I.S.S.N. 0391-5654

Estratto

CULTURA NEOLATINA

Rivista di Filologia Romanza fondata da Giulio Bertoni

ANNO LXXIV - 2014 - FASC. 1-4

MUCCHI EDITORE

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SAGGI E MEMORIE

Medieval Occitan Theater as a Source of Material for Documenting Culinary History

The literature of medieval southern France, specifically medieval literature composed in the language of the region, Occitan (called Provençal by some), forms a corpus very well known to literary scholars; it is this language that gives us the word 'troubadour'. Medieval Occitan literature has been called the birthplace of modern concepts of romantic love, a theme that pervades literature of the period and beyond. However, no scholar to date has considered the images of food and drink that are present in the vernacular texts, which contain a wealth of medieval documentation relating to culinary history. There has been some research on the cuisine of medieval southern France, but no one has used the literary primary materials to offer new light on culinary history.

The best known body of Occitan literature, troubadour lyrics, offers comparatively little detail regarding food and drink. However, much information can be gleaned from other literary texts such as fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Occitan plays that have gone largely unstudied for decades. Medieval culinary historians have tended to use notarial documents or chronicles as primary source material for their researches. The information in this documentation is unquestionable, but these works should not be considered the only primary source material to use for research on medieval food and/or on medieval food culture. In this article, I bring to the fore some of the information available in a selection of literary texts, works that have not yet been plumbed for the details they can provide about medieval consumption practices and behavior. The specific texts discussed are all theater pieces, performed in public in the south of today's France. All were composed in the language of that region, Occitan. The texts in question are the *Play of Saint Jacob,* the *Mystery of the Ascension*, the *Rouergat Mystery Play,* and the *Mystère de sanct Ponz.* Each will be introduced in turn.

Cultura Neolatina, LXXIV, 1-4 (2014), pp. 41-63

Geneviève Brunel-Lobrichon has noted that much of the latter Middle Ages adores stuffing, literally, *la farce*[1]. Works of literature are stuffed, *farci*. Plays are themselves farces, where we can find stories within stories, things within things, another sense of *farci*. One place where such stuffing occurs is on stage, either in the form of farces themselves, or in the form of small scenes inside longer plays, whether as amusements (known as *cilete*), in plays or as moments of levity in otherwise serious material, like Passions and mysteries. As Graham A. Runnalls observes, «A majority of late mysteries contain numerous scenes intended to make the audience laugh»[2]. Michel Rousse adds that playwrights consciously interrupted the serious flow of the story with a lighter moment, sometimes using physical action, such as devils running in all directions, or moving the action to a tavern where a drunken brawl could take place[3]. Further, Jacques Chocheyras notes that late medieval theater composed in Occitan includes a mixing of genres, from the sublime to the grotesque, a feature that will continue in Elizabethan theater, and that 'grossièreté', that is, obscenity, is frequent, continuing the traditions of medieval theater[4].

The Occitan corpus is not as large as that in Old or Middle French[5], though this conclusion can be contested. According to Étienne Fuzellier, there is documentation of almost 400 theatrical representations in Occitania in the medieval period[6]. Fuzellier and Nadine Henrard[7]

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[1] Conversation on Nov. 8, 2007. In contrast, for a detailed discussion of the etymology of the word *farce* and its application to the theatrical world, see M. ROUSSE, *Comment la farce conquit le théâtre*, in "*Mainte belle œuvre faicyte*". *Études sur le théâtre médiéval offertes à Graham A. Runnalls*, éds. D. Hüe – M. Longtin – L. Muir, Orléans 2005, pp. 483-501.

[2] G.A. RUNNALLS, *Le théâtre à Montferrand au Moyen Âge*, in «Le Moyen Âge», 85 (1979), pp. 465-494, p. 472.

[3] M. ROUSSE, *La scène et les tréteaux. Le théâtre de la farce au Moyen Âge*, Orléans 2004, p. 289.

[4] J. CHOCHEYRAS, *Le théâtre religieux en Dauphiné du Moyen Âge au XVIII^e siècle (domaine français et provençal)*, Genève 1975, p. 148.

[5] L. PETIT DE JULLEVILLE, *Histoire du théâtre en France au Moyen Âge. Répertoire du théâtre comique en France au Moyen Âge*, Paris 1886.

[6] E. FUZELLIER, *Histoire du théâtre de langue d'oc*, in «Annales de l'Institut d'études occitanes», 1 (1949), pp. 120-135, p. 126.

[7] N. HENRARD, *Observations sur la tradition manuscrite du théâtre religieux médiéval en langue d'oc*, in *Scène, évolution, sort de la langue et de la littérature d'oc.* Actes du Sep-

argue that Occitan theater was as vibrant and vital as that of the North. Productions in what would become modern-day France were certainly as numerous as those in the British Isles, an area whose theatrical history is better documented[8]. What examples of the Occitan theatrical world remain, warrant our consideration. These literary works have been generally ignored in recent years, as scholarship has attended to lyrics and romances.

Graham A. Runnalls notes that a theater tradition develops in medieval cities when the necessary material circumstances are in place, an efficient city administration, prosperity, wealthy individuals inclined to encourage the arts, corporations and religious confraternities, etc.[9]. Runnalls observes, further, that much theater evidence has disappeared because of the nature of the genre. The texts of the plays, copied for a single performance, did not land on library shelves; the rolls or pages of the script were often recycled for other uses (e.g. fragments of the Auvergnat *Mystery of Sainte Agathe* became book binding material)[10]. This historian of medieval theater is not surprised by the small number of texts that have come down to us[11]. While we do not have many scripts from medieval Occitania, that lacuna does not mean that theater was not an important cultural venue in the region.

In these plays, there is little, if any, effort to exaggerate scenes by means of food – the audience, which was surely popular, would have laughed such efforts off the stage. These literary works are superb sources for what people ate and drank, what foods and drinks people knew and knew of. In no small part, this fact relates to the popular nature of comedy, specifically of farces[12]. In medieval Occitan the-

tième Congrès international de l'Association Internationale d'Études Occitanes, Reggio Calabria - Messina, 7-13 juillet 2002, ed. R. Castano – S. Guida – F. Latella, Roma 2003, pp. 419-431.

[8] See the Records of Early English Drama project http://www.reed.utoronto.ca/, consulted 7 November 2011.

[9] Runnalls, *Le théâtre à Montferrand* cit., p. 471.

[10] G.A. Runnalls, *Le Théâtre en Auvergne au Moyen-Âge*, in «Revue d'Auvergne», 97 (1983), pp. 69-94, pp. 85-86.

[11] Runnalls, *Le Théâtre en Auvergne* cit., p. 85.

