



## Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes

Journal of medieval and humanistic studies

24 | 2012

Au-delà des miroirs : la littérature politique dans la France de Charles VI et Charles VII

---

# “Qe sor les autres è de gran valor”: Ogier le Danois in the Italian Tradition

Leslie Zarker Morgan

---



### Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/crmh/12952>

DOI: 10.4000/crm.12952

ISSN: 2273-0893

### Publisher

Classiques Garnier

### Printed version

Date of publication: 30 December 2012

Number of pages: 423-436

ISSN: 2115-6360

### Electronic reference

Leslie Zarker Morgan, ““Qe sor les autres è de gran valor”: Ogier le Danois in the Italian Tradition”, *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* [Online], 24 | 2012, Online since 01 December 2015, connection on 15 December 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/crmh/12952> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/crm.12952>

---

All rights reserved



## “Qe sor les autres è de gran valor”: Ogier le Danois in the Italian Tradition<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract: Ogier le Danois arrived in Italy with chansons de geste in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Ogier's life story was developed in Franco-Italian and Tuscan texts including his adventures, adding and subtracting details to accounts of his enfances and chevalerie. But one element remained constant: his sword, Curtana. That sword became a symbol of the character through all his transformations (and in any format: chanson de geste, ottava rima, prose), throughout his life cycle from the time he became a knight, when he took it from a Saracen whom he defeated. Ogier only killed when provoked or challenged, and held his hand when offered revenge. Curtana thus represented steadfast and measured character, and was claimed by rulers – such as the Gonzaga – as a symbol of their own positive attributes, and a warning about their combative abilities.*

*Résumé : Ogier le Danois est arrivé en Italie au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec les chansons de geste. L'histoire de sa vie a été développée dans les récits franco-italiens et toscans de ses aventures, en ajoutant ou en enlevant des détails aux différentes versions de ses enfances et de sa chevalerie. Mais un élément est resté toujours le même: son épée, Courtain. Cette épée est devenue le symbole du personnage à travers toutes les transformations des textes (dans toutes les formes d'écriture: chanson de geste, ottava rima, prose), et tout au long de sa vie, depuis le moment où il est devenu chevalier, et où il l'a obtenue d'un Sarrasin qu'il avait vaincu. Courtain est ainsi restée comme symbole d'un caractère loyal et mesuré, revendiqué par des gouvernants, comme les Gonzague, en tant que signe de leurs qualités et garantie de leurs capacités guerrières.*

A 1542 Mantuan Gonzaga inventory lists “una spada nominata curtana danesco [di Oggieri il Danese, paladino] larga con fornimento de argento manico pomo pontale e vera de argento lavorati” and “Una pancera de malia grossa qual era ditta del Danese [Oggieri il Danese, paladino]”.<sup>2</sup> Ogier the Dane in the Italian peninsula became a touchstone of the Carolingian stories, a worthy ancestor faithful to his lord and companions, brave and able in deeds. The Gonzaga prized his armaments – sword and breastplate – because Ogier le Danois linked the *condottiere*

---

<sup>1</sup> *Geste Francor*, l. 11431. The edition cited here is L. Zarker Morgan, ed., *La Geste Francor. Edition of the Chansons de geste of MS. Marc. Fr. XIII (=256)*, Tempe AZ, ACMS, 2009. Personal names of characters remain in the first forms in which they appear.

<sup>2</sup> M. Scalini, “Le armi di “oggieri” [sic], il danese e altre meraviglie delle armerie gonzaghesche attraverso gli inventari”, *Gonzaga, La Celeste Galeria, Le raccolte*, Milan, Skira, 2002, p. 372 (p. 369-86).

family to “il più fedele e affidabile dei paladini, esempio di giustizia e rettitudine cavalleresca”.<sup>3</sup>

The Dane, Charlemagne’s loyal vassal, can be aided by both divine and supernatural forces (St. George and a good enchantress) in exacting vengeance for enemy misdeeds and in delivering Christian territory from depredation and pagan conquest. For in Italian texts deriving from the *matière de France*, vengeance and justice are administered by and against rival clans under divine rule; the “rebel baron” cycle does not exist in the Italian peninsula as it does in the Hexagon. The Maganzesi clan commits treason or causes others to do so; and Saracens, misguided by false gods and unacceptable pagan customs such as astrology and magic, wrongly besiege Christian lands. Ogier’s sword is a symbol of that justice, possessed by an unimpeachable warrior.

### *Ogier le Danois [Uggieri il Danese] in Italy*

Ogier le Danois as a character appears in the earliest epic texts in Italy, including Franco-Italian versions of the *Chanson de Roland*, the *Entrée d’Espagne*, and the *Geste Francor* (V<sup>13</sup>), from the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Legends obviously continued to circulate about Ogier, for 14<sup>th</sup>- and 15<sup>th</sup>-century tales of Ogier contain common points of reference, though the roles of other characters vary. Tuscan versions of his story appear in anonymous *cantari* (in *ottava rima*) through the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (*I Cantari del Danese*), and in the anonymous prose *Storie di Rinaldo* from the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, where Ogier’s fate is intertwined with that of Rinaldo (Renaud). Andrea da Barberino, from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> through the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, includes Ogier in his *Reali di Francia* and *Aspramonte* in Tuscan prose.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Cassio da Narni narrates Ogier’s death in the first book of the *Morte del Danese* (1521, 1522, 1534). Yet Ogier is not necessarily dead forever: Pulci’s 15<sup>th</sup>-century *Morgante* tells of those who continue to believe he is waiting in a cave to return to battle (complementing Cassio da Narni’s story), and Ogier’s weapons and armor continue to serve as symbols not only of strength but also of steadfastness and faithfulness.

