

STUDIES IN THE POLITICO-RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY OF FRENCH POETRY: MIDDLE
AGES AND RENAISSANCE

By

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To Barbara, Olivier

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
ABSTRACT	6
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	8
2 THE IDEAL KING.....	18
Personal Qualities	26
The King as Defender of Christendom.....	34
Instrument of God.....	38
3 THE FLAWED KING.....	43
The Young King	44
The Adult King.....	58
4 SPIRITUAL REDEMPTION AND POLITICAL EXCLUSION.....	89
Circumstances Leading to Exile	91
Return from Exile	117
5 CONCLUSION.....	131
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	143
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	148

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This dissertation is a group of three studies based on poems from both the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century. The medieval epic poems were written over a period roughly one hundred and ten years long. The earliest, *Chanson de Roland*, was composed around 1090. The latest, *Renaut de Montauban*, was written in the early thirteen century. The three other medieval epics poems included in these studies are: *Le Couronnement de Louis*, *Girart de Roussillon*, and *Garin le Lorrain*. There are also two books of poems from the Renaissance. These poems were written as responses to the same crisis: the French Wars of Religion. Ronsard published the *Discours des misères de ce temps* in 1562. Aubigné published the first version of *Tragiques* in 1616.

The political ideology of these centuries centers on the generally held belief that society should have a system of government based on the institution of kingship. The king is chosen by God, and ought to rule, in general accordance with a Christian ordering of affairs.

In the first two studies, I will look at the ideal king figure, using three different categories: personal qualities, their role as defender of Christendom, and finally, as the instrument of God.

In the second study of the king, I will concentrate on the poetic representations of the flawed king. I will first look at how, young or child kings, were particularly vulnerable. I then discuss the more complex nature of the adult flawed king.

Finally, I shall divide the last study into three parts: the conditions leading up to exile, the political and spiritual duality of the exile itself, and the return of the protagonist from exile.

Clearly, such a lengthy time frame between the poems from the Middle Ages and the poems from the Renaissance contradicts all accepted ideas regarding the periodization of French literature. I hope to encourage others to look at texts in a multi-dimensional way.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

To include, in the same dissertation, poems written (in the two extreme cases) over five hundred years apart may, at first glance, seem, at best, to be overly ambitious, and at worst, unfeasible. Clearly, such a lengthy time frame contradicts most widely held ideas regarding the periodization of French literature. The canonical works of French literature have been, since the nineteenth century, divided into centuries: the Middle Ages being the exception. It was inconceivable for a scholar to juxtapose and compare texts from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Moreover, a scholar was usually associated with one century, hence terms such as medievalist.

This dissertation is intended to be a group of studies, for which I draw upon poems from both the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century. I make no claim that these two periods are either interconnected or interdependent. Nor do I presume, that it is possible to consider these poems as part of a coherent period – one tied together by a common set of literary and socio-political ideas. It is for this reason that I believe that studies are a more logical and effective format.

The historical contexts in which these poems were written, were different, not only when comparing poems from different periods, but also from within the same. The medieval epic poems were composed during a period spanning, roughly, one hundred and ten years: from the earliest, *Chanson de Roland*, from about 1090, to the latest, *Renaut de Montauban*, written in the early thirteen century. Both Renaissance poems, were written as responses to the same crisis: the French Wars of Religion. Ronsard began work on his *Discours des misères de ce temps*, in the wake of the massacre at Amboise in 1560. Aubigné dictated his *premieres clauses of Tragiques* in 1577, -- although the first publication of the work would not be until 1616.

Mindful of the lack of historical proximity, I have chosen these poems because they are alike in some very significant ways: they are marked by similar political and religious ideologies. I use the word ideology in its very general sense – the manner, or content, of thinking characteristic of an individual, a group, or a culture. The political ideology, with which I am most concerned for the writing of this dissertation, centers on the general held belief that society should have a system of government based on the institution of kingship (in some cases the ruler could be a queen or regent.) The king is chosen by God, and ought to rule, in general accordance with a Christian ordering of affairs. Regardless of the strength and weaknesses of the individual kings, the office of the king must endure and succeed. This message is present in all of these poems, though with varying degrees of insistence.

Another distinguishing element in all of these poems, is that the king is both the defender of Christendom, as well as the ultimate source of justice in society. The challenges, with which the kings are confronted, are of various types. They come in the form of direct challenges to the king's authority, disputes over legal questions, and criticisms regarding both the personal nature of the ruler; as well as his or her political competence. These challenges can manifest themselves in several ways: rebellion by powerful counts and barons, threats from foreign European powers, attacks from pagan armies, and trial, whose judges can be the king, one's peers, or God.

The primary focus of these poems, with regard to the figure of the king, is his effectiveness as a political ruler. In the first two studies, I will focus on the king primarily as a socio-political figure. With the exception of Charlemagne, the poets seem unconcerned with creating rulers who lead exemplary Christian lives. If the institution of kingship is, however, the basis upon which society is built, in none of these poems is there a portrayal of a king who must, himself, undergo the challenges that all Christians face with regard to their salvation. The

anointing of the king at the coronation signifies that the king will not be merely a king, but is *christianisimus*. A king, or queen, must always perform the two tasks of ruler of his or her country, and defender of Christendom. Much of the king's success, depends on how well he masters certain skills; military, and administrative. Of equal importance, are his or her personal attributes: courageous, just, self-possessed, God fearing – being some of the most important ones.

The truest test of a ruler is how he or she responds to crises. How do these poets using historical and literary legends, shape the way in which their contemporaries view their rulers? What are the socio- political factors that alter the style of the poems? To answer these questions, I will look at the ideal king figure, or queen, in the case of Catherine de Medici, using three different categories: personal qualities, their role as defender of Christendom, and finally, as the instrument of God.

In the second study of the king, I will concentrate on the poetic representations of those kings who fall short, for various reasons, of the ideal. In many ways, studying the weak, or flawed kings, provides the reader with a much more engaging perspective. It is the sovereign's humanity, with its foibles and passions, which creates conflicts, sometimes comical, sometimes harsh, with his or her subjects. These poems offer a critical view of kings, ranging from pathetically pusillanimous, to capable, although ruled by hubris, obsessions, or passions.

In what ways do these criticisms, implicit or explicit, of individual rulers, become, ironically, a means of strengthening the image of the institution of kingship? I will first look at how young or child kings were particularly vulnerable – having, as yet, not been able to learn the necessary skills, either martial or political, that a good ruler possesses. I will then discuss the more complex nature of the adult flawed king.

For those who, unsuccessfully challenge the king's authority, or who, in one way or another, disturb the peace and stability of society, the punishments could be severe. Exile in general, and pilgrimage, a particular form of it, were one way to force rebel barons and traitors to suffer for their crimes. Exile, is rather more of a political punishment imposed on the rebel baron or traitor. In a few cases, however, exile is linked with spiritual or religious itinerary. How does exile function as a means for lay aristocratic characters to achieve reconciliation with society, usually in the person of the king, as well as the salvations of their souls? I shall divide the third chapter into three parts: the conditions leading up to exile, the political and spiritual dual nature of the exile itself, and the return of the protagonist from exile.

It is neither practical, nor necessary, to provide a complete summary for all of the medieval epic poems. I have, nonetheless, provided an outline of the events that are beneficial to my dissertation. The *Chanson de Roland*, written between 1087 and 1095¹, is the most famous *chanson de geste* in French. The oldest version of this song is the Oxford manuscript and contains 4,002 assonant decasyllabic verses. This manuscript is written in the Anglo-Norman language and was signed by Tuoldus. Charlemagne has conquered most of Spain, only Saragossa remains under Saracen occupation. In order to avoid further bloodshed, Charlemagne sends one of his barons, Ganelon, to offer peace terms to the enemy leader, Marsile. Angered at having been nominated for the mission, by Roland, Charlemagne's nephew, Ganelon, furious, plots with Marsile to kill Roland in an ambush. At the battle of Rencesvals, Roland leads the rear-guard of Charlemagne's army. Accompanying him are some of the bravest knights in the French army, among them are Olivier, the duke of Naimmes, the archbishop Turpin, and the count Gérin. The rear-guard is completely annihilated. Everyone dies. Roland is taken up to heaven by

¹ See Jean Dufournet's introduction in his edition of *La Chanson de Roland*. Paris: GF Flammarion, 1993.

angels. Charles and his army attack the Saracens – routing their army, and sacking Saragossa. Ganelon’s treachery is uncovered. He is brought to trial. His cousin Pinabel fights a duel with Thierry, the champion of the king’s cause, to decide Ganelon’s guilt or innocence. Thierry is victorious, and Ganelon is quartered.

Le Couronnement de Louis was written around 1130². This song contains 2,695 assonant decasyllabic verses. It is one of the oldest of the Guillaume of Orange cycle. The coronation of Charlemagne’s son, Louis, occupies only a small number of verses at the beginning of the poem. Charlemagne wishes to pass the crown to his son before dying, so that he may be sure that it is his son who succeeds him. Louis is terrified by the responsibility of being king. The traitor Arnéis offers to act as regent until Louis proves able enough to rule. The count Guillaume, enraged by such a disloyal offer, slays Arnéis. The remainder of the poem is a series of episodes describing how Guillaume, tirelessly and ceaselessly, works to protect Louis’s person, brings rebel barons under the crown’s control, uncovers and eliminates all plots against the king.

Girart de Roussillon was composed during the first part of the thirteenth century³. It is a very long song of 10,000 decasyllabic verses. This poem has three different manuscripts and one fragment; the manuscript of Oxford is written in a mixed language. This song tells the very long, violent, quarrelous relationships between a powerful territorial prince, Girart, and his suzerain, Charles Martel. Girart, the literary character, has been associated with the historical count Gerardus. He was regent of the kingdom of Provence during the reign of Charles le Chauve. In other epic poems, Girart is named differently: Girart de Vienne and Girart de Fraite.

² See Ernest Langlois, introduction of *Le Couronnement de Louis: Chanson de geste du XII^e siècle*. Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1984.

³ See W. Mary Hackett’s introduction of *Girart de Roussillon*. Paris: Editions A. et J. Picard et Cie, 1953.

This epic poem belongs to the group known as the rebel baron's poems. The origin of the dispute, is that Girart believes that he holds his lands as allods. Therefore, he is not beholden to any suzerain. Charles Martel sees things from a different perspective. He lays siege to Girart's castle at Roussillon. After several battles and the loss of a good many knights, Girart is defeated. He flees, with his wife Berthe, into exile in the forest of Ardennes. There they remain for twenty-two years. At first, they rely solely on charity to survive. After several months, they become employed – he as a coal-merchant, and she as a seamstress. They live, fairly comfortably, while in the forest. Eventually, they return to the society of the court and the aristocracy. Girart makes peace with Charles, after another seven year period. While in exile, Girart promises to renounce his hatred of Charles. He must do penance until he has expiated his sins: hubris, failure to pay homage to Charles, and the death of countless Christian knights. His journey to salvation, and Berthe's as well, run a parallel course to the feudal dispute with Charles, until the end of the poem.

Garin le Lorrain was probably composed between 1160 and the end of the twelfth century⁴. It is part of the Loherain cycle. There are twenty-one different manuscripts of this song, most of them complete. The 18,650 verses make this one of the longest poems I have selected. It tells the story of two families, the Lorrainer family and the Bordelais family. The first branch of the poem recounts the end of Charles Martel's life. He dies fighting to defend his kingdom from pagan invaders. He entrusts the care of his son, Pépin, to his most loyal and valiant vassal: Hervis de Metz. Hervis is Garin's father. Hervis dies defending his home from pagans, and Garin and his brother, Begon, are forced to go and live with their uncle. Garin and Begon eventually go to Pépin's court. They both earn the title of seneschal. From this point on,

⁴ See Anne Iker-Gittleman's edition of *Garin le Loherenc*. Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1996.

the narrative becomes a long series of battles between the Lorrainers and the Bordelais. King Pépin, can do little to end these wars, which eventually lead to the end of almost every one of the original principal characters. The poem ends with a new reference to the next generation of Lorrainers and Bordelais renewing their hostilities.

Renaut de Montauban or *Les Quatre fils Aymon* dates from the beginning or the first half of the thirteenth century⁵. There are two complete versions of this song, the La Vallière manuscript, edited by Ferdinand Castet, and the Douce manuscript, edited by Jacques Thomas. This is a very long epic poem, which contains between 14,300 and 28,000 alexandrines verses, according to the different manuscripts. This song relates one of the most famous medieval French legends, probably originating in the Ardennes region.

The first part of the poem, as with *Garin le Lorrain*, begins with the generation preceding that of the main characters. Renaut's father, Aymon of Dordogne, and his three brothers, break their vassalic oath to their king Charlemagne, also called Charles. Charles is obliged to use force to make the rebel barons pay homage. But before this is done, Charles loses his son, Lohier, and Renaut his uncle, Beuves d'Aygrement. The four brothers, Renaut, Alard, Guichard, and Richard, are chased from Charlemagne's court after Renaut kills the king nephew's Bertolai. With the help of Maugis, their cousin, and their horse Bayard, both of them possess magical abilities, they succeed in hiding from Charles.

This song relates the different sieges and wars between Charles and the four brothers. After the battle of Trémoigne, known today as the city of Dortmund, Renaut makes peace with Charles. Renaut departs on a five year pilgrimage, accompanied by Maugis to the Holy Land. Upon his return to Trémoigne, Renaut settles one last matter with the long-standing rival family

⁵ See Jacques Thomas's edition of the Douce manuscript of *Renaut de Montauban*. Paris: Droz, 1989.

of traitors. He finishes his life in Cologne, working as a poor laborer. He dies a martyr, and is afterwards made a saint.

The *Discours des Misères de ce Temps* and *Tragiques*, do not lend themselves to any easy summation. They are poems which lack any narrative. Ronsard's work is a series of letters, addressed to various persons, both royal and noble. Aubigné's *Tragiques*, while not necessary a story in itself, situates the various events of the religious wars within the much larger narrative of biblical history.

Discours des Misères de ce Temps was composed between 1562 and 1563 by Pierre de Ronsard⁶. Ronsard was born in 1524 in the chateau de la Possonnière in Vendômois and died in Saint-Cosme in December 1585. He was from an old noble family—though not of the upper nobility. He studied in Paris from 1533 to 1534. He traveled to Scotland as the page of Madeleine de France who had married Jacques Stuart of Scotland. After his patron's death, in 1540, Ronsard went to Germany for three months. It was there that Ronsard began learning classical literature – taught by his cousin Lazare de Baif. In 1543, Ronsard was tonsured, in order that he receive money from the church. From 1550 to 1558, his fame increased, earning him the reputation as the “prince of poets.” In 1558, Henri II gave him the position of *conseiller et aumônier ordinaire du roi*. In 1560, at the outbreak of hostilities between French Protestants and French Catholics, Ronsard was still a court poet to Charles IX.

In the *Discours*, Ronsard writes in the role as propagandist for the French monarchy. He urges the queen, Catherine de Medici, and in his second *Discours* her son, Charles IX, to put an end to the terrible wars and suffering that have befallen France. Ronsard calls on France's leaders to react in a way that would bring France to her past glory. In the last *Discours*, Ronsard

⁶ According to the notes of Jean Céard, Daniel Ménager, and Michel Simonin, in the edition of La Pléiade. It is after the *tumulte d'Amboise* in 1560, that Ronsard starts writing about the subject of the Civil Wars.

turns his attention to the leaders of the Protestant movement. In them he lists the numerous abuses and perversions of the Reform movement, doing so using a decidedly vitriolic language. In the final *Discours*, the *Remonstrance au peuple de France*, Ronsard calls on moderate Catholics to undertake certain degree of reform within the Church – something that has been neglected for too long.

Les Tragiques was first published in 1616, and again in 1623 by Agrippa d'Aubigné⁷. He was born in Saintonge in 1552 and died in Geneva in 1630. At once a soldier, a poet, and a religious man, he was, unlike Ronsard, a man of action. After his mother had died giving birth to him, he was raised by his father, a Calvinist. He learned Latin, Greek, and Hebrew at a young age. He studied both in Paris and Geneva. After the massacre of Amboise in 1560, his father made Agrippa swear to avenge the Protestants who had been executed. In 1568, he ran away from the house of his tutor, in order to become a soldier in the Huguenot army. Fortunately, he was not in Paris during the Saint-Bartholomew massacre on August 23, 1572. In 1573, he became Henri of Navarre's squire. During his stay at the court, he began formulating his ideas for the *Tragiques*. In 1577, he was seriously injured fighting a battle in Casteljaloux. During his convalescence, he started dictating the *Tragiques* which he first published in 1616. He continued fighting at the side of Henri de Navarre until 1594. Aubigné was very disappointed and disdainful of Henri IV's abjuration, and with the terms of the Edict of Nantes. He retired to the Vendée region, where he became governor. Unable to continue fighting for his cause, he was forced to flee the France of Louis XIII. He went to Geneva where he died in 1630. *The Tragiques* is an epic poem divided into seven different books: *Misères*, *Princes*, *La Chambre dorée*, *Les Feux*, *Les Fers*, *Vengeances*, and *Jugement*. Colorful, at times baroque, in its style and its tone,

⁷ See Jacques Bailbé's, Marguerite Soulié's, and Henri Weber's edition of Aubigné in the *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*.

the message of the *Tragiques* is clear. The verses are replete with his hatred of Catholicism, the pope, the Valois dynasty, and especially Catherine de Medici. There is, however, a laudatory element in the poem. Aubigné wrote this as a hymn to Protestantism and as a testimony to the countless martyrs who died for the reformed faith.

CHAPTER 2 THE IDEAL KING

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

(The Holy Bible, Daniel 3-44)

And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.

(The Holy Bible, Zechariah 14-9)

To most who lived during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, there was ultimately only one true kingdom and one true king. They would have understood that God put kings and popes on this earth to rule men until the day of the Final Judgment. In the Middle Ages, the society over which they ruled was immutable since it was willed by God. Western Christian society was formed in the image of celestial realities, which was divided into three groups: the *oratores*, those who prayed, the *bellatores* or *pugnatores*, those who fought, and the *laboratores*, those who worked and labored. This study will concern itself almost exclusively with the second of the abovementioned divisions – the *bellatores*.

By about the end of the first third of the eleventh century, this vision of the three orders had been expressed by certain leading clerics such as Gerald of Cambrai and the bishop Adalbero of Laon. In his work *Carmen ad Rotbertum regem*, Adalbero states that the *oratores* are the most important of the three orders, for it is they who are the intermediaries between God and his children, both in their translation of His will, and in their intercessions through their prayers and liturgies. The *bellatores* were the lay princes, in particular the kings. It is they, with guidance from the bishops, to whom God entrusted the rule of this world, the defense of Christianity, and the maintenance of peace in His name. The *Chanson de Roland* and the *Couronnement de Louis* are the two medieval poems I have chosen to illustrate this ideal king.

Adalbero's simple descriptions of the world's socio-religious divisions would become insufficient to describe the "orders" of sixteenth century French society. By this century, the political and social divisions had become more detailed and complex, and consequently much more difficult to differentiate. At the time our poems were written, that is to say the second half of the sixteenth century, the knightly class such as it existed in the twelfth century, had been considerably changed. The king was still at the top of the hierarchy and there were still powerful noble families, who were not always easily controlled by the king. There were also many houses of lesser nobles, but their political role had been diminished, due to the importance of the new and well established members of the machinery of royal government – bureaucrats, royal councilors, and the *noblesse de robe*. The Institution of government had significantly increased in number as did the number of civil servants. It is against these civil servants that second and third sons of minor noble families (for example Ronsard and Du Bellay) were forced to compete for positions at court. Aubigné also for a time, was a member of the court but eventually was unable to adapt the skills necessary to be a successful *courtisan*. This deception is symbolized in a scene towards the end of *Princes*, where a young courtesan decides to take the advice of the allegorical figure *Vertu* and not that of *Fortune*: "Que je vous plains, esprits, qui au vice contraires/ Endurez de ces cours les sejours necessaires!" (*Princes*, vv.1487-1488)

In the poems of the Middle Ages there is a somewhat simplified view of the political, religious, and social tensions of the world in which the characters live. This is due in part to the fact that by the end of the eleventh century, Charlemagne was already known to be the ideal king. The figure of Charlemagne in the *Couronnement de Louis*, in many respects does not function as an actual character (identifiable as having depth and motivation) but functions as a stock character. This would suggest that the poet borrowed and simplified the more developed

character of Charles in the *Chanson de Roland* – reducing him to a mouthpiece for the propaganda that was being developed at this time by those adherents of the cult of Charlemagne, associated with the abbey of Saint-Denis.

If these two *chansons de geste* present a particular king as the ideal one, it is because they were confirming an already wide spread perception. This is not to say, that the poets' words would not have served as a source of edification for any contemporary princes who would have read or more likely heard them. The use of the legendary king might have masked any criticism, intended or not, that might have been directed at any particular prince or princes.

The poems of Ronsard and Aubigné reflect a much more detailed and troubled French society in the second half of the sixteenth century. Both Ronsard and Aubigné are writing their poems in a response to various socio-political events of their lifetimes. In the case of Ronsard it takes the form of an exhortation, or what essentially amounts to a form of council addressed directly to Catherine de Medici. Aubigné was every bit as engaged in the polemic of his time as was Ronsard, but his contribution to it was less direct and immediate. The first publication of the *Tragiques* would not come until 1616, long after the main players in his epic poem had left the world stage. In the *Aux lecteurs*, Aubigné writes of Henri IV: “Ce Prince, qui avoit desjà leu tous les *Tragicques* plusieurs fois, les voulut faire lire encore pour justifier ces accusations(8)” in his notes on the edition of the *Tragiques*, Frank Lestringant states that this probably would have taken place before 1589, the year in which Henri de Navarre became Henri IV of France. Both poets were primarily concerned with the ways by which the rulers of that time could end the bitter conflicts between Protestants and Catholics. Here, however, the ideal king that the reader sees is one presented indirectly, that is to say not in the form of a specific character such as Charlemagne in the *Chanson de Roland*.

Ronsard sees in the queen Catherine de Medici the only ruler who can lead France out of these dangerous and tempestuous waters:

Las! ma Dame, en ce temps que le cruel orage
Menace les François d'un si piteux naufrage, [...]
Prenez le gouvernail de ce pauvre navire :
Et maugré la tempeste, et le cruel effort
De la mer et des vents, conduisez-le à bon port.
(*Discours à la Royne*, vv. 43-50)

Ronsard's optimism comes not from his belief in her individual and unique personal qualities. Because of her unique authority as queen, she is the one to bring about the necessary change: "La France à jointes mains vous en prie et reprie" (*Discours à la Royne*, v. 51). Ronsard's *Discours* is not an epic poem filled with the heroic *gestes* of the great kings of history – although he does use some of them, in particular Charlemagne, as models knowing that Catherine de Medici is familiar with them through her reading of French history:

Hà! que diront là bas sous les tombes poudreuses
De tant de vaillans Rois les ames genereuses!
Que dira Pharamond! Clodion, et Clovis!
Nos Pepins! Nos Martels! Nos Charles, nos Loys:
Qui de leur propre sang à tous perils de guerre
Ont acquis à leurs fils une si belle terre?
(*Discours à la Royne*, vv. 55-60)

His verse is also replete with mythical heroes from classical literature such as Ajax, Achilles, and Jason. What this *Discours* is not is an epic poem recounting the deeds and greatness of Catherine de Medici. Her place among the great rulers will be set once she leads France to a time of peace and stability – of course using Ronsard's didactic verse as her guide.

In the *Tragiques* we find no central character that represents the ideal ruler, although before the apostasy of Henri IV, Aubigné had thought that the young Henri de Navarre would be the one to save France. Like Ronsard, Aubigné is commenting on events that have unfolded, and are continuing to unfold, in his lifetime. While his verse is meant to be every bit as edifying as Ronsard's, he is not in the privileged position of court poet and propagandist for both the Valois

monarchy, and the moderate reformers of the Church. In fact Aubigné himself, under the acronym *le bouc du desert*, writes from the vantage point of his self-imposed exile. In scathing, venomous, prophetic, even damning rhetoric he composes for the reader, a series of grotesque, violent, and at times baroque *tableaux* and images whose purpose, is to depict the misery and suffering of the Protestants, evoking the martyrs of the Old Testament as well as more recent European history. Aubigné offers us his vision of the ideal prince knowing that such leader will not come from among any of his contemporaries. Aubigné's ideal king will be the only true king, the King of Kings.

For our purposes I will analyze the way in which some of the poems in this selection present the image of the ideal king, or as Aubigné called him the true or *vrai* king. The kings in *Chanson de Roland*, *Couronnement de Louis*, and *Discours* had responsibilities and duties in their capacity both as a religious and a secular ruler. The two were by no means mutually exclusive – for their success, or lack thereof, in one sphere often determined their effectiveness in the other one.

The king's ability to lead successfully in both the religious and political areas, his ability to resolve crises, is in large part dependent upon his powers and his personal qualities. Adalbero's opinion that of the three orders, the most important is the *oratores*, was not shared by all. Whichever side the poets of the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Couronnement de Louis* may have taken on this issue, the Charlemagne in their songs is very powerful, and neither the Pope nor any archbishops or bishops, have any power of importance relative to the emperor. This would seem to accurately reflect the historical situation at the time of Charlemagne's coronation. The emperor judges the pope's role as very limited. The pope and the clergy have but one function: to

aid the Christian armies of the emperor with prayers. A king should take care of all other matters, religious and secular.

On Christmas day 800, Charlemagne was manifestly the lord of Christendom. Charlemagne was crowned by Pope Leo III as Charles Augustus, Emperor of the Romans, and protector of the *Republica Romana*. These new titles were added to the title of king of the Franks and of the Lombards, which Charlemagne already possessed. It was God himself who crowned Charlemagne as emperor through the pope. This was important since it established the theocratic origin of the office. How one views the significance of this event depends on whether one favors the papal or the royal position. The papalists felt that both the coronation of Pépin III and that of Charlemagne proved the supremacy of the pope over the emperor for it is he, in the name of God, who confers the titles and powers onto the secular ruler.

The political reality of the situation was that the pope and his lands in Italy were completely dependant on the military power of the Franks. What is of importance here, is that the medieval theory of Papacy and Empire had taken form.¹ In the *Chanson de Roland* and in the *Couronnement de Louis*, this is the background against which events unfold. More importantly, this theory shapes the poets' vision of the ideal king such as he is exemplified by Charlemagne in the *Chanson de Roland*, and by the advice Charlemagne gives Louis in the *Couronnement de Louis*.

The idealization of Charlemagne, as W. G. van Emden asserts, reached its pinnacle in the *Chanson de Roland*: "the figure of Charles never again attains the same heights as in the *Roland*" (312). In both the coronation scene in *Couronnement de Louis*, and in the overall portrait of

¹ Although as early as the fifth century Pope Gelasius I (492-496) had formulated the idea of the "Two Swords". This notion asserts that both temporal and spiritual powers were of equal importance to the establishment and the continuance of Christendom.

Charlemagne in the *Chanson de Roland*, the king is portrayed in all his power and majesty as he was in the year 800. However, these works clearly do not represent the actual state of relations between the papacy and the secular rulers as they were at the end of the eleventh century. In the almost 300 years since Charlemagne was crowned emperor and when the poem was written, the popes had gradually increased their power and influence in Western Europe. They had become rulers over large domains, and at times the most powerful of Italian princes. Throughout Western Christendom they had become supreme in their function as spiritual and moral leaders. By the twelfth century, a legendary and romantic image of Charlemagne far removed from the intricate and realistic picture the monk Einhard gives us in his *Vita Karoli Magni* (830-833), emerges in all its glory. Charlemagne becomes first and foremost the superhuman Gallic champion of the Church and the defender of the faith – he becomes the defender of Christianity in France and in Germany. The emperor is viewed as a supreme demi-god a *rex in Gallia*, not as the proud and human Franconian of the Rhineland and Aachen. The first 243 verses of the *Couronnement de Louis* are replete with the duties, responsibilities of a king as defender of the Christian church and of the kingdom of France, as well as the moral character needed to successfully rule.

