

The Conception of Galien: Recalling Constantinople in the Cheltenham *Galien*

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While most versions of the adventures of Galien recreate the events in Constantinople that lead to his conception, the fifteenth-century Cheltenham poet omits the episode altogether. This paper explores the treatment of Galien's parentage in light of this lacuna. I conclude that the poet sought to reshape the memory of the events in Constantinople by first eliminating them. Then, in a game of complicity with an audience familiar with the missing story, Galien's versifier constructs a series of nuanced allusions which recast Oliver's relationship with Jacqueline as a long-distance love affair, thereby bringing dignity to his conception.

Galien, the Frankish epic hero born to the daughter of King Hugo of Constantinople, is conceived when Oliver carries out his famously lustful boast on the night of drunken boasting best known to modern audiences from the Anglo-Norman *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*.¹ Galien's own adventures occur within the epic cycle of Garin de Monglane, but his story is built upon a combination of events likely drawn from the rhymed *Chanson de Roland* and an unknown *Pèlerinage* (Keller, "Autour de *Galien*," pp. 81-82). The appearance of Galien likely occurred sometime in the thirteenth century, but, regrettably, the surviving manuscript tradition stretches back no further than the mid-fifteenth century.² Among the versions which date to the fifteenth century is the *Galien li Restoré* preserved in the Cheltenham manuscript, the only verse adaptation of the story to survive (*Le Galien*, pp. ix-xii).

Whereas the adventures of Galien include, in most instances, a detailed adaptation of the events in Constantinople which lead to his birth, the Cheltenham *Galien* makes the striking omission of the entire episode in the Byzantine palace. Instead, Charlemagne makes no mention of a wealthy eastern king, and simply takes his men straight back to France. One significant consequence of this rather extreme emendation of Galien's biography is the elimination of any explanation of how Oliver managed to father a child during his one-night visit to the eastern capital. This present study addresses the omission of the Constantinople visit from the verse tradition and then explores the treatment of the unavoidable subject of Galien's parentage in light of this lacuna. Through an examination of the progressive retellings of Galien's conception story, I

¹ Published as *The Journey of Charlemagne to Jerusalem and Constantinople*, ed. and trans. J.-L. G. Picherit.

² Keller and Kaltenbach date B.N. 1470 to 1450 at the earliest (*Galien le Restoré*, p. 13). Horrent dated the ur-*Galien* to around 1200, and Keller then pushed the date forward to around 1270 (Keller, "Autour de *Galien*," p. 78).

conclude that the poet sought to reshape the memory of the events in Constantinople first by removing them altogether. Then, in a playful game of complicity with a crowd that must have known the missing story, Galien's versifier ostentatiously refuses to rehash "that night" in Constantinople. Instead, the poem contains a series of nuanced allusions to the night of the boy's conception that succeed in recasting the distasteful circumstances of Oliver's brief union with Jacqueline as a story of legitimate and faithful love, thereby bringing dignity to the creation of Galien.

More than a half a century ago, in his groundbreaking work, *La Chanson de Roland dans les littératures française et espagnole au Moyen Age*, Jules Horrent recalled the immense popularity of *Galien le Restoré* beginning in the fifteenth century. This enthusiasm had been, in his estimation, sufficiently intense to dethrone the reigning rhymed versions of the *Chanson de Roland* (p. 377). Such a level of appreciation in the late Middle Ages has by no means translated, however, to a popular victory over the *Roland* when it comes to the attention of modern critics. In fact, the competition, if we imagine one to exist, has not even been close. Horrent, and then Hans-Erich Keller decades later, made major contributions to the study of Galien, but critical attention has otherwise been limited. The fortunes of Oliver's half-Greek son seem to be changing, however, as evidenced by the appearance of Keller and Kaltenbach's 1998 edition of two of the prose *Galien* manuscripts, Margaret Burland's book on the later reception of the Roland tradition, and, finally, the construction of a digitized *Galien* at the University of Oregon, where the Cheltenham manuscript is housed.

