Patterns of Textual Shift and the Alien Hero: Ogier the Dane in the Europeanization of Old French Epic

Fueled by numerous recent editions and studies of supposedly inferior Old French epics, and by increasing awareness of the value of Old French epic material in translation, the scholarly world is beginning to move away from an anchorage in the Oxford Roland, one shaped by the political design of nineteenth century France as much as by modern aesthetic preferences. The thrust of this effort is toward understanding how a multi-centered medieval heroic narrative framework expanded and shifted to bind several centuries of European culture. Rencesvals has generally been seen as the consummate form towards which all true Old French epics bend, just as all historical events focus on the supreme facta of the Incarnation and Crucifixion in medieval Christianity. The practice of Old French epic form, however, shows Rencesvals to be only one branch of a luxuriantly boughed tree.

Some of that lush narrative braciation is traced in three recent volumes published with the patronage of the Danske Sprog-og-Literaturselskab: I. a facsimile of an incunabulum containing the prose romance Ogier le Dannoys; II. Ogier le Danois dans les littératures européennes by Knud Togeby; III. an edition, modern French translation, and analyses of Karlamagnús saga I, III, VII, and IX by Agnete Loth, Annette Patron-Godefroit, and Povl Skårup. First envisaged and partially carried out by Knud Togeby and Pierre Halleux, this trio of books is devoted to elucidating the literary and cultural dimensions of a figure long obscured by the nineteenth-century politicization of Charlemagne and Roland. Ogier the Dane is an excellent example of the ease with which a figure can move from a small but important role in a wide-focused

1 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1967); (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1969); (Copenhagen: Reitzels, 1980).
Charlemagne narrative to the center position in one where Charlemagne and his principal associates are ancillary. In a career spanning perhaps nine centuries, Ogier goes from Carolingian military leader to membership in the Carolingian epic complex to full epic and romance heroism while remaining unknown in his supposedly native Denmark until the sixteenth century. Propelled by the popularity of his romance form, by the power of the printing press demonstrated in the prestigious Vérard incunabulum, by Danish linguistic nationalism, and by interest in Norse—especially Danish—heroics, Ogier becomes an important catalyst of Danish prose development when the Vérard prose romance is translated there. Ogier's effect on Danish culture was also ideational: he passed quickly into the ballad and tale system. Though condemned as a fiction and thus a contaminating element in Danish culture by some Danish scholars, Ogier gave his name to the famous Holger Danske resistance group in World War II, yet was denounced as the embodiment of a fascistic Nordic past by Danish author Kjeld Abell during that same war. The positive role he played in Danish tradition has remained dominant. In this set of volumes, he takes his full heroic stature with the aid of Dano-French scholarship.

My critical evaluation begins with the volume published last, the edition, translation, and commentary of the *Karlamagnús saga I. Um Karlamagnús Konung* (Vie de Charlemagne); III. *Oddgeirr páetr danska* (Les Enfances d'Ogier le Danois); VII. *Jórsalaferđ* (Pelerinage de Charlemagne); and IX. *Vilhjálmi korneis* (Guillaume au Court Nez). The *Karlamagnús saga* (KMS) has been considered an important source of Ur-Old French epic material and thus is presumably of major interest to readers of *Olifant*. Starting with the earliest texts published in this group of volumes should also allow for greater clarity in analyzing Togeby's tracing of Ogier's

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2 For example, Ogier plays a small role in *Af Otuel*, but his close heroic association with Charlemagne, Oliver, and Roland is emphasized in chapters XIV-XVII, ed. C. R. Unger, *Karlamagnús Saga ok Kappa Hans* (Christiania: Jensen, 1860) 449-55. Unger (modernized and reprinted without the variants by Vilhjalmsson in 1950) remains the most complete edition of the *Karlamagnús saga*. Cf. Loth discussion, vol. III, pp. 376-77.
literary odyssey and in understanding the narrative shape of the *incunabulum*. The *KMS* volume is important because it is the first new edition of these branches since C. R. Unger (1860). Furthermore, it is the first edition to provide a complete record of the A and B mss. by printing A on the left and B on the right. In the case of *lacunae*, the relevant manuscript occupies both pages. Although English readers can consult Constance Hieatt's beleaguered but nonetheless valuable translation from Unger (buttressed by her own analysis of relevant variants), this is the first French translation of III, VII, and IX. This material is framed by three appendices: I. a record of the chapter titles in A; II. the seven chapters of b² from the Danish *Karl Magnus Krønike* (ed. Hjorth) and its French translation; III. a chapter concordance of A (ed. Unger) with this edition. Then follows a general study of the *KMS* by a former student of Togeby's, Povl Skårup, an index of proper names, and a brief but helpful statement of her translation policy by Annette Patron-Godefroit.³ Benefiting from Halleux's translation of these branches from Unger, his former student has finished the more ambitious project interrupted by Halleux's tragic death in 1972, and that of Togeby two years later. This book and the series thus also demonstrate the admirable dedication of Togeby's and Halleux's students to their teachers' scholarly aims.