[12] Rousse, *La scène et les tréteaux* cit., p. 260.

ater, food is used to great comic effect[13], and as the touchstone for any number of comic scenes, if not for entire plays. Moreover, we have documentation to suggest that when food is mentioned on stage, real food was used as a prop[14]. In plays, what we observe regarding food and drink is not an exaggeration of reality, but something fairly close to daily life. What is portrayed through the dialogues is probably very realistic. If a play called for bread as a prop, bread was used on stage; stage directions, when we have them, make this fairly clear.

Ludus sancti Jacobi

The *Ludus sancti Jacobi* or *Play of Saint Jacob* was first found in the municipal archives of Manosque (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence), the town where it was most certainly performed in 1496 and perhaps again afterwards. Subsequent to its publication in 1858 by Camille Arnaud[15], the manuscript disappeared[16]; Brunel-Lobrichon has since recovered the text in the Manosque municipal archives[17]. Though the manuscript of the play was recovered, only the first 705 lines have survived, so we will never know how this story ends. The play relates the adventures of three pilgrims, on pilgrimage, headed, it would seem most likely, to Santiago de Compostella, given their repeated expressions of faith in St. James, the patron saint of that destination. From the beginning, the audience knows that food and drink will be important elements in this story, for the first speaker, a town crier of sorts, says five lines and then takes a drink, a bit of stage action alluded to in his lines and made explicit in the Latin stage directions:

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[13] For observations on the use of food in medieval English drama for comic purpose, see A. RYCRAFT, *Food in Medieval Drama*, in *Food in the Arts*. Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, 1998, ed. H. Walker, Blackawton - Totnes - Devon 1999, pp. 164-171.

[14] G.A. RUNNALLS, *Repas fictifs, repas réels: le rôle des banquets et de l'alimentation dans les mystères français*, in *La vie matérielle au Moyen Âge. L'apport des sources littéraires, normatives et de la pratique.* Actes du Colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve, 3-5 octobre 1996, ed. E. Rassart-Eeckhout et al., Louvain-la-Neuve 1997, pp. 205-216.

[15] C. ARNAUD, *Ludus sancti Jacobi, fragment de mystère provençal*, Marseille 1858.

[16] P. MEYER, in his 'Editorial note' added to A. JEANROY, *Observations sur le théâtre méridional du XV^e siècle,* in «Romania», 23 (1894), pp. 525-561, p. 542, n. 3.

[17] The manuscript is classified under the number *Ii suppl. i*; see G. BRUNEL-LOBRICHON, *Réflexions sur les manuscrits occitans médiévaux*, in *Colloque de Wégimont. Les outils de la recherche occitane. 2*, in «Bulletins de l'AIEO», 8 (1990), pp. 1-12, pp. 2-3.

A fin que la causa sia plus net,
de ma trompeta sonaray,
e pues apres beuray.
Bibit.
(*Ludus sancti Jacobi*, ll. 9-11)

So that the matter may be more clear, I will blow my trumpet and then take a drink. *He drinks.*

This vignette is already comic, for the actions of the player contradict his words – he had promised to blow the trumpet and then drink; instead, he drinks before doing anything else.

The key players are a father, mother[18] and son. Father and son are ready to leave on their pilgrimage when the mother insists on coming along, arguing that she will do their laundry. This argument convinces the son who helps sway the father. The father appears to be a relatively responsible character – the Fool, who serves as the narrator, tells us that the father packs appropriate items for the trip, notably bread and cheese; the father also takes care to fill his bottle, though we are not told with what specific beverage («Pendra de pan e de fromage / e unplira sa botelho», ll. 258-259)[19].

At this point, the scene changes and we see a host of devils conferring. Satan, determined to undermine this family, seeks the advice of his confreres. There is a parodic reminder of the virtue of abstinence, as one devil tells Satan not to sleep, eat or drink until he has done something about these good people:

que non duermas ne te coje,
ne non bevas ni mange,
que non aias qualque causa.

I advise you not to sleep nor drink nor eat until you have done something[20].

[18] E. Fuzellier suggests that medieval Occitan theater was performed, most of the time, by troupes of men, with adolescent boys playing the female roles; see his *Le théâtre de langue d'oc au Moyen Âge (genres, thèmes, conditions générales),* in «Annales de l'Institut d'études occitanes», 2 (1949), pp. 60-79, p. 66; such was certainly the practice in medieval England.

[19] For a discussion of food and eating while traveling, with examples from fourteenth-century Catalonia, see F. Sabaté, *Un sistema alimentari de viatge a la segona meitat del segle XIV*, in *Actes Ier Col·loqui d'història de l'Alimentació a la Corona d'Aragó. Edat mitjana*, Lleida 1995², pp. 371-385.

[20] Arnaud, *Play of Saint Jacob* cit., ll. 339-341.

Mother tires soon and asks that they stop, so she can have something to eat. The father insists that the threesome continue, but Mom is hungry, complaining «I'm hungry; let's sit down because I'm tired» (ll. 471-472). The son suggests that a brief stop will not hurt, acceding to his mother's request.

As the family takes its rest, the proprietors of a nearby inn catch sight of them and do their best to draw the pilgrims to the establishment. As the hostess states, «Let's tell them they will have good wine here» (ll. 464-466). In fact, hostess and her servant do a bit of advertising for the inn. The servant speaks first:

Venes, pelligrins, anbe mi;
sayns vos seres ben lougas,
et en seres ben cocas.
Et vos faren tres bon merchat
de so que Dieus nos aura donat.
Vos aures bon fuoc e bon liec
bon pan, bon vin . . . . . ,
. . . . . .
et un pastus de matin,
et de tres bona mostarda
de bons limons, de ben betaco[21],
et si seres tres ben logas,
et d'ayso non doptes pas,
vos ni vostra conpania.

Come with me, pilgrims; here you will be well lodged and will be well fed. And I will offer you a very good deal on the things that God has given us. You will have a good fire and a good bed, good bread, good wine … and a meat pie for breakfast with a good mustard, good lemons, well mixed, and you will be well housed, and do not doubt this, neither you nor your companions[22].

How can the pilgrims resist? Jean-Louis Picherit reminds us that in another Occitan literary hostelry, that found in the thirteenth-cen-

[21] *Betaco* resists translation: one expects a word relating to food, following mustard and lemons, but there seems to be no word like this in the major dictionaries nor in cookbooks of the period. Moreover, the line does not rhyme, suggesting that part of the couplet is missing. We thank Patrick Sauzet for his assistance on this topic.

[22] ARNAUD, *Play of Saint Jacob* cit., ll. 488-500.

tury romance of *Flamenca*[23], it was the wife who really managed the establishment[24]. Philippe Wolff documents the importance of women in this métier, describing as striking their role in this profession[25]. So the speech of this servant is within audience expectations.

