

## Introduction

The 21st International Congress of the Société Rencesvals pour l'étude des épopées romanes was only the second one to be held in North America, and the first one ever in Canada. It seemed fitting because of the location of the congress to call this volume "Oltre la mer salee", "beyond the salted sea". This phrase conveniently fills the second hemistich of an epic line and occurs in several *chansons de geste*.<sup>1</sup> It also illustrates one of the four major themes of the congress, "Travels and exchanges", which turned out to be more pervasive than we had initially thought. Not only did French epic legends travel to other places, within continental Europe, across the Channel and even beyond the Atlantic, but the other thematic fields explored in this volume also involved more contacts with the pagan or Muslim Other than expected. Family and kinship structures, another of the volume's major themes, cover pagan genealogies and marriages with Saracen princesses, as well as the establishment of mixed-race kinship structures in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Middle East even preserved epic manuscripts, contributing to our knowledge of the transmission of the *chansons de geste*.

The triennial congresses of the Société Rencesvals usually comprise four major themes, representing different areas of current research interests, to which is added a section on *Varia*.

The four themes selected for the Toronto Congress were 1. The *chanson de geste* between France and England, 2. Travels and exchanges: diversity, cultural contact, and the Romance epic in the Americas, 3. Family structures, filiation, and bastardy, 4. Production centers of the *chanson de geste*. Unfortunately, the keynote lecture on the first topic could not take place and, for various contingent reasons, several other contributions could not be included in this volume. For the sake of coherence, the editors therefore decided to modify the order of the topics. The volume opens with the theme "Family Structures, Filiation, and Bastardy", to be followed by the theme "Travels and Exchanges", which turned

1. See, e.g., *Chanson de Jérusalem*, ll. 2026, 5295, *Narbonnais*, ll. 425, 4984, *Fierabras*, l. 6228, *Anseïs de Carthage*, ll. 364, 10922, *Vengeance Fromondin*, l. 3171, or the fragment of the *Chanson de Syracon*, l. 59.

out to have close ties to the family theme, but represents only a small part of the original congress section. The third part contains the contributions to the theme “The *chanson de geste* between France and England”, which describe a special case of contact and exchange. The fourth theme was kept in place, but renamed “Manuscripts”.

Family structures and filiation have long been the object of studies on epic. In the context of the French *chansons de geste*, they have almost come to define the genre. In Old French, the word *geste* usually designates either an epic cycle or a kinship group, a larger family, thus becoming a synonym of “lignage” or “parenté”. Epic cycles are defined by the family relationships of the protagonists of the various *chansons* included in them, and they develop along genealogical lines, additions being made to recount the deeds of the father of the protagonist of the older texts or those of his descendants.

The traditional image of the epic hero who is less an individual than a representative of a family has of course been challenged in various ways over time, as has the role of the larger kinship group as such. However, both ideas are still present in research, especially in general introductions needing to specify the new elements that define the genre of the *roman*, which appears half a century after the first surviving *chansons de geste*.

Although family and kinship are an old topic of research on epic, there was thus a need for a *mise au point*. In her keynote, Muriel Ott offers a welcome overview of the various approaches adopted in research over the past decades, both by historians and by specialists of the *chansons de geste*. She then addresses some major questions, such as the relationship between family and kinship, and the different concepts of consanguinity, filiation, and alliance, before pointing out some avenues for further research.

The other contributions relativize and expand previous research on family structures and their representation.

Bernard Ribémont challenges established ideas about family and marriage in the *chansons de geste* by re-interpreting a number of well-known episodes. Taking his starting-point from the violent discussions following Aymeri de Narbonne’s refusals to let any of his sons inherit his fief, he highlights the role of the mother as intercessor between sons and fathers, and between brothers, even if, in theory, the father’s power within the family is absolute. In a similar way, in marriage episodes, the *patria postestas* (or its surrogate, the power of the King), is counterbalanced by love relationships leading to mutual *consensus* in accordance with the requirements of the Church. Finally, he presents the paradoxical situation of *Gui de Bourgogne*, in which the warriors of the older generation,

although longing for their wives and children, are still fighting in Spain, while the younger generation aspires to a peaceful life, staying with their mothers at home. When the eponymous hero forces the other young knights to come with him to help their fathers, he has them bring their mothers and sisters with them, as well as the very old, who will give good advice. All these episodes, which often function as *embrayeurs narratifs*, determining entire plots, show the importance of the nuclear family (or the couple), and while bigger lineages may play a role, they tend to crystallize around nuclear families.