In 813, Charlemagne confers the crown on his son Louis. He tells him to take the imperial crown and placed it on his head. The significance of this act was that God spoke through the emperor not the pope: “Filz Looïs, vei ici la corone: / Se tu la prenz, emperere iés de Rome (Le *Couronnement de Louis*, vv. 72-73). Charlemagne died in 814 and is buried in Aachen. In the ninth century, folk tales were told about him making him a superhuman. Sainthood would not come any time soon after his death, for too many people remembered the brutality of his acts. However these memories faded; later people would remember him as a soldier of God, a champion of the Faith, and a builder of numerous churches. In the eleventh century,

Charlemagne's image would continue its transformation. It is generally believed that Charlemagne was extolled as a martyr on account of his many adventures. The picture of the king now took on the aspect of a Christian ecclesiastic or a monk. These purely ecclesiastical legends about Charles originated in the twelfth century, though his life was regarded as more ascetic than holy. He was canonized in 1165.

By the second half of the sixteenth century, the idea that French kings were the defenders of Christendom had become an anachronism. The threat from the Ottomans was no longer very serious being limited to Eastern Europe. The Reformation brought about divisions not only within Christianity and the Church, but in the way European states regarded one another. The Church underwent several divisions and subdivisions: Catholics and Protestants, moderate Catholic reformers, Ultramontanes, Calvinists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, et al. The political map of Europe was redrawn and redefined; on the one hand, Protestant England and those states sympathetic to the cause of the Reformation, on the other, Catholic France, Italy, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire – rivals themselves.

In France, the Catholic Valois monarchy held firm. Strong opposition to their power came from the powerful Bourbon and Guise families. The death of Francis II in 1560 led to a struggle for power that ultimately led to the assertion of power by Catherine de Medici and the house of Valois. Although the *Discours* were meant as a polemic against the Protestant threat, it is not unlikely that Ronsard's encouragement of the Queen to be the one who ends France's sufferings, did not also reflect his understanding of the political situation in which the Valois found themselves. He would have seen that the need for unity in France, was a prerequisite of the ability of France to withstand strong foreign opposition as well – particularly from Spain.

The ideal ruler for Ronsard would be one to protect the Gallican Church and the monarchy's political position, while at the same time ending the religious wars. There is nothing in the *Discours* to suggest that the Queen Mother and her son Charles IX should undertake any crusade against the pagans, nor that they were still responsible for the protection of the Roman See.

Aubigné in the *Tragiques* stressed with more conviction that the French monarchy needed to be strong if it were to bring peace and stability to France. However, he saw the Valois rulers as being the cause of France's woes and not the solution. His ideal ruler would be one who worked to create God's kingdom on earth, and who would lead a strong and united France against the papal Antichrist, evil Spain, and the ultra-Catholic Empire.

Our study of the ideal ruler will show some similarities among all four of the texts; their differences are due to the politico-religious circumstances addressed in the poems. If, as was suggested earlier, the coronation scene in the *Couronnement de Louis* offers merely an enumeration of the Emperor's duties and responsibilities, as well as those personal traits necessary to accomplish these, Charlemagne in the *Chanson de Roland*, demonstrates what it is to rule.

Personal Qualities

For the most part, the personal qualities necessary to rule fall into two general categories : physical traits necessary to perform difficult military tasks, and impress the enemy, and personality traits that allow the king to deal affectively with his subjects, in attempt to both win their respect and their admiration. Virility and handsomeness are two physical traits used to describe Charlemagne : « Blanche ad la barbe et tut fleurit le chef, / Gent ad le cors et le cuntenant fier. » (*Chanson de Roland*, vv. 116-117) » He is also described as robust and elegant : « Gent ad le cors, gaillart e ben seant, / Cler le visage e de cuntenant./Puis si chevalchet

mult aficheement. » (*Chanson de Roland*, vv. 3115-3117). In the face of the pagans, all Christian knights must show valor : « Mult est vassal Carles de France dulce. » (*Chanson de Roland*, v. 3579).

The *Couronnement de Louis* offers an amusing contrast between the ideal king Charlemagne and his pathetically weak son Louis. Charles's first commands that Louis in accepting the throne agree to act as a true king : “Filz Looïs, ne te celeraï mie, / Or avras tot mon reïame en baillie, / Apres ma mort, si Deus me beneïe. » (vv. 166-168) Here also Charlemagne is depicted as a vaillant king: “Reis de France porte corone d’or / Prodome deit estre e vaillant de son cors. » (vv. 20-21), and he is fearful to the wicked :

Et s’il est ome qui li face nul tort,
Ne deit guarir ne a plain ne a bos
De ci qu’il l’ait o recreant o mort.
(vv. 22-24)

Much to Charlemagne's disappointment he is forced to recognize that his son is neither courageous nor vaillant. This is the opinion that Arnéis shares as well when pointing out that Louis is not strong enough to lead anyone in battle : « Mes sire est jovenes, n’a que quinze anz entiers, Ja sereit morz quin fereit chevalier. » (vv. 103-104) Arnéis proposes that after a three year period they reassess the situation :

S’il vult proz estre ne ja bons eritiers,
Je li rendrai de gré et volentiers,
Et acreïstrai ses terres et ses fiez.
(vv. 107-109)

Other personal qualities that Charlemagne possesses in the two medieval poems relate to various Christian virtues. The most important virtue is to live a life without sin. In the *Couronnement de Louis*, the ideal king must commit no sins: “Tort ne luxure ne pechié ne mener » (v. 65). A ruler must be patient : « De sa parole ne fut mie hastifs: / Sa custume est qu’il

parolet a leisir. » (*Chanson de Roland*, vv. 140-141). He must also display generosity and largesse :

Ben le conuis que gueredun vos en dei
E de mun cor, de terres et d'aveir.
Vengez vos fil[I]z, vos freres e voz heirs,
Qu'en Rencesvals furent morz l'altre seir !
(*Chanson de Roland*, vv. 3409-3412)

Another important point stressed in these poems is that the king has a responsibility to care for widows and orphans, particularly those whose husbands or fathers fought with Charlemagne :

« Ne traïson vers nului ne ferez, / Ne orfelin son fié ne li toldrez » (vv. 66-67) or « Ne orfe enfant retolir le suen fié. » (v. 84).

Piety is another virtue that is expressed in these poems. In a couple different places the narrator of the *Chanson de Roland* notes that Charles attends holy offices : « Li empereres est par matin levet ;/ Messe e matines ad li reis escultet. » (vv. 163-164). Charles also tells Louis that he needs to be a pious man : “Et sainte eglise pense de bien servir » (*Couronnement de Louis*, v. 155).

Physical strength is another way for the ideal ruler to deal with his enemies: « Qui me guerreie, bien sai qu'il te desfie, / Cil qui me het, bien sai ne t'aime mie. » (*Couronnement de Louis*, vv. 69-70). However, to be truly successful a king must be wise and unwavering in his enforcement of justice upon his subjects:

Ainz deit les torz batre soz ses piez,
Encontre val et foler et pleissier,
Envers le povre te deis umeliiier ;
Se il se claime, ne te deit enoier,
Ainceis le deis aidier et conseiliiier....
(vv. 80-84)

In the *Discours* and the *Tragiques*, we find many of the same personal qualities of the ideal ruler. For Aubigné physical strength and military prowess are important : « Et que fait la Foiblesse au tribunal des Rois ? » (*Chambre Dorée*, v. 439). Gwenda Echard examines the ways

in which the ideas exposed in Erasmus's *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (1503), and the *Institutio principis Christiani* (1516), are present in the work of Ronsard and Aubigné; she points out that both of Erasmus's works stress the need for personal *pietas* in a prince: "While owing much to classical and to medieval sources, [these works] are distinctive in this emphasis they place on "pietas" and are the antithesis of a Machiavellian pragmatism that seemed frequently to be the order of the day in sixteenth-century power-politics." (28) Echard goes on to say that Erasmus whose perspective is one marked by an evangelizing zeal sets himself up as the « conscience of Europe » (31), whereas Ronsard, in his capacity as propagandist for the French monarchy, is not interested in presenting in the *Discours* anything that would detract from the image of the good king, or the monarchy. Ronsard's relation to Erasmus lies in his didacticism concerning the formation of the Christian monarch. Yet « the total effect of his work is not quite un-Erasmian in its impact. » (Echard 28-29). It is likely that Aubigné shared Erasmus's conviction that « before all else he [the king] must put his inner house in order, and [...] the notion of kingly responsibility is inseparable from his notion of individual 'pietas'. » (Echard 27) However Aubigné's kings are scavengers, lacking royal dignity, courage, and honor. Among the kings of Aubigné's world none would be capable of performing such acts of pious devotion.

According to Arlette Jouanna : « Le vrai roi est un adulte, viril, guerrier, maître de lui et de ses choix. » (625). Both poets point out the importance of being a king who exemplifies virtue, and who corrects vice. Ronsard also believes that a ruler should recognize virtue in others so as to surround himself with the best possible councilers :

Il faudra de vous-mesme apprendre à commander
 À ouyr vos sujets les voir et demander,
 Les coignoistre par nom et leur faire justice,
 Honorer la vertu, et corriger le vice.

(*Institution pour l'adolescence du Roy Charles IX^e de ce nom*, vv. 91-94)

And he points out later :

[...] Ce n'est pas tout de sçavoir la vertu :
Il faut coignoistre aussi le vice revestu
D'un habit vertueux, qui d'autant plus offence,
Qu'il se monstre honorable, et a belle apparence.
(*Institution*, vv. 79-82)

Aubigné writes also : « Debteur au vertueux, persecuteur du vice. » (*Princes*, v. 521). How a ruler acts toward his subjects is very important in that it not only sets a good example, but also creates a positive impression : « Vous ferez vostre charge comme un Prince doux, / Audience et faveur vous donnerez à tous. » (*Institution*, vv. 103-104). Ronsard also suggests that a king should be even tempered when dealing with his subject :

Punissez les malins et les seditieux :
Ne soyez point chagrin, despit ne furieux :
Mais honneste et gaillard, portant sur le visage
De vostre gentille ame un gentil tesmoignage.
(*Institution*, vv. 171-174)

Above all a king's subjects should not fear him. On the contrary, he should be loved and remembered by his people, and later on again Ronsard states :

Il faut que d'un bon œil le peuple vous regarde,
Qu'il vous aime sans crainte : ainsi les puissans Rois
Ont conservé le sceptre, et non pas le harnois.
(*Institution*, vv. 138-140)

Charles tells Louis that it is important to be respected and admired by his subjects :

Tes chevaliers pense de chiers tenir ;
Par els seras onorez et serviz,
Par totes terres et amez et cheriz.
(*Le Couronnement de Louis*, vv. 157-160)

The historical Charlemagne attached great importance to education, including his own. Numerous scholarly works have been written about Charlemagne's desire to better the education of his clergy:

What the leaders of the Carolingian society wanted to do was to prepare the clergy, 'the soldiers of the Church', to lead 'the people of God to the pasture of eternal life'. (Contreni 709)

Charlemagne's biographer, Einhard, writes briefly on the subject of the emperor's studies: "[...] Alcuin, was the greatest scholar of his time [...]. Under his direction, the king spent a great deal of time and effort studying rhetoric, logic, and especially astronomy. [...] He also tried his hand at writing [...] but [...] he never became very accomplished in this art. (93). Little of this ambition is found in the *Chanson de Roland* or in the *Couronnement de Louis*, for the poets' concerns were for other matters.

The sixteenth century was very different, drawing on a long and rich tradition of Christian and classical writings. Poets and scholars of this century stressed the need for the Christians princes to be learned. In the *Institutio*, Erasmus emphasizes this blend of the classical and the Christian using the platonic tradition of the philosopher king, as well as the idea that the king is the earthly counterpart of God. Knowledge and understanding of Scripture was of course paramount. Ronsard believes that a ruler is well-served "[...] par les beaux mestier que les Muses nous donnent. » (*Institution*, v. 30) He stresses the particular importance of the *Trivium* and the *Quadrivium* :

Quand les Muses sont filles de Jupiter
(Dont les Rois sont issus) les Rois daignent chanter,
Elles les font marcher en toute reverence,
Loin de leur Majesté banissant l'ignorance :
Et tous remplis de grace et de divinité,
Les font parmy le peuple ordonner equité.
Ils deviennent appris en la Mathematique,
En l'art de bien parler, en Histoire et Musique,
En Physiognomie, à fin de mieux sçavoir
Juger de leurs sujets seulement à les voir.

(*Institution*, vv. 31-40)

While important in its own right, formal education is only one type of knowledge necessary to be a good ruler. Knowledge of oneself and of one's role is perhaps equal, if not superior in value. Formal education, wisdom, and congeniality, are of little use if one is not in possession of one's emotion. In the *chansons de geste*, *démésure* is the antithesis of self-

possession. My intent in this chapter is not to add to the plethora of studies done on the former. It is the latter which concerns us here. This topic is not one of those Charlemagne discusses with Louis in the *Couronnement de Louis*. However, this personal quality does appear to be of importance in the *Chanson de Roland*.

The behavior of Charlemagne in the *Chanson de Roland* is a topic of long debate. There is the well supported view, according to which Charlemagne despite the power, majesty, and dignity of his appearance does have one weakness – namely that he appears weak and vacillating – especially in the council scenes. Such a foible would alter our perception of this perfect Christian ruler, would undermine the idea that Charlemagne is the very model of self-possession. In his insightful article on Charlemagne, John D. Niles rejects this interpretation.² Placing Charlemagne as the central hero of the epic as he does, Niles is able to read these scenes of supposed weakness in the opposite manner. He views Charlemagne as the embodiment of “serene majesty” (124). Furthermore, Niles argues that what appears to be passivity is really self-control:

The emperor is literally *impassive*: that is, he has an active control over his passions. He is *self-possessed*, in the full meaning of that term. Even during the trial of Ganelon, when he wishes nothing more than to see the traitor die, he subordinates his own passion to judgment by the court: that is, to law. (136)

Whichever argument seems more compelling, each shares one idea – that self-possession and restraint are essential in the ideal ruler. The massacre of Vassy in 1562 was an act that went beyond the bounds of reason. Whole groups in society were now allowing passions to control reason and tolerance:

Au ciel est revolée et Justice et Raison ,
Et en leur place, hélas! Regne le brigandage,
La force le harnois le sang et le carnage.

² In his article “The ideal Depiction of Charlemagne in ‘La Chanson de Roland’” Niles refutes in particular the position taken by W. T. H. Jackson in his standard history, *The Literature of the Middle Ages* p. 169.

(*Discours à la Royne*, vv. 182-184)

This is a world plunged into madness and disorder. Ronsard exhorts Catherine de Medici to not allow her passions to overrule her and to be true and constant to who she is:

De là vous apprendrez à vous coignoistre bien,
Et en vous cognoissant vous ferez toujours bien.
« Le vray commencement pour en vertus accroistre,
« C'est (disoit Apollon) soy-mesme se coignoistre:
Celuy qui se coignoist, est seul maistre de soy,
Et sans avoir un Royaume, il est vraiment un Roy.
(*Institution*, vv. 83-84)

In the *Tragiques* Aubigné adds the element of laws to the need for self-mastery. Aubigné approaches Erasmus's belief that indomitable passions in a prince are "the very dregs of the mob." (*Enchiridion*, 65).

Ceux-là regnent, ceux-là sont de vrais Rois
Qui sur leurs passions établissent des loix,
Qui regnent sur eux mesme, et d'une ame constante
Domptent l'ambition volage et impuissante
(*Princes*, vv. 664-666)

One of the ways the king can bridle his passions is by respecting the law. The ideal king must recognize that to rule is not to act without any constraint; following one's whims and desires. Arlette Jouanna interpretes these verses: "Aux despens de la loy que prirent les Gaulois / Des Saliens François pour loy des autres lois." (*Misères*, vv. 735-736) as a statement that the kings should act in accordance with certain laws:

C'est d'abord la loi par excellence, celle de Dieu. [...] Les lois, ce sont aussi les lois humaines du droit positif, sacrées parcequ'anciennes, inscrites dans la tradition du royaume ; parmi elles, la loi salique (625)

Obedience to God's law by the king would seem to be an evident part of being a king. In Christian Western Europe, since the first time a king was recognized as being a representative of God on Earth, it was obvious that he was not a demi-god, but rather an instrument of God. He was to rule Earth according to a Christian ordering of affairs – which implies following as

closely as possible, the model of what the heavenly kingdom was. If a king was unsure, or if he consciously strayed from this path, the popes and bishops would be there to interpret the will of God and give council.

Ultimately, the only real way the pope and the Church had of pressuring a ruler to mend his ways was with the threat of excommunication. In the sixteenth century, scholars such as Erasmus and Jean Bodin began to take it upon themselves to guide the Christian princes, as we mentioned above. Many of the classical and Christian ideas regarding the role of the king, are expressed by the scholars of that century, and are echoed in the poems of Ronsard and Aubigné.

The King as Defender of Christendom

For the king in the eleventh and twelfth century poems we know that one of the benefits of the wars against the pagans, either defensive or offensive, as was the case with the Crusades, was to allow young knights or *militēs* to prove their prowess and valor in the hope of obtaining lands, titles, and wealth. If the Crusades were to be effective, however, the Christian armies needed capable and well equipped knights. The men and resources the lay princes had at their disposal depended on how well they were able to maintain peace and order within their realms. A common theme in numerous epic poems is the danger of long and bloody wars between Christian nobles and barons. They were condemned by some as being wrong on the grounds that they weakened the Christian forces. In *Garin le Lorrain* for example, Charles Martel is unable to respond to the recent pagan invasion because of the protracted and bloody wars he had fought with Girart de Roussillon:

Charles Martel ne les pot pas soffrir
que de ses homes fu forment apovris.
Poi en i ot armes poïst soffrir:
mort sunt li pere, petit furent li fill,
si com l'estoire le nos tesmoigne et dit.
(vv. 14-18)

In *Girart de Roussillon*, these same two adversaries do manage to put aside their differences for a period of five years during which they both participated in a campaign against the Saracens. However the hostilities would begin again and would deprive France of her young warriors and also severely weaken both the king and his great vassals: “Tant franc baron lai restent mort e sanglent, / Noal en er en France a ton vivent.” (vv. 3157-3158)

Also in the *Epilogue*:

Era es fenitz lo lhibres e la cansos
De K. e de G. los rixs baros
[...] Lhi cop si foro fer e engoissos
Que de sai que de lai remanen blos [...]
(vv. 1-5)

This fear of depleting France’s human and financial resources, and the impact it would have on France’s ability to fight the pagans, was certainly shared by Ronsard and Aubigné. The violent and barbaric nature of killing during the Renaissance was scarcely different from what is described in some of the passages of medieval epic poems. What is different is the expansion of the scope of the killing during the wars of religion. It is no longer the knights killing only knights, but it becomes a question of people of all social classes being killed by each other:

Ô Dieu [...] donne que la fureur de la guerre barbare
Aille bien loin de France au ravage Tartare:
Donne que nos couteaux de sang humain tachez
Soyent dans un magazine pour jamais attachez:
Et les armes au croq, sans ester embesognées,
Soyen pleines desormais de toiles d’araignées.
(*Discours à la Royne*, vv. 213-224)

J’ai vu le reistre noir foudroyer au travers
Les mesures de France, et comme une tempeste,
Emporter ce qu’il peut, ravager tout le reste [...]
Là de mille maisons on ne trouva que du feux,
Que charongnes, que morts ou visages affreux.
(*Misères*, vv. 372-380)

Bitter and bloody, the butchery was also to be found among members of the same family:

Ce monstre arme le fils contre son proper pere,
 Le frere factieux s'arme contre son frere,
 La soeur contre la soeur, et les cousins germains
 Au sang de leurs cousins veulent tremper leurs mains [...]
 Les enfans sans raison disputant de la foy,
 Et tout à l'abandon va sans ordre et san loy.
 (*Discours à la Royne*, vv. 159-166)

Je veux peindre la France une mere affligee,
 Qui est entre ses bras de deux enfans chargee.
 Le plus fort, orgueilleux, empoigne les deux bouts
 Des tetins nourriciers ; puis, à force de coups
 D'ongles, de poings, de pieds, il brise le partage
 Dont nature donnoit à son besson l'usage [...]
 Si que, pour arracher à son frere la vie,
 Il mesprise la sienne et n'en a plus d'envie.
 (*Misères*, vv. 97-106)

There are similarities in the circumstances described in the poems from both the sixteenth century and the Middle Ages. In all these poems, there is a violent society in which Christians kill Christians. Yet when reading one of the medieval poems the reader is hardly filled with the horror and revulsion that he would experience when reading Ronsard and even more so Aubigné. In the *chanson de geste*, the violence done to Christians by Christians is virtually an affair between members of the warrior aristocracy, the nobility, and the royalty. Warfare is a part of their chivalric code. This is not to say that violence among the warrior aristocracy was acceptable no matter what the reason, but it certainly was justified in certain situations. In general, society condemned the use of force when resolving private conflicts.

Guillaume in the *Couronnement de Louis* killed Christians for purely political reasons – because they committed treason, as in the case of Arnéïs of Orléans. A second reason is that powerful barons threatened the stability of the kingdom, Richard of Normandy being one of the most important. This is not inconsistent with the advice Charlemagne gives Louis:

Por l'amor Deu de son dreit adrecier ;
 Vers l'orgoillos te deis faire si fier
 Come liepart qui gent vueille mangier ;
 Et s'il te vult de neient guerreier,

Mandez en France les nobles chevaliers
Tant qu'en aiez dusqu'a trente milliers ;
Ou mielz se fie la le fai assegier,
Tote sa terre guaster et esseillier.
(vv. 185-192)

In *Girart de Roussillon*, *Garin le Lorrain*, and *Renaud de Montauban*, Christians fight but they do so as part of conflicts arising from political and social tensions. In these three poems, the sheer number of knights who were killed is quite considerable – especially in *Garin le Lorrain* and *Girart de Roussillon*. While it seems that in *Girart de Roussillon* and *Renaud de Montauban*, the narrator does sympathize with the plight of the rebel baron, there is no doubt which of the belligerents is at fault. No matter the circumstances, baronial revolt against the king is never morally justified.

The looming and dangerous threats to the kingdom and to Christianity never become reality in the *Chanson de Roland*, *Girart de Roussillon*, and *Renaud de Montauban*. The kingdom is weakened but order is always, eventually restored, and any menace to Christendom dealt with. The case of the *Couronnement de Louis* is slightly different. Guillaume is able to secure the throne for Louis, the young king, turn back the pagans threatening Rome, and bring to heel some of the more troublesome rivals to Louis's power. The end of the poem ends with Guillaume going off to once again serve his king. What these three epic poems have in common is that the king is a viril and powerful warrior. No matter how ridiculous, illogical, or *démesuré* Charles Martel is in *Girart de Roussillon*, and Charlemagne is in *Renaud de Montauban*, their military abilities are formidable. While it is obvious that Louis is clearly not the ideal ruler, it is possible to read this as an example where Guillaume though not a king himself still remains true to the ideals that Charlemagne had passed on to Louis during the coronation. This is the suggestion that Jeanne Wathelet-Willem makes in her article where she describes Guillaume as

the one who recognizes the need to support the office of kingship no matter how incompetent the king may be:

Guillaume, successeur moral de Charlemagne, ce thème, particulièrement illustré dans le *Couronnement de Louis*, et, en fait celui de toute la geste. C'est peut-être son caractère presque royal qui fait de Guillaume le héros épique le plus célèbre, après Charlemagne et Roland, comme le prouve notamment la diffusion de sa légende dans les littératures étrangères. (218)

In *Garin le Lorrain*, there is really no conclusion to speak of. Pépin III is unable to bring the hostility to an end. The conflict will last for at least three generations, but will never weaken the kingdom to the point of collapse.

The society depicted in the *Tragiques* and the *Discours* are another matter. The Saracen threat does not factor into the problems affecting the world of the second half of the sixteenth century as it is described in these two poems. Members of the aristocracy at court do at times kill each other, though for reasons of honor or politics as much as for religion. Aubigné comments on the absurdity and danger from the increase in the numbers of duel fought as a result of the influence of Machiavellian ideas at a court consisting of a good many Italians.

Instrument of God

Defenders of the traditional notion of royal power claimed that the king exercised his power in accordance with a God given order. In the two poems from the Middle Ages, the role of Charlemagne as instrument of God is most evident in the *Chanson de Roland*. Both poems do present the notion that the king is the instrument of God whose two primary functions is first, the smiting of all enemies of Christendom – whether they be pagans, Saracens or even other Christians who disrupt the peace and stability of Christian society. Charlemagne himself in the *Chanson de Roland* participates in the defeat of the Saracens after the devastating defeat at Rencesvals. The war ends with Charlemagne killing the Saracen emir Baligant and then

continuing on to take Saragossa. Here we have Charlemagne as the military arm of God. God himself intervenes or send his angel Gabriel, directly in the affairs of the king, marking him clearly as one who wields God given powers. At two different moments God intervenes. First to stop the sun in mid-sky: “Pur Karlemagne fist Deus vertuz mult granz, / Car li soleilz est remés en estant.” (vv. 2458-2459) Then he sends Gabriel to keep him from losing his duel with Baligant at that critical moment when the fate of Christendom hangs in the balance: “Seint Gabriel est repairet a lui, /Si li demandet : ‘Reis mages, que fais-tu ?’» (v. 3610)

In the *Couronnement de Louis*, Charles advises his son Louis to go on crusades against the pagans :

Filz Looïs, vei ici la corone :
Se tu la pren, emperere iés de Rome,
Tu puez en ost bien mener cent mile omes,
Passer par force les aives de Gironde,
Païene gent craventer et confondre....
(vv. 72-76)

Louis does not possess any military skill. The task of defending Christendom and the Holy See falls to Guillaume. This can be viewed as Guillaume usurping the role of the king as defender of Christendom. This is actually, an example of the Canonical writings during the Gregorian reform movement, which sought to place the responsibility of defending Christendom on the soldiers of the warrior aristocracy. This of course coincided with the need to support the Crusades. If Gregory VII could have created a knight who would exemplify the ideal soldier of God, it would have been Guillaume. Among other writings, the pope stated that those who seem to fear or to love God flee from the wars of Christ. They wrongly placed their own interests before the salvation of their bretheren ; and in so doing fail in their duty to love their neighbor.

Killing pagans, Saracens, or any enemies of Christendom was a necessary and justifiable action. At times this killing extended to those who did not fight against the Christian forces.

Charles also destroys the synagogues and the mosques in the city of Saragossa and therefore becomes an iconoclast :

Li emperer ad Sarraguce prise.
A mil Franceis funt ben cercher la ville,
Les sinagoges et les mahumeries ;
A mailz de fer e a cuignes qu'il tindrent,
Fruissent les ymagenes e trestute les ydeles :
N' remeindrat ne sorz ne falserie.
(*Chanson de Roland*, vv. 3660-3665)

The other way the ruler served God would be to gain converts to Christianity. Marsile was offered the opportunity to convert as part of his surrender to Charlemagne. Before killing Baligant, Charlemagne tries to convert him as well :

Carles respunt : « Mult grant viltet me semble[e] ;
Pais ne amor ne dei a paien rendre.
Receif la lei que Deus nos apresetet,
Christientet, et pui te amerai sempres ;
Pui serf e crei le rei omnipotente ! »
(*Chanson de Roland*, vv. 3595-3599)

The one successful concession of importance is at the end of the poem when Bramidoine of her own free will decides to become Christian :

En ma maisun ad un caitive franche.
Tant ad oït e sermuns e esamples
Creire voelt Deu, chrestientet demandet.
(vv. 3978-3980)

Ronsard and Aubigné both understand that the king is an instrument of God and a mediator between humankind and their creator. The king should remember that as a Christian, he should fear God and submit himself to his laws as would any other Christian have to do. One of the first differences is that as a propagandist for the monarchy, Ronsard paints Catherine in a positive light throughout the *Discours à la Royne*. Ronsard knows that if France is to be saved from the monster that is Protestantism, then God will have to aid their ruler:

Ô Dieu qui de là haut nous envoyas ton Fils,
Et la paix eternelle avecques nous tu fis,

Donne (je te suppli) que ceste Royne mere
Puisse de ces deux camps apaiser la colere
(vv. 213-216)

Aubigné also believes that the king has been elected by God to be an instrument of his will :

Heureuse françoise Province
Quand Dieu propice t'accorda
Un prince, et te choisit un prince
Des pavillons de son Juda !
(Préface des *Tragiques*, vv. 279-282)

Yet Aubigné differs from Ronsard in his belief that the king is also sent as an instrument of punishment :

Dieu veut punir les siens quand il leve sur eux,
Comme sur les meschans, les princes vicieux,
Chefs de ses membres chers
(*Princes*, vv. 391-393)

Aubigné's disappointment with the apostasy of Henri IV put an end to his hopes that the ideal ruler would be found among his contemporaries. At the same time, he sees in the king a tragic hero figure who did have certain good intentions which Aubigné feels are what led to his assassination. That is to say that Aubigné saw Henri IV as having his own crusade – that against the papacy and Spain. This is the opinion of Jean-Raymond Fanlo who writes : « La Papauté n'est pas seulement une Institution religieuse pour Aubigné : c'est l'Antéchrist [...]. C'est donc contre la bête de l'Apocalypse qu'Henri IV partait en croisade. » (400) For Ronsard the ideal king can be found among the ruling Valois dynasty. He knows however that it will only be with help from God that France will eventually be able to return to a period of peace and stability.

