

Introduction

Looking for Charlemagne

The 1967 children's book called *The Emperor's Arrow* tells the story of a young peasant named Pepin. While working in the fields one day, he heard the gallop of approaching horses, jumped into the brush, and watched the emperor Charlemagne ride past. Pepin knew that Charles was a kind ruler, who set up schools and even treated the peasants well; 'a hero without equal in the world Pepin lived'. Pepin had even heard that a sultan had sent Charlemagne an elephant. The boy followed Charlemagne into his castle only to discover that his army has been beset by the Black Death. During a mass sung for the emperor, an angel appeared to Charles, telling him to go outside and shoot an arrow into the sky. What that arrow hit would cure his army. Pepin, hiding again in the brush, recovered the plant in which the arrow had landed. Excitedly, the boy rushed home, told his mother what he found, and coaxed her into making a broth from the plant. The boy was finally brought before Charlemagne, who (by his mere appearance) consoled the boy, making him feel as if 'somehow . . . everything would be safe in his world'. The herbal broth did indeed save Charlemagne's army and he rewarded Pepin with a place at the palace school, where Pepin rose to high honors.¹

The book you're now reading is not really about Charlemagne. That is, this book is not about the Frankish king and emperor of the eighth and ninth centuries, but rather about idealized images of the Frankish ruler and the meaning behind them. Sources of the Charlemagne legend are diffuse, scattered across the pages of annals, chronicles, poems, and hagiographies, as well as on the walls of churches and cathedrals. They are also legion. In the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, telling stories about Charlemagne meant telling stories about a (lost) Golden Age whose contours shifted across time and space. Each scribe who recorded the great one's deeds or narrated the events of that Golden Age added a layer, pressing his particular memories and preoccupations into the fabric of the Charlemagne legend.²

¹ Burke Boyce, *The Emperor's Arrow* (Philadelphia, 1967).

² Beginning in the 12th century, an intellectual battle has been fought over his very name—was he Charlemagne or *Karl der Grosse*? See Karl Ferdinand Werner, *Karl der Grosse oder Charlemagne? Von der Aktualität einer überholten Fragestellung* (Münich, 1995); Joachim Ehlers, *Charlemagne: L'Européen entre la France et Allemagne* (Stuttgart, 2001); Robert Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France: A Thousand Years of Mythology*, tr. Catherine Tihanyi (Notre Dame, Ind., 2003); and the short summary in Joanna Story, 'Charlemagne's Reputation', in Story (ed.), *Charlemagne: Empire and Society* (Manchester, 2005), 1–4.

Modern scholarship has had a hard time getting a handle on this phenomenon, though not for lack of trying. In 1993, Susan E. Farrier published an annotated bibliography on the Charlemagne legend, having over 2,700 entries subdivided into three parts, twenty-eight sections, and many, many more subsections. The main dividing line in Farrier's work, however, is between 'historical' and 'poetic' sources. In Farrier's organizational schematic, historical sources are generally those written in Latin (although she includes some late medieval vernacular chronicles as well), while poetic sources are exclusively in the vernacular.³

This fits well within the scholarly tradition. Gaston Paris's pioneering late nineteenth-century *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne* largely defined the limits of all subsequent research on the topic.⁴ For Paris, 'poetic' meant fictional and vernacular, with sources that spoke of universal characteristics, oftentimes devoid of cultural context. Thus, studying Charlemagne in epic and romance meant saying something about Charlemagne as a recurring, fictional character, easily recognizable across texts.⁵ On the other hand, Paris believed that the image of Charlemagne in Latin (hence 'historical') sources evolved from king to saint, with each text another step in a more-or-less conscious process towards Charlemagne's canonization at the behest of Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (1152–90)⁶ in 1165 CE.

Recently, literary critics who have discussed the Charlemagne legend have worked to more precisely contextualize (chronologically and geographically) their sources. Nonetheless, many critics debate details, as they remain tethered to texts already within their scholarly tradition and are primarily concerned with indicating how each manifests a rather standardized portrait of Charlemagne.⁷ Paradoxically, even as they treat the multiple discursive layers in their own sources, 'literary critics have been accustomed to get their history secondhand and prepackaged and have tended . . . to treat it as unproblematic, something to be invoked rather than investigated'.⁸ This intense focus has had another, perhaps unintended consequence. Often, because some literary critics have traditionally viewed their texts either as discrete units (removed

³ Susan E. Farrier, *The Medieval Charlemagne Legend: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York, 1993).

