Review

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The extensive enveloping of texts around key figures and events in the chansons de geste, taking at some point the form of enfances and genealogical fantasy, is a central fact of medieval narrative. While the most impressive example of epic cyclicalization undoubtedly remains the poems centered around Guillaume d'Orange, nothing really precluded any respectable epic character, theoretically at least, from falling under the further scrutiny of enterprising poet-scribes. With Jean Subrenat's edition of the Roman d'Auberon (Aub.)—a kind of introduction to its more illustrious mate Huon de Bordeaux (HdB)—wider access is now possible to still another manifestation of the cycle process.

The so-called Huon cycle is most fully represented in a single codex, seriously mutilated by fire and water, containing some miniatures, in Turin's National Library: L.II.14, fols. 283-460. A colophon on fol. 583v\(^{a}\) indicates that the MS. was completed in June, 1311.\(^{1}\) In addition to the core HdB and its equally anonymous prologue, this MS features a series of texts recounting the subsequent adventures of Huon, his wife Esclarmonde, and their offspring.\(^{2}\) Arturo Graf produced an indifferent

\(^{1}\) Convenient and somewhat fuller descriptions of MS L.II.14, at least as far as the Huon cycle poems are concerned, are given in F. Meunier, ed. La Chanson de Godin (Louvain, 1958), pp. xix-xxi and in P. Ruelle, ed. Huon de Bordeaux (Bruxelles, 1960), p. 12. At one point, this important MS. also included sizeable portions of the Geste des Lorrains, Herman de Valencienne's Roman de Sapience, Destruction de Jérusalem, and Beuve de Hantone. Unfortunately, nothing in Professor S. Edmund's authoritative review of the medieval Savoyard library appears to identify this codex as part of that illustrious collection (Scriptorium XXIV [1970], 318-327; XXV [1971], 253-284; XXVI [1972], 269-293).

\(^{2}\) While Aub. is not encountered elsewhere, and while the Turin MS possesses the greatest number of cycle branches, a portion of the Huon continuations, as well as versions of HdB, is also found in B.N. MS fr. 22555 and fr. 1451. Max Schweigel did a semi-diplomatic edition of the bulk of the sequel: Esclarmonde, Clarisse et Florent, Yde et Olive, Drei Fortsetzungen der Chanson von Huon de Bordeaux (Marburg, 1891). See F. Meunier, Godin, pp. ix-xvi, for a concise analysis of these texts. Barbara A. Brewka is currently preparing a new edition of much of this
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edition of Aub. nearly a century ago (Halle, 1878) which quickly brought forth detailed critiques from the vigilant A. Stimming (ZRP, 2[1878], 609-616) and Gaston Paris (Rom, 7[1878], 332-339). As Subrenat rightly admits, occasional recourse to Graf's imperfect endeavor is indispensable since certain passages succumbed irretrievably to the ravages of the Turin fire of 1904.

Structurally, the 2468 decasyllabics comprising the work under review here are distributed in a common and rather straightforward pattern of generations. Judas Maccabeus marries the daughter of king Bandifor whom he has slain in battle. Their daughter Brunehaut becomes the wife of Caesar, and that couple are the parents of Julius Caesar. From the latter's union with Morgain are born the twins St. George and Auberon.3

S.'s thorough and convincing comparison reveals that the overshadowed Aub. poet took up a number of cues present in HdB and exploited them with considerable zest.4 The small size and unearthly beauty of the Roi de Feerie are more than evoked, for instance, as is his acquisition of magical powers and instruments (hauberc, horn, hanap, and fiddle-bow) through the good offices of his mother and grandmother. Moreover, the Christian aureola pervading HdB, principally with regard to Auberon, does not fail to radiate here with a peculiar intensity: St. George, in the company of his amie about to bear their son, meets the Holy Family en route to Egypt and witnesses several miracles of the Virgin. One is tempted, moreover, to take clerical interests as the inspiration for an extended sermon-like passage in lines 1772-1800. Without rendering Graf's introduction obsolete by any means, S. deftly points to an assortment of Biblical, hagiographical, and apocryphal sources and parallels (xlix-lxvi).

material, from MS. fr. 1451 and Turin MS L.II.14, under the direction of Professor Larry Crist, Vanderbilt University.

Marguerite Rossi, cited by S. on p. xxxv, proposes a new and comparatively late date, ca. 1260, for the composition of HdB; thus, with a terminus ad quem of 1311 for MS L.II.14, the entire cycle was constituted within a span of some fifty years. This reviewer has not yet seen Professor Rossi's study Huon de Bordeaux (Paris, 1975).