Daniel Ménager writes :

[...] seule l'intervention de Dieu peut donc couronner de succès les efforts de la reine. Dieu interviendra également si la reine, malgré ses efforts, ne peut éviter la guerre, et il donnera la victoire aux armées catholiques : dans les deux cas, c'est donc bien à une action « divine » que Ronsard fait appel. (198)

Perhaps Ronsard and Aubigné, in their hope of finding an ideal ruler, wondered what had happened to all the glorious kings in France's history as well as the biblical kings who led God's people through their times of crisis. For Aubigné there is clearly a presence in the *Tragiques* of the millenarian myth which says that the true emperor would be the emperor of the Last Days. In that respect, Ronsard knows that it is impossible for those living during this crisis to see the situation with total clarity.

CHAPTER 3 THE FLAWED KING

Not all of the French kings depicted in our body of poems measure up, either in terms of their physical strength, or their personal qualities, to the grandiose and near perfect image of the ideal king. The literary figure of the ideal king is Charlemagne, such as he is in the *Chanson de Roland*, and in the *Couronnement de Louis*. In none of our poems, is the discrepancy, between the ideal and the flawed king more apparent than when the two figures are juxtaposed in the same poem: the *Couronnement de Louis*. The poem begins with the coronation scene.

Charlemagne wishes to see his son crowned during his lifetime. Before offering the crown to his son, Charlemagne explains which skills, and personal qualities, are necessary to be as successful a ruler as he was. The young boy proves to be most unwilling to replace his father. Though perhaps the most pathetic one, Louis the Pious is not the only flawed king in these poems.

Another flawed literary king is Charles Martel, who appears in both *Girart de Roussillon* and *Garin le Lorrain*. There is another weak king in *Garin le Lorrain*, who plays a more significant role: Charles Martel's son Pépin III. There is one poem, *Renaut de Montauban*, in which Charlemagne is portrayed as much less idealized ruler. Of the two sixteenth century's poets, Aubigné offers, by far, the most scathing and at times diabolical image of the flawed French kings – particularly those who are contemporaries. He focuses most of his criticism on Catherine de Medici, her son, Henri III, and the first Bourbon king, Henri IV, crowned in 1589. In writing the *Discours*, it is not Ronsard's intention to directly criticize either his queen, or the young future king, Charles IX. I will, however, analyze the first three *Discours*, as a list of flaws that the French monarch must avoid, or overcome, if they are to be successful rulers. I will also, include Charles IX in the section on the difficulties associated with being a young, or adolescent king.

According to Edward Peters, the idea of the *rex inutilis* is first developed in two letters, written in 1076 and 1081, by Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085). Before Gregory VII, the term had been used to criticize some of the weak Merovingian kings. In the thirteenth century, the term *rex inutilis* became a part of the legal theory: “In 1245, at the instance of the magnate and higher clergy of Portugal, Innocent IV formalized in canon law [...] the *rex inutilis*, the legitimate ruler whose weakness and incompetence caused disaster in his realm.” (Peters 20) Jean Bodin and Thomas More, discuss the role played by the king in their contemporary society. Jean Bodin’s *Six livres de la République* (1583), analyzes the figure of the ideal king; and that of the weak king:

After describing the effects of beneficent, then of tyrannical ruler, Bodin sets out in a long series of symmetrical pairs the opposing characteristics of each type and contrasts in a conventional manner the misery of the tyrant’s life, death, and subsequent reputation, with the corresponding felicity of those of the just king.
(2)

In the first half of this chapter, I will look at the types of problems associated with being a young king. By “young king”, I mean those who inherit the crown as children or adolescents, and consequently, are not yet ready to rule. In the second part of the chapter, I will focus on the adult king.

The Young King

The young king or the child king, as he appears in *Garin le Lorrain*, *Le Couronnement de Louis*, *Tragiques*, and *Discours*, is weak in that he lacks both the knowledge and the experience to perform the duty of his office. He is unable to impose his authority, and therefore must rely on others. The young king Charles IX, is the addressee in Ronsard’s *Institution pour l’adolescence du Roy Charles IX*. In *Discours à la Royne* and in Aubigné’s *Tragiques*, he is also one of the subjects of the poem.

In *Tragiques*, Aubigné focuses little on the young king: “O quel malheur du ciel, vengeance du destin / Donne des Rois enfants et qui mangent matin.” (*Princes*, vv. 655-656) He places them in a category with two other groups, whom Aubigné feels should never be allowed to rule: women; especially those who do rule, as does Catherine de Medicis¹, and those whose excessive passions make them too easily influenced:

Rois, que le vice noir asservit sous ses loix,
Esclaves de peché, forçaires non pas rois
De vos affections, quelle fureur despite
Vous corrompt, vous esmeut, vous pousse et vous invite
A tremper dans le sang vos scepters odieux,
Vicieux commencer, acheiver vicieux
Le regne insupportable et rempli de miseres,
Dont le peuple poursuit la fin par ses prieres?
(*Princes*, vv. 459-466).

While much of the criticism in this passage is levied against the last Valois king Henri III, his comments regarding the young king are directed at Charles IX.² He came to power in 1560, but for his entire reign would remain influenced by his mother. His weak personality made him susceptible to manipulation from certain prelates and nobles from other powerful houses.³

Based on Ronsard’s notion of the ideal king, as expressed in the *Discours*, it can be inferred that he, as a general rule, thinks adolescent should not be allowed to govern. In his *Discours à la Royne*, Ronsard recognizes that the queen is the only one capable of leading

¹ Arlette Jouanna observes that Aubigné makes an exception of Queen Elizabeth of England: “Élizabeth fait à cet égard figure d’exception; mais sa vocation et sa ‘virginité’ l’élèvent aux yeux de d’Aubigné au-dessus de son sexe.” (*Le sujet, le roi, et la loi*, note 26, p. 625)

² Henri II’s sudden demise in July 1559, left the Valois monarchy in a precarious position. His successor François II was fifteen years old when he became king. His reign would last until only December of the following year.

³ The most powerful noble families sought control of the regency of Charles IX. The Bourbons while the nearest relations of the Valois, were unable to produce a viable leader. Charles IX turned to the Guises for support lead by Duke Francis of Guise and his brother Charles Cardinal of Lorraine. After the attempted “coup” by the Huguenots in March of 1560, the Guises, were forced to give much more power to Catherine de Medici. The Guise family did remain close advisors to the Queen Mother, in particular Charles, the Cardinal of Lorraine whom Aubigné vilifies in *Princes*.

France out of its bloody and miserable condition, caused by the conflicts between Protestants and Catholics. The issue of the young king, is not of primary importance in the *Discours*. Ronsard's immediate concern, is with the restoration of peace within the kingdom. Knowing that the young king would rule, in the relatively near future, Ronsard understands the necessity of preparing Charles for that day. The *Institution pour l'adolescence du Roy Charles IX* is, essentially, a poem in which Ronsard counsils Charles IX as to what a great king is and does. Implied in the advice he gives to the young king, is the idea that an adult king is better prepared, than is a young one to meet the challenges of the office. In his capacity as court poet, Ronsard supports the idea that the crown should remain in the hands of the Valois. This is one of the main differences between the regencies of Charles IX and those of Pépin in *Garin le Lorrain*, and Louis in the *Couronnement de Louis*. The two kings, although the legal sovereigns, exercise only a nominal authority. The actual power rests in others who are not closely related to the two rulers.

The young kings rely heavily on the most powerful vassals of the kingdom, for virtually everything: estate management, military defense, political advice. As a result, this shifts the focus of the poems onto these vassals, thereby placing the king figure in the background. At the same time, it brings to the fore the idea that powerful nobles and counts support, above all, the institution of kingship more than the individual king. The rejection of this idea, would be destabilizing to society. It calls into question the legitimacy of the king's power (chosen by God). It would be a denial of the feudal hierarchical structure of society. Those who seek to ignore or challenge these ideas are labeled as usurpers as is Arnéis in *Couronnement de Louis*. To that effect, those who attempt to benefit from being ruled by a young king, are labeled as traitors or felons. The Bordelais clan, in *Garin le Lorrain* is a good example of characters who are traitors

The kings of the Middle Ages were considered to be “*primer inter pares*.” Their lands were not extensive and were surrounded by strong territorial principalities. The Bordelais clan, and the Lorrainer clan, rule over two such geographical areas. The Bordelais clan has lands in the region around Bordeaux, and near Gascony. Hardré de Lens, has considerable estates up in the north, near Lens and Saint-Quentin. In the beginning of the poem, the lands belonging to the Lorrainer clan, are mostly in Lorraine, and around Metz. Other powerful families, of secondary importance in the poem, include Normans, Angevins, and Flemish. Even over these lesser families, Pépin cannot easily exert his influence.

After the death of Charles Martel, the kingdom is left without an adult male heir. Before dying, Charles Martel asks his trusted comrade, and strong warrior friend Hervis de Metz, to protect Pépin until he is old enough to rule on his own. Pépin comes to power, when the crown is passed to him, by his father Charles Martel upon his death. Pepin inherits a kingdom in a terrible state. Many of the noble families have lost most of their male descendants and financial resources. An intertextual reference is made here to the long and protracted wars between Charles Martel and Girart de Roussillon. Although Hervis and Charles Martel defeat the Saracens at the battle of Soissons, France is weakened and fairly divided.

The issue of stewardship in the *Couronnement de Louis*, is looked upon both favorably and unfavorably. In *Garin le Lorrain*, it is for the most part, viewed unfavorably. It is possible to consider the question of stewardship, in these two poems, as being near opposites in several respects.

In the case of the *Couronnement de Louis*, Guillaume steps in to defend the crown and the principle of the hereditary monarchy. He also intends to keep the crown in the Carolingian family. At the time Guillaume places the crown on Louis’s head, he is only a loyal and faithful

vassal, not related to the Carolingians. In the *Couronnement de Louis*, it is the count Guillaume who assumes the task of protecting Louis. At the time of the coronation, it is still unclear, whether or not, Guillaume is motivated by self-interest. At the end of the poem, Louis marries Guillaume's sister Aélis, tying the families closely together. Those assembled at the coronation of Charlemagne's son are, for the most part, in favor of this decision:

Quant cil l'entendent, grant joie en ont mené;
Totes lor mains en tendirent vers Dé:
"Pere de gloire, tu seies merciez
Qu'estranges reis n'est sor nos devalez!"
(vv. 57-60)

Only when Louis begins to display his cowardice, do some begin to question the wisdom of this choice.

There is, however, some resistance to the idea of Pépin becoming king. Hervis de Metz is unable to accept this task right away. He must return to his homeland in Lorraine, because he has received news that his lands are being attacked by pagan forces. Hervis de Metz asks Hardré de Lens to assume his duties as Pépin's protector. Threatening to kill anyone who does not loyally, and unselfishly, carry out this duty, Hervis assigns to Hardré the additional responsibility of defending the royal domain, and managing the estates' finances:

"Sire Hardré, soiez loiaus et fis!
Sor tant de terre com avez a tenir,
Me gardez bien le roi et son país.
Car de loig sui, ne puis demorer ci."
(vv. 729-732)

Hardré accepts this task with some reservation, for he and a group of nobles initially balked at Hervis's crowning of Pépin: "De mainte jent i ot le contredit, / Qui nel voloient otroier ne souffrir." (vv. 705-706) Hervis, at first, asks Pépin's mother to watch over her son, and to make sure to keep the estates intact and prosperous for him. She replies that she is too grieved, and too distressed, about the death of her husband, and does not feel capable of assuming such a

task. Because of his mother's indifference, the young king will be left in the hands of advisers who are not closely related to the family. The family, which has proven to be the most supportive and loyal, much more so than the Bordelais clan, does not take control, allowing the less loyal family to take over Pepin's regency.

In order to avoid their capture after their father's death, Garin and Begon are sent to stay with Hervis's brother, the bishop of Châlons. The leader of the most loyal family, therefore, is dead and is not around to ensure the king is given proper advice and guidance. The same fate does not befall Louis. In the *Couronnement de Louis*, the noblest and strongest vassal does manage to defeat all threats to Louis. Even though Guillaume often departs in order to fight against Louis's enemies, he leaves Louis in the care of loyal people.

A clear example of the negative consequences of Hervis's decision, to leave Pépin in the care of Hardré de Lens, comes at a crucial moment. Hervis comes back to ask the young king if he would send troops to fight the Saracens, who have invaded Lorraine. Following the advice of Hardré de Lens, Pépin denies this request and does not grant the aid necessary to Hervis. This scene brings to mind the opening scene of the poem. Charles Martel, in desperate need of money to finance his defense of the kingdom against the Saracens, asks the pope, and other powerful prelates, that he be given money to aid him in his campaign. At first, Charles Martel is denied the necessary funds, for reasons very similar to those given by Hardré de Lens later in the poem. The decision is based on personal interests -- the bishops did not see any reason to weaken their position, and endanger their security, so that Charles Martel could continue to fight. They are unable to see that supporting Charles would be to their benefit.

Hardré de Lens advises against helping Hervis. He does not base his argument on personal reasons but rather on the poor financial state of the kingdom, as well as the weak state of the

army. He does not think that Pépin has the men, or the resources, to go to Hervis's aid. For, if he does, this would only seriously weaken Pepin's position. The king cannot afford, at this particular time, to put himself in a disadvantageous position, since there are still very real threats from the pagans. Hardré de Lens, might also have be trying to keep Louis from giving any aid to any of the other powerful families. Therefore, he himself can continue to profit from the influence that he and his clan exert over the young king.

Pépin greets Hervis warmly, yet he is drawn away into council with Hardré. The king, however, does recognize all that Hervis has done for him. He knows that it is Hervis who made him king. Despite the resistance, and the disagreement among various barons and nobles, Pépin also remarks how loyally and faithfully Hervis served his father Charles. What is particularly interesting, is that the king, despite his gratitude and recognition of the debt he owes Hervis, does not follow his own intuition – to go to Hervis's aid. Hardré informs Hervis that aid is not forthcoming. Hervis, furious, replies that he will no longer govern his lands in Pépin's name, and asks the king to relieve him of his feudal obligations to him. Hardré responds that the king will relieve him of his obligations and will do so before all of his friends as witnesses. Hervis asks Pépin to say himself that he agrees with the decision, and Pépin says: “’Oïl, ’” dist il, “’certes ce poise mi.”” (v. 892). The young king is under the influence of Hardré de Lens. Hardré gives advice that the king always accepts, simply because he is not strong enough to make up his own mind. He is unable to do what he himself believes to be the right thing. As a result, he loses Hervis's fealty who, soon after, dies defending his lands.

One of the issues that arises, when studying the young king, is his lack of physical strength, to not only defend his own person, but to lead an army into battle against the Saracens, or a rebel baron. Such a ruler would, therefore, lack the ability to bring any vassals firmly under

his command – except the most blindly faithful ones. Without the help of strong councilors and strong military leaders, the political situation can prove to be very tenuous.

After Guillaume kills Arnéis, five years pass before the king Charlemagne does indeed die. Louis has grown up even more, and the first similarity with *Garin le Lorrain*, is that before the death of Charlemagne, Guillaume also asks to leave to go for a personal pilgrimage to Rome. Charles grants his request. Guillaume departs leaving the young king with his father. While he is on this pilgrimage, he learns of Charlemagne’s death. Louis is truly alone. Guillaume rushes back immediately, to help Louis out of his first difficult situation, that of being held prisoner in the church of Saint-Martin de Tours.

One of the differences between the *Couronnement de Louis* and *Garin le Lorrain* is that Louis throughout the whole poem is a young boy or an adolescent. He is characterized as being young in many different occasions, and often called a child by the narrator:

Ot le Guillelmes, sil corut embracier,
Par les dous flans le lieve senz targier:
“En nom Deu, enfes, cil m’a mal engeignié
Qui te rova a venir a mon pié,
Car sor omes dei je ton cors aidier.”
(vv. 1742-1746)

In this scene, Louis kneels down in front of Guillaume, who at first, does not recognize him. According to Jeanne Wathelet-Willem: “Il est absolument insolite qu’un souverain, même très jeune, se jette aux pieds de son vassal; c’est au vassal à plier le genou devant son souverain, en signe d’hommage. D’ailleurs, Guillaume ne le supporte pas.” (217) Guillaume, who wants to serve his lord, fights many battles after the episode at Tours in order to secure Louis’s throne. He brings the rebel barons to Louis so that they may pay homage, and recognize Louis as their legitimate lord. The first baron whom Guillaume addresses is the son of Richard of Normandy, Acelin. Acelin and his father do not recognize Louis as their legitimate lord. Acelin says to

Guillaume's messenger Aliaume that he should be given the crown, and that France will be lost with this young boy. According to Acelin, Louis will never amount to anything:

Dist Acelins: "A Deu beneïçon!
Va, si me di a Guillelme le pro
Que il otreit ce que li altre font.
De la corone m'est delivrez li dons;
Bien sereit la France perdue a cel garcon:
Ja ne valdra Looïs un boton
(vv. 1813-1818)

Guillaume becomes angry, and kills Acelin, since Acelin refuses to submit to Louis's authority. During the next three years, Guillaume travels throughout the land in order to fight many battles to secure Louis's throne, and to establish him as the legitimate king. He first subdues king Amarmond of Bordeaux, next he brings to heel Dagobert of Carthage, and the count of Andorra, and afterwards he heads north into Brittany. In the last major episode of the poem, a messenger from Rome arrives in Orléans. He tells Louis and Guillaume, that Gui d'Allemagne has again taken the major fortifications of Rome. The pope is dead, as is Galafre, whom Guillaume had left in charge after his first pilgrimage in Rome. He urges Guillaume to go to Rome in order to defeat Gui d'Allemagne. Louis accompanies him:

"Gui d'Alemaigne a ses oz assemblé;
Pris a de Rome les maistres fermetez.
Toz li païs est a dolor tornez,
Gentilz om sire, se vos nel secorez."
(vv. 2242-2245)

In Rome, Louis, once again demonstrates his cowardice and weakness. According to Wagih Azzam:

Faible, lâche, sot, et finalement ingrate: l'héritier de la couronne ne bénéficie d'aucune circonstance atténuante dans *Le Couronnement de Louis*. On ne saurait dresser portrait moins flatteur, plus opposé surtout-- systématiquement contraire – aux préceptes de la royauté énoncé au début de la chanson. (163)

Gui d'Allemagne attacks the French army before it can prepare the camp, and set up its defenses properly. They catch the French army off guard. While Guillaume is off fighting the Romans,

and Gui's army, Louis is running from tent to tent and hiding in each one: "Et Looïs s'en vait fuiant a pié, / De tref en autre se vait par tot mucier [...]" (vv. 2311-2312) Eventually the raid is stopped and, Louis receives a messenger from Gui saying that he does not have any legitimate claim on Rome, nor does he have a claim on the inheritance on the lands of Rome and around Rome. He is asked to go back to France. If necessary, Gui is also ready to challenge Louis to a duel or anybody else that Louis appoints as his substitute. Louis tells his barons that Gui challenges him and that he is too young and certainly not strong enough to even hold up his weapon:

"Seignor baron, entendez mon langage:
Gui d'Alemaigne me mande grant oltrage;
Par noz dous cors me mande la bataille,
Et je suis juvenes et de petit eage
Si ne puis pas maintenir mon barnage.
A il Franceis qui por mon cors le face?"
(vv. 2405-2409)

Not a single French barons offers to fight in Louis's stead. This is a blatant condemnation of Louis's inability. He does not have the support of his own barons, and they are not willing to fight and die for him, none except Guillaume. Louis begins to cry:

Quant cil l'oïrent, s'embronchent lor visages.
Veit le li reis, a pou que il n'enrage;
Tendrement plore desoz les pels de martre.
(vv. 2411-2413)

Guillaume enters the tent, and asks why Louis is crying. Louis explains to him the situation, and Guillaume decides to represent him. Guillaume kills Gui d'Allemagne, he then puts Louis on the throne and has him crowned the ruler of Rome:

Par dedenz Rome fu Guillelmes li ber,
S'a Looïs son seignor coroné:
De tot l'empire li a fait seürté.
(vv. 2649-2651)

After, they return to France, Louis returns to Laon and Guillaume is called off to fight a powerful rebel baron in attempt to defend Louis's kingdom and the throne.

The empire that Louis inherits in the *Couronnement de Louis* is considerably larger and stronger. The empire, over which the historical Charlemagne ruled, was quite vast and extensive. His son, Louis the Pious, was unable to maintain the size and stability of the empire. King Louis, in the epic poem, is faced with a few immediate threats to his kingdom and to Christendom. In Rome, Gui d'Allemagne has besieged the city, gaining much power in the region and among the Roman nobles. This threat is, however, of less immediate importance to Louis. Some powerful and independent feudal barons, such as Richard of Normandy and his son, Acelin, are the ones who pose the most dangerous threat to the kingdom.

Another point in common, that these two young kings share, is their lack of physical strength. These young kings, even Pepin, after seven years under Hardré's tutelage, are neither admired, nor respected, for their physical abilities. At no point in the *Couronnement de Louis*, does Louis lead an army, or even demonstrate an ability to fight. Unable to master the military skills, and lacking courage, Louis never achieves the level of excellence that his father had.

Pépin III is told, quite bluntly, by Hardré de Lens, that he is weak and should be more prudent when exerting himself. Pepin arrives with his army in Maurienne. He over-exerts himself while participating in chivalric, and falls sick: "'Sire,' fait-il, 'bien vos avoie dit / Ne porriez pas endurer ne souffrir.'" (vv. 1513-1514) This is evidence of his weak constitution. Pepin, therefore, is unable to partake in the battle to rescue Thierry, and is forced to retire. Pépin is not the only one of the young kings, whose constitution is called into question. In the coronation scene of the *Couronnement de Louis*, Arnéis of Orléans tells Louis that he is too

young and not physically strong enough to lead an army or to defend the kingdom. Arnéis proposes to allow Louis to rule, once he proves his prowess as a knight:

“Dreiz emperere, faites paiz, si m’oiez.
Mes sire est juvenes, n’a que quinze anz entiers,
Ja sereit morz quin fereit chevalier.
Ceste besoigne, se vous plaist, m’otreiez,
Tresqu’a treis anz que verrons comment iert.”
(vv. 102-106)

However, there is nothing later on in this poem to suggest that Louis will become a great warrior. To the contrary, he continues to show unrelieved cowardice and physical weakness. The weakness of these two kings, however, is not limited to their corporal states. Their youth and inexperience do not allow them to make decisions necessary to rule.

During the seven years, before Garin arrives at the court of Pépin, Hardré de Lens has time to exert his influence over the young king. He does not miss his chance. Pépin is easily influenced by Hardré de Lens, Isidore le Gris, and other councilors, who at times put forth the Bordelais’ interests before those of Louis and the kingdom.

On several other occasions, Pépin is under the influence of one or another person. He does not show himself to be independent minded, and capable of making a decision by himself. It is true that a good king listens to the advice of his barons before deciding, Charlemagne in the *Chanson de Roland*, is the ideal example of a king who does just that. Yet, throughout most of the poem Pépin, shows himself incapable of deciding what he thinks is best for his kingdom. He is sometimes led into decisions that he makes for purely personal reasons.

It is important to remember, that while the Bordelais clan is portrayed as being villainous, they have a fairly good relationship to the king. From the beginning of Pépin’s reign, the Bordelais and Lorrainers, are faithful vassals, providing invaluable military assistance. Garin and

Froment are close companions during the first years of Pépin's reign. Pepin is responsible for bringing this friendship to an end.

From the beginning of their arrival at Pépin's court, Begon and Garin are protectors of the king and among his most faithful knights and vassals. They show great skill at hunting and as warriors. While hunting, Begon kills a stag. Impressed, the king grants him the fortress of Belin, in Blaye, bordering on the lands of the Bordelais. At first, the Bordelais think this to be disrespectful, and potentially threatening. Pépin also makes Garin and Begon seneschals of France. Froment, jealous of the rewards given to the two brothers, extracts a promise from Pépin. When the first land becomes available, he, Froment, will be granted the land. Just before his death, Thierry of Maurienne, to whom Garin and Begon gave assistance in defending his lands against the Saracens, asks Garin to marry his daughter Blanchefleur. Thierry leaves all of his lands to Blanchefleur and Garin – once they are married. Froment, livid, feels that he should be given Thierry's lands. Essentially, it is this issue which causes the split between Froment and Garin. This controversy, is what ultimately leads to many decades of civil war between the two clans: weakening the country and stripping it of its resources.

An important point of interest also is the upbringing, the care, and the protection of the young Pépin, which is given to somebody outside the immediate family of Charles Martel. This decision will be of political significance later on in the poem. The ones who would advise the king, Hardré de Lens, Bernard de Naisil, and Isidore le Gris would perhaps put forth their own families' interests before those of the kingdom.

There are many parallels and similarities between the portrait of the young king in both the *Couronnement de Louis* and in *Garin le Lorrain*. They share traits, such as physical weakness, lack of courage, lack of intelligence, and ability to rule and understand the nobles. Louis does not

have many opportunities to consult other nobles. There are very few council scenes in the *Couronnement de Louis*. Consequently, he is simply told what to do by Guillaume. When Guillaume is not by Louis's side, the king is left in the charge of other people. Guillaume often goes off to fight battles, to secure Louis's position. These absences do not have a negative impact on Louis, for those who take care of him, during Guillaume's absences, are faithful to the count.

Although written more or less half a century apart, *Garin le Lorrain* and the *Couronnement de Louis*, both at least in part, illustrate the necessity of a faithful and loyal nobility to a king, who is either a boy or an adolescent. In the case of the *Couronnement de Louis*, the baron who not only supports but extends and consolidates the throne and the power of Louis, is Guillaume of Orange. In *Garin le Lorrain*, the situation is less clear. The family that is the most faithful, and the most supportive of the young king ends up being one of the families opposed to the adult Pépin. Nevertheless, during the reign of Charles Martel, Hervis de Metz, who was his strongest and most loyal vassal, ardently defends not only the empire from the pagan invasions, but also the king himself. Later, he also defends his young heir against the plots of some powerful noble families from Bordeaux and from Lens, and united through marriage. Without the help of these powerful and loyal vassals, who defeat traitors who wish to usurp the throne, or bring the young king under their influence, these young kings would not have ruled long. Youth and inexperience were not their only deficiencies. The adult king Pépin, is not much different than the child king, except in so far as he is a slightly better warrior. He is also slightly more courageous – possessing certain attributes which make him a moderately successful king. Pépin never matches the pathetic incompetence that Louis displays. Louis does remain a young king throughout the entire poem. The adult Louis is revealed to us in other *chansons de geste*.

The Adult King

In those poems whose narratives involve a weak adult king, the point of interest centers on various problems pertinent to the feudal relationship between the king and his vassals: rewarding loyalty, matters of feudal rights, privileges, and duties, and questions of justice. One message is constant: dissention, and disagreement are tolerated only to a very narrow degree. With the king always at the top of the hierarchy, rebellion is ultimately seen as unjustifiable though at times understandable.

Adult kings are by no means perfect. To analyse the flawed and weak king I study Charles Martel in *Girart de Roussillon*, and in *Garin le Lorrain*, Charlemagne in *Chanson de Roland*, *Renaut de Montauban*, and in *Couronnement de Louis*, as well as Pépin in *Garin le Lorrain*.