⁴ Gaston Paris, *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne*, 2nd edn. (Paris, 1905).

⁵ There are dangers in not properly contextualizing your sources. See my review of the woeful John F. Moffitt, *The Enthroned Corpse of Charlemagne: The Lord-in-Majesty Theme in Early Medieval Art and Life* (Jefferson, NC, 2007): Matthew Gabriele, 'Review of *The Enthroned Corpse of Charlemagne*, by John F. Moffitt', *Studies in Iconography*, 30 (2009), 239–41.

⁶ I will give regnal years for kings, emperors, and popes. For others, I will give dates of death.

⁷ e.g. Karl-Heinz Bender, 'La Genèse de l'image littéraire de Charlemagne, élu de Dieu, au XI^e siècle', *Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, 31 (1967), 35–49; idem, *König und Vasall: Untersuchungen zur Chanson de Geste des XII. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg, 1967); Karl-Ernst Geith, *Carolus Magnus: Studien zur Darstellung Karls des Grossen in der deutschen Literatur des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts* (München, 1977); and Dominique Boutet, *Charlemagne et Arthur ou le roi imaginaire* (Paris, 1992). Peter Haidu, *The Sense of Violence: The Song of Roland and the Birth of the State* (Bloomington, Ind., 1993) has some fascinating things to say about how the Oxford *Chanson de Roland* functions as a textual artifact, but his discussion of Frankish kingship is dated and makes an anachronistic distinction between kingship's secular and sacral characters.

⁸ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997), 20. Also, Robert M. Stein, 'Literary Criticism and the Evidence for History', in Nancy Partner (ed.), *Writing Medieval History* (London, 2005), 67–87.

from dependent traditions) or as one part of an epic/romantic cycle revolving around a certain hero (removed from the epic/romantic tradition as a whole), the study of Charlemagne himself has been marginalized. He has faded into the background and the fact that the age of Charlemagne's reign provides the meta-thread among almost all of these vernacular texts remains largely unremarked.⁹

On the other side of this imagined disciplinary divide, the touchstone for historians of the Charlemagne legend remains the magisterial work of Robert Folz. Like Gaston Paris had, Folz revolved his analysis around the formal sanctification of Charlemagne by Barbarossa, even as he paid far greater attention to what happened after 1165 than what came before.¹⁰ This late medieval focus remains a prominent thread in the historiography of the Charlemagne legend.¹¹ Another more recent thread, however, looks at earlier evidence of the Charlemagne legend—some assessing how the memory of Charlemagne's idealized reign served as a model for later Carolingian, Capetian, and Ottonian rulers,¹² while others look to determine the motivations behind monastic appropriations of Charlemagne in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹³ Still, historians are often guilty of a kind of

⁹ e.g. not one of the nine papers on the Oxford *Roland* in *Charlemagne et l'épopée romane*—a book supposedly dedicated to Charlemagne in epic—are about the Frankish ruler. Madeleine Tyssens and Claude Thiry (eds.), *Charlemagne et l'épopée romane: Actes du VI^e Congrès International de la Société Rencesvals*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1978); the same in Emmanuèle Baumgartner, Jean-Charles Payen, and Paule Le Rider (eds.), *La Chanson de Geste et le mythe carolingien: Mélanges René Louis publiés par ses collègues, ses amis et ses élèves à l'occasion de son 75^e anniversaire*, 2 vols. (Vézelay, 1982); and Karen Pratt (ed.), *Roland and Charlemagne in Europe: Essays on the Reception and Transformation of a Legend* (London, 1996).

¹⁰ Folz's discussion of events before the canonization is 157 pages long. His discussion of events after 1165 is 403 pages. Folz's second book is entirely on the cult of Charlemagne. See Folz, *Souvenir*; and idem, *Études sur le culte liturgique de Charlemagne dans les églises de l'empire* (Paris, 1951).

