French Romance and English Piety: Genre and Codex in Insular Romance

by

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Abstract

This dissertation explores what the interplay of romance and religious literature in England from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries can reveal about the origins and development of medieval romance. Drawing upon codicological evidence, it favors a more fluid definition of romance that recognizes it as both a category of generic difference distinct from but also linked to the saint’s life, chronicle, or chanson de geste, and as a mode of translation that has its roots in the origins of the term romanç as a marker of linguistic difference used to distinguish French from Latin. It argues that the interconnections of romance and religious literature should be viewed as part of the process of translating or adapting a text, whether into a new language or for a new audience.

The first section examines how French hagiographical works adopt motifs and themes associated with romance in the translation of their Latin sources. Chapter 1 focuses on Wace’s use of courtly imagery, expanded descriptions, and doubling in the Vie de Sainte Marguerite, Conception Nostre Dame, and Vie de Saint Nicolas and how these alterations to his source material anticipate qualities that would become features of the romance genre. The second chapter discusses the generic hybridity in Marie de France’s Vie Seinte Audree, in which allusions to the lais cast Saint Audrey as a mal mariée, and the Espurgatoire Seint Patriz, in
which the emphasis on Owein’s status as a knight offers a suitable alternative to the religious life.

The second section assesses the use of hagiographic and religious elements in romances. The third chapter traces the use of hagiography in three Anglo-Norman romances – the Roman de Horn, Roman de Waldef, and Gui de Warewic – to contextualize the significant generic shift that occurs in the attribution of saintly qualities to the hero Guy of Warwick in the latest of the three texts. Concentrating on the role of the relics, the final chapter looks at how the Middle English adaptations of the chanson de geste Fierabras reflect developments in devotional culture, England’s involvement in the Hundred Years War, and the rise of English as a literary language. The combination of codicological and literary approaches in this study foregrounds the processes of translation, adaptation, and transmission that operated in the literary networks of medieval England to broaden our understanding of medieval genres, as well as the place of French language, literature, and culture.
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## Abbreviations

**AND**  

**ANTS**  
Anglo-Norman Text Society

**CFMA**  
Les Classiques français du Moyen Âge

**EETS**  
Early English Text Society  
- o.s. original series  
- e.s. extra series

**MED**  
*Middle English Dictionary* (online version) [http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/)

**ODNB**  
*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online version)  

**PMLA**  
*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*

**SATF**  
Société des anciens textes français

**TLF**  
Textes littéraires français
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Introduction

Romance is a notoriously fluid and enigmatic term. For the proponents of Romanticism in the nineteenth century, like Nathaniel Hawthorne, romance was a highly visual genre which, by virtue of not being hindered by a “very minute fidelity […] to the probable and ordinary course of man’s experience,” possesses a degree of latitude into the realm of the marvelous unavailable to the true-to-life prose of the novel.¹ In contemporary parlance, the term romance may refer to a mode of behavior relating to love, and, in turn, describe a genre of novels populated by men and women engaged in passionate love affairs. Linguistically speaking, romance may be used to describe vernacular languages that derive from Latin. A similar fluidity characterizes the use of the term romance during the Middle Ages when it functions largely as a signifier of alterity, whether linguistic, social, or generic. The term romance (romanç) originally denoted linguistic difference and referred to a text that had been written in the vernacular, namely French, as opposed to something that had been written in Latin.² Yet it is simultaneously a word that always looks backwards to that Latin past and registers a kind of translatio imperii westwards from Rome to the French-speaking regions of Europe. The linguistic stratification of medieval society naturally encoded a sense of social difference within this term. A text had to be translated from Latin, the language of the learned clergy, and “en romanç” because its audience, whether reading or listening, could not or preferred not to read in Latin. Another shade of meaning arose as romance began to convey a sense of generic alterity alongside its linguistic and social

connotations. The reinscription of a Latin text into a vernacular idiom that meaningfully communicates the sense of the original may also require the addition of elements that would aid the understanding of a text or the elimination of elements that hindered comprehension.\(^3\) In turn, the *romans d’antiquité*, generally considered the vanguards of medieval romance as a genre, incorporate courtly elements in Old French adaptations of the *Aeneid* and other Latin accounts of the sieges of Thebes and Troy, thereby rewriting their sources in a vernacular idiom that speaks to a new medieval audience. Though ostensibly describing events in the classical past, the men and women of the *Roman d’Eneas*, *Roman de Troie*, and *Roman de Thèbes* act in a manner not dissimilar from the knights and ladies who may have read or listened to them being read in the twelfth century. In this way, romance, as a kind of literature populated by lovely ladies and courageous knights performing doughty deeds in their honor, designated a genre distinct from the *chanson de geste*, chronicle, or saint’s life.

Although this discussion of the medieval uses of romance posits the evolutionary progression of its signification as a term of difference, these epochs of meaning and the opposing categories they map out must not be stated too strictly. Romance may distinguish French from Latin, layman from cleric, and romance from hagiography, but, like the variant meanings of its very signifier, the genre of romance is a multifaceted category that encompasses a wide variety of texts. In order to explore this generic fluidity further, this thesis examines the polysemy of romance as a signifier of linguistic and literary difference in England from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries with regard to its relationship with religious literature. Perceived as the

\(^3\) Lawrence Venuti might refer to this as the “domestic remainder,” through which a “foreign text is rewritten in domestic dialects and discourses, registers and styles, [resulting] in the production of textual effects that signify only in the domestic language and culture” (“Translation, Community, Utopia,” *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2000), 469).
literary mouthpiece of the barony and their ideals, romance is often seen as being in dialogic conflict with saints’ lives and other religious writings. Its protagonists are generally members of the barony or nobility. Its lavish descriptions, especially of marvelous objects, bespeak a culture of conspicuous consumerism and material wealth that would not have been in keeping with the ideological abstinence of the Church. Its tendency to end with the triumph of the young knight protagonist in land and love demonstrates the literary wish-fulfillment of the landless iuvenes described by Georges Duby. Yet, like religious literature, romance possesses didactic potential. The (mis)adventures of the young Perceval in Chrétien de Troyes’ Conte du Graal, for example, alert its audience to the importance of proper decorum and speech, a lesson worth learning by any courtier. Both romance and hagiography also feature lone protagonists who endure trials, often marvelous in nature, to test their mettle, and their conduct serves as an exemplary model. In light of these similarities, the relationship between romance and hagiography or religious literature, in general, presents a useful perspective from which to examine what characteristics define romance as a genre. By expanding the traditional boundaries of the genre to incorporate both its linguistic and literary aspects, we may get a better sense of the function of translation and vernacularity in the development of romance.

The generic difference between romance and hagiography is laid out most starkly by the writers of religious texts. In the prologue to his life of Saint Edmund, Denis Piramus, former court-poet turned monk, condemns his previous works as frivolities and urges his readers to

dedicate themselves to moral texts. He recognizes the popularity of the works of Marie de France, Partonopeus, and other “cuntes, chanceuns e fables” (“tales, songs, and stories,” 51) for the power they have as a literature of escape that can quell the emotional storms of sadness, boredom, or anger, but he proposes his present work as a better alternative because it can “les almes garir / E les cors garanter de hunte” (“protect souls and defend bodies from shame,” 64-65). However, it is most importantly a true story, a distinction that separates the vitae from romances: “ceo que hum veit, ceo deit hum creire. / Kar c eo n’es pas sunge ne arveire” (“one ought to believe what one sees because what one sees is not a vision or an illusion,” 77-78). This recalls the distinction adherents and critics of Romanticism established between romance and the novel, the former the genre of the unreal, the latter of the real. The genre that best mirrors human existence, from this point of view, provides the best lens for imparting lessons to the audience of a text. For Denis, this genre is hagiography, whose “estoires … des bones gestes” (“accounts … about the good deeds,” 93) provide good examples for his lay audience: “Rei, duc, prince e empereïr, / Cunte, barun e vavasur, / Deivent bien a ceste oevre entendre / Kar bon ensample il purrunt prendre” (“Kings, dukes, princes, and emperors, counts, barons, and vavasours ought to understand this work well because they can take good example from it,” 83-86).

The authors of the Speculum Vitae, the Cursor Mundi, and similar texts likewise denigrate the genre, suggesting quite explicitly the difference seen between romance and hagiography during the Middle Ages. William of Nassington, the author of the Speculum Vitae, acknowledges that romances, such as those about the heroes Octavian, Isumbras, Bevis of Hampton, and Guy of Warwick, may seem appealing and be the sort of thing “som men like”

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(46), but dismisses them outright as “nowht bot vanyte” (48). It is not an issue, as it is for Denis, of the truthfulness of the stories of “dedes of armes” and of “amours” (37), but rather that the subject matter of romance has no intrinsic worth except as a passing fancy. Additionally, though William groups together texts that scholars have traditionally identified as romances, he also makes no distinction between Sir Isumbras and Guy of Warwick, which borrow narrative elements from the lives of Saint Eustace and Saint Alexis respectively, and the more “secular” romances Octavian and Bevis of Hampton. All such chivalric texts, regardless of their holy trappings, are romances that ought to be condemned. For the author of the Cursor Mundi, romance is likewise a popular genre which “men ȝernen […] for to here” (1), but draws only the foolish since the wise know better. He also importantly characterizes romance as a diverse genre that includes stories about Alexander, Julius Caesar, Arthur, Charlemagne, Tristan and Isolde, and Ydoine and Amadace. But, regardless of the subject, romance remains a folly, even in the case of the quasi-hagiographic Sir Isumbras.

As defined by the authors of these religious texts, whether saint’s life, pastoral treatise, or chronicle, romance is a genre characterized by its fictionality, the diversity of its subjects, its concern with noble protagonists (“princes prelates and […] kynges,” 22), and its vanity in the eyes of the Church. Although this description points to qualities that are key to the distinction between romance and other genres, the condemnation of romance as mendacious and unwholesome ultimately hinges upon the seemingly opposing purposes and worldviews

advocated in these genres. The pursuit of worldly fame, wealth, and love sought by the romance protagonist, whose worth is ultimately determined by his success in attaining these things, is anathema to the whittling away of the connection between the saint and the world presented in vitæ. The death of the saint reflects the spiritual death to the world he or she has already enacted through his or her pursuit of eternal otherworldly goods. The stark contrast these religious texts establish also rests upon an unspoken competition – their authors seek to capture some of the popular appeal of romance, a quality mentioned in each of the examples given above. There is also recognition on some level of the parallels that may be drawn between these seemingly opposing genres. The prologue of the Corpus Christi manuscript of The South English Legendary describes texts about knights and kings as “lesynge” (“lying,” 62), but argues for reading the stories of saints as romances. Apostles and martyrs are likened to “hardy kniȝtes” who “studeuast were in bataille & ne fleide noȝt for fere, / þat softrede þat luper men al quik have lymes totere” (63, 64-65).9 Romance may be filled with lies, but hagiography is the perfect fulfillment of the romance genre because it is grounded in the Truth of Christ. The vitæ are the true stories of God’s true knights.

Although this anti-romance rhetoric clearly forms a crucial part of establishing the purpose and legitimacy of these religious texts, the boundary between romance and hagiography is not so impermeable that the genres do not share similarities, as the prologue of the Corpus Christi redaction of The South English Legendary itself illustrates. Saints are, indeed, like warriors waging battle for Christ’s sake, while the marvelous stag found in the lives of Saints Eustace and Hubert and the imprisonment of Saint Barbara in a tower echoes tropes also found in

romance. These similarities have not escaped the attention of scholars. Brigitte Cazelles’ work on Old French verse saints’ lives has shown how these texts utilize elements associated with romance to describe their saints. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne stresses the similarities between the two genres as examples of exemplary biography and argues for the “limited meaningfulness” of the distinction between romance and hagiography.

On the other side of the generic divide, texts traditionally classified as romances, like Guy of Warwick, Sir Isumbras, Amis and Amiloun, and Robert of Sicily, also appropriate elements from saints’ lives, thereby lending a pious tone to their chivalric narratives. Any romance hero worth the love of his aloof lady possesses some degree of piety as part of his chivalric identity. Geoffroi de Charny’s Livre de Chevalerie even positions knighthood as a kind of religious order, while pité numbers amongst the five chivalric virtues represented in the pentangle on Gawain’s shield in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (653). However, whereas these religious elements form part of chivalric identity in these texts, they play a more substantial role in others. Guy of Warwick, extant in French and English versions, features a knight who abandons his wife and unborn son to atone for his sins on a penitential pilgrimage. The Middle English Robert of Sicily is the story of a king whose pride is punished through his temporary replacement by an angel. The religious components of such texts are decidedly different from the isolated details –

the shield featuring an image of the Virgin Mary, the genuflecting knight, etc. – found in other romances.

This sense of generic alterity led formalist critics in the 1960s and 1970s to advocate for the categorization of these texts within a separate subgenre that recognized their hybrid status as both romance and vita.14 Ojars Kratins first proposed this distinction in his examination of the Middle English Amis and Amiloun in the belief that the appropriate identifying terminology would allow these hybrid texts to be read in the proper perspective. Their religious content would no longer lead to them being deemed unsatisfactory romances.15 Various names were proposed for this group of texts, including secular hagiographies, secular legends, devotional romances, “homiletic romances,”16 “exemplarische Romanzen,”17 “romances of trial and faith,”18 and hagiographic romances. However, with new fences raised to accommodate these texts, there was some disagreement about which ones ought to be included and what constituted sufficient religious content. Writing of non-cyclical Middle English romances, for example, Laura Hibbard includes Sir Isumbras, Florence of Rome, Emaré, The Earl of Toulouse, The King of Tars, Sir Gowther, Robert of Sicily, Amis and Amiloun, Amadace, and Cleges, but excludes Guy of


16 Mehl 120-58.

17 Schelp 11.

Warwick, even though it features one of romance’s most blatant hagiographical borrowings since the hero’s death is accompanied by a saintly odor and his body is rendered incapable of being moved. Dieter Mehl’s “homiletic romances” adds Athelston, The Siege of Melayne, and The Chevelere Assigné to the Middle English contenders, but again omits Guy of Warwick by categorizing it anachronistically as a novel in verse. Subsets within this grouping of texts were also proffered. Andrea Hopkins proposes that texts featuring knights who atone for their sins through physical suffering be referred to as “penitential romances.”

The diversity of terms and categorizations evident here demonstrates that religious romance proves to be just as enigmatic as the genre from which it derives. Though it is clear that the mere presence of a religious or hagiographical element within a romance does not make it a de facto religious romance, the point at which a work crosses the threshold into hybridity seems somewhat arbitrary. Why exclude Guy of Warwick on the basis of its length and resemblance to a modern literary form when its conclusion clearly alludes to the saint’s life? Why are the Middle English adaptations of the Matter of France chansons de geste, like Sir Ferumbras, Roland and Vernagu, Sir Ottel, The Sultan of Babylon, Ralph the Collier, and The Siege of Milan, generally omitted from discussions of religious romance, even though they are essentially expressions of a martial devotional Christianity? The provision of a distinct category for religious romances may provide a critical framework that accounts for the interaction of the romance and religious elements within these hybrid narratives, but such delimitations can also be overly prescriptive.

19 Mehl 220-27.


The question of religious romance has been a particular preoccupation for scholars of the French and English literature of medieval England, but similar texts can be found in medieval literatures throughout Europe.\textsuperscript{22} The prevalence of these kinds of texts in medieval England has been attributed to the moral quality of insular French literature, which has been noted and explored by scholars like M. Dominica Legge, C.B. West, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, a trait that was passed on to the English literature deriving from it.\textsuperscript{23} However, opinions differ concerning the source of this piety.\textsuperscript{24} M. Dominica Legge suggests that it arose from the role of the clergy in literary composition, but, provided that most of the literature in the Middle Ages, both in England and throughout Europe, would have been written by clerics, this rationale is not overly convincing. Susan Crane, on the other hand, argues that the hybridity of insular romance stems from the continued vitality of hagiography as a genre in England throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{25} Whereas the \textit{vita} fell out of favor as a reality fiction, that is, as an imaginative genre reflecting, but not replicating reality, in Continental French literature by the fourteenth century, the genre continued to flourish in England, reinvigorated by the translation of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} See, for example, the possibly continental French \textit{Guillaume d'Angleterre} (ed. A.J. Holden, TLF 360 (Geneva: Droz, 1988)) and the \textit{Libro de Apolonio}, a medieval Spanish hagiographical romance based on the Apollonius of Tyre story, as discussed by Marina Scordilis Brownlee, “Writing and Scripture in the \textit{Libro de Apolonio}: The Conflation of Hagiography and Romance,” \textit{Hispanic Review} 51.2 (1983): 159-74.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Keith Busby contradicts this claim, asserting that early insular French literature was not any more religious than continental French literature. He concedes, however, that this quality may have developed over time (\textit{Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript}, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2002) 2:495).
\item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 132-33.
\end{itemize}
French material into English, and thus providing for more points of sustained contact between hagiography and romance.26

The disjunctive worldviews of romance and hagiography and the perceived irreconcilable differences between them call into question the sincerity of the appropriation of religious elements within romances. For all of the similarities between the two genres, the tendency of romances to end happily distinguishes it from the saint’s life.27 The *vita*, punctuated by the death of the saint, is a testament to disjunction, to his or her break with the secular world, though miracles may continue to testify to his or her influence. In contrast, the genre of romance anticipates the triumph of the hero over his trials and his return to and reintegration with the world he has left behind. The irreconcilability of these divergent attitudes has prompted Susan Crane to argue that the religious elements found in the hybrid romances ultimately reinforce a romance agenda and are, to some degree, even anti-Christian.28 The knight’s piety and saintliness are mere trappings intended to augment his greatness. Unlike the saint, he makes no real sacrifices: anything lost is regained and suffering reaps earthly rewards. Crane roots the insular specimens of religious romance in the protestations of the baronial class against the increasing encroachment of the Church upon their daily lives, epitomized in Lateran IV’s 1215 injunction requiring annual confession. The romances appropriate hagiographic elements in order to champion an ideological system in opposition to the Church and its teachings. The


27 Romances may sometimes end with the deaths of their protagonists, e.g. King Arthur, Tristan, and Isolde. K.S. Whetter argues that these tragic romances constitute a distinct hybrid genre (*Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008)).

warrior-pilgrim and giant-killer Guy of Warwick and the leper Amiloun become part of a new pantheon of secular saints who value martial prowess and chivalric fidelity. Their “vitae” subvert a genre that often serves as a mouthpiece for the orthodox doctrines of the Church. For Crane, these texts, no matter how much they might seem like saints’ lives at first glance – whether in the case of reformed half-demons (*Sir Gowther*), knights whose deaths are accompanied by the odor of sanctity (*Guy of Warwick*), or dead children brought to life once more by the Virgin Mary (*Amis and Amiloun*) – are above all romances. Their protagonists endure suffering, but receive land, wealth, and reunion, not the crowns of martyrs.

Susan Crane has a point. Referring to those romances that contain religious elements as hagiographical romances or secular legends implies an affinity between these genres on the basis of narrative similarities when the worldviews they offer may actually be in conflict with one another. Underlying this generic tension, however, these labels also help to signal the resemblance between romance, hagiography, and religious literature in general. These categories may be modern constructs, but this does not negate the fact that the poems described with these labels contain hagiographic elements and blur the boundary between romance and vita. As Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has noted, “Formal generic assignation is not a label after the fact, but a launching device, a temporary marker around which to mobilize a discourse, rather than a piece of literary history.”29 They provide a springboard for discussing these texts and determining what makes them distinct. Although I would not classify the border-crossing texts as a distinctive subgenre per se, the movement by scholars to do so in the 1960s and 1970s strikes home at the fluidity of romance as a genre and cautions us against policing its fences with too much vigor.

29 Wogan-Browne, “‘Bet … to … rede on holy seyntes lyves …’: Romance and Hagiography Again” 84.
Granted, there are some real distinctions to be made between the romance and religious worlds, part of which springs from a sense of literary competition, as the opposition to romance found in the prologues to the religious texts discussed above demonstrates, but the binary opposition Crane posits between these romances and the Church rings false. There is no denying that romances are quite different from the Bible, saints’ lives, or other religious writings. Their protagonists are often noble lay people whose adventures bring them out into the world, beyond the cloisters. Because of this, it is easy to see why the abbot Gerard in Caesarius of Heisterbach’s exemplum upbraids his monks for being more interested in a secular tale of Arthur and his knights than biblical stories.\(^{30}\) Their concerns ought to be elsewhere, but, at the same time, the presence of romances in the library catalogues of religious institutions in England suggests that monks and other religious read romances.\(^{31}\) It could be countered that the manuscripts containing these romances were gifts from lay patrons. For example, Guy de Beauchamp, the tenth Earl of Warwick, donated a collection of books, including one described as “Un volum del Romaunce des Mareschaus e de Ferebras de Alisaundre, to the Cistercian abbey at Bordesley in 1305.\(^{32}\) One might also conjecture that the romances were read so that religious would be better able to scope out the competition, so to speak, but this does not mean that they were not read and enjoyed by the monks, some of whom may have come from noble families in which such texts may have


\(^{31}\) Copies of *Gui de Warewic* are recorded in the catalogues of Ramsey Abbey, Byland Abbey, and at least four copies were held by St. Augustine’s Canterbury (Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters* 114). See also *English Benedictine Libraries: The Shorter Catalogues*, ed. by Richard Sharpe et al., Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 4 (London: British Library, 1996) 402.

been read – a monk does not spring up *ex nihilo.* In an age that seeks to compartmentalize and keep Church and state separate, we may be inclined to establish strict dichotomies between the sacred and the secular, monk and layman, and to see their aims as divided, but such lines cannot be drawn with reference to the Middle Ages.

Although romance has traditionally been regarded as a “secular” genre that reflects the beliefs and *mores* of the chivalric ranks of society, the reality, noted above, that monks read or at least had access to romance texts challenges assumptions about the genre’s supposed lay audience. Admittedly, the characters typically found in romances might suggest an audience similarly composed of noble knights, ladies, or other laypersons. Many romances, in turn, also contain general references directed from their narrators to “seignors,” as in the *Roman de Horn,* or “lordinges,” as in the Middle English *Bevis of Hampton,* and appear to inscribe a particular stratum of individuals within their texts. But, regardless of whether this identifier actually denotes anything about the social ranking of those addressed, it nevertheless implies a forum, outside of the confines of the cloister, in which these romances may have been recited as entertainment by minstrels. Judith Weiss, for example, has argued that the *Roman de Horn* was

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33 The Norman chronicler Guibert de Nogent, for example, was the son of a minor nobleman. Bernard of Clairvaux was the son of a Burgundian nobleman. Writing of the Benedictines, James Clark notes that, beginning in the twelfth century, the order experienced a shift in its number of noble monks as they resorted to other forms of spirituality (*The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011) 67).

34 References to “seignors” in the *Roman de Horn* may be found at ll. 43, 58, etc. and to “lordinges” in the opening line of *Bevis of Hampton* (“Lordinges, herkneþ to me tale,” 1). Other Middle English examples can be found under the *MED* entry for “lording” (def. 7).

35 The question of whether the romances were intended to be performed has been a matter of much scholarly debate. For recent discussion of this question, see Andrew Taylor, “Was There a Song of Roland?” *Speculum* 76 (2001): 28-65; and Linda Marie Zaerr, *Performance and the Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2012).
composed to be performed at Henry II’s Christmas court at Dublin in 1171-72. The evidence for lay audiences found within the romances themselves is supported by the provenance of several manuscripts containing romances. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 132, which contains a copy of the *Roman de Horn*, belonged to a Berkshire lawyer in the thirteenth century. A copy of *Gui de Warewic* is preserved in a thirteenth-century manuscript (Cologny-Geneva, Bibliothea Bodmeriana 67) with flyleaves made from a manorial register that can be localized to Yorkshire and includes blazons that “appear to be cut from a roll of arms relate [sic] to Catterick,” suggesting the possibility of its aristocratic ownership.

Although these romance narratives might seem more fitting for a lay audience, their readership certainly included religious men and women. In fact, when available, the provenance information for romance manuscripts indicates that a significant number of them can be attributed to clerical institutions or persons. *Gui de Warewic*, for instance, seems to have enjoyed particular popularity among religious houses. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson D.913 comprises four folios from a now-lost manuscript containing the poem, but an inscription on one of the leaves indicates that it was formerly in the possession of the Friars Observant of Canterbury. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 50 can be localized to the abbey of Saint Augustine in Canterbury, which, according to library catalogues, held at least three other copies


38 Busby, *Codex and Context* 2:734.

of Gui de Warewic, now lost. Extant catalogues from monastic libraries also indicate that copies of the poem were in the possession of Ramsey Abbey and Byland Abbey. The unique parchment cover of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 33, which contains a holograph copy of the Middle English Sir Ferumbras, suggests the manuscript’s ownership by a religious cleric. The cover consists of two pieces of parchment stitched together to form a trifold envelope into which the paper leaves of the manuscript proper were bound. The piece of parchment serving as the manuscript’s outer cover is a letter, dated 1357 and addressed to the Bishop of Exeter, while the inner piece of parchment, dated 1377, relates to the announcement of a judgment from Rome concerning a dispute over the consecration of a cemetery adjacent to a chapel in Holne.

Given the subject matter of these documents, W.H. Black infers that its owner was a clergyman living in the diocese of Exeter. While these manuscripts potentially indicate a large romance readership among the clergy, it should be noted that medieval manuscripts originating from clerical institutions are more likely to survive to the present day because they possessed the facilities for their proper storage and continued preservation. As such, this higher proportion of manuscripts with religious provenances does not necessarily reflect the circulation of these texts during the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, even when taking these caveats into consideration, these manuscripts containing romances confirm Caesarius of Heisterbach’s anecdotal evidence about

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the monastic fans of Arthurian legends: non-secular audiences read and enjoyed this “secular” genre.

Furthermore, we may further infer that clerics – whether regular, secular, or merely affiliated in some way with the Church – must have been responsible for writing at least some of the romances, as M. Dominica Legge has argued. Although her attempt to ascribe texts to particular orders proves difficult given the anonymity of many medieval authors, we know, for example, that the Cistercians or someone heavily influenced by their ideals was involved in the compilation of the Lancelot-Grail Cycle and the composition of the *Queste del Saint Graal*, suggesting monastic familiarity with the romance genre and a recognition of its ability to be molded to suit a religious or moral framework.43 The texts examined in this dissertation differ considerably from Arthurian accounts of the quest for the Holy Grail, but the blending of elements is similarly motivated. Just as the Crusades appropriated the chivalric culture of the nobility to further the interests of the Church and Christendom, so too could these “secular” literary texts be used to guide the morals of their audiences. Romances, like saints’ lives, provide exemplary models for their readers, and might both be categorized as examples of “exemplary biography,” as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne contends. It is therefore only reasonable that, originating from similar impulses, they should employ similar techniques to engage their audiences and, as I argue in this dissertation, that those techniques resemble those used in the translation of Latin works into the vernacular, that is, “en romanz.”

Although romances often feature characters and ideals associated with the chivalric ranks of society, this does not entail the binary opposition of its contents to the Church: for they are also, at least in part, a product of that institution and, in turn, exemplify its concerns as well. Crane’s analysis of the pious romances, though incisive about the contexts underpinning the role of romance in England, hinges upon an overstatement about the opposition between romance and hagiography and the composition of their audiences. The Church could not and did not condone all aspects of the values espoused by the nobility or laypersons, in general, but it did seek to reform them. Nor, for that matter, did the laity seek outright to contradict the Church, but they also did not all wish to be monks and nuns. The worldview presented in the romances may not agree completely with Church teachings and may have been criticized by the writers of religious texts, but this does not negate the pious impulses found within the so-called hagiographical romances or set them up in ideological opposition to the Church. It and the nobility formed part of an interdependent society that necessitated accommodation and compromise in order to function. It is the aim of this thesis to look beyond the dialogue of ideological generic struggle to account for the blending of romance and hagiographic elements found in the “romances” of medieval England from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries as a function of the vernacular audience for which they were written by tracing romance as a process of both linguistic and literary translation. It is not my intention to deny completely the subversive potential of romance in its appropriation of hagiographic elements or vice versa, but rather to examine the interplay of these genres in order to better understand the origins of romance as a linguistic process and as a genre and to underscore its fluidity.

Genres change. They evolve to suit the needs and desires of the audience for which they are written. They are, as Franco Moretti has said, “temporary structures […], morphological
arrangements that last in time, but always only for some time.” We may speak of medieval romance as a homogeneous group of texts written for a lay audience and concerned with the plights of knights and ladies, but romance is just as heterogeneous as the meanings that can be applied to the term used to describe it. It evolves to accommodate its audience, whether as vernacular readers or speakers or as individuals interested in chivalric texts. While some sense of this ever-occurring transformation can be gleaned from the shift of content in romance texts – e.g., the early romans d'antiquité show a clear fascination with narratives deriving from classical literature and concern with themes of foundation, war, and love – another potential indicator of genre is the codicological context in which a text is found. When a text stops being copied, that genre, as a temporary structure, reaches the end of its viability. However, this need not mark the complete death of a genre, which may return through a later revival of interest or, as in medieval England, through the translation of texts from French into English which thereby extended the shelf-life of many romances. It is also important to note that although additions or omissions may be made each time a given text is copied anew, it remains more or less the same as it is reframed. We might liken it to the resituation of Puccini’s Gianni Schicchi in modern-day Florence or setting Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar in 1920s Chicago.

In studying the multiplicity of romance as a linguistic and generic term, this dissertation relies primarily on close examination of saints’ lives, other religious texts, and romances for evidence of their interdependence, whether through allusions, the use of vocabulary, or rhetorical devices or structures associated with particular genres. In support of its argument for the fluidity of romance, it also draws upon codicological evidence, which may provide a useful tool for

examining the interplay of romance and religious texts, and defining not only what it means for a text to be a romance, but also whether such a definition depends upon the parameters of other genres. By examining what texts tend to circulate with the “romances” discussed in this thesis, whether as translations or adaptations of Latin texts or as chivalric narratives of the type traditionally categorized as romances, this thesis will determine what manuscripts can reveal about the temporary structures of romance as a genre and how these texts were read.

Manuscripts, like any other type of evidence, possess certain limitations. The loss of medieval manuscripts due to wear and tear, the elements, conflagration, and political turmoil ensures that the pool of potential data is inestimably limited in scope. In post-Reformation England, changing literary tastes also contributed indirectly to the loss of manuscripts. Romances and other medieval texts fell out of fashion as they were seen as superstitious and papist, while English tastes turned increasingly to Italian and Spanish romances or sought the complexities of the allegorical found in works like Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*. Extant library catalogues from clerical institutions and households provide some sense of what has been lost, but they cannot account for everything, making it, in turn, difficult to know how much of that material might have consisted of romances of the linguistic or genre-based variety. Furthermore, those manuscripts and printed books that have survived must also be held somewhat suspect since there is always the possibility that they have been rearranged and reorganized. The seventeenth-century book collector Sir Robert Cotton, for example, is known to have reordered the manuscripts that entered his collection. As noted above, the greater likelihood of survival among manuscripts kept in clerical institutions must also be taken into consideration. Lastly, one

runs the risk of reading too much into the importance of the manuscripts to the exclusion of other types of evidence, especially close-reading. Although the manuscripts in which romances circulated in the Middle Ages may offer some sense of generic identity in relation to the texts within a given codicological context, their inscription of genre can never be taken as a substitute for the way in which the contents of a particular text inscribe that genre.

Bearing these caveats in mind, the extant manuscripts and printed books do provide a way of mapping genre over time as a text is copied into multiple manuscripts and allow insight into how a text may have been read. The juxtaposition or grouping of certain items can point to the compiler’s sense of what texts belonged together, which can then be mapped onto our own notions of generic categories. Although some manuscripts were compiled piecemeal (that is, by copying whatever exemplars happened to be at hand and according to no overarching system of organization), others show evidence of having been purposely arranged with meaningful subdivisions responding to a variety of considerations, including practical issues such as to how many items may be accommodated within a booklet or quire. Insular multilingual miscellanies like Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86, Cambridge, Trinity College B.14.39, and London, British Library, Arundel 292, group their contents according to language. The compilation of vernacular texts together in trilingual miscellanies provides a sense of the concept of vernacularity and of “romance” as a linguistic genre. Other manuscripts may be organized by place. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 329 contains mostly items relating in some way to Thetford Priory in Norfolk, including a Latin version of the Waltheof legend similar to that

46 Such is often the case for commonplace books.

found in the *Roman de Waldef* discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation; an excerpt from William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* concerned with the translations of the bishoprics of Wells, Chester, and Thetford; a description of a Lady Chapel built at Thetford; an account of a relic found at Thetford Priory; and a history of the priory by Geoffrey de Rocherio.48

In addition to organizational schemes based on language, theme, the items in manuscripts are sometimes arranged according to similar contents, that is, to what we, as modern scholars, might refer to in hindsight as literary genre, presenting a situation in which the horizon of expectations for a given text at the moment of its compilation can be determined. Items extant in several manuscripts, in turn, can reveal the shifting generic identities of a single item and demonstrate the fluidity of genre as a temporary formal structure subject to change as a text is read and copied anew. The manuscripts of *Guy of Warwick*, the Middle English descendant of the French romance discussed in chapter 3, record the shifting generic identity of the hybrid poem. For example, Cambridge University Library, Ff.II.38, a mid-fifteenth-century manuscript, contains three distinct groupings of texts.49 Items 1-19, as they are currently bound, comprise didactic religious texts; items 20-33 are saints’ lives and exempla; and items 34-43 are romances.50 This final grouping suggests the similarities the compiler observed between its items

48 For a description and digital reproduction of this manuscript, see Parker Library on the Web. Corpus Christi College and Stanford University Libraries. 28 May 2013. 9 March 2014. [http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/](http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/). The only item that does not make reference to Thetford is a chronicle covering the Incarnation to 1399.

49 For a description of this manuscript, see Gisela Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1976) 94-99. The first two quires, comprising items 1-6, had formerly been misbound.

50 The romances found in the manuscript are: *The Earl of Toulouse, Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Triamour*, the northern *Octavian, Bevis of Hampton, Guy of Warwick, Le Bone Florence of Rome, Robert of Sicily*, and *Sir Degare*. This grouping of texts also includes a copy of *The Seven Sages of Rome*, which as a collection of moral exempla is
and establishes a clear sense of their categorization as romances despite accidentals of plot, character, and setting. Within this subgrouping, the codicological juxtaposition of *Guy of Warwick*, *Le Bone Florence*, and *Robert of Sicily* reflects the incorporation of religious and hagiographic elements within these three texts and the recognition that they form a distinctive kind of romance, separate from the hagiographical texts placed elsewhere.

Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates’ MS 19.2.1, more commonly known as the Auchinleck manuscript, also includes a copy of the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*, but reads the genre of the poem differently.\(^51\) The Auchinleck manuscript contains many romances and its compilation of *Guy of Warwick* with *Reinbrun, Bevis of Hampton,* and *Arthur and Merlin* alongside one another points to a clear sense of the similarity of these poems as a generic unit in a manuscript copied in the 1330s, at least one hundred years before CUL Ff.II.38.\(^52\) But whereas the later manuscript registers the religious leanings of the poem’s account of the knight turned pilgrim warrior, the Auchinleck manuscript’s juxtaposition of *Guy of Warwick* with these texts and following a copy of the Battle Abbey Roll, a list of the barons who purportedly fought during the Battle of Hastings, codifies the poem as one part in a character-history of England, alongside the stories of other English heroes Bevis, Arthur, and Guy’s son Reinbrun. The

generally omitted from discussions of romances (see, e.g., Mehl 254), but its frame story and some of its individual tales, like *Vaticinium*, are themselves romances.

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\(^51\) For a description of this manuscript, see Guddat-Figge 121-26. An online facsimile is available at [http://auchinleck.nls.uk/](http://auchinleck.nls.uk/).

emphasis upon Guy’s status as an English hero, at the expense of the hagiographic potential of his narrative, is further demonstrated by the fact that Guy of Warwick has not been copied into a booklet with Amis and Amiloun and The King of Tars, two other romances with religious elements also found in the Auchinleck manuscript. These other hybrid romance-religious texts appear in the first section of the manuscript alongside saints’ lives, biblical, and other religious texts, including the Speculum Guy of Warwick, a verse homily in which the knight Guy receives spiritual guidance. The compilation of these texts in different codicological units suggests that the compiler did not seek to underscore the relationship between them or the religious leanings of Guy of Warwick. Instead, the manuscript highlights the poem’s historical significance. As the comparison of the two manuscript contexts for the Middle English Guy of Warwick shows, manuscripts provide a way of “measuring” the genre of a text both within a single instance and over time, recording its fluctuations as a text is re-codified.

By combining this codicological approach with close reading, this thesis examines how the treatment of religious themes in insular romance – whether as saints’ lives, tales of penitential conversion, divinely-ordained chivalric success, or of martial violence in defense of the Christian faith and its holy relics – developed over time and how these changes demonstrate the ever-ongoing reconfiguration of romance as a linguistic and literary genre and its potential as a narrative form that reflects the hopes, anxieties, and realities of its audience. In its assessment of the breadth of “romance” in England from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, this

53 Amis and Amiloun is a story of friendship tested that results in the sacrifice of children to cure leprosy and their subsequent resurrection. The King of Tars is a story of conversion in which the union of a Saracen king and his Christian wife produces a formless mass that takes on human form when it is baptized, resulting in the king’s conversion.

dissertation also discusses both French and English works. Much of the rationale for selecting the French texts examined in this thesis arises from an attempt to query what constitutes the French literature of medieval England. In doing so, my dissertation takes inspiration from the French of England Project based at Fordham University, which strives to bring attention to the oft-neglected body of French literature produced in England during the Middle Ages, as well as the work of Ardis Butterfield, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, and Thelma Fenster, among others. Generally seen as too English for French departments and too French for English departments, these recent scholarly projects problematize traditional boundaries deriving from the linguo-nationalist nature of university departments to resituate the field within a francophone world that extends beyond the borders of modern France to encompass the varieties of French spoken and written throughout the medieval world – from the Champenois romances of Chrétien de Troyes to the Florentine Brunetto Latini’s Livres dou Trésor in Picard, from Marco Polo’s Divisament dou Monde in Franco-Venetian to the Anglo-French of John Gower’s Miroir de l’Omm.

In line with this inclusive approach, this dissertation examines both works associated with England and the works of authors who straddle the divide between England and continental France. The Norman Wace writes in a dialect that reinforces his connection to the Continent, but his subject matter in the Roman de Brut and Roman de Rou, his connection with the Angevin King Henry II, who awarded him a prebend at Bayeux, and the circulation of his opera in England (as the extant manuscript witnesses testify) link him intertextually, socially, and codicologically with the world in which insular French was written and spoken. Likewise, Marie

de France, whose *Vie seinte Audree* and *Espurgatoire Seint Patriz* are discussed in Chapter 2, writes in a French dialect with features prevalent in Anglo-Norman, but by styling herself as “de France” connects herself explicitly to the Continent.\(^{56}\) However, her work on insular subjects, including the Arthurian *lais*, a life of an English saint, and an account of an Irish pilgrimage site; the manuscripts containing her works; and her connection to Henry II link Marie to the British Isles. Although Wace and Marie de France are sometimes associated with the Continent, their works and the literary milieu in which they wrote warrant their consideration as part of the Anglo-French tradition as much as the anonymous romances about English heroes written in insular French that are examined in Chapter 3. These Continental and insular works demonstrate the diversity of Frenches circulating in England during the Middle Ages and the fluidity of the French of England as a category, the permeable boundaries of which share the term romance’s looseness of definition. This same diversity and permeability extends to the final chapter of this dissertation which shifts gears linguistically in its discussion of the Middle English Charlemagne romances. These texts are written in English, but their subject – the Matter of France, the deeds of Charlemagne and his Peers – connects them to Continental French literary traditions. As such, although they are not written in French, there is a sense in which this body of texts intertextually forms part of the French of England. The translation and appropriation of these French-aligned works attests to a growing sense of English as a vernacular “romance” in its own right. Whether written in French or English, the texts discussed in this dissertation attest to the distinctive and diverse linguistic patchwork that characterizes England in the Middle Ages. England may be located on the edge of Europe, but its language and literature nevertheless position it within the literary and linguistic networks of medieval Europe.

This dissertation begins with a broad definition of romance that encompasses not only those works that have traditionally been categorized generically as romances, but also the linguistic origins of the term, in which the “romance” genre comprised texts that had been translated from Latin into French, regardless of their narrative type. Doing so underscores the role translation plays in the reinscription of the Latin text for a new audience and the development of romance as a literary genre. By studying the “romancing” of the text, the mechanics of the translation process will reveal what steps were taken to adapt Latin sources for vernacular audiences. The first and second chapters of this dissertation focus upon the French verse translations made by Wace and Marie de France of prose Latin saints’ lives and religious literature. In the first chapter, I examine the alterations made by Wace in the little-studied Vie de Sainte Marguerite, Conception Nostre Dame, and Vie de Saint Nicolas to reveal the changes he makes to his Latin sources to accommodate his non-latinate audience. As a writer whose quasi-historical Roman de Brut provides the jumping-off point for the rise of romance in the latter half of the twelfth century, Wace’s work is a crucial window upon an important time in the conceptualization of romance as both a process of translation and as a literary genre associated with courtly culture. In these linguistic romances, we can see the same processes of adaptation at work in later hagiographical romances.

The second chapter expands the first chapter’s discussion of issues of translation and the “romancing” of Latin religious literature in its study of two works attributed to Marie de France,

La Vie Seinte Audree and L’Espurgatoire Seint Patriz. 58 Both texts are informed by the process of adaptation Marie outlines in the prologue to the Lais. The additions and alterations she makes to the Liber Eliensis (or a text similar to it) and the Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii are framed as efforts to “gloser la lettre” (“gloss the writing,” 15) of her sources and supply “le surplus” (16) necessary to make them comprehensible to her non-latinate audience. 59 In the Vie Seinte Audree, this surplus intertextually links the vita to the Lais and allays the skepticism of the doubtful reader by providing more detailed accounts of Audrey’s miracles. In the Espurgatoire Seint Patriz, the surplus is inscribed in Marie’s greater emphasis upon the lay status of Owein the knight-protagonist and the connection she draws between Owein and herself as fellow translators and penitents. For Marie, translation provides a means of breaking open a Latin source to create a vernacular literary space in which the non-latinate may access what had formerly been inaccessible to them in Latin, which, in turn, permits the blending of religious and romance literature. In this way, translation is likened to a process of compunction that inspires devotion in its audience through the pricking and perforation of the source text. As with Wace’s saints’ lives, Marie’s Vie Seinte Audree and Espurgatoire Seint Patriz demonstrate how writers strove to accommodate the audiences inscribed within their translations through the appropriation of elements associated with the genre of romance. Writing slightly later than Wace, Marie’s works show the greater influence of romance and make greater use of the liberties presented by the “romancing” process. Both extant in single-witness manuscripts, the Vie Seinte Audree and Espurgatoire Seint Patriz are confirmed in their identities as French vernacular texts

by their codicological neighbors. The manuscripts also confirm the categorization of the Vie Seinte Audree as a saint’s life and suggest the hybrid character of the Espurgatoire Seint Patriz.

While the first two chapters focus upon the ways in which hagiographic texts are “romanced” through the process of translation into the vernacular in hagiographic and religious works by two named Continental authors of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Chapters 3 and 4 shift to examine the translation of hagiographic elements in the insular romance tradition of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. The third chapter focuses on three French of England romances: the Roman de Horn, Roman de Waldef, and Gui de Warewic. All three texts recount the stories of English heroes in pre-Conquest England using hagiographic elements to augment their depictions. This chapter attempts to discern what these texts can reveal about the interplay of the genres of romance and hagiography and the development of the romance genre in England. In the Roman de Horn, the titular hero is portrayed as the human enactor of God’s will on earth. Those things that make him the perfect knight – his beauty, prowess, and courtliness – are extensions of his divinely favored status. In the Roman de Waldef, an otherwise rather godless text casts judgment on Guiac, one of Waldef’s sons, for his boundless zeal for conquest, leading to his departure upon a penitential pilgrimage from which, I argue, he never returns. This departure of the Roman de Waldef into a conversion story acts as a narrative suppressant that brings Guiac’s part in the romance to an end, but the poem finds its romance resolution in the story of the other brother Gudlac. Gui de Warewic borrows the penitential exile motif from the Roman de Waldef and uses it as a tool for narrative profusion that becomes a

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catalyst for the hero Gui’s further adventures on the Continent as a kind of pilgrim-warrior. This chapter demonstrates the diverse ways in which hagiographic elements are incorporated and the extent to which the interplay between romance and hagiography contributes to the didactic functions of these texts.

The fourth and final chapter of this dissertation examines the appropriation of hagiographic and other religious elements in the Middle English Charlemagne romances derived from the *chanson de geste Fierabras*, namely the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras*, the Fillingham *Firumbras*, and the *Sultan of Babylon*.61 These romances feature the theft of the relics of Christ’s Passion by Fierabras, a pagan Saracen who eventually converts to Christianity and allies himself with the Twelve Peers of France. These texts have generally been excluded from discussions of hagiographic romances because they do not feature characters who possess saint-like qualities like those discussed in the third chapter. However, I propose that the relics within the texts perform a crucial role in their own right, warranting the discussion of these texts as reliquary romances. This chapter also examines the implications of adapting French sources and rendering the text in a new vernacular, a new “romance,” at a time when England and France were entrenched in the Hundred Years War, signaling the arrival of English as a vernacular “romance” in its own right. These poems provide a performance space for the relics in which their veracity and power can be witnessed and serve as textual reliquaries that can be visited visually or aurally by their audiences. This discussion brings to the forefront the hybridity of romance as a genre

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and a linguistic field. It may entertain with stories of knights, but also serves as an object of devotion and tool for religious instruction.
Chapter 1
Romancing the *Vita* in Wace’s Hagiographical Works

Near the conclusion of the first section of Wace’s *Conception Nostre Dame*, Elsin, an English abbot sent by William the Conqueror to broker peace with the Danish king, sails back to England having successfully completed his diplomatic mission and averted potential war. However, the delivery of this good news to William is threatened when a storm rises up and jeopardizes the lives of those aboard the ship, who beseech God and pray to the Virgin Mary. An angel appears in response to their prayers and promises to quell the storm on the condition that Elsin promote the celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in England. He agrees to do so, but expresses some hesitation about what liturgy he should follow. The angel responds:

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“Tot cel de la nativeté
Qui est oit jorz dedenz Setembre,
Cel meïsme fai en Decembre,
Tot le servise sanz muance
Fors sol le non de la naissance.
La u nativité dit l’on,
Iluec diras conception.” (140-46)
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“Everything pertaining to the Nativity, which is the eighth day in September, do the same thing in December, that is, the complete service without any changes,
except for the word ‘nativity.’ Wherever one says ‘nativity,’ you will say ‘conception’ instead.”

The angel, the one unmoving performer in a scene filled with darkening clouds, crashing waves, and violent gusts of wind proposes an easy solution: “sanz muance” (“without change”), the service for the feast of the Immaculate Conception should follow that of Mary’s Nativity. The only alteration is a linguistic one, the substitution of the word “conception” for “nativité.” The resulting similarity positions these feasts as liturgical mirrors of one another, while also reinforcing the causal link between the events being commemorated. The Nativity would not be possible without the Immaculate Conception. Whatever else might be said about the implications of this one-liturgy-fits-all approach to the translation of one religious rite onto another, the translation of a text from one language into another is rarely so simple or straightforward. Each word in the original text could conceivably be replaced with a word similar in meaning in the language of the translation, but the resulting string of words approximating the original would mean nothing because this verbal exchange cannot occur without some loss or gain in register. Far from creating a mirror image of the original text, such a process of translation might maintain the outward form of the original – the sentence structure, the use of verse or prose, etc. – but would be rendered incomprehensible in the translated language. Instead, a successful translation casts the original text into an idiom that can be understood by its intended audience to produce a work that better captures the impression of the original, albeit at the expense of word-for-word faithfulness.

Wace’s adaptation and translation of his Latin sources for the *Conception Nostre Dame*, in which this miracle appears, as well as his other hagiographical works the *Vie de Sainte*
Marguerite and Vie de Saint Nicolas,\(^2\) attest to the transformation often inherent in the process of translation. His saints’ lives may not offer mirror images of their source material, but Wace, acting as a clerkly mediator, does convey their content meaningfully to his non-latinate audiences. Study of Wace’s translation process has generally focused on his later histories, the Roman de Brut and Roman de Rou, but scholars like Gioia Paradisi and Françoise Le Saux have increasingly turned to Wace’s earlier hagiographical works for the perspective they offer on the treatment of his sources in order to reframe discussion to include his entire corpus.\(^3\) However, such discussions of his adaptation methods have generally neglected Wace’s pivotal position in the development of the romance genre. Writing in the middle of the twelfth century, a time that witnesses the rise of vernacular romance, first through the French adaptations of classical material with the romans d’antiquité and the later flowerings of Chrétien de Troyes’ Arthurian romances, Wace applies rhetorical techniques in adapting his Latin sources for a vernacular audience that anticipate the features, themes, and concerns that would become typical of the romance genre as it developed, such as vivid descriptions, doubling and interlace, the theme of separation and reunion, and the incorporation of elements associated with courtly society. Maureen Boulton has written about the similarity of techniques found in romances and Wace’s Conception Nostre Dame, but neglects his other early works.\(^4\) Analysis of his entire

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\(^{2}\) In the Roman de Rou, Wace notes: “[D]e romanz faire m’entremis, / mult en escris e mult en fis” (“I busied myself with composing vernacular works. I wrote and made very many,” 3.5311-12). It is possible that Wace made other translations of this sort, but they are no longer extant. See A.J. Holden, ed. Le Roman de Rou de Wace, 3 vols. (Paris: Picard, 1970).


hagiographical corpus, including his lives of Margaret and Nicholas, reveals further the extent to which these translation techniques inform romance as a genre in their aim to appeal to the needs of a vernacular and sometimes non-clerical audience, not only in terms of the use of descriptions and dialogues and rhetorical techniques, like amplification and repetition noted by Boulton, but also larger structural features, like doubling and interlace, and the use of courtly language and imagery. Wace’s alterations serve to highlight the visual elements of his Latin source material. Such similarities point to the fluidity between hagiography and romance at a crucial juncture in the development of romance and an effort to appeal especially to an audience that likely would have listened to these texts being read rather than reading them themselves. Wace’s translations of his Latin sources, as such, function as romances in the linguistic sense by virtue of their translation into the French vernacular, but also as forerunners of the romance genre that would flourish in the latter half of the twelfth century.

Although Wace’s hagiographic works predate the romans d’antiquité, his works imply a familiarity with stylistic and content elements that would become associated with romance. Before moving on to discuss Wace’s vitae, however, it is worth looking to see what his other works may reveal about how he may have learned about these “romance” elements. Wace’s Roman de Brut suggests a possible source for Wace’s familiarity with these elements and provides a quick overview of his use of them. His Roman de Brut, completed in 1155, as a translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae, devotes a considerable portion of its narrative to King Arthur, whose reign would provide the setting for the works of many early romances, including those of Chrétien de Troyes. The fantastic elements, like

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Arthur’s confrontation with the giant of Mont Saint Michel, the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death, and “la merveille” (“the wonder,” 9585) of the Severn and Loch Lomond, tinge the latter half of Wace’s history with the sort of fantastic events that would constitute the mainstay of romance narratives. Wace expresses doubts about the veracity of some of these marvelous elements, most notably the possibility of Arthur’s return in the Roman de Brut and the stories told about the presence of fairies in the forest of Brocéliande in the Roman de Rou (3.6373-98), but his comments point to his familiarity with an existing tradition of romance-like tales that circulated orally or, if written down, have not survived. In the Roman de Brut, he notes that the Bretons tell “mainte fable” (“many stories,” 9752) about Arthur’s Round Table and that the years of the Pax Arthuriana inspired the “cunteü[r[s]” (“storytellers,” 9795). In the Roman de Rou, Wace also makes references to the tales of the Bretons (3.6374). Although he does not make explicit reference to the Bretons and their tales in his earlier hagiographical works, it seems possible that similar qualities may have also informed their adaptation.

Wace likewise uses chivalric and courtly elements in his narratives, important facets of the ethos that informs the narrative impulses of romance. In the Roman de Brut, the young King Arthur possesses qualities befitting a nobleman like curteisie, noblesce, vertu, and largesce (9031-32), as well as concern for the honor of one’s lineage (9149-50, 9318-22). Noble ladies, like Guenevere, are “curteise e gent” (“courteous and noble,” 9647). In the description of Arthur’s coronation feast, Wace alludes to the connection the romance ethos makes between chivalric prowess and love. No knight could win the love of a “curteise dame” (“courteous woman,” 10514) without proving himself three times in chivalric feats. The link this observation proposes anticipates the motivations underlying the quest-based narratives of romance in which the knight rides forth on a quest in order to test his prowess and earn the admiration of others,
especially ladies. In Wace’s commentary on the festivities can be discerned echoes of Enide’s
despair over Erec’s neglect of his knighthood in the earliest of Chrétien de Troyes’ romances.

The “imagistic nature” of romance is evident in the vivid description of courtly rituals in
Arthur’s coronation feast, which bring the celebration to life. The detailed account of the
extravagant festivities, including the procession of king and queen, the narratorial delight in the
minutiae and lavishness of the ceremony, the armor and dress worn by the knights and ladies,
and the games played by the knights with the ladies watching from atop the walls, could have
been as easily found in any romance. Wace inherits these romance-like elements from his source,
the Historia Regum Britanniae, but he also expands upon these descriptions, adding to the vivid
picture that the “imagistic nature” of romance as a genre seeks. For instance, he adds a lengthy
account of the preparations for the feast and a behind-the-scenes look at the actions of the
servants and other underlings as guests arrive for the coronation (10337-358). The additional
details about the tapestries hung in the lodgings, the tents erected, the cloaks stowed away, and
the squires seeing to the care of the horses communicates in a very visual way the frenetic pace
of the court in the wake of this momentous event in a way that the Latin source does not. This
addition comprises an act of descriptio like the rhetorical arts outlined and explained in texts
such as Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s Poetria Nova, John of Garland’s De arte prosaica, metrica, et
Arithmica, and Matthew of Vendôme’s Ars Versificatoria. According to Vinsauf, descriptio

8 Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Poetria Nova, trans. Margaret F. Nims, Rev. ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval
Studies, 2010); Matthew of Vendôme, Ars Versificatoria, Mathei Vindocinensispera, ed. Franco Munari, vol. 3
(Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1977-).
“presents consequences and the eventualities that can ensue from a given situation. It gives a full and lucid account with a certain dignity of presentation.”⁹ In turn, the use of description lends greater realism to a scene. Wace’s alteration to his source offers a more comprehensive and visualizable account of the preparations for the feast that effectively illustrates the chaos that arises from the confluence of so many people upon a single location. It also importantly constitutes an alteration of the sort associated with the genre of romance and its compositional impulse towards description.

Wace’s familiarity with these rhetorical techniques likely arose from his education, concerning which he makes several references in the Roman de Rou. As with so many medieval authors, we know relatively little about Wace. His date of birth has been estimated as falling somewhere between 1090 and 1110, though a later date seems more likely given evidence that Wace may have been writing at least until the mid-1170s.¹⁰ Most of what we know about Wace derives from his own self-referential comments. The most extensive of these appears in Part III of the Roman de Rou (3.5299-318). Born on the island of Jersey, off the coast of northwestern France, he was brought at a young age to Caen where he was placed in school.¹¹ He continued his studies “en France,” which likely means that he went to Paris, already a flourishing center of learning, where he would have become a maistre and gained license to teach. He eventually

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⁹ Vinsauf 55.

