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Milne, K.A.

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A Lost Copy of the Old French *Vie* (or *Chanson*) *de Saint Alexis* (Alexandrine Quatrain Version)

Krista A. Milne

Humanities Leiden University, Leiden, Netherlands

ABSTRACT
The Municipal Library of Tournai was struck in an air raid during the Second World War. Among the valuable manuscripts that were lost was Bibliothèque de la ville de Tournai MS 129, a fragmentary manuscript containing the alexandrine quatrain version of the Old French *Vie de Saint Alexis*. This poem, also known as the *Chanson de Saint Alexis,* represents one of the oldest surviving poetic traditions in French and enjoyed considerable popularity during the centuries after it was produced. Despite considerable scholarship on the *Vie de Saint Alexis,* the Tournai MS has gone largely unnoticed and is not mentioned in editions of the decasyllabic version of the *Vie,* nor is it mentioned in the only edition of the quatrain version. Thankfully, a nineteenth-century transcription of the lost Tournai copy survived the war. This article compares this transcription to surviving versions of the *Vie de Saint Alexis* to explore how the lost Tournai text intersects with, and illuminates, the broader tradition of the poem.

KEYWORDS
Old French; Anglo-Norman; saints lives; medieval French; book history

The Municipal Library of Tournai once held a manuscript containing a version of the Old French *Vie de Saint Alexis* (Bibliothèque de la ville de Tournai MS 129). The small manuscript, which contained no other work, was defective at the beginning and end—likely worn away through use. Sadly, this manuscript was destroyed during the Second World War, when the library was hit by Luftwaffe bombardment, on 17 May 1940. Although a great deal of information remains about the copy of the *Vie* in the lost Tournai manuscript, it has been noticed only rarely by those working on the *Vie* and it has not been mentioned in critical editions of the poem (as discussed further below, note 11). This is not due to a lack of interest in the *Vie*. Indeed, the *Vie de Saint Alexis* (also known as the *Chanson de Saint Alexis*) is often considered an important text for the development of French literature, with one critic referring to it as the "premier grand poème de la littérature française" (Zufferey 1) ("first significant poem of French literature").[1] The first surviving vernacular version of the poem has been dated to the eleventh (or, occasionally, early twelfth) century, and the *Vie* is therefore among the earliest surviving poems in French.[2] Since the *Vie* has been the subject of scholarly interest, it is worth examining the copy in the lost Tournai manuscript and comparing it to the broader *Vie* tradition, and these are the goals of the present article.

The author of the *Vie* remains a mystery. Gaston Paris, one of the first editors of the eleventh-century French version of the poem, suggested that the poem could be the work of a particular canon of Rouen, Tedbalt de Vernon, who translated several saints' lives from Latin (Paris et

CONTACT Krista A. Milne k.a.milne@hum.leidenuniv.nl Humanities, Leiden University, Leiden, Netherlands.

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Pannier 44–45). But Paris stressed that this was only a suggestion: "ce n'est là qu'une hypothèse, et si elle n'a rien contre elle, elle a le défaut de n'avoir pour elle aucun fait positif" (45) ("this is merely a hypothesis, and even if there is nothing to disprove it, it has the drawback of having no absolute facts in support of it").[3] More recently, Mary Dominica Legge suggested that the poem was written by a monk who was working in the Benedictine Abbey of Bec-Hellouin, in Normandy (243; see also Zuffrey 2). This suggestion is, however, grounded in little evidence and the poem is typically considered anonymous.

The vernacular *Vie* must have been immensely popular during the centuries after it was written. In her critical edition (1983), Alison Goddard Elliott notes that the work survives in multiple manuscripts and several different versions (13–14); this is rare for an eleventh-century vernacular text. The different versions of the work include independent renditions in both Latin and Old French, and it is worth surveying some of these renditions since one of the goals of this article to understand the position of the Tournai version within the broader *Vie* tradition. One of the independent French renditions was translated from a Latin version of the narrative (known as version B) and is in octosyllabic couplets. Aside from this version, there is also a thirteenth-century French version translated from Latin into Picard that survives in two manuscripts. This version is in monorhymed alexandrine laisses (in other words, the entire laisse uses the same rhyme).[4] There are also two independent French prose translations from the Latin. Although these independent translations have no bearing on the examination of the Tournai version presented here, they are nevertheless worth mentioning because they illustrate the popularity of the narrative life of St Alexis.

The best-known version of the *Vie,* and the one that has most frequently been edited, is the eleventh-century version, which is written in decasyllabic assonanced laisses. This version survives in seven manuscripts (Elliott 14; it is classified as versions 1 and 2 on the poem's *Arlima* page). The stemma of this work is notoriously difficult to reconstruct, and it is not clear which copy of the work was closest to the now-lost original—a situation that has led to some editorial debate. For their well-known 1872 edition of the *Vie*, Léopold Pannier and Gaston Paris chose for their base text what is known as manuscript L (a manuscript from the first quarter of the twelfth century found in Hildeshiem and also known as the St Albans Psalter) on the grounds that it is the oldest manuscript copy. The idea that this copy is the oldest is still accepted in more recent scholarship (see e.g. Elliott 15). F. Zufferey, however, has argued that although manuscript L is the oldest, the text it contains is not the best representative of the original form of the *Vie*. Zufferey argues that a better choice of base text would be that of manuscript A (Bibl. Nat. de France, nouvelles acquisitions françaises 4503) or manuscript V (Vatican, Bibl. Vat., Vat. lat. 5334), both of which Zufferey believes stray the least from the now-lost *ur*-text (2).[5]

