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THE REIGN OF ARNULF II, COUNT OF FLANDERS,
AND ITS AFTERMATH

The scope for dispute about what went on in Flanders between about 960 and about 995 is large, because the sources, adequate for the first half of the tenth century, become sparse. Flodoard, the most reliable of guides, is replaced by the melodramatic Richer; Folcuin of St. Bertin ceases; and the few charters that survive from these years seem relatively uninformative. The only gains are the unreliable Dudo of St. Quentin, and the confused stories relating to the translation of the relics of St. Valéry and St. Richard. From these snippets it has been conventional since the early thirteenth century¹ to depict the reign of Arnulf II as one of sharp political decline in Flanders, with the old enemies of the principality, both internal and external, making substantial gains at the expense of the weak count. Yet by 995 Flanders had regained its earlier frontiers and was, if anything, stronger than ever. Admittedly the count had lost his apparent monopoly of power within the county; but his new associates in the comital dignity showed no sign of the lawlessness earlier historians took it for granted must accompany their appearance. And beyond the frontiers striking losses had even more strikingly been regained. This turnaround in fortune automatically arouses suspicions. Has the gap in evidence between two periods of prosperity been correctly filled in? Was there really fragmentation, followed by resumption? Or have historians been the victims of an optical illusion?

The last years of Arnulf I, Arnulf the Great to the Flemish, were remarkable for the rapprochement he reached with King Lothaire. After a lifetime of exploiting the Carolingian kings' difficulties so that he could consolidate his gains in Ternois and Ostrevant, Arnulf finally reversed his policies. From 954 onwards he sought friendship, and in 962 he fell at his king's feet, rendering up all his land to him on condition that he should retain it for his own lifetime². Flodoard's description of this has been read as proof of the count's self-abasement; but it does not have to be understood in this way. Since 883, when King Carloman created a marcher lordship in Artois thereby tacitly abandoning royal control over the land to the north of the Artois hills³, Baldwin II and his son had built up their formidable county round Bruges, Ghent, St. Omer and Rysel without benefit of royal approbation. Therefore when in 962 Arnulf recognized Lothaire's lordship over this land, he was at the same time receiving from Lothaire formal acceptance of the fact that what had happened in

1 *Comes autem Flandriae Arnulfus secundus molliter et debiliter rexit annis 24*, Johannis Longi chronica sancti Bertini, MGH SS XXV, p. 778; F. GANSHOF, *La Flandre sous les premiers comtes*, Brussels 1964, p. 30.

2 *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. P. LAUER, Paris 1906, p. 152.

3 See P. GRIERSON, *La maison d'Evrard de Frioul et les origines du comté de Flandre*, in: *Revue du Nord* 24 (1938) p. 241-266.

Flanders north of Artois was irreversible. The principality created through the conquests of Baldwin II and Arnulf I acquired legitimacy in this way. Arnulf's prostration before the king symbolized, as was so often the case, the striking of a bargain between near-equals⁴.

But even interpreted like this, Arnulf's homage was a dramatic event. What had led the once tough and assertive count to Lothaire's court? The reason for his journey was that his son Baldwin III, whom he had associated with him as Count of Flanders in 958, had died of pox on 1 January, 962. This bitter blow to an ageing and sick father (he is sometimes referred to in his declining years as Arnulf the Lame) raised acutely the question of what would happen on his own death. Baldwin III had left a young son, by name Arnulf, as heir to the county. But since the boy was likely to be a minor for some years after succeeding, he needed strong family support to sustain him. And Flodoard tells us that there was serious trouble in Arnulf's family: *Rex Lotharius cum Arnulfo principe locutus, pacem fecit inter ipsum et nepotem ipsius omonimum eius; quem infensum hic comes habebat ob necem fratris eiusdem, quem de infidelitate sua deprehensum idem comes interimi fecerat*⁵.

It seems that Arnulf's enemy had been his nephew, son of his brother Adalulf on whom Baldwin II had conferred Boulogne and Ternois⁶, lands which Arnulf had taken into his own control on Adalulf's death in 933. At some point, perhaps when Baldwin III died, the unnamed nephew revolted against his uncle in hope of regaining his patrimony, and was killed for his disloyalty. But this violent action made matters worse: the victim's younger brother Arnulf began a feud against his uncle to avenge the death. The aged Count of Flanders, by now so exhausted that peace had become imperative, called on King Lothaire to arbitrate between the parties. Since the younger Arnulf, whom Flodoard refers to in the passage above as *hic comes*, is later known as Count Arnulf of Boulogne⁷, Lothaire probably at this point persuaded Arnulf the Great to give his nephew his father's land and the appropriate title, in return for recognition of Baldwin III's son's right as heir to Flanders. The concession of Boulogne and Ternois to Arnulf has conventionally been seen⁸ as the first step in the disintegration of the county of Flanders, in that it created on Flemish soil a comital family rivalling the count's own. Yet it constituted on the one hand a reversion to what Baldwin II had intended; and on the other a gesture that brought peace and longlasting amity between the two branches of the family. Far from creating an aristocratic opposition to comital power, it appeased a feud based on genuine grievance. In his old age Arnulf I finally saw the wisdom

4 For similar kinds of ceremonies, see J.-F. LEMARIGNIER, *Recherches sur l'hommage en marche et les frontières féodales*, Lille 1945, p. 122–123.

5 Flodoard (see n. 2) p. 152.

6 See most recently A. C. F. KOCH, in: *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, vol. I, Middelleeuwen, Haarlem 1981, p. 369.