¹⁰ Gaston Paris proposes 1100 as Wace’s date of birth (Review of Maistre Wace’s Roman de Rou et des ducs de Normandie, by Hugo Andresen, Romania 9 (1880): 594), while A.J. Holden gives 1110 (Le Roman de Rou de Wace 3.15). Glyn S. Burgess suggest the latter spectrum of dates on the evidence that Wace appears to have been writing at least until the mid-1170s (The History of the Norman People: Wace’s Roman de Rou, trans. Glyn S. Burgess (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004) xiii).

¹¹ Glyn Burgess suggests that Wace may have gone to Caen because Jersey did not have any suitable places for educating young boys.
returned to Caen and lived there for some time, composing works in the vernacular. At some unspecified later date, Henry II gave Wace a prebend at Bayeux and it appears that he still held this post when he was writing (3.171-74, 3.5313-18). Wace notes earlier in Book III that he became a *clerc lisant* in Caen and that he held this office during the reigns of three Henrys, namely Henry I, Henry II, and Henry the Young King (3.179-80). This suggests that he must have been back in Caen before Henry I’s death in 1135, but the exact duties of a *clerc lisant* are unclear. Translated literally, it means a reading cleric, so Wace may have used the term as a way of designating himself as a learned cleric. Glyn Burgess and others have argued that a *clerc lisant* was a particular post which involved specific responsibilities, such as “writing, reading aloud (perhaps at mealtimes), composing, acting as a notary, studying, teaching and interpreting texts.”

Wace’s education and experience as a *clerc lisant*, in conjunction with his connections to the Angevin court, suggest the factors that contributed to the techniques underlying his translation process. His use of courtly elements, his familiarity with tales of the fantastic, both in his Latin sources and oral vernacular traditions, and his application of the rhetorical arts in the adaptation of his sources comprise the kinds of aspects that would become associated with romance in time and speak to pervading trends of the period that would come together and flourish in romance. These same elements appear not only in the *Roman de Brut*, in which the

12 In the *Roman de Rou*, Wace asserts: “a Chaem longues conversai, / de romanz faire m’entremis, / mult en escris e mult en fis” (“I lived for a long time at Caen and composed works in the vernacular. I wrote and composed a great deal” 3.5310-12). Wace also refers earlier in the *Roman de Rou* to his time spent composing texts “en romanz,” noting that he used to “Faire rumanz e serventeis” (3.153).

tendencies towards romance are more explicit, but also in Wace’s hagiographic works, evidence of his engagement with these literary tendencies and his effort to accommodate the needs and desires of the audiences for whom he wrote in adapting his Latin sources. The incorporation of this same permutation of “romance” elements in Wace’s earlier hagiographic works lends a romance air to these religious vitae, blending the boundary between romance and hagiography, just as their presence in Wace’s historical texts and the Roman de Brut, in particular, allows romance and history to intertwine.

La Vie de Sainte Marguerite

Written between 1130 and 1140, Wace’s earliest extant work, the Vie de Sainte Marguerite, also has the distinction of being the earliest French verse life of Saint Margaret and one of the earliest saints’ lives in the French vernacular. It describes the passion and death of the fourth-century virgin martyr Margaret of Antioch who, after rejecting the amatory advances of the pagan Roman governor, was imprisoned and made to suffer various torments before being beheaded. In the vita’s most memorable scene, Margaret is swallowed by a dragon during her imprisonment, but escapes from its belly safe and sound through God’s intervention. The cult of Saint Margaret rose in popularity during the twelfth century and enjoyed particular devotion in

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England. Written during this period, Wace’s *vie* of the saint attests to this devotional trend and the accompanying rise in hagiographical accounts, especially in the vernacular, as the Latin accounts were translated for the benefit of a wider audience that included clergy and laity alike. Hans-Erich Keller has even suggested that his *Marguerite* may have been written at the request of a Norman lord who held lands in England, given the prevalence of the English cult.

In composing his vernacular *Vie de Sainte Marguerite*, possibly for a lay audience if Keller’s hypothesis is true, Wace uses two distinct Latin versions of the *vita*. He relies primarily upon the Mombritius version, named for Bonino Mombrizio, who published the *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum*, a fifteenth-century collection of saints’ lives. Elizabeth Francis has shown that he supplements the Mombritius with details from a *vita* preserved in London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A.VIII and referred to henceforth as the Caligula version, which shares many similarities with the Mombritius. Wace relies upon these Latin versions to provide the general framework for his own vernacular *vie* and lend legitimacy to his retelling, but he also uses the opportunity for innovation provided by the space of translation to deviate from his Latin sources.

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16 The first vernacular version of Margaret’s life was composed in English around the year 1000. See *The Old English Lives of Saint Margaret*, ed. Mary Clayton and Hugh Magennis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). In addition to the three Old English *vitae*, the English Margaret tradition includes several Middle English lives, including *Meidan Margerete* from first part of the thirteenth century and two lives by Osbern Bokenham and John Lydgate. Over 200 churches were dedicated to Saint Margaret, including the parish church erected in the twelfth century beside Westminster Abbey (David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 344-45). On the cult of Margaret in England, see also Francis, “A Hitherto Unprinted Version” 105; and Gerrit Gijsbertus van den Andel, *Die Margarettalegende in ihren mittelalterlichen Versionen: Eine vergleichende Studie* (Groningen: P. Noordhoff, 1933) 102-03.

17 By the end of the thirteenth century, at least seven verse *vitae* in Anglo-Norman had been written. For a detailed listing of the French verse and prose lives of Saint Margaret, see Keller, *La Vie de Sainte Marguerite* 13-21.


with changes that resemble qualities found in the romances that developed in the latter half of the twelfth century. He quickens the pace of the narrative through omissions that heighten the most visual aspects of Margaret’s passion in keeping with the imagistic nature of romance. Wace also incorporates details relating to courtly culture that cast Margaret as both romance heroine and questing knight. In turn, Wace’s translation “de latin en romanzt” (“from Latin into French,” 739) forges a greater connection between the saint and the audience by creating a clear and visual account of Margaret’s passion that resembles secular literature in its use of courtly imagery, but situates them in a spiritual context that subverts the values traditionally associated with them.

Omission and abbreviation form a key part of Wace’s process of translation and contribute to the Marguerite’s quickened pacing, as is evident from its beginning, which foregrounds Margaret herself as the focus of the vita. The Mombritius version of Margaret’s vita begins with a lengthy introductory section detailing the author Theodimus’ composition process and his instructions to his audience about how they should interact with his vita. It takes particular care to position Theodimus as a clerkly figure whose consultation of ancient “cartas” (“records,” 2-12) authorizes him to instruct his audience of “viri et virgines” (“men and women”). While establishing the authority of the narrator, this preface delays the account of Margaret’s life and passion. The Marguerite, on the other hand, begins with a brief dedication of the text for the honor and with the help of God (1) before turning to the subject of its vita. Trimmed of the Latin source’s introductory digression, the vernacular text instead establishes itself as a story “d’une dameisele saintisme” (“about a very holy young lady,” 3) and provides a

20 The Latin text is quoted from Elizabeth A. Francis, ed. La vie de Sainte Marguerite by page number and then by line number.
quick summary of her life before beginning the narrative proper. As such, Margaret becomes foregrounded as the focus of the vita from the outset and, as Françoise Le Saux notes, “her merit is therefore explicit from the outset.”

Other omissions likewise contribute to the quickened pace of the French Marguerite in order to speed the narrative and highlight the most visual aspects of Margaret’s passio, particularly her confrontation with the dragon in her prison cell. For example, Wace collapses the Roman prefect Olimbrius’ initial encounter with Margaret and her subsequent imprisonment and interrogation so that they occur on a single day. In the Latin, the prefect has Margaret placed in jail after their first meeting, and formally brings her to trial the following day (10.96-103). This abbreviated sequence of events makes torture part of her interaction with the prefect from the beginning and rushes the action of the poem towards the episode with the dragon by delaying Margaret’s imprisonment until after she has been interrogated.

This desire to increase the momentum of the story also appears in the abbreviation of Margaret’s often lengthy prayers, including the prayer of thanksgiving she utters after her rescue from the dragon’s belly. Margaret describes the episode, enumerating what she saw. In the Latin, the account of this mystical vision is rather extensive and is framed by a series of sense-filled images introduced by the phrases video or vidi (“I see”; “I saw”). These include her bright faith; the joy of her soul; the defeated dragon; rotten odors retreating from her; the gluttonous dragon trampled; rottenness and poison retreating; the dragon’s madness at rest; the bright cross;

21 See ll. 67-80; Le Saux, A Companion to Wace 18.

22 Wace greatly abbreviates Margaret’s prayer that she not be harmed by the provost and his men (8.64-76), eliminating especially the comparisons she makes between her situation and that of trapped animals. Cf. also Latin 22.204-13 and 284-96; 7-8, 21-22, 282-94, 26-27, 345-60.
her body permeated by a sweet odor; the approach of holy oil; and the descent of a dove (26.256-66). Wace’s *Marguerite* offers a prayer stripped of the panoply of sights and smells found in the Latin: “La croiz Jhesu vei reluisant, / Sur mei bunes odurs metant. / La columbe est del Ciel venue” (“I see Jesus’ cross shining, showering me with good fragrances. The dove came from Heaven,” 351-53). All that remains are the shining cross, the dove, and the odor of sanctity. Though less expansive, the *Marguerite*’s trio of images and smells effectively streamlines the Latin’s extended mystical vision to focus on its most easily visualized and imagined aspects. They provide a sensual touchstone for relating Margaret’s experience without delaying the progression of the story by becoming bogged down in the details of the Latin text.

This abbreviation of the Latin source also importantly diminishes the potential for confusion. An especially telling example of this aspect of Wace’s translation process occurs in the description of the dragon. In the Latin, the dragon is a colorful beast whose body shines with precious metals and stones. Its flesh is gilded in various colors (“variis coloribus deauratis,” 22.218), its beard gold, and its eyes shine like pearls (“oculi eius velud margarite,” 22.219-20). Though it too has a golden beard, the black flesh and snake-like eyes of its French counterpart is rather drab by comparison.23 This change in color palette accomplishes two things. Firstly, the substitution of black uses the symbolic associations of the color to visually align the dragon with the forces of evil. Secondly, the omission of the dragon’s pearl-like eyes removes any resemblance, however distorted, between the dragon and the saintly Margaret, whose name in Latin (*Margarita*) means pearl. By giving the dragon serpent-like eyes, it becomes linked instead

23 Wace’s *Marguerite* is extant in three manuscripts: Tours, Bibliothèque municipale 927 (late thirteenth century); Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal 3516 (mid-thirteenth century); and Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale 1905 (fourteenth century). The dragon in Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale 1905 and Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal 3516 has a “barbe d’or” (71.311). Tours, Bibliothèque municipale 927 does not preserve this line.
to the serpent in the garden of Eden, a creature whose significance Wace’s audience – whether clerical or lay in make-up – would have easily understood. As Le Saux points out, these changes make it “less potentially confusing for the reader or listener who might not have been trained to read these signs properly,” but they also utilize visual imagery to clarify and guide how the text is interpreted. The vernacular translation not only uses symbols to represent the encounter between Margaret and the dragon that a non-latinate audience, unlearned in the subtleties of symbolism, could more easily understand, but also reduces the multivalent imagery of the scene to focus on very particular images. The repetitive, imprecise, and potentially confusing sights and smells evoked in Margaret’s prayer of thanksgiving – What exactly does blooming faith (“fidem meam florentem,” 26.257) look like? – are removed and represented by the most easily imagined: the resplendent cross, the dove of the Holy Spirit (which Wace even glosses as such to ensure that his audience makes the connection), and the odor of sanctity. This alteration directs attention not to the vanquished dragon “in terra prostratum” (“prostrated upon the ground,” 26.258), but to the heavens above. Likewise, the dragon’s black appearance in the Marguerite ostensibly effaces the visibility and memorability of its polychromatic Latin counterpart, yet accomplishes the opposite. Its black hue diminishes the interpretive distraction that the multicolored appearance of the dragon might engender and removes any ambiguity about its signification. The omission of this detail, as with the abbreviation of the prayers, increases the potency of its images and directs the gaze of its audiences in such a way that steers them towards the clarity of the concrete and the easily visualized and away from the vagaries of the mystical. This tendency to distill clear images from the Latin sources for the sake of clarity mirrors the proclivity of romance towards descriptions, sometimes pithy and at other times extended, that

24 Le Saux, A Companion to Wace 21.
stand out and linger in the minds of the audience. Though Wace’s alterations often abbreviate his source material, they, as has been shown, nevertheless highlight the most visual scenes in Margaret’s *passio*. Her encounter with the dragon and her mystical description of it condense elements from the *vita*, but in doing so they resonate all the more.

Alongside omission and emphasis upon the visual, Wace’s efforts to render his Latin sources “en romanz” (“into French,” 739) also include the incorporation of values and imagery associated with courtly culture that would become key facets of medieval romance. Its introductory description notes that Margaret “assez fu gente et assez bele” (“[she] was very noble and very beautiful,” 9). Alluding to the origins of her name, she also “bien resembla margerie / De sa belte e de sa vie” (“she resembles a pearl in her beauty and her decorum,” 13-14). In the Latin *vitae*, her appearance is noted a few times, but no reference is made to her noble origins. Margaret’s nobility forms an integral part of her depiction in the *Marguerite*. Elizabeth A. Francis comments upon this departure from the Latin source material in her edition of the *Marguerite*, but does not elucidate its implications. Margaret comes from a “grant gent” (“distinguished family,” 19) and her father Theodosius is described as a “bien gentils om” (“a very noble man,” 21). As the “patriarche” (25) of Antioch, he holds high rank in the city (“grant onur en la vile aveit,” 26). Margaret’s beauty and pedigree serve as signs of her overall excellence and her status as one blessed by God, but they also endow the saint with qualities that would become associated with romance heroines. Wace attributes similar qualities to Ygerne,

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25 In the Latin *vitae*, Margaret is described as “pulchra” (“beautiful,” 4.38; though this may refer to the nurse) and Olimbrius orders his men to seize Margaret “propter pulchritudinem eius” (“on account of her beauty,” 6.59).

26 Elizabeth A. Francis notes this departure from the Latin as an emphasis on “l’origine noble de la sainte,” but does not extrapolate further about its implications (*La Vie de sainte Marguerite* 57).
Uther Pendragon’s consort, in the *Roman de Brut*, describing her as “curteise, … / e bele e sage” and “de grant parage” (8575-76).

Wace’s additions heighten the romance potential of Margaret’s *passio*, but just as the *Marguerite* reveals this aspect of its narrative, it undercuts the appropriation of these romance elements. Margaret’s beauty attracts a pagan prefect who physically tortures her when she refuses to renounce Christianity, rather than the attentions of a knight equal to her in appearance and upbringing.27 Ever chaste (18), she directs her love not towards some earthly paramour, but to God, whom she serves as “ancele … et espuse” (“handmaiden and bride,” 16). In turn, the ensuing emphasis placed on the superiority of Margaret’s spiritual family undermines the details Wace adds about her lineage. Following the death of her mother, a Christian nurse cares for Margaret and loves her “cume sa fille” (“like her daughter,” 36). The nurse serves as her surrogate family and stands in contrast to Margaret’s pagan father. Although the Latin *vitae* observe that Theodosius found his daughter’s embrace of Christianity “odiosa” (“offensive,” 5.38), Wace portrays Margaret’s rejection of her father’s religion not merely as apostasy, but as an act that legally excludes Margaret from her family. As a result of her new way of life, she cannot receive any part “del sien ne de s’erité” (“of her father’s possessions or property,” 55). Conversion to Christianity provides her with a new family to replace the mother who died and the father who abandons Margaret because of her love for God.28 Margaret becomes instead a daughter of God, who does not abandon her (“tu ne me deguerpir mie,” 290). She breaks the

27 Olimbrius is never described as a knight in the text, but he is accompanied by a “grant compaigne de chevaliers” (“a large company of knights,” 95), a detail that is unique to Wace’s text (Francis, *La Vie de sainte Marguerite* 57).

28 In the Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale 1905 copy, Margaret addresses this abandonment explicitly with reference to her father (287-91). In Tours, Bibliothèque municipale 927, Margaret speaks of family members in general. Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal 3516 does not preserve this discussion.
bonds of noble lineage for an “altre vie” (“another life,” 53) through which she will receive a new inheritance, as the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove reassures Margaret before she is beheaded: “Si recevras ton gueredun / De ceste tue passïun. / El ciel seras beneüree / O les virgenes corunee” (“You will receive your reward because of your suffering. You will be blessed in Heaven and crowned with the virgins,” 681-84). The emphasis on beauty and lineage in Margaret’s description liken her to female characters in early romances, reflecting the values of courtly culture embraced by the audiences of these texts. However, it simultaneously undercuts the romance resonance of these elements by reframing beauty as an indicator of pious chastity and advancing the superiority of spiritual bonds over familial ones and, as such, the *Marguerite* queries the esteem placed in these values.

Wace similarly reframes aspects of chivalric culture in his account of Margaret’s *passio* in order to transform the seemingly passive suffering of the saint into the actions of an embattled warrior. Margaret describes herself as being at war: “Fai que puisse chacier en veie / Mun enemi qui me guerreie” (“Make it so that I can chase away my enemy who wages war against me,” 293-94). The corresponding Latin passage similarly envisions Margaret’s suffering as a physical battle. She voices her fear about an enemy who fights (“pugnat”) against her, but while she prays that she may see this enemy, her counterpart in the French text wants to pursue it. Wace’s vocabulary subtly colors the account so that she becomes not only a soldier of Christ, but a knight of Christ. *Chacier* may generally mean to chase or pursue, yet it also refers to the act of

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29 The Latin reads: “Precipe ut videam inimicum meum, qui mecum pugnat et iudicium offeram contra eum” (“Instruct me so that I may see my enemy who fights against me and offer my judgment against him,” 22.204-06).
hunting, a favorite pursuit of the nobility and an integral part of “la vie chevaleresque.”30 The sign of the cross that Margaret makes before the dragon swallows her functions as a protective gesture of piety, but the vocabulary used also suggests its combative potential. She physically “arms herself with the holy cross” (“de la sainte croiz s’arma,” 334), an action with strong military connotations as Wace’s use of armer elsewhere in reference to combat situations makes clear.31 The Roman de Rou, for instance, employs the word armer to describe William the Conqueror’s preparations for the battle at Val-ès-Dunes and for the siege of Domfont.32 Wace’s phrasing to describe Margaret’s sign of the cross weaponizes the gesture, in effect, turning it into an action that she can wield like a sword against the dragon. The dragon’s demon brother even later reports that she has killed the dragon “par la croiz” (“with the cross,” 373).

Margaret’s punishment upon a “cheval fust” (“a wooden horse,” 521) also demonstrates Wace’s effort to cast the saint as a knight of Christ. The saint is placed on this device after her defeat of the dragon and his demon brother. The torturers remove Margaret’s clothing and light torches around her. Although the Latin vita identified by Elizabeth A. Francis as its likely source does not mention this horse-like implement, other vitae, like that found in the Martyrology of Rabanus Maurus, refer to an “eculeum” as part of Margaret’s passio.33 Wace expands upon this

30 Hans-Erich Keller, Étude Descriptive sur le vocabulaire de Wace, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Romanische Sprachwissenschaft 7 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1953) 169 and 280. Keller categorizes the word under the heading “la vie chevaleresque” and as an expression meaning to “mettre en déroute,” that is, to rout. See also Anglo-Norman Dictionary “chacer,” def. 1.
31 There is a gap in Tours, Bibliothèque municipale 927 at this point, but both Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale 1905 and Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal 3516 preserve this line. See Keller, La Vie de Sainte Marguerite 72-73.
32 Keller, Étude Descriptive sur le vocabulaire de Wace 183 and 262. For the examples from the Roman de Rou, see ll. 3835 (Val-ès-Dunes) and 4459-60 (Domfont).
hagiographic tradition by describing the rack as wooden and by specifying the exact nature of this instrument of torture: “Cheval fust uns turmenz esteit / U on en chevalchuns seeit” (“A wooden horse was a torture device on which one sat as if riding,” 523-24).34 This tendency towards clarity has been noted elsewhere as part of Wace’s process of adapting his source material into the vernacular. His gloss additionally provides another image of Margaret as a miles Christi. Seated astride the wooden rack, she evokes both the suffering saint and the battle-ready knight.35 The image conjured by the verbal pun “cheval fust” links into Wace’s subtle but sustained portrayal of Margaret, which draws similarities between the torments of the saint and the physical endurance of the knight. It also offers a nuanced blend of vocabulary and imagery associated with religious and secular culture that might have been especially appealing to the audience of “seigneurs normands” posited by Hans-Erich Keller.36 This imagery serves as a touchstone for this audience, a means for engaging with the text, but ultimately redirects that affinity away from the court and its earthly values so that they may reframe them in the context of Christian mores.

This portrayal of Margaret as a miles Christi is accompanied by an effort to depict her as a more vulnerable figure than her Latin counterpart. In prayer, she expresses anxiety that fear

34 Wace, The Hagiographical Works 227. By way of comparison, John of Garland defines the word equuleos as “chewaws de fust,” that is, wooden horses, in his Dictionaries, a collection of the Latin names for a wide variety of items, including the mundane, like body parts (1.196), items sold by merchants (1.197), and torture devices. Dictionaries was likely composed in Paris around 1220. The gloss on equleos appears in the late thirteenth/early fourteenth century copy of the Dictionaries found in Dublin, Trinity College 270, fols. 177v-84v. For the text, see Tony Hunt, Teaching and Learning Latin in Thirteenth-Century England, 3 vols. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991) 2:196-203.

35 That the “cheval fust” was not understood as literally being shaped like a horse may be seen in the historiated initial Q on folio 170 of Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale 1905 in which Margaret is depicted sitting on a structure resembling a sawhorse located above a fire and tended to by two men. A reproduction of this image can be seen in Keller, La Vie de Sainte Marguerite 297 (figure 55).

36 Keller, La Vie de Sainte Marguerite 46.
will lead her to lose God’s love (“Que je ne face pur paūr / Chose dunt je perde t’amur,” “That I should do anything for fear that I would lose your love,” 185-86). She feels pain when the torturers dunk her head into a vat of water in the last of the torments before her beheading (“Marguerite a quelque peine,” 546) and pleas to be saved from death, pressing God to break her bonds “anceis que mort m’ait trop suzprise” (“before death has overcome me too much” 562). The Marguerite highlights Margaret’s human frailty. The dove of the Holy Spirit comes not only to crown the girl in approval for her actions, but also to bolster her courage: “Marguerite, esta fermement / La Cumpaigne del Ciel t’atent,” (“Margaret, be strong. The Heavenly Company awaits you,” 569-70). This unique detail, coming just after she has confessed her fear that death will overtake her, underscores a mixture of weakness and triumph in this pivotal moment immediately preceding her decapitation that is unmatched in the Latin versions. Though weak, she knows that she may rely upon omnipotent God, whose power is “partut” (“everywhere,” 549), to see her through. This casts her, in part, as a vulnerable girl remarkable only in the degree of her faith. Le Saux argues that Margaret comes across as “less self-assured” than her Latin counterpart, whose “warlike desire” drives her “to gain her everlasting prize by vanquishing the powers of the devil working through Olimbrius,” but the use of chivalric vocabulary to describe Margaret demonstrates that this very human vulnerability also possesses a fierce, militant edge. What is more, her frailty and dependence upon God importantly render her a more relatable figure and suitable model for Christian faith for the audience of Wace’s text.

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37 It is worth noting that later in the text, Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal 3516 notes that Margaret “onques dolor n’e senti” (574), but Tours, Bibliothèque municipale 927, which is believed to be the closest to Wace’s original text, and Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale 1905 do not contain this detail.

38 Le Saux, A Companion to Wace 20.
Margaret’s weakness in the *Marguerite* forges a stronger connection with the audience by making her seem more human. Wace’s efforts to facilitate and strengthen this relationship between saint and audience are especially evident in Margaret’s final prayer before she is executed, which highlights her intercessory role as a future saint (617-62). Although Wace, as noted above, generally shortens Margaret’s prayers for the sake of condensing and speeding up the narrative, he makes several notable additions to his Latin sources here. As in the Latin sources, she prays that God pardon the sins of anyone who beseeches him in her name and that the Holy Spirit may come down “del ciel” (“from Heaven,” 661) and defend them from the devil, requests that mirror Margaret’s own prayers throughout the *passio*. She also enumerates the various ways in which the faithful may honor her memory and warrant the pardon she requests from God, including reading and listening to her *vita*, purchasing and lighting a candle, or building a chapel, church, or monastery. Wace importantly adds that the pardon for sins be accompanied by confession, suggesting the growing importance of the sacrament in the twelfth century and anticipating the larger role it would play in daily lives following Lateran IV.39 Most significantly, however, Wace expands Margaret’s role as the patron saint of childbirth. In the Latin, Margaret asks that no lame, blind, or mute children be born in the home of whoever builds a chapel, writes or buys a book about her.40 The French *Marguerite* likewise includes a petition that babies be carried to term and that they be born healthy (643-46), which more or less echoes the sentiment of the Latin, as well as an unparalleled prayer for pregnant mothers: “Se feme est en travail d’enfant / E par besuing m’alt reclamant, / Bels sire Deus, / Or fai aïe / E l’un e l’altre

39 “En num de mei lur fai pardun / E venir a confession” (“In my name, may they be pardoned and come to confession,” 657-58).

40 The Latin reads: “et in domo eius non nascatur claudus fians, nec cecus, nec mutus” (“and in his or her house, may there be born no lame, blind, or mute child,” 50.447-48).
met a vie” (“If a woman is in labor and calls upon me loudly in need, good Lord God, help them and keep the one and the other [i.e. mother and child] alive,” 647-50). Whereas the child-related intercessions in the Latin could be applied to anyone, the prayer in the French very specifically targets women and suggests an attempt to broaden devotion to Margaret’s cult.41 Yet for all of this, the life is not directed at women alone, as the address to the “seignur barun” (“lord barons,” 741) at the end of the poem indicates, but rather to a mixed audience of men and women. Wace’s inscribed audience, in this way, embraces a diverse group and advocates for Margaret as an intercessor for anyone who appeals to her in some way, whether as the builder of a church or as the listener or reader of Margaret’s vita (“qui ma vie o bon cuer lira / U de bun cuer l’escultera,” 631-32). Not everyone can afford a major construction project, but anyone can listen to or read a saint’s life. It serves as a reminder that Margaret’s message to the witnesses to her martyrdom are as much her audience as those who hear or read her story later.

Margaret’s expanded intercessory role in the Marguerite draws attention to Wace’s own role as a mediator between the Latin source and his audience. Wace opens up his Latin sources for a new non-latinate audience through translation so that they too may become witnesses to Margaret’s passion and martyrdom and receive the benefits of her parting petitions. As a bridge between Margaret’s life and the French audience and between the Latin text and the French audience, the chant of the angels “Sanctus, sanctus, / Dominus sabaot Deus” (“Holy, Holy Lord, God of Hosts,” 713-14) over Margaret’s lifeless body fittingly mimics the process of transmission at work within the poem and provides an apt paradigm for examining its mechanics. The Sanctus hymn forms part of the prayer ritual performed as part of the consecration of the

41 Le Saux, A Companion 24-25.
Eucharist.\textsuperscript{42} When it is sung by the angels, it in effect sanctifies her broken body, drawing upon Christological imagery, and demonstrates her sanctity as those who touch her are cured of their maladies. The Sanctus importantly is also a part of the Mass sung by the congregation or the choir. They too take part in the consecration of the host and are incorporated into the sacred mystery with the union of the celestial and terrestrial. As such, the appearance of the Sanctus in the \textit{Marguerite} would have been recognizable to a lay audience. Although this phrase also occurs in the Latin \textit{vita}, its appearance in the \textit{Marguerite}, surrounded by French verse, would have been especially striking and emphasizes the way in which Wace’s vernacular text integrates a new audience of witnesses to Margaret’s martyrdom. The changes made to increase the speed of the narrative and highlight its visuality through elements associated with courtly culture and the genre of romance help the \textit{Marguerite}’s audience imagine and realize the event, strengthening the bond that Margaret’s prayer, especially the petition to her \textit{vita}’s readers and listeners, makes with her audiences as observers and members of the Christian community.

This process of romancing the Latin \textit{vita} opens the experience of Margaret’s martyrdom not only to a French-speaking audience but also to Wace as the originator of these changes. The Latin versions conclude with a statement from Theodimus, the self-named author of the \textit{vita}, describing his role in the events following Margaret’s death. Writing in the first person, he recounts how he removed her remains, placed them in a chest he had made, and brought them to Antioch. He also reveals that he had provided her with food and water while she was imprisoned (55.502-10). Found at the end of his \textit{vita}, Theodimus’ itemized summary of his interactions with Margaret, which he assures have been reported “in veritate” (55.510), legitimates his account of

her passion. Wace similarly uses the end of his text to assert its truthfulness. Although he did not personally witness the events he describes, he utilizes Theodimus’ thorough explanation of his involvement to authenticate his translation. To lend further support to his truth-claim, his text even concludes with a pithy literary genealogy for his text: “Ci falt sa vie, ce dit Wace, / Qui de latin en romanz mist / Ce que Theodimus escrist” (“Here ends her vita. Wace says this, who translated into French from Latin what Theodimus wrote,” 738-40). Through this line of descent, Wace inherits the eyewitness authority of his named source. The Latin vita replaces the body of Margaret that Theodimus fed, touched, and moved. Theodimus’ personal contact with Margaret fortifies his narrative, and Wace appropriates that legitimacy for his own retelling, not only for the parts derived from the earlier Latin narrative, but also for the “romanced” additions to it, whether his omissions, alterations, or embellishments. His retelling in turn warrants his own inclusion as a beneficiary of Margaret’s petitions, which extend both to the those who read (or hear) accounts of her life and their authors (“qui ma vie o boen cuer lira / E a lire la convertera” (“who will read my life with good heart and convert it for reading,” 631-32).43 The auctoritas he derives from Theodimus enables him to open up the text, but also to determine how it is interpreted.

43 This is the reading from Tours, Bibliothèque Municipale 927, which is thought to be the closest of the extant manuscripts to Wace’s original.
**La Conception Nostre Dame**

Wace adopts similar techniques to adapt his Latin source material for a vernacular audience in the *Conception Nostre Dame*. Working from a variety of sources, Wace creates a singular linear narrative that, beginning with the conception of the Virgin Mary, recounts the major events of her life until her death and bodily assumption. A miracle of the Virgin Mary opens this vernacular *vita*, ostensibly establishing and legitimating the celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception in thanksgiving for the rescue of William the Conqueror’s peace ambassador and the others aboard his ship from certain death at sea on their way from Denmark to England. However, at the time of its composition, around 1135, the Immaculate Conception had not yet been universally accepted as church doctrine. The feast had been celebrated in pre-Conquest England, but Archbishop Lanfranc quelled its observance, albeit with little success.

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44 I will refer to this text by the abbreviated title *Conception* from this point forward. All quotations from the text will come from *The Conception Nostre Dame of Wace*, ed. William Ray Ashford (Chicago: University of Chicago Libraries, 1933). Other editions of the poem include: *L’Établissement de la fête de la Conception Notre-Dame dite la fête aux Normands par Wace Trouvère anglo-normand du XIIe siècle*, ed. Georges Mancel and Guillaume-Stanislaus Trébutien (Caen: n.p., 1842), which is based on Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français, 24429 and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français, 1527; and *La Vie de la Vierge Marie de Maître Wace, publiée d’après un manuscrit inconnu aux premiers éditeurs, suite de la Vie de Saint George, poème inédit du même trouvère*, ed. Victor Luzarche (Tours: J. Bouserez, 1859), which is based on Tours, Bibliothèque Municipale 927.


since it eventually gained ground in Normandy.\textsuperscript{48} From there, it spread throughout Europe, sparking the ire of no less stalwart an opponent than Bernard of Clairvaux, who vehemently challenged the doctrine. While Bernard and the doctrine’s defenders, like Anselm of Canterbury, debated in Latin, the language of the clerics, Wace’s \textit{Conception} outlines Mary’s role in salvation history in explanation of and in argument for the validity of this feast for those who could not read the Latin, a group that may have included religious and laity alike.\textsuperscript{49}

Towards these ends, Wace’s vernacularization of his source material employs attributes that would later become features of the romance genre. Maureen Boulton has commented on this usage in her examination of the \textit{Conception}. She argues that Wace adapts his sources with “narrative techniques (borrowed from the Latin \textit{artes}) that he later used in his \textit{Roman de Brut} and that became typical of the romance.”\textsuperscript{50} Wace does make use of devices like those Boulton observes – descriptions, dialogues, and amplifications – but, as will be shown, he also employs character-types, themes, and narrative structures, like the lovesick lady and the lone knight and doubling. While the \textit{Conception}’s likely origins as a text of propaganda for the promotion of the theological concept of Mary’s immaculate conception cannot be dismissed and likely contributed to its popularity, circulating wholly or in part in at least twenty manuscripts,\textsuperscript{51} this chapter will

\textsuperscript{48} The feast of the Immaculate Conception because so popular in Normandy during the Middle Ages that it was sometimes referred to as “la Fête aux Normands” (Ashford xii).

\textsuperscript{49} Boulton posits an audience of women religious for the \textit{Conception}, arguing that it may have served as readings for the office of the feast (121). On Henry I as Wace’s potential patron, see Paradisi 50 and Antonia Gransden, “The Cult of St. Mary at Beodericisworth and then in Bury St. Edmunds to c. 1150,” \textit{Journal of Ecclesiastical History} 55 (2004): 648. Françoise Le Saux suggests that Wace’s patron for the piece may have been Henry I, a known proponent of the feast, or Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester (\textit{A Companion to Wace} 49, 50).

\textsuperscript{50} Boulton 110.

\textsuperscript{51} For a list and brief overview of the manuscripts, see Le Saux, \textit{A Companion to Wace} 32-34 and Ashford vii-xi. See also Hans-Erich Keller, “Quelques réflexions sur la poésie hagiographique en ancient français: À propos de
focus on how Wace syncretizes and distills his multiple Latin sources to produce a more or less linear narrative about the Virgin Mary informed by rhetorical techniques that would also feature in romance. Wace’s adaptation techniques, along with his didactic tendency, create a romanced text at once visual and didactic that may linger in the minds of its listeners and readers, contributing to its popularity and inspiring devotion to Mary.

The Conception consists of five sections. The first, generally referred to as the Établissement de la Feste de la Conception Nostre Dame, describes a miracle of the Virgin Mary that took place when the abbot Elsin was sent as an envoy to the king of the Danes in order to prevent him from attacking England in vengeance for the death of Harold Godwinson. Having negotiated peace, the ship carrying Elsin back to England is caught in a storm. As noted above, he calls upon the Virgin Mary to spare him and in thanksgiving, he institutes the celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception (1-178). The second section, the Conception, describes the travails of childless Anne and Joachim, the Immaculate Conception, Mary’s childhood, her betrothal to Joseph, and the Annunciation (179-1110). The third section summarizes the preceding events (1110-28) and provides a transition into the fourth section (the Histoire des Trois Maries), which gives a genealogical discussion of the three daughters born to Anne named Mary, providing particular elucidation of the familial relationship between the Virgin Mary and the disciple John to whom Jesus entrusted his mother at the Crucifixion (1129-292). The Assomption, the fifth and final section, describes the events of Mary’s Assumption, including Mary’s foreknowledge of her death and the assembly of the apostles.

Much of the material found in this hagiographical account of Mary’s life derives from apocryphal stories – although Mary plays a crucial role in the Incarnation, she otherwise stands as a somewhat peripheral figure in the gospels. Beyond the Annunciation (783-878), the Visitation with Elizabeth, and a brief description of Jesus’ words to John on the Cross (1205-21), the bulk of the Conception’s contents do not rehearse material from the gospels or, when it does, it furnishes details that fill in the picture of the canonical account. For example, Mary expresses confusion about the way in which the Archangel Gabriel addresses her in the Bible (Luke 1:29) and in the Conception, but Wace’s text also notes that the angel’s bright appearance does not disturb her because “asez sovent aveit veüz / Angeles” (“she had often seen angels,” 795-96).

Deriving from the De Nativitate Mariae, this detail provides additional insight into Mary’s state of mind as her role in salvation history is revealed. The prevalence of these non-canonical details suggests that the vernacular provides an especially fitting vehicle for this unofficial biblical narrative, especially given the controversial nature of the Immaculate Conception.

As part of his translation and adoption process, Wace highlights the visuality of elements of his sources, a characteristic that is evident from the Conception’s beginning. In the Établissement section, he creates a more vivid description of the rising storm that overtakes Elsin and his companions after they leave Denmark. Wace’s penchant for descriptions of the sea and use of specialized vocabulary relating to sea travel has been well noted and certainly shows itself in full force in the account of the ominous storm. The miracle of Elsin found in the Conception

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52 The description of Mary in the De Nativitate Mariae reads: “Virgo autem quae iam angelicas bene noverat vultus et lumen caeleste insuetum non habebat, neque angelica visione territa neque luminis magnitudine stupefacta, sed in solo eius sermon turbata est” (119). For an edition of this text, see Evangelia Apocrypha, ed. Constantin von Tischendorf, 1876 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1966) 113-21.

53 Cf. Wace’s descriptions of the sea in the Roman de Brut, including the sea that overtakes Gudlac’s ship after he has captured Brenne’s wife, his former lover (2479-92); and the storm-tossed seas that capsize the ships carrying
expands considerably upon its primary Latin source, the *Miraculum de conceptione Sanctae Mariae*, supplementing it with details from *Sermo de conceptione beatae Mariae*. In the Latin miracle story, a “contrarius ventus” rises against the ship, the sea begins to stir, and the people aboard are struck with fear. Wace builds upon this somewhat flat description to create a moving seascape. While the sea also begins to swirl and the wind to rise up in the Latin version, additional details in the French fill in the picture:

Dunc comence mer a mesler,
Undes a creistre, a reverser;
Nercist li ciels, nercist la nue,
Mut fu la mer tost esmeüe.
Li venz vint a la nef devant
O merveillos torment e grant,
De totes parz la mer l’asalt.
Rompent cordes, li tres lor falt. (69-76)

Ursula and her 11,000 virginal companions on their way to Brittany (6041-68); or his knowledge of nautical terminology in his description of Arthur’s voyage across the Channel (11205-238). On Wace’s nautical vocabulary, see Keller, *Étude Descriptive sur le vocabulaire de Wace* 221-26; and Joël Grisward, “À propos du theme descriptif de la tempête chez Wace et chez Thomas d’Angleterre,” *Mélanges de langue et de litterature du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier*, Publications Romanes et françaises 112, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1970) 1:375-89.

54 According to Rita Beyers, the introductory section of the *Conception* derives from a version of the Elsin miracle identified in Albert Poncelet’s “Index miraculorum beatae Virginis Mariae,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 21 (1902): 241-360. For an edition of this text, see “Miraculum de conceptione Sanctae Mariae,” *Patrologia Latina* 159, 323-26. It is reprinted in Mancel and Trébutien’s edition of the *Conception*. The text is sometimes mistakenly attributed to Anselm of Canterbury.

55 The full description in the Latin reads: “contrarius ventus eis surrexit, mare funditus commovit, omnesque qui in navi errant formidine replevit” (“A hostile wind rose against them, the sea became thoroughly agitated, and it filled everyone on the ship with fear,” 323-24).
Then the sea began to swirl; the waves began to grow; the sky and clouds darkened; the sea churned. The wind came in front of the ship with a marvelous and great torrent. The sea attacked it on all sides, causing the ropes to break and the sails to fall.

Much more than some contrary wind, the scene presented here evokes a turbulent sea, its constant movement, and especially the impact it has on the ship and its inhabitants. It depicts especially convincingly the terror of the passengers, expressing their helplessness through the use of parallelism:

L’uns ne set l’autre conseiller,
Ne l’uns ne peut l’autre aider;
Li plus sage poi i saveient,
E li plus prot poi i veeient. (79-82)

The one did know how to counsel the other, nor could the one offer aid to the other; the wisest ones knew very little of this (i.e. they did not know what to do), and the bravest could see little.

The similar phrasing and the flow of each line as the eye passes easily from one section to another contrasts with the crew’s inability to do anything in the face of the storm’s power. To sustain the suspense and sense of peril, Wace condenses the lengthy prayer offered up by the people aboard ship. In turn, their own behavior as “batent colpes, plorent e creient” (“They beat their breasts, wept, and cried,” 92) mirrors the violence of the storm, both of which stand in contrast to the unmoving divine messenger who appears right next to the ship (“dejoste la nef,” 96), unaffected by the surrounding storm. This figure is explicitly identified as an angel in the French text, but described more nebulously in Wace’s possible Latin sources. In the *Miraculum de conceptione sanctae Mariae*, the figure is a “persona, ut credimus, angelica” (“angelic person, so we believe,” 324D), while in the *Sermo de conceptione beatae Mariae*, he is “quemdam admodum reverendae habitudinis virum” (“a certain man with a very awe inspiring appearance,”
319C). These elements maximize the visual imagery to create a more memorable tableau that reinforces Wace’s attempt to instruct his audience concerning the origins of the celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception in England.56

Similar efforts to enhance the visuality of Latin sources can be seen in other aspects of the Conception. In the final section (the Assomption), the description of Mary’s funeral procession elevates the potential for violence found in its likely Latin source, a version of the Gospel of Pseudo-Melito referred to as the Transitus Mariae B.57 In the Latin, one of the Jewish onlookers wants to overturn Mary’s coffin, but his hands stick to it and wither, while angels strike the other onlookers with blindness (132).58 The French text presents the attack on Mary’s coffin in a more violent light, shifting the graphicness of the Jew’s punishment, which includes twisting as he simultaneously dangles from and sticks to the coffin while the apostles continue with their procession as they chant, to the actions of the Jews themselves. The mob of onlookers want to harm the Virgin Mary’s corpse and to kill the apostles (“toz les aposteles occiun / Que

56 Of course, in doing so, he effaces the pre-Conquest tradition of the celebration of the feast, in effect rewriting its past. For other deviations from his sources, see Beyers, “La Conception Nostre Dame de Wace” 364-68.


58 Beyers notes some similarities between Wace’s version of events and a Latin version of the Assumption intercalated into a text of the Gospel of Pseudo-Melito and suggests the possibility that Wace may have been responsible for combining elements from another Latin version with a Transitus Mariae B version (“La Conception Nostre Dame de Wace” 386-90). For an edition of this other Latin version, see André Wilmart, “Analecta Reginensia, Extraits des manuscrits latins de la reine Christine conservés au Vatican, XX.Reg.lat.119 (fol. 132-135v): L’ancien récit latin de l’Assomption,” Studi e testi 59 (Vatican City: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1933) 323-62.
nul mais vivre n’en laissun,” “we will kill all the apostles so that we leave no one alive,” 1639-40). Described as carrying “trenchanz glaives e … fuz” (“sharp swords and cudgels,” 1642), they are more than capable of accomplishing just that. These elements, absent from the Latin Transitus, highlight the vicious character of the Jews and present a greater contrast to the stayed procession of the apostles. The mob is also punished with blindness. The elevated obstinacy of the Jews makes the repentance of their leader and his pledge to believe “el fil sainte Marie” (“in the son of Holy Mary,” 1682) all the more miraculous. These elements within Wace’s adaptation of his Latin sources work together to produce a livelier episode that leaves a greater impression upon his audience, as in the adapted description of the storm with which the poem opens.

The increased visuality found in Wace’s translation of his Latin sources is evident as much in smaller details as they are in the striking set pieces of the miracle at sea and the funeral procession. The fourth section (Histoire des Trois Maries) adapts a prose version of the Trinubium Annae in its account of the genealogy of the Virgin Mary and includes additional details about the apostle James, son of Alphaeus and Mary, the daughter of Anne by her second husband, Cleophas. Going beyond the dry genealogical listing of the Latin text (“… et filiam suam Mariam quam ex Anna habuit dedit Alphaeo in uxorem, de quo ortus est Iacobus minor et Ioseph alter, unde dicitur Iacobus Alphae,” “and he gave his daughter Mary, which he had from Anne, as a wife to Alphaeus from whom was born James the Less and another Joseph, on

59 Le Saux suggests that Wace’s decision to make them all blind speaks to his effort to make Mary seem milder (44).
60 Beyers comments similarly upon Wace’s depiction of the Jewish mob: “L’hostilité des juifs, leur punition, tout cela est présenté de façon plus vive” (“The hostility of the Jews and their punishment are all presented in a livelier fashion,” 388).
61 Beyers 379. For an edition of this text, which Beyers refers to as Anna et Emeria sorores fuerunt, see Tischendorf, Evangelia 112-113.
account of which he is called James of Alphaeus”), the *Conception* describes the extent of James’ piety and asceticism. He abstains from cider and wine, wearing wool, and eating meat and prays so much that “li chalz li fu creūz grant / Desor les .ii. genolz devant” (“the callouses on his two knees had grown large at the front,” 1177-78). Absent from the Latin text, these details embellish the portrait of James with information that makes him more memorable and could be recalled by a person later as they imagine the events described in the gospels.62

These details illustrate how Wace uses the space of translation for the revision and innovation of his Latin sources to instruct his audience. However, many of the alterations found in the *Conception* are smaller in scale when compared with those discussed above. They often comprise educational asides that do not modify the source significantly, but serve rather to clarify moments that could confuse readers or listeners. Before Mary dies, for example, she explains to her gathered family and friends what happens to the soul after death. At death, an angel and a demon come to claim the soul, but despite being equally desirous of it, it goes to heaven or hell according to its actions in life (“segun ce que l’arme a fait,” 1381). Mary voices concern about the fate of her soul in the Latin, but there is no attempt to present a mini-lesson in eschatology in the middle of this *vita* of the Virgin Mary.63 Elsewhere, Wace develops the debate between Peter and John about who should have the honor of carrying the palm before Mary’s coffin. He provides additional supporting details for why they would both make good candidates, drawing especially upon imagery from the gospels associated with the apostles. The description

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62 These details derive from an existing tradition for the depiction of James the Lesser that can also be seen in Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Ecclesiastical History*, but which was not included in the *Trinubium Annae* tradition (Beyers, “*La Conception Nostre Dame de Wace*” 380). Here, then, we see Wace incorporating information from one Latin tradition to supplement another.

63 As with some of the details found in the description of Mary’s funeral procession, this section of the text may derive from another Latin version; see Wilmart 328-29. Cf. “Et hoc notum uobis facio ut sciatis quia homo, quando iubetur ut exeat de corpora, occurrunt illi duo angeli, unus iustitiae et alter iniquitatis.”
designates Peter as the holder of the “cles del ciel” (“keys of heaven,” 1583) and envisions John asleep “sur le piz Jesu” (“on Jesus’s chest,” 1591) in the garden of Gethsemane. Both descriptions make use of imagery from the gospels as a touchstone for the audience, reminding them of the parts Peter and John play in the Bible and thereby implicitly linking this apocryphal account of Mary’s Assumption to it. In addition to serving as a way for the reader and listener to draw upon visual iconography to better understand the Conception, these details legitimize the authenticity of these non-biblical, but canonically-linked events.

The interconnected issues of visuality, instruction, and legitimacy also realize themselves in the portrayal of the young Virgin Mary, in which architectural imagery is used to explain the Incarnation. Mary’s body is likened to an “ostel” (“house,” 626) and a “maison” (“dwelling,” 631) into which God seeks to enter. Rather than resort to complicated language to explain why Mary makes a fitting vessel for the Son of God, the Conception uses concrete visual imagery that likens Mary to a good house. This elucidation of the basic mechanics of the Incarnation, for all of its lack of subtlety, provides an easy way for an unlearned audience to understand the concept, a ploy that would have been of particular importance given the propagandist motivation likely underlying the composition of the Conception. For the celebration of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary to gain popular support, its basic principles would have to be able to be understood by all and sundry, and the additions included here accomplish just that. They also recall biblical imagery, such as the house Wisdom builds for herself (Proverbs 1:1), and derive from the kind of theologically-heavy treatises that this simple imagery distills, such as the work of Eadmer of Canterbury, a major advocate for the Virgin Mary’s Immaculate Conception, into
plain and simple language that can be understood by a wide variety of audiences, not just the learned clergy.

The Conception’s account of Joachim and Anne, Mary’s parents, similarly appeals to the senses to reach out to its audience. This section largely derives from the apocryphal De Nativitate Mariae which, in turn, springs from the apocryphal Gospel of James that came down in a redaction known as the Pseudo-Matthew. Although the Conception generally follows its account of the birth of the Virgin Mary, it augments its Latin source material to heighten the drama of Joachim’s encounter in the temple with the high priest Isacar, the key catalyst for the miraculous events that follows. The high priest’s accusatory remarks about Joachim’s lack of heirs and the suitability of his offerings are rendered into direct speech and not left as indirect discourse, as in the Latin. The use of imperatives forcefully express the priest’s anger and disgust with Joachim (“Va ta veie, fui d’entre nos!” “Go on your way! Leave our presence!” 243). The text also importantly gives voice to Joachim’s shame as he wonders how he has acted “vers mon creator / Dunt je dieie perdre s’amor” (“against my creator, on account of which I should lose his love,” 253-54). The Latin makes no mention of Joachim’s response to the priest’s accusations in the source. This vocalized dialogue lends a sense of drama to the interaction lacking from the


source so that the scene becomes much more vivid for an audience. They themselves can “hear” the accusations leveled against Joachim and his plaintive response.66

In addition to these amplifications of the Latin intended to increase the vividness of the source and the connection between the story and the audience, the *Conception* utilizes story elements that would become typical of the romance genre in its depiction of Mary’s parents. While following the same plot narrative found in other apocryphal accounts of Anne and Joachim, Wace’s additions cast them as courtly figures. For example, he draws attention to their nobility. Joachim comes “de grant gent, de grant parenté” (“from a noble people, from noble kin,” 187) and Anne comes “del lignage Israel” (“from the lineage of Israel,” 446). In addition to their noble origins, the poem also describes Anne as “molt preisiee, / Mut loee, molt enseigniee” (“very renowned, much praised, (and) well-bred,” 425-26). While this is certainly not the physical description of the lady so often found in romance, the character traits attributed to Anne here are very similar to those associated with romance heroines. Joachim and Anne’s love for one another is also made more explicit in the French text: “lealment e bien s’entr’amerent” (“They loved one another loyally and very much,” 192). These humanizing details are not found in this section’s likely source (*De Nativitate Mariae*), but help to breathe life into these apocryphal figures.

While using “French vocabulary that has come to be associated with courtly literature,” Wace also employs doubling and interlace in his depiction of the separation and reunion of

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66 Beyers notes this alteration: “Wace en fait un dialogue dramatique” (“La *Conception Nostre Dame* de Wace” 371).
Joachim and Anne, a plot commonly found in medieval romances.67 Shamed by the priest Isacar’s accusations, Joachim does not return to Anne, but instead departs alone into the wilderness. In the Latin, this scene warrants little attention in its terse account of Joachim’s time with the shepherds: “Ioachim ad pastores qui cum pecudibus errant in pascuis suis secessit” (“Joachim withdrew to the shepherds who were in the fields with their sheep,” 2.114). Wace gives more attention to describing Joachim’s self-imposed exile where he makes “ses oreisons / E veilles e afflictions” (“his prayers and his vigils and his penance,” 315-16), as well as the shepherds. The description of the shepherds, as Rita Beyers has noted,68 is “sympathique et réaliste” (“sympathetic and realistic”) in its account of their isolation from society, exposure to the elements, and courage.69 As with his other additions to his source material, these details provide a clearer picture that gives as much, if not more, attention to Joachim, the seeming protagonist, as to the secondary shepherds, creating a greater visuality within the scene.

Although this depiction lends a degree of realism, it also suggests Joachim’s similarities to the shepherds and, in its language, to the figure of the knight-errant. Joachim resembles the shepherds in their marginal status. For the sake of their profession, they have to leave behind the trappings of civilization – the “maison,” “citez,” and “chastels” (300, 303) – and experience “tormenz,” “ploies,” and “venz” (“storms, rains, and winds,” 305, 306). For his part, Joachim has been excluded from his religious community because, although he has been married for twenty years, he has not had any children and, as the high priest pointed out, “qui semen ne getera / En Israel maldiz sera” (“He who does not produce offspring will be cursed in Israel,” 261-62).

67 Blacker 49.

68 Beyers, “La Conception Nostre Dame de Wace” 372.

69 The description extends from l. 295-312.
The position of the shepherds and Joachim apart from everyone else, in turn, doubly emphasizes their isolation and their similarity to the figure of the knight-errant, a link that is verbally suggested by the description of the shepherds as “bachelor” (309). At the conclusion of this episode in the *Conception*, Wace interjects to make a clarification about the status of shepherds during the time he depicts. He notes that shepherds were not just boys (“garçon,” 308), but “bachelor alques vaillant, / Bien fort, bien prot, bien conbatant, / Qui de larrons bien se gardassent, / E par matin ainz jor levassent” (“young men, fairly courageous, very strong, very bold, very brave, who could protect themselves from thieves and rose in the morning before daybreak,” 309-12). The use of the semantically variable term *bachelor* is striking. It may designate a young man, as I have translated it above and as Hans-Erich Keller defines it in his study of Wace’s vocabulary, but the word also has links to chivalry and may refer to a young knight.70 The *bachelor* – the young knight – is the typical hero of romance.71 On the boundary between childhood and adulthood, the *bachelor* must leave behind familiar surroundings and, by performing valiant deeds, acquire the renown that will win him the lady whose love will reintegrate him into the relationship structures of society through marriage and parenthood. Described as such, the *bachelor* is not so dissimilar from Joachim. His narrative trajectory of removal and return anticipates his own eventual reunion with his wife and assimilation, albeit by miraculous means, back into a community that had previously rejected and excluded him.

Although Joachim is not himself a young man and does not possess the same qualities of courage

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70 Étude Descriptive sur le Vocabulaire de Wace 42, 168. Keller marks similar usage of the term in the *Vie de Saint Nicolas* (71), the *Roman de Brut* (4493), and the *Roman de Rou* (3.880). According to Keller, Wace uses the word to describe young knights in the *Roman de Brut* (4347) who are participating in the games that were part of Cassibellan’s festival celebrating the expulsion of the Romans (“Li chevalier unt bohordé, / Li bachelor unt escermi, / Pierre jeté, lutied, sailli,” “The knights jousted, while the young knights fenced, threw socks, wrestled, and jumped,” 4346-48).

71 Duby 112-22
that make the shepherds seem like knights, Joachim does depart alone into the wilderness, like a knight of romance embarking on a quest, as he leaves the society he has known to test his mettle in unfamiliar surroundings. His time “loinz de citez, loinz de chastels” (“far from cities, far from castles,” 303) helps to resolve his marginal status as a childless husband because it is there that he finds resolution, not through his own prowess but by his “oreisons” and “preieres” (“prayers,” 333; “entreaties,” 334). The questing Joachim suggested by Wace’s additions to his Latin sources may not resemble the typical knight, but his narrative path does as his separation from Anne comes to an end with the angel’s announcement that the couple will soon have a child.

