

Otterbein University

Digital Commons @ Otterbein

Modern Languages & Cultures Faculty
Scholarship

Modern Languages & Cultures

2013

The »Other« Medieval French Alexander: Arthurian Orientalism, Cross-Cultural Contact, And Transcultural Assimilation in Chrétien de Troyes's Cligés

Levilson C. Reis

Otterbein University, lreis@otterbein.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/mlanguages_fac



Part of the [French and Francophone Literature Commons](#), [Medieval Studies Commons](#), and the [Modern Languages Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Reis, Levilson C., "The »Other« Medieval French Alexander: Arthurian Orientalism, Cross-Cultural Contact, And Transcultural Assimilation in Chrétien de Troyes's Cligés" (2013). *Modern Languages & Cultures Faculty Scholarship*. 14.

https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/mlanguages_fac/14

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Modern Languages & Cultures at Digital Commons @ Otterbein. It has been accepted for inclusion in Modern Languages & Cultures Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Otterbein. For more information, please contact digitalcommons07@otterbein.edu.

The »Other« Medieval French Alexander: Arthurian Orientalism, Cross-Cultural Contact, And Transcultural Assimilation in Chrétien de Troyes's *Cligés*

Résumé / Abstract

En tenant compte du climat xénophobe des croisades cet article recense la réception de *Cligés*, roman de Chrétien de Troyes dont la plus grande partie de l'action se passe en Grèce, et explore les stratégies dont l'auteur se serait servi pour en déjouer un mauvais accueil. On examine d'abord les idées que les Francs se faisaient des Grecs par le biais de la réception contemporaine de l'*Énéide* et du *Roman d'Alexandre*. On examine par la suite comment *Cligés* cadre avec ces perspectives. Cet article pose en principe que, par le truchement du père de Cligés, prince grec stratégiquement appelé »Alexandre«, Chrétien nuance l'image du traître byzantin de la largesse et de la prouesse qu'incarnaient Alexandre le Grand, le roi Arthur, et les chevaliers de la Table Ronde. Le récit des aventures arthuriennes d'Alexandre n'a pas uniquement la fonction d'assurer un accueil favorable du roman mais aussi d'offrir le héros éponyme comme exemple de la fusion de la culture occidentale et orientale au temps des croisades.

The »Other« Medieval French Alexander:
 Arthurian Orientalism, Cross-Cultural Contact, And Transcultural
 Assimilation in Chrétien De Troyes's *Cligés*

Introduction

According to the traditional chronology of Chrétien de Troyes's oeuvre, *Cligés* (ca. 1176) was composed between the Second and Third Crusades at a time when the Franks were still dealing with the failure of Second Crusade (1147–1149), blamed on the treachery of Byzantine emperor Manuel I Comnenus (r. 1143–1180) and the death of Raymond of Poitiers, Prince of Antioch (r. 1136–1149).¹ Yet, very little critical attention has been paid to the impact that the Second Crusade may have had on the composition of *Cligés* as a result of the crusaders' negative experiences with the Byzantine Greeks, in particular, and even less so to the strategies that Chrétien de Troyes may have marshaled to ensure a good reception of his second, Byzantine, romance. In the aftermath of the Second Crusade itself, the very portrayal of the contemporary crusader confrontation with the East as an idealized encounter between Byzantine Prince Alexander and King Arthur remains tantamount to pure romance fantasy.²

Had Chrétien not been sensitive to the anti-Greek sentiment in »France« dating from the Second Crusade nor attentive to the increasingly popular literary interest in the Alexander romances, *Cligés* would have been as much of a flop as its fifteenth-century Burgundian *mise en prose*.³ It appears that the adaptation of *Cligés* for the Burgundian court may have fallen short of the impetus Philippe le Bon needed around 1455 to set afoot another crusade to recover Constantinople from the Turks.⁴ More ingeniously keen to his audience than his epigone, Chrétien de Troyes postpones the story originally set in

Greece to dwell on the adventures of the hero's father at Arthur's court. In the pages that follow, it is argued that Chrétien capitalizes on this first beginning to offer an introductory postcard to the Greek romance. After establishing Arthur's court as the center of power and culture, Chrétien re-stages the beginning of the Greek romance in the familiar world of Arthur, introduces the Greek hero's father, names him »Alexander«, and imbues him with the legendary largesse and military prowess of both Alexander the Great and Arthur. Not without parodic effects, he does all this in order to disarm his audience's Greek xenophobia and ensure a more favorable reception of the main story to come.

1 *Frankish xenophobia of Greeks in the central Middle Ages*

Well before the story of Alexander the Great became part and parcel of the medieval cultural imaginary in the late twelfth century, the Franks had been wary of Greeks. Originally tied to Virgil's legendary line »Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes« (*Aeneid*, Bk. 2, 49), the proverbial distrust of Greeks turned out to be an undeniable reality in the wake of the Second Crusade. In the first-hand accounts of the Franks' first encounter with the Greeks during the First Crusade, Guillaume de Pouille (in the *Gesta Guiscardii*) and Raoul de Caen (in the *Gesta Tancredi*), for example, stereotyped the Byzantine Greeks as treacherous.⁵ Although this would later contribute to »une sorte de racisme antiméditerranéen«,⁶ neither Guillaume de Pouille's view nor that of Raoul de Caen was initially widespread.