However, it is also possible that she stretches the limits a bit. For example, in the Occitan bastide town of Beaumont (today's Beaumont-de-Lomagne, Tarn-et-Garonne), pulling people off the street, as happens in this play, was illegal[26]. At least part of the comedy here is that the audience knows that the behavior of the hostess is not fully condoned by the law; they appreciate this theatrical breaking of legal restraint. It needs be added that this sort of street publicity was a commonplace of tavern scenes in medieval theater[27].

Let us consider in more depth several items mentioned by the servant, first the 'good lemons'. Noted expert Carole Lambert considers citrus fruit as a real marker of the origin of recipes in medieval cookbooks. Lemons are found in recipes in the south, not in northern France or in northern Europe[28]. As Lambert pointedly observes, «lemon trees grow precisely in those lands or regions whose cookbooks have left us recipes for *limonia*»[29], such as the *Modus* recipe for *Limonieyra blanca* (*Modus* number 41), a dish of poultry with

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[23] J.-C. Huchet, *Flamenca, roman occitan du XIII^e siècle*, Paris 1988.

[24] J.-L. Picherit, *L'hôtellerie, les hôteliers et hôtelières dans quelques œuvres de la fin du Moyen Âge*, in «Le Moyen Âge», 108 (2002), pp. 301-332, pp. 322-324.

[25] Ph. Wolff, *L'hôtellerie, auxiliaire de la route, notes sur les hôtelleries toulousaines au Moyen Âge,* in «Bulletin philologique et historique (jusqu'à 1610) du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques», 1 (1960), pp. 189-205, p. 201.

[26] É. Forestier offers this example: «Item, qu'aucun hôtelier ou hôtelière, lorsque les voyageurs passeront par les rues cherchant un gîte, ne soit assez osé pour sortir dans la rue et inviter lesdits voyageurs en criant, vociférant ou en se diffamant les uns les autres, mais simplement gracieusement et sans murmure; qu'ils se tiennent sur les limites de leurs portes, debout ou assis à la table de leur auberge, et invitent lesdits voyageurs, et les engagent à entrer chez eux d'une voix soumise (*submissa voce*), sous peine, pour chaque contravention, d'une amende de 12 sols tournois» (É. Forestier, *Nos pères à table. Étude sur l'alimentation des Montalbanais aux XII^e, XIV^e et XVI^e siècles*, [Montauban 1884], p. 20).

[27] N. Henrard, *Le théâtre religieux médiéval en langue d'oc*, Genève 1998, p. 177.

[28] C. Lambert, *Medieval France. B. The South*, in *Regional Cuisines of Medieval Europe. A Book of Essays*, ed. M. Weiss Adamson, New York 2002, p. 70.

[29] C. Lambert, *La Cuisine française au bas moyen âge: pays d'oïl vs pays d'oc*, in *Alimentation et régions*. Actes du colloque «Cuisines, régimes alimentaires, espaces régionaux», Nancy, 24-27 septembre 1987, ed. J. Peltre – C. Thouvenot, Nancy 1989, pp. 375-385, p. 378.

lemon juice[30]. She suggests that fresh lemon and lemon juice do not appear in northern cookbooks because lemons were hard to obtain and hard to preserve[31]. Lambert refers to other documents that attest to the presence of lemons and lemon juice in the south[32] and reminds readers of work by Philip and Mary Hyman, who noted that «lemon juice was one of the four ingredients that characterize recipes 'à la provençale'»[33]. Furthermore, Lambert reminds her readers that Louis Stouff had called attention to a medieval recipe for Provençal fried fish, «first breaded with flour, then seasoned with lemon juice»[34]. The reference to good lemons in the *Ludus sancti Jacobi* is additional confirmation of the availability of that foodstuff in medieval Occitania.

The other food item worthy of notice is the mustard, another comestible that can be hard to find in the historical record. Danièle Alexandre-Bidon has found records of containers for specific purposes, including mustard pots[35]. Mustard seeds, however, are very difficult to identify in the archeological evidence, for the seeds were ground in order to make mustard[36]. Fortunately, account books from southern France list mustard as a purchase. For example we can consider the remarkable documentation that survives for the early fifteenth-century court of Murol (Puy-de-Dôme). Guillaume de Murol offered special anniversary meals at his court. In addition to the normal elements of

[30] C. LAMBERT, *Trois réceptaires culinaires médiévaux. Les "Enseingnemenz", les "Doctrine" et le "Modus"*. Édition critique et glossaire détaillé, PhD diss., Université de Montréal, 1989.

[31] LAMBERT, *La Cuisine française* cit., p. 379. The recipe collection known as the *Mesnagier de Paris* does include recipes that use oranges (for example, recipe number 352 for *orengat*, candied orange peel) or orange juice (recipe number 278, in a sauce for chicken), but lemons are not mentioned; see G.E. BRERETON – J.M. FERRIER, *Le Mesnagier de Paris*, trans. K. Ueltschi, Paris 1994.

[32] LAMBERT, *La Cuisine française* cit., p. 381.

[33] *Ibidem*, quoting P. and M. HYMAN, *Les cuisines régionales à travers des livres de recettes*, in «Dix-huitième siècle», 15 (1983), pp. 65-74, p. 70.

[34] *Ibidem*; Lambert quotes L. STOUFF, *Ravitaillement et alimentation en Provence aux XIV^e^ et XV^e^ siècles*, Paris - The Hague 1970, p. 260.

[35] D. ALEXANDRE BIDON, *Une archéologie du goût. Céramique et consommation*, Paris 2005, p. 82.

[36] M.-P. RUAS, *Les Plantes exploitées en France au Moyen Âge d'après les semences archéologiques*, in *Plantes et cultures nouvelles en Europe occidentale au Moyen Âge et à l'époque moderne*. Centre culturel de l'Abbaye de Flaran. Douzièmes journées internationales d'histoire, 11, 12, 13 septembre 1990, Auch 1992, pp. 9-35, p. 28.

wine, bread and meat, we find purchases of added spices such as saffron and mustard for the kitchen[37]. The evidence of the *Ludus sancti Jacobi* invites us to accept that mustard was not an exceptional or expensive spice, though its quality might vary from place to place, whence the suggestion by the servant that the mustard at this inn was good.

The pilgrims decide to stop at the inn, where the son courts the chambermaid, Beatrix. Picherit, among others, sought to describe the various services a hosteller might offer: «beyond lodging, the hosteller in the Middle Ages furnishes, in general, food and drink to his customers, as well as other services that people in the twentieth century do not expect»[38]. These additional offerings could include business services, and at least some inns were also houses of ill-repute[39]. The innkeeper in the *Ludus sancti Jacobi* is eager to put the two young people together as if, at this inn, the addtional services include his efforts as a pimp; to this end, the travelers are invited to eat. We have an 'it's-time-to-eat scene' – the table is set in front of the inn, for all the action in this play occurs outdoors; the bowls are washed and set; the linens are white[40]. The meal begins with a medieval version of pâté en croûte,

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[37] P. Charbonnier, *Guillaume de Murol. Un petit seigneur auvergnat au début du XVe siècle*, Clermont-Ferrand 1973, pp. 200-201.

