

# Texts and Territories



# Texts and Territories:

## *Historicized Fiction and Fictionalised History in Medieval England and Beyond*

Edited by

Hülya Taflı Düzgün

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and Beyond

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To Köksal, Bilge and Bengü



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## FOREWORD

JOCELYN WOGAN-BROWNE

Some years ago, a fine essay collection was published by Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles under the title *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1998). As that volume presciently showed, the imaginative hegemony of the nation state would continue to loosen its grip on imagined medieval communities (or at least be refined into specifics of time and occasion) across the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Multiple and shifting relations between text, language, territory and their audiences have proliferated in medieval studies as more global paradigms develop. In 2001 I gratefully adapted Tomasch and Gilles' title as "Texts and Territories: The French of England" for one of my graduate course, thus circumventing, I hoped, any idea that one language or a single or stable territorial boundary would suffice for the idea of England's literary history. It was through such a course that I became the beneficiary of Hülya Taflı Düzgün's enterprisingly mobile practice of Medieval Studies. Sitting in my York UK office, her baby daughter, who had come with her from Turkey in attendance in her pram, Hülya discussed Constantinople with me as part of her graduate work. Listening to someone with a living and culturally informed sense of the place made me see how hopelessly under-imagined and stereotyped my own idea of Constantinople had always been, and how many questions that underdeveloped image had stopped me asking of the texts in which I encountered the city's name. As Hülya suggests in her Introduction, experiencing new perspectives, whether physically, culturally, or imaginatively, brings home the complexity of history and the multiplicity of viewpoints from which we tell ourselves stories of the past.

Like history, territory - actual, experienced, figurative, imagined-remains a fecund resource for thinking about medieval texts. In the volume Hülya has brought together, questions about territory and text continue are one undergirding theme, pursued not only in terms of the various relations of texts to physical and cultural geographies, but in the relation between our concepts of literary genre and its proper territories. History and

romance are particular examples where territories overlap and interact, and there are others, such as the *chansons de geste* with which the volume begins. This genre is a paradigm case of the complexly palimpsested parameters of a culture at once common and specific, where texts and territories cannot be neatly assigned to each other. Its earliest known textualization as the *Chanson de Roland* (c. 1130 or later) has long and famously been claimed as foundational for the modern state of France and also claimed for England, provenance of the earliest manuscript. Subsequent *chansons de geste* were produced in greater numbers in continental European and Mediterranean regions, but some of their texts were copied and adapted in England alongside *chansons* composed there. Here Emma Goodwin carries out a meticulous examination of the *chanson de geste*'s discursive construction of nation (as both the people and the territory of the *Francs/Franceis*) in a textual corpus whose territories range over five geographic regions from north east France to the Mediterranean and the crusader states. Next comes study of *Fouke Fitzwaryn*, as Elizabeth Cox balances gendered claims of cultural centrality and cultural marginalization between men and women in this border narrative. *Fouke* is a text of famously blended historiographic and romance referentiality from the Marches of Wales- political and cultural territory at once within and beyond England. The romance begins with a scene of (re-) colonization, but seems to interpellate a society and a territory conceived (at least by its francophone writer) less as an oppositional struggle between colonized Welsh and colonizing Marcher Lords than as an alliance of the local (with its own dynastic territories and memories) against the sovereign centre, as represented by King John and his unstable desires and policies. *Fouke*'s use of literary and historiographic convention also puts it in conversation with the transregional: the *roman*'s initial scene adapts the tradition of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De gestis brittonum* from Brutus and Britain to William of Normandy and the Welsh Marches. William is told a founding story of masculine wrestling with giants, and a tournament instigated by a woman's dissatisfaction with the suitors proffered by her family becomes a second foundation of European courtly paradigms for establishing land and lineage. Later, in his outlawry, Fouke engages both with more specifically referential territories in England, Britain, France and beyond, and with territories coded through romance narrative convention, so that he fights a dragon as well as King John.

England's physical and imaginative engagement with 'The East' is the territory of three further essays. Hülya Taflı Düzgün herself, in a long and thoughtful chapter, poses the question of whether the extremely popular

romance of *Boeve de Hantoun/Bevis of Hamtoun*, (exported from England via translation into half a dozen European languages), is really concerned with stereotypical Saracen-Christian conflict, or whether Boeve/Bevis finds his Eastern life more rewarding. Discussing the French and English texts simultaneously, she argues Englishness is not the whole of identity here: her perspective, embracing both Eastern and Western edges of Europe and its neighbours, allows a fresh way of seeing the romance beyond the Western 'Saracen imaginary'. And Boeve/Bevis indeed chooses never finally to return to England. Two other chapters deal with the medieval invention of Richard I as Richard Coeur de Lion, a major figurehead of popular literature's engagement with the Crusades. Cristina Figueredo, who has edited *Richard Coeur de Lion*, the fourteenth-century romance that is, so to speak, the apogee of Ricardian invention, offers a further dimension beyond the prowess and the anthropophagy notoriously practised by Richard in the text. In a richly informed study, she turns instead to the interwoven presence of luxurious Eastern and European textiles throughout the romance. Brocades, samites and other textiles are the material of contact with other cultures and part of English experience in trade and commerce. As such, they offer a dimension of transregional experience not entirely confined to the elite, or to what can be observed in royal and noble public appearances, and they are of course, imaginative signifiers of considerable and widespread fascination in romance and elsewhere. Among their multiple functions in *Coeur de Lion*, Figueredo shows, they index Richard's heroic indifference to mere luxury, a rule-proving exception to the material, social and affective engagement with textiles in the rest of the romance. Kathryn Bedford's careful and thorough study of Richard's appearances as a secondary character in chronicles of people and events other than those directly focussed on him offers another fascinating blending of the generic territories of romance and historiography, as well as insight into the processes by which Richard I becomes, both for England and other regions, the *Coeur de Lion* figure.