The sixteenth century poets offer two very different perspectives on the kings of their day, that is to say the Valois monarchy. Ronsard's first two *Discours*, *Discours à la Royne*, and *Institution pour l'adolescence du roy Charles IX*, are both more concerned with the qualities and attributes of the flawed king, rather than with the ideal king. Nevertheless, Ronsard discusses the behavior and policies the king should avoid, as well as which would make him unpopular or ineffective as a ruler. Aubigné is considerably more transparent, in his study of the Valois kings, but also of the first Bourbon king Henri IV. The main focus of Aubigné's criticism lies with Catherine of Medici or "Jesabel" and with Henri III, who succeeded Charles IX. The poems from the sixteenth century differ significantly from those of the Middle Ages. Their tone, content, and perspective, are all part of an evolving, very active, and hostile political situation in France from the Massacre at Vassy in 1562, right up through Henri of Navarre's apostasy. Both Aubigné and Ronsard offer opinions and perspectives, reflect the ongoing and developing debate in the field of political theory that marked many of the writings of those who lived in the sixteenth century.

In the five medieval poems, all the kings are in some way flawed. Charlemagne, as portrayed in the *Chanson de Roland* and in the *Couronnement de Louis*, most closely approaches the ideal we discussed in the previous chapter. He is still human and does have his faults. There is a distinct difference between the types of flaws such as they are found in Charles Martel, particularly in *Girart de Roussillon*, and in Charlemagne, or Charles in *Renaut de Montauban*. Of the three adult kings, Charlemagne, Charles Martel, and Pépin, the weakest by far is Pépin, and I will look at him separately since his case is rather different than of the other two kings. If we I to place them in order from the least weak to the weakest king, I would find at the top, Charlemagne in the *Chanson de Roland* and in the *Couronnement de Louis*, followed by Charlemagne in *Renaut de Montauban*, and Charles Martel in *Girart de Roussillon*, followed by Pépin in *Garin le Lorrain* and finally Louis in the *Couronnement de Louis*. I will approach this section chronologically, that is to say I will look at the two earlier poems, the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Couronnement de Louis*. I will group together the three other poems, *Renaut de Montauban*, *Garin le Lorrain*, and *Girart de Roussillon*.

In the *Prologue* of the *Couronnement de Louis*, the character of Charlemagne is as close as he will ever be to ideal depiction. This is the Charlemagne of the *Chanson de Roland*. This is the Charlemagne of the *culte de Charlemagne*, as was started and developed by the abbey of Saint-Denis in a propagandistic attempt to give legitimacy both to the Capetian monarchy and the abbey itself. Saint-Denis used the legend of Charlemagne to illustrate the legitimacy of the monarch, and the concept of the hereditary crown as symbols, and to defend national unity. In his article about the *Couronnement de Louis*, Jean Frappier states the importance that the Capetians placed on both the hereditary aspect of the crown, and also the naming of the heir during the lifetime of the king:

Le souci majeur des premiers Capétiens fut de rendre héréditaire en fait la couronne élective en droit. Ils parvinrent à réaliser cette pensée politique en conférant par la cérémonie du sacre un prestige religieux à la personne du roi et en associant par avance leur fils à la royauté. C'est de leur vivant même que les six premiers rois de la dynastie firent sacrer et couronner leur fils. Cette pratique n'alla pas toujours sans résistance, mais leur patiente habileté réussit à instituer par voie de coutume le principe de l'hérédité, que consacrait en définitive l'idée d'une royauté de droit divin. (200)

Yet, in the *Couronnement de Louis* there is a certain paradox in that the royal figure, Louis, is anything but strong, powerful, and a worthy representation of the ideal Capetian monarch.

Frappier rightly points out that:

Le trouvère célèbre non pas Louis mais le roi français, qu'on se rappelle la joie des barons apprenant que Charlemagne transmet la couronne à son fils et qu'elle n'échoie pas à un prince étranger, autrement dit le roi de Saint-Denis, de l'abbaye où l'on conservait la bannière du royaume, l'oriflamme. (201)

In the first chapter, the Charlemagne of these two poems was very close to the ideal, if not the ideal royal figure of the Middle Ages. This ideal was a blend of the classical ideal of the *imperium romanum*, and the Christian ideal of the emperor as protector of the faith, and invested with the universal authority of the Church whose mission it is to protect.

There are a few scenes both in the *Chanson de Roland* and one scene in the *Couronnement de Louis*, which suggest that Charlemagne was indeed only a man, in that he was fallible in some extent. This flaw or fallibility of Charlemagne is in evidence at the time of the battle against Baligant after the death of Roland, where he is on the point of being vanquished. At this time Gabriel intervenes, saves Charlemagne from death, which aids Charlemagne in vanquishing the Saracen ruler. Without the aid of divine intervention, Charlemagne would have been vanquished. This episode would not at all have been acceptable, to those who believed in the legend of Charlemagne's infallibility. This scene shows that Charlemagne was a privileged king, and that he was looked after by God, acting through the angel Gabriel. It is clear though that Charlemagne is protected by God, yet he is unable to save Roland from his fate. For, it is

Charlemagne who embodies the ideal of the great Christian emperor. He alone must live, and he alone must survive to fight the pagan enemies who threaten western Christendom.

Yet, Charlemagne is not without his doubts, and at times even questions his ability to carry out the task assigned to him. This is made clear in one of the several scenes in which Charlemagne dreams. In one of these scenes, Charlemagne sees his army, being massacred and attacked on all sides. Then he himself is attacked but he wakes, and remembers the feeling of powerlessness and his inability to help:

Karles se dort cum hume traveillet.
Seint Gabriel li ad Deus enveiet:
L'empereür li cumandet a garder.
Par avisiun li ad nunciet
D'une bataille ki encuntre lui ert:
Senefiance l'en demustrat mult gref.
Carles guardat amunt envers le ciel [...]
E Franceis crient: "Carlemagne, aidez!"
Li reis en ad e dulur e pitet;
Aler i volt, mais il ad disturber.
(vv. 2525-2548)

This dream shows the human weakness of Charlemagne. Even he, is incapable of defending everyone, and winning every battle.

The Charlemagne in the *Couronnement de Louis*, is approaching the end of his years. He is no longer the Charlemagne of action, nor of battles. He is a figure who now rests upon his laurels, and whose career, reputation, and lifetime all serve as an example of his greatness, and his majestic nature. There is one scene in the *Prologue* of the *Couronnement de Louis* in which Charlemagne does demonstrate uncertainty, as if to indicate that he is despite his desires, unable to alter events such as they have befallen him. This is in reference, to the fact that his son deplorably demonstrates his unwillingness and his incapacity to accept the throne from his father's hands. During this scene, Arnéis of Orléans, a noble who is not of the family of Charlemagne, proposes to take Louis under his protection. The curious part about this scene is

that at first, Charlemagne realizing that this is perhaps the best way for him to assure that his son will eventually take the throne, agrees in principle to this proposal by Arnéis. Yet, even if the emperor does not see anything wrong with this proposition, Guillaume who is also not of the family, but yet is a loyal supporter of the monarchy, essentially countermines Charlemagne's decision. It is rather curious, that it is Guillaume who seems to be pointing out to Charlemagne the unwise decision that he had made. However, it is clear that both Guillaume and the narrator, do judge Arnéis a traitor and a felon. This leads us to the question then: why is Charlemagne himself unable to see through the ruse, and unable to identify the traitorous nature of Arnéis's proposal?

In the *Chanson de Roland*, the oft written about scene of Ganelon's trial, raises yet again the *thèse* that Charlemagne himself perhaps did not act as decisively as he should have. In fact at one point, he was on the brink of accepting his fate, that is to acquit Ganelon of all the charges. Yet again, another noble points out to Charlemagne that there is an alternative, and that indeed Ganelon has committed treason. If it were not for Thierry, Ganelon would have gone free, and justice would not have been rendered. It is not my intent here to recreate the fairly long and ongoing debate about how to interpret Charlemagne's behavior during the trial of Ganelon's. Convincing arguments are made on both sides, some view this as being a normal natural part of his role, as feudal king, to allow justice, and law to take its course above that of the personal interest of the emperor. Yet, we may ask ourselves why Charlemagne himself again does not think of this alternative, or does not try to find recourse in the law on other grounds. There are of course those who see in this an example of Charlemagne's weakness, and inability to be decisive at a critical moment. This is not wholly inconsistent with Charlemagne's character, for much earlier in the poem there are the two scenes, in which Ganelon is chosen to be the emissary to

Marsile in Saragossa and where the emperor also refuses to exercise his prerogative to name the messenger.

In the second scene of interest Roland is designated and accepts the assignment to lead the rear guard during the retreat of Charlemagne's army. In the first scene, one in which an emissary is chosen to go to the Saracens, Charlemagne immediately rejects the offer on the parts of Roland, Olivier, and Turpin, to be the emissary. Essentially, he feels that these men are too important to him, and they need to be near him. This of course prompts Roland to suggest that Ganelon be the one to go to the Saracens, at which point Charlemagne himself agrees. But in this scene, as in many others, Charlemagne essentially makes his decisions based on the advice and council of his barons. He seems to rely heavily on them, to the extent that he implements or puts into action decisions that his barons had already made. Yet, when something displeases him he does not even allow the barons to express their opinions, because he immediately dismisses the idea of these warriors he is fond of, getting sent as emissaries. This said in the second scene in which Ganelon designates Roland for the rear guard, Charlemagne has the power to yet again say: "No, Roland is too important for me, I do not think he should go and perform this task." But instead, he simply laments the choice, and he helplessly says; "So who is going to stay with me and lead my army?" (v. 748) At which point Ganelon says: "Ogier de Danemark will ride with you, and protect you while Roland leads the rear guard." So, while at time Charlemagne seems to be able to intercede and control events when he wants to, he seems to be powerless to change Roland's fate. This is an inconsistency on the part of the poet, but also does reveal the inability of Charlemagne to indeed affect the outcome of the decisions of the barons, so that he may see his will done. After all, it would not have been a breach of justice for him to refuse to allow Roland to go, nor would it have been a particular insult to anybody among the Peers of France.

Yet, with so few obstacles in his way, Charlemagne did not in fact do what he wished to do. Although these episodes show the more human and therefore fallible side of Charlemagne, he still remains in these two poems the ideal figure of the Christian king, that is not to be debated.

In *Renaut de Montauban*, Charlemagne is portrayed very differently. He is not at all depicted as the ideal king and, exhibits many foibles. He represents the de-idealized figure of the legendary king. He is a Charlemagne who is given to petty jealousy, who is obsessed with revenge, and who at times is most unreasonable toward his barons. This is not however, a Charlemagne who has been de-idealized to the point where he resembles Louis in the *Couronnement de Louis*. For the Charlemagne in this poem is a strong Charlemagne, he is an able military ruler, and he is someone who still can command the respect of the Peers of France, and of his vassals. This is not a Charlemagne who is weak in mind, indecisive, or coward. Yet, there is not doubt that the poet wishes to portray this king as being flawed. He is most unreasonable, given to tantrums, and to irrational behavior. Yet, at no point does the poet ever suggest that such a king should not be king, it is never a question of replacing Charlemagne or of Charlemagne being defeated. In fact, at the end of the poem, Renaut de Montauban and Maugis do succumb to Charlemagne's desire; they leave the country to go into exile, and they do accept peace on Charlemagne's terms. Therefore, in terms of Charlemagne's responsibilities and power as a feudal lord, Charlemagne has seen justice done. Charlemagne should not be criticized for his insisting on Renaut's exile, no matter how unwarranted it may seem to the reader, whose sympathies seem to often lie with Maugis and Renaut.

In what way is this king flawed? In what way, is he different and more limited than the more ideal version depicted in the two earlier poems? The fact that Charles in *Renaut de Montauban* is not even accorded the formal name of Charlemagne is significant, in that it points

out that his character is not worthy of the magnanimity, the prestige, and the overall praiseworthy reputation of the legendary king. This is not to say that Charles does not possess certain admirable qualities. In this epic poem, Charles does display a good amount of courage, ferocity, and even military prowess in battle. He is also able to use and manipulate his barons to arrive at his desired ends. He is also still treated with respect and deference by the Peers of France, if not by Renaud and Maugis and their families. While his Peers may not agree always with his actions, for the most part, they follow him and they follow his lead. At no point do they speak aloud such disparaging remarks as those heard from the Bordelais clan in *Garin le Lorrain*, or the various noble barons opposing Louis in the *Couronnement de Louis*. This Charles, however, lacks some of the essential fundamental traits necessary to be the ideal ruler. Throughout virtually the whole of this epic poem, Charles is pushed and motivated by revenge. The immediate catalyst for Charles's desire for revenge is Renaud's slaying of Charles's nephew Bertholai in Charles's castle. As the poem progresses, it becomes clear that a second, perhaps stronger obsession begins to form with regard to Maugis, who is a cousin of Renaud and his brothers.

The first most obvious quality Charles lacks, is self-possession. He is driven by the pursuit of his *bête noire*, that is to say his overwhelming need to rid himself of Renaud, and perhaps even more so, Maugis. Frequently unable to control his emotions, Charles demonstrates a rather illogical, and sometimes very violent behavior. This motivation by self-interest, is what puts Charles in a negative light, and earns him the disapprobation of the narrator. It is the very pursuit of his personal vendetta, that pushes Charles beyond the scope of acceptable behavior in an ideal medieval king.

One of Charles's most poignant and even nefarious character flaws, is his recurrent torturing of those whom he holds as prisoner. It is perhaps not surprising given his obsession with the capture of Maugis, that when he does finally have him in his grasp, Charles's passion overcomes him and his treatment of the prisoner becomes violent:

En .I. piler de chaisne les fait .III. fois passer;
En .I. grandisme tronc furent li coing fermé,
Et li charcan del col sunt grant enchainé,
Et les moufles de fer li fait es maint fermer;
Parmi toutes les ongles en fait le sanc voler.
(vv. 11591-11595)

The same extreme treatment of a prisoner is seen with Renaut's brother Richard:

Richars estoit as très angoiseus et destroys;
Les oels avoit bandés, les poins lies estrois;
Tres par miliu des ongles en va li sans tos frois.
(vv. 9921-9923)

We can imagine that some of those listening to the *trouvère* sing his tale, might have felt consternation, and disapproval at the brutality of the king's act. In their edition of *Renaut de Montauban*, translated into modern French, Micheline Combarieu-du Grès et Jean Subrenat mention the significance of these scenes: "*Le sang jaillissait sous ses ongles: les mauvais traitements infligés à un prisonnier sont réprochés dans l'univers chevaleresque. C'est donc la conduite de l'empereur qui est ici stigmatisée.*" (332) Some of these scenes in which excessive violence occurs are marked by certain levity. After his capture by Roland, Renaut's brother Richard, taunts Charles by telling him, that Maugis will kill him if Charles dares hurt him:

Quant Charlemaignes l'ot, si a pris .I. baston
Et fiert parmi le chief Ricart le fil Aymon.
Le cuir li a trancié et la char li derront,
Li sans li est colés aval sor le menton
(vv. 9712-9715)

So, Charles decides to hit Richard with a stick. This is a variation of an earlier scene in the poem, in which Clarisse and her two sons carry sticks with the intention of hitting King Yon, who had

betrayed Renaut. Here the narrator is making the obvious comparison of Charles's behavior with those of a woman and her two boys – hardly befitting a king. Rather than ignoring Richard's taunts, he picks up not a sword but a stick, a tool that a child would use perhaps to hit somebody else.

The siege of Montauban, is the final scene where Charles's obsession, and uncontrollable temper push him to act beyond all measure of reason. Charles refuses to end this siege even after the proposal made by a messenger, that if he did not end the siege, Renaut would hang Richard of Rouen, whom had been taken prisoner. In most of the medieval epic poems, when a French king does battle one of his vassals, it rarely gets to the point where almost everyone in the besieged castle dies of hunger or famine. Usually before that time, one or the other would have given up, and some sort of peace would have been restored. Charles became very angry when he learned that Aymon gave some food to his sons during the siege.

Aymon, ce dist li rois, ne m'aves gaires cier,
Quant tu mes enemis dones si à mangier,
Bien sai tote t'ovraigne, tu ne le pues noier.
Par icel Dameldeu [qui tot a à] jugier,
Je m'en voil ainz la nuit si hautement vengier
Que le cief me laires, se on le velt jugier.
(vv. 13597-13602)

This anger would again suggest, that in his state Charles would have perhaps let everybody perish within the castle unless, he got what he wanted which was Maugis's dead body:

Charles oï ses homes qui l'ont contraloïé;
Adonc jura par ire, comme hon renoié,
Ja Renaus n'aura pais, ne ja n'iert adrelié,
S'il ne li rent Maugis qui si l'a corre[lié].
[De Richart n'a il garde, par lui soit vergoignié;
Miex voudroit de sa teste avoir .I. oeil sachié.]
(vv. 14982-14987)

It is his barons and the Peers of France, who can no longer bear to see the pain, and suffering of those who are in the castle of Montauban. They can no longer go along with Charles' completely

obsessive, and illogical behavior, and finally decide to abandon him. Charles, left alone without his barons, does accept the peace with the condition that Renaut leaves the country, and becomes a pilgrim. Viewed from the perspective of feudal justice, this outcome is perfectly normal and acceptable by medieval standards. Many times a defeated lord or noble was either killed, usually in battle, forced to submit to the king, or forced to flee the country. Here it is clear that Renaud's presence in the kingdom would not be tolerated by Charles, for he is so blinded and so angered by Maugis and Renaud that it would have been impossible for them to co-exist in the same kingdom. The most logical choice would be for Renaut to keep his life, but to be forced to leave the kingdom. He is no longer able to live among his friends and his peers. This conclusion to the siege of Montauban indicates that the narrator while never condemning the revolt of the barons of the kingdom, does to some extent criticize Charles by not allowing him to have his blood thirst satisfied. In this sense, the narrator makes Charles suffer a personal defeat for this type of vendetta is not viewed as acceptable by the narrator. But, in his role as king in a feudal society Charles has every right to avenge the death of his nephew Bertolai, and in that he was vindicated.

At no point are the poet's views made clearer than in the critical scene where Charles finds himself a prisoner in Montauban, after having been kidnapped by Maugis, while asleep. A debate ensues between Renaut, Richard, Roland, and Naïmes. Richard is in favor of killing the king, but Renaut wants to release him. In what may seem today an odd bid of loyalty when the king awakens, all the knights and barons, including those who are his captors, kneel before him in homage. This act confirms the idea that the poet places above all else the need for loyalty, and fidelity of all vassals to the king, and that the decision to release him, is indicative that the rebel barons also come to the same conclusion.

This de-idealized portrait of Charlemagne in *Renaut de Montauban* is made all the more remarkable by the fact, that for centuries the legend of Charlemagne existed, and that such a portrait obviously went against the common perception of how the great king lived and fought. This particular *chanson de geste* did nothing in the long term, to alter the belief that Charlemagne was indeed the model Christian medieval emperor.

Charles Martel in *Girart de Roussillon*, is another thirteenth century portrayal of yet another legendary figure. Although Charles Martel, never attained the same almost demi-god status that Charlemagne does, he nevertheless was remembered in French history as being one of the greatest of the Frankish rulers particularly after his famous battle at Poitiers, where he turned back the Saracen invaders in 732. The Charles Martel of *Garin le Lorrain*, as he is represented in the prologue, is also fighting the Saracens, and defending France. This literary Charles Martel separates from the troops of Hervis de Metz, and goes to Troyes. In the epic poem it is Hervis de Metz who organizes the defense of Soisson and who turn back the Saracens there. Afterward, he rides to the aid of Charles Martel in Troyes, but arriving too late, he finds the emperor fatally wounded.

These historical inaccuracies do little to diminish the image of Charles Martel as a brave and fierce warrior, as well as an ardent defender of the Christian faith. In *Garin le Lorrain*, there is another Charles Martel who uselessly and recklessly wastes the youth, and the fighting force of France, fighting his protracted wars against Girart de Roussillon. It is this facts which leads Hardré de Lens to advise the young king Pépin against going to the aid of Hervis de Metz. From a literary perspective this view of Charles Martel is born out in *Girart de Roussillon* which recounts the life of Charles Martel leading up to the end of his wars with Girart de Roussillon.

This later poem gives a much more in depth and psychologically complex view of the character of Charles Martel.

In many ways, Charles Martel in *Girart de Roussillon* is not that different from Charles in *Renaut de Montauban*. Both are strong and excellent warriors, both have a firm tight control over their kingdoms, and for the most part are able to keep their vassals in line. Both are even able to rally the forces of Christendom, to ride out in defense of the empire, and defeat the Saracens. But just as Charles Martel shares many of the positive qualities of Charles in *Renaut de Montauban*, he also shares some of the negative ones.

At the beginning of *Girart de Roussillon*, the emperor of Constantinople has given his two daughters in marriage. Charles will marry Berthe, and Girart, the most powerful baron of the realm, will take Elissent as his wife. However, Charles changes his mind when he sees the beautiful Elissent, and decides that he will be the one to marry Elissent. Girart should have Berthe instead. Girart gets very angry because of this abuse of power by the king, an abuse which will be at the origin of the whole feud:

“Don”, co respont l’abaz de Saint Denis
“Ceste autre est ta muilliers que tu pelvis,
E que avam jurade en son païs.
-Per mon cap”, co dis Charles, “tot en devis.
Se Girarz lai partit, eu cai causis.”
E l’abaz respondeit: “Don, mareu dis.”
(vv. 366-371)

He does not listen to the abbot and acts selfishly. From the beginning, the narrator calls Girart a noble, and courteous character. With regard to Charles, the narrator paints a critical and at times derisory portrait of this king. This will begin when he decides to take Elissent as his wife. Ultimately, the narrator will maintain the opinion that regardless of his numerous faults and bellicose irrational acts, Girart is to blame for this extremely long conflict, therefore, it is up to Girart to make amends. Once the agreement is made, Girart is free from vassalic links. Girart

does ask Charles to allow his fief to become an allod, and Charles says yes, but is clearly unhappy about having to do this. Charles will then hunt on Girart's land which will begin the conflict.

Charles also mistreats prisoners such as Eble, Senebrun de Bordeaux, Yon's son, and Guillaume from Toulouse. He wishes to punish them because they are now his prisoners, but Aymon tells him they need to be respected, however, Charles ignores him.

Per mon cap", dist lo reis, "molt me sat bon.
Co sunt me anemic li plus felon.
Tros a breus jorz n'aurunt ta gaardon,
Ja mais non caucera uns esporon [...]
-Seinor non lo pouz faire sens mespreison. [...]
E coilli les Girauz en sa mauson;
Anz rendre nes nos vol s'enaisi non
Que uns non I perdes mais raencon;
E de co li fesem ben plevison.
-Eu lor derai", dist Carles, "d'eital poison,
Toz li plus ris dira: "Garniz en son."
(vv. 5378-5396)

It is clear here, that Charles does not listen to Aymon, and intends to poison these prisoners, even though Aymon has given his words to Girart that nothing would happen to them.

Charles's behavior is also to blame, when a monk sent by Girart arrives at his court and talks to him about his trial. Charles wants the monk to pay for all the harm Girart has caused him, and actually threatens to cut his testicles.

Sobre vos cuit, dun monges, qu'en tort li sorz;
En talent m'es vengut ques coils non porz"
Li monges, quant l'oït, vougre ester estorz.
Li monges ot de Carle qui o lui tence,
E entent la rason con la comence.
E tem noil face torre la genitence,
Carl ore qu'en fust fait la penitence.
(vv. 6698-6704)

This is actually the only comedic scene in the poem, especially because of the monk's reaction. He is afraid in front of the king and says he would like to be far away, in his monastery.

Seven years pass after the death of Hervis de Metz, and the arrival at the court of Pépin of Garin and his brother Begon. Pépin as an adult, is not the redoubtable figure, leader, and warrior that was his father Charles Martel such as he is portrayed in *Girart de Roussillon*. He is less able to impose his will on his vassals than was his father. His personality is not marked with a strong streak of independence as is his father's. It is for these reasons that I place Pépin, slightly below Charles in *Renaut de Montauban* and Charles Martel in *Girart de Roussillon*, as approaching the ideal king. Pépin is not however anywhere near as weak, incompetent, and pathetic as Louis in the *Couronnement de Louis*. He does have some qualities that suggest a certain strength, but on the whole, Pépin is someone who is rather incapable of influencing events between the Bordelais clan, and the Lorrainer clan. Most of Pépin's problems come from his inability to think, and reason when given poor advice. From the time he was a young boy, he was raised by and influenced by Hardré de Lens, who often gave advice which would favor his clan, therefore, Louis was never able to really develop the capacity to think on his own in a critical, and intelligent manner. Pépin is reluctant to fully choose a side between the long, bloody, and costly succession of wars between the Bordelais and the Lorrainer clans. Pépin tries his best to always regulate this feud, with the goal of uniting the two clans, making peace, and making a stronger unified kingdom. This underlines the rather ambiguous nature of Pépin's role in this epic poem. On the one hand, he seems to have sided with the Lorrainer clan and for just reason, during most of the poem. On the other hand, that does not prevent Pépin from equally supporting, and welcoming various members of the Bordelais clan into his court, as well as recognizing their importance to the kingdom.

While Pépin may support the Lorrainer clan throughout most of the epic poem, at certain critical moments, he fails in this support, and he is able to be influenced, and controlled through

nothing short of bribery. It is at these moments that Pépin shows his weakest moments as a king; in the moment where he is motivated by personal interest, rather than an interest in the kingdom. In reading *Garin le Lorrain*, one quickly get the sense that the actual protagonists, that is to say those who drive the plot forward, are not the king himself as in the case perhaps in *Girart de Roussillon*. They are those who surround the king, that is to say, Garin and Begon, and the influential Bordelais group of Hardré, Bernard de Naisil, and Froment.

Much of the action is also advanced by the role that queen Blanche fleur plays in shaping events. She is decisively in favor of the Lorrainer clan and would do anything to keep Pépin from perhaps taking a course of action which would influence the Bordelais clan instead of Garin's clan. For, it is clear from the beginning that the Bordelais clan is a race of traitors and felons, who really are motivated by self-interest rather than the common interest of the kingdom. Therefore, it is perhaps Blanche fleur who influences Pépin the most, and who also perhaps influence events in general the most. She protects the interests of the Lorrainer clan, and undoubtedly keeps the kingdom from falling into the hands of the less competent and treacherous Bordelais clan.

It is clear, that both clans at some point in the poem, recognize the deficiencies of Pépin. Only one of these clans actually openly verbalizes its criticism, and it's lack of belief in Pépin's ability to rule the kingdom. The other clan, the Bordelais, seems to adopt a much more sanguine and resigned attitude. They seem to think that even though Pépin is not always capable of ruling the kingdom, he is the king, that he should be respected as such, and that the institution of kingship, is more important than the individual king. The fidelity is, therefore, not to the king necessarily, but to the principle of royalty and the institution of kingship.

Pépin's biggest advantage is that he possesses a large number of troops in his royal army. Combined with the army and the troops of the Lorrainers, that advantage puts the most fear in the Bordelais clan. Judging that Froment is in the wrong, from this point on, Pépin and for a long time throughout the rest of the poem, takes the side of Garin and the Lorrainers. He does add his military force and his wealth to the army of Garin, and they successfully lay siege to Saint-Quentin. He also takes Soissons away from Froment de Lens.

