Les prolongements romanesques de la matière épique

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The theme of the prolongation of the epic and of the precise nature, definition and form of the vernacular epic in its prolongation over time is one to which the Société Rencesvals has returned repeatedly in its conference debates. In this plenary lecture, I concentrate on the prolongation of the vernacular epic in Italy. After addressing more general issues, such as the extent of creative originality as opposed to mere retelling in the so-called late epics, the varying chronological limits that can be set for the period of prolongation of the genre, and indeed what is meant by, what is included within, the Carolingian epic genre, I proceed to examine in detail how the Carolingian epic developed and changed in Italy from the late thirteenth century to the sixteenth century. The discussion focuses on changes in the characterisation and exploits of Roland and the mysterious case of the disappearance of William of Orange.

Let me, a little surprisingly perhaps, given the title of this lecture, begin with a work produced here in the United States at the beginning of this millenium.

In 2000 I received, as a gift from an American author, Ron Miller, who had sought my advice, a work entitled *Bradamant. The Iron Tempest* (Miller). This is in English, in prose, and described and marketed, by author and by publisher, as a novel, though its illustrations owe much to the Italian *fotoromanzi* tradition. But the content is entirely, and closely, derived from the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto; indeed it is in effect nothing other than a retelling of large sections of the *Furioso* from the perspective of the female warrior, Bradamante, rather than from that of one of the male knights of Charlemagne. Is this the most recent contribution to my subject, the *prolongement du genre épique*? In what senses could it be so defined? Thus straightaway, with this publication, we plunge into a whole series of questions and conundrums provoked by the phrase of my title: What is meant by *prolongement*? from when and until when? where? what is meant by *genre* and *matière épique*? How purist should one be in defining a medieval literary genre? What balance should be struck between the dictates of literary form and content, and the changing perspectives of author, audience and reader, influenced as they are by the political, cultural, social and linguistic environments? Many of these questions have been very recently surveyed in a rich and stimulating introduction to the volume of essays *L'épique médiéval et le mélange des genres*, and I shall return to some of them shortly.[1]

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[1] See *L'épique médiéval et le mélange des genres*, textes réunis par Caroline Cazanave. The essays of this rich and stimulating volume span a millenium of *production épique* and so raise many issues of

The theme of the prolongation of the epic and of the precise nature, definition and form of the vernacular epic in its prolongation over time is, moreover, one to which our Society has returned repeatedly in its debates, with varying shifts of emphasis and perspective. At the Pamplona meeting Ignacio Elizalde's communication centred on the prolongation of the genre in Spain, and while concentrating on Spanish prose romances of the sixteenth century onwards drew attention to the spiral pattern traced by the transmission of Carolingian epic from its hub in northern France outwards in ever-expanding circles through Germany, Italy and so to Spain (Elizalde, "Roncesvalles," pp. 117-36).[2] Danielle Buschinger at Strasbourg raised important questions about the reasons for the prolongation and popularity of particular texts, highlighting trajectories for Germany that bear interesting similarities to those found in Italy (Buschinger, "Pouvoir central").[3] And repeatedly, and perhaps most significantly therefore, our deliberations have returned to the so-called late epics, to re-readings (and indeed first readings) and reinterpretations, both of whole texts and of individual aspects of these, and of course to the question of prose versus poetry.[4] And yet I believe not only that there remains much to be explored in the prolongation of the vernacular epics of Charlemagne, but also that this is the theme which should be most exploited by scholars if the millenial tradition of such narratives is to reach and attract an audience in the future. In making my contribution to the Society's on-going discussion of the *prolongement du genre épique* I propose to concentrate on Italy, which has, surprisingly, figured much less in the general discussions just referred to. In addressing the theme of *prolongement* in Italy, I shall be carrying

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relevance to a discussion of the prolongation of epic, not only matters of definition, but also of purity versus hybridity of both content and form, relationship to other types of writing, perspectives of audiences and critics.

[2] It is interesting to note that this image of spiral movement has been taken up in the course of this congress by Jacqueline de Ruiter.

[3] The papers published in this present volume also contribute richly to the theme of the prolongations of *matière épique* from a wide variety of perspectives.

[4] See for example in the acts of the tenth international conference, the contributions of Kibler, Fontana and Suard (Kibler, "Relectures de l'épopée"; Fontana, "Le problème des remaniements"; Suard, "Chanson de geste traditionnelle"). Suard has been a leading protagonist in repeatedly urging serious consideration of the prose versions of Carolingian narrative as part of the tradition of vernacular epic, and has been successful in establishing these texts as the proper subject of scholars of French vernacular epic, and worthy of scholarly attention for their content, relationship to the verse texts, and popular appeal, as well as their essential value in the *prolongement du genre*. See for example Suard ("L'épopée française tardive"; *Chanson de geste*). The value of some of the prose romances was firmly asserted as long ago as the Oxford international conference by M. Tyssens where she comments a propos of the *Roman de Guillaume*: "son oeuvre mérite d'être étudiée pour elle-même, avec sympathie en fonction de son esthétique et des buts qu'elle se propose" (pp. 45-46), and on this see also Suard (*Guillaume d'Orange*). As far as the Italian prose versions of Carolingian narrative, at least, are concerned, the type of study urged by Tyssens is still a long way from being fully realised, in spite of the work of M. Boni and G. Allaire; see Boni ("L'*Aspramonte* trecentesco; "Le storie d'Aspramonte"); Allaire ("The 'Spain' Cycle"; *Andrea da Barberino*).

forward, with some differing emphases, topics I have addressed elsewhere, but first let me return to the initial questions and explore them further.[5]

The use of the term *prolongement* or prolongation suggests on the one hand continuation and continuity, but on the other a trajectory from something already well established. Thus the term conveys also the notion of later developments, of something peripheral rather than central, of change, even of autumnal decline and decay.[6]

A further issue provoked by the idea of prolongation is the question of creative originality as opposed to retelling, recycling material already well known. And this is of course a particularly problematic issue in terms of a medieval literary genre: even the most original narrator seeks, on the one hand, to hide behind an authority or source, which may or may not have existed, but which in any case may be unknown to the modern scholar. Equally, since for the medieval author originality was not the virtue that it is considered today, to what extent should one be critical of a narrator whose explicit aim is only to retell a known story, in other words to prolong the genre through repetition rather than advance it through independent creative writing? As François Suard has stressed,[7] many of the late epic narratives are original works which use the general ingredients of Carolingian epic but mixed as new recipes, playing variations on a theme or themes, manipulating the relative quantities of war, adventure, romance and enchantments, mixing in elements related to the contemporary world, expanding the geographic and historical time frames. Far from conveying a sense of autumnal decay, from the Italian perspective such works anticipate, rather, the recipes for Carolingian narrative so successfully established in Italy in the world of Renaissance humanist culture. The novel *Bradamant* just mentioned is by no means comparable stylistically to the literary masterpiece that is the *Orlando Furioso*, but neither does it aim to rival Ariosto. Nevertheless it does retell the story in a form and with emphases with which the average modern reader can almost certainly more easily engage. It does, in effect, prolong the *Furioso* narrative, it may attract the contemporary reader habituated to narratives in prose and structured as novels, and as such should be welcomed.

Such notions in turn provoke questions such as: what is the terminus *post quem*? When does a genre, in this case vernacular epic, cease to be central, mainstream, innovative, and become instead a mere prolongation. How does one distinguish, as it were, between the body and the tail? When does the period of prolongation begin, and when, more importantly, does it end? Self-evidently, the date one gives for the terminus *post quem* will vary significantly according to country and language. If one is focussing on French vernacular epic then it is probably the case that one would see the *prolongement* period as beginning already in the thirteenth century, but for Italy the thirteenth century would constitute the prehistory of the genre rather than its prolongation after a high point of cultural prominence. Similarly from an Italian perspective

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[5] See in particular Everson (*The Italian Romance Epic,* "The Epic Tradition").