A striking omission

Oliver's boast and the resulting sexual encounter with the Greek princess make possible both the invention of Galien, a new epic hero, as well as the creation of a new branch of the Roncevaux tradition based on his adventures. The continuators who inserted this new generation of Frankish hero into such pivotal and well-known scenes as Ganelon's betrayal, the defeat at Roncevaux, and the triumph over Baligant, faced obvious narrative challenges. In formulating the poetic graft that was Galien, an *ente* meant to join fruitfully with its existing host, his creators needed to determine how the memory of the night in Constantinople would be shaped, and then, how those memories would, in turn, shape the story of the heroic son of Oliver. Those responsible for the various prose versions of the story chose to retain the long sequence of outrageous boasts and late-night bedroom negotiations with the princess. By contrast, the Cheltenham poet, whom Dembowski calls "the fifteenth-century poet-recaster of *Galien*" ("Whom and What," p. 88), was clearly troubled by the dubious nature of Galien's "engendering" (*engendrer* being the verb of choice throughout), and decided to omit the episode altogether.

In a poetic tradition deeply concerned with origins, the circumstances of a new hero's conception would seem worthy of explanation, especially in this case, as part of a significant new offshoot of the adventures of Charlemagne and his twelve peers. The decision not to reproduce the events in Constantinople is thus perplexing. Horrent called it a "grave omission," and insisted that the original *Galien* surely contained it: "L'archétype de nos versions a raconté les aventures de Constantinople, qui étaient le point de départ de son

affabulation personnelle, l'explication de la naissance du protagoniste Galien" (*La Chanson de Roland*, p. 380). Keller, who suggested that the poet might have sanitized the story for a female audience, noted in response to the omission, "il essaie à tout prix de supprimer le *Pèlerinage*, bien que celui-ci soit nécessaire pour expliquer l'origine de Galien" ("Autour de *Galien*," p. 82). Picherit, for his part, recognizes the omission and notes the existence of "quelques brèves allusions à la naissance du héros, tout en restant discrète sur les circonstances de l'évènement" ("Le *gab* d'Olivier," p. 329).³ The nature of these brief allusions to which Picherit refers, suggests, I contend, a deliberate reconstruction of the memory of what happened in Constantinople, although not necessarily one born of simple prudishness.

Oliver's *gab*

In addition to the prose adaptations of the *Galien* which reproduced the Constantinople episode, the boasting sequence and the bedroom negotiations between Oliver and the princess had also been variously recreated in such works as the Norse *Karlamagnús saga*, the Welsh *Pèlerinage*, and, likely, in other Anglo-Norman versions that are no longer extant.⁴ There is insufficient evidence to determine which account of Galien's conception the Cheltenham poet intended to excise, but it is important to note that the tone of the events in Constantinople differed from one version to the next. For instance, the number of times that Oliver promises to "have" the princess is 100 in the Anglo-Norman *Pèlerinage*, and thirty, or fifteen, in other versions. And, despite the fact that the bawdy and mordant Anglo-Norman poem has long been the dominant version of the story, as a rule, most accounts of the night in Constantinople aim to depict a more sentimentalized version of Oliver's *gab* and eventual departure without the princess.

In the Anglo-Norman *Pèlerinage*, Hugo decides to have Oliver be the first to carry out his boast in an attempt to preserve his own reputation in the courts of the land ("Fel seie en tutes curz si jo ne li delivre!" l. 695⁵). Thus, no matter how caddish Oliver may appear for having crudely lusted after the princess when he first saw her, it is her father who sells out her virginity in a fit of courtly vanity. Faced with losing his head if he fails, Oliver promises her two things: first, to be at her command as long as she gets him out of the deal with Hugo ("Mais que de men cuvent m'aquitez vers lu rei," l. 723) and second, to make her his only true love ("De vus ferai ma drue, ja ne quer altre aveir," l. 724). She then pledges her faith to him, and allows him to try to carry out his boast. Oliver manages to perform only thirty times ("Li quens ne le fist mes, la nuit, que .XXX. feiz," l. 726), although this number has been contested.⁶ At the end of the poem, as Oliver is leaving, he tells the princess that he has given her his love as a gift, but he must now depart with his lord,

³ Ott suggests that the Constantinople visit may have detracted too much from the spiritual element of the journey ("Quêtes et héros," p. 323).