### *Franco-Italian tradition*

Ogier appears initially in Italian texts as a part of Charlemagne’s entourage. In the *Chanson de Roland*, Ogier organizes the trial of Ganelon and takes care of formalities for the duel between Pinabel and Thierry (l. 3855-6). He is “le puinneres” (l. 3033) who “cuardise n’out unkes” (l. 3531).<sup>5</sup> Ogier’s Curtana in

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 383, n. 30. But see C. A. De Cosson “Introduction”, to G. F. Laking, *A Record of European Arms and Armor Through Seven Centuries*, London, Bell and Sons, 1920, vol. I, p. xxxv: Du Cange, Père Mabillon and Père Daniel supposedly saw Ogier’s sword at St. Pharon de Meaux.

<sup>4</sup> M. Boni, *Andrea da Barberino, L’Aspramonte, Romanzo cavalleresco inedito*, Bologna, Palmaverde, 1951, includes an excellent introduction with a detailed description of textual witnesses.

<sup>5</sup> Ian Short, ed. and trans., *La Chanson de Roland*, 2<sup>e</sup> éd, Paris, Le Livre de Poche, 1990, p. 232. All references to the Oxford version are to this edition.

Franco-Italian versions epitomizes his role. As Togeby notes, in the V<sup>4</sup> version, Ogier's horse and sword are given to Thierry for his fight against Pinabel (l. 5711-7).<sup>6</sup> Similarly in the V<sup>7</sup>/Châteauroux version, "Et Charlemene li ceinst le brant d'acier, / Cortein la clere, qui fu au duc Ogier" (l. 7966-7) on Thierry, though the horse Ferrant is attributed to Raynier (l. 7970).<sup>7</sup> So Thierry, the administrator of justice on Ganelon, bears Ogier's sword. Ogier's suggestion for Ganelon's punishment foreshadows his own in the two Venice versions (V<sup>4</sup>, V<sup>7</sup>): he suggests closing Ganelon in a tower with the company of "vermine" (l. 5948, V<sup>4</sup>; l. 8305, V<sup>7</sup>/C) and giving him salty peppered meat, with nothing to drink.<sup>8</sup> Ogier's suggestions, like those of other paladins, seek vengeance for Roland's death once Ganelon has lost the trial by ordeal.

Franco-Italian texts, primarily *chansons de geste* in a mixture of French and Italian in manuscripts dating from the early 14<sup>th</sup> century through the 15<sup>th</sup>, continue the *Chanson de Roland* tradition, and add further adventures to those of Charlemagne and his paladins through the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Franco-Italian *Geste Francor*, in a manuscript from the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, narrates Ogier's childhood and coming of age. In nine segments of 17,067 lines, it recounts the history of the French court from Bovo d'Antona's childhood (incomplete in this acephalous manuscript), including the difficulties of Berta da li pe grant and the birth of Charlemagne, Bovo d'Antona's knighthood, Charlemagne's childhood, Ogier's youth, Roland's parents' story, Ogier's knighthood, Roland's birth and youth, and finally, Macaire and his betrayal of Charlemagne. It narrates the careers of Pepin and Charlemagne – in their families, but also in battles to convert pagans to Christianity. In the *Geste Francor*, religion and crusade are major elements of the Dane's story, tied to Italian routes and places.

Ogier – and his weapons – link segments of the unique manuscript. He first appears at a muster in Paris for an army to save Rome from pagans. This introduces Ogier's *enfances* and acquiring of arms from a model enemy. The army rapidly marches into the Italian peninsula. The Dane is "sire ... de tot li scuer" (l. 9982), and with his fellow youths saves the gonfalon from Aloris, the fleeing standard-bearer. He arms himself and leads the squires into battle to save the day. Naimes points him out to Charles and praises his actions, ensuring knighthood for Ogier and the accompanying squires. Many Christian prisoners are taken; and Sandonio and Karaolo,<sup>9</sup> pagan champions who serve the Sultan occupying Rome, praise the Christians. The prisoners, when interviewed, emphasize that Charles's army consists of knights who serve the King at their own expense (l. 10,133-41); that is, they are

<sup>6</sup> K. Togeby, *Ogier le Danois dans les littératures européennes*, Munksgaard, DSL, 1969. Togeby examines V<sup>4</sup> only, not V<sup>7</sup> and Châteauroux (p. 124-5).

<sup>7</sup> J. J. Duggan, *The Song of Roland, The French Corpus, Part 3, The Châteauroux-Venice 7 Version*, Turnhout (Belgium), Brepols, 2005, vol. 2, p. III/447; all references are to this edition. All references to V<sup>4</sup> are to R. F. Cook, ed., *The Song of Roland, The French Corpus, Part 2, The Venice 4 Version*, Turnhout (Belgium), Brepols, 2005, vol. 1, p. II/1-305; here, see II/293.

<sup>8</sup> Laisse 414, V<sup>4</sup> (p. II/303-4); laisse 439, V<sup>7</sup>/C (p. III/465).

<sup>9</sup> I will use this form of Karaolo's name throughout.

not mercenaries.<sup>10</sup> The Sultan admires this and offers a duel: his two champions against two Christians. Ogier and Çarloto (heir to the French throne) volunteer for the challenge. Thus it is arranged, against Charlemagne's will. Krauss discusses at length the differences between Raimbert's Charlemagne and the Franco-Italian version, emphasizing the unique father-son dynamic in the *Geste Francor*.<sup>11</sup> The duel goes poorly for the Saracens, and the Sultan sends in reinforcements. Çarloto flees in fear to the Christian camp, and the Dane is taken prisoner. Karaolo, appalled that his ruler could be so *deslojal* (l. 10,438), goes to Charlemagne and offers himself as prisoner to compensate for the Sultan's dishonesty, since "Sa lietà el non volse falser" (l. 10,474). He then requests Çarloto as a gift, saving Çarloto from being hanged for cowardice. The duel is then restaged; Ogier's valor triumphs, and he keeps Karaolo's sword, Curtana, as his own (l. 10,791-2). The Pope has Rome back, and all would seem to end happily ever after. Thus narrated, as Cremonesi points out, the Dane is in place to assist Roland and his parents assimilate to Charlemagne's court.<sup>12</sup>

