

## APPENDIX

### The *Ludus Coventriae* Prophecies

M&C°	1	Isaiah	Virgin shall bear a child who will defeat Satan
C	2	Radix Jesse	Flower from Jesse's root will save man
M&C	3	David	Virgin will thwart Satan
C	4	Jeremiah	Christ as Priest and King
M&C	5	Solomon	Immaculate Conception
M	6	Ezekiel	Impregnation of Mary by Holy Ghost
M	7	Roboam	Mary will defeat Satan
M	8	Micheas	Mary the reverse of Eve
M	9	Abia	Mary, bringer of bliss
M&C	10	Daniel	Incarnation—signals Satan's defeat
M&C	11	Asa	Crucifixion
C	12	Jonas	Resurrection
M&C	13	Josophet	Confirmation
M&C	14	Abdias	Confirmation
C	15	Joram	Ascension
C	16	Habakkuk	Last Judgment
C	17	Ozias	Sending of Holy Ghost
C	18	Joel	Confirmation
C	19	Joatham	Redemption
C	20	Aggeus	Christ as Good Shepherd will save flock from Satan
M&C	21	* Achas	Confirmation of Isaiah
M&C	22	Ozias	Confirmation of Isaiah
M	23	Ezekias	Mary, bringer of mercy and bliss
M	24	Sophosam	Mary, bringer of spiritual wealth
M&C	25	Manasses	Mary's child as prince of peace
C	26	Baruk	Doomsday
C	27	Amon	Prayer for remission of sins on Doomsday

- °M&C = prophecy refers to both Mary and Christ (total 10)  
M = prophecy refers to Mary only (total 6)  
C = prophecy refers to Christ only (total 11)

## THE BATTLEFIELD TAUNT: VIOLENCE AND HUMOR IN THE *CHANSONS DE GESTE*

In the violent and semi barbaric world of the epic warrior, the human qualities that are most ardently admired are physical strength, fierceness of character, and proficiency in arms. These are, almost without exception, the standards whereby men are measured and judged. Personal glory, whether in the *Iliad* or in the late eleventh-century *Chanson de Roland*, is associated nearly always with excellence on the battlefield, i.e., with the ability to perform mighty feats or to dispense mighty blows, with the number of adversaries slain and victories won. In this society of fighting men there is no place for weakness. Defeat in combat is synonymous with disgrace and apt to arouse only contempt and derision. As Ronald Walpole has justly observed, "where strength of body and character are almost exclusively admired, there is a natural tendency not to indulge weakness, but to laugh at it."<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere in heroic literature is this propensity for laughing at an opponent's failings, for scoffing at him in defeat, and in a general sense for abusing him, more strikingly evident than in the medieval French *chansons de geste*. Indeed, it may be said that the art of the well-phrased insult attained a veritable flowering in that genre. Few epic duels took place without being preceded, if not terminated, by an outburst of choice disparaging terms, ranging from gross obscenities to expressions of sarcastic scorn. The well-formulated taunt provided an effective psychological counterpart to the well-directed blow. Pronounced over a vanquished foe, it served as a triumphant assertion of the victor's superiority.

The practice of reviling an adversary in battle, we find, is an already firmly established convention in some of our most ancient *chansons de geste*.<sup>2</sup> In *La*

<sup>1</sup>"Humor and People in Twelfth Century France," *Romance Philology* XI (1957-58), p. 216.

<sup>2</sup>This tradition has its roots in literary Antiquity. Sarcastic references to an adversary during combat occur, for instance, in the Homeric epic. In Book 16 of the *Iliad*, to cite an example, Patroclus hurls a stone at Cebriones which strikes the latter in the forehead and causes him to fall headfirst from his chariot. The Greek warrior then mocks his victim, comparing him to a diver