[38] Picherit, *L'Hôtellerie* cit., pp. 324-325. For specific details on inns and hostels in medieval Montpellier, see J. Combes, *Hôteliers et hôtelleries de Montpellier à la fin du XIV^e siècle et au XV^e siècle*, in *Hommage à André Dupont (1897-1972)*. Études médiévales languedociennes offertes en hommage par ses anciens collègues, élèves et amis, Montpellier 1974, pp. 55-81.

[39] In the Occitan *Romans de mondana vida* by Folquet de Lunel, composed in 1284, we are offered a description of such an inn, especially at ll. 172-201; see P.T. Ricketts, *Le "Romans de mondana vida" de Folquet de Lunel*, in *Miscellanea di studi in onore di Aurelio Roncaglia a cinquant'anni dalla sua laurea*, ed. R. Antonelli – F. Beggiato – A. Ferrari – A. Solimena, Modena 1989, III, pp. 1121-1137.

[40] See *Ludus sancti Jacobi*, ll. 682-705: «L'Oste: Sus, gentil filh, sezes vos aysi; / tres beu sira, setias vos. / Filius: Volhentier, per amor de vos, / quar mangaren de bon pastis. / L'Oste: Adu lo potage, Beatris. / Chanbriera: Volhenties, ieu o faray. / Son ja assetias … / L'Oste: Hoc, grant temps ha. / L'Ostessa: So es tres ben fa. / Porta aquo et non falhas. / … / ho du bastant auras al plus aut. / La Chanbriera: Lo es ben chaut; ieu lay vauc, / que me cremo tos las mas / … / L'Oste: Aysi bon pant et bon vin. / Mes hostes, fases bona chiera. / L'Ostessa: Deves avant, chanbriera, / … / non me aportara lo rost. / L'Ost: Prenes la tassa e lo pot, / mon oste; trop tarsas de beure. / Pater: Volontiero; m'estessa debonayre; / ieu y esagaray s'il es bon. / Aisi ay bon vin; tastas, ma fremo, / e dises si es bon. / Mater: El es tres bon» ("Host: Here, good son, sit here and you will be very well, do sit. / Son: Willingly, for love of you, because we will eat a good pâté / Host: Here's the soup, Beatrix. / Servant:

the *pastis* (l. 685), then soup, good bread and wine, a roast (l. 700) followed by an invitation to drink again. Unfortunately for the historian, at this point, the play breaks off.

In terms of food history, this play gives us a sense of a typical inn and a meal in that venue. In this play, the inn serves its customers at tables outside (the medieval equivalent of a sidewalk café). We observe that the hostess uses lemons as one of the selling points for her hostelry, reminding us that lemons were both relatively well known and not especially expensive in medieval southern France, since they are an item available at this fictional inn.

The vocabulary of food preparation and kitchen equipment is somewhat limited in the *Ludus Sancti Jacobi*; we are given some nouns for foods (in addition to the vocabulary discussed above: *pan*, *fromage* [258], *vin* [466], *mostarda* [496], *limons* [497], *pastis* [527], *potage* [686], *lo rost* [698]); we find some vocabulary relating to food preparation and service (*fornas* [330], *botellia* [366], *escudellas* [542], *la tassa* [699]). The hostess observes that her guests are not carrying weapons that have potential culinary use such as a *cotel* or a *dage* (517). We know that the table must be assembled, for the hostess tells Beatrix to set it up, «la taula vay butar» (538); the hostess covers the table with a clean tablecloth (544-546). Moreover, the stage directions tell us very little with regards to food other than that the actors do eat and drink (e.g. *Tunc bibant et comedant*, "Now they drink and eat").

It is the women who pay the most attention to matters of food and drink. It is the mother who is hungry; it is the women of the inn who make the sales pitch of food (who may break the law in so doing) and they who put the food on the table. The host at this inn seats his guests at the table and offers what might be called a toast, «Aysi bon pant et bon vin. / Mes hostes, fases bona chiera» ("Here is good bread and good wine / my guests, enjoy yourselves", ll. 695-696), but the host is remarkably uninvolved when it comes to the food. My argument is that

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Willingly, I will do it; they are already seated … / Host: Yes, it's time. / Hostesss: It is very well made, bring it here and do not fail … You will have more than enough. / Servant: It's very hot; I am afraid I will burn my hands … / Host: Here is good bread and good wine, my guests, enjoy yourselves. / Hostess: You should be ahead, Chanbriera … you will not bring me the roast. / Host: Take the cup and the pot, my guest, you are slow to drink. / Father: Willingly, it would be a pleasure; I will try it to see if it is good. Oh, this is a good wine, taste it, my woman, and say if it is good. / Mother: It is very good!").

his lack of involvement in food preparation and service represents the reality for the audience of this play; the role of women in the play as preparers and servers of food in a public establishment offers us concrete evidence about gender roles in this society.

Mystère de l'Ascension

A play of very different order is the *Mystery of the Ascension*, approximately 850 lines of verse mixed with prose passages. This short play appears to be complete, combining a healthy dose of preaching with a very meager plot line. In terms of culinary history, the very first scene has the Virgin Mother on stage, observing that it is dinnertime and that the Apostles will be hungry (ll. 5-6). The repast appears to be simple: bread, wine and *le sobreplus* (l. 13). What is this *sobreplus*? At the most basic level, the word means "surplus". Constance Berman suggests the term may mean «the hot dish»[41]. Runnalls suggests that meals tend to appear on stage with a certain number of fixed ingredients: wine, shoulder of mutton, roast chickens, various pasties and pâtés, tarts, bread and fruit[42]. If such a menu is normal, then the 'simple' menu presented by Mary is truly simple, though more substantial than the bread and wine or bread and water that would represent a meal for medieval penitents.

Jesus then speaks, offering the simple greeting, «Peace be unto you» (l. 15), and Mary hastens to welcome Jesus at her table[43]. The eleven apostles then greet Jesus, who reminds them that it is important to eat with friends before going on a pilgrimage (ll. 105-106).

The meal served here is another simple one, described merely as *viandas* in the stage directions: «Aras senhe la taula Jesus he digua, quant las viandas seran mesas» ("Now Jesus blesses the table

[41] C. Berman, personal communication, May 21, 2011. See also her *Monastic Hospices in Southern France. The Cistercian Urban Presence,* in «Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique», 101 (2007), pp. 747-774.