Ogier's *enfances* begin just after the birth of Roland (l. 9496-9), with the retaking of Rome, and end with a reference to the time after Oliver and Roland (l. 10,904). Both the beginning and end also include references to Ganelon (l. 9502, 10,905): references to Christian war accompany Ogier's youth as do references to betrayal and Maganzesi evil.<sup>13</sup> The disloyalty in Ogier's Franco-Italian *enfances* comes from Saracens; Charlemagne does not call his son Çarloto a coward or a traitor, but implies such, since he wants to hang his son, and threatens to do so should he ever again flee from anyone. Çarloto's unpleasant personality – his petulance and defensiveness before valiant vassals – are here set in place. Ogier is a counterexample to his ruler's (and his ruler's heir's) disloyal behavior. Furthermore, Saracens can be honorable: the sword Curtana, a gift from a Saracen, represents the best of knightly behavior, holding one's ruler and one's companions to high standards, at the risk of one's own life, as did Karaolo. Ogier's knightly career therefore begins with honor and a warning against treachery, continuing under the sword of an enemy who sacrificed himself for his ideals.

The *Geste Francor* then briefly turns away from Ogier, telling of Charlemagne's half-sister, who returns with her family and Charlemagne's army to France.

Upon the French return to Paris, the Dane marries Naimes's daughter, Floriamont, and thus becomes part of a clan of negotiators and diplomats (l. 11,385-6).

---

<sup>10</sup> Serving at one's own expense as praiseworthy behavior is highly ironic in this context, since, from the earliest times, Italians lamented the role of foreigners in government, with perhaps the best-known literary voice being Petrarch (d. 1374) in "Italia mia", at about the same time as the *Geste Francor* manuscript.

<sup>11</sup> H. Krauss, *Epica feudale e pubblico borghese, Per la storia poetica di Carlomagno in Italia*, trans. F. Brugnolo et al, Padua, Liviana, 1980, p. 152.

<sup>12</sup> C. Cremonesi, "A proposito del Codice marciano fr. XIII", *Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune, Prof. à l'Université de Liège*, Gembloux, J. Duculot, 1969, t. 2, p. 751 (p. 747-55).

<sup>13</sup> Krauss, *op. cit.*, p. 155, notes the circularity of the segment with these references, starting and ending at the same point.

In the following episode, Ogier is sent to Marmora to negotiate for tribute.<sup>14</sup> He leaves his only son, Baldoïn, under the personal guard of Charlemagne. But Charlemagne's son, Çarloto, kills Baldoïn "a traison" (l. 11,924), out of jealous anger at the Dane for his success at Rome. Çarloto acts alone here.

Meanwhile, Ogier must confront the Massimo Çudé, a pagan tyrant in northern Italy. As he approaches, Ogier speaks to his sword. Knowing the likelihood of death from the loss of earlier messengers, the warning of his host, and the hanged men on gallows outside the walls, the Dane

[...] se cerchò a l galon,  
 El si trova Curtane, si le dise a baso ton,  
 « Ai, Curtane, veez çeste stacon?  
 Se da questo non m'en faites delivrason,  
 Mais non v'ò a 'priser la monta d'un boton » (l. 11,596-600).

A local inhabitant, his host, helps him overcome the tyrant; this is not betrayal, but rather justice, a retaking of the region by Christians.<sup>15</sup> The religious motif therefore continues, with a pagan ruler in northern Italy being killed and replaced. And it is Ogier's sword, and money, that help him win.

The successful Ogier returns to Paris where he finds his son dead. Naimes calms Ogier, who then represses his anger at his son's death. Ultimately, however, Çarloto taunts him about it, and Ogier kills the murderer with a chessboard.<sup>16</sup> Note that Çarloto had killed Baldoïn with a knife: this is not a battle of national honor on either side, but a personal one. Ogier argues that he had only defended himself under threat, and Roland takes his side. Ogier will only turn his sword over to Roland in return for safe-conduct: "Non è nu hon in la Cresteneté, / Se no a vos a qi dese ma spe" (l. 12,228-9). Curtana can only be held by an honorable man. Naimes, in his usual role, pacifies Charlemagne, repeating Ogier's argument of self-defense. Ogier is imprisoned underground, guarded and well fed by Roland.

Braier, a pagan king, arrives at Paris, having found by astrology that no one above ground can conquer him. Roland, knowledgeable in magic, refuses to fight, so many of Charlemagne's men are conquered. Roland, wise in the ways of magic, knows that only Ogier, who is underground, can defeat the Saracen. He thus

<sup>14</sup> For the identity of Marmora, see V. Bertolini, CR *Le Danois Oger*, ed. C. Cremonesi, *Quaderni di lingue e letteratura* 2, 1977, p. 289-91, and "Ogier il Danese a Verona (Dal codice marc. fran. XIII)", *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia de agricoltura, scienze e lettere di Verona* 17.143, 1968, p. 407-18; J.-Cl. Vallecalle, "Marmora dans la chanson de geste franco-italienne d'Ogier le Danois", *Provinces, régions, terroirs au Moyen Âge, de la réalité à l'imaginaire*, Nancy, Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1991, p. 253-61. Note that it is not Roland, whom we might expect, who is sent to Marmora (cf. Krauss, *op. cit.*, p. 174).