Manuscript study in recent decades has greatly sharpened our sense both of the specificity of medieval textualizations and their mobility across different territories. Two studies draw on manuscript evidence to extend the territories of romance. Rebecca Cubas-Peña's thoughtful and scholarly work reconstructs how the herbal and other remedies of household manuscript miscellanies vivify our sense of the medicinal procedures evoked in romances, and how these might figure in the reading and experience of romance audiences. This is especially pertinent for the women in romance audiences, since women historically had particular domains of expertise and practice in herbal and other remedies. Anastasija

Ropa surveys manuscript contexts for the Grail story in some of its most influential forms. She shows how the territories of chivalry and scripture overlap, the vast prose Arthurian cycles that narrate the Grail's pre-Arthurian history proliferating in a period when francophone biblical translations were also inventive and abundant in their various selections and reworkings of biblical and apocryphal matter. This blending of generic territories requires rethinking of our modern secular and sacred oppositions in approaching medieval chivalry.

These essays in their different ways remind us how open-bordered and diverse the practice of medieval literary study can be. In the interplay between texts and the territories they are deemed to represent or to which they are assigned, there is a constant dialogue between imagination and experience. This is all the more enriched when people from different geographical and cultural territories engage in that dialogue together. In his new *Europe: A Literary History, 1348-1418*, organized by itineraries that reconfigure and open up literary history to an unprecedented degree, David Wallace comments on the revisionary Eastward tilt of his mighty collaborative enterprise. He notes too, the experiences of the great medievalists Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach in Istanbul/Constantinople among other German scholars gathered there in the 1930s and 1930s-40s: 'the Europes of East and West' were not separate for them (Wallace, 2016, I, xxxvi-xxxvii). It is important that Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Bern, 1946: fiftieth anniversary edition, Princeton, 2003) was written by a great linguist and literary scholar looking back at Western Europe from Turkey. The collaboration brought about here by Hülya as she reaches out from Turkey to colleagues in western areas of Europe embodies the collaboration and broader vision on which medieval studies thrive in all their range and diversity. It is also a good reminder of just how simplifying the fictionalized nationalizing histories frequently deployed in our modern political cultures can be, and a valuable lesson in how our accounts of the past and the ways we use it to tell our present need to be appropriately complex and complicated.

## PREFACE

Where did the idea for this volume come from? Perhaps its origin is in my Eastern and Western backgrounds, which are constructed from my academic encounters in both Turkey and the United Kingdom. When I was a high-school student at Adana College, I was very much interested in literature and history classes. At the age of fourteen I was taught by teachers that history was an objective discipline representing the contemporary events of the time, the facts, which could not be changed, and this was the reason why history was objective. In that case, the best example of this was the Conquest of Constantinople in 1453 that we were proud of.

Seven years later I had the opportunity to participate in the Medieval Studies Summer School plenary lectures held at the University of Cambridge. While I was taking my notes in the lectures, I was very much puzzled about the way history was being defined, because here lecturers were talking not about the *conquest* but the *fall* of Constantinople in 1453. At this stage, I realised that there is no objective history, and the contemporary events of the time may well be interpreted depending on where we are and on where we come from.

This realization may have begun with my postgraduate seminar entitled “Texts and Territories: French in England,” which was moderated by Prof. Dr. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne at the University of York in 2009 who first kindled my interest in medieval romance literature, particularly the Anglo-Norman romances and their comparisons with the Middle English ones. This was followed by a postgraduate seminar entitled “Texts and Territories in The Middle Ages and Beyond,” which I organized at the University of Wales, Bangor, and was funded by Medium Aevum in 2011.

Whatever its origins, *Texts and Territories: Historicized Fiction and Fictionalised History in Medieval England and Beyond* could not have been completed without the encouragement of my postgraduate supervisor Prof. Dr. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (now at Fordham) and Prof. Dr. Eugene Steele (University College London, and now at Erciyes University), who listened and talked to me about various parts of the volume as it was in progress.

For assistance with the editing of this volume, I am grateful to the staff at Cambridge Scholars Publishing. I also owe an extensive debt to Gale Owen-Crocker, Marianne Ailes, Glyn Burgess, James Mckinstry, Cristina

Figueredo, and Elizabeth Cox for all their support and helpful criticism supplied at very short notice. The tolerance, good humour, and email companionship of all the contributors have made my work on this book a real pleasure. Closer to home, to my husband Koksal, my parents, my sister, and my brother I owe debts for sustaining encouragement and love that reach far beyond this project.

Finally, I would like to mention my ten-year-old daughter Bilge and two-year-old daughter Bengü, neither of whom has been any help whatsoever, but whose company and unending energy I am very happy to have had.