⁴ For discussion of Oliver's *gab* in the various traditions, see Aebischer, "Le *gab* d'Olivier"; Picherit, "Le *gab* d'Olivier"; and Rejhon, "Le *gab* d'Olivier."

⁵ Verse numbers from the *Pèlerinage* are from Picherit's edition.

⁶ Rejhon usefully sums up the debate over this matter ("Le *gab* d'Olivier," pp. 539-41).

King Charles. At this juncture, the audience is left to wonder whether he was simply abusing the language of *fin'amor* in a moment of crisis. On the other hand, Oliver may have been trapped, at once faithful in his intentions and bound by honor to go fight in Spain, fully intending to hold his new *drue* dear in his heart. Those familiar with the *Roland* tradition are well aware that Oliver cannot stay with her, for his destiny is death on the battlefield in Spain. Stuck, then, in an irreconcilable position between the poetic discourses of romance and epic, love and war, Oliver faces an impossible choice, and the case for blaming him for leaving is consequently difficult to make. The *Pèlerinage*, more so than other versions of the Constantinople visit, ups his crude lustfulness and more strongly suggests that he promises true love to avoid execution, but the moral ambiguity of his departure still remains a defining element of the poem.

Critics have mounted arguments both for and against charging the Oliver of the Anglo-Norman *Pèlerinage* with cruel abandonment, but when it comes to the larger tradition, Annalee Rejhon has recently offered further evidence in Oliver's defense drawn from the Welsh tradition of the *Pèlerinage* ("Le gab d'Olivier," pp. 536-37). In the Welsh version, Oliver promises to "have" her thirty times, but she begs him to stop after fifteen, so as not to kill her (p. 539). All of the Welsh adaptations, Rejhon asserts, portray Oliver as willing to take the princess with him as long as Hugo permits it, and it is her father who prevents her from leaving with her lover. Oliver does his best to behave honorably (pp. 541-42).

Indeed, the scenario which favors true love over life-saving but empty promises of fidelity proves to be the dominant one, at least in sheer numbers. The Anglo-Norman *Pèlerinage*, with its more malicious tone, appears to be the outlier rather than the source against which all others reacted. In a later example, the early sixteenth-century *Galien* preserved in Arsenal 3351, Oliver sees the princess and falls so in love with her that he can no longer eat or drink. He does not refrain, however, from making lustful comments and promises to bring her multiple rounds of sexual pleasure ("son plaisir feroie XV fois") (Picherit, "Le gab d'Olivier," p. 301). He reiterates this promise during the boasting sequence, again specifying fifteen times, for he wishes to do "ce que amy doit faire a amie" (p. 302). In this version, as well as the earlier B.N. 1470 (Keller and Kaltenbach, eds., *Galien le Restoré en prose*, p. 35), Oliver volunteers to carry out his boast, because he wants to, and Hugo agrees. When he does attempt to fulfill his boast, Oliver falls asleep after twelve times and in the morning laments his fate. In Arsenal 3351, although not in B.N. 1470, the princess promises to protect him as long as he swears never to be with another woman again. Standing before her father to make her report, she berates him for putting her in such a position and then insists that she gave her body willingly to a successful Oliver. When Oliver prepares to leave, she scolds him for leaving in such a manner and announces that she is pregnant with his child. He then promises to come back and marry her (Picherit, "Le gab d'Olivier," p. 303). This is hardly a sweet love story, but the prose *Galiens* seek to vindicate Oliver more so than does the Anglo-Norman poem, and understandably so.