<sup>15</sup> On the "helpful host" motif, see C. Cremonesi, "Note di franco-veneto. I. Franco-veneto, franco-italiano, franco-lombardo; II. L'oste: un motivo ricorrente", *Studi di lingua e letteratura lombarda offerti a Maurizio Vitale*, Pisa, Giardini, 1983, vol. I, p. 5-21.

<sup>16</sup> For a psychological explanation of Ogier's actions, see H. Krauss, "Refoulement et hiérarchie féodale. Essai de psychanalyse le comportement d'Ogier le Danois dans la version francoitalienne", *VIII Congreso de la Société Rencevals*, Huarte-Pamplona, Institución Principe de Viana, 1981, p. 263-6.

arranges to nominate Ogier. The Dane exacts penance from Charlemagne in the form of three blows of his sword. Ogier restrains himself, though capable of harm, out of love for Roland and concern for his reputation: “Li cont *Rolant* lora le prie / Qe por son amor faça l’ovra *complie* / Qe çascun de lui ben parli e ben die” (l. 12,998-13,000). Krauss suggests that this supports the new relationship with Roland created by the *Geste Francor*.<sup>17</sup> But in fact, since both fathers have now lost their heirs, justice is served. Ogier needs only regain face. Charlemagne covers himself with three helms for protection, but Ogier does not hit hard, nor is Charlemagne assisted by otherworldly intervention.<sup>18</sup> Ogier then conquers Braier and leads the Christians to victory over the Saracen invaders.

In the *Geste Francor*, Ogier the Dane is therefore one of a number of faithful knights at Charlemagne’s court wronged by others at court. His sword can only function in defense of the realm, a larger goal than mere self-preservation. As he and Bovo were wronged by a member of the Maganzese clan, Blançiflor will be by Macario in the final segment of the *Geste Francor* that follows the *Chevalerie Ogier*. Ogier follows in the line of the clan to which he is allied, that of Naimes, son of Aquilon of Bavaria.<sup>19</sup> He takes action against Çarloto when justified (after verbal abuse and threats), and finally mimes revenge upon Charlemagne with three sword strokes, not seeking further vendetta. The flight into Italy and Lombard war against Charlemagne is not present in the Franco-Italian and Italian tradition; Ogier does not use Curtana against his own sovereign. In the following final segment of the *Geste Francor* (*Macario*), Louis, legitimate son of Blançiflor of Hungary and Charlemagne, is born;<sup>20</sup> the Dane will fight as champion for Charlemagne against Varoher and the Hungarians to obtain the return of Queen Blançiflor and baby Louis (l. 16,476-660), bringing peace, a reunited family, and a solid royal inheritance, with the aid of his father-in-law, Naimes.

### *Tuscan cantari*

Rajna noted that there are major differences between the Franco-Italian and Tuscan branches of *Ogier* in Italy.<sup>21</sup> Among the Tuscan witnesses of the tradition are three manuscripts of the *Cantari del Danese* in *ottava rima* and one incunable, which date from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century through the 15<sup>th</sup>.<sup>22</sup> Ogier’s role therein is

---

<sup>17</sup> Krauss, *op. cit.*, p. 179-80.

<sup>18</sup> In the French version, Ogier does not kill Çarloto, but rather then flees to Italy, where he stays with Desiderio; Charlemagne’s son is still alive, and Charlemagne agrees to the sacrifice of his son for his country, a biblical parallel with Isaac. There the Archangel Michael saves Charlot (*Chevalerie Ogier de Danemarche*, ed. M. Eusebi, Milan, Cisalpino, 1963, l. 10,462-74).

<sup>19</sup> S. M. Cingolani notes exaggerated class characteristics, like advisors who over-advise to the point of foolishness (“Innovazione e parodia nel Marciano XIII (*Geste Francor*)”, *Romanistisches Jahrbuch*, 38, 1987, p. 61-77); for Naimes as super advisor, p. 73.

<sup>20</sup> Togeby comments, “C’est donc au fond Charlemagne et son fils qui sont au centre de l’intérêt et Ogier ne sert qu’à mettre leur conflit en relief” (*op. cit.*, p. 127).

<sup>21</sup> P. Rajna, “Uggeri il danese nella letteratura romanzesca degl’Italiani”, *Romania*, 2, 1873, p. 153-69; 3, 1874, p. 31-77; 4, 1875, p. 198-436. Here, 3, p. 31-32.

<sup>22</sup> S. Furlati, ed., *I Cantari del Danese*, edizione critica con introduzione, note al testo e glossario, Alessandria, Edizioni dell’Orso, 2003.

similar to that in the Franco-Italian, where he is both a part of Charlemagne's court and a protagonist in his own right. However, anonymous authors expand details: names of characters are new or different. Details are added, such as that Ogier is stopped from killing Charlemagne by an external force; the city where Ogier stays before going to Verona is named specifically Brescia; and there he helps a fairy persecuted by a sprite.<sup>23</sup>

Notable differences in the Tuscan tradition from the Franco-Italian versions are in each step of the plot: the collection of tribute; Ogier's return to Paris; and his battle with Bravieri. But the sword remains the same. In the *Cantari*, when Ogier arrives demanding tribute, the ruler of Verona, Massimione, proposes a duel, that either Ogier strikes him three times or he (Massimione) will hit Ogier three times. With the help of St. George, Ogier wins with his final third stroke against Massimione. A local notable, Lucharo, having seen the divine aid, decides to convert, and with him, the city. The ruler of Pavia, Desiderio, comes to help baptize the inhabitants: the role of Desiderio is thus different from in the French, but he does appear, which he does not in the Franco-Italian. Ogier returns to Paris triumphant to find that Ganelon has conspired with Carloto to kill his son Baldovino. In spite of Charlemagne's desire to cover up, Ogier discovers the nature of the betrayal: it derives from Ganelon's lies.

