Traveling Companions

Narrative Diffusion of *Floire et Blancheflor* in Medieval Miscellany, 1325–1400

All models are wrong, but some are useful.

—George Box

There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.

—Mark Twain

Introduction

Identifying how a narrative travels from one place and time to another, and hence from one culture or community to another, remains a persistent problem in both folklore studies and literary history. Often, the movement of narratives must be triangulated and approximated from the surviving evidence. For the medieval period, such evidence is often scant and difficult to evaluate—of the narratives that survive in written material at all, many of those survive in only a handful of manuscripts. This article contends that when the manuscript corpus of a medieval narrative is found largely in a specific type of manuscript—the vernacular anthology

or miscellany—one can use the increased context provided by the anthology to trace the geographic and temporal diffusion of a narrative across literary communities and to see what companion narratives travel with a given story. Using the foundational European tale of Floire and Blancheflor, I explore what a narrative's "traveling companions" across its surviving corpus can tell us about the narrative cultures through which it traveled.

Floire and Blancheflor first appears in the written record as the twelfth-century Old French romance *Floire et Blancheflor*. It possesses a moderate number of manuscript witnesses, but not so many or so few as to render it an outlier among surviving Old French narratives. Further, the manuscript witnesses appear across a wide swath of geographic and linguistic areas, from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. Ultimately, I suggest four iterations of "traveling companions" for the tale: (1) *Floire and Blancheflor*, *Berte of the Big Feet*, and *Mainete*; (2) *Floire and Blancheflor*, *Berte of the Big Feet*, and *Claris and Laris*; (3) *Floire and Blancheflor*, *Amadas and Ydoine*, and *Partonopeus of Blois*, and (4) *Floire and Blancheflor*, *Blancandin and Orgeuilleuse d'Amour*, and *Partonopeus of Blois*. Viewing Floire and Blancheflor as fundamentally tied to these sets of stories in a given narrative community changes our understanding of the narrative's reception in its time.

With the rapidly increasing commercialization of manuscript production over the thirteenth century, bespoke vernacular manuscripts were increasingly available to the wealthy, secular public. While some of these codices contained only a single text, many were what are now referred to as vernacular literary anthologies. It now appears that a great deal of the so-called miscellany manuscripts are, in fact, "organized according to principles ranging from rudimentary groupings of thematically related texts to an elaborate overall design" (Huot 11). Who, exactly, was doing that organizing is open to question; however, it would have necessitated a complex interaction between bookseller, scribe, and patron. As the written trace of a complex narrative culture, manuscripts were assembled "not casually but deliberately, as a result of someone's decision that it should exist, as a result of common or group decision that it should be made in this fashion and not another" (Rouse and Rouse 3). This intentionality does not discount the possibility that such seemingly random collections of texts simply existed for the sake of convenience, or so that the reader would have more than one story at hand. However, when patterns of association between individual narratives crop up repeatedly across multiple such manuscripts, we can make begin to hypothesize about the potential thematic, cultural, or historic connections between them.

New Codicology[1] values the codex as an object of inquiry rather than the corpus, treating each codex as a living artifact rich with multiple sites of meaning (material, textual, and historical). In this scenario, each book is an idiosyncratic individual, capable of being parsed only when confronted as a whole. But the object of my inquiry is one of abstraction: to discover the body of texts that travel around *Floire et Blancheflor* as it moves, diachronically, from codex to codex across a corpus of surviving manuscript witnesses, which is itself dispersed over a wide geographic area. This body of texts then gives new information about how *Floire* moved from one literary community to another.

Methodology

I call the set of texts that traveled with *Floire* throughout its surviving manuscript tradition coappearances. I define a coappearance as any text "A" that is bound with any text "B" more than 1x over the surviving manuscript corpus of text B.

"Literary community" is defined here as the group of literate men and women involved in the production and reception of each extant *Floire* manuscript: authors, craftsmen responsible for the material conditions of book production (scribes, illuminators, binders, and such), and the newly literate bourgeoisie and aristocracy responsible for commissioning vernacular and macaronic manuscripts for their personal use.[2] While each community has its own distinct, historical profile, I hypothesized that the relatively early composition (ca. 1150) and dispersed geographical distribution of *Floire* manuscripts across Europe would yield a consistent and early perception of what sort of texts *Floire* moved with in anthology manuscripts.

To discover if any texts were consistently bound with *Floire et Blancheflor*, I first created a .csv file[3] listing every text in every extant manuscript containing a copy of *Floire*, allowing for certain linguistic and chronologic constraints outlined below. Where the data are available, this spreadsheet also contains tagged metadata on each text and manuscript: order_text, title_specific, title_broad, author, genre, subgenre, language_text, form_text, length_folios, current_location, intermediate_location, earliestknown_location compilation_date, and language_codex.

After cleaning the data in Google's Open Refine,[4] I then used this .csv file as the data frame to create a coappearance matrix, executed in the statistical programming language R. This matrix cross referenced every ordered pair of (manuscript A, B, C

. . . text 1, 2, 3 . . .[5]) against every other ordered pair and reported back every instance where a text appeared in more than one manuscript.[6] Since the manuscripts were preselected to contain *Floire et Blancheflor*, the resulting list of texts are by definition coappearances.

After obtaining this first list, I repeated the same procedure for each coappearing text that fell within the original parameters of language and time period, thus expanding the map of coappearances around *Floire* out another order of magnitude. Finally, I considered the effect loss rates from the medieval period until the modern day have had on the representative nature of the sample (e.g., the surviving manuscripts).

