

***Huon of Bordeaux* and the Transcendence of Borders**

The immensely popular medieval French romance *Huon of Bordeaux* continued to enjoy a thriving afterlife in the early modern period through John Bourchier's English translation of the work in the fifteenth century. Like most medieval romances, one of the central thematic concerns of *Huon of Bordeaux* is the hero's almost incessant questing in order to not only absolve himself of the blemish of having (inadvertently) murdered the emperor Charlemagne's son but also to escape from the perilous siege laid upon his kingdom by the emperor of Germany. Through the successful completion of the quests he undertakes, Huon must live up to his illustrious lineage — he is the son of the late duke Seguin, one of France's most renowned nobles — as well as prove his mettle, both as a skilled warrior and as a true Christian. Huon's quests, however, take him not only well outside the borders of France but also to many fantastic realms far beyond the limits of the known world. During the course of his peregrinations, Huon visits the Rock and Castle of Adamant, is taken to the shores of the Perilous Gulf which acts as a portal to Hell, passes through Rome, Jerusalem, and Babylon, and is eventually transported to Fairyland along with his wife Esclaramonde. Much of the romance is concerned with travel — particularly sea-travel — and border crossing, journeys which not only traverse geographical boundaries but also straddle epistemological and hermeneutic borders. Huon's travels betray both contemporary anxieties as well as prevalent curiosities about intercontinental travel by placing the adventures encountered during these journeys at the heart of the romance's avowed purpose of triumphant self-affirmation of the hero's identity. In my paper I wish to explore some of these journeys in order to examine the significance of transcending borders not only within the matrix of the text's narrative framework but also its generic and cultural applicability.