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French Literature Abroad

Towards an Alternative History of French Literature

Abstract

What would a history of medieval literature in French that is not focussed on France and Paris look like? Taking as its starting point the key role played in the development of textual culture in French by geographical regions that are either at the periphery of French-speaking areas, or alternatively completely outside them, this article offers three case studies: first of a text composed in mid-twelfth-century England; then of one from early thirteenth-century Flanders; and finally from late thirteenth-century Italy. What difference does it make if we do not read these texts, and the language in which they are written, in relation to French norms, but rather look at their cultural significance both at their point of production, and then in transmission? A picture emerges of a literary culture in French that is mobile and cosmopolitan, one that cannot be tied to the teleology of an emerging national identity, and one that is a *bricolage* of a range of influences that are moving towards France as well as being exported from it. French itself functions as a supralocal written language (even when it has specific local features) and therefore may function more like Latin than a local vernacular.

Introduction

It may seem paradoxical to devote an article to the literary history of a single vernacular in a collection devoted to exploring a European and comparative perspective. Yet if we take seriously the imperative to uncouple literary traditions from retroactive national literary historical narratives, narratives that began in the later Middle Ages but which notoriously reach their apogee in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when they tied literary traditions to nation states and national languages, one corollary is that a common language may unify different peoples across political borders, fostering a collective identity rather than fragmented local identities. What were to become the dominant European languages and their literary traditions have often been viewed as coterminous with restrictive ideas of na-

tion, or as an instrument of cultural imperialism or hegemony, but we tend to forget that a shared language may also instantiate a shared, supralocal identity.[1]

It is often acknowledged that 'French literature' seems eccentrically to begin outside France (whether this be defined in medieval or modern terms), and also that it is widely disseminated outside France. However, the implications of this are rarely fully examined. Often a more traditional, Franco-centric literary history prevails, according to which 'French' literary culture has its origin in 'France,' and as the Middle Ages advance emanates outwards from France, particularly Paris, to other parts of Europe, with textual production and dissemination elsewhere adduced as evidence of the pre-eminent influence of 'French' courtly culture from 1150–1450. This article suggests an alternative model for the history of medieval literature in French, centripetal rather than centrifugal, by focusing initially on three case studies, each of which represents a key place and epoch in the development of literature in French outside France, before returning briefly to the more traditional canon to see how literary history may look different if a more diverse geographical arena is taken into account, and also manuscript dissemination as well as textual production.[2]

My case studies on the one hand call into question a traditional teleology of literature in French, according to which the main role of 'French literature' is to play a foundational role in French culture understood as the 'culture of France,' a France with stable and well-defined borders. On the other hand, they also call into question what we mean by the 'literary,' in that medieval textual culture in French often seems more concerned with something we might loosely consider 'history' rather than the 'fiction' that dominates modern literary canons. Furthermore, this 'history' for which readers of French clearly had a great appetite was not first and foremost a 'French' history, but rather one that concerned the relation of medieval Christendom more generally to the Classical past. A final question raised by my approach, then, is: exactly what do these texts seek to represent and for whom?

England *c.* 1136

Modern medieval French literary studies have often privileged the twelfth century as the high point of the tradition. The glories of the

so-called twelfth-century Renaissance are thought to preface a slow decline through the so-called waning of the Middle Ages until the real Renaissance reboots high culture. Few scholars would now accept this caricature of literary history, but twelfth-century texts and authors still dominate many university syllabi. They are also the object of a disproportionate amount of attention from medievalists working in other languages looking to chart the influence of French literature on other literary traditions and of a disproportionate share of research in the field. It is well known, of course, that some of our most canonical twelfth-century texts written in French come from England in one way or another: for example the *Chanson de Roland* (at least in its canonical Oxford version), Marie de France's *Lais*, and Thomas's *Tristan*. Yet none of these texts was widely disseminated in French in the Middle Ages (even if they seem to have been better known through translations into other languages), which suggests at the very least a disjuncture between modern and medieval aesthetic judgements.

When the role of England in the emergence of French literature is acknowledged (which is not always the case), scholars turn to history to offer an explanation. Two key historical factors are evoked. First, the Norman Conquest of 1066; secondly the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry of Anjou in 1152 followed by Henry's succession to the throne of England in 1154. It is superfluous to rehearse the impact of 1066 and 1154 in detail. William of Normandy's victory at Hastings in 1066 allowed him to implant in England a Norman – French speaking – aristocratic elite, which meant that French was a language widely used by England's aristocratic and clerical elites throughout the rest of the Middle Ages (even if quickly they also became English speaking). This Gallicization of the culture of the English aristocracy and high clergy was no doubt accelerated, however, by the accession of Henry of Anjou to the English throne and the creation thereby of the so-called Angevin empire, since French-speaking Henry, his wife Eleanor (previously queen of France 1137–52), and then their four French-speaking sons effectively ruled lands from England's border with Scotland to the Pyrenees.

The extent of the Francophone literary culture generated by and for the elite social strata of England is considerable: Ruth Dean's catalogue of Anglo-Norman texts includes 986 items. But institutional and national biases have shaped modern apprehension of this material. Whereas 'Anglo-Norman Studies' were a thriving sub-discipline in many UK universities (in English as well as in French depart-

ments) throughout the twentieth century, Francophone publications on texts other than the *Roland*, Marie de France and Thomas' *Tristan* were and are limited. Anglo-Norman literature was thus often implicitly regarded as an English affair. The first decade of the twenty-first century has seen the transformation and complete revitalisation of this field, thanks to the pioneering work of scholars such as Ardis Butterfield, David Trotter, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne. Thus, the much-expanded on-line *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* (a project led by David Trotter) now provides an unrivalled research resource that greatly improves our knowledge of the lexis of texts in French produced in the British Isles; Jocelyn Wogan-Brown, in the introduction to the collection *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain,* published in 2009, has redefined and rebaptised Anglo-Norman as the "French of England," drawing attention in particular to the variety, ubiquity and longevity of French in England; and Ardis Butterfield has influentially shown in her 2009 book *The Familiar Enemy* the extent to which later medieval English identity is bound up not only with England's relation to France, but even more significantly with a pervasive and deeply embedded dialogue with French literary texts. It is striking, however, that much of this important work remains largely (though not exclusively) focused on the multilingualism of Insular culture, and on Insular cultural history; it is also noteworthy that this vibrant new field is dominated by English-speaking scholars and scholars of English literature.[3] What then takes centre stage is England's relation to France, with 'French culture' identified in the period immediately following 1066 primarily with Normandy, then from the 1160s onwards with a rarely defined 'France,' but seen primarily within the context of relations between the English and French monarchies.[4] Wogan-Browne quite rightly points out that "we need a new post-national vocabulary – and that is not easy to find" (*Language and Culture in Medieval Britain* 9). One issue here may be the assumption that when what we call the French language is used, this necessarily connotes primarily a relation to France. This may be the case, but when it is considered that French was used widely throughout Europe – in Flanders, Italy, the Eastern Mediterranean and elsewhere – as a language of trade and culture, there is a strong case for considering the networks for which French was a conduit in the British Isles as more complex than the focus on an English–French axis sometimes implies.

If quantities of surviving manuscripts and texts are anything to go by, England plays a significant role in the development of Franco-

3. The overwhelming majority of contributors to Wogan-Browne's *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England* are working in English and while there are a few contributions from scholars working in French Studies, there are none from France itself. The same is true other collected volumes on related topics, such as Kleinheinz and Busby.

4. See in particular the essays in Wogan-Browne, but for some different perspectives see also the essays in Tyler.

phone literary culture. Indeed, a sustained Francophone textual culture in England precedes the emergence of a sustained vernacular written culture in France itself. For instance, the preliminary statistical surveys based on the vast *Translations médiévales* collaborative project that surveys medieval translations into French indicate that a high proportion of both translations and surviving manuscripts of translations into French (which at this stage means translations from Latin) from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries comes from England (see Galdérisi, I 560–62; also Careri, Ruby and Short XXXIII–XXXV). Furthermore, many of these translations are broadly speaking devotional or learned, and may emanate from religious communities rather than courtly settings. It is instructive to consider this data alongside insights from palaeography, codicology and philology, according to which the emerging script for writing French in twelfth-century England (for which there is no sustained continental precedent) was influenced and shaped by the scripts used to write Old English and Insular Latin.[5]

In his ground-breaking study *French: From Dialect to Standard*, Anthony Lodge writes: "In the *langue d'oïl*, if we disregard the French used in England after the Norman conquest […], the vernacular begins to be used extensively in literary manuscripts from the middle of the twelfth century" (113). Lodge is opposing the *langue d'oïl* here to the *langue d'oc*, and seeking to explain the co-existence of a range of *scriptae* (a *scripta* being "a conventional supra-dialectical writing system," 114) for continental French (notably Norman, central French, Picard) before the triumph of Parisian French in the late thirteenth century. To what extent, however, is it helpful "to disregard the French used in England"? And given the scattered nature of the manuscript evidence for continental French in the twelfth century can we really be sure that "the vernacular begins to be used extensively in literary manuscripts from the middle of the twelfth century"? The fact is that we may know of a lot of texts, but as Careri, Ruby and Short demonstrate in their *Livres et écritures*, surviving manuscripts are thin on the ground. This means we have to be cautious, without further research, about drawing any conclusions regarding the emergence, relation and chronological sequence of different *scriptae* for writing French in the twelfth century. All the same, Serge Lusignan has demonstrated for a slightly later period (the early and mid thirteenth century) that what he calls an Anglo-Norman *scripta* was at times consciously adopted in Picardy and Flanders ("A chacun son français"). For Lusignan, the territories on either side of the

5. Consider the Insular manuscripts in Careri, Ruby and Short's catalogue of twelfth-century manuscripts with texts in French, particularly numbers 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 21, 25, 26 and so on. See also their comments, XLVII–LV.

