Berta ai piedi grandi:  
Historical Figure and Literary Symbol

Leslie Z. Morgan  
Loyola College

Berta ai piedi grandi is one of the few chansons de geste with a female in the title—five out of the 86-100 normally listed in chanson de geste repertoires. She also shares a title; of the six chansons de geste listed with two characters as a title, Berta e Milone is one. In St. Mark’s Ms. Fr. 13 (henceforth, Geste Francor), a manuscript compilation probably dating to the first half of the fourteenth century, Berta occupies 1753 lines of verse (out of 17,067 total), about 10% together with Berta e Milone, where the younger Berta is a major character, a female figure dominates 13% of the manuscript text. A female figure this conspicuous has, as might be expected, drawn critical attention.

Critics reading Berta have worked primarily with Adenet le Roi’s late thirteenth-century Old French version, Berte aus grans piés. They have concentrated on two issues: 1) the historicity of the figure (where she came from, who she really is) and 2) her literary relationship with Charlemagne. In comparing various versions of the Berta story (which exist in French, Latin, Spanish and German as well as Italian), different solutions to the two issues have been proposed, but without a conclusive result. Recently, Krauss’s volume (translated into Italian in 1980) has suggested a third issue: the socio-cultural meaning of differences between the Geste Francor Berta poem and the Old French version.

Several historical studies provide useful background to the literary texts of Berta. Duby’s Le Chevalier, la femme et le prêtre (1980), translated as The Knight, the Lady and the Priest (1983), as well as Ennen’s Frauen im Mittelalter (1984), translated into Italian as Le donne nel medioevo (1986), discuss Germanic marriage practices current in Gaul during the seventh through twelfth centuries and the Catholic Church’s efforts to change them. These historical texts note that there were two different types of marriage, the dowered (Mutelehe) and dowerless (Friedelehe); the second seems to have been most practiced by the wealthy who could afford multiple wives. The Church called these women concubines, and accepted only the offspring of dowered
marriages as legitimate. Over the centuries, the Church, gradually increasing its power progressively institutionalized marriage, until finally, in the twelfth century, it began to participate in blessing marriage ceremonies. However, curing Frankish kings of their extra wives was a difficult proposition. As is clear from Figure 1, a whole series of Berthes and Bertrades passed through Merovingian and Carolingian royal bedchambers. Though a Berta was indeed a wife of Pipin the Short and Charlemagne’s mother, many others were connected with the family through the twelfth century, allowing for confusion in the recounting of events. Various Berthes caused concern about royal souls; both Robert the Pious and Philip I underwent public censure. Robert’s Berthe was another man’s wife—he merely married Constance for offspring, and returned to Berthe’s bed after Constance bore children. Philip I excited even greater scandal, involving consanguinity. Louis, Philip’s son, benefited in his own political battles with the Church by having his father’s (and grandfather’s) name blackened (Duby 82). Note that with Louis we are now into the twelfth century.

Thus, change in marriage ritual and its meaning in Gaul could have allowed for the reinterpretation of historical events (for whatever reasons) by subsequent persons. Between reinterpretation and the easy confusion of names due to the frequency of “Berta” and its variants, the literary stage is set for conscious use of historical motifs by poets with didactic programs.

A specific Berta with a specific foot deformation first appears in the thirteenth century. She appears in both art and literature. Several cathedrals have illustrations of the “Reine Pédauque” (Paris 224). The literary function of the foot or feet differs in various versions of the story. In part, it is a recognition device. Thus, in the Geste Francor, Berta’s mother, Belisant, discovers the intruder who has taken her daughter’s place from the lack of “pe grandi;” however, in other versions the feet are not emphasized or even mentioned.

Literary criticism at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century concentrated heavily on comparing the twenty-some different versions of the Berta story, trying to locate the “original” or “oldest” and to track down the sources of different variants (e.g., Feist). Critics have divided the available versions of Berta in various ways: Mediterranean vs. other (Colliot); outlines vs. expanded versions (Gaiffer 502-503). These researches do clarify the
fact that the Franco-Italian version is, in fact, different from all the others.

