

Abstracts and Reviews of Recent Papers

Edward J. Greenan. "The *Canso d'Antioca*: A Focus on Pre-Troubadour Tradition." Tenth Conference on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, May 1975.

What everyone remembers about the birth of Western vernacular literature is the spectacular flowering of the troubadour lyric. While scholars agree that this sudden magnificence must have been preceded by a slow, gradual development, few manuscripts have survived which witness this earlier tradition. One such witness, the *Canso d'Antioca*, has survived in Madrid and has remained almost totally ignored since its rediscovery in the early nineteenth century. Written in an archaic form of Occitan, the *Canso d'Antioca* portrays the heroes of the First Crusade in a battle before Antioch, and exhibits the basic epic format of the Pyrenees in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Composed in irregular alexandrines with an assonanced rhyme scheme, the *Canso* shares a common tradition with the *Cid* and the *Roland* epics. While the author-jonglar of the *Canso* presents the warriors of the First Crusade as fierce and invincible, he yet avoids the fantastic imagery and shadow world of the *Chanson de Roland*. In vivid contrast with the *Roland*, the *Canso* shows a flavor akin to the early crusading chronicles. The author conveys minute details with the sureness of an eye-witness, and takes considerable pains to retain historical accuracy and logical sequence. Perhaps the principal reason why this manuscript has been neglected for the last one hundred fifty years is the seemingly unliterary externals of this epic. Yet the irregularities and *lacunae* are entirely consistent with the formulaic tradition and point to an early origin. As a monument of the oral literary tradition, the *Canso d'Antioca* offers a smooth resolution to the traditional gesta-chronicle antithesis. (EJG)

Comments on Dr. Greenan's Paper

How do we explain the apparent paucity of pre-troubadour epic verse in Occitania, particularly in view of its rich lyric tradition? Stressing the studies of Parry and Lord, E. J. Greenan suggests that contiguous geographical and linguistic areas tend to produce literatures having a commonality of characteristics and that we might therefore more appropriately consider Occitan epic within a much broader social and cultural tradition: Pyrenean-Mediterranean. The examples he cites do illustrate notable similarities: the recurrent heterometrical characteristics common to the *Cid* and to the *Canso d'Antioca*; the linguistic affinities (Rouergue) of the latter and of the *Ch. de Sainte Foy* and their comparable length; the *cobla capcaudada* disposition of the half-verse terminating the *laissez* in the *Antioca* and in G. de Tudela's *Ch. de la croisade contre les Albigeois*; etc.

Somewhat less convincing are his explanations of particular affinities between the *Cid* and the *Roland*—a subject already explored by T. S. Thomov¹—and between the *Roland* and the *Antiocha*. The "similarity of psychological format" he sees in the pagan leaders, in *Roland* and *Antiocha*, exhorting their commanders, is a topos common to numerous epics, as is the chess game before the battle, as P. Jonin has shown.² E. J. G. believes the *Antiocha* "was influenced by the *Roland* legend, if not by the same epic piece which has come down to us," and that the *Antiocha* (vv. 579, 717) has "the earliest vernacular mentions of the *Roland* legend outside of the *Roland* itself." I believe that it is rather in Richard the Pilgrim's *OF Ch. d'Antioche* whose composition is contemporaneous with the events of the First Crusade (and which pre-dates the *Canso d'Antiocha* by nearly a half-century),³ that we find some of the earliest references to *Roland*, *Olivier*, *Roncevaux*, by name. The *Antiocha* manuscript dates from the late twelfth century at the earliest,⁴ while G. de Tudela's composition—whose versification bears close resemblance to a *Canso d'Antiocha* presumed to be the extant Provençal fragment—dates from 1213 at the latest.⁵ The proximity of the datation of the last two manuscripts with those marking the first generation of the *chansons avec des refrains* (ca. 1180-1220),⁶ and with that of Graindor de Douai's reworking of the *OF Ch. d'Antioche* (ca. 1190), suggests that the subject of Antioch was of the greatest actuality everywhere in the West, at roughly the time of Saladin's entry into Jerusalem (Oct. 2, 1187)—some events which barely two years later sparked the Third Crusade.

I concur with E. J. G. (against P. Meyer and G. Paris) that the extant *Antiocha* constitutes a whole; but by no means does this necessarily

¹*La Ch. de Rol. et le Poème du Cid*, Ann. U. Sofia, 59 (1965) 2, 339-369.

²"La partie d'échecs dans l'épopée médiévale," *Mélanges Jean Frappier*, (Genève: Droz, 1970), I, 483-497.

³L. A. M. Sumberg, *La Ch. d'Antioche: Etude historique et littéraire*. (Paris: Picard, 1968), pp. 318-328.

⁴P. Meyer, "Fragment d'une *Chanson d'Antioche* en provençal," *AOL*, 2 (1884), 467.

