

GLYN S. BURGESS

«NE N'OUT CRISANS DE ROME, QUI TANZ HONURS  
BASTID» («PÈLERINAGE DE CHARLEMAGNE»,  
v. 367)

When Charlemagne in the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* first sees the palace of King Hugo in Constantinople, he is immensely impressed by all its pure gold, its decoration and sculptures, its central pillar inlaid with white silver and its hundred columns of marble. Such is the splendour of the building that he puts forward the view that so magnificent a palace was never in the possession even of Alexander, Constantine or Crisans de Rome:

“Seignurs, dist Carles, molt gent palais ad ci:  
Tel nen out Alixandre ne li vielz Costantin,  
Ne n'out Crisans de Rome, qui tanz honors bastid” (vv. 365-67)<sup>1</sup>.

The presence of Crisans de Rome in the company of such famous names as Alexander the Great and the Emperor Constantine is at first sight somewhat puzzling. He was initially identified as Trajan by Pau-

1. Edited by Glyn S. Burgess, in G. S. Burgess and Anné E. Cobby, eds., *The Pilgrimage of Charlemagne and Aucassin and Nicolette* (Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Series A, 47, New York: Garland, 1988). For the purposes of this article I have also made use of the editions of the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* by P. Aebischer (Geneva: Droz - Paris: Minard, 1965; 2nd ed., 1971), Anna J. Cooper (Paris: Lahure, 1925), G. Favati (Bologna: Palmaverde, 1965), E. Koschwitz (Heilbronn: Henninger, 1879; 5th ed., Leipzig: Reisland, 1907), J.-L. G. Picherit (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, 1984) and Isabel de Riquer (Barcelona: El Festín de Esopo, 1984).

lin Paris in 1859<sup>2</sup> and as Caesar by Eduard Koschwitz, in his first edition of the *Pèlerinage* in 1879. The correct identification, however, is certainly that of Gaston Paris, who, in his "Romania" article of 1880, identifies him as Crescentius, the "maître" of Hadrian's Mausoleum in Rome, now the Castel Sant'Angelo<sup>3</sup>. Editors and translators of the *Pèlerinage*, including Koschwitz in his later editions, have adopted Gaston Paris's identification, and for further information they tend to refer readers to his article. Paul Aebischer has no note to v. 367 and he simply tells us in his glossary, using Gaston Paris's phrase, that Crescentius was the "maître du môle d'Hadrien" (p. 101). In his recent edition and translation of the poem Jean-Louis Picherit also has no note to explain the reference to Crisâns de Rome. In his Index of Proper Names he simply states that Crescentius was "a member of a powerful Roman family" (in his translation Picherit calls him Cressentius, p. 32). My aim here is to examine and expand on the remarks made by Gaston Paris, to provide some dates, which are singularly lacking in editions of the *Pèlerinage*, and to pose once more the intriguing question of why Crescentius of Rome should be rubbing shoulders with such significant historical figures as Alexander and Constantine.

In support of his identification Gaston Paris makes the following points. The name Crisâns in the *Pèlerinage* is the same as that of Creissant which occurs in some Old French texts in the expression *Chastel Creissant*. The lost poem which served as a base for *Fierabras* mentioned the *Chastel Creissant* in which the Christians take refuge. An analysis of this poem has been preserved by Philippe Mousket. The same castle is described as a fortress dominating Rome in the mid-twelfth-century *Roman des Sept Sages*, a text based on an original which is "sensiblement plus ancien". Walter Map in his *De Nugis Curialium* refers to this same fortress as the *Castellum Crescens*. Gaston Paris then expands on a conjecture which he says he had made earlier (presumably in his *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne*) and for which he considers he now has confirmation<sup>4</sup>. From the end of the tenth

2. Paulin Paris, *Notice sur la chanson de geste intitulée: "Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople"*, "Jahrbuch für romanische und englische Literatur", 1 (1859), 198-211, p. 208.

3. Gaston Paris, *La Chanson du "Pèlerinage de Charlemagne"*, "Romania", 9 (1880), 1-50, pp. 45-46.

4. Gaston Paris, *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne* (Paris: Franck, 1865). With reference to the Château-Croissant in Mousket's account Paris asks: "Est-ce le château Saint-Ange, ainsi nommé d'après Crescentius?" (p. 251, n. 2).

century the Castel Sant'Angelo was called the "Château-Croissant". This name was derived from the famous Crescentius who was "maître" of Hadrian's Mausoleum. From here Crescentius controlled the city of Rome and the castle must have been "l'instrument et le dernier rempart" of his power. Crescentius, says Gaston Paris, was besieged by the Emperor Otto II within this "redoutable forteresse" and Otto ordered his decapitated body to be flung down from its walls. Although Crescentius's name remained attached to the castle for a long time, the name was not permanent and the former name of Fortress of St. Angelo later prevailed once more. Gaston Paris goes on to say that the presence of the name "Crisans de Rome" in the *Pèlerinage* is an indication of the poem's "antiquité relative". The allusion to Crescentius as the man who "tanz honors bastid" is perhaps no more than a way of completing the line. But it was natural that the actual building of the castle which bore his name should be attributed to him. Moreover, he adds, there is another house in Rome, which several archaeologists date from the end of the tenth century, which is now called the *Casa di Rienzi* or the *Casa di Pilato*, but which has also been known as the *Casa di Crescenzo*, which is doubtless the oldest attribution. Pilgrims to Rome in the eleventh century, on whose accounts the author of the *Pèlerinage* definitely drew, could have seen the "riche demeure" of Crescentius after having seen the impregnable castle and made Crescentius out to be a great builder.

