

THE LEGEND OF CHARLEMAGNE IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

The Matter of France in Middle English
and Anglo-Norman Literature



PHILLIPA HARDMAN AND MARIANNE AILES

The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England



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The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England

The Matter of France in Middle English
and Anglo-Norman Literature

Phillipa Hardman and Marianne Ailes

D. S. BREWER

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GENERAL PREFACE

Charlemagne: A European Icon

THIS series of volumes examining the reception of the Charlemagne myth in different linguistic cultures of medieval Europe springs from 'Charlemagne in England', a project supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to study the literary presence of the emperor in medieval England, an area where the historical Charlemagne never set foot, let alone reigned.

The spread of Charlemagne's myth after his death was even more extensive than was his empire during his life. This larger enterprise, therefore, an investigation of the appropriation of the matter of Charlemagne across Europe, required a network of specialists working on texts written in different languages and different geographical areas. Yet these languages were culturally interdependent: it was largely through the medium of French, with its cultural hegemony, that the legend of Charlemagne spread widely, though Latin was also an important vehicle for texts perceived as historical truth. Furthermore, the same geographical area could also be the 'host' for more than one language, the literatures of which would draw upon each other.

One particular challenge for the project was thus the question of overlap between geographic areas and cultural or linguistic zones. This is exemplified by the original project focused on Charlemagne in England, a multilingual land of overlapping cultural zones in one geographic area, with Latin, French and English literary cultures and other languages operating in particular areas or social groups. The solution was to allow some overlap in coverage, with, for example, French texts written in England covered from different perspectives in both *Charlemagne in England* and *Charlemagne in Medieval Francophonia*, and with awareness that texts in Latin were circulating at the same time and in the same geographic areas as the vernacular narratives. Given the variety of material in different languages and the varying amounts of research that have been produced, the volumes do not all follow the same pattern. Some areas, notably France, have been the object of more than a century of study. Others, such as the Celtic narratives, have received far less

critical attention; indeed, one of the aims of the project has been to stimulate research in these under-studied areas.

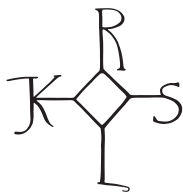
The legends and myths of Charlemagne found expression in epics and romances, chronicles and pseudo-chronicles and were alluded to in political and ecclesiastical documents across medieval Europe. Charlemagne was at the same time king of the Franks / the French and 'empereur d'Occident'. Even in seven volumes we could not aim for encyclopaedic coverage of the Matter of France. We aim rather to address the same research question, a consideration of how the matter of Charlemagne was appropriated in different contexts, whether that exploitation was for political purposes or was more concerned with literary responses. We also limited ourselves in this series to written texts. A similar series of volumes could have been written about the visual representations of Charlemagne. The geographical areas covered include much of Charlemagne's empire, but also areas beyond its reach, such as England and Scandinavia and medieval Spain, where he was often seen as an aggressor, rather than a heroic king-emperor.

We found a mythic emperor whose legend was infinitely malleable and open to (re)interpretation. Even in his own lifetime Charlemagne was the *pater Europae*, but the phrase no doubt meant something different to the poet of the Paderborn epic from the resonances it has today in a European Union of nation states. In the Middle Ages Charlemagne was often cited to promote local interests and cults, while at the same time he served as an *exemplum* of Christian unity. Our project will, we trust, shed some light on the many faces of Charlemagne: 'Karles li rois, nostre emperere magnes', as he is named in the opening line of the Oxford *Chanson de Roland*.

This interdisciplinary project was made possible through the work of many. We are grateful to the collaborators who have contributed to this, and in particular to the editors of the volumes. We would also like to thank the British Branch of the Société Rencesvals for their support and the opportunities offered to present research papers at both British Branch and International conferences. The Bristol Institute for Research in the Humanities and Arts at the University of Bristol funded a workshop on translating Charlemagne material, as part of a series of workshops on premodern translation, which enabled many of the collaborators to meet and develop the project in its early stages. We would also like to thank colleagues from the University of Bristol's IT department and the web-designers from Dirty Design for their work on

the project website, <http://www.charlemagne-icon.ac.uk/>. We are also grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for supporting the network financially, giving us opportunities to meet and discuss research findings and to develop a website for the project.

Marianne Ailes
Philip E. Bennett
Project directors



PREFACE

Charlemagne in England: The Matter of France in Middle English and Anglo-Norman Literature

THE heroic literature of medieval England celebrates the acts of three groups of characters: English legendary heroes, King Arthur and his knights, and the Emperor Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers. The first two groups have received major recent scholarly attention, but the texts in the last group have been comparatively neglected, though a series of editions of the Middle English texts for the Early English Text Society in the late nineteenth century gave them a prominent identity as 'The English Charlemagne Romances'. French-language Charlemagne texts continued to be produced for English readers well into the fifteenth century, and from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century Middle English verse romances of Charlemagne were composed and copied. Caxton printed a prose life of Charles the Great as well as the *Morte Darthur*. However, while Arthurian themes persisted in English literature and culture, those of Charlemagne did not. This might seem explicable if he is viewed as the national hero of the French. Yet, to the puzzlement of some critics, the production of most English Charlemagne texts coincided with the Hundred Years' War. Is it significant, therefore, that the original French texts already existed in Anglo-Norman form? In what sense might Charlemagne have had an established insular identity?

The texts traditionally named the 'Matter of France' deal with the legendary history of the Emperor Charlemagne, who is presented defending Christendom in campaigns against the Saracens with his Twelve Peers. In Old French the *cycle du roi* material extends to over fifty *chansons de geste*, but in the insular tradition, in both Anglo-Norman and Middle English versions, the focus is restricted to a few central, original narratives: the matter of Roncevaux (*La Chanson de Roland* and the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*), the *Fierabras* material (*La Destruction de Rome, Fierabras*), and *Otinel*. A chapter of this book is devoted to each of these traditions, but first we put this in a wider context of reception,

with discussion of the circulation of the material in England and an examination of the texts in their manuscript contexts.

The aim of this study of 'Charlemagne in England' is to explore the insular literary tradition with equal focus on the Anglo-Norman and Middle English texts, examining the textual relations between them and the correspondences in narrative form and generic expectations. The book assesses the evidence for the texts' audiences and reception in a multilingual society, and for their contemporary cultural and political significance. The central conflict represented, between Christians and Saracens, offers parallels to international crusading interests in the earlier Anglo-Norman period, and in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries mirrors the perceived threat to western security from the Ottoman Turks, while the prominence in so many of the texts of the motif of the chivalrous Saracen indicates, through the fantasy of conversion, a desire for engagement with the Eastern Other. The exploitation of material centred on Charlemagne, a pan-European hero, also raises questions of identity in texts which stress the importance of Christian unity at a time of developing nation states. This complex reflection of cultural and political concerns in medieval England has resonances for contemporary Britain.

Acknowledgements

WE wish to acknowledge the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the generous award of a Research Grant (2009–12), without which our collaborative research project would not have been possible. We thank the British Branch of the Société Rencesvals and Bristol Studies in Medieval Cultures for their generous support. We also thank our institutions, the Universities of Reading and Bristol, for their joint support of our research. In particular, we are grateful to the members of our schools and departments: the Department of English Literature at Reading and the School of Modern Languages at Bristol, and to our colleagues in the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies at Reading and the Centre for Medieval Studies at Bristol, for their unstinting support and encouragement. We have been especially fortunate to have had working with us our two AHRC-funded PhD students, the rest of our ‘Team Charlemagne’, Suzanne Leedham and Jade Bailey, and we thank them for their contributions to the project.

Preliminary findings from our research have been presented at the Leeds and Kalamazoo Medieval Congresses, and at numerous other conferences, symposia, research seminars and workshops, and we are grateful to all the audiences and participants for their valuable and stimulating questions and comments. We thank especially the members of the Société Rencesvals British Branch, the Romance in Medieval Britain Conference, and the Early Book Society for their continued and enthusiastic support. Many individual scholars and colleagues have generously shared their expertise with us and have enriched our research, and in particular we are grateful to Philip Bennett, Siobhain Bly Calkin, Anne Curry, Rosalind Field, Mark Hutchings, Richard Ingham, Marco Nievergelt, Carol O’Sullivan, Ad Putter, Rebecca Rist, Stephen H. A. Shepherd, Ian Short, Diane Speed, Emily Wingfield, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and the French of England project team.

Finally, we wish to record our heartfelt gratitude to Adrian and Christopher for their unfailing support and for having to know more about Charlemagne than they ever expected to.

Abbreviations

AND	Anglo-Norman Dictionary
ANTS	Anglo-Norman Text Society
APF	Les Anciens Poètes de la France
BL	British Library
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
CUL	Cambridge University Library
CFMA	Classiques français du moyen âge
EETS, OS, ES	Early English Text Society, Original Series, Extra Series
MED	Middle English Dictionary
NLS	National Library of Scotland
n.s.	new series
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
SATF	Société des anciens textes français
STS	Scottish Text Society
TNA	The National Archive

A Note on Terminology

We use the conventional term ‘Anglo-Norman’ throughout the book to refer to the insular French language of the texts we discuss, following the practice of the Anglo-Norman Dictionary and the Anglo-Norman Text Society.

INTRODUCTION

Charlemagne in England: Owning the Legend

THE idealized figure of Charlemagne (742–814), ‘Christian Emperor, mighty conqueror and patron of learning’,¹ has long been associated with a European sense of identity. A succession of recent scholarly and popular histories of Charlemagne stress this concern in their subtitles – ‘Father of a Continent’, ‘The Formation of a European Identity’² – or make it explicit in their introductory pages.³ Charlemagne’s modern role as embodying the idea of European integration is seen in diverse invocations, from the name of the building that houses the European Commission (the Charlemagne building) to the prize awarded for ‘distinguished service in the cause of Europe and European unification’ (the International Charlemagne Prize),⁴ though behind this focus on Charlemagne as icon of Europeanness is a history of conflicting attempts to appropriate his founding status for both German and French national identities.⁵ Charlemagne’s relation to England has seemed less obvious: indeed, on 9 July 1960,

¹ Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 5.

² Alessandro Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent*, trans. Allan Cameron (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*.

