CHARACTERISATION

IN THE CHANSON DE GESTE OF

GIRART DE VIENNE

by

Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube

By

KATHLEEN ROBINSON, B.A.

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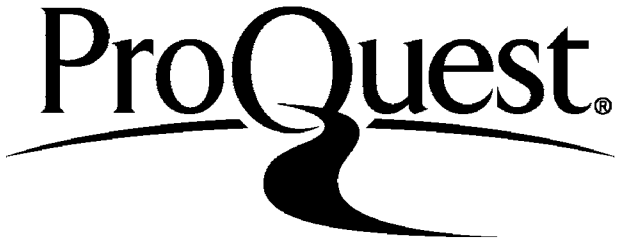

CHARACTERISATION IN THE CHANSON DE GESTE OF GIRART DE VIENNE, BY BERTRAND DE BAR-SUR-AUBE.

Although in a considerable number of Chansons de Geste the characters are stereotyped, and lacking in elasticity, there are others in which the study of the characters is of real interest.

The poem chosen for this study is Girart de Vienne. An examination of this poem shows that the author introduces a certain number of heroes who appear in turn in the foreground of the action. Some have violent characters, like Renier de Genvres, Aimeri, and Roland. Others are more moderate, like Girart de Vienne and Olivier. A few women characters, somewhat sketchily outlined, appear in the background.

In spite of the comparative uniformity of his characters, Bertrand has succeeded in giving to almost all a distinct individuality, and a certain realistic vigour, while from time to time he gives proof of real psychological penetration.

Such a study helps us to enter more fully into the spirit of the poem, and to a better understanding of types of men and women, drawn not without skill, who do not differ greatly from more modern types.

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INTRODUCTION

W. W. Comfort, speaking of the characters in the Chansons de geste as a whole, says: "Their conventionality and unvarying recurrence enable us, without violence, to divide them conveniently into types."[1] In a considerable number of Chansons de geste, no doubt, the characters are no more than types representing the various classes of men in the feudal world - the King, the noble hero, the traitor, and so on.

In others, however, the author, gifted with a certain amount of psychological penetration, has succeeded in creating characters which, though they may still be placed in categories, possess individuality and life. The study of these characters is of real interest.

The poem chosen for this study is Girart de Vienne, by the "gentis clers",[2] Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube. According

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[1] Character types in the Chansons de geste. P.M.L.A. XXI, p.282.

[2] L.101.

to Demaison[1], it was written at the beginning of the 13th century, between the years 1205 and 1225, and belongs, therefore, to a period of political centralisation under the Capetians, during which, "the tendency of the literature being . . . just the opposite of the political tendency, the movement is toward individualism and away from national unity of action. The interest centres in the fortunes of a feudal family or of a single hero."[2] That feudal family or single hero, moreover, is usually in conflict with the royal power: "Self-aggrandizement and armed opposition to the king were perfectly compatible with the highest heroism and the noblest qualities of character."[3] Yet, though the hero may be disloyal to his king, he generally remains loyal to his family.

But in spite of this tendency to put the family before the king, the tradition of feudal loyalty to the overlord continues to exercise a strong influence; the result is a conflict of loyalties which may play an important part in the action of the poem.

Such is the case in Girart de Vienne. Its main subject is a war brought about by the determination of all

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[1] Aymeri de Narbonne. Vol. I, p. LXXXI.

[2] Op. cit. p.1, note 1. p. 295

[3] Ibid. p.308

the members of a family to avenge an insult to one of their number, which is felt to be a stain on the honour of the whole family. Yet so strongly do certain members of this family feel the pull of feudal loyalty that even when fighting against their Emperor they desire to make peace, and when at last victory is within their reach they make their submission.

So far then, the action springs from the characters of the people concerned. The same is true of the entire poem; the basis of the action is not circumstantial, but psychological. The insult which causes the war is provoked by the prejudices of Girart himself. The subsequent behaviour of Girart's family outrages Charlemagne's royal dignity, and his determination to punish the offenders brings about a seven-years' war. The course of events narrated in the poem, then, is decided entirely by the wills and passions of the characters.

Since Girart and his family, the heroes of the poem, are rebels against the Emperor, the work falls into the category of Chansons de desmesure. But here the desmesure is far less violent than in Chansons such as Ogier le Danois, Girart de Roussillon, Raoul de Cambrai, and Doon de Mayence; although the provocation given to Girart de Vienne by the Emperor and his family is no less than that given to these

more violent heroes. The fact is, that although certain members of Girart's family are almost as uncontrolled as Ogier and Raoul, others, including Girart himself, conform rather to the type of the preudom, the more moderate, balanced character.

How far can this and other aspects of the characterisation of the poem be attributed to the intention of the poet? Or how much is due to chance only? Is the modern reader justified in imputing to Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube a conscious attempt to create individual characters, or is he merely reading into a thirteenth-century poem his own twentieth-century notions of characterisation?

In a case where a considerable amount of evidence points to a consistent, individual treatment of character, it seems only reasonable to suppose that the poet has deliberately moulded his characters in accordance with a previously conceived idea of them. The object of this study is to attempt to show that the principal characters of Girart de Vienne, in spite of a certain uniformity, are real individuals, whose treatment is so consistent as to preclude the idea of its being the result of chance.

In general, no statements will be advanced which are not amply supported by examples from the text. Any which might depend on a personal impression or interpretation will be indicated as such.

As the course of events in the poem is somewhat complex, a summary of the action will precede the actual study of the characters. The latter fall naturally into three groups: first, the large group of Girart and his family; second, Charlemagne and his nephew Roland; and third, the women characters. When these have been considered in some detail, it will be possible to draw a general conclusion as to the nature of the characterisation in the poem.

CHAPTER I

Summary of the Action of the Poem

The first scene of the poem takes place at Monglane, at Easter time. Long wars against the Saracens have exhausted the resources of Garin de Monglane, but the situation is unexpectedly relieved when his four young sons, Hernaut, Milon, Renier and Girart, capture a Saracen treasure-train. The four boys decide to leave home to seek their fortunes.[1]

Hernaut, the eldest, inherits the lands of his uncle, the Count of Beaulande, marries, and settles down there. Milon makes himself master of Puille, Romengne, Palerne[2], and Sicily. Renier and Girart, the two youngest brothers, left with no immediate hope of finding lands, set off for Charlemagne's court. On the way they are entertained for a night at Cluny by the Abbé Morant, who, on hearing their story provides them with new clothes, so that "plus en seront

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[1] It is to become a family tradition for the sons of the family to win their own lands. Hernaut's son Aimeri conquers Narbonne for himself. (Aymeri de Narbonne). Later he sends his own sons away penniless to make their fortunes. (Li Nerbonois, LL.43-47). In Le Charroi de Nimes, Aimeri's son Bernart of Brebant disinherits his two sons for the same reason (LL. 622-625).

[2] Apulia, Romagna and Palermo.

en toz leus ennorez."[1]

They reach Rheims, where the royal court is being held, in safety, but for the first week they can find no opportunity of presenting themselves to the Emperor. At last Renier insists that they shall go to court to demand fodder for their horses. They are churlishly received by Charlemagne's servants, and after a good deal of abuse on both sides, Renier slays the Seneschal with a blow of his fist. The rest of the royal servants fly in terror, and the two brothers return home with all the fodder they need.

The next morning Renier and Girart return to court while the Emperor is at Mass, and again one of Charlemagne's servants - his doorkeeper this time - enters into a dispute with Renier and falls a victim to the young man's fist. Charlemagne, coming out of his chapel, angrily inquires who has committed the outrage. Renier, however, defends his action so well that the Emperor's anger is somewhat appeased,[2]

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[1] L.398.

Huon de Bordeaux and his brother Gérard are also entertained and given clothes by the Abbé of Cluny, on their way to Charlemagne's court. (Huon de Bordeaux, pp.19-20)

[2] Huon de Bordeaux, too, on his arrival at court, is forced to justify the slaying of a man. (Huon de Bordeaux, p.31). He, too, is successful in appeasing Charlemagne's anger, until the latter discovers that the dead man is his own son Charlot.

though he proves unwilling to take the brothers into his service, and only consents to do so when all his barons plead their cause. The brothers pay homage to the Emperor, after which Renier is knighted, and Girart becomes a squire. Even then the evil-minded Renart de Poitiers tries to poison the Emperor's mind against them by recounting their father's misdeeds, and by prophesying that one day Charlemagne will rue his kindness to them:

> "'Or voi tel chose que vos comparroiz chier.
> Trop fetes ja ces danziaus sorhaucier.
> Encor .i. jor vos feront il irier.'"[1]

This prophecy is amply fulfilled.

Some time now elapses, during which Renier serves Charlemagne well and faithfully, ridding the country round Paris of many gangs of robbers, so that the Emperor finally appoints him "conseillier de sa chambre."[2] Renier is content with this position until, at a great court held at Pentecost, a messenger from the South brings news of the prosperity of Hernaut and Milon. Renier promptly determines to leave Charlemagne's service unless a fief is given to him at once. A stormy scene ensues, which culminates in two savage attacks made by Renier on Doon le barbé and

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[1] LL. 770-772.

[2] LL.881.

A similar prophecy is made when Charlemagne knights Renaut de Montauban and his three brothers, and the outcome proves the truth of this prophecy also.

"K. les adouba l'emperere au fier vis
Et dona bonez armez et bons cevax de pris.

Renart de Poitiers, the brothers' old enemy.[1]

Girart, terrified for his brother's sake, humbles himself to beg Charlemagne for mercy, and is bitterly reproached by Renier for doing so. Fortunately, one of the barons, Henri d'Orléans, now takes up Renier's cause, suggesting that he shall be given the vacant fief of Genvres. Charlemagne agrees, and Renier departs from Court.

Girart remains with the Emperor for some time, till during a hunting party news arrives of the death of the Duke of Burgundy. Thereupon Charlemagne calls Girart, and gives him an arrow in token that the fief of Burgundy and the widowed Duchess are now his.[2] The party then returns to Laon, where Girart is knighted by the Emperor.

Mes miex venist au roi que lez eüst ocis;
Et perdi maint vassal deu regne saint Denis,
Si comme orrez encu, se je sui bien oïs."

(Quegwer: Der estre teil der Chanson der iiii fils Aymon. p.50)

[1]The frequency of these scenes of fisticuffs in the Chansons de Geste is remarkable. As the barons were forbidden to carry arms in the Royal presence they were reduced to this undignified - and often fatal - way of settling their disputes. It is with a blow of his fist that Guillaume d'Orange kills the traitor Arneïs in the chapel at Aix. (Couronnement Louis, LL. 130-133). In Renaut de Montauban a dispute arising from a game of chess leads to the death of Charlemagne's nephew Bertolai. (Geipel. Der Zweite Teil des Buef d'Aigremont, p.43)

[2]The bow, too, was used as a symbol of investiture. In the Chanson de Roland Charlemagne presents Roland with a bow as a sign that he is to command the rearguard of the army. (Bedier's edition: LL. 780-2.)

The Duchess of Burgundy arrives at Court; Girart is presented to her as her future husband, and she accepts his hand. Unfortunately, Charlemagne suddenly decides to marry her himself. The Duchess, who prefers Girart, asks for a night in which to consider the matter. She then returns to her lodgings, sends for Girart, and explains briefly that she wishes to marry him. Girart, however, scandalized that a woman should propose marriage, refuses point blank and leaves her abruptly. The next morning, when she again sends for him, he refuses to come. The Duchess accepts the Emperor's hand, and the ceremony is performed at once, in spite of Girart's protests that the Duchess and her lands are his by right.[1] The barons, however, unite in begging Charlemagne to grant another fief to Girart, and the Emperor consents to give him Vienne.

Girart has now to render formal thanks by kissing

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[1] A similar situation is the initial donnée of Girart de Roussillon. Charlemagne marries Elissent, daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople, who has been promised to Girart and the result is a long war during which Girart is besieged in Roussillon. (Analysis of Girart de Roussillon: Bédier: Légendes Epiques. Vol. II, pp. 4-25).

the Emperor's foot.[1] In order to do so he enters the room in which the royal pair are already in bed. The fire is burning low, and as Girart kneels at the bedside, the new Queen contrives to substitute her own foot for that of the Emperor, so that Girart unwittingly renders humble thanks to her.

The next morning Girart leaves for Vienne with a large household of knights provided by the Emperor. On the way he stays for a night at Cluny, where he amply repays the Abbé's former kindness. At length he reaches Vienne,

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[1]Flach distinguishes between this ceremony and that of homage proper. When the overlord grants a fief to his vassal, the latter "lui doit de la reconnaissance, un redoublement d'affection, de dévouement, d'amour féodal, et, suivant les règles de la courtoisie, il le lui exprime par des remerciements publics que les textes appellent hommage comme la recommandation, mais qui ne constituent qu'un acte d'humilité et de gratitude. Vous le verrez embrasser ainsi le pied ou le bras de son seigneur."

As additional examples of this gesture, Flach quotes passages from Raoul de Cambrai and Ogier de Danois. When Gibouin thanks the King for the hand of Aalais:

"De ci au pié li baisa ⌈le soler⌋ (L. 119)

Ogier, thanking King Desier for his favours:

"li pié li volt baisier." (L. 3416)

(Flach: Origines de l'Ancienne France. Vol. II, p. 532)

where he settles down, after marrying Guibourc, the sister of King Oton. Again some time elapses.

One day three boys ride up to Girart's castle: their leader is Aimeri, the son of Hernaut de Beaulande. Aimeri stays with his uncle until the following spring, when he sets off with his two companions for the Emperor's Court. The three reach St. Denis after a victorious encounter with a gang of robbers - an exploit which ensures a favourable reception for Aimeri at Court. Charlemagne, in fact, agrees to knight him in a few days' time.

The Emperor then sets off for Paris, leaving the Queen behind, with some of the barons, among whom is Aimeri. During the evening meal she succumbs to the temptation of relating the story of her insult to Girart, which so enrages Aimeri that he hurls a knife at her. Fortunately, his foot slips on a cushion and he misses her. Before he can resume his attack he is seized and thrown out by the barons. Calling his companions, he sets out at full speed for Vienne.

Girart, on hearing his nephew's story, swears to ravage France in revenge for his shame. A family conference is called, and while it is taking place at Vienne fresh provocation arrives, for messengers from Charlemagne summon Girart to Court to pay his neglected dues. Garin de Monglane decides that the whole family shall go to Court at Châlons to demand satisfaction from the Emperor.

A stormy scene takes place at Court; high words give

place to blows when Doon de Monloon rashly insults Garin. Milon flushes with wrath, Renier throws off his fur cloak for action,[1] and Girart draws his sword. Aimeri, quicker than any of them, beats out Doon's brains with a club. All is at once confusion: Girart and his family succeed in cutting their way from the Court and set off in full flight to Vienne, closely pursued by Charlemagne. Twice Renier stops to fight single combats with French knights, and once the whole family pauses while Girart hurriedly knights Aimeri. At length they reach Vienne in safety, and Charlemagne is foiled in his attempt to take them.[2]

The next morning they proceed to sack the neighbouring city of Macon - an act of reprisal which only increases Charlemagne's anger. The Queen has already been

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[1] The same gesture is made by Ganelon when he prepares to fight Roland in the presence of the Emperor:

> "E li quens Guenes en fut mult anguisables.
> De sun col getet ses grandes pels de martre.
> Et est remes en sun blialt de palie."
>
> (Chanson de Roland. LL. 280-282)

[2] A similar flight takes place in Renaut de Montauban, when Renaut and his brothers are pursued from Court by Charlemagne. Single combats occur during this flight also.

(Geipel: Der Zweite Teil des Buef d'Aigremont, p.44, LL. 2371 sqq.)

sent back to France to collect an army: on hearing of this latest outrage the Emperor sends more messengers to gather all the available man-power of France. They arrive at last - a hundred thousand knights - and Charlemagne, after retaking Macon, lays siege to Vienne. Girart hastily sends messengers to recall his brothers, who have left for their homes.

In the meantime Aimeri and Girart make a sortie which is so successful that they are able to penetrate the enemy camp as far as the Royal tent. Charlemagne is forced to take refuge elsewhere, but the Queen, while making her escape, is seized by Aimeri. Girart draws his sword to slay her on the spot, but Aimeri persuades him to carry her off to Vienne. Before they have gone far, however, Charlemagne succeeds in rescuing her.[1]

Eventually Girart's brothers arrive at Vienne with their armies. Renier is accompanied by his two children,

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[1] After this the Queen disappears entirely from the story; and, what is more surprising, the incident of the insult is never alluded to again. Charlemagne's demand for dues from Girart, and Girart's refusal to pay them, now become the causes of the war. This incoherence in the story seems to indicate that the poet has tried, without complete success, to blend two stories into one.

Jean Misrahi deals with this question in an article entitled: "Girard de Vienne et la geste de Guillaume." (Medium Aevum. Feb. 1935).

Olivier and Aude. Immediately after their entrance into the castle, Olivier, looking out towards the enemy camp, sees a young knight who has ridden out of Charlemagne's army to hunt the river birds by the Rhône. His falcon flies across the river into Girart's orchard, and Olivier determines to have it. Riding out to the orchard, he calls the hawk down on to his own wrist. Its owner, however, who is no other than Roland, Charlemagne's nephew, fords the river and persuades Olivier to restore his property. Nevertheless, high words pass between the two before they part.

Each on his return is met by a reproachful uncle for failing to come to blows during the encounter. Roland excuses himself by explaining that he had gone unarmed; Olivier's reply is to demand his knighthood. It is conferred at once by Girart, after which the young knight proves his valour by slaying one of Charlemagne's barons. A second fight takes plaee between Aimeri and Roland, in which Aimeri loses his horse and is obliged to return to Vienne on foot.

The next day Roland obtains permission from his uncle to set up a quintaine. Olivier sees the preparations, and determines to join in the sport. Accordingly, he rides out of Vienne, joins unobtrusively in the press of knights about the quintaine, and contrives to tilt at it first. He overturns it with one blow. Charlemagne, much

impressed by the performance, sends a dozen knights to find out Olivier's name and reward him suitably. Olivier, thinking that he is discovered, strikes the first of them dead, calls out his name, and turns in flight towards Vienne, pursued by the enemy. Unfortunately, his horse stumbles and throws him, but he quickly remounts, and Girart soon comes to his rescue with a large force. A general battle follows.

Roland, in search of Olivier, encounters the ladies of Vienne, who, with Aude at their head, have come out to watch the jousts. Roland takes one look at Aude, forgets Olivier, seizes her and begins to ride off with her. Her cries soon bring Olivier to the rescue, and a duel takes place in which Roland is discomfited and Aude released.

The battle continues. Olivier fights first Count Lanbert of Berry, Charlemagne's godson, whom he takes prisoner, and then the redoubtable Ogier himself, whom he unhorses. At length Girart sounds the retreat to Vienne.

Acting on Olivier's advice, Girart agrees to free Lanbert, in the hope of obtaining peace from Charlemagne. Olivier himself accompanies the Count back to the Royal camp, to ask for terms. Charlemagne, however, remains obdurate in spite of Olivier's eloquence, refusing to consider making peace until Girart has been completely humiliated. At this point Roland enters the tent, followed by the Peers, and takes up the argument with Olivier. The

latter challenges him to a single combat on an island in the river, the result of which is to decide the war. Roland accepts, but so great is his fury with Olivier that he has to be led from the tent by the Peers to prevent his attacking then and there. He retires to sulk in his own tent.

Meanwhile, a skirmish breaks out between Olivier and some of the barons; Olivier is enabled to escape by the help of Lanbert and of his cousin Garin, who is fighting on Charlemagne's side.[1] Girart comes to meet his nephew with a large force, and another battle ensues. The chief incident is a fight between Charlemagne and Girart, who does not recognise his adversary until he has almost stunned him with a blow on the head. When he realises with whom he has been fighting, he begs for Charlemagne's pardon, but the Emperor gives him no reply.

When at last Girart retreats to Vienne, Charlemagne orders an immediate attack on the city, although he has no adequate siege artillery. The assault affords an opportunity for a conversation between Aude on the wall and Roland beneath it.

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[1] The possibilities of the situation caused by the splitting-up of families in Civil War are fully developed in Renaut de Montauban, when Turpin and Ogier refuse to obey Charlemagne's order to hang Renaut's brother Richard, who has been taken prisoner, because he is their cousin. In both these cases the duty to the family outweighs all other considerations. In La Prise de Cordres, Vivien, who attacks his nephew, though in ignorance, is called "enragiés"

During the night the outcome of the fight between Roland and Olivier is revealed to Charlemagne in an allegorical dream.

Early the next morning Olivier puts on a set of beautifully wrought armour given to him by the Jew Joachim, and crosses to the island in a boat. Roland soon joins him, and after Olivier has done all in his power to obtain peace from him, but without success, the fight begins.[1]

Its course is anxiously watched by both sides, but by none with greater concern than by Aude, who is torn by her love for both warriors.

Both horses are soon killed, and then Olivier's too finely-tempered sword breaks, upon which Roland bids him send for another and a bottle of wine. The boatman

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and "Deu enemis". (LL. 1905-1906).

[1] Among the many examples of single combats, two others at least are fought on islands: that between Tristan and the Morholt (Eilhart: edition Lichtenstein, LL. 790-930) and that between Balin and Balan (Merlin. Vol. II, pp. 47-52).

The fight between Roland and Olivier recalls the four days' struggle between Cuchulain and Ferdiad, who, though sworn friends, are obliged to fight to the death as champions of Ulster and Connaught. This fight, which takes place not on an island, but at a ford of the river Dee, is related in the Tain Bo Cuailgne.

takes the message to Girart, who sends back the wine, and a squire with three swords. Of these Olivier chooses Hauteclere, which was given by Joachim. He then looks round to see Roland's life in danger from the squire, who is about to take advantage of Roland's bent head to kill him. Olivier, however, fells the traitor to the ground, and dismisses him from Vienne.

The battle is resumed. Neither warrior will give in, though Olivier is badly wounded, and dusk finds them struggling as fiercely as ever. A miracle then takes place: the combatants are separated by a cloud, and an angel appearing in it warns them to cease fighting each other and to seek salvation by making war on the Saracens.[1]

The angel disappears, and the two knights swear eternal friendship.[2] Roland promises to make Girart's

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[1] In Renaut de Montauban a combat between Renaut and Roland is ended miraculously by a cloud:

"'Diex tremist une nue qui les ot desevre(z)'", says Nairnes when he recounts the incident.

(Seeger: Der Anfang des Teiles IV der Chanson von "Renaut de Montauban," p.59)

In Doon de Mayence, a fight between Doon and Charlemagne is ended by the intervention of an angel.

[2] The full meaning of compagnonnage is discussed by Flach. in Origines de l'Ancienne France, Vol.II, pp. 431-490; pp. 471-480, on "La Fraternité Fictive", relate especially to this passage of the poem.

peace with Charlemagne, and Olivier promises that Roland shall marry Aude. Then they separate: Olivier is welcomed back with joy and relief in Vienne, but Roland is badly received by the Emperor, who suspects him of treachery. His attempt to make peace meets with no success, and for some time the siege drags on.

At length Charlemagne's arrière ban arrives, and Guibourc, Olivier and Hernaut unite in urging Girart to make peace before it is too late. Before Girart can take any step in this direction, however, Aimeri takes advantage of the dusk to make a surprise-raid on Charlemagne's camp, and succeeds in shooting two of the Emperor's officials. Girart realises that this will certainly destroy his hope of obtaining terms from Charlemagne.

An unexpected solution, however, presents itself. A spy brings in the news that the Emperor is to hunt on the morrow in the neighbouring forest of Clermont, and the rebels plan to capture him. Before dawn the next morning they arm and ride out of Vienne by an underground passage which leads into the forest.[1] Girart's forester secretly follows the

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[1] Renaut and his brothers also make use of an underground passage leading out of Montauban.

Emperor during the hunt, and when Charlemagne in his ardour outstrips his followers and loses them, news is quickly brought to Girart of his whereabouts. He is surrounded and overpowered before he is aware of the presence of the enemy.

Aimeri urges his uncle to kill their prisoner at once, but Girart refuses to harm him, and offers his submission.[1] Charlemagne accepts thankfully, and the rebels pledge their faith to him. Hernaut then persuades Charlemagne to return with them to Vienne for the night. Accordingly he is feasted in Girart's palace, while his army is left in a state of the greatest anxiety for him. The next morning, however, Charlemagne rides out at the head of his former enemies, and peace is declared formally. Charlemagne then returns to hold court in Vienne.

Roland and Aude are betrothed, and their wedding-day is fixed, but hardly is the ceremony completed when messengers from King Yon bring news of a Saracen invasion of Gascony. Charlemagne immediately makes arrangements

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[1] A similar situation occurs when Charlemagne is captured by Renaut and his brothers. Renaut, like Girart, at once offers to submit.

(Seeger: Der Anfang des Teiles IV der Chanson von "Renaut de Montauban," Läisses 8-10)

for the war, entrusting an extensive part of his dominions to Girart and Hernaut. Roland bids farewell to Aude, and the poem ends with the announcement of the Spanish War, which is to end at Roncevaux.[1]

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[1] In connexion with the foregoing summary an interesting point arises: the close connexion between Girart de Vienne and the Renaut cycle. In each case the initial donnée of the poem is the same; in each case similar incidents occur, and it will presently be seen that strong resemblances exist between certain characters of the two.

It is clear that imitation has been at work, but on which side it is impossible to say, since it is not known which of the two preceded the other. Bédier notes the many similarities between the Chansons de geste of this period, but renounces all hope of establishing their chronology: "La chronologie de ces romans . . . restera incertaine, parceque, sortis d'un même mouvement des imaginations, représentant les mêmes goûts et les mêmes modes, ces romans à vingt ans à quarante ans près, sont contemporains."

(Légendes Epiques, Vol. IV, p. 217)

CHAPTER II

The Rebels

Bertrand has chosen for his hero a member of one of the most celebrated families of the Chansons de geste, the family of Garin de Monglane, which in its later generations produced such heroes as Aimeri de Narbonne, Guillaume d'Orange, and Vivien, who distinguished themselves by their incessant warfare against the Saracens.

In Girart de Vienne this struggle is merely incidental: here the sons of Garin are occupied, first in establishing themselves as powerful barons, and then in upholding the family honour in a long war against Charlemagne - a common action in which their unity of purpose is fully revealed. But this is not their only point of likeness: certain other traits stamp all the members of the family as belonging to the same stock.

There is evidence that they resemble each other in looks; when Aimeri first appears at Vienne:

> "Voit le Girart, tot li mua le front.
> Molt traoit a sa geste." [1].

All of them seem to be good-looking; the younger men are often described as "bel" and "au vis cler". Moreover all

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[1] LL.1562-1563.

are endowed in an outstanding degree with the physical strength which in the Middle Ages was almost synonymous with male beauty. Every member of the family who appears in the poem is a mighty warrior; in Foucon de Candie the whole geste of Monglane is called "la gent combatant"[1] and many passages of Girart de Vienne prove how well this is deserved. The scene in which they cut their way out of Charlemagne's Court may be quoted as an example, since it shows them fighting together, and against heavy odds:

> "Li cuens Hernaut ala ferir Oton,
> Que il li tranche le chief soz le menton.
> Mile de Puille vait ferir Haguenon
> Amont el chief a .ii. poinz du baston.
> Renier de Genvres fiert Hoël le Breton,
> Et Girart tint une hache a bandon.
> Pié et demi ot le tranchant de lonc.
> De la sale issent qui q'an poist ne qui non."[2]

Consciousness of their prowess gives them a self-confidence which would be irritating if it were less justified. As it is, there is an irresistible attraction in the assurance which inspires even the youngest boys to leave home and wring a fortune from life, like Renier and Girart, or, if the family happens to be involved in a war, to fling themselves at the earliest opportunity into the fray, like Olivier, or like young Nevelon, whose one

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[1] Quoted by Bédier: Légendes Epiques: Vol. I. p.54.

[2] LL. 2294-2301.

appearance in the poem is his entrance into battle:

> "'Vienne', escrie, 'ferez avant, baron!'
> Ou voit son oncle si l'a mis a reson:
> 'Oncle Girart, foiblement le feson.
> Desoremés m'avroiz a conpangnon
> Au cous de la bataille.'" [1]

Their assurance, however, does not spring entirely from their confidence in their own might, but partly from the certainty that, as members of the ruling class, they have a right to land and power. But even more important than their class pride is their family pride. The fact that they belong to the great Geste de Monglane directs the whole cause of their lives: an insult to one member of the family is felt as a stain on the honour of all, and all without hesitation help to avenge that insult. When a long siege results from their acts of vengeance the whole family returns to aid the one who is besieged.

In this, although several members of the family have a strong feeling of feudal loyalty, none of them put their duty to their Emperor before their duty to their family. Girart de Vienne presents no situation such as that which arises in Renaut de Montauban, when the father of the four rebels swears never to help his sons.[2] For

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[1] LL. 4497-4501.

