French, these four men carried out over 100 missions for Philippe le Bon. Spitzbarth, Anne-Brigitte. *Le choix des ambassadeurs bourguignons sous Philippe le Bon, troisième duc Valois de Bourgogne (1419-1467): la stratégie de la spécialisation, entre savoir-être et savoir-faire*. *Le Diplomate en Question (XVe-XVIIIe siècles)*. 2010; 3: 37-60.

refers to a Marguerite of Ghistelles. Despars notes that Marguerite was: «très experte dans l'arrachage des dents», an expert in the practice of pulling teeth<sup>17</sup>. Coupled with their connection with the court this comment, therefore, strongly suggest that Despars and the Ghistelles were, indeed, in contact<sup>18</sup>.

The simple plague text attributed to Despars given in Kassel (other advice is given in n.° 11, 15, 17, 18 and 32) is quite unlike any other contemporary work and, once again, points to a personal interest in the choice of this particular text<sup>19</sup>. It is a relatively short tract, and its advice is essentially practical as it gives simple suggestions such as moving away from the area, a special diet and how to mitigate the symptoms of contagion; all of which was much needed advice in an area which was historically prone to plague outbreaks, for instance in Artois and Flanders in 1438-1439 at the time of the texts found in Kassel. Despars also shows an awareness of other local health problems as he comments on an unusual condition affecting the gums of the inhabitants of the Tournai area<sup>20</sup>. This localised condition caused bleeding and distress for sufferers and for which a remedy is given in one of Kassel's treatises. Despars, unlike the compilers of Kassel, appears to be unaware of the female practice of using aromatic fumigations to aid fertility as he merely notes, that he has heard by hearsay that the women of the Kingdom of Navarre are accustomed to carrying out this treatment before going to their husbands. He adds vaguely: perhaps to aid conception, «peut-être pour favoriser la conception»<sup>21</sup>. Just like the prologue for the medicinal waters' text the plague advice is addressed to all, including the vulnerable in the community. He shows an awareness of the effect of the use of his treatments on pregnant women, and children under the age of fourteen, as he adds the warning that they should neither be bled, nor given the commonly used pills when thought to have been in contact with the plague (fol. 166v).

17. Lauriou, Bruno. *Le règne de Taillevent: livres et pratiques culinaires à la fin du moyen age*. Paris: Publications de La Sorbonne; 1997, p. 174. Although it should be noted that she would have been quite young to have attracted such attention, and the Ghistelles family had several women by the name of Marguerite during Jacques' lifetime: <http://racineshistoire.free.fr/LGN/PDF/Ghistelles.pdf> [cited 1 June 2016].

18. This contact is further underlined with the ownership history of MS Lille 863 where the Vilain family also occurs. An article focussing on this manuscript is in preparation.

19. Despars' interest in plague tests which is discussed in Jacquart, n. 15.

20. Jacquart, n. 14, p. 65.

21. Jacquart, n. 14, p. 44.

#### 4. Feuds and failing families

Untangling the tightly woven alliances made between the old families of Artois and Flanders' is no easy task; anomalies occur and patronyms are not always stable. For example, occasionally, families took a matronymic name to underline their claim to fiefs or lordship which continued down the lineage. The Wavrin family's successful strategy, to which Jean *le bâtard* of Wavrin, seigneur de Forestel and owner of the *Comte d'Artois* romance belonged, was also to form marriage alliances with other, equally important, families. The unification of the Roubaix and Herzelles fiefs had resulted from a failure of heirs in the Herzelles clan in the previous generation and feuding factions of Burgundy and fief holders<sup>22</sup>. In 1381 Sohier de Herzeelles [*sic*] petitioned before the Magistrate in Brussels to claim forfeited lands. He was the second son through his father's third marriage to Sybille of Haverskerke: «filius quondam Jean dominus de Herzelle»<sup>23</sup>, a marriage which, once again, reinforced an earlier alliance in these families. Sohier married Marguerite de Puthem (Pittem) an heiress and fief holder in her own right. However, a lack of legitimate heirs from this marriage<sup>24</sup>, and Sohier's own political misjudgement, resulted in Jean V of Roubaix acquiring the Herzelles' fief which included the border lands of the lordship of Alast (Alost)<sup>25</sup> and the rights of the mayoralty of Dudzeelles (*l'ammanscep du Dudzelles*)<sup>26</sup>. The land transfer and acquisition of the lordship brought the Roubaix, Herzelles and Ghistelles clans into closer contact<sup>27</sup>. Marguerite of Ghistelles, of whom more later, was the granddaughter

