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*With the publication of his University of Zurich thesis, René Specht adds to a growing list of papers and articles on Franco-Italian literature. Given the increasing interest in the corpus in recent years, new scholarship of quality is welcome.*

Specht's study encompasses the three identified works of Nicolas de Vérone: the *Prise de Pampelune, Passion,* and *Pharsale.* An Italian about whom almost nothing is known, Nicolas writes in an idiom which Lorenzo Renzi identifies as "francese di Lombardia," a relatively stable, distinct linguistic system used in northern Italian texts from about the mid-thirteenth to mid-fourteenth centuries. Based on a complex system of interferences between Old North Italian as the primary, and Old French as the secondary language system, its most striking feature is that the Old French in these works dates to the period 1200-1250, and is thus not generally contemporary with the literary production. Specht, who states in his Introduction that he adopts Renzi's distinctions (note 1, p. 11), does not in fact do so, even in specific references to Nicolas de Vérone (see pp. 73, 93,
The book is divided into parallel approaches to the three texts: detailed description of manuscripts; analysis of previous scholarship; summary and examination of each text with particular emphasis on sources; study of interrelationships between the three and other works.

The Prise de Pampelune continues the narration of the battle for that city from the Entrée d'Espagne, with Frankish victory jeopardized by Roland's departure for the East after a long series of quarrels with Charles. In terms of progress in the Reconquest and toward Roncaveaux, its 6117 verses recount the taking of eleven Spanish cities: Pamplona, Estella, Logroño, Burgos, Toletela, Cordova, Carrión, Sahagún, Mansilla, Léon, and Astorga. Readers familiar with epic topography will recognize some of these sites. The narrative is given added dimension by the introduction both of hostilities within the Christian camp, between Lombards and Germans, and of personal and religious conflicts between Maozeris, King of Pamplona, who flees the city after deciding that he cannot convert to Christianity as promised, and his son Isoriés, who does convert and later does battle with his father. It closes with the destruction of Astorga and extermination of its population. The unicum MS Cod. Marc, franc. V (=250) is unfinished, with three principal objectives of the mission unfulfilled: total liberation of the Compostella pilgrim route; final victory over Marsile; coronation of Roland as King of Spain.

Specht begins his study of the Pampelune by considering its relationship to the Entrée in the 131 verses attached to the end of the latter, in the unicum Cod. Marc, franc. XXI (=257). The subject of vigorous debate until the early part of this century, the question of authorship and textual

'Lorenzo Renzi, "Per la lingua dell'Entrée d'Espagne," Cultura Neolatina, 30 (1970), pp. 59-87. Specht reduces Renzi's linguistic differentiations to "francese di Lombardia" as opposed to "franco-veneto," while Renzi groups "franco-veneto" with "franco-lombardo" and "franco-italiano." Renzi does describe this latter group as "una lingua mista, un gergo" in which "non c'è solo interferenza dei due sistemi, ma soprattutto un uso alternato delle due lingue per porzioni sintattiche (parole, sintagmi, frasi)" (p. 85). This is the idiom found in the French texts of Cod. Marc. franc. XIII and the V₄ Roland. Specht refers to "franco-veneto" as a "pathological" hybridism, citing Renzi, who says nothing specifically in that regard but rather stresses that "francese di Lombardia" is not an "organismo patologico" and that "questo giudizio dato per la prima volta da Mussafia al Machario, non già però a una Prise, è stato spesso abusivamente esteso dai critici a tutte le opere designate genericamente e per comodo come franco-venete" (p. 87). Renzi identifies as "francese di Lombardie" the language used by Nicolas de Vérome, the Entrée's Paduan, and the Roland V(7) and C manuscripts.
affiliation seemed finally resolved by Antoine Thomas in his *Nouvelles recherches sur l'Entrée de Spagne,*

2 and his edition. 3 His theories can be summarized as follows:

1) The *Entrée* as written by an anonymous Paduan ends at v. 15,805 with the reunion of Roland and Charles in Spain.

2) The 131-verse "suite" published as an Appendix to the *Entrée* by Nicolas de Vérone (first identified by Thomas) is the beginning of the *Prise de Pampelune,* by the same author. The *Pampelune* "fait partie intégrante de l'Entrée de Spagne ..." 4

3) The extant MS XXI was one of two original copies made, and one of five entries of the *Entrée* in the 1407 inventory of the Francesco Gonzaga library at Mantova.

In a closely argued (if not always clearly presented) revision of Thomas's theories based on stylistic, codicological, linguistic, and episodic evidence, Specht offers the following:

1) The scribal change (noted by Thomas) at *Entrée* v. 15,805 does not mark the end of that work. Rather, the Paduan's text continues through v. 124 of the "suite," ending with elaboration of the reunion scene.

