

Annales Fontanellenses

Translated by Christian Cooijmans

Spardjon

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ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR



Christian Cooijmans is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Liverpool, where his research explores the reach and repercussions of viking¹ endeavour across the Frankish realm, as well as its subsequent, premodern historiography. His monograph, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs: The Conceptual Development of Viking Activity across the Frankish Realm (c. 750-940)*, was published by Routledge in 2020.

¹ This work does not consider the term ‘viking’ to be an ethnic or cultural label, but an occupational one (akin to ‘mariner’ or ‘pirate’, for example). As a result, it is rendered as a common noun, with a lowercase initial.

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EDITORIAL PREFACE

We are very pleased to present the English translation of the *Annales Fontanellenses*. One of the most exciting outcomes of this journal has been the amount of responses to our call for translations. The *Annales Fontanellenses* represent the second translation to be published by *Apardjón*, with more to follow in 2022. The source was translated by Christian Cooijmans, a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Liverpool. Editors who have contributed to the present publication are as follows: Hannah Booth, Cassidy Croci, Jennifer Hemphill, Rosemary Kelly, Blake Middleton, Nate Richardson-Read, Solveig Marie Wang and Jessie Yusek.

I would like to express my gratitude to the editorial team of *Apardjón*, who have gone above and beyond the original plan to release a single journal volume per year. Editing multiple publications throughout the year on top of immense workloads is quite the undertaking, let alone during a pandemic! Each editor has worked extremely hard to ensure our publications meet a high academic quality. Particularly owed thanks is Managing Editor Solveig Marie Wang, who has been instrumental in ensuring the success of each *Apardjón* publication thus far. The editorial team also extends their thanks and well wishes to Heidi Synnøve Djuve, who has stepped down from her role as Managing Editor. We have welcomed Cassidy Croci into the second Managing Editor role for this publication, and we look forward to our continued collaboration with her on future publications.

In regard to this publication, Caitlin Ellis is particularly owed thanks, as her advice helped us find an appropriate reviewer for this translation. Also deserving mention is Blake Middleton, who prepared the translation's cover designs, medieval-inspired fonts, and map design. The editorial team extends our thanks to everyone who has supported the journal this far. We are currently working on the journal's third volume, alongside a few more special issues that will be published in 2023. Until then, we sincerely hope you enjoy this translation of the *Annales Fontanellenses*.

On behalf of the editors,
Jennifer Hemphill

MAP OF NEUSTRIA

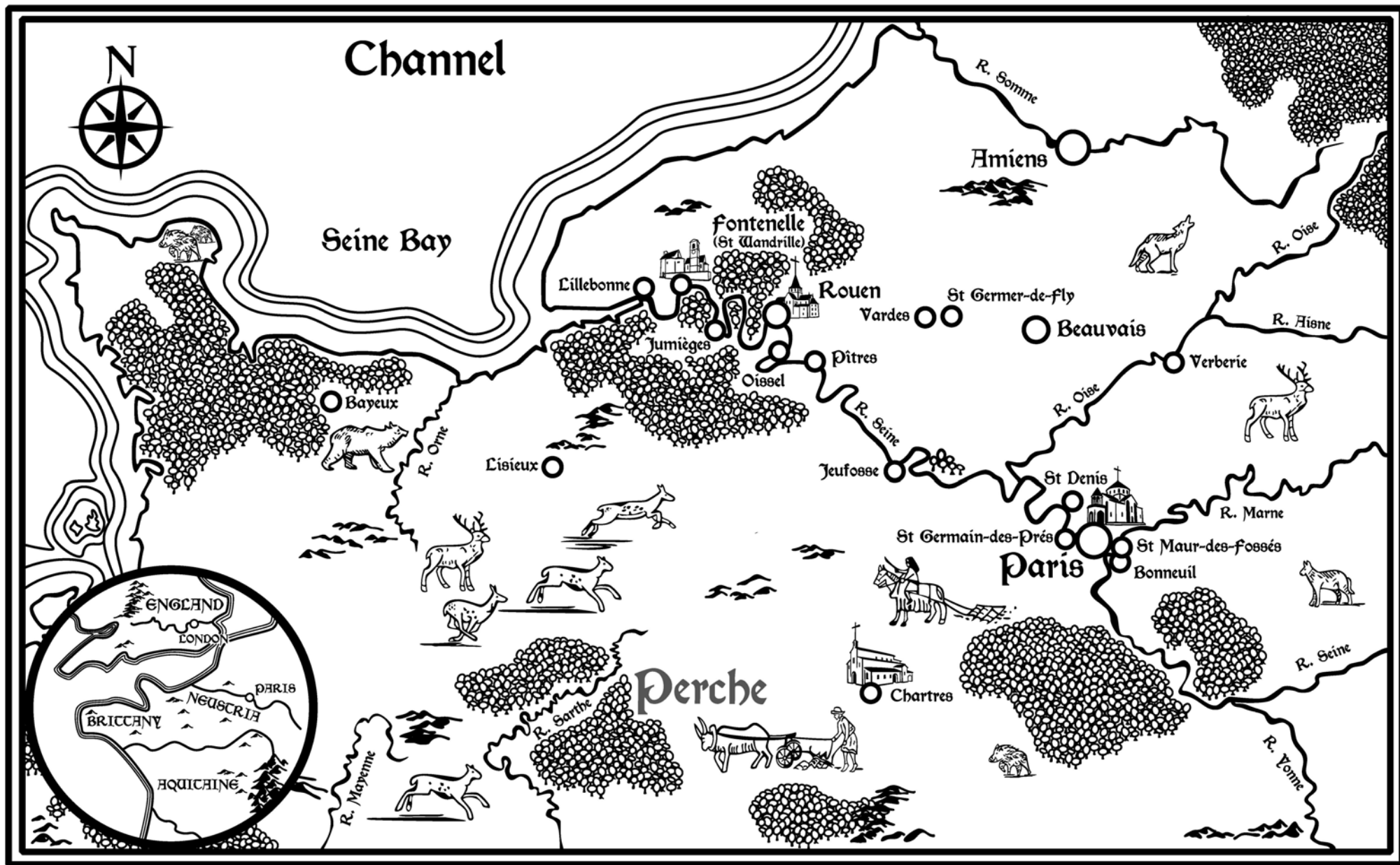


Figure 1. Map of northern Neustria during the ninth century (with locations mentioned in the text).

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The decades straddling the middle of the ninth century were a period of significant societal turmoil throughout the Frankish realm. Following many years of periodic political rivalries between Louis the Pious and his sons — culminating in violent civil war between the latter — the Treaty of Verdun (843) saw the territory divided into three separate kingdoms, each ruled by one of the surviving heirs of the former emperor (Costambeys et al. 2011: 213–22; Nelson 1995: 116–21). As Charles the Bald took the reins of the westernmost Frankish kingdom, he not only had to contend with recurrent aristocratic rebellions in Aquitaine, Neustria, and Brittany, but was forced to attend to the ever-growing threat of incoming viking endeavour, which, by this time, had begun to target increasingly inland centres of wealth and population across the embattled kingdom (Nelson 1992: 135–50; Cooijmans 2020: 221).

Alongside well-known contemporary accounts of regional viking activity, including substantial annalistic works such as the *Annales Bertiniani* (*AB*) and *Annales Fuldenses* (*AF*), a number of more concise, localised monastic records serve as crucial witnesses in what remains an otherwise diffuse and lacunar evidential landscape (Nelson 1991; Reuter 1992; Roesdahl 2003). Among these sources are the so-called *Annales Fontanellenses* ('Annals of Fontenelle'), a brief set of ninth-century Latin annals produced by the monastic community of St Wandrille, situated along the lower Seine. Within its assorted entries — spanning the 840s and 850s — are distinct details of viking endeavour not attested by other contemporary texts, which, as well as illustrating the contrasting targets and tactics of these military campaigns, offer insights into the organisational dynamics that governed them. Upon considering the composition and content of the *Annales Fontanellenses* (hereafter *AFont*) in their institutional and historiographical context, this work will provide the first annotated English translation of this often-overlooked text.

The Abbey of St Wandrille

The monastic house of St Wandrille, also known as Fontenelle Abbey, was first established in or around 649; its hagiographical tradition holds that its founder, first abbot, and eventual namesake — Wandregisil (or Wandrille) — had been a fiscal agent and courtier to the Frankish king Dagobert I before renouncing his secular career for the cloister (Howe 2001: 127). Wandregisil's initial saint's life (or *vita*), which survives in a manuscript produced during the late seventh or early eighth century, relates how the titular monk spent time with the communities of Montfaucon, Bobbio, and Romainmôtier before returning to Neustria. There, under the auspices of Bishop Audoin of Rouen, he established his abbey *iuxta fontem uberimam, qui vocatur Fontanella* — 'near an abundant spring

called the *Fontenelle*' (Krusch 1910: 19).² The ninth-century *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium* (henceforth *Gesta*) expands on this narrative, noting that Wandregisil — with the support of Erchinoald, mayor of the palace of Neustria — founded the community alongside his nephew, Godo (Pradié 1999: 8, 10).³ Relying on established *topoi* of monastic solitude and trial, the author asserted that, before the arrival of the community, the site was covered by bog, bush, and bramble, and thus *magis latibula latronum ac lustra ferarum quam habitatio [...] hominum*, i.e. 'more like a den of robbers and wild beasts than a dwelling for men' (Pradié 1999: 14). But despite this alleged isolation, the abbey would have been situated along both the River Seine and the Roman road linking Rouen to Lillebonne, allowing it to be reached from both places within a matter of hours by boat, on horseback, or even on foot (Lefeuvre and Rodriguez 2016).

