

University of Toronto Archives
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John Ferguson Flinn *fonds*

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John Ferguson Flinn *fonds*

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Biographical sketch

John Ferguson Flinn was born in Toronto on 24 October 1920, the son of Thomas Flinn and Margaret Robson. In 1938 he entered Victoria College at the University of Toronto “on scholarships from Harbord C[ollegiate] I[nstitute], added more each year.”¹ There he took Modern Languages and was much involved in extra-curricular activities. He sat on the executive of the French Club for four years, ending as president, and also for four years in the Canadian Officers Training Corps, where he commanded its Machine-gun Wing III in his final year. In his final year he was also president of the German Club, a member of the executive of the Class of 1938, and a member of the Hart House Art Committee. He graduated with a BA honours in 1942.

Following graduation, Professor Flinn enlisted in the Canadian Army. He took the 15th Field Security Course at Royal Military College in Kingston in the fall of 1942, followed by an intelligence course the following summer. In 1944 he took a wireless intelligence course in the United Kingdom. He trained initially (June 1942-June 1943) with the Canadian Armoured Corps (Advanced) Training Centre and the No. 2 Training Regiment. From August 1943 he served with the Canadian Intelligence Corps as an information officer, initially (from December 1943) at the headquarters of the 2nd Canadian Corps in England, and then with the 1st Canadian Wireless Intelligence Section in the Mediterranean theatre (August 1944-March 1945) and in northwestern Europe (March-November 1945). He was promoted to captain in May 1945 and received various medals. He was transferred to the Reserve in February 1946.²

Back in Toronto, Professor Flynn returned to his *alma mater* as a graduate student, receiving his Master of Arts in 1947. In 1949 he moved to Paris, France, where he was employed as “assistant d’anglais” (until 1952) at the Lycée Turgot and “professeur d’anglais” (until 1953) at the Institut National de la Statistique et des Études économiques. He then entered the Sorbonne where he studied under Professor Jean Frappier and received his Doctorat de l’Université in 1958. His doctoral thesis, ‘*Le Roman de Renart dans la littérature française et dans les littératures étrangères au Moyen Age*’, served as the basis for much of his research work in later life. In 1959 he was hired by the University of Toronto as a special lecturer in the Department of French at University College and was also appointed to the School of Graduate Studies. He was promoted to assistant professor the following year, to associate professor in 1964 and to the rank of professor in 1967, a year after receiving tenure. He retired from the University of Toronto in 1986

At the University of Toronto, Professor Flinn was much involved in departmental administrative work. From 1964 to 1968 he served as academic secretary and undergraduate secretary of French in University College and from 1969 to 1975 as secretary to the Graduate Department of French. From 1966 to 1968 he was a member of the Academic Advisory Committee of the Graduate Department of French and at various times (1966-1967, 1970-1971, 1974-1975) was a member of the Degree Committee for Division I of the

¹ *Torontonensis*, 44 (1942) 50

² Curriculum vitae (September 1982) in B2009-0038/001(01); UTA, A1965-0002/009

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School of Graduate Studies. At various times, he served on other committees in the Department of French at University College and other College committees, in the Department of French, the School of Graduate Studies and the Faculty of Arts and Science. From 1970 to 1972 he was a member of the university Senate.

Outside the University of Toronto, he served on the Appraisals Committee of the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies for three years (1973-1976), the last two as chair; and for a number of years from 1964 was a consultant to the Certification Department of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

In the Department of French, Professor Flinn taught courses in language practice, French realist literature, medieval French language and literature, and practical translation. At the graduate level, he taught courses in the structure of Old French and the bourgeoisie literature of the Middle Ages. He supervised a number of masters and four doctoral students.

Professor Flinn's research centred on bourgeoisie literature in the Middle Ages, particularly in France, and the iconography of the *Roman de Renart* and related works in medieval Europe. He wrote one major book, *Le Roman de Renart dans la littérature française et dans les littératures étrangères au Moyen Age*, book reviews, a few refereed articles and numerous non-refereed publications. Two of these were articles on *Reynard the Fox* and *Gauthier d'Arras* for the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* but most were translations. The latter began with English translations of 97 biographies for volume I of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography/Dictionnaire biographique du Canada* (1965). For Volume II (1969), Professor Flinn chaired the English Translation Committee and was translator, and continued as English translator for volumes III (1974), IV (1979) and V (1983), VI (1987) and VII (1988). He translated a number of articles, pamphlets for the Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario, booklets for the Public Archives of Canada, and legal documents for the Ontario and federal governments and the University of Toronto. He also interpreted phrases of documents for various bodies and individuals.