7 J. DHONDT, *Recherches sur l'histoire du Boulonnais et de l'Artois au IX^e et X^e siècle*, in: *Memoires de l'Académie d'Arras*, 4th series, 1–2 (1941) p. 9–13. It took historians a considerable time to come to the by now generally held view that Adalulf's son was the man at issue, since Adalulf was thought to have died childless. This is now regarded as a mistake; see F. LOT, *Les derniers Carolingiens. Lothaire, Louis V, Charles de Lorraine, 954–991*, Paris 1891, p. 43, n. 1 (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études).

8 GANSHOF (see n. 1) p. 27–29.

exemplified by the Aristotelian king Theopompus, who shared power in order to strengthen his own position.

This dramatic reconciliation was followed by an agreement between the king, the count of Flanders and the count of Boulogne as to what should take place on Arnulf the Great's death. If its terms may be inferred from the actual events of 965, Lothaire undertook to guarantee, by force if need be, the succession to the county of Flanders for Baldwin III's young son. For his pains the king was to be rewarded with Artois and Douai as far as the Lys, the land that Baldwin II and Arnulf the Great had seized from with so much difficulty from his father and grandfather; further south Ponthieu and Amiénois were also to return to his lordship. This substantial gain for the crown, which effectively turned the clock back to about 900 on the southern border of Flanders, was the price Arnulf had to pay to avoid a war of succession within the principality. To the same end, Arnulf of Boulogne agreed to recognize Arnulf II in return for secure possession of his father's lands, and also surrendered all claims to be his cousin's regent to Baldwin Baldzo, who was either his illegitimate half-brother or Arnulf the Great's first cousin⁹. This appointment was perhaps rather unexpected. Naturally the aged Arnulf could not be prevailed on to favour his legitimate nephew, even after peace had been made between them. But he had a son-in-law, Count Thierry II of Westfriesland, who was a closer relative, and who did in practice fulfill the role of regent in the northern parts of Flanders, particularly around Ghent. But if Baldwin Baldzo is indeed to be identified with the Bauces celebrated in the poem ›Anseis fils de Girbert‹, he clearly had personal qualities that made him remarkable among his contemporaries, and these doubtless explained Arnulf's choice¹⁰.

So under the king's influence the family rift was healed and the prospect of their aged ruler's death became less alarming for the Flemish. Nevertheless the years 962 to 965 were not easy ones. Arnulf, who had been so proud and fierce in his heyday, became more dependent on Lothaire. The quarrel between Richard duke of Normandy and Thibaud count of Chartres which had flared up in 960, and in which Baldwin III had vigorously supported Thibaud, was increasingly harmful to Flanders, as Richard's Viking allies ravaged all about. In 964, Arnulf besought Lothaire to confirm the immunities he had granted for the great monastery of St. Peter's, Ghent, ›as a defence against the arrows of the disturbance to come‹¹¹. Not until peace was

9 The first hypothesis is supported by a late tenth century annotation to a charter of Lothaire, see F. LOT and L. HALPHEN, *Recueil des Actes de Lothaire et de Louis V*, Paris 1906, p. 58. The alternative, based on the testimony of the *Annales Blandinienses*, ed. P. GRIERSON, *Les annales de Saint Pierre de Gand et de Saint Amand*, Brussels 1937, p. 21, is that he was a grandson of Baldwin I through his younger son Rudolph.

10 It is possible that Baldwin Baldzo had a particular claim on Arnulf's loyalty: he is sometimes identified with one of those charged by Arnulf to murder William Longsword in 942. But the proof of this – a sixteenth-century witness's allegation that his tombstone bore this information – is weak (P. MEYER and A. LONGNON, *Raoul de Cambrai. Chanson de Geste*, Paris 1882, p. XIX–XX, note 4). His nickname ›Bauce‹ may have been confused with the ›Fauce‹ referred to in the ›Roman de Rou‹ as one of William's murderers; see: *L'Art de vérifier les dates, les faits historiques, des chartes, des chroniques, et autres anciens monumens, depuis la naissance de notre seigneur*, 3rd. ed. rev., F. CLÉMENT, vol. II, Paris 1784, p. 751.

11 *Diplomata Belgica ante annum millesimum centesimum scripta*, vol. I, eds. M. GYSSELING and A. C. F. KOCH, 1950, p. 156.

made between Richard and Thibaud in 966, and Richard's Danes were sent home, did security return¹².

On 27 March 965¹³, Arnulf the Great died. As soon as he heard the news, King Lothaire marched in to southern Flanders, to ensure the child count's safe succession and to take possession of the territories that had been promised to him. The warlike character of the king's manoeuvre, recorded in a wide range of chronicles¹⁴, suggests he expected considerable opposition. But as soon as it became clear that Arnulf of Boulogne and Thierry of Westfriesland had accepted Arnulf's will, Lothaire halted his troops. He took over Artois and Douai, with the great monasteries of St. Vaast and St. Amand¹⁵. At the same time he probably handed over Ponthieu to Duke Hugh Capet, his ally, and Amiens to Count Gauthier¹⁶. The king then had to depart. But in order to maintain a royal presence he left his mother Gerberga and younger brother Charles in Artois. During her stay, Gerberga granted lands within imperial territory to St. Peter's, Ghent, for the soul of Arnulf I¹⁷, a generous gesture to a one-time enemy; and after his return Lothaire in charters of 966 made much of his blood relationship both with Arnulf II and with Baldwin Baldzo¹⁸. These actions indicate that for about eighteen months after the count of Flanders' death the French royal family did what it could to bolster the new regime in the province. Arnulf the Great had been wise to recognize royal overlordship.