English Channel may have been politically diffuse, but they were tightly bound together economically. They have two *langues véhiculaires*: Latin and French. French, he writes, "s'y manifestait sous trois formes régionales ou *scriptae*: l'anglo-normand, le picard et accessoirement le français central" ("A chacun son français" 119: "has three regional forms or *scriptae*: Anglo-Norman, Picard, and peripherally central French"). As Lusignan's equation here of "regional form" and *scripta* suggests, a *scripta* may derive from a local dialect, but it is a written convention and thereby mobile, so potentially at least supralocal. Lusignan is no doubt being deliberately provocative here in relation to the precedence that some scholarship has traditionally accorded central French from the outset when he suggests it is only *accessoirement* a *scripta,* but he thereby usefully challenges received wisdom about centre and periphery. In the zone in which he is interested 'Central French' is indeed peripheral. Thus when the cross-channel links between religious institutions in England and Normandy and the bidirectional cross-channel movement of *scriptae* and texts are set alongside the sheer quantity of surviving early manuscripts in French from England, a picture emerges of a written textual culture in French beginning in a so-called peripheral zone, one where it is not the mother tongue of the overwhelming majority of the population, and then moving towards the area usually taken to be its centre, but in a form strongly marked by the graphic systems of other languages (*i.e.* Latin and English).

The text on which I focus here, Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* (composed in Lincolnshire *c.* 1136–37, cited from Ian Short's edition), is every bit as foundational for Francophone textual culture as the Oxford *Roland,* Marie de France's *Lais,* or Thomas's *Tristan,* yet it has received only a fraction of the scholarly attention. The *Estoire* is the earliest surviving example of French vernacular historiography. Although Gaimar uses a variety of different sources (of which more shortly), his 6532-line poem of octosyllabic rhyming couplets is a loose adaptation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* which makes him also the earliest known translator of English into French. His account runs from the earliest Saxon and Danish invasions in the late fifth century through to the death of William Rufus. I will return to the text's epilogues, but there is more than a hint there (6528–32) and in the *Estoire*'s opening lines (1–16) that the surviving text was originally the second half of a diptych, the first of which almost certainly had Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*c.* 1136) as its source. In all four surviving manuscripts, which are of insular prov-

enance, the *Estoire* is preceded by Wace's *Brut*, also drawn from Geoffrey, and the reason why the first part of Gaimar's history did not survive may well be that it was routinely displaced by Wace's better known account of the same historical sweep: Troy, Rome, Arthurian Britain.

There is not a great deal of critical literature on Gaimar's *Estoire* and virtually none in French. Francophone opinion seems to have been content with Gaston Paris's judgement of Gaimar as "à peu près dénué de valeur littéraire" (cited by Short, *Geffrei Gaimar* lii: "more or less devoid of literary value"). Yet Gaimar's racy account of English history exploits pace and dramatic poise to considerable effect, it is linguistically inventive, and it strikingly breaks new ground in terms of using a Romance vernacular to write history. Furthermore, Gaimar may have been influential in shaping how subsequent writers would use the octosyllabic rhyming couplet for secular narrative (Wace for example) and his work has erotic and chivalric elements that precociously anticipate subsequent verse romance. Ian Short has done much to set out the merits and interest of Gaimar's *Estoire*, but as he points out (*Geiffrei Gaimar* liii) if historians have seen the text's merits as a source, all too often it is referred to only in passing and usually either in negative terms by literary scholars, who also (in my view) have a tendency to pigeon-hole Gaimar as a stooge of the Norman regime. Thus Laura Ashe, in her study of *Fiction and History in England, 1066–1200*, mentions Gaimar only in passing and sticks with examples from the modern canon in English, French, and Latin. Her main evaluation of Gaimar is that his "*Estoire des Engleis* (1130s) and the *Lai d'Haveloc* (*c.* 1200 derived from Gaimar) are monuments to the Normans' appropriation of England, and the characteristics of insular narrative" (20).

To read the *Estoire* exclusively in relation to the Conquest and within the framework of insular narrative is not, however, entirely satisfactory. True Gaimar's narrative climaxes with the Conquest, and true his view of the first two Norman kings is unequivocally positive: William I is "le meildre rei e le meillur / ke Engleis eüssent a seignur" (5139–40: "he was the best king and the best overlord that the English had ever had"),[6] while William Rufus is represented as a powerful, larger-than-life figure acclaimed by English and Normans alike (5778), also a proto-courtly lord, renowned for his hospitality and prowess. Furthermore, Gaimar's sense of right and wrong in relation to the Conquest is terse and schematic: "Engleis cump[r]erent lur ultrages" (5342: "the English paid dearly for their outrageous be-

6. Translations of quotations from Gaimar are from Short's edition.

haviour"). Yet when the Conquest is set in the broader context of Gaimar's account of English history, it is clear that the Normans are but the latest in a long line of *gent de ultramarine* (5266) to have invaded England and then become assimilated.

The fact that so many waves of invading Saxons and Danes become assimilated into the English aristocratic elite renders any sense of purely English identity, as opposed to Saxon, Danish or Norman identity, difficult to discern. Thus if the Danes are initially represented as a *päene gente* (2160) and frequently cast in an antagonistic relation to the English, an antagonism that is often reinforced formally through prosody and rhyme, and if it is remarked that the English dislike the Danes for their rapaciousness and cruelty (*e.g.* 2968–69, 4523–36, 4766–68, 4777–78), this antagonism is just as frequently swept aside and troubled. Consider the case of Rægnald Everwic, "un rei demi daneis" (3507), with an English mother (3508). As this altogether typical case indicates, marriage practices among the social elite of medieval Europe sought to unite warring factions, or potential allies, often across long distances. Rægnald's ethnic hybridity was thus the rule rather than the exception and this naturally means that the cultural (or indeed linguistic) identity of high-ranking men is invariably complex.

The most striking case of the *Estoire*'s representation of a Dane complicating any straightforward opposition between the *Engleis* and the *Daneis* is Cnut. The English, the *Estoire* tells us, flocked to Cnut's support when he invaded (4188–89). Cnut, king of England from 1016 to 1035 as well as king of Denmark, Norway and parts of Sweden, gets a wholly good press from Gaimar as a "good king" (4683–84). The portrayal of Cnut's attempted reconciliation with Edmond Ironside, following his capture of half the kingdom, is particularly positive. He addresses Edmund thus:

> … Eadmund, un poi atent!
> Jo sui Daneis, e tu Engleis,
> E nos peres furent dous reis:
> L'un tint la terre, e l'autre l'out,
> Chescon en fist ço ke li plout.
> Tant com l'urent en poüsté,
> Chescons en fist sa volunté
> E bien sachez loi[n]gtenement
> L'urent Deneis nostre parent:
> Prés de mil anz l'out Dane aince[i]s

Ke unc i entrast Certiz li reis.
Certiz, ço fu vostre ancïen,
E li reis Danes fu le mien.
Daneis le tint en chef de Deu,
Mordret donat Certiz son feu:
Il ne tient unkes chevalment,
De lui vindrent vostre parent.
Pur ço vus di, si nel savez:
Si vus od mei [vus] combatez,
L[i] un de nus ad greignur tort,
Ne savom liquels en ert mort.
Pur ço vus vol un offre fere
E ne m'en voil de rien retrere:
Partum la terre dreit en dous,
L'une partie en aiez vus,
L'altre partie me remaigne!
Ne jo ne vus ne se complaigne!
Puis conquerom cele partie
Dunt jo ne vus n[en] avom mie!
[E] sicom nus la conqueroms,
Entre nus dous la departoms,
E saium dous freres en lai!
Jo jurrai vus, vus jurez moi,
De tenir tel fraternité
Com de une mere fussum né,
Cum si fussum ambedui frere
E d'un pere e d'une mere;
Si eit ostages entre nus,
E crëez mei, jo crerai vus!   (4308–46)

(Edmund, wait a moment. I am a Dane and you are English; both of our fathers were kings, both ruled over the country, and each was master in the land. As long as it was in their power to do so, each did exactly as he saw fit. Our Danish ancestors, I'll have you know, have been ruling here for a very long time. Almost a thousand years before king Cerdic came to the throne, Danr was king. Cerdic was your ancestor, and king Danr was mine. A Dane held the land in the chief from God. It was Mordred who granted Cerdic his fief; he never held in chief, and your family descended from him. In case

you don't already know, I'll tell you that if you fight me, one of us is going to be in the wrong more than the other, though we don't know which one of us will die as a result. This is why I am willing to make you an offer [of peace] – one that I will not seek to back down from: let us divide the kingdom exactly in two, with one part going to you and the other remaining with me, in such a way that neither I nor you will have any cause for complaint. Thereafter let us conquer that part of the kingdom that neither you nor I have possession of. As we conquer it, so let's divide it between us. Let you and me be brothers by adoption! I shall swear a solemn oath to you, and you to me, that we will have the same sort of fraternal relations as if we had been born of the same mother, and as if were two brothers of the same father and the same mother. Let there be exchange of sureties between us: trust me and I shall trust you!)

The terms of this pact were not subsequently honoured because of underhand machinations in Edmund's camp – then his death – but the pact is sealed with a kiss and Edward implicitly accepts Cnut's argument that the two men have more in common than divides them as descendants from the same Royal Danish stock ("nostre parent" in 4316 implicitly refers to both men), with a shared history of interrelations going back centuries. Cnut's contention that whereas English royalty owes its sovereignty to a man (Mordred), Danish royalty received its authority from God belies the text's earlier labelling of the Danes as pagans, but implicitly gives Cnut the greater right to rule. The Realpolitik of the two men agreeing to join together to share the parts of the kingdom neither controls is also instructive as to the solidarity of the 'English' in the face of Danish invaders, and as in near contemporary *chansons de geste*, ideas of right and wrong (*tort,* 4327) are subsumed to questions of power and domination: if you are right you win; you lose if wrong.