Philippe Haugeard's article questions Howard Bloch's idea about the link between the establishment of patrilinear heredity in historic reality and literary representations of families in the *chansons de geste*. Focussing on *Garin le Loherain* and *Raoul de Cambrai*, he is able to show that the concept of a patrilinear transmission of fiefs, while present in these texts, is not the dominant idea, but has to compete with an equally accepted royal prerogative to dispose of fiefs, and that the heroic ideal is to conquer a fief, or to be given a fief in compensation of military services, not to inherit one. Haugeard also points out the importance of female *héritières* in epic, a typical feature which seems to conciliate these two ideas, while emphasizing the actual absence of the fathers in those texts whose protagonists are the sons. He also analyzes the different roles of uncles and nephews in the two texts studied.

*Raoul de Cambrai* is also the subject of the following contribution, which takes up the question of marriage. Susana Artal highlights the astonishing role of women in this *chanson*, studying in particular those parts which are most likely later additions to the original text and which have often been denigrated or entirely neglected in previous research. The four principal female characters of this epic, mothers or wives of the protagonists, all refuse imposed marriages at some point in the plot, with varying consequences. Artal is able to show that the later parts' duplication of scenes that occur in the earlier parts is not mere repetitiveness due to a lack of inspiration on the part of the continuators, but rather a systematic variation of themes in accordance with new political contexts.

Anne Berthelot's contribution analyses the use of genealogies and family structures in connection with the mixture of literary matters that we observe in some texts in the 13th century. She concentrates on the small cycles that develop around the epic legends of Renaut de Montauban and Huon de Bordeaux, studying in particular the figures of the *larron enchanteur* Maugis and the dwarf king of Féerie, Auberon, and their family networks, but also the various figures to whom they are connected. She traces the intensifying relationship of Maugis with the Saracen world, with magic, and the supernatural in general; she also discusses the systematic combination of all literary matters in the various generations of the

ancestors of Auberon in the *Roman d'Auberon* and the increasing permeability of the borders between the heroic world and the supernatural world in the sequels to *Huon de Bordeaux*, and the facility with which Christian concepts are introduced into the fairy world.

Léo-Paul Blaise describes and interprets the system of family relations in a group of 14th-century epics, set in pre-Carolingian times and recounting (in different ways) the prehistory of the Frankish Kings, which are often considered to constitute a “Cycle of Dagobert”. While there is no consensus about the contours of this “cycle”, and the use of this term is itself problematic, these texts do use family relationships in characteristic ways, among which is the suggestion of links with other texts, in ways that differ from those that characterize the 13th-century epic cycles. Blaise identifies two narrative nuclei which develop two different genealogies, one with Roman roots (*Florent et Octavien* and *Florence de Rome*) and a Frankish one (*Dieudonné de Hongrie*), and sees in the late epics *Theseus de Cologne* and *Ciperis de Vigneaux* two different, independent, attempts to harmonize these genealogies. *La Belle Hélène de Constantinople*, which establishes a lineage of saints, offers points of contact with various entities, without developing them. Blaise also analyzes the function of family conflicts and the nuclear family within these genealogies, as well as their relationship with the idea of *translatio imperii*.

Like Léo-Paul Blaise, Victoria Turner concentrates on the long-neglected corpus of the 14th-century *chansons de geste*. She takes her starting point from the ambivalent image of Saracen women in older *chansons de geste*, who, even if converted and married to Christian heroes, almost never become mothers. Her contention is that in the 14th-century *chansons de geste*, the perception of both the Saracen woman and mixed-race sexual relationships becomes more complex and diversified, in connection with an equally new valorization of bastards. Focusing on the Saracen mother of the eponymous protagonist of the *Bâtard de Bouillon*, conceived in adultery, she illustrates how the old literary traditions about the Saracen princess are re-interpreted and how mixed-race relationships are used to create families of converts, constructed around maternal lines, which become part of Christian “biopolitics”, without threatening the Christian social structures based on inheritance on the grounds of paternal lines.

