The Two Itineraries in the Poem *Il Detto del gatto lupesco*

The Thirteenth Century poem known as "Il Detto del gatto lupesco" has been quite a problem for literary critics as evidenced by the dearth of literature dealing with it.[1] The problems run the gamut from the most general to the very specific: the significance of the term "gatto lupesco" with which the protagonist identifies himself, the meaning of the text which is suspiciously clear, hinting of something lying beneath, the purpose of the contradictions and lies which continually disorient the reader, the literary genre with which this poem might be associated, the function of the various literary styles which are echoed throughout the text.

An analysis of the poem reflects two frames of meaning. The plot, describing a trip which the protagonist takes, is divided into three parts, and each of these three segments contains references to yet another adventure. First, we find the protagonist happily strolling along, deviating from the road, and meeting two knights; these knights tell him of their search for King Arthur. In the second part, the gatto lupesco continues along until dusk when he stops at a hermitage for the night; he tells the hermit of his plans to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In the final part, the protagonist attempts to leave the hermitage twice, finally succeeding to continue along his way towards the cross, but stops to observe some beasts, and tells us about them. Here the story ends abruptly. Significantly, each of these nine sections mirrors a literary genre of the Duecento: not an accurate representation of a particular

style, but a parody of it. The literary style presented in the text starts out as an orthodox representation of that genre, but is then thwarted, and we are not left with what we had anticipated. The result is a hodge-podge of literary types.

Who is taking this trip? The enigmatic gatto lupesco: part cat, domesticated and mild-mannered, and part wolf, brave and adventurous.[2] He claims to be on a journey of truth, but the stories he tells seem, at times, grandiose, exaggerated, or just plain untrue. The reason for this confusion lies in the personality of the storyteller. The cat starts with a basis of truth, but then exaggerates and gets carried away in his storytelling in order to promote the wolf in him. In recounting his adventures, he embellishes them to build himself up and make himself seem more courageous and ambitious than he actually is, in short, to be more of a wolf and less of a cat.

The result is a two-tiered poem. At one level we find a cat, who aspires to "wolfness," presenting his tales of a journey; at another level, we find a parody of the literary styles of the day. The parallel is clear. The cat demands honesty and promises the same in return, but then lies and exaggerates to make himself seem greater. The literary styles deviate from the traditional schema in an attempt to be more grandiose and more original.

The poem is also a parody of the liberties taken by the writers of the Duecento. Their attempts at embellishing their style result in a disorienting confusion which retains enough of the original traits of a particular genre to recognize the model, but which exaggerates to the point of foolishness.

Both levels of meaning—the superficial level of the cat who promises the truth but lies so as to be more wolfish, and the deeper level of the literary styles which at first promise to be authentic samples of a particular genre, but innovate in an attempt to be more creative—disorient the reader, present the unexpected, and result in a new hybrid form which possesses strong echoes of the original model. The reading becomes clear when we recognize the parallel between these two levels of meaning.

To prove this hypothesis, I need first show that the protagonist is not a human being but a cat. Specifically, he is a cat who wants to be a wolf

and lies and exaggerates to prove himself so. I will then plot the itinerary through the world of Thirteenth Century literature. At the end of the paper I will present some stylistic devices successfully employed by the poet.

At the start of the poem we meet the protagonist who is happily strolling along thinking about his love:

> per un cammino trastullando,
> e d'un mio amor gia pensando (vv. 5–6)

"Trastullare," though unusual in its intransitive use, clearly implies amusement and enjoyment.

Barattelli notes the apparent paradox of someone "trastullando" (v. 5) and walking "a capo chino" (v. 7) and at the same time.[3] Since "a capo chino" is often associated with a "uomo deferente o pensieroso" (369), it is unreconcilable with the fact that the protagonist is leisurely walking along thinking about one of his loves. She offers two possible explanations: "a capo chino" might be explained as the description of someone who is "talmente occupato a seguire il filo dei suoi pensieri da non prestare la minima attenzione al paesaggio" (374): he is happy ("trastullando") and engrossed in his thoughts ("a capo chino"). Her other explanation is more seductive: "a capo chino" is a position which is "consueta per un animale" (369), and is so used in literature contemporary to this poem. Hence, the protagonist is an animal ("a capo chino") which is happy ("trastullando").

