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Valentin and his Wild Brother in European Literature:

How French is a Medieval French Romance?

Abstract

The medieval romance about the two brothers Valentin and Orson (also known as Nameless) crossed various linguistic and cultural borders in the European Middle Ages and beyond. It is said to have originated in a Francophone context, but the French origin, which is believed to be a *chanson de geste*, has not been preserved – the earliest surviving sources are three Middle Dutch fragments. The different versions of the tale are generally divided into two strands: the first covers versions in Middle Dutch, Middle Low German, Middle High German, and Old Swedish, and the second includes versions in French, English, German, Dutch, Italian, Icelandic, and Yiddish. In this article, we give an up-to-date overview of the two strands and raise the question whether *Valentin* should be considered as a primarily French tradition. We argue that *Valentin* cannot be understood only in a monolingual or national context, and that a linear model of transmission does not do justice to the complexity of this tradition. We consider what it means to approach Valentin as a shared European narrative, how each version places itself in this larger tradition, and what insight this approach can give us into the tension as well as fruitful co-existence between local and supralocal. By putting the different versions of the tale in dialogue and paying attention to the places and social networks along which they travelled, the article presents a new way of understanding a literary tradition that once enthralled audiences from Flanders to Silesia, and from Venice to Sweden.[1]

What do you do when you find out you have a twin brother, who was carried off by either a wolf or a bear just after your mother gave birth, and who grew up to become the local wild man everyone at court fears? The tale about the knight Valentin and his wild twin brother Nameless or Orson (his name depends on the version at hand) circulated widely in medieval Europe, and continued to do so long af-

ter the Middle Ages. It is usually considered a 'French romance', though the earliest preserved sources of the tale are in Middle Dutch. Another early version, in Middle Low German, claims a French source, which has been considered proof of a lost French original. It may, however, be problematic to consider the entire textual tradition – here referred to as *Valentin* – as 'French' when the French source is only postulated, and when the references to a French book we find in the Low German text are just as likely a literary trick or an attempt to claim a prestigious source language.

Valentin has an awkward textual history full of lost texts, fragmentary evidence, and other absences and unknowns, which may explain why it has received relatively little scholarly attention. Another reason is that it is usually studied within one national canon or language, whereas this textual tradition is much better understood within a cross-cultural, multilingual framework. None of the surviving *Valentin* texts sit easily within literary histories that emphasize neat separations between literary cultures, operating instead within cross-European networks. Though there have been previous scholarly attempts to look at versions in multiple languages, these were source-based approaches: attempts to reconstruct a lost French original or to determine which of the surviving texts is closest to the hypothetical source.[2] Such approaches are limited, often ignoring the wealth of evidence that can be gleaned from later translations in the endless quest of postulating some sort of mythical Ur-text. They are attempts at fixing a tradition that in reality is by no means static, but gives insight into the dynamic nature of literary exchanges and the movement of people and texts across medieval Europe.

In this article, we will discuss the textual history of the *Valentin* tradition from an international perspective. We aim to do justice to a tradition whose complexity has not been sufficiently acknowledged in scholarship that has often been too eager to fit each text into a neat, linear model of transmission. Some of the key questions of this analysis are whether *Valentin* is really primarily a French tradition, what 'French' actually means in this context, and what it means to consider this a European tradition instead. For a start, a focus on the French origins of the tale ignores the fact that the earliest Dutch texts and the versions from the Low German language regions played a far more important role in its cross-cultural spread. Then, how should we understand the relationship between the first and the second strand of the tradition (presented below), and what can this tell us about when something is a rewriting and when it becomes a new sto-

2. See, for instance, Arthur Dickson's seminal study of 1929, which remains a valuable contribution to the field but was also a product of its time, reflected in Dickson's attempt to find a source for the motifs in the story. Dickson also published an edition of the English translation by Henry Watson in 1937.

ry? What can the surviving texts tell us about the relationship between the local – each individual version – and the supralocal – the idea of this being a European literary tradition? By putting the different versions in dialogue, and paying attention to the places and social networks along which they travelled, we aim to gain a richer understanding of a tradition that once enthralled audiences from Flanders to Silesia, and from Venice to Sweden.

This article ties in with a growing interest in studying medieval European romances as a transnational phenomenon.[3] *Valentin* is a particularly useful case study because it is so widely scattered, with versions travelling along different routes and across an impressive number of languages. This is not a traditional study of translation that focuses on differences in content between each version. Rather, it traces the patterns of transmission and circulation, and how each version places itself within the larger overall tradition. Although we want to shine light on the more complex patterns typically overlooked in traditional source-translation models, ultimately arguing that this is a shared European narrative, in order to understand why this approach is appropriate for a text like *Valentin* we must first go through each version in turn. *Valentin* offers an excellent jumping-off point for examining key issues of medieval textuality, such as instability and *mouvance*, the value of translation, the prestige of certain languages, and assumptions about typical routes of transmission. It is also a fascinating yet understudied textual tradition, and by presenting a comprehensive overview that also includes the lesser-known versions we hope to encourage further research.

The extant versions of *Valentin* are divided into two strands, traditionally linked to different genres. The first strand comprises the lost French source, thought to be a *chanson de geste*, the Dutch fragments, the Middle Low German translation, a Middle High German version, and an Old Swedish translation. This first strand is referred to as *Valentin and Nameless* (hereafter *VN*), since in this version Valentin's brother is abducted and raised by a she-wolf and he is called Nameless – or Sansnom, Nameloes, Namelos or Namnlös. The second strand (hereafter *VO*) starts with the fifteenth-century French prose romance *Valentin et Orson* and includes translations into English, German, Dutch, Italian, and Icelandic. This strand also inspired several plays, ballads, and pageants based on the story of the two brothers. In this strand, Valentin's brother is raised by a she-bear and is named Orson. The narrative of *VO* is much longer than that of the first strand, and it is this version that is considered a romance.

3. Key works in the field include those by Grieve; Tether and McFadyen; Edlich-Muth; Goldwyn and Nilsson; Lodén and Obry. Other recent studies, not focused exclusively on romances but which highlight the value of looking at translated material and taking a cross-cultural approach, include those by Rikhardsdottir; Besamusca, Willaert, and De Bruijn; Bridges. Recent projects like *Charlemagne: A European Icon* (University of Bristol) and *'Bevis' in Multi-Text Manuscripts* (University of Düsseldorf) are further evidence of a growing interest.

The core of the narrative stays the same in both strands: the sister of King Pepin of France marries a foreign king (king of Hungary in *VN*, king of Greece in *VO*) and she is calumniated, after which her twin sons are taken from her. One twin is raised in the forest and the other at Pepin's court, though Pepin does not realise it is his nephew. Valentin eventually conquers the local wild man and takes him to court to try to civilise him, which leads to various entertaining scenes including one where Orson discovers the joys of wine and tries to get his horse to drink some too. Valentin sets out on a quest to find out who his parents are, taking Nameless or Orson with him, and they find out the truth by means of a prophetic serpent (*VN*) or brass head (*VO*). *VN* ends soon after this, with happy marriages and the rule over France and Hungary. *VO* continues with further adventures of travels abroad, battles with Saracens, flirtations with princesses, deceptions through magic, and eventual rule over France, Hungary, Ankara, and Constantinople. One notable difference is that in *VO* Valentin accidentally kills his own father, for which he later does penance and dies a saintly death.

It is curious that most critical attention has gone to the early versions of *VN* and *VO*, and not their translations. After all, it is unlikely that readers from different parts of medieval Europe lost interest in this tale simply because it was a translation and an import. On the contrary, it seems that its status as a foreign text was part of its appeal. As we will see, the French source is often highlighted on the pages of printed translations, which could be seen as a marketing strategy designed to peak the reader's interest. One may wonder whether this is due to the prestige of French itself or rather an international culture transmitted through French, signalling a cosmopolitan and fashionable literature. Despite the tale's popularity on the European literary scene, little is known about its international appeal. This is a first step towards a broader approach, offering a more complete picture of its literary history.[4]

4. All translations into modern English are our own, unless indicated otherwise.

Strand 1: From Flanders to Sweden

As indicated at the start, for the earliest traceable origins of this narrative we should not look at a French-language context. Instead, the oldest surviving *VN* texts are three fragments in Middle Dutch, dated to the fourteenth century. Fragments I and II consist of two leaves, found together in a collection of fragments now in Berlin, Staatsbib-

5. The *VN* fragments are on pages 19–20. The fragments once belonged to August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben, who also transcribed them: Haupt and von Fallersleben 204–06. The text of the Dutch fragments is reproduced in Kalff 204–20.

6. Each leaf of fragment III has two columns of fifty lines, but a section has been crudely cut away from the second leaf, so that three lines are missing from column b and two lines from column c. For a codicological description, see the article that first highlighted the discovery of the Ghent fragments: de Vreese 140–62.

7. Only one Charlemagne text from this period, *Karel ende Elegast,* is complete – all others survive in fragments. *Sibilla* is also complete, but this is a prose romance dating to the sixteenth century that is found only in print. Note that the Berlin manuscript containing *Valentijn* fragments I and II also includes fragments of *Renout* and *Gheraert van Viane* (*Girart de Vienne*). For an overview of the Dutch Charlemagne tradition, see Besamusca, "Medieval Dutch Charlemagne Romances" 167–93; also see the discussion of the Dutch and German Charlemagne tradition in Classen.

8. *Loyhier en Malaert* is another example.

9. *Ogier, Madelgijs,* and *Renout* were translated into Rhine Franconian (von Bloh 265–93).

10. Seelmann bases his hypothesis on a comparison of only a few names found in both versions.

liothek - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, mgf 751,3.[5] Fragment III also consists of two leaves and is held in Ghent, University Library, BHSL. HS.2749/9. They are no longer intact: fragment II in particular is so damaged that the text is illegible in places, and parts were cut off from the second leaf of fragment III, so that five lines of text have disappeared.[6] Nonetheless, we are lucky that more than 700 lines of verse text survive across the three fragments. It is not unusual for chivalric texts in Dutch from this period to survive only in a fragmentary state, and this is especially true for Matter of France material. Works like *Ogier van Denemarken, Madelgijs* (*Maugis d'Aigremont*), *Renout van Montalbaen,* and *Huge van Bordeeus* (*Huon de Bordeaux*) are known only from fragments.[7] In some cases, Dutch fragments provide the oldest surviving evidence of a hypothetical, now-lost French original.[8] Several texts were also translated into German dialects, showing the important – but rarely acknowledged – role the Dutch versions played in the spread and survival of these narratives.[9] As we shall see, this is likely the case for *Valentijn ende Nameloes* too.