Following its initial establishment, St Wandrille was able to rapidly expand its politico-economic prominence, allegedly administering as many as four thousand landholdings by the end of the seventh century — some as far-flung as Saintonge, Angoumois, and Provence (Lot 1913: xiii–xxvi). Over the following decades, the community would likewise establish itself as a foremost centre of monastic authorship within the diocese of Rouen, whose outputs are thought to have included Merovingian *vitae* of some of its earliest patrons, including Abbots Ansbert and the aforementioned Wandregisil, as well as Wulfram, bishop of Sens (Howe 2001: 130, 154, 163–64, 190).

As the Carolingians continued to expand and tighten their political hold on the Frankish territories during the first half of the eighth century, St Wandrille's fortunes seem to have declined, as a series of adverse abbatial appointments by Charles Martel and Pippin the Short gave rise to local mismanagement and losses of monastic holdings and privileges (Wood 1991: 9–12; Poncelet 1987: 22–23; Musset 1970: 87–88). As well as seemingly recovering some of this politico-economic prosperity by the latter part of the century, St Wandrille was able to uphold its status as a centre of literary production, with various *vitae* and other hagiographical works being actively (re)written for its early abbots and associated saints alike (Howe 2001: 128, 190). At this time, Abbot Gervold (787–806) also seems to have presided over the establishment of a monastic school at the community, presumably in accordance with Charlemagne's far-reaching educational reforms under the *Admonitio generalis* of 789 (Pradié 1999: 140, 220–21; Fontaine 1982: 39–40).

The ninth century brought both prosperity and calamity to St Wandrille. Einhard — scholar and courtier to Charlemagne and Louis the Pious — served as its lay abbot between 816 and 823, and in all probability supported and stimulated its ongoing

² Wandregisil's *vita* is one of only two extant hagiographical texts in a Merovingian manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Latin 18315). See Kreiner 2014: 10, 281–87.

³ Conflicting details on the circumstances in which the land for the abbey was obtained are discussed by Lot 1913: iii–viii.

development as a locus of intellectual pursuit (Dutton 1998: xvii). Abbot Ansegis (823-833) subsequently embarked on an extensive redevelopment of the monastery complex, which not only saw the abbey church of St Peter enlarged, but a new chapter house, dormitory, refectory, and various ancillary structures erected (Pradié 1999: 166–70; Lauwers 2020: 325–26). Bespoke library and archive buildings were likewise constructed as part of this campaign, safeguarding the substantial corpus of books and charters now cared for by the community (Pradié 1999: 170; Fontaine 1982: 41). By this time, St Wandrille would have also been served by a dedicated *portus* along the river, allowing tidings, takings, and trade to arrive from local producers, regional merchants, and remote estates (Le Maho 2003: 155–56).

Up until the early 840s, when the *AFont* commence their reporting, the burgeoning viking phenomenon may have represented little more than a faint, intermittent concern to the various monastic communities situated across the lower Seine valley — an indistinct peril hitherto kept at bay by the coast guards stationed on the estuary and Frankish fleets patrolling the Channel (Cooijmans 2020: 110–11). However, by the spring of 841, in the wake of Emperor Louis’ death, a host of *pyratae Danorum* (‘Danish pirates’) managed — for the first time — to make its way well over a hundred kilometres upstream, catching the presumably ill-prepared and ill-defended riverside inhabitants by surprise (Waitz 1883: 25). Although the community of St Wandrille was compelled to pay a tribute for its own redemption during this campaign, it was by no means singled out, as the culprits likewise attacked and sacked the nearby *civitas* of Rouen, and

omnia monasteria seu quaecumque loca flumini Sequanae adhaerentia aut depopulati sunt aut multis acceptis pecuniis territa reliquerunt. (Waitz 1883: 25).

[they] laid waste all the monasteries and other places along the banks of the Seine, or else took large payments and left them thoroughly terrified. (trans. Nelson 1991: 50).

Viking forces are seen to have remained active in the region over the course of the following decade, and would have repeatedly passed within striking distance of St Wandrille on their way up and down the river, including in 845 and 850 (Waitz 1883: 32–33; Kurze 1891: 35, 39–40).⁴ Nevertheless, no explicit mention is made of the abbey being set upon until 851–852, at which time the *AFont* note that it was attacked at the behest of Asgeir — the same viking leader responsible for the sacking of Rouen ten years prior

⁴ Ferdinand Lot (1913: xxxv-xxxvi) — by insisting that additional tribute payments kept the abbey safe during such episodes — presupposed that incoming vikings exclusively relied on (the threat of) violence in their interactions with regional populations, thereby disregarding the possibility of more cordial contacts, including economic exchange (Cooijmans 2020: 181).

(see also analysis below). Whilst the annalist notes that St Wandrille was set ablaze during this particular episode, its local community would have endured until at least 858, for which year the contemporary *Miracula (posteriora) sancti Wandregisili* note that

sanctissima ossa pique cineres [...] egregii confessoris Christi Wandregisili ac sancti praesulis Ansberti, ob metum et conculcationem horum nefandorum gentilium, de Fontanellae monasterio propriis effosa sepulcris, [...] deportata sunt. (Van den Bossche 1727: 283).

out of fear and due to the oppression of these execrable heathens, the sacred bones and blessed ashes of the [...] honorable confessor of Christ, Wandregisil, as well as those of the sacred bishop Ansbert – having been disinterred from their tombs – were carried away from the monastery of Fontenelle [...]. (trans. author).

Although specific details of any watershed event causing the monks to abandon their cloister are thin on the ground, it has been proposed that the ongoing viking occupation of the upstream river island of Oissel would have been a determining factor (Laporte 1974: 11–12; Le Maho 2013: 21–22).

Having initially taken refuge at Bloville in Ponthieu, the community soon conveyed its relics to the church of St Peter, a dependency of St Wandrille near the emporium of Quentovic, where the author of the aforementioned *Miracula* situates them around 866–868 (Lot 1913: xxxii–xxxvii). Although some of the monks may have found their way back to the lower Seine valley some years later, the abbey was again forced to evacuate during the later 870s, this time to Blangy-sur-Ternoise in Artois (Van Werveke 1967: 80–81; Fournée 1982: 123). Any subsequent return would have been similarly short-lived, as renewed regional viking activity during the mid-880s forced the community to seek shelter at the monastery of St Chéron, situated just outside the *civitas* of Chartres (Laporte 1953: 29). As vikings likewise laid siege to Chartres in 886, the community and its consecrated cargo found themselves northbound once more, and would remain based at Boulogne — on the Channel coast — for well over half a century (Lot 1913: xxxviii–xl).

By 944, Count Arnulf of Flanders, in a bid to associate himself with the cult of Wandregisil (and to restrict its return to Normandy), forced the Fontenelle relics to be transferred to St Peter's abbey in Ghent — itself recently recovered from the adversities of viking antagonism (Lifshitz 1995: 184–86; Trân-Duc 2015: 153, 156; Declercq 1997: 28).⁵ Whilst the exiled community of St Wandrille continued to endure in Ghent until at least the 950s, its erstwhile abbey would eventually — during the later tenth and early eleventh century — be refounded under the aegis of the Rollonid rulers of Normandy, with some of

⁵ Whether the remains of Wulfram were also among the relics transferred to Ghent has been a matter of some debate (Huyghebaert 1977).

its prior estates, archives, and possibly even relics being restored in due course (Cross 2017: 159–60; Trân-Duc 2015: 157–58; Musset 1982: 56–57).

The *Annales Fontanellenses*

The *Annales Fontanellenses* are a succinct set of monastic annals covering the period between 841 and 858, supplemented with intermittent interpolations up to 872.⁶ Conceived within the community of St Wandrille, the text is believed to have been the product of at least two ninth-century monks — both of whom are anonymous, despite the presence of various autobiographical details (Laporte 1951: 65–67). In particular, these personal elements include a digressive interpolation for the year 841, summarising the subsequent author’s career advancement as a novice, deacon, and priest over the course of several decades.⁷ Other, briefer biographical notes and asides are found in the entries for 842, 847, and 851.