3Two other couples are to be included in the story: Judas Maccabeus' s parents, briefly at the beginning; and Mantanor (Bandifor's nephew) and the Fairy-Doe.

4And rather obliquely as well. When St. Joseph loses his beard, later restored miraculously by the Virgin, one may recall the business of Gaudisse's whiskers in HdB (cf. vv. 6711-6713). On recall another level of motif utilization, Judas' s contemplation of the struggle between hawk and malart strangely harks back to the musings of Perceval in Chrétien de Troyes's poem.
To be singled out are the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy and three thirteenth century texts treating Judas Maccabeus, including the long poem by Gautier de Belleperche.5

Only near the end of Aub. is reference made to Huon: "Preudons sera et s’iert de Dieu amès" (v. 2380). He is destined to restore Auber-on’s hauberc and Dunostre, both of which have been lost to the giant Orguelleux. In a suspiciously brusque transition, the final laisse (LI) relates summarily Guillemer (Guinemer) de St.-Omer's departure for Bordeaux and his daughter's captivity at Dunostre. The very last verses anticipate that she (Sebile, but unnamed here) will be delivered by Huon (cf. HdB, vv. 4492-5298). S. speculates that this laisse in assonance is the hand-work of the copyist who was anxious to link formally the otherwise rhymed Aub. to the assonanced HdB (xxix).6

The editor's section on versification is fairly complete, with attention drawn to the dozen or so alexandrines that punctuate Aub., especially after v. 2100, and which Stimming unhappily insisted on turning into decasyllables. Among the rhythmic peculiarities, shown in a tabulation on p. xx, are a concentration of césures lyriques in the first thousand lines and, following v. 1000, a high incidence of césures épiques with a concomitant falling off of the lyric caesura. Gaston Paris, we are reminded (xx), imputed this arrangement to the flagging attention of the author, who (Paris said) simply abandoned the innovative césure lyrique in the course of his narration. For the record, Madame Meunier stresses the existence of a similar state of affairs in Godin (her Introdx., xxx).

There appears ample reason for reviewing the versification of all the cycle components as a whole.

In terms of the text’s "economics," the Aub. poet expended a fair (if hardly exceptional) amount of energy in a generally alert performance of laisse-making, what with twenty-two rhymes and wide experimentation in caesura. In addition, his was the task of coordinating, although admittedly in a superficial and even feeble way, an unwonted alliance of the three matières de France, de Bretagne et de Rome.

5S. vaguely refers (p. lx) to an octosyllabic poem found elsewhere in L.II.14 describing, among other things, an encounter between St. George and the Virgin and which may be another Aub. source. Graf saw fit to cite several passages (his Introdx., xiv-xvii) from this curious Vie de la Vierge (fols. 25-47, 49-79 in the pre-fire MS).

6Analogous mixtures can be located in other sections of the cycle. In Godin the first 9621 verses are in rhyme and the last 900 in assonance; for that reason, Madame Meunier postulated two authors. The distribution is reversed in Yde et Olive, which precedes Godin in L.II.14: the final verses—starting with v. 7676 in Schweigel’s edition—are in rhyme.
Léon Gautier’s vigorous and ultimately damning appraisal of Aub. (cited on lxvi-lxvii) will inspire chuckles among many of today’s readers. The reappearance in print of the Roman d’Auberon should nonetheless incite us to continue our queries into the problem of literary kind. S. subtly hints at his hesitation in generic matters when he refers to the Chanson d’Aub. (xxi, xxvii, xlviii). With his assertion that "dès qu’un poème est écrit en laisses, on pense à une épopée" (lxviii-lxix), one easily reflects that, despite their formal configuration, neither Aub. nor HdB can universally qualify as epics. The "epic-ness" of the latter poem has long since gone through a variety of expositions both pro and con. We can certainly argue that merely on the basis of the constant interplay between human and animal, mortal and fairy, and the diluting of temporal and spatial dimensions—a wish suffices to displace characters and modify situations—both récits are greatly weakened in their epic modalities if not in the sources of their pleasurability. Furthermore, Brunehaut and Morgain are in many ways superior to their male counterparts. S. nearly incriminates the Aub. author by asking, "Son sujet n’étant pas épique, pourquoi n’a-t-il pas opté plutôt pour un roman?" (xxvi). The premise may be considered a slight overstatement, for it is not incongruous to learn of the winning of wives and land, here as in the chansons de geste; and hardly negligible is an epic fierté de lignage which penetrates Aub., from start to finish. S.’s own answer to his question touches upon the necessity of a "unité poétique" and a "présentation épique"; it implies that form—HdB already existed in epic laisses—determines, to a large degree, content. Surely, in equipping Huon with a suitable prologue, the elaboration of any psychological or sentimental vie du héros or du couple, in the style of the Roman, would have produced a jarring rupture in tone. Such was perhaps beyond the interest of our poet anyway: he refers conventionally to loiaus amoureus at the opening of the work and just barely sustains the courtly moment during Mantanor’s wooing of the Fairy-Doe. Roman d’aventure remains for S., and probably for us, the most appropriate category for describing and classifying texts like Aub. On the other hand, our critical approaches to that particular narrative type, something of a handy generic “catch-all,” stand in need of greater refinement.