For the most part, Pépin acts as an arbiter between the two feuding clans. If in theory, he is the sovereign lord over all of his vassals, in reality he is most unable to actually control anyone of the clans himself. The best he could hope to do would be to sway events in his favor. What are the interests of Pépin? For the most part, Pépin intervenes when it is to his personal benefits. In the scene discussed earlier when Froment breaks with Garin, it is Froment's overweening pride, that places him in a position of opposition to his sovereign lord Pépin. Pépin therefore must defend his honor, and that of the crown, and decides to go pursue Froment and so begins the first war. The reason why Pépin goes to the aid of Begon in Bordeaux is because Begon has married Pépin's niece, his niece was threatened by the Bordelais clan, and Pépin's chateau was attacked. But it is Pépin's wife Blanchefleur, who provides the final bid of motivation needed for Pépin to go to Begon's aid. She says that if he does not go down and defend Begon's lands, then the Bordelais would have grown too strong in that region, and that Pepin, therefore, would not be able to resist them, if they were to continue their assault against his lands:

“Sire,” faist ele, “nel devez pas souffrir.
C'est granz otrajes qu'il ont fait, ce m'est vis.
Devant voz ont vos barons entrepris,
Par maintes fois et batus et laidis,
Ne fust duz Begues et ses freres Garins
De douce France vos eussent for mis.
Rois, car chevauche et mande tes amis,
Ainz que li dus soit retenus ne pris.
Se tu le pers, tu en seras plus vis.” (vv. 7915-7923)

Pépin's ultimate goal is not to crush or weaken the power of the nobles, for even if desired to do so, it is improbable that he would have been able to do so. In fact, most of the time what Pépin seeks even after military intervention is a reestablishment of peace, and order within the kingdom. After the siege of Saint-Quentin, Pépin says: "L'acorde voel isi. / Je vos doins jor a la cort a Paris." (vv. 5494-5495) Though essentially it is a war between the Bordelais and the Lorrainers, the ultimate end of the war will only come when the Bordelais, and in particular Froment, come and ask the king's forgiveness. Here again the poet is making a strong point that no matter individual grievance, ultimately all the nobles are the vassals of the king, and that they depend on him for their lands and their estates:

"Enten, Fromons, ci m'envoie Pepins
Li enperere de cui tu dois tenir.
Par moi te mande que ta foi as menti,
Sanz son congié que tu as fame pris,
Par to orguel as son baron asis.
Vien li droit faire a Rains ou a Paris.
Se tu nel fais, malement iez baillis.
O mors ne vis te peüsses gesir.
Soisons te tolt, encore te fera pis."
(vv. 3882-3890)

Eventually, Froment presents himself before Pépin who accepts peace to be achieved between Garin and Froment. To this extent, Pépin was successful in forcing the feudal law upon Froment, and acquiring his submission. However the weakness of his character lies in the fact that these agreements, or truces, never lasted very long, and that ultimately, Pépin could not control the two clans.

There are two occasions where Pépin really acts for personal motive that go beyond his function as king. The first of these scenes take place just after Froment presents himself to apologize and Blanchefleur arrives to be wedded to Garin. No sooner does Blanchefleur arrive, than the schemes of the Bordelais begin to take form. In an effort to prevent the marriage of

Garin to Blanchefleur which would have given considerable power to Garin, the Bordelais at the instigation of the archbishop of Reims, Henri, come up with a plan to prevent the marriage. He points out that Garin and Blanchefleur are too closely related. The archbishop points out to Pépin that he will bring dishonor to France if he allows this wedding to take place, that none of the Bordelais would want to serve him again, and that they would throw France into a war which will never end. Ironically while Pépin's intentions may be to avoid war, preventing the wedding of Garin and Blanchefleur does not bring about peace for quite a long time. Henri suggests that Pépin meet Blanchefleur, and perhaps marry her himself. Pépin meets Blanchefleur, and falls in love with her and desires to have her for his own. At this point, he cares little about the practical details of how he stops the wedding between Garin and Blanchefleur. He accepts the testimony of two monks, that Henri, found saying that they are too closely related. Pépin brings in some relics and has the two monks swear on the relics. This becomes then a satisfactory excuse to not allow the wedding to continue.

We could say that the way Pépin announces the change of plans before the whole of the court, brought some embarrassment to Garin. Garin at first is quite angry, and Blanchefleur tries to ask Garin to take her away to Maurienne, where they would live as husband and wife. This plot is foiled as well by the Bordelais. They informed Pépin of their plans, and essentially Begon tells Garin to accept the situation, because he can find another woman another time. So Pépin's intervention for purely personal reasons, while it should have created quite a stir among the Lorrain clan, did not itself lead to any breach of the peace.

Perhaps the most striking scene of Pépin being motivated for what could be considered to be less than admirable reasons, is the scene which ultimately will lead to a breaking-up of the close relationship enjoyed by the family of Garin, and king Pepin, and Blanchefleur. Acting out

of purely selfish reasons, the king accepts a bribe by Guillaume of Blanquefort, in return Pépin would not intervene by taking side with either Garin and his relatives, or with Froment:

Et dist Guillaumes: “En vostre conduit ving,
De mon avoir voz fas ici venir,
Plus que ne pueent porter .iiii. roncins;
Par tel covent le voz donrai, Pepin,
Que n’aiderez Fromont ne ses amis;
Ainz vos lairez de guerre maintenir
Et as espees le chaple porsivir,
Jusqu’a .i. an porra la grant guerre souffrir.”
(vv. 13893-13903)

This decision on the part of Pépin does indeed set off the final series of wars, massacres, and battles that would ultimately lead to the death of the hero Garin.

This analysis of these weak and flawed kings in the medieval epic poems, the full range of behaviors examined, often times, put the king in a negative light with regard to his personal conduct. But, in so far as his role as king with the exception of Louis in the *Couronnement de Louis*, the king on the whole is able to defend Christianity from the Saracen invaders, and is able to insure that even the most powerful barons and their families, at least would respect the theoretical ideal that the king is above them. This was particularly in *Garin le Lorrain*, *Girart de Roussillon*, and *Renaut de Montauban*. Even the two portraits of the ideal king in the *Chanson de Roland* and in the *Couronnement de Louis*, did contain certain elements that pointed out if nothing else that the king is only chosen by God to govern his kingdom on earth. However, in spite of his strength, and virtues that place him well above all other men, he is still human and capable of weakness and error.

In the two poems of the sixteenth century, the ultimate aims of Ronsard and Aubigné in writing their poems were completely different; they do, however, offer insights as to what characterizes a weak or even bad king. Their ideas were shaped by political theory advanced by Machiavelli, Erasmus, and Jean Bodin, and which contributed to the debate over the actual

nature of the king and the limits of his power. Our two poets' ideas about what the bad king would be were essentially influenced, by how they felt that the ruler should deal with the political and religious turmoil that marked contemporary society.

In reading Ronsard's *Discours*, much of it is reserved for advice for Catherine de Medici and particularly for the young king Charles IX as to which qualities are necessary to be an ideal ruler. The lack of some of these qualities, or the inability to perform certain functions, would of course mean that the king was flawed and inadequate. First and foremost, Ronsard feels that a weak king would be one who is not well educated: "Il faut donq dés un jeunesse instruire bien un Prince, / Afin qu'avec prudence il tienne sa province." (*Discours à la Royne*, vv. 35-36), and:

Un Roy pour estre grand ne doit rien ignorer.
Il ne doit seulement sçavoir l'art de la guerre,
De garder les citez, ou les ruer par terre,
De picquer les chevaux, ou contre son harnois
Recevoir mille coups de lances aux tournois:
De Sçavoir comment il faut dresser une embuscade,
Ou donner une cargue ou une camisade,
Se renger en bataille et sous les estendars
Mettre par artifice en ordre les soldats.

(*Institution*, vv. 12-20)

In particular Ronsard stresses a need for education in the classics both Greek and Latin, as well as history. In his *Discours à la Royne*, he appeals to Catherine's knowledge of history in order to present his argument. History also can be used in order to show examples of rulers -- Charlemagne, Charles Martel, who possessed both military skills, and a great ability to rule and administer the kingdom. Ronsard attaches great importance to the ability of a king in the art of war. A weak king lacking in this ability is unable to not only defend his own city, but also the borders that his ancestors have worked so hard to earn and to increase:

Ils se repentiront d'avoir tant travaillé,
Assailly defendu guerroyé bataillé
Pour un peuple mutin divisé de courage
Qui perd en jouant un si bel heritage
(*Discours à la Royne*, vv. 65-68)

History also provides crucial information to a young prince about the laws and costumes of his ancestors, and cautions against the mistakes of not upholding those laws and customs. Ronsard firmly stresses the idea that to be French, and to recognize one's history and traditions is to be Catholic. One of the greatest mistakes a ruler can make would be to switch from the Catholic faith to another: "[...] qu'il soit devotieux / Vers l'Eglise approuvée, et a que point il ne change / La foy des ses ayeuls pour en prendre une estrange..." (*Discours à la Royne*, vv. 38-40)

As critical as the acquisition of knowledge and the ability to think, is the education of a prince. This can only be useful if the king learns not only self-knowledge, but also self-possession of his faculties:

De là vous apprendrez à vous coignoistre bien,
Et en vous cognoissant vous ferez tousjours bien.
"Le vray commencement pour en vertus accroistre,
C'est (disoit Apollon) soy-mesme se coignoistre:
Celuy qui se coignoist, est seul maistre de soy,
Et sans avoir Royaume, il est vrayment un Roy."
(*Institution*, vv. 83-88)

Ronsard's stress on the rational nature of mental faculties does not exclude the idea of imagination. For in the *Institution*, he discusses the idea that a bad king does not know how to "bien imaginer":

Après il faut apprendre à bien imaginer,
Autrement la raison ne pourroit gouverner:
Car tout le mal qui vient à l'homme prend naissance
Quand par sus la raison le cuider a puissance.
(*Institution*, vv. 70-74)

For Ronsard, perhaps the least effective, and the most dangerous of rulers are those who rule by violence, and blood shed:

"Les Rois les plus brutaux telles choses n'ignorent
Et par le sang versé leurs couronnes honorent.
Tout ainsi que Lions qui s'estiment alors
De tous les animaux ester veuz les plus fors,
Quand ils ont devoré un cerf au grand corsage,
Et ont remply les champs de meurtre et de carnage. (*Institution*, vv. 21-26)

One of the most important responsibilities to ruling a kingdom is how one manages one's finances, and one's resources. According to Ronsard, a bad king is one who wastes the most precious resources of all, the lives of his subjects. A bad king is one who is motivated by poor motives or greed: "Et pensez que le mal le plus pernicieux / C'est un Prince sordide et avaricieux" (*Institution*, vv. 143-144). In particular, he is one who neither guards his wealth, nor his possessions. He does not either spend his money wisely. For, eventually a king who is unwise in how he spends his money, runs into the problem of where he gets his money. A king should try to not overtax his subjects with unnecessary ransoms: "Ne pillez vos sujets par rançons ny par tailles." (*Institution*, v. 133) A king should therefore defend his country's wealth and resources, and hopefully allow his subjects to prosper as well. He should act as a model of behavior and as the protector of his people, even from those who wish to prey on the less fortunate of the society: "Ne souffrez que les grands blessent le populaire, / Ne souffrez que le peuple au grand puisse desplaire...." (*Institution*, vv. 153-154) Above all, while the king's acts are important, the most important attribute of a king is to lead an exemplary life of virtue. An ideal king would be one who has a royal body and soul: "Comme le corps royal ayez l'ame royale...." (*Institution*, v. 141) The weak king, therefore, is one whose subjects fear him, and rules by oppression, not one who maintains authority, and combats vice:

Morte est l'autorité: chacun vit en sa guise:
 Au vice desreiglé la licence est permise:
 Le desir, l'avarice et l'erreur insensé
 Ont sans dessus dessous le monde renversé.
 On fait des lieux sacrez une horrible voirie
 (*Discours à la Royne*, vv. 175-179)

Ronsard states the importance of virtue at the beginning of the *Institution*: "Un Roy sans la vertu porte le sceptr en vain, / Qui ne luy est sinon un fardeau dans la main." (vv. 3-4) For Ronsard if a king is to combat vice, he must first lead a virtuous life in order to recognize this vice. More

importantly, the ideal prince will also be able to recognize virtue, and thus surrounds himself with loyal and wise subjects:

Ayez autour de vous personnes venerables,
Et les oyez parler volontiers à vos tables:
Soyez leur audituer comme le fut vostre ayeul
Ce grand François qui vit encores au cercueil.
(*Institution*, vv. 146-148)

He should maintain a degree of humility and remember that he is only human: “Vous souvenant tousjours que vous estes humain” (*Institution*, v. 132). But a good ruler, will recognize his errors and shortcomings, and will take it upon himself to punish himself before God does: “Punissez-vous vous mesme, afin que la justice / De dieu qui est plus grand, vos fautes ne punisse.” (*Institution*, vv. 177-178) Unlike good Christians, the king who is flawed does not learn to fear God, nor does he learn to concern himself with the salvation of his own soul. In her article about the influence of Erasmus, Gwenda Echard shows that such an idea, which will be echoed even more forcefully in Aubigné, comes from Erasmus: “Erasmus however does more than reproduce classical notions of kingship. His prince is at the same time set apart from all men by his responsibilities and one with them as a man answerable to a Christian God for his actions.” (27)

The message present in Aubigné’s *Tragiques*, is not intended to be vague, polite or instructive, it is meant as a criticism of the family of rulers who have led France down a disastrous, sinful, and bloody path. At his head, is the queen Catherine of Medici. In *Misères*, he expresses his hope that the future Henri IV, will end this reign of tyrants:

Henri, qui tous les jours vas prodiguant ta vie,
Pour remettre le regne, oster la tyrannie,
Ennemi des tyrans, resources des vrais Rois,
Quand le sceptre des lis joindra le Navarrois,
Souvien-toi de quel oeil, de quelle vigilance,
Tu vois et remedie aux mal-heurs de la France;
Souvien-toi quelque jour combien sont ignorans
Ceux qui pour ester Rois veulent ester tyrans. (vv. 593-600)

There are three categories of individuals whom Aubigné feels should never be able to rule a nation. The first group would be the child or the adolescent king. Aubigné feels that it is impossible that a being of such a young age and given such great responsibility would be able to either emotionally, or intellectually carry out the duties necessary to be an effective king: “O quel Malheur du ciel, vengeance du destin, / Donne des Rois enfants et qui mangent matin!” (*Princes*, 655-6) As a general rule, the second group that should never be allowed to rule would be women. But, Aubigné bases most of his observations on the reign of Catherine de Medici. The third category, would be those kings who truly are weak in spirit, and in mind, and who are easily influenced. Those are often simply controlled by their passions or their desires, rather than their interest in being king. These are kings, particularly the last of the Valois kings, who live a life of sin, corruption, and futility:

Rois, que le vice noir asservit sous ses loix,
 Esclaves de peché, forçaires non pas rois
 De vos affections, quelle fureur despite
 Vous corrompt, vous esmeut, vous pousse et vous invite
 A tremper dans le sang vos scepters odieux,
 Vicieux commencer, achiever vicieux
 Le regne insupportable et rempli de miseres,
 Dont le peuple poursuit la fin par ses prieres?

(*Princes*, vv. 459-466)

Using the metaphor of the body of which the king is the head, and his subjects are his body, Aubigné says that the false king is a king who cuts off his members, and who remains just a head, becoming a beast or a monstrosity. In a passage in *Princes*, he goes on to compare the two kings, the ideal and the false king. In this passage, Aubigné uses the same attributes and criticism that Ronsard employs in his description of the bad and the weak king: the king who destroys villages and wars with his own subjects, the king who prefers to rule by fear, and the bad king

who rather than being the shepherd, is indeed the wolf himself, preying on his own people whom Aubigné equates to the flock:

Ces tyrans sont des loups, car le loup, quand il entre
Dans le parc des brebis, ne succe de leur ventre
Que le sang par un trou et quitte tout le corps,
Laisant bien le troupeau, mais un troupeau de morts:
Nos villes sont charongne, et nos plus cheres vies,
Et le suc et la force en ont esté ravies....

(*Misères*, vv. 601-608)

Aubigné is concerned that foreign nations seeing a country governed and ruled by such an hideous monster, will see the weakness, and will seek to profit from this opportunity, and invade France. Aubigné questions whether or not the France he knows has the strength to withstand such attacks because of the internal conflicts that weaken it:

France, bien qu'au milieu tu sens des guerres fieres,
Tu as paix et repos à tes villes frontieres:
Le corps tout feu dedans, tout glace par dehors,
Demande la biere et bien tost est fait corps.

(*Misères*, vv. 645-648)

Ici marquez honteux, degenerz François,
Que vos armes estoyent legeres autresfois,
Et que, quand l'estranger esjamboit vos barrieres,
Vos ayeux desdaignoyent forts et villes frontieres:
L'ennemi, aussi tost comm'entré combattu,
Faisoit à la campagne essai de leur vertu.

(*Misères*, 659-664)

Later in *Misères*, Aubigné specifically names the foreign threat to be Rome:

Nous n'osons pas nous armer, les guerres nous fletrissent,
Chacun combat à part et tous en gros perissent.

Voila l'etat pituex de nos calamitez,
La vengeance des cieux justement irritez.
En ce fascheux estat, France et François, vous estes
Nourris, entretenus par estrangeres bestes,
Bestes de qui le but et le principal soin
Est de mettre à jamais au tyrannique poin
De la beste de Rome un sceptre qui commande
L'Europe, et encore plus que l'Europe n'est grande.

Aussi l'orgueil de Rome est à ce point levé
Que d'un prestre tout Roi, tout Empereur brave
Est marchepied fangeux; on void, sans qu'on s'estonne,

La pantoufle crotter le lys de la couronne...
(vv. 1205-1218)

At the end of this passage, Aubigné makes a reference to the fact that in 1595, Henri IV went to Rome, for absolution, an event which both Gallicans and Protestants found humiliating. Another point on which Ronsard and Aubigné agree is that the king being only human, should recognize that he is God's servant, and that he is also bound by the same laws as other men. These laws are first of all part of the tradition of French history, for example, the Salic law. Above all a false king, is one who does not recognize or live according to God's law:

En vain vous commandez et restez esbahis
Que, desobeissans, vous n'estes obeis:
Car Dieu vous fait sentir, sous vous, par plusieurs testes,
En leur rebellion, que rebelles vous estes;
Vous secotiez le joug du puissant Roy des Rois,
Vous mesprisez sa loy, on mesprise vos loix.
(*Princes*, vv. 443-448)

Like Ronsard, Aubigné felt that good and loyal service on the part of a king's subjects should be rewarded. A bad king is unable to distinguish between those who serve him well, and those who do not. Therefore, he will give honor and favors to the unworthy and to the proud, rather than to those who deserve them: "Faites misericorde à celuy qui supplie..." (*Institution*, v. 121).

Voici un gros amas qui emplit jusqu'au tiers
Le Louvre de soldats, de braves chevaliers,
De noblesse paree: au milieu de la nuë
Marche un duc, dont la face au jeune homme inconnuë
Le renvoye au conseil d'un page traversant,
Pour demander le nom de ce prince passant;
Le nom ne le contente, il pense, il s'esmerveille,
Tel mot n'estoit jamais entré en son oreille.
(*Princes*, vv. 1145-1152)

In *Misères*, Aubigné severely criticizes Catherine de Medici, who succeeds in limiting the strength of the stronger houses in France. He accuses her of manipulating them through various means, such as murder, poison, and even the Machiavellian concept of duels. He also expresses

his concern that she will keep the wealth of the land from these stronger houses, and use them to support her interests, her family, and her friends back in Italy. This touches on a strong undercurrent of anti-Italianism which runs through all of the *Tragiques*, and which has as its target, not only Catherine de Medici but Machiavelli, and the Pope in Rome, as well as several foreign advisers who had been promoted to key positions in the French government, during the reign of Catherine of Medici and her son:

Mais toi qui par sur eux triomphes, seigneureries,
Use de ton pouvoir: tu veux bien triompher
Sur eux, puis que tu es vivandiere d'enfer (*Misères*, 950-2)

Monstre leur le success des ruses Florentines,
Tes meurtres, tes poisons, de France les ruines
(*Misères*, 957-8)

Vous garderez les biens, les estats, les honneurs
Pour d'Italie avoir les fins empoisonneurs,
Pour nourrir, employer cette subtile bande,
Bien mieux entretenuë, et plus riche et plus grande
Que celled u conseil; car nous ne voulons point
Que conseillers subtils, qui renversent à point
En discords les accords, que les traistres qui vendent
A peu de prix leur foy, ceux-la qui mieux entendent
A donner aux meschans les purs commandemens,
En se servant des bons tromper leurs instruments.
(*Misères*, vv. 967-976)

According to Henry Heller:

[...] It is noteworthy that the Protestants were not the only group menaced by the violence of the Parisians during the 1570s. In June 1572, two months before the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew's, there was a riot in the streets of the city against the Italians. [...] The mob was inflamed on this occasion by the accusation that the Italians were kidnapping and murdering young children in order to siphon off their blood. [...] Others asserted that it was the queen mother Catherine de Medici herself who was making use in some way of the blood of the slain children. (80-81)

A final point of particular interest is in how Aubigné viewed the responsibility, and the duty of the subjects to obey the king. For Aubigné, the society in which he lived required a very different socio-political relationship between the king and his subjects. It is no longer a question

of a feudal system of fidelity and service to one's lord. Throughout the course of the sixteenth century, new attitudes began to emerge which discussed more an idea of reciprocity, as opposed to the feudo-vassalic notion of the relationship between the king and his vassals. Arlette Jouanna writes about this relationship:

Elle est en fait plus un service offert qu'une obéissance; elle n'avilit donc pas celui qui la donne librement. Mais elle exige du maître une contrepartie, sous la forme de bienfaits et de récompenses; si celui-ci ne se conforme pas à cette règle, il offense gravement son serviteur. Il faut voir dans les plaintes de d'Aubigné sur l'ingratitude des rois beaucoup plus que de mesquines récriminations; c'est tout d'abord une conception de la royauté qui est en jeu. Être roi, c'est d'abord donner: donner de l'argent, des honneurs, des fêtes. (623)

For Aubigné therefore, loyalty to the king must be earned, and one should not blindly serve one's king simply because he is one's king: "Si la discretion n'apprend aux vertueux / Quels Rois ont mérité que l'on se donne à eux..." (*Princes*, vv. 619-620)

In Ronsard's *Discours*, and Aubigné's *Tragiques*, there is a shift in emphasis with regard to the criteria by which a ruler was judged. Roughly three hundred and sixty years separate the date in which the last of these medieval poems was composed and the writing of Ronsard's *Discours*. Perhaps surprisingly, there are a number of similarities in the types of flaws the poets from both periods criticized. One of the most important differences between these texts, is the degree to which the two poets of the sixteenth century placed more stress on the need for kings to be examples of Christian ideals and virtues.

Because it was widely believed that kings and queens ruled by divine right, then it naturally followed that such a ruler should, above all, seek to rule with the aim of creating a kingdom that approaches, as closely as possible, the Kingdom of God. The ability to reach this goal was made virtually impossible, because of the deep seeded political and religious divisions within Western Europe.

In some significant ways, the Christian world depicted in our two sixteenth century poems, was the complete opposite of the one in the eleventh and twelfth centuries' poems. In spite of the divisive political divisions within the medieval society of the eleventh and twelfth century, the countries of western Europe and in particular the kingdom of France, remained a united Christian front when facing the constant invasions from pagans and Saracens. There existed throughout the Middle Ages, several dissident religious sects which the Church named as heretical. These sects never really posed a serious threat to the social and political stability of western Christendom. By the mid-sixteenth century, the pagan threat for the most part coming from the Turkish Empire, had diminished both in its scope and its intensity.

The France in which Ronsard lived, found itself facing a very strong opposition, within its borders from both Protestants, and the Ultramontane factions within the Catholic party. What had changed by this point, was that western Christendom no longer presented itself as a unified front. Now Christian states and kingdoms; France, England, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and various different powerful states within Italy, including the Papal States, vied for power among themselves. In these two poems, Ronsard and Aubigné both felt that the flawed or inadequate king would be one who failed first on a political level in his inability to bring unity and harmony within the French kingdom itself, but also in its ability to maintain a strong France in the face of foreign threat. The second criteria by which Ronsard and Aubigné judged their king, was their ability to lead France through the religious crisis that also divided not only France, but all of Western Christianity. Their goals were quite different, however, Ronsard sought to achieve this peace through the Valois monarch itself, first through Catherine de Medici in the more immediate term, but eventually through her son, Charles IX.

Aubigné was an apologist for no regime, and no royal family in particular. He especially loathed the House of Valois. Aubigné had placed his hopes in the king Henri of Navarre, but his hopes proved to be in vain, when having been crowned Henri IV, he converted to Catholicism in an attempt to implement a political policy of toleration. Henri IV's adoption of a more tolerant political policy as well as his apostasy at the beginning of his reign, led to Aubigné's final disillusionment with regard to the secular rulers of his days. In his book seven of the *Tragiques*, *Jugement*, Aubigné in fact ends with an apocalyptic tableau in which God establishes his reign on earth, and separates the elected from the damned.

CHAPTER 4 SPIRITUAL REDEMPTION AND POLITICAL EXCLUSION

I propose to look at *Girart de Roussillon* and *Renaut de Montauban* as being characterized by two primary spheres of action. On the one hand, there are the laws and customs that shape the feudal society in which our protagonists live. Most of the actions; the disputes and hostilities to which they give rise, can be viewed within the framework of the political and social relationships of a king to his vassals. I include in this sphere of activity, elements such as feudal laws and customs. The second sphere of action is the religious and spiritual one. What drives the narratives in these two poems are the wars brought about by the failure of certain vassals to accept and perform their duties to their liege lord who in this case is the king. The political and military events which shape the story also create, within the individual protagonists, a moral and spiritual crisis. These characters undergo a spiritual conversion at the same time that they seek a way to end their differences with their king.

While the initial crimes are political in nature, it is only through religion that the heroes will eventually find their way back into society. What I will discuss in this chapter are the circumstances that lead up to the period of separation from the court, as well as society in general. Then I will examine the way in which the types of crimes or faults change the way the heroes experience their exiles. Finally, I will look at the way the spiritual journeys of our protagonists conclude. I will argue that how each character ends his or her life is directly related to three things: the nature of the crime or offense which forced him or her to flee, their attitude towards their punishment, and their goals upon returning from their exiles.

The questions of feudal laws present in *Renaut de Montauban* and *Girart de Roussillon* can be viewed as examples depicting how the society, of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, sought to create a stronger political and social order. The kings of the eleventh century

governed over a small territorial domain. Many of the dukes and counts of other principalities within the kingdom, were very powerful in their own right. The period of 1031 to 1108 was a critical one for several reasons. The kings of France during this period exercised direct power in a small area that was situated between the territories of the great French principalities. These were the powerful duchies and counties of Normandy, Aquitaine, Flanders, Troyes, Burgundy, the Vermandois, and an area including Chartres, Blois, and Tours. There were areas, for example Gascony, Provence, and Brittany that were hardly affected by the politics of the French kings.

The strongest of these territorial principalities held the powers of military coercion, justice, and minting money.¹ The kings of these periods relied heavily on the support and loyalty of those great princes – some of whom did not offer their services willingly. Constance Bouchard points out that despite the precarious position of the French monarchy in this eighty year period, society underwent a fundamental transformation in the direction of greater stability and organization:

The eleventh-century kings did not simply lose power that the twelfth-century king regained. The eleventh-century kings, who actually had an advantage over the tenth-century Carolingians in that they were never seriously challenged for the throne, lived in a period in which there were far-reaching attempts to organize, create hierarchies and understand the moral and social structures of the universe. [...] The French kings had to find a place for themselves in a new political and social order, and in doing so laid the foundations for the power of their successors a century later. (120-121)

Charles in *Renaut de Montauban*, and Charles Martel in *Girart de Roussillon*, are not weak leaders of a fragmented and decentralized society. In fact, they seem to be more like the Capetian rulers of the twelfth century. In terms of their military and political strength, vis-à-vis their powerful nobles, both Charles and Charles Martel resemble the Capetian kings of the second half of the twelfth century. In his study on Capetian France, Eric Hallam discusses the gradual

¹ See the article by Jean Flori, “Knighthly Society” (chapter 6), in particular p. 150 in *The New Cambridge Medieval History IV c. 1024- c. 1198 Part I*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2004.

changes in the structure of the political and social hierarchy in France that seem to strengthen the king's position at the top. He points out that: "the implications of homage and fidelity were not the same in 1200 as in 1000." (95) In the early eleventh century, to pay homage to one's king meant to enter into an alliance more than it did to subordinate oneself to one's prince's authority. By the middle of the reign of Philip Augustus, the obligations of the princes to the king had been strengthened. This resulted in the revival of royal feudal power. The exile of the protagonists in these two poems is the result of feuds whose roots lay in the political power struggle between the territorial princes and their kings. In addition to the political dimension of these conflicts, there is also a personal element which greatly enriches the quality and scope of the narrative. I will begin my examination with *Girart de Roussillon*.