*Chanson de Roland* for example, the oldest and most sublime of French epics, the challenges and victorious assertions voiced by the protagonists tend, for the most part, to be simple, relatively unsophisticated. Contumelious language on the battlefield, here, is generally devoid of ironic nuances and directed more at the enemy collectively than at the individual foe. The tone of the battlefield insult throughout the poem remains grave, imbued with the deep-rooted hostility of contrasting faiths. The tenseness of the situation at Roncevaux, it clear, does not allow for very elaborate verbal jousts between adversaries. On the Saracen side, the urgent goal is to destroy Charlemagne's rearguard before the emperor can return with reinforcements. For Roland and his companions, in the face of overwhelming odds, the object is to die valiantly, to make every blow count. In this summit of dramatic action, there is neither time nor place for extensive sarcastic mockery of the type that one encounters so frequently in later *chansons*. The contemptuous challenges that individual Saracens address to the French as they ride forward to engage them are solemn and terse, in keeping with the poem's preponderantly sober mood. There is little interest in deriding the opponent personally:

Feluns Franceis, hoi justerez as noz.  
 Traït vos ad ki a garder vos out (1191-92)<sup>3</sup>  
 Enquoi perdrat France dulce s'onur! (1223)

In like manner, the exclamations in *La Chanson de Roland* that accompany the death of a pagan adversary are curt and characterized, if one may say, by a certain impersonality. The victim is viewed less as an individual foe than as a member of a group, and there is little desire to insist upon the shameful or ludicrous aspects of his discomfiture. Insult of the fallen enemy assumes a somewhat rigid or formal character in the poem, and verbal economy generally prevails:

De voz manaces, culvert, jo n'ai essoign. (1232)  
 Après li dist: "Turnet estes a perdre!" (1296)  
 Après li dist: "Ja n'i avrez guarant!" (1303)

fishing for oysters. In the *chanson de geste*, the battle insult motif has been studied by H. Theodor, *Die Komischen Elemente der Altfranzösischen Chansons de Geste* (Halle, 1913), pp. 97-104. See also N. Susskind, "Humor in the Chansons de Geste," *Symposium* (Fall 1961), pp. 193-94.

<sup>3</sup>*La Chanson de Roland*, ed. J. Bédier, (Paris, 1922).

Battlefield invectives in the nearly contemporaneous epic *Gormont et Isebart* remain, much as in *La Chanson de Roland*, profoundly charged with religious antipathy. Each of the individual challengers who seeks to engage the pagan Gormont in combat is successively unhorsed or slain, and his defeat is crowned by words of opprobrium. In the case of the fallen Ernaut de Ponthieu for example (vv. 164-95)<sup>4</sup>, the Saracen scorns the Christian warrior through his God, who has abandoned him to die and who, indeed, could not even save Himself from death. Gormont's contemptuous words, however, are vented not so much upon the individual foe than upon the French collectively, and their faith. Deep-rooted religious hostility, hatred of the enemy for what he represents, underlie such invectives. We are far still from the very personal and sarcasm-laden insults that characterize many of the later epics. Only one passage in the Brussels fragment, in our opinion, may possibly compare with some of the cutting gibes of these later *chansons*. This is Gormont's remark to Eudes le Champenois as the latter's horse is felled under him:

"A!", dist Gormunt, "or est surdeis!"  
 Vus fussiez miez en Estampeiz.  
 Perdu avez vostre moreis:  
 vos nel recovrez des meis.  
 Ci remeindrez ensemble od mei:  
 ostel prendrez al briuerie." (102-7)

We have decidedly more here than just vituperative language. Gormont is not merely reviling his opponent. He is flouting his victim in a much more personal manner, figuratively rubbing salt into the other's wounds. Gormont's remark to Eudes that the latter might have been better off in another locality, and especially the invitation to Eudes to take up lodging in the brush, brim with sarcastic relish. It is with a feeling of immense scorn that the pagan leader views his antagonist's defeat and that he proceeds to turn it to ridicule.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to underscoring the profound animosities that motivate combatants of opposite loyalties or faiths, battlefield insults frequently fulfill purposes of comedy. In that respect, they may attain a remarkable degree of sophistication. The challenges which precede armed encounters, for example, quite often involve witty metaphoric references to the outcome of the combat,

<sup>4</sup>*Gormont et Isebart*, ed. A. Bayot (Paris, Cfmâ, 1931).

