

Elements of the Chanson de Geste in an Old French Life of Becket: Garnier's *Vie de Saint Thomas le Martyr*

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The few readers of Garnier de Pont Sainte-Maxence's *Vie de Saint Thomas Le Martyr* (c. 1174) have commended its epic sweep and ambition, but there has been little extended consideration of these elements or their resonances. Janet Shirley, for example, refers to the author's "epic manner" and "several attempts at the epic technique of repetition," but she does not speculate on the purpose behind these phenomena.¹ Presumably, they represent scattershot attempts to inject some of the grandeur of epic into the homelier world of hagiography. Paul Zumthor too invokes the medieval French epic in his brief but enthusiastic comments on Garnier's poem. Zumthor writes: "Garnier réutilise tous les éléments de diction que lui fournissent à la fois la chanson de geste et les premiers essais de poésie didactique."² I would suggest that the *Vie de Saint Thomas* does indeed resemble the chanson de geste to a perhaps surprising degree, and that these resemblances are neither random nor thematically insignificant. In diction, plot, and characterization, the *Vie de Saint Thomas* has more in common with the *Chanson de Roland* or *Raoul de Cambrai*, than with the *Vie de Saint Alexis* or, for that matter, the South English Legendary *Becket vita. Le Couronnement de Louis*, for example, contains an account of a violent assault in church which, though it does not culminate in a death, seems more like the assassination of Becket than anything else in English or French hagiography. This is Guillaume's humiliation of Richard de Rouen, Achitophel to King Louis's David:

On li enseigne par dedenz le mostier
Li cuens i vît poignant toz eslaissiez,
Et après lui quatre vint chevalier.
Richart trova a l'altel apoié;
Nel laissa mie por ce qu'iert al mostier:
Le poing senestre li a meslé el chief,
Tant l'enclina que il l'a embronchié;
Halce le destre, enz el col li assiet;
Tot estordi l'abati a ses piez,
Que toz les membres li peust on trenchier
Ne remuast ne les mains ne les piez.
Veit le Guillelmes, si li prent a huchier:

“Oltre, culverz! Deus te doinst encombrer!”
 Forces demande, si li tondi le chief,
 Tot nu a nu sor le marbre l’assiet,
 Puis s’escria, oiant les chevaliers:
 “Einsi deit on traïtor justicier,
 Qui son seignor vult traïr et boisier.” (1954-71)³

Similarly, the ferocious rhetoric of the king’s men in Garnier—“Dunc jurerent sur sainz, e entre-afié sunt . . . Par desuz le mentun la langue lui trarunt/E les oilz de sun chief ansdous li creverunt” (5091-93)—is common in the chansons de geste, as in this threat by Raoul de Cambrai’s enemies: “Nos li traïrons le poumon et le foie” (2072)⁴ One explanation for such resemblances is that the knights who murdered Becket are more or less real-life versions of the hot-tempered knights who populate—and depopulate—French epic. Both groups habitually resort to exaggerated, excessive language. “Verbal impropriety abounds” in chanson de geste, writes Howard Bloch: “Sacrilegious oaths, exaggeration, blasphemy, broken promises, lies, jokes . . . all serve as catalysts to thematic development.”⁵ Allison Goddard Elliott has also connected the angry speech of hagiographic confrontations with the violent speech of French epic.⁶ Garnier delights in this kind of language. His Henry II swears with cartoonish annoyance and frequency, “Par les oilz Deu!” (four times alone between 1475 and 1505). His Becket claims to be able, if necessary, to resist the flaying of his friends and family (2601-05). Another time Thomas is warned, at Northampton, that he will be imprisoned and “never again see his feet” (1544). William Calin’s typology of the rebel-baron cycle of French epics fits Garnier’s *Thomas* well:

If in the Feudal Cycle the rebel baron appears as a Christ-like figure, the king is usually depicted oscillating between the criminal indifference of Pontius Pilate and the conscious tyranny of Herod or Nero. In each case responsibility for the act of revolt must fall on his shoulders: he will disinherit one of his barons (*Raoul de Cambrai*), steal his intended wife (*Girard de Rousillon*), or fail to render proper justice before the court (*Chevalerie Ogier, Quatre Fils Aymon*). Occasionally these misdeeds are due to the influence of evil counselors, the family of traitors, or the king’s own overly refined sense of family loyalty; just as often, however, he acts out of selfishness or mere caprice.⁷

