

MEDIEVAL FRANCOPHONE LITERARY  
CULTURE OUTSIDE FRANCE

Studies in the Moving Word

Edited by

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BREPOLS

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## PREFACE

This collected volume is part of the output of the project ‘Medieval Francophone Literary Culture Outside France’ (MFLCOF, 2011–2015), directed by Simon Gaunt (principal investigator, King’s College London), Jane Gilbert (co-investigator, University College London), and Bill Burgwinkle (co-investigator, University of Cambridge).<sup>1</sup>

The project examined how some key literary texts and traditions travelled along two principal directions: a northern vector that stretches from England across the Low Countries to Burgundy and the Rhineland; two southern vectors, one across the Alps to Northern and Southern Italy and to the Middle East, and one across the Pyrenees to the Iberian Peninsula. Our enquiries did not exclude Paris or the kingdom of France, but did not gravitate around them.

The first project conference, having as its main theme the northern vector, was held at University College London on 6–7 June 2013 in conjunction with the conference *The Italian Angevins: Naples and Beyond (1266–1422)*, which took place the day before.<sup>2</sup> Mediterranean Europe was the focus of the second project conference, held at King’s College, Cambridge on 10–12 April 2014. Participants and the wider public alike could delve into the objects themselves with the project exhibition ‘The Moving Word: French Medieval Manuscripts in Cambridge’ on display at the Milstein Exhibition Centre of the Cambridge University Library, from 22 January to 17 April 2014, timed to coincide with the conference and remain an accessible point of entry into the subject matter for future years through its website.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> More information on the project, project members and partners, is available on the project website <<http://www.medievalfrancophone.ac.uk/>> [accessed 6 June 2016].

<sup>2</sup> *The Italian Angevins: Naples and Beyond*, ed. by Jane Gilbert, Catherine Keen, and Ella Williams, *Italian Studies*, 72/2 (2017).

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see the online catalogue of the exhibition, ed. by William Burgwinkle and Nicola Morato (2014): <<https://exhibitions.lib.cam.ac.uk/moving-word/>>.

The conferences expanded on the set of research questions that animated the project:

- In what social and cultural milieus were francophone texts composed and disseminated outside ‘France’ (referring to a rough geographical boundary)?
- Is there a transnational francophone literary culture and how does it vary from place to place?
- Does the focus and form of these francophone literary texts change as they migrate?
- Do sites of production and transmission outside ‘France’ influence traditions within ‘France’?
- Does literary French imply a cultural identity and is this necessarily associated with France?
- Are cultural identities mobile, produced by movement as much as by place?
- What is the cultural freight of non-standard and hybrid forms of French, for writers and readers?
- How do non-standard forms of French influence our understanding of what ‘French’ means? What are the implications of all of these questions for literary history?

We were of course challenged by the breadth of these horizons from the theoretical, methodological, historical, literary, philological, linguistic point of view and, in organizing the two conferences, were aware that it would have been virtually impossible to cover all areas, all literary genres, all important texts, all the timelines. For this reason we opted from the outset for a pragmatic problem-based approach, trying to identify a group of case studies that would afford us closer contact with phenomena (especially material and textual ‘evidence’) and, at the same time, to embrace a large panorama from both a privileged and distant viewpoint. This volume is a synthesis of this way of looking at textual culture, textual structures and textual transmission, alternating macro- and micro-history, theoretical frameworks and concrete phenomena.

We hope that the final result is faithful to this perspective, which at least in our intentions should be open and inclusive, providing the reader with an opportunity to reflect on or reconsider our project questions by moving back and forth from the individual to the universal, building a network of *specimina*, operational concepts, and — hopefully — intersecting with or propelling the reader’s current enquiries.

This latter ambition is buoyed by the gathering critical mass of related studies: six years after the project’s inception, MFLCOF appears to be in excellent company. Research on geography, multilingualism, linguistic contact (in itself deeply

intertwined with research on Medieval French from its foundation as a scientific discipline in the second half of the nineteenth century) has steadily accelerated in recent years. It has surfaced in the form of publications, conferences and symposia, edited volumes, national and international projects, databases and even newly created academic journals, some of which were directly inspired by MFLCOF. From the point of view of its disciplinary impact, this has been a great encouragement for all members of the project team and those who contributed to the research. Initiatives in this blossoming research field are multiplying so quickly — even in just the last few months — that while we cannot mention them all systematically in the introduction, many of them are referenced in the volume and provide valuable depth to the questions explored.

In conclusion, we would like to take this opportunity to thank once again all the project members and the project partners, the libraries and collections that granted permission to consult documents on site and publish images, in some cases waiving the copyright fees, all those who participated in our conferences, and all who generously contributed to our project with their scientific expertise and their constant support. Special thanks to Valentina Nieri, who prepared the indexes of the volume. We hope that the nineteen *Studies* about *Medieval Francophone Literary Culture Outside France* with their internal diversity and ongoing dialogue between neighbouring literary, historical and cultural disciplines, with the rhythm of investigation and discovery peculiar to each contribution, will succeed in communicating the atmosphere of transnational collaboration and intellectual exchange between different generations of scholars that has been the driving force of this enterprise.

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