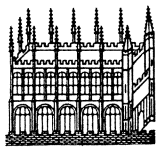
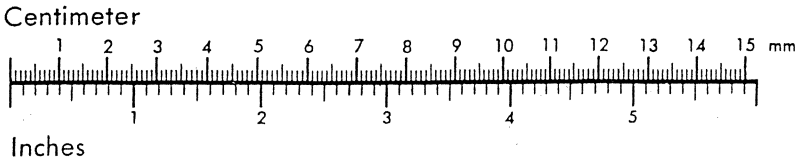
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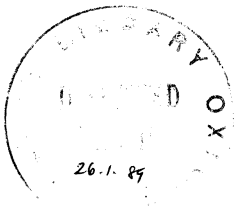
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Four Middle English Charlemagne Romances:

A Revaluation of the Non-Cyclic Verse Texts and the Holograph Sir Ferumbras

by Stephen Henry Alexander Shepherd

A Thesis
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Doctor of Philosophy
in
The University of Oxford



St Cross College
Trinity, 1988

ABSTRACT

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St Cross College, Oxford Trinity Term, 1988

Four Middle English Charlemagne Romances: A Revaluation of the Non-Cyclic Verse Texts and the Holograph Sir Ferumbras

Four Middle English Charlemagne Romances are examined with the intention of disproving conventional claims that English romances of the 'Matter of France' are typically undistinguished.

The manuscript of the Ashmole Sir Ferumbras is a holograph; preserved with it, on sheets which originally formed the binding, is a portion of the poem's rough draft. Comparison of the draft with the fair copy reveals something of the romancer's translational and compositional method, and illustrates well his enthusiasm for, and ability occasionally to improve upon, his French source.

The fragment of The Song of Roland displays some sensitivity to the heroic essence of its famous French model. The poem also displays, however, a free, sensitive, sometimes eloquent and technically complex, adaptation of notable features of that model.

The Sege of Melayne has been recognized for its energy; but extensive studies of the poem appear to have been prevented by an inability to account for the poem's lack of known sources and its use of extraordinary episodes and unusual narrative techniques. Analogues and possible influences do, however, exist; and most reveal the poem's remarkable affinity with propagandistic crusading literature. This affinity goes some way toward explaining, and allowing us to appreciate, the poem's unusual features.

Rauf Coilgear is usually described as a competent and straightforwardly humorous tale similar in spirit to its analogues. A closer look, however, shows the humour to be complicated by the seriousness of a social critique; at times the hero's experience is far from laughable. There is, in fact, some similarity, both of incident and theme, with the best poems of the 'Gawain-group'. That a comparison with such poems (and, indeed, with 'serious' elements in the other Charlemagne romances) can convincingly be made suggests that our expectations of the poem's literary significance should be revised accordingly.

PREFACE

I am grateful to two institutions for financial support during my years at Oxford; the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada have provided me with a Doctoral Fellowship, and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom have provided me with Overseas Research Student Awards.

To my Supervisor, Professor Douglas Gray, go many thanks for his generous advice and his encouragement in this project and other academic matters. Finally, I thank my parents, the value of whose support during my time as a graduate student has been inestimable.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following are the principal abbreviations used.

BL	British Library
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale
cf.	compare
ed(d).	editor(s)
EETS	Early English Text Society (Original Series, unless otherwise indicated)
ME	Middle English
MED	Middle English Dictionary
MS(S)	Manuscript(s)
n.	note
No(s)	Number(s)
OE	Old English
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
OF	Old French
ON	Old Norse
STC	Short-Title Catalogue
STS	Scottish Text Society (Original Series, unless otherwise indicated)
trans.	translator
vol(s)	volume(s)

Accidiosus libencius audit frivola
de Rodlando et Olivero
quam utilem sermonem de deo.*

---ooOoo---

Þe king, þe quhilis, meryly
Red to þaim, þat war him by,
Romanys off worthi ferumbrace.
. . .
The gud kyng, apon þis maner,
Comfort[yt] þaim þat war him ner
And maid þaim gamyn [and] solace.**

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* Oxford, Balliol College, MS 196;462.R.9, fol. 217ra; from an anonymous work on the Seven Deadly Sins.

** John Barbour, The Bruce, edited by W.W. Skeat, EETS, Extra Series, No. 11 (London, 1870), lines 435-465.

INTRODUCTION

The quotations on the previous page are there not because they might provide new insight into the medieval reception of the English Charlemagne romances (though both suggest a considerable popularity which should not be ignored); they are there because I think they sum up the essential procedures of the modern reception of these poems, and, for all their simplicity, introduce those procedures more clearly and memorably than would excerpts from modern critiques. The poems are viewed in two ways, with obviously incompatible results. The disparaging view in the Balliol MS treats the poems as a uniform group, without concern for individual works within the group. It compares them unfavourably with what is considered a more worthwhile kind of work. The favourable view in The Bruce derives from the reading of one romance in particular.

The significant difference between these views and their modern counterparts is that the popularity of the Charlemagne romances is now long gone, leaving behind only disparaging generalization (perhaps encouraged by the notion that the Arthurian romances, like the sermons to the Balliol scribe, provide a more worthwhile alternative for study--they are, after all, about British, and not French, heroes).

> The English Charlemagne romances... give the impression that they were written... by writers who were driven to this somewhat uncongenial material by [an] insatiable demand for romances.[1]
>
> The English Charlemagne romances are in the main undistinguished, to say the least.[2]
>
> The matter of France [is] the source of nine of the dreariest and most contemptible pieces, all from the Otuel and Firumbras cycles except for the fragmentary... Song of Roland.[3]

The inevitable result of such sweeping charges is general neglect on the part of scholars and critics;[4] everything that has been written about the English Charlemagne romances since they were first edited would probably occupy fewer than 50 pages.

The neglect leaves a large gap in our knowledge of the Middle English romance corpus, for the Charlemagne romances represent about ten per-cent of all those surviving; as such they constitute the second largest of the "matters" of English romance. Of course, statistics based upon manuscript survival are unreliable, but there is enough evidence from other medieval sources to confirm the prominence of the

---

[1] Dorothy Everett, "A Characterization of the English Medieval Romances", Essays and Studies (Oxford, 1929), p.119.

[2] H.M. Smyser, "Charlemagne Legends", in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500. Fascicule 1: Romances, edited by J. Burke Severs (New Haven, Connecticut, 1967), p.80.

[3] Derek Pearsall, Old English and Middle English Poetry (London, 1977), p.144.

[4] Cf. Smyser's view (Manual, p.258) that Dorothy Everett's comment "articulates what is practically a consensus of critics...".

legends in Britain.[5] Charlemagne was revered as one of the Nine Worthies and considered an equal to Arthur and Alexander (among other heroes) in that medieval pantheon; we are perhaps most familiar with him, in fact, through accounts of the Nine Worthies such as those found in the alliterative Morte Arthure[6] and The Parlement of the Thre Ages.[7] Legends of Charlemagne were known to great writers like Chaucer,[8] Skelton,[9] and Lindsay[10] (though whether they knew them by way

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[5] Including the English poems, moreover, there are more than 400 European texts surviving, either in romance or chronicle form, which trace the legendary exploits of Charlemagne, Roland, Oliver, and others of the Twelve Peers of France; the English Charlemagne romances (and their popularity) thus have a significant part in the literary history of Europe. The most complete catalogue of manuscripts concerning legends of Charlemagne is by André de Mandach, La Geste de Charlemagne et de Roland, Publications romanes et françaises, No. 69 (Geneva, 1961), appendices 'G' and 'H', pp. 364-433.

[6] See Edmund Brock, ed., Morte Arthure, EETS, No. 8 (London, 1871), lines 3422-3429.

[7] See M.Y. Offord, ed., The Parlement of the Thre Ages, EETS, No. 246 (London, 1959), lines 520-583. On the Nine Worthies in general, see Offord's introduction, pp.xl-xlii.

[8] See The Book of the Duchess, lines 1121-1123; and The Canterbury Tales, Fragment VII: The Shipman's Tale, line 194, and The Nun's Priest's Tale, lines 2387-2390 and 3227. All references to Chaucer are from Geoffrey Chaucer, The Riverside Chaucer, general ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, Massachusetts, 1987).

[9] In "Ware The Hauke", Skelton refers to Ferumbras (line 205), and in "Agenst Garneche", to Ferumbras (i, line 15), to the Bridge of Mantrible (from the Fierabras story; i, line 22), to Oliver (ii, line 22) and to Durandal (Roland's sword; ii, line 8). All references to Skelton are to John Skelton, The Complete English Poems, edited by John Scattergood (London, 1983).

of French or English sources is hard to say). Charlemagne legends figure, moreover, in catalogues of the kinds of tales that, according to The Cursor Mundi, "man yhernes... forto here".[11] Perhaps more telling, however, are smaller details which reveal the popularity outside of what might be called a learned or formal context; such details may be a more reliable gauge of everday popularity. The passage from the Balliol MS is of this sort, and similar to that passage is Walter Map's complaint that "only the (trifling) of mimes in vulgar rhymes celebrateth among us the godlike nobility of the Charleses and the Pepins...".[12] In an anonymous ME lyric there is a passing reference--the kind which, in its avoidance of detail, implies popular familiarity--to Floripas, the heroine of the Firumbras story.[13] Similarly,

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[10] Lindsay refers to the duel between Oliver and Fierabras, and possibly to the Roland of Carolingian legend, in "The Historie of... Squyer... Meldrum". See Sir David Lindsay, "The Historie of Ane Nobil and Wailgeand Squyer, William Meldrum...", in The Works of David Lindsay, edited by Douglas Hamer, Scottish Text Society, Third Series, Nos 1, 2, 6, and 8, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1931-1936), I, lines 1313-1316.

[11] J.A.W. Bennett and G.V. Smithers, edd., "Cursor Mundi", in Early Middle English Verse and Prose, second edition, (Oxford, 1974), line 1; for mention of Carolingian heroes, see lines 15-16. For other catalogues of romance heroes featuring those from Carolingian legend, see Karl Brunner, ed., Richard Löwenherz, (Vienna, 1913), lines 1-16; and Ernst Wülfing, ed., The Laud Troy Book, EETS, Nos 121 and 122, 2 vols (London, 1902-1903), I, lines 1-20.

[12] Walter Map, De Nugis curialium, translated by Frederick Tupper and Marbury Bladen Ogle (London, 1924), p.254.

[13] See Carleton Brown, ed. English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century (Oxford, 1932), p.138, line 46.

"The Passion of our Lord" begins by telling us, in a very matter-of-fact way, that the poem "nis hit nouht of Karlemeyne ne of þe Duzeper./ Ac of cristes þruwinge. þet he þolede her";[14] this may be a direct translation from the French, but the translator seems to have had no fear that the Carolingian heroes would have been unknown to English readers. The least that can be said of this evidence is that Charlemagne legends in some form enjoyed the favour of the populace at large; would that we could find as many contemporary references to romances such as Sir Orfeo, Havelock, or even Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (GGK) to back up our modern estimation of those poems.[15]

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[14] Richard Morris, ed., "The Passion of our Lord", in An Old English Miscellany, EETS, No. 49 (London, 1872), lines 8–9.

[15] There is another interesting possible indication of popularity in the differences between accounts of the story of Firumbras as told in the 'Thornton' and 'Ware' texts of the Parlement of the Thre Ages (lines 546–548):

[Thornton] And than moued he hym to Mawltryple Sir Balame to seche,
And that Emperour at Egremorte aftir he takes,
And wolde hafe made Sir Balame a man of oure faythe....

[Ware] Than mevid he to mowtrible Sir Machel to seche.
The Emperoure at Egremourt aftur he takes.
And wold haue had marcel A man of oure faith.

"Balame" is the strictly correct name; he is the Saracen leader of the Firumbras story, whereas "Machel" or "marcel" is Marsille, the Saracen leader of the Roncesvals story. It is difficult to know, however, which is in fact the corrected version; the line should properly alliterate on <m> as it does in the Ware, though the Ware text partially fails itself

Neverthless, as George Kane says, "the popularity of some... romances in their own time must not be made into a plea for letting differences of time and taste conceal their badness".[16] This is true enough, and I would be the first to admit that a few poems in the group do not stand up to close scrutiny; on the other hand, I think that some awareness of the popularity of these texts is important to show that at least some of them were liked; if all of them were as uniformly unremarkable as we have seen some critics make them out to be, then such popularity would have been impossible. Indeed, the way in which these poems are collectively condemned is all the more unfortunate because some of the very same critics I have quoted above have much more positive views when they consider individual romances within the group. Thus we find H.M. Smyser (author of the second quotation on page 3 above) concluding that The Song of Roland is "not wholly lacking in movement",[17] and Derek Pearsall (author of the third quotation) deciding that The Sege of Melayne is "a splendidly stirring fragment".[18] Here the

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on this account in the last line. The telling fact, nevertheless, is that whichever text represents a correction, the correction has been made with some knowledge of Charlemagne legends.

[16] George Kane, Middle English Literature (New York, 1951), p.13.

[17] Smyser, Manual, p.96.

[18] Derek Pearsall, "The Development of Middle English Romance," Mediæval Studies, 27 (1965), 115.

modern critics become less like the 'critic' of the Balliol MS (who, we may suspect, never read a Charlemagne romance) and more like Robert the Bruce and his men, who clearly enjoyed the merits of one romance read on its own terms. A simple observation, then, upon which this thesis is based, is that, as far as the kind of appeal that we should look for in these romances is concerned, Robert the Bruce (or John Barbour) should be good enough authority for anyone.[19]

There are ten Charlemagne verse[20] romances in Middle English, which are usually classified in three groups.[21] The two larger groups concern romances of Otuel and Firumbras. There are three in the Firumbras group: The Sowdone of Babylon,[22] the 'Fillingham' Sir Firumbras,[23] and the 'Ash-

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[19] This is a sentiment I echo from W.L. Renwick and H. Orton, The Beginnings of English Literature to Skelton,1509 (London, 1952), p.46.

[20] There are also three late prose texts which this thesis does not discuss: Caxton's Charles the Grete [edited by Sidney J. Herrtage, EETS, Extra Series, Nos 36 and 37 (London, 1880-1881)] and The Foure Sonnes of Aymon [edited by O. Richardson, EETS, Extra Series, Nos 44 and 45 (London, 1884-1885)], and Sir John Bourchier's The Boke of Duke Huon of Burdeux [edited by S.L. Lee, EETS, Extra Series, Nos 40, 41, 43, and 50 (London, 1882-1887)].

[21] The most complete account of the English Charlemagne romances is by Smyser, Manual, pp.80-100, with a bibliography to circa 1960, pp.256-266. For a bibliography updated to 1985 (but with little to add to Smyser's) see Joanne A. Rice, Middle English Romance: An Annotated Bibliography, 1955-1985, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, No. 545 (London, 1987).

[22] For an edition, see Emil Hausknecht, ed., The Romaunce of The Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbras his Sone who conquerede Rome, EETS, Extra Series, No. 38 (London, 1881). All references to The Sowdone of Babylone are to this

mole' Sir Ferumbras.[24] There are also three Otuel romances, Otuel,[25] Otuel and Roland,[26] and Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne;[27] Rouland and Vernagu[28] also belongs to this group, as an account of the events leading up to the Otinel story proper. The Firumbras and Otuel romances describe the conversion, and subsequent military victories, of a Saracen giant. Both groups of tales derive from continental (French) models which themselves belonged to more protracted cyclic

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edition.

[23] For an edition, see Mary Isabelle O'Sullivan, ed., Firumbras, in 'Firumbras' and 'Otuel and Roland', EETS, No. 198 (London, 1935), pp.3-58. All references to (the Fillingham) Firumbras are to this edition.

[24] Full bibliographic details concerning Sir Ferumbras are provided in Chapter 1.

[25] For an edition, see Sidney J. Herrtage, ed.,The Romance of Otuel, in 'The Taill of Rauf Coilyear' with the Fragments of 'Rouland and Vernagu' and 'Otuel', EETS, Extra Series, No. 39 (London, 1882), pp.65-116, and commentary, pp.122-124. All references to Otuel are to this edition.

[26] For an edition, see O'Sullivan, ed., Otuel and Roland, in 'Firumbras' and 'Otuel and Roland', as cited in note 23 above, pp.59-146. All references to Otuel and Roland are to this edition.

[27] For an edition, see Sidney J. Herrtage, ed., The Romance of Duke Rowlande and of Sir Ottuell of Spayne, in 'The Sege off Melayne' and 'The Romance of Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne'... together with a fragment of 'The Song of Roland', EETS, Extra Series, No. 35 (London, 1880), pp.55-104, and commentary, pp.147-159. All references to Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne are to this edition.

[28] For an edition, see Sidney J. Herrtage, ed., Rouland and Vernagu, in 'The Taill of Rauf Coilyear' with the Fragments of 'Rouland and Vernagu' and 'Otuel', as cited in note 25 above, pp.37-61, and commentary, pp.118-122. All references to Rouland and Vernagu are to this edition.

(and vaguely historical) accounts (extant in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but now lost) of Charlemagne's conquests in Italy and Spain.[29] The exact sources of the English cyclic texts are unknown; they may derive from Anglo-Norman precursors (of which none survive), or they may be translations directly from continental sources (the latter is, as we shall see, probably the case for Sir Ferumbras). Though the remaining three texts frequently show signs of influence from the cyclic legends, they are commonly considered to be either independent insular creations or translations of non-cyclic continental texts. Of the latter kind of provenance is the fragmentary Song of Roland,[30] which derives ultimately from the greatest of all chansons de

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[29] Still the most comprehensive studies on the (continental) origins of the chansons de geste, and the most relevant to legends of Charlemagne, are Gaston Paris, Histoire poétique de Charlemagne, revised edition (Paris, 1905), and Joseph Bédier, Les Légendes épiques, recherches sur la formation des chansons de geste, third edition, 4 vols (Paris, 1926-1929). Also invaluable is Léon Gautier, Les épopées françaises, 3 vols (Paris, 1865-1868). More recent general studies of note include Urban Tigner Holmes jr., "The Post Bédier Theories on the Origins of the Chansons de geste", Speculum, 30 (1955), 72-81; Ferdinand Lot, Études sur les Légendes épiques françaises (Paris, 1958); and David M. Doherty, "The Present Status of Bédier's Theories", Symposium, 14 (1960), 289-299.

The titles listed above are only a selection from what is a vast field of scholarship. For a comprehensive bibliography concerning these matters, see Robert Bossuat, Manuel bibliographique de la littérature française du moyen âge (Melun, 1951), pp.11-16; Supplément (1949-1953) (Paris, 1955), pp.21-22; Second Supplément (1954-1960) (Paris, 1961), p.17; Troisième Supplément (1960-1980) (Paris, 1987), pp.75-80.

[30] Full bibliographic details concerning The Song of Roland are provided in Chapter 2.

geste, the Chanson de Roland. The other two romances, The Sege of Melayne[31] and The Taill of Rauf Coilgear,[32] have no known sources, though the influence of some of the cyclic texts and the Chanson de Roland can be detected.[33]

The four romances I have chosen to examine in this thesis, the three 'non-cyclic' texts and the Ashmole Sir Ferumbras, were chosen principally because they present more unsolved literary problems than the other Charlemagne romances. These are problems about the romances' sources, use of sources, and the literary techniques which they employ; sometimes there are problems about their relationship with the other Charlemagne poems. In the case of The Sege of Melayne there are doubts about its purpose and meaning, and in the case of Sir Ferumbras, the poem invites queries about the very process of composition itself. It is perhaps because problems like these have not been addressed that the English Charlemagne romances as a whole have been neglected, for at least three of these four are among the best the group has to offer, and could safely be said to be comparable with other Middle English romances which have received more attention

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[31] Full bibliographic details concerning The Sege of Melayne are provided in Chapter 3.

[32] Full bibliographic details concerning The Taill of Rauf Coilgear are provided in Chapter 4.

[33] The Sege of Melayne is commonly classified as part of the Otuel group. As Smyser says, however, (Manual, p.93), "this classification is... held to with some misgivings". In my chapter on the Sege, I will describe the reasons for those misgivings and, with my analysis of the poem, reinforce them.

and praise. This study attempts to provide a demonstration of the value of the Charlemagne group by looking at the four romances under investigation with detailed attention to the individual texts and with an awareness of the variety of narrative, literary techniques, and themes they have to offer.

Simply put, my thesis is that there is more variety and literary merit among these romances than we have been led to expect; they deserve a second look. Each chapter is devoted to one of the four romances, and supports this simple proposition. Each chapter can also, however, be viewed independently, where more complex problems associated specifically with the romance under consideration are addressed. The first chapter observes what might be described as a typical English Charlemagne romance in the process of composition. The manuscript in which Sir Ferumbras is preserved is a holograph, and shows us something of the writer's compositional methods, thematic interests, and improvements to his source. Perhaps most important of all, we can see just how much devotion a Middle English romancer had to what Dorothy Everett said was "uncongenial material".

The second chapter is a revaluation of the Middle English fragment of The Song of Roland. This romance has suffered inordinately (even for a Charlemagne romance) from adverse criticism without responsible examination. I focus upon three aspects of the text which reveal its merits: its

use of sources, its use of formal techniques (such as the deployment of intricate image patterns, proverbs, and descriptio), and its distinctive style. It must be admitted that, in comparison with the Chanson de Roland, its ultimate source, this is a debased text with little of the grandeur of the original; but I hope that my discussion of the text also shows that it is not worthless, that it has a certain literary power which has been achieved with a mixture of reverence for the source and its own independence.

The third chapter discusses perhaps the most mysterious of all Charlemagne romances, The Sege of Melayne. The Sege has no known sources, and because it is fragmentary, we do not even know how it ends. Several brief critiques of the poem have appeared, inspired no doubt by the tremedous energy of the narrative and the richness of its plot. The critiques remain brief, however, because some elements of narrative and characterization are strange when compared with that of other Charlemagne romances. I propose that the Sege is influenced by an aesthetic which in practice is unusual in the other Charlemagne romances; it is the aesthetic of crusade propaganda, with all the eccentricities of character and action which that persuasive mode depicts as acceptable, if not normal. Viewed from this perspective, the method behind what by many might otherwise be considered a rather mad (if exciting) poem becomes clear.

The final chapter discusses what is often considered the

most original and best of the Charlemagne romances, the fifteenth-century Taill of Rauf Coilȝear. It is often implied, however, that the poem is original and superior precisely because it is not a true Charlemagne romance; it is seen as a burlesque of those poems, employing only their superficial characteristics to lighthearted and humourous ends. My discussion of the poem finds, however, that those characteristics are not entirely debased in Rauf. Serious and sometimes harshly critical socio-ethical themes are reinforced through reference to the themes, motifs, and images characteristic of 'serious' ME romances. The humour of Rauf Coilȝear is more sophisticated than we might be led to believe; it is a humour qualified by genuine social concern.

"It would be absurd to state that the subject is now exhausted", wrote George Ellis in 1805, in his Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances (which included abstracts and discussion of some Charlemagne romances).[34] In a letter to Francis Douce in 1801, Ellis said that he intended the Specimens to provide "extracts from the originals: selecting such extracts either on account of their poetical merit, or their singularity of expression, or their allusion to ancient manners and customs".[35] There is an obvious similarity

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[34] George Ellis, Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances, 3 vols (London, 1805), I, iv.

[35] Letter to Francis Douce, 29 January, 1801; now in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce d.34, fol. 3^{vb}.

between Ellis's comments and the basic purpose and general methods of this thesis; I see in Ellis's enterprise a worthy model. There is another more important similarity, however, which makes the choice of such an old model preferable to those suggested by later approaches to the Charlemagne romances (a few of which, as we have seen, are not entirely dismissive); that is an optimism and an absence of prejudice about what these texts may have to offer. And that, after all, would have been the spirit with which, in their day, these romances would have been approached and (to judge from the experience of Robert the Bruce and his men) certainly appreciated.

CHAPTER 1

"golde gay ȝ þat scholde be tyn & bras": The Ashmole Sir Ferumbras[1]

> The author [of Sir Ferumbras] was a conscious artist and took obvious pains with his work. It is full of effective scenes and nice touches.[2]

Though the "effective scenes and nice touches" have not been identified, A.C. Baugh's statement represents as reliable an assessment of the Ashmole Ferumbras (AF) as can be found. It will be my principal aim in this chapter to substantiate Baugh's opinion (which he has restated several times since 1948)[3] by identifying some of these "scenes and

---

[1] Sir Ferumbras is preserved uniquely in Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 33. The original binding of the MS is now kept with the MS in a separate box; details about the MS and its binding, probable date of composition, provenance, and metre, are considered in this chapter. The dialect of Sir Ferumbras is said to be Southwestern, though with a curious mixure of Midland and Northern forms; the scribe may well have travelled widely, though some of his unusual forms may derive from a desire at times to render more precise rhymes or scansion. For further details on dialect, see Sydney J. Herrtage, ed., 'Sir Ferumbras' Edited from the Unique Manuscript Bodleian MS. Ashmole 33, EETS, Extra Series, No. 34 (London, 1879), pp.xviii-xix; all references to Sir Ferumbras (otherwise referred to as AF, or Ferumbras) are to this edition. See also Smyser, Manual, pp.84 and 261.

[2] A.C. Baugh, A Literary History of England (New York, 1948), p.187.

[3] See also, "The Authorship of the Middle English Romances", Annual Bulletin of the Modern Humanities Research Association, 22 (1950), 25-26; and "The Middle English Romance: Some Questions of Creation, Presentation, and Preservation", Speculum, 42 (1967), 8-9.

touches". Such identification is, however, hampered by uncertainty about the provenance of the text. Ferumbras survives in holograph as a translation of an OF text, with occasional sections of text unique to the English version. Sometimes redaction can be attributed directly to the scribe, but it is possible that other sections are the work of translators and redactors other than the scribe. Before attempting to identify the 'scenes and touches', therefore, it will be important to have some idea of the possible origins of any features which will come under discussion.

Undoubtedly the most well-known fact about this romance is that its manuscript is a holograph.

> The manuscript, Ashmole 33 of the Bodleian, is of considerable interest. It is in one hand throughout and is an autograph, like the Ormulum, the Ayenbite of Inwyt, the Peterhouse Equatorie of the Planetis... and a few if any other important Middle English manuscripts. It is bound in a triple envelope of parchment consisting of two documents of minor importance concerning the diocese of Exeter; the outer is dated 1357, the inner (folded double...) is dated 1377. On the back of the inner cover is an original draft, in the same hand as the manuscript proper, of lines 331-759 of the Ferumbras, and elsewhere on the covers an original draft also of some thirty scattered other lines.[4]

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[4] Smyser, Manual, p.85. It is not known when the binding was separated from the MS proper, but evidently this was done before 1845, when the first known notice of the MS occurs in Black's catalogue of the Ashmole manuscripts, in which the contents of the binding are also described; see W.H. Black, A Descriptive, Analytical, and Critical Catalogue of the Manuscripts Bequeathed unto the University of Oxford by Elias Ashmole (Oxford, 1845), column 14.

Figures 1 to 4 (overleaf and ff.) demonstrate how the parchment sheets were used to bind the paper book of the MS proper (i.e. the fair copy) and how they would have been disassembled to reveal the ME draft. For rendering these

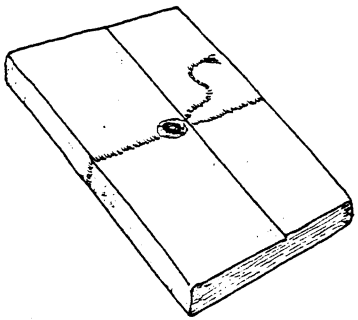


Fig.1.a.

The manuscript as it may have looked in its original state. The illustration of a string and disk as the method of fastening is conjectural, based upon the presence on the outer cover of a circular impression with central holes through which the disc was presumably sewn down. Dimensions of the MS are approximately 16.5 cm. wide by 22.5 cm. long by 2.5 cm. deep.

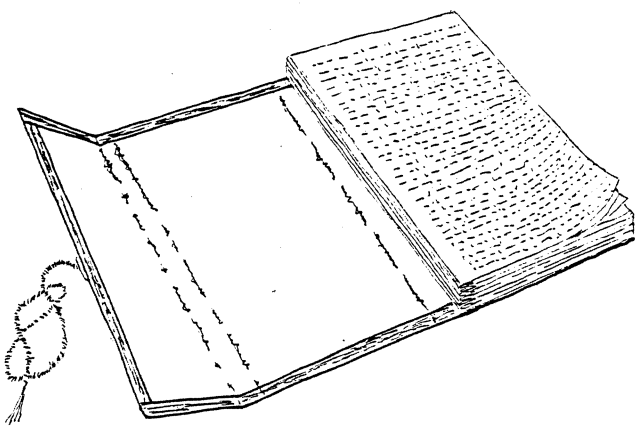


Fig.1.b.

The cover as it would have been pulled back to expose the MS for reading, though with the sewing which attached the cover to the spine of the MS removed. Dark borders indicate strips of the outer parchment sheet overlapping the inner and through which the sheets were sewn together. Total length of the open cover is approximately 41 cm..

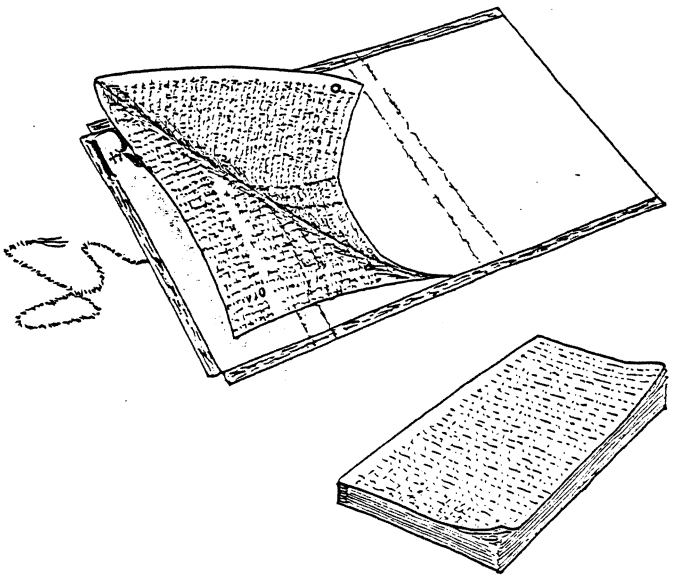


Fig.2.

Preliminary separation of the two parchment sheets comprising the cover, showing the inner sheet to be folded double. The 'R' in the top left corner of the outer sheet marks the large capital initial of a Latin document (dated 1357).

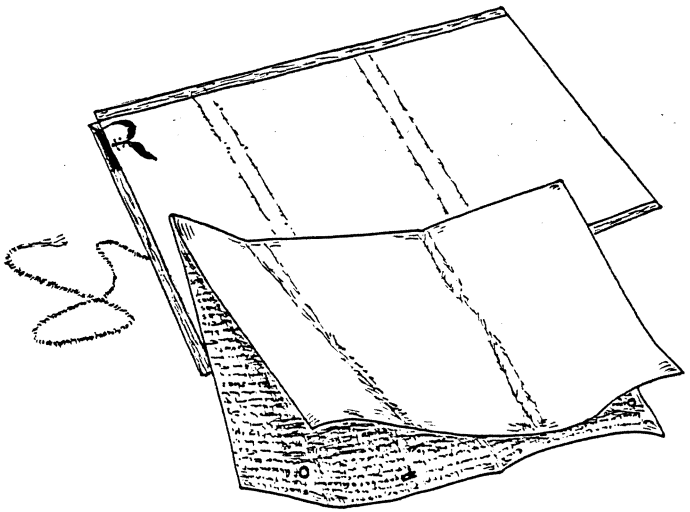


Fig.3.

The inner sheet removed from the outer.

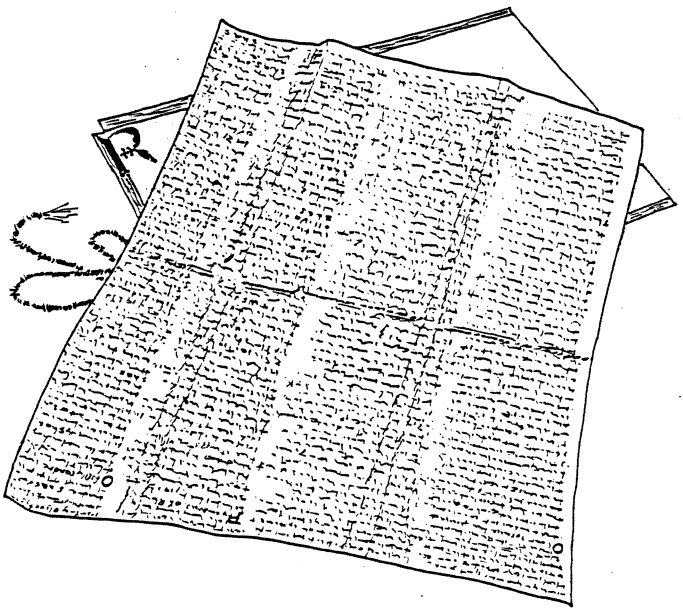


Fig.4.

The inner sheet opened to reveal three and one-half columns of ME draft verse.

From this section of the MS (and indeed from later sections where interlinear amendments have been written), we can identify certain translating, redacting, and broad compositional practices of the scribe. Some of our observations may be offered as examples of ME compositional practices in general; such is the 'conventional' nature of this work's literary appeal--it is no Gawain and The Green Knight or Morte Arthure--that generalizations about the methods of its composition might be proposed more convincingly than in the case of more extraordinary representatives of the genre.

Ferumbras is primarily a translation of an OF Fierabras. The version translated would have been very close to one preserved in at least four Old French MSS--evidently a fairly popular version--and represented by the edition of A. Kroeber and G. Servois.[5] It is also very close to the source used by

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drawings from photographs and a rough facsimile, I am grateful to my father, Mr. R.W. Shepherd.

[5] A. Kroeber and G. Servois, edd., Fierabras, Chanson de Geste, Les Anciens Poetes de la France, No. IV, (Paris, 1860). All references to the OF Fierabras are to this edition. This edition is based upon the text of MS BN 12603, with readings from MSS BN 1499, BL Royal 15 E vi, and Vatican Regina 1616.

For a detailed study of the relation between AF and all other versions of the Fierabras story (including those of a number of fragmentary MSS), see Marcus Konick, "The Authorship of Sir Ferumbras: Ashmole MS 33 of the Bodleian Library, Oxford" (dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1953; Dissertation Abstracts International publication No. 4940), especially pp.62-64. For a summary of Konick's findings and the textual history of AF in general, see Smyser, Manual, pp.84-86 and bibliography, pp.259-261.

Jean Bagnyon for his prose Fierabras of 1478, which was in turn translated (rather slavishly) into English prose by William Caxton in 1485 for his Charles The Grete. Although Ferumbras is characterized by a change in rhyme-scheme (from internally-rhyming septenary couplets, to tail-rhyme) at line 3411, with the suggestion of a corresponding change of immediate exemplar, it is clear that the ultimate source remains the same. A comparison of sections of the Ashmole text(s) with corresponding sections of the French illustrates the kind of close translation which characterizes most of Sir Ferumbras. Lines 386-389 of Ferumbras, for example, translate lines 390-393 of Fierabras:

[Fierabras]

Quant Fierabras l'entent, si a .I. ris jeté,
Et dist à Olivier: « Moult t'aras hui hasté:
« Ains que je m'en remue en sarai la verté,
« Qui tu es, com as non, et de quel parenté....»

[draft]

þe Saragyn law . . .smere & to Oliuer sayde þan:
Wenist þou so me a-fere? þou ert an hastife man.
Or ich remuwy of þys plas þat soþe þou schalt me telle
Of wat kyn y-come þou was, & þy name wyte ich chille...."[6]

[fair copy]

¶ þe Sargyn gan to lawe smere ⁊ & to O[liuer] sayde þan:
"Wat wendest þou now so me a-fere ⁊ þov art an hastif man.
Er y remuvie me of þys place ⁊ þat soþe þou schalt me telle,
Of wat kunne comen þov wace ⁊ & þy name wyten i wille...."

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[6] Unless otherwise stated (as in this case), all citations from Sir Ferumbras are from the fair copy of the text.

Obviously this is no 'stencil' translation; but the layout of the ME text (shown as it appears in the MS) still betrays an attempt, despite the imposition of internal rhyme, to sustain a parallel with the lineation of the French text. The narrative content of each line remains consistent with that of the source, while occasional direct borrowings ("hastif", "remuvie") indicate the translator's close attention to the French. In many translated passages this direct line-by-line correspondence is not always achieved. Moreover, direct borrowings are rare; and, as in the example cited, there are, between draft and fair copy, minor variations (mainly in spellings, or, as we should expect from progressive drafts of verse in the process of composition, in changes of wording which are best accounted cases of improved scansion). It bears repeating, nevertheless, that in most such cases the sribe/translator[7] has endeavoured to bring out the narrative content of the source passage intact. For an example of translation for which a draft does not survive, compare AF, lines 212-216, with Fierabras lines 205-208:

[AF] Hys wounde was þo in yuel aray ⁊ & for Angwys gan to chyne.

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[7] It is difficult when discussing this text to distinguish between scribe, translator, and author, because the writer of this manuscript always assumes the first role, most of the time the second (certainly for the first 'couplet' section of AF), and, as we shall see, sometimes the third. I will in general call him the scribe or scribe/translator, trusting otherwise in the context of the discussion at hand to distinguish which of these roles is being considered.

Olyuer tok his mantel of say ⁊ gold peynt hit was wel fyne,
& rent hit al to peces smal ⁊ & þer wiþ is wonde he digte,
& stoppede is wounde þer wyþ al ⁊ & bond hure as he migte.
þan he clepede ys squyer ⁊ Garyn, & til hym he saide....

[Fierabras] Ses plaies li commenchent d'angoise à tressuer.
De son bliaut de soie fait .I. pan descrier,
Puis s'en fait par les flans isnelement bender,
Et apela Garin. qui lés lui vit ester.

Apart from the addition of a line, the layout of the ME text and some direct borrowings again betray the same kind of adherence to the French as was noted of lines 386–389.

Within the tail-rhyme section of the poem, compare lines 4899–4904 of AF, for example, with lines 5113–5116 of Fierabras (I quote the ME as the strophes are set out in the MS, not as Herrtage has printed them).

[AF] Hure harneys þay gunne to trossye þan,
Baroun, & knyȝt, & euery man: — bote noȝt with hem þay nadde

Bot bred, & wyn, & fleschs, and oten,
þer-of þay toke as þay were hoten, — god plente þer þay ladde.

Ac al hure harneys leuede þay þer,
Cloþys, & pauylouns, and oþer ger, — And armedem on hure wede.

[Fierabras] Isnelement et tost sont li soumier trousé;
De pain, de vin, de char, et d'avaine et de blé.
Mais de l'autre harnois n'en ont il point porté,
Tente, ne pavillon, ni aucube, ne tré....

We still find direct borrowings and a parallel of lineation

(in this new scheme it is a strophe-for-line parallel).[8] Though, as we shall see, it can be argued that the change in rhyme-scheme suggests a corresponding change of immediate exemplar, it ought to be kept in mind that the English text still at least appears to translate a Fierabras close to that of the Kroeber and Servois text in a fashion consistent with the translation of the first 3410 lines; if there has been an integration of different sources, it has by no means been artless.

The parallel lineation and direct borrowing of French vocabulary may suggest that this holograph represents a 'working' translation (i.e. that the scribe's exemplar was written in French and was not a pre-existing English translation). To this evidence should be added Walther Fischer's identification of nineteen Alexandrines (the metre of Fierabras) in the draft, which in the fair copy have (apparently in line with the kinds of improvements of scansion noted above) been corrected to the septenary lines proper to the English version.[9] There are, moreover, in the fair copy a few direct borrowings of vocabulary from the French not found, or not so accurately represented, in the

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[8] For an additional discussion of the closeness of the translation, see Emil Hausknecht's introduction to The Sowdone of Babylone, pp.xvi-xviii.

[9] Walther Fischer, "Zur mittelenglischen Romanze Sir Ferumbras: Das Verhältnis des ersten Entwurfs (v.331-759) zur Reinschrift", Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen, 142 (1921), 29.

draft--changes which imply that the scribe had the French text before him at all stages in the production of Sir Ferumbras. "Pas" ('path') in line 345 recalls "pas" of Fierabras, line 359; the draft at this point does not use the word. "Folie" in line 484 replaces "as fol" in the draft, thereby duplicating "folie" in the corresponding line of the French text (Fierabras, line 471). A change of spelling from "perceyuede" in the draft to "aperceuede" in line 739 of the fair copy recalls more closely "aperchoit" in the French (Fierabras, line 1480).

It must be stressed that the MS which was the source of AF is not known; slight variations in names and numbers and inconsistent correspondence with variants in the other known versions of the poem suggest as much.[10] Further uncertainties about the work's provenance are suggested by the change of rhyme-scheme. In his unpublished doctoral dissertation--relied upon heavily by Smyser in the Manual--Marcus Konick details how each section possesses different characteristic features; this, Konick argues, suggests that each section represents a different immediate source.[11] Konick finds that the tail-rhyme section (which he calls 'ASH II') probably represents a copy of an existing ME text, while the couplet section ('ASH I') probably represents a direct translation of

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[10] See Konick, pp.100-163.

[11] See the details of Konick's thesis, and Smyser's summary, as cited in note 5 above.

a French text.

> [A] difference emerges between the two portions of the Ashmole Sir Ferumbras. The first section omits religious references, elaborate description and irrelevant detail, but... adds descriptions of battle and hunting, and invents names of characters rather freely. The second portion is more faithful to the [source] texts, and [unlike ASH I] has no objection to lengthy prayers, religious references, but is perhaps not so tolerant of battle detail.
>
> It is doubtful if these diverse characteristics are the result of the author-scribe who wrote... the Ashmole MS. One man could hardly manifest such differences of taste. In view of the contrast in character between ASH I and ASH II, we must conclude that the Ashmolean scribe, since the rough draft is in his hand, was also the author of ASH I, but probably little more than the copyist of ASH II, using two different versions of the Fierabras for his romance.[12]

Granted, the scribe has treated the work as a unity, as his numerous corrections to both sections suggests, as well as the simple fact of his changing rhyme-scheme in the middle of a leaf (fol. 45ra); but, as is the case for commentators on Beowulf, we shall still have to keep in mind--even though this may at the end of the day appear unlikely--that there is no guarantee of a throughly unified aesthetic between either section.

As I have suggested several times above, AF is not only a translation of one OF text which has come down to us probably via two different intermediate sources, but also the result of many original revisions. There are dozens of variations from the OF version in both ASH I and ASH II. Often the variations may consist simply of the changes of

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[12] Konick, pp.205-206.

names and quantities typically attendant upon the exigencies of changing rhyme in translation. But on at least 37 occasions the variations involve major structural modifications, the addition of new episodes and descriptions, and the omission or reordering of episodes found in the French. Many of these changes have significant literary implications and obviously characterize this version of the Fierabras story. In the majority of cases there is nothing in the MS to show that the revisions did not exist in a now-lost original, or, indeed, that the authorship of revisions in ASH I is in any way related to that of ASH II.[13] With many of these variations, however, the scribe's authorship is evident in both sections, usually through differences between draft and the fair copy in ASH I, and through interlinear amendment in the only surviving copy of ASH II (that is, the 'fair' copy). These revisions will be the major subject of criticism in this chapter, for they are surely the most interesting features of the poem. They provide us with the rare opportunity of witnessing a Middle English romance in the process of composition. They also provide a helpful way of characterizing some of the unique features of uncertain provenance; in practice, we will see that they are closely allied to those changes which we can prove to have originated

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[13] For the identification of most of these variations from the known sources I am dependent upon Konick, especially pp.193-206 of his dissertation, in which the "unique peculiarities" of the Ashmole text are listed with detailed cross-references to all other versions.

with the scribe.

Revisions attributable to the scribe exist as (1) variations in the MS proper from the surviving section of a rough draft, (2) interlinear or marginal amendments, and (3) palimpsests. Because it is the draft, preserved on parchment sheets which formed the original binding of the MS, which shows this to be a holograph (and, given Konick's findings on ASH I, suggests that the scribe and translator here are one), we should pause briefly to examine the reliability of its evidence. Firstly, the handwriting of the MS book and that of the ME text[14] on the parchment wrappers is identical, a neat, conservative Anglicana hand of the first quarter of the fifteenth century.[15] That the ME text on the wrappers is in

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[14] The wrappers were originally Latin ecclesiastical documents pertaining to the diocese of Exeter, one (the outer wrapper) dated 1357, the other dated 1377. For an account of the Latin contents of the wrappers, see Herrtage, Sir Ferumbras, pp.xv-xvi.

[15] For a thorough discussion of this type of hand see A.I. Doyle and M.B. Parkes, "The Production of Copies of the Canterbury Tales and the Confessio Amantis in the Early Fifteenth Century", in Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries; Essays presented to N.R. Ker, edited by M.B. Parkes and A.G. Watson (London, 1978), pp.163-212. See also M.B. Parkes, English Cursive Book Hands 1250-1500 (London, 1979), especially plates 2(ii) and 24(i).

