

1984

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Recommended Citation

Ghil, Eliza Miruna. "Ideological Models and Poetic Modes in the Song of the Albigensian Crusade."
Romanic Review 75.2 (1984): 131-146.

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IDEOLOGICAL MODELS AND POETIC MODES IN THE SONG OF THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE

The Song of the Albigenian Crusade is a 9,582-line narrative in Old Provençal that recounts Simon de Montfort's campaigns in Southern France at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Preserved in its entirety in a single manuscript copied around 1275 and which was expertly edited by Eugène Martin-Chabot in a three-volume edition between 1957-1961,¹ this text has been briefly discussed by a number of scholars, the best known among them being Robert Lafont, but it has not been the subject of an extensive literary study to date.

The *Song's* neglect by modern critics, highly surprising to my mind in view of the quality of the work, may be due to the lasting prejudice in favor of the courtly lyricism, considered as the most representative and the most brilliant poetic product of the South by many generations of critics.² The traditional opinion, according to which the Southern poets were less good at epic poetry than their Northern counterparts, may also have something to do with this neglect. Possibly present already in medieval times and apparently supported in more recent times by the scarcity and mediocrity of the *chanson de geste* fragments that have come down to us in Old Provençal,³ the assumption about the Southern inferiority in epic may have made the best critical minds turn their interpretative efforts toward what was deemed essential for the culture of the South — i.e., the creation of lyric troubadours.

Among the remarks made about our *Song* up to now, two seem to represent a kind of general consensus. According to the first, the *Canso* has a strictly referential character and is a chronicle rather than a truly epic text;⁴ according to the second, two authors took part in its creation: the first, Guilhem de Tudela, a mediocre poet, supports Simon de Montfort and the French party, while the second, an anonymous poet from Tou-

1. I shall quote throughout this paper Eugène Martin-Chabot's edition of the *Chanson de la croisade albigeoise*, 3 vols (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1957-1961). The manuscript used in this edition is n° 25425 of the French fund in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

2. See, for instance, H.J. Chaytor, *The Provençal Chanson de Geste* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946). We read on pp. 18-19 the following remark: "The contribution of Provençal literature to Western Europe was a body of lyric poetry, expressing sentiments for the most part purely personal, artificial to a great degree, intensely aristocratic, without appeal to the ears of the multitude. From such a source, epic poetry is not to be expected."

3. H.J. Chaytor, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

4. Robert Lafont and Christian Anatole, *Nouvelle Histoire de la littérature occitane* (Paris: P.U.F., 1970-1971), I, 157. Also H.J. Chaytor, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

louse of brilliant talent, enlivens his text with a fiery brand of Southern nationalism.⁵

I would like to examine, in the following remarks, the way in which these problems have been formulated in traditional criticism, and in so doing to attempt to prove a double thesis. The tenets of this double thesis imply that:

1. *The Song of the Albigenian Crusade* is a highly sophisticated poetic work, the impact of which cannot be assessed unless with respect to the institution of poetic activity in medieval Midi (covering aspects such as genre, implied public, intertext and conventional stylistic connotations); and

2. The ideological effects⁶ produced by this work ought not to be attributed to the authors' personal choices — of the type pro-North versus pro-South — but rather to the subtle appropriation of certain ideological models available to our authors at the beginning of the thirteenth century and which they promote in original and astute ways through strictly poetic means.

I shall examine first the opinion according to which the *Song* has a strong referential character and is a chronicle rather than a fully fledged epic text. This accusation was leveled particularly against Guilhem de Tudela's contribution — i.e., the *Song of the Albigenian Crusade*, Part I. This poet's allegiance to what were being perceived as Northern values hardly endeared him to the scholars of Southern extraction who commented upon his text. They show no leniency for his so-called lack of poetic flare, and mince no words in castigating his moral stand ("Esprit odieusement collaborateur," said Robert Lafont, to quote just one example).⁷ But let us turn for a moment to Guilhem's own text and to the description it gives of its own purpose. In *laisse* 1 the performative voice (i.e., the voice of a fictitious performer who presumably enacts the text, "lo libre," before us) mentions with some insistence the author's expertise in geomancy (a divinatory science in the middle ages), thanks to which he could foresee the coming destruction of the Southern lands:

E conoc que.l pais er ars e destruzit
Per la fola crezensa qu'avian cosentit
E que li ric borzes serian enpaubrezit

...

5. Robert Lafont, "Las Ideologias dins la Part Anonima de la *Cançon de la Crusada*," *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Occitanes*, 1962-1963, pp. 87-94.

6. I use the term "ideological effects" in the sense of Philippe Hamon's "effet-idéologie," as he used it in his "Texte et idéologie. Pour une poétique de la norme," *Poétique*, 45 (1982), 105-125. The author proposes in this paper "de ne pas tant étudier l'idéologie 'du' texte ('dans' le texte, dans ses 'rapports' avec le texte), que 'l'effet-idéologie' du texte comme rapport inscrit dans le texte et construit par lui, ce qui correspond à un recentrement de la problématique en termes textuels, et au maintien d'une certaine priorité (qui n'est pas primauté) au point de vue textuel" (107).