Ganelon advises Carloto to kill the Dane, and Carloto goes to the court and mocks Ogier. When challenged, Carloto insists that Ogier be killed, and the Dane must be restrained from attacking Carloto. Curtana is sequestered here as well. Orlando, Ulivieri, and Ermellina (Naimes's daughter, Ogier's wife) must defend Ogier against Charlemagne's desire (eagerly seconded by the Maganzesi) that he be killed. Ultimately, Orlando obtains the care of Ogier in prison, where Charlemagne thinks that Ogier will be starved. His horse can stay with him, and he can see his wife once a month. As in other versions, Bravieri comes to take Paris, but here he conquers all the knights at court, including Charlemagne himself. It is Ermellina, Ogier's wife, who intercedes with Queen Galerana and the Pope to have Ogier released and save the Christians. Saint George in person orders Ogier to fight Bravieri (VIII, 52-3); and just as the armed Ogier exits the gate sword in hand to fight, the fairy whom he had assisted at Brescia appears and reveals Bravieri's secret: Ogier must block his and his horse's ears to avoid passing out from Bravieri's yelling. A series of comic scenes ensue where Ogier can hear nothing while Bravieri challenges him and when Bravieri cries for mercy. After defeating the Saracens, Rinaldo, Orlando, Ulivieri and the Danese continue adventures through pagan lands until they return to Paris in *Cantare* 17.

The *Cantari* therefore show Ogier as one of a select group, with Orlando, Rinaldo and Ulivieri. He holds the grace of God and good luck to recognize and assist a fairy; and his wife, Naimes's daughter, acts as a go-between to assist him in negotiating with the powers of king and church. Women play a major role: both his wife and Queen Galerana succeed in calming male bellicosity. The prose *Rinaldo* follows this version of events closely, elaborating or altering certain details.

---

<sup>23</sup> For a recent discussion of the later tradition in France, and further bibliography, see E. Poulain-Gautret, "Le Merveilleux", Ch. III of *La Tradition littéraire d'Ogier le Danois après le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Champion, 2005, p. 221-48.



### *Tuscan Prose Ogier versions*

There has been confusion over the years about the 15<sup>th</sup>- to early 16<sup>th</sup>-century prose *Rinaldo*. Rajna mentioned the manuscripts, and Allaire, among others, explains the confusion.<sup>24</sup> Books 3 and 5 contain the story of Ogier. Rajna already outlines the differences between it and the *ottava rima* version.<sup>25</sup> Togeby also summarizes it, but does not note some important details in Ganelon's role: for example, it is he who notices the unpaid tribute and nominates Ogier to go collect it rather than Çarloto. The beginning of one version of the *Cantari* is missing, and the other does not include that aspect. The sequence of Ganelon's setting up Çarloto to kill Baldovino is similar, as is Ermellina's dream about his death. But here, after he is killed, Çarloto is brought into the court in a coffin and those present initially think it is a joke; when the truth is discovered, the paladins take him in honor and bury him in San Gallo of Paris (in the *Cantari*, Ganelon is also present, and says, "Vuo' ti tu, Carlo, al tutto disperare, / per colui ch'è figliuolo d'uno saracino?" III, 41).<sup>26</sup>

In both the *ottava rima* and the prose, Ogier wants his son back as he left him: he disinters Baldovino and carries him back to Charlemagne, demanding justice (fol. 55<sup>v</sup>; in the *Cantari del Danese*, IV, 42-4). In the prose version, Ganelon runs to get Çarloto, who then threatens Ogier, "Can sarayno, minacci tu mio padre?" (fol. 55<sup>v</sup>). The prose author insists that the Dane would still have done nothing, until Çarloto says, "Io uccisi Baldovino e cchosi uccidero te can traditore!" (compare, in the *Cantari del Danese*, IV, 48, "Com'io uccisi il tuo figlio sterpone, / ucciderò te se più arai ardimento / di farci motto, e dipartiti quinci!") at which point the Dane attacks Çarloto and cuts his head off. This sets off a melee between the Maganzesi versus Ogier and his companions. Ermellina separates the combatants in both (Prose *Rinaldo*, fol. 56<sup>r</sup>; *Cantari del Danese*, V, 8). But here, in the prose, Ganelon repeatedly calls the Dane "Saraino cane". Here, since Ogier fights enemies of the land, the Maganzesi, he uses his sword. It is not a question of personal disloyalty.

Once the Dane is taken and imprisoned. The role of the marvelous is increased, for Bravieri's background is carefully outlined. He is the son of a Saracen lord (Branchuro) so handsome that an enchantress (Rossandra) took him and imprisoned him as her mate (fol. 57r). Rossandra tells Bravieri that no one above ground can conquer him. Two days before the term that the city must surrender, Ermellina speaks to Queen Galerana, Charlemagne's wife, and asks for Ogier's release; Galerana sends to the Pope, who consents to Ogier's release, saying "forssi sara piacere di dio ch'egli abbia questa vettoria p[er]ch'egli e stato fedele [crist]iano" (fol. 60<sup>f</sup>). The Dane does not understand how he can win when the others could not, and does not wish to; "Et p[ro]mettoti ch'io non mangiero ne bero mai ch'io morro" (fol. 60<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>24</sup> Rajna, *op. cit.*, 4, p. 399. The manuscript in question is Laur. Plut. XLII, 37, one of the five containing the prose *Rinaldo*. See G. Allaire, *Andrea da Barberino and the Language of Chivalry*, Gainesville, FL, University Press of Florida, 1997, p. 66; Morgan, *op. cit.*, 168, note 3. I thank G. Allaire for a copy of her transcription of books 3 and 5 of that manuscript; I refer to it, adding modern capitalization and word division. See also M. Villoresi, *La letteratura cavalleresca, Dai cicli medievali all'Ariosto*, Rome, Carocci, 2000, p. 88.