¹¹ The essays collected in a recent special volume of the *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins* deal almost exclusively (twenty-three of twenty-seven) with the legacy of 1165. *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins*, 104/5 (2002/3), 11–764; also see the earlier Hans Müllejjans (ed.), *Karl der Grosse und sein Schrein in Aachen* (Mönchengladbach, 1988); and Giuseppe Martini, 'La memoria di Carlomagno e l'impero medioevale', *Rivista storica Italiana*, 68 (1956), 255–81. Similarly, art historians have primarily concerned themselves with Aachen or the 13th-cent. stained-glass windows depicting Charlemagne. For instance, Heinrich Schifffers, *Karls des Grossen Reliquienschatz und die Anfänge der Aachenfahrt* (Aachen, 1951); Rita Lejeune and Jacques Stiennon, *La Légende de Roland dans l'art du Moyen Âge* (Brussels, 1966); Alison Stones, 'The *Codex Calixtinus* and the Iconography of Charlemagne', in Karen Pratt (ed.), *Roland and Charlemagne in Europe* (London, 1996), 169–203; the collected essays in Mario Kramp (ed.), *Könige in Aachen: Geschichte und Mythos*, 2 vols. (Mainz, 2000); and Elizabeth Pastan, 'Charlemagne as Saint? Relics and the Choice of Window Subjects at Chartres Cathedral', in *Legend of Charlemagne*, 97–135.

¹² e.g. Paul Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire* (Lincoln, Neb., 1994); Roger Collins, 'Charlemagne and his Critics, 814–29', in Régine Lejan (ed.), *La Royauté et les élites dans l'Europe carolingienne (début IX^e siècle aux environs de 920)* (Villeneuve, 1998), 193–211; Egon Boshof, 'Karl der Kahle: Novus Karolus magnus?', in Franz-Reiner Erkens (ed.), *Karl der Grosse und das Erbe der Kulturen* (Berlin, 2001), 135–52; Joachim Ehlers, 'Karolingische Tradition und frühes Nationalbewusstsein in Frankreich', *Francia*, 4 (1976), 213–35; Karl Hauck, 'Die Ottonen und Aachen, 876–936', in *KdG* 39–53; Ludwig Falkenstein, *Otto III. und Aachen* (Hanover, 1998); Hagen Keller, 'Die Ottonen und Karl der Grosse', *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins*, 104/5 (2002/3), 69–94; and Matthew Gabriele, 'Otto III, Charlemagne, and Pentecost A.D. 1000: A Reconsideration Using Diplomatic Evidence', in *Year 1000*, 111–32.

¹³ For instance, Robert Barroux, 'L'Abbé Suger et la vassalité du Vexin en 1124', *Le Moyen Âge*, 64 (1958), 1–26; C. Van de Kieft, 'Deux diplômes faux de Charlemagne pour Saint-Denis, du XII^e siècle', *Le Moyen Âge*, 64 (1958), 401–36; Marc du Pouget, 'Le Légende carolingienne à Saint-Denis: La Donation

myopia. In direct contrast to how literary critics treat their sources, historians have the tendency to read sources of the Charlemagne legend as if they contained nothing but context, generally using them to say something about the time and place in which an individual text was created, while failing to look more broadly across geographical and temporal boundaries.

This divide endures.¹⁴ In 2003, Federica Monteleone framed her discussion of Charlemagne's legendary journey to the Holy Land as a dual evolutionary process, essentially following Gaston Paris's nearly 150-year-old theoretical structure. One path of Monteleone's investigation led to Charlemagne's sanctification as he became an archetypal crusader in the service of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, while the other led towards the creation of an idealized knightly figure in the Old French *Voyage de Charlemagne*.¹⁵ Certainly, Monteleone's work is filled with valuable insights into various aspects of the Charlemagne legend before 1165 but because she compartmentalizes her sources, she fails to address how or why the legend was so intriguing, to so many people, at so many times, in so many places. She sees little connection between contemporary images of Charlemagne in Latin and vernacular sources. She leaps from one text to the other, offering an implicit evolutionary model that moves towards the Old French *Voyage*, but does not fully explain how one step led to the next or even why the legend was going there. She doesn't explain how ideas could travel.