Accepting the latter interpretation buys us an explanation of another difficult term: "insuno" (v. 37). If we assume that the protagonist is, in fact, an animal, then when he talks to the cavaliers he must look up, *in su*.[4]

This first intuition that the protagonist is an animal is consistent with his response to the cavaliers' question "Ki sse' tu?" (v. 12). He admits that, quite obviously, he is a cat—a very particular type of cat—a "gatto lupesco."[5] He does not say that his name is Gatto Lupesco but that he is "*uno* gatto lupesco" (v. 15; italics mine).

It is significant that he chooses the adjectival suffix -esco instead of any other one. He could have called himself a gatto lupaceo, lupiano, lupigno, lupese, lupano, lupate, luputo, luposo, or the most common

form, lupino (as in volpino, pollino, vaccino, caprino, canino). Instead, he chose a suffix which, in the Middle Ages, commonly indicated ethnic groups (as in arabesco, barbaresco, francesco, moresco, persesco, polesinesco, pantesco, romanesco, turchesco) or membership in a particular family (as in Tancredeschi, Filippeschi, Corradeschi, Aldobrandeschi). The suffix was also used in the Fourteenth Century to indicate a certain behavior (contadinesco, cavalleresco, donnesco, guerresco, pazzesco). Hence, the poet carefully chose an adjectival ending which would denote both wolf-like behavior and membership in the wolf-family.

Confirmation of the proposition that the protagonist is indeed a cat, is the way in which he leaves the hermitage:

> ed uscìo fuor dello rumitag[g]io
> per un sportello k'avea la porta (vv. 84–85)

This "sportello" was a cat entrance built into the door.[6] Barattelli (365) also suggests that at the end of the poem when the gatto lupesco says "tornai a lo mi' ostello" (v. 143), he meant that he returned to his "tana."

Evidence that he is *not* human comes from the verses in which he *compares* himself to humans:

> uomini vanno....così m'andava (vv. 1,4)
> e io com' uomo päuroso (v. 92)

In these two cases he is not saying that he *is* a 'uomo che va' and a 'uomo pauroso' but that he is *like* a 'uomo che va' and a 'uomo pauroso.'

The fact that the protagonist is not a person, but a cat, is now well established. This may have been obvious to the audience if Spitzer (I, 495) is correct to surmise that "il giullare per la recitazione del suo poema forse si era mascherato da gatto lupesco." But he is not just an ordinary cat. He is a very special one, one which can talk and which earns the respect of the cavaliers who first address him with the familiar "tu" (v. 12) and later with the more formal "voi" (v. 35) and the title of respect "ser" (v. 35).[7]

Throughout the poem this cat lies and exaggerates. The reason is clear when we view the type of lie in the context of the liar's identity. The

protagonist is a would-be wolf in the body of a cat. He tries to make himself seem more courageous and adventuresome than he actually is.

What are these lies? To begin *in medias res* we find two blatant contradictions in his story about leaving the hermitage and setting off into the desert: the first regarding the darkness of the desert and the second regarding the ferocity of the beasts.

At his first attempt to depart from the hermitage, he set off "sicuramente" (v. 87), but it was so dark outside that he turned back in fear:

> e non vidi via neuna.
> L'aria era molto scura,
> e 'l tempo nero e tenebroso;
> e io com' uomo päuroso
> ritornai ver' lo romito (vv. 89–93)

At his second attempt to leave the hermit, he set out "bellamente" (v. 107)[8] towards the cross and finds himself in the same dark, harsh desert:

> e quasi non vedea neente
> per lo tempo ch'iera oscuro (vv. 108–109)

He claims that the cross is at least ten miles away (v. 102) and that the desert is very dark (vv. 108–109). How could he see a cross so far away, especially if the desert is pitch black?