Hisarcık, Kayseri  
April 2018

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Emma Goodwin** is completing her DPhil entitled “Imagining the Experience of National Identity in Late Twelfth-century Chanson de Geste Composed in French” at Merton College, University of Oxford. She has an MA in Medieval and modern languages from Cambridge University (French and German) and an MA in French literature from Kings’ College London. She is currently the Principal Investigator of the AHRC-funded collaborative skills project “Promoting Interdisciplinary Engagement in the Digital Humanities” (dhAHRC), and also set up the DHCrowdScribe and CrowdMapCrusade (formally MapFirstCrusade) digital projects, which are affiliated to the dhAHRC project and supported by the Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities (TORCH). She has published on crusade epic and medieval narrative verse in French, English, and German.

**Elizabeth Cox** was awarded her PhD from Swansea University, where she taught Old English. Her doctoral thesis was entitled “Discerning Women: Unravelling Enclosed Female Identities in Secular Texts 900–1300,” in which she considered the representations of the many ways in which women are enclosed within male and female-authored texts of the period. She is joint author and contributor to the volume *Reconsidering Gender: Time and Memory in Medieval Culture* (2015). Her research interests and publications include the enclosure of women in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman texts and Icelandic Sagas, exploring the intersection of temporal, spatial, linguistic, and physical borders.

**Hülya Taflı Düzgün** was awarded her PhD on Medieval Studies at the University of Wales, Bangor and Kayseri, Erciyes University, having been granted the Higher Education Council of Turkey PhD scholarship and Bangor University 125th Anniversary PhD Research Award. Her doctoral thesis was entitled “Another East in the Anglo-Norman and the Middle English Romances.” She has an MA in English Literature from Erciyes University, having participated in the summer programmes at Cambridge University and Edinburgh University to obtain credits for her MA and from the Centre for Medieval and Related Literature at the University of York. She is a lecturer at the School of English in Erciyes University, and is a research fellow at the School of English in the University of Cambridge. She has published in medieval Latin, Old French, Anglo-

Norman, English, German, and Turkish on medieval romances in England, and her PhD research will be published by Palgrave Macmillan.

**Cristina Figueredo** was awarded her PhD on Medieval studies at the universities of York and Leeds, having been granted the White Rose Studentship and an Overseas Research Student Award. Her doctoral thesis was entitled “Richard Coeur de Lion: an Edition from the London Thornton Manuscript. 2 Volumes.” She has an MA in Medieval literatures from the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York. She is currently a lecturer with the Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of York, in the area of Medieval studies and is a research associate with the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York. She has published in both English and Spanish on Medieval Literature and her edition of the Middle English romance *Richard Coeur de Lion* will shortly be published by Manchester University Press.

**Kathryn Bedford** was awarded her PhD on Medieval history at the University of Durham having previously completed an interdisciplinary Masters in Medieval and Renaissance studies. Her doctoral thesis is entitled “Fictionalising the Past: Thirteenth-Century Re-imaginings of Recent Historical Individuals.” She is currently a curator of archaeology for English Heritage. Her research interests and publications include fictionalized accounts of the lives of late twelfth and early thirteenth-century individuals and on how history is interpreted for modern audiences.

**Rebeca Cubas-Peña** was awarded her PhD on Medieval English literature at the University of Birmingham having previously completed her MA from the University of York and an MPhil from the Universidad de la Laguna (Spain). Her doctoral thesis was entitled “‘Every Practitioner his own Compiler’: Practitioners and the Compilation of Middle English Medical Books, with special reference to York Minster Library, XVI E. 32.” She is currently a research associate at York Minster, and has published on Medieval English manuscripts.

**Anastasija Ropa** was awarded her PhD on Medieval English literature at the University of Wales, Bangor having previously completed her MA from the University of Latvia. Her doctoral thesis was entitled “Representations of the Grail Quest in Medieval and Modern Literature.” She is currently a research associate at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Latvia. She has published on medieval and modern Arthurian Literature.



## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACMRS:</b>	Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies
<b>ANH:</b>	The Anglo-Norman Hub. <a href="http://www.anglo-norman.net">http://www.anglo-norman.net</a>
<b><i>Antioche:</i></b>	<i>La Chanson d'Antioche</i>
<b>ANTS:</b>	Anglo-Norman Text Society
<b><i>Aspremont:</i></b>	<i>La Chanson d'Aspremont</i>
<b><i>BDH:</i></b>	<i>Boeve de Haumtone</i>
<b><i>BOH:</i></b>	<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>
<b><i>Cambrai:</i></b>	<i>Raoul de Cambrai</i>
<b>CUL:</b>	Cambridge University Library
<b>EETS O.S.:</b>	Early English Text Society Original Series
<b><i>FFW:</i></b>	<i>Fouke Le Fitz Waryn</i>
<b>FRETS:</b>	The French of England Translation Series
<b><i>HWM:</i></b>	<i>History of William Marshal</i>
<b><i>LDM:</i></b>	<i>Liber de Diversis Medicinis</i>
<b><i>MED :</i></b>	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i> . University of Michigan. <a href="http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/">http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/</a>
<b>MS:</b>	Manuscript
<b><i>Queste:</i></b>	<i>La Queste del Saint Graal</i>
<b><i>RCL:</i></b>	<i>Richard Coeur de Lion</i>
<b><i>Florence:</i></b>	<i>Le Bone Florence of Rome</i>
<b><i>Roland:</i></b>	<i>Chanson de Roland</i>
<b><i>Saisnes:</i></b>	<i>La Chanson des Saisnes</i>
<b><i>Sankgreal:</i></b>	<i>Tale of the Sankgreal</i>
<b>TEAMS :</b>	The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### HÜLYA TAFLI DÜZGÜN