DATA DESCRIPTION

I obtained the data on each manuscript's contents from bibliographic information on the holding library's website. As many of these catalogs date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I cross-referenced these entries with more current scholarly articles on each manuscript's contents when such material was available. When disputes or confusion arose between scholarly sources concerning the contents of a manuscript, I resolved the dispute by either seeing the manuscript in person or checking it digitally. Whenever possible I have avoided interjecting my own "tiebreaker" expertise into the data in order to avoid confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is a term drawn from cognitive science, reflecting the human tendency to see patterns in data that confirm one's preexisting hypothesis; in other words, since I believe that *Floire* has a group of texts that travel with it across its manuscript corpus, I am more likely to unconsciously edit the data to support that conclusion.[7]

When using a computer to run a coappearance matrix, it is crucial that the title of every text be completely regularized in terms of spelling, capitalization, and syntax. As medieval incipits (and the "title" of the text thence recorded in library catalogs) often vary dramatically between manuscripts, this requires heavy editing. In order to preserve the maximum specificity in the data, while retaining the greatest pattern-recognizing power for the coappearance matrix, I created two columns: one holds the original manuscript contents as I entered them more or less directly from bibliographic holdings, manuscript resources, and scholarly articles. The second column, used to generate the coappearance matrix, is highly cleaned and generalized. This is sometimes an easy decision, such as streamlining the many

ways one might write *Le Chevalier de la Charette* or *Lancelot* into one, standard title. However, take the story of *Narcisus et Dané.* In BnF fr. 2168 the story is marked as a *lai.* This is the only manuscript extant in which the story of *Narcisus* is ever marked as such. The story appears here interpolated into several other Breton stories, and its designation as such contributes to the overall gestalt of the manuscript. However, the story of *Narcisus* also appears, marked as *Narcisus le roumanz*, in BnF fr. 19152, a *Floire* manuscript. In the interests of capturing the similarity between them, both texts are entered as NARCISSUS in the second column, but their difference is preserved in the first.

CRITERIA FOR TEXT AND MANUSCRIPT INCLUSION

All texts must have been composed post-1150 and prior to 1300. In the absence of evidence, manuscripts that the prevailing scholarly opinion holds to be medieval have no strict limits, but in the presence of strong codicological evidence,[8] they must have been compiled after 1200 and before 1400. This gap between textual composition and manuscript compilation allows for both the lack of a sufficient number of large vernacular compilations before the mid-thirteenth century and the general lack of vernacular French manuscript evidence pre-1200. The cutoff date of 1400 prevents the incursion of print culture and the seismic shift in manuscript culture as Burgundian prose romances, theatrical works, rondeaux, *dits*, and other such late-medieval genres began to populate the literary scene.

Two sticky issues have yet to be addressed: how to define a text within an anthology manuscript, and pursuant to that, how to define boundaries between texts in an anthology manuscript. For instance, should the entirety of the *Canterbury Tales* count as one text? What about when only certain tales appear in a manuscript? What about closely linked tale cycles that are not defined by a single author, such as the Alexander cycle? Moreover, manuscripts are not static entities—bindings wear out, folios are lost, texts are ultimately shuffled around and re-bound within an original set of texts. Booklets that may have circulated independently are re-bound together into a new whole or dis-bound to circulate again as independent booklets.

Concerning the issue of textual separation and identification, I have laid out the following rules[9] for how texts are labeled in the generalized column used for the coappearance matrix:

1. A text that appears across multiple languages will be entered in as the same text, and in the same language, across all languages and manuscripts (e.g., *Floire* is entered as *Floire et Blancheflor* for manuscripts where it appears in Middle English, Castilian, and Old French). The language used for the title will be that of the earliest-known exemplar of the text.

2. Two variants of the same basic story, which take on different generic forms, will be entered as the same text. So, *Narcisus* the *lai* and *Narcisus* the *romanz* are both entered as *Narcisus*; *Floire* the "popular" version and *Floire* the "courtly" version are both entered in as *Floire*; and *Berte* the miracle play and *Berte* the epic romance are both entered as *Berte*. The specific genres and forms of the individual texts are preserved in other tagged metadata and can be called up as needed.

3. Story collections and tale cycles are broken up and identified by text, *if* the story collection or tale cycle is routinely broken up and moved around within a manuscript in the medieval context. Hence, I enter in each of Marie's *Lais* and each one of Baudoin de Conde's *Dits* as their own text, but the *Fables* is entered in as one text, as is the *Chastoiement d'un père à son fils*.

4. All texts for corpus analysis must have been composed in one of the following languages: a dialect of Old French,[10] Middle English, Arabic, or Spanish. I have for the present project left aside texts written in other languages, such as but not limited to the following: Middle High German, Middle Dutch, Old Norse-Icelandic, and Greek.

The second methodological issue, that of manuscript stability, is simultaneously trickier and easier to address. Fundamentally, a careful literature search for each manuscript, combined with a personal examination of the manuscript when possible, is the only way to ensure that everything in a compilation manuscript was added in the period one believes it to have been. In the metadata for each manuscript, I record a date for each contents list, when data is available, to the closest quarter century. When good codicological research is available on provenance, compilation, bindings, and re-bindings, I have noted it in section A of each corpus analysis.

Finally, I have given an overview of the generic makeup of each corpus. Genre is a vexed, multivalent category that does not lend itself to the need to draw clear lines between categories in a computational analysis. However, I intend the genre tags to give the broadest overview of generic composition within a corpus, and