It is in fact Henry's relentless harassment of Becket by means of his own newly-formulated legal reforms--the Clarendon statutes--that drives the archbishop into exile. Over time, and egged on by his supporters, Henry's feud with Thomas becomes a vendetta. Nor does it strain the parallel to see in Henry's inability to prevent his own knights from assassinating the archbishop what Calin calls the inability of the *geste* king "to maintain order in his own court" (118). According to William Stubbs, the younger Henry Plantagenet's subsequent rebellion against his father represented the reaction of "nearly all that portion of the baronage which inherited the traditions of the Conquest and the ancient Norman spirit."⁸ It is, then, tempting to see the rebel-cycle epics as providing the paradigm for Garnier, but Becket's *desmesure* might best be compared to the prototypical hero of the genre, Roland himself. At a climactic moment in the battle, Oliver reproaches his friend thus:

... Cumpainz, vos le feistes,
Kar vasselage par sens nen est folie;
Mielz valt mesure que ne fait estultie.
Franceis sunt morz par vostre legerie.
Jamais Karlon de nus n'avrat servise. (1723-27)⁹

Here is John of Salisbury to Thomas:

Vostre conseil, fait il, deussiez apeler,
Quant li chevalier vindrent chailenz a vus parler.
Fors achaisun ne quierent de vus a mort livrer.
Mais de vostre corine ne vus puet nuls geter. (5367-70)

... Ne sumes apresté
Que voillum mes encore estre a la mort livré;
Car en pechié gisum e en chaitivité
N'un sul ne vei, fors vus, qui muire de sun gré. (5376-79)

John, then, plays Oliver to the archbishop's Roland: *Thomas est proz e Johans est sage*. The only extant Latin source for this incident is Benedict of Peterborough; John's account contains no such exchange.¹⁰ Garnier, however, doubles the length of Benedict's version, increasing the amount of direct discourse, thereby sharpening considerably its confrontational quality.

Other incidental similarities deserve mention. Becket's refusal to flee his assassins parallels Roland's unwillingness, until too late, to sound the oliphant for reinforcements. Bishop Foliot himself, in Garnier, warns Thomas: "ne vus desmesurez" (3302). Elsewhere, Thomas, like Charlemagne, is given to dream-visions which foretell his fate. Animals and violence figure prominently in these. Charlemagne dreams of being attacked by a bear and a leopard (725-36). A hunting dog rescues him, and in the process, bites off the bear's right ear. In a barely coherent digression denouncing repeat offenders among the clergy, Garnier compares a wicked man to the boar in Avianus's fable, who has his ears cut off for repeatedly wasting a lord's fields: When caught yet again, the animal is handed over to the lord's cook:

Li keus manja le cuer. Quant li fu demandez,
Fist al seignur acreire que senz quer esteit nez:
Car se il eust quer, il se fust purpensez.
Le fel est tuzis fels, ne ja mais n'iert senez.

Pur c'esguard par raisun, e bien l'os afichier,
Que se li clers forfait a perdre sun mestier,
Face le sis prelaz en sa chartre lancier,
Qu'il ne puisse ja mais hors d'iluec repairier.
Iluec purra, s'il volt, ses mesfaiz adrecier. (1292-1300)

"If he had had a heart, the boar would have thought twice (*se fust purpensez*).” Even in its larger context, Garnier's use of this story is highly ambiguous, constituting, one suspects, a sly dig at Thomas's *desmesure*.

In the angry confrontation at Canterbury between Thomas and the newly arrived quartet of knights, the first words are spat out by Reginald FitzUrse: "Deus t'ait!" (5227), a comment, Garnier tells us, which turns Thomas' face "plus vermeilz . . . Que nen est escarlade que l'um d'autres eslit" (5228-29). What FitzUrse utters is what even monks like Orderic Vitalis recognized as the traditional "battle cry of the Normans."¹¹ Some in Garnier's audience might have thought of Ganelon's first words to Charlemagne, after the disaster at Roncevaux: "Salvez seiez de Deu" (676).