The Middle Dutch *VN* fragments contain no prologue or epilogue. Fragment I describes how, while Valentijn and Nameloos's mother Phylla is being held prisoner, a steward tries to kiss her against her will. Phylla punches him in the face, breaking three teeth, but the steward later takes revenge by framing her for murder. Fragment II features Nameloos's wife Rosemund disguising herself as a minstrel to gain entry to court. Fragment III starts with Valentijn and Nameloos battling the Saracen giant Madageer in order to rescue their mother, who by now has been taken prisoner so often that it is starting to become a worrying habit. The three fragments do not appear to be from the same manuscript, and it is not clear whether they represent one redaction or two. Their linguistic features suggest that the fragments are from the southern Low Countries (de Vreese 146–49). Material like this is thought to have been written more for an urban elite than for a courtly context, though concrete evidence of the fragments' readership is lacking.

To better understand the context from which the earliest surviving texts emerged, we must consider the relationship between the Dutch fragments and the second oldest surviving version, the Middle Low German *Valentin und Namelos.* Though Wilhelm Seelmann suggested that the Low German version is a separate translation from the French, most scholars note that the Dutch and Low German versions are clearly related.[10] Recent scholarship has shown that a comparison of the rhyming pairs in each version strongly suggests that

the Low German was made after a Dutch example, and that several words used in the Low German version are more commonly found in Middle Dutch than in Middle Low German texts (Langbroek and Roeleveld, "Valentin" 150–60). A Dutch source seems likely, though the fragments give a more elaborate narrative than that found in the corresponding scenes in the Low German version. An intermediate source, possibly an abbreviated Dutch version, has been postulated, but it is equally possible that the Low German version itself is an abbreviated version. The fragmentary state of the Dutch material makes it difficult to make any definite claims. What is more interesting for our discussion is that the earliest versions give us insight into Dutch-German literary contact. In that sense, the terms 'Middle Dutch' and 'Middle Low German' are misleading. While the terms might suggest a clear separation between languages, in reality they are part of a linguistic continuum.[11] As we shall see, the surviving Low German manuscripts are a testament to the fruitful literary exchanges that took place along this continuum, showing us that *Valentin* is not a narrative bound by conventional borders but, if anything, one that thrived in connection with transcultural economic networks.

The Low German version is extant in two manuscripts. The best-known is Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, 102C in scrinio, also called the Hartebok.[12] It is a paper manuscript dated to the end of the fifteenth century.[13] The Hartebok is a compilation of texts in Low German, most likely put together by a group of merchants associated with the Hanseatic league, known as Flanderfahrer (travellers to Flanders). These were merchants who came from northern Germany to trade with Flanders, who had their heyday in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The manuscript contains mostly religious texts, which at first glance makes *Valentin* appear out of place – until we remember that one of its recurring themes is that of Christians conquering Muslims, and the related western Christian expansionist fantasies this conjures up. Eight out of nine texts in this codex were written by the same scribe, though over a period of time; the indulgence prayer at the end is in a different hand.[14]

The texts in the Hartebok are all of mixed Dutch-German origins. For instance, *Van deme holte des hiligen krutzes* is likely based on a Middle Dutch example, and 'Die drei Lebenden' likely originated around the borders with the southern Low Countries. The texts that have an earlier Low German tradition are mostly associated with areas around the Rhine or Westphalia, also an area of Dutch-German contact. Folio 81r features the name of one of the owners of the man-

11. Both terms also cover a range of dialects rather than one unified language. One problem is that the English term 'Middle Low German' is much less precise than the Dutch and German equivalents, Middelnederduits or Mittelniederdeutsch, which more accurately reflect linguistic commonalities.

12. The older signature is germ. 20a. The first editor of the manuscript, N. Staphorst, gave it the name Hartebok. The cover page has a drawing of a heart being crushed by a press, with the words 'Hertz brich', or heart break, in it. Staphorst read this as 'Herz buck', heart book, and turned it into a Low German equivalent Harte Bock.

13. Langbroek and Roeleveld date the manuscript to c. 1471–84: Langbroek and Roeleveld, *Het Hartebok* 27–28. A Latin charter dated to 1476 was pasted into the binding, which has led others to suggest it must be dated after 1476.

14. *Valentin* is on a different type of paper from the rest and it was likely added to the codex at a slightly later stage; Langbroek and Roeleveld, *Het Hartebok* 19.

uscript, 'Johan Coep'. Coep does not seem to have been the manuscript's first owner, though he was one of its earliest. Coep was one of the Flanderfahrer's Äldermänner who ran the office in Bruges, looking after the finances and privileges of the Hanse together with the city's council (Langbroek and Roeleveld, *Het Hartebok* 30–33). He was an Alderman from 1533–42 and the linguistic features of his ownership note betray his northern German background. It is thought that the manuscript remained in the hands of the Flanderfahrer Gesellschaft, as they were the ones who gave it to the library in Hamburg in 1854.

Though we are in all probability looking at a Hanseatic context, it is not clear whether this manuscript was made in northern German regions – the area around Hamburg has been suggested – or was first created in the Low Countries and later travelled north-eastwards (Seelmann xv; Dieperink 157). Most scholars note that Bruges is the most likely candidate (Langbroek and Roeleveld, *Het Hartebok* 31–32). Bruges played an important role in the spread of French and Dutch literature in the Hanseatic regions. The city was a key trading hub but also a literary centre, and its economic links meant it had an important cultural influence on northern German cities. But it had connections with the French and Burgundian courts and with French literary culture too; this was a place where several worlds and cultural spheres met. Works in both French and Dutch were produced in Bruges, but also in Latin and Low German – even the translation work for the first book printed in English (*Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, c. 1474) was begun in Bruges. If the manuscript was indeed produced in Bruges, it is worth remembering that the Dutch fragments are likely from the southern Low Countries too. One cannot help but wonder: if there was indeed a French original *Valentin et Sansnom*, should it be associated more with the Francophone Low Countries than with France? As recent research has shown, 'French' literary culture does not automatically denote 'France', and Flanders and the Burgundian Low Countries played a significant role in the mediation of French literary culture across Europe.[15]

The Hartebok *VN* shows us that translation need not always involve a huge geographical movement. Especially in multilingual settings, a change in language is often more indicative of a change in social milieus or a different cultural orientation, in this case eastwards. However, the other Low German manuscript, though linguistically close, is from a completely different end of the Low German language region. Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Cod. Vu 73 is a pa-

15. This includes research associated with projects on the French of Italy, the French of England, and the French of Outremer, sponsored by the Center for Medieval Studies at Fordham University. See also the publications that came out of the Medieval French Literary Culture Outside France project, which pays particular attention to the role of Flanders (Morato and Schoenaers; Gilbert, Gaunt, and Burgwinkle).

16. Former shelfmark Vitterhet Tysk 29. *Valentin* is found on folios 1r to 33r; several folios of text are missing.

17. Geeraedts 7–25 gives the range as between 1420 and 1480, but most likely the first half of the fifteenth century.

18. For a description, see web.

19. See, for instance, de Bruijn and Kestemont 179; Meier 21. See also the discussion in Geeraedts 23–24.

20. Both Meier and Geeraedts note that this must be the manuscript's first owner, and subsequent scholarship has repeated their findings. For a transcription of the ledger, see Geeraedts 22.

per codex, usually dated to around 1420.[16] Loek Geeraedts's analysis of the manuscript's watermarks, possible ownership marks, and linguistic features shows that it certainly is from the first half of the fifteenth century.[17] The manuscript is another compilation of Low German texts, which opens with *Valentin*, followed by *Der Verlorene Sohn*, *Flos unde Blankeflos*, the Marian play *Theophilus*, three shorter narratives 'Die Buhlschaft auf dem Baume', 'Der Deif van Brugge', and 'Die Frau des Seekaufmanns', and a ledger of a traveller.[18] The texts are surrounded by prologues, epilogues, and other paratexts, which has prompted Elisabeth de Bruijn to suggest that this is a manuscript made specifically for a reading public, as opposed to the Hartebok, where *Valentin* appears in a performative context (de Bruijn 81–101). There are two scribal hands: the first writes *VN*, *Der Verlorene Sohn*, and the first part of *Flos*, then another hand takes over from folio 51v to 52r to finish the rest of the romance and copy the texts that follow. Two other texts in this codex, 'Der Deif' and *Flos unde Blankeflos*, are, like *VN*, based on Middle Dutch versions.

Although little has been written about the Stockholm manuscript in connection to *Valentin*, critics working on the Low German *Flos* and 'Der Deif' have noted that the manuscript is from central Pomerania, probably Stettin/Szczecin.[19] Stettin is another Hanseatic city, a seaport close to the Baltic sea, which is now in eastern Poland. This was also a multicultural hub, with Slavic roots but also a sizeable German population, which played an important role in connecting the Hanse cities to its west with key trading cities to its east, as well as with trade routes along the rivers Oder and Warta. It also provided commercial access to Denmark and Sweden. A key factor in the manuscript's association with Pomerania is the route recorded in the traveller's ledger found on the final page. The traveller is thought to have been the manuscript's first owner, and the record of expenses describes a route through Pomerania.[20] The traveller went from Ziegenort, now Trzebież, westward along the Baltic coast to Greifswald, yet another Hanseatic city, along the way passing through more Hanse cities like Anklam. Although we do not know who first owned this manuscript, it is tempting to think of another merchant context here.

