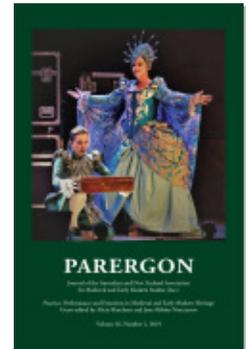*The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England: The Matter of France in Middle English and Anglo-Norman Literature* by Phillipa Hardman, and Marianne Ailes (review)

Roderick McDonald

PARERGON

restlessness of the contemporary […] which needs to be contested' (p. 10), but we must realize that grappling with our restlessness depends on our own contemporary self-awareness being contested. Alas, without theory, self-awareness is illusory. This is not so much a criticism of this particular publication, but a reflection on the divergent state of scholarship in medievalism, perhaps the pressure to publish early and often, and possibly because some modernists are not sufficiently expert on the detail of medieval specifics, and thereby tend to speak more in such simplifications.

Many important and incisive observations are made in this volume, and there is much to stimulate and focus the mind of the scholar on reflexes of 'medieval' in the modern, but these chapters will be most effective if read within a grounded context of nuanced medieval studies, whence generalizing assumptions might be critiqued and challenged.

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Hardman, Phillipa, and Marianne **Ailes**, *The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England: The Matter of France in Middle English and Anglo-Norman Literature* (Bristol Studies in Medieval Cultures), Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2017; hardback; pp. 489; 5 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £60.00; ISBN 9781843844723.

Over recent years an increasing awareness of multilingualism in medieval England has been informing linguistic, literary, and cultural scholarship. This book, exploring the intersection of Anglo-Norman and Middle English literary production across religious, geographic, and socio-political contexts, is a solid piece of work sharing in this discourse. The volume focuses on translations and adaptations of various Charlemagne narratives in France and England from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries. It embraces both close textual readings and material philology, and it does this within a frame of commonalities and cultural ties between England and France, rather than dwelling on anachronistic or unhistorical divergences between the two.

The linguistic context of medieval England, and its implications for literary and philological analyses, are established at the outset. Latin, French (both continental and Anglo-Norman), and Middle English were spoken and written in England well into the late medieval period, and the authors argue that the presence and use of these languages influenced the character and purpose of translation and adaptation. The introductory chapter explores in detail such implications, including the acceptance that French in England was not a marker of foreignness, any more than Middle English can be taken as a marker of a (burgeoning) national identity. Indeed, the perspective that this volume takes on these texts and traditions explicitly addresses issues of identity, and the authors argue that any notion of Middle English literature as marker of identity is anachronistic and wrong. In fact, the opposite case is made, that a medieval English interest in translated French material is better understood as an appropriation of the French tradition, arising

from and endorsing the idea that the English, in embracing Carolingian narrative into their cultural story-worlds and imaginings, were constructing themselves as insular French, rather than differentiating their Englishness.

The book is bipartite in structure. Chapters 1 to 3 discuss the ways in which the Charlemagne tradition became acculturated, translated, and appropriated in England, while chapters 4 to 6 are each concerned with three discrete narratives: Roland and the battle of Roncevaux, *Fierabras*, and *Otinel*.

In addition to reviewing much prior (and often dismissive) scholarship on the relationship between French *chansons de geste* and English material, the first chapter, 'The Insular Literary Context', also traces the circulation of, and local developments in, French-language material in England. It then maps formal poetic aspects of the developing English tradition, considering critical issues relating to genre and providing a detailed analysis of verse forms and structure in English metrical romances. The chapter concludes with strong arguments in favour of understanding the English material as formally coherent, intertextual, and comprising a consistent selection and translation program.

Chapters 2 and 3 then explore, respectively, the translation of the Charlemagne tradition from continental French into Anglo-Norman, and the appropriation of the tradition into Middle English. The Anglo-Norman works show particular interest in three primary themes: crusades and the alterity of Saracens, the role and importance of holy relics, and the status and importance of kingship and monarchy. These themes carry over into the Middle English adaptations, but with interesting and important changes in emphasis or focus, relevant to the insular context.