His second contradiction involves the beasts. When he first leaves the hermitage he sets off "sicuramente," is frightened by the darkness, and turns back in fear. At his second attempt he sets off "bellamente," is greeted by not only the same dark, harsh desert, but this time there are "bestie ragunate" (v. 113) as well. Instead of turning back in fear again, this curious cat does the opposite. He stays on to observe the beasts: "per vedere,/ per conoscere e per sapere" (vv. 117–118). If he was so frightened by the darkness, why is he not frightened by the beasts?

Note that there are striking similarities between vv. 89–91 and vv. 108–110, his two attempts to leave the hermitage. These parallel structures highlight the radical difference in the actions of the gatto lupesco after each of these scenes:

e non vidi via neuna.	e quasi non vedea neente
L'aria era molto scura,	per lo tempo ch'iera oscuro
e 'l tempo nero e tenebroso	e 'l diserto aspro e duro
(vv. 89–91)	(vv. 108–110)

The setting is identical in his two attempts to go out into the desert, but his reactions to these settings are very different. The first time he turns back in fear, but the second time he is not frightened by the darkness nor by the beasts.

How can his contradictory reactions be explained? First, if it is so dark that he can not see the road (v. 89) or anything at all (v. 108), how can he see the cross ten miles away (vv. 101–102) and the beasts which he describes so accurately (vv. 121–134)? Clearly, the desert cannot be that dark; he must be exaggerating as to the darkness of the desert. Second, why is he suddenly courageous when confronted by the beasts? Perhaps these beasts are not so ferocious, anxious to attack any living creature, as the protagonist might have us believe.[9] After all, they are merely waiting for "alcuna pastura" (v. 116), a term which hardly connotes ferocity! In Medieval writings, animals which were associated with *pastura* were not frightful at all:

> li columbi adunati a la pastura (Purgatorio 2, 125)
> la greggia menava or per la pastura (Giamboni, *Volgarizzamento*, Firenze, 1849, p. 153).

Doves and sheep, symbols of peace and innocence! Hence, his escape from the "per maestria" (v. 139) might not have been so clever after all.[10]

In both of these incidents, the gatto lupesco starts out with the truth, but then changes the story to make himself seem bolder and braver. But we know that the desert was not quiet as dark as he would have us believe, nor were the beasts as ferious.

A peculiar aspect of the list of beasts is the fact that it progresses from the known to the unknown, from the possible to the impossible. The gatto lupesco begins with well known animals: "un grande leofante" (v. 121), "un verre molto grande" (v. 122). He then starts interspersing fantastic and unknown animals into the list: "due dragoni" (v. 126), "una bestia strana,/ ch'uomo appella baldivana" (vv. 129–130). He

concludes with a series of mysterious animals: "la paupera,/ e 'l gatto padule e la lea,/ e la gran bestia baradinera" (vv. 132–134), and an abrupt end to his list, explaining that there were still many other beasts (v. 135) which he does not tell us about because "nonn è tempo né stagione" (v. 137).[11]

Significantly, the list of people and places he will visit has exactly the same number of items (eighteen, if v. 60 had two people or places) as the list of beasts, and it too gets continually more exotic and tangential to the flow of the story, only to end abruptly. It starts off as a usual pilgrimage to the Holy Land:

> Io me ne vo in terra d'Egitto,
> e voi' cercare Saracinia
> e tutta terra pagania (vv. 56–58)

It starts getting a little bizarre as he intersperses exotic people with the places he will visit: he puts "Tedeschi" with "Arabici e 'Braici' " (v. 59); he includes figures well known in the folklore of the day "'l soldano e 'l Saladino/ e 'l Veglio....e l'amiraglio e 'l Massamuto,/ e l'uomo per cui Cristo è atenduto" (vv. 61–16; 65–66). This last person, the wandering Jew, triggers a new thought in his mind, and he goes off on a tangent, giving a dramatic recounting of the crucifixion. Once again, he ends the list abruptly: "così cci guardi Dio di guerra" (v. 80).[12] Perhaps, as in the previous list of animals, here too he realizes his lies and suddenly truncates his list.

