

Richard de Fournival et les sciences au XIIIe siècle edited by Joëlle Ducos and Christopher Lucken

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Edited by Joëlle Ducos and Christopher Lucken, *Richard de Fournival et les sciences au XIIIe siècle* focuses on one of the most fascinating intellectuals of the 13th century. Although Fournival studied in Paris and lived for some time in Rome, it was in Amiens that he spent most of his life. In some respects, Fournival may be compared with his English contemporary Robert Grosseteste. Both were polymaths interested in science, theology, and literature. Although less prolific than Grosseteste, Richard de Fournival wrote literary works in French—the most renowned being his *Bestiaire d'Amours*—and a number of scientific treatises. Some of these works are lost (e.g., his treatise on urines), while others such as his *De arte alchemica* are ascribed to him in the manuscript tradition, yet their attribution is still questioned.

Among his works, a rather short yet extremely consequential text plays a key role. This is the *Biblionomia*, an annotated list of manuscripts owned by Fournival and described by him as a garden of knowledge. The list is probably connected to the establishment of a library that Fournival made available to students at the cathedral school of Amiens, where he was chancellor of the cathedral later in his life. For contemporary historians, Fournival's *Biblionomia* is crucial for at least three main reasons. First, it documents what works were available and used in 13th-century France in a non-academic, learned environment. Second, through its description of manuscripts, works, and contents, the *Biblionomia* provides important data on the circulation of medieval manuscripts and also the authorship of the works that they presented. Third, its arrangement of manuscripts into a thematic structure gives us insight into how the sciences were thought to be internally organized and

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hierarchically connected. Accordingly, the *Biblionomia* is a central piece of information for the historical reconstruction of the 13th-century intellectual environment in France and, more generally, in Europe.

For this and other reasons, Ducos and Lucken's book is a brilliant contribution to scholarship. It provides a detailed picture of Fournival's attitude toward the sciences. Readers from different fields, moreover, can enjoy the cultural richness of medieval Amiens and reconstruct the intellectual profile of Fournival and the historical context in which he lived—a context made of theory and practice, wisdom and science, belief and experience.

True to its title, the volume is specifically centered on Fournival and the *sciences*. As Lucken recalls in his introductory chapter, “sciences” here means “modern sciences” in the restrictive sense of this term. Needless to say, medieval *scientia* was grounded in philosophy and, particularly, natural philosophy. Such thematic delimitation aims at justifying the editors' choice of focusing on some disciplines discussed by Fournival while leaving others aside. As a result, the volume has an impeccable unity of themes, methods, and research questions particularly appealing to intellectual historians and medieval philologists.

The first three chapters of the volume address the *Biblionomia* as a whole: the historical context governing its production (Lucken), its connections to medieval theories of knowledge (Mandosio), and its relationship with medieval encyclopedias (Draelans). In the first chapter, “Parcours et portrait d'un homme de savoir”, Christopher Lucken gives an introduction to Fournival's intellectual work and historical context. The chapter is rich with details. Lucken starts by discussing Fournival's literary production and stressing the main lines of his reflections. Specific attention is given to the “sciences”. Fournival's interest in medicine is examined in light of his work as a physician (following in his father's footsteps). Lucken also stresses the bond between dyeing and alchemy—the former being a central commercial activity in Amiens, the latter one of Fournival's central interests—as an eminent case in which practices and social context influenced the production of the *Biblionomia*. As a consequence, Lucken's contribution allows the reader to appreciate the historical concreteness of this text, from the role of its author as cathedral chancellor to the manifold socio-cultural implications governing its internal structure.

Jean-Marc Mandosio offers a fascinating contribution in the next chapter, “La *Biblionomia* de Richard de Fournival et la classification de savoirs au

XIIIe siècle”, which examines how the *Biblionomia* is connected to the theories of articulation of knowledge elaborated in the High Middle Ages. This aspect is central to our understanding of how Fournival saw the organic structure of wisdom and science. Examining the main sections of the *Biblionomia* one by one, Mandosio points out that Fournival mostly follows the 12th-century system elaborated by Hugh of St Victor. In turn, while freshly translated works from both Arabic and Greek are widely attested in the *Biblionomia*, it seems that Fournival does not adhere to the tighter articulation of knowledge proposed by Gundissalinus and grounded in Avicenna’s theory of subalternation. Similar to other medieval systems, Fournival’s articulation ends with theology, which corresponds to the higher wisdom attainable by students consulting the library described in *Biblionomia*.