Ian Short remarks that "one of the most unexpected aspects of Gaimar's attitude to English history is in his treatment of the Danes" (*Geffrei Gaimar* xliii) and this precisely because they appear in a positive light. This has implications for how the text represents 'English' identity. Even more significantly, the same process of the blurring of boundaries between the English and their antagonists occurs with the Normans. Not coincidentally the beginning of this process (both in the *Estoire* and in reality) involves Cnut in that he marries Emma of Normandy, daughter and sister of the Duke of Normandy, who

7. Elizabeth Tyler has recently highlighted the importance of royal and aristocratic women in the fostering of polyglot literary culture in medieval England before the Conquest: see her "Crossing Conquests," and particularly 177–83 on Emma's pivotal role, and that of her daughter, Gunnhild.

8. For an illuminating account of the 'networked' nature of Norman England, see Bates, particularly 128–59.

had previously been married to Ethelred the Unready, mother of Edward the Confessor, king of England 1042–66. Though the Norman involvement in England starts earlier (see for example line 5037), it was through Emma that it intensified.[7] If the Normans prior to the Conquest, like the Danes before them, are *la gent de ultramarine,* the frequency with which William the Conqueror crosses the Channel subsequently is dizzying (5353–58), and his ability (at least in Gaimar's account) to unite *franceis* and *engleis* striking (5484). William, in other words, is above all a cross-channel, cosmopolitan leader. It is equally noteworthy that Gaimar oscillates between referring to the new ruling class as Normans and referring to them as French. Since their being 'French' clearly gives no sense of their being associated with, or subject to, the French crown, 'French' here simply means "from the other side of the channel." If this is then put together with the frequent references to the presence of Flemings (usually mercenaries) in England (5160, 5185, 5423, 5428, 6283), the political map of late eleventh- and early twelfth-century England Gaimar is implicitly drawing is not reducible simply to an English-Norman axis in the immediate post-conquest era. The position of England, rather, is determined by a longer history of networks established by contact across the channel *and* the North Sea, with a good portion of the coast on the other side of the channel being French-speaking, though not politically French.[8]

For Gaimar allegiance to a good king transcends ethnic or linguistic divisions. He most admires kings – Cnut, William I, William II – with a substantial power base on either side of the channel. William Rufus's courtly court is exemplary in this respect. In Gaimar's account, England has at this stage a cosmopolitan court at its symbolic centre where magnates from many different places gather, including from France (as opposed to Normandy), where William is extending his power base with the enthusiastic help of English lords (5909–10), or from Flanders. Gaimar's playful attention to the squabbling of courtiers at William's coronation court notes the origins of the different factions, but their specific identity seems less important than the courtly scenario that underlines William's pre-eminence: Welsh 'kings' vie for his favour at his court, and for the privilege of taking up the subservient position of sword bearer. One lord, Hugh of Chester, balks at this, however, and after some courtly bantering, is asked to bear the golden royal staff instead (6015–20). This courtly feinting leads to Hugh swearing fealty (6033), which in turn leads to the granting of North Wales (6043), but the dominant image of

this passage is the spectacle of William's court as a place in which powerful men from Normandy and the British Isles vie with each other for positions of domestic subservience in the king's entourage. This scene would not be out of place in an Arthurian romance. Tellingly within a hundred lines we are told of another of William's courtiers, Malcolm king of Scotland (6119), who is involved in William's affairs on both sides of the channel, while Gaimar also underlines the connectedness of William to the Kingdom of Jerusalem (6207) through his fractious brother Robert. If Gaimar glosses over the unpleasantness of their family squabble, a picture nonetheless emerges of an England embedded in a complex set of networks stretching in all directions, even to the distant Eastern Mediterranean. The purely 'Anglo-Norman' axis of relations between England and Normandy, or even England and France, is but part of this more complex set of networks.

What role does language play in this? In his lengthy epilogue, Gaimar stresses the multilingual nature of his sources:[9]

9. On this epilogue, see Short, "Gaimar's Epilogue." There is a second, shorter and more conventional, epilogue that only occurs in one of the four manuscripts; see Short, *Geffrei Gaimar* 354–55.

Ceste estorie fist translater
Dame Custance la gentil.
Gaimar i mist marz e avril
E [aprés] tuz les dusze mais
Ainz k'il oust translaté des reis.
Il purchaça maint esamplaire,
Livres engleis e par gramaire
E en romanz e en latin,
Ainz k'en p[e]üst traire a la fin.
Si sa dame ne i aidast,
Ja a nul jor ne l'achevast.
Ele eveiad a Helmeslac
Pur le livre Walter Espac.
Robert li quens de Gloücestre
Fist translater icele geste
Solum les livres as Waleis
K'il aveient des bretons reis.
Walter Espec la demandat,
Li quens Robert li enveiat,
Puis la prestat Walter Espec
A Raül le fiz Gilebert.
Dame Custance l'enpruntat
De son seignur k'el mult amat.

Geffrai Geimar cel livre escri[s]t
[E] les transsa[n]dances i mist
Ke li Waleis ourent leissé,
K[ë] il aveit ainz purchacé –
U fust a dreit u fust a tort –
Le bon livre dë Oxeford
Ki fust Walter l'arcedaien,
Sin amendat son livre bien;
E de l'estorie di Wincestre
Fust amende[e] ceste geste,
De Wassingburc un livre engleis
U il trovad escrit des reis
E de tuz les emper[e]ürs
Ki de Rome furent seignurs.
E de Englettere ourent treü,
Des reis ki d'els ourent tenu,
De lur vies e de lur plaiz,
Des aventures e des faiz,
Coment chescons maintint la terre,
Quel amat pes e liquel guere.
De tut le plus pout ci trover
Ki en cest livre volt esgarder.   (6436–80)

(The noble lady Constance had this history adapted into French. Gaimar took March and April and a whole twelve months before finishing this adaptation of [the history of] the kings [of Britain]. He obtained a large number of copies of books – English books, by dint of learned reading, and books both in the French vernacular and Latin – before finally managing to bring his work to a conclusion. If his lady had not helped him, he would never have completed it. She sent to Helmsley for Walter Espec's book. Robert earl of Gloucester had had this historical narrative translated in accordance with the books belonging to the Welsh that they had in their possession on the subject of the kings of Britain. Walter Espec requested this historical narrative, earl Robert sent it to him, and then Walter Espec lent it to Ralf fitz Gilbert; lady Constance borrowed it from her husband, whom she loved dearly. Geoffrey Gaimar made a written copy of the book and added it to the supplementary material that the Welsh had omitted, for he had previously obtained,

be it rightfully or wrongfully, the good book of Oxford that belonged to archdeacon Walter, and with this he made considerable improvements to his own book. And this historical narrative was improved by also by reference to the Winchester History, [that is,] a certain English book at Washingborough, in which he found a written account of the kings [of Britain] and of all the Emperors who had dominion over Rome and tribute from England, and of the kings who had held lands of these emperors, of their lives and their affairs, what happened to them and what deeds they performed, how each one governed the land, which one loved peace and which one war. Anyone willing to look in this [Washingborough] book will be able to find there all this and more.)

The context in which Gaimar writes is portrayed as one in which books written in English, French, Latin, and Welsh are circulating among cultivated patrons eager to learn about English history, and a writer such as Gaimar is clearly expected to use sources in all four languages. But these languages differ in nature: whereas English and Welsh are local, indigenous languages, tied to specific regions and delimited communities, French and Latin are neither indigenous, nor specific to the British Isles. Indeed, these languages enable textual mobility and *translation* in the physical sense of the term. It is interesting, then, that although the Welsh and English sources Gaimar uses are key to his endeavour, particularly the *l'estorie de Wincestre* (6467: almost certainly the Winchester *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*), these sources are also represented as in need of supplementation (6459–61). I have retained Short's translation, but this masks a number of problems. First, in his translation of lines 6442–43, he introduces the term 'French vernacular' for clarity in order to translate *romanz*, which is indeed the standard word for 'French' of the period. But the syntax actually subordinates both *romanz* and *latin* in line 6433 to *par gramaire* in line 6432. In other words, both *romanz* and *latin* are types of *gramaire*, which is usually a synonym for Latin. This seems to imply that French should be regarded as *equivalent to*, or at least in the same class of languages, as Latin. Secondly, Short's translation specifies that *cest livre* in line 6480 is to be understood as "this [Washingborough] book." Yet syntactically it is equally possible that Gaimar refers here to his own book, particularly given the presence of the spatial marker *ci* in line 6479, which Short translates as "there," but more obviously means "here."

Thus, despite all the local and authoritative Latin sources, if you want to know *de tut le plus* in this instance you need a book in French in that you need to read Gaimar's *Estoire*. It is interesting, then, given the *Estoire*'s status as the earliest surviving French history book, that Gaimar suggests that historical writing in French is already in circulation; he also goes on to spar with a figure called Davit, whose work is implicitly also in French, but whose account of history Gaimar finds wanting, though he "sings" well of courtly intrigue (6483–32).

Given the status Gaimar assumes for French here, the purely insular circulation of the *Estoire* is striking. This cannot, however, be attributed to a lack of interest in his subject matter. Indeed, the success of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* (almost certainly Gaimar's *livre dë Oxeford*), and of Wace's *Brut* (with which the *Estoire* is systematically associated in transmission), shows the popularity of this material outside England. Thus, despite the eminent geographical translatability of French (in Lusignan's terms, its status as a high status *langue véhiculaire*),[10] perhaps there is something eminently *untranslatable* about Gaimar's particular use of it. This is not simply to do with the unmistakable 'Anglo-Norman' phonological features found throughout the text (see Short, *Geffrei Gaimar* xxxii–xxxvii), which do not in and of themselves render the text incomprehensible to continental readers, nor would they preclude the transposition of the text into a more Continental form of French, which happens with other Anglo-Norman texts.