Medieval topics, and especially ones like the study of the Charlemagne legend, scream out for *interdisciplinary* approaches.¹⁶ Monteleone took a *multidisciplinary*

de Charlemagne au retour de Roncevaux', *Société des Sciences, Lettres, et Arts de Bayonne*, 135 (1979), 53–60; Elizabeth A. R. Brown and Michael W. Cothren, 'The Twelfth-Century Crusading Window of the Abbey of Saint-Denis: *Praetitorum enim recordatio futurorum est exhibitio*', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 49 (1986), 1–40; Amy G. Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca, NY, 1995); Rolf Grosse, 'Reliques du Christ et foires de Saint-Denis au XI^e siècle', *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France*, 87 (2001), 357–75; and Daniel F. Callahan, 'Al-Hakim, Charlemagne, and the Destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem in the Writings of Ademar of Chabannes', in *Legend of Charlemagne*, 41–57.

¹⁴ Seen perhaps most famously in Wolfgang Braulfels and Percy Ernst Schramm (eds.), *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, 5 vols. (Düsseldorf, 1965–8). Here, historians of the Charlemagne legend write on Latin sources, while literary critics write on the vernacular. Neither reference the other's work. See also Bernd Bastert (ed.), *Karl der Grosse in den europäischen Literaturen des Mittelalters: Konstruktion eines Mythos* (Tübingen, 2004); and Max Kerner, *Karl der Grosse: Entschleierung eines Mythos* (Cologne, 2001).

¹⁵ Federica Monteleone, *Il viaggio di Carlo Magno in Terra Santa: Un'esperienza di pellegrinaggio nella tradizione europea occidentale* (Fasano, 2003), 11–12. The Old French *Voyage* likely dates to the second half of the 12th cent. See *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, tr. Glyn S. Burgess (Edinburgh, 1998). Two recent dissertations, soon to become books, do much to remedy this lack of interdisciplinary approaches. See Anne Austin Latowsky, 'Imaginative Possession: Charlemagne and the East from Einhard to the *Voyage of Charlemagne*' (Ph.D. diss., Romance Languages and Literature, University of Washington, 2004); and Jace Stuckey, 'Charlemagne: The Making of an Image, 1100–1300' (Ph.D. diss., History, University of Florida, 2006).

¹⁶ The chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin, a 12th-cent. Latin prose account of Charlemagne and Roland's expedition into Spain, is one text that has served as a point of common interdisciplinary ground. For more on Pseudo-Turpin, see André de Mandach, *Naissance et développement de la Chanson de Geste en Europe: La Geste de Charlemagne et de Roland*, 6 vols. (Geneva, 1961); Matthias Tischler, 'Tatmensch oder Heidenapostel: Die Bilder Karls des Grossen bei Einhart und im Pseudo-Turpin', in Klaus Herbers (ed.), *Jakobus und Karl der Grosse: Von Einhard's Karlsvita zum Pseudo-Turpin* (Tübingen,

approach, standing different types of texts next to one another without substantially examining their interdependence. Interdisciplinarity, however, means pushing sources up against and into one another, crossing traditional scholarly boundaries, and using the resources of various disciplines to attack a specific problem. In the case of the Charlemagne legend, interdisciplinarity means being sensitive to the fact that each instance of the Charlemagne legend—be it charter, chronicle, or stained-glass—was tethered to both the local conditions generating the source and to more general themes discernible in disparate texts. Understanding general themes across texts helps the reader see when a cigar is more than a cigar. Deep contextualization will warn us when it might, in fact, just be a cigar.

Take, for example, the tension between memory and history, and fact and fiction. From 1920 until 2004, the New York Yankees had won twenty-six World Series to the Boston Red Sox's zero. Given these numbers, the two teams did not seem worthy of comparison, but Red Sox fans spoke incessantly about their rivalry with the Yankees. Yankee fans almost never spoke in such terms. Why? Red Sox fans thought of the teams' shared past as a *history*. They wanted to problematize the teams' relationship, keeping an active dynamic alive between them by suggesting that their team could overturn the current paradigm. In effect, they always believed that 'this could be the Red Sox's year' (as it indeed was in 2004). On the other hand, the Yankees–Red Sox competition belonged to Yankees fans' *memory*. They knew, approved of, and felt an immediate connection to their team's chain of victories stretching back over eighty years. Their denigration of the teams' status as 'rivals' attempted to suppress any alternative to that narrative.¹⁷