Not until after the Second Crusade did the Franks' xenophobia of Greeks become a matter of public knowledge. As Odo of Deuil corroborates in his account of Louis VII's failed crusade, »The proverb ›I fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts‹ has always been well-known, even among certain laymen«.⁷ Odo of Deuil also notes that the fear of

Greek treachery had turned into a cultural stereotype: »[T]he Greeks, as [one] had learned either by reading or by experience, were deceitful«. ⁸ In fact, from the Normans' siege of Antioch (1097–1098) to the fourth crusaders' occupation of Constantinople (1204–1261) the Franks had become increasingly anti-Greek. ⁹ From the mid-twelfth century to as late as the sixteenth century, Greek identity was the object of exonymic, literary, and cultural xenophobia.

The Latin etymon (*Graecus*), which served as the basis for both the Old French exonym *Grezois* and the Byzantine Greek endonym *Γραικός* (*Graikos*), which the Byzantine Greeks adopted from the Romans, came into Old French laden with pejorative connotations. ¹⁰ In his discussion of the vernacular French adoptions of the Latin exonym *Graecus*, Walther von Wartburg notes that the adjective *Grifaingne*, referring particularly to Chrétien de Troyes's »la jant grifaingne« in *Cligés* (4208), was associated with the pejorative exonym *Grifon* and »[G]riffonnaille ›assemblage de Grecs, aver [sic] sens de mépris«.¹¹ Frédéric Godefroy corroborates the pejorative usage of *Griffon*/*Grifon* among Old French speakers by adding that it was a name »donné aux Grecs byzantins et par extension aux peuples d'Orient en général«. ¹² The modern standard term *Grec*, which was already in usage in the twelfth century and remains to date more denotative of national identity than connotative of a negative cultural characterization, did not supplant vernacular forms such as *Grezois*, *Gregois*, and the popular *Grieu* until the sixteenth century.

Conversely, as the vernacular transmissions of the Alexander romances flourished at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and around the time of the secondary reception of *Cligés* in the thirteenth century, the figure of Alexander the Great as the exemplar of kingship and chivalry had become popular. ¹³ The legendary Alexander the Great, despite his Greek identity, and Constantinople, despite the negative experiences

that tainted her exotic image in the eyes of the crusaders, had for long fascinated westerners. As if he were attuned to these shifting sociocultural attitudes and mindful of his audience’s anti-Greek sentiment at the time he was writing *Cligés*, Chrétien engages both the age-old myth of the treacherous Byzantine, materialized in the wake of the Crusades, and the later medieval stereotype of the brave noble knight, which the medieval figure of Alexander the Great, Arthur, and the Knights of the Round Table came to personify, to forge a new breed of oriental hero. Chrétien’s Alexander turns out to be as munificent and as brave as the legendary Alexander the Great, yet equally as cunning as the stereotypical Byzantine Greek, but in the service of Arthurian ideals.

2 Shorthand and periphrastic Greek exonyms in *Cligés*

At first glance, the poetic and narrative economy of romance appears to explain the deployment of specific ethnonymic terminology in *Cligés*. On the one hand, the narrator refers to the romance hero and his companions by name (1275–1289) or by means of periphrastic formulations such as »Alexandres [...] et (tuit) si compaignon« (1106–1111, 1197–1201, and 1467–1469), or »li doze« (1374). In the heat of battle, on the other hand, as the narrator needs to refer to more than one group, the shorthand exonym becomes unavoidable. In terms of versification alone, the choice between shorthand and periphrastic ethnic designations appears to be determined by the other collocations in the verse and their number of syllables. Consider, for example, a passage where the narrator must make a reference in one octosyllabic verse to three different (ethnic) groups on the battlefield who believed that Cligés was dead: »D’andeus parz cuident qu’il soit morz/Et Seisne et Greu et Alemant« (3556–3557).

A closer examination of the context of these shorthand and periphrastic exonyms reveals, however, that their narrative deployment is geographically demarcated. They are

restricted to episodes that take place in the West. In other words, the narrator never employs Greek exonyms when Alexander, Cligés, and other (Greek) characters are in Greece but refers to them by name or title. Conversely, when outside of Greece, Alexander, Cligés, and their companions are generally designated by the vernacular French exonyms *Gré*, *Grezois*, *Grejois*, or *Grieu*. As it will be shown in the following discussion of specific episodes, references to Alexander and Cligés are often accompanied by ethnic characterizations, which means that father and son live up to the ethnic and cultural stereotypes associated with the Old French Greek exonyms. Yet, focusing on Alexander's loyal service to Arthur and on Cligés's performance in the Oxford tournament, as it will be examined later, Chrétien recasts the stereotypical image of the Greek onto the more familiar role of the Arthurian knight. This narrative reframing follows the double-barreled *modus operandi* of orientalist discourse which, while portraying the Orient and the oriental as they are stereotypically represented, conspires to convert or to transform them into more westernized versions.¹⁴ Such is the case in *Cligés* as it will be discussed in the next sections.