Making matters more complicated, the L copy of the poem contains fifteen stanzas not found in A, and according to Tony Hunt the same stanzas are found with some variation in five of the manuscripts that contain the poem (the manuscripts that have been assigned the sigla LVPM and S)(223). As one of the *Vie*'s editors, Alison Goodard Elliott, notes, this collation challenge, and many others, have led editors to conclude that "[i]t is not possible to construct a *stemma codicum*" for the eleventh-century version of the poem (15). More recently, Maurizio Perugi has tried to construct a new *stemma* for the poem, but the precise relationship between copies remains an unsolved issue.[6]

The eleventh-century version of the poem was adapted into decasyllabic rhyming verse at some point in the thirteenth century. This modified version, which is often indicated using the siglum M, survives in 2 manuscripts: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français, 1553 (ff. 393va-400vb; siglum Ma or M^1) and Carlisle, Cathedral Library (no MS reference; ff. 112r–133v; siglum Mb or M^2) (Paris and Pannier 27–28).[7] This decasyllabic version is relevant for the discussion at hand because it contains a particular linguistic feature that appears in texts concentrated around the Tournai and Lille area (Pannier and Paris 269). For this reason, Léopold Pannier and Gaston Paris proposed that this rhymed version was written in the Tournai or Lille area (275). It is notable that the Alexis story was in circulation in the area where the Tournai manuscript was

last found, but given how far manuscripts traveled during the medieval period and beyond this may not be significant.

This thirteenth-century (or "M") version of the eleventh-century poem underwent an additional transformation into a new version, and it is to this tradition that the Tournai MS belongs. According to Gaston Paris, this newer version, which is in monorhymed quatrains, represents the last known transformation of the eleventh-century version (*La vie* 229). Paris and Pannier date this quatrain version on linguistic grounds to the middle of the fourteenth century, and Paris adds that the rhyme scheme is also suggestive of a fourteenth-century date (229). Paris writes that of all the versions of the *Vie*, the quatrain version is "à coup sûr la plus mauvaise" (230) ("without a question the worst"), but this version nevertheless holds considerable interest to literary scholars and historians alike. Written in the quatrain style that rose to prominence in the fourteenth century, this version highlights an important stage in the evolution and reception of the *Vie* and illustrates how the poem was adapted to changing literary tastes and forms.

According to its first and only editor, Léopold Pannier, the quatrain version was the second most popular version of the story during the medieval period (with the eleventh-century French version having been the most popular). Pannier assigned this quatrain version the siglum Q. This siglum was used to refer to all of the manuscript copies of the quatrain version known to Pannier when he created his edition in 1872—seven copies in total.[8] Each of these copies and the relationships between them are described by Pannier (331–340), and they are worth listing again here for their relevance to the Tournai manuscript. Pannier notes that the authorial copy of the quatrain version has been lost, and the copy that he considers the closest to the original (based on the age of the language) is **A**, Bibliothèque nationale, fonds fr., no. 1555, which Pannier dates to the early fifteenth century (331). Other copies include **B** Bibliothèque nationale, fonds fr., no. 1661 (end of the fifteenth century), **C** Bibliothèque nationale, fonds fr., no. 1881 (sixteenth century), **D** Bibliothèque nationale, fonds fr., no. 15217 (second half of the fifteenth century), **E** Bibliothèque de Besançon MS 588 (middle of the fifteenth century), **F** Bibliothèque d'Arras MS n. 766 (from l'abbaye de Saint-Waast, dated to 1471/1472; Pannier notes that this MS was copied by a woman), and **P**, which appears as no. 129 on a 1862 sale list of the collection of M. Technener. This last manuscript is described by Pannier as having been in his possession in 1872 and it is now Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouvelles acquisitions françaises, no. 4085. This last manuscript was copied by one Philippe Biard of the college of Autun in 1470/1471. Pannier collates all the copies of this

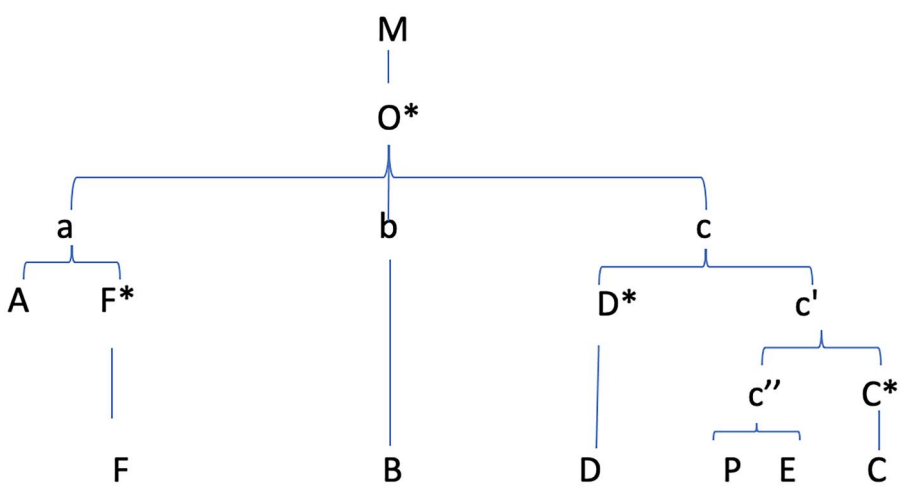

Figure 1.