Mandosio’s contribution is followed by a chapter authored by Isabelle Draelans and dedicated to the relationship between the *Biblionomia* and medieval encyclopedias: “La Biblionomia de Richard de Fournival, une bibliothèque d’encyclopédiste? Enquête comparative sur les textes et les manuscrits”. Draelans’ chapter addresses the question of intellectual bonds between Fournival and the authors of mediaeval encyclopedias (starting with Vincent of Beauvais and Thomas of Cantimpré) as well as philosophers like Robert Grosseteste and Albert the Great. This question is fundamental to our knowledge of the circulation of ideas and texts in medieval Europe. Draelans’ detailed analysis shows that the interests and aims of the *Biblionomia* and the encyclopedists were not identical. While encyclopedists aimed to produce a handy yet complete account of knowledge that preachers could use easily, Fournival’s aim was mostly focused on his personal and sometimes incidental interests. This difference is also reflected by a comparison between the sources used by the encyclopedists and the works mentioned by the *Biblionomia*, which shows some central discrepancies.

Following a thematic articulation, the next two chapters of the volume are dedicated to mathematics. In his contribution, “Arithmétiques et géométries au XIIIe siècle d’après la *Biblionomia*: des traductions arabo-latines à Jordanus de Nemore”, Marc Moyon discusses the intellectual context in which the sections on arithmetic and geometry of the *Biblionomia* were written. Starting with Boethius, Moyon examines the most important novelties introduced in these disciplines during the High Middle Ages, focusing in particular on the Arabic-into-Latin translations by Gerard of Cremona and

the relevance of Jordanus de Nemore. The latter plays a central role in Fournival's *Biblionomia*, and Mayon discusses the main contribution that Jordanus made in both arithmetic and geometry by using the freshly translated materials.

This chapter is followed by Laure Miolo's contribution, "Science des nombres, science des formes: arithmétique et géométrie dans les manuscrits de la *Biblionomia* de Richard de Fournival", which is centered again on arithmetic and geometry. Miolo's chapter, however, addresses another fundamental aspect of Fournival's collection: its role in spreading the works mentioned by the *Biblionomia* in Paris later in the Middle Ages. Miolo examines how Gerard of Abbeville's acquisition of parts of Fournival's collection directly impacted the study of arithmetical and geometrical works in Paris. The relevance of these works can be appreciated up to the later Middle Ages, as Miolo points out in her chapter.

The section on mathematics is followed by a set of three chapters dedicated to Fournival and medicine: its disciplinary context (Green), and the cases of uroscopy (Moulinier-Brogi) and horse medicine (Giese) as presented by the *Biblionomia*. Monica H. Green's chapter, "Richard de Fournival and the Reconfiguration of Learned Medicine in the Mid-13th Century", reassesses the role that Fournival had in the 13th-century renewal of medicine. After having recalled the seven *corpora* of medical texts mentioned by Fournival, Green examines Fournival's effort in acquiring and commissioning medical manuscripts containing texts which were recently translated from both Arabic and Greek. Green links Fournival's effort to the general reconfiguration of medieval medicine that would soon follow, particularly in consideration of the "new Galen", all of whose works are mentioned in the *Biblionomia*.

With the chapter by Laurence Moulienier-Brogi, "Richard de Fournival, la *Biblionomia* et la science des urines", the volume moves on to examine the case of uroscopy in Fournival's work. As Moulinier-Brogi recalls, the science of urines played a central role in medieval medicine; by the time Fournival wrote his *Biblionomia*, the discipline was already well-established in Europe. Moulinier-Brogi's learned contribution examines the works mentioned by Fournival in detail, pointing out the rarity of some of those titles and their influence on medieval medicine.

The last chapter of the section, "Works on Horse Medicine in the *Biblionomia* of Richard de Fournival in the Context of the High Medieval Tradition",

is dedicated to horse medicine. Here, Martina Giese examines the manuscript tradition and possible identifications of the two titles on horse medicine mentioned by the *Biblionomia*: the *Liber de cirurgia equorum* and the *Liber de mulomedicina*. Giese reconstructs the connection of these works with the *Practica equorum* and the *Albertus-Vorlage* treatise, showing that the *Liber de mulomedicina* is an abridged version of the *Albertus-Vorlage*.

The second part of the volume widens the scope to include other scientific texts presumably authored by Fournival. Antoine Calvet's chapter, "Le *De arte alchemica* (inc.: Dixit Arturus explicator huius operis) est-il une oeuvre authentique de Richard de Fournival?", is dedicated to *De arte alchemica*, an alchemical treatise ascribed to Fournival in the manuscript tradition. Calvet's contribution is a remarkable piece of scholarship for the history of alchemy. *De arte alchemica* is a treatise focused on the alchemical transformation of arsenic, which is used in the transmutation of both silver and gold. Calvet shows how attribution to Fournival can be substantiated by historical and textual data. Admission that Fournival was the author of this alchemical text would be of the utmost relevance to tracing his intellectual profile and the role played by alchemy in the 13th century. Calvet's examination is accompanied by a critical edition of *De arte alchemica* and a French translation.