[6] This sense of decay certainly seems suggested by the phrases *genre automne* and *sous-genre* used by both Roussel and Kibler to describe both late fourteenth-century chansons as well as fifteenth-century prose versions. See Kibler ("Relectures de l'épopée"); Roussel (*Automne de la chanson de geste).*

[7] Suard ("Le passage à la prose," "La tradition épique"); see also Roussel ("Le mélange des genres").

one can most definitely make a case for the period of prolongation of the epic as beginning only post-Ariosto, in the 1530s, and running easily to the end of the sixteenth century.[8] The Liège conference included contributions on Victor Hugo and Louis Aragon. The Besançon volume, *L'épique médiéval*, includes an essay (and it is no surprise) on Italo Calvino's novel *Il cavaliere inesistente*, part of his trilogy *I nostri antenati*, and Calvino's debt to Ariosto and to chivalric epic is of course well rehearsed (Plet, "Six personnages"). But Italian *relectures* or *riscritture* of vernacular epic material did not end with the death of Calvino in 1985. Umberto Eco's penultimate novel, *Baudolino*, owes an enormous debt, and I believe one as yet largely unresearched, to the narratives of the *Cycle des Croisades* and the associated chronicles, as well as making play with the whole issue of textual and authorial (un)reliability. And this is to focus only on written, narrative prolongations of epic. Elizalde's discussion in 1978 already pointed to the prolongation of Carolingian epic into Spanish theatre from the Golden Age onwards ("Roncesvalles"). In focusing on Italy, one can point similarly to stage adaptations of vernacular epics, from the sixteenth century on, a tradition which transmuted both into the famous Sicilian puppet theatres (active until well into the twentieth century) and into the myriad operas based, for example, on the *Orlando Furioso*.[9] It is indeed an addition which continues to flourish as I speak, with a dramatised version of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* by two American Italianists (Cavallo and Ross) which, following the spiral pattern referred to above, they have exported back from the United States to southern Italy (Lecce), and back again to New York, and this is to say nothing of film and television adaptations of epic material.[10]

Yet another question: What do we mean by *genre épique* once we move into the period of prolongation, however defined?[11] How indeed do we define the genre? Ideas and definitions of epic were certainly not the same in the Middle Ages as now, and were almost certainly more fluid. For virtually all the consumers of the tradition of chansons de geste Virgil's *Aeneid* would have been acceptably defined as epic, possibly indeed as the epic par excellence. We define Dante's *Divine Comedy* as epic, but Dante himself calls it his *Commedia*

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[8] Compare and contrast the interpretations of *épopée tardive* of Heintze (late twelfth century), Kibler (late thirteenth century), Kibler and Rossi (fifteenth century), Elizalde (up to the eighteenth century), Melli and Thomov (nineteenth century) and Calin (twentieth): see Heintze, "Les chansons de gestes tardive"; Kibler, "Les derniers avatars," "Relectures de l'épopée"; Rossi, "Rapport introductive"; Elizalde, "Roncesvalles"; Melli, "Epopée espagnole"; Thomov, "L'épopée médiévale"; Calin, "L'épopée médiévale."

[9] At the last count operas based on Ariosto's poem numbered 101, beginning in the seventeenth century and running into the twentieth; see *The Oxford Dictionary of Opera.*

[10] Performances of the dramatised *Orlando Innamorato* took place in Lecce in May and in New York in July of 2006; films based on the deeds of Charlemagne, Roland, Saladin and El Cid formed part of the programme of the Seventeenth Congress of the Société Rencesvals, and were discussed in Norris Lacy's plenary talk. See also the version of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* produced for Italian television in 1975 by Luca Ronconi.

[11] As Caroline Cazanave stresses in the introduction to *L'épique médiéval* (pp. 3-25), defining the epic genre is by no means easy. Tracing the multifarious ways in which at different periods and in different systems epic has been defined, she concludes: "la poétique de l'écriture épique se révèle changeante" (p. 7), and she coins a useful phrase: *l'épique fluctuant* (p. 9).

because it is written in the vernacular, deals with everyday people and events, and has a happy ending. The definition of epic, for Dante and his contemporaries, is by style and language, not content. Boccaccio in the mid-fourteenth century claims at the beginning of the *Teseida* that he is writing epic, indeed that he is the first to do so in the Italian vernacular, placing his emphasis on content (classical) as opposed to language (Italian not Latin). Yet the *Teseida* in content has at least as much in common with chivalric romance as with epic, whether classical or Carolingian vernacular. If we follow Dante's lead and make style, form and language the basis of generic definition, then why do we define Carolingian chansons de geste as epic, but Chrétien de Troyes' narratives as romance? Both after all are written in narrative verse metres and in the vernacular. And even if one adopts the generally accepted position, which prevails for French vernacular literature, with generic distinctions based on metrical form, then what happens when one is considering other vernaculars, such as Italian, which uses *ottava rima* for narrative verse on all manner of different subjects, and certainly for both Carolingian and Arthurian *cantari*? If on the other hand one takes Boccaccio's position, and considers content rather than form to be the defining factor, then surely we must incorporate within the *genre épique* the myriad prose compilations of the tales of Charlemagne found in virtually every European tradition.[12]

In mentioning Boccaccio's *Teseida*, I have already raised yet another contentious issue. Our Society has firm views on what belongs within its remit and what does not. Charlemagne is Charlemagne, and Arthur is Arthur and like East and West never the twain shall meet, and yet of course they do, perhaps even before the mainstream mutates into prolongation and certainly thereafter.[13] And it is all a matter of perspective or position. Just as it depends where you are in the world where the East begins, so it depends on where you are in terms of language and country where you draw the boundaries between the two principal vernacular narrative traditions of medieval Europe, if indeed you draw the boundaries at all. It is indeed commonplace in Italian criticism to speak of chivalric or romance epic, highlighting the fusion of the two, the hybrid nature of many examples of the genres in the Italian tradition. And what of the *contatti e interferenze* (to use a term favoured in Italian criticism) from genres other than narrative verse—from chronicle literature, from the novella tradition, and from classical history and epic? Is it really possible, or wise, in the period of *prolongement* to adopt a rigidly purist outlook?

It is my intention, in the rest of this discussion, to focus on Italy and Italian culture and consider the questions raised in the light of that tradition. This is not only because that is where my own expertise lies, but also because, pace *Bradamant*, it is possible to assert that the prolongation of the epic genre has lasted longest in Italy and hence was most influential in prolonging the narratives of Charlemagne into the modern world. But my decision is contentious. Can one talk of Carolingian epic in Italian literature at all? Is there a body even, let alone a tail? From a purist point of view, it is sometimes asserted that in effect there is no

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[12] See again in *L'épique médiéval*, the introduction by Cazanave (pp. 3-25), the essay by F. Suard, and items cited at notes 4 and 7.
[13] Roussel ("Le mélange des genres"); Suard ("Impure").

Carolingian epic in Italian literature, by which is meant that there were no new and original works in the Italian language as opposed to recycled, reworked French originals. For those who hold to this point of view, Carolingian epic must not show interference from other genres, which is of course the case from the beginning in the Italian tradition, nor should it depart from the established formal structures and language of the chansons de geste. In this context, while surveying the history of criticism in Italy on Carolingian material in summer 2005 in Liège, Alberto Varvaro, moreover, reflected on yet another important element of the theme of prolongation, namely how it is read, studied and discussed in the modern world, in the postprolongation milieu. Varvaro's discussion highlighted the sharp distinction which prevails in the Italian academic world between the disciplines of Romance philology (which deals with chansons de geste and medieval French as the dominant linguistic culture) and Italian literature (which deals with literature in Italian, with Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio and their successors). Though possibly a useful distinction in terms of academic organisation and degree programmes, it is without validity as far as readers and writers of late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy were concerned. Dante and the author of the *Entrée d'Espagne*, the first genuinely original Carolingian epic produced in Italy, were exact contemporaries and addressed very much the same audiences. Even as late as the second half of the fifteenth century, readers in Ferrara were borrowing romances and epics written in French as well as those in Italian, and made no distinction between them.[14]

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I pass now to the central part of my discussion, to an examination of how the prolongation of epic manifested itself in Italy in this period. I propose to do so by examining the changes in the character, prominence and deeds of two of the most famous protagonists of Carolingian epic: Roland and William.[15]

> Dopo la dolorosa rotta quando
> Carlo Magno perdè la santa gesta,
> Non sonò sì terribilmente Orlando. (*Inf*. 31.16-18)

> Così per Carlo Magno e per Orlando
> Due ne seguì lo mio attento sguardo,
> Com'occhio segue suo falcon volando.
> Poscia trasse Guiglielmo e Renoardo,
> E 'l duca Gottifredi la mia vista

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[14] See Everson (*The Italian Romance Epic,* pp. 127-60; "Read what I say").

