THE CHANSÓNS DE GESTE

THE NON-ARISTOCRATIC CHARACTERS OF SOME SELECTED CHANSONS DE GESTE

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This thesis aims at a comparative study of the role and portrayal of the non-aristocratic characters of several chansons de geste selected from the twelfth to early fifteenth centuries. At the same time, the treatment of the so-called pseudo-vilains in relation to that of the genuine non-nobles will also be considered.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The celebrated Eric Auerbach has stated in Mimesis:

> The style of the heroic epic is an elevated style in which the structural concept of reality is still extremely rigid and which succeeds in representing only a narrow portion of objective life circumscribed in time, simplification of perspective, and class limitations. I shall be saying nothing new, but merely reformulating what I have said many times, if I add that in this style, the separation of the realm of the heroic and sublime from that of the practical and everyday is a matter of course. Strata other than that at the top of the feudal system simply do not appear.[1]

But is this statement true? If one examines the Old French epics, it is evident that the lower orders of society figure in them, sometimes prominently.

While various critics have considered non-aristocratic individuals and social groups in isolated epics,[2] no one has, as yet, approached the question of

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[1] E. Auerbach, The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (Princeton, 1953), p. 121. (Italics added.)

[2] One could mention here Jean Frappier's discussion of the porter and the pilgrim of Le Couronnement de Louis in Les Chansons de Geste du Cycle de Guillaume d'Orange,

non-nobles in a comprehensive manner. The following study of the non-aristocratic characters of the French national epic will proceed from an historical standpoint. We shall see how the portrayal and role of such characters evolved as time passes. In each epic, the non-noble characters will be divided into two sub-sections: those who often appear in a group, for example, the serjenz and the garçons,[3] and those who are given more individual attention.

The chansons de geste to be examined, thirteen in number, have been organized into three groups according to their date of composition. In most cases, the dating of a particular epic has been based on Raphäel Levy's "Chronologie Approximative de la Littérature de Moyen Age".[4] In the few cases, however, where Levy's estimations have seemed suspect, another date has been suggested in accordance with more recent scholarly views, the source of which is indicated in each case.

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tome II (Paris, 1967), pp. 95-99 or Gerald Herman's report on the Jews of La Mort Aymeri de Narbonne and Girart de Vienne in "A Note on Medieval Anti-Judaism as Reflected in the Chansons de Geste ", Annuale Medievale, XIV (1963), 63-73.

[3]For the sake of conciseness, when a serjent or garçon, etc. appears alone but his portrayal and role do not differ in any way from that of his fellows in the same poem presented in a group, he will included in the study of the group characters.

[4]R. Levy, "Chronologie Approximative de la Littérature du Moyen Age", Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für

Group One

The five epics chosen from the twelfth century are:

La Chanson de Roland[5]	beginning of the twelfth century
Le Couronnement de Louis[6]	1130
La Chanson de Guillaume[7]	1140
Le Charroi de Nîmes[8]	1144
La Prise d'Orange[9]	1160-1165[10]

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romanische Philologie, XCVIII (1957), 1-59.

[5]F. Whitehead, ed., La Chanson de Roland (Oxford, 1962) [reprint of 1957 edition].

[6]E. Langlois, ed., Le Couronnement de Louis, Chanson de Geste (Paris, 1969) [reprint of edition of 1938].

[7]D. McMillan, ed., La Chanson de Guillaume, 2 vols. (Paris, 1949).

[8]J.-L. Perrier, ed., Le Charroi de Nîmes, Chanson de Geste du XII^e Siècle (Paris, 1931).

[9]Claude Régnier, ed., La Prise d'Orange, Chanson de Geste de la Fin du XII^e Siècle (Paris, 1972).

[10]Although Levy puts the date of this epic at 1148, more recent opinion indicates that it was composed several years later than this. See J. Frappier's Les Chansons de Geste, II, 258.

Before we proceed any further, a word should be said about the criteria used in the selection of the epics for this study. The texts were chosen according to the reliability of their dating and also their ready availability in the university library.

Group Two

The five epics chosen from the thirteenth century are:

Aimeri de Narbonne[12]	1217
Girart de Vienne[13]	1220
La Mort Aymeri de Narbonne[14]	first half of the thirteenth century[15]
Macaire[16]	first half of the thirteenth century
Parise la Duchesse[17]	1275

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[12] L. Demaison, ed., Aimeri de Narbonne, Chanson de Geste, 2 vols. (New York, 1968) [reprint of edition of 1887].

[13] F. Yeandle, ed., Girart de Vienne, Chanson de Geste (New York, 1930).

[14] J. Couraye du Parc, ed., La Mort Aymeri de Narbonne, Chanson de Geste (New York, 1966) [reprint of edition of 1884].

[15] R. Levy suggests 1180 as the date of composition of La Mort Aymeri de Narbonne. After consulting others on this matter, I have decided that this date is too early. Hugo Theodor's estimation of the first half of the thirteenth century seems more acceptable. See his study, "Die komischen Elemente der altfranzösischen Chansons de Geste", Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, XLVIII (1913), 4.

[16] F. Guessard, ed., Macaire, Chanson de Geste (Paris, 1866).

[17] F. Guessard and L. Larchey, Parise la Duchesse, Chanson de Geste (Paris, 1870).

Group Three

Finally, the two epics of the fourteenth century and the one from the early fifteenth to be considered are:

Le Batard de Bouillon[18]	middle of the fourteenth century
Hugues Capet[19]	1359
Ciperis de Vignevaux[20]	1410

By what criteria are we to decide whether an epic character belongs to the aristocratic or the non-aristocratic class? From all evidence available in the epics under study, it appears that membership in the nobility was a right of birth.[21] During the middle ages,

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[18]Robert F. Cook, ed., Le Batard de Bouillon, Chanson de Geste (Genève, 1972).

[19]Le M[is] de la Grange, ed., Hugues Capet, Chanson de Geste (Paris, 1864).

[20]W. S. Woods, ed., A Critical Edition of Ciperis de Vignevaux with Introduction, Notes and Glossary (Chapel Hill, 1949).

[21]In her book, The Old French Epic (Oxford, 1951), p. 3, Jessie Crosland explains the importance of an individual's birth as documented in certain medieval chronicles and in Old French literature.

there was much importance attached to the idea of breeding. It was thought that aristocratic parents passed noble traits, for example, courage, on to their children.[22] This belief is evident in Le Couronnement de Louis. When young Louis cries and shows his reluctance to take the crown that his father, Charlemagne, is offering him, the emperor becomes very angry, saying:

> "Ha! las! . . . come or sui engeigniez!
> Delez ma feme se colcha paltoniers
> Qui engendra cest coart eritier." (90-92)

Since Louis seems to be a coward, Charlemagne is convinced that he cannot be his son. On the contrary, he must be the child of a "paltoniers", a man of no worth.

Further proof that membership in the aristocracy is inherited by birth is provided in all the epics in question by the frequent use of the adjective gentil meaning noble (i.e. noble by birth).[23] In Macaire, for

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[22]Negative traits, too, were considered to be inherited. The traitors of Parise la Duchesse are all members of the same family. In the introduction of this epic, we are told:

> Ill ot en Vauvenice .XII. pers moult felons,
> Qui lor seignor murtrirent par moult grant traïson:
> Herdrez et Aloriz, et Tiebauz d'Apremunt,
> Et Pineauz, et R[o]giers, et Herveies de Lion,
> Pinabiaus et Roers, et Sanses d'Orion;
> Cil furent del lignaigne al cuvert Ganellon. (15-20)

[23]For possible meanings of gentil, see Tobler-Lommatzsch, Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch, Band IV, S. 271-276. Although there exist other meanings for this adjective, in the examples given noble by birth is the most suit-

instance, the queen, Blanchefleur, is referred to as "la çentil dame" (58). Charlemagne, too, is addressed several times by persons using this word (573; 1903; 3504). In Hugues Capet, the Count of Dammartin is called "gentis sirez" (937), as is Count Fedry in line 2490, "gentieulz sire".

Although it is sometimes difficult to define who is noble and who is not, it can generally be assumed that all knights are aristocrats.[24] For the most part, only nobles would have the means to purchase the horse and expensive armour and also have the leisure time needed to serve as a knight.

It can now be concluded that all those, both French and Saracen, who are knights, who are called gentil or nobile, who have a title such as duc, conte, marchis, roine, etc., or who hold an office, for instance chamberlain or cup-bearer,[25] are of the aristocracy. Into this

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able. (We assume here that nobility is transferred by the father to his children.)

[24]There are, however, occasional exceptions to this rule as will be seen later in this paper.

[25]In his book, Military and Religious Life in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (New York, 1964), pp. 143-153, P. Lacroix describes the education of a knight. A noble child was usually sent away to the household of some powerful lord to be educated. At first, the boy is called a page and, later, a squire. It is often the squire who is entrusted with the above-mentioned offices. Other offices held by older nobles are those of seneschal and constable.

classification fits the vast majority of epic characters. Those who do not, belong to the non-noble class.[26]

In addition to studying the portrayal and role of genuine non-aristocratic characters, we shall also be considering the depiction in the epics of what J. Frappier has called the "pseudo-vilains",[27] that is, aristocratic characters who, through disguise or other reasons, are presented as non-aristocrats. It will be interesting to see if the presentation of such characters differs in any way from that of the genuine non-nobles.

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[26]The other element of medieval society, the clergy, will not be assigned to either class. These individuals had, at least in theory, renounced the world and its order in favour of the rule of another authority, the Church. It should also be noted that although messengers, or couriers as they are sometimes called, appear in most, if not all, the epics under consideration, they will not be discussed in the body of this paper. In general, they are aristocrats, for it is often stated that they are knights. Sometimes a messenger's noble way of greeting the recipient of the message indicates that he (i.e. the messenger) belongs to the aristocracy. In any case, the role of such a character is always quite straightforward: he is given a message which he promptly delivers. In like manner, thieves who are depicted in a few of the epics will not be considered. According to A. Schultz, Das höfische Leben zur Zeit der Minnesinger (Osnabrück, 1965), II, 152-154, members of the aristocracy sometimes became robbers. In Girart de Vienne, we have proof of this. The poverty stricken sons of Garin de Monglane steal the supplies of some merchants whom they have just slain. Since the social status of thieves is rarely indicated in these epics, they will not be discussed here.

[27]J. Frappier, Les Chansons de Geste, II, 242.

CHAPTER II

THE NON-ARISTOCRATIC CHARACTERS IN SOME TWELFTH-CENTURY CHANSONS DE GESTE

La Chanson de Roland

Especially in the very early epics, the representatives of the non-aristocratic class are few in number.[28] In La Chanson de Roland, all such characters appear in groups, never as distinct individuals. They are the serjenz, the serfs, the bourgeois and the cooks.

Perhaps the most interesting of all these characters are the cooks. According to Charlemagne's orders, they are to guard Ganelon "si cume tel felon" (1819). These words convey a special meaning to the cooks. They are not just to confine Ganelon until the emperor tells them otherwise, but are expected to treat him as a traitor deserves. Without hesitation or further instruction, the cooks begin to beat Ganelon. This suggests that they may have performed this task before. Since the aristocrats do

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[28] In his article, "The Character Types in the Old French Chansons de Geste", Publications of the Modern Language Association, XXI (1906), 384, W. W. Comfort explains that in the epic it was natural for the aristocratic characters to outnumber the non-aristocratic. This poetry, having been written for the nobility, had to reflect their lives and aspirations.

not participate in the beating,[29] it could well be that the punishment of traitors in the field was the duty of the cooks, probably the lowest ranking group in the army.

The punishment meted out to Ganelon -- each of the hundred cooks pulls Ganelon's beard and moustache; each strikes him four times with his fist; each cook beats him with sticks and clubs; Ganelon is then chained up as if he were a bear and is finally placed on a pack horse (1823-1828) -- may seem unduly severe to some. Ganelon's crime of treason (1820) was, however, a very grave one. The severity of the punishment actually corresponds to the seriousness of the crime committed. It is interesting to note that the cooks do not seem in the least reluctant at having to punish Ganelon.[30] They may even have been delighted at having such an opportunity. It is likely that they often had to accept much abuse at the hands of the powerful lords. Here, the tables are turned. The punishment of Ganelon, a member of the upper class, provides the

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[29]They could not punish a peer.

[30]In his article, "Ganelon and the Cooks", Symposium, XX (1961), 143, F. W. Locke describes the punishment as the "sport of the lowborn cooks". He agrees that the cooks seem to enjoy their task.

cooks with an excellent opportunity for revenge.[31]

Before leaving the discussion of the cooks in La Chanson de Roland, the opinions of certain critics about these characters should be reviewed.

In his article, "Ganelon and the Cooks",[32] F. W. Locke opposes (and rightly so) the opinion of E. R. Curtius[33] and others who believe that the handing of Ganelon over to the cooks for punishment provides the reader or listener with a moment of comic relief. After rejecting this theory, Locke goes on to suggest another purpose for the appearance of the cooks. He shows that in the ninth-century work, De Sobrietate, the description of the kitchen suggests hell. Locke also points out that in the Mystère d'Adam,

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[31] See the remarks of P. Noble on this point in "Attitudes to Social Class as Revealed by Some of the Older Chansons de Geste", Romania, XCIV (1973), 363.

[32] F. W. Locke, "Ganelon and the Cooks", Symposium, XX (1961), 141-149.

[33] In European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, tr. W. R. Trask (London, 1953), p. 433, Curtius suggests that the action of the cooks in La Chanson de Roland is an example of "kitchen humour". For other views on the humorous value of this scene see:

Gerald Herman, "Is there humour in the Chanson de Roland?", The French Review, XLV (1971), 13-20.

P. Noble, "Attitudes to Social Class", Romania, XCIV (1973), 362-363.

J. Frappier, Les Chansons de Geste, I, 199-200.

a work of the twelfth century, hell is presented as a medieval kitchen. Since this identification of hell and the kitchen appeared as early as the ninth century and was still present in literature as late as the twelfth century, Locke believes that there existed a "long tradition"[34] of hell as kitchen, and that the Roland, written in the twelfth century, could well reflect this tradition. Ganelon, as a Judas figure, deserves hell. Locke concludes that the action of the cooks symbolically "anticipates the damnation of Ganelon".[35]

Upon the return of the army to court, it appears that the cooks are relieved of the task of guarding the traitor. This job now falls to those of lowest social degree at court, the serfs (3737). Their methods of punishment resemble those of the cooks:

> A un'estache l'unt atachét cil serf,
> Les mains li lient a curreies de cerf,
> Tresben le batent a fuz e a jamelz. (3737-3739)

The author suggests (3740) that Ganelon's punishment is not overly severe but, rather, suited to the crime committed.

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[34] F. W. Locke, "Ganelon and the Cooks", Symposium, XX (1961), 148.

[35] Ibid.

Other lowborn characters besides the cooks and the serfs are seen to be responsible for the punishment of Ganelon. We are told that four serjenz[36] help with his execution:

> Li cheval sunt orgoillus e curant,
> Quatre serjanz les acoeillent devant. (3966-3967)

It is to be noted that the aristocrats, too, participate in the execution (3960-3965). This is now permissible, for Ganelon is no longer a peer, having lost his status in the defeat of Pinabel, Ganelon's champion, by Thierry.

The execution of the thirty relatives of Ganelon is also the responsibility of one hundred "serjanz" (3957). Basbrun, the "veier" (3952),[37] relays Charlemagne's message to them (3956-3958).

In La Chanson de Roland, the serjenz perform one other task. They must attend to Marsile's messengers who arrrive at Charlemagne's court (159-161). These twelve serjenz appear to be gracious and well-mannered, for we are told that they served the aristocratic Saracens well (161).

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[36]The meaning of serjent is serviteur or homme d'armes. See F. Godefroy, Dictionnaire de l'Ancienne Langue Française, VII (Paris, 1961), 391-392.

[37]According to the glossary in F. Whitehead's edition of the Roland, a veier is an officer or provost-marshal (p. 165). It is possible that Basbrun, as the holder of an office, is an aristocrat. (See footnote 25 of this paper).

This duty contrasts sharply with that of the other serjenz who were responsible for the execution of the traitor and his relatives.