[2] "A Aymon de Dordone fist Charles fiancier:
Ja n'aidéroit ses fiex, tant com il vesquiest,
Ne n'avroient del suen l'amontant d'un denier."
(Geipel: Der Zweite Teil des Buef d'Aigremont, p.47)

the geste of Monglane, the duty to their family is "leur premier, leur plus impérieux devoir, celui qui l'emporte sur la fidélité à tout seigneur étranger."[1]

In looks, then, in physical strength, in assurance, in family pride and loyalty, Girart and his relations bear a close resemblance to each other. Yet we hope to show, in a series of individual studies, that by the varying degrees in which they possess these common characteristics, and by the addition of other traits, Bertrand has given to each of them an unmistakable individuality.

For the purpose of these studies the members of the family have been placed in two main categories: "Les Desmesurés" and "Les Sages", according to the violence or moderation of their characters. The first includes Garin, Renier and Aimeri; the second, Hernaut, Milon, Girart and Olivier.

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[1] Flach: Origines de l'Ancienne France, Vol. II, p.447

A. "Les Desmesurés"

1. Garin de Monglane

Garin de Monglane is the ancestor of the "tierce geste"[1] of France, which plays so important a part in the Chansons de geste. His rôle in Girart de Vienne is relatively short: he appears only at the beginning of the poem and at the time of the discovery of the insult to his son Girart. After the visit to Châlons we hear no more of him; presumably he leaves Vienne after the sack of Macon, and does not return to take part in the siege. Yet, though his appearances are few, Bertrand has made the most of them, and the various traits of his character stand out clearly.

Garin, at the beginning of the poem, is described only as an old man, "a la barbe florie"[2]; but a slightly more detailed account of his appearance is given when he arrives at Vienne to preside over the family conference. His sons receive him with joy:

> "De riches dras le font apareillier.
> En sa mein tint .i. baston de pomier.[3]
> N'ot plus bel home de ci a Monpellier.

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[1] L.46.

[2] L.113

[3] LL. 2055-2057

There is nothing unusual in this description: other old men in the Chansons de geste have the same appearance. Aimeri, for instance, is depicted in his old age in much the same way:

> "Blanche ot la barbe si come flor de pre,
> Si li avint jusq'al neu do baudré.
> Plus biau chanu n'ot en crestïanté.
> En sa mein tint un bastoncel plané,
> An .iiii. leus estoit d'argent bendé."[1]

Charlemagne, too, is shown with a long white beard:

> "Blanche ad la barbe et tut flurit le chef,
> Gent ad le cors et le cuntenant fier." [2]

In another poem he, too, is given a staff to lean upon:

> "En se main tint d'olivier .i. baston."[3]

Naimes has the same long white beard, with the addition of fine moustaches:

> "Sa barbe li baloie jusc' au neu del baudré,
> Par deseur les oreilles ot les guernons tornez
> Mult resamble bien prince qui terre ait à garder." [4]

Bertrand has, therefore, given to Garin the typical

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[1] Li Nerbonois, LL.61-65.

[2] Chanson de Roland, LL.117-118.

[3] Huon de Bordeaux, p.283.

[4] Gui de Bourgogne, p.88.

appearance of old men in the Chansons de geste. His character, too, in the opening scenes of the poem, shows signs of advancing age. In face of the poverty to which the family has been reduced he shows no stoicism:

> "Plore des euz, durement se gramie.
> Les lermes corent sor la barbe florie."[1]

In his lamentation to his son Hernaut he reveals the fact that he fears death from starvation; Sinagon, the Saracen king, besets them so closely that they can procure no food:

> "'De la vitaille nos est il molt sordois,
> Que n'en avons a .ii. jors ne a trois.
> S'ai poor de ma vie.'" [2]

Helpless in his grief, Garin has to be comforted and encouraged by Hernaut.[3] In face of hardship, then, Garin seems lacking in fortitude. This impression of

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[1] LL.129-130

[2] LL. 156-158.

[3] This opening scene may be compared with that of Hervis de Metz, which also begins with an impoverished duke:

> "Tant despendi li frans dus honnorés,
> Qu'il endêta si fort sa ducée,
> Que ne savoit comment peuist finer." (LL.17-19)

Unlike Garin, however, he calmly discusses the situation with his barons, rejects the bad advice of a traitor, and willingly consents to arrange matters by marrying his daughter to a rich bourgeois, his provost.

weakness is hardly altered by his rather childish display of joy when his sons return with the treasure:

"Voit les li peres, n'i ot qu'eleescier.
Il cort ses fiz acoler et besier,
Car menant sont et riche." [1]

With regard to the four boys, he seems incapable of any definite action. Their poverty distresses him profoundly:

"'Cuidiez enfant, que n'en soie destroiz
De la poverte que avez sor mon pois?'" [2]

The solution of the difficulty, however, is left to them; they also decide of their own accord to leave home, and carry their plan into effect, while Garin, merely watches them go, with "grant duel".[3] Plainly Garin is not a father of the stamp of Aimeri, who turns his sons away penniless to force them to seek their fortunes, or of Aymon de Dordone, who, having sworn to Charlemagne not to aid his sons, carries out his oath so well that he actually fights and defeats them, and afterwards turns them out of his castle, where they have gone in their

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[1] LL.277-279.
[2] LL.150-151.
[3] L.316.

extreme need.[1]

In view of Garin's character as it is depicted in these first scenes of the poem, there seems little justification for placing Garin among the "desmesurés" of the family. It is possible, however, that the moral weakness shown here is due to a fit of despair caused by long hardships and the extremity to which the old man has been reduced. At all events, Bertrand now introduces a different Garin, a Garin who is more obviously the head of a great family.

From the "mau traître", Renart de Poitiers, we hear for the first time of Garin's former reputation for physical strength and lawless violence, of his somewhat chequered career as a young man:

> "'N'ot a repos onques .i. seul mengier.
> Pepin, vo pere, qant il prist sa moillier,
> Berte la franche, qui tant fist a proisier,
> Lors est Garin bacheler prinsautier.
> Jeu vi a l'ague par mi la mer nagier.
> Molt savoit bien pelerins espier,
> Et desrober et toz nuz despoillier
> Prestres et moines, iglises et mostiers.
> Por ce l'en fist a grant honte chacier
> Et fors de France foir et essillier.'"[2]

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[1] Neither Aimeri nor Aymon, however, lack paternal affection. Aimeri, after the departure of his sons,

> "do cuer vet sopirant" (Li Nerbonois: L. 591)

Aymon, after defeating his sons, bitterly laments his action:

> "Ahi, mi quatre fil! Tant vos dëaisse amer,
> Et encontre tos homes garentir et tenser!'
> Dont commence dus Aymes por ses fils a plorer."

(Quoted by Bédier: Légendes Epiques: Vol. IV, p. 198) Moreover, although he turns them out of his castle, he allows their mother to help them. (Ibid. p. 200)

[2] LL. 774-783

Since then he has been occupied in fighting the Saracens; when he appears in the poem next he has just succeeded, with great difficulty, in defeating them.[1] But in this scene the warlike character of the old man is shown to the full; although he and his men are worn out by the struggle against the enemy, he still declares with undiminished energy that he not only prefers war to peace, but that war is necessary to his well-being:

> "'S'avoie or pes, par le mien escient,
> Sanpres seroie malades por itant,
> Ou plain de liepre ou de malage grant.
> Mes qant j'oi brere ces destriers auferranz.
> Ces chevaliers en fort estor pesant,
> Ferir de lances et d'espées tranchanz
> Ce ain gé plus que nule riens vivant.'" [2]

Here, we feel, is the real Garin, full of warlike vigour, even in his old age, rejecting the very thought of peace. Nor has age mellowed his passions. The little scene with Aimeri which follows Garin's speech shows that he is still capable of outbursts of savage anger. Only Aimeri's quickness saves him from severe chastisement for his impudence, and Garin administers a reproof which effectively silences his grandson.[3] In this scene Garin's conduct recalls old Aimeri's ferocious attack on

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1 LL.2038-2047.

2 LL.2105-2111

3 LL.2125-2133.

his wife in Li Nerbonois.[1] Garin is, in fact, behaving more like the head of the geste of Monglane than in the first scenes of the poem.

Another of the essential characteristics of the family makes its appearance at the same time - that of family pride. Class pride was, indeed, suggested in the first scene; part of Garin's distress sprang from the realisation that his sons were not able to take their proper place in life, and that they were dressed in "dras blois" like

> "'garçonnet a borjois,
> De povre afere et de povre hernois.'" [2]

In his speech to the assembled family, however, he shows all the family certainty of the distinguished position which is their right by birth, when he tells of the careers of his sons, with marked disapproval of Charlemagne's treatment of Renier and Girart:

> "'Entre Milon et Ernaut le sachant
> Vindrent par force les ennors conquerant.
> Renier ala en France la vaillant.
> Il et Girart si devindrent sergent
> Come pastor qui brebiz vont gardant.'" [3]

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[1] "Aymeris l'ot, s'a la color muë,
Hauce la palme, tele li a donee
Desus la face qu'ele avoit coloree,
En mi le marbre l'abasti enversee."
(Li Nerbonois, LL.433-436)

[2] LL.148-149

[3] LL.2091-2095.

The depth of Garin's family pride is shown by the violence of his reaction to the story of the Queen's insult to Girart. He is one of the first to advocate a war of revenge if Charlemagne will not swear ignorance of his wife's action:

> "'Fesons la guerre et orrible et pesant,
> Si li corons tuit seure.'"[1]

When the messengers from the Emperor threateningly summon Girart to pay his dues, it is Garin who makes the decision that the whole family shall go to Court: no longer does he leave all action to his sons.[2] At Court, too, he shows himself to be the most intractable of his family, angrily rejecting Nairnes' offer of penance, which does not satisfy his wounded pride, and implacably demanding the Queen's head as the only adequate reparation.[3]

We have said that some of Girart's family show a strong sense of feudal loyalty. Garin does not seem to be one of these. It is true that he has spent his life fighting the enemies of France and of Charlemagne, but there is no indication that this was from any desire to serve the Emperor. If Renart of Poitiers can be trusted,

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[1] LL. 2117-2118

[2] LL. 2160-2163

[3] LL. 2262-2265

in fact, Garin obtained his lands from the King of Gascony, and is independent of Charlemagne.[1]

During the family council he insists that an opportunity must be given to the Emperor of justifying himself before any definite course is taken in the matter:

> "'Se l'anperere avoit tant d'escïent
> Qu'il vos jurast voiant tote sa gent
> Qu'il ne le sot, ne ne vint a talant,
> Iee hontage dont vos l'alez retant,
> James de nos nen avroit mautalant.'"[2]

Moreover, when Hernaut proposes ravaging the Macon district, Garin indignantly refuses to do so:

> "Et dit Garin: 'Par mon chief, non feron!
> Car ce seroit angin et traïson.
> Einçois sera li rois mis a reson.'"[3]

This may indicate feudal loyalty, but, judging from Garin's character as a whole, the probability is that he is prompted by reasonable moderation, a desire for justice, and a reluctance to commit "angin et traïson" by attacking the Emperor without warning. Either interpretation is possible, however.

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1 LL. 784-786

2 LL. 2096-2100

3 LL. 2142-2144

Whatever Garin's sense of feudal loyalty, he is certainly devoid of any deep religious feeling. His allusions to the divine power are confined to oaths and clichés, and he seems to pin his faith rather to "lances et espées tranchanz"[1] than to supernatural aid. When these have failed him he is plunged into the abyss of despair and only consents to trust in Providence when exhorted to do so by Hernaut:

> "'Fiz,' dit li peres, 'molt par estes sachant.
> Un arcevesque nen deist hui autant.
> Deus me confonde, se meshui me dement.'"[2]

But however ready he may be to comply with his son's advice, he never gives any spontaneous expression of religious feeling.

In spite, then, of Garin's exhibition of senile weakness in the opening scenes of the poem, the rest of his conduct fully justifies his being placed among the <u>desmesurés</u>, for he shows that in ferocity he can exceed the rest of the family. In warlike vigour, in family pride, he is typical of his <u>geste</u>, but by the very mixture of weakness and excessive violence he becomes not merely a type but a living human being, subject to different moods, capable of feeling the extremes of anger, pride and sorrow.

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[1] L. 2110

[2] LL. 184-186

Renier de Genvres

"iiii. fiz ot cil Garins au vis fier.
Onques ne furent plus hardi chevalier,
Mien escient, que en un jor entier,
Lor grant bonté ne porroie noncier.
. . . . . .
Li tierz apres fu de Genvres Renier."[1]

Renier is the first hero of the poem. From the time of his departure from Monglane with Girart, until he leaves Court for Genvres, a space of almost a thousand lines - he holds the centre of the stage. After leaving Court, he retires into the background, giving place to Girart, and henceforth except for a brief reappearance in the forefront of the scene during the flight of the brothers to Vienne, is mentioned only at rare intervals. He is only important, during all the latter part of the poem, as the father of Olivier, and is introduced only in this connexion. It is therefore in the first part of the poem that most of the evidence of his character is to be found.

In Renier the family characteristics are, perhaps, more marked than in any other member of the family. Physical strength and the beauty that goes with it he has in abundance; the killing of Charlemagne's Seneschal[2] and doorkeeper[3] show his ability to kill a man with a single

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1 LL. 58-61; 66

2 LL. 508-514

3 LL. 615-622

blow of his fist. In battle he vanquishes his enemies with ease; during the flight to Vienne he fights and slays two of the French barons[1], and Henri d'Orléans tells how Renier, "li chevaliers adroiz" killed the German champion Jeufrois in single combat.[2]

In a family remarkable for their fearlessness and self-assurance, Renier has, perhaps, the largest share of these qualities. At the beginning of the poem, when the four boys see the Saracen treasure-train approaching, Renier distinguishes himself by boasting that he will kill three of the enemy single-handed:

> "'Se ge nes puis par mon cors jostissier,
> .c. danz et qui puis ert chevalier,
> Ne me donra a boivre n'a mengier.'"[3]

He shows no less determination and confidence in forcing his way into Charlemagne's Court; having killed the Seneschal during his first visit there he returns unabashed on the following day, and on being refused entrance, proceeds to kill the doorkeeper - an outrage which he admits to the Emperor without any sense of being in the wrong:

> "'En non Deu, sire, ce fis ge,' dit Renier,
> G'i oi bon droit, a celer nel vos quier.'"[4]

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1 LL. 2346-2350; 2400-2407

2 LL. 1103-1116

3 LL. 234-236

4 LL. 640-641

He goes on to prove this statement, on the grounds that the doorkeeper had no right to forbid his entrance without first demanding his business. His reasoning appears to convince both Charlemagne and his barons.

However, the scene in which Renier's bold self-assurance is carried to its greatest height is that in which he demands a fief from Charlemagne.[1] After reproaching the Emperor for ingratitude, and threatening to leave his service, he finds himself summoned to make reparation for his insolence. Proud and unafraid, he refuses to give in, and waits for Charlemagne to pronounce judgment:

> "'Lesse li dire son talant et son bon,
> Puisq'an sa cort de pledier nos semont,
> Deus me confonde, se nos ne l'atandon
> Pour le jugement dire.'"[2]

His wrath is finally vented on Doon le Barbé and Renart de Poitiers,[3] two acts of violence which rouse the whole Court against him. It is worthy of remark that, unlike his brother, Renier never shows the least sign of

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1 A similar scene takes place in Le Charroi de Nîmes, when Guillaume demands a fief from King Louis. He also threatens to leave the King's service (LL. 112-114) and reminds him of his past exploits - of the single combats against Corsolt and Dagobert, of the Coronation scene, when Louis owed his very crown to him (LL.133 sqq). Louis, weaker than his father, is only too anxious to grant Guillaume's demand.

2 LL.1011-1014

3 LL.1059-1061; 1063-1074

contrition for any of his brutalities. On the contrary, after the killing of the Seneschal he reassures Girart with complete callousness:

> "'Ne te chaut, frere,' Renier li respondi.
> 'Trop a li rois teus garçons entor li.
> S'il an pert .i., bien le sachiez de fi,
> Qu'il an vendra .xiiii.'"[1]

In view of all these acts of violence it is not surprising to find that Bertrand is continually describing Renier's feelings in such phrases as: "pres n'a le sans desvé"; "a pou d'ire ne fant", or "a pou n'enraje vis."[2] The language which he puts into the young man's mouth is correspondingly violent and brutal. Anyone who annoys Renier is immediately overwhelmed by a stream of abuse and threats. The unlucky doorkeeper, for instance, provokes a long tirade:

> "'Fill a putain, mauvés garçons et bris,
> Deus te maudie, li rois de paradis.'
> . . . . . .
> Mieuz en veil estre detranchiez et ocis
> Que nel comperes, foi que doi seint Denis.'"[3]

But such outbursts are by no means confined to servants: Doon le Barbé is similarly insulted before he is attacked,[4]

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[1] LL. 571-574

[2] LL. 445; 691; 2340.

[3] LL. 605-606; 613-614

[4] LL. 1045-1057

while it would be difficult to surpass the brutal coarseness of Renier's language to Renart de Poitiers.[1] Both in speech and in action, in fact, only one member of the family can match Renier's violence - his nephew Aimeri.

Violent and self-willed in every way, Renier is not the man to tolerate discipline or restraint. The treatment meted out to the Seneschal and doorkeeper who attempt to put him in his place has already been mentioned. Even towards the Emperor he shows scant respect. It is true that he serves Charlemagne faithfully while he is at Court, but from the beginning he frankly admits that his motive is one of ambition:

> "'Un an ou .ii. ferons vostre cemant,
> Et s'il vos plest .iii. ou .iiii. en avant,
> Por conquester ennor et garnement.'"[2]

He has no reverence for the dignity of the Court; no restraint tempers his behaviour in the Emperor's presence, but he is always ready to come to blows there. Moreover, he shows not the slightest respect for Charlemagne himself, but quickly becomes defiant and insolent if the Emperor refuses to comply with his wishes. When his demand for a fief is not granted at once, he promptly refuses to remain in Charlemagne's service any longer:

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1 LL. 802-808

2 LL. 679-681

"'S'il ne me done ou terre ou seignorie,
N'el servirai jamès jor de ma vie.
Einz irai seignor guerre.'"[1]

Even when Genvres is given to him he cannot control himself sufficiently to thank the Emperor courteously; he rudely silences the barons who urge him to do so:

"'Aiez voz pès, seignor,' ce dit Renier,
De trop crier me resemble dengier,
Ou itel gent qui n'aient que mengier.'"[2]

He then condescends to thank Charlemagne but immediately proceeds to demand an armed escort to establish him in his fief; he is determined not to be caught by half-measures:

"'Grant merciz, sire,' ce li dit Renier,
'Mes gardez bien itant vos veil proier
Ne me faciez de mon don foloiër
Que par ce Deu qui tout a a jugier,
Tost en avriez honte
. . . . . .
Si me chargiez chevalier ou baron
Qui avec moi vendront en ce roion
Si porteron vos escriz a bandon
Que ne faillons a ce que requeron.'"[3]

Fortunately for Renier, Charlemagne is only too pleased to comply, and so rid himself of the hot-tempered, insolent young man.

If Renier while at Court shows a complete lack of respect for the Emperor, he afterwards indicates beyond any doubt that reverence for the person of Charlemagne is

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[1] LL. 953-955
[2] LL.1144-1146
[3] LL. 1147-1151; 1163-1166

absent from his mind, since he actually proposes to kill the Emperor, and make Aimeri King in his stead:

"'Par cel apostre q'an quiert en Noiron pré,
Se l'avïons ocis ou afolé,
D'Aimerïet ferons roi coronné."[1]

Of all the rest of the family, only Aimeri ever dares to propose doing violence to Charlemagne;[2] most of the others, on the other hand, have a sense of feudal loyalty which makes them shrink from harming the Emperor in person, even when they are at war with him. But Renier lacks feudal loyalty. It would be interesting to know his reactions to the submission of the rebels at the end of the war, but whether intentionally or not, Bertrand does not even mention his name in this scene, which occurs long after Renier has ceased to be an important figure in the poem.

If Renier seems to have little sense of the Emperor's position, he leaves no doubt as to his regard for his own. The highly developed class-consciousness of the whole family has already been mentioned: Renier has it to a high degree. Hence his determination to take his rightful place at Charlemagne's court, and his fury at the servants who do not realise his rank, and treat him as one

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1 LL. 2451-2453

2 cf. p.63

the lower classes. His rebuke to the churlish door-keeper, who scorns the brothers because of their poor clothes, is worth quoting:

> "'Li cuers n'est pas ne el vair ne el gris.
> Einz est el ventre la ou Deus l'a assis.
> Teus est molt riches qui est de cuer failliz,
> Et tieus est povres qui est fiers et hardiz
> Vasaus de cors et frans hom et gentis.'"[1]

Only men of low degree, however, fail to recognise his nobility: the barons, on the contrary, support Renier's requests, realising his worth. According to their judgment, as well as his own, therefore, he is quite justified in ill-treating the underlings who presume to insult him. Renier makes no secret of his opinion that only the upper classes deserve any consideration from him; on two of the rare occasions on which he shows ordinary politeness he gives the same reason for doing so. To the Abbé Morant at Cluny he says:

> ". . . . 'Jeu dirai voirement,
> Car il est fous qui a preudome ment.'"[2]

To Charlemagne:

> ". . . . . 'Jeu dirai voirement,
> Car molt est fous qui a riche home ment.'"[3]

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[1] LL. 607-611 | [2] LL. 370-371 | [3] LL. 669-670

The same idea occurs in Aiol:

"Ja n'est mi(e) li cœurs n'el vair n'el gris,
Mes riches garnimens, n'es dras de pris,
Mais (il) est el ventre a l'home u Dex l'asist."
(LL. 1582-1584)

In the light of his deep feeling of class-pride, most of Renier's actions become clear. As he was justified in his dealings with the servants who stupidly hindered his entrance into the Court, so he is justified in avenging the insults of Doon and Renart. Similarly, he is justified in his outburst of wrath when Charlemagne refuses to grant him the fief which he feels to be the due reward of his services.

For from the beginning it has been Renier's intention to become a great lord, and it is only fair to say that he demonstrates his ability to govern by his vigorous suppression of the bandit gangs, which gains him the post of "Conseillier de la chanbre" to the Emperor,[1] and that when he is given the fief of Genvres he proves a strong and capable ruler:

A similar passage is found in Garin le Loherain:

> "'N'est pas richesse ne de var ne de gris,
> Ne de deniers, de murs ne de roncins,
> Mais c'est richesse de parans et d'amins;
> Li cuers d'un homme vaut trestot un pais.'"

Quoted from Bartsch: La Langue et la Litterature Francaises, p.114

[1] LL. 836-881

"Or fu Renier dus de Genvres sor mer.
Des or conmence ses guerres a mener.
Murs fet drecier et fossez relever,
Et fors chastiaus et fortes tors fermer.
En tot le resne n'ot haut baron ne per
Qu'il ne coviengne par force a lui aler,
Homage fere et feüté jurer.
Et quel refusse seu fet desheriter." [1]

But even more than class pride, Renier has the kindred feeling of family pride, so typical of his geste. This is shown in the words of proud simplicity in which he announces his parentage to Morant and to Charlemagne:

"'Fiz sui Garin de Monglanne au vaillant,
D'une cité de Gascongne la grant.
Tot jorz a guerre vers sarrazine gent.'" [2]

When he hears of the Queen's insult he enthusiastically advocates calling in the rest of the family, in a dare-devil speech which expresses all his undoubting confidence in their might:

"'S'or savoit Mile com la chose est alée,
Li nostres freres a la chiere menbrée,
Il i vendroit sanz nule tretornée:
Et dant Hernaut a cui proëce agrée,
Garin no pere a la barbe mellée.
Qant averont lor grant ost asemblée,
Par force iroient juq'a la mer betée.'" [3]

As a member of this great family he feels obliged to keep up its high traditions. He rejects with scorn

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[1] LL.1192-1199.
[2] LL.372-374 [3] LL.1972-1978.

Charlemagne's first offer of money and raiment, explaining that he belongs to a family which never sought wealth, like money-grubbing tradesmen:

> "'Einz mes lingnaje n'ala avoir querrant,
> N'en i a nul borjois ne mercheant,
> Ne ja ne l'iere en trestot mon vivent.'" [1]

Riches, according to this code, must be given away to the poor:

> "'Si j'en avoie tout plain ce palés grant,
> Foi que doi Deu, le pere tout puisant,
> Ne retandroie la mente d'un besant,
> Trestot l'avroient chevalier et sergent,
> Provoire et moine et autre povre gent.'" [2]

It is not surprising to find that Renier reserves his personal affection for his relations, and that it is closely connected with his pride and loyalty to his family. Towards his father, indeed, he shows fierce loyalty rather than filial affection; when Renart de Poitiers gives an unfavourable account of Garin's career, Renier's rage can hardly be contained:

> "'Combatrai moi a lui que molt m'est tart,
> A ceste espée, qui les granz cous depart,
> Proverai bien vers le felon gangnart
> Que mon pere est frans dus de bone part.'" [3]

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[1] LL.701-703.
[2] LL.696-700.
[3] LL.811-814.

On a much later occasion, without immediate provocation, he wreaks brutal vengeance on Renart.[1]

Of his three brothers, Renier seems most closely connected with Girart. The two are together from the beginning of the poem until Renier's departure for Genvres, and the bond between them amounts to an unofficial compagnonnage. But in Renier's attitude towards his brother the close relation between his affection and his family pride is clearly seen. He unhesitatingly does all in his power to avenge the insult to Girart, which constitutes a stain on the family honour, but any sign that Girart is not upholding that honour brings forth reprimands and even blows from Renier. When Girart, fearing the consequences of his brother's insolence, offers to submit to Charlemagne, and become his liege-man, Renier expresses his scorn and indignation in no uncertain terms:

> "Renier l'endrece par le peliçon gris,
> Hauce la paume, seu fiert en mi le vis.
> 'Fuiz, gloz, lechierres,' dit Renier li hardiz,
> 'Par cel apostre qu' est a Rome requis,
> Mieuz vodroie estre detranchiez et ocis
> Que fusse sers achatez ne conquis.
> Nostre lingnaje en seroit vis tot dis.'" [2]

It will be seen in subsequent studies that family pride generally plays an essential part in the mutual affection of its members.

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[1] L. 1062 sqq.

[2] LL. 1089-1095. cf. LL. 1009-1010.

There is some indication that for his nephew Aimeri, Renier has a special admiration, for he suggests deposing Charlemagne in favour of Aimeri.[1] This is only a side issue, and is not developed any further, but it is nevertheless a logical result of the resemblance between the two.

So far Renier's gentler feelings have been overshadowed by his fierce loyalty to the family. With the appearance of his son Olivier, however, this is reversed: the boy evidently takes the first place in his feelings. His love and pride in Olivier are shown by his first words when Girart and Aimeri arrive at Genvres with the story of the insult:

> "'Veez', fet il, 'nobile chevalier,
> Ce gentil fil ai ge de ma moillier.'"[2]

The scene of Olivier's adoubement gives rise to a somewhat surprising incident. Olivier, after performing the eslés announces that he means to ride out in search of an adventure. In view of all Renier's past behaviour he might be expected to show enthusiastic approval of this sign of knightly courage in his son, but instead he forbids

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[1] LL. 2452-2453.

[2] LL. 1952-1953.

Olivier to leave the castle:

> "'Vos n'iroiz pas,' dit son pere Renier,
> 'Se vos perdoie par aucun destorbier,
> N'est hom qui mes me poïst leescier.'"[1]

Renier, the fearless knight, is, in fact, reduced by his paternal affection to attempt to prevent his son's going into danger. An unexpected, but human, development to his character!

The battle on the island throws him into an agony of fear; he weeps and prays for his son's safety:

> "Renier de Genvres vet grant duel demenant
> Por Olivier son fil qu'il amoit tant.
> 'Sainte Marie,' dit Renier en plorant,
> Guerisiez hui Olivier le vaillant
> Que il n'i soit veincu ne recreant.'"[2]

Incidentally, this ardent desire for his son's safety produces Renier's only expressions of sincere religious feeling.[3] As long as he can rely on his own might he has no need of heavenly aid, but now that he realises Olivier's great need, he prays fervently.

Love for Olivier seems to be Renier's only *raison d'être* in this latter part of the poem. None of his former characteristics reappear, and the infrequent

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[1] LL. 2946-2948

[2] LL. 5328-5332

[3] *cf.* L. 2939

references to him are all in connexion with his son. Even paternal authority is denied him, curiously enough: Girart knights Olivier; Girart overrules Renier's decision and allows Olivier to ride out of Vienne; Girart and Hernaut arrange Aude's marriage with Roland. Apart from his actual affection for Olivier, Renier seems to hold no further interest for Bertrand.[1]

Taking Renier's character as a whole, from all his appearances in the poem, whether in the foreground or not, it is plain that he has, first, all the typical characteristics of his family: strength, valour, self-confidence, class pride and family pride. He differs from the others, however, by the greater degree of violence and insolent assurance in his youth, and he himself is saved from being a mere type of extreme violence by the addition of his last characteristic - his affection for his son, which seems to fill his whole being during the latter part of the poem.