7. Robert Lafont, "Composition et rythme épiques dans la Seconde Partie de la *Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise*," *Revue de Langue et Littérature d'Oc*, 9 (1962), 47.

E que li cavalier s'en irian faizit.

(l. 1: 8-10, 12)⁸

His text, says the performative voice, is adroitly composed and eloquently worded:

E si.l voletz entendre, li gran e li petit,

I poires mot apendre de sen e de bel dit.

(l. 1: 27-28)⁹

Its poetic/melodic form follows the pattern of another epic work well known in the Occitan tradition — namely, the *Canso d'Antiocha* — as we learn at the beginning of *laisse* 2:

Senhors, esta canso es feita d'aital guia

Com sela d'Antiocha et ayssi.s versifia

E s'a tot aital so, qui diire lo sabia.

(l. 2: 1-3).¹⁰

The work thus appears as the result of a vision subsequently confirmed by the evolution of real events. It is endowed with "sen" — i.e., with an interpretative dimension; it is full of "bel dit" — 'eloquence' — and casts its well-worded view of actual events in the mold of a famous rhythmic and melodic pattern, that of a crusade epic, the *Canso d'Antiocha*.

When a modern commentator attempts to be nice to Guilhem de Tudela, he praises his objectivity (e.g., Eugène Martin-Chabot),¹¹ and after having heard about his "esprit odieusement collaborateur," one is grateful for small favors. But this objectivity seems problematic to me, not because the author is pro-North while he, a Southerner, ought to fulminate against the Northern invaders, but because he is intriguingly pro-South while he, an alleged Simon de Montfort "partisan," ought to be hostile to the warriors of the Midi who fight against the crusaders blessed by the Pope. In order to disentangle some of these intricacies, I propose to examine first the initial artistic choices made by this alleged supporter of the French party.

Among the very few things we know about the historical Guilhem de Tudela is the fact that he was a cleric who subsequently became canon at Bruniquel, a fief belonging at the beginning of the Albigensian War to Baudouin de Toulouse, the count's brother. Paradoxically, he chooses to extol the deeds of the crusaders' commander in vernacular, and particularly in *langue d'oc*, at the time when another clerical author, also a Simon

8. "And he learned that the land would be burnt and devastated because of the crazy belief that had been tolerated there; and that the rich burghers would be impoverished . . . and the knights would have to leave in exile."

9. "And if you want to listen to it, old and young, you could learn from it a lot of wise things, well put."

10. "My lords, this song is composed according to the model of the one of Antioch; it is rhymed in the same way and has the same melody for whoever knows how to perform it."

11. E. Martin-Chabot, *Chanson*, Introduction to vol. I, p. x.

de Montfort partisan, was choosing to narrate the same events in Latin: Petrus Vallium Sarnaii, a Cistercian monk, in the famous *Hystoria Albigensis*. Guilhem's alleged apology of the crusading commander-in-chief would thus take place in a language which Simon could not understand, and possibly despised.

Having chosen the medium, Guilhem had to choose also a genre. He could not have produced in *langue d'oc* the powerful prose pamphlet endowed with clear polemic intentions of Petrus Vallium Sarnaii, since the options open to him within the framework of the *oc* literature of the time, product of a mostly secular creativity, did not include such a possibility. But Guilhem seems to have known quite well the options that did exist for him. In fact, the attempt to narrate war events from a contemporary or slightly later perspective did have a precedent in 1210: it was what literary historians call today the *chanson d'histoire*,¹² a genre related to the *chanson de geste* tradition, but also somewhat different from it: the latter centered its plot on military deeds of legendary character relegated to the distant past, while the *chanson d'histoire*, an epic subgenre, would focus its narrative on recent military events.

A choice of genre implies a choice of public. This rhymed and sung narrative addressed its poetic message, obviously, to a Southern public. And it did so within the framework of an oral tradition, a type of culture which implies a good deal of dynamism and vitality, and also a measure of direct danger and risk for the artistic product. Targeted in particular within this public was the warriors' caste, who experienced a state of great confusion in the initial stages of the Albigensian War, confusion expressed, for instance, in the fluctuating allegiance to, and then away from, Simon de Montfort, depending on the degree of success with which he was besieging their castles.

In *laisse* 2 the narrative voice briefly sketches the theater of events, ready for the dramas to come:

Ben avet tuig auzit coment la eretgia
 Era tant fort monteia (cui Domni-Dieus maldia!)
 Que trastot Albiges avia en sa bailia,
 Carcasses, Lauragues tot la major partia.
 De Bezers tro a Bordel, si co.l camis tenia. . .
 (l. 2: 4-8)¹³

Also active on this stage are shown to be, in *laisse* 3, the preachers sent by the Pope, such as the abbot of Cîteaux:

12. R. Lafont and C. Anatole, *Nouvelle Histoire*, I, 110.

13. "You have all heard how the heresy had made such progress (may God curse it!) that it ruled entirely over all Albigeois, and a good deal of Carcassès and Lauraguais. From Béziers to Bordeaux as far as the road goes."