We can easily imagine why the Becket drama would have been so appealing to a clerical French *jongleur* such as Garnier. It offered a chance to assimilate into an established literary tradition a fresh, contemporary event whose very nature invited epic treatment. The

effect of this assimilation is to affirm the superiority of the rebel-hero Becket without necessarily questioning the authority of the monarchy. Garnier gets, in Becket, the ideological and narrative advantages of mimicking the rebel-baron *gestes* while drawing on the classic hero of the genre, Roland, for the purposes of characterization. The author lends interest, authority, and dignity to his poem and to the cause of the Church—which his poem largely aims to support—by adopting the typology, tone, and diction of the Old French epics. Best of all, by possessing material that allows him to evoke both the royal and the rebel *gestes*, implicit criticism of the archbishop can co-exist with Garnier’s open criticism of the king. As Claudine Wilson suggests, there probably was lots of competition in the “life of Thomas” business, much or most of it now lost to us completely.¹² Turning Thomas of Canterbury into Roland of Roncevaux may have been one means of distinguishing *his* Becket from all the others. Of course, many elements in Garnier’s poem do not easily correspond to the *chanson de geste*. The political and legal maneuvering which takes up so much of the poem has no clear parallel in the Old French epics, although the Northampton council and the various *parlements* arranged by the French king Louis resemble neatly the *gestes*’s querulous councils of Frankish barons. In his letters to the king, Thomas repeatedly refers to the “conseil des feluns” (2858; 2864; 2939) as the source of Henry’s wickedness. The work of R. Howard Bloch may provide a more systematic approach to the issue. In *Medieval French Literature and Law*, Bloch sets medieval French literature against the matrix provided by the rise of the trial by inquest which replaced the violent trial by ordeal as the normal means of establishing legal and moral right. He sees this as a product of the same phenomenon that forms the contemporary social background of the rebel baron *geste*: “a general trend towards centralization of royal power in the post-feudal period”:¹³

The advent of an inquisitory mode served, first of all, to change the nature of the judicial encounter from a symbolic struggle between two relatively limited groups—clans, counties, duchies, even monasteries—to a struggle of an individual against the increasingly comprehensive political body of the state. For the potential violence of clannish vendetta—the violence of some against some—royalty attempted to impose a violence of all against one.¹⁴

Bloch goes on to speak of “a fundamental displacement away from the battlefield and toward the ‘Parlement,’ the place where, literally,

opponents speak instead of fighters.”¹⁵ The result is also a generic transformation in which “romance combines the epic ordeal, violence openly enacted, with that of the lyric, violence expressed only through words”:¹⁶ words such as “excommunicate,” perhaps, which resonates throughout Garnier’s text, as in “excommunicate and cut off.” Henry’s knights demand that Becket restore the men whom he has “escumuniez e fait de Deu sevrer” (5259). Similar examples of excommunication as a cutting off or violent severing occur in vv. 4898; 4910; 5282; 5532-33. The French poet is not inventing but rather heightening a figure derived from Scripture that was conventional in ecclesiastical rhetoric and especially current in the Becket circle. John of Salisbury writes thus to the Canterbury chapter announcing the excommunication of the bishops who participated in the coronation of young Henry:

Look! Peter’s sword is out; it hangs over the necks of the Church’s enemies and mightily threatens them; unless Malchus avoids the blow, Peter will cut off his right ear. . . . I speak to men who know and hold and care for and embrace the Law. It was not believed that the bishop of London and the other authors and inspirers of schism were to be struck by the sword of excommunication; but the Church has now removed them from her body and has cast them out.¹⁷

Likewise, Thomas, in one of his letters provided by Garnier, upbraids the royalist bishops for not acting like Peter at Gethsemani, “qui dona la colee/Al serf al prince aveit l’une oreille coupee” (3489-90). Bloch’s insights allow us to see the *Vie de Saint Thomas* loosed from strict generic moorings, to see genre “as process.”¹⁸ The process involves the adaption of strategies and formulae identified with the *chanson de geste* to contemporary ideological and narratological problems.

