

edition. (The translation is in Modern French prose, but its numbered divisions are those of the Old French.)

The translation is preceded by a presentation in which Guidot characterizes the tone of the *Aliscans* treatment of the *Chanson de Guillaume* material. We learn that the poet's personal feeling in response to persons and events is perceptible throughout the poem. One may define the tone of this later epic as emotional. The poet conveys his own reaction vis-à-vis protagonists and episodes, e.g., contempt for most of the Saracens and the French royalty, with high approval for Guillaume and Rainouart. The emotional note goes beyond personal intervention to color the whole poem. Guidot shows how the poet exploits settings to convey the tone of the scene enacted and the inner mood of the protagonists. Thus when he positions the dying Vivien beside a pool of stagnant water (dead water), in a scene with virtually no vegetation except for the perpendicular-shaped tree under which Vivien lies, we have the symbolism of the decline of human vitality with the hero buoyed by his hope, and his spiritual thrust upwards, towards the divinity.

Guidot points out how the poet excels in his depiction in the inner subtleties of the human soul, e.g., how the love between Guibourc and Guillaume is portrayed as a calm, mature love, and how the members of the Narbonne family are linked by deep yet barely voiced spiritual bonds. He shows how the knights (the very word in many languages linked them with their steeds) have a proud appreciation and tender affection for their warhorses. In their apostrophes to Baucent and Folatille, Aérofle and Guillaume anthropomorphize them, heightening the portrayal of the warriors' emotional attachment to their animals. We see a similar feeling conveyed in Rainouart's speeches to his *tinél*. Guidot also draws our attention to the poet's innovation of two untried protagonists, Aélis and Rainouart, as they are immediately drawn to each other, and to the depiction of Aélis pacifying her burly warrior uncle, Guillaume, by her combination of graceful youth and bravery.

As an introduction to a vulgarization, Guidot's presentation contains no footnotes. However, the gist of what he says here is similar in tone and content to his article "*Aliscans* : chanson de la tendresse" (*Olifant* 18.1-2 [1993]: 5-20), which is documented and to which the interested reader may refer. The title of this article conveys Guidot's

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**Bernard Guidot and Jean Subrenat. *Aliscans*. Traduit en français moderne d'après l'édition de Claude Régner. Traductions des Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 49. Paris: Champion, 1993. Pp. 235 + iii.**

Bernard Guidot and Jean Subrenat's 1993 *Aliscans* is a modern French translation of Claude Régner's definitive edition of the Old French poem (2 vols., Paris: Champion, 1990). Their translation follows the Old French text as closely as possible, and thus makes the epic available to readers not conversant in Old French. Where their reading diverges from Régner's it is because of differences in interpretation. These interpretations, and readings about which they are doubtful, are discussed in notes at the end of the text, referred to by verse numbers of the Old French text. These notes are obviously worthwhile to those interested in translations. But they particularly make the translation a valuable interpretative tool for analysis of difficult passages in the original, identified as they are by the verse numbers of Régner's

evaluation of the poem as a paean to tenderness, but, as he also notes, this does not mean that it is devoid of humor.

Guidot's sensitive reading of the poem is matched by the quality of the translation that follows. Guidot and Subrenat are at their best when translating precisely those passages that Guidot has pointed to as suffused with tenderness, such as that in which Aélis pleads with her uncle Guillaume to reconcile with her parents. Guidot writes of the magic of names, "la magie des noms." However, the opening *laisse*, while it evokes the glory of these legendary warriors, does not entirely match this magic: lacking the cadenced rhythm of the assonanced decasyllables of the Old French, the translated enumeration of Guillaume's soldiers does not flow as musically as the original. However, this is a minor awkwardness, and the phrases of the translation are essentially fluid and graceful.

The translation, while presenting a highly readable text, remains remarkably accurate and faithful to the original. Mostly the renderings are felicitous, as "des adoreurs d'Apolin" (p. 38, l. 19) for "la gent Apolin" (v. 341); and the intensely poetic yet precise "non loin de la source dont les eaux murmurent" (p. 38, l. 28) for "A la fontaine dont li ruiz sont bruiant" (v. 401). There is only one troublesome ambiguity noted by this reader. Writing of Vivien and Bertrand faced by Haucebier and twenty thousand Saracens, the translation reads, "Pas un païen qui ose se jeter sur eux, en revanche, ils leur lancent vigoureusement, mais de loin, leurs épieux, abattant le cheval de Bertrand sous lui" (p. 34, ll. 29-30). Because of the phrase "en revanche" (which is not in the Old French, "Paiens nel voit qui les ost envalir; / De loinz leur lancent lor espiez par air" [vv. 176-77]), a first reading would identify the following "ils" as referring to the Christian heroes, instead of to the pagans, understood only from the singular antecedent.

On occasion the translation is slightly different, e.g., p. 31, ll. 10-11 read as, "Mais cela ne lui sert absolument à rien," from the Old French "Mes ne li monte le pris de .II. besanz" (v. 16). Similarly, on p. 39, l. 8, we have "sa force ne vaut rien" which translates "La soe force ne vaut pas un bouton" (v. 373). While rendering the sense admirably, such translations change the imagery evoked. At times Guidot and Subrenat show greater imagination than the original. While the Old French poet uses the insult *gloutz* / *gloton* to satiety (e.g., "gloton" [v. 372], "Danz glotz" [vv. 1089, 1564], "Gloutz" [vv. 1519, 1619]), Guidot and Subrenat offer a variety of expressions: (respectively) "crapule,"

"Fieffée crapule," "Fieffée canaille," "Vaurien," and "Canaille." These names correspond to modern insults (although "fieffée" can hardly qualify as such) and satisfy the reader. But one is left with a window closed on a medieval mentality that considered gluttony so deserving of derision. These comments are not intended to criticize the renderings offered—indeed, it would be difficult to think of better wording—but to point to the problems inherent in the art of translation which warn that study of image and metaphor are not best pursued in translations.

The text is followed by notes as indicated; by genealogical trees, established from Régnier's Table of Proper Names to indicate familial relationships of Christians and Saracens; and by a bibliography listing editions, translations and critical works, both on *Aliscans* and on its parent text, the *Chanson de Guillaume*. This translation is an artistic yet close rendering of the thirteenth-century poem, a valuable addition to the list of translated Old French classics and one to be welcomed by specialists and general readers alike.