<sup>5</sup>Other instances of battle mockery in *Gormont* are cited by W.C. Calin, *The Old French Epic of Revolt* (Paris/Genève, 1962), pp. 203-4.

boasts to the opponent about what may befall him before the end of the duel. In *Le Couronnement de Louis* for instance, the hero Guillaume assures his adversary that before sundown the latter will be so "appareled"—so decorated by the sword, that is—that, were he to be put up for sale, he would not be likely to fetch much:

Ainceis le vespre ne le soleil colchié  
Te cuit je si del cors apareillier  
Qu'on te porreit d'un besant esligier. (2573-75)<sup>6</sup>

The same mixture of hilarity and scorn is evident in *Gaydon*, in the challenge addressed by Thibaut d'Hautefeuille to the hero of the *chanson*:

Je voz donrai tele confession  
Que jamais prestres ne voz aura fuison. (1628-29)<sup>7</sup>

To which Gaydon retorts with no less sarcasm:

Ansoiz le vespre, voz lirai tel leson  
Dont voz aurez en col le chaaingnon (1639-40)

There is comic irony in the *trouvère's* equivocal use of the word *chaaingnon*, designating a chain or collar. Closely associated in context with such terms as *confession*, *prestres*, *vespre*, and *leson*, the word *chaaingnon* was designed to evoke in the mind of the listener the image of an ecclesiastical collar, e.g., a stole. At the same time however, the thought of a bloody "collar," to be administered by a blow of the sword (*voz lirai tel leson*), remained inescapable. Such word play, for all of its gruesomeness, is not entirely without humor and it is safe to assume that a medieval audience of fighting men must have responded to it with cheer.

The use of religious imagery and terminology, as seen here, is a characteristic feature of battle mockery throughout the genre, and generally serves to denote strong contempt. It is with a feeling of scorn, the instinctive scorn of the man of arms for the cleric and all that pertains to clerical life, that warriors in the French epic employ terms such as *confession*, *leson*, *clerc*, etc., to flout an adversary. The mere association of the opponent with the figure of the cleric implied ridicule. A knight who sought to reason or to argue with his antagonist, for instance, or who evinced the faintest signs of eloquence was im-

mediately likened, in a disparaging sense, to a preacher. A measure of this inbred contempt of the military class for the *clergie* is to be seen in the Saracen Otinel's sarcastic reply to Roland, who had attempted to persuade him to embrace the Christian faith:

Or oi parole de bricon;  
Male honte ait qui de vos fist clercon:  
Ffaillé avez a ce premier sermon,  
Ne savez pas bien lire la lecon;  
Mes je sui metre, si le vos apenron. (*Otinél*, 521-25)<sup>8</sup>

Similar anti-clerical sentiment is to be noted in Rainouart's scornful words to Guillaume d'Orange, who had urged the *vilain* to accept baptism:

Sire Guillames qui savés de sermon,  
Vous déusiés avoir un pelichon  
Lonc traînant descî ke au talon,  
Et puis le froc, el cief le caperon,  
Les grandes botes forrées environ,  
Et le cief rés et courouné en son,  
Et sesisiés tous dis sor un leson,  
En cel moustier fesisiés orison,  
Et eusiés a mangier a fuison. (*Aliscans*, 7885-93)<sup>9</sup>

The most caustic form of battle mockery in the *chanson de geste*, however, was that which accompanied the enemy's death or mutilation. There was, generally speaking, little sympathy for the vanquished or maimed foe. Humanitarian feelings are singularly lacking in our medieval epics. Discomfiture on the battlefield was viewed, in the violent and primitive society of the epic warrior, as evidence of weakness and thus automatically incurred derision. The infliction of an incapacitating or disfiguring wound often elicited jubilant laughter on the part of the victor, as well as a variety of cruel, merciless gibes. We see this for example in *Gaufrey*, in the remark addressed by Robastre to the pagan Nasier, whom he has blinded in one eye:

Or n'a mès c'une gueite en vo castel montés,  
L'autre vous ai tolue, que groute n'en vées; (3584-85)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup>*Le Couronnement de Louis*, ed. E. Langlois (Paris, Cfmû, 1920).