<sup>25</sup> Rajna, *op. cit.*, p. 46-9.

<sup>26</sup> Furlati, *I Cantari del Danese, op. cit.*, p. 142.

St. George comes to Ogier in a dream, and promises to help as at Verona; in both versions, Ogier should no longer be a coward (VIII, 241; “fa ch[e] viltà no[n] ti vincha piu” (fol. 60<sup>v</sup>)). Going to the Pope’s residence, Ogier confides his dream; the pope confesses Ogier who then takes communion and hears mass, vowing to eat nothing more until he has fought Bravieri, so that God will help him (fol. 60<sup>v</sup>). The queen and Ermellina help Ogier arm, returning Ogier’s sword to him; the pope, papal court and clergy come to see him off. Part way to the combat, a voice calls out, and a woman in white tells him to stuff his ears and those of his horse, since Bravieri wins because of 300 demons howling, not his own valor. Ogier turns back, people stuff Ogier’s and his horse’s ears, and then test Ogier’s hearing (with people yelling, *Cantari* IX, 10) or with yelling and musical instruments (fol. 61<sup>r</sup>: “quante tronbe [et] tamburi [et] corni si possono trovare”) to make sure the ear plugs are effective. In the prose, he then puts on a “berretta” to keep the plugs closed in down to his shoulders. The Dane conquers Bravieri, not able to hear his requests for mercy or desire to be baptized; when Bravieri’s head is cut off, the 300 demons cry so loudly the whole battlefield trembles, his soul joins them as a demon. A stink so strong that it almost makes Ogier faint arises, so Ogier remounts his horse and returns to the city. Ogier and his sword have saved Christendom from magic devils.

When the pagans are notified of Bravieri’s death they ask Charlemagne for peace; and Ogier and others enter the tent. Ogier kneels, still armed and covered, and asks for mercy (fol. 62<sup>v</sup>). When Charlemagne finally pardons him with all the other barons as witness, Ogier takes off his helmet. Charlemagne weeps, welcomes him back and repeats his forgiveness. Book 5 contains further adventures of Ogier with Ulivieri and Rinaldo, all after further mischief created by Ganelon, who is thus given a greater negative role over time: initially he acted as part of the court, but in the prose *Rinaldo* he begins the entire subplot involving the Danois by instigating Çarloto to kill Baldovino. The Dane remains better than other paladins, above the fray, in not avenging himself on Ganelon and the Maganzesi, and his sword has saved him and Paris from supernatural non-Christian evil.

### *Andrea da Barberino*

Other texts contain references to Ogier,<sup>27</sup> but the most important by far for developing his story is Andrea da Barberino, who at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> through the early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries wrote a series of prose works cyclifying Carolingian tales circulating in the Italian peninsula.<sup>28</sup> He unites the Charlemagne cycle and the Monglane cycle, conflating the chronology of the two and adding his own details. Andrea names only the sword Durindarda (6.38); genealogical lines are of more interest to him than weapon names. Andrea’s most important work for the history of Ogier is the *Reali di Francia*,<sup>29</sup> in the tradition of the *Geste Francor*. There, in Book VI, Chapter 34, King Gualfedriano and his son Ogier come to the aid of Bramante of Saragozza. Thus the childhood of Ogier is seen in a different light: he is of Saracen

<sup>27</sup> E.g., E. Melli, ed., *I Cantari di Rinaldo di Monte Albano*, Bologna, Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1973. He describes textual witnesses p. XXIV-LXI.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Togeby, *op. cit.*, p. 174-5.

<sup>29</sup> The first published edition was 1491; see also Villoresi, *op. cit.*, p. 74, for manuscript information.

origin, from Africa through Spain. Though the *Geste* had referred to this in passing,<sup>30</sup> Andrea da Barberino develops the connection and uses it to link Ogier and Charlemagne's youthful exile in Spain. That in turn produces an etymology of Ogier's name; his father writes, when he had decided to stay with the Christians, "O Ogier, tu se' 'danés' de l'alma (cioè tu se' dannato dell'anima)".<sup>31</sup> Throughout the *Reali*, Ogier is faithful to Mainetto (the young Charlemagne), using terminology normally expected between lovers; e. g., "io mi sono posto in cuore di vivere e di morire con teco" (6.34) though Mainetto at the time is pretending to be of low rank. Ogier assists in arming Mainetto, and stays in Spain to learn noble customs when his father returns in Africa. Galafrò, King of Saragozza, is to take care of Ogier like his own son, Marsilio. When Mainetto and Morando decide to leave Spain for fear of Marsilio and his brothers, Ogier insists on joining them and being baptized. Galeana arms Uggieri (6.37). He accompanies Mainetto, Galerana, and Morando as they flee from Spain with Orlando. Ogier acts as rearguard when Galerana's brothers appear in pursuit (6.39). Once Mainetto recuperates France, Ogier and Galerana are baptized and Mainetto marries Galerana. Ogier's central role is done at that point of the narration; he continues to appear with Charlemagne and his paladins to assist, for example, in retrieving Orlandino from the forest with Berta and Milone (Chapter 65) and aiding in Berta's acceptance. Ogier there once again becomes one of three, with Naimes and Salamone.

Beyond explaining the origin of his name, the Tuscan Andrea da Barberino continues in the creation of an exemplary character in the *Reali*, Ogier is faithful, discerns nobility even though disguised (as was Mainetto). And of course, he is a brave and a worthy combatant. Andrea's *Aspramonte* follows the *Reali* chronologically, and there Ogier is made guardian of the young knights (Orlando and friends). Upon the army's return to Paris after defeating the Saracens at Aspramonte and before fighting Gherardo da Fratta, he marries Ermellina, daughter of Naimes, at the same time that Ganelon marries Berta, Charlemagne's sister. In the continuing tales, Ogier accompanies Orlando and Charlemagne, remaining loyal to the royal cause. Though his sword is not specifically named, he is honored as a brother of Mainetto (young Charlemagne) and defends the royal cause in all ways.