2.1 Chrétien de Troyes's Arthurian orientalism

From the very beginning of the story, Chrétien establishes King Arthur's court as the universal center of courtliness and chivalry, whose customs and standards foreign knight aspirants, like Prince Alexander, emulate and seek to assimilate. Despite the fact that Arthur's kingdom and Alexander's empire are sovereign types of regency, the latter faces the unparalleled problem of succession when Prince Alexander abdicates his imperial primogeniture in order to serve Arthur. As Donald Maddox has formulated it, »In *Cligés*, it is the universal renown of Arthur and his court that prompts Alexander and his

Byzantine companions at arms to journey to England to receive knighthood at Arthur’s hand ›or not at all‹.¹⁵ To be accurate, Maddox’s quotation paraphrases the words Alexander himself addressed to Arthur, expressing his wish to receive knighthood from the king’s own hands and from none *other*: »De vostre main, non de l’*autrui*« (353). If one compares this statement to the earlier one Alexander had addressed to his father, »Tant que *li* rois Artus me çaingne/L’espee, se feire le daingne;/Que d’*autrui* ne vuel armes prandre« (119–121), it becomes clear that Chrétien establishes King Arthur as the image of the selfsame regent (*li* rois Artus) and, Emperor Alexander, as the embodiment of the Other (*l’autrui*). In *Cligés* Arthur stands not only as the world-renowned king but also as the most generous, in contradistinction to Alexander the Great, himself, who stood for the medieval paragon of largesse.¹⁶ As it had already been established in *Érec et Énide*,

Alixandres, qui tant conquist,
 Qui soz lui tot le monde mist
 Et tant fu larges et tant riches,
 Vers cestui [Arthur] fu povres et chiches.
 Cesar, l'anperere de Rome,
 Et tuit li roi que l'an vos nome
 An diz et an chançons de geste,
 Ne dona tant a une feste
 Come li rois Artus dona
 Le jor que Erec corona. (6673–6682)

Emperor Alexander's long-winded disquisition about largesse in *Cligés* (192–217) right before his son sets out for Britain sounds parodic in the light of this earlier devaluation of Alexander the Great's generosity. While Chrétien acknowledges prodigious oriental personages as they appear in narrative and epic poems (»[a]n diz et an chançons de geste« [6679]), he places Arthur in a position of superiority vis-à-vis them. From the beginning, narrative discourse in *Cligés* acquires an ostensibly orientalist color.

2.2 *Setting foot on the bosnes Artu*

The first segment of the story (45–306), set in Greece, contains no exonyms until the very point when Alexander and his companions literally set foot on Arthurian soil, as the narrator phrases, »[f]urent a cort venu li Gré/ Au pié desçandant del degré« (305–306). When King Arthur asks Alexander and his companions where they are from at the very moment they arrive, the latter identifies himself simply as from Greece:

»Don estes vos?« — »De Grece somes.«

»De Grece?« — »Voire.« — »Qui'st tes peres ?«

»Par ma foi, sire, l'anperere.«

»Et comant as non, biaux amis?«

»Alixandre me fu nons mis.

La ou ge reçui sel et cresseme

Et crestianté et batesme.« (366–372)

Although Alexander’s patristic self-designation follows the frame of Arthur’s questions, he cuts across the king’s assumptions, emphasizing his patronymic lineage and Christianity.

2.3 Be aware of Greeks bearing gifts: Alexander at Arthur’s court

Soon after arriving in England and meeting King Arthur, Alexander dispenses the many gifts he had brought from Constantinople, following his father’s advice that he should practice largesse, the queen of all virtues. The narrator’s description of Alexander’s largesse in *Cligés* brings much attention to the (country of) origin of the ostentatious gifts, reenacting the ambivalence of orientalist discourse. Even for a layman, not conversant with Virgil’s *Aeneid* yet familiar with Laocoön’s proverbial warning to the Trojans against accepting gifts from Greeks, as Odo de Deuil attests,¹⁷ this episode should have aroused the proverbial distrust of Greeks bearing gifts, yet it has a parodic effect in the way the narrator recounts it:

Tote la corz s’an esmervuille,
 Ou ce que il despant est pris;
 Qu’il done a toz chevaus de pris,
 Que de sa terre ot amenez.
 Tant s’est Alixandres penez
 Et tant fait par son bel servise,
 Que mout l’aimme li rois et prise
 Et li baron et la reïne. (414–421)

Tongue-in-cheek the narrator states that the courtiers wondered where Alexander's gift horses came from.¹⁸ He eludes the possible association of Alexander's »chevaus de pris« with proverbial »Trojan« horses to focus the attention on Arthur's approbation of Alexander's largesse and the great impression he makes on the queen and barons. If Arthur approves what Alexander does, this »Greek« may be trustworthy.

2.4 From »an Grece« to »Angrés«: Relocating Greek treachery paronomastically

Immediately after this episode, King Arthur and his court decide to leave the country to spend the summer in Brittany, appointing Count Angrés of Windsor as Britain's temporary regent. By early fall, news of Count Angrés's rebellious siege of London and the king's call to arms offer the perfect opportunity for Alexander to ask King Arthur to knight him, so that he could participate in the war against Angrés. Although in his first *chevalerie* Alexander single-handedly captures four of Angrés's knights fair and square, he devises a cunning trick, »un vice mout merueilleus« (1834; emphasis added) to defeat Angrés.¹⁹ He dons the vanquished enemy's armor to penetrate the rebel baron's stronghold. Despite the vicious strategy, which recalls the device of the Trojan horse, Alexander's defense of Arthur's kingdom against Count Angrés's treason corresponds to the contemporary medieval image that audiences had of Alexander the Great's military prowess.²⁰ By drawing attention to Alexander's loyalty to King Arthur, this episode delinks the association of treachery with Greeks to relocate it paronomastically with »Angrés«.

