IV

The matters of France and Italy: acts of recollection and invention

CHAPTER 9

The chanson de geste *as a construction of memory*

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What did the period (around the time of Charlemagne) that witnessed the events recounted in the medieval French epic represent for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the era that produced the works[1] attested by the texts available to us? Given that these texts claim to be true accounts of the past,[2] the question is one of collective memory being constructed in the *chansons de geste*, and transformed as the *chansons* evolve in response to changing circumstances.

The question can be broken down as follows:

– What structure is given to the time in which the events take place? What are its dimensions, its rhythm, and its orientation?
– What image of its past do the *chansons de geste* convey to the society in which they are composed?
– Finally, and most importantly, in what way does the epic period have something to say to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? Or rather, what are the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saying to themselves through the period in which the epic events take place?

Clearly these various issues cannot be considered in depth in the restricted scope of this chapter. So I shall first offer a description of the past as it emerges from the *chansons de geste*, indicating the bounds that contain the flow of epic memory, and then limit myself to examining how this memory is constructed, concluding with some examples of ways in which it has been put to use.

According to the work of Georges Duby in particular, the eleventh and twelfth centuries see the aristocracy setting out their lineage "vertically" across a period of a hundred and fifty years as they seek, by developing a genealogical literature, an orderly exposition of their origins, both for juridical reasons and through a sort of quest for identity, starting with the high aristocracy and descending progressively to simple knights. In this genealogical drive (some of the literary implications of which are

considered in previous essays in this volume)[3] we see signs of an awareness of the significance of the past in establishing the identities that define different social groups.[4] Around the same time, and for similar reasons, the monasteries likewise begin to put memories in order through the expedient of historiographic texts.[5] My – not too daring – contention is that the structuring of epic memory has to be considered in relation to the development, around the same period, of this identifying historiography.[6]

At the beginning of *Garin le Loherenc*,[7] Hervil discovers a miraculous cross in a stream near Soissons:

Li dux s'abesse, entre ses braz la prist,
Si la dreça amont contre son piz,
Si l'en porta au mostier Saint Drosin.
Encore i est, onqes puis n'en parti.
Tres bien le sevent et viellart et meschin;
Veillier i vont encor li pelerin,
Et qui bataille doit fere ne fornir.

The duke leans down, took it in his arms,
And raised it to his breast;
He brought it to the church of St. Drosin.
There it remains, it never departed thence.
Both old and young know this very well;
Pilgrims still go there to hold vigils,
And whoever has to wage and give battle.

Here there are two stories being told: one from the epic period, recounted in the simple past as well as in the present,[8] and the other, relating to *encor* (still remaining), roughly contemporaneous with the composition and the performance evidently implied by the text. In the first story, at the end of the reign of the emperor Charles Martel, Hervil discovers the cross and entrusts it to the Abbey of Saint Drosin; in the second, the minstrel sings the *chanson* and pilgrims come to hold a vigil in the sanctuary before going into battle.[9] Memory plays between these two periods.

By preserving relics that allow the past to be reborn into the present, it is memory that gives the past meaning and structure. The relics mentioned in the *chansons* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries hark back to the time of the four great Carolingians: Charles Martel, Pépin the Short, Charlemagne, and Louis I (Louis the Pious). *Garin le Loherenc* begins in the time of the first and continues into the reign of the second; the *Couronnement de Louis* tells of the circumstances in which the crown is passed from the third to the fourth; Guillaume d'Orange expires in

Moniage, which rounds off the main part of his cycle, while Louis is still on the throne. The *chanson* devoted to Hervil de Metz makes him the brother-in-law of King Flore of Hungary, and hence Berthe's uncle and Charlemagne's great-uncle, and two manuscripts present him unequivocally as a contemporary of Charles Martel.[10] Thus, the epic events take place in a well-defined period that is, as it were, closed off, a *Carolingian time-space*, corresponding to what Bakhtin calls "the epic national past," an "absolute past": the time of our forebears who were taller, stronger, and better than we are.[11] The gap between the epic period and the time of performance is thus not only temporal, but also ontological.[12]

Two examples confirm this notion of a closed-off time: *Gormont et Isembart* is based on events in the time of Louis III,[13] *Raoul de Cambrai* on those of Louis IV's time.[14] In both cases the king who takes the stage is elevated to imperial rank (*Gormont*, lines 212 and 500; *Raoul*, line 292) and is thus confused with the son of Charlemagne, Louis the Pious. The king in *Gormont*, historically the son of Louis II, the Stammerer, is presented as the son of Charlemagne, "*filz Charlun*" (lines 276 and 289);[15] and when the king in *Raoul* knights his nephew, he gives him the helmet of a Saracen killed by Roland, which brings us once again to the idea of this particular time being arranged around the emblematic hero of Roncevaux.[16]

The primary feature of this time-space is the fact that it is deployed around that foundational event, the primordial moment that is the Battle of Roncevaux.[17] By drawing out indefinitely the duration encompassing this event, but staying within the bounds of those four reigns, many *chansons* prepare the way for, or continue, the *Chanson de Roland*. *Aspremont*, *Fierabras*, and *Gui de Bourgogne* anticipate it; *Anseïs de Carthage* and *Gaydon* follow it. The Guillaume cycle links up with it through *Girart de Vienne* and *Galien le Restoré*; the Doon de Mayence cycle through *Gaufrey*, which foreshadows Ganelon, or *Renaut de Montauban*, whose hero fights against Roland. The intensity of a battle is usually gauged by comparison with that of Roncevaux. There are many examples.

Roncevaux, the primal event of the medieval epic, is also its time reference: one cannot find, either in the *Chanson de Roland* or in the other *chansons*, any date that might situate the epic event in the same time continuum as that in which its heroes are celebrated. If Charlemagne's entry into Spain can be given a date, it would have to be – according to lines 2, 197, and 2610 of the Oxford text – seven years before Roncevaux.[18]

Charles Martel, Pépin the Short, Charlemagne, and Louis the Pious are all presented as emperors, thereby enhancing, of course, both the unity and the specificity of this time-space: the bygone span of the empire and the

Christian emperors. We may note that Charles Martel is occasionally confused with Charlemagne.[19] They share a certain likeness: both offer a powerful image of an energetic emperor who often, however, acts unjustly. In *Girart de Roussillon* and *Girart de Vienne*, respectively, each confronts a rebellious vassal who might well be traceable to the same historic figure.[20] On the other hand, both Pépin and Louis, in the Loherain (*Loherens*) and Guillaume cycles, respectively, prove to be equally weak and unheroic, failing to reward those who serve them or to show justice to the deserving. The time period thus defined appears to be as much constructed as it is foreclosed.

In some circumstances, however, events take place during a different reign. So it is in *Floovant*, which stretches the epic period back to Clovis.[21] But with him it is a question of the "first king of France who became Christian" [*dou premier roi de France qui crestiens devint*] (line 3), "who was the first to take up holy Christianity" [*qui premierement tint sainte crestianté*] (line 36); significantly, the *chanson* has him baptized not at Rheims but at Saint-Denis (lines 32–33), and, like Charlemagne, given the appellation "king of Monloum" (line 1442) and "emperor of the Franks" (lines 1546 and 2231). The dynastic rupture with the Carolingians is omitted for the sake of a continuity symbolized by the sword Joyeuse: acquired in this *chanson* by Floovant, it will naturally come into the possession of Charlemagne before being presented to Guillaume, who will carry it until Louis's reign at the end of the epic period.[22] Annexing Clovis and his son to the Carolingians helps give meaning to this imperial time-space by making the time both primordial and also emblematic of Christian unity in the West. Indeed one could go even further back, but that would involve a different time-space, that of antiquity, of Troy and Rome, of Hector and Caesar,[23] which occupies, relative to the Carolingian period, a position similar to that of the Carolingians vis-à-vis the minstrels and their audience.[24] There are certainly crossing-points between this other universe and that of the *chansons*, but they involve places or people able to transcend rifts in time, like the Jew Joachim in *Girart de Vienne*, who is a contemporary of Pilate but is nonetheless able to hand over to Olivier the weapons of Aeneas.[25]

Moving forward, in the *chansons* prior to 1250 Louis has no successors in the epic period. The only one mentioned is Hugues Capet, in *Guibert d'Andrenas*, and his appearance also signals the end of this period, since he is presented as a rebel and a usurper, albeit one whose story is not told;[26] the series of Carolingian rulers that marked out the time-space of the epic does not extend beyond Louis. It is only from the second half of the thirteenth century, when the *chanson de geste* evolves toward the romance

of adventure, that events after the time of Louis can be recounted. This is the case with *Hugues Capet*, whose hero sees himself as in some way belonging to the epic period, through the encounter with a survivor of Roncevaux who has become a hermit, and who proffers his garments as a gift. Only then can Hugues Capet assume a kingly dignity, placing himself symbolically within the "time of Charlemagne" [*tamps Charlemaingne*] from which he had previously been excluded.[27] Or again with the continuation of *Ogier*, written around 1310, in the reign of Philip the Fair: escaping from the Carolingian world, the Dane finds himself in the reign of a King Philip, after spending two hundred years in Avalon with Morgan and Arthur.[28] But this sojourn in fact underscores the heterogeneity of the epic period and that which followed, and the impossibility of crossing directly from one to the other. Although the King Philip in question cannot be clearly identified, he no doubt belongs to the Capetian lineage and has nothing in common with the preceding dynasty. Moreover, the hero thenceforth appears as a veritable giant, so small has mankind become in the interval between the old times and the new. Accordingly, far from integrating the epic period into the historical continuum, the appearance of Louis's successors only serves to confirm its essential otherness.[29] This situation is symmetrical, all things being equal, to the position of antiquity relative to the Carolingian period.

One can perhaps discern, in these late *chansons*, an inflection towards the romance, and the term *romanesque* has been used for older texts where the hero's personal adventures and the theme of love occupy a vital place.[30] Ogier's sojourn with Arthur and Morgan, coming after Rainouart's in the *Bataille Loquifer*, invites a fortiori such comparison. We should be careful, however, not to be misled by names. The Avalon of Rainouart and Ogier is not the place of Arthurian adventure. Rather, it is a non-place. Rainouart is taken there in his sleep, and two weeks later finds himself still sleeping on the shore whence he had been borne off. The fairies had carried him away; the sirens bring him back – immersed in the wonders of a warriors' paradise, where a fortnight is contained in the space of a dream. On the other hand, the few days Ogier spends there last two hundred years. These incursions into the yonder world of Arthurian legend lead us into the realm of the folktale rather than that of the romance.[31] More broadly speaking, the *romanesque* element of the *chansons de geste* is closer to that of Greek,[32] rather than Arthurian, romance. For the heroes of the *chansons*, the quest is for status, not – as it is for a Lancelot, a Perceval, or a Guinglain (the Fair Unknown) – for identity. To put it schematically, for the Arthurian figures, love in general, whether legitimate or adulterous,

recurrently tends to be strangely sterile, and when not, it often comes of machinations (Galahad), or else leads to catastrophe (Mordred). By contrast, epic love is very largely legitimate and fruitful.[33] Though contained within the – albeit extensible – limits of the Carolingian period, for epic heroes love is clearly directed towards a future that is both dynastic and social, whereas for heroes of the romance, love often seems centered on a self-quest, and, symbolically, appears destined to be repeated time and again in the return to Arthur's court and in the recording of narrative events in the book of Blaise. Some of the intricacies of love in French Arthurian romance are discussed earlier in this volume.[34]

In the *chansons de geste* the proliferation of adventures does not necessarily lead to Camelot or Carduel. This we see in the example of *Beuve de Hantone*, a biographical *chanson* if ever there was, and based largely on the adventures of a couple, but a couple that knows marriage, adversity, and separation, and amidst its tribulations brings into the world a new heroic generation. The earliest version, also the shortest, is without doubt the Anglo-Norman, which precisely locates events in the time of Edgar, king of England, a time-frame that is preserved in the Middle English romance. But as the story crosses over to the Continent, where its dimensions grow and the adventures likewise multiply, it is naturally the general era of Charlemagne (in fact, Charles Martel) that sets the scene for these heroes of the "romanesque" epic who, as such, are not heroes of romance.[35]

Thus the epic period appears as the start of something entirely new, the myth of the Christian origin of a feudal West united under the rule of its emperors.[36] This is one of the ways in which the *chansons de geste* resemble the genealogical literature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These latter texts are actually based on the recollections of descendants, but it seems that the use of this expedient made it impossible to go back more than about a hundred years, two centuries at most in the higher aristocracy. Beyond that, it was necessary to invent founding ancestors, and thus reconstruct memory through the expedient of myth.[37] The past transmitted by the *chansons de geste* likewise goes back beyond all actual memory, direct or semi-direct, at least in the socio-cultural circle that constituted their principal audience, the nobility of the seigneurial courts.[38] This past, too, is a founding era, but now it is the founding of the collectivity, rather than of lineage, though the imaginative process is virtually the same. If the result takes the form of a *chanson*, it is because memory is no longer intended only to define certain rights and to hand down property by identifying those entitled to lay claim to them. With the *chanson* the

collectivity celebrates its unity, its territory, and the values that underpin it, which give it an identity and which justify its very existence.[39]

Founding eras are characterized by, among other traits, two features also found in the *chansons de geste*. The first has to do with relics from that era which, spanning the rift that separates the time of their origins from the time when they are revered, guarantees the veracity of the mythic narrative.[40] The black cross discovered by Hervil, which is still hallowed by pilgrims in the minstrel's day, is a perfect example. Such relics figure abundantly in the *chansons*. Another instance is the body of Vivien in *Aymeri de Narbonne* (redaction *R*, lines 4532–33):

> *En Aleschans Guillaumes l'enfoï;*
> *Encore i gist il ores.*
>
> William buried him in Aliscamps;
> There he lies to this day.