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22. In 1381 Rasse de Herzelee died at Nevels. The previous year the lordship's property had been devastated by the Count's army who demolished the castle, the mills and the *halles*. Soens, Tim. Évolution et gestion du domaine comtal en Flandre sous Louis de Male et Philippe le Hardi (1346-1404). *Revue du Nord*. 2001; 83 (339): 33.
  23. *Bulletin de la Commission Historique du Département du Nord*, Tome XVII. Lille: 1986, p. 259.
  24. Archival evidence reveals that this family's history is rife with illegitimate children. An unnamed illegitimate son was with Jean of Luxembourg in 1418 in Paris where he is listed with a number of «mauvais garçons» and he appears again in 1421. Oste de Roubaix, the brother of Jean V de Roubaix et Herzelle, was another illegitimate male member of the family and possibly the father of one of the «mauvais garçons». Leuridan, Théodore, *Sources de l'histoire de Roubaix*. Dardenne/Roubaix; 1881, p. 159.
  25. See Lettenhove, M. Baron Kervyn. *Oeuvres de Froissart, Publiées avec les variants divers des manuscrits, chroniques, Tome Vingt et unieme. Table analytique des noms historiques*, CL-IVR. Bruxelles: Comptoir Universel d'Imprimerie et de Librairie; 1875, p. 549-551.
  26. Leuridan, Théodore. *Histoire des seigneurs et de la seigneurie de Roubaix*. Roubaix: 1882, p. 362. The acceptance is found on fol. 78v. 1408, décembre à Paris.
  27. Soens, n. 22, 36.



of Gui of Ghisteltes *le viel* who, in 1401, also held lands that fell within the lordship of Roubaix at Wasquehal-La-Marque and Broeucq. In 1440, on the death of her brother, another Gui, the property passed to the female line through Marguerite. Marguerite married Pierre (1415-1498)<sup>28</sup>, son of Jean V of Roubaix and Herzelles and Agnès of Lannoy. Agnès's highly regarded brother, Hugues of Lannoy *seigneur de Santes* (d.1428) married Marguerite of Bécourt (d.1461), however, this union produced no issue.

Marguerite was a pious and devout woman who by marriage was also niece of Agnès Lannoy (1382-1464). There is no direct evidence to prove that Jean of Herzelles, the clerical owner of Kassel in 1446, was an illegitimate son of Rasse of Herzelles known for his liaisons but of which there are no records. The name and connections to the families discussed here, nevertheless, all point to this manuscript and its source texts, circulating within the orbit of these families and also that of the canons and Chapter houses of both Lille and Tournai. A Jean VI of Roubaix is documented in 1470 who, curiously, appears to have been a son of Robert V of whom nothing further is known. It is Agnès of Lannoy and Jean V's legitimate son and heir, Pierre (1415-1498), who married Marguerite of Ghisteltes that brought these two families together in this generation, but the fertility of this legitimate union was, once again, limited as after Isabeau's two sons died at a young age the male line again failed<sup>29</sup>. Before this failure, however, in 1453 Hugues of Lannoy and Marguerite of Bécourt (Pierre of Roubaix and Herzelles' devout and childless aunt and uncle) moved into a substantial house in the parish of Saint-Pierre, located a few steps away from the canons' cloister<sup>30</sup>.

In fifteenth-century Lille and Tournai there was no shortage of canons, chaplains or notaries capable of making copies of medical texts and other works available to high-status families of which the bourgeois of Lille, many of whom were money changers formed a pivotal role. And, as Mikhaël Harsgor has succinctly pointed out, canons were an essential part of this society as, in

28. Gui de Ghisteltes also had one natural son Charles, *grand bailli de Gand* in 1494. In recording his land holdings in 1458 Pierre de Roubaix claims the land through the right of his wife: *Premiers le fief et seigneurie de Wasquehal qui fu à feu Mon<sup>s</sup>. Jehan de Ghistelle le quel me appartient à cause de Marguerite de Ghistelle sa fille et au present m'espeuze*. Bulletin de La Commission Historique du Département du Nord, Tome XVII. Lille; 1986: 340.

