

PREFACE

The Editors

We would like to thank the editor of *Olifant*, Michael Harney, for enthusiastically supporting the idea of an issue of the journal specifically dedicated to the romance epic in Italy. The project began as a series of sessions on Italian romance epic under the aegis both of the Société Rencesvals and the American Association of Italian Studies (AAIS) at meetings of the International Congress of Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo (1992-1997) and at the 1995 AAIS conference in Tempe, Arizona. We also thank those who submitted articles and those who refereed submissions, who constitute our editorial board for the issue.

The study of romance epic in Italy has a lengthy history. Scholars who have contributed research include Gaston Paris (1865,1905), Pio Rajna (1873,1874,1875,1926, etc.), Paul Meyer (1904), Joseph Bédier (1908-1913, 1914-21), Antonio Viscardi (1941), Aurelio Roncaglia (1965, 1974, 1987), Carla Cremonesi (1966, 1969,1973,1977, etc.), Rita Lejeune and Jacques Stiennon (1967), Henning Krauss (1970,1980,1982, etc.), Lorenzo Renzi (1970, 1976) , Cesare Segre (1970, 1989, etc.), Gunter Holtus (1977, 1979, 1985, 1986, 1989, etc.), Aldo Rosellini (1977, 1980, 1984, 1986, etc.), Peter Wunderli (1982), among many others. A selected list of their contributions is appended to this preface.

Several lines of inquiry inform critical studies of the Italian romance epic tradition, similar to those which invest the study of the romance epic in general: genre definition; history and its relationship to literature; analysis of textual language; identification of sources and influences; comparison with other texts; and production of meaning. Essays in this volume touch upon these and other areas of investigation in texts authored in the Italian peninsula, dating from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries.

The first two articles here offer new analyses of aspects of the *Entrée d'Espagne* (EE). Leslie C. Brook examines form and content to propose that the EE conforms more closely to traditional definitions of epic modelled on the *Chanson de Roland* than to paradigms of medieval romance. While recognizing genre as a modern concept, Brook presents textual evidence (notably that the text begins and ends in an epic world) and a series of arguments to support his thesis: treatment of themes; character presentation and development; narrative structure. Although Brook acknowledges several episodes which can be interpreted according to modalities characteristic of romance literature, he does not find them fully integrated into the global epic ethos of the EE.

In "'Non par orgoil, mais por senefiance': Roland Redefined in the *Entrée d'Espagne*" Sara Sturm-Maddox focuses on the function and meaning of the "transitional segment" which conjoins the two principal divisions of the text: Roland in Spain and in the Near East. While Roland is literally in transit himself after a series of confrontations with Charlemagne, a chance encounter with two "pagans" provokes him to an act of murderous violence. As he and the narrator reflect on the relationship of this act to what the text calls Roland's "nature," i.e., those aspects of his conduct and discourse suggesting *orgueil* and *desmesure*, a second encounter generates further reflexion on the uses and abuses of Christian chivalry. It is in this portion of the text that Sturm-Maddox situates the turning point of Roland's heroic career.

Gloria Allaire's essay on the prose *Storia di Aiolfo dal Barbicone* approaches this early fifteenth-century text as an important example of hybridization of Carolingian epic and Arthurian romance. Although Andrea da Barberino may have had access to mediating north Italian versions of the French *Aiol*, he has modified his source(s) in order to conform to *mentalités* prevalent in post-plague Republican Florence. Identifying the principal socio-political contexts within which Andrea was working, Allaire attributes the *Aiolfo* author's emphasis on family

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and kinship to his desire to reach a contemporary audience / readership whose concerns center on issues of lineage, loyalty, alliances, obligations, and conflicts.

Three early fifteenth-century epics contributing to the formation of a new masculine ideal in Italian epic are analyzed and compared here by Juliann Vitullo. The heroes of these *enfances* epics are as adept in language as in chivalric skills; rhetorical prowess in particular renders them more accessible to the *mentalité* of the mercantile and administrative classes of late medieval Italy. Andrea da Barberino's *Guerrino il Meschino* and Raffaele da Verona's *Aquilon de Bavière* valorize reason and order as essential to the new Christian knight; a series of binary polarities posits "Oriental pagans" as self-indulgent, disordered, and sexually deviant. Vitullo contends that these polarized literary depictions correspond to social commentary by, for example, San Bernardino. In turn, the Amazonian protagonist of Ms. Mediceo Palatine 101 defends heterosexuality and marriage as fundamental to ideal masculinity, reflecting similar prescriptions in contemporary Florence.

With the final essay, we arrive at the canonical figure of Boiardo. Daniela Boccassini examines Roland's actions and character development within the *Orlando Innamorato* (OI) in an effort to assess how Orlando conducts himself in circumstances where emotion and cognition may be placing different demands on him. Boccassini asks whether Orlando does indeed become both "dotto e saggio," i.e., whether he attains knowledge of self and the world through his textual journey. In a close reading of his trials, Boccassini concludes that Orlando learns very little, if anything at all, from his numerous experiences and encounters; he appears capable of learning from immediate situations and within the confines of a particular episode, but unable to project and apply that knowledge in different circumstances. Boccassini suggests that Boiardo's knights are reflected, disenchanted images of the court in Boiardo's time, whose interests centered on amusement and diversion.

The articles contained in this volume represent some of the diversity of research currently being done in an important field of medieval literature. It is to be hoped that other scholars will draw inspiration from them so that future issues of *Olifant* can be dedicated to the romance epic texts of other countries.

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