The relic is one of the principal points of contact that make it possible to cross from one time-space to another, as do the weapons of the heroes of antiquity, with which the *chanson* heroes are equipped.

The second feature also relates to traces from the past: in many cultures, ruins are reputed to be the work of giants who once peopled the earth.[41] Giants are very much in evidence in the *chansons de geste*. They are to be found notably among the Saracens, who are often taken to be the builders of ancient fortresses, as in *Gerbert de Mez*:[42]

> *Une grant croute, que firent Sarrasin,*
> *Ot el chastel, qui fu du tanz antif.*
>
> A vast vault made by Saracens
> Was in the castle, which dated from antiquity.

Adémar de Chabannes relates that twenty magic-working giants from Cordoba had been captured as they attacked Narbonne, and had then been sent as a present to Saint-Martial in Limoges.[43] But even the Christians Guillaume and Rainouart, though never explicitly called "giants," are endowed with an unusual stature and strength. The most explicit example, however, is the one mentioned above, in which Ogier is astonished to discover the diminutive size of King Philip's contemporaries. "A history of the degeneration of the human body, of the aging and waning of the earth's productivity," writes Henri Bresc, "incorporates the period of the giants into the ensemble of the Creation and Redemption histories."[44]

The Saracen giants are doubly mythic figures. Not only do they belong to that ancient race that peopled the earth in the time of Charlemagne, but in this same period they are also the perpetuators of ancient paganism, keeping alive its memory and continuing its demoniac cults.[45] A good illustration is the *Couronnement de Louis*,[46] in which the Saracens are represented, on the one hand, by the giant Corsolt, who measures "two metres from shoulders to belt" [*une grant toise d'espaules au braier*] (line 512), and, on the other, by King Galafre, who claims possession of Rome (lines 466–69):

> *Ci sui venuz en mon droit heritage*
> *Que estora mes ancestres, mes aves*
> *Et Romulus et Julïus Cesaire*
> *Qui fist ces murs et ces tors et cez barres.*
>
> I came here for my rightful inheritance
> Established by my ancestor, my forefather,
> And by Romulus and Julius Caesar,
> Who made these walls, these towers, and these barriers.

The construction of this mythic memory is a means of integrating and explaining a disconcerting reality – the occupation by a non-Christian people of areas once loyal to the evangelical faith – by assimilating it into the resurgent menace of ancient paganism. Carolingian time-space thus finds itself confronting figures and forces from another world, surviving elements of an ancient time that the conversion of the West should have brought to an end, just as Baligant, "the elder of antiquity" [*le viel d'antiquitet*], outlived Virgil and Homer.[47]

The example of Galafre also shows that collective mythic memory, for which the *chanson de geste* is the repository, can also draw on the individual memory of different characters, and thus on what they say. This is clearly seen in the evocation of ancestors, who add historical depth to the epic period. In the case of the Saracens, it could be a question, as here, of justifying territorial claims, in a way that is strikingly reminiscent of one of the functions of genealogical texts: belonging to a dynasty justifies a bid to retain ancestral property. In the *Narbonnais*,[48] when the *amirant* places Narbonne under siege, he is laying claim to it as an inheritance, and he proceeds with a lengthy account of how the town was founded by his ancestor Gaudin, how the latter was murdered and his death avenged by Julius Caesar [*Gile Cesaire*], concluding with the conflict that pitted the latter against Pompey [*Popee*]. Thus the Saracen king uses the – considerably revised – history of the Roman civil war to argue his case,

without any mention of the fact that at issue is the recapture of a town recently lost to the Christians (lines 2696–3722).

Preoccupation with the past is not exclusive to the pagans. Guillaume d'Orange regularly asks to hear songs about the lofty deeds of ancient kings and of his own forebears:[49]

> *De Clodoveu, le premier empereur*
> *Que en duce France creeit en Deu, nostre seignur,*
> *E de sun fiz, Flovent le poigneür,*
> *Ki laissad de dulce France l'onur,*
> *E de tuz les reis qui furent de valur*
> *Tresque a Pepin, le petit poigneür,*
> *E de Charlemaigne e de Rollant, sun nevou,*
> *De Girart de Viane e de Oliver, qui fu tant prouz:*
> *Cil furent si parent e ses ancesur.*
>
> Of Clovis, the first emperor
> In sweet France who believed in God our Lord,
> And of his son, Flovent the swordsman,
> Who went far from the kingdom of sweet France,
> And of all the valiant kings
> As far as Pepin, the small swordsman,
> And of Charlemagne and his nephew Roland,
> Of Girart of Vienne and Olivier who was so worthy:
> These were his kinsfolk and ancestors.

It will be noted that the reach of such retrospective contemplation coincides exactly with the time-space to which each belongs: the pagan going back to Julius Caesar, and the Christian to Clovis.

Recollections by individuals show another trait typical of the epic genre: the retrospective accounts of an event or series of events. In addition to forming a regular part of discursive strategy, as when Roland recalls the murder of Basan and Basile in order to persuade Charlemagne to reject Marsile's proposals,[50] these accounts are often given by one of the major protagonists of the *chanson*, and they are intended to recall deeds that are known to all. This clearly follows from the literary status of the epic: it celebrates a communal past, and by the same token, the events it relates belong to a culture that is shared by the minstrel, the audience, and – through a kind of transitivity – by the characters themselves.[51] In this way, retrospective accounts help give coherence to the epic time-space. In Arthurian romance, by contrast, they are usually spoken by incidental, or at least secondary, characters, and they inform the protagonists of deeds of yore unknown to them, helping them to understand the situations they

have come to be in and the adventures that befall them: thus Maboagrain explains to Erec the origins of "*Joie de la Cour*":[52]

Or oëz qui m'a retenu
an cest vergier si longuemant.

Hear now what kept me
For so long in this orchard.

It is thus a question of going back to the origins of the adventure. It is the poetics of a quest pursued, in which the hero goes from one discovery to another, in a world that he learns to decipher, and that the reader discovers with him. In the romance of antiquity, on the other hand, retrospective accounts have a third purpose: since their function is to transmit knowledge, they help to elucidate or round out this knowledge, as when the narrator of *Eneas* takes it upon himself to relate the judgment of Paris or the loves of Mars and Venus[53] – information that Virgil's readers already knew well. And even when the epic hero takes up the retrospective account given by his Latin model, he often chooses to adopt it as his own, thus clearly assuming the role of instructor vis-à-vis his audience.[54]

The preceding examples from twelfth-century romance show *a contrario* the degree to which a sense of communal memory is crucial for the medieval epic, and how much it contributes both to the unity of the world being represented and to its signification.

However, by serving as a means of establishing identity in the here-and-now of the minstrel and his performance, memory reconstructed by the *chanson de geste* is also put to use in varying ways during this same time.

The first is scholarly exploitation by medieval historiography. Bernard Guenée has shown very clearly the clerics' ambivalent attitude in this regard – at once wary of popular traditions and yet compelled to rely on them to fill the gaps in their documentation.[55] One can even speak of a rather perverse attraction, on the part of these peaceable men of the quill, to tales of wounds and bruises, which they roundly declare to be untrustworthy. This was the case with the *Pseudo-Turpin* and the *Chronique de Waulsort*. These two examples effectively show how epic legend is absorbed into scholarly history. It was not a matter of taking the legends literally and simply translating them into Latin, but rather of making them take on the aspect appropriate to the form in question. Firstly, they had to be given the mark of historical discourse. Although medieval history has few dates,[56] dating an event inscribes it in a linear continuum that forms an unbroken link with the moment of writing, and thus eliminates the

boundary that epic has cast around it.[57] The *Pseudo-Turpin* gives the date of Charlemagne's death and – somewhat fancifully – of the battle of Roncevaux. Moreover it appropriates the most reliable marker of authenticity by claiming to be written by a first-hand witness. To do this doubtless requires a certain distortion of the story – but in any case it is known to be unreliable, so that altering it poses no problem. Besides, there were several legends surrounding Charlemagne, Roland, and the expedition to Spain; thus the *Pseudo-Turpin* can legitimately combine details from the *Chanson de Roland* with those from which *Aspremont* is derived, and make Marsile and Baligant two brothers, as happens in other traditions.[58] Finally, since history is the work of clerics, it has to have an edifying aspect: Roncevaux would thenceforth be explained as a consequence of sins committed by the French warriors.[59] On a different track, the *Chronique de Waulsort* takes up the subject of *Raoul de Cambrai* and attempts to play down the scandalous aspect of the adulterous liaison between Ybert and Marsent, to remove all trace of conflict between him and his son Bernier, and to make Raoul bear full responsibility for the conflict and the havoc it wreaks.[60] But for the author, it is a question of bestowing on the founder of his abbey the luster of legend and all the exemplary features required by such a role. Here we have what characterizes historical accounts when they engage the question of origins: recourse to the founding myths that epic memory is peculiarly suited to procuring.

But the exploitation of epic memory can also involve putting it at the service of political or ideological representations. Jean Frappier gives an example from the *Couronnement de Louis*.[61] He reminds us that the initial episode in which Charlemagne transfers the crown to his son, still a child, has many details in common with the chronicle of Thegan, written in the ninth century, and describing the royal transfer ceremony of 813. In particular, the advice on governance given by the emperor to his heir is obviously borrowed. Yet the differences between the epic account and that of the chronicler are as great as the similarities: in 813 Louis was aged thirty-five; he had shown no hesitation in accepting the inheritance; there had been no papal participation in the ceremony; and no great baron had sought to halt the proceedings. In 1131, however, Louis VI had lost his elder son, Philippe, and his younger son, Louis, was only ten years old. The entire policy regarding royal succession, with its aim of perpetuating the hereditary transmission of the crown, and elaborated over nearly a century and a half by the first Capetians despite the opposition of powerful vassals, risked being called into question. Hence the Capetian king's swift

decision to proceed solemnly to the crowning of the child at Rheims, in the presence of the Pope. By taking inspiration from this event for its account of the crowning of the first King Louis, son of Charlemagne, the *chanson* thus manages to give Carolingian-era legitimation to hereditary succession without regard to the heir's age. Thus recourse to epic myth in the *chanson de geste* was clearly a measure that could benefit royal politics.

Jean-Charles Herbin has recently shown how, a century later, the Loherain cycle was in turn put to use in the Franco-Flemish conflict.[62] The two principal *chansons* of this cycle, *Garin le Loherenc* and *Gerbert de Mez*, were given several extended versions. The two continuations that have come down to us as full texts show diametrically opposed political choices: *Anseÿs de Gascogne*, taking a different course from earlier *chansons*, sides with the house of Bordeaux and the Flemish lineage against that of Lorraine and the king of France; the *Vengeance Fromondin*, however, takes the part of Lorraine against the lineages of Bordeaux and Flanders. Both *chansons* allude to the conflicts in the thirteenth century between Flanders, allied to the king of England, and Philippe-Auguste, and (at a later stage) Saint Louis (Louis IX), notably at the battle of Bouvines and in Louis's campaign in Poitou in 1242. Probably written by one of the entourage of the counts of Flanders, *Anseÿs* endeavors to take literary revenge for Flemish defeats, and sees the king of France as responsible for the destruction of the knighthood. It may be noted that in drawing up the character of Bauche li cors, the author presents him as a Flemish count who is a paragon of piety and saintliness, and who may well have been conceived as a counterpart to the figure of – the as yet uncanonized – Louis IX. The *Vengeance Fromondin*, on the other hand, comes across as an engine of war turned against the feudalists in the north, whose property it delights in destroying; in recounting the victory of the French king over a somewhat ill-used Flemish count, it is distinctly reminiscent of Bouvines. In addition, it tells of an expedition by the forces of Lorraine to Saintes – a clear allusion, it seems, to the campaign of 1242. Quite apart from the author's involvement in favor of the king's party, this contrary conclusion to the Loherain cycle might well be a polemical response to the earlier ending. In that case, what we have is plainly the expedient manipulation of the epic world to gain advantage in disputes of that time. Whether or not, as Mary Carruthers argues, medieval scholarship is characterized by a total indifference to the past character of the past,[63] the authors of the *chansons de geste* are very adept at exploiting its mythic dimensions when current issues are at stake.