Aicest santimes hom ab los autres alot
 Per terra dels heretges, et el les predicot.
 (l. 3: 9-10)¹⁴

Thus we have here, face to face, the ideological enemies on whose obstinacy the future conflict is to be built. But a funny thing happens in the rest of the *Canso*. Neither the heretics nor the Church figures gain too much visibility in the episodes about to unfold for many laisses to come, such as the siege and the massacre at Béziers, the siege of Carcassonne, the fall of Termes and Lavaur, the ambush at Montgey, the siege of Moissac, etc. Some invectives against heretics do surface here and there, such as "la mescrezuda jant" (l. 3: 15), "la gent felona" (l. 7: 8), "la fola gent malvaza" (l. 47: 11), "ces fols traidors" (l. 84: 9), and so do some short flattering portraits of spiritual leaders (the abbot of Cîteaux, l. 3: 9; the bishop of Toulouse, l. 46: 1-2). But the lack of fire in these invectives and praises becomes rapidly evident when one compares them to the anti-heretic vituperations of Petrus Vallium Sarnaii of the type "these disgusting dogs" (the Biterrois, par. 91, p. 42),¹⁵ "these shameless dogs" (the besieged at Lavaur, par. 223, p. 92), or to the Cistercian's exultation before the burning stakes of the type "Our crusaders burnt an infinity of heretics with utmost joy" (at Lavaur, par. 227, p. 94). In Guilhem's *Canso* the center stage is gradually conquered by other figures whose prominence becomes rapidly overwhelming and whose supremacy in the game will never fade: the warriors.

One of these warriors is, not surprisingly, Simon de Montfort, whom the *Song* describes in laisse 35, the moment of his election as commander-in-chief of the crusade, as follows:

... un riche baron, qui fu pros e valent,
 Ardit e combatant, savi e conoisent,
 Bos cavalers e larcs e pros e avinen,
 Dous e franc e suau, ab bo entendement.
 (l. 35: 2-5)¹⁶

Other crusaders also receive flattering portraits, such as Guilhem d'Encontre (an obscure figure) or Baudouin de Toulouse.

Paradoxically, so do the Southern knights. Raymond VI de Toulouse is constantly referred to as "lo pros coms de Tolosa" (l. 76: 1 and *passim*); his fierce vassal, the count of Foix, is "lo pros com de Fois" (l. 70: 9) "qui a cor de leon" (l. 69:9), while the unfortunate viscount of Béziers and Car-

14. "This holiest of men went himself to the land of the heretics with the others (preachers), and he preached to them."

15. I use for quotations from this work the modern French translation: Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay, *Histoire albigénoise*, translated by Pascal Guébin and Henri Maisonneuve (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1951).

16. "A rich (prestigious) baron who was brave and valiant, daring and a good fighter, wise and experienced, a good knight, generous, courageous, and pleasant, gentle and honest and nice, endowed with great sense."

and Carcassonne could not have gotten a better treatment from his own court poet:

En tant can lo mons dura n'a cavalier milhor,
Ni plus pros ni plus larg, plus cortes ni gensor.
(l. 15: 3-4)¹⁷

Needless to say, Petrus Vallium Sarnaii sees these characters quite differently — e.g., “this renegade worse than an infidel” (par. 27, p. 16) and “this despicable count of Toulouse” (par. 360, p. 140), or “this sinister traitor, the count of Foix, this very cruel persecutor of the Church and Christ's enemy” (par. 46, p. 21), and later on, about the same count, “this most ferocious dog” (par. 209, p. 85). Such epithets may serve as a sample of the polemic peaks a writer was due to attain, swept away by his partisan zeal at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

One may argue that the preeminence allotted in the *Canso* to the military was, after all, a generic feature in epic texts, the main business of such narratives being precisely to stage mighty exchanges of blows and bloody deeds. Perhaps. What strikes a modern reader, however, is the text's restraint in dealing with such exchanges, which, though frequent and at times detailed, tend as a rule to play down the physical violence and to cover up the atrocities committed on both sides. The narrative voice often seems more intent on showing troops moving and criss-crossing the heretic land, thus playing their beneficial role thanks to a mere show of physical presence rather than by means of brutal military action.

Having formulated in the opening *laisses* the conflict in the terms which we have seen, and having then described its stage as a “terra dels heretges” to be criss-crossed sword in hand by “las ost” (l. 7: 8) of Jesus Christ, Guilhem's *Canso* sets out to plant its “sen” (its ‘meaning,’ its ‘message’) in the firm ground of orthodoxy, and seems to adopt unhesitatingly in its initial lines what I would call the “ecclesiastical ideological model.” According to this model, which we may reconstruct, for instance, from the Pope's letter to Christendom of March 1208 (quoted in full in *Hystoria Albigensis*, pars. 56-66) and to other Church documents, the “mise en proie” (the opening to seizure) of the Toulousan fiefs was a religiously justified decision and the subsequent presence in the South of the Northern knights, led by the Pope's clergymen, a morally legitimate one.