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[2]In Fierabras also Renier is shown preoccupied with Olivier's safety. When Olivier fights Fierabras, Renier begs Charlemagne to pray for him. (p.36)

Is this completion of Renier's character intentional on Bertrand's part, or merely the result of his concentration on Olivier, and his losing interest in Renier? The same question may be asked in respect of Garin's character: here, again, a strong, excessively violent nature has been rendered human by the addition of some gentler trait, whether deliberately or not. We may feel in each case that this is introduced too abruptly, too thoroughly even; but the idea is undeniably sound, and it seems unreasonable not to give Bertrand the credit for having applied with deliberate intention a principle which has had such a happy result. However, in the absence of definite proof one way or the other, the question remains a matter for individual opinion.

3. Aimeri

The character of Aimeri is of special interest, since he plays an important part in so many Chansons de geste, as the head of the family of Aymerides, the father of Guillaume d'Orange, Aymer, and their brothers, and the grandfather of Vivien. Here he is shown in his early youth, and his rôle is an important one, since he is the third hero of the poem. He holds the stage, in fact, between his arrival in Vienne and the coming of Olivier - like Renier, for about a thousand lines. To him is due the commencement of hostilities, for he is first told of the insult to his uncle; he also urges Girart to take revenge, and actually strikes the first blow by killing Doon de Monloon. It is he, too, who attempts to prolong the war when his family as a whole wish to make peace. Lastly, his character serves as a foil to that of Olivier, with whose behaviour his actions form a striking contrast.

Aimeri's resemblance to the rest of the family has already been mentioned.[1] His encounter with the thieves on the way to St. Denis[2] and the killing of Doon de Monloon[3] bear witness to his physical strength, and the encounter with Jocerant d'Aubijois during the flight to Vienne,[4] as

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[1] cf. p. 18

[2] LL. 1742-1751

[3] LL. 2279-2283

[4] LL. 2384-2387

well as his sortie with Girart[1] and his exploits in the battle following Olivier's unsuccessful embassy of peace[2], all reveal his military skill and valour. Moreover, he shows a love of fighting which foreshadows the fierce warrior of other poems. When Charlemagne lays siege to Vienne, Aimeri longs to come to grips with the enemy:

> "'En non Deu, oncles,' ce dist Aimeris,
> 'Ne mengerai, par foi le vos plevis,
> Tant que j'avré chevaliers desconfiz,
> Et par mon cors, et retenu et pris.'"[3]

A characteristic of Aimeri as a fighter is his tenacious refusal to give in. When he is unhorsed by Roland outside Vienne, he calls on Roland to continue the fight, undaunted:

> "Qant Aymeris se santi abatu,
> Il saut en piez, si enbrace l'escu,
> Et tret l'espée au brun coutel molu
> A voiz escrie: 'Chevalier, ou vas tu?
> S'ainsi t'en vas, tu as ton lous perdu.'"[4]

He is as reluctant to yield to the Emperor; even after seven years' war, when the rest of the family are only too anxious to offer terms to Charlemagne, he contrives to wreck

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[1] LL. 2624-2693

[2] LL. 4343-4353

[3] LL. 2613-2616

[4] LL. 3019-3023

the proposed treaty by killing the Emperor's councillor and his chief steward.[1] The following day, when Girart and his brothers submit to Charlemagne, Aimeri at first refuses to take part in their homage:

> "Ja plus felon d'Aimeri ne verroiz.
> A une part se tint a un recoi
> Por esgarder et les torz et les droiz
> Les amendises qu'il fesoient au roi."[2]

He only submits, finally, because he realises the impossibility of holding out alone:

> "Puis que ces autres avez en voz destroiz,
> Je ne veil pas guerre mener par moi,
> Mes ganqu'il dient, creant bien et otroi.'"[3]

If Aimeri has all the valour and delight in fighting typical of his family, therefore, he excels them all in his determination not to give in.

That in violence of temperament he excels even his uncle Renier is illustrated by the vivid and amusing scene in which he is first introduced. He marches boldly into

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1 LL. 6283-6286

2 LL. 6456-6459

3 LL. 6467-6469

Girart's castle, and quickly loses his temper when no one pays any attention to him. Girart, to try him to the utmost, teases him unmercifully, playing on his aristocratic pride by pretending to take him for a juggler; Aimeri, "taint comme charbon"[1] with rage, loses control of himself and hurls his white falcon at Girart's face.[2]

The Queen's story of her insult to Girart has the same effect on Aimeri; beside himself with rage, he loses all consciousness of where he is, seizes a knife, and hurls it at her without the slightest regard for her sex and rank.[3] Renier in his wildest moments never lost his head to such an extent; to find a parallel it is necessary to take another poem, the Aliscans, in which Aimeri's son Guillaume d'Orange makes a similar attack on the Queen of France, who is also his sister:

> "Passa avant, del cief li a ostée,
> Voiant Franchois, l'a a ses piés jetée.
> . . . . . .
> Ja li éust la teste toste coupée
> Ja por nul homme ne li fust devée[e]
> Quant Ermengars li a des poins ostée."[4]

By the irony of fate the now aged Aimeri plays the peacemaker between his son and daughter.

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[1] L. 1626

[2] LL. 1631-1634

[3] LL. 1869-1877.

[4] Aliscans, p. 85.

Aimeri, then, can be so overmastered by his anger as to lose all sense of his actions, or even of his interests. He himself is fully aware of the effect of his fits of rage; after the violent scene between him and his uncle at his first appearance he frankly admits his lack of control:

> "'Oncle Girart, petit conseil avez,
> Qant envers moi vos estes tant celez.
> Par cel apostre c'on quiert en Noison pré,
> Se, a cele eure que g'estoie ore iré,
> Eüse el pong un grant baston carré,
> Par mi le chief vos eüse doné
> Que mort fussiez et tout escervelé.'"[1]

However immoderate these attacks of rage may be, they are, none the less, long-lived. His anger at the Queen's insult is still at white-heat when he reaches Vienne:

> "Cil ne dit mot, que trop fu irascu,
> Einçois se tint une piece tot mu."[2]

It is just this trait in his character which makes him the most effective recipient of the story of the insult. Had Girart heard of it first, he would have been angry at the moment, but it is doubtful whether his wrath would have lasted long enough to cause a long war. Aimeri's more sustained rage, on the other hand, stimulates his

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[1] LL. 1649-1655

[2] LL. 1907-1908.

uncle's indignation, and so plays an important part in the beginning of the war. Again we find ourselves confronted with the question: did Bertrand arrange this deliberately? It seems difficult to believe that such a well-planned situation could have been created accidentally.

If the violence of Aimeri's feelings excels that of his uncle Renier, he is at least his equal in the violence of his language. He pours the whole vocabulary of mediaeval abuse upon Girart and his barons, on his first arrival in Vienne;[1] nor does he hesitate to tell the Queen exactly what he thinks of her:

> "'Se ce feïtes dont je vos oi pledier,
> Ce fu putage, a celer nel vos quier.'"[2]

Aimeri lacks none of the assurance typical of his family: his behaviour when he first arrives at Vienne is, in fact, comically overbearing. He strides into the hall of the castle, glancing often, with pride, at the white falcon on his wrist.[3] Then:

> "A haute voiz conmença a huchier,"[4]

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[1] Laisse xliv.

[2] LL. 1865-1866

[3] L. 1573

[4] LL. 1579

demanding which of the company of barons is Girart. As no reply is forthcoming he proceeds to assert his financial independence:

"'Encore ai ge .xv. livres d'or mier
Dont me ferai en ce borc herbergier.
Assez avrai a boivre et a mengier.'"[1]

No less self-confidence is displayed when he takes his place in the Court at St. Denis, and generously helps himself and his companions to the food laid out on the Emperor's table.[2] Circumstances prevent his receiving his knighthood at the hands of the Emperor, as he had intended. Characteristically, he seizes the first opportunity of demanding it from Girart, though the occasion is not particularly convenient, as Charlemagne is close behind and there is no time to waste:

"'Je serai ja de mes armes garniz;
C'a ce besong, doi bien, ce m'est avis,
Noviaus chevaliers estre.'"[3]

Yet in spite of Aimeri's undoubted assurance, he shows no desire to expose himself to danger unnecessarily. Although carried away by unreasoning anger, he rashly attacks the Queen; immediately afterwards he cools down sufficiently to make his escape:

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[1] LL. 1591-1593

[2] LL. 1756-1762

[3] LL. 2356-2358

"Aimeriet ne fu pas esperdu,
Einz acoilli le grant chemin batu. [1]
Tout droit arrieres si com il ert venu."

One can imagine how different would be Renier's behaviour in similar circumstances: judging from his conduct on the occasion of his demanding a fief, he would probably have defied the whole assembly of barons, proudly refusing to move an inch.

When Aimeri makes his flying raid on Charlemagne's camp he shows the same care for his skin. He ventures no nearer than a bowshot to the royal tent, and after killing his men, "ne vost delaier"[2], but quickly takes flight. The enemy pursue him to the Rhône:

"Mes Aymeris a guerpi son destrier.
En un batel se fet outre nagier
Si l'en menerent .xiiii. notonnier."[3]

He has evidently arranged his escape beforehand, with more foresight than is generally shown by his family.

Their lack of prudence, and Aimeri's foresight, are shown when the family goes to Court to demand satisfaction

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[1] LL. 1897-1899

[2] L. 6291

[3] LL. 6295-6297

from the Emperor. They take with them only a score of followers, and only Aimeri realises that they will certainly need all their forces if they are to return in safety to Vienne:

"Aymeriet n'ot pas cuer esbahi.
Un mes apele coiement et seri.
'Amis,' fet il, 'je te comant et di
Nostre home soient armé et fervesti.
Si les envoie aprés nos, ce te di.
Car ge sai bien tout de voir et de fi,
Que nos serons par mal de cort parti.'"[1]

On yet another occasion Bertrand insists on this trait in Aimeri's character. After the sack of Macon, he is left in charge of the town, while Girart and the rest return to Vienne. Charlemagne advances on Macon, hoping to find Aimeri there, but Aimeri is not to be caught so easily:

"Mes il fu sages et trés bien apansez.
Qant a veüz les granz oz asenblez,
Et les barons que Karles a mendez,
Droit a Vienne est li bers traïnez."[2]

Quite apart from these acts of foresight, therefore, Bertrand has himself insisted three times on Aimeri's prudence and clearsightedness:

"Aimeriet ne fu pas esperdu."
"Aymeriet n'ot pas cuer esbahi."
"Mes il fu sages et trés biem apansez."[3]

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[1] LL. 2173-2179

[2] LL.2579-2582

[3] LL. 1897; 2173; 2579

It seems, then, that Léon Gautier is hardly justified in including Aimeri in "cette jeunesse imprudente", the phrase with which he qualifies all the young men of the family, speaking of Aimeri in particular. Nor is it altogether true to say of him: "c'est toujours le même sang, bon, généreux, ardent, désireux de se répandre."[1] "Bon, généreux, ardent" it may be, but "désireux de se répandre", at any rate against uneven odds, it is not. However, his uncontrollable anger may sweep Aimeri off his feet for the moment; at all other times he sees clearly what is likely to happen, and takes steps to guard himself and his family from destruction. The following study of Hernaut's character will reveal the same realistic outlook, which is, therefore, probably inherited.

The violence of Aimeri's temper, then, exceeds that of the other members of his family, but, on the other hand, it is moderated by a caution and foresight not found in the others. He resembles them, however, in his family pride. He feels the Queen's insult keenly: on his return to Vienne he expresses his grief at the shame put upon the family:

"'Mar i alates a Karlon cortoier.
Molt nos a fet la reine avillier.
Vostre lingnaje honir et abessier.'"[2]

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[1] Les Epopées Françaises. Vol. IV, p.221

[2] LL. 1915-1917

So deeply does he feel the disgrace that it becomes a personal matter with him that the Queen shall be punished for her action; at Court he demands this entirely in his own name:

> "'Qui me donroit tot l'or de Romenie,
> Trive n'acorde n'en prendroie ge mie
> Tant que sera la roïne honnie.'"[1]

But although he implacably demands her death, after his first angry impulse to slay her on the spot, he is not in favour of killing her hastily. When he captures her during his sortie from Vienne, he prevents Girart from putting her to death:

> "'Oncle Girart, por Deu, ne l'ocion,
> Einz la menrons a Vïenne el donjon.
> A noz talanz en prendrons vengison.'"[2]

With a refinement well in keeping with his long-sustained, implacable resentment, he means that some more cruel punishment shall be inflicted on her. She is not to escape any part of his vengeance.

Of all his family Aimeri seems particularly proud of his father. He announces Hernaut's name and rank with evident pride,[3] and when Hernaut arrives in Vienne with his household troops, Aimeri warns Girart to prepare to lodge a large body of men:

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[1] LL. 2240-2242
[2] LL. 2665-2667
[3] LL.1638-1640; 1778-1779; 1788.

"'Ce est Hernaut o le flori grenon,
Li mieus chiers peres qui tant a bon renan.
Prenez conroi ou les herbergeron.
Plus sont de mil, einsi que nos cuidon,
La mesniée mon pere.'"[1]

Most of all, however, his description of Hernaut to Girart shows affection and admiration:

"'En non Deu, sire, malt est preux et senez,
Saihz et legiers, riches et asazez,
Fiers et hardiz et d'amis ennorez.'"[2]

These adjectives which he applies to his father throw light on his lack of reverence for his grandfather Garin. The war-scarred veteran, with his weary, tattered escort, commands no respect in Aimeri. Nor does Garin's address to the family impress his grandson any more; astonished that Garin's four sons listen to him with such attention, Aimeri breaks in rudely upon what seems to him the empty boast of a feeble old man:

"'Avez oï ce viellart sermoner
Et devant nos de bataille venter?
Bien devroit en celui por fol clamer
Qui en bataille le vodroit mes mener.'"[3]

Garin's prompt and violent rebuke, however, appears to make some impression: at any rate, Aimeri is silent for

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[1] LL. 2004-2008

[2] LL. 1662-1664

[3] LL. 2121-2124

some time, until he is actually addressed by his father.

Although he himself may show insolence towards Garin, the latter is still a member of the family, and no outsider may insult him with impunity. While Aimeri's three uncles are merely preparing to avenge Doon de Monloon's insult, the boy, quicker than them all, dashes out his brains with a great club.[1]

To Girart he gives the respect due to the most powerful member of the family;[2] he begs the Queen not to hurt his feelings by speaking ill of his uncle:

"'Por Deu vos pris, n'en me dites noiant.
Si m'eïst Deus, j'en seroie dolant.'"[3]

We know how closely this affection is bound up with his family pride; when he hears of the insult he expresses his personal feeling of shame and grief:

"'Molt est preudom dant Girart le guerrier
De duel morrai, se ne le puis vengier.'"[4]

His behaviour towards Girart is unusually submissive; it is only in response to his uncle's command that he finally consents to do homage to Charlemagne.

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[1] LL. 2279-2283

[2] It is a curious fact that in the Chansons de geste the eldest son is rarely the most important. Girart, Guillaume d'Orange, and Renaut, are all younger sons. This may be the result of the general tendency of stories to concentrate on younger sons.

[3] LL. 1790-1791

[4] LL. 1867-1868.

The sympathy which appears to exist between Aimeri and Renier has already been mentioned. The two match each other in violence of temperament, and Aimeri's youthful admiration of valour and prowess is fixed by Renier's successful combat with Hermer de Paris:

> "'En non Deu, oncles,' ce li dist Aimeris,
> Or vos ain plus que onques mes ne fis.'"[1]

Towards his cousin Olivier there is some indication that Aimeri feels jealousy. Till Olivier's arrival he has been the centre of importance as his uncle's champion. Olivier speedily usurps this position and takes Aimeri's place in the limelight. After his successful encounter with Guinement, Aimeri evidently feels that it is now his turn to perform an exploit:

> "De fere joste ot le cuer desirrant."[2]

Unfortunately, he meets Roland, is beaten, and returns to Vienne on foot in high dudgeon. Bertrand, however, deserts him at this point, without analysing his feelings further.

On the whole, then, Aimeri has all the typical feelings of affection and loyalty towards his family.

From his behaviour to Charlemagne on his arrival at

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[1] LL. 2353-2354

[2] L. 2998

Court one might be tempted to discover in him more feudal loyalty than has been found so far in the family. The scene of his coming to Court forms a striking contrast with that of Renier's arrival there. Both have committed an act of violence before presenting themselves to the Emperor, but whereas Renier had slain two of Charlemagne's officials, Aimeri has rid the country of a dangerous gang of robbers. Moreover, Renier arrived at Court poor and of no reputation: Aimeri comes well-equipped[1] and backed by a well-established family. He might, therefore, be expected to show the greater assurance of the two; but this is not the case, though Aimeri does not lack self-confidence, as we have seen. Whereas Renier loftily stated his justification for killing an impertinent underling, Aimeri, doubtful whether he was right in slaying the robbers, pleads self-defence, almost excusing himself:

> "'En non Deu, sire, je i fui voirement.
> Il m'asaillirent, por voir le vos creant,
> Si les ocis desor moi deffandant.'"[2]

His bearing throughout the scene is gracious and winning, in contrast to Renier's blustering self-assertion. Renier stated bluntly his reason for coming to Court, but Aimeri proffers his modest request for his knighthood as a message from his father:

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[1] LL. 1695-1698

[2] LL. 1801-1803

"'Par moi vos mende li frans cuens postels
Que m'adoubaiz, gentis rois seignoriz.
A tot jorz mes en ert plus vostre amis.'"[1]

It soon becomes clear, however, that this more compliant attitude merely indicates Aimeri's diplomacy; for no sense of feudal loyalty prevents his turning against the Emperor in an implacable desire for vengeance when he hears of the Queen's insult. During the flight to Vienne he does not hesitate to hurl threats of violence at Charlemagne - threats which purport to be a message from Girart, but which are more likely to be Aimeri's own invention:

"'Girart vos mende, ja nel vos celeron,
Qu'il vos ferra enz el cors a bandon
De son espié, qui q'an poist ne qui non,
Que d'autre part parra le confanon.'"[2]

But the scene of Charlemagne's capture in the forest most clearly illustrates Aimeri's lack of feudal loyalty. In the first place he proposes killing the Emperor outright:

"Dit Aimeri: 'Biaus oncle, car l'oci.
Pran en la teste tot meintenant ici.
Si remendra la guerre et li estrif.'"[3]

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[1]LL. 1814-1816

[2]LL. 2422-2425

[3]LL. 6418-6420

When Maugis carries Charlemagne off to Montauban, Renaut's brother Richard is of the same opinion:

"['Empererede France, ce dit Richars li ber(s)]
'Par la foi que doi dieu bien nos devons irer.
En prison vous tenonz et si nos ramponez;
Maiz par la foi que doi au roi de majesté,
Se j'en iere cret[ai] de dan Renaut le ber,
Je vous feroie ja celle teste voler.'"

(Seeger: Der Anfang des Teiles IV der Chanson von "Renaut de Montauban", p. 30)

When the others submit to the Emperor, Aimeri cannot understand their action, which seems weak and cowardly to him:

> "'Qant ge mon pere et mes oncles ci voi
> Qui si sont pris comme oiselet au broi,
> Qui einçois crie que li cous soit chaoit,
> De Damedeu soit ses cors maleoiz.'"[1]

He submits only because there is no point in holding out alone, and gives his services conditionally:

> "'Servirai vos si comme fere doi.
> Et aprés ce, verrai que vos feroiz.
> Se bien me fetes, grant aumesne avroiz.'"[2]

Aimeri, therefore, has all the usual family characteristics. By the violence of his temperament he falls among the demesurés, but is distinguished from them, first by his sustained, implacable anger, and second by his greater share of prudence and diplomacy. Again, he may be said to be not a mere type but a complete living character.

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[1] LL. 6463-6466

[2] LL. 6470-6472. In Aymeri de Narbonne, Charlemagne alludes to this scene when Aimeri offers to take Narbonne. Aimeri still maintains that Charlemagne was in the wrong:

> "'Ne te membre il de l'eure ne des dis,
> Qant en Vienne estoit Girars assis,
> . . . . . .
> Tant fus vers moi fiers et mautalentis,
> S'il te creust n'en eschapase vis,
> Ne remest pas en toi ne fui ocis.'
> 'Foi que doi vos, sire,' dist Aymeris,
> De tel cuer sui et esterai toz dis:
> Ja n'amerai nul jor mes ennemis.
> Mès bien savez trop aviez mespris,
> Qant a mon oncle toliez son païs.'"
>
> (Aymeri de Narbonne. LL. 719-720; 724-731).

Aimeri's character here is exactly the same as in Girart de Vienne.

B. "Les Sages"

1. Hernaut de Beaulande

"Li premiers fiz, mentir ne vos en quier.
Si fu Hernaut de Beaulende le fier." 1.

Hernaut, Garin's eldest son, plays an important part in the opening scenes of the poem, where he is the leader of the four brothers, and comes into prominence at the end, again as the eldest brother. The rest of the time he plays a subordinate part only.

The attack on the Saracens at the beginning of the poem,[2] together with Aimeri's description of his father as "preux et senez", "sainz et legiers", "fiers et hardiz"[3] show that Hernaut has the physical strength and prowess typical of the family. He has, too, their family pride: at the beginning, at least, he is as keen as any of them to avenge the insult to his brother.[4]

His attitude to his father is especially typical. He feels deeply for Garin's distress in the opening scene:

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[1] LL.62-63.
[2] LL.259-264.
[3] LL.1662-1664.
[4] LL.2020-2024.

"'Plorer vos voi, s'en sui en grant effrois.
Se nel me dites, molt ert mes cuers destrois.
De duel, ce cuit, me partira en trois.'" 1

But his grief seems to spring largely from the feeling that Garin, in giving way to tears and lamentations, is behaving weakly and unworthily of himself and his family:

"Hernaut le voit, toz li sanz li fremie.
Ne puet tenir que fierement ne die:
'C'avez vos, pere, por Deu le fiz Marie?
Plorer vos voi, ce resanble follie.
Dites le moi, nel me celez vos mie.
Ou se ce non, par le cors seint Eslie,
N'aurai mes joie en trestote ma vie,
Car traïson resenble.'" 2

On hearing the cause of Garin's distress he actually reproaches his father:

"'Biau sire pere', dit Hernaut li sachanz,
Del dementer est il hontes molt granz.
N'a so ciel home, s'il se vet esmaiant,
Que en por vil ne l'aient si parent.'" 3

When one remembers how bitterly Renier reproached his brother Girart for failing to behave in a manner worthy of his family, one is forced to the conclusion that here is an early example of the idea that affection depends on worth: the idea which inspires so many of Corneille's heroes and heroines, that

"Un homme sans honneur ne te méritait pas" 4

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[1]LL.141-143.

[2]LL.131-138

[3]LL.159-162

[4]Le Cid, Act.III,Sc.IV.

But however Hernaut may blame his father's weakness, he is careful not to desert him until he is provided for.[1]

As Hernaut's attitude to his family is under consideration, we may note particularly his behaviour with regard to the women, especially his sister-in-law, Guibourc, which shows more consideration than has so far been met with. When Guibourc comes to consult him about a treaty of peace, he receives her with courtesy and affection. He is playing at chess when she arrives:

> "Qant voit Guibourc encontre s'est levez.
> Son destre braz li a au col gité.
> Puis li a dit: 'Ma dame, que querez?
> Est-ce besong? Gardez nel me celez.'"[2]

After hearing her fears, he declares that he will go to any length to do as she wishes, no matter what the cost:

> "Dit Hernaut: 'Dame, vos dites verité,
> Mes g'en ferai totes voz volentez,
> Se g'en devoie a honte estre tornez,
> Et a reproche de la crestienté.
> Seu feré ge, por l'amistié de Dé,
> Et por vos, dame, qui proié m'en avez.'"[3]

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1 LL. 293-303

2 LL. 6238-6241

3 LL. 6264-6269

Hernaut, like Garin, Renier and Aimeri seems to have little or no sense of feudal loyalty. His proposal to attack Macon without warning, in revenge for the Queen's insult,[1] shows a complete lack of any feeling of duty to the Emperor.[2] Nevertheless, he fully realises the importance of Charlemagne's position, and appreciates the advantage of Aude's marriage with Roland:

> "Hernaut respont: 'Sires, vostre merci.
> Plus haut ne puet ma niece avoir mari
> Que en vostre lingnaje.'"[3]

Hernaut, then, has all the usual characteristics of the Monglane family, though in no marked degree. Bertrand, in fact, does not insist on these traits of his character, but merely indicates their presence, while concentrating on the individual side of Hernaut.

In the first scene Hernaut is described as "le plus sachant"[4] of the four brothers. This epithet, which is applied to him in all twice, and probably three times[5] is the

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[1] LL.2137-2141

[2] It was considered essential for either the vassal or the overlord to send a défi before making any move against the other. "Le vassal . . . si le seigneur méfait personnellement envers lui . . . peut dégager sa foi par un défi. . . . cette cérémonie accomplie, l'hommage diparaît du même coup." (Flach. Origines de l'Ancienne France. Vol. II, p.537)

[3] LL. 6819-6821.

[4] L. 190.

[5] LL. 190, 159 and probably 2091, since "Ernaut", the reading of MS D (Brit. Mus. Harl. 1321) is evidently more correct than "Renier".

key-note of his character. It appears to denote a mixture of diplomacy, prudence and practical common sense.

His exhortation to his father at the opening of the poem amply illustrates these characteristics. He bids Garin to cease lamentation, as this will rather bring misfortune than avert it:

> "'Si m'eïst Deus, tel se vet dementant.
> Et si parole del tans ça en avant,
> Ja ne verra la feste seint Jehen,
> N'aura chastel ne cité en estant,
> Ne borc ne vile .ii. deniers veillisant
> Ne ver ne gris ne hermin traïnant.'"[1]

Lamentation and distrust in God were the ruin of the Jews.

> "'Por ce perdirent li Juïf mescreant
> Dedanz Esgipte, es deserz d'Abilant,
> Qu nostre Sires les garda propement,
> Et de la maine les reput longuement.
> Il le mescrurent, si nen orent neant,
> Einz lor failli l'aïde Deu le grant.
> Bien dut faillir qant erent mescreant.'"[2]

This shows sincere religious conviction, but the lines which follow show that Hernaut is occupied chiefly with the utilitarian aspect of the situation:

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[1] LL. 164-169. MS C (Brit. Mus. Roy. 20 B XIX) on which the edition is based, has "vaillisant" instead of "veillisant" - L. 168

[2] LL. 170-176

"'Et il est Pasques, une feste joiant,
Que moinent joie li petit et li grant.
Or nos donez a mengier liement,
Car ne savez seu feroiz longuement.'"[1]

This advice of "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" is typical of the practical Hernaut.

His career after leaving Monglane is exactly what might be expected of a man of his character. He reaches Beaulande just at the right moment to inherit his uncle's lands and is, moreover, successful in contracting a highly successful marriage, for not only is his wife "franche et gentis",[2] but

"Par lui a toute la terre a governer."[3]

It is not surprising, therefore, that he quickly becomes "riches et asazez", and "d'amis ennorez."[4]

His behaviour with regard to the Queen's insult shows the same practical common sense. On his first arrival at Vienne, it is true, he declares that she must pay (for her offence) with her life[5], but afterwards he advocates a quicker and more attainable revenge - the sacking of Macon. Moreover, he makes this proposal at a singularly apt moment; for he rises to his feet to interrupt the heated scene between Garin and Aimeri, which threatens to put an untimely end

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[1] LL. 180-183
[2] L. 324
[3] L. 915
[4] LL. 1663-1664
[5] LL. 2021-2024

to the discussion:

> "'Li cuens Hernauz qui tant fu hardiz hom
> En piez se drece, bien resenble baron.
> Qu voit ses freres, ses a mis a reson.
> 'Seignor,' fet il, 'ne fetes lonc sermon.
> Veez lou roi, ci devant a Karlen.[1]
> A molt pres est li païs de Mascon.
> Alons i tuit et la cité prenon.
> A Karlemene par force la tolon.'"[2]

This suggestion is scouted by Garin, but it is actually put into practice on the return of the family from Court at Châlons: the sacking of Macon is the first act of war.

In the meantime it is Hernaut who makes the sensible proposal that Aimeri shall accompany them to Court, so that he may point out the witnesses of the Queen's story:

> "Et dit Hernaut: 'Vendras i Aimeri
> Parler au roi a Charlon[1] pres d'ici,
> Savoie se ja verroies avec lui
> Aucun de ceus qui la parole oï,
> Que la roïne par devant toi gehi.'"[3]

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[1] "Karlon" is the reading of MS C(Brit. Mus. Roy. 20BXIX) "Chalon", which is found in both D C(Brit. Mus. Harl. 1321) and E (Brit. Mus. Roy. 20 DXI) gives better sense, as the Court was being held at Châlons at the time (see L. 2182). Yeandle suggests reading "Chalon" for "Charlon", LL. 2166 and 2483 (Girart de Vienne, p. 240)

[2] LL. 2134-2141

[3] LL. 2165-2169

Hernaut's diplomacy is seen in the incident of the Emperor's capture; it is he who persuades Charlemagne to spend a night in Vienne. This short sojourn is of the utmost importance to the rebels, as it confirms and assures their hold on the Emperor. Yet Hernaut puts the suggestion to him so courteously and tactfully that there is no suggestion of force. He explains first that by staying in Vienne for a night Charlemagne will show that he has taken possesion of it;

> "El dit Hernaut: 'Sire quel la feroiz?
> Iroiz en l'ost ou avec nos vendroiz
> Dedanz Vienne ou ennorez seroiz?
> Si l'orront dire Alemant et Tiois
> Que Karles a Vienne.'"[1]

Then he points out that it would be unsafe for him and his brothers to accompany Charlemagne back to his army, as they might be killed before it was known that peace was concluded;

> "'S'estions ore dedanz vostre ost entrez,
> Einz que François seüsent la verté
> Que nos fusons paié et acordé,
> Serions nos ocis et afolé.'"[2]

This argument is somewhat threadbare, as evidently the risk must be run sooner or later, but if Charlemagne realises this he makes no comment.