We can begin by correcting an error which has found its way into Gaston Paris's account. The Emperor with whom Crescentius came into conflict was Otto III (King 983-996, Emperor 996-1002), not Otto II (King 961-967, Emperor 967-983). The same mistake is made by Joseph Bédier in his article on the composition of *Fierabras*, to which I shall refer later<sup>5</sup>. Crescentius is probably best known to the general reader from the few lines devoted to him by Edward Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Gibbon's remarks confirm Gaston Paris's account and also serve to suggest what impact Crescentius must have made on his contemporaries:

From the condition of a subject and an exile, he [Crescentius] twice rose to the command of the city, oppressed, expelled, and created the popes, and formed a conspiracy for restoring the authority of the

5. Joseph Bédier, *La composition de la chanson de "Fierabras"*, "Romania", 17 (1888), 22-51, p. 25.

Greek emperors. In the fortress of St. Angelo he maintained an obstinate siege, till the unfortunate consul was betrayed by a promise of safety; his body was suspended on a gibbet, and his head exposed on the battlements of the castle. By a reverse of fortune, Otho, after separating his troops, was besieged three days, without food, in his palace; and a disgraceful escape saved him from the justice or fury of the Romans. The senator Ptolemy was the leader of the people, and the widow of Crescentius enjoyed the pleasure or the fame of revenging her husband, by a poison which she administered to her Imperial lover<sup>6</sup>.

The house or race to which Crescentius belongs is sometimes called the house of Theodora, sometimes the house of Alberic. There are in fact two Theodoras, one from the early years of the tenth century, the other, her second daughter. The earlier Theodora's name first appears in the year 914. She was Lady Senatress of Rome and, in the words of an historian, Francis Crawford, "absolute mistress of the city"<sup>7</sup>. It is from the younger Theodora that the Crescentii trace their descent. Alberic, called Alberic of Rome, was the illegitimate son of the elder Theodora's first daughter Marozia, a woman who has been described as "second to Lucrezia Borgia among the bad women of papal history"<sup>8</sup>. Alberic of Rome (d. 954) seized power in the year 932 and went on to become Princeps of Rome and Senator of all the Romans. It appears that the fortress of St. Angelo was occupied by the elder Theodora and then by her first daughter Marozia.

There are numerous members of the Crescentii family and it is not at first sight easy to know which one is "our" Crescentius<sup>9</sup>. He seems

6. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J. B. Bury, 7 vols. (London: Methuen), V, p. 301.

7. Francis Marion Crawford, *Ave Roma Immortalis: Studies from the Chronicles of Rome*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1898), II, p. 27.

8. Peter Partner, *The Lands of St Peter: The Papal State in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), p. 79. Marozia is said to have become the mistress of Pope Sergius III and the mother by him of the future Pope John XI. She cohabited with Alberic of Spoleto by whom she had Alberic of Rome, then married Guy of Tuscany and finally Hugh of Provence who brought his Burgundian troops into the Castel Sant'Angelo. The Romans rebelled under the young Alberic. Hugh fled and Marozia was imprisoned by her own son Alberic, along with his brother, the pope, in the fortress itself. See Partner, pp. 80-86. On the history of Rome consult also Ferdinand Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter vom fünften bis sechzehnten Jahrhundert*, 8 vols. (Stuttgart, 1959-1972); Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), and Norwood Young, *The Story of Rome* (London: Dent, 1901; 8th ed., 1923, especially pp. 173-79 and 352).

9. See G. Bossi, *I Crescenzi: contributo alla storia di Roma dal 900 al 1012*

in fact to be a man known as Crescentius de Nomentana. In the year 988 he adopted the title "Senator of all the Romans" and received a papal grant to become ruler of the important port of Terracina. In 997 he proclaimed himself Consul. Although he has been called a tyrant and a despot, Crescentius was clearly a charismatic figure and a man made from the stuff from which heroes are created. Ferdinand Gregorovius, in his monumental *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter vom fünften bis sechzehnten Jahrhundert*, provides us with a portrayal of the life and times of Crescentius which includes a portrait of the man himself (I quote from the translation of the fourth edition by Annie Hamilton):

Crescentius was a brave man who cherished no vain delusions, a patriotic Roman who lived at a time when his native city was sunk into the deepest barbarism. He was handsome in form and feature, and of distinguished birth<sup>10</sup>.

Francis Crawford, writing a few years after Gregorovius, adds some further elements to our image of the man, describing him as "bold, unscrupulous, pertinacious and keen" (p. 34) and as a man of "ambitious intelligence" (p. 33).