Wace’s depiction of Anne similarly “romances” the figure of Mary’s mother as a lovesick woman, in complement to the portrayal of Joachim as a bacheler. The De Nativitate Mariae serves as the primary source here, though some details are drawn from the Protoevangelium of James, which segues immediately from Joachim’s encounter with the angel to Anne’s. This combination of sources, for which Wace may himself have been responsible, gives equal voice to Anne’s grief and frustration before continuing to her encounter with the angel. In contrast to Joachim, whose retreat from society takes place outdoors, Anne retreats inwards into her home, donning mourning clothes and closing up her home (“Dras de dolor e de plor prist, / Sa maison clost,” “She put on clothing of sadness and tears and closed her house,” 431-32). In the privacy of her own home, she gives vent to her frustrations and argues with her handmaiden Uten about her right to do so. Anne’s complaints do not focus solely upon her barrenness, as in the Latin; they also voice her grief about the absence of her husband: “O est ma joie, o est mis sire? / Quant je nel sai, deis me tu dire / Que joie face et liee seie?” (“Where is my


73 Beyers, “La Conception Nostre Dame de Wace” 372.
joy? Where is my lord? When I do not know, should you tell me that I ought to be joyful and glad?” 459-61). Her lovelorn lament, absent from the Latin sources, provides a realistic reaction to the unexplained absence of Joachim. She has no idea where he has gone and it is not altogether clear from the text itself how long he has been away. This detail complements Wace’s general protocols for translation and adaptation insofar as it vocalizes the extent of Anne’s grief and her affection for Joachim.

This added emphasis on Anne and Joachim’s love, in combination with other aspects of Wace’s portrayal of Mary’s mother, liken her to the figure of the lovesick lover often found in medieval romance. Clad in mourning clothes, Anne is grief-stricken by Joachim’s absence: “Plora la nuit, plora le jor / Tote iert sa vie en grant dolor, / Unques de joie ne li tint” (“She wept at night; she wept during the day. Her entire life was spent in great sorrow; she was never joyful,” 433-35). Like the lovesick lover, her sorrow can only cease when she has reunited with her lover. In her resemblance to this figure of medieval romance, Anne’s portrayal stands as a fitting counterpart to Joachim’s portrayal as a questing knight, and likens the overall arc of their narrative of separation and reunion to a common story pattern found in medieval romance. Although the Conception predates the flourishing of the genre, the appearance of this mini-romance within this account of the life of the Virgin Mary points to narratives patterns and tropes that would become associated with the genre in time.

Doubling, another narrative trope associated with romance, also plays a role in Wace’s adaptation of his Latin sources and manifests itself on a variety of levels, including syntactically, narratologically, that is in terms of narrative structures, and visually. The repetition of words,

74 In the Latin Protoevangelium of James, Joachim stays in the desert and fasts for forty days and nights.
scenes, and images serves as an effective way of reinforcing an idea, theme, or picture upon the consciousness of a reader or listener and presents an important tool given the propagandistic and didactic intentions underlying the composition of the *Conception*. Wace makes use of linguistic doubling, for example, to underscore the connections between Jesus and John the Baptist through the repetition of phrases, while also drawing attention to their differences in the account of the Virgin Mary’s visit with her cousin Elizabeth:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Fiz porterent, mais molt divers,} \\
\text{Li uns ert sire, l’altre sers;} \\
\text{Li uns faïtre, l’altre faïture;} \\
\text{L’uns criïre, l’uns creaiïre;} \\
\text{Li uns ert pere, l’altre fiz;} \\
\text{E li uns granï, l’altre petiz. (895-900)}
\end{align*}
\]

They bore sons, but they were very different: one was a lord, the other a servant; one a maker, the other made; the one a creator, the other a creature; the one a father, the other a son; and the one great and the other small.

The repetition of phrases and their slight variation liken and distinguish the two cousins.75

Doubling is also at work in Wace’s adaptation of the story of Anne and Joachim. By combining the accounts given in the *De Nativitate Mariae* and *Protoevangelium of James*, he increases the similarities between their reactions to their barrenness as a couple, drawing further parallels between their two halves of the same story in ways that the *De Nativitate Mariae* and the *Protoevangelium of James* do not separately. In the *Conception*, as noted above, the humiliation individually felt by Joachim and Anne parallel one another. These scenes both contain vocalizations in direct speech of their shame, interaction with secondary characters, whether

75 Other instances of similar doubling can be seen in Wace’s use of the traditional Eva and Ave parallel to compare and contrast Eve and the Virgin Mary in the transition section of the *Conception* (1093-1110).
shepherds or the handmaiden Uten, respectively, and lastly the angel’s announcement that they will have a child. Wace augments these structural similarities by including an equivalent scene in Anne’s visitation with the angel to the one in which the angel justifies the couple’s sterility to Joachim by naming other biblical couples who had children later in life, like Abraham and Jacob (348-60). Having no parallel in the Latin sources, these examples are reversed in the angel’s discussion with Anne to foreground Sarah and Rachel, the wives of Abraham and Jacob (515-18). While the male examples appear in the angel’s speech to Joachim, they have no counterpart in Anne’s interaction with the angel. 76 This addition contributes to the overarching doubling at work to connect these two annunciation scenes and emphasizes the similarity of Joachim and Anne’s experiences on a structural level that looks forward to and anticipates the point at which their separate storylines interlace once again with their reunion at the golden gate in Jerusalem (“l’oire porte,” 543).

Wace’s use of doubling is most visually evident in the Conception’s description of the apostle John and the Virgin Mary. Extending from the fourth section (Histoire des Trois Maries), the apostle John serves as a link to the concluding section of the poem describing the death, burial, and assumption of the Virgin Mary. The fourth section establishes John’s relationship to Mary and Jesus as the son of Mary, the third daughter of Anne by that name and her third husband Cleophas, and her husband Zebedee (1183-94). Wace gives considerable attention to John (1193-1282) and particularly to his virginity, 77 which, it is implied, is why Jesus entrusted the care of Mary to John: “Corteise fu cele asemblee / Que virgenes hom virgene gardast / E virgine a virgine acompaignast” (“This union was of fine quality because a virgin man protected

76 See De Nativitate Mariae 3.115.

77 Beyers, “La Conception Nostre Dame de Wace” 380.
a virgin woman and one virgin accompanied the other,” 1226-28). As virgins, Mary and John are doubles of one another, a likeness that is echoed in the repeated use of *virgene*. By emphasizing John’s virginity which plays no role in his biblical depiction nor in Wace’s Latin sources for this section, the *Conception* reinforces their biblical link with one another less as caretaker and charge than as individuals still in possession of a virtue that can never be given to someone or recovered (“Jamais ne li sera rendue, / Ja puis ne sera recovree,” “it will never be given back to him nor will it be regained,” 1236-37).

Their deaths further emphasize the similarities between John and the Virgin Mary. Following the discussion of Jesus’ decision to entrust his mother to John’s care, the section seems to take a digressive turn in its description of John’s death (1261-82), straying from the chronologically linear narrative path the poem has taken up to this point in its *vita* of the Virgin Mary, with the exception of the introductory section. In the digression, Jesus appears to John towards the end of his life and instructs him to enter his tomb alive and cover himself. However, when people later looked into the tomb to see the body, they saw nothing but manna, “de blanchor / Novele neif e blanche flor” (“like fresh snow and white flower in its whiteness,” 1277-78). The key to understanding this seemingly unrelated tangent lies in the connection it reinforces between John and Mary, a point underscored in Wace’s commentary immediately following the story of John’s miraculous death: “Cist sainz Johanz que je vos di, / Issi sum Deus l’ot establi, / Ot en garde e en compaignie / Nostre Dame, sainte Marie” (“This Saint John of whom I tell you, as God established it, protected and kept Our Lady, Saint Mary, in his company,” 1279-82). The description of John’s death functions as another point of similarity between the two virgins, for its curious nature foreshadows Mary’s Assumption, in which her
body also disappears, leaving behind an empty tomb. John’s miraculous death serves as a lesser prelude to the grand event that follows in the final section of the *Conception*, for when the apostles bring Mary’s coffin to the valley of Josaphat, where Jesus had instructed, the body vanishes: “Sempres fu d’iluec remuëz, / Nî fu puis veüz ne trovez … / Li sepulcre a esté mostrez, / Mais li cors ne fu puis trovez” (“It was removed from there immediately and it was not seen or found there afterwards,” 1719-20; “The sepulcher has been shown, but the body could not be found,” 1725-26). As Rita Beyers notes, accounts of John’s death and Mary’s Assumption are often found together in apocryphal and theological literature. In the miraculous disappearances of their bodies at death, Mary and John further resemble one another, presenting a literary diptych that juxtaposes the two virgins, but also recognizes the superiority of the miracle afforded to the Virgin Mary.

This final link between John and the Virgin Mary visually links the two figures, but it is importantly a graphic connection defined by absence. John’s body disappears from the tomb, but the manna remains to indicate what had been there. For the Virgin Mary, nothing remains and Wace seems particularly hesitant about describing the Assumption in great detail. Indeed, by comparison with the text of the *Transitus Mariae B*, Wace’s account is rather sparse. In the Latin, Jesus reappears after the mob of onlookers attempts to attack Mary’s coffin and, at the encouragement of the apostles, agrees to assume Mary’s body into heaven. The archangel Michael removes the cover of her tomb and Mary rises from the grave. She prostrates herself at

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78 Beyers, “La Conception Nostre Dame de Wace” 381.
Jesus’ feet in a gesture of thanks. Jesus then takes leave of the apostles and departs “in nube …
in caelum” (“in a cloud into the sky,” 135), accompanied by a group of angels who transport
Mary “in paradisum dei” (“into God’s paradise,” 136). None of this happens in the Conception.
One moment, Mary’s body is in the tomb and, in the next, it is not.

Given Wace’s tendency as a translator-adaptor towards clarification through description, the silence of the Conception seems incongruous. Wace does not describe Mary’s ascent into heaven or the roles of Jesus or the archangel Michael, but leaves his audience instead with his reasons for believing in Mary’s assumption. Drawing on Old Testament examples of resurrection, he argues that someone capable of saving Jonah from the whale and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from a fiery furnace could very easily bring his mother back to life and bring her to Heaven (“Bien pot dunques resusciter / Sa mere vive en ciel porter,” 1793-94). Rita Beyers suggests that this “extrême discrétion” stems in part from a desire to sidestep the controversy surrounding the doctrinal validity of the Assumption. While these factors may have very well played some role in the text’s depiction of the Assumption, it also seems likely that the empty tomb provides a sufficiently visual image for Wace’s purposes. In contrast to his tendency to add details to set-piece events in order to fill in the picture, as in the miracle with which the Conception opens, Wace, in this instance, strips down the scene to its most tangible image and refrains from describing in length the miracle that occurs. His taciturnity here preserves the mystery of the event, rendering it, in effect, indescribable. But by this very absence of description, its visuality and its meaningfulness as an explanation of the Assumption remains. The empty tomb constitutes irrefutable visual proof of Mary’s Assumption: “Le cors n’i pot hom
puis trover / Quar Deus l’ot fait resusciter” (“No one could find the body because God brought it back to life,” 1739-40). What is more, Wace asserts that the tomb may still be seen as further
confirmation of this miraculous event: “Ancor parest e ancor dure / En Josaphat la sepulture” (“The tomb in Josaphat can still be seen and still remains,” 1733-34).

Mary’s empty tomb also importantly forges a connection to Jesus’ empty tomb, thereby underscoring the special relationship between Jesus and the Virgin Mary and lending further support to the reasons outlined by Wace in support of the validity of the Assumption. Just as she and John function as textual doubles, Mary mirrors Jesus too who likewise rose from the dead. The empty tomb stands in contrast to the inexplicable miracle and to the indescribable joy of heaven with which the poem ends. Wace urges his audience to appeal to the Virgin Mary as an intercessor so that they may experience the heavenly joys that “ueilz de chief ne pot veeir / Ne boche d’ome reconter / N’oreille oïr ne cuer penser” (“eyes of the head cannot see, mouth of man cannot recount, nor ear can hear, or mind contemplate,” 1802-04). The image of the empty tomb registers recognition of the limitations of the visual, of the senses, while also recognizing how the sensual may serve as a touchstone for contemplating and understanding complex theological issues.

**La Vie de Saint Nicolas**

Visual imagery, doubling, and repetition, as has been shown, play a key role in Wace’s translation and adaptation of Latin sources for a vernacular audience. The roots of this regimen of adaptation is evident in his earliest work, the *Vie de sainte Marguerite*, with his efforts to simplify the conflicting and potentially confusing depiction of the dragon in Margaret’s cell. In the *Conception*, Wace’s use of visual imagery becomes progressively more nuanced as it serves as a means not only of engaging his audience through its vividness, but also as a way of drawing attention to similarities between biblical events and persons. This use of doubling and repetition
resembles similar methods found in romances for bringing a sense of order to their sometimes episodic and lengthy narratives. This same technique, in conjunction with efforts to increase the vividness of his Latin source material, is used to great effect by Wace in *La Vie de Saint Nicolas*.\(^8^0\) Working from multiple sources, both known and unidentified, Wace employs doubling and the repetition of key scenes and objects to organize the breadth of material presented in his *vita*. Françoise Le Saux has previously commented on Wace’s role as a compiler of resources and his use of “repetitio cum variatione,” but her discussion focuses on the appearance of social groups – e.g., women, children, and clerics – and kinds of miracles – e.g., resurrection, conversion, and cures – as a means of imposing *ordinatio* upon his diverse source materials.\(^8^1\) Building on this argument, which acknowledges that some of these elements for order are already present in the Latin sources, I would argue that visual cues link the *vita* and the miracles to provide cohesion otherwise lacking in the mini-narratives found in *Nicolas*. Wace’s alterations to his source texts speak to his efforts to engage his audience and increase their understanding and appreciation of the material and thus fulfill the role he allots for himself and other *clercs* in the depiction of medieval society he presents in the prologue to the *vita*.

The *Vie de Saint Nicolas*, the latest of Wace’s extant hagiographical works, was likely composed around 1150 and, according to a statement at the conclusion of the poem, was written at the request of “Robert le fiz Tiout / Qui seint Nicholas mult amout” (“Robert, the son of Tiout, who loved Saint Nicholas very much,” 1549-50). Although the exact identity of this Robert

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\(^8^0\) All quotations from the text will come from *La Vie de Saint Nicolas par Wace, Poème Religieux du XIIe siècle*, ed. Einar Ronsjö, Études Romanes de Lund 5 (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1942). This text will be henceforth be referred to by the abbreviated title *Nicolas*.

cannot be established with certainty, this layman’s devotion to Saint Nicholas demonstrates the
growing cult surrounding the fourth-century bishop of Myra who had enjoyed particular
popularity among the Normans as a patron of merchants and sailors. Caen, where Wace was
educated and where his patron likely lived, had two chapels dedicated to Nicholas: a crypt in the
abbey church of Sancté Trinité and another at the abbey of Saint-Etienne. The translation of
Nicholas’ relics from Myra to Bari in 1087 by Norman merchants contributed further to the
popularity of his cult and led to Bari’s development as a major pilgrimage site.

Although writing at the request of a single individual, his named patron Robert, Wace’s
text demonstrates the widespread appeal of Saint Nicholas as a subject especially, though not
exclusively, for a lay audience. The inscription of his audience is laid out most clearly in the
prologue section to the *vita* in which Wace spells out his guiding principle in translation. He
describes the world as being populated by people with contrasting characteristics: “Li un sunt lai,
li un lectré, / Li un fol et li un senee, / Li un petit et li un grant, / Li un povre, li un manant”
(“Some people are lay, others are learned; some are ignorant, some are wise; some are small and
some are great; some are poor and some are wealthy,” 9-12). In these contrasting pairs, it is

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82 One of the poem’s editors, Mary Sinclair Crawford (ed. “Life of St. Nicholas” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1923)) suggests that this Robert is the count of Dreux, son of Louis VI (the Fat), otherwise surnamed Thibault, but Einar Ronsjö doubts this connection since Thibaut and Tiout are not in fact the same name (193-94). Thibault derives from the Latin Theobaldus, whereas Tiout comes from Teoldus. Ronsjö offers a more likely possibility in the personage of a certain Robert Theoldi whose name is mentioned in a papal bull and three charters, all dating from the thirteenth century, as the father of Roger and Robert Theoldi who made donations to the Hôtel-Dieu and the abbey of Sancte Trinité in Caen. Elizabeth A. Francis also briefly discusses the identity of Wace’s patron for the *Vie de Saint Nicolas* (*La Vie de Sainte Marguerite* xviii).


tempting, as Gioia Paradisi does, to see a glimmer of the tripartite division of the medieval estates into those who pray, fight, and labor, especially given Wace’s assertion that “done Deus deversement / Divers done a diverse gent” (“God gives diversely: he gives different gifts to different people,” 13).\(^\text{85}\) However, although this description of medieval society certainly underscores the interconnectivity of its constituent parts, it positions them not so much as part of a tripartite society, but as a bipartite society that contrasts the clerics, like Wace, who names himself in the prologue (35), and those who do not know Latin, a group that generally included the laity. This is clear both from the first pairing of the illiterate and literate in the description and the opening lines of the poem, which declare that it is the duty of “li cler” (3) to instruct “ces qui n’unt lectres aprises” (“those who have not been educated,” 1) about religion, the saints, and their feast days.\(^\text{86}\) This declaration recalls the role Wace inscribes for himself in the Conception as responsible for explaining why the feast of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated (173-78). Although acknowledging the place of the laity in medieval society, the prologue is also importantly as much about providing a rationale for this translation of the life of Saint Nicholas and asserting the identity of its author. Wace names himself in the prologue: “Jo sui Normanz s’ai a non Guace” (“I am a Norman and Wace is my name,” 35).\(^\text{87}\) In so doing, he foregrounds his regional affiliation, perhaps as a way of signaling the connection between Saint Nicholas and the Normans, as well as his authority as the cleric behind the text. It is worth noting that the distinction the prologue makes between the clerics and the “lai” is not an antagonistic opposition, but rather one that recognizes that there are varying abilities and that “qui mels set

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\(^\text{85}\) Paradisi 55-72.

\(^\text{86}\) This line could also mean “those who do not know Latin.”

\(^\text{87}\) Wace also identifies himself as the author of the Vie de Sainte Marguerite at its conclusion (738), and approximately halfway through the Conception (1111).
mels deit enseigner” (“he who knows more ought to teach more,” 23). Wace undertakes this translation for the education of others so that “li lai le puissent aprendre, / Qui ne poënt latin entendre” (“the laity can understand, who cannot understand Latin,” 43-44).

In order to undertake this goal, Wace’s Latin sources must be adapted or “romanced” into French: “En romanz dirrai de sa vie / Et des miracles grant partie, / En romanz voil dire un petit / De ceo que nus le latin dit” (“I will tell you about his life in French and many of his miracles. In French, I want to tell you a little about what the Latin says,” 39-42). Examination of the contents of Wace’s vita and miracles reveals that he largely relied upon two lives of Saint Nicholas, both of which derive from the oldest Latin vita, which was written by Johannes Diaconus, a cleric from Naples, in the ninth century. Wace relies primarily on the Mombritius version, so named for its first fifteenth-century printer Bonino Mombrizio, which closely resembles Johannes Diaconus’ original text.88 Wace also makes use of the Falconius version, also named for its first publisher, Nicolaus Carminius Falconius, who printed the text in 1751.89 It incorporates several miracles originally attributed to Saint Nicholas, the sixth-century bishop of Pinara and later abbot of Sion. Although the text of the Nicolas relies heavily upon these established versions, it also contains several miracles for which exact sources have not yet been identified, including Nicholas’ resurrection of three students murdered by an innkeeper (213-26), which can make it difficult to determine with any specificity what processes Wace utilizes in his translation and adaptation.90

88 Mombritius, Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum 296-309.


90 This is not to say that these miracles do not appear in other vitae of Saint Nicholas, but that a clear Latin source cannot be established for them. The other miracles appearing in the Nicolas which do not appear in the Mombritius or Falconius versions are: the boiling baby (157-94); conversion of a Jew after Nicholas resurrects a man (723-806);
The process by which Wace composes his French account of the life and miracles of Saint Nicholas on the basis of his Latin sources may be encapsulated in the word *consonancie* which appears in his ending remarks: “Mult avreit longes a penser / Qui en romanz voldreit conter / Et torner en consonancie / Ses granz miracles et sa vie” (“Whoever would like to recount in French and render into verse his [Nicholas’] great miracles and life must think for a very long time,” 1551-54). Its appearance here marks the first time that it is used in French and its usage suggests a wide range of meanings.\(^1\) Hans-Erich Keller’s study of Wace’s vocabulary posits its relationship to placing something “en rimes consonantes,” implying that Wace makes reference here to the process of adapting his Latin prose sources into rhyming octosyllabic couplets.\(^2\) Such a definition certainly makes sense given the surrounding context and has been followed in other translations of the text, including my own above,\(^3\) yet it does not embrace the full range of meaning to be found in the Latin word-group from which *consancie* derives. The Latin *consonantia*, from the verb *consono*, may be used to describe agreement or harmony and ultimately originates with reference particularly to aural harmony given its derivation from the

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\(^1\) Keller, *Vocabulaire* 90. The appendix to Keller’s work enumerates Wace’s other neologisms, suggesting the extent to which he contributed to the growth and development of the French language.

\(^2\) Keller, *Vocabulaire* 90.

\(^3\) See also for comparison Le Saux’s translation of this passage: “It would take a very long time of reflection for anyone wishing to recount and turn into a rhymed narrative his great miracles and his life” (*A Companion to Wace* 61 n20).

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a stingy donor (807-934); resurrection and recombination of a merchant murdered by an innkeeper (1093-156); resurrection of a child murdered by the devil (1157-376); and a man’s inability to remove a relic of Nicholas’ body (1377-84). A chart delineating the sources of each miracle in Wace’s *Nicolas* can be found in Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace* 60-61.
verb *sono*, meaning to sound and the prefix *con*-, meaning together.\(^\text{94}\) By extension, the verb means to agree, accord, or harmonize. As such, *consonanie*, its medieval French descendant, comprises a fitting description for how Wace adapts his source material, which entails two intertwined processes that work together to achieve harmony between a translation and its source, as well as between a translation and its audience.

Firstly, the adaptation entails consulting the vast body of stories about Nicholas. Unlike the other two hagiographical works in which Wace has a relatively small body of resources to consult, Wace has recourse to two main sources, as well as an unknown number of other texts. The introductory and concluding sections convey some sense of the work involved. As quoted above, he notes that “En romanz dirrai de sa vie / Et des miracles grant partie. / En romanz voil dire un petit / De ceo que nus le latin dit” (“In French, I will speak about his life and his great miracles. In French, I want to say a little bit about what the Latin says,” 39-42). At the end, he says: “Ne nus ne trovom toz escriz, / Ne nes avom tuz oïz,” (“We did not find them all written down and have not heard them all,” 1555-56). In conjunction with his other statement about how it would take “mult … longes” (“a very long time,” 1551) to turn Latin into French, one is given a sense of the laborious process involved in composing the *Nicolas* in light of the large number of potential resources, not all of which can be consulted, and the degree of selection involved in the “romancing” process. Wace’s translation does not render his source material word-for-word, let alone miracle-for-miracle, but rather conveys only “un petit” (“a little,” 41) of what the Latin says. Abbreviation and selection then are presented as parts of the process of adapting a Latin source for a non-latinate audience, of achieving *consonanie*.

Although Wace’s text does not replicate his sources in their entirety, it nevertheless conveys the existing hagiographic tradition without giving the sense that any miracles or details are lacking. Wace perceives his duty as a learned cleric to use his knowledge for the benefit of others who have not been endowed with his abilities, but the information he presents is not the same as what he himself has read and heard. He suggests that the processes of translation and abbreviation are interconnected, such that romancing includes both linguistic and structural alteration. It involves not only changing what language a story is written or spoken in, but also the length or order in which its story is told.

Secondly, Wace’s process of consonancie also includes the details that are added or emphasized in order to transform the Latin sources for a non-latinate audience. Here, this not only includes the transformation of Latin prose into French rhyming verse, but also the visuality that Wace lends to his descriptions in order to provide a striking image, theme, or symbol that will remain with the reader or listener, or help them to make connections between miracles, thereby imposing order upon a diverse assemblage of stories seemingly connected by little more than the role of Saint Nicholas. These additional elements seek to engage the audience on multiple levels, in conjunction with the imposition of order. Wace’s consonancie then is applicable not only to the versification process, but to all of the mechanisms by which he seeks to adapt his Latin source material for a new audience composed of clerics and laymen.

Wace’s romancing techniques are evident in his treatment of the miracle of Getro, which Françoise Le Saux has identified as one of the most reworked sections in the Nicolas.95 This

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95 Le Saux, A Companion to Wace 68. Le Saux also examines Wace’s adaption of this miracle story, which she refers to as Miracle 18, but she does not draw attention to its use of visuality or the way he links the miracles through resonant imagery. Wace may have been working from an unknown lost source, but Ronsjo disagrees (32 n2).
lengthy miracle appears towards the end of Wace’s text (935-1092) and derives from the Latin tradition preserved in the Mombritius version, in which it appears as the final miracle. In Wace’s text, five miracles follow the miracle of Getro. This lengthy miracle consists of two distinct sections. The first describes the efforts of Getro (Cethron in the Latin) and Eufrosine (Euphrosyna in the Latin) to have a child and their appeal to Saint Nicholas, while the second section describes their attempt to retrieve their child after he is kidnapped and their subsequent reunion. In keeping with the twinned directives of *consonancie* to omit and add, this miracle demonstrates how Wace romances his Latin source by abbreviating its contents and increasing the momentum of the narrative in order to build up anticipation towards the scene in which Getro and his kidnapped son Deudoné (Adeodatum) are reunited. In the first section, Getro, having learned of Nicholas’ great renown, goes on pilgrimage to Myra in the hope that Nicholas will be able to help him and his wife conceive a child, but he finds that Nicholas has died when he arrives. At his insistence, the “clercs” give him a piece of Nicholas’ clothing which he enshrines in a church built at his wife’s suggestion (966). Soon afterwards, their prayers are answered when Eufrosine gives birth to a son.

This first section of the miracle does not differ significantly in its overarching plot from the Mombritius version, but Wace’s rearrangement and omission of certain details speed up the narrative and push it forward to the exciting second half, while also focusing attention on the barren couple. The Latin text begins with a description of Nicholas’ death and the preparations for his burial and only then explains Cethron’s reasons for coming to Myra. The French *Nicolas*, on the other hand, introduces Getro and his wife immediately, thereby focusing

96 See the chart in Ronsjö 28.

97 Mombritius 307.48-309.51. Quotations from the Latin give the page number first, followed by the line number.
attention on their plight and does not describe the death and burial of the saint. This omission and rearrangement allow Wace to unravel his source and lay out the elements of the plot in a more straightforward manner, beginning with the story of the motive – the desire of this barren couple for a child – that drives the rest of the narrative. The elimination of the Latin’s account of the miraculous healings effected by the odor (“tantum … odorem,” 308.19) of the relic of Nicholas’ clothing likewise condenses the narrative and maintains focus on a very particular miracle which is then posited as the direct reward for the devotion of Getro and Eufrosine.

In adapting the second half of the miracle, Wace continues to streamline the narrative both in terms of its pacing and its limited cast of characters. As with the first half, the Latin and French versions follow the same basic plot: the son is kidnapped and sold to a pagan ruler;98 some time later, on the feast day of Saint Nicholas, the boy recalls the date; and finally, Nicholas appears to the boy and returns him to his family. In the Nicolas, only Deudoné is stolen by “robeür” (“robbers,” 1015) during a celebration of Nicholas’ feast day, but in the Latin, everyone is kidnapped and eventually released, except for the boy. This alteration demonstrates Wace’s tendency towards narrative expediency: it seems unnecessary to complicate the outcome by having all of the celebrants affected if the boy ultimately winds up being the only person actually kidnapped. The change also maintains the miracle’s focus on the members of the family, eliminating the introduction of extraneous characters. Similar narrative efficiency is evident in the text’s immediate movement from Deudoné’s kidnapping to the court of the pagan king on the day that he recalls that it is the feast day of Saint Nicholas. In the Latin, a lengthy intervening episode describes the reactions of Cethron and Euphrosyna to the loss of their child and their

98 In the Latin, it is the king of Babylon (“Rex qui erat in Babylonia,” 309.23).
celebration of Nicholas’ feast day despite their misfortune one year later. The feast provides a crucial pivot point in the Latin text, for just as the priests sit down to eat, the pagan king in whose court Adeodatum serves is suddenly struck with a desire to eat, sending his men into a flurry (309.24-26). The synchronized feasts link the two events, evoking the power residing in the celebration of the feast and providing a fitting segue for the transition between scenes as the boy recalls the way in which his parents marked the feast day of Saint Nicholas. In eliminating this episode, the French *Nicolas* also loses the description of Euphrosyna’s grief (308.43-58). Le Saux sees this omission as part of the poem’s “marginalization of the character” and its increased emphasis on the male characters, but the removal of this scene has less to do with foregrounding the miracle’s male figures than with an interest in speeding up the narrative.99 Euphrosyna’s lengthy lament, as well as the descriptions of the two feasts, slow down the action and put off the anticipated and expected retrieval of the child by Saint Nicholas who has not, up to this point in the story, constituted a real presence. By eliminating this intervening episode, the momentum following from Deudoné’s theft is sustained.

Such changes illustrate how Wace “romances” his source material in order to create a more fast-paced narrative, but nowhere are his alterations more considerable or striking than in the reunion scene. As in the Latin text, Saint Nicholas appears at the pagan ruler’s table and miraculously brings the boy back to his home to be reunited with his parents. In the Mombritius version, this reunion occurs outside in front of the church (“extra fores ecclesiae,” 309.43) where the feasters are surprised to see the boy standing and still holding the cup he was to serve to the pagan king. Recognizing her son, Euphrosyna runs to embrace him. The poem then ends

abruptly with her prayer of thanksgiving, leaving the reaction of Cethron up to the imagination. While the Latin original possesses some visual elements that add to the dramatic quality of the scene, Wace’s changes create a more vivid scene that simultaneously emphasizes the marvelousness of the miracle and provides details that lend realism to the reactions of the characters. The momentum built up by the quickened pace of the story finds fruition in a reunion scene that is relocated to inside the church Getro had built to house his relic of Saint Nicholas (“al muster,” 1055). The alteration moves the reunion scene from in front of the church, a very public space, to a more private location where Getro prays “tut sul” (“all alone,” 1056), apart from the feast-day revelers. By resituating the scene within the confines of the same church Getro had built to house the relic of Saint Nicholas, Wace emphasizes the link between the two parts of the miracle story: the birth of an heir to a childless couple and, several years later, the reunion of this child and his parents – all part and parcel of the tighter “romanced” narrative Wace has crafted from his Latin source. The miracle that had begun with the desire of a couple for a child ends with the reappearance of that child – the family unit alone, with no others.

This private setting provides the backdrop for a miracle whose marvelousness is doubly underscored. It is noted that Getro is “tut sul” (“all alone,” 1056), that the doors of the church are closed (“portes closez,” 1057), and that Nicholas does not open any doors (“Qui ounkes portes nen ovrit,” 1063).100 Led by Nicholas, Deudoné is completely unaware that he is no longer with the pagan ruler: “Ne cil nel soult ne ne sentit. / Uncor quidout estre ultra mer / Et ad paleis le vin porter / Al seignur que server deveit” (“He did not know and he did not feel it. He still thought that he was across the sea at the palace carrying wine to the lord he had to serve,” 1064-67). The

100 Here, Getro’s prayer serves as the trigger for the miracle (1057-59).
boy even carries the cup. These details draw attention to the marvelousness of Nicholas’ ability to bi-locate, to transport another human being while doing so, and to pass through closed spaces in a way that the undetailed Latin account does not. Nicholas’ sudden appearance and rescue of Adeodatum are marvelous, but the brevity of the description in the Mombritius version undercuts the sense of mystery and emphasized inexplicability found in the French Nicolas. However, for all of the stress placed on the marvelous quality of the miracle, an attempt is also made to ground the miracle in realistic details. Although the boy also still carries the cup in the Latin text, the French text explains why he continues to do so and his reaction to his participation in the miracle.

The French Nicolas also provides a more complete reunion scene. Deudoné’s reunion with his father resembles that between Euphrosyna and Adeodatum in the initial lack of recognition and the run to embrace the child. Le Saux argues that this change effectively displaces the centrality of Euphrosyna in the Latin text, but it should be noted that whereas the Latin version completely elides the reunion between father and son, the French text presents reunion scenes with both parents. Although less grandiose, Deudoné is reunited with his mother “a maison” (“at home,” 1079) and she is “mult lee” (“very happy,” 1081) as she hears her son recount his experiences. Whereas the Latin offers a lopsided reunion scene that creates an abrupt ending, Nicolas attempts to fill in the gap, while also providing a more symmetrical conclusion to the miracle story. Not only does it present a reunion with both parents, but by making Getro

101 The Vie de saint Nicolas reads: “Asez longement l’esgardat / Ainz que conustre le peüst / Que ceo son fiz Deudoné feust. / Mes puis qu’il l’out enterscé, / Corut vers lui si l’ad beisé,” “He looked at him for a long time before he could recognize that it was his son Deudoné, but after he recognized him, he ran and embraced him,” 1070-74. The Latin notes: “Cum audisset haec Euphrosyna mater eius, commota sunt quippe uiscera eius super eum, coepit flaere prae gaudio / et currens amplexata est eum,” “When Euphrosyna, his mother, heard these things, her insides were so moved towards him. She began to weep for joy and, running, she embraced him,” 309.45-47).
the central figure in the grander reunion scene, it also underscores the fact that it was Getro who went on pilgrimage and retrieved the relic of Saint Nicholas, making it fitting that he should be the first to see the boy again. Taken altogether, the changes Wace makes to his Latin source create a romanced version that condenses and omits aspects of the Latin in order to build narrative momentum for the episode’s set-piece miracle, the teleportation of Nicholas and the boy, in which details are added, not subtracted, to provide a clearer picture of what exactly occurred and thereby stress just how miraculous everything is. Although both the Latin and French miracles end with the reunion of the boy with his family, the alterations found in the Nicholas amplify the sense of ensuing catharsis in a way that recalls the happy ending that often features in romance.

One of the other major changes Wace introduces to his version of this miracle centers on the role of the clerks. The annual celebration of Nicholas’ feast day by the grateful couple includes clothing the clergy, in return for which the clerks read and sing about Saint Nicholas:

“Al miels que il unques poeient / Feste seint Nicholas feseient / Des clercs richement conreer, / De fere lire et de chanter” (“As best as they could, they celebrated the feast of Saint Nicholas and richly dressed the clerics and made them read and sing,” 1007-10). From Deudoné’s explanation of the feast to the pagan king, we learn that the clerics come from all across the country (“Mult unt hui fait grant assemblee / Des clercs de tote la contree,” 1041-42). The clerks are mentioned again at the conclusion of the miracle when Wace interjects to note that he cannot find any record of anyone else celebrating the feast of Saint Nicholas and having clerics read and sing before Getro and Eufrosine (“Devant cels ne trovum nus pas / Qui se servit seint Nicholaz /
faire feste et d’onurer, / De clers faire lire et chanter,” 1089-92). In a miracle that focuses largely on the laity, the appearance of the clerics stresses the interconnectivity between two groups. When Getro arrives in Myra, they mourn the passing of their bishop together: “tut le pople et tut le clergé” (“all the people and all the clergy,” 959). It is the “mestrez clercs” (“principal clergy,” 966) who provide Getro with the relic from Nicholas’ clothing. In stressing this relationship, Wace simultaneously draws attention to his role. Like the clerics who sing and read at the feast-day celebrations held by Getro and Eufrosine, Wace interprets the life of Saint Nicholas for his inscribed audience of listeners and readers and stresses his intercessory role in a miracle he has substantially altered from its source. This interconnectivity reflects and reinforces the worldview described in the introductory section of the poem which outlines the role of the clerics as intermediaries between the uneducated and the culture of the Church, including educating them about the saints and their feast days (1-8). The celebration of the barren couple is presented in effect as a model for how Nicholas ought to be venerated since they are the first to mark his feast in this way, as a day for celebration and instruction under the guidance of the clergy. As Françoise Le Saux notes, the French Nicolas presents an “idyllic illustration of the respective duties of the clergy and the laity being fulfilled, in accordance with the model outlined by Wace in his Preface.”

However, more than that, the emphasis on the place of the clerics demonstrates not only the interconnectedness between members of medieval society, but also the interconnectivity and

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102 The Mombritius version describes a similar celebration: “Post haec omni anno cum laetitia magna coeperunt celebrare solennitatem beati Nicolai” (“Afterwards, they began to celebrate the solemnity of the blessed Nicholas every year with great joy,” 308.32-33); and “Sacerdotes uero et leuitae simul omnes canere coeperunt horas ad laudem domini et beati confessoris et episcopi” (“The priests and deacons also began to sing the hours for the praise of the Lord and the blessed confessor and bishop,” 309.19-20).

103 Le Saux, A Companion to Wace 73.
allusiveness of Wace’s *Nicolas* as a text whose images and themes are constantly making reference to one another. The clerics in Wace’s version of the miracle of Gethro evoke the prologue’s worldview, but they also recall the “treis clercs” (213) whom Nicholas resurrects after they were murdered by an innkeeper. Although the exact source for this miracle has not been identified (it does not have analogues in the Mombritius or Falconius versions), its conclusion resonates with the ending Wace also appends to the Gethro miracle. Following the resurrection of the *clercs*, Wace adds: “Pur ceo qu’as clercs fit cel honur / Funt li clers la feste a son jur / De ben lire et ben chanter / Et des miracles reciter” (“Because he did this honor to the clerics, they celebrate on his day by reciting and singing well and recounting his miracles,” 223-26). The verbal repetition of *lire* and *chanter*, in conjunction with *clercs*, and the celebration of Nicholas’ feast day links the miracle to that of Gethro so that someone reading or listening to Wace’s *Nicolas* may draw a connection between the two miracles on the basis of their shared contents.

This is not the only link Wace makes across his *vita* through repetition. In addition to the link forged between Gethro and the miracle of the three *clercs*, a connection is also suggested between Gethro and its preceding miracle that draws, in particular, on a visual cue. This lengthy miracle features a man who had promised to give Nicholas a silver cup, but decides to keep it for himself and give him an inferior cup in its place (807-934). While sailing on his way to deliver the cup with his family, his son falls into the ocean as he is using the better cup to gather water and, by all appearances, drowns. The grieving parents present their cup offering at the altar in Nicholas’ church, but are thwarted in their three attempts when the cup miraculously flies up into the air and falls to the ground. When they make their confession about the cup, Nicholas appears, leading their son who holds the original cup in his hand. The boy then places the cup on the altar and it remains in place. This miracle, which does not appear in the Mombritius or Falconius versions, bears several similarities to that of Gethro. Both feature family units that are broken
apart and brought back together, reunion scenes that occur in churches, and the recurring object of the cup, described in both instances as a “hanap.” Such similarities suggest that they may have played a role in Wace’s decision to juxtapose the two texts next to one another. As noted above, the miracle of Getro is the final episode in the Mombritius version and does not otherwise appear alongside the miracle of the cup and the drowned boy. The juxtaposition of these miracles in \textit{Nicolas} highlights their similarities by capitalizing on their shared elements. It becomes a way of creating links and imposing order not by linear progression per se, but across the entire poem. The Getro miracle can be connected to the resurrection of the three \textit{clercs} and the cup miracle, as well as to the birth of Nicholas himself. After all, his parents were also a childless couple who begot an “eir, / Nient sul de lur manantie / Mes de murs et de bone vie” (“heir, not only of their possessions, but of their values and good living,” 54-56).

Other scenes of the \textit{Nicolas} mirror or double one another in a similar fashion. Many of the miracles feature groups of three people, from the three daughters Nicholas spares from prostitution with his three gifts of money (81-120); the three \textit{clercs} resurrected after they have been murdered by the innkeeper (213-226); the three counts sentenced to death by the emperor Constantine and saved by Nicholas (445-600); and the family of three featured in the miracle of Getro. Wace also juxtaposes episodes containing similar miracles. A miracle describing how Nicholas protects a pagan man’s treasure with a statue of Saint Nicholas, prompting the pagan’s conversion to Christianity (651-722), is followed by another miracle that also features an image of Saint Nicholas, possibly some sort of icon (the French describes it as an “image,” 735) used as a guarantee by a Christian for a loan from a Jew (723-806). Two of the miracles feature free-flowing oil from Nicholas’ tomb. In the first instance, a little less than halfway through the poem, oil begins to flow when an archbishop is exiled and stops when he is returned to his see (633-50). Later, towards the end of the poem, the oil appears in conjunction with a man’s effort
to remove a relic of Nicholas’ body from his tomb, which is subsequently thwarted (1377-84). Certain groups of people also feature prominently in the *Nicolas*, particularly those for whom Nicholas was a patron saint, including children, clerics or students, and sailors.\textsuperscript{104}

Some of these groupings have been inherited from the extant hagiographical tradition in which Wace was working. The various *vitae* of Nicholas all feature a wide variety of people, reflecting the make-up of medieval society and the groups for whom Nicholas was considered an especial benefactor. The Latin tradition similarly demonstrates how the arrangement of the miracles can be used to great effect. The miracle of Cethron and Euphrosyna appears at the end of the saint’s life in the Mombritius version. The similarity between the couple of the miracle and Nicholas’ own parents certainly played a role in the placement of their story as the last item in the *vita*. Their efforts to bear a child fittingly frames the *vita*’s opening miracle – the birth of the saint himself. Yet for Wace’s text, the use of rearrangement is more prominent and in ways not illustrated in his Latin source material. The combination of the two miracles featuring artistic representations of the saint does not appear in the Mombritius or Falconius Latin versions since the second miracle featuring the conversion of the Jew comes from an unknown source. In turn, this pair of miracles featuring efficacious images of the saint hearkens back and stands in contrast to the miracle describing Nicholas’ destruction of an idol of the goddess Diana, which occurs during the saint’s lifetime (337-444). Although this same relationship is suggested by the appearance of the Diana miracle and the statue miracle in both the Mombritius and Falconius versions, bridging the gap between Nicholas’ pre- and post-mortem activities, Wace’s *Nicolas* underscores this doubly in its inclusion of two miracles featuring images of the saint. Similarly,

\textsuperscript{104} Children feature in the miracles found at ll. 81-120, 157-94; 205-12; 807-934; 935-1092; and 1157-376. Clerics or students appear in the miracles found at 2123-26 and 935-1092. Sailors feature in the miracles at ll. 227-74 and 275-336.
the pair of miracles featuring miraculous oil do not appear together in the *vitae* Wace adapts. Only the Falconius version contains the first miracle of the oil centering on the archbishop and neither of the Latin versions includes the second miracle of the healing oil. The inclusion of the two miracles, in addition to lending further testimony to the sanctity of Nicholas, provide a means of linking two miracles and bringing some degree of order to what might otherwise be seen as a rather unorganized and heterogeneous collection of miracles.

Perhaps the greatest and most effective use of rearrangement and repetition occurs at the conclusion of the *Nicolas*, for the poem ends with two miracles that occur during Nicholas’ lifetime. In the first of these miracles, Nicholas cures a paralyzed man and, in the second, a man possessed by an evil spirit. Wace makes it very clear that he deviates here from the narrative pattern the poem has followed up to this point: “Oëz que nus trovom lisant, / Que li ber fist en son vivant” (“Listen to what we heard while reading, to what the worthy man [i.e. Nicholas] did when he was alive,” 1485-86). *Oëz*, a second person plural imperative, hooks the attention of the audience through its use of direct address and urges them to note what comes next in the narrative through its double objects, particularly to the change in timeframe that it introduces. The following miracle makes no explicit mention of the change in time, but makes it clear that Nicholas is still alive – it is “li bons confessour” (“the good confessor,” 1539) himself who blesses the possessed man and restores him to sanity – while also indicating that the end of the poem is near: “Apres ceo n’out ke un petit” (“After this, there was only a little,” 1519). It is important for Wace to note this change because up until this point, the *Nicolas* has followed a chronological framework. It begins with Nicholas’ birth, his appointment as bishop, and his living miracles, while the latter half of the poem recounts his posthumous miracles, that is, until the last two miracles. Their placement creates a jarring effect after a succession of eight posthumous miracles and Wace’s narratorial interjection does not smooth the transition as much
as draw attention to it. In effect, these words underline the *Nicolas’* deviations from the established Latin traditions, that is, to the artifice of Wace’s romanced text. The two miracles derive from the Falconius version of Johannes Diaconus’ *vita*, but appear about two-thirds of the way through that text, not at the end.  

Anyone familiar with other *vitae* of Nicholas would have been aware or, because of Wace’s narratorial interjection, made aware of the alteration from the usual and expected order.

However, although Wace focuses attention on this moment, he does not do so purely as self-reflexive commentary or as artifice for artifice’s sake. Rather the placement of these two miracles at the end importantly frames its last image: Nicholas as a living saint. On the one hand, this image presents an active view of the saint as he, in one miracle, anoints the paralytic’s body with oil from a lamp and, in the other, makes the sign of the cross over the body of the possessed man, prompting the audience to recall what Nicholas was capable of performing while he was still alive. But, it is also a reminder of the degree to which these miracles are similar to the ones attributed to him after his death. It is a reminder that, though dead, the effects of Nicholas’ sanctity continue to be felt as if he were, in fact, still alive. The deteriorated state of the body of the man in the second miracle underscores this point. All of his flesh is “blemie” ("blemished," 1529), “quassee” (“broken,” 1530), and “purrie” (“rotten,” 1530) and maggots crawl from his flesh and keep falling to the ground. Though alive, the possessed man is the epitome of death. By presenting Nicholas finally as a living man, Wace seeks to play with the

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105 Ronsjö’s table notes that these two miracles were 16 and 17 out of the Falconius version’s 22 miracles.


107 These details are also found in the Falconius version: “plagis horridis, caput vulneratum haberet; itant etiam fanies cum vermibus proflueret” (“his head wounded with terrible gashes; his blood poured forth with maggots,” 122).
same binary opposition between life and death and emphasize as well the fluidity between these
two states made possible with God’s grace. The possessed man may look like one of the walking
dead, but he is eventually restored to health so that he “ki aveit esté dessvez / ben gariz et ben
sanez” (“who had been mad was completely cured and restored,” 1541-42).

Wace’s rearrangement of his Latin source material, as these last miracles show, is
complemented by visual imagery. Like the cup that links the miracle of Getro to the Nicolas’
other miracle featuring a lost son, the image of the living Nicholas connects the final two
miracles to others throughout the vita, creating order out of a diverse group of narratives
otherwise united only by the role that the saint plays in them. The repetition of visual cues, like
the cup, provides nodes for an audience to interlink individual miracles and potentially use them
to better remember their contents. In doing so, Wace’s Nicolas manipulates the order of the
miracles in its sources, allowing new narratives to be made that do not progress in a strictly
linear fashion from Nicholas’ birth to death and his posthumous miracles, but rather in an order
that highlights the similarities between miracles. Although Wace’s rearrangement presents an
alteration that would seem to violate the parameters of consonanie that inform his translation
process, he utilizes this moment of seeming disjunction from his Latin sources to achieve a
different kind of harmony with them. Just as the miracles attributed to Saint Nicholas repeatedly
iterate his role as an intercessor, the Nicolas’ final image of the living bishop likewise
emphasizes that, despite death, Nicholas remains an intercessor capable of bringing help to those
in need of aid, whether barren couples, religious clerics, or the infirm.

The dynamics of consonanie in the Nicolas speak, in general, to the accord that Wace
strives to achieve between his translations and their Latin sources, as well as between his
translations and the audience for which he writes. Throughout his hagiographical works, Wace
conveys the breadth of the vitae and miracles he treats, but presents them in a manner that suits his vernacular audience. As has been demonstrated, he omits material in order to speed up the narrative momentum, as he does in the Marguerite to foreground Margaret’s encounter with the dragon in her prison cell or in the Nicolas to focus on the couple Getro and Eufrosine. Wace also incorporates elements that would become typical of romance, both in terms of content, such as the characterization of Anne as lovesick and Joachim as a bachelor, and structure, such as the use of repetition, or doubling, and interlace. Wace’s “romanced” translations also show a particular investment in creating vivid pictures. Sometimes this is accomplished thorough simplification, as in the case of the multicolored dragon turned black in the Marguerite or the emphasis placed on the empty tomb that Wace substitutes for the detailed descriptions of the Assumption found in his Latin sources. Though simplified, these images are no less vivid and potent with meaning. Wace also utilizes amplified descriptions, like the stormy seascape found in the miracle recounted at the beginning of the Conception or the Nicolas’ almost cinematic resituation of the reunion between Getro and his son in the church. These instances of simplification and amplification highlight the visual potential of the Latin source material and point to Wace’s efforts to enable his audience to easily envision what he describes. Taken together, these aspects of Wace’s translation process anticipate certain features and narrative techniques that would become associated with romance and, importantly, demonstrate the ways in which romance, in part, develops as a result of the dynamics translation and the need to suit a new audience.

The appeal to visuality found throughout Wace’s hagiographical works seems particularly fitting in light of his work as a clerch lisant.108 Although the exact nature of this

profession has been a matter of some debate, its duties, as noted above, likely would have included writing, teaching and interpreting texts, as well as reading aloud, if the title Wace gives to his position in the *Roman de Rou* is translated literally. As such, the alterations he makes in adapting his Latin source material might reflect both an effort to help his audience visualize the lives of these saints, but also hear them, creating texts that can be seen and that would be *consonant* with their oral performance.
Chapter 2
Romance Spaces in Marie de France’s *Vie Seinte Audree* and *Espurgatoire Seint Patriz*

In the Prologue to the *Lais*, Marie de France disparages the translation of texts from Latin into French because of the unoriginality of such an undertaking. Mulling over her next writing project, she notes:

Pur ceo començai a penser
D’aukune bone estoire faire
E de latin en romaunz traire;
Mais ne me fust guaires de pris:
Itant s’en sunt altre entremis! (28-32) ¹

I began to think about composing a good story and translating something from Latin into French, but that would hardly be worthy of renown. So many others have done so!

Wishing to do something new, Marie opts instead to record the Breton *lais* in writing. She does not, however, completely abandon the project of translation from Latin into French. In the *Vie seinte Audree*, she adapts the *Liber Eliensis*, a monastic chronicle, and, in the *Espurgatoire de seint Patriz*, she renders H. de Saltrey’s popular *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* into French.² In light of their easily identifiable sources, these two works present especially telling

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² Although the possibility of attributing *La Vie de seinte Audree* to Marie de France has been raised in the past by Emanuel J. Mickel (*Marie de France*, Twayne’s World Authors Series 306 (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974) 144 n5); Michael J. Curley (*Saint Patrick’s Purgatory: A Poem by Marie de France*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 94 (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1993) 7); Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (“Wreaths of Thyme: The Female Translator in Anglo-Norman Hagiography,” *Medieval Translator* 4, ed. Roger Ellis and Ruth Evans (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994) 46-65); and others, June Hall McCash has convincingly identified Marie de France as the author of the *Audree* in “*La Vie seint Audree*: A Fourth Text by
witnesses to Marie’s translation process and her efforts to create lively and more detailed vernacular versions of her Latin sources that might appeal to a non-latinate audience, whether composed of religious or laypersons, and its taste for romance literature. These alterations demonstrate not only the processes of adaptation and innovation that necessarily extend from the mechanics of translation, but also speak more generally to the development of romance as a genre. Although the Audree is ostensibly a saint’s life and the Espurgatoire a didactic treatise about the afterlife, the narratives found within both poems integrate aspects of the genre of romance to tell their stories, thereby emphasizing the fluidity between religious and secular literature. As this chapter will argue, these romance elements can be identified as an outgrowth of translation, part of the process of reinscribing the source text in an idiom familiar to its vernacular audience and its particular needs, whether this be combating doubt, as in the Audree, or advocating for the place of secular vocations within the Espurgatoire.

La Vie Seinte Audree

The preservation of La Vie seinte Audree in a single exemplar, the Campsey manuscript (now London, British Library, Additional 70513), has largely tended to skew discussion of the poem in terms of its female audience. An early fourteenth-century inscription at the end of its final item localizes the manuscript to Campsey Priory, a community of Augustinian nuns in Suffolk, Marie de France?” Speculum 77.3 (2002): 744-77. The attribution has been rejected outright by several scholars, including Philippe Ménard, Les Lais de Marie de France: Contes d’amour et d’aventure du moyen âge (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1979) 16.

3 La Vie seint Audree will be referred throughout the remainder of this chapter by the shortened title Audree, while L’Espurgatoire seint Patriz will be designated as Espurgatoire.
and indicates that it was given to the priory in order to be read during meals: “Ce liure deviseie a la priorie de kanpseie de lire a mengie” (“This book was given to the priory of Campsey for reading at meals”). Though the importance of this attribution for our understanding of what nuns read and the significance the poem might have held for a female audience cannot be overestimated, scholarly discussions, such as those by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Virginia Blanton, have tended to overlook the other effects of Marie’s decision to “romance” her Latin source in the interest of opposing the Liber Eliensis and its male monastic audience and the female audience of the Audree. But the poem is also significant for the implications it has for our understanding of romance as a genre in light of its interplay with the hagiographic. Marie’s translation links the vita to the genre of romance contextually and amplifies her hagiographic source in order to preclude doubt. By examining how Marie alludes to the lais in her account of Audrey’s life and the changes she makes, we will see how she transforms her source into a hagiographical romance that positions Audrey as the mal mariée turned heroine of her own romance to create an enlivened story that anticipates and undermines the doubt of its audience.

As a work in French and as a translation, the Audree “romances” the Liber Eliensis and its other Latin sources in order to convey the information found in those works for an audience that did not or could not read them in their original language. In doing so, it necessarily endeavors to clarify the Latin original through additions and omissions for its new audience, which includes the nuns of Campsey Priory. Romancing the Latin becomes a way of opening the closed book of the Latin tradition and rewriting it in an idiom informed by the French courtly literary tradition that would have been familiar to the readers and listeners of Marie’s new “livre” […] de la vie seinte Audree” (4611-13). The Audree provides a space in which the polysemous medieval

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4 This inscription appears on fol. 265v. Another inscription on fol. 1r also situates the manuscript at Campsey Priory: “La livere est a covent de campisse” (“The book belongs to the convent of Campsey”).
configurations of romance can seamlessly blend together and the latinate Etheldreda may be transformed and translated into the romanced Audree, just as she had been before from the Anglo-Saxon Æthelthryth.5

The Audree describes the life and posthumous miracles of the saint most commonly referred to as Audrey, but also known by her English name Æthelthryth or her Latin name Etheldreda.6 Born in the seventh century, Audrey was a daughter of Anna, king of the East Angles.7 She married twice: firstly to Tondberht, an ealdorman of the South Gyrwe, and secondly, after the death of her first husband, to Ecgfrith, the king of Northumbria. However, she remained a virgin throughout both marriages. Ecgfrith’s dissatisfaction with their chaste marriage prompted Audrey to flee to the island of Ely, which she had received as dower from her first husband. She founded a convent there and served as its abbess until her death in 679. Audrey was succeeded in this role by several female members of her family, including her sister Sexburga, who decided to have Audrey’s remains moved in 695 to a new shrine, leading to the discovery that her body remained incorrupt sixteen years after her death. Audrey’s tomb became the center of a popular cult at Ely, but veneration of the East Anglian saint soon spread and she


6 All quotations from the Audree will come from Judith Clark Barban and June Hall McCash, ed. and trans. The Life of Saint Audrey (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006).

became one of the most popular saints throughout medieval England, as church dedications and observances of her feast day and translation in liturgical calendars attest.\(^8\)

Composed in the late twelfth century, Marie’s *Audree* confirms the enduring popularity of Audrey’s cult.\(^9\) Written nearly five hundred years after Audrey’s death, the *Audree* is the oldest extant French *vita* of the saint. The poem’s Latin source is never identified outright,\(^10\) but scholars have tended to focus their attentions on the *Liber Eliensis* as its primary source.\(^11\) This monastic chronicle,\(^12\) compiled at Ely and completed in the early 1170s, details the history of the monastery from its founding by Audrey as a convent, through the Danish invasions, Ely’s

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10 Of her source, Marie writes: “Issi ay ceo livre finé / En romanz dit et translaté / De la vie seinte Audree / Si com en latin l’ay trove” (“Thus have I finished this book about the life of Saint Audrey and told and translated it into French, just as I found it in Latin,” 4611-14).