It is that difference of the Geste Francor that must attract the reader's attention. In order to offer a new light on the Geste Francor's version, a plot varying from all others in several ways, one might posit that the canzone di geste is what anthropologists call a "high context literature;" that is, the redactor presenter presumes much knowledge on the part of the audience. In the Geste Francor Berta, the story is not at all forthrightly presented; terms and names are keys to the circle of connoisseurs, keys which the modern reader has lost. Thus the context needed to read Berta in the Geste Francor is Rencesvals, Roland's death and the complicity of Ganelon (Roland's stepfather), and Charlemagne (Roland's uncle). Charlemagne is Roland's mother's brother; that is, Berta's brother (see Figure 2). Furthermore, the Geste Francor is a united cycle; Berta e Milone is a unique story appearing in this manuscript to explain Roland's birth.

To briefly summarize the Franco-Italian version, 1) Berta, daughter of the queen of Hungary, is sought in marriage by Pipin, King of France. 2) On her way to Paris with Pipin's messengers, the convoy stays with Belençer, a Maganzese; his daughter resembles Berta, and she is invited to accompany the party. 3) Upon their arrival in Paris, Berta asks the donçella (never named) to take her place in the marriage bed, since she is tired. (Thus Berta actively solicits the girl's help in deceiving Pipin.) 4) The girl agrees, but then she recognizes her position, and seizes her main chance. She has her henchmen take the real Berta out to be killed. 5) Her henchmen and his cohorts take pity on Berta and let her go; she wanders in the woods, is found by Synibaldo, who takes her to stay with his two daughters. She teaches the girls sewing and tutors them. 6) Pipin, while out hunting, comes to stay with Synibaldo, sees Berta and asks for her. She agrees. 7) He requests, and is given, a "carro," a cart, in the courtyard for their assignation. As a result of their union, Carlo Magno is engendered. 8) Meanwhile, back in Hungary, Berta's mother begins to wonder why she has heard nothing from her daughter, and goes to Paris to see what is going on. 9) Belisant, Berta's mother, finds the Maganzese girl, drags her out of the palace, and threatens Pipin. 10) Pipin remembers the woman in the forest with the big foot/feet, and the royal party goes there. 11) The women recognize each other; the traitor, the unnamed Maganzese girl, is burned (although she is forgiven by Berta, who
brings up the children of the union). This summary is abbreviated in the interests of space, but will convey the general plot and crucial events.

Of particular import to interpretation is the paternity of Roland. Both Latin and French versions of the Charlemagne study attribute (some more, some less discreetly) Roland to an incestuous union between Charlemagne and his step-sister (or sister) Berta (called Gilles in some versions). Those which do not actually carry the story do not contradict it. The first French text which specifically refers to Charlemagne’s sin is the thirteenth-century Chronique Saintongeaise, though earlier texts are believed to refer to it; thus, for example, the Chanson de Roland, laisse CLV (Moignet’s edition), ll. 2095-99 (cf. Keller 1991: 44-45). During the thirteenth century, in fact, the story appears more frequently, though earlier Latin texts (from the ninth century on) suggest that Charlemagne suffered from having committed a grave sin. In only one text, Wetti’s Vision (Wetti d. 836), is the sin specified as being carnal (Gaiffer 492, 502). The other two Latin texts are vague. With the twelfth century, there are further references to Charlemagne’s sin: the Vie de Saint Gilles in particular was a widely-known example. Note that the increasing hints of sin coincide in date with the growth of the “big foot/big feet” legend (Gaiffer; Keller 1991).

Because of the coincidence in timing, an attributed sin and deformed feet, it would seem that critics have ignored a real issue and the basis for the Berta story in the Geste Francor compilation, one that is continued in future Italianizations of the Maganzese cycle. That omitted fact is Berta’s physical deformity, her big foot/feet. In Figure 3 are listed the forms of Berta’s name and epithet which appear in the Geste Francor. Franco-Italian is not the easiest language, so even Colliot, a distinguished critic of French materials, has interpreted l. 1299 (the second in Table 3) as meaning a single abnormal foot: “le pied est signalé à Pepin et aux envoyés du roi” (675). Krauss also speaks of an abnormal foot. A denet le Roi, author of the best-known version of the Berta story gives “as grans piés” (Henry, l. 1076) and “as grans piez” (l. 1367). François Villon, listing the ladies of yesteryear, cites “Berte au plat pié” (mid-fifteenth century): one need only think of Bertha Big-Foot or Bertha Broadfoot, the English names for the same character. However, here, in verses 1238-39, it is stated that her feet are bigger than other people’s: “Ma una cosla oit qe la fa anomer: / ‘Berta da li pe grandi’ si se fa apeler.”
This big foot—or these big feet—explain the Franco-Italian story. Their presence or absence, not number, provides information about the society in which the story was heard or read and the redactor’s interpretation of Berta and her role in deceiving Pipin. The redactor’s society differed from the one previously dominant in Gaul and Northern Europe.