This same structure (beginning with the possible, becoming bizarre and highly improbable, and ending suddenly) is represented in the overall construction of the poem, which also ends abruptly with: "Però finisco ke ffa bello" (v. 144).[13]

Digging a bit deeper, we reach the second level of meaning where we hear echoes of the Thirteenth Century literary tradition. All of the characters and adventures recorded in this poem reflect a literary precedent. In the perfectly symmetrical structure of the superficial level of this poem (three adventures with references to three others), we find specific literary precedents. But these are not true samples of the style recorded. Instead, they are thwarted versions of them.

The first part of the peom reminds us of a pastoral—a cavalier in an unspecified location deviates from the main road and meets . . . well, here is the parody. Instead of meeting the expected shepherdess, he meets two knights. And so we are lead into the next literary genre. The stage is set for a story from a courtly romance, but instead the gatto lupesco embarrassingly responds in a rude and pretentious manner to the knights question "Ki sse' tu?" (v. 12):

> "Quello k'io sono, ben mi si pare.
> Io sono uno gatto lupesco,
> ke a catuno vo dando un esco,
> ki non mi dice veritate.
> Però saper vogl[i]o ove andate,
> e voglio sapere onde sete
> e di qual parte venite." (vv. 14–20)

When the gatto lupesco and the knights take leave of each other, the protagonist continues until nightfall and stops at a hermitage. The hermit is also a well known character in the courtly romances and provides the setting for the poet to present the religious genres. When the gatto lupesco outlines his itinerary (vv. 56–65) for the hermit, we are reminded of the literature chronicling pilgrimages and trips, and the exaggerations in those travel accounts. The drama, choreography, and participation of the masses in the gatto lupesco's account of the passion and death of Jesus Christ (vv. 67–79) mirrors the passion plays and lauds, popular in this period "per il tono fervido ed estroso del loro vario proporsi e intersecarsi....nel suo carattere collettivo, nella fraterna partecipazione d'intere comunità alla preghiera" (Pasquini, 481). We are also presented with another well known personage, the wandering Jew (vv. 66–76). But the story of this wandering Jew is slightly skewed. Instead of being a curse, this Jew was rewarded with eternal earthly existence!

The gatto lupesco takes leave of the hermit and sets off towards a cross which is miraculously visible in the darkness, reminding us of symbolic motifs in literature. He stops to observe a group of animals which he describes in a detailed but not in a scientific manner, interspersing well known animals with fantastic creatures, parodying the excesses of the didactic and scientific literature of the day.

So we have not one, but two sets of lies: the lies of a cat who wants to be a wolf, and the lies of literature which ventures beyond the prescribed parameters of a particular style.

Stylistic sophistication is manifest throughout this poem. Noteworthy are the verses which mention numbers and have lexical repetition. These verses act as signals for the reader to beware, and, in fact, each of these verses signals a change in the adventures of the gatto lupesco and a shifting of the literary genre.

The mention of numbers and the parallel structure of vv. 9–10 catch our attention and signal a change in both levels of reading:

ed intrai in uno sentieri
ed incontrai duo cavalieri (vv. 9–10)

These verse mark a turning point in the gatto lupesco's adventure: from a carefree stroll along the main road, to an encounter on a minor road with the two knights of King Arthur. It also signals a change in the literary style used—from the pastoral to the courtly romance.