André de Mandach's recent claim that AF was written between 1357 and 1377 is wholly misguided, based on the dates found on each of the parchment wrappers; at the very earliest, AF would have had to be written after 1377, the date on the more recent Latin document, and, as noted above, the English handwriting found on both parchment sheets and the MS proper would suggest a date even later than this. See André De Mandach, La Geste de Fierabras, Publications romanes et françaises, No. 177 (Geneva, 1987), p.170.

It should be added that the English text on both parchment sheets suggests by its content that it was written

fact a draft, as opposed to a copy of a different version of Ferumbras, is evidenced by the inconsistency of its layout (some of the text is crammed into improvised columns in the margins of the Latin documents, while the rest is written in four narrow columns on a scraped side of one of the wrappers); the absence of the punctus elevatus to mark the internal rhyme (as appears in the MS proper), the absence of decorated capitals (as appear in the MS proper); and of course the extreme closeness of wording with which the corresponding lines in the draft and the MS proper parallel one another.[16] Interlinear and marginal amendments in the MS are also in the same, though usually smaller, hand. Most such amendments occur after the change of rhyme, and this, along with the fact that a true draft survives only for text in ASH I, suggests that ASH II was not necessarily copied from a draft--a point which reinforces Konick's view of ASH II as derived from an existing English translation. All this extra scribal activity in ASH II does, however, suggest a certain

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consecutively, from the one sheet to the other; what little can be read of the English text on the margins of the older (outer) wrapper shows (on comparison with the fair copy) that it is a draft of lines 232-278 laid out in short columns. The draft on the inner wrapper begins at line 331. Allowing for the fact that the bottom part of the outer wrapper was trimmed for the binding, and therefore that some of its draft is lost, it appears that the text on the inner wrapper was written immediately after that of the outer and that the wrappers were consecutive sheets in the scribe's draft copy.

[16] For a detailed analysis of the evidence that the binding fragments do indeed represent a genuine draft, and not another version of the poem, see Fischer, Archiv, 25-54.

propensity on the scribe's part to modify the text he is receiving, be it an existing translation or not.

I should like briefly to add further evidence for this last point. Throughout the MS of ASH II there are a number of lines begun, cancelled, and then either rewritten in slightly different form or simply dropped. Herrtage records all but the last of these by printing them inside square parentheses. I quote them in context and number them for ease of reference.[17]

i. [þat þay ne dryue by-forn hem euerechon]
þat ech of hem ne drof forþ on,
With pakkes y-charged euerechon,
Wyþ harneys y-fillid toȝte....
(lines 4389-4391)

ii. [þan hadde þay þerof wonder gret]
& þan þay awondrede of him ecchon,
þat for al þe strokes þat þay gerde on,
þat hym nas noȝt þe wers.
(lines 4549-4551)

iii. [¶ þe Sarȝynen power gan waxe gret]
And þe walles were of Marbreston,
Wyþ pykes of yre y-set þer-on,
oppon þe crest ful þykke.
(lines 4647-4648)

iv. [And caste out stones & heuy trees]
Stones & trees þan out þay caste
& þe Sarsyns þer-wyþ quellede vaste,
& made hem tumbly adoun.
(lines 4997-4998)

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[17] To facilitate reading, I have changed the format of the tail-rhyme stanzas as edited by Herrtage (in the edition, the first two lines of each tail-rhyme strophe are printed side-by-side). Herrtage's line numbering has, however, been retained. Emphasis in each quotation is mine.

v. [on * * * * * * * *][18]
Riȝt on þe heued anoneward,
& clef ys helm þoȝ he war hard,
& ys hed in-to þe teþ.
(lines 5581-5582)

We can see in i, ii, iv, and probably v, that all the lines crossed through are rewritten in the following line with slightly different wording. Passage iii appears to belong in sense with a description eight lines before of the rallying of Saracen forces; but, like the other examples, it is not identical to any other lines. All these cancelled lines strongly suggest that, whatever the nature of our scribe's exemplar, be it a French text he has translated or an existing English version he has copied, the text of ASH II as we have it could well be the product of his own considerable revision.

---ooOoo---

The Couplet Section of Sir Ferumbras: Lines 1-3410

The Fierabras story is predominantly one of unmixed adventure, "a rattling good... story with lots of corpses and a happy ending".[19] While this sort of material can be

[18] "On" is the only word in the line, which has been filled out with a decorative variation on the minims of the final <n>.

[19] John Finlayson, "Definitions of Middle English Romance", Chaucer Review, 15 (1980-1981), 173.

translated with appropriate excitement, its constant succession of duels, sallies, and sieges is bound to offer any translator (or redactor) few opportunities to display his full potential. On the other hand, as Alfred Adler has noted of the French text, there are a number of passages in the story, mainly near the beginning (fortunately within the portion of narrative for which the Ashmole draft survives), which contain detailed descriptions of place and person, which admit a degree of distinct characterization, and which address certain moral issues.[20] It is in these places in AF that we see translation (and redaction) with an eloquence and lucidity which betrays a sensitivity to the inherent literary virtues of the passages in the source.

Though I intend for the most part to treat this poem sequentially, it is valuable to begin by skipping over the first 300 lines of the existing introduction of Ferumbras to investigate the portion of text for which a rough draft survives (that is, lines 331-759); I shall refer back to relevant earlier lines in the course of the present investigation. The portion of AF for which a draft survives not only provides the most extensive number of contiguous scribal modifications, but also contains the single most extensive revision of the story as given in the OF.

The first significant modification to note is the

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[20] See Alfred Adler, "Thematic Development of Oliver's duel with Fierabras", Romanische Forschungen, 70 (1958), 267-277.

addition to the fair copy of the following lines not found in the draft:

> "He is bope paal & feynt ~ & ȝut me greues more,
> þat if he beo þer in batail atteynt ~ þou lest þy los
> þerfore."
> (lines 332-333)

The lines are included in the speech of Reyner, Oliver's father, imploring Charles not to allow the wounded Oliver to challenge Ferumbras. Apart from adding to Reyner's existing account of Oliver's debilitation, the new lines introduce the notion that Charles's agreeing to let Oliver go will jeopardize the king's own "los", his reputation (presumably in this case for making wise and honourable military decisions). This aspect of Reyner's appeal does not occur in any other version of the story. Charles's ultimate decision is, as in all other versions, still to allow Oliver to go, but our scribe's addition has coloured that decision with an implicit comment on the virtue of adherence to an ideal of truth and honour.

Rainer's new lines inform a broader thematic consideration of the issue of truth in this stretch of text and appear next to a number of lines which, while also found in the draft, and therefore not necessarily of scribal authorship, are unique to this version. There are also related lines which are not new to this version, but upon which the modifications are founded. These concern Charles's compulsion by law to allow Oliver the duel. These lines occur just before the portion of text for which a draft survives,

and follow the French closely. In an eloquent translation of the French, the treacherous Ganelon and Hardre, wishing to see Oliver dead, remind Charles of a special law:

> "... wat be rewarded be tweyre assent ⁊ þe þridde assenty sholde:
> Hit ys rewardet ous two be twyne ⁊ þat Olyuer schal wende & take
> þe batayl wiþ þe ȝond Sarsyne ⁊ & do hit for þy sake."
> (lines 311-313)[21]

It should be noted in passing that the last half line, with its vindictive slight, has no match in the French, and reveals the scribe/translator's sensitivity to characterization. As in no other version of this story, the villains go on to reiterate their request, immediately after Reyner's subsequent appeal to Charles. There is a noticeable shift in tone as their words now take on the more forceful, and appropriately impatient, strains of colloquialism:

> ¶ þan him answerede Gweneylloun ⁊ & Hardre in hure scorn:
> "þov hast y dremed of venesoun ⁊ þov mostest drynke a torn.
> He schal do now þat he be-soȝte ⁊ for we assentieþ to:
> ho so wil or wil hit noȝt ⁊ þat batail he mot do."
> (lines 334-337)

Though the draft is not entirely legible at this point, we can read enough to show that the middle two lines were

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[21] Cf. Fierabras, lines 299-302:

> «Que ce que li doi jugent, puis k'i l'ont affremé,
> «Aler estuet le tierc, ensi l'ont créanté;
> «Nous [jujon] Olivier, si l'avons esgardé,
> «Qu'il fera la bataille au paien deffaé.»

revised[22] and consequently that they are probably original to this text (certainly the first of these lines, evidently a proverb or adage, is the sort of utterance which possesses that ring of common usage which is rarely translatable). Obviously, the lines were of considerable interest to the scribe. The specific significance of the first line evades me (as it evaded Herrtage),[23] but the second line provides a general sense; the expression of a particular desire (the dreaming of hunting, perhaps of eating venison?) necessitates some (perhaps contractual) action to meet that desire (drinking one's turn before the hunt in a vow to give one's all?).[24] It is significant that the new proverb is ambiguous; "þov" could refer either to Charles, who desires the service of one of his peers to fight Ferumbras, or it could refer to Oliver, who is present and who has expressed his desire to fight. Once more, we encounter what seems to be a reassertion of the ideal of keeping one's word. It cannot be proved that this passage did not exist in the version of Fierabras used

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[22] þou [ha]st y met of venysoun [þou mostest] drynke a torn
[He moste] ytake þat he bi-soȝt [for] we assentieþ to....
(draft, lines 335-336)

[23] "As to the meaning of l. 335, I cannot offer any suggestion" (Herrtage, Sir Ferumbras, p.195).

[24] All other uses of "torn" (and "a torn") in the poem refer to unpleasant eventualities, 'nasty turns'; see lines 796, 1811, 2019, 2195, 4393. Perhaps in this instance, however, "torn" is part of an adverbial collocation ('a-torn'), in which case it may have the sense of 'in due course', 'in turn'.

by the scribe/translator; but there is a strong thematic affinity between the apparently new proverb, the traitors' apparently new repetition of the 'parliamentary' rule of law, and those extra lines of Reyner's plea which are, without any reasonable doubt, original. Regardless of their authorship, however, these features show us that Sir Ferumbras is by no means an inert retelling of an existing story; a moral/ethical issue intrinsic to the story has been highlighted and amplified for us through the adoption of greater stylistic variation, some repetition, and (in the case of Ganelon and Hardre at least) some enhanced characterization.

When Oliver eventually encounters Ferumbras, the detail of the conversation between the prospective combatants is again the subject of scribal modification (and some 'anonymous' but thematically concurrent revision over the source). The draft gives four lines to the moment of encounter:

> [Oliver] him negeþ ner & ner, & spake to him as he lay,
> & askude of him what he were þat made such affray,
> & þat auaunt þat he gan make 3if he meteyne wolde
> A preydem army him for þat sake for with him fi3te he scholde.
>
> (draft, lines 350-353)

Already this differs from the French, in as much as Oliver's first statement to Ferumbras there is simply a request of his name (Fierabras, lines 368-375). Also new (and carried over to the fair copy) is Oliver's demand that Ferumbras "meteyne" his "auaunt", that he substantiate his boastful challenge to

Charles and his Peers—further evidence of the Ashmole text's stress on the ideal of keeping one's word. That this stress is very much due to the scribe is suggested by the fair copy, which, changing Oliver's reported speech to direct discourse, adds two more lines:

> þe knyȝt him neȝede þanne neer ⁊ & spak til him þat tide:
> "Arys vp, Sarsyn, þat ert so feer ⁊ no lenger ne miȝtou bide;
> & þat auantyngge þat þou hast mad ⁊ & þou hit meyteyne wolle
> Loke þat þou be armed sad ⁊ & hele þy bare scolle:
> y am come her .o. semple knyȝt ⁊ y-redy with þe to fiȝte,
> yf þou þyn auaunt performy myȝt ⁊ a-rys vp anon & diȝt þe."
> (lines 350-355)

Before considering the added lines, we should note that the shift to direct discourse admits some stylistic variation. This again displays the kind of sensitive dramatic characterization which was admitted between the first and (unique) second speeches by Ganelon and Hardree: "þat ert so feer" has a derisory flavour suitable to the challenge Oliver is about to offer. The two added lines reinforce the variations from the French already noted in the draft; ".o. semple knyȝt" stresses Oliver's relative freedom from ostentation (and also hints at the fact that he intends to conceal his true identity), while the next line again stresses the ideal of proving one's "auaunt".[25]

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[25] "Auaunt" is found (as "vanter") only twice in this section of the narrative in the French (Fierabras, lines 498 and 570) but it (and its variants) is certainly a favourite word of the scribe/translator's (especially given its

Oliver uses "arys vp anon and digt þe" or variations on the "arys vp" command many times before actually coming to blows with Ferumbras. These represent collectively one of the rare instances in which the English almost matches the order of formal repetition found as a matter of course in the French text, usually as repetition used to link laisses but also, as in this case, to link lines within the body of laisses. The French text employs the motif (usually in the form of "Va, si t'arme") eight times (Fierabras, lines 385,

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appearance in the two entirely new lines at hand). Including the two appearances noted above, there are nine occurrences of the word from the beginning of the surviving fair copy to just before the beginning of physical hostilities between Oliver and Ferumbras. Each occurrence suggests the preoccupation we have already noted with highlighting the evil of boasting (emphasis is mine):

þat nygt was Charl[es proude] y wet ⁊ & auaunted his knigtes olde.

. . .

& [Rolan]d iherd hit euery del ⁊ & his auaunttyngge hem greuede sore,
(lines 42–44)

[Charles] asked of Rychard of normandy ⁊ if he knew þat knygte
þat mad hem þer so perylous ⁊ & auauntid him so gerne.
"He ne telleþ bote lyte of ous ⁊ þe his wordes sterne;
Proutelich he auaunteþ hem ⁊ wiþ xij. for to figte.
(lines 115–118)

"þou madest þat auaunt, soþ to saye ⁊ for to preyse þe selue."
(line 158)

"Wiþ þyn auaunt þou makest heer ⁊ þou ne migt nogt me amaye."
(line 485)

"þyn auaunt worþ dere abogt ⁊ þyn heued þou schalt for-go."
(line 488)

388, 424, 452, 502, 555, 566, 596). Ferumbras translates all but the second, seventh, and eighth of these at lines 384, 424, 460, 490, and 540 respectively. The other three in the French are not translated, but Sir Ferumbras adds two of its own, namely the two already quoted (in lines 351-355); these two precede all others and are much closer together than the rest, perhaps placed so to establish securely in the reader's mind the prominence of the motif and the formal weight it gives to the idea of the necessity of acting on one's words. These additions further suggest that the lines translated were retained not just as a matter of reflexive line-by-line translation, but as part of a concerted plan to retain the formal and mannered aesthetic appropriate to heroic deeds that the corresponding repetition conveys in the OF.[26] In both instances, addition of the motif in the fair copy where it is not found in the draft clearly betrays scribal interest in the motif; so does extensive amendment, between draft and fair copy, of the second translated passage:

> "Now y haue þe al itold ne tarie þou me no mere;
> If þou ert to fiȝte bold, arys & do on þy gere...."
> (draft, lines 424-425)

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[26] Rosalind Field has proposed the existence of a similar phenomenon (which is also partly present in AF, as I note later) in the deployment of the ME alliterative long line as a response to the structural formality of the OF laisse; see "The Anglo-Norman Background to Alliterative Romance", in Middle English Alliterative Poetry and its Literary Background, edited by David Lawton (Cambridge, 1982), pp.54-69; see especially pp.60-63.

"Now haue y told þe þyn askyng ȝ for þy fer arys vp sone
And do on þyn helm þou heþene kyng ȝ & let se wat þou
canst done."
(lines 424-425)

It is significant that we can see in this modification a shift from a kind of bold and lofty 'epic' style to a mixture of that tone (retained in the "arys vp" invocation) with what appears (to me at least) to be an element of colloquial, or at least less formal speech ("let se wat þou canst done"). Earlier we have seen Oliver describe himself as a "semple" knight (line 354), and elsewhere he describes himself to Ferumbras as "bote a demeyne knigt" (line 382); this is part of his intention to conceal his real identity from the Saracen. In doing this, his motive would seem to be primarily to refuse Ferumbras the satisfaction of knowing that his boastful challenge to Charles has managed to force the dispatch of a genuine 'douzeper' of France.[27] Of course, the

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[27] The scribe's usual form is in fact "doþ(þ)eper" The origin of the word is, according to MED, "OF doze per(s), duz(z)e-; twelve peers" and is, of course, a term common among English Charlemagne legends, used to describe the Emperor's twelve traditional paladins. Misappropriation of the OF form is common in ME. MED records the following variations: "dousse-per n., also dus(s)e-, duz(z)e-, duzsi-, dous-, dus- & dos(s)e-, doz(z)e-, dosi-, & duche-, duge-, & doþþe-. Pl. -per(es), -per, -peren, & -piers, -pier." With the exception of "doþþ-" (which is recorded only in Ferumbras) all of the 'douze' spellings can be seen to derive from variations of pronunciation or from oral/aural misreading of <ȝ> for <gh>. The most curious aspect of the <þ>-spelling is that it represents a seemingly deliberate 'correction' from a 'proper' <ȝ> spelling, which is found in the draft at lines 259 and 423. There are at least twenty-five instances of the <þ>-spelling in the MS proper and only one <ȝ> spelling (l.2036), which looks like an momentary 'slip' in what otherwise appears to be an eccentric

disguise also introduces the prospect of an exciting revelation scene later on.

The disguise increases the dramatic interest of the duel scene, and is common to all versions of this story. I suspect, however, that the translator of the Ashmole text may have attempted to impart further dramatic interest with the kind of stylistic variation I have just noted. As the introductory debate develops, Oliver tells Ferumbras that he is Garyn, Oliver's squire, sent by Charles and his paladins to fight Ferumbras because "þoȝ [he] ben in batail schent ⁊ it ys no lest for hem" (line 459); the statement, taken from the French, gives the impression of Garyn as keen but inexperienced.[28] I wonder then if the Ashmole scribe may just

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orthography maintained with Orm-like diligence.

Scribal confusion over the use of <þ> and <y>, because of the similarity of the graphs in some hands has led to back spellings of a [j]-segment (usually represented by <y> or <ȝ>) with <þ>; as Michael Benskin points out, "if, for example, 'year' can be spelled either <þer> or <ȝer>, then it is not unreasonable for 'that' to be spelled either in the traditional way, with <þ>, or as <ȝat> ["The Letters <þ> and <y> in Later Middle English, and Some Related Matters", Journal of the Society of Archivists, 7 (1982), 20-21]. Pronunciation of the place name Keighley as 'Keithley' also suggests the possibility of another form of substitution of <þ> for <ȝ>.

The graphs for <þ> and <y> are, nevertheless, clearly distinguished in the Ashmole hand, and the change of spelling is of course not from <þ> to <ȝ>, but from <ȝ> to <þ>, a less direct, and a seemingly retrograde, departure; moreover, with the exception of the spelling of 'doȝene'(dozen)--clearly a related word--as "doþeyne" at line 1579, there are no other instances of an odd <þ>-spelling.

[28] Lines 448-449, where Garin's history is elaborated have no equivalent, however, in the French, and the variation against the draft is telling. The draft makes Garin appear to have obtained perhaps too much stature by way of the King's

be giving Oliver a further element of disguise through his mixture of spoken styles--the sort of mixture of formal and informal diction we might expect from a keen but inexperienced squire. Ferumbras's response to Oliver's challenge implies the presence of the verbal disguise. After beginning to laugh (as we have seen him do in the French, line 386) and after requesting more detail about Oliver's identity (also in the French), he mockingly reiterates Oliver's characteristic "arys vp... & aray þe" invocation (which he does not do in the French). Keeping back the echo of this to the last half-line points the mocking tone:

> "& wan þat y know it wyterly ȝ þe soþe þat þou saye,
> þan schal y sykerly ȝ arise vp and me arraye."
> (lines 392-393)

Whether or not the Ashmole scribe wished to give the impression of a verbal disguise, it is fairly clear that our text, much more than the French, presents Oliver as more aggressive and determined.

A sequence of perhaps naively serious, certainly rough and boisterous, challenges by Oliver, countered by the urbane and sardonic responses of Ferumbras (himself not above the

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grace:

> "He [bar my los to Charlis] kyng þat he me gan auaunce,
> & ȝaf me beste lond [& thyng] þat be in þe realme of fraunce."

The fair copy restores an element of humility:

> "He bar my los to Charlis kyng ȝ for my gode seruyse,
> þat he ȝaf me lond & oþer þyng ȝ & halp me in þis wyse...."

odd 'low' usage) is sustained for the next fifty lines. The translator has produced some amusing verbal altercations:

O: "& elles y chalenge wiþ þe to fi3t ⁊ outher y schal haue þy stede,
& fleo þov schalt of þis lond ⁊ as a ladde doþ on þy fote.
Charlis sent to þee þis sond ⁊ þou ne ge[te]st non oþre bote."

F: ¶ "Christene kny3t," quaþ Fyrumbras ⁊ "þou art a wonder gome:
þer is non haste in þys cas ⁊ to fi3t 3ut mowe we come."
Ac for þou tellest so litel of me ⁊ ne were it for repreue,
By Mahoun, þat ys my vowee ⁊ of þyn heued y wolde þee reue.
(lines 400–405)

O: "& bot þou þe raþere gynne to spring ⁊ y swere by crist on trone
Sone getest þou euyl endyng ⁊ with my swerd y wil þee slone."

F: ... "kny3t þou art a qued ⁊ to make me such a spelle,
Litel prowesse for me it were ⁊ wiþ a vauasour for to melle,
Wiþ my swerd þat ys here ⁊ ellis y wolde þe quelle."
(lines 426–431)

O: "Or þe sonne hure sette þou schalt sen ⁊ of þy blod ful þis place.
þow schalt þe 3elde recreent ⁊ ouþer her ri3t schaltou dye."

F: ... "verament ⁊ y hope þov schalt lye."
(lines 433–435)

There are subtle forms of derision in each of Ferumbras's responses, none of which find direct matches in the French; the first begins with a tone of admonition, meant perhaps to sound like that of an adult reprimanding a child, and ends with a lighthearted description of an undoubtedly grim demise; the second repeats Oliver's "my swerd" with supercilious emphasis probably given to "my"; and the third

subverts the conviction in Oliver's "her rigt schaltou dye". Responding to Oliver near the end of this sequence, Ferumbras first admits to Oliver (perhaps on behalf of the translator), "y haue of þe god game".

One more passage within this fifty-line span deserves comment. It involves Oliver's description of Charles, Roland, and himself, at Ferumbras's request. One line is given to the description of Charles:

> "Charlis ys so strong in figt ⁊ he fyndeþ nowar ys pere...." (line 413)

Roland is given two:

> "& Rolond ys so muche of mygt ⁊ so coraious & so fere,
> þat nowar nys founde non so wygt ⁊ wan he ys on ys gere." (lines 414-415)

So far, the proportion of text given to each warrior matches that of the French, which goes on to give two lines to the description of Oliver. In AF, however, and in something of the tongue-in-cheek spirit which we have already encountered, Oliver gives himself six lines:

> "Olyuer þe erld is nogt so god ⁊ þe soþe for to saye,
> Ac he ys a man heg of mod ⁊ Sarasyng to yule arraye.
> Onys y wiste oppon a day ⁊ þat he slow kynges three
> þat lyued on gour false lay ⁊ & tweyne mad he flee:
> Ac he slow Sarazyns on þat place ⁊ [so dogtilich þat t|yde
> þat al þe feld y-strawed wace ⁊ of hymen on euery syde." (lines 416-421)

Of these lines the first matches the French "[Il] ne vaut pas Rollant..." (Fierabras, line 422), but the remaining five effectively neutralize the proper humility of this one line.

Oliver (or at least the Ashmole scribe, who we have seen is interested in highlighting Oliver's greatness) has mischievously taken advantage of his disguise (perhaps again in the style of an eager naif) to create a veritable chanson de geste in miniature about himself. The overall effect of this and the other slight "touches" (to recall Baugh's term) we have noted is to enrich the variety of style available in the scene, and surely to make it that much more interesting and enjoyable to read.

The banter between Oliver and Ferumbras continues for well over another hundred lines before the two actually come to blows. As well as containing a couple of the "arys vp" invocations already discussed (and their attendant declarations of disrespect), the substance of conversation continues to revolve around Ferumbras's requests for descriptions of the twelve Peers, and allusions to Garin's low status. Even after Oliver strikes the first blow in the duel, Ferumbras's response retains an air of amusement (though this is now compounded with some fearful surprise):

> þe Sarsyn anon bar of þe stroke ⁊ with ys scheld þat a helde an honde
> & a quarter þer-of a smot ⁊ þat it fel doun on þe sonde.
> ¶ "Arme þe, Sarsyn," saide Olyuer þan ⁊ "hit wil be for þyn prow."
> "þou saist soþ," quaþ he, by ternagan ⁊ þou haddest nevȝ slawe me now.
> Hadd y þat stronge strok y-take ⁊ þou haddest to me ymynt,
> For euere my bred had be bake ⁊ myn lyf dawes had be tynt...."
> (lines 572-577)

After this point there is considerably less dialogue

between the combatants. Where dialogue does occur there is a marked reduction in the comic undertones of the previous verbal altercations. At one point, nonetheless, a now thoroughly angry Ferumbras avows to Oliver "by Mahoun þou schalt deye" (line 628), to which Oliver responds "by god almyȝt ⁊ y hope þou schalt leye", a clear mocking reference to Ferumbras's earlier use of the same collocation (in line 435). On the whole, however, the narrative now depends upon the structure and detail of its descriptions to maintain our interest.

Most of the Ashmole description of the duel proper (that is, from line 570 to line 733) represents a thorough reworking of the scene as given in the French.[29] Many incidents are taken directly from the French, but in almost every case they have either been reordered or involve the reversal of the combatants' roles. Thus in the Ashmole text Oliver reveals his true identity only after levelling a couple of blows at Ferumbras, who then comes to realize that his assailant is not the mere squire he claims to be; the French (Fierabras, lines 696–706) has Oliver identifying himself, at Ferumbras's request, well before the physical duel begins. Similarly, Oliver begins the duel by levelling the first blow; in the French (Fierabras, lines 628–758), by contrast, the duel begins first with Oliver helping Ferumbras

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[29] For a list of all variations in this section, see Konick, pp.193–194.

to arm and then having the two engage in a formal joust. Ferumbras never mounts his horse in the Ashmole text; whereas in the French he begins the duel mounted and dismounts as an act of courtesy to Oliver, whose horse he has slain (Fierabras, lines 1113-1141). And, where in the French it is Fierabras who, during the fight, knocks Oliver's sword away and gives him leave to retrieve it (Fierabras, lines 1298-1310),[30] in Ferumbras it is Oliver who knocks away the Saracen's sword and who permits a retrieval. The Ashmole text also makes a number of omissions from its source, almost all of which are of a theological nature. Several attempts to convert the opponent (by both Ferumbras and Oliver) are dropped (cf. Fierabras, lines 400-401, 721-730, 1307-1320), as are three angry prayers by Charles, who looks on in desperation (cf. Fierabras, lines 762-764, 885-890, 1164-1165). Another couple of prayers by a despondent Oliver are also dropped (cf. Fierabras, lines 919-962, 1400-1410). It cannot be said that the omission of prayers and attempts at conversion indicates an attempt at secularization; many prayers, two conversions, and a number of Christian miracles occur later in the Ashmole narrative. But the omissions do streamline the description of the duel, making it more fast-paced and energetic; the equivalent of nearly 200 lines in the French, almost all of which consist of dialogue, has been

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[30] Oliver does not, however, accept Fierabras's offer; instead, he manages to steal another sword which is attached to the saddle of the Saracen's horse.

removed.

Plainly, several of these modifications reveal an attempt to change Oliver's character from that found in the French text. In Sir Ferumbras he is decidedly more aggressive, less of an underdog. Whereas the premature revelation of Oliver's identity in the French is the passive act of a man of words, its revised counterpart in Sir Ferumbras is obviously the work of a man of action.[31] This new man of action also strikes the first blow, without helping Ferumbras to arm (indeed, he does not even give him the chance to arm); he knocks the opponent's sword away; and he fights without requesting or accepting divine assistance. The changes are consistent with the earlier emphasis that may have been given to the coarser and more aggressive overtones of Oliver's diction.

The overall structure of the duel scene is very formal. This is made manifest by repetitions like those I have noted

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[31] John Finlayson briefly draws a similar conclusion: "... in F[ierabras] the [dramatic] effect is lost by the premature revelation" ["The Alliterative Morte Arthure and Sir Ferumbras", Anglia, 92 (1974), 384]. The main purpose of Finlayson's article is to suggest that AF, not a French Fierabras, is the likely source for the Gawain-Priamus episode in The Alliterative Morte Arthure; this proposition, however, relies upon 1380 as being the approximate date of composition for AF, which would then of course antedate the assumed date of composition for the Morte. On the proposed date of the Morte, see John Finlayson, ed., Morte Arthure (London, 1967), p.33. As noted earlier, however, judging from the handwriting, a terminus a quo in the first quarter of the fifteenth century is more likely, in which case there might be some grounds for seeing the Gawain-Priamus episode as a potential model for the changes introduced to the duel scene in AF.

in Oliver's earlier speeches, but here it is more frequent and involves a denser grouping of related lines. There is some precedent for the practice in the oft-repeated "Moult fu grant la bataille" of the French (Fierabras, lines 1003, 1029, 1147, 1252, 1431, 1458), and, as was suggested of the repeated invocation to "arys vp", the scribe/translator may have deployed his repeated phrases as a stylistic echo of the French lines. The English repetitions, however, consist of a couplet on each occasion, are never identical, and so do not provide quite the rigid formality of the French; rather they read like progressively varied refrains.

¶ Now by-gynt a strong batayl ⁊ be-twene þis knyȝtes twayne;
Ayþer gan oþer harde assayl ⁊ boþe wyþ myȝt & mayne....
(lines 602-603)

& þan by-gan þe stronge fiȝt ⁊ betwene þes kniȝtes tweye;
As tweye lyons þay furde riȝt ⁊ þat wolde slen his preye.
(lines 626-627)

¶ Aȝeyn þey wente to-gydre thare ⁊ & hur armure hewe a -sonder;
Hure strokes fulle so styþ & sare ⁊ þay schulde so doþ þe þonder.
(lines 630-631)

þan aȝen þai toke þe fiȝt ⁊ with swerdes sherpe & kene,
Eyþer til oþer wiþ mayn & miȝt ⁊ þe strokes were wel sene....
(lines 658-659)

¶ þan by-gan a ferly fiȝt ⁊ be-twene þis two baroun,
Eyþer enpeynede him with al ys miȝt ⁊ to dyngen oþer adoun.
(lines 716-717)

¶ Al so scharply þes men of mayn ⁊ þan smyte to-gadre
So doþ þe fyr & wynd & rayn ⁊ an heȝ on þe sky....
(lines 724-725)

Repetion within relatively narrow line groupings is occasionally "incremental".[32] There is a feeling of insistent movement and progression:

Ac þe Saraȝyn was ful fel ⁊ & **kepte is heued** ariȝte.
His heued he kepeþ with is schelde ⁊ þat ounhelid was & bare....
(lines 585-586, emphasis mine)

"**Tel me now** þer-for **þat soþe** ⁊ as þou art gent & free,
& **suþþe schul we to-gadre boþe** ⁊ falle to fiȝt a-ȝe."
¶ þe iantail knyȝt with-drow him þan ⁊ & spak with-oute duelle,
"Herkne now, þou heþene man ⁊ & **þat soþe i wol þe telle**."
(lines 646-649, emphasis mine)

Sometimes the repetition involves the generic sort of 'clashing-of-armour' description found in any number of romances; the difference between these and those of other romances is that they are repeated in close proximity and refer only to the two combatants. Thus, in the following examples the description is stylized with repetition to the point that the warriors' helms are "to-rente" at least three times. Note also what appears (when compared with surrounding

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[32] M.H. Abrams cites this form of repetition ("in which a line or stanza is repeated, but with an addition that advances the story") as a characteristic feature of the ballad. See M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, fourth edition (New York, 1981), p.12. On the origin of the term, see M.J.C. Hodgart, The Ballads (London, 1950), p.154. The verse scheme of ASH I is sometimes called a ballad measure; see, for instance, Smyser, Manual, p.85.

text) to be an enhancement of alliteration appropriate to the martial context--especially in the third of the following passages.

> þey hewe to-gadre wyþ swerdes dent ~ faste with boþen hondes,
> Of helmes & sheldes þat fyr out went ~ so sparkes doþ of brondes
> (lines 604-605)

> Helmes & hauberkes þay kutte a two ~ wiþ hure strokes rounde....
> (line 632)

> þey foȝten to-gadres þanne ȝerne ~ þis wytherwyms wilde & wroþe,
> & smyte strokes smerte & sterne ~ in haberkes & helmes boþe.
> Wiþ þe strokes þat þis frekes slente ~ flyngande to-gader in fiȝte,
> Hur helmes & haberions þay to-rente ~ þat arst wer fair & briȝte,
> (lines 672-675)

> Helmes & scheldes þar-wyþ to-breken ~ & schilde, so doþ þe þonder.
> (line 727)

It must be stressed that all this repetitive material (including the refrain-like couplets) occurs within about 130 lines and makes for a highly stylized span of narrative; there seems to have been a conscious attempt to establish a legendary aura around the duel appropriate to the test both of faith and of heroic stature which the duel represents.

As in the French, the duel ends with Oliver striking the victorious blow by cutting open Ferumbras's momentarily exposed flank. The blow also cuts away a container of holy balm which the Saracen has tied around his waist. Before the duel begins, Ferumbras has offered this balm to Oliver upon

seeing the blood rushing from his side, but, as in the French (Fierabras, line 535), Oliver has refused the offer (lines 521-522). Scribal additions to the MS affect the role this balm plays in the duel and reinforce some of the observations we have already made about the duel.

In the draft, Ferumbras gives the following account of the balm:

> "... ȝunder at my sadel boȝe hongeþ o botel,
> Ful of baume oun y loȝe ys he euery del,
> þat ȝour god was anoynt þer-with wan he byried was:
> Ich hem wan with swerdes poynt at rome ȝour oȝene plas.
> þe man þat haueþ wonde & is þer-with anoynt
> He schel be hol & sonde & waxe on god poynt.
> (draft, lines 510-515)

There is some difference between this and the account given in the French.

> «... voilà .II. barils à ma sele toursés,
> « Qui tuit sunt plain de basme dont Duis fu enbasmés
> « Au jour qu'il fu de crois el sepucre portés;
> « Plaie qui en est ointe, c'est fine verités,
> « Ne puet estre percie ne en drancle mellés:
> « Maintenant est li hons garis et repassés.
> « Je le conquis à Romme, ki est vostre cités.»
> (Fierabras, lines 525-531)

The location of one of the lines (line 513 in AF) differs between the two versions; and in Fierabras the Saracen says that he has two containers (".II. barils"), but in AF he says he has only one. These may well represent differences between the version of Fierabras we have and that used by our scribe; on the other hand, they may simply represent changes introduced by the Ashmole scribe/translator. Whatever the reason for the changes, a number of close verbal borrowings and a near line-for-line correspondence still reveal the

immediate and prevailing influence of the French.

The fair copy changes the location of the balm and also the name of the container:

> ... by myddel þer hongeþ her ~ a costrel as þou miȝt se,
> hwych ys ful of þat bame cler ~ þat precious ys & fre,
> (lines 510-511)

From a metrical standpoint (and potentially from the point of view of rhyme)[33] the change from "botel" to "costrel" is unnecessary. From the standpoint of technical accuracy, however, the new word is thoroughly appropriate, given the container's new location at Ferumbras's waist. OED shows that, while "bottle" and its variants has only the general definition of "a vessel with a narrow neck for holding liquids", "costrel" can have much more specific connotations: "a large bottle with an ear or ears by which it could be suspended from the waist (whence the antiquarian designation 'pilgrim's bottle'), or a small wooden keg similarly used, in which sense it is still in dialect use". This small point shows a clear interest in rendering detail with accuracy--a minor virtue, but one used to effect an intriguing sense of verisimilitude in formal descriptions later in the story.[34]

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[33] Imperfect rhymes are common in Sir Ferumbras; see the references to E.G. Stanley below, pp.56-57.

[34] See, for instance, my discussions later of the detailed, technically adroit, and sometimes eloquent descriptions of [1] a bower (lines 1324-1347), [2] traditional French pastimes (lines 2218-2228), and [3] a Saracen siege tower (lines 3251-3274). In each case the descriptions are more detailed than their French counterparts.

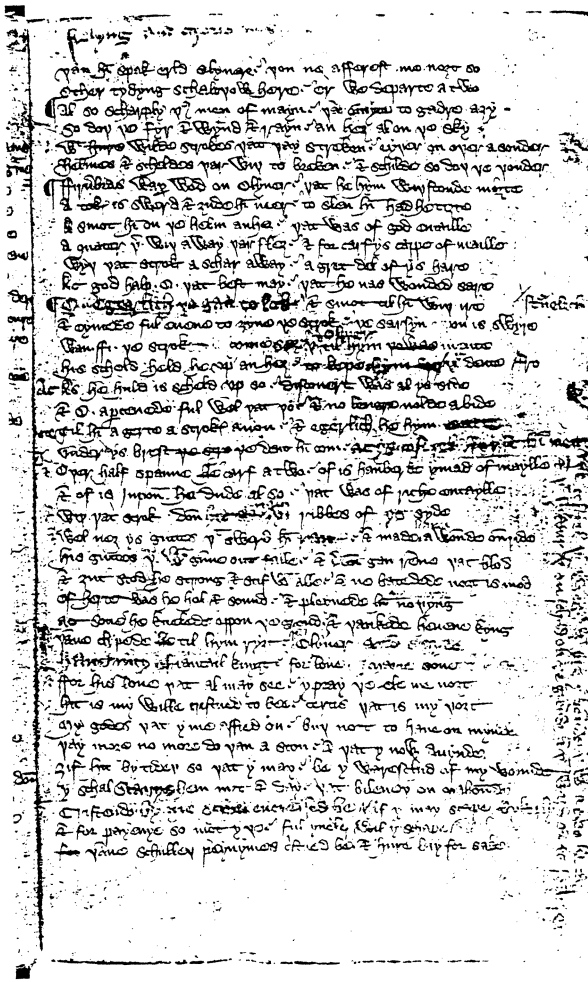
Far more important is the movement of the container from the Saracen's saddle to his waist. This allows Oliver later to cut the balm away in the process of dealing the decisive blow in the duel.

> ... Til him a gerte a stroke anon ⁊ & egerliche he hym sette:
> Vnder ys brest þe dent him com ⁊ ac ys costrel fferst him mette;
> þe costrel þat was with yre y-bounde ⁊ þer-with a-two he carf,
> & þat lykour þer-on schad on þe grounde ⁊ & þat swerd on ys syde swarf,
> . . .
> & wiþ þat strok doun hit so nam ⁊ v. ribbes of ys syde,
> & wel neȝ ys guttes þat swerd him ran ⁊ & made hym a wounde ounride.
> (lines 740–747, emphasis mine)

Lines 742 and 743 match nothing in the draft or in the French (cf. Fierabras, lines 1482–1486), and appear to have been added as an afterthought in the fair copy; the couplet is added down the side of the right-hand margin of fol. 10r a of the MS (see Figure 5, overleaf). In line 741, moreover, the text after the punctus elevatus, which contains the first mention of the costrel in this passage, exists as a palimpsest.[35] The same is true of lines 510–511, in which we first encountered the costrel hanging at the Saracen's waist; these lines, in their entirety, also exist as a palimpsest. All these modifications over erasure suggest that the draft had initially been copied into the MS proper with little

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[35] The draft is fragmentary at this point, but the French tells us only that Oliver's sword first encounters "le blanc hauberc trellis" (Fierabras, line 1483); cf. AF, line 744.



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MS. ASH. 33(1) fol. 10R

Fig.5.

material revision.

More importantly, however, these additions are tied closely to those major variations from the French which characterize the AF version of the duel (and, incidentally, they confirm the scribe/translator's authorship of those variations). In the French, Oliver disposes of the balm by cutting it from the mounted Saracen's saddle; this cannot happen in AF, since, in the English text, Ferumbras never mounts his horse. The palimpsests suggest strongly that the scribe, in the course of his extensive restructuring of the duel scene (one nevertheless referring to, and influenced by, the French original) was led into a minor logistical oversight, forgetting that he had removed Ferumbras's horse, saddle, and balm from the struggle in which the balm must be lost. The marginal addition of the 'costrel' couplet embodies an ingeniously concise correction of this oversight.

The costrel modification--if we may call it that--is additionally notable for the way in which it highlights the translator's desire to change the nature of Oliver's victory in the duel. In the French, Oliver and Ferumbras both imbibe and are healed by the balm during the duel (Fierabras, lines 1017-1044). Ferumbras drinks first, having been wounded in the thigh by Oliver; Oliver, having rejected two previous offers from Ferumbras to drink, finally cuts the containers from the Saracen's saddle during the fray, drinks, and then throws them into a river nearby. His strength renewed by the

balm, Oliver then strives with Ferumbras in earnest and eventually wins the day. The different version we are given in Ashmole 33 has two important functions: firstly, it avoids what could be construed as an act of cowardice and a breach of honour on Oliver's part--for he has gone back on his earlier determination not to enlist the aid of the balm (and a Saracen)--and is consistent with the numerous other modifications, already noted, which tend to highlight Oliver's prowess and which stress the value of keeping one's word. Secondly, it removes a theological element from this part of the story; this is consistent with the removal of other theological elements earlier noted, and probably reflects, as do those other omissions, a laudable intent to sustain the immediate martial vigour of the duel description.

A comparison between draft and fair copy of less notable features than those I have described would find that the reasons which I have suggested are behind more significant changes--that is, an increased emphasis on the ideals of truth and honour, the enhanced celebration of Oliver's prowess and resolve, and the increasing of humour, descriptive accuracy, and formal repetition--account for most of the minor revisions to be found. There are some small changes, such as "or" ('ere') to "til" in line 519 and "come" to "ȝude" in line 729--just two examples of many--which defy

secure explanation;[36] although that very fact may support the

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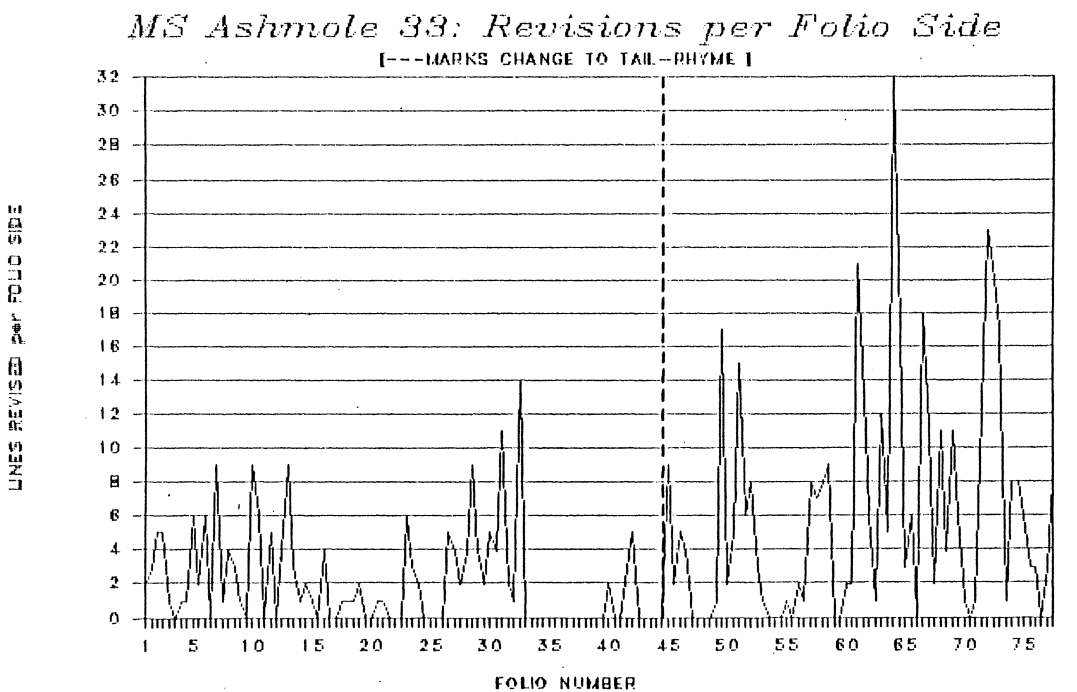
[36] A question which arises from the presence of such modifications concerns the degree to which the scribe's revision is 'roving'--that is, somewhat random, without concern for particular narrative sequences or themes. In an attempt to shed some light on the problem, I have produced a graph of the number of lines revised on each folio side of MS Ashmole 33 (Figure 6, overleaf). My judgement of what entails a revision is necessarily subjective, but my general policy has been to ignore scribal corrections of obvious currente calamo errors. Lines existing as palimpsests are counted, as are lines added in all margins.