[15] In focusing on particular characters, and especially Roland, my discussion nicely reflects some of the concerns discussed in the present volume in the articles of Suard, Burland and Latowsky. For a study raising a number of additional points not discussed here see Dorigatti, "Reinventing Roland."

Per quella croce, e Ruberto Guiscardo. (*Par.* 18.43-48)

When Dante wrote these lines, between 1308 and 1318, he was in exile, residing in the various courts of northeastern Italy, in precisely that *area padana* in which the tales of Roland, Charlemagne and the peers of France continued to enjoy such popularity, to be recited frequently in the piazza and to travellers, and to be copied for the limited, but significant reading public of the courts and the universities.[16]

Before considering further the tales circulating in the *area padana* in the early fourteenth century, it is worth pausing to consider the portrait that Dante gives of the principal hero, mentioned twice in his *Commedia*, Roland, to whom Dante already gives the fully Italian form of his name, Orlando. Roland is recalled in the passage from *Inferno* for his final, desperate and belated sounding of the olifant in the last stages of the battle of Rencesvals, but it is his appearance in *Paradiso* that is more informative. Dante is here in the Heaven of Mars, where he meets the souls of those who were warriors for the Christian faith. These souls form the shape or symbol of the cross, white as the Milky Way against the red background of the heaven of Mars, and the solemnity of that vision, the intimate association of these souls with the cross of Christ is stressed by Dante:

Qui vince la memoria mia lo 'ingegno
Ché 'n quella croce lampeggiava Cristo
Sì ch'io non so trovare essemplo degno;
Ma chi prende sua croce e segue Cristo,

Ancor mi scuserà di quel ch'io lasso,
Vedendo in quell'albòr balenar Cristo.
Di corno in corno e tra la cima e 'l basso
Si movìen lumi, scintillando forte
Nel congiugnersi insieme e nel trapasso. (*Par.* 14.103-11)

This then for Dante is not just the *place* where Roland is to be found, but also a description of his habit and behaviour, his method of *being* in heaven; it is the portrait of a soul who, in Cacciaguida's words just before he introduces Roland: "fuor di gran voce, / sì ch'ogni musa ne sarebbe opima" (*Par.* 18.32-33), that is worthy of being the subject of epic. Roland is celebrated, in these lines of *Paradiso* canto 14, as a Christian martyr and crusader.[17] Moreover this characterisation is enhanced by the association with the speaker, Cacciaguida, Dante's great-great-grandfather, who did indeed die on the crusade led by Conrad III

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[16] These tales were principally retailed in those hybrid forms of French commonly referred to as Franco-Italian or Franco-Venetian, though one must not exclude the circulation, along with these, of wholly French versions, whether in langue d'oc or langue d'oïl.

[17] *Prendere la croce* is the normal Italian form for enlisting as a Crusader.

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Hohenstaufen in 1147. The characterisation of Roland through association with Cacciaguida can, however, be taken further. Dante's meeting with Cacciaguida is the most extended of all those in the *Commedia*, occupying three and a half cantos (*Par.* 14-18), and much of the dialogue between them is concerned with the changes which have occurred in Florence between the early twelfth and early fourteenth centuries, or in literary terms, between the composition of the oldest surviving manuscript of the *Chanson de Roland*, and Dante's *Commedia*. Cacciaguida's chronicle of this period highlights the sobriety, simplicity and harmony of Florence in his day, in contrast with the decay, corruption and decadence of the city in Dante's time, and above all the harmony between Church and State, Pope and Emperor then, in contrast with the factional strife and lawlessness of Dante's Italy. In Cacciaguida's day there was no difficulty in striving to serve both Pope and Emperor, to be indeed a Christian warrior; Pope and Emperor worked in concord for the most noble goals, as Cacciaguida's account of his own life underlines:

> Poi seguitai lo 'imperador Currado;
> Ed el mi cinse della sua milizia,
> Tanto per bene ovrar li venni in grado.
> Dietro li andai incontro alla nequizia
> Di quella legge il cui popolo usurpa,
> Per colpa de' pastori, vostra giustizia.
> Quivi fu' io da quella gente turpa
> Disviluppato dal mondo fallace,
> Lo cui amor molt'anime deturpa;
> E venni dal martiro a questa pace. (*Par.* 15.139-48)

The last four lines could equally well serve as an epitaph for Roland, and indeed the simple, sober, godly life of Cacciaguida and his Florence is contemporary with the dissemination of the *Chanson de Roland* with its similarly straightforward, uncomplicated distinction: "Paien unt tort e chrestïens unt dreit" (*CdR*, l.1015).

Dante is of course giving a deliberately archaic picture, and one whose main purpose is to highlight the injustices from which he has suffered, the political factionalism, commercial greed, and population explosion which characterise his portrait of his city. Moreover, Dante naturally modifies his sources to suit the purpose to which he needs or wants to put them. If we turn to Carolingian epic texts contemporary with Dante a more varied and interesting picture begins to emerge, so that one can legitimately compare the portrait of Roland elaborated by writers in Italy in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to a musical "theme and variations," a balancing act between certain constants, more or less stressed, and a range of variations, configured according to the particular time, place, and author. In this image, the theme is represented by the constant characterisation of Roland as the chief of the knights of Charlemagne and essential for Christian victory, whose life and exploits reach their culmination in his death in the pass at Rencesvals.

Dante's portrait, as has been said, is manipulated, in literary terms, to return Roland to his first appearance, actions and characteristics. In spite of the date of the *Commedia*, Dante's Roland cannot be considered as part of a late or later tradition of chanson de geste; rather it constitutes a kind of *prolongement en arrière*. The *Commedia* is thus not so much the source or root from which the Italian tradition descends, but the constant reminder of where that whole tradition derives from, and what the ultimate chapter in the story of Roland must be.[18] The first texts of the Italian tradition are, however, contemporary with the *Commedia*, though whether these constitute roots, trunk or branches (*prolongement*) to use another metaphor, depends partly on one's perspective. The texts of the Gonzaga manuscripts now in the Marciana[19] belong to the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century. These are the types of versions of Carolingian epic with which Dante and his contemporaries would have been familiar.[20] Alongside these, and in contrast to them, the *Entrée d'Espagne*, the first wholly Italian contribution to the Carolingian *genre épique*, was composed in the same period, and indeed in much the same location and cultural environment as the *Commedia*, and was aimed at a similarly educated and presumably bilingual audience (*L'entrée d'Espagne*).

The *Entrée d'Espagne* is a key text for many aspects of the prolongation of the Carolingian epic, but it is particularly key where the character of Roland is concerned. Roland here is already established as Charlemagne's nephew and principal general; this is a Roland whose exploits at Aspremont are already the stuff of legend, but who is still seven years away from his death at Rencesvals, which the poet nonetheless predicts, through the mouth of the hermit. The Roland of the *Entrée* has now become a far more complex figure, as Claudia Boscolo has recently again emphasised; a figure who owes much to Carolingian tradition, but equally much to Breton romance, classical myth and contemporary political, social and cultural influences (Boscolo, "L'entrée d'Espagne"). There is still a strong religious dimension to Roland's character, as is particularly clear in the last section of the poem when Roland first liberates the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and converts the Saracen population and rulers before returning to his duty in Spain—namely the liberation of Compostella and his eventual "martyrdom" at Rencesvals. As the editor of the poem comments:

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[18] Dante's references to the chansons de geste and their principal heros also act as a perennial prompt to later Italian writers, given the persistent presence of the *Divine Comedy* in subsequent Italian literature; chansons de geste thus constitute a kind of perennial subtext of Italian literature.

[19] Namely the *Geste Francor* (V13)—*Bovo d'Antona*, *Berta da li gran pie*, *Karleto*, *Milon e Berta*, *Rolandin*, *Ogier* and *Macaire*; *Aspremont* (V6), *Aliscans* (V8), *Gui de Nanteuil* (V10) and *Fouque de Candie* (V19-20), as well as versions of the *Chanson de Roland* itself (V4; V7).