The writing of a literary text is a retrospective explanation of what is happening in the present, including social, cultural, religious, and political events, and such writing is a deliberate re-creation in actual practice. The impact of immediate contemporary concerns is served to place a literary text at least partly outside the author's control. The author responds to a given context of historical and cultural incident that limits his freedom to invent, adapt, or explain. Of these contemporary concerns, the literary text first has to do with how cultural practices and cultural changes helped to create it, and second with what happens when specific historical events appear to model themselves on narrative structures, and how those events can be given a conscious boost by narrative authors or patrons to make the parallels even closer. History turns into literary narrative, or literary narrative turns into history; therefore, literature and history live in each other's pockets. The medieval texts that straddle the borderland between literature and history—what has been called a medieval fashion for pseudo-history—have been repeatedly commented on over the years. However, the broader implications of this phenomenon for the modern understanding of medieval concepts of the past and historiography have been under-explored.

The following original chapters engage with historical and literary narrative in Medieval England through a variety of approaches to an interdisciplinary array of texts (ranging from Latin, Old-French, Anglo-Norman to Middle English) between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. Particularly, Emma Goodwin's chapter explores the topic of discursive strategies which are embedded in the structure of the epic tales of medieval France, called *chanson de geste* poems or "songs of deeds," which formed the main medium of imaginative and cultural expression between 1100 and 1250 and appealed to the tastes of the Medieval English audience. It considers the nominal use of the sub-lexemes *franc*, *frans*, and

*françois* and their role in discursive structures in order to examine and show how they contribute to the construction of national identity. These sub-lexemes are considered both within the context of the examples in which they occur and alongside other words connected to identity occurring in the same *laisse*. The connected ideas revealed by networks of word clusters surrounding these sub-lexemes are examined in order to investigate patterns of identity construction embedded within the following corpus of Old French epic poems dating from around the end of the twelfth century: *La Chanson d'Antioche*, *La Chanson d'Aspremont*, *La Chanson des Saisnes*, *Aliscans*, and *Raoul de Cambrai*. Her chapter begins by defining discursive strategies, introducing the texts and discussing the results of the analysis in terms of the references to the sub-lexemes in the corpus. Secondly, selected examples are examined in order to extrapolate the discursive formations and rules of formation in a Foucauldian sense.

Elizabeth Cox's chapter focuses on the Anglo-Norman romance *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, which is based on a thirteenth-century poem that is now lost to us and relates events in the reign of King John. This ancestral romance, with embellishments and errors, is overtly identifiable as a tale of male adventure. Two of the women, Melette of the Blaunchetoure, the founding mother and wife of Waryn de Metz, and Matilda de Caus, a wealthy heiress and wife of the outlaw Fouke, are enclosed within and surrounded by the male-centred discourse. The discourse places these women on the periphery of this text, which is ostensibly about Fouke, an outlaw and the protagonist of the tale, yet they are also a vital part of the story. In this chapter, she argues that they are more important than the heroes of the piece who owe their wealth and status to their wives. The women are central to the family's status and fortunes, and without them there would be no Whittington Castle to fight over. So although the romance is a tale of male-centred derring-do, if we look more closely it is the women who have the adventures, survive the most difficult circumstances, and control the family's status and fiscal fortunes. It is these de-centralized women who sustain the family, making the men almost irrelevant.

Hülya Taflı Düzgün's chapter examines the construction of different narrative identities found in the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone* and the Middle English *Bevis of Hampton*. It has been generally accepted that both *Boeve* and *Bevis* are examples of the matter of England. However, to what extent are *Boeve* and *Bevis* examples that show an awareness of English identity? In what ways do the texts show an enmity between the English hero and the Saracen? Does the East have any influence on the (re)shaping of the identity of the romance hero? The texts will be interrogated in order to find answers to the above questions. These

narratives are explored as to whether they show the national and chivalric identity of the hero as a westerner, or if there is evidence that the hero incorporates Middle Eastern ways of living and thinking.

Cristina Figueredo notes in her chapter that, in recent years, the Middle English romance *Richard Coeur de Lion* has received considerable scholarly attention, and its “anthropophagy episode” has been profusely studied. A number of aspects of *Richard*, however, have not been explored so far. One of these is the relationship between some artefacts, particularly textiles manufactured in the East, and the culture that produced this romance. Her chapter discusses the way in which textiles, especially cloths of gold, are interwoven in the fabric of the romance, working like curtains that separate the episodes and signalling to the audience that important events are about to take place. Moreover, her chapter aims to assess the tension between the romance’s fascination with and contempt for sumptuous textiles. Finally, it studies how the cloths of gold in *Richard* symbolize more than merely wealth and power, functioning as a lens through which both textual devices and cultural attitudes can be discussed.