[42] Runnalls, *Repas fictifs, repas réels* cit., pp. 209-210.

[43] Cf. A. Jeanroy – H. Teulié, *L'Ascension. Mystère provençal du XVe siècle*, in «Revue de Philologie Française et Provençale», IX (1895), pp. 81-115, ll. 16-21: «Nostra Dama: Mon car filh, vos siatz ben vengut / he de tresque gran joya reseubut! / Gran gauch iey quant ieu vo vesi, / he de mas mas quant ieu vos teni; / gran temps ha que no vos iey plus tengut: / he, mon filh, vos siatz lo ben vengut!» ("Our Lady: My dear son, welcome and receive great joy! I am very happy to see you and it's been a long time since I last held you; a long time since I last had you: my son, you are very welcome!").

and says, when the meat [lit.] has been served", *Mystery of the Ascension*, after l. 122). In this case, *viandas* really means "the meal," but it may well include the mutton, roast chicken and pâtés mentioned by Runnalls. Another stage direction makes explicit that it is the women who serve, «las da[m]as devo servir» (after l. 126). Afterwards, Jesus offers a sermon, followed by an even longer sermon by St. Peter. Peter emphasizes the importance of a healthy diet, that it is important to eat good things (l. 740). This argument is hardly new to this piece; Henrard and others suggest that the anonymous author adapted a formal sermon, now lost, for this part of the play[44].

A large part of the sermon is devoted to various kinds of food and drink – I think of it as the Sermon of the Julep. Technically, a medieval julep is a liquid medicine, prepared with a sugar, rather than honey base[45] – to those familiar with a modern-day mint julep, the sugar syrup will be very familiar. The julep is light, particularly when compared to a similar honey-based medication. Ouerfelli reports that medieval physicians prescribed juleps for coughs, burning fevers and pulmonary problems[46]. Juleps also calmed an upset stomach. Ouerfelli concludes that syrups and juleps were not only therapeutic, but also carried other properties: they could be refreshing, thirst-quenching, and for this purpose frequently consumed by travelers and other healthy individuals[47]. These arguments help explain the Sermon of the Julep in the *Mystery of the Ascension*.

While the foods described in the Sermon become more and more ascetic, there remains an interesting balance between the real, physical meal at the home of the Virgin and the equally real, but spiritual meal offered in the sermon. The play balances these two meals of different nature. The point is clearly made that Jesus is present in both venues, but in different fashions. The author of this play sought to make the spiritual meal offered in the sermon somewhat more palatable to an audience that might be concerned with where its next meal would come from. The scene of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene

[44] HENRARD, *Le théâtre religieux* cit., p. 190.

[45] M. OUERFELLI, *Le Sucre. Production, commercialisation et usages dans la Méditerranée médiévale*, Leiden 2008, p. 550.

[46] *Ibidem*, p. 551.

[47] *Ibidem*, p. 558.

serving a company of twelve hearty eaters would balance the asceticism of the sermon 'meal'. The opening scene, with the Virgin inviting guests to her table, is not gratuitous, but necessary for a fuller understanding of the message of the mystery.

Rouergat Mystery Play

Jeanroy and Teulié published, in 1893, a very long set of dramatic texts, which they called «mystères provençaux»[48]. These texts, which probably formed a single play cycle, working from Creation to the Passion and beyond, originated in the Rouergue sometime in the fourteenth century. Though 8106 lines remain, there are significant holes in this production; notably there is no presentation of the Passion, so this can be called, again, a fragmentary text, albeit a long one. Although Jeanroy and Teulié have little respect for the anonymous author, he appears to have been familiar with at least some of the principles of the theater and with other plays of his period. The two scholars state, «the author had a considerable education in theater, and he used for his compilation a number of diverse sources, the greater part of which are lost today»[49]. Aileen Macdonald believes that the anonymous author borrowed much of his material from other sources, notably from a Catalan-Occitan play. She observes, however, that the Rouergat author is more interested in action than dialogue and expands scenes that allow him to display this penchant[50].

Henrard reminds us that medieval Occitan plays were generally not written on parchment, but on paper, a much less expensive material. The extant texts were probably performance copies, with frequent corrections, changes, and erasures[51]. A fragment found in Ille (Pyrénées-Orientales), where it had been used as a book mark in a notarial register[52], preserved lines for only one actor, clearly an indication of rehearsal practice[53]. It is quite possible that the anonymous author of

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[48] A. Jeanroy – H. Teulié, *Mystères provençaux du quinzième siècle,* Toulouse 1893.

[49] *Ibidem*, p. xxiv.

[50] Aileen Macdonald, e-mail message to author, Mar. 19, 2008.

[51] Henrard, *Observations* cit., pp. 423-428.

[52] P. Vidal, *Note sur l'ancien théâtre catalan, à propos d'un fragment de mystère du XIV^e^ siècle*, in «Revue des Langues Romanes», 32 (1888), pp. 339-348, pp. 345-346.

[53] E. Lalou identified three player's rolls for Occitan parts, publishing a number of them in her *Les Rolets de théâtre, étude codicologique*, in *Théâtre et spectacles hier et*

the Rouergue play never gave his work a final retouch, and that what we have today is still a rough copy of his text.

Several episodes in this long text merit the attention of the culinary historian. There is, for example, the banquet at Emmaus, where the host and hostess offer some lovely realism, «vulgar realism» in the words of the nineteenth-century editors of this text[54], simply «very realistic» according to Henrard[55]. The Emmaus scene develops a few verses from the Book of Luke (Lc 24), opening, in Occitan, with an appeal to the innkeeper, on the order of «where's the food?». This query is not found in the Gospel, but marks the beginning of the author's expansion of the Gospel scene. Barnabas is first to think of his stomach and appeals to the innkeeper (l. 3203) for something to eat. The host and hostess provide some comic relief in the scene, with the suggestion that Jesus has left both the table and the inn – he is accused of skipping out on the bill (ll. 3246-48), suggesting to the modern reader that such behavior did occur in medieval taverns. Barnabas adds that the host should be glad they had the opportunity to serve the Son of God. The host is not quite so easily assuaged; he wants proof they have the money, saying «Let's see if you have the wherewithal to pay» (l. 3280). The hostess, however, is willing to accept the opportunity to serve God in lieu of payment in cash (ll. 3281-3288). Her presence minding the till, so to speak, serves as additional documentation of women in the medieval hospitality industry.