In the afterword, "Les Manuscrits norrois" (pp. 358-78), to her synoptic edition of the *KMS* branches in this volume, Agnete Loth includes a plea for a full critical edition of the *KMS*. She also defines the principles that govern the formalization of the text and variants. Loth furnishes a cogent analysis of the treacherously gaping manuscript relationships of the *KMS* that have lured more than one imaginative critic to scholarly doom. She does, however, present the stemma as a series of three staggered parallel lines, which seems overly cautious given her presentation of the chiasmatic accords that unite A, B, a, b. Whatever their divergences in other parts of the saga, the contiguity of these manuscript groups

In this section should be acknowledged in a stemma form argued only on the basis of examples from these texts.

In the essay "Content, Sources, Redactions" (pp. 333-55) which precedes Loth's discussion of her editing philosophy and practices, Povl Skårup must use different sigla from those given by Loth to indicate the links in a chain of lost manuscripts rooted ultimately in a chaos of independent translations from various languages in various social contexts. While Loth maintains Unger's B, his b is changed to b₁ since Loth uses a b₂ Unger did not consult: the lost *b model for that pair is usually and confusingly b in Loth but beta² in Skårup. Loth's enigmatic collapse of the system into X, Y, and b is expanded by Skårup into more typical fan-shaped stemma branches. The effort to organize a group of manuscripts so tantalizingly similar yet at points so irreducibly different is an interesting and challenging one. Skårup performs this task with a conviction that never turns blind to the tenuosity of a theoretical web that could be spun numerous other ways. An important weakness, which he shares with other less cautious workers, is the scholar's willingness to believe ultimately in a single narrative set. At the origin of the dispersion we currently possess, Skårup sees the preparation of one manuscript uniting the whole cycle of Charlemagne sagas in the very late thirteenth century. While such a manuscript would correspond with the trend toward systematization in saga transmission, he does not consider the dispersive effect of the matrix of oral and folktale traditions recently outlined by Joseph Duggan for the KMS I. Duggan rightly points out the compositional and stylistic effects of the French epic genre that unite the KMS I versions. If the high frequency of conjunctions and verbs of saying also found in the French texts does not in itself identify the

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KMS I as a witness to their now lost early versions,\textsuperscript{5} such characteristics do aid Duggan's case for a lost French epic rather than a lost Latin narrative as its generative impulse. If KMS I or the other branches had a primarily Latin ancestry, I would expect them to be marked by Latin rhetorical patterns and narrative habits such as the tendency to expand the narrative program by inverting any structure posed within.\textsuperscript{6} This small-scale consideration of the complexity of the Charlemagne epic and legend system and its reflections in KMS I suggests that any manuscript version would


have such a high tendency to deflect into others that the hypothesis of a unified source for the extant versions is less useful in this case.

Ultimately, though, the KMS branches are less important as translations of French epics than they are as narratives in themselves. It is the constant will to see them in terms of other things that make these works seem so stiff and poor. Whatever the truncations of their manuscript form, each of these narratives has its own structural presence.

The editing principles and problems defined by Skårup and Loth do not show remarkable divergence from those laid out by Foulet and Speer. Changes in the text are well marked. Placed as they are in the center of the page between the text and the translation, the variants are logical and easy to read. This layout, however, joined with the large areas of the edition where other manuscripts alternate with A, valorizes the KMS more as an object for study than as a text to be read.