Kathryn Bedford demonstrates in her chapter that Richard the Lionheart is an anomaly amongst the heroes of medieval “pseudo history” due to the sheer quantity of fictionalized and partly fictionalized narratives in which he appears. As a result, it is possible to explore the motivations and methods of the authors creating these texts more complexly than is usually the case. The *Romance of Richard Coeur de Lion* has naturally received the most attention, however more limited romancifications involving motifs such as treasure and anthropophagy appear in chronical accounts that are accepted as historical sources. In spite of the variety of ways in which Richard has appeared in popular memory, the majority of authors have chosen to portray him in very similar fashions: as a crusade hero. Of particular interest in this context are his very different depictions in the *Chronicle of Reims* and the *History of William Marshal*, both of which were written to glorify someone other than Richard. An analysis of these alternative characterizations suggest that the strength and extent of Richard’s reputation limited the ways in which he could be portrayed. It argues that it was Richard as a historical personage along with his own abilities, interests, and the events of his life that had the primary impact on his literary reputation.

Rebeca Cubas-Peña notes that there are numerous surviving medical writings that have come down to us from late Medieval England, and they reflect a growing interest in the medical lore of the time. A considerable number of these texts were copied in Middle English, and were therefore presumably addressed to a non-academic and secular audience. Both

circumstances are exemplified by the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript (Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral MS 91). This fifteenth-century miscellany was copied and compiled by a Yorkshire landowner named Robert Thornton and contains religious, romance, and medical writings that would have been useful and valuable to a provincial household. The medical text, known as the *Liber de Diversis Medicinis*, is a collection of herbal recipes aimed at curing various diseases, and its codicological structure suggests that it was originally intended to be a single compilation. Undoubtedly, alongside other practical writings, any household would have benefitted from a herbal *receptarium* of this kind. Her chapter argues that, by means of medical writings like the *Liber de Diversis Medicinis*, the gentry gained enough herbal knowledge to recognize the contemporary medical remedies and practices described in romances. As a literary genre frequently addressed to said social class, she examines a group of romances from two celebrated household miscellanies—the Lincoln Thornton manuscript and Cambridge University Library, MS Ff. 2. 38—with the intention of showing how this emerging group of secular individuals, who did not belong to the royalty or the nobility, had the means to commission and acquire medical texts and familiarize themselves with contemporary medical practices.

Anastasija Ropa concentrates on the awareness of the literary and historical context in which texts were written, which is instrumental for our understanding of the way in which the Grail quest is represented in medieval romances. Her chapter examines the contexts in which the *Queste del Saint Graal* and Thomas Malory's "Tale of the Sankgreal" were written. She first discusses the theoretical underpinnings of chivalry in the *Queste* and the "Sankgreal," referring to ethical treatises on chivalry, notably Ramon Lull's thirteenth-century *Libro del orden de caballeria*. Second, she considers the place of the *Queste* and the "Sankgreal," respectively, in the manuscripts of the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle and the early printed editions of *Le Morte Darthur*, because these manuscripts and books provide the material context in which chivalric ideology found its expression. She explains how chivalric ideology, as manifested in contemporary works of chivalry, shaped the two Grail quest romances under discussion: the *Queste* and the "Sankgreal."

This volume constitutes a forum of ideas on the links between literature and history, as the historicised fiction or fictionalized history has a particularly prominent place in the literature of Medieval (French, Anglo-Norman, and English) England between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries.

## CHAPTER TWO

# NAMING THE FRENCH IN *CHANSONS DE GESTE*: DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES LINKED TO NATIONAL IDENTITY

EMMA GOODWIN

### **Introduction: People and territory**

This chapter contends that the identity formed in the *chansons de geste* is an ideology of belonging to the French or Frankish people through a shared connection to the territory of France.<sup>1</sup> This connection emerges from the shared memory of accumulated ideas deriving from the communities in which these poems were produced. Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* applies to the lexis under examination in this chapter: people designated by *frans/franc/franchois*, Charlemagne, St. Denis and France, and references to the French monarchy (king) and Christianity (God and Jesus):

Ces lieux, il fallait les entendre à tous les sens du mot, du plus matériel et concret, comme les monuments aux morts et les Archives nationales, au plus abstrait et intellectuellement construit, comme la notion de lignage, de génération, ou même de région et d'homme mémoire' ... Des lieux carrefours donc, traversés de dimensions multiples. Dimension historiographique, toujours présente, puisque histoire de l'histoire, ils sont la matière dont se construit l'histoire, histoire de ses instruments, de sa production et de ses procédures. Mais dimension également ethnographique, puisqu'il s'agit à tout moment de nous dépendre de nos habitudes familières, vécues dans la chaleur de la tradition, de cartographier notre propre géographie mentale. Psychologique, puisqu'il nous faut postuler l'adéquation de l'individuel au collectif et transporter à tâtons dans le