But an ideology, as we know, is not an objective reflection of reality; it is rather — and I adopt here Georges Duby's definition from *Les Trois Ordres ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme*¹⁸ — a discursive polemic attempt to

17. “As long as the universe extends there is no better knight, neither braver nor more generous, more courteous or gentler.”

18. Georges Duby, *Les Trois Ordres ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), pp. 17, 20, and *passim*.

act upon a reality and to change it according to one's desire (or according to one's class interests, if we wish to use a Marxist terminology).

Thus, when one speaks about the referential character of Guilhem's *Canso* and about the closeness to facts of its narrative, one ought to exercise a double caution, since the subject matter of the *Canso* appears in fact as twice removed from its referent: once, because the *Canso* founds its view of things on a non-objective discursive construction (we may even venture to call it a "fiction") about real events — that of the Catholic Church faced with the stiff competition of growing heresies at the beginning of the thirteenth century;¹⁹ and twice, because it adopts this non-objective discursive construction not in order to voice dutifully its tenets, but in order to reformulate them through discursive means of a different and syncretic nature — those of an oral epic, to be performed before a Southern public, present in the flesh and ready to react to its "sen" and its "bel dit." And the medium seems to get in the way of the message.

If the referential character of Guilhem's *Canso* appears now to us in need of qualification, so does the so-called objectivity of his point of view. Some instances of omissions and of silence deserve a closer look. None of the prominent Southern lords is ever accused of direct involvement in the heresy (modern historians, such as Pierre Labal and Jean Duvernoy tell us otherwise²⁰ — to say nothing about Petrus Vallium Sarnaii), while the deaths of such luminaries as Raymond-Roger Trencavel, viscount of Béziers and Carcassonne, or Aimery de Lavaur and his sister, dame Giraude, are adequately (and at times even eloquently) deplored. No Northern knight of any importance is ever seen committing atrocities against the Southern populace, which requires in certain cases a real *tour de force* — for instance, in the case of the massacre at Béziers, shown to have been the exclusive responsibility of sergeants and servants.²¹ No excommunications, such as that of Raymond VI, are ever mentioned in any detail, which, in view of their noted frequency, is a very remarkable omission indeed. And so on.

Do these omissions imply that Guilhem de Tudela is an unreliable witness whose account of historical events is either sloppy or deliberately misleading? And do I mean to say that his work deserves even less praise than what traditional criticism has bestowed upon it so far? We may turn for some leads on these matters to Guilhem de Tudela's initial choice of intertext and to the reverberations that such a choice was bound to set in

19. For a discussion of the problematic character of a crusade on Christian land, see Chanoine E. Delaruelle, "L'Idée de croisade dans la *Chanson* de Guillaume de Tudèle," *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Occitanes*, 1962-1963, pp. 49-63.

20. Pierre Labal, "L'Église de Rome face au catharisme," in ed. Robert Lafont, *Les Cathares en Occitanie* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), pp. 15-197; and Jean Duvernoy, "La Religion cathare en Occitanie," *ibid.*, pp. 200-262.

21. For a perceptive analysis of the Béziers episode, see Colette Bottin-Fourchotte, "L'Ambiguïté du discours chez Guilhem de Tudela," *Annales de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Nice*, 29 (1977), 99-110.

motion in the Southern public's mind. The *Canso d'Antiocha*, which provides our poet with the rhythmic and melodic pattern used in his own *Canso*, was a crusade epic, allegedly composed by a Limousin knight, Gregori Bechada, some eighty years before the Albigensian War, apparently in honor of two Christian heroes who fought the pagans together before Antioch. They are Raymond IV de Saint-Gilles and Godefroi de Bouillon. Several extensive passages of the fragmentary version in Old Provençal of about 700 lines extant today enumerate warriors taking part in those events, and Northern and Southern names resound with equal force, side by side.²²

In view of this fact I shall venture a hypothesis at this point: that we may see in Guilhem's blatant tendency to smooth over the violent confrontations between Christian warriors, and to leave unmentioned the atrocities committed by knights on both sides the desire to promote a reconciliation within the warrior class and to channel its characteristic aggressivity in a common (and "right") direction — i.e., against the heretics.

This complex grid, made of laudatory epithets evenly distributed to both Northern and Southern warriors, of partial silence about hostile actions, and of blatant omissions about heretic involvement helps bring back to life gradually, through poetic means, the mythic world in which Christian knights, assisted by Church figures, were acting together with a common purpose: the world of the epic tradition. The Toulousan and the Northern warriors, the text seems to say, ought to set aside their unessential differences and to fight together the common enemy, as their ancestors Raymond IV de Saint-Gilles de Toulouse and Godefroi de Bouillon once did. No poetic maneuvers ought to be spared in order to arouse again in the public's memory the splendid image of this past common glory.