In addition to analogues of situation and character, specific images and passages from Garnier’s text support a connection between his poem and the Old French epic. For example, the “anyone who saw . . . would” construction, so common in *Roland*, *Raoul*, and other *gestes*, occurs several times in the *Vie de Saint Thomas*, most notably in a passage describing the final indignity to the archbishop, the smashing of his skull by Hugh Mauclerc:

Qui dunc veïst le sanc od le cervel chaïr
E sur le pavement l’un od l’autre gesir,

De roses e de lilies li peust sovenir
Car dunc veïst le sanc el blanc cervel rovir,
Le cervel ensemment el vermeil sanc blanchir. (5636-40)

In iconographic terms, the passage is rich in meaning. The mixture of roses and lilies is a common image in medieval literary iconography, and the image of the bloodied skull in these terms came to Garnier from his source, Edward Grim. Grim's Latin reads: "quo ictu et gladium colligit lapidi; et coronam, quae ampla fuit ita a capite separavit, ut sanguis albens ex cerebro, cerebrum nihilominus rubens ex sanguine, lili et rosae coloribus virginis et matris ecclesiae faciem confessoris et martyris vita et morte purpuraret."¹⁹ But the "Qui dunc veïst" construction is Garnier's touch.²⁰

An earlier passage offers a odd omen of the coming catastrophe. Becket denounces his enemies from the pulpit on Christmas day, four days before his assassination. One insult particularly galls him:

Mais le jur de Noel, quant il out sermuné,
De saint' iglise aveit Robert del Broc sevré,
Qui l'autre jur devant li eut fait tel vilté
Qu'il li eut sun sumier de la coue escurté,
E altres qui aveient envers lui meserré. (4951-55)

Among the Becket texts, only Garnier has this packhorse incident occur in the archbishop's presence. Later, Garnier represents Thomas including this injury in a list of complaints he makes to Reginald FitzUrse:

"Mult me plaig de ses hummes, sainz Thomas respundié,
Qui noz iglises tienent force a pechié,
Mes hummes unt battuz, mun somier escurcié
Mes tuneaus e mun vin tolu e esforcié,
Que mis sires li reis m'i out acharié." (5306-10)

Thomas's "sumiers" had received passing mention earlier in the poem (4210, 4457). In medieval French literature, packhorses, or sumpters, turn up repeatedly, as is perhaps only natural in stories of epic military adventure. Brault even refers to a "packhorse motif" in Roland.²¹ The schemer Ganelon, for example, advises the infidel King Marsile of the shameful treatment he will receive from Charlemagne:

Vus n'i avrez palefrie ne destrer,

Ne mul ne mule qui puissez chevalcher;
 Getet serez sur un malvais sumer.
 Par jugement iloec perdrez le chef. (479-82)

It is a threat that catches up to Ganelon himself: upon his arrest, “Sur un sumer l’unt mis a deshonor” (1828). Ganelon is a traitor to the king, while Becket is accused by his assassins of being a traitor to Henry II. Since the packhorse is associated with defeat, shame, dishonor, and debasement,²² de Broc’s act seems clearly emblematic in nature, rather than the casual brutality of a local ruffian: it characterizes the royalist attitude towards the archbishop within the context of contemporary literary typology. The story melds a motif from French epic with elements from British folklore. Medieval iconography frequently associates Saint Thomas with tailless horses. Louis Réau cites a fresco scene that represents the “Mocking of St. Thomas Becket—The tail of his horse cut off as he rides through Rochester.”²³

For the zealous Christian jongleur, Becket would have provided the perfect opportunity to compete with chansons de geste. Thomas is a soldier of Christ, like Turpin, who conducts himself in epic fashion against the enemies of God and the Church. In the weeks leading up to his murder, Thomas is repeatedly accused of leading armed knights through the king’s lands (4896-97 and 5066-69). Becket, indeed, had actually led English troops into battle in France. In this regard, Garnier’s Thomas combines the roles of Turpin and Roland, while still affirming the superiority of the ecclesiastical role. The idea of the warrior-priest remained problematic in medieval culture. As early as 742 the Frankish Church had forbidden clerics to bear arms.²⁴ In Thomas’s case, this problem would have been reconciled by the fact of his death *in church*. Of course, the soldier who becomes a monk is a minor commonplace in medieval literature. Perhaps the best twelfth-century example combining actual historical reality and literary representation, in the sense of Bloch’s displacement of the violent into the verbal, is the case of Abelard. His father, he tells us, had intended him for the soldier’s life, “though his passion for learning was such that he intended all his sons to have instruction in letters before they were trained to arms.”²⁵ The son’s love of study, however, prevailed, “until I was so carried away by my love of learning that I renounced the glory of a soldier’s life, made over my inheritance and rights of the oldest son to my brothers, and withdrew from the court of Mars in order to kneel at the feet of Minerva. I preferred the weapons of dialectic to all the other teachings of philosophy, and armed with these I chose the conflicts of disputation instead of the trophies of war.”²⁶ The scholar’s life does