Similarly, the near identical structure of these next two verses and the mention of numbers tell us a lot more than the distances he must travel, into the desert the first day, and towards the cross the second:

ben trenta miglia certo (v. 46)
ben diece miglia certo (v. 102)

We recognize the clues to beware after each of these verses, and note a change in the story. After each of these verses, the protagonist begins an important monologue: in the first case his itinerary, in the second the list of beasts. Predictably, at each of these points in the poem, the poet introduces a new literary genre. In the first case, we are presented with the hermit and the religious styles, and in the second with the symbolism of the cross and the symbolic motif in literature.[14]

Another pair of alliterated verses in which numbers are mentioned again signals a turning point:

e vidivi quattro leopardi
e due dragoni cun rei squardi (vv. 125–126)

It is precisely here that the list of beasts changes from being a list of possible, though highly improbable animals ("leopardi"), to a list of

impossible ones ("dragoni"). Here the spoof on contemporary scientific and didactic literature begins.

The lexical repetition of vv. 77–79 and vv. 95–96 attract our attention. In the first case the gatto lupesco describes the dramatic crucifixion of Christ and the people crying out "a boce" (v. 78), followed by "allora tremò tutta la terra" (v. 79). In the second case he describes his fearful perception of the dark desert and his return to the hermit to whom he pleaded "d'una boce" (v. 95) for directions. The hermit "allora mi guardòe" (v. 99) and pointed to the cross. In both cases, we find a dramatic setting and the use of the words "boce" followed by ("allora") an important scene in the story—the death of Christ and the indication of the correct road in the desert. At a deeper level, we find the introduction of a symbolic motif: the earthquake representing God's anger after Christ's death, and the cross indicating the right Way.

Some terms continue to present interpretative dilemmas, for example, "esco" (v. 16).[15] After introducing himself, the protagonist explains that "a catuno vo dando un esco,/ chi non mi dice veritate" (vv. 15–17). Various explanations include Spitzer's (I, 495) " 'cogliere *in flagranti*' (i bugiardi)," Contini's (288) "adescare, catturare," Muscetta's (321) "una bastonata, un incitamento (?)," and Barattelli's (364) "?." Perhaps the latter are the most honest since *esco* is truly problematic. *Esco*, a masculine noun, is usually defined in historical and etymological dictionaries[16] as an early form of *esca*, but the only reference given is from this poem. If *esco* is an early variant of *esca*, there are numerous entries in the historical dictionaries for the idiom "dare (. . .) esca" (although not precisely "dare un'esca") which should shed some light on the same meaning of "dare un esco," as appears in the poem:

1. dare esca—fomentare (Tommaseo-Bellini)
2. dare esca—allettare con lusinghe (Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario*)
3. dare a mordere l'esca—ingannare con lusinghe (Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario*)

The one connotation common to these definitions is that of trickery or allurement. If *esco* does equal *esca*, we get an image of the protagonist

as someone who will not be straightforward with those who are not honest with him. However, since the only documentation of *esco* appears to be from this poem, it is just as possible that it is not a variant of *esca*, but was another noun with a specific meaning or connotation which is lost to us today.

If this is the case, we must resign ourselves to Muscetta's and Barattelli's "?." Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned here. Many of the problematic verses will have to remain just that because the "in" jokes, the actual recitation of the poem, the identity of the author and the audience are lost to us forever,[17] just as Barattelli (378) notes that much of our understanding of the poem is "compromessa dalla perdita di punti di riferimento del tutto immediati per un lettore medievale."

The cat, who wants to be a wolf, desires the truth from everyone (vv. 16–17), from the knights (vv. 18–20), from the hermit (v. 97), and from the beasts (vv. 117–118), and promises honesty in return (vv. 53–55). But this promise of truthfulness must pass through the prism of the gatto lupesco's ego and fragments into lies and exaggerations, leading into a fantasy world where he is no longer a cat, but a brave and adventurous wolf. So too with the literary styles. With each genre, we are presented with a few strokes of the pen which outline and promise a particular style, but we are unexpectedly left with a strange variant of that style. Just as the cat uses exaggerations as a means to be more wolfish, so too the literary styles exceed their limits to be more creative and original. The clever author of this poem is playing with the writers of the day who try to create a wolf out of a cat, who go beyond the limits of the genres available, resulting in a foolish hybrid. He continues to reach out through the centuries to "dare un esco" to the modern readers of this poem.