Some of Professor Flinn's articles grew out of addresses presented at conferences. Most of his papers dealt with *bourgeoise* literature of the Middle Ages and the iconography of the *Roman de Renart*.

Professor Flinn died in Toronto on 14 June 2009.

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Scope and content

Textual, graphic, 1936-1999 [predominant, 1950-1999], 1.27 m., 10 boxes + 2 folders

Personal records of John Ferguson Flinn, Professor of French in University College at the University of Toronto, consisting of correspondence, minutes of meetings, notes, course and lecture material, manuscripts and publications, addresses and photographs documenting his career as a Professor of French at the University of Toronto and a specialist in the study of the *bourgeoise* literature in the Middle Ages, particularly in France, and the iconography of the *Roman de Renart*. This fonds consists of two accessions received in 1986 and 2009 described in six Series.

Access: Restricted.

B2009-0038/001(12) – (18) : Roll books and course reports closed until 1 January, 2086.

B2009-0038/002(01) – (12) : The correspondence files with students are closed for 30 years from latest date of file activity.

Corresponding accessions: B1986-0029, B2009-0038

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Series 1: Personal and biographical

Textual, graphic, 1936-1989, 0.05 m.

This series contains copies of Professor Flynn's curriculum vitae and some correspondence, both personal and professional and including letters of reference, and examination questions for his undergraduate work in Arts at the University of Toronto in the early 1940s. Included are three photoprints and a satirical drawing of his receiving his doctorate from the Sorbonne.

B2009-0038

/001	(01) – (04)	Curriculum vitae, correspondence, letters of reference	1973-1989
/001P	(01)	University College French Club	1936
	(02)	Unidentified photo; Flinn second from right	n.d.
	(03)	Conference in Paris, France. Photo: Actualités Mondial Photo	1963
	(04)	Drawing by 'JMZT' [under glass] : 'Comment Renart the Flinn fu recu doctour en Sorbone par Noble Lambert, Roonel de Frappier et /Sengrim de Vlaams...'	1958 (?)

B1986-0029

/001	(01)	Professional correspondence	1968-1986
	(02)	Annual examinations, 2 nd – 4 th years	1940-1942

Series 2: Employment, University of Toronto

Textual, 1959-1986, 0.47 m.

This series contains no documentation of Professor Flinn's years of employment in France, only records documenting some of his activities, both administrative and academic, at the University of Toronto. The files are arranged with the administrative records appearing first, followed by teaching files and files of correspondence with graduate students. The most significant administrative records are the minutes, memoranda, correspondence, and reports (1963-1985) documenting the activities of the Graduate Department of French, especially for the years 1969 to 1975 when Professor Flinn was secretary. There is a file [B2009-0038/001(10)] honouring Marguerite Macdonald on her 85th birthday; she had lectured in the Department of French at University College from 1934 to 1965.

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Series 2: Employment, University of Toronto

At the undergraduate level, Professor Flinn taught the following courses:

- FRE 1a : Representative works of French literature (general course) (1959-1964)
- FRE 1b : Option for religious knowledge in honour courses: reading of modern French texts (general course) (1959-1960)
- FRE 1k/116 : Option for religious knowledge in honour courses: reading of modern French texts (general course) (1960-1964)
- FRE 1f : Reading of modern French texts (honours course) (1960-1964)
- FRE 130 : Reading of representative French texts. Composition (honours course) (1964-1965)
- FRE 160 : Representative works of French literature (honours course) (1965-1966)
- FRE 171 : Language practice I (1977-1986)
- FRE 2b/201 : French thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries (general course) (1960-1966)
- FRE 226Y : Realism in French literature (1976-1979)
- FRE 271 : Language practice II (1982-1986)
- FRE 316 : Medieval French language and literature (1972-1986)
- FRE 3f/330 : Old French (honours course) (1959-1970)
- FRE 475: Practical translation (1983-1986)

At the graduate level, he taught:

- FRE 1014/1300Y : The Old French epic (1961-1979)
- FRE 1016/1301Y : Old French *bourgeoise* literature (1962-1979)
- FRE 1159H : Structure de l'ancien français (1979-1980, 1981-1986)
- FRE 1301Y, L : La littérature *bourgeoise* du Moyen Age (1980-1986)

The files contain exam and some text questions for many of Professor Flinn's undergraduate courses, and some course material for FRE 1f, 130, 226 (also some lecture notes), 3f, 316, and 475Y. At the graduate level, there are notes for courses FRE 1014, 1016, and 1159, along with a small sampling of term papers for the last course, and files of doctoral qualifying and comprehensive examinations.