In order to appreciate these differences, I shall first note the meaning of deformity in folk and contemporary Italian medical tradition, then mention the different uses of Berta’s “feet” in Adenet’s French version and the Geste Francor version. I shall then reconstruct the fable behind the Franco-Italian story.

In an attempt to explain Berta’s foot/feet and their essential role in the Franco-Italian story, one must examine materials on deformities in medical, legal and philosophical sources. The most interesting and cited text (translated into English from Latin by Helen R. Lemay, 1992) is the Pseudo-Albertus Magnus’s De Secretis Mulierum, “Women’s Secrets,” a combination of theological and medical commentary (which Lemay calls “Natural Science” in her introduction) relating to gynecological practices. The date given is “thirteenth and fourteenth century scholastic milieu” (2), and the translation includes two commentaries which appear in many of the versions. De Secretis’s date is approximately simultaneous with that of the Geste Francor, and similar references in other works suggest continuing beliefs surrounding deformity (cf. Brundage 156).

In De Secretis, deformity in a child is generally attributed to parents’ sin or a sin of society at large which an individual has been chosen to expiate. Furthermore, there was a strong belief in the inheritance of evil (like father, like son—or, in this case, like mother, like daughter) which could be visible in a deformity through the generations.

Sin in the child’s parents could be sexual. Thus, for example, in Pseudo-Albertus, we find:

Some monstrosity is caused by an irregular form of coitus. For if a man lies in an unusual manner when he is having sex with a woman, he creates a monster in nature. I have heard tell that a man who was lying sideways on top of the woman to produce a child with a
curved spine and a lame foot, and the deformity was attributed to the irregular position. (114)

He also says that children can be blind, crippled, leprous or monstrous “because deformed children are a public reprimand for parents” (Niccoli 15).

Similarly, treatises prohibit women from letting their minds wander during intercourse, for fear of deleteriously affecting the conceptus. De Secretis recounts that a woman thinking of a certain thing may have a child like it: “It is possible that when such a figure springs to mind the fetus will be disposed in accordance with it” (116). Here, disease and deformity are presented as being punishment for erring from the forms of nature (missionary position being the most natural).

Among other causes cited for birth defects and birthing difficulties are inappropriate behaviors by the woman: e.g., participating in male activities. In the Geste Francor’s Berta ai piedi grandi, Berta’s mother is not a typical courtly figurine. She is “feared by all” and leaves to seek Berta when she hears nothing from her daughter. The text after the queen insists on going to see her daughter, and her husband has said no, reads: “E li rois quant l’intent, tuto fo spave[n]tie; / Por sa paure, el no sa q’elo die. / Dever de le tuto se homilie; / Plu la dota de nula ren qe sie” [“And the king, when he heard her, was all afraid; / Because of his fear, he did not know what to say. / Before her, he abased himself completely; / He feared her more than anything that exists.”] (ll. 2396-99). In fact, she is the bullying wife who cows her man, a stereotype in medieval literature (not an anomaly). However, one must go beyond the realm of epic, to farces and fabliaux, to recognize her nature.

The other type of sin much discouraged by the Church was consanguinity; in fact, one cannot help remembering at this point the story of Robert, King of France, who was punished for having married his kinswoman by having a son with “a neck and head like a goose” (Duby 84). In short, the concern is genetic, for appropriate offspring. How this affects the Berta story is clearer in the French tradition, which is discussed shortly. Censured marriages during the Carolingian period are condemned for consanguinity, not adultery (Duby 82).