A few lines later, Jesus returns and inquires as to the meal. Peter invites him to join the apostles at the table, where roast fish is on the menu. Peter displays interest in the menu, if only because he describes it, mentioning specifically the fish (l. 3316); the stage directions make clear that food items were used as props: «Aras se meto a taula he porto de peyso rostit he pa he vi he mange Jesus e totz los autres» (*Rouergat Mystery*, after l. 3319: "Now they sit at the table and roast fish and bread and wine are brought and Jesus eats as do the others"). To summarize, in the midst of the theologically serious moment of the appearance of Jesus to the apostles at Emmaus, we have a comic debate over

aujourd'hui, Moyen Âge et Renaissance. Actes du 115e Congrès national des sociétés savantes (Avignon 1990), section d'histoire médiévale et de philologie, Paris 1991, pp. 51-71.

[54] JEANROY – TEULIÉ, *Mystères provençaux* cit., p. XXVIII.

[55] HENRARD, *Le théâtre religieux* cit., p. 176.

how the tavern bill should be paid and by whom[56], complemented by the comedy of repetition as the host seeks payment (ll. 3210, 3248, 3280); we have the humanity of the host and hostess playing against the saintliness of Jesus and of the apostles, concluding with Saint Peter's evocation of the menu. The setting of the inn is, obviously, not original to the author of this mystery – a meal setting is established in the Gospels (Lc 24: 30). But the author develops the story, expands the various biblical personages, invents a few others, and makes the entire miracle more tangible for his fourteenth-century audience. Note that the stage directions instruct the actor playing Jesus to eat of the food on the table, raising theological questions for the modern reader, but perhaps not for the medieval audience.

In another scene in this long mystery, a further detail relating to medieval food habits is the presentation of a grace before meals. The Gospel setting is the house of Simon the leper, who has just been cured (see Mc14: 3). A meal is about to be served:

> *Aras se asetio totz a taula … he aquels porto vianda he, quant sera tot portat, senhe Jesus la taula*:
>
> [Jesus]: Senher, payre omnipoten,
> que formiest l'ome de nien,
> quar tu lo formies de ta ma,
> pueys fesis lo vi he lo pa
> henaisi coma fesis al desert
> .v. pas segon que no es sert:
> tu benesisquas aquest mangar
> que nos as fach aparelhar;
> aquels que dono an cor bo;
> dona lor, senher, salvatio.
> *Respondo totz*: Amen.
> (*Rouergat Mystery*, ll. 2455-2464)

[56] Henrard observes that Gustave Cohen found this scene comic; that Jeanroy and Teulié judged it ridiculous, denouncing the vulgar realism (Henrard, *Le théâtre religieux* cit., pp. 178-179). Henrard herself sees the scene as realistic and in keeping with its times. Her term for the scene is «divertissant» (*ibidem*, p. 179). Macdonald considers the scene comic, noting that the author has a propensity for suggesting possible law suits and litigation (e-mail message to author, Mar. 19, 2008).

Now they all sit at the table … Simon brings the meat, when all is presented, Jesus blesses the table:
[Jesus]: Lord, father omnipotent, who formed man from nothing, for you formed him with your hands; may you make this wine and this bread as you did in the desert, five loaves as it is not certain [sic]; may you bless this food which you have prepared for us; which I give with a good heart; give them, Lord, salvation.
All respond: Amen.

This before-meal grace, inserted into the dramatic portrayal of the Gospel text, gives us a picture of everyday life in fourteenth-century Rouergue. I think the audience for this mystery would have recognized this benediction as something very familiar, something they would have said and/or heard throughout their lives. It is an example of the 'everyday details' found in medieval Occitan theater. It should be noted that this entire scene in the drama is a significant expansion of a few verses in the biblical text – there is no such blessing in the Gospel; we see here a mark of the author's creativity – incorporating this aspect of daily life into the play – and a willingness to develop the religious text for dramatic purposes.

Confirmation of this before-meal grace is found in another work, known as the *Catalan-Occitan Passion*[57]. Grace is said with almost the same words:

Senher Dieus, payre omnipotent,
que formest home de nient:
senher, tu·l formest de ta ma
e puys fezit lo vi e·l pa.
Aysi co, senher, el dezert
.v. pas fezest, que a nos es cert,
tu benezis aquet manyar
que a nos a fayt aparelhar
aysel que·l dona ab cor bo;
senher, dat li salvasio
e a tos cels que devo manyar,
senher, ab tu puscan estar!
Ara responderon totz Amen.
(*Catalan-Occitan Passion*, ll. 362-373)

[57] A.A. MACDONALD, *La Passion catalane-occitane*, Genève 1999.

> Lord God, father omnipotent, who formed man from nothing, Lord, you formed him with your hands and then you made the wine and the bread. Just as, Lord, in the desert, you made five loaves, which is known to us, may you bless this food which you had prepared for us, which is given with a good heart; Lord, give him salvation and to all who must eat, Lord, may they be with you! *Now they all respond*: Amen.

I do not think the similarity of these two texts requires any more explanation than that both reflect an everyday reality of prayer before meals. There is no need to infer influence from one to the other; no need to see imitation. Macdonald describes this second grace as «very original»[58], but I suspect the prayer was very common, sufficiently common to all of Occitania that those who came to the table would recite more or less the same words and that the audience may well have mouthed the words as the actors spoke them.

Potentially more interesting are the sources of the lines of this prayer, taken in part from other prayers, verses in the Bible and using ideas developed by Saint Augustine in his *Enarratio* on Psalm 90. The evocation of God using the Latinate «payre omnipotent» ("Father omnipotent") is reminiscent of the *Credo* of the Catholic mass. Medieval Occitan translations of the Bible and of the *Credo* tended to translate *omnipotens* as *tot-poderos* ("all powerful")[59], a phrase with the same meaning though with a more familiar feel. The idea of God having formed man from nothing evokes verses in Isaiah (41: 24)[60], while the suggestion that man was formed by God's hands is present in Job (10: 8), having been suggested by the creation story that creates man from clay (Gen. 2: 7). Augustine states explicitly that God created man out of nothing in his Sermon 109, paragraph 3[61], an idea completed in

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[58] *Ibidem*, p. 250.

[59] See, for example, the translation into Occitan of the *Credo*, ed. C. Chabaneau, *Paraphrase des litanies en vers provençaux*, in «Revue des Langues Romanes», 29 (1886), pp. 209-255, pp. 242-246; for a translation of the New Testament, see M.R. Harris – P.T. Ricketts, *Nouveau Testament de Lyon*, http://www.rialto.unina.it/prorel/NTL/NTL.htm, consulted Feb. 15, 2013.

[60] One medieval Occitan paraphrase of the *Credo* states «el creet de nient … cel, tera, mar et tot quant es» ("He created out of nothing … the sky, the earth, the sea and everything that is"), additional documentation for this belief, Chabaneau, *Paraphrase* cit., p. 244.