Although the original author(s) of the *AFont* may have been able to record events as they became known to them between 841 and 858 — only to interrupt this work when the abbey was evacuated — the text may have also been compiled or completed in subsequent years or decades (Laporte 1951: 67, 70). Whereas production is ordinarily considered to have taken place at Fontenelle itself, the possibility that (parts of) the annals were composed in exile — as is thought to be the case for the aforementioned *Miracula* (Howe 2001: 183) — should not be summarily dismissed. Moreover, whether the existing text is only a fragment of a more extensive annalistic history — as previously proposed (Molinier 1901: 264; Laporte 1951: 67) — cannot be readily corroborated nor discredited.⁸

As an historical source, the *AFont* concern themselves primarily with matters unfolding beyond the walls of the monastery, with a particular emphasis on meteorological phenomena, politico-military proceedings, and the movements of viking hosts across the western Frankish kingdom. Even though the motives underpinning the authorship of the text are ambiguous, its eclectic, episodic, and ephemeral character strengthens the notion that (near-)contemporary monks were responsible for its production, relying on chance observation, tidings, and testimony rather than existing textual records. As some members of the community of St Wandrille are known to have been itinerant — as suggested by

⁶ The work is also referred to as the *Chronicon Fontanellense* (e.g. Lot 1913: cxiii), oftentimes in conjunction with the aforementioned *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium* (e.g. Van Den Gheyn 1906: 89). It is likewise identified as the *Annales Fontanellenses priores* (e.g. Laporte 1951: 75) so as to discern it from the analogously-named *Annales Fontanellenses*, which were produced at St Wandrille during the twelfth century (e.g. Delisle 1898: 204; ‘Annales Fontanellenses’ 1967: 280).

⁷ Jean Laporte (1951: 66) has convincingly argued this to be a later, marginal note which was inadvertently incorporated into the body of the text by an incautious copyist (cf. notes 22 and 33).

⁸ Although Lot (1913: cxxviii–cxxxii) considered the annals to be a direct continuation of the aforementioned *Gesta* — whose own manuscript tradition it is bound up with — the mostly divergent character and concerns of the two texts make this an unconvincing premise.

their journeys to the *palatium* at Baisieux and to Bonneuil in 847 — the *AFont*'s reports of far-flung political developments, especially those from Brittany and Aquitaine (846-851), may have been overheard during these types of travels and assemblies. In turn, this might explain why the annals suffer from an imprecise chronology, as their author(s) may not have been privy to specific dates or durations of events, much less the sources needed to corroborate them (Laporte 1951: 69–70). Despite all this, the text is generally deemed to be reputable in substance due to its overall agreement with other contemporary records (Laporte 1951: 69–70; 'Chronicon Fontanellense' 1970: 335).

The *AFont* are known to survive in five separate manuscripts, all of which are post-medieval in date. Among these, a seventeenth-century codex now residing in Brussels is considered to contain the most comprehensive and credible version of the annals (Lot 1913: cxxviii, cxxxiv).⁹ Part of the Bollandist collection, it would have been produced under the care of Héribert Rosweyde before his death in 1629 — drawing on prior material from the libraries of the Rouge-Cloître near Brussels and the Jesuit College of Tournai, respectively (Tessier 1953: 251–52). A subsequent seventeenth-century transcription of this work is found in Paris.¹⁰ The other extant copies of the *AFont* — two of which are also held in Paris¹¹ and another in Amiens¹² — are all of an abbreviated nature, and would have been based on the same antecedent from Tournai, produced in abridged form by Jacob van Driessche, a fifteenth-century monk of Bruges (Laporte 1951: 71; Lot 1913: cxxvi–cxxvii). Although the earliest manuscript tradition of the *AFont* remains a matter of speculation, the original text may have arrived in Ghent with the community of St Wandrille during the 940s, only to be copied and disseminated in later centuries, eventually making its way into the hands of Jacob van Driessche and the monks of the Rouge-Cloître (Lot 1913: cxxxiii).

An initial printed edition of the annals, based on the Brussels manuscript, was furnished by the seventeenth-century French historian André Duchesne (1636: 387–90) — a work incorporated into subsequent primary source collections by Martin Bouquet (1749: 40–43) and Georg Heinrich Pertz (1829: 301–4), both of whom added their own corrections and comments. By the mid-twentieth century, a new edition — taking stock of the Brussels and Tournai traditions — was presented by Jean Laporte, monk of the abbey of St

⁹ Brussels, KBR, MS 7814-22, fols 144^r-146^v. See Van Den Gheyn 1906: 89 (no. 3722). The manuscript also contains an abbreviated version of the annals in fol. 154^r.

¹⁰ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Baluze 58, fols 82^r-84^v (with abbreviated form on fols. 84^v-85^r). The transcription was carried out by André Duchesne, who realised the *AFont*'s first printed edition (Tessier 1953: 251; Auvray and Poupardin 1921: 72–74). Another curtailed version of the text, corresponding to the one from Amiens (note 12), is found in fols 57^r-58^r — albeit not in Duchesne's hand (Lot 1913: cxxvii).

¹¹ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Latin 5426, fol. 36sq; MS Latin 5426A, fol. 91sq. Both date to the seventeenth century.

¹² Amiens, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 524, fols. 233^{r-v}. Dated to the seventeenth century, as per Lot 1913: cxxvii.

Wandrille, an effort which likewise included a French translation of the text (1951: 74–91).

Vikings in the *Annales Fontanellenses*

Despite their limited span and scope of coverage, the *AFont* offer an invaluable window onto the development and domestic impact of ninth-century viking activity across the western Frankish realm, illustrating the organisational dynamics and political interplay of campaigns that could last for many months and involve multiple hosts acting in concert.

At the outset, the annals provide pertinent details on inroads made along the Seine in 841. Overseen by the otherwise little-known leader Asgeir (*Oscherus/Hoserus*), this expedition is the earliest recorded instance of vikings advancing beyond the lowermost reaches of the river. Having entered the area on 12 May, the arrivals are noted to have set the *urbs* of Rouen (i.e. its walled episcopal centre) aflame only two days later, an event likewise documented by the *AB* (Nelson 1991: 50).¹³ Whereas the latter source indistinctly indicates that *omnia monasteria seu quaecumque loca* ('all the monasteries and other places') along the riverbanks were subsequently beleaguered, the *AFont* specify these targets to have included the abbey of Jumièges, which was set fire to on 24 May,¹⁴ as well as the abbey of St Wandrille, which was ransomed the following day. Although few particulars on the circumstances of this payment are provided, its relatively small size — only six pounds by weight, presumably paid in silver — suggests it to have been met by the religious community itself. Other institutions are seen to have been involved in similar transactions, as representatives from upstream St Denis arrived on 28 May to secure the release of sixty-eight prisoners, arguably including members or acquaintances of their own monastic house (Nelson 1997: 26).

Compared to their more extensive coverage of the events of 841, the *AFont* provide only a fleeting reference to the viking attack on Nantes two years later, for which the annalist presumably lacked access to the same type of first-hand or otherwise expository account. The ensuing entry likewise spends no more than a few words on a viking expedition targeting the estuarine emporium of Quentovic in 844, news of which may have reached the community of St Wandrille through its properties and other vested interests in the area (Lebecq 1993: 80; 2000: 147). Although this particular report is often considered to be a misdated reference to an earlier attack on the *portus* in 842 (e.g. Laporte 1951: 78n23), the possibility for it to represent a subsequent, independent incursion should not

¹³ Local archaeological investigation has determined that an uncontrolled fire caused significant damage to Rouen's episcopal complex around the middle of the ninth century, an event associated with the viking attack of 841 (Le Maho 1994: 28–29).

¹⁴ Fire damage identified in the abbey church of St Peter at Jumièges has also been ascribed to a local viking presence in 841 (Le Maho 2014: 53–54).

be wholly discounted — especially as parts of the emporium were specifically noted to have been left viable during the prior attack (Nelson 1991: 53).

The year 845 witnessed a return of viking activity to the Seine valley, as a fleet managed to travel a seemingly unprecedented 350 kilometres upstream in order to approach Paris (Cooijmans 2020: 121, 129). The *AFont*, having identified Ragnar (*Ragnerus*) as the leader of this viking group,¹⁵ declare the arrivals to have physically entered the *urbs* during Easter vigil, an event not made explicit by other contemporary annals, which instead suggest the host to have withdrawn following a tribute payment by Charles the Bald (Nelson 1991: 60; Reuter 1992: 23; Rau 1969: 347–49). A corroborating account is nevertheless found in the *Translatio sancti Germani*, which was authored at the adjacent abbey of St Germain-des-Prés before the end of the decade:

Normannorum populi [...] cursu praepropero sabbato sancto paschalis solemnitatis Parisius venerunt, et ipsa quidem nocte siluerunt. Mane autem facto [...] e navibus cum magno impetu proruperunt, civitatemque Parisius ob metum eorum vacuam et absque habitatoribus repertam ceperunt [...]. (*Translatio Sancti Germani Parisiensis*’ 1883: 80).

The host of Northmen [...] came to Paris by a sudden journey on the blessed Saturday of Easter, and remained silent at night. When morning came, [...] they burst forth from their ships with a great assault, and, discovering the *civitas* of Paris – out of fear for them – empty and without its occupants, captured it [...]. (trans. author).