11 The earliest Latin account is the Venerable Bede’s description of the discovery of Audrey’s uncorrupted body and his hymn to virginity praising Audrey in book 4 (sections 17 and 18, in the medieval chapter numbering, 19 and 20 in the modern) of the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (ed. C. Plummer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1896). Ælfric’s tenth-century Old English life of St. Audrey draws heavily upon Bede’s account (*Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, EETS 82 (London: Trübner, 1885) 432-41). The basic narrative details found in Bede’s account provided the basis for the Latin *vita* of the twelfth century, which were probably written in response to the translation of Audrey’s relics in 1106 (*Love* lix). Written sometime after 1116, Gregory of Ely’s verse account includes a *vita* and description of Audrey’s posthumous miracles, but ends abruptly (Elizabeth Stevens and Pauline Thompson, “Gregory of Ely’s Verse Life and Miracles of St. Aethelthryth,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 106 (1988): 333-90). The only extant copy of this verse account is found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 393, which was copied and kept in Ely. This same manuscript contains a composite prose account of Audrey in two parts. The first part is written in rhyming prose and uses Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* as its source. It is followed by a description of Audrey’s posthumous miracles, referred to by its editor Rosalind Love as the *Miracula Sancte Ætheldrethe*, which includes several miracles that do not appear in Gregory of Ely’s verse *vita*. This collection of miracles is, in turn, followed by four posthumous miracles attributed to Audrey.

12 Scholars like June Hall McCash, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, and Virginia Blanton argue that the *Liber Eliensis* served as Marie’s source. By contrast, Östen Södergård claims that the *vita* edited by the Bollandists for the *Acta Sanctorum* served as Marie’s model, a position very similar to that taken by Rupert Pickens in “Marie de France Translatrix II: La vie seinte Audree,” *A Companion to Marie de France*, ed. Logan E. Whalen (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 267-302.
establishment as an institution for male religious, the Norman Conquest, and on up to the latter half of the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{13} The chronicle’s purpose lies primarily in creating a record of the rights and privileges granted to the monastery and documenting the gradual erosion of these benefits by Danes and Normans, monks and laymen, in the centuries following its founding. In this index of injustices, Audrey looms large – an account of her life, drawn from Bede, appears in Book I – but her miracles can be found throughout all three sections of the chronicle.\textsuperscript{14} As a defender of Ely, she lashes out in saintly vengeance against men and women who attempt to infringe upon its rights in any way. Her virginity and incorruptible body, within this context, represent the inviolable rights of the monastery, ever in peril of being spoiled, but always protected by God. As Wogan-Browne has noted, Audrey’s chasteness resonates “not only as the embodiment of a doctrinal and behavioral ideal with its own powerful affective and psychological relevance for a professionally celibate community but for its divine testimony to intact property rights.”\textsuperscript{15}

Given this underlying intent, much of the material pertaining to the particular rights of Ely in the \textit{Liber Eliensis} is irrelevant for the purposes of writing a saint’s life and, what is more, the hagiographic material it does contain does not always correspond with the account given in the \textit{Audree}.

In light of these discrepancies, Rupert Pickens suggests that Marie’s source may have been an abbreviated form of the \textit{Liber Eliensis}, in combination with other sources relating to

\textsuperscript{13} It has been suggested that the \textit{Liber Eliensis} was completed in sections with Book I having been completed after 1131, Book II after 1154, and Book III after 1169.

\textsuperscript{14} Blake xxviii.

\textsuperscript{15} Wogan-Browne “Rerouting the Dower,” 30.
Audrey, such as that found in London, British Library, Cotton Domitian A XV. This late thirteenth or early fourteenth-century manuscript contains, among other items, Book I and a condensed version of Book II of the *Liber Eliensis*, between which is bound a booklet containing an account of the translation of Audrey’s relics in 1106 and a collection of miracles, including selections from the composite prose account preserved in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 393. Although the version of the *Liber Eliensis* found in Cotton Domitian A XV does not correspond entirely with the *Audree*, Rupert Pickens posits that a manuscript similar in content to it, dating from 1164-89 and likely originating from Ely, served as Marie’s source. In the absence of this hypothetical source, it suffices to use the *Liber Eliensis* and the version which has come down in the Cotton Domitian A XV to shed light on the changes Marie makes in adapting her Latin sources for a vernacular audience.

The Campsey manuscript (London, British Library Additional 70513) preserves the only extant copy of the *Audree* and presents some insight into the new vernacular audience Marie inscribes within her adaptation of the *Liber Eliensis*. The composite manuscript consists of two distinct parts and contains a total of 267 folios recording thirteen verse saints’ lives in French. The first section, dating from the early fourteenth century, comprises folios 1-8 and contains three saints’ lives written by Nicholas Bozon on Elizabeth of Hungary, Paphnutius, and Paul the

16 “Marie de France Translatrix II” 267. London, British Library, Cotton Domitian A XV serves as the basis for the vita of Audrey in the *Acta Sanctorum*.
17 Blake xxv; Love lxvii.
18 Pickens, “Marie de France Translatrix II” 267-302.
Hermit. The second part, dating from the late thirteenth century, comprises folios 9r-265v and contains the lives of Thomas Becket, Mary Magdalene, Edward the Confessor, Edmund the archbishop of Canterbury, Audrey, Osith, Faith, Modwenna, Richard the bishop of Chichester, and Katherine of Alexandria. The manuscript is noteworthy for its size and for its generic homogeneity – it is the largest extant collection of Anglo-Norman saints’ lives and the only such collection to contain only hagiographical items.

Given its contents, this anthology of exemplary lives is an especially appropriate item for the priory of nuns at Campsey, where the manuscript is known to have been kept in the fourteenth century. Located in Suffolk, Campsey Priory was home to a community of Augustinian nuns founded in 1195 by Theobald de Valoines whose sisters served as abbesses there. As noted above, a fourteenth-century inscription indicates that the manuscript was read during mealtimes. Of course, whether the communal setting of a priory coincides exactly with the audience for whom Marie adapted the life of Saint Audrey cannot be determined, but the nuns at Campsey and the manuscript certainly provide insights into an audience that read Marie’s

20 Features distinguishing this first section of the manuscript include its 32-lines per column layout, its smaller text block (128 x 176 mm), and blue majuscule letters with red ink line art.

21 Distinguishing features of the second section of the manuscript include a larger text block (138 x 195 mm), blue and red ink majuscule letters with line art flourishes in the alternate color, and historiated initials depicting the saint at the beginning of most of its items (e.g. fol. 55v: Edward the Confessor; fol. 85v: Edmund, archbishop of Canterbury (the letter has not been colored in and the saint is only outlined); fol. 100v: Audrey; fol. 134v: Osith; fol. 156v: Modwenna; fol. 222r: Richard of Chichester; fol. 246r: Katherine of Alexandria. A leaf is missing from the beginning of the life of Thomas Becket, so it is unclear whether it also had a historiated initial. The initial marking the beginning of the vita of Faith is decorated, not historiated.


24 Jocelyn Wogan-Browne points out “diviseie” may have the alternate sense of “devised,” suggesting the possibility that the manuscript had been designed at the priory. (“Powers of Record, Powers of Example: Hagiography and Women’s History,” *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003) 88).
work.\textsuperscript{25} The vernacular contents of the Campsey manuscript suggest a non-latinate audience typical of the populations found in other religious houses for women and would have profited from Marie’s task of rendering her Latin source “en romanz” (4613). The manuscript also suggests an audience of aristocratic women for the \textit{Audree}, given the social backgrounds of women in religious houses. Containing neither devotional tracts nor religious treatises, the manuscript’s collection of saint’s lives offers portraits of exemplary lives. The women of Campsey Priory would have been drawn by the manuscript’s large number of female saints and the differing array of models of feminine sanctity reflected therein – the sinner turned saint Mary Magdalene, the defiant virgin and abbess Audrey, the virgin martyrs Faith and Osith, the administrator and nun Modwenna, and the eloquent Katherine – any and all of which would have appealed to the diverse array of women found in religious houses during the Middle Ages. The life of Audrey may have spoken especially to Isabella Ufford, the countess of Suffolk, who took a vow of chastity and entered Campsey Priory after being widowed twice.\textsuperscript{26} These non-latinate women who read the \textit{Audree} or had it read to them at mealtime, as such, stand in contrast to the male monastic audience of the \textit{Liber Eliensis}.

In addition to providing insight into the audience of Marie’s \textit{Audree}, the Campsey manuscript contextualizes the generic identification of the poem. As mentioned above, the manuscript is noteworthy for its singular content – every item is a saint’s life, but several of its items are designated in their rubrics as “romances,” such as “Le Romanz de sainte Marie Magdalene” (fol. 50v), “Le Romanz de saint Edward rei” (fol. 55v), and “Le Romanz de la vie

\textsuperscript{25} Delbert Russell has suggested that the manuscript may have been commissioned by Isabel de Warenne, but he finds insufficient evidence to fully support this claim.

seinte Modwenna noneyne” (fol. 156v). This moniker does not identify these works in our more limited modern conceptualization of a medieval romance as a fictional work detailing the deeds of noble knights. Rather, the use of “romanz” to describe these texts points to their categorization according to linguistic criteria, reflecting the term’s origins as a marker of linguistic difference to distinguish French from Latin. Written in French rather than Latin, the saints’ lives found in the Campsey manuscript may all be labelled romances in this linguistic sense and would have been identified as such by a medieval reader. Yet, the manuscript’s French life of Saint Audrey (identified by the rubric: “La Vie seint Audree, noneyne de Ely,” fol. 100v) also bears similarities to romance in the modern scholarly sense since, as will be shown, the translation of its Latin source material utilizes elements that would become associated with the genre.

The reinscription of the Liber Eliensis for this audience in the idiom of romance manifests itself in part through the appropriation of themes and motifs typically associated with romances, including the Lais. The Audree simultaneously undergoes a process of romancing and unromancing as it reframes these romance elements within a hagiographical setting. For example, the description of the island of Ely, Audrey’s dower from her first husband Tondberht, echoes the account given of the island in Guigemar, to which the protagonist is brought after he is wounded. The Liber Eliensis describes Ely as a secluded refuge from the world. It is an “insula” (“island,” 502D), difficult to approach (“difficultate adeundi”), and surrounded by trees. The Audree also brings attention to the inaccessibility of Ely. It too is an “idle” (“island,” 752) with an abundance of water and trees surrounding it, but the Audree also takes particular care to note the only viable means of approach: “En l’entré et tot environ / Nul n’i entra si par nief non”

 (“At the entrance and all around the island, no one entered there except by boat,” 754-55). The inclusion of this detail might seem redundant. After all, Ely is an island, so unless the surrounding water is very shallow, the only way to access the island would be by boat. However, this singular means of approach serves the dual purpose of linking Ely to its doppelgänger in Guigemar and to other places of confinement in the Lais. The husband of the woman Guigemar falls in love with has constructed a fortress that is only accessible by water: “De l’autre part fu clos de mer; / Nuls ne pout eissir ne entrer / Si ceo ne fust od un batel” (“On the other side, it was enclosed by the sea. No one could exit or enter, except by boat,” 225-27). Although not a prison in name, this enclosure becomes a place of incarceration for Guigemar’s lover, similar in purpose to the tower in which the old and jealous husband locks up the heroine of Yonec for seven years. The inaccessible places of Guigemar and Yonec serve as prisons in which jealous older husbands keep their pretty, young wives, but this same motif in the Audree offers a sanctuary for Audrey from the bonds of marriage. Audrey’s first husband, Tondberht, gave Ely to her as a dower. Its solitude and abundance of water and trees (“plenté d’eaue et d’arbres,” 752) provide an Eden-like paradise for her. It is here that she retires after the death of Tondberht to dedicate herself wholly to God and where she flees her second husband Ecgfrith’s attempts to return her to married life. Ely, a “liu solitaire” (“solitary place,” 1291), offers a place “où il ne puisse aver reipaire” (“where he could not have any entrance,” 1291). She experiences “greignur duseur” and “greignur franchise” (“greater sweetness” and “greater freedom,” 1764). Though similar in description to the enclosed spaces of Guigemar and Yonec, Ely’s inaccessibility offers the opportunity for a spiritual liberty that permits Audrey, a mal mariée like those found in the

28 McCash and Barban point out the similarity between the similarity between the description of Ely and the lady’s enclosure in Guigemar in the notes to their edition and translation, but do not comment further upon the greater significance of this parallel (251).
Lais, to escape the bonds of her marriage to Ecgfrith. The Audree inverts the image of these mal mariées and their enclosed spaces. Secluded Ely and the cloisters of the religious house eventually established there become not prisons to be escaped or infiltrated by passing knights, but places of refuge and greater freedom.

A similar appropriation and inversion of elements from the Lais occurs in a description of the relationship between Audrey and Ecgfrith. Instead of sleeping with Ecgfrith at night, Audrey spends her evenings in prayer, a routine enabled by God’s intervention. Every night, when Ecgfrith lies in bed, eager to receive “son delit” (“his delight,” 931), God causes him to fall asleep. Thwarted and increasingly angered by his wife’s refusal to have sex, Ecgfrith devises “une cointise” (“a trick,” 970) to get his way by employing priests to persuade Audrey on his behalf. The jealous husband and nightly absences of the wife from bed of this episode in the Audree recall Laüstic. The mal mariée of the lai sneaks away every night to meet with a knight who lives next door. When asked about her absences, the wife explains to her suspicious husband that a singing nightingale keeps her awake. The husband schemes to trick (“enginnera,” 94) the nightingale and succeeds in trapping and killing it. The Audree recasts this narrative of jealousy within a hagiographic framework. Audrey plays the role of the insomniac wife, God her neighbor and lover-knight, and Ecgfrith the jealous husband. The husband in Laüstic succeeds in ending the relationship between his wife and neighbor, but Ecgfrith fails. His “cointise” instead compels Archbishop Wilfrid to encourage Audrey in her rebuffs. He cannot overcome her desire for God, her ever-present lover, or, for that matter, God’s own desire to preserve Audrey’s virginity as his effort to make Ecgfrith fall asleep, a detail not present in the Latin sources, makes

29 As with the previous parallel between the Audree and the Lais, McCash and Barbran point out the similarity, but do not discuss it further (251).
clear. In contrast to her counterpart in Laüstic, Audrey the mal mariée achieves the union portended by the appearance of her lover God, revealing the way in which the Audree incorporates and redirects the aim of romance narrative to suggest that the guarantee of a happy ending in love may only be achieved when its ultimate goal is God.

As this brief discussion has shown, the Audree draws on romance elements from the Lais, but the narrative setting of the poem directs them toward celestial, instead of carnal, love. The presence of these romance elements serves as an implicit recognition of the appeal of these tropes for its audience and suggests their importance in the translation and reinscription of the Liber Eliensis. Hagiography and romance blend together so seamlessly that June Hall McCash even categorizes the poem as a hagiographical romance. Such a designation points to one of the ways in which it adapts its source for a vernacular audience, but it does not contextualize these romance additions within the larger framework of the mechanics of the romance as a whole, that is, Marie’s translation of her Latin source. As Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Virginia Blanton have shown, the Audree develops the account of Audrey’s life considerably, giving a fuller portrait of her youth and marriages, so that her vita stands in greater balance with her posthumous miracles. The adaptation also attributes greater agency to Audrey. Although much emphasis has previously been laid upon the significance of these alterations for an audience of women, whether lay or religious, these additions have not been discussed in great length with regard to the genre of the Audree. Examination of these additions and amplifications – whether through the use of courtly language or emphasis upon agency – will demonstrate how Marie’s process of translation “romances” the Liber Eliensis by expanding upon its Latin source.

30 “La Vie de seinte Audree,” 761.
31 Wogan-Browne, “Rerouting the Dower” 32; Blanton 183.
This process of translation entails, in part, the use of courtly language, a feature especially evident in the expanded descriptions of Audrey’s relationships with her two husbands. The Audree utilizes the motifs and vocabulary associated with courtly love to illustrate the role of sexual desire in her marriages and to underscore its subsumption to spiritual love. Playing with the love from afar trope of romance, it presents the courtships of Tondberht and Ecgfrith in parallel terms in order to draw attention to Audrey’s increasing reputation for holiness. As a young woman, news of Audrey’s beauty, described in terms befitting a romance heroine, attracts many suitors including her future husband: “De sa bieuté et sa valur / Parloient mut li plusur, / Et loinz et pres [en] fu portee / La novele et la renomee” (“Many spoke often about her beauty and worth, and news and renown were brought far and near,” 267-70). In addition to being beautiful, Audrey also mimics the romance lady in her aloofness towards her suitor. Audrey’s beauty inspires a similar reaction in the Liber Eliensis, but the register of French as a language of romance capitalizes on the resonance of the scene with similar episodes in romances. She spurns her potential suitors and longs instead “pur la chambre […] / C’est le paleis [de] Jesu Crist” (“for the chamber … namely the palace of Jesus Christ,” 276-77). The description of Heaven as a palace lends a courtly air to the “thalamum” of the Liber Eliensis (“bridal bed,” I.4; 14). It casts Jesus as a nobleman equal in status to the ealdorman Tondberht. Furthermore, Audree’s description of Ecgfrith’s attempt to win Audrey’s hand in marriage draws once more upon the idea of her suitors falling in love with her from afar. In the Liber Eliensis, no motivation is given for Ecgfrith’s attraction to Audrey beyond desire: he is inflamed “in amorem” (I.8; 20). This motivation likens Ecgfrith to the pagan kings found in the lives of virgin martyrs, like the governor Olimbrius in the life of Margaret, providing a contextual clue to the path his marriage
with Audrey will eventually follow.\textsuperscript{32} The \textit{Audree}, by contrast, presents Ecgfrith as an admirer of Audrey’s virtue from the beginning.\textsuperscript{33} Just as Audrey’s “bieuté” and “valur” (“beauty” and “reputation,” 267) had attracted Tondberht, now the “victoire de sa bounté / Et de sa grant virginité” (“victory of her goodness and of her great virginity,” 774-75) spread “par tut le regne” (“throughout the realm,” 776). Ecgfrith is not inflamed by love, like his counterpart in the \textit{Liber Eliensis}, nor does Audrey’s physical beauty, now diminished by fasts and vigils,\textsuperscript{34} motivate him. Although the perfect courtly knight in every way – “pruz et vaillanz,” “courteis et larges a doner / Et mut vaillanz d’armes porter” (“brave and valiant,” “courteous and generous and very brave in bearing arms,” 849, 851-52) – he desires Audrey’s hand in marriage not for these things, but rather “pur les biens k’il oy de ly” (“for the good things he had heard about her,” 784). This inversion of the earlier courtship points to Audrey’s transformation from the beautiful daughter of the king of the East Angles, potential heroine of romance, into a potential saint. It also demonstrates how \textit{Audree} reinscribes fame within a hagiographical context as a messenger of spiritual, not just physical or earthly, goodness.

The \textit{Audree} also incorporates romance elements through the use of vocabulary found in romances and other genres of secular literature.\textsuperscript{35} For example, Audrey’s ability to remain chaste despite being married is considered by others to be a “grant merveillie” (326); the incorruptibility of Audrey’s body sixteen years after her death is referred to as “une aventure” (2011); the same

\textsuperscript{32} Cf. Olimbrius’ love for Margaret.

\textsuperscript{33} McCash and Barbran note that in \textit{Le Fresne} Gurun falls in love with Le Fresne because of the good things he has heard about her, but do not comment upon its similarity to Tondberht’s attractions to Audrey (251 n784).

\textsuperscript{34} “De jeüner et de vellier / S’amegri pur ly travaillier” (“Suffering for him [i.e. God], she grew thin from fasting and vigils,” 760-61).

term is used again to describe the experiences of Yma, Audrey’s former servant, who had been miraculously freed from the ropes with which his captors had bound him (2115). It would be tempting to dismiss these single word alterations to the Latin source as insignificant, but they testify, on a small scale, to the overarching romancing of the source material. With no equivalent in the Latin, these words transform the manifestations of the divine grace given to Audrey into marvels and adventures, like the appearance of a white stag at a feast, worthy of being recounted to religious and laity alike. These instances of courtly language lend what Logan E. Whalen calls a “descriptive energy” to the poem informed by the idiom of romance, demonstrating the interpenetration of hagiography and romance, so that the vita and miracles of Audrey are presented as a kind of romance with the saint as its heroine.

This notion of Audrey as the heroine of her romance brings us to one of the most important aspects of the Audree’s romancing of the Liber Eliensis: namely, the greater agency given to the saint. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has written about how the Audree uses Audrey’s virginity as a symbol of freedom, while Virginia Blanton notes that “Æthelthryth’s agency and active participation is [sic] foremost in this narrative.” Though she writes principally with regard to the Audree’s expanded account of Audrey’s life, her comment may also be applied to the collections of miracles that constitute the latter half of the poem and that have generally been neglected in recent scholarly discussions of the poem. In the miracle of Leffi and Lefta, for

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36 Merveille derives from the Latin mirabilia and refers to something that surprises (“chose qui étonne”). In turn, it may refer to the miraculous or the astonishing. The initial sense of aventure means fortune, but in the second half of the twelfth century, it starts being used in “romans de chevalerie” to describe an “action extraordinaire, mêlant le danger et le plaisir de la découverte” (Dictionnaire Historique de la langue française, ed. Alain Rey et al. 2 vols. (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1992) 2:1229-31; 1:150).


38 Blanton 194.
example, Audrey plays a more central role than in the Latin versions. Leffi and Lefta, a husband and wife who renege on an agreement to sell their land to the bishop of Ely, refuse to hand over the land and part of the money they received in payment. The Liber Eliensis gives a more detailed explanation of the agreement between the bishop and Leffi, as would be fitting given the chronicle’s concern with the rights and property of the community at Ely. The Audree, in the interest of space and perhaps the incompatibility of octosyllabic couplets for discussions of financial transactions, omits much of this information in order to focus attention upon the punishment dealt to the couple for their wicked dealings with the bishop. In the Liber Eliensis, Leffi dies “ultione divina fervente turpiter ac miserabiliter” (“basely and wretchedly, with divine vengeance boiling up,” II.11; 85). God’s vengeance is swift for Leffi, but the bishop pardons Lefta for the money owed to him. Audrey does not appear at all in the Latin version of the miracle. The Audree, in contrast, presents the actions of Leffi and Lefta as injustices committed not only in a general sense against Ely as an institution or the bishop, but as a particular offense against Audrey, who is specified as the recipient of the purchased land. The bishop gives the land “a seinte Audree” (“to Saint Audrey,” 2918) and, in turn, she, not God, acts as the distributor of vengeance: “Seinte Audree justise en fist” (“Saint Audrey punished them,” 2929; my emphasis). Leffi receives his deserts with a sudden death, but Lefta does not escape punishment, unlike her counterpart in the Liber Eliensis. Both husband and wife die “maveisement com faire durent” (“badly, as they ought to do,” 2932). This matter-of-fact addition to the Latin suggests dissatisfaction with the conclusion of the miracle insofar as their mutual responsibility for taking back the land ought to result in their equal punishment. Whereas the Latin version showcases the

39 This miracle can be found in Book II.11 of the Liber Eliensis. The abbreviated version of the Liber Eliensis preserved in Cotton Domitian A XV does not contain this miracle.

40 Leffi and Lefta are called Leofsige and Siflæd in the Liber Eliensis (II.11; 107-09).
mercy of the bishop in its treatment of Lefta, the Audree emphasizes Audrey’s role as the active and unwavering defender of Ely’s rights. Through these changes, it provides a more satisfying ending for the miracle, as well as greater agency for the patron saint of Ely.

The romancing of the Latin source material makes possible the alterations found in the Audree’s version of the miracle of Leffi and Lefta, as well as the other changes discussed above, because the process of translation creates a linguistic and narrative space in which the supposed defects of a source may be remedied or improved. In this way, anything that might be an impediment to the comprehension or enjoyment of the text’s new audience can be altered. As has been shown, ways of filling this space may include the integration of allusions on the narratological, such as the references to the Lais, or the lexical levels, like the use of romance vocabulary in a hagiographical context, in order to inscribe the translation in an idiom better able to draw the attention of the audience. It may also include shortening a text whose length might prove too taxing on the patience of the audience or lengthening a text through description to create a more detailed and memorable scene. We can see these facets of translation at work in the miracle of Leffi and Lefta, which is shorter, more vivid, and ultimately more satisfying as a whole than its Latin source. Its condensed narrative omits the lengthy discussion of Leffi’s wicked deeds and the judicial proceedings levied against him, producing a more compact story that maintains the overall sense and shape of the original, while also speeding up the narrative by virtue of its shortness so that the conclusion of the miracle has greater force. The introduction of Audrey into the French version puts a human face on the victimization of the monastery at the hands of Leffi and Lefta and, in turn, creates a more vivid account of the divine vengeance she wreaks. Lastly, the punishment of Lefta, who escapes retribution in the Liber Eliensis and whose fate is not mentioned at all in the Miracula section of Domitian A XV, provides a sense of completeness to Audrey’s act of vengeance given the complicity of both parties. Each of these
components works together to create a story that addresses a perceived inconsistency in its source and brings Audrey, the subject of the *vita*, to the forefront of the miracle.

Although scholars like Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Virginia Blanton have tended to focus on how its portrait of Audrey as an active and independent founder of churches and convents speaks to the audience of aristocratic women, lay and religious, for whom it may have been written, the *Audree*, as a translation, also demonstrates a concern with issues of doubt and skepticism arising from the question of whether the *aventures* and *merveilles* of Audrey’s holy life and miracles will be believed by an audience that must rely primarily on written *vitae* for evidence of their truth. Examination of two miracles dealing with this question – the miracle of the skeptical priest (2429-630) and the skeptical monk (4545-610) – will demonstrate how the *Audree* modifies its Latin source to clarify and enliven these miracles. In romancing her text, Marie attempts to eschew this doubt through the introduction of vivid details and direct speech to hook the interest of her audience and narrates beyond her historical and hagiographical sources. The paired miracles of the Dane and the priest who attempt to violate Audrey’s tomb provide especially striking examples of Marie’s effort to adapt her Latin source and indicate the shortcomings of hagiography as a means of representing reality.

The first miracle to be discussed is, in fact, a pair of miracles linked by their occurrence at Audrey’s tomb.\(^4^1\) During the Danish occupation of England in which Ely was pillaged, a devilish Dane (“satelles diaboli,” I.41; 519C) uses a hatchet to create a hole in Audrey’s tomb in the belief that it contains treasure. Divine justice is swift: the Dane loses his eyes and dies. The second miracle occurs some years later after the Danish threat has subsided and a group of

\[^{41}\] This miracle can be found in both the *Liber Eliensis* (I.43) and the abbreviated *Liber Eliensis* found in Cotton Domitian A XV.
clerics has returned to Ely. A certain priest, eager to learn whether the tomb still contains Audrey’s remains, uses the hole created by the Dane in the earlier miracle to see the saint’s body. He extracts a small piece of Audrey’s clothing, but, like the Dane, he too is struck blind and eventually dies.

The repetition of the motifs of the tomb, the hole, and blindness in these two miracles offers a textual diptych in which the Dane and the priest, both disbelievers, are presented as doubles of one another. The Dane, as a non-Christian, commits an act of sacrilege out of ignorance. Motivated by greed, he believes that the tomb contains “or ou argent” (“gold or silver,” 2434), unaware of the spiritual nature of its true treasure. The priest, on the other hand, knows about Audrey, but refuses to believe her efficacy as a saint. One of the priest’s companions attempts to dissuade him by relating five more miracles, but even these further testaments to her sanctity are futile. The Dane and the priest mirror one another in their disbelief and are similarly punished, but the priest’s persistent skepticism sets him apart from his pagan double, who knows nothing of Christianity, let alone Audrey.

The priest’s skepticism also echoes the doubtfulness of the apostle Thomas. Unwilling to believe in Jesus’ resurrection without physical proof, Thomas proclaims: “nisi videro in manibus eius figuram clavorum et mittam digitum meum in locum clavorum et mittam manum meam in latus eius non credam” (“I will not believe unless I see in his hands the impression of the nails

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42 Although identified as a priest in the Audree (“li malurez prestres,” 2541), the Liber Eliensis refers to the skeptical cleric as either a priest (e.g. “presbiter,” I.49) or an archpriest (e.g. “archipresbiter,” I.43).
43 In the Liber Eliensis’ account of this miracle (I.43), the priest additionally cites the Venerable Bede’s Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum (520F) as the source of his knowledge about Audrey. The five miracles recount Audrey’s cures of a crippled woman, a mute man, a blind girl, a young man with a paralyzed hand, and a girl with a stick lodged in her hand.
and put my finger in the place of the nails and my hand in his side,” John 20:25). Like Thomas, who has heard of Jesus’ resurrection from the other apostles, the priest has had the benefit of other evidence, but insists upon personally experiencing proof of Audrey’s presence. However, the stories from the old folks (“[d]es vieus les essamples,” 2554) are not enough. The hole, the “grand pertus” of Audrey’s tomb (“the large opening,” 2436), may be seen as an extension of Christ’s wounds, an absence that proves the occurrence of a miraculous event. Only after placing his hands and the tools within the tomb does the priest receive the proof he needs, albeit too late. The exemplum of the priest, like the story of doubting Thomas, suggests that the kind of proof sought by the priest is not available to everyone. Just as Jesus told Thomas that “vidisti me credisti: Beati qui non viderunt et crediderunt” (“You saw me and believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and believed,” John 20:29), Marie encourages her audience not to imitate the poking and prodding of the priest or even Thomas, but rather to believe by means of the text, “en cest escrit” (2523), just as she has.44 The skepticism of the priest anticipates that of the Audrey’s audience. They too have heard “des vieus les essamples” (“stories from the old folks,” 2554) and wish to experience Audrey’s power for themselves, but Marie offers the description of the priest’s miracle for the sake of this audience which has not seen so that they may experience the miracle of the tomb through her writing. Marie’s alterations to the Latin versions of the priest’s miracle produce a more vivid and convincing account of Audrey’s influence.

The enlivened description of the Audree is due in part to the abbreviation of the Latin source material and the selective use of direct speech. The Audree forms a stronger connection between the paired miracles of the Dane and the priest. It accomplishes this by reducing the

44 The hole created by the Dane which might have served as physical proof of the miracle does not appear to be visible any longer in Marie’s time since she does not include the Liber Eliensis’s statement that the hole can still be seen: “foramen efficitur, quod usque hodie manens cernitur” (“a hole is made which is still seen today,” 519D).
miracle of the Dane to its most salient features and omitting the intervening discussion of the genealogy of King Edgar. This abbreviation juxtaposes the accounts of the two disbelievers one after the other and underscores the similarities between them. The Audree does not often make use of direct speech or preserve it when it appears in the Latin, but it does so here in order to contrast the voice of faith, as represented by one of the priest’s companions, and the priest’s voice of skepticism. While the priest’s companion admonishes: “Pur nïent nos en duterons / K’enter ne soit le cors de li” (“We do not doubt at all that her body is intact,” 2548-49) and that the distrustful priest will soon see this is true (“ceo verrez vos,” 2551), the priest insists: “Ge pris mut poy / Des vieus les essamples ke g’oy. / Ore verrai si sa vesture / Est bien entiere et uncor dure” (“I pay little heed to the stories I have heard from the old. Now, I will see if her clothing is intact and still endures,” 2553-56; my emphasis). The shift in person between the speeches of the two men underscores that the priest (the singular *ge*) stands alone against the multitude represented by his companion’s *nos*. The priest’s speech gives voice to the skepticism of the reader, but it also makes clear which stance the reader ought to take. Direct speech also appears throughout the Liber Eliensis’ description, but it does not set up as strong an opposition between the priest and his companions. The Audree’s sparing use in this instance stresses the translation’s concern with issues of doubt and its efforts to bring the scene to life.

The more vivid description found in the Audree also owes much to the greater emphasis it places on Audrey’s victimization. In the Latin versions, the priest and his companions initially use fennel stalks (“surculos maratri,” 1.49; 60) to poke at Audrey’s body, and later the priest

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45 Liber Eliensis 1.42; Acta Sanctorum 1.87.
sharpens the end of one of them so that he can twist it to get a hold of her clothing.\textsuperscript{46} These fennel stalks have been replaced by iron hooks (“crocs de fer,” 2544) in the \textit{Audree}. The hooks imply intent to do harm to Audrey’s body,\textsuperscript{47} whereas the fennel stalks of the \textit{Liber Eliensis} are instruments of chance. They happen to be strewn across the floor around Audrey’s tomb: “surculos maratri, unde fuerat compita totius superficies pavimenti” (“fennel stalks with which the entire surface had been covered,” I.49; 60). The hooks of the \textit{Audree}, on the other hand, are brought by the priest and his companions explicitly for the purpose of disturbing Audrey’s resting place: “Al sarcu seinte Audree alerent: / Ou crocs de fer ke il porterent / Voleient acrocher le cors” (“They went to Saint Audrey’s tomb: with the iron hooks that they carried, they wanted to seize the body,” 2543-45). The substitution of the hooks for the stalks emphasizes the violent nature of the priest’s actions and stresses further the scene’s already implicit resemblance to a rape, as the priest breaches the “pertuis de la tombe” (“the opening of the tomb,” 2574) with “une verge” (“a rod,” 2573) to which he has attached a hook.\textsuperscript{48} The sense of this scene as a metaphorical rape is carried over from the Latin versions, but the \textit{Audree}’s alterations present Audrey more clearly as the victim of the priest’s penetrating hook and his unyielding pursuit of proof.

The \textit{Audree} simultaneously presents Audrey as the active defender of her tomb and her body. When the priest and his companions attempt to extract part of Audrey’s clothing, a miracle

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Maratri}, from \textit{maratrus}, is not commonly attested. Marie’s substitution of iron hooks may point, in part, to the fact that she did not know what the Latin word meant. See entry for “marathus” in \textit{Latin Dictionary}.

\textsuperscript{47} The use of hooks may also suggest an attempt to liken the priest to a devil since they are often depicted as wielding hooks. See, for example, the description of devils in the \textit{Espurgatoire seint Patriz}: “Autres diables vit parfait, / qui jetouent lur crocs amont, / de fer, ke crokier le voleient” (“He saw other devils below who throw their hooks up high in order to reach him,” 1395-97).

\textsuperscript{48} Amongst its many meanings, \textit{verge} may refer to the penis (see \textit{AND} “verge,” def. 8).
occurs as the body reacts or appears to react to their use of force. In the *Liber Eliensis*, Audrey’s clothing is pulled back into the tomb “quasi eam … duo fortissimo milites retraherent et quasi ipsa adhuc virgo sancta vivens eis dicere: ‘Nec Dei nec meam habeatis gratiam, quia ausi estis corrumpere sindonem meam’ (“as if two knights pulled her very strongly and as if the holy virgin were alive and saying to them: ‘You may not have the grace of God nor of me because you have dared to ruin my muslin,” I.49; 61; my emphasis). The *Audree* replaces these *quasi* semblances with concrete realities:

Puis ke seinte Audree senti
Ke l’em hostoit se[s] dras de li,
Si com li prestres reconta:
A sey les trait et resembla
A tel force, lur fu avis,
Com si mein d’home i eüst mis.
Et parla la virge dedenz
Si que bien oïrent les genz,
Et dist: “Vos n’avez mie espase
Ne de Deu ne de moi la grace
Ke vos depecez mon suaire.
Vos en avrez peine et contraire.” (2585-96)

Then Saint Audrey felt that someone was dragging her clothes from her, just as the priest said. She drew them to her and gathered them together with such force that it seemed to them as if the hand of a man had been there. The virgin inside heard the men and she said: “You do not at all have leave nor grace from God or from me to tear apart my shroud. You will have pain and illness.”

Audrey is identified explicitly as the force behind these actions. *She* feels her clothing being moved. *She* pulls it back with the strength of a man, as it seemed to them. *She* speaks directly to
the priest and his companions and warns them of the punishment to follow. The transference of these actions to Audrey endows her with a degree of agency absent from the Audree’s Latin counterpart. As the heroine of her own romance, she becomes the mistress of her own fate and not the passive victim of the priest’s metaphorical rape.

Audrey’s agency is a function of the processes of translation and of generic transformation. In the space created by “romanz,” Marie can narrate beyond her Latin hagiographical sources to present a livelier account of the miracle of the priest at the tomb. The _quasis_ of the Latin capture something of the mystery of the miracle by leaving the exact mechanisms behind it obscure in the ineffability of the divine. However, it does so at the expense of its representation of a definable reality. The hagiographical impulse of the _Liber Eliensis_ hesitates to explain too much and leaves open the possibility of the kind of skepticism represented by the figure of the priest. The Audree, in contrast, as part of its appeal to a non-latinate audience, renders the Latin in such a way that it presents a more concrete reality and leaves little room for misrepresentation or confusion, while still conveying something of the _merveille_ of the miracle. The _quasis_ of the Latin versions are transformed into undeniable occurrences and no doubt remains about what exactly happened or who did what. Driven by the descriptive impulse of romance, the Audree presents a more complete picture than that of the _Liber Eliensis_. The romanced translation, like the hole created by the Dane and used by the priest to spy upon Audrey’s body, pierces a hole through the Latin source and provides a space through which both “clers et lais” (“clergy and laity,” 2707) may look upon the body of Audrey and witness the miracle of the tomb for themselves, and learn from the example of the skeptical priest. The breaking of the text, implicit in translation, provides the wounds through which the audience may search for evidence of Audrey’s sanctity. The Audree’s enlivened account seeks to dispel the skepticism of any doubting Thomases in its presentation of a text that ought to serve as
proof enough of a miracle. Hagiography is a narrative mode ultimately defined by absence, always already incapable of narrating religious experiences because they lie beyond the scope of words, but romance, ever descriptive, may fill in the gaps.

The **Audree** concludes with a set of paired miracles that, like that of the Dane, priest, and the tomb, centers on the question of doubt, not only with regard to the power of Saint Audrey’s sanctity, but also to the power of the text to convince and effectively describe a miraculous event. The first miracle occurs during Audrey’s marriage to her first husband Tondberht. The framing miracle involves a monk at Ely who learns about the earlier miracle. This pair of miracles does not appear in the *Liber Eliensis*, but can be found in the collection of posthumous miracles sometimes referred to as the *Miracula Sancte Etheldrede*, which forms part of the vita printed in the *Acta Sanctorum*. By comparing the Latin and French versions, we can see that Marie creates a romanced account that narrates beyond the Latin and challenges its readers to believe the truthfulness of the miracle it relates.

The core of the nested narratives rests in the miracle occurring during Audrey’s lifetime. Tondberht enters Audrey’s chamber and becomes angry when she disagrees with him. He threatens her, but she makes no response other than to remove her gloves which remain suspended in midair in a ray of light. The quarrel quickly comes to an end and Tondberht begs for Audrey’s forgiveness. The miracle is curious for its lack of context – no indication is ever made for why Tondberht is angry with Audrey or when it takes place within their marriage. Was this the first time Tondberht became truly aware of Audrey’s special relationship with God? We

49 *Acta Sanctorum*, 15.158-64. Citations from the *Acta Sanctorum*’s transcription of Cotton Domitian A XV are located according to their capitula. Rupert Pickens’ textual analysis of the Latin sources of the *Audree* incorrectly identifys §158-61 as the relevant sections of the *Acta Sanctorum*. 
do not know and, to a degree, it does not matter in the context of the hagiographic narrative because the miracle’s purpose lies primarily in its display of the special grace given to Audrey by God, a motivation stated outright in both the *Miracula* and the *Audree*. Tondberht initially threatens Audrey not out of personal anger or the undue influence of the devil (“non instinctu inimici et fraude maligna,” 576A), but so that the height of their merits (“altitudo utriusque meritorum,” 576A) can be exposed. The *Audree* similarly identifies the impetus of Tondberht’s anger as an effort to “mustrier de Deu la gloire / Et de la virge sa victoire” (“to show the glory of God and the victory of the virgin,” 4595-96), not in “d’ovre d’enemi” (“the work of the enemy,” 4594). Regardless of the surrounding circumstances, the event’s importance lies not in the insight it gives the audience into the lives of Audrey and Tondberht as husband and wife, but in the spectacle of the miracle and the portraits of holiness it provides.

This miracle is framed in both versions by another miracle story featuring a monk at Ely. The monk hears the miracle of Audrey and the gloves from another monk in the Latin version, but the monk reads the story himself in the French version. That night, he experiences a miracle of his own. In the Latin version, the monk hears an unidentified voice assuring him that the miracle that he has decided to record in writing because it is “memoriale ac dignum” (575E) is true. In the *Audree*, Audrey herself appears to the monk and tells him to accept the miracle “pur verité” (“as truth,” 4604). In both versions, the monk’s frame miracle legitimates the authenticity of the miracle of Audrey’s gloves, while at the same time presenting another testament to Audrey’s saintliness. However, although the Latin and French versions demonstrate

50 In the Latin count, the divine catalyst for Tondberht’s anger is revealed immediately after the quarrel begins, but, in the *Audree*, this revelation is delayed until the conclusion of the miracle when Tondberht begs for Audrey’s mercy.

51 In the Latin version of the story, only one glove appears in the miracle.
a concerted effort to validate the truthfulness of the miracle, as in the miracle of the Dane and the
priest, the approaches taken in the two texts diverge considerably because of their different
generic impulses.

The Latin version presents a detailed portrait of the monk at Ely found in the framing
miracle. We learn that the monk being described by the narrator of the account is a “fidelis”
person: “cujus maturitas seu morum honestas non sineret illum vel mendaciter confingere … vel
quasi figmentum fallendo assere” (“whose maturity or integrity of character would not permit
him to falsely fabricate or to assert a fiction by lying,” 158). In other words, the monk is
presented as the perfect narrator for this hagiographical account. Reliable and trustworthy, he is
unlikely to resort to the flourishes of fiction to embellish his account. Such a portrait is necessary
to establish the reputability of the monk through whose first person report the paired miracles are
described. The compiler of the Miracula steps aside from his role as narrator to defer to the
personal testimony of this upstanding monk, lest his audience should refuse to believe it
(“advertat fidelis auditor, ne credere detrectet,” “let the faithful listener turn his attention, lest he
should refuse to believe,” 158). The eyewitness account, coming from such a person and
reported in the first person, in turn, lends additional credibility to the miracle. This shift in
narrators anticipates the audience’s disbelief concerning not only the frame miracle personally
experienced by the monk, but also the core miracle of Audrey and the glove, the strangeness of
which is referred to throughout. It is called a “spectaculum magnum” (“a great spectacle,” 161),
the likes of which has never been seen or heard: “maxime cum nemini ante a seculo tale quid
videre vel audire contigerit” (“especially since such a thing has not happened to anyone before
from this world,” 161). Its novelty renders it almost inconceivable. The monk, who hears this
story read to him in English by another monk, is so inspired by this “insolitum et inauditum”
thing that he decides to write it down in Latin (“unusual and incredible,” 162). However, his
fears that others will not believe the account and will mock it (“irridebunt,” 164) and judge it to be empty or frivolous (“vacuum,” “frivolum”) cause him to waver about whether he ought to write it down. This lingering doubt provides the impetus for his own miracle, in which an unidentified voice commands him: “Certus esto et fideliter crede quod quomodo exarasti stylo, sic dudum evenit in re et verum fuit” (“Be certain and faithfully believe what you have written down with your stylus. It happened thus a short time ago and was true,” 164). The voice confirms the validity of the miracle and likens the monk’s account to a divine revelation since the monk credits the voice to God and Saint Audrey.

This legitimacy is appropriated by the compiler of the Miracula collection, who assures his own readers that he has followed the monk’s account exactly. These measures are in keeping with the concern of this pair of miracles with establishing the validity of the core miracle in light of its uniqueness, which serves as a source of doubt. Although the monk intrinsically believes the miracle is true, the implicit awe and marvel of the hagiographical account is tempered by doubt whether it will be believed by others when it is recorded. To counter this doubt, scrutiny falls on the credibility of the monk witness, but in doing so, it also dwells on the tension between the legitimacy of the miracle and its very miraculousness. Even after the miracle’s legitimacy is confirmed by the voice, this anxiety about its veracity permeates the miracle because the monk wonders afterwards if it was a “somnium” or a “phantasma” (“dream,” “phantom,” 164). The monk concludes that it was divinely inspired, but the ambiguity of the confirming frame miracle remains. The voice is never identified outright in the hesitation of the Miracula to narrate beyond the eyewitness’ account and to explain the inexplicable. Though introduced to remove doubt, the eyewitness instead creates it. Striving to eliminate the intrusion of the fictional, the monk detracts from the marvel, ultimately undoing what he had sought to do.
The description of this pair of miracles in the Audree is also concerned with the question of doubt. Though described as a “bon moine” (“good monk,” 4545), the monk of the frame miracle is not portrayed as the reliable narrator of the two miracles as in the Latin version, but instead as the skeptical reader. Gone are the assurances about his upstanding character, as well as many of the extraneous details found in the Latin version. The Audree streamlines the pair of miracles, as Marie does with many of the details found in her Latin sources, leaving only the most essential elements: the monk, the quarrel between husband and wife, and the gloves in the ray of light. Gone as well are the statements about the novelty of the miracle of Audrey’s gloves. It is acknowledged as a “bieu miracle” (“fine miracle,” 4551) and accepted for what it is, removing the need to legitimate the miracle through the character of its teller. Whereas the monk narrator of the miracle had tentatively posited the catalyst for Tondberht’s anger as the will of God with a hesitant “credo” (“I believe,” 160), the Audree asserts this as an unwavering truth: “Icist coruz dont ge vos di / Ne vint pas d’ovre d’enemi, / Mes pur mustrier de Deu la gloire / Et de la virge sa victoire” (“The anger of which I speak came not from the work of the Enemy, but to show the glory of God and the victory of the virgin,” 4593-96). Where the Latin Miracula leaves open the possibility of doubt, confusion, or ambiguity, the Audree elides that gap and nowhere is this more evident than in the description of the frame miracle.

In the Audree, the monk does not hear the story from another monk, but finds the miracle in “un livre” (“a book,” 4548) containing an English vita of Audrey. However, after reading it, he does not think the miracle is true and, as such, stands in contrast to his counterpart in the Latin version: “Cist moine ke leut en sa vie / Ce miracle ne creoit mie” (“This monk, who read her life, did not believe this miracle at all,” 4597-98). In his disbelief, the monk mirrors the skeptical priest of the tomb miracle who continued to doubt Audrey’s power to perform miracles, despite the evidence he had heard to the contrary, an instance of narrative doubling that links the paired
miracles and is not found in the Latin versions. The oral stories heard by the priest have their counterpart in the monk’s “livre.” The Audree, as such, portrays the monk and the priest as doubles of one another and, just as the expression of doubt by the priest provided the catalyst for the miraculous in the earlier story, here too the divine rebuffs the skepticism of the monk. Audrey appears to him as he lies in bed and tells him not to have any “dotance / Del miracle ne mecreance” he read in the book (“doubt or disbelief about the miracle,” 4602-03). The disembodied voice of the Latin version, which seems to come from someone standing nearby (“quasi de adstante aliquot,” 164), is replaced by the unequivocal appearance of Audrey herself, a point which the Audree is especially keen to emphasize: “Bien le seût pur verité / ke c’estoit ele, seinte Audree, / ke a li estoit demonstree” (“He knew it well, in truth, that it was she, Saint Audrey, who had shown herself to him,” 4604-06). The somnium or phantasma debate of the Miracula is dispelled completely, as is the ambiguity concerning the source of the voice. The Audree alters any possible moments of obscurity in the miracle that could serve as nodes for doubt for its audience and replaces them with certainties. In so doing, Marie creates a more fleshed out, visual, and memorable account of the monk’s miracle.

Although the Audree follows its Latin source by concluding the account of Audrey’s life and miracles with this story of the skeptical monk who is made to believe, it is nevertheless fitting that the poem ends with a miracle about a doubtful reader. As has been demonstrated, the text resitutes the focus of the miracle from the writer who worries that its novelty will be derided to the reader who finds himself unable to believe the story he has read “en un livre” (“in a book,” 4548). This change implies a particular concern with how this miracle and, by extension, the poem as a whole will be received by its audience. Just as the monk resembles the priest at Audrey’s tomb from the earlier miracle, the poem positions the audience of the Audree as a reflection of the monk. Audrey’s admonition to her monkish reader in the miracle, in turn,
applies to those reading or listening to both this miracle and to her French adaptation as a whole. Marie speaks through the voice of Audrey, reaching through the text to touch the reader. They too must accept the miracle and the Audree “pur verité” (“as the truth,” 4604) and not have any “dotance” or “mecreance” (“doubt,” 4601; “suspicion,” 4602).

The romancing of the Liber Eliensis – the introduction of narrative elements from courtly literature, the use of courtly language to describe the miraculous, and the greater agency given to Audrey – come together to quell any doubt about the veracity of the poem and, in turn, about the efficacy of Audrey as a saint in life and death. These intertwined elements of the poem’s translation produce a more memorable account because of its resonances with romance as a genre, whose concern with description engenders the Audree’s lively expansions of its Latin source not only in the case of the miracle of the monk, but throughout the entirety of the poem. The poem’s increased focus on Audrey’s life and specifically her marriages casts the saint as a mal mariée, like the women of the Lais, while the greater agency given to Audrey in the miracles as the protector of Ely and her own sanctity position her as the heroine of the Audree’s hagiographical romance. Determined that Audrey’s life and miracles should not be forgotten (“Ne voil nul mettre en obli,” 4616), this romanced version of Audrey emerges from the vagaries and obscurities of the Latin source material, whether the dark tomb of the saint or the chamber of a sleeping monk, as the central figure of the Audree’s more memorable and vivid narrative. The Audree’s alterations help to imprint its portrait of Audrey in the hearts and minds of those who read Marie’s livre, like the monk of Ely, or those who have it read to them, like the women of Campsey Priory.
Espurgatoire Seint Patriz and Penitential Romance

The prologue to the Espurgatoire Seint Patriz outlines Marie’s purpose in translating the Latin

Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii into French:^52

voil en romanz mettre en escrit,

si cum(e) li livres le nus dit,

en remembrance e en memoire,

des peines de l’Espurgatoire

k’a Seint Patriz volt Deus mustrer

le liu ou l’om i deit entrer. (3-8)

I wanted to put into writing in French, in remembrance and memory, the pains of purgatory, just as the book tells us, which God wanted to show to Saint Patrick, namely, the place where man must enter.

Though desiring to be very faithful in the translation of its source “en romanz” (“into French,” 3), the Espurgatoire’s process of translation, for all of the simplicity and straightforwardness of this claim, is more nuanced. It consists of not one single translation, but rather of multiple translations. Linked by parallel phrasing, the linguistic exchange from Latin into French is bound to the transference of written material from one physical form into another, that is from “li livres” (“the book”) of its source to the vernacular version “en escrit” (“in writing”), as well as to the translation from a physical form (“en escrit”) to an intangible one (“en remembrance e en memoire,” 5). These three translations are, in turn, extensions of the poem’s overarching translation: the Espurgatoire’s attempt to capture the experience of the knight Owein in Saint Patrick’s Purgatory in a written form so that the audience can experience the pains of purgatory in place of their own personal pilgrimages there. Using the space created through translation “en

romanz,” the *Espurgatoire* opens the Latin *Tractatus* to encompass its vernacular lay audience and its unclerky narrator Marie. This allows for the inscription of the audience within the text, expanding the *Tractatus*’ sphere of influence beyond the cloister. Although its Latin source already possesses some romance aspects, Marie’s *Espurgatoire* amplifies the narrative’s identity as a romance through the modifications made to the account of Owein’s pilgrimage to purgatory, which forms the core of the Latin treatise. The *Espurgatoire* asserts more strongly Owein’s status as a layman and knight, suggesting its similarity to the subset genre referred to by Andrea Hopkins as penitential romance.53 Owein’s penitential journey to purgatory mirrors Marie’s translation of her Latin source and pursuit of penance, thereby casting the writing and translation process as a romance unto itself.

The Latin *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* was an immensely popular text during the Middle Ages.54 Surviving in over 150 manuscripts and numerous vernacular translations, including the *Espurgatoire*, the *Tractatus* describes the pilgrimage of an Irish knight named Owein to Saint Patrick’s Purgatory as related to the monk H. by Gilbert, a monk with whom Owein had worked. H., a monk at Sawtry Abbey, wrote the account at the request of the abbot of Saint Mary de Sartis by 1185/86 and possibly as early as 1173.55 It circulates in two redactions: a short (α) and a long version (β). The α redaction is generally held to be most representative of


H.’s original text and the β redaction a later expansion, though Robert Easting has argued for the primacy of the longer version. Composed in the late twelfth century, the Espurgatoire, the oldest of the extant French verse versions of the Tractatus, is largely a translation of the α redaction, but it also includes elements from the long version. Its exemplar, which has not survived, may have been a composite version.

Part of the Tractatus’ widespread popularity lies in the resemblance of its narrative to romance and the figure of Owein the knight, features also passed down to the Espurgatoire. Excluding the non-narrative material at the beginning, which relates the origins of Saint Patrick’s Purgatory, the remainder of the text focuses on a protagonist who is referred to repeatedly as a knight, whether as a “miles” (136) in the Tractatus or as “li chevaliers” (671) in the Espurgatoire. He embarks on a pilgrimage that resembles a quest and his name even evokes that of the Arthurian knight Yvain. Owein’s experiences in purgatory and earthly paradise are not

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58 For a table of the omissions and additions, as well as a summary of the Espurgatoire, see Pontfarcy 2-4.