From the work of Gregorovius, Crawford and other historians of the city of Rome we can piece together an outline of the events which seem principally to lie behind the reference to Crescentius in the *Pèlerinage*. In the year 995 Otto III came of age and his aim was to impose a renewed empire on the German and Latin worlds. Pope John XV, who was completely under the thumb of Crescentius, appealed to Otto against Crescentius's power and Otto made his way to Italy, intending to be crowned Emperor there. Before he reached Rome, John XV died and Otto sent a member of the Saxon royal family, Brun of Carinthia, to be the first German pope. Brun became Pope Gregory V. On Sep-

(Rome, 1915), and Carlo Cecchelli, *Note sulle famiglie romane tra il IX e il XII secolo*, "Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria", 58 (1935), 69-97. On the question of whether a certain Johannes or John Crescentius should be identified with "our" Crescentius, Cecchelli writes "Come pure è assai arbitraria la identificazione di Giovanni di Crescenzo «de Theodora» col famoso Crescenzo cosiddetto «Nomentano», cioè il decapitato da Ottone III" (p. 76, n. 2). Partner states: "John Crescentius described himself in 986 as «patrician of Rome». Two years later another Crescentius, called «de Nomentana» was «senator of all the Romans»" (p. 92).

10. Annie Hamilton, trans., *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages* by Ferdinand Gregorovius, translated from the 4th edition (London: Bell, 1894-1902).

tember 29, 996, a revolt broke out in Rome and Gregory fled. He had surrounded himself with Germans and his rule was regarded by the Romans as "an odious tyranny" (Gregorovius, III, p. 420). At that time Crescentius seized the fortress of St. Angelo and filled it with armed men. Crescentius became the ruler of Rome and he quickly endeavoured to make sweeping changes in administration, expelling the existing *judices*. They were largely Germans who lacked knowledge of Roman custom and law, and Crescentius filled their places with patriotic Romans. This was in fact the second time that Crescentius had taken over the government of the city. He had already done so earlier in 991, during the later years of Pope John XV. His rule on this second occasion lasted until 996 when Otto III arrived with a large military force and was met by envoys in Ravenna with letters of submission from the nobles who seemed to think that Crescentius did not possess the power to oppose Otto's rights to elect the pope. Crescentius was condemned to banishment, but on the intervention of Pope Gregory V he was allowed to continue to live in Rome as a private citizen.

In 997 Crescentius made the Greek Philagothos, a former teacher of Otto and Bishop of Piacenza, Pope John XVI. Philagothos was a man with papal ambitions who had gone to Constantinople to attempt to sue for the hand of a Greek princess on behalf of Otto III. As anti-pope he resigned the temporal power to Crescentius and the nobility, seemingly on the understanding that overall supremacy would be granted to the Greek Emperor. One of Crescentius's aims was to reintroduce Greek influence into Rome. But Otto crossed the Alps in 997 and arrived before the city of Rome in February 998. The city was undefended and only the fortress of St. Angelo and its occupants defied Otto and his forces. Pope John XVI fled and was brought back to Rome where he suffered the removal of his nose, tongue, ears and eyes. He was led through the city on an ass and then imprisoned. Otto restored Gregory V to the papacy and ordered Crescentius to surrender, but merely received a defiant response. Crescentius, in spite of the grave danger he was in, seems to have scorned all possibility of escape and to have settled down to defend the fortress with his adherents. Otto's initial attacks were successfully repulsed and he had to lay siege to the fortress in a more scientific manner. Eventually the wooden towers and machines of the Germans shook the fortress and it was taken by assault on April 29th, 998.

Just exactly what happened to Crescentius is not as clear as Gaston Paris suggests. One legend says he came disguised to Otto’s palace, asked for mercy but was taken back to St. Angelo. When the fortress was captured, Crescentius may have been beheaded on the battlements and his remains thrown down and then placed on the gallows below Monte Mario. Or the Emperor may have commanded that he throw himself down from the battlements in the sight of the people. Another legend has it that he was seized in attempting to escape, paraded on an ass through the streets of Rome, then torn limb from limb and finally hanged outside the city. Some Italian chroniclers tell that his eyes were torn out and his limbs mutilated and he was dragged through the city on the skin of a cow.

Whatever Crescentius’s precise end actually was, it was certainly spectacular. He was clearly a man who could inspire legends and his name is found frequently in Roman annals until late in the eleventh century. Gregorovius reports that “Many families bestowed it on their sons in memory of the brave champion of Roman liberty” (III, p. 433). A twelve-line inscription placed over his grave confirms his physical appearance (“pulcher in aspectu”) and suggests that he was a victim of the fickleness of fate (“Nam fortuna suos convertit lusibus annos / Et dedit extremum finis habere tetrum”). There are even legends, as Gibbon states, concerning Crescentius’s wife, Stephania. One is that she was surrendered to Otto’s brutal soldiers as one of the spoils of war. Another is that she became the mistress of her husband’s victor and succeeded in poisoning both him and the second German pope, Sylvester II (999-1003).

It is tempting to think that the Fortress of St. Angelo (*Castellum sancti Angeli*) had its name changed to the *Castellum Crescentii* as a result of Crescentius’s heroic last stand. But it seems to have acquired this new name as a result of the shift in power in the second half of the tenth century from Alberic’s side of the elder Theodora’s family to the Crescentii. The fortress was originally occupied by Theodora, then by her daughter Marozia, who was married there to Hugh of Provence in 932, shortly before he was driven out by her son Alberic and she herself then imprisoned in the fortress by Alberic. Gregorovius reports that possession of the fortress was, along with his wealth and nobility, a major factor in Alberic’s power (III, p. 296). When it passed to the Crescentii, the fortress became known as the Castle of Crescen-

tius or the Tower of Crescentius<sup>11</sup>. By this time, of course, the original purpose of Hadrian's Mausoleum had been largely forgotten, in spite of the fact that Hadrian's porphyry sarcophagus still stood in the vault (Gregorovius, III, pp. 286-87). The building was now the only fortress in Rome and possession of it was fundamental to political authority, both secular and papal. It would remain so for some time to come.