In their subsequent coverage of viking endeavour, the *AFont* point to the presence of a fleet on the distant River Dordogne in 848 — with Charles the Bald reportedly capturing nine of its ships. Although few contemporary authors seem to have been aware of this particular event — the *AFont* being the only extant witness to their capture — the encounter would have been part of a broader wave of viking activity across southern Aquitaine during the later 840s, which saw population centres like Saintes, Bordeaux, and Périgueux, as well as the silver mines of Melle, besieged and captured (Nelson 1991: 62, 65–55, 68; Pertz 1859: 486; Lewis 2021: 101–9). Despite the substantial impact of these regional expeditions, however, the *AFont* offer only a cursory remark on the seizure of Bordeaux — and the apprehension of its count, William (Chandler 2019: 119–20) — thereby underlining the

¹⁵ The viking leader Ragnar likewise features in several other contemporary Frankish sources, including the *Annales Xantenses* (*AX*), the *Translatio Sancti Germani*, and the *Miracula Sancti Richarii* (Cooijmans 2020: 167; McTurk 1976: 95).

selective and lacunar mechanisms through which contemporary news was received and reported by remote monastic record-keepers.

Afterwards, as part of the entry for the year 850, the *AFont's* attention is momentarily drawn northwards, to the Low Countries, where the author notes a viking force — led by the kinsmen Rorik (*Roricus*) and Godfrid (*Godefridus*) — to have been active on the River Waal, as well as more southerly in Flanders. The arrival of the viking *dux* Rorik, in particular, is substantiated by several other annalistic sources, which proclaim that he had previously commended himself to the Middle Frankish king Lothar, before either intentionally or involuntarily abandoning this allegiance (Reuter 1992: 30; Nelson 1991: 69). Having returned to the region in 850, Rorik is characterised as attacking communities along the Frisian coasts and rivers, prompting Lothar to receive him back into fealty and grant him the emporium of Dorestad and its surrounding territories in benefice (Cooijmans 172-173). These events seem to contradict the account offered by the *AFont*, however, which suggests — presumably from ignorance — that Rorik and his associates left these riverlands empty-handed.¹⁶ By contrast, word on the successive viking incursion into Flanders may have arrived directly from St Wandrille's own properties in Ternois (Laporte 1951: 85n49; Pradié 1999: 184). Whilst the *AFont* attribute this local activity to the same group, the *AB* clarify that [*c]eterorum [...] pars* — i.e. only a share of Rorik's original force — was involved (Waitz 1883: 38).¹⁷

The *AFont's* entry for the year 851 encompasses an extensive, months-long viking expedition across the Seine basin, whose detailed chronology suggests the annalist had multiple eyewitness accounts at his disposal — possibly including his own. According to the author, the campaign was coordinated by the same Asgeir who had already been active in the area in 841 (see above), and who had since taken part in besieging Bordeaux. Having entered the Seine in mid-October, the force in question is noted to have focused its initial efforts on the abbey of St Wandrille itself, attacking it, sacking it, and eventually — by January of 852 — burning it down completely. Whilst being the only known narrative to feature the attack (Lot 1913: xxx), some scholars have suggested that the *AFont* present a faithful account of these events, assuming a scattered community to have subsequently returned to Fontenelle to rebuild (e.g. Laporte 1953: 26; Poncelet 1987: 24). Others, instead, have proposed that little to no physical violence would have been perpetrated at all, with the abbey being ransomed rather than ruined, and its monks remaining in situ (Lot 1913: xxxv–xxxvi). As an intermediate option, it may be worth considering that the overall

¹⁶ Godfrid's presence in Frisia and Flanders is also briefly attested by the *AB* for the year 852, conceivably in reference to the same series of events, albeit without reference to Rorik (Nelson 1991: 75; Coupland 1998: 94n49).

¹⁷ In her translation of the *AB*, Janet Nelson (1992: 69) identifies these culprits only as 'another band', with no reference to their apparent affiliation with the viking group in Frisia.

damage inflicted on the abbey need not have been extensive enough to warrant a comprehensive rebuilding effort, with vikings exercising a degree of restraint in their actions, as demonstrated elsewhere in Francia (Cooijmans 2020: 113, 137). Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, the prolonged interval between the regional arrival of the fleet and the alleged arson of the abbey — eighty-nine days — suggests that the monastic complex itself may have been used as a base of operations for upstream and inland viking activity during these early months, including an overland march on Beauvais attested by the same entry. Regional parallels for such a monastic occupation are well-attested, and may be found in the viking encampments at St Maur-des-Fossés (861), Jumièges (862), and St Germain-des-Prés (886), among others (Nelson 1991: 96, 98; Dass 2007: 67).

As distinct as the *AFont's* initial descriptions of the viking presence of 851 are, this level of detail is mostly lacking for the latter months of this campaign — i.e. January to June of 852. Although the annalist claims to have deliberately withheld information for the sake of brevity — contending that no contemporary chronicler could have fully communicated these events — the noncommittal nature of the narrative suggests that an unfamiliarity with the finer points of this activity is actually to blame, perhaps attributable to an evacuation of the community of St Wandrille. The same succinctness is evident in the subsequent entry: having affirmed that a joint fleet of the *duces* Sigtrygg and Godfrid met with military opposition along the Seine in the autumn of 852, the record merely notes that the viking host spent the winter at Jeufosse before withdrawing in the month of June.¹⁸ When juxtaposing the annal with its counterpart from the *AB*, it seems that Charles the Bald had been able to strike a deal with Godfrid, the specifics of which are unclear, but which may have involved the conferral of a landed benefice in the area (Nelson 1991: 75–76; Reuter 1992: 30n3). Accordingly, Sigtrygg's assumed absence from the agreement suggests that his were the forces that still *diripiunt, cremant atque captivant* ('ravaged, burned and took captives') across the Seine region in 853 (Nelson 1991: 76; Lot 1970: 688–89).

In their lattermost entry, more than anywhere else, the *AFont* draw attention to the apparent readiness and resilience which with viking groups communicated, combined their resources, and conducted collaborative operations. Collating a chain of events for the years 855–59 (*recte* 856–58), this final record notes the return of *dux* Sigtrygg to the Seine, where he and his host established a riverside encampment near Pîtres. Here, after several weeks, they were joined by the forces of yet another viking leader, Bjorn, upon which their collective company made its way south into Perche, presumably doing so on foot and/or horseback. The following year, after another military encounter with Charles the Bald, the

¹⁸ During the 850s, the site of Jeufosse seems to have repeatedly hosted such encampments over the course of several years, its defensive attributes being alluded to by the *AB* in 856 (Nelson 1991: 82–83; Cooijmans 2020: 142, 221).

respective forces of Sigtrygg and Bjorn are seen to have relinquished their association and gone their separate ways; the former abandoning the region altogether, the latter establishing themselves *in quadam insula* ('on a certain island') in the Seine, identified by the *AB* as *Oscellus* — i.e. Oissel, just upstream of Rouen (Nelson 1991: 85, 87; Coupland 1998: 103). The entry concludes by pointing to the unsuccessful beleaguerment of said island by King Charles, whose efforts were undermined by a concurrent foray into western Francia by his brother, Louis the German. Overall, the condensed nature of this final entry led Laporte (1951: 67) to surmise that its author cut the narrative short due to the evacuation of the community of St Wandrille. However, as before, the chronicler in question — working from regional testimonies — may simply not have had a full timeline of events to hand, and was instead forced to collate the available information into a concise but conceivable narrative.

All in all, the *AFont* provide a palpable but mostly piecemeal impression of a regional viking phenomenon shaped and sustained by independently organised groups of mariners, whose movements and motivations coalesced and diverged in accordance with shifting strategies and circumstances. In reporting this activity, the annals strongly suggest that the acquisition of moveable wealth — and its associated social prestige — would have been foremost in the minds of these viking groups, as they sought to attain their affluence using a complementary repertoire of threat, force, discretion, and diplomacy. The opportunistic nature of these endeavours is underlined not only by their chosen targets — which included high-yield, low-risk monastic and commercial centres like Jumièges (841), Quentovic (842), and Saint-Germer-de-Fly (851) — but is equally evident in the strategic timing of their incursions, with some urban centres being besieged during periods of distinct defensive vulnerability. The episcopal town of Nantes (843), for example, was attacked shortly after the death of its associated count, Rainald, whilst both Paris (845) and Bordeaux (848) were targeted under cover of darkness. On a broader geopolitical level, viking campaigns are also seen to have coincided with episodes of domestic unrest and upheaval, which may have caused established military networks to be disrupted and reoriented. The earliest reported movements on the Seine (841), for instance, occurred at a time when the Frankish realm — as a whole — was in the throes of civil war, whilst the ensuing viking activity in Aquitaine (later 840s-early 850s) was set against a backdrop of ongoing political strife between Pippin II and Charles the Bald (Nelson 1992: 137, 144, 150–55).