The graph confirms Herrtage's observation that "the latter part of the poem... is much corrected" (p.xvi), and reinforces his suggestion that the tail-rhyme section was "possibly written off at once, and not copied from a previous draft" (p.xvi). While almost every folio side has received attention from the scribe (confirmation that his revision was to some extent roving), the extreme jaggedness of the graph shows that many sides received markedly more revision than those adjacent and were obviously the objects of special attention; only a more detailed study of the precise nature of revisions on each of these folios--something beyond the scope of the present investigation--will show to what degree those peaks represent additional roving or more specific revision.

Even so, larger scale 'groupings' of high (or no) revision do suggest the existence of a distinct revision policy. One large span of text in the couplet section (fols. 33-41) shows virtually no revision at all and suggests the scribe's general satisfaction with the state of the translation there. Certain spans of narrative show revision well beyond the standard deviation above the average per folio side for each verse form (for the couplet section the standard deviation above average amounts to approximately six revisions per side; for the tail-rhyme section the figure is approximately twelve). These heavily-revised sections are fols. 1-12 (the account of Oliver's duel with Ferumbras and his subsequent capture by Saracens); fols. 27-33 (the capture of Floripas's bower); fols. 49-51 (how Richard miraculously avoids the Saracens on his mission to France): and fols. 61-73 (the final Saracen assaults on the bower and the final great battle). The average amount of revision in each of the four groups is generally greater than that of the preceding group, suggesting perhaps that, since each group involves key events in the story, the scribe was concerned with a suitable sense of progression toward a climax; certainly, his revision has in itself a kind of climactic movement.

To conclude, the revision appears to be both roving and specific; there is a certain amount of background roving

Fig.6.


MS Ashmole 33: Revisions per Folio Side
[---MARKS CHANGE TO TAIL-RHYME]
LINES REVISED per FOLIO SIDE
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
14
16
18
20
22
24
26
28
30
32
1
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
55
60
65
70
75
FOLIO NUMBER

claim that we are in possession of an authorial holograph. Such minimal and seemingly subjective changes are the sort we might expect to be important to one engaged in a creative translation.

Other kinds of changes go some way--not, admittedly, as far as we would like--toward answering the kinds of questions about ME composition (and, by implication, translational practices) we would expect a MS with its own draft to answer. As E.G. Stanley points out (with brief reference to AF), a good and true rhyme is not, evidently, the highest of priorities for a ME composer.[37] His remarks are borne out by a consideration of lines in AF where no attempt has been made

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revision interspersed with apparently more purposeful revision confined to discrete sections of the narrative.

[37] E.G. Stanley, "Rhymes in English Medieval Verse: From Old English to Middle English", in Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane, edited by E.D. Kennedy, R. Waldron, and J.S. Wittig (Cambridge, 1988), pp.19-54. Stanley's comments on the rhymes in Sir Ferumbras (p.50) are based on those cited by Herrtage in his introduction to the edition (Sir Ferumbras, p.xviii).

> The rymes are full and true, to effect which, however, the author frequently has had recourse to some very curious spelling (see for instance 11.260-1 [**keem** 'came'/ **Eem** 'uncle']). Occasionally we have instances of half-rymes, as in 11.76-7 [**frenschemen** / **hem** 'them'], 86-7 (first half [**bane** 'ruin' / **name**]), 370-1 [**Balaan** / **cristendam**], 1545-6 [wrong reference, perhaps 1548-9 **cure** / **þere**], &c.

For an extensive account of inexact rhymes throughout AF, see Konick, pp.238-241.

between drafts to replace half-rhymes.[38] As Stanley points out, moreover, in one case the quality of rhyme may even decrease between draft and fair copy.[39]

Other changes (of "letest" to "telest" and "lite" to "litel" in line 404, "sadel" to "mydde1" in line 510, "putte" to "pult" in line 594, "soþ" to "so" in line 643) show us that the author did not look far beyond the words he had already written when he was searching for new ones. Of him we might say, as Maldwyn Mills has said about Libeaus Desconus, "the original redactor of a ME romance would seem in his own way to have been almost as careless as any of the scribes who [may have] later handled his work".[40] More positively, his changes may suggest a sensitivity to word-play, something confirmed later in the narrative by his use of a number of puns: even with a poet of such relatively humble abilities as the Ashmole poet, the spellings and sounds of words may well have carried weight.[41]

The poet's concern for the sounds of words is, however,

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[38] Compare the draft and fair copies of lines 458-459 (**men/hem**), lines 472-473 (**stede/to me**), lines 638-639 (**non/hom**), and lines 686-687 (**hond/longe**).

[39] Stanley, "Rhymes", p.50. Compare the rhyme of lines 370-371 in draft (**Balahen / cristen men**) with that of the fair copy (**Balaan / cristendam**).

[40] Maldwyn Mills, ed., Libeaus Desconus, EETS, No. 261 (London, 1969), p.66.

[41] See my commentary later (in note 55) on the use of "hed" in lines 1604-1610 and "rage" in lines 1668-1671. See also my commentary below, p.86., on "wrech" (added by the scribe over a deletion) in lines 4209-4210.

at its most obvious in the considerable number of small changes between draft and fair copy which enhance the alliteration of individual lines. Because this text is not strictly alliterative, and because it is a late text in relation to the 'alliterative revival' we must naturally be cautious of overstressing implications such changes may have for the composition of bona fide alliterative texts. On the other hand, as I remarked earlier, the text's relative conventionality--that is to say, its innocence of literary innovation--may well be taken as an indication of the corresponding conventionality of its composition. There are over twenty instances of enhanced alliteration between draft and fair copy: thirteen of these create collocations which can be identified in Oakden's survey of alliterative traditions in ME poetry,[42] and which might therefore be justifiably considered conventional.[43] Another eight all

[42] J.P. Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: A Survey of the Traditions (Manchester, 1935).

[43]

Line	Collocation created	Oakden page:
400	londe...ladde	291
414	muche...myȝt	332
416	soþe...saye	337
552	clad...(cote-armure) clene	274
562	say so	348
572	held...honde	287
576	stronge stroke	339
606	sterne strokes...strenghþe	339
608	fers...fiȝte	324
659	mayne...miȝt	332
673	smyte...smerte	337
673	strokes...sterne	339
686	lyued...lyf...longe	329

contain words which can be identified individually among the collocations listed by Oakden and which might therefore be considered to be conventional in nature (if not in placement within known or recorded collocations).[44] We can tell that, for our poet, alliteration probably suggested itself as appropriate to the translation of heroic passages from the source (certainly this is the case for a martial description, as we have seen in lines 672-675 quoted above, p.49). The evidence of the fair copy enhancement of alliteration suggests, however, that alliterative collocations were not (even in the martial passage of lines 672-675, which itself has acquired further alliteration after revision) easy aids to quick improvisation; they were not necessarily 'formulas' which sprang immediately to mind. To the contrary, the use of alliteration in Sir Ferumbras is very much a bookish affair, and complements Turville-Petre's observation that

> the great majority of surviving alliterative

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[44]

Line	Collocation created	See Oakden (respectively) page:
335	dremed...drynke	279, 279
364	with...werres	***, 310
397	forsoke...false...folloȝt	***, 281, 282
462	such...stroke	***, 339
520	felest...feer...fiȝte	***, 324, 281-2
556	meruayllep myche...meyne	332, 332, ***
566	heȝere hand	287, 285
712	sond...sare	300, 300

> poems... are extremely 'bookish' compositions; they are... written by fairly learned men who had a text of the original in front of them....The written alliterative works do not reflect an oral tradition... they are developments of a written tradition....[45]

The Ashmole poet's visible movement toward conventional phraseology is, moreover, probably the most unequivocal evidence available in support of claims, such as W.E. Holland's, that

> the verse romances, those in couplets as well as more complex stanzas, are by their very nature conventional. They do not fail of originality, but ignore it.[46]

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[45] Thorlac Turville-Petre, The Alliterative Revival (Cambridge, 1977), p.16.

[46] W.E. Holland, "Formulaic Diction and the Descent of A Middle English Romance", Speculum, 48 (1973), 105. See also Hoyt N. Duggan, "The Rôle of Formulas in the Dissemination of a Middle English Alliterative Romance", Studies in Bibliography, 29 (1976), 265-288; note especially p.282:

> the editor cannot assume that the poet composing formulaically achieved absolute regularity in his verse, though since he was able to reread and correct what he had written, his opportunities to achieve total regularity were much greater than for purely oral poets.

For a more general treatment of the subject of formulaic composition, see: Turville-Petre, Alliterative Revival, pp.83-92; J.A. Burrow, Medieval Writers and Their Work (Oxford,1982), pp.26-34; and Larry D. Benson, "The Literary Character of Anglo Saxon Formulaic Poetry", Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, 81 (1966), 334-341; note especially p.337:

> ... we do have some [Old English] texts that allow us to watch the very process of composition. From them we can see that not only can literate poets write formulaic verse, they can write it pen in hand in the same way any writer observes a literary tradition.

From the point at which the draft breaks off until the change of verse scheme at line 3410, there is very little evidence in the MS of scribal modifications. Most such changes will probably have been worked through in a now-lost continuation of the draft. Variation from the French, as well as moments of distinctly stylish translation, continue, however, to be common. The first significant variation from the French appears just before the wounded and defeated Ferumbras says to Oliver "do let me hennes bere,/ þat y ne daye in þis degre ~ cristned y wolde y were" (lines 777-778). Ferumbras gives instructions about how he might be moved; the lines have a certain pathos.

> ¶ "Go now, tak my gode stede ~ þat tyed ys at þis tree,
> & he schal wel in thys [my] nede ~ bere boþe me & þee.
> & tak al-so my swerd ploraunce ~ þat hongeþ her by my side,
> Þe hefþe of hym doþ greuaunce ~ to my wounde wyde;
> & helpe me y were on hym an horce ~ y pray þe, ne spare þou noȝt,
> & y wil me selue enforce ~ þat y wer on hym broȝt."
> (lines 788-793)

Of greatest interest in the passage is the grace with which the detail of the Saracen's no longer being able to bear his own sword is handled. "Þe hefþe of hym doþ greuaunce..." has more compassionate elegance and gravity than its rather prosaic French counterpart "«Plourance trop me poise à mon lés»" (Fierabras, line 1527). In this instance AF is easily the more sensitive version; the Saracen's earlier "auaunt"

has been replaced by a touching contrition.[47]

Oliver does not manage to carry Ferumbras far before being ambushed by over fifteen thousand Saracens armed "fro þe top in-to þe to" (lines 801-815). At this point in the French Ferumbras pleads at length with Oliver not to abandon him; this covers over 50 lines (Fierabras, lines 1576-1631). The Ashmole author characteristically recognizes the impossibility of such a debate at such a time, and so enlivens the narrative through concision. The remark "As wys hit was in trewþe & riȝt" in the relevant portion of text appears almost to be a justification of the change:

> þe woundede man þan he set adoun ⁊ & þouȝte askape þe rout.
> & þan he prayde to god almiȝt ⁊ schold saue him þat ilke day,
> As wys hit was in trewþe & riȝt ⁊ þat he tok þat iornay.
> & al-so he prayde for Fyrumbras ⁊ þat no man him be-reue
> Til he wer cristned þorȝ godes gras ⁊ & y-broȝt to the riȝt beleue.
> (lines 825-829)

The explanation is short and simple, and we are allowed to move on quickly to the inevitable battle. Another characteristic feature of this change emphasizes yet again Oliver's unfailing integrity. In the French, Ferumbras admonishes Oliver for appearing cowardly in his decision to abandon him; this in turn causes Oliver to change his mind and keep moving--a decision which could support claims of

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[47] The Sowdone of Babylone does not mention the sword (see lines 1353-1368); and the Fillingham Firumbras, a fragmentary text, does not commence until after this point in the narrative.

cowardice, or at least indecisiveness.

Oliver's encounter with the ambush is given an expanded treatment in the Ashmole text. It is of little value to quote extensively from this and indeed most other subsequent battle scenes, for they are conventional--although they maintain the headlong movement and suspense characteristic of the French text. Some of the appeal of these scenes is, however, derived from a variety of small original 'touches' similar to those we have already encountered; that is, they involve distinctive vocabulary, novel descriptive detail, repetition, and so on, some examples of which do deserve comment. In the expanded description of Oliver's encounter with the ambush we might note, for instance, this cruelly humorous scene, in which the anaphora of prepositions allows a syntactical mimicry of the dire progress Oliver's sword makes through one unfortunate Saracen:

> [He] smot hi<u>m</u> wiþ his swerd keruyng ˜ a sterne strok & a god;
> þorw helm & scolle he clef hi<u>m</u> dou<u>n</u> ˜ & þorȝ auentaile & þorȝ hod
> þorw haberke & þorw is aketou<u>n</u> ˜ attes nauel þe dent a-stod.
> (lines 879-881.)[48]

---

[48] Cf. Jean Ritzke-Rutherford concerning a similar description in the 'Gawain-Priamus' episode of <u>The Alliterative Morte Arthure</u>:

> the description of the blow is retarded, striking as in slow motion through the layers of rich, ornate clothing, listed item by item.... The action [has] an almost dream-like quality greatly in contrast to the rapid cut and thrust of other battle scenes in the poem. ☞

Oliver quickly weakens in the fray and is soon overpowered. A description not unlike that just quoted works as a kind of sad indication of the knight's decline:

> ys scheld þat was wyþ golde y-batrid ⁊ & eke wyþ ire y-bounde,
> Sone þay had it al to-clatrid ⁊ þe peeces leye on þe grounde.
> ys helm, ys coyphe, ys habryioun ⁊ alle þay hadde to-rente,
> & eke ys noble aketoun ⁊ was [al] for-hewe & schente.
> Ac al þe whyle þat he was sounde ⁊ he delte dentes sare,
> Til he hauede so many a wounde ⁊ þat he ne miȝt fiȝt no mare.
> (lines 896-901)

Compared with the rather bald French "en plus de .xxx. lieus ont precié son escu" (Fierabras, line 1681), we have a finely onomatopoeic word, "to-clatrid"; and the phrase "þe peeces leye on þe grounde" has a grim despondent finality.

Subsequent scenes in the battle waged by Roland and others in a vain attempt to recover Oliver are often characterized by the forceful repetition which characterized similar descriptions in the early duel scene. The repetition would have been especially effective if the lines were read aloud.

> Roland prikede is stede of prys ⁊ so dude scot Guylmer,
> So dude Geffray and Aubrys ⁊ & Berard of Montdisdier;
> So dude þe duk of Borgoygne Sir Guy ⁊ þat hardy was & wys,
> & eke Richard of normandy ⁊ & eke sire Alorys;
> & duk neymes of Baueer ⁊ Wyþ þe gray hore berde,
> Basyn, Terry, and Ogier ⁊ & Charlis wiþ al his ferde.
> þay criede "a mont ioie! synt dynys ⁊ " after hem as þay

[Jean Ritzke-Rutherford, "Formulaic Macrostructure: The Theme of Battle", in The 'Alliterative Morte Arthure': A Reassessment of the Poem, edited by Karl Heinz Göller (Cambridge, 1981), p.88.]

gunne ryde,
"ȝe token yuele þe knyȝt of prys ⁊ & yuele ȝou schal be-
tyde."
(lines 932-939)[49]

Once it is realized that the battle is lost, the French knights return to Charles and report their failure to recover Oliver and other captured peres. Charles's response contains an impressive formal complaint which is one of the more sophisticated passages in the poem:

¶ Charlis saw þe sonne neȝ set ⁊ þat red þan schon &
lowe,
In his pauillouns to haue recet ⁊ þiderward gan he
drawe.
& wiþ his host he tornde aȝeyn ⁊ wiþ a wel yuele chere,
& euere he siȝte & gan to seyn ⁊ 'Alas' ⁊ þat he cam
theere:
"Alas ⁊ Olyuer, my gode kniȝt ⁊ for þe myn herte ys
cold.
Alas! þe tyme þou scholdest fiȝt ⁊ with þat Saraȝyn
bold.

---

[49] The same is true of such passages as the following.

¶ þe Sarsyns þanne with gode herte ⁊ foȝte & sparede hem
naȝt,
Harde strokes & eke smerte ⁊ to þe frenschemen þanne þay
raȝt.
þay caste til hem gleyues & launce ⁊ falsarȝ and feþerd
dart,
& slowe þer-wyþ kniȝtes of fraunce ⁊ & gaue hem batail
hard.
(lines 964-967)

þanne miȝte me sen þe frensche men ⁊ after þis Sarsynȝ
chace,
þay huld hur scheldes bi-forn hem ⁊ & harde hem bi-gunne
enbrace.
At aualyng of an hulle ⁊ þe frensche þay han of-take,
& wanne þe frensche men on hem fulle ⁊ þe Sarasyns gunne
to quake.
(lines 982-985)

Alas! now buþ myn barouns wyȝt ⁊ fro me y-take in hold.
Alas! þe tyme þat in mi siȝt ⁊ þis mischef falle schold."
(lines 1020-1027)

The corresponding passage in the French is less formal and not as long.[50] That the Ashmole scribe is responsible for the formal amplification is suggested both by the addition of fourfold rhyme in the last four lines[51] and by a three-way transposition, indicated in the MS, of the last three lines.[52] The extra punctus elevatus in both lines 1023 and 1024 also suggests a degree of extra concern about the way the passage should be scanned for best effect. Formal repetition of initial "Alas" signals the traditional 'complaint', "the regrez, or formal lament by a knight for a dead comrade".[53] That repetition (both of "alas" and of "þe tyme") emphasises the sense that past wrongs can no longer be righted. The setting sun is a kind of 'objective correlative', a focus of sorrow; and "myn herte ys cold" has

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[50] Cf. Fierabras, lines 1779-1785.

[51] Comparison between the earlier draft and fair copy shows that this is a favourite preocupation of the scribe. Compare lines 344-347, 348-351, 408-411, 412-415, 424-427, 500-503, and 626-629, of the draft, with those of the fair copy; in each case the end rhyme (and sometimes the internal rhyme) has been extended across four lines rather than the two of the draft.

[52] The uncorrected order is as follows (using existing line numbers): 1024, 1027, 1025, 1026.

[53] G.V. Smithers, ed., Kyng Alisaunder, EETS, Nos. 227 and 237, 2 vols (London, 1947-1957), II, 31. For further discussion of the passage in AF, see Velma Bouregois Richmond, Laments for the Dead in Medieval Narrative (Pittsburgh, 1966), p.88.

an implicit connection with the waning daylight, a physical darkening and cooling off. We should now recall the emphasis given early on (by the scribe/translator) to Charles's responsibility in the first instance for allowing Oliver to fight Ferumbras. Charles's own realization of that responsibility is now manifest. I think it is fairly safe to say that the Ashmole scribe has succeeded in heightening the emotional force of that presentation over that of the source.

Observing the poet's familiar request to "Torne we aȝen in tour sawes ⁊ & speke we atte frome/ Of Erld Oliuer & his felawes ⁊ þat Saraȝyns habbeþ ynome" (lines 1104-1105) we shall find that scenes at the court of the Emir Balan occasionally contain dialogue which has been translated with notable sensitivity to characterization. Thus the Emir's response at learning that Oliver is the Frenchman who has defeated his son Ferumbras shows a lively mixture of surprise and anger:

> ¶ "Aha!" quaþ he, "is þes þe þef? ⁊ þe deuel him mote for-gnaȝe...." (line 1148)

This kind of response will during the course of the narrative come to characterize most of Balan's actions. In the same way do the first words of Floripas (the Emir's daughter) anticipate her subsequent characterization. When asking the Emir's gaoler if she can see the captured Frenchmen she speaks with a mixture of 'feminine' grace and propriety with 'masculine' vehemence:

¶ "Brytamoun," þanne saide sche ȝ "let me wiþ hem speke
a þrowe
For to wyte wat þey be ȝ & hure couyne y-knowe."
. . .
"... þy fader me for-bed al-so ȝ þat for no þyng þat
miȝte be-falle
þat to no man ne schold y þe dore vndo ȝ with hymen to
speke or calle...."
. . .
"Wat! harlot gadelyng," saide sche þan ȝ mote þou be
heȝe an-honge!
How answerest þow a iantail womman ȝ þat budeþ þe no
wronge!"
(lines 1226-1235)

This combination of grace and venom from a self-proclaimed "iantail womman" is naturally comic. The effect is carried over to Floripas's physical actions, in both the French and English versions, when twice she politely entices servants to their death. Only in the Ashmole version, however, does she wink as a means to her deadly ends (lines 1238 and 1365).

Floripas manages to free the French knights and conceals them in her bower, which is located in a fortified tower built upon a rock jutting into the sea. In both the French and Ashmole texts the description of this bower is the subject of a detailed rhetorical descriptio. As Herrtage notes, the Ashmole descriptio, however,

> ... differs altogether from that in the French text, in which only the ceiling is described.... The author then tells us that the chamber was built by king Methuselah, who he assures us... died of grief because king Naaman desired to have it. Surely an extraordinary jumble of personages. The garden is then described, amongst the plants growing is the mandrake, which will cure any wound

or disease.[54]

The Ashmole version possesses much more visual detail. It is one of the more graceful of such descriptions to be found among the Charlemagne romances and warrants full quotation:

> ¶ þe walles of þe chambre were ⁊ araid for þe nones,
> y-maked of ful riche gere ⁊ of coral & riche stones,
> þe wyndowes wern y-mad of iaspre ⁊ & of oþre stones fyne,
> ypoudred wyþ perree of polastre ⁊ þe leues were masalyne,
> Al þe copples cipres were ⁊ & þe raftres wer al-so,
> And þe bases þat hem bere ⁊ wiþ golde were bi-go:
> þe celynge with-inne was siluer plat ⁊ & with red gold ful wel yguld.
> ne sawe þay neuere by-fore þat ⁊ a place so faire ybuld.
> þe chambre stod oppon þe se ⁊ amidward a roch of stone:
> þer-inne duelte þat maide fre ⁊ as chef of al þat wone,
> & with hure maide Ioyaunce ⁊ þe kynges dogtre of Floyre,
> Clarymounde & mayde Floraunce ⁊ & þat fayre may Baudoyre,
> & oþre maydens elleuene ⁊ burdes brigte on boure;
> xv. þar were of hem ful euene ⁊ duellyng in þat toure.
> ¶ Ful noble was þe ryche aray ⁊ þat in þe chambre was.
> þat vessel was of golde gay ⁊ þat scholde be tyn & bras.
> þe dossers were of ryche pal ⁊ y-brouded al wiþ golde,
> & þe beddes of sente þorw-out-al ⁊ as þarto falle scholde.
> ¶ To a wyndowe wente þes barouns fre ⁊ & ther þay loked oute,
> þay sege þe wages of þe se ⁊ harde to-gadre route.
> As þay auysede a-boute oueral ⁊ þe wardes þat þer wore,
> þe wawes walwede a-geyn þe wal ⁊ a sper schaft lengþe & more.
> "Parfay," þan saide erld Berard ⁊ "þys tour is strong to wynne,
> For any kyng it were ful hard ⁊ wyþ assaut to comen inne."
>
> (lines 1324-1347)

This passage (and indeed other "nice touches" we have

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[54] Herrtage, Sir Ferumbras, p.205. The mandrake from the garden of the French text is used to heal Oliver's wounds. In AF however, the only remedy offered is "a drench þat noble was ⁊ &... warm" (line 1386); once more the Ashmole text avoids presenting Oliver as dependent on supernatural aids.

discussed and will discuss) is, to borrow words from the passage itself, like a piece of gold where we might normally expect "tyn & bras". The detail of the description is well organised. There is an obvious delight in the way in which the chamber is methodically explored; perhaps there is delight also in the sense of the tower's inclusiveness, of its being a world unto itself. An account of the basic fabric of the tower (lines 1324-1331) is followed by a list of its inhabitants and its location (lines 1332-1337); this is followed by a description of the furnishings (lines 1338-1341); the martial overtones in "harde to-gadre route", "a sper schaft lengþe & more" and in Berard's estimation of the tower (lines 1342-1347) then lead us to a pragmatic view of the tower's soon-to-be-tested strategic importance.

Catalogues of things and people in lines 1325-1331, 1334-1335, and 1339-1341, moreover, involve a rich vocabulary and a pleasingly assonant variety of names which together complement aurally the visual richness of the scene. Perhaps in this can be detected a confirmation of our earlier proposition that the scribe/translator is sensitive to the sound value of the words he chooses.[55]

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[55] In this description, only lines 1334-1335, which contain the catalogue of names, are taken over from the French. Since the names have no significance whatsoever to the rest of the story, it may be that they have been included here simply for their pleasing sound.

Equally characteristic are two examples of wordplay in this section of the poem. The first involves an obvious play on the sense of "head":

A later scene which shares many of the qualities of the bower description comes as the result of this eloquent request a Saracen makes of Naymes to describe the pastimes of Frenchmen:

> "Tel me furst by þy lay ⁊ wat doþ ȝour men of fraunce;
> Of hure disport & ek hure play ⁊ what is ȝour mest vsaunce?"
> (lines 2216-2217)

The response is as eloquent as the request.

> ¶ "þe manere of hem," þan sayde he ⁊ "is erly gon to

> Roland smot hym on þe helm an heȝ ⁊ & laid hit a doun with mayn,
> Helm & coyfe ther wyþ a clef ⁊ þorw-out heued & brayn.
> . . .
> ¶ Wanne his felawes þat y-sye ⁊ þat Moradas þe kyng was ded,
> Loude þay cryede & skryȝte an hye ⁊ "Mahoun wat is þy red?
> How schulle we now ous selue gye ⁊ now ous lackeþ our hed?"
> (lines 1604-1610)

The second involves a more subtle play on the sense of "rage", when Roland suggests that he and six other peres, now on a mission to deliver a message to Balan, carry directly to the Emir the heads of seven of his messengers whom they have just slain:

> "Ro[land]," quaþ Neymes, "why spekestou so? þou ert of heȝe parage,
> Wilt þou þe selue & ous a slo ⁊ þorw such a fol outtrage?"
> "Be dure god," quaþ Terry þo ⁊ it wil be riȝt god rage,
> Riȝt as he wil let it be do ⁊ for þat is vassalage."
> (lines 1668-1671)

Terry's contrary "god rage" would seem to fit the observation in OED that "outrage (from OF ultrage, oltrage) in English [is] often analysed as from OUT and RAGE; a notion which affected the sense development: cf. sense 2; extravagant, violent, or disorderly action; mad or passionate behaviour, fury...". Naymes's perjorative inference of "mad" behaviour has been twisted by Terry into the more favourable sense of "passionate" behaviour.

cherche,
& after-ward ech man on his degree ˙ after his stat þay
werche.
þo þat lordes buþ of þe lond ˙ in som tyme of the ȝere,
þay takeþ hure facouns faire an hond ˙ & fareþ to
ryuere;
& Summe a deer honteþ of hem þar went ˙ & some to fox
and hare;
& to ioustes and tornyment ˙ wel mo þer wendeþ ofte
þare.
þo þat willieþ to leue at hame ˙ pleyeþ to þe
eschekkere,
& summe of hem to iew-de-dame ˙ & summe to tablere:
Summe þay vseþ a maner of play ˙ to caste wel a spere;
And somme for to sckyrme alay[56] ˙ with swerd & bokelere.
þys buþ þe games pf my contre ˙ þat y þe telle here."
(lines 2218-2228)

Much of this charming passage is taken over from the French, which has "escrimissent" ("sckyrme"), esciés ("eschekkere"), and "oent messe" ("gon to cherche") to denote French pastimes (see Fierabras, lines 2898-2905). As with the description of Floripas's bower, however, there are significant additions--again, it seems, with the intention of creating an inclusive and orderly tableau. Whereas the French provides a simple list of pastimes, with the only qualifications that 'one' does this, 'most' do that, and that mass is attended in the morning, the Ashmole account evokes from the elaboration of such points a world of some social (and temporal) distinction. Thus, not only is church attended in the morning, but there are periods "after-ward" in which each man works "on his degree[,] after his stat." These states and

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[56] The edition reads "asay", but the MS has "alay", as does Herrtage's note to this line, p.210. I cannot find any other examples of this word; perhaps the phrase "sckyrme alay" indicates some special martial game.

degrees are then identified according to the kinds of leisure they attract. Landed gentry engage in outdoor sports, namely five different kinds of hunting; "joustes & tournyment" are even more popular. A more sedentary number of such gentry prefer three different sorts of table game. Lastly, the less sophisticated field sports of spear throwing and sword fighting are represented. The impression, then, in structure, content, and style, is of an attractive orderly world alive with activity, in which the activty is itself an expression of the orderliness.

There can be little doubt that it is with such descriptions as these that the Ashmole poet is at his best; they stand out from the surrounding text. Before the change of rhyme-scheme there are two more compelling descriptions in which the modifying hand of the Ashmole scribe/translator may be detected.

The first involves the attempted rape of the sleeping Floripas by Maubyn, Balan's ill-fated necromancer, whose task it has been to enter the tower by magical means and to despoil the maiden of a magical girdle which prevents hunger for all those in the tower. Having easily removed the girdle, Maubyn decides further to despoil Floripas of her maidenhead. Awakened, she cries out and is swiftly rescued by her paramour, Guy of Burgundy. This basic sequence of events is identical in both French and English versions. The Ashmole text, nonetheless, adds the following small details:

þe cloþes þat wern on hure bed ilaid ⁊ araid al wiþ þe beste,
Alle haþ [Maubyn] wiþ is hondes braid ⁊ doun be-nyþe hure breste.
(lines 2427-2429)

By þat had he hur legges oundo ⁊ & saide, "so Mahoun me saue,
Wheþer þov wile now ouþer no ⁊ þy maydenhed schal y haue."
(lines 2439-2440)

¶ þan sche spak þat burde brigt ⁊ þat al naked was saf hir cerke....
(line 2449)[57]

By increasing the graphic detail of the description, the scene is made more exciting, the gravity of Maubyn's actions made to seem more intense, the suspense amplified; the subsequent heroism of Guy (not to mention the love interest between Guy and Floripas) is also thrown into greater relief.[58]

The second notable description before the change of rhyme-scheme combines the attention to structural detail of the bower description with the hierarchical ordering of the 'pastimes' description. Finding that the Christians in the tower are offering formidable resistance (even though the Saracens have attaked in numbers "as þykke as gras", line

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[57] Compare the entire scene with Fierabras, lines 3080-3108.

[58] The scribe/translator's authorship of these changes is, I think, clear from twelve further lines (lines 2453-2464) which précis the event and which have no match in the French. In the MS, the first four lines (with fourfold rhyme) lie over a palimpsest, and the last eight (also with fourfold rhyme) have been squeezed into the lower margin after the main body of text had been written.

3220), Sortibrant recommends that Balan bring before the tower "[þe] castel of tre þat higt brysour" (line 3171). "Brysour" is subsequently described.[59] There might have been a French source for the description; but, other than this, no existing version of the story describes the tower in any detail, and the least we can say about the passage is that it has been translated with evident delight.

> þe engyneour, yuele most he þeo ⁊ so narwe he him by
> -þoȝte!
> To þe castel þat was ymad of treo ⁊ al þat host he
> broȝte;
> þat haluendol þan diȝte he ⁊ wiþ-inne forþ to stonde,
> þat oþer dol wyþ-oute to be ⁊ to schute & caste with
> honde.
> ¶ In þat same tre castel ⁊ weren maked stages thre;
> þe heȝest higt mangurel ⁊ pe middel higt launcepre,
> þe nyþemest was callid hagefray ⁊ a quynte þyng to se,
> & was digt for ys owen aray ⁊ for þer-on wolde he be.
> þan þe heȝest stage of al ⁊ fulde he wiþ men of armes,
> To schelde hem by-nyþe wel ⁊ fram stones & othere
> harmes.
> þat wanne þe frensche þyderward ⁊ caste stones oþer tre,
> þay scholde with hure scheldes hard ⁊ kepe þe dent aȝe;
> & summe scholde schete to þe frensche rout ⁊ with gunnes
> & boȝes of brake,
> þat þay ne beo hardy to lokie out ⁊ defense aȝen hem to
> make.
> And on þat oþer stage amidde ⁊ ordeynt he gunnes grete,
> And oþer engyns y-hidde ⁊ wilde fyr to caste & schete.
> þyder þanne he putte y-nowe ⁊ & tauȝte hem hure labour,
> Wilde fyr to schete & þrowe ⁊ aȝen þe heȝe tour.
> In the nyþemest stage þanne ⁊ schup he him selue to
> hove,
> To ordeyne hure fyr þar-inne ⁊ & send hit to hem above.

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[59] The name seems to be thoroughly appropriate. Cf. the OED entry for brusure:

> Obs. Forms: brusur... brissoure... brusor. [a. OF. briseure, bruseure, mod. F. brisure, f. briser to break.]
> 1. Bruising or crushing; a bruise, contusion....
> 2. Breaking, breach, fracture; ruin....

To him-ward þanne tok he Sarazyns ⁊ an hundred atte leste,
To come & go to þe engyns ⁊ and seruy hem in þe beste:
Al þe remanant of þe numbre ⁊ he ordeyneþ to schute & caste,
þe grete tour fort encumbre ⁊ in þys wyse atte laste.
(lines 3251-3274)

This is clearly not as delicate a scene as the other two in terms of its visual richness or the grace of its prosody (though we can say that our author's statement that this is "a quynte þyng to se" is genuine and no mere filler). In terms of technical detail and orderliness, nevertheless, it is just as compelling; Froissart's involved descriptions of sieges and battles come to mind, where the appeal lies in much the same ordered and thorough approach to detail, the impression of verisimilitude.[60] As with the other two

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[60] There is, in fact, a description of a siege tower similar to this in the account of the siege of Breteuil in Book I of Froissart's Chronicles:

> the King of France... set numbers of carpenters to work at building a large 'belfry' or wooden tower with three storeys which could be moved about on wheels. Each storey could hold a good two hundred men, with enough room to use their weapons. This tower was provided with loopholes and padded with leather as a protection against heavy bolts.

[Jean Froissart, Chronicles, translated and selected by Geoffrey Brereton, revised (London, 1978), p.120. All references to Froissart, Chronicles, are to this edition.]

The construction of these towers in three storeys with specialized functions for each storey is by no means unusual, reflecting an ancient design; cf. Sidney Toy on the attack on Echinus by Philip of Macedonia in 211 B.C.:

> the siege towers were each of three storeys and, in addition to fighting men, contained catapults, fire-extinguishing equipment and, in the ground storey, men employed in clearing the way in front ☞

descriptions, this account is self-contained. In fact, the subsequent battle accounts make no specific mention of "Brysour"; the value of the scene, therefore, would seem intended to lie principally in the pleasure derived from the investigation of the tower itself. This is achieved through familiar techniques. There is again, in the description of the specialized functions of each of the three stages, a distinction between constituent features of the scene. Repeated words and phrases ("hegest", "middel", "nybemest",

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of the towers so that they could be moved forward.

[Sidney Toy, A History of Fortification from 3000 B.C. to 1700 A.D. (London, 1955), pp.27-28.]

The naming of siege engines such as this tower has historical precedent; cf. the following account of the siege of Acre in 1192.

> The king of France... turned his attention to the constructionof machines and petrariæ... and he had one of superior quality to which they gave the name "Bad Neighbour." The Turks also had one they called "Bad Kinsman"....

["Itinerarium Regis Anglorum Richardi, et aliorum in Terram Hierosolymorum", in Chronicles of the Crusades, translated anonymously (London, 1892), p.205.]

I cannot locate any reference to the naming of individual levels within the tower as we find in the Ashmole description. Even so, to the engineers who were entrusted with the design and construction of these siege engines, some technical nomenclature reflecting the function of each level would surely have existed. I think this is suggested by two of the names given in the Ashmole text; "mangurel" (a legitimateME form of 'mangonel') and "launcepre" (from the French, perhaps, '[to] throw stones') are self-explanatory, and could reflect the actions which may have taken place on the two top floors. If "Hagefray" was meant to indicate a function I am unable to identify it; the word does not have an obvious etymology in either French or English.

"castel", "tre", "schete & caste", "stones", "fyr", and "engyns") also reflect the structural and functional specialization of the tower.

——ooOoo——

The Tail-Rhyme Section of Sir Ferumbras: lines 3411-5890

As I remarked earlier, in the light of Konick's findings it is wise to approach the text following the change of rhyme-scheme as if it represents a different source exemplar. At the same time it must also be recognized that the Ashmole scribe has in any event brought something of his own style and innovation to the tail-rhyme text; indeed, it is probably from this kind of observation that Baugh expressed doubts that any change of authorship has taken place, even after supervising Konick's thesis.[61] It will, moreover, always hold true that a new rhyme-scheme imposes a new aesthetic on the text. Herrtage notes that "the concluding portion of the poem has been revised by the author more than any other, and is in consequence more smooth and finished, and 'goes' better".[62] Revised or not, the tail-rhyme text does give this

[61] "Whether [scribal corrections in] this part represent improvements on [the ASH I author's] own work or his revision of another version needs further study" (Baugh, Speculum 42, p.8).

[62] Herrtage, Sir Ferumbras, p.xviii.

impression; there are fewer rhymes to break up the flow and sense of the lines; "leisurely and detailed stories... are told in the couplet form", says Maldwyn Mills, but "the [tail-rhyme stanza is] most lyrical and best suited to express emotion".[63] From a wider perspective, the story is now entering its climactic phases and this part of the narrative in fact marks a natural break. The proposition that the besieged knights send a messenger for help is introduced here--and this is a proposition which ushers in the turning point in the Christians' fortunes and quickly brings victory. The scribe has treated this as a natural break by marking the change with a paragraph symbol and a large capital, as he does other significant breaks.[64] In short, it is difficult to believe that the point at which the change occurs has not at least partially been determined from a literary point of view, even though the original reason for the change may have been a defective exemplar. It follows, then, that we should not rule out the scribe's sensitivity to the implications of the change and its effect on the entire narrative; he may have adjusted the finer points of his transmission of a new source accordingly to make it complement the previous section.

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[63] Maldwyn Mills, Six Middle English Romances (London, 1973), p.viii.

[64] This is also a break sanctioned by the textual tradition; it is marked, as Konick points out, in five other versions of the story. See Konick, p.223.

Smyser speaks of parts of the tail-rhyme section as "lively and entertaining".[65] I cannot think of better words to describe not just parts, but all of the section. The action is diversified with dialogue, and suspense is maintained. Generally speaking, this is as competent a handling of martial material as one can expect from most metrical romances--though we should remember that, as Konick has pointed out, ASH II deviates less from the French than ASH I and so owes much of its appeal to its source. The drive of the narrative is rarely interrupted by 'rhetorical' or purely descriptive passages, though where they do occur, they retain the kind of eloquence which often complemented their original and translated counterparts in the septenary lines. A good example comes soon after the change of verse-form. With a succession of distinctive phrases notable for their grace and gravity, Richard of Normandy explains why he is the one who should risk embarking on a message to Charles:

"Sirs, ȝe knoweþ wel
þat y am sumdel stryken on age,
And haue a sone of my parage
þat is boþe wys & fel:
þoȝ þe Saraȝyns smyte of myn hed,
He ys myn ayr after my ded
To broke myn heritage.
& þerfor yf ȝe assentiaþ to,
At al perils wil y go
To Charlis in ȝour message."
(lines 3480-3486)

The translation is smooth and confident, and the lines have the same air of sad wisdom as those we have seen uttered by

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[65] Smyser, Manual, p.84.

Oliver's father so early on in the story (lines 331-333). The same qualities can be detected in Charles's thoughts to himself when confronted with the proposition of leaving Spain now that his peres seem certain to be lost:

" now falleþ al myn honour,
þe whyle y hauede me aboute
Myne doþþepers bold & stoute,
Olyuer & Rolond,
In tal þe worlde men dude me doute:
Whar þat y come wyþ my route,
y hadde þe heghere hond:
þanne me dradde fer & ner,
And was ycleped conquerer,
In tal þe worlde aboute."
(lines 4054-4060)

The first line reintroduces the point of honour raised in Reyner's early lines ("þou lest þy los þerfore", line 333). Here, as was the case with Reyner's lines, the point of honour comprises an explicit statement not found in the French, and shows us the consistency with which both parts of the Ashmole text bring Charles's culpability to the fore.[66] The second tail-line, for all its simplicity, is the most powerful line in the passage; isolated as the three words "Olyuer & Roland" are, and given their reflective context, they present an elegiac finality. By repeating "in tal þe worlde" of five lines before, the last line quoted also has an elegiac flavour, and convincingly suggests Charles's incredulity at the loss.

A glimpse of the more dynamic potential of the new verse-form (apart from the martial passages) is given soon

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[66] Cf. Fierabras, lines 4443-4446.

after Charles's sad words. When Ganelon and his allies encourage Charles to return to France, Reyner wisely reminds Charles "hure consail to þe nas neuere noȝt" (line 4101). A scuffle ensues between Reyner and Ganelon's cousin Alorys. Ganelon's supporters then voice their anger. Though short, their protest, marking one of the few instances of unannounced speech in the poem, is remarkable for its energy:

> "What of alyaunce, wat of blod,"
> þan þay ascryede hym as þay were wod,
> "Asarmes!" swyþe an-heȝ.
> (lines 4125–4126)

Although we shall not encounter quite such distinctively energetic lines again, we will find that they are only a few of many hearty rallying cries and speeches which occur in this section of the Ashmole text and increase the excitement as the story nears its end. Some of those passages are of particular interest because they betray clear evidence in the MS of scribal rewriting or wholesale addition to the source.

Most passages of this sort occur in the lower margins of the MS and, unfortunately, have not been placed by Herrtage within the text proper of the edition. He probably did not include these passages in the text because he was unsure of their intended point of insertion and because various scribal 'pointers' and lines connecting displaced continuations of added passages were invisible (they can now be seen with the

aid of ultraviolet light).[67] The first of these additions involves the Saracens' reaction to a messenger's report that Charles and his army is approaching. In the original text of the MS, the response by Balan and Sortibrant is consistent with that of the French text:[68]

¶ þanne hym askede þe Amerel:
"Wyþ how many comeþ þe fauterel
Wyþ þe hore berde?"
"Sir," quaþ he, "þar buþ y-tolde
An hondred þousand of knyȝtes bolde
Comyng on ys ferde."
¶ Sortybrant sayde, "þer-of no drede,
þow hast þe doble on þy ferede,
Ay tweyne aȝen hem one,
And þay habbeþ þe wrong & we þe riȝt;
To-morwe we schulle wyþ hym fiȝt,
& discomfytye hymen echone."
(lines 5235-5242)

The passage is marked in the MS[69] for replacement with the following lines:

Wan þe Amyral hym haþ y-herd
Of ys tydynges he wax afferd
þe assaut he lefte sone.
& het ys host go to hure logyng
Til þay hadde of hym warnyng
What þay scholde done.[70]

Obviously the substituted lines state explicitly that Balan is frightened. This change is in fact more in keeping with the

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[67] Herrtage also appears to have worked mainly from a transcript of the MS made by "Mr George Parker, of the Bodleian Library, Oxford [to whom] is due the sole credit of deciphering the MS" (Herrtage, Sir Ferumbras, p.xxvii).

[68] Cf. Fierabras, lines 5398-5403 (though only Balan responds to the messenger).

[69] A small cross is placed to the left of line 5235, and beside "Wan" in the marginal material.

[70] See Herrtage, Sir Ferumbras, p.163.

general hysterical and defeatist tenor of Balan's characterization throughout the story; this was implicit in Sortibrant's comforting "þer-of no drede", but the Ashmole scribe has evidently decided that that implication alone is not strong enough. Another perhaps more important motive for the substitution--which we should note replaces dialogue with reported narrative--is that it frees Sortibrant's use of the familiar "þay habbeþ þe wrong & we þe right" for use in a later speech by Charles. The phrase is familiar from the Chanson de Roland: "Paien unt tort e chrestiens unt dreit".[71] Interestingly, Fierabras gives the line to a pagan (with appropriate changes), but the Ashmole scribe has returned it to its 'rightful' context--certainly it is, in its directness, a powerful line which the scribe may have thought was rather wasted on those to whom victory is inevitably denied in these stories.

In its new position, the line is employed to good effect. Charles's rallying speech belongs with a relatively long, but well-written, passage squeezed into the lower margins of fols 72^{vb}-73^{ra}. Ordered according to scribal directions the whole passage reads as follows:

> þat host of Saragyns þan he beheld
> þar þo by-spradde þe large feld,
> iij myle yn lengþe & brede.
> Al a-loud said he þen:

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[71] J. Bédier, ed., La Chanson de Roland publiée d'apres le manuscrit d'Oxford et traduite par Joseph Bédier (Paris, 1937), line 1015. All references to the Chanson (de Roland) are to this edition.