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Notes

1. For typographic simplicity, I will refer to Guerrieri Crocetti's 1914 article as Guerrieri Crocetti (I), his 1952 article as Guerrieri Crocetti (II), and his 1956 article as Guerrieri Crocetti (III). Spitzer's 1959 article will be referred to as Spitzer (I) since it was written before his 1957 article, which will be referred to as Spitzer (II). I will refer to Muscetta and Rivalta's text as Muscetta, and I will use their version of the poem in the present paper. The main difference between Muscetta's and Contini's versions of the poem is found in the first verse: "Dico mal....uomini vanno," (Muscetta, Guerrieri Crocetti, Spitzer, Folena); "Sì com'altri uomini vanno" (Contini, Barattelli). Critics offer varying interpretations of each. Other differences between the two versions (Muscetta's and Contini's, respectively) which, however, do not interfere with the interpretation of the text, are found in the following verses:

v. 6	e di mio amor gía pensando e d'un mio amor gia pensando
v. 37	E io rispuosi a loro insuno E io rispuosi allora insuno
v. 74	e Cristo si rivolse ad esso e Cristo si rivolse adesso
v. 81	E a questa mi dipartio....dando A questa mi dipartìo andando

2. Why did the author choose to create a *gatto lupesco*, an unattested hybrid in Medieval writings, as opposed to any other animal combination? Spitzer sees the cat as being associated with fear and the wolf with courage, and offers a Freudian interpretation of the personality of the protagonist as being composed of two antagonistic parts, "una che vuole e una che 'svuole'....una che spinge verso una meta ambiziosa e una che reagisce....una parte coraggiosa ('lupo') e una paurosa ('gatto')...." (I, 502–503). Guerrieri Crocetti (II, 24) says that the cat represents astuteness and the wolf ferociousness, and sees this combination in allegorical terms, an interpretation which follows from his earlier analysis (I, 210) of the poem as a "contrasto tra la vita attiva e la vita contemplativa."

3. Spitzer (I, 494) believes that the protagonist is walking "a capo chino" because "pensava con dolore a un suo amore infelice," but Guerrieri Crocetti (II, 26) claims that he is "tutto attratto dai piaceri terreni....impedendo di volgere lo sguardo in alto."

4. Guerrieri Crocetti (II, 23) is closest to this interpretation when he contrast "insuno" (meaning "in su") with "capo chino." "Insuno" would not, therefore, mean "subito" as claimed by Muscetta (322), Contini (289), and Spitzer (I, 497).

5. It can not be so obvious if the cavaliers need to ask "Ki sse' tu?" (v. 12).

6. Spitzer (I, 492; 494) sees the "sportello" as a comic device: the protagonist is a coward who does not leave through the main door, but through a small door. But, Barattelli (369) and Contini (291) believe that the "sportello" is an animal entrance, a claim supported by similar use of this term in Sacchetti (Novella 6): "E 'l Basso così nella gabbia collo sportello serraio, cominciò a squittire...."

7. The gatto lupesco uses the plural "voi" with the knights (vv. 18, 19, 20, 38) and the familiar "tu" (v. 96) with the hermit.

8. Spitzer (II, 460) confidently confirms his earlier suspicion (I, 500) that "bellamente" means "ordinatamente e garbatamente," an interpretation supported by Folena (267). Guerrieri Crocetti (II, 27) maintains that it means "agevolmente e senza sforzi." Barattelli (365) recently provided convincing evidence that the meaning of "bellamente" is "slowly." These interpretations all appear to be acceptable and not in contradiction with one another. Use of *bellamente* in Medieval Literature connoted both slowness and a comfortable easy manner:

Regime du Corps (Schiaffini)
"e dee la vischicha priemere bellamente" (186)
"e meni la qulla bellamente e soavemente" (190)
"soavemente e bellamente muovere e al fuoco aprossimarsi" (200)

As a result we have an image of the protagonist leaving the hermit the second time in a good mood and in an unhurried manner.