The very mechanism of the boasting sequence, which in each case imposes impossible choices on Hugo, Oliver, and the princess herself, also renders it impossible to completely sentimentalize the story of Galien's conception. Unless the narrative were to be altered beyond recognition, the princess will always, in some measure, have been sold out by her own father to a man who wished to prove his sexual prowess by

deflowering her and “having” her sexually in superhuman fashion. What is more, given the relatively innocent nature of the boasting game itself, and Hugo’s threat of beheading for failure, any uncertainty about Oliver’s true intentions can never be totally eradicated. The Cheltenham poet may well have come to this same conclusion, for he or she is undeniably in the mood to forget, or to encourage forgetfulness of the circumstances of Galien’s conception and Oliver’s departure.⁷

The Cheltenham *Galien*

In the beginning of the verse *Galien*, Hugo is depicted as a tyrannical father who unjustly chases his unwed pregnant daughter out of the kingdom. Her mother supports her from afar, and Galien is raised by his maternal uncle in Damascus. When the boy is finally brought to his grandfather’s court as a teenager, he learns his true identity, and there begins his quest for his father. Over the course of the ensuing journey, from Constantinople to the battlefield at Roncevaux, the poet constructs a series of parallel scenes of self-presentation during which Galien must confront the subject of his parentage. The first allusion to Oliver’s “engendering” of Galien occurs in the form of an internal monologue by Jacqueline’s mother, wife of Hugo. The banished Jacqueline gives birth far from Constantinople, in a place of Celtic wonder, where she is attended by fairies with magical powers. Hugo’s queen receives word of the birth and is overjoyed, but her joy is quickly dampened by the thought of the child’s missing father. The narrator tells us:

Mais quant il lui souvint d’Olivier le vaillant
 Qui l’avoit engendré, du cuer va souppirant,
 Et puis dist: “Olivier, mal feustés cy venant;
 Ou estes vous mon gendre qui n’en faictes semblant?
 Et quant je vous vy a tant estiés advenant;
 Car se vous n’estiés jamais cy revenant,
 Je n’aray autre [gendre] quoyque voise disant.
 Roy Hugues, monseigneur, qui en vous despitant,
 En fist chacer ma fille qui tant a doulz semblant.” (ll. 375-83⁸)

This quiet lament conveys to the audience, if to no one else, both her daughter’s faithfulness to Oliver and his legitimate status as son-in-law in her eyes. They would marry if they could, she wants to believe, no matter what slanderous voices may be whispering about her unwed daughter.

⁷ Margaret Burland, who was kind enough to share drafts of her book, *Strange Words: Retelling and Reception in the Medieval Roland Textual Tradition*, with me, offers a thoroughgoing treatment of the notion of “forgetfulness” with regard to the battle of Roncevaux.

⁸ Quotations from the Cheltenham *Galien* are from the Dougherty and Barnes edition.

King Hugo

The next time the subject of the conception of Galien comes up, the young man stands before Hugo in Constantinople. The boy is fourteen, a stranger to his grandfather, and has yet to learn the identity of his father, but here, he will finally learn the truth. The scene contains what amounts to stage direction for a lively reading, and boasts a level of humor not found elsewhere in the poem. Hugo is holding court at Christmas when Galien arrives with his uncle, the Count of Damascus. The count leans in to greet Hugo and as he is bowing before his host, the king looks past him to the striking young man who stands behind him and demands to know who he is: ““Qui est ce bel enfant? Ne me soit pas celé”” (l. 441). The narrator then allows:

Ja lui eüst le conte dicte la verité,
 Mais la gentil roïne qui l’ot bien advisé,
 Au quens de Damas a maintenant signé,
 Qu’au roy ne die mie toute la verité
 De Galien l’enfant que Dieu ot tant amé. (ll. 442-46)

The scene continues with the following almost farcical exchange:

Quant le conte la voit, si a bien advisé,
 Lors a yl son parler de tout poins remué,
 Et a dit au roi Hugues: “Comment vous a esté?
 De vous veoir avoye certes grant volenté.” (ll. 447-50)

Hugo’s reaction to the count’s odd behavior and refusal to answer his question is one of combined annoyance and anger as he asks his guest if he has indeed gone deaf and wonders why he answers him like an idiot.