for that purpose the tags are useful. I laid out the following rules for the murkier categories of genre entries:
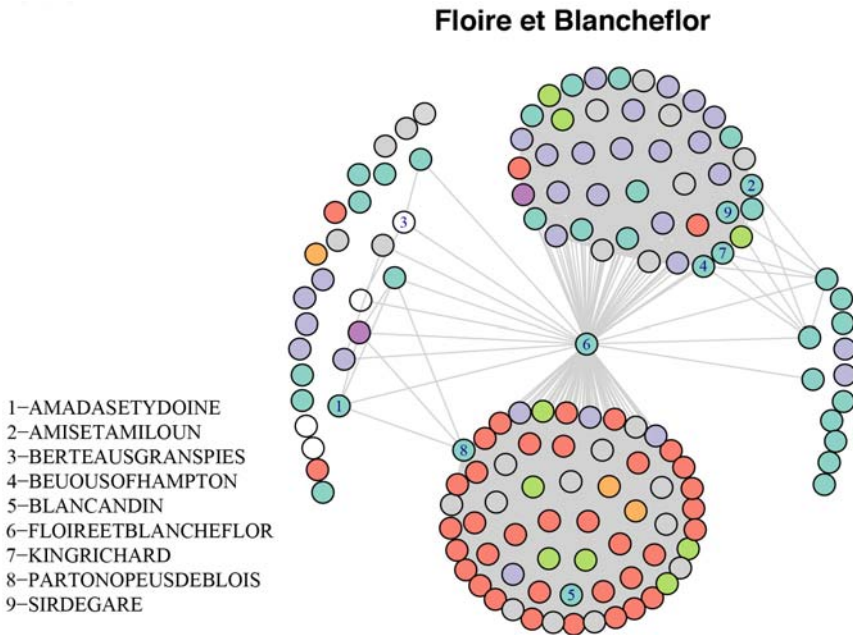
1. ROMANCE: any text commonly thought of as "romance" in modern scholarship, including all the subcategories of romance (idyllic, adventure, and such).
2. Religious: any text explicitly and in the majority of its content relating to liturgy, saints' lives, miracle stories of the Virgin. Examples: *Les miracles de Nostre-Dame*, *Ave maris stella* (in Old French).
3. DIDACTIC: any text that is not in its majority explicitly religious, that attempts to teach the reader a lesson, with or without the use of stories as a framing device. Example: *Le doctrinal sauvage*. Will overlap from time to time with category four.
4. WISDOM: Any text not in its majority explicitly religious/liturgical, which attempts to teach the reader a lesson using fables or stories. Example: *Le chastoisement d'un père à son fils*, *Ysopet.*
5. CLASSICAL: texts directly translated and adapted from Greek or Latin literature, which are neither didactic nor wisdom nor so adapted as to have departed entirely from the original in all but the basics of the narrative. Example: *De Ovide de arte*, but not the *lai* of Narcissus.

Results and Analysis

FLOIRE ET BLANCHEFLOR CORPUS [1275–1450][11]

▪ *Initial observations on the corpus:* The corpus analysis for *Floire et Blancheflor* includes nine manuscripts. The date of *Floire* in each ranges from the late twelfth century (Vat. Pal. Lat. 1971) to the early fifteenth (BnF fr. 12562). There is less precise data on the date of each manuscript's compilation; however, the oldest compilation is likely BnF fr. 375, from the last quarter of the thirteenth century. The youngest is certainly the mid-fifteenth-century Madrid, BN, 7583—only included in the corpus analysis as it is almost certainly a copy of a lost manuscript from the last quarter of the thirteenth century.

Geographically, one of the manuscripts was produced in Castile (BN, 7583), five are insular in origin (Vat. Pal. Lat. 1971, Advocates 19.2.1, BL Egerton 2862, CUL Gg 4.27, and BL Cotton Vit. D III), and four are from the northern half of what is now France (BnF fr. 375, BnF fr. 1447, Bnf fr. 12562, and BnF 19152). The linguistic

Floire et Blancheflor

1–AMADASETYDOINE
2–AMISETAMILOUN
3–BERTEAUSGRANSPIES
4–BEUOUSOFHAMPTON
5–BLANCANDIN
6–FLOIREETBLANCHEFLOR
7–KINGRICHARD
8–PARTONOPEUSDEBLOIS
9–SIRDEGARE

composition ranges from macaronic (BnF fr. 375), to Castilian (BN 7583), to Middle English (BL Egerton 2862), to Old French.

In total, the corpus contains 168 individual texts. The most prevalent genres in the corpus are romance, fabliau, religious, wisdom, and classical. Most of the fabliaux cluster in one manuscript, BnF fr. 19152, skewing the generic balance of the entire corpus heavily toward fabliaux. The remainder of the romance, religious, wisdom, and classical texts are fairly evenly distributed throughout the corpus.

■ *Coappearances:* The *Floire et Blancheflor* corpus contains eight coappearances: *Amadas et Ydoine*, *Amis et Amiloun*, *Berte aus grans pies*, *Beuous of Hampton*, *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'Amour*, *King Richard*, *Partonopeus de Blois*, and *Sir Degare*. The network graph (figure 1) shows each coappearing text as a numbered vertex, corresponding to the legend in the left-hand margin. None of the texts coappear more than twice with *Floire*.

Within the coappearing texts, only one text crosses a major language barrier: Adenet le Roi's Old French *Berte aus grans pies* appears first in BnF fr. 1447. It then appears in Madrid, BN 7583, in a prosified Castilian version of Adenet's text,

interpolated into the *Primera Crónica General* (*PCG*). The others cluster into a Middle English group: *Amis et Amiloun, Beuous of Hampton, King Richard, and Sir Degare*,[12] and an Old French group, *Amadas et Ydoine, Blancandin et l'Orgeuilleuse d'Amour*, and *Partonopeus de Blois*. Two of these, *Amadas* and *Partonopeus*, appear in very early[13] Anglo-Norman copies—together with an equally early copy of *Floire*—in Vat. Pal. Lat. 1971; unfortunately, as we know only that Vat. Pal. Lat. 1971 was bound together at some point before 1510, it is impossible to posit a primary association between the French grouping as early as the late twelfth century (Busby 498).

Temporally, the texts fall into three clusters along their dates of composition: first, a mid-twelfth-century cluster, including *Floire, Ami et Amile*,[14] *Amadas et Ydoine*, and *Partonopeus de Blois*. *Blancandin* and *Berte* bookend the thirteenth century, with *Blancandin* composed in the first quarter and *Berte* in the last. Finally, *Sir Degare, Sir Richard*, and *Beuous of Hampton* all date from the turn of the fourteenth century, with *Sir Degare* the youngest of all.

From this base list, I perform the same procedure on each of *Floire*'s coappearing manuscripts. However, two of the Middle English texts, *Sir Degare* and *Sir Richard*, have no extant manuscripts that fall within the date requirements (other than those that are already covered in the *Floire* corpus analysis) and are thus not covered below.

FLOIRE COAPPEARANCE LIST: CORPORA ANALYSES

Amis and Amiloun [1275–1400]

■ *Initial observations on the corpus:* Like *Amadas, Floire*, and *Partonopeus, Ami et Amile* (Middle English: *Amis and Amiloun*) is part of the earliest group of French romances, likely composed in the mid- to late twelfth century. It survives in multiple linguistic traditions, including Latin, Middle Welsh, Middle English, Anglo-Norman, and Old French, as well as multiple generic ones, such as hagiography, *chanson de geste*, theater, and romance. The version that coappears with *Floire*, however, is the Middle English romance, generally assumed to trace back to a lost, twelfth-century French *chanson de geste* (Nixon 228).