60 This question of onomastics has been a concern of scholars of the Tractatus and Espurgatoire for many years. See, for example, J.-B.-B. de Roquefort, Poesies de Marie de France, Poete Anglo-Normand du XIIIe siécle ou
very similar to the adventures of Chrétien de Troyes’ similarly named hero (though his lion companion would have proven a very helpful asset in dealing with the demons), but the

*Tractatus*’ supernatural otherworld does share several similarities with the landscape of the romance tradition. For example, the perilous bridge of the tenth torment, which Owein must cross to reach earthly paradise, recalls the sword bridge of Chrétien de Troyes’ *Lancelot*, while the “desert” and “lius gastez” (“wilderness” and “wasteland,” 305; “in locum desertum”) surrounding the entrance to Saint Patrick’s Purgatory echo the barrenness of “la gaste forest soutaine” (75) where Perceval and his mother live at the beginning of the *Conte du Graal*. In light of this latter similarity, R. Howard Bloch describes the *Espurgatoire* as a text written “in the mode of a Grail romance.” The interplay of sacred and secular motifs, its Irish knight, and Owein’s utterance of the Lord’s name to thwart the demons of purgatory follow in the wake of Chrétien’s naïve Welsh knight, whose inability to discern between situations necessitating and not necessitating speech during the procession of the grail prevents him from ending the suffering of the Fisher King and restoring his kingdom. Bloch’s argument stems largely from the *Espurgatoire*, but these correspondences originate from the *Tractatus* and are likely to have played an important role in Marie’s decision to adapt it. That she recognized the Latin text’s resemblance to and potential as a romance is registered in her description of her translation as a “cunte” (91) and of the pilgrimage to purgatory as an “aventure” (499), two terms which evoke

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the fictional and marvel-filled accounts of the romance genre. The Espurgatoire heightens the Tractatus’ romance impulse present in its contents by altering its outward form. Translated from Latin into French and rendered from prose into octosyllabic rhyming couplets, the Tractatus is made over in the language and verse form of the romance genre’s origins.

But for all of its similarity to a romance and any inclination we may have to quickly baptize it as such, the text is first and foremost a religious treatise on purgatory. The catalyst for the aventure of the Tractatus and the Espurgatoire is not the appearance of a white stag or the whims of a king eager for entertainment, but penance. Owein, while serving as a knight to an unidentified Irish king, has committed acts “contre Deu en grant cruelté” (“against God in great cruelty,” 514). The exact nature of Owein’s sins is never explained, but they warrant a hefty penance and cannot be atoned for “legierement” (“lightly,” 531). He seeks a “digne penitence” (“worthy penance,” 523) and Saint Patrick’s Purgatory, “la plus grieve penitence” (“the most severe penance,” 536), presents what Owein believes to be the most fitting punishment for his wickedness. Although the bishop to whom Owein makes his confession suggests that he become a monk or canon, Owein rejects this possibility, seeking to undertake the dangerous pilgrimage to purgatory. Becoming a monk later remains a possibility, but for now Owein wishes to continue as a knight: “ja autre habit n’en recevra, / fors tel cume l’aveit eü / de cil k’il ait cel liu veü” (“He will not receive another habit except the one he had until he had seen that place,” 556-557).

63 The Old French conte generally designates a true story and does not begin being used to indicate a fabrication until the seventeenth century. However, in the medieval period, conte is sometimes used to refer to stories that distract, as well as to popular tales (Dictionnaire Historique de la langue française 1:485). Denis Piramus uses it in this sense in his life of Saint Edmund (“cuntes, chanceuns e fables,” “tales, songs, and stories,” 51). For a discussion of the connotations of aventure, see p. 114.

64 The earliest medieval romances, the romans d’antiquité, were composed in octosyllabic couplets. This verse form “dominate[s] the linear narrative of romance, but occasionally give[s] way to ten- or twelve-syllable lines and epic or lyric stanzas” (Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, “The Shape of Romance in Medieval France,” The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance, ed. Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 13.
The rationale behind Owein’s insistence upon this status is not stated outright, but it seems to be linked to his desire for physical penance. Only corporal punishment, hurt for hurt, could make adequate atonement. It does not suffice to join a monastery and trade the knight’s helmet for the monk’s cowl since he committed his sins as a knight and must therefore expiate them in the same role. Pricked by compunction, Owein sets forth not as a monk but as a knight into Saint Patrick’s Purgatory and transforms what had been a moral treatise about the afterlife into a romance.

Something of this generic hybridity is evident in the single extant manuscript of the Espurgatoire, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 25407. Dating from the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century, the manuscript has three distinct units within its 244 folios. A catchword on the final folio of the manuscript, as well as other codicological evidence, indicate that the Espurgatoire formed part of a separate manuscript containing: the Tournoiement Antechrist, the Espurgatoire, Les Moralitez, and the Roman des Romans.

Forming Manuscript B, these items were preceded by Manuscript A containing Gauthier de

65 The α and β redactions express similar sentiments. Owein will not become a monk “donec prefatum intrasset purgatorium” (“until he has entered the aforesaid purgatory,” Warnke 40.39-40).
67 Pontfarcy and Shields. Beckerlegge, though noting that the manuscript is written in four different hands, gives no indication that he thought the manuscript was a composite (Le Secré de Secrez xxv-xl).
68 The catchword, found at the end of the Tournoiement Antechrist, comprises the first line of the Espurgatoire (“Al nun de deu qui od nus sejt”), indicating that it was meant to precede the Espurgatoire instead of being the manuscript’s final item.
69 These designations for the manuscript units forming Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 25407 have been adapted from Pontfarcy and Shields.
Metz’s *Image du Monde*, which has been copied in a different hand according to T.A. Jenkins, and followed by Manuscript C, containing Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 25407’s remaining items. It is unclear when the manuscripts were bound together.

The *Espurgatoire*’s textual neighbors in Manuscript B provide some insight into how its compiler interpreted the genre of this poem. The overarching moral and didactic character of the composite manuscript as a whole is reflected on a smaller scale in the contents of Manuscript B. Huon de Méry’s allegorical battle of the vices and the virtues in the *Tournoiement Antechrist* provides a fitting partner to Owein’s efforts to thwart the devils of purgatory in the *Espurgatoire*. These chivalric texts stand in counterpoint to the sedate *sententiae* of the *Moralitez*, a translation of the *Moralium Dogma Philosophorum* often mistakenly attributed to William of Conches, and the satirical critique of church and clergy found in the stanzas of *Le Roman des Romans*. Taken as a whole, the contents of Manuscript B suggest its role as a miscellaneous compendium of instructional texts intended to nurture the faith of its owner. The juxtaposition of these items in Manuscript B values the *Espurgatoire* within this informal program of religious instruction as an eyewitness account of the perils of purgatory and as a warning about the repercussions of sin. In addition to the religio-didactic functions of the *Espurgatoire*, the manuscript context also draws attention to the poem’s identification as a

70 Jenkins 18.

71 Pontfarcy gives the order of the items within Manuscript C (currently bound as items 5-10) as the *Credo, Paternoster, Le Livre de Sibile*, the sayings of Jesus to his mother, *Le Secré de Secrez*, and the *Distichs of Cato* (21). Hugh Shields suggests an alternative order for the items in the manuscript (xxx-xxxvii).


romance in its pairing with the *Tournoiement Antechrist*. Both poems convey their didactic messages dressed in the trappings of chivalric culture. While the psychomachia of the *Tournoiement* lends action and vigor to the daily psychological struggle between good and evil, the *Espurgatoire* adds an element of adventure to the contemplative experience of the pilgrimage to Saint Patrick’s purgatory. The placement of the *Espurgatoire* alongside the *Tournoiement*, as such, points to the blending of didacticism and entertainment in Marie’s poem and suggests the fluidity of its genre identity.

The blend of religious and romance elements found in the *Tractatus* and the *Espurgatoire* bears many similarities to a group of texts designated by Andrea Hopkins as penitential romances. Although she uses the term more specifically to refer to a group of Middle English romances that focuses on the sinfulness, penance, and redemption of their protagonists, she recognizes the importance of this theme in discrete episodes in other English romances as well.\(^74\) Piety forms part of the dossier of many romance heroes alongside generosity, courtliness, and beauty, but the penitential romances foreground the sinfulness of their heroes and describe how they come to realize the gravity of their sins, resolve to make amends for them, and achieve atonement. The *aventure* of the penitential romance is about the journey to redemption, which is often very physical in nature. In the Middle English *Sir Isumbras*, for example, the hero is punished for his pride by the loss of his family and his worldly possessions.\(^75\) Isumbras’ chivalric status forms an important part of his penitential journey. At the beginning of this road

\(^74\) Hopkins (*The Sinful Knights*) analyzes in detail the Middle English romances *Guy of Warwick*, *Sir Isumbras*, *Sir Gowther*, and *Robert of Sicily*. In Appendix A, she briefly examines penitential episodes in the Middle English romances *Valentine and Orson*, *Melusine*, *Athelston*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

to redemption, he carves a cross into his shoulder, marking himself as a pilgrim and a crusading knight of Christ. He works as a blacksmith’s apprentice for seven years and forges his own armor. He then engages in battle against the sultan who took his wife. His is a faith that sweats and bleeds and translates the sacrament of penance within a chivalric context, a notion that clearly appealed to its readers, as evidenced by the nine extant copies of the romance.

The generic hybridity of the *Tractatus* and *Espurgatoire* shares some striking similarities with these penitential romances. Like Isumbras, Owein strives to atone for his sins corporally. While seeking to make amends for his *cruelté* against God, he endures a penance from which some never return. Saint Patrick’s Purgatory may be a visionary experience, but its pilgrims nevertheless feel it in a very bodily way. As he navigates its ten torments, Owein must deal with devils that poke at him with iron hooks and bind him to flaming wheels, a freezing wind that threatens to plunge him into equally freezing water, and a bridge that seems too unstable, too narrow, and too tall to cross. He fights against his fiendish foes as a knight equipped with the spiritual weapons of the Pauline tradition.\(^76\) Like the soldier of faith in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, Owein is armed “de fei e de bone Esperance / e de justice e de creance” (“with good faith, good hope, justice, and belief,” 657-58), and carries the “espeie … del Seint Espirit … c’est la parole Jhesu Crist” (“the sword of the Holy Spirit, namely the word Jesus Christ,” 805, 807). However, although armed in such a manner, Owein does not physically wield these spiritual weapons. They are meant to stand in contrast to the “armes de fer” he used in the service of his king (“iron weapons,” 652), and represent a new kind of knighthood in which the

sword is not a death-dealing blade, but the name of the knight’s savior, the utterance of which dispels the demons and protects him from the ten torments of purgatory. The sword that overcomes them is a repeated meditation on the name of God. The spiritual nature of Owein’s weapons and his demon enemies distinguishes the Tractatus and Espurgatoire from Isumbras’ battles against the Saracens in his handmade armor, but in both cases physicality underlies the pursuit of harsh penance found in these works and frames the struggles of their sinner-knights within the genre of romance. Owein expiates his sins, if not in the physical trappings of a knight, then in the mode of one.

The Tractatus and Espurgatoire’s inscription of penance as a chivalric act demonstrates the affinity of these two texts with penitential romance. Although Hopkins does not comment on the Tractatus and Espurgatoire in her study, it is possible that the Saint Patrick’s Purgatory tradition may have inspired the development of her subgroup of romances. Such potential influence, however, does not preclude the recognition of the intertextual links between these traditions. These similarities extend not only to Owein’s marvel-filled quest in purgatory, but also to the conclusion of the narrative. In the penitential romances, the physical endurance and suffering of the hero generally result in the restoration of his relationship with God and of the way of life that he has lost or left behind during his penitential quest, the sort of happy ending one traditionally associates with romance. After an angel tells Isumbras his sins have been forgiven, he reunites with his family, conquers several kingdoms, and converts their pagan inhabitants. His act of penance proves fruitful both spiritually and monetarily as, by the end of the poem, “Thenne was þe kynge sir Ysumbras / Of mare welthe þan he euer was” (793-94). While the legend of Saint Eustace on which the story of Isumbras draws concludes with the reunion of the saint and his family, promptly followed by their martyrdom at the hands of their pagan persecutors, Isumbras’ suffering is rewarded with a king’s crown rather than a martyr’s
palm. The poem exploits the pathos of this hagiographic narrative, but its resolution ultimately asserts the primacy of romance and its chivalric ethos.

The conclusion of Owein’s story in the *Tractatus* and *Espurgatoire* also stresses Owein’s identity as a knight. Having survived his penitential ordeal and gone to the Holy Land, Owein faces the prospect of the monastic vocation presented as a possibility in his confession to the bishop. In many ways, his dilemma reflects the situation of other knights whose sins or the propensity of their profession for sin weighed on their consciences and led them to become monks. For example, Evrard II, Viscount of Chartres, disposed of his worldly possessions, went on pilgrimage, and became a monk in 1073 at the abbey of Marmoutier after realizing that “nil aliud quam damnaire et dampanari, foedare et foedari in seculo faceret” (“he was doing nothing else in the world but destroying and being destroyed, polluting and being polluted”). 77 Similarly, the knight Odardus entered the monastery at Jumièges after returning from Jerusalem. 78 For Evrard and Odardus, pilgrimage, whether of the spiritual or martial variety, precedes the decision to become a monk. Owein likewise undergoes two pilgrimages leading up to his own potential conversion, firstly to Saint Patrick’s Purgatory and, secondly, to Jerusalem. The *Espurgatoire* makes it clear that he does so as a crusader, while the two redactions of the *Tractatus* imply that he visits the holy city principally as a pilgrim. 79


79 The *Espurgatoire* reads: “En honur Deu sun creatur / croiser se fist par grant amur” (“In honor of God, his creator, he took the cross for great love,” 1913-14). *Tractatus* a notes: “Sicque, cruce in humero suscepita, Iherosolimam perrexit” (“And thus, have received the cross on his shoulder, he went to Jerusalem,” 138.1) and
monasteries suggests the inadequacy of pilgrimage as a sufficient means of atonement for their past transgressions. Christopher Harper-Bill has shown that this attitude was especially common in the eleventh century among Anglo-Norman knights for whom monastic conversion was seen as the most appropriate, if not the only, way to make amends for their careers of violence. Many waited until old age or infirmity to become monks, but it was not unknown for younger knights with their best years ahead of them to enter, as the examples of Everard and Odardus attest. In his desire for penance and his chivalric identity, Owein resembles contemporary knights who turned to the monastery in pursuit of salvation when no other path seemed available to them. However, though a plausible and historically accurate option, Owein does not enter a monastery. This detail, found in both the *Tractatus* and *Espurgatoire*, suggests the viability of knighthood as an alternative to monkhood, and the *Espurgatoire* places particular emphasis on this theme, as its descriptions of Owein’s discussion with the king, his work with the Cistercian monks, and his death illustrate.

The *Espurgatoire* significantly expands the Latin account of Owein’s conversation with the king after he returns from Jerusalem about whether he ought to remain a knight or become a monk in order to assert the legitimacy of knighthood as a vocation. This is accomplished in part by the scene’s allusions to and inversion of Owein’s earlier confession to the bishop before his descent into Saint Patrick’s Purgatory. He gives a thorough account to the king of his doings

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*Tractatus* β reads: “Deinde, signo domine crucis in humero suscepto, dominici corporis sepulchrum Iherosolimis usitare perrexit” (“Then, having undertaken the sign of the Lord’s cross on his shoulder, he went to visit the tomb of the Lord’s body in Jerusalem,” 138.1). If Owein was a knight during the reign of King Stephen and went on crusade, as the *Espurgatoire* says, he would have participated in the Second Crusade, the primary aim of which was to restore the crusader state of Edessa.

during his absence, revealing “tut en ordre … de sa vie la verité,” as if detailing his sins to a priest (“the truth about his life, all in order,” 1921-22). However, whereas the bishop had sought to convince Owein to join a monastery in the first confessional scene, the king urges his vassal to remain a knight in this second pseudo-confessional scene. The brief description of their meeting in the *Tractatus* lacks this resemblance and also gives no indication of the king’s advice: “Et inde rediens regem, dominum suum, consulturus adiit, ut eius consilio secundum religionis ordinem exinde uiuueret quem rex ipse illi laudaret” (“And returning to his lord the king, he came to take counsel so that by his advice he might live from then on in a religious order of which the king might approve,” 138.21.1). 81 Although the king’s answer to Owein’s dilemma is implied in the *Tractatus* insofar as Owein does not become a monk, the *Espurgatoire* states it outright, thereby clarifying an obscure point in its source and drawing attention to the advice Owein receives. The king tells Owein that “chevaliers sei, si cum il fu” (“he should be a knight, just as he was,” 1928) and that “en ço poeit (il) Deu bien servir” (“he could serve God well in that (estate),” 1930). Owein ostensibly comes to the king seeking advice about what religious order to join, but the king instead calls him to return to the chivalric life. The king’s role as Owein’s secular confessor authorizes knighthood as a valid way of doing God’s work and asserts that a knight, though liegeman to a secular lord, could also serve God and the Church.

The *Espurgatoire*’s alterations to the account of Owein’s work as a translator with the Cistercian monks further underscore Owein’s continued status as knight. Although this episode

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81 The longer Latin version (β), which does not differ significantly in content, reads: “Et inde rediens, regem, dominum suum, cui prius familiaris exitierat, utpote uitium industrium et prudentem adiit, quatimus eiusmodi quem sibi consuleret ipsi religionis habitum susciperet” (“And returning from Jerusalem to his lord the king, with whom he had previously been intimate, he came as an industrious and sensible man in order to receive the habit of whichever order the king might advise,” 138.21.1). Like the short version of the *Tractatus*, the long version does not include the king’s advice to Owein.
also forms an important part of the *Tractatus*, the French adaptation seems especially invested in this point. When the Cistercians arrive to found an abbey in Ireland, the king appoints Owein as an interpreter for the monk Gilbert. They work together for two and a half years until Gilbert and his fellow monks go back to England. In many respects, it seems as if Owein remains a knight in name only after his return from the Holy Land. Neither the *Tractatus* nor the *Espurgatoire* mention any further engagements by Owein in the martial activities typically associated with knighthood, but, although Owein is not shown astride a horse or wielding a sword, he continues to be described as a knight in both texts. The king summons “le chevaler / Owein” (1958-59; “uocato milite ipso,” 140.21.2); “li chevaliers” gladly accepts the position as translator (1961; “miles,” 140.21.3); the “li chevaliers” lives “seintement / … e mult honestement” while working with the monks (“holily … and very honorably,” 1987, 1985-86; “milite,” “sancte et religiose,” 144.21.5). This insistence on Owein’s identification as a knight even when he is not otherwise engaged in knightly activities illustrates a multivalent chivalric ideal, as well as the link between one’s estate and identity. Knighthood could be (and was for Owein) something more than fighting. He does not have to become a monk to live “seintement” (1985). Even after working with the monks for an extended period of time, Owein does not join a monastery in either the *Tractatus* or *Espurgatoire*. He desires to be “nec monachus nec conversus” (“neither a monk nor a conversus,” 142.21.4). Robert Easting argues that this reading from the α redaction of the *Tractatus* is faulty and asserts that the phrasing found in the β redaction, which implies that Owein will later become a monk (“sed nondum monachus nec conversus fieri uoluit,” “but he did not yet want to become a monk or a conversus,” 142.21.4), is closer to the work’s original wording.\footnote{Owein at St. Patrick’s Purgatory,} However, regardless of the veracity of Easting’s claim,
the transmission of the *Tractatus* recognizes on some level the persistence of Owein’s refusal to become a monk and it is this message that informs the romancing of the *Espurgatoire*. It iterates this point while also signaling the continuation of Owein’s status as a knight: “mais ne voleit changer sun estre, / moigne ne convers ne volt estre” (“but he did not want to change his way of life; he did not want to be a monk or a *conversus*,” 1973-74). It is not simply an issue of whether he wants to be a monk, but rather of his intention to remain the same. The repetition of *estre* as the rhyming pair in both parts of the couplet verbally echoes Owein’s desire to maintain the status quo and suggests its underlying motivation. The combination of the noun form, meaning existence, way of life, or state, and the verb form, meaning to be, implies that his *estre*, his way of life, is who he is. To alter this would amount to self-annihilation. Knighthood forms an intrinsic part of Owein’s identity in the *Espurgatoire*.

The addition of this semantic cue and the *Espurgatoire’s* other departures from the *Tractatus* noted so far demonstrate its interest in Owein’s sustained status as a lay person. These changes culminate with two references to the death of Owein. His last appearance in the *Tractatus* occurs when the Cistercian monks with whom he has been working return to England. He remains in Ireland, living “sancte et honeste” (“holily and honorably,” 144.6). The β redaction hints at the possibility that Owein does so as a monk since the description of his time with Gilbert only states that Owein did *not yet* (*nondum*) want to become a monk, not that he refused the vocation altogether. However, this alteration in status is not stated explicitly in the *Tractatus* and no mention is made of his death. The Owein of the Latin text, like General

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83 The variant in the long version (β) of the *Tractatus* is not significantly different. Owein is said to be living “honeste et religiose” (“honorably and piously,” Warnke 144.68).
MacArthur and every old soldier, does not die. He fades away, disappearing from the text with the departure of the monks.

The ambiguity and silence surrounding Owein’s fate after the monks’ departure contrast with the vernacular adaptations of the Tractatus. In the Middle English Sir Owain, for example, the knight serves as a monk for seven years and, upon his death, goes to Heaven.84 Like the Middle English version, Marie’s Espurgatoire attempts to bring closure to Owein’s narrative and its emphasis on his knighthood by filling in the details of his death. The first reference appears in the couplet immediately following the estre couplet discussed above (1973-74). The link between Owein’s estate in life and his existence is reinforced by the poem’s assurance that “En non de chevalier morra, / ja autre abit nen recevra” (“He will die as a knight; he will not receive any other habit,” 1975-76). As long as he lives, he will be a knight. Any ambiguity remaining in the minds of the audience about whether Owein’s desire to not be a monk or conversus was fulfilled is quickly dispelled with this line. This addition also verbally echoes Owein’s response to the bishop’s suggestion at the beginning of the narrative that he become a monk instead of embarking on the dangerous journey through Saint Patrick’s Purgatory: “ja autre habit n’en recevra” (“he will receive no other habit,” 556). The repetition of the line connects Owein’s past and future, implying the seamless fluidity and continuation of his position as a knight throughout his life. The second reference describes Owein’s death explicitly: “a Deu rendi / s’alme, ke bien l’out deservi” (“he surrendered his soul to God, which had served Him well,” 1995-96). In addition to filling in a gap in the Latin account, this detail encapsulates the poem’s implicit argument that knighthood offers a legitimate path to salvation. Beyond the cloister and without

receiving the monastic habit, Owein is able to live “seintement” (1994) and be proven in death to have served God in a fitting manner as a knight. Even when faced with the prospect of death, in anticipation of which many eleventh and twelfth century knights had joined monasteries in extremis, Owein remains an adherent of the chivalric life. Like the penitential romances, the conclusions of the Tractatus and the Espurgatoire assert Owein’s identity as a knight and situate his quest for atonement within a chivalric framework. However, the changes found in the Espurgatoire demonstrate the French adaptation’s greater emphasis on Owein’s continued status as a knight as the silences of its Latin source provide spaces for further narration.

It is tempting to see Owein’s rejection of the monastic life as the triumph of the court over the cloister, of romance over didactic treatise, especially as it is depicted in the Espurgatoire’s romanced adaptation of the Tractatus. However, such a reading fails to acknowledge the origins of the Tractatus and, by extension, the Espurgatoire. Firstly, the Tractatus was written by a monk, a “frater H., monachorum de Saltreia minimus” (“brother H., least of the monks of Sawtry,” 2.1), and dedicated to the abbot of Saint Mary de Sartis, a Cistercian abbey and mother house to Sawtry Abbey. It even praises the monastic life and the Cistercians especially. When Owein meets the monk Gilbert, he tells him that “cil furent en greignur gloire / de lur ordre e de lur convent, / que tuit le plus de l’autre gent” (“the men of their order and community were in greater glory than all of the other people,” 1968-70). It seems unlikely that such a text would use the romance narrative found within its overarching didactic framework to undermine the very institution that produced it. Rather, the Tractatus, as a monastic text, recognizes the symbiotic relationship between the Church and the new knighthood advocated in the twelfth century and acknowledges its validity, like monasticism, as a vocation. The twelfth century saw an increase in the number of knights entering monasteries, but
conversion was no longer considered the only pathway to salvation for the penitent knight.\(^{85}\) The program of reforms advocated by Gregory VII and his successors sought to engage a knightly class whose ideology and conduct had hitherto been seen as antithetical to the teachings of the Church through the institution of the crusades. These changes played an important role in the reconfiguration of the chivalric ideal by recognizing that those characteristics that had put the knights at odds with the Church might be used to its benefit. As a result, “no longer was the possession of an order and rule the peculiar privilege of monks.”\(^{86}\) Knighthood too could be considered a calling in its own right.

The depiction of Owein the sinner-soldier turned penitent crusader and translator indicates a conception of knighthood that likewise sees the knight as a friend to, not the enemy of, the Church.\(^{87}\) Owein waives and ultimately rejects the monastic life, but he does not do so as an act of repudiation against the institution or the ideals for which it stands. In fact, the chivalric identity he constructs for himself after recognizing the extent of his *cruelté* against God is constructed very much within the Church’s established parameters. He makes his confession, consults a bishop about an appropriate penance, undertakes a pilgrimage, and goes on crusade, all in keeping with orthodox practice. Owein’s desire for atonement redeems his knighthood in a new form by blurring the boundaries between *pugnatores* and *oratores*. As a crusader, he is the warrior monk fighting for the glory of God instead of his own benefit, while as a knight, having

\(^{85}\) Harper-Bill 76.


\(^{87}\) Easting (“Owein at St. Patrick’s Purgatory”) argues that Owein goes to Jerusalem as a pilgrim rather than as a crusader in the *Tractatus*, but the phrasing of the Latin is ambiguous and allows for either interpretation. However, the fact that Owein’s time in the Holy Land coincides with the Second Crusade is highly suggestive that Owein was a crusader.
laid aside the monk’s cowl on the advice of the king, Owein does not do battle, but rather works for the monks as their interpreter. In this hybrid estate, the *Tractatus* ordains Owein in a vocation on par with the monastic life and presents a portrait of its chivalric ideal. The changes found in the *Espurgatoire*, which highlight Owein’s implied decision in the *Tractatus* to remain a knight, should not as such be taken as an indication of greater resistance to the Church, but rather as an added emphasis on the potential of the laity to lead holy lives alongside, not against or better than, their religious brothers and sisters.

The *Tractatus* and the *Espurgatoire*, both dating from the last quarter of the twelfth century, engage with contemporary ideas about knighthood as a vocation in their depiction of the knight Owein. He is endowed with a calling that combines facets of the fighting and praying estates of medieval society to suggest that the knight like the monk may also serve God in his own way. The *Tractatus* and the *Espurgatoire* as texts likewise cross boundaries in the way that they mix generic impulses. Both are concerned first and foremost with teaching their audiences about purgatory and the punishments to be found therein and use aspects of the genre of romance to convey their didactic purpose. Their accounts of the knight Owein’s journey through the otherworld of purgatory with its indescribable marvels and hazardous perils owe much to the romance tradition, as has been discussed above. Although this chivalric narrative does not extend throughout the entirety of either text, it clearly serves as the core of the work and is intended to be convincing proof of the existence of purgatory. Given the influence of contemporary thought on the depiction of Owein, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the genre blending found in the *Tractatus* and *Espurgatoire* stems from the same impulse to Christianize knighthood and, in turn,

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provide a framework in which to Christianize romance, transforming the quest from an adventure of self-discovery that usually culminates in the knight’s reintegration within courtly society and marriage into a pilgrimage that results in the restoration of the knight’s relationship with God and incorporation within a society encompassing both court and cloister.

Both texts frame their re-imagined romances on one side with discussions of the Latin auctores Gregory and Augustine on purgatory and the origins and rites associated with Saint Patrick’s Purgatory and, on the other side, with additional testimonies from Irish clerics confirming Owein’s account of purgatory. This evidence from learned Church fathers both ancient and contemporary root the experiences of the layman Owein in the learned clerical tradition. The appropriation of romance within this framework and with the intent of teaching others suggest a monastic-sponsored effort to Christianize the narrative form and demonstrate that it, like chivalry, may serve a divine purpose. Such an attitude stands in contrast to the repudiation of romances and similar works found in the writings of other monastic authors, like Denis Piramus. In the prologue to his life of Saint Edmund, the former court poet turned monk recognizes the delights of “cuntes, chanceuns et fables” for “li rei, li prince e li cuntur / cunte, barun e vavasur,” but urges his audience to turn their attentions to stories that can “les almes garir / E les cors garantir de hunte” (“cure souls and protect bodies from shame,” 64-65). For the Tractactus’ monk H. and the Espurgatoire’s Marie, romance and spiritual healing need not be mutually exclusive and may even work together to produce something that serves the concerns of those interested in the care of souls and those who desire to save their souls. The spirit of mutual beneficence between court and cloister, knight and monk, romance and exemplum, found in these two works testifies to their place within a greater theological movement that sought accommodation, not exclusion, of knighthood.
The alterations to the *Tractatus* found in the *Espurgatoire* clearly attest to the significance the French adaptation placed on this validation of knighthood and the laity more generally. The *Tractatus*’ romanced narrative about a knight’s pursuit of penance uses the “adventure” of purgatory to make a case for the chivalric life as a vocation. Amplifying this theme, the *Espurgatoire* creates an opening through translation for a vernacular audience within its Latin, monastic-sponsored source so that they, like Owein, may see the pains of purgatory, as well as for its female author who, whether she may be identified as a nun or a laywoman, writes outside of the masculine clerical milieu. Examination of the discourse of openings found in the *Espurgatoire* will demonstrate how Marie uses the narrative space created by romancing the *Tractatus* to call her audience to compunction and to represent her translation process. Owein’s descent into purgatory serves as a metaphor for Marie’s adaptation of her Latin source.

The prologue and epilogue (1-48; 2297-2300) to the *Espurgatoire* characterize translation as an opening up of its source text so that its contents may benefit others. Alleging to render the text “si cum(e) li livres le nus dit” (“just as the book tells it,” 4), Marie declares her intention to “aovrir / ceste escripture e descovrir” (“open and explain this writing,” 29-30). She wants to “desclore” (“unlock,” 47) the *Tractatus* “de faire a grant profit venir / plusurs genz e els amender / e server Deu plus e duter” (“to make many people come to great profit and to amend themselves and serve and fear God more,” 18-20) and “pur amender la simple gent” (“in order to amend the simple folk,” 46). Although this desire to bring others to greater faith and devotion to God is not unique to the *Espurgatoire*, its additions to the Latin source place a particular emphasis on explicating the text. The terms used here – *aovrir*, *descovrir*, and *desclore* – represent the Latin source as a text that must be opened, unlocked, and uncovered because the contents of the *Tractatus* must be made “entendables” and “covenables” for the audience (“comprehensible,” 2299; “suitable,” 2300). On the one hand, translating the text “en romanz”
renders the *Tractatus* into a linguistic register that underlines its inherent romance affinities further. It also opens up the closed text of the Latin tradition, in effect, making it available not only to the cloistered monks of Sawtry Abbey, but also to the seigneurs to whom the *Espurgatoire* is addressed. These references, which do not appear in the *Tractatus*, recall the addresses found in romances which point to the oral performance of the text, thereby troubling further the distinction between secular and sacred literature. They also reflect the knightly status of Owein and reinforce the partnership of cloister and court espoused in the *Tractatus*. The introduction of the seigneurs within the poem invokes the audience of the romanced translation and calls them to *compuncпcium*.

Marie uses the term *compuncпcium* (41) to describe the intended effect of Saint Gregory’s teachings about the afterlife, but it also fittingly expresses the aim of the *Espurgatoire*’s translation both with regards to its audience and the mechanics of its romancing process. *Compungere*, the Latin verb from which *compuncпcium* ultimately derives, means to cause repentance, prick, or goad. On the one hand, this wordplay highlights the *Espurgatoire*’s focus on Owein’s status as a knight by substituting the spur of the knightly seignur for the spark of fire found in the Latin versions. On the other hand, with regard to Marie’s translation process, the derivation of *compuncпcium* from *compunctio*, meaning a puncture, characterizes the *Espurgatoire* 89

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90 *Latin Dictionary* notes that the word is uncommon. Latham’s *Revised Latin Word-List* defines *compunctio* as compunction or remorse.

91 In both the short (α) and long (β) versions of the *Tractatus*, it is said that Gregory spoke about death so that “iustorum affectum ad deuotionem inflammaret” (“he might inflame the passion of the just to devotion,” Warnke 4).
as a breaking open of the Latin *Tractatus*. In keeping with the program to *aovrir, descovrir, and *desclore* its source established in the prologue, the vocabulary used here and in the prologue voices the *Espurgatoire*’s efforts to open up its Latin source through translation so that its contents may benefit both latinate and vernacular audiences, as well as provide a gap through which Marie as a translator can enter the text.

The entrance to purgatory revealed to St. Patrick by Jesus, that is the “fosse tute rounde” (“the completely round hole,” 305), can be read as a metaphor for Marie’s *compucciun* or opening of the Latin text. The origins of the *fosse* stem from the problem of disbelief. Despite Saint Patrick’s preaching, the Irish refuse to believe him “s’il ne lur mustrat certain(e)ment, / k’il veïssent apertement / les joies dunt il ad muster / e les peines dunt ad parlé” (“if he would not show them certainly the joys and pains of which he had spoken so that they could see them openly,” 269-72). The Irish want to physically see the unknown torments of purgatory before they convert and the *fosse* provides Patrick with an instrument for doing so “apertement.” Marie’s translation, in turn, mimics the hole as it allows her audience to look through the Latin *Tractatus* and glimpse the divine. Marie’s *compucciun* becomes not only the process by which she opens up the *Tractatus*, but also the opening itself through which she and her audience enter the Latin text in order to experience the adventure of purgatory.

Just as the *fosse* serves as a metaphor for the *Espurgatoire* as a translation, the figure of the knight Owein also anticipates Marie the translator. The *Tractatus*’ tacit approval of Owein’s decision to remain a knight clears the path for the vernacular *scriptrix* who emphasizes the spirit of accommodation found in her Latin source and intertwines elements from romance and

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92 *AND*, “compunction” def. 1.
religious literature. The similarities between Owein and Marie suggest that the *Tractatus* was translated as much for its affinities with romance and the appeal of its subject matter, as for the resemblance Marie saw between herself and the penitent knight turned translator. Marie renders the Latin *Tractatus* into the French *Espurgatoire* with “peine et cure” (“pain and care,” 48), while Owein, after his descent into purgatory, serves as a “bon latimer” (“skilled translator,” 1957) and intermediary between the Cistercian monks and the native Irish population. Their status as translators places in relief the liminal positions they occupy. Owein had given serious consideration to becoming a monk and works for the monastery, but remains a knight. Marie mediates between the cloister and the court with her translation of a Latin text written by a monk and dedicated to an abbot, but recalibrated as a romance written for the seignurs and dedicated to “uns prosdom” (“a worthy man,” 9). Although it is unknown whether Marie wrote in the sphere of the cloister or the court, the links the *Espurgatoire* makes between her and Owein stress that their connection lies in their roles as intermediaries.

Owein serves as an avatar for Marie because of his role as a translator. Marie’s decision to translate the *Tractatus*, as such, rests in the appeal of its romance narrative for her audience who might identify with its knight protagonist and in the resemblance Marie saw between herself and the latimer Owein. In this light, the *Espurgatoire* becomes a romance metafiction about Marie’s experiences as a translator and writer. Owein’s descent into purgatory represents her *compunccium* and incorporation into the *Tractatus* through a point of entry provided by the process of romancing. Her entrance enables her to take apart the Latin text and appropriate the narrative of its clerkly narrator as her own. Like Owein, she too is a *latimer*, a term that derives

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93 Pickens notes that both Owein and the Irish interpreter for Saint Patrick are “avatars” for Marie (“Marie de France Translatrix” 14).
from *latinier* and means to render into Latin, but she also functions as an anti-latimer since she de-Latinizes her source.\(^94\) However, her deconstruction of the text is not merely linguistic. As has been shown, it includes the introduction of small changes to the narrative that emphasize the lay status of the knight Owein and Marie’s elision and adoption of the monk H.’s position as author. In the prologue, she transforms the “pater uenerande” (“venerable father,” 1) and abbot of the *Tractatus* into “uns prosdom” (“a worthy man,” 9). Following in the wake of H., who learns about Owein from the monk Gilbert, she refers to the source of her account as something she has heard,\(^95\) even though she has identified her source as a written one just lines above.\(^96\) As Yolande de Pontfaricy has noted, Marie does not so much translate the prologue of H. as make it her own, even adding feminine endings to the appropriate words.\(^97\) Towards the end of the work, she likewise appropriates the *ego* of the *Tractatus* to become the *je* who speaks with the Irish abbots about whether Owein’s experience was true.\(^98\) Blurring the line between the monk H. and herself, Marie annexes the role of narrator so that her translation may benefit from and be seen as more legitimate because of its closer connection to the original source.\(^99\)

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\(^{94}\) The term *latimer* likely derived, according to the *OED*, from a corruption, graphic in origin, that was then adopted into oral usage – counting minims is never an easy task!

\(^{95}\) Near the end of the poem, Marie positions herself at one remove from Gilbert, implying that she has heard the story from H. (2057-62).

\(^{96}\) Near the beginning of the *Espurgatoire*, Marie says: “vueil en Romanz metre en escrit, / si cum li livre le nus dit” (“I want to put the text into French, just as the book tells us,” 3-4), but further in the prologue, she notes: “dirai çô que jo’n ai oî” (“I will say what I have heard,” 15).

\(^{97}\) Pontfaricy 75.

\(^{98}\) In the \(\beta\)-version, see V.XXIV, ll. 2063-70.

\(^{99}\) Leonard 58.
Like Owein, who thwarts the demons of purgatory by speaking God’s name, Marie’s own romancing of the *Tractatus* pivots upon choosing the right words for her translation. She must strike a balance between succinctly conveying the vital information found in her source and doing so in a manner that is novel and appealing to her audience. Her success in doing so and completion of the translation project is akin to Owein’s survival and the account he gives to the monks, who then record it in writing. Neither the α or β redactions of the *Tractatus* mention the occurrence of this ritual with regard to Owein’s return, suggesting the *Espurgatoire*’s investment in the place of writing within the ritual of Saint Patrick’s Purgatory. As a writer, Marie must have found the importance of words within the *Tractatus* appealing. Words, written and spoken, feature prominently in the *Tractatus*. Those wishing to enter Saint Patrick’s Purgatory must receive written permission from the bishop; Owein wields the Word of God as a spiritual weapon against the demons; and those who return from purgatory must have their stories written down. **Like Owein’s descent into purgatory, Marie’s entry into the *Tractatus* results in the production of text, situating the *Espurgatoire* within a long tradition of written accounts stretching back to the time of Saint Patrick, the weight of which lends credibility to Marie’s romanced translation.**

In this way, the *Espurgatoire* comprises not just one romance, but rather two romances. The first describes the quest of a sinner knight seeking redemption, while the second entails the translation of their chivalric narrative “en romanz,” a process which itself mirrors the adventure of the knight. We can see here the polysemous fluidity of romance at work. Generic and linguistic difference come together in one text to produce a work that utilizes the innovative

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100 In the α- and β-versions of the *Tractatus*, it is noted that pilgrims’ records have been kept since the inception of Saint Patrick’s Purgatory. Saint Patrick himself initially recorded what the pilgrims saw. However, neither redaction of the *Tractatus* mentions that Owein’s experience is recorded by the monks.
potential inherent within translation to create a text that amplifies the *Tractatus*’ emphasis upon Owein’s status as a knight and layman and thereby blurs even further the boundaries between religious treatise and romance. In keeping with the prologue to the *Espurgatoire*, Marie succeeds in making the *Tractatus* not merely “entendables / a laie genz” (“understandable to lay people,” 2299-300), but also “covenables” (“suitable,” 2300) for a lay audience. Although the intent of the monk H. can have hardly been to encourage all of the readers of his text to become monks, Owein’s continued status as a knight in the *Espurgatoire* registers a conscientious effort to depict a protagonist whose pursuit of penance follows a path more “covenables” for its audience, though not one necessarily distinct from that inscribed in the *Tractatus*. This modification aligns the *Espurgatoire* more closely with the romance tradition, especially with the penitential romances discussed above, and demonstrates the way in which this generic shift towards romance grows out of translation and the need to meet the demands of a new audience.

In the parlance of Marie’s *Lais*, we might refer to the modifications Marie makes to her Latin sources both here in the *Espurgatoire* and the *Vie Seinte Audree* as the “surplus” which must be supplied by readers to illuminate the obscure writings of the ancients:

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Custume fu as ancïens,
Ceo testimoine Precïens,
Es livres ke jadis feseient,
Assez oscurement diseient
Pur ceus ki a venir esteient
E ki aprendre les deveient,
K’i peüssent gloser la lettre
E de lur sen le surplus mettre. (9-16)
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It was customary for the ancients, as Priscian tells us, to speak rather obscurely in the books that were made back then so that those who came afterwards and had to learn about them could gloss the text and input the meaning from their understanding.

Anyone reading these texts, according to the passage, has to “gloser la lettre” to make sense of what has been written. In a similar manner, the process of romancing provides the extra layer of signification that bridges the divide between a text’s original latinate audience and its subsequent vernacular audiences. This process becomes a way of glossing the Latin narrative and filling in the gaps of the story. For the **Audree**, the *surplus* consists of creating enlivened accounts that seek to rein in the doubt of the skeptical reader. For the **Espurgatoire**, the *surplus* entails its emphasis on Owein’s status as a knight both during and after his pilgrimage to purgatory, as well as the inscription of Marie’s translation process within Owein’s pursuit of atonement. Although neither poem may lay claim to being strictly identified as a romance, the *surplus* involves the incorporation of elements associated with that genre. Their hybridity, as such, ultimately stems from their vernacularity, and it is through this romance *surplus* that the **Audree** and the **Espurgatoire** are able to illuminate and clarify the dark spaces of their Latin sources, whether they be the tomb of a saint, the sleeping chamber of a monk, or the dark and deep entry hole to purgatory.
Chapter 3
Hagiography, Romance, and the Matter of England in French

As was argued in the last chapter, Marie’s process of translation appropriates elements associated with romance in order to adapt her Latin source texts for a vernacular audience. The combination of romance and didactic treatise, concern with penance, and knight protagonist found in the Tractatus and its French translation the Espurgatoire Seint Patriz paves the way for the Anglo-Norman romances discussed in this chapter: Le Roman de Horn, Le Roman de Waldef, and Gui de Warewic. The “novele bataille” of the Espurgatoire offers a possible model for a new kind of hybrid text that exploits the popularity and entertaining format of romance to relate moral and spiritual truths to its audience (789). Owein’s “espeie … del Seint Espirit” (“sword of the Holy Spirit,” 805), the physical embodiment of the name of God uttered and wielded like a weapon against the demons of purgatory, anticipates the sword carved with the names of God carried by Horn. Owein’s excessive penance, undertaken to atone for his sins against God, looks forward to the self-imposed penitential exiles of Guiac in the Roman de Waldef and the titular hero of Gui de Warewic. These elements highlight the romance character of Owein’s spiritual aventure and contribute to its multi-faceted generic identity.

The three works discussed in this chapter likewise blur the boundaries between romance and religious literature in their use of motifs and themes associated with saints’ lives. Such blending testifies to the morality traditionally associated with Anglo-Norman literature. M. Dominica Legge discerns a “serious and didactic bias,” while C.B. West comments upon its “strain of deep piety combined with a strong sense of the practical.”1 Susan Crane, as well,

1 Legge, Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters 2; West 23.
observes a strong “religious and moral commitment” in the fictional literature of medieval England. These general statements about the French literature of England as a whole also extend to its romances, as the following analysis of the *Roman de Horn, Roman de Waldef*, and *Gui de Warewic* will show. Because of these qualities, some scholars have argued that such genre-bending texts constitute a distinctive subgenre variously referred to as secular legends, secular hagiography, and hagiographical, penitential, or devotional romances. However, others, like Susan Crane and Judith Weiss, question the motives for the incorporation of hagiography in romance and whether the ideological foundations underpinning these texts has anything fundamentally in common with saints’ lives. Susan Crane, in particular, has argued that the pious veneer of these works merely augments the greatness of the hero, whose physical and spiritual prowess is without peer, and to champion the supremacy of secular chivalric values. The romances, in her opinion, function as a form of literary protest that mirrors the twelfth century conflict between Church and crown epitomized in Thomas Becket’s struggle with Henry II. They cry out against the encroachment of the Church on the daily lives of medieval people and, despite their hagiographic leanings, arise ultimately from “a value system distinct from that of medieval Christianity.” Particularly in the case of *Gui de Warewic*, the purpose of these borrowings has also been criticized on a narratological level linked to this ideological conflict. The romances exploitatively appropriate hagiographic elements as narrative catalysts for the

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2 Crane 92.


4 Crane 131.
hero’s further adventures and as opportunities to prove his greatness in saint’s clothing, but without the contemptus mundi theme of the vita, the sacrifice of the martyr, or the death to the world of the hermit. However, must the adoption of hagiography within a romance frame be understood in such antagonistic terms? The actions of the heroes in these romances do not always align with the behavior of saints, yet a perceived discrepancy need not necessarily indicate a subversive or aggressive attitude towards the Church and its teachings. Romances, especially on the Continent, often depict the adulterous affairs and the religion of love, but there is more than a little difference between the genuflection of Lancelot before Guinevere’s bed in Chrétien de Troyes’ Chevalier de la Charrette and the procession of angels that accompanies Gui de Warewic’s soul to Heaven.\(^5\) The introduction of a hagiographic motif may prolong a text, but the same could be said of any plot twist in a story.

This chapter looks beyond the dialogue of generic conflict to determine what the Roman de Horn, Roman de Waldef, and Gui de Warewic can reveal about the interplay of romance and hagiography and its role in the development of French romance in England. These three romances can be situated within three waves of Anglo-Norman romance and offer telling insight into the relationship between romance and hagiography from the late twelfth to early thirteenth century, as well as the role intertextuality may have played in the integration of religious themes.\(^6\) Gui de Warewic shows clear evidence of borrowing hagiographical themes from the Roman de Waldef, in addition to saints’ lives, but all three poems similarly use hagiographic


aspects in the portrayal of their heroes. By examining these elements, this chapter will trace the development of romance as an insular genre vis-à-vis its relationship with religious literature. Codicological evidence will also be taken into account to examine how their compilers read the genre of these hybrid works and what light this sheds on medieval perceptions of genre.

Although these texts may sometimes resist the generic expectations associated with saints’ lives, the relationship between romance and hagiography, as these genres developed in England, should be seen not solely in terms of generic and ideological binaries, but as a product of literary intertextuality, generic fluidity, and syncretism that sought to Christianize the genre of romance and recognized that the saintly life was not for everyone. The interplay reflects the struggle to balance between earthly ties – whether to power, wealth, or family – and devotion to God.

**Le Roman de Horn**

The *Roman de Horn* is not generally considered a hagiographical romance.\(^7\) For example, Keith Busby cites the text as evidence against “the notion of Anglo-Norman tastes being primarily didactic.”\(^8\) Susan Crane classifies it as a romance of “land and lineage,” not as one of the pious romances.\(^9\) Laura Ashe reads the figure of Horn as an enactor of Christian truth, but positions the

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\(^8\) *Codex and Context* 2:495.

\(^9\) She discusses the *Roman de Horn* as a romance of land and lineage in *Insular Romance* 24-27. Chapter 3 contains her examination of pious romances (92-133).
*Roman de Horn* as an example of another hybrid genre, historical romance. Its alexandrine laisses, a verse form typically associated with the epic genre, led M. Dominica Legge to note that it has “more the flavour of the best kind of *chanson de geste*.” Expanding on this description, Marianne Ailes classifies the poem as a *chanson de geste* and rejects its identification as a romance. These categorizations of the *Roman de Horn* as undidactic, as a romance of “land and lineage,” as a historical romance, as a romance infused with epic attributes, and as a *chanson de geste* point to the multifaceted and fluid identity of the poem, but overlook the hagiographic potential of its narrative.

Foregrounding the poem’s use of elements from saints’ lives reveals generic interplay at work early in the development of insular romance and provides insight into the generic preferences of its English creators and consumers. Composed in the 1170s, during a transitional period in the rise of romance and soon after the appearance of the *romans d’antiquité*, the *Roman de Horn* and its generic multiplicity present an especially interesting case study. Its hagiographic elements cast Horn as an instrument of God’s will ordained to defend his homeland Suddene, commonly identified as England, and Ireland from Saracens, but their presence within the text is not uncomplicated. While denoting his role as a quasi-angelic messenger of God, these same qualities are problematized by the poem’s simultaneous characterization of Horn as a fairy. Horn’s saintliness and hybridity mark his superiority and legitimate his efforts to restore his kingdom, win the love of his lady, and exact revenge for the death of his father. However, this

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10 Ashe also situates the poem in “a space between history, romance and *chanson de geste*” (*Fiction and History in England, 1066-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 123).
appropriation of the hagiographic does not so much subvert the saint’s life as highlight Horn’s almost superhuman character within an existing narrative tradition and present him as an exemplary figure and role model for the poem’s audience, as the extant manuscripts demonstrate. Horn himself becomes a figure for the poem’s generic instability.

The centrality of God’s providential role in the poem’s opening scene demonstrates the importance of hagiographical and religious elements in the Roman de Horn. When the young prince Horn and his companions are cast adrift in a boat (“n’i ot tres n’avirum, guvernail, ne struman,” “there was no sail, oar, rudder, or helmsman,” 74) by the Saracen responsible for killing Horn’s father, they avoid a more immediate and direct means of death because “ne fud destinez” (“it was not destined,” 22): God has granted Horn “un eür” (“a gift,” 24) that inspires pity and mercy in anyone who looks at him. This eür spares them from a more hands-on means of execution, but the rudderless boat presents its own difficulties and highlights the seeming hopelessness of their predicament. The irony of the situation is not lost on the pagan Saracens who mock the boys for believing in a god unlikely to protect them anymore than he would a foolish sheared sheep (“un tundu mutun ky est asotanz,” 69). Their chiding derisively alludes to the parable of Jesus as the good shepherd and his faithful as his sheep to emphasize the absence of their God and catches the helpless boys in the jaws of an existential crisis.13 More than an expedient mode of execution, the rudderless boat represents a godless world. This situation resembles those of other castaways found in narratives like the Man of Law’s Tale, the Middle English romance Emaré, and the legends of Mary Magdalene, in which a symbol of spiritual

13 See John 10:1-21 for the parable of Christ as the Good Shepherd.
abandonment is transformed into a symbol of God’s grace. The description of God as “cil ki salvat Moïsan” (“the one who saved Moses,” 75) reinforces this reversal in signification, recalling the basket that transported the baby Moses from harm’s way. Following in the wake of this religious tradition, Horn and his boys, those “senz cunseil” (“without counsel,” 95), soon find a “cunseilliers” (“counselor,” 96) in God who sends a wind that brings the boat safely to Brittany. This opening scene emphasizes the helplessness and lack of agency of the boys, for it is God who steers the ship, not the hero Horn. God’s actions at the beginning of the poem set the stage for the integral role his orchestrations play throughout the rest of the text, but also cast Horn in the role of the passive saint submitting to a test of faith. His survival of this watery baptism proves his candidacy as an agent of God, worthy to write God’s will with the edge of a sword engraved with his names, but the adventure he embarks on is one of God’s choosing.

Ships like this one also appear in more secular texts and, as here, their lack of a crew or other mechanisms for steering usually provides an opening for the sacred. In Marie de France’s Guigemar, the wounded knight, boards a crewless ship with beautiful silk sails (“Dedenz quida hummes truver, / Ki la nef deüssent garder: / N’i aveit nul ne nul ne vit,” “he thought to find inside the men who ought to be guarding the boat, but no one was there and he saw no one,” 167-69). He prays to God that the ship will find its destination safely. Likewise, “Nostres Sires”

14 Allegorical ships also appear throughout medieval literature, e.g. the Ship of the Church, the Ship of Baptism, the Ship of the Soul, and the Ship of Death, but in the Roman de Horn, as in the Man of Law’s Tale, there is no “sustained allegory” (V.A. Kolve, Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984) 306).


16 Horn and his companions are submitted to a similar trial in the Middle English King Horn, but no mention is made of God’s role in bringing the boat to shore (King Horn, ed. Rosamund S. Allen (New York: Garland Medieval Texts, 1984) ll. 115-30).
(“Our Lord”) guides Bors, Galahad, and Perceval in a crewless ship on their way to “aventure” in *La Queste del Saint Graal* (200:31-33). These divinely driven ships rein in the seemingly infinite possibility of chivalric adventure and happenstance, with the providence of God. The *Roman de Horn* as well identifies “Deu” (“God,” 104) explicitly as the originator of young Horn’s “aventure grant” (“grand adventure,” 104).

Exploited by both religious and secular traditions, the motif of the rudderless ship, as it is utilized in the *Roman de Horn*, introduces Horn as an almost saint-like hero whose actions throughout the remainder of the poem seem less like those of the self-determined hero of romance than of the saint who yields himself fatalistically as a tool of God’s will sent to punish the wicked and non-Christians. Horn’s movements back and forth between his homeland Suddene, Brittany, and Ireland adhere to the exile-and-return motif prevalent in English romance, but are also overseen by God, as the poem’s many references to his providence and role in the action of the narrative underline. Mildred K. Pope has shown that God’s “overruling providence” and “especial care of Horn” are evident throughout. God ordains that King Hunlaf of Brittany will raise Horn (106); Rigmel, Hunlaf’s daughter, will reject all of her suitors and will marry Horn (411-13); Horn will avenge the death of his father (1319-21); and Horn will

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17 *La Queste del Saint Graal*, ed. M. Albert Pauphilet (Paris: Champion, 1923). Bors prays to God that the ship take him “ou s’amie puisse ester sauve” (“where his soul can be saved,” 194.24).


20 Pope 2:121.
overcome the pagans who invade Brittany (1710-12). God is also the purveyor of adventurers, manipulating time and space to ensure that Horn crosses paths with the sons of Goodrich, the king of Ireland, when exiled from Brittany (2200-02); sends pagan invaders to Ireland in response to Horn’s prayers for an opportunity to prove himself in battle (2898-904); spares Horn from bodily injury and death (3203, 4823); and, in the final episode, facilitates vengeance by guiding Horn’s ship, rudder intact, back to Brittany so that he can rescue Rigmel from a marriage arranged by the traitor Wikele (5029). This situation mirrors and reinforces that constitutive opening scene in which God guides Horn and his companions from Suddene to Brittany and christens Horn as an agent of “God’s intervention in the world.”

The repeated physical descriptions comparing Horn to an angel complement the portrayal of Horn as a providential agent. Standing before the pagan king:

Oilz aveit vers e clers e le vis ot rosin,
Gente façun aveit, bien semblot angelin;
Cum esteile jornals, quan lievet al matin,
Sur les altres reluist, ki li sunt pres veisin
Sur tuz ses cumpaignu[n]s resplent Horn [li meschin]. (14-18)

He had bright and clear eyes and a rosy complexion. He had an attractive face – he looked very much like an angel. Like the morning star when it rises in the morning, he shone more than the others who were nearby. The young man Horn outshone all his companions.

21 This course of events forges a link between prayer and realization that is reinforced by the reading of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 132: “Sa preiere ad oïe, tresbien l’ira ancor, / Cum vus purgez oïr s’estes escoteïr” (“He [God] heard his prayer, as you can hear if you are listening,” 2904a-b).