quatrain version to arrive at the following stemma (344), which is the only one that has been produced for this version of the poem thus far:

In this stemma, Pannier uses lower case letters to indicate missing copies from which a family is descended. A single apostrophe indicates a secondary family, whereas a double apostrophe indicates a tertiary family. A * indicates a lost copy from which a surviving copy is descended. Capitals without other marks indicate surviving copies (344). "M" here refers to the aforementioned thirteenth-century version in decasyllabic rhyming lines that has been localized to the Tournai area.

When Elliott wrote about the *Vie* in 1983, the list of seven manuscripts of the quatrain version (version "Q") produced by Pannier was still up to date (14). Since then, three more manuscripts have been identified, bringing the total number to ten. I have assigned them the following sigla, starting with G (because Pannier's sigla list ends at F): **G** Bern, Burgerbibliothek, A 260, ff. 70–81v (or 82a) (fifteenth century); **H** Bruxelles, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, 10295–10304, f. 34v (first half of the fifteenth century; identified by Paul Meyer in 1901 but not identified as a Q version MS until later); and **I** Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouvelles acquisitions françaises, no. 14313 (fifteenth century).[9] The version of the *Vie* in the Tournai manuscript represents an eleventh copy of the quatrain version of the *Vie,* which I have assigned the siglum **J**.

The Tournai MS (J)

As already noted, the manuscript was in the collection of the Bibliothèque de la ville de Tournai (Tournai Municipal Library) when it was struck in a German air raid on 17 May 1940. The destruction to the building was significant, and the library lost about 70,000 printed books in the attack. Although the caretaker of the collection, M. Coinne, worked to save the collection's valuable historical manuscripts, only 25 manuscripts of this pre-war collection survived (Faider and Van Sint Jan 3). A total of 222 historical manuscripts were destroyed, and by my count 42 of these were copied before 1500 (one of which is in two volumes).[10] The lost manuscripts held considerable historical value. Many had belonged to the local Cathedral Chapter during the medieval period and others had been donated by important humanist figures and book collectors with international connections and tastes (the provenance of the collection is discussed further below, p. 5). The manuscript collection was valuable, not just for the medieval history of the region, but also for many regions beyond it. Lost texts of historical and literary value are many and include a copy of the Old French *Chevalier au Cygne* (Bibliothèque de la ville de Tournai MS 103) and a copy of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* (in Latin) with an English marginal addition of what is known as the "West Saxon" version of *Cædmon's Hymn* (Bibliothèque de la ville de Tournai MS 134).

The copy of the *Vie* that was destroyed, Bibliothèque de la ville de Tournai MS 129, has very rarely been noticed in the critical history of the *Vie*. It has gone apparently unnoticed by the editors of the various versions of the poem.[11] It has surfaced in other scholarly work only occasionally and has not been the subject of critical analysis. The online *Dictionnaire Étymologique de l'Ancien Français*, for example, records some linguistic forms from the anonymous transcription of the Tournai manuscript examined here, but it does not attempt to trace the copy's intertextual history and refers to it mistakenly as an "independent version" of the *Vie* in "vers hexasyllabiques."[12] Christopher Storey mentions the anonymous edition of the poem based on the Tournai manuscript briefly in a "postscript" to his *Annotated Bibliography* of the *Vie,* but he gives only sparse details about the text and does not mention which version of the *Vie* the lost manuscript had contained (59).

Most of what we know of the Tournai manuscript comes from pre-war material. The manuscript may have once contained a complete copy of the *Vie,* but by the time it was catalogued in Tournai it was defective at the beginning and end. When it was destroyed, it contained the verses that correspond with stanza 123, line 4 to stanza 190, line 4 in Pannier's 1872 edition of the

quatrain version. While a complete description of the manuscript is impossible (given that it was destroyed), a good deal of information about it can be reconstructed from pre-war catalogue descriptions. Most helpful here is that of Paul Faider, who had, rather fortunately, catalogued the manuscript in the years leading up to its destruction. I have listed what is known about the manuscript here:

Tournai, Bibliothèque de la ville, MS 129 (destroyed in 1940)

Vie de Saint Alexis[13]

Size: 150x110mm; 15 lines per folio side

Writing material: Paper; no cover

Date: 15th century

Foliation: 15 folia; missing folia at beginning and end; 2 other folia are missing between what is now ff. 13 and 14 (approximately 60 verses are missing as a result of this loss; see the collation below). On the last two folia, the exterior margin (i.e. the margin positioned beside the text and on the side furthest from the gutter) has been cut.