In the second part of the romance, which takes place mostly in Greece, there appear no exonymic references to Greeks, except in the section relating Alis and Fénice's wedding in Germany (2702–4214) and their return trip to Greece (3388–4214). In MS S, seventeen instances of *Greu* (9) and *Grejois* (8) pepper the narrator's description of

Cligés's and the Greek army's battles against the Saxons. Alexander's cunning prowess, discussed in the previous section, serves as the model for Cligés's own attempts to save his uncle's matrimonial (and political) alliance with the German empire. While returning from Germany after his uncle's arranged marriage to the handsome German princess Fénice, who had been previously promised to the Duke of Saxony, Cligés engages in two battles against the Saxons. First, in a single combat, he defeats the Duke of Saxony's nephew, who attempted to waylay the homebound Greek army. Then he tackled the duke himself, who had unsuccessfully tried to abduct Fénice while the troops were on the battlefield. Like his father, Cligés wins his battles not without some recourse to trickery and deception. After killing one of the duke's mercenaries, who had come for his head, Cligés dons the enemy's armor to gain an advantage over the Saxons. In a subsequent episode, he straddles the duke's horse to pose as the Saxon duke himself in order to recover the kidnapped Fénice. Notwithstanding, Cligés's victorious battles correspond to the medieval belief that only a Greek knight as astute as his namesake Alexander the Great could protect twelfth-century Western Europe from the incursion of the German Holy Roman Empire.²¹ Although Cligés fulfills this role in the romance in defense of his uncle's Byzantine Empire, twelfth-century »French« audiences would have believed that, as Gauvain's nephew, he probably would also have stood up for Arthur's kingdom.

3 *From Grezois to Φράγκοι: Reversing the dominant cross-cultural gaze*

After these battles against the duke of Saxony and his nephew, Cligés leaves for England, keeping the promise he had made to his dying father to travel to Arthur's court to measure his knightly prowess against the Bretons and the French (*François*).²² Despite the fact that this reference to the *François* counts as one of only two instances of the word in

Cligés (excepting MSS A and P), Alexander's use of it as an exonym becomes qualitatively significant in the context of cross-cultural contact. Although it has been well attested that *François* has etymologically evolved from the *Franc*-stem (> *francensis* > *francesis* > *franceisis* > *franceis* > *francois*),²³ there is an alternate perspective of the French identity based on the cross-cultural interaction between the Franks and the Byzantine Greeks during the Crusades.

3.1 *Between Φράγκοι and François: Etymological and sociocultural coincidences*

The medieval Greek exonym *Φράγκοι*, which the Greeks used to refer to the French during Byzantine times and during the Crusades, adds another dimension to this examination of cross-cultural contact, for it entertains a number of particular relationships with the French vernacular self-appellation. Etymologically it is well attested that *Φράγκος* also stems from the primordial French ethnonym. Evolving originally from *Francus*, *Φράγκος* emerges from the addition of *-ς* to the form *Franco* which the Greeks may have borrowed from their interaction with Italian language and culture.²⁴ During the crusades, the Byzantine Greeks used the exonym *Φράγκοι* as a name for the inhabitants of Western Europe, without ethnic distinction.²⁵ It remains none the less true that just as much as the Byzantine Greeks used *Φράγκοι* to denominate crusaders, western authors writing in Latin and in vernacular French also used *Francus* and *Frangois*, respectively, to refer to fellow westerners.²⁶ In *Cligés*, quoting Alexander and taking the Greek point of view, Chrétien de Troyes also uses *Francois* (without the cedilla) to refer to westerners.

Because of these etymological, sociopolitical, and cultural coincidences, some medieval historians have argued that the crusading Franks may have adopted the Greek exonym *Φράγκοι* as an autonym.²⁷ Because the Greek exonym is pronounced [frángi],

such a hypothesis presumes that the crusaders transliterated *Φραγκοι* and Gallicized it as *Francois*.²⁸ Although the etymological, sociocultural, and literary-historical relationships between *Φραγκοι* and *Francois* are ascertainable and although there exist some references of attempts at transliterations of *Φραγκοι*, they are not enough to corroborate the hypothesis that the Franks may have adopted the exonym the Greeks used for them during the crusades as an autonym. As Marcus Bull has put in particular reference to this issue, »it is unlikely that the crusaders heard, and understood, outsiders referring to them sufficiently often to prompt a substantial revision of their self-identification«. ²⁹ In *Cligés*, while it is certain that Alexander uses *Francois* as an exonym, especially in the light of the use of *Φραγκοι* by Byzantine Greeks to denominate westerners, the exonym acquires a sense which, while not exclusively French, remains contextually specific to Arthur’s subjects or the Knights of the Round Table in particular.

3.2 »Vestuz a guise de François« (4990): Franco-Byzantine transcultural assimilation

The second reference to *Francois* appears in the context of Cligés’s visit to Arthur’s court (excepting MSS B and P) in fulfillment of his father’s last wishes that he assays his knightly prowess against the *Breton* and the *François*. Cligés arrives in England right when Arthur is holding a tournament at Oxford. Following his father’s instructions, Cligés does not reveal his identity, changing the colors of his armor every day of the tournament until he had defeated all the best Knights of the Round Table. Having beaten Sagremors, Lancelot, and Perceval, he takes on Gauvain on the fourth and last day of the tournament. Unhorsed after the first joust, both Cligés and Gauvain end up in a dueling standstill at which point King Arthur intervenes to put an end to the tournament, eager to know the identity of the knight. Before coming to court to meet Arthur, Cligés goes back to his lodgings to change clothes.