29. Schnerb, Bertrand. Piété et culture d'une noble dame. Au cloître et dans le monde: femmes, hommes et sociétés (IXe-XVe siècle), eds., Henriot, Patrick; Legras, Anne-Mare. Paris: Presses l'Universitaire de Paris-Sorbonne; 2000, 235-246.

30. Schnerb, n. 29, 237.

effect, «they collectively formed the intelligentsia of the Burgundian state»<sup>31</sup>. It is also notable that although some remained unmarried, in keeping with their defined role, not all were celibate. Their status, however, had other benefits as they were free from the responsibility of providing for families or managing lands<sup>32</sup>. Burgundian society's acceptance of illegitimacy, from the Duke down, would have allowed illegitimate males, such as Jean of Herzelles, Jean of Wavrin, and Jean of Lannoy to openly refer to themselves by their patronyms. Furthermore, many canons exercised their talents widely: notaries, administrators, councillors, chaplains, musicians, doctors and diplomats. As such their role in society was not only indispensable but their talents led to a rise in social status for a man of non-noble birth. Illegitimacy, therefore, did not act as a barrier to progress. Using the strategies of acquiring clerical status, and of condoning illegitimacy, the problem of what to do with bastard sons was commonly solved by arranging for them to have a clerical life<sup>33</sup>. However, a brief survey of the families studied here reveal this supposed stain of illegitimacy did nothing to reduce the numbers and often these children were legitimised for dynastic reasons. The artistic and literary side of this clerical and bourgeois dominated society, in which the Kassel manuscript was created, is also evident in the inclusion of a small fragment of a ballad by Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377) that has been used as a paste-down<sup>34</sup>. Scholars have shown how Burgundian patronage of literature and the arts flourished in this period in many ways including the re-working of the romance texts cited earlier. Given that the background to a surprising number of canons in Lille and Tournai was one of learning, music and illegitimacy<sup>35</sup>, I posit that this was a perfect environment to produce the compilation in Kassel. It has answers to questions of fertility which would further the dynastic aspirations and ambitions of the families discussed here.

31. Harsgor, Mikhaël. L'essor des bâtards nobles au XVe siècle. *Revue Historique*; 1975: 332.

32. Brine, Douglas. Chapter, commemorating the Canons of St. Omer. In: *Pious Memories. The wall mounted memorial in the Burgundian Netherlands*. Leiden: Brill; 2015, p. 97.

33. Brine, n. 32, p. 93.

34. Staehelin, Martin. Ein Fragment des frühen 15. Jahrhunderts mit Musik, u.a. von Machaut in Kassel. In: *Kleinüberlieferung mehrstimmige Musik vor 1550 im Deutschen Sprachgebiet*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter; 2012, p. 49-52.

35. La société bourguignonne de XVe siècle ne faisait pas une grande distinction entre enfants légitimes et enfants illégitimes sur ce terrain. Les bâtards eux-mêmes ne font pas non plus la différence et se louent de leur famille paternelle comme s'ils en faisaient partie intégrante. Harsgor, M. L'essor des bâtards nobles au XVe siècle. *Revue Historique*. 1975; 253(2): 319-354 (332).