Arnulf II's reign therefore began quite propitiously; and it is the aim of this article to argue that it continued thus, that historians have been misguided in seeing it as a period of great weakness for Flanders. The most influential account, that of Jan Dhondt, which was written in 1943, reflects to some degree the circumstances of its writing. The self-seeking Dhondt took for granted among all Flanders' neighbours caused him to glory in the military feats of Arnulf I and Baldwin IV while mistrusting the peaceful Arnulf II's efficacy as a ruler. However he did have evidence which appeared to support the thesis that Flanders had disintegrated during the years 960 to 988, in the charter of 1st April 988, by which Arnulf's widow and son carried out the dead count's last wishes. Since this was sealed by five counts, Dhondt saw proof here that the count of Flanders no longer monopolized power within the county as Baldwin II and Arnulf the Great had done¹⁹. Behind this deduction there lies the assumption that a comital title necessarily implies comital office; if Thierry II of

12 Hugh of Fleury, *Historia modernorum regum Francorum*, MGH SS IX, p. 384.

13 Although the *Annales Blandinienses* (see n. 9) p. 20 and note 34 states it occurred in 964, it is now clear that Flodoard (see n. 2) p. 156 must be right in placing it in 965, because Arnoul signed a charter in October 964, see eds. GYSSELING and KOCH (see n. 11) p. 157-158.

14 See LOT (see n. 7) p. 46-48.

15 H. PLATELLE, *Le Temporel de l'abbaye de Saint-Amand des origines à 1340*, Paris 1940, p. 117. For this region see D. LOHRMANN, *Mühlenbau, Schiffahrt und Flußumleitungen im Süden der Grafschaft Flandern-Artois (10.-11. Jahrhundert)*, in: *Francia* 12 (1984) p. 149-192.

16 See GANSHOF (see n. 1) p. 28; P. GRIERSON, *L'origine des comtes d'Amiens, Valois et Vexin*, in: *Le Moyen Age* 3rd series, 10 (1939) p. 118.

17 MGH *Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae*, t. I, pars secunda, p. 413, no. 317.

18 See eds. GYSSELING and KOCH (see n. 11) p. 160-163, *Baldwinus noster eiusque consanguineus, nutriusque Arnulfi pueri filii Baldwini filii Arnulfi*.

19 J. DHONDT, *De crisis van het grafelijk Gezag in Vlaanderen na den Dood van Arnulf den Erste*, in: *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis en de Oudhondkunde*, 1943, p. 68; GYSSELING and KOCH (see n. 11) p. 179, no. 71.

Westfriesland's son was referred to as Count Arnulf, he must have had a county – presumably Ghent – over which he ruled; likewise Count Artold must already have been in charge of Guines. It would follow inevitably that the county of Flanders had been seriously reduced in size by these new accumulations of political rights within its ancient borders. But this chain of argument is by no means uncontroversial. Dhondt's belief that Ghent was a county in Arnulf II's reign has often been questioned²⁰; and the emergence of the county of Guines is regarded by others as an eleventh-century phenomenon²¹. Arnulf and Artold probably owed their comital titles to their close relationship with their ruler's family, rather than to possession of counties²². Furthermore, as we have seen, although Boulogne and Ternois were separate inheritances by 988, they owed their independence to the will of Baldwin II and the grant of Arnulf I, not to the weakness of Arnulf II. Qualified thus, the argument for political disintegration in Flanders between 965 and 988 is weak. Tenth-century counties lacked the legal solidity Dhondt took for granted. But if the lynch-pin of the case against Arnulf is loosened, then his reign deserves to be reexamined.

The task facing Baldwin Baldzo in 965 was less intimidating than Dhondt thought because, once Count Arnulf had established his authority over Boulogne and Ternois, and the land to the east of the Lys had been taken by Lothaire, what remained was dominated by the very extensive private estates of the Counts of Flanders, the product of Baldwin II's conquests, land reclamations and purchases²³. Rivals to comital power in this coherent block between Bruges, Ghent, St. Omer and Rysel were relatively insignificant. While Baldwin Baldzo's authority was inevitably of a different character from that of Arnulf – dependent less on force, more on attracting cooperation – alliances were apparently easy to come by. The few surviving charters suggest that he associated on easy terms with Count Thierry of Westfriesland and his sons. Thierry's goodwill was not totally disinterested; it had to be purchased by allowing him to acquire land in Waas, which Lothaire confirmed in

20 GANSHOF (see n. 1) p. 27–28; KOCH, *Algemene Geschiedenis* (see n. 6) p. 370. On the implications of the comital title, see J. DUNBABIN, *France in the Making 843–1180*, Oxford 1985, p. 10–11.

21 M. CHANTEUX-VASSEUR, *Étude géographique et historique sur le comté de Guines des origines à 1283*, in: *École des Chartes; Positions des Thèses*, Paris 1935, p. 59. The misapprehension that the county of Guines was Arnulf's creation arose from the fine legend contained in Lambert of Ardres' early thirteenth century work, which traced its origin to a certain Sifrid, an adventurer, who made Arnulf's aunt pregnant; the poor Count of Flanders was then obliged to create a county for his cousin, MGH SS XXIV, p. 568. This is doubtless pure romance, based on the story of Baldwin I of Flanders and Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald. But the Count of Flanders may have assisted Artold's rise by allowing him the title of count in virtue of his position as advocate of the St. Bertin lands in the area. F. GANSHOF, *Saint Bertin et les origines du comté de Guines*, in: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 10 (1931) p. 552–553, points out that the castle of Guines was built on St. Bertin land. On the likelihood that the count was a member of the comital family, see DHONDT (see n. 19) p. 68, n. 97.