"Her ys gret puple of heþen men,
god of heuene ous spede!
Alþoȝ þay beo mo þan we yn numbre,
Hure fals fayth schal hem encombre,
& ek hir false dede.
þay haue þe wrong & we þe riȝt,
We schulleþ sle alle hem yn fyȝt,
Haue ȝe none drede.
Go we þer-for to þam affront
& fiȝte we with þe heþene hond,
& maugre habben þat spare."
"Amen," saide þay euerechon;
With þat hert was vp anon
& layn þay wel be þare.
þan Char[lis] þat host haþ y-nome
& esyly rydeþ at o trome
& aȝen þe Sarsyns [. . .].[72]

Small details bring the passage alive. First there is the even progression of argument which we have noted in other Ashmole additions to the story. Charles moves from an assessment of Saracen numbers to an assessment of moral righteousness, which in turn makes the initial panorama of heathen forces seem immaterial; from this Charles reaches the confident decision "go we þer-for to þam affront". The success of the speech is immediately evident both in the collective "Amen" and in an assured line (reminiscent of Maldon) "hert was vp anon". Though the final tail-line strophe is fragmentary, we have enough of the whole passage to see that this addition to the poem makes for a charged introduction to the final battle. Without the passage we are (as in the French, lines 5576-5595) cast almost immediately, with little heightening of tension or suspense, into a

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[72] See Herrtage, Sir Ferumbras, pp.168 and 170. The lines belong between lines 5458 and 5459 of the edition proper.

sequence of one-on-one combat descriptions.

Another instance of scribal modification to the original story is found in the second formal complaint in the poem; changes in the MS show that the passage has received special attention from the scribe. Again, the complaint is spoken by Charles who mourns the apparent loss of his best warriors. As before, the complaint is significantly expanded from the French, and its formal structure is emphasized by multiple use of "Alas".[73] It is the scribe's modifications which are of the greatest interest in this passage (stars surround words which were added as corrections; the words they replace are listed beneath the quotation):[74]

ofte he sayde "Alas!"
& "Alas!" saide he, by-forn hem þar,
"þat y euere y ȝut croune bar,
þis is a deeful þyng!
þat suþþen myn barouns buþ þus y-slayn,
& y *thus* wrecchedly schal torne a-gayn,
Wiþ-oute **wrech takyng:**
þar as y ha be arst mykel of tolde,
For a coward y worþ y-holde,
boþe in tour and bour.
Alas ⁊ alas! cold is my red;
Why lybbe y now þat þay buþ ded...."
(lines 4206-4213)

now
any vengeance

Replacement of "now" with "thus" creates an echo with "þus" in the previous line, thereby closely linking the death of

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[73] See Fierabras, lines 4560-4565.

[74] Other small changes have also been made, but which are not noted here; full details may be found in Herrtage's edition.

the barons with the retreat: their death is the defeat and retreat of Charlemagne. The second change is more sophisticated. The phrase may have been added to rhyme with the new tail-line, but the choice of the word "wrech", alliterating with "wrecchedly" in the preceding line, expresses the combination of misery and the inability to wreak revenge more pointedly and bitterly.

At this point in the narrative, Richard of Normandy arrives from the besieged peres with their request for help. As Charles turns to their aid, he instigates the final series of battles in the story. Ultimately, Balan's army is defeated, the Emir captured and, after refusing baptism, eventually beheaded; Floripas is baptised and then married to Guy of Burgundy. All this activity makes for a lively enough narrative, though until all but the last surviving lines there is little deviation from the French, and little scribal modification visible in the MS. The translation is, as always, competent.

Perhaps the most obvious conclusion to be drawn from this study of Sir Ferumbras is that a new edition is needed. Indeed, it is impossible at present fully to appreciate the complexity of the scribe/translator's attention and devotion to the text without constant reference to the MS itself. Perhaps even with a new edition, the problem would remain; only a view of MS Ashmole 33 and its original bindings can, I

think, impress upon one just how 'experimental' the process of rendering this story appears to have been, just how much, moreover, its rendering has been a labour of love. Even the 'fair' copy of the MS book is so covered in amendments that it is impossible to conceive of all 77 leaves and the more than 5000 lines as anything but another draft; the scribe was committed to much more work on his poem. We catch the process of composition only in medias res.

In this sense, it becomes difficult to feel that any critique of the text we have can do full justice to the abilities and potential of its scribe/translator, and sometime author; even so, we can still see, as Baugh implied, that many of the more exciting and appealing moments in the existing story result from the amending talents of this individual. What we can say of the author for certain, moreover, is that the manuscript evidence of his labours belies Dorothy Everett's influential claim that stories of Charlemagne and his paladins were seen by ME romancers as "uncongenial material".[75]

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[75] One point of further interest in this MS is the following gallery of assorted characters to be found in its margins. They are also the work of the scribe, and confirm visually a number of his literary inclinations. ☞

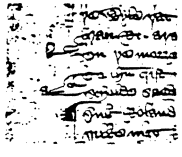


Fig.7
(from fol.46^{vb})

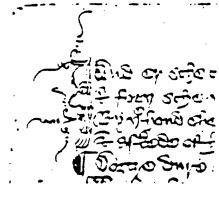


Fig.8
(from fol.26^{vb})

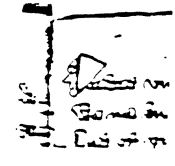


Fig.9
(from fol.39ra)

Like many notable literary features of AF, these little figures are easily overlooked (and have not been specifically identified before). Like the 'dog and cat' transposition symbols (Figure 7), some of the revisions which attempt to reorder points of transition in the narrative reveal a certain precision and inventiveness (note in the drawings the formation of the ears from initial <þ> and <T>). Like the foliated visage (Figure 8), revisions and scribal modifications to the source story possess a mixture of naive charm, confidence, and vigour. Like the capital <L> transformed into the face of an old woman (Figure 9), the many slighter modifications throughout the text can embody a clever and playful sense of humour.

CHAPTER 2

"I haue gone for þi sak wonderfull wais": The Song of Roland[1]

"The principal merit of [this] piece", said its editor, S.J. Herrtage, "lies in its shortness".[2] Herrtage has not been alone in his low opinion of the ME Song of Roland (SR). In the earliest edition of the OF Chanson de Roland, Thomas Wright said that the ME version had "peu de valeur";[3] in his influential Histoire poétique de Charlemagne, Gaston Paris found that "les fragments que nous possédons du poème anglais

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[1] Composed around 1400, the Middle English Song of Roland is preserved uniquely in a late fifteenth-century paper manuscript now bound into British Library MS Lansdowne 388 (fols 381ra–398^{vb}). The poem survives as a fragment of 1049 lines in four-stress rhyming couplets written in an East-Midland dialect. The fragment begins at that part of the Rencesvals story which recounts the return of Ganelon from his embassy to Saragossa; it breaks off at the point in the battle of Rencesvals when Roland decides to summon help (this corresponds roughly to lines 674–1736 of the Oxford Chanson de Roland). For further details, see Smyser, Manual, p.94, and bibliography, p.265.

For details about the other contents of MS Lansdowne 388, see Gisela Guddat-Figge, Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances (Munich, 1976), pp.209–211.

[2] S.J.Herrtage, ed., Fragment of the Song of Roland, in 'The Sege off Melayne', 'The Romance of Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne', together with a Fragment of the 'Song of Roland' from the unique MS Lansdowne 388, EETS, Extra Series, No. 35 (London, 1880), p.xix. All references to The Song of Roland (otherwise referred to as SR) are to this edition.

[3] Thomas Wright, "Analyse d'un fragment en viel anglais sur le même sujet", in La Chanson de Roland, edited by F. Michel (Paris, 1865), p.284.

ne nous font pas vivement regretter ce qui manque";[4] and W.H. Schofield felt that the English author "had plainly very little talent".[5] No doubt, unfavourable estimation of the fragment was (and still is) due in large part to comparison with the great Oxford Chanson. Even so, this collective low opinion has not been derived through any obviously detailed attention to the poem, not through the kind of attention which of course had in the last century brought the greatness of the Oxford text itself to light. Almost alone in recognizing this has been Jessie Crosland, who, in her discussion of the fragment, said that "not quite full justice has been done [to the poem]".[6] Though her discussion of the poem is brief, Crosland arrives at a more favourable view than that of most other critics, probably because she at least pays some attention to the actual text and assumes implicitly that the poem may have its own artistic purpose as against that of its sources, and that its artistic independence is not necessarily something to be regretted. I will attempt to expand on Crosland's approach with a more detailed study of the text and its background; it is my aim to show how the justice Crosland found wanting might be

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[4] Gaston Paris, Histoire poétique de Charlemagne, revised edition (Paris, 1905), p.155.

[5] W.H. Schofield, English Literature from The Norman Conquest to Chaucer (New York, 1905), p.151.

[6] Jessie Crosland, The Old French Epic (Oxford, 1951), p.231.

served. The ME Roland is not a masterwork--this is not another Chanson de Roland, and the text has probably suffered from a succession of copyings and their attendant scribal blunders--but I do feel that this ostensibly humble fragment displays a degree of literary craftsmanship which deserves to be exhibited for what it is worth.

Let us first allow the poem to speak for itself. In the first ten lines of the fragment, which recount Ganelon's return from Saragossa with gifts of wine and women (the basic outline of which, as most commentaries point out, is borrowed from The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle), one cannot fail to detect intimations of a poem of some power and quality.

> He beheld ladys with laughinge cher.
> then lightid gwynylon and com In in fer,
> And brought in the madins bright in wedis;
> he told many tailis, and all was lies:
> For he that is fals no wordis ned seche,
> so fairithe he withe flatring speche.
> And the lord that king plaid with.
> and on the toper sid he kest his sight.
> who so beleuythe hym shall him fals find,
> right as A broken sper at the litill end.
> (lines 1-10)

Rhymes look odd in lines 4 ("lies" with "wedis"), 8 ("sight" with "with"), and 10 ("end" with "find"), but the passage still holds us; note the commanding proverbial wisdom about Ganelon's behaviour provided in "he that is fals no wordis ned seche/so fairithe he withe flatring speche" (lines 5-6) and "who so beleuythe hym shall hym fals find,/ right as A

broken sper at the litill end" (lines 9–10).[7] Note also the abrupt, seemingly angered simplicity of "he told many tailis, and all was lies" (line 4); that line provides a thematic touchstone to the ominous proverbial reference to the "broken sper" which follows. There is also good dramatic detail: Ganelon's treacherous inclinations can be no better presented than in the observation that, although "laughinge" (line 1), he would not look Charles in the eye (line 8). Ganelon's imminent treachery itself is aptly presented through the metaphor of the broken spear; a warrior's loyalty is broken, and the most valiant portion of the emperor's army is, because of this, about to be broken. The metaphor also seems to have been chosen to inform the dream Charles has later, in which Ganelon assails him so that "the splintis of [Charles's] sper sprong into heuyn" (line 87). Charles also says later of the dream, in a prophetic and moving line, "my spere spild, and my sped failid" (line 386).

Not much further on in the narrative, where the feast Charles holds on the night of Ganelon's return is described, the poetry again rewards attention.

> the king set hym to his soper þat tid,
> seruyd hym semly and his men by his sid

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[7] I take "litill end" to refer to the pointed end of the spear, the overall sense of lines 9–10 being 'who so believes him shall find him as deceptive and unreliable (in war) as a spear which is cracked near its point'. Cf. proverb no. S649 in Whiting's catalogue: "He that rests on a rotten staff must fall...". [B.J. Whiting, Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases From English Writings Mainly Before 1500 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968), p.544.]

with euery thinge þat myght glad his hert:
wyn went be-twen þem, non did astert,
þat gwynylon to toun brought, euyll hym be-tid!
It swymyd in ther hedis and mad hem to nap;
they wist not what þey did, so þer wit failid.
when they were in bed and thought to a restid,
they went to the women þat wer so hend,
that wer sent fro saragos of sairsins kind:
they synnyd so sore in þat ylk while
that many men wept and cursid þat vile.
(lines 65–76)

"Wyn went be-twen þem" (line 68) resonates with ambiguity. Not only is it the wine of fellowship passed "be-twen" comrades; it is also the wine "þat gwynylon to toun brought" (line 69), an instrument of treachery which would drive barriers "be-twen" true fellowship and unity of purpose. The rest of the passage describes the knights' debauch with evident concern, in a fashion which conveys dramatically the physiology of what seems to be an almost demonic possession. The knights' heads do not swim quite in the conventional sense; the wine, already personified as something of a villain, "swymyd", like an independent entity, "in ther hedis" and "mad" the knights drowsy, to the point that "þer wit failid" (lines 70–71). That the knights intended to rest (line 72) but instead "went to the women" (line 73)—"hend" women "of sairsins kind", it is stressed (lines 73–74)—further suggests an irresistible descent into regrettable behaviour. The passage acquires further drama through its juxtaposition of the evil action of the wine and women with the king's initially "semly" feast (line 67).

I think it is clear, even from this brief glance at the

text, that there is some literary interest; the symbolism, characterization, repeated images, proverbs, and simply the memorable cadence of some of the lines tell us as much. These features are all the more impressive because they are not, on the whole, taken from any other known versions of the story.

Even where there is influence from known sources, the details of that influence are interesting. Source affiliation for the fragment is, in fact, so complicated as to be indeterminable; as H.M. Smyser has noted, SR (or the French text it may have translated) appears to derive not from the direct transmission of one source, but from conflation of several versions of the Rencesvals story, including those of the Oxford, Paris, Chateauroux, and Venice 'V7' MSS of the Chanson, as well as The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle.[8] One suggestion of such an apparently varied collection of influences is that SR (or its possible French 'original') might be a kind of 'researched' compilation, the result perhaps of some considerable narrative craftsmanship (assuming, of course, that it is not the result of successive redactions--even then, as I think will become evident from the following discussion, each individual contibution would

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[8] Smyser, Manual, pp.94-96. For editions of the versions of the Chanson other than that of the Oxford text, see R. Mortier ed., Les Textes de la 'Chanson de Roland', 10 vols (Paris, 1940-1949).

have had to have been integrated with some skill).[9]

Especially telling of all these possible influences is the nature of the poem's debt to The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle. Existing attempts to explain the reasons for the influence on SR of the Chronicle are probably misinformed. It has been assumed that SR borrows from the Latin text of the Chronicle.[10] There are, however, differences between the Latin and the English account of Ganelon's gift of wine and women. Firstly, it is not stated in the ME, as it is in the Latin, that only lesser warriors went to the women; indeed, in the English, "non" of those at the feast (presumably including Charles's greater lords) "did astert" (line 68) from drinking the wine; and this would also seem to refer to those who were induced by the wine to take to the women.[11]

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[9] SR may also have been influenced by legends other than that of Rencesvals. Jessie Crosland notes (p.233) that the poet may have been acquainted with legends of Ganelon's lineage, such as that found in Macaire.

[10] Selections of the Chronicle provided in an appendix to Herrtage's edition (pp.xxxii-xxxiv) are those of a Latin text. In his study of the poem, Clemens Wichmann considers only a Latin Pseudo-Turpin; see Clemens Wichmann, "Das Abhängigkeitsverhältnis des altenglischen Rolandsliedes zur altfranzösischen Dichtung" (dissertation, Münster, 1889). Editions of vernacular texts of the Pseudo-Turpin are, moreover, not listed in Smyser's bibliography, the most comprehensive available for this poem (see Smyser, Manual, pp.256-257).

[11] The Latin account is as follows:

> Maiores vero pugnatores vinum solummodo [a Ganalono] acceperunt, mulieres vero nullatenus, sed minores sustulerunt.

[C. Meredith-Jones, ed., Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi,

Secondly, only Saracen women are involved in the ME account, whereas Christian women are also mentioned in the Latin.[12] Thirdly, in the ME, as we have seen, the wine is said to weaken the warriors' resistance, whereas in the Latin attention is simply not drawn to the nature of the wine's effect.

R.N. Walpole has determined that two of the English Charlemagne romances, Roland and Vernagu (of the Auchinleck MS) and Otuel and Roland (of the 'Fillingham' MS), borrow from a particular Old French version of the Pseudo-Turpin, which he calls the 'Johannes' Translation.[13] Although he does not include SR in his study, it would appear that it too may borrow from a 'Johannes' Turpin. The points of difference which distinguish the ME 'wine and women' passage from the Latin also distinguish the Johannes text (I place the

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ou Chronique de Pseudo-Turpin (Paris, 1936), p.181. All references to the Historia Karoli Magni (otherwise referred to as the Latin Pseudo-Turpin) are to this edition; I refer to the 'Calixtinus' text of the edition, which provides greater detail than that of the 'A.6.' text also printed in this edition.]

[12] See Historia Karoli Magni, p.181:

> ...quidam cum mulieribus paganis et christianis etiam feminis quas secum multi de Gallia adduxerunt, fornicati sunt....

[13] R.N. Walpole, "'Charlemagne and Roland': A Study of the Source of Two Middle English Metrical Romances, 'Roland and Vernagu' and 'Otuel and Roland'", University of California Publications in Modern Philology, 21 (1944), 385-452. See also Walpole's "Note to the Meredith-Jones Edition of the 'Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi'", Speculum, 22 (1947), 260-262.

appropriate number before the text which agrees with each of the three points noted above):

> [i] Guanes envoia par l'ost as hauz homes les... somiers de vin et les... Sarrazines. [ii] Cele nuit furent yvre par l'ost li plusor et jurent as Sarrazines par ivresce, [iii] car tant con li hom est ivres est il destournez de reison et de tote mesure.[14]

We can see, in short, that the ME Roland displays a greater affinity with the OF Johannes Translation than with the Latin Pseudo-Turpin.[15]

The interpolation of the 'wine and women' passage (regardless of its precise source) appears to have been made in the interest of qualifying the meaning of the work without greatly disturbing the basic plot as we find it in the Chanson. Clemens Wichmann has seen the interpolation as an attempt to portray the defeat at Rencesvals as an act of divine retribution;[16] this is no doubt a feature of SR which has caused other commentators to believe the poet was a

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[14] R.N. Walpole, ed., The Old French Johannes Translation of the 'Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle' (Los Angeles, 1976), pp.162-163. All references to the Johannes Translation are to this edition.

[15] André de Mandach indicates that the Pseudo-Turpin elements of SR derive ultimately from a 'Johannes' text. Beyond using the point at which the fragment breaks off as a guide to source affiliation, however, de Mandach offers no tenable evidence for the derivation. See André de Mandach, La Geste de Charlemagne et de Roland, Publications romanes et françaises, No. 69 (Geneva, 1961), pp. 251 and 414.

[16] Wichmann, pp.69-72.

cleric.[17] To be sure, the last lines of the passage, "they synnyd so sore in þat ylk while/ that many men wept and cursid þat vile" (lines 75–76), may invite the interpretation of the Christian loss at Rencesvals as divine retribution; but I think that view can only have been suggested by the more explicit and moral text of the (Latin) Pseudo-Turpin:

> sed quia praecedentibus noctibus... quidam cum mulieribus paganis et christianis... feminis... fornicati sunt, mortem incurrerunt.[18]

The fact is that the subsequent death of some of the Christian men at Rencesvals is not explicitly attributed in the ME, as it is in the Latin, to the sin the debauch entails.[19] In illustrating this difference, I do not wish to discredit what must be a part of any acceptable view of the 'wine and women' passage; I simply wish to point out that the view can be distorted too easily by drawing an analogy with the Latin text to the point of ignoring other literary motives involved in the scene's addition to the poem. This brings us back to a consideration of the nature of the

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[17] See J.E. Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English (New Haven, Connecticut, 1916), p.93; and Renwick and Orton, The Beginnings of English Literature, p.373.

[18] Historia Karoli Magni, p.181. The Johannes text draws no such conclusions at this point in the text, although it does address the issue later; see the Johannes Translation, p.164.

[19] Cf. Smyser, Manual, p.96: "whoever borrowed the episode left the moral behind in the Pseudo-Turpin...". Cf. also W.R.J. Barron: "if the English adapter... was a cleric, he made no thematic use of these importations; the... root cause of the disaster [remains] Ganelon's treason" [English Medieval Romance (London, 1987), p.90].

difference between the English and Latin accounts. As a guide, let us consider R.N. Walpole's comparison of the 'wine and women' scene in the French with that of the Latin:

> [Johannes] has filled the Pseudo-Turpin's vacant account with the reality which belonged to the legend of Roncevaux but which the Pseudo-Turpin, labouring with less art than doctrinal purpose, ignored. Johannes wrote with understanding of the mentality and taste of his lay audience which saw in Charlemagne and the peers embodiments of their own experience and ideals, active participants as they were in crusading warfare and political life. The realistic touches which he added belonged to the world which they knew: character and conflict, physical and psychological detail, the drama of good and evil at odds within men and between them... he did not accept... the Pseudo-Turpin's gross style of sermonizing: his equivocal and sycophantic attribution of the minor sin of drunkenness to the nobles and the major one of adultery to the commoners; his subsequent inconsistencies declaring that the drunken... lay with Christian as well as Saracen women....[20]

The SR author's intentions behind the presentation of the 'wine and women' passage would seem to sympathize with those of Johannes. We cannot, of course, attribute complete originality to the SR poet for his presentation of the episode, but he obviously did not object to what he presented, and we can safely say that the addition of the episode does for SR in relation to the Chanson what Johannes has done to the Pseudo-Turpin: it imparts an quality of humane realism--a sympathetic embracing of everyday life and its exigencies--which is not as prominent in the more mannered original.

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[20] Johannes Translation, pp.112-113.

This quality is further in evidence in another of the poem's more striking unique episodes. As the battle at Rencesvals becomes desperate, Roland dejectedly considers sending for help, instead of sounding his horn as he does in the Chanson:

> "... we ar but few, and hathe fought long,
> our horse wery, And we not strong.
> I red we send a man to feche our lord;
> say we be sore hurt, and socour we wold.
> but if he cum and help vs Anon,
> our lyues be lost, and the lond gone."
> (lines 1041-1046)

Smyser suggests that, because of this variation from the original story, "the dramatic climax of the Chanson is sadly mishandled".[21] Smyser's view is, however, too strongly prejudiced by comparison with the Chanson, for it ignores the implications of the next few lines of the episode (the last three lines, in fact, of the fragment):

> then answerd olyuer with a ruffull steuyn,
> Angry in hert thus gan he nevyn:
> "broder, let be all siche sawes [....]"
> (lines 1047-1049)

Oliver is about to refute Roland's proposal. Roland may yet fatally sound his horn, and his may then be a death made all the more tragic because the great warrior has in the course of battle progressed to a higher state of personal integrity by experiencing a renewal of resolve. The scene is also potentially tragic because it expresses a tenderness between Roland and Oliver. The confidential and affectionate

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[21] Smyser, Manual, p.96.

"broder", delivered as it is with "a rufful steuyn" suggests a relationship based less on a common martial pride than its counterpart in the Chanson. There is something more at stake in their impending death than what is stressed in the Chanson, namely the loss to the nation of a living symbol of unimpeded conquest and honourable alliance. In the Chanson, says John Stevens,

> everything [Roland] does is designed to protect his reputation, his honour (i.e. what his king and his countrymen will think of him), not simply for his own sake but because his honour is one of their greatest possessions. The death of Roland could never be a private matter.[22]

In the ME passage, one senses that something private has been intimated. So it is earlier in the poem, when, this time, Oliver shows a lack of resolve:

> "abid," quod Roulond, "and siche wordis blyn!
> Olyuer, art thou aferd of this sight?"
> (lines 534-535)

Roland also reproaches Oliver in the Chanson at this point, but his words are coloured with an impersonal heroic bravado.

> Respunt Rollant: «Ne dites tel utrage!
> Mal seit del coer ki el piz se cuardet!»
> (Chanson, lines 1106-1107)

The impersonal "coer" is in English replaced by "Olyuer", and the indignant, rather lofty, "cuardet" is replaced by the personal, almost homely, "art thou aferd". Roland and Oliver are shown to us not only as legendary comrades-in-arms, but also as friends on a more personal and natural basis.

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[22] John Stevens, Medieval Romance (London, 1973), p.77.

Another important variation from the Chanson in SR is that when Oliver asks Roland to sound the olifant (something he does three times in the Chanson), he does so here only once (lines 524-528). The request is made two more times in SR, but both times the French knights do so en masse, with impressive determination:

> som bad Roulond to blow aftur socour,
> And som bad hym bid of his blast lengour,
> and be redy to fight, for fle they nylle.
> (lines 435-437)

> then all princis praid þat ther houyd,
> his bugle to blow, they hym wowid:
> "for know ye right well it is vs on hond,
> the hole hethyn ost is ny, I vnderstond.
> when we be laid low, to lat It wer
> eny help to haue but of heuyn feyr.
> but for dred of dethe, do thou it neuer.
> but for our lordis loue, þat is god euer.
> If we dye here, his baille is the more:
> I tell my lyf-tym then is for-lore."
> (lines 545-553)

The horn is mentioned once again, by all the peres, but no longer in the form of a request:

> olyuer, and Roger, and other fulle many,
> Ingler, and arnold, of the peres, I say,
> pressen to the prince in þer palle wedis.
> when they hem sens, said thes wordis:
> "why rewes thou, roulond, is this rew tid?
> wit it thy nown werk, þi dedis did gid!
> thou myght help vs with an horn blast.
> let on, prik out, and not to rid fast,
> so shall they be fellid, yf they fendis wer."
> (lines 633-641)

The weighty "urgent-intense and manifold-simultaneous"[23] effect of Oliver's famous repeated requests in the Chanson

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[23] Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 1953), p.104.

has obviously been eliminated; though the ME does retain an ominous fourfold mention of the horn. In the process of removing the effect, moreover, the SR poet has (once again) directed attention toward what could be considered a psychologically more natural aspect of the experience depicted. Now not only Oliver, but, as one might think would make sense, all of the peres are concerned with Roland's bold restraint. The way the peres' concern is seen to develop over time also has a certain realism which we will not find in the Chanson: they move from divided opinion ("som bad hym bid of his blast lengour"), to fearful reasoning with Roland ("If we dye here, [Charles's] baille is the more"), to cynical resolve ("why rewes thou, roulond... wit it thy nown werk, þi dedis did gid").[24]

The portions of the text we have examined so far reflect principally the way in which the characters are depicted in their responses to various events. In this, they behave in what can be described as a very natural, predictably human way. We might recall Scott's own description of Waverley: "the object of [this] tale is more a description of men than manners".[25] A special interest in character is not, however, the only innovation in the English rendering of the story. Jessie Crosland notes that "the 'strange weather' that

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[24] For further detail of the change in the warriors' resolve, see lines 568-577.

[25] Sir Walter Scott, Waverley, edited by A. Hook (London, 1972), p.35.

occurred in France as the armies fought, is described [in the English version] with a pastoral touch".[26]

> ther fell in Fraunce A straung wedur.
> . . .
> Foulis fled for fere, it was gret wonder:
> bowes of trees þen brestyn asonder:
> best ran to bankis And cried ful sore,
> they durst not abid in the mor....
> . . .
> the Rose a clowd euyn in the west,
> as red as blod, with-outon rest;
> It shewid doun on the erthe & þer did shyn,
> so many doughty men as died þat tym.
> (lines 846-862)

It is easy to see how the English addition of "foulis" which "fled for fere" (line 851), "bowes of trees" which "brestyn asonder" (line 852), and beasts which "ran to bankis" (line 853) could be construed (as Crosland seems to construe it) as a mere stylistic caprice. I think, however, that these details may belong to a well-structured pattern of significantly repeated images.

On the whole, this is a less formal kind of repetitive technique than one would expect, given the formal nature of repetition in the Chanson (where laisses are linked by iteration, where one-on-one combat descriptions follow each other in even succession, where twelve Saracen kings match the twelve peres, and so on). In this poem instead, natural images, such as the birds, trees, and sundry beasts in the above passage sustain the repetition. Including the 'strange weather' passage, such images (or groups of images) occur no

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[26] Crosland, p.234.

less than eleven times. They act as verbal leitmotifs, inviting certain emotional responses and sustaining certain themes where they appear.

To understand the way this repetition works, it is important to examine the repeated images in the order in which they appear. I must first digress, however, to consider one other passage unique to this text, which, along with that already cited, I think confirms the deliberation with which repetition is used. Crosland also quotes this other passage--which describes the scene before the great battle, lines 578-582 (and which precedes the description of the storm)--but says only that it is evidence of how "romance has crept in".[27]

> whil the knyghtis Roun, risithe the soun;
> the day was faire, the clowdis be roun,
> dew diskid adoun and dymmyd the floures,
> And foulis rose and song full Amorous.
> ther did no wind blow, but wedir full still.
> (lines 578-582)

Again, Crosland appears to have seen the addition as something of a decorative caprice--and certainly, with its description of dew settling on flowers and birds which sung "full Amorous" the lines do have a 'romantic' delicacy about them--but it is clear that the whole passage has a strong resemblance to the "foulis fled for fere" passage. There are the "foulis" themselves in both passages, as well as "cloudis" and the "wedir" generally. The condition of these

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[27] Crosland, p.234.

features has, nevertheless, changed: "foulis" which sing "full Amorous" in one passage have "fled for fere" in the other (line 851), the pleasantly "roun" clouds have given way to an ominous blood-red cloud (lines 859-860), and the "wedir" has declined from being "full still" to being "straung" (line 846). Although these events occur in different places, the SR poet has drawn a verbal connection between them. The effect is to amplify dramatically the import of the storm scene; the defeat of the Christians offends a divine and universal order much as the storm description, in a sense, disturbs (at a distance) the general orderliness established in the "foulis song full Amorous" scene.

That all of this repetition is perhaps a kind of rhetorical technique is suggested by the (reasonably obvious) fact that the "Amorous" scene is a set-piece which belongs to the conventional rhetorical topos of the nature description. The storm scene of the original OF into which this scene has been inserted in SR also conforms with a rhetorical topos, and seems to have been recognized as such by the SR poet, who has, we might say, in turn augmented the 'rhetoricality' of the passage with his own adaptation of elements of the convention. More than a stylistic caprice, however, the addition is also functional in its connection with the other new rhetorical passage. The SR poet has essentially used a convention to create something new for himself; it is a

technique familiar to the greater writers of the period, and, by comparison, its use here is humble. Still, its use is intelligent because it makes the work more unified and interesting in the way it develops its themes and related images.

The other nine examples of related imagery reveal an intricate symbolic fabric (I quote the passages in which they occur in the note below, and number each passage for ease of reference).[28] All of the common images (boars, more birds and

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[28]

[1] but sone aftur [Charles] fell in a noþer [dream]:
hym thought ferre in fraunce with-outon Frend ther,
I A wild Forest Among wilde bestis
A Bore com from A bank wondirly boistous,
And Fought sore with hym, and fendithe hym swithe.
he tok hym by the right arm and hent it of
clene from the braun, the flesche, & the lier;
the fell and the Flesche at his fete fallithe.
(lines 91-98)

[2] [Charles] callid the wissest men þen aright,
and askid of his dreme hou it be myght.
all they said, þat þer did stond,
that tray and tene is toward at hond,
battell on the feld, byd who þat myght:
but none of hem knew þe trouthe aright,
when It will fall the feld for to wyn,
and the lebard had tak the bore & slayn hym.
and for fair the flesche & þe fight endid,
then shuld kinge charls the better aspendid.
(lines 107-116)

[3] "lordis," said the king, "listyn a stound.
now we must to Fraunce, god send vs sound!
her be wais wild that we wend most,
full hore hillis and also he on bost;
Full of cragy roches they bene sertayn,
And they be callid the gatis of spayn:
ther may not iij men go in at onys....
(lines 121-127)

beasts, forests, hills, banks, and rocks) are associated with Saracens and/or Ganelon's treachery. Many of these images (including some from the "foulis fled" and "Amorous" scenes) can be traced to two passages of a conventional or rhetorical

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[4] [Amaris] lep vpon his sted & furthe did he ryd,
with xl. thoussond sairsins by his sid;
ouer hillis and holtis he hastid full sone,
vnto the tym to the cristyn þey com.
(lines 277-280)

[5] "now wise vs crist! quod Roulond, "one word;
we be fellos and frendis, god be our gid;
we be stad in a place a stound to abid,
Amonge medos, and moris, and euyll bankis,
And roches roughe, and wodis full of bestis,
beter for birdis to bred, þen men in to won,
or wild wollves for to walk in sone.
(lines 303-309)

[6] [Gauter] rod furthe in an holt, by an hore bank,
he se in the vale wher an ost stant,
With bright sheldis and schaftis in hond.
then wer they wild in þer werkis to found...
. . .
... our folk wer feld, and the feld endid.
(lines 326-342)

[7] then [Gauter] kest vp a cry, and callithe hem euer:
. . .
"... I haue lost þat I had, but my-selue a-lone.
. . .
I wold foulis had ete me, so I wer at my end.
gwynylon hathe vs gilid, I may say now...."
(lines 357-366)

[8] "hou may this chaunce be," said charls the strong,
"that my good knyghtis abiden so long?
now may I dred þat I dremyd this nyght,
hou A bore bet me and my brond bright...."
(lines 382-386)

[9] thus said [Ganelon] to the king stonding hym be sid:
. . .
"your knyghtis be-hind haue som bores fond...."
(lines 415-420)

cast in the Chanson, namely Charles's second prophetic dream--

> Apres iceste altre avisum sunjat:
> Qu'il ert en France, a sa capele, as Ais.
> El destre braz li morst uns vers si mals.
> (Chanson, lines 725-727)

--and the doleful descriptio of the Gates of Spain

> Halt sunt li pui e li val tenebrus,
> Les roches bises, les destreiz merveillus.
> Le jur passerent Franceis a grant dulur.
> (Chanson, lines 814-816).

The two passages are rendered in SR as examples [1] and [3] respectively. Apart from increasing the frequency of their appearance in the narrative as a whole,[29] the SR poet has also increased the frequency within these two renderings. In passage [1] a "wild Forest" and a "bank" have been added, perhaps to stress the allegorical significance of this landscape to the real, fateful, "wais wild" and "hore hillis" of the Gates of Spain in [3]. The actions of the bear of the Chanson have been described in [1] with considerably more vigour: the straightforward "El destre braz li morst uns ver si mals" has been replaced by a "wondirly boistous" boar

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[29] All of the passages cited from SR occur before the great battle and appear within 400 lines. It is most noteworthy that passage [9] (concerning Ganelon's explanation to Charles of why Roland has been absent for too long) has been shifted to before the battle; its analogue in the Chanson occurs only when Roland has decided to sound the olifant. Thus, we must traverse roughly 1000 lines of the Chanson, from Charles's dream to Ganelon's claim that Roland is merely hunting, before anything like a realization of the dream (via related imagery) can be claimed. Even then, the animal supposedly hunted, "un sul levre" (line 1780), unlike the boar of the ME text, provides no obvious link with the dream.

which "Fought sore" and "fendithe... swithe" (line 95), and which tears Charles's arm right off, instead of just maiming it--and from that arm "the fell and the Flesche at his fete fallithe", in the most dramatic alliterative fashion. In passage [3] "wais wild" and "hore hillis" are themselves new, as is the detail that through the Gates "may not iij men go in at onys", which contributes explicitly to the sense, implicit in the French, of a mysterious organized menace which is in the process of constricting the very life's-blood of France's glory. In short, the static and concise images of the French have been given new scope and drama in the Middle English version.

By glancing at the rest of the passages from SR listed above, we can begin to see just how wide the scope and forceful the drama has become. Passage [2] provides an interpretation of the emperor's dreams not found in any other version of the story; the addition seems to confirm that the SR poet is intent on making the significance of his images clear, and the patterns those images form obvious. Passage [5] (also unparalleled) is, in its depiction of "euyll bankis", "roches roughe, and wodis full of bestis,/ beter for birdis to bred..." a close reflection of the dream and passage [3], and itself is so reflected in the 'pastoral' addition to the description of the "straung wedur" which besets France. The "holt" and "hore bank" of [6], upon which Gauter climbs to face his doom at the sight of Saracen

hordes--and over which the hordes have themselves, as if this were their natural element, "hastid full sone" in [4]--continues to trace a realization of the prophetic dream. "Foulis" in [7] recalls the foreboding "birdis" of [5], and, in their association with mortal wounds inflicted upon Gauter, establish their significance as harbingers of evil, somehow in league with the Saracens.[30] This last connection adds another dimension to the "Amorous" passage; no doubt the Saracens are as happy as the birds on the morning of their planned ambush. Passage [8], in which Charles frets over the fate of his rearguard and recalls his dream of the boar, contains another set of lines which finds its analogue in Old French (Chanson, lines 836-840). The passage has, however, acquired new functions. It appears immediately before a discussion by Charles's men (peculiar to the English version) of Ganelon's suspected treachery (lines 393-398). The full ironic import of the implicit affiliation between Ganelon, Saracen treachery, and the boar of the dream, is then chillingly compacted into that one outwardly simple line of Ganelon's in passage [9]: "your knyghtis be-hind haue som bores fond...".

Some novel features of this poem do not necessarily owe their presence to possible modifications or developments from earlier texts. Some of these features do, however, contain

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[30] For a distant further identification of "foulis" with Saracens, see lines 1031-1033.

conventional or stylized elements which at least signal adaptation of a literary tradition. In the discussion of the first ten lines of the fragment, I pointed out two proverbial statements (in lines 5-6 and 9-10; hereafter numbered I and II respectively). These two statements belong to a family of proverbial utterances found throughout the first half of the fragment (numbering continues from above):

III there is no prow to pryk þer men pece sought.
(line 32)

IV If that mercy and myght mellithe to-gedur
he shall haue the mor grace euer aftur.
(lines 33-34)

V who gothe in woo wintirs full fell,
yet is frendchipe and faithe fairiste at end.
(lines 46-47)

VI they must be Frowardis þat delithe with euyll frekis,
or he shall haue euyll sped at the last end.
(lines 132-133)

VII who so takithe from the tre the rind and the levis,
It wer better that he in his bed lay long.[31]
(lines 152-153)

VIII ... men dred tresson wher they it finden
(line 176)

IX he must take hed þat with euyll delithe.
(line 249)

X It is good to be wise in ded and in thought.
(line 310)

Only II and IV are listed in Whiting's dictionary of proverbs from English writings mainly before 1500, and I have been

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[31] I take the sense of this curious proverb to be something like 'whoever removes the leaves and bark from a (healthy) tree is suffering from some form of dementia and ought rather to stay in bed.' Perhaps, however, "bed" here refers to something more threatening, like the bed of death.

unable to find close analogues in other collections of proverbs.[32] Even if convincing matches to these lines can be found elsewhere, I feel it is safe to say that we have here a combination of sententious statements brought together to serve a distinct literary purpose. The considerable density of the proverbs (they all occur within 310 lines) itself suggests that they entail a calculated addition to the poem. Jessie Crosland quotes two of them as examples of the "moral content" of the poem,[33] and Wichmann quotes two as examples of Ganelon's characterization.[34] Nevertheless, we need look only at I and II for their air of worldly cynicism, the ironic disposition of III and IV (as announced by Ganelon) and V (as announced by Charles), and the homely observations and pithy adages of VIII and X, to see that moralism and characterization are only parts of a carefully-wrought thematic significance we should expect from these lines.

That significance begins to be more obvious if all of the examples are considered together. Each proverb addresses one of four issues central to the story: treason, wisdom,

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[32] See Whiting, Proverbs... Mainly Before 1500; example II is listed there as proverb no. S549 (p. 540), and example IV is listed as proverb no. F684 (p. 219). I have also consulted James Woodrow Hassell, Jr., Middle French Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases (Toronto, 1982) and works listed in his bibliography, including J.Morawski, Proverbes français antérieurs au XV^{e} siècle (Paris, 1925), and Wolfgang Mieder, Proverbs in Literature: An International Bibliography (Berne, 1978).

[33] Crosland, p.234.

[34] Wichmann, p.53.

striving against evil, and fellowship. The mechanisms of treason are the subjects of I and II, and the gravity of treason is evoked in VIII. Wisdom, common sense, and sanity are the the subjects of VII; and X speaks plainly for itself about the virtues of wisdom (it is uttered by a Roland wary of Ganelon's intentions). IX links the necessity of cautious thinking directly to the presence of treachery. The necessity of direct action against such evil is promoted in VI (note the parallels with "euyll" and "delithe" in IX); and III is a kind of corollary to this statement.

The contexts of these groupings show that they exist in what might be called a hierarchy of directness. The passages concerning treason are all delivered by the 'omniscient' narrator; they are the most direct and unambiguous. The passages on fellowship are delivered by the beguiled Charles to the beguiling Ganelon and are the most ironically undermined. The two middle groups contain honest statements of wisdom, but in every case derive from the recognition of an act of treachery (or a breach of fellowship) and so offer ultimately only a reinforcement of the worldly resignation characterizing the proverbs on treason.

By "worldly" I mean that this resignation is not absolutely pessimistic. Like other characteristic features of the poem, the resignation comprehends and accepts human nature. It is not delivered as it might be in the Chanson--as, for example, in the austere and cryptic observation of

the grieving Charles: "Mult ad apris ki bien conuist ahan" (Chanson, line 2524). In the proverbs of SR, even great men and their deeds are openly imbued with a kind of quotidian predictability and familiarity. To put it another way, we will find Ganelon being accused of madness in the Chanson ("El cors vos est entree mortel rage", line 747), yet nowhere else but in the ME version will it be suggested that "It wer better that he in his bed lay long" (line 153).

Because the proverbs form a noticeable group of similar utterances, they may have been deployed collectively as a rhetorical device. As Grace Frank points out, "from the twelfth century on authors of books on rhetoric recommend the use of proverbs as a stylistic device of merit...".[35] Such devices contribute, according to Valerie Krishna, "solemnity, formality, and an elevated style" to the heroic alliterative Morte Arthure;[36] they might therefore be considered germane to the heroic ethos of the Rencesvals story. Because some of the proverbs are delivered in ironic contexts, some of the "formality" and "elevated style" they might evoke is curtailed. The echo is hence largely due to "solemnity"--solemnity not unlike that defined by C.S. Lewis when he employs the ME word "solempne" in consideration of heroic literature:

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[35] Grace Frank, "Proverbs in Medieval Literature", Modern Language Notes, 58 (1943), 508.

[36] Valerie Krishna, ed., The Alliterative 'Morte Arthure': A Critical Edition (New York, 1976), p.29.

> like solemn [solempne] implies the opposite of what is familiar, free and easy, or ordinary. But unlike solemn it does not suggest gloom, oppression or austerity.... The solempne is the festal which is also the stately and the ceremonial....[37]

The proverbial utterances of our poem are indeed solemn in the way Lewis suggests--although, as we have seen, they do admit something of the "familiar, free and easy" qualities he disclaims. It was earlier noted that SR lacks formal features (such as iteration) found in the Chanson; the proverbs can consequently be seen as a partial replacement of the heroic solemnity those formalities would tend to invite (as, on reflection, can the formal descriptive set-pieces and their symbolic progeny discussed earlier). This is not the same kind of formality as in the OF, but it does suggest that it was intended that the ME Roland retain the formal, "solempne", and thence heroic essence of its model in a balance with its own new presentation of a more naturally human milieu.

None of the passages I have cited so far discusses the trappings of warfare, or the deeds of arms, for which this story is renowned; but there is no question that the SR poet excels in martial descriptions, and that in them he manages further to balance the 'heroic' with the 'human'. Take, for instance, this rousing sequence of descriptio, straight narrative, and direct discourse.

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[37] C.S.Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost (London,1942), p.17.

[Roland] armyd hym surly in Irne wed,
And thought hym sure for any ned.
his banẽrs beten with gold for the nonys,
set with diamondis & oþer stonys:
his kneys coueryd with platis many,
his thies thryngid with silk, as I say,
his Acton And oþer ger þat he werid,
. . .
he tok with him his sper, and went to his horse,
but lep on lightly, with-out any fors.
then euery cristyn knyght vnto oþer said:
"It is fair, Roulond to folow in a braid;
he may boldly abid, þat hathe siche a lord."
(lines 285-302)

The descriptio itself is conventional enough, but where the passage as a whole departs from convention, and where it gains its unique character, is in the last three lines. The greatness of the hero, something usually left implicit in such descriptions, is explicitly praised after the warriors witness both Roland's armoured splendour and that remarkably lively detail that he leapt on "lightly, with-out any fors". A further affective novelty in those last lines is the way in which the warriors submit their exhortation in unison. This device is used to create several other stirring martial speeches (in one case spoken by Saracens).

all they said atonys they will to-gedur hold,
with Sir Roulond to rid they wer bold:
"For he in word and werk greuyd vs neuer,
nor sparid schewing of sheldis for non þat lyuyd euer:
For dred of dethe, he hid neuer his hed,
with hym is worship euer-mor in ded,
ther men may wyn worship for euer."
(lines 207-213)

they will hold with them "till our hertis bled,
ther hedis throughe helmes hewen in-ded,
Our well and worship to win sound.
yet will tutlers in toun talk bound,

that we wer the men þat Roulond wold quell.[38]
. . .
good Sir, haue good day, to god we þe be-teche!
For we will rid in the rout, Roulond to seche."
(lines 223-229)

they say to the sovdan in the sam stevyn:
"now we be redy to rid furthe euyn,
to go in-to the forward to rest vs awhile:
For duk Roulond he is fell,
but euery pece of his armes be Asonder rent,
And he feld on the feld, and also schent;
as longe as thou leuyst, trist vs neuer
If we in this mater do not our deuour."
(lines 491-498)

when they vndirstod hou he ne wold
for to blow his horn for no socour bold,
they tok hem comfort, And said full hye:
"now curssid be he that hens will flye,
or eny fot this day fley of the feld:
but der sell our dethe, as I dem sheld.
let it be sene hou the king vs louyd,
fast hew on them þat vs hathe harmyd;
the dais dawithe on hie; we bid to long.
In cristis name let vs furthe fonge."
(lines 568-577)

Group utterences of such length (unusual in the ME romances) create a sense of grand overstatement; one is reminded of the (appropriately self-descriptive) "stormy peple" chorus in The Clerk's Tale.[39] Group utterances also occur in the Chanson,

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[38] Smyser says of line 227 that it "may reflect the attitude toward Charlemagne and his court of late romancers" (Manual, p.96). This presumably implies that the line is taken as a form of invective against Roland's excessive pride. Given the context of the knights' obvious willingness to fight, however, the line more likely conveys pride in the fact that the great Roland has chosen them to die a glorious death by his side.

