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### Social Functions of the Medieval Epic

#### Passage I: Lambert of Ardre, Chronicle of the Counts of Guines:

Et tamen antiochenae commendator cantilenae, avaritiae zelo ductus, et magis cupidus temporalis lucri retributionis quam Arnoldus laudis humanae (o gartionum et ministrorum, immo adulatorum injuriosa laudatio° o inertium principum indigna et inanis exultatio°) quia

Virtute et probitate per omnia nobilis heros,

Arnoldus eidem scurrae, qui nullo nomine dignus habetur, duas caligas denegavit scarlatinas, de eo digne promeritae laudis praeconium et gloriam subtrahit; et de eo in cantilena sua, in qua ficta veris admiscens, multa multorum nihilominus laudandorum gesta sub silentio intacta reliquit, mentionem non fecit. Sed o laudanda et ubique terrarum praedicanda Arnoldi militia! o in omnibus saeculis memoranda probitatis ejus strenuitas et gloria! o humilitatis ejus non despicibilis, sed inenarrabilis in virtutum operibus constantia! qui humanam nullatenus quaerens gloriam, scurrae maluit quantumcumque munusculum denegare, quam in ore scurrae et nomine indigni, licet omni haberetur laude dignissimus, in orbe terrarum deferri et cum instrumento musicari vel decantari. Sed cum ignominiosus ille concentorem nomen Arnoldi extinguere curavit, accensa lampade virtutum fama extulit et magnificavit. Quod enim avarus ille et cupidus nomen illi subtraxit per invidiam, immo per cupiditatem et avaritiam, cognita probitatis ejus gloria, ubique terrarum personuit, et praedicatum est ei in virtutis et laudis magnificentia.

[And nevertheless the intoner of a Song of Antioch, motivated by the zeal of avarice, and more desirous of the profit of temporal reward than Arnold was of human praise--oh insulting commendation of servants and minstrels, or rather of flatterers, oh unworthy and empty exultation (exaltation?) of slothful princes--, suppressed the glory and commendation of his justly deserved praise because,

In all things a noble hero in virtue and prowess,

Arnold denied to the same jester, who is not considered worthy of any renown, two scarlet shoes; and he made no mention of him in his chanson de geste, in which, mixing fictions with truths, nonetheless he passed over in silence, untouched, many deeds of many praiseworthy people. But oh the military service of Arnold, worthy of praise and of publishing in all lands! Oh the glory and robustness of his prowess, to be remembered in all ages! Oh the

constancy of his humility, un contemptible, but indescribable in the virtuous works!--he who, in no way seeking human glory, preferred to deny however small a gift to the jester rather than to be carried through the whole world as a subject of music and song in the mouth of a jester unworthy of renown, granted that he would be considered most worthy of all praise. But when that disgraceful and disdainful man took pains to extinguish Arnold's renown, fame magnified and exalted it, the lamp of virtues having been lit. For although that greedy and avaricious man removed his renown through envy, nay through greed and avarice, it resounded in all lands once the glory of his prowess had been recognized, and was proclaimed to the magnificence of his virtue and praise.]

**Passage II: Jean Bodel, Chanson des Saisnes,  
6-11:**

N'en sont que trois materes a nul home entendant:  
De France et de Bretaigne et de Rome la grant;  
Ne de ces trois materes n'i a nule semblant.  
Li conte de Bretaigne s'il sont vain et plaisant  
Cil de France sont voir chascun jor aparant.

[For any knowledgeable man there are only three matters:  
That of France, that of Brittany, and that of Rome the great;  
Nor there any other similar to these three matters.  
If the tales of Brittany are empty and pleasant,  
Those of France are true, as is shown every day.]

**Passage III: Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube's Girart de  
Vienne, lines (8-68):**

A Seint Denis, en la mestre abaie,  
trovon escrit, de ce ne doute mie,  
dedanz un livre de grant encesorie,  
n'ot que trois gestes en France la garnie;  
ne cuit que ja nus de ce me desdie. 5  
Des rois de France est la plus seignorie,  
et l'autre après, bien est droiz que jeu die,  
fu de Doon a la barbe florie,  
cil de Maience qui molt ot baronnie.  
El sien linaje ot gent fiere et hardie; 10  
de tote France eüsent seignorie,  
et de richece et de chevalerie,  
se il ne fuserent plain d'orgueil et d'envie.  
De ce lingnaje, ou tant ot de boidie,

fu Ganelon, qui, par sa tricherie, 15  
 en grant dolor mist France la garnie,  
 qant en Espangne fist la grant felonnie  
 dont furent mort entre gent paiennie  
 li .xii. per de France.