What can be said of this edition qua edition? The days are long past when editors wittingly wrote complete Old French grammars into their introductions. The language of Aub.—both that of MS and author—reserves few surprises, vide S.’s conclusion: “une langue quelque peu composite de dialectes du Nord, mais avec forte dominance picarde” (xvii). Wisely, then, S. does not insist upon an exhaustive demonstration. But a lack of noteworthy linguistic features should never excuse an editor from distinguishing properly between phoneme and graphy in any discussion, however succinct (cf. xv-xvi). More crucially, one can legitimately register a protest against the absence of any clear enunciation of editorial policy which, normally, would have led to some description of the MS in terms of
Its abbreviations, word divisions, and even punctuation, as well as their
treatment. Indeed, in spite of its far from excellent state of preser-
vation, Aub. in MS. L.II.14 is "Dans l'ensemble lisible" (xiv). Several
disconcerting practices can be rapidly evoked here. After opting for
n'en, what is really gained by noting that the MS. reads nen, or by con-
sistently printing l'endemain while needlessly letting lendemain appear at
each turn in the critical apparatus? Why inform readers that Graf gives
tramis whereas the ms. has trami and add that "le -s final est caché dans
un pli" (v. 566). And while some may not be at all consoled by S.'s con-
servative intentions—"Ce qui semble être une faute de graphie du copiste
n'a pas été corrigé" (xv)—the point is that this prudence (or diffidence?)
does occasionally backfire. What justification can be offered for dis-
pending with the long-accepted convention of alerting unwary readers, usu-
ally by means of brackets, to all editorial additions proper? Finally,
the grouping of earlier scholars' readings with the leçons of the ms.
seems ill-conceived. A far more elegant arrangement, not to say less mis-
leading might have been to list in a separate table Graf's divergent read-
ings, line by line, as necessary, summarizing his more banal habits, along
with his reviewers' alternative proposals.

Included here are some notes intended to accompany a reading of
S.'s by and large welcome contribution. A more careful scrutiny of the
proofs, one may reasonably assume, would have eliminated the need for a
number of these. V. 33—In spite of note, Stimming's reading Preus fu
Judas still seems preferable v. 72—Note is for v. 73 v. 229—Read Juïs
v. 232—Note necessary? v. 249—R. Après v. 254—R. a without
grave accent v. 274—trievage: disyllabic v. 287—trievage: disyll-
abic v. 291—liegement: trisyllabic v. 309—Comma in place of semi-

"More extensive marking of diaeresis could perhaps have been
done, although it is true that the tendency is to restrain the use of the
trema in texts as late as this one. The eye is still grateful, however,
for mïedis (683, 1673). Read also mïenuit (419).

"A similar point can be made for readings in vv. 270, 659, 921,
1071, 1966, and 2040.

"Thus, in light of such editorial pronouncements, why does S.
correct scierf (506), chiers (571), mais (630), sellve (878), mourlier
(959), faees (2317, 2401)? Indeed, vir (837) is a perfectly orthodox
Picardism (cf. espirs, 1382).

Lines affected include 138, 359, 542, 608, 609, 648, 658, 814,
917, 963, 964, 982, 993, 1001, 1012, 1020, 1024, 1095, 1217, 1488, 1709,
1764, 2044, 2068, 2114, 2184, 2248, 2334.
Readers are somewhat at a loss as to the principles guiding the compilation of the Lexique on pp. 113-123. In face of such entries as iviers (v. 696), gumel (1651), and esbaîr (491), some much more troublesome candidates do not appear, e.g., loriés (658), conbra (752), acointier (849), lanier (860), groucier (1603), etc. Is sorte (503) an aberrant graphy for saute? R. endruiés (p. 116), fumiere (p. 117), juïs (p. 118), liegement (p. 118), and suîr (p. 122).

Accompanying the tables of proper and place names are a helpful Tableau généalogique, and Index des objets merveilleux, and an Index des thèmes.

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