[20] In fact it is highly likely that the range of epic narratives in circulation was much more extensive. A. Viscardi, in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, voce: *canzoni di gesta*, discusses, but without reaching any definitive conclusions, whether Dante's knowledge of chansons de geste came from versions in prose rather than in verse, and stresses again the relevance of the Gonzaga manuscripts in this context; see *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, vol. 1, pp. 809-12; while Roussel, in his recent article on "L'automne des chansons de geste," points to a large number of French narratives being composed in the period and indeed throughout the century, which would have reached Italy along the traditional merchant and pilgrim routes between France and Venice.

> […] il est plus grand et plus saint que jamais il n'a pu l'être dans l'épopée française proprement dite: il a été le champion du Christ en Orient comme en Occident, et il laisse derrière lui le succès et la gloire pour rentrer dans le rang et marcher à la défaite et au martyre (Thomas, ed., *L'entrée d'Espagne*, vol. 1, p. lv).

which takes us back to Dante's heaven of Mars. But there is more to Roland in the *Entrée*. He is still, as in the *Chanson de Roland*, characterised by *desmesure*, but this is mitigated by his sense of chivalric obligations towards virtually everyone, Christians and pagans alike, and in the course of the poem the character trait of *desmesure* is modified, and even transferred on to Charlemagne. Roland's *desmesure* manifests itself most clearly in the dispute with Charlemagne which precipitates Roland's departure for the East, a démarche which in turn becomes another facet of *desmesure*, since Roland abandons his feudal duties to nurse his hurt pride, his bruised ego rather than his (actually) bruised face. Through this extended adventure in the East, the poet of the *Entrée* introduces not only a new Roland, but a vitally important variation on the theme of Spain narratives, which would again prolong itself, with many variations until well into the sixteenth century. Roland becomes the loner, the mercenary captain in the service of Eastern, Saracen rulers, the chivalric hero defending ladies from unwanted suitors and aggressors, the figure of admiration and adulation for young pagan knights who worship the name of Roland, the last of the apostles preaching Christ and converting the heathen. This is by and large a noble portrait, but the poet of the *Entrée* does not neglect altogether the element of humour, of light relief from such a lofty character and his behaviour. His Roland may be almost unbelievably perfect, but he has a flaw. In the full, belated, portrait the poet gives, there is a sting in the tail. After first laying stress on Roland's powerful physique—his height, broad shoulders, sinewy arms, and then his appearance—white teeth, long straight nose and smiling eyes,[21] in short after creating an attractive portrait, if an emphatically athletic one, the passage ends:

> Le front anples et aut et de zufet tot nu
> Char il estoit ja chauf, ce avons entendu […]. (ll. 13659-60)

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[21]   Char le duc estoit loing et quarés et menbru;
        La janbe ot loinge et grose, li pié chanbrés agu,
        Le chuises plates, et dougiés por le bu,
        Anples le spaules, et por le piz gros fu;
        Les main longues et blance, le bras gros e nervu,
        Le cols et loing et gros bien demi pié et plu;
        La bouce avoit polie, les dens blans et menu;
        Le nés ot loing a droit, et non mie bosu;
        Vair oil ot et riant, s'il n'estoit ireschu. (*EdE*, ll. 13650-58)

A suitably masculine, virile hero then, but emphatically bald.[22] Limentani is uncertain whether this baldness is intended humorously ("Il comico"), yet if one stands back from the description and attempts to imagine Roland, the picture is perhaps not all that attractive to womankind—all those huge limbs—everything about Roland is *loing*, *gros*, and *menbru*, *nervu*, muscley—it all seems just too much, a visual realisation of physical *desmesure*—and an unprepossessing feature, elements which will become a constant refrain in Roland's character in the Italian tradition. Nor is the poet averse to humour at Roland's expense. As a foil for the serious and holy Roland, he elaborates, even reinvents *ex novo*, the character of Estout (Astolfo), described, again in Thomas's phrase, as *railleur perpétuel*, forever debunking the seriousness of Roland. In Astolfo, too, the poet of the *Entrée* initiates one of the most successful variations of the prolongation and development of epic in Italy.[23]

Roland's appearances in the slightly earlier *Geste Francor* are restricted to his birth and adolescence, his life prior to his involvement even at Aspremont (*La* Geste Francor, ed. Rosellini; *La* Geste Francor, ed. Zarker Morgan). In part therefore it is not surprising that the texts of *Berta e Milon*, and of the *Rolandin*, present a rather different Roland from that of Dante's Christian martyr or the principally serious and religious figure of the *Entrée*. But the differences are not wholly or even mainly explicable in terms of the hero's young age. The *Rolandin* gives the reader no sense that this is a saint and martyr in the making. Rather, right from his first appearance at Charlemagne's court, he is presented as a type of unschooled rustic, more gauche and unmannered even than Chrétien's Perceval. He lacks any courtly graces, has no table manners, and when permitted to eat at Charlemagne's table, he preempts the age of the take-away and the doggy bag, and shovels the leftovers into a cloth to take home for his mother! There is surely contamination here from the Breton romance tradition, and that is further emphasised in Berta's diffidence towards the court and her attempts to forbid her son to have anything to do with the emperor and his army. In spite of his poor manners, and indeed his greed, Rolandin is nevertheless attractive both physically and in himself; he is described as "legro et çoiant" (Rosellini, ed., *Rol*., l.11010), while others comment: "como est belo." He is also clearly, again in spite of his manners, "filz d'omo d'alto lin / De qualqe çivaler, conte o palatin" (Rosellini, ed., *Rol*., l. 11087-88), but above all he already has superhuman, even exaggerated physical prowess. In particular he is such a fast runner that "No l'atenderoit un levrer ben corant" (Rosellini, ed., *Rol*., l. 10999) and he easily outstrips those whom Charlemagne sends to pursue him on foot, while even when pursued on horseback still reaches home first. For the poet of the *Rolandin*, Roland's *desmesure* is largely a matter of physical accomplishments. The combination of admiration and amusement in respect of the protagonist which the *Rolandin* provokes in the reader/listener embedded itself in the Italian narrative tradition, to be elaborated in the course of the fifteenth century in a variety of ways.

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[22] This description is given in the context of Roland's possible role as suitor/husband of the daughter of the Sultan.

[23] *L'entrée d'Espagne* (vol. 1, p. lx); see again Limentani, "Il comico" (pp. 117-19), and also Santoro, "L'Astolfo ariotesco."

25.1-2

The Roland of the *Geste Francor* portrait clearly remained a vigorous variation on the theme, at least as far as the childhood narratives are concerned—and here we return to the important issue of the place, in a discussion of the prolongation of the Carolingian epic in Italy, of the prose compilations of the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and in particular the contribution of Andrea da Barberino. From a purist perspective, Andrea's *Reali di Francia*, *Nerbonesi*, and *Aspramonte*, must necessarily be excluded from a consideration of how the genre grew, developed and renewed itself in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and yet it is as impossible to explain the variations on the theme wrought by Pulci, Boiardo and Ariosto if one ignores Andrea as it is to explain those same variations if one ignores the context of the classical revival in culture. For Andrea's compilations were known to all of them, poets and public alike, each poet drew on them for aspects of his work, indeed in many respects Andrea's compilations constitute the essential link between the major Carolingian epics of the Renaissance and the Franco-Italian texts from which they descend. However unepic in *form*, Andrea's *content* is fundamentally epic, and he aims precisely to transmit that epic cycle to his contemporaries.[24] Yet the insistence on form as the criterion for inclusion in, or exclusion from, the study of vernacular, Carolingian epic has had the unfortunate effect of severely restricting critical study of Andrea's works.[25]

Critics have tended to stress that Andrea's *Reali*, *Nerbonesi* and *Aspramonte* derive directly from the texts recorded in the Venice manuscripts mentioned above, and indeed there are many close similarities. In one sense therefore, in spite of their date, they should not really be considered as "late" epics. But more than a century separates Andrea from the composition of those manuscripts, and he was, moreover, writing in the very different environment of mercantile and bourgeois Florence, and of early humanism. His texts are influenced by the Franco-Italian versions of these narratives developed after the composition of the *Entrée*, and particularly by the range of narratives developed in Tuscany in the new metre of *ottava rima*—the *cantari di Aspromonte*, *di Rinaldo* and *di Uggieri* and the various versions of the Spagna narrative. His Roland thus continues to add to the variations, in particular by enhancing the Italian dimension and milieu, while still transmitting the core theme of a particular part of the cyclic narrative. Andrea's prose must thus be seen as part of the *prolongement* of the genre, a variation played on a nonstandard instrument but nonetheless playing the same theme tune.