Contents: ff. 1r-15v *Vie de Saint Alexis*

Marginal annotations: A name has been inscribed in the margin of f. 5v: "Jan de la Vingne"

Given the fragmentary nature of the manuscript, one might hope that the pieces that were missing when the manuscript was catalogued might have been stored elsewhere (and might therefore survive), but unfortunately this does not appear to be the case. The size of the manuscript, which is strikingly small, does not resemble that of any of the known copies.

The name inscribed in the manuscript, "Jan de la Vingne" is suggestive. It is tempting to read it as a variant spelling of the name of Jean de Vignay (b. c. 1280, d. middle of the 14th c), who translated the *Vie* for his version of the *Legende doree* (as noted on the poem's *Arlima* page). But differences in spelling make this link unlikely. It is also worth noting that the position of the name, on what is now folio 5v, is not one where an author or translator's name would be expected. The name may instead refer to the Jan de la Vingne who died in Amsterdam in 1593 ("Church Records, Burials" ff. 112–13). Further provenance information is unfortunately irrecoverable.[14] The manuscript cannot be identified on the list of Belgian manuscripts that was prepared by Antoine Sanderus, and which is typically a good source of provenance information for manuscripts from the region.[15] Nor can the origins of the manuscript be reconstructed from its last known location, since the manuscripts of The Municipal Library of Tournai originated from multiple sources, including the local Cathedral Chapter, the Abbey of Saint-Martin of Tournai, and the collections of various early modern humanist figures and book collectors, such as Denys de Villers (as is the case for Tournai MS 133) and Jerome De Winghe (c. 1557–1637), a canon from Tournai (as is the case for Tournai MS 78)(Faider 9–14; "Winghe"). It must suffice to state that the manuscript was possibly in the Low Countries, and possibly near Amsterdam, in the early modern period.

The text of the *Vie* that was in the Tournai manuscript has thankfully not been lost to us, because it was transcribed at some point in the second half of the nineteenth century and published by an anonymous editor in the *Memoires de la Société historique et archéologique de Tournai*. Working before automated full-text searches, this anonymous editor did not recognize the poem as a copy of the *Vie de Saint Alexis,* describing it simply as "une légende rimée dont le héros est Saint Alexis" ("Légende" 67) ("a rhyming legend, the hero of which is Saint Alexis"). Compared to many contemporary editors, the editor appears to have been relatively conservative. He claims that the edition maintains the particularities of the language of the original and adds only such punctuation as was deemed necessary.[16] Since the original manuscript is lost there is no easy way to check the editor's claims, but judging from the oddities of spelling and

punctuation in the text it would seem that neither had been standardized. We must assume, however, that the surviving transcription is not a completely diplomatic one, since it contains no marks to signal expanded abbreviations. But regardless of how faithful the editor was to his source text, the edition is valuable as the only remaining witness to the lost J text.

The Position of the Tournai MS (J) on the Stemma of the Quatrain Version

Since the text's anonymous editor claims to have resisted editorial intervention, the Tournai text can be collated with surviving copies to get a sense of the text's relationship to the broader tradition of *Vie* texts. This process must be only an imperfect one, since we cannot now assess the accuracy of the Tournai transcription—or how far its transcriber kept to the stated pledge of resisting editorial intervention. Moreover, since the Tournai text was incomplete at the time that it was transcribed, the collation must be only partial.[17] The collation below should therefore be considered little more than a preliminary tool, designed to support investigation into the quatrain version until a much-needed new edition of this version can be established.

Nevertheless, the collation, which is given in Appendix A, is valuable for opening up new lines of analysis into the text. This is especially true given that the collation has established a large number of variant readings in the Tournai text (J). The large number of variants in the J text is perhaps not surprising, since the broader textual history of the quatrain version of the *Vie* is marked by considerable variation—or, to use Paul Zumthor's famous term, *mouvance* (65–68). In places, the J text closely resembles the quatrain version of the *Vie* as it appears in Pannier's edition, but the J text also contains many distinct readings. These are often minor variants that have no impact on the broader narrative, although the redactor of the text preserved in the Tournai MS did not hesitate to rewrite sections of lines, or to change rhyming words. Given its distinct readings, the Tournai MS was clearly a witness to a unique set of revisions, and the survival of its transcription is fortuitous.

Although the surviving transcription has its weaknesses, it is possible to use it to establish a sense of where the J text belongs on Pannier's stemma (reproduced above). The J text shares by far the largest number of substantive variants with the manuscripts of branch CDP.[18] When this branch diverges on a substantive reading, J most typically corresponds to the text of D.[19] Neither D nor J is descended from the other.[20] Thus the collation, limited as it must be due to the nature of the surviving evidence, suggests that D and J form another sub-family, and that both D and J were descended from a now-lost ancestor copy, which should be placed where D* falls on Pannier's stemma. The text of manuscript J, then, was not an original or authorial copy, but it is nevertheless an important one for shedding light on the evolution of the quatrain version of the *Vie*.