What was done about deformation or monstrosities? MacKinney, in his history of medicine, suggests that “disease was a divine visitation.
Strictly medical care of the sick by clergymen in clerical institutions was frowned upon.” Making the sick comfortable was the maximum that could be done; the cure was up to God (75). One presumes that the same occurred in the case of deformation. However, exceptions may have happened, since, after the council of Trent, the Church promulgated guidelines of whether to destroy a “monster” or baptize it (Niccoli 19). The wording suggests that convenient “accidents” occurred and should be regulated. Whichever the case, the comfort or suppressing of monstrosities, one might presume that the daughter of a King of Hungary, in easy and conspicuous circumstances, would not be subjected to midwives who could cause a convenient “accident.” She would survive and thrive, as Berta did.

That people were (and are) suggestible and superstitious about childbirth and prenatal influence is seen elsewhere in medieval literature. To recall one text familiar to many, in Marie de France’s Le Fresne (“The Ash”), of the second half of the twelfth century, a woman foolishly accuses a neighbor of adultery for having twins (and then has them herself and must give one up to avoid soiling her name).

In summary, physical deformity in medical treatises is attributed to several causes, none of which is favorable to the parents. While there are other excuses presented—astrological signs, weak seed, etc.—the more scandalous are admittedly more interesting and more likely to be the source of speculation.

In light of these beliefs, a living person surviving with a deformation might be a source of fear and insecurity. In the Geste Francor’s Berta, each time her feet are mentioned, the onlookers laugh (Figure 4). First, when she is suggested to Pipin as an appropriate bride, he thinks the çubler is joking, and laughs. Secondly, when the messengers arrive in Hungary to notify the King of Pipin’s interest, they laugh (as does the Queen of Hungary in hearing of Pipin’s deformity; see Figure 4c). Anthropologists suggest that laughter derives from nervousness at a situation, when a human is unsure of how to react (Norris).

Whatever the source of Berta’s deformation, expiation of parental guilt or arbitrary, she is a marked woman. The “inspection” so remarked upon by Krauss (93-94), far from being a mere bourgeois marketing technique for verifying the quality of goods to be purchased (here, a marriage partner) had a real raison d’être since one anomaly
can be associated with various genetic syndromes (Wynbrandt and Ludman); the messengers sought related anomalies. Clubfoot or not, one deformation may be a sign of others.

The Geste Francor, like the early fifteenth-century Reali di Francia, insists on Berta’s feet. They are mentioned before betrothal, before marriage (by Berta’s father to the messengers) and for recognition when Berta’s mother comes to France. In German texts, they are not mentioned (Colliot 675); in Adenet’s text, one hears nothing about them until line 1076, when Berta is on her own, having been cast out by Pipin. In Adenet’s version, the feet only come up in all-female contexts—e.g., recognition by her mother, in company of her host’s daughters. In the French version, however, the fault for betrayal lies with an evil nurse and her daughter; in the Italian text, the fault is shared by Berta and her Maganzese twin. The Maganzese takes advantage of a possibility offered her by Berta, to sleep with the King, so Berta too is guilty. In the Italian version, the feet are not merely for recognition. There are two evils in the Franco-Italian Berta story: Berta herself and her twin.

Berta was herself so “marked,” that it is only to be expected that her offspring also be. Berta’s deformity, whatever its source, bears evil: she allows the adultery/bigamy by sending the donçela to Pipin out of laziness (the sin of indolence), and thereby brings suffering on herself, and ultimately, her own death at the hands of that same donçela’s two boys. Berta further transmits the suffering to Charlemagne, her son: in Biblical terms, her evil is visited upon the second generation.

The Maganzese, the donçela (who is evil by definition since she is a Maganzese) has three children with Pipin: Lanfroi, Landrix, and a daughter, a younger Berta. The two boys will poison Berta and Pipin (in Mainetto, also known as Enfances Charlemagne, the next chanson in the Geste Francor), driving Charlemagne to Spain. The younger Berta, marked by an evil frequently ascribed to females, immoderate sexual behavior, produces Roland with Milone outside of wedlock. The younger Berta’s child is also a “monster”: Roland, huge in size and intellect (he offends his teacher in Italy by knowing more than anyone else—including the teacher—in three days). Roland is the “son” whose sacrifice (death) redeems Charlemagne (who is evil or “deformed” through his mother, the big-footed woman). In this scenario (together with the historical information on Charlemagne), it is easy to see why some French redactors might carry this plot to the logical extreme,
making Roland Charlemagne's son in fact as well as symbolically. But that is not the Italian solution. And after Berta is reunited with Pipin in Berta ai piedi grandi, there is no further mention of her feet; the emphasis on evil switches to the two Maganzese sons, Lanfroi and Landrix.