The last group of non-aristocratic characters to be considered are the Saracen bourgeois who make a fleeting appearance in La Chanson de Roland (2689-2691). The apt remarks of W. W. Comfort regarding this scene should be quoted in full:

> This is the early feudal conception: the townspeople huddled in the narrow streets of the lower town, within the enclosure of the fortifications, but living apart from the fighting men, who kept to the citadel, the "citet amunt" [2692]. This bare mention of the bourgeois element in a town is to be noted chiefly for its complete failure to serve as an artistic background. It never occurred to the trouvère of the Roland to narrate what the bourgeois of Saragossa were doing at the time, and how they received the Christian messengers.38

In general, the appearance of the non-noble characters in the Roland is always very brief. None of the serjenz, serfs or bourgeois are individualized. Except for their chief, Besgun (1818), none of the cooks are named. Neither are any of the non-aristocratic characters physically described. Except for Besgun who relays Charlemagne's order to the hundred kitchen boys,[39] none

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[38]W. W. Comfort, "The Character Types", PMLA, XXI (1906), 238.

[39]Although numbers in medieval literature can often be interpreted symbolically, it is unlikely to be the case

of the non-nobles are ever heard to utter a word. All the non-aristocrats, with the exception of the bourgeois, are shown carrying out Charlemagne's orders which most often involve the probably unpopular duty of the punishment or execution of criminals. For the most part, the non-nobles are in a position of complete subservience to their social superiors.

Le Couronnement de Louis

In contrast to the portrayal of the non-nobles in the Roland, who always appear in a group, is the treatment of these characters in Le Couronnement de Louis. While groups of non-aristocrats are still frequent, for example the peasants, the serjenz, the garçons, the

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here. In his article, "Number Symbolism and Medieval Literature", Medievalia et Humanistica, I (new series) (1970), 166, E. Reiss remarks:

> To begin with, it should be obvious that not every number appearing in a medieval text has symbolic significance. Some, like 10, 50, and 100, are round numbers which, while possibly having additional signification, possess mainly, as Curtius says "aesthetic significance". Should a writer speak of, say, 1,000 warriors, the chances are good that he means merely a large number of warriors, unless the context indicates that he may have something more in mind.

pietaille and the bourgeois, two non-nobles, the porter and the pilgrim,[40] appear as well-defined individuals.

Although the pilgrim is not named, many details of his physical appearance are given:

> En mi sa veie encontre un pelerin,
> L'escharpe al col, el poing le fust fraisnin;
> Onc ne veïstes tant gaillart pelerin,
> Blanche ot la barbe, come flor en avril. (1453-1456)

This portrait is a positive one, the pilgrim resembling perhaps a friendly grandfather.

In contrast to the silence of the non-nobles in the Roland, the pilgrim eloquently expresses his loyalty to the hereditary monarchy (1473-1477). He informs William of Louis' predicament (1460-1465) and furthers the plot by telling him where he can find the young king

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[40] While there is no clear-cut proof that the pilgrim is a non-noble, the fact that he accepts a reward of money from William (1483-1484) may indicate that he is not an aristocrat. In her book, The Old French Epic, J. Crosland points out that the nobles often had a scornful attitude toward money and trade. In describing this attitude, she writes:

> "Ne sui pas marchëans qu'aie borsée," cries Aiol angrily when the king offers him a reward of money. And the same scornful words with slight variation in detail come from the lips of many a proud scion of a noble family. (p. 289)

It might also be noted here that Jean Frappier, in Les Chansons de Geste, II, 52, describes both the pilgrim and the porter as representatives of les "petites gens".

(1466-1469). Standing face to face with William, the son of Aimeri, the pilgrim laments the absence of "li lignages al pro conte Aimeri" (1472). This ironic statement was probably a source of amusement for the listeners. William does not hide his appreciation of the pilgrim's help. Smiling, he compliments the pilgrim by asking Bertrand, "O'stes mais si corteis pelerin?" (1480). William then rewards the pilgrim by giving him "dis onces d'or" (1483).

The porter in the Couronnement is a character very similar to the pilgrim. Although he is not physically described, he expresses at length his loyalty to Louis.[41] He laments the young king's predicament (1536-1539) and, cursing William who identifies himself as Richard's (i.e. the traitor's) ally, refuses to let William through the gate (1544-1551). Using almost the same ironic words as the pilgrim (1470-1473), the porter laments the absence of the family of Aimeri de Narbonne (1540-1543).

When William says that if his true identity were known, the porter would readily open the gate, the porter,

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[41]While this porter is loyal to the king, there are apparently others who support the traitors (1880).

perhaps remembering his earlier harsh words to William (1544-1551), becomes more cautious and polite, asking:

> "Gentilz om, sire, se j'osasse parler,
> Je demandasse de quel terre estes nez,
> Et de quel gent et de quel parenté." (1565-1567)

This sudden change in attitude may have amused the medieval audience.

Having learned William's true identity, the porter allows him to enter. The porter then presents his glove and declares a challenge to Richard, his treacherous master (1604-1608). Of his action, J. Frappier writes:

> Voilà un geste et un langage de baron; ce portier, personnage subalterne, prend des proportions épiques, se hausse d'instinct au-dessus de sa condition.[42]

The porter also gives William much good advice (1587-1589; 1595-1596; 1632-1639). As was seen earlier with the pilgrim, William is very appreciative of the porter's help. The stock phrase, "Oïstes mais si bien parler portier?", is repeated several times (1554; 1598-1599; 1644-1645). Like the pilgrim, the porter is rewarded. This time, however, William bestows knighthood[43] and makes

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[42] J. Frappier, Les Chansons de Geste, II, p. 97.

[43] We see here that, although knighthood was generally reserved for those of noble birth, certain non-aristocrats were admitted to the order. In their article, "Idéal Social et Vocabulaire des Statuts -- Le Couronnement de Louis", Langue Française, IX (fév. 1971), 116, J. Batany and J. Rony remark that "la chevalerie est affirmée comme classe ouverte à ceux qui sont 'gent' et 'alignee' et qui

the porter his chief adviser.[44]

In general, the porter and the pilgrim are presented in a favourable light. By their support of the hereditary monarchy, they are, like the non-nobles of the Roland, in the service of the aristocrats. The appearance of two such similar characters in Le Couronnement serves four main purposes. It underlines the fact that many non-artistocrats support Louis, the hereditary monarch.[45] It also emphasizes William's popularity with those of the lower class and reveals very clearly William's generosity. By giving these non-nobles a fairly prominent role in his story, the author may also be attempting to interest a wider audience.

The remaining representatives of the non-aristocratic class in Le Couronnement de Louis are all portrayed in

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savent 'bien parler' (c-à-d. de façon moralement louable)". Also interesting regarding the knighting of the porter are the comments of J. Crosland quoted by J. Frappier, Les Chansons de Geste, II, 99-100.

[44]William's choice of a non-aristocrat or vilain as his conseilliers directly opposes Charlemagne's advice on the selection of an adviser. To Louis he says: "Et altre chose te vueil, filz, acointier, / Que, se tu vis, il t'aura grant mestier: / Que de vilain ne faces conseillier / . . . Il boisereient a petit por loier" (204-208). Ironically, in Le Couronnement de Louis it is the nobles who betray the king, while the non-aristocrats are, for the most part, loyal to him.

[45]See J. Frappier, Les Chansons de Geste, II, 52.

groups. The appearance of the serjenz and the garçons[46] is a very brief one:

> Il font lor chartres et lor briés seeler,
> Et lor serjenz et lor garçons errer.
> Ainceis que fussent li quinze jor passé,
> En i ot tant venuz et assemblez
> Cinquante mile les peüst on esmer,
> Que bons serjenz, que chevaliers armez. (2269-2274)

The role of these characters is quite straightforward. Always at the service of the nobles, the garçons and serjenz deliver messages. In addition to this duty, the serjenz must assemble to help with the battle (2274). Another group, mentioned in passing, who also help the nobles in battle is the pietaille (420) or gens de pied who "tendront les portes et les barres" (421). This is the first time so far that we hear of the non-nobles joining the aristocrats in battle.

A few peasants, too, appear in Le Couronnement de Louis. They are described as bringing food to William and his men:

> Al matin monte, pense de chevalchier
> Tresqu' a Lions, un riche gualt plenier;
> En une lande sont descendu a pié;
> Li païsant lor portent a mangier (2085-2088)

Of all the epics considered in this paper, it is

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[46] Garçon means "Dienstbursche (niedriger Herkunft)". See Tobler-Lömmatzsch Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch, IV, 111.

only in this one that the country folk appear.[47] Again we see the non-aristocrats in the service of the upper class. This support of the peasants for the defenders of Louis could be interpreted as a demonstration of their allegiance to the concept of the hereditary monarchy.

The last group of non-aristocrats to be considered in Le Couronnement are the bourgeois. They can be divided into two groups: those who support the traitors (1874-1875; 1884-1888) and those who support William and, presumably, Louis (2070-2073). It should be noted that the bourgeois' aid to the nobles is not military in nature, but consists, rather, in giving shelter to the aristocrats. Except for the brief mention of Hungier, the innkeeper (1885), no interest is taken in the bourgeois as individuals.

In general, the appearance of the non-noble characters presented in a group in Le Couronnement de Louis is extremely brief. They are never physically described and are never heard to speak. With the exception of Hungier, the bourgeois, (1885), none of the non-aristocrats are named. These characters are always portrayed as the servants of the aristocrats. They provide no humour in this epic.

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[47] According to W. W. Comfort, "The Character Types", PMLA, XXI (1906), 395, these poems rarely speak of the rural population.

La Chanson de Guillaume

In contrast to the Couronnement, there are very few non-nobles present in La Chanson de Guillaume. The kitchen workers appear as a group, while the porter and the chief cook are the only non-nobles portrayed as individuals. Of much interest is the introduction of Rainouart, the first pseudo-vilain to be considered in this paper.

We shall first consider those non-nobles who appear in a group.

The kitchen workers of La Chanson de Guillaume are malicious pranksters. With their mindless antics, these characters provide an element of slapstick comedy in this epic. In their first appearance they get Rainouart drunk and hide his tinel (2697-2700). When Rainouart awakens to find it gone and the kitchen workers mocking him (2701-2704), he beats two of them severely, while the third, seeing this, gives back the club without delay (2706-2710).

Later, some kitchen boys play a new trick on Rainouart. After getting him drunk again (2856-2858), they burn his hair and clothing while he sleeps (2868-2869). When Rainouart awakens to find himself on fire and the boys

teasing him (2870-2881), he kills four of them with his club (2886).[48] Although one tries to escape from Rainouart by running away (2887), he, too, is slain. With his tinel Rainouart "li dona un colp tel, / En dous meitez li ad le cors colpé" (2888-2889).

These kitchen workers are the first non-aristocrats considered so far who are shown in a bad light. The poet, calls them "leccheur" (2700; 2704; 2868; 2881), an abusive term often used of the hated Saracens. The cowardice of the kitchen boys is clearly revealed when one of their number tries to run away to escape Rainouart.

While the kitchen workers are portrayed as a group, the chief cook of Louis' kitchen is presented as an individual. Although he is not as malicious as the kitchen boys, the surly and outspoken cook is also shown in a bad light. His first reaction to Rainouart's request for permission to join William's army is, "Lecchere, nu ferez!" (2674). He ridicules Rainouart by telling him that he will find army life too difficult. Rainouart, accustomed

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[48]It is interesting to note that one of these boys could have been a noble. In lines 3422-3431, Guinebald scolds Rainouart for killing Winebold, Guinebald's nephew. As Guinebald is a "chevaler felun" (3422) and his nephew is obviously a malicious character, it is probable that they were members of a family of traitors (see footnote 22 of this paper). It could be that Winebold was relegated to the kitchen for previous misdeeds or perhaps because he could not be trusted in the army.

to the good life (2677-2679), will be unable to endure hunger and hardship (2675-2676). When the chief cook tries to hold Raindaurt back by force, the youth flattens him with his club before pushing him into the fire (2684-2688). Partly because of the punishment he receives from Rainouart and partly because of his bad temper, the chief cook provides much humour in this poem.

The only other non-noble to be individualized in this epic is the porter. When William, dressed in Saracen armour, requests entry into the city, the porter, a very cautious individual,[49] curtly asks: "Qui estes vus?" (2217). Upon receiving the answer, "Ço est Willame al curb niés!" (2217), the porter decides that he must consult with Guiborc, his lady, before allowing the knight to enter (2218-2219). The porter hurrying to the castle, reports the incident to Guiborc who decides to proceed to the gates herself. Although the porter can be very abrupt when trying to discourage a suspicious-looking visitor, he can also be very polite, as is evident in his words to Guiborc (2222-2232). In this same speech, the

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[49] It seems that a porter was justified in being extremely careful about whom he allowed to pass through the city's gate. As we learn in this passage from Aimeri de Narbonne, porters were sometimes punished for allowing the enemy to enter their city. The Saracen emir says to Aimeri:

"Par Mahomet que ge doi aorer,
Bien vos poez por fol musart prover,

porter is shown to be very observant for he has noted many details of William's physical appearance: William is, according to the porter, "granz . . . corsuz . . . mollez [et] fer" (2224-2225) and "chevalche un alferant tel / Il n'ad si bon en la crestienté / N'en paenissme nel poet hom recovrer. / Paenes armes li pendent al costez" (2229-2232). This ability to observe was very important, for it was from such details that he would decide if he should let a particular visitor enter the city.

In contrast to the chief cook, the hard-working and conscientious porter is shown in a favourable light. Unlike the cook, the porter is not, himself, a source of humour. It is thanks to him, however, that Guiborc appears on scene to create much humour in her interview with William. Like most of the non-nobles discussed so far, both of these men serve the nobles.

Finally, we shall consider the role and portrayal of Rainouart, the pseudo-vilain. Although by appearance and behaviour Rainouart is very much a non-aristocrat, by birth he is a noble. Son of a Saracen king, Rainouart was taken prisoner at a young age and sold into slavery. For

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Qui toz armez osastes ci entrer,
Et li portiers le doit bien conparer,
Qant vos lessa le suel ainsi passer!" (4042-4046)

years he has worked as a kitchen boy in Louis' household (3506-3542).

In La Chanson de Guillaume, Rainouart seems to be a source of much humour. Consider, for instance, his appearance:

> Deschalcez e en langes, n'out point de solders;
> Granz out les piez e les trameals crevez,
> E de sur sun col portat un tinel;
> N'est ore nuls hom qui tel peust porter. (2649-2652)

Rainouart's unkempt condition quite likely caused laughter among the well-dressed aristocratic audience. (See the nobles' reaction to Varocher, p. 68 below.)

His speech, too, was probably a source of humour: his first words provide a good example of this. He offers to help William kill "Sarazins e Esclers" (2656). Of this speech, one critic writes:

> Une vantardise, un "gab" est normal dans la bouche d'un chevalier; prononcés par l'un des membres du "fier lignage" les deux vers (2655-2656) n'auraient rien qui doive spécialement accrocher l'attention. Proférés par un personnage dont l'aspect extérieur révèle un vilain, ils créent une dissonance. On se trouve dès lors en présence du phénomène d'inversion, de rôle "renversé" dont parle Bergson.50

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[50] J. Wathelet-Willem, "Le Personnage de Rainouart dans La Chanson de Guillaume et dans Aliscans", Société Rencesvals, IV[e] Congrès International, Actes et Mémoires, (Heidelberg, 1969), p. 168.

It is possible that Rainouart's ideas and attitudes were also a source of humour. His obstinate refusal of knighthood with its accompanying armour and horse in favour of fighting with his tinel (2666-2668; 2834-2836; 2839-2840) quite likely amused the knights in the audience, whose status was normally very envied in the middle ages.