The resurfacing of this copy of the *Vie,* insofar as it reveals a large number of variant readings, enables new avenues of literary analysis of the work. It also highlights the need for a new edition of the alexandrine quatrain version of the *Vie*—one that adopts an up-to-date editorial approach and accounts for all the witnesses of the quatrain version now available. Finally, the resurfacing of the Tournai copy also helps to highlight the considerable and long-lasting influence of the *Vie*. The quatrain version, which survived in eleven copies before the Tournai MS was destroyed in 1940, is the best attested version of the poem in the modern era and, judging from these figures, must have enjoyed considerable popularity during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

It is clear that the Alexis narrative continued to resonate in the late medieval period. From its origins as an early verse narrative in French, the *Vie* evolved to suit the poetic tastes and sensibilities of multiple generations. While poems like the *Vie* were once viewed as relics of a "pre-romance," or epic, age that came to be forgotten and superseded by a "twelfth-century renaissance," a growing body of scholarship, which includes important work by Keith Busby, Sarah Kay and others, has highlighted the persistence of these supposedly "pre-romance" narratives in

late medieval France.[21] The Tournai manuscript, a witness to the richness and complexity of the Alexis tradition in the late medieval period, reflects the persistence of these supposedly pre-romance narratives in the late medieval world.

Notes

1. Catherine Vincent also writes that "*La Vie de saint Alexis* fait partie des premières grandes œuvres rédigées en langue d'oïl" (par. 8) ("The *Vie de saint Alexis* is among the first significant works written in the *langue d'oïl*"); all translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.
2. One of the poem's early editors, Gaston Paris, suggested that the poem began to circulate in written form around 1040 (Paris, *Littérature* 7; see Storey, *Annotated*, 25). F. Zufferey suggests, on linguistic grounds, that the vernacular version emerged around 1050 (2; 8-9). Christopher Storey, surveying the evidence, suggests that the text "was composed in the second half of the 11th century, and almost certainly after the end of the First Crusade (1059)" (*Annotated* 25). More recently, Maurizio Perugi has argued that the vernacular version of the *Vie* could not have been written before 1112 (419).
3. De Vernon's authorship is not commonly accepted today. Some do, however, ascribe the poem to De Vernon; see, for example, a recent article by Catherine Vincent (par. 8). Vincent attributes this view to Christopher Storey (although Storey is far more restrained in his reporting of the evidence; see *La Vie de saint Alexis* 148).
4. The octosyllabic version is no. 4 on the work's *Arlima* page (see also Paris, "*La vie de saint Alexi* en vers octosyllabiques" 166). The version in monorhymed alexandrine laisses is no. 5. This version is preserved in two manuscripts, 'P' - Paris Bibl. nat., fonds fr. no. 2162; and 'O' - Oxford, Bodl., Canonici misc. 74 (Stebbins 5). These two MSS have been edited by Charles E. Stebbins. Independent versions translated from Latin include that inserted into the *Tombel de Chartreuse* (no. 7), and the prose versions (8 and 9) (see the poem's *Arlima* page, "La Vie").
5. For another who views the A text as superior, see Sckommodau. An edition based on MS A has since been completed by T.D. Hemming (1994). Other editors have selected manuscript L on the basis of what Carl J. Odenkirchen describes as its "completeness" (57). Perugi (2014) chooses MS L as a base text on the basis of a complex recension that takes into account the Latin versions (601-608; 617-618). On the critical history of the manuscript tradition of the text, see Tony Hunt (225, note 10; 226, note 24).
6. For his 2000 edition, Perugi attempts to reconstruct a stemma for the *Vie*, but Perugi revisited the issue in his 2014 study of the poem (583-87) and the matter remains the subject of ongoing critical inquiry. Further discussion of the relationship between copies of the eleventh-century text is beyond the scope of this investigation.
7. This is version 3 on the work's *Arlima* page ("La vie"). Paris and Pannier had not identified the Carlisle MS at the time of their 1872 edition. This second manuscript is described by Gaston Paris in "Un second manuscrit de la rédaction rimée (M) de *la Vie de saint Alexis,*" and by R. Fawtier and E. C. Fawtier Jones; see also Elliott 18.
8. The Q tradition has been edited by Pannier (*Vie* 346-388), with a brief and dismissive introduction by Gaston Paris (*Vie* 332; the manuscripts are described on 7, 27 and 331). Elliott suggests that the Q tradition is closer to manuscript M^2 than M^1 (19).
9. The list is given on the poem's *Arlima* page ("La vie"). On MS H see Paul Meyer (1901). The Bern MS is described in Hermannus Hagen's catalogue (296). On preliminary analysis, MS G shares readings with P and E, but further collation is beyond the scope of this article and best left to future editors of the quatrain version.
10. The count of 247 is given by Faider (3). It is based on the manuscripts described by Wilbaux (Wilbaux gives numbers up to 245, but one of these manuscripts, no. 3, is in three parts). The count does not include the Assistance publique fonds or Nouveau fonds. The count of pre-1500 manuscripts that were lost is mine, based on the dating given in catalogue descriptions by Faider and Wilbaux. Two additional manuscripts (MSS 243 and 244 in Wilbaux) are not dated and may therefore date to this pre-1500 period, but this is unlikely judging from Wilbaux's descriptions. MS 213 may have contained some medieval material but it was more likely a post-medieval copy.
11. The Tournai MS is not mentioned in the early editions of the poem, including Wilhelm Müller's (1845). Dr Geßner's (1855), or Jakob Schipper's edition of the English versions of the poem (1877). The MS is also not mentioned among the seven copies of the monorhymed quatrain version described by Pannier (*Vie* 331-340). In his 1953 edition of the earlier poem, Gerhard Rohlfs states that the fourteenth-century quatrain version survives in "mehreren Handschriften" (6) ("many manuscripts") but does not list these. Of the 23 editions of the earlier version of the Alexis text listed by Christopher Storey in his 1987 *Annotated Bibliography*, I have checked all except nos. 23, 27 (a translation into modern French), and