An important consequence of this attitude is that the divisions marked by titles in manuscript A have been relegated to an appendix (I), although chapter numbering found in manuscripts A and B is respected in the text and translation and is correlated with those in the Unger edition via Appendix III. The titles are, however, crucial to the narrative form of the saga since they define the blocks the scribe, if not the author, is manipulating. This effort to clarify a complex set of textual relationships obscures rather than reveals. The use of zeroes to indicate short gaps in the text, especially in the Jórshalaférd, is effective in expressing the fragmentary reality of


8 On p. 361, Loth defends this decision on the grounds of spatial economy. It is questioned also by Hieatt and Hume.

manuscript A relative to B.\textsuperscript{10} Such a confrontation of these two manuscripts shows strikingly how our understanding and appreciation of medieval literature is controlled not by any fixed text but by the shape of the manuscript version transmitted through scribe and time. This edition places the scholar in the midst of the moving forms that converge on a traditional cluster of actants and actantial patterns. Their own product then argues against the single pure translation that Skårup and Loth propose as the taproot of these branches and instead shows scribes working in a variety of conditions and to diverse purposes: the results are related but different.

While the scholarly world has welcomed the recent blossoming of English, French, and German translations of Old Icelandic literature in general and of the \textit{KMS} in particular, there have been frequent complaints of grammatical errors, omissions, and general inaccuracy.\textsuperscript{11} Annette Patron-Godefroit, one of the plaintiffs, has now produced her own translation of these \textit{KMS} branches. Patron-Godefroit has fortunately avoided the florid Gallic verve of Aebischer's translation of \textit{KMS I}. By exploiting the stiff formality possible in French narrative prose as in Old Icelandic, she has pitched her translating style at the most effective level possible in the conjunction of such phonetically divergent languages. She has even tried to achieve continuity between the translation and its object by using Old Icelandic forms for toponyms, personal names, and


adjectives of place.\textsuperscript{12} While the procedure is successful for the personal names, too often the other forms create an awkward and even mystifying effect. It seems unnecessary for the reader, who is already struggling to see a text printed on alternating pages as a whole, to go scuttling to the glossary of proper names to solve the philological puzzle posed by a name.

A further problem surfaces once the toponyms are identified, since many of the Old Icelandic names are unfamiliar (e.g. Valland), and their geographical location is not detailed in the laconic glossary. A map or two would have made the edition more articulate and spared the reader a search through the atlas. In this case, the two languages fight both each other and the reader. Since the punctuation of the manuscripts has been extensively and surprisingly altered in the translation, the use of such words also creates a false impression of extraordinary adherence to the text.

The translation is indeed very accurate, but (as Hieatt and Hume have also noted) there are definite changes in form. A stylistic marker shared by both Old French and Old Icelandic, one which should frequently be maintained in translation, is the extensive use of conjunctions. For example, Patron-Godefroit consistently breaks up the Old Icelandic conjunction series based on \textit{ok} (‘and’) to make the agglutinative flow of Old Icelandic narrative, which provides an elaborate foil for the flattening effect of its understatements, into a choppy series of factual assertions in French.

\begin{quote}
Olifer tok Lambert ok flutti med ser j borgina ok skilduz at kuelldi ok baru huarirtueggio sina menn til grafar. Karlamagnusi kongi (þotti) mikill skadi er Lambert var tekinn.
\end{quote}

(p. 82, A)

\begin{quote}
Olifer prit Lambert et l'emmenga avec lui dans la
\end{quote}

ville. Ils se séparèrent le soir et chaque camp
enterra ses hommes. Le roi Karlamagnus déplora
vivement que Lambert ait été capturé.

(p. 82)

In the Old Icelandic narrative structure, the dangerous result of all
these actions is spotlighted by its relatively concise statement, but in
the French translation this important contrast does not exist.
Although Patron-Godefroit is following the standard Old Icelandic
translation practice, it is nonetheless strange that she should fail to
translate a use of conjunctions she has elsewhere noted coincided
with Old French epic style. On the other hand, she is scrupulous
about expressing (as Aebischer did not) all the speaking isotopies,
whose coincidence with Old French epic style she has also
stressed. Patron-Godefroit's translation thus reflects the general
attitude of the scholars who produced this book: the Karlamagnús
saga branches have minimal aesthetic value in themselves and take
their worth from the information that their divergence from extant
Old French epics can shed on vanished Old French epics.

