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An Epic Fragment: *Les Vœux dou Canart*

In the winter 1978 issue of *Olifant* (vol. 6, no. 2) we published an epic fragment that had been found by Professor Avril Ichthik in the Carroll Dodgson Library in London. In the summer of 1986 a similar but unrelated fragment, from a late, otherwise unknown chanson de geste, was discovered amongst the wrapping papers in an Indonesian takeaway in Utrecht, Holland. It has just been acquired by the Dodgson Library and is now listed as MS. *Dud 2* in their collection. With the permission of the discoverer of the fragment, Professor K. Busby of Utrecht, and the trustees of the Dodgson Library, we are pleased to present the fragment to readers of *Olifant*. Unfortunately, other folios of apparently the same provenance were used apparently to wrap pancake rolls and were consequently damaged beyond repair. A full commentary is in preparation, but it can be noted in the interim that the author shows a rare prescience in his vocabulary, along with a strong tendency toward the rare or unique vocable. The author is unknown, unless the word *Stultissimus*, scrawled in a late bâtard hand in the left margin, is to be taken as a signature rather than as a comment on the action.

I

Or escotez signour qui tant estes de pris:
.i. bon conte vous dirai, dous et amanevis,
c'est dou joli canart qui a Bron fu rostis,
dont li savant ont fet lors gabs et lors avis.
Devant la porte il vint cis canars dont jou vous dis,
si mengea trop de pain, mors cheï et transis.
Lors avint .i. bons queus, por desjeuner l'out pris,
alors fu li canars ou les pommes rostis:
ce sont bon vegetal qui durement sont fris,
aussi sont il bouillis et a vapeur servis.

II

Dist li uns des savans: «Ço m'est .i. bons pretexte:

jou mettrai a mercis tot le pueple dou Texte,
ço sont li Sarrazin qui habitent contexte.
Tost les aray occis, Fenotexte et Sustexte,
les .ii. freres geans, et le fel Macrotexte,
et occirai le nain qu[i] a nom Microtexte,
et lor reis en moura, l'orgoillous Intertexte.»

III

Lors gaba .i. savans, d'Outremer est venus,
por sa [tres] grant proëce de tout hom est connus.
Au grant Qala'mazout .m. savans out vaincus,
.x.m. a Toronte, .xx.m. a Liverpus.
Dist il: «Le nom de Je ne pris jou .i. festus,
si de Je parle .i. clers, mors est et confondus.
Tel clerc mensengëor de moi seront refus;
n'i ert que Narrateur et Persona par us.
Par le canart le jur: feray par grant vertus.»
(Mais cil parla en Je: de nul hom n'ert creüs!)

IV

Aprés gaba .i. clers, on le dist moult lisant:
Li grans osts des Genres devant lui va fuyant,
de sa Modalité lors testes va tranchant,
puis sor Reception s'en va les cors foulant,
ço est son destrïer, de lui n'a nus garant.
De les Genres nommer est hom or mais en grant.
Cis dist: «Par le canart vois je mon nom changeant!
Faus estoit lors mes genres, or ert li voirs parant:
Li chevaliers dou signe sera mis noms atant;
fils sui d'un grant seignor, dou bon Senefiant,
et de Signifiee, la fee qu'il aima tant,
si la perdist lons temps par .i. enchantement.
Or jou la sauverai, a lui l'irai donnant,
s'auront .i. autre fil, le gentil Referant.»

V

Lors vint .i. savans homs, dou voir est grant pités:
.xvii. ans toz pleniers fut il emprisonnés
dou fel dragon Etti qui tant est maus et lés.

Membre n'i out cis homs, quin fust descontruisés,
sor le piz .i. frans barthes, les piez semiotisés;
les .ii. yeus de la teste out narrativisés,
orribles fu li nez, ert diagetisés.
Grans miracles i fust, dont fust esmerveilliés:
il toucha le canart, dou mal est delivrés.
De joie fîst .i. saut, s'en va sains et haitiés...

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The following advertisement, like the above text, has its ties to Holland:

Haskins Medal

We are pleased to announce that the Medieval Academy of America awarded its Haskins Medal for 1986 to a former member of *Olifant's* editorial board, William Roach. The following is the text of the commendation.

The Haskins Medal for 1986 has been awarded to William Roach, Professor Emeritus of Romance Languages at the University of Pennsylvania, for the fifth volume of his edition of the *Continuations* of the Old French *Perceval* of Chrétien de Troyes. This volume, which was published by the American Philosophical Society in 1983, contains the *Third Continuation,* a poem of about ten thousand lines composed by a certain Manessier in order to bring to completion the adventures of Perceval and Gauvain as recounted by Chrétien de Troyes and two earlier continuators of Chrétien's romance. The Manessier volume is the long-awaited capstone of a monumental undertaking and has been prepared with the same philological rigor and meticulous care as its four predecessors. Taken together with them, it makes available in a very reliable form, and with copious notes and variants, about eighty thousand lines of octosyllabic verse that are much needed as primary source material not only by students of Old French literature and historians of the French language but also by Arthurian scholars, whatever their field of specialization, and by persons interested in the legends surrounding the Holy Grail.

With the modesty and dedication of Mabillon, Professor Roach has placed his intelligence and erudition at the service of his contemporaries and of future generations. Since the Holy Grail is not ours to bestow, this medal is offered as a small token of appreciation for the lasting contribution Professor Roach has made to the advancement of medieval studies.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas N. Bisson
Robert M. Lumiansky
Alice M. Colby-Hall, Chairman