Calvet's chapter is followed by three contributions dedicated to the role of astronomy in Fournival's reflections and in relation to the *Nativitas* that he authored (see the chapter by Boudet and Lucken) and to the *Speculum astronomiae* (see the chapters by Weill-Parot and Burnett). The contribution by Jean-Patrice Boudet and Christopher Lucken, "In Search of an Astrological Identity Chart: Richard de Fournival's *Nativitas*", analyzes a special text: Fournival's *Nativitas*, his "astrological autobiography". The two authors reassess the attribution of the *Nativitas* to Fournival by considering the *status quaestionis* and the data provided by works directly related to Fournival and astronomy (the *Roman d'Abladane*, *De vetula*, and *Speculum astronomiae*). After convincingly arguing that the *Nativitas* was authored by Fournival, the authors stress the discrepancies between this text and the anonymous *Speculum astronomiae*, the attribution of which to Fournival seems difficult to maintain.

The next chapter of the volume, "La *Biblionomia* de Richard de Fournival, le *Speculum astronomiae*, et le secret" by Nicolas Weill-Parot, is centered on the "secret books" mentioned in the *Biblionomia* and about which many hypotheses have been proposed by scholars. Weill-Parot engages the problem of what these books might have been by examining the terms "occult"

and “secret” in astrological and magical works that were included in manuscripts probably proceeding from Fournival’s collection. The semantic field emerging from the textual analysis of these terms is quite close to the sense of a passage in the *Biblionomia* stating that a secret, although occult, can be unveiled. Weill-Parot’s analysis of the *Speculum astronomiae*, however, shows that this text characterizes the terms negatively insofar as it affirms that what is occult cannot be unveiled. This discrepancy would seem to distance Fournival from the *Speculum astronomiae*.

The matter is taken up again in the last chapter of this section on astronomy. Charles Burnett, in “Richard de Fournival and the *Speculum astronomiae*”, reassesses the hypothesis—proposed by Bruno Roy—that Fournival is the author of the *Speculum astronomiae* by comparing it with the *Biblionomia* and examining how both texts use translated sources. With much clarity, Burnett shows that some commonalities in sources, terminology, and concerns seem to point toward Fournival’s authorship of the *Speculum*, even though, as Burnett remarks, further research is needed to clarify this point.

The last thematic section of the volume is dedicated to *De vetula*, a pseudo-Ovidian text ascribed to Fournival. In the first chapter of this section, “Le quadrivium dans le *De vetula* attribué à Richard de Fournival”, Marie-Madeleine Huchet discusses the role of the four mathematical disciplines of the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) in *De vetula*. She examines how *De vetula* connects astronomy with the other disciplines of the quadrivium and its hierarchical structure as presented in the text.

In the second and last chapter of this section, “An Astrological Path to Wisdom. Richard de Fournival, Roger Bacon and the Attribution of the Pseudo-Ovidian *De vetula*”, Cecilia Panti challenges the attribution of *De vetula* to Fournival. Through a detailed analysis of the work and the use of it made by Roger Bacon, Panti argues convincingly in favor of a closer relationship between the author of *De vetula* and Bacon—a relationship whose closeness borders identity, since the author might be Bacon himself, as Panti suggests. Panti’s hypothesis is very consequential since it would explain some non-perspicuous aspects of Bacon’s reflections and historical context.

Ducos closes the volume with a short conclusion in which the relevance of Fournival’s contribution to the history of ideas is summarized and contrasted with that of other intellectuals and “polymaths” from the 13th century, such as Robert Grosseteste and Vincent of Beauvais.

Rich in perspective in all its chapters, the volume is a remarkable contribution to the intellectual history of the 13th century—especially as regards

the historical reconstruction of Fournival's thought and attitude toward the sciences. The studies included in the volume allow readers to establish sets of meaningful connections with other main characters of the 13th century, such as Grosseteste, Albert the Great, and Roger Bacon. However, while the volume focuses on Fournival's connections to the scientific debate of his time, one main question appears to be left aside: What role did philosophy play in Fournival's reflections, purchase of manuscripts, and overall consideration of science? By restricting the richness of *scientiae* to a consideration of "modern sciences", the volume misses an aspect that appears to be central to the reconstruction and assessment of Richard de Fournival's contribution and his intellectual context.