The character of Roland in Andrea presents to the reader in his narrative of that name is still a young and attractive lad o' pairts, both feisty and responsible, begging to support his parents, at the age of only five, but able too to hold his own in fist fights with the gangs of boys in Sutri. These fist fights are the occasion for

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[24] Andrea's version is often the only surviving record of a particular narrative, the only evidence for knowledge of a particular chanson or cycle—as is the case with narratives of William of Orange.

[25] For *I Reali di Francia*, see Andrea da Barberino; there is also a selected number of texts and extracts in *Romanzi dei Reali di Francia*; for *Aspramonte*, see Andrea da Barberino, *L'Aspramonte, romanzo cavalleresco inedito,* a limited edition of 300 copies, and the more recent edition of L. Cavalli; while for the William cycle there is still only Andrea da Barberino, *Le storie Nerbonesi*. For studies on Andrea, see in particular Allaire, *Andrea da Barberino*.

Andrea to reiterate Orlando's incredible physical prowess, and to recall his tendency to exaggerate, to *desmesure*, and of course Orlando always wins.[26]

Andrea elaborates amusingly on Orlando's first visits to Charlemagne's court or camp, turning the taking of food from Charlemagne's plate into a kind of dare, which displays further Orlando's amazing physical prowess (he knocks down grown men), but also his lack of restraint, his continuing *desmesure*. When Orlando comes a third time to Charlemagne's table, and for a third time takes Charlemagne's full plate from under his nose:

> Carlo gli fece uno brutto e spaventoso viso, e fece uno grande roncare di gola, credendo fargli paura. Orlandino lasciò il piattello e prese Carlo per la barba e disse—Che hai? E fu più scura la guatatura che fé Orlando inverso Carlo, che quella che fé Carlo inverso lui (*I Reali,* VI, ch. lxvi, p. 557).[27]

These are additions to the *Geste Francor* account, but the most important element added by Andrea, at least as far as the subsequent tradition is concerned, is to Orlando's looks:

> Egli era alquanto di guardatura guercio e aveva fiera guardatura (*I Reali*, VI, ch. liii, p. 540).

An inescapable fact which Andrea gives first, before continuing:

> Ma egli fu dotato di molta virtù, cortese, caritatevole, fortissimo del suo corpo, onesto, e morì vergine, e fu uomo sanza paura, la quale cosa nessuno altro franzoso non ebbe (*I Reali*, VI, ch. liii, p. 540).

[26] "Perché a ogni giuoco egli faceva più fieramente che niuno degli altri e faceva ognuno maravigliare; e fusse che giuoco si volesse, o pietre, o mazza, o braccia, o pugna, tutti gli altri fanciulli gli fuggivano dinanzi; e alle braccia molti maggiori di sé gittava per terra" (*I Reali*, VI, ch. lviii, p. 547). In this same early period of his life, according to Andrea (*I Reali*, VI, ch. lx), Orlando acquired the colours ever after associated with him, namely the red and white, subsequently quartered on his shield, colours which signify: "due gracie che regnorono in Orlando, cioé pura verginità e carità."

[27] And Andrea's account elaborates further the humorous aspects of Orlando's repeatedly running off with a full plate of food, and the amusement afforded to Charlemagne and the bystanders at Orlando's means of knocking down anyone who gets in his way, and the problems of not spilling the gravy: "Ed ebbe Carlo tanto piacere che rise di voglia quando Orlando tolse la tazza, perché si versò Orlandino alquanto di brodo in sul petto" (*I Reali,* VI, ch. lxiii, p. 554). The tale of Orlando taking food from Charlemagne's table, first narrated in the *Geste Francor*, and then elaborated by Andrea, clearly continued to be popular in the Italian tradition. It surfaces again at the end of the fifteenth century in Cieco da Ferrara's *Il Mambriano*, XXXV, 79-84: "Non è 'l quel che già a Sutri sotto il monte / Visse molti anni nutrito alla grossa / E che tre volte innanzi alla tua fronte / Venne con una veste bianca e rossa / A robarti le tazze e le vivande / Per sovvenire al suo bisogno grande?" See also below, note 34.

25.1-2

Guercio—the most enduring characteristic of Orlando thereafter, his squint. He is cross-eyed and odd to look at. Nowadays, in our politically correct world, neither Andrea nor his successors in the genre could present such a feature as a matter of mockery. But disability until very recently was readily made fun of in Italy, and would certainly have been in the fifteenth century. And *guercio* has many meanings, all of which can be heard as this note sounds in the variations on Orlando: not just cross-eyed, but also short-sighted, even blind in one eye; and figuratively, lacking in discernment, blinded by one's passions, in short from *guercio* to *furioso* is but a short step.

The combination of baldness and good looks has disappeared, but Orlando's squint, his gaucherie especially in respect of women ("morì vergine") and his role as the butt of Astolfo's wit become from the mid- fifteenth century onwards among his most defining characteristics. His physical prowess, tendency to "go off on a frolic of his own" and his adventuring in the East and in the service of pagan rulers also continue to form part of the prolongation of Roland in the Italian tradition. Andrea da Barberino was writing in the early years of the fifteenth century, but his work is deliberately based on the older, fourteenth-century (and earlier) narratives and envisages a prehumanist, bourgeois and especially Florentine public, similar indeed to that of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and of Antonio Pucci's *cantari*. There is thus a gap (or several gaps) that separate Andrea from the great exponents of the Carolingian tradition in the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a gap that is wider than might otherwise seem, and one that is both historical and stylistic, but also, for all except Luigi Pulci, geographical and social. The later poets are all writing, as I have stressed elsewhere, in a context in which the dominant culture is that of humanism and the classical revival, a cultural context with which the Carolingian epic has to come to terms, to which it must adapt to flourish and survive. Moreover, all are also writing for sophisticated patrons and envisage an audience in the palazzo as well as the piazza, of aristocrats as well as merchants, travellers and the urban crowd. Not surprisingly the Roland that emerges from the pages of Pulci, Matteo Maria Boiardo, Ludovico Ariosto and even Francesco Cieco is a more varied and complex figure, yet one who still reveals his origins, sometimes in surprising ways.

The first to develop the character of Roland for the audience of the Renaissance was Luigi Pulci. In *Morgante*, Pulci, like Andrea, is still writing for a Tuscan, specifically Florentine, audience, but one including the sophisticated and intellectually "modern" circle of Lorenzo dei Medici. Pulci sets out, ostensibly, to narrate "properly," "seriously" and in good literary style, the story of Charlemagne and especially the campaigns in Spain and the final battle at Rencesvals. This should mean, if taken as stated, that Pulci should present an Orlando similar to that of Dante, a Roland who looks back to the hero of the *Chanson de Roland*. But Pulci, though explicitly referring to Dante (and often misquoting him too) does little more than nod in this direction, until the final five cantos when he at last turns to the narrative of the battle of Rencesvals and the death of Roland, which is, however, narrated in a somewhat melodramatic and sentimental fashion, with many additional details, which tends to diminish the element of tragedy, if not the general seriousness of the narrative. The greater part of the *Morgante* concentrates rather on a "variation" of Orlando the adventurer in the Middle East, to the extent that what in the *Entrée d'Espagne*, and even in the *Spagna in rima*, is an excursus from the main theme, becomes for Pulci virtually the central theme itself,

since Orlando in the *Morgante* is almost consistently away from Charlemagne and the French army from canto 1 to canto 20. Indeed on his departure in canto 1, Orlando sends a messenger back to Charlemagne to tell him that he intends never to return (*Morg*. II, 50).