It is interesting to consider the Stockholm manuscript in relation to the Middle High German and Swedish versions, which are both based on a Middle Low German version, as it is much closer to these geographically than the manuscripts discussed so far. Here is evidence that our story was spreading north-eastwards. Moreover, it looks like the manuscript itself soon travelled to Sweden. The binding fea-

tures a coat of arms belonging to the Swedish knight Arend Bengtsson (Ulv) (c. 1420 – c. 1475), who is thought to be the second or third owner.[21] Next to this coat of arms is an image of a horn, which matches the horn that appears in the coat of arms of Arend's second wife Hebla Albrektsdotter (Bydelsbak). Both Arend and Hebla were from well-connected noble families; Hebla's father was involved in the treaty between Erik of Pomerania and the Polish-Lithuanian king Władysław II Jagiełło, and in the treaty of Copenhagen which ended the Dutch-Hanseatic war, breaking the Hanse monopoly on Baltic trade routes. The manuscript was likely owned by this family during the time of Arend's second marriage, though it is possible that Arend already owned it and simply had the manuscript rebound when he remarried. The Stockholm manuscript shows us that *Valentin* moved to Pomerania and easily travelled further to Sweden from there.

If we go by the dates of the surviving texts, next are the Middle High German versions, which go back to a Middle Low German example and survive in two manuscripts. A parchment leaf containing a fragment of fifty-two lines of verse text is found in the Royal Library in Copenhagen.[22] The other manuscript, a prose text, was in the Stadtbibliothek in Wrocław/Breslau, but it is now marked as 'Kriegsverlust'.[23] The Breslau manuscript would have presented another gap in the *VN* tradition, if it were not for the detailed notes made by Schoppe in 1928.[24] The manuscript was a compilation, with two parts bound together. Part A opened with the chronicle *Die Königin von Frankreich*, followed by *Valentin und Namelos*, the so-called *Breslauer Apollonius*, and Heinrich von Mügeln's *Ungarncronik*. Part B contained an anonymous translation of the *Buch von Troja* after Guido de Columnis, and Pribík Pulkava von Radenín's *Chronica Bohemorum*. The codex was a collection of chronicles and historical writings, and *VN* seems to have been included because of its pseudo-historical nature. The manuscript's origins are in Lower Silesia: on fol. 98v the scribe identifies himself as 'Johannem Clementis' and says he completed his work in Waldau, near Liegnitz, in 1465. Its east central German (Ostmitteldeutsch) dialect confirms a Silesian provenance.

The Breslau manuscript shows a particular interest in Bohemian history, which is not surprising considering that Silesia was part of the Crown of Bohemia at this point. What is more striking is its interest in Hungarian history. Ralf Päsler suggests that this is partly a reflection of the political instability of Silesia at the time, as it had become a plaything of various political powers (Päsler 41). Silesia was to be ruled by the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus in 1469. Päsler

argues that this background might explain why part A of the manuscript, which also includes von Mügeln's chronicle about Hungary, has such a Hungarian focus. *Die Königin von Frankreich*, for instance, gives a prominent position to one of the ancestors of Duke Rudolf IV of Austria, the addressee of the Hungarian chronicle (Päsler 40–41).

What is more interesting for us, however, is that the beginning of *Valentin* has been adjusted to suit this new context. Whereas in the Low German the text opens with a reference to the French king Pepin, in the Breslau manuscript we are first told about the Hungarian king: "In Hungirn was eyn konig gesessin (...) ehe denne dy Hungirn yn das land quomen, der konig was genant Crisostomus" ("in Hungary a king was seated, at a time before the Hungarians came to that land. The king was called Crisostomus") (Seelmann 74).[25] The heading also leaves out the French king and notes instead that the story is about "eynem konige von Hungern vnd von eynis konigis swester von Frankreich vnde von iren kindern" ("a king of Hungary and about the sister of the king of France, and about their children") and their later adventures (Seelmann 74).[26] The focus has changed from a story centring on French royalty to one about the descendants of the king of Hungary. The text takes on new relevance here, suggesting that *VN* has largely lost its significance as a specifically 'French' text. The Breslau manuscript also highlights that looking at language alone can be deceiving: though *VN* was never translated into Czech or Polish, it was certainly known in central Europe, and again it is a German version that played a key role in this spread.

The Old Swedish *Namnlös och Valentin* was most likely translated from the Middle Low German version, even though nothing is said about its source in the translation itself.[27] The identity of the translator is not certain, but it has been suggested that it was Sigge Ulfsson (Sparre av Hjulsta och Ängsö), who was archdeacon and then bishop in Strängnäs in Sweden (Vilhelmsdotter 263–64). Sigge Ulfsson had studied in Leipzig, where one could assume that he came in contact with continental culture and also acquired a level in German that was sufficient to translate from Low German. It has been shown that he was the scribe of the oldest preserved manuscript of *Namnlös och Valentin*, Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Cod. Holm. D 4a (D 4a) (Wiktorsson 260–62).

D 4a presents a compilation of texts of different genres, which is also the case for the two other manuscripts containing *Namnlös och Valentin*: Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Cod. Holm. D 3 (D 3) and Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Cod. Holm. K 45 (K 45). Both D

25. Compare the opening in the Hartebok: "Dat was eyn koningh wys vormeten/ Jn franckryke beseten/ Pippingh was de name syn" (lines 1–3) ("There was a wise king, seated in France, Pepin was his name").

26. Päsler 39–40 discusses these changes.

27. For a more detailed presentation of the Swedish text, see Lodén.

4a, dated to c. 1448 and known as 'Fru Märtas bok', and D 3, dated to 1488 and referred to as 'Fru Elins bok', were owned by women of the Swedish aristocracy. D 4a belonged to Sigge Ulfsson's sister, the Swedish Lady Märta Ulfsdotter (Sparre av Hjulsta och Ängsö), and D 3 was compiled for Märta's daughter, Elin Gustavsdotter (Sture). In previous studies, these two manuscripts have been described as both entertaining and edifying, functioning as small libraries for the two women and their households (Vilhelmsdotter 264). Several texts in D 4a and D 3 are the same. *Namnlös och Valentin* is preceded and followed by the same group of texts in both manuscripts, namely the Swedish *Eufemiavisor*, three translated verse romances originally written in the beginning of the fourteenth century, which mark the beginnings of Swedish literature.[28] In D 4a, *Namnlös och Valentin* appears after the first of the *Eufemiavisor*, *Herr Ivan*, the Swedish translation of Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Chevalier au lion*, and is then followed by *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*, the second of the *Eufemiavisor*, which is said to be a translation of a German source that would go back to a French original – both unknown today – and tells the adventures of a certain duke of Normandy. In D 3, *Namnlös och Valentin* follows the third of the *Eufemiavisor*, *Flores och Blanzeflor*, the Swedish version of *Floire et Blancheflor*, and is once again followed by *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*. The third manuscript in which *Namnlös och Valentin* is transmitted, K 45, contains neither *Herr Ivan* nor *Flores och Blanzeflor*, but the text that opens the manuscript is *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*. *Namnlös och Valentin* is the last text in this manuscript, preceded by *Tungulus*, the Swedish version of *Visio Tnugdali*. *Tungulus* also appears in D 4a and D 3. Thus, the manuscript context of *Namnlös och Valentin* clearly links the Swedish translation to other translated romances. There are several links between the *Eufemiavisor* and *Namnlös och Valentin*, in terms of their literary style and courtly focus. However, whereas the *Eufemiavisor* were written in verse, *Namnlös och Valentin* was written in prose, with only shorter passages in verse.

The Swedish text is generally close to its Low German source text, although it features a prologue which is not found in the Low German version. In this prologue the narrator describes what will follow as a 'courtly adventure' about the heroic achievements of the two brothers: "Her effter børiæs eth høffuist æuintyr aff Nampnlos och Falantin, aff all theres mandom" (Wolf 2) ("Hereafter begins a courtly adventure of Namnlös and Valentin, and of all their heroic achievements"). The word æuintyr can mean both a "chivalric adven-

28. The three *Eufemiavisor* are *Herr Ivan, Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*, and *Flores och Blanzeflor*. For a discussion of the role of these texts in the establishment of Swedish literature, see Lodén.

ture" and a "story of a chivalric adventure" and may evoke foreign and translated literature, in particular when described as "courtly" ("høffuist"). Æuintyr also appears in the first verse of *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*: "Eth æuintyr thet byriæs hær" (Noreen 1) ("An adventure begins here"). However, whereas *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie* is explicitly presented as a translation from French to Swedish via German in its epilogue, it is significant that the translator of *Namnlös och Valentin* does not refer to his work as a translation, neither in the prologue nor in the epilogue. Instead, he insists on the text's role as amusement: it is supposed to be "lusteligit at høræ" (Wolf 2) ("amusing to hear") and "fordriffuæ tiiden til thæs en høgre glædi komber" (Wolf 2) ("while away time until a higher form of joy arrives"). Thus, even though *Namnlös och Valentin* is associated with other translations in its manuscript context, its nature as a translation is not highlighted in the text itself, let alone any connection to a French source.

Having introduced the various surviving versions that make up the first strand, we can now reassess what evidence there is for a hypothetical lost French source. As mentioned in the introduction, proof of a French source hinges mostly on references to a French book found in the Low German version. The Low German text contains five references to a French source, repeating the phrase "also ik ût deme walschen las" ("as I read in the French [source]").[29] There are no such references in the Dutch fragments. They are also not repeated in either of the translations based on the Low German version, the High German and the Swedish versions. There are only five lines in one version, out of thousands of lines across the different versions, which refer to a French source. Moreover, there is a formulaic quality to these phrases, as they are always used to rhyme with a preceding line ending in 'was'. In fact, virtually all lines that end with 'was' in the Low German version are then rhymed with 'las' in the next line; this seems to be the poet's go-to phrase.[30] If we combine this with the fact that all of these lines are found in the main text, whereas one would usually expect to find important details like the identification of a source in a prologue or epilogue, there is a strong suggestion that the lines referring to a French book are fillers used to pad out the rhyme scheme.

If the oldest surviving texts contain no references to a French source and the references in the Low German version are fillers, this might not exclude the possibility of there being a French source but there certainly is no guarantee either. It is just as likely an indication of the pseudo-historical origins and geographical setting of the nar-

29. Lines 530, 1650, 1735, 2295, and 2526 in Klemming's edition. These correspond to lines 471, (missing page), 1385, 1945, and 2176 in Geeraedt's edition of Stockholm Vu 73.

30. The exceptions are ll. 1861 and 1982, where "was" rhymes with "gras" or grass, which is possible because the action takes place outside. This is not an option for the lines where the poet uses "also ik ût deme walschen las".

31. France still plays a central role in the narrative's geography in all versions discussed here.

32. This is, of course, not limited to Dutch, or to Arthurian romances. *Rauf Coilyear* is an example of a narrative in Scottish that builds on a French Charlemagne tradition without claiming a French source.