[39] "O stormy peple! Unsad and evere untrewe!
Ay undiscreet and chaungynge as a fane!
Delitynge evere in rumbul that is newe,
For lyk the moone ay wexe ye and wane!
Ay ful of clappyng, deere ynogh a jane!
Youre doom is fals, youre constance yvele preeveth;

but never are they as extensive (or as rich in bravado) as these. This is not to overrate SR at the expense of the Chanson, but to suggest that, as with the "solempne" effect of the proverbs, such passages express the heroic with different emphasis from the original. Again, there is evidence of a concern not only for relating the deeds of the heroes, but also for representing the viewpoint of the community of 'unnamed' warriors.

Descriptions of battle also have original touches. Witness the energy of these lines:

> Amys of almayn then he met,
> And strok hym to dethe with-out eny let.
> turpyn turnyd hym, and met hym agayn,
> sat sadly in his sadill, sothe for to sayn:
> man and horse doun he laid,
> from the croun to the brest: "ly þer!" he said.
> hym he curssed, and rod furthe still,
> And bad the fleyng fend feche hym to helle.
> (lines 968-975)

The passage has its 'tags' ("with-out eny let", "sothe for to sayn"), the primary detail is unremarkable--the passage even has its analogue in the Chanson[40]--and yet a few distinctively novel minor details bring the description alive. That the slain warrior "sat sadly in his sadill" suggests a thoroughly vanquished foe, an almost humorously

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> A ful greet fool is he that on yow leeveth."
>
> Thus seyden sadde folk in that citee....

[Geoffrey Chaucer, The Clerk's Tale, The Canterbury Tales, Fragment IV (E), lines, 995-1002.]

[40] Cf. the Chanson, lines 1423-1437.

debilitated corpse. And Turpin's blunt command "ly þer!", combined with the action of returning to the dead Saracen to achieve the symbolically important act of literally unhorsing the enemy, gives an arresting, psychologically plausible, portrait of the nervous agitation of one engaged in close combat and lofty causes.

Near the end of the fragment a general description (unique to the English version) of the great battle (lines 828-844) achieves an almost epic grandeur through its formality, and, perhaps, through its literary allusions. We are told that the warriors clashed "As element and erthe togedur shuld flintis/ bothe wind, water, fyere, and wod [...]" (lines 832-833).[41] Never were so many killed, moreover, "sithe god spek with mouthe on the montaigne/ And taught moyses his men to preche" (lines 840-841)--not even "in the battaille of troy" (line 844) were so many "drof to dethe" (line 843). Reference to the siege of Troy and to Moses' third day on Mount Sinai gives us a somewhat learned (and "solempne") estimation of the ferocity and importance of the battle. It is implicit that the conflict is almost apocalyptic in the way in which it appears to agitate the very stuff of creation, in the way in which it threatens a moral order established with Moses, and in the way in which

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[41] The lines may be corrupt; Herrtage indicates as much with his punctuation. I read "wod" as meaning 'fiercely violent', 'tumultuous', though it is not impossible that 'wood' is indicated.

it suggests the end of an epoch such as that marked by the conquest of Troy. The references to Moses and Troy increase the air of heroic grandeur. (This is also accomplished here by a heightening of alliteration, which is otherwise noticeable in the poem but inconsistent).

It is important to note that the passage describing the "straung wedur" in France follows this battle description immediately. The scenes appear to possess some interrelated imagery and allusion. In the description of the storm, the mixing of "element and erthe" of the battle returns as "a grete derk myst" (line 846), "the erthe" (line 850), "thonder light" (line 849), and the wind which presumably causes the bows of trees to "brestyn asonder" (line 852). Moreover, the entire description, with its thunder and lightning, its "thik, and clowdy" weather (line 848), its "doillfull" din (line 850), and its fearful onlookers (lines 855-856) bears an interesting resemblance to the description in Exodus 20.16 of Moses' third day on Sinai.[42]

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[42] I quote the later Wycliffite version for what the verbal parallels may be worth:

> And now the thridde day was comun, and the morewetide was cleer; and, lo! thundris begunnen to be herd, and leitis to schyne, and a mooste thicke cloud to hile the mounteyn; and the sownyng of a clarioun made noise ful greetli, and the puple dredde....

[Forshall and Madden, edd., Exodus 20.16, in The Holy Bible... made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and His Follwers, 2 vols (Oxford, 1850). All references to the Wycliffite Bible are to this edition.]

The connections I propose may well be too specific; most of the images observed in parallel can be said to be as conventional as the storm and battle descriptions in which they are found. Even so, a parallel based on simple resemblance does exist (through the presence, it should be remembered, of a scene unique to the English version of the story) and this is enough to establish in one's mind the sense of apocalyptic grandeur the combined descriptions evoke. Conventional as the descriptions may be in their components, then, it is at least possible that a correspondence between the descriptions has been orchestrated with a degree of originality which brings to this section of the poem an appropriately heroic tone.

This fragment's image patterns, rousing martial descriptions, its group utterances, and its proverbs comprise major elements in our poet's personal style. It cannot be stressed enough, however, that this style manifests itself in other less quantifiable ways. We can recognize it simply in lines which are particularly memorable but which cannot always meet the demands of a rigorously technical scrutiny. The most memorable of such lines, and the most worthy of attention from among portions of the fragment I have not already quoted, concern the defeat of various French warriors. A simple but powerful pathos emerges from Roland's recognition of impending doom--

> that rewes the erle and grevis his hert,
> sore wepithe for wo and ek for smert:

not for his own sak he soghed often,
but for his fellichip þat he most louyden.
(lines 598-601)

—and in his subsequent maudlin attempt to cheer his men:

"... euery knyght be kene, & comfort other,
ffor this day shall we dy, and go no further...."
(lines 623-624)

The pathos of the first passage is linked with the interest in the more human aspects of friendship we have seen to characterize this version of the Roncesvals story, and is most immediately developed in the tender way in which the lines imply that death alone awaits Roland and his men. The second passage also emphasizes common friendship (it lacks the bold statements one associates with strictly martial camaraderie); but it acquires most of its force in the composition of the latter line: the appropriately expiring cadence of "and go no further" refreshes what might otherwise be a cliché.

When Ganelon says to Charles, near the beginning of our fragment "I haue gone for þi sak wonderfull wais" (line 4) we can perhaps see the poet saying the same thing indirectly to his audience; the use of such techniques as the simultaneous invocation and liberation of conventional features, the amplification of more human aspects of the interaction between the warriors, and the use of such a source as the (Johannes) Pseudo-Turpin, not to mention the Chanson de Roland itself, are indeed "wonderfull wais" to have gone to

bring us this unique version of the Rencesvals story. It is difficult to characterize completely the nature of these English innovations, but we can at least see it is complex; it is at once robust, down-to-earth, and yet not unsophisticated in its manipulation of traits of an adopted genre. Here is an air of heroic solemnity reminiscent of the Chanson, but blended with a sympathetic (though also at times detached) projection of the experience of common humanity; and the blend has been achieved through a degree of technical dexterity which suggests that the poetry we encounter is no accident. I fear that my discussion of technical aspects of various passages may in fact overlook their poetic merit. I recommend a rereading of those passages simply as poetry. They will not disappoint; barring probable textual corruptions, almost any set of lines in the fragment has at the least a unique and attractive style. The ME fragment of The Song of Roland is the work of a poet well versed in the literature and literary conventions of his time, and yet imaginative and talented enough to reshape what he has acquired into new poetry with its own evocative character.

CHAPTER 3

"Come helpe to feghte one goddis foo": The Sege of Melayne[1]

Scholars have hadsurprisingly little to say about The Sege of Melayne (SM). This is probably due in varying ways to the obscurity of the poem's sources. Since 1880, when Gaston Paris informed S.J. Herrtage that "it was the first time he had ever heard of the siege of Milan, and... that nothing at all resembling it exists in French", there has been no revelation about the poem's provenance.[2] Perhaps because of this, scholars, especially those writing in the earlier part of this century, have avoided comment on the poem's place among the ME Charlemagne legends. Perhaps it is in part because of the scant critical heritage that comment has in more recent times tended to be limited to brief discussions

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[1] Composed around 1400, The Sege of Melayne is preserved uniquely in the fifteenth-century 'London Thornton' manuscript (British Library MS Additional 31,042, fols. 66^{vb}–79^{vb}). Only the first 1603 lines of the Sege survive (at least one leaf appears to be missing from the end of the romance); the verses are set out in twelve-line tail-rhyme stanzas, rhyming **aabccbddbeeb**, and the dialect is Northern. For further details on dialect and metre, see Smyser, Manual, p.92, and bibliography, p.264. The most comprehensive (and recent) account of the compilation and collation of the London Thornton MS is by John J. Thompson, Robert Thornton and the London Thornton Manuscript (Cambridge, 1987).

[2] S.J. Herrtage, ed., The Sege off Melayne, in 'The Sege off Melayne' and 'The Romance of Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne'... Together with a Fragment of 'The Song of Roland', EETS, Extra Series No. 35 (London, 1880), p.x. All references to The Sege of Melayne (otherwise referred to as SM, Melayne, or the Sege) are to this edition.

in journals and general surveys.[3]

The problem of missing sources may of course be something of an illusion, for there may be no sources in a 'traditional' sense; the absence of known Continental versions suggests that SM may well be a late composition (relative to the other verse texts of the Charlemagne cycle) which evidently did not enjoy the same kind of popularity as the other Charlemagne legends. Even if SM had a Continental predecessor, lack of any reference to the story among other Charlemagne legends suggests that it may not have been seen to belong with them.[4] Internal evidence supports the

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[3] An exception to the tendency are of course Maldwyn Mills's comments in his edition of the poem [The Sege of Melayne, in Six Middle English Romances, (London, 1973), pp.1-45, and commentary, pp.193-197], to which I will refer at some length. Because Mills's edition is normalized, and therefore inconsistent with the editions of other Charlemagne romances to which I refer, I have chosen not to use it as my base text; I do, however, prefer some of Mills's readings over those of Herrtage, and note them when quoted.

[4] I can find but one external (roughly) medieval reference to our romance (and then only to its title) in the sixteenth-century Complaynt of Scotland, in the list of tales told by a group of shepherds. The reference suggests that the story enjoyed some popularity in Scotland a century or more after its only other known appearance in the London Thornton Manuscript. Three other romances concerning Charlemagne are also listed:

> ... the tayl of the four sonnis of aymon, the tail of the brig of mantribil [(the Fierabras story)]... rauf coll3ear, the siege of millan....

[Robert Wedderburn, The Complaynt of Scotland, edited by A.M. Stewart, Scottish Text Society, Fourth Series, No. 11 (Edinburgh, 1979), p.50.]

The lack of known Continental sources for, or references to, the poem suggests that SM might be an Insular production.

proposition. Although SM appears to be a composite of motifs which characterize the Otuel portion of the Charlemagne cycle (as in Otuel, the setting is Lombardy and the Saracen leader is Garcy), it does not properly fit into the cycle from which it borrows.

> Paris and Gautier suggested that the Sege of Melayne forms a kind of introduction to Otuel in the same way as the Destruction de Rome is introductory to Fierabras, and the Sege has ever since been placed in the Otuel Group. This classification is here held to with some misgivings. The Sege never names Otuel and we do not know how its story ended. No version of Otuel has been adapted to accommodate it to the Sege as a prologue.... [I]n fabricating his... romance, the author of the Sege drew as heavily on the Otuel as on any other romance, even Fierabras or the Chanson de Roland....
>
> Though the Sege is... taken as a chronological preface to Otuel, it does not otherwise stand to the Otuel as the Destruction does to Fierabras. The purpose of the Destruction is to introduce Fierabras by explaining the circumstances of its opening. Nothing in the Otuel calls for explanation....[5]

According to Gaston Paris, if SM had a French original, it was probably of Anglo-Norman provenance; see Gaston Paris, Review of the English Charlemagne romances edited for the EETS by Hausknecht and Herrtage, Romania, 11 (1882), 152.

[5] Smyser, Manual, p.93. Smyser adds that "it may not be insignificant that the tail-rhyme Sege precedes the tail-rhyme Duke Roland and Sir Otuel [in MS Additional 31042]".

The apparent importance of this relationship must, however, be questioned; the two romances are in fact separated in the MS by a song to Our Lady ("O florum flos") covering fols 80^{ra}–81^{vb}. As Mills points out (Six Middle English Romances, pp.196–197),

> it seems likely, indeed, that the two romances had not been linked in any meaningful way... but were simply brought (almost) together in the present manuscript collection because [of the common setting in Lombardy and the role Garcy plays]. This view is supported by the fact that the compiler of

As we shall see, there are other unusual features, such as certain digressive exemplary passages, the unorthodox characterization of Archbishop Turpin, and an inordinately frequent use of phrases such as "our men", "our knights", and "our Christians", all of which further distinguish the poem

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> this collection is shown by his arrangement of its first four items--religious pieces, all of quite diverse provenance--to have been concerned to find as meaningful a grouping as possible for his material.

Mills's last point refers to the suggestion that the first four items may have been arranged to tell (as Guddat-Figge notes, p.161) "an almost continuous story from the birth of the Virgin Mary to the destruction of Jerusalem". On this arrangement, see also F.A. Foster, ed., The Northern Passion, 3 vols, EETS Nos. 145, 147, and 183 (London, 1912-1930), II, 13.

Evidence for the order of composition of the London Thornton MS recently provided by John J. Thompson (Robert Thornton and the London Thornton Manuscript, p.48) contributes to the view posited by Mills:

> [Thornton's] short title 'the Sege off Melayne' is written in the head margin of fol. $66^{v\,b}$ in Thornton's hand, but the title itself seems to have been added rather casually in the only available space left after Thornton had copied the main text of this item. This is in marked contrast to the relatively formal layout of both the incipit and explicit of The Siege of Jerusalem on fols $50^{r\,a}$ and $66^{v\,b}$ respectively. Since Thornton seems to have considered Melayne as an adjunct of some kind to the existing material in [the previous two gatherings], it is even possible that his title for this siege romance was influenced by the few words of French in the formal explicit of The Siege of Jerusalem on the previous page in this collection.

Thompson adds (n.26, p.48) that this "may even support the view that Thornton was more aware of and more interested in juxtaposing two stylistically different 'siege' romances than he was in stressing any of the 'Charlemagne' features that might link the two tail-rhyme romances now permanently separated by 'O florum flos'...".

from its apparent literary relatives. Here perhaps lies the best explanation for the dearth of more recent and extensive scholarly comment; SM is not easily understood by comparison with the other Charlemagne romances, and yet it is unclear with what else, if anything, it ought to be compared.

It is my belief that Melayne is a kind of generic 'hybrid', with a specialized aesthetic better understood by comparison with elements of what we might call 'typical' medieval crusade propaganda. Perhaps the author genuinely intended to create his own authentic Charlemagne romance; but the kinds of literary models which may have influenced him, and their characteristic affective techniques, are unusual (if not in essence, then certainly in intensity) in those stories.

A survey of what little literary criticism there is about Melayne, accompanied by an attempt to identify the literary traditions with which the poet appears to have been familiar, will introduce the points which in my opinion are important to a literary evaluation of the poem. From this approach we shall begin to see in more detail why, apart from the obscurity of its sources, Melayne stands apart from the other Charlemagne romances. This will also provide better insight into how, and why, the poem has been composed, why indeed it gives many who read it the impression that, as Derek Pearsall puts it, "the Sege is a splendidly stirring fragment which takes fire from the moment of Bishop Turpin's

first appearance and thereafter maintains a stern, martial ardour...".[6]

Among the limited commentaries on the poem, there are basically two views of the work's genre, and three or four views of the role of the remarkable central character, Archbishop Turpin. Concerning the poem's genre, Maldwyn Mills finds that SM "in its subject-matter looks back to an [early] mode of heroic literature...":

> Melayne reflects the ideal... of the French chanson de geste of the late eleventh century onwards--heroic poems in which the enemy was the heathen, from whose control lands and shrines that were once Christian must now be wrested.... [Melayne] is, with the exception of the fragmentary Song of Roland, the most genuinely heroic of [the Charlemagne romances].[7]

Similarly, A.McI. Trounce (in his occasionally uneven account of the English tail-rhyme romances) detects in SM a "heroic tone" reminiscent of both the Chanson de Roland and The Battle of Maldon.[8] In his view of Turpin, Trounce is characteristically effusive and admiring, though his attempts to account for this extraordinary character must be viewed as inconclusive:

> [SM] contains in the figure of Archbishop Turpin the finest piece of characterization in Middle English, with the exception of Chaucer's best, and, possibly, of Gawayne in 'Gawayne and the Green Knygt'. He is primarily the vigorous ecclesiastic,

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[6] Pearsall, Mediæval Studies, p.115.

[7] Mills, Six Middle English Romances, p.xi.

[8] A.McI. Trounce "The English Tail-Rhyme Romances", Medium Ævum, 3 (1931), 46.

> champion of the church; but the poet delights in him as a personality, paints him with individual touches... and shows us the power of unflinching endurance... [and] his stern integrity....[9]

"The poet delights in him as a personality", though no doubt true, seems to me a rather searching attempt to explain this character's eccentricities. By contrast, Mills is more helpful for identifying specific episodes which are crucial to an understanding of the Archbishop's characterization (and, indeed, of the poem at large). It is clear from Mills's comments, however, that a complete explanation for Turpin's eccentricities remains elusive:

> Turpin is certainly the mainspring of the action to a degree not found in any other romance (or chanson de geste for that matter), but the impression that he is likely to make upon the modern reader is one more comic than serious. When Charles shows himself ready to follow Ganelon's comfortable advice to stay quietly at home and let Turpin--who likes that sort of thing--go off and do the actual fighting, the archbishop excommunicates him.... Even more peculiar is the later scene, in which he rashly charges at troops coming to the help of the French, under the impression that they are Saracens, and so appears as a kind of ecclesiastical Quixote, tilting at sheep.... But strangest of all is an earlier [scene] in which, as soon as he has learned of the French defeat, he reviles... the Virgin.... While the example of the romance of Richard Coer de Lion (of which a copy is found in the same manuscript collection as Melayne) shows that energy of an almost diabolical kind would be applauded as long as it was directed against the Saracen... the only way of explaining away [the first and third moments described above] would be to suppose the author never forgot that Turpin was in the last resort French, and therefore always a little unreliable. A comparison with Richard is again illuminating on this point, since in that romance

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[9] A.McI. Trounce, "The English Tail-Rhyme Romances", Medium Ævum, 1 (1932), 100-101.

> the French crusading king, Philip Augustus, is on several occasions represented in an unfavourable light.... The end product of it all is certainly a figure that stands out from most pieces of characterization in these romances, even if in a rather different way from that defined by Trounce.[10]

To return to the question of genre, Dieter Mehl and Diana Childress share a different view from that of Mills and Trounce. Mehl sees less of the pure heroic in Melayne and classes it as a "homiletic romance":[11]

> the chief point of the episode described here seems to be the drastic demonstration of the superiority of the Christian faith. In spite of some initial setbacks, the Christian warriors are always victorious in the end, although not always due to their own strength and prowess, but to the direct intervention of God.... This story-pattern gives a rather legendary character to the poem which is also stressed by several miracles, proving that the fight against the heathens is a holy war... The Sege off Melayne is thus a true crusading poem.... The dramatic argument about the question whether the king should act upon his divine vision and go to the rescue of Milan also brings home the fact that the war between Christians and heathens is the real subject of the poem.[12]

Mehl sees Archbishop Turpin as a representation of "the unquestioned supremacy of the Church";[13] the representation is achieved through an implicit comparison of the Archbishop with his Emperor, Charlemagne:

> The king is on the whole a rather weak representative of earthly power.... The scene in which the

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[10] Mills, Six Middle English Romances, pp.xii-xiii.

[11] Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London, 1968), p.156.

[12] Mehl, pp.153-154.

[13] Mehl, p.154.

> king humbles himself before the Bishop is strongly reminiscent of Athelston and, like the whole episode, illustrates impressively the superiority of spiritual over earthly power in this war.[14]

Childress follows Mehl fairly closely in her view of the poem's genre, though it is for her the character of Turpin which provides the key to that view. Like Mills, she identifies episodes which are crucial to the interpretation of the poem:

> the hero of The Sege of Melayne, Archbishop Turpin, proves to be a tough and ready warrior in battle; but the poem as we have it focuses as much on the miracles he performs as on his vigorous leadership of the French forces. Even the battle scenes emphasize his wounds and his perseverance as much as his prowess: like a saint who endures prodigious physical torture... Turpin keeps fighting even when he is so bloody as to be unrecognizable except by his shield.... One fully expects that the fall of Milan--already prophesied by an angel--will be achieved by some miracle. Although the poem is [fragmentary], its legendary character is established. Not only is divine concern for the characters and divine direction of events explicit and emphatic, the actual power of action of the hero is greater than that of romance heroes: he is the means of a divine miracle when bread and wine are sent sown from heaven for his performance of the Mass, and he sustains wounds that would fell other heroes.... Like [a] saint, the hero... [is] the means through which God's will is performed.[15]

While Mehl calls the poem a "homiletic romance", Childress suggests that it is "secular hagiography" or "secular legend"[16]; the 'romance' of Mehl's term has for Childress

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[14] Mehl, p.155.

[15] Diana Childress, "Between Romance and Legend: 'Secular Hagiography' in Middle English Literature", Philological Quarterly, 57 (1978), 316.

[16] Childress, p.312.

yielded to the more serious intentions of the Saint's Life.

> From romance the secular legend borrows settings, style, and many story motifs, and as in romance its heroes and heroines are not martyred but achieve success in this world before their heavenly reward in the next. But instead of entertaining their audiences with the exploits of admirable men, the authors of the secular legends aim to teach moral lessons.... Included in this category [is] the [fragmentary] Sege of Melayne....[17]

Rather than attempt to discredit any of these views in defense of one view alone, I intend to establish that all are (to varying degrees) correct if taken collectively. The heroic and the hagiographic are combined, the hero is at once a great warrior and an eccentric visionary, the story as a whole both entertaining and provoking.

We should give to Dieter Mehl the benefit of the doubt for having said more than is at first apparent. His statement that Melayne is "a true crusading poem" draws attention to a striking devotion in the poem to the literary traditions of medieval militant Christianity. Mehl expands little upon his statement, except, as we have seen, for explaining that the miraculous events in the story prove that "the fight against the heathens is a holy war".[18] Certainly, as Dorothee Metlitzki has pointed out, all of the Charlemagne romances involve wars against Saracens and so share an element of the

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[17] Childress, p.319.

[18] Mehl also says elsewhere (p.156) that "the prime interest... [is] the irreconcilable conflict between Christianity and all other religions, and the indisputable supremacy of God".

crusading spirit.[19] I believe, nevertheless, that SM possesses a number of militant Christian elements which are just different enough from those of the other Charlemagne romances to warrant caution in the way we go about interpreting the poem, especially given the presence of those 'odd' features which have to date met with little secure explanation. The other Charlemagne romances by comparison seem concerned less with persuading their readers to defend Christianity against its enemies than they are with reaffirming Christian belief through entertaining stories of past victories for the Faith. That the actively persuasive spirit in the Sege makes it a genuine piece of crusading propaganda, I am reluctant to say. It is possible that the 'original' of SM was some sort of allegorical excitatoire which attempted to inspire, say, French readers to go off and fight the heathen or some such enemy--crusades, both without and within Christianity (notably in France and Northern Italy), were popular enough causes into the fourteenth century--but I see no reason to attribute to the English poem as it stands such a specific purpose.[20] That we can see that

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[19] See Dorothee Metlitzki, The Matter of Araby in Medieval England (New York, 1977), p.160.

[20] A study of possible historical influences can, however, be illuminating. A general precedent for the story of Melayne could have been the historical Charlemagne's annexation of Lombardy in 773, more specifically his eight-month siege of Pavia in that year. Though Milan gave no resistance in Charles's campaign, it is possible that legends of the Pavia siege were modified to describe an assault on Milan--a town perhaps more familiar than Pavia to some story-

tellers. For an account of Charles's campaign against the Lombards, see Thomas Hodgkin, Italy and her Invaders, second edition, 8 vols (Oxford, 1892), VII, 366-381; and J.B. Bury, and others, The Cambridge Medieval History, 8 vols (Cambridge, 1936-1959), II, 220-221.

One of the more notable of many sieges and battles which took place in and around Milan in the Middle Ages was that which occured in 1161-1162, during Frederick Barbarossa's struggles against Pope Hadrian IV and the Lombard communes. One feature of the siege, the standard-chariot, or "carroccio" wheeled into battle by the Milanese, appears to have found its way into chapter 18 of The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle, which describes the battle between Charlemagne and Ebrahim, the king of Seville, at Cordova. For a thorough review of the evidence for the connection, see H.M. Smyser, ed., The Pseudo-Turpin (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1937), p.35, n.1. In addition to this detail we might note that, after having his Anti-Pope, Paschal III, canonize Charlemagne in 1165, Barbarossa commissioned a Vita Karoli Magni, which incorporated sections of the (? recently composed) Pseudo-Turpin (see Smyser, Pseudo-Turpin, pp.5-8). We might note further that Barbarossa had been threatened with excommunication by Hadrian IV in 1159 (see The Cambridge Medieval History, V, 430). The reverence for Charlemagne, combined with the possible connection with the Pseudo-Turpin, and the threatened excommunication, suggests how a poem might have been composed to celebrate how Charlemagne was excommunicated (but later forgiven), and then inspired to great feats by Turpin (a voice of faith, and supposed author of the Chronicle), and successfully laid siege to a Milan occupied by enemies of the Faith.

Another possible historical connection might derive from the many conflicts in the fourteenth century between the Northern Italian city-states and the Papacy. The Papacy often viewed such conflicts as crusades, and recruited support by offering the same kinds of indulgences, and by using the same propagandistic methods, as they would for a crusade to Palestine; "for the[ir] supporters... the Italian Crusades... were directly equivalent in... purpose and character to crusades against the Muslims" [Norman Housley, The Italian Crusades (Oxford, 1982), p.163]. Of note for its connection with Milan is the crusade preached in France and Italy against the Visconti by John XXII between 1321 and 1324. It is possible to see a now-lost French original of a poem such as Melayne having been written to persuade men to join in such a crusade, as if they were to follow in the footsteps of a legendary crusader who had done as they would do.

Obviously, one historical event can be as convincing a parallel to Melayne as another. What these parallels do show,

the poem was read across at least one century (in the London Thornton MS and then in The Complaynt of Scotland) says as much; its appeal is unlikely to have been limited to one particular historical moment. The Sege does, nevertheless, appear to borrow the kinds of images, incidents, and attitudes which were the mainstay of crusading propaganda from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. We should not, therefore, take lightly the possible influence upon the creation of the Sege of this, the most militant expression of medieval Christian belief.

One of the more obvious allusions in SM to matter typically employed in crusade propaganda involves the gift of a sword to Charles as he dreams of the apparition of an angel:

> Als kyng Charls in his bedde laye
> A Sweun þan gan he mete.
> Hym thoghte ane angele lyghte als leuen
> Spake to hym with mylde steuen,
> Þat gudly hym gan grete.
> Þat angele by-taughte hym a brande,
> Gaffe hym þe hiltis in his hande,
> Þat euen was handefull mete:
> And saide: "Criste sende the this swerde,
> Mase the his werryoure here in erthe,
> He dose þe wele to weite.

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however, is that the absence of known sources in Carolingian legend for Melayne could suggest that the poem had its origin in crusading propaganda which may have grown out of such historical events. In this, Melayne might have had a similar provenance to other crusading songs and poems, such as the Chanson de la croisade contre les Albigeois or the many sirventés written both for and against the intra-Christian crusades in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For a guide to the context of such works, see Palmer A. Throop, "Criticism of Papal Crusade Policy in Old French and Provençal", Speculum, 13 (1938), 379-412.

He biddes þou sall resteyne it tyte
And þat þou venge alle his dispyte,
For thynge þat euer may bee."
. . .
When Charls wakenede of his dreme
He sawe a bryghtenes of a beme
Vp vn-to heuenwarde glyde.
Bot when he rose þe swerde he fande
Þat þe Angelle gaffe hym in his hande
Appon his bedde syde.
He schewede it thanne to his Barouns alle,
And than saide his lordes bothe grete & smalle:
"Þe sothe is noghte to hyde:
We wote wele þat goddis will it es
Þat þou sall conquere of hethennesse
Countres lange and wyde."
(lines 110-144)

In his introduction to the edition, Herrtage suggests (p.x) that this episode "is probably founded on 2 Maccabees xv.15,16".[21] It is impossible to prove that the episode in Melayne has in fact been derived from the Maccabees but it is difficult to suggest a more likely source. In a recent note in Medium Ævum, D.A. Trotter observes that "it is well known that those parts of the Maccabees which found their way into the Vulgate (the first two books) were highly influential on writing concerned with the crusades." Trotter adds that

> it is not... all that surprising to find evidence of possible influence of the Book of Maccabees on... chansons de geste.... The liaison between

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[21] I quote the passage from the Maccabees as it appears in the (later) Wycliffite Bible:

> [Judas] expownede a sweuene worthi of bileue, bi whiche he gladide alle.... Forsothe he sig that Jeremye hath stregte forth the rigthond, and hath 3ouun a goldun swerd to Judas and seide, Take thou the hooli swerd, a gift of God, in which thou schalt caste doun the aduersaries of my puple Israel.

> chanson de geste and history needs no intermediary. The two genres are already related and often overlap.[22]

Trotter proceeds to discuss a passage from an Old French crusading sermon found in two fifteenth-century manuscripts. I think the passage is highly relevant to our understanding of Melayne.

> The most complete fusion between the Old Testament, the Carolingian era, and the crusades occurs in a xv-century text in two Paris MSS (Arsenal MS 1030, and BN lat. 2873-B).... The text opens with the bestowal by Jeremiah of a glave d'or on Judas Maccabaeus, the Vulgate passage being quoted; then Charlemagne receives a sword from St Denis:
>
> > Et fut samblable vision et apparicion faicte a Charlemagne, roy de France, quant il ala en secours de la terre saincte, a la requeste de l'empereur de Constantinoble; [lacuna?] est fondee la vertu du glave qu'on dit auriflamme. Car icelluy Charlemagne estant en grant doubte et pensee de secourir et aydier audit empereur et a la terre saincte, monseigneur sainct Denis s'apparut a luy et luy bailla ung glave d'or, dont il apparoit saillir flambe de feu. (MS Arsenal 1030, fol. 76^{vb}....)[23]

Trotter rightly warns us that "this is a late text, and the greatest of care is... called for if it is to be used to shed light on... chansons de geste which may antedate it...".[24] It should be noted, however, that the MS of our text itself dates from the fifteenth century and that Melayne shares the

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[22] D.A. Trotter, "Charlemagne, Judas Maccabaeus, and the 'Oriflamme'", Medium Ævum, 54 (1986), 128.

[23] Trotter, p.129.

[24] Trotter, p.129.

same general view as this crusade sermon about the divine bestowal of a weapon as a direct sanctification of war. It is also important to recognize that such a bestowal occurs in no other English Charlemagne romance (nor, as far as I know, in their French counterparts).[25] The only exception may be in a now lost-portion of the fragmentary Song of Roland. In the French Chanson de Roland, Charles is given a sword to pass on to one of his vassals. Roland here speaks to the sword, Durandal:

> Carles esteit es vals de Moriane,
> Quan Deus del cel li mandat par sun angle
> Qu'il te dunast a une cunte cataignie:
> Dunc la me ceinst li gentilz reis, li magnes.
> (Chanson, lines 2318-2321)

Though given to Charles, the sword was ultimately given to Roland, and so the nature of its bestowal differs from that in SM. As Jeffrey Ashcroft notes of this scene, "the Chanson interprets the supernatural origin of [Durandal] as a divine endorsement of chivalry, but conceives chivalry primarily of vassalage, in which service of a... lord is coextensive with fealty to God".[26]

Ashcroft notes one single version of the Chanson,

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[25] I might add that the detail of Charles's doubt about the truth of the dream is similar in both the SM and Arsenal accounts. This may just possibly suggest that both accounts share a common source; certainly these are the only two known accounts of such an episode involving Charlemagne.

[26] Jeffrey Ashcroft "'Miles Dei--Gotes Ritter': Konrad's 'Rolandslied' and the Evolution of The Concept of Christian Chivalry", in Knighthood in Medieval Literature, edited by W.T.H. Jackson (Cambridge, 1981), p.55.

Konrad's Rolandslied, in which the spirit of the bestowal is similar to that of SM (and the Arsenal sermon) and in which, according to Ashcroft, a crusading influence can be detected.[27] "In Konrad's version," notes Ashcroft, "the angel specifies Roland as God's designated recipient of Durndart...".[28] This (along with other details) leads Ashcroft to conclude that the modified passage

> stresses that God confers a direct privilege on Roland, that Karl is intermediary, not arbiter. Konrad develops the myth of Durndart's divine origin, which in the Chanson sanctions Roland's heroism and vassalage, into a validation of the militia dei, the holy war which God institutes as a chivalric officium.[29]

Stress, we might add, is given to direct individual service of God: the warrior cannot remain faceless within a national army or, in Charles's case in SM, behind the office of kingship. Ashcroft's observations about the Rolandslied invite more attention than I can give them here--they warrant a thesis in their own right--but my purpose in citing them briefly is to point out that the bestowal of the sword in the Sege belongs with a specific and, for this degree of specificity among the Charlemagne romances, rare set of ideas which are very much at home in crusade literature.

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[27] "The definition of Christian knighthood... is the chief concern of Konrad's Rolandslied, which recasts... the heroic values of the Chanson in the mould of twelfth-century crusading ideology" (Ashcroft, p.57).

[28] Ashcroft, pp.58-59.

[29] Ashcroft, p.59.

There is only one analogue to SM which is reasonably close, and generally convincing as a probable influence. The story it tells is similar, it has a common literary pedigree, and, if one suspects Melayne not to have had a Continental source, was undoubtedly familiar in some form to Insular writers of Charlemagne material. This is, to give it its full summary title, the Descriptio qualiter Karolus Magnus clavum et coronam a Constantinopoli Aquis Grani detulerit qualiterque Karolus Calvus hec ad Sanctum Dyonisium retulerit (hereafter referred to as the Descriptio).[30] The story is close, in fact, to that described in the Arsenal sermon; it is also described at the beginning of the English Rouland and Vernagu (RV). While demonstrating that the story was familiar to at least one English romancer,[31] the passage in RV also provides a good précis.

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[30] For an edition of the Descriptio, see G. Rauschen, ed., Die Legende Karls des Grossen im 11 und 12 Jarhundert (Leipzig, 1890).

[31] For a discussion of the familiarity of the story to Insular writers, see Laura Hibbard Loomis, "The Athelstan Gift Story: Its Influence on English Chronicles and Carolingian Romances", Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, 67 (1952), 521-537.

As well as the late romance Capystranus, discussed below (beginning p.146), another romance in ME containing the episode (though also late) is Caxton's prose translation of Jean Bagnyon's rendering of the Fierabras story, Charles The Grete; see pp.31-37 of Herrtage's edition of that text.

Another allusion to the story of the Descriptio in ME has recently come to light in a verse translation of an exemplum from the Alphabetum narrationum; see Paul Acker, "Harvard MS Eng. 1032: Exemplary Verse concerning Charlemagne and Theobald", Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 87 (1986), 354-364.

In þat time was an emperour
In costentin of gret honour,
Constansious he hiȝt....
. . .
In speyn, þo þer was a king,
A stern man wiþouten lesing,
Þat werred oȝain þe riȝt.
Ebrahim was his name....
. . .
& þe patriark of ierusalem
Out of lond dede him flem,
Al for godes sake.
Þe patriarke was ful wiis,
& to þemperour he went y-wis,
His mone for to make,
Hou þe king ebrahim
Out of lond exiled him,
Wiþ michel wer & wrake.
King costance þemperour,
Made swiþe gret dolour.
For þis tidinges,
Ihū crist bisouȝt he...
. . .
& sone so he had þe bon y-bede,
An angel lit doun in þat stede,
& þis bode him bringes.
Þe angel seyd to þemperour,
"Wele þe greteþ þi saueour,
Ihū, ful of miȝt,
& bit þe sende wiþ michel anour,
After charls þe conqueror,
He is a douhti kniȝt.
He schal þe help in batayl,
& sle þe sarrazin wiþouten fail,
Þat doþ oȝain þe riȝt."[32]

From this point in the story, Constansious sends envoys to Charles, who responds by marching directly to the Levant. We can see the general identity of plot with that of SM, while the conquered patriarch of Jerusalem and Constansious (who receives the angelic recommendation to summon Charles), together correspond to Alantyne, lord of Milan, who shares a similar experience. As we have seen Maldwyn Mills point out,

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[32] Rouland and Vernagu, lines 17-61.

the Melayne poet is fond of using episodes apparently borrowed from other chansons de geste. It is a plausible enough suggestion that the poet may have done the same with this episode; if he was writing in Britain, his familiarity with the story of the Descriptio by way of a version of RV would have been highly likely. RV belongs as an introduction, unknown on the Continent, to the Otuel legend, with which, as we have seen, there can be little doubt our poet was familiar.[33] If the original poem was Continental, then the source of the episode may have been a version of the Descriptio itself, or more probably, given the poet's familiarity with the Otuel legend (and indeed his choice of Turpin as the hero), the Johannes Pseudo-Turpin; a popular redaction of this version of the Pseudo-Turpin was characterized by the addition of a précis of the Descriptio as its first chapter (incidentally, the redaction was also the source for RV).[34]

There is one significant feature of the possible connection between SM and the Descriptio. Obviously, the Descriptio in and of itself tells a story which would have

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[33] On the provenance of RV and its relationship with the Otuel legend, see Smyser, Manual, pp. 87-89 and bibliography, p.262. The most important single contribution to the study of the source of RV is Walpole's "Charlemagne and Roland".

[34] On this redaction of the Pseudo-Turpin, see Smyser, Manual, p.88; Walpole, Johannes Translation, pp.xvii-xx; and Walpole, "Charlemagne and Roland", 396-400. On the source of RV in particular, see the references to Smyser and Walpole in the previous note.

appealed to crusade propagandists (though, of course, it is also an entertaining story in its own right, and no doubt this is its primary appeal as found in RV). For propagandists, what more inspiring example could be set for those who could be persuaded to defend the Faith than that of a legendary and historical Christian leader who was summoned by God to reclaim Jerusalem from the heathen? As Jules Coulet observes,

> d'après certains... [la Descriptio] serait un "excitatoire", analogue à la fameuse lettre de l'empereur Alexis et à tant d'autres écrits plus ou moins authentiques, qui raconterent alors les souffrances subies par les chrétiens de Palestine.[35]

Another romance in Middle English which appears to be familiar with the Descriptio is the fragmentary Capystranus, which survives in late prints (probably) by Wynkin de

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[35] J. Coulet, Etudes sur l'ancien poème Français du Voyage de Charlemagne en Orient (Montpellier, 1907), p.170. See also W.R.J. Barron, English Medieval Romance, p.92; Maurice Keen, Chivalry (New Haven, Connecticut, 1984), p.106; and Walpole, "Charlemagne and Roland", p.399.

It its also worth bearing in mind R.N. Walpole's observation that the redaction of the Johannes Turpin which contains the Descriptio originally catered for readers who were "active participants... in crusading warfare..." (Johannes Translation, p.113). Walpole adds (pp.xix-xx) that

> the redactor draws no attention to his interpolation [of the Descriptio]; implicitly, but no doubt intentionally he leaves the impression that the Pseudo-Turpin was the author who truly chronicled all of Charlemagne's crusades against the Saracens in Palestine and Spain.... This redaction of the Descriptio-Turpin was... published at the moment when... the full tide of the crusades seemed to be borne on in Capetian France as in the France of Charlemagne by unanimous patriotic and religious feeling.

Worde.[36] Apart from reinforcing evidence that the episode was relatively well known to English romancers, its appearance in the Capystranus again involves a potentially propagandistic crusading theme. This romance involves a pseudo-historical account of the Franciscan (St) Giovanni da Capistrano's involvement in the raising of the Turkish siege of Belgrade in 1456. Even for its late date, the romance possesses a strong element of the crusading fervour which the actual event had inspired amongst Christians who, like their Pope, Pius II, were committed to a crusade against the Turks.[37] As W.A. Ringler has said, "the poem must derive in some way from

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[36] The earliest de Worde print of Capystranus (STC 14649, 10 leaves) is dated circa 1515, but there are two later fragments of circa 1527 (STC 14649.5, 2 leaves) and circa 1530 (STC 14650, 4 leaves). Only selections of the romance have been reprinted in modern times. Douglas Gray edits 162 lines describing Capistrano's relief of the Turkish occupation of Belgrade; see Douglas Gray, ed., Capystranus, in The Oxford Book of Late Medieval Verse and Prose, pp.199-203, and commentary, pp.459-460; all references to Gray, "Capystranus", are from this edition. Karl D. Bülbring reprints the first nine stanzas of the romance; see Karl D. Bülbring, "Anhang 1", "Vier neue Alexanderbruchstücke", Englische Studien, 13 (1889), 145-146; all references to Bülbring, "Capystranus", are to this reprint.

[37] For accounts of the siege of Belgrade and its influence on Christian morale, see Kenneth M. Setton, The Papacy and the Levant 1204-1571, Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, Nos 114 and 127, 2 vols (Philadelphia, 1976-1978), II, 173-184; and Robert Schwoebel, The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453-1517) (Nieuwkoop, 1967), pp.41-47.

Of de Worde's two later reprints of the Capystranus (see the previous note), Douglas Gray suggests that their publication may reflect "an interest in the continuing Turkish threat--Belgrade fell to Soliman the Magnificent in 1521, and the Hungarians were defeated by him at Mohács in 1526" (Gray, "Capystranus", p.459).

the... Descriptio".[38] Its introduction (after a lengthy opening prayer) sets the crusading tone thus:

> Some men loueth to here tell
> Of doughty knyghtes, that were fell,
> And some of ladyes bryght,
> And some myracles, that are tolde,
> And some of venterous knyghtes olde,
> That for oure lorde dyde fyght,
> As Cherles dyde that noble kynge,
> That hethen downe dyde brynge
> Thrughe the helpe of god almyghty.
>
> He wanne fro the hethen houndes
> The spere end nayles of crystes woundes
> And also the croune of thorne,
> And many a ryche relyke mo
> Maugre of them he wanne also
> And kylled them euen and morne;
> The turkes and the paynyms bolde
> He felled doune many a folde....[39]

The poem then goes on to describe the struggles of Christians against the Turks in Capistrano's time, first in Constantinople and then in Belgrade. Mention of Charles's recovery of the relics of the Passion indicates that the Descriptio is a probable source; the connection here with Constantinople increases the probability. Even if the Descriptio were not the source, the tone of the passage certainly matches that of Melayne. Just like the Capystranus (which, interestingly, appears in the above passage almost to draw a distinction between what we might call 'secular' and 'militant Christian' genres of romance), Melayne begins, as Mehl says, by "put[ting] the emphasis on Charles's fame as a

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[38] W.A. Ringler, Jr., "Charlemagne and the Relics of the Passion", Notes and Queries, 222 (1977), 489.

[39] Bülbring, "Capystranus", pp. 145-146.

killer of heathens":[40]

> All werthy men that luffes to here
> Off cheuallry þat by fore vs were
> Þat doughty weren of dede,
> Off charlles of Fraunce, þe heghe kinge of alle,
> Þat oft sythes made hethyn men for to falle,
> Þat styffely satte one stede.
> (lines 1-6)

This view of Charles may be so self-evident from any of the Carolingian chansons de geste that the comparison I draw is pointless; but, as we shall see later, there is at least one other point of affinity between the Capystranus and SM which reinforces the proposition that the view may have been influenced by a propagandistic model.

These quotations from the Arsenal sermon and from the Capystranus cannot prove that SM is indebted to crusade propaganda, or even to the Descriptio in the forms or settings in which that story occurs. Only in the Arsenal sermon, moreover, do we find an analogue for the gift of the sword which specifically has Charlemagne as its only recipient. What can be said for all this circumstantial evidence, however, is that where probable analogues for features of SM show up, a persuasive crusading element can often be seen.