Gaston Paris dates the *Pèlerinage* in the third quarter of the eleventh century (p. 43), so he had no need to allude to events which took place in Rome a little later. The issue here concerns the conflict between Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) and the Normans on the one hand, and the anti-pope Wibert of Ravenna and Emperor Henry IV (King 1056, Emperor 1084) on the other. To extract from these complicated events just what is relevant to our purpose, we can note that Wibert became Clement III in 1084 and a week later crowned Henry IV Emperor. Pope Gregory VII remained in the *Castellum Crescentii* and appealed for help from the Norman Robert Guiscard, who approached Rome from the south. Henry and Wibert fled three days before the Normans arrived, leaving a German garrison. Guiscard's forces quickly cleared a way to the Castel Sant'Angelo and liberated Gregory. Gregory died in Salerno in 1085, but Wibert and his supporters were a thorn in the flesh of his successors Victor II and Urban II. Wibert finally left Rome in 1092, but his supporters were only overcome when Urban II entered Rome in 1097 with troops supplied by Matilda of Tuscany. The last stronghold of Wibert's supporters was the Castel Sant'Angelo and this was taken on August 23, 1098<sup>12</sup>.

These events have been linked by Mario Roques in 1901 and recently by André de Mandach to the early stage of the *Fierabras* legend<sup>13</sup>. As Roques envisaged it, details of these events would have been brought back to France by the "nombreux pèlerins qui cheminaient sur la route de Rome" (p. 174) and who would have been informed of them by clerics from St. Peter's, which would still have borne the marks of the damage it suffered. One of these pilgrims would

11. Cesare D'Onfrio, *Castel Sant'Angelo e Borgo tra Roma e Papato*. (Rome: Romana Società Editrice, 1978), p. 183.

12. See Partner, pp. 135-39.

13. Mario Roques, *L'élément historique dans "Fierabras" et dans la Branche II du "Coronement Loois"*, "Romania", 30 (1901), 161-81, pp. 171-75; André de Mandach, *Naissance et développement de la chanson de geste en Europe: V, La geste de Fierabras: le jeu du réel et de l'in vraisemblable* (Geneva: Droz, 1987), pp. 106-07.



have linked the events of the 1080s and 1090s to the sack of Rome by the Saracens in 846, in which the *Castellum Crescentii* may also have played an important, if unattested, part. De Mandach identifies this particular pilgrim as Gautier de Douai who spent two months at the court of Urban II in Rome in 1094 (pp. 118-19). While Gautier was there, the *Castellum Crescentii* was still under the control of the supporters of anti-pope Clement III, but Urban managed to take up residence there a few weeks after Gautier's departure. My purpose here is merely to suggest how the name of Crescentius and his family may have become sufficiently familiar to a French speaking public to find its way into a text such as the *Pèlerinage*.

As Gaston Paris pointed out, part of the oldest version (*Version Blanche*) of the *Fierabras* legend is preserved by Philippe Mousket, who began his chronicle of the kings of France around 1245. Mousket's fifty-four line summary contains two references to the *Chastel Creissant*:

Li dus Garins et sa mesnie  
 Entrent en Castiel Croissant,  
 Quar Sarrasin, Turc et Persant  
 Amenerent trop grant compagne  
 Et de vers Surie et d'Espagne (vv. 4669-73).

Et dus Garins vint a l'estour —  
 Ki tint Pavie en quitée  
 S'ot bien Castiel Croissant gardé (vv. 4693-95)<sup>14</sup>.

Bédier points out the interest of the allusion in Mousket's account to Richard of Normandy who died in the year 996 and adds that the references to the *Chastel Croissant* also show that Mousket was analysing a poem which could not be earlier than the eleventh century (p. 25). He claims that original from which Mousket was working was contemporary with the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*. Bédier's observation that Crescentius was thrown down from the walls of the fortress in 1002 is inaccurate (ibid.). The correct date is 998.

Whatever the precise date of the *Version Blanche* (De Mandach dates it between 1095 and 1121, p. 123), the *Castellum Crescentii* was

14. Edited by A. de Mandach (see previous note), pp. 97-98. The line references correspond to the earlier edition by F.A.F.T. baron de Reiffenberg, 2 vols. (Brussels: Hayez, 1836-1838), where the *Fierabras* summary is found in vv. 4664-717.

clearly not unknown to a twelfth-century French audience. In the Hanover MS of the *Destructioun* we first hear of the building when the pagans arrive to attack Rome. Garin, who looked after the *Tour Croissant*, recommended to the Pope that he should seek help from the French king in Saint-Denis:

Garins avoit a non, mult out chivalerie,  
Sages fu de parler, mult avoit de voidye;  
D'un des quarters de Rome avoit la seignorie,  
La Tour Croissant gardoit, si l'avoit en bailie.  
Et dist a l'apostoille: "Ne vous atargez mye,  
Envoies tost en France au roy de Saint Dynye,  
Se luy mandés pur Dieu et soccors et aïe" (vv. 517-23)<sup>15</sup>.