33. Even when Dutch texts do mention a French source, this is not always true and may have other reasons. Remco Sleiderink has highlighted examples of Middle Dutch verse texts that claim a French source, when there is no evidence for one, and of authors trying to market their texts by linking it to popular French works. He notes this may be a reflection of the perceived status of French, where a Dutch text can borrow some of the prestige of the French literary tradition (Sleiderink 127–43).

rative than a true identification of an actual French source.[31] The main reason for the association with a French source may just be convention – because 'Matter of France' material is linked with French culture and political history it is also automatically associated with a French origin. This certainly seems to be the case for the Dutch fragments. Bart Besamusca has questioned Dutch scholars' eagerness to brand every Dutch Charlemagne text as a translation from a French original, since for many texts a clear source has not been identified, which has led scholars to either postulate a lost source or claim that the translator was working from an oral tradition (Besamusca, "Karlsepen" 26–35). But what if, Besamusca asks, we take a bold move and assume that, if no source is mentioned, there might not be one, and that Middle Dutch poets were more inventive than they are often given credit for? This does not mean that the core of the narrative material does not have its origins in French culture, but it should not be assumed that every Matter of France text also comes from a French source. Certainly, by the time the Dutch and Low German versions of *Valentin* were written, other Matter of France texts had spread across borders and this was becoming an international literary phenomenon more so than an exclusively French one. There is no reason why a non-French author could not invent a new narrative based on familiar material; as, indeed, is the case for several Dutch Arthurian romances.[32] Has the time come to reassess these claims about a lost French source?[33] One question to ask ourselves is what would happen if we did not have those lines in the Low German version. And is a French setting the same as calling this a French narrative? What do we mean when we call a story 'French'?

There is much we can learn from the *VN* texts that actually survive. For one, they give us insight into various literary hubs and areas of cross-cultural contact that played a key role in the spread of narratives like this. They highlight how manuscripts belonging to the same language group may nonetheless belong in very different cultural contexts. They also remind us that choice of language matters when we look at how far translated material spread across Europe. Where translation into some languages forms an endpoint, with cultures mostly importing foreign works, other languages take on a mediating role, enabling a narrative to spread even further. Low German is one of those catalyst languages for *VN*. As the *lingua franca* of the Hanseatic league, it was spoken across a wide region, covering the eastern Netherlands and cities in the south, the northern parts of modern-day Germany and Poland, and even southern Scandinavia

and cities in the Baltic states. Note that these regions map very nicely onto the spread of the first strand of *Valentin*. We have manuscripts from the southern Low Countries, one of which moved to a northern German city, a manuscript associated with Pomerania that later moved to Sweden, and a manuscript from Silesia. The High German and Swedish versions are both based on the Low German version, which is itself likely based on a Dutch example. This suggests that the range of the postulated original French version was actually quite limited and, frankly, insignificant when considered in this larger scheme – it was the move to Dutch and then Low German that was key to the narrative's international spread.

Strand 2: From Lyon to Venice (and Across the Atlantic)

Whereas for the first strand there is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding its possible French source, with the second strand we are on much firmer ground: its origins lie in the French prose text *Valentin et Orson*, which dates to the late fifteenth century. Written by an anonymous author, it is no doubt one of the most important versions of this tradition, if importance can be measured through the number of surviving texts and translations. *Valentin et Orson* has generally been considered a *mise en prose* of the lost French verse original (Schwam-Baird, *Valentin et Orson* ix–x). It survives entirely in a printed context, with no known manuscripts. It is also the basis of almost all translations included in this strand. One of the reasons why *Valentin* has been seen as a French tradition may be because this second strand has a French origin, which was then projected back onto the first strand. There is a question here, however, as to what degree we should see these two strands as representing the same tradition or whether these are in fact two separate narratives with common elements. Scholarship has been too keen to make a linear story out of a textual tradition which is messy and has many gaps – we do not know exactly how and where this new version originated, for instance. Though on the surface *VO* looks like a later, newer tradition, it is important to note that the Swedish *VN* translation and the earliest French *Valentin et Orson* edition are in fact near-contemporary. The history of *Valentin* is again far more complex and multifaceted than previously acknowledged.

The earliest known edition of *Valentin et Orson* was printed in

34. Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC): 765978, Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke (GW): 12840, French Vernacular Books/Livres vernaculaires français (FB): 50247.

35. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, RES-Y2-82; London, British Library, IB.41942 (imperfect); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, b15 P3(2) (fragment).

36. These woodcuts are on sig. B1v, D3r, H8r, and Q8r. See also Dalbanne and Droz 49.

37. Maillet's editions of *Baudoin* and *Jason* include images found earlier in editions printed by Schenck. For more on the reuse of images among Lyon printers, and the relationships between printers like Schenck and Ortuin, see Zeldenrust 108–09.

38. That von Kaden owned a French edition is all the more interesting considering that by 1526 the German translation had already been published, twice (see below).

39. For an overview of the editions printed in Lyon, see Shira Schwam-Baird's entry in the online catalogue *Éditions Lyonnaises de Romans du XVIe siècle (1501-1600)*.

Lyon in 1489 by Jacques Maillet.[34] Maillet printed works in French as well as Latin, both religious texts and secular narratives, including *Fierabras*, *Jason et Medée*, *Baudouin de Flandres*, *Recueil des hystoires troyennes*, and *Descrution de Jherusalem*. Maillet's edition of *Valentin et Orson* is the first printed text that carries his name and three copies have been preserved.[35] The text is divided into seventy-four chapters and features forty woodcuts. As pointed out by Shira Schwam-Baird, who edited and translated Maillet's text, the woodcuts are typical of their time and the Lyonnais style of illustration, in that they have a clear German design (Schwam-Baird, *Valentin et Orson* xix). Most early printers active in Lyon had connections with local German printers or were themselves Germans, who had moved in search of new opportunities and brought existing illustrative material with them, repurposing German images for editions in French. Lyon printers also borrowed and copied each other's printing materials, resulting in a great deal of image reuse.

We see this in *Valentin et Orson* too: four of the woodcuts in Maillet's edition are identical to those used by the printer Peter Schenck (or Pierre Boutellier) in Vienna in 1484 for another text, *l'Abuze en court*.[36] Schenck had worked in Vienna before settling in Lyon, taking his woodblocks with him. Several of Maillet's other editions also reuse woodcuts first found in editions printed by Schenck, and Maillet seems to have known Gaspard Ortuin, who worked together with Schenck in printing an edition of *Mélusine* in c. 1485.[37] Although this cross-cultural reuse and movement of images was typical of the early period of printing, it is interesting to link it to the European character of *Valentin*. Even when we are dealing with a strand where the first surviving text is definitely French, because of the international nature of the early printing market – which was characterised by a movement of people and materials – we see that the pages of the first edition are marked by other cultural connections too.

Maillet's edition was followed by two other editions published in Lyon: by Jacques Arnoullet in 1495 and by Martin Havard in 1505. It was then published in Paris in c. 1515 by Michel Le Noir and in c. 1511–25 by the widow of Jehan Trepperel and Jehan Jehannot. One of the surviving copies of the edition printed in Lyon in 1526, by Olivier Arnoullet, was owned by Michael van Kaden, a German humanist who worked in the legal profession, showing that the French editions were also read outside France.[38] In all, another twelve editions were printed in the sixteenth century, mostly in Paris and Lyon, but also in Louvain in 1596.[39] Even though the texts of the first editions

are close to each other, there are a number of differences in their orthography and illustrations (Colombo Timelli 331). Many more editions followed in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, printed in Lyon, Rouen, Troyes, Lille, and Montbéliard. The last known edition is dated to 1846 and printed in Epinal, which shows that the tale captivated audiences for a long time. *VO* was also included in the 'Bibliothèque bleue' series, works similar to English chapbooks and German Volksbücher (Schwam-Baird, "La longue vie" 300–02) Altogether, there are fifty known editions of the French *VO* (Schwam-Baird, *Valentin et Orson* 531–34).

Valentin et Orson is about ten times longer than the most complete version of *VN*, the Middle Low German version. Whilst the core of the first half of the narrative still revolves around the motif of the two brothers separated at birth, one of whom is raised by a wild animal, now a bear instead of a wolf, the second part is distinct. There are important additions, in particular the inclusion of the dwarf magician Pacolet and his flying wooden horse, as well as a large number of other characters. The story's geography also expands, most notably with new adventures in India. Previous research has stressed the difficulty of placing the French text within one specific genre: it contains elements from romance, epic, saints' lives, and other genres (Schwam-Baird, *Valentin et Orson* xii; Szkilnik 104). To some extent, this may resemble other French prose texts from the same period, i.e. longer prose cycles that juxtapose elements with various generic origins (Schwam-Baird, *Valentin et Orson* 104). However, as shown by Michelle Szkilnik, *VO* remains more disparate than most prose cycles, which she argues can be linked to the inclusion of the magician Pacolet, whom she says becomes an anachronistic figure (Schwam-Baird, *Valentin et Orson* 104, 108). This disparity raises questions about when we call something a rewriting and how many changes are needed before it in fact becomes a new text. Are these not so much two versions of the same narrative as two separate narratives? The same question can be asked for other works, like *Quatre Filz Aymon*, which changes so much in being constantly translated and retold that it is difficult to speak of one coherent tradition.