Following the course material files are other files of correspondence with Professor Flinn's four doctoral students and a number of masters and undergraduate students, arranged alphabetically in each category. These files contain a combination of general correspondence, material relating to theses research and defence, and letters of reference.

Access: Restricted

The roll books and course reports in B2009-0038/001(12) – (18) are closed until 1 January, 2086. The correspondence files with students in B2009-0038/002(01) – (12) are closed for 30 years from latest date of file activity.

B1986-0029

/001	(05) – (10)	Employment (general) – School of Graduate Studies, Executive Committee, Division I	1971-1986
	(11) – (15)	Graduate Department of French. Minutes, memos, correspondence, reports	1961-1985

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Series 2: Employment, University of Toronto

B2009-0038			
/001	(03) – (10)	Employment (general) – Marguerite Macdonald	1963-1998
/001	(11) – (18)	Teaching files: roll books; course reports (French 1a - 475Y) Restricted	1959-1986
	(19) –(27)	Courses: French 1f, 130, 2b, 3f, 316, 330, 475Y. Exam questions and some course material	1959-1986
	(28)	Course : The Old French epic	1964
B1986-0029			
/001	(16) – (17)	French 226. Course material, lecture notes	n.d., 1977-1979
/002	(01) – (02)	Undergraduate French exams	1959-1964
	(03) – (06)	Graduate French courses : 1014, 1016, 1159	1964-1980
	(07) – (08)	PhD qualifying and comprehensive examinations	1961-1983
B2009-0038			
/002	(01) – (04)	Doctoral students Restricted	1963-1998
	(05) – (12)	Masters and undergraduate students Restricted	1964-1996

Series 3: Professional associations and activities

Textual, 1966-1999, 0.06 m.

The files in this series document Professor Flinn's appraisal of manuscripts submitted to the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and to the University of Toronto Press and other publishers, correspondence with the Public Lending Rights Commission over his authorship of articles and his translations, and his involvement in the Société Internationale Renardienne/International Reynard Society, which ran the International Beast, Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium.

The files contain correspondence, notes, and programmes.

B1986-0029			
/002	(09) – (10)	Canadian Federation of the Humanities	1983-1984
		University of Toronto Press/other presses	1966-1986
B2009-0038			
/002	(13)	Public Lending Right Commission	1986-1999
	(14) – (18)	Société Internationale Renardienne/ International Reynard Society	1974-1999

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Series 4: Research

Textual, graphic, 1950-1989, 0.62 m.

Professor Flinn's academic research centred on *bourgeoise* literature in the Middle Ages, particularly in France, and the iconography of the *Roman de Renart*, Renard the fox, and related works in medieval Europe. It led to one book, *Le Roman de Renart dans la littérature française et dans les littératures étrangères au Moyen Age* and a number of articles and addresses. His research continued into retirement and over the years he corresponded with a number of fellow enthusiasts, especially Tobias Hagtingius in the Netherlands and Kenneth Varty at the University of Glasgow.

The files contain notes, original material sent by colleagues, correspondence relating to Professor Flinn's research interests and partial drafts of some writing projects. Some relate to his book, others to the iconography of the *Roman de Renart*, and still others to a 'Reynard the Fox in Europe' project proposed by Erwin Verzandvoort of the Netherlands in the late 1980s, which apparently came to naught. It is not possible, for the most part, to relate these files directly to a single publication, except for a few files relating to Professor Flinn's book; these can be found in the next series.

The arrangement of the files follows Professor Flinn's quite closely, with the description of each file (except for the "Renart" prefix to each, done by the arranger) being, very largely, what he provided.