Shortly afterwards, when the battle between the Saracens and the Romans begins, the same building, now called the *Palais Croissant*, is mentioned as a strategic spot from which to sound the horn summoning the Romans to prepare for battle:

Mult fu grantz l[i] estorm en Rome la cité,  
Au muster sunt les seyns a grant effroi soné.  
Sus en Palais Croissant est l'olifant corné;  
Romains communalment sunt molt tost adoubbé (vv. 577-80).

Elsewhere in the text the building is referred to as "la tour vaultie" ("the vaulted tower", v. 575), "la tour batelee" ("the fortified tower", v. 1024) or more simply as "la/le tour" (vv. 643, 911, 920). It is interesting to note that in the Egerton MS of the *Destructioun*, published by Louis Brandin, there is no mention of the *Tour Croissant* or its guardian Garin.

Gaston Paris is also right that there are allusions to the *Chastel Croissant* in the oldest extant verse rendering of the *Roman des Sept Sages* (Paris, B.N. fr. 1553, known as Version K)<sup>16</sup>. The references

15. *La Destructioun de Rome: version de Hanovre*, ed. Luciano Formisano (Florence: Sansoni, 1981). The Hanover MS was published earlier by G. Groeber, "La Destruction de Rome", *première branche de la chanson de geste de "Fierabras"*, "Romania", 2 (1873), 1-48. The Egerton MS of this text has been edited by Louis Brandin in "La Destruction de Rome" et "Fierabras": MS Egerton 3028, *Musée Britannique, Londres*, "Romania", 64 (1938), 18-100.

16. *Le Roman des Sept Sages*, ed. Jean Misrahi (Paris, 1933, reprint Geneva: Slatkine, 1975). The version from the Bibliothèque de Chartres is found in Hugh Allison Smith, *A Verse Version of the "Sept Sages de Rome"*, "Romanic Review", 3 (1912), 1-67.

occur in two stories told by the queen and known as Roma and Gaza. In the first of these stories the city of Rome is being attacked by Saracens and the wise men look to a "maistre sage" by the name of Genus for help in defending the city (vv. 2391-406). Genus's ruse is to disguise himself in a gaudy costume with squirrels' tails dangling from it, climb to the top of the *Tour Croissant*, equipped with a mirror and three swords, and endeavour to frighten away the enemy (and it works!):

Cil sages se leva matin  
 Et se vesti en cel engin.  
 Puis monta en la Tour Croissant,  
 Que assés fu et haute et grant.  
 Avoec lui porta trois espees,  
 Richeement furent enheudees.  
 Devers les Sarrasins se met,  
 A un crenel, tout en sommet (vv. 2419-26).

In v. 2392 the *Tour Croissant* seems to be called a *palais*. In the story known as Gaza the *Tour Croissant* is the depository for Octavian's treasure. Another wise man is placed in charge of the Tower:

Octeviiens fu ja a Romme,  
 En cest siecle n'ot plus sage homme,  
 Ne miels amast argent ne or;  
 Em pluisors lius fu son tresor.  
 Le Tour Croissant en fist emplir,  
 D'or et d'argent molt bien garnir.  
 Un saige avoit soz lui menant,  
 D'avoir molt durement poissant,  
 A chelui poés bien savoir  
 A fait li rois garder l'avoir.  
 Les avers et les soldoieurs  
 Fait l'en tos maistres des honnors (vv. 2857-68).

Elsewhere in the story the *Tour Croissant* is called simply the *tour* (vv. 2882, 2900, 2903, 2915, 2918, 2981). The story tells of a further sage or knight in the city of Rome who has spent more money than he should and decides to steal the Emperor's wealth from the Tower. Accompanied by his son he makes several successful visits to the Tower, but his efforts are detected by the guardian of the Tower who prepares a pit full of molten lead, earth and *glu*. The thief duly falls into the pit and, to save his family from shame, orders his son to cut off

and dispose of his head to render his body unrecognizable. This story is found in the prose version (Version D) published by Gaston Paris himself (surprisingly he does not refer to this version in his remarks on Crescentius): "Il avoit une tour nommée la tour Cressant qu'il fist emplir de chevance et la bailla a garder a ung homme sage et riche. En la ville avoit ung autre sage homme, mais de telle condition estoit que plus avoit plus despendoit..." (p. 34)<sup>17</sup>. In the rest of the tale the depository is again simply called "la tour".

In the *Ystoire des Sept Sages*, the second of the two prose versions in Gaston Paris's SATF volume (Version H, a late translation from the Latin), the story is recounted without any precise reference to the *Tour Croissant*. The tower in which Octavian keeps his money is merely called "la tour": "En celluy temps estoit empereur Octaviain, lequel estoit le plus puissant du monde tant en seignoyrie comme en tresor d'or et d'argent, tellement qu'il avoit une tour pleine d'or, pour laquelle tour garder il deputa ung sage chevalier" (p. 89). We do, however, find the *Tour Croissant* mentioned by name in Version M of the *Roman des Sept Sages*, a late thirteenth-century prose version published by Hans R. Runte under the title *Li Ystoire de la Male Marastre*<sup>18</sup>. Here, in Gaza, the story of Octavian's treasure, we read that Octavian had sent five of the wise men of Rome away from the city and two remained there: "A l'un de ces doi sages avoit il chargé et commandé son avoir qui estoit en la tour dou Croissant" (p. 23, ll. 4-5). The other wise man, impoverished through generosity, speaks to his son, saying: "Veés le tresor l'emperéour qui est en la tour Croissant" (p. 23, ll. 15-16). After this point the Tower is simply called "la tour". In the prose Version L published by Le Roux de Lincy the tower is mentioned twice, but the editor seems not to have recognized it as a proper name: "Sire, il ot en ceste ville, un empereur qui ot nom Otheviens qui ama plus or et argent que autre chose. Il en aüna tant que il en ot amplie toute la tor du croissant... si apelle son fill: Ça vien, tien cest pic et ge cestui; si irons en la tor du croissant"<sup>19</sup>. Similarly we find in the recent edi-

