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François Suard. *Guillaume d'Orange: Étude du roman en prose*. Bibliothèque du XV^e siècle, No. 44. Paris: Éditions Honoré Champion, 1979. Pp. XXVI + 661.

IN THE COURSE of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a large number of epic poems were reworked in prose: *Renaut de Montauban*, *Fierabras*, *Valentin et Orson*, *Huon de Bordeaux*, *Ogier le Danois*, among many others. Since the time of Léon Gautier, those versions have received what can be described only as "poor press." Most remain unavailable in satisfactory modern editions. The prose reworking of a number of poems from the William of Orange cycle, extant in its full version in only two manuscripts (B.N. fr. 1497 and B.N. fr. 796), was not among the more popular *rifacimenti* in its day but has been selected for study by Prof. Suard because of its relationship to the indisputably popular earlier epic cycle. Suard, however, does not propose simply a

³Michael Wendt, *Der Oxforder Roland: Heilsgeschichte und Teilidentität im 12. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Fink, 1970); Raimund Rütten, *Symbol and Mythos im altfranzösischen Rolandslied* (Braunschweig: Westermann, 1970).

repetition of the rather pedestrian source study by J. Weiske (*Die Quellen des altfranzösischen Prosaromans von Guillaume d'Orange*, Halle a. S., 1898). Although a re-examination of Weiske's conclusions is indispensable, the greater part of Suard's study is devoted to a meticulously detailed examination of the prose work itself. The conclusions drawn do not concern only the *Prose Guillaume d'Orange*: on the one hand they shed new light on the poetic works upon which it was based, and on the other they are used to examine the literary and ideological movement which led in the latter half of the fifteenth century to the proliferation of prose translations.

Following a brief statement of methodology and objectives and a detailed summary of the *Prose Guillaume d'Orange* (henceforth: P), Suard in his initial and lengthiest chapter reconsiders the question of sources. He shows that the author of P did not attempt an exhaustive recapitulation of the entire cycle, but instead chose to concentrate his efforts on the poems treating Aymeri and the most illustrious of his sons, Guillaume. These poems are thirteen in number: *Aymeri de Narbonne*, *Narbonnais*, *Siège de Barbastre*, *Enfances Guillaume*, *Couronnement de Louis*, *Charroi de Nîmes*, *Prise d'Orange*, *Enfances Vivien*, *Chevalerie Vivien*, *Aliscans*, *Bataille Loquifer*, *Moniage Renouart*, and *Moniage Guillaume*. They are treated with remarkable fidelity—a fidelity which in fact may have been one of the principal reasons for the relative lack of success of the *mise en prose*, as Suard argues in his final chapter.

Although Louis Demaison, in the introduction to his edition of *Aymeri de Narbonne* (Paris, 1887), had argued for a lost verse *remaniement* to fill the gap between the extant poetic versions and P, Suard shows that "la version complète peut s'expliquer à partir des chansons de geste que nous possédons" (p. 94). In one of the most intriguing sections of his study, Suard combines historical and codicological evidence in a masterful piece of detective work to demonstrate that the impetus for the prose reworking came from the Burgundian milieu which was responsible for so many prose works produced during the fifteenth century. Although the two full-length manuscripts of P both belonged to the great bibliophile Jacques de Nemours, and one might therefore presume he had commissioned the prose, the existence of a shorter prose version (Arsenal 3351) and a chronicle account (B.N. 5003

and Vatican Reg. lat. 749) lead to an entirely different conclusion which deserves to be quoted in full:

Élaboré dans le domaine bourguignon peu après 1450, le roman en prose de *Guillaume d'Orange* résulte du grand mouvement littéraire qui entreprend, sous l'impulsion des ducs et notamment de Philippe Le Bon, de donner aux oeuvres épiques une vitalité nouvelle. Sans être le résultat direct d'une commande ducale, ce texte sera utilisé sous forme de résumé par D. Aubert ainsi que par le prosateur de l'Arsenal; il aura des liens avec la rédaction amplifiée du *Gérard de Vienne*, conçue également dans le domaine bourguignon; enfin il sera utilisé par l'auteur de la chronique contenue dans les mss. B.N. fr. 5003 et Vatican Reg. lat. 749.

Dans les circonstances que nous ignorons, mais que les contacts entre La Marche et la Bourgogne permettent d'expliquer, une copie de ce roman, représentée par le ms. B.N. fr. 1497, est parvenue entre les mains de Jacques de Nemours; celui-ci en ordonnera la mise au net et ce travail, interrompu par le procès et la mort du duc, est contenu dans le ms. B.N. fr. 796.