<sup>7</sup>*Gaydon*, eds. F. Guessard & S. Luce (Paris, APF, 1862).

<sup>8</sup>*Otinél*, eds. F. Guessard & H. Michelant (Paris, APF, 1859).

<sup>9</sup>*Aliscans*, eds. E. Wienbeck, W. Hartnacke, P. Rasche (Halle, 1903).

<sup>10</sup>*Gaufrey*, eds. F. Guessard & P. Chabaille (Paris, APF, 1859).

It is with obvious glee, and without the least sentiment of pity, that Robastre derides his opponent, metaphorically likening Nasier's remaining eye to a sentinel perched atop a castle, and exulting over the loss of the other "sentinel." There is humor here, grim humor to be sure, but humor nevertheless, which an audience of soldiers and knights could not have failed to appreciate.

Mockery of the injured adversary frequently involves a comparison of the wound to an object or entity bearing some general resemblance. In *Aliscans*, the Saracen Baudus wounds Rainouart in both heels and then compares his victim to a *luiton* ("Cousin, a poi vos ai fait moignon./Estalonne vos ai comme luiton.", 7064-65), an elfin creature sometimes depicted in legend with a cloven hoof. In *Doon de Mayence*,<sup>11</sup> the youthful protagonist administers a blow to an opponent that causes the latter's scalp to sag over his face; he then ironically likens his maimed antagonist to a "... mouton que on ait escorne" (4443), a dehorned sheep! Religious imagery finds its most vivid use in this type of comparison. Of particular appeal to medieval taste and sensibility, judging from the frequency with which it recurs throughout the French epic, was the association of a scalp wound with an ecclesiastical bonnet. The dark hair and bloody wound had their visual analogy in the red, or black and red, headpiece. A natural extension of this at once gruesome and witty comparison consisted of asking the victim to what order he belonged, or of informing him that he was now eligible to become a priest, a cardinal, etc. We find a vivid illustration of this motif in the poem *Gaufrey*, where the pagan Nasier delivers a mighty blow that lops off a sizeable part of Robastre's scalp ("...de la char fust .i. faucon saolés"). Nasier then proceeds to taunt his mutilated rival:

Dont li a dit Nasier: "Vous estes couronnés;  
 "Or povés estre moine ou canoine rieulés,  
 "Ou prieur ou abbé, le quel que vous voudrés,  
 "Ou Cardinal de Romme, se vous le gréantés:  
 "Le caperon est rouge qu'en vo teste portés." (3543-47)

This intimate blend of savagery and mirth, characteristic of battlefield invectives in the *chansons de geste*, is sensed perhaps even more acutely in the following passage of *Doon de Mayence*. Here, it is the hero Doon who strikes off the top of the traitor Herchembaut's head, a spectacle which affords the victor intense amusement, and which elicits cutting raillery:

<sup>11</sup>*Doon de Mayence*, ed. A. Pey (Paris, APF, 1859).

Sus le hiaume est le cous si de droit assenés  
 Que il est sous le branc si derout et faussés  
 Et li cheirele malmis et si desclavelés  
 Que il ne li valut ne que .ii. oes pelés.  
 Li haubers est derous, dessous et despennés,  
 Parmi la char li est le riche branc estés:  
 De la char et de l'os est .i. lambiau volés  
 Le hiaume li quéi, que tout fu effondrés,  
 Et li sanc li raia aval par les costés  
 Si que ses garnemens en ot ensanglentés.  
 Et quent Do l'a véu, si en a ris assés:  
 En riant li a dit: "Vous estes couronnés  
 "Comme prestre novviaux, et si n'en savés grez  
 "A evesque qui soit. Grant henour i avés,  
 "Quant rouge caperon en vo teste portés." (5083-97)

The same inhuman severity and lack of compassion of victor for vanquished are evident also in *La Chevalerie Ogier*, in the taunting words addressed by Ogier to the pagan Braiher, whom he has maimed in similar fashion. The sight of his opponent's bleeding scalp prompts Ogier to inform Braiher, sarcastically of course, that he resembles a prior ("Préus resanlles du mostier Saint-Nicol," 11730).<sup>12</sup>