Included are photoprints, film strips, photonegatives, slides and postcards from sources in Europe and Britain; these are often referred to in the correspondence or in Professor Flinn's notes. The images in B2009-0038/002P have been left in the envelopes provided by Professor Flinn, with his notations thereon; the descriptions of the other photos are taken from his notations. For an accompanying file of notes, see B2009-0038/005(18). The arrangement has been left in the order he created.

B2009-0038

/002	(19) – (30)	Grant application and correspondence re research projects	1956-1988
	(31)	Correspondence with Elizabeth Cramer-Pieters re and copy of a article about Reinaert from <i>Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant</i> , 4 July 1964	1964
/003		Draft of 'Renart and I. in the well', research and writing files on iconography, research notes on various aspects of <i>Roman de Renart</i> and other Renart projects, including 'Reinhart de Vos'	n.d., 1959-1973
/004		Research notes on various aspects of <i>Roman de Renart</i> ; includes files on 'branches I-XVIII', and other Renart projects.	n.d.-1980

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Series 4: Research

B2009-0038			
/005	(01) – (17)	Research notes on various aspects of <i>Roman de Renart</i> and related projects, including the proposed ‘Reynard the fox in Europe’ project.	1950-1989
/001P	(05) – (16)	Research photos acquired from sources in Europe and Britain	1951-1978
/002P		Photoprints, negatives and slides of images acquired or taken by Professor Flinn for his research	1950-1977

Series 5: Manuscripts and publications

Textual, 1961-1988, 0.14 m.

This series contains only a partial documentation of Professor Flinn’s literary output. The five book reviews listed in his curriculum vitae [September, 1982, B2009-0038/001(01)] are present, but only a small selection of his translations are, including some legal documents, interpretations of phrases, and pamphlets for the Addiction Research Foundation, and none of his work for the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. The files on his book *Le Roman de Renart dans la littérature française et dans les littératures étrangères au Moyen Age*, contain correspondence, notes for a few chapters, reviews, and a copy of his book to facilitate understanding the files in Series 4. The other principal writings documented are his articles on *Reynard the Fox* and *Gauthier d’Arras* for the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* and his 1983 article, ‘Of cabbages and wine: popular belief or scientific tradition in the *Roman de Renart*’, recorded in his 1989 update of his publications, B2009-0038/001(01).

The arrangement of the files is chronological.

B1986-0029			
/002	(11)	Book reviews	1967-1978
B2009-0038			
/005	(19) – (24)	<i>Le Roman de Renart dans la littérature française et dans les littératures étrangères au Moyen Age</i>	1956-1967
/006	(01)	<i>Le Roman de Renart dans la littérature française et dans les littératures étrangères au Moyen Age</i>	1963
	(02) – (10)	Translations and articles	1972-1988
	(10a)	Translations for Secretary of State of Canada	1986
B1986-0029			
/002	(12) – (17)	Translations	1961-1980

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Series 6: Public lectures and scholarly addresses

Textual, 1960-1985, 0.05 m.

Drafts, with some accompanying correspondence and notes, of all but one of the addresses mentioned in Professor Flinn's 1982 curriculum vitae are documented in this series, along with two other addresses and notice of another. The arrangement is chronological.

B2009-0038			
/006	(11)	'The triumph of Reynard the Fox,' University College Public Lecture Series, 1960.	1960
	(12)	' <i>Bourgeoise</i> literature in the Middle Ages,' Regional Seminar, Centre of Medieval Studies, U of T, January 1968	1967-1970
	(13)	'Renart the Fox in medieval art.' Notice for illustrated lecture, University College, 1972-02-28	1972
B1986-0029			
/002	(18) – (19)	'Aspects of the medieval beast epic,' 3 rd International Conference of the Institute of Medieval Studies, Université de Louvain, Belgium, 15-17 May 1972. Correspondence, notes, etc.	1971-1975
B2009-0038			
/006	(14)	'Littérature <i>bourgeoise</i> et le <i>Roman de Renart</i> .' Drafts of address for above conference	1972
	(15)	'L'iconographie du <i>Roman de Renart</i> .' Drafts of address for above conference	1972
	(16)	'The iconography of the <i>Roman de Renart</i> ,' 11 th Conference on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1976-05-03	1976
	(17)	Untitled address to International Courtly Literature Society's Triennial Congress (4 th : 1983 : U of T)	1983
	(18)	Address on occasion of Professor Robert Finch's 85 th birthday, 1985-05-29	1985