Pour expliquer la composition de P, l'hypothèse du remaniement tardif en vers est inutile et même gênante: la prose que nous possédons constitue une translation critique établie à partir de trois mss. épiques, un du petit cycle, B et D. (p. 106).

An important auxiliary conclusion likewise merits citation:

Mais nous avons également souligné un phénomène encore peu connu, la coexistence au XV^{ème} siècle de la production en prose et de la composition en vers. Depuis Gautier, en effet, on a l'habitude d'établir une barrière rigoureuse entre la période des remaniements en vers—le XIV^{ème} siècle—et celle des mises en prose—le XV^{ème}. (p. 107)

Chapter II, "Du manuscrit cyclique à l'ensemble narratif," bridges the gap between the source-oriented materials of the first chapter and the literary analyses which will form the bulk of Suard's study. After reviewing how the cyclical writers combined their poems: *rappels*, *incidences*, displaced episodes, linking prologues, etc., Suard undertakes a poem-by-poem, unit-by-unit study of the methods used to link chapter to chapter. The conclusion is predictable: "Dans la chanson de geste, le développement dramatique est donc lié à cet entrelacs de reprises et de variations procédant de la structure lyrique du texte. Or ceci a tout à fait disparu du roman en prose dont le projet, et par conséquent le mode de

composition, est devenu purement *narratif* (p. 164). The final section of Chapter II, subtitled "La conduite du récit," shows the ambiguous status of this particular adaptation. On the one hand, the *remanieur* is seduced by new narrative techniques such as *entrelacement* and by the romantic subject-matter of "armes, amours, noblesse et chevalerie," while on the other he is unable to break away from the epic constraints of episode, *laisse*, and heroic action. "Ayant renoncé à la structure lyrique de la chanson de geste, l'auteur pouvait briser le cadre relativement étroit imposé par la strophe et se donner de vastes espaces narratifs; il a préféré calquer ses paragraphes sur les laisses, morcelant son récit en unités discontinues, reliées assez artificiellement les unes aux autres" (p. 187). These stylistic shortcomings in P, although not specifically alluded to later by Suard, may well have been a factor contributing further to the work's lack of success.

Having examined in Chapter II the methods by which P attempted to organize elements from thirteen distinct *chansons de geste* into a coherent narrative text, Suard studies the syntactical, lexical, and rhetorical elements of its style in his next chapter, "Les aspects caractéristiques du style." In syntax, he notes the heavy-handed use of subordination and the ubiquitousness of the compound relative (*lequel* and its derivatives). The vocabulary of P is essentially that of the epics; it avoids neo-latinisms, but has more abstract terminology than the poets. Rhetorical elements of all manner abound in the work, which the redactor himself best characterizes as "prolixement et bien aourné." After an exhaustive review of the *ornatus facilis* and *ornatus difficilis* and the use of discourse and monologues, Suard reaches an unsurprising conclusion: "recherche d'ampleur et d'ornement" (p. 262). The prose redactor is interested in *beau langage*, particularly in scenes of battle and love, for which he has a special predilection.

Chapters IV and V are devoted to these favored themes of "armes et amour." Each begins with an inventory of all the scenes to be discussed, then proceeds to a comparative analysis of the scenes in P with those in the corresponding *chansons de geste*. This comparison enables Suard to formulate a number of significant conclusions which give useful insight into the literary and ideological concerns of the period.

In battle scenes, there is a marked tendency to organize and simplify the engagements, as well as to make them more realistic:

P se montre moins désireux de plonger ses lecteurs dans la stupéfaction, de les enthousiasmer au récit d'exploits extraordinaires, que de rendre plausibles les récits de bataille qu'il propose. . . . Tributaire de son temps, le romancier ne peut plus concevoir le combat comme le théâtre de la seule prouesse héroïque; les grandes batailles de la Guerre de Cent Ans, Crécy, Poitiers et Azincourt, ont montré les nécessités de la tactique et les catastrophes produites par l'impréparation ou le courage téméraire. (p. 281)

But individual exploits are not eliminated altogether: those of Aymeri, Guillaume, Vivien, and Renouart still stand out. However, they are made more concise and more realistic; fantastic elements are regularly replaced by rhetorical elaborations; individual bravado yields to organized strategy.

P gives considerably more importance to the love intrigues than did its models—even to the point of developing new chapters from whole cloth. However, these episodes, which are always inspired at least indirectly by the sources, do not detract from the essentially epic task of celebrating the exploits of the male heroes, Aymeri and Guillaume. Influence of the courtly romances and love lyrics on P is alleged, but the descriptions of falling in love and the characteristics of love adduced are far too general to warrant this narrow a conclusion. Suard is correct to insist upon the influence of the courtly tradition on P, but inaccurate to limit his discussion to a few arbitrarily chosen *rapprochements*. One might conclude erroneously that he is suggesting influence where there is only a *fonds commun* of expression.