³ See, for example, Hywel Williams, *Emperor of the West: Charlemagne and the Carolingian Empire* (London: Quercus, 2010); Derek Wilson, *Charlemagne: The Great Adventure* (London: Hutchinson, 2005). Both are popular histories that highlight Charlemagne’s role in forming an idea of a distinctly European identity and culture.

⁴ Walter Eversheim, ‘A Citizens’ Prize for Distinguished Service on Behalf of European Unification’, http://www.aachen.de/de/stadt_buerger/pdfs_stadtbuerger/pdf_karlspreis/karlspreis_o3/eversheim03_en.pdf [accessed 23/08/2016].

⁵ For a brief summary, see Joanna Story, ‘Charlemagne’s Reputation’, in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. J. Story (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 1–4.

contemplating the reasons for a possible British application to join the Common Market, Harold Macmillan confided to his diary his fear of a future 'caught between a hostile (or at least less and less friendly) America and a boastful, powerful "Empire of Charlemagne" – now under French but later bound to come under German control'.⁶ Here the exclusively continental identity of a political alliance imagined in terms of Charlemagne's empire seems logically opposed to British involvement. Half a millennium earlier, Caxton, though celebrating both as Christian Worthies, set the native Englishness of Arthur, 'kyng and Emperour of the same [royame of Englonde]', against the alterity of Charlemagne's identity as 'kyng of fraunce & emperour of Rome';⁷ and one modern scholar has noted as an 'amusing irony' (in view of 'the age-old and perennial animosity between France and its cross-Channel neighbours') the fact that the most famous literary Charlemagne text, 'the French national epic', is known from its English provenance as 'the Oxford *Song of Roland*',⁸ while another ponders the 'paradox' inherent in 'the production of the Middle English Charlemagne romances ... during a period of prolonged Anglo-French hostility'.⁹ However, this

⁶ Harold Macmillan, *Pointing the Way, 1959–61* (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 316.

⁷ Caxton's prefaces to *Morte Darthur* (1485) and *Charles the Grete* (1485).

⁸ Ian Short, 'Literary Culture at the Court of Henry II', in *Henry II: New Interpretations*, ed. C. Harper-Bill and N. Vincent (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 335–61 (p. 350), on Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 23. For an edition, see *La Chanson de Roland: The French Corpus*, ed. J. J. Duggan et al., 3 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), I: *The Oxford Version*, ed. I. Short. This edition has been chosen as the reference edition for this book because it allows easy comparison of the different Old French redactions; the edition is also the basis for a translation into English of both the Oxford text and the Châteauroux-Venice 7 version: *The Song of Roland: Translations of the Versions in Assonance and Rhyme of the 'Chanson de Roland'*, trans. Joseph J. Duggan and Annalee C. Rejhon (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012). In what follows, we give citations to the edition with the name of the editor of the particular MS in the form Short/Duggan; for ease of comparison the Duggan and Rejhon translation is used unless otherwise stated.

⁹ Robert Warm, 'Identity, Narrative and Participation: Defining a Context for the Middle English Charlemagne Romances', in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D.

sense of strangeness fluctuates according to historical distance and political perspective. Fifty-odd years earlier than Caxton, Lydgate, in his 'Ballade to King Henry VI upon his Coronation', addressed Henry as a descendant of both St Edward and St Louis, and immediately invoked the parallel paired kings, 'knightly' Arthur and 'Charlles of gret prys' (l. 13), as his twin secular patrons.¹⁰ And as Ian Short argues, not only was the earliest extant version of *La Chanson de Roland* copied and preserved in England, but it seems it was designed to draw a parallel between William the Conqueror and Charlemagne, who also, 'we are told, crossed the sea and conquered England, holding it by personal tenure';¹¹ its revision can thus be seen as an act of appropriation, adapting *La Chanson de Roland* for an insular audience.

This unique text may be considered the first significant landmark in tracing the literary career of Charlemagne in England.¹² No such special focus on England occurs in any other version of the *Chanson de Roland* (although England is mentioned prominently among Charlemagne's conquests in the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*), and the passages in question may represent localized innovations by the Anglo-Norman copyist,

S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 87–100 (p. 87). The span of the Hundred Years' War coincided with the composition and/or copying of the majority of the extant English Charlemagne texts.

¹⁰ *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, ed. H. N. MacCracken, vol. II: *Secular Poems*, EETS OS 192 (1934), pp. 624–30.

¹¹ Short, 'Literary Culture at the Court of Henry II', p. 351, referring to two brief passages in the text (ll. 370–3 and 2331–2). Short rejects arguments that this shows a 'Norman bias' or 'Insular influence' in the original composition of the *Chanson* (p. 356), but there is certainly a case for Anglo-Norman adaptation in the manuscript copy as we have it. For further discussion of ll. 370–3 and the link with William I, see Melissa Furrow, 'Chanson de geste as Romance in England', in *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*, ed. Laura Ashe, Ivana Djordjević and Judith Weiss (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 57–72 (pp. 60–1); for further discussion, see Chapter 4.

¹² For discussion of documentary evidence for actual contemporary perceptions of Charlemagne's authority in England, see Joanna Story, 'Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxons', in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Story, pp. 195–210: 'From the Frankish perspective, the Anglo-Saxons lay within the boundaries of Charlemagne's authority when it came to the proper performance of Christian duties' (p. 202).

aiming to absorb the story of Charlemagne into the history of Britain (echoing Brutus and prefiguring William I), to produce a pattern of conquerors who made England their own. In one passage, much corrected by a subsequent reviser, Roland lists the countries he has won for Charlemagne, culminating in the British Isles: 'jo l'en cunquis e Escoce e \Uales/ Irlande | e Engleterre' (2331–2);¹³ the reviser's addition of Wales here gives an authentic insight into the reception of the text in Anglo-Norman Britain, suggesting a desire to assimilate the text's representation of Charlemagne's world to the audience's own.

Three further landmarks present themselves: the proliferation of insular Charlemagne texts in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (both Middle English adaptations and Anglo-Norman copies); the publication by the Early English Text Society, beginning in 1879, of a series of editions of Middle English texts under the general title *The English Charlemagne Romances*;¹⁴ and the increasing critical interest in these texts at the present time. Our concerns in this book are primarily to contextualize the occurrence of the late-medieval texts and to explore the timeliness of modern critical responses; but the extraordinary nature of the EETS series, the only body of romances to be distinguished in this way among the society's publications, cannot go unrecognized. Sidney J. H. Herrtage, the initial editor, offers no rationale for embarking on the project, but a hint may be found in Emil Hausknecht's introduction to Part V. This describes with nineteenth-century enthusiasm the 'glorification' of Charlemagne's reputation for military power through 'the sublime figure of Charlemagne', the 'valiant champion of Christendom' with his 'nimbus of majestic grandeur', in imaginative literature of universal appeal: he was, wrote Hausknecht, 'celebrated in song by almost all European nations'.¹⁵ The Middle

¹³ Short tentatively dates the reviser's hand 'well into the thirteenth century' and notes that by adding Wales, the reviser has 'complet[ed] the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman kingdom of Britain'; the interpolation is not included in the edited line (*Oxford Version*, pp. I/103, I/312). For further discussion, see Chapter 4.

¹⁴ See Marianne Ailes and Phillipa Hardman, 'How English are the English Charlemagne Romances?', in *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*, ed. Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 43–55.

¹⁵ *The Sowdone of Babylone*, ed. Emil Hausknecht, EETS ES 38 (1881), pp. v–vi. Hausknecht imagines Charlemagne's Europe in terms of

English romances of Charlemagne, though very late in the medieval tradition of the Matter of France, nevertheless preserve the optimism of this early literary image, eschewing those later portrayals which show, as Hausknecht puts it, 'the splendour of Royalty tarnished and debased'.¹⁶ This may have been their late-nineteenth-century appeal: a body of English texts that represent in an apparently unproblematic way 'the great Christian hero' of all Europe, and which could be brought to public attention by being grouped together under this title, with its claim that Charlemagne has a recognizable identity in English literary culture.

While Hausknecht's focus is on the extent of Charlemagne's conquests in Western Europe, the medieval legendary tradition attributes to him a huge sphere of authority across the Mediterranean world, south into Spain, and eastwards to Jerusalem, and this wider context supports a different emphasis in studies of Charlemagne's image. Besides his role as 'Father of Europe', Charlemagne's reputation as champion of Christendom and the widespread legend of his journey to the East saw him cast in the role of 'Crusader',¹⁷ as in the celebrated thirteenth-century Charlemagne window at Chartres, where pictorial scenes from the legendary traditions represent his conquests in Spain and the Holy Land. This constructed image of Charlemagne, the European hero defeating the opposed powers of Eastern rulers, is reflected throughout the insular Matter of France tradition, with its repeated representation of conflict between Charlemagne, his peers and forces (an 'international brigade' from a wide range of European

nineteenth-century nation-states.

¹⁶ Hausknecht cites *Guy de Bourgoyne* as an example of the later tradition.

¹⁷ See, for example, Nancy Bisaha, 'Crusade and Charlemagne: Medieval Influences', in her *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 13–42; Jace Stuckey, 'Charlemagne as Crusader? Memory, Propaganda, and the Many Uses of Charlemagne's Legendary Expedition to Spain', in *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages: Power, Faith, and Crusade*, ed. Matthew Gabriele and Jace Stuckey, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 153–68; Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

locations)¹⁸ and Saracen armies drawn from all across the East.¹⁹ Yet the concept of 'crusade', at least in the narrow sense of the journey to the East epitomized in the OED definition of 'crusade' (a 'military expedition made by Europeans to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims') and as reflected in the stereotypical 'good deaths' of many medieval romance heroes, fighting for God in the Holy Land, needs further interrogation in relation to these texts.²⁰

In the reopening in 2010 of Britain's oldest public museum, the Ashmolean at Oxford, the collections were reorganized to present a new approach to the understanding of the past: entitled 'Crossing Cultures Crossing Time', it was intended to reveal 'how the civilisations of the east and west have developed as part of an interrelated world culture'.²¹ This twenty-first-century concern to recognize the commonalities and interdependencies of global human history is tellingly expressed in terms specifically indicating the expectation of difference, of opposition, that it seeks to counter, in the formulation of the world as a construct of two halves, east and west. Stabilized and reified as 'the East' and 'the West', these geographical distinctions carry far-reaching and long-standing cultural associations, and attempts to interrogate the relations between them have understandably proliferated since 2001. The editors of *Cultural Encounters between East and West: 1453–1699*, for instance, introduce their volume with the claim that 'a radical reappraisal of the relationship between "East" and "West" is currently under way' which questions previous critical approaches that had assumed 'a binary

¹⁸ For this feature in the Oxford *Roland*, see Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory*, p. 138.