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[1] LL. 6483-6487 [2] LL. 6491-6494

It is interesting to note the reactions of the rest of the family to Hernaut's behaviour. In the women, his practical common sense, coupled, perhaps, with his position as eldest brother, seems to inspire a special confidence. During the fight between Roland and Olivier, Aude goes to him to beg him to make peace before one of them is killed,[1] and later Guibourc, on Olivier's advice, seeks him out on a similar errand.[2]

With the other members of the family, however, his behaviour is not always so popular, on account of the wide gap between their knightly standards and his terre-à-terre common sense. At the beginning of the poem, for instance, when he leads the attack on the Saracens, his first thought is to pick off their leader with an arrow:

> "'Tout voirement ferrai ja le premier
> Par mi le cors de cest carrel d'acier.'"[3]

This produces Girart's famous dictum that archers are cowards. To the mind of the perfect, gentle knight of the period this was undoubtedly so,[4] and the fact that

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[1] L. 5372 sqq.

[2] Laisse CLXXVII

[3] LL. 219-220

[4] So great was the opposition to the bow as a weapon of war that in 1139 its use was forbidden by the Church. Henceforth it was used only in hunting. (Fawtier: La Chanson de Roland, p. 204). See L. 1233, where Charlemagne is seen hunting with a bow and arrows. It will be recalled that at Roncevaux the Saracens, not daring to fight Roland,

Hernaut does not subscribe to the idea shows his originality. It will be recalled that Aimeri did not disdain the bow and arrows when he made his raid on Charlemagne's camp. He seems, therefore, to have inherited his father's disregard for what was or was not 'done' by the perfect gentleman.

This is not the only occasion on which Hernaut's conduct seems unknightly to his relations. His proposal to sack Macon without first defying the Emperor is promptly condemned by Garin as treacherous. Yet Hernaut's intention was to inflict a definite loss on Charlemagne in revenge for the insult, and leave it at that; he fails to understand the stubborn pride on both sides which drags the affair out in a long war, though he genuinely believes Girart to be in the right in the quarrel:

> "'Je n'en puis mes,' dit Hernaut li frans hom,
> 'Ce fet Girart, il et le roi Karlon,
> Par lor orgueil et par lor mesprison.
> Einz nostre encestre, de verté le savon,
> Li bons dus Bueves o le flori grenon,
> Ne rendi jor qui vausist .i. bouton
> De treüage l'enperaor Karlon
> Por l'annor de Vienne.'"[1]

But if Hernaut fails to comprehend the attitude which has brought about the long war, he knows that he is powerless against it, just as at Roncevaux Olivier's "sagesse" is powerless against Roland's different standard of conduct.

Turpin and Gautier de l'Hum hand-to-hand, make their final attack with missile weapons. (Laisses CLIV; CLX)

[1]LL. 5378-5385

Although the rôle of Hernaut is short and comparatively unimportant, he stands out from the other members of his family by this great difference of standard, and by the balanced, practical common sense which is closely bound up with it. There can be no doubt that in Hernaut Bertrand has created a highly individual character.

3. Milon de Puille

"Li autres fu, si com j'oi tesmongnier,
Mile de Puille qui tant fist a proisier."[1]

Milon is the least important of the brothers, and his short rôle has little bearing on the development of the story. From his few appearances we may deduce that he has the usual family characteristics, but only twice does he show any real individuality.

In the first scene of the poem he is introduced as "L'orgueilleus et la fier",[2] and he immediately proceeds to justify this by boasting that he will kill two of the Saracens.[3] This characteristic is not developed further, however.

There is some indication that he possesses practical common sense, like Hernaut, and, as in the case of

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[1] LL. 64-65
[2] L. 228
[3] LL. 229-232

Hernaut, this quality pervades Milon's religious feeling. When the brothers leave Monglane, Milon goes to Rome:

"'Aler m'en veil, n'i a mestier celée,
De ci a Rome sanz plus de demorée
Proier seint Pere par bone destinée
Qu'annor me doint que molt l'ai desirrée.'"[1]

Apparently the Saint recognises Milon's worth, for the pilgrimage has highly satisfactory results:

"Buer i ala, que Puille a conquestée,
Tote Romengne et Palerne aquitée,
Puis fu dus de Sezile."[2]

In Milon, however, we meet feudal loyalty for the first time. It is true that he joins in the war against Charlemagne, but he has reverence for the person of the Emperor; he cries out indignantly when Renier proposes to kill Charlemagne:

"'Frere,' dit Mile, 'ore avez mal parlé.
Deus si conmende, le roi de majesté,
Que l'en ne die orgueil ne foleté.
Preudom est Karles, ce savons de verté:
N'a meillor roi en la crestienté.
S'il estoit morz, par la foi que doi Dé,
Molt remendroit France en grant offenté.
Qui de Borgongne l'avroit desherité,
Moi est avis, assez l'avroit grevé.
D'aler en France sanbleroit foleté,
Car trop est la gent fière.'"[3]

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[1] LL. 305-308
[2] LL. 310-312
[3] LL. 2454-2464

Several points may be noticed in this tirade. The first is a sense of the sanctity of the royal person, the worth of the Emperor, and his importance to France; Milon's anxiety that France as a whole shall not suffer is an early expression of patriotism. Milon's feudal loyalty, however, does not go so far as to prevent his proposing an attack on Burgundy - a similar suggestion to that of Hernaut. He shows common sense in realising the folly of invading France, and his first words, in fact, show that he regards an excess of pride or folly as sinful.

This speech is practically Milon's only expression of his character; one must admire the variety of traits which Bertrand has contrived to put in it. However slight and incomplete Milon's character may be, as far as it goes it is logical, and promises to be individual. As far as can be seen, he is a balanced, practical man, like his elder brother.

Girart

"Et li carz fu dan Girart le guerrier."[1]

Although Girart is the hero of the poem, and is actually present throughout almost the whole of the action,

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[1] L. 67

the chief interest is rarely focussed on him. Bertrand, in fact, seems to choose one character after another for his hero, and then lose interest in him: first Renier, then Aimeri, and lastly Olivier. Girart, on the other hand, though never the centre of attraction for long, is never effaced as Renier and Aimeri are effaced. Not only is Girart's presence essential to the unity of the poem, but he is the mainspring of the action. He serves, too, as a foil to the other characters. But this is not all: though other characters may appear to be temporarily more important that Girart, the latter is never completely eclipsed, and his personality can be felt throughout the poem;

Unlike the other members of the family, Girart does not obviously possess a warlike temperament. Yet he is far from lacking in military prowess. In the first scene, indeed, his performance excels that of his brothers, although he boasts less:

> "Girart li mendre n'i vost plus delaier.
> Meins se vanta, mes mieuz fist a proisier,
> .ii. en fist mort devant lui trebuchier."[1]

During the later part of the poem his valour tends to be eclipsed by his nephews' exploits, but it exists none the

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1 LL. 269-271

less. In the battle which follows the quintaine scene, Girart advances alone, a bow-shot in front of his men, to meet Duke Naimes,[1] and later engages Charlemagne himself in an equal combat.[2]

As well as being a valorous knight, Girart has the gift of leadership. In the battle he has his men well under control[3], and knows the moment to retreat:

> "Ja i feïst Girart perte trop grant
> De ses meillors chevaliers conbatanz.
> Qant il sona .i. cor tot meintenant,
> Tot entor lui ra asenblé sa gent.
> Prant Olivier par la resne devant,
> Qu'il ne remengne el fort estor pesant.
> L'estor guerpisent, si s'en tornent a tant,
> Dedanz Vïenne la fort cité vaillant,
> Et aprés eus lor gent esperonnant.
> Puis fermerent les portes."[4]

Apart from the evidence of Girart's actions, Bertrand insists on his warlike qualities by the epithets with which he describes him. It is, of course, dangerous to draw conclusions entirely from the epithets used in the Chansons de geste; many of them are purely stock phrases, and fulfil no more important purpose than to make up the lines of the poem. In Girart's case one must be especially wary; in the course of his long rôle in the poem most of Bertrand's store of epithets are applied to

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[1] LL. 3331-3332
[2] Laisse CXXI
[3] cf. LL. 4367-4370; 4472-4476
[4] LL.4569-4578

him at one time or another. But while most epithets are used in connexion with him three or four times only, he is called "le guerrier" nineteen times, "franc" fifteen times, and "hardi" eight times. It seems clear from this that Bertrand meant to show him particularly as a noble warrior.

There can be no doubt, then, that Girart's military qualities equal, or even excel, those of Renier. His temperament, however, has little of Renier's violence, though he is capable of spasms of rage. When he first hears of the Queen's insult, for instance, he vows comprehensive destruction on France:

> "'N'i leserai chastel a peçoier
> Ne bore ne vile, iglise ne mostier.'"[1]

His anger is so great that when Aimeri captures the Queen, he draws his sword to kill her at once "par grant afroison".[2] He is, moreover, stirred to wrath by Aimeri's untimely attack on Charlemagne's tent.[3] But these attacks are short-lived; he has none of Aimeri's lasting, implacable hatred.

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[1] LL. 1933-1934

[2] L. 2663

[3] LL. 6301-6303

After his outburst on hearing of the insult, for instance, he soon cools down and leaves the other members of the family to take definite action.

One may presume that Girart has the usual family pride. He only welcomes Aimeri when he finds that "Bien traiez a ma geste".[1] On the whole, however, the words "geste" and "lingnaje" are less on Girart's lips than on those of other members of his family. His pride seems to arise from a more general feeling of his position as a knight. His objection to archery in the opening scene, for instance, seems to be on the grounds of the censure which would be incurred by a member of his class who stooped to the weapon of cowards:

> "'A maleür,' dit Girart a Renier,
> 'S'or devenons comme garçon archier,
> Mes prendre au poinz et tuer d'un levier
> L'an le nos doi molt vilment reprochier.
> Ci devons nos noz vertuz essaier.
> .c. daaz et qui archier fu premier!
> Il fut coart, si n'osa aprochier.'"[2]

When Olivier fails to offer any resistance to Roland at their first meeting, Girart does not reproach him for disgracing the family, but for being weak and cowardly:

> "'N'ai soing de viautre qant il est soz gagnon.
> Ja mes amer ne te devra nus hom.'"[3]

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[1] L. 1647

[2] LL. 221-227

[3] LL. 2886-2887

Olivier has forfeited the esteem, not only of his family, but of all men.

Girart's pride is at the root of his outburst against the Duchess of Burgundy. This time his pride seems to be in his sex; Girart feels himself dishonoured when a woman so far forgets herself as to propose marriage; in an indignant tirade rendered amusing by its vehemence, he forswears all relations with women for a long time to come:

> "'Dame,' fet il, 'merveilles oi conter.
> Or puis bien dire et por voir afier
> Que or commence le siecle a redoter.
> Puis que les dames vont mari demender.
> Foi que doi Deu, qui tout a a sauver,
> Einçois verrons toz les .ii. anz passer
> Que l'en me voie vos ne autre espouser.
> Or querez autre se le poez trover.
> Ja moi n'avroiz ce vos di sanz douter.'"[1]

With this he leaves abruptly, and though usually courteous:

> "Onques congié ne prist ne demenda."[2]

That all this is due to wounded pride is shown by the fact that the next morning, when the Duchess sends for him again:

> "Il fu tant fiers que venir n'i degna."[3]

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[1] LL. 1355-1363

[2] L. 1367

[3] L.1380

She herself describes him subsequently as "l'orgueilleus."[1]

Although Girart can be so roused by a woman's proposal of marriage, his sense of masculine superiority does not prevent his protesting when he realises that he is losing the Duchess and her lands. In doing so, he makes no attempt to placate her, but, leaving out all consideration of her feelings as an individual, demands her as his just due from the Emperor. The outcome shows how ill-advised was his whole conduct in the matter.

Girart's masculine pride is of the greatest importance in the poem, since it not only provokes the Queen's insult, but also accounts for his vehement desire for revenge afterwards. Bertrand leaves no doubt of his hero's feelings in the matter, when, at the moment of the insult, he writes:

> "Se le sedst li gentil chevalier
> Einz la ferist d'un grant coutel d'acier
> Qui li dengnast de sa bouche touchier."[2]

When Girart hears of the affair he is overcome with shame:

> "'De duel morrai se ne m'en puis venchier,
> Car trop est grant la honte.'"[3]

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[1] L. 1854

[2] LL. 1471-1473

[3] LL. 2086-2087

But neither then nor at any other time does he suggest that his care is for the family honour; it seems clear that his own manly pride alone is wounded.

Girart, then, has the pride typical of his family, but it seems to relate to a more general standard than the family pride of the others. He has, however, a quality common to them all - a flair for success in the feudal world. In this he even excels his brothers, for from being the penniless "Girart li mendre" of the opening scenes he becomes the richest and most powerful member of the family. Even before going to Vienne he has succeeded in amassing a wealth which produces the significant remark from those who see him:

"Qui preudom sert, bien en doit amender."[1]

He takes to Vienne "grant richece",[2] and wastes no time in making extensive improvements to the defences of his fief. At the beginning of the war with Charlemagne he is a "puisanz et riches hom."[3] Throughout the siege he takes chief command, even though his elder brothers are with him, and he seems, indeed, to be the virtual head of the family. His decisions with regard to Olivier outweigh those of the boy's father Renier,[4] and Girart knights

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[1] Line 1337.
[2] L. 1494
[3] L. 1990
[4] LL. 2949-2951

both Aimeri and Olivier, even though their fathers are present.

Yet in spite of these proofs of Girart's authority, he shows, on many occasions, a gentleness in his attitude towards the members of his family which is not generally typical of the geste.

For his father, indeed, he has the usual filial affection and loyalty, though perhaps in more than the usual degree. It is Girart who proposes to attack the treasure-train, in order to help Garin:

> "'Garin mon pere en avroit grant mestier,
> Il et ma dame qui n'ont mes que mengier.
> Hui vi mon pere plorer et lermoier
> Desoresmés li devons nos aidier
> Et cest avoir conquerre et gaengnier.'"[1]

It is worthy of note that Girart speaks of his mother as well as his father; he is the only one of the brothers to mention her.

One of Girart's rare spasms of anger is induced by Renart de Poitiers' sneers at Garin's wild youth. Girart's indignation is greater than Renier's: while Renier merely challenges the traitor to single combat, Girart seizes him by the beard and plucks out a handful of hair.[2]

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[1] LL. 212-216

[2] LL. 817-823

Towards his brothers, however, Girart often shows a submissive respect which one does not associate with the character of the family as a whole. Even though he takes command over Hernaut during the siege, at the time of their submission he courtiously insists that his eldest brother shall take precedence:

> "'Ne place Deu,' dit Girart li cortois,
> 'Que parçonniers soiez ja contre moi.
> Hernaut mes freres qui est ainnez de moi
> Doit estre sires en toz leus desor moi.'"[1]

It is true that in the opening scene he criticises Hernaut's proposal to use the bow and arrows, but he addresses the remark to Renier, not to Hernaut himself.

During the sojourn of the two youngest brothers at Court the contrast between the compliant and rather apprehensive Girart and the impetuous, self-willed Renier is evident. When they have been trying for a week to gain admission to the Court, without success, Girart, despairing and homesick, proposes to give up and go home:

> "'Se somes auques en iceste cité
> N'en remenrons vaillant .i. oef pelé,
> Ne garnement ne mulet afeutré.
> Li vif deable nos i ont amené
> Car cist païs est plains de grant lasté.,
> Molt est cist mieudres la ou nos fumes ne.
> Ralons nos en, trop avons demoré.'"[2]

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[1] LL.6447-6450

[2] LL. 438-444

Renier insists that they shall go to Court at once, quarrels with the Seneschal and kills him. He then delivers a loud tirade, offering the royal fodder to all and sundry: Girart, meanwhile, performs the less spectacular but more useful task of taking what they need.[1] The next morning a similar incident occurs: Renier again brushes aside Girart's well-founded fears and takes him to Court, this time to be received into the Emperor's service.[2]

That Girart's submissive attitude towards Renier is founded on real affection is shown in the scene in which Renier demands his fief, when Girart braves his brother's anger to plead for mercy for him from Charlemagne; he is ready to serve the Emperor for life to gain this, and no thought of disgracing either the family or himself prevents him from making the offer:

> "'Merci, frans rois,' dit Girart li gentis,
> Por amor Deu qui en la croiz fu mis,
> Renier mon frere si est mautalantis.
> Mes chevaliers est il fiers et hardiz.
> Il n'a meillor en .LX. païs.
> Por amor Deu, qui pardon fist Longis,
> Retenez le, empereres gentis.
> Vostre hon serai rachetez et conquis,
> Servirai vos volentiers a tot dis.
> Ne vos lerai, tant com ge soie vis.'"[3]

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[1] LL. 517-523

[2] LL. 563-574

[3] LL. 1078-1087

Girart's affection for Renier, and his reliance on him, cause him to turn first to his brother, when Aimeri brings news of the insult. Aimeri suggests calling in all three brothers, but Girart says simply:

"'Nos irons a Renier.'"[1]

For his nephews he has a special affection, and although he insists on a certain standard of conduct from them, as long as they conform with that standard he is content to allow them a great deal of their own way.

When Aimeri arrives at Vienne, Girart teases and provokes him to the utmost to test his pride and temper, and is delighted when the boy in a rage hurls his falcon at his uncle's face:

"Entre ses braz l'a levé contremont.
.VII. foiz li besse la bouche et le menton.
'Aimeri, niés, cuer avez de baron.
Bien traiez a ma geste.'"[2]

Henceforth Aimeri is to play an important part in Girart's life: it is he who brings back the news of the insult, and urges on his uncle to seek revenge; he sends Girart's army after the family to Châlons; he determines on the sortie at the beginning of the siege, and prevents his uncle from killing the Queen. In all this Aimeri seems to be the

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[1] L. 1941

[2] LL. 1644-1647

leading spirit of the two: Girart appears to rely on him completely:

> "'Niés,' dit Girart, 'Jesu te soit aidis!
> Se tu ne fuses, je fuse malbailliz.'"[1]

Girart appreciates to the full the whole-hearted service given to him by his nephew. But when Aimeri, at the end of the poem, attempts to thwart the treaty of peace so earnestly desired by Girart, the latter reproaches him bitterly:

> "'Hé, gloz,' fet il, 'Deus te doint enconbrier!
> Por c'alas hui au tref Karlon lancier?
> Or nos as fet nostre pés delaier.'"[2]

Moreover, Girart, courteous himself, insists that Aimeri shall behave with courtesy to the Emperor:

> "'Gloz,' dit Girart, 'a son pié en iroiz!
> Dont n'oez vos que il vos aime en foi?'"[3]

Olivier, on his arrival in Vienne, claims an even larger share of Girart's affection than Aimeri, probably because the two have more in common. On occasions he is, like Renier, fearful for Olivier's safety. He tries to dissuade him from going out to take Roland's falcon, in the first place, and later from fighting Roland:

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[1] LL. 2617-2618
[2] LL. 6301-6303
[3] LL. 6478-6479

"'Niés Olivier, por Deu le droiturier,
Ceste bataille vos estuet alessier:
El duc Rollant a vaillant chevalier:
. . . . . .
Je ne vodroie, por le tresor Gaifier
Qu'il te peüst de ton cors domagier.
Ne me porroie ja mes releescier,
Qui me donroit le resne de Baivier
Et tout le resne de ci que a Poitiers.'"[1]

Girart's only sincere expression of religious feeling is, like Renier's, on behalf of Olivier. Before the battle he prays for his nephew's safety.

"'Cil Damedeu qui fist ciel et rousée
Te doint vitoire en icesta jornée,
Et de mort te desfande.'"[2]

During the fight he again prays fervently.[3] It is only gradually that he realises, as Charlemagne has done from the beginning, that Roland's death would be as great a catastrophe as Olivier's.

Yet though Girart fears for Olivier's safety, he insists on knightly behaviour from his nephew. We have seen already how he reproaches him for not fighting Roland at their first meeting. After this incident, he insists, against Renier's wish, that Olivier shall ride out and prove his valour:

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[1] LL. 4849-4851; 4856-4860.
[2] LL. 4995-4997; cf. LL. 5263-5270; 5797-5798
[3] LL. 5264-5271

"'Si fera, sire,' dit Girart le guerrier.
De son barnage nel doit nus delaier.'"[1]

Again, when he hears that Olivier has gone off alone to tilt at the quintaine, he leads his men out to the rescue, but instead of interfering too soon and so spoiling Olivier's sport, he hides them in a wood until his nephew actually needs help.[2] We may well wonder what would have been his reactions had Olivier agreed to follow his advice and give up the fight with Roland.

There is no possibility of this, however, for Olivier is as anxious to fight as any member of the family, and urges Girart on, just as Aimeri did. Girart complies with many of his suggestions: the battle which takes place after the failure of the embassy of peace is proposed by Olivier;[3] he also persuades Girart to attack the knight who subsequently turns out to be the Emperor,[4] and, after that unhappy encounter, encourages his uncle, who wishes to retreat at once, to continue the fight.[5] Girart relies on his nephew's judgment, too, in freeing Lanbert without a ransom, and his confidence in him is further shown when he entrusts to him the embassy of peace,[6] a task

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[1] LL. 2949-2950
[2] LL. 3188-3191
[3] LL. 4330-4332
[4] LL. 4406-4408
[5] LL. 4529-4532
[6] LL. 3878-3880

which he certainly could not have given to Aimeri.

If Girart shows himself affectionate and often compliant towards the men of the family, his behaviour towards the women is characterized by gentleness and a certain amount of sympathy and consideration. There is actually little evidence of his relations with his wife. He listens, however, to her peace counsels, and leaves her to take the action of calling together the rest of the family to discuss the matter[1], so we may take it that he is accustomed to listen to her advice as he listens to that of the other members of the family. A humorous little scene occurs between them when Charlemagne comes to Vienne with the brothers. Guibourc, recognising him, is impelled by true feminine instinct to instruct Girart in his duty towards the Emperor, without waiting to hear what he is actually doing in the matter. Girart quickly retorts:

"'Dame,' fet il, 'a tart avez parlé.'"[2]

Guibourc then begins to turn her thoughts to her honour as hostess of the Emperor:

"Dit Girart: 'Dame, bon loisir en avez
De fere son servise.'"[3]

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[1] LL. 6146-6159; 6207-6217

[2] L. 6551

[3] LL. 6560-6561

During the battle on the island he shows sincere affection and sympathy for Aude:

"Bele Aude en a meinte lerme plorée.
Li dus Girart l'a molt reconfortée."[1]

When Aude in her distress prays for both the combatants, Girart does his best to help her:

"Girart l'antant, s'a la color muée
Isnelement l'en a sus relevée
A un mostier l'a conduite et menée
A molt grant poine l'avoit reconfortée."[2]

From his emotion it almost seems as if this is the first indication he has had of Aude's feeling towards Roland.

It must be confessed, however, that he shows little consideration for her feelings in his conversation with Lanbert, which takes place in her presence. Girart rallies Lanbert on his preoccupation with her:

"'Sire Lanbert, mengiez et si buvez.
N'est mie nostre qanque vos esgardez.'"[3]

Lanbert replies that he is quite worthy of Aude, but that there are doubtless even finer fish in the sea. Whereupon Girart brushes the whole matter aside: "'Tot ce lessiez ester.'"[4] Bertrand, however, gives no indication of Aude's feelings during this surprising conversation.

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[1] LL. 4992-4993 [2] LL. 5439-5432
[3] LL. 3720-3721
[4] L. 3730

From what has been said, it is clear that Girart shows a gentle and even compliant attitude towards his relations. He himself seems to avoid violent action on the whole, and the war with Charlemagne seems to be a result rather of his family's decisions than of his own.

Considering his rather yielding nature, especially towards those set in any way in authority over him, it is not surprising to find that he is more sensible of his duty to the Emperor than his family as a whole. When Charlemagne demands of Renier satisfaction for his insolence, Girart is ready to submit to the Emperor's will, and actually suggests that he and his brother shall do penance:

> "'Merci, bons rois,' dist Girart li frans hon,
> Se il vos plest, orendroit en iron,
> Nu piez en langes, en noz meins .i. baston,
> Estrumelez le pais vuideron.'"[1]

Even in his indignation at losing the fief of Burgundy through Charlemagne's caprice, he does not forget his duty to the Emperor:

> "Et dit Girart: 'Sire, rois droiturier,
> Grant tort me faites, a celer nel vos quier,
> Car ceste dame me donates l'autrier,
> Tote sa terre et s'annor a baillier.
> Mon seigneur estes, ne vos puis jostissier.'"[2]

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[1] LL. 1005-1008.
Renaut de Montauban makes the same offer to win Charlemagne's pardon:
"Et chascuns de ces frerez ces honz ligez sera,
Tot mes piez et en langez au sepulere en ira."
(Seeger: Der Anfang des Teiles IV der Chanson von "Renaut de Montauban. p.53)

[2] LL.1430-1434. Girart's forbearance may be compared

It is illuminating to contrast this with Renier's overweening demands for a fief.

Even when Girart is actually at war with the Emperor, his attitude is half sorrow and half anger:

> "'Hé Karles, sire, bons rois poosteïs!
> A si grant tort m'as en Vïenne assis.
> Ja Deus ne place, ne le ber seint Moris,
> Que en partoiz tant que soiez marriz.'"[1]

Never, throughout the siege, does he forget that Charlemagne is his rightful lord; in his message to the Emperor by Olivier he protests that he is

> "'vostre hom et jurez et pleviz,
> Si tient de vos sa terre et son païs.'"[2]

He is only too anxious to make amends:

> "'Servira vos de gré et volontiers.
> S'il a mesfait, prez est de l'adrecier.'"[3]

For a long time before the war comes to an end then, Girart shows a consistent desire for peace,

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with the less loyal attitude of Girart de Roussillon in similar circumstances: "Et Girart était couronnée et ne pensait pas à rire. Pour un peu il eût defié le roi, si le respect du clergé ne l'eût tenu." (Girart de Roussillon: translation by Paul Meyer). Girart de Roussillon's feelings, however, were aggravated by the fact that he was in love with Elissent.

[1] LL. 4361-4364

[2] LL. 3987-3988

[3] LL. 4018-4019

which seems to be caused chiefly by a feeling of discomfort at his position as a rebel.[1]

If Girart dislikes making war on the Emperor, the thought of doing violence to the person of Charlemagne fills him with horror. He is overcome with grief and contrition when he finds that he has fought Charlemagne: he begs for forgiveness,[2] and the Emperor's refusal to grant it cuts him to the heart. He expresses his grief to Olivier:

> "'Ce fu li rois qui soef me norri.
> Molt sui dolanz qant onques le feri.
> Ja mes, ce cuit, n'avra de moi merci.'"[3]

In the scene of Charlemagne's capture, all Girart's sense of feudal loyalty is awakened by Aimeri's suggestion of killing the Emperor, and he submits at once:

> "'Ne place Deu,' Girart li respondi,
> Que rois de France soit ja par moi honniz.
> Ses hom serai, s'il a de moi merci.
> De lui tendrai ma terre et mon pais,
> Et si nel fait, par le cors seint Moris,
> Je m'en irai el resne es Arrabiz.
> Moie ert la honte, si en sera plus vis
> Nostre enpereres riches.'"[4]

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[1] cf. LL. 5799-5802; 6303-6304

[2] LL. 4442-4448.
Renaut de Montauban appears to fight twice with Charlemagne. Once he fights him in ignorance, like Girart, and repents afterwards. (Ed. Michelant: p.287, v.5). On another occasion he actually defies Charlemagne and fights him. (Seeger: Text von C.,pp.107-108).

[3] LL. 4521-4523

[4] LL. 6421-6428
When Renaut de Montauban holds Charlemagne prisoner in his castle, he immediately makes his submission, and

Girart, then, has much more feudal loyalty and realisation of the sanctity of the royal person than any of the characters treated so far.

It is a striking fact that Girart's gentleness and freedom from the overbearing attitude typical of Renier have the effect of rendering him popular with all who come in contact with him. While he is still at Court we learn that

"Forment l'amerent li baron et li per."[1]

There is no evidence that Renier was ever so popular, and this is borne out by the fact that while only one baron pleads Renier's cause before Charlemagne, all unite in asking for a fief for Girart.[2]

It is clear, indeed, that Girart's whole conduct and temperament are such as to make friends. He is more courteous, more appreciative of services rendered than Renier. It is Girart who thanks the Abbé Morant for his gifts,[3] and Girart who remembers to repay him in the day of prosperity.[4] Moreover, whereas Renier refuses

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after trying in vain to obtain peace from the Emperor, allows him to go:

"'Vous estez mes droiz sire(z), se dert,com vous plaira.'" (Seeger: Der Anfang des Teiles IV der Chanson von "Renaut de Montauban."