Parenthetically, Cligés's sartorial preparation to meet the king recalls that of his father, Alexander. The day after arriving in Winchester, where the king was staying, Alexander and his companions smarten themselves up (»s'atornent«, as it is worded in *Cligès* [298]) before appearing at court. Alexander (and his companions) could in fact pass for members of Arthur's inner circle, for »ne cuident pas que il ne soient/Tuit de contes et de roi fil« (322–323). As the narrator comments, Alexander's and his companions' tunics, made »[d]'un drap et d'une taille [...]/D'un sanblant et d'une color« (328–329), follow English courtly fashion in material and design, as Geoffrey of Monmouth had previously described: »So noble was Britain then that it surpassed other kingdoms in its stores of wealth, the ostentation of its dress, and the sophistication of its inhabitants. All its doughty knights wore clothes and armor of a single color«.³⁰

Referring to Cligés, the narrator also employs the verb *atorner* to describe the knight's preparation to meet King Arthur: »Plus tost qu'il puet a cort vient,/Meis bien fu atornez einçois,/Vestuz a guise de François« (4988–4990). Instead of oriental garments or the princely outfits which Alexander and his companions had carefully chosen to wear the day they met Arthur in Southampton, Cligés dons »French-style« garments or, at the very least, »western-style« ones. Conversely, well before Cligés, Érec first appears in his eponymous romance dressed in oriental garments:

Uns chevaliers, Erec ot non.

De la table reonde estoit,

[...]

Sor un destrier estoit montez,

Afublez d'un mantel hermin;

Galopant vint tot le chemin,

S'ot cote d'un diaspre noble,
 Qui fu fez an Costantinoble. (82–98)

Whereas, in *Érec*, the eponymous hero is a western knight dressed in oriental garments, in *Cligés*, he is an oriental knight »[v]estuz a guise de *François*« (4990). Taking the cycle of *translatio studii et imperii* and the fantasy of the cross-cultural contact between the Greek and the French in Chrétien de Troyes's Arthurian fictional universe, it would make sense that a »French« Cligés should follow a »Greek« Érec. In fact, after the First Crusade, as Foucher de Chartres notes in his account, this transcultural assimilation was no longer just fantasy: »Considérez et réfléchissez en vous-même de quelle manière en notre temps Dieu a transformé l'Occident en Orient; nous qui avons été des Occidentaux, nous sommes devenus des Orientaux«.³¹ It was then the new order of things.

Conclusions

In the cross-cultural context of the crusades, the Other is not the Greek, the *Griffon*, exclusively. The Other is also the French especially if one takes Alexander's reference to *François* as an exonym, and most importantly, if one keeps in mind the medieval Greek exonym *Φράγκοι* which the Byzantines employed to designate westerners in general. Notwithstanding, the Other is a traitor. While Virgil's proverbial stereotype was still used during the central Middle Ages to single out the Greek, despite the positive image that the figure of the Greek had taken on with the popularity of the *Roman d'Alexandre*, the traitor in *Cligés* is not the proverbial Greek bearing gifts but the insider at court who violates the feudal code that structures Arthurian polity.

Although Alexander's and Cligés's performances seem to reverse the cultural stereotype of the Greek Other, the authorial, narratorial, characterological, cultural, and

ethnonymic perspectives remain tendentially orientalist. By recasting the stereotype of Greek treachery in three major episodes in *Cligés* in terms of an Arthurian socio-political ideology, Chrétien manages only to reaffirm the political hegemony of the feudal West. Similarly, the two references to the *François* (Alexander's exonymic reference to the Knights of the Round Table and, second, the narrator's portrayal of Cligés dressed as a *François*) turn out to be both insignificant if they were to be considered as Chrétien's attempt to countervail the prevalent cultural xenophobia of Greeks in both the fictional universe and the reception context of *Cligés*. On the one hand, it comes with little surprise that the Francophile, »francophone« Alexander would use the term *François* in such favourable circumstances. From the very beginning Alexander overvalorizes the Arthurian West and its socio-political customs. On the other, the narrator's portrayal of Cligés as the best knight at the Tournament of Oxford in the guise of a *François* reasserts the prowess or bravery of the westerner, if not that of the French. These references to the *François* only reinforce the military, political, and cultural hegemony of Chrétien's Arthurian West.

Whether Byzantine Greek (*Grejois*), Greco-Arthurian (»[d]el lignage le roi Artu« [10]), or French/western (»[v]estuz a guise de François« [4990]), Alexander and Cligés represent, all accounts taken, the important role that the knight, of whatever extraction, held in feudal society based on chivalry, valor, and loyalty, values which the narrator associates with Alexander at the very beginning of his account: »Tant fu preuz et de fier corage« (14). In recognition of such chivalrous valor and loyalty, King Arthur rewards Alexander with an alliance that includes the best kingdom in Wales and, upon the latter's request, the hand in marriage of his niece Soredamors, which paves the way to the oriental tale. Thus, in the reception context of *Cligés*, Alexander's story turns out to be not only the most diegetically expedient means to introduce the Greek romance but

also Chrétien’s own »vice mout merveilleus« to garner the favorable reception of his second romance.