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Dr Hülya Taflı, Professor Marianne Ailes and Professor Jocelyn Wogan-Browne for their helpful and insightful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

champ du social des notions – inconscient, symbolisation, censure, transfert—dont, au plan individuel, la définition n'est ni clair, ni sûre. Politique aussi, et, peut-être, surtout, si l'entend par politique un jeu de forces qui transforment la réalité: la réalité: la mémoire en effet est un cadre plus qu'un contenu, un enjeu toujours disponible, un ensemble de stratégies, un être-là qui vaut moins par ce qu'il est que par ce que l'on en fait. C'est dire qu'on touche ici à la dimension littéraire des lieux de mémoire, dont l'intérêt repose en définitive sur l'art de la mise en scène et l'engagement personnel de l'historien. (Nora 1994, vii–viii)

[These places must be understood in all senses of the word, from the most material and concrete, like monuments to the dead and the National Archives, to the most abstract and intellectually composed, like the notion of lineage, generation, or even region and “human memory” ... Places which are therefore crossroads, intersected by multiple dimensions. The historiographical dimension, always present, since the history of history, they [*lieux*] are the subject matter from which history is created, the history of its tools, production and procedures. However, the dimension is equally ethnographical, since it is at all times a matter of leaving our familiar habits behind, lived in the warmth of the tradition of mapping our own mental geography. Psychological, since we have to apply the appropriateness of the individual to the collective and transfer it by trial and error to the social sphere of notions—unconscious, symbolization, censure, transfer—for which, on the individual level, the definition is neither clear nor certain. Political too, and perhaps, if one understands by political a play of forces which transform reality: memory is in effect a frame more than content, a stake [in something] which is always available, a group of strategies, a *Dasein* [existence] [être-là is the French translation of the Heideggerian *Dasein*, which literally means “being-there” or “presence,” but is usually translated as “existence”] – in that place which is worth less because one makes it from [memory]. That is to say that one is getting to the literary dimension of the places of memory, in which the interest definitively rests on the art of its storytelling and the personal engagement of the historian.]<sup>2</sup>

Nora follows Maurice Halbwachs in saying that memory is both multiple and specific; collective, plural, and also individual, and rooted in concrete things, spaces, gestures, images, and objects. Nora's concept of memory is one “without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth—and on the other hand, our memory, nothing more than sifted and sorted historical traces” (Nora 1989, 7). Thus, a pattern of references

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<sup>2</sup> My notes are in square brackets. According to editorial policy, published English translations of passages in French have been used.



in one *laisse* is echoed in modified in a similar form over a single work, and on occasion over more than one text (see discursive strategies below). A sense of belonging to a larger political, religious, or geographical grouping is created through the repetition of semantic networks formed of nominal sub-lexemes and a lexis denoting themes linked to national identity.<sup>3</sup>

The definition of national identity determines its pertinence in the context of the Middle Ages (Llobera 1994, 96). Josep Llobera defines nationalism as a development of an imagined concept from a historical precipitate over an extended period and incorporates both the Middle Ages and the early modern period (1994, 83–4, 120, 221). This “imagined concept” comprises an uncertain set of sentiments, convictions, values and attitudes.<sup>4</sup> Llobera’s definition also finds parallels in Paul Zumthor’s notion of the *chansons de geste* as assuming an ideology which can encapsulate and make up for the break between reality and imagination perceived by a group, representing as it does history as transfigured in the intemporality of fiction:

Moins que reflet d’une réalité passé, la chanson de geste est ainsi compensation, pour le groupe, de la rupture apparemment survenue entre le réel vécu et l’imaginaire. Elle projette en prophétie un souvenir. Elle assume l’idéologie diffuse de ce qui échappe à la décadence du monde. De la même parole dont elle déclare vraie l’histoire, elle la transmute en fiction intemporelle. L’histoire subsiste, mais elle s’abolit comme historicité. (Zumthor 1975, 239)

[Rather than the reflection of a past reality, the *chanson de geste* is thus a compensation for the group, of the rupture seemingly occurring between lived reality and the imaginary. It projects a memory through prophecy. It [the *chanson de geste*] assumes the diffuse ideology of what eludes the decadence of the world. From the same word with which it declares history to be true, it transforms it into a temporal fiction. History lives on, but obliterates itself as historicity.]

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<sup>3</sup> Themes related to the portrayal of France and the French in the *chansons de geste*, such as St. Denis, Charlemagne, Christianity, and sovereignty, imply a construction of national identity which parallels Thorlac Turville Petre’s assessment of the English nation as being “founded on a series of myths and loaded interpretations of the past” (1996, 6).

<sup>4</sup> Such an imagined concept can also be found in the article of Hülya Taflı Düzgün’s ‘Location and Identity in *Roman de Horn* (2016, 83) and in her chapter of *National identity* in this volume (2018, 70)

Thus, the shared memory of the communities identifying with the narrative is evoked consciously or unconsciously through repetitions of semantic networks, which act as stimuli in order to suggest an identity behind the narrative frame of the text.