Although this brief analogy grossly stereotypes the two types of fans, it does I think help demonstrate that the terms 'history' and 'memory' are not oppositional, but are rather two modes of discourse constantly locked in a struggle over the meaning of the past. Memory implies continuity and stability, while history recognizes discontinuity and difference.¹⁸ Despite the enormous contributions of Hayden White, Mary Carruthers was one of the first to throw open this field of research for the Middle Ages by translating general historiographical observations into a concrete analysis of medieval memorial practice.¹⁹ Although she focuses on the late Middle Ages, Carruthers did deal with late antiquity and the early Middle Ages by tracing the mnemonic system to the point when it became much more formalized in the universities. More importantly, Carruthers showed how the pre-modern process of memorization revealed a prevailing understanding of how people

2003), 1–37; and now William J. Purkis, *Crusading Spirituality in the Holy Land and Iberia, c. 1095–c. 1187* (Woodbridge, 2008), 150–65.

¹⁷ See the (somewhat) similar case-studies in Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993); and Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality* (Cambridge, 1991), 233–6.

¹⁸ Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987), 20; and Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990), 56.

¹⁹ Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1990). See also Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago, 1966). Yates, however, virtually skips the Middle Ages, jumping from antiquity to the Friars.

dealt with the past. The Middle Ages placed little emphasis on the objective reconstruction of past events. Instead, recollection was an interpretive act, a selective process that chose what was thought to be valuable and worthy of remembrance. Hence, remembering allowed one to impart new meaning to events or texts.²⁰

Scholars have begun to use these insights into the memorial process to say something not just about how individuals remembered, but how communities did as well. How individuals remembered shaped the texts they produced and the stories they told, which both in turn shaped how a community perceived the past. But this was a two-way street. Communities shaped how they remembered the past just as much as the past gave order and meaning to a group's collective experience.²¹ Some medieval communities seem to have been well aware of this dynamic and sought to manipulate the meaning of the past by presenting either artificial continuity or radical discontinuity in the timeline.²² For example, if medieval monasteries found a version of the past to be unsuited to their current political, social, or religious needs, they might simply recast it by rewriting or forging some sources, or destroying others. As Gabrielle Spiegel so eloquently summarized, the 'past [became] a repository of . . . dreams and desires, both because it [could] offer up a consoling image of what once was and is no longer, and because it [contained] the elements by which to reopen the contest, to offer an alternative vision to a now unpalatable present'.²³

The implications of this conception are staggering. If, as seems to be the case, almost every medieval source participated to a greater or lesser degree in this dialectical struggle between memory and history, we should profoundly rethink how we understand our sources; especially those that take subjects in the past but

²⁰ Events too were read as texts, always pregnant with meaning and needful of interpretation. Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 25, 89, 168–9; Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge, 1992), 285–93; Dominic Janes, 'The World and its Past as Christian Allegory in the Early Middle Ages', in *Uses of the Past*, 110–13; and Hans-Werner Goetz, 'The Concept of Time in the Historiography of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', in Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick J. Geary (eds.), *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography* (Cambridge, 2002), 160–4.

²¹ Although not often explicitly mentioned much in these studies of communities and memorial culture, Brian Stock's 'textual community' seems to lurk just behind them. Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983), esp. 88–240. See also James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, 1992), esp. pp. x–xii, 200–2.

²² This modern approach to the sources owes much to the work of Michel Foucault on the primacy of power as a motivational factor; e.g. see Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, tr. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1977).

²³ Spiegel, *Past as Text*, 211–12. On monasteries, see esp. Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994), 6, 119–65; also Amy G. Remensnyder, 'Topographies of Memory: Center and Periphery in High Medieval France', in Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick J. Geary (eds.), *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography* (Cambridge, 2002), 193–214. On this dynamic regarding the Holocaust, see Hayden White, 'Commentary', *History of the Human Sciences*, 9 (1996), 123–38; and idem, 'Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth in Historical Representation', in *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore, 1999), 27–42.

which modern scholars often consider to be ‘fiction’.²⁴ For instance, modern scholars sometimes puzzle about how to deal with hagiography, especially since these texts demonstrate a problematic relationship to (the modern understanding of) truth similar to that found in vernacular epic or romance. But a better understanding of the tensions between memory and history, and fact and fiction, during the Middle Ages shows that this problem is a straw man—a problem of our own creation that dates to the nineteenth-century philological, social scientific tendency towards classification. The Middle Ages did not define its terms as we do now, nor did it classify by genre in the same way we do.²⁵ When we categorize these texts, we separate when we should be lumping. Cutting early medieval texts up by genre seems to imply that the subjects of these texts, to some degree, did not inhabit the same intellectual ‘space’ for their audiences. In other words, the deeds of Charlemagne as recorded in a chronicle were thought to have been conceptualized as somehow necessarily different from the deeds found in the *Vita* of his contemporary, St William of Gellone, or those found in the Oxford *Chanson de Roland*. We should be uncomfortable arguing this point.