After Charlemagne's rise to power, at a moment not included in the Geste Francor, Berta returns to type: she marries Ganelon, the head Maganzese. Evil returns to evil, good to good, and, with Roland's death, Charlemagne is freed from inherited sin. The inherited evil is expiated.

The Franco-Italian text's inconsistencies and its insistences suggest an attentive reading. The emphasis on Berta's deformity is strong and frequently repeated. Berta herself remarks, "Qe de petito albore, bon fruto se po ma[n]cer / E quel del grant si no[n] val un diner" [that one may eat good fruit from a small tree / and that from a big (tree) not be worth anything] (ll. 1701-1702). The description of Roland, young Berta's son, centers on his size and the amount he eats. The roles of the Maganzesi and the deformed (e.g., dwarves, as in the Macario, the final chanson of the Geste Francor) are actively evil; they are not merely decorative. In the Franco-Italian Berta, Berta's big feet are not just for recognition: they trigger laughter (because they are threatening) and they cause problems for Pipin. Furthermore, when they could be used for recognition—in the marriage bed initially and then on the cart later—they are not. Therefore the feet are more important than they seem on the surface.

In the early fourteenth century, complexities of Germanic marriage tradition were long forgotten, but memories—however confused—of royal scandal remained. In the fourteenth century, accepted marital behavior would be the same for all classes: men could have one wife, not related consanguinely or by the Church (i.e., not even a fellow godparent), and could not divorce capriciously. Thus the Geste Francor offers a somewhat tongue-in-cheek lesson to its audience about the evils of inappropriate behavior consistent with fourteenth-century Italy, written on a background of historically-based legend. While Berta is a conglomerate of historical figures, her role is one of literary symbol, related to taboos inherent in the culture. Berta is not "lächerlich," "ohne jede Bedeutung, ohne die Würde, die Adenets Heldin eigen ist" (Reinhold 27). On the contrary, the two Bertas of the Geste Francor offer an object lesson in two parts: against avoiding sex (Berta, Pipin's
wife) and against overdoing it (the younger Berta, mother of Roland).

The final poem in the Geste Francor, Macario (the Reine Sibille story), continues with an opposite pair: a couple consisting of a deformed male and an evil male. But that will form the subject of another paper.

Notes

1. This paper was originally a talk given at the Annual Conference of the American Association of Italian Studies, Austin, Texas, April 1993.

2. All quotes from the Geste Francor are from Morgan's edition. The information on names of chansons de geste derives from a survey of Moisan and Langlois, who list the chansons included in their volumes in introductions. I include Moisan's Table panoramique des sources 5: 14-29. The Berta e Milone is distinctive and very Italian; only in Italy does this version of the story exist.

3. The eight chansons in Ms. 13 are 1) Bovo, Parts 1 and 2; 2-3) Ogier le Danois; 4) Enfances and Chevalerie; 5) Enfances Charlemagne (also called Mainetto); 5) Berta ai piedi grandi; 6) Berta e Milone; 7) Orlandino (also called Enfances Roland); and 8) Macario. Note that different names are frequently used to designate the chansons, depending upon the tradition to which a critic refers, French or Italian. The title of the manuscript itself, which is acephalous, is given by Rajna (1925) as Geste Francor. Rosellini, in his edition of 1986, has followed Rajna's footsteps. The titles of the chansons are arbitrary here; however, these are the accepted titles with a certain weight of tradition behind them, and no less arbitrary than the titles of any number of other chanson de geste.

4. For the specifics of Philip's scandal and a discussion of the confusion of kings' names (Charles Martel, Pipin the Short, etc.) see Paris (1974: 629), Green and Duby.

5. Though I do not specifically cite it here, I must note that Tanenbaum's thesis helped me here by noting three references to Berta in the Chanson de Roland, and recalling the larger picture, “family history,” in Berta.

6. A Maganzese, from the house of Maganza, Mainz (French Mayence) was, by definition in the Italian tradition, a traitor. The first section of the Geste Francor is Bovo d'Antona, where Bovo's enemy is Doon de Mayence. Whether or not the source of the Mayence line as enemy of the Clairmonts derives from a confusion of that Doon with Doon de Mayence, head of one of the great gestes, as Paris suggested, is unclear. Whether or not the idea is original with this compilation is also not certain. However, in all following Italian versions of Carolingian epic material, the Maganzesi as the enemy is commonplace (cf. Viscardi 23; Meyer 310-11, etc.).