In terms of Orlando's character, Pulci's main interest is in his *desmesure*, taken now to ridiculous extremes. Orlando's reaction to Charlemagne's critical comments is outrageous; he immediately takes umbrage and is effectively out of his mind—so much so indeed that in the very next *ottava* he attempts to cut off poor Alda's head, so blinded is he by anger (*Morg*. I, 16-17).[28] From the first, Pulci's Orlando is prone to wild, unreasoning fury, for which there is no mitigating excuse such as jealous love, as there will be in Boiardo's and Ariosto's accounts. But Pulci exploits the psychological dimension of *desmesure* very little, in spite of its comic possibilities. He explores rather, and for the comic potential afforded, Orlando's physical *desmesure*, his immense physical prowess and feats of arms—in particular through his encounters with giants, including of course Morgante himself, but also through encounters like that with the Saracen warrior woman, Meridiana, in which Orlando's use of his superior physique becomes a matter of ridicule if not censure by Pulci.[29] Yet Pulci's characterisation of Orlando is an uneasy and uncertain one; Pulci seems more interested in Rinaldo and his companions, Ulivieri and Dudone, as well as in Morgante, than he really is in Orlando. Having begun the poem by setting Orlando up as the loner, he rapidly has Rinaldo and company join him and together form a group of Christian knights roving the Middle East pursued by the hostility of Gano and his network of spies, and repeatedly taking service with Saracen rulers and falling for pagan women. In short Pulci's model for Orlando (even with his squint) and his exploits, like that of his chief source, derives much more from the Rinaldo cycle than from the traditions of Aspramonte and Spain.

Pulci's picture of Orlando is still strongly based in the old Carolingian traditions, even if these are deliberately mixed and mocked. It is his immediate successor in the genre who can be credited with introducing major innovations into the character and exploits of Orlando. By making Orlando *innamorato* Boiardo has traditionally been credited with a major departure from the long standing portrait of Roland/Orlando as cold and indifferent to women. This is in fact only partly true, since Orlando had been prone to passing fancies for women before; his character as a chaste virgin is not entirely accurate south of the Alps.[30] Nevertheless Boiardo's opening lines are striking: what he will tell are not "l'alta fatica e le mirabil prove" done in defence of the Christian faith, but "per amore," not for Charlemagne, but "nel tempo del re Carlo imperatore" (*Orlando Innamorato*, I, i, 1[31]). Right from the start too Boiardo acknowledges both the tradition he is now overturning and also the conflict between Orlando's physical strength, his physical

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[28] "Orlando si sdegnò di Carlo Magno / E poco men che quivi non l'uccise / E dipartissi di Parigi solo / E scoppia e 'mpazza di sdegno e di duolo" (*Morg*. I, 16) and "Alda la bella, come vide quello / Per abbracciarlo le braccia distese / Orlando che smarrito avea il cervello / Com'ella disse: – Ben venga il mio Orlando / Gli volle in su la testa dar col brando" (*Morg*. I, 17).

[29] See *Morg*. III, 5, 8, 16-17; XVI, 74-82.

[30] See for example his infatuation with Chiariella in *Morg*. XII-XV.

[31] The most recent critical edition is Boiardo, *L'innamoramento de Orlando* (hereafter: *O.I.*)

25.1-2

desmesure, and his emotional vulnerability, his psychological *desmesure*, which in the *Furioso* will reduce him to the state of a beast (*O.I.* I, i, 1-3; 29-30). What Boiardo emphasises in his very first presentation of Orlando is his lack of experience (which is traditional) and his sense of shame, but also the fact that he is, if not uninterested, certainly repressed (*O.I.* I, xxv, 37-39). Less concerned with Orlando's appearance, Boiardo translates Orlando's squint, his *guercio* eye, on to the psychological plane, making him unable to see straight in matters of love or even to understand the most obvious deceptions of women, whether Angelica, Origille or one of the enchantresses—Falerina, Dragontina and Morgana.[32] The other aspect of his psychological lack of restraint—his uncontrollable temper—is still very much present, especially in dealing with men, and especially with rivals in love such as Ranaldo.[33] Like Pulci, Boiardo is not really concerned with the campaigns of Charlemagne in France or Spain, and, like Pulci, he turns the variation of adventures in the East into a fully developed theme. Indeed this is taken even further by Boiardo who pushes the geography of these adventures much further eastwards. Thus Boiardo too plays a variation on the theme of Orlando the loner. On his departure from France and Charlemagne, Orlando is certainly alone, and during his long journey eastwards he continues to be a loner, encountering a series of individual adventures which demonstrate again his immense physique—and more—for Boiardo aims to show Orlando in the new light of classical culture. Building on comparisons to Hercules and Alexander—standard and meaningless in the tradition, Boiardo actually makes Orlando act as a new Hercules and a new Alexander, giving him exploits which reflect the labours of Hercules and the journeys of Alexander, as he ventures further east than ever before, to the plains of Tartary and Cathay for the sake of Angelica, encountering monsters and challenges which must be overcome, and entering into magical realms, like those of Alexander's mythical adventures.[34]

Boiardo's variations on the theme of Orlando are taken up most clearly by Ariosto, but before the continuation of the *Innamorato* by Ariosto, and in the same *area padana* other variations on the theme are played by Francesco Cieco in the *Mambriano*.[35] This poem is sometimes characterised as closer to the *cantare* tradition, but it was produced in the sophisticated milieu of the Gonzaga court, and for patrons familiar by long association and interest with the Carolingian epic. In spirit it is both independent and innovative, distinct from both Boiardo and Ariosto in its approach to Orlando, reflecting both tradition and originality of conception. Cieco's Orlando still retains his odd appearance, his squint is still a physical characteristic so prominent that no disguise can hide it, and he is still sexually inexperienced.[36] Indeed Cieco

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[32] For these episodes see book I, cantos vi-xiv for Dragontina; I, xxviii-xxix, II, ii for Origille; II, viii-ix for Morgana; I, xxvii for Angelica.

[33] See the duel in *O.I.* I, xxv-xxvii.

[34] The incorporation of classical sources and motifs is a vitally important dimension of the prolongation of Carolingian epic in the Italian Renaissance, for which see Everson (*The Italian Romance Epic*), esp. ch. 7 and 8 (pp. 223-324). For specific considerations of Boiardo's use of the myth of Hercules, see Gareffi, "La memoria di Boiardo"; Montagnini, "Fra mito e magia."

[35] Cieco, *Mambriano*. I am currently preparing a new critical edition of the poem.

[36] See *Mamb.* XLIV, 59: [Astolfo to Orlando] "Gli disse, abbandonando ogni rispetto: / Questa tua barreria non ha buon terzo; / Trovane un altro che sia più perfetto, / ch'asconder non si può colui ch'è guerzo."

returns to the earlier tradition in making Orlando indifferent, uninterested and cold even towards his wife, Alda, an attitude which is used to considerable humorous effect in exchanges with the lascivious and accident-prone Astolfo.[37] Orlando is still, as he had been spasmodically in Pulci's poem, the major religious figure among the paladins, on several occasions taking on the role of priest and missionary, acting as confessor to Astolfo, converter of pagans, and intercessor with heaven through his prayers (*Mamb*. IX, 50-72; XX, 1-50). This is Orlando the theologian and missionary of the *Entrée d'Espagne*. Yet there is in many aspects of Cieco's portrait, as has already been hinted, a sense of debunking, of bringing the tradition of Orlando down from its lofty heights to a more human level. Cieco does not, unlike Boiardo and Ariosto, make Orlando invulnerable. Indeed even in his last encounter in the *Mambriano* against Gioroante he is at risk of being defeated by the giant Pitargo (*Mamb*. XLIV, 40). Moreover, Cieco reveals Durlindana to have lost its cutting edge and to be fallible at least against monsters and boulders (*Mamb*. IV, 45-46; X, 96-98). In the *Mambriano* Orlando is no longer, as in Pulci, one of a large group, but neither, for most of the poem, is he a complete loner. Most frequently he is accompanied by Astolfo, and Cieco, more than the other poets, exploits fully the comic potential of the relationship to undermine the exaggerated morality and prowess of Orlando. A further variation played on the theme is that, while Orlando once again abandons Charlemagne in his hour of need (or just before it), he does not set off out of pique but altruism, and does not go East and take service with Saracen rulers, but rather travels to north Africa and subsequently to Spain on adventures more reminiscent of a romance of chivalry than of Carolingian epic. Yet the adventures in Spain are not dissociated from that tradition. Rather, once again, they play an interesting set of variations on the old theme of liberating the route to Compostella and bringing Spain under the hegemony of Charlemagne. Orlando in a series of encounters makes friends and allies of Marsiglio, Grandonio, Bianciardino and their relatives, thus removing any need to defend the pass of Rencesvals and die there! What emerges here, quite forcefully, is an Orlando adapted to the world of Machiavelli, weighing the pros and cons of fighting and the advantages of politics over warfare; the arbiter of *pax hispanica*, yet still refusing the crown of Spain (cantos XXXIV-XLIV).