In a more general way, and depending less directly on immediate circumstances, the Carolingian myth helps to illustrate different aspects

of the ideology of feudal society. Its role in relaying the call to join the Crusades has been amply studied and discussed, but another major aspect of the issue is the way in which the *chanson de geste* represents the king's function regarding the entire realm. I have in mind, in particular, the important work of Dominique Boutet, which cannot conceivably be summarized here.[64] I will merely refer to the fact that it sees in the representations of royalty in the *chansons de geste* the expression of two concurrent and contradictory ideas of what a king should be: God's representative on earth, or the first among feudal lords – ideas that come into confrontation precisely in the period when the Capetian monarchy is being consolidated. The contradiction between them grows ever more acute as people become increasingly aware of the gulf between the earthly kingdom and the kingdom of God, and therefore aware, too, of the impossibility of the task facing the king, who was to lead his subjects towards an ideal order. This questioning of political matters is not exclusive to the *chanson de geste*; it is also found in Arthurian romance of the same period. In this way, both the romance and the epic genres use their mythic worlds to interrogate the society in which they develop. Each does this in accordance with the nature of the time-space in which its story unfolds. Arthurian romance does not feature the kind of primordial activity that distinguishes the *chanson de geste*, and it is not linked in the same way to a collectivity whose history it relates. This accounts, in part, for the unpredictable and individual character of Arthurian adventure. It also allows the king's role to appear more utopian and less concerned with material – that is, political – contingencies. In the *chanson de geste*, by contrast, such concerns are ever-present, bringing secular considerations increasingly to the fore, especially with an emperor whose image is always more dominant than the Pope's. From this perspective, Arthurian myth seems to be less subject to the realities of the world than Carolingian myth, though Arthurian literature has its own ways of evoking contemporary conditions and social agendas. Its link with sacred history in the person of Joseph of Arimathea is one factor that prevents its narrative from slipping entirely into a fictive time; but it can also take on an allegorical dimension, notably in the *Queste del Saint Graal*, which also distances it, though in a different way, from historical time.[65] However cut off it may be from the present, the epic period endures as a past era, a time of absolute beginnings; as such it has to take account of the present and, whatever else, is always at hand for engaging current issues.

The *chanson de geste* acquired its epic dimension by transposing a period of history to a mythic time-space that is closed off and primordial – "auroral,"

to borrow the term used by Mircea Eliade.[66] This period assumes several of the features of mythical times: a distinctive otherness in relation to the present, and a certain circularity combined with exceptional elasticity, as well as a notable compactness. But the Carolingian period is also grafted onto linear historical time, and allows for the development within it of succeeding generations. Although closed in on itself, it is a world that nonetheless absorbs changes taking place outside it. It is upon this somewhat dialectical rapport between actual historical time and the time of a mythic past that the epic can construct itself as memory.

This remains fundamentally unchanged amid the revisions and developments of the fourteenth century and the subsequent prose versions and adaptations of the Bibliothèque Bleue. Nonetheless, the epic's increasing openness to other historical factors such as the Crusades or lives of the saints, as well as to Arthurian magic, promotes an evolution towards fiction, which becomes more marked when the subject matter of the epic is destined for an audience with which it now has virtually no historical connection, or – to put it another way – for which it can no longer serve as memory, other than quite artificially: I am thinking especially of the Franco-Italian *chansons*. Thus there is nothing to impede a complete fusion of the different narrative worlds, henceforth largely detached from the conception of historical time in the *chansons de geste*. When he becomes a knight-errant, Roland, like Yvain, will come to know love and madness – a development with provocative implications for imaginative and critical history (see Chapters 10, 12, and 13).[67] The road that begins with Boiardo and Ariosto will lead on to *Don Quixote*. After four centuries, Rainouart's Arthurian dream will find its likeness in what we call the novel.

CHAPTER 10

Ruggiero's story: the making of a dynastic hero

Riccardo Bruscagli

Romance doesn't translate into contemporary Italian. *Romanzo* in Italian today means *novel*, and there is no way to convey in a single Italian term the configuration of senses now often associated with the English term *romance*: a mix of idealism, moral aggrandizement, dreamy detachment from everyday realism, and devotion to "romantic" love. It was not always so. From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and well through the Age of Reason, *romanzo* in Italian meant a narration (in verse or in prose) characterized by the presence of idealized sentiments and characters, often taking place in foreign and exotic settings, and regularly displaying a conspicuous amount of escapism. The term retained this meaning until, ironically enough, the beginning of the Romantic era, when the word *romanzo* lost this early resonance and started to be associated with a more realistic, mimetic mode of narration.

For a range of writers in the Italian Renaissance, this theatrical aspect of the Italian *romanzo* identifies it and distinguishes it from a competing kind of heroic narrative, the classical *epos*. The question of clarifying the definition, the origin, the poetic legitimacy, the moral value, the "form" of the *romanzo* (and of its competitor, the epic poem) lies not only at the center of the theoretical debates of the Italian Renaissance – a topic examined later in this volume – but also at the center of its poetic creativity. It may be that we could survive without the critical treatments of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the sixteenth century, or without the skirmishes on *epos* and *romanzo* of Giovan Battista Giraldi Cinzio, Giovambattista Pigna, Antonio Minturno, and others. It would be a little more difficult to imagine Italian literature deprived of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

In recent decades questions about the role of the *romanzo* have returned to the center of Italian literary scholarship. Such scholarship has increasingly explored the *romanzo* not only in terms of its own narratological and intellectual designs, but also in the context of romantic and novelistic

modes in European literature at large. By the same token, it has also increasingly situated the *romanzo* in the restless social conditions of its own times, treating it as a way of participating in the very history it seems to escape. The discussion that follows examines one of the most imaginative cases of that participation.

On April 14, 1471, in a solemn ceremony in Rome, Pope Paul II invested Borso d'Este, current lord of the city, with the title of Duke of Ferrara. Up until that moment Borso, like his predecessors, had been a marquis: a mere *marchese di Ferrara*. Now, upon receiving from the hands of the Pope the golden rose and the crown, he became a *duca*, the new *dux Ferrariae*.

The occasion was not just a matter of pomp and circumstance. For us today, promotion from marquis to duke might seem a trivial matter of petty presumption. In the fifteenth century it was not. Promotion of this kind meant Ferrara's admission into the ranks of first-rate powers, not only of Italy, but of Europe at large. The marriages of future dukes of Ferrara in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries demonstrate quite effectively this leap in status for the Este lords. Ercole, Borso's half-brother and his successor to the ducal throne, will marry Eleanor of Aragon, daughter of the King of Naples. Alfonso, his son, will marry the beautiful and fateful daughter of Pope Alexander VI, Lucrezia Borgia. Ercole II, the third Duke of Ferrara, will bring to the altar Renée of France, the daughter of the French king Louis XII.

A new title means new political status, along with new cultural ambitions. From 1471 onwards, Ferrara feels like a real monarchy, and starts to produce a cultural apparatus worthy of its newly elevated dignity.

Borso had come to Rome from Ferrara, in April 1471, accompanied by a splendid *cavalcata* of the most renowned gentlemen of his court. Among them were the two preeminent figures of his literary circle: Tito Vespasiano Strozzi and Matteo Maria Boiardo.[1] They were uncle and nephew: the first, already famous for the amorous verses of his *Erotica*; the second, the keen hope of a new generation of Ferrarese humanists. Something new, though, was stirring in their literary activity. Tito had already been working, probably for more than a decade, on his *Borsias*: an epic poem, in Latin hexameters, devoted to the hyperbolic aggrandizement of the life and deeds of the divine Borso himself.[2] Young Boiardo had already joined his uncle's profession of panegyrist to the Este house and had already produced his *Carmina de laudibus Estensium*, quite consonant with Tito's poetic mode in terms of courtly magnification of the Ferrarese ruler and his family.[3] *Borsias* is not the title of a mere panegyric. It is a

Virgilian title, something that promises an epic story, a new *Aeneid*, the transformation of the Marquis, now Duke, of Ferrara, into a cogent narrative character. But Tito's muse was not a narrative one. His poem, more or less completed in 1505, never quite rises above elegant but tedious reports of Borso's good deeds, along with descriptions of various official occasions and accounts of assorted mythological creatures that convey portentous messages, epiphanies about the great future of the Este dynasty.[4] Something of interest did happen, though, in the years 1493–94, according to Walther Ludwig, the modern editor of Tito's poem (almost all of which remained unknown until its recent edition in 1977). Probably during the winter, Tito extracted from the larger work a small section of a few pages, which he arranged to be splendidly copied and illuminated in a small parchment volume that he offered as a special gift to Ercole himself.[5] Those pages contained an episode from canto VI of the *Borsias*, in which a "new" hero suddenly emerged: an ancient hero, in fact the ancestor of the Este house – Ruggiero, or more precisely, *Rugerius*. But by the winter of 1493–94, Ruggiero was hardly a new entry in the celebration of the Este family; Tito's nephew, Boiardo, had already largely outwritten his uncle. In 1482–83 he had published the first edition, in two books, of his *Orlando Innamorato*. (A third book was left unfinished when he died in 1494; the poem at large was published posthumously by his family in 1495.)[6] The similarity between Tito's Latin Rugerius and Boiardo's vernacular Ruggiero has raised many questions, few of which can be answered satisfactorily, at least in the present state of the art. Whose invention is this previously unknown Ruggiero? Tito's or Boiardo's?[7] Are we sure that he was indeed previously unknown?[8] Or has the loss of so much late fifteenth-century chivalric material forced us, more or less, to guess? In any case, why did the Este suddenly need an ancestor, or at least a new one?

The invention of Ruggiero, that is, of a new ancestor of the Este family, has long been the object of passionate inquiry.[9] Traditionally, the necessity for Ruggiero has been identified with the need to avoid another ancestry, disseminated and promoted, we used to think, by the enemies and detractors of the Este house. It was said that the Este descended from Gano di Maganza (Ganelon), the traitor of Orlando at Roncisvalle. This genealogy goes back to the *Liber de generatione aliquorum civium urbis Paduae*, by Giovanni di Nono (*c.* 1325). The traditional explanation was repeated frequently until very recently, when Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti rightly observed, first, that the descent from Gano di Maganza was not just disseminated in milieux hostile to the Este, but was also very popular in the court of Ferrara itself and in the circle of its own courtly writers and

intellectuals, and second, that while Gano was a horrible traitor (Dante puts him in *Inferno*), his house was still one of the most prestigious, at least in the French epic tradition.[10] Thus the Este did not necessarily need a new ancestor to replace a previous, unpresentable one. Ruggiero was not the rectification of a disgrace; he was rather a daring, very ambitious step up. Ruggiero was none other than a descendant of Hector of Troy; more precisely, of Hector's son Astyanax, who was not slain during the fatal last night of the city (as is recounted in the well-known classical sources, from Euripides to Virgil to Seneca), but who had been miraculously saved and had then come west, to Europe, where he had engendered quite an abundant lineage, to the Este, on one side, and to the Carolingian kings, on the other.[11]

This claim to Trojan ancestry by the lords of Ferrara has in my view been generally undervalued. It is true that from the seventh century onwards, and especially from the twelfth century, everybody in Europe wanted to be descended from Troy. Germans, Britons, Danes, Poles, Austrians, even Turks; Merovingian as well as Carolingian kings; dukes of the Baisse Lorraine, of Bourgogne, of Namour, of Boulogne: all were children of Troy, through the fabrication of a number of very convenient Trojan survivors. The British kings? From Brutus, whose father, Silvius, was the son of Ascanius, the son of Aeneas. The Scots? From Albanactus, the son of Brutus. The French? From Francus, often identified with Astyanax himself: as Ronsard puts it at the beginning of his sixteenth-century *Franciade*: "*Muse . . . guide ma langue et me chante la race / des roys François yssus de Francion / enfant d'Hector Troyen de nation*."[12]

Such claims belong to what Roberto Bizzocchi has brilliantly described as "incredible genealogies" [*genealogie incredibili*]:[13] a frantic, and, more often than not, comic frenzy that swept across Europe well beyond the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, up to the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment. (It is Reason, in fact, through the deliciously poisonous prose of Voltaire, that will destroy this carnival of extravagant ambitions, in Voltaire's memorable rebuttal of Joseph de Guignes's *Mémoire dans le quel on prouve, que les Chinois sont une colonie égyptienne*.[14]) The genealogical impulse informs the writing of romance long before and long after the time of Tito Strozzi and Boiardo (see Chapters 5, 6, and 14 of this volume). But this does not mean that the invention of Ruggiero by Tito and Boiardo is of negligible importance. In this case, even the valuable commentary of Tissoni Benvenuti seems a little too lukewarm:

> With regard to the dynastic aspect of the *Innamorato*, Ruggiero's self-introduction is very important: he claims Trojan origins, more illustrious

> (by the direct descent from the surviving Astyanax) than those of the Roman emperors, who descended from Aeneas, or those of the kings of France, who traced their origins to Troy through Hector's younger brother Francus. The Este's links with France and chivalry, much in vogue in Borso's time, are shifted into the background . . . in homage to Ercole's wishes and according to the new classicizing fashion.[15]

The similarity to Virgil's treatment of Aeneas as the ancestor of the Romans is striking, but it should be remembered that the frenzy for Trojan ancestry had been triggered, in the Middle Ages, more by the apocryphal writings of Dares and Dictys than by the *Aeneid*, and that the Trojan "infection" was far more complex and diverse than a simple comparison with Virgil's *Aeneid* could suggest. Briefly, it seems to me that with the invention of Ruggiero and with the Este claim of a *genealogia incredibile* of Trojan distinction, Ferrara wanted to enter not simply into competition with Virgil but into a general European contest that involved almost all the ruling houses of early modern monarchies in the West. That is why the invention of Ruggiero coincides, more or less, with Borso's investiture with the new ducal title: with the moment, in other words, when Ferrara enters a new, much nobler category of lordship. When you are promoted from marquis to duke, you need, as it were, an ancestor of Trojan blood. . .