¹ As indicated by Keu’s passing remark in *Yvain* about slaying »Noradin« to avenge Raymond of Poitiers’s death at the battle of Inab (29 June 1149) at the hands of Nur ad-Din (Nureddin Mahmud Zengi [r. 1146–1174]), the memory of the failure of the Second Crusade remained alive late into the twelfth century (Foerster, Wendelin/Alfons Hilka [Eds]: *Christian von Troyes. Sämtliche erhaltene Werke*. Bd. 1: *Cliges* [1884]/Bd. 2: *Der Löwenritter (Yvain)* [1887]/Bd. 3: *Erec und Enide* [1890]/Bd. 4: *Der Karrenritter (Lancelot) und Das Wilhelmsleben (Guillaume d’Angleterre)* [1899]/Bd. 5: *Der Percevalroman (Li Contes del Graal)* [1932], Halle: Niemeyer 1884–1932, 5 vols, vol. 2 [1887], 595. All subsequent references to Chrétien de Troyes’s romances (by title and line number) come from this edition and appear in brackets in the text. References to the manuscripts of *Cligés* in this article also follow Foerster’s sigla: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale (BN), MSS fonds français (f. fr.) 1450 (B), 794 (A), 1420 (R), 12560 (C), 375 (P), 1374 (S), and the fragments from Tours, Bibliothèque municipale, 942 (M), and those from Annonay (N).

² While this fantastic representation may appear odd to the modern reader, the tendency to subsume contemporary sociopolitical realities within the magical world of Arthur was part and parcel of medieval romance. On this feature of the genre see, for example, Anthime Fourrier: *Le Courant réaliste dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen Âge*, Paris: Nizet 1960, 160–174; Freeman, Michelle A.: »Structural Transpositions and Intertextuality: Chrétien’s *Cligés*«, in: *Medievalia et Humanistica* 11 (1982), 149–163 (p. 157); Shirt, David J.: »*Cligés*: Realism in Romance«, in: *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 13 (1977), 368–380 (pp. 373–374); Geraldine Heng: *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy*, New York: Columbia University Press 2003,

45; McCracken, Peggy: »Romance Captivities in the Context of Crusade: The *Prose Lancelot*«, in: *PMLA* 124 (2009), 576–582 (p. 577).

³ *Le Liure de Alixandre empereur de Constantinoble et de Cligés son filz* (Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Rep. II 108). For an overview of the reception of the fifteenth-century *Cligés*, see Willard, Charity C.: »The Misfortunes of *Cligés* at the Court of Burgundy«, in: *Arturus Rex: Acta Conventus Lovaniensis 1987*, 2 vols, Leuven: Leuven University Press 1991, vol. 2, 397–403; Timelli, Maria C. (Ed.): »Introduction«, in: *Le livre de Alixandre empereur de Constantinoble et de Cligés son filz*, Geneva: Droz 2004, 7–64 (Textes Littéraires Français 567); Lacy, Norris J.: »Adaptation as Reception: The Burgundian *Cligés*«, in: *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 24 (1998), 198–207; and Grimbert, Joan T.: »The Fifteenth-Century Prose *Cligés*: Better than Cutting to the Chase«, in: *Arthuriana* 8, no. 2 (2008), 62–72.

⁴ On Philippe le Bon's interest in the political figure of Alexander the Great see Blondeau, Chrystèle: »A very Burgundian Hero: The Figure of Alexander the Great under the Rule of Philippe the Good«, in: Elizabeth Morrison/Thomas Kren (Eds): *Flemish Manuscript Painting in Context: Recent Research*, Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum 2007, 27–42. On the political significance of Constantinople to the Burgundian Court see Deveraux, Rima: »Reconstructing Byzantine Constantinople: Intercession and Illumination at the Court of Philippe le Bon«, in: *French Studies* 54 (2005), 297–310; Timelli, Maria Colombo: »Cherchez la ville: Constantinople à la cour de Philippe le Bon (1419–1467)«, in: Liana Nissim/Silvia Riva (Eds): *Sauver Byzance de la barbarie du monde*, Milan: Cisalpino 2004, 113–30; and Runciman, Steven: »Byzantium and the Crusades«, in: Vladimir Goss/Christine V. Bornstein (Eds): *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications 1986, 15–22.

⁵ For such references in the *Gesta Guiscardi* (c.1099), see Mathieu, Marguerite (Ed./Trans.): *Guillaume de Pouille: La Geste de Robert Guiscard*, Palermo: Lavagnini 1961, 110–111, 176–177, and 230–231; in the *Gesta Tancredi* (ca.1111), see Guizot, M. (Ed./Trans.): *Faits et gestes du prince Tancrede pendant l'expédition de Jérusalem par Raoul de Caen*, Paris: Brière 1825, 24, 25, 360, 368, 375, 378, and 412.

⁶ Payen, Jean-Charles: »L'Image du Grec dans la chronique normande: sur un passage de Raoul de Caen«, in: *Images et signes de l'Orient dans l'Occident médiéval*, Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA 1982, 267–280 (p. 269).

⁷ Berry, Virginia G. (Ed./Trans.): *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem: The Journey of Louis VII to the East*, New York: Norton 1948, 27. The proverb »I fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts« derives from Laocoön's warning to the Trojans in the *Aeneid*: »[...] equo ne credite, Teucri./Quicquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentis« (Bk. 2, 48–49).

⁸ Berry, *De profectione*, 13.

⁹ Sharon Kinoshita: *Medieval Boundaries: Rethinking Difference in Old French Literature*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2006, 153; Horowitz, Jeannine: »Quand les Champenois parlaient le grec: la Morée franque au XIII^e siècle, un bouillon de culture«, in: Michael Goodich et al. (Eds): *Cross Cultural Convergences in the Crusader Period: Essays Presented to Aryeh Grabois on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, New York: Peter Lang 1995, 111–150 (p. 137); and Steven Runciman: *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press ²1989, vol. 2, 247, note 2 (*The Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Frankish East 1100–1187*).