The second section contains various contributions to the broadly conceived theme of travels and exchanges – including contacts between cultures – within the diegesis of the epic texts, as well as in connection with their reception and rewriting. While both the antagonism between Christians and Saracens, which is at the centre of many *chansons de geste*, and the occasional collaboration

between a Christian hero and a Muslim, which we also find described in the genre, have often been studied, a more precise look at this modern theme proved fruitful.

Simone Pinet's keynote concentrates on the idea of exchange. Her detailed study of a 15th-century prose version of the *Siete Infantes de Salas*, is an example of the recent "economic turn" of medieval literary studies. She first gives a brief overview of the presence of economic ideas of exchange and equivalence, and of the metaphorical use of language arising from these ideas, in the *Chanson de Roland* and in Castilian texts, highlighting their increased presence in the latter. Applying the concept of "spending" from George Bataille's *La notion de dépense* (hitherto used only in anthropological contexts), she then analyzes episodes from the *Siete Infantes de Salas*, in which some kind of substitution, or duplication, occurs, establishing an apparent equivalence between persons, actions, and words. She is able to show that there never is a true equivalence, and that these discrepancies, which can be expressed in terms of gain or waste, are major factors in the motivation and articulation of the plot. She also examines the vocabulary used, and the relation established between these quasi-economic discrepancies and moral values.

Leslie Zarker Morgan then examines the Italian prose adaptations of *chansons de geste* by Andrea da Barberino. She concentrates on Andrea's representation of the figure of Charlemagne and the genealogical networks Andrea establishes. Both aspects should be seen in connection with the political situation in Florence and the favorable attitude of the city towards the Angevin Kings of Naples.

The two remaining contributions of this group both centre around *Fierabras*, probably the epic legend that saw the largest geographical diffusion, owing to the fact that the Portuguese and Spanish prose adaptations spread to other continents with the European expansion of the Renaissance.

Adélaïde Lambert examines the mentions of multilingualism and switching from one language to another in a corpus consisting of the various versions of *Fierabras*. After establishing a brief typology of the scenes in which languages are mentioned in the *chansons de geste*, she analyzes the adaptations of the three text passages in the Old French *Fierabras* where languages are mentioned. She points out the fact that these seem to be critical passages, where the various versions differ in their readings. While mentions of languages are abandoned in most later versions, with the sole exception of the Occitan one, some residues of them can also be found in the prose versions by David Aubert and Jean Bagnyon. Lambert attributes these three cases to the greater linguistic sensibility of authors living in multilingual contexts.

The actual diffusion of the Matter of France, and in particular the legend of Fierabras, is the topic of Beate Langenbruch's contribution. She observes that the proper name "Charlemagne" has vanished in France, while "Carlos Magno" is still in use in Brazil, especially in the Nordeste (an appendix contains corroborating data) and relates this fact to the popularity of the *literatura del cordel* in this region, in which the Matter of France is present to this day. In the second part of her contribution, she gives a brief overview of the prehistory and different versions of the Fierabras story, on which most of these *cordéis* are based, as well as the list of the *cordéis* published since around 1900, which pertain to the Matter of France, along with the reference information of their first editions. While in the older examples the main hero is Oliver, to be followed by Roland in a second phase, Charlemagne, at first mostly a background figure evoked to define the setting of the plots, becomes a protagonist only from the 1970s on. Langenbruch analyzes in detail the changing function and representation of the emperor in the various *cordéis*, briefly discussing additional sources, assured or potential (e.g. a modern translation of the *Chanson de Roland* and a legend concerning Charlemagne's wife Fastrada), and insisting on the unusual aspects of his story highlighted in some of these texts.

The next group of contributions is dedicated to the *chanson de geste* in England. The *chanson de geste* was long thought to be a national French genre with little presence in the British Isles. The actual existence of many of these epic texts and the knowledge of epic legends in England have only recently been established. Four contributions offer further *mises au point*.