22 It is pertinent to realize that Arnulf did not reduce his own prestige by allowing members of his family to be called counts. He, like his grandfather, was known in Flanders as Marquis; he could afford to be generous with lesser titles (see eds. LOT and HALPHEN [see n. 9] p. 101, n. 1). It may even have been a form of self-protection. If E. WARLOP is correct (*The Flemish Nobility before 1300*, Kortrijk 1975, vol. I, chapter I) in postulating a well-entrenched aristocracy in Flanders in the tenth century, the point may have been to create an élite group impermeable by ambitious men of other families.

23 KOCH, *Algemene Geschiedenis* (see n. 6) p. 372.

his possession by a charter of 13 April 969²⁴. But this was a small price to pay for family harmony. However Arnulf II rapidly acquired some new relatives, when his mother Matilda, daughter of Duke Hermann Billung of Saxony, married Godfrey of Verdun very shortly after 965, and brought her young son into that count's family. Godfrey and his three sons are mentioned in the second genealogy of the counts of Flanders, revised by Lambert of St. Omer around 1120²⁵, which suggests that they were remembered in the province as something more than mere relations; the admittedly unreliable late thirteenth-century chronicler John of Thierlrode recorded that Matilda after her marriage made grants to churches in the name of her son²⁶. That Godfrey and Thierry were on good terms in 969 can be inferred from Godfrey's witnessing Thierry's gift to St. Peter's, Ghent, in that year²⁷. And since the young Arnulf also sealed this charter, an amiable family alliance seems to have obtained. If his stepfather's goodwill earned him some reward in power during the minority, there was nothing particularly sinister in this. And there was no sign of strain between Godfrey and Baldwin Baldzo.

Although Arnulf II's age on his grandfather's death is unknown, it has usually been surmized that he was very young indeed. Dhondt thought he did not attain his majority until 976²⁸; but the proof offered for this simply demonstrates that Lothaire still held Artois until that date. On the other hand, if Grierson is correct in believing that Arnulf II rather than his grandfather wrote the letter to St. Dunstan published by Stubbs²⁹, then, since the count talks of *familiaritas* with the archbishop, he must have been born before Dunstan's return from Flanders to England in 957–8. A charter in the ›Liber Traditionum‹³⁰ ascribed to 969 showed the young Arnulf confirming a grant without either his uncles or his tutor to corroborate his action; and by 972 he was apparently capable of granting land to St. Peter's, Ghent, in his own name³¹. The age of majority for the Carolingian family was twelve years; families closely related to it are thought have followed suit³². (Arnulf's son Baldwin IV appears to have been recognized as of age at twelve³³.) It is therefore unlikely that Arnulf was still in tutelage by the death of Baldwin Baldzo in 973.

24 Ed. O. OPPERMAN, *Fontes Egmundenses*, Utrecht 1933, p. 215–217 (Werken uitg. door het Historisch Genootschap, III, 61).

25 MGH SS IX, p. 306.

26 MGH SS IX, p. 335.

27 *Liber Traditionum sancti Petri Blandiniensis*, ed. A. FAYEN, Ghent 1906, p. 80–81, no. 77. The documents in the *Liber Traditionum* are held to have survived most of O. Oppermann's scathing criticism; see E. SABBE, *Deux points concernant l'histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Pierre du Mont-Blandin (X^e–XI^e siècles)*, in: *Revue Bénédictine* 47 (1935) p. 52–71; and KOCH, *Diplomatische studie over de 10^e en 11^e eeuwse originelen uit de Gentse Sint-Pietersabdij*, in: (eds.) GYSSELING and KOCH (see n. 11) p. 87–122.

28 DHONDT (see n. 19) p. 62.

29 *Memorials of St. Dunstan*, London 1874, p. 359–361; P. GRIERSON, *The relations between England and Flanders before the Norman Conquest*, in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (1941) p. 91, n. 5.

30 Ed. FAYEN (see n. 27) p. 81, no. 78.

31 A. VAN LOCKEREN, *Chartes et documents de l'abbaye de Saint-Pierre à Gand (633–1599)*, Ghent 1868, p. 44, no. 45.

32 M. BUR, *La formation du comté de Champagne v. 950–v. 1150*, Nancy 1977, p. 508 and n. 2.

33 KOCH, *Algemene Geschiedenis* (see n. 6) p. 370, states that he was eleven when his father died. He was sealing charters in his own name by 990; see ed. FAYEN (see n. 27) p. 94, no. 98.

By that year the young prince may already have been married for a little while. His bride was Rozala, younger daughter of Berengar, King of Lombardy, who had been ejected from his kingdom by Otto I in 951. His two daughters were taken back to Germany by their father's conqueror and cared for by the empress at court³⁴. The emperor had little time to concern himself with the affairs of his western neighbours after 968; if Rozala's wedding is to be ascribed to his initiative, then a date in that year is probable³⁵. But Otto may merely have arranged an engagement; or indeed the match may have been organized by Arnulf's stepfather after Otto's departure for Italy. Rozala presumably had no dowry to bring with her, since her father had lost everything. Nevertheless she was a bride to be proud of, in that her royal blood conferred lustre on her children and her connections with the empress were diplomatically valuable. To judge by her later career, she was a woman of strong character. Though it was her unfortunate fate to be married to two men both much younger than she, there is no sign at all of discord between her and her first husband.