But what is particularly striking in Ferrara is the larger cultural design of its Trojan claim and the literary creations that spring from it. What the *Borsias* just touches on, and what *Orlando Innamorato* fully develops, is what is sometimes called a *master fiction* or (in the idiom of Foucault) a *récit* or *discours du pouvoir*.[16] The *Borsias*'s *discours du pouvoir* is, as far as Ruggiero is concerned, quite elementary. Tito Strozzi presents the young hero as the pupil of an old magician and wise man, Atalante, who has raised him on Mount Carena, bringing to perfection his spiritual, cultural, and physical qualities while at the same time segregating him from the world for as long as possible. Atalante evokes some of the features of both Chiron (the centaur who raised Achilles to a level of unsurpassed physical prowess and moral courage) and Thetis (the mother of Achilles concerned about the dark destiny of her son). But the destiny that concerns Atalante is that Ruggiero will eventually convert from pagan belief to Christianity: "*cerno . . . alios emergere ritus*" [I can see . . . new religious rites taking over] (VI.391–92). Half-Chiron, half-Thetis, the devoted Atalante finally frees Ruggiero from his tutelage with a moving *adieu* full of dignity and love: "*Vade tui memor Atlantis, te numina postquam / eripiunt mihi, care puer!* . . ." [And now go, and remember Atlas, since the gods take you away from me, dear boy. . .] (VI.342–43). It is a good proem for a very good

story, which in Tito's poem, as I have noted, never substantially develops. That is why it seems to me quite unlikely that the *Borsias* inherited this character from Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*. The sheer simplicity of Tito's Ruggiero, compared to his complexity in Boiardo's poem, seems to belong to a still tentative, inchoate phase of the character's existence.

In any case, it is with Boiardo that the invention of Ruggiero truly advances the master fiction of a genealogical claim capable of challenging the formidable propagandistic machines of the early modern European monarchies. To my knowledge, insufficent consideration has been given to the impressive resemblance of Boiardo's dynastic invention to the most complex and powerful *discours du pouvoir* of modern Europe: the British one, or, more precisely, the Elizabethan one. Naturally, I am not suggesting the possibility that Boiardo's work directly influenced the Tudor narrative of legitimization. Yet the comparison can help to clarify, in retrospect, the true character of Boiardo's cultural design.

As a range of scholarship – from Frances Yates on[17] – has abundantly demonstrated, the master fiction of the sixteenth-century British monarchy (a "history" about which some contemporaries expressed reservations) embraces a wide variety of writings and propagandistic materials: from historical or pseudohistorical accounts such as *The Light of Britayne* by Henry Lyte (1588) or the *Chronicles* of Holinshed, the main historical source of Shakespeare; to serious polemical rebukes of skeptics and non-believers, such as Richard Harvey's *Philadelphus* (1593) or John Leland's *Assertio inclytissimi Arturi Regis Britanniae* (1544); to poetic works such as Norton and Sackville's *Gorboduc* and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. Yet the main features of this *discours du pouvoir* go back essentially to the *Historia regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth,[18] a work with a far-reaching afterlife in later vernacular writing (see Chapters 4–5 of this volume). It is Geoffrey who popularizes the view that British kings descend from Brutus; who makes a close connection between the figure of Arthur and Trojan blood; who traces the genealogy of British rulers down to Cadwallader; and who suspends the story of "Major Britannia," leaving it intriguingly unfinished. Cadwallader, whose departure from a Britain ravaged by civil war and plague is eventually exploited by the Saxons, is about to attempt a reconquest of the kingdom, when a *vox angelica* comes down from heaven and stops the enterprise: God does not want the Britons to reign over Britain until the time that Merlin had prophesized to Arthur. For many later writers the prospect of such a time involved the return of Arthur himself.

This genealogical plot conspicuously fits the dynastic anxiety of the Tudors. Not only did the association with Trojan blood give the dynasty

an unsurpassed splendor; not only could that association connect the present rulers of England to its native, more legitimate inhabitants; it could also connect Arthur, the prospective vindicator of British honor, with the monarchs of the period – with Henry VIII and, more elaborately, with Elizabeth, the providential "Faerie Queene" (see Chapter 14 in this study). As Thomas Hughes expressed it in *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, a play presented before Queen Elizabeth herself in 1588:

> That virtuous Virgo born for Britain's bliss:
> That peerless branch of Brute: that sweet remain
> Of Priam's state: that hope of springing Troy:
> . . .
> Let her reduce the golden age again,
> Religion, ease and wealth of former world.
> Yea let that Virgo come and Saturns reign . . .[19]

The passage catches beautifully the British master fiction in action: that is, the synergy of the Trojan descent from Brutus, the British dynasty, and the new golden age brought about by the new ruler. What is less obvious, but easily inferred, is that this new golden age is not just one of the many sought by Renaissance courtly literature. It is something ideologically denser; it is the fulfillment of Merlin's prophecy; it is the age of Saturn, to be sure, in classical terms, but it is also the return of the age of Arthur.

This vision, an aspect of Elizabethan culture, is impressively anticipated by Boiardo in his *Orlando Innamorato*. In this poem, the author introduces Rug[g]iero, boasting of his Trojan blood, to an already adoring Bradamante:

> Rugiero started from the first
> Offense against the Greeks, the cause
> That led two kingdoms into war –
> Priam's and Agamemnon's. He
> Told her about the wooden horse . . .
> (III.v.18)[20]

Ruggiero proudly recites at length (twenty-nine octaves) his genealogy, from the initial *coup de théâtre* – the survival of Astyanax – to the division of his bloodline between Costante, the ancestor of the *reali di Francia* (the royal house of France), and Clodovaco, the ancestor of Ruggiero's own family branch. With the descendants of one member of the family, Bovo of Antona (Hampton/Southampton), that branch is further divided into two settings: an English one and an Italian one, the latter eventually providing the context for the romantic and tragic history of Ruggiero's

unfortunate parents, Riccieri and Galaciella, and his education by Atalante. Ruggiero's final statement, shaped into a particularly sonorous hendecasyllabic line, reads: "*Rugier son io; da Troia è la mia gesta*" [My name's / Rugier; my people come from Troy].

The appearance of Ruggiero in Boiardo's poem coincides with the emergence in the text of a new ideological framework. At the beginning of the second book, when Ruggiero enters the story for the first time, Boiardo shifts his ideology from what had been initially proposed in the famous prologue to the first book. There, Boiardo had presented his work as the story of the shocking metamorphosis that occurred in the narrative life of Orlando, the pure and chaste hero of Carolingian epics. *Orlando innamorato*? Yes, even Orlando had to succumb to the power of love.[21]

> Don't think it strange, my lords, to hear
> Orlando *innamorato* sung:
> It always is the proudest man
> Whom Love defeats and subjugates.
> No strong arm, no audacity,
> No blade well-honed, no shield or mail,
> No other power can avail,
> For in the end Love conquers all.
>
> (I.i.2)

The initial frame of the poem had thus been the *innamoramento*: that is, the extension of a typically Arthurian moral and psychological condition to the world of Charlemagne and his champions – the world evoked in a range of *chansons de geste*, discussed in the previous chapter of this volume.[22] It was not only the "fusion" of the two most important narrative cycles of the medieval chivalric tradition; it was a true colonization, as it were, of the Carolingian world by the values and the behavior of the Arthurian world.[23] The moral superiority of Arthurian chivalry over Carolingian chivalry is openly proclaimed in a crucial passage of the poem, the famous prologue to canto xviii of the second book, where the deeds of good British knights are identified with the golden age of chivalry, followed by what seems still a noble, but not more than silver, age – the Carolingian one:

> There was a time Great Britain was
> Illustrious in arms and love;
> Her name is celebrated still.
> The glory of King Arthur stems
> From when the good knights in his realm
> Displayed their worth in many battles

And sought adventure with their ladies.
Her fame has lasted to our day.

Later, Charles held court in France;
His court was no equivalent,
Though it was sturdy, confident,
And had Ranaldo and the Count.
Because it closed its gates to Love
And only followed holy wars,
It could not boast the worth, the fame
The former showed, the first I named.

Love is the source of glory and
Brings worth and honor to a man . . .
(II.xviii.1–3)

But then enters Ruggiero. Ruggiero is a brand new hero: he does not belong to the old cast of Charlemagne's champions; nor is he one of the already well-known pagan heroes. He does not need to convert from the exclusive service of war to the service of love, like Orlando and the other paladins: the union of arms and love will come to him as a natural, non-traumatic, non-shocking condition. In other words, the ideological frame of the first book of the poem simply does not apply to him. With him, rather, the world will know the apex of chivalric virtue – an unsurpassable, stellar perfection:

You'll hear the prowess – glorious;
You'll hear the virtues of a rare
Heart – one whose force and beauty were
Endless: the third Rugiero, one
Whose fame and rank as paladin
Were known across all boundaries. . .
(II.i.4)

In introducing this perfect knight into his narrative, Boiardo frames his entrance with a new, different ideological scheme: the return of the lost golden age of chivalry:

During the gracious season, when
Nature makes Love's star brighter, when
She covers earth in leaves and green
And sets fair flowers on the trees,
Then every living thing, young men
And women, play; their hearts are glad.
But winter reaches us; time flows,
Delight retreats and pleasure goes.

So, in the time when virtue bloomed
In lords and cavaliers of old,
We lived with joy and courtesy,
But then they fled down distant roads
And for a long time lost the way
And nevermore returned; but now
The winter and sharp winds are gone,
And virtue blossoms as before.

Singing, I call on memories,
On acts of prowess in times past.
(II.i.1–3)

This is the prologue of the second book of *Orlando Innamorato*. The story of Orlando is not abandoned, but a new narrative unfolds and overlaps with the old one: the story of Ruggiero, and, in timely coincidence with the story of Ruggiero, the return of the knights of old. In other words, we have here elements that appear in the future Elizabethan master fiction: Trojan genealogy, the advent of a new hero, and the return of a golden age that, in Boiardo's poem as well as in Tudor legend, is associated with the return of Arthurian virtues. Boiardo offers his reader, and his lords, building blocks suitable for future British dynastic lore, but he does not complete the edifice. Nor could he do so, because this "British" (that is, Arthurian) affiliation cannot be other than spiritual: Ferrara can be a new Camelot only in a metaphorical sense. The Este can claim their Trojan blood, but not a direct national alignment with King Arthur. At the same time, if we keep in mind what Bizzocchi has keenly written about the relevance of not only blood genealogies, but also spiritual genealogies,[24] we might understand that Boiardo's fiction goes far beyond an ephemeral expression of vanity. Through the invention of Ruggiero, he concocts a grand dynastic scheme, founded on the characteristic interaction of the legend of Troy, the eminence of ancient Arthurian chivalry, and its return through the introduction of a new hero.