Interestingly, many passages of the *Estoire* seem clearly addressed to readers who also know English. Thus in the portion of the epilogue quoted above there are several instances of English proper nouns rhyming with French words in such a way that the phonology of either the English or the French word must be distorted in order to make a pure rhyme (Gloücestre and Wincestre with *geste*; Oxeford/ *tort*). This is a technique also used by Wace, but a good deal less frequently. It is not clear that rhymes such as these tell us anything about how the words were actually pronounced in a reading of the text, since the intention may have been to produce eye-rhymes, the spelling of the words may be modified in transmission, and all our surviving manuscripts postdate the composition of the text considerably. On the other hand, the high frequency of English proper nouns and the accuracy with which they are recorded in the *Estoire* suggests that it is the phonology of the French word that is implicitly modified by rhyming with an English word. In many instances of multilingual rhyming, a variety of parts of speech, not just proper

10. Lusignan concludes his "A chacun son français" with the observation that the *forme lettrée* or *scolarisée* of much Anglo-Norman and Picard French means it is functionally more akin to Latin than to spoken French.

nouns, do not make sense without the voicing or modification of consonants that in some instances would destroy the phonic purity of the rhyme, and in others seems potentially to introduce an English word into French: Edefrid/ *saisi* (1147–48); *retint / edeling* (1727–28); *suth / vertu* (2115–16); Everwices / *païs* (2859–60). Elsewhere Gaimar uses unambiguously English words, and if, again as in Wace, some of these might have had some continental currency thanks precisely to Arthurian literature or indeed to the circulation of Wace's texts (for example *uthlages* 2612 and elsewhere; *wesheil* and *drincheil* 3809), others either have a quaintly 'franglais' flavour (*e.g. welcumé* 3679 and 3689), or are arcane and/ or technical, therefore probably not intelligible to readers from the continent with no knowledge of English (*e.g. buzecharles* "shipman" in 5486; *esterman* "steersman" in 5832).

Gaimar's use of French is therefore at one and the same time local and particularised, *and yet* it also plays on the status of French as a mobile, supralocal European language, like Latin. As a writer he is not in any way dependent on French models, nor is he apparently concerned to reproduce the language of native French speakers from France. One important corollary, however, of Gaimar's French being directed at a Francophone readership with a good knowledge of English is the sharper focus this gives less on the mobility of texts in French *per se* (since this text does not appear to have been particularly mobile) than on the importance for his readers of knowing French in order to partake in certain types of supralocal, pan-European cultural and political networks, networks from which monolingual English or Welsh readers would by definition have been excluded. The local 'English' reader of French is thus situated in a broader and cosmopolitan cultural and political context simply by virtue of his or her knowledge of French, even if the text s/he is reading is primarily of local interest.

Flanders *c.* 1210 and Acre *c.* 1260

I began the previous section by noting the focus in modern accounts of French literary history on twelfth-century texts. In fact the manuscript traditions of the texts that receive most scholarly attention are often relatively sparse (for example the *Chanson de Roland*, Marie de France, the first four Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes, verse Tristan romances). Indeed, apart from devotional texts, the two

11. Only about 40% of this text has been edited. For editions of the sections devoted to Genesis, Thebes, Assyria, Greeks and Amazons, Troy and Alexander, see Coker Joslin; de Visser-van Terwisga; Jung, 358–430; Gaullier-Bougassas. Apart from these editions, the main work on the *Histoire*'s manuscript tradition is Meyer, but see also Oltrogge for an important account of the tradition's cycles of illustrations; also more recently, Traschler; and Zinelli, "«je qui li livre escrive»." The following account draws on all these sources.

12. In addition to the example cited below from Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), fonds français 20125, 148v–49r, see Coker Joslin § xxxiii (102) and Gaullier-Bougassas 316, where reference is made to "les bones gens d'Europe" in the closing paragraph of the Alexander section as transmitted in Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (ÖNB), 2576.

twelfth-century texts in French with the most significant manuscript dissemination from the early thirteenth century onwards – both in France and elsewhere – are the *Roman d'Alexandre* and the *Roman de Troie*, both texts with an orientation that might be described as broadly 'historical.' When each of these texts is read in isolation, their particular articulation of 'history' might seem rather different to that of Gaimar's *Estoire*. Yet as with Gaimar's *Estoire*, we have plenty of evidence that in reception at least (and possibly in conception too), this narrative material is subsumed to a broader drive, that manifests itself with different ideological agendas in different parts of Europe, to produce a continuous history of Occidental culture running from Biblical history, through ancient history particularly as cathected through the Trojan myth, then often through Arthurian history, and finally to the (medieval) present day.

One of the most successful texts in French (in terms of dissemination) to respond to this historicizing agenda is known to modern scholarship as the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*.[11] Composed in Flanders between 1208 and 1213, which is to say a region that was not then politically part of France (though this was about to change), and in which the ruling classes at least seem to have used both French and Flemish routinely, the *Histoire* is typical of much medieval textual production in that it is less an original composition than a collection of disparate adaptations of material from different sources. These include Genesis and Medieval Latin or Old French accounts of the stories of Thebes, Troy, Aeneas, Alexander the Great and Roman history. The *Histoire* thereby offers a vast 'universal' history that effectively narrates the foundation of Europe, with particular attention to the seminal Trojan myth, for which it was an important vehicle of transmission in many parts of medieval Europe. Indeed, it is interesting that at various points in this collage of material from different sources, the term 'Europe' seems to be used not simply to designate a geographical continent (though clearly this is one of its meanings), but also a cultural entity, conflating Occidental Christendom with the 'European,' and thereby making the *Histoire* a key early text for the emergence of a properly 'European' identity.[12]

Furthermore, although the *Histoire* remained incomplete, stopping with the story of Julius Caesar, it nonetheless enjoyed significant dissemination between the early thirteenth and late fifteenth centuries: 80+ surviving manuscripts make it one of the most widely known texts composed in Old French. In transmission it was sometimes associated with *Li Fait des Romains* and it is the compo-

sition in 1213–14 of this text, which picks up more or less where the *Histoire* leaves off, that may account for the *Histoire*'s incompleteness. Furthermore, the *Histoire*'s eccentric (in every sense of the term) manuscript transmission makes it a particularly interesting instance of the supralocal use of French: composed outside France, the earliest manuscript witnesses of this text, dating from the mid-thirteenth century, are from Acre (in the Kingdom of Jerusalem) and from Northern France. There is then some transmission later in the century of this so-called first redaction in Italy and Northern France, deriving from the Levantine tradition, but later medieval versions from France demonstrably all derive from a copy of a substantially revised version made in Naples before 1340 (London, British Library, Royal 20 D 1), taken to France as a gift for the French king some time before 1380, and written in a form of French with palpable linguistic traces of its Italian origin. This revised version is a substantively different text: it no longer includes Biblical material, and incorporates a much-expanded new Troy section. The *Histoire ancienne* therefore demonstrates that the centrifugal model of textual transmission that is often assumed for major French literary texts, whereby texts are composed 'in France' and then move outwards, is often quite erroneous. Indeed, the transmission of the *Histoire* is if anything centripetal with respect to France itself: the text seems to have skirted around France, only to return from further afield in a different form before gaining a more sustained readership in France.[13]

The standard work on the emergence of vernacular history as a mode of writing is Gabrielle Spiegel's 1993 *Romancing the Past* (though see also Croizy-Naquet's 1999 study). Spiegel's pioneering work focuses on a group of texts in French that emerge mainly from Flanders in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries; these include the *Histoire*. She is not concerned with earlier historiographical texts written in French verse in England (such as Gaimar's *Estoire*) because her interest is in exploring the relation between the development of prose in French and the writing of vernacular history. Crucially, Spiegel shows that the corpus of texts from Flanders she examines was written for, and promoted by, the chivalric nobility on the porous, unstable borders of France, not royalty as had sometimes previously been assumed. She compellingly locates in this corpus of texts "the rise of vernacular prose historiography" and central to this is what she sees as a move to create a clearer distinction between 'history' on the one hand, and "the fictions" of "prior romances" on the other (107–09). For Spiegel, the adoption of prose was key to this.

13. For further details see the website of the *Medieval Francophone Literary Culture outside France* project.

Spiegel's conclusions have been widely accepted by both historians and literary scholars, but there are a number of problems here that are worth revisiting. Thus, despite her initially nuanced consideration of the cultural geography of Flanders, the texts under discussion become subsumed in her account to "French historiography," and to a narrative that culminates in "royal history." Yet this is to simplify their complex transmission through space and time and her argument fails to account adequately for the popularity of a text in French like the *Histoire* in Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean, distant from the historical context on the borders of Flanders and France in which she situates them. Finally, many of the stylistic features and rhetorical moves concerning historical veracity that Spiegel regards as indices of the 'historical' nature of these texts, are also ubiquitous in texts she, along with many literary critics, regards as more properly 'fictional' or 'literary.' Indeed codicological, linguistic and stylistic analysis suggests that to apply the main epistemological and/ or generic categories that modern scholarship has used to separate 'literary' or 'fictional' texts from 'history' in medieval vernacular traditions begs the question.[14]

Given the *Histoire*'s transmission history, its historiography should be viewed as supralocal in scope rather than specifically 'French.' It is, however, nonetheless striking that what 'France' is becomes a matter of concern in this text, and thereby implicitly also a matter of concern to its geographically disparate readership. I shall comment briefly on two passages, the first taken from the text's lengthy verse prologue, the second a passage from the Aeneas section on the origins of France and of the king's of France.