Even more cutting was that form of the battlefield taunt which consisted in offering mock advice, ironic "practical" suggestions, etc., to the maimed adversary. Such humiliating offers of assistance provided what could be termed the verbal "coup de grâce," the finishing touch as it were, to the victor's triumph. To the reader well-acquainted with the medieval French epic, the example that almost immediately comes to mind is the well-known passage in *Raoul de Cambrai* where the hero scoffs at two opponents whom he has

<sup>12</sup>*La Chevalerie Ogier de Danemarche*, ed. M. Eusebi (Milan, 1963). The comparison of scalp wound to clerical bonnet, it should be noted, is also to be found outside of the epic tradition. In the parody *Roman de Renart* for example, in the scene where Renart taunts Brun the bear who has lacerated his scalp while attempting to extricate himself from a trap: "De quele ordre volez vos estre./qui rouge chaperon avez?" (ed. M. Roques, *Cfma*, v. 1, p. 25). The motif still survives with Rabelais (*Gargantua*, xlv), in Frère Jean des Entonneurs's threat to the soldiers of Picrochole: "Par l'habit (disoit le moyne) que je porte, je vous feray icy cardinal... Vous aurez un chapeau rouge à ceste heure de ma main." The head wound inflicted upon one of the unfortunate victims is described by Rabelais as "... en forme d'un bonnet doctoral, noir par-dessus, rouge perdedans."

maimed—he has severed the one's hand, the other's leg. To each, Raoul offers degrading employment appropriate to his state of physical disability: the one is to be a watchman, the other a gatekeeper:

“Or vos donrai .j. mervillous mestier:  
 “E. ert mans, et vos voi eschacier;  
 “Li uns iert gaite, de l'autre fas portier.  
 “Ja ne porres vostre honte vengier. (2928-31)<sup>13</sup>

With similar mock complaisance, an antagonist might be encouraged to carry on diligently with his plans when it was apparent that, due to mutilation or loss of life, he was no longer able to do so. In one passage in *Gaufrey* for example, a Saracen courier is intercepted by the French, slain, and his message is appropriated, whereupon he is told with ironic civility to proceed with his mission (4092-95). Or, the slain adversary might generously be granted certain favors which, now, he was unable to enjoy, as in *Gui de Nanteuil* where the hero Gui freely accords his *amie* to the traitor Hervieu whom he has just slain in battle:

Parmi le corps li met de la lance .i. tronchon  
 Que mors l'a abatu du bon cheval gascon.  
 Par contraire l'apele, si l'a mis à reson:  
 “Hervieu, tenés m'amie, je vous en fes le don;  
 “Demain l'espouserés à tesmoing de Kallon. (2884-88)<sup>14</sup>

Even the slain victim's prone position sufficed, on occasion, to elicit jubilant outbursts of sarcasm. The obvious physical resemblance of death to sleep might give rise, in the exuberant mood of victory, to a variety of facetious observations to the dead man, e.g., of being a late sleeper, of being in need of rest, etc., as we can see, once again, in the poem *Gaufrey*:

Dessus la teste amont le va si assener  
 Que le hiaume li trenche et tout le capelier  
 Entre si u menton n'i lessa que couper

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<sup>13</sup>Raoul de Cambrai, eds. P. Meyer & A. Longnon (Paris, SATF, 1882).

<sup>14</sup>Gui de Nanteuil, ed. P. Meyer (Paris, APF, 1861).