## 5. The families and the manuscript

Bruno Laurioux, in his work describes the copy in Kassel as a partial borrowing of sections of the classic *Viandier* which has been supplemented with additional material. He notes the close affinities between Kassel's copy (n.º 9) and, the copy found in the *Mesnagier de Paris* (ms Paris, BnF. 6739), dated to the second half of the fifteenth century<sup>36</sup>. He describes this particular copy as a working manuscript —additions have been made in the margin— concludes that it is written in one hand, and notes that it has been produced with little illumination<sup>37</sup>. This manuscript is known to have been owned by Pierre of Roubaix and Herzelles and his wife Marguerite of Ghisteltes (d. 1495)<sup>38</sup>. Laurioux notes the ownership (or dedication to) Roubaix and Ghisteltes, but does not explore the connections further to this manuscript and Kassel<sup>39</sup>. The *Mesnagier de Paris*' contents cover a range of subjects, all of which, although addressed to a woman, would have been disseminated to the household. Agnès of Lannoy, Guillebert and Hugues Lannoy were bibliophiles and Hugues' connections with advice literature went further. He is credited with composing the work in the style of the widely read *Mirror for Princes*, known as: *L'Enseignement de vraie noblesse, de l'Instruction d'un jeune prince et des Enseignements paternels*<sup>40</sup>. These works were aimed at giving guidance on manners which he considered to be fit for knights and for courtly circles, and which would have been implemented in his own household, and inculcated into his relations families' comportment. This conduct book should be viewed as the partner text to the *Mesnagier de Paris* and also complementary to the texts found in Kassel aimed at caring for a family's health and its fertility.

36. Greco, Gina M.; Rose, Christine, M., eds. *The good wife's guide (Le Ménagier de Paris): A Medieval household book*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press; 2009.

37. Laurioux, n. 17, p. 119.

38. Laurioux, n. 17, p. 169.

39. Laurioux, n. 17, p. 120.

40. Sterchi, Bernard. Hugues de Lannoy, auteur de *L'Enseignement de vraie noblesse, de l'Instruction d'un jeune prince et des Enseignements paternels*. *Le Moyen Age*. 2004; 50: 79-117. Available from: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-le-moyen-age-2004-1-page-79.htm>

## 6. The manuscript and its texts

While it is now too simplistic to equate vernacular texts with a female readership, the use of vernacular languages, nevertheless, facilitated exchanges of medical knowledge between doctors and patients<sup>41</sup>. Kassel, like others, provides a complementary blend of materials set within a natural philosophical framework, a setting where astrological and divinatory texts form a necessary part of healthcare in this period. This framework was familiar to university trained physicians, such as Jacques Despars, and also clerics like Jean of Herzelles<sup>42</sup>. While astrological or astronomical texts were the subject of debate in scholastic circles, their common use in prognosis, blood-letting or medical practice, ensured their continuing inclusion in medical texts and regimens (nos. 24, 27, 28, 29)<sup>43</sup>. Other treatments, such as blood-letting and diagnosis by urines (n.° 22), and herbals (nos. 20), useful synonyma lists (n.° 13), and a range of recipe collections (nos. 12, 14, 16, 19, 21, 25, 26, 30, 31) all created healthcare manuals which were practical and useful to families with ambition.

The first section of the manuscript, the earliest, is written in a practised neat hand. The compiler has given a useful index which he describes: «*Isi commenche le table de plusieurs choses en ce present livre escript...*» (Here begins the table of many things which are contained [written] in this present book). This section, which still has its original folio numeration, points to its use prior to having the later material added. It suggests clerical involvement,

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41. See for example: Mellyn, Elizabeth Walker. *Passing on secrets: interactions between Latin and vernacular medicine in Medieval Europe*. I Tatti Studies. 2013; 16: 289-310; Stolberg, Michael. *Learning from the common folks: academic physicians and medical lay culture in the 16th century*. Social History of Medicine. 2014; 27 (4): 649-667; Leong, Elaine. «*Herbals she peruseth*»: reading medicine in early modern England. Renaissance Studies. 2014; 28 (4): 556-578. For the development of the meaning of «*secrets*» in medical literature see: Jacquart, Danielle. *Recherches médiévales sur la nature humaine: Essais sur la réflexion médicale (XIIIe-XVe s.)*. Micrologus' Library, 63. Florence: SISMEL-Edizioni del Galluzzo; 2014.
  42. Naoë, Kukita, ed. *Medicine, religion and gender in medieval culture*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer; 2015. The crossover between religion and healthcare is found in a manuscript owned by another family with close ties to the families discussed in this article, and particularly Jean le bâtard de Wavrin. MS Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France coté Nouvelle acquisition française 4412: Marchandisse, Alain et Bertrand Schnerb, *Le livre de prière de Robert et Marguerite Seigneur et Dame de Wavrin fin XV<sup>e</sup>*. Rencontres d'Avignon 17-20 septembre 2009. N.° 50. Available from: <https://orbi.ulg.ac.be/bitstream/2268/115680/1/Art.%20Wavrin.pdf>.
  43. Klaassen, Frank. *The transformations of magic: illicit learned magic in the later middle ages and renaissance*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press; 2013.