As far as we can tell, the earliest version of the *Histoire ancienne* had a verse prologue of almost 300 lines and many of its main narrative units were punctuated by moralising verse segments that gloss the action, sometimes precisely, sometimes rather loosely. Only one surviving manuscript contain all these verse segments, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), fonds français 20125, this being one of the important Levantine witnesses, while one other manuscript, Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (ÖNB), 2578, a key early Italian manuscript, contains the verse prologue and many of the other verse segments.[15] Spiegel remarks that "Later manuscripts of the *Histoire ancienne* progressively suppress both the verse moralizations and the interpellations to the audience," arguing also that the purpose "is textually to efface authorial presence," thereby enhancing an effect of historical "objectivity" (108–09). Spiegel's survey of

14. For some initial reflections, see Gaunt, "Genres;" and for comparative linguistic and stylistic analysis see Marnette. On the question of prose from a more literary perspective, see the brief but nuanced remarks of Baumgartner.

15. On the crucially important BNF f.fr. 20125 see particularly Folda, 429–33; Oltrogge, 302–07; Rodriguez Porto; and Zinelli, "Les histoires franceses," 9–13. Oltrogge disputes the Levantine provenance of this manuscript, a position that is accepted by de Visser-van Terwisga. But the arguments in favour of the manuscript being from Acre advanced by Folda and Zinelli are compelling. On the verse segments see Szkilnik and Blumenfeld-Kosinski.

the absence or presence of the verse passages, however, is confined to manuscripts in Paris (see 110–11), and it is therefore partial and not a little misleading. Furthermore, as she herself realises, some manuscripts retain the text of the verse moralisations, but copying them as prose, or alternatively they prosify them fully. The verse moralizations are indeed eliminated in some branches of the manuscript tradition, but we are not as yet in a position to be sure that this process is 'progressive' and the survival of the verse moralizations is certainly more widespread than Spiegel suggests, probably characteristic of the text's earliest transmission in Acre, Italy and Northern France/ Flanders. The contentions that the author's presence is felt more in the verse portions and that interpellations to the audience are progressively eliminated also require further investigation using a broader range of manuscripts.

The verse prologue is the main source of information as to the text's Flemish origin, since it identifies Roger, castellan of Lille (*c.* 1190–*c.* 1230) as its patron (262–63). The first half of the prologue is a disquisition on fallen humanity and the vanity of wealth. This segues into a summary of the *Histoire*'s contents and it is from this that we can infer that the text was originally supposed to bring universal history up to the present day. What, then, is the position of 'France' in this account of history?

> De ceus qui la loi Deu tenoient
> E lui e ses ovres amoient
> Ce covendra plenierement
> Dire sanz nul delaiement.
> E puis aprés, sans demorance,
> Qui premerains fu rois de France
> Fais crestïeins, coment ot non;
> E de sa generatïon,
> Quel furent, coment estorerent
> Les riches glises qu'il funderent.
> Aprés sera dit en comun
> Coment li Wandele, Got e Hun
> France pelfirent e guasterent,
> E les iglises desrouberent.
> E des Normans vos iert retrait
> E lor conqueste e lor fait,
> Coment destruirent Germanie,
> Couloigne e France la guarnie,

Angou, Poitou, Borgoigne tote;
De ce ne rest il nule doute
Que Flandres, Waucres n'envaïscent
E mout de maus ne lor feïssent.
Des quels gens Flandres fu puplee
Vos iert l'estoire bien contee,
Com se proverent, quel il furent,
Com il firent que fere durent.   (221–46, ed. Coker Joslin)

(It will be entirely fitting to tell all and without delay about those who upheld God's religion and loved his works. About who was the first king of France, his Christian deeds and what he was called; and his descendants, who they were, how they conducted themselves, and about the fine churches they founded. After this it will be relayed to all how the Vandals, Goths and Huns pilfered France, devastated it and plundered the churches. And then you will be told about the Normans, their conquests and deeds, how they destroyed Germany, Cologne and prosperous France, Anjou, Poitou, all Burgundy; and let there be no doubt that Flanders was not attacked by these vile people, or harmed. You will be told the story of what people populated Flanders, how they were tested, who there were, and what they did in order to survive so long.)

As this suggests, though the text remained unfinished, the original intention was a universal history serving the political interests of the Count of Flanders. The plucky Flemish, in this historically dubious account, according to which the Normans laid Germany to waste, somehow resist, or are bypassed by, the invading Vandals, Goths and Huns, whereas the French have their lands decimated. Furthermore, the lengthy moralization with which the prologue opens might well lead readers to infer moral failings on the part of the more recent French, initially good Christians, and founders of great churches, but then prey to successive waves of destruction, first from the East, then from the Normans. But what then is meant by 'France' in this passage? Any reader with the modern Hexagon in mind might assume that Anjou, Poitou and Burgundy are invoked here as part of France. But Anjou at this point was still disputed between the Plantagenets and the Capetians, as anyone writing in Flanders for a patron in the *mouvance* of the fractious count of Flanders would surely have known, and Burgundy was largely at this stage part of the Empire, not subject to the king of France. 'France' is invoked here, but its con-

tours and extent are simultaneously called into question. The text is circumscribing France as much as defining it.

Later in the text, the origins of France and of her kings are explicitly raised again. The portion of the text I quote here – from the Aeneas section – is unedited. I cite it from Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fonds français 20125, 148v–49r, thus one of only two manuscripts to contain the verse prologue:

> Ce dient li plusor qu'Eneas ot un frere. Friga fu nomes. qui avec Eneas ne s'en ala mie. Ains remest en Frige, cest en la terre de Troies, et o lui sa maisnee. Mais quant il vit qu'il n'i poroit arrester, qu'il ne li convenist estre desous autrui segnori, et il s'en parti et o lui grans gens toz de sa contree et de sa ligne, et lor femes et lor enfans. Et si se mistrent en mer [...] Entre tant morut Friga. Et il firent roi d'un fill sien fiz, Fransios ot a non [...] Cis Fransios erra tant par mer qu'il vint en Europe, et la issi il a terre. Si porprist le regne entre le Rin & la Dunoe, ou adonc n'avoit habité ne mes nulle humaine creature. Seignors, cil puplerent cele terre, quar d'aus vint et issi mout grans pueple. Et de ces dient li pluisor que li Fransois issirent, et orent non Fransois por lor roi qui estoit preus et hardis et Fransion ot a non en lor premerain language. Et tels i a qui aferment et dient qu'il vindrent premerainement d'une isle qui Scanzia est apelee, dont li Got issirent, quar en cele isle a une terre qui iest encore France apelee. Et si mostrent cil qui ce dient tel raison encore que celle terre est auques voisine au regne qui fu au roi Latin qui fu pere a la royne Laivine que Eneas ot a feme. Et Eneas noma les Latins fransois por ce qu'il pres li estoient et ensaié. De ceaus dient il ensi que Franse fu puplee. E peut bien estre qu'adonques en celui tans i ariverent et vindrent et des uns et des autres. Mais n'est mie certe choze li quel en orent des adonc la seignorie. Mais des celui tans fu ele puplee.

> (Some say that Aeneas had a brother, who was called Friga, who did not leave with Aeneas, rather he remained in Frige, which is the land around Troy, with his household. But when he realised it would not suit him to live subjected to another, he left, taking with him many people from his family lands, their wives and children. They took to sea [...] after a while Friga died and they made one of his sons, whose name was

Fransio, king [...] this Fransio wandered the seas until he came to Europe and there he landed. He seized the realm between the Rhine and the Danube where no people had previously lived. My lords, they populated this land, for many great peoples came forth and issued from them. And some say the French issued from them and that they are called French because of their king, who was worthy and bold, and called Fransio in their original language. And there are others who affirm and say that they came first from an island that is called Scandinavia, from which the Goths came. For in this island there is a land still called France. And those who say this adduce another reason: that this land was close by the kingdom of the Latin king who was the father of queen Lavinia, Aeneas' wife. And Aeneas called the Latins French, because they were nearby and subjected. Some say this is how they populated France. And this may be so, because in those days people came and went. But it is not certain which people exactly were in control from that point onwards. Yet [France] was populated from this point onwards.)

This passage offers competing accounts of the origin of France; one which locates 'France' originally in the land of the Franks (between the Rhine and the Danube) portraying the 'French' as descendants of a minor branch of Trojan royalty; then another in which the 'French' come from Scandinavia, land of the Goths, believed by many to be an island in the Middle Ages, yet also here represented as near the Latin kingdom that Aeneas seized through marriage. The geography of the relation between "Scandinavia" and the "regne qui fu au roi latin" here is fuzzy (and frankly fanciful); the implication that the French might in fact have originally been Goths is also at odds with the account of the Gothic invasions in the prologue. Perhaps all we can know for sure here is that nothing is certain ("n'est mie certe chose" says the narrator regarding the question of lordship in the period under discussion). Two chapters later the reader is offered yet another account of the origins of France and the French (149r–50r), one in which they descend from yet another group of migrating Trojans, who found a kingdom that is destroyed by Romans, as a result of which they fetch up in Germany, whence they take over France, then called Gaule. They are called *Fransois* by emperor Valentinian because "c'est ausi com hardis e crueus" (149v: "this means bold and cruel"). The cumulative effect of these conflicting accounts

is an image of the French as bedraggled refugees of uncertain provenance. Or are they perhaps an eclectic group of people held together by a common goal of conquest and/ or defence (rather like the Franks in the Crusading States where we know this text circulated)? As the *Histoire* succinctly puts it: people at that time came and went. To my knowledge the only scholar to have discussed this passage is Jacques Monfrin, who writes: "Les deux excursus sur l'origine des Francs [...] s'inscrivent dans l'histoire des destinées des émigrés de Troie; mais, mal coordonné l'un à l'autre, ils trahissent le malaise qu'ont toujours eu les historiens médiévaux à combiner sur ce sujet des traditions inconciliables" (208: "the two excurses on the origin of the Franks [...] relate to the story of the fate of Trojan emigrés, but they are badly coordinated with each other, and they thereby betray the discomfort medieval historians always had when combining incompatible narratives about this"). Be that as it may, France emerges here, in a text in French of early thirteenth-century Flemish provenance, and one that circulates extensively in the years following its composition in the Eastern Mediterranean and in Italy, more as a vague idea than as a geographically specific place or political entity, which is somewhat striking given this is precisely what it was clearly in the process of becoming. This view of 'France' in a text in French might also give pause for thought as to what the use of the language actually connoted.