Rainouart's actions, too, were likely entertaining. His beating of the cooks who had tortured him (2707-2709) and his crushing of the armed and mounted Saracen warriors with one blow of his club (3088-3092) quite possibly amused the medieval audience, whose attitude toward violence and brutality differed from our own. P. Ménard explains:

> Sans nul doute, les gens du Moyen Age ont une vie rude et des moeurs plus durs que les nôtres. Ils ne perçoivent pas comme nous qu'il y a des châtiments inhumains. Ils éprouvent parfois une joie mi-naïve, mi-sadique au spectacle de la torture. Ils rient des mutilations et des supplices subis par les méchants. Pour eux, quand on est coupable, on doit expier dans son corps et dans sa chair.[51]

The portrayal of Rainouart, the pseudo-vilain, differs in many ways from that of the genuine non-nobles. While we learn little of the latter's appearance, attitudes,

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[51] P. Ménard, Le Rire et le Sourire dans le Roman Courtois en France au Moyen Age (Paris, 1969), p. 75.

speech and actions, Rainouart's are all described at length, seemingly for comic purposes. While the genuine non-aristocrats studied thus far provide some humour, they do not do so to the same extent as Rainouart. While Rainouart is, himself, inherently funny, very few of the genuine non-nobles have been portrayed in this manner.

Le Charroi de Nîmes

The pseudo-vilain also makes an appearance in Le Charroi de Nîmes (i.e. William and his men disguised as merchants). The representatives of the genuine non-aristocrats are few in number. A vilain accompanied by his three children is presented as an individual, while the vilains and the cooks appear in groups.

Unlike the Roland where "le médiocre, le bas, le vulgaire"[52] have no place, Le Charroi de Nîmes often portrays the mundane and the common. This is illustrated by the unheroic means employed by William to capture Nîmes. In accordance with the less noble tone of the Charroi is the introduction of the kitchen scenes, described as follows:

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[52] I. Siciliano, Les Chansons de Geste et l'Epopée -- Mythes, Histoire, Poèmes (Torino, 1968), p. 372.

En cez cuisines ont cez feus alumez
Cil qui se hastent del mengier conraer. (788-789)

and

Et Harpins hauce, si a Baillet tüé,
Et puis Lonel, qui estoit par delez
(Cil dui estoient li mestre limonier).
Et escorchier les fet au bacheler
En la cuisine por le mengier haster. (1276-1280)

As in the Roland, we see here (788-789) that cooks are attached to the army. In the Roland, however, they are never presented doing their kitchen chores. The cooks seem to be shown in a favourable light, for they are always hard at work. Other than this, however, little can be deduced about these characters from their extremely brief appearances.

Like the kitchen workers, the vilains are presented in a group. After the nobles go about the countryside collecting carts, oxen and casks for their entry into Nîmes, the vilains appear. The scene is described as follows:

Li bon vilain qui les font et conjoignent
Ferment les tonnes et les charrues doublent.
Bertran ne chaut se li vilain en grocent:
Tieus en parla qui puis en ot grant honte,
Perdi les eulz et pendi par la goule. (959-963)

These characters are presented in a favourable light by the poet who calls them "li bon vilain" (959). They are shown to be diligent and unafraid to complain if they feel the nobles are exploiting them: when the vilains are put to work by William and his men they "grocent" (= murmurent) (961). From Bertrand's treatment of those who grumble --

he puts out their eyes and hangs them (961-963) -- we see that, as far as the aristocrats were concerned, the life of a vilain was sometimes worth little. However, once victory is achieved, those vilains who co-operated with the nobles are richly rewarded: in addition to receiving their carts and horses back, they are also given "grant soldee" (1475-1480).

As with that of the other non-aristocrats studied in this paper, the appearance of the cooks and the vilains is very brief. None are individualized or physically described. They provide no humour in Le Charroi. Again, the non-nobles are portrayed in a position of complete subservience to the aristocrats.

The only non-aristocrat to be presented as an individual in this epic is the vilain, who is accompanied by his three children (875-917). While we are told nothing of his physical appearance, we learn much about his character. The vilain is a shrewd and thrifty man.[53] Since salt is very dear in his own neighborhood, he has gone to Saint Giles, where it is cheaper, to buy a good supply (879-882). Like the bourgeois of some of the later epics,

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[53] J. Frappier terms him "finaud" in Les Chansons de Geste, II, 239.

this vilain is very money conscious. When William asks him if he had been to Nîmes, the vilain answers:

> "Oïl voir, sire, le paaige me quistrent;
> Ge sui trop povres, si nel poi baillier mie;
> Il me lesserent por mes enfanz qu'il virent." (905-907)

William then asks about "des estres de la vile" (908). The vilain responds:

> "Por un denier dos granz pains i veïsmes;
> La deneree vaut dos en autre vile." (910-911)

The vilain is also a hard-working man [54] for he tells Bertrand:

> "Or m'en revois por reclorre mes blez:
> Se Mahomez les me voloit sauver,
> Bien m'en garroie, tant en ai ge semé." (892-894)

The vilain appears to be a good father, as the description of his three happy, playful children suggests (883-885). He is also honest[55] as the following quotation indicates:

> . . . "De ce ne sai ge mie,
> Ne ja par moi n'en iert mençonge dite." (916-917)

Finally, the vilain is shown to be courageous when he remains unintimidated by Bertrand's threatening outburst (895-899).

The dialogue between William and the vilain (902-917) is a source of much humour in Le Charroi de Nîmes

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[54] P. Noble, "Attitudes to Social Class", Romania, XCIV (1973), 372.

[55] Ibid.

It must be stressed, however, that the vilain is not, himself, inherently humorous. As J. C. Payen explains:

> . . . le vilain lui-même ne prête pas à rire. Le caractère plaisant du passage tient surtout au contraste entre Guillaume et son interlocuteur.56

The disparity between the preoccupations of William and those of the vilain is at the root of the humour in this scene. While the former's questions solicit news of a military nature (903-904; 908), the latter's answers describe the economic conditions of Nîmes (905-907; 910-911).

As we have seen, the vilain in the Charroi is presented in a very favourable light. This is highly significant, since he is a pagan, a Saracen. Such a character would normally be mocked and presented as a veritable devil by an epic poet. M. Mancini expresses this point when he writes:

> Le vilain que Guillaume rencontre dans le Sud diffère radicalement de la caractérisation grotesque traditionnelle, qui recueille l'héritage topique de la "descriptio" des païens. . . .57

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56 J. C. Payen, "Le Charroi de Nîmes, Comédie Epique?", Mélanges de Langue et de Littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à J. Frappier, II (Genève, 1970), 898.

57 M. Mancini, "L'Edifiant, le Comique et l'Idéologie dans le Charroi de Nîmes", Société Rencesvals IV^e Congrès International, Actes et Mémoires (Heidelberg, 1969), p. 209.

As was sometimes the case with other non-nobles considered in this paper, the vilain provides a few humorous moments in the epic. Like his fellow non-aristocrats, the vilain is at the service of the nobles: William and his men confiscate the vilain's cart, oxen and cask to be used in the capture of Nîmes.

In contrast to the vilain of the Charroi who is not, himself, inherently humorous are the pseudo-vilains, whose chief characteristic is their ridiculousness. Comedy is the main element in the scenes where William and his men are disguised as merchants.[58]

Consider the extremely detailed description of the clothing of these pseudo-vilains. Of Bertrand we are told:

> Une cote ot d'un burel enfumé;
> En ses piez mist uns merveilleús sollers:
> Granz sont, de buef, deseure sont crevé.
> "Deus", dit Bertrans, "beau rois de majesté,
> Cist m'avront sempres trestoz les piez froé." (990-994)

Even more details are given of William's attire:

> Li cuens Guillelmes vesti une gonnele
> De tel burel com il ot en la terre
> Et en ses jambes unes granz chauces perses,
> Sollers de buef qui la chauce li serrent;
> Ceint un baudré un borjois de la terre,
> . . . . . .

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[58] See G. Schilperoort's study, Le Commerçant dans la Littérature Française du Moyen Age -- Caractère, Vie, Position Sociale (Groningue, 1933), pp. 42-45.

Pent un coutel et gaïne molt bele,
Et chevaucha une jument molt foible;
Dos viez estriers ot pendu a sa sele;
Si esperon ne furent pas novele,
Trente anz avoit que il porent bien estre;
Un chapel ot de bonet en sa teste. (1036-1046)[59]

The absolute incongruity of such costumes with the wearer's normal attire and social status quite likely caused much laughter in the audience. Of these disguises Frappier says: ". . . cet aspect inattendu prenait une saveur particulière à une époque où les différences de classes étaient tranchées. Ce monde à l'envers ne pouvait pas manquer de divertir".[60]

The speeches of the pseudo-vilains, especially William's, were also likely amusing to the audience. Again, it is the incongruity of his words with the reality of his life which is entertaining. When asked where he is from, William, a native of southern France, replies that he is from Canterbury, England (1122-1123). When questioned about his family, William, a bachelor, says that he has a wife and eighteen children (1125).

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[59]Regarding this description, J. Frappier, Les Chansons de Geste, II, 241, writes:

> . . . l'auteur se complaît à décrire le costume insolite de ses personnages non sans quelque symétrie parodique avec le motif traditionnel du chevalier vêtu d'une armure étincelante.

[60]Ibid. See also the nobles' reaction to the ugly Varocher p. 68 below.

Later, the double meaning of William's words is also a source of humour.[61] William says to Otrant, the Saracen king of Nîmes:

". . . Beau sire, or vos soffrez;
Ge nen istrai huimés de la cité:
La vile est bone, g'i vorrai demorer.
Ja ne verroiz demain midi passer,
Vespres sonner ne solleill esconser,
De mon avoir vos ferai tant doner,
Toz li plus forz i avra que porter." (1162-1168)

While Otrant thinks that William is promising to give him some of the rich materials and arms (1064-1067) which he supposedly has with him in the carts, the listener or reader knows that William is really alluding to the armed knights who will come out of the casks to attack Otrant and his men.

Not only the speech and attire of the pseudo-vilains but also their actions create humour in this epic. Bertrand, for instance, experiences much difficulty in driving the oxcart:

Mes a Bertran est molt mal encontré,
Qu'il ne fu mie del mestier doctriné,
Ainz n'en sot mot, s'est en un fanc entré;
Tresqu'as moieus i est le char entré;
Voit le Bertrans, a pou n'est forsené.
Qui li veïst dedenz le fanc entrer

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[61] See G. Herman Aspects of the Comic in the Old French Epic, Stanford University Ph.D. Dissertation, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1967, p. 276.

Et as espaules la roe sozlever,
A grant merveille le peüst regarder;
Camoisié ot et la bouche et le nés. (1002-1010)

By this slapstick scene the poet exploits our tendency to laugh at someone in difficulty. Part of the humour also results from the incongruity of this activity with Bertrand's more normal one, that of being a knight.

As we saw earlier with the portrayal of Rainouart, that of William and his men as pseudo-vilains differs in several ways from the presentation of genuine non-aristocrats. While the physical appearance, speech and actions of the majority of the latter are rarely mentioned, those of the pseudo-vilains are described in full, seemingly for comic purposes. In contrast with most of the genuine non-nobles studied so far, the false merchants are, themselves, inherently funny.

La Prise d'Orange

In this epic, the porter is the only non-aristocrat who is portrayed as an individual. Several others, however, appear in groups: the jongleurs, harpeors and garçons.

As is often the case with the non-nobles, the role

of the garçons is rather limited. They are called by the Saracen nobles to dig a ditch around William and his two nephews. It is to be filled with wood so that the French can be burned to death (1221-1226). Other than this, however, we learn nothing about these characters.

Like the garçons, the jugler (138) (1883) and the harpeor (1883) make only fleeting appearances. In the first case, the jongleur is singing a "vielle chançon de grant antiquité". He must have been a talented artist for his efforts pleased William[62] (138-140). The second account of the jugler and harpeor is briefer still: their music is not even mentioned (1883). Together with other details of the festivities (1882-1885), the appearance of these performers helps us to envisage the great celebrations occasioned by the baptism of Guiborc and by her marriage to William.

During the brief appearances of the jugler, harpeor and garçons in this epic, we learn nothing of them as people: they are neither named nor described nor do they express their opinions. Like the other non-aristocrats we have seen, these characters are in a position of subservience to the nobles.

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[62]It is interesting to note that earlier in the poem (l. 56) William complains that he and his men have arrived in Nîmes with no jongleur to entertain them. Without explanation, however, the above-mentioned jugler appears about a hundred lines later.

Although he is not described in any way, Maretant, the porter of La Prise d'Orange (997), is a more vivid character than the garçons and musicians. A cautious individual, Maretant immediately distrusts the three "translators", William and two nephews in disguise, who are seeking admission to the city. His gruff questions and comments are meant to discourage the would-be visitors to Orange:

". . . Onques mes n'oï tel!
Vos quel gent estes qui la hors m'apelez?
Encor n'est mie rois Arragons levez
Ne ge n'os pas la porte deffermer," (424-427)

Certain remarks of the porter are a source of humour. For example, it is extremely ironic that he should make the following statement to William, himself:

"Tant redoutons Guillelmë au cort nes
Qui a pris Nymes par sa ruiste fierté.
Estez iluec, au roi irai conter;
S'il le commande, enz vos lerai entrer. (428-431)

In a somewhat more conciliatory mood -- despite his suspicions, the porter, as servant of the nobles, cannot arbitrarily keep these "translators" out -- the porter seeks his master's permission to allow the three "drugement . . . d'Aufrique" (422) to enter (438-441). In contrast to the porter, who is extremely cautious, Arragon immediately agrees to admit the visitors.

Although he admits William and his nephews into Orange, it cannot be claimed that the porter is slow-witted or stupid for not seeing through the Frenchmen's disguises.

The author stresses the perfection of their costumes:

> Dist Guïelin: "Par le cors saint Richier,
> A grant merveille estes andui changié;
> Or poëz bien tot le monde cerchier,
> Ne seroiz ja par nul home entercié. (383-386)

The poet also points out that Gilebert, one of the "translators", addresses the porter in his own language (419-420).[63]

After William shuts himself up in the palace, Gloriëte, Arragon shouts to his men:

> "Or tost as armes, nobile chevalier!
> Par force soit li assauz commenciez!
> Qui me prendra Guillelme le guerrier
> De mon rëaume sera confanonnier;
> Toz mes tresorz li ert apareilliez." (889-893)

Apparently, Maretant hears this call to arms and, hoping to receive the promised reward,[64] tries to capture William and his nephews (994-999). Like all the other Saracens, however, he does not stand a chance against the French.

During his brief appearance, Maretant is presented in a favourable light. He is hard-working, conscientious and courageous. We are almost moved to feel sorry for him.

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[63]See J. Dufournet, "La Métamorphose d'un Héros Epique, ou Guillaume Fierebrace dans les Rédactions A et B de la Prise d'Orange", Revue des Langues Romanes, LXXXVIII (1968), 33.

[64]As we saw in Le Couronnement de Louis, it is possible for a non-aristocrat who shows evidence of valour to be knighted.

In spite of all his efforts in trying to keep William and his nephews out of Orange, he is killed by them. Like several of the other non-nobles studied so far, the porter is a source of some humour. Like them, too, he is the servant of the nobles.

In general, the non-aristocrats of these five epics make very brief appearances. Their role is always quite limited. Only rarely is their physical appearance described; for the most part, the non-nobles are all in a position of subservience to their social superiors. Except for the chief cook and the kitchen workers of La Chanson de Guillaume, the non-aristocrats are presented in a favourable or, at least, neutral light. While those who appear as individuals often speak, the non-nobles who form part of a group are usually silent. In general, it is only the individualized non-aristocrats who provide humour in these epics. As might be expected, these latter characters are, on the whole, more interesting than the non-nobles who appear in a group. The bourgeois are almost non-existent in these early epics.

In our study of La Chanson de Guillaume and Le Charroi de Nîmes, we observed that the portrayal of the pseudo-vilains differed in several ways from that of the genuine non-nobles. While the appearance, speech, attitudes and actions of the latter are rarely described in any

detail, those of the pseudo-vilains are well-documented, always for comic purposes. While the genuine non-aristocrats provide some humour in the epics, they are hardly ever, themselves, inherently funny. The chief characteristic of the pseudo-vilains is, however, their inherent ridiculousness.