¹⁰ For a comprehensive treatment of the etymology of the Greek exonym(s) in Old French, see von Wartburg, Walther (Ed.): *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch (FEW)*, 25 vols, Bonn: Klopp/Berlin: Teubner /Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn; most recently,

Zbinden 1928–2002, vol. 4 [1952], 211–112 (s.v. *graecus*). For the etymology of Γραικός, see Bampiniōtēs, Geōrgios (Ed.): *Lexiko tēs neas Ellēnikēs glōssas* [*Dictionary of the new Greek language*], Athens: Kentro Lexikologias [Lexicology Centre] 2008, 436 (s.v. Γραικός); Kriaras, Emmanouēl (Ed.): *Lexiko tēs Mesaiōnikēs Ellēnikēs dēmōdous grammateias: 1100–1669* [*Dictionary of Medieval Greek Vernacular Literature: 1109–1669*], 16 vols, Thessaloniki: Kentro Ellēnikēs Glōssas [Centre for the Greek Language] 1968–[2008], vol. 4 [1975], 365 (s.v. Γραικός); and Triantafyllides, Manolis (Ed.): *Dictionary of Standard Modern Greek*, Thessaloniki: Institouto Neoellēnikōn Spoudōn tou Aristoteleiou Panepistēmiou Thessalonikēs [Institute for Modern Greek Studies, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki] 1998, < http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/modern_greek/tools/lexica/triantafyllides/search.html?q=%CE%93%CF%81%CE%B1%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%82&dq= >, s.v. Γραικός [accessed 11 November 2012].

¹¹ *FEW*, vol. 4, 212 (s.v. *graecus*).

¹² Godefroy, Frédéric (Ed.): *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française [DALF]*, 10 vols, Nendeln: Kraus Reprint 1969, vol. 4, 357 [s.v. *griffon*]; and Tobler, Adolf/Erhard Lommatzsch (Eds): *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch (AW)*, 11 vols, Berlin: Weidmann [vols 1–2]/Wiesbaden: Steiner [vols 3–11] 1925–1993, vol. 4 [1960], 660 [s.v. *grifain*] and 664 [s.v. *grifon*].

¹³ Gaullier-Bougassas, Catherine: »Alexandre le Grand et la conquête de l'Ouest dans les *Romans d'Alexandre* du XII^e siècle, leurs mises en prose au XV^e siècle et le *Perceforest*«, in: *Romania* 118 (2000), 83–104 (pp. 99–100); Harf-Lancner, Laurence: »Introduction«, in: Edward C. Armstrong et al. (Eds): *Alexandre de Paris: Le Roman d'Alexandre*, Paris: Livre

de Poche 1994, 5–58 (pp. 44–45) (Lettres Gothiques); and Kibler, William W.: »A paine a on bon arbre de malvaïse raïs«: Counsel for Kings in the *Roman d’Alexandre*«, in: Donald Maddox/Sara Sturm-Maddox (Eds): *The Medieval French Alexander*, Albany: State University of New York Press 2002, 111–126 (p. 111).

¹⁴ Edward W. Said: *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books ²1994, 49–72, *passim*.

¹⁵ *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: Once and Future Fictions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991, 8.

¹⁶ Paul Meyer: *Alexandre le Grand dans la littérature française du Moyen Âge*, 2 vols, Paris: Vieweg 1886, vol. 1, xxi; Harf-Lancner, Laurence: »Introduction«, in: *Chrétien de Troyes: Cligés*, Paris: Champion 2006, 9–52 (pp. 15–16); Harf-Lancner, Laurence: »Introduction«, in: *Alexandre de Paris: Le Roman d’Alexandre*, 39; and Whitney, Marian P.: »Queen of Medieval Virtues: Largesse«, in: Christabel F. Fiske (Ed.): *Vassar Mediaeval Studies*, New Haven: Yale University Press 1923, 191–215 (p. 191).

¹⁷ Berry, *De profectione*, 27.

¹⁸ Tobler and Lommatzsch list this usage of *esmerveiller* in MSS N, S, and R of *Cligés* as an example of an expression of the feeling of curiosity: »neurig empfinden« (*AW*, vol 3 [1954], 1122 [s.v. *esmerveillier*]). Manuscripts A, M, B, C, and T use *se mervoille/merveille*, which also mean »neugierig sein, sich fragen, etw. wissen wollen« (Tobler/Lommatzsch, *AW*, vol. 5 [1963], 1549 [s.v. *merveillier*]).

¹⁹ In the manuscripts of *Cligés*, different variations on the theme of deception express Alexander’s strategy to capture Angrés. In MS A, *vice* means »faute« and »disposition habituelle au mal« (Godefroy, *DALF*, vol. 8, 226, and vol. 10, 854, respectively [s.v. *vice*]). Tobler and Lommatzsch reference this line (1834) as an example of a cunning, crafty attack: »listiger Anschlag« (*AW*, vol. 11 [1993], 406 [s.v. *vice*]). In MSS B and R, the variants *visde* and *voisdie* mean both »habilité« and »ruse« (Godefroy, *DALF*, vol. 8, 264

[s.v. *visde*], and 287 [s.v. *voisdie*]; Tobler/Lommatzsch, *AW*, vol. 11 [1993], 553 and 672 respectively). In MS Tours, B. M., 942, the variant *guile* describes Alexander's strategy as unabashedly deceitful and fraudulent (Godefroy, *DALF*, vol. 4, 383 [s.v. *guile*]; Tobler/Lommatzsch, *AW*, vol. 4 [1960], 778 [s.v. *guile*]).