At the same time, as the narrative unfolds, the *AFont* also allude to a viking presence that was becoming increasingly entrenched across western Francia, with several successive campaigns — some lasting weeks or months — attributed to the same companies and commanders. Most notable among these is the viking Asgeir, whose host, according to the annalist(s), had already been active around Francia for almost eleven years (841–851) before

mounting a nine-month campaign across the Seine and its adjoining areas. Even when accounting for the potential exaggeration and narrative infilling of such a claim, it nonetheless suggests that regionally active vikings were able to mobilise and maintain significant fleets and forces over extended periods of time — a feat corroborated by other contemporary authors (Cooijmans 2020: 120–23, 131–32). For all intents and purposes, the apparent expediency and endurance with which these viking groups were able to operate would have required them to be intimately familiar with the sociopolitical and economic dynamics of the Frankish realm. With this in mind, the long-term sustainability of any such viking presence would not have been rooted in rash, rampant acts of indiscriminate violence, but rather in forethought, forbearance, and far-reaching intelligence gathering.

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*Annales
Fontanellenses*

NOTES



This translation of the *Annales Fontanellenses* is presented in parallel to the normalised Latin edition from the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (Pertz 1829: 301–4).

Due to the anachronistic connotations of their modern English counterparts, a number of politico-administrative terms have been deliberately left untranslated. By and large, a *civitas* (pl. *civitates*) denotes the site of an episcopal seat, an *urbs* (pl. *urbes*) signifies a larger walled nucleus, and a *castrum* (pl. *castra*) represents a fortified enclosure in a more general sense. The titles of *dux* (pl. *duces*) and *princeps* (pl. *principes*) have likewise been left unchanged, as present-day English ‘duke’ and ‘prince’ misrepresent the ninth-century political status of such leaders.

In the interest of clarity, any Julian calendar notations – which were obtained by counting backwards from each month’s kalends, nones, and ides – have been substituted by their standardised (i.e. forward-counting) equivalent in the translation.

Anno dominicae incarnationis 841, indictione 4, quarto Idus Maii venerunt Nortmanni, Oscheri quoque dux. Pridie Idus Maii incensa est ab eis urbs Rothomagus; 17. Kal. Iunii regressi sunt a Rothomago; 9. Kal. Iunii Gemmeticum monasterium igne cremarunt; 8. Kal. Iunii redemptum est Fontinellense coenobium libris 6; 5. Kal. Iunii venerunt monachi de sancto Dionysio, redemeruntque captivos sexaginta octo libris viginti sex. Pridie Kal. Iunii pagani mare petierunt. Obviusque illis factus est Wulfardus regis homo cum populo; sed pagani minime ad pugnam se praeparaverunt. Eodem anno pridie Kal. Aprilis feria sexta Carolus rex in Sequanam transiit, ad locum hunc accessit. Pridie Nonas Aprilis cum fratribus locutus est. Ipso anno 7 Kal. Iulii bellum plus quam civile gestum fuit in territorio Autisiodorensi.

841: In the year of the incarnation of the Lord 841, the fourth indiction, on 12 May, the Northmen came with their *dux* Asgeir. On 14 May, the *urbs* of Rouen was set aflame by them; on 16 May, they withdrew from Rouen; on 24 May, they burned the monastery of Jumièges with fire; on 25 May, the monastic community of Fontenelle was ransomed for six pounds; on 28 May, monks came from St Denis, and ransomed sixty-eight captives for twenty-six pounds. On 31 May, the pagans made for the sea. And Wulfard, a man of the king,¹⁹ opposed them with a host of people, but the pagans were by no means prepared for battle. In the same year, on 31 March — a Friday — King Charles crossed the Seine and came to this place [i.e. Fontenelle]. On 4 April, he spoke with the brothers. In the same year, on 25 June, a war worse than a civil war was waged in the territory of Auxerre.²⁰

Eodem anno, regente huius coenobii Ioseph archiepiscopo, 4. Kal. Martii huc Domino miserante accessi. Deinde post annorum curricula expleta decem et novem propitio Christo diaconatus ordinem suscepi per manus venerabilis archiepiscopi Weniloni, anno verbi incarnati 861, indictione 9, 12. Kal. Octobris sabbato. Nec multo post obiit in Domino idem pontifex. Cui succedit venerandus Adelardus in pontificatu, per cuius manus sacrum gradum presbyteratus suscepi anno dominicae incarnationis 872, indictione 5, octavo Idus Martii, sabbato.

In the same year, when Archbishop Joseph governed this monastery,²¹ I came here through the mercy of the Lord on 26 February. Thereafter, following a period of nineteen years, I received, through Christ's favour, the office of deacon by the hands of the venerable Archbishop Wenilo, in the year of the incarnation of the Word 861, the ninth indiction, on 20 September – a Saturday. And not long thereafter, the same pontiff died in the Lord. The venerable Adelard succeeded him in the pontificate, by whose hands I took up the sacred position of priest in the year of the incarnation of the Lord 872, the fifth indiction, on 8 March – a Saturday.²²

¹⁹ The potential identity of this Wulfard is discussed in Laporte 1951: 74n4.

²⁰ A reference to the battle fought at Fontenoy (near Auxerre), a crucial theatre in the civil war between the surviving heirs of the recently deceased emperor, Louis the Pious (cf. Nelson 1991: 50–51; Reuter 1992: 19).

²¹ Believed to refer to Bishop Joseph of Ivrea, who would have acted as ephemeral abbot of St Wandrille both in c. 833–835 and 841 (Schäpers 2018: 366–67; Pradié 1999: 195, 230).

²² Both the shift in perspective and tangential nature of this paragraph suggest it to have been added at a later time, presumably as a marginal annotation which was then unwittingly incorporated into the body text (cf. note 7 above and 33 below).

Anno dominicae incarnationis 842, indictione 5. apparuit in coelo stella cometa a plaga occidentali, a septimo Idus Ianuarii usque die Idus Februarii dies 37. Kalendis Martii apparuerunt acies in coelo prima hora noctis, feria 4. Tertio Idus Martii feria secunda iterum apparuerunt acies in coelo hora noctis secunda horribiles a parte orientis in modum albi coloris, nigri, et rubei, sive viridis. Erant autem aliae maiores, aliae minores, ac sine intermissione aut occidebant, aut oriebantur. Inter orientem vero et occidentem claritas erat summa. Sed hae acies maxime totam plagam aquilonarum repleverunt. Inter occidentem vero et aquilonem apparuit in modum viae latissimae claritas quaedam usque prope medium coeli centrum ad meridiem quasi tendens. Perduravit autem usque mediam noctem. Et cum esset luna vigesima, tam mira claritas erat, ut intuentibus miraculo esset. Tertio Kalend. Aprilis ipso die coenae Domini antequam aurora finem daret, luna defectionem passa est, a summo incipiens. Clotharius de Aquis exiit. Guntbaldus hic erat 17. Kalend. Maii acies iterum in coelo isto visae sunt. Ipso anno 9. Kalend. Novembris feria tertia, hora noctis prima, terrae motus validus extitit, et perseveravit huius sonus per septem dies. Dabat autem mugitum aut hora diei prima aut nona, aut noctis mediae aut initio aurorae. Secuta est tussis validissima, de qua multi mortui sunt.

842: In the year of the incarnation of the Lord 842, the fifth indiction, a comet appeared in the sky from the west, between 7 January and 13 February — thirty-seven days [altogether].²³ On 1 March, rays of light appeared in the sky on the first hour of the night, on the fourth day of the week. Once more, on 13 March, the second day of the week, dreadful rays of light — white, black, and red or green in colour — appeared in the sky from the east on the second hour of the night. Some were greater, others smaller, and they appeared and disappeared without interruption.²⁴ Their brightness was certainly highest between the east and west. But these rays of light mostly filled up the entire northern region. Between the west and the north, some of the brightness appeared in the form of a very wide track, almost to the centre of the sky, as if directing itself southward. This lasted until the middle of the night. And on the twentieth [day of the] moon, the brightness was so extraordinary, that it would have been a miracle to those who beheld it. On 30 March, the day of the Lord's Supper, before dawn came to an end, the moon underwent an eclipse, starting from the top.²⁵ Lothar departed from Aachen. Guntbald was here,²⁶ and on 15 April, rays of light were once more seen in the sky. In the same year, on 24 October, the third day of the week, in the first hour of the night, a powerful earthquake occurred, and its sound lasted for seven days.²⁷ It produced a rumbling, either on the first or ninth hour of the day, either in the middle of the night or the break of dawn. It was followed by a very powerful coughing, on account of which a great number of people died.²⁸

²³ The sighting of this comet likewise features in the *AF*, *AX*, and Nithard's *Historiae* (Wozniak 2020: 128).

²⁴ This appears to be a description of the aurora borealis. The Latin term used to characterise the phenomenon, *acies*, also commonly refers to 'battle lines' or 'battle arrays', which the author may have deliberately sought to evoke in a metaphorical and/or prophetic sense (Wozniak 2020: 181–83; Scholz 1972: 86).

²⁵ The eclipse is likewise referred to by the *AF* (Reuter 1992: 21).

²⁶ Laporte (1951: 76–77) considers this clause to be a later interpolation.

²⁷ The *AB* confirm the occurrence of an earthquake in western Gaul during this year (Nelson 1991: 55).