22 Ashe, Fiction and History in England, 1066-1200 150.
As one who enacts God’s will on earth, it is fitting that he should be described as such. Horn is similarly described in his first meeting with Rigmel:

De la beauté de Horn la mesun en resplent.
Tuit cuident que çoe seit angelin avenement.
Rigmel, quant l’ad vëu, tut chaunga sun pensé,
Quida ke fust angele, ki i fust enveié
Del seignur ki sus maint en haute maiesté,
Si cum el l’esgarde: taunt bel li ad semblé. (1053–58)

The house shone with Horn’s beauty. Everyone thought that it was an angelic visitation. When Rigmel saw him, she was overcome with emotion – she thought that he was an angel who had been sent by the Lord who dwells above in high majesty. As soon as she saw him, he seemed so handsome to her.

His beauty possesses a distinctly supernatural quality that goes beyond that generally associated with the courtly hero of romance. He quite literally lights up the room in a manner that recalls the mandorla, aureole, or nimbus used in religious art and iconography to denote holy individuals. Like these artistic representations, Horn’s light visually and outwardly manifests his latent internal holiness.

Comparisons of Horn to a fee, an enchanted being, however, problematize this quasi-angelic portrayal.23 Hunlaf’s court speculates about the origins of Horn’s beauty and conclude that “c’est chose faéé / E ke onc mes de Deu ne fu tiel figurée” (“it is a magical thing, and that such a thing was never made by God,” 453-54). What singles out Horn as blessed by God for some also causes others to question his place in divine creation. His beauty leaves people

23 Horn is compared to a fairy at lines 452, 850, 2186, 2459, and 2852. The Anglo-Norman Dictionary defines a fee as an “enchanted being” or “elf.” Judith Weiss translates the term as an elf at line 453 in The Birth of Romance in England 53.
“trespensée” (“disturbed,” 446) and “esragée” (“wild,” 861), and inspires women with thoughts of adultery: “Dame ne l’ad veü ki vers li n’ait amur / E nel vousist tenir, suz hermine covertur / Enbracie belement, sanz seü de seignur” (“No woman saw him who did not fall in love with him and wanted to hold him, stealthily embraced under an ermine coverlet, without the knowledge of her lord,” 476-78). It could be argued that Horn’s portrayal as a courtly Mesmer indicates the extent of his beauty. The comparison of Horn’s appearance to an enchanted being and angel situates his otherwise indescribable appearance within the narrative parameters of romance and hagiography, somewhere between the ethereal fairy and the enraptured saint, inscribing and drawing attention to its juxtaposition of generic elements on Horn’s body. But such attributes hardly seem fitting for one of God’s providential agents. Rather, they cast him as a destabilizing force that queries the status quo. Like the fairy lady in Lanval and the strangely-hued visitor to Arthur’s court on New Year’s in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, his presence triggers the breakdown of traditional values, lending an element of amoral chaos that threatens the divine order which governs the world of the poem and undermines its hagiographic potential. It highlights the exploitation and juxtaposition of romance and hagiographic elements inscribed on Horn’s body. His dueling identities as angel and fairy register the generic tension between romance and hagiography and test the boundary between them.

The use of biblical allusions to the Apocalypse and Annunciation, in conjunction with these comparisons of Horn’s beauty to angels and fairies, likewise reinforce and simultaneously complicate his role as a divine agent. The description of Horn as the “esteile journals” (“morning star,” 16) likens him to Jesus by recalling Jesus’ self-identification as the “radix et genus David stella splendida et matutina” (“the root and the stock of David, the bright and morning star,”
Revelation 22:16) at the conclusion of John’s vision of the apocalypse. Like Jesus, the Word of God, Horn’s ordained actions are inscribed upon the earth with a sword carved with God’s names, testifying to his physical presence and interventions in human history. Rigmel’s response to her first meeting with Horn resembles the Annunciation with Horn standing in as the archangel Gabriel and Rigmel as the Virgin Mary. Like Mary, who “turbata est” at Gabriel’s revelation (“was thrown into confusion,” Luke 1:29), Rigmel “tut chaunga sun pensé” (“was overcome with emotion,” 1055) when she sees Horn. These intertextual links to biblical narrative underscore the extent of the relationship between God and Horn’s actions and, in effect, christen him further as a vital participant in a providential plan. However, the nature of this re-imagined biblical narrative differs considerably from the stories of self-sacrifice and suffering found in the typical saint’s life. These scenes “romance” key episodes in the salvation history laid out in the New Testament and position them in a narrative that seeks familial vengeance, marriage, and succession as its end goals, not the redemption of humanity. Horn descends from the “genus” of his father Aaluf, whose death, at the hands of Saracen invaders, he seeks to avenge. His angelic visitation occurs at Rigmel’s request and marks the beginning of a relationship that ultimately ends in marriage and the birth of an heir who will rule over their paired kingdoms. As with the depiction of Horn as both angel and fairy, these biblical allusions expose the tension between the romance and the hagiographic narratives at work within the poem and elide the generic boundary in order to legitimate Horn’s “romance” actions.

The exploitation of these elements from saint’s lives emphasizes Horn’s superlative character, not as a saint perhaps, but at least as a saint-like warrior for God. His pursuits, after

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24 Other biblical references to the Morningstar can be found at Ecclesiastes 50:6, Revelation 2:28, Revelation 22:16 and to the daystar at Job 11:17, Job 38:32, Psalm 109:3, 2 Peter 1:19, and Isaiah 14:12.
all, are not altogether ungodly. While seeking vengeance, wooing and marrying Rigmel, and securing his kingdom, Horn also wagers war against Saracens, engaging in a physical struggle on behalf of Christendom that may not warrant the martyr’s palm, but does, in the estimation of the poet, earn its romance equivalent, the happy ending. This is his calling and the grounds upon which the narrator proleptically prays so that God will spare Horn from being killed. He is the “radix” of a line of defenders of the Christian faith and must be saved because “uncore par cels murrat maint barbara[n]” (“many pagans will die by this man’s hands,” 80), and his son, following in his footsteps, “paens destrurat d’ici qu’al flum Jordan” (“will kill the pagans from here to the River Jordan,” 84). This is the calling for which God ordains Horn’s actions. The young boy must be spared and brought to Brittany so that he may meet Rigmel, daughter of the king, marry her, and produce an heir who, like his father, will fight against Saracens. Towards this necessary end, a typical romance plot becomes enmeshed in an overarching plan to increase the reach of Christendom. Yet, while drawing attention to the tension or conflict between them, the Roman de Horn ultimately situates Horn and his descendants within a story of Christian triumph that necessitates the creation of a martial and chivalric hero who in one person embodies the two narrative traditions of hagiography and romance – as a crusading warrior of faith who wields a sword inscribed with God’s names.

Even though it is one of the earliest Anglo-Norman romances, the Roman de Horn is by no means unique in its blend of romance and hagiographic elements. The battles of its sometimes saintly hero against Saracens, as well as other facets of the poem, link it intertextually to the chanson de geste genre. For instance, the hagiographic encroaches on the epic in the chanson de
geste through angelic visions, as in the Chanson de Roland. Charlemagne is warned about Ganelon’s treachery in a vision (835-38); an angel announces to Charlemagne that the sword Durendal should be given to Roland (2318-21); angels guide Roland’s soul to Heaven (2389-96); and, in answer to an entreaty by Charlemagne, an angel announces that God will halt the movement of the sun so that the French may continue to pursue the Saracens. The poem also reveals that Roland’s olifant and the tombs of Roland and Oliver can even be visited at the churches where they have been entombed, like the relics and shrines of saints. These details sanctify the actions of Charlemagne and his men, while demonizing Ganelon and the Saracens. Roland and the others killed at Roncevaux are transformed into martyrs for Christendom and for France. The hero of the Roman de Horn does not die as a martyr, but his narrative contains similar hagiographic elements and makes several formal and intertextual links to this Continental French tradition. Unlike the other romances discussed in this chapter, the Roman de Horn is written in laisse stanzas further signaling its affinity with the chanson de geste genre, an affinity noted by Legge and more recently by Marianne Ailes. Horn’s sword cuts down men as deftly as Curtein and Durendal, the swords of Ogier the Dane and Roland, respectively (1995). His shoes are better than those of “Roullant l’enperïal” (1997) and his ability to strike down his enemies has not been seen “pus le tens Lowis” (“since the time of [King] Louis,” 3466), a


26 The olifant is kept at Saint Séverin in Bordeaux, while Roland and Oliver are buried at Saint Romain. Hugues de Fleury (d. soon after 1119) places Roland’s body at Saint Romain de Blaye. As late as the sixteenth century, there were three white marble sarcophagi in the crypt at Saint Romain de Blaye, corresponding to the “blans sarcons” mentioned in the Chanson de Roland found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 23, said to belong to Roland, Oliver, and Turpin. In other manuscripts, Oliver is always buried at Romain, while the third sarcophagus is sometimes that of Turpin, Saint Romain, or Belle Aude. The Oliphant is at Saint Severin. See Fidel Fita and Julien Vinson, ed. Le Codex de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle (Liber de miraculis S. Jacobi) Livre IV (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1882) 43.

27 Legge, Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background 96; Ailes “What’s in a Name? Anglo-Norman Romances or Chansons de geste?” 61-76.
reference to Louis III of France, whose victory over the Danish invaders at Sarcourt in 881 was memorialized and possibly known to the poet Thomas from the *chanson de geste Gormont et Isembart*.  

The *Roman de Horn* shows a clear insular interest in aspects of this epic genre. Its references highlight Horn’s role as a fighter of pagans equal in might to the heroes of the *chanson de geste* and also suggests another locus for the appearance of hagiographical elements in insular romance, not solely restricted to the saint’s life. Although the saint’s life may prove to be the ultimate source, the *chansons de geste* provide an alternate, though indirect, source for the blend of religious and martial elements found in the *Roman de Horn*. Appropriation of the nationalist spirit of the *chanson de geste* allows for the creation of an English epic with a decidedly English hero. Whereas the *Chanson de Roland* utilizes angelic visitations and heroic prowess, even in failure, to laud French heroes, the *Roman de Horn* anglicizes this trope to position Horn alongside these other warriors of faith as an English hero for an English audience. Horn’s native Suddene is never explicitly identified as England, but contextual geographical clues in relation to its proximity to Ireland and Brittany situate it in southern England. Horn’s geographically ordained movements assert this insular identity in their passage between England, Ireland, and Brittany until, by poem’s end, Horn’s land claims encompass an area that maps the holdings or land aspirations of Henry II around the time when the poem was likely written.  

Linguistically, the repetition of the hero’s name reinforces this spatial English identity, one of the

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29 Judith Weiss has argued that the poem was performed in Dublin for the Christmas court of 1171-72, and that its first audience would have included Henry II. See “Thomas and the Earl: Literary and Historic Contexts for the *Romance of Horn*” 1-14. Horn and his men are also sometimes referred to as “les noz” or some variant thereof at lines 54, 1651, 1681, 3266, 3288, 3294, 3347, 3433, 4667, and 4685.
few words in English found in the poem.\textsuperscript{30} It serves as a linguistic reminder of the insularity of its hero and audience. Cast adrift into a sea of French verse, the repetition of Horn’s name projects English into a linguistic space otherwise occupied by England’s dominant literary language, thereby bringing them together to reflect England’s linguistic and cultural diversity. In doing so, the Roman de Horn anglicizes the figure of the crusading quasi-saintly warrior of faith and spans the gap between the continent and England through intertextuality and language.

Yet while the epic Chanson de Roland inscribes its generic multiplicity implicitly in its angelic visits and its construction of a literary monument and shrine to the valorous defeat at Roncevaux, the Roman de Horn more explicitly self-identifies as a moral and didactic text at its conclusion. Only two manuscripts preserve the poem’s final lines, which point to the poem’s generic identity.\textsuperscript{31} The final lines of the early thirteenth-century fragment Cambridge, University Library, Additional 4470 read: “Thomas nen dirra plu tu autem chantera / Issi finist de Horn. AmeN.”\textsuperscript{32} These final lines indicate that the poem has come to an end. The mid-thirteenth-century manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 132 expands the Latin phrase in Additional 4470: “Tomas n’en dirrat plus, ‘Tu autem’ chanterat: / ‘Tu autem domine miserere nostri’”

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\textsuperscript{30} The only other English word used in the poem is the early Middle English oath witegod (4013).

\textsuperscript{31} The Roman de Horn is preserved in five manuscripts, none of which contains a complete copy of the poem: Cambridge, University Library, Ff.6.17; Cambridge, University Library, Additional 4407; Cambridge, University Library 4470; London, British Library, Harley 527; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 132. All date from the thirteenth century.

\textsuperscript{32} Pope includes a transcription of these lines in her edition, but I have made some corrections based on my own transcription of the manuscript. The early character of the hand is indicated by the separation of the initial letter in each line and the placement of periods at the conclusion of the line. Cambridge, University Library 4470 consists of four folios that were formerly used as flyleaves for an early printed book, Cambridge, University Library Inc.5.E.2.2 [STC 2829].
(“Thomas will speak no longer. He will sing ‘Lord, have mercy on us,’” 5239-40).33 “Tu autem” derives from a common liturgical formula from Psalm 40:11, which in its full form reads: “Tu autem Domine miserere mei et resuscita me et retribuam eis” (“But you, O Lord, have mercy on me and bolster me and I will recompense them”). Camillus Callewaert has shown that this formula was used in monasteries to conclude a reading, in response to which the monks would have replied “Deo gratias” in thanksgiving for the reading.34 While the appearance of this phrase at the end of the Roman de Horn could suggest that its poet Thomas may have been a monk, it is also possible that he was familiar with literary conventions.35 As Friedrich Ohly demonstrates, “tu autem” could more generally indicate the conclusion of the recitation of any work, sacred or secular, whether in a monastery or elsewhere, a practice that extended to written copies.36 For example, the Harley lyric “Cil qui voldra oïr mun chant” brings its meditation on friendship to a close with “Le tu autem est en ce vers. / Le respuns seit de joye. Amen” (“The tu autem is in this verse. May the response be one of joy! Amen,” 111-12).37 The same concluding force is expressed in the final lines of the chanson de geste Girart de Roussillon: “Les obres sunt

33 This manuscript supplies the ending found in Pope’s edition. It is possible that the full Latin line quoted at the end in this manuscript was not part of the original poem. The Latin line has not been incorporated into the rhyme scheme of the laisse and although University Library, Additional 4470 preserves the same reading, it does not include the complete formula.

34 Sacris erudiri (Steenbrugge: Nijhoff, 1962) 75.

35 If Thomas was in fact a monk, this would contradict the poet’s assertion that his son Gilimot (5231) will write a sequel to the Roman de Horn recounting the adventures of “[l]e vaillant Hadermod” (5226). This romance is not extant, and it is possible that it and Thomas’ son Gilimot are literary fictions intended to reflect the genealogy of the Roman de Horn, which itself purports to be a sequel of an account about Horn’s father Aaluf. Judith Weiss expresses doubt about the existence of this romance of Aaluf (The Birth of Romance in England 7).


enchades el camps remas / Qu’eu nen dirai mais plus, trop en sui las. / E se chare la tienz, qui la diras, / Asaz en poz conquere aver e dras. / Tu autem, Domine, des ici en avant” (“The works have begun and the battles are finished. I will not say anymore; I am completely exhausted. If you who recite this work hold it dear, you will earn sufficient reward in money and clothing. From here on, ‘Tu autem, Domine,’” 9998-10002). The position of this formula at the end of the Roman de Horn exhibits a similar purpose. The poem’s potential oral performance before an audience addressed throughout as “seignors” signals its conclusion with an oral marker to indicate the story has come to an end. The words of Thomas, whether spoken or written, cease.

Yet although the liturgical formula engages with this larger literary convention, the phrase “tu autem” also functions as a linguistic token of the Roman de Horn’s legitimacy as a work of moral fiction on par with the monastic lectiones of the sort for which the formula was originally used. Thomas, the authors of the Harley lyric, and Girart de Roussillon may have known the phrase only as a literary device to be used at the end of the work and been unaware of its link to sacred reading, but, even so, the register of Latin as a language associated with the Church and sacred scripture remains to make that connection and to signal the moral intent of the text in which it appears. The Harley lyric’s final lines reinforce its “essentially serious tone” with its “last two lines and the concluding amen.” Likewise, the concluding tu autem provides a fitting end for Girart de Roussillon, which becomes increasingly hagiographic in tone towards its

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39 See lines 11, 184, 666.

40 Jeffrey and Levy 266.
final resolution, and equates it to “a reading in the divine office.” While functioning as a linguistic signpost to demarcate the ends of these works, *tu autem* provides a generic framework for reading the poem. It may contain chivalric battles and wooing maidens, but the formula punctuates the *Roman de Horn* in a pious manner that recalls and foregrounds instead the role God has played throughout. Just as the *tu autem* originally invited the response of those hearing the reading, its usage here and elsewhere asks the audience to review their response to the work. In this new frame, the *Roman de Horn* asks to be read, on some level, as the sort of text that would have been read in a monastic house, whether as a *lectio* of the divine office, a biblical passage, or a saint’s life.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 132 reflects this mode of reading. It and Douce 137 originally formed a single manuscript, as a thirteenth-century list of contents in the latter reveals. That manuscript’s contents include: the *Roman de Horn*, Robert Grosseteste’s *Chasteau d’amour*, Marie de France’s *Fables*, Guillaume le Clerc’s *Bestiaire*, and miscellaneous legal items. Pamela Robinson has argued that a lawyer in Berkshire had the first five booklets bound together in the mid-1260s. Another owner, likely also a lawyer, added a sixth and final booklet and saw to the addition of running titles for the manuscript’s items in the mid-fourteenth-century. The thirteenth-century list of contents separates the non-legal items from the legal under the title “Romanum” and delineates them as the kinds of things its lawyer-compiler “wished to read in

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42 The incomplete nature of the Cambridge, University Library fragments 4407 and 4470 renders it difficult to draw substantial conclusions about how they reflect their generic categorization, as does the absence of additional items in Cambridge, University Library, Ff.6.17, the oldest of the *Roman de Horn* manuscripts. London, British Library, Harley 527 is fragmentary and the exact relationship between its present items is not altogether clear.

his spare time." These items display a particular interest in vernacular moral and didactic texts. The allegorical *Chasteau d’amour* recounts the creation of the world and Christ’s redemption of humanity. Marie’s *Fables* presents pithy lessons to its readers using the relationships between animals and other aspects of rural culture. The *Bestiaire* extrapolates moral interpretations and Christological connections from the behavior of animals. Codicologically juxtaposed with these allegorical items, the chivalric exploits of the *Roman de Horn* initially seem out of place. Yet the accessibility to spiritual and moral truths of the other items engendered by their simple allegorical frames and vernacularity stems from an impetus similar to the *Roman de Horn*’s inscription of the chivalric life within the narrative of Christian history. The placement of the romance alongside these other more explicitly moral texts foregrounds its hagiographic and exemplary potential, an attribute which the manuscript’s fourteenth-century owner-compiler recognized. The Latin description “Hic est de Horn bono milite,” translated into French by a later fourteenth-century hand as “Horn le bon chiualer,” distinguishes the *Roman de Horn* not merely as a story about a knight, but as an account of a *good* knight (fol. 1r). This Bildungsroman casts Horn as the ideal knight, almost supernatural in his beauty – lest we forget that his looks can charm women from wedlock – and his goodness; an accomplished harpist; and Christ-like, wielding his divinely-carved sword in reflection of the Word of God. He is compassionate towards the poor. He is pious, placing “trestute d’esperaunce” (“all of his hope,” 1309) in God, and generous (1775, 1985). He is merciful, forgiving Wikele for his role in exiling him from Brittany, but not to a fault. When Wikele betrays Horn a second time by facilitating Rigmel’s marriage to King Modin, Horn’s justice is swift. He is a brave soldier whose military exploits for

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44 Robinson 57.
the defense of Brittany, Ireland, and England from pagan invaders recall the Matter of France, but for all of this, his conduct is imitable.  

The Douce manuscript’s identification of Horn as the “bono milite” and “bon chiualer” emphasizes the exemplary potential of this secular *vita* and complements the final lines of the poem, which it also preserves. He may not suffer a martyr’s death, but the hagiographic elements of his narrative demonstrate how he, like a saint, provides a model for behavior, not only for the Berkshire lawyer who initially compiled Douce 132/137, but for all who read or heard the poem. The *Roman de Horn*’s final lines inscribe its audience as part of a community of the faithful who may respond to its “tu autem” by following in the footsteps of a French account of an English warrior for the Christian faith and take their place in their own “roman” of Christian history.

**Le Roman de Waldef**

If the *Roman de Horn* uses its hagiographic elements to illuminate how its hero might serve as a model for good chivalry indebted to the *chanson de geste*, the *Roman de Waldef*’s account of the efforts of Waldef, the king of Norfolk, and his sons Guiac and Gudlac to maintain and expand their landholdings in pre-conquest England presents a darker view of the human experience.  

M. Dominica Legge noted the “unchristian and at times amoral” character of the poem, while

45 Pope discusses the portrayal of Horn in 2.15-16. She characterizes Horn as an ideal knight, flawed only by “one fundamental defect, excessive pride” (15), but, as J.D. Burnley has shown, Horn’s *fierté* comprises part of the poem’s definition of perfect chivalry (386 ff).

Rosalind Field has commented on the “coldly amoral and often vicious” nature of the events it describes. It depicts a fictional Anglo-Saxon past characterized by shifting allegiances between its many kingdoms; the ever-present possibility of invasion from abroad and treachery from within; and the transitory nature of happiness. Defeat follows quickly on the heels of success: the news that Saracens have kidnapped his wife and sons undercuts Waldef’s military victory against Uthier, the king of London. The strength of the family unit atrophies when those children return to their parents as strangers years later, only to leave England for the prospect of Continental conquest. The separation of the family looks forward to the always-anticipated reunion of the father with his sons, but the death of Waldef forestalls the narrative pay-off of romance entrelacement. The 22,304-line poem, extant in a single manuscript, may be unfinished, but it leaves little indication that it will meet the expectations of closure so typical of romance. The dark worldview of this Anglo-Norman anti-romance has been explored in recent years by editors and scholars who have sought to bring attention to this oft-neglected poem in order to situate it in relation to the corpus of Anglo-Norman romances and the development of English narrative. In the years following its edition by A.J. Holden in 1984, Judith Weiss has examined the poem’s relationship with Wace’s Roman de Brut and its representations of empires and the sea, while Rosalind Field has used the poem to problematize the Matter of England as a literary category and explored the poem’s use of “name-dropping.” However, in examining the place of the

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Roman de Waldef against the backdrop of thirteenth-century insular narrative, little attention has been given to the hagiographical leanings of the poem, composed at a time when Anglo-Norman romance was beginning to exploit the potential of saint’s life. This is especially curious in light of the link the poem forges by name between its hero and the historical Waltheof, the earl of Northampton and Huntingdon executed by William the Conqueror in 1076 and revered as a saint in East Anglia, where the poem was likely composed. The Waldef-Waltheof connection has generally been dismissed as irrelevant, but this section argues that it forms part of the poem’s rich intertextual matrix of allusions. This instance of name-dropping reflects the waves of invasion upon the British Isles that have influenced the literary tradition inherited by the Anglo-Norman poet. The French language Roman de Waldef romances the life of Earl Waltheof as a hero for a multilingual England, united if not by common language then by geography, and repurposes his status as a martyr of the Norman Conquest to critique the pursuit of empire. Waldef’s death and the effect it has upon his sons Guiac and Gudlac, who have their eyes set on imperial glory, highlight the hagiographic potential of the poem and lead to the fragmentation of the narrative, as the brothers turn away from the excesses of conquest and Gudlac returns home to England.

The theme of conquest pervades the poem from its beginning. The Roman de Waldef initially presents itself as a continuation of Wace’s Roman de Brut and an estoire about the

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50 For the sake of clarification, I will refer to the fictional hero of the Roman de Waldef as Waldef and the historical figure as Waltheof.
English successors to the British, which likewise envisions history as a “series of conflicts, violence and betrayals,” sometimes within families. The poem purports to describe events “com le Bruit conte apertement” (“as the Bruit openly relates,” 18), but it orients its history not towards the foundation myth of Brutus and his wayward band of Trojans, as Wace does, but with Julius Caesar’s invasion of Britain. Caesar comes to England with “gent fiere” (“a cruel army,” 10) and uses “grant esforz” (“great force,” 13) to conquer the land, which he greatly desired (“il desiroit mult la terre,” 12). This passage portrays his endeavor as an avaricious land-grab and as a near-constant assault upon the land that seems to bring him more anger than pleasure because of the soldiers he loses. The juxtaposition of Caesar’s expeditions with the Norman Conquest simultaneously situates the arrival of the French in a history of invasions upon the island of Britain and also contrasts it to those earlier conquests:

Quant li Norman la terre pristrent
Les granz estoires puis remistrent
Qui des Engleis estoient fetes,
Qui des aucuns ierent treites,
Pur la gent qui dunc diverserunt
E les languages si changerunt. (39-44)

When the Normans seized the land, they replaced the great estoires that had been made by the English and translated by others because the people changed and so did the languages.

51 Judith Weiss discusses the relationship between these two works in “Wace’s Influence and ‘History’ in Le Roman de Waldef.” My sincere thanks go to Professor Weiss for sending me a copy of her paper, a version of which will be appearing in a forthcoming volume edited by David Woodman and Martin Brett. The influence of Wace has also been noted by Holden, but he considers it minimal at best: “les traces de l’influence du Brut sont rares et peu précises” (Le Roman de Waldef 27-28) and Field, “Waldef and the Matter” 29 ff.
The poem reframes the potential violence inherent within conquest as a process of linguistic translation and literary appropriation. French capture of the island barely registers. Unaccompanied by “grant esforz” (13), it is anesthetized as an aesthetic exchange of “les granz estoires” (40), including the stories of Waldef, Tristan, and Aelof. The unlikely claim that these works have been translated from English into French lends legitimacy through indebtedness to English auctoritas and stresses the continuity of narrative material between the two languages. Yet, whatever the linguistic origins of these stories, their “translation” rests in the appropriation of their British and English heroes into French language works in extension of William the Conqueror’s history-altering journey across the Channel. For the Roman de Waldef, in particular, this linguistic and literary conquest centers on Waltheof, Waldef’s historical forebear.

The poem’s introductory emphasis on conquest continues in its network of allusions making reference to key figures in England’s past, real and imagined. Characters’ names reflect the role England’s ever-changing inhabitants have played in its rich literary and cultural diversity. Names like Modret, Uthier, Merlin, Fergus, Edwin, Hildebrand, Cnut, and Tierri bespeak centuries of migration, inhabitation, and invasion of the British Isles on up to the Norman Conquest. The stories of the past are not supplanted and forgotten, but added to the island’s collective memory. Many of the names can also be linked specifically to saints or other religious figures from the Anglo-Saxon period in which the poem is ostensibly set. Bede the venerable chronicler lends his name to Waldef’s father. Felix, the fictional king of Norfolk and

52 Aelof is described as “li bons rois” (“the good king,” 50) and may be a reference to Aalof, the father of Horn. The Roman de Horn mentions that its narrative is a sequel to a work about Aalof’s exploits: “Seignurs, oi avez le[s] vers del parchemin, / Cum li bers Aaluf est venuz sa fin” (“Lords, you have heard the verses from the parchment, how brave Aaluf came to his end,” 1-2).

53 Holden, Le Roman de Waldef 18-23.
Bede’s brother-in-law, shares his name with the apostle and bishop of the East Angles. Gudlac, Waldef’s younger son, finds his pre-Conquest doppelgänger in the soldier-turned-monk and founder of Crowland Abbey. Osmund, the fictional king of Oxford, shares his name with the chancellor of England and bishop of Salisbury.\textsuperscript{54}

The significance of this pastiche of names and figures has yielded differing opinions. A.J. Holden deems them “hétéroclites,” a haphazard hash of material the author had at hand,\textsuperscript{55} whereas Rosalind Field claims that the Arthurian names, like Modret, Uthier, and Merlin, signal the poem’s critique of centralized royal power.\textsuperscript{56} The sheer number of allusive names certainly seems random and the resemblance between character and namesake generally superficial, but that very multitude is key to understanding their significance in the poem. \textit{En masse}, the names interweave the \textit{Roman de Waldef} into the fabric of England’s mythical, historical, and hagiographical past. As a signifying \textit{auctoritas}, they flag the poem’s familiarity with the subject matter and legitimate its own \textit{estroire} about the English and linguistic context of purportedly English \textit{matière}. Its matrix of name-based intertextuality stitches the \textit{Roman de Waldef}’s account of an imagined pre-Conquest England – a country divided into numerous city-states bearing little resemblance to historical Anglo-Saxon England – into the wider history of the island of Britain and its inhabitants.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} For more information on these historical figures, see their respective entries in the \textit{ODNB}: Bede (673/4-735); Felix (d. 647/8); Guthlac (674-715); Osmund (d. 805x11). Osmund could also refer to the king of the South Saxons (fl. 765-770x2).

\textsuperscript{55} Holden, \textit{Le Roman de Waldef} 22.

\textsuperscript{56} Field, “What’s in a Name? Arthurian Name-Dropping in the \textit{Roman de Waldef}” 63-64.

\textsuperscript{57} Much of the early scholarship about the \textit{Roman de Waldef} was concerned with determining the historicity of the poem. See Alois Brandl, “Historia Regis Waldei,” \textit{Archiv für das Studium neuer Sprachen und Literaturen} 128
In light of these extensive allusions, the significance of the central character’s name and its connections to the events of the late eleventh century bear due consideration. It is possible that the name constitutes another intertextual tip of the hat to the vicissitudes of English history and nothing more, but the poem’s emphasis on conquest suggests that the hero’s name should not be glossed over as another instance of name-dropping. It is furthermore decidedly curious for a French-language poem written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century to memorialize an opponent of the Norman Conquest and traitor to the crown. The historical Waltheof, earl of Northampton and Huntingdon, fought against the Normans at Hastings in 1066 and again at York in 1067, before finally swearing loyalty to William I in 1070 and subsequently having his earldoms restored to him.\(^{58}\) As a further sign of the peace between them, William gave his niece Judith in marriage to his former enemy in 1072, as well as the earldom of Northumbria, a title previously held by Waltheof’s father. However, Waltheof was implicated in another baronial revolt against the king in 1075. Less forgiving the second time around, William had Waltheof imprisoned and beheaded the following year, marking the first execution of one of his royal subjects. Given his identification with the English resistance, Waltheof would seem to be a figure best forgotten after the Conquest, but the reinscription of the Anglo-Saxon past found in the *Roman de Waldef* is not without precedent. The *Roman de Horn, Gui de Warewic*, and *Boeve de Hamtoun* all feature English heroes whose triumphs and tribulations play out against the backdrop of pre-Conquest England, with little reference to the events that profoundly altered that

\(^{58}\) For further information, see the entry on ‘Waltheof, earl of Northumbria (c.1050–1076)’ in the *ODNB.*
world, beyond the language in which they are written. This appropriation of the Anglo-Saxon past stresses the continuity between the pre- and post-Conquest periods, but the *Roman de Waldef* functions somewhat differently. Instead, it refers explicitly to the Norman Conquest, bringing attention to the break between these periods, and reimagines Waltheof as a hero for post-Conquest England.

The figure of Waltheof had undergone substantial rehabilitation or what modern advertisers might call “rebranding” by the early thirteenth century when the *Roman de Waldef* was written. Building on this rebranding, the English traitor would have principally been familiar to a medieval audience as a saint whose cult was centered at Crowland Abbey, to which his body had been brought after his execution in 1076. Although never officially canonized, Waltheof was nevertheless identified in some regards as a saint. His name is rubricated like the obit for a martyr in the Peterborough manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Peterborough being located near Crowland. Orderic Vitalis’ life of Waltheof, which forms part of his history of Crowland Abbey, recounts how the earl’s head continued to utter the paternoster after it had been cut off in the middle of the prayer. His body was also found uncorrupted and intact, the head having miraculously reattached itself, in 1092 when it was moved from the abbey’s

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59 Texts like these have sometimes been classified as Matter of England in the past, but, as Rosalind Field has argued, this problematic category shares none of the uniformity of the traditional Matters of Troy, Rome, and France, and should be used with caution (“Waldef and the Matter of/with England” 30-31).


In further testament to his saintliness, several visitors to his tomb were cured of blindness.

Early evidence for Waltheof’s cult suggests its subversive origins arose from a desire to transform the traitor into a political martyr in protest of the Norman invasion. For instance, the nuns of Romsey Abbey, located in the diocese of Winchester where Waltheof had been executed, venerated the earl. Anselm of Canterbury had to write to the abbey in 1098 and 1102 to urge its suppression. The unofficial status of Waltheof’s saintliness may have drawn Anselm’s hand in this case, but the possible ramifications of a cult that condemned the earl’s execution and, in turn, questioned the legitimacy of the Norman succession almost certainly played a part in his reprobation of the nuns. However, by the time Orderic Vitalis, the half-English, half-Norman chronicler wrote his monumental Historia Ecclesiastica in the second quarter of the twelfth century, Waltheof’s cult had lost its subversive edge.

The twelfth and thirteenth century hagiographical and historical accounts generally interpret the miracles as evidence of Waltheof’s innocence in the plot against the king. William of Malmesbury records that the earl “had joined the conspiracy only with the movement of his lips and not in his heart.” In a thirteenth-century vita, Waltheof refuses to participate because of his fealty oath to the king, but stands accused of

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62 Vitalis 286 (Book IV.ii).

63 Waltheof’s reputation as a healer of blindness may have been “consciously promoted by the monks at Crowland” (Carl Watkins, “The Cult of Earl Waltheof at Crowland,” Hagiographica 3 (1996): 105).


65 Even the story of the Norman monk who visits Waltheof’s tomb, belittles him as a “nequam traditor” (“wicked traitor,” 288 [Book IV.ii]), and dies is tempered by the knowledge that the abbey’s French abbot Geoffrey has allowed for the inclusion of the miracle in Orderic’s account of Crowland Abbey.

treachery anyway because of the king’s counselors who want to lay claim to the earl’s extensive landholdings. The disagreement between the English and French over Waltheof’s guilt mentioned in the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* dulled over time to reframe Waltheof as a man unjustly executed rather than the victim of Norman hegemony. This rebranding undoubtedly contributed to the longevity of his cult and continued to bring pilgrims with coins for the abbey’s coffers throughout the Middle Ages.

The *Roman de Waldef* illustrates this same process of gradual rehabilitation and reimagines Waltheof for a post-Conquest England. The localization of the poem to East Anglia – Waldef is the king of Norfolk and his seat of power is identified as Thetford – suggests the author’s familiarity with the cult of the English saint and the prominence it would have held in his hagiographic geography. Waltheof’s incorruptible body, rather than serving as a symbol of unceasing English resistance, able to thrive despite the decapitation of one of their last great leaders, functions as a persistent reminder of the Anglo-Saxon past. Over time, he becomes a figure less associated with a particular political cause than with a time period within Britain’s history. The *Roman de Waldef*, in turn, presents a pre-Conquest Waltheof whose liminality provides a discursive and rewritable locus for meditating on the perils of territorial acquisition.

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69 Watkins 105.
70 References to Thetford in the *Roman de Waldef* can be found at ll. 311, 326, 389, 795, 3237, 4328, 4615, 4652, 5330, 5337, 5479, 5515, 5539, 5584, 6403, 6405, 6415, 6915, 7021, and 8719.
As with the linguistic Norman Conquest described in the poem’s introductory section, the *Roman de Waldef* likewise reinscribes the English *estoire* for England’s “new” French-speaking inhabitants.

The romanced Waldef stands in contrast to his English counterpart because of his hybrid Norman and English identity.\(^{72}\) The historical Waltheof was the son of Siward, the earl of Northumbria, and Ælfflæd, a daughter of Ealdred, the earl of Bamburgh. The literary Waldef is described as the son of Bede, the king of Norfolk, and Ereburc, the sister of Morgan, the duke of Normandy.\(^{73}\) Waldef’s Anglo-Norman hybridity looks both forwards and backwards. It anticipates the impact of the Norman Conquest on the ethnic makeup of the population of England and reflects the link between these two regions backwards onto the Anglo-Saxon past. England’s neighbor across the Channel represents a place of refuge in the world of the *Roman de Waldef*. For instance, Bede turns to Normandy for help when several kings attack Norfolk (837 ff.), and when the seneschal Frode conspires to kill the young Waldef, his cousin Florenz flees with him to Normandy (2317 ff.). Favorably portrayed, the Normans distinguish themselves from the cowardly French, as is observed in a battle between the French and the Normans: “Les François s’en vont tost fuiant / E les Normans les vont chascant” (“The French flee quickly and the Normans pursue them,” 1235-36).

\(^{72}\) Rosalind Field mentions Waldef’s ethnicity briefly, noting that it is one of the poem’s few concessions to its contemporary audience (*Waldef and the Matter of/with England*” 35). Other differences include: both live in the Anglo-Saxon past and are noblemen, but Waltheof was the earl of Northampton, Huntingdon, and later Northumberland, while Waldef is the king of Norfolk, an area that adjoins but is not identical with the historical earl’s landholdings. Waldef attempts to defend the throne of London from an inner threat, not from a foreign invader, but in the chaotic assemblage of kingdoms comprising the England of the poems, he is neither formally a rebel nor executed for his actions. Furthermore, whereas Waltheof’s death leads to the development of a cult at Crowland, Waldef is not revered as a saint.

\(^{73}\) The *Roman de Waldef* refers to the leader indiscriminately as either duke or king (Holden, *Le Roman de Waldef* 366).
Waldef’s hybridity and the prominence of Normandy do not merely establish links with the pre-Conquest past or efface the identity of one of the Conquest’s strongest opponents, as Brian J. Levy has suggested. Instead, they emphasize the relationship that already existed between Normandy and England prior to the Conquest. In his hybridity, Waldef resembles Edward the Confessor, whose father was the English king Æthelræd II and his mother Emma, sister of Richard, the Duke of Normandy. In addition to calling attention to these pre-existing connections, Waltheof’s hybridity also creates new links in order to underscore the continuity between pre- and post-Conquest England. Waltheof, a historical figure who straddles that transition, becomes the perfect cipher for bridging the gap in a francophone poem that explores the implications of conquest. The half-English, half-Norman Waldef is undoubtedly a Waltheof reimagined, but he is not a Waltheof forgotten. The early scholarship on the historicity of the Roman de Waldef has generally been scorned by recent critics, but the name of the hero unearths the historical and hagiographical figure who ultimately inspires the poem’s concern with conquest. His hybridity connects England’s past and present and reflects its diverse history. It transforms Waltheof more fully into a figure of syncretistic unity who simultaneously draws attention to and elides the fissure of the Norman Conquest in his person. This romanced reinscription of Waltheof exemplifies the linguistic exchange of stories that accompanies the arrival of the Normans described in the poem’s introduction.


76 Rosalind Field, for example, characterizes them as charmed by the “will-o’-the-wisp of historical authenticity” (“Waldef and the Matter of/with England” 26).
The *Roman de Waldef* mediates its critique of conquest through the saintly identity of its hero’s namesake and the hagiographic elements found in the description of Waldef’s death and its effects on his sons Guiac and Gudlac. Although he does not otherwise seem especially saintly, Waldef, like Waltheof, dies as a martyr for England and as an advocate against conquest, a resemblance that highlights the poem’s nuanced reading of Waltheof’s sanctity. However, although some scholars have written about the *Roman de Waldef*’s counter-conquest message, they have given little attention to the role of hagiography. Judith Weiss has argued that this theme derives in part from the influence of Wace’s *Roman de Brut*, and its concern with the “transience of imperial power” and the dangers of “overweening power used to secure conquest by force majeure but without justice or right.” Rosalind Field discusses the conflict between Waldef and his sons and their pursuit of pan-European dominance as part of the poem’s rejection of the “providential optimism of romance ideology.” Neither of these examinations roots its reading in the historical Waltheof or considers how the generic interplay between romance and hagiography contributes to the *Roman de Waldef*’s anti-conquest dialogue. However, the martyrdom of Waldef, the penitential pilgrimage of the eldest son Guiac, and the allusive link between the youngest son Gudlac and Saint Guthlac highlight the centrality of hagiography within the poem’s vast intertextual matrix. These hagiographical elements threaten to fragment the narrative and undercut the expectation of romance closure, reinforcing the poem’s anxieties about imperialism by casting the return to England as a saintly act.

Waldef’s death casts him as a saintly martyr and plays an integral part in the poem’s anti-imperial message. Like Waltheof, Waldef dies in defense of the legitimate succession to the

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77 Weiss, “Emperors and Antichrists” 99 and “Wace to Laȝamon via Waldef” 2.
throne of London. The previous king Fergus died and left his daughter Ykenild, the wife of Waldef’s younger son Gudlac, prey to the regal aspirations of her cousins, Brand and Hildebrand. Overwhelmed and outnumbered, Waldef succumbs to the brothers’ multinational army in the city of Rochester, but before dying, he laments the absence of his sons who have left England in the name of continental conquest:

“Hai! Mes beals tresduz fiz,
S’ore fuissiez en cest païs
Unchor serroie seins e vis.
Allas! ore serrai occis,
A nul jur mes ne me verrez;
Ja terre lunges ne tiengniez
Si vus, mes fiz, ne me vengiez
Si vus en eise ja soiez.” (21343-50)

“Alas, my sweetest sons, if you were now in this country, I would still be safe and alive. Alas, I will be killed now and you will never see me. If you did not hold land far away, my sons, you would avenge me and I would be at ease.” [emphasis is mine]

A description of Waldef’s death follows this pointed condemnation of the aspirations of his sons. His lost helmet and shield, his torn chain mail, and the blood running down “a ses piez / E par devant e par detriés” (“to his feet, both in front and behind,” 21361-62) provoke an affective response, making him resemble as much the defiant martyr as the valiant knight on the brink of defeat. His saintly potential is reinforced by the placement of his body in a boat to Ireland “pur la mervelle de li mustrer, / Cum il de grant valur estoit / Tant cum en li la vie avoit” (“in order to make known that marvel concerning him, namely how he possessed such great courage as long as he lived,” 21376-78). This movement comprises, in effect, a translation of his relic body that proclaims more widely Waldef’s courage and might. The inclusion of these hagiographical
details not only heightens the signification of Waldef’s death, but also draws attention to the
interplay of romance and saint’s life. Romances rarely end or include the deaths of their heroes,
with the exception of the tragic endings of Arthur and Tristan and Iseult. Their narratives
generally flow towards resolution, reintegration, and reunion with loved ones, whether romantic
or familial. The hero’s death interrupts that generic pattern and results in a failure to meet the
horizon of expectation for romance. Its heroes do not die, defeated in battle, abandoned by their
sons, their lands prey to their enemies, but in the Roman de Waldef, all things fall apart. The
always-expected reunion of Waldef and his sons never occurs.⁷⁹ Their twinned narrative paths,
contrary to the dictates of entrelacement, do not cross again. The collapse of the poem’s romance
narrative, along with Waldef’s martyrdom, underscores the source of these missed connections,
namely the absence of Guiac and Gudlac as a result of their desire for conquest.

A desire for land characterizes the actions of the two brothers throughout the Roman de
Waldef. Kidnapped by Saracens as children, they both independently resolve to return to England
in order to learn about their origins and to lay claim to the land. The elder Guiac leaves the court
of King Conrad of Cologne because “il voloit aler conquerre” (“he wanted to go conquering,”
11782) and the younger Gudlac likewise leaves the Danish court for “Angleterre / U il son droit
voldra conquerre” (“England, where he wanted to claim his right,” 12505-06). This appetite is
not sated even when the brothers are reunited with their parents and their inheritance of land
secured. The marriage of Gudlac to Ykenild, the daughter of the king of London, and Guiac’s
primogenital claim to Waldef’s own kingdom guarantee that they will eventually receive land of
their own, but this does not suffice. They desire land, honor, and praise now. This desire is

⁷⁹ In this respect, the Roman de Waldef bears some similarity to the Conte du Graal, in which the hero leaves his
mother to become a knight, despite her objections, and eventually learns that she has died.
especially pressing for Guiac whose prospects as a future king, at least in his estimation, pale in comparison with those of his younger brother as heir to the throne of London. Although their parents see their plan as “folie” (“madness,” 15074) and a “grant pechié” (“great sin,” 15131) and insist that their absence will kill them (“Quant vus ensemble aler vulez / Si bien occire nus purrez,” 15119-20), their sons cannot be dissuaded: they have “de conquerre … grant desir” (“a great desire to conquer,” 15161) foreign lands.

Given the intricate intertextuality of the Roman de Waldef, as discussed above, this pursuit of conquest importantly aligns them with Arthur and the brothers Belin and Brenne, who are mentioned explicitly in the poem and whose exploits on the Continent are described in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae and Wace’s Roman de Brut. Guiac cites these three conquerors as precedents for his desire to go abroad (15001, 15015) and hearkens to their memory once more when encouraging his men to march into Germany en route to their ultimate goal, Rome (17659-67).80 In addition to this allusive name-dropping, there are also similarities in narrative detail. Like Arthur, Belin, and Brenne, Guiac and Gudlac seek conquest on the Continent. Like Belin and Brenne, the story of the alliteratively named brothers within the Roman de Waldef contains an episode in which their mother exposes her breasts upon a field of battle in order to prevent familial bloodshed.81 However, instead of the opponents being brothers in conflict with one another over how they ought to divide the kingdom they have inherited, the adversaries are Guiac and his father Waldef, who unknowingly attempts to defend England from an invasion led by his eldest son. Furthermore, in a detail not found in the Historia Regum

80 Additional references to Arthur are made in the description of the German emperor’s daughter whose beauty is said to equal that of the women of Arthur’s court (18147-49) and in Guiac’s farewell to his men whom he describes as surpassing those who have served under any king or emperor, even Arthur “le vallant” (21776).

81 Wace, Roman de Brut 2709-2817; Roman de Waldef 14458-520.
Britanniae or the Roman de Brut, an angel visits Ernild, Waldef’s wife, in order to reveal the true identities of the unknown invaders from the Continent (14387). The interjection of this hagiographic motif into an episode adapted from earlier historical texts marks a point of high tension and then release, as the possibility of war is raised and temporarily averted. However, the encounter foreshadows the later generational conflict between father and sons and displays an anxiety about the dangers of conquest that can only be eased by divine intervention. The angel that appears, like Waldef’s later saintly death, functions as a textual signpost, alerting readers to the dangers of territorial ambition.

Punctuated by hagiographic elements, the poem’s nuanced reading of earlier British histories combines the success of Belin and Brenne’s march towards Rome and the tragic consequences of Arthur’s absence from Britain while fighting against the Romans into a single narrative of conquest. The alliteratively-named Guiac and Gudlac successfully conquer Germany, where Guiac is crowned emperor, and they then set their sights eastward on Rome and Greece. However, their imperial aspirations are cut short when Guiac announces his intention to conquer the earthly paradise, even if it means taking up arms against the angels.\(^{82}\) The Miltonic misguidedness of this goal is made clear by the appearance of a mysterious pilgrim who reprimands Guiac for his “grant orguel” (“great pride,” 20713) and warns him of his impending fall from grace.\(^{83}\) This arrives in the form of three messengers from England bearing news of Waldef’s death and his condemnatory last words. Guiac receives the news of his father’s death as

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\(^{82}\) Between lines 20662 and 20663, which marks the transition between f. 123v-124r, there is a gap in the manuscript where Guiac voices this goal, but the pilgrim’s accusations make Guiac’s intention clear, as do the Latin versions of the Waldef story discussed below. Guiac’s pursuit of earthly paradise also recalls the legendary accounts of Alexander the Great, in which he too desires to see Eden.

a sign that he has offended God and experiences a moment of self-realization that may be likened to the scenes of pagan conversion found in the lives of saints of the early Church. In this case, however, the oral account of the death, following fast on the heels of the mysterious pilgrim compels the act of conversion, not the sight of the martyrdom. Guiac renounces his imperial crown and pledges to go into exile to make amends for his overweening pride and his part in his father’s death. Although the careers of the brothers as conquerors rely heavily on their forebears Belin and Brenne, Waldef’s death draws the focus of the story back to England and concludes the outwards geographical expansion of the poem, reflecting the influence of Arthur’s rise and fall, whose own ambitions on the Continent are cut short by news of Mordred’s treachery. The introduction of the quasi-angelic pilgrim intertwines the narrative intertextualities as the major conquerors of the urtexts of British history are combined to tell an English story of conquest with tragic consequences.

The codicological juxtaposition of the Roman de Waldef with Gui de Warewic and the chanson de geste Otinel in the poem’s only extant manuscript, Cologny-Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, Bodmer 168, reinforces the importance of Guiac’s renunciation of his past actions within the poem’s overarching narrative. The unified design of this late thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century manuscript, including inked initials alternating in red and blue, mirrors its thematic unity. As A.J. Holden and Keith Busby have shown, all three items feature the

\[84\] See, for example, the conversion of 5,000 people that occurs when the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove before Margaret’s execution in Wace’s Vie de Sainte Marguerite (575-78).

\[85\] For a full description of the manuscript, see Françoise Vielliard, Manuscrits Français du Moyen Âge (Cologny-Geneva: Fondation Martin Bodmer, 1975) 93-99. A digital facsimile of the manuscript is available at [http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/fr/list/one/cb/0168](http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/fr/list/one/cb/0168). Bodmer 168’s items are found on the following folios: Le Roman de Waldef, f. 1r-133v; Gui de Warewic, f. 134r-210v; and Otinel, f. 211r-22r.

\[86\] Holden, Le Roman de Waldef 29-32; and Busby, Codex and Context 502.
opposition between pagans and Christians. Waldef fights against the Saracen Swede Urvein and must rescue his wife and sons from Saracens. Gui crusades against the pagans at Constantinople and Jerusalem. Otinel is a messenger sent to convince Charlemagne to surrender to the pagan emperor Garsile and renounce Christianity. What has not been noted previously is that each of these texts also includes moments of conversion, whether from one religion to another, as in the case of the Saracen Otinel. Whether these similarities ultimately factored into the compilation of these three texts together cannot be unequivocally determined, but their current juxtaposition in Bodmer 168 certainly highlights the significance of this narrative thread of conversion and, in turn, the significance of Guiac’s epiphany in the Roman de Waldef. The pilgrim’s appearance interrupts Guiac and Gudlac’s mimetic performance of Belin and Brenne’s famed conquest of Rome and reframes the generic trajectory of the narrative as a whole from a story of romance ambition conceptualized and fulfilled to the penitent sinner, a trope familiar from the lives of Saint Eustace, Mary Magdalene, and others.

However, just as the fusion of the stories of Arthur and Belin and Brenne from British history enables Guiac’s moment of conversion, the hagiographic elements found in the Roman de Waldef fragment the story into two diverging paths to suppress the narrative of conquest. The arrival of the pilgrim and the news brought by the messengers produce two different reactions in Guiac and Gudlac. The younger brother Gudlac interprets his father’s last words as a call to return to England and avenge Waldef’s death, but Guiac, whose desire for land initially led them across the Channel and whose pride inspired him to challenge the angels of earthly paradise, construes his father’s words as an accusation and resolves to atone for his sins through penitential pilgrimage, embarking on an inner conquest to quell his overreaching ambition. The unique exemplar details the ensuing split in narrative as the brothers part ways – Gudlac for England and Guiac for places unknown – but whether this fragmentation continues throughout
the remainder of the story is complicated by the abrupt end of Bodmer 168’s copy at this important juncture.\textsuperscript{87}

Two fifteenth-century Latin redactions of the Waldef story suggest that the split is not permanent and append a happy ending to Guiac’s exile, but such a conclusion does not seem altogether in keeping with the dark timbre of the \textit{Roman de Waldef} or its anti-imperial theme. The Latin versions, as will be shown, manipulate the hagiographic potential of Guiac’s story to legitimate his conquests on the basis of intertextual allusions to the Matter of Britain and the life of Saint Guthlac.\textsuperscript{88} It seems more likely that the brothers’ narrative \textit{entrelacement} never occurs, thereby providing a fitting capstone to the poem’s consistent stance against conquest.\textsuperscript{89} In the short redaction preserved in Trinity College Library Dublin 632 (formerly E.5.20) and the long version written by John Bramis, a monk at the priory of Thetford in Norfolk, found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 329,\textsuperscript{90} Guiac does not remain in exile permanently. After eight years, an angel tells him to return to Germany where he is crowned emperor once more. When his lands are invaded,\textsuperscript{91} Gudlac, now the king of London, comes to his brother’s aid,

\textsuperscript{87} The text of the \textit{Roman de Waldef} ends partway down the right column of folio 133v. A.J. Holden, estimates that there are approximately 2,000 lines missing on the basis of a fifteenth-century Latin version (\textit{Le Roman de Waldef} 18).

\textsuperscript{88} While A.J. Holden turns to the Latin versions as a means “de remédir partiellement” the absence of the rest of the Anglo-Norman version (\textit{Roman de Waldef} 18), Rosalind Field is much more doubtful about the degree of correlation between the two versions: “I see no particular reason to give much credence to it [Bramis’ Latin version] as evidence for the ending of the original \textit{Waldef}” (“\textit{Waldef} and the Matter of/with England” 39 n30).

\textsuperscript{89} I have previously attempted to reconstruct the ending of the \textit{Roman de Waldef} in a paper entitled “An Incomplete Text: \textit{Le Roman de Waldef} and Codex Bodmer 168” at the 2012 Romance in Medieval Britain conference.

\textsuperscript{90} For a description of the manuscript containing the condensed Latin version preserved in Trinity College Library Dublin 632, see Mario Esposito, “Analecta Varia.” \textit{Hermathena} 15 (1908-09): 380-82. For a description and digital reproduction of Cambridge, Corpus Christi Cambridge 329, see \textit{Parker Library on the Web} \url{http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/page.do?forward=home}.

\textsuperscript{91} The shorter Latin version (Trinity College Library Dublin 632) is incomplete and ends with the arrival of the messenger bearing news of the invasion of Guiac’s kingdom.
whereupon they reprise their roles as brother-conquerors, in the vein of Belin and Brenne, and invade Greece and Rome.

In the Latin versions, Guiac’s conversion functions as a stepping stone in his path towards becoming the ultimate earthly ruler, as they recount both his self-imposed exile and his divinely-ordained return. Although Guiac’s later conquests do not differ significantly from his earlier lust for land, except insofar as he no longer seeks earthly paradise, his restraint in this regard implies that the penitent sinner has learned from his past misdeeds. Content with mortal adversaries and earthbound conquest, his reward in kind encompasses the world itself and its great empires and cities. This connection between Guiac’s penance and its earthly rewards is emphasized in the long version’s concluding description of its narrative as a saint’s life, as the “vita et conversatio” of Guiac ("life and conversion," 254). Through this designation, the Latin exploits the genre of hagiography to legitimate and sanctify Guiac’s imperial aspirations and delight in martial affairs ("rebus in bellicis," 254). The conversion narrative transforms his zeal for conquest into a kind of manifest destiny that ordains that he will succeed and exceed Belin, Brenne, and Arthur through his conquests of Germany, Greece, and Rome and, what is more, that his children and their children will rule after him for many days ("ipsoque defuncto filii sui et filii filiorum suorum multis postmodum diebus successere," 254).