The careful demarcation of relative spatial positions and the
sequence of events, if not time of events (precise), witnessed in the
obsessive use of sidan ("since") in the text are usually rendered into
French. Spot comparisons of the Old Icelandic and modern French
translations turned up divergences that, although minor, impede the
perception of textual form. For example:

nv rida Frankismenn fræknliga ok letta eigi fyr
en þeir koma til borgarinar er Svstra heitir

(Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1979) 150; cf. Suzanne Fleischman, "Evaluation in
Narrative: The Present Tense in Medieval 'Performed Stories'," Yale French

14 Cf. also Hieatt: vol. I: p. 246, "Now the French rode valiantly and
hard and did not stop until they came to the city which is called Sustra"; p. 245,
"... and turned towards Lombardy". On tense switching, see Fleischman,
Les Frankismenn chevauchent, valeureux. Ils allèrent tout d'une traite jusqu'à la ville qui s'appelle Sustra.

The problematic time and space marking is similar in both A and B versions. The *nv* should be acknowledged as *now* or *next*: it is not a meaningless filler but part of the dense net of sequential markers that design the high sense of existential separateness of events and movements in this narrative. The framing contrast is thus missing from this passage, and from that which immediately precedes, where

ok snærz þeir a sidan til Langbardalanz.

is presented as merely

Ils prirent la direction du Langbardaland

instead of the strongly bordered

and then they turned afterwards towards Lombardy.

The translator's excision of elements fundamental to how time and space are mapped in this particular narrative thus leads the reader to a mistaken acceptance of a spare "typically laconic" saga style.

Since the problems pointed out here are basic to this translator's procedure, there is little point in endlessly multiplying this discussion. What is important is that those of little Norse who wish to study time and space relationships in, for example, the Oxford *Roland* and the *KMS* might think they had found a similar vagueness. In reality the obsessive delimitation of these features
thrusts the KMS past Old French epic vagueness and even the sequence-consciousness of sagas such as Brennu-Njáls saga (thirteenth century) into the ultra-high degree of segmentation typical of chronicle style in Old Icelandic and Old French.\textsuperscript{15}

This is extremely significant, since it indicates a strong transforming will in the KMS redactors: their aim was the production of history from the relative temporal and spatial formlessness of their Old French epic sources. Even the most clearly folkloric elements such as the ring of invisibility and the glove full of blood could be redeemed into Historia if they were presented in a carefully wrought network of space and time. This feature also sheds light on the patrons and the audience for the KMS productions: people for whom the KMS would be acceptable only as fact rather than as the heroic myth of epic. Such an insistence on factual legitimacy indicates the same uneasy aristocracy proposed by Lars Lönnroth as the audience for a similarly transformed, re-historicized Brennu-Njáls saga (originally early eleventh century) in the late thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{16} That period coincides with the one supposed for the vanished ancestors of today's early fourteenth-century versions of the KMS manuscript.

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The second volume of this trilogy, Ogier le Danois dans les littérature européennes, by Knud Togeby, uses Ogier on a grander scale to put the structural shifts of medieval French literature into focus as they affect other European literatures.

Spurning the Nordic forests and their legendary spawn, Togeby begins his twenty-nine-chapter volume by setting the outer limits of Ogier's shape in the appearance and the change in order of


the Oliver-Roland appellative patterns in the documents studied by Rita Lejeune to date the poem at around 1160. Since all other literary mentions of Ogier are then posterior, Ogier must have come into being with the *Chanson de Roland*. Togeby treats the *Roland* as an entity until the third page of his analysis when, in discussing Ogier's sword, he begins to differentiate among manuscript versions and the diverse periods and places they represent. This discounting of the learned, traditional, and historical levels of the *Chanson de Roland* versions mars the Togeby discussion most seriously when he discusses how Ogier surges from the background in the first part of the poem to prominence at crucial junctures in the second part. There are numerous well-grounded arguments against the sudden appearance of a full-grown *Chanson de Roland*. One of the most persuasive (though Togeby could not have known it) is Joseph Duggan's analysis of the Baligant episode as a product of mid-twelfth century history and Norman politics.17 The Norman / Viking origins he urges would explain the sudden impetus given a figure who is only a Nordic name in the first part.