We have no proof of the actual impact Guilhem de Tudela's *Canso* may have had on the Southern aristocratic public for which it was apparently intended. The evolution of historical events was going against the message of reconciliation and Christian unity anyway, and the decisions of the fourteenth Lateran Council (1215) that sanctioned Simon de Montfort's lordship over the Southern conquered lands and the deposition of Raymond VI de Toulouse were not destined to appease the animosity that already ran high after the decisive Southern defeat at Muret (1213).

Few medieval works enjoyed, however, the attention that at least one reader/listener was going to lavish on this particular *Canso*. And this reader/listener was not going to keep his reactions to himself. I mean, of

22. This text was first published by Paul Meyer, *Archives de l'Orient Latin*, II (1883), 473-494. For a new edition, see the unpublished doctoral dissertation by Edward Joseph Greenan, "The *Canso d'Antiocha*: A Critical Edition and Philological Study," 1976 (The Catholic University of America).

course, the Toulousan anonymous poet, author of the *Song of the Albigensian Crusade*, Part II. This Toulousan anonymous poet has had a considerably better press in traditional criticism than his predecessor. He has usually gotten high marks for his stylistic fluency — deservedly so, I might add — and for his moral stand. To Guilhem's duplicity and opportunism, he opposes, according to these critics,²³ a flawless Southern patriotism and an admirable moral rectitude. His is the real *Song of the Albigensian Crusade*, the only one that matters and on which critics should spend their time.

I would like to interject here a modest remark: the 2,772 lines of Guilhem's *Canço* survived intact along with the Anonymous' 6,810, and if the former had not provided the pattern and the artistic choices I have already discussed elsewhere in this paper, the latter would have had nothing to continue. A superior poet himself, the Toulousan was about to build his own ambitious poetic project — possibly at the instigation of the court of Toulouse, which was ready to resume the fight around 1228 — on the shoulders of his predecessor, precisely as that predecessor had done with respect to Gregori Bechada's *Canço d'Antiocha*.

With a notable difference, however. When Guilhem adopts the model of the crusade song, it is in order to emulate and revive its underlying values, and thus promote the contemporary version of the ecclesiastical ideological model to which he adheres. But when the Toulousan poet decides to resume Guilhem's work, it is, wittingly or unwittingly, in order to demolish it from within.

The Song of the Albigensian Crusade, Part II, embodies a massive effort of "rewriting" the moral/ideological choices, and to a certain extent, also the poetic choices of Part I. It is not simply with an opposition of the type patriot versus collaborator or with a difference of versification (from *cobla capcaudada* to *cobla capfinida*) that we deal, but with a different mentality, a different world.

Let us take, for instance, the spatial image of the Southern lands as "terra dels heretges" which was so central to Guilhem's theater of events. The Anonymous rewrites it from the start, and it is a Toulousan consul (a "capitoul") who voices the new image in the second *laisse* of Part II:

Qu'en Dieu ai esperansa que tost sian sobratz
Que nos avem gran dreit ed els an los pecatz
Car nos vezem destruire las nostras eretatz.

(l. 133: 14-16)²⁴

The municipal official is the first among many other characters to dwell on this new image of the space as rightful heritage: *las nostras eretatz*. He expertly bases it on customary law (the narrator calls him elsewhere "us

23. R. Lafont, "Las Ideologías," p. 87.

24. "I put my hope in God that they will soon be vanquished, since we have the right on our side and they the sin, since we see how they waste our own heritage."

legista senatz," l. 133: 8, 'a wise legist') and also on canonical law, *sui generis*, when he dubs "sinful" the crusaders' attempt to waste what rightfully belongs to his community.

This "eretat" takes various shapes in Part II of the *Canso*. It reappears in the fiery speech delivered by the count of Foix during the Lateran Council (l. 145), where it applies to this feudal lord's own fief; in the words that the count of Comminges addresses to his lord Raymond VI (l. 181) and in which he links the vassals' destiny to that of their Toulousan lord; in the words of the consul from Avignon, Bertrand, addressed at Beaucaire to the "young count" (the future Raymond VII, l. 161) and in which the destiny of urban communities is linked to that of its legitimate lord; and so on.

But the scene of events is not the only element painstakingly redefined in Part II. The main characters in the drama are rewritten and the main roles recast. In Guilhem's *Canso* heretics and clerics were pale figures, uninteresting from a poetic point of view, but at least they were there, and the recurrent terms "crozada," "crozat," applied to Northern fighters, resounded periodically in battle descriptions. Not so in Part II.

Let us take the heretics first. After the eight *laissez* (142-150) devoted to the heated debates of the Lateran Council in which the term "heretic" is mentioned several times (often in speeches which reject the accusation of heretic sympathies leveled against Southern lords such as the count of Foix, whose fiery eloquence shuts everybody up), the word practically never occurs again. And with the word, the thing also goes. On the other hand, some clerics do become very visible in this text, and too much so for their own good. This is the case of Foulque, bishop of Toulouse, a most memorable figure of villain in the Anonymous' *Canso*. As for the crusaders, the appellative most often applied to them becomes in the new text "li clergue e.ls Frances" (l. 132: 1 — the first words of Part II) or simply "li frances soldadier" (l. 133: 1), while the rarely used "crozat," "crozada" (less than twenty occurrences in the whole text)²⁵ surface mostly in passages hostile to the enterprise. Without heretics and without crusaders, our war will become an entirely different game.