In the second part the authors provide detailed descriptions and analyses of all manuscript versions of the relevant narratives. These studies include comparisons with continental versions, variance within the insular material, and examination of the social and political conditions of production. The three narratives being examined (*Roland*, *Fierabras*, *Otinel*) are each afforded their own chapter, and a very useful appendix is included that lists insular Charlemagne texts and manuscripts.

The English and Anglo-Norman Charlemagne texts are shown to be embedded in multi-layered and motivated translation and adaptation practices, and this book reveals an orientation theorizing these works in terms of medieval historiography and *translatio studii et imperii*. The authors note that recent translation theory tends to tread carefully around cultural appropriation, but for these medieval textualities the authors here emphasize the fact that adaptation is 'a major impulse in medieval literary creation' (p. 16), where appropriation is an important path for reconfiguration and recontextualization. So, noting such an approach informing the Middle English Charlemagne texts, the authors take the stance that the appropriation of Carolingian narrative is indeed a legitimate and important mechanism implicated in the heritage of both insular and Angevin people, whether English- or French-speaking, or both.

This is the third in the University of Bristol's 'Charlemagne: A European Icon' series, following *Charlemagne and his Legend in Early Spanish Literature*

and Historiography, and *The Charlemagne Legend in Medieval Latin Texts*, both published in 2016. Further volumes are in preparation, including *Charlemagne in Medieval Francophonia*, and *Charlemagne in the Celtic and Scandinavian Worlds*, and these are eagerly awaited, an important series for scholars of Carolingian narrative in Europe.

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Heslop, Kate, and Jürg **Glauser**, eds, *RE:writing: Medial Perspectives on Textual Culture in the Icelandic Middle Ages* (Medienwandel—Medienwechsel—Medienwissen, 29), Zurich, Chronos, 2018; paperback; pp. 328; R.R.P. CHF48.00, €48.00; ISBN 9783034010290.

Mediality is a theoretical orientation for textual and manuscript scholarship that resists the simplistic, outmoded constraints of the orality/literacy binary, instead negotiating contextualities and embracing variability, dynamics, and performativity in medieval texts without privileging or fetishizing any particular mode, such as the manuscript. This 'turn' treats text, textuality, the text bearer, and transmission processes as essentially medial: texts are go-betweens, they mediate power and authority, they enjoy a social existence, they are meaning-producing, relational, and contingent. 'The medium is […] always engaged in a process and, as it is human culture that is of interest here, this process concerns *meaning*, its transfer, materialisation, transport, translation, [and] expression' (p. 20).

This book speaks theory from the outset, and the introduction, authored by Kate Heslop and Jürg Glauser, sets the frame. To talk of texts changing in the course of transmission is to talk of mediality. Where once scholars sought an urtext, or favoured a genealogy of textualities, we now have transmission studies embracing later textual expressions alongside the earlier, and valuing variance over fixity. This book certainly accepts the baton from the likes of Paul Zumthor and Bernard Cerquiglini. Here, mediality plays out across a range of 'discussions', many of which will be familiar to medievalists: the relation of oral to literary, the textualization of traditional narrative, memorial text as both literary and performative, the active processes of scribal culture, multi-modality in manuscript scholarship, text promulgation and book production, and hagiography in the context of the political culture of the northern church.

The first section in this volume discusses the role of mediums—the go-betweens, those who mediate—in Norse narrative, and there are but two papers in this section. Kate Heslop opens with a well-wrought examination of the multi-valanced and over-determined 'medial signature' (p. 45) of Mímir in Norse myth, while Judy Quinn follows with a close reading of Jóreiðr's prophetic dreams in *Sturlunga saga*, identifying intertextualities and topoi that mediate between the Christian/pagan dichotomy.

The second section, 'Media', contains six contributions, all of which focus on aspects of the materiality of Norse texts: the circumstances of their production, use, and performance, and the ways in which these texts are aware of and