and while it is tempting to surmise that Jean (Jo.) of Herzelles was responsible for collating or copying the material, there is to date, no definitive proof. It does, however, end with a scribal colophon: «I ask the reader to pray for me so that after death I will be given the delights of heaven». «Mando lectori, Christum roget ore fideili vt det scriptori post mortem gaudia celi. Amen». There are a number of beautifully executed capitals and sufficient space has been left between the items to make it easy to read. The initial letters are also slashed with red, and important words are underlined, to help the reader navigate the text, by drawing attention to a range of women's remedies and other conditions. Latin is used occasionally in headings, in a small number of compound medicinal waters, which the compiler points out were gathered from «many sources» and the later texts. In the practical but incomplete *synonyma* list (n.º 12) a different and less expert hand, has extended the entry for *Artemisia* to include the local names of *bibeuf* and *armoyse*. This emmenagogue, widely used infertility treatment, is one of only a few of those listed where additions have been made demonstrating that the entries were of particular interest to the compiler. Again, when examining the texts forming the earliest part of this compilation and, particularly the *LSM*, *The Book on the Conditions of Women*, it is notable that a number address issues of women's health and fertility. For example, women's conditions appear at the very outset in the short treatise (n.º 1) that focusses on the therapeutic use of *poullieul* (*Mentha pulegium*)<sup>44</sup>, this includes the warning that it is dangerous for pregnant women to use. In the *LSM* the copyist's focus on fertility is also highlighted by the way in which he employs the introduction to rework the prologue (fol. 16v).

Despite the uneasy relationship between religion, physicians and astrology the prologue has, nevertheless, been developed further to form a cosmological physiognomy<sup>45</sup>. The religious undertone is emphasised through a creative explanation of how God resolved the problem of finding a name

44. For example see the Old French Herbal in which part of the Latin text explaining the possible use of this herb has been suppressed: Hunt, Tony, An Old French herbal MS Princeton U. L. Garrett 131. Turnhout: Brepols; 2008, p. 53.

45. The sometimes uneasy relationship between religion and astrology and its use and patronage by the Burgundian Court is described in Veenstra, J. R. Magic and divination at the courts of Burgundy and France: text and contexts of Lauren Pignon's 'Contre Les Devineurs' (1411). Leiden: Brill; 1998. Kassel also contains other physiognomies for example fols. 251r-257v. See also Porter, Martin. Windows of the soul: the art of physiognomy in European culture, 1470-1760. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2005, p. 72.

for Adam by linking the formation of Adam's name to the four cardinal points in the heavens<sup>46</sup>. The source of this first part of Kassel's unusual prologue is a vernacular translation of a popular non-canonical text known as the *Vitae Adae* (The Life of Adam)<sup>47</sup>. In Kassel the author reminds his readers, or listeners, that they will have already heard, this popular story: When our Lord made Adam as you have already heard «Quant Monseigneur eust adam fourme si comme vous avez oy», a phrase which also appears in Kassel's copy of Aldobrandino's *Régime du corps*: «Toutes chose sont faictes de .iiii. elemens si comme vous avez oy» (fol. 78r). The treatise on medicinal waters, fol. 37r-69r — a treatment prescribed by Jacques Despars for his female patients who complained about other less agreeable treatments<sup>48</sup> — is another example where, in Kassel, the compilers' preference for practical and easily accessible remedies shows:

«Chi comenche un traitties dauwes qui sont extraites de plusieurs herbes que li anchien filosofe firent jadis pour ce que toutes jauwes qui sont extraities des herbes et des fleurs par distillation sont plus soubtilles et plus vertueuses et maintes convuentes a toutes gens du monde que autres medicines nulles ... Car par les esues puelit on essouser et remedyer a pluseurs maladies secretez et plus publiques que soient ou monde en corps humain ou dehors [fol. 37v]».