“Conte,” ce dist le roy, “vous estes asourdé.
 Demandé vous avoye dont cel enfant [fut] né,
 Et vous me respandez comment tout assoté.” (ll. 451-53)

Hugo then offers the count the best doctor in the land for his hearing problem before coming right up to his ear and insisting, in a threatening manner, on knowing who the boy is and where he came from. The king promises that no harm will come to the boy, and upon hearing this, the count cannot keep from laughing (“ne se tint point de rire,” l. 464). The queen, seeking to put an end to the discussion, chimes in with what should be satisfactory answer, (“Et la roïne dist ung mot qui deüst suffire,” l. 465), stating in sibylline fashion that not all truths (true stories) are meant to be told. ““Tous voirs,” ce dist la dame, ‘ne sont pas bons a dire,”” l. 467). The scene has a theatrical quality to it, and it is amusing imagine what sort of gesture the queen might

have used to signal to her brother to bite his tongue. The queen's words may also be applied to the larger question of the omission of the Constantinople episode. Her lament bemoaning Oliver's absence may echo the sentiments of the poet, as she tells the audience that the circumstances of Galien's birth "ne sont pas bons a dire," (l. 467) thereby offering an oblique explanation of the missing Constantinople episode.

With the queen's interjection, Hugo is now aware that his wife also knows the identity of the boy, which makes the king all the more annoyed. He changes tactics and loudly summons Galien to ask him, "Dont estes vous, beau filz? Ne m'alez point celant" (l. 470). "Ne scay," the boy answers, and insists that he has never seen his father a day in his life. In this first encounter, Galien does not know his own story and cannot, as he will in later scenes, allude to cryptically or edit out the questionable circumstances of his conception. Still in the dark, Hugo is now quite agitated and swears he will discover the boy's identity. In later episodes, everyone on his father's side will easily recognize Galien as one of their own before he even opens his mouth, so striking is his resemblance to Oliver. By contrast, there seem to be no family resemblances on the Greek side worthy of mention. Yes, Galien was conceived in Constantinople and born of the Greek king's daughter, but his true identity will be defined in the West, before he comes back to ascend the throne in Constantinople.

The queen tells Hugo not to get so upset and promises to tell him the truth about the boy's parentage at sunset. Later that evening, she announces, "C'est le filz Olivier, le hardi combatant / Et a ma belle fille que Dieu soit huy aidant" (ll. 486-87). Despite the possessive "ma belle fille" that can be read as a gibe concerning his banishment of their daughter, this is joyous news to Hugo and he quickly sends for her in Damascus. When she returns from exile, Hugo embraces his daughter and offers her his fortune out of love for the knight that Oliver conceived while he was staying there ("Que Olivier engendra quant cy fu hebergant," l. 502). Hugo is guilty here of a rather euphemistic characterization of the highly destructive fiasco during which he allowed Oliver to prove his sexual prowess on his virgin daughter. The events leading to Galien's conception, although papered over here once again, were very likely alive in the memory of the listening audience. The spare "quant cy fu hebergant" functions here on two levels: one, for the internal audience which surrounds Hugo at court, and Galien in particular, and second, for the external audience hearing the poem.⁹ Hugo has, indeed, just been cautioned that not all true stories need be told, and that admonishment reaches outside the poem as well.

Galien receives the news of his lineage with as much joy as does his grandfather, and he is immediately determined to seek out Oliver. Hugo asks him to stay with him in Constantinople, promises to dub him a knight at the end of three days, and offers him weapons, horses, castles, and all of his land. This overly generous promise is made to the detriment of his two sons, Galien's uncles, who figure prominently later in the poem. Galien declines, insisting that he will not stay then, nor will he ever, until Oliver is married to his

⁹ Burland rightly notes that the audience would have to know the tradition since the poet makes no mention of why Charlemagne and his men would have been in Constantinople, in her words an audience with "active intertextual memories."

mother. Here begins the quest for his father, which is articulated in this instance as an explicit campaign to legitimize the relationship between his parents. The young man swears that he will find his father, even if he is at war somewhere far away, and then insists that he will need a sword to do it. An audience familiar with the *Pèlerinage* tradition will remember that the last man to say he needed to borrow a sword from Hugo was a boasting Charlemagne, an allusion which forges a crucial link between past and present meetings with Hugo.