In twelfth-century historiography, four pillars of history were used upon which to construct identity: the Trojan origins of the Franks, their acquisition of land in *Gallia*, the formation of the wider Frankish kingdom which gave rise to the *regnum Francorum*, and from 843 the Western Franks.<sup>5</sup> From the ninth century onwards, the sources had sought to secure Frankish traditions. However, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, events from the history of the Franks and their rulers going back to the ancient and early medieval periods were incorporated into political awareness, culminating in the great historiographical works of Philip Augustus's reign, and later serving as the basis for the vernacular version of Frankish/French history in the *Grandes Chroniques* (Schneidmüller 1987, 167–8). Indeed, these tendencies were seen in Beate Langenbruch's investigation of the *chansons de geste* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries:

En tout cas, l'importance accrue du terme désignant le groupe des Français témoigne du sens, voire du prestige qu'auteurs et public des chansons de geste lui accordent. Il désigne un groupe dont les contours sont encore mouvants au début de la période. Vers le début du treizième siècle, Français dénote sans doute le plus communément 'les Français au sens large' selon l'editrice de la Chanson des Saisnes, Annette Brasseur. Exceptionnellement, le sens de Francs peut toutefois être présent, ou encore le concept de "francité" restreinte, et plutôt francilienne, en l'occurrence quand on leur oppose les Mansois, Bourguignons et Lorrains, ou encore des 'nationalités' plus éloignés comme les Lombards. [...] D'une situation de parasyonymie entre Franc(s) et Franceis, on parvient alors à une distinction progressive et de plus en plus affirmée, et consciente entre les deux groupes initialement confondus. A l'extrême fin de notre période d'investigation, il n'y a plus de doute possible. Dans le *Doon de Maïence*, situé dans la seconde moitié du treizième siècle, on ne trouve plus guère que des Franceis, voire nos Franceis aux cotés de Charlemagne. (Langenbruch 2007, 163)

[In any case, the increased importance of the term designating the group of French people bears witness to the meaning and indeed the prestige accorded by the authors and audience of the *chansons de geste*. It designates a group whose general character is still in flux at the beginning

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<sup>5</sup> Schneidmüller asserts that the distinction between eastern and western Franks was used until the middle of the tenth century (1987, 276).

of the period. Towards the beginning of the thirteenth century, *Français* denotes without doubt “the French in a broad sense” according to the editor of the Song of the Saxons, Annette Brasseur. Exceptionally, the meaning “Franks” can however remain present, or indeed the concept of restrained “Frankishness,” or rather inhabitants from the Île-de-France, specifically when they are opposed by people from Le Mans, Burgundians and people from Lorraine, or even by nationalities farther afield like the Lombards. [...] From a situation of parasynonymy between *Franc(s)* and *Franceis*, we arrive at a progressive, increasingly affirmative and conscious distinction between two groups which were initially mixed together. At the very end of the period of our investigation, there is no more doubt. In *Doon de Maience*, in the second half of the thirteenth century, one scarcely finds anything other than *Francheis* (French) or indeed *nos Francheis* (our French) at Charlemagne’s side.]

This chapter will follow two main lines of enquiry. Firstly, discursive strategies will be defined, the texts will be briefly introduced, and then the broader results of the analysis will be discussed in the context of the references to the sub-lexemes in the corpus mentioned above.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, a number of illustrative examples will be presented and analysed in order to extrapolate the discursive formations and rules of formation in a Foucauldian sense.

National identity cannot be readily examined in an individual epic text at the end of the twelfth century, as the construction of identity occurs through a complex arrangement of patterns. As a result of this, there is a methodological requirement for a way of examining national identity as part of a discourse which pushes beyond the usual boundaries in which literary scholars and critics work. Foucault’s early work on discourse provides such a canvas, and in particular his discursive formations which can be inferred from the analysis of specific lexical fields.

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<sup>6</sup> This approach is an example of representative, as opposed to exemplary, research methodology. I am interested in looking at the research question from the point of view of quantitative analysis, and to this extent my methodology could be regarded as an example of an approach in keeping with the emerging field of digital hermeneutics. Rather than using philosophical or sociological conditions of possibility to produce evidence-based arguments about national identity in the past in order to “understand” it, following Dilthey’s (2002, 237–8) conception of hermeneutics, my approach strives for a critical and self-reflexive use of digital tools in the form of spreadsheets and statistical analysis in order to approach the research question in a new way, and answer the question of whether the network of patterns constructing national identity can be seen to exist as an artefact in the corpus.

Foucault's notion of discourse is fruitful for dealing with unstable discursive structures. Similar to Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* in analyses of history and identity, unstable discursive structures in the context of the *chansons de geste* can be regarded as performative and provisional in nature, and thus useful terms in an examination of national identity in the *chansons de geste*. Foucault's aim is to approach discursive events with the ability to describe the interplay of relations within and outside them. He sets out to do this by deploying the notion of discursive formations, which can be hypothesized in four ways.<sup>7</sup>

Nouns describing territories which derive from substantives describing people are common from the third century, and indeed this is the case for the Latin term *Francia* and the related development of the meaning of the Old French noun *France* (Bader 1969, 25). In other words, we cannot easily separate the development in the meaning of the term describing the territory of France (*France*) from the twelfth-century terms used to describe the Frankish and French people (*franc, frans, français*).

The sub-lexeme *frans/c* designates the Frankish people. The difference between the sub-lexemes *franc* and *frans* is historically a grammatical one: *frans* being the masculine nominative singular (*cas sujet*) or plural (oblique case) form, and *franc* being the masculine oblique singular (*cas sujet*) or plural (oblique case) form of the noun. These differences became less observed over time: "Peut-être comprendra-t-on pourquoi le cas-sujet a fini par céder peu à peu devant le cas-régime : les petits bataillons ont reculé devant les gros" (Foulet 1965, 31) ["Perhaps one can understand why the nominative case ended up being gradually overtaken by the oblique case: the smaller batallions retreated before the larger ones"].