17. Gaston Paris, ed., *Deux rédactions du "Roman des Sept Sages de Rome"* (SATF, Paris: Firmin Didot, 1876).

18. "Li Ystoire de la Male Marastre": Version M of the "Roman des Sept Sages de Rome", ed. Hans R. Runte (Beihefte zur "Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie", 141, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1974). I am grateful to Professor Runte for his helpful comments on the present article.

19. Antoine-Jean-Victor Le Roux de Lincy, ed., "Roman des Sept Sages de Rome" en prose (Paris: Techener, 1838), pp. 29-30.

tion of Version A by Mme. O. Derniame and others: "Il l'ama tant qu'il en emplî toute la tour du cressant... si alons à la tour du cressant" <sup>20</sup>.

In the case of the story known as Roma the text of Gaston Paris's first prose version refers to the Tower simply as "la plus haulte tour de Romme" (p. 29) or "la haulte tour" (p. 30). In the same story, as it appears in the partial verse rendering of the *Sept Sages* (Chartres, Bibliothèque Municipale, 620, Version C), the "mestres sages", here called Janus, claims merely that he will climb up "the tower":

Demain endroit tierce de jor  
Men monterai en cele tour  
Et fera merueilleus engin  
Por espoenter Sarrazin (vv. 220-23) <sup>21</sup>.

Again it looks as if the *pales* referred to in v. 209 is the *Tour Croissant*, which we have seen called a *palais* in the *Destruction de Rome*. In Version A the tower is called "la tour du cressant" (p. 53).

Walter Map's allusion to the *Castellum Crescentii* occurs in the eleventh story of the fourth *distinctio* of his *De Nugis Curialium*, the bulk of which work seems to have been composed in 1181 and 1182 <sup>22</sup>. This story is entitled "De fantastica decepcione Gerberti" and deals with Gerbert of Aurillac who became Pope Sylvester II in 999, the year after Crescentius's death. In his youth in the French city of Reims Gerbert fell in love with the daughter of the provost of Reims. His love, which was not reciprocated, destroyed his peace of mind and his capacity to handle his affairs. Overwhelmed with debts, he became a victim of usury and fell into extreme poverty. He was abandoned by his friends and became neglectful of his person. One day he was walking in the forest when in a glade he came upon an exceptionally beautiful woman sitting on a silk carpet with a large heap of money in front of her. The woman, called Meridiana, promised him all her money and more, if he would abandon his interest in the provost's

20. O. Derniame, H. Henin, H. Naïs, eds., *Les "Sept Sages de Rome": roman en prose du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Nancy: Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Linguistiques, 1981), pp. 19-20.

21. On the difficulties presented by the Chartres manuscript see Mary B. Speer, *New Light on the Chartres Prose Fragment of the "Roman des Sept Sages"*, "Scriptorium", 35 (1981), 262-70.

22. Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 351-65.

daughter and direct his affections towards her. He predictably accepted this handy substitute for his beloved, and returning home laden with money, slowly paid off his debts and set about re-establishing for himself an aristocratic way of life. He devoted himself to learning and to acts of generosity and in due course became the saviour of the needy and a major contributor to the growing prestige of the city of Reims. Thereupon his former love, completely changing her tune, attempted to ensnare him and was duly rejected in her turn. She finally trapped him, as he dozed in an orchard after lunch. In his inebriated state she was able to have her way with him and he was forced to seek Meridiana's forgiveness for his lapse. At this time Gerbert became Archbishop of Reims and was soon created a cardinal by the Pope. Shortly afterwards he became Pope Sylvester II. During the last year of his papacy (1003) Meridiana appeared before him and informed him that his life would only remain safe until the day he celebrated mass in Jerusalem. When this day arrived, Meridiana again appeared to him. He made a full public confession before the clergy and the people and spent the remainder of his life in severe penance.