Evidence abounds that medieval readers and writers made no such distinction between types of texts. Early Anglo-Saxon hagiographies, annals, and chronicles dealt with the tension between memory and history in quite similar ways. Hugh of Fleury (d. c.1118), his contemporary Albert of Aachen, and Hariulf of Saint-Riquier (d. 1143) all saw no problem in using epic poems as sources for their chronicles. Monasteries often invoked characters from epic in an effort to legitimize falsified charters. Conversely, jongleurs and their audiences considered their works to be accurate representations of the past.²⁶

The apparent disconnect between medieval and modern historians’ perceptions of truth is likely due to our tendency to project our own definition of what separates

²⁴ Bernard Guenée has argued that the Middle Ages held on to a fundamental opposition between truth and fiction, which he defined as history and poetry. Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l’Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1980), 19. But see also Nancy Partner’s rather dismissive comments on medieval historians who believed fiction ‘quite artlessly’: *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago, 1977), 190–1.

²⁵ See Felice Lifshitz, ‘Beyond Positivism and Genre: “Hagiographical” Texts as Historical Narrative’, *Viator*, 25 (1994), 102–8; Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval*, 300; Monika Otter, ‘Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing’, in Nancy Partner (ed.), *Writing Medieval History* (London, 2005), 111; and now the intriguing Robert M. Stein, *Reality Fictions: Romance, History, and Governmental Authority, 1025–1180* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2006). On the tyranny of previous scholarship on the questions we ask of our sources, see the thoughtful comments in Anthony Grafton, April Shelford, and Nancy Siraisi, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); and Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002), 16–38.

²⁶ Catherine Cubitt, ‘Memory and Narrative in the Cult of the Early Anglo-Saxon Saints’, in *Uses of the Past*, 29–66. On Hugh and Hariulf, see Albert Pauphilet, ‘Sur *La Chanson de Roland*, *Romania*, 59 (1933), 172–8. On Albert, see Susan B. Edgington, ‘Albert of Aachen and the *Chansons de Geste*’, in John France and William G. Zajac (eds.), *The Crusades and Their Sources: Essays Presented to Bernard Hamilton* (Brookfield, Vt., 1998), 23–37. On epic, jongleurs, and monasteries, see Joseph J. Duggan, ‘Medieval Epic as Popular Historiography: Appropriation of the Historical Knowledge in the Vernacular Epic’, *Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, 11/1 (1986), 304–5. Robert Stein has coined the term ‘reality fictions’ to engage with the medieval programs of truth. See Stein, *Reality Fictions*, 31–3.

fact from fiction back onto the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages, what mattered was the text's truth *claim*, rather than its truth *value*—'not whether it corresponds to fact . . . but how it asks to be taken by the reader'. Historical truth in the Middle Ages should simply be defined as that which was willingly believed. Anything belonging to a widely accepted tradition could fall into this category, regardless of where that tradition might fall according to modern definitions of fiction.²⁷ If they all make the same truth claims, a monastery's chronicle, a hagiography, and a vernacular epic all said something meaningful to their contemporary audiences about what happened in the past.²⁸ So to determine that truth claim—to determine whether or not a text was thought to make a meaningful claim about the past—we must seek out the middle ground, what Spiegel has called the 'social logic of the text'. The moment of a text's—any text's—inscription fixes its historical reality, revealing implicit and explicit desires, interests, and beliefs that are all socially constructed. A monastery's Latin annals should be read as a literary creation, just as much as a vernacular epic should be read as a historical artifact. Images work in much the same way.²⁹ An interdisciplinary approach shows us that general and specific are both important, together.