*Franc/s* and *François* are sub-lexemes of the lexeme *Franc/Français*, which also includes *franche, francor* and *France* (see Table. 2.1 below).

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<sup>7</sup> The four hypotheses of discursive formations are: (1) statements different in form, and dispersed in time, form a group if they refer to one and the same object; (2) the definition of a group of relations between statements: their form and type of connection; (3) the establishment of groups of statements, by determining the system of permanent and coherent concepts involved; and (4) a regrouping of the statements in order to describe their interconnection and account for the unitary forms under which they are presented: the identity and persistence of themes (Foucault 2002, 35–9).

**Table. 2.1**

Lexeme Franc/François includes:	<i>franc/s</i>
	<i>françois/franchois</i>
	<i>Franche</i>
	<i>Franceé</i>
	<i>Francor</i>

According to von Wartburg, the sub-lexemes *François/franchois* are derived from the ablative form *français*, and the majority of examples he cites describe language but occur much later than the period with which we are concerned (von Wartburg 1922, 751–2). Greimas does not feature these lexemes at all and only provides a minor reference to the adjective *franceis*, which means a subject of the French king (1995, 277). Takeshi Matsumura (2015, 1618) does however cite a reference to the army of French men in the *Chanson de Roland* as the example of the substantive use of this sub-lexeme:

Dist Blancandrins: “Par ceste meie destre  
 E par la barbe ki al piz me ventelet,  
 L’ost des Franceis verrez sempres desfere:  
 Francs s’en irunt en France, la lur tere.” (*laisse 4*, vv. 47–50)  
 (*La Chanson de Roland* 1990)

[Said Blancadrin: “I swear by my right hand/ And by the beard that flows down to my chest/ You’ll soon see the French army routed/ The Franks will return to France, to their own land.”] (Gaunt and Pratt 2016, 4)<sup>8</sup>

The quotation above not only illustrates the interconnectedness of the sub-lexemes and lexemes but also hints at the complexity and potential confusion of these meanings. In the *Chanson de Roland* there are 170 references to *France* and *Franceis* as signifying or belonging to the entirety of Charlemagne’s Empire (Bader 1969, 38). We will return to this point, but what emerges from the analysis of these sub-lexemes in the five texts is that there are many references using this sub-lexeme.

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<sup>8</sup> Burgess (1990, 30) translates “Franceis” as “Frankish.” However, “French” is another possible translation.

## A *chanson de geste* corpus and its data

The significant fact in the context of this study is that these lexical configurations can be found in all five texts chosen for examination here. In line with Foucault's third hypothesis of discursive formations, the permanence and coherence of the territory of France as expressed through sub-lexemes and lexemes, as we saw in the above example (*Franceis*, *Francs*, and *tere*), in terms of interpretation (see below), we could say that the frequency with which certain configurations appear indicates the poet's strategy to create a particular effect on the readers of, and listeners to, the text.

The five *chansons de geste* in my corpus date from around the end of the twelfth century and belong to the three main *gestes* making up the Matter of France.<sup>9</sup> They explore different subject matter in texts of varying length, from sparring barons, to the first crusade and various campaigns of Charlemagne.<sup>10</sup> *Raoul de Cambrai* can be defined as belonging to the "rebellious baron" cycle (*Geste de Doon de Mayence*), *La Chanson d'Antioche* forms part of the crusade cycle, *Aliscans* forms part of the William of Orange cycle (*Geste de Garin de Monglane*), and both *La Chanson d'Aspremont* and *La Chanson des Saisnes* are part of the King Charlemagne cycle (*Geste du Roi*).<sup>11</sup> The study required a method for ensuring the completeness and accuracy of the count of all the instances of the lexemes and sublexemes in the texts examined. Thus, texts which are not in the *Classiques Garnier* database could not be considered, as using OCR text recognition on medieval French texts on a standalone basis, without a method to check that all the references have been read or transcribed correctly, would compromise the accuracy and, by extension, representative nature of the results (*Corpus de Littérature Médiévale des origines à la fin au 15e siècle*, 2001). The text selection was made according to four criteria: (1) the narrative of each text had to take place in a different geographical location to the other texts in the corpus (for the

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<sup>9</sup> Jean Bodel (1989, 6–11) refers to the three matters (of France, Britain, and Rome) in the prologue of *La Chanson des Saisnes* [*the Song of the Saxons*]. Richard Trachsler (1997, 201–19) commented that most scholars understood Bodel's matter of France to refer to the *chansons de geste*. Philippa Hardman and Marianne Ailes (2017, xi) point out that the texts traditionally grouped under the Matter of France feature the legendary history of Charlemagne, who defends Christianity against the Saracens with the aid of his Twelve Peers.

<sup>10</sup> On the connection between Charlemagne and European identity, including French national identity, see Hardman and Ailes (1997, 1–2).

<sup>11</sup> H. M. Smyser (1967, xi) comments that the cycle of Charlemagne is "infused with the spirit of patriotism."