not ultimately spare Abelard the violence of the soldier's. He is the victim of both real and figurative violence: he is castrated by Heloise's uncle Fulbert, and his book is burned. A twelfth-century vernacular analogue to Becket and Abelard even better than Turpin is the *Moniage Guillaume*, whose very existence demonstrates contemporary interest in adapting the secular epic to an ecclesiastical or monastic context.²⁷ At a climactic point in the *Moniage Guillaume*, the hero yanks off the leg of a sumpter horse to use as a weapon against attacking robbers. He does this, however, only after threatening them with excommunication. When he is finished with the fight, he miraculously restores the leg to the sumpter. The hero, the former Guillaume al Cort Nez, makes for a comically sorry monk indeed, but in this scene we see a kaleidoscopic reflection of all the basic elements of the Becket story (*desmesure*, monasticism, excommunication, violence, miraculous cures) within the context of a genre that is itself, by this time, bursting at the seams.²⁸ Guillaume the monk, like Thomas, is too difficult to handle, and must be gotten rid of, in this case by a plot concocted by Guillaume's own abbot.

We need not argue that Garnier's life of Becket *is* a *chanson de geste*, only that there are enough similarities to suggest that the author consciously adapted his work in part to that tradition. By this means, Garnier reinforces epic elements already present or latent in hagiography, and certainly present in the events themselves of Thomas's life. By casting the drama in such recognizable terms, Garnier provides his audience with a tool for interpreting these events; indeed, by so casting it, he offers his own interpretation.

NOTES

¹In her English translation, *Garnier's Becket* (London: Phillimore, 1975), xi-xiii. The French text of Garnier was edited by Emmanuel Walberg as *Vie de Saint Thomas Becket* (Lund: Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis, 1922); reissued with abridged editorial apparatus for the *Classiques Français du Moyen Age* (CFMA) series (Paris: Champion, 1964). Citations are from the CFMA edition; references to Walberg's editorial apparatus are to the 1922 edition, and are cited as "Walberg."

²Paul Zumthor, *Essai de Poétique Médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972) 30.

³Ed. Ernest Langlois, CFMA (Paris: Champion, 1969). Another useful analogue, outside the realm of French epic, might be Galbert of Bruges' *The Murder of Charles the Good*, trans. James Bruce Ross (New York: Harper & Row, 1967). Although Galbert does not describe in any detail the actual murder--elsewhere his narrative is full of violence--there are some remarkable similarities to the Becket case: Charles is murdered in church; his body is left unattended for some time afterward; the common people seek his body and blood as relics. Indeed, two camps, Ghent and Bruges, almost go to war over the corpse.

⁴Raoul de Cambrai, ed. P. Meyer and A. Longnon (1882; rpt. New York, 1965). Further citations are from this edition.

⁵R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983) 101.

⁶Allison Goddard Elliott, *Roads to Paradise* (Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 1987) 185.

⁷William Calin, *The Old French Epic of Revolt* (Geneva: Droz, 1962) 118.

⁸*Constitutional History of England*, 6th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1897), 1: 515.

⁹Gerard J. Brault, ed. and trans., *La Chanson de Roland* (University Park: Pennsylvania State U P, 1978). All citations are from this edition.

¹⁰For Benedict, see *Materials for a History of Thomas Becket*, ed. James Craigie Robertson (Rolls Series 67; rpt. Millwood, NY: Kraus, 1965), 2: 9. Hereafter cited as *Materials*.

¹¹Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968-1980), 5: 363.

¹²"These Becket lives . . . which we now see as so many individual productions, are merely the remains of a great collective creation, the legend of Becket." See Claudine I. Wilson (review of Walberg's 1922 edition), *Modern Language Review* 18 (1923): 491-99.

¹³R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1977) 127.

¹⁴Bloch 128.

¹⁵Bloch 139. Eugene Vance writes similarly: "During the twelfth century, there was an increasing tendency for the dialectic of the literary battlefield to move inward into the mind, to become psychological rather than physical. Dialogue, moreover, tends to replace physical action." See *Reading the Song of Roland* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970) 62.