Interestingly, it is the addition of Pacolet and his wooden horse which also shows that the narrative incorporated elements of other literary traditions as it transformed into *Valentin et Orson*. Pacolet and his flying horse are introduced in Chapter xxiv in the French text:

De grant sens et subtil engin estoit plain, lequel a l'escole de Toullette tant avoit aprins de l'art d'ingromance que par dessus tous les aultres estoit parfait et experimenté en telle maniere que par enchantement il fist et composa ung petit cheval de boys. Et en la teste d'iceluy cheval avoit fait et acomply artificiellement et par science subtille une cheville qui estoit tellement assise que toutes les fois qu'i montoit sur le cheval de bois pour aler quelque part, il tournoit la cheville qui en la teste de son cheval estoit devers le lieu ou il vouloit aler et tantost se trouvoit en la place sans nul mal et sans danger, car le cheval estoit de telle nature qu'il s'en aloit parmy l'air plus soudainement et plus legierement que nul oyseau ne sçait voler. (Schwam-Baird, *Valentin et Orson* 208–10)

(He was quite clever and cunning; moreover, at the school of Toledo he had learned so much of the magical arts that he excelled in it above all others. In fact, with his magic he had formed and constructed a little wooden horse in whose head was inserted a pin fashioned with art and cunning knowledge. Thus, each time he mounted the wooden horse to go somewhere, he turned the pin in his horse's head in the direction of the place he wanted to go and soon found himself there without any harm or danger, for the horse was made in such a way that it flew through the air more quickly and lightly than any bird.) (Schwam-Baird, *Valentin et Orson* 209-11)

Both dwarf magicians and flying wooden horses were known literary motifs at the time *Valentin et Orson* was written: the figure of Pacolet could be traced back to several *chansons de geste* and the school of magic in Toledo had been mentioned previously too (Szkilnik 93). The enchanted horse was inspired by *Cléomadès* by Adenet le Roi, written in Paris around 1285.[40] It can also be linked to the closely related *Méliacin* by Girart d'Amiens, also written in Paris around 1285.[41]

However, the motif of the wooden horse goes back much longer: it appeared in the Indian collection of animal fables *Pañcatantra*, written in Sanskrit c. 200 BC (Houdebert, *Le cheval d'ébène* 32). It was picked up in the Persian empire and found its way into *One Thousand and One Nights* as well as the closely related *One Hundred and One Nights*. The latter was copied in Al-Andalus, the Muslim-ruled part of the Iberian Peninsula, in the Middle Ages, which is assumed to have played a key role in the transmission of the motif into European culture. The sister of King Philippe III of France, Blanche de France, has

40. This has been pointed out by several scholars. See, for example, Dickson, *A Study* 218.

41. For a close study of *Cléomadès* and *Méliacin*, see Houdebert, *Le cheval d'ébène*.

been pointed out as a person who likely brought the story to France: she is mentioned in Adenet's prologue as one of the commissioners, together with the queen Marie de Brabant, and also Girard seems to make reference to her, even though her name is not mentioned explicitly (Houdebert, "L'histoire du cheval d'ébène" 146). Blanche was married to Ferdinand de la Cerda and part of the Castilian court, until her husband died and she had to return to France. In her book on the two French texts, Aurélie Houdebert has argued that Blanche probably transmitted the Arabic tale orally to both French authors, who then separately wrote their own versions (Houdebert, *Le cheval d'ébène)*.

Cléomadès and *Méliacin* were written in octosyllabic verse, but the story was rewritten in prose in the fifteenth century. One of the prose rewritings, entitled *Clamades*, was printed in Lyon in 1480 by Guillaume le Roy, shortly before Maillet's edition of *Valentin et Orson*. Schenck, whose woodcuts Maillet's *VO* edition copies, also printed an edition of *Clamades* in Vienna around 1483–85. Did this prose version inspire the writer of *Valentin et Orson* to add the motif of the wooden horse?[42] One could indeed imagine that this part of the tale was born in Lyon, among networks of writers, printers, and other tradesmen who regularly shared materials.

Whereas Girard's horse mainly travels in Asia, Adenet's horse is of a more European character: it travels between places like Seville, Toscany, Salerno, Normandy, Britain, and France (Uhl 22). *Valentin et Orson* also contains references to different regions and cities, such as France, Portugal, Aquitaine, Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, India, Antioch, and Angory (Ankara). These place names reflect an interest in areas around the Mediterranean and in key crusading territories, covering a wide Eurasian space whilst also connecting the text to the Matter of France.[43] That so much action takes place in Constantinople probably reflects a reaction to the city's fall in 1453, with its eventual recapture from Saracen enemies representing a kind of shared western European chivalric wish-fulfilment. The presence of the wooden horse contributes to making travel between distant places possible in *Valentin et Orson*, at the same time as it links the tale to French as well as Spanish and Arabic sources. Even though *Valentin et Orson* is a French romance epic, anchored in a French literary tradition, it needs to be understood in this broader perspective. It matters that the earliest surviving text of this strand was printed in Lyon, whose printing market relied on skilled foreigners and had important connections with non-Francophone printing cities, and that it emerged from a literary milieu that also looked to other cultures for

42. This hypothesis is presented by Houdebert, *Le cheval d'ébène* 557.

43. For example, the mention of 'Esclardie' echoes 'Esclaudie' in the *Chanson de Roland* (Dickson, *A Study* 229).

inspiration. Considering how much the author recycles material from other literary traditions and that these episodes take up a considerable amount of narrative space, the question arises whether we should see *Valentin et Orson* more as a new version or a spin-off, which borrows from the earlier *VN* tradition as much as from other cultural traditions. Is it a case not of rewriting *VN*, but of putting together existing narrative elements not previously put together to create something new? This is more than mere 'influence' alone: the narrative attests to a co-evolving of narratives around the Mediterranean world.

Szkilnik notes that there are parallels between Pacolet and the author of *Valentin et Orson*.[44] Similarly, one could see a parallel between the wooden horse and the tale itself. The teleporting horse is an apt metaphor for how the story itself spread widely. The earliest French edition was published at a time when prose romances were in vogue not just in a French-language context but also on the international stage; translations of French prose romances had become fashionable. This meant that it did not take long before *Valentin* appeared in several other languages, starting in English. It also meant that translators and printers were often all too keen to highlight their French source material – which is very different from what we saw with *VN*.

The earliest edition of the English *The Hystory of the two valyaunte brethren Valentyne and Orson* was printed by Wynkyn de Worde around 1508–10.[45] It survives in only one fragment of eight pages.[46] However, we know what the original text must have looked like, because it was reprinted in its entirety by William Copland in 1555. The English translation generally stays close to its French source, though there are some differences.[47] It was not unusual for English translations of French romances in this period to stay close to their source material, so the English *Valentyne* is not an anomaly.[48] It was also translated relatively soon after the printing of the first French editions, so it may not have needed much updating. Though the French editions make no mention of an author, the English version proudly announces the name of the translator and the fact that he is translating from French: "I, Henrye Watson, symple of understondynge, haue translated [this history] out of frenche in to our maternall tongue of Englyshe" (Watson, *Valentyne* Sig. A2r).[49]

The English version is clearly presented as a translation from the start. In fact, Watson's identification of his French source appears to be part of an overall marketing strategy, where the book's status as a foreign text becomes a selling point. We must not forget that English at this time was far from the world language it is today and that Eng-

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44. Szkilnik compares the way Pacolet loses control of events in the narrative to the way the author loses control of his character and the increasingly elaborate plot (Szkilnik 108). The narrative is not so much an example of *entrelacement*, or the careful interlacement of episodes typical of prose romances, as a spreading out that threatens to overrun authorial control.

45. Universal Short Title Catalogue no. 501165, Short Title Catalogue no. 24571.3. The USTC and STC give the date as 1510. Joseph Gwara has argued in a recent article that it dates from 1509, possibly 1508, based on the use of 'foul sorts' or individual pieces of type that stand out from the rest of the font used (Gwara 212, 232).

46. London, British Library, C.132.i.54. The fragment starts on sig. B3, with the text matching sig. C3 in William Copland's 1555 edition.

47. For instance, measurements are Anglicised, the translator sometimes adds explanatory details, and the text is divided into a larger number of chapters (Hosington 4–5, 13–14, 18).

48. See the discussion on invisibility and close translation in Zeldenrust 206–11, as well as discussions by Cooper 211, and Hardman and Ailes 26–27.

49. Quotations from Watson's translation are from Copland's 1555 reprint of De Worde's edition.

50. Hellinga notes that printing had been developing on the continent for at least two decades before the first book was printed in England, in Westminster (Hellinga 1).

51. Caxton's earliest types were modelled on the manuscript hand of David Aubert, a scribe and author who worked for Burgundian nobles. Aubert copied a manuscript of *Olivier de Castile* and adapted *Renaut de Monauban* into a *mise en prose* for Philip the Good. Caxton's later types were modelled on Flemish and French printing types, initially imitating those used by Colard Mansion (Robinson 65). Robinson notes that the types used by Caxton must have looked foreign to English readers, who were used to manuscripts written in Anglicana or the English secretary hand.

52. *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* is the first book printed in English (Ghent or Bruges c. 1473–74), endorsed by Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy. It is Caxton's own translation of the *Recueil des Histoires de Troye* by Raoul Lefèvre, secretary to Philip the Good. Caxton's *History of Jason* (Westminster, 1477) is also a translation of a work by Lefèvre and Caxton mentions Philip the Good and the Order of the Golden Fleece in his prologue. Caxton's *Blancardyn and Eglantine* (c. 1489) is a translation of a Burgundian prose reworking.

53. The vogue for Burgundian texts in England had been going on for some time, a notable example being Edward IV's collecting of Flemish manuscripts. He seems to have acquired a taste for them during his exile, when he stayed with the notable bibliophile Louis Gruuthuse.

54. The author of *Olivier*, Philippe Camus, also wrote a prose version of *Cléomadès*. It is not certain that *Ponthus* was produced at the Burgundian court, but it was certainly read there (Brown-Grant 17).

55. The page numbers in this section refer to those of Copland's 1555 reprint of De Worde's edition.

56. The same woodcuts appear in other editions by De Worde, including *Justes of May* 1507, *Ponthus* 1511, *Richard Coeur de Lion* 1528, *Bevis* after 1528; one

lish literary culture and book production lagged behind continental innovations. Printing came to England relatively late, and only after the first English printer William Caxton spent years learning his craft on the continent and had first tested the printing of books for an English audience from there.[50] Time spent in the Burgundian Low Countries and at its courts left a mark on the books Caxton printed, both in terms of their appearance on the page (his types, for instance, were modelled on Burgundian script) and his choice of texts, which often reflected Burgundian literary tastes.[51] This is certainly the case for the romances he printed.[52] When Caxton's apprentice De Worde took over his printing business, he continued this work, reprinting romances published by Caxton but also commissioning new translations of romances which similarly had Burgundian links. Some of these were new prose romances, whilst others were older verse narratives which were turned into prose romances within a Burgundian literary milieu. Even for several romances where the exact origin is uncertain, we know that they were eagerly read and collected by Burgundian dukes and duchesses (Cooper 226–27).[53] Since many Francophone texts printed by Caxton and De Worde have a Burgundian connection, one may wonder whether *Valentyne* had a similar trajectory. Its translator Henry Watson certainly also translated two other works which were a hit at the Burgundian court, *Olivier de Castile* and *King Ponthus*, also for De Worde.[54] There too, Watson highlights their status as texts translated "out of Frensshe into Englysshe/ oure moders tonge" (Watson, *Olyver* Sig. Aa6r). Prose romances like *Valentyne, Olyver*, and *Ponthus* represented the latest literary fashions.