[1]L. 1202
[2]LL. 1445-1449
[3]LL. 402-405
[4]LL. 1508-1512

point blank to render formal thanks to the Emperor for the fief of Genvres, Girart is only too willing and happy to acknowledge that of Vienne.[1]

Although Girart has the qualities typical of his family, he becomes an individual by his more general standard of honour, and by his gentler qualities of courtesy and reasonably yielding moderation. In him for the first time we find the clash of conflicting loyalties. In creating Girart, Bertrand has attempted a more complex character than any of those studied so far.

4. Olivier

Olivier is the last of Bertrand's heroes. He holds the centre of the stage from his arrival in Vienne to the end of his fight with Roland - that is, for about half the poem; a longer reign than is accorded to any of the other characters. The unmistakable gusto, moreover, with which Bertrand treats this part of the poem, leaves no doubt of his partiality for Olivier.

In a family of great warriors, Olivier is the perfect knight. His strength and skill as a warrior and a horseman are displayed again and again. None of

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[1] L. 1462

Charlemagne's knights, except Roland, can withstand him; Guinement, Entiaume, Hernaut de Poitiers, Ogier and Lanbert[1] all go down in turn before him, killed or unhorsed, until his prowess attains the highest reputation and earns the highest respect among the enemy:

> "'. . . . c'est li cuens Olivier,
> Cil qui nos fet les cenbiaus comencier,
> Et chascun jor nos ocit chevalier.'"[2]

Even Roland, the greatest warrior in France, cannot conquer him; the first time they meet Roland is actually discomfited by a mighty blow on the helmet, which causes his horse to bolt,[3] and their single combat on the island is only ended by the intervention of an angel, since neither can prevail.

Olivier is, like the rest of the family, fully conscious of his valour, and delights to exercise it. When he demands his knighthood it is plain that he longs to try out the strength which he is sure of possessing:

> "'Or me covient et armes et destrier.
> Car tant me sant fort et sein et legier,
> C'a ces granz jostes veil mon cors essaier.
> Chevalier veil par mon cors jostissier.'"[4]

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[1] LL. 2962-2969; 3271-3277; 4507-4512; 3625-3635; 3534-3545

[2] LL. 3956-3958

[3] LL. 3453-3460

[4] LL. 2901-2904

He is always anxious to begin a fight and to continue it as long as possible; we have seen how he persuades Girart to join battle with the Emperor's forces after the failure of the embassy of peace, and how he has eventually to be led off the battlefield by his uncle, to prevent his being left behind.

He seems, moreover, to find real delight in overcoming his adversary in battle - a delight independent of any profit he may gain from his victory. When he unhorses Roland on the island he is filled with joy:

> "Voit le Olivier si s'est esleescié.
> Qui li donast de France la moitié
> Et Orlenois et Reins l'arceveschié
> Mein escïent, n'eüst le cuer si lié
> Comme del conte qu'il a deschevalchié,
> En l'ille soz Vïenne."[1]

On the other hand, the usually even-tempered Olivier is invariably angered by the success of his adversary. When Lanbert makes a large hole in his shield: "n'ot en lui c' afrier,"[2] and during the fight on the island he is "dolant et irascu" when Roland cuts his hauberk to pieces with Durandal.[3]

Courageous and warlike, Olivier never hesitates to fling himself into battle; on some occasions, as, for

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[1] LL. 5307-5312

[2] L. 3494

[3] L. 5773

example, that of the quintaine scene, he seems reckless, and lacking in Aimeri's careful foresight. Yet he has not his father's foolhardy bravery: when he is in danger he recognises the fact. He is frankly panic-stricken when he supposes that his identity is discovered after he has overturned the quintaine,[1] and again when he finds himself unarmed and surrounded by the angry barons in Charlemagne's tent.[2] But his greatest straits are when, during the fight with Roland, his sword breaks:

> "Savoir poëz molt ot le cuer iré
> Car ne vit arme ou il ait recovré
> Si regarda tot entor lui el pré
> De tote parz se vit si enserré
> En nule guise ne puet estre eschapé
> Lors a tel duel, a pou que n'est desvé.'"[3]

But in each case his fear spurs him on to greater efforts; he scorns to show any weakness:

> "Mieuz veut morir a ennor en ce pré
> C'a coardisse li soit ja atorné
> Que de air ait ja senblant mostré.
> Tout meintenant eüst Rollant coblé
> A ses .ii. poinz voiant tot le barné."[4]

His fine knightly pride, indeed, abhors any suggestion of weakness in himself. After trying in vain to make peace

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[1] LL. 3224-3225

[2] LL. 4269-4270

[3] LL. 5451-5456

[4] LL. 5458-5462

with Roland, he suddenly feels that by his repeated efforts he has dishonoured himself:

> "'Or sui ge fous, si mes hui vos en pri.
> Biau Sire Deus, por coi cri ge merci?
> Por fol m'en tieng recreant et honni.
> Deus, aidiez m'en, q'an vos me croi et fi.'"[1]

This same scrupulous regard for his honour is shown throughout his behaviour on the battlefield. He gives Roland ample warning of his attack:

> "'Ne dites mie que vos aie trahi.
> Gardez vos bien, desormés vos desfi.
> Devant le cop vos en ai bien garni.'"[2]

Moreover, determined to conquer Roland by force of arms only, he sportingly offers him an interval of rest when Roland declares that he is tired:

> "'Mieuz vos amasse conquerre au branc d'acier
> Que d'autre chose eüsiez enconbrier.'" 3

With the same generosity he saves Roland's life from the treacherous squire who brings the swords.[4]

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[1]LL.5197-5200. cf. his refusal to show weakness when wounded by Roland. He sinks to his knees for a moment, but

> "Honteus en fu, ce puis bien afichier.
> En piez resaut a guise d'ome fier,
> Si se desfant en guise de guerrier.(LL.5751-5753)

[2]LL.5203-5205.

[3]LL.5843-5844.

[4]LL.5597-5599.

In battle, therefore, Olivier shows not only outstanding prowess, but courtesy and generosity, and an exact regard for his honour, which give evidence of a fine, noble character.

In the case of other members of the family, physical strength and prowess gave rise to self-assurance. Olivier does not lack confidence, but it would be incorrect to call it mere self-confidence, for he never omits to assert that he expects to conquer through divine aid. It is clear that he regards the fight with Roland as a real trial by combat, in which heaven is to declare who is in the right:

> "'Puis que serons seul a seul adobé,
> Si ait l'annor, qui Deus l'a destinée.'" 1

As Olivier feels his cause to be just he hopes for God's help:

> "'Je me fi tant en Deu le droiturier,
> Se nos venons a l'estor conmencier,
> Que bien le cuit envers lui derrenier
> Se Deus me veut par sa merci aidier.'"2

When Roland wonders at Olivier's valour, Olivier assigns the credit to God:

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[1] LL 4124-4125.

[2] LL.4165-4168.

"'Sire Rollant,' dit li cuens Olivier,
'Ben sai que tant com Deus me veille aidier,
Ne dout ge home qui me puist domagier,
Ne qui ja mal me face.'"[1]

The same deep religious feeling runs through the whole of Olivier's character. After the angel's visitation, his first thought is to render thanks:

"En .ii. ses meins en tant vers Damedé:
'Glorieus Sire, vos soiez aoré,
Qui a cest home m'avez hui acordé.'"[2]

Olivier, then, shows a sincere religious feeling which has not been found in any other member of his family, for although Renier's and Girart's prayers for him were sincere, neither showed any sign of the strong faith which supports and strengthens Olivier. This is an interesting point, as the quality of religious feeling has been added to Olivier's character since the Chanson de Roland, in which he gives little evidence of any such feeling; on the other hand, Roland, who in Girart de Vienne seems to lack the feeling almost entirely, is represented in the Chanson de

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[1] LL. 5867-5870

[2] LL. 5951-5953

Roland as the more religious of the two.[1]

Two other points may be noticed in this connexion. The first is the moderation of Olivier's language, which is free from the curses so frequent in that of many of the other characters; even oaths are sparingly used by Olivier. The second is Olivier's adoption of St. Maurice as his patron saint. Besides being the patron of warriors, St. Maurice was the patron of Vienne.[2] Girart, after being given the fief of Vienne, swears three times by him, and Olivier, as his uncle's representative, also uses his name on several occasions[3]. Apart from these two, who are both intimately connected with Vienne, no one in the poem refers to St. Maurice. These are only details, but they show that Bertrand must have paid attention to such small points of characterisation. It seems hardly possible that they could have been the result of accident.

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1 In Fierabras also, Olivier is represented as being religious; his long prayer during the single combat is the cause of Fierabras' conversion to Christianity.

2 LL. 1930; 4363; 6425.

3 LL. 3232; 3306; 3496; 3607; 4328; 5495.

Olivier's religious feeling enters into his loyalty both to his family and to his over-lord. In the case of the desmesurés, family loyalty was all-important, and there was therefore no doubt of the justness of the rebels' cause. Hernaut disapproved of the length of the war on the ground of common sense, but agreed with it in principle. In Milon we found a sense of feudal loyalty, but its consequences could not be seen owing to the lack of development of his character. Girart had a strong sense of feudal loyalty, and was only able to justify his cause by laying the blame for the war on the Emperor.

Olivier's attitude, while it resembles that of Girart, is further complicated by his religious feeling. His words to Lanbert express the sentiments of the ideal feudal vassal:

> "'Se vos servez Karlemene au vis fier
> De ce ne doit nus frans hom merveillier.
> Car son seignor doit en par tot aidier,
> Puis que il tient de lui terres et fiez,
> As cleres armes au bon tranchanz espiez,
> Le doit servir qant il en a mestier.'"[1]

Yet there is a higher duty:

> "'Mes que ne soit a violer mostier,
> N'a povre gent rober ne essillier.
> Car Damedeu ne doit nus guerroier
> Q'an petit d'eure le feroit trebuchier.'"[2]

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[1] LL. 3802-3807 [2] LL. 3808-3811

Evidently the duty to the liege-lord must not be obeyed if it dictates immoral conduct. If Olivier can fight for Girart against the Emperor with a clear conscience, it is because he feels that Girart is in the right. He puts this point of view to the Emperor:

> "'Vienne fu mon aiel, ce savez,
> Et mon tresaive, c'est fine verité.
> Mes aieus fu dus Bueves li barbez,
> Plus de .c. anz tint quite cest resné
> Einz rois de France ne l'an mostra fierté.
> Or m'est avis que grant tort en avez
> Qant vos mon oncle volez desheriter.
> Pechiez ferois se l'an desheritez.'"[1]

There is no doubt that Olivier needs to feel that he is in the right. He relies implicitly on the help of God, and he must feel that he deserves this. In fighting for Girart, therefore, he is not exactly putting his family before feudal loyalty, but the right before the wrong cause.

But however much Olivier and his uncle may feel justified in their war against Charlemagne, both would prefer to be at peace with him. Olivier is one of the first to talk of peace, when he urges Girart to set Lanbert free:

> "'Randez le Charles, plus gent plet en avrez.
> Molt sera fel se n'estes acordez.'"[2]

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[1] LL.4041-4048

[2] LL.3747-3748

He is even ready to give up his fight with Roland at the eleventh hour if by so doing he can obtain peace. He repeatedly offers Roland both Aude and Vienne in return for this:

> "'Hé Rollant, sire, nobile chevalier,
> Por Deu vos pri, qui se lessa drecier
> En seinte croiz por son pueple essaucier,
> Que ceste guerre feïsiez apesier.
> Audein avroiz, s'il vos plest, a moillier.
> Tote Vïenne avroiz a jostissier.
> Au duc Girart le ferai ostroier.
> En grant bataille et en estor plenier,
> Serai tot jorz vostre confanonnier.'"[1]

Although it would seem from this that Olivier is prepared to sacrifice the immediate interest of his family for the sake of peace, there is no suggestion of betrayal; Bertrand, on the contrary, commends his conduct.[2]

Yet he is as proud of his family as any of his relations,[3] and has the same confidence in their might as his father Renier:

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[1] LL. 5159-5167

Renaud de Montauban makes similar proposals to Roland when he meets him in battle: "Roland et Renaud se trouvent en présence l'un de l'autre, et c'est ici que se révèle. . . le grand amour de Renaud pour la paix. Il s'humilie devant cet adversaire qu'il ne craint pas, et dit à Roland: "Si vous voulez m'accorder avec il'Empereur je deviendrai votre homme, je vous livrerai Montauban."
(Gautier: Les Epopées Françaises, Vol. III, p. 219)

[2] LL. 5157-5158

[3] cf. LL. 2773-2776

"'Qant ensenble ert li riches parentez,
..xl. mil seromes adoubez.
Chevaucherons par fine poostez
De ci en France sor les chevaus montez.
Ne vos lerons ne chastiaus ne citez,
Ne tor de pierre ne riche fermetez
Que tuit ne soient par terre craventez.'"[1]

But in spite of this pride and confidence, he probably feels, in addition to his desire for peace with his overlord, a certainty that eventually his family will lose the war. He is particularly anxious not to fight Roland, because he feels that even if he conquers him the result will be disadvantageous to his family in the long run, since Charlemagne will be rendered all the more implacable:

"'Je ne vodroie, por l'annor de Ponti,
..Que vos eüse ne pris ne mal bailli.
Car en la fin ce sai ge bien de fi
En esseroient tuit mi ami honni.
Ja mes li rois ne mes oncles ausin
Jor ne seroient bien voillant ne ami.'"[2]

Although, therefore, Olivier manifestly desires peace and is willing to compromise to obtain it, he is no less loyal to the family than any of his relations, but his loyalty is more far-sighted, and perhaps broader, than that of Aimeri.

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[1] LL. 4061-4067

[2] LL. 5178-5183

Girart's predilection for Olivier has already been noted, and it is clear that the two have several points in common: military prowess, general moderation, and feudal loyalty in particular. Olivier fully returns his uncle's affection; he speaks of him as

"'Girart mon oncle que j'ai chier.'"[1]

Like Aimeri he is proud of Girart; when Charlemagne insists that the siege shall continue until Girart has been put to shame, Olivier indignantly declares that that will never be:

"'Ce n'iert ja certes, sire,' dit Olivier
Car trop est fier dant Girart le guerrier,
Et de puissant lingnaje.'"[2]

To Roland he says:

"'Sire Rollant, por Deu, le fiz Marie,
Je vos di bien que c'est molt grant folie,
Qant vos cuidiez par vo grant estotie
Girart mon oncle torner a cuivertie,
Ja ne donra cuivertaje en sa vie,
Nel soferroie por tote Normendie.'"[3]

We have already seen how Girart often complies with his nephew's advice. Olivier is fully aware of this;

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[1] L. 4173

[2] LL. 4032-4034

[3] LL. 5135-5140

when he offers not only to become Roland's vassal himself, but that Girart shall do so too, he is certain that his uncle will agree to this:

> "'Tote Vïenne avroiz a jostissier.
> Au duc Girart le ferai ostroier.'"[1]

On the other hand, on the one occasion on which Girart disapproves of Olivier, after the first meeting with Roland, his reproofs have a marked effect. Olivier's first movement is to answer back sharply:

> "Olivier l'ot, si teint comme charbon.
> Si li respont par grant aïroison:
> 'En non Deu, sire, vos dites que preudom!
> Si come cil qui est molt riches hom
> Qui la roïne besastes el talon.
> Si se venta oiant meint haut baron
> A Seint Denis chiés l'abé Phelipon.
> Forment m'en poise, foi que doi seint Simon,
> Que molt en ai grant honte.'"[2]

However, he cannot rest till he has received his knighthood and proved his valour by slaying Guinement.

There is little evidence of any close affection between Olivier and the other men of the family; we are hardly told if he reciprocates his father's love. But there is no doubt of the close relationship between him and his sister Aude. This is shown first in the little scene which precedes his departure to joust at the

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[1] LL. 5164-5165

[2] LL. 2888-2896

quintaine. The two are watching the operations in the plain below Vienne. Suddenly Olivier calls for his arms, and Aude anxiously asks where he is going. He replies gently:

"'Bele, au François veil aler tornoier.'"[1]

He reassures her when she begs him not to go:

"'Bele,' dit il, 'ne vos chaut d'esmaier.'"[2]

He warns her, on pain of losing his affection, not to tell Girart; but it is plain that he has confidence in her power to keep the secret.

All his affection and anxiety for her honour come to the fore when Roland tries to carry her off:

"'Sire, niés Karle, ainsi vos oi nomer,
Vostre merci, ma suer lessiez ester.
.iiii. arcevesques avra a l'espouser.
Si ert Hernaut qui tant fet a loer,
Et dant Renier de Genvres sor la mer,
Li dus Girart qui tant fet a loer,
Et Aimeri li gentis et li ber,
Et ge meïsmes se la vos veil doner.'"[3]

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[1] L. 3125

[2] L. 3131

[3] LL. 3415-3422

From the last line it is evident that he means to have a say in her marriage, and later when he decides that Aude must marry Roland, he seems to have no doubt of his power to effect this:

> "'Tant li cuit dire ainz demain l'avesprer,
> Se a vos faut a seignor espousé,
> N'avra mari en trestot son aé;
> Einçois devendra nonne.'"[1]

Clearly he has no thought of forcing her into an unwilling marriage: he is convinced that he will be doing well by her in marrying her to Roland: and he may, of course, know her feelings in the matter. Nevertheless he does not scruple to use her name as a condition of peace.[2]

For his cousin Aimeri he seems to feel less affection, at any rate when he first comes to Vienne. There is the suggestion of rivalry between them: when Olivier comes on the scene he deposes Aimeri from his position as Girart's champion. Aimeri's ignominious return to

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1 LL. 5407-5410

It is curious that while Olivier, Hernaut and Girart all interest themselves in the question of Aude's marriage, Renier, her father, is hardly mentioned in connexion with it.

2 LL. 5123-5125

Vienne on foot after his encounter with Roland affords great satisfaction to Olivier:

"Voit le Olivier, liez et joianz en fu."[1]

This is not purely because of Aimeri's defeat, however, but partly because Olivier is pleased that his cousin has not defeated the man to whom he himself gave in.

However, Aimeri is a member of Olivier's family, and Olivier defends his cause loyally. He uses the incident of Aimeri's defeat to reproach Roland[2], and on the island he actually declares that he has come to avenge his cousin.[3]

Such, then, is Olivier: invincible, courageous and generous in battle, a deeply religious young man, loyal both to his feudal lord and to his family, and, on the whole, affectionate in his relations with the members of his family - the ideal type of Christian knight, and true preudom.

So far, we have examined Olivier by himself: this was necessary for the analysis of his character, but it omitted what to Bertrand seems to be his chief interest - his relations with Roland. Highly conscious of the traditional friendship between the two, Bertrand, even though he is describing events prior to its formation,

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[1] L. 3029
[2] LL. 3239-3242
[3] L. 5114

seems to think of it almost as an accomplished fact. The result is that, consciously or not, he creates a strong impression that the friendship was predestined from the beginning. Not only are the two destined to be companions for life, but they are to end their life in an untimely death, fighting the enemies of God. The idea of Roncevaux overshadows their whole relationship: it is hardly too much to say that they are preordained to death in that battle. The idea is introduced the first time Olivier is mentioned:

> "De ceste dame que nos ici dison
> Fu Olivier a la clere façon.
> Il et Rollant furent puis conpangnon
> Que puis traï le felon Ganelon
> En la terre d'Espangne."[1]

Other references to "la male jornée"[2] of Roncevaux during the course of the poem serve to keep the idea present in the mind of the reader throughout the rest of the story.[3]

Circumstances make the two enemies when they first meet. Yet fate seems anxious to bring them together as soon as possible,[4] for when Olivier arrives at Vienne the

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[1] LL. 1182-1186 [2] L. 5416

[3] LL. 5876-5884; 6924-6928.

[4] Montaigne speaks of "ne scay quelle force inexplicable et fatale, mediatrice de cette union" in connexion with his friendship with Etienne de la Boëtie. (Essais: livre 1, Chap. xxviii)

first thing he does is to look out of a window and see Roland. He is immediately attracted by Roland's skill at falconry,[1] and when the two actually meet, he is anxious to find out Roland's name:

> "Il l'aresone bel et cortoisement:
> Or t'ai ge dit quel gent sont mi parent,
> Et tu, qui es? Nel me celer noiant.'"[2]

Above all, he admires Roland's prowess; after watching the encounter between him and Aimeri, Olivier exclaims on it to his uncle:

> "'Par Deu, biaus oncles, merveilles ai veü.
> De ceste joste ne sui pas irascu.
> C'est li vasaus qui m'a l'oisel tolu.
> Tel chevalier ne vi mes ne ne fu
> Del barnaje de France.'"[3]

The effect of Olivier's admiration for Roland is to awaken a strong competitive desire in him. This seems to be the cause of his going down to Roland in the first place; he is invincibly drawn to take and keep Roland's falcon:

> "'Se ge n'i vois, vis sui et recreüz,
> Et se gel tieng, il n'iert hui mes renduz
> Por amor ceus de France.'"[4]

The recognition of Roland's worth seems to make Olivier want to assert himself; at all events, he takes

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[1] LL. 2735-2747 [2] LL. 2780-2782

[3] LL. 3032-3036 [4] LL. 2745-2747

every opportunity of doing so. Roland's attempt to buy back his falcon provokes a tirade which is Olivier's assertion of his aristocratic dislike of trafficking for goods, and then, as Roland persists in referring to him as a "garçon",[1] Olivier must needs assert his superiority by grandly offering to take Roland into his service,[2] a piece of cool arrogance surpassing all the violent language which Aimeri would no doubt have used in similar circumstances.

In the quarrel which follows, Olivier affirms his ability to meet Roland in battle:

> "'Par cel apostre q'an quiert en pré Noiron,
> S'antre nos deus esmeüst la tançon,
> N'en feïsiez en France la vantoison,
> Q'an portisiez par force .i. seul bouton.'"[3]

Henceforth, Olivier is not content unless he can reproach or mock Roland. In the battle after the quintaine scene, he deliberately seeks him out to remind him of his encounter with Aimeri;[4] it is a debatable point how far this is loyalty to his cousin, and how much an excuse for attacking Roland. The next time the two meet,

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[1] L. 2791

[2] LL. 2794-2799

[3] LL. 2828-2831

[4] LL. 3237-3241

Olivier has an even better excuse, for he finds Roland in the act of carrying off his sister.[1]

There is no doubt that Olivier has the trick of striking home with his tongue; on one occasion Roland, hearing his reproaches, "s'en bronche",[2] and when he does not accept at once Olivier's challenge to single combat and Olivier taunts him with lack of spirit,[3] Roland is so angry that he can scarcely forbear to strike Olivier, a messenger.

But if Olivier uses his ready tongue to reproach Roland, he uses it, too, to beg for peace. To obtain this he offers to give up everything, - Aude, Vienne, his own independence even,[4] but in vain. Even after the fight has begun he has a momentary hope that peace will be possible when Roland allows him to send for a new sword. He is soon disillusioned, however, for Roland summons him to continue the fight, and he regretfully complies:

> "Il prant sa targe, s'a la guige sessie.
> Se il l'osast lessier sanz vilenie,
> Nen feïst plus por tot l'or de Hongrie."[5]

Actually, the fight is inevitable; even necessary. Their positions as champions of Charlemagne and Girart seem to demand a single combat. Moreover, Olivier at least is urged on by a desire to match his strength against Roland's, to settle which is the stronger of the

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[1] LL. 3415-3422 [2] L. 3243 [3] LL. 4111-4114
[4] Laisses CXLI-CXLIV [5] LL. 5635-5637

two. Lastly, the temperaments of the two are sharply contrasted, as we hope to show in a study of Roland's character; this opposition does not die when they swear eternal friendship; Faral observes that even at Roncevaux "la plupart du temps, l'amitié de Roland et d'Olivier apparaît comme une émulation, comme une rivalité, presque comme un antagonisme." [1]

Olivier, then, challenges Roland to the single combat which is to decide between them, and their respective causes. His efforts to make peace do not prevent him from putting his best into the battle, and in spite of all Roland's wonderful prowess, neither of them can prevail.

The reconciliation which follows the intervention of the angel[2] is not a sudden change in their attitude brought about by a deus ex machina, but is logically based on the mutual admiration and attraction of two outstanding characters, and is, moreover, foreshadowed from the beginning of their relationship by their forbearance in the scene of their first meeting.

The divine command comes at the right moment, when they are satisfied that their valour is equal; and so begins

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[1] La Chanson de Roland, p. 220

[2] laisse CLXX.

the compagnonnage which is to last all their short lives:

"Juq 'a un jor qu'ele fu departie
En Rancevaus en la lande enhermie,
Por Ganelon qui li cors Deu maudie,
Qui les vandi a la gent paiennie,
Au roi Marsile que Jesu malefe,
Onques mes jor en France la garnie
N'avint si grant domaje."[1]

The treatment of the beginnings of this friendship is probably, psychologically, the best part of the poem. Bertrand has shown so well the mixture of attraction and antagonism which characterises their attitude to each other, together with the subtle interplay of the two characters, that one is almost tempted to suppose that he had some experience of such a friendship. He has infused into this relationship just that inexplicable element which gave rise to Montaigne's immortal phrase: "Par ce que c'estoit luy; par ce que c'estoit moy."

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1 LL. 5878-5884

CHAPTER III

1. Charlemagne

"Prise dans son ensemble," says Gaston Paris, "l'épopée française a pour sujet l'histoire de Charlemagne."[1] The Emperor is not, however, treated in the same way throughout the whole range of epic poetry: the conception of him varies with the changing political movements.

In the early Chansons de geste, such as the Chanson de Roland, written during the chaotic period of weak monarchs who ruled, or rather more often did not rule, from the death of Charlemagne to the coming of the Capetians, the rôle of the Emperor is grandiose, almost superhuman. As God's agent on earth he enjoys divine favour and protection; his power is limited, it is true, but nevertheless he towers above all his subjects, supreme in royal dignity as in virtue and military prowess.

At the end of the 12th century, however, reaction against the growing power of the King produced in literature a tendency to belittle Charlemagne, to reduce his grandeur by making him unattractive in various ways. In Girart de Roussillon, for example, his conduct is

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[1] Histoire poétique de Charlemagne, p. 12

both capricious and unjust, since, in spite of the previous arrangement that he should marry Berthe. the elder daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople, and Girart the younger daughter Elissent, Charlemagne, on hearing that Elissent is the fairer of the two,suddenly changes his mind, and insists on marrying her.[1] In Huon de Bordeaux Charlemagne has no compunction about breaking his word to Huon; although he has previously sworn to pardon Huon for slaying a man, when he discovers that it is his own son Charlot who has been killed, he is overcome by fury, and, forgetting his oath, tries to attack Huon with a knife.[2] Sometimes he even descends to treachery; in Girart de Roussillon he allows an ambush to be laid for Girart[3]; in Bueves d'Aigremont, too, Bueves is killed in an ambush of which the Emperor had cognisance;[4] in Renaut de Montauban he actually causes King Yon to betray the rebels to him.[5]

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[1]Bédier: Légendes Epiques, Vol.II., p.5.

[2]Huon de Bordeaux: p.40.

"Karles l'entent, se li mua li sans,
Huon regarde par moult fier maltalent,
Les dens eskigne, les iex va rouelant.
Desour la table voit .i. coutel gisant;
Karles le prent tost et isnelement,
Ja en ferist Huon parmi les flans,
Quant li dus Nales li vait des puins ostant."

[3]Bédier: Légendes Epiques, Vol.II., p.13.

[4]Gautier: Les Epopées Françaises: Vol.3, p.197

[5]Ibid. p.215.

But the characteristic which is invariably attributed to Charlemagne during this period is that of a pitiless, inflexible hatred of those who have incurred his displeasure. Even when Huon de Bordeaux has proved his innocence by killing the traitor Amauri in single combat, Charlemagne will not allow him to be reinstated in his lands, simply because he has not heard the traitor's confession; and when he is obliged by his barons to make some concession to Huon, he sets such conditions to his pardon that Huon will almost certainly lose his life in trying to fulfil them.[1] In Ogier le Danois and Girart de Roussillon, he pursues the rebels with bitter, unchanging fury, and nothing could surpass the unbalanced, unreasoning obstinacy with which he demands the surrender of Maugis in Renaud de Montauban.[2]

Yet in spite of these unfavourable characteristics, the tradition of the greatness of the Emperor remains, and men look back to his reign as the Golden Age of France's might. Only fifty years later, Rutebeuf,

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[1] Huon de Bordeaux, pp.65-68.

[2] "'Se tot li home del mont ke l'en peüst trover,
M'en venoient prier por cestui acorder,
N'en feroie por aus le monte d'un disner,
Se Maugis ne me rens, ke je ne puis amer;
Trencerai li les menbres et le ferai bruler.'"