Arnulf's marriage inaugurated a period of unusually close relations between Flanders and the imperial court, which Dhondt interpreted as a sign of the count's weakness. It can however more plausibly be seen as the obvious course for a son of Matilda Billung and the husband of Rozala to pursue. On the whole imperial friendship was beneficial to Flanders. It is true that the charters of Otto II protecting St. Bavo in Ghent gave that monastery a new degree of independence from St. Peter's, Arnulf the Great's refoundation³⁶; but the innovation was not necessarily against Arnulf's wishes. And Geberga's gift of land to St. Peter's, along with another later acquisition across the imperial frontier, offered an opportunity to expand Flemish influence into Lotharingia for the first time³⁷, a sign of strength not weakness. While Count Thierry of Westfriesland and Count Godfrey of Verdun carried favour with the emperor, their activities caused Arnulf no anxiety at least as late as 979³⁸, and they brought Flanders into the limelight in Germany. When the new church at St. Peter's, Ghent, was finally dedicated in 975, the occasion was graced by Adalbéron, Archbishop of Rheims, Godfrey's brother; when the west tower was consecrated four years later, Thierry's son Egbert, Archbishop of Trier, came to perform the ceremony³⁹. Otto II himself stayed at St. Bavo shortly before his death in 983. Occasions like these not only enhanced Flanders' European standing, but also afforded Arnulf the opportunity to meet and negotiate with important imperial vassals. Though the immediate results of such contacts were small, the ground was marked out for his son's expansion into Valenciennes in 1006, which led ultimately to the establishment of the Flemish March of Valenciennes as a fief held of the emperor.

While Arnulf's interests in Lotharingia developed, he continued to look after his position in the heartland of Flanders. In the second half of the tenth century the

34 Cont. of Regino of Prüm, MGH SS Rerum Germanicarum, Hannover 1896, p. 175.

35 R. KÖPKE and E. DÜMMLER, *Kaiser Otto der Große*, Leipzig 1876, p. 380 and n. 2.

36 MGH Diplomata t. 2, p. 82–83, 141–144, nos. 69, 125 and 126.

37 MGH Diplomata t. 2, p. 163–164, no. 145, and p. 444–445, no. 44.

38 Arnulf sealed a charter of donation by Godfrey to St. Peter's, Ghent in 979, *Opera diplomatica et historica Auberti Miraei*, 2nd ed., Brussels 1723, vol. I, p. 144–145, no. 23.

39 *Annales Blandinienses*, ed. GRIERSON (see n. 9) p. 21.

comital city of Bruges was just beginning to develop as a port; Arnulf built extensively there⁴⁰. A few coins struck by him have been found in Denmark, Prussia and Russia⁴¹, indicating his appreciation of the importance of Flanders' participation in Baltic trade, even if this was still on a very small scale. His concern to maximize his assets caused him to insist that Baldwin Baldzo's lands in Kortrijk be granted out after 973 as a clearly-defined benefice, not as an inheritable asset⁴². This canniness had its unattractive features: an admittedly very late tradition from St. Bertin remembered the count as refusing to honour a promise made by his grandfather, grandmother and father to surrender two estates to the monastery⁴³. Similarly a charter in the ›Liber Traditionum‹ of St. Peter's, Ghent, speaks of two parcels of land taken away from that church in the reign of Arnulf II, presumably by him, which were later restored to it⁴⁴. Evidently Arnulf was capable of resisting the blandishments of ecclesiastics. Scrupulous guardianship of what he believed to be his own was matched by concern to defend the Flemish shores against marauders. Security considerations led him to retain Danish sailors, for whose piratical activities he was held responsible by his English neighbours⁴⁵. But he also appreciated the virtues of alliance: characteristically he begged Archbishop Dunstan to reestablish the close relations between the Flemish and the English courts that had obtained under Baldwin II⁴⁶. Unlike his ferocious grandfather in his prime, the younger Arnulf valued family ties.

Nevertheless his earlier excellent relations with his distant cousin King Lothaire of France cooled in his maturity. Dudo of St. Quentin records that at some unspecified date Arnulf refused to perform military service for Lothaire; in consequence the king attacked Artois, and peace could only be reached between the two parties by the intervention of Richard of Normandy, who persuaded Lothaire to return Arras to Arnulf⁴⁷. Ferdinand Lot was inclined totally to disbelieve this episode, alleging that Dudo had invented it, drawing on chronicle accounts of 965 in order to flatter the duke⁴⁸. But although Dudo certainly mingled some facts about 965 in the later event, there is nothing inherently improbable in his story, which is doubtless a garbled version of Duke Richard's own recollection as recounted to him. Despite Lot's denial, Dudo's assertion does gain some support from the ›Gesta episcoporum

40 Tractatus de ecclesia Sancti Petri Aldeburgensi, MGH SS XV/2, 872. For Bruges in this period, GRIERSON (see n. 29) p. 73 and n. 4, p. 105; but see also A. E. VERHULST, *Les origines et l'histoire ancienne de la ville de Bruges (IX^e-XII^e siècle)*, in: *Le Moyen Age* 66 (1960) p. 53-63; and ID., *An aspect of the question of continuity between antiquity and middle ages: the origin of the Flemish cities between the North Sea and the Scheldt*, in: *Journal of Medieval History* 3 (1977) p. 194.

41 D. M. METCALF, in: (ed.) N. J. MAYHEW, *Coinage in the Low Countries 880-1500. The Third Oxford Symposium on coinage and monetary history, 1979* (B. A. R. International series 54), p. 2.

42 On Kortrijk, KOCH (see n. 6) p. 71; WARLOP (see n. 22) vol. I, p. 32, 40.

43 *Johannis Longi chronica Sancti Bertini* (see n. 1) p. 777.