30-31 (all of which were unavailable to me) and none of them mentions the Tournai MS. In his own conservative edition of manuscript L of the earlier version of the poem (1934), Christopher Storey does not describe the various manuscripts of the poem, so the Tournai MS is naturally not mentioned (nor is it mentioned in his 1968 edition, undoubtedly for the same reason). Nor is the Tournai MS mentioned in more recent editions. It is not mentioned by Stebbins in his 1974 edition (unsurprisingly, since this edition is focused on the thirteenth-century laisse version). Alison Goddard Elliott's 1983 edition does not mention it, perhaps because this edition is focused on the earlier, eleventh-century version (14). Recent studies are also silent on the Tournai MS, likely because they tend to be focused on the earlier tradition of the poem. In her 1991 study, Rachel Bullington suggests that there are 17 manuscripts of the Old French *Vie* but does not list them in detail (7-9, note 7). In his extremely detailed and comprehensive study of the Alexis tradition and the Old French *Vie* (2014), Maurizio Perugi offers an updated version of his 2000 edition of the eleventh-century *Vie* and establishes the sources of the Old French version but does not consider the Q tradition at any length and so does not mention the Tournai MS (the MSS of the eleventh-century version are described on 617).

12. The Bibliographical entry for the work in the *Dictionnaire Étymologique de l'Ancien Français* states that the Tournai MS version "correspond en gros aux vers 264-570" ("corresponds roughly to verses 264 to 570") of the eleventh-century Alexis. But the version corresponds much closer to stanzas 123 line 4 to 190 line 4 in Pannier's 1872 edition, as discussed above.
13. This description is based on those of Paul Faider (146) and Amable Wilbaux (62).
14. Linguistic localisation is best avoided given the state of the transcription, on which see below. While the anonymous editor claims that the edition preserves the particularities of the language, there are no marks of abbreviation or other qualities that reflect a strictly diplomatic transcription and we must assume the editor silently expanded abbreviations, which would influence the linguistic forms of the transcription.
15. There are several lives of St Alexis listed by Sanderus but none can be positively identified with Tournai MS 129.
16. The editor writes that "La Société a ordonné l'impression de ce fragment dans toute sa naïveté, avec ses bizarreries d'orthographe, et sans autre addition que la ponctuation nécessaire à l'éclaircissement du texte" (67) ("The Society called for the printing of this fragment in all its naivety/primitiveness with its particularities/oddities of spelling, and without any other addition than the punctuation that was deemed necessary for the clarification of the text"). We must assume, however, that the transcription is not completely diplomatic, since there are no marks to signal expanded abbreviations; see above, note 14.
17. The collation is also limited by the state of scholarship on the quatrain version of the *Vie*. The only edition remains Pannier's, and while it should be praised for taking into account many versions of the text, its Lachmannian editorial approach results in occasional silences on variant readings and a synthetic text which can give the impression of greater variation between copies than is attested by the manuscript tradition. Pannier outlines his editorial approach on pp. 344-45. In addition, a few verses of the quatrain version are printed by Carl J. Odenkirchen in his edition (56-58).
18. Substantive variant readings that J shares with the whole CDP branch occur at the following lines of Pannier's edition: 129.1, 130.3, 134.2, 142.1, 147.3, 147.4, 152.2, 170.1, 174.3. The variants J shares with D provide further evidence that J belongs in this branch.
19. Substantive variant readings that J shares with D include 129.3, 132.2, 134.3 (also shared with B and P), 141.3, 143.4 (similar variants), 144.1, 144.2, 145.3, 146.4, 150.2, 151.4, 157.4 (also shared with C and F), 169.4, and the variants listed above. Variants shared with other manuscripts are fewer but do occur on occasion; see e.g. 146.3 (shared with B) and 190.3 (shared with B).
20. That D is not descended from J is clear from e.g. 124.3, 125.2 and 126.2. That J is not descended from D is clear from e.g. 131.3, 132.2 and 139.2.
21. The idea that the twelfth century saw a shift from 'epic' to 'romance' was developed by W. P. Ker (3). Ker's formulation was taken up and extended by R. W. Southern, who argued that the twelfth century came accompanied by a turn toward self-reflection and a related turn toward works with romance elements (227-28). For those who reject this model, see, for example, Sarah Kay's *The Chanson de Geste in the Age of Romance* and Keith Busby's *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*. I discuss the matter at further length in my monograph (Murchison 30-31).

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Appendix A: List of Substantive Variants in MS J

The following variant list is based on my collation of the text of J against the text of the alexandrine quatrain version printed in Pannier's edition, which uses manuscript A as a base text. Unless otherwise indicated, the word or phrase in Pannier's base text is indicated first; the word or phrase after the square bracket replaces it in manuscript J. In keeping with common editorial practice, variants are only recorded when they are substantive (i.e. spelling variants are not recorded unless they result in a changed meaning). I have maintained the punctuation and accents added by the editors since, in the case of MS J, separating editorial intervention from MS reading is not possible.