There are eight manuscripts in the corpus analysis. To cast as broad a net as possible, I included all manuscripts, including any version of the legend that met the study's linguistic and date criteria (a heuristic that I continue to follow throughout the analysis of all *Floire*'s coappearances). The earliest extant manuscript (1275) is BnF fr. 860, which Busby attributes to a workshop in Laon (northeast central

France), possibly made for an "aristocratic family with ties to the town and environs" (Busby 583). The youngest is BnF fr. 819–820 (1400), the "Cangé manuscript," with its forty miracle plays produced by the Parisian goldsmith's guild, including a theatrical adaptation of the *Ami et Amile* legend.

Linguistically, the manuscripts in the analysis are predominantly Middle English, Anglo-Norman, and Old French, as well as macaronic between all three of the former and Latin. Geographically, they range from what is now central and northern France to England.

Overall, the eight manuscripts contain 135 texts. The five most common genres are theater, romance, religious, *chanson de geste*, and scientific/medical. The preponderance of theater texts derives completely from the Cangé manuscript, which shares no coappearances with the rest of the corpus, despite the fact that it also contains an adaptation of another of our key texts, Adenet's *Berte*. Thus a more accurate picture of the generic landscape would be romance, religious, *chanson de geste*, scientific/medical, and chronicle.

Excluding *Floire*, the corpus contains six coappearances: *Beuous of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, *King Richard*, the *Roman de Brut*, and *Sir Degare*. None of the coappearances jump language barriers. Because so much of the older French material for this romance has been lost, most of the surviving material in the analysis, and hence the coappearance list, is insular and written in Middle English. The *Brut*, of course, is written in Anglo-Norman. Generically, five of the six are romances, and one is a chronicle or history. All are in verse.

Amadas et Ydoine [1290–unknown, before 1510]

■ *Initial observations on the corpus: Amadas et Ydoine* only survives in three manuscripts: one complete, and two fragmentary. The two fragments—probably part of the same, lost, original[15]—are both Anglo-Norman—the complete, Picard. Only two manuscripts are eligible for the criteria of the corpus analysis, BnF fr. 375 and Vat. Pal. Lat. 1971, both of which I discuss in detail above.

■ *Coappearances: Amadas* only shares *Floire* between these two extant manuscripts. Proximity is as listed above, for *Floire*.

Berte aus grans pies [1275–1400]

■ *Initial observations on the corpus: Berte aus grans pies* is an old story, in the sense that there are a great deal of literary and historical references to the mother of

Charlemagne, Berthe, and her (possible) clubfoot. There are nineteen surviving texts in French, Spanish, and German that reference the Berte story, including *Floire* itself,[16] appearing in over fifty manuscripts (Wright 168). However, the first person to create a literary work dealing exclusively with Berthe and her life was the minstrel Adenet le Roi, with his *Berte aus grans pies*, which he composed around the fourth quarter of the thirteenth century. Somewhat unusually for a French medieval poem of this period, Adenet's poem does not show a great deal of *mouvance* between versions, maintaining a tight cohesion of episodes, vocabulary, and wording between scribal copies. The manuscript corpus for *Berte*, the first in our list with an identifiable author, shows a similar cohesion.

The corpus analysis contains ten manuscripts: nine containing *Berte* and one not, the large Cangé theatrical manuscript, which also contains a theatrical adaptation of *Amis et Amiloun*. The oldest manuscripts are late thirteenth century: Arsenal 3142, BnF fr. 12467, and BnF fr. 24404. The remaining manuscripts all date to the fourteenth century. Geographically, the manuscripts were produced in Paris, central France, and Picardy. Linguistically, the manuscripts are all in dialects of central or northeastern Old French (*francien* with traces of Picard).

There are 124 texts in the corpus, including the Cangé manuscript, without it, eighty-three. The primary genres are theater, *dit,* religious, and *chanson de geste*. Once again, the Cangé manuscript skews the top result: without it, the primary genres are *dit*, religious, *chanson de geste*, wisdom, and romance. These are fairly evenly distributed among the nine remaining manuscripts.

■ *Coappearances:* In keeping with the lack of *mouvance* within the manuscript versions of *Berte*, the manuscripts themselves show a high degree of similarity. There are no less than twenty-two coappearances within the corpus. Of these, the vast majority are shared between the two oldest manuscripts in the corpus, Arsenal 3142 and BnF fr. 12467: *Les enfances Ogier* (Adenet le Roi), *Ave maris stella*, *C'est des quatre soeurs*, *Dit d'Avarice* (Baudouin de Condé, *Dits*), *Dit de gentillesse* (Baudouin de Condé, *Dits*), *Dit de la vigne* (Jean de Douai), *Dit des deux bacheliers* (Baudouin de Condé, *Dits*), *Dit du dragon* (Baudouin de Condé, *Dits*), *Dit du gardecors* (Baudouin de Condé, *Dits*), *Dit du manteau de l'honneur* (Baudouin de Condé, *Dits*), *Dit du preudome* (Baudouin de Condé, *Dits*), *l'ABC Plantefolie*, *La Bible Notre Dame*, *La prière Théophile*, *Le marriage des filles au diable*, *Le paternostre*, en français, *Les neuf joies Notre Dame, Moralités sur ces six vers*, *Pourquoi Dieu fit le monde*, *Prières Notre Dame*, and *Une Prière de Notre Dame*.

Finally, *Folque de Candie* (Herbert le Duc) appears in BnF fr 778 and Arsenal 3142, with Adenet's *Cleomadés* in BnF fr. 24404 and Arsenal 3142. This is both the first nonanonymous text I have run a corpus analysis on and the youngest, most temporally homogenous corpus I have examined. This is also the first corpus where any coappearing text coappears more than twice—*Les Enfances Ogier* pops up with *Berte* three times, and in two of those three times (Arsenal 3142, Brussels II 7451) binds immediately next to *Berte*. The third time (BnF fr. 12467), *Ogier* is bound at the beginning of the manuscript and *Berte* at the very end, also a significant pairing for the reader. The preponderance of texts shared between Arsenal 3142 and BnF fr. 12467 is likely explained by their scribe: Arsenal 3142, Bnf fr. 24404, and BnF fr. 12467 share the same scribal hand, and 3142 and fr. 12467 were both illuminated by the master of Méliacin (Azzam and Collet 211).