In the version of Galien's adventures preserved in B.N. 1470, which likely preceded the Cheltenham poem, Galien lives in Constantinople for two years under the tutelage of his grandfather before learning the truth of his identity. After one of his uncles hits him over the head with a chessboard and calls him *bastart*, Jacqueline explains to her confused son about the night spent with Oliver:

“Beau filz,” dist sa mere, “il est vray que l’empereur de France, Rolant, et Olivier et tous les .xii. pers s’en vindrent une nuit ceans herberger. Si se venta Olivier que s’il me tenoict avecques lui couchee, qu’il me feroict .xv. fois celle sote besoigne que je n’ose nommer. Lors jura mon pere qu’il me feroict une nuit au baron essaier, et s’il le pouoit trouver mensongier, il lui feroict la teste couper. Si me fist nom pere coucher avezques luy, et fustes celle nuyt ainsi engendré. Si est moult fol celui qui le veult reproucher” (*Galien le Restoré*, p. 43).

Having heard his mother's explanation, Galien then proclaims that he would rather be the bastard son of Oliver than the legitimate son of two cowards (pp. 43-44). No such explanation occurs anywhere in the Cheltenham poem, nor is there any such vindication of Galien's illegitimacy.

In the prose versions, Jacqueline simply expresses sadness about his departure and hopes that he will return with Oliver. The Cheltenham poet, by contrast, makes a significant addition to the departure scene by adding an exchange in which Jacqueline gives Galien the promise ring that Oliver had left with her:

“Beau filz,” dist elle, “a Dieu soiés vous commandé,
 Qui vous puist ramener Olivier le membré
 Le tres noble chevalier qui vous a engendré,
 Et veci ung anel que jadis m’a donné
 Tres bien le congoistra, saichés de verité!” (ll. 554-58)

Here the poet pairs one of a limited number of carefully placed references to his “engendering” alongside the ring, which is clearly meant to be read as a promise of faith. The ring also suggests a setup for a later recognition scene for which the ring would serve as proof of identity, but, as Burland rightly points out in her paper in this volume, the ring never shows up again. Here the poet offers reassurance of Oliver's honorable feelings for Jacqueline both to Galien and to the audience, but with that accomplished, the ring ceases to

serve any narrative purpose. The very fact that Jacqueline has the ring at all works to counteract engrained memories of Oliver's conduct in Constantinople.

Regnier de Gennes

Galien's first meeting on his westward journey toward Roncevaux is with Regnier de Gennes, who is his paternal grandfather and father to Oliver and his sister Aude, beloved of Roland. In this initial instance of Galien's self-presentation, he is cryptic in his discussion of his conception. After his entry is smoothed by the fact that Aude mistakes him for Oliver, Galien responds to Regnier, who has also noted the striking resemblance. Regnier asks him his name and the young hero announces:

“Je suis filz Olivier, n'en feray celeson,
 Et fils a Jacqueline, la fille au roy Hugon.
 Olivier m'engendra en estrange royon,
 Dedens Costentinoble, la cité de renom.
 Nouvellement en ay sceüe la raison,
 Laissé ay mes amis et ma grant region
 Pour veoir mon pere a la clere façon.” (ll. 830-36)

While the prose versions contain Jacqueline's detailed explanation to her son of the night of conception, there is no indication in the poem of how Galien came to know about the infamous night in Constantinople. Galien shares with Regnier “la raison” but the audience only knows this because the narrator says so. Once Regnier hears the explanation (“l'ouÿ recorder sa raison,” l. 837) he tells the boy that he is his grandfather. Galien has clearly shared with Regnier the “raison,” of his conception, but the conversation is left to the imagination. To what is he referring? Does it include the circumstances of the *gabs*? Oliver's negotiations to get out of the *gab* and into her bed? Did it include promises of true love? The economy of words here is deliberately intriguing and even taunting to anyone unfamiliar with the events in Constantinople, which, once again, have been omitted. Galien alludes to these events, but they are communicated between figures within the poem to the exclusion of the listening and reading public. The reception of the scene therefore depends heavily upon the presumed collective memory of the Constantinople episode. The behind-the-scenes communication of the “raison” can be taken as a knowing wink or a glaring hole in the narrative, and the former seems more likely. As Burland points out, with regard to a discussion of Galien's conception earlier in the poem, an audience unfamiliar with the *Pèlerinage* tradition would surely have found this treatment of Galien's conception both frustrating and confusing.