Actually, more than just an introduction. What separates the Ruggiero of Tito's *Borsias* and the Ruggiero of Boiardo's *Innamorato* is that while Tito produces just the draft of a story, Boiardo projects Ruggiero into the center of a large-scale romance, where he is destined to play a major role. Boiardo starts by changing sharply the relationship between Ruggiero and his tutor, Atalante, as well as his prospects for the future. In the *Borsias*, Atalante foresaw the role his pupil was destined to play in the destruction of the pagan world, a sorry enough prospect for the old pagan magician. In the *Innamorato*, by contrast, the resemblance of Atalante to Thetis, and of

Ruggiero to Achilles, definitively takes over: Boiardo's Atalante is desperate because he knows that the precocious perfection of his Ruggiero is tied to a destiny of early death. The steps of Ruggiero's perfection, in fact, will be steps into a grim destiny. He will meet Bradamante, a valiant female warrior, a Christian, and the sister of his foe Ranaldo da Montalbano; he will fall in love with her; he will convert to Christianity; he will marry Bradamante; and then he will be miserably betrayed and ignominiously killed by – who else? – Gano di Maganza. In the *Borsias* there were already quite recognizable allusions and borrowings from Statius' *Achilleis*;[25] in the *Innamorato*, the Achilleic quality of Ruggiero is fully exploited, and his beauty, his prowess, his courtesy, are enfolded within a pathetic aura of imminent defeat.

But, as we know, Boiardo only anticipated, through the prophecy of Atalante, the sad destiny of his hero. The abrupt interruption of the poem allows us to catch only a glimpse of the new character. We see how he is sought by Agramante, the pagan king well aware that his war on Christianity can be won only with the participation of Ruggiero; we follow the futile attempts of Atalante to keep his pupil away from the war; we trace his passage to France, his encounter with Bradamante, his falling in love, his total absorption in this new sentiment. Nothing more. Enough, though, to understand that Boiardo takes his claim about the "perfection" of Ruggiero very seriously. In fact, Ruggiero is not only introduced as another Achilles, that is, an unsurpassable warrior, an epic hero; he is also a perfect cavalier in the Arthurian sense, and therefore a perfect lover. The epic excellence of Ruggiero is briefly but effectively shown in the battles of the last cantos of the second book and in the third book of *Orlando Innamorato*, to the point at which only a fiction by Atalante (the sudden appearance of a fake Olivieri and a fake Ranaldo wounded and in chains) separates him from, and seems to prevent his victory over, no one less than Orlando himself.[26]

Ruggiero is not just a hyperbolic warrior. He is an accomplished knight, whom Boiardo poignantly shows outperforming the other traditional champions exactly on the Arthurian terrain of *ventura*, of adventure. In a small but very significant episode (III.vii) a dwarf invites a group of excellent knights – Orlando, Gradasso, Brandimarte, Ruggiero himself – to a new challenge: "'My lords!' he cried out. 'Listen, please!'"

> My lords, if you love chivalry,
> If you defend what's right and just,
> Avenge the biggest crime on earth,
> The greatest, strangest villainy!
> (III.vii.37–38)

But the excellent knights are, it seems, tired of such challenges. They had just escaped another of their endless magic traps, the Fonte del Riso, and, apparently, they have had enough of such magical escapades. The dwarf takes an oath and swears that this adventure is "unenchanted" [*che non è a questa impresa incantamento*], but the heroes seem incredulous:

> "And who'll convince me?" Asks the Count.
> "I'm sorry I've believed so much. . ."
> (III.vii.39)

And here is Ruggiero, young and fresh, reminding everybody of the unfailing duty of full-time cavaliers:

> Ruggiero said, "Opinions vary:
> Everyone likes his own ideas.
> Some people say one ought to fear
> Demonic works and fairy spells,
> But if a good knight does his duty,
> He can on no account withdraw.
> He must face every strange adventure,
> And he must never, never fear.
>
> "Dwarf, usher me to sea, to flames,
> Or show me how to fly through air.
> I'll follow you to any task
> Or place. Don't worry, I don't scare."
> Gradasso and the Count turned red,
> A little, hearing how he spoke,
> And Brandimarte told the dwarf,
> "Lead on; we all will follow after."
> (III.vii.40–41)

It is very significant that the code of Arthurian *ventura* is so impeccably recited by this new personage in Boiardo's poem: it is quite clear that we are witnessing a changing of the guard. Not only on the battlefield, but also in the characteristic realm of Arthurian *ventura*, now it is Ruggiero who is supposed to receive the torch of the old virtues and make them even more resplendent.

The same can be said for his service in love. Here, too, it is a small episode that is the most revealing. After meeting Bradamante, after falling in love with her, after proudly reciting his noble origins, Ruggiero is separated from his beloved by the vicissitudes of war. They do not even have time mutually to acknowledge their love: night falls, and they search for each other in vain. In fact, the searcher is Ruggiero:

The sun is hidden in the west
Before that difficult duel ends
And the young man, in love, looks round
For Bradamant. Rugier's distressed
And can't calm his anxiety,
For dark night has arrived already,
And nowhere does he see the lady
He cherishes. He calls, he searches.
(III.vi.33)

He is so deeply immersed in his amorous thoughts that when he encounters a couple of paladins in the dark, he does not even hear their greetings. Only with their sarcastic remarks ("A villain he must surely be . . .") does he wake up from his *reverie*, apologize for his involuntary rudeness, and proclaim his total devotion to Love:

You're right. I'm to blame.
Love holds a bridle on my heart,
And Love confounds my faculties.
I'm not the man I used to be.
(III.vi.35)

A perfect warrior, a perfect knight, a perfect lover. I emphasize these significant glimpses in Boiardo's narrative because, as we know, Ruggiero's story did not end here. It did not end, I mean, with the sudden interruption of Boiardo's poem. The opportunity was too inviting; the serializing practices of sixteenth-century chivalric poetry – practices with provocative implications for the treatment of history[27] – could not miss the opportunity to continue the interrupted *Orlando Innamorato* with various sequels: a fourth, and then a fifth, and then a sixth book of the poem, provided by various authors; and then new poems devoted to the story of Ruggiero's posthumous son, Ruggerino; and finally the *Orlando Furioso* of Ludovico Ariosto.[28]

Ariosto radically changes the story of Ruggiero and gives a totally new twist to the making of the Este dynastic hero. The authors of the other sequels had dutifully followed Boiardo's first episode: their Ruggieros immediately marry Bradamante (in general, after an extremely hurried baptism); they briefly enjoy marital happiness; and they rapidly fall into the perverse hands of Gano di Maganza. Not Ariosto. *Orlando Furioso*, first of all, decisively defers the sad conclusion of Ruggiero's story. To be sure, the tragic foreknowledge of Atlante (Atalante) lingers in the background of the narrative,[29] but Ariosto's poem ends with the magnificent celebration of the marriage between Bradamante and Ruggiero. It might be a

temporary happy ending, but Ariosto has distanced the funereal conclusion of Ruggiero's story from the end of his own work. The question of how a temporal process comes to an end had long preoccupied writers of romance, and as earlier essays in this study suggest, diverse treatments of the question evoke differing approaches to temporal experience at large.[30] For his part, Ariosto – placing the nuptials of the dynastic hero near the close of a very long text of forty-six cantos and tens of thousands of lines – manipulates the account of Ruggiero in a radical way, stretching it along the whole narrative of his poem. For Ariosto's Ruggiero is far from perfect. This is the genial invention of *Orlando Furioso*, which alters the premises of Boiardo and configures the relationship between Ruggiero and Bradamante in a totally different way.

In the first canto of *Orlando Furioso*, a white cavalier crosses the forest, interrupting, with exquisite timing, Sacripante's amorous assault on Angelica: "*Ecco pel bosco un cavalier venire, / il cui sembiante è d'uom gagliardo e fiero. / Candido come nieve è il suo vestire, / un bianco pennoncello ha per cimiero*" [Out of the wood a knight appeared. Stalwart and proud was his mien. His raiment was white as snow, and a white plume crested his helmet] (1.60).[31] This white cavalier, who only *looks* like a man, is in fact a woman: Bradamante, who, as a later passage will indicate, "*cercando . . . gìa / l'amante suo . . . / così sicura senza compagnia, / come avesse in sua guardia mille squadre . . .*" [was riding in search of her lover . . . she rode without companions, as self-assured as if she had a body-guard of a thousand squadrons] (11.33). In Ariosto's poem it is Bradamante who is in search of Ruggiero, not vice versa, as in Boiardo's poem.[32] This inversion of roles will not escape criticism: Tasso, for example, in his *Apologia in difesa della Gerusalemme liberata*, will observe that it is supremely inappropriate for a damsel to rush after her lover, when the opposite is expected:

> [I]n *Orlando Furioso* . . . Ruggiero is loved more than he loves, and Bradamante loves more than she's loved, and she follows Ruggiero and tries to free him from prison; she's the one who performs all the tasks and does all the deeds which would pertain rather to a knight striving to win the love of his lady.[33]

This initial divergence from the circumstances indicated by Boiardo foreshadows the new relationship between the two ancestors of the Este house and totally reshapes Ruggiero's story. In *Orlando Furioso*, Ruggiero is on his way towards perfection throughout the narrative, but he is far from being the complete reincarnation of the chivalric virtues of old. Though in this essay it is not feasible to discuss in detail Ruggiero's

Bildungsroman, I would like at least to call attention to the true revolution – a sort of Aristotelian denouement – that marks the development of Ruggiero's character in the middle of *Orlando Furioso*, between cantos XXII and XXV. Up to this point Ruggiero has been more an object of love than a passionate lover himself: his erotic distraction on the Island of Alcina, not to mention his sudden, predatory sexual impulse towards Angelica, has shown us a lover only in progress, as it were, certainly quite distant from the high standard required for Bradamante's future spouse, and very distant from what we had seen, or at least glimpsed, in Boiardo's *Innamorato*. His repeated slippages into the traps of Atlante – the castle in the Pyrenees, Alcina's Island, the enchanted palace in the woods – have put him in a situation of impotence, leaving his chivalric prowess largely unexpressed.

A drastic change happens between cantos XXII and XXV. Ruggiero is freed from Atlante's frustrating control (after the enchanted palace the old master will just give up on trying to protect Ruggiero from his destiny); Ruggiero finally re-encounters Bradamante, declares his love, promises to be baptized and embrace Christianity, and starts, finally, to act as a "man." Conversely Bradamante begins losing her "masculine" traits and starts acting as a "woman." The transformation is finely crafted all through the second part of the poem, but already in canto XXII, at the castle of Pinabello, Ruggiero, having to confront the champions of the local lord, shows who is the "true man" in this relationship:

> *Bradamante pregò molto Ruggiero*
> *Che le lasciasse in cortesia l'assunto*
> *Di gittar de la sella il cavalliero*
> *Ch'avea di fiori il bel vestir trapunto;*
> *ma non poté impetrarlo, e fu mestiero*
> *a lei far ciò che Ruggire vòlse a punto.*
> *Egli vòlse l'impresa tutta avere,*
> *e Bradamante si stesse a vedere.*
> (XXII.63)

> Bradamant entreated Ruggiero as a favour to leave it to her to unhorse the knight whose fine surcoat was picked out with flowers, but she could not sway him and had perforce to do as he wanted, that is, to leave the whole challenge to him while she looked on.

And when he inadvertently wins the struggle with the help of his magic shield – a resource he had used insouciantly earlier in the poem – he feels deprived of his true merit. He blushes; he is overwhelmed with shame; and he ends up getting rid of this ambiguous and by now dangerous help – he throws

the magic shield into a deep well.[34] In the meantime, Bradamante, incapable of curbing her bellicose instincts, attacks Pinabello himself, follows him in the woods … and loses sight of Ruggiero again. The *Bildungsroman* is evidently dual: the making of Ruggiero and the making – or unmaking? – of Bradamante become the making of the *couple* Ruggiero/Bradamante. Their mutual adjustments and the interplay of their public and private lives represent the first example I know in Italian literature of a true romantic story: that is, a story that traces a substantial character's development, along the curve of an emotional progression, displayed over a protracted stretch of time, through a carefully described series of significant situations.

As a last comment, it should be stressed that between canto XXII and canto XXV lies the account (in canto XXIII) of Orlando's folly, the *furore* of the title. The strategic entanglement of such episodes tells us quite clearly that as Orlando is destroyed by love and practically exits the plot, the responsibility of the story, of a positive love story, passes on, and becomes Ruggiero's – and of course Bradamante's – responsibility.