Michelant: p.337, LL.16-20.

lamenting the state of the world as he knows it, sighs for the time of Charlemagne:

"Se Charles fust en France, encore i fust Rolans."[1]

In view of these two conflicting conceptions of the Emperor, we shall not be surprised to find some anomaly in the treatment accorded him in Girart de Vienne. Léon Gautier, it is true, accuses Bertrand of being one of those who have belittled the Emperor: "Le poëte, auteur de Girars de Viane, est un de ceux qui sont coupables d'une vaste et honteuse conspiration contre la grandeur de Charlemagne."[2]

Is Gautier altogether justified in making this statement? Let us try to answer this question by considering Charlemagne's character by itself and in relation to the other people in the poem.

His rôle certainly does not lack importance, for as the antagonist of Girart he is essential to the action of the poem. Do his person and character, then, give evidence of the conspiracy of which Gautier speaks?

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[1] De la vie dou monde. Edition Jubinal: Vol.II.,p.33.L.60

[2] Les Epopées Françaises, Vol.III., p.99.

In person he seems little different from the Charlemagne of the Chanson de Roland. Bertrand, in accordance with tradition, considers him as an old man, since he often describes him as "a la barbe meslée", or "a la barbe florie", but here his age is not phenomenal, as in some of the other epics. He himself claims, with relative modesty, to have been King of France for over twenty years.[1]

But whatever his age, in appearance he has lost none of his royal dignity. The usual epithet used to describe him is "au vis fier", and Guibourc recognises him

> "Au fier regart et au vis et au nes,
> Au chief devant que ill ot fenestré."[2]

His physical strength and vigour, moreover, are unimpaired. His exploits in the poem confirm the epithets "vaillant" et "ber" which are so frequently applied to him. We see him twice in action on the battlefield. On the first occasion he rescues his Queen from Aimeri in true knight-errant fashion; in spite of Aimeri's great valour he is unhorsed by a single blow from the Emperor.[3] When the rebels attack after Olivier's embassy of peace, Charlemagne himself leads his forces into

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[1] LL.4433-4434.
[2] LL.6543-6544.
[3] LL.2686-2689.

battle:

> "Li rois meïsmes tot meintenant s'arma
> Isnelement sor son destrier monta
> . . . . . .
> Devant les autres premiers esperonna.
> Plus d'une archiée sa gent arrier lessa[1]

In his encounter with Girart he shows strength and valour:

> "Karles fiert lui par grant aïroison,
> Que de la sele froissa derriers l'arçon,
> Et sor la crope de l'auferrant gascon,
> L'a enversée li rois tout a bandon."[2]

Moreover he takes a fierce delight in fighting. Bertrand tells how he encourages his men "par molt ruiste fierté"[3], and his ardent desire to overcome the enemy is evident throughout the battle-scenes. When he sees that Girart is about to retire to Vienne, he orders four hundred knights to cut off the retreat:

> "'Devant les portes lor soiez au devant.
> Ne vos eschapent li felon souduiant.'"[4]

As the enemy succeed in retreating to Vienne, he insists

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[1] LL.4396-4397; 4400-4401.

[2] LL.4420-4423. cf. his fight with Baligant in the Chanson de Roland (Laisses cclviii-cclxii)

[3] L.4582.

[4] LL.4555-4556.

on an immediate assault, though his forces are inadequately equipped for such an operation:

"'Ore a l'asaut, franc chevalier menbré!
Qui or me faut n'ait part en m'eritè.'" 1

When Naimes points out the impossibility of success, Charlemagne refuses to listen:

"Karles l'antant durement s'en gramie
Il se rescrie: 'Monjoie l'esbaudie!
Que faites vos, ma bone gent hardie?'
Lors reconmence molt fiere l'aatie." 2

There is no want of energy or warlike vigour here.

If age has not impaired his physical strength and energy, neither has it mellowed his passions, which are as strong as those of any younger man. Again and again he is "dolanz et abosmez", or otherwise deeply moved; and frequently "près n'a le sans desvé" with anger. It is true that the violence of his passions is much less than in Renaut de Montauban. No passages in Girart can be compared in this respect with the following:

"Lors roielle les iex si est en piez levez,
Aviz est qui l'esgarde que il soit forcenez
Quant li baron(z) le voient, si sont tuit effreez;

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[1] LL.4583-4584.

[2] LL.4620-4623.

Naimes li dus s'en est arriere retournez,
Il n'ose .I. mot sonner, tant est espoantez,
Ne nus des autres princes si le voient iré."[1]

Nevertheless, the Charlemagne of Girart is undoubtedly a passionate old man. His fierce desire for vengeance is as much a cause of the long war as any action of the rebels. At the beginning of the siege he swears to take Vienne:

"'Einz i serra .xiiii. anz environ
C'a force ne la prengne.'" [2]

For seven years he keeps his oath, leaving Vienne "ne por vent ne por pluie,"[3] and at the end of that period his ardour is rather increased than diminished, for when Roland urges him to make peace, he replies:

"'N'en tornerai en trestot mes aez.
Si ert la vile et li hauz murs versez.
Ses prang a force, mal lor ert encontré.
N'i avra .i. qui ne soit desmenbrez.'"[4]

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[1]Seeger: p.88.
[2]LL.2532-2533.
[3]L.3060. He shows the same determination to take Montauban at all cost: cf. Seeger,p.90, LL.21-23:
"'A .xi. mille hommez ains midi l'assaurai,
Por noif ne pour jalee jamais n'en tornerai,
De ci en icelle heure que je Renaut arai.'"
[4]LL.6103-6106.

This passionate desire for revenge is concentrated particularly on Girart, whom Charlemagne holds responsible for the outrages which have wounded his royal dignity. Even when Girart sends the eloquent Olivier to offer favourable terms to the Emperor, Charlemagne refuses to accept, demanding the complete humiliation of Girart:

> "'Vasal', dit Karles, 'molt m'a fet corrocier.
> Dolanz serai se ne m'en puis vengier.
> Grant est cist sieges merveilleus et plenier,
> Si a duré bien .vi. anz toz entiers.
> Et si vilment le me rouves lessier? 1
> Par ce seignor a cui l'an doit proier,
> Einz que m'en parte, ja nel te quier noier,
> Ert si aquis dant Girart le guerrier
> Que devant moi vendra ajenoillier,
> Nu piez, en lange, por la merci proier,
> La sele el col qu'il tendra par l'estrier,
> D'un roncin gaste ou d'un povre somier.'" 2

As Charlemagne's violence is more emphasised in Renaut de Montauban than in Girart, so, too, is his obstinate determination to humble the enemy, though here his resentment has for its chief object, not Renaut, but his cousin Maugis, who has fooled the Emperor so many times. Even though not only Renaut, but Roland, Ogier,

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[1] Charlemagne's pride evidently forbids him to leave Vienne, just as it forbids him to leave Narbonne, in Aimeri de Narbonne, when his barons refuse to attempt to take the city:

> "'Je remendrai ici en Nerbonois
> Si garderai Narbone et le defois.'" (LL.613-614)

[2] LL.4020-4031.

Naimes and Turpin, beg him to make peace, Charlemagne persistently refuses until Maugis shall be delivered up to him.[1]

But the passions of anger and vengeance are not the only ones with which Bertrand endows Charlemagne: he gives him also that of love. The Charlemagne of Girart is highly susceptible to the charm of a pretty face; when he first sees Aude at close quarters he cannot take his eyes off her:

"Li rois l'esgarde et menu et sovant."[2]

On seeing her again the following day he is struck afresh by her beauty:

"'Et Deus,' dit Karles, 'si bele fame a ci.'"[3]

The Duchess of Burgundy's beauty, however, arouses his passion:

"Nostre enperere a la dame esgardée.
Molt la vit bele et gente et acesmée.
. . . . . .
'Deus', fet li rois, 'seinte Virge ennorée,
Je ne truis fame en tote ma contrée
Une ne autre qui me plesse n'agrée.
Et ceste est tant et bele et acesmée
C'onques plus bele ne pot estre trovée.'" 4

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[1] Michelant, pp.336-338.
[2] L.6633
[3] L.6806.
[4] LL.1273-1274; 1277-1281.

He immediately determines to marry her:

> "'Par ce seignor qui fist ciel et rousée
> Ceste aurai ge a moillier espousée.'"[1]

The protests of Girart, to whom the lady had been promised, are swept aside; as nothing can turn Charlemagne from his vengeance, so nothing can prevent his satisfying his desire.[2]

Charlemagne, therefore, is portrayed by Bertrand as a fairly old man, but one whose strength and vigour, both physical and mental, are undiminished by age. He is, perhaps, more human than in the Chanson de Roland, but so far there is no sign of the conspiracy of which Gautier speaks.

In the presentation of Charlemagne as Emperor we inevitably find a certain anomaly. Bertrand is evidently influenced by the tradition which made of Charlemagne a great, almost superhuman figure, but his treatment of the Emperor is modified by the fact that he is portraying realistic rather than idealised characters, and also by the nature of the story which he is relating. In the Chanson de Roland, Charlemagne appears as a soldier saint fighting for Christianity against the pagans, and he

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[1] LL. 1282-1283

[2] In Girart de Roussillon also Charlemagne is attracted by the beauty of Elissent.

and his barons claim all our sympathy. In Girart, on the contrary, he is fighting against men of his own race, whose leader is the hero of the poem. Our sympathy is concentrated largely on them, and not on the Emperor. Any difference of treatment will probably be due to this change of standpoint.

Charlemagne's close relationship with the divine power, for instance, cannot be overstressed by the poet here; it is, however, present to some extent. Leaving aside the stock oaths and exclamations which mean nothing, there remain the prayers for Roland which show Charlemagne to be a sincerely religious man.[1] Moreover he is well aware of the manifestations of the divine will in his own life; when Girart finally submits, Charlemagne's first movement is to render thanks to heaven :

> "Envers le ciel regarda .iiii. foiz.
> 'Et Deus,' dit Karles, 'qui sor toz estes rois,
> Meinte miracle avez fete por moi.'"[2]

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[1] LL.5803-5808.

> "Et d'autre part est Karles le puissant
> A oroisons dedanz son tref plus grant
> Ou il deprie Jesu escordement
> Que il guerise son chier neveu Rollant,
> Que il ne soit veincuz ne recreant,
> Ne tornez a viltage."

[2] LL.6432-6434. An amusing instance of Charlemagne's attitude to the divine power is found in Renaut de Montauban. As the siege is not going well he prays for help:

At the end of the poem, when news comes of the Saracen invasion, we actually have a glimpse of the Charlemagne of the Chanson de Roland, the champion of God. He at once appeals to heaven for help:

> "'Et Deus,' dit Karles, 'voir rois de majesté,
> Qui ce vosites par la vostre bonté
> Que ge tenisse coronne et roiauté,
> Conseilliez moi par la vostre pité.'" 1

His final call to arms is made in the name of the Lord:

> "Or reservez por Deu de majesté
> Et por s'amor conquerre." 2

In view of Bertrand's evident preoccupation with the thought of Roncevaux, to which the events narrated in Girart are a prologue, it is surely evident that among the "meinte miracle" is the bringing together of Roland and Olivier, which is to place at Charlemagne's disposal the two greatest champions in the world. Yet Charlemagne seems unable to understand this, in spite of

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> "'Biax sire, car m'aidiez ma coronne a tenir!
> Car vos la me donastes pour la loi maintenir.
> Sire, se je la per(t), de ce ne quier mantir,
> N'irai mais en Espaigne, sor Sarracins ferir,
> Ains vodrai en lour loi durement obëir.
> Or soit a vo plaisir de la loi maintenir.'"
>
> (Seeger: p.85)

[1] LL.6859-6862.

[2] LL.6871-6872.

the fact that a clear indication of what is going to happen is given to him on the eve of the battle in a prophetic dream.[1] As in the dream which is sent to Charlemagne the night of Roncevaux the future is revealed in allegorical form, and in both cases the meaning is dark to the Emperor. But whereas at Roncevaux he makes no attempt to solve the mystery, here he takes care to send for ".i. mestre molt sachant,"[2] who explains the meaning with clarity. Charlemagne accepts the interpretation:

> "Molt fu joiant l'enperere au vis fier,
> Qant ot le songe si a bien anoncier."[3]

Yet he does not appear to trust it, for not only does he try to prevent Roland from fighting,[4] but when Roland makes peace with Olivier, exactly as it was foretold in the dream, Charlemagne actually suspects treachery.[5]

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[1] Laisses cxxxi-cxxxii. The occasion is somewhat similar to that of the dream after Roncevaux. As then Charlemagne

> "Molt fu travailliez
> De cous doner et des armes baillier."
> (LL.4752-4753)

[2] L.4794.

[3] LL.4821-4822.

[4] LL.5056-5064.

[5] LL.5974-5981.

Although, therefore, Bertrand has followed the tradition which accords supernatural aid to Charlemagne, this seems to make little or no difference to his feelings; in spite of the knowledge which is miraculously given to him, he is no surer of the future, and he is suspicious of the very events which have been foretold to him. Here, then, is a striking instance of the mingling of two conceptions of Charlemagne: Charlemagne the agent of God receives divine aid, but Charlemagne the man is unable to profit thereby.

As a result of these two conceptions, Charlemagne's relations with his barons are somewhat complicated.

In the Chanson de Roland one of his outstanding traits was his affection for his barons, which was shown particularly by his grief for the loss of so many of them on the "male jornée" of Roncevaux. In Girart this affection reappears on many occasions. When he hears of the death of the Duke of Burgundy, he mourns for him as a friend:

> "Et l'emperere conmença a panser.
> Por le franc due, que tant solçit amer,
> Covint ilec Karlemene plorer."[1]

On one occasion he laments the death of one of the barons whom Olivier has slain:

> "'Devant mes euz m'a tel baron ocis
> Que neu vosise por tot l'or de Paris.'"[2]

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[1] LL. 1227-1229 [2] LL. 3249-3250

Often he expresses apprehension when they are in danger of death. When Lanbert is taken by Olivier, for example, Charlemagne fears for his godson's life:

> "'Les genz le conte en moinent Lanbert pris
> Mes filleus est, par foi le vos plevis.
> Grant poor ai que il ne soit ocis.'"[1]

Charlemagne appears to share Bertrand's undoubted predilection for young knights. Girart, in his youth, finds great favour with the Emperor, since the latter spontaneously gives him the great fief of Burgundy. This affection does not die completely during the war; after the submission of the rebels, the Emperor is glad to receive Girart back as "ami et dru."[2]

The valour of young knights seems to attract the Emperor more than anything else. Aimeri finds that his exploit in killing the robbers opens the door to Charlemagne's favour:

> "'Molt est cist enfes corageus et hardiz,
> Qant por son cors a .x. larrons ocis.'"[3]

Olivier's valour quickly attracts the Emperor's attention; after seeing his performance at the quintaine, Charlemagne, much impressed, sends knights to find out who he is and reward him generously:

> "'Pere puissant, par la teue merci,
> Einz de mes euz si riche cop ne vi.

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[1] LL. 3572-3574 [2] L. 6686 [3] LL. 1808-1809

> Pongniez, François, demendez qui feri.
> S'il est frans hom, sodoier ou marchis.
> Tout mon tresor li soit a bandon mis.'"[1]

His subsequent attitude to Olivier merits special note, as it shows a fine generosity. Girart, it will be remembered, was concerned chiefly for Olivier's safety, and even when he became anxious for Roland too, his motive was one of self-interest, since he felt that Roland's death would ruin all hope of peace with Charlemagne.[2] Charlemagne, on the other hand, is almost as concerned throughout for Olivier as for Roland, since he realises that the death of either would be an irreparable national disaster. For this reason he forbids Roland to fight Olivier:

> "'Car li dui mieudre seriez asenblez
> Qui soient pas en la crestïenté.
> Et se ensenble estiez ajosté
> Il covendroit que l'un en fust maté.
> Ja mes el siecle ne seroit restoré.'"[3]

There is little sign here of this belittling of character of which Gautier complains.

In the case of Roland, too, who is naturally the best-loved of all Charlemagne's barons, the Emperor's affection seems to be largely due to his nephew's valour. He proudly tells Girart that

> "'N'a chevalier meillor el mont vivant.'"[4]

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[1] LL. 3216-3220 [2] LL. 5879-5882

[3] LL. 3359-3363 [4] L. 6639

Since he realises Olivier's mighty prowess, he is afraid for Roland's life during the combat on the island;[1] nevertheless he keeps his word to his nephew, and insists on non-intervention in the fight, as he had promised.[2]

A rather charming illustration of Charlemagne's love for his nephew is his attitude to Roland's passion for Aude. As soon as the Emperor discovers this he determines that the two shall marry[3], and eventually arranges the match with Hernaut and Girart. Yet he cannot resist teasing Roland a little:

> "Voit le li rois, un pou l'a escharni.
> 'Biau niés,' fet il, 'quel plet avez basti
> Vers la pucele ou ge parler vos vi?
> Se vos avez nul mautalant vers lui,
> Pardonez li, par amors le vos pri.'"[4]

He then proceeds to tell Roland that Olivier has profited by his distraction to make a sortie:

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[1] LL.5803-5808

[2] L. 5084; Laisse CLXV. During Olivier's fight with Fierabras also Charlemagne has to prevent his barons interfering on Olivier's behalf:

> "Et Franchois les esgardent qui sunt au maistre tré;
> Pour le conte Olivier sunt moult espoenté.
> Par le mien esient ja fuissent tuit monté,
> Se ne fust Karlemaines qui lor a devéé,
> Pour ce que il voloit tenir sa loiauté:
> Mix vausist estre mors que il fust reprouvé."
> (Fierabras, p. 34)

[3] LL. 4707-4710.

[4] LL. 4713-4717

"'La pucele Aude si le savoit assez
Einsi vos a escharni et gabé.'"[1]

But he goes on at once to comfort the shame-faced Roland:

"'Biau niés,' fet il, 'ne soiez trepansé
Por la pucele ou vos avez parlé.
Nos en irons au loges et au tres.
Por seue amor ert il'asaut respitez.'"[2]

In his affection for his nephew he consents to do what all Naimes' common sense had failed to obtain from him.

Yet in spite of this, Charlemagne shows less willingness to be swayed by Roland than Girart by Olivier. Whereas Girart is usually willing to follow his nephew's advice, Charlemagne vigorously rejects Roland's peace-counsels.[3]

With regard to his barons as a whole, Charlemagne's position is not of the strongest. Even in the Chanson de Roland, his power was not unlimited: he was only primus inter pares. He was bound to consult them on all important points and to abide by their decisions: the disaster of Roncevaux was a result of this. In Girart we find the same dependence; when the Emperor wishes to marry the Duchess of Burgundy, he first asks their consent:

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[1] LL. 4728-4729

[2] LL. 4734-4737

[3] L. 6090 sqq.

Charlemagne seems to place little trust in Roland's advice, which is often extreme; in Gui de Bourgogne he makes this plain:

"'Ha! glous,' dist il'emperere, 'com tu es forcené!
Ains ne me fu par toi .i. bons consaus donés.'"
(p.32)

"Ses chevaliers en prist a aresnier:
'Vez ci la dame o le viaire fier,
Ceste prendrai, seu volez ostroier.'"[1]

Again, the peace treaty must be ratified by them before it becomes final:

"'Or si vos pri, quel conseil me donez?
De lor païs que ge lor ai gasté
En quel maniere lor sera amendé?'"[2]

Charlemagne, moreover, is completely dependent on the barons for the carrying out of his orders. But the barons are unruly; frequently the peace of the Court is disturbed by their brawls, and both Charlemagne's royal dignity and public opinion[3] demand that these should be suppressed, and the offenders punished. Charlemagne is quick to order their arrest, indeed; when Aimeri has killed a man in full court the Emperor calls to the barons:

"'Prenez le moi, ma mesniée privée.
S'ainsi nel fetes, vo foi avez fausée.
Mar s'en ira por nule trestornée,
Car ma cort a honnie.'"[4]

Similarly, when Renier attacks Doon and Renart, and when Lanbert and Olivier defy the whole company of barons. Charlemagne's orders are never carried out, and the outrages go unavenged. The weakness of his position is even clearer

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[1] LL. 1427-1429

[2] LL. 6757-6759

[3] The messenger who reports the death of the Seneschal to the Emperor says:

"'S'or ne t'an venges, ja ne t'avrons mes chier.'" (L. 535)

[4] LL. 2285-2288

in his feeble complaint to his knights when Olivier has slain Entiaume in battle:

> "'Seignor baron, avez vos esgardé?
> Fu ainz mes rois de la moie bonté
> Qui par .i. home fust ainsi vergondé?
> Pongniez, François, n'i ait plus areste.
> Gardez que ja ne vos soit eschapé.
> Biau niés Rollant, del retenir pensez.'"[1]

There are two reasons for this lack of authority often shown by Charlemagne: the first is that Bertrand, like other authors of the Chansons de Geste of this period, is portraying a king resembling, not Charlemagne himself, but one of the early Capetian monarchs, who had to impose their will, not always with success, on barons as undisciplined as the ones in the poem. The second reason is that as the authors of the outrages in question are invariably the heroes of the story, Bertrand, in order to extricate them from the tight corners into which he loves to put them, is forced to allow the Emperor's orders to go unobeyed.

But whatever the reasons, there seems to be some justification here for Gautier's accusation of conspiracy against Charlemagne's greatness. Actually, Gautier appears to base his statement largely on the fact that when Renier asks to be taken into the Emperor's service, "au lieu de

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1 LL. 3290-3295

s'indigner contre le jeune révolté, le monarque débonnaire juge à propos de lui offrir de l'argent."[1] It seems probable, however, that Charlemagne's action shows not lack of dignity, but rather that although he feels that it would be imprudent to acquire such an unruly vassal as Renier, he is attracted by the two brothers, and does not wish to turn them away empty-handed. The gravest charge that can be levied against him in this is lack of psychological penetration, in making such an offer to a young man of Renier's character. In any case, it is difficult to understand why Gautier applied the word "débonnaire" to Charlemagne: it does not seem the mot juste for a man of his character.

Gautier also accuses Charlemagne of being a bad statesman, when he promises Girart the fief of Burgundy: "Certes, ce n'est pas là de la politique profonde, et donner un si gros fief à un si redoutable vassal, ce n'est pas œuvre digne d'un Philippe-Auguste."[2] In what respect is Girart "redoubtable"? He has, it is true, made a fortune at Court, but he is landless, not yet knighted even, and his behaviour towards the Emperor has always been the opposite of "redoubtable."

Yet if these two particular accusations seems unfounded, Gautier might have proved his point with other

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1 Les Epopées Françaises. Vol. III, p. 100

2 Idem.

more formidable charges. We have already seen how Charlemagne often seems ineffectual and lacking in authority over his barons. But this is not all; one of his greatest defects is a curious inability to judge between true men and traitors. In the Chanson de Roland, Charlemagne at least understood the machinations of Ganelon, even though he was powerless against them. But this is true of no other Chansons de geste: in all the rest, even the ones which recount events subsequent to Roncevaux, the traitor-geste is allowed to do its worst. In Gaydon, for instance, Ganelon's family is even supported in its fell designs by the Emperor himself. In Macaire Charlemagne lets his mind be poisoned against his innocent wife Blanchefleur, and in Huon de Bordeaux Amauris easily prejudices him against Huon and Gérard.[1] The power and influence of this geste is, in its degree, as mystifying as that of the fallen angels with whom it is compared.

One might expect Charlemagne to know Roland better, after years of unswerving loyalty and devotion from him, than to suspect him of treachery. Yet when he sees Roland and Olivier make peace, in spite of his dream-warning of

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1 Huon de Bordeaux, p. 8

this, he jumps to the conclusion that he has been betrayed:

> "'Grant poor ai que il ne m'ait trahi,
> Et lui meïsmes vergondé et honni
> Si l'avoit fet, plus m'avroit mal bailli
> Ne fist Judas qui Damedeu trahi.'"[1]

But not only does he suspect Roland whom he should have trusted; he allows himself to be influenced by Ganelon whom he should have mistrusted. Ganelon suggests that Roland has made peace in order to have Aude, and the next morning Charlemagne's words to his nephew reveal that the traitor's hint has had its effect:

> "'Mes por bele Aude vos estes acordez,
> Dont Olivier vos a le gant doné.'"[2]

In the quarrel which ensues, Charlemagne banishes his nephew from the army, but Roland refuses to go. It is the same story in Renaut de Montauban. Roland, Ogier, Naimes and Turpin are for some time with Renaut in Montauban; they are there, in fact, when Maugis brings the Emperor to the castle. All join Renaut in begging Charlemagne to make peace, and the latter, convinced that he is betrayed by them, vents his fury on Roland:

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1 LL. 5978-5981

2 LL. 6117-6118. cf. At the beginning of the poem Charlemagne calls Renaut de Poitiers, who is hated by all the barons, (L. 825) "alosez" and "adurez" (LL. 962-963.) Charlemagne alone, in fact, fails to recognise the true character of the traitor.

"Li rois oit la parole, s'i alume et amprant,
De felonie eschaufe, les iex va roëllant,
'Rolans,' se dit li rois, 'fui toi de ci errant.'"[1]

When, shortly afterwards, Renaut sets the four free, Charlemagne at first refuses to take them back, declaring that they have come as spies to his camp.[2]

Yet, in spite of Charlemagne's weakness and lack of penetration he remains in many ways a great Emperor. If his authority is sometimes dimmed by the violent, self-willed barons who occupy the foreground of the action, yet his figure looms large in the background, and his will can be felt throughout the poem, combating that of his opponents, inflexibly fixed on his purpose of subduing his enemies. Force is of no avail to move it; Renier may storm and rave, but only when Henri d'Orléans courteously and humbly asks Charlemagne to grant him a fief does the Emperor yield.[3] Nor have even Girart's just protests any power to change his determination to marry the Duchess; and only the supplications of all his barons cause him to grant Girart the fief of Vienne in compensation.[4] Even when Charlemagne

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[1] Seeger: p. 56.

[2] "'Naimes,' dit Kallemaigne, 'espïer me venez.
Vuidiez moi tost mon tref, faulx glouton(z) parjurez!'"
(Seeger: p. 79, LL. 22-23).

[3] LL. 1127-1129

[4] LL. 1144-1153

is captured by the rebels, he does not yield in the slightest degree. While they are debating whether to kill him or not, he makes no sign of fear, though he afterwards admits that he expected death.[1] He remains silent, preserving his royal dignity even in these most trying circumstances, until the rebels, overcome by his majesty, beg for forgiveness.[2]

But this is not all. We have seen how Charlemagne is often dependent in important matters on the will of his barons; this is not always so, however, for he has bursts of energy and determination during which his will alone is the deciding factor: the war against Girart is the result of one of these. Moreover, if Charlemagne is dependent on his barons to carry out his orders, they are like lost sheep without him. When he spends a night in Vienne at the end of the poem, they are almost distracted:

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1 L. 6748

2 Laisse CLXXX. In Girart de Roussillon, too, the rebels finally make their submission with great humility, though they have actually defeated the Emperor. (Bédier: Légendes Epiques. Vol. II, p. 23). Gaston Paris speaks of the respect felt for Charlemagne: "ce respect dont l'entourent presque à leur insu, ces fiers sujets qui le bravent à chaque instant, mais qui sentent qu'ils sont dans leur tort et finissent par s'humilier." (Histoire poétique de Charlemagne, p. 357)

"Lors fu li oz de grant duel conmeüe.
Nus cele nuit n'i boit ne ne menjue,
N'a bon cheval n'iot sele tolue."[1]

The next morning they comb the wood in search of him, in vain. When they see Girart and his men coming out of Vienne, they are terrified at the thought of being attacked without Charlemagne to lead them.[2] There can be no doubt, therefore, of the importance of Charlemagne to his barons.

Examination of the poem has shown that there is a distinct anomaly in Bertrand's treatment of Charlemagne. On the one hand Gautier's statement is justified by the evident weakness of the Emperor's position with regard to the barons. But on the other hand, Charlemagne's physical and mental vigour, his majesty, and the respect in which he is generally held, contradict the accusation that Bertrand has belittled his grandeur. This mixture of conceptions produces some confusion in the character of the Emperor, and one feels that it is less successful from a

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1 LL. 6600-6602

2 LL. 6692-6701

This dependence is shown also in Huon de Bordeaux, when Charlemagne, who wishes to resign his crown, is not allowed to do so by the barons. They urge him to take rest, but not cease to be Emperor:

"'Se vous gissés .XL ans entrepiés,
Si serés vous cremus et resoigniés.'" (p.3)

psychological point of view than some of the others in the poem. Nevertheless, the general impression of Charlemagne is that of greatness, both as a man and as a ruler.

2. Roland

If Olivier, as the champion of the rebels, is Bertrand's principal hero, Roland, who occupies the outstanding position in Charlemagne's army, is a close second. In portraying him, Bertrand has in many ways followed the tradition of his character as he appears, for instance, in the Chanson de Roland, but certain alterations or additions give interest to the study of his personality.