⁵E. Martin-Chabot, éd. *La Ch. de la Croisade albigeoise*, 2e éd. (Paris: CFMA, 1960), I, xi.

⁶As contrasted with the *Chanson à refrains* (see P. Zumthor, *Langues et techniques* . . . [Paris: Klincksieck, 1963], p. 177).

give it a claim to greater age. On the contrary, the *ensenhamen* suggests that the troubadours had amassed a considerable fund of procédés for assembling epic verse; it is noteworthy that most of these *ensenhamen* date from the late twelfth, early thirteenth centuries.

The datation of at least two works cited are open to question. The morphological evidence of *Boèce* and of *Ste. Foy* indicates that they date from the eleventh century at the earliest, with *Boèce* coming AFTER *Ste. Foy*.⁷ And Bertran de Born and Peire Vidal are most certainly NOT "the only two troubadours who make mention of Roland or Olivier," as reference to the chrestomathies of C. Appel (no. 97:53) and of Hill and Bergin (nos. 82:51-2, 89:64) shows. The onomastics are sketchy: *Corbarin* is in the *Ch. de Ste. Foy* (v. 491) clearly a plural.

The suggested correlation between Guillem IX's senhal *Bon Vezi* ("Ab la dolchor . . .," v. 26) and the "mock senhal" *Malvezi* (*Antiocha*, vv. 217-219)—name of one of the towers defending Antioch—is altogether inconclusive. It was common practice in the Middle Ages to give such names to siege machines and the like, as at Antioch where, according to the anonymous *Gesta* and *Tudebode*, the crusaders had erected a fort called *Malregart* on a summit of that name; it was also known as the Château de Bohémond. It is noteworthy that at the siege of Minerve (1210) recounted in Pierre des Vaux-de Cernay's *Hystoria Albigensis* (XXXVII:152) and in G. de Tudela's chronicle (1213), we find a siege machine named *Mala Vezina* (V:48, vv. 5-7), while a knight Robert *Mauvoisin* (Ile-de-France)—an intimate of Simon de Montfort—figures prominently in this same siege!

E. J. G's concluding remark that "the *C. d'Antiocha* was esteemed as a good representative of epic style in the Pyrenean region" echoes J. Rychner's observation: "Des conditions professionnelles identiques expliquent la permanence du style épique à travers époques et pays différents."⁸ But the burning question remains: WHICH *Song of Antioch*? The anonymous Prov. *Antiocha*? The (presumed) lost *C. d'Antiocha* of the Limousin knight Grégoire Bechada? Or just possibly . . . Graindor's reworking of Richard's *Ch. d'Antioche*?

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⁷A. Soutou, "Localisation géographique de la *Ch. de Ste. Foy*," *AnMidi*, 82 (avril-juin 1970) 97, 120-121.

⁸*La Chanson de geste* . . . (Genève: Droz, 1955), p. 128.

Patricia Lynne Harris Stablein. "The Test of Kings: Royal Judgment and Heroic Action in *Hrolf's Saga Kraka*, *Beowulf*, and the *Chanson de Roland*." Eleventh Conference on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, May 5, 1976.

In the relationship of Bothvar Bjarki and King Hrolf, the royal leader must prove his kingship with a correct interpretation of the hero's action. He cannot be fooled by his own men or by Bothvar himself. When Hrolf impedes rather than instigates heroic action, this is really an affirmation of his royal identity. He judges *post-facto* action rightly; he does not perform it. His success is in the coincidence of his analysis with the reader's knowledge of the circumstances surrounding Bothvar's action.

There is a much more intimate judgment/action relationship between *Beowulf* and Hrothgar. The king and the hero explain themselves to each other, whereas there is very little such communication between Bothvar and Hrolf. Hrothgar's moral commentaries on the hero's character and deeds enrich their significance. The focus then is much less on a test of judgment than on a display of moral knowledge.

The disaster of Roncevaux is a result of Charlemagne's failure in a test of judgment. This failure spreads to Ganelon, Roland, and Oliver, all of whose judgment is in question at various points in the epic. The judgmental primacy of the leader has broken down, so there is no more certainty regarding the rightness of the heroic action. Only the entrance of direct communication reestablishes the judgmental hierarchy.

There are many aspects to the differences and similarities of these works in regard to this problem. Only a few can be explored, but they may indicate new ways of looking at heroic structure. (PLHS)

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Song of Roland Conference

Preparations are underway for a conference on the *Song of Roland* at The Pennsylvania State University, October 12 - 14, 1978. This is expected to be the major observance on this continent of the twelfth centenary of the Battle of Roncevaux. It will follow the 1978 congress of the Société Rencesvals, which will be the international commemoration of this historical event (*BBSR*, Fascicule Ko. 8, page 6). For further information about the American meeting, please contact Professor Gerard J. Brault, Department of French, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802, U.S.A.