

**THE PROLOGUE IN THE
OLD FRENCH AND
PROVENÇAL MYSTERY**

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The prologue in the Old French and Provençal mystery by David Hobart Carnahan

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DAVID HOBART CARNAHAN

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Prologue in the Old French
AND
Provençal Mystery

BY
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A Thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Yale University
in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
1905



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PREFACE

The present study is divided into two parts. Part I was presented in candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Yale University; Part II is supplementary, in order to complete fully the subject.

No previous work has been done on the prologue, considered as a whole, although references have been made to it frequently in the various editions of mysteries and in articles on the subject of the mystery.

The epilogue likewise has not been studied, but I have begun work on it and shall complete it after the publication of the present article.

The work used as guide, and consulted continually in this study, was "Les Mystères" of M. Petit de Julleville, Paris, 1880. It is a reliable and very complete treatise on the mysteries known up to that date. Reference is made to it for description of manuscripts and editions used, and for the analysis of the entire mystery from which a prologue is taken.

Seventy-eight Old French mysteries, including several fragments, and nine Provençal mysteries are named in the Table of Mysteries, page 191 of this volume. The total number is considerably greater, as various groups of closely allied mysteries have been placed under one number, as [24] Douze mystères de N.-D. de Liessc, [78] Le Vieux Testament, including nine short mysteries, [87] Mystères Rouergats, etc. A few Breton mysteries only were selected, as they are, to a certain extent, outside the scope of this article.

Of the seventy-eight Old French mysteries named, seventeen were found in manuscript form. Twenty-seven were found in rare editions, preserved in the "Réserve" of the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris.

Only prologues of the regular type have been considered in the body of this work. Irregular and doubtful forms have been treated in a separate chapter.

The number of verses in the regular prologues copied is somewhat over seven thousand, while the entire number copied, including irregular and doubtful forms, is over thirteen thousand.

Only a few of the representative prologues have been reproduced in the appendix of this study, this being done merely to illustrate various points of versification. In a supplementary work which is to appear within the year, I shall publish a number of prologues which exist only in manuscripts or rare editions in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris.

I wish to express my thanks to the members of the Department of Romance Languages of Yale University for the instruction I have received from them. In particular my thanks are due Professor Frederick M. Warren for the suggestion of a so fruitful a subject for a dissertation, and to Professor Henry R. Lang for his kind assistance in the preparation of the work. It should be added that a part of the expense of publishing this thesis has been borne by the Modern Language Club of Yale University from funds placed at its disposal by Mr. George E. Dimock, of Elizabeth, New Jersey, a graduate of Yale in the Class of 1874.

D. H. C.

July 22, 1905.

INTRODUCTION

The prologue of a mystery is an introductory speech, delivered by the author at the beginning of the representation, a member of the company or a priest, not a member of the company, for the purpose of fixing the attention of the audience, of giving them an understanding of the plot of the piece, and of serving as a vehicle for the apologies and explanations of the author.¹

Each prologue contains one or more of the following elements: sermon, analysis of the preceding or following "journée," description of stage setting, introduction of actors, apology for subject matter or manner of presentation, reasons for producing, mention of sources.

These prologues are of pure French development; no traces of the influences of the classic drama can be found in them. Just as the Old French mystery is a development of the Latin liturgical drama of the Middle Ages, so the prologue is a descendant, in part at least, of the introductory forms found in this same drama.

Nothing occurs in the tropes and early forms of this liturgical drama which corresponds to the prologue, but in the later, more developed drama various introductory forms are found which may well be considered prologues. The rôle of the chorus or of the "Praeceptor" at the beginning of the ceremony is the clearest example of this resemblance. The following examples from the Latin mystery-plays will illustrate this fact.

¹The word "prologuist" will be used throughout this work to indicate the person who delivers the prologue speech, the English term "prologue" being ambiguous.