It is, of course, important to bear in mind that the usual term for designating the language that we now call French was not "fransois," but rather *romans*, as is amply clear from the prologue to the *Histoire*: "S'il veut, en romans dou latin / Li cuic si traire lonc la letre" (266–67: "if he [Roger of Lille] wishes, I intend to translate literally from Latin into romance"). As Serge Lusignan's recent work has shown, *fransois* almost certainly does not become the standard term for designating French until later in the thirteenth century (see particularly *Essai*, 84–97). We might also consider the claim earlier in the prologue that the story to be told here, "the highest of works" (107), has never before been "en nos lengue traite" (109: "translated/ told into/ in our language"). The context of this line (which makes the text's Flemish provenance and original audience clear) explicitly uncouples "our language" from "France." It may also be significant that it does so using a linguistic form (which is also present in the other manuscript witness of this line) that is only used in the Northernmost regions of the French linguistic area, the standard French feminine singular form of the possessive adjective being *nostre*.[16] If we

16. See Pope, 328 (§ 853); Northern features are characteristic of outremer French.

put this together with linguistic traits elsewhere in the text as it is recorded in BNF f.fr. 20125 that suggest a Levantine origin,[17] we might conclude that the French of the *Histoire,* at least as recorded in this manuscript, represents a deliberate supralocal koinization of the language, one intended to be at home wherever it travels.

Italy *c.* 1270

"Lengue franceise cort parmi le monde," so writes Martin da Canale, author of the *Estoire de Venise* (ed. Limentani 1). If we put this remark together with the *Histoire*'s claim to be using *nos lengue,* the most salient feature of the proprietorship of French in the Middle Ages is precisely that it belongs to no one, or perhaps more accurately to any Francophone Christian, as the vernacular language that transcends borders, linguistic and otherwise. One of the most important regions for the production and transmission of texts in French is Italy, particularly Northern Italy, the most celebrated and successful example being Marco Polo and Rustichello da Pisa's *Le Devisement du Monde,* composed in Genoa in 1298, better known in the Anglophone world as Marco Polo's *Travels.* Italian readers of French seem to have had a particular taste for Arthurian romance in the form of the prose *Tristan*, but also for texts with an historical bent: *chansons de geste* (of which there is a significant Northern Italian tradition), the *Histoire ancienne*, and the matter of Troy. Thus Italy plays a significant role in the manuscript tradition of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* and three of the five *mises en prose* of this seminal text for later medieval culture were produced in Italy, almost certainly by writers of French who were native speakers of Italian. A good deal of this so-called 'Franco-Italian' material is under–researched; some is as yet unedited.[18]

This is true of my final case study, the second *mise en prose* of the *Roman de Troie*. This text was produced in Italy around 1270 and survives in only three manuscripts, close to each other (and to the supposed date of composition) in terms of provenance and date:

- Grenoble, Bibliothèque Municipale, 861: copied in Padua, 1298
- Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 196: copied in Verona, 1323
- Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, N.a.Fr. 9603: copied in Genoa, *c.* 1300

17. Most notably, and perhaps not coincidentally, since it is the same part of speech, the uninflected possessive adjective *lor*, of which there are several examples in the passage from the Aeneas section quoted above. On this linguistic point, see Minervini 176–77.

18. On the use of French by Marco Polo and Rustichello da Pisa, see Gaunt, *Marco Polo*. For an overview of Franco-Italian literature, see Günter and Holtus. Other important studies include Busby 596–635 and Delcorno Branca. On the transmission of the *Roman de Troie* in Italy, see Jung.
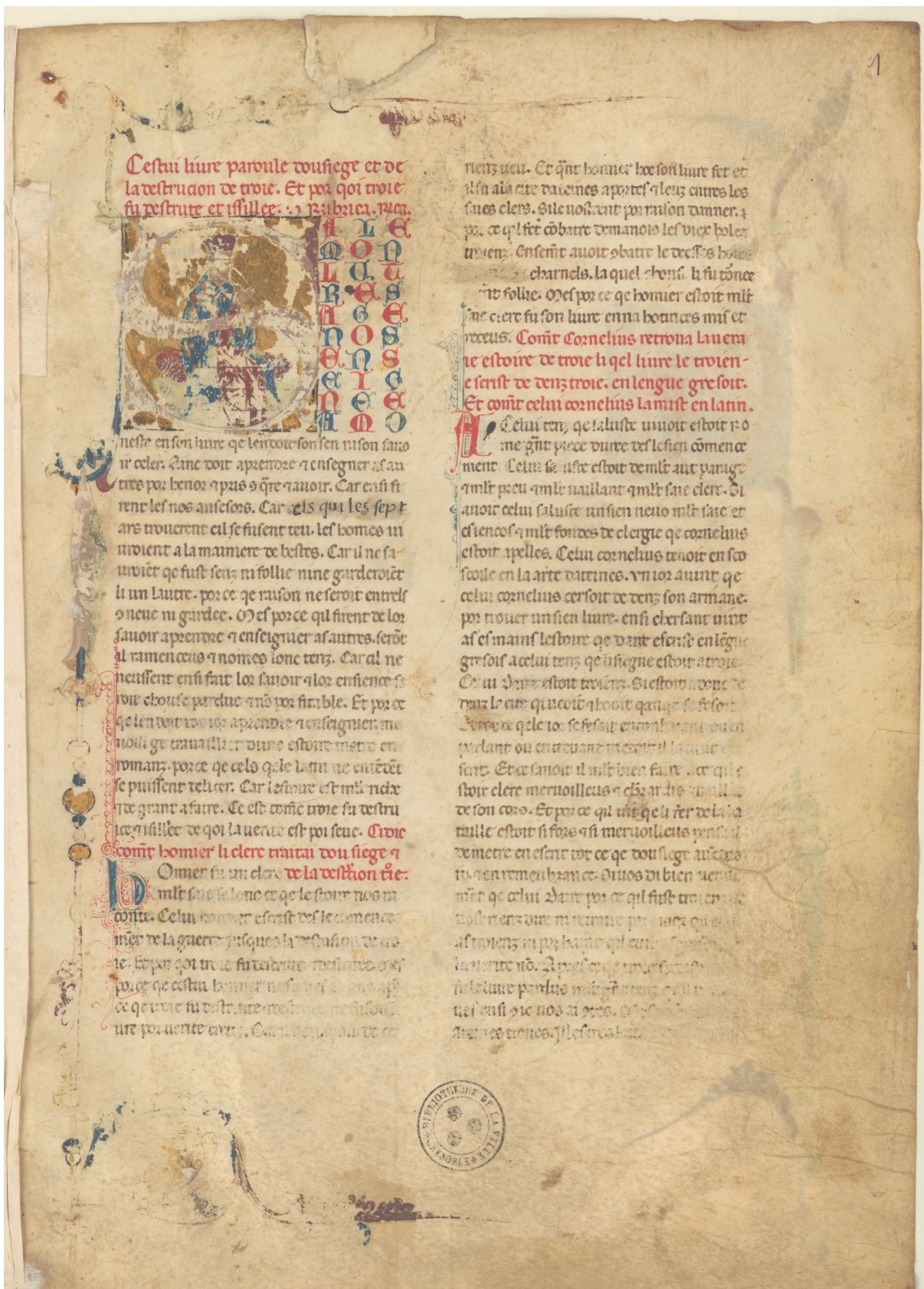
That two of these manuscripts come from the Veneto, with the third closely associated with it, is significant. While there is a rich Latin historiographical tradition in the Veneto in the thirteenth century, Venetan vernacular textual culture, including historiography, is at this point and as far as we know, in Occitan or French. The choice of French as a vehicle for historical narrative in the Veneto, as Laura Morreale and others have argued in relation to Martin da Canale's *Estoire de Venise* (1267), almost certainly signals an affiliation with the Crusader States of the Eastern Mediterranean as much as it does an affiliation to the French aristocracy.[19] There is little scholarship on the second *mise en prose* of the *Roman de Troie*, which has mainly elicited interest either from those interested in the manuscript tradition of the *Roman de Troie*, or from those interested in its subsequent Italian *volgarizzamento*.[20] What exactly is it? How are we to evaluate its language and style? Finally, for whom was this new version of the Troy story intended?

The first thing to note is that this text works closely with its source, following its plotlines, but rewriting it often profoundly on a stylistic level. Below follows the opening page from Grenoble, Bibliothèque Municipale, 861 (see Plate 1), which is the manuscript on which my discussion will focus, together with a translation of material from its opening paragraphs equivalent to roughly the first 100 lines of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's poem. I reproduce the rubrics in red, and in blue textual material that has a direct correspondence in the verse romance.

> This book speaks of the siege and the destruction of Troy. And of why Troy was destroyed and confounded. Rubrica, Rubrica. Solomon the most wise teaches us and exhorts us in his book that one should not hide one's wisdom. Rather one should teach and convey it to others honourably and in order to obtain and have a fine reputation. Thus did our ancestors behave. And if those who invented the seven arts had been silent, men would live now like beasts. Indeed, they would not know wisdom from folly, and they would not care for each other, for they would neither have nor observe reason. But because they did teach and convey their knowledge to others, their names are recorded and remembered over the ages. And if they had not done so, their wisdom and knowledge would now be lost, without profit. And because one must always learn and teach, I want to work on putting a

19. See Morreale xii. On literary culture in the Veneto more generally, see Folena.

20. See Carlesso and Chesney; also Jung 485–98. The second *mise en prose* of the *Roman de Troie* is translated into Italian by Binduccio.

Plate 1: Grenoble, Bibliothèque Municipale, 861, f. 1
(*Roman de Troie*, en prose, Bibliothèque Municipale de Grenoble, cote Ms. 263 Rés. Cliché BMG.)

story/ history into Romance so that those who do not know Latin might understand and enjoy it. For the story/ history is noble and concerns great deeds. It is about how Troy was destroyed and confounded, concerning which the truth is little known.