Walter Map's interest in Gerbert lies principally in the way in which he escaped from the clutches of Meridiana, interpreted as a period of captivity "by the birdlime of the devil", to become an effective ruler of the Roman Church. But Walter's concern for what happened after Gerbert's death is of greater importance to us. He tells us that Sylvester's successors gradually allowed the possessions of the Roman Church to be dissipated. In particular, he says, Pope Leo is responsible for the fact that the *Castellum Crescentii* is currently withheld from the papacy by the heirs of a certain Peter Leonis: "Audiimus quod Leo papa dedit inicium cause qua castellum Crescentii (MS Crescens) adhuc, quasi exheredato beato Petro, Petri Leonis heredes detinent" (p. 362). The wardenship of the castle had been conferred on Peter Leonis by Pope Leo IX (1049-1054) who had converted Peter from the Jewish to the Christian faith. Walter tells us that Peter Leonis had twelve sons and he passed on the wardenship of the *Castellum Crescentii* to them as an hereditary possession<sup>23</sup>. What is of

23. Walter relates the complicated tale of how the wardenship of the *Castellum Crescentii* was bequeathed to Peter's twelve sons. Peter "handed them twelve sticks strongly tied together, and the one who without loosing the band could break them with his bare hands was thenceforth to be held first in the inheritance. So when the efforts of them all proved vain, he ordered the sticks to be untied, and each son to

interest to us is that Walter Map clearly expects his late twelfth-century readers to know of the *Castellum Crescentii* and to be interested in who is in possession of it. His statement that "I have heard..." ("audiuimus") indicates that in Walter's time stories concerning the fortress were still reaching England.

There remains the question of the Casa di Crescenzo. It is certainly true that visitors to Rome in the twelfth century could have seen a building which bore the name of Crescentius. Modern visitors to Rome can see vestiges of this building, as the ground floor, a fragment of the upper storey and the arcaded loggia still remain<sup>24</sup>. This mansion was not built, as Gaston Paris implies, by the Crescentius who defied Otto III or by his son, as Francis Norwood states (p. 40). We owe it to a later member of the Crescentius family, Nicolaus. It seems to have been built between the late eleventh and mid-twelfth century. Richard Krautheimer, who provides an account of the ancient buildings of Rome in his *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308*, suggests 1100 as a likely date. This contradicts Gaston Paris's view that the house dates from the end of the tenth century. The Casa di Crescenzo was originally a tower situated between S. Maria in Cosmedin and the theatre of Marcellus, in a dense quarter of the city. The Crescenzi family had the right to collect tolls on the Aemilian bridge and the house was built as a fortress and tower guarding the river. But Nicolaus also built his house as a monument to his family and to Rome's former grandeur. After the death of Crescentius at the hands of Otto III the great Crescentii clan had largely been stripped of its power and estates. But as well as being a memorial to a family which had suffered eclipse and doubtless appearing as a symbol of an upturn in their fortunes, the house was a visible sign of a new intellectual spirit in Rome, the revival of antiquity. In fact much of the outer adornment of the house, the volutes, foliage, putti, sphinxes and coffering, was purloined

break his own, which was done in an instant. He said therefore: "Thus, my dear sons, as long as hostility finds you united with the bond of affection, it will fall back defeated; but any violence that attacks you singly will triumph" (p. 363).

24. See Krautheimer, pp. 197-98, and the illustration on p. 196. Georgina Masson, *A Companion Guide to Rome* (London: Collins, 1965; 6th ed., 1975), expresses the view that the survival of the Casa di Crescenzo is probably due to the fact that it was once the home of Cola di Rienzo, who claimed to be descended from the Crescentii family (p. 415). She also confirms Gaston Paris's point that the Casa di Crescenzo was known as the house of Pontius Pilate, on the grounds that medieval passion plays were acted in the area and the Casa di Crescenzo served as Pilate's palace (*ibid.*). The Castel Sant'Angelo is discussed at length by Masson on pp. 507-14.

from ancient Roman buildings. As such the Casa di Crescenzo is a precursor of the renaissance of Roman antiquity which led to the formation of the Roman Republic in 1143<sup>25</sup>.

What, finally, of "Crisans de Rome, qui tanz honors bastid"? The form of the poet's statement implies that the audience was familiar with Crisans and his achievements and merely needed a quick reminder to indicate to them the splendour of Hugo's palace. Surprisingly, there are no other allusions to Crescentius in twelfth-century French texts. The only other reference of which I am aware occurs in a thirteenth-century fabliau by Gautier Le Leu:

Mais ainc n'oïstes du baron  
 Qui plus est larges et poissanz  
 Ne fu Cesaires ne Croissanz  
 Ne Costentins li riches rois,  
 Ne Alixandres li grizois (*Du C.*, vv. 62-66)<sup>26</sup>.

It looks very much as if Gautier Le Leu's observation is in fact drawn from the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* where Alexander and Constantine are also mentioned. Charles's allusion to Crisans in the *Pèlerinage* is, of course, anachronistic, as Charles's death in 814 is not far off two hundred years earlier than that of Crescentius. The poet in fact, probably unconsciously, sets up a chronological sequence, from Alexander (356-323 B.C.) to Constantine (280?-337) to Crescentius. He may have known a text such as *Fierabras* in which Charles is connected with the defence of Rome and the *Chastel Creissant* and assumed that Crescentius lived at the same time as Charles. It is clear from the *De Nugis Curialium*, the *Pèlerinage*, which is now normally dated in the second half of the twelfth century, the *Destruction de Rome* and the *Roman des Sept Sages* that Crescentius and the *Chastel Creissant* were recognisable to a twelfth-century audience. But even in Rome the appellation *Castellum Crescentii* was beginning to die out in the middle of the

25. Krautheimer writes of "The concept of ancient Rome reborn and interpreted along the lines of contemporary political aspirations and realities" (p. 198).