²⁸ This seems to refer to a regional epidemic (cf. Wozniak 2020: 649, 676–77).

Anno 843 iterum terrae motus magnus, aurora surgente, 8. Idus Septembris. Item media nocte similiter. 7. Idus Septembris hora diei prima similiter. Ipso die hora secunda similiter. Eodem anno Nannetes urbem depopulati sunt Nortmanni, et Guntbardum episcopum martyrizaverunt. Eodem anno Reginoldus dux occisus fuit a Brittonibus.

843: In the year 843, on 6 September, another great earthquake [occurred] at the break of dawn, and again at midnight. Likewise, on 7 September, on the first hour of the day, as well as the second hour. In the same year, the Northmen laid waste to the *urbs* of Nantes, and martyred Bishop Gohard.²⁹ In the same year, *dux* Rainald was slain by the Bretons.³⁰

Anno 844. Quentawich portum miserabili clade devastaverunt Nortmanni.

844: The Northmen devastated the *portus* of Quentovic with lamentable carnage.

Anno 845. indictione 8. Ragneri dux Nortmannorum venit cum classe sua, et usque Parisius accessit, ac in vigilia sancti paschae, id est 5. Kalend. Aprilis, eandem urbem intravit.

845: The eighth indiction. Ragnar, *dux* of the Northmen, arrived with his fleet, came all the way to Paris, and on the vigil of Holy Easter, that is, on 28 March, entered that same *urbs*.

Anno 846. Franci Britanniam ingressi, propter difficultatem locorum et loca palustria, 10. Kal. Decembris commisso cum Brittonibus praelio, Brittones superiores effecti sunt.

846 [recte 845]: The Franks, having entered Brittany, met the Bretons in battle on 22 November; on account of the difficulty of the terrain and the marshlands, the Bretons were victorious.³¹

Anno 847. Ad Bacivum palatium perreximus pro quibusdam praediis. Ibi missi ad dominum regem venerunt, interitum Mangili Brittonis et sociorum eius nunciantes, qui a Gairfrido comite interfecti sunt. Ipso anno perreximus Bonolium pro praediis recipiendis. Ipso anno obiit dominus Adelardus archiepiscopus.

847: We proceeded to the palace at Baisieux on account of certain estates. There, messengers came to the lord king, announcing the death of the Breton Manguil and his associates, who were killed by Count Gairfrid.³² In the same year, we proceeded to Bonneuil to receive estates. That same year, the lord Archbishop Adelard died.³³

Anno 848. Carolus rex cum Francis Aquitaniam ingressus, super fluvium Dordonia novem naves

848: King Charles, having entered Aquitaine with the Franks, captured nine Danish ships on

²⁹ The attack on Nantes is attested by several other (semi-)contemporary authors (Cooijmans 2020: 137), and was purportedly perpetrated by *Wesfaldingi* — i.e. individuals originating from Vestfold (Garipzanov 2008: 135; Lewis 2021: 94–97).

³⁰ Another contemporary account of the death of Rainald is found in the *AB* (Nelson 1991: 55). For more details, see Smith 1992: 93–94.

³¹ The Battle of Ballon, a key engagement brought about by Charles' march into Brittany in support of regional factions opposing the rule of Nominoe (Smith 1992: 96, 120).

³² The identity of this Gairfrid is unknown, although he is hypothesised to have been a count of Nantes during the later 840s (Guillotel 1975: 18; Laporte 1951: 79n27).

³³ With no known record of a regional Bishop Adelard in office at this time, Laporte (1951: 66) has compellingly argued that this obituary note would have been part of the autobiographical interpolation in the 841 entry, and that a lack of marginal space on a verso in an early manuscript caused this final sentence to spill over to the adjacent recto (i.e. beside the 847 entry). Believing it to be an isolated statement, the copyist would have simply incorporated it into the entry for 847 rather than 841 (cf. note 22).

Danorum cepit, interfectis pyratis earum, in diebus quadragesimae. Eodem anno Nortmanni Burdegalim urbem ceperunt et ducem eiusdem Guilhelmum noctu. Ipso anno dominus rex Carolus iterum Aquitaniam ingressus est contra Pipinum, qui tyrannidem meditabatur. Eodem anno acies visae in caelo, 5. Kalend. Decembris media nocte. Ipso anno 6. Kalend. Ianuar. iterum acies terribiles visae sunt igneae inter aquilonem et orientem, et in media plaga orientali visuntur, aurora surgente. Gundebaldus episcopus obiit Nonis Ianuarii.

Anno 849. Paulus ordinatur episcopus in urbe Rothomago 8. Idus Ianuarii. Ipsis diebus gelu magno fluvius Sequana glacierumque densitate superveniente tegebatur, ita ut per eam quasi super pontem populus transiret. Eodem anno mense Ianuario Clotarius et dominus Carolus rex ad Peronam palatium accedunt, ibique iure amicitia sese constringentes, datis invicem muneribus, unusquisque in proprium sibi regnum ingressus est. Isto anno mense Martio cepit Vivianus comes Carolum, fratrem Pipini, qui ad auxilium fratri ferendum Aquitaniam destinabat, aliosque complices eius. Isto anno Wilhelmus, filius Bernardi ducis, Barcinonam urbem Hispaniae munitissimam cepit per dolum, expulso Aledranno, custode illius urbis et limitis Hispanici. Ipso namque tempore placitum habuit rex Carolus generale cum Francis in urbe Carnotensi. In quo loco Carolus praedicti Pipini frater tonsoratur, et in monasterio Corbeia continuo dirigitur. Inde disposito itinere Ligere alveo transmisso ad Lemovicam urbem accedit, occurrentibus sibi obviam principibus Aquitanorum, et cum summo favore suscipientibus. Inde recto itinere Tolosam rebellem aggreditur urbem, praemissis ante se

the River Dordogne during Lent, killing their pirates. In the same year, the Northmen took hold of the *urbs* of Bordeaux and its *dux*, William, at night.³⁴ That same year, the lord King Charles again entered Aquitaine against Pippin, who was planning acts of tyranny. In the same year, rays of light were seen in the sky on 27 November, at midnight. That year, on 27 December, frightful fiery rays of light were again seen between the north and east, and were beheld in the middle of the eastern sky, at the rise of dawn. Bishop Gundebald died on 5 January.

849: Paul was appointed bishop in the *urbs* of Rouen on 6 January. On the same day, the River Seine was covered with heavy frost and an increasingly large amount of ice, so that people could cross it as if over a bridge. In the same year, in the month of January, Lothar and the lord King Charles came to the palace at Péronne, and, binding themselves with oaths of friendship there, they presented gifts to one another, and each proceeded to his own kingdom. In this year, during the month of March, Count Vivian³⁵ seized Charles, the brother of Pippin, who intended to hasten to Aquitaine to aid his brother, as well as other accomplices of his. In this same year, William, the son of *dux* Bernard, seized Barcelona, a well-fortified *urbs* in Spain, through deceit, driving out Aledran, the custodian of that *urbs* and of the Spanish border. At the same time, King Charles held a general *placitum*³⁶ with the Franks in the *urbs* of Chartres. In this place, Charles, the brother of the aforementioned Pippin, was tonsured and immediately sent to the monastery of Corbie. From there, having arranged his journey and crossing the channel of the Loire, he [i.e. the king] came to the *urbs* of Limoges; the *principes*

³⁴ William, son of Bernard of Septimania, had been count of Bordeaux and *dux* of Gascony since 845 (Chandler 2019: 118–20).

³⁵ Count Vivian of Tours, lay abbot of St Martin, who was killed during the Battle of Jengland in 851 (MacLean 2009: 136n63; Guillotel 1975: 25–26; cf. note 45).

³⁶ A *placitum* (pl. *placita*) represents a formal assembly at which military and legislative matters were discussed, generally presided over by a monarch or representative thereof.

quibusdam primoribus populi sui, qui eandem obsiderent urbem. In qua obsidione commissa est porta quae vocatur Narbonensis, venerabili viro Heriberto abbati Fontinellensis monasterii, simulque Odoni viro illustri, ad custodiendum. Homines quoque Heriberti abbatis, iniecto igne, praedictam portam igni cremaverunt maxima ex parte. Quo metu custos eiusdem urbis, Fridolo nomine, in crastino in deditionem venit; datisque sacramentis, post rege urbem ingresso reddita est illi civitas ad custodiendum. Inde dominus rex Carolus ad Bituricas civitatem mense Decembri venit. Episcopi in Parisio synodum generalem tenuerunt. Autumnale tempus imbribus inundantissimum fuit. Tertio Nonas Ianuar. fulgura et tonitrua extiterunt, pluviae quoque largissimae. In mense Febr. dominus rex Carolus de Aquitania regressus est. Et Aquitanici promissam fidem fefellerunt, et iterum Pippino se coniunxerunt. Nomenoius, tyrannus Brittonum, ad Andegavis urbem accessit, et Lamberto comiti reddita est marka. Isembardus, filius Warini, et Aledrannus per dolum pacis fictae capti sunt a Wilhelmo, invasore urbis Barcinonae. Sed non multo post isdem Wilhelmus bellum contra nostros instaurans, victus est, amissa infidelium copia, fugaque arrepta, dum Barcinonae se recipi posse confideret, factione Aledranni et quorundam Gothorum capitalem subiit poenam; sicque filius iniquitatis periiit.