¹⁹ See Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 119.

²⁰ Although sometimes described as 'crusade-romances', most of the insular Charlemagne texts deal with conflicts between Christians and Saracens that are not 'journeys to the East'; only one (*Roland and Vernagu*, based on the Old French '*Johannes*' version of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*) includes an account of Charlemagne liberating the Holy Land.

²¹ Ashmolean Museum leaflet (2010), p. 2; in the latest version, the theme 'Crossing Cultures' is designed to 'show how civilisations developed as part of a connected world culture', and introduces collections presented as 'East Meets West', <http://www.ashmolean.org/assets/images/Plan/FloorPlan.pdf> [accessed 23/08/2016].

opposition between a civilized Christian “West” and the encroaching barbarity of an infidel “East”, although they point out the anachronism of the governing idea: ‘In this period there is generally no sense of a clear or rigid demarcation between what are ordinarily thought of as “East” and “West”.’²² This may need a little qualification: while agreeing that the modern binary ‘East’ and ‘West’ was not standard usage in the Middle Ages, Suzanne Conklin Akbari points to the construction, from the late fourteenth century onwards, of the opposed terms ‘Occident’ and ‘Orient’ as denoting distinct geographical areas and their inhabitant peoples.²³

There is no doubt, however, that an opposition between geographically defined peoples characterized as either Christian or ‘infidel’ is very widely inscribed in medieval and early modern texts and culture, and it is the consequences of this faith-defined division that are also largely the focus of current interrogations of East and West.²⁴ Prominent in both medieval texts and modern analyses is the

²² *Cultural Encounters between East and West: 1453–1699*, ed. Matthew Birchwood and Matthew Dimmock (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005), p. 1.

²³ Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. 3, 46. Akbari cites, for example, John Gower’s retelling the story of the repopulation of the earth after Noah’s flood, which very precisely aligns the whole of Asia (everywhere east of the Nile as far as Paradise) with the term ‘Orient’: ‘And schortly for to speke it so, | Of Orient in general | Withinne his bounde Asie hath al’ (*Confessio Amantis*, 7: 572–4). The ‘Occident’, meanwhile, covers the rest of the world ‘Westward’ (7: 582, 576), setting a cold ‘Occident’ against a hot ‘Orient’ (7: 582–3). See also Gower’s account of Julius Caesar’s conquering nations: ‘Noght al only of thorient | Bot al the Marche of thoccident’ (Prologue, 719–20).

²⁴ For instance, in his sweepingly titled *Worlds at War: The 2,500-Year Struggle between East and West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Anthony Pagden chronicles the successive manifestations over millennia of the ‘ancient struggles between an ever-shifting West and an equally amorphous East’ (p. xix), but centres his survey on the bitter wars between the two universal religions, Christianity and Islam, as the most potent and influential aspect of that persistent conflict and its modern expressions.

phenomenon and afterlife of the crusades, and while Christopher Tyerman concludes his study of the historiography of the crusades with a sharp critique of the more extreme manifestations of the 'clash of civilizations' theory and their unhistorical collapsing of past and present, it is fundamental to his own argument that 'one of the oldest features of crusade historiography had been its relation to contemporary cultural and political attitudes'.²⁵ Moreover, the interpenetration of past and present could be seen as characteristic of some crusade thinking from the beginning: a 'war of liberation', to free the Christian people of the eastern Churches from the tyranny of Muslim rule,²⁶ was at the same time, with the innovative ritual of 'taking the Cross', a return to the world of the New Testament for those who heard the call to fight as a summons to avenge the insult to Christ and to reclaim the place of his death and burial.²⁷ Thus it is not altogether surprising to find the language and attitudes of the crusades imaginatively projected back on to the conflicts of Christian heroes of earlier centuries, Charlemagne and the legendary Arthur, in epic and romance.²⁸ Surveying the functions of representations of Charlemagne over the last 1,200 years, Rosamund McKitterick calls attention to 'the degrees to which a people communicates with the past in order to form or to inform its own contemporary concerns, to heighten its sense of identity and cultural affiliations and to shape its political purpose'.²⁹ In this book we aim to trace the relation of the insular Matter of France texts, with their focus on the battles between Charlemagne's Christian knights and enemy Saracen forces, and their oblique reflection of the history of crusades to the East, to the cultural and political concerns of their own times, and to ask what and how legends of an imagined Carolingian past contributed

²⁵ Christopher Tyerman, *The Debate on the Crusades* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 247, 217.

²⁶ As urged by Urban II before the First Crusade: Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History*, 2nd edn (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 4–8.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–5, 10–11; Tyerman speaks of a 'religio-historical nostalgia' (*Debate on the Crusades*, p. 22).

²⁸ An instructive instance from the late fifteenth century is William Caxton's project of publishing the histories of Charlemagne and Arthur as companion pieces to his history of *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, based on William of Tyre's account of the First Crusade.

²⁹ McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*, p. 6.

to the self-image of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century readers in England (while we are, of course, conscious of our own inescapable situatedness in a world newly sensitized to the representation of conflict between Muslims and Christians, East and West).

Crusades historian Jonathan Phillips points out that the Old French *Chanson de Roland* was composed almost immediately after the First Crusade to the Holy Land (1096–9), alongside texts dealing directly with the crusade: Latin chronicles of the Holy War and other *chansons de geste* that celebrate the heroic deeds of the Christian forces combating the Muslim inhabitants of the East, such as the *Chanson de Jérusalem* and the *Chanson d'Antioche*; he sees this as evidence of how deeply the memory of that crusade and its spectacular victories had entered into the 'political and spiritual culture of western Europe'.³⁰ The fervour attending the preaching and preparations for the First Crusade, its astonishing success in liberating the holy places and establishing the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, and the joy with which the returning crusaders were welcomed home as heroes and 'models for future generations to emulate',³¹ all make it somewhat surprising that these stirring epics of the crusade cycle were not appropriated for an insular audience. French texts on the subject were available in Britain, for a copy of the *gestes* was borrowed from the Master of the Temple in 1250 for Eleanor of Castile, who had murals of the subject painted in the 'Antioch Chamber' at Westminster,³² but there is no evidence of any attempt to produce a cultural adaptation of the crusade cycle in either insular vernacular. One little-known poem, surviving only in Anglo-Norman manuscripts and based on a chronicle account of the First Crusade, is potentially the only extant insular poetic treatment of this glorious chapter of Christian history;³³ indeed, there are very few insular

³⁰ Jonathan Phillips, *Holy Warriors: A Modern History of the Crusades* (London: Bodley Head, 2009), p. 78.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³² Peter Brieger, *English Art, 1216–1307*, Oxford History of English Art (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 133.

³³ An edition has been published of part of the text only: *La Chanson de la Première Croisade en ancien français d'après Baudri de Bourgueil: Édition et analyse lexicale*, ed. Jennifer Gabel de Aguirre (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2015); see also Paul Meyer, 'Un récit en vers français de la première croisade fondé sur Baudri de Bourgueil', *Romania*

chansons de geste or romances directly concerned with the topic of crusade to the East at all.³⁴ The lack is particularly surprising given the fact that, as Tyerman observes, ‘militant Christianity, enshrined in tales of Charlemagne or warrior saints, was in fashion in the Anglo-Norman world’.³⁵

One exceptional example is the Middle English romance of *Richard Coeur de Lion*, a fantasized account of the part played by Richard I in the Third Crusade (1189–92). This text had considerable success, judging by the large number of extant versions,³⁶ and it offers a useful paradigm of insular taste. There are obvious attractions in its bizarre combination of relatively recent history and supernatural fiction, with its central role for an insular crusading hero-king, and Geraldine Heng argues for its power as a model of English national identity;³⁷ but perhaps an additional source of interest the text provides is the extended confrontation between Richard and his opponent, the charismatic Muslim leader Saladin. Although Richard is obviously the heroic central

5 (1890), 1–63. For further discussion, see Chapter 1. Two chronicles, one Norman, one Anglo-Norman, are devoted to the Third Crusade: *The History of the Holy War: Ambroise’s ‘Estoire de la Guerre Sainte’*, ed. Marianne Ailes and Malcolm Barber, 2 vols (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003); *The Crusade and Death of Richard I*, ed. R. C. Johnston, ANTS 17 (Oxford, 1961).

³⁴ Crusade to the East features frequently in insular narrative (for example in *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton*) as a subsidiary topic, the ultimate test of Christian knighthood.

³⁵ Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095–1588* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 14.

³⁶ Eleven distinct medieval texts in manuscript and print survive (dated from c. 1330 to 1528) – more than for either *Guy of Warwick* or *Bevis of Hampton*, for example. No Anglo-Norman original for the Middle English romance is known, but a contemporary Anglo-Norman chronicle account of Richard I’s exploits in the crusade, based on Roger of Howden, exists in *The Crusade and Death of Richard I*.

³⁷ Geraldine Heng, ‘The Romance of England: *Richard Coeur de Lion*, Saracens, Jews and the Politics of Race and Nation’, in *The Post-Colonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey J. Cohen (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2000), pp. 135–72; rev. as Chapter 2 in Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 63–113.

figure of the romance, receiving assistance on different occasions from angelic advisers and from St George, while Saladin is correspondingly portrayed as confounded, still, the repeated focus on the two leaders, the several episodes of actual or projected single combat (on one occasion specifically to test the power of their respective faiths), and the eventual three-year truce they agree produce an effect of something more like equal combat between the great commanders, against a background of dissent among French and English in the Christian camp and of reported unrest at home in England. The subject of Richard and Saladin was of immediate and long-lasting interest: as Phillips observes, 'eyewitnesses on both sides recognised that the two main players in the Third Crusade were exceptionally charismatic men',³⁸ and half a century later their combat was depicted in wall paintings at Henry III's Clarendon Palace, as well as in the celebrated Chertsey floor tiles, possibly designed for the palace of Westminster.³⁹ What this may suggest is that there was a particular insular taste for a version of the opposition between East and West, Muslim and Christian, figured almost symbolically in the image of one-to-one confrontation between heroic representatives of each.