If we look closely at the English *Valentyne*, it is, like the first French edition, a far more international text than first appears. Several of its woodcuts are copied after images from French editions.[55] For instance, the woodcut on sig. Y3r, depicting two knights jousting in front of a fountain, is modelled on a woodcut that appears in Guillaume le Roy's edition of *Ponthus et Sidoine* (c. 1483–87) and reappears in several other editions also printed in Lyon, including the *Olivier* printed by the widow of Jean Trepperel (1520) (Sánchez-Martí 93–97).[56] Another jousting woodcut on sig. Y4v, this one showing an open field and one knight reeling after being hit by the other's lance, and the woodcut on sig. Rr2v, depicting two men and a woman on horseback, also appear in Dennis Meslier's editions of the *Chroniques abrégées des Rois de France* (c. 1490) and *Paris et Vienne* (c. 1491).[57] De Worde's edition also features ornamental borders and grotesques (large decorated initials) which imitate styles used in continen-

reappears in Copland's reprint of De Worde's *Aymon* 1554.

57. Sig. C4v, D5v, E2v, F6v, F7r, H1v, H3v, I1v, K1v, N4r, O6r, and P5r for the jousting woodcut in *Chroniques abrégées*; A4r, A5v, B3v for the same woodcut in *Paris et Vienne*. Sig. M3v for the horseback woodcut in *Chroniques abrégées*; Sig. D2r in *Paris et Vienne*.

58. It is an irony of book history that the font later known as 'English blackletter', which was to typify printing in English, originates from a font bought from Paris, used by local printers (Robinson 68–69). On the types of *Valentyne*, see Gwara 212. Most paper used by printers in England was imported from Italy or France, as an attempt to set up a local paper mill was short-lived; Robinson 62.

59. The inventory lists more romances, including a French prose edition of *Doon de Mayence*, English translations of *Recueil des Histoires de Troye*, *Oliver of Castile*, and *William of Palerne*, and a copy of *Richard Coeur de Lion*. He also owned books on coats of arms and other chivalric subjects (Meale 297).

60. Edwards and Meale note that Stafford's patronage of the arts shows a man "who fostered an image of magnificence" and who was up on current cultural and political interests (99).

tal editions. It features a type modelled on the style of fonts used in Paris and Rouen, and it is printed on foreign paper.[58] These were not just aesthetic choices; for practical reasons, the English printing market depended a great deal on foreign materials and tradesmen in its early stages. Even De Worde himself, the most important printer of romances in England, was not native born. He came from northern France or the Low Countries and was granted status as a denizen of England in 1496, receiving the equivalent of a modern residence permit, though he continued his connections with Dutch and French printers and employed tradesmen from the continent (Hellinga 133–34).

Furthermore, the translation itself features many Gallicisms and often uses syntax that follows its French source. It does not allow the reader to forget that we are dealing with a foreign text. Close translations might seem to lack imagination, but for an English reader at the time such close fidelity to a French model likely added to the text's appeal and prestige. As a sign that a text like *Valentyne* was in demand, we need only look at the inventory of the books owned by Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham and nephew to Edward IV's queen Elizabeth Woodville. The duke owned many fashionable works, mostly in French, or English translations from French or Latin, and most were purchased not long after printing, as the duke seems to have kept up with the latest literary hits.[59] He was a known patron too: he instigated English translations of *Le Chevalier au Cygne* and *La fleur des histoires de la terre d'Orient*.[60] He also owned a copy of De Worde's *Valentyne* edition, obtained soon after it was printed. If we consider how the text itself makes traces of the foreign visible, both in terms of the narrative and its material features, like images and type, this suggests that Watson's highlighting of his French source in the prologue is more than a linguistic identification. This is a marketing tool that signals an awareness of the latest literary innovations and a cosmopolitan, high culture mediated through French, which seems to have appealed to noblemen like Stafford.

Valentyne remained popular in England for some time. As mentioned, William Copland reprinted De Worde's edition in 1555; he may have obtained his printing material via his father or brother Robert Copland, who worked as a translator for De Worde. William Copland printed the 1555 edition for John Walley, a fellow printer and book merchant. He printed another edition in 1565, which suggests the work was commercially viable. In 1586 Thomas Purfoot was granted a license to print *Valentyne*, though we do not know if he exercised this privilege (Cooper 165). The license then transferred to his

son Thomas Purfoot jr., who printed an abbreviated version of the romance in 1637, where its potentially problematic parts, mostly scenes relating to the magician Pacolet and his demonic powers, were taken out. This abbreviated version continued to be reprinted throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Considering that quite a few English prose romances were printed only once or twice and then seemingly disappeared, *Valentyne* was relatively successful.

The story was also performed in pageants and on the stage. At the coronation festivities for King Edward VI in London in 1547, one performer was dressed as the knight Valentine and another as the wild man Orson, covered in moss and leaves and wielding a huge club (Mulready 50). Although the plays themselves do not survive, the Stationers' Register records that a performance of "Valentyne and Orsson, plaid by hir maiesties Players" was licensed to Thomas Gosson and Raffe Hancock in 1595, and another was licensed to William White in 1600 (Cooper 164). Henslowe's diary records that he received a payment of £5 from Richard Hathaway and Anthony Munday, known dramatists, for "a Boocke called vallentyne & Orson" in 1598, which they may have used as source material (Cooper 164). It is in this context that we also find one of the most noteworthy testimonies to the story's continuing currency in the English literary tradition.[61] In his critique of how dramatic adaptations of medieval romance too often break Aristotelian unities, the Elizabethan poet Philip Sidney mentions 'Pacolet's horse' as an example of a handy plot device that allows authors to quickly transport characters from one location to the next, showing rather than reporting a change in setting (Mulready 47). Sidney acknowledges that, writing as he does in an age of rapid global expansion and exploration, his world is much larger than that of his much-admired Classical authors. He brings up Pacolet's horse as the ultimate example of how one can bridge the gap between Classical narrative theories and the realities of an ever-expanding world. Pacolet's horse, "a fantasy of almost instant transport to exotic realms", becomes the quintessential globetrotter (Mulready 60). A literary motif that is itself an example of cross-cultural exchange, and of how stories and ideas travelled across the medieval Afro-Eurasian space, becomes a metaphor for how literary works might struggle to represent the realities of travel in an ever-expanding world.

More translations followed. The German "Hystori [...] von zweyen brůderen Valentino und Orso" ("history [...] of two brothers Valentino and Orso") was first printed in 1521 in Basel. It was published by Adam Petri, a printer better known for his editions of Martin Lu-

61. As further evidence of how well-known this story was: Robert Ashley's autobiography of 1614 includes *VO* in a list of romances he read as a child, and the log of the buccaneer Basil Ringrose notes that he and his crewmates imprisoned a boy they had spotted off the South American coast and called him Orson, because they considered him a wild man who needed to be civilised, showing the darker side of this narrative.

62. Urs Graf was a colourful figure, who was regularly imprisoned on accusations of violence and consorting with prostitutes. He worked as a goldsmith, stained glass artist, and mercenary, during which time he travelled to Burgundy and Italy, and it has been suggested that he was present during the Sack of Rome in 1527.

63. Found on folios N4r, O1r, Q2v.

ther's texts and other reformed works. Petri's *Valentino* features woodcuts made by Urs Graf, an illustrator who also worked for printers in Paris and Strasbourg.[62] Many of the woodcuts feature scenes specific to this narrative, including the image of a wild man holding a club.[63] As we saw with De Worde's edition, it was not unusual for printers to reuse generic images of jousts, weddings, battles, and other often-recurring scenes to cut costs. That some of the woodcuts are tailor-made indicates that Petri thought they were worth the expense and tells us something about his confidence that the edition would sell.

Valentino was not published on its own but together with a German translation of *Olivier de Castille*, entitled *Olwyer und Arto*. This is another tale of two brothers who are separated and eventually reunited. Both translations are by the same translator, whose name we know, because he tells us several times throughout the edition that he is "Wilhelm Ziely von Bern in Ochtlandt" (Ziely, *Olwyer* A1r). Unlike with the English translation, where we have a name but otherwise know almost nothing about the translator, Ziely pops up rather frequently in historical records. He came from a family of artisans involved in the cloth trade, who may have originally come from Nice. He tells us in his prologue that at the time he translated *Valentino* and *Olwyer* he was a "diener im Kouffhuß" (K3v: "servant in a department store"). Ziely seems to have been a social climber, later taking up important roles in Bern, including as an administrative controller for the St. Vinzenz foundation, a judge, and an envoy representing the city in discussions about the Reformation (Putzo 130).

Ziely was writing at a time when German prose translations of French romances and *chansons de geste* were in fashion. These were typically prose adaptations from verse originals, which makes *Valentine*, a prose-to-prose translation, an interesting exception. Christine Putzo points out that Ziely does not match the typical profile of translators of French material in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Putzo 130). Most translators belonged to the upper or lower nobility, or they were in service of the nobility, which meant they would have had a formal education. Examples of translations that arose from a courtly context include the Charlemagne texts *Herzog Herpin, Sibille, Loher und Maller*, attributed to the countess Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken; *Ponthus und Sidonia* translated by princess Eleanor of Scotland; and *Magelone* by the courtly diplomat Veit Warbeck, which was finished not long after Ziely's translations.[64] We might see in Ziely's *Olwyer* and *Valentino* further evidence of his social aspirations, at a time when literary activity, certainly for chival-

64. Another text translated in this period is Wilhelm Salzmann's *Kaiser Octavianus*. For the overall context of translation activity in German in this period, see Bertelsmeier-Kierst 17–47.

ric texts, was still largely associated with an elite minority.[65] It is also striking how many translations of French romances, like Ziely's works, originate from Bern and its surrounding areas. Other texts from Bern include Thüring von Ringoltingen's German *Melusine*, the oldest translation of *Ponthus und Sidonia* (a different version from Eleanor's, known as version C), and the *Clamades* fragment. As we saw with the English translated romances, these are largely Burgundian texts rather than strictly 'French' romances. If the idea of a French to German translation might suggest a movement from central France to central Germany, the reality is different. The more typical route is through Burgundian or northern French territories and, for those versions based on a printed source, via Lyon, with a great deal of translation work taking place in regions which are today part of Switzerland.