of Aquitaine went to meet him and received him with the greatest favour. From there, he advanced directly to the rebellious *urbs* of Toulouse, having sent some of his leading people ahead of him to besiege the same *urbs*. During the siege, the gate which is called ‘Narbonnaise’³⁷ was entrusted to the venerable Herbert, abbot of the monastery of Fontenelle, as well as the illustrious Odo, to guard. And the men of Abbot Herbert, setting fire to it, burned down most of the aforementioned gate. Out of fear, the custodian of the same *urbs*, named Fredelo, surrendered on the next day, and, once oaths were given, the *civitas* was returned into his protection after the king entered the *urbs*. From there, the lord King Charles came to the *civitas* of Bourges in the month of December. The bishops held a general synod in Paris. Autumn overflowed with heavy rains. On 3 January, there was lightning and thunder, as well as an abundance of rain. In the month of February, the lord King Charles returned from Aquitaine. And the Aquitanians broke their oath of fidelity, and again united with Pippin. Nominoe, tyrant of the Bretons, came to the *urbs* of Angers, and the [Breton] march was restored to Count Lambert. Isembard, son of Warin, and Aledran were captured through the guile of a feigned peace by William, the invader of the *urbs* of Barcelona. But not long afterwards, the same William, renewing his war against our people, was defeated; having lost his army of faithless ones³⁸ and seeking to escape, he was put to death by the adherents of Aledran and certain Goths when he believed to be able to retreat to Barcelona. And so perished the son of wickedness.³⁹

Anno 850. Carolus placitum in Vermeria palatio tenuit in mense Iunio. Ibi ad eum legati venerunt

850: Charles held a *placitum* in the palace of Verberie in the month of June. There, legates of

³⁷ The principal southern gate, facing the road to Narbonne (Fauré 1999: 50).

³⁸ The author’s use of *infideles* lends itself to multiple interpretations, possibly by design. Although perhaps simply referring to the host’s disloyalty to king Charles the Bald, it might also bear upon the notion that William had been aided by Muslim forces from the Córdoba emirate during his campaign (Chandler 2019: 121; Laporte 1951: 82–83).

³⁹ This phrasing reflects a common scriptural formula (e.g. II Samuel 7.10; Psalms 89.22; Hosea 10.9).

Induonis et Mitionis ducum Naverrorum, dona afferentes. Paceque petita et impetrata, reversi sunt. Lambertus comes et Warnarius, frater eius, tyrannidem meditantés, a fide defecerunt, et Nomenoio tyranno Brittonum se coniunxerunt. Sed non multo post Warnerius a Gausberto comite captus est, regique praesentatus. Rex Carolus cum exercitu usque ad Redonas oppidum pervenit, ibique custodiam disposuit. Sed eo ab urbe recedente, Nomenoius et Lambertus cum fidelium copia eandem urbem oppugnare moliti sunt. Quo metu territi custodes nostri, in deditionem venerunt, in Britanniamque exiliati sunt. Dum haec in Britannicis finibus geruntur, classis Danorum in regnum Clotharii appulit, ducibus Rorico et Godefrido. Nec mora, de Walo fluvio recedentes absque ulla praeda, Flandrensem adorsi regionem, variis depraedationibus populati sunt. Ipsis diebus Amalricus comes et alii plures a Nomenoio, duce Brittonum, et Lantberto tyranno in Nannetis urbe capiuntur. Indeque ad Cinomannis cum indicibili furia pervenerunt, Lantberto tyranno proditore [...] haec cooperante. Seniores vero capti in Britanniam directi sunt, reliquis populis inermibus reversis.

Induo and Mitio, *duces* of the Navarrese, came to him, bearing gifts. And having requested⁴⁰ and procured peace, they returned. Count Lambert and his brother Warner, planning acts of tyranny, abandoned their loyalties, and they joined forces with Nominoe, tyrant of the Bretons.⁴¹ But not long afterwards, Warner was captured by Count Gauzbert, and brought before the king.⁴² King Charles, with his army, came up to the *oppidum* of Redon, and placed a garrison there. But when he withdrew from the *urbs*, Nominoe and Lambert endeavoured to attack the same *urbs* with an abundance of followers. Terrified with fear, our guards surrendered and were taken to Brittany. As these events took place on the border of Brittany, a fleet of Danes landed in the kingdom of Lothar with their *duces* Rorik and Godfrid. Withdrawing from the River Waal without delay and without any spoils, they set out to the region of Flanders, and ravaged it through various plunderings. In those same days, Count Amalric and many others were captured in the *urbs* of Nantes by Nominoe, *dux* of the Bretons, and by the tyrant Lambert. And from there, they came to Le Mans with unspeakable fury [...] supported by the tyrant and traitor Lambert. Its nobles were captured and sent to Brittany, the rest of its defenceless people were returned.

Anno 851. indictione 14. Nomenoius, dux Brittonum, divino iudicio malae intentioni finem dedit, sicque in finibus Francorum mortuus est. Sed nec sic Lantbertus ad fidem flexus est, sed propriam gentem in qua natus est, Brittones cohortans, insecutus est infeliciter, non tamen sine suorum hominum ac Brittonum damno. Isto

851: The fourteenth indiction. Nominoe, *dux* of the Bretons, by divine judgement, put an end to his ill intentions, and so passed away on the borders of the Franks. But not even this returned Lambert to loyalty; exhorting the Bretons, he even shamefully persecuted his own people, from whom he was born, but not without injury to his

⁴⁰ The word *petita*, which is absent from the Brussels manuscript (fol. 145^v), was conjecturally provided by Pertz (1829: 303n19).

⁴¹ Further details on Lambert's political career may be found in Cassard 1986: 312–19; Smith 1992: 92–100.

⁴² Count Gauzbert of Maine, who is differentiated from two other Gauzberts within these annals: 'the young Gauzbert' and 'the youngest Gauzbert', both featuring in the 851 entry. The relationship between the three individuals — if any — is unclear (Nelson 1991: 74, 1992: 172; Smith 1992: 99), although Laporte (1951: 84n46) surmised them to be father, son, and grandson.

⁴³ For this empty space in the Brussels manuscript (fol. 146^r), Pertz (1829: 303n21) proposed *quam maxime*, 'as much as possible', whilst Laporte (1951: 85) suggested *suae gentis* 'of his people'.

anno placitum magnum et generale factum est a tribus gloriosissimis fratribus, Clothario, Carolo, et Ludovico, magnis regibus, in loco quodam iuxta flumen Mosam. Inde cum pace reversus rex Carolus, placitum suum in Rauziaco tenuit, et dona annua suscepit. Inde in Britanniam iter suum indixit. Commissoque cum Brittonibus bello, fugaci more suorum plurimi Franci perierunt, nobiles, comites et duces, seu reliqua manus. Inter quos Gausbertus iuuenis, necnon et Hilmeradus comes palatii, et alii quamplures; multique capti Britanniam perducti sunt. Paceque cum Respogio filio Nomenoi, tyranno Brittonum, assecurata, ad proprias regni sedes Carolus rex reversus est. Eodem tempore classis Nortmannorum fluvium Sequanam ingressa est ipso die tertio Idus Octobris, duce Hoseri, qui aliquot ante annos Rothomagum urbem depopularat ac incendio cremarat, id est anno dominicae incarnationis 841, et per annos undecim multas regiones latrocinando occuparat. Inter quas et urbem Burdegalim munitissimam, caput regionis Novempopulanae, de qua tunc progressus fuerat,

own men and the Bretons. In the same year, a great general *placitum* was held by the three most renowned brothers Lothar, Charles, and Louis, great kings all, in a certain place near the River Meuse. King Charles, having returned from there in peace, held his *placitum* in Roucy, and received his annual *dona*.⁴⁴ Thereafter, he proclaimed his march to Brittany. And, having engaged in battle with the Bretons, many Franks — nobles, counts, *duces*, and the rest of the host — perished due to their habit of fleeing.⁴⁵ Among them was the young Gauzbert, as well as Hilmerad, count of the palace, and numerous others; and many captives were led away to Brittany. And having established peace with Erispoe — son of Nominoe, tyrant of the Bretons — King Charles returned to his seat in his kingdom. At the same time, on 13 October, a fleet of the Northmen entered the River Seine under their *dux* Asgeir, who, several years before, laid waste to the *urbs* of Rouen and set fire to it — that is, in the year of the incarnation of the Lord 841 — and for eleven years had occupied many regions to plunder them. Among them the well-defended *urbs* of Bordeaux, capital of the region of Novempopulania, from which he had then advanced,

historiam in te meorumque infelicitatis [...].