9. He succeeds in convincing Guerrieri Crocetti (I, 208) and Barattelli (377) that the beasts were ferocious and he brave. Spitzer is less credulous. He (I, 492) claims that the only adjective used to describe the beasts, "alpestre" (v. 120), is a bit comic when associated with the animals the gatto lupesco claims to have seen, and that the poet "maschera gli animali più innocenti da belve" (I, 501).

10. Various attempts at defining his "maestria" include Spitzer's (I, 501) "piuttosto intellettuale che morale;" Guerrieri Crocetti's (II, 19) "abilmente;" Contini's (293) "con abilità;" and Muscetta's (326) "con magica abilità."

11. How strange that he should claim it is not the time to tell about the other beasts after he carried on for thirteen verses about some! Why is it not the time to continue the list? Significant is the repetition of the word "tempo." When he first leaves the hermit to venture out into the desert (v. 91) " 'l tempo" was "nero e tenebroso." Similarly, the second time (v. 109) "lo tempo" was "oscuro." In this setting the protagonist creates grand tales of fantastic beasts, a cross visible in the darkness, and dissipated fears. Then he abruptly ends the tale because "nonn è tempo" (v. 137). When it was dark, the "tempo" was right for tale-telling. Now it is not the right "tempo;" therefore, it might be assumed that it was no longer dark. The new day had dawned, and the dreams had to end. Only in the darkness are such fantasies allowed.

12. Spitzer (I, 498; 506) understands this verse to mean that, as God protected us during the earthquake at Christ's death, so may he protect us from other catastrophes, like war! Guerrieri Crocetti (III, 116) disagrees with Spitzer and explains that these words were a common interjection used during the horror and terror of certain circumstances.

13. Spitzer (I, 502) sees this final verse as the author's arbitrary ending to the fantasy world into which he had lead us. Barattelli (363) sees it as "quasi uno sberleffo per chi ha potuto prendere sul serio il *récit*...."

14. In addition, we find another lie. It has already been established that in the case of the cross, which is supposedly ten miles from the hermitage (v. 102) the protagonist

is lying. He could not have seen a cross ten miles away in the darkness, even if the desert was not quite as dark as he might have us believe. We may assume that the use of a nearly identical structure (v. 46) indicates that he is lying again. This is surely within the realm of possibility. A thirty mile trek in a single day in the desert is quite a feat for a meager cat!

15. Critics also question the poet's choice of "san Simone" (v. 138) Spitzer (I, 493) says this is the apostle Simon, a saint only rarely invoked, and, in this case, for humoristic reasons. Guerrieri Crocetti (III, 117) believes the poet chooses this name for purposes of rhyme. Contini (292) agrees with both Spitzer and Guerrieri Crocetti when he says that Simone is used for reason of rhyme and a burlesque tone. Brattelli (367) is a bit more original when she notes that a certain Saint Simon was a guide for pilgrims in the Eleventh Century, and was adopted by the gatto lupesco as his patron saint.

16. See Battaglia (*Grande Dizionario*) and Cortelazzo-Zolli (*Dizionario Etimologico*) but most dictionaries do not have an entry for *esco*.

17. It is commonly accepted that the poet was a jester who wrote in the Thirteenth Century. A seductive project for further research is to study the poem's theatrical aspects (especially with reference to the work of Paul Zumthor) and to examine its relation to the goliardic literature of the day which celebrates (and perhaps derides the excesses of?) "l'esaltazione della vita libera" (Muscetta, 18), as does this piece.

The similar name of an Eighth Century writer, Cathuulfus (Dümmler, 502–505), which also appears written as Cathwlphi (Bouquet, 634), Kathvulf (Laistner, 112), and Cathwulf (Wallace, 190) does not appear to be more than a coincidence. This author, about whom little is known, wrote a mini-treatise in the form of a letter to Charlemagne dealing with monarchic rule, the relation between temporal and spiritual powers, the relation between Church and State, the personal qualification of a God-directed king, in short, a manual of Christian ethics for Christian rulers.

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