Taking for granted, probably, that his audience knows all about Roland's appearance, Bertrand leaves it undescribed.[1] There is no doubt about his physical strength

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1 There is little evidence in the surviving Chansons de geste as to the appearance of either Roland or Olivier. In Renaut de Montauban they are both described as "blond" (Ed. Michelant; p. 213, L. 13; p. 207, L. 14), and Olivier tells Fierabras that Roland is slightly shorter than himself. (Fierabras, p. 17).

and prowess, however; Bertrand evidently follows the tradition which made of Roland the mightiest of Charlemagne's knights. Olivier, it will be remembered, was a young, untried boy on his arrival at Vienne. Roland, though doubtless young, has a reputation already made:

"N'a hom el monde plus face a resongnier."[1]

His performance fully justifies this; no one except Olivier can withstand him in battle. We have already seen how easily he overcomes the valorous Aimeri, striking him "si vertueusement"[2] that he unhorses him at once. In his fights with Olivier he is less successful; on the first occasion, indeed, he is actually discomfited, but it must be remembered that on this occasion Olivier is undoubtedly inspired by the fact that he is fighting for his sister's honour.[3] In the fight on the island, however, all Roland's prowess is shown: he unhorses Olivier, shatters his helmet and shield, cuts his breast plate to pieces.[4] It is true

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[1] 2992. The question of the age of these heroes is left as vague as their appearance. One presumes that Olivier and Roland are more or less the same age. In the case of Aimeri there is a certain incoherence. According to Aimeri de Narbonne, he should be considerably younger than his cousin Olivier: yet in Girart de Vienne he is older, for he is born before Renier has even left Court for Genvres. (cf. L. 916).

[2] L. 3014

[3] LL. 3443 sqq.

[4] LL. 5229-5240; 5640-5650

that Olivier replies with blows as great, but the fact that Roland seems to get his doughty strokes in first, and also that he alone succeeds in wounding his adversary, gives the impression that although their prowess is almost e qual, Roland is perhaps slightly the better of the two.[1]

Not only is Roland a valiant knight, but his great delight is in battle. He cannot bear to be long inactive; during the siege of Vienne he must seek distraction in hunting and hawking, and bored with the lack of fighting, he urges Charlemagne to allow him to set up a quintaine, describing in picturesque terms the sad state of besiegers and besieged:

> "'Cil sont leanz comme moine ruillé,
> Et nos ça fors comme cers esgaré.
> S'il vos plest, sire, le congié m'en donez
> C'une quintaine me lessisiez fermer.'"[2]

It is hardly necessary to comment on Roland's bravery; it is so much a part of his traditional character as to be a foregone conclusion. However, one striking and unstereotyped example may be quoted: when he and Olivier pause in their battle while a new sword is brought for Olivier, Roland asks for wine to quench his thirst. As he is drinking it, the squire who has brought the swords

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1 There is probably some truth in Olivier's modest words to Fierabras:

> "'Oliviers ses compains se reset bien aidier;
> Mais ne vaut pas Rollant, à celer ne vous quier.
> Car onques ne li vi en estor esmaier.'"

2 LL.3076-3079 (Fierabras: p.14)

attempts to kill his master's enemy, and is prevented from doing so by Olivier himself. From the words which follow this, it is clear that throughout the scene Roland has continued imperturbably drinking, unmoved by the struggle for his life which has been going on over his head.[1]

The incident, besides illustrating his fearlessness shows also his attitude to treachery, the possibility of which he simply ignores. Just as he refuses to admit Ganelon's treachery at Roncevaux, so he exposes himself to attack here, not expecting disloyal behaviour from either Olivier or the squire.

But if he expects loyal, straightforward behaviour in others, his own has the same qualities. The very suggestion of subterfuge is repugnant to him; when Charlemagne proposes to cut off the enemy from Vienne by sending a force of four hundred knights to intercept them, Roland indignantly refuses to adopt the plan:

> "'Merveilles oi, par foi,' ce dit Rolant.
> Ne sont ici devant nos en present?
> Ou volez vos que les aillons querrant?
> Ja Damedéu ne li face garent,
> Puis qu'il sont ci, qui les querra avant.'"[2]

One cannot fail to recognise in this the Roland of the Chanson de Roland, who by his foolhardy bravery sacrifices a whole army.

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[1] LL. 4611 sqq. [2] LL. 4557-4561.

These actions are dictated partly by the consciousness of his position as Charlemagne's nephew; when he allows Olivier to send for a new sword, he explains this:

"'Niés sui au roi de France le resné.
S'or t'en avoie veincu ne afolé,
A tot jorz mes me seroit reprové.'"[1]

He evidently feels that a high standard of conduct is expected from one in his position.

As Charlmagne's nephew, he gives loyalty and affection to his uncle; throughout the siege, up to his reconciliation with Olivier, he asserts Girart's treachery to the Emperor:

"'Encui avra li dus Girart poor,
Qui tient Vienne a loi de boiseor.
Tel guerredon avra a chief del tor
Qu'il en pandra a loi de traitor.'"[2]

Even when he swears friendship with Olivier, he makes a reservation in favour of his uncle:

"'Je vos plevis la moie loiauté
Que plus vos ain que home de mere né,
Fors Karlemene le fort roi coronné.'"[3]

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[1] LL. 5469-5471. The acts of generosity in this combat may be compared with that of Fierabras, who offers Olivier balm for his wound:

"'Puis te combatras mieus encontre moi assés.'"
(Fierabras, p. 17).

[2] LL. 5622-5625

[3] LL. 5936-5938

Roland shows the same affection for his uncle in

Nevertheless he is capable of opposing the Emperor openly. Although he declares that Charlemagne is to come first when he pledges his faith to Olivier, he actually gives all his loyalty to the latter, upholding his cause without scruple. When Charlemagne demands if he has obtained the surrender of Vienne, he replies bluntly and tactlessly:

> "'Voir,' dit Rollant, 'ne l'ai pas entandu.
> La dont je vieng n'en fu ainz plet tenu.
> Einz dient tuit et chaut et cheveluz
> Par vostre orgueil est toz cist plez metz.
> Ralons nos en que ja nen ferons plus.
> Droiz enpereres, se mes lous ert creüz,
> Girart sera vos amis et voz druz.
> S'alons en France, n'i ait plus atendu.'"[1]

It is no wonder that Charlemagne is angered and bewildered by this startling change of attitude. He is only placated, in fact, when Roland becomes more coherent and explains that divine intervention has brought about the pact.[2] The next morning Roland, not discouraged by his first failure, tries again, more seriously this time, to induce his uncle to make peace. Unfortunately his argument that Charlemagne will

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Renaut de Montauban. After he has surrendered to Renaut he twice expresses his anxiety for Charlemagne's feelings. (Michelant: p. 327, L.7; p.328, L.4)

[1] LL. 6025-6032

[2] LL. 6075-6081

not take Vienne in twenty-seven years[1] only arouses all the Emperor's obstinacy. Roland persists, going so far as to refuse to serve his uncle any more against Girart.[2] Thereupon Charlemagne dismisses him from the army, but this merely renders him more defiant:

> "'Non ferai, sire,' dit Rollant li menbrez,
> Ne m'en irai tant com vos i serez.
> Einçois verrai coment vos le ferez
> Vers Girart de Vïenne.'"[3]

In spite of Roland's affection for Charlemagne, therefore, he can oppose the Emperor with an obstinacy equal to his uncle's own, and not even Charlemagne's terrible wrath can cow him.

It is plain from this that Roland does not depend upon his uncle's will, but relies largely on his own judgement. Similarly, he trusts to his own strength rather than to the might of the Emperor. In all his boasts of overcoming the enemy, he clearly feels that victory will be due to his own efforts:

> "'Par cel apostre que quierent peneant,
> Se Deus ce done par son conmendement
> Que ge repas outre celé eve grant,
> Morz est Girart et Hernaut le ferrant.
> Jes ferai pandre et encroer au vant.'"[4]

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1 LL. 6099-6100

2 LL. 6125-6127

3 LL. 6130-6133

4 LL. 2785-2789

From the foregoing lines it is easy to deduce Roland's attitude to divine power. He relies on it no more than on Charlemagne; let God but allow him to return to his own people, and he will do the rest himself. Similarly, on a later occasion, he swears to kill Olivier:

"Se Deus me sauve Durendart la forbie.'"[1]

This is the direct opposite of Olivier's attitude of dependence:

"Tot est en Deu qui Longis fist pardon.
C'aidier me puet par sa beneſçon,
Faire vers vos secorre et guerison.'"[2]

On only one occasion does Roland admit that he has need of divine help, and that secretly. In regretting that Aude is not his, he adds:

"Mes ce n'iert ja se Deus ne m'en aſe
Por la bataille dont j'ai fet aatie
Vers Olivier de Genvres.'"[3]

Unlike the Roland of the Chanson de Roland, indeed, he shows little religious feeling; less, in fact, than most characters in the poem. It is true that he submits at once to the angel's commands, and joins with Olivier in

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1 L. 5143

2 LL.5249-5251

3 LL. 4657-4659

offering up thanks for this manifestation of the will of heaven, but apart from that, he renders no separate thanks, as does Olivier. Otherwise his references to religious matters consist, for the most part, of oaths and exclamations. It may, perhaps, be noted that in these both Roland and Aimeri show a preference for the name of the Deity, a violent and at the same time laconic form which fits well the characters of the two young men.

Roland's reliance, then, is placed neither on his uncle nor on heaven, but on himself. In his own might he puts complete confidence. He has no doubt that he can lead the French to victory against Girart and all his forces:

> "Et dit Rollant: 'Tot ce lessiez ester.
> Pør cele foi que ge vos doi porter
> Je i menrai.m. chevaliers armez.
> Si vient Girart ne Olivier le ber,
> Ja en Vienne en porront retourner;
> As brans d'acier les irons encontrer.'"[1]

Nor does he doubt his importance to the Royalist army; when Olivier has saved his life from the treacherous squire he says:

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[1] LL. 3091-3096

This is the same Roland who at Roncevaux declares that:

> "'Sempres ferrai de Durendal granz colps;
> Sanglant en ert li branz entresqu'a l'or.
> Felun paien mar i vindrent as porz:
> Jo vos plevis, tuz sunt jugez a mort.'"
> (LL. 1055-1058)

L.3095: MSS.C,D,E, all have "ne porront".

"'S'il m'eüst mort France en fust en error,
Et li païs d'anviron et d'entor,
Et li barnajes Karlon l'enperaor,
Eüst perdue hui et joie et baudor.'"[1]

Confident in his might and his reputation, he can afford to show disdainful generosity to his opponents. Having unhorsed Aimeri, he refuses to continue the fight any further:

"'Or t'en revas,' Rollant a respondu
'N'avras plus mal, puis que t'ai abatu.'"[2]

The same proud, scornful clemency is shown by his promise to save Olivier's life in return for his falcon:

"'Tant te ferai par amor de bontez
Que n'i seras ocis ne afolez
Por mon oisel c'as randu de bon grez.'"[3]

It is plain that Roland is highly conscious of his personal dignity. Any attempt to belittle this inevitably provokes him to wrath. If in the scene of his first meeting with Olivier we read that "n'ot en lui c'aïrier,"[4] and "le sans cuide changier,"[5] this is because

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[1] LL. 5614-5617 [2] LL. 3024-3025

[3] LL. 2843-2845 [4] L. 2757

[5] L. 2767

a young, untried boy has dared to take his property. All his contempt is expressed in his first words:

> "Ies tu mesaje, vallet? Nel me noier:
> Car me rant ore mon oisel que j'ai chier.
> Je te ferai .xv. livres paier."[1]

Olivier's continued defiance and refusal to recognise Roland's superiority infuriates the latter, till he swears not only to hang all Olivier's relations, but to put Olivier himself to shame.[2]

All Olivier's behaviour seems to have the effect of provoking Roland to wrath. Not only does Olivier, in rescuing Aude, deal Roland a blow which makes him "tainz et irascuz",[3] but he deals many severe blows to Roland's dignity by constantly challenging him and calling him to account in public. When Olivier is discovered after tilting at the quintaine, his first impulse is to call out Roland and to declare that Aimeri will avenge himself for the loss of his horse. Roland shows that the shot has reached its mark, for he "s'en bronche".[4] Olivier's challenge to a single combat seems to hurt Roland's dignity again: probably because he feels ashamed that anyone should dare to defy him so boldly, particularly before the barons. At any rate,

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[1] LL. 2759-2761
[2] LL. 2838-2842
[3] L. 3470
[4] L. 3243

there is no doubt of the effect of the challenge:

"Rollant l'entant, toz li sans li fremie.
Honte ot por la barnaje."[1]

Aude, too, finds Roland's weak spot when she tells him that he would never have killed Poinçon had Girart and Olivier beem there:

"Rollant l'antant si enbronche le vis."[2]

It is clear that Roland's pride is so great that the very suggestion that anyone might withstand him is intolerable to him. Under Olivier in particular his "genius is rebuked."

It is not surprising to find that he cannot bear mockery. When Aude teases him about the failure of his violent designs on her he is greatly distressed:

"Rollant l'antant, toz li sans li fremi.
'Ma demoisele,' li cuens li respondi,
'Ne me gabez, par amors vos en pri.'"[3]

The effect is even more marked when Charlemagne laughs at his nephew's preoccupation with Aude:

"Rollant l'antant, toz li sans li fremi.
Por la honte s'encline."[4]

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[1] LL. 4094-4095

[2] L. 3674

[3] LL. 4696-4698

[4] LL. 4718-4719

Assured and self-willed as he is, then, Roland's pride and sense of dignity lay him open to be influenced by the opinion of others. His fear of public opinion regulates many of his actions. In allowing Olivier to send for a new sword he makes his motive clear:

> "'Brisié avez vostre branc acéré,
> Et j'en ai une qui est de tel bonté
> Qui ne puet estre oschié ne esgruné.
> Niés sui au roi de France le resné.
> S'or t'en avoie veincu ne afolé
> A tot jorz mes me seroit reprové,
> C'ocis avroie .i. home desarmé.'"[1]

Again, when Charlemagne dissuades him from fighting Olivier, he shows the same attitude:

> "'Ja nel leroie,por l'or de .ii. citez,
> C'a coardisse me seroit atorné.'"[2]

There is no question of this with Olivier; he is anxious for the battle for its own sake.

One more example: in the Emperor's tent he is restrained from striking Olivier by the thought of the blame which he would incur in attacking a messenger:

> "'Ferir le vost, mes il s'est porpansé
> Si le touchait qu'il en seroit blamez,
> Bien doit mesaje dire ses volentez.
> De ce fu molt Rollant amesurez,
> Qu'i ne vost chose fere dont fust blamez.'"[3]

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[1] LL. 5466-5472

[2] LL. 3365-3366

[3] LL. 4127-4131

Again one recognises the Roland who at Roncevaux refuses to ask for help because:

"'En dulce France en perdraie mun los.'"[1]

It would be an exaggeration, however, to say that Roland's sense of chivalry and honour arise altogether from fear of public opinion. On the contrary, the nobility of all his acts certainly indicates nobility of character, and a high standard of conduct from which he never deviates. His words to Charlemagne before the fight on the island indicate this clearly:

"'Jeu fiencié si que bien le savez.
Je nen veil estre mentiz ne parjurez.
Ne puet remeindre, por home qui soit nez
Que je n'i aille sor mon destrier armez.
Se del covant li estoie fausez,
J'en avroie grant honte.'"[2]

But there must be no underhand dealing:

"Je ne vodroie, por tot l'or de Paris
Que vers le conte eüsse riens mespris.'"[3]

Although there is an undoubted connexion between Roland's pride and his honour, therefore, the two are not one and

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[1] Chanson de Roland, L. 1054

[2] LL. 5067-5072

[3] LL. 5082-5083

the same thing, and he stands out above all as a noble, chivalrous character.

Roland's pride is an important factor in his attitude towards Olivier, for if it makes him show the greatest courtesy, it also forbids him to yield in the slightest degree. Consequently, all the yielding is on Olivier's side: Olivier in the first place gives up the falcon, and Olivier later offers to give up Aude, Vienne, his own independence even, for the sake of peace with Roland, who, until the angel's intervention, maintains an attitude as uncompromising as that of Charlemagne himself.

But all Olivier's efforts only serve to harden Roland. Olivier's self-righteousness and loquacity probably irritate him: "N'ai song de preeschier'"[1], he says on one occasion. Perhaps, too, he suspects Olivier of weakness as he continually humbles himself to beg for peace. There is a suggestion of this in the words:

> "'Voir,' dit Rollant, 'ne m'estordroiz issi.
> Einz vos avrai mort ou pris o honni.'"[2]

Roland himself, abhorring the merest suggestion of giving in, seems to make a deliberate effort to keep up hostilities, even in spite of himself. To all Olivier's prayers he gives the same reply:

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[1] L. 5168 [2] LL. 5187-5188

"'Qant je t'avrai ocis au branc d'acier,
Vienne avrai et Audein a moillier.'"[1]

Forced by his pride and by his innate chivalry to allow Olivier to replace his broken sword, Roland seems almost annoyed when the truce is strengthened by Olivier's act in saving his life; probably, too, he is irritated that Olivier has equalled his own generosity. At any rate, he scarcely thanks him, and seems almost over-anxious to recommence the fight, as if to prove that no weak thought of peace has entered his mind through all this magnanimity. Briefly consigning the traitor where he belongs, he recalls Olivier to business:

Qant ot bel li niés l'enpereor,
Conte Olivier apela par iror.
'Lesiez ester le plet del lecheor
. . . . . .
Voist au deables, car il est bien des lor.
Prenez vos armes, si alons en l'estor.
Trop avons ci fait longuement sejor.'"[2]

Yet though Roland scorns to give any evidence of a personal attraction to Olivier, that attraction exists almost as much as on Olivier's side. This is seen from the beginning in Roland's unaccustomed behaviour at their first meeting. Not only has Olivier, a young boy, dared to take Roland's falcon, but he actually refuses to give it back, and refuses, moreover, to recognise any superiority in Roland.

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[1] LL. 5169-5170.

[2] LL. 5611-5613; 5619-5621

There can be no doubt of the behaviour to be expected from the proud, fiery Roland - his obvious reactions are admirably expressed in his own statement of what he would have done had Olivier persisted in keeping the falcon:

> "Et dit Rollant: 'Ja orroiz veritez.
> Par cel apostre q'an quiert en Noiron pré,
> Del gros del pong t'alasse tel doner
> En mi le vis, qui q'an dëist peser,
> Q'andeus les euz te fëse voler.'"[1]

But instead of taking this course in the first place, he is impelled by some restraining influence to ask Olivier's name "cortoisement."[2] More surprising still, he restrains his anger even when Olivier coolly offers to take him into his service:

> "Qant Rollant ot Olivier si parler,
> Hauce le pong qu'i l'en voloit doner.
> Qant tout por lui se prist a porpenser
> Qu'i le vodra encore aresonner.
> 'Vasal', fet il, 'ancor vos veil rouver
> Que par amors mon oisel me rendez.'"[3]

This extraordinary behaviour astonishes Charlemagne, and Roland himself, at a loss, perhaps, to explain his own conduct, excuses it, somewhat weakly, by saying that he had taken no arms with him, and therefore could not fight.[4] One may be sure that in ordinary circumstances he would have needed no weapons other than his fists to recover his property.

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[1] LL. 2818-2822
[2] L. 2771
[3] LL. 2800-2805
[4] LL. 2870-2872

Moreover, however obstinately Roland may insist on keeping up hostilities, he manifests an interest in Olivier's character even during the fight on the island:

> "Lors se porpanse dant Rollant le guerrier
> Coment porroit Olivier essaier
> S'est si loiaus com dient chevalier."[1]

He feigns fatigue and asks for a short rest. Olivier grants it so generously that Roland "prist soi a merveillier",[2] but he hides his admiration under mockery of Olivier's credulity.[3]

If Roland is attracted to Olivier in the first place by the latter's personality alone, he soon learns to admire Olivier's valour. On one occasion he points him out to Charlemagne:

> "'Si m'eïst Deus, c'est li cuens Olivier.
> Devant Vïenne, n'a meillor chevalier
> N'en tote la contrée.'"[4]

He recognises that Olivier's valour falls in no way short of his own: when he declares to Charlemagne his intention of fighting Olivier he admits that both have equal chances of winning,[5] and, as we have seen, he confesses to himself that he will need all possible help if he is to overcome Olivier in single combat.[6] Since this knowledge wounds

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[1] LL. 5835-5837
[2] L. 5849
[3] LL. 5851-5854
[4] LL. 3345-3347; cf. 3617-3619
[5] LL. 3368-3369
[6] LL. 4657-4659

his pride, he resolutely hides all suggestion of it from Olivier, asserting, over and over again, that he will kill or capture him. Yet in the fight itself he is at length forced to admit that he has found his match:

> "'Sire Olivier,' dit Rollant le guerrier,
> Einz mes ne vi si puissant chevalier
> Qui tant durast vers moi a chaploier.'"[1]

That is not, perhaps, the most modest way of expressing himself, but Roland does not suffer from false modesty. At Roncevaux he says:

> ". . . . 'Mis cumpainz est trez!
> Encuntre mei fait asez a preiser.'"[2]

As in the case of Olivier, recognition of valour which is possibly as great as his own inspires in Roland a desire to fight Olivier. In the first place, he seems to want instinctively to avenge Olivier's victims. This is possibly the reason for his riding out after Olivier has slain Guinemert.[3] Bertrand does not actually say that Roland means to avenge Guinement, but we may suppose that Aimeri has this to thank for his own defeat. But however that may be, there is no doubt in the case of Ogier. Olivier has taken Flori and given him to Poinçon, a young knight

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[1] LL. 5864-5866

[2] Chanson de Roland, LL. 1558-1559

[3] LL. 2980 sqq.

who had lost his own horse. Roland cannot rest until he has retaken Flori:

> "Rollant chevalche corrociez et marriz,
> Lez les murs garde, si a Poinçon choisi.'"[1]

Poinçon easily falls a victim to Roland's spear, and Flori is restored to his master.

But even more, Roland desires to fight Olivier:

> "'Or ne leroie por l'or de .ii. citez
> Que envers lui ne soie hui esprovez,
> Et si savrai comme est grant sa fierté,
> Et com il est aus armes redouté.'"[2]

However much he may feel that Olivier's challenges are harmful to his own dignity, he actually desires to fight as much as Olivier. It is true that Olivier makes the final challenge to single combat, but Roland provokes it, perhaps deliberately, for he practically forces Olivier to take up his uncle's cause:

> "'Veus tu desdire, par ta grant venterie,
> Li dus Girart, qu'il n'ait sa foi mentie
> Envers lou roi cui il l'avoit plevie?'"[3]

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[1] LL. 3652-3653

[2] LL. 3354-3357

[3] LL. 4081-4083

There is only one reply to this, and Olivier gives it.

Consciously or not, then, Roland is drawn to fight Olivier as inevitably as Olivier is drawn to fight Roland, though Roland's pride prevents him from actually seeking Olivier out. The same applies to their whole relationship: the attraction between the two is mutual, but Roland is held back by his pride and sense of dignity from making advances or concessions. However, after the battle has proved that the valour of the two is equal; after the angel has ordered them to lay down their arms, Roland is able to say with sincerity, and without any sudden change of feeling:

> "'Sire Olivier, ja ne vos ert celé,
> Je vos plevis la moie loiauté,
> Que plus vos ain que home de mere né.'"[1]

All the elements of their friendship have been present in both of them since their first meeting, for the same two forces of attraction and antagonism are to remain in it till the end. Even at Roncevaux they quarrel. Like so many friendships, theirs represents not a harmonious union of two people in complete sympathy, but rather a delicate balance of opposites.

In the Chanson de Roland, affection for Charlemagne and for Olivier and the other Peers occupies the main part of

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[1] LL. 5935-5937

Roland's affections; in his last moments he has no thought to spare for his fiancée Aude. In Girart de Vienne he shows much more interest in women, for reasons which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. Even in the heat of battle, he can spare a moment to pity the distress of the women in Vienne:

> "'.ii. dames voi en ce palés listé
> Qui por vos ont forment bret et crié,
> Et Olivier ont forment regreté.
> Si m'eïst Deus, il m'en prent grant pité.'"[1]

He is almost as much preoccupied with Aude as with her brother. The scene of their first meeting is well known: Roland, on his way to attack Olivier in battle, sees Aude, desires her, and immediately forgets Olivier. As he is a young man who generally takes what he wants, he does not hesitate:

> "Le destrier broche vers Audein est alez;
> Si l'a sessie qu'i l'an voloit porter
> En l'ost le roi en son demoine tref.
> La en feïst totes ses volentez."[2]

This is the impulsive, rather savage side of Roland's character, but it must not be supposed that he has no consideration or respect for women. His pity for the grief of Aude and Guibourc has already been noted; moreover, a truly

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[1] LL. 5397-5400

[2] LL. 3402-3405

chivalrous attitude is shown when Roland takes advantage of an attack on Vienne to talk with Aude. He sees her taking part in the defence of Vienne, and gallantly refuses to attack the city at that point:

> "Rollant s'en vit a la chiere hardie.
> A haute voiz li gentis cuens s'escrie.
> 'De ceste part, por Deu le fiz Marie,
> N'iert mes la vile ne prise ne sessie,
> Devers les dames ne asaudré ge mie.'"[1]

He desires Aude no less than on the preceding day, but now he resorts to a more conventional courtship:

> "'Qui estes vos, pucele seignorie?
> Se geu dement, nel tenez a folie,
> Car nel dement por nule vilenie.'"[2]

So seriously is he attracted to her that he half regrets the coming battle with Olivier for her sake.[3] He is much amused when Aude supposes that his lady must have great beauty:

> "Rollant l'antant, s'em a un ris gité.
> 'Dame', dit il, 'vos dites verité.
> Il n'a si bele juq'a Reins la cité
> Ne juq'a Rome, ce sachiez de verté,
> Ne ailleurs que ge sache.'"[4]

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[1] LL. 4635-4639

[2] LL. 4641-4643

[3] LL. 4674-4678. One notices that although Roland's attitude to Aude is now somewhat more civilised, being Roland he never shows any sign of repentance for his first impulse. He recounts the incident quite frankly to the baron Manesier. (LL. 3942-3948)

[4] LL. 4674-4678

The whole scene shows a lighter, more attractive side of Roland than we have met before in the poem.

How far Roland is preoccupied with Aude is shown by the intensity of his jealousy of Lanbert. Without any justification he leaps to the conclusion that they are to be married as soon as he sees Lanbert waving a banner from a window of Vienne:

"Rollant la voit, s'a la color muée.
A sa mesniée l'a entor lui mostrée:
'Vez de Lanbert, franche gent ennorée,
Il et bele Aude ont la pés porparlée.
Li cuens Lanbert en a eü sodée.
De cele part m'a feru sanz espée.'"[1]

At the end of the poem they are betrothed, and immediately after are obliged to part:

"Li dus Rollant est entrez en la chanbre.
Besa Audoin sa bele amie gente,
Et en aprés son anel li comende,
Et ele lui la bele ensengne blenche."[2]

The pathos of this scene is emphasised by the ominous prophecy of Roncevaux which follows:

"Mes Sarrazins qui li cors Deus cravente
Les departirent que il ne la pot prendre.
Ne de nul d'aus ne remest oir en France.
Ce fu duel et domage."[3]

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[1] LL. 3850-3855
[2] LL. 6907-6910
[3] LL. 6914-6917

In many ways, therefore, the Roland of Girart resembles the Roland of the Chanson de Roland. His military prowess, his undisciplined courage and his pride are the same in both. Bertrand's conception of him, however, omits the strong religious feeling which appears in the Chanson de Roland. On the other hand, in Girart he has more interest in women. These changes tend to make him less of a sublime, ideal hero, but more of a human being. On the whole, one feels, on reading Girart, that Olivier is portrayed more sympathetically than Roland; he is apparently Bertrand's favourite of the two. Yet Roland is a real, living character, with an individuality which serves as an excellent foil to that of Olivier.

CHAPTER IV

The Women

"Taking the rough with the smooth, and balancing theory against practice, the mediaeval woman played an active and dignified part in the society of her age."[1] So Professor Eileen Power sums up her study of the position of women in the Middle Ages. There seems no doubt, however, that in the case of the upper class, at least, women on the whole played a less prominent part than men, in spite of the theory that a woman was the per of her husband. Generally speaking, her chief importance was that she represented lands: "Le mariage entre nobles," says Luchaire, writing of the time of Philippe-Auguste, "est, avant tout, dans les moeurs et coutumes de cette époque, l'union de deux seigneuries."[2]

Nothing is more common in the Chansons de geste than these mariages de convenance. Several examples occur in Girart; Hernaut, for instance, contracts such a marriage:

> "Moillier li ont fet él païs doner.
> Par lui a toute la terre a governer."[3]

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[1] The Legacy of the Middle Ages, p. 433

[2] La Société Française au temps de Philippe-Auguste, p.381

[3] LL. 914-915

Renier is given a wife with similar advantages. "Give him Genvres," says Henri d'Orléans:

> "'N'i a remés nul oir, biau sire rois,
> Fors une fille qui le cuer a cortois.
> Renier l'avra, li chevaliers adroiz,
> Sire ert de le terre.'"[1]

Girart's projected marriage with the Duchess of Burgundy is of the same variety; and none realises the necessity for this more than the lady herself, forshe actually comes to Court to ask for a new husband:

> "'Se il vos plest, autre mari demant,
> . . . . . .
> Car mestier a ma terre d'aide grant,
> Ou ce ce non, trop i serai perdant.'"[2]

The feelings of the brides are of no importance in any of these cases.