CHAPTER III

THE NON-ARISTOCRATIC CHARACTERS OF SOME THIRTEENTH-CENTURY *CHANSONS DE GESTE*

Aimeri de Narbonne

In this poem, only one non-noble, the doctor, is portrayed as an individual. Several others, however, such as the *jugleor*, archers, crossbowmen, engineers, carpenters, *bourgeois*, *vilains* and *serjenz* appear in groups.

Whereas the *serjenz* in the *Couronnement* are never actually seen participating in battle, in *Aimeri de Narbonne* they are shown fighting side by side with the nobles. In fact, of the twelve mentions of these characters (1013; 1044; 1068; 1082; 1118; 1126; 1136; 1712; 1925; 2648; 3078; 3080), eleven deal with battle or preparations for it. In the one remaining case (2648), the *serjenz* act as messengers.

The growing importance of the *serjenz* in war is stated outright by the poet for he credits them with bringing about the final decision in a battle between the French and the Germans. The struggle has become "molt pesant" (1920) and there are only about thirty-five French knights remaining against two hundred Germans. According

to the poet, however, the French have "un aventaje grant: / Prẽs de .iij.^{c} escuier et sergent, / Qui tuit estoient corajeus et vaillant" (1924-1926). These men eagerly attack the enemy and kill anyone who gets in their way. When the German leader sees this new development, he advises his men to flee, for the French are "deable" (1935).

Although the support of the serjenz is very important to Charlemagne, he pays scant attention to their problems or desires. At one point in the battle for Narbonne, the French, fighting from the "berfroit" (1052), are being assailed with "granz pieus" (1091) which crush their helmets and crack their skulls (1090-1093). Nevertheless, the serjenz do not give up but fight on all the harder (1094-1096). They decide, however, to change their tactics and start to attack the walls of Narbonne with axes and hatchets (1097-1102). When Charlemagne sees this, he forbids them to continue for fear that they might damage the beautiful walls of the city. He demands that they fight on as before even if it takes them seven years to capture Narbonne and "l'arriere ban de France" must be called in (1105-1117). Upon hearing this, the serjenz, along with the knights, express their despair of ever seeing their loved ones or country again (1118-1124). Such cares matter little to Charlemagne, however. The serjenz, obliged to obey (1125-1127), take up their former

positions (1134-1136). Much sympathy is aroused here for these characters who must endure a great deal of hardship because of their very demanding leader.

A new group of military men appears in Aimeri de Narbonne: the archers (1044; 1136; 1139), the crossbowmen (1137), the engineers and the carpenters (1030-1043). The arrival of such people on the military scene is explained by William Calin:

> War is a necessity, a sport, an art -- and a technique. The day of the knight on horseback as sole combatant has passed. There exist many ways, many levels of fighting: at each level are to be found specialists. Late epics such as Aimeri de Narbonne . . . concentrate on the siege operations involved in the capturing of cities.65

Examples of the "specialists" of whom Calin is speaking are the engineers, Morant, Savari and Jordant (1030-1031), whom Charlemagne asks to construct ". . . .j. angin fort et grant, / Et ausin haut comme cis murs devant" (1032-1033). The carpenters fabricate "les engins" (1038), that is, the "berfroi" (1043) and the "perrieres" (1054). When the battle is under way, the archers and crossbowmen (1044; 1136; 1137) fire their weapons from atop the berfroi.

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[65] W. Calin, The Epic Quest, Studies in Four Old French Chansons de Geste (Baltimore, 1966), p. 43.

Like the archers and crossbowmen, the jongleurs are also presented in a group. Although we learn little about these characters, their appearance (4453-4455) helps us to picture in our minds the great celebrations on the occasion of Aimeri's marriage to Hermengard.

The other non-noble characters who are shown as a group in Aimeri de Narbonne are the bourgeois and vilains of Pavia. Insulted by the French messengers' refusal to accept his hospitality, Boniface, king of Pavia, summons all his tradesmen before him: the bakers, candlemakers, fishmongers, grain dealers, butchers, mercers, furriers and cobblers (2122-2128). Boniface orders them to sell their wares at such highly inflated prices that the French will never be able to afford them and, thus, will be obliged to accept the king's hospitality. It is not difficult to convince the merchants to carry out this command. They take to it immediately, saying:

> "Nos lor vendrons, mien escient, si chiers,
> C'onques viande outre mer as paumiers
> Ne fu si chier vendue." (2146-2148)

Later, the eagerness of the bourgeois, described by the poet as avares (2266), for financial gain is again revealed by their reaction to the French envoys' announcement, "qui henas a, chier seront acheté" (2234).

When the bourgeois hear this, they waste no time in making their transactions:

> Li borjois l'oient, n'i ont plus demoré:
> Desoz lor chapes en ont tant aporté
> Que il en ont .j. grant mont entassé.
> Si chier lor vendent com il lor vint a gré,
> A bon argent et a fin or pesé:
> Si grant avoir lor en furent doné! (2235-2240)

Even the vilains get into the act:

> Et cil vilain rameinent a planté
> Muls et somiers qui sont de noiz trousé,
> Qu'il ont vendues tot a lor volenté. (2241-2243)

At first delighted to exact high prices from their French visitors, the bourgeois complain loudly when the envoys buy up everything in town, leaving nothing for anyone else (2180-2189; 2269-2276). When their schemes backfire, the contemptible bourgeois want out.[66]

Not only contemptible, these characters are also cowards. When the fire built by the French messengers reaches gigantic proportions (2244-2249), the bourgeois, full of fear, say:

> . . . "Mal nos est encontré!
> Ce sont ici vif deable et maufé!" (2251-2252)

The portrayal of the bourgeois of Pavia (who are, incidentally, Lombards) as greedy, contemptible cowards constitutes, according to Calin, a national portrait or

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[66]W. Calin, The Epic Quest, pp. 51-52.

stereotype.[67] Such caricatures flattered the developing feeling of French national pride and also induced laughter in the audience.[68]

In general, the appearance of those non-aristocrats in Aimeri de Narbonne who are presented as members of a group is quite brief. Except for the engineers, none of these characters is named. None is physically described. While the military characters, especially the serjenz, are presented in a favourable light, the bourgeois are shown to be ridiculous by the poet. All the non-aristocrats are portrayed as the servants of the nobles. Only the bourgeois

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[67] W. Calin, The Epic Quest, p. 53. (All the Lombards, not just the bourgeois, are stereotyped.)

[68] G. Herman, "Nationality Groups in the Old French Epic", Annuale Medievale, X (1969), 93.

Further studies which deal with the portrayal of the Lombards in this and other epics are:

Henning Krauss, "Ritter und Bürger -- Feudalheer -- Zum Problem der feigen Lombarden in der altfranzösischen und frankoitalienischen Epik", Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, LXXXVII (1971), 205-222.

J. Malsch, Die Charakteristik der Völker im altfranzösischen nationalen Epos, Inaug. Diss. (Heidelberg (Baden), 1912), pp. 87-90.

R. M. Ruggieri, "Les Lombards dans les Chansons de Geste", Société Rencesvals IV^{e} Congrès International, Actes et Mémoires (Heidelberg, 1969), pp. 37-45.

provide humour in this epic. The increased importance of the non-nobles in the army and the more prominent position of the bourgeois are very significant developments in Aimeri de Narbonne.

The only non-aristocratic character in Aimeri de Narbonne not presented as part of a group is the Saracen doctor[69] who cures Aimeri of his serious wounds (4412-4419). The gravity of the latter is attested to in the following lines:

> Li dus Girarz a tant esperonné
> . . . . . .
> Que tot a pié a Aymeri trové,
> . . . . . .
> Tant ot feru de son branc aceré
> Que tuit li braz l'en estoient enflé,
> Et si l'avoient paien el cors navré
> Li sans li ist par le hauberc safré,
> Tot l'esperon en ot ensanglanté. (4310-4318)

Despite these wounds, the Saracen is able to cure the warrior overnight (4415-4419).

It is important to note that the doctor is a "paiens . . . d'outre la mer salée" (4414). In the French epic, Saracens are often attributed with supernatural

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[69] From the following quotation of Alwin Schultz, Das höfische Leben zur Zeit der Minnesinger, (Osnabrück, 1965), II, 295, it would seem that doctors in the middle ages were of non-aristocratic origin: "Die Verwundeten waren unter der Pflege der Aerzte (afr. mires), die entweder dem Heere folgten oder gegen hohe Belohnung herbeigeholt wurden".

powers.[70] This stereotyping of the Saracens stems from real life technological advances which they held over the French. As F. B. Artz points out, the Moslems introduced into Europe many scientific innovations.[71] Since the French did not understand that the Saracens had developed a certain methodology which they carefully followed in order to produce, for example, high quality steel, they (i.e. the French) thought that the Saracens' success in this area was attributable to some magical power they possessed. The French believed that this same power permitted the Moslems to work miracle cures.

Like most of the non-noble characters considered so far, the doctor is at the service of the aristocrats. He never speaks and no interest is taken in him as an individual. As earlier with the Lombards, here again we have evidence of the stereotyping of foreigners. In this case, however, the caricature does not create humour.

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[70]The attribution of supernatural powers to a Saracen was seen earlier in Aimeri de Narbonne during the religious celebrations of the pagans. Of a certain "enchanteres" (3516) who is perhaps a sort of pagan priest, we are told:

> Del flum c'oez Paradis apeler
> Il fist les pierres venir et asenbler;
> En fin esmal les ot fet seeler.
> Par nigromance i fait le vent entrer,
> Encontremont par le tuel monter;
> Quant li vanz sofle, les oisiax fet chanter, (3517-3523)

[71]F. B. Artz, The Mind of the Middle Ages AD 200-1500, An Historical Essay (New York, 1953), especially p. 150 and pp. 161-168.

Girart de Vienne

In this epic, we meet several representatives of the lower class. Some appear as individuals, for example the porters, the bourgeois innkeeper, the marinnier and Joachin, while others are presented in groups, for instance the garçons, merchants, cooks, notonnier and serjenz.

The duties of the serjenz in this epic do not differ greatly from those of the serjenz we have seen in other epics. They deliver messages (1379), perform military duties (2434-2435; 6662-6665), carry out domestic tasks (3752-3753; 6646; 6660-6661) or serve as the attendants of the aristocrats (524; 1584; 6606-6609). By their concern over the disappearance of Charlemagne (6606-6609), these characters are shown to be loyal to their lord. Their reaction also emphasizes the popularity of the emperor among the members of the lower class.

For the first time in the epics we have studied, the garçons appear in a military role (2434-2435). Little, however, is said of them or their activities, except that they assemble for battle.

Like the garçons, the notonnier or sailors make only a very brief appearance in this epic (6295-6298). In a boat with fourteen sailors, Aimeri leaves for Vienne. Apart from this, we learn nothing about these characters.

In Girart de Vienne, two groups of merchants are mentioned. The first (201-272) is composed of seven pagans coming from Spain, leading twenty mules loaded down with supplies. Hernaut, one of the sons of Garin de Monglane, approaches them demanding that they turn over to him their money and supplies. One of the merchants, however, unwilling to go along with this, boldly threatens Hernaut with death (257-258). It should be emphasized that this merchant was likely unaware that he was speaking to an aristocrat. Since he is destitute, Hernaut is probably dressed in ragged clothing. This could account for the boldness of the merchant's retort.

Angered by the resistance of the merchants, the four brothers kill them and seize their money and supplies. All this they give to Garin, their poor father. Having thus seen to his security, the boys are finally able to leave home in search of adventure.

This episode reveals how unimportant the life and property of non-aristocrats were in the eyes of the nobles. It seems here that the one exists solely for the benefit of the other.

The description of the second group of merchants (6780-6787), who are busily selling their wares, indicates that complete peace and prosperity have been restored to the land after the termination of the bitter feud between

Garin and his seigneur, Charlemagne.

Finally, the cooks in Girart de Vienne are seen preparing the meagre Easter repast of Garin and his household (123). All the food that could be found in the city was three cakes and two peacocks. This scene reveals the extreme poverty of Garin and his people but it gives us no details of the character or appearance of the cooks.

For the most part, the appearance of the non-noble characters of Girart de Vienne who are presented as members of a group is very brief. Nameless, these characters are never physically described. Although the other non-aristocrats are presented in a more or less neutral fashion, the serjenz and the bold merchant are shown in a favourable light. Most of these characters are in a position of subservience to the nobles. None of them provoke laughter in this epic.

For the first time in any of the poems studied so far, in Girart de Vienne a member of the bourgeoisie is portrayed as an individual: Hernaut and his brothers stay at an inn owned by Hervi, a bourgeois. Described by the poet as "le vaillant" (338; 353), Hervi is a very gracious host, as his farewell (354-355) to his guests indicates. Some emphasis is also placed upon the wealth of this character. Hervi is "riche" (339) and he served his guests "molt richement" (340).

Like his counterparts in La Chanson de Guillaume and La Prise d'Orange, the porter in Girart de Vienne has a very difficult job. When Renier and Girart approach the gate, the porter does not even have a chance to ask them their names before they have pushed past him into the city (465-467).

Later, Renier meets another porter (589). The latter is a very spirited individual, prone to anger (589) and to acts of physical violence: when Renier attempts to kick the gate down, the porter tries to strike Renier with a club (587-591). The porter's language is quite coarse as we see by his first words to the visitor, "fill a putain" (594). This non-noble also seems to be a repository of popular prejudices. He scorns Renier because he is "nez d'autre terre" (595). The porter also attaches much significance to the outward image of a man. Although we know that Renier is an aristocrat, the porter, assuming from the "coteles grises" (603) he is wearing that Renier is a member of the lower class, ridicules the boy (597-603). This attitude gives Renier the opportunity to affirm that nobility is not a matter of the clothes one wears but of one's inner qualities: "Li cuers n'est pas el vair ne el gris. / Einz est el ventre la ou Deus l'a assis" (607-608). Upon finishing this speech, the young noble breaks down the gate and kills the bad-tempered porter (619-621).

Later, another porter, Guion, appears (1557-1558). Without offering any resistance, he permits Aimeri and his two companions to enter the city. Because these three visitors look like nobles (1552-1555), the porter has no second thoughts about letting them in. At the end of this scene, we notice that another duty of the porter was to attend to the visitors' horses (1557).[72]

The marinnier in Girart de Vienne (5486-5581) performs two main tasks for Olivier. He ferries the knight to the island where he is to do battle with Roland and also acts as Olivier's messenger. Described by the poet as "cortois" (5517), this sailor is very respectful of Olivier, as is revealed by his answer to the knight -- "Sire . . . tot a vostre comment" (5499) -- and by his haste in carrying out Olivier's orders (5500-5504).

The final non-aristocratic character of Girart de Vienne to be considered here is Joachin, the Jew. Of this character's physical appearance, all we learn is that he has a white beard (4882; 4897; 4924; 4984). Very rich (4893), Joachin is also extremely generous as is revealed by the following quotation:

> Tant en dona au barons del païs
> Que entor aus l'orent sofert tot dis. (4894-4895)

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[72]It is interesting to note that in La Chanson de Guillaume, Guiburc takes over the porter's duties completely: not only does she interrogate the strange looking visitor, William in disguise (2235-2325), but she also takes total charge of his horse (2330-2334).

Joachin's generosity is also emphasized by his treatment of Olivier. He gives the knight some armour which is of extremely high quality (4898-4899; 4926-4935; 4942-4947; 4980-4983). He also presents Olivier with the famous sword "Hauteclere" (5556).[73] Joachin's benevolent nature is stressed by the repetition of the phrase "li bons Juïs" (4917; 5529; 5572).[74]

An aura of mystery surrounds Joachin. His entry into the epic illustrates this (4880-4881): Joachin seems to appear as if from nowhere. This character is also associated with certain objects, the hauberk and the sword, whose histories are long and complicated (4947-4969;

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[73]It is interesting to note that Jews are often portrayed in the epic as owners of superior armour. In his article, "A Note on Medieval Anti-Judaism as Reflected in the Chansons de Geste", Annuale Medievale, XIV (1973), 68, G. Herman writes;

> They are portrayed not infrequently as skilled swordsmiths or armorers. Allusions to a weapon or piece of equipment forged by, furnished by or at one time in the possession of, a Jew recur throughout the French epic.