Blancandin et l'Orgeuilleuse d'Amour [1290–1300]

■ *Initial observations on the corpus:* The anonymous *Blancandin ou l'Orgeuilleuse d'Amour* was composed in the first third of the thirteenth century and prosified in the fifteenth century. It survives in only four manuscripts, two of which (BnF fr. 375; Bnf fr. 19152) are large, vernacular anthologies. Of the remaining two, only one (Philadelphia, Penn, French Ms. 22) still survives. The other manuscript, Turin, L.V. 44, was destroyed in the library fire of 1904. In both of the anthology manuscripts, *Blancandin* coappears with *Floire et Blancheflor*. Unlike *Berte*, there is no evidence of a larger mythos predating the romance itself.

The manuscript corpus contains ninety-four texts, and the primary genres are fabliau, romance, religious, and wisdom. The majority of fabliaux are, again, contributed by BnF fr. 19152. Of the two smaller codices, one contains only *Blancandin*, and the other, *Blancandin* and the *Chanson des Saisnes*.

■ *Coappearances: Blancandin* only coappears with *Floire*, and it always coappears immediately adjacent to *Floire*, out of sixty-one texts in fr. 19152 and thirty-one texts in fr. 375.

Partonopeus de Blois [1200–1350]

■ *Initial observations on the corpus:* An anonymous romance, *Partonopeus* was likely composed in the last quarter of the twelfth century. Like *Floire*, *Berte*, and *Ami et Amile*, it jumps across languages, with adaptations appearing in Middle

Dutch, Old Norse, Middle High German, medieval Spanish and Catalan,[17] and medieval Italian.

The network analysis for *Partonopeus* includes seven manuscripts. The earliest examples of the romance itself are the insular text contained in Vat. Pal. Lat. 1971 and the continental text contained in Arsenal 2986. Both date to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. The youngest manuscripts included in the analysis date to the first half of the fourteenth century: Tours, BM, 939, and BnF fr. 368. The oldest, likely Arsenal 2986, contains only *Partonopeus de Blois* and may date to the end of the twelfth century, but it dates from the very early thirteenth (Busby 10; Smith 7).

Geographically, the manuscripts were all produced in what is now northern and central France, with the exception of Vat. Pal. Lat. 1971 and Yale, Beinecke 395, which are insular, and BnF nouv. aq. fr. 7516, which was likely produced in Italy. Linguistically, BnF nouv. aq. fr. 7516 is the most complex, as it contains an admixture of French, Italian, and Provençal texts, and its copy of *Partonopeus* is likely based off an Anglo-Norman exemplar. The remainder of the manuscripts are varying dialects of *langue d'oïl.*

In total, the corpus contains seventy-seven texts. The most prevalent genres overall are fabliau, romance, religious, lyric, *chanson de geste*, and wisdom. The fabliau cluster, as per usual, is in BnF fr. 19152.

■ *Coappearances:* There are four coappearances, discounting *Floire et Blancheflor*: *Le Doctrinal Sauvage* (BnF fr. 19152, Bern Burgerbibliothek 113), *Le Chastoiement d'un père à son fils* (Yale, Beineke 295; BnF fr. 19152), the *Letter of Prester Jean*[18] (Yale Beineke 395; Bern 113), and *Le Roman de Brut* (Yale, Beineke 395; Vat. Pal. Lat. 1971.[19] The *Doctrinal* and the *Chastoiement* are wisdom literature, the *Brut* is a chronicle, the letter is a faux-epistolary travelogue, and *Floire* is a romance, making this a distinctly disparate group of coappearances.

CONCLUSIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE ISSUES

■ *Sample composition and loss rates:* One of the central doubts in any study involving medieval manuscripts is that of manuscript survival, and thus the representative nature of the surviving sample. In other words, might there have been ten, fifteen, or twenty manuscripts with idyllic romances bound immediately next to *Floire*, but we have, through time, war, fire, flood, and carelessness—simply lost them? The

evidence on manuscript survival rates shows that codices containing *Floire* have almost certainly been lost; however, the pattern of that loss allows us to infer what may have once existed.

The best estimate for pan-European survival rates for medieval manuscripts from the beginning of the Middle Ages to the present day comes from two sources: Neddermeyer's 1996 study of medieval manuscript production in the Holy Roman Empire, and Buringh's recent book on manuscript production across northern Europe.[20] Neddermeyer estimates a total survival rate of 7 percent, which both Buringh and Wijsman agree continues to hold up, although it needs amending in specific areas, such as loss rates in late medieval France, which Neddermeyer consistently estimates at far too low a rate (Buringh table 5.8). Taking Neddermeyer's survival estimate of 7 percent and applying it to *Floire*, at one time there were at least 129 manuscripts in circulations for *Floire*. As Neddermeyer's estimates are likely too low for northern France, this is an extremely conservative estimate: there would almost certainly have been even more Old French manuscripts containing *Floire* originally in circulation.

However, while it would obviously be preferable to have retained all 129-odd of *Floire*'s manuscripts, that does not necessarily mean that no conclusions may be drawn from their surviving corpora. The surviving nine manuscripts of *Floire* are relatively randomly distributed along multiple axes, spanning 250 years (1200–1450), three major language groups, and multiple geographic areas. While not an ironclad shield against sampling bias,[21] this alone significantly strengthens the validity of any causal conclusions we may infer from the sample.