Here [the book] speaks of how Homer, the clerk, dealt with the siege and destruction of Troy. Homer was a very wise clerk, as the story/ history tells us. This Homer wrote about the origins of the war up to the destruction of Troy. And why Troy was destroyed and her people disinherited. But because Homer was not born until 100 years after Troy was destroyed and her people disinherited, his book was not always considered truthful. Indeed, he had not seen any of this. And when Homer had written his book and it was taken to the city of Athens, and read by the wise clerks, they rightfully condemned it, for he had the gods doing battle with the Trojans. Likewise he had goddesses fighting with mortal men, which was considered great folly. But because Homer was a wise clerk, his book was considered authoritative and circulated.

How Cornelius, found the true story/ history of Troy, which a Trojan wrote in Greek in Troy itself. And how Cornelius translated it into Latin. Sallust lived at that time, shortly after Rome's foundation. Sallust was from a very noble family, and he was bold, most worthy and a very wise clerk. Sallust had a nephew called Cornelius, who was very wise and knowledgeable, and learned. Cornelius was at school in Athens. One day Cornelius was searching around in his cupboard for one of his books. And in so doing, the history/ story that Darius wrote in Greek during the siege of Troy came into his hands. Darius was a Trojan. He was in the city and saw and observed everything that happened.

The first thing to note is that either Grenoble 861's source was sloppy, or alternatively that it is a sloppy copy of its source. Banal scribal errors are not infrequent and on the first page alone there are two glaring misunderstandings or bowdlerisations of words: "en na hotrices" for "en l'autorité" (as in Douce 196) and "demonois les diez" for "les damedeus" (both at the end of the second paragraph). Yet the prosifier works attentively with the detail of Benoît's text. In the passage translated here, he retains *c.* 70% of his source fairly literally,

and this means that *c.* 70% of his own text consists of approximate quotation in that it is adapted directly from Benoît, keeping many of his formulations. He loses some of the nuances of Benoît's text, but he cuts far less than the prosifier of the first *mise en prose* (made incidentally in Morea), whose text is shorter, more moralising and less interested in the figure of Benoît and his claimed sources. Furthermore, he goes to some lengths to dismantle Benoît's octosyllabic rhyming couplets, for example:[21]

- Qu'ensi firent li ancessor (6) > Car ensi firent les nos ansesors (+ 2 syllables)
- Mais la verté est poi oïe (44) > de qoi la verite est poi seue (+ 1 syllable)

This formal make-over goes hand in hand with a more thoroughgoing stylistic and ideological reworking.

For example, the second *mise en prose* makes frequent use of formulae that evoke *li conte*, "the tale," and *l'estoire*, the "story" or "history," both as source of the narrative material and as guarantor of its authority:

- Mes a tant laisse hore li *conte* a parler de Medea qe plus ne dit hore por sivre la droite matire (Grenoble 861, 7r)
- Or dit li contes qe Hercules s'aparoilla molt … (Grenoble 861, 7v)

Furthermore, whereas Benoît evokes *l'estoire* and the authority of his supposed sources Darius and Dictis, here Benoît himself becomes another author figure, cited as part of a chain of transmission that begins with Darius and culminates in the text we are reading (emphasis added):

- Si vos laisse hore nostre conte a parler de Jason si outreement q'il ne parole plus en nulle part, por ce que Daire ne s'escrist plus. *Meismement Beneoit, qi le livre trelaica, le nos tesmoigne ausi.* Mes nos vos conterons de la plus grant houre [Douce 196: histoire] qi james fust ni doie estre secuit [Douce 196: escrite]. (Grenoble 861, 7r)
- *Benoic qe cestui livre escrist, et trelaita de latin & le mist en romans, ne vost laissier a retraire nulle rienz de ce qe Daire dist,* car Daire savoit tot ce q'il dist por fine verite por ce q'il l'avoit tot ce veu a ces els, ou par verite hoi conter. Mes por ce Daire volt faire sa hovre conplie & pleniere vost il escrire la forme e la contenance de ciascun de princes qi vindrent au siege de

Troie. (Grenoble, 861, 19r)

- En ceste partie dit li contes, et *Beneoite qi l'estoire treslaita nes le tesmoigne*, qe cele nuit passa en tel mainiere come je vos ai ai dit. (Grenoble, 861, 82v–83r)

If the first paragraph of the text retains the first person of its source ("me voill ge travaillier d'une estoire metre en romanz"), as Jung points out (486), elsewhere Benoît's first person is systematically transposed to the third person, then linked to Darius's name, for example:

> Ne puis tot dire n'aconter, (= first-person)
> Qu'enuiz sereit de l'escouter
> Co que chascuns fist endreit sei (12337–39)

> Daire qe ceste estoire escrist, ne vost pas (= third-person)
> metre en escrit ce qu ciascun fist d'armes endroit soi, por ce
> que l'estoire seroit trop desmesuree. (Grenoble 861, 51v)

It is telling here that in one at least of the two author portraits in Grenoble 861, the identity of the author depicted – Darius or Benoît – is unclear, reinforcing the idea that Benoît is now an ancient author and authority, like Darius and Dictis. Thus on f. 19r, the rubric identifies the author as Darius, but the text beside the author portrait identifies him as Benoît (see Plate 2).

An example of the ideological reworking the text undergoes is the misogynistic rewriting of the Troilus and Crysede episode, which, as Jung points out (487), is grounded in a misreading or misunderstanding of the first-person verb form *criem* "I fear" as the noun *crime*. Benoît's declaration, sometimes taken as an apology to Eleanor of Aquitaine for telling a story that might cause offence to women, that "De cest veir criem g'estre blamsmez" (13457: "I fear that I will be blamed for speaking the truth") is transformed into the remark that "De cestui crime estoit la damoisele Blesida durement blasmee" (17r: "Cressida was harshly blamed for this crime"). Interestingly, manicula against this passage in both Grenoble 861 and Douce 196 indicate not only that contemporary readers found this passage particularly significant, but also that the two manuscripts are related (see Plate 3).

What are we to make of the language of this text? The most common term used to describe the French of Italy is hybrid, which is to say that French and Italian forms are mixed, sometimes to the extent

Plate 2: Grenoble, Bibliothèque Municipale, 861, 19r, detail. Note too the instructions to the artist in Italian. (*Roman de Troie*, en prose, Bibliothèque Municipale de Grenoble, cote Ms.263 Rés. Cliché BMG.)
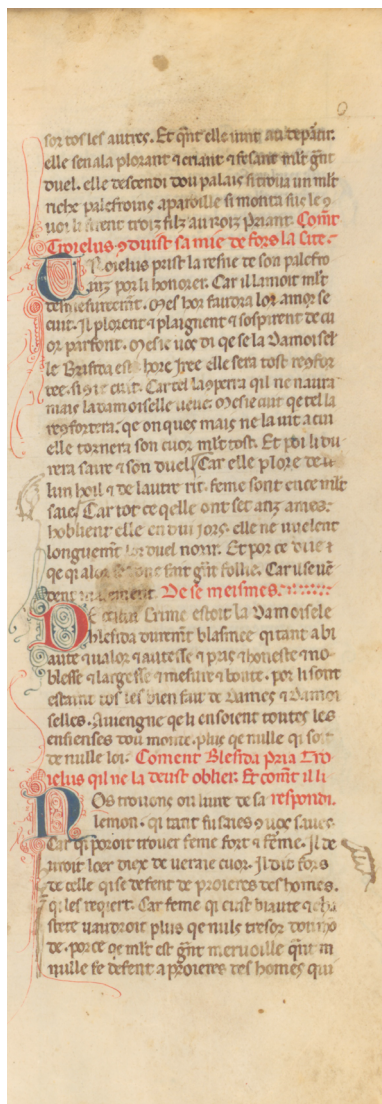
that the form of an individual word is neither clearly French, nor clearly Italian, but mixed. I have elaborated elsewhere a critique of the notion of 'hybridity' as applied to texts of this kind, one key point being that it imposes an imperative to analyse the language of a text deemed to be linguistically 'hybrid' against, a 'pure,' non hybrid model (Gaunt, *Marco Polo* 86–94). This is not always clearly stated, but even in a textbook as fine as Frédéric Duval's outstanding *Le Français médiéval*, the implication is that "Franco-italien" needs to be evaluated against an 'original' form of French from France: "L'apparition du franco-italien s'explique peut-être par un compromis, qui consisterait à contenter le public pour la compréhension du texte tout en conservant *le prestige de l'original français*. La *forme hybride* franco-italienne ne résulterait pas de l'incapacité des rédacteurs à s'exprimer en français, mais du désir de concilier la langue étrangère […] et la compréhension du public" (52, emphasis added: "the appearance of Franco-Italian may perhaps be explained by a compromise which consists of catering to the readership's need to understand the text, while conserving the *prestige of the original French*. The *hybrid form* of Franco-Italian would not then be the product of the redactors' inability to express themselves in French, but of their desire to mediate between a foreign language […] and the public's capacity to understand"). If writers of Franco-Italian texts are not deemed incompetent here, as has often been the case, their readers are nonetheless implicitly charged with a limited knowledge of French. To what extent is the notion of *le prestige de l'original français* useful in an evaluation of the Grenoble manuscript of the second *mise en prose* of the *Roman de Troie*?