But what about the master fiction of Boiardo, *le discours du pouvoir* of the *Innamorato*, the "incredible genealogies" of the Este rulers? To be sure, Ariosto dutifully inherits the dynastic invention of Boiardo, although the descent of Bradamante and Ruggiero, down to Ariosto's own masters and benefactors, is presented not to Ruggiero, but to Bradamante (in canto III), by Merlin and through the intervention of the enchantress Melissa.[35] The Este destiny is, at least in the first half of Ariosto's poem, firmly in female hands. But Boiardo's beautiful fiction just falls to pieces in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. It is true that Ruggiero is still of Trojan blood; it is true that the Este rule is, quite conventionally, a new golden age. But what is missing – an omission that causes the whole edifice to disintegrate – is the return of ancient Arthurian chivalry. In Ariosto the new Este golden age is nothing more than a glittering varnish on a contemporary reality that Ariosto contemplates with the irony and the frustration of a modern – that is, post-1494 (after the French invasion) – Italian. The bold optimism of Boiardo has vanished. Arthur is never mentioned. The old chivalry of early Britain will not come back. The venerable operation of the Arthurian *ventura* is deeply deconstructed: Ariosto's cavaliers are not *cavalieri erranti*, "knights errant": they are, at best, very curious voyagers.[36] No new hero, on the other hand, is born perfect. Ruggiero and Bradamante's long, uneven, contradictory itineraries towards perfection tell us that these are times when virtue must be patiently earned. These are times when the protagonists of a romance, and the ancestors of an illustrious dynasty, must agree to submit themselves to the fatigue of a long education.

Finally, it must be observed that Ariosto's lesson seems to have gone largely unheard. As I have already noted, grandiose constructs of legitimation via legendary dynasties will become a prolonged feature of European history. Not without, naturally, recurring doubts and self-deprecating ironies. In the middle of the so-called war on precedence, the new duke of Florence, Cosimo I, commented about the vain pretences of his rival, the duke of Ferrara:

> And in this respect, indeed, I cannot deny that our illustrious house is inferior, since it had no such poet to celebrate it, by giving it such a radiant and noble beginning: I mean, Ruggiero, who eclipsed the splendor of Orlando and of all the other paladins [*dico di quel Ruggieri el quale estinse lo splendore di Orlando e di tutti li altri paladini*], as the sun does when it rises and eclipses the light of the other lesser stars. For myself, I cannot say that I am born of a duke of Florence, nor do I care much whether I can or not, for I have not decided properly whether it is more laudable to be born or to become a duke in the way I have done [*qual sia maggior laude o el nascere o el diventare in quel modo che ho fatto io*].[37]

One feels sorry that Cosimo did not follow his impulse and did not have the courage to dismiss altogether the incredible genealogies of his time. He obviously had in mind his Machiavelli, who in the second chapter of *The Prince* had dismissed the *principati ereditari*, that is, exactly the kind of principalities which could claim incredible genealogies, as less interesting than the *principati nuovi*. Cosimo, *principe nuovo*, was not iconoclastic enough to proclaim the superiority of somebody who created a dynasty over somebody who just inherited it. Instead, as we know, he let himself become entangled with some particularly incredible genealogies of his family and of the city he ruled.[38] Fortunately, the household of Priam was large enough to provide ancestors for everybody in Europe.

CHAPTER II

*Temporality and narrative structure in European romance from the late fifteenth century to the early sixteenth century**

Marco Praloran
Translated by Ruben Borg

In a discussion aimed at mapping out a history, or perhaps still more significantly a morphology of the Western narrative tradition from the early verse romances of the twelfth century to the narrative poems and romances of the Renaissance, it seems to me extremely important, even essential, to articulate a comparatist perspective. This is all the more the case the more closely we approach the modern era. For instance, if we look at the Italian and Spanish traditions, to which I would like to devote a few opening remarks, we have to acknowledge that in both traditions the French prose romances of the thirteenth century still provide a prominent model of operation. Admittedly, this may be viewed as a reflection of the social character of literary works, as the symbolic values of French chivalry and feudalism still exert a strong attraction on the Spanish and Italian aristocracies. But that is only part of the picture; what is at stake is also the structure, the very form of narration.

In this regard we encounter different degrees of imitation. It is curious to note that from the middle of the fifteenth century the Italian tradition picks up narrative elements that Spanish culture chooses to set aside: namely, the polyphonic construction of the plot, which concentrates not

* *Editor's note*. In an early phase of the collective project Marco Praloran provided for this essay a bibliographical introduction on the historical development of scholarly attitudes toward *entrelacement* in medieval and Renaissance literature. Though in the published volume this introduction has been omitted and minor technical adjustments have been made elsewhere in the essay, the text that follows is extremely close to the main text that he provided for the chapter. Parts of the essay present material published in Italian in his study "L'utopia del poema cavalleresco alla fine del Quattrocento," in *Boiardo, Ariosto e i libri di battaglia: atti del convegno, Scandiano-Reggio Emilia-Bologna, 3–6 ottobre 2005*, ed. Andrea Canova and Paola Vecchi Galli, Serie Centro studi Matteo Maria Boiardo, 53, Studi boiardeschi, 7 (Novara: Interlinea, 2007), pp. 15–39; reprinted in Marco Praloran, *Le lingue del racconto: studi su Boiardo e Ariosto*, "Europa delle Corti," Centro studi sulle società di antico regime, Biblioteca del Cinquecento, 143 (Rome: Bulzoni, 2009), pp. 99–123. The early passing of Marco Praloran prevented him from reviewing the chapter in its present form but not from making this lasting contribution to the cooperative study.

on the *ethos* of an individual character but on the moral values associated with the portrayal of the hero and on the relations between the idealized figure and contemporary social mores.[1] One might advance many hypotheses – and many indeed have been constructed – to explain this divergence. Above all, it is necessary to consider the complexities of Italian culture, beyond the particulars of the literary establishment. To this end we would do well to take into account the commitment of fifteenth-century Italy to linguistic and technical experimentation. The fascination of the culture with visual experience and the nature of the image, with matters of space and pictorial dramatization, was bound to have a profound impact on an intellectual of Boiardo's caliber. Correspondingly, it could not but lead to an investment in the formal features of narrative, in plot as a means of structural orchestration.[2]

For its part, the Italian public was prepared to privilege aspects of a literary work pertaining to the montage of imaginative material rather than to the material itself. It was also primed to appreciate – in Ariosto, particularly, but also in Boiardo – the superimposition of various literary echoes: from Virgil to Dante, and from Ovid to Petrarch.[3] Such issues were not as pivotal in the reception of the Spanish romances. This was because, among other factors, the intellectual disposition of the Spanish public was considerably less sophisticated. Attached to the immediate, "primary" sense of the narrative, most readers in that public identified fully with their heroes, whose characterizations, free of ambiguity and grey areas, were in turn ideally suited to the process of identification.

The ways in which the world of Arthurian myth is reclaimed in early modernity are thus fundamentally opposed. And in this sense there is a chance that the study of one tradition will help, by way of contrast, to shed light upon the other. We do know, after all, that versions of the principal Iberian romances – the translation, now lost, of the *Tirant lo Blanch*[4] as well as Bernardo Tasso's adaptation of the *Amadis* – enjoyed considerable success in Italy. Similarly, both the *Furioso* (whose extraordinary fortune throughout Europe is well documented) and the *Innamorato* were read in Spain.[5] Hence, it seems to me valuable to compare four works that, in my view, represent the major developments in a supranational tradition – works that were written or published within a few crucial years of each other: *El Tirant lo Blanch*, the *Inamoramento de Orlando* (or *Orlando Innamorato*), the *Amadis de Gaula*, and the *Orlando Furioso*.

On the evidence of the Tissoni Benvenuti/Montagnani critical edition of Boiardo's work, along with the research underlying the edition, the final draft of Book III of the *Inamoramento de Orlando* appears to have had an

even more extensive compositional history than was previously imagined.[6] The writing process, begun in the early 1470s and continuing through the early 1490s, was shaped by a rich sequence of events, of new fashions and cultural forces affecting the tastes of both the general public and the ruling elite, not to mention the production and circulation of printed books. As a result of this history, Boiardo's long poem was exposed to a series of ever-changing, often discordant influences, and it is for this reason, aside from an inherent aesthetic disposition, that it can be said to constitute an eminently experimental work – experimental in the sense that the author was wont to modify his original conception in the course of writing without going to the trouble of revising the previously completed material in light of the latest changes. The fact that the *Orlando Innamorato* eludes, through the very processes by which it came to be written, those requirements of coherence and uniformity that are essential to the classicism of the *Furioso* (but also to the conception of Cieco da Ferrara's *Mambriano*, which remains obscure to us in many aspects) is therefore highly significant and symptomatic of the overall trajectory of its writing. Indeed, the work of Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti has shown that the break between the second and third books of the poem is not the only one of its kind. It is possible to discern other disruptions in the creative process, shifts in the author's ideological position that are tied, in essence, to the interests of patronage. [On patronage and *Orlando Innamorato*, see Chapter 10 in this volume. – ed.]

Nevertheless, the work remains faithful, in its own peculiar way, to a stylistic design announced at the outset. It preserves a "narrative model" (to borrow Segre's influential phrase)[7] established in the very first cantos of Book 1: a model founded on the technique of interlacement as derived from the great Arthurian romances of the thirteenth century (especially, I would say, the *Tristan en prose*). Yet it is also indebted, in equal measure, to Carolingian material, the subject matter of which was the stuff of Italian chivalric poems written in *ottava rima*. Not enough emphasis has been given to the fact that the use of interlacement during the second half of the fifteenth century was by no means an intuitive choice for modern texts aiming to revive the culture of medieval chivalry. If we think of the two most important coeval works produced in Europe on the theme of Arthurian adventures – Malory's work in England and the beautiful Catalan romance *El Tirant lo Blanch* by Joanot Martorell – we have to observe, first of all, that Boiardo preserves verse instead of using prose (and this is without question a typically Italian characteristic), and second, that he maintains a polyphonic plot-structure, whereas the other two texts tend decidedly, though in different ways, toward monody.

In *Le Morte Darthur*, which was completed in 1469–70 and published for the first time in 1485 in London, the original plot of the Vulgate (*Lancelot, Queste*, and *Mort Artu*) is disarticulated and subjected to a process of reduction. A few great adventures are abstracted from the grand scheme and narrated in sequence, without regard for the rules of cyclical composition. Each of these adventures constitutes a romance; the last one, *The Tale of the Death of King Arthur*, is adapted in part from the *Mort Artu*. Clearly, Malory skirts the dangers presented by the conventions of continuous construction and deferral, both mainstays of interlaced narrative. In so doing, he caters to the taste of an audience that had become unaccustomed to those prodigious feats of memory indispensable for a coherent reading of medieval romances. As Eugène Vinaver points out, Malory's method is to unscramble the themes and redistribute them in sequence: one after the other, rather than one *during* the other.[8]

In *El Tirant lo Blanch*, written in the 1460s and published for the first time in 1490, the plot-structure is fully coherent, but this coherence does not rest on a plurality of lines, on "polyphony." Tirant is always at the center of the narrative. The book is the story of his life and his deeds: from his beginnings as a young knight in England until his death en route to Constantinople after a victorious campaign.[9] Thus one finds, in these two fifteenth-century masterpieces of the chivalric tradition, relatively little development by narrative diffraction, as it were. Meaning tends not to be produced *both* continuously, through the sense that accrues to particular events in their chronological distribution, *and* compositely, as one event sheds light on the other by juxtaposition. The process is mainly sequential in operation; one event is the cause of another in accordance with the Aristotelian model of plot-structure. Moreover, the emotional content of the narrative normally also unfolds, and is presented to the reader, in a linear rather than a composite arrangement. We generally follow a straightforward narrative thread and, as the reading progresses, moments of high dramatic tension succeed the more tranquil episodes. Our perspective is limited; the ground that is yet to be covered, the plot's unexpected turns, are regularly ahead of us. It is interesting to note that in the Catalan masterpiece the action is carried out in what could be described, at least within the parameters of fifteenth-century culture, as a realistic setting. Realistic is the representation of time, centered on aspects of day-to-day life that, even when not directly portrayed, are implicitly associated with the steady flow of the heroes' existence. As the priest in *Don Quixote* observes, the *Tirant* is the only Spanish romance in which characters eat, sleep, etc.: theirs is a time patterned on the time of actual life.

We must not forget, after all, that the knights depicted in this work are modeled on real-life knights, the cream of European aristocracy. These were knights who, by their obsessive adherence to the rituals of courtly behavior, desperately sought to carry the spirit of chivalry into modernity. The fact that after the Turkish conquest Tirant succeeds in regaining Constantinople is a utopian sign of the function collectively invested in the figure of the Great Knight – and indeed of the historical significance of his actions. What is most striking about the romance is not the dueling or the themes of arms and warfare (despite the remarkable variety and elegance with which these matters are treated); rather, it is the attention to detail, the extreme care taken when reproducing the entire theatrical and ritualistic apparatus of chivalry: the challenges to duel, the counter-challenges (*lletres de batalla*), the rules of engagement, the arguments, the greetings, the feasts, the ceremonies, etc. The romance celebrates a civilization in its autumnal phase. Indeed, were it not for the energy and sense of vitality with which it infuses its narrative, it might be said to approximate, in spirit and sensitivity, the waning culture of contemporary Burgundy.[10] From this point of view time emerges, once again, as linear and progressive.