But side by side with this, we find in Girart another attitude towards women which had only recently begun to show itself in French literature. Until the end of the 12th century the part played by women in literature was small indeed. To realise this, we have only to think of the Chanson de Roland, in which Aude is scarcely mentioned. "Roland does not think about Alde on the battlefield; he thinks of his praise in pleasant France. The figure of the betrothed is shadowy compared with that of the friend, Olivier. The deepest of worldly emotions in this period

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[1] LL. 1122-1125 [2] LL. 1258; 1262-1263

is the love of man for man, the mutual love of warriors who die together fighting against odds, and the affection between vassal and lord."[1]

Towards the end of the 12th century, however, the widespread influence of the romans courtois, with their doctrines of courtly love, begins to be felt in the chansons de geste. Courtly love does not enter wholesale into the Chansons de geste; in them love never becomes the essential part of life; the lady is not placed upon a pedestal to be worshipped by her lover, and love generally leads to marriage - three essential points of contrast with the theory of courtly love. But in this period we find that woman becomes "an end in herself, as a subject worthy of description and detailed analysis."[2] Moreover, the idea of gallantry has crept into the Chanson de geste. The comparatively important rôles played by the women in Girart de Vienne, and Roland's courtship of Aude, are significant of this new attitude towards women.

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[1] Lewis: The Allegory of Love, p. 9

[2] Comfort: Character types in the Old French Chansons de Geste, p. 360.

Three women actually take part in the poem: Guibourc, Aude, and the Duchess of Burgundy. Of these, Guibourc may be dismissed in a few words. Her few appearances - praying with Aude, counselling her husband, urging Hernaut to arrange peace[1] - show her to be a typically capable, respected married woman, but colourless and endowed with no real individuality. The one scene in which she shows any sign of life is that in which, returning from church with Aude, she meets the male members of the family bringing Charlemagne back to Vienne, when her comical surprise, her anxiety to instruct her husband what to do, and her woman's preoccupation with household affairs[2] make a vivid little scene. Even then, however, she can scarcely be said to be more than a type. On the whole, she is a slight, colourless character.

The rôles of Aude and the Duchess are more important, for both are essential to the development of the action. Their characters, which are depicted in some detail by the poet, merit separate studies.

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1 LL. 5360-5371; 6146-6159; 6205-6217; Laisse CLXXVII

2 LL. 6545-6559

1. Aude

Aude, as Léon Gautier points out, is in the same situation as Camille, since her brother and her lover are chosen to fight in single combat as champions of Charlemagne and Girart. Like Camille, she finds herself torn between the two combattants, her "voeux confondus", but we must not expect any deeper resemblance between the two: Aude, unlike the passionate, rebellious Camille, receives her sorrow passively, knowing the futility of attempting to dissuade either of the two warriors.

Any such depth of feeling, such independence of thought and action as are displayed by Camille, will not be found in thirteenth-century Aude; nevertheless, the latter is far from being colourless or lacking in character, though perhaps somewhat conventionalized.

Alone of all the characters in the poem, Aude's appearance is described in detail, with evident enjoyment on the part of the poet. Light and slender of figure, she has all the classical points of beauty presented in the aristocratic literature of the period:

"Blont et le poil menu recercelé,
Les euz et verz comme faucon mué,
Et le viaire si frés et coloré
Comme la rose que l'an qent en esté,
Et blanches meins et les doiz acesmez,
Les hanches bases et les piez bien formez;
La char et blenche plus que n'est flor de pré.

Le sang vermeil li est el vis monté.
Il n'ot si bele en la crestienté."[1]

Add to this the fact that she is beautifully dressed in a short cloak which has slipped down over her shoulders, a jewelled circlet on her fair hair, and Roland's reactions on seeing her are hardly surprising.

There is nothing original or distinctive in this portrait of feminine beauty: "this slender, fair-haired type was produced in French literature as soon as woman in herself became worthy of detailed description."[2] Similar passages are found in Aiol[3] and Garin le Loherain,[4] while Floripas in Fierabras is described in even greater detail than Aude, yet always with the same conventionality.[5] But by some miracle, these women lose none of their charm through conforming to a fixed type; they remain as fresh and dainty as the flowers with which they are so often compared.

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[1] LL. 3389-3397

[2] Comfort; Character types in the Old French Chansons de Geste, p. 367

It is noteworthy that only in aristocratic literature are the heroines fair-haired: in popular literature they are generally brunettes.

[3] LL. 5420 sqq. [4] LL. p. 297-8, quoted by Comfort, p.367

[5] pp. 61-62

In character also Aude conforms largely to the somewhat superficial type of young girl generally found in the Chansons de geste.

Only general epithets are applied to her, such as "cortoisse" and "senée"[1] - words which denote qualities attributed to all the ladies of the Chansons de geste, as universally as skill in needlework.

Her general characteristics, too, are no more than typically feminine. She displays, for instance, a woman's tender feelings, weeping, lamenting and fainting frequently when those whom she loves are in danger.[2]

Closely allied to this is her strong religious feeling. The men, on the whole, confident in their own great strength, and fully occupied by their warlike activities, tend to trust more to themselves than to divine power. The women, lacking physical strength, and left unoccupied during the fighting, feel the need of turning to superhuman aid. All the three women in the poem look to God in the hour of need; Aude in particular, during most of the fight on the island, kneels in prayer on the marble steps of the chapel-altar.

Another womanly quality shown by Aude is that of kindness. When Lanbert has been taken prisoner by Olivier,

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[1] LL. 5277; 5434

[2] LL. 3902; 4992; 5273; 5287-9, etc.

it falls to Aude's lot, according to the custom which handed over important prisoners to the ladies of the castle, to look after him. She fulfils this task in a particularly charming way. Lanbert has been disarmed, and stands, weary and disconsolate, among the rebels:

> "Aude le voit, nel mist pas en oubli.
> Un mentel riche a son col li a mis.
> Par la mein destre la pucele l'a pris.
> Si l'en mena el palés seignoriz.
> Sor une coste joste li l'a assis,
> Si le conforte la pucele au cler vis."[1]

Before retiring for the night, she comes again to Lanbert to repeat her consolations. His heart is won: he gallantly offers to go to the world's end for her sake.[2]

Like the greater part of the women in the Chansons de geste, Aude has the virtue of chastity. However much she may be attracted to Roland later, his attempt to carry her off arouses great indignation in her:

> "'. . . ja ne place au roi de majesté
> Que de mon cors soit fete tel vité.'"[3]

She is determined to be married in a proper manner, with the consent of her family:

> "Einz n'oi seignor en trestote ma vie.
> Non avrai ja, par Deu le fiz Marie,
> Se dant Girart ne le veut et otrie,
> Et Olivier qui proece mestrie.'"[4]

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[1] LL. 3689-3694

[2] LL. 3760-3771

[3] LL. 3411-3412

[4] LL. 4650-4653

Yet she has no scruples in proposing to sacrifice the honour of one of her maids in order to persuade Lanbert not to fight Olivier.[1] Nor does any sense of modesty prevent her from calling down from the wall of Vienne to Roland in the plain beneath:

> "Ou voit Rollant, si li crie a haut cri:
> 'Vasal,' fet ele, 'mal nos avez bailli.'"[2]

When, on a later occasion, Roland finds favour in her eyes, she tells him so frankly:

> "'Molt vos siet bien ce fort escu bendé,
> Et cele espée c'avez ceinte au costé,
> Et cele lance au confanon fermé,
> Et desoz vos ce destrier pomelé,
> Qui si tost cort com carrel enpanné.
> Molt avez hui noz genz forment grevé.
> Sor toz les autres senblez avoir fierté.'"[3]

Then follows an entirely feminine touch:

> "'Or croi ge bien, si com j'ai en pansé
> Que vostre amie a molt tres grant biauté.'"[4]

She does not hesitate to admit to Roland that she is aware of his feeling for her, and that therefore she is sorry that

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[1] LL. 3513-3523

[2] LL. 3668-3669

[3] LL. 4665-4671

[4] LL. 4672-4673

he is to fight her brother, but in the next breath she mocks him for his unsuccessful attempt to the day before[1] - another feminine change of front which bewilders Roland.

Aude cannot be ranked among the "forward women"[2] of the Chansons de geste, such as Floripas, but from the passages just quoted it is evident that she is not shy and retiring. On the contrary, she speaks her mind freely, and takes no trouble to hide her feelings.

From her appreciation of Roland,[3] it is clear that his valour has a particular attraction for her. On one occasion she calls him "le meillor home qui ainz ceincist espée."[4] It is typical of the women of the Chansons de geste and, indeed, of the whole feudal world, to rank prowess as the highest quality in a man.[5] When so much depended on valour, the tendency to idealise its possessor was inevitable. It is noticeable, for instance, that the "preux" Roland is usually preferred to the "sage" Olivier. Physical strength and good looks, moreover, seem to be generally considered as synonymous.

Aude's interest in the actual fighting is equally typical of the attitude of both sexes at the period. It

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[1] LL. 4689-4695

[2] See Comfort: Character types in the Old French Chansons de geste; p. 379

[3] cf. p. 229

[4] L. 5432

[5] Mirabel acclaims Aiol for the same reason:
"'Sire, venés vos ent qui preus estes as armes.'" (Aiol, L. 5599)

is the reason for her appearance outside Vienne, when Roland first encounters her; she comes out at the head of the ladies of the city who:

"Furent issues les jostes esgarder."[1]

Undaunted by her experience with Roland, she remains on the battlefield to watch the combats, and boldly runs in between two ranks of warriors to intervene in the fight between Olivier and Lanbert:

"Es vos bele Aude corant par mi le pré.
Par les estaches a le mentel levé,
Trés ses espaules le let aval coler.
Entre .ii. rans vait a Lanbert parler."[2]

Even when her negotiations with Lanbert have failed, she stays "por la joste esgarder."[3] During the attack on Vienne she actually assists in the defence, much to Roland's amusement:

"Qant vit l'asant et la fiere asaillie,
Ele s'abesse, une pierre a sessie,
Fiert .i. Gascon sor l'iaume de Pavie
Que tout le cercle li defroise et esmie.
Par .i. petit qu'il ne perdi la vie."[4]

Bertrand does not appear to be of the opinion that women cannot aim straight.

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[1] L. 3379
[2] LL. 3501-3504
[3] L. 3533
[4] LL. 4630-4634

Aude's interest in fighting shows her to be a true member of her family. She has, too, all the family pride shown by her relations:

> "'Aude m'apelent la gent qui m'ont norrie,
> Fille Renier qui Genvre a en baillie,
> Suer Olivier a la chiere hardie,
> Niece Girart qui molt het coardie:
> Le mien paraje est de grant seignorie.'"[1]

Of all her relations, her greatest affection is given to her brother. In spite of her high opinion of his valour[2], she is in constant fear for his safety during the battles; hence her attempt to prevent the fight between him and Lanbert.

The intimate understanding between the brother and sister is shown in the short scene which occurs before Olivier rides out to tilt at the quintaine. Her fears are roused when she hears him call for his arms:

> "Aude l'entant, seu corut enbracier.
> 'Frere,' fet ele,'ou devez chevalchier?'"[3]

On hearing his intention she is filled with dismay, but when he forbids her to tell Girart, on pain of losing his love, she is indignant that he should have thought her capable of doing so:

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[1] LL.4645-4649.
[2] LL.4687-4688.
[3] LL.3123-3124.

"'Sire,' fet ele, "a tant vos en tessiez.
Ja mes .i. mot ne m'en orroiz pledier,
Car vos estes mes freres.'"[1]

It is Aude who, when Olivier goes to offer terms of peace to the Emperor, has the practical wisdom to send after him his squire with his armour.[2]

When Roland appears, in spite of the unfortunate incident at their first meeting, he soon wins an important place in her affection, and after their conversation during the attack on the city he seems to be openly accepted as her lover. Her affection and anxiety are now shared between him and Olivier, and her distress during the fight on the island is acute:

"'Je voi conbatre mon frere en cele prée
A mon ami, qui m'avoit aamée.
Li quiens qui muire je serai forsenée.'"[3]

Like Charlemagne, both Aude and Guibourc recognise that the death of either champion will be a national catastrophe, apart from being a personal loss:

"'Se uns en muert, de verté le savon,
Gaste en sera France et tot le roion,
Et cist païs mis a destrucion.'"[4]

This is an example of clear-sightedness which is not

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[1] LL.3135-3137.
[2] LL.3910-3916.
[3] LL.5435-5437. L.5436: a amée, Edition: Yeandle. MSS. C. & D. (appear to read "aamée."
[4] LL.5369-5371.

shared by most of the men in the poem.

The catastrophe is miraculously averted, peace is made, and Aude is betrothed to Roland, with the expectation of becoming Queen of France in the future. That hope is never to be fulfilled: Roland is immediately parted from her to accompany the royal army into Spain, whence he is never to return. Roncevaux has, in fact, cast its shadow on her life as much as on those of Roland and Olivier. Though Bertrand never actually refers to her death, he prophecies the sad end of her love-affair, when he first mentions her:

> ". . . la bele Aude o le viaire cler
> Que Rollant dut a moillier espouser.
> Mes Deu nel vost sofrir ne andurer."[1]

The character of Aude is probably, for the most part, Bertrand's own creation, since her momentary appearance in the Chanson de Roland shows little but her love and fidelity to Roland. Bertrand's conception of her is undoubtedly somewhat stereotyped and superficial, but nevertheless her qualities of religious feeling, kindness, chastity, her frankness, her love for Olivier and Roland, are clearly denoted. Her actual behaviour shows

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[1] LL.1189-1191.

on the author's part real observation of women: if Bertrand has not succeeded in penetrating below the surface, in entering into her mind and feelings, at least he has made her words and actions seem natural and spontaneous. Altogether she is a charming figure; her freshness and beauty, to which the menace of the "male jornée" gives an impression of fragility, are an important element in the artistic whole of the poem.

2. The Duchess of Burgundy.

The Duchess of Burgundy is important as being the actual cause of the war between Girart and Charlemagne. In a sense she is the villainess of the piece; yet she is not wholly bad. "The bad women in the epic poetry are rare," says Comfort.[1] Bertrand has, indeed, taken some pains to explain the reasons for her momentous action.

Widow of the Duke of the important fief of Burgundy,

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[1] Character types in the Old French Chansons de geste, p.380.
There are exceptions to this; Lubias, in Amis et Amiles, is one of them.

the Duchess is a great lady. Her visit to Court is attended by two archbishops,[1] and four counts escort her to her lodgings.[2] She is evidently capable, moreover, as would be expected of the wife of a great lord, of undertaking important feudal duties, for Charlemagne entrusts to her, when she has become Queen, the task of gathering together an army for the siege of Vienne.[3] She is, one gathers, a strong, commanding type of woman.

In person she is still young and beautiful:

"... bele et gente et acesmée
Les eux et verz, la face colorée,
Et fu plus blenche que n'est noif sor gelée."[4]

Her rôle in the poem denotes a woman of decisive character, who makes a definite attempt to get what she wants from life, and, having failed, makes the best of the situation.

Her behaviour shows above all a frank directness of purpose, and a refusal to beat about the bush. When she arrives at Court, she quickly brushes Charlemagne's condolences aside, and goes straight to the point:

"'Sire, fet ele, "ce poisse moi formant,
Mes en duel fere n'a nul recovrement.

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[1] LL.250.
[2] LL.2431-2437.
[3] LL.2431-2437.
[4] LL.1274-1276.

Se il vos plest, autre mari demant,
Car coutume est dés le tans Moïsant,
Qant li uns muert, li autres vient avant.
Aprés le mort m'en covient .i. vivant,
Car mestier a ma terre d'aide grant,
Ou ce ce non, trop i serai perdant.'"[1]

Nothing could be more frankly practical than this.

When Charlemagne proposes to her, she tells him plainly that she has no desire to be Queen, but wishes to marry Girart, whose youth and good looks have attracted her:

"'Girart me donne a la chiere menbrée
A cui ge sui premiere presantée.
Se geu refus bien doi estre blasmée.
Biau sire, rois, n'i a mestier celée,
Ja ne serai roïne.'"[2]

She is equally frank in her marriage proposal to Girart:

"'Sire Girart, ja nel vos quier celer,
Prenez me a fame, seu volez creanter.
Que ge n'ai cure de lonc plet demener.
Onques nul plet ne vi si definer
Q'an ne peüst de plusors parz blamer.'"[3]

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[1] LL.1256-1263. [2] LL.1300-1304.
[3] LL.1349-1353.
The Duchess belongs to the common "aggressive" type of women in the Chansons de geste; those who court the men of their choice. In Gaydon, Claresme persuades Gautier to take a love-message to Gaydon, and meets with a rebuke somewhat similar to that of Girart:

"'Fame qui prie si fait grant desverie;
Tel chose emprent souvent par legerie,
Qu'elle en cuide lestre miex amée et prisie:
Par haste fait ce dont elle est honnie.'"(p.249)

In Fierabras, Floripas makes a proposal to Gui de Bourgogne that can hardly be refused:

"'. . . . . .Se vos ne me prenés,
Ne vous ferai tous pendre et au vent encruer.'"
(p.85)

Having failed to win Girart, she shows herself no less practical, concealing her discomfiture by accepting the hand of Charlemagne, while artfully professing that such an alliance will satisfy her ambition:

> "'Conseil ai pris, c'est verité provée,
> De ce dont vos m'avez aresonnée.
> . . . . . .
> Mieuz veu ge estre roïne coronnée
> Seul .xv. jorz de France la loée
> Que .xiiii. anz duchoisse estre clamée.'" [1]

She becomes, then, Queen of France, a position for which she had no ambition. She has acted throughout like a woman of strong feelings and determination, doing all in her power to attain her object. After refusing Charlemagne's hand point blank, she obtains a night's respite in order to propose to Girart. Girart refuses her, and leaves her in "grant honte"[2], but her desire is strong enough to overcome her indignation. She can neither eat nor sleep, and the next morning goes to a church where she prays fervently that Girart shall

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Esclarmonde also makes acceptance of her hand in marriage a condition of her helping Huon de Bordeaux. (Huon de Bordeaux, p.176)
Lusiane, too, offers her love to Aiol without any scruple. (Aiol: L.2170 sqq)

[1] LL.1402-1403; 1406-1408.

[2] L.1365.

be given to her:[1] she then makes a last unsuccessful attempt. Thereupon her love for Girart changes to a deep hatred, and it is with malicious joy that she refuses his hand:

> "'Mieuz vodroie estre a chevaus traïnée,
> Noiée en eve ou en feu enbrasée,
> De vostre cors fusse james privée.'"[2]

Moreover, she loses no time in taking revenge on him.[3]

For years the secret thought of that revenge is enough for her, but the arrival of Aimeri at Court stirs up her most violent feelings again. Aimeri, we know, bears a strong resemblance to the other members of his family, and it is probable that he recalls the youthful Girart to the Queen. At all events she hates him at sight, and tries to prejudice Charlemagne against him:

> "Dit la roïne: 'Molt a ci bel enfant!
> Onques d'Avergne n'oisi nul ausi gent.
> Mes tuit garçon lecheor soduiant
> Sont en lor terre por voir le vos creant.
> Nes dant Girart de Vïenne la grant
> Ne pris je mie la monte d'un besant.'"[4]

The presence of Aimeri quickly leads her to divulge her secret, and to gloat openly over the details of the insult.

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[1] LL.1374-1377.

[2] LL.1418-1420

[3] LL1467-1468

[4] LL.1780-1785.

This is her last action in the story: the matter is now taken out of her hands. She herself seems terrified by the results of her confession. Aimeri's savage attack fills her with fear:

> "'. . . . .tel poor ai eü,
> Devant .i. mois n'iere mes en vertu.'"[1]

When the angry Monglane family appear at Court, she sits "esbahie",[2] and slips away as soon as possible to her own room, "eu mott ot grant friçon."[3]

For her insult to Girart she is condemned by everyone in the poem, and neither her rank nor her sex can protect her from the attempts of Aimeri and Girart to take her life. Bertrand himself says that for her action "Ele en dut estre ocise,"[4] yet there is no doubt that he sympathises with her up to a point, for he shows in detail the strong feelings which lead her to insult Girart, and he seems to attribute her action to a sudden evil impulse:

> "Tandi son pié, si li a fet bessier
> Si com deables la voloit engingnier."[5]

He seems, indeed, to take more interest in her character

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[1] LL.1895-1896
[2] L.2203
[3] L.2304
[4] L.1476
[5] LL.1468-1470

than in that of Aude, and in a sense, she is a more real and living individual than Aude.

CHAPTER V

Minor Characters

Of the remaining characters, the majority are nothing more than types, with little or no separate individuality.

Charlemagne's barons fall into two classes: the loyal knights and the traitors. The first includes the great mass of barons, who think and act more or less *en masse.* A few are mentioned by name, such as Entiaume, Guinement and Henri d'Orléans, but are distinguished in no other way from the crowd. Beside these we meet a few names well known in the *Chansons de geste*: Duke Naimes plays his usual rôle of councillor to the Emperor;[1] Ogier le Danois and Richard de Normandie also make brief appearances.[2] One alone of these barons has a more developed character - Count Lanbert, who makes a valiant attempt to defeat Olivier, in spite of Aude's tempting offer, is taken prisoner by Olivier, and the next day accompanies

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[1] LL.2257-2261; 4596-4619; 5985-5998.

[2] LL.3625-3635; 6187-6202.

him back to Charlemagne's camp, where he defends him loyally against those who would attack him.[1] His characteristics, however, loyalty, honour and valour, are no more than typical: his is the portrait of any French knight.

The traitors, too, are stereotyped: their rôle is comparatively unimportant, being confined to unsuccessful attempts to harm the heroes of the poem by their lies and evil-speaking.[2] This conception of the traitor accords neither with the Judas-like version found in the Chanson de Roland, nor with the conception of the traitor-geste, the family of Hardré and Ganelon, referred to at the beginning of Girart de Vienne,[3] that the members of the traitor-geste, though valiant warriors, fell, like the rebel angels, through pride. A comparison between Renart de Poitiers, Hernaut de Mongençon and the rest,

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[1] LL.3485-3568; 3680-3891; 4221-4286.

[2] Renart de Poitiers tries to poison Charlemagne's mind against Renier and Girart, (L.769 sqq.); Hernaut de Mongençon proposes to hang Olivier, a messenger (LL.4192-to 4214). With them may be ranked the evil-speakers, Doon le Barbé (LL.1036-1061) and Doon de Monloon (LL.2266-2283)

[3] Laisse II.

and the rebel angels, seems hardly apt: the only point of resemblance is their jealousy of all good and honest men. Even Ganelon is only a shadow of the interesting character of the Chanson de Roland. Here he is merely Roland's enemy, rejoicing at blows to Roland's pride,[1] and attempting to poison the Emperor's mind against his nephew.[2]

A little more vividly drawn are Charlemagne's two servants, the Seneschal and the Doorkeeper[3]. Both are insolent, overbearing, and stupidly intolerant of those "d'autre païs". Both, too, are inordinately proud of their fine clothes. Both, however, belong to the type of the churlish servant; moreover, they are sketched superficially, so that we have no more sympathy with them than has Renier.

Among the minor characters, one alone has any claim to be called a living individual. This is the old Jew Joachim. His chief interest lies in the fact that, in

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[1] When Olivier wounds Roland's feelings by challenging him in public, Ganelon is amused (L.3243)

[2] He declares that Roland has consented to make peace with Olivier for Aude's sake:

"'C'est por Audein,' Ganes li respondi,
Qu'il aime tant, por verté le vos di,
Que ceste pes a il fete por li.'" (LL.5982-5984)

[3] LL.472 sqq.; 589 sqq.

defiance of the usual tradition, Bertrand has made him a "bons Juïs."[1]

His character is vividly, though briefly sketched. As generous as he is rich, he has contrived to remain on excellent terms with the lords of Vienne:

> "Riches hom fu et d'avoir repleniz.
> Tant en dona au barons del païs
> Que entor aus l'orent sofert tot dis."[2]

With Olivier he seems to be on terms of affection. He appears when Olivier is arming for battle with Roland, offering a set of wonderful armour, and later, when Olivier's sword has broken, Joachim produces Hauteclere, which had once belonged to the Emperor Closamont.[3] Olivier seems to return the Jew's affection sincerely, for when Joachim makes his generous offer,

> "Olivier l'ot, a regarder l'a pris.
> Desor l'espaule li avoit son braz mis.
> S'il creüst Deu, ja le besast el vis."[4]

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[1] L.5529.
Another exception to the general conception of the Jew is Saolin, the "juïs sachanz" in La Mort Aymeri de Narbonne, who interprets Aimeri's dream (pp.16-20). He also finds favour with Aimeri:

> "Quens Aymeris ot le juï molt chier." (K.461)

[2] LL.4893-4895.

[3] LL.5528 sqq.

[4] LL.4900-4902.

The next lines illustrate clearly the depth of Joachim's religious feeling. Olivier, to try him, offers jokingly to have the Jew's son baptised and knighted. Joachim fires up at once, to the amusement of the barons present:

> "'Ne place Deu, ce respont Joachins.
> Que crestïen deviengne ja mes fiz.
> Par la voiz Deu mieuz vodroie estre ocis,
> Et que il fust escorchiez trestot vis.'"[1]

He is only a small character, but, vividly and sympathetically drawn, he stands out among the minor characters of the poem as a living individual.

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[1] LL.4911-4914.

CHAPTER VI

The Characterisation in Relation to the Structure of the Poem

In the preceding chapters the characters of the poem have been studied separately. It remains now to be seen how Bertrand has used these characters to make up his Chanson de geste.

The poem as a whole may be considered as falling into four main sections, with a prologue and an epilogue. The prologue consists of that part of the story which precedes the departure of Renier and Girart for Charlemagne's Court. The first main section, with Renier as its hero, continues until the departure of Renier for Genvres. Then for a time Girart holds the centre of the stage, until the arrival of Aimeri initiates the third section. Aimeri, in his turn, is deposed from his position by Olivier, who remains in the foreground of the action until the end of his single combat with Roland. The last thousand lines are concerned mainly with winding up the story. Each of the central sections is dominated by its hero, a young man who, when he appears on the scene, has not yet been dubbed knight, but is at the beginning of his knightly career.

The poem does not, however, lack unity on this account. Not only does the war between Girart and Charlemagne provide a central theme for the action, but the characters themselves, separately and in groups, are worked into a perceptible pattern which imparts to the work a general feeling of unity.

It is noticeable that this pattern depends largely on antithesis, on the interplay of conflicting personalities. This appears in the succession of heroes; violence and moderation alternate in the characters of Renier, Girart, Aimeri and Olivier. Moreover, examination of almost any situation in the poem shows that the dramatic effect is greatly enhanced by the conflict of opposing characters. The scene of the Monglane family conference furnishes a striking illustration of this, in the contrasting personalities of the Desmesurés and the Sages of the family. The fierce but loyal violence of old Garin, the youthful intolerance of Aimeri, and the practical common-sense of Hernaut are all used to relieve each other. Again, the gentleness of Girart and the violence of Renier are emphasised throughout the first part of the poem by the juxtaposition of the two. This is particularly clear in the scene in which Renier demands his fief from Charlemagne.

The most interesting contrast, however, is that

between Roland and Olivier, which, together with the mutual attraction which inevitably accompanies it, creates the whole movement of the fourth and largest section of the poem. This movement reaches its climax in the battle scene, which is perhaps the finest part of the poem. Here epic stylisation lifts the whole passage to a high artistic level; the extraordinary valour and nobility of the champions engaged in mortal combat, the tense anxiety with which the fight is watched from both banks of the river, the prayers of Charlemagne, Aude and Girart, combine to form a rhythmic pattern of actions, feelings and words which is not found at any other point of the poem.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that as a portrayer of character, Bertrand has his limitations. The preceding character-studies have shown that the recurrence of common qualities, emphasised by the frequent use of stock phrases and epithets, creates a certain uniformity in the types of character introduced into the poem. Bertrand's preoccupation with one hero at a time produces another limitation: interested in one character only, he often tends to relegate the others more or less to the background.

Nevertheless, the men and women of the poem are moved by the same passions of love and hatred, and the same desires and needs, as the men and women of today. If they are to some extent stereotyped, the principal ones show enough individuality of action, feeling and even, in some cases, of language, to stand out clearly as distinct and separate human beings, whose personalities are emphasised by the juxtaposition of contrasting characters.

To what degree can this be attributed to the conscious intention of the poet? It would certainly be a mistake to suppose that the portrayal of character was Bertrand's chief object in writing the poem. On the contrary, the unmistakable gusto with which he creates one exciting situation after another, with which he describes quarrels, scenes of reckless bravery, stirring fights, often against uneven odds, pursuits, and last-minute rescues, shows clearly that his main intention was to tell a good adventure story well, and it cannot be denied that in this he has fully succeeded. But since in the details as well as in the broad lines the characters are, on the whole, consistently portrayed as individuals, we must conclude that he expended some thought and care on his characterisation.

Without attributing to Bertrand either the zeal or

the capability for the minute dissection of character, possessed by the modern author, one may claim that he wrote the poem with definite conceptions of his principal characters in his mind, some original, some culled partly from epic tradition. And these conceptions have, in nearly every case, produced men and women of that timeless humanity which has persisted throughout the ages.

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