According to Jung, one of the few scholars to have passed any comment on this text, "la langue est truffée d'italianismes" (485: "the language is stuffed full of Italianisms"). Some of these Italianisms are clear and common in Italian manuscripts of French texts:

- Reduction of [ou] > [o] systematically in some words: *trover < trouver*; *soveraine < souveraine*; *tornera < tournera*; *novelle < nouvelle*
- *Parledor* (for *parleur*)
- *Ciascune* (for *chacune*)
- *Chouse* (for *chose*)

Furthermore there are 'errors' with agreements of gender and number, and of verb morphology that are typical of Italian scribes of French texts, 'errors' that indicate imperfect knowledge of French as

Plate 3: Grenoble, Bibliothèque Municipale, 861, f. 57, detail. Note the manicula.
(*Roman de Troie*, en prose, Bibliothèque Municipale de Grenoble, cote Ms. 263 Rés. Cliché BMG.)

written in France, or at the very least a casual attitude towards its written grammatical norms in that a scribe of French origin is unlikely to have written in this way:

- *tos le doulor*
- *elle ne vuelent*
- *fairons*

Finally, syntactic structures sometimes mimic those of Italian: for example "les nos ancessors" on the first folio.

It is instructive, however, to consider these 'errors' within the broader framework of the manuscript's orthographic system, which is idiosynractic, but nonetheless fairly systematic by medieval standards:

- The frequent, almost systematic use of inorganic 'h' in words beginning with a vowel, particularly 'e' and 'o': *hoc, hoisi < issi, horent < eurent; hosast < osast; hole < o le; hestoit < estoit; hosels < osels*
- The almost systematic use of 'i' as a graphy for intervocalic [ʤ] in some words, most notably *saie*, 'wise'
- The almost systematic use of 's' as a graphy for intervocalic [ʧ] in some words and metathesis of [ts] and [ʧ] in *cersoit < chercher*
- 'l' for 'r' or 'lamdacism': *Blesida*

The initial inorganic 'h' could be a Burgundian trait, but this seems unlikely here; it seems more probable we are dealing with a scribal tic, perhaps intended to give the script a more learned, Latinate flavour. The graphy *saie* is common in Franco-Italian manuscripts, but is not to my knowledge used in France, where either *sage* or *saige* prevails. *Saie* would seem therefore to be a specifically Italian form of a French word. I have not found any analogies for the metathesis in *cersoit* or for this form of Cressida's name.[22]

This overall complex of linguistic features and orthographical traits makes it imprudent, in my view, to judge a text such as this against a notional French original either in terms of the text itself or the language in which it is copied. In any case, what would the 'original' be here textually or linguistically? Clearly not Benoît de Sainte-Maure's text, since although it is a source, it has had such a thorough make-over. And then what constitutes 'correct French' for the Italian prosifier, a copy of whose work we are reading? I would like to take seriously Alberto Varvaro's suggestion that linguistic features of the

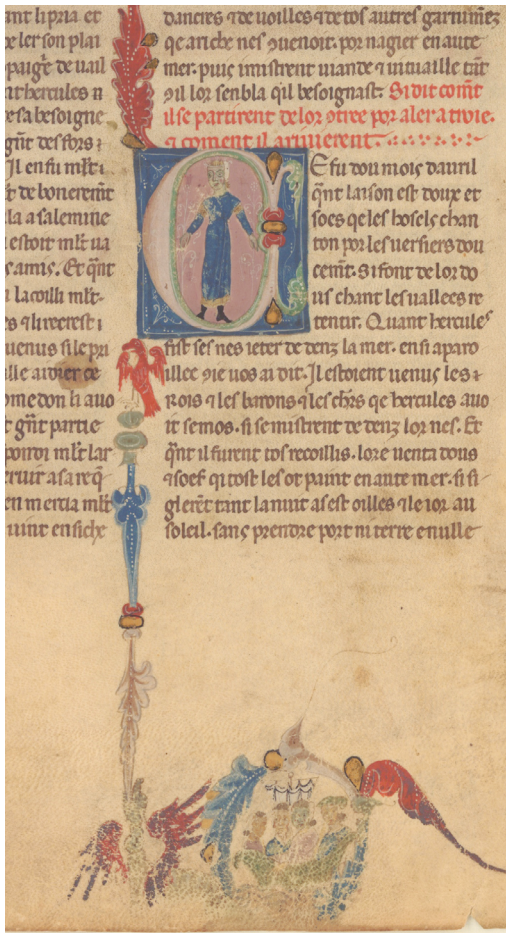22. I am grateful to Ian Short for advice on some of these points.

Plate 4: Grenoble, Bibliothèque Municipale, 861, 7v. The historiated initial here shows stylistic parallels with portraits of troubadours in Paris BNF, f.fr. 854 and 12473. The figure stands beside a passage clearly evocative of the lyric spring opening. (*Roman de Troie*, en prose, Bibliothèque Municipale de Grenoble, cote Ms. 263 Rés. Cliché BMG.)

kind that philologists often use to *localise* a text or scribe by identifying dialectic traits, or sometimes 'errors' characteristic of foreign or non-local scribes, may in fact be *stylistic* choices (532). But I would like to suggest further that if this linguistic veneer of a text is seen as a stylistic choice, it needs also to be looked at *in conjunction* with other stylistic choices, such as those pertaining to narrative voice, prosody, and the representation of authorship I discussed earlier. Furthermore, we can push further this stylistic approach to the medieval text in its manuscript context if we also look at how it is presented visually.

With Grenoble 861, we can locate and date the text precisely through a colophon informing us one Johannes de Stennis copied the manuscript while imprisoned in Padua in 1298. But even without this information, the manuscript has visual traits that localise it and tie it to the late thirteenth century:

- the characteristic display script of the opening initial (1r above)
- the style of the miniatures (*e.g.* 19r above)
- the decorative medallions (*e.g.* 19r above)
- the scribe's hand
- instructions to the artist in Italian (*e.g.* 19r above)

The first two if these points are particularly telling. Although this style of display script is found in manuscripts of other vernacular texts from the Veneto (*e.g.* Brunetto Latini's *Tresor*), the majority of other examples I have been able to locate are Italian manuscripts of the *Histoire*.[23] As for the style of the miniatures, there may well be stylistic analogies here with troubadour *chansonniers* produced in the Veneto (See Plate 4).

So who and what was this new version of the *Roman de Troie* for? At the time it was produced and reproduced Benoît's text was still in circulation in Italy, but in the late thirteenth century it must have seemed stylistically archaic to an Italian Francophone reading public that seems never to have had a taste for French verse romance, except for the *Troie*, and yet seems to have had a strong appetite for prose romance, particularly the *Tristan en prose* and material derived from or related to it (see Delcorna Branca 49–76). The stylistic modernization effected by the prosifier of the second *mise en prose* goes hand in hand with a visual packaging in Grenoble 861 at least that seems to create a link with other vernacular 'French' texts, notably the *Histoire ancienne*, with its central Trojan theme, but also trouba-

dour lyric. This starts to give a sense of a vernacular literary canon in the late thirteenth-century Veneto, to which one should add of course the numerous *chansons de geste* copied in the region at this time. But the Italian reading public who commissioned and used manuscripts of works in French did not require them to be written in 'correct' or 'pure' French. Thus as with Gaimar's *Estoire* the French of the second *mise en prose* of the *Roman de Troie* localises it on one level, and yet probably also means that the text is not *translatable* to France, or at least not in this linguistic form, and again as with Gaimar's *Estoire* the dissemination of this text seems to have been confined to a single region. But crucially, the language of a manuscript like Grenoble 861 has its own distinctive style, which is sustained and clearly has its own aesthetic rather than simply reproducing debased forms of imported 'French' literary culture.

Conclusion

The manuscript and text I examined in the last section offer an insight into the literary culture of a specific place and time. Yet, the phenomena I was discussing are redolent of broader trends within Francophone literary culture throughout Europe. Even when specific instances of texts in French do not translate easily, their production and dissemination show how readers could participate in a cosmopolitan, supralocal textual culture by virtue of being able to read French. Furthermore, this textual culture was associated with the formation of supralocal historical narratives that helped shape an emerging 'European' identity. Indeed, in some instances and in many regions of Europe, texts in French, such as the *Histoire ancienne*, seem to have been the main vehicle for propagating bodies of knowledge about the past, particularly ancient history. These texts are not, however, the texts usually taught in modern university curricula as 'French literature,' nor have they been particularly popular with literary scholars. Our modern concentration on the emergence of 'fictional' material (though the category is questionable), such as Arthurian romance, or high aristocratic literary culture, such as lyric, skews our sense of what medieval readers were reading across Europe and also why they were reading in French.

One way of correcting our apprehension of medieval vernacular literary culture would be to revisit the texts of the traditional canon within the broader context of the larger textual culture to which they

belonged. This reorientation of scholarship has already begun, but there is still a long way to go. Ian Short, for example, asks what literary history would look like if we were to read writers like Wace, Marie de France and Benoît de Sainte-Maure primarily in relation to British literary culture, rather than French? If we were to do this, we would see that the main precedent for the literary (or historical?) entreprises of both Wace and Benoît, continental poets writing for the cross-channel Angevin dynasty or their acolytes, was Gaimar, whose work Wace almost certainly knew ("Patrons and Polyglots"). Chrétien de Troyes is usually firmly situated at the court of Marie de Champagne and in the 'French' courtly circles she is thought to exemplify, but his final patron was Philip of Flanders and his *Conte du Graal*, which was in the Middle Ages by some margin his most successful romance even though incomplete, emerged from exactly the same cultural milieu as the *Histoire ancienne*.[24] Finally, Alison Cornish reminds us that Jean de Meun spent formative years at the University of Bologna and was not just a product of the university in Paris (88–89). Rather than a history of French literature in the Middle Ages being one of French courtly culture being exported to the rest of Europe from a central point, the literature of France starts to look like a *bricolage* of influences from elsewhere. Perhaps this is precisely what makes French literature so compelling, important, and ultimately influential. But the key point to remember too is that what makes this possible is that French itself is *nos lenge,* 'our language,' a supralocal language, not a national or proto-national one.

24. Indeed, one hypothesis about the authorship of the *Histoire* is that it is the work of Wauchier de Desnain (see Szkilnik), otherwise known as the author of the second continuation of the *Conte du Graal*.

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