[61] Augustine of Hippo, *Sermones*, 11, Sermo 109, in J.P. Migne, *PL* 38, 23-2354; *PL* 39, 1493 (1845-49); www.monumenta.ch/latein/text.php?tabelle=Augustinus&rumpfid=Augustinus, Sermones, 11, 109&id=Augustinus, Sermones, 11, 109, 3.

his sermon on Psalm 90, paragraph 6, in *Enarrationes in psalmos*[62]. In this second sermon, Augustine merges the temptation of Christ in the desert (Mt 4: 1-11; Lc: 1-13) with the miracle of the loaves and fishes (Gv 6: 9; Lc 9: 13, 16)[63] stating *De nihilo fecit panem* ("He made bread out of nothing"), a conflation seen in the fourth and fifth lines of the prayer above. I have not been able to identify possible sources for the final lines of the grace, but would suggest that the use of Latinate vocabulary and the evocation of several Augustine's sermons points to a fairly learned, albeit anonymous author.

Mystère de sanct Ponz

This mystery is complete, comes at the very end of the medieval period[64], and has a number of comic scenes, always with the same characters. These players lift the tone throughout, through the use of the language of food and drink. Chocheyras thinks, that of the multiple plays from the Dauphiné region that he has studied, in French and Occitan, this one is the closest to a «true literary work»[65]. Extant in one manuscript, this 5415 line play, with over sixty named roles[66], was meant to be performed over the course of two days[67]. The story told is that of Saint Pons, a Roman citizen who converts to Christianity, and then converts his father and his friends before pressure from the Roman emperor forces him to leave Rome. He flees to Cimiez, near Nice, where

[62] Augustine of Hippo, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, in J.-P. MIGNE, *PL* 36, 67-1026, *PL* 37, 1033 (1845); www.monumenta.ch/latein/xanfang.php?tabelle=Augustinus&xy=Augustinus&domain=&lang=0&apparat=.

[63] V. KUPFER's article on southern French and Catalan artistic interpretations of this theme is worthy of note: *The Iconography of the Tympanum of the Temptation of Christ at the Cloisters,* in «Metropolitan Museum Journal», 12 (1978), pp. 21-31. Psalm 90 and the temptation of Christ in the desert are both part of the liturgy of the first Sunday in Lent (see *Missale romanum, editio juxta typicmn vaticanam,* New York 1941, pp. 66-68).

[64] CHOCHEYRAS, *Le théâtre religieux* cit., p. 95, offers a date of composition as after June 19, 1464.

[65] *Ibidem*, p. 96.

[66] JEANROY, *Observations sur le théâtre méridional* cit., p. 543, reminds us that plays were regularly extended, with additional (non-speaking) roles being added, and extra lines being given to devils and other comic roles in the play (*ibidem*, p. 545). These traits are simply typical of the period.

[67] CHOCHEYRAS, *Le théâtre religieux* cit., p. 183.

his presence is not appreciated by the local authorities – he is a threat and for this reason, the local governor has Pons decapitated in 257.

Against this foreground of noble saint and Christian virtue are placed a set of characters with far less noble interests; these are the individuals who bring food and drink into the play. Though the manuscript did not provide a list of the cast, we know simply from the names of these individuals that they will contribute levity to the play – the characters are Friant, Bruyant, Rifflant, Grandent, all names that describe their personalities more than their family origins[68]. Add to this group, Briffault, the trumpeter, town crier, and messenger for the emperor; the author has created a group bound to evoke laughter in the audience.

The mixing of seriousness and fun begins early in the play, as the comedians appear on stage well before Pons makes his first appearance. The men in question are a group of ne'er-do-wells who claim to be warriors, all the while looking for food, drink and/or lodging, and without much concern about how to pay for such items. First to make his presence known is Briffault, who appears to have gainful employment in the service of the emperor. He has other issues, however, and says explicitly that he needs wine in order to blow his trumpet: "Oh, if I had had the perfume, a mouth full of a strong red wine, I would have no equal in breath to make my trumpet speak!" (ll. 79-82). Immediately after this statement enter our truants, with, as I imagine the production, a lot of noise:

> Friant: Who are we?
> Rifflant: Noblemen.
> Bruyant: Well-to-do.
> Grandent: Like indigents.
> …
> Friant: Living according to our appetites: dice, cards, life in the tavern!
> (*Mystère de sanct Ponz*, ll. 87-94)

[68] Henrard, *Le théâtre religieux* cit., p. 302, reminds us that these character names are also found in northern French dramas and may represent an element of borrowing by the playwright. Chocheyras, *Le théâtre religieux* cit., p. 95, makes the same point. Koopmans notes that these names are reminiscent of the nicknames of cooks of the period, see J. Koopmans, *La Table sur les tréteaux. Cuisine grasse et cuisine maigre dans le théâtre de la fin du Moyen Âge*, in *La Vie matérielle au Moyen Age* cit., pp. 127-147, p. 138.

These three players provide regular comic relief to the play. Henrard sees these comic interruptions as «faithful to the spirit of contemporary French theater, where tyrants share their immoderate taste for wine and for money»[69]. Though these characters are not rulers, they are tyrannical, frequently described by those who have studied this play as *tyrans*[70]. And their scenes certainly serve to lighten the overall mood of the play (see ll. 911-957): «they eat well at the auberge of Master Martin, who has a good muscatel»[71] (ll. 1245-1263). Chocheyras notes that the tyrants drink a lot[72].

For another example, after a somewhat threatening scene with Satan and devils considering how to attack Pons, we land again among our four buffoons, who are trying to figure out where to get some money, where to find a roof for their heads, a scene described by Chocheyras as a burlesque interlude (see ll. 2000-2020)[73]:

> FRIANT: Let's go.
> BRUYANT: To do what?
> BRIFFAULT: To find nuts (*aglant*) to nourish us during winter.
> (ll. 2005-2006)

The invocation of nuts as nourishment during winter is surely parodic, for one cannot survive on nuts alone. The line does remind the modern reader, however, of the presence of nuts in the medieval diet, documentation all the more useful as such fruits are not frequently mentioned in traditional written sources such as account books. On the other hand, other forms of documentation, such as archeobotanical evidence proves without doubt the importance of nuts and nutstuffs in the Middle Ages. Marie-Pierre Ruas's excavations have uncovered tremendous stores of nuts, suggestive of the importance of nuts in the medieval diet[74]. Ruas, Bouby and Pradat add that of all the fruits they

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[69] HENRARD, *Le théâtre religieux* cit., 301.

[70] *Sic* Chocheyras and Jeanroy.

[71] CHOCHEYRAS, *Le théâtre religieux* cit., p. 184.

[72] *Ibidem.*

[73] *Ibidem*, p. 185.