Togeby discusses each Old French, Latin, Old Provençal, or Middle High German work in which Ogier appears until the formalization of his identity in the lost *Enfances Ogier* (1195) and then in the extant *Chevalerie d'Ogier de Danemarche* at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Though he considers why Ogier appears in certain contexts as these works unfold, Togeby never goes beyond the particular instance to explore the larger issues. For example, one might observe that Ogier's presence becomes more widespread and finally more textually dense (*Enfances / Chevalerie*) as the unified Carolingian complex in the *Chanson de Roland* breaks up not only into the fragmented epic of revolt but also into the polyglossia of other versions and styles (parody, prose, comedy, lyric, romance, satire) as the twelfth century ends. Ogier was probably a "popular" figure alien to the unified and official

Carolingian ideal of the culture that produced the *Chanson de Roland*. As that unity is fractured by the economic and cultural innovations of the twelfth-century Renaissance, this alien figure maintains a small but increasingly diversified textual presence until he is officially incorporated into the earlier system by his now vanished tomb at Meaux: the sculptural program featured epic figures like Charlemagne and Roland, and also Ogier himself in both his monastic and chivalric roles. The tomb concretized Ogier's new role in Old French textuality: like the major figures that framed his images and the minor ones his presence narrativized, he was a principal bearer of narrativity and no longer a minor verbal echo.

Togeby's tracing of Ogier through the epico-romances of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, flawed as it is by the type of weaknesses signaled above, is nonetheless useful to Romance experts for the light it throws on the continuous vitality of epic figures and situations in European literature. Although Togeby's disparaging remarks on the works themselves often betray his stylistic prejudices, the sheer mass of such works belies their cultural emptiness. After the sixteenth century, though the will to extend the Carolingian system remained active, Ogier himself shifted into the Nordic literature he never came from, to reappear on the European scene only with the advent of nineteenth-century Carolingian scholarship. Why did Ogier drift northward and disappear after the popularity of the prose *Roman d'Ogier* in the sixteenth century? Togeby gives us not a hint, but he does close the volume with an extensive bibliography of Ogier studies (pp. 294-305). Perhaps, then, an examination of the facsimile of the prose *Roman d'Ogier* that forms the third volume of this triptych will provide more information about his fifteenth-century status, if not about his later disappearance.

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18 Musset, "L'Image" 211-13; Andersson, "The Viking Image" 218-29, 243.
The preface to *Ogier le Dannoys: Roman en prose du XVᵉ siècle* identifies it as the vehicle of Ogier's introduction into the Danish literary milieu. Published in a luxury edition at Paris by the famous Antoine Vérand to fête the enthronement of the French King Louis XII in 1498, it expresses the vitality of epic matter in France at that period and indeed in Italy and England as well. This reproduction of a book so monumental in the history of Danish prose structure and the history of Old French epic is then most interesting to see. The reproduction of its miniatures (complete?), including one in color to give an idea of its original beauty, provides valuable documentation on how the Old French epic was seen in its romance form. In the image structure (or at least what is here presented), this edition maintains the battle-oriented form of early twelfth-century epic which also dominates the romance elements. The frontispiece to the Vérand edition (not this "facsimile") shows the well-known printer offering it to the armed king, surrounded by his royal army. The inscription beneath the presentation scene gives no clue to Vérand's intentions other than that he believes it is a Christian duty to do good work and avoid oisiveté: this book is a witness to the printer's good work. No doubt Ogier was also chosen because he was a popular subject and harmonized with the other popular romance literature Vérand printed in handsome illustrated volumes. Still, the roman's focus on Ogier's struggle against an unjust king makes this dedication seem a warning, and particularly so in the context of an aggressive Denmark. It serves as an informative as well as handsome witness to the continuing power of epic form and to the prose *roman d'Ogier* for which no manuscript...

19 In my work on the Ogier *incunabula*, I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the staff of The Folger Shakespeare Library and the benefits of working in those incomparable surroundings.

exists. Unfortunately the Danske Sprog-Og-Litteraturselskab provides but a very brief preface to explain its importance to the scholarly world.