This belief regarding the Jews could be explained by their close relationship with the Saracens who, as we have already said, were able to produce a better quality steel than the French. (The Jews often lived and studied with the Saracens and were able to translate Saracen books.)

[74]As G. Herman points out in the above-mentioned article, pp. 63-67, most often Jews were presented as fiends in the French epic.

5534-5567).

Joachin brings an element of humour into this epic. When Olivier promises to reward the Jew for his generosity by giving his (i.e. Joachin's) son arms, a horse and some lands after having him baptized and knighted (4904-4910), Joachin replies contemptuously:

> "Ne place Deu, . . .
> Que crestïen deviengne ja mes fiz.
> Par la voiz Deu mieuz vodroie estre ocis,
> Et que il fust escorchiez trestot vis." (4911-4914)

With Olivier and the other knights present (4915-4916), we are moved to laughter at the Jew's "eccentricity".[75]

Although he agrees that there is an element of humour in this scene, G. Herman feels that a more serious comment is also being made by the poet. Herman explains:

> . . . beneath this seemingly inoffensive joviality, one also senses a note of more serious criticism. Joachin is not merely a sympathetic personage, humorous in his eccentricity. He is to be viewed, simultaneously, as a symbol of Jewish religious obstinacy, of the Jews' blind perseverance in beliefs which, in the eyes of a medieval Christian public, were irremediably false.[76]

In general, the non-nobles who are presented as individuals in Girart de Vienne are all seen to be in the service of the aristocrats. While one of the porters is shown in an unfavourable light, some of the other non-nobles,

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[75] See G. Herman, "A Note on Medieval Anti-Judaism", Annuale Medievale, XIV (1973), 72.

[76] Ibid.

especially Joachin, Hervi and the marinnier, are portrayed in a very positive way. With the exception of Joachin, none of the non-aristocratic individuals are physically described nor do they engender laughter. The appearance of most of these characters is quite brief.

La Mort Aymeri de Narbonne

While in this epic only one non-noble, Saolin, is presented as an individual, several appear as members of a group -- the bourgeois, the hundred French merchants, the garçons, and finally, the serjenz.

The serjenz make but two brief appearances (3955; 4067-4068). They are first seen with the nobles preparing for battle and later, they keep watch all night with the knights after Aimeri has died. This action reveals not only their loyalty to their seigneur but also Aimeri's popularity with those of the lower class.

The pagan garçons also appear only infrequently in this epic. Once we see them as they put the prisoner, Aimeri, on a pack horse and bind his hands and feet (1598-1599). As we saw earlier in the Roland, the non-nobles of La Mort Aymeri are also responsible for the detention of prisoners.

The portrayal of the hundred French merchants is more interesting than that of the garçons. Returning from a fair in Spain, loaded down with gold and silver, the merchants were ambushed by the Sagittaires,[77] intent on stealing the treasure. After being captured by their attackers, the French are thrown into prison. Sometime later, the noble Clarissant and her entourage are put into the same prison with the merchants (2961-2972; 2937-2939).

The conditions of this prison are interesting. Normally, it was full of toads and snakes (2951-2953). When the river rose, so much water entered the prison that those inside were obliged to stand up (2954-2956). When the food was brought in, the French, who were very hungry, rushed to it. All they find, however, is raw deer and boar meat (which, incidentally, the Sagittaires were accustomed to eating). In spite of their hunger, the French will not touch this food (2988); they put it to one side. Soon snakes and toads swarm around the meat and devour it (2990-2993). Later in the epic, the merchants are freed by the French army. After their liberation, however, they are never heard from again.

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[77]The Sagittaires were a pagan, half-civilized people. J. C. du Parc, in his edition of La Mort Aymeri, calls them "monstres" (p. XV). The Sagittaires, who were centaurs (p. XIII), represent one of the elements of the supernatural in this epic.

This episode of the hundred merchants serves two purposes. It points out how very civilized are the customs of the Christian French who refuse to eat raw meat and how barbaric are those of the pagan Sagittaires who regularly eat this type of food and make their prisoners endure most inhuman conditions. This incident also represents an element of the "sensational". By identifying with the French captives, the listener or reader can "share" their horrible experiences.

In contrast to what we observed about these characters in the earlier epics, the bourgeois make quite frequent appearances in La Mort Aymeri. Twice they are seen watching the battle between Aimeri and the pagan, Corsolt (1096-1097; 1148-1149). Both Hermengard and Aimeri express concern for the happiness and safety of the bourgeois (1494-1503; 1822-1824). This concern could indicate that trade and industry were becoming important to the life of the city or simply that Hermengard and Aimeri were benevolent rulers. With the capture and killing of two groups of bourgeois (1574; 1589-1590), these people are portrayed for the first time as the victims of war.[78]

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[78]It should be understood that these bourgeois were civilians and not members of the army.

Finally, the bourgeois are observed mourning the death of Aimeri (4031-4039; 4051-4063). This reaction reveals not only their loyalty to Aimeri but also the count's popularity with the members of the lower class.

In general, the non-nobles who are presented in groups in La Mort Aymeri de Narbonne make very brief appearances. Always presented in a favourable light, none of these characters are described in any way and most never utter a word. Only the garçons and serjenz are portrayed as servants of the nobles. None of these non-aristocrats provokes laughter in the listener or reader.

Perhaps the most interesting of all the non-nobles in La Mort Aymeri de Narbonne is Saolin, the Jew who interprets Aimeri's dream.[79] While he is not physically described, we learn much about him as a person. The phrases used to describe Saolin reveal that he was very respected at court -- e.g. "sajes hom fu et de grant sens porpris" (381); "li juïs sachanz" (392); "li sajes clers" (417). The use of the word "provoire" (= priest) (491) to describe

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[79]The appearance of a Jew as an interpreter of dreams seems not to have been a mere invention of this epic's author but has a basis in historical fact. According to P. Lacroix, Science and Literature in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (New York, 1964), p. 206: "Oneirocricy -- the explanation of dreams . . . -- or oneiromancy -- the divining of dreams . . . -- is of very ancient origin. The Egyptians, the Jews and the Greeks had reduced the art of interpreting dreams to a regular doctrine". Lacroix goes on to say that, in spite of the Church's objections, these

Saolin increases his prestige; Aimeri almost considers the interpreter's activities to be religious ones. Later, when Louis learns that Aimeri's death has been predicted by "uns siens juïs" (523), he immediately abandons his plans to attack Hugh Capet in order to go to Aimeri. All this evidence proves that Saolin is trusted and respected at court.[80]

As was seen earlier with the Jew, Joachin, in Girart de Vienne, an aura of mystery surrounds the Jew in La Mort Aymeri. Saolin has a book, "un livre paré de toz latins / Ou li art sont et li sonje descrit" (382-383), which, presumably, only he can understand. Saolin, perhaps not wanting others to see the contents of his book, goes

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people exercised their "mischievous" trade in the palaces and in the towns and country. As we see in La Mort Aymeri, the interpretation of dreams seems to be quite a serious business. Saolin has ". . . un livre paré de toz Latins / Ou li art sont et li sonje descrit" (382-383). He is not, however, "mischievous"; his interpretations and predictions are shown to be true.

[80]It should be remembered that the more usual portrait of a Jew in medieval literature was never as positive as is this one of Saolin. Normally they were described as heretical monsters. See G. Herman's remarks on the usual portrait of a Jew and on that of Saolin in his article, "A Note on Medieval Anti-Judaism", Annuale Medievalia, XIV (1973), 63-67, 69-70.

out alone into the garden to read it (385-386).

By his interpretation of Aimeri's dreams, Saolin foreshadows future events (412; 416).[81] He also gives his master advice on how to best prepare for death (413-416). When he learns the true meaning of Aimeri's dreams, Saolin, a loyal subject, starts to weep (389). This reaction reveals the popularity which Aimeri enjoys among his subjects.

It is interesting to note Aimeri's reactions to the predictions of his own suffering and death. We are told that he "ot lo juſ molt chier, / Bien croit tot ce que li ot desrainier" (461-462). Aimeri does not become angry and is not afraid (463). Remaining calm, he asks for something to eat (464). He continues on almost as if nothing had happened. Aimeri's reaction to Saolin's predictions gives us a glimpse of his strength and bravery.

As we have seen, Saolin is shown in a very positive light. Although his appearance is rather brief, Saolin's role is a fairly important one. By his predictions, Saolin foreshadows future events and allows us to see how courageous Aimeri is. Unlike Joachin in Girart de Vienne, Saolin does not provoke laughter.

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[81] The appearance of a character who immediately explains the meaning of a dream is, according to A. Dickman, an infrequent occurrence in the epic. In his book, Le Rôle du Surnaturel dans les Chansons de Geste (Paris, 1926), p. 119, he writes: "C'est d'ailleurs un fait assez rare dans les chansons de geste qu'une explication immédiate des songes;

Macaire

In this epic, several interesting non-aristocrats are presented as individuals: the dwarf, the bourgeois innkeeper and his wife, the vilain and Varocher. Certain non-nobles are also portrayed in groups: the doctors, merchants, péon or footsoldiers, and garçons.

The garçons appear only once in this epic. They are shown to be on the side of justice as they call for the death of Macaire, the traitor (1246-1252).

The péon are portrayed in a similar manner. They, too, demand the death of Macaire (1246-1252). With the merchants, they are also seen weeping for Blanchefleur as she is about to be unjustly punished by being burned alive (533-536). Later, the péon express their sadness at Blanchefleur's unjust banishment (726) and Aubri's treacherous murder (952-953). In addition to being shown as the supporters of right and justice, the péon are also seen in their more usual role as members of the army (2325; 3398).

The role of the doctors in Macaire is quite straightforward: they tend to the wounded (186; 870).

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généralement on les comprend à la lumière des événements qui suivent . . .".

There are, however, no miracle cures documented here. We are told, for instance, that the dwarf was incapacitated for a week as a result of his injuries (187).

In general, the non-nobles who are presented as part of a group in Macaire make very brief appearances. While the doctors are portrayed in a fairly neutral way, the others are shown in a very positive light. All these non-nobles either serve the aristocrats directly or show sympathy and support for them. None of these characters is a source of humour in Macaire.

The least interesting of the non-nobles presented individually in Macaire is the vilain (1079-1088). Carrying a "baston de pomer" (1082), the vilain is leaving the city, having just purchased some shoes, when he hears that Charlemagne is offering one thousand pounds for the apprehension of the fugitive, Macaire. With his stick, the vilain arrests Macaire and presents him to the king "por li avoir de voire guaagner" (1085). Unlike the other non-aristocrats considered so far in this epic, the vilain does not seem to act out of pure love for justice. What is topmost in his mind when capturing Macaire is the reward he will receive. Like the vilain in Le Charroi and the bourgeois of Aimeri de Narbonne, this non-noble considers money to be very important.

Although it is not specifically stated that the dwarf in Macaire is a non-noble, his willingness to betray the king and queen in exchange for a monetary reward (114-120) could well indicate that he is a non-aristocrat.[82]

The only physical description given of this character is that he is a dwarf and that his head is "petit, groso . . . e quaré" (319). As will be seen, his outer deformities reflect his malignant nature. The inherent evilness of the dwarf is stressed by the repetition of such phrases as "le malvas nan" (148) "malvasio liçer" (181), and "li mal nan" (311) used to describe him.

Very unscrupulous, the dwarf agrees to help the traitor, Macaire, seduce the queen, Blanchefleur. He is also a very vindictive individual. Angry at the queen for punishing him,[83] the dwarf agrees to help Macaire carry out his plan of having her burned alive (225-231). The dwarf's thorough wickedness is revealed by his answer to the traitor:

> "Et altro non demant.
> Se eo de lei me veist vençamant,
> Si çoiant non fu uncha à mon vivant." (232-234)

Not only vindictive, the dwarf is also a coward. When the queen asks for him at court, the dwarf, afraid

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[82]See footnote 40 for the attitude of nobles toward money.

[83]It should be stressed that this punishment was well deserved. The queen chastises him only after he persists in making his immoral suggestions to her.

that she might punish him again, refuses to see her (215-219). Later, after agreeing to help Macaire, the dwarf asks about the traitor's plans for taking revenge on the queen:

> . . . "Dites le moi davant,
> Et eo li faro tuto li vestre comant;
> Mais de le parler no me deisi niant,
> Qe plus la doto non faroie un serpant." (243-246)

Here, again, the dwarf shows his true cowardly colours.

The dwarf is also seen to be a foolish person. Later in the epic, the court is gathered around a huge fire in which Blanchefleur is to be put to death (528-538). Running toward the blaze with the dwarf in his arms, Macaire asks him:

> "Nan, nan . . . di m'o segurement,
> Fus tu cun la dame uncha à ton vivant?" (550-551)

Instead of realizing what the treacherous Macaire was about to do, and revealing to all present his own part in the deception,[84] the stupid nain says:

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[84]The "deception" spoken of here is Macaire's plan for revenge. Because Blanchefleur would have nothing to do with him, Macaire arranges to have a false charge of infidelity brought against her. Macaire knows that the emperor regularly goes to matins while Blanchefleur sleeps. One morning after Charlemagne has gone to pray, Macaire has the dwarf get into bed beside the sleeping queen. When Charlemagne returns to find the dwarf with his wife, he is very angry. Charlemagne immediately goes to his vassals and asks for advice. Macaire wastes no time in suggesting that the queen be burned alive for her infidelity.

"Oil voir, sire, una fois e sesant
Son stat cun le in leto et altremant." (552-553)

Upon hearing this, Macaire tosses the unsuspecting dwarf into the fire, thus disposing of the only witness who could betray him to the emperor. It is quite likely that the dwarf's death was a source of humour to the medieval audience. He who had caused the queen so much suffering is finally betrayed by his partner in deception.

Earlier, too, the sufferings of the dwarf induced laughter in the reader. Although the queen orders him to discontinue making his evil suggestions to her (169-170), the dwarf refuses to be silent. Bursting with anger, the queen pushes him down the steps so that he cracks his skull (171-177). This incident provides a moment of comic relief after the description of the queen's anger. We are pleased to see the dwarf finally receiving his due. The appearance of the dwarf at court with his head wrapped in bandages is also very humorous (205). We are told that even the king laughs at him (207).

In stark contrast to the wickedness of the dwarf is the thorough goodness of the innkeeper, Primeran, and his wife. While the former is described as being "saçes" (1341) and "un bon oster" (1337), the latter is a woman ". . . de gran vertu, / Qe molto amoit li poure e la çent menu" (1339-1340).

Like the innkeeper in Girart de Vienne, Primeran is a very gracious host. Although he is taken aback at the sight of the ugly Varocher (1344-1347), the vilain who is the protector of the exiled Blanchefleur, Primeran does not betray his feelings but asks Varocher where he is from (1348-1349).

Although they seem to be of modest means, the innkeeper and his wife, at first unaware that their guest is a queen, generously care for Blanchefleur who is about to have a child. In fact, we are told that they look after her as if she were a member of the family (1380-1381).

Varocher, the woodcutter, is the first genuine non-noble to be considered in this paper whose appearance is described for comic purposes. The poet portrays him as follows:

> En soa man oit un gran baston prendu.
> Grant fu e groso e quaré e menbru;
> La teste oit grose, le çavi borfolu:
> Si stranҫes hon no fo unches veu. (1320-1323)

The sight of this man causes much laughter among the other characters of the epic (1332-1333; 1426-1427).

Varocher is a unique epic character for yet another reason. He is the only one we have seen so far who starts his life as a lowly non-aristocrat and eventually becomes a rich lord, possessor of both "palasii e doion" (3612).

This transformation in Varocher does not take place overnight. To attain the status of an aristocrat, Varocher

performs several military deeds, each one more noble than the last. Varocher begins his military career by helping the emperor of Constantinople fight Charlemagne. He uses the only weapon he knows, his club (2235-2241). At first, he is not seen with the knights but associates with the squires, of whom he becomes the leader (2334-2341).

In the next stage of his transformation, Varocher becomes bolder as he steals alone into Charlemagne's camp to rob the emperor of his best horse (2341-2347). At the woodcutter's inspiration, several knights of Constantinople also steal some horses from the French camp (2348-2359).

