This innovative study of the lives of ordinary people – peasants, fishermen, textile workers – in nineteenth-century France demonstrates how folklore collections can be used to shed new light on the socially marginalized. David Hopkin explores the ways in which people used traditional genres such as stories, songs and riddles to highlight problems in their daily lives and give vent to their desires without undermining the two key institutions of their social world – the family and the community. The book addresses recognized problems in social history, such as the division of power within the peasant family, the maintenance of communal bonds in competitive environments, and marriage strategies in unequal societies, showing how social and cultural history can be reconnected through the study of individual voices recorded by folklorists. Above all, it reveals how oral culture provided mechanisms for the poor to assert some control over their own destinies.

David Hopkin is Fellow and Tutor in History at Hertford College, University of Oxford. His research concentrates on the oral and popular cultures of nineteenth-century Europe. He is an editor of the journal Cultural and Social History.
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Voices of the People in Nineteenth-Century France

David Hopkin
To my mother
With what reverence stories are listened to and told on board! And how strongly a sailor is inclined towards the adventurous element in them! Himself as it were half-adventurer, a man seeking strange new worlds, what fantastic things does he not see at the first startled sight? Have I not myself experienced the same on approaching an unfamiliar coast, a new country, or even a particular period in history?

Johann Gottfried Herder, 'Journal of a Voyage to Nantes', 1769
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1 Map of the main locations mentioned in the text.  
2 Paul Sébillot’s map of the legendary geography of the canton of Matignon.  
3 Map of locations where dāyemans have been collected.
Acknowledgements

This book has been a long time in preparation, and over that period I have incurred a frighteningly large number of debts, some institutional, some personal. I am grateful to both the University of Glasgow and the University of Oxford for the time they have allowed me to do the research and the writing. I am indebted to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the Carnegie Trust for Universities in Scotland, the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, who between them funded several visits to archives in France and two periods of sabbatical leave.

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The biggest debt I owe will always be to Liz and our children, Ed, Alex and Anna, who have been obliged to spend every summer touring France from the beaches of Brittany to the Velay highlands – but after all, perhaps that was not such a great sacrifice. Finally, this book is dedicated to my mother, storyteller.
Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC Montigny</td>
<td>Archives communales de Montigny-aux-Amognes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD Côtes-d’Armor</td>
<td>Archives départementales des Côtes-d’Armor, Saint-Brieuc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD Haute-Loire</td>
<td>Archives départementales de la Haute-Loire, Le Puy-en-Velay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD Ille-et-Vilaine</td>
<td>Archives départementales d’Ille-et-Vilaine, Rennes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD Loire</td>
<td>Archives départementales de la Loire, Saint-Étienne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD Meuse</td>
<td>Archives départementales de la Meuse, Bar-le-Duc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD Moselle</td>
<td>Archives départementales de la Moselle, Metz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD Nièvre</td>
<td>Archives départementales de la Nièvre, Nevers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEROSE</td>
<td>Base d’étude et de recherche sur l’organisation des savoirs ethnographiques en Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM Nancy</td>
<td>Bibliothèque municipale de Nancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM Nevers</td>
<td>Bibliothèque municipale de Nevers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM Puy-en-Velay</td>
<td>Bibliothèque municipale du Puy-en-Velay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRBC</td>
<td>Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMD</td>
<td>Musée des manufactures de dentelles, Retournac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNATP</td>
<td>Musée des arts et traditions populaires, Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHM</td>
<td>Service Historique de la Marine, Brest</td>
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Map 1. Map of the main locations mentioned in the text.