New Conclusions Drawn from the Coappearance Lists: Floire et Blancheflor

The list of coappearances I give for *Floire et Blancheflor* in this section does not indicate that *Floire* was equally associated with all of these texts at once in the mind of any given member of a literate community that produced one of *Floire*'s extant manuscripts. Where and when each text coappears reveals a subtler picture. Among the coappearances, there are three distinct clusters. The first cluster contains *Amadas et Ydoine* (BnF fr. 375; Vat. Pal. Lat. 1971), *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'Amour* (BnF fr. 375; BnF fr. 19152), and *Partonopeus de Blois* (BnF fr. 19152; Vat. Pal. Lat. 1971). The second contains only *Berte aus grans pies* (BnF fr. 1447; BN 7583), and the third,

Amis et Amiloun (BL Egerton 2862; Auckinleck), *Beuous of Hampton* (BL Egerton 2862; Auckinleck), *King Richard* (BL Egerton 2862; Auckinleck), and *Sir Degare* (BL Egerton 2862; Auckinleck).

To unlock the first cluster (*Amadas/Blancandin/Partonopeus*), begin with the strangest manuscript. Vat. Pal. Lat. 1971 contains five total texts and three coappearing texts: *Floire* (incomplete), *Amadas* (incomplete), and *Partonopeus* (complete—may have circulated as an independent booklet). The other two texts are the *Brut* and *Aspremont*. This is by far the highest ratio of coappearances to total texts of any extant *Floire* manuscript, suggesting that this was a manuscript organized around texts like *Floire*. But, so little is known about the provenance of the manuscript that we only know for certain that it was compiled at some date prior to 1516. Even stranger, every text in the manuscript is Anglo-Norman and appears in a very early copy (last quarter of the twelfth to first quarter of the thirteenth century). All three coappearances appear here in their *earliest* extant copies (Busby 498).

Without the corpus analysis, it would be easy to construct an explanation that goes something like this: perhaps an aristocrat or newly literate bourgeois toward the end of the Middle Ages desired the cachet of some of the oldest copies of vernacular French literature at hand and commissioned someone to piece together whatever could be found. These are odd texts for such a cachet, though, the *Brut* excepted—romances and *chansons de geste* would not have been the first choice over medical texts and histories. Still, it is not impossible, and a pleasant thematic reading of the Saracen themes in *Floire*, *Aspremont*, and *Partonopeus* could be handily carried out, further cementing the coherence of the individual codex itself. *Floire* need not be the keystone of this story, merely a part of it. But then consider that *Floire* and *Partonopeus* appear again, halfway across France, in a completely different dialect of Old French, in the late thirteenth century (BnF fr. 19152). Nearly simultaneously, *Floire* and *Amadas* pop up together in Arras, in the contemporaneous BnF fr. 375. And in both manuscripts, the same thirteenth-century romance—*Blancandin et l'Orgeuilleuse d'Amour*—fills in the empty slot where either *Amadas* or *Partonopeus* have dropped out, and in both manuscripts this same romance is bound immediately next to *Floire et Blancheflor*.

In all three cases we know the scribes were not the same, we know the workshops were not the same, and in all likelihood the patrons were not the same. So by process of elimination, I am left to argue for textual diffusion: that in the time from circa 1150, when *Floire*, *Amadas*, and *Partonopeus* were composed, *Amadas* and

Partonopeus became loosely associated with *Floire* in literate communities across northern France, particularly in their context as older, Anglo-Norman stories.[22] Next, *Blancandin*, composed a century later and bound in 50 percent of its manuscripts directly next to *Floire*, seems to have piggybacked its way into large, northeastern anthology manuscripts on *Floire*'s narrative coattails, displacing one of the older romances whenever it appears. Thus we have three iterations of textual groupings at work in this mini cluster: (*Floire*, *Amadas*, and *Partonopeus*), (*Floire*, *Blancandin*, and *Amadas*), and (*Floire*, *Blancandin*, and *Partonopeus*). The effect of binding each iteration of the trio together on the reader depends utterly on the individual manuscript and the overall assembly of texts contained within it.

The cluster containing *Berte* works between two languages and two forms (prose and poetry). In its own corpus, *Berte* coappears most frequently (3x) with Adenet le Roi's *Les Enfances Ogier*; however, as I described earlier it is a corpus with an extremely high degree of interconnectivity in its earliest two copies and, hence, a high number of coappearances. Thus while *Floire* has a high likelihood of binding with *Berte*, *Berte* does not have as high a likelihood of binding with *Floire*. This finding supports the thesis, put forth by some scholars of *Berte* (Wright 169), that the portions of the *Floire* legend that mention *Berte* were likely added later, to make *Floire* conform to *Berte*, rather than being an early, integral part of the story.

Within the *Floire* corpus, *Berte* binds in Madrid, BN 7583 and BnF fr. 1447. Each contains a copy of *Floire* and a copy of *Berte aus grans pies*. One is a fifteenth-century copy of an early thirteenth-century Castilian manuscript, with the trio of *Floire*, *Berte*, and *Mainete*, in that order, interpolated into a copy of the *PCG.* The second is a Parisian compilation from the first half of the fourteenth century, containing, in order, *Floire*, *Berte*, and *Claris et Laris*. That the two texts coappear in such different manuscripts is itself strong formal evidence for a nonrandom connection, particularly given the relative rarity of coappearances within the *Floire* corpus as a whole. Further, consider their relative position: in both manuscripts, *Berte* immediately follows *Floire* in a trio of texts. The arrangement stresses their chronology in the Carolingian cycle: Floire and Blancheflor as the parents of Berte, Berte as the mother of Charlemagne and the wife of Pepin. But it is the ending of that cycle within the codex that changes depending on the manuscript context.
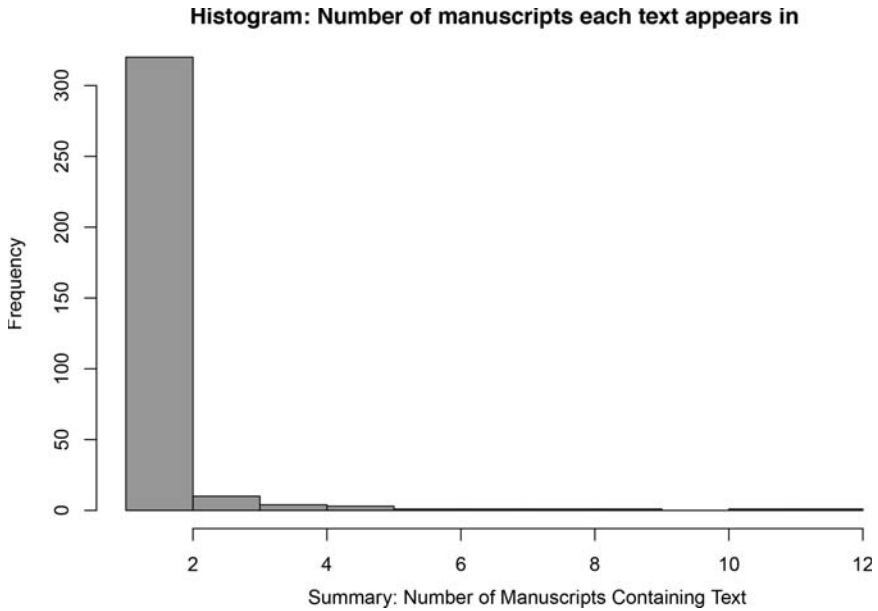
In the Madrid manuscript, the trio ends with *Mainete*. Known as *Mainet* in the French canon, the text was originally a *chanson de geste* composed in the mid-twelfth century, in northeastern France.[23] The Old French text picks up where *Berte* leaves off, with the young Charlemagne fleeing France because the two evil sons of