44 Ed. FAYEN (see n. 27) nos. 116 and 117.

45 STUBBS (see n. 29) p. 362; GRIERSON (see n. 29) p. 933, n. 2; J. CAMPBELL, *England, France, Flanders and Germany: some comparisons*, in: (ed.) D. HILL, *Ethelred the Unready*, Oxford 1978 (B. A. R.), p. 263.

46 STUBBS (see n. 29) p. 360.

47 *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae Ducum*, ed. J. LAIR, Caen 1865, p. 294: *Flandrensis comes, Arnulfus nomine, sprevit Lothario regi eo tempore militare et servire.*

48 *Les derniers Carolingiens* (see n. 7) p. 47-48, note 2.

Cameracensium⁴⁹, which points to 978 as the year of Lothaire's attack. The king's intention, as Dudo implies, was to force an extremely reluctant Arnulf to assist him in invading Lotharingia, to which end only a bribe as large as the return of Arras had any chance of success, both on account of Arnulf's friendship with the Ottonian court, and because Lothaire's claim to Lotharingia was morally weak. There is no evidence for Lothaire's intervention in Artois after 976⁵⁰; there is one reference to Arnulf's involvement with the house of St. Vaast⁵¹. Both these facts corroborate Dudo's assertion that Arras returned to Flanders before Arnulf II's death, and suggest that while the king of West Francia was dazzled by the prospect of huge gains in Lotharingia, he willingly sacrificed what he had won by the treaty of 962. Flemish assistance, even if half-hearted, was worth the loss. If this is accepted, then Arnulf II was responsible for acquiring royal recognition of Flanders' rights in Artois, a signal triumph for his house. Arras was to be a major economic asset to the principality from 978 until its loss to Philip Augustus in 1192. By diplomacy Arnulf earned more than his grandfather and great grandfather had won by the sword; he had given legality and permanency to their conquests.

Even historians too sceptical of Dudo's veracity to feel happy with the argument above would agree that Arnulf did not join his stepfather in defending Otto II and the infant Otto III against Lothaire. But in view of his past loyalties the count of Flanders' enthusiastic support for the Lotharingian offensive can be ruled out. That he is mentioned not at all in Richer's narrative suggests his conspicuous absence from the West Frankish court in these years; he kept a low profile. This attitude must have made him a natural ally for Hugh Capet in the period after the Peace of Margut of 980, when Lothaire began to view the Duke of the Franks with suspicion⁵². The traditional view, that Hugh and Arnulf were at daggers drawn throughout their lives⁵³, is based on a very literal reading of the ›Relatio Sancti Walerici‹⁵⁴, a hagiographical source replete with the interpretational difficulties of that genre. The ›Relatio‹ tells the famous story of how Hugh Capet was visited one night by a vision of St. Valéry, bemoaning his captivity at St. Bertin, whither his relics had been taken by Arnulf I in 952, and desiring to be restored to his own seaside monastery in Ponthieu. The saint promised the duke that if his bones were translated to their original resting place, not only would Hugh become King of the Franks, but his successors would secure the throne for seven generations. Spurred on by this prophecy, Hugh approached Arnulf with a humble request for the return of the relics. Arnulf at first demurred, pointing out that they were venerated at St. Bertin. But Hugh gathered his men around him and rode to Ponthieu, put the Flemish representative in Montreuil to flight, and appeared on the Flemish frontier to repeat his demand. Arnulf, terrified lest any of his subjects should be hurt, agreed. Recognizing his own unworthiness to be the guardian of such holy things, he had the

49 MGH SS VII, p. 446.

50 DHONDT (see n. 19) p. 61.

51 MGH SS VII, p. 446.

52 Richer, *Histoire de France*, ed. R. LATOUCHE, Paris 1964, t. 2, p. 100–115.

53 First formed by the Benedictine Maurists in: *L'Art de vérifier* (see n. 10) Paris 1784, t. II, p. 751; taken up by LOT, *Les derniers Carolingiens* (see n. 7) p. 117.

54 MGH SS XV/2, p. 693–698.

relics encased in a splendid silver reliquary and sent them to Hugh. The return of St. Valéry to his own monastery in Ponthieu occasioned much rejoicing among the Franks, much sadness among the Flemish.

The prophecy of St. Valéry promoted the interests of the Capetian dynasty no more than those of the monks who now guarded the precious reliquary⁵⁵. Though ambition obviously fuelled its authors' imagination, their story was based on a genuine translation of the saint's bones from St. Bertin to St. Valéry-sur-Somme at some time around 981, the date provided by the ›Relatio‹. But whether anything beyond this in their tale is credible is a matter of opinion. It would seem very rash to construct the history of Ponthieu around the statement in such a source that Hugh's men chased off Arnulf's official from Montreuil. The monks of St. Valéry had every reason to attribute to the Count extreme reluctance in granting Hugh's request; had they not mentioned the use of force, their readers might have concluded that not everyone felt as strongly as Hugh did about the value of the relics. Given their hagiographical purpose, nothing they say offers justification for believing that there was deepfelt hostility between Arnulf and Hugh; rather Arnulf's gift of the reliquary suggests an alliance. More importantly, only the relics and not the county of Ponthieu (as the ›Relatio‹ implies) changed hands in 981; for Ponthieu had probably been under Hugh Capet's lordship since 965, as a part of the agreement between Arnulf I and King Lothaire. Therefore the translation of the relics argues not for Arnulf II's weakness, but for his perspicacity. He had already seen the way the wind was blowing. Lothaire's attack on Lotharingia had won him few friends at home, his reluctance to accept the peace of Margut had upset many, and his animosity against Hugh was potentially dangerous. In indulging Hugh's whims in 981, Arnulf was demonstrating his political skills. It was an act of friendship which was to be rewarded seven years later.