Once Regnier welcomes him to the family, Galien is quick to reassure his grandfather of Jacqueline's faithfulness to Oliver, insisting that she has never loved another man. Regnier then exhorts his missing son to come back from Spain and marry Jacqueline so that no one will be able to call Galien *bastart* or *garçon* ever

again. In a parallel scene of grandfather and grandson, Regnier also tries to persuade Galien to stay, but the young man refuses to sit around drinking his grandfather's wine while his own father fights on the battlefield.

Charlemagne

With each encounter on his westward journey, Galien meets new people closely tied to Oliver to whom he must present himself and explain how he is related. When Galien arrives in Charlemagne's camp, his presence is woven into the famous negotiations concerning the leadership of the Frankish rearguard. On this occasion, his explanation of his parentage is noticeably more detailed, perhaps because Charlemagne was there that fateful night in Constantinople and certainly benefited from Oliver's successful late-night negotiations with the princess. As was the case with Regnier and Aude, here again, Galien's uncanny resemblance to his father smoothes the way for a successful recounting of the circumstances of his conception by Oliver. "Mieux ressemble Olivier que rien qui soit vivans!" (l. 1524), announces Charlemagne when he sees him. Galien kneels before Charlemagne and asks whether his father is there, to which the emperor responds by asking who his father is. In a moment of tragic irony, Charlemagne reassures Galien that both Oliver and his companion will be back shortly. In what is supposed to be the interlude before their return, Charlemagne asks Galien a series of questions which set the stage for the next recitation of his conception story: where was he born? In what region? What is his name? Galien promises to announce it all proudly, or at least loudly ("Sire, je le diray a hault son," l. 1544):

"J'ay nom Galien, ensemment m'appell on;
 Filz suis a Jacqueline, la fille au roy Hugon,
 Qui de Constantinoble gouverne le royon,
 Ou vous feustés une foiz en grant confusion.
 Les gas y furent fais de mout riche baron,
 Et la fus engendré, bien sçavés la fachon.
 Or ay voullu guerpier ma nacion
 Pour mon pere veoir, qui ceur a de lion;
 Si pri[e] vous pour Dieu et pour sa passïon
 Que me veullés dire s'il est ycy ou non." (ll. 1545-54)

Once again the spare presentation of events suggests a knowing exchange between poet and audience. Galien alludes to the mess that Charlemagne and his men had once been in, but does not elaborate. The statement "bien sçavés la fachon" is addressed to Charlemagne, but it could just as well be addressed to the audience.

This poet is simply not going to rehash the events of the night in Constantinople, but he is willing to bring them up repeatedly in an enigmatic and suggestive manner. If the queen's statement that not all stories are meant to be told is also meant for the poem's audience, then, here too, the "you know how it happened"

may also be taken as a metacommentary on why the Constantinople episode has been continually omitted from Galien's adventure of self-discovery. For an uninitiated public, these omissions and knowing allusions would certainly have been distracting, which suggests that what happened in Constantinople was never really a secret. These scenes, built on the play of allusion to something that the poet wanted forgotten, raise intriguing questions about the relationship of later *remanieurs* to the epic traditions on which they constructed their stories. Poets cannot create amnesia, but they can make creative decisions which highlight their efforts to alter cultural memory.

In the scene in Charlemagne's camp, the *Galien* poet's playful concern with audience foreknowledge of the hero's conception furnishes yet another instance where both internal and external readings are possible. The statement "bien sçavés la fachon" both winks at an audience who well knows what happened and protects Charlemagne from a public recollection of the visit to Constantinople. Once again, the poet sees that the story of Galien's conception is not relived publicly, this time in the context of a military camp rather than a plenary court. Charlemagne, of all people, would understand Oliver's predicament. Like Regnier, Charlemagne also reacts to Galien's edited conception story by offering reassurance of his legitimacy. The Frankish leader assures Galien that he will be able to see his father soon, and tells him that he often heard Oliver express his desire to marry Jacqueline as soon as he could.¹⁰ Now that Galien has met Charlemagne, the remaining suspense derives from the uncertainty over whether Galien will make it in time to meet Oliver before he dies.