Soon, Varocher begins to realize his own worth and he asks the emperor of Constantinople to make him a knight. Varocher promises the emperor to fight as well as any champion to be found in Charlemagne's army (2496-2503). Upon being knighted, Varocher swears that ". . . al rois K. sera mal compagnon" (2523). After Varocher is armed and mounted, the poet comments:

> Qi le véist corer e stratorner
> Nen senblaroit mie eser paltoner,
> Senblant oit de nobel çivaler. (2535-2537)

Varocher's first exploit as a knight is again to steal horses and armour from the French camp. This time, however, he is at the head of a group of one thousand knights (2535-2605).

After this, Varocher's deeds become more worthy of a knight. The first warrior he meets on the battlefield is Naimes, who is so impressed by his adversary's ferocity that he exclaims: "Questo no e hon, ançe li vor malfer" (2730). Soon, Varocher is attacked by Bernard de Montdidier whom Varocher unhorses and takes prisoner (2752-2762).

Varocher proves himself so well in battle that when the emperor of Constantinople asks who should represent his army in single combat against Ogier le Danois, everyone shouts: "Varocher, l'aduré" (2901). Although he knows that Ogier is considered to be the best knight in Christendom (2909-2911), Varocher is so self-confident that he says:

> "S'el fose vivo Rolando et Oliver,
> N'i dotaria la monta d'un diner." (2930-2931)

Eager for battle, Varocher tells Bernard and Blanchefleur to hurry and get his armour ready (2982-2983).

Arriving early in the French camp, Varocher upstages Ogier who, as yet not even dressed for battle, is caught off guard (3024-3036). When Ogier suggests taking the easy way out (i.e. if Varocher were to proclaim himself the loser at the outset, the battle would not have to take place), Varocher sarcastically retorts:

> . . . "Avez li seno perdu?
> Créez qu soia qui a loga venu
> Por dir çanson ne faire nul desdu,
> Se no por conbatre à li brandi nu?" (3049-3052)

Once under way, the battle is evenly matched, each combatant striking fierce blows (3056-3114). Ogier, "the best knight in Christianity", is once heard to remark regarding Varocher:

> "Sante Marie . . . ,
> A grand mervile é fer ste malfer;
> Jamai non vi homo de tel aiter.
> A gram mervile e pro çivaler." (3115-3118)

Although he is a good fighter, Varocher is extremely talkative. During the battle with Ogier, he relates his life story (3123-3129), after which he adds:

> "De quella cosa qe mo sta à çeler
> S'el la saüst K. maino l'inperer,
> No t'averoie mandé qui a çostrer
> Par moi oncire, confondre e mater,
> Ançi m'averoit amer e tenu çer." (3130-3134)

When Ogier asks to know the secret, Varochers naïvely makes him promise not to tell anyone (3141-3143). Upon hearing that Blanchefleur is alive and in her father's (i.e. the king of Constantinople's) camp, Ogier concedes victory to Varocher and hurries to tell Charlemagne the news about his wife. In this way, the feud between Charlemagne and the emperor of Constantinople is ended and a happy peace is unwittingly achieved by Varocher, acclaimed as the hero of the day, the best knight in Christianity (3216; 3284).

Varocher's rise from a state of wretchedness to nobility has not been without merit. From the beginning, Varocher is shown to be a very kind man, the personification

of goodness. Hard at work in the forest, he notices the queen alone and in distress. He immediately asks if anything is the matter and, without thought of reward, offers to take vengeance against anyone who has harmed her (1286-1291). Upon hearing of her predicament, Varocher reveals himself to be generous and protective when he says:

> "Ne vos o abandoner à tot mon vivent.
> Venez rer moi, eo aliro avent." (1305-1306)

Once Varocher has left the forest with the queen, he never abandons her. He accompanies Blanchefleur through Provence and Lombardy, across the sea and mountains until they reach Hungary. Varocher is also loyal to and protective of the queen's infant son. Soon after the child's birth, we see Varocher who ". . . vait e avant e aré / Con li baston e groso e quaré, / E guarda ben l'infant q'elo non fose anblé / Ne de ilec eser via porté (1383-1386). Even when the child is taken to church for baptism, Varocher insists on going along (1412-1414).

A good father and considerate husband, he takes leave of his family before setting out with the queen (1313-1319). Even through all his exciting adventures Varocher sometimes thinks of his wife and two sons at home (2327-2331). After he sees Blanchefleur reconciled with Charlemagne, Varocher returns to his family, with whom he shares his newly acquired wealth (3581-3613).

While the appearance of most of the non-noble characters in Macaire who are portrayed as individuals is relatively brief, that of Varocher lasts throughout the final two thirds of the epic. Of all these characters, only Primeran, his wife and Varocher are presented in an unequivocably favourable light. Both the dwarf and Varocher provoke laughter in this epic. While all these characters are in the service of the aristocrats, only Varocher profits substantially by his efforts. As we see with the treacherous dwarf and the kind Varocher, non-nobles are beginning to receive more substantial roles in the French epic.

Parise la Duchesse

In the last of the thirteenth-century epics to be considered here, the individual non-noble characters include the rich bourgeois, the mayor, a chambriere, a garçon and the master sergent. Those non-aristocrats presented in groups are the bourgeois, the archers and crossbowmen, the serjenz, and, finally, the garçons and pautroniers.[85]

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[85] Pautroniers is a close synonym of garçons.

In this epic, the garçons and pautroniers are usually seen together. It is these lowborn characters who are given the duty of arresting the duchess, Parise, (253-254) and who are to throw her into the fire at her execution (651-652). Later, the woman who has helped to betray Parise is also handed over to some pautroniers, who run her out of town (2076-2077). As we saw earlier in the Roland and in Aimeri de Narbonne, non-nobles are often responsible for the detention and punishment of prisoners or criminals.

The archers (1885; 1983; 2367) and crossbowmen (1886; 1983-1984) appear quite often, usually in military situations. For the first time, however, these characters are seen, not in the service of the nobles, but aiding the bourgeois, who are angry with Duke Raymond for unjustly exiling Parise. Like the bourgeois, the archers and crossbowmen are on the side of justice.

As has been observed in other epics, the duties of the serjenz are varied. While some act as messengers (1100-1104; 1703-1745) or help with the battle (1983; 2071), others have domestic duties (976; 2289-2292). One of this latter group is heard to speak out independently against a messenger of the enemy (2291-2292). He says:

> . . . "Va avant, chevalier;
> Certes nos n'avon cure de mauvais mesager."

When the messenger replies to the serjent's insult, the seneschal attempts to strike him, but the messenger manages to kill his attacker (2293-2301). This is the first time in the epics studied so far that a serjent has provoked an incident.

The bourgeois play a very important role in Parise la Duchesse. For the first time, we see these characters armed and ready for battle (1887-1889). The bourgeois now appear to be as organized militarily as the nobles. Of the mayor and two hundred townsmen we are told:

> Par force et par engin sont an la tor antré,
> O lui .ll.c borjois de cui il est amés. (2069-2070)

The bourgeois, on the side of right and justice, are a force to be reckoned with in the epic. The duke realizes this, for he seeks their military aid. Speaking on behalf of his fellow citizens, the mayor refuses to assist the duke, pawn of the traitors. Not only do the bourgeois decline to help Duke Raymond, they also move actively against him. They kill Raymond's serjenz (2071) and punish the duke's new wife, who is also the daughter of one of the traitors, by cutting her hair and tearing her clothes before forcing her to leave the city (2072-2077). The bourgeois then disfigure Raymond's master serjent by slashing his face and cutting off his right hand. After this, they send him to report their actions to the duke (2078-2083).

Not only militarily strong, the bourgeois also exert their influence by using their enormous wealth. They show their support for Hugh, Parise's son, by giving him gifts of "harjent et hor fin / . . . et bons pailes d'Estantes et destriers sejorné" (2738-2739).

In Parise la Duchesse, some of the non-nobles who are portrayed as members of a group are presented in a fairly neutral fashion (e.g. the serjenz, garçons and pautroniers). Others, however, such as the bourgeois and the archers and crossbowmen are shown in a very favourable light. While a few of these non-aristocrats are still seen to be in the service of the nobles, some, like the bourgeois and the archers and crossbowmen, are now acting on their own initiative. The appearance of the bourgeois in a military role is a very important development in this epic. None of these non-noble characters provide any humour in the poem.

It is in Parise la Duchesse that we meet the first garçon who is presented as an individual. Asked by Berengier, one of the traitors, to deliver some apples to Parise, the garçon is unaware that the fruit has been poisoned. Upon handing the apples to Parise, the garçon says:

> "Je vos en faiz present; de moult riche poison:
> Par lo mien escient, ainz meillor ne vit hom." (78-79)

This involuntary pun ("poison" means either tonic or poison depending on its context) would undoubtedly have caused a

stir in the audience.

This garçon appears to have been an amusingly sly individual. When Parise offers him a reward for his efforts, he says that he will return for it the next day (85). In this way, the garçon can return immediately to claim a reward from Berenger without the latter knowing that he has already received one from Parise. Unfortunately, the only recompense the garçon obtains from the traitor is death at the bottom of a well (90-91).

For the first time in any of the epics considered so far, the mutilation of a serjent in battle is described in some detail (2078-2083). After they have finished with him, the serjent's attackers send him as a messenger to report to Duke Raymond, his seigneur.

In Paris la Duchesse appears one of the few non-noble female characters to be found in the epics. Anglantine, the "pucelle au chié blon" (112), is Parise's chambriere (94-96).[86] It is she who unwraps the apples for her lady. When Parise's brother-in-law dies after eating one of these apples, both Parise and her maid faint. Later,

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[86]A distinction has been made in this paper between the chamberlenc who is the officer of a nobleman and the chamberer (feminine, chambriere) who is the servant of the aristocrats.

when they are again conscious, Anglantine is seen to be the more lucid. Realizing that she and the duchess will be executed when the duke learns of his brother's death, Anglantine suggests that they dispose of the body in the river (122-129). The poet may have created Anglantine so that Parise would not be the one to suggest this rather deceptive action. It was better that this idea come from a non-noble than from the good duchess.

Like the bourgeois considered earlier in this epic, the mayor, Richier, is on the side of right and justice. He leads his fellow citizens into battle (2069-2083) against their unjust lord, Raymond. The mayor has absolutely no fear of the nobles and refuses to obey the weak and foolish duke, who has unjustly exiled Parise. When the duke asks Richier to have the bourgeois assemble to help him fight his enemies, the mayor speaks his mind in no uncertain terms.

> . . . "Naie! si m'aïst Dex.
> Par icel saint Apostre c'on quiert an Neron prẽ,
> Se vos de Vauvenice lai defors issiez,
> Jamais à vostre vie çaianz n'antreriez;
> Ne somes pas vostre home, ja mar le cuiderez:
> Vos estes .l. Lombarz, de Lombardie nez.
> Certes, anvers ma dame vos estes perjurez;
> A grant tort l'an féistes de la terre giter;
> Vos an tenez la terre et tote l'erité." (2038-2045)

Although Raymond admits he has done wrong (2050-2054), the mayor does not reverse his decision.

The last non-noble to be considered in this epic is

the rich *bourgeois* innkeeper (1331). Here again, the wealth of the *bourgeoisie* is emphasized. Very kind, this man binds up Hugh's wounds for him (1344). When Hugh says that he has nothing except a "hermin agolé" (1357) with which to pay for the services he had received at the inn, the generous innkeeper says Hugh could stay four months without having to pay for anything. He even offers the youth ".c. sols" (1361) for love of the lady he so resembles. The innkeeper tells Hugh the story of a certain lady who, fifteen years earlier, had stayed at his inn (1363-1368). Hugh suspects that she is his long lost mother but, unfortunately, the innkeeper has no idea of the lady's present whereabouts (1369-1372). Upon hearing this, Hugh sets out on his horse and the innkeeper never appears again.

In general, the appearance in this epic of non-nobles presented as individuals is extremely brief. Except for the *garçon*, none of these characters engender laughter in the listener or reader. The two representatives of the *bourgeoisie*, the mayor and the innkeeper, are presented in a very favourable light. The prominent role given to the mayor and the individualization of the *serjent* and the *garçon* are significant developments in this epic. While most of these characters are still at the service of the nobles, the mayor refuses to obey his weak and unjust lord.

In our study of the non-aristocrats of the thirteenth-

century epics, several trends have been noticed. Perhaps wishing to flatter their audience, the poets have presented these characters in a very favourable, or at least neutral light. In Macaire and Parise la Duchesse, the last two epics considered, the poet has even gone as far as to place the non-nobles on the side of justice opposing the weak and evil nobles. The only non-aristocrats to be presented in an unfavourable way are the porter in Girart de Vienne, the bourgeois of Pavia in Aimeri de Narbonne and the dwarf in Macaire. The poets make it clear to us, however, that the latter two examples are special cases which are not representative of the average French non-aristocrat: the dwarf is abnormal and the bourgeois are foreigners.

While no pseudo-vilains appear to create humour in these epics, some of the non-nobles, mostly those presented as individuals (e.g. Joachin, the dwarf and Varocher), do provide some light moments. In contrast to what was observed in the earlier epics, these non-aristocrats are portrayed as being inherently funny: Joachin because of his religious eccentricity; the dwarf because of his stupidity; and Varocher because of his bizarre appearance.

In the thirteenth-century epics, we have also noticed some stereotyping of the non-nobles: foreign non-aristocrats like the doctor in Aimeri de Narbonne and Saolin in La Mort Aymeri de Narbonne have supernatural powers. Other foreigners such as the bourgeois

in Aimeri de Narbonne are greedy cowards. In most of the poems studied, the bourgeois are all rich.

More and more non-nobles who formerly appeared only in groups are now being portrayed as individuals. The individual representatives of the bourgeois are the innkeepers in Girart de Vienne, Macaire and Parise la Duchesse and the mayor in Parise la Duchesse; a garçon and a serjent are portrayed as individuals in Parise la Duchesse. In conjunction with the increased individualization of the non-nobles in the thirteenth-century epics, it is interesting to note that many of these characters now have names -- the mayor, Richier; the woodcutter, Varocher; the innkeepers, Primeran and Hervi; and the porter, Guion.

Finally, the roles of the non-nobles seem to be becoming more important in the thirteenth-century epics. While the serjenz in Aimeri de Narbonne are credited with bringing about a successful end to one of the battles, certain other non-nobles such as the garçons in Girart de Viennes, the archers, crossbowmen and carpenters in Aimeri de Narbonne and the bourgeois in Parise la Duchesse are involved for the first time in a battle or preparations for it. Although many of the non-nobles are still seen to be in the service of the aristocrats, some, like the footmen and the merchants in Macaire and the mayor and bourgeois in Parise la Duchesse, openly express their disagreement with

the decisions made by their lord. The most revolutionary developments in these epics are, perhaps, the rise of Varocher from the depths of misery to the ranks of the nobility and his portrayal as the hero of the story.

CHAPTER IV

THE NON-ARISTOCRATIC CHARACTERS OF SOME FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH-CENTURY CHANSONS DE GESTE

Le Batard de Bouillon

In this epic, the only non-noble to be individualized is the carbonnier. Several other characters, however, appear as members of a group: the serjenz, the pietaille, the archers, the crossbowmen, the chambrieres, the vilains, the doctors, the servants, the serfs, the marinnier and, finally, the bourgeois. In this epic, too, a pseudo-vilain makes a brief appearance.

Let us consider first those non-aristocrats who are presented in groups.

Unlike the influential bourgeois of Parise la Duchesse, those of the Batard de Bouillon have a very minor role to play. Appearing only infrequently, these characters are once seen in their now familiar role as members of the army (1995). Later, the bourgeois of Jerusalem lament the absence of King Bauduin, whom they believe to have died in some faraway land (3756-3757). This reaction reveals the loyalty of the bourgeois and also Bauduin's popularity

among his subjects. At the same time, the lack of popularity of Aurry, Bauduin's son, who has become king of Jerusalem, is shown by certain of their remarks (3758-3762).

Like the bourgeois, the pietaille are rarely mentioned in this epic. Twice they are seen fighting side by side with the knights (293-294; 6362-6363). As usual, the role of the pietaille is strictly military in nature.