One noticeable feature of Ziely's *Valentino* is that he adds his own prologue, in which he highlights his French source several times. Ziely tells us that he is translating from a book "das ich funden han in frantzösischer sprach und welscher zungen" (K3v; "that I found in the French language and French tongue"), followed by a modesty topos saying that he has done his best even though "ich der kunst und der sprach nit eigentlichen underricht bin" (K3v; "I was not taught in the art and the language"). He repeats several times that he translated the work "von der welschen zungen" into "unsere Dütsche sprach" (K3v; "from French" … "our German language"), using the verb 'bringen' or 'to bring' to describe the process of moving the story from one language to another. The title page and the colophon at the end of the edition similarly highlight that the story comes "uß franßösischer zungen" (A1r) and that it was "Vertütscht durch den wysen Wylhelm Zielly" (Gg8r; "set to German [literally: German-ised] by the wise Wilhelm Ziely"). Such identifications of a French source are not unusual. Thüring's prologue to *Melusine*, for instance, also emphasizes that the story is based on a French example.[66] Such references no doubt give Ziely's text a degree of validity, especially considering that he spends part of the prologue defending the value of fiction, writing as he did at a time of increasing scrutiny over the supposed lies told by romances. But they can also be read as another marketing trick, meant to capitalise on the associations between French romances and chivalric culture, and to show interested readers that Ziely's work is in keeping with current trends.

Adam Petri printed another *Valentino* edition in 1522, where it is again presented together with *Olwyer*. *Valentino* was printed on its own by Weigand Han in Frankfurt in 1558, though it is worth noting

that there is evidence of an *Olwyer* printed by Weigand Han's heirs a decade later.[67] Peter Schmidt printed another edition via the presses of Kilian Han, Weigand Han's son, in 1572. The 1572 *Valentino* is a more stripped-down version of Petri's text: it no longer has a table of contents and the translator's prologue has disappeared, though Ziely is still mentioned as the translator. At least three more editions were printed at the start of the seventeenth century. The number of editions is similar to that of romances like *Ponthus*, being regularly reprinted throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and becoming familiar staples. The story was known to German audiences in other ways too, including in the theatre, as *Valentino* was dramatized by Hans Sachs in late 1556 and again by Jakob Ayrer in 1598.

The French *VO* was also translated into Dutch, by an anonymous translator. This second Dutch version is unrelated to the earlier *VN* fragments. However, as with the *VN* fragments, there are textual witnesses missing here too. The earliest edition of *Valentijn ende Oursson* has been lost. An edition printed by Jan II van Ghelen in 1557 is mentioned in an inventory of a bookseller from Kortrijk which dates to 1569, but no copies survive.[68] Willem Kuiper has suggested that this edition may have been a reprint of an edition published by Jan I van Ghelen, his father (Kuiper, "Valentijn ende Oursson" 223). Jan II was known as a re-printer of works that sold well, so it would fit his printing strategy for *Valentijn* to be a re-issue of an earlier successful edition. Because the 1557 edition does not survive, we must work with later, seventeenth-century editions to get a sense of what the original translation may have looked like. Petrus Joseph Rymers printed a *Valentijn* edition in Antwerp in 1624, Jan Jacobszoon Bouman printed one in Antwerp in 1657, and another edition was printed in Utrecht in 1696. At least four more editions were printed by the end of the seventeenth century, but again, not all survive. It is also not clear how close the texts of the later editions are to that of the 1557 edition or, indeed, whether the 1557 edition was itself already a modified version of an earlier translation.

Despite such difficulties, it is clear from the editions that do survive that *Valentijn* underwent some significant changes. For a start, the romance was subject to censorship. In 1624 Maximiliaen van Eynatten reviewed the narrative and added a mark of approbation, repeated in Bouman's 1657 edition, stating that "Dese Historie van Valentyn ende Oursson, van nieuws oversien ende gecorrigeert, mach profijtelijck herdruckt worden, ende inde Scholen gheleert worden" ("this history of Valentyn and Oursson, updated and corrected, may

be reprinted and taught in schools"). Van Eynatten was a well-known censor, who also appears to have approved editions of the Dutch translations of the French *Quatre Filz Aymon* (*Vier Heemskinderen*) and of the English *Knight of the Swanne* (*Helias, Ridder metter Swane*). He was appointed by bishop Malderus of Antwerp as a 'scholaster', or an inspector of works for schools, from 1619–31 (Debaene 233). He removed a considerable amount of text from the Dutch *VO*, mostly erotic scenes and scenes involving magic, following the bishop's instructions that young schoolboys would learn nothing good from books that dealt with "amoreusheydt ende dierghelycke dinghen" ("romance and similar topics") (Debaene 323).[69] That the story was shortened because of censorship is perhaps not as surprising as the indication that it was being taught in schools. This probably explains why the 1624 edition opens with a prologue addressed "Tot de jonckheydt" ("To the Youth"), which then links the story to that of Remus and Romulus, another example of children raised by animals.[70] It has been assumed that so little survives of the Dutch *VO* because it appeared on early seventeenth-century censor lists, but Kuiper notes that it is more likely that stories like this were so popular that they were read to shreds (Kuiper, "Valentijn ende Oursson" 223–24).[71] That the romance was used in schools might be another reason why few copies survive.

Only in the earlier editions are we reminded that this is a translation. The 1657 edition by Bouman, for instance, inscribes itself in the international *Valentin* tradition by announcing on its title page that the romance is "Uyt de Francoysche in onse Nederlantsche sprake overgeset. Van nieus oversien ende verbetert" (A1r; "transferred from French to our Dutch language. Updated and improved"). Later editions remove this detail from the front page. If noting a French source was once a selling point, this no longer seems to be the case once we move towards the end of the seventeenth century. The place of printing may play a role too. For the editions printed in Antwerp, a city with a particularly international outlook and where printers tended to publish material in multiple languages (Jan II van Ghelen is an example of this) it makes sense to stress the romance's international nature. Readers could have seen the French counterparts of these romances being sold around the city too. But with a move to cities in the northern Low Countries also comes an apparent move towards a more exclusively Dutch-reading audience, where the romance loses its status as an international text.[72]

As in English and German-speaking regions, *Valentijn* had a continuing popularity in the Low Countries. The most recent count

69. On Van Eynatten's changes, see Kuiper, "*Valentijn ende Oursson*" 104. Kuiper notes that the Dutch translator may have engaged in self-censorship, as the treacherous bishop becomes a treacherous knight, perhaps to avoid raised eyebrows from Catholic censors.

70. The same prologue is found in a later edition by the heirs of Hieronymus Verdussen, printed c. 1684–1713.

71. Debaene notes that *VO* appears on lists in Bruges, Antwerp, and Mechelen (Debaene 211).

72. Scholars have pointed towards a general trend where Dutch literature went its own way after an initial close contact with French literary traditions. Frank Brandsma has noted how the emergence of Dutch as a more confident literary language was likely a reflection of the rise of the language's cultural prestige and the development of the region itself. In other words, this is not so much a turn away from French as a move towards Dutch (Brandsma 241–63).

comes to at least forty-four editions published by the nineteenth century, which is a high number for a Dutch medieval romance, though there were likely more (Kuiper, "Valentijn ende Oursson" 223). But the story was also known in other ways. Pieter Brueghel's painting 'The Fight Between Carnival and Lent', which dates to 1559, features a scene of a knight facing someone dressed as a wild man, holding a club, in the top left corner. The same scene was copied in a woodcut entitled 'The Wild Man or the Masquerade of Orson and Valentine' in 1566. This example highlights how the story was particularly well-known in a performative context, as we saw with the English version, and that the wild man Orson, especially, became a favourite of masquerades and street performances. The records of the city of Breda, for instance, show that in 1568 a procession known as the Omgang also featured a wild man, which has been linked to Orson.[73]

Although the Dutch *VO* is unrelated to the Dutch *VN* fragments, that the story returns to the Low Countries might tell us something about *VO* and *VN* being perceived as different versions rather than the same tale. Moreover, it turns out that, as with *VN*, the Dutch *VO* played an important role in the narrative's later spread. The Dutch version reached outside of the Low Countries in the second part of the seventeenth century, when it was translated into Icelandic. This Icelandic text was not printed, unlike the other translations, but is preserved only in a paper manuscript, today kept at the Royal Library of Stockholm: Isl. Papp. fol. nr 29. It contains seventy-four chapters, the same number of chapters as the earlier French editions and the earliest surviving Dutch editions. The manuscript opens with a brief sketch of the international genealogy of the story of "Falentin og Ourssom", noting that it was "Fyrstt Samsett I Frónskú Tale: Sydann aa Hollendsku" ("first composed in French, afterwards in Dutch") and now in Icelandic. This suggests that the source is one of the earlier Dutch editions, which still note that the tale is based on a French example. The Icelandic manuscript is not the only known *VO* translation not based directly on a French edition. There is also a Yiddish version, printed by Jahn Janson in 1756 under the title *Eyn vunderlikhe shene naiye historiye fun Falentin un' Orson*. This version is also based on the Dutch translation, underscoring that Dutch was an important mediating language when it comes to the narrative's post-medieval afterlife too.