Oliver

Finally, more than 1400 lines later, it is time for the anticipated recognition scene with Oliver. Galien, having just fought the pagan Pinart, is moaning in pain. Oliver, wounded himself, scolds Roland for not going to the aid of their still-unidentified countryman. At first, Oliver recognizes his father Regnier's prized horse Marchepin, which convinces him that whoever this man is, he must be worthy. Unlike the previous recognition scenes in which Galien's resemblance to Oliver serves as the initial proof of familial ties, here Galien recognizes Oliver by his emblazoned shield and calls out, "Et que je voy le pere dont je suis engendré" (l. 2832). Galien realizes that Oliver is near death and laments that Jacqueline will never see him again. The poet wastes little time in making sure that Oliver provides crucial information concerning his intentions toward Jacqueline. He reassures his son that when he was in Constantinople, he had promised to marry her, but then he had to come there ("Quant en Constantin fus ung jour qui passa, / De ma main l'affray et elle m'afia / Que je l'epouseaie; mes nous venismes ça," ll. 2911-14). As he is dying in the arms of his son, Oliver calls out to God to protect Jacqueline, his "amie" with whom he conceived this handsome boy ("De qui j'engendray ce gracieulx enfant," l. 2935). This lament marks the beginning of a list of

¹⁰ This discussion of Jacqueline does not occur in the two prose versions edited by Keller and Kaltenbach.

adieux to all of his family members, and, above all, to Roland. Oliver then beseeches Galien pardon him for not keeping his promise to her, the fault, he insists, of treacherous pagans.

The People of Constantinople

When Galien returns to Constantinople to rescue his mother from his wicked uncles, who have accused her of poisoning their father, he tells his conception story one final time. The crescendo of proud self-proclamation which builds in both confidence and detail over the course of the poem, reaches its apogee when Galien cries out to the people of the city:

En hault s'est escrié: "Que je soye escouté!
 Seigneurs, or m'entendez, pour Dieu de majesté,
 Ne sçavez qui je suis – saichés pour verité,
 Et je le vous diray sans y point arresté.
 Je suis filz Olivier, le chevalier membré,
 Qui en Constantinnoble ot mon corps engendré
 En belle Jacqueline, qui est la en ce pré,
 Au jour que les gas furent et fais et achevé." (ll. 3955-62)

He then holds up, as physical proof of Hugo's tacit approval of the succession, the sword Floberge passed down to him before he left on his quest. Now convinced of his identity, the people of the city proclaim him their new king, and he is crowned. Earlier, his conception story was paired with the ring. Here it is placed with the sword, and by play of association, both objects lend further dignity to the circumstances of his conception.

In this final presentation of his conception story, which also marks Galien's ultimate quest for legitimacy, the interplay of external and internal knowledge of the Constantinople episode is again at work. Galien's audience is composed of the people of Constantinople, who, more than fifteen years after the fact, require no explanation of the night the Franks made their boasts, tore up the city, and deflowered their princess. The lesson appears to be that nobody needs such an explanation. By omitting the Constantinople episode from the beginning of the poem, the Cheltenham poet is able to build towards this ultimate and unapologetic declaration of the circumstances of Galien's conception unburdened by the weight of them having been revealed at the outset. The successive scenes of his self-presentation create an intimate relationship between the hero and his own audiences within the poem. On a separate level, these scenes also establish a complex relationship between poet and audience, an audience who is presumed not to need the very details which have been conspicuously left out, but certainly not forgotten. The omission of the Constantinople episode, even if it does little to erase from memory the circumstances of Galien's conception,

nonetheless allows for a more subtle presentation of the union of Oliver and Jacqueline, one which brings dignity to their relationship and consequently, to Galien's conception as well.

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