26. Edited by Charles H. Livingston in *Le jongleur Gautier Le Leu: étude sur les fabliaux* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1951). Livingston states with some exaggeration that Croissanz is one of the "quatre grandes figures de l'antiquité" (p. 92). I am grateful to Dr. Anne Cobby for pointing this reference out to me.



twelfth century<sup>27</sup>. Not all versions of the *Destruction/Fierabras* and the *Sept Sages* maintain the allusion to the *Chastel Creissant*. It may be that both series of texts go back to an older original and to a time when the Crescentius family and the *Chastel Creissant* had more contemporary impact, perhaps the period of the First Crusade, when Crusaders were in Rome at the time of Urban II's struggle against Wibert's supporters and when Nicolaus Crescentius was building his tower. So Gaston Paris may be right that the presence of Crisans de Rome in the *Pèlerinage* is proof of the poem's age or at least of the existence of an earlier form than the one which is extant.

All this does not solve the problem of Crisans as a man who "bâtît tant d'édifices somptueux", as Gaston Paris translates the expression "qui tanz honors bastid" (p. 45)<sup>28</sup>. Crescentius or his family certainly did not build the fortress which came to bear his name. Originally begun by Hadrian in the year 135 as a sepulchre for himself and his family, it was finished off by his successor Antoninus Pius in 139, a year after Hadrian's death<sup>29</sup>. Aurelian turned it into a fortress when he surrounded the town with a wall in the year 270. In the days of Charlemagne it was a substantial castle with six towers and one hun-

27. Onfrío states that the Castel Sant'Angelo received "il nome «Castello di Crescenzo» o anche «Torre di Crescenzo», dalla seconda metà del x fino almeno alla metà del xii secolo, pur avendola ormai perduta da circa un centinaio d'anni" (p. 183).

28. Madeleine Tyssens translates v. 367 as "Ni Crescentius de Rome, qui bâtit tant de monuments", in *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople: traduction critique* (Ghent: Story-Scientia, 1978). In the note on p. 51 the name appears correctly as Crescentius. Cooper translates as "Ni Crisant de Rome qui bâtit tant d'édifices somptueux".

29. See Stewart Perowne, *Hadrian* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), pp. 116-17. Hadrian wanted his tomb to resemble and even outshine that of Augustus. Beyond the Pons Aelius, "there was laid out a square foundation, eighty-four metres long on each side, which the present walls of the fortress largely represent, and on it was placed the rotunda, slightly smaller in diameter than that of Augustus, which must have looked rather squat, but a good deal higher than it, about sixty metres from base to summit. The great drum was faced with marble and crowned with statues. In the middle was a roof-garden, on the old Babylonian model" (p. 116). Depending on just what was left at the time that accounts of the building first penetrated France, the similarities with Hugo's palace are not without interest. Perowne adds that inside "there was a vestibule, in which a niche housed a statue of the emperor, and from it, on the right, led a ramp, which in an anti-clockwise spiral makes a complete circuit of the building in the course of a hundred and twenty-five metres and rises twelve metres. This passage, which is beautifully constructed of travertine, was originally lined with marble. Its floor was covered with a simple black-and white mosaic, and the ceiling was frescoed. This passage leading to the cell was no doubt inspired by the long adits which lead to the tombs of the Egyptian Pharaohs, and is a clever adaptation of that device for instilling awe" (p. 117).

dred and sixty-four battlements. But Crescentius did enlarge the building (Gregorovius, III, p. 428) and, as we have seen, it was associated with his or his family's name for around two hundred years. The family certainly had a number of fine houses inside and outside of Rome and these could perhaps have contributed to Crescentius's reputation<sup>30</sup>. But Gaston Paris's point that this reputation as a great builder depends on the Casa di Crescenzo has to be regarded as suspect. The context of v. 367 of the *Pèlerinage* does seem to imply for the verb *bastir* the interpretation "to construct a building", but this sense is hard to find at the time and the meaning "building" for *honor* seems just as rare. Tobler-Lommatzsch offer under *onor* only our example with the meaning "grossartiges Baudenkmal" to which they append a question mark<sup>31</sup>. Could the phrase be interpreted as "who established such a fine reputation"? This would be less disconcerting linguistically and it would fit the known facts.

It is not easy to know exactly what remained of the embellishments on Hadrian's Mausoleum in Crescentius's day or in the twelfth century. But the tenth-century chronicler Liutprand described the building as "a fortress of marvellous workmanship and strength" and Gregorovius suggests that it must "still have retained much of its marble panelling" (III, pp. 287-88). When we read in the *Pèlerinage* that the *palais* of King Hugo of Constantinople outstrips anything possessed by Crescentius, the allusion is thus surely to the Castel Sant'Angelo, which, as we have seen, is called a *palais* in other Old French texts. This man who was the star of the "strangest and most remarkable years in the history of medieval Rome" (Partner, p. 96) and this splendid, if somewhat forbidding, building are excellent choices to impress on a French audience the magnificence of King Hugo's stunning Oriental palace.

30. Gregorovius writes: "These Crescentii had undoubtedly erected a fortress for themselves in the ruins of the Thermae of Constantine, perhaps on the spot where the Palazzo Rospigliosi now stands" (III, p. 381). Partner states that in 1014 the "Pope with his forces marched into Sabina, and duly reduced the Crescenzi fortresses" (p. 103).

31. Tobler-Lommatzsch quote only one further example of *bastir* in the sense "to construct a building" ("bastir granz edifiz", in Philippe de Navarre, *Quatre âges de l'homme*).