Could this massive effort of rewriting Guilhem's moral/ideological values be characterized as the result of a "subjectivisme ethnique occitan"?²⁶ As the expression of a "patriotisme ethnique," "sorte de prénationalisme"²⁷ that developed in Southern France after 1214? Without being necessarily inaccurate, this way of describing the conflict staged in the Anonymous' *Canso* seems to me somewhat inadequate, and possibly

25. Here is the complete list of occurrences of the term "crusade" and related words in the *Song of the Albigensian Crusade*, Part II: *los crozatz*: *laissez* 133: 30, 135: 23, 137: 30, 190: 7, 194: 45, 204: 122, 210: 15, 211: 78; *crozada*: *laissez* 196: 41, 198: 27, 200: 104, 208: 56, 212: 17; *la crotz*, "army of the cross": *laissez* 145: 55, 148: 10, 149: 48, 208: 97.

26. R. Lafont, "Las Ideologias," p. 87.

27. *Idem*, "Composition et rythme," p. 45.

anachronistic. Rather than speaking about the "people"²⁸ in the modern sense of "ethnic entity" or "nation," as Robert Lafont does, it may prove more useful, at this point, to attempt an analysis of the social forces at work in those moments of common enthusiasm which recur periodically in battle scenes in our text: at Beaucaire, at Toulouse, at Marmande.

I shall analyze a single passage of this type, one of many, from the siege of Toulouse, a passage that describes the effort to consolidate a defensive wall:

E anc e nulha vila no vis tan ric obrer,
Que lai obran li comte e tuit li cavalier
E borzes a borzezas e valent mercadier
E.lh home e las femnas e.ls cortes monedier
E li tos e las tozas e.l sirvent e.l troter.

...

E la noit a la gaita son tuit cominaler.

...

Las tozas e las femnas per lo joi vertader

Fan baladas e dansas ab sonet d'alegrier.

(l. 183: 67-71, 74, 77-78)²⁹

We encounter here a memorable image of the Southern society as viewed by the Anonymous' *Canso*: united in its defensive effort at every level of the social hierarchy, and heartened by the pursuit of a common purpose. We spot first in this scene the "counts" and the "knights" — i.e., the aristocracy — lending a helping hand in v. 68; the bourgeois class and the merchants follow them in v. 69; the citizens of both sexes and the money-changers are mentioned in v. 70; and youth of both sexes and servants of all kinds in v. 71. Two words eloquently sum up in v. 74 the spirit that animates this incongruous combination of social forces in action: "tuit cominaler." Their significance, in this epic context, is essential.

Most remarkable to me, in the passage above, is the presence of some social categories traditionally banned as active figures from the epic universe — e.g., the mercantile class and the female citizenry.³⁰ They are, on the contrary, eminently visible in this episode, either as active participants rewarded with laudatory epithets ("valent mercadier," "cortes monedier"), or as efficient animators who use for "militant" purposes some of the traditional lyric repertory of the medieval South: the "tozas" and "femnas" in v. 77.

28. *Idem*, "Las Ideologias," p. 88.

29. "One has never seen in any city such distinguished workers, since in that place the counts and all the knights work together, and the burghers and their wives, and the worthy merchants, and the men and the women, and the courtly money-changers, and the boys and the girls, and the servants and the errand boys. . . . All night long they watch, all of them, together. . . . The damsels and the women, moved by genuine merriment, play balads and danses on a joyful melody."

30. See, on this matter, Dominique Boutet and Armand Strubel, *Littérature, politique et société dans la France du Moyen Âge* (Paris: P.U.F., 1979), p. 56.

The manner of describing a fighting society that we encounter here differs greatly from what we usually see in a *chanson de geste* or even *d'histoire*. Carried away by its desire to show all layers of society involved in the common war effort, the narrative voice includes elements usually overlooked in the more archaic diction of the epic material that preceded our *Canso*. Interestingly enough, these social elements were in fact neglected also within the framework of the ecclesiastical ideological model,³¹ espoused, as we have seen, in Guilhem's *Canso* and in which the mistrust toward urban inhabitants, often accused if not of sheer malice at least of foolishness — for instance, at Béziers — is all too visible. A phrase such as "cortes monedier," v. 70, uttered at a time when the tolerance toward usury was one of the main points in the papal accusations repeatedly hurled at Raymond VI de Toulouse seems to me eminently worthy of attention.

One may argue that in mentioning these social categories the poet may have been purely and simply accurate. After all, the citizens of Toulouse did fight to defend their city against Simon de Montfort, and some women seem to have indeed been responsible for launching the fatal stone that killed the crusaders' commander-in-chief in 1218. It seems to me, however, that we may discern in the consistent effort to promote to center stage a number of social groups not usually visible in the epic world also an attempt to unsettle the usual military/clerical alliance of the *chanson de geste* order (*bellatores* + *oratores*) in order to replace it with a new and possibly more efficient alliance promoted to epic status: military/urban (*bellatores* + the newer branches of *laboratores*).