Et Robastre li crie: “Quinart, or de l'ester!  
 “Ne vous caut, amiral, hui mès de vous lever:  
 “Trop mastin vous levastes, tans est de reposer. (4312-21)<sup>15</sup>

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The battlefield insult, as our brief survey has attempted to show, plays a prominent role in traditional epic narration. It has been exploited, at one time or another, by nearly all *trouvères*. Although one may be tempted, at first, to dismiss the myriad insults and taunts exchanged by combatants in the genre as conventional narrative devices, as stylistic trappings lacking artistic merit and of little critical interest, these invectives in reality often contribute to our understanding of the protagonists, affording us an insight into their moral character or state of mind. Thus, Raoul de Cambrai's cruel gibe to the wounded Ernaut and Rocoul becomes a manifestation of the hero's fundamental immoderation, denoting another phase in this *démesuré*'s tragic evolution, which culminates in his blasphemy of God. In the same manner, Guillaume d'Orange's sarcastic challenge to Gui d'Allemagne (supra) brings to light the warrior's celebrated, and often cutting spirit of mockery.<sup>16</sup> In the broadest sense, battlefield insults and taunts serve to dramatize the intensity of feeling that is brought into armed encounter. They render more vivid the deep-rooted religious or personal hostility that underlies epic warfare.

Nor may one overlook the element of humor often inextricably associated with such violent invectives. A medieval audience, as all indications show, looked with joyful anticipation to the well-turned insult, one that blended contumely and wit. The more gruesome the circumstances, the more these invectives must have been relished by a knightly public. The modern reader may perhaps find it somewhat difficult to fully savor this type of humor. Modern taste and sensibility, after all, do not readily admit such cruel sport as mockery of the maimed or of the dead. In an age, however, when warfare represented a constant reality and provided the only reliable

<sup>15</sup>Cf. also *Doon de Mayence* (vv. 11265-66) and Doon's remark to the pagan Aubigant whom he has slain: “Puis li a dist apres: “Ne vous caille a lever;” “Vous levastes matin, bien devez reposer.”

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Jean Frappier, *Les Chansons de Geste du Cycle de Guillaume d'Orange*, I, (Paris, 1955), p. 97.



gauge of a man's worth, praise of victor and abuse of victim were bound to elicit responses different from ours today.

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## SIR ORFEO: ROMANCE AS EXEMPLUM

The Breton lay *Sir Orfeo* has been praised as 'one of the most charming and most successful of all our Middle English romances';<sup>1</sup> however, the poem has yet to spark the fire of critical imagination that one expects of great poetry, even though the materials for such a study, Bliss's edition of the manuscript versions and Severs' study of the sources, have long been available.<sup>2</sup> According to Bliss, three distinct versions were produced approximately seventy-five years apart, the first, Auchinleck (A), about 1330; the second, Harley 3810 (H), in the early fifteenth century; the third, Ashmole 61 (B), toward the end of the same century.<sup>3</sup> No certainty of relationship among the manuscripts can be established, only that the Harley and Ashmole versions 'are dependent upon a common ancestor, either descended from or coeval with' the Auchinleck (p. xv).

Nevertheless, the differences between versions, especially Auchinleck and Harley, are sufficiently great to suggest that they are more than scribal, indeed, that the Harley scribe consciously tinkered with his materials to the extent that he took on the role of poet, especially if, as Bliss proposes, Harley 'was written down by a minstrel from memory' (p. vi). While allowing for variations in inspiration, each of the poets, we may reasonably assume, conceived of the poem as a whole and by this conception ordered the elements within it. We are therefore not so much interested in the fact that one poet added here or deleted there, but rather in the effect on the total poem of each particular decision—and by the process of accumulation, in the direction in which each poet moves his work. It is thus desirable to examine the versions as distinct poems to determine the effects of the various choices the poets make. For the sake of simplicity, I have chosen to contrast the earlier two versions, Auchinleck and Harley.<sup>4</sup> The

<sup>1</sup>J. Burke Severs, 'The Antecedents of Sir Orfeo,' in *Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Professor Albert Croll Baugh*, ed. MacEdward Leach (Philadelphia, 1961), p. 202.

<sup>2</sup>A.J. Bliss, ed., *Sir Orfeo*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1966); Severs, pp. 187-207.

<sup>3</sup>Bliss, pp. x-xii (all subsequent references are to this edition).

<sup>4</sup>In spite of the differences between Auchinleck and Ashmole, comparison of these two versions does not lead to conclusions remarkably different from those presented here; the inclusion of a third version, needless to say, would confuse matters considerably. Dieter Mehl has effectively compared more radically divergent redactions of the same story; see, for example, his comparison of