By 'crusading element' I have so far assumed only a general idea of the militant Christianity, the belief in aggressive martial support for the Faith that one naturally associates with the Crusades. Nevertheless, specific

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[40] Mehl, p.153.

attitudes, themes, and motifs can be seen to characterize propagandistic crusade literature and distinguish it from other militant Christian material. Beyond an outward resemblance to analogues, Melayne can also be found to have an affinity with some of these specific features.

Of the few studies there are on the attitudes, motifs, and themes of crusade literature, I have found D.H. Green's study of the (Middle High German) Millstätter Exodus the most helpful in illuminating the methods of the Melayne author.[41] Green identifies a central conception in crusading literature as the "feudalization of Christianity".[42] This involves a view held by those who would fight for God that they have a reciprocal contract of service with God; "[such] a man thinks he is entitled to remind God that He too has obligations to fulfill".[43] This attitude "stresses God's obligation to reward and protect those whom he has accepted into his service".[44] One of the more remarkable manifestations of this spirit in crusade literature is the warrior's angry complaint to God for His apparent failure to keep His part of the implicit 'feudal' contract.

> It is precisely this feudal attitude... which we find in one passage in the [Millstätter Exodus]

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[41] D.H. Green, The Millstätter Exodus: A Crusading Epic (Cambridge, 1966).

[42] Green, p.295.

[43] Green, p.173.

[44] Green, p.288.

> where Moses, to whom the Israelites have complained that their position is now worse than it had been before his intervention in God's name, lodges his own complaint with God:
>
> si lîdent ienoh die selben nôt,
> dû ne habest sî geledigôt,
> alsô dû iz mir gehezze,
> noh iz wâr neliezze....
>
> The Millstätt author... has... depicted [Moses'] relationship with God as resting on a mutual compact... which... modifies the biblical source by introducing the element of feudal reciprocicity and therefore the possibility that Moses may justifiably make complaint if he feels that his rights are not being observed.[45]

Green adds that "just as the Millstätt author did not hesitate to show Moses making reproaches to God for His failure to keep His promise, so do the crusading sources show us signs of a comparable attitude amongst the crusaders".[46] Green draws attention to a complaint in this tradition in a passage from the Gesta Francorum. In that passage, Bohemond's half-brother Wido, and others who have just heard of the destruction of the crusading army at Antioch, threaten God with the proposition that they will abandon their service of Him.[47] The same attitude is evident in one of the most

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[45] Green, pp.173-174.

[46] Green, p.287.

[47] Green, pp.287-288. The episode to which Green refers is as follows:

> [Wido] and all the others began to weep and to make loud lamentation, and all of them said, "O true God, Three in One, why hast thou allowed this to be? Why hast thou permitted the people who followed thee to fall into the hands of thine enemies, and forsaken so soon those who wished to free the road

striking passages in Melayne, where Turpin reviles the Blessed Virgin upon news of the disastrous Christian defeat at Milan:

> The Bischop keste his staffe hym fro
> Þe mytre of his hede also:
> "I sall neuer were the more,
> Ne oþer habite for to bere,
> Bot buske me bremly to þe were,
> And lerene one slykke a lore.
> A! Mary milde, whare was thi myght,
> Þat þou lete thi men thus to dede be dighte,
> Þat wighte and worthy were?
> Art þou noghte halden of myghtis moste,
> Full Conceyuede of þe holy goste?
> Me ferlys of thy fare.
>
> Had þou noghte, Marye, 3itt bene borne
> Ne had noghte oure gud men thus bene lorne?
> Þe wyte is all in the."
> (lines 541-555)

As Maldwyn Mills remarks, "a stock scene in the chansons de geste and the heroic romances was that in which a sultan, after hearing of the rout of his forces, did physical violence to the images of his gods, and while Turpin does not quite go so far as laying hands on [a] statue [of the Virgin] it seems an uncomfortably near thing".[48] In the other Charlemagne romances such outbursts are almost exclusively made by Saracens, and one is inclined to agree with Mills

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> to thy Holy Sepulchre? By our faith, if the word which we have heard... is true, we and the other Christians will forsake thee and remember thee no more, nor will one of us henceforward be so bold as to call upon thy Name".

[Rosalind Hill, ed., and trans., Gesta Francorvm et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorvm: The Deeds of the Franks and the Other Pilgrims to Jerusalem (London, 1962), p.64.]

[48] Mills, Six Middle English Romances, p.xiii.

when he adds that "here it is very difficult to avoid the feeling that [Turpin] is being presented as a pagan...".[49] On the other hand, Turpin's action, when seen in the context of crusade literature, is not altogether extraordinary: what verges on blasphemy in the former context is entirely acceptable, if not admirable, in the latter.

It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that the only other ME romance (to my knowledge) where there is a similar outburst against the godhead by a Christian is the Capystranus. As Douglas Gray notes, a chronicle written by Mathieu d'Escouchy which tells the story of Capistrano contains "hints of the reproachful, almost querulous, tone of [Capistrano's] address to the Virgin Mary--in d'Escouchy he ends his prayer by saying to God, 'Come, lest the Turks and unbelievers say, Where is God'".[50] The Capystranus has rendered the incident described in the chronicle in a fashion similar to that of its counterpart in SM:

> He sayd,'Lorde God in heven on hyght,
> Where is become thyn olde myght,
> That men were wont to have?
> O my lord, Cryste Jesus,
> Why hast thou forgoten us?
> Now helpe of the we crave.'
> . . .
> 'Now, Mary, mayden, helpe me todaye,
> Or elles thy matyns shall I never saye
> Dayes of all my lyve,
> Ne no prayer that the shall please
> But yf thou helpe now our desease,

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[49] Mills, Six Middle English Romances, p.xiii.

[50] Gray, Capystranus, p.460.

Ne menye thy joyes fyve.'[51]

There is no doubt that Turpin, like the hero of the Capystranus, is meant to be a thoroughly admirable character, for it is he who leads all others on to the ultimate Christian victory; his unorthodox behaviour is the reason for his success, and therefore it too must be viewed as admirable. In this we can begin to see how other odd aspects of Turpin's behaviour might be better explained than they have been hitherto.

Indeed, the extraordinary zeal which appears to have imbued historical crusading figures (at least according to the written accounts) should always be kept in mind when one encounters in SM what may at first seem to be unreasonable behaviour; perhaps the Melayne poet was influenced by accounts of such crusading figures. Peter Bartholomew's frequent visions at the siege of Antioch in the First Crusade were believed by the starved and weary Christians to the point that they were suddenly stirred on to victory. Bartholomew also had a suicidal zeal in his willingness to undergo an ordeal by fire to prove his veracity.[52] This brings to mind the knight described by Fulcher of Chartres who, "stirred by a fiery zeal",

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[51] Gray, Capystranus, lines 106-135.

[52] A good account of the story of Peter Bartholomew is by Sir Steven Runciman, "The First Crusade: Antioch to Ascalon", in A History of the Crusades, Kenneth Setton, general ed., 6 vols to date (University of Wisconsin, 1969-), I, 308-342, especially 320-330.

> immediately put spurs to his horse and eagerly asked those standing around, "If any of you wish to sup in Paradise, let him now come and eat with me, for I am about to go there."
>
> He promptly waved his lance and plunged amidst the thousands of the enemy, overthrowing and killing the first one who opposed him. Thus in the act of slaying he was himself slain forthwith.[53]

Fulcher concludes, admiringly, "and so supported by faith and hope and strengthened by love he died joyfully". Along with these examples of zealous excess, we might also recall the cannibalistic Tafurs, maniacal remnants of the People's Crusade whose "berserk attacks made them feared by Moslems and crusaders alike," but who nevertheless "personified that... messianic animation which was the very soul of the First Crusade...".[54] Finally, we must not forget the fighting clerics, such as Phillipe de Mézières and Peter de Thomas, the latter of whom is said by Mézières to have led men to battle with nothing but a cross in his hand for protection.[55] Extraordinary figures such as these left a distinct impression upon the Byzantine historian Anna Comnena:

> The Latin customs with regard to priests differ from ours.... Your Latin barbarian will at the same time handle sacred objects, fasten a shield to his left arm and grasp a spear in his right.... The

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[53] Fulcher of Chartres, A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127, translated by Frances Rita Ryan, edited by Harold S. Fink (Knoxville, Tenessee, 1969), pp.179-180.

[54] See R.C. Finucane, Soldiers of The Faith (London, 1983), pp.127-128.

[55] For an account of this episode, see Aziz Suryal Atiya, The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages (London, 1938), pp.134-135.

race is no less devoted to religion than to war.[56]

The frame of mind Anna describes easily matches one we shall discuss later, in which Turpin joyfully arms himself immediately after celebrating Mass. A review of the episodes described by Mills and Childress (above, pp.131-133) will show briefly that there are other examples of zealous excess in SM which correspond to the general spirit of the crusading episodes and images I have just cited; I will return to examine some of those examples in this light later.

Two additional features mentioned by Green add to the evidence that SM is influenced by a strong crusading sensibility. Taken separately, the features may not be convincing evidence of an influence, but taken with the features I have already described, the implications of their presence are compelling. The first feature concerns the crusading ideal of the purifying renunciation (by warriors and not just religious) of worldly possession in the struggle against the heathen. For warriors, this amounted in a practical sense to resisting pillage (and personal aggrandizement) through conquest; "this is clear" says Green "from what information we possess on Urban II at Clermont":

> of the thirty-two canons of this council only one, the second, is concerned with the crusade, but this makes it certain that... absolution from sins was held out as a promise by the Pope to the knights he was specifically addressing: 'Quicumque pro sola devotione, non pro honoris vel pecuniæ adeptione,

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[56] Anna Comnena, The Alexiad, translated by E.R.A. Sewter (London, 1969), p.317.

> ad liberandum ecclesiam Dei Hierusalem profectus fuerit, iter illud pro omni poenitentia reputetur.'[57]

This is a pervasive idea in SM, and is important to any speculation about the intended purpose of this romance. The most memorable (and entertaining) manifestation of this idea occurs when Turpin 'preaches' to a squire, who, judging from Turpin's repeated "Loo!" (an excellent dramatic device) and his eventual beating of the squire, is repeatedly distracted by the prospect of relieving a dead Saracen of his jewelry:

> The Bischoppe sqwyere in the place
> Saw þat þe kynge dede was
> Þat had bene of grete powere;
> . . .
> His gowere pendande on þe grounde,
> It was worthe a thowsande pownde,
> Off rubys and Safere:
> He lowted down, vp wolde itt ta,
> The Bischoppe bad hym fro it ga:
> "Go fonnge the anoþer fere.
>
> To wyn the golde þou arte a fole,
> Þou bygynnes sone for to spoyle,
> Loo! 3onder comes moo.
> Thou settis more by a littill golde,
> Þat þou seese lye appon þe molde,
> Þan to fighte one goddes foo.
> Loo! 3onder comes Sara3enes in þe felde,
> Go kill þam down vndir thi schelde,
> Slyk [w]orchippes were gude to do."
> He tuke þe pendande in his hande,
> The Bischoppe bett hym with his brande
> [Þat] he kest it hym fro.
> (lines 973-996)

Like Urban II, the great proponent of the First Crusade, Turpin preaches what one historian (speaking of Urban II) has described as "a new kind of religious service, in which,

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[57] Green, p.398.

without giving up their customary pursuit... of fighting... knights could obtain moral and spiritual rewards".[58] That the episode exists at all strengthens this impression; it has little to do with an account of the progress of the siege, and looks more like an exemplum. We find echoes of the same idea in other Charlemagne romances, notably in the Fierabras story where Roland and other peres are willing to throw gold idols at attacking Saracens, who subsequently become distracted with their greed for the gold at the expense of victory.[59] Whereas SM is unequivocal in its presentation of this idea, however, the Fierabras story shows us elsewhere that the Christians themselves are not above plunder, and that this is implicitly acceptable. One wonders, in fact, if the scene of the distracting idols had been described more for its comic value (I quote from Sir Ferumbras):

> Now hab Char[lis] þe citee y-take,
> & sleyn echon boþ whit & blake
> þat erst were yn þe toun.
> . . .
> þan Charlis het to hys route
> þe citee to pyle al aboute
> & þe pylage to hem take.
> Muche was þe tresour þat þay founde þan,

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[58] Frederic Duncalf, "The Councils of Piacenza and Clermont", A History of the Crusades, Kenneth Setton, general ed., I, 245.

[59] See Sir Ferumbras, lines 3333-3342; The Sowdone of Babylone, lines 2475-2486; and the 'Fillingham' Sir Firumbras, lines 834-836.

Of golde & syluer & ryche stan,
& monaye whyt & blake.
(Sir Ferumbras, lines 4839-4846)[60]

The second feature described by Green concerns the popularity of the conception of imitatio Christi in crusade propaganda:

> it is... the paschal aspect of Christ's sacrifice which Urban II... places before the knights as the example which they are to imitate in bringing help and release from their suffering to their brethren in the East. The concepts of a paschal sacrifice, a liberation brought to one's fellow men, a taking up of the cross and a journey to Jerusalem, to the site of the crucifixion, are all ideas which establish an affinity between Christ's actions in the Easter period and the knights' military expedition to the Holy Land.[61]

Although no journey to Palestine is involved in SM, and direct references to Christ usually consist of conventional prayers and invocations, there are hints of this view in Turpin's role as something of a Christ figure. A wound he receives late in the poem may well recall the great wound in Christ's side.

The Bischoppe es so woundede that tyde
With a spere thorowe owte the syde,
Þat one his ribbis gan rese.

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[60] Cf. The Sowdone of Babylone, lines 3011-3018; the 'Fillingham' Sir Firumbras has a lacuna at this point (after line 1381).
The quotation from Sir Ferumbras is based upon emendations to this passage, as indicated by interlinear glosses in the MS; see Herrtage's annotations to these lines. (The basic sense of the passage is, nevertheless, the same in both drafts.)

[61] Green, p.420.

Thrugh þe schelde & the brow[n]e bare[62]
A schaftemonde of his flesche he schare:
lordynges, þis es no lese.
(lines 1303–1308)

The appeal to the incredulous in the last line seems to highlight the significance of the wound.[63] The connection with Christ is strengthened by Turpin's repeated vow, four stanzas on from the above description, to fast (and not to sleep). As W.R.J. Barron has noted, the vow draws an explicit comparison between Turpin's plight and that of Christ:[64]

"What! wenys þou, Charls," he said, "þat I faynte bee
. . .
[For] A glace thorowte my syde.
Criste for me sufferde mare;
He asked no salue to his sore,
Ne no more sall I this tyde."
(lines 1345–1350)

It is a pity that the ending of Melayne is now lost, for there we might find yet another similar comparison with

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[62] I have adopted Mills's emendation from "browe" to "brow[n]e" for the reasons he cites in his commentary (Six Middle English Romances, p.196).

> The emendation of "browe" to "browne" is rather tempting in view of the fact that "schelde" and "browne/brawne" occur in conjunction in descriptions of wild boars in Middle English, standing for the hard skin and tough flesh (of the shoulders) of the beast: see Sir Gawain and the Green Knight 1611. The phrase "als breme als bare" is of course sufficiently commonplace in descriptions of warriors in the romances (Melayne 94[8], for example); what is suggested here would be much rarer, but apt enough for this particular piece of characterization.

[63] Note also Turpin's own reminder, earlier in the poem, that Christ was "sore wounded with a spere" (line 701).

[64] See Barron, p.98.

Christ. Turpin's wounds are so severe as the poem breaks off ("Be þat tyme he myghte note wele a worde out-wyn", line 1582) that one wonders if anything short of a miracle could restore him, if not resurrect him, given that he suffers a wound which heralded the death of Christ.[65]

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[65] Turpin also displays patently Christian qualities throughout the story. Later, the wounded Turpin displays Christ-like selflessness and a willingness to make almost superhuman sacrifices in the service of others: vowing not to eat or drink, or let anyone see to his wounds until Milan is taken, "Or ells þer fore to dye",

> He garte dele his vetells then
> Firste amanges oure wonded men,
> Bot no mete neghe wolde hee.
> (lines 1194-1197)

Compare the many self-imposed fasts promised in Sir Ferumbras (lines 103, 128, 177, 915, 1358, 1828, 1972, 1995, and 2162); there they are imposed solely as a point of valour and not as a gesture of piety and self-sacrifice; they are not literally observed. Cf. Finucane on Jacques de Vitry's observations about some crusaders (Soldiers of the Faith, pp.32-33):

> [Jacques de Vitry] says he saw knights in the Holy Land (he was Bishop of Acre) who were so zealous in fasting and self-punishment that, worn out by this, they were easily overcome by Saracens.

Also of note is a hilltop mass held by Turpin in which the wine and host are sent from heaven; in this there is perhaps a combination of echoes of the Sermon on the Mount and Christ's first miracle at Cana in Galilee:

> And off the Trynytee a messe he says,
> And hertly for þe saules he prayes,
> And the bodyes þat þare gan dye.
>
> The Bischoppe sone gane hym reuesche,
> In gude entent he says a messe,
> In þe name of god almyghte:
> He blyssede þe awtere with his hande,
> And a fayre oste of brede þer appon he fande,
> Þat euer he sawe with syghte.
> His chalesse was so full of wyne
> There myghte no more hafe gone þer in,

The ideas stressed by Green and paralleled in Melayne are most valuable to an interpretation of the poem when considered alongside the poem's probable sources or analogues; the overall consistency with characteristic features of crusading art and ideology then appears striking. As I have said earlier, this is not to say that SM is literally a crusading poem. However (as Mehl may suggest by introducing the term "crusading poem"), it can at least be seen how the 'holy' and 'heroic' aspects of the Sege (which critics tend to treat separately) might coexist for a special purpose. We can also see how the peculiar character of the work's hero, Turpin, might be influenced by models of a partisanship generally foreign to the Charlemagne romances. These impressions will be strengthened by a closer examination of the poem itself.

Within the first 200 lines of the Sege, some structural and thematic patterns are established which (as one might expect of a persuasive discourse) will be repeated and developed throughout. Following the opening stanza (which stresses Charles's reputation as a slayer of heathens) we are presented with a view of the heathen, not just as an invader, but as a determined and effective enemy of Christendom.

> The sowdane Arabas the stronge
> Werreyde appon Crystyndome with wronge
>
> ---
>
> It come fro heuen on highte.
> (lines 886-897)

. . .
The Emagery þat the[r] solde bee,
Bothe the Rode & þe marie free,
Brynnede þam in a fire:
And þan his Mawmettes he sett vp there....
(lines 13-28)

The "wronge" with which Arabas fights his war is, however, as much mercantile as it is theological:

To Melayne sythen he tuke þe waye
And wanne þe Cyte apon a daye,
Gaffe his men golde & ill hyre.
(lines 31-33)

We have already seen Turpin and Barnard use "golde" as a synonym for covetousness; it is associated with the evil of wordly gain so many other times subsequently that it becomes a kind of leitmotif. A more subtle characteristic of the Saracens is the way in which they conduct their conquest (and other affairs) with a grim orderliness and efficiency. Alantyne, the Lord of Milan, is presented with a ruthlessly efficient ultimatum.

þe Sawdane sent hym messangers free
And bade hym torne and hethyn bee.
And he solde haue his awenn:
Melayne, that was the Riche Cite,
And alle þe laundis of lumbardye,
And to his lawe be knawenn:
"And if he ne will noghte to oure lawe be sworne,
He sall be hangede or oþer morne
And with wylde horse be drawen:
His wyffe & his childire three
By-fore his eghne þat he myghte see
Be in sondre sawenn."
(lines 49-60)

The unannounced dialogue (a device employed to advantage several times throughout) further conveys the Saracens' efficiency and ruthlessness; the speech sounds as if it were

the formulaic proclamation of a well-established bureaucracy.

Throughout the poem, action prompted by emotion (rather than clear reason) is the usual Christian reponse to this kind of evil; Alantyne's response to his subjugation is typical. Although he is granted a day's grace to consider the ultimatum, he immediately makes a direct and impassioned appeal to Christ:

> Bot þan heues he vp his handis to heuen,
> To Iesu Criste with mylde steuen
> Full hertly gane he praye.
> . . .
> "Some concelle sende þou me:
> Whethire þat me es better to doo,
> The hethyn lawe to torne too,
> Or my lyfe in lande to tyne."
> (lines 67-84)

God responds of course by sending an angel to Alantyne in a dream, with instructions to enlist the aid of Charlemagne. That course of action had been open to Alantyne all along; it is not as if Charles is unfamiliar to him, for we are told later that they are cousins (line 149), and it is not as if Charles is ever considered physically too distant, for we soon see that Alantyne manages (however unrealistically) to reach Charles within the day's grace permitted him by Arabas. An exemplary distinction has been intimated between the Saracen's evil and well-organized action and good Christian action of faith. For now, the distinction may seem minor, all the more so because Alantyne's response could be due to a simple, unsophisticated, piety--the kind of piety, perhaps, which might have been taken advantage of by a figure such as

Chaucer's Pardoner. The distinction, nevertheless, quickly becomes one of the major themes about which the plot develops, and the nature of just what constitutes an admirable action of faith is investigated in more and more depth.

The most significant instance of the distinction between actions of reason, even if misguided reason, and actions of faith is initiated five stanzas later, when the ramifications of Charles's dream, and the sword it produces, are considered.

> And than saide his lordes bothe grete & smalle:
> "Þe sothe is noghte to hyde:
> We wote wele þat goddis will it es
> Þat þou sall conquere of hethennesse
> Countres lange and wyde."
> (lines 140-144)

It is significant that at no time is Charles shown to have interpreted the dream; and regardless of the tangible evidence of the sword and what he is told about the dream by his lords, there is no sign that he comprehends what has been indicated. The prominence given to "Þe sothe is noghte to hyde" as the first statement of the lords' interpretation is probably telling. This, followed by what is essentially a restatement of the angel's words implies a remarkable innocence on Charles's part; for him the truth does appear to be hidden.

I choose "innocence" over "ignorance" because there is in the last two lines of the passage some intimation that the dream marks the very beginning of Charles's legendary wars against the infidel. So begins part of a depiction of

spiritual progress. It takes little critical insight to see that Charles does ultimately observe God's instructions (after some considerable strife with Turpin); but it was probably important for our poet that his reader pay attention to how the transformation is effected, and not just to the fact that it happens. It will be seen that certain small but memorable details trace how Charles changes from being susceptible to appeals of misguided reason, very much identifiable with the ways of the Saracens, to being a man of emotion, whose action is confidently guided by faith. The king's progress in this manner, I am sure, is meant to be exemplary and forms yet another part of this poem's persuasive method.

When Alantyne and Charles compare their dreams, it is stressed that the dreams "accordede bothe in one" (line 162). It is as soon as this simple but important observation is made, that we catch our first glimpse of Turpin. As he seizes upon the obvious portent of the coincidence, his first two words convey much of what we will find to characterize him throughout:

> "Hafe done! late semble þe folke of thyne!
> Myn hede I vndir take[65]

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[65] Herrtage emends the MS reading of "vndir take" to "vndir nome" to improve rhyme. I have restored the MS reading, in line with Mills's commentary on the line in his edition (Six Middle English Romances, p.193).

> "Vndirnome" could hardly be a present form of ME. "undernime(n)", and the latter verb does not, in any case, seem to have been used, like

Þat gode es greuede at þe saraȝenes boste:
We salle stroye vp alle theire hoste....
(lines 164–167)

"Hafe done!" shows at once Turpin's animated resolve (in contrast to Charles's reticence) and hints at the unbridled emotion we will see later. Before the conviction of this outburst is heeded, however, the scheming Ganelon intervenes with some ostensibly sound reasoning. (Echoes of the Chanson are strong; as if to reinforce the idea that in these scenes we witness the early stages of Carolingian legend, we are told that Ganelon's "firste tresone now by gynnes here", line 178).

Bot alle þat herde hym Genyenn,
. . .
The falseste traytoure was he one,
. . .
"Sir," he sayde, "þat ware a Synfull chaunce,
Whatt solde worthe of vs in Fraunce,
And þou in þe felde were slayne?
Thy selfe and we at home will byde
And latte Rowlande thedire Ryde,
Þat euer to Bekyre es bayne,
With Batelle & with brode banere;
Of his wyrchippe wolde I here,
Witt ȝe wele, full fayne."
For Rowlande this resone he wroghte
Euere more in his herte he thoghte
He solde neuer come agayne.
(lines 169–192)

The "resone" that Ganelon has "wroghte", and which Charles follows, is, on the face of things, eminently sensible, but this makes it all the more evil; it works against God's will, aims to have Roland slain, and, as we soon find out, results

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"undertake(n)" in the sense of 'pledge' or 'lay', that is necessary here.

in the massacre of the Christian forces. It is important to note that Charles does not follow Ganelon's recommendation immediately; only when his barons agrée with Ganelon does he decide to remain in Paris. This tendency to independence, which essentially involves a rejection of "resone" will become stronger as the story progresses.

Within seven stanzas of this episode we are given an account of the defeat of Roland's forces at Milan. The plot moves quickly in this part of the poem, the implications of events being evidently more important than the events themselves. As Roland and seven other knights are taken prisoner there is a passage, concerning the death of Richard of Normandy, which highlights those implications. In his death speech, Richard describes a hierarchy of personal allegiance. He first commends himself to king and court:

> "Rowlande, if þe tyde þat chaunce
> Þat þou come euer more in to fraunce,
> For þe lufe of mylde Marie,
> Comande me till oure gentill kynge,
> And to þe Qwene my lady ȝynge,
> And to all Cheualrye."
> (lines 295-300)

He then considers his family:

> "And if þou come in to Normandy,
> Grete wele my [faire] lady,
> And sir Richerd my sone;
> And dubbe hym Duke in my stede,
> And bydde hym venge his Fadir dede,
> . . .
> Appon þe cursede Saraȝens for to werre,
> Venge me with dynt of spere,
> For my life es nere done."
> (lines 301-312)

Finally, he descibes that quintessential motif of holy-war

ideology, a vision of martyrdom:

> "A, Rowlande! by-haulde nowe whatt I see,
> More Ioye ne myghte neuer bee,
> In 3outhe ne 3itt in elde.
> Loo! I see oure vawarde ledde to heuene
> With Angells songe & merye steuene,
> Reghte as þay faughte in þe felde!
> I see moo Angells, loo! with myn eghe,
> Then there are men with-In Cristyante,
> Þat any wapyn may welde.
> To heuen þay lede oure nobill knyghtis,
> And comforthes þam with mayne & myghtis,
> With mekill blysse & belde."
> (lines 313-324)

Note the transition to an exclamatory style to mark the relative importance of what is observed. The hierarchy is structured in the spirit of the earlier sword bestowal, which emphasizes direct individual action within the context of a holy war, rather than a patriotic kind of service, or service of a conventional overlord. For Richard, the king is not considered as an intermediary through whom he may serve God. When Richard dictates that his son must follow in his footsteps, he does not consider his son's role as a kind of service to the king; the sole interest is to wreak vengeance upon the infidel and essentially to continue the mission of his father. There is a strong sense that the individual Christian soul is the subject of this struggle, not the glory of a nation or its monarchy.

The account of Roland's captivity among the Saracens develops some of the themes and motifs we have already met, and introduces others. Enraged at the beheading of the dying Richard, Roland breaks free of his captors and slays sixty

Saracens before he is recaptured (lines 330-336). During this skirmish, four of Roland's fellow captives are slain (lines 340-341). Given this result, Roland's action could be seen as a form of madness; but it is a madness which is not criticized by the poet within the overall meaning of his poem. The implicit sanctioning of such behaviour will emerge with greater relevance when we consider the actions of Archbishop Turpin, but perhaps Roland's action here (and the way it is not criticized) is consistent with Turpin's actions--certainly it belongs again with an advocacy of individual action and an apparent rejection of reason.

As Roland and the other remaining captives are led to the Sultan, we are reminded once again of the characteristic orderliness of the Saracen camp. The captives are led in as part of a procession (lines 385-387), a feast appears to have been prepared (line 388), and the Sultan has already been informed of the circumstances of Roland's capture, which information he uses to persuade Roland that he has been lucky and that he should show his gratitude by converting (lines 392-396). Roland's response invokes the "golde" motif:

> "He will gyffe me golde and Fee,
> Castelles ryche with towris heghe,
> Þat lorde full wele he maye.
> Bot goddis forbode & þe holy Trynytee
> Þat euer fraunce hethen were for mee...."
> (lines 403-407)

Responding to this, the less emotional Sultan resorts to what might be described (somewhat loosely--though I think some emphasis on the rationality of his behaviour is right) as a

form of reasoning based upon experimental proof:

> Thane loughe þe sowdane withe eghne full smale,
> And saide; "ane hundrethe of 3oure goddis alle hale
> Have I garte byrne in a Firre with bale
> Sen Firste I wanne this wone.
> . . .
> Goo, feche one of theire goddis In
> And if he in this fire will byrne
> Alle o<u>þer</u> sett att noghte."
> (lines 415-423)

The Christian warriors pray for a miracle (lines 428-432) and (naturally) get one in the form of a fire with which the cross blinds the Saracens; again we see Saracen sophistication countered by a comparatively simple manifestation of Christian faith.

Aside from the thematic issues inherent in the episode, the skill with which the episode has been presented deserves some attention. That fetching detail that the Sultan laughed "...with eghne full smale" belongs to a set of such details which, along with the Sultan's dialogue, gauge the Saracens' demeanour as their 'experiment' proceeds and the rood fails to burn. Their merriment shifts from arrogance--

> "I darre laye my lyfe full ryghte
> Þat of hym selfe he hase no myghte
> Owte of this fire to wyn."
> (lines 439-441)

--to dismay--

> Þan wexe þe sowdan woo:
> "And 3if þe deuell," he sayde, "be hym <u>with</u> In
> He sall be brynt or eu<u>er</u> I blyne..."
> (lines 450-452)

--to fear--

> Of hert he was full throo.
> "Thies cursede wreches þat are here In

Hase wethede þaire goddis þat þai may not byrn,
I wote wele it es soo."
(lines 453-456)

--and finally to a near-comic stupefaction:

A fire þan fro þe crosse gane frusche,
. . .
That þay stode still als any stone,
Haundis nore fete myghte þay stirre none
Bot drery wexe in chere....
(lines 469-474)

A series of actions by the Christian knights, beginning with their prayer for a miracle, appear in counterpoint to those of the Saracens. After the rood (evidently a crucifix, pathetically refered to as "he" throughout, and perhaps further evidence of our author's fondness for Christocentric devotion) is thrown into the fire, the knights "made þaire prayere faste" (line 464). Once the rood lashes out, Roland explains what has resulted:

"This Meracle es schewede thorowe goddis grace
For alle þe saragenes in this place
May noþer see nore here."
(lines 478-480)

Enclosing all these 'contrapuntal' passages are what could be described as two 'bookend' strophes which, in their couplet rhymes especially, give to the scene an ironic sense of completion. The Saracens begin thus:

They keste þe Rode in to þe fire
And layde Brandis with mekill Ire,
Fayne wolde þay garre hym birne.
(lines 433-435)

And they end, in a sense, as they began:

Thay tuke þe grete lordes with Ire

And brynte þam in þat bale fire,
Those doughty garte they dye.
(lines 487-489)

This episode is obviously presented as no simple passing detail within the greater movement of the plot, even though, like the episode of Turpin reprimanding his squire, it serves no function in the basic plot of the siege story. As with the episode of the squire, this is a small (but detailed) exemplum of the power and worth of Christian faith. As with a biblical parable one is drawn by it into an engaging and thus memorable demonstration of a particular article of faith.

Once Roland and his comrades have returned safely to France, and their defeat has been mourned, blasphemously, by Turpin at St Denis, the news reaches Charles. Before we examine Charles's reaction (or lack thereof), I should like to return briefly to Turpin's blasphemous outburst. Apart from the sense it conveys of an implicit aggressive contract with God, it offers another example of the kind of admirable 'madness' which may have been displayed in Roland's unnecessary and costly struggle with his Saracen captors. It is through his rage at this point that Turpin embarks upon the campaign which will ultimately bring victory at Milan. His disposal of the mitre and staff--a willing rejection, perhaps, of reason, or at least of the orderliness of form and ceremony-- though verging on blasphemy, is very much a part of the zealous militancy this work champions.

The significance of this action is carried over into Turpin's subsequent behaviour toward Charles, who has just arrived "appon [a] Pilgremage" (line 565), a ceremonial way of serving God which to Turpin is perhaps like the mitre and staff, now objectionable in the wake of the Christian losses. Continuing to shun formality and to court irrationality, Turpin greets his king with nothing more than a cold stare:

> ... when the Bischoppe mett with þe kynge
> He wolde noghte say "gud mornynge,"
> Ne ones his browes blenke.
> (lines 568-570)

We should perceive in Turpin's actions throughout this scene a general intensification of his emotional commitment to the cause; the forthright determination of his earlier "Hafe done!" has clearly become a violent and (momentarily) speechless anger.

Turpin's silence is all the more irrational because it precludes a further attempt to stress to Charles that he is transgressing God's instructions, and it allows Ganelon once more to produce his dangerously 'sensible' reasoning:

> "... if þe Sowdane thus be dede
> Thay will haue anoþer newe,
> A more schrew þan was the toþer,
> Garcy þat is his awenn brothir,
> . . .
> These landes of hym I rede ȝe halde,
> . . .
> Or ells with In thies monethes three
> Als qwhitte of Fraunce sall ȝhe bee
> Als ȝhe it neuer ne knewe."
> (lines 590-600)

Turpin breaks in and prevents Charles from replying, and once more rejects form and ceremony (if not reason) by ordering

his king to fight. Implicit in the order is the view of Charles as an impressionable sovereign.

> "... at home, sir kynge, þou sall kepe nane
> Bot alle thy gud men with the tane,
> . . .
> Appon 3one cursede sara3enes to were...."
> (lines 607-610)

Not waiting for a response, Turpin takes matters into his own hands and, to use Herrtage's gloss, "proclaims a crusade". The army for this venture is to be made up of "alle þe Clergy" (line 613). Its soldiers "þat werede schauen crownn" (line 632) and its installation with the Pope's "pouste" (line 616) are reminiscent, respectively, of crusading orders such as the Hospitalers, and the Papal sanction crusaders traditionally received for their mission. The description of how the army is assembled is (appropriately enough) one of the most finely orchestrated and exciting in the poem. The description spans three stanzas and falls into three roughly corresponding narrative sections. Having announced his plans, Turpin begins their execution:

> The Bischoppe sendis ferre & nere
> To monke, Chanoun, Preste and frere,
> And badd þam graythe þaire gere,
> And keste þaire [care] clene þam froo,
> "Come helpe to feghte one goddis foo,
> All þat a swerde may bere."
> (lines 619-624)

The second stanza describes the assembly of the army. SM has been noted for the way in which it employs alliteration for scenes of heroic action; here we can see the technique at work, heightening our impression of the vigour and commitment

with which the army assembles.[67]

> The Clergy grauntes alle þer to,
> Als doghety men of dede solde do,
> Þat worthy were & wyghte.
> Be comen was wekes three
> Thare semblede a ful faire menȝhe,
> In baneres burneschid bryghte.
> A hundrethe thowsande were redy bownn
> Of Prestis þat werede schauen crownn,
> And fresche men for to fighte.
> Thay lightede appon a lawnde so clere
> Vndir þe Mownte Mowmartere,
> It was a ful faire syghte.
> (lines 625-636)

In the third stanza the alliteration fades away as we are reminded of the religious function of the army, that it has the approval and support of Rome (lines 638-639), and that it is an instrument of great pious and emotional conviction (lines 640-645; we should remember from the opening lines that Rome itself has been sacked by the Saracens, and so shares more than just a doctrinal interest in the hostilities). The last strophe, and especially Turpin's words in the last line, concludes the entire episode impressively:

> And thane sent he In to the kynge
> And badde hym forth his Barouns brynge,
> And saide, "my Prestis are here."
> (lines 646-648)

Turpin's four words are a powerful understatement, coming as they do after an extended absence of dialogue; the concise assertion is firm and authoritative, a verbal mirror of the

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[67] For references to the use of alliteration in SM, see Derek Pearsall, "The Alliterative Revival: Origins and Social Backgrounds", and Rosalind Field, "The Anglo-Norman Background to Alliterative Romance", both in Middle English Alliterative Poetry and its Literary Background, edited by David Lawton (Cambridge, 1982), pp.36 and 62 respectively.

single-minded vigour with which his forces have been marshalled. The last line also has something of the 'bookend' quality we have noted before; it imparts a sense of completion in response to the opening strophe (lines 619-621 quoted above) which describes Turpin's initial orders.

Impressive as all this may be, Charles remains susceptible to Ganelon's reasoning:

> Bot 3itt this false Genyoun
> Conselde þe kynge ay with treson
> þat hym selfe solde duelle þer still...
> . . .
> And with his concelle and his fare
> Slyke concell he gaffe þam þare
> The kynge grauntis þer till.
> (lines 649-660)

Stress given to "concell(e)" through repetition is not, I think, accidental, but offered as a kind of mockery, intended to dispose the reader favourably toward Turpin's subsequent response.

That response is a characteristically intense tirade which spans more than three stanzas (lines 667-708), within which Turpin resorts to excommunicating Charles in an attempt to change the king's mind. Each strophe within the tirade exists as a discrete syntactical unit; and all the strophes taken together could be said to be a series of variations on one theme, namely that Charles's resistance is, in Turpin's view, heretical (we may recall that Charles has been given specific instructions from God; he has so far in effect gone against God's word). This format is not unlike that of a sermon in which one precept is reiterated in different

guises, symbolic, anecdotal, and allegorical, in the hope of being understood by all listeners. Here obviously is an element of persuasion consistent with other such elements we have identified. The entire tirade does not warrant quotation, but a number of strophes are worthy of note for their eloquence, earnestness, and the way their tail-lines terminate the strophe on a suitably portentous note:

"I sall hym curse in myddis his face.
What! sall he nowe with sory grace
Be-come ane Eretyke?"
(lines 670-672)

He saide: "allas, sir Charllyone,
That þou thus sone be-comes a crayon,
Me thynke thi body full dym."
(lines 679-681)

"Nowe arte þou werré þan any Saragene,
Goddes awenn wedirwyne,
Of sorowe now may þou synge!"
(lines 694-696)

"Men will deme aftir thi daye
how falsely þou forsuke thi laye,
And calle the kynge of skorne."
(lines 706-708)

The result of Turpin's cursing is to incite just the kind of anger in Charles that we have already seen in Roland and Turpin, but from which Charles has so far been sheltered through "resone" and "concell":

Bot then kyng Charls with owtten wene
At the byshoppe was so tene
A fawchone hase he drawen....
(lines 709-711)

The lively display is soon over, and Charles holds his ground; nevertheless this unprecedented display of emotion (let alone his physical action) might justifiably be

considered the beginning of Charles's wilful part in that campaign which is essentially God's campaign.

It is significant that, immediately after this scene, and immediately before the scene in which Charles, besieged at Paris by Turpin's army, finally agrees to go to Milan, Turpin restates much more explicitly than has been done before the great fact of his cause--that success in Milan is possible only if Charles obeys his dream:

> Goddes byddynge hast þou broken,
> Thurghe þᵉ traytour speche spoken
> Alle Cristendom walde þou schende.
> When Criste sent the a suerde vn till
> Thou myghte wele wiete it was his will
> that thi selfe solde thedir wende....
> (lines 745-750)

This marks the beginning of the climax of the pre-siege section of Melayne; it also marks the turning point not only of Charles's actions but also his ideas. Perhaps it is because Turpin's statement is so strong and clear, and not just because he has been compromised militarily, that Charles begins to show some comprehension. When he finally agrees to go, he becomes apologetic. In his declared subordination to Turpin, he appears to recognize something of his own culpability. The passage is notable for its solemn delicacy:

> The kynge says: "haly fader free,
> This gilte I praye the forgyffe me
> And I will wirke 3our will.
> And with 3our clergye tournes agayne,
> Riste and Ryott 3ow by þᵉ water of sayne,
> Ay whills I come 3ow till."
> (lines 793-798)

The account of the second Christian campaign at Milan

begins with a five-stanza description of the crowning of Garcy as Sultan. This consists largely of a conventional feast/procession descriptio--one of only a few conventional passages in the Sege which I would describe as representing a fully-fledged formal topos. As one could expect of accounts of Saracens in this poem, rational order and worldly splendour are the focus. Knights, maidens, falcons, steeds, greyhounds, and hounds (a very round and regular sixty of each of these) are ushered forth amid quantities of "golde" and precious jewels (lines 829-864). Maldwyn Mills notes a shift of tone with this passage: "[it is] more courtly in tone than any of the scenes at the court of Charlemagne".[68] Normally we would consider courtliness a positive spiritual virtue in a romance, but here it is quite obviously 'wordly courtliness' and a sign of vice. The passage goes on to "point the moral inferiority of the heathen"[69] within their otherwise splendid demesne:

When he his powere semblede hade,
A ryalle feste þe Sowdan made
Of worthy men in wede.
Of alle þe damesels bryghte & schene
þe Sowdane hade hym selfe I wene
þaire althere Maydynhede;
By þam ilkone he laye a nyghte,
And sy͡then Mariede hir vn-to a knyghte,
þay leffed one haythen lede.
So mekill luste of lechery
Was a-mange þat cheualry
þat þay [myg]hte noghte wele spede.
(lines 865-876)

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[68] Mills, Six Middle English Romances, p.195.

[69] Mills, Six Middle English Romances, p.195.

It is telling that, even in this description of "luste of lechery", Saracen orderliness is evident in the systematic nature of the deflowerings and their complementary marriages.

Within twenty lines of this passage, we witness the miracle of the wine and host being sent down from heaven during Turpin's hilltop mass outside Milan. There is in the suddenness of the change of scene an element of polemic symmetry. We have, after all, adjacent descriptions of two quite different forms of feast; one is literal and worldly, the other symbolic and spiritual. The mass, it could be argued, is no less orderly than the Saracen feast. It should be remembered, however, that this order is followed solely in the context of Christian worship; it is (as indeed was Turpin's excommunication of Charles) a representation of complete faith. As the scene progresses, moreover, it becomes apparent that such order remains subordinate to a zealous and militant expression of faith. Turpin ends the mass with a gesture highly reminiscent of his earlier disposal of mitre and staff:

> The bischoppe þan keste of his abytte
> And aftir armours he asked tytte....
> (lines 913-914)

The next line rounds out the description with a characteristic touch:

> For egernesse he loughe.
> (line 915)

Here is an supreme passionate confidence, but a confidence driven by what would normally be considered a tinge of

madness; perhaps we can see in this something of Byrhtnoð's "ofermod".[70] We have not seen Turpin laugh before, and can only assume that the intensity of his zeal is on the rise. An arming descriptio follows (lines 918-924). This, like the Saracen feast, is treated as a substantial formal topos. It cannot be said, however, that its invocation in this context greatly represents orderliness; rather it is an instrument of emotional crescendo employed in the same way as it is in any number of romances--in the same way, for instance, as is Roland's arming in the ME Song of Roland. On the other hand, because extended formal passages are rare in this poem, I am inclined to believe that the scene is employed to validate further the special alliance of the unusual (Turpin's 'madness') with the usual (his preparation for battle within the normal scope of the topos). Turpin himself goes on to indicate as much when he addresses the army; his fighting clerics (the 'unusual' portion of the army) are instructed to fight vigorously (line 931) so that "þe [le]wede men" (that is, the secular portion of the army) "may se with syghte, /And gud Ensample haue" (lines 932-933).

At the end of this speech Turpin demands that no Saracen

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[70] Cf. also the description of Byrhtnoð in battle:

> Se eorl wæs þe bliþra,
> hloh þa, modi man, sæde Metode þanc
> ðæs dægweorces þe him Drihten forgeaf.

[Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, edd., "The Battle of Maldon," in A Guide to Old English, fourth edition, revised (Oxford, 1986), lines 146-148.]

be spared "For golde in erthe" (line 936). "Golde" may be used here within the conventional sense of the expression in which it appears; it may, however, have some thematic connection with other admonishing allusions to gold elsewhere, most specifically with the small exemplum of the corpse-robbing squire, which follows 37 lines later. We should note now, on reflection, that the description of the dead Saracen in that passage has a formal quality as a catalogue of armour and jewelry. This is the last such passage in the existing fragment, suggesting, along with its relative proximity to the feast and arming passages, its role in the polemic relation already seen between the other two passages. Again, a contrast is drawn between orderly Saracen worldliness and the deeds of militant Christians abandoned completely to their faith. One is inclined to see in this distinction as it is presented throughout the poem a familiarity with the anti-intellectual quality of much late medieval piety. Our author would probably have sympathized with Thomas a Kempis (as translated into Middle English): "cesse from ouer gret desire of kunnyng, for þerin shal be founden gret distraccion & deceite".[71]

As the great battle for Milan begins, the Saracen Darnadowse challenges Charles to single combat (lines 997-1008). Charles accepts in an unprecedented move; he refuses

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[71] John K. Ingram, ed., The Earliest English Translation of The First Three Books of the 'De Imitatione Christi', EETS, Extra Series, No. 63 (London, 1893), p.3.

the request of another knight (Roland) to fight on his behalf (lines 1013–1014). A humble but eloquent response to Roland shows that Charles has come more fully to appreciate his responsibilities to his faith:

> "Sen ilke a man feghtis for his saule
> I sall for myn do mede."
> (lines 1016–1017)

During the fight Darnadowse attempts to convert the king (lines 1036–1041). Before Charles can respond, Turpin interrupts (lines 1043–1044), much as he had done when Ganelon last attempted to sway the king's opinion. Mills says of this passage that, "thanks to Turpin's intervention, Darnadowse is unable to get very far in his attempt to convert Charles".[72] Certainly, Turpin thinks Charles may need such support, but it is clear from Charles's response that he no longer does:

> [Charls] saide: "sir Bischoppe, nay,
> [Neuer sall I] forsake my lay:"
> And to-gedir gan þay goo.
> (lines 1057–1059)

Charles's spiritual awakening appears to be complete, and his favour in the eyes of God confirmed. As if to confirm this, we are told that, upon slaying Darnadowse, Charles took the Saracen's sword with which "He conquered many a lande" (line 1089).