Such a taste in insular culture could help to explain an apparent anomaly in the statistics relating to the selection of Charlemagne texts for copying and translating in Britain, statistics that show multiple versions of a surprisingly small number of source texts. As Rosalind Field has remarked, 'The Middle English Matter of France romances can be seen as translations derived from the already established selection of *chanson* material available as insular texts in Anglo-Norman from the twelfth century into the mid-fourteenth century', a precedent that 'may account for the otherwise odd concentration on Ot[in]el and Fierabras material amongst the Middle English works'.⁴⁰ To summarize briefly: of the considerable range of Old French *chansons de geste* dealing with the Matter of France, Anglo-Norman rewriters appear largely to have

³⁸ Phillips, *Holy Warriors*, p. 136.

³⁹ *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England, 1200–1400*, ed. Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1987), p. 204.

⁴⁰ Rosalind Field, 'Patterns of Availability and Demand in Middle English Translations of *romanz*', in *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*, ed. Ashe *et al.*, pp. 73–89 (p. 81).

restricted their choice to a small group of texts concerning Charlemagne and his closest peers, Roland and Oliver, in direct conflict with Saracen enemies, often with named individual Saracen champions such as Otinel and Fierabras. And from this selection of texts, Middle English translators and adaptors further refined their choice,⁴¹ to produce three distinct retellings of the combat between Firumbras and Oliver, and three versions of Otuel's fight with Roland. The central image of the two opponents locked in single combat is sometimes reflected in the titles given to the Middle English romances by their scribes: *Duke Rowlande and Sir Ottuell of Spayne*; *Off Rowland and off Otuel*; and *Off Firumbras de Alisavndre and Syr Olyuer*. It is also worth noting the construction of a similar, unique Middle English romance, *Roland and Vernagu*, created from incidents in the *Johannes Turpin*, a thirteenth-century French adaptation of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*.⁴² In each case, the Christian knight battles a Saracen giant and makes an attempt at converting him before the Saracen is eventually defeated. This represents a remarkable concentration on narratives that follow the pattern of opposed champions of the two faiths, like Richard the Lionheart confronting Saladin in popular imagination (though they never met in historical reality), as depicted in *Richard Coeur de Lion* and on the Chertsey tiles. Indeed, one might see almost an insular fixation on the persistent motif of the individual Christian hero in contention with the potentially convertible Saracen.⁴³ One of our concerns in this book is to trace

⁴¹ A notable exclusion is the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, of which there are numerous Anglo-Norman copies. *Aspremont* is discussed in Chapter 1, but as it was never translated into Middle English, a full consideration of its place in insular culture has been reserved to the Anglo-Norman chapter of the *Charlemagne in Medieval Francophonie* volume (ed. Marianne Ailes and Philip E. Bennett) in the series 'Charlemagne: A European Icon'.

⁴² *The Johannes Turpin* includes in its first chapter an abbreviated version of the legend of Charlemagne's journey to the East and recovery of the relics of the Passion (*Descriptio qualiter Karolus Magnus clavum et coronam Domini a Constantinopoli Aquisgrani detulerit*). See *The Old French Johannes Translation of the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, ed. R. N. Walpole, 2 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

⁴³ 'Wishful' traditions grew up around the historical Saladin, presented as a potential Christian convert, who received knighthood from a Christian

and interrogate this motif in the Anglo-Norman and Middle English Charlemagne tradition.⁴⁴

Unlike King Richard and Saladin, however, the heroes of these Charlemagne romances confront their Saracen foes not in the Holy Land in the East, but in Western Europe, either at the frontier of Islamic Spain, or in Christian territories: Rome, Paris, and Lombardy.⁴⁵ The events of *Fierabras* and its English versions take place initially on the border with Islamic Spain, and then, as Charlemagne's forces pursue the Saracens with their French captives, the action moves into the heart of the sultan's Spanish empire, and ends with the conquest of Spain and the establishment of Christian rule. But the antecedents of the story, as told in the *chanson de geste*, *La Destruction de Rome*, and incorporated into the Middle English romance of *The Sowdone of Babylone*, explain that Charlemagne's expedition to Spain was an act of continuing revenge and repossession after the atrocities previously carried out by the sultan and his son Fierabras in Rome, where they sacked the city, killed the inhabitants – including the pope – and stole the relics of Christ's Passion. The story of *Otinel* begins in France, where a messenger from the Saracen king of Spain brings a similar report: the Saracens have sacked Rome, and demand that Charlemagne renounce Christianity and submit to the Saracen king as his sovereign. When Charles refuses, the action eventually moves to Lombardy, where the Saracen king has made his stronghold; and again, the story ends with conquest of the Saracen-held lands and the establishment of a Christian kingdom. The main events of *Roland and Vernagu* take place in Spain, which Charlemagne conquers, city by city, and where the Saracen giant comes

lord: see Margaret A. Jubb, 'Enemies in the Holy War, but Brothers in Chivalry: The Crusaders' View of their Saracen Opponents', in *Aspects de l'épopée romane: Mentalités, idéologies, intertextualités*, ed. Hans van Dijk and Willem Noomen (Groningen: Forsten, 1995), pp. 251–9; Sarah Lambert (citing Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*), 'Heroines and Saracens', *Medieval World* 1 (1991), 3–9 (p. 9). The idea can be found widely in connection with virtuous non-Christians such as, for example, the Saracen Sir Baltirdam in *The Beauchamp Pageant*, ed. Alexandra Sinclair (Donington: Watkins, 2003), p. 88.

⁴⁴ In the Appendix we give details of the manuscripts and editions of all the insular Charlemagne texts discussed in this book.

⁴⁵ The action of *Aspremont* takes place in Calabria.

to challenge him; the action of *The Sege of Melayne*, as indicated in the title, is set in Lombardy and climaxes with the siege of the Saracen-held city of Milan – but as the text is incomplete, we can only guess that it most likely concludes with the reconquest of the city and the restoration of Christian rule. There is evident replication between these various texts, and, not surprisingly, it has been argued both that *Otinel* reworks material from *Fierabras*,⁴⁶ and that *The Sege of Melayne* is a compilation of well-known motifs from *Otinel* and elsewhere.⁴⁷ This only strengthens the impression that insular audiences had an insatiable appetite for fiction adhering to a particular, recognizable formula: triumphal narratives of familiar Christian heroes defending or reconquering European lands in the face of Saracen aggression. We explore the issue in this book by placing it in the context of recurrent concerns for the Christian homeland in the later medieval period that may have provoked repeated insular engagement with these specific Charlemagne texts.

The vivid portrayal of hostile relations between English and French contingents in the crusader forces in *Richard Coeur de Lion* indicates another site of concern around the selection of texts for insular appropriation: the issue of language and identity. Questions raised in the past about the production of English-language Charlemagne texts, particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries during the period of the Hundred Years' War, tended to assume a narrative of developing national and linguistic identity, in which war-time English adaptations of French-language narratives celebrating Charlemagne and the peers of 'douce France' would seem to present an anomaly.⁴⁸ However, this assumption has been profoundly questioned by much subsequent work on the complex patterns of language use and identity construction in

⁴⁶ The nineteenth-century critic Léon Gautier described *Otinel* as 'servilement calquée sur la légende de Fierabras': *Les Épopées françaises: Étude sur les origines et l'histoire de la littérature nationale*, 4 vols (Paris: Société Générale de Librairie Catholique, 1878–92), III, p. 398; Marianne Ailes, 'Otinel: An Epic in Dialogue with the Tradition', *Olifant* 27 (2015), 9–39.

⁴⁷ W. R. J. Barron, *English Medieval Romance* (London: Longman, 1987), p. 96.

⁴⁸ Warm, 'Identity, Narrative and Participation', p. 87.

medieval Britain and France.⁴⁹ Michael Bennett, focusing on relations between England and France in the early years of the war, stresses the vitality of cross-Channel Francophone cultural exchange: 'In the late 1350s, the court of Edward III could claim to be the centre of the French-speaking world.'⁵⁰ Ardis Butterfield offers a striking insight into the anxieties surrounding the ownership of language and its relation to identity in response to the course of the war: 'The realization *from the other side*, once the English soldier started to dominate at Crécy and Poitiers, that "French" as a political and linguistic category now meant "English" (at least to the English) was one of the crises of the period.'⁵¹ Marisa Libbon, reading the earliest copy of *Richard Coeur de Lion* in the Auchinleck MS (NLS MS Adv. 19.2.1), argues that details in the romance create a parallel between Richard and Charlemagne which, together with other 'textual inventions' in the manuscript, reinvent the French canon as 'England's rightful inheritance'.⁵² Applying a similar insight to BL MS Royal 15 E vi, a manuscript that was shaped by the outcome of the war as a presentation volume for Margaret of Anjou, Andrew Taylor proposes that its collection of French Charlemagne texts for a new queen of England could be read 'as an act of cultural appropriation, a *translatio studii* that reinforced a *translatio imperii*, laying claim to

⁴⁹ See, for example, the 'French of England' programme at Fordham University, NY, and the University of York; and the Leverhulme-funded international 'Multilingualism in the Middle Ages' project network. For a brief response in relation to Middle English romances, see Thomas H. Crofts and Robert Allen Rouse, 'Middle English Popular Romance and National Identity', in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, ed. Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 79–95.

⁵⁰ Michael Bennett, 'France in England: Anglo-French Culture in the Reign of Edward III', in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c. 1100–c. 1500*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne *et al.* (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 320–33 (p. 327).

⁵¹ Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language and Nation in the Hundred Years' War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. xxvii.