7. Cremonesi suggests that she is named in Rubric 41 (after line 2043, her 880): Alic (151). However, the rubrics of the Geste Francor are problematic, to say the least. Her reading is not the only possibility.

8. The Gilles sources are treated by a number of critics. In certain sources, Charlemagne's sister is Gille(s) (e.g., Adenet's Berte; Pepin and Berta's first child is Gille); in others, Charlemagne confesses his sin to St. Gilles (Tristan de Nanteuil 21704-711; Mireur des hists [cited Keller 1991: 53]). For further exemplification, see also Roncaglia, Lejeune, Gaiffer and Keller 1991.

9. Krauss and others may be influenced by the Reali di Francia, a well-known Italian text, in which Book 6 contains the story of Berta. There it is specified that she had one foot bigger than the other, so she is specifically “al piede grande.” G. of Viterbo and other Italian sources also cite one big foot (Paris 1974: 224).

10. I consulted Scheler's (1874) and Henry's (1963, 1983) editions of Adenet's Berte for this paper.
11. The ms. sources of Villon differ; ms. T reads “au grant pié,” while ms. A and C read “plat pié.” Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this information.

12. I first thought that Berta might have clubfoot and sought under those sources; but the description of the “rei ne pédauque” would seem to indicate some other deformity.

13. In fact, laughter appears at many critical junctures: where Berta’s mother threatens Pipin, etc. It seems to serve to defuse situations in general, by avoiding lèse majesté, for example.

14. This is arbitrary; cf. Foa, speaking of the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, but a similar situation: “Illness was a punishment from God for the sins of humanity and could strike either the individual sinner or entire communities in order to make them expiate the sins of the world. Thus, sin always appeared just below the surface of sickness.” (27)

15. Duggan’s paper argues the moral issues in the Chanson de Roland. He suggests that the death of Roland, in all its cataclysmic effects, it “un catigo por el pecado del padre” (64). That Roland tradition is different from the one which interests us here. Both Duggan (63) and Chocheyras emphasize the importance of the incestuous origins of heroes such as Roland, their origin as a source of mythical strength and the fact that “sa [the hero’s] race s’était avec lui” (295). They do not examine the inheritance of sin, the role of sin type, and its continuing importance to a geste, which are my emphasis here.

16. Cf. the historical situation, where Charlemagne would not allow his daughters to marry. They in fact had illegitimate children. Cf. Einhard (Section 18).

17. Note that by the time Renaissance interest in medicine reached France, popular literary genres were changed—e.g., Paré’s Des Monstres et Prodiges appeared in the sixteenth century.

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**Figure 1**

**Historical Berta/es and Bertrade/as**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Pipin the Short (d. 768) + Berte/ Bertrade (d. ca. 783)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Charles (d. 814) + Himiltrud (Pipin the Hunchback) + Desiderio’s daughter (separated) + Ildegarde (Charles, Pipin, Ludovico, Hrothrud, Berte, Giselle) + Fastrada (Theodrada, Hiltrud) + Hruodheird + Liutgard + four concubines at once: Madelgarda, Gerswind, Regina, Adalind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c. Robert the Pious (d. 1031) + Rozola (married ca. 988)  
    + Berthe (b. ca. 964, married ca. 996,  
          + Constance

d. Philip I (d. 1106)  + Berthe de Frise (repudiated 1092)  
    + Bertrade (three male children)

**FIGURE 2**  
**LITERARY BERTA’S GENEAOLOGY**

**GESTE FRANCOR**

Berta Sr. + Pipin (marriage)  
    Pipin (adulterous liaison) + Maganzese  
          (Belençon’s daughter)

Charlemagne  
Milon + Berta Jr.  
Landrix  
Lanfroi  
Roland

**KARLAMAGNUSSAGA; RONSASVALS; ROLAND À SARAGOSSE**

Ganelon + Berta Jr.