The conspicuous absence from the Southern camp of one social category further contributes to crystallizing this attempt at redesigning the social fabric of the Southern world through epic means: I mean the clerics. The institutionalized Church is almost never seen in the Southern camp, and when it does show up, its representatives are cast as a rule in negative roles. I have already mentioned in this respect Foulque, bishop of Toulouse. We may add to the list of villains the pontifical envoys — e.g., the archbishop of Nîmes (l. 162), to whom various crusaders, such as Foucaud de Berzy, Alain de Roucy, and Amaury de Craon, periodically express their doubts about the legitimacy of their presence in the South.

The prelates' absence would have left a threatening moral void in the heart of the Southern Christian society, had it not been filled thanks to narrative and stylistic stratagems of great complexity which deserve some scrutiny. One such stratagem uses the set-up of a marked opposition between God's will and the clerics' behavior. The "fals prezicador" mentioned by Dragonet de Mondragon at Beaucaire (l. 163: 11), the

31. See Maria Corti, "Models and Antimodels in Medieval Culture," *New Literary History*, 2 (1979), 339-366, particularly p. 344 on women on p. 345 on merchants.

"mals parladors" led by Foulque, responsible for the destruction of Toulouse (l. 178: 2), "los clergues" who "an . . . mentit" accused by the consul of Avignon, Bertrand (l. 161:41) represent the ecclesiastical caste now alienated from its parishioners, since it first alienated itself from the will of the Lord.

A second and more far-reaching stratagem uses a subreptitious identification between divine will and seignorial right, designed to enhance and dramatize the legitimate suzerainty over the Southern domains of the traditional lords, Raymond VI and his heir, the young count. Let us examine one occurrence of this stratagem: the moment of the lord's return from his exile in Spain to lead the revival of the Southern resistance:

Per que cel de Proensa eran tuit mescabat
Tro que Deus i trames una dossa clartat,
Que venc de vas Toloza que a.l mon alumnat,
Que restaura Paratge e a Pretz colorat;
Per so que.l coms lor senher, motas vetz perilhat,
Que lo rics apostolis e li autre letrat
A tort e senes colpa tenon deseretat
Es vengutz en la terra, on trobet lialtat,
D'en Roger de Cumenge.
(l. 180: 49-57).³²

The imagery of mystic light, used to describe the significance of the rightful lord's appearance among his vassals, astutely transfers miraculous virtues from the religious domain to the feudal/secular sphere of influence, and endows the chief of the secular hierarchy with the prerogatives of a Savior. The historical fact described here is that the count of Toulouse is coming from Spain through Comminges and advances in the direction of his capital. But thanks to the double meaning given to "Toloza" in v. 51 — 'count of Toulouse' and 'geographical city' — this capital is made to function as a Bethlehem with respect to the Southern world now enlightened by the "dossa clartat" that emanates from *it* through *him*.

The attribution of such powers to the secular chief becomes particularly striking in the passage above, since he is said to restore in this Mesianic way eminently secular values such as *Paratge* (a term rich in connotations in this text, meaning 'noble lineage,' 'heritage,' 'feudal right'.)³³ and *Pretz*, a well-known courtly/chivalric value related to social worth

32. "Due to this fact, the Provençal subjects were all discouraged, until God sent them a sweet light, which descended from the direction of Toulouse and which enlightened the world, and restored Paratge (Nobility) and returned to Pretz (Valor) its brilliance. This means that the count their lord, after having suffered many dangers, he, whom the noble Pope and the other clergy had unjustly deprived of his lands, has arrived on the land of Sir Roger of Comminges, and was given there loyal reception."

33. For a discussion of the use of this term in our text, see C. Bagley, "Paratge in the Anonymous *Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise*," *French Studies*, 3 (1967), 195-204.

and prestige, and since he is said to perform this restoration in marked opposition with the institutionalized Church's unjust decisions, mentioned in vv. 54-55.

A major ideological shift is underway in this passage and in so many others of the same type. But in order to operate this "rewriting" of the *chanson de geste*/*chanson d'histoire* universe, and to place in its center the God of *Paratge* represented on earth by its Messiah, the secular lord, the strictly epic discursive means, undermined by the anonymous poet's unusual treatment, were no longer sufficient to the task. And as Guilhem de Tudela decided to turn to a vernacular and secular discourse in order to promote the ecclesiastical ideological model he supported, in much the same way the Toulousan anonymous poet will turn to a vernacular and secular discourse able to provide him with the expressive means adequate to this ambitious undertaking. This discourse is embodied in the courtly lyricism, a long series of songs which, for over a century, had devoted their artistic efforts to the enhancement of the values and the life style of a certain secular world: the aristocratic, the "courtly."