⁵² Marisa Libbon, 'The Invention of King Richard', in *The Auchinleck Manuscript: New Perspectives*, ed. Susanna Fein (York: York Medieval Press, 2016), pp. 127–38 (p. 137).

the glories of French heritage'.⁵³ We believe that the same project of cultural appropriation may be seen as lying behind the repeated acts of translation and rewriting that produced the Middle English Charlemagne romances. Texts celebrating Charlemagne and his peers would be as much the legitimate heritage of English-speaking subjects of Plantagenet kings as of their French-speaking fellows, and indeed this consciousness might have been felt especially keenly during those phases of the Hundred Years' War when Edward III and later Henry V explicitly laid claim to the crown of France.

Cultural appropriation as an aspect of translation has been an issue in recent developments in translation theory, especially, as applied to medieval texts, in combination with a renewed emphasis on manuscript transmission and multilingualism.⁵⁴ Indeed, given the emphasis in medieval writing on the process of rewriting, of adapting an authoritative text for a new context, it is possible to consider 'translation' in its widest sense as a major impulse in medieval literary creation. Nevertheless, in the past translations were often dismissed as being derivative and therefore of little interest. The English Charlemagne romances have suffered from this tendency, a tendency sufficiently marked that our texts do not appear at all in William Calin's extensive study of *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England*.⁵⁵ Even when credit is given to the creativity of translators, some critical judgements of the Middle English Charlemagne romances have been harsh. Rosalind Field argues that 'the most intriguing cultural *translatio* gives rise to one of the least satisfactory groups of romances, the ME romances of the Matter of France. The quality of the surviving ME versions of Matter of France material is generally considered

⁵³ Andrew Taylor, 'The Self-Presentation of an English Mastiff: John Talbot's Book of Chivalry', in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain*, ed. Wogan-Browne *et al.*, pp. 444–56 (p. 453).

⁵⁴ See, for example, the studies of Scandinavian material in Sif Rikhardsdóttir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), and Stefka Georgieva Eriksen, *Writing and Reading in Medieval Manuscript Culture* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

⁵⁵ William Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

unimpressive.’⁵⁶ This follows her more detailed judgement of their quality as ‘derivative and feeble versions’ of the original *chansons de geste*, which ‘displace their matter into an exotic, distancing, romance mode in which it can easily topple into absurdity or banality’.⁵⁷ This view reflects the majority critical opinion of the Charlemagne romances in the twentieth century, and the sense that these texts are of limited value because of their status as ‘derivative’ translations has permeated much discussion.⁵⁸ What lies behind such dismissive judgements of the Middle English translations can be demonstrated with reference to the varied assessments of Caxton’s prose translations. N. F. Blake, in his overview of Caxton, compares the very different judgements made by two editors of Caxton’s work:

The difference between the views of Sommer and Kellner quoted above is the result not so much of the different quality of the two translations, as the different expectations and outlooks of the two modern editors. The mistakes in the two works are comparable, but Kellner viewed them in relation to other fifteenth-century translations, whereas Sommer looked at them with a modern eye.⁵⁹

Reviews of modern translations generally evaluate them in terms of a balance between fidelity to the original and fluency in the target language,⁶⁰ but if such criteria were applied to Caxton’s Charlemagne

⁵⁶ Rosalind Field, ‘Romance’, in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, ed. Roger Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), I, pp. 296–331 (p. 312).

⁵⁷ Rosalind Field, ‘Romance in England, 1066–1400’, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 152–76 (p. 172).

⁵⁸ See, for example, H. M. Smyser, ‘Charlemagne Legends’, in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500*, vol. I: *Romances*, ed. J. B. Severs (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967), p. 80; D. B. Sands, *Middle English Verse Romances* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 2.

⁵⁹ N. F. Blake, *Caxton and his World* (London: André Deutsch, 1969), p. 126.

⁶⁰ Fidelity to the original is often the main concern with academic translations, which may be used as an aid for the ‘semi-linguaged’. For a more detailed discussion of fluctuating attitudes to the *fidus interpres*,

romances they would be found wanting. However, in recent years the development of a more general academic study of translation practice and theory has had a beneficial effect on approaches to medieval translation,⁶¹ and the theory and practice of translation in the Middle Ages have, over the last three decades, been a subject for investigation in their own right.⁶²

Situating the practice of medieval translation in the context of medieval rhetorical practice has revolutionized recent approaches to medieval translations. This principle received its fullest and most systematic treatment in a major study by Rita Copeland,⁶³ while both Copeland herself and Karen Pratt had previously applied the same

see Luis Kelly, *The True Interpreter* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979); Lawrence Venuti, in *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 2008), with conscious and clearly articulated polemical purposes, stressed that fluency has been a major criterion in the evaluation of translations since the seventeenth century.

⁶¹ There is no room here for a comprehensive bibliography. Influential scholarship includes: *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, ed. Theo Hermans (London: Croom Helm, 1985); Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998); Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 75–83; *The Translator as Writer*, ed. Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush (London: Continuum, 2006); Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*.

⁶² This development can be seen in the series of volumes and connected conferences on medieval translation initiated by *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989); also in the series of panels at Kalamazoo, and associated publications such as *Medieval Translators and their Craft*, ed. Jeanette Beer, *Studies in Medieval Culture* 25 (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 1989). *Rethinking Medieval Translation: Ethics, Politics, Theory*, ed. Emma Campbell and Robert Mills (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012) offers a series of studies on medieval translation and modern translation theory.

⁶³ Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

approach to individual texts.⁶⁴ The same techniques and rhetorical practices which could be used in imitating and adapting classical models could be applied by the vernacular translator to his model, whether that model was Latin or another vernacular.

Even in this brave new world of studies of medieval translation into the vernacular, the focus has been largely on translation from classical languages, particularly Latin: inter-vernacular translation is only rarely the main topic of study.⁶⁵ As Copeland's work has shown, vernacular translation of Latin texts was often part of an ambitious project of linguistic rehabilitation: the act of translation demonstrates the adequacy of the target language for the presentation of material hitherto confined to the source language, and, by implication, for the production of original material which might previously have been written only in the source language.⁶⁶ Until these recent preoccupations with translation theory, a major focus of interest in medieval

⁶⁴ Rita Copeland, 'The Fortunes of "Nor verbum pro verbo": or why Jerome is not a Ciceronian', in *The Medieval Translator*, ed. Ellis (1989), pp. 15–35; Karen Pratt, 'Medieval Attitudes to Translation and Adaptation: The Rhetorical Theory and the Poetic Practice', in *The Medieval Translator*, ed. Roger Ellis (London: Westfield Medieval Publications, 1991), pp. 1–27.

⁶⁵ Important exceptions include Rikhardsdóttir, *Medieval Translations*; Eriksen, *Writing and Reading*; and, of particular relevance here, Stephen H. A. Shepherd, 'The Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras*: Translation in Holograph', in *The Medieval Translator*, ed. Ellis (1989), pp. 103–21. See also Karen Pratt, 'Direct Speech – A Key to the German Adaptor's Art', in *Medieval Translators and their Craft*, ed. Beer, pp. 213–46; Brenda Hosington, 'The Englishing of the Comic Technique in Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*', *ibid.*, pp. 247–64; Earl Jeffrey Richards, 'The *Fiore* and the *Roman de la Rose*', *ibid.*, pp. 265–84; Ana Pairet, 'Intervernacular Translation in the Early Decades of Print: Chivalric Romance and the Marvelous in the Spanish *Melusine*', in *Translating the Middle Ages*, ed. Karen L. Fresco and Charles D. Wright (London: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 135–46. The relatively small number of vernacular texts in the corpus of translations into French (90% are translations from Latin) is demonstrated in the output of the monumental *transmédie* project: *Traductions médiévales: Cinq siècles de traductions en français au moyen âge (XIe–XVe siècles): Étude et répertoire*, ed. Claudio Galderisi with Vladimir Agrigoroaei, 3 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), in which see Michel Zink's 'Préface', p. 10.

⁶⁶ Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, p. 3.

translation was on biblical translation, as it was here that the approach of the translator was most likely to be articulated. However, there are important differences between literary texts like the Charlemagne romances and the translation of Scripture, sacred and inspired by God where, therefore, there was some argument for *ad verbum* translation.⁶⁷ Jeanette Beer divides medieval translations into two main camps: the literal and the literary. The former groups together 'functional' texts and sacred Scripture: 'While the inherited legal formularies, Scripture, and philosophic/scientific treatises compelled translators toward close lexical equivalence, literary translation necessitated no such devices.'⁶⁸ She goes on to ascribe this practice of 'unfaithful translation' to 'the shifting medieval attitudes toward authorship and authority'.⁶⁹ However, medieval translation practice was far from uniform, and the fact that Roger Bacon thought it necessary to admonish translators not to add material of their own suggests that this was common practice, even though such freedom to edit was thought undesirable in translations of 'functional' or religious material.⁷⁰

With the specific texts at the heart of our study, the Middle English and Anglo-Norman redactions of the Charlemagne material, an explanation for the particularly dynamic approach to translation should perhaps be sought in the conditions of manuscript culture and the nature of the source texts themselves.⁷¹ The *chanson de geste* as a genre was particularly subject to *mouvance*, an instability which went beyond minor formulaic changes and included substantial *remaniement* of the

⁶⁷ Jeanette Beer, 'Introduction', in *Medieval Translators and their Craft*, ed. Beer, pp. 1–7 (p. 1).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Kelly distinguishes two authority structures: 'personal' and 'positional'. The former allows the translator to take authority over the text; the latter is more text-centred. In medieval practice authoritative texts, in particular the Bible, would not be open to the same kind of editing and alteration by the translator as were historical and fictional texts (*The True Interpreter*, pp. 205–18).

⁷⁰ Bacon, cited in J. D. Burnley, 'Late Medieval English Translation: Types and Reflections', in *The Medieval Translator*, ed. Ellis (1989), pp. 37–53 (p. 49).

⁷¹ Tim William Machan, 'Manuscript Culture', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, I, ed. Ellis, pp. 29–44.

source text.⁷² Scribes and *remanieurs* could adapt, expand and abbreviate according to the demands of individual patrons or the exigencies of performance, for this was a genre which, even as it moved away from its oral roots, continued to be performed. This freedom in adapting inherited material was part of the way the medieval scribe worked. The accepted instability of the medieval manuscript text allowed the scribal adaptor to make the changes he saw as necessary. The medieval translator took the work of the *remanieur* one stage further, since his 'reworking' of the text also translated it into another language. It is thus not surprising that, on a continuum with adaptation at one end and *ad verbum* translation at the other, the translations of the Old French verse texts into Middle English are at the adaptation end.