Although this sequence of events found in the Latin versions provides a fitting conclusion for the story of Waldef as an English sequel and improvement upon the Matter of Britain, it contradicts the clues in the Roman de Waldef clearly indicating that Guiac’s part in the story

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92 The Latin quotations come from Johannes Bramis’ redaction of the story of Waldef. See Johannes Bramis, Historia Regis Waldei, ed. Rudolf Imelmann, Bonner Studien zur Englischen Philologie 4 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1912). The text of Trinity College Dublin E.5.20 has not been edited, but a modern English translation is available.
comes to an end with his departure into exile. Whereas the conversion story in the Latin versions acts as a narrative stimulant to spur on Guiac’s further adventures, his exile functions as a narrative suppressant in the French version that splits up the stories of the two conquering brothers once and for all. For example, Guiac’s men “unques puis jur ne s’entreveirent” (“will never see one another afterwards,” 22146) and Guiac “unc ariere ne repoira” (“never returned back again,” 22150), phrases that have no counterparts in the Latin versions. His absence engenders speculation that fairies have taken Guiac to their realm on account of his goodness, presumably after he has spent some significant time in exile, and that he remains there forever (22151-58). Its similarity to Arthur’s exit from Wace’s *Roman de Brut* underscores the permanence of Guiac’s departure. Wace’s Arthur and Guiac both disappear from the narratives in which they have featured prominently, but neither conqueror is said to have died per se. Arthur is brought to Avalon so that the wounds he sustained in battle may be healed and, as Wace reports, the Britons believe that he is still living there and will return.93 These parallels between Guiac and Arthur, his cohort-in-conquest, situate the poem once more within an intricate network of allusions. Just as Arthur’s campaign against the Romans provides Mordred with the opportunity for a power grab that results in the mortal wounding of Arthur, the death of many men, and the waning of the Britons, Guiac’s pursuit of conquest on the Continent leaves his father Waldef without the support he needs and leads to his death. Their ambitions on the Continent produce tragic consequences at home. These similarities demonstrate the unlikelihood that the Guiac of the French version returns from his penitential exile, and one cannot presume that the conclusions of the Latin and French adaptations are one and the same. Although the Latin versions also contain references to Arthur and imply a connection between the hero’s

93 See Wace, *Roman de Brut* 13275-290. Wace’s account of Arthur’s end does not mention fairies, but does make reference to Avalon as his resting place, which has traditionally been associated with the Celtic Otherworld.
absence from Britain and his downfall, only the *Roman de Waldef* presents this final diptych of Arthur and Guiac as fellow conquerors undone by their continental campaigns. The juxtaposition of these figures of imagined British and English history provides a fitting bookend to the poem’s overarching critique of chivalric excess and boundless expansion and the poem’s opening meditation on conquest.

Based on this reconstructed ending, Guiac’s renunciation of his empire and departure into exile simultaneously concludes his territorial ambitions and his role in the poem. As the pursuit of empire ceases to be productive as a narrative path, it comes to an end. Guiac’s search for penance replaces his previous desire for land, but this inner conquest is never described. The poem’s silence on the fate of Guiac the pilgrim extinguishes his narrative of conquest in its lack of resolution, consonant with its themes, but it provides only one part of its twinned dialogue on this theme. If Guiac’s exile and departure from the text condemn his pursuits abroad, Gudlac’s actions signal the poem’s approval of his narrative path, providing a romance conclusion to the otherwise unromantic *Roman de Waldef*. Rosalind Field has suggested that neither brother is cast in a sympathetic light, but although Gudlac may have been a willing participant, Guiac is identified as the primary instigator of their trip to the Continent. Guiac’s desire for land of his own brings them across the Channel and pulls the geographical center of the story away from England. This outward pull stops with Guiac’s exile. In contrast, Gudlac resolves to avenge Waldef’s death, returns to England, and fights against the giant Hunewald, to whom Hildebrand and Brand had promised Waldef’s lands, when Bodmer 168’s copy abruptly comes to an end (21168-72). Although its outcome is unknown, Gudlac’s impending battle against the giant

positions the poem once more within the context of the literary tradition of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* and Wace’s *Roman de Brut*. He resembles Arthur not yet defeated, taking on the giant of Mont-St-Michel before he faces the Roman emperor. Yet, perhaps, more significantly, he also echoes Brutus, newly arrived in Britain from the east and ready to defeat the island’s monstrous inhabitants before he can claim it entirely as his own. Gudlac returns to England and fights the giant to reclaim his father’s kingdom and to wrest control of the kingdom of London, which he has inherited through his marriage to the previous king’s daughter. He comes to instill order, much as Brutus did, but he comes not as a refugee fleeing a defeated kingdom, but as an avenging son returning home. Gudlac counters the centrifugal force of Guiac’s quest with the centripetal force of his quest for England and home. He fulfills the last words of Waldef, the poem’s martyr against conquest, and gives the *Roman de Waldef* the romance closure expected of its genre.

Gudlac’s name provides a crucial key to the final insular pull of the *Roman de Waldef* and its denunciation of imperial aspirations. While the alliterative names Guiac and Gudlac reflect their predecessors Belin and Brenne, the particular namesake of Waldef’s younger son most likely derives from Saint Guthlac. As briefly noted above, Guthlac, a descendant of Offa I, was a Mercian nobleman who entered a monastery after spending nine years as a warrior, struck, as Felix’s life of the saint explains, by the “antiquorum regum stirpis suae per transacta retro saecula miserabiles exitus flagitioso vitae termino” and the “caducas mundi divitias contemtibilemque temporalis vitae gloriam” (“the wretched deaths and shameful ends of the

95 Wace, *Roman de Brut* 11287-608.

96 The form Guthlac is not itself preserved in the poem, but the forms Gudlac, Gullac, Gutlac, and Gudlas clearly derive from it. For the sake of clarification, I will refer to the historical figure as Guthlac and romance character as Gudlac.
ancient kings of his race in the course of the past ages” and “the fleeting riches of this world and
the contemptible glory of this temporal life,” 82-83). 97 He eventually became a hermit at
Crowland where he was tormented by evil spirits in the fens of East Anglia. A shrine was built
where his body was found incorrupt, leading eventually to the foundation of a monastery.

Although both are associated with pre-Conquest England, Guthlac’s renunciation of life
in the world shares more in common with the penitent Guiac. Gudlac’s quest for vengeance,
presumed reunion with his wife, and ascent to the throne of London embrace the “contemtibilem
… temporalis vitae gloriam” the hermit Guthlac rejects. Yet, despite this lack of congruence, the
significance of this hagiographical name-dropping rests in Guthlac’s identity as a native English
saint and Gudlac’s return to England. The origins of Gudlac’s name point to his roots in England
and the homewards direction of his narrative. The hagiographical link sanctifies and legitimates
his return. With the insular Gudlac, the poem makes its concluding centripetal pull into itself.

This insular pull signaled by Gudlac’s name is doubly significant given the association of
Saint Guthlac with Crowland, the same monastery where the quasi-saint Waltheof’s remains
were brought by abbot Wulfketel in 1076. 98 The abbeacy of Henry Longchamp saw the
translation of the relics of both Guthlac and Waltheof in the late twelfth and early thirteenth
centuries, events that may have caused these denizens of England’s past to loom large in the


98 Holden comments upon the connection between Waltheof and Guthlac: “Il faut noter en plus que Crowland avait été fondé par Saint Guthlac, et que le fils cadet de Waldef porte le nom de Gudlac dans notre poème; la coincidence est frappante. Cependant, ici encore, il s’agit de spéculations impossibles à vérifier, et c’est ainsi que nous les présentons” (Le Roman de Waldef 17).
imagination of the poet. Through their names, the French-language *Roman de Waldef* calls back to pre-Conquest England, weaving Waltheof and Guthlac and so many others into a rich tapestry of allusions that draws on the lessons of the past to present an exemplum for a post-Conquest future about the perils of conquest and imperialism. Although its pastiche of British, French, and English traditions implicitly recognizes the diversity enabled by imperialism, the *Roman de Waldef* implicitly rejects it, too. Written in the early thirteenth century, at a time when King John was fighting for and losing English territory in France, the *Roman de Waldef*’s insular inward turn advocated by Gudlac’s twinned hagiographic and romance story and the anxieties it expresses about conquest abroad would not have gone unnoticed.

**Gui de Warewic**

The previous discussions have examined how romance adopts elements from saints’ lives, whether to depict its hero as an instrument of divine will, as in the *Roman de Horn*, or to create a complex network of hagiographic allusions that link its *estroire* about pre-Conquest England to an anti-imperial message, as in the *Roman de Waldef*. However, despite these appropriations, neither poem could be mistaken for a saint’s life nor have they featured prominently in scholarly debates about the boundaries between romance and hagiography. The same cannot be said about *Gui de Warewic*, whose blend of these two genres has been the focus of much

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99 Colgrave 39-42.

100 In the case of the *Roman de Waldef*, this absence may have more to do with its relative obscurity. A.J. Holden’s edition was not published until 1984 and is not widely available.
discussion.\textsuperscript{101} This thirteenth-century story of a renowned knight who embarks on a penitential pilgrimage to atone for his sins and exudes the odor of sanctity at his death displays a clear indebtedness to hagiographic narratives, but scholars of this poem and its Middle English derivations have questioned the intention underlying its pious turn. Susan Crane and Judith Weiss argue that it exploits the themes and motifs of hagiography to legitimate a romance invested in underscoring the greatness of its hero rather than presenting a portrait of an exemplary but flawed layperson.\textsuperscript{102} Paul Price sees Gui’s confession partway through the poem as a means of artificially extending its length with adventures seemingly no different from those in the poem’s first section.\textsuperscript{103} In this same vein, Maldwyn Mills characterizes Herhalt’s quest for Gui’s son Reinbrun, which interweaves with Gui’s penitential narrative, as a needless attempt to prolong the story beyond the death of its hero.\textsuperscript{104} These criticisms depict its author as a literary magpie gathering all that glitters into his nest of narrative. Such assessments of \textit{Gui de Warewic} frame their discussions with regard to the poem’s failures as a saint’s life and as a cohesive narrative. The text can, admittedly, be rather unwieldy at times and its moral compass does not always align completely with Church doctrine, but these reactions fail to recognize the ingenuity of its inextricable mix of romance and hagiography in the context of the romances that preceded

\textsuperscript{101} Other scholars weighing in on this topic include Hanspeter Schelp (133-49) and David Klausner, who classify \textit{Gui de Warewic} as an exemplary romance; Diane Childress, who excludes them from her secular legend category (317); and Dieter Mehl, who classifies the lengthy poem as a novel in verse (220-27).


it, like the *Roman de Horn* and *Roman de Waldef*. By examining the poem’s appropriation of religious elements in relation to both the *vita* and romance traditions, this section provides insight into the development of the genre of romance in England and highlights how its interplay with hagiography demonstrates a profound generic shift that blurs the boundaries between two similar but opposed genres to create a fluidity of generic identity evident in the poem’s extant manuscripts.

Gui’s efforts to win the love of Felice, the daughter of the Earl of Warwick, comprise the poem’s first section and follow a typical romance plot. Having been spurned by his beloved because he had not yet achieved sufficient renown, Gui participates in chivalric contests and adventures on the Continent, subsequently becoming the famous knight his lady desired. He and Felice wed, an event that provides a fitting conclusion for Gui’s trials and for any number of medieval romance couples, including Horn and Rigmel from the *Roman de Horn*. Alfred Ewert cites the earlier romance as one of the sources for the first part of *Gui de Warewic*.\(^{105}\) Although the paradigm is slightly reversed, since Horn does not believe himself to be worthy of Rigmel’s love and Rigmel is decidedly not aloof, other plot elements link the two romances. Both Horn and Gui are the social inferiors of their would-be lovers – Horn being the ward of Rigmel’s father and Gui the son of the seneschal of Felice’s father.\(^{106}\) They exchange rings with their


lovers when they part ways and are reunited with them incognito. Most importantly, Gui and Horn prove their worthiness to their ladies through martial prowess and are later married to them. Such an ending meets the horizon of expectation for romance, which advances as a genre towards reunion and resolution with the hero’s reintegration into society, often through marriage. The wedding of Gui and Felice concludes Gui’s protracted efforts to prove his chivalric worthiness through his elevation from the son of the Earl of Warwick’s seneschal to knight to “cil del mund li plus preisez” (“the most praised in the world,” 2956). There may be missteps along the way, but the attainment of these goals marks both the end of the romance’s overarching quest and the end of the story. However, the story of Gui and Felice does not end with their marriage. It continues for another 5000+ lines in its account of Gui’s conversion and penitential exile, thereby undermining the expectations of romance as it shifts in genre.

The poem signals this shift from romance through the incorporation of hagiographic elements in the description of Gui’s decision to go into exile. Fifty days after his wedding, Gui gazes upon the starry sky from a tower and, in a moment of epiphany, realizes that he has neglected his duty to God in his zeal to win the hand of Felice: “Homes ocis, destruites citez, / Arses abbeies de plusurs regnez” (“I have killed men, destroyed cities, and burned abbeys in many kingdoms,” 7609-10). Striving to right this wrong, Gui announces his intention to go on pilgrimage and recalibrate his body as a penitential instrument, redirecting the physical toil it has suffered for the love of woman toward the love of God: “Ço que par muns cors mesfait ai / Par mun cors esperir voldrai” (“What I have done wrong with my body, I want to expiate with my

\[107\] When Gui returns to England, he comes to Felice’s home in his pilgrim’s clothing and invited in to eat out of charity, but Felice does not recognize him.
body,” 7675-76). After making it known that she is pregnant with their son, he then leaves his wife and goes into exile, not to be seen again by her until they are reunited at his deathbed.

Although analysis of this scene by scholars – such as Susan Crane and David Klausner – has generally focused on the influence of the legend of Saint Alexis, of equal importance here are the ways in which romance elements are reconfigured to foreshadow the shift the poem takes in this scene. Like Gui, Alexis, the son of a prominent nobleman, leaves his wife on their wedding night and begins instead his betrothal to God by going abroad to live in anonymity. The similarities between the stories of Gui and Alexis are clear, but Gui de Warewic’s manipulation of generic expectations rests not only on the appropriation of hagiographic elements, but also on the transformation of romance motifs and symbols. Prior to Gui’s epiphany, he spends the day hunting, taking pleasure in a sport associated with members of the knightly estate and featured in numerous romances in which the pursuit of game provides the opportunity for further adventures. Hunting may also symbolize the knight’s quest for his lady, but the proverbial hunt no longer ensnares Gui, who has already found his quarry. He seeks something more, suggesting a breakdown in motif that anticipates his decision to leave Felice.

Setting the scene in “mai, el tens d’esté” (“May in the summertime,” 7563) further elevates the expectation that an event of an amorous character will follow since May is traditionally


associated in medieval literature with renewal, *reverdie*, and fertility. However, Gui’s decision undercuts these associations.

The tower in which Gui experiences his epiphany also provides a symbol often associated with romance that is reinscribed as the poem shifts in genre. From atop a tower, Gui looks up at the stars and contemplates how little he has done for God and the many things he has done for the love of Felice, in keeping with his promise to do anything for her love: “fust ço mal u fust ço bien” (“whether it were wicked or good,” 318). The tower providing the backdrop for this pivotal moment recalls an earlier episode from Gui’s courtship of Felice (425 ff.). Overcome with love, Gui had looked out of a window towards Felice’s tower and wished that it could “a tere acraventee, / E a la tere esparpeilee!” (“be knocked down to the ground and strewn to the earth,” 431-32). The prominence of towers links the two scenes, but their signification differs greatly. The first tower hinders Gui’s pursuits and serves as a sounding board for his anticipation of Felice’s love. It prevents him from securing the cure for the lovesickness that consumes him. Far from being a barrier, the second tower facilitates Gui’s communion with God by physically distancing him from the things that have prevented him from seeing the debt he owes God for the gifts and honors he has received. Perched high in the tower, he is positioned between “le pais” and “le ciel” (“the land,” 7571; “the sky,” 7572), caught between the earthly and the celestial. Gui’s position at the window of the tower underscores that liminality (“a une fenestre” 425; “as estres” 7570). These two scenes unify the sections of Gui’s narrative by providing a landmark that serves as a signpost for Gui’s transformation. Whereas Gui first looks out of a window to a tower in the hope that it will bring him to Felice, Gui is later in a similar or perhaps the same tower as Felice and looks out, away from it. What had been a symbol of lovesick yearning becomes a place of contemplation and penitential remorse. The second tower scene rewrites the
first. The transformation of the tower and the liminal geography of the scene also reflect the shifting generic identity of the poem.

The tower scene and the events leading up to it require that the motifs and the expectations of romance be re-read and reinterpreted in light of the ensuing account of Gui’s adventures abroad as an anonymous penitent. The poem’s pastiche of romance and hagiography displays a nuanced understanding and fine-tuned familiarity with the characteristics of these genres and an innovative willingness to play with them that is both intratextual – e.g., the reinscription of the tower – and intertextual – e.g., the reinscription of elements from other romances, like the Roman de Horn. However, this blending of romance is not without precedent, as comparison of Gui de Warewic with the Roman de Waldef, one of its sources, will demonstrate.

A.J. Holden first established a connection between Gui de Warewic and the Roman de Waldef on the basis of shared narrative details and similarly worded phrases and lines found in the two works, prompting him to deduce that the Roman de Waldef had served as a source for Gui de Warewic.111 Subsequent scholars have noted this link, but they have not explored its implications more fully, especially with regard to the quasi-hagiographical turns both poems take.112 Both poems focus on foundational families in pre-Conquest England, while also prominently featuring events in Germany and Saxony. Gui and Guiac are similarly named heroes who abandon their former lives at the height of their fame and power to go on pilgrimage. Like

111 Holden, Le Roman de Waldef 29-32.
Gui, Waldef’s elder son Guiac imposes penitential exile upon himself in order to atone for his sins against God, despite the encouragement of others to choose a less demanding form of penance. In both cases, this decision to go into exile is abrupt, highlighting the contrast between the hero’s two lives.\(^{113}\) For Gui, it is the product of quiet contemplation on a starlit night, while for Guiac, it stems from the remorse experienced after a fateful boast to conquer earthly paradise and the appearance of a mysterious pilgrim. Gui’s personal moment of reflection atop the tower may lack the grandeur and spectacle of Guiac’s reprobation in the middle of an imperial court, but the motivation underlying these scenes remains the same.\(^{114}\) They depict the conversion of their heroes as they turn away from their sinful pasts to embrace a regime of self-denial and abnegation. As noted above, *Gui de Warewic* and the *Roman de Waldef* are bound together in Bodmer 168, suggesting the possibility that the manuscript’s compiler may have recognized the similarities between these two texts.\(^{115}\) Copied one after the other, Guiac’s conversion and pilgrimage codicologically anticipate the penitent knight and pilgrim Gui.

The conversions of Guiac and Gui also mirror the conversion of genre that occurs in the *Roman de Waldef* and *Gui de Warewic*. As their heroes leave behind their former lives, the genres romance and hagiography come together in a moment of tension that tests the boundary between them in a way that incidental hagiographic elements, like the angel who appears to Waldef’s wife so that she can prevent her husband from fighting his sons, do not.\(^{116}\) The

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\(^{113}\) This contrasts with the life of Saint Alexis, in which the decision to leave is an outgrowth of the piety he has always demonstrated.

\(^{114}\) Weiss considers the influence of this scene on *Gui de Warewic* in “The Exploitations of Ideas of Pilgrimage and Sainthood in *Gui de Warewic*” 50-51.

\(^{115}\) This manuscript was discussed briefly on pp. 196-97.

\(^{116}\) This hagiographical motif occurs at l. 14458ff and was discussed on p. 194.
resolution of that generic tension and the decision to use or reject the narrative potential of the conjunction of these genres reflects the development of romance in England and its increasing exploitation of elements from saints’ lives. The meeting of romance and hagiography in the *Roman de Waldef* functions as a narrative suppressant, bringing Guiac’s pursuit of land and his participation in the story to a conclusion. However, it produces the opposite effect in *Gui de Warewic*, acting instead as a narrative amplifier as it provides the catalyst for Gui’s further adventures.

In the *Roman de Waldef*, the conjunction of romance and hagiography that occurs when Guiac’s overzealous campaign for territorial domination heralds the intervention of a divine messenger serves as a narrative suppressant to Guiac’s part in the poem. The introduction of the religious narrative of Guiac’s penitential journey ends his part in the poem.\(^{117}\) He does not return from his exile and his experiences abroad are never narrated. Rather, it is only anticipated, remaining ever pregnant with possibility for his redemption and the story that might have been told. Guiac disappears into obscurity, an ending that reflects the spiritual abnegation inspired by the pilgrim’s admonitions against pride. The emperor of Germany who had sought to conquer all things, including earthly paradise, despoils himself of his earthly trappings, becomes nothing, and recedes from the text. Guiac’s conversion and exile act as narrative suppressants because his story must come to an end. There is no space in the *Roman de Waldef* for the hagiographic and narrative possibility of Guiac as a sinner turned saint. He is the negative exemplum of the perils of conquest held up in contrast to his brother Guthlac, whose tale of vengeance and return replaces the dead-end of Guiac’s narrative and brings it home to England. The hagiographic...

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\(^{117}\) I argue this based on the hypothetical ending for the *Roman de Waldef* that I proposed in the previous section of this chapter in which, contrary to the ending given in the Latin version by the monk John Bramis preserved in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 50, Guiac does not return from his penitential pilgrimage. See pp. 199ff.
potential of Guiac’s story yields to the pull of romance as a genre towards resolution and reunion represented by Gudlac’s defeat of the giant and eventual ascension to the throne as the king of London.

In *Gui de Warewic*, by contrast, the conjunction of romance and hagiography presented by Gui’s decision to go into penitential exile functions as a narrative amplifier. Gui’s conversion marks a turning point, not the end, of his story. Although he experiences an epiphany about the value of his life as potentially world-shattering as Guiac, Gui’s story does not stop. His time in exile is not shrouded in mystery or left to the imagination of the audience, but rather versified and described over the course of the poem’s many remaining lines. It develops the plot thread suggested by the narrative of Guiac in the *Roman de Waldef*, unwinding the possibility for narrative amplification already present within its source. The *Roman de Waldef* registers the potential to narrate beyond Guiac’s disappearance from the text in its suggestion that Guiac lives with the fairies, a detail that forms part of the poem’s rich intertextual matrix. Nevertheless, his story can go no further if Guiac’s resemblance to Arthur is to hold true, in keeping with its dialogue with the Matter of Britain and its commentary about chivalric excess. *Gui de Warewic* presents no such limitations. It extends beyond the threshold of romance and explores the aftereffects of Gui’s conversion in a way unavailable to Guiac’s truncated narrative, allowing its potential as a saint’s life to play itself out. This enables the blending of these genres so that Gui’s conversion and exile can be exploited as a narrative space for romance adventure in which he may visit “meinte estrange terre / les sainz Deu purra requere” (“many foreign lands where he could find the holy relics of God,” 7735-36).

The *Roman de Waldef* and *Gui de Warewic* contain instances of generic tension between romance and hagiography, but the resolution of this strain produces narrative death in the former
and the spark of narrative possibility in the latter. In the Roman de Waldef (as I have reconstructed its ending), these two genres are intertwined but ultimately irreconcilable. Guiac’s pursuit of worldly glory, wealth, and conquest lead him to a penitential narrative that is cut short. Although the potential for his redemption remains, it takes place beyond the margins, if it even comes to pass, and Saint Guiac never becomes a possibility – he simply ceases to be. The romance resolution to the poem hinges upon his brother Gudlac whose story concludes the poem. *Gui de Warewic* combines the divergent narratives of Guiac and Gudlac into one story, blending romance and hagiography to such an extent that it is impossible to extrapolate one from the other. Like Guiac, Gui experiences a moment of conversion that throws his life into disarray, but his quest for atonement continues in a manner not so dissimilar from his efforts to win fame and glory for Felice. He returns to England and, like the Roman de Waldef’s Gudlac, kills a giant in order to save his country from a foreign threat. Although Gui does not reveal his identity to his wife as he dines in her hall as a pilgrim, he does send for and reunite with her on his deathbed. He atones for his sinful past, and sanctity’s sights and sounds surround his death, but he also ensures that he produces an heir to inherit his estate and increases his renown with an exile marked by chivalric battles.

Romance and hagiography freely intermingle with one another in *Gui de Warewic* to create a work that validates chivalric values in a fashion inconceivable within the earlier Roman de Waldef, in which the two genres function as neighboring but nevertheless distinct genres. The poem may end in the hero’s death, but Gui’s hagiographic story has been romanced in this push towards reunion and resolution. The incorporation of hagiographic elements found in *Gui de Warewic* and the fluidity with which they are adopted differs considerably from the interplay found in the Roman de Horn and Roman de Waldef. It goes beyond isolated elements and stunted plots to incorporate substantial narrative structures from hagiography, creating a new and distinct
“temporary structure,” to use Moretti’s turn of phrase, which links the two genres more directly.\footnote{Moretti14.} It shows greater nuance than the earlier romances in the interpenetration of these elements. But whether this temporary structure constitutes a distinctive subgenre or a permutation of romance, it bears considering the extent to which Gui de Warewic meets or fails to meet the expectations associated with the saint’s life and romance genres.

Scholarly discussion of Gui de Warewic as a kind of saint’s life has focused on its similarity to the life of Saint Alexis, though other possible analogues can be found in the legends of Saints Eustace and Hubert.\footnote{Eustace was a Roman general formerly known as Placidas, who converted to Christianity after seeing a stag with a crucifix between its horns. He and his family were roasted to death in a bronze bull for refusing to make a sacrifice. See Hippolyte Delehaye, “La Légende de S. Eustache,” Mélanges d’hagiographie grecque et latine, Subsidia Hagiographica 42 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1966) 212-39. Hubert converted to Christianity when he saw a stag with a crucifix between its antlers while hunting on a Good Friday. He later became the bishop of Maastricht and Liège, died 727. See Alain Dierkens and Jean-Marie Duvosquel, ed. Le Culte de S. Hubert au pays de Liège (Brussels: Crédit Communal, 1990).} Popular during the Middle Ages,\footnote{Alison Goddard Elliott, The Vie de Saint Alexis in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: An Edition and Commentary (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).} the Latin \textit{vita} of Saint Alexis spawned numerous vernacular versions, including the eleventh-century French \textit{Vie de Saint Alexis}, the earliest of its derivatives.\footnote{La Vie de Saint Alexis, ed. Maurizio Perugi (Geneva: Droz, 2000).} As noted earlier, Alexis, the son of a prominent Roman nobleman, leaves his wife on their wedding night and begins instead his betrothal to God. He lives in anonymity and poverty abroad for seventeen years until the miraculous icon of Edessa reveals his holiness, drawing the devotion of the townspeople and causing him, in turn, to
flee their attention. He returns to Rome where he lives as a beggar in his father’s home, his true identity unknown to his family until his death.\textsuperscript{122}

As this summary demonstrates, \textit{Gui de Warewic} shares several basic plot similarities with the \textit{Vie}. A husband leaves his wife and departs alone upon a spiritual adventure in which he strives to live anonymously. He eventually returns home, unknown and unrecognizable to his family and friends. The similarities extend to the thematic level, as well. Both the \textit{Vie} and the romance grapple with the difficulty and effects of breaking spousal and familial bonds in pursuit of greater union with the eternal love of God. They make use of the tension prompted by the protagonist’s return to his homeland and close proximity to his family to illustrate his dedication to his spiritual cause, though the measure of his success varies significantly in the two works. The \textit{Vie} seeks complete dissolution of those familial bonds and Alexis’ proximity to his family and wife – he lives under the stairs of his father’s house – underscore his dedication to God. Such is the devotion displayed by a saint. Though perhaps no less devoted, Gui is less discreet with regard to maintaining his anonymity. He ostensibly leaves behind his identity as the famed warrior knight to become the anonymous pilgrim, yet he repeatedly crosses paths with people who knew him or of his reputation and seek his help, whether it be Earl Jonas who may be freed by his Saracen captor if he can find and enlist Gui or his steward Herhalt to fight against the

giant Amoraunt; the hapless Terri, Gui’s sworn brother, who stands accused of the death of Duke Otis, and seeks Gui to fight against Otis’ nephew, Berard; or Athelstan, the king of England, who needs a champion to fight against the giant Colebrant in order to stem the tide of Danish invasion. These combats undertaken during his exile symbolize three types of worldly bonds: his bond to his former fame; his bond to his family and friends; and his bond to his native land. Rather than flee these situations that acknowledge Gui’s martial prowess, as Alexis himself does when the icon of Edessa “calls” him out, the former knight takes up these fights and, though initially seeking to remain anonymous, reveals his name at the insistence of those he comes to aid. These interactions emphasize the inescapable nature of earthly ties, which the vita of Alexis also recognizes but ultimately rejects in the spirit of hagiographic contemptus mundi. Gui de Warewic, in turn, revises the Alexis narrative with an eye to the lures the world and home especially present to the knight and the difficulties faced in attempting to withdraw from their persevering and demanding nature.

The centripetal pull of the romance to family and home hinders Gui de Warewic from meeting the expectations of hagiography, which always yields to the centrifugal pull of the saintly life away from the family and the familiar. Yet the presence of hagiographic elements in the description of Gui’s death serves to validate and reinforce those earthly bonds. Like Alexis, Audrey, and other saints, Gui has foreknowledge of his death. Angels carry his soul to heaven, while a “fleirur,” redolent of “totes les especes d’icest mund / E tutes les dulces riens qui i sunt” (“all the spices of this world and all the sweet things that are in it,” 11581-82), emanates from his body and cures the sick. Mourners are initially unable to move Gui’s body to Warwick from the hermitage in the forest, a characteristic found in the lives of saints. Later, however, Terri removes the body and builds an abbey to enshrine it in Lorraine, where it remains in perpetuity: “uncore i est e tuz jurz serra” (“it is still there and always will be,” 11656). This final movement
of Gui’s body recalls the translation of the saint in order to augment his or her status.\textsuperscript{123} As the final physical appearance of Gui within the poem, the scene underscores the sense in which \textit{Gui de Warewic} asks to be read as a saint’s life. After all, a man whose body smells like a saint, heals like a saint, and defies the laws of physics like a saint must be a saint. However, Gui is not Saint Alexis. Despite his efforts to conceal his identity and withdraw from society, Gui turns back again and again, as his divinely heralded actions bring him into contact with his past. This movement contradicts the \textit{contemptus mundi} theme prevalent in hagiographic literature, but it is the Orphean look back, a fidelity to one’s past, that the poem acknowledges as both justifiable and worthy of a reward resembling sainthood. Demonstrating the persistence and inescapability of these concerns, even in the course of an individual’s pursuit of a greater spiritual good, \textit{Gui de Warewic} claims that through perseverance in maintaining these earthly ties and obligations – values associated not with hagiography, but with romance – one can attain salvation.

Yet despite this seeming validation of earthly ties and chivalric prowess consonant with romance, \textit{Gui de Warewic} also does not meet the expectations of that genre, as the failure of the narratives of Gui and his son Reinbrun to interlace at the poem’s conclusion demonstrates. Romance, as a genre, does not always end happily – the legend of King Arthur displays this most clearly\textsuperscript{124} – but the happy ending generally associated with the genre often arises from the confluence of a text’s interweaving narratives. For example, the drama and force of the conclusion of the Middle English \textit{Emaré} derives from the reunion of Emaré with her husband


\textsuperscript{124} K.S. Whetter proposes that these “unhappy” romances should be classified as tragic romances in \textit{Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance} (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2008).
and estranged father. Although *Gui de Warewic* is predominantly a unilinear narrative centered on the actions of its titular knight, approximately one-third of the way through the account of Gui’s penitential exile, Reinbrun is kidnapped by merchants. This event, in effect, splits the story as it follows both Gui and Herhalt, Gui’s seneschal, as he attempts to retrieve his lord’s son. The introduction of this secondary plot suggests the eventual *entrelacement* with Gui’s story, given the narrative mechanics of romance, but Gui and his son are never united, a missed connection that distinguishes it from other romances in which separated family members are brought back together at story’s end. In the *Roman de Horn*, for example, the hero and his mother are reunited at the conclusion. It could be argued that the situation of Gui and Reinbrun differs insofar as they have never met one another, thereby greatly reducing the expectation of their eventual meeting. However, the Middle English lay *Sir Degaré* features a similar situation in which a fairy knight impregnates the daughter of a king. The son and his fairy father later meet in combat, but the chance recognition of a tipless sword left behind by the fairy knight as a token for his unborn son prevents them from fighting. Gui also leaves a sword for Felice to give to his son, but although the sword implies its eventual use as a remembrance tool, it never fulfills that role, and Gui and Reinbrun never unknowingly fight one another, a “missed” opportunity all the more marked because of the way in which their stories interweave.

We might chalk up this failure of *entrelacement* to poor storytelling, a criticism not unknown in scholarship on *Gui de Warewic*, or to the possibility that the story of Reinbrun was added later in response to the popularity of the original poem and to sate its audience’s desire for


126 *Sir Degaré, The Middle English Breton Lays*. 
more story, but regardless of whether Reinbrun featured in the original or a later redaction, the story does not succeed as a romance.\(^{127}\) Gui and his son never meet, despite the expectations to the contrary. This missed connection between parent and child resembles the failure of Perceval to reunite with his mother,\(^{128}\) but perhaps more directly the division between father and sons found in the *Roman de Waldef*. Guiac and Gudlac not only never see their father again after departing for the Continent, but are also indirectly responsible for Waldef’s death. Both undercut the reunion and resolution typically found in romance and make use of a similar notion of cause and effect. If Guiac and Gudlac had stayed in England, they could have prevented Waldef’s death. Gui’s absence similarly leaves Reinbrun prey to being kidnapped. His fault is key to understanding the role of this appendage to Gui’s primary narrative because it provides insight into the repercussions of Gui’s departure. Just as we learn what happens to Felice in her husband’s absence in the main narrative, the interlinked story of Reinbrun deals with the loose end of the son Gui fathered on his wedding night, an element of the plot that distinguishes it from the life of Saint Alexis and demonstrates its romance *mores*.

At the same time, the account of Herhalt’s search for Reinbrun registers a certain dissatisfaction with the hagiographic end to Gui’s story and a desire to conclude in a manner more in keeping with the expectations of romance. The presence of romance aspects, including a fairy knight who contrasts greatly with the penitential tone of the rest of the work, has attracted the attention of various scholars.\(^{129}\) This section of the poem also contains the reunion of a father

\(^{127}\) The Auchinleck manuscript even splits up the stories of Guy and Reinbrun into two distinct and separate stories.

\(^{128}\) This dissatisfaction with this failure of reunion clearly weighed on its Middle English adaptor in *Sir Perceval of Galles*, a loose adaptation in which mother and son reunite at its conclusion. *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, ed. Mary Flowers Braswell (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 1995).

\(^{129}\) See Weiss, “The Exploitation of Ideas of Pilgrimage and Sainthood in *Gui de Warewic*,” for example.
and a son who unknowingly fight one another, as well as the reunion of a family, though not, as one might have expected, of Gui and Reinbrun, but rather of Herhalt and his own son, who had left England to find his father and eventually his wife. Reinbrun, for his part, returns to England to find both of his parents dead and buried. The reunion scene missing from his own return falls instead to Herhalt and his family which, composed of husband, wife, and son, strikingly mirrors that of Gui.\footnote{Herhalt returns to his castle at Wallingford to stay “desore” (“from now on,” 12909) “od sa femme, la bone moiller” (“with his wife, the good woman,” 12910).} This romance ending to the Reinbrun section, as such, fills in the horizon of expectations left by the failure of Gui’s penitential narrative to provide a sense of closure that at once ties up its loose ends and attains the qualities associated with the genre.

The inability of aspects of Gui de Warewic to meet the expectations of the saint’s life or romance is, of course, not meant to suggest that it may not be categorized as either or that its identification as a hagiographic romance or secular legend is unfounded.\footnote{130} Rather, as has been shown, it utilizes aspects from both genres, stressing its generic fluidity. In its account of the conversion of a sinful knight who redirects his love of a lady to the love of God, Gui de Warewic converts the hagiographic motif of penitential exile into a suitable part of a romance story, an innovative feature that points to the influence of the life of Saint Alexis and the Roman de Waldef. It translates and transforms Alexis’ escape from his wife to points abroad and amplifies the nascent narrative potential of Guiac’s self-imposed exile into a lengthy penitential aventure, replete with asceticism, angelic visions, and the odor of sanctity, as well as chivalric fellowship, blood feuds, and combat with Saracen giants. However, for all of the influence of this
hagiographic motif, *Gui de Warewic* does not neatly straddle the boundary between romance and hagiography, but vacillates and weaves between them. The story of Reinbrun displays resistance to the hagiographic impulse and an inclination back towards the patterns of exile, return, and reunion typical of romance. Although this thread of the story has been criticized as an unnecessary addendum intended to prolong the poem, indicative of its desire for more of itself,\(^{132}\) the ending could more rightly be said to serve as a recognition of and attempt to relieve the poem’s possible friction between romance and hagiography. It ultimately demonstrates not narrative excess but *Gui de Warewic*’s unfixed potential for generic variability.

The juxtaposition of texts found in the extant manuscripts of *Gui de Warewic* documents this multivalent identity and its fluidity.\(^ {133}\) For example, the earliest extant copy of *Gui de Warewic* (London, British Library, Additional 38662), datable to the second quarter of the thirteenth century, currently contains a single text, but it was formerly bound in a manuscript that also contained the *Chanson de Guillaume*; *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*; Wace’s *Life of St. Margaret*; Adgar’s miracles of the Virgin Mary; and a French life of Saint Katherine.\(^ {134}\) Comprised of two distinct groupings of texts concerned with chivalric battles against non-Christians, on the one hand, and saints’ lives on the other, the manuscript maps the genre of *Gui* as a text sharing similarities with the *chanson de geste*, with its links to particular historical times

\(^{132}\) Price 93-110.


\(^{134}\) See J.A. Herbert, “An Early MS of Gui de Warwick,” *Romania* 35 (1906): 68-81. These items previously formed part of the Edwardes manuscript, which was divided up and sold in separate parts. Numbers written in a modern hand at the beginning of each item are believed to indicate the order of the items in the original manuscript.
and spaces, but also complementary to the vita. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 50, a manuscript dating from the latter half of the thirteenth century, positions Gui de Warewic alongside Amis and Amiloun, another semi-romance and semi-hagiographical tale of sacrificial friendship, and the Four Daughters of God, an allegorical explanation of Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection, and Latin and French histories of England, like Wace’s Roman de Brut. These neighboring texts point simultaneously to the hybridity of Gui de Warewic and to its status as a source about England’s pre-Conquest past. This historicity is similarly highlighted in Cologny-Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, Bodmer 67 in which the poem is once again bound together with Wace’s Roman de Brut, as well as a French translation of the Prophecies of Merlin, and a chronicle of the kings of England to 1216. The manuscript also contains a copy of the chanson de geste Florence de Rome in which a woman unjustly accused of adultery and murder enters a convent and gains the ability to heal the infirm, combining the hagiographic, chivalric battle, and the drama of the persecuted woman in a way that recalls the fluidity of genre found in Gui de Warewic. The juxtaposition of the Roman de Waldef, Gui de Warewic, and Otinel in Bodmer 168, as has been previously noted, displays their shared narratives of conversion, but also their identities as epic and historical texts, rooted in a particular times – Waldef and Gui in pre-Conquest England and Otinel in the world of Charlemagne. While these manuscripts suggest that “scribes may have thought of [Gui de Warewic] as either a historical or a

135 The two items preceding Gui de Warewic in the original manuscript have not been identified.
136 For a description of this manuscript, see the relevant entry at Parker Library on the Web http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/page.do?forward=home.
138 See pp. 196-77.
hagiographic text,” its generic resonances with romance and *chanson de geste* are also clear.\(^{139}\)

These bound manuscripts reflect the fluidity of *Gui de Warewic*, which meets, transgresses, and navigates the permeable boundaries of romance, a genre to the structure of which elements from other genres may easily be added to create something altogether different and new that resonates simultaneously on multiple generic levels.\(^{140}\)

The fluidity and multiplicity of *Gui de Warewic* undoubtedly contributed to its popularity and its broad appeal among both the laity and clergy. The poem survives in sixteen manuscripts and fragments, more than any other English romance, whether written in French or English.\(^{141}\)

Provenance can be difficult to determine with medieval manuscripts. The margins of Cologny-Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, Bodmer 168, for example, contain the signatures of several women, dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and suggest the possibility of lay ownership.\(^{142}\) The flyleaves of Bodmer 67 consist of Latin records from fourteenth-century manorial register from Yorkshire. Keith Busby posits that this “may point towards aristocratic ownership.”\(^{143}\) A larger number of the extant manuscripts containing *Gui de Warewic* can be associated with particular religious institutions, a fact that points, on the one hand, to a clear

\(^{139}\) Weiss, *Boeve de Haumtone and Gui de Warewic* 22.

\(^{140}\) The multiplicity of generic identity found in the manuscripts of the French *Gui*, as I have argued in the paper I presented at the 2010 Medieval Congress, stands in contrast to the Middle English *Guy* manuscripts which tend to situate the poem with other romance texts. See, for example, the Auchinleck manuscript.

\(^{141}\) Among other Anglo-Norman romances surviving in multiple manuscripts, the greatest number are found in Thomas’ *Tristan*, which survives in six fragments, the *Roman de Horn* and *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, both of which survive in five manuscripts and fragments. More comparable numbers can be found in Middle English romances (*Sir Isumbras* in nine manuscripts and fragments; *Robert of Sicily* in ten; and *Richard Coer de Lion* in eight), but this may have something to do with a greater rate of survival because of their later date of compilation.

\(^{142}\) Images of these marginal names can be seen in Busby, *Codex and Context* 2:735.

\(^{143}\) *Codex and Context* 2:734.
clerical readership and, on the other hand, to the greater likelihood of clerical manuscripts to survive because of the means these institutions have for storing and maintaining books. London, British Library, Harley 3775, circa 1300, contains numerous items pertaining to Saint Albans Abbey. The fourteenth-century Rawlinson fragment (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson D 913, fols. 86-89) can be traced to a manuscript once housed in the convent of the Franciscan Observant Friars in Canterbury.144 Four manuscripts were also kept in the monastic library of Saint Augustine’s in Canterbury, only one of which can be accounted for, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 50.145

Romances undoubtedly incurred the wrath of medieval clerics, an attitude that the author of the Speculum Vitae or the abbot who complained about the “vein carping” of his monks about King Arthur might have espoused, but such explanations rest upon the untenable conclusion that the monastic and chivalric spheres did not overlap. However, the presence of copies of Gui de Warewic in monastic and fraternal libraries suggest otherwise. Furthermore, given its nuanced reinterpretation of the life of Saint Alexis, the contents of Gui de Warewic strongly suggest clerical authorship, a conclusion suggested by Alfred Ewert, who thought that canons of Bordesley were responsible for its composition, and more recently suggested again by Judith Weiss, who has argued that the text was produced by monks at Saint Frideswide in Oxford.146

144 A note written in a secretary hand on fol. 87r reads: “hoc volumen conceditur ad vsum fratrum minorum / de observantia cantuarie.” For a description of the fragment, see W.D. Macray, Catalogi Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleiana (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898) cols. 141-42.

145 Copies were also held by the Abbey of Bordesley, the Benedictine Abbey at Ramsey, and the Cistercian Abbey of Byland (Legge, Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters 114). The copy from Byland has been identified as York, York Minster Library, 16.1.7.

146 Ewert vii-viii; Weiss, “The Exploitation of Ideas of Pilgrimage and Sainthood in Gui de Warewic” 52-55. Legge suggested the possibility that Gui de Warewic may have been written by a canon of Oseney, which had been founded by an earl of Warwick (Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters 63).
Regardless of our own concerns about the inconsistencies in the narrative and the conflicts in beliefs found in *Gui de Warewic*, these manuscripts and the poem itself demonstrate its potential as a quasi-hagiographic and didactic text. It does not seek to promote a new pantheon of secular saints worthy of veneration, but rather positions Gui and all of his failings as an exemplum of the chivalric ideal that, for good or ill, effaces the friction between romance and hagiography, chivalric and monastic, to propose a middle way. As has been shown, the *Roman de Horn*, *Roman de Waldef*, and *Gui de Warewic* blur the boundaries between hagiography and romance in their incorporation of elements from saints’ lives as a tool for both legitimization and critique. The angelic Horn’s quest for vengeance and the throne is inscribed as the will of God, while the flawed Guiac and Gui find their own romance quests for dominion and prowess interrupted to remind them of their place in the world. Perfect and flawed, these insular romances present their protagonists as exempla for the moral instruction of their audiences. Their use of biblical imagery, liturgical formulae, and hagiographical and literary allusions signify their didactic intent and positions these texts at the interstices of clerical and secular culture and Latinate and vernacular literature, undoing assumptions about the authorship and audiences of these pulp fictions of the Middle Ages.\(^{147}\) In light of this, Susan Crane’s suggestion that these hybrid texts exploit hagiographic elements to protest the hegemonic control of the Church and the implications of the Fourth Lateran Council seems unlikely. These three romances, all composed before 1215, demonstrate not so much a reaction against as a recognition of the extent to which the Church and its teachings, filtered through the hagiographic tradition, has already permeated the lives of their audiences, whether the Berkshire lawyer who consulted the *Roman de Horn* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 132) or the cloistered monks at the abbey of Saint

Augustine in Canterbury who read Gui de Warewic (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 50). Interweaving romance and the vita, these hagiographical romances do not laud their knightly heroes in the triumph of the layman over the cleric, but ask their audiences to reframe their worldview as part of both the worldly and celestial communities.
Chapter 4
The English *Fierabras* Tradition

Joseph Bédier identified the central character of the Old French *chanson de geste Fierabras* as the reliquary.\(^1\) Dating from around the end of the twelfth century, it describes the efforts of Charlemagne and the Twelve Peers to win back the relics of Christ’s Passion stolen by the Saracen Fierabras during his attack on Rome.\(^2\) By story’s end, the relics have been retrieved, Fierabras and his sister Floripas have converted to Christianity, and Spain has been conquered and placed under the joint rule of Fierabras and Guy of Burgundy, a retainer of Charlemagne who has married Floripas. *Fierabras*’ blend of epic, romance, and hagiographic elements contributed to its widespread popularity across the Continent and England, and its heroes resemble the Saracen-fighting warriors for Christ and saintly men and women found in the previous chapters.\(^3\) However, the continued transmission of stories about Charlemagne and his peers, including the Middle English adaptations – the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras*, the Fillingham *Firumbras*, and the *Sultan of Babylon* – during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries present a curious testament to the popularity of this subject matter in light of the growing discord between England and France as a result of the dynastic struggle that would come to be called the Hundred


Years War (1337-1453). As will be shown, the insular audiences for these versions valued *Fierabras* as a story about the triumph of the Christian community rather than the heroes of France and as a setting for the display of the power of the Passion relics. However, as close examination of the Middle English versions also demonstrates, this pan-Christian reading coincides with efforts to appropriate for England the relics Charlemagne distributes throughout France at the end of *Fierabras*. They position the Middle English texts as alternate sites for experiencing the miraculous deeds performed by the instruments of Christ’s suffering, so that reading or hearing these narratives read becomes an act of virtual pilgrimage, a connection made most clearly in the pardon found in the epilogue of the Fillingham *Firumbras*. The translation and adaptation of *Fierabras* found in these Middle English texts demonstrate developments in late medieval religious culture, the rise of England as a proto-national power at a time when England and France were at war, and the resurgence of English as a literary language.

**Charlemagne in England**

*Fierabras* and other stories featuring Charlemagne and his knights enjoyed popularity throughout Europe, but discussions of their circulation tend to discount the allure of the Matter of France for English audiences. H.M. Smyser comments that, in their export, the Charlemagne material “lost an essential element of [the] patriotic appeal” that had infused the Continental

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4 The Middle English adaptations of the *chanson de geste* *Fierabras* have traditionally been categorized as romances. Though their subject matter clearly derives from the epic, they do not preserve the laisse verse stanza which formally distinguishes the *chanson de geste* from other genres. The Ashmole *Ferumbras* uses two verse forms: double-rhymed alexandrines (38-3410) and six-line tail-rhyme stanzas rhyming aabccb (3411-5890). This generic ambiguity may derive in part from the absence of strict codicological distinctions between romances and *chansons de geste* in Anglo-Norman manuscripts by the middle of the thirteenth century (Busby, *Codex and Context* 2:500), but the hybrid epic-romance identity of *Fierabras* may also play a factor in the particular case of its three English versions. For further examination of the verse forms of these texts, see Marianne Ailes and Phillipa Hardman, “How English Are the English Charlemagne Romances?” *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*, ed. Neil Cartlidge (Woodridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008) 45-47. John Finlayson discusses the romance attributes of the adaptations of the Charlemagne material in “Definitions of Middle English Romance,” *Chaucer Review* 15 (1980): 44-62, 168-81.
Janet M. Cowen, in turn, notes that the Middle English Charlemagne romances comprise a “relatively small corpus within Middle English romance.” Gisela Guddat-Figge implies their rareness when she speaks of the Middle English adaptation of the *Chanson de Roland* as “one of the few Middle English Charlemagne romances.” However, the extant manuscripts and references to now lost copies point to a relatively robust popularity in England, both in French and English, despite the absence of the patriotic spark that may have enlivened their source material.

The majority of the *chansons de geste* that circulated in Anglo-Norman redactions in England focused on the exploits of Charlemagne and his retainers. Composed in Normandy in the twelfth century, the *Chanson d’Aspremont* survives in seven insular French copies dating from the thirteenth century, as well as numerous other Continental manuscripts. It relates

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7 Guddat-Figge 210.


9 For a list of the *chansons de geste* circulating in England and the manuscripts containing them, see Ruth J. Dean, and Maureen B.M. Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts* (London: ANTS, 1999) 51-57. The *chansons de geste* featuring Charlemagne fall within the cycle of epic texts collectively referred to as the *geste du roi*. The only Anglo-Norman redactions that do not fall within this category are *Gormont et Isembart* and *La Chançun de Guillaume*.

Charlemagne’s efforts to rebuff the invasion of the Saracen king Agolant and his son.
Charlemagne’s struggles against a Saracen presence in Spain loom large in several texts that circulated in England. *Fierabras* is represented by three Anglo-Norman manuscripts, all dating from the fourteenth century. Evidence from library catalogues also documents two lost copies of *Fierabras*. Guy de Beauchamp, the tenth Earl of Warwick (circa 1272 – 1315), donated a substantial collection of books to the Cistercian abbey at Bordesley in Worcestershire in 1305, including one described as “Un volum del Romaunce des Mareschauls e de Ferebras de Alisaundre.” This inventory item constitutes the earliest known record for the circulation of the Fierabras story in England. Another lost copy resurfaces in the inventory of the library at the Benedictine priory at Dover. Compiled by the monk John Whytefeld in 1389, it lists a trilingual miscellany, shelf-mark D.VII.7, containing a text identified as “La Romonse de Ferumbras” with the incipit “Seygnours ore escut.” The *Destructioun de Rome*, a related text, describes the events leading up to *Fierabras* and was composed in the mid-thirteenth century. It comprises a

Nationale, nouvelle acquisition française 5094 (XIII°); and (7) Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Palatini Latini 1971 (XIII°).

11 The three Anglo-Norman manuscripts and approximate dates are: Hanover, Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, IV.578 (XIV°); Leuven, University Library, G.171 (XIV); and London, British Library, Egerton 3028 (XIV°). A complete listing of the extant copies of *Fierabras*, both continental and insular, can be found in Le Person, *Fierabras* 22-56.


14 For editions of the *Destructioun de Rome* found in the Hanover manuscript, see: La *Destructioun de Rome: Version de Hanovre*, ed. Luciano Formisano (Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1981); La *Destructioun de Rome*, ed.
distinct insular redaction of Continental French material preserved in two manuscripts: Hannover, Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, IV.578 (last third of the thirteenth century), and London, British Library, Egerton 3028 (mid-fourteenth century). *Otinel*, like *Fierabras*, relates the conversion of a Saracen during Charlemagne’s Spanish campaign. The only complete copy survives in an Anglo-Norman manuscript, Cologny-Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana 168, dating from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.\(^\text{15}\) A fragmentary Anglo-Norman redaction of the text is also extant in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouvelle acquisition française, 5094 (thirteenth century). The *Voyage de Charlemagne* describes Charlemagne’s pilgrimage in the company of his peers to the Holy Land, where he receives relics from the patriarch of Jerusalem, and Constantinople.\(^\text{16}\) It is preserved in a thirteenth-century manuscript (London, British Library, Royal 16.E.VIII), but was likely composed in the twelfth century, possibly in England. The oldest surviving copy of the *Chanson de Roland*, found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 23, dates from the second quarter of the twelfth century and is written in the Anglo-Norman dialect.

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\(^\text{15}\) This manuscript was previously known as Phillipps 8345. For an edition of this text, see *Otinel, chanson de geste*, ed. F. Guessard and H. Michelant, Les anciens poètes de la France 1.2 (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1859). This edition uses the incomplete copy of *Otinel* found in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reginensi Latini 1616 as its base manuscript, illustrating the general attitude among nineteenth century scholars about the inferiority of insular French copies. Ernest Langlois has edited the fragment from Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouvelle acquisition, 5094 in “Deux fragments épiques: *Otinel*, Aspremont,” *Romania* 64 (1938): 18-100.

The *chanson de geste*-derived texts circulating in Middle English manuscripts, all dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, likewise focus on Charlemagne and his men.\textsuperscript{17} The story of the Saracen convert Fierabras is extant in three distinct verse versions in three manuscripts: the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras* and the Fillingham *Firumbras*, and the *Sultan of Babylon*. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 33, containing what is believed to be a holograph copy of *Sir Ferumbras*, dates from around 1380 and can be localized to Exeter on the basis of the documents used as outer coverings for the manuscript.\textsuperscript{18} London, British Library, Additional 37492, also known as the Fillingham manuscript after its former owner William Fillingham, contains *Firumbras*.\textsuperscript{19} Copied on paper in the latter half of the fifteenth century, the manuscript’s exact provenance has not been determined, but Mary Isabelle O’Sullivan has conjectured that it “may most safely be assigned” to the East Midlands.\textsuperscript{20} The text of *Firumbras* may have originally been composed in northern England in the last quarter of the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{21} The *Sultan of Babylon* is found in Princeton, Princeton University Library, Garret 140, a manuscript

\textsuperscript{17} Given the focus of this chapter on verse adaptations, prose redactions have not been accounted for in this discussion. By way of a brief overview, I note: William Caxton’s *Four Sonnes of Aymon*, a translation of a *chanson de geste* of revolt in which one of the characters kills a son of Charlemagne, and the *Boke of Huon de Burdeux*. Caxton’s prose romances *Charles the Grete* and the *Four Sonnes of Aymon* are both translations of Continental French texts. The *Four Sonnes of Aymon* is a close translation of *Quatre fils Aymon*, sometimes referred to as *Renaud de Montauban*. Caxton may have used an edition printed at Lyons in 1480. Caxton’s *Charles the Grete* was printed in 1485 and is a translation of Jean Bagnyon’s French prose *Fierabras*, which was printed in 1478. Sir John Bourchier, Lord Berner’s *Boke of Duke Huon of Burdeux* dates from around 1530 and was printed around 1534, possibly by Wynkyn de Worde. Bouchier translates a French prose version of *Fierabras* from 1455 that was first printed in 1513.