The *prolongement de Roland* which we have been tracing reaches its culmination with the portrait of Roland in the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto (*Orlando Furioso*, ed. Debendetti and Segre). In part Ariosto takes up the Orlando already portrayed by Boiardo and pushes further, to the extreme, aspects of character given by the older poet, which had both been carried forward from, and challenged tradition. But Ariosto also returns to some of the most traditional features of Orlando. He is not especially interested in Orlando's appearance, making reference neither to baldness nor a squint, at least not literally. He does, unlike Cieco, continue the tradition of Orlando's invulnerability, but this, like his physical *desmesure*, is frequently turned

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[37] "Ma sì ti spiace il corso naturale, / che ribello mi chiami, e a Dio nimico, / E più di te mi credo essergli amico. // Crescite, disse Dio, e augumentate / l'umana specie, che 'l s'empia la terra. / E s'io servo le leggi per lui date, / Tu di' ch'io erro, e tu sei pur quel ch'erra, / Che dispensando vai le tue giornate / Senza alcun frutto d'una in altra guerra / E se ognun fosse come te infecondo / Già saressimo giunti al fin del mondo." (*Mamb*. V, 28-29), and see also *Mamb*. IV, 14-15.

25.1-2

to ironic or parodic purposes. Similarly, traditional *gesta* appear in the *Furioso*, again often in parodic form. Orlando's famous duel with Ferrau, a momentous encounter in the *Entrée d'Espagne*, is here given an ironic twist. Since both Orlando and Ferrau are (as in the *Entrée*) invulnerable except at one point which is well protected or difficult to hit, the duel between them could, as Ariosto suggests, go on forever, not just for three days as in the source text (*O.F.* XII, 47-49). And it ends, in the *Furioso*, not with conversion or death (or both as in Boiardo's version of the same duel), but with an agreement to postpone the match, because both have a greater, mutual, more pressing concern with Angelica, not religious belief or ideological conflict, but self-centred lust (XII, 54-56).

Orlando's physical *desmesure* is constantly reiterated by Ariosto, indeed it becomes in the *Furioso* his defining characteristic, one that is always carried to impossible extremes. He achieves victory in Frisia against Cimosco in spite of the latter's "modern" firepower; he skewers soldiers on his lance until it breaks under the weight of its human kebab; he kills 80 men in a matter of minutes to rescue Zerbino, as if these were so many ants.[38] Moreover, even before he goes, clinically, mad, he frequently fights in antiheroic ways, and with whatever comes to hand—an anchor against the sea monster, a table against the robbers, fisticuffs against Mandricardo.[39] Ariosto clearly understands, as Cieco had already hinted in Orlando's fight with a bear (*Mamb*. XXXVII, 12-15), that Orlando's physical prowess (which I am terming a form of *desmesure*) when carried to the limit leads to behaviour that is berserk and bestial. It is, as much as his infatuation for Angelica, a form of madness, actions unrestrained by any form of reason. The scenes in which Orlando loses his sanity completely clearly demonstrate this. The victims of Orlando's physical *desmesure* now are unarmed non-combatants—shepherds and peasants, hapless animals—horses and donkeys, even inanimate objects—trees, stones and rocks, the cave in which Angelica has consummated her love—all are hacked to destruction without reason or restraint.[40] It is only here, as he effectively loses it (in the literal and colloquial senses), that Ariosto actually describes Orlando's appearance, and here that he pushes Orlando's *guercio* handicap to the semantic extreme, as Orlando becomes mentally, if not literally, blind, and his physical and psychological *desmesure* combine to overthrow his human nature.

For Ariosto, too, returning again to the older tradition of the *Entrée*, and even more than for Boiardo, Orlando is the loner.[41] From his solitary departure, leaving Charlemagne besieged in Paris very much in the lurch, to go instead in search of Angelica, pursuing the false vision of a dream, through his various adventures and diversions en route—rescuing Olimpia and then Isabella, Orlando is alone, not one of the crowd with Rinaldo, Ulivieri and company as in Pulci's poem, not in creative duet with Astolfo, as in Cieco's. Only after his healing, through the combined forces of Astolfo, Ulivieri, Dudone, Sansonetto, and Brandimarte, to say nothing of God and St. John the Evangelist, does Orlando emerge as a "recognisable" figure from tradition—the heroic, noble, serious knight of the *Entrée*, the chief champion against the last

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[38] See respectively *O.F.* IX, 73-80; IX, 68; XXIII, 59-62.
[39] See respectively *O.F.* XI, 37-39; XIII, 37-40; XXIII, 82-88.
[40] *O.F.* XXIII, 129-31; XXIV, 4-13.
[41] In the *Furioso* from his first departure in canto 8 to his healing in canto 39 Orlando is always alone.

rump of pagan opposition, in the form of Agramante, successfully defeated in the last combat on Lipadusa. In the *Furioso*, as in the *Mambriano*, Orlando survives to fight another day, seems not destined for the pass of Rencesvals. Ariosto takes up the message announced by Cieco, that it is no longer necessary for Orlando to die at Rencesvals in order to secure Spain for Charlemagne, nor indeed to die at all. As the *Furioso* ends, at Charlemagne's court, and with the wedding of Ruggiero and Bradamante, Orlando is already a figure in the background, as Ariosto's spotlight falls on the new hero, Ruggiero, and turns, in the *Cinque Canti*, to a different strand of the Carolingian tradition, the enduring hostility of the house of Maganza, to internal feudal strife rather than religious warfare, though again with a new slant (Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso e Cinque Canti)*. Orlando does not altogether disappear after Ariosto, but as the titles of later examples of the Carolingian genre indicate, the interests of sixteenth-century poets and public lie elsewhere, with figures such as Astolfo, or pagan protagonists like Rodomonte, or women—characters less bound by a wealth of tradition, on whom, as a result, more variations could be played.[42]

And so to my coda, which takes us back once again to Dante:

> Poscia trasse Guiglielmo e Renoardo,
> E 'l duca Gottifredi la mia vista
> Per quella croce, e Ruberto Guiscardo. (*Par.* 18.46-48)

Dante's lines give equal weight, with Roland and Charlemagne, to William and Rainouart, as well as to Godfrey of Bouillon and Robert Guiscard. Time precludes any discussion of these last two, though important research remains to be done on the tradition of the Crusade Cycle epics and historical crusade literature in Italy during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and their influence on, and emergence in, Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* at the end of the sixteenth century—another strand of the *prolongement du genre*. But William is a fascinating, indeed mysterious case. Dante's lines imply an equal familiarity on the part of his public with the narratives of the William cycle, and this is also borne out by comments in a range of contemporary documents.[43] Yet looking to the end of the period under scrutiny, Pio Rajna, in his exhaustive survey of the sources of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, is doubtful of any close familiarity on Ariosto's part

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[42] For details on these poems, see Beer (*Romanzi*, pp. 345-69), where she lists poems with titles such as *Astolfo borioso* (by Marco Guazzo), *Marphisa bizzarra* (by Giambattista Dragoncino), and *Rodomonte innamorato* (by Marco Bandarini), and notes the continuing popularity of poems such as the *Altobello* and the *Persiano*, both with pagan protagonists though predating the *Furioso*.

[43] See Levi (*I cantari leggendari*); for the general familiarity and interest including by educated members of the public such as the protohumanist Lovato de' Lovati, see Folena ("La cultura volgare"). J. Wathelet-Willem wonders whether Dante in placing Rainouart "à côté de héros authentiques […] a connu une autre tradition qui présentait un héros plus digne?" ("Le personnage de Rainouart," pp. 176-77). This contrasts both with views which see Rainouart as a self-renewing figure capable of very different representations, but also with our argument, below, of the influence of Rainouart in Pulci, which would represent what Wathelet-William considers the mainstream tradition of this character.

25.1-2

with the tradition of the *Storie Nerbonesi* (to give the cycle its Italian name), admitting only, rather diffidently one feels: "Che Lodovico non ignorasse questa letteratura è presumibile per sé medesmo," and indeed such references as the *Fonti* contains to the William narratives are very few and not related to central episodes, nor ones exclusive to that cycle.[44] So the question arises: what happened to William? If Roland could develop as a character in so many different ways, why are there no themes and variations on William? Surely William already in the French originals has attributes that would have made him attractive to an Italian public and to Italian poets with their tendency to incorporate irony, bourgeois and anti-heroic elements.