This freedom to adapt which was part of manuscript culture and, as we have noted, particularly a feature of the dissemination of the *chansons de geste*, showed signs of changing in the later Middle Ages. Dynamic translation did not cease to exist, but texts which had previously been open to adaptation and appropriation became more fixed in their form and wording when, with the introduction of printing, the source text in the form of a printed book itself became less subject to constant *remaniement*. The later printed Charlemagne texts provide a useful comparison in consideration of translation practice. Charlemagne narratives were first printed in English by Caxton and translated by him, no doubt with some commercial imperative to complete them quickly.⁷³ Caxton's *Four Sons of Aymon* (c. 1490) and *Lyf of Charles the Grete* (1485) have been criticized in modern times for their *ad verbum* approach:

In his translation, Caxton has followed his original so closely and even slavishly, that at times it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand his meaning without a reference to the language of

⁷² Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 65–75; Zumthor, 'Intertextualité et mouvance', *Littérature* 41 (1981), 8–16.

⁷³ Joerg Fichte, in 'Caxton's Concept of "Historical Romance" within the Context of the Crusades: Conviction, Rhetoric and Sales Strategy', in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. Field, pp. 101–13, considers the inter-relation of principle and commercial impulses with regard to Caxton's *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, concluding that 'if his appeal [to the common goal of the liberation of the holy places] was not heeded, Caxton had the consolation of having supported a good cause and having made good money in the process' (p. 113).

the original. Frequently he has used the very words of the French author, and still more frequently he has merely given them an English dress.⁷⁴

This is the judgement of the Early English Text Society's editor of *Charles the Grete*, while the editor of Caxton's translation of *Les Quatre Fils Aymoun* calls it 'perhaps one of the most literal that has ever been produced in the English language', so close that it can scarcely be considered an independent version of the story.⁷⁵ Another nineteenth-century editor comments that Caxton was 'content to follow his author with almost plodding fidelity'.⁷⁶ Caxton himself frequently used the prologue to assert his fidelity to his source, making use of what have been described as 'fairly standard late medieval translators' topoi of fidelity and humility.⁷⁷ Such close translation was not unusual practice in the later Middle Ages and it is not unreasonable to connect this to the increasing stability of the text through the use of printing,⁷⁸ though, as Lotte Hellinga points out, 'appearing in print does not necessarily signal the stabilization of a text'.⁷⁹ Again, Caxton's prologues give us insight

⁷⁴ William Caxton, *The Lyf of Charles the Grete*, ed. Sidney Herrtage, EETS ES 36, 37 (London: 1880–1), p. vii.

⁷⁵ William Caxton, *The Four Sons of Aymon*, ed. Octavia Richardson, EETS ES 44, 45 (London, 1884–5), p. viii. The extreme fidelity of Caxton's translations makes them unprofitable for the purposes of our textual analyses; however, we examine the circumstances of their production in Chapter 3. For discussion of Caxton's choice of these Matter of France romances, see Megan Leitch, 'Thinking Twice about Treason in Caxton's Prose Romances: Proper Chivalric Conduct and the English Printing Press', *Medium Ævum* 81 (2012), 41–69.

⁷⁶ *The Game and Playe of the Chesse*, ed. William Axon (London: Elliot Stock, 1883), p. xxxiv.

⁷⁷ A. E. B. Coldiron, 'William Caxton', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, I, ed. Ellis, pp. 160–9.

⁷⁸ On fifteenth-century translation practice, see Blake, *Caxton and his World*, pp. 147–50; *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, I, ed. Ellis.

⁷⁹ Lotte Hellinga, 'From Poggio to Caxton: Early Translations of Some of Poggio's Latin *Facetie*', in *Makers and Users of Medieval Books: Essays in Honour of A. S. G. Edwards*, ed. Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 89–104 (p. 91). For a useful

into this tension between a degree of ongoing editing of a text and increased stability, for Caxton used the paratext to explain the changes he made to his sources;⁸⁰ in manuscript culture, the licence a translator had to edit his source text, to add or subtract material, abbreviate, embellish and elaborate, did not need to be commented on. But even so, the increased stability of the text was neither total nor sudden, any more than the increasing monolingualism of England was immediate. Texts which appeared in print also circulated in manuscript. Early printers did continue to view their source texts as 'malleable, revisable, interpretable works'.⁸¹ Nonetheless, a gradual, but inexorable, process of textual stabilization was taking place, which would not be seriously challenged until the era of the internet, wikis and blogging.

All translators have a target readership in mind which will, in part, determine the principles of translation. A modern translator may seek what Beer terms 'the modern ideal of audience response equivalence'. Aiming for a response from the reader of the target text which is equivalent to that of the reader of the source text permits radical changes, including changes of form, where the literary form of the source text, in our case the *chanson de geste*, has no equivalent in the literary tradition of the target language. Beer argues that medieval translation never had 'audience response equivalence' as its goal, and goes on to say that 'appropriateness of form was determined from the predicted response of a particular target audience, never from an attempted match between presumed past response and presumed present one'.⁸² However, in the case of the English Charlemagne romances, while the evidence of paratextual matter, particularly prologues, does not support any suggestion that medieval translators sought to replicate any 'presumed past response' (and such an ideal would seem to be contrary to the medieval tendency to ignore the historical context of the source text), the experimentation with different verse forms in the English verse texts

summary of 'revisionist histories of the book and print culture' displacing earlier ideas of the 'fixity' of print, see Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and their Books, 1473–1557* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 9.

⁸⁰ Coldiron, 'William Caxton', pp. 166–7.

⁸¹ Anne Coldiron, *English Printing, Verse Translations, and the Battle of the Sexes, 1476–1557* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 15.

⁸² *Medieval Translators and their Craft*, ed. Beer, p. 2.

may indeed spring from a desire to find a literary form equivalent to that of the heroic *gestes* of France.⁸³

In the treatment of content, rather than form, appropriation, rather than 'audience response equivalence', seems to have been the approach to the translated text, as the rest of this book will demonstrate; the target audience or readership was as important in a medieval context as in a modern one, and the production of the translation may equally have been driven by commercial imperatives, at least some of the time.⁸⁴ The patron may have determined not only the matter to be translated, but also the form of the translation and the manuscript context in which the translation is found.⁸⁵ A change in manuscript context, as in the case of the Anglo-Norman *Fierenbras*, could also mean a different way of reading a text, a different meaning.⁸⁶ Indeed, the vexed question of why some French Charlemagne texts circulating in England were translated while others were not may be answered, at least in part, by the preferences of patrons. For example, the aristocratic and gentry patrons of translations would have had a vested interest in not extending beyond the francophone elite the textual community of narratives which seemed to justify rebellion against authority, such as *Renaud de Montauban* and *Aspremont*.⁸⁷

⁸³ See Chapter 1, pp. 86–97.

⁸⁴ Coldiron, *English Printing*, returns at several points to the question of commercial motivation, e.g. pp. 4, 111.

⁸⁵ See Roger Ellis, 'Patronage and Sponsorship of Translation', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation*, I, ed. Ellis, pp. 98–115. For a comparison of the context of a fourteenth-century translator working under royal patronage and a sixteenth-century author translating his own work without patronage, see Jeanette Beer, 'Patronage and the Translator: Raoul de Presles' *La Cité de Dieu* and Calvin's *Institution de la religion Chrestienne* and *Institutio religionis Christianae*', in *Translation and the Transmission of Culture between 1300 and 1600*, ed. Jeanette Beer and Kenneth Lloyd-Jones (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), pp. 91–142.

⁸⁶ See the discussion of British Library MS Egerton 3028, pp. 138–44.

⁸⁷ See M. J. Ailes and Ad Putter, 'French in Medieval England', in *La Francophonie européenne*, ed. D. Offord and Vladislav Rjéoutski (Peter Lang: Bern, 2014), pp. 51–80. The insular situation differed from that on the continent in two respects: the presence of two vernaculars in England,

The particular context in which our texts were translated was a multilingual one, and this must have affected the nature and purpose of translation. The multilingual nature of medieval England has been the subject of increasing attention in recent decades, in a period when modern Britain has also had to come to terms with the experience of various languages sharing the same geographical space.⁸⁸ It is now recognized that 'English–French bilingualism remained a central fact in the linguistic life of England well into the late medieval period'.⁸⁹ Even after the Charlemagne texts had been translated into Middle English, they continued to be copied in French. The *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* circulated in England in three languages: Latin, French (continental and Anglo-Norman)⁹⁰ and Middle English; in the wider context of the British Isles it was also translated into Welsh and Irish.⁹¹ At the same time it should be remembered that the source texts for all our translations, apart from the versions of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, were

and in France the existence of fiefdoms so vast as to more than rival the French king's lands.

⁸⁸ See, for example, *Medieval Multilingualism: The Francophone World*, ed. Christopher Kleinhenz and Keith Busby (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain*, ed. Judith A. Jefferson and Ad Putter (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in Medieval England, c. 800–c. 1250*, ed. Elizabeth M. Tyler (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011). An acceptance of the reality of multilingualism also lies behind the 'Medieval Francophone Literature outside France' project: <http://www.medievalfrancophone.ac.uk/> [accessed 23/08/2016].

⁸⁹ Richard Ingham, 'Anglo-Norman: New Themes, New Contexts', in *The Anglo-Norman Language and its Contexts*, ed. Richard Ingham (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), pp. 1–7.

⁹⁰ Traditionally, earlier insular French, which has very distinctive dialectal markers, has been called 'Anglo-Norman' and later insular French termed 'Anglo-French'; more recently the terms 'French of England' and 'insular French' have been used to cover the whole period. We use the term 'Anglo-Norman' to distinguish works written in the dialect of French used in England, along with the more extensive term 'insular French'.