The archers and the crossbowmen, too, make only infrequent appearances in Le Batard de Bouillon. The archers guard the gate (692-695), while the crossbowmen prepare to participate in battle (2979-2981; 3015). For the first time, a few details are given regarding the physical appearance of the crossbowmen, who are "targié de maint riche blason" (2981).

Although the serjenz are not once portrayed as members of the army, we meet them often in their familiar roles as domestic servants (2321; 2739; 3945-3946) and as messengers (987-988; 2294-2295).

As we saw earlier in the Roland (3737-3739), serfs are sometimes responsible for the punishment of prisoners. In the epic under study, it is the duty of these characters to hang the Bastard (6004-6006).

Like the serfs, the servants are mentioned only once as they accompany the knight, Tancrède, into the

palace (6450-6453).

In the same way, the doctors make only a single appearance in this epic. Early in the poem, they are seen assisting the wounded on the battlefield (465).

When Hector pardons the Bastard for "trestoute sa folie"--this action signifies that no armed confrontation will take place between these two men and their armies--the vilains (4135) join the nobles in expressing "grant joie" (4135). This reaction of the vilains shows us that they must have been as equally affected as the nobles by the hardships of war. Whenever the latter was averted it was a time for celebration.

The chambrieres appear several times in Le Batard de Bouillon. Some act as messengers (5930-5933) or domestic servants (1277), while others are the attendants of their lady, Sinamonde (2713; 3904-3905).

The marinnier are mentioned very often in this poem. For the most part, it is their duty to take the aristocrats by sea to a specific destination (4565; 4584-4585; 5466-5467; 5480-5485; 5755; 5765-5767; 5823; 6423). In only one instance, these characters are seen supervising the unloading of their boats (5482-5484).

The poet once describes the sailors as being "gentil" (5480).[87] Although it does not really tell us much

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[87] Gentil does not necessarily mean noble by

about the characters, this qualification presents the marinnier in a positive light. Such a portrayal was likely meant to flatter the non-aristocrats in the audience.

As usual, those non-aristocrats who are portrayed as part of a group in Le Batard de Bouillon, are not described in any great detail. For the most part, they mutely carry out their duties as servants of the upper class. In general, the poet remains neutral in his presentation of these characters.

The only non-noble to be presented as an individual in Le Batard de Bouillon is the carbonnier (5843). Leading his horse upon which is loaded a sack of coal (5844), the carbonnier explains to the Bastard that he is on his way to Mont Oscur where he intends to sell his coal (5845-5853). Upon learning this, the Bastard kills the carbonnier (5860) and disguises himself in his victim's clothing. In this way, he can easily enter Mont Oscur, a pagan city, to see his wife, Ludie.

By this incident, we see again the very indifferent attitude of the nobles toward the life of a non-aristocrat. The nobles seem to consider that the non-nobles exist merely for their use and convenience. In this encounter

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birth. This word can also signify possessed of a noble nature. See Tobler-Lommatzsch Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch, IV, 273.

between the carbonnier and the Bastard, the material or monetary preoccupations of the non-nobles are again emphasized.

Although to a somewhat lesser extent than the authors of La Chanson de Guillaume and Le Charroi de Nîmes, the writer of Le Batard de Bouillon takes advantage of the comic possibilities that the portrayal of a pseudo-vilain presents. After disguising himself in the carbonnier's clothes (5861), the Bastard darkens his face with coal dust (5862) so that he becomes "noirs . . . et hideus" (5863). The incongruity of the Bastard's present costume with his profession and social status would likely have provoked much laughter in the medieval audience.[a]

Although at first he manages to guide the carbonnier's horse without difficulty (5869; 5873), as he approaches Mont Oscur the Bastard has an accident described as follows:

> Assés pres du chastel malement li ala,
> Car ses chevaus kaÿ, et ses carbons versa.
> Moult le convient suer, quant il le releva;
> Tant bien li plut le coze qu'ains ne se cour[e]cha.
> (5893-5896)

The sight of the noble Bastard, on hands and knees trying to pick up bits of coal, is a source of much humour in this epic.

Like the portrayal of the pseudo-vilains in the two earlier epics, that of the pseudo-vilain in Le Batard

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[a]See the nobles' reaction to the ugly vilain, Varocher, p. 68 above.

de Bouillon differs in several ways from the presentation of the vast majority of the genuine non-aristocrats we have studied so far. While the appearance and actions of the Bastard as carbonnier are described in a fairly detailed way, those of real non-nobles are, in most cases, left to our imagination. Unlike most of the genuine non-aristocrats who do not provide much humour in the epics, the pseudo-vilain of Le Batard de Bouillon is an important source of comedy.

Hugues Capet

Whereas few non-aristocrats are portrayed as individuals in Le Batard de Bouillon, several such characters -- the servant, Simon and Hugh -- appear in Hugues Capet. Many non-nobles are also presented in groups, for instance, the marinnier, the archers and crossbowmen, the doctors, the serjenz, the pietons and the porters or guards, the chamber servants, the minstrels and finally, the bourgeois.

As in the other epics we have considered so far, in Hugues Capet the economic preoccupations and wealth of the bourgeois are emphasized (p. 2, ll. 24-27; p. 30,

l. 780; pp. 30-31, ll. 783-789).[88] It is interesting to note the queen's strategy in this last passage. Trying to persuade the bourgeois to vote against the marriage of her daughter, Marie, to the traitor, Savary, she first points out to them that if he were to become lord of the land, great poverty would result. Only after appealing to their love for money does the queen mention that her daughter would be "moult avillez" (p. 31, l. 788) by marriage to this man.

As in Parise la Duchesse and Le Batard de Bouillon, so, too, in Hugues Capet, the bourgeois are seen to be members of the army (p. 34, ll. 885-886; p. 36, ll. 917-918; p. 36, ll. 930-931). Here, however, the efforts of the bourgeois in battle seem to be nobler than were those of these same characters in the earlier epics. For the first time, expressions which often describe the knights are used to refer to the bourgeois, e.g. "ly bourgois de vallor" (p. 34, l. 885) and ". . . li aultre bourgois estoient moult isniel" (p. 36, l. 930). The growing importance of these people in battle is demonstrated by the traitor, Fedry, who decides that he needs fifty thousand men (p. 150,

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[88]Since irregularities in the numbering of the lines of this epic occur starting on pages 48-49, it has been necessary for the sake of clarity to indicate both the page and line references for the passages cited in Hugues Capet.

ll. 3512-3513) to guard them.

Besides their military role, the bourgeois in Hugues Capet are now also responsible for giving advice to the nobles. In order to decide what to do about Savary's marriage proposal to her daughter, the queen calls in not only her relatives and the French peers but also the bourgeois (p. 26, ll. 670-699). (It will be remembered that in La Chanson de Roland, Charlemagne consulted only the peers when making difficult decisions -- ll. 166-167.) The great importance of obtaining the co-operation of the bourgeois in this matter is stressed by the queen when she says to Savary:

> A vous m'acorderay vollontiers, je vous dy,
> Mais que my franc bourgois de ceste cité chy
> Soient à l'acorder et l'aiient assenty,
> Et je croy c'à vo gré se seront obéy.
> Ainsi serez vous d'iaus amé et conjoy;
> Car, se par force aviez cest ouvraige basty,
> Dez gens de ce roiaume seriez moult enhay.
> (p. 28, ll. 722-728)

In this epic, not only the influence, but also the independence of the bourgeois has grown. The queen does not, as we might expect, demand that they help her against Savary. She must be more humble and beg (prier p. 30, l. 769) them for their support. When actually addressing these people who now seem to have the option of rejecting her request, the queen introduces her plea for assistance by saying: "Franc bourgois, aiiez de moy pitez" (p. 30, l. 783).

Although one of the bourgeois is ready to let Savary have Marie and the kingdom (pp. 32-33, ll. 833-849), the others unanimously decide to assist the queen and her daughter (pp. 33-34, ll. 852-869). Thus, we see that, in general, the bourgeois are again on the side of right and justice.

In other ways, too, the bourgeois of Hugues Capet are presented in a very favourable light. Adjectives such as noble (p. 31, l. 792; p. 43, l. 1121), bon (p. 31, l. 806) and franc (p. 28, l. 723; p. 37, l. 965) are often used to describe them. Upon observing the queen in such distress that she faints (p. 31, l. 790), the kind-hearted bourgeois are seen to weep (p. 31, ll. 791-794).

The other non-nobles who appear as members of a group in Hugues Capet make brief and infrequent appearances. The archers (p. 134, l. 3089), crossbowmen (p. 149, l. 3499; p. 150, ll. 3520-3521) and pietons (p. 49, l. 848) are again seen in battle. Their presence is just one of many details which enable the reader to better envisage the armed combat which is taking place. Of some interest is the use of the adjective "fier" (p. 149, l. 3499) to describe the crossbowmen. Although this is hardly an in-depth characterization, it will be remembered that in the earlier epics these people were never qualified in any way. Here, as in the previous poems, the non-aristocrats are presented

in a favourable light.

Like the serjenz in Aimeri de Narbonne, those in Hugues Capet are once heard to openly express their opinions. When Hugh announces his plan to go into the enemy's camp and kill the leaders of the opposition, some of the "sergant et baceller" (p. 63, l. 1217) say:

> . . . "Chilz a cuer de saingler;
> Comment osa il oncquez tel outraige penser
> D'aller tous seulz à l'ost à princhez assambler?"
> (p. 63, ll. 1218-1220)

The others answer: "Follie . . . l'en fist onquez vanter!" (p. 63, l. 1221). For the first time, we hear the serjenz commenting on the proposed actions of the epic's hero. Unlike the daring Hugh, who, in this poem, is considered to be a non-noble, the lowborn serjenz are very prudent and cautious. It is because of his special qualities that Hugh reaches a position of greatness which the other non-aristocrats are unable to achieve.

In Hugues Capet, as in the other epics considered, the "camberierez" (p. 203, ll. 4898-4899) and the "maronniers" (p. 45, l. 1178) are at the service of the nobles. Except for short descriptions of their actions, little is learned of these characters.

In Hugues Capet, the porters or as they are sometimes called, the guards, are responsible not for keeping someone out of the town but for preventing Hugh from leaving it. The queen has ordered them to do this

(p. 63, ll. 1208-1210) because she fears that Hugh will be killed if he goes to the enemy camp to assassinate the leaders of the opposition. In spite of the porters' vigilance (p. 63, l. 1212; p. 64, ll. 1247-1258), Hugh manages to get himself, his arms and his horse out of the city by trickery (p. 66, ll. 1305-1346). Later, upon the safe return of Hugh, the queen exclaims:

> "Ly portiers n'ont point bien tenu leur covenans;
> Mais se vous estez mors, si m'ait saint Jehans,
> Ils en seront pendu comme fel soudoians."
> (p. 69, ll. 1381-1383)

We see here the very difficult work of the porters. Even though they had done their job to the best of their ability, the porters would have been hanged had anything happened to Hugh.

Although it was the duty of the porter to keep intruders out of the town, sometimes this proved impossible, as we see with the approach of the enemy army in Hugues Capet (p. 188, ll. 4502-4510). In such a situation, it was the porter's responsibility to warn those in the city by sounding his horn (p. 188, ll. 4511-4513).

Like the porters, the doctors in Hugues Capet make brief and infrequent appearances. They are, as usual, at the service of the nobles. After his wounds have been bound up, Fedry, the traitor, receives assurance from his physician that he will soon be well (p. 192, ll. 4623-4625). Later, Fedry's doctors bring Marie to see her mother, the

queen (p. 202, ll. 4893-4894).

The minstrels in Hugues Capet , who play music at the marriage of Marie and Hugh, help us to envisage the celebrations at court on this great occasion (p. 174, l. 4150). For their services, the minstrels receive generous gifts of "vairs et . . . gris" (p. 174, l. 4150).

Later in the epic, the minstrels have a much different role to play. On his way to do battle with Fedry and his men, Hugh orders his minstrels to play their instruments very loudly, so that the enemy might hear (p. 229, ll. 6003-6006). Their attention attracted by this noise, the enemy perceive the approach of the French army and are overwhelmed by fear (p. 229, ll. 6014-6015).

For the most part, the non-nobles in Hugues Capet who appear in groups are presented in a favourable or, at least, neutral light. While most of these characters serve the nobles in their usual fashion and make very brief appearances, the bourgeois have a more important role to play than ever before. Not only do they provide military aid but also they offer advice to the aristocrats. As in Parise la Duchesse, these characters are no longer obliged to obey the nobles. They are free to decide whether they will extend or withhold their support. In general,

these non-nobles do not provide any humour in Hugues Capet.

The first non-aristocratic individual to be considered in Hugues Capet is Hugh's uncle, Simon, the butcher. Unlike the bourgeois of some of the later epics we have studied, Simon is never actually seen participating in battle. His interests and ideals seem to be strictly monetary and prosaic. When discussing this character, W. Comfort writes:

> More important to remark is the bourgeois spirit personified in Hugh's rich uncle Simon, the butcher. It is the sordid spirit of Philistinism in this uncle which is contrasted with the more chivalric conception of Hugh. . . . The uncle wants the nephew to be his apprentice and successor. (pp. 5-6, ll. 120-124)[89]

Upon hearing about the expensive pastimes of his nephew (p. 6, ll. 126-145), Simon, extremely concerned about preserving his wealth, murmurs to himself:

> . . . "Oyez con fet hardiel!
> S'il demeure céens jusquez au quaremiel
> Il me vora honnir, foy que doy Dieu le bel,
> Et me despendera tout men meuble catel."
> (p. 7, ll. 148-151)

Realizing that Hugh had no intentions of settling down, Simon,"tout pensis, sans mot dire, s'assist sur .l. tonniel. / Quant assez ot pensé, s'alla à son huchiel, / .II^{c}. florins a pris en sen plus grant monchiel, / A Huon

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[89]W. W. Comfort, "The Character Types", PMLA, XXI (1906), 391.

lez donna en ung petit saquel" (p. 7, ll. 152-155). Of this action Comfort says: "What a picture this is of the careful hoarding Parisian bourgeois!".[90] Simon's miserly joy at the departure of his nephew (p. 7, ll. 166-167) would most certainly provoke laughter in the listener or reader.

Simon is not, however, always presented in an unfavourable light. He helps advise the queen on the matter of Marie's marriage (p. 30, ll. 758-780) and, later, he offers to let Hugh stay with him as his "drois hoirs" (p. 22, l. 570)--Simon has no children. Hugh can redeem his lands (p. 23, ll. 574-576) and participate in jousts and tournaments (p. 23, l. 579) at his uncle's expense. Simon's generosity is, however, not entirely unmotivated: through his nephew's exploits and adventures, Simon expects to receive honour (p. 23, l. 575).

The task of assigning Hugh to either the aristocratic or non-aristocratic class is a rather complicated one. The son of a knight (p. 1, l. 13) and a butcher's daughter (p. 3, ll. 46-64), Hugh is portrayed, contrary to what we might expect, as a member of the bourgeoisie.[91] Several

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[90] Ibid., p. 392.

[91] W. O. Farnsworth's study, Uncle and Nephew in the Old French Chansons de Geste, A Study in the Survival of the Matriarchy (New York, 1966), sheds some light on the appearance in the epics of sons who derive their social status from their mother rather than their father.

times he is called "Huez ly bouchiers" (p. 37, l. 951; p. 57, l. 1049; p. 80, l. 1663; p. 92, l. 1990). He is also twice described as being lowborn (p. 38, ll. 985-986; p. 126, ll. 2874-2875). Even Hugh once states that he is a bourgeois: "Gentis sirez, par Dieu qui tout avoie, / Bourgois sui de Paris, pour coy en mentiroie?" (p. 52, ll. 937-938).[92]

Although he is a bourgeois, Hugh has many interests or tendencies which are often associated with the upper class. After refusing to become an apprentice butcher to his uncle (p. 6, ll. 127-129), Hugh explains that he knows how to arm a knight, ride a horse and handle weapons (p. 6, ll. 134-139). From his uncle he hopes to receive each month ". . . un bel abit nouvel, . . . ung faucon jolly, ...II. levriers courans, . . . [et] ung menestrel" (p. 6, ll. 140-145).