Oi avez dire en meinte chançon 20  
 que de la geste qui vint de Ganelon  
 furent estret meint chevalier baron,  
 fier et hardi et de molt grant renon.  
 Tuit seignor fuserent de France le roion,  
 s'an eus n'eüst orgueil et traïson; 25  
 mes par orgueil, por voir le vos dïson,  
 est trebuchiez en terre meinz hauz hom,  
 ausin com furent, de verté le savon,  
 deu ciel li engres, qui, par lor mesproïson,  
 trebuchié furent en l'infernal prison, 30  
 ou il n'avront jamés se dolor non.  
 Del ciel perdirent la seinte mansion  
 par lor orgueill et par lor foloïson.  
 Et ausin furent li parant Ganelon,  
 qui tant estoient riche et de grant renon, 35  
 se il ne fussent si plain de traïson.  
 De ci lingnaje, qui ne fist se mal non,  
 fu la seconde geste.

La tierce geste, qui molt fist a prisier,  
 fu de Garin de Monglenne au vis fier. 40  
 De son lingnaje puis ge bien tesmongnier  
 que il n'i ot .i. coart ne lannier,  
 ne traitor ne vilein losangier;  
 einz furent sage et hardi chevalier,  
 et combatant et nobile guerrier. 45  
 Einz roi de France ne vodrent jor boisier;  
 lor droit seignor se penerent d'aidier,  
 et de s'annor en toz leus avancier.  
 Crestienté firent molt essaucier,  
 et Sarrazins confondre et essillier. 50  
 .iiii. fiz ot cil Garins au vis fier,  
 onques ne furent plus hardi chevalier,  
 mien escient, que en un jor entier  
 lor grant bonté ne porroie noncier.  
 Li premiers fiz, mentir ne vos en quier, 55  
 si fu Hernaut de Biaulende le fier.  
 Li autres fu, si com j'oi tesmongnier,  
 Mile de Puille, qui tant fist a proïsier.  
 Li tierz après fu de Genvres Renier,  
 et li carz fu dan Girart le guerrier. 60

[At Saint-Denis, in the main abbey,  
 we find written--I don't doubt it at all--  
 in a book of great ancestry,  
 that there were three lineages (gestes) in strong France;  
 I don't think anyone will contradict me on this. 5  
 The most powerful is that of the kings of France,  
 and the next--it is right that I should say it--  
 was of Doon of the white beard,  
 the one from Mainz who was a very great lord.  
 In his lineage were fierce and rugged people; 10  
 they would have had the lordship of all of France  
 and of power and of knighthood,  
 were they not full of pride and envy.  
 From that lineage, in which there was so much treachery,  
 came Ganelon, who by his treason 15  
 caused great suffering in France the strong  
 when he committed in Spain the great felony  
 that caused the death, among the pagans,  
 of the Twelve Peers of France.

You have heard tell in many a song 20  
 that, from the lineage (geste) that sprang from Ganelon,  
 many a great knight was descended,  
 fierce and bold and of very great renown.  
 They would have been lords of the whole realm of France  
 if they had not been given to pride and treason; 25  
 but through pride--we tell you truly--  
 many a high-placed man has fallen to earth,  
 just as the angels--we know it in truth--  
 who, through their own fault,  
 were thrown down into the prison of hell 30  
 where they will feel nothing but eternal pain.  
 They lost the holy mansion of heaven  
 by their pride and their folly.  
 And like that were Ganelon's kin,  
 who were so powerful and of such great renown, 35  
 if only they had not been so prone to treason.  
 Of this lineage, which did nothing but evil,  
 was the second cycle (geste).

The third cycle (geste), which was extremely praiseworthy,  
 was that of Garin of Mnglane, of the fierce countenance. 40  
 In his lineage I can well testify  
 that there was not a single coward or good-for-nothing  
 or traitor or base flatterer;  
 rather they were wise and bold knights  
 and good fighters and noble warriors. 45  
 Never once did they wish to betray a king of France;  
 they endeavored to help their legitimate lord  
 and to further his honor everywhere.  
 They advanced the cause of christianity

and destroyed and confounded Saracens. 50  
Garin of the fierce countenance had four sons;  
never were there bolder knights,  
in my opinion, with the result that if one had a whole day,  
one could not do justice to their great qualities.  
The first son--I have no wish to lie to you-- 55  
was Hernaut of Beaulande, the fierce.  
The second, as I have heard tell, was  
Milon of Apulia, who was so praiseworthy.  
The third was Renier of Genoa,  
and the fourth was lord Girart the warrior. 60]