Circumstances Leading to Exile

This examination of the circumstances leading up to the exile of the main characters in these two epic poems, will begin with a look at the socio-political relationships of the protagonists to the king. These poems both depict the political and military tensions that arise between the king and some of his most powerful vassals. This is a fairly small group, at the apex of the political and social hierarchy. Among the numerous protagonists that inhabit the world of medieval epic poetry, most of them are members of the warrior aristocracy. Their ranks include, among others, Peers of France, dukes, counts, barons, and archbishops. Although all Christians were thought to be equal in the eyes of God, the king and the warrior aristocracy as well as the most important members of the clergy: popes, archbishops, and bishops, all lived in a world separated from the vast majority of the population. These three groups were indispensable to medieval society. This society, however, was marked by violence stemming from political and military disputes.

As Renaut, Maugis, Berthe, and Girart show us, they were just as fearful for their personal salvation; as were most Christians at the time. Those of the warrior aristocracy were responsible for the protection of western Christendom from the pagans. *Renaut de Montauban*, and *Girart de Roussillon*, show a world that differentiates between the conduct and duties necessary to maintain peace in society, and the personal journey all Christians undertook which ended in their day of reckoning with God.

In his article analyzing the relationship between Girart and Charles Martel, Claude Galley writes:

Les chansons de geste ont la réputation méritée d'exalter des valeurs qui sont avant tout celles des guerriers [...] mais chaque épopée n'est-elle pas avant tout la difficile résolution d'un point de droit extrêmement délicat, et la démonstration éclatante de l'exercice d'une justice supérieure qui fait un bilan définitif des torts de chacun, la providence. (Claude Galley 150)

In examining the crimes and circumstances which eventually resulted in the flight of our protagonists, I will make a distinction between the ways the crimes or faults are viewed, either from the perspective of the king or from that of the vassals. The king is the ultimate source of justice. In all the *chansons de geste* in this study, what makes a good and wise king is one who protects Christian society from threats, both from within and without the kingdom. Even by the most powerful vassals, the office of king was recognized as that of the nominal leader of all the subjects of the kingdom. The king is chosen by God to rule in His name, and by His laws.

Girart's character is cast from the mold of these powerful princes. Girart and his family are arguably more powerful than Charles Martel:

Puis Deus vos a estors de sa prison,
Eu ne pris vostre perte un moisserun.
Tress en castels aveis en sa reion,
Trente citaz demenes ob Avignun.
(vv. 1095-1098)

His wealth, military strength, and overweening pride make Girart a difficult vassal to control. He does, on the whole remain a loyal vassal – if a disobedient one. He is perfectly willing to go to war with his king to protect what he feels are his own rights. He does, stop short of killing the king or usurping his power—demonstrating a profound respect for the king as his sovereign. In her seminal study on the epic poems and their relationship to the consolidation of the royal power under the late Capetian kings, Dominique Boutet writes:

Mais l'aristocratie, qui avait parfaitement admis que la royauté se définît comme valeur et bénéficiât de ce fait d'une "préeminence très lâche", a évidemment mal accueilli cette transformation de la royauté en véritable pouvoir. Des refus d'hommage, des rébellions ouvertes en témoignent historiquement. Il est certain que, dans ce milieu (et dans ceux de sa mouvance) l'image de la royauté en a pâti: celle-ci devenait l'adversaire, sinon l'ennemi. Il a fallu du temps pour que les mentalités non cléricales s'accoutument suffisamment à la notion de pouvoir royal et acceptent d'associer à nouveau à la royauté une valeur éminente – de définir la royauté à la fois comme une valeur et comme un pouvoir. (3)

Girart is not altogether neglectful of his vassalic obligations to Charles. After the battle of Vaubeton, one of the conditions of the peace was that Thierry de Scanie be forced to leave on a pilgrimage. This begins a five year truce during which Girart aids Charles in subduing other powerful territorial princes, in particular Reimbart de Fraise, and fights alongside Charles during his battles against the pagans near the Gironde River. At this battle Girart proves himself to be not only a loyal vassal but also Charles's most skilled warrior:

Ainc ne vistes nul rei qu'aisi rancor
Quant Girarz s'ajostet, li cons, a lur.
Ainz non vi tan baron, tan prou, si dur,
Ne proeçe de conte qu'aisi mellur.
(vv. 3296-3299)

Moreover, Charles recognizes Girart's value as a vassal and as a reward gives all of the loot taken in the battle to Girart so that he may distribute it among his men:

Per le consel Folcon, qu'est molt senaz,
Fu li eschaz a Carle sanz presentaz.
E li reis dis Girarz: "Cons, tot prennaz,
E donaz l'a vos omes cui mels amaz.

Per itau cors de conte serai preizaz
E cremuz e tensuz e redotaz;
E amerai vos mai que ome naz,
Si ne reste en vos la mauvaistaz.”
(vv. 3311-3318)

This episode in the poem emphasizes the inconstant nature of the relationship between the two men. It adds a certain degree of levity to the overall tone of the poem. This is especially revealing since this episode falls right in the middle of decades of war between the two. A war whose loss of thousand of Christian lives includes close relatives for example Girart's father Drogon, and his uncle, Odilon.

Girart's final defeat, resulting in his exile, comes after the truce. Before this five year period there were several incidents which lead to the commencement of the wars. Before the first time Charles attacks Roussillon, he and his vassal are on good terms. It is in this state that we find their relationship at the beginning of the poem.

The first scenes of the epic poem are about the joint adventure of Charles Martel and Girart, who go to Rome to help the emperor of Constantinople defend the city from pagans. For their services, they are granted a gift, which the emperor decides will be his two daughters in marriage, one for Girart, and one for Charles. Charles returns to France and Girart, accompanied by the Pope goes to Constantinople to escort the two young ladies back to Charles's court. While in Constantinople, Girart and Elissent fall in love. The emperor decides that therefore Girart will marry Elissent, and that Charles will marry Berthe. However, Charles decides to alter this arrangement himself. The choice of one sister over another offers no political advantage since both are the daughters of the emperor. It is merely because Charles finds Elissent to be prettier than Berthe, that he decides he wants to wed the former. This causes a bitter argument between the king and his count. After initially refusing to allow Charles to wed Elissent, Girart is persuaded by the Pope to accept a compromise. Charles will be allowed to wed Elissent, while

Berthe will wed Girart. Furthermore, Charles grants that Girart will now hold his lands as allods and not as fiefs.

The idea of a king choosing to disregard a previously agreed upon marriage is not unique to *Girart de Roussillon*. In *Garin le Lorrain*, Pépin upon meeting Blanchefleur, Garin's betrothed, is so taken by her beauty that he decides to let himself be persuaded to marry Blanchefleur himself. Interestingly, the reaction of Garin is very similar to that of Girart. At first, Garin is absolutely furious at what Pépin has done, not for depriving him of Blanchefleur, but the rather underhanded way he goes about it. After Garin and Blanchefleur discuss the possibility of absconding, Pépin learns of it and has them stopped. Garin's anger is fairly quickly appeased and his brother Begon points out to him that he can have anyone of a hundred women that he desires. Blanchefleur for her part, accepts the situation with relative equanimity and agrees to marry Pépin. It is not here a question of the two young lovers seeking revenge for their separation. They all accept the situation and end up marrying other people anyway. The episodes regarding marriage in both *Garin le Lorrain* and in *Girart de Roussillon* illustrate the point that in these poems such disagreement of a more personal nature is secondary to any considerations of a political nature. It is not a question here of feudal law but rather of the selfishness of Charles's desire to have Elissent. The issue that leads to open hostilities between Girart and Charles is that of the allods.

Since the time of the Carolingians, most feudal relationships, between a lord and a vassal, did not necessarily have to include a grant of land. As the royal power dissipated during the ninth and tenth centuries, the powerful territorial princes essentially were able to exercise seigneurial rights over their lands; that is to say they could tax their inhabitants and perhaps mint money. They were for the most part not compelled to swear homage and fealty to the king. During the

second half of the twelfth century, there is a decline in the number of allods. It was during the reign of Philip Augustus that the central monarchical power was reconstituted and was able to base its relations with its vassals on the concept of feudalism, the primary element of which was the fief. An allod is a hereditary land of no lord. The holders of most allodial lands were not required to either render homage or services to their nobles. This type of feudal land was held by barons and castellans who were very powerful, some of whom were outside the immediate influence of the French monarchy. Such nobles did recognize that the king was their legal sovereign. They understood that the king was invested with special powers conferred upon him by prelates during the coronation ceremony. Charles's decision, therefore, to not recognize Girart's lands as allods, was for Girart a breach of the basic feudal agreement between the two. As Claude Galley points out, this type of agreement was at the very foundation of the feudal society: "D'autre part le droit qui régit les rapports entre l'autorité et les féodaux n'est pas un droit commun mais un droit contractuel et personnel qui établit des engagements réciproques beaucoup plus équitables que le droit contemporain." (Galley 151) Further on Galley develops this point ; particularly with regard to *Girart de Roussillon*: "Par exemple les revendications des Girart successifs, Girart de Vienne alias Girart de Roussillon, sont strictement rattachées à la coutume féodale. Le principal héros de chaque chanson se déclare alleutier pour une raison particulière." (Galley 151)

Girart is a good example of a powerful ruler who felt that his lands were his own, and that he was not beholden to Charles. While he was willing to, and often did, enter onto alliances with his king, for Girart they were just that. This attitude does seem consistent with the political realities of the eighth century; the time when Charles Martel ruled as Mayor of the Palace. Charles Martel is jealous of Girart's power and in fact desires his lands for himself. Without any

provocation the king simply attacks Girart's castle at Roussillon in Burgundy. Before further elaborating on this point, however, another incident occurs which sets in motion the inevitable conflict between the two. As I pointed out above, the character of Charles is more closely akin to the Capetians of the twelfth century. These kings, through warfare and insistence on feudal duties, sought to subjugate turbulent nobles. Dominique Boutet points out that:

Girart perd de vue qu'il reste l'obligé du roi, et surtout que le roi est plus qu'un suzerain. Même si les terres de Girart ne sont plus des fiefs, le roi conserve un droit éminent sur son ancien vassal. Le tort essentiel de Girart est d'oublier ce caractère transcendant de la royauté. (10-11)

This battle does not end in Girart's defeat, nor does it end in Charles's. Prior to this battle, Charles has challenged Girart and has offered him the opportunity to fight him. If Girart wins the battle, then Charles will declare himself vanquished, and if Charles wins the battle, Girart will leave on pilgrimage. The subject of the pilgrimage will be discussed in the final section of the chapter, what is important now is that the outcome of the battle is such that neither Charles nor Girart wins. After a day of fighting, God intervenes by shooting thunder and lightning from the sky burning the various standards and frightening the soldiers so that they leave the field of battle in terror.

La nuit lo rest vengude e jors failliz,
E li celz est teners e bruneziz.
Dex lor mostra miracles qui fu chastiz:
Flamme lor ciet del ciel qu'es entr'ubriz,
Quel gonfanons Girart est toz bruiz,
E li Carlon, qui fu ab aur escriz.
Tot en tranblent les cars as plus ardiz,
E terre soz lor piez des la raiz.
Ce dist li uns a l'autre: "Segles feniz."
(vv. 2880-2888)

As a result, Girart does not leave on a pilgrimage and a peace is made between Girart and Charles. One of the conditions of this peace, however, is that Thierry de Scanie must himself leave on a pilgrimage. He is responsible for both the death of Girart's father and uncle:

“Jan en crerai conseil que l’on m’en die,
Se Teuri de gerpist e sa parie
E puis ne me fait dreit de la bauzie,
Qu’a tort a ma onor preze e saisie,
E m’a mon paire mort, ma gent delie.
Se cest plait ne me fait e ne m’autrie,
Ja ne sera mos seindre ne eu siens die!”
(vv. 3010-3016)

Girart insists on this point because he feels that given his position of relative strength he can negotiate. Rather than personally seeking to avenge their deaths by killing Thierry, Girart chooses to settle the matter using a common form of punishment – pilgrimages. The king refuses, initially, to allow Thierry to depart for his pilgrimage. He is not happy at the idea of losing one of his most trusted and powerful allies. It is Thierry de Scanie who, perhaps recognizing the sin and the suffering that he has caused Girart, insists on accepting Girart’s term and departs on a pilgrimage:

E Teiris respondet: “Segnor, marchei.
Ne place a Damlideu, au manne rei,
Que ja mais per mon cors nus om gerrei!
Cent anz a qui fui naz e mas, ce crei;
[...] De France fui jetat a grant beslei,
E u lai tornerai per son autrei,
Qu’en sera bien Girarz li cons au rei.
(vv. 3122-3134)

One can look at Thierry de Scanie’s action as also being a rather shrewd understanding of the political situation. Hoping to diffuse any further hostilities and putting an end to the bloodshed, Thierry de Scanie nobly agrees to leave on a pilgrimage. For five years a truce is then declared between Charles and Girart, the time necessary for the pilgrimage of Thierry de Scanie.

At this point, the narrative of the epic poem changes course. After five years of exile, Thierry de Scanie returns only to be murdered by Fouque and other relatives of Girart. Although Girart is not directly responsible, nor had he any knowledge of Fouque’s intentions, Charles naturally blames him. Here again, it is a question of the duty and obligation toward one’s feudal

lord. Perhaps if Girart was faithful to Charles he would have handed over those who were responsible for the death of Thierry, which Charles had taken so personally. Girart's obstinacy, in not handing over Fouque, leads to the next war. This eventually costs Girart not only his place within French society, but also threatens to lead to the damnation of his soul. Only when Girart recognizes his mistakes, and pays homage to Charles, will he be fully welcomed back into the court. Since he refuses to do so, only a resounding military defeat will force him into exile.

Although it is Girart's second defeat at Roussillon that causes him to flee, this defeat comes because of an earlier incident. The purely evil acts of murder and sacrilege, that Girart and others commit, are ultimately the cause of his exile:

Cent en trobet tenent a une crouz;
Tuit li crident mercet ensenble a vouz.
Lo cons e su neis Bos les ocist touz.
(vv. 6185-6187)

A hundred of the king's royal soldiers take refuge around a cross, which should provide them with protection from any further assault. Boson comes and massacres every one of them. The second massacre takes place is on the plain of Vaucouleurs. Fearful for their lives, a prior, several monks, and an abbot as well as one thousand soldiers take refuge in a church. It is Girart himself who decides to make Charles suffer by watching as he sets fire to the church, killing everyone in it:

Un moster ac el plan soz Vaucolor;
Abat i a e monges e prior.
Mil chevaler lai entrent por pour.
Girarz les arst a fuc e a calor,
Veient les ulez Carlon l'enperedor.
Grant tort i fait ver Deu e son senior.
(vv. 6190-6195)

The narrator says: "Non pout mudar ver lui Dex nos corouz; / Per quei tornet de gerre Girarz desouz." (vv. 6188-6189) The importance of this scene is made more cogent by viewing it within the larger context of the political and religious reforms which were a prominent factor in the

eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Peace of God movement which started in the 1030's was a response to the excessive violence that had threatened the stability of society. Many of the *chansons de geste* condemn the sinful and costly wars fought among members of the aristocracy against each other, and against the king.

The events leading up to Renaut's flight from Charlemagne's court are thematically similar to the beginning of *Girart de Roussillon*. In the Vallière manuscript, which serves as the basis for Ferdinand Castet's edition of *Les Quatre fils Aymon ou Renaut de Montauban*, the first section tells the story of how Renaut's father entered into a bitter and deadly dispute with Charles. The trouble starts when two of Renaut's uncles, Doon de Nanteuil, and Beuves d'Aigremont, refuse to answer Charles's summons to come to his court and pay homage to him. Renaut's father, Aymon, who does answer Charles's summons attempts to defend his two brothers. This draws Charles's ire, which leads to Aymon's expulsion from the court. Charles sends one of his faithful vassals Enguerrand to the lands of Aigremont to ask him to come to court. Aigremont ambushes Charles's envoy and kills Enguerrand. The conflict now goes from just a simple matter of dispute over feudal duties, and becomes a dispute of a more personal nature. Charles next sends his son Lohier with an entourage of four hundred knights to bring Aigremont back to Charles's court so he may be judged and hanged. At Aigremont's castle, Lohier fills his message with insults and threats to the point of even unsheathing his sword. A battle ensues during which Lohier is killed by Beuves.

After mourning seven days for his son, Charles invades Aigremont laying his lands to waste. Aigremont calls on his three brothers to come to his aid, which they do. In the ensuing battle Girart de Roussillon proposes that they go to Charles and ask for his pardon. Beuves offers to come to the court and pay homage. After which, if Charles still desires it, he will leave on a

pilgrimage to the Saint Sepulcre. All four brothers present themselves at Charles's court, kneel before the emperor, and promise to be loyal vassals. Charles pardons them. As was the case in *Girart de Roussillon* the primary concern here is not punishment or justice for the murders of Lohier and Enguerrand, rather it is for the restoration of the feudo-vassalic relationship between Charles and his vassals. But here, in his turn, Charles changes his mind and following the advice of felons, lays an ambush which ends in Beuves's death.

This is the background to the story concerning Renaut and his three brothers. In spite of the murder of Beuves, Aymon is once again welcomed back in Charles's court. He brings his four sons; Renaut, Guichart, Richart, and Alard, to Charles's court so that they may become squires and eventually be knighted. Renaut shows exceptional abilities and promise so Charles decides to knight him the following day.

Soon after the end of the knighting ceremony Bertolai, Charles's nephew, and Renaut are playing chess. At one point Bertolai becomes angered and insults Renaut and then strikes him on the face. Renaut taking umbrage at this act, rather than immediately rushing to try to defend his honor goes to Charles so that he may have an equitable judgment. On the surface it would appear that Bertolai is in the wrong and that Charles should judge in favor of Renaut. Instead, Charles insults Renaut and tells him to stop being a sniveling coward. This injustice infuriates the young Renaut, causing him to reproach Charles for the death of his uncle Beuves:

“Sire, dist-il au roi, quelle merveille ci a ?
Or laisons ce ester, je n'en parlerai ja;
Mais de la mort de mon oncle li parlemens sera,
Que feïstes ocire, dont malement vos va.
De lui vos demant droit par cel qui nos cria.
Mi honcle et li miens peres s'aimenerent pieça;
Mais endroit moi, dans roi, nel creanterai ja.”
(vv. 1927-1933)

Charles then strikes Renaut. Renaut reacts by seeking out Bertolai and killing him on the spot. An enraged Charles commands his knights to seize Renaut and his three brothers, but they are able to flee the castle and make their way back to their homeland of Dordogne. According to Ève-Marie Halba:

La mort de Bertholet (neveu de Charlemagne), évoquant celle de Lohier (fils de l'empereur tué par Beuves), aggrave la situation de Renaut. Il n'est pas seul à porter la responsabilité de ce crime de lèse-majesté, son lignage tout entier est coupable. D'où la fuite des quatre frères et le désengagement du père par le forjurement. Les Aymonides portent le poids de la malédiction familiale, qui se traduit par la mort physique (exécution de Beuves) ou la mort civile (bannissement). (121)

The reasons for the Aymonides's flight from Charles's justice, are different than those which would eventually drive Girart into the forest of Ardennes. In the first of the poem, Charles, although profoundly distressed over the death of his son Lohier, is ready to welcome Beuves and his brothers back to court and to pardon them for their transgressions. It would appear that of the two offenses, the murder of Lohier and the failure to fulfill their vassalic obligations, the latter is more severe. In the case of *Renaut de Montauban*, the poet wishes to add another element which shifts the focus of Charles's anger toward his vassals, Renaut and his brothers, to a more personal nature. It is unacceptable for anyone to simply kill the king's nephew; especially in the king's castle. However, while this act leads to the immediate flight of the four brothers from Charles's court, the energy and the obsession that drives Charles throughout the rest of the poem, comes from his hatred of both Renaut and Maugis, the son of Beuves d'Aigremont. The fact that Renaut mentions, and in an accusatory tone, the incident between Charles and Beuves, adds a dimension of personal hatred to the relationship. This hatred stays with Charles for most of the poem. According to William Calin, Renaut's question to Charles about his uncle Beuves is irrelevant to his problem with Bertolai:

Killing Bertolai would have been far too grave a punishment for the blow he had received. He was in fact also punishing Charles for his insolence and avenging his uncle's betrayal. Now Renaud is wrong, not only for stirring up an old feud but, far more important, for shedding royal blood. In spite of the affront, Charles is emperor and Bertolai a Prince of the Blood. Renaud, however justified emotionally, has undermined society in the same way as his cruel uncle. (81)

In *Girart de Roussillon*, Charles Martel and Girart both claim to hate one another and to wish to see the demise of the other, as I mentioned above, their feud was primarily a political one that took on personal dimensions as the poem progresses. In the case of Renaud, the initial and the primary motivation for this feud are personal rather than political. My use of the term personal is meant to bring to the fore the idea that, while it may be perfectly normal for Charles and Charles Martel to want to reestablish their control and their dominance over their vassals, their pursuit of justice is not necessarily for any particular crime that the outlaws have committed.

Exile from Court and Society

The question of the personal and the political nature of the dispute between the two kings and their rebellious vassals, is crucial to our understanding of the meaning of the ensuing periods of exclusion. No longer welcome in the social and political world of the royal court, Girart, Berthe, Renaud, and Maugis will all experience both a spiritual and physical metamorphosis. In the next section, I will examine in detail how each of these characters experiences the trials and tribulations of their time as outlaws. I will focus on the way in which these periods of exile from court, and in the case of Girart and Berthe, the aristocratic world altogether, are shaped by two fundamental factors. The first concerns the reasons, both political and personal, that these characters have been banished by their kings. The second, is the way in which their attitudes toward their plight shape the way they live the experience, and how they eventually bring it to an end.

While in exile, for twenty two years, Girart does not show any genuine remorse for his sins. His primary goal is to return to society and to the position he enjoyed before losing the second battle at Roussillon. Girart enjoys himself, but must go back because of who he is, that is to say because of the class to which he belongs. One does not permanently change classes, especially when it is a question of moving down. Only later does he understand and accepts the seriousness of his crimes and his sins:

L'influence de Berthe est déterminante sur la résolution de Girart et c'est elle aussi qui va lui donner l'exemple de l'abaissement social car elle prendra avant lui un métier manuel. Girart va donc s'engager dans un long temps de pénitence: il faut considérer comme une expiation du péché d'orgueil la vie de travailleur manuel qui va être la sienne désormais: péché à l'égard de son suzerain, et, ce qui est plus rare au 12^{ème} siècle, à l'égard de l'humanité. (504)

Physical hardship does not push Girart to repent. He suffers when confronted with the orphans and widows that are destitute, because of the wars he waged involving their husbands and fathers. If anything, he laments his suffering more than he feels remorse. Girart and Berthe both live ascetic and difficult lives – eventually they work hard as seamstress and a coal-merchant. This is more of a social punishment, one relating to the loss of material wealth, and the necessity for manual labor.

Reflecting upon Girart's "itinéraire spirituel", as Combarieu du Grès puts it in her introduction of *Girart de Roussillon*, I am tempted to view it as being on a parallel course to Berthe's spiritual journey. Berthe, since their entry into the Ardennes Forest, is now irrevocably linked with Girart and his quest for redemption. Sharing none of his sins: excessive pride, massacring prisoners, killing members of the clergy, destroying countless Christian warriors, devastating lands, looting churches, Berthe must nonetheless endure the same punishment as her husband.

In the mind of the medieval public, who either read the poem; or more probably listened to it being performed by a *trouvère*, there was nothing extraordinary about Berthe having to share her husband's and master's fate. I believe the poet elevates Berthe to a loftier status than Girart; at least in terms of her worth as a Christian. All of Girart's transgressions are related to his role as a member of the warrior aristocracy. Berthe, while of noble lineage, does not live a life that even remotely resembles Girart's. In her article, Régine Colliot points out that Berthe would know how to sow for that would be one of the many talents that the lady of an aristocratic lord would learn during her education. In short, while neither participating in, nor condoning Girart's crimes, Berthe suffers the same fate of being punished simply because of her relationship to Girart.

Of the four exiles that I am discussing in this chapter, Girart's is probably the least spiritual and religious in its nature. Girart's exile, as well as the remainder of his life, is viewed in contrast to that of Berthe. The one consuming and constant goal Girart has during his exile, is simply that of eventually returning to his homeland of Roussillon and regaining his place in society. It is this sole ambition that shapes the entire period in which Girart and Berthe are forced to flee Charles's attempt to find him and kill him. After Girart and Berthe leave the second hermit, they come across some merchants who tell them that they have seen Girart put into the earth. The merchants run back to Charles's court to inform him that Girart is indeed dead – news that is well-received by Charles.

During his exile, Girart receives constant guidance and support from Berthe as well as from a couple of hermits. In the beginning, Berthe is there to keep Girart from plunging into self-pity. In the second stage of the exile, Girart falls sick. During this time, Berthe works as a seamstress for the lady of a house in which they are staying so that Girart may have time to

recover. They are both thrown out of the house before Girart can completely regain his health. All of this points to a rather glaring fact that Girart, without the help and support of Berthe, would have had a very difficult time enduring his penance.

Upon entering the forest, just after his defeat at Roussillon, Girart stays the night in an encampment in the forest, whereas Berthe, takes shelter in the nearby church of Saint Nicolas. This suggests the difference in the attitude that each adopts from this point on. Berthe immediately seeks refuge in God's house, knowing that her salvation must come through Him. Whereas Girart, has not yet begun to realize that he too must turn towards God, and with all his heart and soul confess his sins and accept his penance. For the time being, therefore, Girart will continue to live in sin, the most important of which being the cardinal sins of pride and wrath.

I will divide this analysis of Girart's exile into two parts. The first part will cover his arrival in the forest of Ardennes up until the end of his sickness. The second will be the twenty-two years that he spends working as a coal-merchant. The first exile is divided into stages that result in a general decline in Girart's material status. After the first night in the forest, a group of thieves comes along and steal Girart's horse and weapons. These two objects are symbols of Girart's former political and social status in the aristocracy. A little further on in this first exile, Girart is forced to renounce the use of a horse or weapons until he has completed his penance for his sins. The narrator has very little sympathy for Girart losing his horse and weapons: "Qui trop mainten orguel, nol prez uns gans. / Per Girart vos o diu, qui maintint tans / Qu'en fun deseritaz vint e dous ans. » (vv.7384-7386) One of the ways by which penitents endure their punishment is by embracing a life that is closer to the way Christ lived. Suffering physical hardship through mortification of the flesh, and through the first beatitude, poverty, are ways in which penitents express their sincere desire to change. At no point does Girart practice

mortification of the flesh. However, the second hermit he encounters is practicing mortification of the flesh, when Berthe and Girart arrive at his abode. This hermit is also practicing another kind of self-punishment -- that of physical suffering through the wearing of certain types of clothing such as goat skin:

Vient a l'ermitage de meriene;
Troberent lo saint ome qui per Deu pene.
Il non a drap vestit, mais pel cabrene,
Les escriz lieges vielles sobre l'esquene
Nuz cotes e genoilz, a terriene.
(vv. 7406-7410)

Girart's particular form of suffering also comes in the form of a reduction in the material comfort of his life. The first night they spend at the first hermit's house, Girart and Berthe are given a warm fire, a bed of straw, bread, and cider. This is a far cry from the standard of living that they enjoyed in the castles on Girart's lands. However, this will be a relatively sumptuous meal, and rather fine accommodations, compared to what await them in the first part of his exile. After receiving absolution from the hermit Girart and Berthe begin the next stage of their penance. Girart and Berthe are forced to travel a very difficult path sown with obstacles: and rocks, boulders, uneven terrain, and various types of brambles. They are given shelter at another hermit's house, yet this time the accommodations are more austere. The meal consists of stale bread and water. The third place Girart and Berthe stay is at the house of an unkind bourgeois. Girart does not find many material comforts here either. He falls very ill for a period of forty days and cannot even get up from his bed. Not wanting to keep him under his roof, the bourgeois sends him to a vaulted cellar underneath the stairs.²

² The number of days Girart is sick, forty, is highly symbolic in biblical literature. There are many references to the passing of forty days and at times forty days and forty nights. In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus spent "forty days" in the desert before beginning his public ministry (*Mark* 1:13; *Luke* 4:2). Other significant episodes in the *Bible* relating to the time period of forty days is when Moses spends "forty days and forty nights" on Mount Sinai, receiving the Law from God (*Exodus* 24:18). After his resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples for "forty days" before ascending into heaven (*Acts* 1:3).