One last passage may throw some light on the subtle poetic/ideological maneuverings used to promote the rights and the survival of this world in the Anonymous' *Canço*.

De tota aquesta guerra es parvens e semblans
Que Dieu renda la terra als seus fizels amans.
Car orgulhs e dreitura, leialtat e engans
Son vengut a la soma, car aprosma.l demans
Car una flors novela s'espandis per totz pans
Per que Pretz e Paratges tornara en estans;
Car le valens coms joves, qu'es adreiz e prezans
Demanda e contrasta los dezeretz e.ls dans,
Per que la crotz s'enansa e.l leos es mermans.
(l. 160: 1-9)³⁴

The narrative voice identifies in this passage the divine intervention with the interests of the Southern landowners. God acts as a good feudal lord, interested in the just attribution of fiefs, a role which becomes evident thanks to the vassality code disseminated throughout the passage: "terra" (v. 2), "fizels" (v. 2), "dreitura" (v. 3), "leialtat" (v. 3). The divine intervention brings about a rebirth of hope, expressed in v. 5 by means of a floral metaphor, reminiscent of the seasonal *topos* from the *exordium* of some courtly lyrics. Then this metaphorical rebirth engenders the

34. "The appearance of this whole war shows that God is going to return the land to those who love Him faithfully, since for vainglory and justice, for loyalty and treachery, the day of reckoning has come, since the hour of the just demands draws near, since a new flower blossoms everywhere in order that Valor and Nobility be restored, since the valiant young count who is adroit and enterprising seeks justice and opposes (counters) spoliations and losses. Therefore the cross is enhanced and the lion loses ground."

flourishing of courtly and aristocratic values such as "Pretz e Paratges," associated alliteratively in v. 6, where they replace the more frequent grouping "pretz e valor." Thus *Paratge*, a term with limited poetic impact in courtly lyricism but central to the anonymous *Canso*'s discourse, firmly joins the constellation of major courtly values thanks to a syntactic permutation and to a recurrent alliteration.

A double stylistic/ideological maneuver takes place in these lines. The relation between divinity and the Southern fighters is couched, on the one hand, in the terms of legal legitimacy, thanks to which God becomes the guarantor of "eretat," and it is couched, on the other hand, in the terms of courtly ethic, thanks to which God becomes the guarantor of the Southern vernacular civilization and of its poetic/ideological model promoted for a century by the troubadours and within which *Paratge* now occupies its central and privileged place.

The beneficiary of this double stylistic/ideological maneuver is the young count, "le valens coms joves" (v. 7), fighter against the "dezeretz," 'the spoliation,' and its mastermind, the usurper Simon de Montfort. The prominence given throughout this *Canso* to the Toulousan heir rather than to his procrastinating father may be seen as an attempt at further use of the courtly framework of reference within which the epithet of *joven* has particularly positive connotations. And thus, the "coms jove" unnoticeably turns in v. 9 into the champion of the cross — thanks to a mischievous stylistic/semiotic play on feudal emblems, the cross of Languedoc and the Montfort lion — and he is pitted against the champion of "dezeretz," "engans" and "orgulh" marked by the fierce lion, Simon de Montfort. A remarkable ideological *tour de force* has thus been accomplished through strictly poetic means.

Does the Southern world thus described correspond to the actual society of 1228, presumed date of composition for the *Song of the Albigensian Crusade*, Part II? Cases of omission and of silence abound also in the Anonymous' *Canso*, as they did in Guilhem de Tudela's *Canso*. To the deafening silence that covers the heretic presence in the Southern society (unusually high at the beginning of the thirteenth century) we may add also other omissions, such as the very real conflicts of interests between urban groups and their feudal lord (analyzed by John Mundy in his classic book *Liberty and Political Power in Toulouse (1050-1230)*),³⁵ or the ruinous concessions that Raymond VII de Toulouse, the exalted "coms jove" of our *Song*, had to make in order to gain their support in his war effort, and so on.

Should we then fault the Toulousan poet for these omissions and doubt his accuracy and his good faith? The answer, I think, is an emphatic "No." In a most effective and most moving way this brilliant

35. John Mundy, *Liberty and Political Power in Toulouse (1050-1230)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), pp. 88-89 and *passim*.

poet strives to unhinge one ethic and poetic myth — that of the crusaders' epic world, and establish instead another ethic and poetic myth — that of the courtly world of Paratge; and few poets have ever promoted in medieval literature their partisan, probably inaccurate, and at times so very enticing beliefs with the conviction, the fire, and the vision of this unknown artist who rivals at his best moments the scope and the depth of a political poet of Dante's stature.

I believe that in view of the ambition and sophistication shown by this grandiose epic work our traditional assumptions about the Occitan mediocrity in the epic vein ought to be thoroughly revised. The lyre of the Southern poetic genius had more than one chord during this first half of the thirteenth century, probably the most mature and the most diverse period of its historical development. A period which we, now imbued with the enticing games of one of its most gifted and long-winded sons, may like to call in his own words, and in honor of poetry, the age of Paratge.

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