By 982 Lothaire and Hugh were reconciled. But the following year brought Otto II's death and a marked improvement in Lothaire's chances of conquering Lotharingia. In 985 during a highly successful campaign, Lothaire captured first Verdun and then its count, Arnulf's stepfather Godfrey. In that year the empress Theophanou, with Egbert of Trier and Henry of Bavaria, converted Thierry II of Westfriesland's benefices between the Lier and the Ijsel into hereditary possessions, with the purpose of strengthening his support for the young Otto⁵⁶. Given his family connections, Arnulf must have been aware of the Empress's party's bitterness at the attacks to which they had been exposed, their sense of relief at Lothaire's death in 986, and their rising hope that Hugh Capet, a first cousin of Otto II, would prove more loyal to the Saxon royal family than any Carolingian could. Arnulf probably knew at least something of what Adalbéron, Godfrey's brother, was plotting; and since his mother was a recipient of a letter from Gerbert in 985⁵⁷, he may even have understood more clearly than any modern historian can hope to, just what that man's subtle intrigues were aimed at.

55 On the date, see K. F. WERNER, *Die Legitimität der Kapetinger und die Entstehung des ›Reditus regni Francorum ad stirpem Karoli‹*, in: *Die Welt als Geschichte* 12 (1952) p. 214; and A. W. LEWIS, *Le Sang Royal. La famille capétienne et l'Etat. France X^e-XIV^e siècle*, Paris 1986, p. 300, n. 133.

56 Ed. OPPERMAN (see n. 24) p. 217-219.

57 Ed. and tr. H. P. LATTIN, *Gerbert of Rheims, Letters, with his Papal privileges as Sylvester II*, New York 1961, p. 97, no. 57.

But if he did, then he played the whole crisis of the royal succession in 987 very close to his chest. No chronicler mentioned his participation in the politicking involved; and Richer in his extensive list of the peoples over whom Hugh became king in 987 failed to include the Flemings⁵⁸, an omission which strongly suggests Arnulf's absence from the coronation. Equally Gerbert betrayed no knowledge of Arnulf's activities. On the other hand there is no sign of him allying with his cousin Albert of Vermandois, Hugh's only known opponent in 987. Dudo of St. Quentin, who was in Albert's service, was sent by his master to gather support not from Arnulf but from Richard I of Normandy⁵⁹ – who effectively stalled till the crisis was over.

For those historians who regard Arnulf II as a cipher, the absence of evidence about his sympathies in 987 is unsurprising. From a different perspective, granted the web of intrigue in which his relatives enmeshed themselves he was perhaps wise to play a very cautious role in the whole affair. Just how cautious may be indicated by the charter produced on 1st April 988, immediately after his death, whereby his wife and son granted land to St. Peter's, Ghent, for the sake of his soul. This charter is dated only *Anno Domini*, not by Hugh's regnal year⁶⁰; regnal year dating was the normal, though not the exclusive, practice of the St. Peter's scriptorium. If the omission was deliberate, then Arnulf II had not unequivocally recognized Hugh before his own death in March 988. Yet if there is reason to think that he had bided his time, he was certainly not overtly associated with Hugh's enemies⁶¹. Despite his Carolingian blood, of which he was proud, it is hard to see that he had anything to gain by the continuance of Carolingian kingship, which automatically implied the prolongation of the Lotharingian war and the antagonism of his chosen allies. The anti Capetian sentiment often attributed to Arnulf, if it existed at all, can have had only shallow roots.

That Arnulf's neutrality towards Hugh Capet's accession was benevolent may be inferred from Hugh's protection of his family in the spring and summer of 988. As soon as the new king heard the news of Arnulf's death, he acknowledged the count's young son Baldwin as the successor to all his possessions, and confirmed that judgement by marrying Arnulf's widow Rozala in 990 to his own son and heir Robert. These were the actions of a kindly and well-disposed lord. Had Hugh in fact been Arnulf's enemy, a seductive alternative lay before him. Gerbert's letter, written to Archbishop Egbert of Trier on 20th May 988, provides proof that Arnulf II of Westfriesland, who had just succeeded his father Thierry II on 6th May, was frustrated in some way by Hugh's recognition of Baldwin's succession; Gerbert says explicitly that the *milites* supported Arnulf in the affair⁶². It has been conjectured that the Count of Westfriesland's disappointment was connected in some way with

58 Ed. LATOUCHE (see n. 52) p. 162–163.

59 Ed. LAIR (see n. 47) p. 294–295.

60 Eds. GYSSELING and KOCH (see n. 11) p. 177.

61 I have taken it for granted that William of Jumièges's allegation, in: (ed.) J. MARX, *Guillaume de Jumièges, Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, Paris and Rouen 1914, p. 70, that Arnulf refused military service to Hugh is simply a misplaced echo of what Dudo of St. Quentin said earlier, see n. 47.

62 Ed. LATTIN (see n. 57) letter 122, p. 154–155; see KOCH, *Algemene Geschiedenis* (see n. 6) p. 371 and n. 1, accepting Lattin's interpretation.

his family possessions around Waas; perhaps he hoped to hold these allodially or as fief directly from the crown of France? But although the desire to convert benefices into allods was widespread at this time, there is no reason to think that Hugh's recognition of Baldwin as heir to all his father's lands would have prevented Arnulf from pressing for this later; in fact patient cooperation was as likely to yield concessions as tantrums. And Gerbert's words, obscure though they are, imply anger disproportionate to such an explanation.

