

Uitnodiging - Invitation

# The Translation of the Matter of France in Wales: The Middle Welsh Charlemagne Tales

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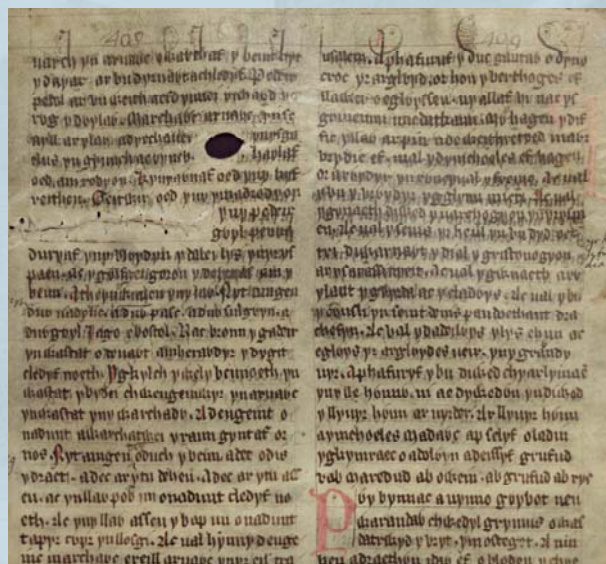
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OG Comparatieve, historische en toegepaste taalkunde (CoHisTAL)

OG Vertaling en Interculturele Transfer (VICT)

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*Lectio*



## Abstract

Texts about Charlemagne and his exploits were very popular during the Middle Ages as we can judge from the numerous translations made into various European languages. In this presentation I will discuss the so-called Welsh 'Charlemagne cycle' or 'compilation', a group of four translations into Middle Welsh of tales pertaining to the Matter of France, namely, the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* (a Welsh rendering of the Latin *Historia Turpinī*), *Cân Rolant* and *Pererindod Siarlymaen*, versions of *La chanson de Roland* and *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, respectively, and *Otuel*, translation of the *Chanson d'Otinel* or *Roman d'Otinel*. The compilation has been dated to c. 1275 but *Otuel* is undoubtedly a later addition of the fourteenth century, certainly of before 1336, when the earliest manuscript was copied.

The tales were for the most part neglected by scholars until fairly recently (with few but important exceptions such as Stephen Williams' 1930 edition of the texts based on one of the manuscripts), and one of the reasons was their status as translations of foreign secular narratives. For instance, most of the texts still lack a critical edition. The field of Medieval Translation and the introduction of Translation Studies and Cultural Transfer to the analysis of medieval texts is greatly contributing, in my opinion and in line with recent research, to the study of Middle Welsh translations in general and of the Charlemagne tales in particular. Therefore, after a brief presentation of the compilation and the problems raised by its textual transmission, I will address the intervernacular translations (i.e. *Cân Rolant*, *Pererindod* and *Otuel*) from that perspective in order to show similar traits of translators as 'mediators' between foreign aesthetics and native literary traditions, as well as differences in their treatment of the sources. I will argue that *Otuel* stands apart from the other two renderings by considering a few examples at the textual level (lexical items and phrases) and their implications within a global reading. In this way, I intend to show the value of Translation Studies and Cultural Transfer for the description and explanation of medieval Welsh translations and how they can, in turn, contribute to the understanding of translation practices in general.