In the description of the general battle which ensues (lines 1093–1104), one feature is especially worthy of note.

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[72] Mills, Six Middle English Romances, p.195.

It is the frequent use of the first person plural, thus:

> We may thanke gode þat is in heuen
> Þat lent vs myghte & mayne.
> (lines 1100–1104)

There are many other examples, mainly in possessive references to "our men", "our knights", "our Christians" and so forth. To my knowledge the feature does not exist in such density in other ME romances (except perhaps, interestingly enough, in the Capystranus[73]). Both H.M. Smyser and Maldwyn Mills have been at pains to account for the feature. Smyser points out that this may simply imply the existence of a French source, its use being fairly common in the chansons de geste;[74] but this still does not account for its relative density in SM when compared with other Charlemagne romances, such as the Otuel and Firumbras legends, which have known chanson de geste sources. Mills considers this a deliberate addition:

> in the Middle English Song of Roland we find a few scattered examples ("oure kinge" (77), "our men" (248), "oure knyght" (677)), but these could well have been the result of carelessness [in a translation from the French]. In Melayne, the density of examples is so great that they seem bound to be deliberate: an attempt to naturalize a foreign mode of poetry so that its new audience might be totally involved in it.[75]

To elaborate perhaps on what Mills suggests by "involved", I

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[73] The use of such possessive references is quite frequent in the climactic scenes of this fervent piece: see Gray, Capystranus, lines 23, 61, 74, 76, and 79.

[74] Smyser, Manual, p.93.

[75] Mills, Six Middle English Romances, p.xii.

think, given the persuasive elements we have noted so far (such as the possible influences of crusade propaganda, the exemplary digressions, the progressive characterization of Charles, and Turpin's repetitive sermon-like speeches), that what we have here is yet another persuasive technique, not necessarily just something to encourage the reader's attention to the story; this is surely also the role of similar usage in the Capystranus. The reader is repeatedly invited to feel at one with the cause espoused and the action which supports the cause.

It is when the first engagement with the Saracens is over that Turpin makes his vow to fast and not to sleep until Milan is taken. This is the time at which he begins in earnest to enact, with an almost visionary fanaticism, elements of the imitatio Christi. I have suggested earlier that Turpin was not alone in his spiritual progress--and, of course, we have already seen Charles as another example of this (although he does not progress on such a high theological plane). In a description of the scene on the morning of the second battle--one of the most evocative passages in the Sege--some of the army also appear to assume a heightened state of spiritual grace. Theirs is achieved through what may be meant to be seen as a kind of unwitting sacramental service:

> Oure folke hade done so doughtily
> That many of þam weren ful wery,
> So hade þay foghten þan.
> Bot one þe morne þe Cristen stode

A thowsande ouer theire fete in theire blode
Of theire awenn wondes wane.
Othere refreschynge noghte many hade
Bot blody water of a slade,
Þat thrughe þe Oste ran.
(lines 1201-1209)

Descriptions of battlefields covered in blood are a common enough motif in medieval romances, but a scene in which warriors drink that blood is (again, like so many other features of this poem) remarkable. I will risk over-interpretation; perhaps because "Oure folke" drink of their own blood, and that the blood is mixed with water, the scene may be meant to reflect the imagery of the crucifixion and eucharist (especially since we have been reminded of such images through Turpin's miraculous mass). In a sense, the army may be engaged to some extent in an imitatio Christi of its own. True to crusade ideology, we may see here warfare depicted as a form of Christian sacrifice and worship--as, indeed, a transformation of the worldly institutions of warfare into a means of serving and reflecting the presence of Christ.

The subsequent battle (in which we are reminded that "Oure Cristen men" "... tuke none hede of gudes nore golde", lines 1262-1267), results in the Saracens being forced back behind the walls of Milan. In the hiatus before the Christians ready their siege engines for what looks to be the final and successful assault on the city, a number of events take place which draw together several themes we have traced throughout the story.

Unfortunately, there is a leaf missing in the MS near this point (between lines 1365 and 1366), but it appears that in the missing text Charles decides to send a knight to France for reinforcements. Charles has great trouble getting anyone to go, on the grounds that their action would constitute a cowardly flight from the struggle. As the fragment resumes, it is evident that at least one knight has already rejected Charles's request (lines 1366-1388). Subsequently, two others, Sir Baldwin, and Sir Ingelere also reject the request (lines 1370-1392). It is then proposed that Berard, a severely wounded knight, should go; the passage, replete with pathos, then becomes (another) small exemplum, which is explicated by Turpin:

> The Duke Berarde was wondede sare,
> Thrugh þe schelde into þe Body bare
> He was borne with a brande.
> Of this message þay gun hym frayne,
> bot he hade no worde to speke agayne,
> Bot grymly stude lukande.
> Than Turpyn gan to Charls say:
> "Here arte þou seruede, bi my fay,
> Þou fayles of þat þou fande.
> The Duke es woundede so wonder sare
> It ware grete syn to greue hym mare;
> Gude sir, þou late hym stande."
> (lines 1393-1404)

Because of his willingness to serve despite his severe wounds, Berard is something of a mirror of Turpin. Turpin will, in fact, soon reach a similar speechless debilitation (see line 1582); the praise he gives for Berard is praise he himself will deserve. More immediately, both the nomination of Berard and his apparent willingness to go, given his

excessive debilitation surely constitute an absurdity not far dissociated from other instances of irrational, but apparently acceptable behaviour seen elsewhere in Melayne. Irrational behaviour is apparently advocated even further when yet another man, Barnard, is asked to go. Barnard is offered "grete gyftis" as an incentive (line 1407); predictably, he refuses worldly prizes ("giffe 3our giftis where 3e will", line 1412), and asks simply to be knighted. Once knighted, he rides off, but (ostensibly) in the wrong direction, his action, from an objective point of view, every bit as irrational as any that Turpin has yet performed:

> He rydis euen to þe 3atis of Melayne
> And there with sara3enes was he slayne,
> He dide ful wele þat day.
> (lines 1423-1425)

Barnard's actions, and the admiration with which they are described, are close to those of the suicidal crusader described by Fulcher of Chartres. Normal codes of conduct have again been abandoned; irrational zeal, the pious kind of madness that was often celebrated among true crusaders, yet again carries the day in Melayne.

One final irrational act remains in the surviving portion of our text; this is Turpin's charge against his own men, the French reinforcements who have just arrived (lines 1441-1482). Clearly the charge is made in the same spirit as Barnard's (and, earlier, the captive Roland's). The scene is reminiscent of that in the Chanson where the blinded Oliver strikes at Roland, who is coming to his aid (Chanson, lines

1991-2007). There, however, the effect of the scene, though surely inviting admiration for Oliver's determination, is primarily pathetic, the account of a great warrior still alive but rendered ineffectual. The scene in Melayne appears to champion the abandonment of reason to the impulses of faith, to "the gostly fire of... gele", to borrow Nicholas Love's words.[76] Penelope Doob has pointed out briefly that lack of censure for such imprudent forays may be a tradition in Middle English romances:

> [a] form of possession may be found in berserks and perhaps in the many English romance heroes who fight madly in battle.... The berserks' madness often has bad moral connotations.... But there seems to be no such condemnation of English heroes who fight "wodely", even in so extreme and unfortunate a case as Gawain in the alliterative Morte Arthure....[77]

The earlier scene, in which Roland's foray against his captors costs the lives of four of his companions, is similar to such episodes; but, in charging at his own men Turpin's action is exceptional.[78] Turpin may well have been given such

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[76] Nicholas Love, The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ, edited by Lawrence F. Powell (Oxford, 1908), p.154.

[77] Penelope Doob, Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature (London,1974), p.18, n.33.

[78] The closest analogue I know of to such an episode (where the madman is inclined to be viewed sympathetically) is the passage in Froissart which describes a mad outburst by Charles VI amongst his retinue (Froissart, Chronicles, pp.395-396).

> He spurred his horse forward, then drew his sword and wheeled round on to his pages, no longer recognizing them or anyone else. He thought he was

extreme behaviour precisely because anything less would be construed as operating within the usual possibilities of any romance. In addition, the obvious parallel which can be drawn between Turpin and the notorious Tafurs of the crusades--warriors feared by fellow Christians and yet accepted and employed for the qualities which instilled such fear--goes some way toward confirming that the promotion of such behaviour in Melayne could have its source in matters outside the usual province of romance and chanson de geste.

Robert Thornton, the compiler of the manuscript in which Melayne is preserved, clearly had good literary taste; the two manuscripts which we know to have been compiled by him contain The Alliterative Morte Arthure, The Parlement of the Thre Ages, selections from Lydgate and Rolle, The Cursor Mundi, and other notable works. If we are to trust Thornton as a kind of medieval critic, then, it is likely that he valued Melayne and that he recognized its militant Christian tenor; as Gisela Guddat-Figge points out, the MS in which it appears is "religious-didactic throughout [and its] romances can be easily adapted to that general pattern since they are

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in a battle surrounded by the enemy and, raising his sword to bring it down on anyone who was in the way, he shouted: "Attack! Attack the traitors!".... I did not hear that any were killed in that affair, but he struck down quite a number, for none defended himself.

of a militant Christian type".[79] She adds that

> whereas the Lincoln MS... seems to have been written for the use of the Thornton family, the present MS was probably compiled on the order of a patron for some well-to-do family. Although of very modest appearance, it is certainly written more carefully; it is moreover, more homogenous in its contents.[80]

If Melayne is anything to go by, that patron was probably a knight. Another implication of the compilation, however, is that Melayne was not distinguished from the other romances, not as if it was viewed as remarkably different from the others. The same might be said of the poem's inclusion beside the three other Charlemagne texts listed in The Complaynt of Scotland. It is important, therefore, not to overstress the effective value to the reader of this poem's odd features. Even so, this is not to underrate the importance of understanding the literary/ historical influences which have shaped the author's intentions, which have in turn shaped Melayne itself, and which do at least notionally distinguish the poem from the others.

There must have been a hint of Turpin's eccentricity about our author, who had a zealous, and (to judge from his poem's frequent rejection of "resone") anti-intellectual,

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[79] Guddat-Figge, p.161. Beside The Romance of Duke Rowlande and of Sir Ottuell of Spayne, the other romances in the MS are (to use Thornton's titles) The Segge of Ierusalem off Tytus and Vaspasyane and The Romance of Kyng Richerd þe Conqeroure.

[80] Guddat-Figge, p.161.

approach to his faith. He therefore employed the kinds of literary models (stories of a legendary crusader), motifs (accounts of miracles and zealots), and techniques (close identification with his audience, exemplary digressions, polemic parallels, and the tracing of a spiritual enrichment of character) which appealed to him. Of course, because of such features, there is something of Turpin's eccentricity, something of his admirable madness, about the poem at large. Eccentric as some elements in Melayne may be, and indeed because of this eccentricity, the poem may have been written to present a persuasive model for a special code of conduct; it might well be said that there is a method in the madness.

CHAPTER 4

"of thy glitterand gyde have I na gle": The Taill of Rauf Coilȝear[1]

"Lo! lorde," quoþ þe leude, and þe lace hondeled,
"Þis is þe bende of þis blame I bere in my nek,
Þis is þe laþe and þe losse þat I laȝt haue,
Of couardise and couetyse þat I haf caȝt þare;
Þis is þe token of vntrawþe þat I am tan inne...."
. . .
Þe kyng comfortez þe knyȝt, and alle þe court als
Laȝen loude þerat....[2]

The laughter which attends Gawain's admission of

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[1] Composed perhaps late in the fifteenth century, this Middle Scots poem has come down to us by way of an edition printed by Robert Lekpreuik at St Andrews in 1572. That volume is now in the National Library of Scotland; a facsimile has been produced, with an introduction by W. Beattie [The Taill of Rauf Coilȝear, printed by Robert Lekpreuik at St Andrews in 1572 (Edinburgh, 1966); all references to the Lekpreuik text are to this facsimile]. The poem employs the thirteen-line 'Gawain-school' alliterative stanza with 'wheel', rhyming **abababab**^{c4} **ddd**^{c2}.

The date of composition is suggested by a reference to the poem in a now-lost portion of the Asloan MS, which was compiled between 1513 and 1530; see W.A. Craigie, ed., The Asloan Manuscript, Scottish Text Society, New Series, Nos. 14 and 16, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1923-1924), I, xv. Between 1500 and 1501, moreover, both Dunbar and Douglas mention the hero, Rauf; see William Dunbar, "To the King", in The Poems of William Dunbar, edited by James Kinsley (Oxford, 1979), p.124, line 33; and Gavin Douglas, "The Palice of Honovr", in The Poetical Works of Gavin Douglas, edited by John Small, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1874), I, 65, lines 3-4.

Other indications of date of composition might be inferred from possible historical allusions; see H.M. Smyser, "The Taill of Rauf Coilyear and its Sources", Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, 14 (1932), 135-136. All references to Smyser, HSNPL 14, are to this article.

[2] J.R.R Tolkien and E.V. Gordon, edd., Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, second edition, revised by Norman Davis (Oxford, 1967), lines 2505-2514.

failure on his bonded venture might be considered a nervous laughter. One could argue that the Court's mirth is a diplomatic response to an awkward and irregular situation, that it is a response which may well attempt to conceal a public recognition that Gawain's contrition is justified. This is not to say that some genuine humour in Gawain's story has not prompted some part of the laughter--even the most grim scenes in the poem, those of the (real or threatened) beheadings, seem at times to have been told with a wry smile--but it is obvious that a sinister element must be seen to constitute the greater part.

The humour of Rauf Coilȝear and the laughter it generates is, of course, vastly more direct; no one could doubt that from beginning to end this is a deliberately humorous poem. I have begun to draw a comparison with Gawain and the Green Knight, however, because I feel that something similar to the sinister element of the laughter in that poem (and, as we shall see, to a lesser extent with other sinister elements of the Gawain story) must be perceived in any sensitive response to Rauf. And it is this double-edged quality of the humour which best accounts for the sophistication for which "this excellent poem"[3] has many times been praised, but for which almost no careful explication has been advanced.

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[3] Renwick and Orton, The Beginnings of English Literature, p.374.

The best testimony to the poem's sophistication may lie in some commentators' apparently evasive attempts to account for their unwillingness to interpret the poem at length. Elizabeth Walsh offers the non-comittal (though, as we shall see, not inaccurate) observation that RC is the type of story at the root of which "is the ironic perception of the incongruities and inconsistencies of life in this world".[4] When attempting to assess the effect of the poem's obvious affinity with true chansons de geste, H.M. Smyser virtually dismisses further investigation.

> As far as I can see, the makar may actually have been a warm admirer of the saga of Charlemagne, even as it appears in Otinel and Fierabras. But it is not a point to dwell upon. In subjective matters of this sort discretion is the better part of criticism....[5]

If we were in a mischievous mood (in keeping with the spirit of the poem), we could say that Sir William Craigie has exiled hope of interpretation to just the kind of remote and unwelcoming Caledonian climate in which Charlemagne finds himself at the beginning of our story:

> ...both the language and the humour are so thoroughly Scottish that it is doubtful whether any but Scots to whom their native dialect is perfectly familiar can fully understand the one and appreciate the other.[6]

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[4] Elizabeth Walsh, "The King in Disguise", Folklore, 86 (1975), 8.

[5] Smyser, HSNPL 14, 150.

[6] Sir William Craigie, "The Scottish Alliterative Poems", Proceedings of the British Academy, 28 (1942), 228.

There is in these comments an implicit testimonial to the sophistication of Rauf; and, at the risk of appearing naive, indiscreet, and insensitive to national prerogatives, it is possible to extricate sensibly those techniques and themes which inform the sophistication.

The only thorough existing commentary on the poem concerns sources and analogues. From this, one encounters further (and more concrete) intimations of a complex literary design. H.M. Smyser (who has himself contributed much to our knowledge of the poem's background) summarizes the points upon which there is basic agreement:

> The poem offers us a version of the widespread folktale known as the "King in disguise," to which is added a sequel, Rauf's winning of his spurs. Numerous details, especially in the description of Rauf's household and his entertainment of his royal guest, show a close relationship with an English lay of somewhat earlier date, John the Reeve, in which John, after entertaining Edward Longshanks, is summoned to court and knighted. The Scottish poet seems to have had at hand also a second version of the "King in disguise," for which warrant is to be found on the Continent: a collier entertains his sovereign, who induces him to bring a load of coals to court on guarantee of a good market; in this fashion he is rewarded for his hospitality. The two versions (John the Reeve's and the Continental) are skilfully combined.... The sources of the sequel are more formally literary. In Rauf's combat with Magog, the poet has constructed, in the broadly comic vein of his whole piece, a burlesque of the stereotyped combat of the chanson de geste. Such details in this scene as are not wholly commonplace point to the "titular" combats of Otinel and Fierabras, as might be expected from the popularity of these romances in Great Britain.[7]

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[7] Smyser, Manual, p.97.

It is possible, as is possible with the ME Song of Roland, that this is something of a researched compilation, an intelligent literary fabrication.[8] At the present stage of our enquiry it is difficult to achieve an adequate sense of the Scots poet's motives in the possible compilation, but it is worth noting that the closing shift to chanson de geste material is not the only instance in the poem of the adoption of such material; and that even in that closing material, moreover, a spirit of burlesque is not (stylistically) always present. It is worth keeping in mind J.A. Burrow's observations of the nature of the burlesque in La Prise de Nueville. There he finds "lines [which] could come from a true chanson de geste" and suggests that "most of the jokes

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[8] It is not possible to prove conclusively that a compilation has in fact taken place; as Smyser indicates, there are no known direct sources. Smyser does, however, describe elswhere (HSNPL 14, p.145) a few pieces of slight internal evidence which suggest "the composite nature of [the] poem" in its debt to John the Reeve:

> (1) Rauf sets out with a load of charcoal which he purposes to sell at court, but when he arrives he leaves his coals at the palace gate and goes in to be knighted (like John the Reeve).
>
> (2) Rauf sets out on his journey in voluntary fulfilment of a promise made to his guest, but when he gets half-way to the palace he meets a messenger (Roland), who has been sent out, like the messenger in John the Reeve, to hale him before his sovereign.
>
> (3) Rauf sets out on his journey carrying a whip with which to belabour his pack-horse, but when he breaks into an angry colloquy with Roland we suddenly learn that, like John the Reeve, he is bearing rusty arms (cf. lines 385 and 517f.).

in La Prise de Nueville, at the linguistic level, are directed not at the chanson de geste but at the Flemings and their 'lourd patois'".[9] A distinction emerges between literary and social burlesque; I intend to point out that a similar distinction ought to be seen in Rauf Coilȝear.

For newcomers to the poem there is nothing in the opening two stanzas to suggest that what is to follow is anything other than a serious tale of serious deeds. We find conventional 'heroic' collocations such as "proudest in pane",[10] "proudest... and pure" (line 20), and "stiflie and sture" (line 16), as well as mention of "Empreouris and Erlis... Prelatis and Princis... Dukis and Duchperis... Barrounis and Bacheleiris" (lines 3-11) who are all caught riding amid a "ferlyfull flan" (line 2) which had fallen "feirslie fram the Firmament" (line 18) over the "rude mure" (line 14) and among "myrk Montanis" (line 22). There is nothing less to expect than a tale of requisite heroic deeds in the face of imminent peril. The description could easily

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[9] J.A. Burrow, "Chaucer's Sir Thopas and La prise de Nueville", The Yearbook of English Studies, 14 (1984), 50.

[10] Sidney J. Herrtage, ed., The Taill of Rauf Coilȝear, in 'The Taill of Rauf Coilyear'... with the Fragments of 'Rouland and Vernagu' and 'Otuel', EETS, Extra Series No. 39 (London, 1882), line 5. All references to Rauf Coilȝear (otherwise referred to as Rauf or RC) are to this edition. I have incorporated and acknowledge some emendations suggested by Felicity Riddy in her normalized edition of RC in Longer Scottish Poems, edited by Felicity Riddy and others, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1987 for 1983, 1987), I, 94-133, and commentary, 345-355. I have also consulted the Lekpreuik facsimile in instances where Herrtage's readings are questionable.

replace similar versions of the alliterative storm topos such as those found in the ME Song of Roland, or indeed in any romance where such descriptions occur. So too could the following passages taken from elsewhere in the poem (for further examples, see lines 813-826 and 858-866 in the closing 'chanson de geste' section):

> Schir Rolland and Oliuer come rydand the way,
> With thame ane thousand, and ma, of fensabill men
> War wanderand all the nicht ouir, & mony ma than thay
> On ilk airt outwart war ordanit sic ten,
> Gif thay micht heir of the King, or happin quhair he lay;
> To Jesus Christ thay pray that grace thame to len.
> Als sone as Schir Rolland saw it was the King,
> He kneillit doun in the place,
> Thankand God ane greit space,
> Thair was ane meting of grace
> At that gaddering.
> (lines 328-338)

> Quhen thay Princis appeirit into Paris,
> Ilk Rew Ryallie with riches thame arrayis.
> Thair was Digne seruice done at Sanct Dyonys,
> With mony proud Prelat, as the buik sayis.
> Syne to Supper thay went, within the Palys;
> Befoir that mirthfull man menstrallis playis;
> Mony wicht wyfis sone, worthie and wise,
> Was sene at that semblay ane and twentie dayis,
> With all-kin principall plentie for his plesance.
> Thay callit it the best 3ule than,
> And maist worthie began,
> Sen euer King Charlis was man,
> Or euer was in France.
> (lines 352-364)

I have quoted at some length because I feel it cannot be stressed enough that the 'heroic seriousness' is not just confined to scattered shifts of register, to the isolated words and phrases of an imitative style, but is also found in extended passages which harbour the seriousness in context. There are also a couple of formal descriptions, one of

Roland's arms and armour (lines 455-479), and another of the royal dining hall (lines 664-687) which seem perfectly serious in content and context--and which (as we shall see) are to our hero, and therefore in some part to the audience, no laughing matter; they become for Rauf sinister reminders that in his dealings with the Court his very life is a stake. As with some of Shakespeare's comedies, there are undercurrents of suspicion, brutality, and imminent cruelty throughout; and, as with GGK, there is an abiding insecurity about the resilience of courtly ideals in an unpredictable world. This can at times be a very unfunny funny story.

It would be taking things too seriously, however, to argue that such passages have no comic value whatsoever; against the overall comic plan of the poem they are to a degree subverted by their relatively hyperbolic style. Nevertheless, it is important that at the very least we count such features as indications of a poem capable of marked shifts in mood and meaning--this is, after all, as important to the full appreciation and understanding of the humour as any other aspect of the poem.

Given that Rauf, a 'humble' collier, is the necessary agent of all this (so far only alleged) literary sophistication, it is best to begin a consideration of the poem with an examination of Rauf's character and his condition. Neither are as simple as one might be led to believe. Elizabeth Walsh's description of Rauf is helpful in light of her

assertion that RC is one of a number of stories in which the heroes

> represent a lower class on the upward bound.... All are seemingly humble subjects, somewhat suspicious of the aristocracy. All are masters in their own domains....[11]

That RC represents a kind of struggle between classes is a commonplace, but Walsh's observation that Rauf comes from a class "on the upward bound" deserves closer condideration. A fact easily overlooked is that Rauf is not a pauper; as Rauf himself says, he lives in "[his] awin house, maist in this land" (line 68): note what could be called a kind of competitive nouveau-riche pride implicit in the qualifications "awin" and "maist". From subsequent descriptions of the house and its accoutrements, we can see that the pride is justified: there is a stable, to which Rauf has "Twa cant knaifis of his awin" lead the horses (lines 114-116--note again the inordinate emphasis given, in "awin", to personal ownership). As Charles wryly points out, the meal which Rauf provides him is of a quality of which "The King him self hes bene fane,/ Sum tyme..." (lines 207-208). And the king finds rest for the night in some considerable luxury:

> To ane preuie Chalmer beliue thay him led,
> Quhair ane burely bed was wrocht in that wane;

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[11] Walsh, Folklore, p.16.

Closit with Courtingis, and cumlie cled,
Of the worthiest wyne wantit thay nane.
(lines 265-268)[12]

That Rauf is fully aware and proud of his status is (besides the telling use of "awin") most evident in the scene in which he first encounters Roland. This is a comedy of errors, where Roland is never quite sure that Rauf is in fact the man Charles has sent him to escort, and where Rauf resolutely refuses to be distracted from his goal of reaching court by noon, even though the goal assigned to both Rauf and Roland is the same. This is the primary appeal of the scene; but beneath the immediate comic patina lies a shrewd observation on the nature of class prejudice, and with it an element of additional humour. As the two meet, the line which describes Rauf's actions seems designed deliberately to highlight the social gulf which exists between them by virtue of their different occupations.

Courtesly to the Knicht kneillit the Coilgear....
(line 423)

We might note that "Rauf" and "Roland" could have been chosen

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[12] Though it is the purpose of the present discussion to point out Rauf's justification for a certain class-pride, a subtle humorous aspect of Rauf's wealth, noted by Smyser (HSNPL 14, p.140, n.2), should not be overlooked:

> A modern parallel... can easily be constructed. During the labour troubles of the [First] World War, the plumber became the proverbial butt of jests concerning lower-class affluence. In broader satire... one could joke about the wealthy ditch-digger, making capital of the fact that, during normal times, the ditch-digger (like the collier) is a symbol of humility.

as alliterative complements. Instead we have the 'generic' "Knicht" and "Coil3ear". Without provocation, Roland then speaks dismissively to Rauf:

> And Schir Rolland him self salust him agane,
> Syne bad him leif his courtasie, and boun him to ga;
> He said, "withoutin letting,
> Thow mon to Paris to the King;
> Speid the fast in ane ling,
> Sen I find na ma.'
> (lines 424-429)

From these lines alone it may not be possible for us securely to interpret Roland's dismissiveness as based upon a disdain for dealing with men of a lower class. There is no doubt, however, that this is the way Rauf interprets it:

> "In faith," said the Coil3ear, "3it was I neuer sa nyse;
> Schir Knicht, it is na courtasie commounis to scorne:
> Thair is mony better than I, cummis oft to Parys,
> That the King wait not of, nouther nicht nor morne.
> For to towsill me or tit me, thocht foull be my clais,
> Or I be dantit on sic wyse, my lyfe salbe lorne."
> (lines 430-435)

At this response, Roland tells Rauf that "It is the Kingis commandement" (line 440). This only encourages the collier to expound further upon his belief:

> "I am bot ane mad man, that thow hes heir met;
> I haue na myster to matche with maisterfull men.
> Fairand ouir the feildis, Fewell to fet,
> And oft fylit my feit in mony foull fen;
> Gangand with laidis, my gouerning to get."
> (lines 443-447)

Further argument from Roland then prompts Rauf to advance an ultimatum:

> "Thow fand me fechand nathing that followit to feid,
> I war ane fule gif I fled, and fand nane affray:
> Bot as ane lauch-full man, my laidis to leid,
> That leifis with mekle lawtie and laubour in fay.
> Be the Mother and the Maydin that maid vs remeid,

> And thow mar me ony mair, cum efter quhat sa may,
> Thow and I sall dyntis deill, quhill ane of vs be deid,
> For the deidis thow hes me done vpon this deir day."
> (lines 508-515)

Finally, Rauf reiterates the basic issue at hand:

> "For thow seis my weidis ar auld, and all to-worne,
> Thow trowis nathing thir taillis that I am telland."
> (lines 562-563)

In all four sets of lines I have quoted, Rauf could be said to be a serious spokesman of serious issues--serious especially to the enterprising class Rauf appears to represent, which may take pride in endorsing the refinements of the aristocracy, even though it may not be able to imitate the appearance of aristocracy. A basic Christian ethic also finds expression in Rauf's words (as indeed it does in the poem's overall preoccupation with mistaken identity): "do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares"[13] (in this instance, for "angels", read "royalty").

The extra element of humour which goes with this social critique lies in the surprising fact that this is a social critique, that Rauf consciously applies an argument almost as if he were schooled in it. There is in his words something reminiscent of legalistic argument, or a feeling at least that he speaks with the conviction of one who thinks he can appeal to an institutional authority; "it is na courtasie commounis to scorne" sounds like an expression of a

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[13] Hebrews 13. 2.

communally held ideal, while Rauf's description of himself "as ane lauchfull man... that leifis with mekle lawtie" overtly appeals to a public notion of legal and rightful conduct.

All this is hardly what one would expect from a fifteenth-century charcoal-burner, whether he is well-off or not (we might say that Rauf speaks with the education of his author). And Rauf's behaviour clearly is enough to confound Roland, who, initially having "Mekle merwell" (line 516) of Rauf's words, decides that it "... is bot foly/ To striue with him ocht mair" (lines 555-556) and ends up simply not responding to his request for a duel (lines 568-572).

To illustrate this point further I risk reference to a modern parallel of the scene. Like Roland, the hapless Arthur in Monty Python and the Holy Grail encounters a disconcertingly socially-aware commoner.

> **DENNIS:** What I object to is that you automatically treat me as an inferior...
> **ARTHUR:** Well... I am King.... who is your lord?
> **OLD WOMAN:** We don't have a lord.
> **ARTHUR:** What?
> **DENNIS:** I told you, we're an anarcho-syndicalist commune, we take it in turns to act as a sort of executive officer for the week.
> . . .
> **ARTHUR (grabbing Dennis by the collar):** Shut up, will you. Shut up!
> **DENNIS:** Ah! Now... we see the violence inherent in the system.
> **ARTHUR:** Shut up!

DENNIS (calling): Come and see the violence inherent in the system. Help, help, I'm being repressed!
ARTHUR: Bloody peasant![14]

To borrow words form Terry Jones, who compares parts of the Monty Python corpus with The Knight's Tale, "it seems to me that [the Rauf poet] made this same joke almost [five] hundred years ago".[15] Of course, Rauf is not an anachronistic political radical like Dennis, and he is not one, we can be sure from his later acceptance of knighthood, to deny the possibility of acquiring privilege; but he does share with Dennis an informed conviction of his own social worth, a conviction which manages to confuse and bemuse a condescending interlocutor.

It may be argued that Rauf's responses are simply driven by a 'persecution complex', that his is an unbalanced personality which sees some form of affront in virtually any social engagement. Without doubt, this is the impression one gets from Rauf's first begrudging conversation with the king.

The King carpit to the Carll withoutin debait,
"Schir, tell me thy richt name, for the Rude lufe:"
He sayis, "Men callis me Rauf Coilgear, as I weill wait;
I leid my life in this land with mekle vnrufe,
Baith tyde and tyme, in all my trauale;
Hine ouir seuin mylis I dwell,
And leidis Coilis to sell,
Sen thow speiris, I the tell
All the suith hale."

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[14] Terry Jones, and others, The Monty Python and the Holy Grail Book (London, 1977), pp.7-11.

[15] Terry Jones, Chaucer's Knight: The Portrait of a Medieval Mercenary (London, 1980), p.82.

"Sa mot I thrife," said the King, "I speir for nane ill."
(lines 44-53)

Rauf seems to be prepared to start a fight at the first opportunity; the leading of his life "with mekle vnrufe" ('much trouble') seems a matter of choice. Not much further in the narrative, after Rauf has offered the king lodging, he shows what (on rereading) is an alarming (though also amusing) predilection for altercation:

CHARLES: "Schir, God 3ow for3eild!'

RAUF: "Na! thank me not ouir airlie, for dreid that we threip...."
(lines 78-79)

Most commentators agree that one of the joys of this poem is that such touches as this contribute to the projection of a genuine character, a figure with a consistent psychological profile of an individuality which, with the possible exception of Turpin in Melayne, will not be found elsewhere in the ME Charlemagne material; Rauf is more than just a conventional literary 'type' which can be associated with a paticular literary genre. It is this genuineness of character, moreover, which should reinforce our impression that Rauf's role as a kind of champion of one class and critic of another is to be taken seriously.

It should be stressed that the narrator sides with Rauf in his various protests against discourteous conduct, despite Rauf's own clear, and sometimes cruel, peccadilloes on this account. Just before Charles's first offence against Rauf's

sense of courtesy--when the king offers to let his host enter the house ahead of him--we are told that "The Coilȝear gudlie in feir tuke him be the hand,/ And put him befoir him as ressoun had bene" (lines 118-119, emphasis mine). After describing how Rauf throws the king inside "be the nek" (line 123) as a punishment for this discourtesy, the narrator adds nothing of his own; in the wake of his earlier judgment, the narrator's present silence might seem selective--a diplomatic gesture, perhaps, of approval. On the occasion of Charles's second offence against his host's courtesy--when he refuses Rauf's request that he take the head of the table--there is again some sense that the narrator sides with Rauf.

Before considering the point further, it is worth pausing simply to consider the humour of the scene. The slapstick element is obvious; we are told that the blow given to Charles this time was so strong as to send him into a reeling fall from which he is able to recover only when he at long last hits the floor. Our poet uses the delayed resolution of rhyme inherent in the 'wheel' portion of the stanza to mimic the protracted effect of the blow:

> He leit gyrd to the King, withoutin ony mair,
> And hit him vnder the eir with his richt hand,
> Quhill he stakkerit thair with all,
> Half the breid of the hall;
> He faind neuer of ane fall,
> Quhill he the eird fand.
> (lines 151-156)

Further humour is evident in the detail of Charles's discourtesy. In this also is additional evidence of the

narrator's partisanship.

> "Tak my wyfe be the hand in feir, withowtin let,
> And gang begin the buird," said the Coilgear.
> "That war vnsemand, forsuith, and thy self vnset:"
> The King profferit him to gang, and maid ane strange fair.
> "Now is twyse," said the Carll....
>
> (lines 146-151)

"[M]aid ane strange fair" conjures visions of any number of ridiculous gestures. It is left to us to imagine just what arcane manoeuvres Charles is performing; and this vagueness enhances the humour of the scene, because it suggests that the action is so strange as to be well beyond easy description. On a more serious note, that the "strange fair" is left "strange" by the narrator tends to ally his view with Rauf's; and that view, as we know, is one of disapproval. Amid the slapstick action, then, a critical distinction between mere courtly display (as shown by a genuine courtier) and honest courtly action (as shown by a low-born carl) is implied. Though Rauf may be unbalanced in his representation of courtesy, it is clear that he is to be seen as no worse a representative than the king himself.

Indeed, this curious mixture of humour and serious critique continues as Rauf goes on to reprimand Charles verbally for his discourtesy. As always, the obvious joke is that a collier unknowingly counsels a king in matters of courtesy. The serious side of this (though also a subtle source of quiet amusement) is that the collier's basic judgement is sensible. And it is sensible beyond the common

'folkloric' authority of those adages which could be too easily quoted as if they constituted a quintessential gloss on the poem--that 'a man's home is his castle' or, indeed, according to an old French proverb, that the 'charbonnier est maître dans sa maison'.[16] Beyond an assertion of his own 'proverbial' rights, this collier recognizes that his host is some form of courtier who, as surely anyone would agree, should know better:

> "Schir, thow art vnskilfull, and that sall I warrand;
> Thow byrd to haue nurtour aneuch, and thow hes nane;
> Thow hes walkit, iwis, in mony wyld land,
> The mair vertew thow suld haue, to keip the fra blame!
> Thow suld be courtes of kynd, and ane cunnand Courteir."
> (lines 161-165)

As with much of what Rauf is given to say, this is a graceful and eloquent series of potentially serious statements; here they are more obviously serious through their tendency to be complete in one line and through their use of anaphora on "thow" in every line. Because of such qualities, the passage appears to have been designed to prevent the seriousness from being obviated by the prevailing humour of the scene. When Rauf then comes to express his own version of the common adage, therefore, I find it difficult to read his words entirely as an outrageous reprimand. There is also a genuine dignity which inspires sympathy with Rauf's position:

> "Thocht that I simpill be,
> Do as I bid the,

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[16] For a discussion of this adage, see Smyser, HSNPL 14, p.141, n.3.

The hous is myne, pardie,
And all that is heir."
(line 166-169)

As if again to vindicate Rauf's position, the narrator gives us Charles's thoughts on the incident. Amid the king's predictable and, it must be stressed, quite justified, complaint there is an element of confusion and doubt, an implicit admission that he is to an extent just as Rauf has described him; that is, not the authority on courtesy that one should expect:

The King said to him self, "this is an euill lyfe,
3it was I neuer in my lyfe thus-gait leird;
And I haue oft tymes bene quhair gude hes bene ryfe,
That maist couth of courtasie, in this Cristin eird."
(lines 170-173)

As Smyser says, this Charlemagne is not "the austere patriarch of the Chanson de Roland"; instead, he is "good-natured and approachable";[17] if this is to say that he is more self-conscious of his own fallibility, then we have here good evidence for the proposition. Charles does not appear to doubt Rauf's authority, only to question his method of teaching in comparison with others who have instructed him in the past. There is obvious humour in this self-doubt, but again there is also a very real sense that the integrity of courtly ideals within the court is genuinely being questioned.

Other examples of a tacit championing of Rauf's convictions will surface as we consider other features of the

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[17] Smyser, Manual, p.96.

poem, but I hope that enough examples have been advanced to expose a 'socio-ethical' theme which has gone unnoticed by previous commentators. Perhaps we can view this aspect of the poem's depiction of Rauf in the light of what John Stevens says of Chaucer's characterization of the Franklin and the Wife of Bath:

> it is... the great achievement of Chaucer, as I see it... to have extended and deepened the courtly concepts involved in the definition of a 'gentil' man until their class-basis, their narrowly-conceived aristocratic tenor, becomes irrelevant.[18]

To call Rauf "gentil" would be unacceptable, but a general proposition that, like the Franklin and the Wife of Bath, he provides a model and a critique of certain idealized modes of conduct, must be taken seriously.[19]

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[18] Stevens, Medieval Romance, p.58.

[19] It is this poem's implicit willingness to credit Rauf with a certain dignity (both of expression and of vision) which distinguishes it from its closest analogue, John the Reeve. Detailed comparisons between the two poems (based perhaps on the compendium of similarities given by Smyser, HNSPL 14) could be made to illustrate the point, but I think one short passage from John suffices to demonstrate an essential difference. Implicit expectations of John's role (let alone his reader's) as a serious critic of his condition are low. John has some trouble with his sword as he prepares to leave for court:

> Iohn pulled ffast at the blade:
> (I wold hee had kist my arse that itt made!)
> he cold not gett itt out.
> Allice held, & Iohn draughe,
> either att other ffast loughe,
> I doe yee out of doubt.
>
> Iohn pulled att the scaberd soe hard,
> againe a post he ran backward
> & gaue his head a rowte.
> his wiffe did laughe when he did ffall,

A further part of Chaucer's achievement in his depiction of a character like the Franklin is that we can never be absolutely certain that that character is as "gentil" as he may seem, that, as critcs such as Kearney,[20] Burlin,[21] and Saul[22] have argued, he may in fact be the subject of some derision and disapproval, depicted to a degree as a self-conscious social climber. Much of the 'dark side' of Rauf is

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> & soe did his meanye all
> that were there neere about.
>
> . . .
> "dame," he sayd, "ffeitch me wine;
> I will drinke to thee once againe,
> I troe I shall neuer thee see.
>
> "Hodgkin long, & hob of the lathe,
> tarry & drinke with me bothe,
> ffor my cares are ffast commannde."
> they dranke 5 gallons verament:
> "ffarwell ffellowes all present,
> ffor I am readye to gange!"

[John W. Hales and F.J. Furnivall, edd., "John de Reeve", in Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript, 3 vols (London, 1868), II, lines 611-646; all references to John the Reeve are to this edition.]

[20] See Anthony Kearney, "The Franklin's Tale", Essays in Criticism, 21 (1971), 109-111, especially p.111:

> The Franklin has aspirations to gentility, but has a superficial... view of this.

[21] See Robert B. Burlin, "The Art of Chaucer's Franklin", Neophilologus, 51 (1967), 55-73, especially p.59:

> [The Franklin is] an otherwise sober, capable man of practical affairs who is innocently infatuated with an aristocratic performance which he can imitate but not quite fully understand.

[22] Nigel Saul, "The Social Status of Chaucer's Franklin: A Reconsideration", Medium Ævum, 52 (1983), 10-26.

more obvious than that; he is openly irascible and prone to unpredictable violence. As with the Franklin, however, there is the feeling that, while he may be a champion of a certain social issue (which is quietly supported by the narrator), he is not a champion beyond reproach. Some sympathy with those who have had to deal with him is very much in order.

I have indicated several times now that it is important not to overlook the fact that some of Rauf's behaviour toward Charles is unmistakably brutal and cruel. If we re-examine the story as far as the conclusion of Charles's stay with Rauf and look at the episode expressly from Charles's point of view, we shall see that the nature of that brutality and cruelty is, like the purpose of Rauf's representation of standards of courtesy, more sophisticated than one could be led to believe.

It was noted earlier that Rauf's first warning to Charles not to be too grateful too early, "for dreid that [they] threip" (line 79), showed an alarming predilection for altercation. Looking more closely at the text beyond that point, we might add that the warning is prescient, almost as if it were part of a predefined plan and not just a consequence of Rauf's churlishness. The last line of the stanza which describes Charles's first transgression of Rauf's sense of propriety finds Rauf concluding (with evident reference to his earlier statement) "Begin we to threip" (line 130). Also of note in the stanza is Rauf's statement,

after he has disciplined Charles, "Now is anis" (line 126). A tally is being kept, as if to suggest that further indiscretions are guaranteed. Surely enough, immediately upon the second indiscretion, as soon as the king makes his "strange fair", the tally continues:

> "Now is twyse," said the Carll, 'me think thow hes forget."
> He leit gyrd to the King....
> (lines 150-151, emphasis mine)

On this occasion Rauf has given Charles no prior warning or explanation for the blow, and on the first occasion there was virtually no warning (line 122). Not unlike Gawain's host Bertilac, Rauf specialises, it seems, in keeping his guest in some confusion about the customs of the house whilst nevertheless involving him in a preconceived test of his observance of those customs.

Further similarities with the supernatural host tradition of the 'Gawain-group' can be seen. Early in the history of scholarship on Rauf (and GGK), Kittredge denied such a connection,[23] and perhaps from then on scholars have

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[23] George Lyman Kittredge, A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1916), pp.101-102:

> It would be possible to regard some exemplum enforcing the lesson that a guest should obey his host in everything without ceremony.... Such an hypothesis will doubtless seem attractive to those students who are anxious to explain away all the [supernatural] Celtic material as a mere outgrowth of mediaeval ethical formulas or social conventions. Ammunition for a campaign of this nature might perhaps be found in the burlesque romance of Ralph the Collier....

followed his influential lead. Even so (and though the foregoing evidence can only be circumstantial), judging from that evidence, I think that echoes of the supernatural element are present. To that evidence should be added indications of Rauf's remarkable strength; recall that he drives the king the length of the hall with one blow; and this is enough to make the king, who is no stranger to armed combat, say to himself "... I am stonischit at this straik, that hes me thus steird" (line 175).[24] Later Roland also comments on how "weill sene" is Rauf's stoutness and strength in the combat with Magog (lines 878-879). Consider also that Rauf lives in an impressive home amid a strange landscape, that he arranges to join with Roland in combat at a later date, and that he makes a rude entry into the king's hall during Yuletide festivities. These details, though incidental and with their provenance explicable by more innocent means, do contribute further to a suspicion that the author has had stories of supernatural hosts in the back of his mind; with

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[24] Compare the stroke which the discourteous Sir Kay receives at the hands (literally, as in Rauf) of his supernatural host Golagros:

> Thair vith the grume, in his grief, leit gird to schir Kay,
> Fellit the freke with his fist flat in the flure.
> He wes sa astonayt with the straik, in stede quhare he lay,
> Stok still as ane stane, the sterne wes sa sture!