But the absence of polyphonic structures in the work can be explained in yet another context. The fact that our understanding of the romance is not based on the contrast between different leading personalities in the book, or on some individual shortcoming that allows us to distinguish the *ethos* of a particular knight from an ideal chivalric model (a difference that comes clearly into relief in the comparison with other knights), is highly significant. Whereas in the case of the Arthurian knights, even the most noble ones, perfection is an unstable condition – continually put into question and in many ways seen as an unattainable ideal (hence the pain and the nostalgia) – for Tirant it is a given. From the outset Tirant is enveloped in perfection; certainly a more banal and stereotypical kind of perfection, but no less true for being so. There is no need, then, to reconstruct meaning by analogy. The sense of the world, its manifestation, is not grasped through a comparison of actions and thoughts that would commit both the book's heroes and its reader to an intelligent evaluation of things. Rather, it is entirely summed up in the deeds of the protagonist.

In the *Inamoramento de Orlando* narrative tension develops otherwise: here the reader's viewpoint does not open exclusively onto the future, onto what is always to come. The event on which we temporarily focus cannot make us forget the effective presence of other narrated worlds that are suspended, that are alive "alongside" and "behind" us. Accordingly, the

work's affective content is promoted not only by the current storyline, but also in the expectation of the other suspended lines, and ultimately in the possibility, always real, that one of these lines may eventually converge with ours. The emotional curve produced by the romance is founded on this principle of continuous segmentation – that is to say, on the art of montage; in Boiardo's resumption of this ancient model what develops in this narrative interplay is not so much meaning as emotional content.[11] These profound structural differences help to explain, at least in part, why the characters of the *Tirant* are *used up* in the unfolding of the romance, used and dismissed (killed off, poor souls), with the obvious exception of the protagonist and his friends. Thus they situate themselves irretrievably "behind" our point of view, which is that of the eponymous hero. By contrast, in the *Inamoramento* the principal characters do not die, because they are the structure's main support, its skeleton: to kill off one of the heroes would be to undermine the narrative model on which the work is based. This is why the emotional content of the *Tirant* is to a large extent intrinsic to the "storyline," whereas in the *Inamoramento de Orlando* it inheres in the weave of the plot. Boiardo does not use the interlacing process to advance the significance of the hero's actions (unlike Ariosto, who, in subtle and covert ways, does precisely this); rather, his aim is to create new possibilities of plot-construction.

Now in approaching the world of fifteenth-century courtly idealism (to use Erich Köhler's felicitous phrase)[12] it is necessary to consider the way in which a particular work positions itself within various generic forms. The complex structure of the romance is a device designed to elevate materials of Carolingian derivation.[13] The polyphonic plot presupposes a certain control over time, a contemplation of temporal structures and a technical ability to organize narratives that implies a high order of composition in the hierarchy of literary genres. This narrative technique breathes life into the source material. It gives it a new form and a new orchestration. It is interesting to note that the objective elements of the tradition call into play, here as always, an entire set of pre-established patterns. Thus, the Arthurian character of Boiardo's episodes – namely the knight's singular quest in a field of limitless adventure, a field strewn with excitement and risk in which one incident follows another at a pace altogether alien to the realist aspect of Arthurian romance – cannot be dissociated from the polyphonic form of the poem's narrated world. In point of fact, a purely epic setting would have made it impossible to carry out a genuine interlaced narrative. To speculate on which of these elements may have first determined the other would be pointless. What is

certain is that the two are co-implied; and that the returns for the genre of Italian chivalric poetry were considerable. Moreover, they were, in many ways, easier to "imitate" than the equally remarkable innovations of Pulci, which consisted chiefly in providing the sparse idiom of the *cantari* with a veneer of heightened expressivity. In so doing, Pulci inevitably stressed the mimetic nature of narrative, drawing his vocabulary from a cultural framework as typical and allusive as that of the Florentine municipal world. Here, as Maria Cristina Cabani has recently shown, the literary tradition (including the *ottava*) was already marked by linguistic tensions that must be construed in terms of expressive tone.[14] Thus one may venture to say that Pulci's only true follower, at the level of expressive form, was – at least from a certain phase of his writing career – Boiardo himself, but not Ariosto, and not even the magnificent literary tradition that established itself in those few years, between the third book of the *Inamoramento de Orlando* and the first draft of the *Furioso*.[15] Boiardo's imitators were nonetheless numerous; and every single one of them – even Cieco da Ferrara in his *Mambriano* – felt the need to employ the technique of interlaced narration, though in ways that were far less experimental than those of the Count.

Boiardo's masterpiece, left unfinished in 1494, is an eminently open work. It contains within it, encoded in its very structure and narrative program, a germ of incompleteness – or, to be more precise, the sense of an infinite openness and of a progressively expanding plot. [On narrative closure in earlier romance, see Chapters 4–8. – ed.] Let us reflect, then, on the "unfinished" nature of the work, limiting our analysis to the following two aspects of it: (a) the interlaced plot as objective element, and (b) the preservation of the world (i.e., the need to preserve the world of Arthurian adventure).

We must begin with a minor premise. We do not know what Boiardo actually read. We are unable to ascertain which versions of the great romances in prose he may have perused or what codices he may have owned. It is certain that in seigneurial circles in fifteenth-century Ferrara there was a strong desire to read any courtly romance available: some essential narrative kernels, but also various additions and continuations. This suggests the sense of a narrative world *in progress*, a world that was utterly open. It is therefore possible to surmise, even within a discourse on the logic of genres – i.e., the logic invested in different generic forms in the course of their history – that for Boiardo, composing a work that in its very structure harks back to past models entailed the creation of a text from which it was assumed that other romances might spring (which is indeed what happened) according to a radically counter-classical conception of art.

Characterization in the *Innamorato* is partly mimetic and partly not. To a certain extent characters are anchored in tradition, and as such they are protected by a prohibition: a ban of indestructibility. The great Arthurian romances have an orientation of their own. Since the psychological make-up of the heroes is far richer, elaborated in a cadence of narrated biographical incidents – in other words, since the heroes' life is already fully plotted out – it is difficult to open up a new narrative space, making it seem as though it emerged naturally from within the old material itself. Such a move, on the other hand, is perfectly possible with the great Carolingian heroes whose death, admittedly, is already narrated (Orlando at Roncisvalle; Rinaldo in Cologne), but narrated in such a way as to seem disengaged from the rest of the plot, like an isolated event. In the case of Lancelot, all we are able to add is "the story of an unknown episode in the hero's life" since *Lancelot*, the *roman en prose*, is devoted (not unlike the *Bildungsroman* of the nineteenth century) to the faithful representation of one character and one destiny retraced along the principal stages of the character's existence.[16]

Conversely, in the logic of interlaced narration, every pivotal character represents one line of the plot, one side of its configuration. The model is sustainable precisely because here, contrary to what happens in the Iberian romances (even in *Amadís de Gaula*, *Palmerín*, and their many sequels), the characters live on throughout the narrative. Thus, at the moment in which Boiardo invents a new character, one can assume that it is an investment in structure – one that entails a multiplication of the plot's open potentialities. There can be no doubt that, despite announcing its polyphonic nature from the outset, most notably from the episode of Angelica's flight, the plot of the *Inamoramento de Orlando* grows increasingly complex, more open as it evolves. It suffices to draw a comparison between the first and the second book and to assess the amount of textual space devoted in each to the various characters: for instance, Rinaldo and Orlando.

The structure of the first book is based on a principle of construction that we might describe as "extended alternate montage." Its most luminous stars are Rinaldo and Orlando (who are manifestly granted more "narrative time" than the other heroes), and its crowning moment is the convergence of the two champions in the duel at Albracca (the one episode that, more than any other in the vast plot of the romance, is able to evoke a sense of closure). The match ends in a tie only because Angelica intervenes. But from that point onwards, the narrative structure changes and the plurivocity of the text intensifies. From that episode, which as I have noted is the closest the plot ever comes to the sense of an ending, the ratio of

narrative time accorded to the two protagonists dwindles progressively. In the second book Agramante enters the scene, but being a "king-figure" his role on the chessboard of narrative interrelations is one of absolute stability, characterized only by a collective dimension. More importantly, Rugiero and Rodamonte come into the picture, and this effectively modifies the poem's organization. [On some of the implications of the introduction of Rugiero, see Chapter 10. – ed.] Never until then had a polyphonic plot contained so many pivotal characters, so many dominant "voices" carrying equal weight. An exception to this rule is in some ways represented by the *Vulgate* or *Lancelot–Grail Cycle*, where, admittedly, the number of storylines is very extensive. Yet, as Elspeth Kennedy reminds us, all those storylines circle around a single axis that is the life and activity of Lancelot.[17] The deep-seated sense of the work is this: the actions and thoughts of other characters are narrated through the project of meaning that constitutes Lancelot's world, and it is only in direct confrontation with these characters that Lancelot's destiny can be understood.[18] In Boiardo this is not so. The characters are truly at the same hierarchical level. This is already evident in Book II. In Book III, not only is the arrangement confirmed, but a new dominant character is added to the cast: Mandricardo. And alongside Mandricardo, the chief innovation of Book III (or, if preferred, of the transition from Book II to Book III) is the dramatic and narrative autonomy afforded by Bradamante. Such a move serves to balance the ratio between Christians and pagans, but its main purpose is to introduce a woman as a great hero *en quête*. Bradamante's mission constitutes one of the principal features supporting the book's vast architecture. The elegiac, almost lyrical octaves of the wounded Bradamante, alone and deeply in love, mark out a development that is reprised integrally in the *Furioso*: a woman *en quête*, but a woman who will not conceal her feminine side, unlike Marfisa. Such enormous potential falls intact into Ariosto's hands and becomes the source of the great combative quest narrated in his masterpiece.

All throughout Europe, starting with the printed editions of the great medieval romances, the opposite tendency prevails, a tendency that is ideally exemplified in the "form" of the *Amadis* by Montalvo, the other great bestseller of Renaissance chivalric culture alongside the *Furioso*. In essence, the *Amadis* limits the polyphonic aspects of the plot and focuses the narrative on the protagonist, on the range of his actions.[19] One must observe, then, that even before the widespread diffusion of Aristotelian poetics, interpreted by sixteenth-century classicism in the strictest possible manner (therefore in rigidly anti-polyphonic terms), this trend was

dominant throughout Europe: in France, in Spain, even in England where, as I remarked previously, Malory's famous work, more or less contemporary with Boiardo's poem, undertook a simplification of the older structure, leaving much of the source material unchanged but disarticulating individual stories from the overall scheme.

As is well known, the *Amadis de Gaula*, printed in its standard version in Saragoza in 1508, is the reworking of a medieval romance probably dating to the fourteenth century – a text of which only a few fragments have survived. Compared to the *Tirant*, the first book of the *Amadis* has a plot that is moderately polyphonic, bearing more clearly than any other section of the romance the signs of its medieval derivation. From chapter 16 onwards the plot develops three lines of action: the story of Amadis, that of his brother Galaor, and finally that of their cousin, Agrages. The technique is very restrained; cuts from scene to scene occur always in moments of relative "calm," when the warriors are out of the line of fire. And the same goes for the chapter breaks, each chapter having been conceived as an autonomous sequence in the narrative.[20] The plot's formal division thus facilitates a deeper comprehension of all the events, which is exactly the opposite of what happens in Italy with the two *Orlandi*.

One must further note that the different narrative projects of the heroes are always fully harmonized. In the *Amadis*, the characters are friends and stand by each other, contrary to what happens in the French *romans*, for example *Guiron le courtois*, which in its second part presents an alternate montage of the antithetical quests of Guiron and Danayn. Similarly, the Spanish text distinguishes itself from the Italian tradition, in which the heroes' narrative projects are set in complete contrast (be it in love, war, or merely because of their loyalty to rival factions). It is also significant that the preeminence of Amadis's role in the narrative is never in question: the juxtaposition of storylines does not revolve around this issue, but is simply a matter of variation. In any case, one can surmise that the conception of the *Amadis*, being less realistic than that of the *Tirant* – less committed to a framework designed to mirror contemporary society – demanded a more open narrative construction, one that privileges variety and discontinuity. The technique of interlaced narration, emptied here of its cognitive function, serves to prop up the unfolding of events and to produce variations on the same character-type.