[Fragment, possible interpolation. Here interpreted as 'a story of my misfortunes and those of my community'].⁴⁶

Primitus Fontinellam monasterium aggressi, cuncta eius depopularunt; ad extremum etiam post dies ingressus sui Sequanam 89. ipso die 5. Idus Ianuarii ad solum usque cremaverunt, cum

At first, having attacked the monastery of Fontenelle, they devastated all of it; in the end, eighty-nine days after their entry into the Seine, on 9 January, they burned it to the ground, after

⁴⁴ Formalised, customary gifts — usually horses — bestowed by elites to the king (Curta 2006: 687–88).

⁴⁵ The Battle of Jengland, a decisive Breton victory, fought from 22 August 851 (Smith 1992: 99; Halsall 2003: 203–4). The reference to fleeing is ambiguous. Although possibly alluding to cowardice on the part of the Franks, it might also pertain to the military strategy of feigned retreat employed by the Bretons (MacLean 2009: 137; Leyser 1982: 27–28).

⁴⁶ As above (cf. note 22), the fragment may represent a marginal note — commenting on subsequent viking activity on the Seine — which was inadvertently incorporated into the main body text. Although Pertz (1829: 303) proposed that *in te* should be read as *vite*, Laporte (1951: 86n56) suggested *meae*, reinforcing the notion of the phrase having been adapted from St Jerome's letter 22 to Eustochium (*Referam tibi meae infelicitatis historiam*, 'Let me recount for you my own sad story', trans. Williams 2014: 54).

stetisset a primo aedificationis suae die ducentis octodecim annis, mense uno, et dies tredecim. Belloacus interea urbem cremarunt, et Flaviacum monasterium. De qua cum reverterentur, in loco nuncupato Wardera a Francis excepti, plurimi interfecti sunt, reliqui silvis se occuluerunt; sicque noctu aliqui ad naves reversi sunt. Fuerunt autem in Sequana a tertio Idus Octobris usque Nonis Iunii dies ducentos octoginta septem. Sicque onustis navibus ad Burdegalim reversi sunt. Testantur regiones Sequanae adiacentes, quia ex quo gentes esse coeperunt, nunquam tale exterminium in his territoriis auditum est. Tanta enim egerunt, quanta nemo prudentium cronographorum enarrare sufficeret; idcirco multa reliqui, quia sub brevitate narrare disposui. Ipso tempore Lantbertus a Gausberto iuvenculo interimitur, et frater eius Warnarius iussu regis capitalem excepit poenam.

Anno 852. classis Sydroc et Godefridi ducum Danorum 7. Idus Octobris Sequanam ingreditur, et usque Augustudunas accedit. Contra quos Clotharius et Carolus reges gloriosi obsidiones ponunt. Sed Nortmanni aqua freti, deputatam sibi hiemem exegerunt in loco qui vocatur Ghivoldi fossa; et in mense Iunio recedunt, mare petentes.

Anno 855. indictione 3. ipso die 15. Kalend. Augusti, maxima classis Danorum fluvium Sequanae occupat, duce item Sydroc, et usque Pistis castrum, quod olim Petremamulum vocabatur, venire contendunt. Deinde post dies 33, id est 14. Kalend. Septembris, Beruo Nortmannus cum valida classe ingressus est. Deinde iunctis viribus, usque Particum saltum plurimam stragem ac depopulationem fecerunt.

it had stood for 280 years, one month, and thirteen days since the day of its original construction. In the meantime, they burned the *urbs* of Beauvais, and the monastery of Saint-Germer-de-Fly. As they returned from there, they were intercepted by the Franks in a place called Vardes; a great number was slain, the rest hid themselves in the woods, and thus some returned to their ships at night. But they were on the Seine from 13 October until 5 June, for 287 days. And thus they returned to Bordeaux with their ships filled. The regions adjoining the Seine bear witness that — ever since peoples came to be⁴⁷ — such destruction had never been heard of in these territories. They had done so much that no skilled chronicler could completely list it, and I have omitted much, because I wanted to tell a brief story. At the same time, Lambert was killed by the youngest Gauzbert, and his brother Warner, by order of the king, received capital punishment.

852: The fleet of Sigtrygg and Godfrid, *duces* of the Danes, entered the Seine on 9 October, and came all the way up to *Augustudunas*.⁴⁸ The glorious Kings Lothar and Charles set up blockades against them. But the Northmen, relying on the water, spent the winter – as had been granted them – in a place which is called Jeufosse; and they withdrew in the month of June, making for the sea.

855 [recte 856]: The third indiction. On 18 July, a very large Danish fleet occupied the River Seine, likewise under *dux* Sigtrygg, and came as far as the *castrum* of Pîtres, which was once called *Petramamulum*. Then, after thirty-three days, that is, on 19 August, the Northman Bjorn arrived with a powerful fleet. Thereafter, having united their forces, they caused a great deal of carnage and destruction as far as the forest of

⁴⁷ This phrasing is analogous to that of Daniel 12.1, dealing with eschatological prophecy.

⁴⁸ Although *Augustudunas* — whose location is undetermined — has been variously speculated to represent Rouen, Les Damps, and Les Andelys (Lair 1897: 6n4; Coupland 1998: 94), the circumstances of the blockade suggest the site to have been further upstream, beyond Jeufosse (Laporte 1951: 89n63).

Quo in loco Carolus rex eis cum exercitu occurrens, maxima eos strage percussit. Sequenti anno Sydroc egreditur de fluvio. Berno in quadam insula castrum aedificat, ubi a Carolo rege navali obsidione obsessus est anno 859; sed factione Ludovici fratris et quorundam seditiosorum ab eo repellitur.

Perche. In this place, King Charles and his army met up with them, and inflicted a great defeat upon them. The following year [856, recte 857], Sigtrygg exited the river. Bjorn raised a *castrum* on a certain island, where he was hemmed in by King Charles with a naval blockade in the year 859 [recte 858]; but the actions of his brother Louis and of other seditious parties drove him away from there.

APPENDIX: MANUSCRIPT

This section reproduces folios 144^r-146^v of Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, MS 7814-22, representing the *Annales Fontanellenses* (see pages viii-ix for discussion). A more detailed description of the seventeenth-century codex itself is found in Van Den Gheyn 1906: 89 (no. 3722).

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post dno ingressus sui Orquana 89 ipso die quinto dno Januarij
 ad solam usq; remanere ut, cum stetit a primo adificatione
 sue die durabit ortodetm amio mensibus et diebus tandem.
 Bellecaris interea vrbem reuocant et flammam pugnatiuam
 Orquana riu inuictibatur in loco nuptiato buardiza a franco de
 riph plurimij inuicti fut, reliquid solus se struierat, serq; portu
 aliqui ad nauis nauis fut. fuit autem in Orquana a tertio
 dno ortodetm usq; nono lunij die durabit ortodetm septem. Erat
 onustis nauibus ad Orquana nauis fut. (Cestentur religiose
 Orquana ad nauis, quia eo ipso pntis esse reperit in qua tale
 est terminu in his seruatorib; auditu est. tanta enim eorum, qua
 fa nemo pcedentiu chronographor; narrare possent. Porro
 multa reliqui, quia sub breuitate narrare disposui.
 Ipso tempore Lambertus a Gansbergo iuniorulo imperatoris
 et frater eius Barnardus in suu regis capitulum exierit pnuam.
 Anno octingentesimo quinquagesimo secundo classis
 Eddor et Eddoford; dno Danoru, sexto dno ortodetm
 Orquana ingreditur. et usq; Augustidunab; ardit. Cestentur
 contra quos Glotharid; et Carolus regis glouch; obsidione ponit
 sed Nortman; aqua festi deputata sibi hibernij regit in loco
 vocatur Eddoford; fossa. et in nubiis hinc ardent mare potu
 Anno octingentesimo quinquagesimo quinto indictione
 ipso die dno quinto kalendas Augusti maxima classis Danoru
 flumina Orquana occupat dno itaq; Eddor. et usq; usq; ralis
 quod olim pthema mulu vocabatur vniue; ralis. Deinde per
 dies tringinta hinc, id est dno quarto kalendas de septimbris
 dno Nortman; riu valida classe ingressus est. Deinde inuictis vniue;
 usque partem saltum plurima stragim ar depopulationem fut
 runt. Quo in loco Carolus rex h; riu regit struere magis
 ma eos strage perussit. Orquana dno Eddor; gradit
 de flumina. dno in quadam insula castrum edificat. vbi a
 Carolo regis nauali obsidione obsessus est.
 Anno octingentesimo quinquagesimo nono, sed factione Ludo
 uigi fratris et quorundam hibernor; ab eo loco repellitur.

Figure 7. Brussels, KBR, MS 7814-22, fol. 146v.

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The ninth-century *Annales Fontanellenses* are a concise set of monastic annals composed by the community of St Wandrille, situated along the lower reaches of the river Seine. Covering the 840s and 850s, their contents are concerned with a relatively brief but highly tumultuous period in the history of the Frankish realm, representing an eclectic range of reports on meteorological phenomena, politico-military proceedings, and the movements of viking hosts across the western Frankish kingdom. Considering the composition and content of the annals in their institutional and historiographical context, the present work furnishes the first annotated English translation of this often-overlooked text.