Berte's erstwhile handmaiden have taken over the country. Charles conquers the Saracen court at Toledo, but eventually returns home with a new wife, Galiana, to oust the evil handmaiden's sons. In the Spanish version, *Mainete*, the plot differs slightly from the older French *chanson de geste*: the young Charles simply has a falling out with his father, and rather than conquering the Saracen court at Toledo, he becomes a treasured vassal of the king. He then falls in love with the king's daughter, Galiana. Galiana gives him his famous sword, Joyeuse (here *Joyana*). While Charles is never a prisoner of the Muslim king, he worries he has become too valuable a vassal to be allowed to go free, and so the two sneak away back to France, where she converts and becomes his queen (Grieve 46–50). Placing *Mainet* at the end of the trio of French texts interpolated into the *PCG* mirrors Floire and Blancheflor back in reverse: the Saracen princess (Galiana) to Floire's Saracen prince, the Christian heir apparent (Charlemagne) to Blancheflor's Christian slave-princess.

In BnF fr. 1447, by contrast, the final text is the *unicum* Arthurian romance, *Claris et Laris*. Composed relatively late for a verse romance (1268), *Claris et Laris* is also extremely long, with more than 30,000 lines of Arthurian adventure and misadventure as the two male protagonists save each other from dangerous women, fairies, and other such monstrous creatures. The friends' double marriage at the end of the romance secures an alliance with Britain and control over Gascony, prompting Busby's ultimate conclusion about the trilogy of romances composing fr. 1447: here, one finds a clear westward progression of *translatio imperii* "from Babylon, whither Blancheflor was abducted" to "Hungary and Germany and all of France" (Busby 431). BnF fr. 1447 comes out of a different literary community than BN 7583, and had to serve vastly different political, linguistic, religious, and cultural ends. But the narrative unit of *Floire + Berte* remains the same between both texts, changing only the text grafted onto the end.

This suggests that the duo of *Floire* and *Berte* served as a thirteenth-century[24] Carolingian springboard, onto which a different ending may be grafted, depending on geographic and narrative need. That stake in the intrinsically political Carolingian cycle is also part of what gives the romance such a hold on both medieval and nineteenth-century perceptions of the idyllic themes and tropes within the romances themselves. When the nineteenth-century critic chooses to read the scenes of idyllic childhood learning in *Floire et Blancheflor* as generically foundational, instead of at the multiple scenes of intercultural, gendered violence, he or she makes an intrinsically political decision to value the idyll as genre and trope.

The Middle English texts are straightforward, compared to the puzzle presented

Histogram: Number of manuscripts each text appears in

Summary: Number of Manuscripts Containing Text

by the continental texts. There are four Middle English manuscripts compiled before 1400 that bind *Floris* and *Blauncheflor*: CUL, MS Gg. 4.27; Cotton, Vit. D III; BL Egerton 2862; and the famous Auckinleck manuscript (NS Advocates 19.2.1). Of these, only Egerton 2862, Cambridge 4.27, and the Auckinleck contain coappearing texts: in order, the Egerton contains (*King Richard*, *Bevis*, *Sir Degare*, *Floire*, and *Amis*) and the Auckinleck (*Amis*, *Assumption*, *Sir Degare*, *Floire*, *Bevis*, and *King Richard*). We have much better codicological information and, generally, better information on the provenance of the insular manuscripts than for the equivalent continental manuscripts. The Auckinleck, in particular, has retained the majority of its reception and provenance history since the late Middle Ages.

The Auckinleck manuscript, produced between 1331 and 1340, contains the greatest repository of Middle English texts in circulation before Chaucer. It was likely produced in London. Forty-four texts total survive in the manuscript, of which eighteen are romances. All the romances are in their earliest Middle English copy, with the sole exception of *Floris et Blancheflor*. It is a large-format, luxury manuscript, preserved in good condition. By contrast, the small, heavily water-damaged BL Egerton 2862 was compiled around 1390 in Suffolk. Its resemblance to the Auckinleck is well noted in the literature: the five romances that coappear with

Floire within it all appear in the Auckinleck. One would be hard-pressed, however, to find an early Middle English romance corpus that was *not* heavily indebted to the small group of early fourteenth-century manuscripts comprised of the Auckinleck, CUL Gg 4.27 (1300–1325), and Oxford, Bodleian Laud MS Misc 108 (Meale 143). For example, *Amis and Amiloun*'s corpus contains five coappearances: *Beuous of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, *King Richard*, the *Roman de Brut*, and *Sir Degare*. Everything but the *Brut*—which is not, in any event, a romance—appears in the Auckinleck.

What the coappearance list picks up on in the Middle English context is not a clustering of texts around *Floire* itself, but rather the simple fact that early Middle English verse romances have a high rate of clustering, full stop. Correlation, in other words, does not always equal causation.