Françoise Le Saux opens the series with the reconstitution of a hitherto unknown Charlemagne legend: the special connection of the emperor with Northern England. Taking as her starting points the brief mention of England in the Oxford *Roland*, and the fact that Charlemagne resides in Carlisle in the Middle English *Song of Roland*, she finds corroborating evidence for the existence of such a tradition in two 12th-century texts: Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* and Symeon of Durham's *Historia regum*, the former based on a northern version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the latter incorporating material from Regino of Prüm. There clearly was a pre-Conquest tradition which made Charlemagne the overlord of Northumbria – a tradition that never made it into English mainstream ideology, which rather identified the Normans with the Matter of France – and was unknown in France, but survived in northern English baronial circles.

Marianne Ailes then examines the representation of Charlemagne in mainstream epics present in England, focusing on the aspect of the sacrality of the king. After a brief survey of the various elements which make the king appear a

sacred figure in the *chansons de geste* in general, she examines the representation of Charlemagne in epics copied, composed, adapted, or translated in England. While the priestly character Charlemagne assumes in two instances in the oldest versions of the *Chanson de Roland* seems to vanish in later texts, Ailes is able to show that other indications of his sacred character are maintained in Anglo-Norman texts from the 12th and early 13th century, which were mostly written or copied for the nobility, while the later Middle English translations, typically commissioned by the merchant class, seem less concerned with this aspect of the royal office.

Reacting to the discussion around his recent edition of the *Voyage de Charlemagne*, Alain Corbellari discusses how to interpret (and therefore to edit) prosodic irregularities in Anglo-Norman verse, and specifically, in the single (and now lost) Anglo-Norman copy of the *Voyage*, which can be shown to have been a continental composition. Corbellari discusses specific endings, apparent hiatus, supernumerary *e*'s, and the use of erroneous declension forms of the proper names. In most of these cases, he attributes such irregularities to scribal usage, depending on an English pronunciation, but not meant to change the syllable count, and pleads for keeping them in the edited text. There are certainly also other scribal mistakes, notably additions of superfluous connectors, which require correction. In some cases, misreadings by the modern editors cannot be excluded. An appendix lists some corrections to his edition.

If the legend of Charlemagne, often thought to be restricted to the Continent, is present in England as well, the same holds true of the Crusade cycle, which is the subject of Carol Sweetenham's contribution. She retraces the literary afterlife of the First Crusade in England, discussing the two Anglo-Norman manuscripts of the *Chanson de la première croisade d'après Baudri de Bourgueil*, frescoes and mentions of books, the Middle English *Chevalere Assigne*, and Caxton, as well as the allusions to, and borrowings from, crusade epics that can be found in other works. Sweetenham shows that the knowledge of the poetic account of the First Crusade was always present in England and that England developed a specific form of the legend, which will often be referred to in later insular texts.

The intense debate about the origin of the *chansons de geste* (oral tradition or written composition?) has often obscured the fact that the written witnesses we have are not original records of oral performances, but products of a written tradition with its own characteristics that need to be studied. Moreover, our knowledge of the manuscript tradition of epic texts was long based on the principal surviving witnesses, library copies containing whole epic cycles, or at least a number of narrative texts.

In his keynote, Gabriele Giannini studies epic fragments and rectifies established ideas about epic manuscripts. He shows that the predominance of fragments originating from large luxury copies among those that were found in book bindings does not mean that this type of manuscript was actually predominant, but only that it was preferred by the bookbinders because of its size. Moreover, an important number of fragments described over the last decades are actually remnants of small, one-column manuscripts, which presumably contained only one, or perhaps two, texts, proving that this type of manuscript was still in general use in the 13th century and that texts which we know only as parts of cycles did actually circulate separately. The *recueils* containing several narrative texts, which have preserved most of the epic texts, were library copies, destined rather for the *mise en scène* of the texts, or their conservation, while their actual consumption relied to a large extent on smaller *libelli*.