In the final passage in this first section of exile, Girart and Berthe are taken in by a good citizen, after having been thrown on the street by the bourgeois and his wicked wife. This scene is a transition from the first part of the exile to the second part. Girart and Berthe go to another part of the forest and work as a coal-merchant and a seamstress respectively. This passage is reminiscent of the parable of the Good Samaritan from the *Gospel of Luke* (10:25-37), which illustrates that human kindness must be available to all; even to one as wretched and sinful as is Girart:

Aiqui pasmet la donne de dol que ac.
Lo prosdom l'esgardet, si com Deu plac,
E fait l'en aportar, tot freit e flac.
Loc li fes laz son foc e let o jac;
Pois lid et car de bos e peis de lac,
E retret l'o [si] tant que gari l'ac.
(vv. 7650-7656)

This scene indicates the beginning of the return of Girart and Berthe back to society. It is not, however, indicative of a fundamental change in Girart's attitude toward his situation. In this first part of the exile, in spite of the oaths given and confessions made by Girart, he sees himself as being punished by God for his sins. While he accepts that he deserves to be punished, he himself does not express a desire to perform the penance required.

Before Girart can begin in earnest his journey towards absolution, and the salvation of his soul, he must first recognize his sins. Yet this does not come easy to Girart. In fact, Girart; at least at the beginning of his exile, believes sincerely that it is Charles who has wronged him. Upon meeting the second hermit, Girart complains his horse and weapons were stolen causing him to make their way on foot. He then tells a story about why he and Berthe were forced into the forest. Ignoring most of the circumstances leading up to this scene, Girart tells the hermit only that Charles had accused him of murder and of helping the traitor who murdered Charles's closest vassal Thierry de Scanie. He then goes on to tell the hermit that Charles declares war on

him and has victimized him by taking his fiefs and his lands and by attacking him. Although Girart recognizes that he does deserve to be punished for having committed certain sins this does not prevent him from complaining and feeling sorry for himself at various points during this exile. At one point during his journey after leaving the second hermit, Girart cries out: “Abanz plore des uelz, trel cabel; / Dist melz vougrei ester morz en plan canpel, / Quel reis l’oges ocis e si fiel.”(vv. 7577-7579) Towards the end of this stage of his exile, after having been cared for by the good neighbor who finds them in the street, Girart once again cries out in affliction:

“E Deus”, dis el, “tans es vers moi teners!
Les obres que ai faites molt lai me mers.
Folche e Landris m’ou dist, cil de Nivers;
Bernart, Folcher, Se gin, Bos e Gilbers,
Pos vesquei après vos, molt sui cuvers!”
(vv.7659-7663)

Neither the narrator, nor Berthe, nor the hermit, have any pity whatsoever for Girart. They recognize that Girart’s biggest obstacle to finding salvation is his own stubbornness and hubris. At the house of the second hermit, it is clear that Girart views this exile as a purely political punishment. As a result, all of his thoughts are focused on him ending his exile so that he can return to society, and not on truly repenting for his sins. When first asked by the hermit whether or not he has faith, Girart answers that he puts all of his hopes in God. The hermit then asks him to renounce all of his enmity towards those who have wronged him. Girart does so, with the exception of Charles. Girart has not abandoned the hope of being able to exact his revenge on the king:

-Seiner, ja ne prendrai jor penitance
Entros que li ferai de mort dotance.
Se ja mais pois portar escut ni lance,
En qualke gen prendrai de lui venjance.
(vv. 7458-7461)

Girart continues to refuse to pardon Charles, and still fails to recognize his own sin, causing the hermit to launch into a very detailed admonishment of Girart during which he even compares him to Satan:

“Bons om, or sai qui t’a si confundut:
Cil orguelz que troberent li cornut
Qui jus de ciel en furent abatut.
Angres furent en cel de grant vertut;
Per orguel sunt diable devengut.
De la o eres cons de grant salut,
Pechaz t’a e orguelz si confundut [...]
Pecaz e enemis t’a decobut.
En itse voluntat criemque te tut.
Aiduns t’aura tot quite conquesut.”
(vv. 7477-7490)

It is at this point that it becomes clear that Girart’s remorse and repentance do not include a recognition of the full scope of the past sins he has committed – namely those at Vaucouleurs. To this extent I agree with Pierre Le Gentil when he writes: “Certes, depuis le jour où, devant l’ermite, il a cédé aux objurgations de Berte, Girart n’est plus un pécheur endurci. Toutefois, malgré sa docilité et sa patience, il n’a que partiellement triomphé de son orgueil et de son égoïsme.”(64) Pride and egoism would have, without doubt, been sternly condemned by the church; especially the former which is a mortal sin. Instead what the hermit chooses to focus on is the political importance of Girart’s decision to renounce his hatred towards all including Charles:

-E l’ermite respont: “Deu en aor,
E de sa part me clam vostre fessor;
Que sil faiz de bon cor e senz dotor,
Enquor auras barnat, terre e onor.
(vv. 7517-7520)

Girart seems to attach importance only to those sins that relate directly to his feudal ties with Charles. Both the hermit and Berthe seem to stress the seriousness of his crimes of hubris and disloyalty to his feudal lord, more than they do Girart’s other crimes. Even the chastisement

regarding the devastating effect his wars with Charles had on families (the loss of lands, fathers, and sons) focuses on Girart's defiance of Charles not towards any sins against humanity. This is seen most clearly in a passage spoken by the hermit:

“Bons om”, co dis l'ermite, “ke n'as paor,
Qu'en ton jovent as fait tante felor,
E as en mal usat de tei la flor.
Encore vols ocire to seignor!
vv. 7498-7501

Later during their journeys, Berthe and Girart receive hospitality from a family that saw both father and son perish in one of Girart's war. Listening to the tale that the family recounts Girart becomes distressed. Berthe gently reminds him:

“Seiner, laise lo dol, si t'en esclaire.
Toz tens fus orgueilleus e gerreaire,
Bataillers e engres de ton afaire;
E as plus omes morz non saz retraire,
E lo[s] ris paubresiz e tout lor aire.
Er en prent Deus justice, lo dreiz jujaire.
(vv. 7589-7594)

The first part of the exile of Girart and Berthe, ends rather abruptly with the simple announcement that they will endure much more suffering and hardship. Then the second part of the exile begins when Girart meets some woodsmen who offer him employment as a means of performing his penance. Girart accepts and Berthe also finds work as a seamstress. This part of the exile is significantly different from the first one in that the couple enjoys a much less difficult life. There are no more meetings with hermits who offer them guidance or chastise them for a lack of repentance. Girart complains no longer about his plight. There is no longer anything specific about the spiritual or religious aspect of Girart's exile. This section focuses more on the social degradation that comes with exclusion from the life at court and, in particular, the aristocratic life that Girart and Berthe were used to.

This passage in the poem marks a certain logical step in Girart's return to society. After twenty-two years of physical hardship, severe poverty, and living under humiliating circumstances, Girart and Berthe now begin to regain some of their lost wealth and status. They both earn a fairly good living as manual laborers, enough to make them bourgeois rather than ascetics.

Both Girart and Berthe seem to be quite content with their new life and the success they enjoy:

Chascuns settan dener vent son carbon.
Gerart veit lo gaain, e sat li bon;
Cil n'en unt plus de lui mige un billon.
Or li doinz Dex ostal e tal maison
Per quei poissent venire a garison!
(vv. 7696-7700)

For a former member of the warrior aristocracy, not only performing but enjoying and thriving in the profession of coal-merchant, is indeed a rare thing in medieval literature. That Berthe would know how to be a seamstress is less exceptional. This would have been considered part of her education as being a lord's wife. As Régine Colliot points out: "Alors qu'il est très rare de voir un homme de l'aristocratie accepter de vivre longtemps dans un autre ordre que le sien, il n'est pas rare dans la littérature épique de rencontrer une femme noble dans une condition servile ou médiocre durable." (512) Success and contentment notwithstanding, it would be inadmissible that the couple be allowed to remain in this situation for the rest of their lives. It is Berthe who eventually would have to convince Girart that such a place in society is unworthy of his noble character. The day of Mardi Gras, while watching warriors jousting, Berthe is reminded of the life that they left behind twenty-two years previously. With tears in her eyes Berthe asks Girart to return to his social class:

"Seiner, se mes conseilz en fus auiz,
Nos torne sem en France, o fus nuiriz.

Or a vint e dous ans qu'en es eisiz,
Et assez de mau traire roz e fraitiz.
(vv. 7756-7759)

In analyzing this passage, Régine Colliot rightly points out that the return to their social class was inevitable:

Nous retenons de ces propos de Berthe que le déclassement est un état d'abaissement et de pénitence, mais que la pénitence achevée, le noble se doit de sortir de cet état, et de regagner son ordre, selon l'éthique de la grande féodalité. Le comte acquiesce aussitôt: "C'est bien dit. J'irai là." (512)

By examining Berthe's experience in exile; and comparing it to Girart's, there appears to be a more profound and spiritual commitment on the part of the former. Berthe is not guilty of any of the crimes which Girart has committed. She has every right to lament the situation that has taken her from the life she was born into as a princess of the emperor of Constantinople. And yet it is Berthe who exhibits a much more pious and sincere attitude towards the salvation of her soul. Moreover, she is not only a councilor but also a source of support and inspiration for Girart. She seems to have taken it upon herself to keep Girart from relapsing. The fact that Berthe seems to be playing a role secondary in importance to that of her husband, indicates the political importance of this exile at least in the mind of the poet. Yet, exile can easily be seen as a statement about the true nature of penance. For while Berthe and Girart live twenty-two years of exile side by side, their paths are different.

Berthe's attitude towards their time in exile, is considerably different than is Girart's. Berthe never complains about her situation. She expresses no desire to seek vengeance.³ Girart does not understand or appreciate the role Berthe plays in his twenty-years in exile even at the end. Berthe, seeing the warriors jousting, cries for her husband and not for herself. Girart at first

³ Both at the beginning and the end of the poem, Girart expresses his regret that he has caused Berthe to suffer the same punishment that he had to endure. When first asked by the second hermit about Berthe, Girart makes the statement: "D'iste donne me pese, qui mare fon."(v. 7431)

does not understand the reasons for her tears. He says to her that he now realizes that he has not provided her with the kind of life that was due her as the daughter of the Emperor of

Constantinople:

“Donne, or sai ke tes cor ves mei repent.
Care t’en vais en France senz mai[n]tenent;
[E] eu te jurerai sor sains vertent
Ja mais ne me veiras, ne tei parent.
(vv. 7746-7749)

Girart’s proposal that she return to their lands and to their former life without him, annoys Berthe who expresses to him her unwavering fidelity and repeats her pledge to stay by his side no matter what. Berthe will never go back completely to the world they left behind, even though they will return to Roussillon. Her time in exile leads her down another path, one which she continues to follow until her death. This path runs parallel to the everyday life of the chateau. In addition to her loyalty to Girart and her devotion to God, Berthe also has learned the virtue of humility. Having suffered without clothing and food, having lived in meager circumstances, in poor shelter, Berthe accepts her fate, never letting this weaken her resolve to continue to work toward the salvation of her soul. In some ways, the spiritual and religious journey of Renaut, and to some degree Maugis, resembles Berthe’s more than Girart’s.

After the death of Bertholai, Renaut and his three brothers flee Charles’ court. After first heading to their homeland in Dordogne, they then go to the forest of Ardennes; following the suggestion of their mother. As in *Girart de Roussillon*, the forest of Ardennes, is a place of multivalent significances. In both epic poems, the forest is a place of refuge from those fleeing from the wrath of their lords, which in both cases is the king. Throughout medieval history, the forest was considered a place of superstition, danger, solitude, and the supernatural. In *Girart de Roussillon*, there are very few incidences of danger from brigands and outlaws during the twenty-two years, with the exception of Girart’s horse and weapons being stolen just after he

enters the forest. In Renaut de Montauban, Renaut and his brothers are considered to be villains while living in the Ardennes.

Young knights who were not attached to a household, either their own or one which has taken them on as squires, were forced to go out into society in order to win honor and riches. They did this by attaching themselves to other lords in various parts of the kingdom. Renaut and his brothers accompanied King Yon on his campaign to fight the Saracens, during which they perform heroically. They earn Yon's favors. As a reward Yon gives them a plot of land upon which they build their castle at Montauban. Renaut's ties with Yon's family are strengthened when he agrees to marry Yon's sister Clarisse. It is now a case where Renaut and his brothers have essentially risen up in society to secure themselves their own lands, and to reestablish their social status in society. Although they are still excluded from the society surrounding the court, they are able to live lives as fairly powerful barons. This is all contingent on their whereabouts remaining secret to Charles. This period of their lives comes to an end when Charles, returning from a pilgrimage at Saint-Jacques of Compostella discovers their whereabouts. He forces king Yon to honor his oath to him by betraying the four. Up to this point, Renaut's banishment from Charles' court can be seen as merely a consequence of a political feud between the king and his vassal. There is very little that indicates that Renaut is committed to a spiritual journey of repentance. This is simply a case of a fugitive, one who has killed the king's nephew, being pursued by an increasingly vengeful and obsessed Charles. What becomes apparent after this point is that Charles is going to settle for nothing short of the death of Renaut and his brothers, as well as that of Maugis. Charles is unable to hang Maugis, despite the fact that on many occasions Maugis was in his custody. Charles's hatred of Maugis and Renaut becomes stronger and stronger but the shift seems to move towards Maugis as the poem progresses. It is at the battle of

Vaucouleurs that Renaut, for the first time, is shown to be a character of exceptional religious and spiritual depth. He and his brothers despite overwhelming odds, are able to survive the battle and again must flee until they reach the relative safety of Montauban. The three brothers recognize that it is Renaut who needs to survive, if any of them are to. They pledge their lives to his protection:

Ils vont baisier Renaut le pié et le talon.
“Ahi! frere, font il, car nos dones .i. don,
Por amor cel seignor ki vint à passion.” [...]
Vos aves tel espée ki n’a mellor el mont.
Bien vos pores garir et nos ci remandron.
N’ert mie grant damage, se nos .iii. i moron,
Et vos en ires, à Montalban, ens el maistre donjon.
(vv. 7290-7304)

Unlike Girart, Renaut does not have vast amounts of lands, men, and resources to fight a long and protracted war with Charles. He and his brothers eventually are forced to end their running and withstand a siege of Charles’s army at Montauban.

Renaut has, up to this point, tried to make peace with Charles by offering to leave on pilgrimage if Charles in return, will end his attempts at capturing and killing them. By this time Charles’s thirst for the death of Maugis has made this the only acceptable solution to the feud between Renaut, Maugis and Charles. At this point in his exile, Renaut has begun to show signs of remorse and regret about what he has done. He recognizes both his desire and his need to leave on pilgrimage. He realizes, however, that simply giving himself up to Charles will not enable this to happen. So, he and his brothers try to withstand a siege as long as they can against the increasingly obsessed Charles.

It is Maugis who, after having captured Charles and brought him inside their chateau in Montauban, decides that it is time that he leaves for good. Fearing Charles’s wrath, as well as remorse for the pain and suffering he has caused, Maugis sneaks by Charles’s army and decides

to live a more eremitic existence. The two heroes have separated—leaving Renaut to deal with Charles. Renaut and his brothers escape from Montauban. Their flight eventually ends up in the city of Trémoigne, where Charles, one last time attacks Renaut. Long before this final battle, probably since Vaucouleurs, the reader has become sympathetic to Renaut's cause, even if he is guilty of having killed Bertolai and defying his lord. His unheeded attempts at trying to make peace with his lord, serves only to attract more sympathy for the rebel baron. Although Charles succeeds in seeing Renaut leave on a pilgrimage, ironically, it will be after being forced to make peace. Charles is unable to win at Trémoigne because his nobles, seeing the extent to which Charles will go to have his revenge, finally abandon him by withdrawing their support, making it impossible for him to win the battle. As Jean Subrenat states: "L'empereur se donne à bon compte une apparence d'autorité, voire de clémence; il ne fait qu'ordonner ce que Renaut ne cessait de proposer." (225)

Charles gains a political victory, even in military defeat. Here, in contrast to Girart, Renaut does not wish to return to society. He has by this time committed himself to another path, one that eventually leads to his becoming a saint. The period, from the moment they flee the court after Bertolai's death, to the end of the battle of Trémoigne, can be viewed as an exile consisting of multiple stages. During this exile, Renaut and his brothers also enjoy a period of social and financial success. Renaut's departure on his pilgrimage is for Charles a political solution to his problem. This only serves to satisfy Renaut's wish to undertake a new path in his life.

Return from Exile

In the final section of our chapter, I will look at the way in which the four protagonists each continue their spiritual journey. Once the political issues are resolved (as much as they can be), the poets can now complete the religious itineraries of their heroes. Girart's continued

attempt at finding redemption takes place as a member of the warrior aristocracy. Berthe being his wife, accompanies him back to his former position, yet will continue along her own path. I will examine how for both Renaut and Maugis, the period of pilgrimage often used as a punishment for those who needed to repay a debt to society, turns out to be in the case of Renaut, the first step towards sainthood. After his pilgrimage, Renaut returns to society where he is a member welcomed back into Charles's court. Maugis, after his pilgrimage returns to his eremitic life, essentially ending his role in the poem. Finally, I will look at the importance of the return from exile, with regard to how Berthe, Girart, and Renaut pursue their salvation and redemption. In other words I will answer the question: why do Renaut and Berthe become saints, whereas Girart and Maugis end their days differently?

The exile of Girart and Berthe concludes with the couple, albeit through trickery and deceit, being allowed to take possession of their lands. Believing Girart to be long dead, Charles sees no harm in hypocritically expressing his regret at no longer having him at his court. It is his certainty that allows the king to accept Elissent's request to renounce his anger towards Girart:

“De Girart, de cel conte qui fu faidis,
Ben avez tuit aui qu'il est fenis.
Car li pardonez tuit qui rien forfis;
Plus soau l'en sera pareïs.”
(vv. 7948-7951)

Once Charles realizes he has been duped, this sets the stage for the conflict to continue until its final resolution eight years later. The way that Girart resumes his place, only leads to renewed anger and plots, on the parts of Charles, to kill Girart.

It has been suggested by Pierre Le Gentil, among others, that Girart's attitude towards this new period of conflict with Charles, lacks the same conviction that it had during the pre-exile wars. In fact, Girart does not attempt wholeheartedly to make peace with Charles until after the murder of his son. Renaut is more sincere in his efforts to make peace with his king. The

important difference between Renaut's attempts and Girart's is that Renaut is not seeking to regain his position in society, with all of its accompanying benefits and prestige. Renaut's only desire is to be able to leave on a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage indicates the crossing of a frontier, making the pilgrim a stranger in lands that were often very hostile and dangerous. It was not uncommon for pilgrims to not return from their journey. In the Christian world of the twelfth century, there were three main reasons that one would undertake a pilgrimage. A common reason is to seek a cure, in the form of a miracle, for a terminal illness or severe affliction. Many pilgrims viewed this undertaking as an act expressing one's piety; often by journeying to the sites of veneration of a particular saint. A third reason, the one that is most relevant to this discussion, is the need to do penance for one's sins. This type of pilgrimage would either be imposed on the penitent as a punishment, or performed as a type of self-punishment. The conclusion of the peace at Trémoigne results in Renaut's departure on his pilgrimage.

It is interesting to note that Girart, whom critics have thought of as having undergone a full conversion, does not himself leave on a pilgrimage. At the battle of Vaubeton, Charles states that the loser of the battle would have to depart on a pilgrimage. Given the context in which Charles sets the conditions, there is little doubt that he has no interest in Girart's salvation. He is simply looking for a logical and expedient political solution to the situation:

La nuiz lo rest vengude e jors failliz,
E li celz est teners e bruneziz.
Dex lor mostra miracles qui fu chastiz:
Flamme lor ciet del ciel qu'es entr'ubrizz,
Quel gonfanons Girart est toz bruiz,
E li Carlon, qui fu ab aur escriz.
Tot en tranblent les cars as plus ardis,
E terre soz lor piez des la raiz.
Ce dist li uns a l'autre: "Segles feniz."
Dunc fu Girarz li cons espaveriz
E Carles entres seus fort esmariz.
Dunc s'esloignent des autres e seupartiz;
Puis n'i fu cols menbraz, n'autres deriz.
(vv. 2880-2892)

It is this event that will lead Girart's barons to suggest that the following peace be made:

Mais pos Dex nos ou a mis en corage,
Quin a fait demonstrance a son barnage,
E Carles quert t'amor per sos message,
Ne responden orguel, mal ne oltrage.
Girarz fu sos om liges, qu'eu vi l'omage,
Quen pres de lui en feu son eritage
[E] en recut amor e segnorage;
Si s'en retor li cons en son omage,
El reis li rende tot son eritage,
Si com fu devisat au marriage.

(vv. 3048-3057)

This would be an ideal place for the epic poem to conclude. Of course, it is far from its final verse. It seems reasonable to interpret God's intervention as a way of keeping the Christian armies from completely annihilating one another. This scene is important, however, for another reason. Neither Charles nor Girart has to leave on a pilgrimage. Such an occurrence would have prevented Girart's more important exile in the forest of Ardennes from taking place. Girart's greatness is contingent upon first resolving the political dispute. Only that will force Girart to make the final commitment to his salvation. It will not be until after the battle of Vaubeton that Girart will be forced to begin his exile. At the end of the battle of Vaubeton, Girart's military strength is still equal to Charles's. He is filled with rancor and a desire to revenge the death of his father and uncle – who were both killed as a result of the battle. His pride pushes him to ignore the advice of his councilors. Only his promise to his uncle Odilon keeps him from renewing the hostilities.

In contrast to this episode, the one which sees the first peace concluded between Charles and Renaut comes at a point much further on in the narrative. The overwhelming withdrawal of support by almost of all Charles best knights; including Roland and the twelve Peers of France, is a stern rebuke of Charles's indefatigable and destructive obsession. Even at this moment,

however, Charles retains his pride and honor. For he does not really lose the battle, he is merely forced to make peace with Renaut:

Li rois ala encontre qui auques ere sol,
Et dit a ses barons: “Vos me tenes por fol
Qui me voleis pais fa[i]re trestot oltre mon vol.
[Ja hé ja] tant Renaut, par lo cors de saint Pol,
Nel porroie veoir en face ne an col.
Oltre meir s’en ira [vestus sol] d’un laniol,
Tout nu pies [et en langes] traïnent son tijol.
(vv. 15144-15152)

His sanction is to not be able to see either Renaut or Maugis dead. The conditions of the peace are not without political significance. Renaut’s three brothers will be able to go back to their lands. Richard de Normandie, so moved by the honorable and Christian way in which he was treated while Renaut’s prisoner, encourages Charles to observe his duty, by watching over Renaut’s brothers and his wife in Renaut’s absence. The more important result is that this initiates Renaut’s journey towards his redemption. This is exactly what Renaut had hoped for:

“Dame, ce dist lid us, vos me sambles lissarde.
Je m’en irai par tans, [l’eure à venire] me tarde
Ci remanront mi frere qui de vos penront garde.
(vv. 15216-15218)

In *Girart de Roussillon* and in *Renaut de Montauban*, there are four characters, who in the end, and to varying degrees, have removed themselves from the social milieu in which they belong. All of them distance themselves from the political and social affairs of the kingdom. They all accept, to some degree, a lifestyle marked by poverty, humility, and hardship. In the end, only two of them are judged by God to be worthy of sainthood: Renaut and Berthe. Girart leads a very pious and prayerful life following his withdrawal from the world. Maugis during the siege of Montauban leaves. He plays an important role in the siege of Trémoigne. He accompanies Renaut on his pilgrimage. He chooses not to return to Trémoigne with Renaut. He decides to return instead to his isolated eremitic life to earn his redemption. These four characters

represent very different perspectives on how those of the twelfth century aristocratic society, sought to reconcile their roles and actions in this world, with their Christian world view.

The time following Girart's return from his twenty-two year exile, cannot be characterized by a sincere effort to apply the lessons of humility and obedience he learned while in the first part of his exile. His pride is still very much in evidence. Even after the seven year truce between Girart and Charles, the count still lets show his bellicose nature and his hubris:

E qui monges devent, molt est malvaz.
Eu aim molt chevaliers e ai amaz,
E fe(a)rai quant viu(e)rail or volentaz,
E donrai volunteers, car ai assaz.
Trop me sui longement humiliatz;
Nen ert mes ainemis per mei preiaz;
Ains confundrai glotons oltrecuidaz!"
(vv. 9126-9132)

These words arouse fear in the baron Guy de Risnel. Not wanting to see the hostilities begin anew, Risnel lures Girart's five year old son into the garden where he kills him:

"Fai, cons, de mei justice a ton plazer;
Car melz en vuel murir, pendre u arder,
Que face ceste gerre mais remover."
(vv. 9164-9166)

After learning of the death of their son, Berthe pleads with Girart one last time to put aside his hatred and his anger and to make peace with his king:

"Girard", dist la contesse, "charz amis doz,
Por Deu, laissaz estar tot cest coroz.
Tant as perduz amis rix e neboz,
Qu'anc tant n'en perdet om ne de si proz.
Eu pregerai a Deu qu'auge ma voz,
Que te donst paz del rei e de seu toz."
(vv. 9206-9211)

After his return from exile, Girart is a more docile and patient man; but one who is still capable of relapsing into his former sinful ways. The discovery of an abandoned Saracen treasure in the old arenas of Autun, provides an opportunity for Girart, Berthe and Elissent to show their

generosity. Girart rewards all of those noble warriors who fought for him. He gives half of the treasure to Charles as a gesture of reconciliation. Only after another five hundred verses, during which a seven year truce is in effect, will the definitive peace with Charles be concluded. During this part of the poem, Girart is still not able to completely give himself over to his penance. He does, with his generosity, try to expiate his sins.

In order for Girart to be able to withdraw from the world he must first settle various matters. He makes sure that his relations are provided for. He also sees Aupaïs and Fouque married. He offers money to the church. Most importantly, Girart renounces his former way of life. Unfortunately, it takes the murder of his son for Girart to finally realize that he can no longer continue his bellicose and rebellious ways. His desire for peace sets him at odds with the next generation of knights. This marks the psychological beginning of Girart's separation from other members of his class.

Girart plays a relatively passive role in bringing about the changes that lead to his withdrawal from society. Throughout the whole of the poem, solutions are found and enacted by several other characters. Many of the attempts to broker the peace come from the queen Elissent; with the support of Berthe and some of Girart's vassals. Elissent's role is vital, not only in settling affairs between Charles and Girart, but also those concerning many of Girart's relations. The final peace is only made through the intervention of the pope. The pope does not need to appease Girart and Charles for they are ready for peace. It is the knights who, not wanting to end the conflict, make it difficult for Girart and Charles to do so.

The pope's message during his long speech is clear: "Breu sermon vos ferai de veritat./ Dirai vos que Deus fait en magestat:/ Orguel besse e cha[r] ten humilitat." (vv. 9431-9433) This passage outlines almost all of the causes and consequences of those disastrous wars. In these

verses are contained echoes of ideas that formed the basis of the Peace of God movement.

Though it began roughly one hundred years prior to the writing of *Girart de Roussillon*, it was designed to reduce the costly and violent wars which were extremely disruptive to Christian society:

Mais iste gerre l'ait mis en error:
Gerrer e male genz e robeor
Les unt arses a fuc e a calor,
Qu'en sunt li monge sanz e li prior
E l'ordres Deu tornas a desonor,
E paubre genz at mise en grant dolor,
E de toz crestianz aucis la flor,
Dunt sunt tornat li loc ric en sotror
E li publes menuz en crid e plor.
(vv. 9385-9393)

Instead of these words being directed solely at Girart; and for his benefit, the pope's plea for a change in the attitudes and actions causing these wars, is now directed at the younger generation of knights. The pope's words underline a philosophy that aims to create a social ideal. Ernst-Dieter Hehl points out that one of the results of this reform was that war and the Christian life came together. Not every type of fighting was inadmissible. The Crusades were an accepted activity for a Christian warrior. The Peace of God movement more clearly defines the role of the king, the Church, and the warriors:

At the same time, however, the duty of the warrior to the socio-political unit in which he lived was stressed ever more strongly. Not only the church, but also kings, as heads of such units, took advantage of this integration of warlike activity into a Christian order and way of life. The essence of this integration was that the warrior must pursue not his own interests but those of his fellow men. The ideal justification of his struggle was no longer the old aristocratic striving to increase his own fame and self-esteem, but love of his neighbour, that fundamental Christian virtue through which he expressed his love of God. (Ernst-Dieter Hehl, *The New Cambridge Medieval History IV, Part I*, 185-186)

Seen in the context of the Peace of God movement, Girart is the aristocratic warrior trying to reconcile his role, both as a feudal vassal and a lord, with that of trying to be a Christian. Admitting his sins of hatred and anger towards his feudal lord, and suffering the

punishment of his exile, were only steps taken by Girart to regain his lands and titles. These steps were essential for Girart. He needed, first of all, to return to society so that he might become the exemplary Christian warrior. Only after the conclusion of the peace with Charles, can Girart remove himself from society. By this time, Girart has lost both of his sons. His wife has given herself over to doing God's work. These two facts contribute significantly to Girart's decision to no longer remain a part of the feudal society.