Despite such considerations, publication of this three-volume project constitutes a useful and stimulating contribution to the world of Old French studies.

Patricia Harris Stäblein
The Folger Shakespeare Library

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Personalia

Evelyn Birge Vitz of New York University has published an article entitled "Rethinking Old French Literature: The Orality of the Octosyllabic Couplet" in the November 1986 issue of the Romanic Review. A review of Reason and the Lover by John V. Fleming should appear this spring in the Modern Language Quarterly. Dr. Vitz is currently working on articles encompassing the areas of orality and literacy, and on hagiography. A recent work in the area is "Life, Legend, Literature: Orality and Literacy in the Stories of the Saints." An NEH Summer Stipend will allow work on "Orality and Literacy in Old French Saints' Lives."

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David Schenck now holds the rank of Assistant Vice Provost at the University of South Florida. He is currently working on a book on the William Cycle. Mary Jane Schenck has a book on the Old French fabliaux in press at Purdue.

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Dr. Art Kimmel will serve on the Board of Directors of the Council on International Educational Exchange.

Stephen G. Nichols has been named "Edmund J. Kahn Professor of Humanities" at the University of Pennsylvania. He is working on a book entitled *Voices in the Text: Writing and Orality in the Troubadour Lyric*. Last year he edited a book with Kevin Brownlee, *Images of Power: Medieval History / Discourse / Literature*, in which he included "Fission and Fusion: Meditations of Power in Old French History and Literature."

Edward A. Heinemann of the University of Toronto is studying the narrative and lyric form in the chanson de geste. The research will appear as "La Chanson de geste, Essai sur l'art métrique du jongleur."

F. R. P. Akehurst has nothing epic to offer us, but is licensed to practice law in Minnesota as of October 1986.

Harry F. Williams has recently published "The Authorship of Guillaume d'Angleterre" in the *South Atlantic Review*. Last year "In Search of Fabliau Ancestry" appeared in *Romance Quarterly*. He successfully underwent quadruple bypass surgery this spring and was in excellent health when seen this spring at the Medieval Institute in Kalamazoo.

Françoise Denis is a Post-doctoral Associate in the Department of French and Italian at the University of Minnesota. She is doing research on "les lieux géographiques dans Raoul de Cambrai."
cours de ce siècle, comme le fait Horrent. L'affirmation «il semble donc logique de croire que le manuscrit même a été exécuté aux environs de 1490» (p. x), avec une datation aussi précise, surprenante dans son contexte, serait donc à revoir ou à étayer de façon plus convaincante que par quelques graphies empruntées à Horrent.

Tout semble avoir été dit sur les lacunes ou erreurs présentées par la partie linguistique de l'introduction. De la critique, on retiendra surtout la réfutation par Kibler du caractère picard du texte, impliqué mais jamais clairement explicité par les éditeurs, comme il le fait remarquer. Par conséquent, le lecteur est renvoyé à l'étude de Horrent, elle-même très ambiguë. Clairement, seul un linguiste qualifié peut résoudre l'énigme de la région d'exécution du manuscrit, sans parler de la langue du texte, deux notions que cette introduction ne distingue pas (voir Roques). Finalement, peut-être est-il plus fructueux (comme le signale Dembowski) qu'une étude de linguistique portant sur un texte remanié, qui conserve de nombreuses traces du texte original, présente plutôt l'opposition «modernismes / archaïsmes.» C'est un point qu'une édition révisée de cette publication devra retenir.

Le mérite principal de cette publication est de permettre la lecture d'un texte non retouché, contrairement à celui de Stengel. C'est un mérite que soulignent la plupart des critiques auxquels nous avons renvoyé le lecteur. Celui-ci devra cependant garder à l'esprit certaines remarques de Régnier quant à la rime et au compte des syllabes dans la lecture du texte, ou du même et de Roques quant à la valeur à accorder aux trémas. Il est certain que le vers 2845, par exemple, ne comporte une syllabe de trop qu'à cause du tréma qui a été placé sur luy, tandis qu'un peu plus haut le vers 2834 comporterait douze syllabes si Gualien (partout trisyllabique dans le