By the second book, as the narrative unfolds in its Mediterranean and oriental setting, the plot-structure takes a monodic turn, veering closer to the model of Greek pseudo-autobiography. Faithful from the outset to the prevailing ideals proclaimed by Catholic kings, ideals of conciliation, and a

new devotion to imperial values, the hero conforms to a standard of perfection and manages to unite, within a single course of action, the pursuit of self-realization and the fulfillment of social mores. Naturally, the love story with Oriana is seamlessly inserted into this logic of non-conflictual composition. And in a way it is also for this reason that, as the romance unfolds, matters of war and scenes of an epic quality come to replace more and more frequently the adventures at court.[21]

If adventure in the Arthurian universe is all the more important for the variegation it creates in the character's interiority, here such considerations are out of place. Characters in *Amadis* are static, unchangeable. To be sure, the *Amadis* does offer a representation of character-interiority, but it is an interiority based on an anthropological model very different from the medieval version. Emotions flare up suddenly and seem to owe nothing to the struggle between societal values and the self. In short, one cannot escape the impression of a formulaic psychology and an extremely limited vocal range. Perhaps the reason for this is that the heroes of this work, unlike their counterparts in the romances of the thirteenth century, are unaffected by changes in circumstance or by the confrontation with other characters; they remain themselves, reacting like automatons in ways that are entirely predictable. Such a psychological state of affairs cannot coincide with a display of self-awareness on the part of the individual character, or even with an authentically introspective evaluation of his actions. Rather, it is formulated as a series of blatant effects aimed at stirring the public (more often than not, a female public) to a heightened emotional response.

The writing of the *Furioso* followed directly on the third book of the *Inamoramento de Orlando*. But by then the conditions of literary production in Italy had changed significantly. Boiardo's experimental flair, his stylistic eclecticism, was out of vogue in the classicist environment that prevailed at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (a classicism that was indeed already fashionable during the last twenty years of the fifteenth century, as we gather from the *Rime* and the *Arcadia* of Sannazaro).[22] Not only is the first edition of the *Furioso* very different from Boiardo's masterpiece in this respect; the style of the *Mambriano*, a work published in the first decade of the sixteenth century, must also have seemed more modern to the contemporary reader. Boiardo's much-discussed fortune depends entirely on an astonishing thematic inventiveness and a masterfully executed plot-structure that, in spite of the hybrid language, ensured its success. In the last analysis, it is with the help of the *Furioso* that Boiardo's vehemently experimental plot-structure imposed itself on sixteenth-century Italian taste.

The types of *entrelacement* featured in the *Furioso* are well known. Some of the scholars contributing to this volume have brought into relief Ariosto's peculiar handling of scene-cuts and have helped clarify the very concept of adventure invested in his work.[23] Compared to the *Amadis*, its great rival in the European tradition, the *Furioso* poses a continuous challenge to received temporal structures, disrupting the linear course of reading and dismantling the idea of an objective temporality. How well these structural tensions can be said to reflect the characters' interrelations was cogently demonstrated by Daniel Javitch some years ago.[24] Later I shall return to this issue. At this juncture we should note that the popularity of the *Furioso* throughout Europe was due chiefly to the elegance of its style and the beauty of individual episodes, rather than to its formal organization, which was perceived to be as chaotic as it was plot-driven. [On sixteenth-century criticism of Ariosto's work, see Chapters 12 and 13. – ed.] Ultimately, the narrative structure of the *Amadis* was more easily assimilated to sixteenth-century European taste than the lavish brilliance of the *Furioso*. As the priest remarks to the barber in the first chapters of the *Quixote*: language and style are the principal causes of the excellence of Ariosto's "romance." The comment is not only extremely apt but also symptomatic of a widespread opinion, held not only in Spain but also in France, and certainly not limited to the late sixteenth century.

But given the limits of this essay I would like to consider two final issues: the literariness of the *Furioso*, and the work's ties to the Arthurian universe. One might say that in the *Furioso* there is an ostensive literariness which corresponds, in essence, to what we call Ariosto's classicism: the work reflects the entire history of the Italian lyric, and a large part of the Latin tradition, in a process of synthesis that develops around a recognizably Petrarchan technique. For the first time the readers of sixteenth-century Europe were able to discover, in a work of narrative, the plasticity, the fine balance, the resonances of a language that had no equal in the modern world – that was in fact unapproachable. It is well-known, for instance, that Ariosto shared none of the perplexity that the French classicists, chief among them Ronsard, felt toward the overly dramatic tone of Petrarch's love poems.[25]

Nevertheless, we must observe that the literariness of the *Furioso* is also a new narrative resource. Ariosto's Petrarchism can be ascribed not only to the elegant style of composition but also, more pertinently, to the complex manner in which imitation conditions the form of the plot.[26] The subjective drama that permeates the work, and the intense imagery stirred up by the pressures of interiority, are born of an extremely personal reading of

Petrarch's poems. At the level of literary technique this is clearly discerned in Ariosto's treatment of syntax, in the logic of enumeration, in the forms of repetition, etc. It is not so much a matter of applying a lyrical coating to the narrative as of devising, through a peculiar adaptation of the Petrarchan model, new, hitherto unimagined possibilities of narration.

It is worth dwelling a little on the nature of these possibilities. In the first place, Ariosto employs a complex Petrarchan syntax to create effects of delay (*ritardo*) and slow motion (*rallentato*). But whereas in the *Canzoniere* these techniques function in such a way as to reflect somehow the non-linear and non-sequential character of the poet's meditations, in the narrative their role is to bring about surprising changes in rhythm – changes that suspend the narration in its inner stages and so stimulate the reader's emotive response in anticipation of a resolution. Such effects are especially evident in Ariosto's deployment of complex syntactic constructions and proleptic subordinate clauses. This is a difficult point to elaborate in purely linguistic terms, and it is necessary here to make a careful distinction between *langue* and *parole*. If on the one hand it is only natural that the elevation of the *Furioso* to a more prestigious literary form should coincide with a more sophisticated syntax, on the other hand it is notable that such a syntactic choice (*langue*) is made by Ariosto in accordance with the text's most specific stylistic demands. A comparison between Ariosto and Bembo in this regard is instructive. In both cases we are presented with a high linguistic register, clearly reminiscent of Petrarch, but it is only in Ariosto that the Petrarchan model is invested with such rhetorical power as to affect, in more ways than one, the content of the narrative. The complexity of the syntax and the proleptic use of subordinate clauses break the regularity of the narrative's rhythm, producing an effect that might be compared to the slow extension of an elastic band that, once released, suddenly bounces forward. Naturally, such an effect is not possible in the Spanish romances, which develop in an essentially linear fashion, much like a chronicle, insisting on very simple and clear logical relations between different parts of the plot and often resorting to paratactic constructions.

To be sure, Ariosto's peculiar use of subordinate clauses is not the only device displaying this type of stylistic surplus. Another instance of Petrarchan borrowing, resulting in great stylistic virtuosity, involves Ariosto's ability not merely to slow down the pace of the narrative but, far more radically, to break up one of its chief constituent elements: linear progression. Imitating a typical procedure of Petrarch's *canzone*, Ariosto uses the *ottava* in the manner of a stanza that is linked to other stanzas by a

principle of theme-and-variation. In a complex game of delayed repetitions, the opening line of one octave is reprised in the next octave, whereupon time is somehow brought back to the earlier moment, and the same action is narrated again from a different point of view. The process is marvelously intricate and obviously impossible to replicate in prose.[27] Needless to say, it represents only one of a variety of techniques in Ariosto's stylistic repertoire. But it is precisely here that we may discern the *principium individuationis* of Ariosto's poem as against the narrative form adopted by the Spanish romances. The *Furioso* distinguishes itself at the point at which meter and style begin to have clear implications for the construction of narrative. [On narrative juxtaposition and temporal experience in the later work of Spenser, see Chapter 14. – ed.]

It is no coincidence that in these remarks the subject of time has come up repeatedly as a defining feature of the narrative. It would have been possible to compare the *Furioso* with its contemporary prose works on the basis of lyrical descriptions of landscape, character presentation, expository excerpts (which are numerous and certainly significant), or vividness of dialogue. But it is precisely on the issue of time and its "representation" that the difference between texts emerges most compellingly.

On the level of plot-construction, that is to say the selection and disposition of basic elements in the storyline, Ariosto's polyphonic structure creates some truly surprising effects – for example the tendency to make time virtual. The narrated time that we interpret as real is rather virtual, which is to say that, in essence, it is not what it appears to be.[28] In the Aristotelian conception, in the ancient conventions of epic and tragic narration, and also in the Alexandrian romances, time is the vehicle by which events come to be known. It is through the logical (or logico-dramatic) structure of time that we are able to grasp the sense of events. By their correct Aristotelian disposition in the plot they are given their proper meaning. One might assume that the medieval technique of *entrelacement* overturns this idea. But that is not really the case. Different as it may be in conception as well as technique, the representation of time in the great medieval prose romances, above all in the *Lancelot*, is still aimed at making events intelligible.[29] The narrator presides over a complex temporal frame that corresponds to the time of the world. Yet through his narrative, which is a mirror of reality, he arranges this time in such a way as to be able "to explain" its complexity to the reader. The invisible relations that bind different adventures are elucidated *through* time and *in* time. To be sure, a casual analysis could not bring any of this to light. But through careful, patient investigation the reader should be able to find in the *roman* access to its covert forms of signification.

The polyphonic structure of interlaced narration thus does not cancel the explanatory function of time; the opposite is the case. The technique of *entrelacement* is born because of the expansion of the narrated world; it arises from the necessity to recount the (chivalric) world in its totality. Time – the narrative conception of time – must therefore be figured differently in order to maintain its function as a means of access to meaning.

But these considerations do not apply to the *Furioso*. Ariosto's conception of time actually hinders the reader's cognitive process. It is difficult to understand what motivates this dynamic, although we are able to say that Ariosto inherits a treatment of time that Boiardo had originally articulated in his *Orlando Innamorato*.

Boiardo plays with an illusionary time in order to invigorate events, to give new thrust to worn-out material. Above all he uses time as an instrument of emotive manipulation and surprise, undermining the convention by which narratives are supposed to represent time objectively. In effect he plays games with time, treating it as a surprise-effect that makes it possible to even out wholly different durations; time thus becomes a configuration of unequal quantities. These games alter the structure of time, as though it were representing some elaborate view, a vast landscape or a city, through distorting lenses. But in Boiardo's poem what is at stake is not a comprehensive interpretation of the sense of events: there is no secret meaning of the world to be investigated. The "artificial" treatment of time is intended above all to manipulate emotions, to provoke surprise and suspense.

In Ariosto's work, on the other hand, there is once again an urge to probe for meaning. I believe that this is due, at least in part, to a new reading of the Old French *romans*. With *Orlando Furioso* the disjunctive effect of narrated time acquires a more complex significance. The representation of time, its form and organization, becomes an almost illegible cipher, subordinated to a narrative project that disables the causal interpretation of events by undermining the coherence of their temporal relations. If we are unable to say what happens first and what happens later, how can we formulate even the slightest interpretation of phenomena? Insofar as our understanding of the temporal priority of different strands of the plot is always belated, we cannot help but perceive the narrated world as chaos. Ariosto's narrative technique is the formal correlative of this world-chaos, governed by the narrator and fully comprehended only by him: the narrator as *artifex*. Always suspended, always uncertain, the reader of the *Furioso* moves across a vast territory, but does not really see the direction in which his path takes him, does not know

whether he is advancing or being dragged backward. In the tradition of Western narrative forms this is immensely significant. The prestige associated with the technique of *entrelacement*, the widespread fascination it exerts, the variety of detail and emotion that it provokes, make it possible for it to withstand much theoretical criticism, even by the late sixteenth century. The technique survives in Tasso (where it comes into contact with the precepts of the *Poetics*), in Spenser, even in Cervantes – and its presence in these texts is more pronounced than is generally thought.[30] Despite the decrease in virtuosic effect, the curtailed use of the technique, the loss of polyphonic texture, etc., what continues to matter throughout the Western narrative tradition (from the renewed literary forms of the eighteenth century, mainly in England, through the nineteenth-century novel, to the brink of modernity) is the reappropriation of time as a vehicle of meaning: narrative time devised and regulated not to prevent us from accessing the meaning of events but to make that access possible. This marks an extraordinarily important distinction between the plot of the *Furioso* and what follows it in the development of the European novel.

Perhaps even these brief observations may suggest how the form of time in Ariosto's work, as reflected both in its local structures (syntax, aspects of verbal tenses)[31] and in its larger patterns, contributes to the production of a supremely unstable narrative. It is unstable not simply because of the temporal (one is tempted to say Cubist) disarticulation of the plot-sequence, which makes it very difficult to situate the individual event in the context of other events, but also because events are always viewed from an angle that impedes their objective evaluation on the part of the reader as well as the characters. Characters in the *Furioso* are repeatedly shifting amid the kaleidoscopic configurations of Ariosto's turning narrative. Such characters are marked not by individual "psychologies"[32] but by their relative positions in the flux of events, and the great warriors of Ariosto's poem are embattled not only because of adversaries, but above all because of the complex implications of their actions. The sense of complexity in the temporal world, the ambiguity that underlies all seeing and knowing, are Ariosto's homage, filtered through his personal form of Petrarchism, to the *entrelacement* of medieval French romance.