⁹¹ Marianne Ailes and Suzanne Leedham, 'Le Pseudo-Turpin en Angleterre', *Cahiers de recherche médiévales et humanistes* 25 (2013), 495–514; Celtic material will be covered in the volume on *Charlemagne in the Celtic and Scandinavian Worlds*, ed. Helen Fulton and Sif Rikhardsdóttir, in the series 'Charlemagne: A European Icon'.

chansons de geste, a genre particularly associated with France (to the extent that some modern scholars have denied the recognition of the genre in an Anglo-Norman context).⁹²

The distinction between 'domestication' and 'foreignization' used by Antoine Berman and Lawrence Venuti is much less clear in a context where the geographic area of production is the same and the cultural zones (to borrow a term from Stephen Greenblatt) of the source and target language overlap.⁹³ Linguistic permeability is increasingly seen as part of the landscape of medieval England.⁹⁴ The large number of lexical borrowings from French into English makes an assessment of our texts as translations particularly problematic. The Middle English *Sir Ferumbras* is an interesting case: its high proportion of romance words is clearly different from the 'lazy' taking over of French words into English in Caxton's translations. To some extent this usage can be seen as an aspect of the fashionable enhancement of the text, but is it also a way of retaining a sense that this is and remains a 'French' text, an acknowledgment that the text is a 'romance' in the etymological sense of a text (originally) written in a romance language? Viewed or read thus, the technique might be seen in modern terms as deliberately

⁹² See Chapter 1, pp. 36, 49, 57–9; Luke Sunderland challenges this notion that the Matter of France belongs to France in 'Bueve d'Hantone / Bovo d'Antona: Exile, Translation and the History of the *chanson de geste*', in *Rethinking Medieval Translation*, ed. Campbell and Mills, pp. 226–42 (pp. 226–9).

⁹³ Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*; Antoine Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995); Antoine Berman, 'Translation and the Trials of the Foreign', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Venuti, pp. 276–90; Stephen Greenblatt, 'Culture', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 2nd edn (London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 225–32. For a brief definition of 'domestication' and 'foreignization' see *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. Jeremy Munday (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 183, 189.

⁹⁴ Ingham, 'Anglo-Norman: New Themes, New Contexts', p. 2; Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, 'General Introduction: What's in a Name? The "French" of England', in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain*, ed. Wogan-Browne *et al.*, pp. 1–13; Emma Campbell and Robert Mills, 'Introduction: Rethinking Medieval Translation', in *Rethinking Medieval Translation*, ed. Campbell and Mills, pp. 1–20 (p. 11).

'foreignizing'. The *chansons de geste* belong equally to the culture of medieval France and to the francophone culture of medieval England and elsewhere.⁹⁵ Although French was always a minority language in medieval England in purely numerical terms, it was never unfamiliar and was not therefore the vehicle for an alien culture.⁹⁶ For the translation of our texts, the time in which they were redacted or copied, and the changes made to the texts to render them meaningful in a different context, may be as significant as the different language.

Much work on medieval translation has made use of authors' prologues to discuss approaches to translation, taking into consideration what the translators themselves say about both approach and purpose.⁹⁷ The general assumption made is that 'the point of translation is to make a text accessible to its readers who lack the requisite skills to read the original'.⁹⁸ Prefaces of medieval translations from Latin into medieval French which tell us the purpose of the translation support this. Thus, for example, the author of *La Vie de Seint Clement* makes it clear that his purpose in translating his Latin source text is to make it available to those with no Latin, so that they may learn from it.⁹⁹ He is writing in the early thirteenth century and explicitly states that he expects everyone but the most vulgar to be able to read French. Our Anglo-Norman

⁹⁵ Sunderland, 'Bueve d'Hantone / Bovo d'Antona'; M. J. Ailes, 'What's in a Name? Anglo-Norman Romances or *chansons de geste*?', in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 61–76. See also Chapter 1.

⁹⁶ Ardis Butterfield writes of the 'entanglements between peoples, cultures, histories and languages', which are the subject of her study *The Familiar Enemy*, p. 393.

⁹⁷ See, for example, *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999); Elizabeth Dearnley, *Translators on Translation: French–English Translation and the Middle English Translator's Prologue*, forthcoming.

⁹⁸ Gloria Allaire, 'Literary Evidence for Multilingualism: The *Roman de Tristan* in its Italian Incarnations', in *Medieval Multilingualism*, ed. Kleinhenz and Busby, pp. 145–53 (p. 151).

⁹⁹ *La Vie de Seint Clement*, vol. I: *Text: 1–7006*, ed. Daron Burrows (London: ANTS, 2007); the poet declares he is writing so that 'plusurs genz prun eussent' ['so that many people may have benefit from it'] 34.

translation of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* asserts in a similar vein that it is written so that those who read or hear the tale may both learn and be entertained by it:

Le mettray en romaunz ke ceus ke le orrunt i preynount
essaumple e s'i delitunt a oyer les hauz feez et les hauz miracles.

[I have put it into the romance language so that those who hear it
may learn from the example and take pleasure in hearing of great
deeds and mighty miracles.]¹⁰⁰

The *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* stands out among our translated texts in the visibility of the translator; only Caxton's later printed prose translations are similarly marked as translations. Anne Coldiron has nuanced Venuti's comments regarding the invisibility of the translator in works dating from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, with an analysis of the 'visibility' of the translator in earlier times as 'part of a complicated, powerful textual system designed to guarantee and to display a text's *auctoritas*'.¹⁰¹ The *Pseudo-Turpin* is the one insular Charlemagne text which is given such a 'hierarchy of authority', beginning with St James himself telling Turpin to write the chronicle, and including the patrons of the translator, William de Briane.

Where the Middle English verse Charlemagne romances have prologues, they are similar to those of the *chansons de geste* – exhortations to the listeners, with, sometimes, a reference to the content; they do not present themselves as translations.¹⁰² The translator is invisible; the translation functions as an independent text. It is probably safe to speculate that at least part of the purpose behind the fact of translation was indeed to 'make a text accessible to its readers who lack the requisite skills', but this is only part of the story. Some of the owners of the manuscripts would certainly have had a degree of competence in French; evidence suggests that levels of competence in French may even have improved during some periods of the Hundred

¹⁰⁰ *The Anglo-Norman Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle of William de Briane*, ed. Ian Short, ANTS 25 (Oxford, 1973).

¹⁰¹ A. E. B. Coldiron, 'Visibility Now: Historicizing Foreign Presences in Translation', *Translation Studies* 5 (2002), 189–200 (p. 190).

¹⁰² Several of the Middle English Charlemagne romances are acephalous: see Chapter 3.

Years' War, due to increased contact with our neighbours across the Channel;¹⁰³ indeed, writing of events in 1360, John M. Bowers notes the 'francophilia, not to mention francophonia' of the English court.¹⁰⁴ Some patrons were aristocrats who owned French books, and may even have sometimes supplied the translator with their source text.¹⁰⁵ The translations, however, broadened the textual community, making available to whole households the culture and narratives which were part of the (still) prestigious French-language culture. It is worth noting the tension, or even incompatibility, between translation as appropriation and translation as access.¹⁰⁶ The verse Charlemagne romances, with their invisible translators, present as appropriations of the source texts, replacing (or displacing) them; the *Pseudo-Turpin* in its prologue is presented as giving access to the source text.

It has been argued that the decision to write in English was a political act,¹⁰⁷ but this act was not necessarily a simplistic one of promoting an 'English' identity over a 'French' one, as Bowers argues with regard to Chaucer's output.¹⁰⁸ Nicholas Watson claims that 'writing in English raised questions about national/cultural identity and about

¹⁰³ Anne Curry *et al.*, 'Languages in the Military Profession in Later Medieval England', in *The Anglo-Norman Language and its Contexts*, ed. Ingham, pp. 74–93.

¹⁰⁴ John M. Bowers, 'Chaucer after Retters: The Wartime Origins of English Literature', in *Inscribing the Hundred Years' War in French and English Cultures*, ed. Denise N. Baker (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 91–125 (p. 92).

¹⁰⁵ This is likely to have been the case for William of Briane, translator of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, see Short's edition, p. 5. The Earl of Oxford supplied Caxton with a copy of Christine de Pizan's *Livre de Fait d'Armes* to translate (Coldiron, 'William Caxton', p. 166). It is even possible that he had some role in providing Caxton's source text for the *Four Sonnes of Aymon*.

¹⁰⁶ Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, pp. 224–6.

¹⁰⁷ Nicholas Watson, 'The Politics of Middle English Writing', in *The Idea of the Vernacular*, ed. Wogan-Browne *et al.*, pp. 331–52; see also R. F. Yeager, 'Politics and the French Language in England during the Hundred Years' War', in *Inscribing the Hundred Years' War*, ed. Baker, pp. 126–57.

¹⁰⁸ Bowers, 'Chaucer after Retters', *passim*.

the consequences of the spread of literacy'.¹⁰⁹ When the texts being translated are focused on a king of France, the emperor Charlemagne, it would be facile to see the translation as a rejection of French and francophone culture. Arguably, the use of English was as much about cultural identity as about national identity. In the early thirteenth century the clerical translator of the *Vie de Saint Clement* could assume that those who could read at all would be able to read French, but as literacy increased this was no longer true.¹¹⁰ Translation implies both contact and an acceptance of alterity. French was an integral part of insular literary culture; the fact of translation of these French texts into English both acknowledged the alterity of the French and suppressed that difference by appropriating the Matter of France for England. Moreover, translation or transference from one context to another does not always imply inter-lingual translation.¹¹¹ The Anglo-Norman redactions of texts originally composed in another dialect of Old French are part of a continual process of adaptation and reworking of texts, a process of which inter-lingual translation is simply the most radical expression. The copying of the French texts into different manuscript contexts and their adaptation to different literary criteria is another aspect of the instability of the text which arises out of medieval manuscript culture.¹¹² It is this very instability, of course, that produces the conditions for the adaptations and appropriations of the Charlemagne tradition in new insular contexts, in both vernacular languages, over a period of 300 years.

In this book we read the story of the so-called 'Matter of France' in multilingual late-medieval Britain by piecing together a contextual

¹⁰⁹ Nicholas Watson, 'The Politics of Middle English Writing', p. 331.

¹¹⁰ For discussion see Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, 'Introduction', and J. B. Trapp, 'Literacy, Books and Readers', both in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. III: 1400–1557, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1–20 and pp. 31–43.

¹¹¹ Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan (London: Routledge, 2006) writes of translation between different registers of the same linguistic community (p. 10; also cited by Catherine Batt, 'Introduction', in *Translating the Middle Ages*, ed. Fresco and Wright, pp. 1–7, p. 1); in a medieval francophone context we would also want to include translation from one dialect to another.