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that the twelfth-century European romance *Floire et Blancheflor* was associated with the Old French texts *Amadas et Ydoine*, *Berte aus grans pies*, *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'Amour*, and *Partonopeus de Blois* by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century literate communities in what is now northern France. Coappearance is a rare event across every corpus I examined (figure 2)—only one text, *Ogier* within the *Berte* corpus, coappears more than twice. Thus, coappearances are unlikely to be random. Within the *Floire et Blancheflor* corpus, I identify three clusters: (*Amadas* or *Blancandin*, *Partonopeus*, *Floire*), (*Berte*, *Floire*), and the Middle English cluster I discuss above. Because of the high degree of connectivity among early Middle English verse romance manuscripts, it is impossible to tell if the English texts have any particular connection to *Floire* on the level of the corpus. However, it appears likely that the literary community involved in producing *Floire*'s extant witnesses believed that *Amadas*, *Partonopeus*, and *Floire* went together well in a manuscript, as measured by some, unknown medieval metric. *Blancandin*, on the other hand, seems to have piggybacked onto *Floire* within large anthology manuscripts from the northeast.

It is key to stress that *why* these texts were perceived as suiting each other within anthology manuscripts is outside the scope of this article; rather, we have established only that their coappearance is unlikely to be random, down merely to convenience, or the desire to have multiple texts to hand at once. But that lack of randomness is a key piece of information going forward for how scholars may read *Floire* as existing in a community of other narratives. All too often, literary analysis exists outside of the larger cultural context that produced the very literature we analyze. However, when we ground modern readings of medieval literature in the analysis of a given narrative's manuscript corpus, as opposed to either the codex

or the individual tale, we render the complex narrative cultures that lie behind literary expression suddenly visible.

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■ NOTES

1. A movement in French medieval studies defined by the work of the Rouses, Sylvia Huot, and Keith Busby, among others.

2. This community was overlapping with, but distinct from, the commissioning and production of Latin manuscripts. For a description of this overlapping situation in Paris, see Rouse and Rouse 277–82.

3. Most users come into contact with this as an Excel spreadsheet, which has a .xlsx file extension. .csv is a file extension that stands for comma separated values. A .csv file stores plain-text data (letters or numbers). .xlsx files are proprietary to Windows and difficult to work with outside of Excel's native environment.

4. Data cleaning refers to the process of correcting incorrect or incomplete entries in the data, and regularizing the data so that the computer can analyze the data consistently. For example, "CLIGES" and "Cliges" would be read as two different titles by the machine, so capitalization and spelling must be absolutely regular. This has particular challenges for medieval studies because of irregular spellings, capitalization rules, and the difficulty most standard programming languages have with non-English diacritical marks.

5. Where A, B, C, and 1, 2, 3, are unique manuscript and text identifiers (shelf marks and titles).

6. For example: (manuscript A, text 2; manuscript C, text 2).

7. See, for instance, Koslowski and Maqueda 104–30. The literature on confirmation bias as a concept is, however, extensive in psychology and cognitive science, originating in the 1960s with Wason, specifically 129–40.

8. Meaning that more than two scholarly sources agree that the manuscript was

compiled after this date. Two may seem like a low number; however, many manuscripts, even well-known Occidental ones, simply do not have more than two thorough, high-quality codicological studies published on their contents as a whole.

9. As with any quantitative analyses, these are to some extent arbitrary; however, it is key to make one's assumptions explicit, such that results may be replicated and examined under alternative assumptions.

10. Including but not limited to Franco-Italian, Provençal, Occitan, Anglo-Norman, or Picard.

11. Dates in brackets are dates of earliest and latest manuscript compilation to within the closest quarter century, not of textual composition.

12. *Amis et Amiloun* always appears in its Middle English version, *Amis and Amiloun*, in the *Floire* corpus. However, as the goal of the corpus analysis is to have as consistent and broad a set of titles as possible for the data as a whole, I have both versions coded in as *Amis et Amiloun* (see "Methodology" for further explanation).

13. Late twelfth to early thirteenth centuries.

14. This is slightly complicated, as the oldest version of *Ami et Amile* does not coappear with any extant version of *Floire*, and the Middle English version was not composed until the early thirteenth century.

15. See Nixon 227–51.

16. However, it is possible that the reference to Berte in *Floire* was added in the fourteenth century (Wright 169).

17. Unfortunately, while the Spanish tradition is tantalizingly early, with the first printed edition appearing in 1488, all are print editions, and all appear past the cutoff date of 1400 (Nichols xlv–xlvii).

18. In two distinct versions: in Yale, Beinecke 395, it appears in the Anglo-Norman verse version; in Bern, Burgerbibliothek 113, it is an anonymous Old French version.

19. I have scrubbed BnF fr. 792 from the list because *Partonopeus* and *Voeux du Paon* were added to it after 1515; however, if it is included in the analysis, the list expands to include three more texts from the Alexander cycle: the *Roman d'Alexandre*, the *Signification de la mort d'Alexandre*, and the *Voeux du Paon.*

20. See the following for an overview of recent scholarship on the topic: Wijsman, in particular 17–26; Buringh; Buringh and van Zanden 410–46; Bozzolo and Ornato "L'étude quantitative," 233–39; Bozzolo and Ornato *Pour une histoire*; Neddermeyer 23–32.

21. Sampling bias is a kind of selection bias. It means that your data sample is not representative of the larger dataset you are attempting to represent; for example, say that you wait until 11:00 a.m. Sunday morning at Kalamazoo to hand out a questionnaire on conference participation. Your sample will be biased toward attendees who are excessively interested in Sunday morning sessions as opposed to getting back to O'Hare at a reasonable hour.

22. Note that I do not say they are all related to one another—while this may have been true, *Amadas* has only survived in three manuscripts, and two of those manuscripts contain fragments of what used to be one original. None of the three contain a copy of *Partonopeus*.

23. The only surviving French fragments are preserved in Paris, BN nouv. aq. fr. 5094.

24. Wright suggests that the passage in *Floire et Blancheflor* that spells out the connection to *Berte* may date to the first half of the fourteenth century; however, if BN 7583 is indeed a copy of a thirteenth-century manuscript, this would place the association between the two texts at least fifty years earlier.

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