[Here begins a treatise on waters which are extracted from many herbs which the ancient philosophers formerly made, so that all [medicinal] waters which are made from herbs and flowers by distillation are more subtle and effective and appropriate for everyone above all other medicines... For with these waters one can relieve and cure many private or openly visible illnesses illnesses, that may [occur] in the world, within the human body or externally].

As the remedies in the *LSM* begin the same hand in the margin, draws attention to three remedies which were intended to provoke menstruation to aid fertility (fol. 17v). On the following folio the fertility treatment (*le remede*) is also underlined and this pattern of underlining continues up

46. For a discussion on the origins of the *Adambooks* which includes references to his naming by the use of the four cardinal points and the question of the multiple linguistic versions see Murdoch, Brian. The apocryphal Adam and Eve in medieval Europe: vernacular translations and adaptations of the *Vitae Adae et Evae*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2009.

47. Dean, James, M. Domestic and material culture in the Middle English Adam Books. *Studies in Philology*. 2009; 1: 25-47.

48. Jacquot, n. 14, p. 54.

until the point where the treatments for childbirth (*pour enfanter*) begin (fol. 19v). Other changes have been made to this text when compared with the standardised version as edited by Monica Green cited earlier. For example, costly ingredients and aromatic internal and external ointments have been omitted, and, intriguingly, all reference to the use of pessaries has been lost.

## 6. Additions, innovation and change

I discussed above that astronomical or astrological knowledge continued to form an integral part of healthcare in the late medieval period. Unlike the earlier part, the added later texts, for example on astrology and astronomy, in a hand attempting to produce gothic lettering with red ink, show a lack of expertise and hurried work (e.g. n.º 27). A number of folios in the latter part of the manuscript are relatively neatly written but many of the pages are filled with script and there is little evidence that this section was consulted on a regular basis<sup>49</sup>. This is in contrast to the earlier part of the manuscript where, from the useful index through to a later remedy collection that finishes on fol. 226r, the production is, on the whole, of a better standard. As I stated earlier the compiler's intention was to produce a book which I posit started at page 1, now fol. 16r, in the rebound volume. The index, possibly added slightly later, provides detailed information, not always accurate, on where to find the contents: whether for medicinal waters, medical treatments, a range of culinary recipes or for chapters in Aldobrandino's *Régime*. On the whole, the use of rubrics and spaces between the paragraphs in this section have produced texts that are not only easily read but a number of which appear to have been set out with the express aim of allowing additions to be made over time for example the five remedies that have been added to fol. 223r in the spaces. It is these texts that I now focus on below.

As in other manuscripts the *LSM* (n.º 2) is accompanied with other popular works that provided a useful household health manual. For instance, the *Lettre d'Hippocrate* (n.º 3, 4)<sup>50</sup>. Aldobrandino's work (n.º 8a/8b/

49. An exception is the text on urines which was, most probably, part of the original book.

50. The text (on fol. 26r-37r) is described in Broszinski's catalogue as a *Phlebotomie* followed by urine diagnoses and a *receptaria*. The text on prognosis by urines (fol. 25r-26v) includes a number specifically for women. For the problem of identifying sources of remedies see Claude de Tovar, Contamination, interférences et tentatives de systématisation dans la tradition manuscrite des

8c)<sup>51</sup> and another well-known remedy collection (n.° 20) the work attributed to Philip the IV of France's (*Philippe le Bell*)<sup>52</sup>. In keeping with other copies, the Aldobrandino text also contains a wide range of health advice, including its chapter for co-habiting with a woman, (*de habiter a femme*) along with the customary warning of what illnesses will occur if too much time is spent with them (*pour savoir quelz maladies vient trop compaignier a femmes*, fol. 93r). This copy also contains the advice for pregnant women (fol. 108r) and for caring for neonates and the reader, by consulting other texts in the compilation, would have been able to concoct the remedies or follow the instructions given: for example, advice for stimulating mother's milk (fol. 208v). The treatment of infants (fol. 123r) also called for the use of rosewater for which the instructions are usefully given in the medicinal water section. This manuscript is also notable for its disordered remedy collection (n.° 11) which, again, includes a number of additional remedies aimed at treating female gynaecological conditions and which are also addressed to a female readership or audience<sup>53</sup>. The remedies, although not in the usual head to toe order, have been neatly set out on the pages so that they are easily consulted. As with other remedy collections a number are intended to treat excessive menstruation and include genital fumigations using incense, or in some cases simple herbs —these also appear in the *LSM*. What is remarkable is that this is the treatment for which, notably, Jacques Despars claimed ignorance. Nevertheless, given the evidence of this compilation, and of other manuscripts, the practice was widespread.