¹¹² Machan, 'Manuscript Culture', p. 31.

understanding of the genesis and reception of Charlemagne texts in England, in both insular vernaculars, looking at the various ways in which the legends appear to have been used at different times. We explore several identifiable sites of particular interest in the insular Charlemagne tradition: the marked concentration on narratives portraying Christian and Saracen heroes in single combat; the choice of texts representing the advance of Saracen armies into Christian lands rather than vice-versa; the proliferation of Middle English versions of these stories in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The book recognizes three significant stages in the textual history: first, the appearance of Charlemagne-related texts in Anglo-Norman (whether derived from continental French sources or Anglo-Norman compositions) in the thirteenth century (an era of crusades); second, the making of translations into Middle English, and new copies of Anglo-Norman texts, in the fourteenth century (coinciding with the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War); and third, the production of further Middle English translations and adaptations, and new copies of older texts, in the fifteenth century (when there were fears of Turkish invasion in Europe). However, the structure of the book reflects the clear insular focus on a small corpus of narrative traditions: the stories of Roland, Fierabras and Otinel. Each individual text is closely examined as a revisioning of the tradition in its own specific moment, and the reception of the texts in these three different periods is investigated in light of contemporary cultural, political and religious concerns, drawing on the evidence provided in the manuscript (or print) context of each. Our aim is thus to engage with the major questions about these insular Matter of France narratives on their own terms.¹¹³

¹¹³ In this, we take a different approach from that adopted in most other critical analyses of the insular tradition, which have tended to be synthetic and thematic, discounting the integrity of each text and its role within the larger manuscript collection it may be in. Examples range from Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby*, to Siobhain B. Calkin, 'Saracens', in *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, ed. Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), pp. 185–200. A notable exception is Janet Cowen, 'The English Charlemagne Romances', in *Roland and Charlemagne in Europe: Essays on the Reception and Transformation of a Legend*, ed. Karen Pratt (London: King's College Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1996), pp. 149–68.

Acculturating Charlemagne: The Insular Literary Context

The Circulation of French-Language Charlemagne Material in England

Reception of the *Chanson de geste*

THE Matter of France entered insular literary consciousness largely through two genres: the *chanson de geste* and the chronicle, or rather the pseudo-chronicle in the text of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*. If the latter apparently brought a respectable clerical imprimatur, the former might be expected to have had more popular appeal. While only a restricted group of texts became fully appropriated into Middle English popular culture through translation into Middle English, there is evidence of much wider dissemination of the legends of Charlemagne in French-language texts.

The *chansons de geste* are more distinct by form than any other French narrative genre. After some early experimentation in versification, by the middle of the twelfth century most French narratives were written in rhyming couplets.¹ The *chansons de geste*, however, retained the verse form of the earliest surviving examples of the genre, namely the *laisse*, a strophe of variable length united by assonance or rhyme and with a line length of ten or twelve syllables. The basic unit of meaning is the hemistich. The narrative is related using an episodic structure. With these formal features we find a characteristic discourse related to the oral origins and dissemination of the *chanson de geste*. This discourse can be epitomised as using different forms of repetition: formulaic lines and half-lines, different patterns of repetition to link the *laisses* (including

¹ On the experimentation with versification in the twelfth-century *lai* of *Piramus et Tisbé*, see <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/modern-languages-and-cultures/liverpoolonline/piramus.pdf>, pp. 18–21.

reprise, picking up some of the sense of one *laisse* in the following one), and different forms of parallelism.²

Some aspects of the reception of the *chanson de geste* in the insular context, and in particular in England, have long puzzled critics. All of the oldest *chansons de geste* survive only in Anglo-Norman manuscripts. The *Chanson de Roland*, the iconic text of French nationalism, and in particular of nineteenth-century French nationalism,³ survives in its oldest known form in an Anglo-Norman manuscript, as noted above; this version of the text is known as 'the Oxford *Roland*', because of its modern resting place, the Bodleian Library.⁴ Almost as venerable (but set in the reign of Charlemagne's son Louis), the only complete text of the non-cyclical version of the *Chanson de Guillaume* is an Anglo-Norman manuscript (BL MS Add. 38663); a further fragment discovered in St Andrews University is also Anglo-Norman.⁵ Another Charlemagne-related text surviving uniquely in an insular manuscript is the fragment of *Gormont et Isembart*.⁶ Probably also dating from the twelfth century, the

² For an introduction to the genre, see Catherine M. Jones, *An Introduction to the chansons de geste* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014); François Suard, *La Chanson de geste* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993); Dominique Boutet, *La Chanson de geste: Forme et signification d'une écriture épique au moyen âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993).

³ For an analysis of the nineteenth-century exploitation of the *Roland* legend and nationalistic interpretations, see Isabel N. Di Vanna, 'Politicizing National Literature: The Scholarly Debate around *La Chanson de Roland* in the Nineteenth Century', *Historical Research* 84 (2011), 109–34. The most anglophobic attitudes were those of the first editor of the text, Francisque Michel, and the later commentator Léon Gautier. Di Vanna expresses the perspective of Michel succinctly: 'it seems that Michel could not accept that the national poem had been created by the enemy' (pp. 118–19).

⁴ Bodleian Library MS Digby 23.

⁵ See below, p. 40. On the *Chanson de Guillaume* as an Anglo-Norman text, see P. E. Bennett, 'La *Chanson de Guillaume*, poème Anglo-Normand?', in *Au carrefour des routes d'Europe: La Chanson de geste*, Xe Congrès International de la Société Rencesvals (Aix-en-Provence: Publications du CUER MA, 1987), pp. 259–81.

⁶ Brussels, Bibliothèque royale, portefeuille II. 181; *Gormont et Isembart: Fragment de chanson de geste du XIIe siècle*, ed. Alphonse Bayot, 3rd edn,

Pèlerinage de Charlemagne now exists only in later transcripts and editions, the unique manuscript, again an insular copy, having disappeared from the British Library in 1879.⁷ The reason for the survival of these texts only in Anglo-Norman copies is unclear: is it, as Rosalind Field has suggested, because insular tastes were conservative, so these older texts were not rejected?⁸ Or was England, in the words of Dominica Legge, 'in the van' of the writing and copying of these texts, rather than lagging behind?⁹ Given that the earliest manuscripts are insular, the evidence points to what Melissa Furrow designates 'a cutting-edge Anglo-Norman reading public'.¹⁰ In fact we find manuscripts containing *chansons de geste* in England throughout the Middle Ages.¹¹ Most of the surviving manuscripts actually copied in England date from the thirteenth century, perhaps not surprisingly as this was a period of great invention and popularity of the genre in France also, and a time when the use and knowledge of French was possibly at its most widespread in England. However, some manuscripts are later: BL MS Egerton 3028, for example, was copied in the fourteenth century. Other manuscripts copied in

CFMA 14 (Paris: Champion, 1931).

⁷ *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. Glyn S. Burgess (Edinburgh: British Rencesvals Publications, 1998). On the peculiarities of the manuscript of the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, see Jules Horrent, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne: Essai d'explication littéraire* (Paris: Belles-Lettres, 1961), pp. 140–50.

⁸ 'The prolonged life of the *chansons de geste* in Anglo-Norman England is intriguing and indicates a taste for a slightly archaic, morally concerned and heroically active type of narrative poetry' (Field, 'Romance in England, 1066–1400', p. 154). William Calin also deems insular readers 'a conservative public that esteemed texts gone out of fashion in the continent' (*The French Tradition*, p. 136).

⁹ Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 3; see also Dominica Legge, 'Archaism and the Conquest', *Modern Language Review* 51 (1956), 227–9.

¹⁰ Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), p. 105; Melissa Furrow, 'Chanson de geste as Romance in England', p. 67.

¹¹ Keith Busby, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, 2 vols (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 488–513; Furrow, 'Chanson de geste as Romance in England', pp. 65–72.

France in the fifteenth century were for English patrons.¹² All of this suggests an ongoing taste for the genre.

In *Gormont et Isembart* the king concerned is Louis, son of Charlemagne in the French epic tradition. Some sections of the narrative concern England, and all the early evidence of the narrative is insular: the narrative is found, with variations, in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*.¹³ The only manuscript dates from the thirteenth century and is a fragment of a mere 661 lines.¹⁴ The editor of the *chanson de geste* fragment considers the underlying language of the text to be that of central France, implying a continental original, though the fragment was copied in England. The narrative (which can be reconstructed with some confidence from internal allusions in the surviving fragment and from other versions) centres on a renegade Christian knight in the service of a pagan king, Gormont, who besieged Cirencester, later handing over the lands he conquered in England to the Saxons, at whose request he had invaded the land in the first place. The fragment of *chanson de geste* deals with the end of Gormont's life, in a battle against Louis, and the death-bed repentance of Isembart. We find here the same concerns about Saracen-Christian conflict, particularly

¹² For example, BL MS Royal 15 E vi, or BL MS Royal 16 G ii.

¹³ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae, The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), pp. 256–7, 264–5; Wace, *Roman de Brut*, ed. and trans. Judith Weiss (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), ll. 1194–98, 13379–13662; p. 30, pp. 337–43; Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. Alexander Bell, ANTS 14–16 (Oxford, 1960), ll. 3235 ff. Wace, as a Channel Islander, illustrates well the difficulty in trying to define too sharply what we mean by Anglo-Norman.

¹⁴ *Gormont et Isembart*, ed. Bayot, p. v. The legend was also known on the continent, as can be seen by later allusions in the chronicles of Philippe Mouskès and of the anonyme de Béthune, as well as in Guillaume le clerc's *Fergus*, and much later in *Loher und Maller*, a German redaction of the fifteenth-century *Lohier et Mallart* (Bayot, pp. xii–xiii); see also Caterina Menichetti and Maria Teresa Rachetta, 'The Gormond et Isembart Legend in the French Monastic Chronicles of the Thirteenth Century', in *The Proceedings of the Oxford Congress of the International Société Rencesvals*, ed. Marianne J. Ailes, Anne E. Cobby and Philip E. Bennett (Edinburgh: British Rencesvals Publications, 2015), pp. 469–94.