²⁰ Gaullier-Bougassas, Catherine : »L'Altérité de l'Alexandre du *Roman d'Alexandre*, et en contrepoint, l'intégration à l'univers arthurien de l'Alexandre de *Cligès*«, in: *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales* 4 (1997), para. 11 of 15, <<http://crm.revues.org/index948.html>> [accessed 11 December 2012].

²¹ Gaullier-Bougassas, »Alexandre le Grand«, 90.

²² In MSS A, the scribe Guiot makes reference to the *Einglois* instead of the *François*: »Ne te vas esprover einçois/Et as Bretons et as *Einglois*« (Micha, Alexandre [Ed.]: *Cligès*, in: Mario Roques (Ser. Ed.): *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes édités d'après la copie de Guiot* (*Bibl. nat., fr. 794*), 5 vols, Paris: Champion 1952–1975, vol. 2 [1957], 2569–2570 (CFMA, 84). Although Gregory and Luttrell based their edition of *Cligès* on MS A, they adopted the lesson *François* instead, because, as they believe, »la rime *einçois*/ *François* des mss. SMBT est plus ornée que celles présentées par les mss. AP, où il s'agit d'Anglais plutôt que de Français« (Gregory, Stewart/Claude Luttrell [Eds]: *Chrétien de Troyes: Cligès*, Cambridge: Brewer 1993, 275, notes 2589–2590 [Arthurian Studies, XVIII]).

²³ *François* evolved etymologically from *Francensis* by the addition of *–ensis*, the Latin suffix that designates nationality, to the *Franc*-stem. In the transition from Latin to vernacular French, after the reduction of *ns* to *s*, *Francensis* took the form *Franceis* as *e* became *ei* by the end of the tenth century (Auguste Brachet: *An Etymological Dictionary of the French language*, trans. by G. W. Kitchin, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1882, lvi–lvii and 172 [s.v. *français*]; Bloch, Oscar/Walther von Wartburg [Eds]: *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1994, 275 [s.v. *français*]; and

Gamillscheg, Ernst [Ed.]: *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 2 vols, Heidelberg: Winter 1997, vol. 1, 448 [s.v. *français*]). By the eleventh century, *ei* turned into *oi*, and *Franceis* became *Francois* [*sic*] (*Etymological Dictionary*, lviii). On the history of the addition of the cedilla that appears in the transcription of *Francois* in the editions of *Cligés* as an unwieldy anachronism, see *Etymological Dictionary*, lviii–lix; Charles Beaulieux: *Histoire de l'orthographe française*, 2 parts, Paris: Champion 1927, part 2, 118 (*Les Accents et les autres signes auxiliaires*); and Charles Joret: *Du c dans les langues romanes*, Paris: Franck 1874, 113; and Peter Rickard: *A History of the French Language*, New York: Routledge 1989, 93.

²⁴ Bampiniōtēs, *Lexiko tēs neas Ellēnikēs glōssas*, 1901 (s.v. Φράγκος).

²⁵ Triantafyllides, *Dictionary of Modern Standard Greek* < http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/modern_greek/tools/lexica/triantafyllides/search.html?lq=%CE%A6%CF%81%CE%AC%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%82&dq=>, s.v.

Φράγκος [accessed 11 November 2012]

²⁶ Bernd Schneidmüller: *Nomen patriae. Die Entstehung Frankreichs in der politisch-geographischen Terminologie (10.–13. Jahrhundert)*, Sigmarigen: Thorbecke 1987, 106, note 3; and Bull, Marcus: »Overlapping and Competing Identities in the Frankish First Crusade«, in: *Le Concile de Clermont de 1095 et l'appel à la Croisade: Actes du Colloque universitaire international de Clermont-Ferrand (23–25 juin 1995)*, Rome: Ecole française de Rome 1997, 195–211.

²⁷ Robert Bartlett: *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950–1350*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993, 101–05; Kinoshita, Sharon: »Pagans Are Wrong and Christians Are Right: Alterity, Gender, and Nation in the Chanson de Roland«, in: *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31 (2001), 79–111 (p. 87); and Horowitz, »Quand les Champenois parlaient le grec«, 111.

²⁸ For examples of transliterations of $\Phi\rho\alpha\gamma\kappa\omicron\iota$, see Bartlett, *Making of Europe*, 103; and Horowitz, »Quand les Champenois parlaient le grec«, 111. In the primary sources see Hill, John Hugh/Laurita L. Hill (Eds): *Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere/Petrus Tudebode*, Paris: Paul Geuthner 1977), 86, 108, and 137; Hill, R. M. T. (Ed./Trans.): *Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, London: Nelson 1962, 46.

²⁹ Bull, »Overlapping and Competing Identities«, 203.

³⁰ Reeve, Michael David (Ed.): *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. by Neil Wright, Woodbridge: Boydell 2007, 212 (Arthurian Studies, 69).

³¹ Guizot, M. (Ed.): *Histoire des croisades par Foucher de Chartres*, Paris: Brière 1825, 241 (*Collection des mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France*).