As noted above, the Dutch version was first printed in 1557, even though this particular edition has been lost. This was the same year as the Italian version of *VO* was printed in Venice by Vincenzo Val-

grisi and Baldassarre Costantini: *Historia dei due nobilissimi et valorosi Fratelli Valentino et Orsone*. On the title page of the Italian text it is said that it is a translation from French. The printer Vincenzo Valgrisi was also French; his French name was Vincent Vaugris. He was born close to Lyon around 1510 and died in Venice in 1573. His family may have been related to German printers, in particular in Basel, an important printing city. Considering the fact that the French text was first printed in Lyon, one may wonder whether he had actually come across one of the French editions before moving to Italy. Six editions of the French *VO* had been published in Lyon by the time Valgrisi started printing in Venice, which suggests the work sold well, so it is intriguing to think this may have played a role in his choice of publishing an Italian version. Valgrisi was an important printer: between 1540 to 1572, he published 202 works (Grendler 5). Most of his activity took place in Venice, but he was also active as a printer for a shorter period in Rome. He owned bookshops in several Italian cities (Padua, Bologna, Macerata, Foligno, Recanati, and Lanciano), and also Frankfurt and Lyon (Grendler 16). The fact that the Italian version of the tale appeared in Venice fits nicely with the international character of this particular tale: during this period, Venice was "one of the main centres in the Western world for the production and commerce of printed material" (van der Sman 235). The Venetian print trade was marked by different kinds of exchanges and collaborations (van der Sman 247). Since Venice was a cultural melting pot, the publication of new narratives was not an unusual phenomenon and the foreign material did not necessarily need to be explained or adapted in a more substantial way to appeal to an Italian-reading audience.

In 1588 or sometime shortly after, *Valentin et Orson* found its way into Spanish literature through the dramatic adaptation *El Nacimiento de Ursón y Valentín* by Lope de Vega (1562–1635). This time, we are not dealing with a translation of the French *VO* but a new version of the tale, in which we meet, among others, the king Clodoveo, his adviser Uberto, the queen Margarita, the gardener Luciano, and the two twin brothers Ursón and Valentin. As in the other versions, the two brothers grow up in different environments: Ursón is raised by a she-bear while Valentin is taken care of by his mother the queen. When the play ends, the two brothers are reunited, have married, and have both become kings of France. The focus of the play is on the opposition between the wild brother and the well-educated Valentín; the story of the wooden horse and the magician Pacolet has been left out.

Lope de Vega has been considered as the first writer to introduce

the theme of the wild man in the Spanish *comedia*, a motif that was later picked up by Calderón in his famous depiction of Segismundo in *La vida es sueño* (Meadows 183). *El Nacimiento de Ursón y Valentín* was the first play in which Lope de Vega explored this theme, to which he came back in the plays *El animal de Hungría* and *El hijo de los leones* (Meadows 183). Thus, while the theme of the wooden horse – a theme that had found its way into French literature through contacts with the Iberian Peninsula – was not picked up by Lope de la Vega, the story of the wild brother inspired new tales when it arrived in early modern Spain. Once again, the circulation of the tale about the two twin brothers seems to have been the starting point for a new literary exploration. With de Vega's adaptation we also see that the story of Valentine and Orson made it outside of Europe, travelling to the New World. *Ursón y Valentín* was included in collected editions of de Vega's comedies, such as that printed under the title *Las comedias del famoso poeta Lope de Vega Carpio* in Saragossa in 1603–04. A copy of this collected edition appears on a list of books shipped by a bookdealer from Seville to his associate in Lima, Peru; the shipment arrived in 1606 for further sale in the New World.[74] By the early 1600s our story had crossed continents.

74. For a transcription of the books received by Miguel Méndez in Lima, see Leonard 386.

Conclusion: A Shared European Narrative

As the other articles in this issue attest, scholarship is becoming increasingly aware that older models of the translation and movement of medieval texts are too neat and too linear, rarely reflecting the reality of the messy routes by which books, texts, and ideas travelled. Many medieval texts also blatantly defy later attempts at constructing literary histories that show a clear separation between literary cultures. *Valentin* is one such messy textual tradition, with a complex pattern of transmission which is much better understood once we move away from linear, source-based models.

Though it is often considered a French tradition, the earliest French source has been lost, the context from which the second French version emerged is shadowy, and we cannot see this tradition as an example of a clear pattern of transmission that moves outward from France. For a start, there are too many gaps, the Middle Dutch and Middle Low German versions play a far more important role in the story's spread than previously acknowledged, and we have examples of translations that sparked new translations. There are also man-

uscripts that belong to the same language group but which emerge from a completely different cultural milieu, manuscripts and printed texts that moved across borders, and texts where multiple cultural traditions come together on the page. Though there are two different strands, the Swedish *VN* and the early French *VO* editions are near-contemporary, defying any further neat categorisations. *Valentin* illustrates the tension between the scholar's desire to pin down a book or text in order to define it, and the medieval reality where books and narratives rarely stayed in place. Literary forms changed as human agents adapted stories or repurposed characters and motifs, and books themselves were forever being moved around and preserved, destroyed, rediscovered or remade, encountering new audiences along the way. Linear stories may be easier to understand, but they are not enough to capture the complexity and richness of shared literary forms like *Valentin*.

At the same time as it may be problematic to view the evolution of literary traditions as linear, *Valentin* also raises the question of the border between translations, rewritings and adaptations, on the one hand, and different texts and narratives, on the other. Should we consider the French prose version first published by Maillet as a prose rewriting of a lost French *chanson de geste*, or rather as a new tale that is closely related to a Germanic tradition, while also picking up elements from broader Eurasian story matter? The malleability of romances has often been pointed out, but in the case of these tales one may wonder whether we are not actually dealing with two romance traditions that share the same beginning before moving in two different directions. *Valentin et Orson* is not necessarily a later rewriting of a lost French source, but could also be seen as a new French text, written as a result of foreign influences. This is not a case of simply borrowing some additional motifs, but the additional episodes are woven into the structure of the tale and take up more space than the 'original' story matter. The idea of a *chanson de geste* being turned into a prose translation may fit a model we know, but we must be careful in treating all such texts the same way. One cannot help but wonder whether, if this had been an Arthurian story – where processes of adaptation and rewriting are well-established in existing scholarship – *VO* would have been treated differently, as a separate, off-shoot tradition.

One of the most striking features of both *VN* and *VO* is that they have a textual history marked by gaps, losses, and fragmentary evidence. This messy, uncomfortable history forces us to think about the incomplete records medievalists often deal with, and of problems

as well as opportunities – how such gaps offer the occasions for some good old-fashioned sleuthing that many of us find so rewarding. But there are dangers, too, with trying to fill in the blanks, when each missing connection is easily explained away by postulating yet another lost source, and when national traditions overlook foreign influences and too readily claim a text as their own. A search for lost originals often overshadows the important findings that can be unearthed from the material that does survive. Though it can be difficult to see the full picture when parts of a textual tradition are missing, it is important to consider this larger view nonetheless. With European narratives like *Valentin*, looking at one language or version alone is its own kind of wilful fragmentation, with scholars choosing to see one static snapshot where there is a kaleidoscope.

Even though the French prose text *Valentin et Orson* is a French romance epic, anchored in a French literary tradition, it needs to be understood in a broader perspective. Considering the crucial roles of Dutch and German traditions for the tradition as a whole, it becomes difficult to treat the tale about the twin brothers as a primarily French narrative, even though the French prose text was fundamental for the development of what we have referred to as the second strand. When looking at all these texts together, we learn more about literary contact across the Dutch, Low German, High German, and Scandinavian cultures, than about the spread of a French narrative alone.

It is notable that the Dutch and German versions played such an important role as mediators of *VN*, with the Dutch *VO* also triggering new translations in Icelandic and Yiddish. At a time when it is being recognised that important literary works in French actually originated in Flanders and not in regions belonging to the French crown, we see that for the translation and spread of French material across other regions of Europe Flanders is equally important. It is also worth noting that the German context plays a key role in the transmission of French romances, which is not sufficiently acknowledged by critics. *Valentin* is by no means the only example. If we take the spotlight off western Europe and look at Europe as a whole, we see, for instance, that some of the Swedish translated romances go back to German translations of French examples (Lodén 12–14), and that for central European romance narratives, especially in Czech and Polish, German translations were a crucial point of transmission.[75] Stories about the spread of French romances too often downplay the importance of such mediating cultures.

Yet, this does not imply that we should refer to these texts as pri-

75. Fulvio Ferrari points out that Low German was particularly important for the spread of chivalric texts in Sweden, especially since Low German was spoken and read at court "and it was the language of economic power" (Ferrari 79). All Czech romances are translations of German models. The Polish versions of *Mélusine* (*Historia o Meluzynie*), *Pierre et Maguelonne* (*Historia o Magielonie*), and *Octavian* (*Historia o Otonie*) also go back to German examples (Wierzbicka-Trwoga 267–69). Some of these translations were later translated into Russian. For romances from this part of Europe, German literary culture is a much more central and direct point of origin than French literary culture.

marily Germanic. Instead, we suggest that *Valentin* should be considered a shared European narrative. *Valentin* is not unique in any sense; on the contrary, it connects to other shared narratives, such as *Floire et Blancheflor* and *Paris et Vienne*, which also spread widely in medieval Europe. These shared narratives need to be approached as such: one individual text should also be related to the larger tradition. Texts like this have traditionally been overlooked in national histories, because their status as translations and international narratives means acknowledging the role of other literary cultures in the formation of one's own. But this is not a case of national versus European, but rather of realising that these are connected: at the same time as they could be linked to a larger project of Europeanisation of medieval culture, some of these narratives have also contributed to the emergence of new vernacular literatures (Lodén). The Swedish *VN*, for instance, takes an important place in the emergence of Swedish literary writing. The *VO* translations that mention a French source uncover another such link: these identifications seem to refer to an international literary tradition which also has French roots. Just as French is one of the "prestige languages with pan-European currency" that nonetheless had local variants (Putter and Busby 1), so French literature also had considerable status and appeal across Europe, with many romances in particular becoming shared European traditions that had localised versions. Texts like *Valentin* give insight into the tensions but also the fruitful co-existence between local and supralocal.

Valentin is not a particularly glamorous narrative – it is not a typically 'courtly' romance and it is often labelled as a 'popular' romance in English scholarship, a label that calls up association with low status, second-rate texts. It is also not a canonical text, so it often falls through the cracks. Our study shows the value of examining more peripheral, problematic literary texts. Texts that are considered aesthetically pleasing and examples of an elite, exclusive, high literary culture tend to steal the spotlight. Yet it is texts like this – whose international audience turns out to include noblewomen, well-travelled merchants, and those in the legal profession – that had more universal appeal and therefore spread far and wide. Such 'popular', non-canonical texts are a testament to the vitality of literary exchanges in the Middle Ages and remind us what we leave out when we consider one specific language or literary context as an isolated phenomenon.

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