¹⁶Bloch 189.

¹⁷Letter 295, *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, Vol. 2, ed. and trans. W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976) 679.

¹⁸This phrase is used by both Vance 73 and Kevin Brownlee and Marina Scordilis Brownlee, "Introduction," *Romance: Generic Transformation From Chrétien de Troyes to Cervantes* (Hanover, NH: U P of New England, 1985) 1.

¹⁹*Materials* 1: 437.

²⁰M. D. Legge cites an inscription on an Anglo-Norman church in Wood Eaton that offers a variation on this motif: "Ki cest image verra/Le iur de male mort ne murra." *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U P, 1950) 1.

²¹Brault, 2: 409.

²²An incident in which a packhorse is associated specifically with persecution of the church occurs in *Raoul de Cambrai*. In that late *chanson de geste* Raoul's crimes against the church--the burning of a convent, the attendant murder of its nuns, disregard for Good Friday fasting customs--lead to his swift downfall. Among these acts, he assaults a church, and orders:

Mon tré tendez em mi liu del mostier,
Et en ces porches esseront mi sonmier . . . (vv. 1234-35)

Orderic's account of the first crusade describes how, during the siege of Antioch, the Christians "sent four pack-horses laden with the heads of the slain to the gate, at the sight of which the citizens and envoys from Cairo lamented bitterly and almost died of grief." (5: 87). He recounts too the fate of a certain abbot and traitor to Henry I named Robert, who when captured was "flung like a sack over a horse's back"; only his monastic habit, Orderic says, prevented Henry from being "torn limb from limb on the spot." (6: 83). Five hundred years later, the association of the packhorse with disgrace is still current in literature: Shakespeare's *Lear* cries, "Return with her?/Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter/To this detested groom." (II.iv.214-16).

²³ *Iconographie de l'art chrétien 3: Iconographie de saints* (Paris: PUF, 1959) 1272-75.

²⁴ Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980) 77; on this issue see Duby 77-78, and also Robert Levine, "Ingeld and Christ: A Medieval Problem," *Viator* 2 (1971): 105-28, esp. 110-11.

²⁵ *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. Betty Radice (London: Penguin, 1974) 57.

²⁶ *Letters* 58.

²⁷ Jessie Crosland, *The Old French Epic* (1951; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1971) 40. See also the excellent essay by Jean Subrenat, "Moines mesquins et saint chevalier: à propos du *Moniage Guillaume*," in *Mélanges de Philologie et de Littérature Romanes Offerts à Jeanne Wathelet-Willem* (Liege: Cahiers de l'A.R.U., 1978): "Le *Moniage Guillaume* participe ici de deux ordres: l'ordre monastique et l'ordre chevaleresque, tous les deux au service de Dieu" (662). For monastic liturgy as violence displaced, in Bloch's sense, into speech, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Cluniac Liturgy as Ritual Aggression," *Viator* 2 (1971): 129-59. Rosenwein argues that "the life of a Cluniac monk even inside the cloister was unconsciously a ritualized re-enactment of the life of the knight" (154). Orderic Vitalis mentions William the Conqueror's grandson Henry who "was given as a child oblate to fight for God in the monastery of Cluny" (*Ecclesiastical History* 3: 117). E. Catherine Dunn notes a generic similarity in the performance of early hagiography: "The chanted recitative of the hagiographical *vita* was a phenomenon closely analogous to the celebration of a great warrior's deeds by the scop at the Germanic banquet hall." *The Gallican Saint's Life and the Late Roman Dramatic Tradition* (Washington: CUA Press, 1989), p. 94. The longer and shorter versions of *Le Moniage Guillaume* are edited by W. Cloetta, 2 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1911).

²⁸ The further similarities with Abelard's *Historia* are worth noting as well. As a hapless reforming abbot, Abelard is persecuted by his monks:

whenever the monks heard that I was travelling anywhere they would bribe robbers and station them on the roads and byways to murder me. I was still struggling against all these perils when one day the hand of the lord struck me sharply and I fell from my saddle, breaking a bone in my neck. This fracture caused me far greater pain and weakened me more than my previous injury. Sometimes I tried to put a stop to their lawless insubordination by excommunication, and compelled those of them I most feared to promise me either on their honour or on oath taken before the rest that they would leave the abbey altogether and trouble me no