[74] See, for example, M.-P. RUAS, *Semences archéologiques, miroir des productions agraires en France méridionale du VI^e au XVI^e siècle*, in *Castrum 5. Archéologie des espaces agraires mediterranéens au Moyen Âge*. Actes du colloque de Murcie (Espagne), 8-12 mai 1992, ed. A. Bazzana, Madrid - Rome - Murcie 1999, pp. 301-316.

have found in excavations, only olives, nuts and apples were stocked and stored as provisions[75].

Moreover, Carole Puig comments on the presence of various kinds of nuts, almonds, hazelnuts, and pine nuts, in merchant documents in medieval Catalonia and Languedoc[76]. These items could appear in registers as fruits or as grains, depending on whether they were sold with or without their shell[77]. Puig reiterates that items such as these nutstuffs only appear in the written record when they become of interest to merchants[78], and we do have records of rents paid in nut oils from the thirteenth century[79]. So long as they were local products for local consumption, nuts are under-documented.

Given the context, where our indigent speakers invoke acorns as a winter foodstuff, it may be worth adding that chestnuts served as an important source of carbohydrates in winter[80], though there is some scholarly debate about the importance of chestnuts in the medieval diet. Ariane Bruneton-Governatori argues for cultivation of chestnuts since Antiquity[81], disagreeing with Jean-Robert Pitte, who sees exploitation of chestnut farming as a more recent development[82], though Pitte does not deny the use of chestnuts for food in the medieval period also. Paolo Squatriti makes a strong argument for medieval chestnut production along the Italian Amalfi coast[83]; he suggests that chest-

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[75] M.-P. Ruas – L. Bouby – B. Pradat, *Les restes de fruits dans les dépôts archéologiques du Midi de la France (X^e^-XVI^e^ siècle)*, in «Archéologie du Midi médiéval», 23-24 (2005-2006), pp. 145-193, p. 172.

[76] C. Puig, *La place des fruits en Mediterranée nord-occidentale à partir des actes de la pratique et des tarifs marchands (XII^e^-première moitié XIV^e^ siècles)*, in «Archéologie du Midi médiéval», 23-24 (2005-2006), pp. 119-128.

[77] *Ibidem*, p. 123.

[78] *Ibidem*, p. 120.

[79] L. Bérard *et al.*, *L'Inventaire du patrimoine culinaire de la France. Midi-Pyrénées, produits du terroir et recettes traditionnelles*, Paris 1996, p. 43.

[80] A. Bruneton-Governatori, *Le Pain de bois. Ethnohistoire de la châtaigne et du châtaignier*, Toulouse 1984, p. 287.

[81] Bruneton-Governatori, *ibidem*, p. 434.

[82] J.-R. Pitte, *Terres de Castanide. Hommes et paysages du châtaignier de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Paris 1986, pp. 283-284.

[83] P. Squatriti, *Trees, Nuts, and Woods at the End of the First Millenium. A Case from the Amalfi Coast*, in *Ecologies and Economies in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Studies in Environmental History for Richard C. Hoffmann*, ed. S. Bruce, Leiden 2010, pp. 25-44.

nuts were not simply a food for the poor, but a source of agricultural wealth[84]. And though chestnuts from the Italian region of Lombardy were the most appreciated in the Middle Ages[85], we know that chestnuts were grown throughout the area of Occitania, with references found in documents from the tenth century on[86]. Daniel Meiller and Paul Vannier speak of a «chestnut civilization» in the Pyrenees, the Massif Central and the region of the Cévennes in southern France[87]. It is logical to think that our drunkards were thinking of chestnuts when they thought of foods to tide them over the winter, though I hasten to repeat that the Occitan term they use, *aglant*, is the word for acorn. Acorns are a foodstuff generally reserved for animals (the analogy is not lost on the author nor the audience of this play) and consumed in the Middle Ages during times of penury. It is probable that *aglant* was chosen for purposes of the rhyme (*aglant* : *galant*).

The comedy of food ceases at this point; the four friends, frequently addressed as children in the play, become torturers and executioners of Pons. In this role, they add a bittersweet quality to the production, for the audience knows they are buffoons; they approach the task of torturing Pons with little sign of expertise. We can picture the author setting up the contrast of noble saint, who puts up with everything including buffoonish torturers, who had caused the audience to laugh and now cause the audience to sympathize all the more strongly with the hero of the play.

Pascale Dumont observed two different tendencies in the presentation of food on stage in Old French theater, either as a moment of conviviality, usually in a tavern, marked by boasts and/or treachery, or as a background episode, perhaps with no dialogue at all, serv-

[84] *Ibidem*, p. 34; see also J.-L. GAULIN, *Pietro De' Crescenzi et l'agronomie en Italie (XII^e-XIV^e siècles)*, Doctorat, Université de Paris I, 1990, I, p. 296.

[85] The Old French fourteenth-century text known as the *"Concile d'apostoile"* speaks favorably of chestnuts from Lombardy (l. 61); see L. BORGHI CEDRINI, *"Concile d'apostoile": un curioso esemplare di "cri" duecentesco,* in *Miscellanea di studi in onore di Aurelio Roncaglia* cit., I, pp. 215-226.

[86] See BRUNETON-GOVERNATORI, *Le Pain de bois* cit., pp. 420-424.

[87] D. MEILLER – P. VANNIER, *Le Grand Livre des fruits et légumes. Histoire, culture et usage*, Besançon 1991, p. 282.

ing to valorize the host and hostess[88]. In medieval Occitan theater, even in the more serious moments, food is more clearly an element of pure comedy. The examples offered here are all examples of comedy in medieval Occitan drama; there are other plays from the region, though they are of less interest to the culinary historian. In the four plays discussed in this article, historians are invited to the table: we have evidence of consumption patterns; we see the role of women in the hospitality industry; we can understand more clearly how people might behave at the table, and we have the text of a before-meal blessing. Though the plays range in quality from the mediocre to great works of literature, they offer us a good deal of information about medieval daily life. Nadine Henrard bemoaned the lack of study of these important works by literary historians[89]; I hope to have demonstrated their value for cultural historians as well.

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[88] P. Dumont, *Boire et manger dans le théâtre religieux des XIII^e^ et XIV^e^ siècles. Est-ce un modèle à suivre?*, in *"Contez me tout". Mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Herman Braet*, ed. C. Bel – P. Dumont – F. Willaert, Louvain 2006, pp. 90-91.

[89] Henrard, *Observations* cit., p. 419.

SOMMARIO

SAGGI E MEMORIE

NOTE E DISCUSSIONI

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Abbonamento annuale: Italia € 126,00 Estero € 180,00

Grafica Mucchi Editore (MO), stampa Sigem (MO). Annate arretrate (nei limiti della disponibilità)

Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Modena - Periodico scientifico N. 334 dell'1/10/1957
Direttore responsabile Marco Mucchi