123.4 fezoient] disoient
124.1 et truant] Papelart
124.2 jetoient] ruoient
124.3 Laveurez et ordurez] Les vermis et ordures
125.2 S'il se vousit nommer, il lez feïst tous pendre] *missing in MS J*
125.4 s'en vint] ala
126.1 el povre grabaton] gésir el garghechon
126.2 Il s'aprocha de li et le] De luy est aprochies se la
126.3 ne sai nommer ton non] ne say ton non
127.2 Car je suis crestien en bautesme nommez] *line missing in MS J*
127.3 rende] renge
127.3 certez] car
128.1 Bons] Frans
128.1 son père] li sires
128.2 tu mon enfant Alexis] Alexit mon chier filz
128.4 partis] tournes
129.1 Atant es vous sa mère] Apres sen est la mère
129.2 Et est sous le degré devant son fiex venue] *line missing in MS J*
129.3 Et la pucele ausi qui fu mout irascue] La pucielle avoec luy quy fut moult yrastue
129.4 ly sains hons] Alexit
129.4 tout le sanc li remue] Trestout ly sanc ly mue
130.1 Onquez ne lez osa le saint] Adont ne losa pas ly homs
130.2 conneüs] recognus
130.3 La dame prist tantost sa file a apeler] Ung jour après, la dame vot
131.1 sous ce] desous nos
131.2 bien] *missing in MS J*
131.4 mez guerez : trop forment aflebist.»] mais, car fort il sapalist.
132.1 li dist] respont
132.2 chiens] entre nous
132.2 outrage] damage
132.3 lignage] courage
132.4 si saron son courage. »] demandons son linage
133.1 La dame li dist : « File, par foy, j'y vois envis] Puciel, dist la dame, et gi vois bien envis
133.2 Tousjours quant le regarde] Toute fois que gi vois
133.3. A pou qu'il ne lui] Avis mest quil le
133.3 du vis] de nés
133.4 Du duel qu'ay de mon fis je mourai ains mez dis] *line missing in MS J*
134.1 tallent] gres
134.2 Sous les degrez alérent plourant mout tendrement] Lors vinrent as degres moult tenrement plorant
134.3 Alexis demandèrent son nom très bonnement] A Alexit demandent son non moult douchement
135.3 et] puis
135.3 les Dieu] Dieu et
135.4 avez] sont
136.1 Bons] Frans
136.1 dient les dames] dist la dame
136.3 dist] fait
136.3 voir: j'ay nommé Alexis] asses, pour lamour dAlexit
137.1 C'onquez] Quonques
137.1 ce degré vers mi] les degrés amy
137.3 si vous requier] Je vous requiers
138.1 les dames l'oïrent, s'ont de pitié plouré,] la dame l'entendent, sy en ont grant pitet

138.3 Plourant s'en] De la se
138.4 Dis et set ans entiers il avoit ja esté,] Vij ans tout plainement y a voit il estet
139.1 d'Alphis] d'Alsis
139.2 just en bons lis] ni desur utlis
139.3 Li] Sy
139.4 li dist : « Dous amis] ly a dit ensy
140.1 Soiez] Sache
140.1 frère] sire
140.3 rende] renge
140.4 bon parchemin] parchemin
141.1 l'oy] lentent
141.2 [*this line and the following are transposed in MS J*] bien le] lauoit
141.2 Fine] bone
141.3 Duel out quant entendi qu'il seroit] Dolans fu quant il ot quil deuoit
141.4 a lors] tos
142.1 saint Alexis] ly sains hons
142.3 Dont espousa la bele que pour Dieu out guerpie] *line missing in MS J*
142.4 Le bref] Sy
142.4 puis] et
143.2 Quant l'ot pris, les deus mains en crois sus son pis mist] Et mist ses mains en crois tout par de sur son pis
143.3 li] y
143.4 en paradis] lassus ou chiel
144.1 criant] huquant
144.2 li petit et li grant] Et les petis enfans
144.3 non sachant] mescreant
144.4 serjant] seruant
145.1 partis] partant
145.3 Tous ceux de Romme furent ce jour mout] Cel jour furent a Rome les gens bien
145.4 meïmez requist a Dieu] requist a Dieu de cuer
146.2 S'avoit deus roys a Romme qui mout furent puissans] *line missing in MS J*
146.3 fu nommé] ot non
146.4 si furent] sestoient
147.3 vois] sains homs
147.3 ne seroit] ni jert ja
147.4 conte] el cor
148.1 Quant le saint apostole ouyt ceste] Moult fut ly sains homs lies quant oyt la
148.2 le cors] le saint
149.1 Chacun peut bien savoir qu'il] Ly conte Efemyens sy
149.2 il vit tant de gens entrer] ly barons montoient
149.2 pourpris] palais votis
149.3 lui] sains il
149.3 dont il fu bien marris] iI leur requist merchy
149.4 ne lui] mais ne
150.1 Quant] car
150.1 son manoir] le pays
150.1 enquis] chierquiet
150.2 a mort livré] en prisones
150.4 Qu'oncques jour] Que onques
150.4 alé] tournes
151.1 Sa] Et a sa
151.1 hucha, du saint corps leur enquist] Del cors saint requis
151.2 ce saichez sans respit] Saches le sans mentir
151.4 souvente] mainte
152.1 Lors fu Euphemiens] Efemyens estoit
152.1 esbaïs] pensis
152.2 Que deus roys si] Que ly baron tracoient
152.3 Mez la gentil pucele fu] Et la pucielle estoit par
153.2 suer bele] ma suer
153.2 prochainement saurez] Prochain vous le sares
153.4 suis forment effraiez] Suy jou fort effraes