2) Nicolas begins his continuation of the *Entrée,* also the *Pampelune* opening, thus:

   Ci tourne Nicolais a rimer la complue
   De l'Entrée de Spagne, qe tant est stee escondue
   Par ce ch'elle n'estoit par rime componue
   Da cist pont en avant, ond il l'a proveüe
   Pour rime, cum celu q'en latin l'a leüe. 5

3) Like previous scholars, Specht hypothesizes that an entire volume of the *Pampelune* is missing between v. 131 and the *incipit* of V. He entitles it *Liber primus istoriarum Ispanie,* companion to the *Liber secundus* of that title entered in the 1407 Gonzaga inventory.


4) Although no evidence exists of a *Liber primus*, its contents can logically be reconstructed by consultation with other texts, principally the *Entrée* and *Pampelune* themselves, plus the Italian *Fatti de Spagna* and *Spagna*. Its subject matter was largely concerned with events surrounding the appropriation of Charles's throne and Queen by his appointed vicar and the exploits of Guron de Bretagne.

5) Two MS fragments of the *Entrée* discovered after Thomas's edition alter the position of Marciana XXI as presumed archetypal text. Of the two, Châtillon (C) and Reggio Emilia (R), the latter adds both to our knowledge of extant episodes in XXI and introduces new material. A comparison of C and R with XXI reveals that the latter "fourmille d'erreurs," that neither C nor R is among the 1407 entries, and that "R respecte mieux son modèle et semble être plus proche du texte original ou de l'archétype …" (p. 54).

The extant *Pampelune* MS is also incomplete in its ending, although Specht finds that the *laisse* and episode in progress are satisfactorily terminated. Doubtful that a third volume was ever written, he believes that the poet grew weary of his task and simply abandoned it *in medias res*. It thus becomes impossible to reconstruct those missing portions which would connect it to the *Roland*, of which both *Entrée* and *Pampelune* form a vast prologue. The originality of the *Pampelune*, as part of the larger European epic tradition, lies in its contributions to the "histoire poétique de Charlemagne." Here, Specht includes the only developed version in French of the Basin-Basile episode, evolution of the Hestout, Sanson, Isoriés, and Guron de Bretagne characters, the battles for Cordova and Toledo, and the thematics of "intramural conflict" mentioned above.

The *Pharsale* is not "un remaniement quelconque des *Fet des Romains* mais la transformation d’un extrait d'une oeuvre historique en prose, destinée à la lecture, en un poème narratif indépendant, destiné à l'exécution orale" (p. 116). Treating just two chapters of his medieval source, Nicolas does not appear to have known Lucan's *De helo civili*, Specht finds, however, a generally close rendering of the *Fet des Romains*, with alterations in the ordering of episodes. Modifications also include versification and organization into epic *laisse*. Their purpose: "Augmenter l'intelligibilité du récit en vue de son exécution orale, et [adapter] l'esprit' historique aux exigences du genre épique et à l'attente d'un public amateur de chansons de geste" (p. 117).

Regarding the *sens* of the *Pharsale*, Specht approaches the issue by a
close comparison with the *Fet*, pointing out that, in general, medieval treatment of the Pompey-Caesar conflict tends to favor Caesar's position, while Lucan did not share this bias. He also asks why the *Pharsale* either omits or seems to misinterpret most of the references to the fratricidal character of the conflict. As for why Pompey suffered defeat, neither the *Fet* nor the *Pharsale* offers a logical explanation. In view of such significant questions, it is curious that Specht does not pursue any contextual links. Instead, he concludes:

> Ni les cent cinquante ans qui séparent le Véronais du compilateur anonyme ni le milieu particulier d'une cour princière italienne de la prérenaissance n'ont laissé de traces perceptibles dans la *Pharsale*. Contrairement à d'autres chansons de geste franco-italiennes, le poème sur la bataille de César contre Pompée ne semble pas refléter une situation sociologique ou politique particulière (pp. 152-153).

The *Passion* likewise exists today in an *unicum* MS, Cod. Marc. str. XXXIX (=272). After giving a plot summary, Specht compares the Biblical sources utilized, surmising that Nicolas consulted all four Gospels and translated directly from the Vulgate, with some additions, omissions, and "interprétations personnelles" (p. 200). Again, apostrophes to an audience lead him to suppose exclusively oral presentation of the Biblical text transformed into a *chanson de geste*. Although Specht expresses brief but categorical doubt concerning lack of "imagination" in these texts, he states here that "il ne fait aucun doute pour nous que cette *Passion* est la création originale de Nicolas de Vérone" (p. 199). Yet Specht does not define what he means by fourteenth-century "imagination" or "originality." And while he allows "originality" here, he denies "la moindre prise de position explicite" in a theological sense — except, possibly, that "la fidélité aux évangiles signale éventuellement un retour à l'Évangile" (p. 200). Such elliptical and reductionist statements are difficult to comprehend.

Although this thesis contains a large quantity of material familiar to those conversant with Franco-Italian literature, it makes good use of traditional critical methodologies to provide an exacting examination of texts. Specht is most original in his arguments for a revised concept of the affiliation between the *Pampelune* and related texts, especially the *Entrée d'Espagne*. There are broad areas of literary interest raised here which merit further research. It is to be hoped that Specht's study will stimulate that scholarship.

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