At first, Hugh's energies are not directed toward the most noble of activities. Much of his time is spent in the pursuit of amorous adventures and in taking flight from the irate fathers and guardians of his lovers (pp. 7-11, ll. 168-277).

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[92]Although occasional mention is made of the noble status of Hugh's father -- Hugh is, for instance, "d'un costé jentieus hons" (p. 128, l. 2933) -- , the impression with which we are left in the first part of the epic is that he is a bourgeois .

Gradually, however, Hugh abandons this frivolous way of life and devotes himself more and more to upholding the rights of the weak and the oppressed. Little by little, he proves his worth and is rewarded accordingly. His first altruistic deed is to rescue the daughter of Count Sauvage from her kidnappers (p. 17, ll. 411-437). For his trouble, Hugh is given "or, argent, draps et ung bon destrier gris" (p. 19, l. 483). Later, Hugh champions the cause of Queen Blanchefleur and her daughter, Marie, against the traitors, Savary and Fedry. As each new military effort that Hugh makes on the ladies' behalf is more valiant than the last, so too, the rewards he receives are more substantial. After killing Savary, then entering the enemy camp alone to kill King Hugon and, finally, taking Fedry prisoner in battle, Hugh first becomes a knight, then duke of Orléans and, finally, through his marriage to Marie, king of France. Like Varocher in Macaire, Hugh starts out as a non-noble and is eventually proclaimed to be the most noble warrior of all. The French once say of him:

> "Dieux . . . biaus perez de lassus,
> Comment Huez est preus et d'armez pourvéus!
> Onquez ne fist tant d'armez Hector ne Capallus,
> Ne Judas Macabeus, ne le ber Melidus,
> Marsillez, Balligans, nel fort roy Fernagus;
> Par lui est ly royaulmez tensez et secourus."
> (p. 159, ll. 3741-3746)

As many critics have pointed out,[93] this epic was written to flatter the bourgeois who listened to it. The author achieves this end not only by showing the rise of a bourgeois character to the kingship but also by making certain statements regarding nobility of birth and nobility of nature. H. Breuer explains the poet's point of view on the different types of nobility:

> Die vorurteilsfreie naturalistische Betrachtungsweise unseres Dichters setzt sich fort in der Wertung der Standesunterschiede. . . . im Hugo . . . wird der persönliche Wert des Mannes gegenüber der Hohen Geburt kräftig betont. "Se de bas linaige estez", sagt jemand zu Hugo, "n'y conte .l. neut d'estrain: / Vo fait et vo maintien ne sont mie villain." (38). Und der Connetable, der den Wert des Bürgers für den Kampf herabgestzt hatte, wird von dem "Bürger" Hugo vom Tode gerettet, um ihm zu erklären: "Ne say c'estez bourgois, du cuer estez gentis." (52)[94]

The final non-aristocratic individual to be considered in Hugues Capet is the servant (pp. 59-60, ll. 1123-1129). At the queen's request, this servant presents Hugh with the peacock. His graciousness is revealed by his

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[93] See R. Bossuat, "La Chanson de Hugues Capet", Romania, LXXI (1950), 450, and L. Gautier, Les Epopées Françaises (Osnabrück, 1966), II, 429 [reprint of 1865-1868 edition].

[94] H. Breuer, "Über den Verfasser dreier der letzten Chansons de Geste", Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, XLII (1923), 583.

words to the hero:

> . . . "Tenez, biaus sire, ce present avenant,
> "Le roïne, me dame, le vous va envoiant."
> (p. 60, ll. 1127-1128)

Other than this, however, we learn nothing of this character.

In general, the non-noble individuals in Hugues Capet are presented in a favourable light. While all three characters are in some way at the service of the nobles, only Simon provokes laughter in the listener or reader. As in some of the other late epics we have seen, a non-noble is given a very prominent role to play in Hugues Capet: the bourgeois Hugh becomes an aristocrat and the hero of the epic.

Ciperis de Vignevaux

While only one non-aristocrat, Hellie, is portrayed as an individual in this poem, several others are presented as members of a group: the bourgeois, the serjenz, the marinniers, the fevres, the servants, the carbonniers, the carpenters, the archers and the crossbowmen.

As usual, the role of the carpenters (3406-3421), archers (4985-4987; 5378-5380) and crossbowmen (2428-2429; 2435-2436) is a military one. The carpenters and the "maistre dez engiens" (3413) work on the war machines

which will be used in the attack on the Ciperis' castle. The archers and crossbowmen aid the knights in battle by firing missiles at the enemy. These characters are presented in a favourable light for they seem to do their tasks well (5379; 3421).

The serjenz (1259-1260; 1581-1583; 3611-3612) and the carbonniers (2107), too, help out in battle. While little is said about the performance of the serjenz, the carbonniers distinguish themselves in the fighting (2107). Domestic tasks are carried out by both the servans (2936) and one of the serjenz (3734).[95]

Like the above-mentioned characters, the maronniers and the fevres serve the nobles. When Ciperis decides to punish the treacherous bourgeois, he calls in the fevres who are to torture them (5088-5090). The work of the

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[95]For the first time in the epics we have studied, a serjent appears who seems to be a noble. He is an "amirant, sire de Nicquez" (7361-7362) and is chosen to represent the Saracens in single combat against Ciperis. Although we are not told so, this could be another example of a non-noble who, because of his special qualities -- he is "fel et desmesurés" (7513) and a "gaiant" (7366) who measures ".xij. piez" (7514) -- has become an aristocrat. It could also be that the serjenz, like the servants, are sometimes aristocrats and sometimes non-aristocrats. In Girart de Vienne, for example, Olivier and other noble youths act as servants to their seigneur (6612; 6623). In Ciperis de Vignevaux, too, nobles are seen serving their lord (7693; 7699).

sailors is more conventional. They ferry the aristocrats from place to place (672-674; 6060-6061) or give information to their lord (1730-1738).

In Ciperis de Vignevaux, as in the other late epics we have studied, the bourgeois play a very important role. When the Norwegians and Danes invade England during the absence of that country's king and queen, it is the bourgeois, and not the aristocrats, who negotiate with the enemy. They call a meeting to discuss the demands of the king of Norway (365-367). This meeting proceeds in a democratic way for nothing was to be done "sans le commun assent" (374). In the end, it is decided that they will renounce allegiance to their absent king and queen and will pay homage to King Galadre of Norway (314-405).

In this epic, the bourgeois are portrayed for the first time in an unfavourable light. Their fickleness is emphasized when, upon the defeat of Galadre by Ciperis and the French, the bourgeois switch their allegiance back to their former king, William (i.e. Ciperis' son) (978-981). The bourgeois are also shown to be great cowards. Although all are responsible for abandoning their rightful king and queen, the commun (1173), afraid of being punished, say to William:

> . . . Noble roy, par la vertu nommee,
> Aiés de nous pitié s'il vous plaist et agree.
> Et nous vous renderons ains qu'il soit l'ajournee
> Ceulz par qui la cité fut envers vous retournee,
> Et qui ont rellenqui no dame l'honnouree." (1174-1178)

The French bourgeois, too, are unscrupulous. Bribed by Gui, a traitor and murderer, the Parisian bourgeois support him in battle against Dagoubert, their rightful lord (4465-4467; 4916-4925). When the bourgeois see the strength of Dagoubert's army, however, they are overcome by fear (4935-4937). They beg mercy from Dagoubert and claim that their leaders coerced them into co-operating with Gui. The treacherous bourgeois agree to hand over these leaders to Dagoubert (4941-4947; 4957-4958).

It is difficult to account for this negative portrayal of the bourgeois in the epic. Perhaps the author of Ciperis de Vignevaux was trying to innovate by altering the more usual presentation of the bourgeois as good people.

As usual, the bourgeois' wealth is emphasized in Ciperis de Vignevaux. After Dagoubert invades their country, the bourgeois of Friesland offer to pay for peace (1773-1779). When the French king insists that they surrender everything to him, the bourgeois decide that they have enough provisions to last until they can call in help from outside for whose services they will pay (1807-1830).

Except for the bourgeois, the non-nobles who are portrayed as members of a group in Ciperis de Vignevaux are

presented in a favourable light. While most of the other non-aristocrats are still seen to be at the service of the nobles, the bourgeois usually act to serve their own convenience. As we have noticed, the role of the bourgeois has changed in another way since Hugues Capet. In the latter epic important decisions were made by both the non-aristocrats and the nobles. In Ciperis de Vignevaux, on the other hand, the non-nobles make such decisions on their own. None of these non-aristocrats induce laughter in the reader or listener.

At the beginning of Ciperis de Vignevaux, Hellie is not, strictly speaking, a non-noble. Formerly a carbonnier, Hellie is now a knight (2597-2600). As we have seen with the other characters who have abandoned their non-aristocratic status to become nobles, Hellie possesses certain exceptional qualities. A great leader, Hellie encourages others to help Ciperis (811-817). Extremely skilled in battle, Hellie distinguishes himself above all the other warriors (2108-2111). Like the non-nobles, Varocher and Hugh Capet, Hellie is proclaimed "flour d'armes et d'amours et de grant hardement" (2592).

Hellie is more gifted than those around him in another way. His intuitive superiority to the nobles is revealed when he, unlike Ciperis, is able to discover who killed Dagoubert's son (4173-4339). Like Hugh Capet and

Varocher before him, Hellie undoubtedly worked his way from the ranks of the carbonniers into the upper class.

In general, the non-aristocrats of the fourteenth and early fifteenth-century epics are presented in a favourable or, at least, neutral light. While most of these characters are still seen to serve the aristocrats, a few, such as the bourgeois in Ciperis de Vignevaux, have broken away entirely from their loyalty to the upper class and now act in their own interests. Although the majority of these non-aristocrats still make only brief appearances and have limited roles to play, some, for example Hugh Capet and Hellie, occupy a very prominent position in their respective epics. Except for Simon and the pseudo-vilain in Le Batard de Bouillon, none of the non-nobles provide any humour in these poems. While the bourgeois in Le Batard de Bouillon do not have a prominent role to play,[96] these same characters in Hugues Capet and Ciperis de Vignevaux are very important. In this latter epic, they are seen to make decisions which undermine the best interests of the nobles, while in the former they give valued advice and military support to the aristocrats.

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[96]This could be explained by the fact that this epic is only the sequel to another much longer one, Bauduin de Sebourc.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the thirteen epics considered in this paper there is ample evidence that, from the thirteenth to the early fifteenth centuries, significant changes take place both in the role of the non-aristocrats and in their portrayal by the poets. As we shall see, it was during this same era in French history that the position of the lower classes in society also underwent a great evolution.

In the earliest epics, while many of the non-nobles presented in groups are obscure and colourless characters who mutely obey their masters (e.g. the serfs and _serjenz_ in the _Roland_, the _serjenz_ in the _Couronnement_ and the _garçons_ in _La Prise d'Orange_), a number of those in the later poems enjoy somewhat more prominence and have more noteworthy roles to play. As examples of this we could mention the kitchen workers of _La Chanson de Guillaume_ who create much humour and the _vilains_ of _Le Charroi_, the merchants of _Girart de Vienne_, the _serjenz_ of _Aimeri de Narbonne_ and the _péons_ of _Macaire_, all of whom express their disagreement with the commands or decisions of the nobles.

The duties of those non-nobles portrayed in groups

also change significantly. Excluded in the Roland from military activities, in the Couronnement some non-nobles, the serjenz and pietaille, take up positions in the army. Little, however, is said either of their duties or of their performance. In Aimeri de Narbonne, on the contrary, the serjenz are credited with bringing one of the battles to a victorious conclusion. In this same epic, new non-aristocrats appear on the field of combat: the engineers, archers and crossbowmen.

The role of the bourgeois, too, changes dramatically. At first occupied almost exclusively with commerce as, for example in Aimeri de Narbonne, in the later poems such as Parise la Duchesse, Le Batard de Bouillon, Hugues Capet and Ciperis de Vignevaux, the bourgeois participate in battle. Their role is almost always a decisive one: in Parise la Duchesse and Hugues Capet they help defeat the traitors. In Ciperis de Vignevaux, although the bourgeois fight as well as the nobles, they cannot be successful for they are supporting a traitor. The lack of prominence in combat in the bourgeois in Le Batard de Bouillon could be explained by the fact that this epic is the sequel to a much longer one, Baudouin de Serbourc.[97]

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[97] In this latter work, the bourgeois figure more prominently than in Le Batard.

In addition to their military duties, the bourgeois in Hugues Capet give highly valued advice to the nobles on important matters. In Ciperis de Vignevaux, the bourgeois go one step further; no longer in collaboration with any of the aristocrats, the citizens make important decisions on their own.

Not only the role but also the portrayal of the bourgeois undergoes a change. In the early poems such as the Roland and the Couronnement, these characters offer little interest: they do not speak and we learn little about them. Later, however, the bourgeois become more interesting as the poets begin to endow them with definite characteristics, as with the greedy and cowardly citizens of Pavia in Aimeri de Narbonne, and to allow them to express their disagreement with the nobles' decisions, as in Parise la Duchesse.

Although the majority of non-nobles are portrayed in groups, there is a marked trend in the epics toward the individualization of such characters. In the Roland all non-aristocrats are presented as members of groups: the serfs, serjenz, cooks and bourgeois. In the later epics such as Le Couronnement de Louis, La Chanson de Guillaume and Le Charroi de Nîmes, although many non-nobles are still portrayed in groups, several colourful and often humorous non-aristocratic individuals appear: the porter and the

pilgrim, the chief cook and the vilain. In the early epics such as the Roland, the Couronnement and Aimeri de Narbonne, the serjenz and garçons are presented exclusively in groups. In Parise la Duchesse, however, one serjent and a garçon are shown as distinct individuals. The bourgeois are represented for the first time by an individual in the person of the innkeeper in Girart de Vienne. Other individual bourgeois who appear are the innkeepers in Macaire and Parise la Duchesse, and Simon and Hugh in Hugues Capet.

While at first the appearances of the non-aristocratic individuals are infrequent and of limited duration, as with the chief cook in La Chanson de Guillaume and the vilain in Le Charroi de Nîmes, the appearances of such characters in the later epics are very frequent and last much longer, as we saw with Varocher in Macaire, Hugh in Hugues Capet and Hellie in Ciperis de Vignevaux.

The roles of the non-noble individuals also change as time passes. Although at first these characters exist mainly to serve the nobles and to create a few light moments in the poems, as we saw with the vilain in Le Charroi de Nîmes, the porter in La Chanson de Guillaume and Joachin in Girart de Vienne, in later works they frequently achieve great prominence, some even becoming the epics' heroes, for example Varocher in Macaire, Hugh in Hugues Capet and Hellie in Ciperis de Vignevaux.

When we turn to the portrayals of pseudo-vilains, we see that these differ in several ways from that of the genuine non-nobles. While details of the latter's physical appearance, actions and speech are rarely given, those of the pseudo-vilains are described in full, usually for comic purposes. The difference in treatment accorded the genuine non-nobles and the pseudo-vilains may well reveal the epic poets' fundamental preoccupation with the life and ideals of the aristocracy: even when outwardly indistinguishable from a vilain, an aristocrat remains the centre of interest.

As we suggested earlier, the rise of the non-nobles to a position of prominence in the French epic reflects the contemporary ascent of the social ladder by the lower classes. Although W. W. Comfort believes that, "to keep abreast of popular demands in a period of changing taste [,] . . . to vary the monotony of the recital and to effect a contrast with the eternally recurring type of feudal and chivalric hero", the epic poets had to give more prominent roles to their non-noble characters, he adds that this change was "fostered" by the increasing political power and influence of the lower classes in society, especially the bourgeoisie, during the corresponding period in French history.[98] The rise to prominence of the non-

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[98]W. W. Comfort, "The Character Types", PMLA, XXI (1906), 397.

nobles in the epic is, according to Comfort, proof that "epic poetry reflects accurately the contemporary social evolution".[99]

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[99] Ibid., p. 385. See also the remarks of L. Gautier on the influence of the French bourgeois on Hugues Capet in Les Epopées Françaises, II, 427-429.

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