\textsuperscript{19} Guddat-Figge 168-69.

\textsuperscript{20} O’Sullivan lxxviii. However, O’Sullivan does so with hesitation, noting the “utter confusion of dialect” found in the manuscript (lxxxii).

\textsuperscript{21} O’Sullivan xx, lxxii-lxxxiii; Smyser, “Charlemagne Legends” 86.
dating from the mid-fifteenth century. The poem derives from a textual tradition similar to the Anglo-Norman *Fierabras* redaction preserved in London, British Library, Egerton 3028. It was composed in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, based on the presence of several Chaucerian imitations within the text. The provenance of this single-text manuscript is unknown, but the poem’s dialect may be localized to the East Midlands.

The story of the Saracen Otuel also circulated in multiple Middle English versions: *Roland and Vernagu, Otuel a Knight, Otuel and Roland, the Sege of Melayne, and Duke Roland and Sir Otuell of Spain*. *Roland and Vernagu* and *Otuel a Knight* are found in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates’ 19.2.1 (the Auchinleck manuscript), which dates from circa 1330-40, making it the earliest of the manuscripts containing Middle English Charlemagne romances. Its production has been localized to London, though dialect markers suggest that these two texts may have been composed in the East Midlands. The Fillingham manuscript, discussed in the previous paragraph, pairs *Firumbras* with a copy of *Otuel and Roland*, whose approximate date of composition is the first quarter of the fourteenth century. Like the Auchinleck manuscript, London, British Library, Additional 31042, sometimes referred to as the

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23 For example, echoes of the General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales* can be seen in “Hit bifel bytwyxt March and Maye, / Whan kynde corage begynneth to pryke” (41-42) and “Whan lovers slepen withe opyn yye” (45).


26 Smyser concludes that the dialect is “East Midlands with some Southwestern traces” (“Charlemagne Legends” 90).

27 O’Sullivan lxvii.
London Thornton manuscript, also contains two Charlemagne texts: the *Sege of Melayne* and *Duke Roland and Sir Otuell of Spain*.\(^{28}\) Dating from the fifteenth century, it was copied in Yorkshire by Robert Thornton, although these two treatments of the Otuel story likely date from around 1400 or earlier and are marked by a Northern dialect.\(^{29}\)

The remaining Middle English Charlemagne romances similarly feature Charlemagne and his men. A fragmentary adaptation of the *Chanson de Roland*, which describes the death of Roland as the result of treachery during Charlemagne’s Spanish campaign, appears in a late fifteenth-century manuscript, London, British Library, Lansdowne 388.\(^{30}\) The poem was composed in the East Midlands around 1400.\(^{31}\) In the humorous *Taill of Rauf Coilyear*, the rough and tumble Ralph offers hospitality to his king Charlemagne, but fails to recognize him. The poem was composed in the late fifteenth century in a Scottish dialect. It survives in a single printed copy from 1572, but its earlier circulation is supported by the appearance of the title “The Buке of Ralf Colgear” in a list of contents for the circa 1515-25 Asloan manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, 16500).\(^{32}\)

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\(^{29}\) Guddat-Figge 159-63; Smyser, “Charlemagne Legends” 92, 94.

\(^{30}\) *The Sege off Melayne and The Romance of Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne ... together with a Fragment of The Song of Roland*, ed. Sidney J. Herrtage, EETS e.s. 35 (London: Trübner, 1880). For a description of the manuscript, see Guddat-Figge 209.

\(^{31}\) Smyser, “Charlemagne Legends” 94.

Although scholars have tended to characterize the insular French and Middle English Charlemagne corpus as relatively small, the above discussion points to a sizable group of texts relating to the French king and his retainers. It is not surprising that this assemblage of works should be outnumbered by those relating to his fellow member of the Nine Worthies, King Arthur, but the popularity of the Matter of France in England, particularly during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when most of the manuscripts containing these texts were copied, challenges our assumptions about the effect of tensions between France and England and the Hundred Years War on the production and transmission of these works. It implies an appreciation for the subject matter that extends beyond identification with the heroes at the national or linguistic level and transcends geographic borders.

The Charlemagne material circulating in England in French and English shows a particular preference for texts featuring armed conflict between Christians and Saracens. With the exception of the Voyage de Charlemagne, which centers on pilgrimage, the chansons de geste found in Anglo-Norman redactions depict Frenchmen battling against non-Christian threats. This is true not only of the texts focusing on Charlemagne and his retainers in Spain or southern Italy, but also those that do not. In Gormont et Isembart, the French king rallies his forces against the rebellious Isembart, who has renounced Christianity and allied himself with the Saracen Gormont, while in the Chançun de Guillaume, the titular Guillaume and his family members engage in various battles with pagans. The Middle English adaptations display a slightly greater inclination towards texts featuring Charlemagne than their Anglo-Norman

33 Busby, Codex and Context 2:501.
counterparts, but they likewise all contain struggles between religious enemies. Even the humorous *Taill of Rauf Coilyear* includes a scene in which Ralph encounters Roland fighting a Saracen giant, whom they succeed in converting to Christianity.

These texts circulating in England reflect two important recurring themes: the conversion of pagans, typified in the examples of Fierabras and Otuel, and martial success in the face of the encroachment of Saracen enemies upon Christian territories, albeit occasionally at great cost, as at Roncevaux. These features would have resonated with audiences in England, as they did on the Continent, in light of efforts to reclaim the Holy Land and would have gained traction in the late medieval period when large-scale crusading campaigns waned, particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when the manuscripts discussed were copied. The stories of Charlemagne and his men offer a quasi-historical example of past victories against Saracens and an inspiring goad for continuation of similar crusade efforts. Several scholars have noted this connection as part of the appeal of these texts for an English readership. Marianne Ailes and Phillipa Hardman see Charlemagne’s triumphs as “an oblique reflection of the glorious victories of the First Crusade” and suggest the possibility that *Fierabras* may have been composed as a response to the Third Crusade,\(^35\) while Stephen H.A. Shepherd argues that the *Sege of Melayne* should be read as crusade propaganda.\(^36\) Yet, in addition to being rooted in particular historical moments, part of the continued appeal of this material also rests more generally in their potential as religious texts for edification and devotion.


The circulation of Charlemagne texts with religious and devotional works in manuscripts reflects this avenue of appeal of the Matter of France for English audiences as texts that could instruct or inspire devotion in their readers. The Fillingham manuscript (London, British Library, Additional 37492), for example, blurs the boundaries between romance and religious literature in the placement of its Charlemagne texts, *Firumbras* and *Otuel and Roland*. Named for William Fillingham, an antiquarian and member of the Middle Temple who owned it in 1805, this paper manuscript dates from the second half of the fifteenth century. Its contents highlight the religious affinities of its Charlemagne items:

1. *Firumbras* (*Kinge Charlys*), fol. 1r-30r
2. *Otuel and Roland* (*Otuel Roulond and Olyuer*), fol. 30v-76r
3. *The Hermit and the Outlaw* (*The Eremyte and the Owtelawe*), fol. 76v-82v
4. *The Devil’s Parliament* (*The Fendys Parlement*), fol. 83r-90v
5. *The Mirror of the Periods of Man’s Life*, fol. 90v-92v

Several folios are missing from the beginning and end, but a clear religious and moral quality nevertheless characterizes the contents as a whole. George Ellis likewise observes this feature,

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37 Fillingham lent the manuscript to George Ellis, who described the manuscript in his *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, 1805). The manuscript’s whereabouts thereafter were unknown until the British Museum acquired it in 1907.


39 It is unclear how many folios are missing. *Firumbras* begins imperfectly with the foray of the peers against the Saracens as they feast. *The Mirror of the Periods of Man’s Life* contains only the first 142 lines. Signatures are visible or partially visible on several folios: 15r, 17r, 18r, 19r, 31r, 32r, 43r, 44r, 45r, 64r, 66r, 69r, 78r, 79r, 80r, 81r, 82r, and 91r.
asserting that its “poems are, more or less devotional.”

Gisela Guddat-Figge, on the other hand, labels the Fillingham manuscript a “miscellany,” rather than a religious miscellany, a descriptor she uses elsewhere to describe manuscripts like London, British Library, Additional 31042 (the London Thornton manuscript), which also contains two Charlemagne romances. However, all five items contain strong religious elements. *Firumbras* describes the Saracen Firumbras’ theft of relics of the Passion from Rome, his conversion, and the retrieval of these sacred items by Charlemagne and his knights. *Otuel and Roland* is set during Charlemagne’s campaign in Spain and describes the conversion of a Saracen messenger as he fights against Roland. Like *Firumbras*, it too mentions the relics of the Passion, noting that Charlemagne wore the crown of thorns four times a year (1990-98). The *Hermit and the Outlaw* offers a moral exemplum featuring a repentant outlaw. The *Devil’s Parliament* uses the meeting of two parliaments of devils in Hell to justify Jesus’ redemption of humanity. The *Mirror of the Periods of Man’s Life*, an allegorical treatise, depicts the pilgrimage of man through life as he is tempted by the vices. Although the pairing of *Firumbras* and *Otuel and Roland* in this manuscript highlights their categorization as Charlemagne romances, the contents of the manuscript as a whole simultaneously codify these Matter of France romances as religious texts that offer their readers evidence of the miraculous in the conversions of the peers’ Saracen foes and the relics of Christ’s Passion.

40 From a letter to William Fillingham, dated August 17, 1801; printed in O’Sullivan xii.
41 Gisela Guddat-Figge 168, 160.
This cross-genre identification of the Fillingham manuscript’s Charlemagne romances resembles the mid-fifteenth century London Thornton manuscript (British Library, Additional 31042).\(^43\) It contains the *Sege of Melayne* (fol. 66v-79v) and the *Romance of Duke Rowlande and of Sir Ottuell of Spayne off Cherlls of Fraunce* (fol. 82r-94r), between which has been copied a hymn to the Virgin Mary.\(^44\) As in the Fillingham manuscript, the placement of these works accentuates their generic categorization as romances focused on Charlemagne.\(^45\) Phillipa Hardman has suggested that the *Sege of Melayne* and *Roland and Otuel* form part of the Thornton manuscript’s narrative of salvation history. Beginning with excerpts from the *Cursor Mundi* that recount the birth of the Virgin Mary and the birth and ministry of Jesus, this reading continues its argument for the necessity of Jesus’ sacrifice with a dialogue between Christ with man, and a Passion narrative, followed by the *Siege of Jerusalem*, the Charlemagne romances, and the intervening hymn to Mary.\(^46\) As Hardman argues with regard to the *Sege of Melayne* in particular, this codicological framework “gives us near-contemporary evidence for an understanding of the poem as primarily affirmative of the reader’s Christian faith in terms both of orthodox doctrine and of popular devotion.”\(^47\)

\(^{43}\) A similar juxtaposition of Charlemagne romances also occurs in the Auchinleck manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 19.2.1, circa 1330-1340), which contains *Rouland and Vernagu* (fol. 262r) and *Otuel a Knight* (fol. 268-77).


\(^{45}\) The London Thornton manuscript denotes the rhyme scheme of these twelve-line tail rhyme poems in the same manner. The two lines that rhyme are written in the left margin, connected by a bracket with the tail to the right.


\(^{47}\) Hardman, “The *Sege of Melayne*: A Fifteenth-Century Reading” 86.
This is, of course, not to imply that the *chansons de geste* sources for these Middle English stories are not themselves religious in character, but that these manuscripts further highlight this mode for reading these texts and suggest their allure for an English audience. They frame the insular Charlemagne texts less as examples of the Matter of France about the deeds of French knights than as narratives forming what we might instead describe as the Matter of Christendom. The reception of these texts in England then centers on their categorization as stories that depict struggles against enemies of the faith and efforts to secure the relics of Christ’s Passion, and that appeal to a Christian community without boundaries, whether geographic or linguistic. In light of this, we might view the insular French and Middle English Charlemagne tradition not so much as a distinct corpus related to Charlemagne as part of a larger group of texts “displaying an interest in crusading and a devotion to the relics of the Passion.”

The broad, universal appeal of the triumphs of Charlemagne and his men against the enemies of Christianity beyond the borders of France is evinced not only by the many translations and adaptations of texts featuring them in the manuscripts mentioned above, but also by how they treat references to the French heroes, as the Fillingham *Firumbras* demonstrates. In the *Fierabras* redactions, Charlemagne’s men are commonly referred to as “nos Franchois” (2101), an identifier that also appears in the Anglo-Norman versions. Although incomplete, the Fillingham *Firumbras* contains relatively few references to the French and France for an 1800-line poem populated by them. Charlemagne’s men are not referred to as the French, but rather as “the knyghtys” (12, 24); “oure cristyn knyhtys” (98); “oure cristenmen” (1575); “oure knyghtys” (205, 382, 402, 847, 852, 986, 1262, 1591); and “oure noble kny3thes” (679, 683, 687). By way

48 Cowen 150.
of comparison, the oldest of the Middle English adaptations of *Fierabras*, the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras*, provides a faithful translation of its French source, even to the extent of introducing words into English directly from the French, such as *glutoun* (3841) and *ensoygne* (2827). Yet despite this regimen of close translation, its source’s many references to “nos Francois” are not generally preserved. The peers are called the *dulpepers*, a corruption of *doucepers*, or more generally the French men, knights, or “Þe frensche” (5525), though the first person plural possessive is used on one occasion to identify Charlemagne’s knights as “oure christen men” (5527). The phrase does not seem to correspond exactly with a particular phrase in the Old French versions, but signals the identification of the heroes of the poem by a religious marker rather than a national one. The *Sultan of Babylon* never incorporates the French heroes of *Fierabras* within the inclusive possessive plural or draws attention to their Frenchness. The absence of such modifiers suppresses the French character of *Fierabras*, but the Fillingham *Firumbras’* realignment of their affiliations to a spiritual knighthood is not followed.


50 The translator of the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras* seems unaware of the meaning of this term, particularly the fact that it means twelve peers, as evidenced when her refers to “Þe 7 doþeper” (1486) or “Þes doþopers xij. of fraunce” (2036). On other instances of possible misunderstanding, see Marianne Ailes, “Comprehension Problems and their Resolution in the Middle English Verse Translations of *Fierabras*,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 35.4 (1999): 396-407.

51 It occasionally describes people as being “of Fraunce” (e.g. 140, 170, 240, 744, 809, 1499, 1666, 2152, 2168, 2893, 3084). *The Romance of the Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbras his Son who Conquered Rome*, ed. Emil Hausknecht, EETS e.s. 38 (London: University of Oxford Press, 1881).
These three English adaptations do not denigrate the French, but they do manifest an effort to strip away the Frenchness of the source material and present Charlemagne and the peers as at least Christian knights, if not English ones. The Fillingham *Firumbras*, in particular, effaces the French identity of Charlemagne and his men in order to appropriate their story as a narrative not about the knights of France turning back the tide of Saracen invasion, but as a tale of “our” Christian knights. Charlemagne is even identified on several occasions as “oure emperour charlys” (1187, 1378) and “oure noble kyng charlys” (1589, 1621). He is not the king of a national enemy, but a king of Christendom. The *Sege of Melayne* displays a similar technique in tailoring its Charlemagne story. It repeatedly refers to the French knights using the possessive first person plural, whether designating them as “oure knyghtis” (259, 271, 429, 465), “oure Cristen men” (1260, 1289, 1331), or similar epithets. As in the Fillingham *Firumbras*, these identifiers “appear to be designed to evoke from us a strong sense of partisanship with the Christian forces.” The “translation” of these French personages and of Charlemagne, in particular, recall the universal appeal of the Nine Worthies. As one of the Christian worthies, alongside Arthur, and Godfrey de Bouillon, Charlemagne’s status as a defender of the Christian faith and a representative of chivalric virtue surpasses national boundaries.


53 These first person plural references are extensive and “unmatched in other Middle English romances” (Shepherd, *The Sege off Melayne* 275 n1). Other terms used to describe Charlemagne, his men, and their allies include: “our Cristyn knyghte” (239, 244); “oure Cristen knyghtis” (429, 1274); “oure gud men” (224); “oure chevalrye” (266, 492); “oure vavarde” (267, 316); “our medillwarde” (274, 283); “oure renwarde” (346); “oure bales” (275); “oure nobill knyghtis” (322, 352); “oure barouns” (347); “oure batelle” (365); “oure foure lordis” (386); “oure lordis” (389, 1256); “oure worthy men” (496, 1246, 1267); “oure ferse men” (502); “oure menye” (565); “oure folke” (950, 1199); “oure Kynges hande” (1084); “oure Bischopp” (1124); “oure wonded men” (1194); “oure clergy” (1295); “oure pynces” (1300); “oure oste” (1484, 1593); and “oure Bretons” (1495, 1518, 1527, 1533, 1547, 1593).

54 Shepherd, *The Sege off Melayne* 275 n1.
The Translation of Relics
The discussion above accounts in a general way for the allure of stories about Charlemagne for English audiences and makes it clear that the French origins of their heroes presented little hindrance to their appreciation. The kinds of texts that circulated in French and English in England and the items with which they were bound emphasize the appeal of their Christian narrative rather than the Frenchness of their source or its heroes. The religious potential of the Charlemagne texts is particularly evident in the *chanson de geste Fierabras*, in which the theft and retrieval of the relics of Christ’s Passion form the driving force behind the narrative. The relics as religious artifacts belong to the Christian community as a whole and, though stolen from Rome, their retrieval from Saracen hands ultimately benefits all, despite being the work of French knights.

However, for all of their broad appeal, the reception of these Matter of France stories in England does not occur without some alteration to reflect insular audiences. Focusing on the Middle English adaptations of *Fierabras* and their treatment of the relics of Christ’s Passion, this section will demonstrate how these versions emphasize the religious categorization of these texts even further, particularly in the case of the pardon found in the Fillingham *Firumbras*, even as they simultaneously introduce changes to their sources that personalize and translate them for a late medieval English audience. Although the non-national nature of the relics allows for the appreciation of *Fierabras* as a literary vehicle, its adaptation for an English audience poses potential difficulties in light of the animosity between England and France during this period and the very particular associations between the poem’s original composition and the Lendit fair held at Saint-Denis and its display of relics from Christ’s crucifixion. As the rest of the chapter will demonstrate, the Middle English *Fierabras* adaptations – the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras*, the
Fillingham *Firumbras*, and the *Sultan of Babylon* – disassociate the relics from a particular geographical place in order to translate the instruments of Christ’s Passion to England.

The relics of Christ’s Passion play a central role in the *Fierabras* tradition, a centrality that is followed in the Middle English adaptations. Their theft provides the overarching plot and their retrieval concludes the narrative. Stolen by Ferumbras during his sack of Rome in retaliation for the theft by the Romans of several dromonds belonging to Ferumbras’ father, the relics are brought to the city of Aigremont. These events in Rome are only alluded to in the Ashmole *Ferumbras* and Fillingham *Firumbras*, but are fully recounted in the *Sultan of Babylon*, which combines the plot of the *Destruction de Rome* and *Fierabras*.55 The specific relics taken vary in each retelling. In the French *Fierabras*, the relics are identified as the crown of thorns, a nail, and the holy shroud. In the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras*, Ferumbras steals the crown of thorns and nails with which Jesus was crucified, but the Fillingham *Firumbras* also includes Longinus’ spear and the “voluper & sudary” (1416).56 Context makes it unclear whether these latter two terms describe one single relic or two separate relics since *voluper* and *sudary* may both refer to the cloth used to wrap Christ’s head before his burial, while *sudary* may additionally refer to the vernicle on which an image of Jesus’ face was imprinted.57 In *The Sultan of Babylon*, the relics taken by Ferumbras include the cross, the crown of thorns, and the nails (*SB* 665, 3235-38). After they have been stolen, Ferumbras entrusts the relics to the care of Floripas, his sister. As their

55 To distinguish the texts from which quotations are being made in the parenthetical citations and footnotes, the following abbreviations will be used: *AF* for the Ashmole *Ferumbras*, *FF* for the Fillingham *Firumbras*, and *SB* for the *Sultan of Babylon*.

56 *AF* 2118-119; *FF* 594-96, 1414-16, 1770-74; 1837.

57 See *MED* “sudarie,” def. 2b and “volupere.” The entry for “sudarie,” def. 1b uses line 1416 as an example of the meaning referring to a head cloth.
guardian, she retrieves them at several key moments in the narrative, such as to confirm the seriousness of her intention to convert to Christianity so that she may marry Guy of Burgundy (AF 2144 ff.); to fortify the peers before they leave the tower to rescue Guy from being hanged (AF 2959 ff.; FF 594-96); to turn back the Saracens scaling the walls of the tower in which the peers await help from Charlemagne (AF 5038 ff.; FF 1414 ff.); and, finally, to give them to Charlemagne at the conclusion of the story (FF 1769-74).

Throughout the Middle English Fierabras adaptations, the relics testify to God’s presence and do not function merely as passive objects. They engender piety in Charlemagne’s men who kneel before them (FF 597-99), kiss them (AF 2132, 2962; SB 3144), and pray before them (AF 5053). They also prove themselves to be true and genuine relics. They are tested informally when the peers use them to thwart the Saracens scaling the walls of the tower when all seems lost. In the Fillingham Firumbras, the relics blind the Saracens (FF 1413-18), but in the Ashmole Ferumbras, the sight of the relics strikes the attackers with fear, causing them to fall (AF 5063-66). Formally, these relics are tested when Charlemagne gives them to the bishop and they float “stylle in the eyre” (FF 1792).58 The relics provide foci for manifesting God’s presence, as do other hagiographic elements found in the texts. God intervenes to prevent Floripas from being raped by a thief who Sneaks into the tower. He also sends a white hart to guide Richard of Normandy across a flooded river so that he may escape the Saracens pursuing him and enlist help from Charlemagne. Such details lend spiritual legitimacy to the struggle of the peers to maintain control of the tower and the relics and situate it both within Charlemagne’s efforts to expel the Saracens from Spain and as a battle between good and evil, God and the

58 The ending of the Ashmole Ferumbras has not survived, but presumably contained a similar scene given the closeness of its translation. The Sultan of Babylon does not contain this scene.
Devil. The Saracens, presented as military and spiritual adversaries, seek to gain control over culturally significant objects. As such, only with the assistance of the relics are Charlemagne and his peers able to succeed and, by retrieving the relics and bringing them to France, fortify their status as God’s chosen people, in reflection of *translatio imperii*.

The significance of the relics as a central part of the narrative and as essential players in it is demonstrated clearly in the conclusion to the Fillingham *Firumbras*:

Nowe endyth thys gest nowe here
Off firumbras de Alisavndre and syr Olyuer
and al-so of Charlemayn, that gode, holy kyng.
by-seke whe to god, that he ȝeue vs hys blessyng!
God for the Rode loue ȝeue hem hys benysoun,
that hauen herd thys gest with gode deuocyoun
of the spere & the naylys and of the crovn!
Schullen [thay] haue an .C. dayes vnto pardoun!
Our lord graunt that it so be,
seyth all amen pur Charite! (1831-40)

The description of the poem as a “gest / of the spere & the naylys and of the crovn” highlights the role of the relics not as passive objects of cultural significance being fought over by armed men representative of conflicting religious ideologies (1836-37). Rather, their active role in the

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59 The descriptions of Maubyn, the thief sent to steal Floripas’ girdle, and the giant Agolafre link both characters to the Devil, who himself makes an appearance when he inhabits the idols of the Saracens’ shrine to urge them to launch another attack on the tower.

story is placed in complement to the deeds of Charlemagne and the peers whose deeds are recorded a few lines earlier as the “gest … / Off firumbras de Alisavndre and syr Olyuer / and also of Charlemayne” (1831-33). The similar wording verbally juxtaposes the actions of the relics alongside those of the human soldiers in the poem. It casts them as epic heroes in their own right, worthy comrades-in-arms to the knightly trio of Firumbras, Oliver, and Charlemagne. Although scholars like Joseph Bédier and Janet M. Cowen have commented on the prominence of the relics in the Old French *Fierabras* and its Middle English adaptations, the Fillingham *Firumbras* stresses them even further with the pardon also found in these concluding lines. They indicate the participation of the relics in the struggle against the Saracens, but more importantly the presence of the relics engages the participation of those who attentively listen to this “gest,” entitling them to one hundred days of pardon. Hearing the poem is not merely an entertaining way to pass the time, but also a devotional act that merits spiritual recompense. In this way, the Fillingham *Firumbras* translates the boundary between secular romance and religious artifact.

Although many Middle English romances conclude with prayers or other pious formulae, the pardon found in the Fillingham *Firumbras* is unique and has no counterpart in the Old French *Fierabras*. It situates the poem in the context of late medieval devotional culture and the use of indulgences for the remission of temporal punishment for sin. The exchange of money for the receipt of indulgences drew the ire of their medieval critics, but these pardons

61 Bédier 2.243-56; Cowen 149-68.

62 For an examination of pious formulae in Middle English romance, see Roger Dalrymple, *Language and Piety in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000).

could also be granted for the performance of certain pious acts, including the repetition of particular prayers, pilgrimages to sacred sites, and the veneration of holy images. Robert Warm has compared the Fillingham *Firumbras*’ pardon to the indulgences granted to crusaders, envisioning those who read about the adventures of Charlemaigne and his men in Saracen Spain as fellow warriors of Christ, while Marianne Ailes and Philippa Hardman suggest that it bears more similarity to those “offered in late medieval devotional manuscripts to those who devoutly contemplate a picture of the Holy Face […] or the instruments of the Passion.” However, in a way bridging the gap between these comparisons, I would suggest that the pardon rewards a kind of virtual pilgrimage that enables the audience of the Fillingham *Firumbras* to contemplate the relics, as they might an image of the instruments of Christ’s Passion, but also to envision them in a very particular frame – that is, in a distant and foreign landscape peopled with Saracen kings and giants vying against Christian knights from France. In this way, the Fillingham *Firumbras* also resembles texts like the *Stacions of Rome*, a Middle English versified guidebook to the major religious sites in the Holy See which relates in precise numerical detail the pardons granted to visitors to the churches and chapels it describes.

In the *Stacions of Rome*, for example, the time remitted from purgatorial punishment may depend on when the site is visited or the distance a pilgrim has traveled. Someone who visits

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64 R.N. Swanson’s *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) provides a thorough study of the use of pardons on the eve of the Reformation.


Saint Peter’s Basilica from Holy Thursday to Lammas will receive 14,000 years of pardon (53). The pilgrim who visits Saint Peter’s when the vernicle is displayed will receive 3,000 years of pardon if he lives in Rome, while someone living outside of the city would warrant 9,000 and a traveler from across the sea, 12,000 years (64, 66). Visiting major religious sites like Rome, Jerusalem, and Santiago de Compostela could provide substantial spiritual security for the Christian with the money, leisure, and physical ability to embark on such a journey, but local churches also offered pardons to develop and support saints’ cults, renovate ecclesiastical buildings, or build other necessary structures. In the special case of Rome, jubilee indulgences, which granted complete remission of all temporal punishment and were generally only available to those who undertook pilgrimage there, were sometimes extended to churches elsewhere, as they were to England in 1300, 1350, and beyond. The churches stood in as substitutes for the stations of Rome and merited the equivalent temporal rewards.

Although not as demanding a task as an actual pilgrimage to Rome, visitation of substitute local churches still incorporates a degree of physical movement, unlike the armchair pilgrimage rewarded at the conclusion of the Fillingham Firumbras. The reader’s experience of the relics of Christ’s Passion entails no physical effort and does not even require reading per se – the narrator notes specifically its applicability to those who have “herd” his geste (1836). The audience of the Fillingham Firumbras may not physically travel to Rome, where the relics originated, Spain, where they are brought, or France, where they are finally redistributed, but they do undertake a mental pilgrimage, a process that other medieval readers also engaged in with guidebooks to religious sites, like the aforementioned Stacions of Rome. In addition to

67 Swanson 56.
68 Swanson 53-54.
enumerating the pardons associated with particular places, the *Stacions of Rome* conveys physical distance and temporal constraints so that the virtual pilgrim may imagine what the experience entailed. For example, the pilgrim-reader is told that four miles stands between the churches of Saint Peter and Saint Paul (72) and two miles between the chapel of Scala Coeli and Saint Mary the Nunciate (137), while the narrator-tour guide warns that “her may we not long be” at the church of Saint Paul in order to leave time to visit the church of Saint Anastasius (93).

Texts like the *Stacions of Rome* do not always include pardons, but as the dispersal of indulgences developed, other devotional activities without physical components came to merit the same benefits as came from lengthy pilgrimages, like the recitation of particular prayers.69 It is in this vein that we can situate the pardon found at the end of the *Firumbras* text.

While providing their audience with a sense of a distant place by identifying important landmarks and measuring the distances between them, travel literature, like the *Stacions of Rome*, also removes those distances, allowing that sacred place, relic, or image to be experienced and venerated within the confines of one’s own native country and imagination in a way not dissimilar from the substitution of English churches for Roman churches as part of the jubilee indulgences. The pardon iterates and validates the text of the Fillingham *Firumbras* as a sacred site of pilgrimage whose link to the divine centers on the relics it describes and enshrines. It simultaneously collapses chronological and geographical distance to bring the relics to its audience and encourages them to visualize the narrative’s events and locations. This offers a text-based, rather than experiential, encounter with the relics, for which they can be rewarded with a pardon as long as they have read or heard the text read with “gode deuocyoun” (1836).

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Although only the Fillingham *Firumbras* contains a pardon, the other Middle English adaptations of *Fierabras* similarly engage in a process of devotional substitution to provide textual loci for the display and performance of Christ’s relics. Stripped of the liturgy and physicality of the sacred space of a pilgrimage site, the literary space in each of the Middle English adaptations offers an interior venue for the adoration of the relics that relies upon their imagined actions rather than personal contact. The virtual pilgrimages provided by these texts shift the crown of thorns and nails from Rome, to the tower in Spain, to Saint-Denis in France, and finally into the personal space of their readers or listeners.

These texts provide spaces for encountering the divine, but the experience they provide is not unmediated, just as any encounter with a relic, even when seen in person, must occur within certain parameters. There are actions that must be performed, whether pilgrimage to see the relic or devotional gestures. The physical structure of the reliquary and the church surrounding it determined how a medieval Christian perceived and interacted with these religious artifacts, at once enabling and modifying their experiences. The multilayered imagery of spatial enclosure found in the Middle English adaptations, in turn, mirrors and draws attention to the ever-mediated nature of access to the relics.70

Although the relics are never themselves described in detail, the spaces containing them are. The Fillingham *Firumbras* and *Sultan of Babylon* do not go into great detail about the exact location of the relics within the tower, which also contains Floripas’ bed chamber, but the Ashmole *Ferumbras* focuses on their enclosure. The relics are kept in a “cofre” (AF 5046) which may refer to “a trunk, chest, or case of any size” and possesses some kind of closing mechanism

that must be “oundone” (AF 5047) before the relics may be brought out. Made of gold, it is also described as a shrine on two occasions (AF “shryn,” 2116; “schryn,” 5077), delineating the container very specifically for a religious purpose. Within this coffer-shrine, the relics are wrapped in a “cloþ of tarse” (AF 5077), simultaneously highlighting their spiritual costliness as treasures of God and the system of interlinked enclosures that separate Floripas and the peers from the relics. The rich fabric in the golden coffer encloses and enshrines the relics, while their removal comprises part of the ritual necessary in order to see them with one’s own eyes.

These enshrining layers extend beyond the shrine itself to enclose the room and the tower so that they too reflect the structure of the reliquary containing the relics of Christ’s Passion. The room containing the shrine, accessible via a door, is identified as a “pryue plas” (AF 2115), which points to the concealed and multilayered location of the shrine. It, in turn, appears to be connected to Floripas’ room. The extravagant architectural and decorative details found in its description recall the bejeweled reliquaries of the Middle Ages, whose splendor represents the spiritual treasure of their contents and anticipates the resurrected glory that awaits them with Christ’s Second Coming. The chamber’s jasper window, silver-plated and gilded ceiling, and walls decked in coral and other “riche stones” (AF 1325) glorify and are glorified by the relics and the shrine that they surround. The super-structure of the tower likewise functions as an extension of the reliquary. The use of terms like clos (in the Ashmole Ferumbras) and fermorye (in the Fillingham Firumbras) to describe the tower stresses its enclosed nature and status as a sacred space. A clos can refer to any bounded area, but its definitions may include a variety of religious spaces, both large and small, like a cloister or a reliquary, as it does in Roland and

71 MED “cofre,” def. 1a.

72 AF 1378, 2044, 2060, 5023; FF 229, 864.
Vernagu, another Middle English Charlemagne romance. The *Middle English Dictionary* defines *fermorye*, the term used to describe the tower in the Fillingham *Firumbras*, as a monastic infirmary, thus echoing the religious timbre of the Ashmole *Ferumbras’ clos*. *Fermorye* certainly carries this sense in one instance (“Ye segge vylonye, that ye am a coward and schulde lygge in fermonye!” *FF* 316), which is cited as an example under its entry in the *Middle English Dictionary*. However, its other appearances (*FF* 229, 864) suggest its general applicability to an enclosed space, as the text’s editor glosses it, or, even more specifically, a prison, from the Old French *fermerie*. Whatever its particular uses in the cited examples, the ultimate derivation of *fermorye* from the Old French *fermer*, meaning to close or lock, in conjunction with *clos*, identifies the tower as an enclosing space. This description is reinforced by the attention drawn to the mechanisms for closing off the tower throughout the texts. The peers, Floripas, and her maidens “schutte þe gates” and “vp þay drowe þe draȝtbrig” (*AF* 2323). Just as the clasp on the coffer-shrine and the Tarsian cloth mediate access to the relics within the reliquary shrine, the gate and drawbridge control who may enter the tower. The outermost enshrining layer physically reinforces and supports the innermost reliquary, defending it against the Saracen force that is always on the verge of gaining entry. The spatial imagery of the tower importantly situates and visualizes the relics within a very particular space, but not one necessarily synonymous with Saint-Denis, where the relics are distributed at the end of *Fierabras*, or any other existing shrine.

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74 MED “fermerie,” def. 1a.

75 As, for example, it is used in the *Destruction de Rome* (e.g. 336, 378).

76 Other references to the gate and drawbridge in the Ashmole *Ferumbras* can be found at: 2615, 2775-76, 2965, 2967-68, 3154, 3367, 3409, 3593 (just the gates), 3595, and 3751.
Instead, though reminiscent of a shrine, it is located at once in a realistic, historicized world and in the minds of the readers of the adaptations of the Middle English *Fierabras*, by means of their text-based, rather than experiential, encounters.

On the one hand, the pardon in the Fillingham *Firumbras* and the other Middle English adaptations of *Fierabras* enable opportunities for personal encounters with the relics that reflect aspects of late medieval devotional culture. On the other hand, the substitution of the text as the locus for this encounter with the divine also speaks to the metaphorical movement of the relics to England through the linguistic translation of the French source material into the English vernacular that alludes to the Hundred Years War and the complementary rise of English as the primary vernacular in England. They unlink the relics from their French connections, especially the Lendit festival, to adapt its source for an English audience.

The *chanson de geste Fierabras* ends with Charlemagne’s removal of the relics from Spain where they had been taken by Fierabras’ father, Balan, to France, where they are then dispersed to various churches:

\begin{verbatim}
Au baron Saint Denis fu moult grans l’assamblee;
Au peron du Lendi fu la messe cante.
Illuec fu la couronne partie et devisee:
Une partie en fu a Saint Denis donnee,
Et .I. cleu ensement, c’est verites prouvee.
De la couronne fu partie et desevree;
A Compiegne est li signes a l’eglise honneree.
Des saintimes reliques fu la le desevree;
Maint present en fist Karles par France la loee:
\end{verbatim}
En l’onor Dieu en fu mainte eglise honneree.

La foire du Lendi fu par ce estoree,

Que ja n’i devroit estre cens ne taille donnee. (6384-96)

At noble Saint-Denis, there was a very large assembly. Mass was sung at the altar of Lendit. The crown of thorns was parted and divided: one part of was given to Saint-Denis, along with a nail – it is a proven truth. The crown was divided and dispersed. The shroud went to the honored church at Compiègne. The holy relics were divided there and Charles made them to be dispersed throughout France. To the honor of God were many churches honored. The fair of Lendit was established in this way so that there should be no fee or tax rendered.

Part of the crown of thorns and one of the nails go to the church of Saint-Denis. Christ’s burial shroud is sent to the abbey church of Compiègne (Abbaye Saint-Corneille), a dependent of Saint-Denis, while various other relics were sent to churches throughout France. This final movement of the relics westwards to France at the conclusion of Fierabras marks it very much as a French story and underscores the chanson de geste’s connections to the Lendit fair held at Saint-Denis.

The chanson de geste makes explicit reference to the festival here in its closing lines, as well as at the beginning of the poem, ostensibly explaining its origins: “A Seint Denis en Franche fu le tresor portez; / Au perron a l’Endit fu partis et donnez / Por les saintes eglises dont vous après orrez: / Por chen est il encore li Lendis apelez” (12-14; “The treasure was brought to Saint-Denis in France. It was divided and given at the altar on Lendit for the holy churches of which you have heard, on account of which it is still called Lendit”). According to these references, Charlemagne founded the festival of Lendit as an occasion for displaying the relics retrieved by the peers in Fierabras, which, in turn, gave rise to the development of a fair. This account, however, obscures the historical origins of the festival and the fair.
Lendit originated in the Carolingian period as a pilgrimage to Saint-Denis on the feast of Saint John the Baptist to see its relics, including the Passion relics. Its name derives from the Latin *indictum*, referring to the fact that the feast day has been proclaimed or announced. In the tenth century, the pilgrimage coincided with a fair catering to the needs of pilgrims that was initially held within the confines of the abbey (Inner Lendit), but eventually outgrew that space and spread beyond the cloisters to the town by the mid-eleventh century and to a plain north of Paris by the early twelfth century (Outer Lendit). Just as the fair grew in space, it also expanded in time to encompass three weeks total, from the first Wednesday in June to the feast of John the Baptist. The fair served as a source of revenue for the abbey, which charged merchants for the use of stalls, and the king, who levied a tax from the merchants to sell their wares. It and the pilgrimage attracted visitors from near and far. By the eleventh century, records indicate that Italian merchants sold their wares there and, according to Anne F. Sutton, English merchants may have also attended. The *Dit du Lendit rimé*, a fourteenth-century poem that enumerates almost eighty towns where textiles at the fair were produced (mostly in northern France), testifies to the draw of the fair, which specialized in wool. The fair was notably also where the University of Paris purchased its annual supply of parchment.

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78 The plain was between Saint-Denis, Saint-Ouen, Aubervilliers, and La Chapelle.


Although the Lendit fair itself drew visitors, the yearly pilgrimage to Saint-Denis to venerate the relics of the Passion remained the central feature of the June festivities and, for their efforts, visitors received an indulgence. The crowds that came to Saint-Denis were sometimes so large that “no one among the countless thousands of people because of their very density could move a foot; that no one, because of their very congestion, could [do] anything but stand like a marble statue, stay benumbed or, as a last resort, scream.” Such large crowds inspired Abbot Suger’s massive building campaign in the first half of the twelfth century. According to tradition, the relics were first given to the abbey church in the ninth century by Charles the Bald, though it is unclear how they came into his possession. However, several legendary accounts arose to explain where they came from, including the story found in Fierabras.

The discrepancy between fact and fiction found in Fierabras forms but one part of a longstanding legendary tradition linking Charlemagne to the origins of the relics at Saint-Denis. For example, in the Latin Descriptio qualiter Karolus Magnus clavem et coronam Domini a Constantinopoli Aquisgrani detulerit qualiterque Karolus Calvus ad Sanctum Dionysium retulerit, composed circa 1080s, Charlemagne receives the relics from the emperor Constantine. Charlemagne places the relics – the crown of thorns, nail, and a piece of the Cross – at Notre Dame in Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), from which they are transferred by Charles the Bald to Saint-Denis. Charles gives the holy shroud to Compiègne and, as his father had instituted at Aix, proclaims that an indictum be celebrated on the feast of John the Baptist. The parodic French chanson de geste Voyage de Charlemagne à Jerusalem et à Constantinople offers a slight


82 Le Person 132-33.
variation on this legend in which Charlemagne and the peers travel to the Holy Land and receives various relics, including the crown of thorns and a nail, from the patriarch of Jerusalem. In addition, visual record of the legend is known from two stained glass windows depicting Constantine greeting Charlemagne at the gates of Constantinople, which were installed in the choir of the church at Saint-Denis during Abbot Suger’s improvements. Such stories link the abbey church to the relics and document their legitimacy by linking them back to the Holy Land.

*Fierabras* and the other legends describing how the Passion relics arrived at Saint-Denis also point to an effort to connect seats of imperial and sacred power to the French king. In the *Descriptio*, Charlemagne receives the relics from the emperor Constantine in Constantinople, the seat of the eastern half of the Roman Empire. In the *Voyage de Charlemagne*, the patriarch of Jerusalem, a seat of religious power, bestows the relics on Charlemagne. The stained glass windows in Saint-Denis also illustrate this connection to Constantinople. Participating in this similar translation of the relics westwards, *Fierabras* describes the movement of the relics from Rome as they are captured by Fierabras and their retrieval by Charlemagne, who brings them to


84 These legendary accounts may also have served as propaganda to assert the supremacy of Saint-Denis’ relics over its rival Notre Dame, which possessed part of the cross. This rivalry came to a head in the twelfth century when the Lendit fair was moved from the immediate environs of Saint-Denis to a field north of Paris, allowing Notre Dame to potentially claim a share of the abbey church’s profits. *Fierabras*’ identification of Saint-Denis and its relics as the original site for Lendit and the associated fair reinforce its position against Notre Dame and the legitimacy of its relics. See Marianne Ailes, “A Comparative Study of the Medieval French and Middle English Verse Texts of the Fierabras Legend” (Ph.D. diss., University of Reading, 1989).

France. Although the relics originated in Rome, they are not returned there. Instead, they are transferred from Rome, a city associated with the ancient might of imperial power and the seat of western Christianity to religious sites throughout France. In each of these legendary accounts, the translation of the relics westwards heralds the translation of religious and imperial power, which simultaneously authenticates the religious artifacts and anoints the French kings and France as the successors to the rulers of Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Rome. This relic-based *translatio imperii* positions Charlemagne as a king whose leadership extends not only to the French, but to Christendom as a whole, while also establishing Saint-Denis as the seat of his power. Saint-Denis had strong connections with the French monarchy. It was traditionally the burial site of French kings, starting with Dagobert I, and housed the crown, royal regalia, and the oriflamme, also known as the Banner of Saint-Denis, which was carried into battle by French kings, starting with Louis VI.

Although the translation of the relics to Saint-Denis and the festival of Lendit form an integral final act in *Fierabras* that legitimates France as the successor to Rome as a center of imperial and religious power, the festival of Lendit does not appear in its Middle English adaptations. This may be due to the adaptor’s ignorance of what exactly Lendit was or the happenstance of manuscript survival as, for example, the beginning of the manuscripts containing the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras* and the Fillingham *Firumbras* are both lacking. The absence of references to the festival may also register an awareness by the authors of these texts that the Passion relics attributed to Saint-Denis were by this time located at Sainte-Chapelle,

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87 Favier 847-48.
88 Crosby 103.
having been moved there around 1248 by Louis IX. Consequently, some later versions of 
*Fierabras*, such as the French prose version from 1400 and David Aubert’s *Croniques et 
Conquestes de Charlemaigne* (1458), identify Sainte-Chapelle, rather than Saint-Denis, as the 
location of the crown of thorns to reflect this translation of the relics.\(^8^9\) The end of the 
Fillingham *Firumbras*, containing the pardon described earlier, is intact, but it makes no mention 
of the festival or the dispersal of the relics, despite its emphasis on the place of the relics in the 
story. The other Middle English adaptations are likewise silent on this front. The *Sultan of 
Babylon* alludes to the link between its ultimate source material and Saint-Denis when it notes 
that its story “is wryten in romaunce / And founded in bokes of antiquyté / At Sei 
nt Denyse 
Abbey in Fraunce” (25-27), but does not mention the feast explicitly. The beginning and ending 
sections of the Ashmole *Firumbras* corresponding to where references to Lendit are made in the 
Old French *Fierabras* are no longer extant.

While it is possible that the translational silence of the Middle English adaptations of 
*Fierabras* acknowledges the discrepancy between the French source and the well-known 
location of the Passion relics at Sainte-Chapelle, this silence also disassociates and dislocates the 
narratives from the relic feast of Saint-Denis to present the texts of these Middle English 
adaptations as alternate sites for the veneration of the relics of Christ’s Passion.\(^9^0\) Like the 
festival of Lendit, these texts provide their readers with an opportunity to experience the relics. 
However, instead of displaying static objects of devotion, they present living relics, animated by 
God’s motive power, whose own deeds stand side by side with those of Charlemagne, Oliver,

\(^8^9\) Mandach, *La Geste de Fierabras* 125.

\(^9^0\) As Marianne Ailes demonstrates in “Comprehension Problems and their Resolution in the Middle English Verse 
Translations of *Fierabras*” (406), it can be difficult to discern between a mistake in translation and a conscious 
effort on the part of translator-adapter to deviate from the source material.
and the Saracen convert Firumbras. Removed from the frame of Lendit, at the beginning and end, these texts importantly redirect the locus of devotional activity from a French religious site strongly associated with the French monarchy. The transfer of power through the conduit of the relics is most evident in the Fillingham *Firumbras* which, for all its interest in foregrounding the active potential of the relics and the extension of pardons to its audience, does not discuss the dispersal of the relics in France. Charlemagne departs from Spain with Floripas’ maidens for Paris (1826), but no mention is made of what he does with the relics he has “whan” (1830). The silence of the Fillingham *Firumbras* places those who have “herd thys geste” (1836) – its English audience – as the relics’ next guardians, not churches in France. In turn, the Middle English adaptations displace their French source through the intertwined translations of the relics and languages. If *Fierabras* is a text that envisions the struggle between Christians and Saracens as a battle over culturally significant objects, the Middle English versions cast the dynastic war between England and France as a fight over both culturally significant objects and literary texts. The translation of relics exhibited here functions as an extension of the patterns of literary transmission between England’s primary vernaculars and the linguistic translation of the French *Fierabras* into English. Just as the French *Fierabras* describes how the relics formerly kept in the churches of Rome made their way to France, the Middle English *Fierabras* romances shift the narrative further west to England through linguistic translation. This echo of *translatio imperii* positions English as the linguistic heir to Latin and French while also advancing England as the successor to these preceding seats of sacred power.91

Recognition of the broad appeal of *Fierabras*’ narrative of interfaith struggle over the relic-witnesses to the Crucifixion, a central event in Christian history, and its affiliation with a French literary tradition manifest themselves in a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion running throughout the Middle English adaptations, composed and circulated during the Hundred Years War. Although they, especially the Fillingham *Firumbras*, displace Saint-Denis and Lendit as the site of virtual pilgrimage, this translational regime is not as adversarial as other Middle English texts from the same period, such as the depiction of the French as enemies of God in the popular romance *Richard Coer de Lion* or the *Book of John Mandeville*’s assertion that the Holy Land is the rightful claim of England, not France.92 As their references to the French and France demonstrate, the Middle English *Fierabras* adaptations are less interested in condemning the French than in *Fierabras* as a story of Christian triumph in the face of a seemingly insurmountable Saracen force, regardless of the national origins of those who stand at the vanguard. Enjoying particular popularity in England which, as Keith Busby has noted, possessed a fondness for *chansons de geste* concerned with Christians and Saracens battling one another,93 the English adaptations offer a plausibly historical account of a successful crusade at a time when reconquest of the Holy Land seemed the stuff of dreams, in part because the enmity between England and France made the kind of multinational force needed to launch an effective assault impossible. They present not just an English fantasy, but a Christian one as well.94


93 Busby, *Codex and Context* 2:500.

94 Warm 87-100.
The Middle English *Fierabras* romances may employ the Matter of France as a means of literary propaganda, but the interior pilgrimage they enable registers other effects of the Hundred Years War. Major pilgrimage routes to Rome, Jerusalem, and Santiago de Compostela, like the Via Francigena, crisscrossed France, and were impacted by the fighting.\(^{95}\) The war even interrupted the fair of Lendit for a period of eighteen years, starting in 1426. This necessitated alternative sites and means of pilgrimage and the development of interior pilgrimage, as demonstrated in these Middle English versions. Just as the period following the fall of Acre in 1291 saw a rise in texts about virtual pilgrimages, like Petrarch’s *Itinerarum ad Sepulchrum Domini*, the *Fierabras* adaptations operate in a similar inaccessibility to sacred Christian space.\(^{96}\) Impeded by the increasing difficulty of travelling to the Holy Land, English readers could look to these fictional texts, just as they might to guidebooks, like the *Stacions of Rome*, to create an imaginative space in which to enshrine and venerate relics and visit religious sites.

This space is also, importantly, an English language one. It becomes the linguistic means by which relics are translated and geographical distances spanned. In addition to signaling its annexation of a story associated with the Matter of France tradition, these adaptations of *Fierabras* document the rise of English as the primary vernacular language in England. Just as the Latin *vitae* of Saints Nicholas, Margaret, and Audrey had to be translated into French, rendered “en romanz,” to provide vernacular audiences with exemplary models of Christian sanctity, it was necessary here to translate a French text into English so that all members of the


English community, whether French- or English-speaking, might hear and benefit from the “geste” of the relics of Christ’s Passion. In this way, English becomes a romance in its own right.
Conclusion

The genre of medieval romance encompasses a much broader spectrum of works than the tales of knights and ladies generally studied in the undergraduate classroom. As a fluid and temporary structure that transforms to meet the attitudes, anxieties, and dreams of a given time and society, romance frustrates any effort to delineate its boundaries or stake out its qualities with any definite certainty. It may alternately describe a translation from Latin to French, as in the saints’ lives and religious works of Wace and Marie de France; the tale of the young knight Horn, whose efforts to avenge his father’s death and return to his homeland form part of God’s providential plan; a story about a pious knight who abandons his family and earthly trappings, as in the Roman de Waldef and Gui de Warewic; or an epic translated from French into English depicting Christian knights who wield the relics of Christ’s Passion like weapons to thwart their Saracen foes, as in the Middle English adaptations of the *chanson de geste Fierabras*.

The fluidity of romance has been examined in this dissertation with regard to its interplay with religious literature. We might conceptualize the relationship between these genres as a form of interlace. Interlace or *entrelacement* is a structural device often found in romances that interweaves separate stories into a complex narrative whole. In a similar way, throughout the medieval period, the seemingly separate narratives of romance and hagiography intertwine, coming together at numerous points of contact, whether through the confluence of shared vocabulary, imagery, or themes, to produce the romances explored in the previous chapters. Each of these moments of contact lends further complexity to these respective genres and contributes to an overarching narrative that breaks down the traditional boundaries between two genres sometimes judged to be incongruous by medieval and modern critics alike. While medieval detractors condemned romances for their irreligiosity, despite their hagiographic leanings, their
modern critics characterize their incorporation of religious elements as a form of exploitation intended to legitimate courtly culture. Just as the juxtaposition created by interlace invites comparison between the intertwined storylines of medieval romance, our understanding of romance and hagiography and the relationship between them is enriched by taking note of their similarities, not just the differences. The interlace of these two genres demonstrates their variability – their potential to cross again and again in untold permutations – and problematizes the definitions we attempt to impose on them.

In turn, the use of interlace itself in the texts examined in this dissertation has demonstrated how moments of contact between these genres contribute significantly to the overall message of these texts. In Wace’s *Conception Nostre Dame*, for example, Wace adapts his Latin source material to highlight the similarities between Anne and Joachim’s narratives after Joachim’s self-imposed exile in the company of some shepherds. The correspondences between their separate storylines – their isolation, their interactions with secondary characters, and the appearance of the angel – anticipate their eventual reunion and the interlace of their narratives. The affinities of this scene with the genre of romance are further illustrated in the portrayal of Anne as the lovesick lady and Joachim as the errant-knight and Wace’s emphasis on the love between them in his translation. The apocryphal biblical narrative and courtly tropes interweave to create a more effective reunion scene that parallels the happy ending so often found in medieval romances. However, this happy ending benefits not only the reunited couple, but also all of humanity since their union precipitates the Immaculate Conception, in support of which Wace writes, and the Incarnation.

The anticipation inherent within interlace is used to great effect in other romances as well, such as the *Roman de Waldef* and *Gui de Warewic*, to counter generic expectations about
romance endings. In the *Roman de Waldef*, the departure of Guiac and Gudlac for the continent in pursuit of land and glory raises the expectation that they will return and be reunited with their parents, as had been the case when they had been kidnapped as children. However, their absence leaves their father Waldef vulnerable to attack by his enemies, leading ultimately to his death. *Gui de Warewic* likewise creates the expectation, as per the conventions of romance, that the pilgrim Gui will meet his son Reinbrun. However, as in the *Roman de Waldef*, the always-anticipated reunion never occurs. The kidnapped Reinbrun is found by Gui’s steward Herhalt and returns to England, but finds his parents dead. The failure of these romances to interlace and make contact echoes the overarching concerns of their narratives and the interplay of romance and hagiography at work within them. The death of Waldef forms part of the *Roman de Waldef*’s implicit warning against the perils of pride and the excessive pursuit of conquest, while Reinbrun’s narrative within *Gui de Warewic* reflects the repercussions of Gui’s decision to leave his family and atone for the sins he had committed as a knight. Gui makes amends with God, but his pursuit of penance leaves numerous loose ends, including the fate of Reinbrun.

These examples of interwoven narratives constitute just a few moments in the interlace of romance and religious literature, but they show the ease with which these genres can converge to draw on the richness of both traditions. Interlace is characteristic of romance, but the example from Wace’s *Conception Nostre Dame* shows that it is a structural device that may be translated to other genres, too. Although these instances of interlace speak to the relationship between hagiography and romance, hagiography is but one thread, one narrative, in the overarching story of romance as a genre, which interweaves many threads together. As this dissertation has attempted to foreground, translation and vernacularity form key roles in the development of romance. The rhetorical techniques used in adapting Latin source material for non-latinate audiences reflect similar tendencies in romance towards description and the creation of vivid
scenes, such as the seascape at the beginning of the *Conception* and the priest’s attempt to peer into Audrey’s tomb in the *Vie seinte Audree*. In the context of these works, these visual set-pieces both function didactically to inspire devotion towards the Virgin Mary and Saint Audrey, and are enabled by their vernacularity to expand the audience from beyond that of their Latin sources.

The story of romance, then, is one driven by an effort to reach out to and accommodate new audiences through translation in its many forms, whether linguistically speaking by rendering a text from Latin into French or English or through the incorporation of characters, situations, or themes that resonate with a text’s new readers or listeners. However, we must not assume that the incorporation of courtly elements in the Latin translations of saints’ lives or the focus of romance narratives on knights and ladies strictly identifies the laity alone as the inscribed audience for these “romanced” texts. As the provenance of their manuscripts demonstrate, a diverse audience of lay and religious enjoyed these texts. Far from being a genre intended purely for entertaining the noble classes or reinforcing their worldview, the reality fiction of romance provides a mirror for medieval society that queries the very image it ostensibly reflects. In turn, romance constantly evolves to better imitate the anxieties, needs, and wishes of the latest reality, intertwining aspects of other genres into its overarching interlace and thereby extending its relevance and the story of romance throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern period and beyond.
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