An alternative possibility arises: that Arnulf hoped to obtain the county of Flanders or a part of it for himself, and that in this ambition he had the backing of Archbishop Adalbéron of Rheims, in whose name Gerbert wrote. Dhondt regarded this as very unlikely, despite his suspicion of Arnulf's empire building⁶³. And it is true that, although he was a grandson of Arnulf the Great, the son of Thierry of Westfriesland could have had no real hope of inheriting Flanders unless there were grounds for regarding the young Baldwin's claims as void. Arnulf II had unequivocally recognized Baldwin as his son; did anyone else believe him to be illegitimate? It is possible. When her husband died, Rozala took the name Suzannah, by which she was known for the rest of her life⁶⁴. This new name suggests that she successfully fought off a false accusation of adultery aimed at disinheriting her son. If this guess is correct, then Flanders itself was at issue in 988. The importance of the succession dispute might explain the appearance in May 988 of the imperial court at Braine-le-Comte near Waas⁶⁵: imperial influence was to be brought to bear on the Flemings. But Hugh Capet's firm intervention on Baldwin's behalf doubtless convinced Theophanou of the impracticability of backing Arnulf's claims with force. On this hypothesis, it is possible to explain two subsequent events which have hitherto been obscure: the Westfriesland family's loss of Waas after Arnulf's death in 993, and the establishment of a comital castellany at Ghent⁶⁶. The young Baldwin IV would understandably be indisposed to recognize the claims of a cousin whose father had obstructed his own succession, and would wish, after the breach in a long family friendship, to reinforce his own control in Ghent. More immediately, this interpretation of events would imply that Suzannah's marriage with Hugh's son Robert was Hugh's public affirmation of his belief in her innocence.

But whether or not this speculative solution is accepted, it remains true that King Hugh did everything in his power to shield Arnulf's wife and child in difficult times. And though Robert undermined the generous gesture by repudiating Suzannah, this did not happen until Baldwin's hold on Flanders was quite secure. In any case the effects of the repudiation have almost certainly been exaggerated. While Richer was no doubt correct in his assertion that Suzannah bitterly resented Robert's failure to hand over Montreuil to her as part of her dowry⁶⁷, the lady very rapidly acquired extensive estates in Mortagne at the expense of the abbey of St. Amand, which

63 DHONDT (see n. 19) p. 70, note 102 and p. 67; but see KOCH, *Algemene Geschiedenis* (see n. 6) p. 370.

64 *Vita Sancti Bertulphi Renticensis*, MGH SS XV/2, p. 638.

65 Eds. GYSSELING and KOCH (see n. 11) p. 177. The significance of this was pointed out by LATTIN (see n. 57) p. 155.

66 GANSHOF (see n. 1) p. 31; KOCH, *Algemene Geschiedenis* (see n. 6) p. 374.

67 Ed. LATOUCHE (see n. 52) p. 286–288.

apparently pleased her⁶⁸. And Baldwin recovered any land in Picardy lost in 965 which had not been returned to his father by Lothaire⁶⁹. There is little in the sources to justify postulating an extensive war between the Capetians and the comital family of Flanders. Both Baldwin and Suzannah owed the new ruling dynasty too much to engage in overt hostilities or even in prolonged pique. But nor is there anything in the charter evidence to support Ganshof's suggestion⁷⁰ that Hugh Capet arranged the marriage between Robert and Suzannah in the hope of bringing Flanders under Capetian control. Had this been his intention, he surely would have sent Robert to Flanders immediately after the wedding, and then prevented him from throwing away so lightly the advantage his sagacity had earned. Hugh's aims were rather the simpler ones of helping a great prince and obtaining additional royal blood for his grandchildren. If by 991 he was convinced that Suzannah could no longer bear children, then his acquiescence in Robert's repudiation of her would make sense.

What, if anything, did the counts of Flanders contribute to the crisis that ended in the change of dynasty in 987? Arnulf II must have been at worst neutral, at best passively friendly, towards Hugh Capet in 987, since had he overtly resisted his power Hugh would not have been able to boast to Count Borrell on 15th January 988 of the peace that obtained within the French realm⁷¹. Arnulf had no strong links with Charles of Lorraine, no reason, other than a much-vaunted but now distant bloodtie, for adherence to the Carolingian claims; indeed, if he sympathized with his mother's grief during his stepfather's captivity, he may even have opposed Charles firmly. Since Hugh's accession seemed likely to be accompanied by the end to the war in Lotharingia, the change of dynasty would be in Arnulf's interests. Therefore he could afford to lie low and leave the running to others. But his choice of a back seat should not be taken to indicate that he could not drive. Given the habitual strength of Flemish armies in this period, his lack of opposition was an important, if negative, factor in Hugh Capet's success.

It is time to reassess Arnulf II's reign. Far from being a time of weakness, with enemies crowding in on every side, it should be seen rather as a period of transition, in which the comital house gradually prepared the way for a successful and longlasting alliance with the new kings of France and for future expansion within the empire. Arnulf protected what he had inherited from his predecessors, turned *de facto* into *de jure* rights in Arras, and traced the path for Flanders' future economic development. The successes of Baldwin IV and Baldwin V had their roots in his achievements. If not as assertive a man as his grandfather Arnulf the Great, he was in some respects a more constructive one.

68 PLATELLE (see n. 15) p. 118.

69 GANSHOF (see n. 1) p. 30.

70 Ibid., p. 29.

71 LOT, *Les derniers Carolingiens* (see n. 7) p. 220; ed. LATTIN (see n. 57) p. 153, no. 120.