### *The Death of the Dane (La Morte del Danese)*

Later Italian poems treat the end of Ogier's life: in particular, Cassio da Narni in *La Morte del Danese* published in Ferrara in 1521, 1522 in Milan, and 1534 in Venice.<sup>32</sup> There the Dane dies in the first of three Canti (the other two are largely

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Rajna, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 155-6.

<sup>31</sup> A. Roncaglia and F. Beggiano, eds., Andrea da Barberino, *I Reali di Francia*, introduzione di A. Roncaglia, note di F. Beggiano, Brughiero-Milan, Gherardo Casini Editore, 1987, Book 6, Chapter 49, p. 651. References are to this edition.

<sup>32</sup> I consulted a photocopy of the Milan 1522 edition: *La morte del Danese de Cassio da Narne nouamente stampata nela quale se tratta de molte bataglie marauigliose: zoe del Danese Orlando e Rinaldo e de molti altri gran baroni...*, Meliolani, die quarto Ianuarii. Mcccccxii. The numeration is in fascicles and frequently incorrect; I cite rather by Book, Canto, and octave (my sequential numbering). For details about different editions, see A. Casadei, "La morte del Danese di Cassio da Narni: questioni testuali e critiche",

dedicated to Rinaldo's exploits). Cassio da Narni presents the Dane as a companion of Orlando, seeking Rinaldo in order to avenge a slight over a chess game. Orlando and the Dane fight a group of dogs unleashed against them by a "uom selvaggio" (Libro I, Canto 5, ottava 13). Upon defeating the dogs and their owner, Orlando and his men burn the home whence the dogs had issued. They then encounter four one-eyed, cave-dwelling giants (I, 5.42). These recognize the sword and helmet of their brother Almonte that Orlando wears, and attack the group. Eventually the giants leave Orlando stunned and stripped of his arms, tied to a tree. They take the Dane to their cave:

Ivi il Danese per farno piu stratio  
 inchatenorno con l'arme sue indosso  
 dove sol d'acqua & d'erbe il facean satio  
 si che si diseco come arido osso  
 et ben che steti a tal vita piu spatio  
 non fu mai più d'alcun d'indi riscosso  
 si che di fame morì quel campione  
 indichi ognun qual fu sua passione (I, 5, 84).

A terrified Bradamante will find him in the dark cave. As was predicted by "gli fati", a young Estense will eventually come along and take his arms (I, 5, 87-8).<sup>33</sup> Ogier's arms are thus also desirable to the Este family, flattering the heir as alone meriting them. While this re-enters the tradition of dynastic praise, it also ties in with the "return of the hero" theme found in romance and late romance epic.<sup>34</sup>

Pulci's *Morgante* (1478-83) presents Ogier as one of the many paladins of Charlemagne's court. He fights giants, travels through the East with other paladins. It is he who urges Charlemagne to return to Roncevaux at the sound of the horn

*Tipografie e romanzi in Val Padana fra Quattro e Cinquecento* (Ferrara, *Giornate di studio, 11-13 febbraio 1988*), ed. R. Bruscastelli e A. Quondam, Ferrara, Franco Cosimo Panini, 1992, p. 207-17, esp. p. 209. Cassio Brucurelli da Narni is better known as a point of reference for Ariosto's *Cinque Canti*; Orlando is swallowed by a whale in *La Morte*. See M. Beer, *Romanzi di cavalleria, Il Furioso e il romanzo italiano del primo Cinquecento*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1987, especially p. 149-67. For more information on Cassio da Narni and a résumé of the entire poem, see G. Piccoli, "La morte del Danese di Cassio da Narni", *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 54, 1934, p. 305-25, and "Cassio da Narni e 'La Morte del Danese'", *Convivium* 5, 1933, p. 756-72.

<sup>33</sup> Et benche l'alma sia del corpo uscita  
 secundo che gli fati hanno predetto  
 parera sempre esso Danese in vita  
 fin che venga in tal parte un giovinetto  
 il qual dicono che havra forza infinita  
 et con sue man gli cavera l'elmetto  
 dicendo anchor per quanto i(n)te(n)dere parmi  
 ch'altri che lui non merta haver q(ue)lle armi (I, 5, 87).

<sup>34</sup> For the dynastic theme see J. Everson, *The Italian Romance Epic in the Age of Humanism, The Matter of Italy and the World of Rome*, Oxford, University Press, 2001, p. 11, and *passim*. Togeby treats the tradition of Ogier returning to save his country, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

(XXVII, 191).<sup>35</sup> He joins Salamon, Turpin and Ricciardetto in urging Charlemagne to avenge Roland (XXVII, 226). He assists in wreaking terror upon Saragossa (XXVII, 243-260), and takes care of the camp and men before heading back to France (XXVII, 286). The narrator speaks of his (questionable!) sources, saying,

E del Danese che ancor vivo sia,  
 Perché tutto può far chi fe' natura,  
 Dicono alcun, ma non la istoria mia;  
 E che si truova in certa grotta oscura  
 E spesso armato a caval par che stia,  
 Sì che, chi il vede, gli mette paura:  
 Non so s' è vera oppinone o vana... (XXVIII, 36)

As Pulci completes his poem in this final canto, he summarizes the *matière de France*, citing Lattanzio, who sings of each major character, including:

E del Danese, e come e' fu cristiano,  
 E del caval chiamato Duraforte;  
 E che in prigione il tenne Carlo Mano,  
 Quando quel dette a Carloto la morte,  
 Insin che venne quel Bravieri strano,  
 Che abbatté tutti i paladin di corte;  
 E come e' fu della Marca signore;  
 Ogni cosa dicea quel cantatore. (XXVIII, 64)