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réceptaires médicaux français: le réceptaire de Jean Sauvage, *Revue d'Histoires des Textes*. 1973; 3: 115-91.

51. Kassel contains two extracts from Aldobrandino's *Regime* in the section referred to as a *phlebotomie* (fol. 21r-25r). The full text attributed to Allis de Brandis is catalogued as *Aldobrandin de Sienne: Régime du corps* fol. 78r-153v. For the transmission of this thirteenth-century popular vernacular text see Fery-Hues, François. *Le Régime du corps d'Aldebrandin de Sienne: tradition manuscrite et diffusion*. Actes du 100e Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes, Section d'Histoire Médiévale et de philology. Montpellier: CTRS; 1987, p. 113-134. Kassel's copy has been identified as a redaction referred to by Fery-Hues as the *Roger Male Branche*. The oldest known copy was also mainly written in Picard: Landouzy, Louis et Roger Pepin. *Le régime ducorps de maître Aldebrandin de Sienne: texte français de XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Pepin; 1911.
52. Moulinier, L. *Roi garant ou roi guérisseur? Philippe le Bel et le corps, d'après le réceptaire mis sous son nom*. In *Etre médecin à la cour* (France, Italie, Espagne, XIIIe-XVIIIe siècle). Florence: SISMEL/Edizioni del Galluzzo; 2013, p. 131-148.
53. This collection is also found in varying formats in MS Lille 863 and MS London, British Library Sloane 2401.



One simple remedy calls for incense to be burnt on embers over which the woman is to place herself so that the fumes may enter. A novelty here is the domestic touch in that the patient should also be given goat's milk, still warm from the animal, each morning.

Externally used remedies would have been apparent to family and friends, such as the Roubaix and Herzelles, Bécourt and the Lannoys. Simple remedies, such as these were, therefore easily disseminated outside of the written sources. For instance, burning incense when used as a cleansing and fertility treatment is both symbolic and yet inescapable. Its perfume drifts on the air, evoking its use to passers-by, of purifying religious rituals and celebrations, of biblical stories or Guild processions and its perfume inevitably permeates clothing and textiles. Another remedy in this collection follows the long tradition of transference healing and symbolism. Here the instructions are given in two stages and intended to help a woman suffering from excessive menstruation. Firstly, it advises that she should drink a constrictive potion and after tie some of her hair to a tree in leaf. «Et lyes a la feme de ses cheveus autour dun vert arbre quel qui soit» (fol. 175v). Kassel, unusually, leaves the choice of what type of tree to the patient, adding pragmatically «whatever it might be».

In the later collection, to which a number of remedies have been added, a group of twelve remedies (fol. 211v) are aimed at treating women's gynaecological conditions. These begin with the phrase: For all the illnesses which women have that men do not have: «Pour tout les maladies que les femmes ont que les hommes nont point». They range from simple advice to drink sorrel infused in wine or used as a poultice on the genitals: «elles douvent boyre del oseille destempres, de vin, or elle le lient sur le member secret, en maniere de emplastres», to another fumigation but this time using burning or smouldering vine branches «vine caulz». These were to be plunged into cold water «mettent sus del eaue froide» over which the woman should place herself to benefit from the steam «elle facent que le fumee entre dedens elle par bas». The widespread use of spices is well attested in this period whether in culinary recipes, warming drinks such as hypocras, or a medicinal powder to aid digestion. Other domestic remedies are given for alleviating excessive menstruation, where spice is used in a hot potion with white wine, «Prenguent du piement et le cuisent en vin blanc et boyuent ce vin caulz»; simply eaten «mengier celle herbe», or, alternatively, made into a type of pancake or omelette «Et que cuiyent le dit piement en .i. raton de oeufs et le mengeieynt la widengue de menstruum cesse». Where instructions