Baldewin (seen in Chanson de Roland)

* I have used “Jr.” and “Sr.” to distinguish between the older and younger Berta here, in order to avoid confusion.
FIGURE 3*
BERTA + pè

1239 “Berta de li pe grandi “ si se fa apeler.
1299 Ela oit li pe asa plus grant
   Qe nulle autre dame qe soit de son co[n]cant;  8Ra
   “Bertal a li pe grant” si l’apella la jant.

1397 Salvoq’ela oit un poco grande li pe.
1599 Major d’altre dame oit grande li pe.
1624 Por querir ma file Bert de li pe grant;
1651 Ça oldiré parler Berta da li pe grant.

1788 Se vu no la troves tuta sana e senç’er, (625)
   A fors li pe d’altro no me pores blasmer.”

2000 Li pe trovò petit, dont s’en pris merveler,
   Por la parola qe li dise le çubler.

2305 Cerchò la dame por flanc e por costée.
   Nul manchame[n]to oit en le trovée,
   A forsque li pe trovò grant e desmesurée.
2620 E por le piç e davant e daré.
   Pois vene a li pe, qe no[n] oit oblié;

2658 Quant sor li caro elo la vit primer,
   Li pe li trovò grandi como dise sa mer. (1495)

2710 Ben la conoit a li pe e a la favelle;

* The numbers to the right designate the line numbers in Morgan. When there are too few lines cited to give a fifth line number, parentheses are used. The numbers in parentheses to the right are the line numbers in Cremonesi.
Quant la conoit no l’apella de novele,

2717 Qe questa è berta qe oit li pe grant ,
   Qe fu sposea de li rois primeament. (1555)

**FIGURE 4**
LAUGHTER AND BERTA’S BIG FOOT/FEET

a.  El ven davant li rois, si li dist en riant : (120)
   “Ai, sire rois de Franca, molto estres manant,
1285  La vestre cort è bella e avenant;
   Non è major en le bateçament.
   Si ò çerché jusqua in Jerusalant,
   Non trovo nula c’ça baron tant. (125)
   Ma no[n] vos poes apriser la mo[n]te d’un besant,
1290  Qua[n]do dama no[n] aves a li vestre comant,
   Donde vu avisè fio e infant
   Qe pois la vestre morte ma[n]tenièt li reant.
   E qua[n]do a vos el vos fust a talant, (130)
   Una vos contarià cortois e avena[n]t,
1295  Et è filla de rois cu[n] vu si ensemant;
   Plu bella dame non è in Oriant,
   Nian plus saçe se la mer no me mant.
   Una colsa oit qe tegno por niant: (135)
   Ela oit li pe asa plus grant
1300  Qe nulle autre dame qe soit de son co[n]vant; 8Ra
   “Bertal a li pe grant” si l’apella la jant.

1305  Li rois l’intent, si s’en rise bellemant;
   Et al çubler el mostrò bel semblant
   Por cela parole, el non perdè niant:

b.  Tuto li son faire el m’à dito e co[n]té:
   Qe in la dama no è nul falsité,
   Salvoq’èla oit un poco grande li pe.
   Nian por ço non vole qe stagé: (235)
   Qi la po avoir qe no la demandee.”
1400  Li baron s’en rist , si s’en oit galé.
c. Sa filla guarde, si le dist en riant,
“Filla,” fait il, “a ves ven ste convant; (475)
Vostre per vos à dito tot li co[n]venant,
1640 De sa fature e de les o senblant;
S’elo vos plait, dites seguremant;
Colsa como no, no s’en farà niant.

d. Berta, quan l’olde, oit un riso òtée;
(2276) E dist a Synibaldo, “De ço no ve doté.

e. De dama Berta a la cera riant ,
2320 De la se departì e legro e çoja[n]t;'n;

f. Li rois, quando le soit, de çoja el ne rie ;
(2331) Donde oit mandé por soa baronie,
Por honorer la dama q’el no[n] vede en sa vie.

g. Ben la cercò tuta qua[n]ta por enter;
2000 Li pe trovò petit, dont s’en pris merveler,
Por la parola qe li dise le çubler.
E pois se prist entro soi penser,
“Li çublers si li dist por far moi irer.” (840)

h. Çerçò la dame por flanc e por costé.
Nul manchamento oit en le trovée,
Aforsque li pe trovò grant e desmesurée.
Nian por ço non ait li rois lasée; (1145)
D’ele ne prist amor e amistée
2310 Tota la noit, como la fu longa e lee.

Works Consulted


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