The other three contributions in this section are studies of single manuscripts. Two contributions examine 13th-century manuscripts containing collections of several texts. The first of these is a cyclical manuscript: Margherita Lecco studies BnF fr. 12558, the only manuscript of the crusade cycle that contains the older version of the *Naissance le Chevalier au Cygne*, known as *Elioxe*. While in this version, still close to the folkloric origins of the story, the swan children are saved by a sister, the later versions all minimize the folkloric aspects and replace the sister with a brother, adapting the story to the feudal world of other *chansons de geste*. Lecco is able to show that the miniatures introducing *Elioxe* in this manuscript, represent a step in the same direction, departing from the text, which thus became, perhaps, more acceptable to a 13th-century audience.

On the other hand, Emmanuelle Poulain-Gautret studies a non-cyclical *recueil*, Coligny (Genève), Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cod. Bodmer 67. This manuscript includes five different texts, four of which (*Gui de Warewic*, *Brut*, *Prophéties de Merlin* et *Chroniques d'Angleterre*) glorify English heroes or kings and combine this glorification with a moral stance. All four support the Plantagenet dynasty or offer model figures to the English nobility. Poulain-Gautret's focus is on the fifth text, the epic *Florence de Rome*, a work which apparently has nothing to do with England, and whose inclusion in this codex she tries to understand. She points out several aspects which link it to *Gui de Warewic* and the *Brut*, for instance the mixture of (pseudo-)history and adventure, the hero who is a model of a young nobleman, the Trojan origins and the *translatio imperii*, the absence of Charlemagne, and, last but not least, the theme of the conflict between brothers, which offers an obvious parallel to Plantagenet family history.

The final contribution of this part concerns a later, 15th-century codex. Catherine Emerson combines an analysis of the text of David Aubert's *Croniques*



*et Conquestes de Charlemagne* with the study of the single manuscript in which the text survives complete and unabridged, and which was commissioned for the court of Burgundy. She stresses the role of Philippe le Bon as a patron of historiographic and pseudo-historiographic writing, and illustrates the various ways in which the manuscript addresses the Duke's concerns: his Carolingian descent, preferably through the maternal line, which would confirm his legitimacy as a ruler independent from the line of the Valois kings of France, and the unity and independence of his disparate lands. She compares the text to some of its sources, including the *Grandes Chroniques de France* and the *chanson de geste Renaut de Montauban*, and points out the ambivalent representation of Charlemagne in the text and in the *grisailles* illustrations that accompany it. In spite of some elements which seem to support the idea of an independent state of Lotharingia, she ultimately interprets the manuscript as supporting the political *status quo*.

The group of *Varia* opens with a study of visual art. Andrea Ghidoni analyzes the methodology used in iconographic studies around the matter of the *chansons de geste*, bemoaning the frequent lack of a preliminary formal study of the artefacts examined, a study which would take into account both the iconographic traditions of art and the context of each work. He then applies these observations to a particularly striking example that had been presented in the canonical work by Rita Lejeune and Jacques Stiennon, *La Légende de Roland dans l'art du Moyen-âge* (Bruxelles, 1966): the *chapiteau* of the church of San Gil de Luna which, according to the two scholars, represents the scene where St Giles receives a letter from heaven that tells him the sin committed by Charlemagne is in fact a representation of the resurrection of Christ.

Several contributions study the language and style of the *chansons de geste*.

Peter Chekin presents a systematic study of the adjectives or nouns ending in *-or* (*Francor*, *paienor*, etc.) that we find in many *chansons de geste*, and especially in the *Chanson de Roland*, and which are mostly considered to be remnants of the Latin genitive plural. After recapitulating preceding research, he presents a new explanation: these forms could be traces of the pronunciation of Latin before the Carolingian reforms, or during a transition phase that would have stretched into the 8th century, and would thus be additional proof of a long tradition of songs behind the surviving text. However, not all these forms do necessarily have the same origin, some may be more recent latinisms based on the new pronunciation of Latin, others may have been created in analogy to these older forms (which would thus still have been, to a certain extent, productive).

Edward A. Heinemann looks at the grammatical structure of the decasyllabic verse and its hemistichs, on the basis of an episode in the *Prise d'Orange*.