are given for excessive menstruation they are often couched in terms which might suggest that they are addressed to a male or female audience. However, the instructions following the suggestion that sorrel (oseille) should be used as either a decoction or plaster, rather than a pessary, makes it clear that it is the women themselves who are to carry out the treatment «ou elle le lient sur le membre secret, en maniere de emplastres» fol. 211v. As elsewhere simple herbal remedies are included to stimulate the menses, and therefore aid fertility, such as through the use of an unusual and perhaps locally devised medicated pessary, which was to be made from corn-cockle, lanolin rich wool and cloth. «Ou autrement prenez fleur de neele et en fait .i. petit tontelet et le mettes en .i. drapel si le boicte en sa nature» fol. 210v. Like other collections Kassel's also includes treatments for women in childbirth. For example on fol. 211r under the heading for women's illnesses «pour le mal des femmes» there are remedies to help women at the time of parturition and in cases of miscarriage. Many of these call for herbal preparations such as the commonly used mugwort or, unusually in Kassel, the juice of Our Lady's Seal (Sigillum Sanctae Mariae)<sup>54</sup>: «Se lenfant est mort ou ventre de la mere/elle doit boyre du jus del armoyse/ou on li doit mettre le paste sur le marris en maniere de emplastre/ou elle boyree du jus de seel notre dame».

## 7. Conclusion

Remedy and recipe collections such as those bound into Kassel along with its other health advice found an eager audience in late medieval society allowing the transmission of medical knowledge to percolate into literary and religious didactic texts. As we have seen the family alliances between members of the Roubaix, Herzelles, Ghistelles, Lannoy and associated clans reveal an almost impenetrable network of marriages and land transactions which were carried out over generations, with a number of illegitimate offspring among the birth records adding further confusion to their origins. But by the end of the fourteenth century the Herzelles lordship had, through the lack of immediate heirs, passed through the female line to the lordship of Roubaix. By the Fifteenth Century the Roubaix and a number of the Ghistelles lines, too, were also failing. Further evidence of dynastic anxiety

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54. I suspect a more detailed analysis would reveal further localised treatments.

on the part of Jean V might be the evidence from the 1432 Letters Patent of the legitimisation of his two natural daughters. Read against the background of the families' histories, and the textual evidence for advice for fertility, pregnant women and neonatal care in this compilation, allows us to view this manuscript as a collaborative effort by families to ensure children's survival and avoid a failure in lineage. Like other compilations of this type Jean of Herzelles's book may also have required the active cooperation of women and their families by lending him the texts or passing on their remedies to be written down. Outside of the domestic sphere, moreover, the women of the family, like the childless and devout Marguerite of Bécourt, were also proactively supporting the sick and poor in other ways. In 1488, following a female tradition of creating foundations and providing for charitable works, Isabeau, the only daughter and future heir of Pierre and Marguerite's property, with her father's permission, founded a hospital dedicated to St. Elizabeth<sup>55</sup>. The statutes for the hospital stipulated that it should care for twelve old and infirm women, two chaplains and two clerks [*douze vieilles dames paralytiques, deux chapelains et deux clers*]<sup>56</sup>. These men would have been ideally placed to read or collate and copy texts such as those found in Kassel or to have collated such knowledge for hospitals such as that of St. Jacques that sheltered pilgrims on the way to Compostela as well as caring for women lying-in and which, like many others, was also supported by Marguerite of Bécourt. With Isabeau's children the story of the direct line male of the Roubaix/Herzelles family ends and it is tempting to speculate that, along with her family's lands, Isabeau for a short time at least, also came into possession of Kassel. After all, she is also known as the commissioner of a rich Book of Hours (Paris, BN, Manuscrits de la médiathèque de Roubaix, Ms\_006bis), perhaps recognising in her prayers and her foundation (dedicated to a happily-married and saintly mother, Elisabeth of Hungary) her own fortunate fecundity. ■

55. This was a year after she was widowed and suggests she might have been making provision to withdraw from secular life.

56. The first stone was placed on the 24 March 1488 the Sisters, following the rule of St. Augustine took possession in 1494. Marissal. L. E. Recherches pour servir à l'histoire de la ville de Roubaix de 1400 à nos jours. Roubaix: Beghin; 1844, p. 200–203.