Chapter VI, "La piété et la dévotion," shows that while the redactor of P, like the authors of the *chansons de geste*, was profoundly influenced by religion and religious observances, the emphasis has changed markedly. Whereas in the poems there is a distinct religious fervor and God's presence is constantly felt, in the prose there is more emphasis on external observance: miracles and the Mass, for example, are brought to the fore. In Suard's words, "La chanson de geste est, dans son principe, une oeuvre animée par la foi. . . alors que le roman en prose reflète un certain idéal chevaleresque et une piété réelle" (p. 422). Just before concluding his chapter, Suard asks why P, which has lost the religious fervor of its

predecessors, nonetheless describes numerous religious observances, conversions, and prayers. The answer sums up very well Suard's view of the work:

Ces éléments répondent d'abord au souci de vraisemblance qui guide le narrateur. Les personnages du roman portent la marque de l'époque pour laquelle écrit P; Guibelin ou Renouart agissent et parlent comme on le fait au XVe siècle: c'est de la même façon aussi qu'ils prient.

Mais, pour intéresser, le temps du roman doit aussi rester "le vieux temps", car le plaisir qu'un lecteur du XVe siècle trouve dans la mise en prose d'un poème épique n'existe qu'à partir du moment où il croit retrouver dans une oeuvre contemporaine la saveur des vieux textes. (p. 450)

Chapter VII, "Les personnages," is an exhaustive comparison of the characters of the *roman* with those of the *chansons de geste* in order to determine literary assumptions found in P, and the influences upon it. All of the action is seen to be concentrated around Aymeri and Guillaume; of the other characters, some (Orable, Guibour, Hernault, Gérard de Commarchis, etc.) are of increased importance, others (Bernard de Brabant, Bertrand) find their rôles diminished. King Louis plays a much less odious rôle than in the poems. In general, the heroes lose their epic *desmesure*: "Le héros est désormais pourvu d'un ensemble de qualités guerrières, mondaines et amoureuses, qui s'équilibrent et s'harmonisent les unes avec les autres" (p. 515).

The final chapter, "Le Roman de Guillaume et les proses épiques imprimées," compares P with the more popular prose epics of the period to seek reasons for the former's distinct lack of popularity. It is an unusually rich and suggestive chapter in itself, but we actually learn much more about other prose romances than we do about P. Suard ranks the most successful prose epics based on number of editions: *Renaut de Montauban* (with 27 fifteenth- and sixteenth-century editions), *Fierabras* (26), *Galien* (19), *Valentin et Orson* (14), *Ogier le Danois* (13), *Mabrian* (13), *Huon de Bordeaux* (11), and *Milles et Amys* (10). In contrast, the *Roman de Guillaume* has never been honored with a printed edition. By concentrating his attention on these eight successful works, Suard is able to distinguish three common characteristics which P does not share to any appreciable degree: seven of the eight accord particular importance to the Charlemagne / Rencesvals axis; most stress the importance of

lineage through the development of *suites généalogiques*; all show a marked influence of the romance, and many accord a special rôle to the *merveilleux*. While it is undeniable, for example, that *compagnonnage* plays a significant rôle in P, the relationships between characters are quite different from those in the popular prose epics; because they were originally successful heroes in their own right, they remain somewhat unintegrated and, in particular, the possibilities for suspense are diminished. In sum, P has failed to exploit in full the possibilities opened by romance; the *romancier's* desire to remain faithful to his models has precluded his creating a successful adaptation.

Suard's study is exhaustive, well-documented, and usefully indexed. However, one senses in Suard's work something of the same sort of tension he so skillfully analyses in P. On the one hand, he wishes (or is obligated) to remain faithful to the consecrated *thèse-format*, with its Cartesian divisions and meticulous documentation; on the other, his personal interests lie clearly with literary criticism and textual analysis. As a result, the volume sometimes seems to lose balance as it catalogs one phenomenon or another for pages before reaching the always judiciously stated and justifiable conclusions. Yet, could we have it any other way? Conclusions without justifications are meaningless. There can be no question that this is an important study of a work—indeed, of an entire genre—which has been widely ignored. Suard, true to his purpose, opens new insights both into the poems on which the *Roman de Guillaume* is based and into the period which fostered this proliferation of prose adaptations. When more studies with the depth and interest of Suard's have appeared, we shall at last be in a position to attempt an evaluation of this entire prose tradition.

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