One answer to this must be that the William cycle, for whatever reasons, seems never to have passed into the *ottava rima* form of the *cantari*. Again, as I have argued elsewhere, it was the success of this as a narrative metre in Italy that ensured not just the survival, but the flourishing of the genre in the increasingly sophisticated cultural world of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Everson, *The Italian Romance Epic*, pp. 113-22). The absence of any fourteenth-century *cantari* on the William Cycle, in despite of Dante, may be possibly explained by the loss of manuscript witnesses. More striking, however, is the complete absence of fifteenth-century *cantari*, and in particular any deriving from Andrea da Barberino's monumental compilation, the *Storie Nerbonesi*. Andrea clearly thought, in the early fifteenth century, that the Cycle of William was still sufficiently popular to merit the compilation in prose, and that there would be an audience for these stories. And yet it must be said that Andrea's prose in the *Storie* is much less lively than in his *Reali di Francia*, and that rather than adding to, inventing, and expanding the narrative, as he did in the *Rolandin*, he tends to give only the main outlines, in a rather schematic, uninspiring rendering amounting often to little more than a list of actions by the principal characters. Even the narrative of the taking of Nîmes fails to bring William alive in the way that Rolandin is brought to life by Andrea. Perhaps then it is not surprising that Andrea's William Cycle did not inspire later *ottava rima* narratives, in contrast with his influence on later poems on Roland, and Charlemagne.

So is that the end of the story, did William and Rainouart just disappear? Or should we look for them in some other form, disguised beneath a different name, their characteristics attached to other protagonists, their exploits inserted into extraneous narratives and located far from William's territories in southern France? The answer to these questions, I am convinced, is firmly yes, but the unmasking of William and Rainouart in the Italian tradition is a detective investigation which has yet effectively to begin. Space prevents me here from

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[44] See Rajna (*Le fonti*, p. 380; also pp. 409, 505). Lack of familiarity with the William cycle is already evident in the later fourteenth century in Italy, in the commentaries of Lana, l'Anonimo and Buti to *Paradiso* 18.46. The commentators, unable to identify William correctly, reveal their complete ignorance of the narrative tradition. The decline in the fortunes of the William cycle would seem therefore to have occurred within at most two generations, between the early fourteenth century (the time of Dante) and the end of the same century. This is precisely the period in which the fortunes of Carolingian vernacular epic, and of particular cycles within that, were being established in Italy through the transition into *ottava rima* versions; see also *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, vol. 3, p. 313, voce: Pispisa, "Guglielmo conte d'Orange".

doing more than plant a few clues, a few suggestions as to where researchers might look for William, and I do so in the hopes of stimulating what should prove an exciting field of research.

Firstly, William's appearance. William has, from the beginning, a characteristic facial appearance, whether it is a hooked nose (*courbe nez*) or an outright deformity (*court nez*) which cannot be hidden. A facial deformity is present in the Italian tradition, and apparently invented by that tradition, but it is of course, as we have seen, transferred to Orlando, and from nose to eye. Is the origin of Orlando's deformity then a "sign" of William? It looks plausible.

Secondly, there are William's relations with the "fair sex." At the beginning of the *Prise d'Orange*, Guillaume hears tell of the beauties of that city and especially of its queen, Orable. Immediately, he falls hopelessly in love with this distant and pagan lady, and though accused by others of "treason and folly," he sets off at once for Orange. As one critic summing up the character of William here puts it: "Guillaume au Cort-Nez is no longer the standard epic hero, engaged in battles for the defense of Christendom. He is the would-be lover, who neglects his social, political and religious duties to set off in quest of a new ideal: the beautiful pagan queen Orable" (Grunmann-Gaudet, "From Epic to Romance," esp. p. 24). A hero with a visible facial deformity, struck by a *coup de foudre* for a beautiful pagan princess, who then promptly abandons his military obligations and moral and religious principles, to go off alone in pursuit of his illusion—change the names and this is a description of Boiardo's Orlando at the beginning of the *Innamorato*, and as Ariosto continues to portray him in the *Furioso*—signs of William hidden again behind the mask of Orlando. Moreover, as the author of the *Prise* has it: "Hom qui bien aime est trestoz enragiez" (l. 366). William's pursuit of Orable, though ultimately successful, displays a loss of reason, a kind of self-absorption bordering on madness, that is found again in Boiardo's Orlando and tragically in the *Furioso*. Furthermore as a would-be lover William is inept, unpractised and gauche. Though fluent in the Saracen tongue (another trait shared with Orlando in the Italian tradition) he cannot communicate his love to Orable because he not only lacks the appropriate vocabulary, he is also physically too overcome to utter a syllable other than platitudes. We have already referred to Orlando's gaucheness in love—which reaches its climax in the *Innamorato* when he is bathed by Angelica following a battle and is too inhibited to respond in any way—another sign of William taken here to extremes![45]

A third clue to be pursued concerns the character of Rainouart, defined by one critic, again speaking of the French tradition, as an "instrument of renewal" and as "autonomous and self-renewing" (Seidenspinner-Nûñez, "William and Rainouart," esp. p. 15). Such definitions are thought provoking in the context of the renewal of the Carolingian epic genre taking place in Italy in the fifteenth century. And in that context other aspects of Rainouart are also suggestive: his antiheroic associations, his devotion to his stomach, his comic, nonstandard weapons and methods of fighting, his size, his conversion, and, according to Dante, his apotheosis in heaven. Where might one look for such a character? Who is the poet most likely to be attracted to such a figure, a figure of renewal and parody? I would suggest the answers are to be found in Pulci's

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[45] See *O. I.* I, xxv, 37-39.

Morgante with his bell clapper,[46] his gigantic size and the unfortunate implications for any horse he might mount,[47] his huge appetite, exemplified especially in the Margutte episode, when he consumes a whole unicorn and an elephant, as well as at least half of a buffalo, a turtle and a basilisk each at a single meal.[48] Morgante too converts and is baptised by Orlando, after a summary instruction in the faith, but his end, unlike Renoardo's, is antiheroic, he dies of a crab bite, just after another gigantic exploit—pushing a sea-going ship by walking along the seabed. Nevertheless, though Pulci eschews the rather staid conclusion of Renoardo's life (marriage followed by retreat in old age to a hermitage), his Morgante still makes it to heaven. Pulci, whose love of parodying Dante is a constant in his poem, assures his reader that Morgante on his death goes straight to heaven and indeed has Orlando, as he dies at Rencesvals, receive the assurance, from the Archangel Gabriel, that he will be reunited with him in heaven, just as Dante reunites Roland, Charlemagne, William and Rainouart in the glories of the heaven of Mars.[49]

Riccardo Bruscagli once remarked, on an occasion similar to this, that attempting to trace and identify the sources of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* was an enterprise doomed to failure, not just because the text itself is an unfinished story, but also because, of the several scholars who have attempted the subject, none has successfully brought it to a conclusion. The study of the *prolongement du genre épique* seems to me a similar case, not only because prolongations still continue to appear in new media and at all levels of literature, but also because the study of prolongations takes us repeatedly back to the sources, outwards around the expanding spiral through the vernaculars of both medieval Europe and our modern world, and inwards again to the centre, to the event which sparked off the whole chain, and which has brought us here, to Rencesvals.

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[46] Morgante's *battaglio di campana* (*Morg*. II, 10) and Rainouart's *tinel* or *pinello* ["mace"].

[47] See *Morg*. I, 68-75, esp.: "Questo caval s'accoscia per la pena, / E scoppia e in sulla terra si ritruova" (st. 68) and: "[Morgante] E fe' duo salti col cavallo addosso" (st. 73) and Andrea's account in *Storie Nerbonesi* that Renoardo "non cavalca cavallo."

[48] *Morg*. XVIII, 152-160, 188-200; XIX, 54-90.

[49] *Morg*. XXVII, 139: "[Morgante] Il qual nel Ciel ti farà compagnia / Come soleva un tempo fare al mondo / perché tu il drizzasti per la via / che lo condusse al suo stato giocondo."

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