Sources of the Charlemagne legend predating the twelfth century are especially representative of this double, interpenetrating dialectic between memory and history, and fact and fiction. Although the events described in sources of the Charlemagne legend may be demonstrably 'false' by modern standards (Charlemagne never actually went to Jerusalem, nor did he conquer all Iberia), many contemporaries believed them to be true and believed that the sources recording such events said something meaningful about the past.³⁰ So, both general themes and specific context matter. Not every text made the same claims about Charlemagne's Golden Age. But many did, from diverse places and times, spread across much of Europe and throughout the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. What did it mean to make such claims

²⁷ Quotation from Otter, 'Functions of Fiction', 112. See also Suzanne Fleischman, 'On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages', *History and Theory*, 22 (1983), 305–6; Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Schichtman, *King Arthur and the Myth of History* (Gainesville, Fla., 2004), 9, 14–16; and Leah Shopkow, *History and Community: Norman Historical Writing in the 11th and 12th Centuries* (Washington, DC, 1997), 1–2.

²⁸ e.g. the Carolingians may have used Virgil's *Aeneid* as a representation of the Trojan/Roman past. The *Chanson de Roland* was sung to the Norman contingent at Hastings to inspire them by example. The lay aristocracy of late medieval France contested encroaching royal control by using vernacular prose translations of the Pseudo-Turpin. Hagiography was certainly thought to be a true account of what had happened. See McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 209; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1998), 455; Jean Frappier, 'Réflexions sur les rapports des chansons de geste et de l'histoire', *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 73 (1957), 4–6; and Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*. Again, Brian Stock's idea of textual communities seems to lurk just behind this analysis. See n. 21 above.

²⁹ Spiegel, *Past as Text*, 24–8, 53–6; Hayden White, 'The Historical Text as Literary Artifact', in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978), 81–100; and Matthew Gabriele, 'Asleep at the Wheel? Apocalypticism, Messianism and Charlemagne's Passivity in the Oxford *Chanson de Roland*', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 43 (2003), 46–72.

³⁰ Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France*, 14. This seems analogous to Monika Otter's conclusion that there are 'plenty of indications that many readers [of Geoffrey of Monmouth] took the story of Brutus, the mythical founder of Britain, and the story of Arthur, the ideal king and conqueror of the known world, as "historical"'. Otter, 'Functions of Fiction', 110.

locally and what did it mean that such claims were so similarly expressed in sources so disparate?

Charlemagne came to represent something politically, religiously, and socially special to those who wrote about him. To say something about Charlemagne in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries was to say something about how you understood yourself and your own place in sacred history. But the Charlemagne legend also spoke to ideas of community, sanctity, and violence. Especially in the eleventh century, speaking of him was a way of saying something about a universal community of Christians, that community's special place in God's eyes, and your relationship to that community in the arc of sacred history.³¹

Charles—later Charlemagne—came to the throne in 768 CE after the death of his father, Pippin the Short (741–68). Initially, Charles shared control of his father's kingdom with his brother Carloman (768–71) but after his death, Charles succeeded to his brother's possessions. Charles attempted to reform the practice of Christianity in his realm and attracted the leading minds of the time to his court. He conquered the Lombards, Saxons, and Avars, and expanded into Iberia. He shared friendly relations and exchanged emissaries with the Islamic Caliph and patriarch of Jerusalem, and earned the grudging respect of the Byzantines. At the height of his power, Charles controlled a territory extending from Rome to the English Channel, and from Saxony past Barcelona. On Christmas Day 800 CE, Charles was crowned as Augustus by Pope Leo III (795–816) at Rome.

Charles died in 814, having been king for forty-six years and Augustus for fourteen. He was interred in the chapel of St Mary's which he had constructed at Aachen. His youngest and only surviving son Louis (the Pious, 814–40) traveled north from Aquitaine to take possession of the empire. The legend of Charlemagne began then.

³¹ On Charlemagne as symbol, see Eugene Vance, 'Semiotics and Power: Relics, Icons, and the "Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople"', *Romanic Review*, 79 (1988), 170; also Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France*, 10. For a forceful argument on the necessity of listening for people's beliefs, see Geoffrey Koziol, 'Is Robert I in Hell? The Diploma for Saint-Denis and the Mind of a Rebel King (Jan. 25, 923)', *Early Medieval Europe*, 14 (2006), 233–67.