[F.J. Amours, ed., "Golagros and Gawane", in Scottish Alliterative Poems, Scottish Text Society, No.27 (Edinburgh, 1897), lines 105-108.]

tongue in cheek perhaps, he has added to the improbable formidability of his comic 'anti-hero' a touch of 'Celtic' mystery and enchantment.[25]

Though the locus of the story shifts to Paris and the court of Charlemagne, the shift invites mainly variations on themes established in the previous section. There is, in fact, a kind of mirrored symmetry in the shift (notwithstanding the final shift to a chanson de geste mode, which we shall consider later): in the former section Rauf is host; in the latter he is guest: in the former Charles gets lost; in the latter Rauf is the one who does not know the way: in the former Charles is the one shaken by criticism of his conduct; in the latter it is Rauf. The overall comic value in the

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[25] It is worth noting also that the poem's thirteen-line alliterative stanza with 'wheel' is similar to that employed by GGK and identical to that of a couple of other 'Gawain-group' poems treating the story of a supernatural host: these are The Awntyrs of Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne and Golagrus and Gawane. The former is listed in the index of the Scottish Asloan Manuscript with RC (though both poems are now missing in that MS; see Craigie, The Asloan Manuscript, I, xv) and the latter, like RC, survives solely as a sixteenth-century Scottish print. An obvious implication to be drawn from these 'coincidences' is that the Rauf poet could easily have been familiar with poems of the Gawain-group.

A further implication which can be drawn, based upon analysis of linguistic (i.e. coincidence of alliterative collocations) and narrative features (such as, perhaps, the detail of Golagros's astonishing stroke delivered to Sir Kay, as cited in the previous note) is that two or all three Scottish poems are by the same author. Though the argument is now no longer accepted, its various proponents are worth consulting in the light of the suggestion of possible influence. For a summary of early commentators, see Smyser, HSNPL 14, 136-137. The most recent such study is by Elizabeth Walsh, "The Taill of Rauf Coilyear: Oral Motif in Literary Guise", Scottish Literary Journal, 6 (1979), 7-10.

symmetry is that we see Rauf humbled by a recognition of his own churlishness and Charles finding good sport in the revelation of his own true identity.

Within all these mirrored actions the (serious) theme of the importance of being courteous to any stranger continues to be supported. Indeed, the theme is clarified through greater exposure. An important distinction between being thoroughly (as opposed to nominally) courteous is thrown into greater relief. This is achieved most noticeably through Charles's magnanimous decision not to punish Rauf for his churlishness, but rather to reward him for his past hospitality. The decision is all the more magnanimous given that it is the opinion of the court that Rauf should be hanged:

> Thir Lordis leuch vpon loft, and lystinit to the King,
> How he was ludgeit and led, and set at sa licht;
> Than the curagious Knichtis bad haue him to hing,
> "For he hes seruit that," thay said, "be our sicht."
> (lines 742-744)

The passage of course shows us yet again the sinister side of the poem, despite its humour and its happy ending: Rauf's life is thrown in the balance on a point of courtesy.[26] From this perspective another mirrored parallel is seen: whereas

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[26] It is important to note that in the analogues the hero is not threatened directly by the Court. In John the Reeve, for instance, John suspects that his reward of knighthood might be a prank ("fful oft I haue heard tell/ that after a coller comes a rope...", lines 814-815); but no direct threats are spoken by the Court, as is the case in Rauf. For a précis of the episode as it occurs in other analogues, see F.J. Child as cited in n. 41 below.

Rauf was Bertilak to Charles's Gawain in the first section, those roles are now reversed and the new Bertilak is in a position to claim his due. The passage (and the new parallel it suggests) also reveals a finer element in the cruelty to which the collier is subjected. Like Bertilak (who is ultimately beneficent) Charles has evidently paused to tease his subject, for he has, as lines 742-744 reveal, reported only the disagreeable aspects of his stay with Rauf; the Court is led to its severe judgment and Rauf is kept in fearful suspense.

The reader must surely also feel the suspense, despite the fundamental humour of the episode, for attempts to build suspense have been made from the time Rauf first sets out to the Court. As he loads his cart, his wife (sharing Rauf's uncanny prescience, and showing considerably more perspicacity) offers some sensible warnings:

> "Mary, it is not my counsall, bot 3one man that 3e knew,
> To do 3ow in his gentrise," said Gyliane;
> "Thow gaif him ane outragious blaw and greit boist blew;
> In faith, thow suld haue bocht it deir and he had bene allane.
> For thy, hald 3ow fra the Court for ocht that may be;
> 3one man that thow outrayd
> Is not sa simpill as he said;
> Thairun my lyfe dar I layd,
> That sall thow heir and se."
> (lines 369-377)[27]

Rauf's response to this suggests that he appreciates

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[27] By contrast, the warning given by John the Reeve's wife is much less powerful because of its brevity and lack of detailed insight: "shee sayd shee was affrayd/ this deede wold make debate" (John the Reeve, lines 597-598).

Gillian's warning, but that, given that his criticisms of his guest were reasonable and that he has made a promise to the guest, he feels he must still proceed on a point of honour; in other words, the suspense is not mitigated (we are not even permitted the gross humour of seeing our hero gain courage from a bottle, as did John the Reeve--see n.19 above).

> "3ea, Dame, haue nane dreid of my lyfe to day;
> Lat me wirk as I will, the weird is mine awin.
> I spak not out of ressoun, the suith gif I sall say,
> To Wymond of the Wardrop, war the suith knawin.
> That I haue hecht I sall hald, happin as it may,
> Quhidder sa it gang to greif or to gawin."
> (lines 378-383)

Perhaps Charles's alias, "Wymond", further increases the suspense. Felicity Riddy notes that the name

> may, as A. McI. Trounce has argued, have connotations of rascality. It is the name of the traitor in Athelston, and of the Third Executioner in the York Crucifixion play; it is also recorded as a term of abuse.[28]

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[28] Riddy, p.349. Cf. A.McI. Trounce, ed., Athelston, EETS No. 224 (London, 1951), pp.27-28.

To this evidence may be added the malevolent actions of a (Scottish) historical Wymond. The Historia Rerum Anglicarum of William of Newburgh (Liber Primus, Cap. XXIV) records that one Wimund, Bishop of Man and the Isles, sometime after 1142 raised an army in defiance of King David as some sort of pretender to his throne (see Richard Howlett, ed., Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II., and Richard I., Rolls Series No. 82, 2 vols (London, 1884), I, 73-76). It is difficult to determine the authenticity of Wimund's claim, but, as Alan Anderson has noted,

> at last [David] abandoned the endeavour to overcome Wimund by force, and bargained with him for peace, promising him lands in Cumbria.... If this bargain was made in good faith, it would seem to have been an admission that Wimund's claims, whatever they were, were in some degree just.

Charles's identification with a wardrober, regardless of any sinister resonances the wardrober's name may have, is a minor variation on the poem's theme of comparison, if not equation, of the potential in different classes for noble or ignoble conduct: the churlish can be kingly; the kingly can be churlish. Once we find Rauf on his way to Court, further variations on the theme emerge through a special use of rhetorical descriptio. The first descriptio is of Roland (lines 456-481), and comes as Rauf pauses in his 'class-conscious' chastisement of the knight. Two features are of note in the description; the overt interpretation of Roland's coat of arms, and Rauf's interpretation of the splendour of the whole sight.

The coat of arms is described competently with some genuine heraldic terminology ("He bair, grauit in Gold, and Gowlis in grene,... /Ane Tyger ticht to ane tre...", lines 457-459, emphasis mine). The apparent genuineness of the

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[Alan O. Anderson, "Wimund, Bishop and Pretender", Scottish Historical Review, 7 (1910), 30-31.]

It is difficult to determine whether this Wymond would have achieved enough notoriety in the later Middle Ages to figure in the connotations of the name as it appears in Rauf; his exploits are told in detail only in William's Chronicle. Ultimately, it is safest to agree with Trounce that the multiplicity of notorious associations the name bears "renders irrelevant any attempt to find an original for it" (Trounce, Athelston, p.28). If the connotation did figure in Rauf, however, it would be further evidence for the poet's elaborate control of irony: in his disguise, Charles is a kind of pretender to the throne, and he is (to Rauf) also a potentially dangerous figure; the historical association is tempting indeed.

description adds authority to the conclusion that the emblem is "ane takn of tene" (line 459), a token of wrath.[29] Roland is then described as "that tenefull" (line 460). Rauf subsequently contributes, in his thoughts, to the impression of a dangerous and forbidding Roland:

> Of that Ryall array that Rolland in raid
> Rauf rusit in his hart of that Ryall thing;
> "He is the gayest in geir, that euer on ground glaid;
> Haue he grace to the gre in ilk Iornaying.
> War he ane manly man, as he is weill maid,
> He war full michtie with magre durst abyde his meting."
> (lines 482-487)

Finally, it is noted that Roland demands "in wraith" (line 488), that the collier go to the king. The obvious impression generated by the descriptio is that this representative of the Court is a nasty piece of work; beside the inevitable impression of prowess, there is an implicit opposition to the response of elated admiration conventionally invited by such a conventional description (recall the chorus of admiring knights which attends the descriptio of Roland in SR, lines 300-302). This is what one could expect to be a peasant's view of a splendidly appointed knight; splendid, certainly,

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[29] It is tempting to search for historical analogues to such an accurate description, but I have been unable to find reference specifically to the combined motif of a tiger tied to a tree. The tiger is a conventional (though relatively rare) heraldic beast, and the tying of various beasts to trees is a valid (though, again, relatively rare) heraldic form; for good illustrations of these forms, see Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, Fairbairn's Book of Crests of the Families of Great Britain and Ireland: A New Edition Revised and Brought Down to the Present Date, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1892), especially II, plates 25 and 143-145.

but frightening all the same for the knight's evident indifference to the peasant's worth.

When Rauf finds himself in the Royal Hall, the impression given of the court and its representatives is again one of a splendour with worrying implications. The sense of splendour comes from the (accomplished) conventional description of the hall;[30] the worrying sense comes (as it did above) from Rauf's personal interpretation of the scene. Rauf shows some fear about lingering at court.

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[30] Because I shall refer to this passage again, I quote it here for ease of reference:

Thocht he had socht sic ane sicht all this seuin 3eir,
Sa solempnit ane semblie had he not sene;
The hall was properly apperrellit and paintit but peir,
Dyamountis full dantely dentit betwene.
It was semely set on ilk syde seir,
Gowlis glitterand full gay, glemand in grene,
Flowris with Flourdelycis formest in feir,
With mony flamand ferly ma than fyftene.
The rufe reulit about in reuall of Reid,
Rois reulit Ryally,
Columbyn and Lely;
Thair was ane hailsum harbery
Into riche steid.

With Dosouris to the duris dicht, quha sa wald deme,
With all diuers danteis dicht dantely;
Circulit with siluer, semely to sene,
Selcouthly in seir he was set suttelly.
Blyth byrdis abufe, and bestaill full bene,
Fyne foullis in Fyrth, and Fischis with fry;
The flure, carpit and cled, and couerit full clene,
Cummand fra the Cornellis closand quemely.
Bricht Bancouris about browdin ouir all,
Greit Squechonis on hicht,
Anamalit and weill dicht,
Reulit at all richt
Endlang the hall.
(lines 664-689)

"Heir is Ryaltie," said Rauf, "aneuch for the nanis,
With all nobilnes anournit, and that is na nay;
Had I of Wymond ane word, I wald of thir wanis,
Fra thir wyis, I-wis, to went on my way...."
(lines 690-693)

Knowing Rauf for his confident class pride, we must conclude that the desire to leave springs less from a traditional fear of rising above one's proper place than it does from a (soon-to-be-justified) fear of the kind of dangerous disdain already encountered with Roland.

The way in which Rauf's response is structured is revealing. The first two lines are not inconsistent with what could be expected from a conventional response to the scene; but, then again, the observation they represent is not qualitative, merely descriptive. The following two lines show, moreover, that for Rauf "Ryaltie" with all its "nobilnes anournit" is something to be fled at the earliest opportunity. There is nothing in the first two lines to suggest a happy admiration of the scene and nothing in the latter two lines to suggest anything but an immediate and unqualified anxiety about the appearance of royalty and its relation to the actual fact of royal behaviour. Indeed, when Rauf eventually makes his way to the king and discovers the true identity of Wymound, his expression of fear is overtly tied up with his perception of the visual splendour of royalty.[31] Mistaken identity can come in more than the usual

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[31] We might also take note of the instant when Rauf discovers that Wymound is the King.

form:

> "Allace, that I was hidder wylit!
> I dreid me sair I be begylit!"
> . . .
> With ane cairfull countenance the Coilgear kest his E
> To the cumly Quene, courtes and cleir.
> "Dame, of thy glitterand gyde haue I na gle...."
> (lines 712-720, emphasis mine)

It is important not to overstress the 'sinister' aspect of the use of descriptio in this poem. That is, after all, an aspect revealed only in Rauf's responses to the descriptions; it is not germane to the descriptions themselves. In and of themselves, the descriptions are highly competent, conventional, representatives of their kind; as with other passages I have cited earlier, burlesque or parody is not a necessary component in the descriptions; they can be appreciated for their conventionality without immediate recourse to a subversive reading. When we hear Derek Pearsall saying of another comic romance, The Squyr of Lowe Degre, that it is "not a burlesque, but a loving re-creation of the [romance] form with all its charm" and that it contains "deliberate and nostalgic evocations of the world of

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> "3one is Wymond, I wait, it worthis na weir;
> I ken him weill, thocht he be cled in vther clething,
> In clais of clene gold kythand 3one cleir...."
> (lines 706-708)

There is very much the sense that Rauf's words have an ironic profundity: beneath the "clais of clene gold" of the King there still remains, without doubt ("it worthis na weir"), the roguish figure of Wymond.

romance",[32] we can see that the same comments apply easily to portions of our poem.

Rauf's "Here is Ryaltie" has in it further ambiguity which could be described as more comic than sinister. It cannot be determined whether Rauf's words should be paraphrased 'royalty must live here' or 'this sight represents the utmost in splendour'. A general ambiguity of this sort pervades the use of "Ryall" and its derivatives throughout the poem. Flora M. Ross has noted irony in the use of "Ryall array" to describe Rauf's appearance as he sets out to win his spurs (line 795);[33] does Rauf now carry himself as if inured with the approbation of Royalty, or does he just look good, or, given the reference in the preceeding line to the "rude runsy" on which he rides, is the description tainted with the facetiousness of the mock heroic? Surely all three conditions apply at once. This is perhaps the most obvious instance of the term's ambiguously ironic use, but there are many others: "Ryall" can in this poem be used in association with the king, a Saracen, decoration, even a collier's fire; the literal, qualitative, and facetious senses all apply.[34]

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[32] Derek Pearsall, "The English Romance in the Fifteenth Century", Essays and Studies (Oxford, 1976), p.66.

[33] See Flora M. Ross, "A Study of the Treatment of Romance Subjects in 'Golagros and Gawane', 'Lancelot of the Laik', and 'Rauf Coilyear'" (dissertation, Oxford, 1967), p.223.

[34] For ease of reference, I list here all occurrences and take some account of their contexts. ☞

It is telling that "Ryaltie" is the only noun, the only true substantive form to be found among all the occurrences (line 690), as if to draw attention to its role as the essential model for the significance of all the other forms. And, of course, that significance is indeterminate.[35] The only

Line no.	Form	Object of description
14	"Ryall" (substantive adj.)	Charles.
109	"Ryall" (adj.)	Rauf's fire.
353	"Ryallie" (adv.)	Manner of courtiers' dress.
480	"Ryallest" (adj.)	Roland's dress.
482	"Ryall" (adj.)	Roland's dress.
483	"Ryall" (adj.)	Roland.
552	"Ryall" (adj.)	Roland's dress.
673	"Ryally" (adv.)	Hall decorations.
690	"Ryaltie" (sb.)	(?) Hall decorations or genuine royalty.
782	"Ryall" (adj.)	Rauf's dress.
795	"Ryall" (adj.)	Rauf's dress.
938	"Ryall" (adj.)	Magog's dress.

[35] It is worth conducting a similar survey of the use of 'courteous' and its variants. Usage in this instance is much less indeterminate; there seems to be no ironic subversion in any of the associated contexts. Though certain characters' lack of courtesy is a matter for criticism, courtesy in itself, unlike "ryaltie", is presented as a desirable, inviolate, and unimpeachable ideal. There is no question that that which Rauf champions is a worthy cause.

certain conclusion to be drawn--and, by this stage in our investigation, it is nothing new--is that royalty is depicted more as an institution of admirable appearance than as an

line no.	Form	Object of description
122	"vncourtes" (adj.)	Charles.
125	"Courtasie" (sb.)	Charles's lack of courtesy.
165	"courtes" (adv.)	How Charles should be.
165	"Courtier" (sb.)	What Charles should be.
173	"courtasie" (sb.)	The topic for experts on manners.
423	"Courtesly" (adv.)	Rauf's deferent kneeling to Roland.
425	"courtasie" (sb.)	What Roland would have Rauf abandon.
431	"courtasie" (sb.)	Rauf's description of what Roland's conduct to him is not.
719	"courtes" (adj.)	Of the Queen.
722	"Courtasie" (sb.)	What Rauf claims he should not have attempted to teach a King.
749	"Courtasie" (sb.)	That for which Charles proposes to reward Rauf.

institution truly worthy of admiration.

I have used "mock heroic" to describe Rauf's action in setting out to win his spurs because the term is used by Ross to describe Rauf's first entry to court.[36] As with other attempts to explain features of the poem concisely, the use of such a term compromises accuracy. Even so, at first sight of the relevant passages, "mock heroic" is not altogether inaccurate. Were it not for the low stature of our hero, the quirks of his personality, and the nature of his struggle, the detail of Rauf's entry would be worthy of the best tales of chivalric strife:

> He saw thair was na meiknes nor mesure micht mend,
> He sped him in spedely, and nane of thame he spaird;
> Thair was na fyue of thay Freikis, that micht him furth fend,[37]
> He socht in sa sadly, quhill sum of thame he saird.
> He thristit in throw thame thraly with threttis.
> (lines 655–659)

> He thristit in throw threttie all atanis,
> Quhair mony douchtie of deid war Ioynit that day.
> For he was vnburely, on bak thay him hynt;
> As he gat ben throw,
> He gat mony greit schow;
> Bot he was stalwart, I trow,
> And laith for to stynt.

> He thristit in throw thame, and thraly can thring,
> Fast to the formest he foundit in feir:
> Sone besyde him he gat ane sicht of the Nobill King....
> (lines 696–705)

The "thristit in throw" collocation occurs three times among these lines (none of which collocations are more than about

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[36] See Ross, p.223.

[37] Herrtage prints "send", but the facsimile quite clearly shows an initial <f>.

fifty lines apart) but occurs nowhere else in the poem; the exclusivity of its use suggests that it is intended, perhaps with less subtlety than is normal for the poem, to draw the reader's attention to the imitative style of the description. It is because of this point that I have some reservations about applying the term "mock heroic" to the technique. Without doubt, the primary effect is comic. There is humour in the use of a disproportionately high style which both suggests and ridicules Rauf's unbalanced bellicose inclinations; but, as with the several other passages of a formal nature we have remarked, there is the feeling that this is also a 'loving recreation' of a martial convention with a serious thematic content. There is the impression that Rauf, for all his emotional excesses, is to some small extent engaged in a genuine battle for a genuine cause. Previous implicit critiques of the court's courtliness must throw this impression beyond much doubt; but the critique is also evident within the scene. As he attempts to make his way, Rauf is pushed and shoved by the courtiers (courtiers who, it must be stressed, do not seem to be acting in an official capacity as royal bodyguards or something of the sort). This is hardly the most courteous response to a guest, regardless of his behaviour. Though this is a mock battle, it is a battle all the same. Moreover, we should not lose sight of the fact (and its attendant humour) that within the terms of this battle, the court <u>loses</u>. Despite his boisterousness,

Rauf reaches his goal; honest determination, however ridiculous it can be made to seem, wins the day.

It was remarked in note 35 above that the use of "courtesy" and its variants is without irony, and that this usage consequently reflects a general respect for what the term ideally stands for. The only instance in which there might be some doubt about the term's integrity is the last. Here Charles announces his intention to reward Rauf, and in so doing announces what could be seen to be a strange kind of equation of opposites, in form not unlike Rauf's odd juxtaposition of the appreciation of "Ryaltie" with an immediate desire to take flight.

> Him semis ane stalwart man, and stout in stryking,.
> That Carll for his Courtasie salbe maid knicht.
> (lines 748-749)

Naturally, Charles refers in the main to Rauf's past hospitality, but the immediate syntactical context suggests that being "stalwart... and stout in stryking" is the hallmark of "Courtaisie". The effect of this is similar to that established in Charles's earlier complaint that the treatment he was receiving at the hands of Rauf was not what authorities on courtesy have recommended; namely, that Charles has an underdeveloped or aberrant personal sense of courtesy.

Because of such cheeky ambiguities as this we must move into the third section of the poem, the '<u>chanson de geste</u>' section in which Rauf realizes his reward, with continuing

doubt about the court's integrity--and continuing vigilance for multivalent meanings. For that matter, another reading of those oddly coupled lines of Charles's is that the king, one evidently not to be revered for his own courtesy--nor, indeed, for some cruel teasing--is fully aware of his equation of opposites and sees in Rauf's knighthood a form of punishment for the collier's past churlishness. The claim was made earlier that Charles's decision to reward Rauf instead of punish him was an act of magnanimity. By and large the truth of this is self-evident, but, as with most things in this poem, a more sinister interpretation is possible. Included in Charles's apparent motives for knighting Rauf is the desire to have more men to fight the heathen:

> "I hald the counsall full euill that Cristin man slais,
> For I had myster to haue ma,
> And not to distroy tha
> Tha[t] war worthie to ga
> To fecht on Goddis fais!"
> (lines 750-754)

As we are to find out, Rauf would relish the opportunity to fight a Saracen, but one has to wonder whether Rauf is being considered by the court merely as an expendable commodity, something of an unwitting clown whose execution is only delayed so that a more splendid method can be used. And one has to wonder whether what is said of Rauf is said with the occasional cruel and knowing chuckle. The counter-argument to this is to note that Charles's reward to Rauf constitutes a genuine personal expense: three hundred pounds a year, armour, and sixty squires, not to mention the promise of a

feudal holding (lines 760-777). None of this is, however, offered unconditionally. The feudal holding is subject to the legalistic provisos of a bureaucracy generally foreign to the ideals of romance (and surely foreign to the ideals of our hero)--

> "... the nixt vacant, be ressonabill richt,
> That hapnis in France, quhair sa euer it fall,
> Forfaitour[38] or fre waird, that first cummis to hand,
> I gif the heir heritabilly..."
> (lines 761-764)

--and the knighthood requires the winning of spurs:

> "It war my will, worthy, thy schone that thow wan,
> And went with thir weryouris wythest in weir;
> Heir ar curagious Knichtis, suppois thay the nocht ken,
> For thy simpill degre that thow art in heir."
> (lines 768-671)

Rauf's own view of these honours is equivocal. There is a sense of gratitude to Charles and a desire not to let him down (note the characteristic eloquence of Rauf's expression, which imparts a convincing seriousness to his words)--

> "It war ane graceles gude that I war cummin to,
> Gif that the King hard on hicht
> That he had maid ane carll Knicht,
> Amang thir weryouris wicht,
> And docht nocht to do..."
> (lines 789-793)

--but there is also suspicion about the motives of the court at large:

> "Amang thir[39] Galȝart Gromis I am bot ane Gest;

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[38] Herrtage prints "Forfaltour", but this is an obvious misreading of a blotted <i> in the Lekpreuik print for an <l>.

[39] Herrtage prints "the", where "thir" is clear in the Lekpreuik print.

. . .
Sall neuer Lord lauch on loft, quhill my lyfe may lest,
That I for liddernes suld leif, and leuand besyde."
(lines 785-788)

Even if the evidence of Rauf's words here is considered alone, without recourse to the other points I have raised, Rauf's rewards and rewarding experiences from this point on must be respected for their potential for constituting more than just the light-hearted, lightweight, conclusion to his story which some commentators have seen.[40] Indeed, it is worth suggesting that RC may possess this ending, which is unparalleled in its analogues, for the very purpose of allowing its hero the opportunity of a tangible and more dignified personal demonstration of his worth.[41]

A major cause for a simplistic reading of the poem's

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[40] Sir William Craigie finds that "there is... a distinct falling-off of interest after the king has related his adventure to the assembled nobles and has conferred the honour of knighthood on Rauf to show his gratitude... and the piece ends rather lamely" (Craigie, "Scottish Alliterative Poems", p.236).

D.J. Williams is generally critical of the poem, but the essence of his criticism lies in an implicit view of a lack of thematic development through to the end of the poem: "the main theme [(the courteous behaviour expected of a knight)] slight, obvious, and insisted on rather than developed, becomes tedious" [D.J. Williams, "Alliterative Poetry in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries", in The Sphere History of Literature 1: The Middle Ages, edited by W.F. Bolton, (London, 1987), p.146].

[41] I have not found any of the analogues to conclude with events which occur beyond the bestowal of the heroes' reward(s) or which displace the climactic value of that event. For a comprehensive bibliography of analogues to Rauf, see Smyser, HSNPL 14, p.138, n.4. A good summary of the plots of many of the analogues is given by F.J. Child in The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, 5 vols (London, 1881-1898, reprinted New York, 1956), V, 67-75.

closing section may well be the sentimental appeal of the happy ending. Interpretative errors on a more factual basis may, however, be another significant cause. It is easy, for instance, to account Rauf a complete fool for his mistaking of a Saracen atop "ane cameill" for the Roland he had seen only the day before (lines 804-809).[42] There is obvious humour in the misidentification, but we must take care to credit our poet with incorporating into that humour more than just derision: although, as Ross rightly says, "the humour of the fight comes not from a sustained defiance of the conventions of chivalry, but from... facts... of Rauf's character"[43] there is in the humour an affectionate comprehension and demonstration of all that should (by now) be obvious as good and worthy in the collier's character. Rauf's indefatigable determination (to honour his challenge to Roland, and in the process to prove his knightly prowess) above all leads him to his errors.

> Vpon the morne airly, Schir Rauf wald not rest,
> Bot in Ryall array he reddyit him to ryde;
> "For to hald that I haue hecht I hope it be the best
> To ȝone busteous Beirne that boistit me to byde.
> Amang thir Galȝart Gromis I am bot ane Gest...."
> (lines 781-784)

The way this speech (the continuation of which I have already quoted) begins, completely unannounced, is a clever method of

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[42] Cf. Ross, who feels that the failure to acknowledge the significance of the camel "shows a lack of reasoning power" (p.211).

[43] Ross, p.209.

conveying the intensity of Rauf's feelings; he is either driven through anxiety to talk to himself, or perhaps he addresses his readers directly, as if to highlight the singular thematic importance of his plans. In addition to Rauf's own words, we are told that he "ruschit out of toun" (line 794) and "maid him full boun" to his destination (line 797). Given all this anxious haste, and given that, at the time of day previously appointed with Roland (line 802), Rauf sees, with a view obstructed by his visor (line 814) a mounted figure advancing aggressively ("With ane curagious countenance, and cruell to se", line 808), it is no wonder that Rauf mistakes the interloper's identity. We should also note that the "cameill", the most obvious anomaly which could have been noticed, is killed within the first moments of the combatants' meeting (line 807) and thus soon goes out of the picture;[44] from that point on, the combat is so fast, furious, and fearful, that any impulse to establish identities would surely succumb to simpler impulses of self-preservation.[45]

That Rauf has blundered into this duel is obvious, but it must also be stressed that Rauf's is a blunder based on

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[44] One has to wonder just how much this creature is in fact meant to figure in the comedy; in the only other instances in the poem in which the animal is mentioned, it is described as a "blonk" (line 810) and a "hors" (line 817).

[45] It should be noted also that when Roland does appear on the scene, Rauf fails immediately to identify him (lines 842-849).

admirable motives encouraged by an understandable misapprehension. Another indication of the strength and integrity of Rauf's determination is the fact that he keeps his appointment with Roland, whereas Roland (who does nonetheless eventually show up) might be said to have missed his. This is not a point to dwell on, for Roland never in fact verbalizes an agreement to meet with Rauf; even so, there is something to be said here on Rauf's behalf, for though he may know that the contest would have been one-sided, it remains that he has, in true chivalric spirit, wholly observed his commitment and Roland has not. Again, the comedy is tempered with some serious implications.

A further sophistication of the comedy in the duel between Rauf and Magog arises from a parodic (perhaps a better term is 'imitative') element in the basic narrative form. I noted early on that the descriptions of combat here in and of themselves could easily have been taken from 'authentic' romances. In this case we may have the influence of those episodes in which one knight fights his friend without knowing his true identity; there, the mutual concealment of identity usually has tragic ramifications, as in the case of the brothers Balin and Balan, or of Ywain and Gawain, or, indeed, of Roland and the blinded Oliver in the Chanson de Roland. What begins, in the eyes of the opponents, as a conventional confrontation ends with a sad realization of the morbidity of the contest; there can be no victor. In

Rauf's case, what begins as a combat with an opponent believed to be from the same camp--a combat which perhaps is meant to highlight the serious side of Charles's "I hald the counsall full euill that Cristin man slais" (line 749)--ends with a happy realization of the fundamental rightness of the contest; Christianity can now be the victor.

> "Now sall thow think it richt sone, thow hes met with me,
> Gif Mahoun or Termagant may mantene my micht."
> Schir Rauf was blyth of that word, & blenkit with his face;
> "Thow sayis thow art ane Saragine?
> Now thankit be Drichtine,
> That ane of vs sall neuer hine
> Vndeid in the place."
> (lines 852-858)

We never do find out who would be the victor, for Roland eventually shows up and intervenes; but an important point has nevertheless been drawn from the duel, one as critical of Rauf as it is of the court which may have jestingly driven him to the combat. Christianity, that essential cause in all conventional Charlemagne matière, is championed here only as a mistake, where initially Rauf's sense of personal honour was the sole cause. There can be no doubt that Christianity is important in the poem; our story ends with the conversion and marriage of Magog and the establishment of a hospital in the name of Saint Julian. That is to say, Rauf's victory over oppression from all fronts has, in the end, a Christian impetus; so the inadvertent defense of the faith is a point to be taken seriously. To be sure, the circumstances of the victory will always remain humorous, but it must be admitted

that this is a sardonic humour; the episode is laughable in all senses of the word.

It is easy further to highlight the sardonic in this part of the poem by pointing out the obvious weakness in the victory over Magog; namely that he is more or less bribed into conversion by that paragon of Crusading integrity, Roland, rather than won over through sheer martial prowess, eloquence of theological exposition, or miracles, as is the case in such 'conversion' episodes as we find them in the Firumbras and Otuel romances. The motivation for Magog's (sudden) change of heart is unmistakable:

Rol. "In Christ and thow will trow, thow takis nane outray."
. . .
Mag. "Breif me not with 3our boist, bot mak 3ow baith boun,
Batteris on baldly, the best, I 3ow pray."
. . .
Rol. "I rid that thow hartfully forsaik thy Mahoun;
Fy on that foull Feind, for fals is thy fay!
Becum Cristin, Schir Knicht, and on Christ call;
It is my will thow conuert...."
. . .
Mag. Schir Rolland, I rek nocht of thy Rauingis;
Thow dois bot reuerence to thame that rekkis it nocht..."
. . .
Rol. "Wald thow conuert the in hy, and couer the of sin,
Thow suld haue mair profite and mekle pardoun;
Riche Douchereis seir to be sesit in,
During quhill day dawis, that neuer will gang doun;
Wed ane worthie to wyfe and weild hir with win,
Ane of the riche of our Realme be that ressoun;
The gentill Duches, Dame Iane, that clamis be hir kin
Angeos and vther landis, with mony riche toun.
Thus may thow, and thow will, wirk the best wise,
I do the out of dispair,
In all France is nane sa fair
Als scho is, appeirand air
To twa Douchereis."

Mag. "I rek nocht of thy riches, Schir Rolland the Knicht,
. . .

Thy Gold[46] nor thy Grassum set I bot licht;
Bot gif thy God be sa gude as I heir the say,
I will forsaik Mahoun, and tak me to his micht,
Euer mair perpetuallie as he that mair may.
Heir with hart and gude will my treuth I the plicht,
That I sall lelely leif on thy Lord ay...."
(lines 880-944)

Though Magog sets "bot licht" the riches offered as an incentive to his conversion, he shows no disinclination later to marrying Jane (lines 961-962). Note moreover the way Jane is described with one of those marvellously ironic 'equations of opposites' which characterise this poem (even the rhyme points the equation): "... is nane sa fair/ ... appeirand air".

A temptation with this final section of the poem is to see Rauf and Magog equated as rogues brought into the courtly fold.[47] A more revealing equation is, however, to be drawn between Roland and Magog. Magog is, to begin with, like Roland, and unlike Rauf, an experienced knight; he may well have fought in the same battles as Roland (cf. lines 900-901); he is also, like Roland, a man of formidable stature ("The maist man of all", line 805), a messenger of kings (see

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[46] Herrtage prints "God", as the word appears in the Lekpreuik print; but this obviously conflicts with the sense of the following line. I have accepted Riddy's emendation, for the reasons she cites (p.355):

> God is an obvious error, possibly due to unfamiliarity with the common ME alliterative phrase gold and gersum 'gold and treasure'....

[47] Cf. Riddy, p.95: "by the end the two outsiders Rauf and Magog--peasant and pagan--... have both earned the right to serve Charlemagne as true peers of Rolland".

lines 907-908). And it can be seen from the 'bribery' scene above that both seem to think along the same lines; for them the holy war has become a war in which rewards are implicitly obtained through materialistic deals, not necessarily through feats of arms. Again, this is a point which is funny and yet unfunny, unfunny when we view it in effect as a (continued) dismissal of the chivalric ideals which Rauf was in the process of upholding. It is easy to see now how someone like Rauf, who might actually desire to fight "Goddis fais" may well, as we suspected earlier, be considered by a rather jaded court to be an expendable commodity.

There are, nevertheless, grounds for accusing Rauf himself of having 'sold out' to the worldly sophistication of the court, because, in the closing stanza of the poem, he is seen to accept his full knighthood (as reward for an essentially indecisive battle; line 960) and to receive a marshalship of France (because the court, whose judgement can hardly be called ethical, "thocht him richt worthie", line 968). It is important, however, to note that the last lines of the poem redeem the rest of the poem's implicit championing of the collier and show him to possess that which no one in the court has convincingly demonstrated, namely genuine good will to strangers:[48]

> [He] foundit ane fair place quhair he met the King,
> Euer mair perpetually,

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[48] I.e. by the time Rauf is shown some goodwill, he is no longer a stranger, but a known commodity.

In the name of Sanct Iuly,
That all that wantis harbery,
Suld haue gestning.
(lines 971-975)

Even in these final lines we cannot escape the humour of the story, for we know that Rauf's form of "gestning" requires submission to his rigorous arbitration on courtesy.

It has been claimed that the dispatch with which Rauf's fate is dealt makes for a disappointingly brief, anticlimactic, conclusion. There is some truth to this inasmuch as this is the least humorous part of the poem; even the irony in "gestning" becomes evident only upon reflection. Given the narrative skills of our poet, however, it is difficult to see this as anything but a deliberate feature, probably having thematic significance. As J.A. Burrow notes, "most burlesques get their best effects early on, before the joke has begun to seem laboured and predictable"; better authors know when to stop with just enough of a good thing, as Chaucer does with Sir Thopas.[49] The thematic point of the brief ending may be that the court continues to deal with Rauf as it has always done, in a summary, certainly not caring, way. Recall that Rauf's reward has been by and large promissory, conditional; a tension and doubt about the court's true motives has continually been nurtured. And the tension is not resolved until the final stanza. Even then, we find that a post which meets the conditions of the promise

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[49] Burrow, Yearbook of English Studies, p.48.

("the nixt vacant... that first cummis to hand", lines 761-762) is given further judgement from the court before it is eventually granted, as if to imply that the court still does not have much respect for Rauf and had tacitly reserved the right to renege (lines 964-967). Perhaps, moreover, the less said about Rauf's reaction to the reward (beyond noting his founding of the hospital), the better. Though a character humorous for his eccentric foibles, Rauf remains something of a hero for his patronage of ideals, his suspicion of material display, and his exposure of courtly hypocricy. Anything noted beyond a gesture which essentially embodies all of these impulses would (though consistent with the poem's generally suspicious view of human nature) perhaps be counter-productive to the 'grander' socio-ethical interests of the poem; in the last end the poet has chosen an advocacy of his man.

I hope my study of Rauf Coilȝear, with its illustration of a serious side to the poem, has not seemed to obscure or underrate the humour for which the poem is generally credited. Indeed, the most important point to be drawn from the study is that the seriousness qualifies the humour, and that the humour must in turn be respected for its depth and range, and for its thematic potential. There is more in the humour than simply a derisive portrayal of a humble merchant blundering his way amongst royalty. Perhaps we find what

Addison calls "the several Provocatives of Laughter in Men of superior Sense and Knowledge" which exist beyond mere derision.[50] It could be argued that many species of humour, 'low', 'high', 'black', slapstick, and satire are present. I would hope that the limitations of such statements as follows are now evident:

> In [Gawain and the Green Knight] 'cortaysye' is a Christian virtue of deep significance both to the poet and to his audience. In Rauf Coilȝear it has become a question of who goes through a doorway first--an occasion for comedy.[51]

Though it makes for more work in trying to establish the sen of the poem, I hope it has been demonstrated that more intricate comparisons with a work like GGK are the last sorts of studies to be discouraged. Certainly to the Rauf Coilȝear poet, and probably to his audience, 'cortaysye' (with special reference to its social, as opposed to personal, qualifications) is a virtue of deep significance.

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[50] Joseph Addison, The Spectator, No.47 (Tuesday, April 24, 1711), in The Spectator, edited by Donald F. Bond, 5 vols (Oxford, 1965), I, 201.

[51] Turville-Petre, Alliterative Revival, p.117.

CONCLUSION

The variety of narrative, technique, and theme displayed by the four poems studied here, their varied use of sources, and the varied ways in which they can at times claim some sophistication, give the lie to sweeping condemnations of the English Charlemagne romances. To repeat my caveats, this is not to say that the four romances should now be hailed as long-lost masterpieces; in quality, scope, or power, they cannot compare with such works as Gawain and the Green Knight, Orfeo, or the alliterative Morte Arthure. But I hope it has been demonstrated that they merit more than the passing comment they usually receive in studies of ME romance, and that to ignore individual poems within the Charlemagne group on the basis of a general condemnation of the group is to lose interesting and informative contributions to the understanding of ME romance.

For concrete evidence of the way in which ME romancers went about translating, composing and revising their work--and the ways in which they were critical of, and occasionally capable of improving upon, their models--what better example is there than Sir Ferumbras? At the very least, the implications of this text for the study of rhyme and alliterative 'formulæ' ought not to be ignored. As a source for the study of ME translational methods, moreover,

Ferumbras should be recommended alongside the examples often cited, such as Ywain and Gawain, Launfal (and its variants), and Bevis of Hamtoune. It is truly remarkable that in modern times only A.C. Baugh has paid any kind of attention to what the poem's unique manuscript(s) might tell us about composition. I have also demonstrated that the work can be recommended simply as entertaining. The Fierabras story is lively and suspenseful, and the Ashmole scribe does full justice to it.

The ME fragment of The Song of Roland, for all the damage it appears to have suffered by the time it was copied into the Lansdowne MS, shows us that the heroic essence of the Chanson could be appreciated by a late romancer. That romancer nevertheless managed to impart, with some success—for many of his lines come across as confident and distinctive—the emotive power of his own more 'humane' view of the heroes, their less noble fellows, and their conflicts. These findings are not entirely new. Crosland hints at them when she says that "some credit must be given to the author for passing on to us even the faintest echo of the original",[1] and in her reference to how "romance has crept in". But I hope it is now possible to see that the poem achieves its distinctive qualities intelligently, with a certain method; the poet has taken some trouble over the way in which he deploys related image patterns, sententious statements, and conventional topoi. I would risk taking the

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[1] Crosland, Old French Epic, p.231.

opposite view to Gaston Paris, and claim that the fragmentary condition of this text is something to be regretted.

The Sege of Melayne shows us an extreme development of ME romance, to say the least. There are other romances which we would call 'crusading' romances--Richard Coer de Lion and The Siege of Jerusalem for instance, and of course the other Charlemagne romances--but only for Melayne, I think, could it be said that the promotion of some sort of crusade (even if only spiritual, and not martial) is the focus of meaning, and the motive behind the poem's several extraordinary features. I have described at length the similarities Melayne has with literature with a possible crusading connection. The poem may also be compared with an example from the visual arts, which, like Melayne, offers a fervent account of war against God's enemies interlaced with exempla. As Paul Binski notes, the murals of the Painted Chamber in the medieval Palace of Westminster illustrated a "combination of military events and moralising stories".

> [One group of murals] comprised an extensive series of Old Testament stories arranged around the room in registers with bands of French inscription between them.... The surviving imagery was unusual: a large cycle of paintings about Judas Maccabeus... was set above paintings concerning good and bad kings and prophets, illustrating passages from II Kings, Judges, and II Maccabees.[2]

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[2] Paul Binski, "Copies of murals formerly in the Painted Chamber in the medieval Palace of Westminster", in Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200-1400, edited by Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (exhibition catalogue of the Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1987), p.341.

The murals' patron, Edward I, was a sometime crusader, and is described by one historian as inclined to have been "reckless of dangers" and "hot and impulsive".[3] Edward would have had much in common with Archbishop Turpin, and perhaps with the author of Melayne himself; and the author may well have seen in his poem what Edward must surely have seen in his murals: a model for a distinctive approach to life and faith.

Rauf Coilȝear shows us, if we look beyond its obvious humour, that it has more in common with the 'Gawain-group' poems than simply its verse-form. As with those poems, there is a serious concern with the value of courtesy and trust, and, most notably like Gawain and the Green Knight, there is an implicit critique of the ability of the court to sustain these values. In this case, it is left to a non-aristocratic hero to attempt (at the risk of his dignity, and possibly his life) to uphold values which should be the pride of the court, but which have, it seems, long since been lost by that court.

We can only speculate about why the RC poet chose to set this story in the court of Charlemagne rather than in the court of Arthur (since the influence of stories of Gawain is likely). One generalization which I think is true about the Charlemagne romances as a group is that they are largely heroic works in which the refinements of courtoisie, such as

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[3] B. Wilkinson, The Later Middle Ages in England, 1216-1485 (Harlow, Essex, 1969), p.83.

the manners of sophisticated diplomacy (like those that are put to the test in the 'bedroom' scenes of GGK), an individual concern for personal spiritual improvement (the essence of courtly romance, if we accept Auerbach's paradigm),[4] and the service of women, do not figure significantly;[5] the focus is (with varying emphasis) on a loyalty to fellow defenders of the Faith and to the Faith itself. The choice of a Carolingian model, then, may have something to do with the elimination of distracting accidentals, an attempt to concentrate on the foundations of courtly achievement. The result, of course, is a not altogether humorous criticism of the court's inability to be courtly in the true sense of the term; a charcoal burner can be more true to his word and more enthusiastic about defending his Faith than anyone else. It might therefore be possible to claim for RC more than a superficial link with

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[4] See Auerbach, Mimesis, pp.134-136:

> [the task of the hero] has [no] purpose but that of self-realization.... Trial through adventure is the real meaning of the [hero's] ideal existence.... [The world of romance] is a world specifically designed to give the [hero] opportunity to prove himself.

[5] Cf. John Finlayson, Chaucer Review, pp.169-170.

> Where love enters these works... it is not love of the courtly type and the adventures are in no way motivated by this love, though the hero may find his way out of a tricky situation because of love.... Social courtesy and refined laws of combat have nothing to do with events in these works. Indeed, Froissart's Chronicles are frequently more "romantic" than the Charlemagne "romances".

the Charlemagne group (though we must remember that the championing of a non-aristocratic hero is wholly uncharacteristic); while burlesquing elements of these romances, RC also respects and emulates them as traditional authorities on certain basic values.

In all of my discussions of these romances I have been aware of the problem of appearing to overrate them. I have tried throughout to praise with moderation; but it must be stressed that none of the four romances studied here deserves such epithets as "uncongenial", "undistinguished", and "contemptible". If moderation at times appears to have yielded to overpraise, I ask the reader to bear in mind Samuel Johnson's comments on that most pernicious of all the "persecutors of merit", the "Man of Moderation".

> The author he knows to be a man of diligence, who perhaps does not sparkle with the fire of Homer, but has the judgment to discover his own deficiences, and to supply them by the help of others; and in his opinion modesty is a quality so amiable and rare, that it ought to find a patron wherever it appears, and may justly be preferred by the publick suffrage to petulant wit and ostentatious literature.
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> He who thus discovers failings with unwillingness, and extenuates the faults which cannot be denied, puts an end at once to doubt and vindication; his hearers repose upon his candour and veracity, and admit the charge without allowing the excuse.[6]

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[6] Samuel Johnson, The Rambler, No. 144 (Saturday, August 3, 1751), in Samuel Johnson: Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, third edition, edited by Bertrand H. Bronson (New York, 1971), p.115.

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