### *Vengeance and Justice*

Viscardi in 1963 suggested a double persona for Ogier: a “vassallo fedele” in the *cycle du roi* of the eleventh century, who becomes a “vassallo ribelle” in the romances of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup> Any such difference is absent from the Italian tradition. Even when his own son is murdered in cold blood – by the heir to the throne, admittedly – Ogier does not demand vengeance or recompensation. He is not a rebel and only takes action when he himself is threatened and attacked. That threat derives from a clearly marked “evil” house, like the Maganzesi (Ganelon and his clan). The context of the Franco-Italian *chansons de geste* and their derivatives is particular: outside of the French realm, in northern Italy, urban centers concentrate audiences for literary productions. The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries are an era of constant jockeying for power between those cities, where *signorie* and their self-made, self-proclaimed rulers sought ways to justify their rule and to maintain it financially. Those rulers – like the Gonzaga, for example – rented their services as *condottieri* (mercenaries) to others. Rulers of larger cities hired them. John Hawkwood in the

<sup>35</sup> Luigi Pulci, *Il Morgante*, ed. G. Fatini, Torino, UTET, 1948, rpt. 1984.

<sup>36</sup> A. Viscardi, *La Chevalerie Ogier e la narrativa francese del secolo XIII, dalle lezioni di filologia romanza svolte nell'anno accademico 1962-63*, ed. C. Cremonesi, Milan, La Goliardica, 1963, p. 5-6.

14<sup>th</sup> century, for example, is noted for his fidelity, and for that reason is depicted in a fresco by Paolo Uccello in the Florentine cathedral.<sup>37</sup>

The Crusades were technically over: Acre had fallen in 1291. But their hold on the imagination remained. And fear of “Saracens” in Italy was not totally irrelevant: the Ottoman Turks besieged Otranto in 1480-1481. Picturing Roland as the “Senator of Rome” (as he is in the *Entrée d’Espagne*) or as “falcon de la Crestenté”,<sup>38</sup> and placing Ogier under his protection, proclaims the Dane as one of the “good” side opposed to the evil Maganzesi. Pasqualino suggests that these “rebelli” represent the Italian communes rejecting the German Empire, and that the “ribelli positivi” are “sempre pronti a sottomettersi”.<sup>39</sup> The “ribelle negativo”, on the other hand, displays extreme pride and wrath, and seeks constant revenge. The positive characters know moderation as well as justice.

In fact, the royals in the Italian Ogier tales are just misguided, mistakenly listening to Ganelon and led astray by his (and his family’s) evil intentions. Ganelon and his family’s evil deeds are expanded in each subsequent retelling. Ogier is not a rebel: he seeks justice for the loss of his son. He does not harm Christians or “our” Frenchmen.<sup>40</sup> Once he has killed his son’s murderer, he repays his debt to society with a prison term and a battle in which his own life and sword are at stake for his country. He is chosen by God, helped by St. George and a fairy (called Gloriande in some versions). Curtana, won in Ogier’s first battle, continues to defend him and prevent inappropriate violence throughout his career.

The “positive rebel” of French tradition is in Italy a faithful, valiant vassal, chosen for special tasks. Not unlike Roland, who becomes wise in Italian tradition, subsuming the role of Olivier,<sup>41</sup> Ogier becomes one of the select paladins closest to Charlemagne and Rinaldo. He assumes traits from his father-in-law, Naimés the advisor, and offers support and defense to the royal family from Saracens and evil threats. He seeks only justice, not insisting on further revenge. Through the history of the Ogier story, his wife’s name might change, his national origin is unsure, and

---

<sup>37</sup> For historical background about the Gonzagas and Mantua, see E. R. Chamberlain, *The World of the Italian Renaissance*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1982, here especially p. 27-32; and J. M. Nagemy, *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance*, Oxford, University Press, 2004, p. 198-200. Others claim to hold Curtana or a model of it; one of the five coronation swords of England is named Curtana, called the sword of mercy, since the Dane did not kill with it. Another legend of the sword’s origin is its being “cut” to fit the Dane (originally belonging to Tristan; Boni, *Aspramonte*, ed. cit., III, CXLVIII, 15 [p. 285]).

<sup>38</sup> *Entrée d’Espagne*, ed. A. Thomas, Paris, Firmin Didot, 1913, rpt. Johnson Reprint Corp., NY, 1968, l. 6554, 14,124, etc.; *Geste Francor*, ed. cit., l. 11,252.

<sup>39</sup> A. Pasqualino, *Le vie del cavaliere, Epica medievale e memoria popolare*, Milan, Bompiani, 1992, p. 90.

<sup>40</sup> On “our” Frenchmen and other techniques to personalize the Franco-Italian texts in northern Italy, see G. Holtus, “Quelques aspects de la technique narrative dans *L’Entrée d’Espagne*”, *Essor et Fortune de la chanson de geste dans l’Europe et l’Orient latin*, Actes du IX<sup>e</sup> Congrès international de la Société Rencesvals pour l’étude des épopées romanes (Padoue-Venise, 29 août-4 septembre 1982), ed. A. Limentani *et al.*, Modena, Mucchi, 1984, p. 703-16.

<sup>41</sup> J.-Cl. Vallecalle, “Roland est sage: remarques sur la personnalité du héros dans *L’Entrée d’Espagne*”, PRIS-MA, 10.1, janvier-juin 1994, p. 71-80.

his mount varies, but Ogier and Curtana together conquer Saracens and outlast the Maganzesi. The Gonzagas could thus be proud of owning Ogier's Curtana and his breastplate, sure that these weapons, like his persona, defended the faithful and granted justice, avoiding treason and excess.

Leslie Zarker Morgan  
Loyola University Maryland