Studying in particular the degree to which the hemistichs add to the content, or make the action advance, he shows how the different versions of the manuscripts achieve different poetic effects. While it is not always possible to determine which version is the original one, each of them deserves to be analyzed on its own. Heinemann therefore pleads for a separate study of the single versions of the *chansons de geste*.

Giovanni Palumbo and Paolo Rinoldi use stylistic differences to corroborate a two-author hypothesis for the *Chanson d'Aspremont*. Some stylistic differences between two parts of the narrative had already been noted by François Suard, the poem's most recent editor. Extensive analysis of the poem's whole manuscript tradition allows Palumbo and Rinoldi to relativize and render more precise Suard's observations. Then, by appealing to instances in which the second part ignores narrative details in the first, as well as highlighting the second part's "monotony" of rhyme patterns, they propose three possible scenarios for the composition of *Aspremont*, given the current state of research: a single author changed his working habits part of the way through composing the text; or, a single author borrowed and amplified preexisting material; or, two authors are responsible for the poem, and either they collaborated or one worked very soon after the other had completed his portion. A final answer to this question may be possible once the in-progress critical edition of the poem is completed.

Two contributions which present current projects are also linked to language questions:

Dorothea Kullmann, Marjolaine Raguin, and Brittany Yuen present the project of a database of Occitan epic formulae that is being set up in Toronto, discussing the problems encountered, especially concerning the definition of the formulae, and their linguistic standardization, as well as the potential conclusions that can be drawn from the data. While formulae common to several *chansons* seem rare in the Occitan domain, some exceptions exist, and these groupings may convey information about the genesis of the texts.

Stephen P. McCormick gives a report on the progress of the project of a digital edition of the various manuscripts of the Franco-Italian epic *Huon d'Auvergne*. He justifies the choices made in terms of reproductions, software, and modes of tagging, insisting on the usefulness of such an edition in the Franco-Italian context, and with this text in particular, whose four manuscripts all show different degrees of language mixture, which can thus be compared more directly. The digital format also allows for the inclusion and tagging of those sections of the burned Turin fragment that have been reconstituted and those that exist in an early transcription by Pio Rajna.

Dimitri Pétales contributes a comparative study of two epic motifs: the single combat between father and son, and the defloration of the Amazon queen. He examines the various versions of a modern Greek song and a Serbian folk tale, both based on Byzantine *cantilènes*. These texts describe episodes which are similar to those found in the French *chansons de geste*, the *Nibelungenlied* or other epic texts. He considers the combat between father and son to be an old Indo-European motif, but interprets the taming of the Amazon queen as a *Wander-motif* which would have traveled from one language domain to another at a later date.

The final two contributions deal with ideological aspects of later epic texts, exemplifying the increase in attention the later Middle Ages have received in recent years.

Alicja Bańczyk studies the representation of the feudal relationship in the 14th-century version of *Renaut de Montauban*, comparing it with the earlier version of this text. She highlights in particular how the essential components of this type of relationship (especially *auxilium* and *consilium*), which in the older version of the text were presented as efficient tools to restrain the power of the king, have become less effective, giving way to an increased royalism.

Valérie Guyen-Croquez examines another 15th-century prose text, the *Croniques et Conquestes de Charlemagne* by David Aubert, attacking it from a slightly different angle, the idea of truth. She shows how old values are relativized and a new ideology develops in this compilation, based on various older sources. Charlemagne himself, although he seems the last representative of heroic values, is not only a producer of “fake news”, but also comes to doubt himself. God, though still thought a warrant of truth, is almost absent. David Aubert opposes different versions of certain elements of the storyline, without always telling the reader which one to trust, and, in the end, the *auctoritas* which decides about the truth is only his own.

It is our hope that *Oltre la mer saelee* will not only document the diversity of ongoing research in the field of medieval Romance epic, but also, through its four major themes, illustrate the huge geographical space medieval Europe was naturally in contact with and the extraordinary capacity of the epic genre to reflect this historical reality. Often thought to be a “national” genre, medieval epic is in fact astonishingly international.