154.1 Car] Que
154.1 lez anemis] Le diable
154.2 Qui l'ame de moy cuident] Cuide lame de moy
154.3 Mez je voi cha sus destre] Mais je revois au diestre
154.4 trez douce suer] ma douce amie
155.1 conquerez] aquerres
155.2 mout de] fait du tout
155.3 dez laz aus anemis] de mauuais
155.4 Douce suer] Suer, dist il
155.4 rende] renge
156.3 que vous pour Dieu] pour Dieu vot
157.2 Or plus ne pout parler le cors qui] Onques puis ne dit mot, ly sains hons
157.3 angrez] sains angeles l'emportèrent devant
157.3 liement] en present
157.4 Les sains] Les cloques
158.1 chacun sonnoit] Tous cascune
158.2 out le miracle oui] Les miracle coisy
159.3 Trespasa orendroit] Trespassa chy
159.4 l'oy] lentent
159.4 si i] il
160.1 ja estoit] estoit ja
160.2 Il ne cuidast jamez] Mais il ne cuida pas
160.2 chier] *omitted in MS J*
160.3 Le conte] il
160.4 lors] sen
161.1 Mout bien la cuida prendre] Ly sires le vot
161.2 Lors ot grand duel le conte] Ly contes ot grant duel
161.3 Tantost s'en vint au pape] A lapostole vint
162.1 Dix et sept ans entiers a chiens demouré] Qui a xvij ans sous son degres gent
162.2 bien prendre l'ay] que bien auoir
162.3 bien m'a pris en grant] prendre; bien croy que il me
162.4 povrement] pau
162.4 en son mal regardé] pour vray a son mal visetet
163.2 mout] il
163.4 Très tous] Adont
163.4 en] par
164.1 Dieu de bon cuer fermement] de cuer a dieu du firmament
164.4 Lors se leva le pape trestout] Lapostole se lieve tout
165.1 s'abesse et humilie] Humblement sumilie
165.2 prise] saisit
165.2 le saint li a lessie] et si la hors saquie
166.2 tous] trestous
166.4 Tous ceus] La gent
167.1 l'espousée] lespee
167.4 sus] sur *(twice)*
168.1 bien] *omitted in MS J*
168.2 se met en l'ommage] sen bat en hontage
168.3 tant sont] sont tout plains de rage
169.1 Bele suer, bien croi] pucielle, je croy
169.4 la pucele] la dame
170.1 Doucement li dist : « Sire, cestre lestre lissiez! »] Et lui a dit : «chier sire, ceste lettre vous done».
170.3 Cois soyez] or oyies
171.1 Que ce] Le
171.2 Fu fis] Est fieus
172.1 Alphis la cité fu] la chitet dAlsis
172.2 Nus, povrez et deschaus comme povre truans] Poure, descaus estoit, souvent gisoit as cans.
173.1 C'a paines oït] Qua paines son euist
173.2 n'oy] euist
173.3 Lors dist] *missing in MS J*
173.4 Par amour] Sil vous plaist

174.1 homme] corps
174.2 n'abita] nadesa
174.3 Quant départi] Au départir
174.4 Vez en ci] la vechy
175.3 to 183.3 *Missing lines in MS J, which contains only*
Li cardinal luy a celle moitiet donee;
La fist Dieu grant vertu en ycelle journee
183.4 retient] detint
184.2 desvée] deruse
184.3 Chier] Dous
184.3 com] quel
184.3 desevrée] destinee
184.4 Or m'avez vous lessie de tous biens esgarée] *missing in MS J*
185.1 veuveté] vanités
185.2 autre homme] nul aultre
185.3 es ciex] ou ciel
185.4 société] consoscietet
186.1 Moult avoieut] Il eurent bien
186.2 tant com le dueil menoient] Chilz qui le duel faisoient
186.3 si qu'il l'emporteraient] car porter len cuidoient
187.1 L'apostolle leur dist] Adont, dist lapostole
187.2 ja] tous estains
188.1 gecté a gens. Si se departiront] partout jetés et aval et amont
188.2 to 188.3 Et il ont respondu volentiers le feront.
L'argent gietent ez ruez ; les gens semblant n'en font]
Par quoy li poure gens en se departiron ;
Et il ont respondut: Vostre plaisir ferons
Largement en getteret autour et environ,
Mais pour chose qu'on jette ly gens semblan nen font.
188.4 A veoir le cors saint si grand] tout leur
189.1 Qu'] *missing in MS J*
189.2 des plus forts] de plusieurs
189.3 passé] portes
190.1 sans] sans plus de
190.2 fut] est
190.3 Mout fut] A
190.3 solemnelment] moult hautement