I agree with Le Gentil's statement that the poet had to bring about a spiritual victory to follow the political conclusion:

La chanson n'est cependant pas terminée. Pour être jusqu'au bout logique avec lui-même, le poète ne pouvait, en effet, se contenter de réaffirmer les principes d'une morale purement politique et sociale. Il devait aussi donner au dénouement de la geste une large portée spirituelle. (65)

What prevents Girart from ever reaching sainthood, is the fact that he never truly adopts the life of one who must seek out his salvation of his own accord. Girart has to always be led, prodded, made to suffer, in order for him to finally arrive at redemption.

Girart is told that he is being punished by God and for which sins in particular. First it is the hermit in the forest who compares Girart to Satan. It is Berthe, later on in their exile, who points out to Girart that he should suffer from seeing the pain of the widows and orphans of the wards he has caused:

Que ne paraula melz nus predicair:
"Seiner, laise lo dol, si t'en esclaire.
Toz tens fus orgueilleus e gerreaire,
Bataillers e engres de ton afaire;
E as plus omes morz non saz retraire,
E lo[s] ris paubresiz e tout lor aire.
Er en prent Deus justice, lo dreiz jujaire.
Membre tei del saint ome del bois de caire
(vv. 7588-7595)

Even towards the end of the poem, Girart suffers his cruelest punishment, having his son murdered as a result of Girart's renewed hubris. There are, however, other sins, some of them

cardinal, which Girart commits and are only mentioned indirectly. Yet these sins weigh as heavily, if not more so, on his conscience than do his transgressions related to his failures as a feudal vassal. At no point does Girart neither recognize nor repent his actions after the battle on the plains of Vaucouleurs. This sin is neither mentioned nor criticized by either the hermit in exile, Berthe, the pope, or anyone. The narrator only mentions the fact that because of this Girart will lose the war against Charles.

The crimes to which I am referring, are the murder of prisoners taken in battle and of clergymen. Girart continues this massacring of enemies, as well as desecrating and pillaging churches, all the way to Bayeux:

Non lait bon chevaler tro a Baiol,
Ne tensar en moster ne soz arvol,
Teste ni encenser, croiz ne orcol;
Tot done a chevalers quan que lai ol.
Pois les mest de la gerre en tal tribol,
Non pout ome baillar saive ni fol,
Non l'aucie o nel pende o ne l'afol.
(vv. 6203-6209)

Not all scholars attach much importance to Girart's actions. Pierre Le Gentil, for example, underestimates the gravity of these sins: "Quoi d'étonnant si, pour finir, il pousse l'égarement et la démesure jusqu'à l'impiété et au sacrilège, lorsque, par exemple, il incendie les églises où ses ennemis cherchent refuge?" (60) In a society which was seeking ways to cure excessive and unjust violence, these heinous crimes must have seemed shocking⁴. Persons and property of the clergy were sacrosanct. The killing of those who sought refuge and were not engaged in combat was equal to murder. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, many Christian thinkers, offered views on issues such as just war and the morality of killing. Many of these views were influenced by the writings of Saint Augustin (354-430). He stressed that sins should be seen no

⁴ For an indepth study of the reform movement and the papacy's role in it from 1122 to 1128, I refer you to the study of I. S. Robinson, in the Cambridge Medieval History fourth volume, Part II, pages 317-383.

longer as merely deeds but also in relation to the will and mentality of the sinner. In his work on ethics, *Scito Teipsum, seu Ethica*, Peter Abelard (1079-1142) develops his ideas on the concept of intentionalism. He writes that moral rightness or wrongness is a function of the intention of the agent. Girart's sins, after the battle at Vaucouleurs, fall well beyond the realm of just killing and of just war. It is both these acts in addition to Girart's unconcern for the consequences of these acts, which are what separate Girart from Berthe and Renaut.

That Girart's wife Berthe, and not he, should become a saint is not surprising. She is loyal to Girart. This is even more impressive when considering that she shared a difficult experience with Girart; even though she herself did not merit such a punishment. Not only does she not leave Girart, she inspires, encourages, motivates, even chides her husband. She prays from her Psalter for Girart's redemption. It seems that during the beginning stages of the exile, Berthe is probably more concerned for Girart's salvation than he is.

Unlike her husband, Berthe never complains about her unwarranted punishment. She recognizes her sins and accepts her punishment. After her return from exile, she increasingly devotes herself to the salvation of her soul. By the end of the poem, she has given herself, body and soul, to her commitment to earning God's forgiveness:

Quant la contesse vait a Verselai,
La paubre gent del ren por li s'I trai,
Por la grant caritat e bien que fai,
Que Dex gart son segnor lai u s'en vai.
E cel, qui bien conoist son cor verai,
Li monstret per samblant que ne s'esmai
D'amar lui e server, quar molt li plai.
(vv. 9528-9534)

Being the wife of a powerful feudal lord obliges Berthe to play an active role in the running of her household. This worldly task is insignificant compared to her other vocation. It was not unusual for a lay nobleman or woman to seek out a more religious life without necessarily

entering into a coenobium. Berthe is not as solitary as are the two hermits she encounters at the beginning of her exile. She lives, even after her return from exile, in semi isolation from her familial duties.

The second way that Girart and Berthe differ with regard to how they view their salvation, is the way each one shows their devotion to God. Girart uses really only material means to show his desire to redeem himself by having churches built, paying for monks and priors to attend them, and having relics brought to them: “Quant la gerre finet, au main viaire, / Girarz en fez mosters ne sai cans faire, / En qu’el mes assaz monges a saintuaire.” (vv. 3194-3196) In the *Epilogue* is a list of all that Girart did before his death: build monasteries, churches, abbeys. He patronized them with a considerable amount of money. The narrator tells us that Girart did penance in the monastery that he himself had built. In this way, he spent the remainder of his days in prayer and contemplation in the hope of receiving eternal salvation:

Si G. fetz gran mal tot en prumier
El sesmendet molt be tot en derier
Que fetz gran penedensa en un mostier
Quel meteis fets bastir molt bo e chier
E mes i .c. donselas e i fetz mongier
Nulha re no fan alres mas dieu preier ...
(Epilogue vv. 23-28)

Berthe chooses the path of service to fellow Christians. After the murder of her son, Berthe begins construction on the abbey of Vézelay. In a remarkable show of devotion, she turns this tragedy into a chance to serve God:

Ne pot ses curs suffrir ne sostener;
Vuelge u non, l’aven de dol cader.
E li cons l’en levet, fait la seder:
“Donne, ne deiz is dol mais mentever.
-Segner, quant Deus non vol no fil sofrer,
Nos fazam, se lui plaist, de lui nostre er.
Melz val od lui donar qu’a nos tener.
(vv. 9181-9187)

Her goodness becomes widely known – attracting all of the poor, the weak, and the suffering to Vézelay in the hope of receiving some of Berthe’s charity. These poor and wretched are not disappointed. They see Berthe as God’s intermediary whose one desire is to serve Him: “Quant ot dat caritat gent paiberine, / Pan e char e deners, vin e ferine, / Si s’en vai as ovres d’ovre caucine.” (vv. 9558-9560)

In the final analysis, Girart’s effort to redeem his soul and find salvation is rewarded.

Only Berthe will be granted sainthood. Le Gentil writes:

Berthe en revanche avait droit aux plus exceptionnelles faveurs: si donc, au terme d’une geste belliqueuse et brutale, les victoires que l’homme est appelé à remporter sur lui-même, devaient être exaltées, ce ne pouvait être qu’en elle et par elle. (65)

In the same way that Berthe led a life of piety, humility, and of service to God, Renaut shares a similar fate. Renaut’s path to sainthood and salvation will first lead him on a pilgrimage. While it was the condition for the end of his war with Charles, Renaut accepts his punishment as a means of doing penance for his sins against society. Renaut chooses to seek out God’s grace, fighting the pagans in defense of Christians in the Holy Land. In this Renaut performs one of his primary functions as a member of the Christian warrior aristocracy. After returning from his pilgrimage, Renaut’s next duty is to restore the honor and reputation to his family. There is an episode during which Renaut’s sons, Yonet and Aymonet, defeat two of the sons of the traitor Fouques de Morion -- Constant and Rohart. This episode of justice by trial ultimately yields the judgement that the Aymonides were finally able to exact their revenge on the family of traitors who, for generations, had murdered and ruined the lives of many of the Aymonides. After his debt to society is paid, and the honor and reputation of his family is restored, Renaut now turns to the final stage of his search for salvation. Knowing that his sons are in a good position in society, and also having lost his wife Clarisse, Renaut departs for Cologne. Renaut will not end

his days quietly as a hermit (in the way that his cousin Maugis does), living a life of extreme asceticism and prayer. Like Berthe, his salvation will come by doing God's work in society. But his will not be a peaceful end. He is murdered by jealous co-workers while helping to build the Cathedral. Renaut dies a martyr while performing penance, and serving God, as well as others.

William Calin points out the significance of this fact:

Now we see why he was not allowed to perish in the Ardennes and again at Vaucouleurs and Montauban, why Maugis and Bayard appeared so often to aid him at a crucial moment – it was ordained that his great strength and fine heart should be used ultimately in the service of Christ and not against him, this alone being sufficient to remit all previous sins. (*The Old French Epic of Revolt*, 96)

Both Renaut and Girart, as members of the Christian warrior aristocracy, must be judged within the context of their duties and responsibilities to society. They are powerful lords as well as vassals to the king. They come from a class whose function is to safeguard Christendom from the pagan threat and maintain peace and justice in the society. That is why much of their quest for salvation includes penance for faults and crimes related to their failure to uphold their vassalic oath. It is necessary that their place in society, their family's honor, and their lands and titles, all be restored to the level due them before any personal penance can be performed.

William Calin writes: "The secular honor of the warrior class is never to be sacrificed for purely religious considerations."(93) No such consideration need be given to Berthe. Hers is a purely religious journey. She has no debt to repay to society. She is the quintessential example of what lay monasticism is at its best.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The original idea, to group these poems together in the same studies, was born out of my interest in French and European history. I chose these particular poems for various reasons. First of all, I wanted poems that treated the fundamental socio-political and religious issues, of the historical period in which they were composed. I was less concerned with whether or not the poems were of outstanding aesthetic value. This is not to say that the poems from the Renaissance were not clearly superior – in their erudition, richness, and poetic style.

I look at these poems, as having been created for two different types of audiences, yet sharing a similar function. In the medieval epic poems, the creations of the poets, drew on a base storyline predating the year in which the poem was written. The *trouvères* altered these stories to suit their audiences. They were songs, primarily sung, as a source of entertainment, at either the royal court, or the entertainment halls of the wealthier and more powerful members of the aristocracy.

They are loosely based on the lives of what were even then, well-known figures from the Merovingian and Carolingian periods. Any relevance, intended or not, these poems had to the contemporary political and religious issues of their day, was less transparent.

The Renaissance poets had as their aim, to stir into action, or severely criticize, the prominent political and religious leaders of the society in which they were living. Direct, and unreserved, these poets hoped that their verse would bring about change in their world.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I focused on the ideal king, such as he is described in the *Chanson de Roland*, the *Couronnement de Louis*, the *Discours* and the *Tragiques*. The second chapter was dedicated to the study of the weak or flawed king as he is perceived by medieval poets in the *Couronnement de Louis*, *Girart de Roussillon*, *Renaut de Montauban*,

Garin le Lorrain, the *Discours*, and the *Tragiques*. Finally, the third chapter represented an analysis of the themes of political and spiritual exiles. I have studied the scenes of banishments, and of pilgrimages, and compared the characters of Renaut, Maugis, Girart, and Berthe.

What have we learned about these different king figures? Charlemagne represents the ideal leader, in both the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Couronnement de Louis*. His son Louis, who is still young when his father dies, represents one of the types of flawed kings Aubigné describes in his work. Louis represents the young, or child king, absolutely unable to rule over his kingdom without the help of Guillaume, his faithful baron. Guillaume can be viewed as the spiritual successor of Charlemagne, even though Louis is supposed to be anointed, and therefore chosen by God. Charles Martel in *Girart de Roussillon*, and Charlemagne in *Renaut de Montauban*, represent the flawed king, full of *démésure*, who never controls himself. He thinks about his own gain before the affairs of the kingdom.

Finally, we have learned that even though Renaud committed a sin when he killed Bertolai, Charles's nephew, he was really penitent for his crime, and in that sense he can be compared to Berthe. Both of them, even though Berthe has never committed a crime, finish their lives doing God's work and salvaging their souls.

The ideal king in these poems, is not only the instrument of God, but works to create God's kingdom on earth. The first, indispensable quality of the ideal king, is that he must live a life of Christian virtue. Of the two of the Renaissance poets, only Aubigné criticizes, and quite severely, the contemporarily kings. His poem, heavily influenced by his religious convictions, leaves the reader with no image of an earthly ideal ruler. He places all kings, within the context of his visions of biblical history. In the final analysis, all Christians, kings, as well, are subjects of the divine ruler.

Ronsard, too, stresses the importance of Christian virtue. In the first two *Discours*, addressed to Catherine de Medicis, there is both a humanist, and biblical element to his instruction. His focus here is more on the present crisis. The ideal ruler is one who must bring about an end to the political troubles affecting France. Having accomplished this, the ideal ruler would be one, who, through personal and political abilities, would solidify the monarchy's positions vis-à-vis other powerful rival houses, protect the Gallican Church, and defend France from foreign threats. *The Discours*, written to the young Charles IX, with regard to its content and tone, resembles the first scene of the *Couronnement de Louis*: a father instructing the future king, on all that is needed for him to rule well. Ronsard uses the great kings of France's past as models for the ideal. They are also witnesses and judges to the way which French rulers lead their subjects. These legendary historical and literary figures, become in the medieval poems, much more than references. The epic poem, in which they are characters, celebrates the glorious period of Charlemagne's reign. In the *Chanson de Roland*, Charlemagne is a virtual demi-god. This is evidenced by his strong connection to God, through the constant intercessions of the archangel Gabriel. He is an inspiration to a Christendom beginning to be caught up in the fervor of the first Crusade.

The Charlemagne in *Couronnement de Louis*, is a much less profound literary character. Most of the poem is about what happens after the coronation. Yet the coronation scene serves a dual purpose, that of reinforcing the legitimacy of the idea of the hereditary monarchy. This, coupled with the efforts of Suger, in particular to link the Capetians to the Carolingians, gives weight to the idea that this poem was written to be a propagandistic tool for the Capetians.

In the two medieval poems, the king is the ideal; both through his actions and his council. He is, among other things, pious, valorous, and just. There is, however, more of an emphasis

placed on the king as the defender of Christendom than on his exemplary Christian life. The *Couronnement de Louis* offers a more detailed view of how an ideal king rules the subjects of his kingdom. In the *Chanson de Roland*, the loyalty, and admiration, that Charlemagne's subjects show to him, with the exception of Ganelon, is complete. When Charlemagne must prepare his son for the task ahead, nothing is presumed. This is why there has to be such a detailed description of all the duties and responsibilities of being king. Louis represents all French monarchs, who, though never able to be Charlemagne, are able to benefit from his example and wisdom. Could this be read as a tutelage for the young Louis VII?

This study of the ideal king, offers an idea, if only partial, of the relationship between literature and history. It is much easier, in the case of *Discours*, to pinpoint the historical events, which prompted Ronsard to write his polemical poems. In his capacity as court poet, Ronsard responds to a specific threat to the political and religious unity of France – the Protestants. It is a considerably more daunting task, to establish such a cause and effect relationship, when looking at the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Couronnement de Louis*.

These three poems, offer a glimpse at the challenges facing the French kings at various times of crises. Only Aubigné's poems, expand the scope of the question to universal proportions. The ideal Christian French king, in the *Tragiques*, can no longer be associated with the Catholic Church. The kings in the other three poems, are the rulers of the secular world, of which the pope is the spiritual and religious head. This is a far from a complete perspective. Much work remains to be done, in order to build a comprehensive picture of the French king, as the most Christian king, such as they are depicted in all of French literature.

It would be problematic, to equate the ideal king, with the absolute monarch. The progressive struggle of French kings, to consolidate royal power, while expanding their sphere of

influence, reached its zenith under the Bourbon king Louis XIV. How, if at all, can we follow this gradual, centuries-long, process through the representation of the king in French literature? This study neglects over three hundred years of literature, between the writing of *Renaut de Montauban*, and the *Discours*. I chose to focus on two periods in French history during which poetry, as opposed to other genres, was the dominant mode of expression. Secondly, I felt that the two periods were marked by significant and sweeping politico-religious and social changes. It is for that reason, that any further studies of the ideal king in these two periods, should include a more complete account of the political theory that provided the framework for these poems.

Another logical way to expand this study, would be to look at all of the poems, from the same millenarian perspective that Aubigné gives us in his *Tragiques*. This would shed some light on the similarities between *Tragiques* and the other three poems, with regard to their teleological role in a biblical interpretation of history.

The depiction of the flawed king in French poetry is much more prevalent than that of the ideal king. With the exception of *Chanson de Roland*, and *Discours*, all of the poems have at least one literary figure depicting a weak king. There are different ways that a king can be flawed. There are those, such as Charles Martel in *Girart de Roussillon*, and Charles in *Renaut de Montauban*, who possess considerable strength in some areas: military prowess, and courage. They are successful in so far as they defend Christendom from the pagans, or Saracens. They also, with the notable exception of certain rebel barons, maintain a strong unifying presence within the kingdom. Their weakness, however, lies in their excesses: hubris, and their passion, beyond limits of self-possession and reason, to bring their *bête noire* to justice.

Henri de Navarre, in *Tragiques*, is the king whom Aubigné follows for a time. He possesses some positive attributes: skilled politician and able military leader. Henri's flaws begin

to manifest themselves in his political agenda. He is unable to extricate himself from the numerous, misguided, and in some cases, just evil influences surrounding him during his rise to the throne. The first issue over which they disagree is Henri's shift toward the moderate position of the *politiques*, those who believe that a policy of tolerance is essential. The more dramatic break comes after Henri's apostasy. For Aubigné, Henri had betrayed the Protestant cause.

Aubigné's more venomous portrayal of the flawed, or weak, king is directed at the last of the Valois rulers – beginning with Catherine de Medici. The less dangerous rulers of the Valois family are described as inept, corrupt, and effeminate. The worst are murderous demons. Children (Charles IX), women (Catherine de Medici), and those influenced by selfish and corrupt councilors (Italians at court), are three categories of people who should never rule.

Aubigné looks on the tyrants of his days as being the most recent in a long biblical history of rulers sent by God to punish His children. These rulers, under the influence of Satan, turn away from a life of piety and devotion to God. On some points, he and Ronsard agree: the weak king does not fear God and is not concerned with the salvation of his own soul. Such kings are inevitably going to fail as political rulers. This last point has a different, almost opposite, meaning for each of the poets. For Aubigné, France would be ruled by a tyrant, one who is influenced by foreign powers, who persecutes Protestants, and who is in league with the Church in Rome. Ronsard fears that a weak king, or queen, would be unable to guide France out of the traitorous waters under which she is in danger of being submerged. Ronsard knows that only a strong Valois monarchy can achieve this.

Religious conflict is not the only danger to the Valois dynasty, according to Ronsard. If a ruler is not properly educated in the art of war, and political administration, France risks losing the glory and identity that generations of rulers have built up. Weak rulers will not be able to

withstand various other pressures: challenges to the Valois's throne from within France, threats from foreign powers, and an ever present attempt, on the part of the Roman Catholic Church, to bring the Gallican Church more firmly under its control.

The literary Pepin, sons of Charles Martel, is in *Garin le Lorrain*, both a boy king and an adult ruler. His flaws as an adult king, manifest themselves as a lack of personal qualities; such as a dominating physical force, a tendency to be opportunistic, and a force of character to bring about an end to the ceaseless wars between the Bordelais and the Lorrainers.

I have divided this chapter into two categories: the adult and the young king. In writing this section on the young king, I focus on Pepin in *Garin le Lorrain*, and Louis in *Couronnement de Louis*. I show that the way in which an adult king deals with problems is different than the way the young king does. I also point out that the young kings must rely on older barons to make decisions for them and to enforce them. Such a dependency puts the young kings in a very weak position. It is just this vulnerability, which the poets make use of to establish the initial dramatic effect of the poem. The message sent is that above all the rule of the legitimate heir to the throne, should never be challenged. It is the duty of the strongest, and bravest, vassals to protect the young ruler. More importantly, the institution of kingship should never be threatened, either by usurpers, or rebel barons. This is vital to the stability of the kingdom. The ideological message is that France needs a strong kingship – one that is respected by all.

This chapter offers a different way of understanding the importance of the literary king figure, even though he is flawed, to the politico-religious ideology put forth in the text. This ideology is a shaping force of medieval epic poetry. Many of the contemporaries who read, or heard, these *chansons de geste*, did not consider the weak king to be a divisive element in society. Some times ridiculed, some times dismissed all together, the weak king remained a

literary creation that served a dual and perhaps contradictory purpose: strengthening the position of the institution of kingship, while at the same time giving a sympathetic and flattering image of the aristocracy.

One of the difficulties in approaching a study this way (young and adult kings), is that many of the problems they face do overlap. It could be argued, that Pepin, and Louis, do indeed represent the dangers of a country being ruled by such a young king. In that case, these two poems, could be read as a statement on the necessity of a quasi- independent aristocracy. This may be more applicable to the *Couronnement de Louis*. During the entire poem, Louis is a young and weak king. The number of years that pass in the narrative are at least eight – putting Louis at about twenty years old by the poem's end. He is no better a king than he was at his coronation. It is important to bear in mind, that this poem is just one of many in the Guillaume Cycle. In *Aliscans*, and *Charroi de Nîmes*, Louis, still as flawed, is now an adult.

In the case of Pepin, his seven or so years under the tutelage of Isidore le Gris and Hardré de Les, does not seem to end in disaster – at least as far as Pepin is concerned. If anything, this period underscores the advantage the Bordelais seized from the Lorrainers. They are able to influence the young king, into making decisions that weakened their rival.

With regard to the adult kings, more attention could be given to the king as mediator between the earthly kingdom and God. In all of the medieval epic poems, there is the idea that the king, by virtue of being the mediator is ultimately more important than his subjects. Aubigné places the king in his role as mediator but only with the assent of his subjects. This difference indicates that the role political theory played in shaping the ideal kingship had changed in the three hundred years between the two periods.

In writing this chapter, it became clear, that the whole question of what an ideal king is, versus a weak one, can be approached through a study of the interactions of the kings with councilors. This could range from the full court of barons present at Ganelon's trial, to the numerous scenes in which the king is in council with one or two individuals. One question to consider is how the number of individuals involved in these scenes alters the way the king reacts. Very often, it is while in individual council that the kings are shown to be at their weakest. Analyzing the council scenes would also provide an opportunity to include a study of certain female characters. Berthe and Elissent in *Girart de Roussillon*, and Blanchefleur in *Garin le Lorrain*, offer a rich opportunity to view the important and decisive way in which these women shape the narrative. This leads us to question the wisdom of Aubigné's position that women should never rule.

In the study on exile, I limited my analysis to two epic poems: *Girart de Roussillon*, and *Renaut de Montauban*. In both of these poems, there is a religious, as well as a political, aspect associated with the banishment of four characters: Renaut and Maugis, in *Renaut de Montauban*, and Girart and Berthe in *Girart de Roussillon*. These two poems are part of a group that is called the epic poems of revolt. The banishment from society, whether as pilgrimage, exile (imposed or self), or simply as a fugitive, is a form of political punishment.

In *Girart de Roussillon*, the king, Charles, seeks to force Girart into admitting his guilt, and to come and kneel before him in order to swear homage. By performing this act, Girart will be recognizing that his lands are not allods, and that he owes service and fealty to Charles. Girart comes from a very strong, quasi-independent principality. He is the most redoubtable and ferocious of Charles's vassals. The extent of his skill and bravery can only be matched by his *hubris*. Only after several military defeats does Girart take refuge in the forest of Ardennes. The

pilgrimage brings about a marginal change in his attitude. While renouncing his hatred of Charles, as well as the use of arms, he does begin to understand that, only by doing true penance, will he earn his true salvation.

The exile in the forest, only introduces the idea of Girart's eventual salvation. The complete spiritual transformation comes only after Girart makes peace with Charles. I viewed this first twenty-two year exile as having mostly socio-political implications. His exclusion from his lands, and his social milieu, are the two most immediate sanctions. After a long period of social debasement, during which Girart is forced to do manual labor, he returns to society. It will be several more years before Girart is at peace with his king. In contrast to Girart, Renaut is a young, newly knighted member of Charles's court. He is not himself the head of a powerful family. His flight from Charles's thirst for justice comes about rather abruptly. He is guilty of having killed the king's nephew Bertolai. He does not have men and resources with which to engage in pitched battles. He and his three brothers are forced to run as fugitives, taking refuge in the forest of Ardennes. Renaut, after a period of several years, does recognize his sins and wishes to make peace with Charles. So long as Charles wishes only to hang Renaut, a peace will not be concluded. Only when Charles is forced to does he allow Renaut to repay his debts by leaving on a pilgrimage – after which he, like Girart, is able to regain his place in society.

A comparison of Girart's and Renaut's experiences, yields some interesting differences. The first is that Renaut ends his days as a saint, whereas Girart, although securing his own salvation through penance, generous financial donations, and prayer, is never elevated to the same status. Secondly, Girart never shows complete remorse for the serious crimes he commits against the members of the clergy, as well as Church's property. The third difference, is that Renaut voluntarily leaves on a pilgrimage – demonstrating a sense of understanding, about what

he must do to redeem himself. This self-awareness is something Girart does not possess. Is it not significant that Girart does not leave on a pilgrimage – either imposed upon him as a political punishment, or self imposed as a spiritual necessity?

Compared to Renaut and Girart, Berthe undertakes a life of true devotion, and piety, in the service of God. There is nothing political about her journey. This is fitting, since she commits no sins, or political transgressions. She is only guilty by association with Girart.

These three characters show us the increased importance given to the religious aspect of the lives of the aristocracy. I believe this to be meant as an example of the gradual linking of the Christian ethic with the warrior aristocracy.

There is little doubt, that while Girart and Renaut's crimes are severe, the reader is, nonetheless, inclined to view them as being interesting and praiseworthy. The desire to not judge the protagonist harshly, is influenced by the belief that God intervened on their behalf: Renaut, at the battle of Vaucouleurs, and Girart at the battle of Vaubeton. The theme of divine intervention, and its role in furthering the spiritual journey of Berthe and the two rebel barons, would be a useful addition to this study.

In what way should we interpret the spiritual journey of Maugis? He remains, throughout the poem, an outsider, albeit an influential one, with regard to the nature of his quest within the political and religious parameters of society. Is his preference for the eremitic life simply a religious and spiritual one? The relationship of Maugis and Charles gives the poem a comedic element. Maugis's character does not fit the typical mold of the feudal baron. Is it because Maugis is not totally of this world? Is the presence of this supernatural character meant to act as a form of divine intervention – one that enables Renaut to complete his search for salvation? Charles's inability to capture or punish this magical character suggests the presence of a

significant spiritual dimension to their relationship. The ridicule Charles suffers at the hands of Murgis, is it not the closest thing to a public punishment, for the sins of God's chosen representative on earth?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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